

Cheli, Ralph

# BETHLEHEM MAN LED LAE ATTACK

JAN 14 1943

## Captain Ralph Cheli Headed Squadron Which Wrecked New Guinea Air Base.

By FRANK ROBERTSON  
(I. N. S. Staff Correspondent)  
Somewhere in New Guinea, Jan. 14.—Speedy American North American two-motored bombers virtually wrecked the Japanese base at Lae, New Guinea, in Wednesday's raid, returning pilots declared today.

Supply dumps, ammunition stores and shore and harbor facilities were smashed or set afire in a devastating attack.

Capt. Ralph Cheli, of Bethlehem, Pa., led the attack, taking the formation in at low level under overhanging clouds. The squadron carried both demolition and fragmentation bombs which were loosed with deadly accuracy.

Lieut. Vincent Kaelin, of Louisville, Ky., bombardier on the plane piloted by Capt. Cheli, said he scored direct hits on the jetty and a building near the shore.

Lieut. W. E. Brandon, of Fort Worth, Tex., said his bombardier, Gilbert Grey, of Elmonte, Calif., scored a direct hit on a large supply dump.

"There was a tremendous explosion and huge clouds of smoke billowed up," he said. "Miles away

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on the way home we could still see the flames."

Informed this morning of the daring of her husband, Captain Ralph Cheli, Mrs. Cheli, who with her son, Raphael, is residing at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. James T. Reilly, 522 Broadhead Avenue, was well pleased, remarking, "I knew he was somewhere in New Guinea."



CAPT. RALPH CHELI

His last visit to Bethlehem was in February, 1942, when he spent a furlough with his wife and son.

He enlisted in the U. S. Air Corps at Mitchell Field, N. Y., in 1940, while he was a junior at Lehigh University. He received his preliminary training at Tulsa, Okla., and his basic training at Randolph Field, Texas. In November of the same year, following a nine months course, he graduated at Kelly Field, Texas.

After receiving his wings, he was sent to Miami, Fla., assigned to the 21st Reconnaissance Squadron, and was subsequently transferred to Newfoundland. After a brief period of service at the latter place, he was returned to the United States, being assigned to MacDill Field, Tampa, Fla. Some time later he served as defense officer on maneuvers, at Owen Field, Columbia, S. C.

Prior to leaving this country last August, for "some place in Australia", he organized a squadron at Shreveport, La., and he was accompanied across the briny by the entire squadron.

It is not known locally what part of the squadron he organized participated in the battle, but there is a possibility that with the original unit intact, they all functioned under the command of their daring leader.

A native of San Francisco, he is a son of Mrs. Albert Cheli, now re-

siding in New York City. After the family located in the metropolis, he enrolled at Lehigh University in an engineering course.

January 14, 1943