

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



NEWSLETTER 102nd EDITION
APRIL 2007

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Winter was very slow in arriving in the Northeastern part of our country, but when it did, it hit with a vengeance. As I am writing this a few days before the deadline to submit news to our editor, I notice that the temperature outdoors is now in the lower teens. Starting in late January while I was in Colorado the area was hit with plenty of snow that continued throughout the month of February and so far into March.

You will read in this newsletter a slightly revised program for the upcoming reunion in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania. The Tuesday, September 4th tour will be limited to the Gettysburg battlefield and the lecture to follow. It was necessary to eliminate the Eisenhower Farm part of the tour so that the bus(es) would be back at the hotel before the **Board Meeting takes place from 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM in the Conference Room.** Ann Fletcher, Fred Hagen and Jim Dieffenderfer have arranged a terrific reunion. I hope to see many of you there and that you have a great time.

For nearly two decades now we have been anxiously awaiting a complete history of our Group by Larry Hickey. I have reported some progress being made on that endeavor in the past. By the first of March the final draft for all of 1943, except some work on three months, were completed along with a final draft through September 1994. All of 1944 is expected to be in its final draft by May of this year. Then Larry and his two co-writers, Zach and Matt, will work on the final draft for 1945 and the appendices. The latter constitute a huge amount of work but are down to the final drafting and editing. All maps, artwork, cover layout and color profiles are

completed. Larry says that no deadline for publication has been set as yet. Let's hope that it is not years away.

Our Association Elf, **Elain Pierce**, has sent me a list of names of those to whom this newsletter has been sent regularly but whose dues are not up to date. The list now contains 109 names. It had been over 300, but after she mailed each of you a letter explaining the situation about half brought their dues up to date. The question of whether or not we should remove these names from our mailing list is under consideration at this time. I propose to ask our Board at the Plymouth Meeting reunion to assist me in making that decision. It is not quite fair to expect only those paying their dues to support the considerable expense of preparing and mailing our newsletter to everyone listed in our mail data base that includes over 100 non-dues paying persons. Costs have been rising yearly. The USPS will be raising its mailing rates effective next year from all indications. Exceptions can be made if someone is unable to pay his dues and Elain or I am informed of that situation. Dues have been raised to \$20 a year starting January 1, 2007. Lifetime dues are still only \$100. Please give this careful consideration.

Plans are moving ahead for the 2008 reunion to be held in Atlanta, Georgia. **Sam Commons** and his daughter, **Amy Nally**, have visited a number of hotels and have narrowed the list down to one. Since no contract has been signed as yet, I won't name the hotel here. From all indications, if we do contract with this particular hotel, it should be an excellent choice. It is very modern, has excellent facilities and there is a **free** shuttle between the airport and the hotel. It is also located so that it will be close to a number of attractions being considered for tours.

Take good care of yourselves and I do hope to see many of you in September at the Plymouth Meeting reunion. God bless.

Jim Cherkauer

*****EDITOR'S and MEMBER'S REPORTS*****

I received an e-mail from our friend **Sandra Smith**, daughter of **Joseph Thompson, 63rd Squadron Radio Operator**. Sandy's quest for information concerning her father, who was MIA with the **Coleman Crew** on 3 December 1943, has been successful! This activity has been well documented in previous 43rd Newsletters. All of you, especially you Tracy, can very proud, for our Kensem web site has been very instrumental in assisting Sandy.

The purpose of Sandy's latest correspondence is to inform her 43rd friends that she has just moved into her new home and to provide us with a new address, 19 CLEVELAND BAY AVENUE, EATON, 6232, WESTERN AUSTRALIA. Her new phone number is 08 97241514. Her e-mail address is unchanged. Sandy is all settled in with everything new and beautiful with a view of the beach and ocean.

In a December letter, **William Jobe, 64th Bomb Squadron Radio/Gunner**, reports that he mailed his 2007 dues to **Bill Wilson**. Sadly, William writes that his wife, **Bernice**, passed away this past September. He also tells us- "I was sent to Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho in October 1944. I met Bernice when she fitted my parachute harness at the base shop where she worked. I fell in love with her right from the start and we were married on December 16th. We had a wonderful life together. She was a devoted wife, a faithful, loving companion and I miss her very much."

Signed: William L. Jobe, Captain, USAF (Ret)

Janice Olson, daughter of the late **Chick Olsen, 64th Squadron**, reported the following via her Christmas Card. "My silence these past couple years is no reflection on my B-17

activity, in fact, **Phil Gudenschwager** (11th Bomb Group, historian and a friend of your Secretary's here in Phoenix) and I had a long talk not too long ago. I am working on a couple of crash sites with a couple fellows from back East who "dropped in" to my life via e-mail. Now that Larry Hickey has picked up the ball again on the 43rd, I hope to be back in the loop.

There's nothing more I'd like to do than go to the next reunion. Lets keep our fingers (crossed) until then, have a fabulous holidays." *Janice Olson*

Irene Dow, mother of **Russ Dow** and **Tom Dow**, both Associate Members, has returned to her winter home in Payson, Arizona. The following excerpt is Irene's report of her travel across the country.

"I really love "training" it!! This will be my fourth trip by train from the east to the west. I get on in Framingham, MA and this time will detrain in Flagstaff (AZ). Ginger West lives there where she works for Progressive Insurance as a Claims Adjuster. She'll get me to Payson. It's an entirely different adventure. Years ago (1976) I traveled alone from British Columbia to Montreal where my husband met me. I'd been visiting our son in Portland (OR). That was my first train, and since then I'd wanted to "ride the rails" again. I spoil myself by going first class, in a bedroom compartment which has its' own bathroom facilities, room to walk around, a dressing area, bed, easy chair, and a large window to view the passing countryside. Meals (every thing included) in a dining car w/white table clothes, excellent food, and when I feel like it (which is a lot) I go to the observation car with all the windows and swivel chairs to see both sides of the view."

Now, your Secretary will ask you, don't that sound like a great way to travel? The problem, out of Phoenix, there is no passenger train service (Phoenix the 16th largest city in the USA)! Phoenians must go to Flagstaff or Tucson to travel by train. Anyway, Irene is now in Payson and here is her reply to my e-mail welcoming her back and cautioning her about our cold weather

"Everything here in Payson is as I left it last April...it's a chilly, damp night. Almost like back east! The train trip out was very nice and in Colorado I saw a large herd of antelope and another of wild horses. Lots and lots to see when you travel by train. The only problem is that the tracks are quite rough, and that's because Amtrak doesn't have its own rail system. They use the freight lines, and those are pretty heavily traveled. They do need work!

What do you mean a cold snap??? Back in Maine it means several days when the temps don't go above 5 degrees!! Stay warm!" *Irene*

Irene's winter address is **1026 West Rim View Road, Payson, AZ 85541**. By the way the low temperature in Phoenix during winter is in the 50's during the days and hardly ever goes below freezing at night, but I am now a "Desert Rat" and always cold when it goes below 70 degrees.

Andy Anderson reports, via telephone, **Helen Green's** new address: **1221 Joseph Street, Moscow, ID 83843**

My Christmas Card to **Leonard "Red" Lawson, 63rd Squadron Electrician**, was returned by the Post Office as not being deliverable, due to no forwarding address. Anyone know what has happened to Leonard?

A note from **Ted Bouton, 63rd Squadron RADAR/ECM Operator**, to Elaine follows: "I just received the 100th addition of the newsletter, and noted it was sent to my old address in Laurel, MD. So I better up-date your database. My new address is: **Edmond L. Bouton, Jr., 10 Hidden Lake Court, Ocean Pines, MD 21811.**

I noticed that the dues have been increased to \$20.00 a year, so my check in this amount is enclosed. I would join as a Life Member, but being as I am 89 years old, I am not optimistic enough to believe I would get my \$100.00 worth." Ted also gave his e-mail address: tedbouton@verizon.net. So all of you send him a message and convince him that all of us are going to reach 100!

Just a note from **John Taylor, 64th Squadron Flight Engineer**: "They say the mind is the first thing to go. I might argue that so far at 84 many things have gone. Just so I won't forget to renew my membership again, will enclose my "lifetime" dues at this time. I'm going to gamble money on this!! Hope I win this one.

Wishing well to the rest of **Matt Holohans** crew, **Thomason, King, Burns, Wisnack** and Yours Truly," *John Taylor* Way to go John!

Another note to **Elaine**: Dear Elaine, thank for the beautiful reminder. We really aren't bad boys, just getting into the "very forgetful age" and need people like you to help us along. Thank you—**Paul**

Don't know who Paul is, but I think all of us will agree. that Elaine is a great help to all 43rd members.

A new Associate Member, **Ron Jensen**, son of **Raymond Jensen, 65th Squadron**. Ron was our Guest Speaker at the Branson reunion. He is a journalist and his address is **1461 West Water Street, Galesburg, IL 61401. Phone (309) 344-4501.**

Another Associate Life Membership from **Jon T. Youngblood, 905 Foothill Drive, Providence, UT 84337. Phone (435) 753-7273.** Jon is the grandson of **Hugh E. Youngblood, B-24 Flight Engineer**. Jon writes, that his grandfather was on combat missions, which flew at night and performed skip bombing (probably as a member of the 63rd Squadron). Quoted from Jon's note: "I know very little about what it was like for him. He passed away in 1998. Basically I am interested in my grandfather's activities during WWII. He spoke of it very little. I am fascinated by it".

If anyone can help Jon with crew and other info write him a note. Jon attend the next Reunion and you may find some of your grandfather's buddies there.

John G. Smith, 64th Squadron Navigator, sent his 2007 dues to **Bill Wilson** along with this note. "I was in the 64th as navigator on **Shad Shaddox** crew and flew 52 missions out of Port Moresby and Dobo. I remained in the Reserves after leaving active duty in Nov. 45. I spent the last 13 years of reserve duty at Langley Air Force Base ending up in HQ Tactical Air Command. Only three of the crew are still alive. **Gus** (can't made out last name) **Co-Pilot, Wally Munson Radio Operator** and me."

Another address correction for Life Member, **Francis X. Labie: 5533 Paradise Drive, New Port Richey, FL 34653. Phone (727) 813-1371.**

Elaine received the following letter, which I believe is worthy of reproducing:

**LAWRENCE L. GARDNER
POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR
MILLER A. LASHLEY, JR.**

221 Virginia Avenue
Fairmont, West Virginia 26554

Telephone: 304-363-5940
E-Mail: aardvark155@hotmail.com

November 4, 2006

43rd Bomb Group
Post Office Box 360
Snyder, Texas 79550

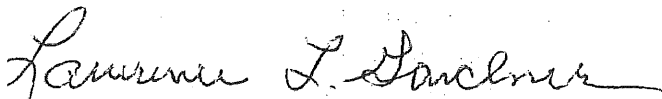
Dear Sir/Madam:

I am the nephew of and Power of Attorney for Miller A. Lashley, Jr., a member of the 43rd Bomb Group Association. Sadly, Mr. Lashley is now living in a nursing home and is unable to take care of his own affairs. He is, however, cognizant of his surroundings and has asked me to forward to you his dues as a member of the 43rd Bomb Group.

As you might imagine, his service in World War II and particularly his service in the Pacific in the 43rd Bomb Group has always been, and remain, very high among the most meaningful, important, and memorable events of his life. While his mind is beginning to fail, as is often the case with our older folks, he remembers vividly and with great pride his service in the Pacific and the distinguished accomplishments of his unit. We talk about it often.

So – please bring his account current. His mailing address (607 Coleman Avenue, Fairmont, WV 26554) continues to be good as we are holding onto his house for the time being. Should you have a need to contact me in any regard, feel free to do so.

Sincerely and with great respect,



Lawrence L. Gardner
Vietnam (1969-1970)

Attachments:

- (1) 43rd Bomb Group letter advising of dues pending
- (2) Miller A. Lashley, Jr. check #3935 of 11/04/06 in the amount of \$45.00

The following e-mail was received from Dennis O'Keeffe

"I am writing to make a belated report of the death of my aunt, **Helen Ormsby**. She passed away on December 4, 2005 and was the widow of **Lieutenant Francis G. Peattie, US Army Air Corps, 65th Bombardment Squadron**.

Frank was reported missing in action on June 26, 1943 while on a bombing mission in the New Guinea theater. He was the bombardier aboard B-17E "Naughty But Nice," when it was attacked by Japanese fighter aircraft. A lone crew member, **Jose Holguin**, survived when he was propelled through an open door during the out of control descent of the B-17. Holguin was found by the Japanese and held a prisoner of the war for 26 months.

In 1982, Jose Holguin fulfilled his promise to return his lost crew members to their families. I won't go into the story, because I'm sure you know the details, but the remains of Frank Peattie were returned to Aunt Helen in 1985.

