



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



NEWSLETTER 98TH EDITION
APRIL 2006

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FROM JIM CHERKAUER, PRESIDENT

In the past three months while serving as president of our association I have learned a great deal about the responsibilities of our organization. I have come to appreciate ever more the role that our past presidents have played in keeping this association together as it moves into the future. It is a pleasure to work with members of our board and our other officers: Vice President **James "Jim" Thompson, Jr.**: Treasurer **William "Bill" H. Wilson, Jr.** : and the man who edits this great newsletter, Secretary **Howard K. "Andy" Anderson**. I do appreciate all that they do to make my job easier and to help this organization.

A number of things have taken place since my report in the January newsletter. You should all have received your material from Branson Hospitality with regard to the reunion there in August. **Pat and Chuck Rauch** have worked very diligently and have spent many hours finalizing the reunion details and deserve your appreciation and thanks. I **cannot emphasize too strongly** the need to follow directions very carefully with regard to registering for this reunion. Failure to do so may make it difficult to get registered properly and partake in all of the planned functions. All arrangements are in the hands of Branson Hospitality, Inc. and you **must** follow their rules.

Chuck and Pat also took on the task of compiling the photo album for the 2005 Minnesota reunion. By necessity it took a lesser priority than the task of getting the 2006 Branson reunion details settled and a contract finalized, but at the time I am writing this report it had been sent the Dunning Company for publication. If you do not have your copy by the time you read this, it should be coming to you shortly.

Anita and I were visiting our daughter and son-in-law in Estero, Florida just before this message was being written, and we enjoyed a lunch and visit with **Chuck and Pat**. They are both in pretty good health, and their house roof was finally being installed at that time over 18 months after being damaged by hurricane Charlie.

Anne Fletcher, Jim Dieffenderfer and Fred Hagen are moving right along with the planning for our reunion at Valley Forge, PA, in 2007. At the time I am writing this, no dates have been set firmly but They are considering early September for a number of good reasons. They are preparing a very exciting and historical adventure for all who attend that reunion.

At this time there have been no plans or suggestions for our 2008 reunion. If you have any suggestions about where to hold this reunion, please pass these on to me. We not only need a place and time for this reunion, it would be helpful to have a volunteer to host it. We intend to keep on holding reunions as long as possible.

Shortly after assuming the responsibilities of president, I began to work with our very capable Web mistress, **Tracy Tucciarone Lopez**, to eliminate the ads that appeared when the Message Board was opened. Those of you who have access to the Internet and our Kensmen web site have probably noticed this change. The web site is now fully funded by our association. Due to spammers inundating our Guestbook, that facet of our web site has now turned over to the same organization that handles our Message Board as it is able to prevent spammers from leaving their false messages in the Guestbook. Its format has been revised, and may be further revised in the future. Feel free to contact me with regard to any suggestions that you have to make this web site even better than it is. We who use this web site owe a great deal of thanks to **Tracy** for all she has done and is doing to keep our web site up to date and very functional. I certainly appreciate all of the help and cooperation **Tracy** has given me in making these changes. We have one of the best military web sites available.

I am looking forward to seeing and greeting many of you in Branson. May God bless all of you.

Jim Cherkauer.

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By Andy Anderson:

Address changes; **Orion L. Rogers** is now at #300 4925 Battery Lane. Bethesda, MD. 20814-4978  
(No phone, as yet)

His son, **Orion L Rogers, Jr** is now at Apt 309 1136 N. Columbus Ave, Glendale, CA 91202  
His cell phone is ( 562) 485-7161

He is divorced from **Charlene** who is listed in our roster.

**William R. Snyder Jr.** is now at 25 Camden Woods Dr., Cartersville Georgia 30121-4993

I occasionally receive and send e-mail to **Jim Rodella** in Pittsburgh, PA. He recently asked me how to reach Larry Hickey and I gave him Hickey's mailing address and e-mail address. It seems that Jim found an old check proving that he paid for Hickey's promised book. As a result, Jim was able to get his money refunded.

In February, I received a nice letter from **Helen Green**. She stated that although her back was bothering her some, she expects to see us in Branson next August. I have some back trouble also, Helen, but if I lived in Moscow, Idaho where you live I expect my back would be worse, at least in cold weather.

**Elmer J. Schwalbach** sent a dues check to me and I mistakenly thought he was a new member and sent him an application for membership. He did supply some new information that needs to be in our roster. His wife's name is Audrey and he was a radioman in the 65<sup>th</sup> Squadron and was on 45 missions. He is trying to locate **T/Sgt Glenn Schuster**, Gross Point Park, Detroit, Michigan., If anyone can help him, he can be reached at (414) 425-4525.

I cut out an interesting article from the Los Angeles Times dated November 15, 2005. The article describes in detail the operation of the Central Identification Laboratory at Hickam Air Base in Hawaii. I plan to bring it to Branson and exhibit it. There are several 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group casualties waiting there to be identified. They recently identified a military man who was encased in ice for 63 years on a high mountain in California.

## TAPS=LAST ROLL CALL

|        |                              |                                                               |                                             |           |
|--------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------|
| ✓      | <b>Steve Blount</b>          | 64 <sup>th</sup> Squadron pilot on Jan 20, 2006               | Reported by Max Axelsen                     | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>Augustine Rapisardi</b>   | 65 <sup>th</sup> Squadron pilot on Dec.20, 2005               | Reported by "Chalky" White                  | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>Florine Russell</b>       | wife of Richard T. Russell on Dec. 20, 2005                   | Reported by phone                           | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>Kenneth Gissone</b>       | 403 <sup>rd</sup> Squadron navigator on March 20, 2005        | Reported by daughter, Judy                  | God Bless |
| N.M. ✓ | <b>Thomas O'Malley</b>       | 403 <sup>rd</sup> Squadron                                    | reported on our web site                    | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>Herb Totten</b>           | 64 <sup>th</sup> 1st.Sgt on Jan.1, 2006                       | Reported by Max Axelsen                     | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>John D. Behrns</b>        | 65 <sup>th</sup> Squadron gunner on Oct. 29, 2005             | reported by crewman Jim Eide                | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>Percy D. Alexander</b>    | 403 <sup>rd</sup> Squadron on Christmas Day, 2005             | Reported by his son, Ken                    | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>George White</b>          | 63 <sup>rd</sup> Squadron gunner on Dec. 27, 2005             | Reported by John Vesper, son-in-law         | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>Francis P. Denault</b>    | 63 <sup>rd</sup> Squadron pilot on Dec. 3, 2005               | Reported by his brother, Leo                | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>Charles L. Reifenberg</b> | 65 <sup>th</sup> Squadron on June 18, 2005                    | Reported by his son, Ralph                  | God Bless |
| N.M. ✓ | <b>William E. Heilman</b>    | 63 <sup>rd</sup> pilot on January 18, 2005                    | Reported by Jim Rodella                     | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>Dot Sue Young</b>         | widow of Jackson Young on July 3, 2005                        | Reported by daughter Ginny Jeans            | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>Fredrick Lloyd</b>        | 403 <sup>rd</sup> Bombardier on November 11, 2005             | Reported by his wife, Janet                 | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>Helen Commons</b>         | wife of Sam Commons, 65 <sup>th</sup> Sq. on February 14,2006 | Reported by Sam                             | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>Leon Hemelstein</b>       | 403 <sup>rd</sup> on February 19, 2005                        | Reported by Jim Cherkauer                   | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>Phyllis Hemelstein</b>    | on October 16, 2004                                           | Reported by Jim Cherkauer                   | God Bless |
| ✓      | <b>Carl P. Averill</b>       | 403 <sup>rd</sup> Sq. in Feb. 2006                            | Reported by his son, Robert on our web site | God Bless |

It is sad to see so many names listed above. **George White** was our President during the years 1985 – 1987. **Sam Commons** held the job during the years 1998-1999. We now have four ex-presidents who will not be answering roll call; **George White, Dale Barr, Max Osborn and Jim Murphy**. Somehow, reunions will not be the same without **Helen Commons**. **Francis Denault** helped to make many issues of our newsletter very interesting by providing stories from his diary. The 18 people listed above will be missed.

