



# KEN'S MEN

## 43rd Bomb Group

January 2015

ISSUE: 129

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### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is with great pleasure that I wish each of you a very Happy New Year. I hope this finds you having enjoyed a holiday season filled with family and friends as we remember the times when such a thing was not always possible. Many of our military personnel are serving abroad yet today, and it is always important to remember them during these times.

In remembrance, we all mourn the loss of our long time Secretary and friend, Edward Gammill. He worked tirelessly for this organization and was a friend to us all. Ed was also the editor of our Ken's Men Newsletter, working long hours to bring you up to date and keep you in

touch with each other. Ed was at every reunion that I know of and they just won't be the same without him, he will be missed by all. His family has asked that in lieu of flowers that donations be made to the 43rd Bomb Group and that the 43rd direct all funds to George Mason University to support our 43rd Archiving and web site efforts.

Louise Terrell, our newly acting Secretary, has graciously volunteered to publish the newsletter starting in March. Expect a new look with some new features, thank you Louise!

I have, as always, gotten quite a few phone calls from the membership and I am seeing an interesting pattern. The calls are from an

ever increasing younger generation looking for a connection to a loved one. A missing father, grandfather or a father they never knew. I am also seeing more from the support groups, two in fact from two different individuals related to photographers assigned to the 43rd. You will see inside a few drawings from the grandson of one of these men. As so many of you know, I myself came to my first reunion to learn more about my father's story and have gained so much more by learning yours. I have encouraged these new people to join us in September and share their stories and learn their family's past.

Susan Clark Lanson



Ed Gammill 2012 & 2014 with daughter, Hazel. Washington DC



## KEN'S MEN - 43RD BOMB GROUP

### REUNION PLANS FOR 2015

#### PAST PRESIDENTS

**Robert Butler**  
1981-1984\*

**George L. White**  
1985-1987\*

**William H. Wilson, Jr.**  
1988-1991\*

**Dale F. Barr, Jr.**  
1992-1993\*

**Max Osborn**  
1994-1995\*

**James T. Murphy**  
1996-1997\*

**Samuel F. Commons**  
1998-1999

**Max M. Axelsen**  
2000-2001

**Roger T. Kettleson**  
2002-2003

**Charles Rauch**  
2004-2005

**Jim Cherkauer**  
2006-2007

**James Thompson Jr**  
2008

**Eldon "Bud" Lawson**  
2009-2010

**Arvid J. Hougum**  
2011\*

**Robert R. Richardson**  
2012-2013

\*Deceased

Plans are underway for our 2015 reunion and we are receiving an enormous amount of support for the Time Capsule. Senator Carl Levine as agreed to speak and attend our Time Capsule ceremony, his schedule permitting, and will assist in the lowering of the capsule. We are shooting for a September reunion as always and will let you know as soon as possible.

Louise Terrell, our newly acting Secretary, has graciously agreed to sort and catalogue all contents that are to go inside the capsule. Forms will be available online as well as by mail to any and all, with Veterans of course receiving preference. We hope for a large participation, not just from our usual active members, but from family members of veterans that are no longer with us. This time capsule is not only about us today, but about the 43rd Bomb Group as a whole. It would be wonderful to gather not only for the past but in the spirit of the future.

So, yes, Langley AFB as our destination, at a hotel to be determined. We are currently working on the hotel plans and hope to put up a designated link on the Ken's Men web site to be able to register on line. So keep an eye out for it on

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

### WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

With the new year comes change and that means to the 43rd as well. We welcome two new board members to our group.

Both Louise Terrell and Walter "Buck" Buchanan, III have both graciously agreed to serve. Louise will serve as Secretary and Buck on our board.

Many of you may remember Louise as she has come to several of our reunions along with her husband, Doug. Louise is also who has been helping Tracy with the web site and been compiling the database of our aircraft and casualty list as seen on our website. Louise's father was William P. "Bill" Voght, a B-24 gunner with the 64th Squadron in 1943. Louise herself was a career military

aviator, then with the Dept of Defense and now retired, lives near Lake Superior on Michigan's Upper Peninsula to be near family.