Although I never knew Uncle Frank, I consider myself fortunate to have met two heroes from his crew at the funeral in 1985. They were Jose Holguin and **Hal Winfrey**. Hal was the usual pilot on this air crew, but did not fly that mission because he was receiving treatment for an infection in his arm.

Helen enjoyed receiving your newsletters over the past years. For the purpose of querying your mailing list, Her address was 73 Round Hill Road, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603-5133.

Please extend my warmest regards to all of the heroes of the 43rd Bomb Group".

Sincerely,

Dennis O'Keeffe

I received the following changes of address from **Andy Anderson**. **Vic Franco, 512 Millers Run, Glen Mills, PA 19342** and **Helen Green, 1221 Joseph Street, Moscow, ID 83843**.

Treasurer **Bill Wilson** has received an Associate Life Membership from **Jim Perry, 5028 Hidden Forsth, N. Charleston, SC 29420**. Jim writes that he retired as an E-7 Master Sergeant and is a history buff. Therefore he is interested and enjoys researching and reading about WWII groups. Welcome aboard Jim, we look forward to meeting you at one of our reunions.

Due to a message in "Guestbook" of our web site, I contacted **CC Sherrill, 64th Squadron Radio/Radar Operator**. The following are portions of his response.

"Yes I was a member of a B-24 crew arriving at the 7 mile strip in Morseby in March or April of 43. Then on to Dobo and Nadzab. Then to OWI, but as I had both the hours and missions behind me, I was sent back to Jackson Strip to teach Aussie crew air to ground radio on the old 375 D transmitter. Then to Milne Bay via Karawina Island and on to the MB via an Aussie Schooner with a Polonesion navigator who got us through the reefs at night via the stars in the sky. To me, his was a great accomplishment. We then boarded the U.S. Willard H. Holbrook (former Presidential Liner Wm. Taft) and on to the Golden Gates in 7-44 as I recall. I have all of the records.

Yes my crew was assigned to the 43rd Bomb Group, 64th Squadron. Within 24 hours after arriving, we made a night recon to Rebaul and dropped our four or six five hundred pounders as an announcement of our visit.

I appear four or five times in the **Jack Mattisoff** series of items on Kens Men and also on the B-24 crew of the Lucky Lucille listed there. I'm second from left, top row. The copilot Lt. Petty (not Perry) was the only one not making it back. He wanted to make Captain but died in a crash on Owi I was told. He had all hours and missions built, was a gentleman and scholar and a friend of all who knew him. Our **Pilot Capt. Johnny Oneil** of Pine Bluff, Ark. had the utmost faith in him as did **Del Ray Echo Hawk** our Engineer and all we crew members.

I'm real proud of all the Ken's Men. They got me back! Best Wishes, **CC Sherrill, 4415 Union Baptist Rd., Lenoir, NC 28645, (828) 758-1688**"

As a result some research and further correspondence, Sherrill and **Alan Mattisoff, son of Jack L. Mattisoff, 64th Squadron Nose Gunner**, are now corresponding. From my last communication with Sherrill: "Thanks a million for yours of 1/31/07. You are a prince to respond with so much info and the few lines about yourself and back ground from Mitchell Field on to the 5th AF and the 43rd Bomb Group is valued and interesting historical data. Yes, I'm pleasantly surprised to learn that you were reared in Pine Bluff, AR along with Johnny Oneil"

Great news, from **Associate Member George Wyatt**, concerning a B-17 wreck found, in December 2005, off the coast of Cape Horn. George has received up to date information from his correspondents in Australia. Divers now indicate that the aircraft appears to be the 63rd Squadron "**Pluto**," **B-17F S/N 41-24384**, which disappeared 26 March 1943. If so, this would be the missing aircraft, in which, **Gen. Ramey and crew** were conducting a Recon mission. **Former 63rd Squadron personnel Quaal, Berkowitz and H.A. Johnson** were on board. The divers who discovered the aircraft, are conducting additional explorations. Hopefully they will recover remains and identifying items.

A letter from **John G. Yeager, 403rd Squadron Pilot**, John reports sending his 2007 dues to Bill Wilson. His letter also included a document that tells of the early history of Owi Island. The document was prepared by a member of 864th Engineering Aviation Battalion, the outfit who built the airstrips. Quoted from John's letter- "Up to now, everything I have read put out by the Air Forces indicated the strip were there before the US forces took control.

The enclosed documents are very interesting! They were given to me by a friend (Navy Veteran) who had access to the island info". Regards, *John Yeager*

A follow up letter from John—"Thank you for the personal notes on your OWI experience and the pictures.

You left there about the time I arrived. Nadzab in October 44, to Biak by air, to OWI by what I think was a PT Boat. Probably November. Came overseas on a mail plane (C-87) as Co-pilot on Lt. Dawson's crew. Checked out as Pilot by Capt. Beck in January 45. You spent the worst of it on OWI. We enjoyed Washing Machine Charley nightly but don't remember any bombs. The worst I saw was a centipede about 6" long and an inch in diameter.

From OWI to Tacloban (Leyte) to Clark Field to Le Shima. Except for Clark all the strips seemed short and takeoff over water.

Chuck and I are not related except as descendant from Prussian ancestors. Yeager us the German name for Hunter." Thanks again and Best Regards *John*

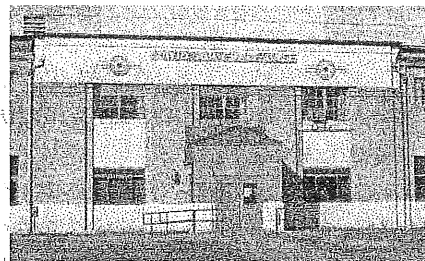
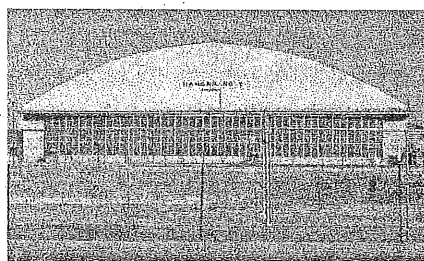
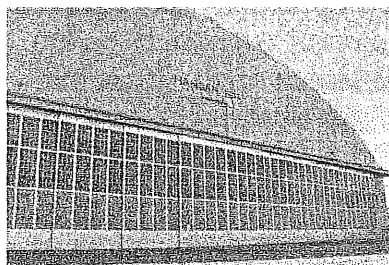
Sam Commons, 65th Squadron Flight Engineer, reports via telephone, that he spent January in sunny Florida. While there he had the opportunity to see some Spring

Training baseball games. He visited **Pat and Chuck Rauch, Jimmy Dieffenderfer, Bill and Nancy Solomon**. He also stopped by his daughter's, in Atlanta, where they scouted potential hotels for the 2008 Reunion. He had a great time visiting with all of his friends and enjoyed that well known Southern Hospitality! He informs us that he heard "Y'all comeback" many times.

A note from **Jim Cherkauer** reports that **Reginald E. Tatro, 65th Radio Operator**, has recently been inducted into **The Distinguished Flying Cross Society**. Congratulations Reginald!

For any of you who may have served at **Lowry Air Force Base, Denver, CO**. I think the following will be of interest.

Mr. Gammill, I was out near Lowry today and took a couple of pictures. These 2 hangars are pretty much all that is left. Inside hangar 1 is an air museum. Most of the area is now new housing, stores, etc. I don't know what the plans are for the hangars, but there are new development all around here. I was working in the Air Force Reserve Office which is just to the west of the hangars. I just thought you would like to see what Lowry is today. I received this from a young man who is a good friend of my youngest son. He knew that my last duty station was Lowry.



In 1941, I received recruit training at Jefferson Barracks, MO. I attended Aircraft Mechanics School at Chanute Field, IL. I was stationed at Mitchel Field, NY until February 1942, when I transferred to the 43rd in Bangor, ME. After returning to the states, in 1945, I was stationed at Lowry Field. All of these facilities are gone! They were excellent facilities, with permanent buildings, now replaced by shopping centers and homes!

*****MEMORIALS*****

William L. Jobe, 64th Squadron Radio/Gunner, sent a notice of the passing of his wife, **Bernice**, In September 2006.

Martha (Marty) Zimmerman, widow of **Kent Zimmerman** passed away at a San Antonio hospital, Thursday 21 December 06. She had recent surgery, was feeling good and expected to be released to home next week. Reported via e-mail by **Max Axelsen**

When **Jim Cherkauer** called to inform **Harold Donner** of Martha Zimmerman's death, Harold informed him of the death of **George Burhoe's** wife, **Bertha**. Harold and George were members of the **Kent Zimmerman** crew. The surviving members still keep in touch with each other via mail or phone.

Henrietta Bonino reports the death of her husband **Nuncio J. Bonino, 63rd Squadron**. Nuncio joined his crew on the Golden Flight Line December 21, 2006. Henrietta

tells, that Nuncio was 85 years old on July 24 last year and even though he had dementia he never lost his sense of humor. We will miss him very much. New address for Henrietta: **320 Greene Road, War Minster, PA 18974-4485, phone (215) 292-3951.**

A very short note from **Ray Roberts, CPA** of an accounting firm tells of the recent passing of **Norma Stueland**, wife of deceased **Edwin Stueland, 65th Squadron Nose Gunner**. No other news, he just requested that her name be removed from our mailing list.

A telephone message from **William "Bill" McMurray, 63rd Squadron**, reports the death of **Chester Bialicki** in December 2006. Chester traveled to Australia, via the Queen Mary. Shortly after arriving, he became eligible for flight training and returned to the states. After completing pilot training, he became a B-26 Pilot in the European Theater.

The following is quoted from a Jan. 24, 2007 letter to Jim Cherkauer:

"Dear Jim,

My husband **Albert Webber, 63rd Squadron Engineer**, passed away on October 22, 2006. I am his wife Ruth and am writing this with much sadness in my heart.

You do not know how much this newsletter meant to him. I do not wish to have any more sent to me as I could not bear to read them. Thank you.

Sincerely, **Ruth Webber"**

Jim Thompson received a message from **Steven Bartel**, son-in-law, of **Life Member Claude Sachse, 65th Squadron Maintenance**, informing him that Claude had passed away in June 2006.

A letter from **Michael O'Malley, 63rd Squadron Navigator**, reports the death of his crew mate, **Harold "Mac" McNabb, 63rd Squadron Co-Pilot**. Both served on **Earle J. Bishop's Crew**. Michael reports that "Mac was married to his wife Ruth for 56 years. He graduated from the University of Tennessee with a degree in Pharmacy. He was a great guy. Mike"

I received a phone call that **Chuck Rauch's wife Pat** passed away early morning of March 19, 2007. We are going to miss that Wonderful Lady. She helped all of us in one way or the other.

*****MAY GOD BLESS and KEEP YOU*****

"HE ONLY TAKES the BEST "

God saw he was getting tired,
And a cure was not to be.
So, he put his arms around him,
And whispered, "Come with me".

With tearful eyes, we watched him suffer,
And saw him fade away.
Although we loved him deeply,
We couldn't make him stay.

A golden heart stopped beating.
Hard working hands are at rest.
God broke our hearts to prove to us,
He only takes the best.

From Pat Rauch:

One night a burglar is trying to break into a house. He's sneaking across the lawn when he hears a voice, "Jesus is watching you!" He jumps, turns around, but doesn't see anything. So he starts creeping across the lawn again. "Jesus is watching you!" He hears it again. So now the burglar is really looking around, and sees a parrot in a cage by the side of the house. He says to the parrot, "Did you say that?" The parrot answers "Yes I did." So the burglar asks, "What's your name?" The parrot says "Clarence." The burglar says "What kind of a stupid idiot would name his parrot Clarence?" The parrot laughs and says, "The same idiot that named his Rottweiler "Jesus."

From Nicholas Aribinko

This one reminds me of my departed JD drinking buddy, **Charley Parker**, and I'll bet **Bob Butler** knows what I am talking about!

Fifty one years ago, Herman James, a North Carolina mountain man, was drafted by the Army. On his first day in basic training, the Army issued him a comb. That afternoon the Army barber sheared off all his hair. On the second day, the Army issued Herman a toothbrush. That afternoon an Army dentist yanked seven of his teeth. On the third day, the Army issued him a jock strap! The Army has been looking for Herman for 51 years!