**Manny LaPorte**, nephew of the late **Michael LaPorte**, 65<sup>th</sup> Squadron, and associate member has sent to the Association a most generous money gift to help offset the cost of maintaining our Kensmen web site. **Jim Cherkauer** has forwarded this gift to our Treasurer, **Bill Wilson**.

The San Diego B-24 Memorial is now complete. More than 1400 people attended the dedication last Veterans Day, including at least 400 B-24 veterans. The Memorial was completely financed by hundreds of donations received over the past five years, many from B-24 veterans and their families. Our 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group Association donated a total of \$1000 to the bronze "less than full size B-24 Memorial" which is located at 2115 Park Blvd. in Balboa Park. Nearby is the Veterans Memorial Center and Museum which serves as caretaker. Your Editor hopes to visit there soon and bring some photos to the Branson reunion. When I was 17 years old I helped to build B-24s in Dan Diego in 1942.

At the Branson reunion we need to hold elections for Director for Headquarters Squadron, replace or re-elect **Roland Fisher** as Director of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, replace or re-elect **Charles McClenny** as Director of the 64<sup>th</sup> Squadron, replace or re-elect **William Solomon** as Director of the 403<sup>rd</sup> Squadron. In addition we must replace or re-elect our President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary. If no one is available to serve as director for HQ Squadron, perhaps we need to eliminate that position or vote to have an "at large Director". Directors serve 3 year terms. Officers serve one year terms. Newly elected men will start service on Jan.1, 2007.

**Douglas Walker**, son of **Brig.Gen. Kenneth Walker** is asking our help to locate the B-17 that carried is father to his death on January 5, 1943. Certainly the "San Antonio Rose" did not crash on land or the wreckage would have been located long ago. The plane was heading for Rabaul and Doug is very much interested in the route it may have taken from Port Moresby to bomb Rabaul., or most likely. the route a damaged plane might take to return to Port Moresby. Of the seven B-17s lost in New Britain this one is the only one not recovered. Two crewmembers bailed out and were captured by the Japanese. It is speculated that they bailed out over the mountainous area south of Rabaul. The route the plane took is what interests Doug. No doubt he is interested in locating the wreckage. Anyone who would like to deal with Doug on this issue can reach him at the address in our roster, or by e-mail to **newwalk@optonline.net** or by phone at (203) 834-7614.

I had an e-mail from **Fred Bostick** to state that he is listed in our roster as a pilot when he was actually a flight engineer. Those who attended the Tampa reunion will remember Fred as the one who played the harmonica. After Fred left the 403<sup>rd</sup> he went on to fly 30 missions in B-17s with The 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force from England. He stated that he is a "Southerner by the Grace of God!"

I will now publish more of Col. Jim Pettus' manuscript. Save your October 2005 and January 2006 Newsletters. What you will get here in events that happened before what you already have. Following the paged in this newsletter, attach the pages in the Oct. 2005 followed by the pages in the January 2006 issue. What we need to do is create a booklet of history of the B-24 period of time in the 43<sup>rd</sup>. More will follow in the July 2006 and October 2006 issues. I apologize for getting things out of order. I am moving the page numbers for the part that I write to the bottom right hand of the page in this newsletter.

By now it should be recognized by all of us, even those diehards with hope otherwise, that we will never see a history of the 43<sup>rd</sup> by Lawrence J. Hickey. So in order to give you a brief outline of one part of our history, I have taken the liberty and the time to write a capsule of the day-to-day operations of the Group starting from January 1, 1944 to the end of the war in August 1945. This is adapted from the manuscript prepared by the late Col. James Pettus, Commander of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group in its B-24 era. Hopefully I will be able to send to our Editor, Andy Anderson, a few pages for each of the future newsletters until this task is done.

A few of the dates and targets are questionable. A check against my own diary and information that I received from many of you while I served as Editor of our newsletter show that a few dates in the Pettus manuscript and that in our records differ by one day. On some missions where the Group went to a secondary or tertiary target, only the primary target is listed in the Pettus manuscript. I think that is not really too relevant at this time in our lives. What I suspect has happened is that Jim used official records kept in the U.S.A. and they recorded events on the dates in this country while we were a day ahead in the SWP Theater.

Please bear in mind that some of Jim's entries were written in such a manner that they are almost in code to him and are not at all self explanatory. There are many references to other sources that are not included with his manuscript. In such cases it is virtually impossible to know what he is writing about a mission. Information is almost non existent on many days when the Group was in action. On other days the information is quite complete. I hope that this will be of some value to many of you.

*Jim Cherkauer*

Jan 1, 1944. 21 B-24s hit Japanese supply dumps at Saidor with 500# GP bombs.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> conducted search missions over Bismarck Sea with 4-6 searches per night.

Jan 2, 1944. 27 B-24s over Saidor to soften up enemy just prior to Army troops landing on the island.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> pounded Saidor and airstrip all night long with 500# GP bombs flying out of Dobodura.

403<sup>rd</sup> called to do Bismarck Sea recco attacked at low level a Sugar Charlie in the area of Cape Hoskins. Engine on 1 B-24 hit by 40 mm gun. Plane made an emergency landing at Finschhafen.

Jan 3, 1944. Twenty-one B-24s dropped 500 lb. bombs in AA gun pits to destroy them at Alexishafen. Supply dumps also bombed.

63<sup>rd</sup> was expanding its night missions from the Bismarck Sea to New Ireland and as far away as Hollandia by the use of bomb bay tanks.

Jan 4, 1944. B-24s went back to same target. 7 planes damaged by enemy fire. Three men were wounded, one seriously.

Jan 5, 1944. A day of rest for the 43<sup>rd</sup>.

Jan 6, 1944. Back again to attack AA at Alexishafen. Each plane made an individual run in 5 second intervals from a slightly different heading and altitude to confuse the Jap gunners. Due to lack of practice with this type of bombing there were several near collisions. 43<sup>rd</sup> credited with destroying a number of gun emplacements.

Lt. Col. Jay Rousek, Deputy Group Commander, was rotated back to ZI for much needed rest. Major Jean Jack, 403<sup>rd</sup>, was moved to the Deputy slot from Group Operations, and Capt. Russell Bragg became Ops Officer. Major Art Curran, Group G-4, also went home and was replaced by Capt. Roger Kettleon.

