



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



NEWSLETTER 105th EDITION JANUARY 2008

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In Tucson and I'm sure in Phoenix we have had the warmest November on record in 2007. I hear by the news that they are having snow and freezing rain in some parts of the country as I'm writing this.

First, I would like to thank **Jim Cherkauer** for his many years of service to the **43rd Bomb Group Association---President, Vice President, Secretary and Newsletter Editor**. He has done it all except Treasurer. Thanks also to **Ann Fletcher, Jim Dieffenderfer** and **Fred Hagen** for the wonderful 2007 Reunion in Plymouth Meeting, PA. It will be remembered for many years to come.

We have another good Reunion coming up in Atlanta, GA. It is scheduled September 17 through 21, 2008 by planners **Sam Commons** and his daughter **Amy Nally**. Please start planning to attend for some good Southern cooking and hospitality.

I would like to keep alive the history of the 43rd BG. Bud Lawson, our Vice President, is also our Historian so that will help. I will try contacting post World War II members of the 43rd Bomb Wing to see if we can get more members from that era.

Some other ideas to think about and discuss are, some folks have expressed interest in having a reunion on a cruise ship. There would be little planning or work on our part, for rooms, food and entertainment would be totally included. We would have to arrange for the meeting/memorabilia rooms. Also we may consider a river boat cruise.

Could we have a reunion with another Bomb Group Association, such as the 22nd? We could get a better rate on a lot of the activities. We could have separate meetings, but combined tours. Maybe the rooms would be cheaper as we would reserve more.

Could we send the newsletter by e-mail to people with e-mail addresses? This would save a lot of money every year. We could collect membership dues at the reunion like we used to. We would need extra help at the registration desk.

I urge the Board of Directors to start approving a lesser amount for future reunions. At the rate we are using funds from the treasury there will not be any left for paying the cost of the newsletter and postage in the future years.

It was good to see Orion Rogers daughter and grand children at the last reunion and all of the sons, daughters, relatives and guest of member as well.

Jim Thompson

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

"The gift of a common tongue is a priceless inheritance."—Winston Churchill

"My Father, **Staff Sgt. Thomas R. Smith**, now deceased; was a tail gunner on a B-17 named "The Old Man" with Uncle Sam painted on the fuselage. I know of only one crew member, similar name sake but no relation, **Bob Smith** radio operator. My Father was from Brooklyn New York and he was a tall red head. He earned the D.F.C. along with the Air Medal. He didn't speak much about his experiences, other than returning from a ditching experience to find his belongings were divvied up by bunk mates for being missing in action. He served in the South Pacific from 1942-44. Then returned to the states and was stationed near Rapid City South Dakota until the end of the War. Any information as to missions, of his plane, surviving crew mates would be most grateful. I have a copy of the keepsake photo book DOWN UNDER, The Fifth Air Force."

Thank you for your generations sacrifices, *Dave Smith* dsmith@bhmcs.org

The 8 August 2007 note, that follows, was to **Nancy Solomon** from her brother by the way of e-mail from **Jim Cherkauer**.

"Dear Bill and Nancy,

We just want to again thank you for having us as your guest at the 43rd Bomb Group Reunion. It is a rare occasion when words fail me, but I cannot express how much it meant to us to share with both of you in the reunion. It was a great joy to meet your comrades-in-arms and their spouses. We felt so comfortable in their presence and they too made us feel welcome.

The Memorial Service at Valley Chapel was very beautiful and moving, especially Nancy's singing. We also much enjoyed "George Washington".

Especially meaningful to me was to be able to give in some small measure by singing "Waltzing Matilda" for the group. In a life time of performing, that has to be one of the high points—"magical". Best of all, was seeing both of you and getting to

know Bill in a whole new light, catching a glimpse of a distant time so important in your life-indeed, all of our lives.

We love you both, very much. Thank You",

Love, *Richard and Carolyn*

Dear **Richard Hughes**, I owe you a very large apology. I mistakenly gave credit to Leland Louchney for your excellent performances of Waltzing Matilda. This error was a result of my trying to obtain all attendees names. If you remember, I was rushing around, during the closure of the last evening function, asking for folks to tell me if they were on the attendee list. In the confusion of this search, I crossed up you two. Please forgive me, I hope Leland is an excellent singer also! *Ed Hammill*

Richard furnished me with the information to attain the complete words to Waltzing Matilda and the definitions of the Australian slang. This information will be included in a future newsletter.

I hope, in the future, all attendees will sign the attendance roster. It will help, if you sign under the correct Squadron and note your relationships. This will assist your Secretary/Editor in being more accurate.

Received the following from **Russell Burnett, 64th Squadron, Flight Engineer**:
"For all concerned,

Jane and I want to congratulate and thank everyone who planned and saw to it that our 2007 Reunion was a success. Every little detail was worked out for the pleasure of the the members, including the meals, buses and meetings. The trips we participated in were historical, interesting and enjoyable (our tour guide was most humorous).

We appreciate being with our "43rd Family" and having some good visits is a paramount Reunion quality. The hotel lobby was very comfortable for visiting.

The Memorial Service was so enhanced by Nancy Solomon's dynamic voice at the George Washington Memorial Chapel.

All hotel accommodations were outstanding. All in all, it was a great Reunion!"

Thanks again, *Russ & Jane Burnett*

PS---By the way, in June, I received a 40 minute flight in a 1942 B-25 from Erie, Colorado. This was an early 88th birthday gift from my wife and children. The copilot had been copilot on "Dragon and His Tail" for a number of flights. It was very enjoyable. *RB*

A new Associate Member, **John A. Wiekrykas**, who writes: "My father **Walter J. Wiekrykas, 65th Squadron Tail Gunner** on "Target for Tonight" until November 1943, when he was wounded on his 13th mission. Capt. Carrol was his Pilot". John's

address: 615 West Center Street, Mahanoy City, PA 17048

Greg Butler, son of **Robert (Bob) H. Butler, 63rd Squadron, Bombardier**, has become an Associate Life Member of the Association. Greg's address: 7341 Kennington Street, Charlotte, NC 28270, phone (704) 846-8502. Greg writes: "The reunion in Phila, PA was very nice. I will do my best to attend next year in Atlanta with my dad". Greg, it was great seeing you and Bob at the 2007 Reunion. We look forward to seeing you in Atlanta.

Via e-mail to both Jim Cherkauer and James Thompson, **Orion L. Rogers, 63rd Squadron, Pilot**, informs us of his new address and phone number: 11939 Galaxy Lane, Bowie, MD 20715-4009 and telephone (301) 262-3779.

Another story about coming home on the U.S. CAPE FLATTERY. This one is from **Robert White, 63rd Squadron, Tail Gunner**. Directly from his diary:

"7-29-44: Finally! We flew to Finchaven today on the first lap home! Now we sweat out a ship. From 7-29-44 to 8-22-44 we swam in the ocean - good waves - and ate. The food was a lot better than at Nabzab - saw some shows and got wet. I don't think it ever stops raining in Finchaven. They have a steam roller digging the mud out of the sides of the road so the mud won't cover the road. The swimming is very good. The waves are really high. We swim out to the reef and dive for shells and cats eyes. There were bright stones, shells and bright colored fish swimming in and out of the coral formations.

8-23-44: Today, we boarded the good ship, Cape Flattery. We were enjoying a movie on the fan tail, WHAM!, the Liberty ship, that was double docked in front of us, caught on fire. Either a 55 gallon drum of 100 octane gasoline had been dropped in the hole of the ship and blew up or a Jap sub hit it. Since the ship, next to it, was loaded with high explosives, we just plain took off in a hurry! As we crossed the ship next to the dock, someone yelled for help with the donkey engine. I went over and helped played the fire hose on the burning ship's stern. When the donkey engine knocked out, I went back to the Cape Flattery. We left about 2 minutes later. Twenty seven fellows were left behind, including Neito and Kandik. They caught another ship and arrived in San Francisco the day after we did. We had good weather and only one sub scare. About five miles away at three thirty in the morning two freighters caught a Jap sub surfaced between them and sank it. We could see the tracers flying.

