



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



**NEWSLETTER 97<sup>TH</sup> EDITION  
JANUARY 2006**

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**By Andy Anderson:** Jim Cherkauer set me a two page article from a Springfield, PA newspaper which featured our own **Sam Commons**. The article was sent by e-mail and contains two photographs of Sam, one showing a model B-24 Sam built himself. The article was dated November 10, 2005 and states that Sam is 81 years old. I have much in common with Sam, since I am also 81 years old. But Sam served overseas from January 1944 to February 1945 according to the article written by Joe Baron of the Springfield Sun. My service overseas began many months later and my last mission as a B-24 radioman was over Japan the same day the 2<sup>nd</sup> atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. I was discharged just few days before my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. The article twice stated that Sam was in the 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron. But the article refers to the "Lucky Dice" emblem of the 65<sup>th</sup> Squadron and in our roster Sam is listed as being in the 65<sup>th</sup>. (?) Anyhow, is always a pleasure to go to a reunion and find **Sam and Helen Commons** there!

**Neil Fairbanks**, who was co-host at our Minnesota reunion reports that he still has some caps for sale by mail order. The cost \$11.00 each. Since the cap does not have a date on it, it is appropriate for any year. The deadline is Feb.1, 2006. His address is in your roster. He also states that Fred Hargesheimer's address is P.O. Box 641, Grass Valley, CA 95345 for those of you who would like to order his book, "The School That Fell From The Sky". I cannot inform you of the price.

**Wayne Caldwell** sent me an e-mail to mention a new address. He now lives at 11711 Wainwright Blvd. and is still in Fishers, Indiana 46036-1397. He states that he and his wife love to go to Branson, Missouri. He said that Branson is a good place for entertainment.

My wife **Anne Anderson** sent some extra photos we had to several people and the one to **Bob Butler** brought some nice comments from him in the form of a letter. He spent Thanksgiving in Andover, MA with his oldest son, and later went to North Carolina to divide his belongings and to say goodbye to Fayetteville. He got a good price for his home there. He stated that his fondest memories were "the good times with the 43<sup>rd</sup> folks."

**Chuck Rauch**, our immediate past president, sent me a copy of a letter sent in late October to George Welch which included a second donation of \$500 to the B-24 memorial monument being built in San Diego. Thus, our total donation is now \$1000. I will go there and photograph it when it is completed.

A president's report by **Jim Cherkauer** follows on the next page and one half.

It is with a great sense of humbleness that I assume the role of president of our association. Those are giant footsteps that I have to try to fill following such stalwarts as Bob Butler (1981-1984), George White (1985-1987), Bill Wilson (1988-1991), Dale Barr (1992-1993), Max Osborn (1994-1995), Jim Murphy (1996-1997), Sam Commons (1998-1999), Max Axelsen (2000-2001), Roger Kettleson (2002-2003) and Chuck Rauch (2004-2005). Our association has been a strong organization under their leadership, and I pledge to do my very best to attempt to live up to the standards they have set.

It is so gratifying to see so many loyal members attending our reunions each year, and may we have many joyful years ahead.

Later in this newsletter our immediate past President, Chuck Rauch, brings you up to date regarding the reunion this year in Branson, Missouri.

Ann Wood Fletcher, daughter of Jim Dieffenderfer, and Fred Hagen have been making good progress with the planning of our 2007 reunion in Valley Forge/Philadelphia, but more of that will be forthcoming in future newsletters that Andy Anderson is doing such a fine job of producing.

Over the years our bylaws have served us well, but a review of them shows that at least one revision should be forthcoming to make them more realistic in light of how we have been operating. I am addressing this matter and will bring it to the attention of our Board at the Branson reunion. If they approve my recommendation, then it will be voted on at the ensuing General meeting of the Association. I will propose that the offices of Secretary and Treasurer not be restricted to a maximum of two consecutive terms as they currently are in the bylaws, but that we have been ignoring for several years. We should be thankful and appreciative of the men who are willing to serve in these offices for as long as they desire and we choose to accept their services.

I am asking Andy Anderson, our very capable Secretary and Newsletter Editor, to include a copy of our bylaws with this newsletter. It seems to me that they have not been distributed very widely to our membership for many years. I suspect that many of you may never have seen these.

Another matter that will need the attention of our Board is that of the Director from Headquarters Squadron. Unfortunately, no one from Headquarters attended the 2005 reunion. The directorship last held by C. Fred McAlister expired at the end of 2005, and of course no replacement was elected at the 2005 reunion. Technically that directorship is vacant so the matter of how to handle this office should be addressed at the 2006 reunion. Perhaps Fred may be willing to continue in that position.

Our newsletter is the primary source of information about the doings of our association and its members. For many of our members it is about the only contact that they have with their fellow veterans, so I urge each of you to keep Andy posted with what you are doing so that this can be included in future newsletters. This news is important to many others. Those of you who use the Internet can also keep up with

much that is posted on our excellent Web site under the most capable care of our Web Mistress, Tracy Tucciarone, the daughter of Francis Tucher.

A suggestion made to me by Jim Dieffenderfer is well worth passing on to you. When the children or grandchildren ask what you want for Christmas this year or for your birthday, instead of saying you have everything you need, tell them you want them to take you to our reunion at Valley Forge in 2007.

I look forward to the challenges in the year ahead and welcome all of the help, suggestions and advice that any of you is willing to share with me. My God bless each of you.

Jim Cherkauer

By **Andy Anderson**; Just before Thanksgiving I received an e-mail from Jim asking that I include the following paragraph in the January newsletter:

"Herb Christensen from Elk Horn, Iowa is seeking information about a **Ross D. Burd**, Serial number 17038346. Ross was crewman in the 403<sup>rd</sup> Squadron. He went to Australia on the *Argentina* (or is it *Argentine*?) His B24D was last seen heading into a storm 40 miles north of Kiriwina Island in the Solomon Sea on 10/13/43. He was listed as MIA at the time. Herb would like to know if anyone can provide him any information with regard to this plane, the crew, or Ross. If so they can contact Herb via e-mail at [mobydick@metc.net](mailto:mobydick@metc.net) or if they have no access to e-mail, they can contact Jim Cherkauer at 114 Thorncliff, Kenmore, NY 14223-1216 and he will see that Herb gets the information."

Since your Secretary/Editor has a nearly complete casualty list of the 43<sup>rd</sup> from Maxwell Air Force Base, I looked at it and learned the following:

"While on a Group strike to Rabaul the weather was closed over the target. This plane and crew was never heard from. A 3 plane search mission combed the sea at the earliest moment, but the missing B-24 was never found. 13 October 1943. (403<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Squadron)" I will list the crew.

Hughie R. Bonner	Capt.	Coffeeville, Miss.
Royal R. Baumgartner	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt.	Philadelphia, PA
Edward B. Tucker	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt.	College Park GA
Angelo J. Lavalley	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt.	Jamestown, NY
Michael P. Elphinstone	T/Sgt.	Dallas, TX
Robert P. Moeller	S/Sgt.	Walthill, Nebr.
Elbert H. Hutto	S/Sgt.	Goose Creek, TX
Coleman P. Butler	Sgt.	Kansas City, Kansas
Ross D. Burd	S/Sgt.	Fort Dodge, Iowa
Lloyd R. Tamblinson	S/Sgt.	Milwaukee, Wisc."