Jan 7, 1944. The planned day of rest was interrupted with a call for ground support for marines near Borgen Bay. 18 B-24s dropped 216 500-pounders in the assigned area.

Jan 8, 1944. The 65<sup>th</sup> and 403<sup>rd</sup> were back pounding the AA at Alexishafen while the 64<sup>th</sup> was supposed to give ground support to in the Bergen Bay area, but the weather made it too dicey with U.S. Marines nearby.

Jan 9, 1944. The 43<sup>rd</sup> had the day off while the 90<sup>th</sup> Group took over the battering of Alexishafen.

Jan 10, 1944. Ken's Men sent 18 B-24s over Madang, only some 30 miles from Alexishafen. AA and supply dumps were the targets. The Group met little to no resistance, but a very large explosion was heard in the 403<sup>rd</sup> target area as reported by the 64<sup>th</sup>.

Jan 11, 1944. No entry in the manuscript.

Jan 12, 1944. It was back to Alexishafen or AA sites and supply areas. There was no resistance and bombing was excellent with several fires started, probably from stored fuel.

Jan 13, 1944. A lucky day for the 63<sup>rd</sup> as they tagged a Sugar Baker on the stern with a 1000 lb. Torpex bomb and another close by. The vessel was on fire but still afloat when the 63<sup>rd</sup> had to leave the area to continue the patrol. It was claimed sunk since it was never sighted later by other aircraft on the lookout for it.

Jan 14, 1944. Madang again with port and supply areas being plastered and one large fire started near the wharfs.

Jan 15, 1944. No entry in the manuscript.

Jan 16, 1944. The Group gave ground support to troops near Arawe on New Britain. A strong Japanese position was holding up the marines who would have suffered severe casualties to dig them out, so the 43<sup>rd</sup> blasted the Japs out using 1000 pounders with instantaneous fusing. The bombing was precise with initial reports indicating great satisfaction. The strafers followed immediately after the drop.

Jan 17, 1944. 18 B-24s dropped their bombs on the guns camp area at Hansa Bay.

Jan 18, 1944. The heavies were to be bait to lure the Wewak fighters up for Gen. Whitehead's P-38s. Approaching at 20,000 feet and chattering on the radio near the juicy targets at Wewak was enough to get the Japanese airborne, and as the bombers sighted Wewak on the horizon, they turned back to bomb Hansa Bay. The P-47s and P-38s went to work with the 47s staffing and the 38s doing battle. There were 14 confirmed enemy fighters shot down and a number of others destroyed on the ground. One P-38 was shot up but made a crash landing at Gusap and was later salvaged.

During the night of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> the 63<sup>rd</sup> scored hits on a 2000 ton Sugar Baker causing secondary explosions. Poor weather made it impossible to confirm a sinking, but the contact disappeared from the radar screen in 10 minutes. The crew was credited with a probable sinking.

Jan 19, 1944. The 43<sup>rd</sup> went to Wewak to attack the fuel dumps and revetment areas. No enemy fighters appeared and the AA was moderate. Fires were started and were visible for 90 miles, but other groups were in action there so the 43<sup>rd</sup> did not claim all of the credit. On the night of the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> the 63<sup>rd</sup> attacked an unidentified "submarine" in the Bismarck Sea. Two 1000 lb. bombs were dropped after the 63<sup>rd</sup> plane received permission from the Fifth Air Task Force to do so. Neither bomb hit the submarine but it stopped dead in the water. Although the crew believed that it had sunk a submarine, some question arose as to whether or not it was a semi-submerged cargo container towed by a submarine that dropped the tow line when the B-24 approached. Another 63<sup>rd</sup> hunter claimed damage to a Sugar Charlie in the Bismarck Sea.

Jan. 20, 1944. No entry given.

Jan 21, 1944. The 63<sup>rd</sup> struck it rich hitting a Sugar Able (7000 ton tanker) and setting it ablaze. It was claimed sunk as on the return portion of the patrol it could not be sighted. A recco hit a Fox Tare with 500 pounders. The ship sank in 40 minutes.

Jan 22, 1944. The daylight squadrons hit Wewak AA and supply areas. The Japanese put some 50 fighters into the air but lost a good part of these to our fighters and Liberator gunners. Bombing was good. The 43<sup>rd</sup> claimed 11 definite and probables. The 90<sup>th</sup> claimed 5 definites. This number of enemy aircraft was probably not destroyed due to gunners making conflicting claims. (There were days when claims of shooting down enemy fighters exceeded the number the Japanese had in the area, but the next day those clever Nipponese replaced many of them.) On the 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> the Sea Hawks attacked unidentified motor vessels, but with uncertain results the vessels were listed as damaged.

Jan 23, 1944. No entry shown.

Jan. 24 - 25, 1944. The 43<sup>rd</sup> again attacked Wewak, but due to poor weather the results were not observed.

Jan 26-27, 1944. Two groups including the 43<sup>rd</sup> headed to the Admiralty Islands. The targets were barge unloading points and supply dumps on Los Negros and Lorengau and the

adjacent air strips. Poor weather made for poor bombing. There was no opposition making it appear that the Japanese had not made much progress in building a major air base there.

Jan. 28 - 31, 1944. Poor weather prevented further daylight operations. There were some uneventful night reccos and attempted photo missions.

Feb. 1, 1944. Word was received that Maj. Jay Zeamer has been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Jay is recovering from the serious wounds he received last June. Lt. Parks, 63<sup>rd</sup>, scored two direct hits on a Fox Able near Hollandia; explosions resulted and the ship sank within minutes. Daylight squadrons were either inactive due to inclement weather or turned back from heavy fronts.

Feb 2, 1944. A 63<sup>rd</sup> plane made a recco run to Wewak and Hansa Bay. Either the same plane or another 63<sup>rd</sup> B-24 made a too close for comfort attack over a Jap destroyer.

Feb 3, 1944. Clear weather permitted a raid on Wewak to hit airstrips and revetment areas. Burning aircraft on the ground were sighted. P-38s kept the enemy fighter at bay. The 2000 pounders hitting the airstrips made the enemy fighters have to fly to Dagua to refuel. Our strafers destroyed some many on the ground there. In all 76 enemy planes were destroyed on the ground or in the air.

(In these early days of February, the Pettus manuscript is too cryptic for this writer to decipher all that is written, but the following is what was gleaned from his writings. He will not testify to the accuracy of what is reported in those early days of February.)

Feb. 4, 1944. A 63<sup>rd</sup> patrol encountered a Sugar Charlie; no report on what happened. The 403<sup>rd</sup> apparently bombed Wewak. A recco flown by Usset seems to have taken place.

Feb. 5, 1944. A daylight raid on Hoskins with 64<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> planes hit.

Feb 6, 1944. Apparently Wewak was the primary target that day but Bogajim seems to be the one actually bombed with a couple of 403<sup>rd</sup> planes hitting Madang.

Feb. 7, 1944. No entry shown.

Feb 8, 1944. The group was off to Wewak but only the 65<sup>th</sup> made it to hit AA positions in support of strafers. The other daylight squadrons went to Madang. Capt. Russell Bragg, Group Ops Office, and Capt. Bill Graham with a crew of B-17 vets from the 403<sup>rd</sup> flew a B-17, now an armed troop carrier, on a mercy mission to some stranded Yank and Aussie airmen in NE New Britain. After a search of two hours the airmen were found, and the B-17 crew dropped food, weapons and medical supplies to the stranded men. Capt. Fisher, 63<sup>rd</sup>, attacked Rabaul and Sedlander, 403<sup>rd</sup>, bombed Momote strip.

