

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



## NEWSLETTER 103<sup>rd</sup> EDITION JULY 2007

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Web site: [www.kensmen.com](http://www.kensmen.com)

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### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Our organization continues to remain fairly robust with a reunion this year and another in the planning stage for next year. We will keep having reunions as long as possible.

On March 22<sup>nd</sup> our beloved Jay Zeamer, Jr., a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, passed away in a nursing home in Boothbay Harbor, Maine. His widow, Barbara lives in Boothbay. Jay was honored in a number of magazines and journals this past month for his photo mission on June 16, 1943. Jay had won many medals for past photo missions. This one was to photograph the small island named Buka off the larger island Bougainville in the Solomons. During the mission his B-17 41-2666 *LUCY* was attacked by at least 14 Japanese fighters. Jay was severely wounded and his bombardier, Lt. Joseph R. Sarnoski, awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously, was killed after downing a couple of the Japanese planes. Some of you may have seen a depiction of this mission on the History Channel in January. It is entitled *DOGFIGHTS LONG ODDS*. I have been told that Jay's copilot, J. T. Britton, lives in Midland, Texas. Our prayers are with Barbara - may God bless.

Also in the recent past the military identified the remains of the 10 crewmen killed on Black Sunday, April 16, 1944, from the 403<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Squadron. Their remains have been returned to surviving families and we have had reports of burials in Texas, Michigan, Ohio and two in Pennsylvania during the past month or two. The plane B-24D 42-72946 *HERE TIS* was piloted by 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Raymond Cooley.



The news about the status of our history is a bit disturbing. One of the writers, who Larry Hickey had hired to write our history, has gone to China for a year of study. This leaves the remaining author the task of completing the book. He currently is finishing September 1943 and then will move to December 1944 where the first writer left off. Meanwhile a couple of other books have moved ahead of ours which is difficult to understand. No deadline exists for when ours will be ready for final layout and publication.

We all do honor and pay tribute to all of our heroes who gave their all while serving in 5<sup>th</sup> AAF, 43<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group as well as those who are no longer with us today.

I hope to see many of you in Plymouth Meeting for our reunion in September.

*Jim Cherkauer*

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

A message, from **Eldon Lawson and Sam Commons**, invites all the golf ers to join them at the **43<sup>rd</sup> Reunion Golf Outing**. Sam has reserved tee times for **10 a.m. on Wednesday September 5**, at his golf club. We'll play just nine holes, carts and clubs will be available. Come on sluggers, contact Sam and go for it.

A telephone call from **Isadore Miller, 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, Cryptographer** reports that he is doing well and says that he talks to some of his 63<sup>rd</sup> friends who live in Connecticut, such as **Bill McMurray**. But sadly he has lost several buddies in the last year. These are reported in MEMORIALS. It was nice to hear from Isadore, its been a long time.

An item of interest from **Jim Cherkauer**. The History Channel is offering a DVD that shows a graphic depiction of the photo mission on 16 June 1943, flown by **Jay Zeamer, Jr. and Crew** in B-17 666. In combat action during this mission Jay and his bombardier **Joseph R. Sarnoski**, earned the Medal of Honor and other crew members all earned high military awards. Dial (800) 708-1776 to order the DVD (**Dogfights, Long Odds, Cat. No. AAE-777190**) Cost is \$24.95 plus \$5.95 and any sales tax.

Received the following letter, dated April 18, 2007:

I am **Marjorie Baron**, wife of **Alfred M. Baron (63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, Tail Gunner)** who passed away 10/04/05. I found your picture in his DOWN UNDER book 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force. In the back of said book are autographs and your name appears (she listed my name with home address of 1943). No ZIP codes in those days!

Alfred M. Baron was discharged as a S/Sgt parachute rigger and a B-17 tail Gunner. He also had the nickname of "BLUE." We met in 1945 and married in 1947. Had two daughters, grandchildren and two Great Grandchildren. He lived to know he had Great Grandchildren.

He was a 12 year prostate cancer survivor. But kidney failure took him at age 81. We were married 58 years. He worked for GE here in New Hartford, NY for 33 years.

I enjoy the newsletter "Ken's Men." I read it to "My Freddie" here at home where I took care of him in his final months. Hope you are well, and if not already done, pass on your history to your family.

A devoted Fan of Ken's Men *Marjie Baron and Chipp 2* (Worlds Smartest Dog a Border Collie) The opinions expressed are the dog's!



May 3, 07 your Editor received the following message:

I'm e-mailing this message on behalf of my father, **J. Kent Milton**. Kent was an **Armor/Gunner and Photographer** who flew 57 missions with the **403<sup>rd</sup> Squadron**. He married Elise Wilson on May 6, 1943 while home on leave before shipping out to the Pacific. They are celebrating their 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Kent and Elsie's address is 215 Locust Ave., Clairton, PA 15025.

My dad remembers your board member **William Solomon**. He was holding Solomon's poker winnings when there was an explosion on board the vessel that was taking them back to Pearl and everyone had to abandon ship. Luckily, the money survived!

My parents would love to attend your reunion since it's in Pennsylvania, but I'm afraid this event would be too much for them at this time. I notice that the flier mentions single tickets for some of the evening meals. Can you or someone give me more details on this? Would it be possible for them to attend one evening meal without registering for the entire reunion. (We have relatives in the area.) If so, which event would be the best to aim for? The banquet? Also what would be the cutoff date for ordering tickets? I have their dues check and am mailing it off to William Wilson. *Joyce Milton*

**The following is for all who want this information.**

**You are welcome to attend any individual activity without staying at the hotel. You do not have to participate in the total program.**

**Using the ACTIVITIES REGISTRATION FORM, select the \*\* events you wish to attend, fill in the number of attendees and send your payment (\$30 per person) to the address at the top of the form. All are welcome!**

**For recognition of your attendance and receive your tickets, you must register at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Registration Table in the hotel lobby. Please drop into the Memorabilia Room, visit with friends and review all of the interesting photos, books and data.**

An item on Ken's Men "Message Board", followed by much additional e-mail activity, reported the discovery of the **403<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, B-24J S/N 42-72946 "Here T'is"** which was lost 16 April 1944 on what has become known as "**Black Sunday**." The crew listed as MIA were: **Raymond A. Cooley, Pilot; Dudley R. Ives, Co-Pilot; George E. Archer, Navigator; Donald F. Grady, Bombardier; Richard R. Sargent, Engineer; Norman L. Nell, Assistant Engineer; Steve Zayac, Radio; Thomas G. Knight, Assistant Radio; Blair W. Smith, Gunner and Joseph M. King, Gunner.**

The aircraft was last seen 50 miles north of Faita at 2000' on a 90 degree bearing, in bad weather, much of it instrument flying, when the formation, in which this airplane was flying broke up. The pilot was instructed to take a heading for Saidor and proceed by himself. He acknowledged and stated he was gaining altitude. This was the last radio contact.

In 2002, **Brian Bennet** discovered the crash site, at an altitude of 4,700 feet, in the Finesterre Ranges. It was discovered only 700 meters from B-24J S/N 42-100225, which was lost on the same mission and MIA for 58 years. The wreck was investigated as an MIA site by US Army CILHI.

Thanks to **George Biscoe, Brian Bennet and Aerothentic Publications** for this historical information.



\*\*\*\*\*THEY ARE COMING HOME!\*\*\*\*\*

We have received additional information from our members. They are:

**Orion Rogers, 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron Pilot**, sent the following note to **Jim Cherkauer**:

"Dear Jim,

You have probably already seen this item which was in the March Air Force Times. Was this Black Tuesday? You were there then, weren't you? In the 65<sup>th</sup>. I suppose Stephen Parker was in the 403<sup>rd</sup> as was Dudley Ives.

The Reunion in Philadelphia sounds interesting. I sure wish my health would permit me to go."

Sincerely, *Orion Rogers* (Joined the Squadron in Sept. '44)

#### AIRMAN'S REMAINS IDENTIFIED

An airman missing since World War II was finally brought home for burial more than 60 years later.

Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Dudley Ives was buried Feb. 19 among relatives and with full military honors in Aransas Pass, Texas.

Ives went missing in April 1944, when the B-24 he was co-piloting crashed in Papua New Guinea during a mission to destroy Japanese bases. Ives served with the 403rd Bombardment Squadron, 43rd Bombardment Group.

Ives' son, Rodney, said he contacted the military in 2002 when he heard a report about the discovery of American plane wreckage in Papua New Guinea.

Remains from the crash site were transported to the military's Central Identification Laboratory, where specialists used mitochondrial DNA to help identify the lost servicemen.

Rodney Ives finally got the call in late December, followed by a visit from military officials who briefed him on the identification.

An Army Air Forces veteran, Stephen Parker, said

he flew alongside Ives on the day of the 1944 bombing raid, which is remembered for its bad weather.

"There were a lot of planes in the air that day," the 85-year-old said at the service.

"We had just dropped our bombs; two planes flew into a mountain."

MAR 2001  
AIR FORCE TIMES

Also Orion's address should be updated as follows: 4925 Battery Lane #300, Bethesda, MD 20814-4918 and his phone number is (301) 718-3070.

From Abraham Hellman, 403<sup>rd</sup> Squadron Navigator, who said: "I don't know if this article appeared in all newspapers. But a reprint in the newsletter might be of interest to the members. *Abe (Shorty) Hellman*, Navigator 403<sup>rd</sup>"

## 10 airmen's remains from WWII identified

SUN SENTINEL  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON • The remains of 10 U.S. airmen, missing in action since a World War II mission over New Guinea, have been identified and will be returned to their families for burial, the Pentagon said Monday.

A B-24 Liberator with the airmen was returning to the aerodrome at Nadzab, New Guinea, after bombing enemy targets near Hollandia on April 16,

1944. The aircraft altered course because of bad weather and was flying to the aerodrome at Saidor when it disappeared, the Defense Department said in a statement.

Wreckage of a World War II-era bomber was found in Morobe Province in New Guinea in 2001, according to the Defense Department's Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office. A team from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command surveyed the site in 2002 and recovered remains as well as identification tags and other objects.

Scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used dental records, mitochondrial DNA and other tools to identify the remains.

Army officials have met with the airmen's next-of-kin to discuss the recovery and identification process and to coordinate burial with military honors, the Pentagon said.

The airmen were identified as:

- 2nd Lt. Raymond A. Cooley, of Leary, Texas.
- 2nd Lt. Dudley R. Ives, of Ingleside, Texas.
- 2nd Lt. George E. Archer, of Cushing, Okla.
- 2nd Lt. Donald F. Grady, of Harrisburg, Pa.
- Tech. Sgt. Richard R. Sargent, of North Girard, Pa.
- Tech. Sgt. Steve Zayac, of Cleveland.
- Staff Sgt. Joseph M. King, of Detroit, Mich.
- Staff Sgt. Thomas G. Knight, of Brookfield, Ill.
- Staff Sgt. Norman L. Nell,



The PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW article sent to us by Judge Michael O'Malley, 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron Navigator, reports S/Sgt. Blair W. Smith's family preparation for his return.

## Hero's burial awaits missing WWII airman

*He was 24 when his plane went down. Back in Armstrong County, his mom kept hoping.*

BY MICHAEL HASCH  
TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Staff Sgt. Blair W. Smith will be coming home soon.

Smith left his home in Numine, Armstrong County, a few days after his 22nd birthday to join the Army Air Forces in the early days of World War II.

He died in 1944, when his plane went down on the north coast of what is now Papua New Guinea, the eastern half of the island of New Guinea, north of Australia.

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office announced Monday that the remains of Smith and nine other crew members have been identified and will be returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

Sgt. Richard R. Sargent, of

North Girard, Erie County, and 2nd Lt. Donald F. Grady, of Harrisburg, also were on the B-24 Liberator that was returning from a bombing raid on what was then known as Hollandia, a Japanese stronghold on the island.

Larry Greer, of the POW/Missing Personnel Office, said the plane was flying to Nadzab, New Guinea, on April 16, 1944, and changed course because of bad weather. The crew was trying to reach an aerodrome at Saidor when the plane went down, he said.

"That's all we know. We don't know if they went down in bad weather or were shot down," said Greer.