Buck is a new member, this past reunion being his first. He came in search of information regarding his father and with a lucky break met up with Justin Taylor, our guest speaker and found out more than he had hoped.

His father, a bombardier with the 403rd had an exciting history with our group which you can read about in the following pages as Buck has shared the story of his father's crash landing.

Buck too brings with him a long military career, of both aviation and command. A recently retired Lt. Gen. he

has served both over seas and stateside. He now lives in Virginia with his wife Sharon.

We are proud to have you both join our ranks and we look forward to seeing you both at our next reunion.

**"You are  
only gone  
when you  
are  
forgotten"**





## KEN'S MEN - 43RD BOMB GROUP

### REUNION TIME CAPSULE

BY MICHAEL LA VEAN

How do you want to be remembered?

History is not random. History is written by the victors and often the authors have PR materials on their desks.

Most people believe WWII in the Pacific was Pearl Harbor, several invasions by the Marines and then we dropped an A Bomb.

The reality is very different. The largest invasion in the history, if the world, was D-Day. how many Marines were there? Zero. The second largest invasion was at Luzon. How man Marines were there? Zero. The Marines went to Guadalcanal but they needed the Army to finish the job. At Okinawa the Marines went ashore and then the Army once again came in and got the job done.

The Marines have a wonderful PR machine, and everyone else takes a back seat.

The 43rd Bomb Group Assn is going to protect the legacy of family members who served when their country called by making sure their stories are collected, recorded and made easily available to the historians of today and the future.

January 15, of 2016 is the 75th Anniversary of the Activation of the 43rd Bomb Group at Langley Field, Virginia.

At this year's reunion at Langley the 43rd will be loading a time capsule which is to be opened in 2091, 75 years from now. Any member of the 43rd, or their family members, can place memoirs, items, photos or anything that you believe will help the historians of the future better understand our story and what the 43rd did and who they were.

Examples of what you might insert might be any written memoirs, personal letters, pictures and diaries, artifacts like short snorters, insignia, maps, etc.

All donated items will be inventoried, photographed or scanned before being sealed in the time capsule. The actual list of contents will be made by the veterans present, who will also place all items in the time capsule.

The entire process will be videotaped. Also, you will not need to be present to have your items placed in the capsule so send what you would like and include it's story along with your own. If your veteran is unable to come, or has passed away, please send your items and we will ensure their placement into the capsule. We want your story along with his, all members are important.

Our Newsletter Editor, LTC (ret) Louise Terrell, daughter of William "Bill" Voght of the 64th will be receiving the items between now and the reunion. See the form that follows. Otherwise bring your item with you to the reunion and we will do our best at that time to have it included.

This will be our message to the future, what we as a group want to say to the historians of the 22nd Century. What they say and write about us, the 43rd Bomb Group. With your help we will do everything we can to make sure the 43rd's story is preserved and accessible.



L-R, seated, Col (ret) Mark Morris, Sam Commons, Ed Gammill, Donna Marchese, Joe Snyder, Buck Buchanan

2014 Reunion, Washington DC





**43rd Bomb Group (H) Time Capsule Submission**  
**Commemorating**  
**The 75th Anniversary of the 43rd's Activation at Langley Field, Virginia**

**Full Name and Rank of 43rd Bomb Group Member**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Serial Number** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Birth** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where Born (City, State, Country)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Address** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dates Assigned to 43rd** \_\_\_\_\_ **Assigned Squadron** \_\_\_\_\_

**Duties While with the 43rd** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Person Submitting Item & Relationship to 43rd BG Member (self, spouse, son, niece, etc.)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Description of Item(s) Donated to the Time Capsule** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significance of Item(s), Personally and/or Professionally** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Please submit this form and your items to:*

*Louise Terrell, 207 Huron Street, Houghton MI 49931, NLT 20 August 2015*

*Contact Louise through email at lterrell5@verizon.net or by phone at 703-999-3542 with any questions or to provide notification that your item(s) are being sent*

*If you want to keep originals of items, documents, etc, please make and forward only copies*



## **SUGGESTED ITEMS FOR TIMJE CAPSULE**

A printed copy of your WWII memoir, signed and dated

Personal stories about the war or your time spent in the war that are not necessarily a part of recorded history.