Feb 9, 1944. Not enough information given to make sense to this writer.



- Feb 10, 1944. Mission to Wewak had limited success due to the weather. The 65<sup>th</sup> hit the target but the other squadrons went on to bomb heavily hit Madang. Sam Commons has more information about this mission.
- Feb 11, 1944. With better weather the group pounded Kavieng. The runways and dispersal areas were bombed with numerous fires being sighted. Enemy aircraft were spotted in the air, but no interceptions occurred. The 28 heavy AA were ineffective perhaps due to the dropping of a lot of chaff foil.
- Feb 12, 1944. A day off for the group.
- Feb 13, 1944. The target was Kavieng, but due to weather the bombs had to be dropped through the clouds by timing runs from the coast. Although the target area was two miles square, no estimate of damage could be made. Squadrons were weaving in and out looking for targets with many on the wrong headings. Planes became mixed up and there were many new flight leaders this day.
- Feb 13/14, 1944. The 63<sup>rd</sup> sank a Fox Tare Dog (1000 - 1500 tons) from a convoy. Later another Sea Hawk found more of the convoy and radioed its location and that of a destroyer before attacking a medium sized U/1 Freighter causing damage. It also got a hit on a destroyer. Still another Sea Hawk arrived on the scene and damaged a Sugar Charlie and a Fox Tare Dog. Results were one confirmed sunk and four damaged.
- Feb 14, 1944. Fierce bombing of the Admiralties.  
63<sup>rd</sup> went back to Kavieng but the weather had not improved. Results uncertain.
- Feb 15, 1944. Went after a 19 ship convoy - good detail. Kavieng also hit.
- Feb 16, 1944. All B-24s sent to hit the light AA at Kavieng. Weather interfered to some degree with mission, but large fires were started. Two 64<sup>th</sup> planes went to look for stragglers from the convoy of the night before. Found some but their attacks were futile. That night the 63<sup>rd</sup> went in search for the convoy and found it. They damaged four vessels with at least two seriously crippled. Lt. McGehee straddled a U/1 MV and made one hit. He also laid bombs near an armed escort ship. Lt. Gregg attacked a Sugar Charlie and a Fox Tare Dog, claiming near misses and possible heavy damage.
- Feb 16/17, 1944. Fisher reported two runs made on two ships with unbelievable AA from them.
- Feb 17, 1944. Back to Kavieng to destroy light AA and automatic weapons that had caused a great deal of damage to B-25s on a previous day's mission. Due to bad weather the planes went to the secondary, Talasea, where they did little damage except to the runway. A 403<sup>rd</sup> plane dropped its bombs through the bomb bay doors. One flew back and damaged the tail causing the plane to spin from 12,000' to 2,500' before regaining control.  
A 65<sup>th</sup> plane searching for any remnants of the convoy attacked yesterday in the Bismarck Sea found several ships. It damaged a Sugar Baker of 1500 tons.

Feb 18, 1944. Entries too confusing to decipher.

Feb 19, 1944. Two squadrons on alert for a convoy known to be leaving Rabaul. A-20s and B-25s hit the convoy doing extensive damage. The squadrons used the day for much needed maintenance.

The Sea Hawks attacked a tanker that got away.

Feb 20, 1944. The daylight squadrons put 21 planes in the air to hit the AA at Hansa Bay. Bad weather spoiled the mission with bombs being dropped all over the area. The only recorded damage was to the secondary target, Alexishafen, where some explosions were seen.

At 2100 hour three 63<sup>rd</sup> planes took off. Two were unsuccessful, but Lt. McGehee attacked a large Fox Able freighter (5,000 tons) north of Wewak. Flares showed the ship capsizing with clouds of steam pouring from amidships.

Feb 21, 1944. Kavieng was socked in by weather and the group hit the secondary target, Iboki Plantation. With no visible results no damage assessment could be made.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> sent out 3 planes. One Sugar Charlie was hit and damaged by Lt. Quinette's plane. It probably sank.

Feb 22, 1944. A real SNAFU day. With two squadrons airborne and the third taking off the target was switched to Momote Airstrip. A severe front over the Bismarck Sea prevented the planes from getting there. Iboki Plantation was hit in turn with one string apparently hitting a fuel dump. The planes that were taking off when the target was switched attached themselves to the 90<sup>th</sup> Group heading to Kavieng. They too could not penetrate the front and hit Iboki also.

A 403<sup>rd</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> search in the Eastern Bismarck Sea turned up a Fox Tare Charlie (2000 - 4000 tons) which they hit at least twice after the mediums had worked it over. With the ship sinking the crew took to life boats and headed towards shore. Strafing prevented them from getting to New Hanover where other ships from their convoy had headed.

Feb 23, 1944. This was labeled "Black Wednesday" and was probably the worst day in the history of the 43<sup>rd</sup>. The 3 daylight squadrons attacked AA at Wewak but encountered accurate AA, but no casualties occurred. Most bombs dropped in the water and not on target.

Feb 24, 1944. Bad weather again with the planes scattering and heading all over the area. The primary target was Mamote. One plane made it to the target and dropped all of its bombs in the ocean. Some planes went to Alexishafen and others made it to Karkar Island with no observed results.

Feb 25, 1944. Ken's Men plastered the guns at Wewak once again from 12,700 feet. All bombs hit the target area and were dropped by minimum interval. There were numerous secondary explosions of ammo with smoke rising to 5,000 feet.

Feb 26, 1944. Only the 64<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> got to the target, Mamore. The bombing results were not spectacular. The 403<sup>rd</sup> hit the secondary target. Jim could not read the name of this target from the form 34.

Feb 27, 1944. The supply dumps in Boram was once again the target. Large fires were started and seen for over 100 miles and as far as Hansa Bay. Crews bombing from 14,000 feet reported accurate heavy AA with several planes being hit but with no serious damage.

Feb 28, 1944. Off to Momote again with the 65<sup>th</sup> hitting supply and defense areas. The other squadrons were gearing for a special mission. Twelve aircraft were sent to Nadzab for a night mission under orders from ADCOM.

Feb. 28/29, 1944. Aircraft were reporting weather and were busy harassing Mamote with night strikes using frag and phosphorous bombs. One 64<sup>th</sup> crew carried out a predawn strafing run on barges and buildings. At 0740 on the 29<sup>th</sup> Ken's Men bombed the area where the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry was to come ashore. The troops landed and met little resistance. By 0940 bulldozers were at work enlarging the airstrip and making hardstands.

Feb 29, 1944. The 12 planes sent to Nadzab, including 6 from the 63<sup>rd</sup>, joined with planes from the 90<sup>th</sup> BG to hit Hollandia after midnight. Only the 63<sup>rd</sup> had been trained and had some experience for this kind of mission. So the 24 planes took off at staggered times and hit the target at staggered times also. The object was to keep the Japanese up all night and wonder what was next as the 1,000 pounders dropped. This turned out to be a bust due to weather. Planes were arriving far off their scheduled times and many never made it to Hollandia. Only a few planes dropped their bombs in the target area and did wake up the search light crews. The planes were land at Nadzab after dawn as the valley approaches were tricky at night. One plane made an emergency landing at Finschhafen as it was badly damaged but the crew was fine.

