

AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

Editor's Introduction: The adventures of the men of the 40th Group didn't end with the end of WW II and the deactivation of the Group. Many stayed in the service or returned to it, spending their careers in the military and making history along the way. This issue of MEMORIES tells the stories of four members who had memorable experiences in the military after they left the 40th (or, should we say, after the 40th left them).

Date of event: Sometime after Japanese surrender, 2 September, 1945

Date Written: May, 1993

Written by: James Giannatti

Shades of the Wild West at an Overseas Location

One of the individuals at the location where this adventure took place was an American government official. He was a good friend who spent most of his career developing a knowledge of the intelligence and politics of the region in which he served. His dedication and work habits were such that we knew him to be "working" both on and off duty.

This event recounts just one of his exploits. The reason I know it to be true is that he convinced me to become involved in it. On this specific occasion, our man employed a national of the country in which we were on duty. This national's allegiance was to us, but he was also employed by a high-ranking official of his native country. This official believed our "double agent" was loyal to him.

Our man learned that this official was organizing a gang of burglars to raid his apartment. The objective was to seize certain official papers believed to be in our man's possession. These papers would prove that the U.S. was subsidizing an enemy of the host country. This, of course, was not true. It was later learned that this official did not have the sanction of his government to engage in this break-in. He believed that when he got possession of the documents, his government would praise him for what he had done.

When our man learned of the plot, he decided that he would foil the attempt and thereby discredit this government official who was violently anti-American. My friend enlisted me in this caper. His plan was to gather a group of us--about eight or ten--to confront the burglars who he knew were scheduled to break into his apartment. Accordingly, my friend (through his double agent) informed the host country official that, during a coming weekend, he and his family were going to visit friends some distance away. My friend's apartment, which was on the second floor, would, ostensibly, be empty and would provide a splendid opportunity for a burglary and search.

Our "counter attack" team was secreted in the apartment, heavily armed with handguns. Also, through the double agent, our man sent word to the native official that the operation was going to be a "cakewalk" and that it would not be necessary for the burglars to be armed. (We later learned that the leader of the gang commented, "In this business, you are always armed!")

The gang of burglars (four or five in number) proceeded as planned. They noisily climbed the stairs to the second floor. They broke the living room window and boldly entered the apartment. The gang was convinced that the apartment was empty and did not search it.

Our man had previously had his family leave the apartment with luggage which they loaded into the car, giving every evidence that they were off on a holiday. Our group was deployed throughout the apartment. I was hiding behind a refrigerator located in the hall. The study, which was to be searched, opened on this hallway. In our preparation to surprise the gang, we attached a tear gas bomb to a drawer in the library desk. The drawer was so booby trapped that when it was opened, it would pull a cord attached to the safety pin on the tear gas bomb, and the bomb would explode. It wasn't until the gang entered the apartment that we realized that when the tear gas bomb exploded, we would be affected by it also. Consequently, our man who spoke the native language fluently, announced in a loud voice after the gang had entered the study, that we had them trapped; that we were armed; that we did not wish to kill them; that they were to come out with their hands up; that we would not harm them.

Instead of coming out as ordered, the thugs started shooting. Bullets were hitting everywhere. I couldn't help thinking, "I'm not an infantryman!" Across the hallway from the study against a wall in the living room was a bar stacked with bottles of alcoholic beverages of every description. Bullets were bursting the bottles. The smell of alcohol was nauseating. Bullets were tearing up the overstuffed furniture. Persian rugs on the floor were being torn to tatters. Plaster from the walls and ceiling was falling like hail. The gunsmoke was heavy, and the noise was deafening. (We did not anticipate gunfire, and consequently we neglected to provide ourselves with ear protection.) When we realized that the thugs were armed and shooting, we had no alternative but to return their fire. Words cannot describe the din in a closed apartment that can be raised by a dozen or more handguns (.38s, .357s, .45s) going off at the same time. (My hearing is now seriously impaired, and I attribute it to this engagement.)

When we returned the gang's fire, we kept our shots high. We were careful not to hit any one of them because one of their group was our double agent. I estimated that there were not less than 50 shots fired!