It took us about 20 days to cross the Pacific. Conklin and I took our bunks apart and slept under the anchor hoist most of the way home. It was really hot in the hold. We landed in 'Frisco at 3:00 in the afternoon on the 11th of September 1944. What a

yell went up when we sailed under the Golden Gate bridge! We will be here a couple of days and then get a 21 day furlough. My overseas time was a little more than 13 months. Not too much, but enough! We had good food on the ship, but we are really eating now. Well, I've been lucky so far thank God and I did Thank God."

*****MEMORIALS*****

A letter from **Frances R. Boutwell, 65th Squadron, Nose Gunner:**

"I am writing you to let you know of the passing of **W. T. "Joe" Albright, Pilot, 65th Squadron**. I felt that his family would notify you of his death, but it still hasn't been mentioned in our newsletter. I had the privilege of serving, as nose gunner, with Joe who was our co-pilot. Joe, later became our pilot, after our original pilot W. B. Brown finished his missions.

I am enclosing a check in memory of my dear friend Joe Albright. Use the money any way the treasurer sees fit. Joe left this world 12/31/06.

I read with much personal interest, the account of one mission over the capital of Formosa where there is mention of a wounded nose gunner. I was that nose gunner. It was a very minor wound but scared the hell out of me. This item was in the July Issue of the newsletter. It is very interesting to receive and read the newsletter. You certainly do well with this publication. When I finish with it, I pass it to a friend who seems to enjoy it nearly as much as I do."

Best Regards, *Frances R. Boutwell .Randy.*

Randy, thanks for the kind words. I mailed your check to our Treasurer.

Received notices of the death of **Asa Lewelling, Pilot, 64th Squadron** from **Jack Nunnellee, Nose Gunner, 64th Squadron** via **Jim Cherkauer** and **Nick Arabinko, Pilot, 64th Squadron**. Nick's message is quoted:

"I regret to inform you of the passing of Asa Lewelling on September 7, 2007. Asa was my co-pilot; he joined our crew at Alamogordo, NM in January 1943. Our crew completed Phase Training in June 1943, received and ferried a new B-24 to Ports Moresby, NG in July 1943.

Asa was the quintessential reflection of "An Officer And A Gentleman". He was one hell of an outstanding pilot and commanded the total respect of our crew. I shall truly miss Asa L. Lewelling." *Nick Arabinko*

A phone call from **Charles Woods, 63rd Squadron, Flight Chief**, and his son informed us of the death of their beloved wife/mother, **Elizabeth**, September 29, 2007.

"It is with deep regret that I have to inform you of the death of my husband, **Vito Delfino**, passed away September 9 as a result of a massive heart attack. He was a Sergeant in the **65th Squadron, 43 Bomb Group, 40 ERA.**"

Helen M. Delfino

In a note to **Bill Wilson, Treasurer**: "Wanted to let you know **Ernest N. Morgan, 403rd Squadron, Pilot** passed away August 23, 2007 after 1 month diagnosed lung cancer

He enjoyed hearing all the news from you all."

Beth Morgan

Wilbert Householder, 63rd Squadron, Navigator, passed away on June 12, 2007. Received this from his daughter who wrote: "He really enjoyed the newsletter, my mom and he liked going to the conventions, in the 1990's, before my mother's death".

Thank you, *Patty Emerick*

Jim Cherkauer received the following letter re: **Howard L. Rogers, 64th Squadron Radar Operator.**

"I just received the 43rd Bomb Grp. Newsletter and am anxious to read through it. I'm sorry to say that Howard passed away Sept. 4th. He was in the 64th Squadron and also in the Korean conflict but didn't talk much about either of the conflicts. He was a true believer in America! He had a military burial. We had just decided we would try to make the last reunion but his health didn't permit it. Keep up the good work and let our country remember."

Thanks again, *Wilma Rogers*

A November 8, 2007 letter "I wish to report the passing of **Lotus "Jack" Fultz**, on October 30th 2007. He was a member of the **63rd Squadron**".

Bob Gaffney, 65th Squadron, Pilot

November 7, 2007, letter from Virginia De Angelis:

"It is with the utmost sadness that I write to you to report the death of:

M/Sgt. Anthony J. De Angelis, USAF Retired (63rd Squadron, Crew Chief). Tony was my husband, lover, friend, father of three wonderful children and my good buddy for sixty-one years of marriage.

Tony was ninety-one years of age on Oct. 18th—he died peacefully two days later on Oct. 21 just after midnight.

Tony's first love was "**Black Jack**" his B-17 aircraft. I came second! The years he spent in the Air Force (1937-1960), especially in New Guinea, he never forgot—it made his life important!

Please tell his buddies he has joined the others who have flown up. With wonderful memories of Tony and his friends."

Love, *Dinna*

Now the HEAVENS are brighter by nine more STARS.

*****43rd HUMOR*****

YOGI'S SAYINGS: "Baseball is 90 percent mental, the other half is physical". "A nickel isn't worth a dime anymore." "You can observe a lot just by watching." "Mantle can hit just as good right-handed as he can left-handed. He's just amphibious." "There's nothing like a home opener, whether it's at home or on the road." "Always go to other people's funerals. Otherwise they won't go to yours."

From a local NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL PAGE: "Don't despair, Cub fans. Any team can have a bad century."

"I disagree with the venter who said the man with a beard is too lazy to stand up to a razor. I wear a beard. My wife likes my beard. She says it hides a whole lot of ugly."

From a friend via e-mail: A women went to the emergency room, where she was seen by a young new doctor. After about 3 minutes in the examination room, the doctor told her she was pregnant.

She burst out of the room and ran down the corridor screaming. An elder doctor stopped her and asked what was the problem; after listening to her story, he calmed down and sat her in another room. Then he marched down the hallway to the first doctor's room. "What the hell's wrong with you?" he demanded. "This woman is 63 years old, she has two grown children and several grandchildren, and you told her she was pregnant?!!"

The new doctor continued to write on his clipboard and without looking up said: "Does she still have the hiccups?"

A wise old Mother Superior from County Tipperary was dying. The nuns gathered around her bed trying to make her comfortable. They gave her some warm milk to drink, but she refused it. Then one nun took the glass to the kitchen. Remembering a bottle of Irish whiskey received as a gift the previous Christmas, she opened and poured a generous amount into the warm milk.

Back at Mother Superior's bed she held the glass to her lips. Mother drank a little, then a little more. Before they knew it, she had drunk the whole glass down to the last drop. Mother, the nuns asked with earnest, "Please give us some wisdom before you die."

She raised herself up in bed with a pious look on her face and said. **"Don't sell that cow."**

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 **43rd Bomb Group Association**.

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

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

*****PETTUS MANUSCRIPT*****

The pages that follow are the completion of **Jim Cherkauer's** edited version of the James Pettus manuscript of the B-24 era of the 43rd Bomb Group from July 1, 1945 thru August 14, 1945. The pages are numbered to continue in sequence with the complete manuscript from January 1, 1944 thru August 14, 1945 (144 Pages!). Jim, this is a great job and we owe you a **BIG THANK YOU**.

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

These enclosures will assist you in planning for the Reunion.

1-Brochure of Events and Atlanta

2-Activity List and Planning Document (Pages 1-6)

It is important that you mail the planning information to **43rd Bomb Group Reunion 2008, Amy Nally, 2402 Creekside Trace, Jonesboro, GA**

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

JULY 1945

Jul 1, 1945. The old Army adage, "Hurry up and wait," now became a reality as everything was frantically packed to head north and there were no LSTs for the sea life. 6 X 6s were loaded, flight operations were confined to weather reccos and the 63rd visits to Shanghai farther north. Everybody waited.

The 64th drew the Wenchow weather recco and hit Mako on the way to China and a target of opportunity on the way home. At Mako 22 X 250 lb. demos ran through the target and caused an explosion with flames to 300' and black smoke. On the way home Simouisen, on the southern tip of Formosa, was hit with two 250 lb. demos falling into a housing area; the plane was holed for its trouble. Their bombs had hung up and it was thought wiser to drop elsewhere than to do another run for just 2 bombs.

