

My Story

By Eddie Wang

In **1943**, I was admitted to the department of physics at the Sichuan University in Chengdu. Less than a year later, in 1944, I decided to volunteer and joined the army to defend my country against the invading Japanese army. I thus gave up my academic studies and was incorporated in the student volunteers' unit of the national army located in Luzhou, south-east of the Sichuan province. In the beginning of 1945, I was selected to go to Chongqing to learn communications and more specifically the Morse code for more than two months. While doing so, as a cadet, I had the opportunity of joining a new group of fellow countrymen training as interpreters organized by the F.A.B. (Foreign Affairs Bureau).

After 25 days of non-stop training the 25th April 1945, I was sent to the Kunming interpreters' pool to provide interpreters for the American units operating in China. I was selected by the O.S.S. (Office of Strategic Services) and assigned to the S.O. branch (Special Operations).

Seven member teams were organized to carry out missions that had to harass the enemy's rear area and attack the Japs along with the local guerrillas. Our job was to make contact with the local anti-Japanese guerrilla forces, providing them with weapons and ammunition to harass the Japanese army. All those missions were of a military nature and thus, very dangerous.

I then made several missions by going to Zhijiang in the Hunan province where was located the forward echelon of the OSS serving for South China. When we had noticed that the Japs were fighting in the Hengshan area, we organized the transfer of our guerrilla friends to the different combat zones — which were not very far away from Zhijiang.

Not very long after that, we were dispatched back to Kunming. I was then sent to Kaiyuan (in the Hunan province) for a thorough training in small arms, TNT-explosives, use

of the bazooka etc. ... at a special training base branch: S. & T. (School & Training). I had a special & personal training for the use of parachutes including stimulating of parachute jumps. That lasted until the end of July 1945.

Soon after that, we went back to Kunming — stand-by for operations and that is about when the Japanese surrendered — August 15, 1945. The S.O. missions were no longer required and I was assigned to the S.I.

branch — (Special Intelligence) — with another team — a new one — to carry out new missions — humanitarian.

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At the S.I. branch, several new seven-member teams were promptly organized. I was part of a team with Major Staiger as leader but we didn't know what our new mission would be.

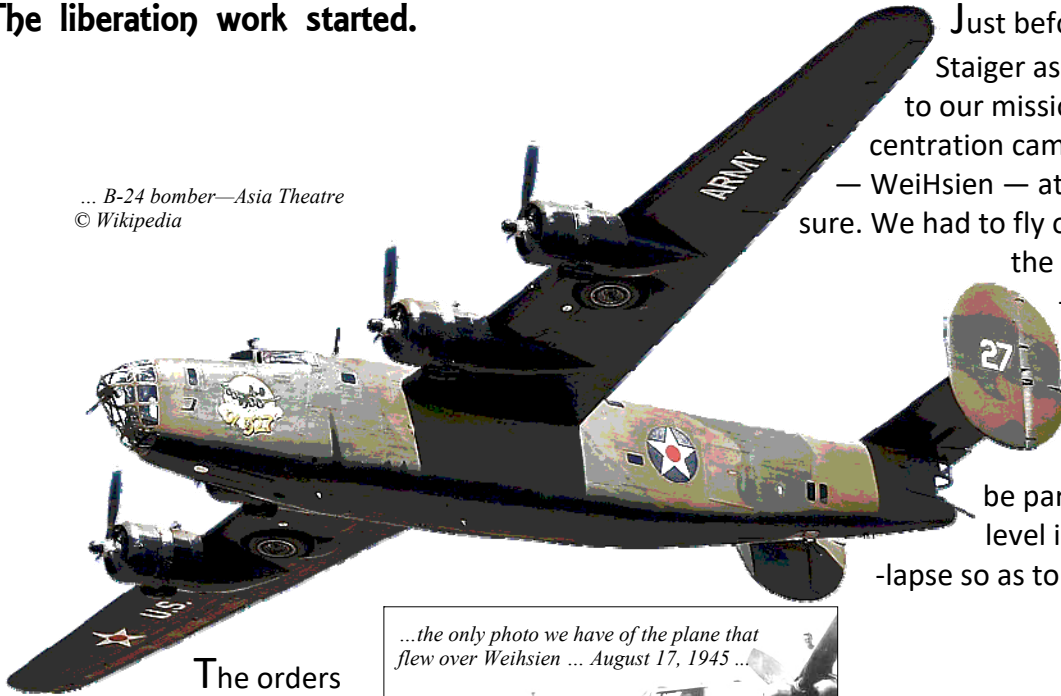
On August 16, 1945 ... we left Kunming for Xi'an (in the Shaanxi province) where the North China echelon of the O.S.S. was situated.