The Armstrong County Memorial War Wall outside the courthouse in Kittanning lists Smith as killed in action, but the family didn't know what happened to him, said Earl D. Smith, 47, who lives in his uncle's childhood home on Main Street in Yatesboro, a few miles from Numine.

SEE AIRMAN • A6

### AIRMAN • FROM A1

"I know my grandmother always waited for him to come back," said Smith, whose late father, Earl G. Smith, was a brother of Blair Smith.

"All my dad knew was that he was missing," Smith said. "They didn't know if he was shot down or a prisoner of war."

The U.S. Embassy in Papua New Guinea notified Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command in late 2001 that wreckage of a World War II bomber had been found.

The site was surveyed several times in 2002 and the identification tags of Smith, Sargent and Grady were located.

"A young lady from the Army called me. I couldn't believe what I was hearing over the phone," Smith said yesterday.

Greer said records show that Blair W. Smith was born on Jan. 13, 1920, and enlisted on Jan. 26, 1942, seven weeks after Pearl Harbor.

He enlisted in the Army Air Forces, the aviation branch of

the Army in World War II when there was no separate Air Force.

Smith was the son of Isaac Daniel Smith, who died in a mining accident in the 1930s, and Dora Lloyd Smith, who died in 1960.

The couple had four other children — Earl and Lawrence Smith, Garnet Febringer and Grace McCartan — who are all deceased.

Before McCartan died, the military was able to obtain a DNA sample to make a positive identification of Smith's remains, Greer said.

Smith's family has not completed funeral arrangements.

"Some other families have made the decision to bury their loved ones in Arlington National Cemetery, but they

could bury them in their hometown cemetery, if they wish, and the Army will take care of all expenses," Greer said.

Earl Smith said he is happy the military never stopped trying to find his uncle.

"I only wish my dad and my grandmother could have known," he said. "They never had the chance for closure."

*"I only wish my dad and my grandmother could have known. They never had the chance for closure."*

EARL SMITH

BLAIR W. SMITH'S NEPHEW

From Aloysius J. Gongol, 403<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, Flight Engineer: Who wrote "Although I did not see combat, I flew with the 403<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Sqdn.-43rd Bomb Group as a Flight Engineer on a B-24J in 1945 and was based on Ie Shema when the war ended. I am enclosing a clipping from the Detroit Free Press of April '07-regarding a comrade who was with the 403<sup>rd</sup>. It corroborates Jim Cherkauer's synopsis of activities from the Newsletter Edition of April 2006, pages 13 and 14 of the "Black Sunday" April 16, 1944.



# Killed in WWII, he's home for burial at last

By CECIL ANGEL  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Liberator that went missing April 16, 1944, over the Pacific island of New Guinea, was dead. So in 1975, his parents erected a headstone in Woodmere Cemetery in Detroit — engraved with their son's image — next to plots they had bought for themselves.

and made their daughter Mary King Cibor promise that she would take up the cause after they were gone.

On Friday, Cibor will fulfill that promise. Her brother will be buried in Detroit with full military honors.

"My parents' wish was to

They wanted him home

See KING, 10A



Mary King Cibor of Lincoln Park with photos of her brother, Joseph King.

## KING | Thanks to sister's persistence, Detroit killed in WWII is home at last

From Page 1A

have my brother's remains brought home and interred next to them in Woodmere," Cibor, who lives in Lincoln Park, said Monday. "Thank God I was able to fulfill what I had promised my parents. I'm 92 years old and the Lord kept me on the Earth for this purpose."

King's downed plane was found in 2001 and his remains were taken in 2002 with others to the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii.

But it was not the military that initially told Cibor her brother's remains had been found, she said. She learned in 2002 from someone who had visited the crash site, saw her brother's dog tags and tracked down Cibor using census and marriage records.

For the past five years, Cibor and a relative of another airman from the downed plane have pestered military officials to release the remains.

"The two of us have been working together to get the government motivated to release the information so we could get the remains," Cibor said.

In September the government began to respond, Cibor said. She was told that the military did not want to release any information publicly until all of the remains were identified. A Defense Department spokesman did not return calls for comment Monday.

### Black Sunday in World War II

King died on what has been called Black Sunday during World War II, when 37 aircraft crashed in a severe storm over New Guinea, said Alexander Nemeth, 83, of Allen Park, who was King's friend.

According to the Defense Department, the crew of 10

### Visitation, funeral

Visitation for Air Force Staff Sgt. Joseph Michael King will be 5-9 p.m. Thursday with a rosary at 7 p.m. at the John Molnar Funeral Home, 14032 Northline in Southgate. Sgt. King will lie in state at 10:30 a.m. Friday at Holy Cross Hungarian Catholic Church, 8423 South St. in Detroit. The funeral mass is to begin at 11 a.m.

airmen on King's plane, part of the 43rd Bombardment Group, 403rd Bomber Squadron, were returning to Nadzab, New Guinea, after bombing enemy targets near the town of Hollandia. The plane broke out of a four-plane formation and changed course because of the storm, heading toward another landing area.

It never arrived.

Cibor said her family was told that they should forget about ever seeing her brother again — the plane had either gone down in the sea or in the jungle, where survivors likely would be killed by cannibals.

"You'll never know what happened to him," Cibor said the family was told.

But the family never gave up hope, Nemeth said.

King's mother, Rose King, "would always tell me some day Joe would be brought home," Nemeth said. When she spoke of her son, there were always tears in her eyes, he said.

"It was terrible especially for my mom," Cibor recalled. Her father, Charles King, a superintendent at U.S. Radiator in Detroit, was near death in 1975 as he planned his son's headstone. He saw only the completed drawing.

"My dad died a few days later," she said. Her mother died in 1989 and her sister, Helen Nemeth, two years ago.

### He cheated death three times

Joseph King was born at

the family's home at 8352 Vanderbilt in the Delray neighborhood of southwest Detroit, a bustling Hungarian enclave at the time. He graduated from Southwestern High School in 1942 and entered the military the next year.

He was drafted but he could have asked for an exemption because he was an only son. He declined to do so because so many of his friends were joining up, Cibor said.

"How can I face them when they come home and I sat it out?" he told his family.

The last time the family was together was Thanksgiving 1943 at Cibor's home, before her brother left for the war. She recalled how he took her aside and made her promise to take care of their parents.

King didn't think he was coming back, Cibor said, because he believed you get only three chances to escape death and his were up.

As an infant, he'd cheated death when his father left him on a blanket at the beach and the tide picked up the blanket and floated it out into the water, Cibor said.

Then there was the time when King, a toddler, was badly cut by flying glass from the windshield when his father crashed the family car. The third time was during training when his parachute jammed but finally released when he was close to the ground.

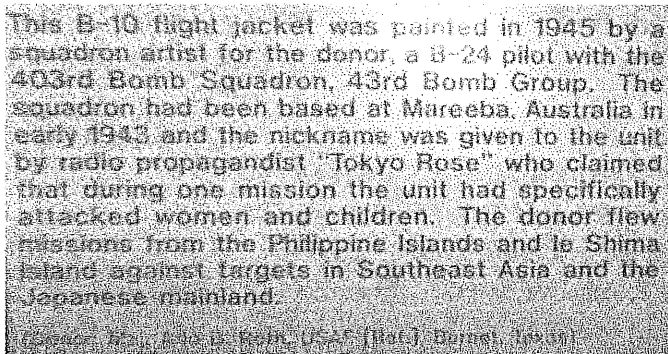
"I want you to take care of Mom and Dad because I'm not going to make it," Cibor said he told her in 1943. "Three times — out."

His remains were brought home Saturday. Cibor said an honor guard carried his flag-draped casket off the plane and State Police escorted his remains to a funeral home in Southgate.

Contact CECIL ANGEL at 313-223-4531 or angel@freepress.com.



The following photos were taken @ the Air Museum, Dayton, Ohio. I thought it worthwhile to send them along to you.



Although my health is not the best, I hope to make my first reunion trip in Sept. '07 to Valley Forge. Good Luck to all 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group survivors, Sincerely, *A.J. Bonglol*

A change of address for **Rosemary Brown, 102 Pecan Grove, #204, Houston, TX 77077. Phone (281) 752-7783**

A new address for **Life Member Virginia L. Mathias, 108 4 Mile Village, Boxford, MA 01921.**

In the April Newsletter on page 82 of the Pettus manuscript, **Jim Cherkauer** asked for information about the aircraft tail number involved in the **Williams, March 28, 1945**, crash landing at Clark Field. **Stephen Perrone**, author of **WORLD WAR II B-24 "Snoopers,"** sent a letter and summary of the mission in which, he confirmed the aircraft was #676. The letter and summary is included at the end of the May/June continuation of the Pettus manuscript.

**Bill McMurray** responded to my request for information about "Red" Lawson 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, Electrician. New address for **Leonard Lawson, 423 US Route 2 South, Alberg, VT 05440.**

Welcome a new **Associate Member, Amelia Nally**, daughter of **Sam Commons, 65<sup>th</sup> Squadron Flight Engineer and Past President of the Association.** Amelia's address: **2402 Creekside Trace, Jonesboro, GA 30236-6186. Phone (770) 473-7434.** Amelia and Sam are planning and hosting our 2008 reunion in Atlanta, GA

Via an e-mail, **Jim Cherkauer** reports that our **Treasurer Bill Wilson, 65<sup>th</sup> Squadron Pilot**, has had a fall and suffered some broken ribs! Bill we hope you recover soon and be out of pain.

\*\*\*\*\*MEMORIALS\*\*\*\*\*

The death of **Eric Leighman, Morton Sosemski both 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron** and **James T. O'Brien 65<sup>th</sup> Squadron** was reported by **Isadore Miller.** No additional information was available.



A phone call from **Jo Bachi**, widow of **Mike Bachi**, told of her call to **Helen and Louis Miklos, 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, A/C Maintenance**, urging attendance to the Philadelphia Reunion. Sadly, Louis reported that his beloved wife had pass away just recently.

Reported by **Darrick Price: 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Dudley R. Ives, Pilot, 403 Squadron** was laid to rest on 10 February 2007 in Arkansas Pass, Texas (see MIA details in EDITOR'S and MEMBER'S REPORTS).

Received from **Aloysius Gongol: S/Sgt. Joseph M. King, 403<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, Gunner** was laid to rest (see MIA details in EDITOR'S and MEMBER'S REPORTS).

Received the following e-mail from **Fred Hagen and Suzanne:**  
Dear 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group

It is with sadness that I write this letter. **Richard L. Patton (64<sup>th</sup> Squadron, Gunner)** past away at the age of 87 years and is laid to rest in St. Francis, Kansas. He was proud to be a member of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group. My father was proud of the time he served his country.

Thank you.

His loving daughter *Marcia Moore*

Via an e-mail to Jim Cherkauer, **Steven Bell** reports "I am sorry to inform you my father-in-law **Everett F. Perkins, Jr.** passed away on March 6, 2007 following a brief battle with prostate cancer. I know that his affiliation with the 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group was a source of great pride for "Perk."

**Bill McMurray** phone in the following correction to the April Newsletter.

"A telephone message from **William "Bill" McMurray, 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron**, reports the death of **Charles Lorrick (date unknown)**. Charles traveled to Australia, via the Queen Mary. He was a member of Bill Laird's maintenance crew until he became eligible for flight training and returned to the states. After completing pilot training, he became a B-26 Pilot and finished his service in the states..

**Chester Bialicki** passed away in December 2006 as reported by Bill."

\*\*\*\*\*JAY ZEAMER\*\*\*\*\*

March 24 **Ernest J. Wells** reported, via The 43<sup>rd</sup> web site "Message Board," the death of **Medal of Honor Recipient Jay Zeamer, Pilot 65<sup>th</sup> Squadron**. This sad news was followed by additional information from **Jim Cherkauer, Max Axelson, George Anderson, Reg Tatro and Roger Vargas**.

Along with George Anderson's note concerning Jay Zeamer, was a description of two of George's nail biting missions. Since they are expansion of activities in the Pettus manuscripts, they are presented at the end of the Pettus manuscripts.

**Roger E. Vargas, 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron Navigator**, sent the article on the right re Jay Zeamer.

