



43RD BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION, INC. "KEN'S MEN"



NEWSLETTER 101st EDITION JANUARY 2007

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It may be a trifle late but "Happy New Year." Life keeps rolling along and I do hope that you are able to enjoy it to the hilt.

Later in this newsletter you will find the needed materials with regard to the upcoming reunion in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania. You will see that a full and very interesting program has been arranged by our reunion planners, **Ann Fletcher, Fred Hagen and James Dieffenderfer**. So mark those dates on you calendar and plan to be there with so many of your fellow participants. Both Anita and I are looking forward to this happy occasion.

As many of you probably read in a news report or saw on TV, the area of the country where I live was hit with a freak and devastating snow storm on last Columbus Day, Oct. 12, 2006. We managed to survive the storm but not without great discomfort. Being without any electric power for nearly 9 days in very cool temperatures is no pleasure. The storm damage was widespread and very great. We lost one entire tree and most of another huge maple tree. Clean up is still going on. We now know how our members hit by hurricane Charlie in 2004 felt. I don't think that this compares at all to what hurricane Katrina did last year. Mother Nature can deal out some mighty harsh blows when she is so inclined. Those of you who suffered through the typhoons that hit Ie Shima in August and October 1945 know what a storm can do.

Sam Commons and his daughter, Amy Nally, are making good headway with their planning of our 2008 reunion in Atlanta, GA.

I want to welcome **Edward Gammill** as our new secretary and newsletter editor and thank him for starting his duties a few months early. This newsletter is his own product and of course his first one for our association. We trust that this will be an undertaking that he will enjoy carrying on for some time to come. Go to it, **Ed**.

We all owe many thanks to **Howard "Andy" Anderson** for his many selfless years that he served as our secretary and newsletter editor. **Andy** served well and dutifully for the past five years and deserves our thanks. May you have continued good health, **Andy**.

As you know our officers serve one year terms of office. Over the years it has become traditional to reelect the president and vice president for a second year and the secretary and treasurer to be reelected as long as each desires to remain in office. I really don't know how many years our very capable treasurer, **William "Bill" Wilson**, has served as treasurer, but it has been many. We certainly owe **Bill** an overwhelming vote of confidence and many thanks for a job done so well for so long. We can rest assured that our funds in very capable hands.

Vice presidents generally work quietly in the background and observe what is going on as they serve their term of office and give support to the president. With the probability that he will be nominated for the office of president at the end of his term, **Jim Thompson** has to be thinking ahead about how he would conduct the business of our association and whom he would like to see serve as vice president during his tenure. I am really happy to have **Jim** working with me.

It is very assuring to have a staff of officers who carry on their duties so well. It makes the job of president that much easier. But we can't forget who else is working diligently in Snyder, Texas, in getting the nitty-gritty jobs done so well and efficiently. Our 43rd Elf, **Elain Pierce**, sees that the newsletter is printed and mailed to each of you. She also prepares our Roster. That alone is a tremendous undertaking. **Elain** attends to many other matters for the association that go on without fanfare and recognition. She is the hard working young lady that sees to it that affairs of this association are taken care of when the need arises. Thank you, **Elain**.

May each of you have a Great 2007! God bless.

Jim Cherkauer

*****From the Newsletter Editor*****

My first newsletter! I wish to thank **Andy Anderson** and **Jim Cherkauer** for their assistance and advice. The newsletter is a mutual activity and requires participation of all members, therefore I look forward to receiving items of interest from all of you. Please send any information in a timely manner (prior to the 15th of the month before publication of the newsletter).

The preparation of our 2007 Reunion is well underway. The planning is being performed by **Suzanne Crain**, **Jim Dieffenderfer**, **Ann Fletcher** and **Fred Hagen**. The reunion is scheduled for September 3rd through 9th in Philadelphia/Valley Forge, PA. The **Events and Description of Tours**, **The 43rd Bomb Group Reunion Events Flyer** and **Activities Registration Form** are included as an enclosure. Please note the April 1, 2007 date for making your hotel reservations. Also the reunion committee request that you complete the form at the bottom of the Reunion Flyer and mail to the attention of Suzanne at Fred Hagen Construction. This is very important for the committee needs to attain a count of participants.

I hope you will join all of your friends and buddies at what will be a visit to one of the most historical areas of our country. Lets have a BIG turnout.

Had a short telephone conversation with **Andy Anderson**, in which, he reports that he is doing well. He had a great Thanksgiving with 38 of his family in attendance and is looking forward to having another gathering on Sunday (December 9). He plans on attending his sons graduation from Dartmouth in September and drop in for the 2007 Reunion.

Vic Franco, 63rd Squadron Navigator, and wife **Anna Marie** reported a new address: 512 Millers Run, Glen Mills, PA 19342. The new address is a retirement center. **Anna Marie** hopes that the move will enable them to attend the 2007 Reunion. She also stated that they don't want to miss the newsletter because they enjoy every copy.

A very upset Life Member, **Francis X. Labie** reported that his name disappeared from our 2005 Roster. He would have attended the Branson reunion had he known about it! His address is 3741 Cranberry Drive, New Port Richey, FL 34653. Phone (727) 815-9728. **Francis** we are very sorry that this has happened, it will be corrected in the new Roster and you will receive future newsletters.

Orion Rogers, 63rd Pilot from Bethesda, MD, has a new phone number (301) 718-3070. Please make changes in your roster.

Robert E. Lee III has become a new Associate Member. His address is 11995 Shakerwood Lane, Wellington, FL 33414. He is the grandson of **Robert Lee** who flew on the late **Angus Taff** crew with the 65th Squadron.

Another new Associate Member, **Kellie Hedges** whose address is P.O. Box 907, Toledo, WA 98591. Phone number (360) 864-6649. She is the niece of her great-great-great uncle **Louis Miller** who was KIA on March 3, 1943 in the B-17F Ka-Puhio-Wela during the Bismarck Sea Battle. I have been in contact with her and have told her of the excellent document that **Tom Dow** has created concerning this event. Our web site has been instrumental in helping another family researching for information.

A new members, **Norman K. Rollins** and wife **Wanda**, 107 Choctaw Place, Yukon, OK 73099. Phone number (405) 350-0592. During the B-29 era (1947-1949), he served with the 65th Squadron as a Radar Operator. **Norman** wishes to locate and or contact **Richard R. Danger** and **Jack O. Reagan**.

Ann Fletcher, daughter of **Jim Dieffenderfer**, has become a Life Member at the insistence of **Jim**. She writes "My father is a member of the 43rd Bomb Group-63rd Squadron. He is a Life Member and I have attended the last two reunion with him. I wish to become a Life Member." Ann has become very active in our reunion planning.

New member **Maxwell Meyers**, who served with the 403rd Squadron in 1945 and was the ball turret gunner on the **Coleman Crew**. His address is 17 Hilltop Drive, Bedford, MA 01730-1328. Phone number (781) 275-0511. He states the only action he saw was two typhoons while on Ie Shima, after which, the squadron moved to Okinawa. After the 403 was deactivated, he became a member of the 6th Emergency Rescue Squadron. This squadron utilized PBY and B-17 (with life boats under the bomb bay) for the rescue work. Presently he is a civilian physical scientist doing research and development on combat rations for the Army. He is anticipating retirement after 31 years of service.

Jack H. Strange, via a letter to **Bill Wilson**, has renewed his membership. **Jack** reports that he joined the 403rd Squadron at Nadzab, NG. His crew was **Pilot-Dexter Fairbanks**, **Co Pilot-Robert Weise**, **Navigator-Leo Morgillo**, **Bombardier-Neil Smith**, **Flight Engineer-Clarence Clark**, **Gunner-O'Neil Mokxey**, **Radio Operator-Murray Sandeki**, **Gunner-Norman Evensen**, **Tail Gunner-Roland LaLiberte**, **Waist Gunner-Jack Strange** (Some names maybe misspelled, for I had trouble reading the original letter). After 22 missions with **Fairbanks**, he flew 27 missions with **Max Axelson**. He returned home from Leyte with a total of 408 combat hours. His present address is 181 Private Road 1617, Clifton, TX 76634-4522, phone (254) 622-2584. **Jack** included a lengthy newspaper article about a meeting he had on Dexter Fairbanks' 85th birthday. I will bring this article to the 2007

Reunion for display in the memorabilia room.

I received a letter from **Bernard Greenberg**, 64th Pilot, who had this to say: "I wrote this article sometime ago, but for some reason, I never submitted it.

I ran across the article while trying to locate a cancelled check for 2006 dues (which apparently I did not pay) my apologies, paid now under separate letter. I felt to a certain degree that this was a very interesting and an experience that will always be in my memory.

This experience took place, I believe in October or November 1945. Publish the article if you feel that it may make interesting reading and perhaps be familiar to others in this period. I would appreciate if you would let me know if you plan on publishing the article." Thank You and signed by **Bernard Greenberg**

The story he writes about, in the following, is **Jim Cherkauer's** report of the **Edward Joseph B-25** ditching. This was in the October 2003 Newsletter.

IN THE OCTOBER NEWSLETTER, ON PAGE TWELVE, SECOND PARAGRAPH, THERE WAS AN ARTICLE THAT I WAS ABLE TO ASSOCIATE WITH AS MY CREW AND MYSELF WERE INVOLVED WITH THIS PIECE OF HISTORY.

