

a bearer a 12-year old boy who looked no more than eight. He was quite bright, spoke fair English, and was most accommodating. He had a distended belly that we did not understand. We took him to our Flight Surgeon, who told us the boy had chronic malaria for which nothing could be done. He further said the lad had a small chance of reaching adulthood. It was for many of us the first sad experience with the hopelessness of many peoples in the world at that time.

We knew we were very expendable, so we could empathize with this young boy. When we departed soon thereafter, we left him what was (to him) a princely sum of money for whatever good it might do.

#### PART 4 BURMA

#### CHAPTER 21

While we were in the South, the Allied troops had recaptured the airfield at Mytkina. We were then able operate from inside Burma. We then helped further the campaign to re-open the Burma Road to China.

The engineers had built an air strip in Northern Burma at a place called Tinkawk Sakan. It was underlaid with logs from the forest cut to make room for the field, and filled with sand and gravel from a nearby river bed. It was levelled on top with mostly packed sand; but this was monsoon season and the rains were regular and heavy. The result was that the field was usable, but took a particularly hairy method of takeoff, particularly with a bomb load.



The strip was muddy on the right side in the upper (parking) end, and muddy on the left side about halfway down. This took a special takeoff technique, as follows:

1. Taxi out on the left side, stop and do the engine checks,
2. Start the take-off down the left side as fast as you dare then swing over to the right as soon as possible,

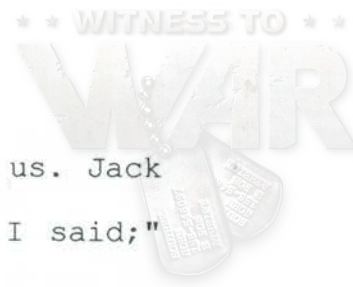
3. "Firewall" the throttle and finally stagger out over the 200-foot high trees off the end of the runway and all is well.

Landing was a lot easier. Just put it down in the un-muddy area and the softness of the runway slowed you up very quickly. If a plane cracked up on landing, it was pushed off the side of the runway where it was available for spare part collection.

It was while here that I participated in one of the inevitable tragedies of war. To this day it is fresh in my memory. While Jack Emery, Randy Reeves, Tiny Wilbourne, and I were standing alert, available for instant takeoff to answer any aerial threat, we saw the red flare ( which meant "takeoff" and receive orders by radio).

Up we went. However, while joining up, Randy's canopy blew off, so he had to return to base. The order came to the rest of us; "Proceed to Mytkina and orbit at 10 angels (10,000 feet), Mytkina is under attack".

The three of us, Jack (#1), Tiny (#2), and I (#3) proceeded as ordered. When we made our first orbit of Mytkina, we



sighted four twin-engine airplanes about 2,000 feet below us. Jack said over the radio; " There they are." Both Tiny and I said;" Jack those are B-25's."

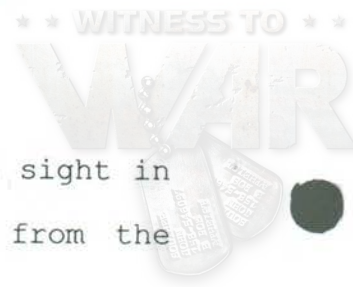
Jack said; "Hell no, they're Betty's (a Japanese Mitsubishi G4M3 bomber); let's go take a look." With that he proceeded to dive on the rear of the formation.

We had been taught repeatedly in Fighter School to never point your nose (thus your guns) at any bomber unless you planned to shoot it down. Bomber crews cannot distinguish between fighters heading directly toward them, and had nervous trigger fingers.

As we approached the bomber formation at high speed, I slid far out to the right of the formation and turned my wing up so the white star was visible. As I did, the B-25s started firing, and Jack's plane instantly looked just like a duck that had been shot by four shotguns. It was in an uncontrolled free fall, with coolant and oil spewing out of it as it went under the formation.