"Attached is a copy of an article from Air Force Times magazine in regard to Jay Zeamer, which I am sure would be of interest to all of us members of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group."

George Anderson's newspaper article is on the left. *The Boston Globe* article was received via e-mail. These articles have been selected from the many that I received and to all who sent in data from all over the country----THANK YOU!



# Jay Zeamer Jr., 88; pilot won the Medal of Honor in World War II

From the Associated Press

Jay Zeamer Jr., a World War II bomber pilot, who was awarded the Medal of Honor for fighting off enemy attacks during a photographic mapping mission, died Thursday at a nursing home in Boothbay Harbor, Maine. He was 88.

Zeamer, a major in the Army Air Forces, also earned two Distinguished Flying Crosses, two Silver Stars and two Air Medals for his service in the South Pacific.

On June 16, 1943, after volunteering for the mapping mission over an area near Buka in the Solomon Islands that was well-defended by the Japanese, Zeamer and four of his crew were shot down by enemy fighters. Zeamer's crew spotted about 20 enemy fighters on the field, many of them taking off. But Zeamer continued with the mapping run, even after an enemy attack in which he suffered gunshot wounds in his arms and legs that left one leg broken.

Despite his injuries, he maneuvered the damaged plane so

that his gunners could fend off the attack during a 40-minute fight in which at least five enemy planes were destroyed, one by Zeamer and four by his crew.

"Although weak from loss of blood, he refused medical aid until the enemy had broken contact. He then turned over the controls but continued to exercise command, despite losses into unconsciousness, and directed the flight to a base 890 miles away," according to the citation posted by the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

He had been listed by the so-

cialty as one of 36 living Medal of Honor recipients from World War II.

Second Lt. Joseph Sarnoski Jr. of Simpson, Pa., Zeamer's wounded bombardier shot down two of the planes and kept firing until he collapsed on his guns. He was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously.

Zeamer's wife, Barbara, said her husband rarely talked about his experience during the war.

"His daughters never knew he'd won the Medal of Honor until they were in junior high school," she said. "I think he

didn't feel he deserved it. He was so close to his bombardier, and he felt terrible about his being killed."

A native of Carlisle, Pa., Zeamer grew up in Orange, N.J. He studied at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, earning bachelor's and master's degrees in engineering.

After the war, Zeamer worked at Pratt & Whitney in Hartford, Conn., before moving on to Hughes Aircraft in Los Angeles and then Raytheon Co. in Bedford, Mass. He retired in 1988 to Boothbay Harbor, where he had

spent summers as a boy, rowing his homemade boat across the harbor.

In addition to his wife, Zeamer's survivors include their five daughters.

He will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

## Obituaries on the Web

Obituaries from the last seven days are available on The Times' website: [latimes.com/obits](http://latimes.com/obits).

## AIR FORCE HEROES

# Photo mission ended in fight with Zeros

By Fred L. Borch  
and Robert F. Dorr  
Special to the Times

When Jay Zeamer Jr., 88, died in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, on March 22, the nation lost a hero who held a special place in the Air Force's heritage.

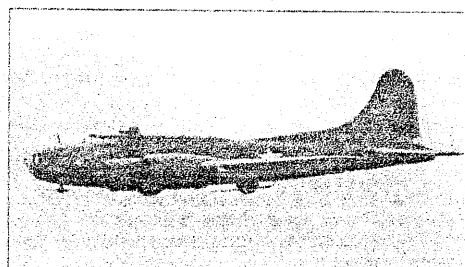
Born in Pennsylvania in 1918, Zeamer grew up in New Jersey. He was an Eagle Scout and a graduate of Culver Military Academy in Culver, Ind.

Zeamer graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1940 with a civil engineering degree.

In college, Zeamer developed a love of flying and took lessons. He completed reserve officer training and was commissioned in the Army Reserve but requested a discharge so he could pursue an offer to become a flying cadet. Zeamer received the silver wings of an aviator in March 1941.

After assignments in other bomb groups, then-1st Lt. Zeamer belonged to the 43rd Bombardment Group at Port Moresby, New Guinea, in late 1942. In November 1942, he was awarded the Silver Star medal for a photographic mission over Rabaul, New Britain. In May 1943, then-Capt. Zeamer received an oak leaf cluster to his Silver Star for heroism in the air over Wewak, New Guinea.

On June 16, 1943, Zeamer volunteered to fly a B-17E Flying Fortress (serial number 41-2666, named "Lacy") on an important photo reconnaissance mission to Buka, an island off Bougainville in the Solomon Islands. The job was to photograph and map Japanese installations in preparation for Allied landings scheduled for



CLIFFORD THORPE

Capt. (later Lt. Col.) Jay Zeamer piloted a B-17E Flying Fortress like the one seen here over Hawaii in 1942.

November 1943.

The island was 600 miles northeast of New Guinea, which meant a 1,200 mile round trip. Zeamer and his crew would fly unescorted, but each man volunteered for the mission. They did not know the Japanese navy had recently transferred 400 Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters to the area. The Americans were flying into trouble.

According to official records, Zeamer and his crew saw about 20 Japanese fighters take off from Buka field while they were photographing it.

"Despite the certainty of a dangerous attack by this strong force, ... Zeamer proceeded with his mapping run, even after the enemy attack began," an official citation reads.

In the ensuing attack, bombardier 2nd Lt. Joseph R. Sarnoski manned the nose gun and was credited with shooting down two fighters. A previously enlisted man who'd helped develop the Norden bombsight used by most U.S. bombers, Zeamer's fellow Pennsylvanian Sarnoski was wounded but continued shooting until he died

at his position.

Zeamer was badly wounded during the fight. He had a broken leg and gunshot wounds in both arms and legs. Still, he continued to pilot the aircraft. The air-to-air engagement lasted 40 minutes with the B-17's surviving gunners repeatedly battling Zeros.

Weak from loss of blood, Zeamer refused medical treatment, gave the controls to co-pilot 1st Lt. John Britton, and remained in command despite drifting in and out of consciousness. The B-17E made an emergency landing in New Guinea. Except Sarnoski, all the crew survived.

Zeamer and Sarnoski were awarded the Medal of Honor. □

Fred L. Borch retired from the Army after 25 years and is now the regimental historian for the Army Judge Advocate General's Corps. He is the author of "Kimmel, Short and Pearl Harbor," an analysis of the 1941 Japanese attack on Hawaii. His e-mail address is [borchf1@aol.com](mailto:borchf1@aol.com). Robert F. Dorr, an Air Force veteran, lives in Oakton, Va. He is the author of "Air Combat," a history of fighter pilots. His e-mail address is [robert.f.dorr@cox.net](mailto:robert.f.dorr@cox.net).



## Jay Zeamer Jr., 88, recipient of Medal of Honor in WWII The Boston Globe

By Associated Press | March 25, 2007

BOOTHBAY HARBOR, Maine -- Jay Zeamer Jr., a World War II bomber pilot who was awarded the Medal of Honor, died Thursday at a nursing home. He was 88.

Mr. Zeamer, a major in the US Army Air Corps, also earned two Distinguished Flying Crosses, two Silver Stars, and two Air Medals for his service in the South Pacific.

He earned the Medal of Honor for fighting off enemy attacks during a photographic mapping mission in which he suffered wounds that caused him to lose consciousness.

A native of Carlisle, Pa., Mr. Zeamer grew up in Orange, N.J., and spent most of his summers in Boothbay Harbor, rowing his homemade boat across the harbor.

He studied at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating with bachelor's and master's degrees in engineering.

Mr. Zeamer, who enrolled in the Army ROTC program at MIT, was awarded the nation's highest military honor for his actions on June 16, 1943, after volunteering for the mapping mission over an area near Buka in the Solomon Islands that was well defended by the Japanese.

While photographing the Buka airdrome, Mr. Zeamer's crew spotted about 20 enemy fighters on the field, many of them taking off. But he continued with the mapping run, even after an enemy attack in which he sustained gunshot wounds in both arms and legs that left one leg broken.

Despite his injuries, he maneuvered the damaged plane so that his gunners could fend off the attack during a 40-minute fight in which at least five enemy planes were destroyed, one by Mr. Zeamer and four by his crew.

"Although weak from loss of blood, he refused medical aid until the enemy had broken combat," according to the citation posted by the Congressional Medal of Honor Society. "He then turned over the controls, but continued to exercise command despite lapses into unconsciousness, and directed the flight to a base 580 miles away."

He had been listed by the society as one of 36 living Medal of Honor recipients from World War II.

Mr. Zeamer's wounded bombardier, Second Lieutenant Joseph Sarnoski Jr. of Simpson, Pa., who shot down two of the planes and kept on firing until he collapsed on his guns, was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously.

Mr. Zeamer's wife, Barbara, said her husband rarely talked about his experience during the war.

"His daughters never knew he'd won the Medal of Honor until they were in junior high school," she said.

"I think he didn't feel he deserved it. He was so close to his bombardier, and he felt terrible about his being killed."

Governor John Baldacci directed that flags in Maine be flown at half staff Monday, the day of Mr. Zeamer's funeral.

"Jay Zeamer was a hero in every sense of the word," Baldacci said. "He will be remembered for his great contributions to Maine and to this country for his service during World War II, and he will also be remembered by his community as someone who had the greatest heart and spirit."

After the war, Mr. Zeamer worked at Pratt & Whitney in Hartford before moving on to Hughes Aircraft in Los Angeles and then Raytheon Co. in Bedford, Mass.

He retired in 1968 to his beloved Boothbay Harbor, where he bought a skiff and oars and rowed around the harbor.

In addition to his wife, Mr. Zeamer leaves five daughters: Marcia of Medford, Mass., Jacque Zeamer Damon of Eliot, Jayne of Winchester, Mass., Susan of Falmouth, and Sandra Neubert of Easton, Conn.

A celebration of Mr. Zeamer's life will be held tomorrow in American Legion Post 36 in Boothbay Harbor.

Burial will be in Arlington National Cemetery. ®

\*\*\*\*\*ON EAGLES WINGS\*\*\*\*\*

And HE will raise you up on eagles's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of HIS hand.



Roger Vargas included the following report of his experience during a similar mission to that of Jay Zeamer's.

"On the 8 April 1943, I flew a similar Recon. Mission to Buka (Kavieng). **I think this Recon. Mission was flown once a month by a crew from the 43<sup>rd</sup>.** I flew as navigator with then **Capt. Folmer Soggard** and crew. Folmer had "asked" me to fill in for navigator **Bill Ahl** who could not make the mission because of a tooth extraction.

We arrived at Buka around 1630 and dropped down below the broken cloud layer to about 5000 feet and flew right down the middle of the runway. We had to come in low in order to make a visual observation of activities and aircraft on ground. We must have surprised the Japanese because we did not receive any ground fire. However as we started our climb one Zero fighter made a frontal pass at us leaving a few bullet holes near the co-pilot. Sogaard headed for the nearest and biggest cumulus cloud and headed for home. Believe me we were a most lucky crew to survive the mission. On our return flight we had to make an emergence landing at Dobodura (Buna) which had recently fallen to the Americans. We landed at 2210. We had a giro problem and there was heavy weather over the mountains. After spending a rain soaked night in Dobodura we returned to Moresby.

April 1943 was a very memorable month for me. Early morning on 12 April we lost **Ken McCullar and his crew** and that same day, I flew my last mission. That evening we took off at 1800 for Bogia Harbor, near Wewak, to skip bomb naval vessels reported to be in the harbor. We found conditions at Bogia perfect for skip bombing. We mad a perfect run toward a ship in the harbor but our bombs did not release. Foolishly we decided to try again which proved disastrous. Our aircraft "LULU BELLE" and I received much damage and again our guardian angel was looking after us. **Frank Denault, Pilot and Lloyd Anderson, Co-Pilot**, managed to somehow get us back to Moresby and land about midnight. After a 5 week extended visit to the 10<sup>th</sup> Evac. Hospital in Moresby I was finally released and sent home for reassignment.