QUOTES FROM THE FAMOUS

Sometimes, when I look at my children, I say to myself "Lillian, you should have remained a virgin."—Lillian Carter (mother of Jimmy Carter)

I had a rose named after me and I was very flattered. But I was not pleased to read the description in the catalog: "No good in a bed, but fine against a wall."—Eleanor Roosevelt

By all means, marry. If you get a good wife, you'll become happy; if you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher.—Socrates

I was married by a judge. I should have asked for a jury!—Groucho Marx

Last week, I stated this woman was the ugliest woman I had ever seen. I have since been visited by her sister, and now wish to withdraw that statement.—Mark Twain

Until I was thirteen, I thought my name was SHUT UP!—Joe Namath

I don't feel old. I don't feel any thing until noon!—Bob Hope

Be thankful we're not getting all the government we're paying for.—Wil Rogers

There are 2 theories to arguing with a woman—neither works! Wil Rogers

I have never hated a man enough to give his diamonds back.—Zsa Zsa Gabor

My luck is so bad that if I bought a cemetery, people would stop dying.—Rodney Dangerfield

I never drink water because of the disgusting things that fish so in it.—W.C. Fields

Maybe it's true that life begins at fifty—but everything else starts to wear out, fall out, or spread out.—Phyllis Diller

By th time a men is wise enough to watch his step, he's too old to go anywhere.—Billy Crystal

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 Elian Pierce at 1101 E. Coliseum Dr., P.O. Box 360, Snyder, TX 79550-0360**. It is most important that C/O Elian 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 receive 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 March 1, 1945 thru April 30, 1945. The pages are numbered to continue in sequence with the previous chapters form January 1, 1945 - February 28, 1945.

*****REUNION INFORMATION ENCLOSURES*****

These enclosures will assist you in preparing for

1-Events and Description of Tours-2 pages

2-ACTIVITIES REGISTRATION FORM

3-FLYER announcing the Philadelphia/Valley Forge
the bottom of this flyer. For planning purposes, it is impo
to Alfred Hagen's office as soon as possible.

MISSING PETTUS
3/1/45 → 4/30/45

MARCH 1945

Tacloban had been a nightmare to operate from. The single strip with steel matting was very hard on tires and hard to maintain. Taxiways were narrow and inadequate as were the ramps on either end of the strip. If a plane developed trouble waiting to take off there was little room to get it out of the way to get others in the air. When bombers and fighters all had to get in the air in a short time, taxiing was chaotic and accidents frequent. Although usually minor these accidents could put a plane out for days due to the shortage of parts. The Sea Hawks were glad to move to Mindoro even though it meant operating out of temporary facilities. They left on February 19th. Everybody was getting ready to move to Clark and the word was that this was the end of the line for the heavies. The B-29s were to take the load for the attacks on the Home Islands, while the B-25s, A-20s and fighters were to take the tactical load. The B-24s would hit Indo-China, Formosa and mainland China, and seal off the sea lanes. To ease problems at Tacloban, the 64th moved an advance party to Mindoro on March 10th and operated out of there for a week. They then went on to Clark. The 65th and 403rd operated out of Leyte until March 15th and then headed north.

Mar 1, 1945. This date marked the beginning of a new kind of target for the strike squadrons. The target was Tainan, a major industrial complex in a large urban area. This beat dropping on jungle dromes. The load was incendiaries and 17 of 18 planes got to the target. 144 of 162 bombs hit the target and big fires resulted. AA was intense and accurate, but only a few planes were damaged. P-47s chased every enemy that dared to take off. The weather was good and morale was high; no more bombing rice paddies and jungle dumps.

The Sea Hawks had 2 planes out; one to the Indo-China coast and the other to Hong Kong. Capt. Butts, flying #898, found a destroyer escort with a small convoy moving south. He had only 2 bombs left after having sunk a barge farther north. Making a radar run at 1000' one of the two 500 pounders made a direct hit and with a large explosion, the ship stopped and soon sank. Lt. Van Etten, in #807, found a Sugar Dog but missed it, although the gunners had a bit of a strafe. It was a good start for March.

Mar 2, 1945. Fifteen planes with frags hit Tainan again. The object was to destroy and/or damage vehicles, plant equipment and buildings by using thousands of steel fragments from the bombs. With poor weather the bombers went to Kamka Drome and bombed using H2X. The bombs were thought to be wide of the target. Accurate AA damaged 3 planes. The 403rd sent a photo recco to Palwan for pixs of the Panigaran Pt. area; the run was made at 7500'.

The 63rd had 3 planes out. Two headed toward the Liuchow Peninsula. Lt. Miller, in #898, found 4 ships at 0135 hours. He made runs on an 8500 ton Fox Tare Able, and on the second run he made a direct hit on the bow; the second bomb was a near miss. Other bombs were long and the plane was holed between #1 and #2 engines. The ship was claimed as damaged. Three hours later Lt. Dickenson, in #807, found the same ships stationary but visibility was poor. The results of a run at 1500' were obscured by the murk, but a fire was seen a few minutes later. It soon died out. Lt. Van Etten made a run on a Sugar Baker Sugar, but missed.

Mar 3, 1945. The strike squadrons went back to Tainan with frags with the intention of hitting the drome. Again poor weather was met and caused much confusion. The 64th stayed in the area

for over an hour trying to find holes and finally bombed the secondary, the northeast end of town where the RR station was. It was visual run checked by H2X, but the results could not be seen through the undercast. The 403rd reported its VHF jammed so it could not use its H2X, so it tacked onto other elements and bombed. The AA was moderate with several planes damaged but no one was wounded. Another 403rd plane went to Palawan for photo runs at 17,000' and at low level. Films were dropped to the ground troops. Apparently the 8th Army wanted more photos, but the plane was out of film.

In this first week of March the move to Clark Field began. The forward echelon departed Tacloban on March 1st and arrived at Clark in their B-24 with Maj. Pressley McInnes and 6 "volunteers" - T/Sgt. Barker, Cpl. Peschiera, Sgt. Patton, Sgt. HighField, Sgt. Longe and PFC. Gerloski. They landed amid the arid dusty plains with no sign of mud encountered at Tacloban. There were signs telling one to beware of land mines and booby traps. Col. Pettus and Maj. Hallock had preceded them and had approved of the site. The first few days were very difficult, but Maj. McInnes and his crew were master scroungers and were equipped with several cases of gin; a bottle of which could produce lumber and have a road graded (at night) or get a water point. At night these pioneers were treated to Japanese machine gun fire in the distance and U.S. 105s closer by. There were ordinance people to blow land mines (only 1 was found) and flares, of which there were lots and very tricky to handle. Day by day the camp took shape as more and more plane loads of men and gear arrived aboard B-24s and C-46s. The sea lift left Leyte in several sections beginning about the 5th of March. The 63rd and 64th moved from Mindoro while the 65th and 403rd moved from Leyte. Even with all of this moving chaos, the strike squadrons were out every day of the month except for the 19th. (Another reference says it was the 16th. Also it appears that none was out on the 4th except for a photo recco.) Headquarters moved to Clark on the 15th of March. The 63rd flew every day or night of the month.

Mar 4, 1945. There was no group strike on this date, but the 403rd was back in the photo business at Palawan. Forty-five photos were taken of the coast line around Honda Bay. The exposed film was dropped to a ground station as ordered. The 63rd put 3 planes over the Hainan Straits and scored again. Lt. Grimm, flying #809, caught a 10,000 ton tanker and then lined up on the stern for a 15 degree run and let go 4 X 500s and 2 X 250s scoring a hit on a quarter tonner and two near misses. There was a shattering explosion and ship disappeared off the scope after the plane had flown a few miles away. The plane circled back but there was no tanker. A Sugar Able Love was on the bottom. The tanker may have been empty or only partially full as no enormous fire developed and because of the massive blowout. The other planes found no suitable targets.

Mar 5, 1945. The group sent 16 planes to Antipolo where there was fierce Japanese ground resistance. Almost all of the 500 pounders were on target. Lots of grey smoke and fires along with one detonation were observed. The 64th had 8 planes and the 65th only 3 on this mission.

The Sea Hawks went to Hong Kong with some typical illogical military thinking. They had been told that all ships at docks belonged to the 14th Air Force in China, but any in the stream were fair game. Capt. Butts, in #807, was first over, but the weather was very poor and there were many hills around Hong Kong. He made 2 runs over suspected targets but no results were observed. There were lots of lights and medium AA. Both were inaccurate. Plane #809 with Lt. Potthoff piloting found a 2000 ton vessel outside

the harbor and made a run dropping 2 X 500s and an explosion resulted. The ship disappeared from the scope and was not seen again. It was claimed as probably sunk. Lt. Marley came in at 0400, missed several small boats but later dropped on an 850 tonner taking evasive action. There was an explosion, but the boat was still on the scope 10 minutes later. It was claimed as damaged.

Mar 6, 1945. The 64th and 403rd sent a total of 13 planes to hit Antipolo again. They hit the assigned area, but the results were a few explosions with much smoke and dust. The results would not be known until later.

The Sea Hawks had proved that Hong Kong was not as rough expected so it was off to the Hainan Strait where the hunting seemed to be better. Lt. Bryant, flying #031, found a destroyer lying in the Gulf of Tonkin. He made 2 runs and on the second one made a direct hit with a 500 pounder. Numbers of explosions resulted and the intense AA that had holed him ceased. The destroyer was claimed as probably sunk. Radar was out so runs were visual. Two other B-24s made no contacts, but made practice runs on reefs and dropped their bombs. One plane had made a radar run earlier and had dropped a flare to mark the target.

Mar 7, 1945. It was a bad day for the strike squadrons and the 403rd in particular. The target was ground support near Balete Pass and the weather was not good. The planes tried to get below the clouds and fly up the valley that was narrow. The planes could not turn after "bombs away" and thus tried to climb to clear the overcast and the surrounding hills. Tragically two 403rd planes hit the mountains. One of those planes, #979, hit the hill squarely and exploded killing all aboard. The other plane, #481, struck the very top of the ridge in a full stall so that the forward section fell on one side and the tail section on the other side. Amazingly 5 men survived this crash. [Names of those KIA are not given.] The remaining planes reformed at 8000' and bombed through broken cumulus clouds.

The Sea Hawks sent 3 planes to Hainan Strait again. Lt. Williams, in #676, found a two stack Tare at anchor off the Kuingshan Harbor. The first run was a failure, but the second straddled the ship with a near miss at the stern. A half hour later a flare showed the decks awash. Plane #898 lost its radar and couldn't find a visual target. Plane #901 jettisoned after finding no ships. Lt. Williams dropped his remaining bombs on the docks of Kuingshan.

Mar 8, 1945. It was back to Balete Pass again for the strike squadrons with 12 planes from the 65th and the 403rd. A solid overcast prevented the planes from dropping in support of the ground troops. The 65th jettisoned safely while the 403rd dropped on ETA near San Quintin. Great care had to be taken not to drop on friendly Filipino or U.S. troops. It was back to Hainan Strait for the Sea Hawks the target being ships in Haihow Harbor. #809 piloted by Lt. Compton found no ships and targeted the docks of Haihow with unobserved results. Lt. Van Etten, piloting #034, attacked a medium target with no observed results. He had reported sighting a 10 ship convoy, but they were outside the blind bomb zone. Plane #396, piloted by Lt. Patten, found several ships but did not score. The weather was spotty and visibility was poor. The two stack Tare sunk the night before had come to rest on the bottom leaving only the superstructure showing.

Mar 9, 1945. New night harassing raids by the strike squadrons were flown this night. Two planes from the 65th and 1 from the 403rd, equipped with H2X, went to harass Tainan City. The Sea Hawks planes, with new radar bombing sights, were kept on shipping searches. One 65th plane had a bad engine and returned. The other two pressed on to the target. It was a text book mission for the 65th. They found the target with radar, lined it up and made a run dropping 12 X 500 incendiaries resulting in 4 large and 2 small fires. There were no searchlights and only light AA. The 65th plane was informed by the radar station that it had a probable hostile plane tailing it but staying 10 miles behind. The 403rd radar went out, but they bombed on a celestial and ETA run and hit the city. One night fighter made a lone pass, firing from about one quarter of a mile away. Both crews came home pleased with what they had done.

The Sea Hawks had 3 planes searching the coastal area from Hong Kong to Amoy, with a secondary target of Takao. Capt. Butts, in #901, bombed a good signal north of Canton that turned out to be a reef. Finding nothing else, he went to Takao and hit the docks while stringing out a lot of rope after counting 14 searchlights. Lt. Morley, piloting #676, bombed a target that might have been a submarine. It was in the blind bomb zone and a flare showed bomb bursts in its wake as it dove. Had it been of the USN Group, he would have heard about it in short order.

Mar 10, 1945. The 64th made 6 plane trips to Zamboanga to hit shore defense installations near where a landing might take place. Bombing was right on the nose, 47 of 48 bombs trailed through the target. The squadron was treated to a sight of seeing the Navy shelling installations nearby. The enemy is getting it from all directions.

The 65th and 403rd sent 5 planes to the Ipo Dam area where the Japanese were still holed up. 30 X 1000 lb. demos all hit in the designated area.