Suddenly the din subsided. Not another shot was fired by the intruders. We also ceased firing. We expected the thugs to come out and surrender to us. We waited and waited. Nothing happened. Cautiously we inched our way to the study entrance and quickly glanced in. The room was empty! The burglars had succeeded in opening an outside window to the study that had been nailed shut. They had jumped from the window and made their escape. While we were discussing what had happened, we heard footsteps running up the stairs. The door opened and in marched a group of uniformed policemen. "What's going on here?" one of them asked. Our man explained to them in their language what had taken place. Immediately, the police departed without any explanation. This was typical of the inefficiency of their police. An efficient policeman would have taken names, gathered evidence and would certainly have detained our group. While we were lambasting this inefficiency, another group of police arrived. We asked why the first group had left so suddenly. We were told that the second group of policemen were the real thing; that the first group was probably aligned with the burglars; that if we had captured the burglars, the phony police would have taken them and later released them.

The second group of police did a creditable job of investigation. After they had gathered all the information they desired, they dismissed us. Before leaving, our man cautioned the police not to pull out the desk drawer, that we had booby trapped it. (He did not tell them the trap was a tear gas bomb.) The police agreed not to disturb the desk drawer. We exited the apartment and were barely to the bottom of the stairs when suddenly the police came running out of the apartment. They had

been unable to resist the temptation to open the open drawer. The tear gas permeated the entire apartment--the curtains, the rugs, the overstuffed furniture. Despite this inconvenience, our man invited some friends to the apartment the next evening (believing the apartment would be adequately aired out by then. It wasn't.)

I wish I could describe this gathering. The guests stood around with cocktails in their hands trying to be social while tears ran down their cheeks. My friend and his family did not remain in the apartment. They soon moved to another location.

I should state that in this contretemps, no blood was spilled. In view of the number of shots fired and the number of ricochets, this was a situation in which the law of averages did not hold.

Date of event: 6 December, 1945

Date Written: July, 1990

Written by: Elmer W. "Scoop" Martin

An Unnecessary Ditching

On a flight from Guam to Kawajalein in a C-54, we went into the water. As is the case with MEMORIES, in the interests of sweet Christian charity, we will not mention by name the SOB pilot who was responsible. On this flight, the #3 engine had over 800 hours on it when normal engine change time was 600 hours. This meant we were flying on a Red Diagonal. We made it to Kawajalein. Since about all of us on the passenger manifest were maintenance men, we recommended to the pilot that we not go any farther but wire for an engine. He said no; he wanted to get home for Christmas.

I was technically in the 436th Squadron at the time. Sidney Williamston (now deceased) and another man named Weiss (not on our roster) were from the 40th and were also on the plane. We spent the night on Kawajalein, and in the morning, we asked the base operations officer to not allow the plane to take off. Our pilot, who was a major, pulled his rank on the operations officer, and we took off. Two hours later, #3 engine went out. Half hour after that, #1 engine went out. We had no choice; we had to ditch. First, we jettisoned the big cargo door. We had a compressor on board that weighed about 500 pounds. We threw that out.

Next we were preparing to throw out the boarding ladder which was about 20 feet long, but we were afraid to for fear it would hit the flight controls, so we tied it down. The life rafts were tied down back of the cargo door we had jettisoned.

In a C-54, you sat sideways facing the center of the plane, rather than facing forward. All of us took seats with safety belts on. I had on suntans and GI shoes. I had a blanket which I put around my head, and I had a flashlight in hand. When we hit the water, most of us flew out of our safety belts. I flew out of mine and ended up against the 263 bulkhead. I still had the blanket around my head, but I lost the flashlight.

Of the five life rafts we had tied behind the cargo door, three went into the water, and two floated up in the passenger compartment. We inflated them and got them out the cargo door. I went out the emergency door onto the wing. I saw the pilot come out the top hatch door. He went to pieces, we learned, and the co-pilot ditched the plane (doing a very good job of it). The left wing was ruptured, and the gasoline from the wing tank floated with us. We counted heads. Two men were missing.

There were 30 of us on two five-man life rafts. At first, half of us went over the side of the raft and hung on while the others rested in the rafts. That was taking too much energy. Then we tried putting one leg in the raft and one leg out, but this submerged us up to our armpits. We removed our shoes to keep from punching holes in the bottom of the raft. While we were taking our shoes off, the pilot was hollering. "Don't no one steal my wallet." We should have thrown him overboard, but the co-pilot persuaded us not to.