A 63<sup>rd</sup> crew piloted by Lt. Biddison sighted a four ship convoy near Hollandia and attacked. Two direct hits were made on a Fox Uncle causing several secondary explosions. Ship probably sunk.

In early February five crews from the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) were assigned to the 65<sup>th</sup> Squadron for B-24 training. All the pilots were experienced and had served in England, Singapore, Egypt and other places.

At the end of February Col. Harry Hawthorne returned from the U.S. and resumed command of the 43<sup>rd</sup> from Lt. Col. Ed Scott, a long time 43<sup>rd</sup> member and former CO of the 63<sup>rd</sup>, and temporary CO of the Group, was named Deputy Group Commander with special responsibility for the 63<sup>rd</sup> Squadron. Only 6 months earlier Col. Scott had returned to the 43<sup>rd</sup> with the planes and crews for Low Altitude Bombing equipped B-24s or LABs as they were designated. These new secret planes were painted black and flew only at night manned by 63<sup>rd</sup> crews trained at Langley Field. Within a few months Col. Scott became the commander of the 90<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. "The 43<sup>rd</sup> felt that the 90<sup>th</sup> had at last come of age, getting the most distinguished member of the 43<sup>rd</sup> as their new commander."

- Mar 1, 1944. The daylight squadrons dodged weather and made it to Lorengau Township where the enemy had a staging point. An underground fuel storage was ruptured and oil spread over the bay.
- 1/Lt. McGehee, flying #041 of the 63<sup>rd</sup> on an East Bismarck Sea recco, radioed that he had lost an engine and was making an emergency landing at Cape Glouscester. In landing he overshot the runway and crashed into a gully killing himself, 1/Lt. Henry Krieder, copilot, T/Sgt. Howard Dust, engineer, and S/Sgt. Liggett Gillian, assistant engineer. The rest of the crew was badly shaken up by there were no other serious injuries.
- Mar 2, 1944. Due to inclement weather the daylight squadrons hit Alexishafen and Madang again with no visible results to report. A phantom B-24 was reported in the area but nothing ever came of it.
- Mar 3, 1944. Bad weather continues so strike was against Alexishafen with 320# white phosphorous bombs dropped in supply areas starting several fires. Assessment of damage limited due to white smoke. One enemy tan, twin engine flying boat reported in vicinity of Pommera Bay.
- Mar 4, 1944. Off to But airdrome and AA that had been so troublesome. Enemy fighters from an undetermined base eluded the P-40s in escort and damaged several planes. Two landed at Nadzab with engines out. Considerable barge activity reported Wewak area.
- Mar 5, 1944. With better weather 18 planes hit Mamote and Los Negros with 1000# instantaneous fused demos. All bombs on target with considerable damage to buildings and some vehicles. A 65<sup>th</sup> recco plane sighted 5 or 6 enemy ships headed in the direction of Hollandia. They could not be found the next day so it was surmised that they had turned west and gone to Biak.
- One 63<sup>rd</sup> B-24 ran into a "hell of a storm" on its mission.
- Mar 6, 1944. Six reccos, day and night, but only the 63<sup>rd</sup> saw any enemy ships but did no damage to them due to the LAB radar still having bugs that need to be worked out to prevent the bombs from falling 300 feet from the target area.
- Mar 7, 1944. All daylight squadrons headed out over the Bismarck Sea to hit naval guns on the small islands of Mdrilo and Hauwei in the Admiralties. Atrocious weather led to bombs being dropped in the water, along the shore and on reefs with little damage. Pamphlets of Japanese fairy tales were dropped. One B-24 aborted on takeoff with 5 crewmen being injured and the plane a total loss.
- Mar 8, 1944. With clear weather the group was back at the small islands of Mdrilo, Hauwei and Pityilu in the Admiralties to prevent the enemy from building up any offensive capabilities to hinder U.S. operations from Los Negros. Each squadron hit whatever targets it found worth hitting after bombing the guns. With no action from the ground, the planes strafed the buildings.

- Mar 9, 1944. No activity except reccos; one 65th on E-W equator recco and two 63rd planes saw a Catalina blast a small lugger to the Promised Land.
- Mar 10, 1944. Only the 65<sup>th</sup> was out on strike to Bowat Mission and Ring Ring Plantation on Manus Island. One element took out Ring Ring with 22 bombs out of 24 carried. The two hung bombs were salvoed into the rain forest causing a tremendous explosion and white smoke, probably from an ammo dump. The second element, short one plane that had returned to base, put 16 x 1000 pounders in and around one building that caused a brilliant explosion. Probably ammo was stored there after being diverted while en route to Rabaul or the Solomons.  
The 63<sup>rd</sup> had two reccos in the West Bismarck Sea and damaged a Sugar Charlie. They also reported weather in the area.
- Mar 11, 1944. It was the 403<sup>rd</sup>'s turn to hit small rear area targets - this time Lugos mission west of Lorengau. Eight B-24s were loaded with white phosphorus and 500 pound demos. The idea of blowing down the coconut trees and setting a fire did not work out, so the planes strafed at 200' with one having an engine knocked out. The 63<sup>rd</sup> damaged a ship at night.
- Mar 12, 1944. Since the group had run out of targets with the exception of Wewak, orders to pack for a move had come in on the 10<sup>th</sup>. So today there was little activity in the air except for 63<sup>rd</sup> reccos. The group began its move from Dobodura to Nadzab on this day. The bombers were equipped with cargo racks and made the 1.5 hour flight to Nadzab, were emptied and sent back to Dobo for another loading. Some planes carried 30 passengers and parachutes became a problem. Several hundred C-47 flights were made each day for the next several days. The 63<sup>rd</sup> continued reccos from Dobo during the entire move.
- Mar 11-16, 1944. The 5<sup>th</sup> AAF made a final assault on the Wewak/Tadji area and the Dagua, But and Boram strips. In all some 68 Japanese fighters were shot down and over 100 destroyed on the ground. Runways were cratered and never repaired.
- Mar 14, 1944. The 43<sup>rd</sup> joined the parade and 17 planes bombed the runways at Tadji, a satellite field about 75 miles west of the main Wewak complex. There was no enemy interception and 4 probable Tonys were seen heading in the Hollandia direction. The runways were of no use for several days at least.
- Mar 15, 1944. Eleven 403<sup>rd</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> planes hit the gun areas and dumps near the dromes at Wewak. At least 3 planes were damaged by AA fire, but all returned safely. A large explosion shook 64<sup>th</sup> planes. It seemed to be at about 3000' altitude while they were bombing at 12,000'. No explanation ever given of this explosion.
- Mar 16, 1944. The 65<sup>th</sup> and 403<sup>rd</sup> were on the mission together again to hit Wewak. The 65<sup>th</sup> dropped all of its bombs in the water while the 403<sup>rd</sup> put all of its bombs on target with large fires resulting.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> had 3 planes out in search of a convoy north of Hollandia. They located it and Lt. Thomas and Capt. Quinette set Fox Tares on fire.