THE ARTICLE OF COL. EDWARD B JOSEPH BEING ON A LIFE RAFT AFTER DITCHING HIS B-25 OFF THE SOUTHERN ISLAND OF KYUSHU.

MY COMMANDING OFFICER, MAJOR CRAMER, MYSELF, CAPTAIN BERNARD BROWN, BOMBARDIER, CAPTAIN DONALD DUNN, NAVIGATOR AND OUR ENGINEER, WHO I DON'T RECALL, BECAUSE OUR REGULAR ENGINEER, SGT. PAUL MAC FERRAN, WAS A HIGH POINT MAN AND I BELIEVE HE HAD ALREADY BEEN ROTATED BACK TO THE STATES, WERE ORDERED TO FLY OUR B 24 MILLION DOLLAR BABY ON A SEARCH MISSION TO LOOK FOR THE MISSING B25. WE WERE TO FLY AT LOW ALTITUDE OVER THE SOUTHERN PART OF KYUSHU ALONG THE COAST AS WELL AS INLAND. WE CARRIED A ONE HUNDRED POUND BOMB AND WERE TOLD THAT IF WE MET ANY HOSTILE FIRING AT OUR PLANE WE WERE TO DROP OUR ONE HUNDRED POUND BOMB. WE FLEW A FEW HUNDRED FEET ABOVE LAND AND FORTUNATLY HAD ONLY PEOPLE WAVING AT US.

AFTER FLYING ALONG THE COAST AND INLAND AND NOT BEING ABLE TO FIND THE MISSING B 25 WE HAD PERMISSION TO LAND AT ATSUGI AIRBASE AND TO SPEND THE NIGHT. ON THE WAY UP TO ATSUGI WE FLEW OVER HIROSHIMA. SEEING THE DEVISTATION FIRST HAND IS A MUCH GREATER SHOCK THAN SEEING IT IN PICTURES. WE COULD LOOK DOWN AND SEE STREET CARS THAT LOOKED LIKE THEY WERE ALL WELDED TOGETHER FROM THE BLAST. NO BUILDINGS, ONLY THESE VERY TALL SMOKESTACKS THAT SEEMED TO ESCAPE THE BLAST FROM THE BOMB. NOT A HAPPY SIGHT.

WE LANDED AT ATSUGI AND WERE BILLETED AT ONE OF THE BARRACKS. THAT WAS QUITE AN EXPERIENCE. I WENT TO USE THE LATRINE, NO TOILETS, SQUAT, HOLD ON THE THE BARS(COME TO THINK OF IT, I'M NOT SURE THERE WERE EVEN BARS) AND DO YOUR DUTY. NOT VERY PLEASANT.

WE REQUISITIONED A JEEP, HAVING A MAJOR WITH US DID NOT HURT, AND HEADED FOR TOKYO. WE PASSED THROUGH YOKAHAMA, AND BEING AS BOMBED OUT AS IT WAS, EVERYWHERE WAS THERE WAS A LITTLE PLOT OF GROUND THERE WAS SOMETHING GROWING. AMAZING.

WE ARRIVED IN TOKYO AND IT WAS ALREADY GETTING DARK AND WE DROVE AROUND THE GINZA AND HEADED I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE, I BELIEVE WE WERE LOST AT THAT TIME. I REMEMBER WE DROVE DOWN A NARROW STREET, AND I HAPPENED TO SEE A SMALL STORE AND IN THE WINDOW THERE WERE THESE BEAUTIFULLY DRESSED GEISHA DOLLS IN GLASS CASES. THE CASES WERE ABOUT 12 INCHES HIGH AND ABOUT SIX INCHES WIDE. WE STOPPED AND WENT INTO THE STORE. THERE WAS AN ELDERLY JAPANESE GENTLEMAN WHO IMMEDIATELY CALLED OUT IN JAPANESE TO SOMEONE IN THE BACK. A WOMAN ABOUT FORTY YEARS OLD CAME OUT AND IN PERFECT ENGLISH, NO JAPANESE ACCENT, ASKED, CAN I HELP YOU? WHAT A SHOCK. I ASKED HER ABOUT THE DOLL, BOUGHT IT, AND OF COURSE WHERE SHE LEARNED TO SPEAK ENGLISH? OH SHE SAID, I WAS LIVING IN CHICAGO, AND JUST NOT TO LONG BEFORE THE WAR BROKE OUT, WENT TO VISIT MY HUSBANDS RELATIVES IN TOKYO, WITH MY HUSBAND AND DAUGHTER, AND WAS HERE WHEN THE WAR BROKE OUT, SO HERE I AM. I ASKED HER IF SHE COULD GET US ANY OF THOSE BEAUTIFUL JAPANESE KIMONOS. SHE SAID SHE WOULD ASK HER SISTER INLAW WHO LIVED IN ANOTHER PART OF TOWN, BUT WE WERE NOT ABLE TO COME BACK AS WE WERE NOT EXACTLY ON AN EXTENDED VACATION. THE ONE THING SHE ASKED IF WE HAD ANY CHOCOLATE FOR HER DAUGHTER. IT JUST SO HAPPENED WE HAD A COUPLE AND LEFT THE BARS WITH HER.

IT WAS FAIRLY LATE AND WE HAD SOME TROUBLE FINDING OUR WAY BACK TO ATSUGI. THE REST OF THE MISSION WAS UNEVENTFULLY, THANK G-D, AND WE FLEW BACK THE FOLLOWING DAY TO IE SHIMA. THIS MISSION WAS QUITE AN EXPERIENCE.

I RECALL THE NIGHT MISSIONS THAT LASTED ABOUT TWELVE HOURS OR MORE. THE MOST VIVID ONE WAS I BELIEVE TO SHANGHAI. I RECALL THAT WE WOULD TAKE A BENZIDRINE PILL TO KEEP US AWAKE. I THINK I WAS TWELVE HOURS OUT OF SYNC WITH THAT PILL. I COULD HARDLY KEEP AWAKE ON THE WHOLE MISSION, BUT ON ARRIVAL BACK TO BASE I WAS SO WIRED FROM THE DELAYED ACTION OF THAT PILL, I WAS WIDE AWAKE FOR THE REST OF THE DAY.

ON ONE MISSION ON THE WAY BACK TO BASE, IT WAS PITCH BLACK, AND AS WE GOT CLOSE TO BASE, SUDDENLY ON THE RADIO WE HEARD YOU DUMB SO AND SO'S, ONLY IN A MORE DEROGATORY MANNER, "YOU WANT TO GET SHOT DOWN, TURN ON YOU IFF. WE COMPLIED!!

JUST TO ADD A LITTLE HUMOR TO THIS LETTER, I WOULD LIKE TO TELL AN EXPERIENCE I HAD ON ONE OF OUR BOMBING MISSIONS ON THE WAY TO FORMOSA.

WE WERE FLYING ABOUT TEN OR TWELVE THOUSAND FEET MAYBE A LITTLE HIGHER, AND IN THOSE DAYS I SMOKED. I HAD MY TRUSTY ZIPPO WITH ME AND ATTEMPTED TO LIGHT A CIGARETTE. AT THAT ALTITUDE THE ZIPPO WOULD NOT LIGHT, SO I TOOK A BIG BREATH OF OXYGEN FROM MY OXYGEN MASK AND BLEW IT OVER MY ZIPPO WHILE I FLIPPED THE WHEEL. I'M SURE YOU GUESSED WHAT HAPPENED. THE FLAME SHOT UP, COMPLETELY BURNED OFF MY EYEBROWS, SINGED THE TIP OF MY NOSE A LITTLE, OK I KNOW THAT WAS NOT TO SMART WHAT I DID. NEXT TIME I JUST SUCKED IN JUST A LITTLE OXYGEN TO LIGHT MY CIGARETTE.

IT WAS QUITE A SIGHT AND A THRILL TO BE CLOSE TO THE FLIGHT LINE WHEN THE BETTY BOMBERS LANDED AT IE SHIMA. WE SAW THE TRANSFER TO THE C54. I HAD SOME PHOTOS OF THAT OCCASION, BUT COULD NOT FIND THEM.

THERE WERE MANY MORE EPISODES, SOME VERY HARROWING, ESPECIALLY THE ONE TO NAGASAKI, WHERE I SAW PLANES SHOOTING AT ME, AT LEAST IT FELT PERSONAL, AND OF COURSE THE ACK ACK THAT WE FLEW THROUGH ON SOME OF THOSE LONG BOMBING RUNS. WHAT A RELIEF WHEN THE BOMBS WERE DROPPED AND YOU MADE THAT DIVING TURN TO GET OUT OVER THE WATER.

I FEEL THAT OUR CREW WAS VERY LUCKY TO SURVIVE WHERE SO MANY DID NOT. I WAS VERY FORTUNATE TO BE ON THIS EXPERIENCED CREW AND TO BE FLYING WITH SOME OF THE GREATEST AND NICEST PEOPLE I HAVE EVER KNOWN. I HOPE THAT THIS TRUE STORY OF MY CREW AND MILLION DOLLAR BABY CAUSED YOU SOME NOSTALGIA AND PERHAPS A LITTLE ENTERTAINMENT.

BERNARD GREENBERG BGREEN5578@AOL.COM

PERMISSION IS GRANTED TO EDIT THIS LETTER FOR ANY REASON YOU MAY HAVE!!