All of us had on Mae Wests, and each one of them had a packet of shark repellent. The life rafts had yellow tags on them. That meant they were complete. To our surprise, we discovered they had been robbed. All we found was two flares and a deteriorated conversion water bottle supposedly to be used to convert sea water to drinking water. None of the rafts had any food or water. There was sunburn lotion in the raft, and we plastered our faces with it. This proved to be a factor in our rescue. The tail gunner in a PBY-2A reported seeing our white faces looking up as they passed over us. He told the pilot to try another pass; he thought he saw something. They came in so low on the next pass they almost upset us. The props threw water over us. This was on the second day we were in the water.

Back at about dark of the first day, we spotted a B-17 searching for us. We used our flares. The crew of the B-17 saw them, dropped flares and said they dropped a motorized Dumbo lifeboat, but we didn't see it. Anyway, we knew they knew we were there. That night we hit the Japanese current, and we started to drift with it at about 25 miles per hour. By daybreak on the second day, we were miles away from where the B-17 had spotted us.

On the morning of the second day, we could see the search planes searching on the horizon. We watched them and then came the PBY-2A. They found our dye trail. The crew of the PBY-2A called the planes to our position. About that time we sighted an aircraft carrier.

The planes started dropping rescue equipment--a Dumbo, life rafts and Gibson girls. A Gibson girl almost hit me on the head. The Dumbo boat was nearby, but now came the crisis. We needed a life raft to get to the Dumbo. We designated five men to take one of the life rafts to go after the Dumbo while 27 of us held onto one five-man raft. When the man got to the Dumbo, they found they couldn't get the engine started; the parachute shroud lines had entangled the propeller. By that time, we had more life rafts than we needed. I ended up in a raft by myself. The aircraft carrier Rendova was, by now, on the scene. They lowered whale boats with engines and took the life rafts in tow to the carrier. They then gathered up all the rest of the rescue equipment that had been dropped to us.

On board, three carrier doctors examined us. They allowed us very little water and very little to eat. Sadly, a Sgt. Anderson went into the water in a leather jacket. The high octane gas that leaked from the wing and floated with us for hours got under the jacket and caused third-degree burns. He died at Tripler General Hospital in Honolulu. This brought the death toll to five. I hope our pilot rots in hell. I'm still sorry we didn't throw him to the sharks.

I want to praise the Mae Wests. They had a shark repellent in them, a black dye. We would throw that out on a 30-foot line. It colored the water black. When the sharks came in, they couldn't see and would have to dive. No doubt the repellent saved us from the sharks. The Air Force was glad to hear that. It was the first report on the new repellent.

Editor's Note: Scoop's hometown newspaper in Hagerstown, Maryland, gave lots of ink to the story with a picture and headline which read, "County Boy Among 33 Plane Survivors." News accounts placed the scene of the rescue about 52 miles southwest of the point where the plane ditched. This was about 1,000 miles southwest of Honolulu and about 340 miles southwest of Johnston Island. More than 20 Air Force and Navy planes participated in the search along with four Naval surface vessels.

Date of event: 1963

Date Written: April, 1993

Written by: Dick Steiner

Highlights of a Tour in Japan

Editor's Note: Dick Steiner transferred to the Reserve and left the service in 1946. He re-entered the service in 1947 at Offutt AFB as a M/Sgt. and served at Offutt and Ft. Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, until August 1949 when he applied for recall to active duty in commissioned status. He went to Mather for Air Observer, Bombardment upgrade and refresher courses, then to Instructor School. He was assigned to Ellington as a navigator-instructor. In 1953 he transferred to Smokey Hill where he flew for two years as a navigator in KC-97s. (This was with the 40th Air Refueling Squadron, 40th Bomb Wing. The Wing consisted of the 25th, 40th and 44th Squadrons.) In 1955 he went to Greenland as chief navigator and polar navigation "expert." Then it was back to the States to Travis where he flew as a MAC navigator in C-97s and C-124s until the summer of 1963. We pick up Dick's story in the following account of his tour in Japan.

In the summer of 1963, I was sent, with family, to the 315th Air Division at Tachikawa AFB, Japan. We were allowed to travel concurrently although there was a waiting list for base family quarters.

After a couple of days in the guest house at Tachi, we rented a house in "American Village," a small settlement of houses built Japanese style by a Japanese contractor to serve Americans working on the base. It was just outside the gate of the base and very convenient. The architecture was interesting, but it was frightening to look up into the attic. The roof supports were round saplings with the bark still on them and, in wet weather, they sprouted small green shoots. The design was sound, however, during the 11 months we lived in the "Village."