The 63rd went on a shipping search from Hong Kong to the Hainan Strait. The specific orders were NOT, repeat NOT, to enter Hong Kong Harbor. To use LAB radar was too dangerous with all the hills' false readings. Lt. Rogers dropped on a radar target that turned out to be a sailboat, and on his next run the result was a navigation buoy. He then decided to hit the docks at Yulin, but the bombs were short. During all this time there were night fighters about, but they only dropped flares; they never tried to close and fire. Plane #809 had a rack malfunction and jettisoned its load. Lt. Miller, in plane #031, got the prize of the night, a 6000 ton Fox Tare Baker in Hainan Strait. On a run from 1200 feet the bombardier let go all 8 bombs, resulting in 2 direct hits. The plane swung around and dropped a flare, that showed the ship down by the stern with the bow sticking up out of the water. The other ships in the vicinity moved out after the bombing. (Group does not mention this sinking and the 63rd says only 2 planes out on the 10th.)

Mar 11, 1945. The 65th and 403rd went to Aparri and Wa-Wa Dam. The 65th hit the beach defenses at Aparri with 32 X 1000 demos in the target with one large explosion. The Wa-Wa Dam was difficult because of clouds so multiple runs were made. Large brush fires were started, but the ground controller said they were pleased with the results. The 63rd sent 2 planes to look for ships reported leaving Takao Harbor. Lt. Dickenson found 2, but failed to score and plane #809 had bomb rack malfunction. Finally, over Takao bombs were levered out with a screwdriver. Lt. Grimm sank a 500 ton escort vessel that blew up with amazing force.

Mar 12, 1945. The 64th went to Tainan Town and hit the railway yards with 48 X 500s all on target, but only minor fires resulted. was accurate, but fortunately only 1 plane was holed and there were no injuries in it. The 65th and 403rd went to Wa-Wa Dam, but it was weathered in and they hit the secondary at Aparri. The 65th was on the money, but half of the 403rd bombed the wrong target. There was evidence that the enemy was still bringing in men for the defense of Northern Luzon. This was the last day the 65th operated out of Tacloban, and they left without any regrets.

Mar 13, 1945. The 64th was given a real tough target, the power plant at Jutsugstsutan that supplied electricity to much of central Formosa. The target was socked in as was the secondary, the naval base at Mako. However, the bombardiers were able to pick up Mako about 10 seconds from "bombs away" and, although scattered, several of the bombs hit underground oil storage tanks and smoke rose to 11,000'.

The Sea Hawks had only 1 plane out, plane #396 with Lt. Compton flying. He attacked several ships northeast of Swatow [China]. On the second run he had a near miss that started a fire on a Fox Tare Charlie. The fire was brought under control with 10 minutes, so the ship was only claimed as damaged. There was lots of AA from an escort, the FTC, and the shore, but no damage was taken.

For the 63rd Capt. Butts was rapidly becoming the champ if he wasn't already. He hit a 3000 ton merchant vessel outside of Macau, and to test their skill they dropped only 1 bomb. It was a direct hit and the ship exploded in all directions. Flames seemed to go as high as the plane, i.e., 1000 feet. Whatever it was, it was very volatile. At 0300 they found a launch towing a large barge and dropped 3 bombs - one a direct hit. A few minutes later a flare was dropped and, although the launch was here, the barge was gone. Two other planes were out that night, but the undercast and fog made it impossible to identify targets. Several were dropped on, but the results were unobserved. Still it was a good night. Unexplained are the flares that had been seen in that time frame. Apparently they had been dropped from the air as no rockets had been reported. It's possible that these were to guide night fighters to the B-24s, but no attacks had been pressed even when the enemy planes flew by a few miles away.

Mar 14, 1945. The 64th went back to Mako and the fire was still burning. The bombing was good, but no new fires were started. Smoke interfered with the first bomb run and a second was made. No AA or interception was there to greet them.

Mar 15, 1945. The 64th as well as the 90th and the 380th went to Bagio Naval Headquarters. The 19 X 1000 demos hit the target creating lots of smoke and flames as well as destroying buildings. No AA was encountered.

At noon this day Group Headquarters closed on Leyte, APO 72, and reopened at 1400 hours on the 16th at Clark Field, APO 74. The 64th remained in Mindoro until the 19th as did the 63rd. The 65th and 403rd were already at Clark Field.

Three B-24s from the 63rd went on a sea search with Mako [perhaps Makung] in the Pescadores or Hoihow [Haik'ou, Hainan] as secondary targets if no shipping was sighted. One plane accidentally released its bombs prematurely and hit the water below. A small picket boat was attacked and missed. Some bombs dropped amid ships in Hoihow Harbor while others were dropped on Mako where an undercast obscured any view of results.

- Mar 16, 1945. The Sea Hawks went to Swatow [Shant'ou], China, and the Hainan Strait sea lanes and were to remain there until daylight when they would be relieved by the 90th BG. Lt. Rogers in #807, and last to takeoff, found a Fox Tare Charlie anchored near Swatow. They missed on the first run, but made 2 direct hits on their second attempt. Since it was now getting light, they circled long enough to see the ship sink. During the flight one bomb bay door was ripped off. Planes #809 and #396 found no targets, but one saw a Tojo that put on an aerobatic show making no attempt to close.
- Mar 17, 1945. The 63rd went back to Hainan Strait but failed to sink or damage any ships. Plane #676, piloted by Lt. Dickenson, found a radar target but had not identified it. They circled the target, but when they opened the bomb bay doors, all the bombs dropped out. This was not a singular occurrence. The complex electrical system that prevented the bombs from falling when the doors were closed even if they had been released electrically, frequently released a bomb or more when the doors were opened. To avoid this, pilots would pull the red jettison handle between the pilot and copilot as this would open the doors and release the bombs simultaneously. Lt. Heckman found no ships so he bombed the secondary target, Mako, through a solid undercast, but they did sight fires still burning from the bombing 3 nights ago. Lt. Williams piloting plane #898 bombed a number of small targets through the undercast at Hoihow with no observed results.
- Mar 18, 1945. Two 63rd planes went out but due to poor weather, they bombed secondaries at Mako and Tien Ho Drome in the Canton area. Lt. Miller was the first 5th Air Force plane to bomb Tien HO. Lights were reported on in Canton and bombs fell on the drome, but the result went unobserved due to ground haze.
- Mar 19, 1945. The 64th flew its last mission from Mindoro. It was off to Samah Drome on the southern tip of Hainan Island, but the mission got off to a bad start as their transportation was 30 minutes late so they took off 30 minutes late. They arrived at the target just as the fighter coverage was leaving, but there was no interception. The bombing was very good with all bombs walking through the hanger areas. Very little activity was seen, no fires, big explosions or AA. The strike to Bagio [Baguio], Luzon, for the 65th and 403rd was called off due to weather.
- Mar 20, 1945. Sixteen planes from the 65th and 403rd headed to Balet Pass in the Bagio area, but weather won out and all bombs were dumped into Lingayen Gulf. The Sea Hawks had 2 planes out that night. Capt. Butts got a 100 ton lugger taking 3 runs, but leaving only splinters. In the Hainan Strait area a strange flare was seen again. It seemed to come from land and not from the air. Lt. Potthoff found no shipping and went on to bomb Tien Ho Drome from 5500'. A thick ground haze prevented any assessment of results, but it did seem that some bombs did not detonate. As they left the area 5 planes trailed them but did not try to attack.
- Mar 21, 1945. The group strike was against Samah Drome on Hainan. Despite poor weather en route and several turn backs, the planes that made it plastered the target and left burning planes and carnage. Eight or more planes were destroyed on the ground, several hangers were hit and other buildings were set on fire. The fighter cover was excellent as was the weather, but the AA was accurate and damaged three 65th planes and 2 from the 64th, but

the 403rd escaped any hits. This was good for the crews' morale after several days of frustration.

The 63rd had 2 planes out this night ranging from Hainan Island to Hong Kong to the north. One radar target was attacked blind due to weather and it was still on the scope after all bombs were dropped. Some junks were found by flares and were left alone. Bombs were dropped at Kuingshan Drome with unobserved results. Night fighters were around, but made no passes. Flares were seen in the strait area and it has been suggested that these were to alert shipping that U.S. planes were in the area.

Mar 22, 1945. The weather improved and 16 planes were off to Balete Pass. [Cherkauer's first mission in the 65th.] Bombing was not the best although 121 X 1000 demos were in the personnel areas with a few wide of the assigned targets. A few trucks were spotted and the road looked well traveled despite a few large holes that needed filling. The 403rd had a weather recco up soon after dawn and reported every half hour.

The 63rd had 2 ferret planes out to the South China Sea north to Hong Kong and farther north to Shanghai for a flight of 2520 miles of 16 hours duration. They found no targets so they headed to the secondary targets at Mako and Tien Ho. Lt. Gossens, in plane #807, hit Mako totally covered by clouds, but still a good radar target. Indications were that all bombs dropped in the target area, but no observation was possible. Lt. Bryant put bombs on Tien Ho, but ground fog prevented accurate assessment. Both planes were followed by night fighters that did not fire even though one came within 100' of one of the planes.

A third 63rd plane, #901, was lost somewhere between Leyte and Clark Field. The cause of the crash was unknown and there were no survivors. The plane apparently hit Mt. Babahao, a 500' high mountain about 60 miles south of Manila. [No crew names are given.]

Mar 23, 1945. The strike squadrons were off to the #2 power plant at Jitsugtsu-Tan north of Takao, Formosa. Eighteen planes were off to hit the target that turned out hard to find due to cumulus clouds. The 64th put the 2,000 lb. demos into the switch gear and transformer housed and put them out of commission with flames and smoke rising to 3000'. The 65th hit the power house with at least 2 bombs and had others within 50' of the main buildings. There was a great deal of smoke over the target along with AA causing some confusion. Bombs also ruptured the penstocks leading to the planets and great plumes of water spurted into the plant until it was cut off back at the dam valves. Three planes from the 403rd making individual runs hit the target with their 2000 pounders. AA hit two 64th planes, four 65th planes and two 403rd planes, but there were no injuries. Two planes went to the secondary targets at Takao and hit the railway yards. All in all it was a very satisfying day although the AA was a bit unnerving.

The Sea Hawks put up 5 planes with one heading for a new target, Ishigaki town on the island of the same name [Southern Ryukyus] that lies east of the northern tip of Formosa. The weather was poor en route but the island was easily picked up. Three runs at 10,000' put bombs on target with one fire reported. Four bursts of AA were sighted with no damage inflicted. Two of the other planes jettisoned their bombs due to fuel problems. The remaining planes found no shipping and headed to the secondary targets. Lt. Patton, in #814, hit the small boat docks at Kirun and caused a dandy explosion, shaking the plane at 3000'. The Torpex and incendiaries dropped also brought on secondary detonations and a blue tinted fire. Plane #814 stayed around for an hour observing their

handiwork. Lt. Williams went to Tien Ho but did not see a thing although radar indications from the Pearl River gave him a good fix.

Mar 24 1945. There was no group strike this day that was used to repair damage from the previous day. The 64th had an H2X mission on Ishigaki. The weather was poor with 10/10 from 5500' to 8000'. Three H2X runs were made at 10,000' and several fires were started. These were sighted after the plane dropped below the overcast. Fires were visible 10 miles south of the island. The H2X did not give a steady return on the shape of the coast, not did it pick up 2 jetties. From then on the 63rd would have some night time assistance.

Lt. Rogers in plane #809 flying at 2100' was headed for the Amoy Hainan slot. As the pilot was talking to Lingayen Fighter Sector a yellow alert was turned to red and AA opened up on them before they could get clear. By the time the mix-up was put right, the plane was badly damaged with shot out control cables, damaged hydraulics and hits on the #1 and #2 engines. Rogers made it out over the ocean to drop the bombs and make repairs to return to Clark Field. None of the crew was injured but the B-24 was a mess having taken some 20 shots. Lt. Miller, in plane #898, and flying his last mission ran into the red alert, but using violent evasive action managed to avoid the AA and made it to the gulf. There, crossing the shore, both planes saw the cause of their distress. A twin-engine Japanese plane was caught in the lights while heading south. After suitable clearance, Lt. Rogers headed back to Clark and landed at 2400. Williams [this must be Miller] headed for the hunting grounds and at about 0500 found an unidentified merchant vessel, maybe 3500 tons. The ship was stationary and had several craft around it, probably unloading as it was near Nanchow Island. Two runs were made and 2 hits were scored on the first run, but there was no fire and the results of the second were not seen. The ship disappeared from the scope in less than a half hour while they circled. Plane #076 flew another of those long ferrets, going from Shanghai to Saigon in just under 16 hours. The ferret planes had been away for several modifications done in Townsville, where they obtained better receivers and jammers as well as undergoing long term routine maintenance and several engine changes.