Two Sea Hawks went to Haiphong and the South China Sea looking for ships on June 30th/July 1st. Four junks were found, but only 2 bombs were expended. The bombs missed, so the planes went on to look for better things or to hit the city and docks. The results were only fair as half of the bombs had to be dropped by ETA and went into the river. The other half fell on a cement plant and rice mill on the edge of the water. Black smoke was visible after the planes left the target. The visibility was limited and AA was inaccurate. Another plane went to Shanghai and tried to hit the Texas Oil Refinery again. The bombs were dropped on ETA with the last 500 pounder on target, but no damage was done. Visibility was very poor and the AA inaccurate.

On the night of the 1st/2nd only one 63rd plane went to Shanghai. Lt. Seaman, in #398, found 2 luggers unloading a Fox Tare Baker and dropped a bomb hitting the one lugger that exploded and sank. He then skip-bombed 2 on the Fox Tar Baker; one of which hit the ship in the stern and 30 minutes later only the superstructure was above water. A second Fox Tare Baker was in the area but got away as it moved up river and the radar returns were lost due to background interference. As it was getting time to leave, they tried for the other lugger but missed. On the way home, at 0713, a Tojo tacked on to them off the coast of Formosa. He trailed them for 30 minutes but did not fire. They landed at 1105.

Jul 2, 1945. There was no weather recco on this date. All further combat operations were cancelled pending the move, the date of which was put forward several times. No strike missions were flown until July 18th.

Jul 3-13, 1945. There was now a concentration on training. 1) Bombing practice for both the 63rd and the strike squadrons. Targets were available and were booked by the squadrons. 2) Checking out of copilots. 3) H2X operators were busy teaching others and getting more practice as it was felt that there would be more cloud interference farther north. There was lots of maintenance carried out and all planes were ready to go. During the first 10 days of the month there was conjecture as to where the move would be. Some said China while others said Okinawa, but none said Ie Shima, that was known only as the island where Ernie Pyle was killed. By the time the first truck loads left for Subic Bay on the 14th of July, the destination was recognized to be Okinawa.

Jul 14-17, 1945. This was a memorial day for a "working party" that went to the hills to collect some lumber and to look for souvenirs. It was one of the few working parties for which there were plenty of volunteers. The volunteers were armed to the teeth; a few worked

while most stood guard or poked into the bush to look for Japs or souvenirs. Upon arriving near the saw mill, and before they had time to organize, 13 Japanese surrendered to them. These sons of the emperor had been in the hills for months; they were not combat troops and they were hungry. They knew that if they surrendered to the men in khaki, they would get to the P.O.W. camp alive, but if they surrendered to the men in combat green, their future was much less secure. So when the 65th truck pulled up, they were ready to give up. If they had wanted to ambush the 65th truck, they could well have done so. They were duly brought down the mountain, past the non-smiling infantry check point personnel who saw what happened. Stotsenburg MPs would have none of them, but when the right people were called they came to the 65th camp area to remove the P.O.W. Many pictures were taken, and the only people unhappy were the infantry in the hills. [One of the prisoners wore either a Harvard or Yale class ring and spoke perfect English as noted by Jim Cherkauer.]

There were Japanese stragglers all over the area, and guards were posted at night as hungry Japanese came to steal anything, but mainly food. There was far more danger getting shot by a guard or some vigilantes than by the enemy, if there was a rumor going around that there was a Jap in or near the camp. A week before one was captured when wounded after a jeep chase. [In the 65th camp one Jap surrendered in the wee hours of the morning to an officer who went to the latrine. When the startled pilot released the clip from his 45 rather than the safety lock, the Jap bowed down, picked it up and handed it to the frightened lieutenant who then screamed at the top of his lungs. Dozens of officers came to his rescue.]

There was too much stealing, and though most were sorry for the Filipinos after their being under the Japanese so long, enough was enough, and security was tightened. Most men were ready to move on; they had been to Manila, warned about the women and the liquor, and were glad to get closer to the war.

Jul 18, 1945. At Clark the training continued, but a mission to Matsuyawa Drome by the strike squadrons was cancelled due to weather. That night the 63rd flew a weather recco to Wenchow and the China coast with Mako as the alternative target. 6 X 500 lb. demos were strong through the west side of the target with no visible damage.

Jul 19-21, 1945. This move to Ie Shima was by far the most difficult that the unit was put through. Some trucks had left for Subic on the 14th only to be called back after being there a day. Buildings torn down for the move had to be partially re-erected as mess halls. In the midst of this a mini-typhoon came through, soaked everything and laid some tents flat. Finally, 10 days after the first trucks had gone to Subic Bay, they began loading again; but it was not until the 27th that the convoy left for Ie Shima.

Jul 19/20, 1945. The Sea Hawks sent out 2 weather reccos to the China coast this night. One returned early due to battery failure; the other completed the circuit. No shipping was sighted, so bombs hit Mako through a solid undercast. but no bombs were thought to be on the drome. In all 3 runs were made. There was no AA. Unarmed #694, with Lt. Little as pilot, went up the island chain towards Okinawa and reported weather.

Jul 20/21, 1945. Two night reccos were out from the 63rd this night, but one came back due to instrument failure. The crew then took off in a spare plane that had no bombs but they

completed the circuit. Lt. Brim, in unarmed #694, went farther north to Sakishita Gunto and reported weather. Lt. Mueller, in #983, completed the southern portion of the China Sea recco and came back to Mako where he made 3 runs to bomb due to the undercast. No results were observed.

Jul 21, 1945. Some of the 65th and 64th planes made the journey to Ie Shima from Clark. The air echelon movement continued for 3 days. Flight time was 6 plus hours. A limited number of C-46 air lifts were supplied, but NOT enough.

That night and into the 22nd two Sea Hawks were out on a weather recco to Wenchow and to bomb an ammo dump at Gyoo-To Island. No shipping was spotted, so bombs were dropped with 2 explosions being seen. Lt. Redmon, in #969, went to Saksshima Gunto and the north Pacific to report weather. The flight lasted 12 hours and 20 minutes.

Jul 22, 1945. This day 9 B-24s of the 403rd took off for Ie Shima loaded with 6 X 500 lb. frag clusters, one bomb bay tank, 15 men and their clothes and such gear as they could cram in the plane. [Jim Cherkauer's diary indicates that 65th planes also left Clark for Ie Shima this day.] The weather on Ie Shima was cool after the Philippines, but rain and mud promised problems. A camp of sorts had been established, and some men and crews were in transient camps. A few men slept in the planes and also stood guard duty. The B-24s that flew to Ie Shima brought very little gear as they had a bomb bay tank and a load of bombs. Only personal clothing and tools were on the bombers. Some smart crews managed a tent, but there was a great shortage of poles. All the tents from Clark were on frames that were now loaded on the trucks. The sea lift sailed from Subic on July 27th and did not arrive at Ie Shima until August 4th.

Ie Shima was a small island off the west coast of Okinawa. It was pear shaped, about 6 miles long and a mile and a half wide. At the larger end were two 7000' long air strips. There was a small mountain, Mt. Suribachie or hill 601 (its height in feet) on the narrow end. There were steep drop offs at both ends of the runways. A major hazard was that the north end of the runway was 50' higher than the south end, and the prevailing wind was north to south. The question was - did the planes takeoff uphill into the wind or downhill, down wind? This aeronautical problem was debated by pilots, the C.O., tech reps, engineers, etc. Finally, Col. Pettus made a decision; if the wind was more than 8 miles per hours, you dropped off 2000 lbs. of bombs. The 43rd did not lose a plane on takeoff.

The island had some good aspects. There were no civilians, no enemy stragglers roaming around, and very few women (American nurses at the far end from where KEN'S MEN had their camp). Also, every souvenir had been picked clean by the infantry that had taken the island in some bloody fighting, and by engineers who followed. In the beginning conditions were bad, and the exhausted men were content to stay in camp. After a week or so, their need for some sightseeing was taken care of by some truck tours just to show them there was really nothing to see, just lots of dust and mud. Soft taxiways and hardstands were another problem. A fully loaded B-24 weighed about 69,000 pounds and many bogged down on the new hardstands and taxiways. A near war erupted when the fighter group had to move out of the best hardstand area so the B-24s could park without sinking in. Here again, Col. Pettus was the airdrome C.O., so what KEN'S MEN needed, they got.