Tachikawa AFB was a major Japanese wartime air base, the equivalent of Wright-Patterson. The testing programs for most of the Japanese aircraft were carried out at Tachi before and during WW II. The main theater of the base at Tachi West was a converted wind tunnel in which the Japanese had tested air frames. Many of the post-war housing areas for American forces and their families were located in facilities built by the Japanese to support their aircraft industry which was centered west of Tokyo on the Kanto Plain. Several of these plants were connected by a tunnel system through which aircraft were towed to the airfield. Tunnels were many miles in length.

Naturally, the Japanese people living in the area (many who worked at the American military bases) had a ringside seat to much of the bombing by B-29s. Our maid, who worked with our family for three years, remembered the bombing raids vividly and spoke with awe of "Bee-San" or "Mr. Bee," the terms they used to refer to the B-29. There seemed to be no animosity toward the Americans by the Japanese. It seemed to me that, by nature, the Japanese have great respect and awe for overwhelming power. The Japanese who worked for us were excellent employees and, in our opinion, scrupulously honest and faithful. During a strike of base workers, inspired by the Communist party which was strong in Japan at the time, Tachikawa AFB was picketed for days. Our housemaid challenged the pickets at the gate every morning, literally bowling over the pickets and proclaiming loudly, "I don't work for the U.S. Air Force, I work for Col. Steiner." She was never late for work. Interestingly, her national hero, second only to the Emperor, was General MacArthur.

We thoroughly enjoyed our three years in Japan and formed many happy family memories. Our older son attended high school there in his junior and senior years. As a senior, he played football with the Yamato Warriors. Our younger son went to school at the Tachi Elementary School on base. They both sort of feel that Tachikawa is their hometown.

When we arrived at Tachi, friends met us at the airport and lent us a pre-war Toyopet to use for transportation until our car arrived from the States. The car had very little paint on it, but it was surprisingly well maintained mechanically. The only instruction we got was to stay on the left side of the center line and obey the national speed limit of 50 km. (about 35 mph). When our car arrived, I took the Toyopet to the service agency at the Toyota factory at Hachioji to have it tuned up before returning it to our friends who had loaned it to us. At the reception area, a Japanese service manager, immaculate in a white smock, with clipboard, came out to the car. I tried with pathetic results to tell him in "pidgin" English what I wanted done. Finally, in desperation, I just said, "Please fix it." He responded in perfect Oxford English, "It's too late, Sir."

There were many visible signs of the bombing and fires in the area of Tachikawa and Hachioji, the latter just a few miles down the road. Along the road from Tachi City to Hachioji, there was a little roadside park under a huge old tree. Under the tree was a large stone monument bearing an inscription in Japanese. When we asked English-speaking Japanese to interpret the inscription for us, they always refused and became very uncomfortable. I finally found out why when I talked to the Japanese language interpreter who worked for the 315th Air Division. The monument commemorated the beheading of three B-29 crew members who were captured in late 1944 after one of the early missions flown by the 73rd Wing from Saipan.

Date of event: Korean War period

Date Written: May, 1993

Written by: O.E. "Ed" Adamson

B-26 Combat in Korea

Editor's Note: Ed asks, "How did I get into the Korean mess?" Then he answers his own questions by writing: "My Clovis crew pilot, Roger Sandsted, asked me if I could navigate if he flew a 40th B-29 back to the States from Tinian. We landed at Mather, and all officers went through the five-year reserve commission line. (Truman had frozen the reserve commission time at five years.) Nearing six years, Congress mandated that the military either had to take these men or let them out. The Air Force took a lot of us combat reserve navigators. Most of us were inactive because we had started a business or had started a family---or both. So back in I went. My orders called for refresher training at Ellington, combat crew training at Langley with a San Francisco APO and Tokyo for a destination. I wound up at Kunsan on the west coast of Korea."

We must first identify the B-26. The cigar-shaped Martin Marauder (B-26) of WW II was pretty well out of service at the end of the war. By then, a new plane, a larger version of the A-20, was ready for service. This plane was designated B-26 for the Korean War. It had Pratt & Whitney 2400 engines and was a very durable ship. The crew consisted of a pilot and a right-seat person. That person was either a navigator or a flying maintenance man. In the nose was a bombardier with a Norden sight or a navigator with fixed angle bombing training. We had Shoran on a few ships with navigator operator.