Early in the morning of August 17, 1945 we took off on board a B-24 for our special OSS-mission of the day: **Weih sien.**



The liberation work started.

... B-24 bomber—Asia Theatre
© Wikipedia



The orders were given by General Wedemeyer, Commander in Chief for China to liberate all the concentration camps held by the Japs in China.

YES! — we were all informed by the American Secret Services that the Japs could potentially kill all the prisoners they detained.

That is the reason why the overall order of the missions was given by General Wedemeyer, the American Commander in Chief for the China theatre. The American high command wanted to avoid — at all costs — an overall tragedy.

We were not the only ones to take off that morning. There were three other teams scheduled for rescue operations at the airfield and all of us were to liberate Japanese concentration camps in China.

The different B-24s were going to Shenyang, Beijing, Hainan and WeiHsien. All the missions had the name of a bird. Ours was: "**DUCK TEAM**".



We all carried the minimum necessary armament to defend ourselves. As for me, I carried a Smith & Weston 0.38 caliber revolver and a 0.45 Tommy gun.

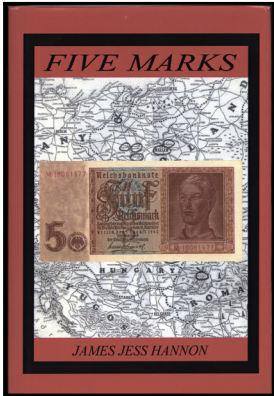
Just before the take-off from Xi'an, Major Staiger assembled his team and briefed us as to our mission. The liberation of a Japanese concentration camp situated in the Shantung province — WeiHsien — at a location we did not know for sure. We had to fly over the city of WeiHsien and search the area ... all we knew is that our seven-member team was to liberate a concentration camp even if we had to fight for it. None of us knew what would happen there and Major Staiger told us that we were to be parachuted by bailing-out at very low level in order to shorten the descent time -lapse so as to avoid being shot by the Japs.



...the only photo we have of the plane that flew over Weihsien ... August 17, 1945 ...

We absolutely had to shorten our stay in midair — that was absolutely vital!

Among the seven of us, only the U.S. soldier, Lieutenant James Hannon did not belong to the O.S.S. James Hannon had just recently escaped from a Nazi Concentration Camp. He wrote a book about it.



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When we flew over the drop zone at 2000 feet we could see nothing underneath so we lowered down by circling to 500 feet. At a moment, we noticed an isolated zone with many many people waving their shirts, shirts of all colors or whatever and running all over the place, screaming and dancing. The plane circled several times and we could now see walls with barbed wires, watch-towers and trenches around a well defined perimeter.

Weihsien Concentration camp was located.

The B-24 leveled at 450 feet for the jump.

I remember that when we bailed out of the B-24 bomber, Major Staiger was the first one to go. I was the fifth one, just before James Hannon and when it was my turn, I hesitated. James gave me a slight push and off I went — and he followed immediately after. My para-

chute opened automatically and I landed safely in the gaoliang fields.

I don't remember who was the first person I saw in that field but it was one of the Weihsien prisoners wild with joy and gratitude. Major Staiger quickly evaluated the situation and rounded up his liberation team. We couldn't help being carried shoulder high towards the walls of the camp by all those exited prisoners. At a short distance of the gates we abandoned our shoulder-high position and entered the camp with the crowd — weapons ready.