This night a 63rd crew in #786 took off at 1905 but had to return due to radar malfunctions. They jettisoned the bombs and took the standby plane that was unarmed. They completed their mission and returned the next morning at 1245. Weather was reported every 30 minutes. F/O Stebbins had the northern recco but had to return early due to #4 engine failure. He landed at 0650 on the 22nd of July.

Jul 23, 1945. More strike planes went to Ie Shima, and a mission to Shanghai was scheduled for the 24th. [C-46 transports continued to bring gear to Ie Shima.] The last of the sea lift departed Clark for Subic Bay. They were to load on the 24th but did not do so until the 25th. The LSTs pulled off the beach on the 25th and then waited in the bay until the 27th to sail with a convoy of vessels.

This night and into the 24th the 63rd sent out 2 planes, but again radar malfunction caused Capt. Bancroft to bring his bombs back and had them loaded into the standby. He took off at 2230 and completed his mission, but the bombs fell wide at Gyco-To Islands. Lt. Croft flew the north Pacific route but carried no bombs. Weather was reported and he returned to Clark at 0845 on the 24th.

Jul 24, 1945. Despite the rigors of moving, KEN'S MEN put 26 B-24s in the air for Shanghai. This was the first daytime strike out of Ie Shima and from Japanese soil. The 64th had 9 planes over the target, the Woosung Docks, but it was totally cloud covered. An H2X run was made with the bombs hitting north of the target. Weather en route was very poor. The 65th had 8 planes over the city and also bombed the docks as their primary target as Kaingwan East Drome was closed in, and they could get an H2X on the docks. Results were unobserved due to clouds. One Tony intercepted but caused no damage with its one firing pass. AA was moderate heavy and holed 3 planes. The 403rd found a hole over the drome and dropped in the revetment area, but could not see the results of their handiwork. Some 15 planes were seen on the ground. They were happy to report that the AA went to the other squadrons and only 1 enemy fighter was seen. It didn't come near the 403rd but did make a pass at another squadron. All planes returned to Ie Shima and the mud of the new camp.

The Sea Hawks had the night off to prepare for their move to Ie Shima.

Jul 25, 1945. Twelve Sea Hawks crammed with men and gear began taking off at 0800 heading for their new home. All arrived safely, but they were no sooner there than the call came down from the 308th Wing to have at least 4 planes ready for missions that night. A great groan was heard all the way to Naha.

There was no daylight strike this day.

At 2215 and 2245 on the 25th four old-timers lifted off and headed for the Blind Bombing Zone and the Inland Sea. Lt. Phillips, in #786, found a Fox Tare Dog, 1000 tons, under tow and dispatched it with 2 bombs. Next came a Fox Tare Baker, 6500 tons, and the bombardier, Lt. Greffe, sent it to the bottom with 2 bombs. The long dry spell was over. Lt. Croft, in #969, found a Tare Two Stacks, 6500 tons, in convoy. Sneaking in before the enemy realized it, they made a direct hit. Within a half hour the ship was off the screen. AA was too intense when another pass was attempted so the effort was abandoned. Several other ships including a destroyer were dropped on by Lts. Seaman and Canevari, but no hits were claimed. Still, it was a good night to begin the Ie Shima sojourn. Feelings were upbeat; the move was worth it. The planes returned safely in the early hours of July 26th.

Jul 26, 1945. At 0001 the 3rd B.G. (H) Major Leonard Nathe opened for business on Ie Shima. There was no daylight strike this day. The crews spent the day getting out of the mud and pitching in building the camp. Again the requirement for the 26th/27th was for four 63rds. They took to the air at 2100. Two planes went after a Sugar Dog, which bore a charmed life. One plane had radar malfunction and returned; the other missed on 2 different runs. Aggressive interceptors then intervened, and the Sugar Dog lived to sail another day. The other 2 planes fared little better as they missed their targets, and #812, piloted by Lt. Fugate, got its hydraulic system shot out and had to make a precarious landing with little brakes. (This was when the up hill runway came in handy.)

Jul 27, 1945. The first daylight strike was flown against the Japanese Home Island. The target was Kagoshima in the extreme south of Kyushu. Rail yards and freight loading yards were the targets and bombing was good, as was the weather. The load was 1000# demos from 11,000'. AA was meager and there were friendly fighters galore. The 65th had a bad day as they could get only 4 planes in the air due to others being stuck in the soft hardstands. It was a good beginning for KEN'S MEN after the long slog from Australia. One pilot said at the intel briefing that he could see boring through the clouds - those many B-17s and B-24s the 43rd had lost since 1942. They were watching this day as the war went to the enemy homeland. Again on the 27th/28th four 63rd planes were out. Major Butts lead the parade. Near Tsu Shima Straits, a plane making a visual run over a large merchant ship, received AA from several vessels. The tail turret was destroyed and the gunner was injured badly. The bombs were jettisoned and the wounded man was returned to base. Two other planes attacked several targets in the Inland Sea but without results. The AA was a great deal more troublesome than it was around Shanghai. (I can't find this man's name, but it must be Sgt. Samuel E. Bloom of the 63rd. Group lists him as injured on the 29th.) The fourth plane, #127 piloted by Lt. Kerns, never returned from its mission. The last message received was "One Sugar Baker 3332N-13208E sunk." No wreckage or life rafts were found despite wide searches on the 28th and 29th. (This crew is listed in the summary of the 3/9.)

Jul 28, 1945. This was the day of the aircraft carrier attack. The CV Katsuragi was docked in Kure Harbor undergoing repairs and the Fifth Air Force wanted to sink it. Had this vessel been seaworthy enough to move, it would either have been towed or gone under power to some location more out of harm's way. KEN'S MEN were the most available bomb group and were assigned the task. However, Ie Shima was still a difficult place to operate from due to shortages of test equipment and the loading facilities. The first call said the strike was to be on the battleship Haruna supposedly sunk in 1941, but it was still afloat near Kure. The bomb load was 2000 pounders. To use these bombs different bomb rails had to be installed in the planes. It was found to be too difficult to, due to mud, to get these one-tonners out of the dump even if there were any there. (In the early days of an operation there was always a great deal of confusion as to what or where). So 1000# demos with delay fuses were used. Thirteen B-24s were all that the 3 squadrons could muster, and despite a series of mishaps, they got 4 or 5 direct hits on the bow and stern and a series of bombs strung along each side that were credited as near misses. The ship that probably never would have made it back to sea was seriously damaged. Photos

taken the next day and the day after showed it low in the water. Later it was seen lying on its side. The AA was heavy and direct. Of the 10 planes that made the run, 7 were holed but none seriously; nor were there any injuries. Bombing altitude was 10,500' - 11,000'. There was no real interception, but several enemy fighters were seen and made half-hearted passes out of range. Gunners replied with tracers to show the attackers they were being tracked. The 65th performed a rescue assist when they spotted 2 life rafts tied together, and the bomber was able to call in a Navy Catalina. The B-24 stayed with the downed fliers until the rescue began. Then it had to head for home as fuel was low and it was alone. All in all, it was a good day. The Fifth Air Force got its carrier, nobody was down or wounded and morale got a good boost. All the ground crews needed now was for the sea lift to arrive. It was not due until August 4th.

Despite the high hopes of ships, the night of the 28th/19th was a bust for 3 Sea Hawks. Though several targets were located, all bombs were well off. The radar men wished for all of their calibration equipment, so the cause of the misses could be ascertained.

Jul 29, 1945. Fifth Bomber Command was not satisfied with the results of the carrier attack of the 28th and gave the same target again for the 29th. No photo recco had been over to see what damage had been done, so the 43rd went back to have another try. Sad to say, this time the weather was very poor and the bombing was the same. Loads were 1000# demos and some 2000 pounders that they managed to get out of the dump. The 65th had 7 planes, the 64th had 5. They bombed together as the 64th H2X did not take off. The target was 9/10 covered, and the H2X run was way off. The 403rd found a hole at the last minute and made 3 runs as the AA was meager. They dropped on 2 of the runs. No bombs were close, but the carrier was observed to be listing and the stern was low in the water. The euphoria of the day before was replaced by frustration. [Jim Cherkauer's diary says that he sighted no AA while leading the second element of the 65th over the target.]