The entire crew is still listed as missing. I will e-mail Herb and provide him with this information. There is additional information, but it is too lengthy to include in this newsletter

While we are on the subject of casualties, I have received information that the remains of the B-24 crew of **Capt. Robert Coleman** of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron have been at the Central Identification Laboratory at Hickam Field, Hawaii for 2 years or so and the family of **Pvt. Joseph Thompson** expect some identification to be announced soon. They provided DNA from his mother's side of the family. I do not know if other crewmen's families were able to do this. **Ed Gammill** will be pleased to know this.

**Orion L. Rogers Sr.** of Sun City, Arizona has sent your Editor a many interesting letters and stories over the past year. I am saving them until I need more material to fill a newsletter. At the moment I have plenty of material for this newsletter. He recently sent me a greeting card which reads "Seasons Greetings and Best Wishes" Orion and Edith Rogers. On the back he typed these words, "This card was copied from the 1944 card that Edith selected s our Family Christmas Card. We were separated for our first Christmas. I was in the Pacific flying my combat missions in the B-24 Heavy Bomber and Edith was working as the Chief Surgical Nurse in the Langley Field, Virginia base hospital." I suppose I like love stories, so I will include this one which will fill only a small amount of space that needs to be filled.

### SHORT COURTSHIP

By Orion L. Rogers

I joined the Army Air Corps in 1942. I was single, with no intention of getting married until the war was over.

I went through pilot training, and on December 5, 1943 I got my wings at Brooks AFB. Then I went to Salt Lake City for crew placement. Afterwards I went to Blythe, CA. For replacement training as a co-pilot on a B-24 crew. Then on 7 April, 1944, our crew was ordered to Langley AFB for radar training .

I was breezing through radar training until June the 24<sup>th</sup>. That day, on a blind date, I met Second Lieutenant Edith Williams who was Chief Surgical Nurse at the base hospital. In short order, We decided that we were meant for each other.

During the fourth week of our courtship, we decided to we would get married before I shipped out. It was too late to make arrangements for a church wedding, so we had to locate a Justice of the Peace, get our license, and get blood tests, all with no transportation other than the shuttle bus. What a rush! On the afternoon of July 29<sup>th</sup> we got **Captain Edward Rothkrug**, my navigator, for a witness, got on the shuttle bus and went to the JP's office in Hampton, Virginia. We said our "I do's" about 5 pm.

We had a courtship of thirty five days, five very short weeks. We had the shortest honeymoon on record. I had to be on the flight line at 0700 hours the next morning, July 30<sup>th</sup> for departure to the Pacific Theater.

There were those skeptics who said it wouldn't last. I flew my missions and got back to the USA in June 1945. We both got discharged from the service. We had three wonderful children, worked hard and then retired to wonderful life in Arizona. I lost Edith to cancer on December 29, 2002. For those who said it wouldn't last, I can say we had a wonderful 58 years and five months.

*Orion L Rogers*

While your Editor has been working on this Newsletter, December 7, 2005 has come and gone, the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pearl Harbor.

I suppose we could criticize Orion for using the terms "Langley AFB" and "Brooks AFB" In those days they were "Army Air Fields"

The next six pages list the by laws of the 43<sup>rd</sup> BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION, INC. and amendments. Members should save them for future reference.

BY LAWS OF  
43<sup>rd</sup> BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION, INC.

A TEXAS NONPROFIT PUBLIC BENEFIT CORPORATION

ARTICLE 1. ORGANIZATION

The name of the organization shall be 43<sup>rd</sup> BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATON, INC. The organization may at its pleasure, by a majority vote of the membership present at an annual Membership Meeting, change its name.

ARTICLE 2. OFFICES

The principal office of the corporation for the transaction of its business is located in Bexar County, Texas.

The county of the corporation's principal office can be changed only by amendment of the Bylaws and not otherwise. The Board of Directors may, however, change the principal office from one location to another within the named county by noting the changed address and effective dates below, and such changes of address shall not be deemed an amendment of the these Bylaws:

\_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_, 19

\_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_, 19

The corporation may also have offices at such other places within or without the State of Texas, where it is qualified to do business, as its business may require and as the Board of Directors may, from time to time, designate.

ARTICLE 3. PURPOSE

To perpetuate the history of the 43rd BOMB GROUP and the memory of lost comrades; to arrange reunions and to provide social and recreational activities for its members.

#### ARTICLE 4. MEMBERSHIP

Membership in this organization shall be open to all who served with, or were assigned or attached to, the 43<sup>rd</sup> BOMB GROUP or the 43<sup>rd</sup> STRATEGIC WING \*(SAC). Spouses, Widows and Widowers of those who served with or were assigned or attached to, the 43<sup>rd</sup> BOMB GROUP or the 43<sup>rd</sup> STRATEGIC WING (SAC) are also eligible for membership.

Air Historians and others interested in the goals of this organization may become Associate Members. Associates may attend meetings and other activities and will receive the organization newsletter and other routine mailings. Associates may not vote. The membership year shall be the fiscal year, commencing on the first day of October and ending on the last day of the following September, for all members.

#### ARTICLE 5. MEETINGS

All meetings of this organization shall be governed by ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER.

Membership Meetings of this organization shall be held at regular intervals. A notice shall be mailed to every member in good standing at his address as it appears in the membership list of this organization. Such notices shall be placed in the Newsletter announcing the time and place of the meeting.

Not less than a majority of members in good standing present at a Membership Meetings shall constitute a quorum and shall be necessary to conduct the business of this organization. Members who have not paid their dues for the current year may not vote.

#### ARTICLE 6. VOTING

At any Membership Meeting, if a majority so requires, any question may be voted.

#### ARTICLE 7. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The business of this organization shall be managed by a Board of Directors consisting of the Elected Officers and nine (9) elected directors.

To be eligible for office, nominees for the Board of Directors must have been a member of the 43<sup>rd</sup> BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION INC. for at least one year prior to the election.

Officers and Elected Directors shall be elected at the annual Membership Meeting by a simple majority vote.

Any vacancies in the Board of Directors between meetings may be filled by appointment of the President with the approval of the Elected Officers by mail ballot.

Elected Officers shall be elected for a period of two years and may serve consecutive terms if re-elected.

Elected Directors shall serve for a period of three (3) years. Three (3) Directors shall be elected each year at the annual business meeting of the membership. Beginning with fiscal year 1986 - 1987, three (3) Elected Directors will serve for a period of one (1) year, three (3) Elected Directors will serve for a period of two (2) years, and three (3) Elected Directors will serve a full term of three years. The initial terms of office will be chosen by lot. Beginning with fiscal year 1987 - 1988, all newly Elected Directors will serve a full term of three (3) years.

The Board of Directors shall have control and management of the affairs of this organization. The Board of Directors shall commission an independent audit each year.

#### ARTICLE 9. OFFICERS

The Elected Officers shall be President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. The positions of Secretary and Treasurer may be combined. The Corporation may require the Treasurer to be bonded.

The President shall be the titular head of the organization and, subject to the control of the Board of Directors, shall exercise general supervision over the affairs of the organization with the authority to delegate such responsibility as deemed advisable.

The Vice President shall exercise the office of the President in his absence, or upon the inability of the President to act, with rights and responsibilities as if he had been duly elected President.

The Secretary shall keep the minutes and file such records as are kept or delivered into his possession. The Secretary will also attend to regular correspondence of the organization and will execute duties incident to the office of Secretary. Copies of all

minutes and financial statement will be duplicated and mailed to all of the members of the Board of Directors.