Bernard Greenberg PILOT

News from **Bob Claycombe** via an e-mail from **Max Axelsen**:

"Max, I am home now after a 6 way heart bypass and 3 weeks of hospitalization and rehab. You have no idea how good it was to get home. The surgery knocked out my kidneys so I am on dialysis, I hope temporarily. I get better each day.

You might pass this on to those in the Group who might be interested. **BOB**"

I received a letter from the 5th Air Force Memorial Foundation (5AFMF). The October 7, 2006 minutes of the 5AFMF Board Meeting were included. The 43rd Bomb Group Unit Trustee, **Neil Fairbanks** and his wife **Marly** attended the meeting.

A brief summary of the minutes: When first founded, the foundation had over 1500 members and now has only about 800. The continuing loss of membership and the 25 year time limit imposed by the 5AFMF Charter, requires decisions to be made prior to 2009. The package included a questionnaire

asking members to recommend what action they wished. As with many WWII Associations, the declining membership is requiring such a study.

The 5AFMF is still very active in making the 5th Air Force known. They have a program of giving maps to schools for class room instructional use. The Foundation continues supporting worthy causes such as the board approved a \$1000 gift to the newly formed **Pacific Museum of the Pacific War** with a request that the 5th Air Force have a part in its creation. Also the board approved motions to give \$4000 for the **5th Air Force Circle** and \$500 for a flag at the **National Cemetery** at Dallas-Fort Worth.

*******MEMORIALS*******

Robert E. Thompson, 65th Squadron Aerial Photographer, August 24, 2006. Reported by his wife **Jeanne**

Byrle Miller, 64th Squadron Radio Operator, September 25, 2006. Reported by his wife **Dolly**.

Rebecca Holquin October 2006: Rebecca was the wife of **Jose Holquin**, 65th Squadron Pilot, prisoner of war and the host of a 43rd Reunion. Reported by her son **Curt Holquin**.

Arlene Roth October 19, 2006: Arlene was the wife of Robert Roth, 403rd Squadron Photographer/Gunner. Reported by **Jim Cherkauer**

James D. Williams, 65th Squadron Line Chief, November 5, 2006. Reported by his daughter **Elaine Stuart Mancusi**.

Wallace Alan Gettman, 64th Squadron, December 10, 2006. Reported by **Sandra Fenton**, who told; "Wally was my husband's grandmother's second husband, but he grew up with him, all his life, knowing him as "grandpa Wally." We last saw him on Thanksgiving, at which time he seemed to be doing well. He used to regale us with stories of his exploits while in the military. Wally was a total hoot and a delight to know."

TAPS

We in the United states have all heard the haunting song, "TAPS". It's the song that gives us that lump in our throats and usually tears in our eyes. But, do you know the story behind the song? If not, you will be interested to find out about its humble beginnings. Reportedly, it all began in 1862 during the Civil War, when Union Army Captain Robert Ellicombe was with his men near Harrison's Landing in Virginia. The Confederate Army was on the other side of the narrow strip of land.

During the night, Captain Ellicombe heard the moans of a soldier who lay severely wounded on the field. Not knowing if it was a Union or Confederate soldier, the Captain decided to risk his life and bring the stricken men back for medical attention. Crawling on his stomach through gunfire, the Captain reached the stricken soldier and began pulling him toward his encampment. When the Captain finally reached his own lines, he discovered it was a Confederate soldier, but the soldier was dead. The Captain lit a lantern and suddenly caught his breath and went numb with shock. In the dim light, he saw the face of the soldier. It was his own son. The boy had been studying music in the South when the war broke out. Without telling his father, the boy enlisted in the Confederate Army.

The following morning, heartbroken, the father asked permission of his superiors to give his son

a full military burial, despite his enemy status. His request was only partially granted. The Captain had asked if he could have a group of army band members play a funeral dirge for his son at the funeral. The request was turned down since the soldier was a Confederate. But, out of respect for the father, they did say they could give him only one musician. The Captain chose a bugler. He asked the bugler to play a series of musical notes he had found on a piece of paper in the pocket of the dead youth's uniform. The haunting melody, we now know as "TAPS"—used at military funerals was born. The words are:

**Day is done, Gone the sun, From the lakes, From the hills, From the sky.
All is well. Safely rest, GOD is nigh.
Fading light, Dims the sight. And a star, Gems the sky, Gleaming bright.
From afar, Drawing nigh, Falls the night.
Thanks and praise, For our days, Neath the sun, Neath the stars, Neath the sky.
As we go, This we know, GOD is nigh.**

*****SAFETY TIPS*****

Received by e-mail:

You walk across the parking lot, unlock your car and get inside. You start the engine, shift into Reverse and when you look into the rear view mirror to back out of your parking space, you notice a piece of paper stuck to the middle of the rear window. So, you shift into park, unlock your doors and jump out of your car to remove that paper (or whatever it is) that is obstructing your view.

Just as you reach the back of your car, the car-jackers appear out of nowhere, jump into your car and take off. They practically mow you down as the speed off in your car. And guess what, ladies? Bet your purse is still in the car, and if they see your home address and have your keys, your home is now compromised!

BEWARE OF THIS NEW SCHEME THAT IS NOW BEING USED. If you have an obstruction stuck in your back window, drive away, remove it later and be thankful that you have read this. A purse and an automobile contains many personal information and identification documents that you do NOT want in the wrong hands.

Lieutenant Tony Bartolome, Bureau of Investigations, Florida Highway Patrol

*****QUARTERLY HUMOR*****

From **Pat Rauch**:

A blind man decided to visit Texas. When he arrived on the plane, he felt the seats and said, "Wow, these seats are big!" The person next to him said, "Everything is big in Texas." When he arrived in Texas, he decided to visit a bar. He ordered a beer and got a mug between his hands and said, "Wow, this mug is big!" The bartender replied, "Everything is big in Texas." After a couple of beers, the blind man asked where the bathroom was? The bartender said, "Second door to the right." The blind man headed to the bathroom and accidentally tripped and skipped the second door and instead entered the third door, which led to the swimming pool and fell into the pool by accident. Scared to death, the blind man started shouting "DON'T FLUSH, DON'T FLUSH!"

For the Ladies: THE PERFECT DRESS

Jennifer's wedding day was fast approaching. Nothing could dampen her excitement—not even her parent's nasty divorce. Her mother had found the PERFECT dress to wear and would be the best dressed mother-of-the bride ever! A week later, Jennifer was horrified to learn that her father's new young wife had bought the exact same dress as her mother!

Jennifer asked her step mom to exchange it, but she refused, "Absolutely not. I look like a million bucks in this dress, and I'm wearing it," she replied. Jennifer told her mother who graciously said, "never mind sweetheart. I'll get another dress. After all, it's your special day." A few days later, they went shopping and did find another gorgeous dress. When they stopped for lunch, Jennifer asked her mother, "Aren't you going to return the other dress? You don't have another occasion where you could wear it." Her mother just smiled and replied, "Of course I do, dear. I'm wearing it to the rehearsal dinner the night before the wedding." NOW I ASK YOU, IS THERE A WOMAN OUT THERE ANYWHERE, WHO WOULD NOT JUST LOVE TO DO THIS?

This newsletter is published four times a year - **January, April, July and October**. Please pay your annual dues to our **Treasurer, William H. Wilson, Jr. C/O Elaine Pierce at 1101 E. Coliseum Dr., P.O. Box 360, Snyder, TX 79550-0360**. It is most important that C/O Elaine Pierce is on the envelope. Please keep in mind that annual dues are **\$20.00 per year** and life membership is **\$100.00**. Please make the check to the **43rd Bomb Group Association**.

Send items for the Newsletter to **Ed Gammill at 5415 E. Osborn Rd., Phoenix, AZ 85018-6106** or via e-mail to **Edgammill@aol.com**. Any material received after the 15th of the month prior to a publication month probably will not appear in that publication.

The Postal Service **will not forward** this newsletter. If you change your address please notify our 43rd Elf, Elaine Pierce, at the address shown above. Send her all changes of phone numbers, etc. also.

The pages that follow are the continuation of the edited version of the James Pettus manuscript of the B-24 era of the 43rd Bomb Group from January 1, 1945 - February 28, 1945. The pages are numbered to continue in sequence with previous chapters from November 1944 - December 1944.

*****REUNION INFORMATION ENCLOSURE*****

These enclosures will assist you in preparing for the 2007 Reunion.