Mar 17 - 18, 1944. Continuing to pound Wewak two 43<sup>rd</sup> squadrons hit AA and gun positions, especially on Boram Point.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> was out looking for the convoy found last night and had a banner night sinking a Fox Tare Charlie, hitting a two-stack Tare Baker and doing possible damage to an escort DD or DE.

Mar 19, 1944. An off day except for reccos. The 63<sup>rd</sup> finished its move to Nadzab and was no longer operating and living divided from the rest of the group.

Mar 20, 1944. This was a sad day for the 403<sup>rd</sup> as one of its planes crashed en route from Moresby to Nadzab killing 10 men: 1/Lt. Chester Lowe (probable pilot), HQ 43<sup>rd</sup>; Capt. Wm. H. Graham, Group S-2 HQ 43<sup>rd</sup>; Capt. Moore (name and org. unknown, may have been passenger); Civilian James Jollie, a tech rep HQ 43<sup>rd</sup>; M/Sgt. George Sotpik, HQ 43<sup>rd</sup>; T/Sgt. Wm. Allen, HQ 43<sup>rd</sup>; T/Sgt. Lyle Dorr, 65<sup>th</sup> Sq.; T/Sgt. Farrel McMahon, 403<sup>rd</sup> Sq.; S/Sgt. James Svojtek, 64<sup>th</sup> Sq.; and S/Sgt. Jon Davis, 403<sup>rd</sup> Sq. Only the 63<sup>rd</sup> was out this day with 3 reccos damaging a Fox Tare Baker and an escort gunboat.

Mar 21, 1944. After a day of rest it was off to Kairiru Mission where considerable fuel was stored and large fires resulted from bombing. A Sugar Charlie was destroyed at its jetty by a 65<sup>th</sup> plane. Considerable barge activity was spotted in and around Wewak Point. The 63<sup>rd</sup> had 2 armed reccos in the West Bismarck Sea. One sighted and attacked a DD with 6 bombs bringing it to a halt. The other plane was called in and scored 3 hits sinking the ship.

Mar 22, 1944. It was a hodgepodge of targets at Wewak with the squadrons split into elements and even individual planes. AA, revetment areas and some 16 enemy planes were sighted at Boram. It was a sad day for the 403<sup>rd</sup> losing a plane 10 minutes after takeoff with all ten men lost. Pilot Thomas in 42-72780 is the only crewman named.

Mar 23, 1944. The primary Boram was socked in so Hansa Bay, the secondary, was hit hard. It was difficult to determine damage although all bombs landed in target area. AA was heavy but inaccurate. 63<sup>rd</sup> Attacked 2 ships claiming to have sunk one that capsized.

Mar 24, 1944. The daylight squadrons were given a day of rest due to terrible weather at Wewak. Reccos did fly with the 63<sup>rd</sup> having 3 and the 64<sup>th</sup> one in a daylight search. Lt. Payne, 63<sup>rd</sup>, scored a direct hit on a gun boat or minesweeper which was claimed sunk. The 64<sup>th</sup> upon returning to home base strafed a tertiary target at Sek Island. The known results were some native building blown away. (These targets were never attacked without an OK from the Aussies.)

Mar 25, 1944. 64<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> pounded Wewak causing several explosions and a fuel fire. Photos showed 24 planes on Boram strip but their serviceability could not be determined. No aircraft took off.

Two 63<sup>rd</sup> planes sighted a Japanese hospital ship all lighted up with electric crosses. No run was made but flares were dropped and our men imagined the lower decks were filled with healthy troops.

Mar 26, 1944. No daylight strike action.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> picked up a different hospital ship. No crosses were on the sides but one was shown forward plus circles of green and white lights. The 63<sup>rd</sup> plane circled and then continued on its mission.

Mar 27, 1944. The 403<sup>rd</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> bombed Wewak and Kairiru Island starting a large fire and destroying a jetty. Because of clouds one flight of 64<sup>th</sup> planes could not line up and bombed AA Hansa Bay. Lots of barges and luggers were sighted in the Wewak area. A 63<sup>rd</sup> anti-radar recco passed near a Nippon DD that opened fire from some 3 miles away. One B-24 with no bombs while at 8,000' made radar calibrations. Another 63<sup>rd</sup> adventurous sighted a gunboat in the West Bismarck Sea and strafed it after missing it with bombs. The craft replied with intense medium fire damaging the B-24.

Mar 28, 1944. This was a rest day. It was obvious that Hollandia was now to get serious attention and a maximum effort to do so was set for the 30<sup>th</sup> and again on the 31<sup>st</sup>. The mission on the 30<sup>th</sup> had been planned for a long time. Some B-24s did harass the enemy at Hollandia along with the 90<sup>th</sup> BG. They dropped flares and bombs with no specific targets. Only 4 of 10 planes made it through the bad weather to bomb but they could not find the airdromes. Flying to Hollandia at night was very tricky with high mountains only 15 miles inland and the bombers with no radar.

Mar 29, 1944. There were 3 night missions with the 64<sup>th</sup> dropping flares and frag bombs on Hollandia at night but with no real targets. This was harassment to keep the enemy up at night. The 63<sup>rd</sup> lurked off shore with 2 or 3 planes ready to intercept a possible convoy.

Mar 30, 1944. The Japanese were certain that there would be no daylight bombing of Hollandia with fighter escort out of the question. With improved weather 7 B-24s, 5 from the 43<sup>rd</sup>, hit dispersal areas with frags. Considerable damage was done to aircraft lined up on the ground wingtip to wingtip. Shortly afterwards 61 B-24s with 21 from the 43<sup>rd</sup>, escorted by 8 P-38s, dropped 14,000 23 # frag bombs on AA defenses and the aircraft parking ramps. Some 40 of the Emperor's wild eagles took to the air with 10 being shot down by fighters, 7 probables and the bombers claiming 2 more. Five minutes after leaving the target, smoke rose to 7,000' and could be seen as far away as Wewak.

Mar 31, 1944. A total of 68 B-24s including 23 from the 43<sup>rd</sup> hit Hollandia with frags and HE 1000 pounders to crater runways. Numerous fires were started and the 403<sup>rd</sup> destroyed 5 bombers and 2 fighters in a repair facility. AA was ineffective. The P-38s got 14 Zekes before the rest headed to safer airdromes on Biak or Wakde. Very little damage was done to American aircraft with the exception of one lost P-38 in two days.