Mar 25, 1945. The 65th and the 403rd each sent one plane on a search mission to try to find any sign of a missing 90th Bomb Group B-24. A 5-hour search between Clark Field Lingayen found nothing in that mountainous territory that was so frequently cloud covered. The 63rd sent 2 planes to Hainan to look for shipping reported to be in Yulin Harbor. Finding none Maj. Brownfield, 63rd CO in #398, strung 8 Torpex bombs through the rail yards and ore loading facility. He flew at 5000' and encountered inaccurate AA. An hour later plane #396 came over the same target, and the enemy was ready for him. Medium and heavy AA holed his stabilizer, and one night fighter was in the area. All of his bombs were way off target and did no damage.

Mar 26, 1945. All 3 strike squadrons hit different targets around the Takao docks. Although there was no lead plane, all elements tried to get over the target at or as near the same time as possible to minimize the AA. The 64th had 3 planes hit; the 65th had 2; and the 403rd had 2, but there were no injuries. The bombing was very good. A good sized ship tied up at the docks but firing at them was sunk. Lots of fires and damage were seen although a few bombs did land in the water leading up to the docks and ship. A 2500 miles anti-radar ferret took off at 1530 and returned the next day at about 0800.

The Sea Hawks also had a good night with 4 planes out and the sinking of 2 ships. Lt. Rogers, getting by Lingayen safely, hit a Sugar Dog not far from Hong Kong. Two bombs were dropped with one scoring a direct hit. The small ship broke into parts and the bomber crew watched it sink. After more search the plane went on to Hoihow, the secondary, and dropped bombs through an undercast. No results were observed. Lt. Griffiths, in #398, found a Fox Tare Charlie at anchor off Liuchow Peninsula. The plane flying at 1000' dropped a string and scored a direct hit its stern. On circling back the crew dropped a flare and observed the ship settling stern down with the bow almost vertical out of water. Lt. Flinner, in #025, searched all night in vain and in desperation he ducked through the undercast at Hoihow Harbor and dumped 7 bombs on the docks from 1700' at 0930 hours. He did not stay around to observe the results, but instead sought shelter in the friendly clouds overhead.

Reports were coming in about a convoy off Indo-China and at 2022 Lt. Bryant took off in unarmed #898 to locate it. He found a DE, a large merchant vessel and a light cruiser or large DD along the coast near Vanfong Bay. At 0400 on the 27th, Lt. Williams took off with 8 Torpex bombs aboard. At about 1030 he found the convoy near Tre Island. The convoy now had several DDs and DEs plus a light cruiser and at least 4 merchant ships. This was a formidable target for a lone bomber on a clear day, but Williams said that he was there to sink ships. He began a run at 300' on the 10,000 ton tanker. As he lined up all hell broke loose as every ship fired at him. The tail section of the plane was hit and his rear gunner was slightly injured. Three bombs were dropped, but failed to explode probably due to fusing. Without hesitation the crew went back for a second run with the radar operator in the tail turret. AA was heavier than on the first run, but 2 hits were made on the ship that burst into flames and listed badly. As the B-24 peeled away and the crew marveled that they had survived, 2 silver Oscars attacked from 12 o'clock firing 20mm shells into the cockpit killing the copilot. A second pass from the rear killed the radar operator in the rear turret. A third pass from the front took out engine #3, and still the fighters came back. The nose and top turret gunners tried to keep the Oscars off and saw one smoke away into a cloud. Suddenly the B-24 was alone and headed for cloud cover. Two men were dead; 1 engine and the radio were out; there were fuel leaks; many instruments were out and 2 men were wounded but fortunately not badly. The controls, especially the elevators, were shot out; there was no trim; the plane was nose heavy and needed 2 men to hold her level and they were 650 miles from home. Everything not needed was thrown overboard. Only engines #1 and #4 were pulling full power; #2 was at reduced power and #3 was dead. For nearly 6 hours the crew fought their crippled plane back to Clark. Since they had not been heard of from about 1040 hours, the worst was feared as the plane could not be in the air much longer. The Air warning system alerted all that an aircraft was approaching from the west, but all efforts to contact it had failed. Its IFF was responding, so it was assumed to be friendly; Air Sea Rescue was alerted but did not launch a mission having no specific information on the plane. As it crossed the shore at Lingayen, word was passed that a B-24 on 3 engines was headed down the valley. The plane made it to Clark field, but without radio it could not contact the tower. A flare was dropped but it did not go off. The crew cranked down the landing gear and levered out the nose wheel. The plane was now committed to land as it did not have the power to go around for a second try at landing. With no brakes and part of the flaps gone, the plane hit hard, careened down the runway and came to a rest. There was no fire; all switches were cut and props were slowing. The crew had been in their crash positions and felt the grinding, wrenching, deafening noise of the airframe pulling itself

apart. Those alive got out of the wreckage as quickly as possible suffering some cuts and bruises caused by the landing. All were taken to the hospital but were back on duty in a few days. Lt. Williams was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action and the other crew members were awarded the DFC. It was a proud mission for the 63rd and KEN'S MEN. [There is confusion as to the number of Lt. Williams' plane between #076 and #676. If any of these men are in the association today and read this, please let Ed Gammill or Jim Cherkauer know the correct number of that B-24. At this point in Jim Pettus' manuscript dates seem to be getting mixed up. My diary lists the above as occurring on the 27th/28th.]

Pettus writes, "Wed. March 28, 1945. 63rd lost ship. Crash landed. Copilot & radar man had been killed." [One possible explanation for this is that Jim Pettus apparently was using records kept in the U.S.A. where it was always a day earlier than the date in the Pacific Theater. If it was Friday in the SWPA, it was Thursday in the States, etc. This one day difference in dates has caused confusion in many books and articles that I have read about the war in the Pacific.]

On this same night, 26th/27th, the 64th and 65th each had an H2X plane out over the Kiirun Docks. The 64th made 3 runs a few minutes apart at 8000'. They dropped 2 bombs on each run and spotted fires and explosions seen through the undercast after the last two runs. The 65th had good radar return, but no observed results.

Mar 27, 1945. With the enemy still holding out to the north on Luzon, the 3 strike squadrons sent 18 planes to Balete Pass. The target was a ridge north of Santa Fe where ground control designated the targets with white smoke. All bombs fell in or very near the requested drop zones. On this type of mission, weather permitting, the planes would make a familiarization run before dropping bombs.

The 64th and 65th each sent an H2X mission to Kiirun Docks [Formosa] this night and next morning. Weather was 10/10ths so this mission gave the crews experience over enemy territory and practice with the H2X on a target that might be hit later by the whole group in poor weather. The 64th had trouble with its H2X and bomber ETA. The 65th used H2X and was rewarded with an orange flash though the undercast. Night fighters were around with lights on. One made a firing pass beginning at 1000 yards. The B-24 did not return fire.

Mar 28, 1945. The Group sent 18 planes to hit Balete Pass again. It was much the same as the day before, except the bombers were rewarded with a series of explosions some of which could be felt at 5000'.

Another first for the 63rd was a mission to the mouth of the Yangtze River. Three planes staged through Mangaldan Drome on the Lingayen Gulf as it was the longest mission so far attempted. Two of the 3 planes found targets, but Capt. Butts, in #127, found a Sugar Baker Sugar off Fushan and scored a direct hit amidships. The ship sank a few minutes after smoke and flames erupted. Earlier Butts had seen small boat moving in the area and decided to go back and give it some attention. To their great surprise it turned out to be a gunboat that opened fire as did shore batteries. Luckily no hits were scored on #127. A twin-engine night fighter had been watching the action and made a pass from 7 o'clock high. The B-24 pulled off power and popped a bit of flaps to avoid the attack. Several of the bombers' gunners shot at the fighter but saw no effect from their shots. All planes returned to Clark without further incidence.

Mar 29, 1945. The 3 strike squadrons went on a major hit to Toshien Docks north of Okayama, Formosa. Bombing was excellent, although a few bombs were wild due to mechanical problems. The 64th hit a Sugar type tied up at a dock, then walked bombs into warehouses and caused explosions. A 65th put a string through 6 sub chasers tied up near the shore and possibly hit a Sugar Charlie. The 403rd had some problems, but had most bombs on the target. AA holed 2 of the 19 planes that made it to the target. The 63rd was sent on a patrol in the Formosa Strait with Kiirun Docks as the secondary. Two planes found no shipping and came back to hit the coal wharves and nearby oil storage tanks. Lt. Grimm, in #130, hit both with one very large red explosion from the oil tank farm. A few lights were diverted by rope. Earlier a hospital ship had been seen off Amoy. A 20mm shell hit #397 near the tail, the crew did not learn this until after landing.

Mar 30, 1945. The Group went back to Balete Pass and had good results as far as getting eggs into the nest. They even had a few explosions, one of which rocked the planes at 10,000'. The ground forces were reluctant to take excessive casualties to occupy this ground as the enemy couldn't escape, but the Japanese troops were determined to fight to the last and would be so accommodated.

Once again the Sea Hawks made new ground (or water). They sent 2 planes up the Yangtze River; one to search from Nanking to Tsingkiang and the other to search from the mouth to Tsingkiang. The briefing was careful as the planes were to avoid the AA at Nanking, and they were not to molest junks or sampans as these often were manned by friendly Chinese who do a rescue job for the 14th Air Force operation in China. The planes were not to go up the Whangpoa River to Shanghai. Weather in the area was hazy with a thin undercast. Lt. Van Etten made one blind run and finding nothing else jettisoned and came home. Lt. Potthoff damaged a large barge or floating dock, but it stayed afloat.

Mar 31, 1945. Eighteen planes from the strike squadrons headed out to Yulin harbor on Hainan Island. The 403rd had a series of miscues and only 1 of its planes went over the target after the other squadrons had bombed. The 64th scattered bombs all over, but managed to hit some barges and warehouses. Fire from the barges spread across the water. The 65th straddled a Fox Tare Uncle and also hit a Sugar Uncle that blew up and sank. The last plane across, that 1 lone 403rd plane, put its bombs into a group of Sugar Dogs and claimed hits on 2 of them. It also reported the ship hit by the 65th was sinking. Four 63rd planes went out this night and returned on April 1st. Two tried for small ships and missed; the other 2 bombed the secondary. Lt. Griffiths, in #807, searched until 0400 when he found a Sugar Dog but had rack trouble and missed. Capt. Rogers first bombed a reef, and then he went to Sanchu Drome near Canton, the largest Japanese Air Base on the Pearl Delta. He, too, had rack trouble and the bombs went in the water. Lt. Bryant, in #025, went to the same drome and was jumped by 5 night fighter while on his run. One twin-engine night fighter closed and fired, hitting the nose turret and slightly wounding the gunner. Two bombs hung up and were later levered out. The plane was also hit in 1 fuel tank and landed at Lingayen for gas en route to Clark. Lt. Flinner, in #130, missed a Sugar Dog, and he too, had rack trouble when 6 bombs accidentally released. The Sugar Dog was missed, and all came home to raise hell with the ordnance electricians about the bomb racks.

It was a busy month. The move to Clark was arduous, but it had some advantages. It was the best camp the 43rd had in months. There were no jungles or swamps and there were eager locals to do laundry and other chores. There were watermelons to buy and rot gut alcohol that would make you blind. KEN'S MEN built a fine camp on the premises with the idea that it was the end of the line for them as the B-29s would carry the war to Japan. Carefully hoarded supplies were brought out and used. Nice Enlistee Men's Clubs and Officers' Clubs sprang up. By the middle of April there were lights in every tent (thanks to the scrounging ability of Maj. McInnes, who induced the Navy to give him a generator and transformers - this exchange may have involved some whiskey, but such details were never discussed).

There were some drawbacks, such as Col. Pettus was the Commander of Clark Field, but there were service squadrons to do the work. There was dust and plenty of it, but the weather was better than Leyte's.

From a training standpoint there were a few problems, mainly bombing targets. Also the air defenses were highly sensitive and clearance had to be obtained to get out to the sea. The 63rd instituted training so that a crew would fly a plane in the day to calibrate the radars and get to feel comfortable with the plane they would fly that night.

Clark was very big and very busy with Army, Navy and Marines; there was even a detachment of the Mexican Air Force. Few people knew that Mexico was in the war on the U.S. side. There was also the feeling that "it won't be long now." VE Day was coming as Germany crumpled and Japan was in retreat, although nobody had any illusions that the end would be easy. Still there was no doubt about the outcome - only when.

The Sea Hawks had an outstanding month. They had flown 90 sorties and had failed to complete only two. They sank 20 ships of some 53,000 tons and damaged 4 others. Sadly, 2 men had been killed in action and 13 others had been killed in an accident.

