

Diehl Jr., Robert H.

## 40 Missions With 'Curly Bird'



A 7TH AAF HEAVY BOMBER BASE IN THE MARIANAS—Staff Sgt. Robert H. Diehl Jr., Bethlehem, Pa. (left), ball turret gunner, and Technical Sgt. John C. Peploski, Verona, N. Y., engineer gunner, exchange congratulations after completing 40 combat missions in their Marianas-based 7th AAF Liberator, "Curly Bird." Sgt. Diehl is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Diehl Sr., 1426 High Street, Bethlehem. (AAF Pacific Photo)

## Local Staff Sergeant Has Cause To Remember Bombing Mission Against Jap-Held Iwo Jima

A 7TH AAF HEAVY BOMBER BASE IN THE MARIANAS—(Delayed)—Although Staff Sergeant Robert H. Diehl Jr., of Bethlehem, Pa., has completed his 40 combat missions with the 7th AAF and is awaiting reassignment, he will never forget one mission against Jap-held Iwo Jima.

"We were going into our bombing run," said Sergeant Diehl, ball turret gunner of the Liberator bomber, Curly Bird, "when a Jap anti-aircraft shell pierced the plane's fuselage a few inches behind me, shot up between the waist gunners, and tore through the top of the bomber near the tail, a bare three inches from the tail gunner.

"Fortunately, the projectile was from a 75 mm gun fused to explode at a certain altitude instead of a smaller 22 mm shell which would have exploded into a thousand pieces when it hit our plane."

Sergeant Diehl has flown almost

400 hours over nearly 60,000 miles of water while hitting Jap targets in the Bonins, Volcanos and Carolines. Since joining the 7th AAF in April, 1944, he has been awarded the Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Sergeant Diehl's parents are Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Diehl, Sr., 1426 High Street, Bethlehem. He was graduated from Liberty High School in 1942, and was employed by the Mack Manufacturing Company, before entering the Army in April, 1943.

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