1-Events and Description of Tours-2pages

2-ACTIVITIES REGISTRATION FORM

3-FLYER announcing the Philadelphia/Valley Forge reunion. Please note the item at the bottom of this flyer. For planning purposes, it is important that you furnish this information to Alfred Hagen's office as soon as possible. Also make your hotel reservation prior to **April 1, 2007!**

JANUARY 1945

- Jan 1, 1945. Although takeoff was on Dec. 31, 1944, the action by the Sea Hawks took place in the new year. 1/Lt. Earl Butts in #397 was assigned a shipping search along the west coast of Luzon north of Lingayen. He sighted 2 picket boats, but the bombs fell astern and the boats headed to shore. LAB radar not being very accurate near shore, he headed northward toward the Abra River. Anchored near the mouth of the river was a Fox Tare Baker of about 4000 tons with about 15 barges going back and forth to shore. Upon deciding to skip bomb this target the fuses on the bombs were changed quickly. Butts made a low level approach from land to sea, where the silhouette of the ship showed along the horizon. Fifty feet off the water, full power on, within 100 yards he released 1 bomb on each of 3 runs; the second scored a direct hit. The third bomb exploded on the far side of the ship. The plane made 2 more passes on the sinking ship to let the gunners have a chance to sharpen their skills. Well satisfied they headed back to Tacloban.
- Jan 1/2, 1945. Flying the same route again this night, Capt. Howard C. Rogers in #898 found the ship sunk by Butts with the stern completely submerged. A quarter of a mile away tied up at a dock was a Fox Baker two stacker of about 4000 tons. On two runs the bomb racks malfunctioned and despite diligent efforts the problem could not be solved. It was decided to make a 45° angle run over the ship and jettison the 6 X 500 pounders on the ship and dock. Due to smoke, wreckage and confusion of the very large explosion, direct hits could not be confirmed so the ship was claimed as damaged.
- Jan 2/3, 1945. With such good hunting on the Abra River, the 63rd returned and found the Fox Baker still at the dock with indications that it had sustained some damage the previous night. Plane #394 had released 3 bombs while attacking 3 destroyers that sailed close to shore where the LAB was of not much use to the B-24. The destroyers were firing at #394 that released a flare. Another attempt to sink the ship failed when the closest bomb dropped 50 feet astern. Some damage may have occurred to the rudder.
- Jan 3/4, 1945. Two 63rd planes, #397 and #398, headed to Laoag on northern Luzon where activity had been picking up. Each was over the target about 4 hours. They dumped their mixed load of demos and incendiaries on the parking ramps, runways, campsites and storage areas. At least 1 plane was destroyed on the ground and large fires were seen burning for hours. One was a brush fire that swept into a personnel camp. The planes made strafing runs on the target as well.
- Jan 4/5, 1945. Two Sea Hawk planes spent a part of this night harassing with demos the installations at the Clark Field complex since the landing at Lingayen was scheduled for Jan 9th. They were rewarded with an orange fire that lasted several hours. Searchlights and AA were at a minimum.
- Jan 5/6, 1945. It was back to Clark Field again for the 63rd but with frags and incendiaries that caused explosions and fires. There was 1 burst of medium but inaccurate flak. The bombers used weaving approaches and bombed at random. There was a great deal of

activity on the ground. Road traffic was visible and the surrounding towns were not blacked out. The planes spent more than 4 hours over the target.

Ten planes and crews from the 90th B.G., the 43rd's arch rivals, joined the 63rd for the rest of the month to learn tricks of night attacks. These planes were equipped with H2X radar for blind bombing. This radar could pick up prominent landmarks and was best used for runs from sea to land. They did not have the LAB radar of the 63rd. Briefings were joint and an instructor pilot or navigator from the 63rd went along with each 90th plane on its initial sortie. The 2 groups did excellent work in this time, but regretfully the 90th lost 2 planes during this period.

The 5th AAF had long wanted a night interdiction aircraft. The newly arrived P-61s could do the needed job but they were tied down with night fighter work to defeat Japanese night raids.

From time to time the day strike squadrons were called on to do night raids, but they never had very great success. The crews were not trained for this sort of bombing as were the 63rd crews. An attempt to use them for a night attack on Hollandia prior to the big day time attack resulted in a dismal failure. Bombing at night required special training and lots of practice as things look different at night even when the crew is sure of that it is seeing and were it is.

Jan 6/7, 1945. The 63rd sent 2 planes to Clark Field loaded with frags. These were well distributed over the area but mostly in targeted zones. Small fires and 1 spectacular explosion were reported on this clear night. No enemy night fighters were sighted, but the B-24s located and reported 10 ships in Pampanga Bay.

Jan 7/8, 1945. This was the first night of the joint 43rd/90th operations. Four planes took off but one 90th plane returned due to radar problems. The target was the Manila Bay area but there was a ground haze, so visual identification was not certain and orders were to drop no bombs on friendly areas. The planes went to Clark Field shadowed by 6 Nip night fighters that made no firing passes although they came within 250' of the bombers. The 63rd carried frags and the 90th carried 100 lb. demos. Bombs went through a Stotsenburg warehouse but no fires were started.

A 63rd ferret plane picked up 7 ships on radar in the Lingayen Gulf. These ships were engaged in a naval battle. The plane stayed well away.

Jan 8, 1945. This was a red letter day for the 63rd as they were once again all together. The last of their planes flew in from Angaur in the Palaus from where they had staged many missions. A few of their personnel were still on Owi.

Jan 9, 1945. It was a sad day for the Sea Hawks as they lost Major Merrill F. Sargent, their C.O., in a crash on Owi. The plane with 16 aboard faltered on takeoff and crashed. There were no survivors. Except for a few men in the hospital, these were the last of the 63rd men on Owi.

Jan 9/10, 1945. Four American divisions had landed at Lingayen Gulf early on the 9th. Two 63rd planes took off to do ground interdiction north of Clark Field. Planes #394 and #901 flew in at 1000 to 1500 feet and disrupted road traffic and stalled convoys by dropping

wicked frag bombs. They were in general making life miserable for the Japanese who were heading north from Manila. A few fires were started and over 3600 rounds of 50 cal. expended. There is no record that the 90th was on this mission.

Jan 10/11, 1945. Four planes, 2 from the 63rd and 2 from the 90th, went after the traffic north of Manila. One 90th had a rack malfunction and turned back, but the other had a ball snarling traffic and strafing trucks setting them on fire. In all, they blasted a dozen or more convoys. Small arms fire was encountered but it was ineffectual. One 63rd plane got an intense dose of small arms fire as it crossed Clark Field at 1000'. Although this was a foolish thing to do, the pilot said that he was so intent on hitting the traffic, he was over Clark before he knew it.

Jan 11/12, 1945. It was a dark and hazy night with only 1 plane from the 63rd and 1 from the 90th taking off. Convoys were bombed with no damage claimed. The 90th plane, #480, carried a 63rd instructor pilot, 2/Lt. George W. Brautigan. During the flight the plane disappeared. No message was heard and no wreckage was found. All were listed as MIA. The 63rd plane, #398, reported enemy night fighters were aloft, but they were not aggressive.

Jan 12/13, 1945. This night the Sea Hawks accomplished another first by dropping the first USAAF bombs on Formosa. Three planes, #394 and #396 of the 63rd and #487 from the JOLLY ROGERS, were up. No. 394 had to turn back with a bad engine, but the 63rd planes pressed on to Heito Drome on Formosa where the weather was clear. Each plane carried 3 X 1000 demos plus clusters of incendiaries. There were numerous searchlights but a low lying overcast kept them wandering. AA was inaccurate and all bombs were on target. Two very large fires and several smaller ones were burning in the revetment and fuel storage areas.

Jan 13/14, 1945. One plane from each group went again to Heito with each carrying 6 X 500 lb. demos and frag clusters. At least 3 large fuel fires were started. AA was moderate and inaccurate but up to 25 searchlights at Takao/Okayama were active. One plane passed over Itbayat Island in the Philippines on the return flight and was fired upon. Note was taken to avoid this spot for future routes to Formosa.

Jan 14/15, 1945. Planes, numbers 394, 471 and 901, were off to Heito. Despite an undercast outlines could be picked up and results were good. A large fire with numerous pyrotechnics identified it as an ammo fire, visible for 25 miles through the undercast.

Jan 15, 1945. Capt. Albert Brownfield took command of the 63rd after the death of Maj. Merrill Sargent. Brownfield was 27 years old and received his military training in the infantry. For the 43rders he was an old man in experience and age.

Jan 15/16, 1945. The night planes headed to Okayama with a secondary of Aparri on Luzon. The weather was poor with a solid undercast to 6000' with rain and turbulence. Three planes, #s 448 of the 90th, 398 and 396 of the 63rd, made runs with radar. The crews felt that their bombs were on target. The enemy made no reaction until the bombs fell. The

searchlights came on but could not penetrate the overcast and some AA was fired. The 2 planes that followed had the same experience. On the way home one plane, whose frags had failed to drop over Okayama due to an electrical problem, detoured to Aparri Drome and dropped its frags after righting the electrical problem.

Jan 16/17, 1945. It was back to Okayama again with only 2 planes. Again there was a solid undercast, but the target was better outlined to meet H2X capabilities. With no visual confirmation of results, these had to wait the photo interpretation they hoped to have by the next week.

The Sea Hawks flew an anti-radar ferret over Formosa that brought back a wealth of data.

(An entirely different report for these dates is also reported in drafts that Col. Pettus was working with. It is shown below.)

With clear weather #471 and #394 went to Okayama and saw the ground for the first time. Lots of lights went off and on at various times with a flashing red beacon on the coast that remained on as long as the planes were in the area. A large unexplained fire was seen to the north. The planes dropped a total of 48 frag clusters and 4 incendiary clusters on the revetments and storage areas. There were heavy explosions and a huge detonation that caused a bright yellow blaze plus numerous small fires. No night fighters were seen.

Jan 17, 1945. The 2 daylight strike squadrons still on Owi were back in limited action. The 65th and 403rd went to a target near Davao and destroyed a warehouse and other buildings using 250 lb. demos. There was AA but no planes were damaged. The bombing was good. The 64th, operating from Tacloban, went to Cebu, Negros, where 3 planes hit a different drome with 8 X 1000 demos. The 64th felt very superior while operating from the "Front" while their comrades were still back in the rear areas.