Personal stories told to you by a veteran, by family members or anyone!

A "Joe Snyder" hand carved

Flight helmet

Goggles w/lenses

Flight jacket

Flight wristwatch

Flight navigation tools - E6B, etc.

Set of Air Corps wings - pilot, navigator, bombardier, gunner

Photos of crews or individuals, labeled with names

B-17 operators manual and checklist

B-17 maintenance manual

B-24 operators manual and checklist

B-24 maintenance manual

Aeronautical charts / maps from in-theater

Tickets from liberty ship travel and/or train travel

Postcard, victory mail, letter sent while deployed

Orders assigning to 43rd Bombardment Group

Dress uniform with cap

Photos of maintenance crew, personnel, intel, operations, supply, medic, mess hall, motor pool, etc., labeled with names

5th AF shoulder patch, 43rd Group patch or Squadron patches

Full set of medals authorized to be worn by members of the 43rd Bomb Group

Survival kit

Pilot's flight/mission log

Crewmember's flight/mission log

ID tags

Signed dollar bill (short snorter)

Wartime diary

Individual biographies - pre / during / post-war

Fifth AF / 43rd Bomb Group yearbook "Down Under"

Selective Service Documents

American Legion booklets

Training documents / graduation diplomas

Newspaper articles regarding individuals and/or efforts by the 43rd BG or 5th AF

Pics of airplanes assigned to 43rd BG, labeled with names

A picture of the men taken at each of the past 30+ reunions - with names if possible

A listing of all casualties from the 43rd - take from Ken's Men website - both alphabetically and by date?

43rd's Newsletters

Certificate of Appreciation for War Service, separation paperwork, memos, foreign currency

Belt buckle, St. Christopher's medal, cloth and metal rank, cloth overseas stripes, Army Air Corps ring, a bracelet made from Australian coins

Religious items such as a Catholic ID pouch, prayer cards, a Prayer Book for Catholic Servicemen

Poem titled "The Song of a Gunner",

Small box with set of aviators' sunglasses

A blue hardcover book titled, "Bombs Away", written by John Steinbeck

Newly published book, "Ken's Men Against the Empire Vol. I, The Illustrated History of the 43rd Bombardment Group During World War II"

Love Letters

And Wade....pictures of your Australian girlfriends!





## KEN'S MEN - 43RD BOMB GROUP

### HISTORY THEN & NOW

#### January-March 1945: Philippines Campaign

In early January 1945, the biggest army the U.S. would commit to any one battle in the Pacific invaded the main Filipino island of Luzon. At this time it was defended by 287,000 Japanese. According to historian Donald Miller, this was "the largest army the Americans faced in the Pacific." When the organized battle ended after two months, Manila was one of the most thoroughly devastated cities of World War II. The Japanese Navy had blown up Manila's harbor and destroyed the old city.

MacArthur's Sixth Army suffered 38,000 individuals killed or wounded. Despite defeat, stalwart Japanese would continue to fight in the jungles and mountains of the Philippines until the very end of the war, losing a total of 400,000

lives in the Philippines.

Until Late March when the 43rd moved to Clark Field, the 43rd was based at Tacloban. Col Petus saying at this time Tacloban was the busiest airport in the world.

During this period notable 43rd BG targets were various targets on Luzon in support of the ground troops and also Corregidor which the Japanese had turned into a fortress. The 43rd also bombed targets in Formosa including knocking out more than 60% of the power generating capability of the Island.

The 63rd conducted night anti shipping operations in the east and South China Seas, Gulf of Tonkin and along the coast of China. By the first of April the 5th Air

Force had cut the sea lanes from the South Pacific to Japan and the bombardment of Hong Kong began. One mission is described by Col Petus as the most dangerous mission he ever flew.

In February of 2014 there was a 2,000 lb bomb (most likely dropped from a B24) found and diffused in Hong Kong.