It had also been a busy time for the strike squadrons. Everyday in March, except the 16th, some operational mission had been carried out. A total of 494 sorties were flown and 1230 tons of bombs dropped, ranging in size from 250 pounders to one-tonners (frags and incendiaries count for 260 lb. bundle.) No aircraft were missing or lost on takeoffs and landings. Two planes were lost when they hit mountains in Luzon during one ground support mission. Seventeen men were killed. One plane disappeared flying from Clark to Leyte on March 9th; the crew of 5 were declared lost.

APRIL 1945

Apr 1, 1945. The 63rd missions shown on Mar 31, 1945, ended in April of course. In addition a 65th plane equipped with H2X dropped 6 X 1000 lb. bombs through 6/10 cloud coverage on the Kiirun Naval Base. They used rope to dodge the lights and evaded 2 night fighters. [This was Easter Sunday in 1945. Cherkauer's diary indicates that a Japanese ammo dump near the 65th camp at Clark Field blew up with one terrific explosion.] The strike squadrons sent 9 planes to the airdrome at Giran; eight made it to the target and had good results with the drop of frags that caused flames to reach 300' and smoke to 4000'.

The 63rd sent out just 1 plane this night; the others may have been having work done on those defective bomb racks. Lt. Dickenson, in #398, found plenty to keep him busy. At 0400 the next AM, he made a run on a Sugar Charlie Love, 2300 tons, and scored a direct hit. The ship sank in less than a half hour. A dropped flare at 0415 showed the ship listing heavily. At 0430, when they returned, the ship was gone. The saw at that time a Sugar Dog and dropped on it. A near miss capsized the little boat. At the end of their

patrol they had a radar indication and dropped on it, but a flare showed a ship that had already been sunk and was aground.

This same night the 64th sent an H2X up to Shinchiku Drome with a load of frags. The weather was clear, so a visual run was made and was checked by radar. All bombs fell in the target area, but only impact bursts were seen. One night fighter began to fire from 1000 yards and received a few rounds in return. There was no damage to either plane.

Apr 2, 1945. Three planes, one from each of the strike squadrons, went after Ft. Drum in a kind of bombing competition. The load was 4 X 2000 lb. GP bombs. The 64th had 3 hits; the 65th had 2 hits [Lt. Donald McMahon, bombardier on Capt. Herb Agard's crew had 3 hits copilot Cherkauer's diary says] while the 403rd received a big goose egg.

Apr 3, 1945. Shipping in the Hong Kong area was the target for the strike squadrons as a major effort by the 22nd BG, the 43rd BG and the 90th BG. To prevent the bombing of hulks or vessels run aground, a pathfinder or spotter flight would be first over the area with photos taken the pervious afternoon. All planes on the mission had the photos, and ships already disabled were so marked. The pathfinder was to assign undamaged targets to each group; in all he would have to make 3 passes over the harbor. Col. Pettus, who had evolved the idea of the spotter, was to be in the lead with 2 other planes. There was 1 squadron of P-38s just to cover this element. There would be 4 squadrons of the 90th, 4 squadrons of the 22nd and 3 of the 43rd to bomb the targets assigned by the spotter. En route 1 plane of the spotter element dropped out. The weather was perfect. Weaving across the harbor to throw off the AA, the pathfinder sent targets to the 90th - all their planes missed the assigned target. Another spotter run over the harbor assigned the same targets to the 22nd, and they too missed. For the last run Pettus and James Klein, flying on his wing, took the biggest ship after assigning targets to the 43rd. So far there had been no enemy fighters seen, and for that matter no friendly P-38s either. Some of the squadrons that had bombed reported interception even though there were to be 3 squadrons of P-38s in the area. Just before "bombs away" Pettus and Klein were jumped by 3 Zekes, very aggressive, passing within 30' of the B-24s. The lead top gunner on Pettus' crew was seriously wounded, but fought on. One engine was shot out and several, including the pilot, received minor injuries. Bombs were dropped but missed their ship, and the B-24s decided to get away before the Zekes could come back. By this time the 43rd was on its bomb run and saved the day by superior bombing. They sank 4 ships and hit oil tanks, starting big fires. Two squadrons were intercepted, but not damaged. AA holed a number of planes, but not seriously. Col. Pettus landed at Lingayen, 1 engine dead, another almost out of oil. The heroic gunner, Sgt. Gangler, was transferred to the hospital, and after several operations; his leg was saved. In the critique that followed the mission, it was established that the P-38s had gone to Macau instead of Hong Kong. Of the 11 squadrons over the target, 9 were intercepted. The P-38s saw nothing. [Capt. Agard's 65th plane, #0915, got off late due to mechanical problems that were repaired. It never caught up with the other B-24s and hit the target as a solo. The AA was very intense, but no enemy fighters were seen. Lt. McMahon dropped the bombs on target, and #0915 headed back to Clark with no interception.]

This night Lt. Grimm, in #076, flew a ferret mission from Hong Kong to Saigon, 2475 miles. Two other 63rd planes were out with no luck on ships or bombing. Lt. Williams bombed a reef, then he went to Mako but all bombs hit the water. Lt. Rogers had radar problems after part of the housing fell off, so their bombs were jettisoned.

Apr 4, 1945. The Group went to Hong Kong again with the docks being the main targets. All squadrons scored hits on vessels tied up or in dry dock. 144 X 1000 pounders were unloaded and did great damage. AA was meager and there was no fighter interception. (P-38s in the right place that day). Twenty KEN'S MEN took off and 18 reached the target.

Two 63rd planes were out this night and early morning. Lt. Van Etten, in #898, sank a 50 ton barge. They also damaged a Fox Tare Dog about 1000 tons. Lt. Patton, in #814, bombed a radar target and then went to Tien Ho Drome to hit a supply area. Being careful to avoid a nearby POW camp, their bombs went through the target with 1 large building rising in the air and disintegrating. Again there was rack trouble with 3 stations skipped. These bombs were salvoed at the end of the run, and one hit quite near a searchlight that went out. Canton was blacked out, but Hong Kong was a blaze of light.

Apr 5, 1945. It was back to Hong Kong for the strike squadrons. Flying an airborne standby, 21 planes took off with 20 making it over the harbor, but the weather made bombing difficult. Still hits were observed on the Royal Navy Docks and a tanker, and bombs hit 1 of the power stations. AA was spotty and only 6 planes were holed with no injuries. One DD seemed to be the cause of much flak.

Three Sea Hawks were out this night and next morning and Lt. Potthoff, in #694, found a convoy of perhaps 10 ships on a heading of 80 degrees. As it was now daylight, he was ordered to jettison the bombs and shadow the convoy as long as his fuel permitted. Lt. Flinner took off at 1000 hours on the 6th to take #694's place. Lt. Flinner, in #130 carrying no bombs, found the convoy at 1430. He flew at 6000' and was weaving through the cloud cover to keep a visual check on the convoy reporting that the enemy had fighter cover over it. At the same time #130 was sending a homing signal for A-20s to hit the ships. When they heard the A-20s say they would be over the target in 10 minutes, they got in position to watch the show. At this moment 6 camouflaged Tojos, apparently unaware of the approaching A-20s, came after the B-24. Flinner headed for some clouds and made it just as the first Tojo started a pass. Then the B-24 headed out to sea to draw the Tojos away from the convoy yet at the same time stay in the clouds for self protection. After about 30 minutes he went back to check the convoy and the results of the A-20s' attack. He found that they had sunk a Fox Tare Able and damaged a destroyer. Flinner then made a last position report and headed for home. (Pettus says these A-20s were at the extremity of their range, as he doesn't think Aparri was open by this time for an emergency landing.)

Also out this night were Capt. Butts, in #812, and Capt. Rogers in #398. Butts found no shipping, so he went after the ore loading docks at Bakli Bay. Two runs scored destructive hits on the docks and warehouse, some of which popped open like firecrackers. One night fighter was troublesome making several passes, but Butts shook him off by going down on the deck.

Rogers became the first Sea Hawk to bomb a lighthouse. Getting a good radar signal, they released bombs and straddled the target. Going back and dropping a flare, they found that it was a beacon on rocky reefs. A hit at the base had toppled it and no light was showing. The plane then strafed 2 Sugar Dogs and went looking for better targets. Just before dawn they found a Fox Tare Charlie of 2000 tons and used their last 4 bombs. A series of very near misses resulted in the ship exploding and sinking within a half hour. They then headed home.

One 64th and one 65th H2X planes went to Kiirun and dropped 12 X 1000 lb. bombs on the drome with unobserved results due to the undercast. There was little AA, but 2 fighters were seen.

During the night of the 5th and morning of the 6th, Sea Hawks took off every 3 hours to shadow and attack the convoy. Lt. Dickenson failed to find the ships. Lt. Croft, in #898, also failed to locate the convoy. It was thought that the ships may have made port by this time, so #898 went to the secondary target at Mako where, after bombing, it received a message that the lost had been found - too late. Lt. Grimm, in #807, also missed the convoy and hit Mako where he reported lots of radar interference. Last to take off was Capt. Rogers in #126. He found the ships and dropped in daylight on a DD from 4500' with unobserved results due to an undercast. Lt. Dolley in #076 flew a ferret from Amoy to Nanking.

Apr 6/7, 1945. The 63rd sent out 6 planes, 4 armed to hit the convoy, one unarmed to shadow it and 1 armed recco to Hainan. Lt. Van Etten took off at 1755 in #396 and found the convoy at about 2200 hours. He made 4 runs on a light cruiser, but 2 near misses were all he could manage. He estimated that there were 15 ships in the convoy. He counted 3 visually and the rest by radar. Just after midnight Lt. Patton, in #398, made several runs but did not connect. He relayed his position to those coming after him. Lt. Phillips, in #897 or #807, had mechanical trouble and rack problems. He too could not claim any hits. Last off was Lt. Wilson, in #812, with a crew making its first mission. A series of mechanical mishaps were rectified on the way out, and they were nervous about their initial encounter with the enemy. At 0210 they were over the convoy. They counted 4 ships on radar and lined up for a run at 1000'. At one quarter mile they dropped a flare and then loosed 4 bombs scoring 1 near miss, 2 direct hits and 1 overshoot. The AA was intense, but they managed to get away with the tip of the right wing gone. They came back for a second radar run and dropped 4 X 500 Torpex bombs and made 2 direct hits on a destroyer. This resulted in an enormous explosion. The ship stopped firing and its searchlight went out. As Wilson pulled up into the overcast a second detonation was seen. Counting themselves lucky not to have anyone injured, they took stock of any damage and noted that there were only 2 ships on their radar. They headed home knowing that they had done a good job on their baptism of fire. Wilson and his crew were credited with sinking a Tare Baker, 8000 tons, on the first run and a destroyer of 1700 tons on the second. Their plane had numerous holes and the tip of the starboard wing was missing.

Apr 7, 1945. A daylight search mission for the day was Capt. Welch in #130 with a pickup VIP crew - Major Brownfield, 63rd Squadron C.O. as copilot, Lt. Waller, an Armament Officer, as nose gunner went looking for daylight shipping. At 1600 they began to follow a radar indication, but they soon realized that it was aircraft and probably several when they came upon 3 twin-engine Nells. There was a spirited exchange of fire. With 2 Nells smoking and the nose and top guns in the B-24 jammed, they climbed into clouds to try to get the guns working again. Their day was just beginning. They sighted a 7000 ton tanker that was a few miles off shore and had a fire forward. They made a quick skip bombing run and scored 2 direct hits. The ship rolled over and began to sink. Next they encountered a large lugger loaded with cargo and personnel. Another skip bombing attack dispatched this ship with one bomb. Flying down the coast and keeping a sharp eye out for bogeys, they spotted a Sugar Able Love. Although they missed with their

bombs, they set the ship on fire with tracers. After 2 more bombing runs, they scored a hit and the ship sank. Finding no more ships, they went to lay their last eggs on the Hoihow Seaplane Base. Due to an overcast, they made a radar run and dropped their last bombs calling it a day. It was now 2000 and they were five and one-half hours from home base. All the sinkings were in clear weather and within 7 miles of shore and 20 miles of Fat Law Drome, but they encountered no interception.

The strike squadrons sent 18 planes to the Shinchiku Drome, but the clouds were nasty. The planes bombed by elements and hit other targets in Tainan Town and even Taichu. The 403rd hit 4 different targets. One plane was holed and the only fighters seen were many friendly U.S. planes.

At 0600 Lt. Potthoff of the 63rd flew an unarmed B-24 to shadow the convoy during the day. He picked it up at 1035 and reported 4 merchant vessels and 2 destroyers that seemed to be heading into harbor at Kaivang Point. Another 4 ship convoy was sighted coming out of Swatow and he and his crew kept track of it. All the time their flight was dodging in and out of clouds to avoid enemy fighters. The plane stayed in the area sending position reports for over 5 hours.