Jan 17/18, 1945. A major effort on Heito and Okayama was to take place. The 63rd sent 3 planes out and the 90th sent 2. #398 of the 63rd had mechanical problems, salvoed its bombs and returned. Plane #472 of the 90th failed to reach the target and was not heard from again. It was listed as MIA. #448 of the 90th bombed Heito using H2X and reported good results. While passing 60 miles from Nichols Field heading to the target, the planes sighted a large fire, and it was burning more intensely 3 hours later when the planes returned. #901 and #396 of the 63rd hit their targets with 500 lb. demos, but the results were obscured by ground fog. Searchlights were operating, but no night fighters were seen. Takao city was blacked out as #901 passed over.

The 63rd had a ferret out that ranged from Formosa to Mindoro. It reported signals from Bataan and Koto-sho Islands. It landed at Mindoro due to an engine problem.

Jan 18, 1945. The 64th was out to destroy a bridge south of Bagio. They missed it, but their 2000 lb. demos caused a landslide that closed the road for a time.

Jan 19, 1945. Three 64th planes plastered the drome at Lahug with 2000 lb. demos. They had been headed for Fabrica, but weather interfered. Eight planes from the 65th and 403rd hit Deliao, destroying buildings and a saw mill as well as facilities around Padada.

Jan 19/20, 1945. Six planes headed to Okayama and Heito, but only 4 reached the targets as one from each group turned back. The 63rd hit the secondary at Aparri with no results. Other Sea Hawks pounded Heito with excellent results. One fire was sighted 30 miles away by the 90th. The going over Okayama was rougher for the 90th with 1 plane being holed and numerous searchlights in use. Although night fighters were seen and made passes, they did not open fire.

Jan 20/21, 1945. Three planes each from the 63rd and 90th headed to the city of Takao and its dock areas that served as a major jumping off place for the re-supply of Luzon. The weather was poor and plane #471 of the 90th returned due to radar trouble. The 63rd's #034 ran into a thunderhead and was tossed so violently that equipment tore loose and a 1000-lb. bomb was wrenched from its shackles and became wedged between the outer skin and the bomb rails. It took hours to pry it loose and lower it to where it could be jettisoned. One gunner was cut on the forehead and another almost went out the camera hatch but was pulled back to safety. Shortly after midnight the remaining planes hit the Takao area with 1000 lb. demos and started huge fires and explosions in the warehouse and dock areas. The bombing took place over a period of 2 hours. AA was weak and confused and many searchlights were in use. A few night fighters were seen with 1 coming within 200 yards but did not fire. Several convoys of ships were sighted and reported. Near Cantanduanes Island red flares burst at 10,000', presumably an air raid alert.

Jan 21, 1945. The 64th headed to Balete Pass east of Lingayen with 15 X 2000 lb. demos in an attempt to block the road in the pass for a few days to prevent the Japanese from bringing supplies to re-enforce its defenses that were holding the hilly area to the north. The mission had bomb sight and rack problems. The 2000 pounders often did not release properly and sometimes a large screw driver was inserted into the shackle and when the electrical solenoid clicked, a strong hand on the screwdriver sent the bomb on its way.

That night and into the 22nd, 5 planes went to Heito; #397 and #398 of the Sea Hawks and #431, #487 and #424 of the JOLLY ROGERS. The planes were over the target for about 2 hours and started numerous fires. The main target was the fuel storage and building area. AA seemed accurate with #431 being holed twice. One night fighter moved in close but did not fire. A huge fire was sighted burning north-northeast of Heito and large fires were seen near Viagan.

Jan 22, 1945. The 64th and 65th were sent to hit the Balete Pass area again and provide ground support to the infantry. [No mention has been made of the 65th arriving at Tacloban from Owi, but they apparently arrived.] Several hits were made on the road and landslides were triggered by the 2000 pounders. Keeping the road closed prevented the enemy from sending troops northward while they were being chewed up in the south.

Jan 23, 1945. Three 64th and one 65th plane headed to the Bario/Calot road with 2000 lb. demos. Landslides and direct hits on the road made it difficult for traffic to move for a day or two.

That night the 63rd and 90th headed back to Takao where a previous raid had been so successful and a decision had been made to hit this target over the next week or so. The target was a lucrative one, the Nippon Aluminum Co. Three planes from the 90th and 1 from the 63rd had their go at the plant with 500 lb. incendiaries. The planes were to string out the raid and keep the targets in a state of alert over a long period of time. Just before midnight #041 made a run on the factory and started 2 huge fires. Just after midnight, the 24th, #471 started more big fires. Later #467 passed over the factory and dropped 6 more incendiaries through the building causing a big explosion. AA was not accurate but the searchlights were. One night fighter was seen but it did not fire. These were the only planes over the target as the 90th plane had radar trouble.

Jan 24, 1945. The Sixth Army wanted 2 bridges taken out on the all weather Bagio/San Rosario road. Three 64th planes and one 65th plane were able to drop a forty foot span of the South Bridge. Photos showed the bridge down.

Jan 24/25, 1945. Pleased with the results of the previous raid on Takao, 6 planes, 3 from each group, took to the air this night with oil tank farms, Nippon Aluminum and the adjacent chemical works the targets. Planes #s 424, 487, 448, 898, 394 and 901 dropped 500 lb. demos and small incendiaries scoring numerous hits. The searchlights were right on target and hard to shake. The Japanese AA was more accurate with more guns seemingly brought in to defend the area, but only one plane was holed. Two enemy planes were sighted but they did not fire on the B-24s.

Jan 25, 1945. The 64th tried its bridge success once again but due to turbulence and a malfunctioning bomb rack the bombs missed and surprisingly some turned out to be duds. Ten planes from the strike squadrons (3 from the 64th, 4 from the 65th and 3 from the 403rd) went to the Matina area. Bad weather and a poor target resulted in the crews getting mostly formation flying practice. A few buildings were hit and 1 good fire was started.

Jan 25/26, 1945. Three planes from each of the 63rd and 90th BG were back to Takao's warehouses with good results. Large fires and explosions were reported along with stiffer AA opposition from more guns than in past raids. Anti-radar devices were used and seemed to cause the lights to waver and the AA to fire a bit late. The raid lasted almost 4 hours with 500 lb. demos being dropped. Several enemy planes were seen. Some even had their lights on.

Jan 25/26, 1945. Four planes were back to Takao to hit the chemical plant. They found fires from the previous night still aglow. More fires were started and merged into 1 large conflagration as each plane went over the target at 45 minute intervals. The anti-radar devices seemed to be ineffective this night. Seven planes had taken off but #424 bombed Aparri after its radar failed, and #898 and #034 jettisoned their bombs due to radar and radio problems.

Jan 26/27, 1945. The Sea Hawks and the 90th headed to Chomosui Drome in the Pescadores Islands. This was a new target. Only a recco plane had been here before. Two 63rd planes and one 90th took off but #041 turned back with a gas leak. The other two reached the target but the weather was so bad they dropped to 1000' attempting to find the target by radar. Even at this altitude they could not make out the drome but dropped frags by radar. Indications were that the bombs were on target. #394 stayed around the area so long it had to refuel at Mindoro on its return flight.

Sometime during this week the strike squadrons were sent to bomb Fort Drum in Manila Bay. This was a concrete battleship built on a small island named El Fraile that guarded the entrance to the bay and Corregidor. It had no AA defenses, but it had 2 turrets on the deck. Whether or not they were operational at the time was not known, but after repeated bombings they were obliterated. The bombs used could not penetrate the concrete but did knock off pieces when they hit. The bombing of this fortress continued well into March before a Navy ship using a heavy bamboo shield on one side moved up to the concrete ship and eliminated all occupants with flame throwers.

Jan 27-28, 1945. Three planes each from the 63rd and 90th headed to Kagi Drome north of Takao on Formosa. Due to bad weather all the planes but #432 went to Takao. #432 hit Kagi Drome with unobserved results. #487 returned early due to radio problems. The others hit Takao setting large fires which covered whole blocks and were seen 50 miles away. The planes dropped aluminum strips called "rope" in an attempt to divert the searchlights.

Jan 28, 1945. Three 64th and three 65th planes hit the former U.S. Naval Base at Olongapo on the coast west of Manila. 2000 and 1000 lb. demos were strung through the warehouses and housing areas causing one small fire. There did not seem to be much activity at that old base.

