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The Burman News

SUMMER 1979

Official Newsletter

MERRILL'S MARAUDERS ASSN., INC.



This newsletter is the first of which I hope to publish on a quarterly basis, with your help of course. The prime purpose of the newsletter is for the continued good communications between all of us. Our mailing list has grown to the extent that it requires a newsletter for announcements, special requests, suggestions, etc.. Please do not hesitate to send me any information which you feel might be of benefit or enjoyment to the Association members.

LAST CALL FOR 1979 REUNION

You are hereby summoned to attend and enjoy the good company of your Trail Buddies! This is a very important reunion in that we plan to discuss with all of you just what our incorporation means to the Association, and to you as members. I wish to remind you that your donations and expenses incurred attending the Annual Meeting and reunion are TAX DEDUCTIBLE! We also plan to read the Articles of Incorporation to the membership, so please make every effort to attend.

REUNION SITE

Raddison Ferncroft Hotel & Country Club, Danvers, Mass. (Boston area) on August 31, 1979 to September 2, 1979.

Like tennis? Swimming? Golf? Breaking bread with your old buddies? Or lifting a few? Enjoying the splendor of New England at a great time of the year? The Raddison is the place for YOU -- And nearby you'll find horseback riding, fishing, and Boston's famous Quincy Market for shopping.

(Continued next page)

Ralph Kuroyen, Reunion Chairman, informs me that we have over one hundred room reservations and many indications that members who reside in the northeast area plan to attend, but will be making last minute reservations, which is par for the course.

COME ON FELLAS - GET MOVING & MAKE THOSE RESERVATIONS NOW!!!

MEMORABILIA

New patches will be available at the reunion.

LAST SALUTE

I regret to inform you of the passing on of THOMAS V. KEANE, Connecticut; THOMAS GATELY, Massachusetts; and JOLYN CLOFINE, the beloved wife of our Treasurer, Herb. They will all be sadly missed. Also, we received notice of the passing of JOHN R. MADDEN, Texas; and PALMER EASTWOOD, Florida.

SICK CALL

Rene Genest: 6 Wilson St., Sanford, ME 04073

Francis F. Trappen: 180 Lobster Rd., Port St. Lucie, FLA 33452
(Needs to know what you do with recurring jungle rot)

BURMAN NEWS

In Burmese, there is a special word which denotes the extreme sensitivity to the feelings of another; an unwillingness to shame him or embarrass him or make him feel small. This adequately fits the description of the camaraderie existing between Marauders -- AH NARDE...

So I say to you AH NARDE KOS (brothers) and welcome to our first quarterly edition of the Burman News. The Burman News was the last English language newspaper in Burma, prior to their pullout. Cezu timbade (thank you for being so patient all these monsoons as we attempt to put this thing together kos: With your full cooperation in sending in news, we hope to put together a newsletter as we try to rehash our experiences incurred during our sojourn in that fascinating land of so many different peoples, cultures, and religions. Although at the time mere survival was all we were concerned about, we were in a very ancient and historic part of the world. For instance, the five major peoples involved in Burma are the Burmans-who comprise the vast majority; the Kachans-who are hill people, hunters, and very courageous, and fought with you Marauders side by side in the steamy jungles; the Shans; the Karens-many of whom were Christians and produced most of the country's bumper crop of rice; and last but not

east, headhunting Shins, who were dreaded by the enemy and little wonder for when killed, off came the heads of adversaries, to be methodically smoked, rendered, shrunk, and prized as trophies. Some of you jungle jolies may have seen some of these heads held by their long hair and proudly displayed by their warriors.

Had you been a tourist then instead of a fighting Marauder, you would have noticed the hundreds and hundreds of beautiful pagoda's of all size many adorned with jewels, rubies as a labor and token of love by these highly cultured, religious, peaceful people. Most Burmese are Buddhists and wouldn't even swat a fly, akin to the Jains of India. In layman's language, a pagoda is built to gain brownie points with their God, Buddha, whom they revere. The pagoda performs the exceedingly important task of reminding the passers-by of the good works to which he must dedicate himself if his karma (life's destiny) is to be changed for the better and his release obtained from the wheel of birth.