Tiny was in close formation with him so the B-25's were firing at him as well. At this moment, I spotted four Oscars ahead and above the B-25's. They were obviously attacking or preparing to attack the B-25's. I pulled up into their formation, turned, and fired at the closest Oscar, scoring hits in the wing section. He went smoking down through the very heavy cloud cover.

The other three circled in what I called a Fluer-de-Lis pattern and were all now behind and above me. I pushed the stick hard forward and went straight down through the clouds, pulling out



at a low altitude. I looked around and not a soul was in sight in any direction. It was as if everyone had disappeared from the earth. It was VERY lonesome!

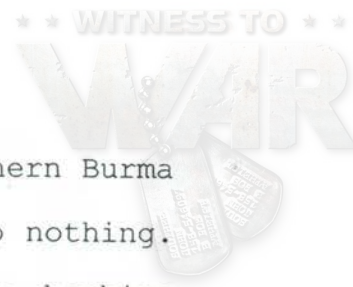
There were mountains ahead of me sticking up into the clouds, jungle behind, and no hole through the clouds to see if there were any enemies above. I went back up the river valley to find my way back to the base.

I finally landed and reported what I had seen. "The B-25's have killed Jack. Tiny and I broke up an attack on the B-25's by 4 to 8 Oscars. I hit one Oscar but I was much too busy saving my own ass to worry about what happened to him. I never saw Tiny after the first pass."

Tiny came in a few minutes later. He reported that he had fired on the B-25's in reflex when he looked up and saw them shooting at him. He had some bullet holes through his wings from the front to show for it. He believed that he had seen Jack again after the encounter, but Jack never came back. It was reported that when the troops were pushing further south they found his remains in the wrecked plane in the jungle.

As it turned out Tiny or Jack had killed a crewman on one of the B-25's. However, we had in truth broken up the enemy attack on them, and the B-25's had escaped in the clouds.

We flew a number of missions (about 10) from Tinkawk Sakan in support of the ground troops. We were then replaced by other elements of the 311th Fighter group.



We saw the Japanese Air Force only once more in northern Burma before departing for China. It was accidental and came to nothing. A 4-ship flight led by Ax Hiltgen had taken off for a bombing mission and was flying in clear air just underneath a solid overcast at about 10,000 feet. The overcast ended suddenly as if it been sliced off by a knife, and at that very instant, a P-47 with four Jap Oscars on its tail came straight down in front of our formation. Ax was obviously looking the other way. We called out on the radio all at once; "Bandits 12 o'clock low". We were all talking so the whole message was garbled; Ax just went cruising along.

Suddenly, he saw them. On Ax's signal we jettisoned our bombs to go after them, but they were gone. We never found them. The entire mission was a total waste, but things happened so fast that it was all over in a matter of seconds.

After returning to our home base at Mohanbari, India, we continued to fly ground support missions, and occasionally a bomber escort mission. Nothing of any consequence occurred until we started preparing the entire 311th Group to transfer to China.

#### PART FOUR. CHINA

#### CHAPTER 22

The first step in the plans for China was to get new airplanes to take with us. The Allison powered P-51A had been modified by replacing the 1100 HP Allison with a Rolls Royce Merlin engine having 1650 HP. The resulting redesigned plane had a much higher



service ceiling of over 25,000 ft, and was about 30 mph faster.

To extend the range, an 85 gallon gas tank was installed behind the cockpit to add to the 180 gallons carried in the wings. With two 150 gallon external wing tanks, we could take off with 565 gallons of fuel, extending flying time to 9 hours. This was far beyond the range of any existing fighter plane. We were soon to discover what that long-range flying did to our backsides.

One tricky feature of this was that with the rear tank full, the center of gravity was behind the center of lift on the wings. On level flight it made little difference, but when you went into any high G turns or other maneuvers, the plane would try to tighten the turn. Thus instead of holding back pressure on the stick to hold in the turn or pullout, it was necessary to keep the stick from coming back into your lap on its own and risk pulling the wings off the thing. On takeoff we used the gas out of that tank until the plane was manageable.