Could this be from the 43rd?

### KENSMEN

We're on the web!

[www.kensmen.com](http://www.kensmen.com) \*\*\*\*\* [www.pacificairwar.org](http://www.pacificairwar.org)

Does anyone remember seeing this drawing? It was recently sent in by a member of photographic unit that was assigned to the 43rd for a part of the war.

We would love to know the story behind this drawing. Anyone having any information, please call Susan Lanson at 727-641-1332

It has a name of Col. Harry J. Hawthorne C.O. on the bottom and is dated 1944, but artist is unknown.





## KEN'S MEN - 43RD BOMB GROUP

### RAISING CANE

Joe & Sally Snyder, so often the quiet couple in the corner of our gatherings yet one that brings much joy. Joe, with the help of his wife Sally, is the creator and carver of the 43rd Bomb Group Canes.

Joe quietly selects a recipient each year for a cane and then throughout the next year will painstakingly turn, carve, sand and stain away until a one of a kind piece is created.

Joe works in cherry and walnut to name but a few and will add details such as the 5th AF, 43rd Bomb Group and the individual Squadron Insignia in miniature. He will place in pilots wings if applicable and other such information pertaining to WWII such as where the recipient served, curving it artfully around the cane. It is beautiful to see the names such as Mareeba, Port Morseby or Dobadura wrapping down a cane to make it a unique piece of history and a map of that man's life.

No one knows how Joe selects his recipients, but George Anderson Sr. received one just before this past Christmas. George says he is still overwhelmed by the honor, it was a complete surprise.

I do hear Joe plans to retire his craft soon. All the more reason for all of you to take the time to look closely at any cane you see this next reunion, it is a tradition all our own and we thank you Joe and Sally for bringing it to us.



Joe & Sally Snyder 2014



George Anderson , and daughter Gayle, receiving custom made







## KEN'S MEN - 43RD BOMB GROUP

### RIPCORN FOR A BEER

BY BUCK BUCHANAN

Despite being just past midnight, it was a typical summer evening in Papua New Guinea – CAVU (Ceiling And Visibility Unlimited) ... *and hot*. The date was July 11, 1943. The crew of the B-24D "Liberator," SN 42-40060, had been alerted earlier in the evening that they were scheduled for a night mission — something they had done many times before as proud members of the 403<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Squadron, 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group (H).

Captain Bill Gowdy's crew had arrived in theater the previous September ferrying a new B-17F from Hamilton Field, California. In the intervening ten months, they had become a close knit team and been a part of just about every combat action undertaken by "Ken's Men" since the later part of 1942. As one of the first 403<sup>rd</sup> crews to arrive in theater, they started flying combat attached to the 63<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Squadron. They participated in the *Battle for the Bismark Sea* and conducted numerous bombing missions against the enemy stronghold at the seaport of Rabaul on the island of New Britain, Papua New Guinea.

Despite their experience in theater and especially in the B-17, Bill Gowdy and his crew were relatively new to the B-24. For most of them, this was only their eleventh flight in a B-24 and Gowdy himself had only 37.5 hours in the aircraft.

Mission planning and preflight gave no indication that tonight's mission would be any different than the many combat flights they had previously flown out of Jackson Field, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. The only aspect of the mission that was notable was that they had an extra navigator aboard. 2Lt Albert Stewart was on his initial combat checkout sortie under the tutelage of 1Lt John McMahon who had been with Gowdy since they left the States.

With ground and preflight checks complete, Captain Gowdy took the runway and was cleared for takeoff shortly after midnight. He ran the engines up, making sure everything looked good. The heavy bomber shook as the engines strained against the brakes. The bombardier, 1Lt Walter "Buck" Buchanan Jr., looked over the co-pilot's shoulder as he had so many times before as Gowdy released the brakes and the big bomber began lumbering down the runway. 2Lt George Putnam, a new addition to Gowdy's crew, watched the gauges closely and helped Gowdy track the bomber as she slowly accelerated down the runway.

As he approached the end of the runway, Gowdy pulled back on the yolk and eased the heavy bomber into the air. Feeling confident that they were now safely airborne, Gowdy called for the landing gear to be retracted. Putnam responded and raised the gear.