If you thought it rained forever as you sloshed and sloshed in all that mud as the heavens sent down torrents of water, you were right. For you were caught in the midst of the wet monsoon which lasted from May to October and gave certain areas of Burma as much as 17 feet of rain. The other monsoon, which lasted from November to March, was the dry monsoon you were lashed with gale-like winds - but not water. The late President Hoover called the Burmese the only truly happy and cheerful race in all of Asia -- a land of ready smiles and gentle laughter -- of course at the time you did not see this -- you saw dread and fear.

In India, it was rupees and annas; in Burma, if you will recall, it was pyas (pennies), 100 of which made up a Burman dollar, called a kyatt and which used to be worth 50 kyatt to the American dollar. This of course is not according to the fluctuating dollar of modern times. But then, who had the time to spend any kind of money....

So kos, as you make plans to gather on the East Coast at Boston in September, or on the West Coast, let us give thought to the formation and creation of a central point of communication so that we don't lose sight of each other; the thing we have among ourselves which no other group has is our for having been thru this thing together and which we certainly don't want to forget. How about some news, letters, etc., telling about what you've been doing, your families, activities, or anything you want to share with your buddies.



NEW JERSEY REP. RODINO TO RECEIVE AWARD

The famed Merrill's Marauders, jungle fighters of World War II, always pay their debts and as a result, Rep. Peter Rodino of New Jersey, will become the first recipient ever to receive an award from the former Army unit.

Congressman Rodino, now Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, saved three Burmese nurses of the famed Dr. Gordon Seagraves jungle hospital from deportation after the war. They had been interning at Jersey City when the U.S. Immigration Service acted to revoke their visas.

Rodino, in conjunction with the Newark Star-Ledger, obtained a delay in the deportation and also got a special bill through Congress giving the nurses temporary residency to complete their internship. Major General Frank Merrill, leader of the jungle fighters and at the time Highway Commissioner of New Hampshire, helped in spearheading the appeal after being told of the nurses situation by the Star-Ledger.

Dr. Seagraves, one of the most famous medical figures of World War II and known as the 'Burma Surgeon', had mostly Burmese nurses in his unit. They attended hundreds of sick and wounded Marauders in the heart of the Burmese jungle.

"They saved many of us and we guarded these same nurses from Japanese patrols," recalled Anthony Colombo, former New Jersey resident and point-man for the Marauders. Colombo, now Executive Secretary of the Merrill's Marauders Assn., Inc., was a former business agent for Local 1936 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Hoboken. He is now a resident of Phoenix, Arizona.

Colombo explained how the award came about over 20 years late. "While conducting research for the China-Burma-India Veteran's Assn. reunions I came across the situation involving the Seagraves nurses. At the time, Gen. Merrill told some associates about the fine work that Congressman Rodino had done to help the nurses, and said at that time if any of us got a chance to thank the Congressman in later years, to do it. We regard his wish as a command, even if it is over 20 years old."

Colombo said that under Gen. Merrill, the Marauders never left any

wounded behind and had buried all their dead. "We always paid our debts," he said, "and we owed one to the Congressman and the newspaper for their help. It will be the first time we have ever given an award to anyone."

Colombo said the award will be presented at the Marauders Annual Reunion dinner at Danvers, Mass. on September 1st. He said a special commendation of thanks will also be read at the reunion in regard to the Star-Ledger.

*Art Heenan, Former Editor
CBI ROUND-UP*

(From 'China-Burma-India World War II'; Time-Life Books)

President Roosevelt had indicated that he was in complete sympathy with a drive on Myitkyina. Gen Joe Stilwell dryly told a staff member that he would trade the sympathy for one U.S. division.

Stilwell actually did get an American combat unit - the first to reach the Asian mainland. This organization bore the cumbersome title; 5307th Composit Unit (Provisional). In official dispatches, it was called by its operational code name, *Galahad*. But it would come to be known as Merrill's Marauders, after Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill, whom Stilwell had selected as its leader.

Merrill's Marauders totaled only 3,000 men, but they were to achieve a reputation far out of proportion to their numbers. Lt. Col. Charles N. Hunter, Merrill's classmate at West Point and the unit's executive officer through most of the Burma action, called the Marauders "the most beat upon, most misunderstood, most mishandled, most written about, most heroic and yet most unrewarded regimental sized unit in World War II".

To be sure, commanders commonly talk about their outfits in superlatives but this unit deserved them. In its short lifetime it was to engage in uncommon exploits, suffer uncommon ordeals, get into an inordinate amount of trouble and stir up an exceptional fuss.

MERRILL'S MARAUDERS ASSN.

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