Again this night, 29th/30th, 3 planes were out from the 63rd. Two went to the Inland Sea and one went to the Blind Bombing Zone west of Kyushu and Honshu. Radar malfunction brought one home before midnight, but its companion was able to attack 2 ships missing them both although the bombs were close. No damage was claimed. Lt. Croft, in #984, found a Fox Tare Baker and scored a direct hit amidships on the first run. Three more runs were misses, but the one hit was enough as the ship tipped forward and sank. With one bomb left the plane made a run on a Sugar Charlie Sugar, a 20 foot miss, and the little ship rolled on its side and slowly went under in 20 minutes. Score one Fox Tare Baker, 6500 tons, and one Sugar Charlie Sugar, 500 tons. AA was scattered from the Fox Tare Baker, but a frigate in the vicinity of the Sugar Charlie Sugar was quite active, though inaccurate. One night fighter worried the planes over the Inland Sea but did not fire.

Jul 30, 1945. There was no daylight strike due to the weather, and everybody was glad to have the time to get a little better organized. Still, the sealift was 5 days out.

Major Butts took to the air on the night of the 30th/31st; he tried his best but could only damage a Fox Tare Charlie. Despite repeated runs and a near miss or hit, which left the ship listing but afloat, it was not to be claimed even as damaged. Maybe it was listing before his runs. This encounter was in the Blind Bombing Zone. Things were better for Lt. Fugate over the Inland Sea, although his companion, Lt. Redamn, had the old radar jinx and went back early. Fugate thought the ships were small Sugar Able Sugars and

managed to sink one and give several others a good scare. 1100 more tons went to the bottom.

Jul 31, 1945. This was to be another tour de force as the Group went to Kammon Tunnel. This tunnel is the main artery, both road and rail, between Honshu and Kyushu. The load was 2000 lb. demos with delayed fuses dropped from an altitude of 12,000' - 13,000'. This target was very small and could be difficult to pick up. An IP would depend on weather in the immediate area. It turned out to be impossible to pick up at all due to 10/10 overcast and large cumulus clouds. Then began a sort of excursion looking for a target. Sasebo Naval Base was the secondary, but it was obscured by a smoke screen from generators. So the Group went back to its first target, Kagoshima, and the rail yards that were still pretty much intact. All the wandering around had lost the group its fighter cover, and AA took pot shots from a number of places, especially from Sasebo, that holed a number of planes. Cumulus towered to 20,000', but a good run was made on the yards and bombing was excellent. The roadhouse was hit as were numerous other buildings, and fires were started in several places. The 403rd with 9 planes over the target put 100% of their one-tonners in the yards. It would be unique to have 9 planes drop 2000 lb. bombs without a problem. They did have 5 hang up and one jammed in a bomb bay door. Other squadrons had difficulty with at least 30% of their bombs; some were jettisoned and some were levered out. The one-tonner was a pain to load, to carry and to drop. The 65th had 2 men wounded by AA, one seriously (Lt. Harry Reedy and S/Sgt. Edward Hilsher were both there, but there is no indication as to who was hurt seriously). In all, a total of 7 planes were holed, as there seemed to be a great deal of flak. One report was made of a shell that ejected steel balls on wires. After losing the fighter cover in the poor weather, a few enemy fighters trailed along and made some half-hearted passes resulting in numerous exchanges of fire. Some 43rd gunners were sure of hits. The Japanese had no hits on the 43rd. The 403rd lead plane still had the one-tonner lodged on the bomb bay door and nothing could get it loose. The door was jammed and would not move; there was no hoist to get the brute back on the shackle, so it was defused and after warning the tower the plane landed on Birch Strip on Ie Shima. At touchdown the bomb fell out, bounced behind the plane and rolled to a stop where it was recovered by the armorers.

All in all it had been a good day, although tiring for the crews who had been to several targets hitting one very well. So far the enemy has not shown the determination to defend its homeland at any cost, or as had been feared the enemy did not try air-to-air ramming. They have not pressed fighter attacks any more than they had in defenses farther from home. At least the expected fierce defense has not materialized to date. July ended with the Group waiting for the sea lift to really hit its stride.

One thing different from the targets that KEN'S MEN had been bombing for years was that the secondaries were nearby; no flying for an hour to find another island or staging area. Over Japan proper there was always another city within 15 minutes flight time, and every one a target that was getting ready to repel the planned and scheduled Olympic invasion.

It was apparent that air opposition over Kyushu was not a real factor. The Kamikaze was a dangerous and fearsome menace for ships, and it was known that the enemy had other suicide boats and mini-sub. However, it apparently was not worthwhile to use one plane to knockout one bomber although B-29s had been rammed on numerous occasions. Hundreds of planes roamed at will over Kyushu bombing or strafing everything and

anything. The 43rd was advised, for the next few days, that many targets would be aircraft (or dummies on the ground). One squadron assigned one plane on the ground, but if it was destroyed, it might save a ship.

AUGUST 1945

Aug 1, 1945. Although the weather was not ideal, there was to be a big strike by many planes, heavies, mediums and fighters on the harbor of Nagasaki on this date. The 43rd's main objective was a 10,000 ton tanker moored at the docks. This ship probably was unable to move and was likely used as an AA platform. The squadrons managed to get 18 planes over Nagasaki, that was 8/10 cloud covered. They circled looking for an opening in the clouds but only found that the ship was not at the dock as shown in the photos. It was several hundred yards away, and this coupled with the cloud cover threw the run off; bombing was poor. Only the 64th dropped its load in the dock area but not near the tanker. The 403rd was about to drop when the lead bombardier's bombsight was hit by AA wounding the bombardier. All the other plane's bombs went astray. The 65th was all over the harbor. AA was heavy and accurate; 7 of the 18 planes were holed. The trip home was uneventful, but after landing all planes were tied down as a typhoon was possible. It did not arrive.

The 63rd did not get off this night as hoped. In fact, they made no start at all until August 4th. A typhoon threat kept them grounded.

Aug 2/4, 1945. There were no missions during this time until the night of the 3rd/4th due to the typhoon threat. Although the typhoon missed Ie Shima, the east coast of Okinawa had some very rough weather. Some local flying for maintenance checks, oil consumption, etc., did take place. For the most part the airplanes were worked on and crews tried to get more comfortable and scrounge up lumber, etc. Ie Shima was not a great place for scrounging as there were not many troops there. There were no big dumps as it was not a jumping off place for another move. Most of the troops were Army Air Force and AA, and all were short of engineering supplies. There were no big treasure caves as there were on Luzon where a hoarded bottle of gin could do wonders. Most of the equipment was unloaded on Okinawa as Ie Shima had difficult beaches on which to land and get bulk loads ashore.

On the night of the 3rd/4th the Sea Hawks roared out with 4 planes, all had radar trouble. Very chagrined, they returned at dawn with all 4 having lost their chances to take a big crack at enemy ships. One of these planes bombed Tarumizu Town with a column of smoke being the only result.

Aug 4/5, 1945. There was no daylight strike on the morning of the 4th.

This night three 63rd planes took off with an intent to really get at the enemy. Lt. Fugate, in #126, crossed into the Blind Bombing Zone and soon found 2 Fox Tare Charlies. One of these was sent to the bottom on the second run with a direct hit amidships. The second Fox Tare Charlie escaped when the B-24 had bomb rack failure. The remaining bombs had to be levered out. Lt. Redomon, in #984, found a 10,000 ton Tare Able and made a run that missed by 50' astern. On the second run his bombs hung up and 2 night fighters interfered. #984 then retreated to find the radar problem and to shake off the night fighters. An hour later they found the Tare Able and a naval escort at anchor. They made another run dropping 6 bombs, but the AA was fierce so they racked their plane

around to get out of the fire. The plane suffered 13 holes but no one was injured. After a half hour the ship had disappeared from the scope, so they revisited the area and claimed it as "probably sunk." So 3500 tons were added to the scoreboard. The third plane flying off the coast of Korea found nothing and dropped its bombs on Gunzan City. The crew was rewarded with a large explosion. The city lights stayed on even after the bombs were dropped.