That was when things began to go wrong.

As the landing gear began to retract, the heavy bomber seemed to sigh and settle back to the runway striking and bouncing on her aft belly for about 50 feet.

Gowdy struggled to coax the lumbering bomber back into the air. Had they settled back to the runway with a full bomb load and no runway remaining, it would have been catastrophic. Later S/Sgt Peterson would recall that all he thought about at the moment the bomber sank and struck the runway was the 1000-pound bomb that was mounted just feet behind him in the bomb bay. Fortunately, the big bomber found the strength to keep flying, slowly climbing away from the airfield.

Gowdy called for an assessment of any damage. He was certain they had hit the runway. What he didn't know was the extent of the damage. Those on the flight deck noted the landing gear had not fully retracted. The nose gear indicated it was in the up position, but the right main gear was still down, and the left main was in transition. Looking out at the main gear, they tried to access damage but could not see clearly enough in the darkness. The crew would have to wait until daylight to fully determine the damage. A quick inspection of the bomb bay revealed that when they bounced off the runway they had, at least, damaged the bomb bay doors. What other damage the underside of the belly had sustained, no one knew.

Their bomber now crippled, the mission was aborted. Attention was turned to how best to get the crew and aircraft safely back on the ground. With the landing gear in an asymmetrical configuration, they had a choice to make. They had to find some way to establish a somewhat symmetrical landing configuration that would allow them to safely land the big bomber or they would have to bail out. Even if landing meant bellying her in, at least it would allow them to salvage or possibly repair the relatively new aircraft. SN 42-40060 only had 243.3 total hours at the time and had been assigned to the 43BG (H) for less than a month. She had not yet even earned a nickname or been decorated with any racy nose art.







## KEN'S MEN - 43RD BOMB GROUP

The crew knew they needed to get rid of their bomb load first. Landing a crippled bomber full of bombs was a risk not only for the crew but also for those on the airfield.

But there was another problem. When the bomber bounced her aft belly off the runway, her bomb bay doors were not just damaged, they were jammed shut. Unless they could find a way to get them open, they wouldn't be able to jettison the bomb load. Working in the dimly lit bomb bay, in and around the bombs, the crew set to work trying to free the doors and get them open. They finally kicked the door rollers off of their tracks and were able to hand crank the doors a bit and then pry and kick them open. Now open just enough, they headed over the water and jettisoned their bombs, unfused, into the ocean.

Throughout the rest of the night, Gowdy and the crew tried everything they could think of to establish a landing configuration that would allow them to safely recover the bomber. Despite their collective efforts and help from the ground, they just couldn't find a way.

With daylight, they could clearly see why. The left main gear was not just stuck in transition. It was cocked about 30 degrees aft and twisted where it had hit the runway as it was being retracted. The crew could also see that the left main had a torn hydraulic line. Without hydraulics they now understood why they had not been able to raise the right main gear.

The issue was the cocked and twisted left main. Regardless of the position of the nose or right main gear, the damaged left main would drag and collapse on landing. If the nose and right main gear were up, that would be okay as they belled in. However, with the right main locked down (which it was), a collapsing left main would cause the bomber to drag a wing and ground loop, putting the crew in extreme danger. The decision was left up to Captain Gowdy as the aircraft commander. In the end, he decided the risk was too great to attempt a crash landing and told the crew to prepare to bailout.

One can easily imagine what happened next. Having never parachuted before and only been given cursory training in the procedures, the crew now turned their attention to how to bailout safely. One can hear Gowdy and others filling the intercom with what they recalled from their training: how to properly fit the parachute, how to cleanly exit the aircraft, how to achieve the proper body position as you pull the ripcord so you don't get tangled in the risers, and finally how to hit the ground without breaking your leg!

Everyone checked his parachute to make sure of a good fit (something that should have been done before takeoff). All were good except two. Captain Gowdy, himself, found his parachute was too small for his large frame, and T/Sgt Wesley Cowan, the radio operator, found his was too large. This was something that could have been deadly in an emergency bailout. At least this night they had time. Gowdy and Cowan traded parachutes.