To obtain our new planes we had to take the used P-51A'S back to Karachi, India, and pick up the new P-51C'S. (The only difference between a P-51B and a P-51C was that the "C" was made in the North American plant in Dallas, Texas. I thought that was quite proper.) They had been brought over as cargo in crates and had to be assembled in Karachi. This trip involved flying clear across the breadth of India in the north, and return the same way.

We each requisitioned a P-51A to take back, and mine was an old piece of junk that had been flown off a jungle runway in Burma



by Col. Phil Cochran. He had been immortalized in the comic strip "Terry and the Pirates" as a hot-shot character named "Flip Corkin". Because of the condition of the airplane, the honor was somehow lost on me after take-off.

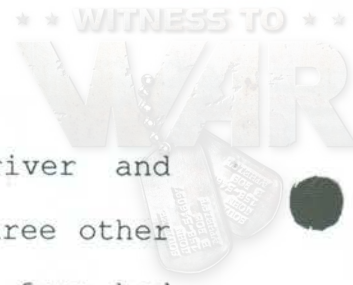
We were going out in a flight of nine led by Ax Hiltgen. The plan was to break up into two sections. Fortunately, we each had our route maps and planned stopping points.

On the appointed day, there was a solid cloud cover at about 2,500 feet; but the weather report was that it was clear above and out on our route. We took off individually and joined up on top of the cloud layer. All went well and we proceeded on assigned course. There was another cloud layer several thousand feet higher. It presented no problem - at first.

As we proceeded on our course, the upper layer started going lower and lower until the cloud layers merged. Ax saw openings underneath, and five of us proceeded to dive down to the deck. During the dive we all separated. I ended up flying on another mans wing - just the two of us.

Our first stop was to be at Laminar Hat for overnight and refueling. Lal Hat was just alongside the huge Brahmaputra River.

All we had to do was find the damned river and proceed to the base. I thought that we should turn left (or south) when we found it, but when we did find the river, the leader turned north toward the Himalaya mountains. Then, to complicate matters, the cloud layer started dropping lower and lower until we were in it. I lost



the leader, so I U-turned and headed south down river and eventually found Lal Hat and landed. Ax was there with three other guys. We spent the night after finding that the other four had safely ended up in other places.

The revised plan was for all of us to meet in Agra, site of the world-famous Taj Mahal. Next morning, we went out to take off, and there was a pool of coolant about six feet across under my plane. The coolant radiator had about 30 patches on it; but some were leaking. The others took off without me while the old pile of junk was repaired.

Finally, late in the afternoon, all was ready, so I took off and flew by myself to Agra. All nine were again assembled. The others had all seen the Taj Mahal, but I had arrived too late.

Thanks for waiting guys.

Next morning early, we all took off and assembled over the field. As we throttled back to start the all-day journey with only refueling stops, my electric propeller pitch control went into high pitch (low RPM and power) and stuck. I had to leave the flight and make an emergency landing as it was not possible to "go around" with such low power.

I was able to see the Taj after all, but could never convince the guys that I had not done it on purpose because of missing the Taj the day before. Next day I proceeded to Karachi, having essentially made the entire trip by myself.

We picked up our P-51C's, and flew them to Calcutta for some





modifications. We then flew them to Mohanbari, India. There the squadron completed preparations to move to China.

While in Calcutta we lost one of our pilots. Bill Butler was asked by an Engineering Officer at the base where our P-51's were modified to test-fly a P-47 that had undergone repairs. Bill was qualified in P-47's; so he accepted the job. He suffered engine failure on takeoff, crashed and burned.

Earlier, Bill and I had suffered through hemorrhoid operations as fellow patients in the 110th Station Hospital in Chabua, India.