This night and into the next day, April 8th, 2 Sea Hawks went to Swatow. Lt. Rogers, in #694, made 2 runs in foul weather that seemed to be affecting the LAB causing them to miss the target by wide margins. At 0435 he headed home. Lt. Williams, in #128, did not find any targets and proceeded to his secondary only to find it closed in by weather. He jettisoned the bombs and headed home. #128 was trailed for a half hour by an enemy night fighter showing a bright headlight. The fighter came within 100 yards, but his light did not pick up the B-24. Neither plane fired any shots.

An H2X flight by a 64th plane put 6 X 1000 lb. bombs in the Kiirun Dock area, but due to an undercast no results were seen. AA holed the plane and a night fighter was seen but made no pass at the bomber.

Apr 8, 1945. Due to bad weather the Group strike with frags on Matsuyama Drome was a disaster. One 64th plane bombed the primary but the rest went to Taito Town. Bombs were dropped on targets up and down the west coast of Formosa. Due to clouds, several planes unwittingly flew near AA positions and several were holed.

The convoy was now beyond the range of the 63rd bombers, so 2 planes went out this night for other game. One was to search from Swatow north and the other from Canton south. Weather was poor and Lt. Dickenson, in #128, made no visual sighting and the radar contacts were poor. A flare only lit up the undercast. Lt. Flinner, in #397, found nothing and made a run on the oil storage at Mako, but only bomb bursts were seen through the haze and mist.

Apr 9, 1945. The 3 strike squadrons had the day off for maintenance and training.

At 0600 Capt. Butts took off for a daylight sweep in the Hainan area. He found no shipping, but took "targets of opportunity" that included blowing up with skip bombing a railroad bridge and a small freight yard that they also strafed. The latter resulted in an engine being dispatched in a cloud of steam. They encountered AA from Fat Law Drome but were not holed and they had no interception.

This night and into the next morning, Lt. Grimm of the Sea Hawks in #076, flew a ferret along the China coast from Hong Kong/Canton, around Hainan Island, on to the Indo-China coast near Tourane and then back to Clark at distance of 2160 miles.

Apr 10, 1945. The strike squadrons had no mission this day.

A 65th H2X made two runs on the Kiirun Naval Base and encountered meager AA. One interceptor was seen. Only bomb bursts were observed.

The Sea Hawks again had a daylight recco that took off at 0300 with Lt. Patton at the controls in #807. He skip bombed and strafed a tanker near Hainan only to find that it was run aground and abandoned. It was low in the water due to high tide at the time. He bombed Hoi How Seaplane Base blowing up a large building and getting a near miss on the base swimming pool. They then flew close to the shore looking for targets and enemy planes at several dromes, but they saw none.

A night mission by Lt. Croft, in #694 of the 63rd, had no luck at all. No shipping was seen in the Canton/Hong Kong corridor and he could not identify his secondary target, a small arms factory in Canton.

Apr 11, 1945. The day strike squadrons went to Fuga Island after finding the primary near Bagio was socked in by weather. Fuga is a staging area on the north coast of Luzon. The Group bombed from 3500'-5000' and destroyed numerous buildings. While flying in the Bagio area trying to find the primary target, they encountered light AA.

At 2100 hours the 64th sent an H2X to the Kiirun Bay area where bomb runs were made on 2 radar targets, but due to an undercast no results were seen. AA holed their stabilizer. Also this night the Sea Hawks had 4 armed reccos out flying along the China coast towards Nanking. No shipping was found on the Yangtze, but bombs were dropped on the Pukow rail terminal from which material was shipped to Japanese forces in the interior. Nanking and Pukow were bright with lights, and the drome at Ming Ku Kung had its runway lights on. One of the bombers was trailed for several hours by fighters, but no passes were made.

At 2300 Lt. Dollar, in #108, took off to look for a convoy, but he found nothing except 1 Fox Baker that was possibly aground.

Apr 12, 1945. The Group strike to Kagi and Ikayama Dromes was weathered out, so it went to Tainan and bombed by H2X. They dumped 40 plus tons of frags from 12,000'. The results were unobserved but one plane was holed by AA. Although rope was used, the radar controlled guns soon got the range.

This night a 65th H2X plane bombed shipping in Kiirun Harbor. Their bombs hit amongst ships and strung out into town. No assessment of damage could be made. One night fighter was seen but there were no AA or lights.

The 63rd sent 4 planes towards Nanking, but only 1 made it. Two had radar problems and the third had a gas leak in the bomb bay. Lt. Flinner, in #898, made it to the target, but he found no shipping so he plastered the rail yard at Pukow and started a small fire. An armed recco also went to Tien Ho Drome and dropped a load of frags. Three enemy planes circled but did not fire.

Also there was a night mission by a 403rd bomber equipped with H2X bomber Kiirun. No results were observed, but 1 night fighter was troublesome but uneager. It fired from a half mile away.

Apr 13, 1945. The Group was off to Hong Kong again, but it did not fare too well except for the 65th that sank a Fox Able and hit the Texaco refinery. The 64th dumped most of its bombs in the water as did the 403rd, although the latter did manage to drop some bombs

on the docks. There was no fighter interception but 3 planes were holed by AA. On the flight home, 3 rafts with dye markers were seen and reported to Rescue.

This night the Sea Hawks headed for the China Sea and Shanghai. They were looking for ships and the Italian liner, Conte Verde, that was supposed to be in the area although the 14th AAF had claimed to have sunk it prior to this date. The 63rd was to hunt for this 17,500 ton liner many times with no success. Three of the 4 bombers hit a variety of targets but claimed no shipping although several ships had been sighted. Lt. Grimm dropped on a large area of lights that seemed to be floating. Although the bombs struck close or through it, no apparent damage resulted. Later it was thought to be some kind of a lighted trap to attract fish.

Apr 14, 1945. Kagi Drome was the target for the strike squadrons. Seventeen planes made it to the target where they dropped frags on planes on the ground. The results were fair to good. The 65th had all bombs on target and started fires. The other squadrons had 50%-60% on target but some bombs that overshot the target hit rail yards. AA was heavy and accurate with 3 planes being hit and 1 having an engine shot out [Capt. Agard, 65th in #540, QUEEN OF THE CLOUDS]. Aircraft were spotted on the ground about 10 miles from Kagi, parked along a strip, presumably dispersed from the center of the attacks. That night 4 Sea Hawks headed for Shanghai looking for the Conte Verde again. Three made it to the Whangpoo River and 1 turned back due to radar failure. There was a great deal of flak with 2 planes being hit but not seriously. No big ship was seen and the dropped bombs missed the docks. Lt. Wilson was last over the target and had rack trouble. The bombs were finally dropped over Pootung Point when the bombardier said, "NOW," and they were dropped using the emergency jettison system. They were awarded with a nice red colored explosion but no Conte Verde.

Apr 15, 1945. Aircraft on the ground at Shinchiku, the primary, and Toyahara, the secondary were the targets for the Group. The 65th found a hole in the clouds and hit the primary with good results. They destroyed a twin-engine bomber and started some fires. Some hung bombs were later salvoed on Kyoritsu Town where a large fire with smoke rising to 5000' was started. The 64th and 403rd went to Toyahara where they spotted a few planes on the ground and were greeted with heavy AA. Bombs hit several areas of the drome but with no spectacular results. Six planes were holed, but there were no injuries. This night the 63rd planned a big effort on the capital of Formosa, Taihoku [T'aipei?], on the north of the island. Six planes took off but 1 returned due to radar failure. The others dropped 500 lb. incendiaries resulting in many fires. The city was brightly lit when the first plane, Lt. Dolley in #809, went over at 2331. The city then darkened when Lts. Grimm, in #894, and Canevari, in #398, arrived but fires below showed them the way. Two more planes followed and the many fires all started soon merged into 3 very large conflagrations. Night fighters were around but did not fire. AA was moderate holing 1 plane. Searchlights were plentiful but very ineffective. This was the first of many poundings that city would get.

Apr 16, 1945. The Group sent 25 planes to Matsumaya and all made it to the target. Frags and 1000 lb. demos were dropped from 12,500' onto various targets including parked planes, guns and airplane hangers. Photos later showed a number of planes destroyed on the ground and fires attested to other destruction. The weather was clear, the AA plentiful

holing 6 planes and rocking all of them. Only one plane from an unnamed squadron dropped its bombs in the water. All in all it was a good day.

The Sea Hawks spent this night searching the Formosa Strait with no success, so they proceeded to the secondary target at Mako. Lt. Craig, in #694, found the target socked in and bombed by radar. Later Lt. Phillips, in #398, found a hole in the clouds and hit the naval barracks. Both planes had received a message that some shipping might be in the Amoy area and to make the secondary Mako. Phillips went to Amoy, but finding it totally weathered in he wisely proceeded to Mako since he had no maps of the area. Craig did not try to go to Amoy without charts.

A 64th H2X went to Kiirun Bay and bombed at 0125 on the 17th. Lights caught the plane after "bombs away" and held it for several minutes. Night fighters were airborne and visible due to their lights being on. The bombs dropped started one large fire.

Apr 17, 1945. The Group put 23 planes in the air to hit the primary target of Shinchiku.

Twenty-two made it to the target. Numerous fires were started although bombing was not too good with just over 65% of the bombs in the designated area. AA holed 2 planes and rocked others. Twenty-five OD colored single-engine airplanes were sighted in a clear area west of the target. Clouds and breakaway maneuvers prevented photos of these planes to determine if they might be decoys.

Two Sea Hawks were sent out this night, but they found no action. One plane jettisoned after an hour or so due to radio interference with its radar. The other plane came back after a long and fruitless search bucking headwinds that made it too risky to get to the secondary.

A 64th H2X hit Okayama Drome with frags. The mickey operator could not pick up the strip, so they bombed the dock area that could be seen. A large fire was started. AA holed the plane in 2 places and the night fighters were out as usual, but they did not fire at the bomber. Bombs were away at 0135 on Apr. 18th.

Apr 18, 1945. Seventeen Group planes hit Giran Drome, Formosa, with frags. Two planes on the bomb run had problems; one had all of its bombs drop when the bomb bay doors were opened, and the other was hit by flak so that the electrical system would not release the bombs that were later salvoed in the ocean when the formation went over the open ocean to avoid further AA.

[The takeoff this day was delayed for a fair amount of time when a P-38 came in to land with a hung up bomb under one wing. The pilot foolishly performed an Immelmann maneuver used by fighters when landing without a hung bomb. The maneuver caused the bomb to drop and hit a B-24 that blew up and set another P-38, that was in the air off the wing of the culprit, on fire. This pilot bailed out and hit the ground as his chute opened. He died later. A huge fire was started in a nearby hanger. In all 21 ground crew men were killed along with the one pilot. Recorded by Jim Cherkauer who observed the event from B-24J-190 *BARBARA JEAN* waiting in line to take off.]

The 63rd put one anti-radar ferret plane in the air only to have it turn back after completing about 30% of its mission before experiencing problems in engines #1 and #2.

Apr 19, 1945. The Group planes went to Shinchiku Town with plans to bomb by H2X and visually if the weather permitted. The weather turned out to be 50/50, i.e., half could see and half could not. The 64th had the flux gate compass go bad on the run, and they were off the aiming point by 2000'. The 65th lined up and dropped visually on 3 targets in the

H2X larger parameter. Several fires were started and violent explosions rocked planes at 10,000'. The 403rd followed the H2X plane and toggled on it; the mickey operator pronounced a perfect run, but clouds prevented any visual confirmation. AA was moderate with only 1 plane being holed. No enemy fighters were seen, but there were P-47s in evidence.

The 63rd had this night off.

Apr 20, 1945. Once again the weather was bad. The primary target was Tainan Drome with the secondary being Tainan Town using H2X. Only 1 element dropped on the revetments of the drome and with unobserved results, but in the target area. The formation then went around again making an H2X run on the town and starting a number of fires in warehouses near the marshalling yards. The AA was accurate and holed 6 planes, but there were no injuries. One plane had engine trouble and bombed Kato before turning back. Another plane had to feather a prop and lagged behind making a target for a lone Zeke that made a pass. The 2 planes exchanged gunfire with no damage to either. The Zeke broke off at some 500 yards, but his presence alerted our planes to be careful as there was at least 1 enemy fighter in the air.

This night the Sea Hawks sent out 3 planes. One flew a ferret doing a sweep of the China coast north to Shanghai and Hanchow. Two planes went to Sakashima Gunto, islands northeast of Formosa, and hit the town and drome at Mirara. Lt. Scroggs, in #809, finding no ships dropped in the target with unobserved results due to undercast. Lt. Fuller, in #398, hit barrack buildings at the Mirara Drome on the same islands that were active in the attack on the 10th U.S. Army when it landed on Okinawa on April first. There was no AA, but one night fighter appeared and followed #398 for 30 minutes and once fired into a cloud.