In discussions with operations on the ground, Gowdy detailed his plan. He would pass over the airfield and set the crippled bomber on autopilot aimed out to sea. With fuel getting low after all the time and effort expended trying to save the bomber, they were finally ready.

Unlike a combat mission where decisions were made in an instant and one did not have time to be scared, the bailout scenario had been in the back of their minds all night. On other missions, they had seen desperate crewmembers abandon their stricken aircraft only to have their parachute malfunction. These images, so indelibly marked in their memory, had been flooding back all night.

Gowdy, a good combat leader, now did something to break the tension and calm his crew. These men, his friends who he had flown combat with for almost a year, heard him announce over the intercom, ***"whoever shows up on the ground without his ripcord buys the beer!"*** (In training, aircrews were taught to discard the ripcord after it was pulled.) With Gowdy's simple challenge, his crew relaxed and looked beyond the coming parachute jump. Everyone now knew they would make it safely to the ground. *And they would not be the one buying the beer!*

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**KENSMEN**

**TRUSTED 43rd SUPPORTERS:**

**[www.Pacificairwar.org](http://www.Pacificairwar.org) \*\*\*\* [www.pacificwrecks.org](http://www.pacificwrecks.org)**

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## KEN'S MEN - 43RD BOMB GROUP

Gowdy leveled the bomber at 8,000 feet and headed toward the airfield. Once in position, he rang the bell. 1Lt McMahon, the navigator, led the crew out the camera or "submarine" hatch. It was 0817 in the morning, 8 hours since the fateful takeoff. Gowdy was the last to jump.

Most opened their parachutes and landed without incident. S/Sgt Harold Peterson, assistant engineer, the same man who earlier in the evening had thought about the 1000-pound bomb sitting behind him, landed in a tree and found himself stuck 35 feet off the ground until he was rescued. 2Lt George Putnam, the copilot, dislocated his shoulder when his parachute opened and landed in the water. The remainder of the crew landed on Jackson Field where the accompanying photograph was taken. All smiling with ripcords in hand!

There is no record of who ended up buying the first round after that fateful flight. In the end it didn't matter. They all made it out safely.

One final note, as Gowdy jumped clear of the crippled bomber, one of the engines flamed out (probably due to fuel starvation), causing the bomber to turn and enter a tight spiral. Ground observers reported she just missed hitting Gowdy as he floated down in his parachute before the crippled bomber crashed into a hill about 3 miles northeast of the airfield where she still lies today.