Jan 28/29, 1945. The 90th hit Kagi and the 63rd hit Takao City. The Jolly Rogers felt their bombs were on target. Although ground fog prevented an accurate evaluation, a glow from a fire was seen through the overcast. The Sea Hawks had a bright moon and #394, first over the target, started a fine fire visible for 20 miles. Next #037 piloted by 1/Lt. Albert Goosens was picked up by the lights and AA holed the plane a dozen times even though they dropped "rope." Bombs were dropped on the tank farm and enormous fires resulted. Between 5 and 7 night fighters attacked with a desperate fight ensuing. Tail gunner, S/Sgt. Charles Trusty, was wounded but shot down 1 fighter. S/Sgt. Willingham got Trusty out of the turret and took over the tail gun. He shot down a second attacker. Meanwhile S/Sgt. Willard Ogle who was manning a waist gun and trying to tend to wounded Trusty was hit in the right forearm. Willingham returned to aid both wounded men when Lt. Robert Gordon, bombardier, came to help. Willingham returned to the tail turret and may have damaged another night fighter. While this was going on Goosens was seeking safety in clouds and was taking evasive action and losing altitude. Although the fight lasted about 15 minutes, it seemed like an hour to the crew. The B-24 took a good many hits with #4 engine losing oil rapidly. It could not be feathered due to the loss of the hydraulics so it wind milled. The auto pilot was gone, the starboard gas tank was

hit and the wind whistled through the many holes in the fuselage. The windmilling prop was creating a big drag so that the other engines had to pull almost full power to hold the altitude. Sparks, flames and hot chunks of metal were being thrown off endangering the craft with fire from the leaking tank. All guns and the remaining ammunition were thrown overboard to lighten the plane. It was estimated that 1700 rounds of ammo had been expended in the fight. It was 550 miles to Lingayen Gulf where there was a strip big enough for the plane to land. #4 engine was vibrating so badly that preparations were made to bail out if the plane started to breakup. Relief came when the prop and white hot gear box spun off the glowing engine, but left a fire that burned for 20 minutes before going out. Approaching Lingayen their troubles were not over as the drome was in the midst of an air raid. The plane was held up for 30 minutes after which the crew had to lower the flaps and gear without hydraulic pressure as well as to land at night with only marker lights along the strip. Not until touchdown did the crew realize that the left wheel and tire were damaged. They could apply the brakes only once using emergency hydraulics. The plane swerved off to the left and clipped the tails off two B-25s, but the pilots brought the plane back on the steel matted runway and to a halt. Medics met the plane, complemented the crew on the first aid they rendered to the wounded, and took the latter to the hospital. Lt. Goosens was recommended for the Silver Star and other crew members for suitable awards.

#398 was the last plane over the target and encountered no problems but started only one small fire.

Jan 29/30, 1945. It was back to Takao and Kagi, but the weather was not clear. Although bombs were dropped in the general area, there was little in the way of fires at Kagi.

Jan 30, 1945. A U.S. Navy plane was missing and a plane from each of the 64th and 65th squadrons were sent to search the Luzon, Samar, Leyte triangle but made no sightings.

Jan 30/31, 1945. It was back to Takao with the 90th joining the 63rd. A large fire was started near the docks at 2307 and was still burning at 0305 when the last plane departed. Plane #471 was attacked by a night fighter and there was an exchange of gunfire with no apparent damage.

Jan 31, 1945. The strike squadrons hit the Cavite and Sangley Point AA and coastal guns. Bombing results were mixed. The 65th hit radio towers and a fuel dump. The 403rd claimed bombs in a coastal gun emplacement, but had no pictures to verify that. The 64th started a fire but missed the guns in their target area. There was a great deal of AA from Manila City, Nichols, Cavite and Corregidor. All were firing with little chance of hitting the planes. No damage took place.

January ended with the Sea Hawks having flown missions on 30 of the 31 days with a total of 72 sorties on 35 assigned missions. Seven missions were incomplete due to mechanical failure - mostly radar. One ship was credited as sunk and 1 as damaged, but most of the missions were against land targets. Two enemy aircraft were destroyed in the air. The strike squadrons had operations very fragmented while performing from several different dromes. Their totals were short of their capabilities and often not up to standard due to operation difficulties.

FEBRUARY 1945

Feb 1, 1945. Midnight found 3 Sea Hawks dropping frags on Okayama Drome. Two, #041 and #396, had excellent results stating large fires in the barrack's area. #398 had to dump its load due to radar failure. The 90th BG joined them and dropped frags and demos. Two 90th planes guided by the fires had good results while the third experiencing radar problems went on to bomb Takao visually. Night fighters were spotted with no exchange of fire. The searchlights were erratic when the planes dropped "rope."

The strike squadrons sent 2 planes to hit the guns at Corregidor. Heavily entrenched AA made the target a difficult one, but bombs dropped all around one emplacement led to a claim that it was destroyed. Some buildings were destroyed. These AA frequently hit planes flying into Manila or Cavite.

Feb 2, 1945. This was the last night that the 63rd and the 90th engaged in cooperative strikes. Okayama Drome was the target again with 3 planes from the 63rd and 2 from the 90th taking off. Several large fires were started and were seen through the undercast. Plane #467 of the 90th developed a gas leak and bombed Aparri. Later #487 caused 2 large explosions. Searchlights were ineffective and night fighters were airborne but made no attacks.

Seven planes from the strike squadrons returned to Corregidor to hit the guns and try to seal the enemy in the caves. Results seemed to be good and there was less AA than in the previous raid. Two planes from the 64th and 65th went to Cebu to hit a supply target. The 65th did well but not so for the 64th.

Feb 3, 1945. No target is identified, but the 403rd hit some suspected Japanese dumps and storage buildings with some 8 of 25 damaged.

Feb 3/4, 1945. Three Sea Hawks were over Takao for more than 3 hours, there was no sign of any opposition. The undercast was slight but there were no searchlights, AA or night fighters. Results were good with explosions and one fire visible from 30 miles away.

Feb 4, 1945. A 65th B-24 piloted by Major Arthur Mulligan flew the President of the Philippines, Sergio Osmena, back to his country after he visited the ZI to confer with President Roosevelt. They landed at Tacloban.

The Group sent 7 planes to hit Corregidor again with the coastal batteries as the main targets. Other heavy groups were also hitting the target and near misses and hits were hard to identify due to the dust and smoke. AA was slight and over 400 photos were taken of the defenses and gun pits.

Feb 4/5, 1945. The 63rd sent 3 planes to Tainan Drome just north of Takao City. #398 was over the target at 2305 hours and its bombs were dead on, hitting hangers and repair areas. Very large fires erupted. About midnight #396 hit the hangers and barracks, but ground fog building up made it hard to judge the results.

Feb 5, 1945. Seven planes were off to Corregidor from the strike squadrons. Gun pits were the target again. The 65th claimed that half of its bombs failed to explode on contact. The

65th also sent 2 planes to Licanan where Japanese troops had been reported concentrating. The bombs were frags but the bombing was not good due to rack failures. They did not see any heavy enemy activity.

This night and into the 6th, the 63rd went back to Tainan, but encountered bad weather en route to the target with broken clouds over the drome. Planes numbered 901, 396 and 041 started numerous fires including one large fire with red billowing flames that suggested a gasoline fire.

Feb 6, 1945. American troops entered Manila this day. Corregidor was again the target. The bombs were 1000 lb. demos and 1 hit directly in a 12' x 12' pit. These bombs made the rocky area below look like a moonscape. There was no AA. The 64th sent a couple of planes to the Padua area to hit some warehouses and were rewarded with large fires. The 65th and 403rd also hit Cebu City with frags. The 63rd had the day/night off but had been informed that they would be sending a detachment to Mindoro to assist in the staging through there. It was thought that the Japanese had some planes there that would not attack a large number of B-24s but might attack small numbers of planes. None were sighted.

Feb 7, 1945. Six planes from the 64th and 65th went to Licanan with 100 lb. demos. The bombing was good with 228 of 240 bombs falling on target resulting in the destruction of several buildings. Fires were started and the smoke reached 3000'. Three possibly serviceable twin-engine planes were seen on the ground at Sassa Strip. The Sea Hawks gave Takao Town a going over despite the usual undercast. Bombing was done by radar. #034 could not find an opening in the undercast at 1000' and rose to 5500' and made a run on the oil storage and carbolic acid plant. Three large fires were started. At 0130 #397 made a radar run on the business district to the tank farm. There was no AA or searchlights. Small glows were seen in the mist when suddenly the night was ripped by a brilliant explosion, then another and a third and fourth when the plane was 20 miles away. #901 was airborne when a piece of Plexiglas in the nose turret was blown out. The plane returned with a full load; the crew took the standby and made it over the target by 0300. The weather had improved and they sighted the fires from earlier bombing as well as starting some more. There was no opposition. Another 63rd plane made a ferret flight around northern Borneo and back up the China Sea. It made no sightings and picked up no new radar indications.

Feb 8, 1945. The Group sent 7 planes to Mariveles Town on the Bataan Peninsula with 1000 lb. demos. About 85% fell on the target. Several buildings were destroyed, and a jetty was hit sending lots of grey and black smoke upwards. That night the Sea Hawks sent 3 planes to Tainan Drome, but only 1 made it due to mechanical troubles. Plane #398, while in the vicinity of Takao, was sent a message to attack a ship in the harbor, but finding none it continued to the target where its bombs hit hangers, the repair area and barracks. No damage was seen along with no activity at the drome - no guns and no lights.

Feb 9, 1945. The strike forces had the day off for maintenance.

The 63rd headed to Raigaryo Drome, not far from Takao. Three planes made it to the target with #031 hit the target first about midnight. Frags and incendiaries were dropped through a supply area setting off numerous fires and about 100 explosions. A few minutes later #901 hit the dispersal ramp setting 3 twin-engine planes on fire. #397 came in next, but due to calibration problems it did no damage. The crew enjoyed the show their comrades had put on. There was no AA or lights. The night fighters sited made no attempt to attack.

The 63rd sent planes to Heito Drome 10 minutes apart. The searchlights picked up each plane before rope was dropped, but the bombing was good starting a few fires. The lesson learned was to drop the rope before the lights lock on them.