- Apr 1, 1944. Maj. James Pettus was appointed Deputy Group Commander, Capt. Russell Bragg was appointed Group Operations Officer and Capt. John Petersen from the 63<sup>rd</sup> was made Group S-2. Bad weather kept the planes on the ground all day.
- Apr 2, 1944. Our primary target, Kairiru Island, was overcast so the B-24s headed to Hansa Bay to hit the AA again. The guns here were hard to take out and were very effective and unfortunately the bombs were 1000 pounders not designed for hitting AA emplacements that were generally only 12' in diameter. The guns were reported to have ceased fire, but only photos taken later could determine if the gun were hit. There is much confusion in the reports by the squadrons with no report from the 403<sup>rd</sup> available. The 64<sup>th</sup> may or may not have lost a plane on takeoff with all escaping the ensuing fire except the tail gunner.  
The 63<sup>rd</sup> flew one armed recco, but sighted only lights at Wadke and lost its radar later in the mission.
- Apr 3, 1944. All 3 strike squadrons reached Hollandia where AA, both light and heavy, was the target. Most bombs fell in assigned area, but dust and smoke made it difficult to determine the damage done. Some shipping reported. P-38s turned on 6 Jap fighters. The 403<sup>rd</sup> lost a plane on takeoff losing 4 men: 1/Lt. Walter Cole, pilot; S/Sgt. Richard Fowlkes, gunner; S/Sgt. Wayne Laco, gunner and S/Sgt. Harry Rouse, Jr. The rest of the crew was listed as wounded in action.
- Apr 4, 1944. More bad weather caused the planes hitting the Wewak area to scatter their bombs far and wide. The flight down the Markham Valley was very difficult due to the extreme frontal conditions and with mountains on each side.
- Apr 5, 1944. Back to Hollandia for more AA guns. The 65<sup>th</sup> strung its bombs through the target and into a wooded area where they hit a fuel dump. Several fires and smoke to 12,000' were reported. The 64<sup>th</sup> hit nearby Homadi Island where they started fires as did the 403<sup>rd</sup>. The bomb load was 24 X 250# demos that gave good coverage and did a lot of damage. Good fighter coverage and no enemy planes attacked the bombers.
- Apr 6, 1944. No report for daylight squadrons.  
The 63<sup>rd</sup> sent 6 aircraft off in intervals to strike Wadke Island to keep the enemy on its toes and in foxholes. The planes carried 40 X 120# frag bombs. The targets were planes dispersed at Wadke from Wewak and Hollandia. Fires and explosions were sighted and reported among the parked aircraft. The AA was light and inaccurate.
- Apr 7, 1944. Bad weather cancelled all daylight strikes. The 63<sup>rd</sup> sent out 2 weather reccos and found conditions good up to Humboldt Bay, but by the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> it had deteriorated.
- Apr 8, 1944. Back to Hollandia, but poor weather made bombing only fair although several good fires were started. The Japanese had dispersed their supplies so sometimes a bomb outside the assigned area brought good results. The 64<sup>th</sup> started a fine fire with smoke up



to 8000' though only 50% of their bombs were on target. The 403<sup>rd</sup> became separated from the rest of the group and bombed But near Wewak.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> had two planes on armed/weather recco. A radar indication was made not far from Wewak but disappeared. It is presumed this may have been a submarine. Bad weather over the entire route.

Apr 9, 1944. Bad weather in the northeast made bombing of But impossible, so it was back to Hansa Bay the secondary and that accurate AA. It was too accurate and the 65<sup>th</sup> lost its lead plane with a direct hit in the #4 engine. The plane, under partial control, headed out to sea but soon lost an outer wing panel. No chutes were sighted and B-24s circling the area sighted only a few floating oxygen bottles. The men in the plane are not identified. The 63<sup>rd</sup> had 2 planes on armed/weather recco. With no sightings one plane dropped its bombs on Wakde and started 3 intense fires north of the strip.

Apr 10, 1944. Back to Hansa Bay for revenge on the AA, but the weather protected the Emperor's gunners. Even the 63<sup>rd</sup> flew a daylight mission and a recco to see what the area looked like, rather than only on the scope. It had nil sightings.

Apr 11, 1944. Hansa Bay again but this time to bomb barges and jetties. Raids on Hansa Bay were kept up as a deception to the enemy. These were intended to make the enemy think that the next invasion would be there whereas this would be one more island skipped in the move to Tokyo.

Two 63<sup>rd</sup> planes took off for a night mission with nil results. One had to return due to radio trouble. These planes radioed weather conditions back to the base regularly during their missions.

Apr. 12, 1944. With better weather the 3 daylight squadrons made it to Hollandia with fair to good bombing results. Accurate but not intense AA. Enemy fighters in area and the 403<sup>rd</sup> claimed to have shot one down. A 90<sup>th</sup> B-24 was shot down and the crew was seen to bail out.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> encountered a rare episode of radar interference around Wewak and Hollandia.

Apr. 13, 1944. Dagua was hit today. AA guns were seen but were not in use. Bombing was excellent with several strings of 1,000 pounders through the target.

The Sea Hawks hit Wadke with numerous fires started. The AA was intense and accurate.

April 15, 1944. While the 64<sup>th</sup> had a day of rest the 65<sup>th</sup> and 403<sup>rd</sup> hit Tadjj. They bombed the strip and staging areas with no opposition by AA or enemy aircraft. Bombing was excellent under these conditions. One 65<sup>th</sup> plane suddenly lost 3,000 feet when all 5 engines quit. It recovered and returned to base. Probably a fuel transfer problem. The 63<sup>rd</sup> had another night like the 14<sup>th</sup> with more radar interference. Looking for a technical solution to this potential problem.

April 16, 1944. At 2:00 am the Sea Hawks put 6 planes over Wadke. Each dropped 8 XC 1000 lb. demos that fell all over the tiny island keeping all enemy personnel up all night.

Heavy headwinds caused fuel problems and one plane landed at Saidor and another at Finschhafen.

The daylight squadrons dropped 1000 pounders set for 3000 feet intervals on the supply dumps in Hollandia. The weather was good except for heavy winds. There was some confusion over the target. The fighter coverage was excellent and the AA was silent. Some fires were seen, but the flight home became a nightmare due to weather. This day became known as Black Sunday for the 5<sup>th</sup> AAF. (See Michael John Claringbould's *BLACK SUNDAY*.) This was the worst day for the 5<sup>th</sup> AAF during the entire war yet not a single plane was lost due to enemy action. This story should be told in our newsletter, but not here. The 403<sup>rd</sup> lost one plane and no trace was found of it.

Apr 17, 1944. The weather was still bad but the 63<sup>rd</sup> got one B-24 recco off for a night flight but it was on instruments for most of the time. The other squadrons put one airplane each airborne on a search mission for planes lost on Black Sunday.

Apr 18, 1944. Weather prevented any daylight strikes. The time was used for maintenance and training.  
The 63<sup>rd</sup> put two planes up that night but with nil results.

Apr 19, 1944. No daylight strikes due to bad weather.  
The Sea Hawks damaged a Sugar Charlie and strafed a fishing boat in an unusual daylight mission that needed all of their radar for navigation.

Apr 20, 1944. Repeat of the 19<sup>th</sup> for the 3 daylight squadrons. The 63<sup>rd</sup> had two armed reccos in the vicinity of Wadke and they found 3 targets. A direct hit with a 1000 pounder resulted in a multicolored explosion and sinking of a Sugar Charlie.

Apr 21, 1944. All 3 strike squadrons hit But and Dagua Strips to make the unserviceable during the Hollandia landing set for the 22<sup>nd</sup> and the Tadjj invasion this very day. Bombing was not good although Dagua strip was knocked out for a few days.

Apr 22, 1944. With the Navy covering the Hollandia invasion, the 43<sup>rd</sup> bombed Hansa Bay to hit the very accurate AA guns there. Photos showed that the guns had been moved and the bombs were on targets that were no longer there.  
The 63<sup>rd</sup> did some local calibration flying to sharpen their radar skills.