Aug 5, 1945. V Bomber Command had discerned that the Japanese had an underground factory at a place named Tarumizu located on Kyushu. This small city was on a hillside, and the factory that made some kind of suicide weapons was dug into the hills. The target for the strike squadrons covered the area where the entrance was thought to be. Also, the bomb patterns would do the workers who lived in the environs no good. Fifteen planes made it off the ground after 3 changes of bomb load and much cursing by the armorers. The load was mixed demos and incendiaries with bombing to be from 12,500'. The target was easy to pick up as there was a big road that ran to it from a breakwater; also a hospital was well marked and avoided. Bombing was very good with fires and explosions giving the crews the certainty that this peaceful looking town was really an evil place. As the planes turned towards Ie Shima, they were delighted to see the smoke had risen to 13,000'. AA holed only 2 planes and these from a squadron that did not use RCM. The taxiways and hardstands on Birch Strip were a problem as parked planes would sink into the surface and would be difficult or impossible to move. Taxiways were slippery with mud, and there was a rash of ground accidents. One 65th plane chewed the tail turret off the 65th plane ahead of it; fortunately the gunner was not in his position. [Here is a confusion of dates according to this editor's, Jim Cherkauer's diary. Lt. Sullivan in #547 skidded that plane and chewed off the tail of #042. Number 4 engine on #547 was badly damaged. This took place on August 6, 1945. I was following them in #024 but lost a mag and did not get off that day. One more example of dates being confused due to the fact that Ie Shima and Japan proper were one day ahead of the time in the U.S.A. and records kept in this country would reflect America's dates and not Japanese dates. Col. Pettus in this manuscript relied quite heavily on official records kept here in the States.]

On August 5th Col. Pettus received an order to report to Gen. Whitehead personally rpt personally - there was no other explanation except a time. Having no transport other than a B-24, one was cranked up and he headed to Kadena to report to 5th Air Force Headquarters. There he was given another copy of the frag order for the 6th which had already been transmitted to 43rd Operations. Outside the General's office were several of the Colonel's colleagues - none of whom knew what the summons was about. Each was called into the office separately and was only asked by Gen. Whitehead if he had and understood the strike order for the 6th and told that under NO circumstances could there be any deviation from that order. If bombing was impossible, return via the same route up. NO TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY. The final instruction was that each Commanding Officer would personally rpt personally brief the crews before the mission. There was no small talk as was the general's usual manner - all business - the interview lasted less than a minute. One suggestion was that there had been problem with the Navy in regard to bomb lines, strikes not following given routes, etc., and of course, due to Kamikazes, ships were very concerned at any plane that seemed headed in their direction. Marine fighters had made passes at B-25s that were off course - no damage done. Still, it

was back to work and nobody had any idea of the real reason, which of course was the dropping of the atomic bomb on the 6th of August.

This night August 5th/6th the Sea Hawks sent out 4 planes to search for shipping. One of the newer pilots, Lt. Moore, in #694, crossed in the Blind Bombing Zone and spotted a 3500 ton Fox Tare Charlie. On the second run he made a direct hit and was rewarded with a terrific explosion that violently rocked the B-24. The Fox Tare Charlie disappeared from the scope and was claimed as sunk. One hour later, with their last 2 bombs, the bombardier Greenberg got a hit and/or a near miss on another Fox Tare Charlie. This ship was claimed as damaged. Plane #2, finding no ships, bombed Fusan Metal Plant with unobserved results. Plane #3 also bombed a land target at Hamada Town, dropping 8 X 500 pounders and getting a huge red flash and explosion in return. Plane #4 found some Fox Tare Dogs and a Fox Tare Charlie, but they bore charmed lives and escaped.

Aug 6, 1945. The target for this day's strike was Miyakonojo on Kyushu's eastern shore, about 180 miles south of Hiroshima. It was to be a major strike, one of the announced cities to be destroyed. Heavy, medium, light bombers and strafers were to take the city out. The 43rd bomb load was 12 X 500 lb. incendiaries; other groups would carry demos. The announcing of names of cities was part of the psych-war ops. Each day a number of cities were named for destruction, but how and when the attack would take place was left to the recipient to worry about. Sometimes it was not that day due to weather or the war of nerves. In this case, it was the weather and all planes beat it to their secondary -AND AS ORDERED, NO PLACE ELSE. The secondary was Kaoshima, but others had been there before KEN'S MEN. The whole city seemed to be on fire and smoke added to the clouds and undercast. An H2X run was made by the 16 planes that made it to the target. No evaluation was possible due to the undercast and smoke, but all units were credited with bombs in the city. Bombs were away at 1330. Unknown to all was that at 0815, before the 43rd had taken off at 0855, an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. No announcement was made of the dropping of the A bomb for some 16 hours as President Truman was returning from the Potsdam Conference.

It was after midnight when news of the very powerful bomb having been dropped was received. However, since nobody knew what the bomb was, and the day's strikes were being readied, the news was greeted with some skepticism. The Sea Hawks were out sinking ships and there was work to be done - big bomb or no big bomb.

The water echelon arrived, but unloading was slow as beach space was limited and tides made it difficult. It was not until the 11th that all equipment was transported and in place. The sighting of the night before made the 63rd crews eager to get on the roster on the 6th/7th, and 4 planes went out this night. Each carried 3100 gallons of fuel and 8 X 500 lb. Torpex, or by the technical name, composition "B" bombs. Lt. Phillips, in #807, found 2 Fox Tare Charlies around the Tsu Shima Straits and sank one after several runs. The plane circled and the ship sank in about half an hour; 3500 tons added to the score. The second Fox Tare Charlie got away. Two other planes found no ships and hit the secondary land target at Kumamoto on Kyushu. Bombs were dropped in the center of the city with only 2 small fires resulting. The fourth B-24 tried for a Sugar Charlie Sugar but missed and attacked a reef. One night fighter paid this plane a visit and fired a rocket but did not score a hit.

Aug 7, 1945. The target for the strike squadrons was Kamikazes on the ground - the right place to destroy them. Nineteen planes made it to hit Tsuiki Drome on Kyushu. The load was 240 X 20 lb. frag clusters. Some 40 or 50 aircraft had been seen on the ground at this Drome but some may have been dummies. Several fires were started and 14 or 15 planes were either destroyed or damaged. AA was meager; only 2 planes were holed. Other bomb groups were hitting similar targets. One 403rd plane did not find his formation and tacked onto the 494th Group and bombed.

A near tragedy occurred on the beach unloading when a truck skipped back and rolled over one of the 43rd men. Medics and Doctor Austin were nearby, and he was quickly extracted from the mud and taken to the hospital where he was found to have no broken bones. He was plenty sore. KEN'S MEN are tough.

Four Sea Hawks were out again this night and into the next morning. Lt. Croft, in #126, found a Fox Tare Dog and made a direct hit on this run. The ship sank in 10 minutes. With only one bomb left, he searched on and found several merchant ships and damaged a Fox Tare Charlie with a near miss. One Fox Tate Dog and its 1000 tons went to the bottom and one Fox Tare Charlie of 3500 tons was damaged. A lone night fighter fired 4 rockets at this B-24 just after midnight. Plane #130 had LAB failure and proceeded to hit the Kushikino City, the secondary. The city lights were on so the target was easy to find. There was neither AA nor fires. The plane returned to base at 0645. Capt. Bancroft, in #128, found several ships and sank a Sugar Dog, 150 tons, and damaged a Sugar Charlie Love, 2300 tons, with 2 near misses. The fourth Sea Hawk returned early due to total radar malfunction.

Aug 8, 1945. The USA Drome was the target for the strike squadrons on the 8th. This is the city that used to manufacture "Made in USA" toys and other items to sell in the U.S. The weather was perfect for a change, and bombing was very good. There were numerous fires and a number of planes were destroyed or damaged on the ground. These aircraft were all potential Kamikazes. They were hidden along roads, were well camouflaged and yet might even be dummies. Fires were a good sign as the Japanese were known to be so short of fuel so they were unlikely to use it to allow a dummy to burn as a trick to appear to show destroyed planes. There was little AA although 2 planes were holed. Smoke was seen to 5000'. The 7th Air Force had visited the drome before the 43rd, and because of this smoke it was difficult to assess the damage done. The B-29s had been to Shimoneseki, only 5 miles from USA, and the smoke there rose to 20,000'. This night, 8th/9th, the 63rd went back to the Tsu Shima Straits and the coast of Korea. One returned early due to radar out, but the other 3 continued their attacks on the enemy. A Fox Baker of 4000 tons was attacked and damaged. Several attacks by the bomber silenced the guns firing at the B-24, and a column of black smoke was seen rising from the ship. The crew did not see it sink, so 4000 tons went into the "damaged" column. The plane that went to the Yellow Sea found no ships and hit the rail yards at Jinsen, Korea. Bombs hit the yards, but no fires were observed. The last plane found no ships and made an unproductive run on Kushinkino on Kyushu.