... And it was then, that just in front of the camp gate we were welcomed by a salvation army band who played medley after medley of national hymns including those of America, Britain, Russia and China as well as many other songs.

We passed the gates and entered the camp. We



4. The moon gate
Widia

turned left and then, passing through a moon gate we directly entered the Jap Commandant's office to negotiate. He was waiting for us. There were more than 10 people present in the room, including the 2 Japanese commandants, one representing the Qingdao consulate in charge of administrative affairs and the other Japanese commandant representing the Japanese military police dealing with military matters of the camp. The other participants were our members and the rep-

representatives of the executive committee of the camp. We were all in the commandant's office. I was not familiar with them. We — of course — carried our weapons in the office where the area was not too large but it did not seem crowded to me. The commandants seemed impassive, not arrogant. Both sides negotiated in a calm and distinguished atmosphere.

The principal negotiator on our side was Major Staiger with Tad Nagaki as the interpreter. The result was successful as confirmed by the official Duck Mission report.

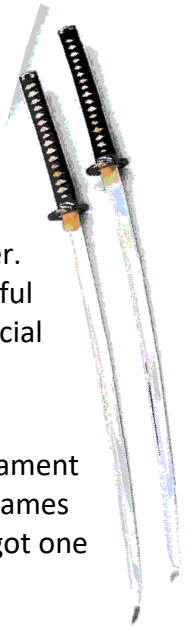
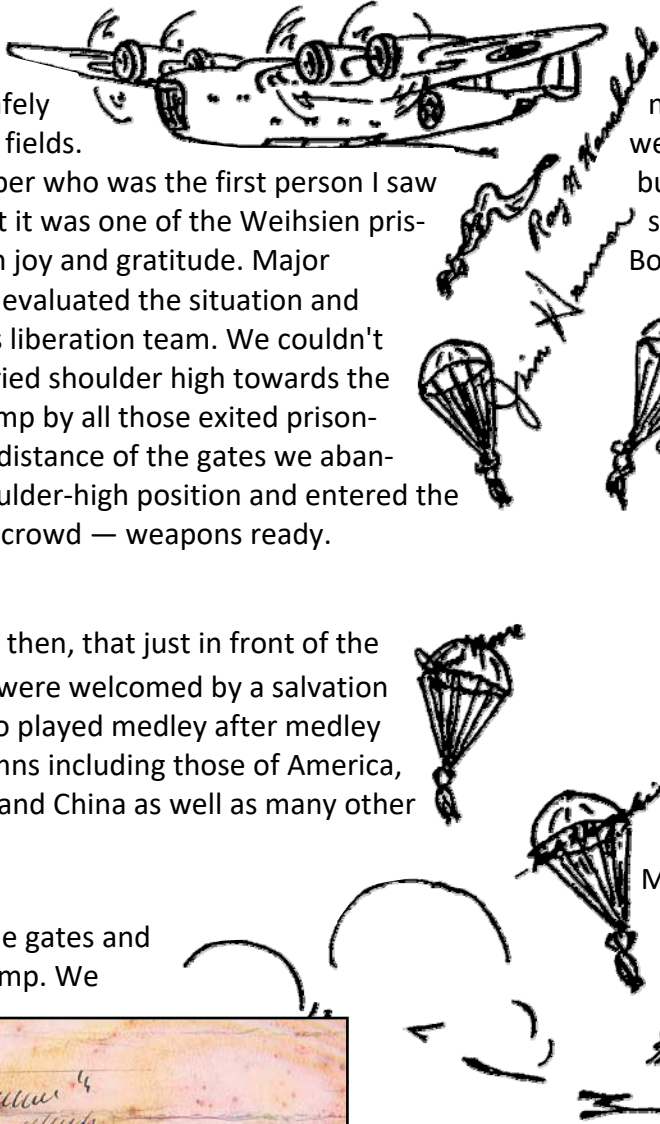
The Japs gave up their armament and their samurai swords. James Hannon — I remember — got one of those swords.