Another item of interest to the 43<sup>rd</sup>, especially those who were with the group in 1942 and 1943. I recently read an article that "PLUTO" a 63<sup>rd</sup> B-17 lost on 27 March 1943 with **Gen. Ramey** on board had been located in the ocean near Hood Point. Many hours were spent searching for the General. Our crew flew a 10 hour mission covering the coast line from Port Moresby north to the Fly River Delta. The swamps in the delta would have swallowed anything that went down.

As of this date it does not look like Olga and I will attend the next reunion. I am 91 and Olga 86. Although we are in reasonably good health, our strength has just about left us and we find it difficult to travel. We miss the reunions as they were such a pleasure to us.

Sincerely, *Roger*

P.S. Sorry for the messy typing, my arthritic hands refuse to cooperate."

Roger, it is great! You can not imagine what a mess this newsletter would be in, if it were not for, Word Processing and Spelling Checker! Ed



\*\*\*\*\*43<sup>rd</sup> HUMOR\*\*\*\*\*

**From Jim Thompson and Max Axelsen**

Tom was in his 50's, retired and started a second career. However, he just couldn't seem to get to work on time. Everyday, 5, 10, 15 minutes late. But he was a good worker. Real sharp, so the Boss was in a quandary about how to deal with it. Finally, one day he called Tom into the office for a talk. "Tom, I have to tell you, I like your work ethic, you do a bang-up job, but you're being late so often is quite bothersome."

"Yes, I know Boss, and I am working on it."

"Well good, you are a team player. That's what I like to hear. It's odd though, you're coming late. I know you're retired from the Air Force. What did they say if you came in late there?"

They said, "Good morning, General!!"

**From Ann Fletcher**

**The Pastor's Business Card**

The new pastor was visiting in the homes of his parishioners. At one house it seemed obvious that some one was at home, but no answer came to his repeated knocks at the door. Therefore, he took out a business card and wrote "Revelation 3:20" on the back on the back of it and stuck it in the door.

When the offering was processed the following Sunday, he found that his card had been returned. Added to it was this cryptic message, "Genesis 3:10." Reaching for his Bible to check out the citation, he broke up into gales of laughter. Revelation 3:20 begins "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Genesis 3:10 reads, "I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid for I was naked."

Remember when the funniest jokes were the clean ones? They still are!

"A cheerful heart is good medicine" (Prov. 17:22)

\*\*\*\*\*MORE QUOTES\*\*\*\*\*

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and to have the two as close together as possible.—George Burns

Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint.—Mark Twain

Santa Claus has the right idea! Visit people only once a year.—Victor Borge

We could certainly slow the aging process down if it had to work its way through Congress.—Will Rogers

Don't worry about avoiding temptation..as you grow older, it will avoid you.—Winston Churchill

Only Irish coffee provides in a single glass all four essential food groups: alcohol, caffeine, sugar and fat!—Alex Levine



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 Elia Pierce at 1101 E. Coliseum Dr., P.O. Box 360, Snyder, TX 79550-0360. It is most important that C/O Elia 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 43<sup>rd</sup> 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](mailto:Edgammill@aol.com). Any material received after the 15<sup>th</sup> 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 43<sup>rd</sup> Elf, Elia Pierce, at the address shown above. Send her all changes of phone numbers, etc. also.

\*\*\*\*\*PETTUS MANUSCRIPT\*\*\*\*\*

The pages that follow are the continuation of the edited version of the James Pettus manuscript of the B-24 era of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group from May 1, 1945 thru June 30, 1945. The pages are numbered to continue in sequence with the previous chapters from March 1, 1945 thru April 30, 1945.

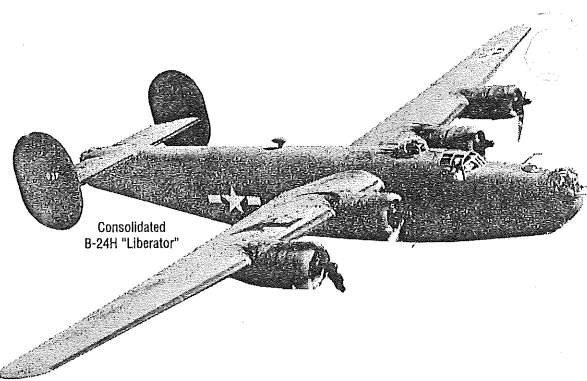
Additional information is the Steve Perrone letter and George Anderson's added information re the Pettus Manuscripts.

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

These enclosures will assist you in preparing for the Reunion.

- 1&2 Events and Description of Tours-2 pages
- 3-ACTIVITIES REGISTRATION FORM
- 4-FLYER announcing the Philadelphia/Valley Forge Reunion
- 5-TRAVEL INFORMATION Please note the item at the bottom of this flyer. For planning purposes, it is important that you furnish this information to Alfred Hagen's office as soon as possible.





# WORLD WAR II

## B-24

### "Snoopers"

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NJSG · P.O. BOX 100 · SOMERDALE, NEW JERSEY 08083

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4/12/07

Ed Gammill  
5415 E. Osborn Rd.  
Phoenix, AZ 85018-6106

Dear Ed,

I read through the April 2007 Newsletter and I'm responding to your request for the correct number of Bill Williams plane for the mission described on pages 81 and 82. The correct number is #676.

Three versions of the Bill Williams mission were included in my history, World War II B-24 "Snoopers" plus several Roland Fisher missions and the complete combat missions diary of Art Millard who flew the first 63rd BS Snooper mission with Squadron Commander Col. Edward W. Scott as co-pilot.

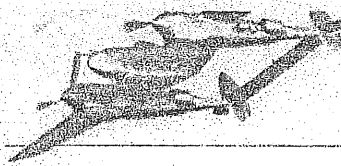
Back to the Bill Williams mission: the best version of this mission was written by Radio Operator Vernon Phillips who was among the wounded on this mission but died several years before my history was published. Another wonderful story about this mission: Several months after my book was published, I received a call from Robert Williams (no relation) who was Bill William's navigator and the person that Bill Williams credits for getting them back to Clark Field. Robert said he and Bill lost track of each other some twenty years ago and they had been the best of friends. I gave him Bill Williams' address and telephone number and they visited. Bill called me and thanked me for bringing them back together.

Your name sounds familiar--I thought you purchased one of my books but I could be wrong. The last three or so reunions I attended I displayed my book in the memorabilia room but received little interest. I did give a copy to our group historian as I recall.

Regards,

The records and exploits of the "Snooper" Squadrons were almost  
a forgotten adventure of the Pacific War Theater





## HISTORY IN BLUE

A 5-MINUTE HISTORY LESSON

### AIR FORCE BATTLES

# Japanese barrage couldn't kill B-24

By Robert F. Dorr  
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Before dawn on March 28, 1945, a lone B-24 Liberator bomber took off from Clark Field, Philippines, piloted by 1st Lt. Bill Williams with 12 men aboard.

"This became our worst day of the war," said Williams, 78, of Poulsbo, Wash. "I feel very lucky to be here today."

The mission of the B-24 was "to look for a Japanese ship convoy at sea between Singapore and Indochina," said Stephen M. Perrone, 83, of Somerdale, N.J., a veteran of B-24 combat and author of the book "World War II B-24 Snoopers."

At 10:30 a.m., the B-24 crew found four large merchant ships, protected by a light cruiser, three destroyers and two destroyer escorts.

"Not many people realize that American bombers waged a campaign against Japanese convoys," Perrone said. "The story of Bill Williams' crew illustrates what this fighting was like."

Williams' B-24 belonged to the 63rd Bomb Squadron "Seahawks" of the 43rd Bomb Group, part of the 5th Air Force.

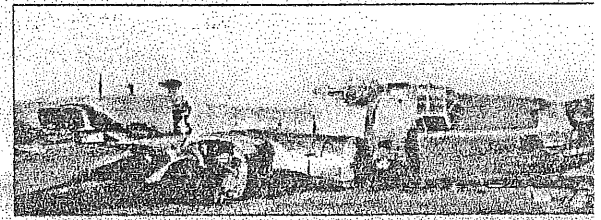
Out to sink ships and ready for a low-level attack, Williams began his run with every gun in the convoy shooting at the B-24.

"We dropped three bombs on the last guy in the convoy, a huge tanker," Williams said, "but they failed to detonate. That, unfortunately, was not unusual. We had numerous in-



PHOTOS BY STEPHEN M. PERRONE

First Lt. (later Capt.) Bill Williams' B-24 Liberator crew shortly before the March 1945 mission. Pilot Williams is kneeling second from left. Co-pilot 2nd Lt. Bennie Siler (kneeling, left) and Sgt. Thompson (not shown) were killed in action during the crew's battle with Japanese ships and fighters.



The Williams crew's B-24 Liberator after crash landing at Clark in the Philippines.

stances during the war when our bombs didn't work."

As Williams pulled up, gunfire riddled the rear fuselage of the B-24. Tail gunner Sgt. Morris Rifkin was wounded.

"There were five bombs left in the Liberator's bay," Williams said. "On the second run, we dropped all five. Two hit the tanker and ignited a violent explosion."

The crew later said the ship listed sharply to port and belched black smoke.

The B-24's elevator con-

trols were badly damaged by gunfire from the ship. Williams turned the bomber to limp home as the B-24 came under attack from two silver-colored Nakajima Ki-43 fighters known to the Americans as Oscars.

The attack by the fighters began with a burst of cannon fire that slammed the B-24 cockpit and instantly killed co-pilot 2nd Lt. Bennie Siler.

"They blew open the

See B-24 next

## B-24

From previous page

of the airplane," Williams said.

"They blew Siler's head off."

When Sgt. Dale Thompson scrambled back to take the wounded tail gunner's place, the Oscars made a second pass and shot up the rear fuselage of the B-24. Thompson was killed.

"Everybody else was wounded," Williams said. "We got 10 Purple Hearts that day."

Williams said that he and an extra gunner that bumped the 11-man crew to a 12-man team did not get the Purple Heart.

It was only the beginning of an ordeal. The Japanese fighters swarmed around the B-24 and shot out its No. 3 engine. In a third and fourth firing pass, the Oscars damaged other engines and destroyed the top turret guns.

Struggling with his controls in the damaged cockpit and with wind rushing into his face, Williams dove the bomber into cloud cover and escaped the fighters.

With only two fully functioning engines, Williams began the six-hour flight that took the bomber back to Clark Field, uncertain whether he would be able to land when he got there.

"The others were lucky,"

Williams said, "I was the only one who knew how bad it was. We could have flown inland and bailed out over Japanese-held territory, but I didn't want to do that with wounded men on board. So we struggled to get home, throwing everything we could out of the plane to reduce weight."

Williams credits the navigator, 2nd Lt. Robert Williams (no relation) with getting the B-24 back to Clark Field under extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

Even then, the day was not over. "We had no radio contact. So we were going to fly over the field and shoot flares to warn them we were making an emergency land-

ing," Bill Williams said. "We fired flares and they didn't work. We couldn't get the flaps down. We

couldn't get the gear down. Finally, the engineer crawled into the nose and cranked the gear down manually."

But a wheel collapsed the instant the B-24 touched the runway.

"We hit hard," Williams said. "The plane turned around three or four times and broke into several pieces. Fortunately, it didn't catch fire."

In a remarkable achievement of survival, 10 of the 12 crew members walked away from the bomber and were rushed to medical care.

Pilot Williams later received Silver Star for his role in saving the plane and crew.

"The mission was a symbol of all those we flew," said veteran and author Perrone. "Soon afterward, Gen. MacArthur's headquarters told us that Japanese shipping lanes in the region were practically deserted."

Perrone believes B-24 anti-sipping patrols were responsible for denying navigation on the high seas to the foe. □

Robert F. Dorr, an Air Force veteran, lives in Oakton, Va. He is the author of numerous books on Air Force topics, including "Air Force One." His e-mail address is robertdorr@aol.com.



MAY 1945

May 1, 1945. This May Day the target was to be Kagi Town and spreading destruction over Formosa. The Japanese had a secret weapon, the weather, so May Day turned into another day like April 26<sup>th</sup> and Toshien. KEN'S MEN rained incendiaries all over western Formosa. Several planes hit Kagi by H2X, but the returns on the scopes were not good, so there is no telling where those bombs went. Squadrons and elements separated and there was little concern of interception as fighter-cover ranged up and down the west coast. Tainan caught 92 bombs and fires were started. Elements cruised until they saw an opening and then they looked for a target. Two planes hit Toko and 2 more hit Koshun, and Takeo, Doheki, Kobi and Shabo all got the treatment. Other groups were in the area encountering the same experiences. One 65<sup>th</sup> plane was intercepted with no damage resulting. Only over Tainan was the AA effective; it holed 5 planes.