The Treasurer shall have the care and custody of all monies belonging to the organization and shall be solely responsible for such monies, or securities of the organization; shall pay all routine bills, and make such other expenditures as are authorized by the Board of Directors; shall render at the Membership Meetings at stated periods, as the Board of Directors shall determine, a written account of the finances of the organization with such reports to be physically affixed to the minutes of the Board of Director's meetings. He shall also exercise all other duties incidental to the office of Treasurer.

#### ARTICLE 10. SALARIES AND EXPENSES

The Treasurer, with approval of the Executive Committee, may reimburse the Officers for necessary travel expenses while on Corporation business.

The Board of Directors may hire and fix compensation of any and all employees which they in their discretion may determine to be necessary in the conduct of the business of the organization providing that this is in concurrence with the tax status as determined by the Internal Revenue Service.

#### ARTICLE 11. COMMITTEES

Committees of this organization may be established by the President. Committee members shall be appointed by the President for terms of office for a period of one year, or less if sooner terminated.

There shall be an executive committee formed consisting of the President, Past Presidents, Vice President, and Secretary and Treasurer.

Standing committees may be established by the President with the approval of the Board of Directors and appointments to standing committees may be for indefinite terms.

Standing committees may be changed or eliminated by the President with the approval of the Board of Directors.



ARTICLE 12. DUES

The dues of this organization shall be ten dollars (\$10.00) per annum payable on the first day of October of each year. Dues may be changed by a majority vote of the members in good standing present at their annual Membership Meeting. Life Membership dues may be established at some future date by the Board of Directors.

The payment of dues by widows and/or widowers of Members who served with, or were assigned or attached to, the 43<sup>rd</sup> BOMB GROUP or the 43<sup>rd</sup> STRATEGIC WING (SAC) shall be waived.

ARTICLE 13. AMENDMENTS

The Bylaws may be altered, amended, repealed or added to by an affirmative vote of not less than two-thirds of the members in good standing present at an annual Membership Meeting.

(END)

## AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

## FORTY THIRD BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSN., INC

1. Article 4, paragraph 2: The membership year was changed from fiscal year to calendar year at the 1988 reunion in Dayton, Ohio.
2. Article 8, paragraph 5: Amended to read Elected Officers shall be elected for a period of one year, and if elected, may serve one more year. 1991 reunion in Norfolk, Virginia.
3. Article 9, paragraph 1: The Sect-treasurer shall be an appointive position by the Board, and may have a salary as determined by the Board.
4. Article 12, paragraph 1: Amended to read, Life Memberships shall be offered for \$100.00. 1988 reunion in Dayton, Ohio.

Addendum: Also voted at the 1988 reunion in Dayton, Ohio - reunions to be planned and set up two years in advance.

MINUTESSTEERING COMMITTEE MEETING  
SAN ANTONIO, APRIL 25<sup>th</sup> 1986

A meeting was called for the 25<sup>th</sup> of April to approve the Articles of Incorporation for the Group, and to write the Bylaws to submit to the general membership at the upcoming meeting during the reunion.

Present were: Chairman, George White, Sect.-Treas., Lloyd Boren, and the following elected members of the Steering Committee: Cyrus Michaels, Bob Haase, Otis Cleere, Bill Wilson, Jim Harcrow, Roger Kettleson, Art Mulligan. Also present was Max Axelsen.

Secretary reported on financial status. Approved.

Articles of Incorporation. Approved (name - 43<sup>rd</sup> BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION, INC.)

Secretary instructed to take all necessary steps to incorporate.

It was agreed that the present steering committee would serve as the initial nominating committee, and Max Axelsen was appointed chairman of the Nominating Committee.

The following slate was approved for submission to the General Membership in October:

For President, George L. White; For Vice President, William "Bill" Wilson; For Sect.-Treas., Lloyd Boren; For Board of Directors, Bob Butler; O. K. Coulter; Max Axelsen; Roger Kettleson; Cyrus Michaels; Dale Barr.

The members agreed to suggest to the General Membership that Bossier City be considered as the next reunion site.

It was recommended that each Squadron appoint one or two men to submit Squadron news items to the Newsletter.

The bylaws were drawn up and approved (copy attached). These will be submitted to the General Membership at the October meeting.

Plans were discussed for the October reunion, and approved.

Plans were made to hold the next Committee meeting at the Reunion - on Wednesday.  
END

+++++TAPS—LAST ROLL CALL+++++

**ARTHUR J. LUTZ** tail gunner 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron. Reported by his widow, Ruth **God Bless**

**ALFRED M. BARON** tail gunner 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron Reported by his widow, Marjorie **God Bless**

**David T. Kiley** Not yet a member Reported by Membership Chairman Ed Gammill **God Bless**

✓ As a result of Ed Gammill's efforts **David R. Kiley**, son of the man mentioned above, sent in dues to become a member. His address is 15528 Hagenderfer Road, Plain City, OH 43064. He stated on his application form that his purpose in joining was to learn more about his dad

✓ Another new member is **Malcolm M. Hudgins** of Apt. 108, 107 San Pablo Road, South, Jacksonville, FL 32224-2043. His phone is (904) 221-7732. He is a retired safety engineer at US Army Missile Command at Huntsville, Alabama. It would be interesting to know if he knew **Jim Murphy**. He flew 52 missions as a bombardier in the 64<sup>th</sup> Squadron. His pilot's name was Donald Rauscher. His missions were flown from New Guinea, Owi Island and Leyte. In answer to the question on the application form "If you are trying to locate someone", he lists three names. One of them is "Huey...navigator" I believe that is Dale Huey, Apt. C20, 100 High Point Dr., Medina, OH 44256-4369. The crew position and squadron number is a match. Malcolm's wife's name is Ruby Helen. It would be nice if two old members of the same B-24 crew could get together as a result of our organization!

**Elmer J. Schwalbach** wrote a letter offering to loan some photos for the newsletter of places like Hong Kong, Fort Drum( in Manila harbor) and "nose art" of our B-24s along with crashed planes and planes taking off and landing at Leyte. Elmer, if you will send them to me, the Secretary, at the address on the first page of this newsletter, I will copy them and return them. I will have no time until after the first of the year. I was on three missions to Hong Kong and one to Fort Drum. I remember that we carried four 2000 lb. bombs on the mission to Fort Drum which was fortified like a battleship and not much larger.

✓ **Arlene Roth**, widow of **Bob Roth** sent in a new address: 10949 Telegraph Road # 120, Ventura, CA 93004-1274. Her husband was a photographer/gunner in the 403<sup>rd</sup> Squadron. She writes that her new address is a new residential retirement facility very close to her former address. She states that "I'm very comfortable, happy and doing as well as a 83 yr. old with bad knees and no hearing can expect to be." You cannot be in very bad shape, **Arlene**. Your handwriting is near perfect.

Some of the above news is old but was not previously reported

Your editor received a letter in late October from **Bill Jobe**, radioman/gunner in the 64<sup>th</sup> Squadron who lives in Bremerton, Washington. He had some comments about **Colonel Pettus'** "History of the B-24 Days of the 43<sup>rd</sup>" as reported in the October Newsletter. Bill checked his diary and saw that he had written, "June 4—Many of our planes took off to bomb the convoy this AM. Everyone is listening in at Communications for every report. Just heard that the 403<sup>rd</sup> has been jumped by Jap fighters. We're alerted from midnight on. Little nervous. (Did I say Little?)

