

JULY 1982

4th Edition, July, 1982 - 63rd, 64th, 65th, 403rd Recon - Hdq. Squadrons

What could be better for a kickoff invitation than the rally appeal from Louis "Swiftly" Prifti, 63rd Sqd, from Arlington, Va? Swiftly, whose family was wiped out in Albania by the Nazis in 1943, later appeared in bond rallies for the government, after returning from overseas. He was ball turret gunner on Jim Murphy's crew, a crew which to me typified what we used to call "crew integrity", they lived together, played together, fought together, and accomplished their missions with an enthusiasm which made the 43rd Bomb Group great. Herewith, the Prifti "Call to Arms":

OPEN LETTER TO THE FIGHTING MEN OF THE 43rd BOMB GROUP

The following epic poem is dedicated to the intrepid men of the Roaring 63rd Bomb Squadron, the 64th, the 65th, and the 403rd Squadrons of the 43rd Bombardment Group (H), who shot down from the skies and sank in the waters of the SW Pacific, the best of Japan's planes and warships until victory was assured. How did they do it? With the help of that "Lovely Lady - a Thing of Beauty," the B-17, the Legendary Flying Fortress of World War II. I still dream of her, and my eyes fill up each time I think about our lost buddies, the skip-bombing at dawn, and the long hours of reconnaissance.

COME TO THE REUNION OF THE 43rd BOMBARDMENT GROUP!

Place: OKLAHOMA CITY, OK. The date: SEPTEMBER 24-26, 1982

Come, relive and share with your buddies those days of yesteryears, the thrills, fears, spills, tragi-comic things, accts of bravery and gallantry, of death and life itself under the most dangerous of conditions. Come to the reunion and tell your buddies where you were and what you did on the day we blasted the hell out of the Japs in the Bismarck Sea Battle, bombed Rabaul at daybreak, and reconnoitered over those unheard of places in the SW Pacific, Bouganville, Kavieng, Faisi, Weewak, Madang, Gasmata, Lae, Salamoia, Milne Bay, and other enemy targets.

Put your flaps down and bring your friends to the Reunion! OKLAHOMA CITY, OK - SEPTEMBER 24-26, 1982.

THE INTREPID MEN OF THE ROARING 63rd

Duty, Honor, Valor

To "Them All"

By: Louis M. "Swiftly" Prifti

Out of the night, from Port Moresby,
Roared the intrepid men of the 63rd,
Up and over the Owen Stanley mountains
They went, to battle the enemy,
Who had dared to challenge them.

There was purpose in their fight -
To keep their beloved America and the world free,
Free as the Bald Eagle,
Soaring in the wind-swept mountains
And the great rivers of U.S.A.

Their message was clear -
Blast the Sons of Nippon
From the Pacific skies and waters,
Blast them a thousand times,
Avenge our fallen comrades at Pearl Harbor.

They flew by day and by night -
Whether in stormy weather or sunny skies,
It didn't matter much,
They attacked the enemy relentlessly
And made him wish he had never started the war.

In the beginning, when the 43rd operated
From Mareeba, Australia,
And bombed the enemy in the jungles of New Guinea,
Tojo called the Americans "The Mareeba Butchers,"
But wait, Tojo hadn't seen the last of them.

When the fighting men of the 43rd
Made Port Moresby their home,
And skip-bombed to the bottom
Any of the Jap ships at Rabaul and around,
Tojo screamed "Port Moresby Murderers."

Poor Tojo! He thought he had seen
The last of 43rd's gallant men -
Then came the Bismarck Sea Battle,
His convoy of ships, destroyers and planes
Never made it to New Guinea - the 5th AF did them in!

The 5th Air Force and its planes -
P-39 Cobras, P-40 Kitty Hawks, P-38 Lightnings,
B-25 Mitchells, B-26 Marauders, B-24 Liberators,
They all did their best, but for me, I'll take
That "Lovely Lady - a Thing of Beauty" - the B-17.