Apr 23, 1944. The 43<sup>rd</sup> went back to Hansa Bay with 12 X 500 lb. bombs in each plane with a better chance to get into the new gun emplacements. Bombing results were good and the AA was silent. Dust made it difficult to assess the damage.

Apr 24, 1944. Another day that the Group would like to forget. Of the 204 500 lb. bombs dropped on the large target, only 24 were on target. Although weather was a factor, it was no excuse for such poor bombing.  
The 63<sup>rd</sup> were on unarmed reccos due to the fact that the U.S. craft were all over the area and this would prevent any accidental hits on our own forces.

Apr 25, 1944. The 65<sup>th</sup> went to Dagua with 2000 pounders to crate the runway and prevent any air evacuation of the strip. Bombing was good but there was always the problem of the 2000 lb. bombs having a slow release or hang up.  
All other squadrons including the 63<sup>rd</sup> had the day off.

Apr 26, 1944. Weather called a halt to the mission, but the 403<sup>rd</sup> had 4 planes airborne before the strike was cancelled. They were told to drop their 2000 lb. bombs on the Hansa Bay supply areas. Most bombs were in the target area and there were no release problems.

Apr 27, 1944. This was a max effort day and 24 B-24s went on the biscuit bombing run to Hollandia. Some of our invasion troops had been cut off from the main supply route by a landslide and some roads to the airstrips had been cut off. Many men were low on food supplies, so food was being dropped by parachute from the B-24s to these men. Some C-47s managed to land at Sentani Airstrip. All drops were on target with the exception of one that landed in the water but was picked up by a PT boat. The 64<sup>th</sup> returned with a bullet hole in one prop. No one claimed responsibility but was the 64<sup>th</sup> firing at itself or even at the 403<sup>rd</sup>?

Apr 28, 1944. The strike squadrons were given a new target, Biak, some 800 miles from Nadzab and the longest strike penetration to date. Of the 21 aircraft scheduled for the mission, 20 got airborne and 15 reached the target. The bombs were frags with the hopes that they could repeat the success of Hollandia and destroy many enemy aircraft on the ground. There was no fighter coverage and the 43<sup>rd</sup> encountered no enemy aircraft although the 90<sup>th</sup> BG reported a number of attacks. There were virtually no enemy planes on the ground, but an enemy AA spotter flying well to one side of the group was relaying the course, altitude and air speed to the AA gunners. Despite this the enemy fire was inaccurate. Bombing was good with 6 enemy planes sited burning on the ground. It was long day with a 10.5 hour flight and some planes sweating out fuel on the return trip. This would not be the last bombing of Mekar Drome.

The Sea Hawks 12 planes were paired up with 8 from the 868<sup>th</sup> Sqd. from the 13 AAF to give a max effort against Wadke. Only 18 planes were airborne and 17 of them reached the target. The carried 160 lb. frags with extension fuses that were very effective against planes, men, vehicles and anything else on the ground. There were a few fires sited and the bombing continued into the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Apr 29, 1944. The Sea Hawks were back to Wadke with 6 planes carrying frags to hit the parking and bivouac areas. The bombing was poor due to radar failure on 2 planes, but a few fires were started.

No report is given on what the 64<sup>th</sup>, 65<sup>th</sup> and 403<sup>rd</sup> did this date.

Apr 30, 1944. This was a day of rest for all 4 squadrons. After a strenuous 2 weeks of missions both men and machines needed the rest.

A note by Jim Pettus indicates that on the last missions and especially the one to Biak, a bomb bay tank must have been used in each plane although he can find no record of the fuel loads used.

**43<sup>rd</sup> BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION 2006 REUNION**  
**BRANSON, MISSOURI**  
**AUGUST 23 - 28, 2006**

We are including this information in the newsletter to bring to your attention the Branson Reunion. The full details for the Reunion have been mailed by Branson Hospitality Inc. to all of our members this last week. This information in our News Letter serves as an added reminder and if you have not received the mailing from Branson directly for some reason then call Chuck Rauch at 941-639-6421 or write or call Branson direct. Give them the above information and Reunion date and they will send the complete information to you. Make your reservations early directly to Branson Hospitality for both the Hotel and Registration fee by June 24<sup>th</sup> or we will lose fifty percent of the rooms they are holding for us. We have included the Registration Form if you have not received one.

Branson Hospitality Inc.  
P.O. Box 1167  
Branson MO 65615

Phone: 1-800-877-8687 ext.0  
Ask for Reunion Reservationist

**SEE YOU IN BRANSON**

## QUARTERLY HUMOR

You can thank (or blame) Nicholas Aribinko for this one.

A golfer is in competitive match with a friend who is ahead by a couple of strokes. "Boy, I'd give anything to sink this putt," the golfer mumbles to himself. Just then, a stranger walks up beside him and whispers, "Would you be willing to give up one-fourth of your sex life?" Thinking the man is crazy and his answer would be meaningless, the golfer feels that this is a good omen, so he says, "Sure." and sinks the putt.

Two holes later, he mumbles to himself again, "Gee, I sure would like to get a eagle on this one." The same stranger is at his side again and whispers, "Would it would be worth giving up another fourth of your sex life?" Shrugging, the golfer replies, "Okay." And he makes an eagle. On the final hole, the golfer needs another eagle to win. Without waiting for him to say anything, the stranger moves to his side and says, "Would winning this match be worth giving up the rest of your sex life?" "Definitely," the golfer replies and makes the eagle.

As the golfer is walking to the clubhouse, the stranger walks alongside him and says, "I haven't really been fair with you because you don't know who I am. I'm the Devil, and from this day forward you will have no sex life." "Nice to meet you," the golfer replies, "I'm Father O'Malley.."

## Wedding Bells

Four young novice nuns were about to take their vows. Dressed in their white gowns, they came into the chapel where the Mother Superior was waiting to perform the ceremony to marry them to Jesus. Just as the ceremony was about to begin, four Hassidic Jews with yarmulkes, long sideburns and long beards, carrying siddurs, came in and sat in the front row.

The Mother Superior said to them, "I am honored that you would want to share this experience with us, but do you mind if I ask why you came?" One of the four Jews replied, "We're from the groom's side."

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Another address change: Hazel Taff is at 6550 Treasure Oaks Circle, Tallahassee, FL 32307. Hazel is the widow of Angus Taff, a B-24 pilot in the 64th Squadron. She plans to attend the Branson reunion. Her phone number is (850) 893-3351

It seems that if you are a Brigadier General and head of the 5th Air Force Bomber Command in WWII in the Pacific flying in a 43rd Bomb Group B-17 was hazardous to your health. **Kenneth Walker** did not return from a mission and was replaced by **Howard Ramey** who "borrowed" a B-17 from **Jim Murphy** and did not return it. It was expected to be headed to Merauke and Horn Island from Port Moresby. This makes no sense to **George Wyatt** our associate member, and myself, because neither location was in a war zone.

And why were there 12 men aboard the plane with so much rank? One was a Navy Lt. Commander! But recently an Aussie diver spotted a plane under water which has not yet been identified. Perhaps, time will tell.

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

The post office will not forward this newsletter. If you change your address or phone number, please notify **Bill Wilson**, Treasurer. The newsletter is mailed from his address.. If you notify the Secretary, the new address will be forwarded by e-mail.