This night and into the next morning the Sea Hawks sent 2 planes to the China Sea, the Hainan Strait and the Gulf of Tonkin. They found nothing even though they searched close to the mainland shoreline where ships might be hugging the coast for safety from submarines as well as aircraft. The planes bombed on their ETA and hopefully hit Kiungshan Drome.

Two H2X planes, 1 from the 65<sup>th</sup> and another from the 403<sup>rd</sup>, dropped 1000 lb. demos on Kiirun with unobserved results due to cloud cover. Kiirun Harbor had a good return on the H2X. One night fighter was seen but it caused no damage.

May 2, 1945. The 43<sup>rd</sup> Group was off to help the 43<sup>rd</sup> Division near Ipo Dam northeast of Manila. Using frags the 3 squadrons managed 80% of their bombs in the target area. The weather was spotty and some planes made 3 runs over the target. "Snap Uncle," the ground controller, seemed to like the job done by the Group's planes.

This night Lt. Flinner, piloting #076, flew an anti-radar ferret from Clark to Hong Kong, Hainan, Saigon and back with no sightings. The plane did record lots of technical data. Following this flight, the 63<sup>rd</sup> took 2 days off to work on their planes.

May 3, 1945. The Group was off to Ipo Dam again with daisy cutter frags, 260 pounders with extension fuses. Thirteen planes made individual runs for over an hour, [some making as many as 12 runs]. The weather began to close in before all had dropped their bombs, so they dropped then either in the ocean or on the practice bombing range on Tabones Island. Again the ground controller liked the job done by the 43<sup>rd</sup>.

There was no night activity on the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>.

May 4, 1945. Again, on May 4<sup>th</sup> planes were loaded with 1000 lb. demos and were off to hit the Ipo Dam area, but the weather beat them to the desired location. This bombing had to be very precise to protect nearby American troops and Filipino civilians. The 65<sup>th</sup> and 403<sup>rd</sup> jettisoned their bombs safely in the water off east Luzon. The 64<sup>th</sup> brought theirs back to Clark.

It was left up to the squadron commander and the pilots to decide if they wanted to bring their bombs back. Certainly there was a risk if the plane had an accident and burned, especially on the runways or taxiways. Planes were usually not overloaded on landing as their fuel had been used, but some pilots did not wish to land with a load of bombs.

There was no criticism of them if that was their decision. The 63<sup>rd</sup> always jettisoned their bombs as they used Torpex HE bombs that were much more powerful and less stable



than the ordinary HEs. Strike squadrons were not permitted to carry Torpex bombs while in formation as any could be set off by impact of AA fragments, a direct hit by machine gun or cannon. In the early days of the war there was a shortage of bombs, but this was no longer the case, and it was really up to the pilot if the bombs were brought back or dumped safely.

This night the Sea Hawks went back to work with 4 planes on the Shanghai beat. Each plane had a bomb load of 4 X 500 lb. Torpex and 3500 gallons of gas with 2 bomb bay tanks. This permitted about 19 hours of endurance. The planes were to search the Whangpoo River and the mouth of the Yangtze. Capt. Rogers, in #099, was first off and had problems. His engineer injured his arm in the nose turret, but painful as it was, he said to press on. Then the command radio went out, so it was decided to make a short search and head back. Two hundred miles short of Shanghai they encountered a subchaser and attacked. Bombs were near misses, but brought the 350 ton craft to a halt and it was strafed. They claimed it as damaged and turned for home.

Lt. Williams, in #898, made a run on a Tare Baker, but had a malfunction of his bomb release and got shot at a lot for his trouble. So he looked elsewhere and found a target with a large funnel and the bombardier jettisoned the load on it - a lighthouse.

Lt. Phillips, in #812, bombed 2 ships, but missed and got his left tire shot out for the effort. This was Phillip's third such incident in 250 hours of combat time.

Lt. Carnavari, in #127, found no ships, so he hit the Standard Oil Docks and started a small fire.

May 5, 1945. The Group target was Shinchiku Drome [Jim Cherkauer's log shows Mako Air Drome], and the load was 100 lb. demos. Each squadron had an H2X lead, but the weather was CAVU. Hangers and revetments were the objectives in hopes that planes would be hiding there. Bombing was good with bombs falling in many of the revetments, adjacent hangers and shops. One SSF was destroyed and several fires were started, one with smoke to 2000'. A 65<sup>th</sup> plane with problems headed home early and dropped on Ryushu-Sho starting fires in 3 buildings. AA was moderate and holed 2 planes.

Only one 63<sup>rd</sup> plane was out seeking targets on the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> as sightings from the night before and air recco showed U.S subs near the blind bombing line. So the lone plane out was to stay far up river from the mouth of the Yangtze. Lt. Wilson, in #099, dropped on a tug and barge, but missed and then strafed. The target was claimed damaged; the other 2 bombs were dropped blind through haze with unobserved results. Lt. Morley did an anti-radar ferret along the China coast from Amoy to Shanghai.

H2X 64<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> planes went to Takao Drome with frags in hopes of finding planes on the ground. Bombs were seen to fall in the ramp and revetment areas, but no fires were observed. They could spot no planes on the ground due to a haze. AA was slight, and fighters followed both planes, but did not fire. The B-24s did not fire so as not to give away their positions.

May 6, 1945. Twenty-one KEN'S MEN made Toshien their target this day only to find the target protected by weather. Much damage was done, however, but they got a lot of flak. Many buildings were destroyed and big fires were started by the 65<sup>th</sup>, one of whose planes had an engine shot out. It jettisoned its bombs and was able to keep up with the squadron after leaving the target. The squadron slowed down for him as a Tojo made threatening moves. The 403<sup>rd</sup> did not do well and had no excuses as only 30% of their



bombs fell in the target area. The 64<sup>th</sup> was on target and had a plane with a tire shot out. When the crew saw the flat on approach, the pilot pulled up and had the other tire shot out. He then landed with no trouble except new wheels would be needed.

This night Lt. Dolley, in #128, and Lt. Scroggs, in #898, went back to Shanghai and the Yangtze. Unaware of each other, they both found 3 ships, a DO and 2 merchant vessels that were stationary at the mouth of the Yangtze. Scroggs made an identification run and got a big dose of 20mm and MG fire. Swinging wide and getting everything lined up, he came back an hour later and went across again with no opposition, but was off line and didn't drop. On the third pass he dropped with unobserved results due to haze and fog. He was still 8 hours from base, so he headed back. According to the navigator's logs, Lt. Dolley made a run a few minutes before Scroggs' first pass and scored a hit forward on the destroyer, but did not silence its guns. He came back for the next run and found fierce AA from the DD and from Hegsha Island. As their bombs smashed into the DD, a 20mm seriously wounded the rear turret gunner (can't find name) in the face and hands. He subsequently lost an eye. The bomb hit amidships, causing an explosion that blazed up for a bit and then was obscured by the fog and mist. A few minutes later Scroggs came back for a second run, but probably not over the DD. In any event, there was no flak and after making a third run, he headed home. Dolley circled getting back on course and making the wounded gunner as comfortable as possible. As he did so they saw the DD slip from the radar screen. The B-24 was holed in the rudder and left elevator, but not seriously. One night fighter made a brief appearance but caused no trouble. The DD sank in shallow water and subsequently crews could see its superstructure and stacks above water at low tide.

At 0400 hours a 64<sup>th</sup> H2X bomber dropped 12 X 250 lb. incendiaries on Taihoku town from 11,500' causing at least 1 fire. The plane exited the area as a night fighter was nosing around and it was getting light.

May 7, 1945. There was no Group strike this date.

The night of the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> one plane went to Shanghai and another flew the Hong Kong/Swatow search area. Neither found any shipping. En route to Shanghai Major Link, piloting #130, picked up a radar indication near the blind bomb zone. Getting no IFF return, he dropped a flare. Whatever had been there was now gone. A submarine? Whose? Three bombs missed the Texas Depot on Gough Island. The H2X/Swatow plane dropped on Tien Ho Drome, but only bomb bursts were seen.

May 8, 1945. Bashing the Japanese still holding out on Luzon was the mission this date. There was no escape for the enemy, and they would not surrender, so it was peck away at them and not waste American lives. Bombing would make their life miserable and eliminate some gradually; they would be worn down and a few would surrender; others would die of disease and at the hands of the Filipino guerrillas. At Echague the enemy had a supply and personnel area in very difficult terrain and what was left of an airstrip. Filipinos relayed that Japanese planes had been in at night, but this was not verified by American radar. Bomb runs were individual with 95% falling in the assigned targets. There was no fire, and no AA - a real mild run.

This night and next morning 5 Sea Hawk planes were out. Lt. Williams, in #127, looked in on Amoy en route and bombed a good radar return - a reef. He then tried for 2 mine sweepers, but their evasive action was too good. He had AA from the ships but with no damage. #398 returned early with radio failure. Capt. Rogers, in #807, reached Taihoku



on Formosa. His objective was the government center and incendiaries were the load. Dropping from 4500', the bombs were on target and fires were started. One was visible for 25 miles. The plane went on to search for shipping but found none. Lt. Flinner, in #694, also was headed to Taihoku, but received a message to go to Canton and carry out a shipping search. With a headwind and weather Canton was too far with the bomb load, so he was told to jettison and proceed. The plane went to Canton, but found no ships; weather recco 100% complete. The last plane of the night was an anti-radar ferret to Shanghai. This unarmed plane spotted 2 ships of medium size, but there were no armed planes in the area to make an attack.

May 9, 1945. Tien Ho Drome near Canton, China, was the Group target, and 21 planes made it to the target. Two H2X planes were in the lead as the weather was 8/10 in some places. Bombing was mostly visual as holes appeared at opportune times. Fires were started and several planes were destroyed on the ground. AA was plentiful and the 65<sup>th</sup> had 2 planes damaged. P-38s were much in evidence. Thousands of copies of newssheet with world events in Japanese were also dropped. [Some 9 hours and 45 minutes later the planes were returning to Clark Field.]

This night and next morning five 63<sup>rd</sup> planes were out. Two went to the Hong Kong/Canton area to be sure that the weather was reported. Lts. Dolley and Scroggs, in #s 809 and 126, were to disrupt the government at Taihoku and they did so. Dolley went over and started big fires to lead Scroggs in. There was little interference with #809, but when #129 arrived, more than 24 lights caught the plane and held it. Scroggs got his bombs on the money, but flak clattered around and night fighters were in evidence. The crew was glad to find friendly darkness. Near Canton Lt. Phillips sank a stationary lugger and went on to Tien Ho Drome to use the rest of his bombs and report weather. There was grey smoke to 500' when he left. Also, Lt. Horley did an ETA run there, but as the overcast had rolled in, results were unobserved. Near Shanghai, Lt. Wilson, in #812, had a bout with a frigate, but could only claim it as damaged. He had used all his flares to be sure that it was not a reef, and although his last bombs were a near miss and/or a hit, he could not ascertain whether or not it would sink.

May 10, 1945. Despite 2 weather planes in the Canton area on May 10<sup>th</sup>, the Group strike to University Drome, Canton, was a washout. "Gangway" leader told crews to turn back as the front was too tough to get through. Only 1 element of the 65<sup>th</sup> pressed on, and using H2X dropped on the revetment area and probably destroyed 2 fighters on the ground. AA was moderate resulting in no damage and there was no interception. An unarmed 63<sup>rd</sup> weather recco in the Luzon Strait was easy going for Lt. Williams and crew in #894 this night and early morning. It was left to Major Link en route to Shanghai to bring out the enemy night fighters. Four or 5 enemy night fighters escorted Major Link for an hour and a half. They kept the B-24 gunners on alert, but as far as they could tell only 1 green rocket/missile was fired across the nose of the B-24. The night fighters were finally lost in the clouds. Due to bomb release problems, the plane made an unsuccessful attack on a frigate. On the way home night fighters again picked up the plane and stayed with it for up to 2 hours but never attacked. Lt. Croft, also en route to Shanghai, got an IFF return of some 20 signals in the Formosa Strait. A quick check with the U.S.N. advised no friendly ships in the area and it remained a mystery. The plane had no success attacking the secondary target. Lt. Flinner flew an anti-radar ferret to the Gulf of Tonkin.