Feb 10, 1945. Six planes from the 64th and 65th hit Corregidor again but due to haze and dust the results were not well observed. There were no direct hits on gun emplacements. The 403rd had finally made its move to Tacloban and sent 2 planes to Surigao on Mindanao to use napalm bombs on inflammable targets. Some fires were seen but nothing more. The Sea Hawks hit Heito again into the 11th with 2 planes; each of them was caught in several cones of light that were difficult to shake. Their bombs fell on the revetments and taxiways. #898, coming in a bit later, was caught in the same lights but managed to drop its bombs in the maintenance area where a large red fire was started and was visible for 20 miles. Col. M.D. Burnside from V Bomber Command was aboard as an observer. Crews did not like having V.I.Ps. aboard as the feared pilots might take extra risks and an "old wives' tale" held that they were bad luck. The enemy was firing 90mm AA rather than the typical 75mm. Several rounds burst above #898, but there was no damage to the plane.

Feb 11, 1945. Two 65th planes bombed Corregidor individually to strike the gun emplacements. Nine direct hits or near misses were scored and one small fire was started. The 64th sent 3 planes to Babo on Cebu Island to strike a road junction and assembly point for enemy forces. The bombing with 100 lb. demos was good with many hits on several buildings setting them ablaze. The 403rd sent 2 planes to Cebu City to drop leaflets consisting of 20 bundles of the SWPA Gazette written in Japanese. Preparations were being made for a major effort against a Jap task force that was known to be at sea and would be shadowed by the 63rd. The planes sent on such a mission would carry 2 x 2000 lb. demos and an extra bomb bay tank. [This latter action may have been on Feb 12th, but the manuscript is not at all clear about dates at this time.]

Feb 12/13, 1945. The 63rd sent 4 unarmed planes off in two hour intervals to track the convoy of 2 battleships, 3 destroyers and 1 heavy cruiser. The convoy was picked up at 11 10 N, 110 17 E. The 43rdm 90th and 345th were to make daylight attacks when it came into range. The convoy was believed to have come from Indo China and headed to Hong Kong. The 63rd maintained radar and visual contact from 2300 on the 12th until 0830 on the 13th. U.S.N. patrol planes had also picked the convoy up about 1615 of the 12th. At 0545 KEN'S MEN, along with the 90th and 22nd Bomb Groups, began to take off from Tacloban and Samar to find the fleet. Seventeen planes were to rendezvous over the north tip of Palawan and from there they were to head to the estimated position. Navy PB4Ys were to pick up the fleet and have it under radar surveillance after the 63rd

departed, but they did not. The weather around Palawan was so bad that the formations never got together although most squadrons found each other. Amid cumulus clouds towering to 20,000' and a near solid undercast below, squadrons of bombers and fighters were flying hither and yon with no one sighting the fleet. As the planes became low on fuel, they began to head home. The bombers were told to jettison the 2000 pounders to avoid possible problems of them breaking loose from their shackles as the planes landed. One 65th bomber turned back due to a gas leak and dropped its bombs on Bataan Peninsula.

Feb 13/14, 1945. The 63rd sent two planes out to try to establish contact with the enemy convoy. They had no luck. Two other 63rd B-24s, flying a different route, found the convoy again and maintained contact until relieved at 0600 on the 14th by 90th planes. The 63rd planes also spotted 4 ships that appeared to be headed to join the convoy that was now out of range of the heavy bombers. It had to be conceded that the convoy had gotten away. The Group sent 11 planes on the 14th to bomb personnel areas in and around Marivales Drome. The bombing was right on target and was a tonic to the crews frustrated from the past days mission failures. With no AA, the planes demolished the area with 45 tons of bombs.

Feb 14/15th. The Sea Hawks were beginning to operate more and more from Mindoro, the island from which they had done all of their convoy search. Glowing reports were sent to Tacloban of the fact that there was no mud there and that their camps were high and dry. The 63rd sent 4 planes to Hong Kong to look for shipping. No hits were made with all bombs missing their targets. One plane saw nothing, but the others did site ships making them determined to go back to the area again.

Feb. 15, 1945. The Group sent 9 planes to hit the personnel area at Corregidor as the emplacements were all out of commission from previous bombings. The planes carried frags that seemed to be a wrong choice to use on a solid rock target, but most bombs landed in the assigned areas. Crews sighted American destroyers shelling Corregidor and Marivales and landing craft taking troops into the harbor at Marivales. The 403rd sent 1 plane to Puerto Princessa at the request of the 8th Army to get low level shots of Hondo Bay and Puerto Princessa Bay. Many photos were taken as the plane made low strafing runs at 50' to 100'. One seaplane was damaged and 1 barge hit. The B-24 took on 10 holes, but no one was injured. The 8th Army reported that the photos had been invaluable to them.

Feb 16, 1945. [No mention of this date appears in the manuscript.]

Feb 17, 1945. The 65th sent a plane to Puerto Princessa to photograph a different area with 25 pictures made from an altitude of 600'. The Rufe seaplane, object of the 403rd's attention the day before [?], had sunk in shallow water. Air Force G-2 announced there were 600 enemy fighters on Formosa.

This date was also the anniversary of the 43rd embarking on the Queen Mary three years prior. Now the 43rd is accepted by many as the best heavy bomb group in the 5th AAF, although this is disputed by many others.

The strike squadrons were scheduled for their first daylight attack against Formosa. They were also going to check out the H2X radar bombing system and were going to use "rope" as AA jammers. The target was Okayama, but due to weather, they were diverted to the secondary at Takao. With only each lead plane having H2X, the other planes dropped on the lead. Bombing consisted of dropping frags through a heavy overcast. Later photos showed that although the bombing was good, the choice of bombs for that target was not a good one. Demos would have been better given the fact that a large industrial area adjacent to the shoreline gave a good radar reading. AA was very erratic and no enemy fighters were sighted.

The 63rd was moving to McGuire Field on Mindoro and had no action this night.

Feb 18, 1945. The Group went back to Formosa with 16 planes. There was very poor weather, but they managed to bomb Takao Drome their tertiary target. It was not a good H2X target so the bombing was done visually with only a 10 second visual sighting. With a fine formation the bombing was good but the frags did not appear to start any fires. Since the bombs fell through areas where planes were spotted on the ground, it was suspected that the Japanese were using dummy planes to draw the Group's bombs.

The Sea Hawks made a long ferret using 2 bomb bay tanks and carrying no bombs. The rear bomb bays were filled with receivers and direction finders. The route was Leyte - Sibuyan Sea - Lingayen - South China Sea - Hainan - Hong Kong - N. Luzon - E. Luzon and back to Mindoro. The flight lasted 16 hours.

Feb 19, 1945. The daylight strike force hit Takao Drome with 18 planes scattering bombs all over the area. There was lots of inaccurate AA due to the dropping of "rope" by the B-24s. Frags hit the personnel area north of the strip and some hit the drome itself. A lead plane using H2X seemed to hit a toxic gas works. The weather below was broken. This night and into the 20th, the 63rd sent 3 planes out after shipping in the China Sea and Formosa Strait. #901 saw no ships and bombed Mako, the secondary target. #031 and #898 sighted a DD but the LAB did not function in both planes and all bombs missed.

Feb 20, 1945. The strike squadrons had the day off for maintenance. The 63rd sent out only one plane and searched the China Sea for shipping but in vain.

Feb 21, 1945. The strike squadrons were on a ground support mission north of Manila. This was a new type mission and with the Japanese dug into the hills or in caves, smoke pots and arrows were used by the Army to point out targets where frags were dropped. How much good was done remained a mystery, but 2 days later the Army asked for this support again.

Feb 22, 1945. Three 63rd planes went out at 0200 and found no shipping up and down the coast of Indo China. The mission was to be coordinated with the 345th's B-25s. Although they made radio contact with the 345th, they did not call out the B-25s due to the lack of

targets. One B-24 reported a railroad on the Indo-China coast as a place for future attention.

The daylight squadrons sent 18 planes on ground support west of Fort Stotsenberg. All 1000 pounders hit the target except those of one bomber in which the bombs hung up. The crews sighted a sign on the ground that read "Help USAAFE arms and supplies." Jim Pettus writes, "Let the G-2 figure out what it meant."

Feb 23, 1945. The Group's C-47 was lost on a flight from Owi to Tacloban via Yap. Seventeen men were missing. An extensive search was organized, but no trace of the plane was found. The weather was not bad, the plane was in good condition and no message was received from the plane was in trouble.

There was no Group activity this day.

The 63rd sent out 3 planes with little results. Takeoff was at 0330 and landing at about 1700 hours. A V.I.P. Brigadier went along but the plane, #031, missed a Sugar Dog. #901 saw nothing and returned. #304 sighted 2 DDs that headed into Vin Hao Bay (Vietnam). The B-24 contacted airborne B-25s but they headed directly to Cam Ranh Bay a bit to the north of Vin Hao Bay. Later #034 passed by Cam Ranh Bay and saw B-25s attacking 2 transports. There was a huge column of smoke, but sadly 1 B-25 was shot down.

The 63rd had 4 planes flying up and down the coast. One had taken off on the 23rd but the others were off by 0300 on the 24th. #396 went to Swatow, China, ENE of Hong Kong, but its run was unobserved due to undercast. #901 found no targets at Hong Kong, but did try to contact airborne B-25s with no luck. #397 sighted 1 ship while over Hainan, but could not make a run. It did attack several Sugar Dogs through overcast, and it did contact the airborne B-25s that homed in on its signal but they were weathered out.