June 5—We took off at 0630 to bomb Biak Island. We thought we would go out to bomb the Jap convoy, but it turned back 40 miles north of Manokwari, N.G. We lost #991 yesterday when **Lt. Petty** ran out of gas and landed in the sea. We hit our target and saw about 15 fighters behind us at Biak.

June 6—When # 991 of our squadron went down into the sea, we were led to believe that Lt. Petty's crew were all rescued. Word came in last night that all were lost.

June 7—I learned that Petty's navigator was the same guy (Katzen) who has been giving us the news at the 1300 meetings. The bombardier (Lt. Bohman) was the guy who was always smoking a pipe. I flew with him on the last bombing practice. Then there were Sergeants "Tiny" Dillon, Bailey, Cramston, Erwin and Towerrey.

On May 8<sup>th</sup> Pettus mentioned putting up search planes for a missing plane. That was Lt Terping and crew in A/C #525. I read somewhere that their aircraft and remains were finally found in 1974.

Col. Pettus wrote a good report and I'm looking forward to the continuation. Enclosed are my dues for 2006. Keep up the good work! *Bill* "

With the notice of her husband's death, Marjorie sent me a copy of his dairy. Alfred (known as Blueie) wasted no words but he didn't misspell any!

"Aboard the S.S. Queen Mary—February 12, 1942. The Queen leaves Boston Harbor with 8,000 'dog faces' crowding the railings. Destination unknown. The 43<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group (H) one of the many outfits on board. This is my unit. I am an 18 year old enlistee. Raw recruits without airplanes. The ocean is cold and broad, with prowling subs. Men packed together like sheep. Off the coast of Florida an Esso tanker refuels the Queen. Next day we head westward .PX short on candy and cokes. Air escort all day. Feb.28<sup>th</sup>.Clocks ahead half hour. We have lectures, calisthenics, movies daily. Mar. 6<sup>th</sup>, We anchor in Rio de Janerio. We see the statue of Christ, symbol of peace in a world at war. No going ashore. The Queen takes on oil, water, supplies. Leave on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Exercise, tetanus shots, malaria and cholera. Rough seas. Clocks ahead.

In Capetown, South Africa, escorted by destroyers. More oil, water and supplies loaded. Depart Mar.15<sup>th</sup>. Dolphins leading the way. A joy to watch. March 23<sup>rd</sup> arrive in Freemantle, Australia. On the 26<sup>th</sup> we are in the Australian Bight, heavy, tough weather pitched the Queen to keel 45 degrees. March 27<sup>th</sup>.last day on board. First taste of caned beer or ginger ale. March 28<sup>th</sup> 1942 Sydney Harbor—we see the famous bridge. We traveled 19,000 miles due to a zigzag route. We were the longest troop movement to remain aboard for 40 days. Dark, raining when we finally disembarked. We were put on trucks for a short ride to Randwick Race Track, our temporary quarters. Horse stalls for most of us-fresh, sweet straw our beds. The Queen Mary brought in safe and sound. We thank her. Ten weeks of living in tents at Randwick then on to Northern Australia and New Guinea.

I spent three years in the jungles of New Guinea, with names like Buna, Dobadura, and Nadzab. War ending, came home Aug. 1945. Sent to Ft. Devens, Mass, then to Atlantic City, NJ for R&R 15 days. Then to Lakeland, FL where we were put under quarantine due to VJ day. For 24 hours we heard the world celebrate except us. Just happy to be in the USA! Discharged as S/Sgt Alfred M Baron."

Your editor read many versions of the famous "40 day-40 night voyage of Queen Mary" and they all vary, as one might expect. Few persons know that the trip was made at the insistence of Winston Churchill for the purpose saving Australia, then part of the British Empire. And few know that US General George Marshall assigned a young Brig.General named Dwight David Eisenhower to quickly round up as many US Army outfits of all kinds as possible and dispatch them from Boston only about 2 months following Pearl Harbor.

Thanks to Jim Cherkauer, I will now continue with Col. Jim Pettus' B-24 history of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group

## July 1944

- Jul 1-2, 1944. The strike squadrons hit Kandari Drome on Noemfoer with 250 pounders on July 1<sup>st</sup>. This was an attempt to destroy fortifications the Japs were building. Excellent bombing resulted. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> they dropped 1000 pounders with great care as the allied forces had landed on the island 4 hours before the drop took place. Little to no enemy opposition took place. The Sea Hawks hit Pelalia Strip on Palau with frags and incendiaries with only small fires being started.
- Jul 3, 1944. The 63<sup>rd</sup> was on reccos and carried frags. One plane bombed a reef believing it was a ship. The strike squadrons were off for maintenance as they were through the 6<sup>th</sup>. They were also having the bombers equipped with cargo racks for the move to Owi.
- Jul 4-6, 1944. The 63<sup>rd</sup> hit Peleliu on the 4<sup>th</sup>. On the 5<sup>th</sup> they bombed Klarrbeek Island. On the 6<sup>th</sup> a convoy was sighted and hits were scored on a medium freighter with a skip bombing attack due to faulty radar on the plane. The freighter was declared sunk.
- Jul 7, 1944. Today began the big airlift of 43<sup>rd</sup> and other unit personnel and baggage to Owi. The strip was serviceable but fuel was very limited. So the bombers were fueled with only 500 gallons for the trip back to Nadzab. This move with the bombers took place until the 16<sup>th</sup>. The 63<sup>rd</sup> had been staging out of Wadke Island for about a month now. The area was subject to nightly air raids by the Japs from Biak until it fell. Then the raids continued for some time from the Halmaheras until night fighters got the raiders under control. Planes of all types landing on Wadke because of battle damage or mechanical problems were quickly stripped of parts to get other planes in the air. The 63<sup>rd</sup> bombed Palau with frags and started a fire seen 30 miles away.
- Jul 9, 1944. The squadron attacked a Sugar Able at Palau with no results. The 63<sup>rd</sup> continued its missions nightly with at least 2 planes each night on armed reccos looking for shipping. It flew at least 1 mission from Owi before moving there on the 14<sup>th</sup> and closing shop at Nadzab and Wadke.
- Jul 10, 1944. Two Sea Hawks planes dropped 500 pounders on Ngebeus (Sp?) Drome after failing to find any shipping for targets.
- Jul 11, 1944. The 63<sup>rd</sup> attacked Peleliu and caused fires and a large explosion.
- Jul 15, 1944. With the 63<sup>rd</sup> moved to Owi 4 planes took to the air this night. Two went to Ngebeus and 2 hit Peleliu. The weather was so poor that no real results were seen.