Aug 9, 1945. Aircraft on the ground at Iwakuni Drome and seaplane base located about 30 miles from Hiroshima were the targets this day. The bombing was good with the 64th doing the best of the 3 squadrons. Bombs were strung through areas where planes or dummies were parked, but there were no fires. From the patterns of the bursts, planes must have been damaged. Either due to the fuel shortage and not having any of the planes fueled to

make them less vulnerable or to the possibility that these were dummy planes no fires were seen. (The same prohibitions that applied to the missions on the 6th of August were in place that effected routes to and from targets, so no targets of opportunity were to be sought. If bombs happened to go out on the route back, that did not count.)

Flight crews showed interest regarding Kure near Hiroshima where the attack on the carrier had been made. Photos were taken from afar, but there was no mention of Hiroshima in the debriefs. The 65th reported smoke rising to 25,000' toward the west in the direction of Nagasaki. The second A bomb was dropped on Nagasaki at 1115 local time of August 9th. The announcement of this use of the A bomb was made later that afternoon. By now it was accepted that this bomb was really supernatural. There were no physicists of sufficient knowledge in the 43rd to explain it. The news releases did little to explain it or enlighten the average soldier. All understood that it was an awesome weapon that would shorten the war. As far as KEN'S MEN were concerned it was business as usual.

Four Sea Hawks were out again on the 9th/10th. The search area for 2 was the Tsu Shima Straits. The load was 12 X 500 lb. Torpex and 2700 gallons of fuel. For the other 2 going to the Sea of Japan and Korea, the load was the usual 3100 gallons of fuel and 6 X 500 lb. Torpex. One of these latter planes had a complete engine failure soon after takeoff and had to jettison the bombs and return to base. The other found no ships and strung it bombs through the Fusan Docks in Korea. No fires were sighted and the AA was slight.

The Tsu Shim Straits gang had better luck. Both found ships. Number 126 gave the Japanese a scary night, but it failed to connect despite dropping 12 bombs from many angles. In addition to the ships attacked, the crew sighted on the scope other ships. The crew was very chagrined, but would have to wait another 4 or 5 days for another crack at them.

Lt. Little, in #130, found a Sugar Charlie Love and began a systematic attack. The first run was a near miss, but fragments ignited something flammable on the stern of the ship. This fire was put out, but on the next go around they dropped 3 X 500 lb. and made 2 direct hits. The 2300 ton ship exploded and sank. Further search produced no more ships so they proceeded to the secondary, Makurasaki, on the southern tip of Kyushu. 7 X 500 lb. bombs were strung through the town, but no fires or explosions were observed.

Aug 10, 1945. Steps towards ending the war were being taken this day, but for KEN'S MEN it was another day of bombing the enemy. Before takeoff there was news that three million leaflets had been dropped on Japan telling the people what the future was if they did not surrender. During the day a message was sent to the Swedish and Swiss governments by the Japanese stating that the Imperial Government accepted the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, and Japanese radio announced Japan's desire for peace.

From Birch strip on Ie Shima twenty-two 43rd heavies took off for Kumamoto on Kyushu for another big combined strike with the 7th AAF. As they approached the target at 12,000', it was apparent that the 7th had gotten up earlier than the 5th as the city was already in flames. Smoke obscured exact targets, so the leader decided to go to the secondary at Oita, some 65 miles to the northeast. Several planes, having set up for release, saw the target at Kumamoto and dropped. At Oita it was clear and the bomb run was made at 12,000'. The coverage was excellent. The load was incendiary clusters or 6 lb. bombs bundled to break apart 22 seconds after leaving the planes thus being spread over a considerable area. Many fires resulted and smoke billowed upwards s the

formation headed south. The AA was moderate to heavy and 7 planes were holed but with no injuries.

The night of the 10/11th six Sea Hawks went out on missions. One was an unarmed weather recco that went to northern Luzon and the Pacific Ocean. Three planes were sent to the Sea of Japan and Korea. These hunters found no ships and hit the docks and rail yards at Fusan, Korea. Two medium fires were started and several explosions were seen later. AA holed one of the B-24s. Several night fighters were about with one firing 3 rockets. Searchlights were active and held one bomber for 3 minutes.

Two planes went to the Inland Sea and found ships. These crews also had land targets, but small shipping was plentiful. Lt. Wilson and crew were on their last mission, but they were not able to add to a very fine record. They attacked 2 ships and made the crew of a Sugar Charlie Sugar grey-haired with near misses. Lt. Canovari found 2 ships and worried them until a Sugar Charlie Sugar of 500 tons was finally sunk after his crew repeatedly missed the larger of the 2 vessels. Both crews were not pleased with their night's work.

Aug 11, 1945. While negotiations for the ending of hostilities were going on the only results seen by the fighting forces was the announced suspension of B-29 raids as of the 11th. Far East Air Forces would continue operations until the terms of surrender were fully accepted.

Again the 7th AAF seemed to have been out earlier than the 5th as the target at Kurume was already in flames when the 43rd arrived. The secondary at Miyazaki was also alight. It seemed that cities all over Kyushu were on fire. The 64th and 403rd bombed Yamakawa Town resulting in smoke rising to 10,000'. The 65th hit Isusuki Town nearby. All are small cities on Kagoshima Bay. As usual the load was incendiaries and the altitude was 11,000'. Meager AA and fighter cover were everywhere.

On the night of the 11th/12th the frag order was the same. Two Sea Hawks went to the Sea of Japan and another 2 headed to the Tsu Shima Straits. One plane on the Sea of Japan circuit before finding the target returned due to mechanical problems. The companion plane had to settle for the docks and yards at Fusan, Korea. The 8 X 500 lb. bombs were dropped but only bomb flashes were sighted.

Lt. William Croft, whose crew had one of the best records in the 63rd, went to the blind bombing zone. A Fox Tare Charlie was attacked, but was missed so the crew pulled off the target to check the radar calibrations. As they did so they picked up several radar sightings - one very large. Wisely deciding that any vessel that large would be heavily defended, they made the first pass a bomb run. A flare lighted up a heavy cruiser of the Nachi Class (14,000 tons) and a destroyer. The bombs hit between the two missing the DD by only 50' but the cruiser by more. Throwing caution to the wind and having no real AA on the first run, another attack was made and both ships came alive with AA that fortunately was inaccurate. Two 500 pounders were laid within 10' along side the cruiser and the ship came to a stop. Croft remained out of range of the AA, that was still being fired, presumably to tell them to stay away, but the cruiser did not move. Leaving the cruiser, they found a Fox Tare Dog and dispatched it to the bottom with two 500 lb. bombs. Add 1000 tons more to the score. There were still 2 bombs in the racks. A Sugar Charlie Sugar was found and after several passes, the bombs straddled it. A few minutes later the stern was awash. They claimed the ship sunk and another 500 tons went to the bottom.

The squadron C.O. Butts took out a pilotless crew for its first mission. The new crew was nervous enough, but to have the C.O. in the left seat made them all sweat. They did not have long to wait as a Sugar Baker Sugar with 2 small ships were found. The new bombardier took a deep breath and prepared to drop his first 3 bombs in anger. He made a direct hit on a 2000 ton tanker sending up a great cloud of black smoke. The ship sank within 10 minutes before the anxious eyes of an eager bomber crew. They were not through yet and soon polished off a Sugar Dog adding another 150 tons for the record books. Nearing the end of their search mission they spotted and attacked two 1100 ton Sugar Able Sugars with their last 3 bombs and scored a very near miss or a hit on one. Due to AA from the ship and from the shore, they could not stay around any longer, so the ship was only claimed as "damaged." The new bombardier had done himself proud.