Feb 24, 1945. This was a day that the 43rd could have covered itself with glory, but instead got mud in the eye. The target was an important hydro-electric plant above Takao. The 65th was leading and went up the east side of Formosa instead of the west side, probably because this gave the H2X a better radar return. This necessitated climbing over the mountains consuming valuable time. This combined with a cumulus buildup threw the timing off fouling up everything. Squadrons were making runs in all directions with bad results. To add insult to injury the AA was heavy and accurate with a number of planes being hit, but there were no injuries. No 43rd bombs fell on the hydro but other groups did hit the target.

The 63rd's #398 took off at 1900 and found 2 Sugar Dogs and a lugger in the Gulf of Tonkin. It missed the Sugar Dogs, sank the lugger and then found a Sugar Charlie nearby and dispatched it with 3 bombs

Feb 25, 1945. The Group sent 18 planes to hit the Ipo Dam area northwest of Manila where the Japanese had a large number of troops and stores concentrated. The drop of 214 X 500 lb. demos was in the target with only 2 falling wide; several buildings blew up with smoke and flames seen up to 2000'.

The Sea Hawks sent out 5 planes. Two were on the day shift but did not score, and 3 took off at 1930 hours. One was a ferret to the China Coast covering 2355 miles on a 15 hours flight. #809 went to Hainan and in Hoi Hoa Bay and it found a 10,000 ton Sugar

Able Love and 3 smaller vessels; one of which was very close to the SAL. On a run to string bombs across the SAL they got both ships. The explosion from the SAL was so violent that it shook the plane. The SAL disappeared from the screen and the smaller ship was left burning. The other B-24 did not do well. It attacked 3 ships but missed.

Feb 26, 1945. The Army was pleased with the bombing at Ipo Dam on the 25th, so another drop was scheduled for the 26th. All of the bombs dropped in the selected area. Smoke was seen to 3000' from numerous fires. Army G-2 reported that yesterday's raid destroyed at least 1 heavy gun emplacement, and that the fires had burned through the night. The Sea Hawks had 1 day and 3 night patrols. The daylight bomber attacked a DE at 1855N and 1104E, but no damage was claimed. #398 damaged a Tare Able with near misses using Torpex bombs causing the ship to come to a halt and list. Two DE escorts threw up plenty of fire, but with some hung up bombs the plane decided to continue the patrol and jettison the bombs. The second plane found two PT type boats, each towing a barge, but the plane ignored them to finish its assigned patrol coordinates. On its return the B-24 dropped its load on the PT boats and barges sending one PT boat end over end. The boats put up 50 cal and 20mm shells, but were silenced by the 50s from the plane as it strafed and set one barge afire with its tracers. #398 was hit in the hydraulic system, but lowered its landing gear with emergency procedures. #034 returned after drawing a blank searching in the Hainan area.

Feb 27, 1945. The 8th Army was soon to land on Puerto Princessa, so all 3 squadrons were dispatched to blast its beach defenses. Bombing was by elements and individual planes, some making 5 runs to be sure of a pillbox target. 1000 lb. bombs with 1/10 sec. delay fuses were the order of the day. 110 bombs fell in the defense area; a few were wide of the area and 1 load malfunctioned. One single engine plane was seen on a nearby runway, but it did not venture up. Enemy machinegun fire was seen by its flashes, but at 5500' the planes were out of range. The Sea Hawks sent up 3 planes this night but little good was done. Two drew blanks and jettisoned while #809 found some barges, but missed them. It did strafe them. Earlier the plane had sighted a sub, but while ascertaining there was no IFF, it dove.

Feb 28, 1945. The 8th Army landed at Puerto Princessa and encountered very little resistance taking the town and 2 airfields quickly. The strike squadrons went to Caldera Point on Southern Mindanao near Zamboanga. Eighteen planes with 1000 lb. demos hit a very heavily fortified defense area. The target was plastered by the 43rd and other groups, but dust and smoke obscured the results so which outfit did what damage was moot. The 63rd sent out 3 planes, but 2 jettisoned after a fruitless search. #809 found some barges, but missed them so no damage was claimed. The gunners did get in some shots.

The month for the 63rd ended after 71 sorties that did a great deal of damage on Formosa, sank 4 ships totaling 10,000 tons and damaged 3 more of around 11,000 tons.

Events and Description of Tours
43rd Bomb Group Reunion
In Philadelphia and Valley Forge
September 3rd ~ 9th, 2007

- **Monday, Sept 3rd:** Labor Day Welcome Reception at Fred Hagen's farm in Buck's county featuring "Philly Food". Bus will depart the Doubletree Inn at 4:45 pm. The party is scheduled from 5:00 pm ~ 8:00 pm. Minimal fee: \$15.00 per person. Children welcome!
- **Tuesday, Sept 4th:** Optional Tour to Gettysburg and the Eisenhower Farm.
Driving tour of the Battlefield covering approximately 25 miles with guide who brings the Battle strategy and stories to life. Dobbin House Tavern for a deli lunch.....and a memorable hour with Jim Getty as Abraham Lincoln, our 16th President. Getty has portrayed Lincoln since 1977. Then travel to the Eisenhower Farm ~ the only home owned by President and Mrs. Eisenhower. The farm was used during Eisenhower's administration as a weekend retreat and "temporary White House". Nap on the bus!
Departure at 7:30 am ~ Returning at 8:00 pm. \$90.00 per person
- **Wednesday, Sept 5th:** Many choices: Play Golf with Sam (Price TBD), Play Bridge at the Hotel, visit the King of Prussia Mall, or take the Optional Guided Tour to Lancaster County and visit the Old Order Amish. We begin with a visit to the Amish Experience for an introduction to their lifestyle. These people, who have inhabited this area for more than 250 years, live today much like their forefathers who came to Pennsylvania to escape religious persecution. Hear fascinating commentary on their lifestyle and tour the Homestead (replica of typical Old Order Amish home) Enjoy lunch at one of the family-style restaurants (or possibly in a private Amish home) and sample it all: fried chicken, ham, meat loaf, mashed potatoes, vegetables, and a variety of desserts! All delicious!
Depart Hotel at 8:30 am ~ Returning 2:30/3:00 pm. \$60.00 per person
- **Wednesday Evening:** Included within your Standard Activities Fee is a special evening at the famous William Penn Inn, established in 1714. It begins with a cocktail reception and dinner, and entertainment by the Romano Sisters who will take you back in time. The Squadron Meetings will follow ~ so, this evening is a must! Bus departs Hotel at 4:45 pm and will return the ladies to the Hotel following dinner and the men following their meetings.
- **Thursday, Sept 6th:** Optional Guided Tour of Historic Cultural Philadelphia.
Visit Independence Hall (built as the State House for the colony of PA and the site where the Declaration of Independence was signed and the U.S. Constitution was debated, written, and signed; Congress Hall, building which served the U.S. Congress during the period of 1790-1800 when Philadelphia served as the federal capital; the recently opened National

Constitution Center, building totally dedicated to the better understanding of the U.S. Constitution ~ an interactive experience; Christ Church, founded in 1695 where many of the patriots worshipped.....and much more. Also included is a driving overview of the city passing City Hall, Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Avenue of the Arts, Society Hill. Lunch in Delegates Restaurant of National Constitution Center. Bus departs Hotel at 9:00 am ~ Returns to Hotel at 4:00 pm. \$50.00 per person

- **Thursday Evening:** An exceptionally special evening has been planned at the exquisite, historic and private The Union League Club of Philadelphia, founded in 1862 as a patriotic society to support the policies of President Abraham Lincoln. It is said that President Lincoln declined an invitation to this private club because of a previous commitment and tickets to Ford Theatre. Do you dare decline? Cocktails and Dinner: \$60.00 per person.

Jackets for men. No jeans. No sneakers. Bus departs Hotel at 6:00 pm.

- **Friday and Friday Evening:** General Group Meeting in the morning with the afternoon open for The Memorabilia Room and/or the King of Prussia Mall. The Photograph session and Dinner/Dance, included within the Standard Activities Fee, will be this evening.
- **Saturday, Sept 8th:** Included within the Standard Activities Fee is a special Guided Tour of Valley Forge National Park with the Memorial Service at Washington Memorial Chapel. Included within our guided tour of this most sacred site of the American Revolution is a stop at Muhlenberg's brigade to see reconstructed huts and Washington's headquarters. The Washington Memorial Chapel, built in 1903 as a tribute to George Washington, offers many significant points of historical and religious interest. Lunch is included at Freedom's Foundation. Bus departs Hotel at 10:00 am ~ Returns at 3:00 pm
- **Saturday Evening:** Included within the Standard Activities Fee: a Buffet Dinner at the Hotel with entertainment.
- **Sunday, Sept. 9th:** Begin the day with a glorious Sunday Brunch and follow with an afternoon of culture at the Franklin Institute. The Brunch is included within the Standard Activities Fee. The Optional Tour to the fabulous King Tutankhamen and The Golden Age of Pharaohs Exhibit is the last chance to see the Egyptian artifacts from the 18th Dynasty, including the child-sized throne of ebony, ivory and gold and artifacts from the tombs of five other Pharaohs of this period. The exhibit is double that of thirty years ago and Philadelphia is the last stop! \$60.00 per person. Bus departs hotel following Brunch.