- Jul 16, 1944. The 3 Sea Hawks planes headed for some ships and 2 vessels were attacked. Although the Hawks claimed one was an aircraft carrier, this was very doubtful.
- Jul 17, 1944. The 64<sup>th</sup> had the honor of being the first strike squadron to fly a combat mission from Owi. Nine planes headed to Manokwari to hit AA positions. With poor weather and despite some elements making 6 runs, the targets remained elusive in the rain and haze.  
The 63<sup>rd</sup> kept the Japanese at Yap awake with a night bombing.
- Jul 18, 1944. The strike forces had been busy with the move to Owi and no missions were undertaken from the 2<sup>nd</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup> of July. Building a camp on Owi was heavy and difficult work. The island being so small soon became a nightly target of the Japanese planes that generally resulted in little damage. Many of the hundreds of frags that these planes dropped did not go off and soon became objects for souvenir hunters the next morning. Several men were injured gathering these and one unidentified 43<sup>rd</sup> man was killed. He was the only 43<sup>rd</sup> man killed on Owi by air raids of gathering of frag bombs for souvenirs.  
The Sea Hawks sent out 3 planes but results were weather reports and a miss on a merchant ship.
- Jul 19, 1944. Pettus' manuscript is ambiguous as to just which day the first strike of any of the day strike squadrons took place from Owi, but it seems to be the 64<sup>th</sup> might have flown as mission to Manokwari this day but with poor weather making the mission difficult.  
The 63<sup>rd</sup> went back to Yap and Babelthuap to keep the Japanese off balance as to where the next shoe would drop.
- Jul 20-21, 1944. The 65<sup>th</sup> and 403<sup>rd</sup> were still waiting for their sea lift to arrive at Owi so only the 64<sup>th</sup> was operational. It went to Manokwari again. With better weather and using a full load of 100 lb. demos, the AA batteries were definitely damaged.
- Jul 22, 1944. The 64<sup>th</sup> pulled a double making 2 missions in one day. The first was to Biak to hit the "Indi" pocket a ridge where hundreds of Japanese were dug in and defying shelling, naval guns, snipers, etc. Eight 64<sup>th</sup> bombers took off at 0830 and flying in 3 elements dropped sixty-four 1000 pounders right on target. Our ground troops moved in immediately and the planes were back on the ground by 0925. They were then loaded for a mission to Manokwari.  
That afternoon the same 8 planes went to Manokwari, only 200 miles from Owi, and covered the AA with 10 lb. demos.  
Four Sea Hawks went out for the night and hit Yap, Babelthuap and Peleliu. Only a few small fires were sighted.

Jul 23, 1944. The workhorse 64<sup>th</sup> sent 9 planes in 3 elements to 3 different enemy airstrips, Babo, Samate and Manokwari. The bombing at Babo was hampered by clouds, Samate was socked in and Manokwari, already much battered, got the worst of it with many more holes blown in the strip. The 63<sup>rd</sup> went back to Babelthruap and Ngosebus with frags and 100 pounders. A number of small explosions were reported.

Jul 25, 1944. The 64<sup>th</sup> had a day of rest. The 65<sup>th</sup> and 403<sup>rd</sup> were getting their planes ready for their first daylight mission from Owi the next day. The 63<sup>rd</sup> sent out 2 armed reccos with not sightings reported and no secondary targets assigned.

Jul 26, 1944. The 64<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> hit the airstrip on Samate while the 403<sup>rd</sup> hit the strip on nearby Ramsiki. That night the 63<sup>rd</sup> attacked and sank a 4500 ton Fox Tare Charlie south of the Halmaheras. Hit with a 1000 lb. bomb, the ship was set on fire and sank.

Jul 27, 1944. The daylight squadrons headed for new targets on Halmahera Island. The target was the dispersal areas of Lolobata Drome. Although the area was covered with frags assessment of the damage was difficult due to smoke and dust. These made it hard to tell whose bombs dropped where. Two of 7 Nip fighters made an attack on the 403<sup>rd</sup> and 1 was shot down quickly. That night 2 Sea Hawk bombers had good luck with their radar in the same area and found targets but missed them. A great deal of soul searching took place as to why so many radar misses of late. Was it the training, calibration or mechanical problems with the new system that were under constant modification?

Jul 28, 1944. The 3 daylight squadrons hit the oil fields on the island of Ceram, a new target. A lovely fire was started after the bombing by the 5 of 18 planes that made it to the target. Two 64<sup>th</sup>, one 65<sup>th</sup> and two 403<sup>rd</sup> planes managed to destroy a pumping station and start several fires with smoke to 4000 feet. The other planes hit secondary and tertiary targets. The planes staggered back to Owi throughout the day with one B-24 landing at Wadke. Takeoff had been delayed by the collapse of a nose wheel. The following planes had to reverse direction for takeoff. Bomb release problems were plentiful. This was probably due to electrical problems caused by the weeks of inaction and cargo hauling.

*I'll Be Around* a 63<sup>rd</sup> plane crashed with a C-47 on takeoff and then plowed through several parked planes: 2 C-47s; 2 P-39s; 1 P-38; 1 P-61 and 1 B-25. The bombardier was killed and the pilot, copilot, 2 gunners and the radar operator were injured.

Jul 29, 1944. The 64<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> managed to penetrate the weather and bomb Boela with good results. The targets were oil loading facilities, the water front with the airstrip being secondary. All were well hit with 1000 pounders, but the airstrip was soon back in service. The 403<sup>rd</sup> hit the secondary target, Otawari Airstrip.

Jul 30, 1944. It was back to Boela's airstrip with 1000 pounders. With better weather the planes hit the runway and adjacent parking area with a lot of smoke and fires reported.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> had 2 armed reccos out in the Halmahera Sea but found no targets.

Jul 31, 1944. The group hit Galela Strip on Halmahera some 600 miles away. The planes carried 250s and 500 pounders to drop on the dispersal areas. The bombing was excellent and at least 15 enemy planes were destroyed on the ground. Much to the surprise of the crews, Gen. Ennis "The Menace" Whitehead was on hand to meet them. This was a rarity as most enlisted men and junior officers seldom saw any of the generals much less to meet one.

The Sea Hawks' reccos had radar failure and did not complete their mission except 1 did drop frags on Agesebus Drome starting fires and explosions.

July was a hard month for the group. The scrub typhus epidemic broke up crews, but with hard work the men managed to weld crews together with the replacements as well as working with the ground crews. The mortality rate of the mite was less than 2%, but many victims were left with heart murmurs and symptoms similar rheumatic fever.

## AUGUST 1944

Nobody was sorry to see July pass. New targets like Borneo to the west and the Philippines to the north were inviting. Allied troops had landed and taken Sansapor and New Guinea and new fighter strips had been constructed on a nearby offshore island of Middleburn.

The island of Ceram and Halmahera were the first targets to be neutralized. The weather on Owi was good but this was not true of the targets areas.

Aug 4, 1944. All 3 squadrons took off to hit aircraft on the ground at Haroekoe Airdrome on the island with the same name. They carried 20 lb. frags, but the target was covered and they hit the secondary, the oil fields of Boela. Since frags are not the proper bomb for oil targets, little damage was sited. One twin engine aircraft was destroyed on the ground. Enemy fighters gave minor interception with some phosphorus bombs dropped on the 64<sup>th</sup>. The presence of P-38s resulted in no serious passes made at the bombers.



The Sea Hawks were out almost every night of the month to date but with poor bombing results as the radar was not too effective when the targets were close to shore and among numerous islands.

Aug 5, 1944. With bad weather over Haroekoe the group went back to Boela, but the 64<sup>th</sup> lost a plane over the target. A/A was heavy and accurate but not so intense there multiple planes were hit. *Bombs Away* #006 with Lt. James R. Barber in command had an explosion in the bomb bay and immediately burst into flames. One chute was seen to open, but no landing was seen and it was not certain that anyone was in the chute. The plane may have had a bomb malfunction but more likely an A/A detonated some of the frags.

Aug 6, 1944. No report.

Aug 7, 1944. All 3 strike squadrons hit Lolobata Drome with 390 100 pounders. Numerous fires were started along with one large explosion. The 63<sup>rd</sup> had 3 planes out this night, 1 to Lolobata and 2 to Bassa Airfield on Mindanao.