An occupational hazard for dive bomber pilots was hemorrhoids. All those high G pull-outs didn't help keep things where they belonged. A third of the pilots in the outfit were so afflicted. The Flight Surgeon sent the two of us to have this new operation. It was discovered that every muscle (and nerve) in your body is connected in some way to your asshole with the result that every cough, laugh, hiccup, toe wiggling, etc. hurt like hell. The upshot of it was that the Doc could never persuade another guy to have the operation.

#### CHAPTER 23

The day finally arrived to depart for China, flying our planes over the Himalaya Mountains (the famous "Hump") to get to Kunming.

We were to rendezvous at Mytkina with a B-25. That crew had a navigator on board to guide us over the Hump into China.

We arrived at Mytkina and started circling. No B-25. We couldn't raise anyone on the radio to find out what happened. We



had to abort, and go back to Mohanbari, India, to try another day.

Going to China was proving difficult. One consolation. We had removed a lot of ammo and put bottles of beer in the ammo boxes and wings. Good cold beer sure did help our frustration when we went back.

The next day we made connection with the B-25 and landed in Kunming, China, hours later after successfully flying the Hump.

This time the beer was really cold because we had been up over 15,000 feet where the temperature was close to zero. We didn't really see the mountains all that well because of the weather.

After we landed in China we had some help from the guys in Kunming, so the beer was about finished off right there on the field. Kunming being 6,000 feet above sea level added to our beer "high." The very next day, I learned that beer sold for \$5 US per bottle in this theater, and a good Scotch was \$100 a fifth. Bear in mind that our pay including flight and overseas pay was about \$250/month.

Our stay in Kunming was brief, though we had time to go into town and try some of the renowned Chinese mulberry wine. BOY WHAT A HANGOVER!!

We left Kunming for our final destination. It was a field outside Chengdu with the code name A-3. This field was enormous, with a 9,000 foot, 300 feet wide runway and a narrow fighter strip of about 4,000 feet alongside. The surface looked like packed limestone (caliche).



This field had been built by coolie labor, essentially by hand. It was designed to handle the new Boeing B-29 Superfortress for bombing missions to Japan. We were replacing a Republic P-47 fighter group, as their gasoline consumption was about 50% greater than ours. They were returning to India. It was a pilot from this group that inadvertently shot me down.

This field was built in a flat area that had been rice paddies for centuries. They first had to excavate to depth of 9 feet, then bring in rocks of ever decreasing size to fill the hole up to ground level. They then finish off the surface with sand and caliche and smooth it out with a huge stone roller about 9 feet in diameter and 10 feet long. It took about 3,000 coolies to just pull the roller after they had patched the surface by hand. They had to refinish the surface after every B-29 raid.

The B-29's flew about one mission every 5-7 days. They started in Calcutta, flew to Chengdu for refueling, and extra ammo or bombs. These supplies were being flown in all the time between missions. When the B-29's took off for Japan, they would disappear up the valley still being only a few hundred feet high.

#### CHAPTER 24

The Japanese had prepared a surprise welcome for us after we arrived at A-3 in the early afternoon. We checked into our tents supplied by the Chinese and settled in for a good night's sleep. We were about half asleep when, with the banging of pans down the tent street, the Chinese were yelling, "Jing Bao, Jing Bao".



We looked at each other. "What the hell is a Jing Bao?" When the first bomb exploded we knew what a Jing Bao was!! It's amazing how low you can scrunch down in a one-foot wide, one-foot deep drainage ditch when you are being bombed! Next morning we found 20 damaged aircraft out of the 24 we had brought from India.

The Japanese had dropped anti-personnel "frag bombs" down our flight line, which sprayed our ships with shrapnel. Our mechanics were truly heroic. They worked like dogs repairing the damage as they had all along. They had 18 of those beautiful new P-51Cs flyable by nightfall.

Some new Northrop P-61 night fighters had come in about the same time we did, but were not yet operational. They quickly loaded up for war after that night raid with bombs hitting all around THEM. Two nights later the Japanese returned to our field.

