

Fincher, William W.

Local Pilot in Squadron With 149 Enemy Planes to Its Credit

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First Lieutenant William W. Fincher, son of Mrs. Sarah A. Fincher, 713 Fifth Avenue, Bethlehem, bagged another Jap plane, his second Nipponese aircraft, recently while escorting American Liberator bombers in an attack on Jap-held Tobera in the South Pacific. He was flying a P-38 Lightning with the hard-hitting "Sun Setter" squadron of the 13th AAF Fighter Command.

In the same aerial dogfight Lieutenant Fincher's teammates destroyed nine other Jap aircraft to bring the "Sun Setters" total to 419 enemy planes downed, 29 since the first of the year. Their most recent record is seventeen Nip aircraft shot down without an American loss.

One of his fighter pilot buddies, First Lieutenant Thomas H. Walker, of Belmont, California, got his fifth Jap plane in this engagement to become the seventh ace in the "Sun Setter" squadron, and the eighteenth ace boasted by the 13th AAF Fighter Command. This Command is credited with 430 Jap planes in the past year-and-a-half, 62 since New

Year. Twenty-eight years old, Lieutenant Fincher has been in the South Pacific since last May. He holds the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters.

Telling of the first Jap plane he shot down, Lieutenant Fincher relates:

"It was one day in the early part of last November. We were on a routine patrol over Torokina, Bougainville, when we ran into a large force of 40 Jap Zeros escorting enemy dive bombers. They were in a huge "v" formation. We circled over them, and I dropped my heavy extra belly tanks. The Japs prepared to engage us, breaking into a luftberry circle. We made several passes at them without scoring any hits but succeeded in chasing them off.

"We sighted another 15 Zeros making a run-in on shipping with 4 Nip dive bombers. We dove down on them. I fired a long burst at one of them. He pulled up, then shuddered momentarily and burst into flames, plunging into the sea."

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