One can only wonder if she wasn't trying to take one last swing at Gowdy before crashing.

~~~~~

The bombardier, 1Lt Walter "Buck" Buchanan Jr., *and my Dad*, always told this story with reverence for the men he flew with in combat and admiration for Bill Gowdy who had the presence of mind to take the edge off a very tense situation as he worked to get his crew *and friends* safely back on the ground.



The men in the bailout photo are from left to right:

Yawn (tail gunner), Powell (engineer), McNight (waist gun), Stewart (student nav - first mission), Buchanan (bombardier), Cowan (radio operator), McMahon (navigator), Gowdy (pilot)



<http://www.af.mil/AboutUs/Biographies/Display/tabid/225/Article/107609/lieutenant-general-walter-e-buchanan-iii.aspx>



## KEN'S MEN - 43RD BOMB GROUP

### LETTER TO THE 43RD

Dear Mr. Gammill and Ms. Lanson,

Jan 22, 1015

My name is Colin Mitchell, and I'm the grandson of 1st Lt. John F. Deutsch (1920-1996), who piloted B-24s in the 403rd Bombardment Squadron from January 1945 through November 1945. He was never a member of your organization, though I did find a reference to him in a Ken's Men newsletter from 1983. He never spoke about the war and after his death the facts of his military experience began to fade with the passing years.

About six months ago, I obtained access to my grandfather's old Type A-4 military case which had long been in storage. (A photo of the case is attached.) It proved to contain over a hundred original documents, some yearbooks, and a few photos, spanning my grandfather's entire military service in World War Two. No one in my family had ever given these documents more than a cursory look, so I took it upon myself to look through them in detail. I soon discovered that these documents pertained not only to my grandfather, but also to his crew. One photo, in particular, shows my grandfather and the crew posing in front of a B-24 Liberator. I recognized only my grandfather. From other documents I learned the names of the other men, but I had no way to identify who was who. As it's been seventy years since that photo was taken, I assumed that none of the men was still living.

After learning of the 1973 fire at the National Archives, and realizing that I possessed documents that other families might be grateful to have, I've spent the last six months -- nearly every day -- searching for these men and their families. It hasn't been easy, but I've had some success. As of today, I'm in contact with the families of all nine crewmen. The interactions have been very positive and it is humbling to be able to provide such precious information to families who have none. I'm now able to identify all of the men in the aforementioned photo and I have a basic understanding of who they were and what they did after the war. But, the greatest gift of all is locating a still living crewman (another non-member of your organization), the tail gunner, who joined the Army Air Forces at age seventeen. (To preserve his anonymity, let's call him "Michael".) He's eighty-nine now, in fairly good health, and has been willing to talk with me about his experiences. I've made plans to travel from my home in a matter of weeks to meet him in person.

My own father worked as a historian for many years and as a young man I learned how to perform archival research. For this project, part of that research meant reading every single Ken's Men newsletter in sequence (there are 125 of them as of this writing, I believe) searching for references to my grandfather or his crew. I was disappointed to find very little, though there were one or two tidbits worth mentioning here:

First, in Issue 105 there is a day-by-day account of the 43rd's missions in July 1945. There is a description of a bomb becoming stuck in the bomb bay and then falling out of the aircraft upon landing. "Michael" had earlier told me a story of those events happening to my grandfather's plane at Clark Field, so I'm fairly sure that this is the same event. His explanation was that they normally jettisoned unused bombs in the ocean, but because of cloud cover they were not allowed to do so because there were U.S. troops in that area. He noted that the bomb (1000 pounds) had been defused, but that it hit the runway at 120 miles per hour and rolled away.

The second event is not noted in detail, but on March 12, 1945 my grandfather's crew was in the formation (it was just their third mission) which accidentally bombed the Philippines town of Abulug. They were not the lead aircraft, but I've since learned that this event was so traumatic to the bombardier that after the war he rarely flew again.

As I read through the newsletters one by one, I was at first pleased to learn of a book to be published about the 43rd Group. My pleasure turned to dismay, then disappointment, to anger and then grief as I read of the deaths of so many of the men and women who waited faithfully for their book to be published. I don't know the circumstances of this shameful deceit but I wonder how Mr. Hickey can sleep at night, knowing that he's lied to a generation of war veterans. The accounts of some these men never receiving back their donated photos and documents is particularly shocking. I truly hope that something is published some day.

I know a great deal about my grandfather's missions, and know where he was on most days of the war. However, there are a few areas of research that I'd like to know more about. Is there a historian or archivist in your organization?

I would also like to give, not simply take. Would you please send me the name of someone within your organization that I can contact about providing digital copies of the documents and photos in my possession? There's always the chance I have something you don't. The only proviso I would make is that not a single document or photo ever be provided to Mr. Hickey (or his representatives) under any circumstances or for any reason. He simply hasn't earned the right.

Attached is a strike plan dated June 5, 1945. My grandfather flew thirty-five missions and returned home at the end of November 1945...just in time for a big Thanksgiving meal with his family.

Very best regards from Minnesota,  
Colin Mitchell



## FROM OUR FILES



Photo sent by a new potential member, Patrick McNutt

Please submit your photos to Editor Louise Terrell

### **Do We Have Your Current Email?**

If you did not receive an email notice of this newsletter, then we do not have your email on file. To save on postage, the 43rd is using email more as a means of reaching membership. Please update yours today.

For changes or to be added to our list, email: [43bgroup@gmail.com](mailto:43bgroup@gmail.com)

Please no personal emails, this is to be used for address additions and changes only.