The Roaring 63rd, with daredevil pilots -
McCollar, Murphy, Scott, Sogaard, O'Brien,
Navigators - Hirsh, Ahl, Franco, Vargas,
Bombardiers - Lombard, Butler, Blair -
They all did their best.

And there were the radio operators, men like -
James, Bancroft, Westphal, Garofalo,
Engineers - Tubbessing, Palewicz, Zekas,
Gunners - Swiftly, Lutz, Holley and others -
They did their duty to the end.

It took guts to be a ball turret gunner
And ride out under the belly of a B-17,
Or hang for dear life in the tail,
Where Zeroes zoomed close,
And ack-ack burst around you.

But where would the combat crews be,
If it weren't for the men from
Operations, Transportation, Ordinance,
Dispensary, Mess Hall or the "Angel"
With frozen Coca Cola in 120 degree heat!

I swear, if it weren't for "THEM ALL" -
Especially those unsung heroes, the ground crews,
Who made sure our B-17s were worthy of flying,
Even on two engines and a prayer -
We wouldn't be here today. BLESS THEM ALL!

Come to Oklahoma City all of you men of the 43rd Bomb Group who flew and maintained that "Lovely Lady - a Thing of Beauty," the B-17. Do you remember the name of your ship - was it ... PLUTO, CAP'N THE KIDS, LADY LUCK, THE OLD MA, STUD DUCK, CRAPS FOR THE JAPS, THE JOKER'S WILD, THE LAST STRAW, GEORGIA PEACH, JOLTIN' JANIE, PANAMA HATTIE, YANKIE DIDDLE, LISTEN HERE TOJO, LOOSE GOOSE, RITA, or the CHAMP?

Pluto's Pup,
Lou "Swiftly" Prifti

NEWS ITEMS compiled by R.H. Butler

Please inform all of your 43rd buddies about the reunion and write a note to your local newspaper of reunion dates.

A good time was enjoyed at a mini-reunion in May, hosted in the Philadelphia, PA area by DAVE HASSEMER. Among those attending were DR. ALBERT CARP, WES ROWE, CYRUS MICHAELS, BILL EATON, HERBERT ANDRESS, "COACH" FATHER THOMAS SHEA, HY MARDER, BOB BUTLER, and FRANK PIMPINELLA. The writer also had a nice visit with PRIFTI and DR. MILTON "BUD" GUSACK in Arlington, VA on the way to the mini-reunion.

CYRUS MICHAELS has arranged to get 43rd lapel pins for those coming to the Oklahoma City reunion, and will also be available for shoulder patches. LLOYD BOREN, who has been invaluable in printing newsletter and updating roster, has recently had triple by-pass heart surgery, but is making good recovery. All are looking forward to reports from recent visitors to South Pacific - MAX OSBORNE and JOE HOLGUIN. The latter was a POW at Rabaul for 32 months, and one of six survivors of 77 who were imprisoned there. TONY COLONNA, a post war 43rd member has written of later exploits by the 43rd; first ROUND the WORLD flight - NON STOP in 1949 in B-50 - LUCKY LADY II, from 63rd Sqd. Word from CARL HUSTAD that HARRY STALEY, the writer's original co-pilot, and former Deputy Group Commander of 43rd, has recovered from recent surgery, and is coming to Okla City. Former Group Commander, JIM PETTUS, writes from Hawaii that he has overseas conflict for September reunion, but will surely make Queen Mary in 83. We may have BILL NANCE all the way from Australia at reunion to see his old side-kick, J. A. HOLT, both veterans of the QM voyage to Australia. MAX OSBORNE is wondering how many of the 43rd members were former 19th Group members. Our membership now stands at 450.

This newsletter is short because bulk of this mailing will include complete roster to date with addresses. If you are listed in "Squadron Unknown", please contact either Lloyd or myself and we will get you in the right squadron. ART HANE of 403rd, in charge of reunion, will be sending out pre-reservation cards to all - Please note the following:

82 Reunion information: Art Hane
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News Items, New Members: R. H. Butler
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