This time they never reached the field as the P-61's (known as Black Widows) intercepted. We were treated to one hell of a display of flaming bombers falling out of the sky. This time we knew where the slit trenches were, and viewed the scene with much greater caution than the first raid. They tried some more, but never mounted a serious attack after that.

#### CHAPTER 25

By now it was late October, 1944, and planning for the offensive missions into North China by the 311th Group was being completed. Of course none of us peon pilots knew anything about



it. These missions were the major reason for the transfer of the 311th to China, along with protection of the B-29 bases and escort of crippled B-29's coming back over north China into A-3.

We were then into a period of very little flying, so Paul and I along with Courtney Richard and Johnny Wood decided to set up our tent. We needed some bamboo poles for side panel stiffeners to keep out the cold. We set out from the base toward a farming area where we had seen some bamboo groves. We blithely went in and started chopping some poles. A furious Chinese farmer charged at us yelling with both arms waiving menacingly.

Fortunately one of the English-speaking Chinese from the base saw us and came over to settle the "problem".

He told us; "This bamboo belongs to this farmer."

"It was just out in the woods." Ever the Ugly Americans.

"Sirs, every square inch in China belongs to somebody."

Still thinking this farmer wasn't properly grateful for us being over there saving his ass, and saving his damned bamboo, we paid the farmer a few Yuan, and everybody was happy.

From early October until late November, we spent a lot of time sitting around the Recreation Room at A-3, occasionally talking with one of the Chinese who managed this "hostel." One evening we were carrying on to this former restaurateur from Shanghai about the advantages of Western civilization.

He apparently had enough so replied; "Gentlemen, my



civilization is 4,000 years old while yours is 200 years or so. We will wait to see how yours comes out."

Courtney Richards was a guy from California that had been classified 4-F, or physically disqualified for military service. He had flat feet and varicose veins in his legs. He volunteered for the Air Corps and was accepted as he had exceptional vision. He proved to be an excellent pilot though his over-confidence killed him at the ripe old age of 22.

He foretold his own death one night sitting around the recreation room.

Rich said; "I'm gonna get killed the next time I run into a Jap fighter. I've lost my respect for their planes and their pilots!"

Rich, flying out of Hsian (now Xian) shortly before I was sent there, encountered an enemy fighter. They went head-on at each other. Neither gave way, so they crashed in what must have been a spectacular, but horrible sight. The Japanese gave Rich a joint funeral with their pilot, with full military honors, and were buried in a common grave.

Johnny Wood led my last flight, and then went down less than two weeks later in a similar mission to my own.

In a period of about three weeks, only Paul Swetland was still flying from our tent. He came home with ulcers. Not only was he rich - he was lucky.

PART SIX. LOST



## CHAPTER 26

A forward air base in Hsian was positioned at the bend in the Yellow River where that river came down from the North and turned East to head toward the China Sea. It gave us a straight shot to Peking (now Beijing) and Nanking and all the area in between. A few missions were commenced in November, 1944, and I was scheduled to be in the group to replace the first section in early December.

On December 4, 1944, we departed Chengdu, and flew over the mountains to Hsian, landing in the early afternoon. When I opened the canopy a blast of the coldest air I had felt in two years quickly made for a numb nose.

It was good to see some of our pals who had been here for a while. Right away we enjoyed a little "friendly" poker game to become reacquainted.

I was to be appointed Assistant Operations Officer, so on December 6, 1944, I reported to the Ops office to start learning the job. I had on my regular uniform of "pinks", wool shirt, and B-4 flight jacket instead of flight coveralls for a mission. However, when I got to the flight line, a four-ship mission to be led by my Chengdu tentmate Johnny Wood turned up an element leader short. Randy Reeves had the "runs" and couldn't go. I violated the first rule in the military, and volunteered to take his place. I had not flown a combat mission in several weeks and wanted to see the area. That was a bad move when viewed through a retrospectroscope.