We used the Norden sight in daylight and fixed angle sighting at night. Ships were equipped with 13 forward-mounted 50-cal. guns for low flying against ground targets like trains and trucks.

The powers that be decided that two dual-rated navigators were too important to be flying short-routine reconnaissance missions, so they put us on daylight bombing and formation training. We got in no missions while most of the other crews got in eight or ten missions. Because of our complaining, they finally relented, but we had to fly as Bomber Stream Controllers (see following) or Pathfinder crew. These assignments meant that we had to fly missions that were a half hour to an hour longer than the other crews.

There were a number of different types of missions,

Night route recon: These were 2½- to 3-hour missions with fixed-angle bombing on any truck lights on our route. There was no precision to the bombing, but it did turn lights off on the ground.

Bomber stream--fixed targets: The lead crew would probably have a Napalm bomb to mark the area. They would then tell the following planes if the marker was short, long, or right or left.

Bomber stream-controller: This type of mission replaced the above. Here, the lead crew would circle the target and direct each ship where to drop.

Pathfinder: For hard-to-locate targets at night, the Pathfinder started a half hour ahead of the Bomber Stream. With flares to help locate the target, then Napalm to mark it, the Pathfinder would direct in the control crew and turn the Bomber Stream over to them.

Daylight Formation: With only two dual-rated navigators in the Squadron, on every mission one crew would be lead. On other days, we would lead when ships were from our squadron only.

I flew two or three daylight bombing missions. One was fairly deep into North Korea. We had a Canadian fighter squadron flying cover. If everything was coordinated right, they could give us seven minutes over the target. I asked one of the Canadian pilots afterwards if they could prevent the Migs from attacking us. He said, "We can't prevent the attack, but they will play hell getting away."

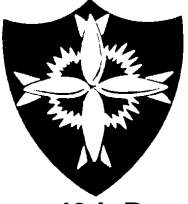
My last two daylight missions were frontline support missions. On the first day there were 12 ships in the formation, and six ships were damaged. On the second mission with six ships in formation, we were blown out of the sky. Three ships made it to Kimpo airfield, and three of us made it back to Kunsan. I believe this was in support of the ground battle known as White Horse Hill.

On my first day of duty, I was on a local flight when we were called to land immediately. We landed about 1400 hours, and I was told I was to lead a 12-ship formation to take off about 1600. I was to get my equipment together and head to the briefing room. When I got to the briefing room, I was handed a sheet of paper with the target coordinates and the following directions: "Pick your altitude and heading. Bomb bays cannot be opened over friendly territory. The bomb run must be over enemy territory." I picked 13,000 feet as our altitude. (We had been told the light AA would not be effective above 10,000 feet. The Heavy was not too accurate below 15,000 feet.) The heading I picked was downwind and almost parallel to the DMZ. When our planes neared the DMZ, a Marine controller was to give us our heading into North Korea. His heading was away from the target so our pilot had me talk directly with the controller. He reluctantly agreed to let us proceed, but he said he would follow us closely.

The target was a supply dump for the enemy's White Horse Hail operation. The location was a tree-covered area with no definite features to identify. I found a small pond on the ground on my map. I ETA'd to the target spot on the map, and we dropped individually over 1,200 single anti-frag bombs. I saw 50mm AA go through the formation, and I saw many others fall below our altitude. The heavy AA was scattered. Our rear plane observer reported still seeing explosions when we were well below the DMZ. When we landed at Kunsan, the ROK general had already reported the success of the mission.

The Day Two mission was run because it was determined that the top quarter of the dump area was not destroyed. The RON general asked for a six-ship formation and requested the same lead crew. I got the same briefing information. I could make so few changes that they really had us cased. The enemy concentrated the heavy flak in the 12-14,000-foot altitude. In B-29s, all I ever saw was black puffs in the distance. Here it was red balls, the concussions rippled the skin of our plane. The nose glass took many hits and continued to pop and creak most of the way home.

They told us two of the ships from our formation that landed at Kimpo went into parts; the rest were repairable. In two days, 12 ships went into repair. On the second day the Wing commander from the Pusan B-26 unit was killed over North Korea. This ended the B-26 daylight missions for us.



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