Aug 12, 1945. Despite rumors and word from people who were supposed to be in the know, there had been not a word from Tokyo. Many ears were glued to every radio while the ops section watched the teletypes for news or cancellations of the strike this day. No word came - so Japan was to receive its daily ration of 7000 tons of bombs. KEN'S MEN loaded the planes with 260 lb. frag clusters.

Aircraft on the ground at Matsuyama Drome were the objective. Twenty planes took to the air on this mission that many felt would be the last of the war. Smoke and haze made the target a little difficult to pick up, but bombing was good with about 85% in the target; fires were started that could well have been planes burning. AA was sporadic holing 3 planes and slightly wounding one 65th gunner. (Pettus can't find the man's name. He could be the last casualty in the 43rd. The 65th records say, "One nose gunner being grazed by a fragment tearing through 2 pairs of gloves on his hands.") Some planes made second runs due to smoke. All squadrons were careful getting back to Ie Shima to avoid known AA positions. There was no sightseeing, but the crews did get a look at Nagasaki. About all they could see was smoke and haze. It was forbidden to go within 20 miles of the stricken city.

There was no stand down yet, so 4 of the black Sea Hawks took to the air on the 12th/13th. Two went to the Sea of Japan, that had been a poor hunting area, but this night proved to be different. The first plane, piloted by F/O Stebbins, found a Tare Two Stacker and a DE. He dropped 4 bombs on 3 runs and got one near miss on the bow. The ship was stationary when first attacked and seemed to have its back broken. It appeared to be fully afloat on the first run, but within half an hour the forward hatches were awash. The ship of 5500 tons was claimed as sunk. The crew now turned to deal with the DE that was throwing up inaccurate but very worrying flak. The DE took violent evasive maneuvers and all bombs missed by a wide margin. Another DE joined the fray with its AA. This proved to be too plentiful and Stebbins pulled away. At this time the operator had radar problems so they returned to base with the recco not quite 100% completed.

In the other plane Capt. Bancroft put 4 bombs on a reef. Then finding no shipping he bombed the docks at Fusan with no observable results.

The other two Sea Hawks went to the Tsu Shima Straits. As soon as they arrived at the blind bombing zone, they found targets, but the haze made visuals difficult. Two patrol craft dodged 2 X 500 pounders from Lt. Hovland and crew in #812. These ships were hard to hit as they were very maneuverable. Looking for bigger game they found a Fox Tare Charlie at 0230 hours and dropped 3 X 500 lb. bombs scoring 2 hits near the stern. The ship rolled on its side emitting white smoke or steam and sank in a few minutes. The rest of the patrol produced no good targets, but the crew was happy with a 3500 ton Fox

Tare Charlie. The second plane to the area was #130, piloted by Lt. Seaman, and at 0005 he picked up a Fox Tare Baker, 6500 tons, making 3-4 knots and heading westerly. On the first run the 3 bombs dropped were near misses, but on the second try 2 bombs made direct hits on the stern. As #130 circled they saw lifeboats and survivors in the water. The next target was a Tare Two Stack, but it was missed and got away. Due to sea scatter on radar, they did not look further for the Two Stack and went back to see what had happened to the Fox Tare Baker. They then found a Fox Tare Dog that was probably looking for survivors from the destroyed ship and dropped 2 X 500 pounders towards the ship. They spun it around but did not sink it, so it was only claimed as "damaged." With only 3 bombs left they continued to look for another target, realizing this was probably the last chance they would get in the war, and found a Sugar Able Item and a smaller ship going north at 7 knots. The larger ship put up a screen of flak holing #130, but it dropped its remaining 3 bombs. One made a direct hit aft on the ship. The ship blew up creating secondary explosions with such force as to break windows in #130. The crew suffered no injuries and continued to circle the wreckage as the ship split in two and sank. Green distress flares were fired from the floating debris. Out of bombs and content with their work, the crew headed for home and landed at 0620. The bombardier, Lt. Bergh, received congratulations from all.

It turned out that the strike on Sunday the 12th would be the last armed mission of the war for the daytime strike squadrons. Preparations had been made for a strike on the 13th, but they were canceled the night of the 12th.

Aug 13th/14th. The Sea Hawks did not have orders to stand down, so they were active this night. Three Sea Hawks flew what was to be the last offensive action of the 43rd B.G. These crews were eager to get ships and to reach the magic one million ton mark for ships sunk, probably sunk and damaged. Two of the hunters carried 12 X 500 lb. Torpex and 2700 gallons of fuel while the third headed towards Korea carried 9 X 500 lb. bombs and 3100 gallons of fuel. After 2 hours the plane with the shortest recco had to turn back due to a gas leak. They jettisoned their 12 X 500 lb. load safely. Lt. Fugate, at the controls of #025, with Lt. Fletcher over the bombsight, soon found a Sugar Dog and missed him with 2 bombs. Spending 2 hours looking for bigger game they picked up a small convoy with a Sugar Able Item being the largest of the vessels. After missing on his first 2 bomb runs, they hit on the third blowing up the ship with such force that the waist windows in the black B-24 were shattered. The ship was undoubtedly carrying ammunition that kept exploding for the next 5 minutes. The ship soon sank more a victim of its own cargo than the bombs that had hit it. Another 5000 tons were now added to the total score. They dropped their last bombs on a convoy lugger that had hung around to see if there were survivors, but they missed and continued on their recco although unarmed. They would of course report any major ship in their search area. The last plane out was a new crew on its first mission. Great credit must be given to that old master, Major Butts, for not flying what was known to probably be the last mission of the war. As a good C.O. he allowed the crew, whose place on the roster had come up, to fly the mission. They acquitted themselves like veterans. 2/Lt. P.B. Cressor and the bombardier, 2/Lt. Voda, along with their comrades, joined a long list of gallant men who had gone into combat with the 63rd B.S. The area assigned to Cressor, flying in #969, was off the coast of Korea, not the most fruitful of reccos. After doing his rounds for over 2 hours, he headed NE towards Tsu Shima Straits. Here at 0210 he found a Fox Baker under way at 10 knots, and he made 2 runs on the ship. On the second, a diagonal

run, he dropped 3 bombs and a sheet of flames erupted, probably from ruptured fuel tanks. It sank within 15 minutes sending 4000 tons to the bottom on their first encounter. With 3 bombs left and the proscribed course not completed, they searched on, and at 0230 they found another Fox Baker. An attack with their last 3 lethal weapons scored a hit amidships. Fire followed and as the B-24 circled and watched a large explosion shook the vessel and it listed 20 degrees. Within 15 minutes it joined its sister in the deep. This ship had put up a defense and #969 was holed in the tail. Two night fighters poked around blinking their lights and came within 100 yards or so of the B-24 without firing. The B-24 remained silent, looked for a cloud and returned safely to Birch Strip landing at 0700. This was the last of KEN'S MENS combat operations.

Aug 14, 1945. The strike squadrons were again standing down, but there had been no declaration of a cessation of hostilities. Some Far East Air Forces were carrying out limited reccos. The 43rd was on alert and ready to resume operations at a moment's notice. On August 15th the Japanese Emperor read his statement of surrender over the radio to the Japanese people, and on that same day President Truman ordered all hostilities to cease ... PANDAMONIUM THEN HIT OKINAWA AND ALL ISLANDS. Word came in before noon on the 15th that it was over, and Col. Pettus called in all the staff and squadron commanders. He announced that what must be avoided at all costs was men getting killed and injured while celebrating and ordered that ALL WEAPONS IN THE HANDS OF INDIVIDUALS WOULD BE COLLECTED. IF ANY MAN FIRED A SHOT, HE WOULD BE COURT MARSHALLED BY A GENERAL COURT IMMEDIATELY. The Colonel was not sure if he had this authority (and probably did not), but he sure made everybody think that he did. He said he did not care what they did, how drunk they got, even if they burned the latrines down, but no guns and that was that. Most of the weapons were collected by nightfall and though there was plenty of celebrating, there was no shooting. On Okinawa 6 men were killed and 30 wounded by gunshot and falling fragments. [This order did not reach some of those in the 65th Squadron, including this editor Jim Cherkauer, but no guns were fired in our area as far as he knows.]

Thus ends the manuscript of Col. James Pettus and edited by Jim Cherkauer.