Aug 8, 1944. Back to Lolobata, but weather forced the squadrons to hit the secondary target, Manokwari. It was big surprise to have 100 lb. bombs set off 2 explosions that rocked the B-24s at 10,000' after the target had been hit so many times. No doubt a well concealed ammo dump.

Aug 9, 1944. The daylight squadrons hit Liang Drome despite poor weather. Only the edges of the target were visible so no assessment of damage was attempted.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> got a real boost when Maj. Harry Staley, formerly of the 63<sup>rd</sup> and legendary skip bombing, rejoined the squadron. He was assigned as operations officer to learn the transition from B-17s to B-24s. Within a few weeks he was leading missions and was a big asset to Col. Hawthorne, the C.O.

Aug 10, 1944. The target was Galela Airdrome and photos showed at least 40 enemy planes on the ground. The 100 lb. demos were right on target dropping in the dispersal parking and revetment areas. V Bomber Command assessed that at least 10 planes were destroyed and as many were damaged. The 63<sup>rd</sup> worried these same airdromes with attacks on and off over several hours. A plane would hit an airdrome and then head off to look for shipping. Soon after another plane would attack the same airdrome at a different altitude and speed and in turn head out to look for shipping. These same planes reported weather every half hour to aid for the next day's strike.

Aug 11, 1944. Weather cancelled the daylight strike.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> went to Davao and back to the Lolobata area to a new strip named Hatetebako where they hit an ammo dump.

- Aug 12, 1944. It was off to Davao to hit A/A and dispersal areas. Two twin-engine planes were claimed destroyed on the ground and another damaged. That night a 63<sup>rd</sup> plane hitting Lolobata dropped all of its bombs in the water, but another sighted and sank a Fox Tare Charlie in Davao Gulf. It also attacked another target but missed.
- Aug 13, 1944. No entry.
- Aug 14, 1944. The strike squadrons had a day of rest and getting tech supplies caught up.  
The Sea Hawks hit the docks at Davao and missed a Fox Tare Baker by a narrow margin. Again the squadron was trying to figure out why so many recent attacks missed by a small margin - maybe 100'.
- Aug 15, 1944. With a new supply of frags the daylight squadrons Lolobata under good weather conditions. Over 3000 twenty-pound frags fell in the dispersal area resulting in a number of large fires. A/A was heavy, and although 6 planes had minor damage only one man was wounded.
- Aug 16, 1944. Planes on the ground at Miti Drome were the target as well as a strike to make the target unserviceable. The bombing was good starting numerous fires and destroying at least 2 planes on the ground and damaging others in the revetment area.  
The 63<sup>rd</sup> could claim only a near miss in Kaoe Bay this night.
- Aug 17, 1944. It was back to Lolobata to destroy any aircraft still on the ground. Very few were seen. Radio chatter indicated that there were 14 enemy fighters airborne, but the only fighters actually sighted were P-38s in pursuit. Bombing was good but no fires were started in the area where the bombs fell amid parked aircraft. The only claim could be to damaging enemy aircraft. The 63<sup>rd</sup> were making life miserable in Kaoe Bay and Davao keeping the enemy up all night and dropping a bomb here and there. The only results were some small fires.
- Aug 18, 1944. The strike squadrons were grounded due to weather. The 64<sup>th</sup> lost a plane when the gear folded up on landing after a practice bombing mission. No one was injured, but 5 jeeps were damaged when the plane slid into them.
- Aug 19, 1944. With better weather the squadrons went on a multi-target mission in the Ceram area. They were to head to Manloa Airdrome and bomb if they found targets. If not, they were to bomb a town a few miles away. One squadron bombed the primary target causing little visible damage. The other 2 squadrons hit the town starting 4 nice fires.  
The Sea Hawks found no shipping and dropped its 500 pounders on Kaoe (pronounced COW) Township.

Aug 20, 1944. The target was a staging area near Tabalo Village on northern Halmahera where numerous barges and small freighters had been seen. The 18 B-24s wiped out 75 buildings, a pier and caused severe damage. A few trucks and people were seen on the ground but the area looked pretty deserted.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> hit Kaoe Town that night and had another near miss on a freighter.

Aug 21, 1944. The supply area of Wasile Bay on Halmahera was to be hit today. Targets were jetties and dumps nearby. Bombing was excellent, but only 1 fair explosion was sighted.

The Sea Hawks went after Kaoe Town and Davao again with disappointing results.

Aug 22, 1944. Weather grounded the strike squadrons.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> was rewarded for its attack on Davao with a fire that was visible for 25 miles.

Aug 23, 1944. Galela an airfield on Halmahera was the target, but if not a sufficient number of planes were on the ground to justify using 1000 pounders, the squadrons were to go on to the supply/depot a few miles away. That is where they went and dropped 93 1000 pounders on a supply dump starting fires and destroying a number of buildings.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> went back to Kaoe Town to keep them up all night and to report weather.

Aug 24, 1944. Enemy aircraft on the ground on Halmahera were down to about 21 at 6 airfields, so the offense switched to supply and personnel targets. So on this date the B-24s was after troop concentrations south of Lolobata and laid waste to a bivouac area. The 403<sup>rd</sup> missed the intended target but started a very large fuel and ammo fire which kept growing by the hour as confirmed by strafers coming in later.

The Sea Hawks sent out 2 planes but with little success although they thought they had hit a ship but were not given credit for such.

Aug 25, 1944. The lead ship miscued the planes following it and 2 squadrons missed the target completely. The 403<sup>rd</sup> hit the Bull's Eye at Karokoe Drome amid light A/A, but with nothing to report for results.

Two 63<sup>rd</sup> bombers attacked a small island in Davao Gulf and did not sink it.

Aug 26-27, 1944. Bad weather so the squadrons used the time to catch up on maintenance.

Aug 28, 1944. The target was Ambon Town and in particular 2 buildings reported to be officers' quarters complete with geisha girls. Both buildings were claimed to be destroyed and 7 large fires were started in the area. A/A was heavy and accurate hitting several planes. This was nothing compared to the danger from the 22<sup>nd</sup> BG being off course and dropping their bombs through

the second element of the 65<sup>th</sup> Squadron's formation. The only damage was a 14" gash in one wing caused by an arming vane from one of the bombs. The Sea Hawks sent out 3 planes to Davao this night but bad weather made it difficult to pick out particular targets, but the squadron kept the enemy up all night. Another 63<sup>rd</sup> plane bombed "Cow" Town.

Aug 28, 1944. Bob Hope showed up at the revetment area, not the makeshift theater as planned, and christened a new B-24 *BOB'S HOPE* with the comment, "They named this ship after me because they couldn't keep its nose down."

Aug 29, 1944. The major supply point of Wasile Bay was the target today. Eighty-two 1000 pounders were dropped in the staging area resulting in 2 large explosions. A/A was accurate but not intense. One aircraft hit. Targets like this one were being hit by not only the 43<sup>rd</sup> BG but the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> as well as by the B-25s that generally came in after the heavies had bombed. Their hopes were that the deadly light A/A would have been taken out by the B-24s.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> went back to Davao hitting a barracks area south of town. They dropped 260 lb. frags with extension fuses. These are very nasty against vehicles, barracks, etc.

Aug 30, 1944. Terrible weather cancelled all strikes.

The Sea Hawks sent 3 planes to Davao to hit Matina Drome. Some fires were started and one very large explosion was seen near the base of a jetty a mile from the base.