A 403rd H2X raider went to Tainan Town this night and dropped 12 X 500 incendiaries starting many fires. One night fighter was seen and it trailed the B-24 to the southern tip of Formosa. A new kind of AA was reported. It was a kind of rocket bomb that burst well in front of the plane while making a high arch trailing a short streamer. The crew estimated its speed at about 400 mph. (This would be close to the apex of its arc.)

Apr 21, 1945. There was no Group strike this day.

An H2X plane from each of the 64th and 65th squadrons hit the town of Taihoku this night with outstanding results. These conflagrations were visible 30 miles from the town. Night fighters were present and made at least 1 firing pass with no damage resulting. The 65th bomber sustained a hole in one vertical stabilizer.

This same night the Sea Hawks had 2 planes on a sea search along the China coast. They had the docks of Swatow as a secondary target. At about midnight Lt. Dickenson, in #807, detected a night fighter coming in from 3 o'clock. The Jap kept coming until he was perhaps 100 yards away when the tail gunner fired. The Jap continued to come and flew just under the tail of the bomber. Since he did not fire, the crew feared that it was an unsuccessful suicide attempt. The B-24 sought cloud cover and recovery of the crew's nerves. The fighter was not seen again, so the bomber continued and hit warehouses on the Swatow waterfront. Only the bursts were seen. The second plane came over just before dawn and plastered the business district, but the crew did not see any spectacular results.

A 63rd ferret went from Hong Kong to Saigon and as usual when unarmed, a target was found. Off Tiger Island there were 13 ships of various sizes; at least 2 were large.

Apr 22, 1945. The Group tried to take out a bridge north of Balet Pass, but the weather closed the area; so they hit the secondary at Iligan Town. Here the retreating Japanese had stores and barracks and were making a last stand. Numerous buildings were destroyed and one large explosion, probably ammo, went up. The load was 96 X 1000 lb. bombs and 90% fell in the target from an altitude of 5000'. This night, 22nd/23rd, a 403rd bomber equipped with H2X went to Matsuyama with frags, but only a small fire was their reward. There were lots of searchlights in the area, but rope seemed to divert them. A 65th plane on the same mission had to turn back with a severe hydraulic leak. Shortly after midnight, a 64th H2X bomber was over Matsuyama Drome to hit barracks near the west dispersal area. Bombs were released on radar plan and visual checks. One large explosion resulted some 15 seconds after the bombs hit. Two night fighters appeared. One made a firing pass, but evasive action was underway and no damage was done. There was no AA and the searchlights were uncoordinated. Three 63rd planes headed to the Shanghai/Whangoo rivers to hunt for the liner, Conte Verde, where the V Bomber Command had reported it. It was not there. What was reported to have been the ship turned out to be an island with dense vegetation. One crew member remarked upon his return, "It was some camouflage job if the Bomber Command thought that it was the liner!" All 3 dropped some bombs on the Woosung Military Depot, but without spectacular effect. AA was moderate with no damage reported. The city of Shanghai was lit up when the first plane arrived, but the lights began to dim after the first bombs were dropped.

Apr 23, 1945. The Group strike was to Yulin Harbor on Hainan Island where numerous small ships had been seen. Bombing was excellent and targets destroyed were: 2 Sugar Charlie Sugars; 1 patrol craft; 2 large barges; 2 luggers; and a Fox Tare Dog was a probable. Bombs also destroyed buildings in Yulin Town, and the wharves were damaged. AA was accurate holing 4 planes, but although interception was airborne, it did not attack. Some phosphorus shells were seen, but they were not effective. This night the Sea Hawks went to the Gulf of Tonkin to look for ships there were supposed to be in Yulin or nearby. Two planes found nothing but junks, so they headed for land targets. #807 hit the Hoihow docks. Lt Craig, in #812, went to Bakli Bay where he found no ships; so he bombed the docks and adjacent areas. When he left, there were 2 large columns of smoke rising. One 63rd plane went to Formosa Strait and found a small unidentified ship and overturned it with 3 bombs. He then went to Mako's oil storage area and put 5 Torpex bombs into the concentrations of buildings. Fires were burning brightly as he exited the area. A 65th H2X plane dropped on Taihoku town using 24 X 260 frags. Flashes and glow came through the undercast, but the crew soon turned its attention to 3 night fighters trailing along. The B-24 took evasive action in the clouds and soon lost the fighters.

Apr 24, 1945. There was no Group strike this day. This night the 63rd had a field order from V Bomber Command that the "island" they had sighted 2 nights ago was actually the Conte Verde. They were to "Find it and sink it." If it could not be found, there were secondaries. Lt. Wilson, in #130, went up and back down the river at 150' in the undercast that made lateral visibility almost nil. He could not pick up the big liner. The Kiangnan Docks and Woosung Depot could not be picked up on radar. It was too dangerous to search under these conditions, so he bombed a

stationary target and missed. On the flight deck they wiped the sweat away as they pulled back up to 2500' for the trip home. Lt. Scroggs, in #014 or #614, searched the lower river for shipping and found nothing. Weather was so solid that he could barely find the Woosung Military Depot. LAB radar was not for navigation. It could pick up objects as it swept, but what these objects were or exactly where they were, it could not distinguish. Unlike H2X, it could not give a coast line from altitude and a river mouth or spit of land from which the plane's position could be determined. They dropped on the depot and hopefully hit the rail yards.

Apr 25, 1945. The daylight squadrons went bridge busting at Balet Pass. The weather was good. Five 64th planes dropped 2000 pounders on Bridge "C" and dropped 3 spans with 3 direct hits. They also damaged 3 other spans from an altitude of 5000'. The 403rd hit the bridge northeast of Dupex using 2000 lb. demos making individual runs while in a traffic pattern. Two direct hits were scored with 1 near miss. Seventy-five percent of the bridge was down with major damage also done to the approach road. The 65th missed their bridge but heavily damaged the road leading to it. Japanese traffic would be stalled for quite sometime.

Two more 63rd bombers were sent this night to Shanghai to find the Conte Verde. Only #397 searched for the errant ship and looked for over 2 hours. With reduced visibility and no other sightings, Lt. Fuller dropped on some barges, but 1 bomb did not explode. Lt. Dolley found 2 Sugar Dogs and made 2 runs on them, but he could not tell the results due to the undercast. Bombs were heard and felt to go off. The fog seemed to hang over the river at these early morning hours. The bombers passed near Lungwha Drome and sighted 15 planes on hardstands. There was vehicle traffic in Shanghai and the area was brightly lit. There was no AA, no interception and no Conte Verde.

A 403rd and a 64th equipped H2X bombers headed for Tansui Floatplane Base. The 403rd plane returned with radar and radio trouble, but the 64th pressed on. He completed his mission in soupy weather, dropping 12 X 260 lb. frags by radar. One twin-engine night fighter trailed them over the base when the AA went off below.

Apr 26, 1945. The strike squadrons headed to oil targets at Toshein in central Formosa, but the weather interfered. This resulted in a wild and confusing day. The target did not lend itself to H2X bombing, so the planes bombed many targets. There were some 90 B-24s milling around over the island. The 43rd bombed Toshien with 3 planes; Tainan with 5 planes; Koshun with 3 planes; Shajo with 4 planes; Kato with 2 planes; and Hotei with 1 plane. The enemy fighters and AA command must have had a busy day. One plane was damaged by AA, and all straggled back to Clark Field.

This night, 26th/27th, Major Link flew an anti-radar ferret to the southern tip of Kyushu, one of the longest ferret flights undertaken. Armed reccos were still looking for the Conte Verde, but even bright moonlight failed to reveal the elusive vessel, although he flew low over suspected hiding places. Lt. Murphy, in #130, was first and with good visibility brought out the AA on both sides of the river near Pootung Point. His plane was holed in several places including the bombardier's office. It was too hot to go back so they hit Woosung Military Depot and picked up some more holes, but started good fires. Lt. Croft, in #127, searched lower down the river and failed to hit 2 patrol boats that had taken refuge amongst some junks. Considerable AA was encountered and 1 troublesome night fighter was around but caused no damage. Lt. Flinner, in #694, went to look for a convoy near Swatow, but found nothing. So he hit the warehouses in

Swatow. Last, but not least for the 63rd, was Lt. Williams searching but finding nothing in the Formosa Strait. He went to Mako after the oil storage area, but only bomb bursts were observed.

Three H2X missions went to Tansui Seaplane Base; 2 from the 64th and 1 from the 403rd. It had nine-tenths cloud coverage, but the radar brought it up and 12 frag clusters were dropped on each run. There was 1 large explosion and a brief flash. Both 64th planes were intercepted, but only 1 of 3 enemy fighters fired causing no damage. One 64th bomber was holed by AA. The 403rd arrived a bit later and saw only clouds. A night fighter appeared but did not fire. The 403rd saw no AA.

Apr 27, 1945. There was no mission of the strike squadrons this day, but there was plenty of action this night.

Two Sea Hawks headed for the Yangtze, but 1 returned early with radar problems. Lt. Carnavari, in #898, pressed on and located a Fox Tare Dog (700 tons). Making 1 run at 100', he put a bomb on the stern and the ship soon sank. Some barges were spared due to being off line at so low an altitude, but AA was active as he passed the Woosung Military Depot. His plane was holed as he flew up and down the river; all had a shot at the low-level raider.

The 64th flew a single H2X mission to Tansui just to show that they were not forgotten. Frags were the load and no fires were seen. Searchlights were active, holding the plane for 1 minute on the breakaway.

Apr 28, 1945. Seventeen 43rd B-24s made it to the Toshein oil storage area, but only 3 bombed the depot. The 64th got honors for hitting the oil jackpot as 2 of their planes went down to 9000' to make sure of the target. The load was 24 X 250 lb. demos. They used an H2X/visual run and hit the pump house and started 1 large fire. One 403rd plane bombed the primary but was well wide of the target. Other planes either jettisoned bombs or hit areas in the vicinity of Toshein. There was lots of AA, and 3 planes were holed. One fighter attacked a 64th that returned the fire from a great distance. It wasn't a very successful day.

This night, April 28th/29th, was not a good one for the Sea Hawks. Four planes went the Shanghai to hit oil facilities at the Standard Oil and Texas installations. B-24 #814 piloted by 2/Lt. Raymond Kahn and crew disappeared. The plane made a routine check in at 2300 just before entering the target area. The weather was CAVU and their altitude was 1300'. No word was heard after this time so all Rescue in FEAF and the 14th AAF notified that the plane was no longer in contact. Nineteen hours after taking off when all fuel would have been exhausted, the plane was declared missing. (Pettus says Larry Hickey has the names of the crew members, but gives the date as April 26th. Brownfield's official report dated 4/30 gives 2300 on the 28th as when the last message was received.)

Lt. Phillips, in #397, had a wild night. On his target run intense AA was encountered from both sides of the river and the plane was holed 18 times. "In addition a phosphorus bomb exploded in the waist, causing a fire that was soon extinguished." (It is not clear what happened. The 63rd record says "A flare could have been ignited, but not easily put out, or a fragment of a phosphorus shell that the crew did not see in the dark, could have come through.) In any event bombs fell short and the plane headed for home where the nose wheel collapsed on landing resulting in a washout. However there were no injuries either from enemy action or the landing.

The other 2 planes encountered no real trouble; both had bombs on target, but a number of them were not seen to explode.

Apr 29, 1945. There was no Group strike this day.

This night Capt. Rogers, in #943, flew an anti-radar ferret past Shanghai and up to Nanking. Several ships were sighted and reported. The flight covered a distance of 2800 miles.

Apr 30, 1945. The strike squadrons were off [0845 hours] to Toshien to hit the oil storage again, and this time the weather was perfect. The load was again 250 lb. demos. A great deal of damage was done. Many large and small fires were started and some of the pumping facilities were damaged. Despite fires close by and hits, some tanks did not ignite. Possibly these tanks were empty. [The Group made 2 runs over the target.] AA was moderate with 3 planes being holed. Leaflets were dropped to advise the Emperor's men that this was only the beginning.

This night and early morning the 63rd sent 3 planes on armed reccos in the Hainan area. Orders were to bomb Samah Drome if no shipping was sighted. They were to report the weather too. No ships were seen and Samah seemed to be mostly deserted. The planes made visual runs and had no or interception. One plane on the ground seemed to have its lights on, but a dropped flare showed no activity and there was no reaction to the flare. [When the planes returned home, it was the first of May.]

In summary the Group flew 519 sorties in April 1945. The strike squadrons flew 426 sorties and the 63rd flew 93. A total of 11 ships were sunk including 1 destroyer for a total of 23,750 tons. Another 3 ships totaling 6,250 tons were damaged.