- May 11, 1945. The military facilities at Toshien Town were the targets for the Group. The bombing was good, and the incendiaries started many fires with the smoke going up to 3000'. The AA was intense and accurate holing 10 planes. A 65<sup>th</sup> plane had 2 men injured, one seriously, and it slipped out of formation after dropping its bombs. This B-24 was some distance from the rest of the Group's planes and heading for Luzon when it was intercepted by a single plane. Although no damage resulted it was another example of the danger of getting out of formation. This plane would only have arrived at Clark a few minutes sooner than the formation. Leaflets were also dropped. [Perhaps Jim Pettus was unaware that after a mission to Formosa we seldom stayed in formation when heading home except for the first few minutes away from the target.] Early the next morning, 0205 hours, a 403<sup>rd</sup> H2X B-24 dropped a load of frags on Tien Ho Drome near Canton. The lone Sea Hawk out this night and morning was piloted by Lt. Fullenwinder who headed to Shanghai where intelligence had reported numerous ships in the harbor. All he could find was a Sugar Dog and a subchaser. Rack trouble prevented the total destruction of the vessels but they were strafed.
- May 12, 1945. Weather was an unpredictable science and on May 12<sup>th</sup> the V Bomber forecasters were at their worst. Sixteen Group planes took off for ground support at Lal-Lo in the Cagayan Valley. All bombs were jettisoned at sea as the target was 10/10 covered. This night and into the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup> one 63<sup>rd</sup> plane went to the old hunting ground around Hainan and Haiphong Harbor, but with no success. Lt. Phillips, in #807, found that small islands and reefs around the entrance to the harbor clouded the scope and made radar runs too tricky. With limited visibility and a solid undercast he made an ETA run over Hoi How. Lt. Canevari, in #127, went to Shanghai and had the old reef problem. He then dropped on a frigate but missed.
- May 13, 1945. Once again the Group tried to help the Army, but they needed good weather to be successful. Seventeen planes stayed in the Ban Bang area for over an hour as the clouds got thicker. They then called it a day. At the very start of the planes arriving in the area a 403<sup>rd</sup> plane was able to drop bombs, but the results were impossible to measure. The plane did drop leaflets urging the Japanese to surrender and giving instructions as to how it could be done. The other planes jettisoned their bombs. This night and next morning one 63<sup>rd</sup> plane flew to Tien Ho Drome and another flew to Shanghai. Lt. Scroggs took #025 over the drome and walked 15 X 260 lb. frags throughout the dispersal area. Bomb bursts were seen but no fires. There were a few searchlights, but after the run the enemy was glad to see him gone. Lt. Dolley went to Shanghai and found only a Sugar Dog and missed. One 65<sup>th</sup> H2X hit Shinchiku with a load of incendiaries and started 4 large fires. Night fighters intercepted but were uneager to engage. Twelve searchlights held the plane for 2 minutes, but the bombs were dropped from 10,000' at 2240 hours.
- May 14, 1945. The Group had a new target, Hosan Town, and a new bomb load 100 lb. napalm incendiaries. These were actually 100 lb. practice bombs filled with napalm rather than sand. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Group had preceded the 43<sup>rd</sup>, and the area was well covered with smoke. About 34 tons of inflammables were dropped, but how much of the city was burned out



would have to wait for the photo reconnaissance. AA was accurate on the 64<sup>th</sup> holding 3 of its planes.

This night and into the next morning 3 Sea Hawks were out. One headed to Shanghai and the other 2 were to be reccos after bombing their primaries. Major Link encountered such heavy weather that he did not make Shanghai and went to the target of last resort, Mako. There the bombs fell in the water. Lt. Croft went to Takao that had given much pain in the past, but he dropped frags on the drome from 5000' with no interference. Departing and heading north he picked up 2 planes on radar, and 5 minutes later had two rockets pass very close to his plane's nose without ever seeing the enemy planes. As they flew by Okayama they saw it was still burning from day strikes.

An attack on Tien Ho was to have a first attached to it. A photo was to be taken of the bombing and/or the target. S/Sgts. Dagamn and Tarcliffe had been working for a long time to get the right equipment lined up to get flash pictures. This night was to be the test. All went according to plan. The bombs were dropped and a few seconds later the flash went off and the deed was done. Two night fighters were around, but they gave the bomber no trouble. In the morning the S/Sgts. developed the film and found they had good pictures of the wrong airdrome. The film showed a drome with more activity than was believed to have been there. This was an unplanned bonus and a good job. There no doubt would be more night photos.

At 0259 hours a 64<sup>th</sup> H2X bomber dropped frags over Taihoku from 11,000'. There was a solid undercast with searchlight probing the mist. A few AA shots were well off target. Scope pictures were not too good. One of the reasons for these missions was to get practice with the equipment and learn its limitations. Scope pictures were also taken for comparison with other photos and the actual terrain.

May 15, 1945. The Group sent 19 B-24s to hit Shinchiku, but only 16 made it. They were attempting to get all of the planes over the target in 5 minutes or less so as to limit their exposure to AA. Crews took to this tactic without question and began to fly better formations. Targets were harder to hit and squadrons could not make last minute corrections. It would also require some different targeting. About 50% of these bombs were in the assigned areas, but even those outside were in other target designations. Planes that did not hit the primary dropped on other coastal cities and scooted for home. All had some mechanical problem. In 1 case a 403<sup>rd</sup> rack did not check out on the way up and they knew they would have to jettison, so they dumped on Ryuku Sho Island with a nice fireball.

Two 63<sup>rd</sup> planes went out this night. One headed to Shanghai and the other to Tien Ho. Both carried bombs to hit the enemy, but they also were to report weather in detail. Lt. Flinner went to Shanghai and saw a Sugar Dog and dispatched it with 1 bomb. Two bombs on an unidentified target could not be verified due to a flare not going off. Lt. Phillips, in #694, got caught in the lights of Tien Ho and had to go back for a second run due to his bombardier being blinded. This time frags hit off the dispersal area and into buildings and the depot. After bombing, he headed to Amoy. While en route there a bandit fired a rocket from 8 o'clock, but it gave them no further trouble. All the rockets observed seemed to come from angles such that it was difficult to make a hit (thank goodness), and this was the subject of much debate. So far there were no stern attacks or head-on passes that were the favorites in the European Theater.

Also out this night was an anti-radar ferret to Shanghai. On the way north they picked up a possible convoy of 9 ships and they reported this and continued on course. Seventy-



five miles east of Shanghai they were picked up by 2 night fighters that flew one on each side of the B-24 while signaling to each other. One fired a green flare while the other fired a glowing rocket from 4 o'clock, but it fell short. Both then disappeared. The B-24 stayed in the area for another 3 hours reporting weather in detail when another night fighter appeared. It was time to head home, so the bomber took evasive action to shake the bandit but this used up enough fuel that they landed at Lingayen for fuel.

May 16, 1945. The Group had 17 B-24s take off with 16 making it to the primary target, Taichu Drome. They dropped frags to hit aircraft on the ground. Some 90% of the bombs fell on the target and several planes on the ground were known to be destroyed. Nearby barracks were also put to the torch. There was a great deal of AA that holed 5 planes but caused no injuries. There was some white phosphorus that gave a good show but seldom did any harm. There would be more and more raids on aircraft on the ground as the Kamikaze was becoming a growing hazard as an official policy and not just individual bravado. This also marked the time that the enemy was making dummy airplanes to appear as real ones and attract our bombing them. Of course these dummy planes had no fuel in them so they did not burn even when hit. One 65<sup>th</sup> plane experiencing engine problems turned back and dropped on a village west of Tainan. For this ingenuity, the plane was met with a good deal of AA that put one small hole in the plane. This night [Jim dated this as the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup>, but I am sure he meant 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> as he also lists the former dates coming up in their proper place.] Shanghai was given a pass this night at it had been unproductive, so two 63<sup>rd</sup> planes went to Nanking. Lt. Wilson, in #812, hit the rail terminal at Pukow. Wilson arrived unexpectedly and unannounced until the bombs hit. The city was lit up, and when the bombs hit the alert rocket was seen to go up. 4 X 250 lb. and 2 X 500 lb. Torpex bombs demolished a roundhouse, fired warehouses and blew up tracks. Fires could be seen for 20 miles. Two hours later Lt. Fullenwinder came over the target while guided by the fires. He was 2 hours late taking off due to mechanical problems. He put 4 X 500 lb. Torpex slightly to the east of the fires and started 3 more. Photos by the photo/flash flare were to bring back proof of this bombing, but searchlights set the camera shutter off before the bombs went off, so there were no pix. He made several runs to observe the damage and then headed home, but with some bandits trailing along. One plane fired and the tail gunner replied, but no hits were made on either side. AA was slight to medium with no hits. On the way home they strafed some barracks at dawn on the Pescadores and also tried to hit a lighthouse. Two other B-24s were out that night. Lt. Canevari, in #807, made 3 runs on Tien Ho before the bombs would release. When the crew observed no damage, they flew on to Swatow to report the weather. Night fighters blinking their lights followed the plane for some time but did not fire. In #126, Lt. Scroggs found Takao totally blacked out. He dropped bombs on the runways and dispersal areas but started no fires. They encountered a great deal of ground haze. This same night a 403<sup>rd</sup> H2X weather recco went south of Foochow, then to Hong Kong and then back to Matayama Drome to drop frags. The bombs dropped long and there appeared to be no damage. One night fighter was around and kept his lights on. This night fighter's lights being on was another subject of long discussion. Were they signaling each other? But in this case there was only the 1 plane, but still he flicked his lights on or turned on different ones.



May 17, 1945. There was no Group strike this day.

This night the Sea Hawks sent out 4 planes. Two headed to Nanking with hopes of results like those of last night. Alas, this was not to be. Lt. Dolley's bombs were all duds and Lt. Morlery's landed in the rail yards away from the congested areas. One small fire was all he got for a long night's work. AA was meager and inaccurate and night fighters were airborne. Leaflets were also dropped.

An armed weather recco loaded with napalm in 55 gallon drums headed north up the China coast. He was to drop these on Takao while heading north. Dropping these drums involved a bit of sighting guess work as there was no trail angle for a 55 gallon drums. Each drum had an igniter inside. They hit some buildings and caused 4 big fires visible for 35 miles. These 400 lb. incendiaries were declared a success, but they were cumbersome to load and a harness had to be fitted to each to hang it on the shackle. The igniter presented a problem fitting it while in flight. The plug had to be removed so the filler hole had to be at the very top when the drum was in place. Major Link hit buildings and the dispersal area at Tien Ho Drome but saw nothing. Flares dropped on subsequent runs showed no sign of planes on the ground. Leaflets were also left at the drome and at several regions nearby.

At 0202 on May 18<sup>th</sup>, a 65<sup>th</sup> H2X plane gave Taihoku Town the 55 gallon drum treatment that started fires visible for 40 miles. Night fighters were a nuisance and made numerous passes, but only fired once. Some heavy AA caused damage to the nose turret and earned the gunner the Purple Heart. There were lots of lights that did not seem to be distracted by rope.