Aug 31, 1944. There was no group strike.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> went back to Davao with frags and HEs. Numerous small fires were started as well as 2 large conflagrations. It could not be determined what was hit and burning due to the heavy black smoke coupled with rain and clouds, but obviously something was set afire as frags do not burn.

August started out slowly, but by the end of the month KEN'S MEN were on a roll. In all 329 sorties were flown, and the group was capable of putting up 3 strike squadrons each day plus the 63<sup>rd</sup>'s nightly flights. The bad news was that 250 men had to be evacuated due to scrub typhus. That was about 10% of the unit's strength.

By Andy Anderson; I will now conclude the "Reckless Mountain Boys" report by **Byron "Dutch" Heichel** which began in the October, 2005 newsletter. As we pick up the story, Byron is a POW at Ashio, Japan

"In the fall of 1944(?) the (prisoner)officers of this camp were transferred to Zentsugi Prison Camp on the island of Schikoku. I heard the entire prison camp at Ashio was abandoned shortly afterwards, due to uncontrollable conditions.

Zentsuji had the reputation of being one of the better prison camps. I made some very good friends there. In the spring of 1945 (April?) the entire population of prisoners from Zentsuji was taken up into the Fuki Province to an abandoned ski camp north of the city of Fuki. This camp was called Roko Rashi. This is where we prisoners were when the war ended. This is where the American recovery party found us. This is where we saw the approaching American flag, a beautiful sight, the camouflaged and most versatile and bravest soldier the world has ever known, the American GI, and the sexiest, most lovely and compassionate nurses any service has ever known.

About 300 prisoners were housed here. As at Zentsuji, they were all officers, mostly American. The rumor was that we would held as hostages if the United States invaded Japan proper. Our time was spent clearing brush from the hillsides and planting sweet potatoes. Incidentally, we fertilized our garden with human excrement collected in large clay pots under our benjoes (toilets). This effluent was carried to the fields in barrels on a cart we called the "Honey Wagon". We were amazed that sickness was not more prevalent. However, we immediately it into the soil. We never harvested any of the sweet potatoes. But we had sweet potato greens from the leaves.... BR !

On August 6, 1945 our daily routine ended when the atom bomb fell on Hiroshima. Of course, the Japanese became excited. We knew something important had occurred –but what? An outside Japanese workman slipped a newspaper to a prisoner who in turn sneaked it to our translator, a Navy officer who was quite good at it. Only certain men were aware of this mini-news bulletin that passed around occasionally. The last man ate it. Also, we had a group of men who would quietly talk to certain prisoners who were conducting themselves in a manner "unbecoming an Officer and a Gentleman," that is, they had lost all self-respect. We had a few "assholes." (Find a better word).

When we learned what happened, we feared execution, as several of the guards had indicated if the Americans invaded Japan, we would be shot before giving us up. The Japanese Commandant became furious and vindictive. We feared for our lives. He mistreated several of the prisoners; even the guards seemed fearful for themselves. But on August 9th (Nagasaki) everything stopped. In due time we learned that Japan has sued for peace.

A great deal happened after that, but I am getting tired of telling this story. I don't mind telling it in bits and pieces, but not a long stretched-out tale. The Red Cross contacted the camp. Food was dropped to us from some B-29s. This food drop, in itself, was a frightening affair, actually quite an event. Several large parcels did damage to our barracks. Many men became violently ill from gorging on rich American food. It was not funny. A recovery party (American soldiers) arrived on September 8, 1945, extremely emotional. We were taken to Manila for processing, Ultimately arriving at Madigan Hospital at Fort Lewis, Washington.

There is much I've skipped over that probably should be told some time. On occasion I have written concerning special incidents. I hope to eventually document the period from May 7, 1943 to September 8, 1945, if motivation and time allow.

Our celebration at the last camp at war's end was quite a happening in itself.

The few horrendous days at Kavieng.

The months of intimidation at Ofuna.

The cold and sickness at Ashio.

The wonderful friends that I made.

And, of course, always wondering what was happening to my crew.

But time (50 years) and distance have taken their toll on harsh memories. The fateful days between May 7, 1943 and September 8, 1945, lived by another 'Dutch' Heichel that I remember,

I saw my daughter, Sue, born on May 4, 1943 for the first time. I received an accumulation of letters that had never been delivered. My wife and family did not learn that I was a P.O.W. until shortly before the end. I gained 30 pounds the first 30 days. My weight at the lowest was 90 pounds. I now weigh 180 pounds. For some reason, the sight of rich food would cause me to vomit. That lasted for 6 months. It took some getting over in mind and body, but all wounds heal, believe me.

For years I lived with the bitterness that my copilot, Lt. Barry Rucks had turned the Japanese heat on me to ease himself. Now I'm not sure I have been fair to him. I wish any adverse remarks concerning my crewmen to be deleted from 43<sup>rd</sup> Group history. However, it should be of record some place, Please honor my request.

**By Andy Anderson:**

Byron included the following letter in his report. This explains why he got the mailing to me so promptly. It was actually written for Larry Hickey years ago!

February 10, 1994

International Research and Publishing Corp. P.O. Box 3334 High Mar Station Boulder, Colorado 80307  
LARRY HICKEY, President

Dear Mr. Hickey:

AT LONG LAST.

Enclosed is the resume of happenings and the twenty eight subsequent months to follow, implicating a certain B-17 No.24518 (The Reckless Mountain Boys) and eleven man crew of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, 43<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group stationed in New Guinea on that date. Attached as well, is a copy of a photograph of No.24518 as she lay broken on a coral reef along the northwest coast of New Ireland, an island member of the Bismarck Archipelago. The photo, just recently sent to me by Mr. Steve Birdsall, an Australian historian of WWII events, was obtained by a Japanese National in Rabaul. Up to this point, information concerning picture is skimpy. Clarity of the numbers on the vertical stabilizer should suggest the photograph had been taken within a year or so of the crash. I'm sure the people are Japanese or natives. What you see is remnants of a Bomber following twenty to thirty minutes of aerial combat with an overwhelming number of Japanese Zero and one B-17.

Several significant interesting events occurred, involving, to some extent this particular crew from the time they departed Hamilton Field, San Francisco, in late 1942 to September 1945, when they were repatriated into the United States.

The first incident concerned our Assistant Engineer Sgt. Kasmarsik (? Spelling). He was taken the plane at Hickam Field because of yellow jaundice. He asked that we keep his position as long as possible. Upon recovery he caught a ride with another plane going to Australia. The pilot of that plane was Maj. Robins, but the command Pilot was General Eddie Rickenbacker. They missed Canton Island and went out down a sea. The only man not to survive the rescue was my Assistant Engineer, Sgt. Kasmarsik.

The B-17 that we took over to Australia was later shot down in the Bismarck Sea, the entire crew lost, Lt. Brown (?) pilot.

While in the Japanese prison camp, Ofuna, Pappy Boyington (later eulogized in TV's Black Sheep

Squadron) was brought into Ofuna. The Japanese made much of him but American prisoners would have nothing to do with him...too boastful and generally full of s...t. We doubted his veracity. Still do, bless his soul. Later, after the war, I refused to ride with him in a parade in Mt. Vernon, Washington. Looking back, rather naïve and stupid on my part, oeh?