Major Staiger, in the name of the U.S. Army claimed for the immediate surrender of the Japanese including all their armament — Requested that they assume for the safety of the camp until all the prisoners be safely transferred back home — and to continue to provide for the necessities of the everyday camp-life until the arrival of the U.S. troops.

As for the food, we knew that there was a critical shortage in all the camps. After being parachuted we were anticipating to find all the prisoners in a state of advanced starvation and though they were all visibly undernourished, the Weihsien population seemed rather healthy thanks to the excellent organization of the Camp Committee.

Our team was a vanguard of the U.S. Army for the liberation of Weihsien. It was the first phase of the operation and we had to prepare for the successive teams who had to come as soon as possible. Not easy work though. We had to care for the dropping of food drums from B-29 squadrons, the emergency evacuation of those who needed it and for the organization of the camp with the help of the Camp Committee as well as the Japanese Commandant.

My job, when in Weihsien, was principally for the registration of the aliens ... name, nationality, age, sex, residence etc. ... as well as my interpreters work. All this was



— of course — mostly a lot of paperwork. In 1945, in WeiHsien, we had no modern equipment — such as, a computer with the appropriate software. I would so much have liked to chat and play with the children and also learn "dancing" with the teenagers, ... those of my age.

On August 30, a complete team of 20 American military men led by Colonel Weinberger arrived in camp. We handed over what we had prepared so far but stayed in camp for a short while longer. I left WeiHsien camp on September 25 for Kunming via Xi'an and the other 6 members of our DUCK team went to Qingdao — all who later, returned to Kunming.

At the end of September 1945, I left Kunming for Chengdu and went back to study in the department of physics of Sichuan University.

The war was over for me.

1945 – 1965

I graduated three years later and became a high school teacher in teaching advanced algebra and physics. That only lasted for a year and a half, until October 1949.

After the 1949 revolution, I had to give up teaching and went to Chongqing, recruited by the Ministry of Industry and assigned to a non-ferrous metallurgical plant in Shenyang, a north-east city of China. I became engaged in air-pollution technology and in 1965 — after 15 years — received the title of: Engineer of environmental protection.

1966 – 1976

Towards the end of the year 1965, I was transferred to the Guizhou Metallurgical Engineering Research Institutes. Unfortunately, during this period of turbulence in China, it was practically impossible to work. It was a period of political turmoil and as an ex-OSS agent I was suspected to be an American spy and put into a detention house ... for nearly three years. I was exculpated in 1973 and returned to work again.

1976 – 1990

All the grievances of my country against me were finally abandoned and I could return to a normal life. I worked hard and at full-time and I was finally accepted by my peers as a senior engineer professor. In 1981, I was invited to attend a conference organized by the Environmental Engineering Society of China in Jinan, Shandong province.

Being in Shandong province for the occasion, I returned to visit the "old" Weihsien Concentration Camp. I was quite disappointed by this experience. I didn't see what I wanted to see — utterly negative it was!

1990 and after retirement

It was at the end of March 2015 that my grandson found Mary Previte in America. My grandson, Daniel Wang i.e. Wang Qian in Chinese, actually working in South Carolina – U.S.A. found Mary on the Internet. I communicated with her by telephone and finally, in 2016, July 27-29 could talk to her, face to face at my home in China. She crossed the ocean to Guiyang accompanied by her nephew to meet me. We were finally reunited 71 years after the Second World War had ended. She carried 18 letters of thanks from ex-prisoners and also very official V.I.P. letters written by US officials — from the state senator of New Jersey, the U.S. ambassador to China and the representatives of the U.S. Congress.

As for our reunion in 2016 in Guiyang there are a lot of newspaper excerpts on the Weihsien-paintings' website.

To my great honor, I have been awarded the title: "Anti-war veteran national mainstay" in China.

... and that is enough for me in my retired period.

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Eddie Wang in 1945 ...