May 18, 1945. The Group sent 21 planes with frags and 2000 lb. demos to blast parked planes on the ramps and taxiways at Tainan Drome. [AA was intense and accurate. Lt. James J. Franklin, in #358, received a direct hit and his plane exploded.] This plane was loaded with frags and it is possible some went off. [Not just possible, as they did go off and several hundred pieces of shrapnel riddled #373, piloted by Lt. Cherkauer on Franklin's right wing. This story was written up in one of our newsletters of about a year ago.] In any event, the plane plunged to earth, a mass of flames, and with no chutes seen. The plane flying nearest #358 received a massive dose of the explosion, knocking some 200 holes in it and wounding 3 men. The bombardier, who was over his bomb sight, was knocked unconscious. [This is a very controversial issue not to be taken up here.] Bombs were salvoed by the copilot [actually by the pilot] as a fire started in #2 engine [there was smoke and flames in the bomb bays at the time and #1 engine was also in flames]. They got the fire[s] under control and headed south [with #1 and #2 props feathered but being able to get #1 engine to put out some power an hour or so later], landing at Lingayen to leave the wounded at the hospital. But the bad day for the 65<sup>th</sup> was not over. As they pulled off the run another 65<sup>th</sup> plane was hit, its #4 engine went out and its #3 engine began to run away as the prop governor went out. [Actually, Lt. Wilt, flying on Franklin's left wing, was also blasted by the frags from Franklin's plane at the same time that #373 was hit by frags. All 3 planes had been hit directly by AA at about the same instant, but only Franklin's plane blew up.] When Wilt's plane got down to 6000', the crew bailed out. All 11 chutes were seen to open, but 2 men went under before rescue could get them out and they disappeared. [Rescue was by a couple of Cats and the 2 men who were not found were reportedly not wearing Mae Wests due to a shortage in the squadron when it put up 7 planes with approximately 72 or more men.] The 65<sup>th</sup> lost 14 men killed or missing and 8 wounded/injured on this one mission.



The 403<sup>rd</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> did pretty well, but there were not many planes in the target areas. Some 403<sup>rd</sup> bombs were sent long but hit in shops and a motor pool. One 403<sup>rd</sup> plane never found its squadron and bombed Taichu with the 90<sup>th</sup> Group.

This night and the next morning saw 7 Sea Hawks out. Two headed to Nanking; 1 weather recco went to Takeo but aborted due to engine failure; 1 weather recco was off to Canton; 2 went to Taihoku; and 1 ferret was out. Lt. Phillips and Lt. Canevari went to Nanking and the first to arrive found the city lights on. Their bombs fell on the railway terminal but with no dramatic results. Leaflets were dropped, the AA was slight and there were no searchlights. The bombing at Canton and the China coast weather recco were spoiled by very bad conditions over Canton. The target of University Drome could not be found, so after spending several hours in the vicinity, the aircraft had completed 85% of its recco and went to Paratas Reef to bomb the radar stations at dawn but with little damage. Lts. Wilson and Scroggs went to Taihoku with napalm, but heavy rain prevented an accurate assessment of the drops. There were night fighters in evidence, making several firing passes but were well away. The ferret was a bust as it was to plot Taihoku night fighters and go to the Pescadores, but the radar went out completely. Although the crew did most of the route by dead reckoning while trying to get the radar operating, it was fruitless.

May 19, 1945. Eighteen Group planes carrying 2000 lb. demos hit the rail yards and adjacent buildings at Kiirun Harbor causing 1 huge explosion with smoke to 4000'. AA holed 3 planes. One B-24 took off late and bombed the seaplane base at Toku. A 403<sup>rd</sup> crew saw a mid-air collision of 2 B-25s near Lingayen; one was seen to crash and burn. Four 63<sup>rd</sup> planes loaded with frags were out this night and next morning; two to Nanking and weather reccos that dropped on University Drome and Takao. Nanking was very tough due to haze and ground fog. Both runs were by ETA and results were unobserved. Lights did probe through the mist and there was some medium AA. One night fighter was seen. News sheets were dropped giving all the latest news in Japanese. At Takau 6 drums of napalm started 6 fires visible for 40 miles. Then the aircraft made a calm recco to Amoy and reported weather. Lt. Dolley woke them up at University Drome by stringing 260 lb. frags through revetments, but he saw no damage. On the run 5 lights came up, but rope threw them off. The recco then went south for weather reporting. At 0350 on May 20<sup>th</sup>, a 64<sup>th</sup> H2X hit Taihoku from 10,000' with 7 napalm drums. Fires were seen for 10 miles and there was no opposition of any kind.

May 20, 1945. There was no group strike this date.

This night the 63<sup>rd</sup> was back looking for shipping. Lts. Croft and Wilson headed for the Yangtze. Croft in, #812, picked up 2 strong radar returns near Hangchow Bay. A flare showed it to be a 4000 ton Fox Baker, stationary and a real prize. On the first run 2 bombs fell short; on the second a 500 pounder was 75' short; on the third run a 500 lb. Torpex hit the water amidships causing a great plume of steam and debris. There was no opposition and the ship sank inside a half hour. He dropped his last bomb on a moving ship not far away but missed. Wilson had no such luck, and after a long search, he dropped on the Texas Oil Depot that was cloaked in heavy rain.

This night and morning there were 2 weather reccos with stops at Takao and Tien Ho to drop calling cards, frags at Tien Ho and napalm at Takao. One plane was probably destroyed at Tien HO and large fires were started at Takao.



May 21, 1945. A 65<sup>th</sup> plane went on a weather recco to Hong Kong/Canton with a side duty to take photos of Kitchen Bay and Tunk River shipping. This was a bit dicey and had to be done soon after dawn. There were too many enemy fighters in the area for them to be alone long. As soon as photos were done, they headed home and sent their last weather report.

There was no Group strike on this date.

Two 63<sup>rd</sup> planes flew to Shanghai/Yangtze again this night and next morning. They found ships. At 0100 Lt. Phillips found a Fox Tare Dog (1000 tons) near the river mouth and made a run. Dropping 2 bombs, a 250 lb. and a 500 lb. Torpex, he got a direct hit with the second and the ship sank in a few minutes. Five miles away they found a Fox Tare Charlie (3500 tons) and the bombardier, Lt. Greffe, dispatched it with the remaining 4 bombs, one of which made a direct hit. Lt. Wilson, in #126, searched until almost dawn before he found a target, but it was a good one, a Sugar Charlie Love (4000 ton tanker). A 500 lb. Torpex hitting on the stern superstructure soon sent the aft portion of the ship under the waves with the bow pointing skyward. While waiting for the tanker to go down bombs were dropped on a dredge and on a patrol boat. It was a good night after a long dry spell of no sinkings. Lt. Dolley flew a long anti-radar ferret to Hainan, Hong Kong, Amoy and back.

May 22, 1945 [Date not shown in manuscript, but it must be this date.] The weather over Formosa was very poor, and the Group's primary target Jitsugetsu was closed in as was the secondary, Kiirun. So they took their 2000 pounders to Toshien and hit the barracks. Using both 50/50 visual and H2X most bombs were in the barracks complex. At least 8 large barracks were destroyed and a number of fires were started. AA holed 4 planes wounding 1 man slightly.

This night a 64<sup>th</sup> weather recco dropped by Takao and left 7 X 55 gallons drums of napalm that started small fires. AA was accurate and holed the plane once. The recco was 100% complete to Amoy and return.

After the success of the previous night four 63<sup>rd</sup> B-24s went back to Shanghai/Hangtze. The blind bombing zone was within 50 miles of Shanghai, and the Texas Oil Depot was the secondary. Lt. Scroggs, in #898, had radar failure and returned early. The 3 that reached the area found no success; 1 missed a ship; the other 2 dropped on the oil depot. Most of the bombs failed to explode. This caused great anguish to have gone to so much trouble and danger and then not have the bombs go off. The reasons for this were given intense study because it seemed to happen more often on land targets with the Torpex bombs than when bombs were dropped on surface ships.

May 23, 1945. Again there was no Group strike this day.

Two Sea Hawks were off to Shanghai this night and next morning, but they found few targets. Shortly after 2400 hours Lt. Fullenwider found a Fox Tare Charlie (1500 tons), and with his last bomb he hit it in the stern. Number 127 circled for half an hour after seeing the ship hit, but it could wait no longer to see if the ship sank. It was claimed as damaged. Lt. Canevari found no shipping and dropped short at the oil depot. Leaflets were dropped over Shanghai proper. Night fighters were around and fired on #127 inflicting no damage.

Lt. Dolley, in #943, made an anti-radar trip over Taihoku to get plots on the guns firing at the 22<sup>nd</sup>'s Group H2X plane and also to see what radar were guiding night fighters to the nightly B-24 visitors. In all the ferret made 9 runs over the area. "Clay pigeons,



that's what we were," was Dolley's comment at the debriefing. However, there was no damage from the AA or from the 4 night fighters that were around.

This same night the 64<sup>th</sup> drew 2 H2X sorties. One went to Takao warehouses and the other to White Cloud Drome. After leaving their calling cards, they were to do a weather recco on the China coast, north and south from Hong Kong. One plane en route to Takao turned back due to mechanical trouble. The second plane delivered 24 X 260 lb. frags by H2X. No results were seen due to a 10/10 undercast. One night fighter fired but did not press the attack.

May 24, 1945. With poor weather over Formosa and Luzon, the Group was ordered to try and put Appari Drome in northern Luzon out of business. 2000 lb. demos were the dose for the strip that the Japanese were using to evacuate officers, technicians and wounded. Planes bombed individually due to clouds and they made multiple runs each. Only 1 plane was sighted on the ground and it was probably not serviceable. Over 60% of the bombs hit the runway. The Japanese would have a job filling those holes.

This night and into the next morning a 65<sup>th</sup> H2X went to White Cloud Drome and dropped 24 X 260 lb. frags at 0155 with unobserved results. Two night fighters made a coordinated attack on the bomber and fired. The B-24 returned fire, but there was no damage to either side.

Four Sea Hawks were sent to Shanghai. Lt. Phillips, in #130, found a Fax Baker that immediately began evasive action. Although the B-24's bombs missed on the first 2 runs, the ship stopped. Of the last 2 bombs dropped, 1 made a direct hit aft of the superstructure. The Torpex bomb struck a fatal blow and as the plane passed over at less than 1000', #130 was holed by flying debris. A flare was dropped, and the crew watched the 4000 ton ship sink in 20 minutes. Lt. Orton had radar trouble and bombed Chomosui Strip in the Pescadores. He got some black and some grey smoke from the ground as well as holes in his stabilizer. Lts. Wilson and Scroggs reached Shanghai, but bombed the Texas Oil Depot. Wilson missed. Only 1 of Scroggs' bombs exploded even though he had hit the depot.

The 64<sup>th</sup> had an H2X early run the morning of May 25<sup>th</sup>. At 0335 hours they dropped 7 napalm bombs on Taihoku starting fires that did not seem to enlarge. The AA was well away and they did use rope.

May 25, 1945. There was no Group strike on this day.

May 25 - 26, 1945. Three Sea Hawks prowled the Yangtze, and all found the same ship, a Fox Tare Charlie. Lt. Fullenwider made 4 skip bombing runs and missed (2 bombs were duds). When Lt. Canevari found the ship it was moving, but LAB runs and skip bombing did not bring this Emperor's sailor down. So it was roundly strafed after a near miss had brought it to a halt. Lastly came Lt. Dolley who made 2 LAB runs and missed. These Japanese sailors had a lucky night. While all this was going on Lt. Croft was doing the "clay pigeon" routine over Taihoku. Searchlights coned the B-24 and could not be shaken by rope. Over Kiirun lights on the plane again, but again the rope did no good. There was no AA in either place, almost as if they knew why the ferret was there. No gun laying radar frequencies for you tonight. This flight also went by the Pescadores, and for a little excitement they decided to strafe the radar station which looked undefended. Bullets flew from both sides, but a bedspring antenna was toppled, a water tower holed and luggers targeted. From the ground came a hail of return fire, holing the plane in 7 places and wounding one of the radar men, who really don't get paid for this



sort of gathering of electronic information. The bomb bays of the ferrets were filled with complex electronic equipment, mostly receivers that could monitor hundreds of frequencies a minute, and when they picked up a signal would take a directional reading. If the shrapnel that hit the operator had damaged this equipment, there was sure to be some very angry people when the plane got back. Occasionally ferrets flew on regular bombing missions as a part of the formation. It was scary in any event and more so in the black bomb bay when the flak began to go off and when the bombs hitting the ground could be felt.

May 26, 1945. Echague Drome, south of Appari, was suspected of being used to take Japanese VIPs (such as remained) out of Luzon, so the order was to give them a dose of 2000 lb. demos and to make the strip U.S. for a while. The weather was bad over Formosa anyway. Twelve planes went up, 4 from each squadron, and they left the drome a mess for a few days at least. There was the same old problem with the one-tonners as the shackles didn't want to release at times.