Also at the Ofuna Prison Camp, a B-24 pilot, Lieut. Bill Philips and his navigator, Lieut. Lew Zamporini were brought in. (Incidentally, you should hear their story) Zamporini, if you are old enough to recall, became world famous in the 1930s as an American Olympic star in Germany. Not for his speed in the indoor mile, at which he held a record, but as an American to defy Adolph Hitler, by climbing an important building in Berlin and planting the Stars and Stripes. It created an international incident but made Zamporini famous.

At the prison camp, Ashio (?), a Lieut Edwin Kobeflesh was brought in late one night. It was to be punishment for some indiscretion on his part. He had been writing propaganda for Tokyo Rose in Tokyo. At trials following the war, he and all the others were let off because of their contention that they had been under duress and fear of death. I know differently. He begged the Japanese to reinstate him as a script writer. Every day he was sending them letters through the guards. Perhaps much of this information is of little use in your history, it may refute or confirm prior assertions you have accepted. I am sure some valid points have been neglected and emphasis placed on minor ones. It has been a long time and issues of importance have changed. I have written much on my experiences as a prisoner of war but just for the benefit of family (never published).

Excuse the continuity of my literary style. I had a friend type this for me as I gave it to her. I am capable of better (I wistfully imagine) with me time, like several months?

Best wishes on you project. Keep me posted.

Sincerely, *Dutch* Byron 'Dutch' Heichel"

By **Andy Anderson** : The photo that Byron referred to probably would not be clear in the newsletter but On the top of the photo there are some words that should be included, I believe.

"PILOT; CAPTAIN BYRON "DUTCH" HEICHEL. WITH ELEVEN MAN CREW. EIGHT MEN SURVIVED THE AIR BATTLE AND WERE TAKEN AS PRISONERS. FOUR SURVIVED PRISON LIFE AND RETURNED TO THE UNITED STATES AT WAR'S END.

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By **Andy Anderson**: I sent an e-mail to our new Vice President, **Jim Thompson**, asking information so that we can get to know him better. His e-mail address is **Jimcarves@aol.com** and his wife's name is **Louise**. I remember attending the October, 1999 reunion that he hosted in Tucson and I still have the cap that I bought at that time. This is the message he sent:

"I have about 13 years military service. Most in the reserves. I was in the Naval Reserve before I went in the Air Force. I was in the 63<sup>rd</sup>. Bomb Sq. 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Wing in 1950 thru Dec 1952 as an aircraft mechanic. The 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Wing was at Davis-Monthan AFB at Tucson at that time. The Korean (war) conflict started at that time. I also went to the South Pacific TDY to Guam. The 43<sup>rd</sup> at that time was SAC. We flew B-50s and used converted B-29s to refuel -later KC-97s. That was how a B-50 from the 43<sup>rd</sup>. Lucky Lady II became the first plane to fly around the world nonstop. One day when Lucky Lady II was coming in for a landing they lost power to all four engines and they made a gear up landing in the desert south of the runway. No one died in that accident and the plane did not get damaged too much but it did not fly again. They preserved it for history. I retired from Hughes Aircraft Co. in 1989 where I





## FROM CHUCK RAUCH, BRANSON, REUNION COORDIANTOR 2006

This will be our 97<sup>th</sup> newsletter and I have enjoyed working with everyone as your President and hope it has been successful in spite of the hurricanes. The 2004 reunion was delayed approximately forty days. The hurricane also hit Punta Gorda and we had damage to the boat and our home. The boat has been sold and our house is still in the state of repair on the exterior but we are comfortable and happy inside. I have been working very closely with Jim Cherkauer who is our new President and in particular on the planning of the 2006 Branson Reunion.

I was hoping to have the final planning for the Branson Reunion completed by the time that the January Newsletter was ready to be issued. This has not been accomplished. The reason is Branson is just now finalizing the Shows for 2006, however the overall Reunion scheduling has been set and it looks to be very good.

I do want to tell you the Reunion is to be planned and handled differently than we have done in the past. The agreement that we presently have is to have Branson Hospitality Inc. run the entire reunion and, in general, the same format as we have had in the past. We will be staying at the "Lodge Of The Ozarks" from Wednesday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2006 through Sunday August 27<sup>th</sup>. We are asking the board of directors to arrive for a board meeting to be held at 8:00 PM Wednesday evening. We also planned Memorial Services for Sunday morning with optional shows to attend Sunday afternoon. This will give time to travel on Monday, August 28<sup>th</sup> when there are more discounted fares available. We will also have three nights before and three nights after the reunion at the same hotel rate per night. You will also find that many of the major airlines have connecting service into Springfield, Missouri from the major cities in the USA.

I am not including the detailed reunion information at this time as Branson Hospitality Inc., as part of their agreement, will be including two mailings to our membership with a flyer and a detailed schedule. I will provide a note from the 43<sup>rd</sup> BG with two mailing that will answer questions that may exist at the time. The first mailing by Branson will be made in late January or early February and the second will follow shortly thereafter. We do not contemplate the 43<sup>rd</sup> BG will require a registration fee as the Branson Hospitality Registration Form includes the hotel charges including tax, optional trips and charges as listed. The Reunion Schedule will show the items that are included and those that are on your own. Please do not confuse the flyers being sent as advertising as they will include your registration package and other information. Pay attention to the early registration dates required as they will be held to. The shows, hotel, etc. require the early registration!!

Jim and I both think this will be a great reunion and we are looking forward to seeing you there and please get your reservation in early.

And in parting, I want to wish each of you a healthy and prosperous 2006,

Address change: On page 33 of your 2005 43<sup>rd</sup> Roster, please change the address of **Joseph Jancosko** to 1963 Shady Oak Circle, Allison Park, PA 15701. At the present time your editor does not have a phone number. Also he is now remarried to a wonderful lady named **Agnes**, so add her name, also. I have known Joe for more than 61 years. He was the top turret gunner on my B-24 crew where I served as radioman. We flew many, many missions together. Of the 10 man crew, five are still living.

Your editor had a nice communication from **Doug Walker** who is the son **B/Gen. Kenneth Walker**, who flew to his death with the 43<sup>rd</sup> on January 5, 1953 in the B-17 "San Antonio Rose". Doug was very touched by **Byron Heichel's** story in the October, 2005 issue of this newsletter, which he refers to as a "valuable document." Doug also wrote, "Byron Heichel's story was riveting and deserves wider circulation. In the meantime it serves as a powerful reminder of the ordeals of WWII that far to many Americans have forgotten about.....Heichel's story is probably the closest account we'll have of the experience of capture, endurance, and too often death when airmen fell into Japanese hands. Heichel's continued anger at the Japanese is certainly justified. I would think he is particularly galled at continued Japanese attempts to rewrite history and argue that they were victims and not the aggressors." Doug is a dues-paying associate member of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group Association.

Doug also a copy of an article written by Australian, Michael Claringbould, which appeared in the Aussie magazine "Flightpath" which was titled "Rabaul's Ultimate Mystery, The Loss of Brigadier General Kenneth N. Walker." If I ever decided to include parts of it in a newsletter, I would need to rewrite it for the print is very fine. Claringbould uses information provided by Larry Hickey and from Japanese records. For those who do not know, Kenneth Walker was head of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army Amy Air Corps Bomber Command and was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

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This newsletter is published four times each year: **January, April, July, and October**. Your dues should be paid to Bill Wilson at the address on the first page of this newsletter. Dues are \$15 per year and \$100 for life. Make the check out to 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group Association.

You may send e-mail to the Secretary/Editor to **andyanne@comcast.net**. You may mail items for the newsletter to my address on the first page of this newsletter.

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