This night and next morning 2 planes went to Shanghai. Lt. Booth, in #126, was on his first mission. It was a long mission for a first, but there were no short ones. Lt. Orton was also out, but both missed a Fox Tare Charlie. Booth and crew got into the swing by strafing some Sugar Dogs and received some AA in return from a patrol vessel.

A 64<sup>th</sup> H2X bomber hit Taihoku Town at 0405 on the 27<sup>th</sup>. It dropped 7 napalms and started fires visible 30 miles away. The AA was off, but lights held the plane regardless of rope.

A 65<sup>th</sup> hit a target of opportunity from an H2X plane and dropped napalm on Taito at 0322. The fires soon died down. Leaflets were also dropped.

May 27, 1945. The 403<sup>rd</sup> had a daylight weather recco in the Canton area. The plane was ordered to stay away from trouble spots and stay near clouds. It reported the weather every half hour.

The 3 strike squadrons were on a mission to help the GIs. Each went to different targets with 2000 lb. demos - the kind that doesn't like to drop when they are supposed to. The 65<sup>th</sup> targeted a personnel area 10 miles out of Appari. Seventeen of 20 bombs went in the target with the others close. A 64<sup>th</sup> bomber hit what was thought to be an underground storage dump, but although they chewed up the ground, no dump was revealed. Seven bombs failed to release and were levered out over water. One went out as the bomb bay doors opened taking a front bomb bay door with it. The 403<sup>rd</sup> hit a small strip at Gamu. Fifteen of 24 bombs dropped when they were supposed to and hit the strip. Several others fell out unexpectedly and 4 were dropped out at sea. Great care was taken not to drop near Filipino civilians.

This night and next morning (28<sup>th</sup>) 4 bombers were to go to Shanghai by orders from V Bomber Command. Crews had been flying every third night and were worn out by this night. Three regular crews participated and a fourth pickup crew was piloted by Capt. Butts. First off was the reliable Phillips in #812. He found a Fox Tare Charlie and sank it in short order when 250 and 500 pounders made contact. Another 3500 tons were added to the total tonnage sunk. He tried for another ship later, but missed. Lt. Seaman reached the area, but found nothing after a search of 2 hours, so he returned. Lt. Wilson had bad luck as his plane did not gain speed or altitude. He jettisoned his bombs safely and made an emergency landing only to have the gear fold. There were no injuries, but the plane was a washout. (Note by Pettus - can't find what happened to cause this, but



sounds like flap trouble.) Butts and his pickup crew were last off and on approaching the Yangtze he heard the location of ships attacked by Phillips. They soon located a Fox Tare Charlie and after several runs, they sank it with 2 skip bombing hits. The ship was blazing from stern to stern when they left it.

A 403<sup>rd</sup> H2X bomber dropped on Takao at 0010 using napalm. Fires did not last long although the bombs were in the town proper.

May 28, 1945. Another strike made by the Group but this time to UGAC, against the Japanese who were being squeezed into smaller and smaller confines on Luzon. Thirteen planes were over the target for 2 hours making careful runs to render the whole area unsuitable for aircraft. The landing strip itself was a mess. There was little activity seen, but at nearby Pangul Strip the holes had been filled in, but no wheel marks were identified. The big bombs were less troublesome this day. Maybe the armorers were getting more used to them.

This night and into the next morning 4 Sea Hawks were off to Yangtze. Wilson, who had bad luck the night before, was first off in #812. On the way he ran into problems with his #4 engine. It seemed to have caught on fire, but after being shut off and restarted, it ran in a fashion. Being close to the target area, he pressed on and soon found a treasure trove of ships. He sighted 2 Fox Bakers, 4 Fox Tare Charlies and 5 escorts. Taking the Fox Baker on the edge of the group he made a LAB run. His bombs missed but AA from all the ships didn't. Shrapnel through the nose destroyed the bomb sight, caused holes in the radar compartment and the flight deck and wounded the copilot. The plane's #4 engine quit. They jettisoned the remaining bombs and made the long trip home on 3 engines. They had back luck two nights in a row, but they felt lucky to get home.

Lt. Ray, flying his first mission, found the ships and made several runs on a Fox Tare Charlie. The results were unobserved due to spray, but his bombs were close. Sea scatter clouded his radar and he lost the ships. So he then dropped a flare only to see junks. He was in the big leagues on his first night out.

Next, the old vet Scroggs found 10 ships in all and attacked a Fox Tare Charlie and got a 500 lb. Torpex on its stern. With all bombs gone he looked around the area and then came back to look at his victim. It was partially under water. Another 3500 ton score. Last off was another newcomer, Capt. Bancroft, also flying his first mission. He ran into bad luck, losing an engine just north of Formosa. The aircraft jettisoned its load and returned home.

Also out this night and morning was a 63<sup>rd</sup> weather recco to Tien Ho. Lt. Dolley laid 15 X 260 lb. frags in the dispersal area, but no big results were seen other than detonations. Seven accurate searchlights were encountered and heavy flak rocked the plane but caused no damage.

It was a good night for the Sea Hawk - 2 ships sunk and 7000 tons into the mud of the Yangtze Delta.

May 29, 1945. The target was Kiirun with a maximum effort being called for. The weather was perfect. The 65<sup>th</sup> took off with 10 planes and all bombed the primary. The 403<sup>rd</sup> also had 10 planes and 7 hit Kiirun, Formosa. The 64<sup>th</sup> took off with 5 planes and all hit the primary. Their load was 1000 lb. demos and almost all were on the money. The AA was intense, accurately holing 5 planes in both the 403<sup>rd</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup>. The 64<sup>th</sup> did not suffer any hits. The bombs ran through a variety of targets, starting fires and a number of explosions. "Juke Box" rescue was standing by and followed one 403<sup>rd</sup> plane to be sure



it made it to Lingayen. One plane [Lt. Cherkauer's #257 OUTTA THIS WORLD] reported unusual AA streamers that might have been wire wrapped AA shells. Lt. Tighe, the flak intelligence officer, planned to check to see if the Japanese were known to have such shells. Lots of leaflets were dropped. Gene Tight later became a three star general and head of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

The V Bomber Command wanted 3 Sea Hawks sent out this night and next morning, but the 63<sup>rd</sup> could only put up two. The pressure of the last few weeks was telling on equipment as well as on the crews. These 2 went to the Yangtze, but the sightings were few. A Fox Tare Charlie was missed with 4 X 500 lb. bombs, but smaller ships were bombed and strafed with no damage claimed.

At 0223 on May 30<sup>th</sup> an H2X 64<sup>th</sup> B-24 woke up the enemy in the vicinity of Tien Ho with 10 X 260 lb. frags dropped through the undercast. Tien Ho did not have a good return on the H2X scope, so it was doubtful if this did more than send the enemy to their guns.

May 30, 1945. Too many planes were being damaged by AA over Formosa. The loss of 2 [actually 3] 65<sup>th</sup> planes a few days before was unnerving. The bombing accuracy suffered because of the need to make shorter bomb runs. This raid was on AA at Takao, and the 43<sup>rd</sup> put up 27 planes with 24 of them dropping on the AA emplacements. Although it was hoped to destroy some of the guns, the main purpose was to confuse and blind the enemy with smoke and dust so that other squadrons coming behind would have a clearer run. This idea was agreed upon by the group commanders, and KEN'S MEN drew the lead. It was not any more dangerous since the planes attacked by elements, and all were to be over the target as close together as possible. Aiming points were the gun batteries and a large earthen radar dish. The load was 260 lb. frags to be dropped from 17,000'. ROM and rope were used and immediately after the 43<sup>rd</sup> dropped other groups were to come in and hit the usual targets. The higher altitude for the AA attackers made it a little safer, but it also meant that immediately after the first wave, the next attackers would be much lower and different fuses would have to be cut by the AA gunners. The 43<sup>rd</sup> received very little flak, only one 65<sup>th</sup> was holed, and the following groups also faced much less AA than usual. All agreed it was a successful tactic and would be used again. Leaflets were dropped as usual.

The Sea Hawks ended the month on this 30<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> with a bang. V Bomber Command said they needed one more medium sized ship to put them over the half million ton mark for the first 5 months of 1945. The 63<sup>rd</sup> gave them two.

Lt. Canevari was first off in #130. All crews were to be on the lookout for a possible convoy along the China coast. #130 received radar indications of ships north of Formosa about half way to Shanghai. There was no visual sighting and they were not to attack without permission. After the report, they continued to the mouth of the Yangtze and came upon a Fox Tare Charlie moving slowly. They backed off and made a run dropping all 4 of their precious 500 lb. Torpex eggs. Two scored hits or near misses, and the crew circled back again. It was misting and very hazy, but the scope would not bring it in. At this time permission to bomb the convoy was given. Now without bombs they headed back to see if the convoy could be found. The aircraft did not find the radar returns, and by now being short on fuel, it headed for home as other planes were on the way and would take up the search. The damaged ship could not be confirmed as sunk, though it was certainly badly damaged and could not be found on the scope. Lt. Orton, in #794, did not find the convoy and proceeded to search the area. He found a Fox Tare Charlie



near Tsungming Island and dispatched it with two 500 lb. Torpex bombs. The ship was settling as they circled and in a few minutes it had disappeared from the scope. Attacks were made on 2 other targets, but the bombs seemed to be duds. The last 2 planes both found the ship; Canevari attacked at the coordinates of the action. It was blazing from stern to stern and both said it should be regarded as sunk. Another Fox Tare Charlie near the burning vessel was then the target of these 2 planes, but it escaped. The month ended for the Sea Hawks by putting V Bomber Command over the half million ton mark and making the month one of the best ever for the squadron despite a slow period in mid-month.

A 65<sup>th</sup> H2X plane started the 31<sup>st</sup> at 0045 by dropping 24 X 260 lb. frags on Tien Ho Drome. Results of this H2X run were obscured by clouds. Photos were taken of the scope which was all part of the learning process to use this technique. The run was 17 miles long and there were a few bursts of AA after "bombs away."

May 31, 1945. The month ended with another maximum effort by the daylight squadrons with 25 planes making it over Taihoku Town in northern Formosa. Although 29 planes took off, 4 turned back. Government buildings in the capital were the objective, and they were hit numerous times. Over 75% of the bombs were in the assigned targets, but since targets abutted each other, many outside the target area were damaged also. The last planes over the target had difficulty picking up aiming points due to smoke and dust. One plane bombed a target of opportunity at Toi. The AA was accurate, holing 10 planes, 5 each in the 65<sup>th</sup> and 403<sup>rd</sup>. The 64<sup>th</sup> got off easier. These maximum efforts were hard on the equipment as planes were pushed to their limits, and although safety was primary, small problems could come up that might have been avoided if more thorough checks had been done before the planes took off. Many of these planes had flown the day before when 24 were over Takao and even the day before that when 22 were over Kiirun. There were many checks that had to be done, especially electrical having to do with bomb release and the turrets. There crews were not as hard pressed on these maximum efforts as were the planes. It showed as the number of aborts was generally higher on the maximum effort missions than on the regular missions.

## JUNE 1945

The war in Europe was over. Japan was in retreat and although much blood and anguish lay ahead, the outcome was certain. The Pacific and China were the only theaters of operations; no longer were they second priority. Airplanes were in abundance as were replacement crews. The original Queen Mary men who had sweated it out for years could now go home and return to the ZI was in prospect for many. Mail came and fresh food was available; the Pacific War of shortages was over. A long 3 years was coming to a close in the Philippines.

June was a busy month for all operations, but life was better as the camp was in good shape. Materials that had been hidden away were used, and the word and feeling was that Clark was to be the end of the line for what were now - the smaller airplanes. The B-29s and coming B-32s would carry the war to the Japanese homeland. These planes were designated super heavy or SH. The B-24s would hit China, Indo-China, Formosa and do sea searches. Treasured cement was now being poured. Cement was one of the hardest commodities to get, and it was needed for mess halls, showers (there was never enough water), work shops, storage areas, almost everything, and the worst thing was that you could not take it with you when you moved. Now there was hope that the moving was at an end. KEN'S MEN HAD MOVED EVERY