The mission was a simple one. Four P-51's with wing tanks and armor-piercing .50-caliber ammo in the gun boxes were to seek out locomotives and trains on the track between Nanking and Kaifeng. We flew directly to Nanking as the easternmost point. Then two planes dropped down to tree-top level and flew along the railroad tracks, with the other two at 5,000 feet for top cover, just in case of enemy fighter attack. At Soochow junction, we were to trade places.

Johnny had a field day on his stretch. On this cold day, a locomotive struck by the AP's would blow steam into the atmosphere in a huge cloud. It was a spectacular display. Between Soochow and Nanking, I counted six of such strikes.

When we reached Soochow and time to trade places, one of my wing tanks would not come off until I engaged in some violent maneuvers. At last, it came off, and I went on with my part of the mission.

I was thoroughly pissed off. Johnny had such a "field day" on the first stretch of track. My wingman and I had flown a hundred miles along the track at treetop level and not seen a single target. He was a stranger to our squadron named Dexter, a P-47 pilot getting some combat time with us.

We were approaching the last town of our sweep, doing about 250 mph on the deck. I commenced pulling up to head for home as we came abreast of the town.

There! In a clump of trees on a siding sat a nice, big, fat Jap locomotive. I knew they had seen us, but the temptation was





too great.

"Johnny, cover me, I'm going back to get that bastard."

"Dexter give it a little gas".

#### CHAPTER 27

We peeled off into the target, rolled out of the peel-off and commenced pouring four machine guns worth of armor-piercing slugs into the boiler. I felt much better as I was pulling out of my run over the top of the locomotive. Suddenly a very recognizable jolt spoiled the whole thing!!!

"Johnny I think I'm hit".

"Yeah, you're loosing oil."

I reached for altitude and throttled back on my engine for maximum distance and turned toward the guerilla territory from which pilots had been helped to escape many times from under the very noses of the Japs.

"Hey Unk, the oil's stopped coming out".

"Yeah, it should, I haven't got any".

Actually I didn't have any glycol coolant for the liquid-cooled engine. It had run out the same hole as the oil radiator was surrounded by the coolant radiator.

This was incredible, being shot down was something that happened to somebody else. A bullet is definitely an anti-egoist.

I frantically searched for sparsely populated territory. Escape would be simplified there, but as my engine commenced to overheat and smoke, I could see nothing but closely packed farms. The only



option left was to hit the silk.

"Johnny, I've got to disconnect my radio - tell the boys good-bye for me".

"I hope you make it, Unk".

"Me too."

With that I disconnected my radio and jettisoned my canopy. By now the smoke from the engine was coming up into the cockpit.

Time to go!

Over the side! Where's that ripcord? Pull! Feet together!

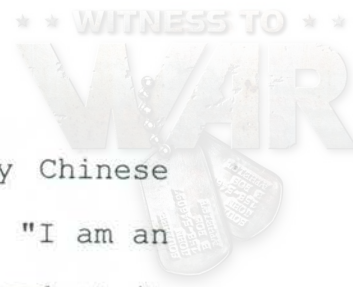
Wham! The chute opened I swung once and there was the ground.

Four hundred feet for a bailout doesn't leave any room to enjoy the view.

I hit, rolled, collapsed the chute, and reached for my jungle knife to cut the shroud lines, so I could be on my way out of the vicinity of the crashed plane. It was about 200 yards from me. The knife had been lost in the jump, so I just gathered up the chute and proceeded in a south-westerly direction. For what I thought would help my escape, I had grabbed navigation maps which were complete with course lines and identification of my home base. A hundred yards further on I realized that I was running, so I cut it down to a fast walk.

#### CHAPTER 28

I saw several Chinese, but only grinned at them and went on. After proceeding for about a mile, an old farmer came running up to me excitedly and motioned me over. He was nervous and appeared



extremely frightened of something. I promptly pulled my Chinese flag out to show to him. It had written in Chinese on it, "I am an American flyer fighting for China, help me." He only glanced at it and motioned me to follow. He was in a hurry to move out.

We headed again in a southerly direction under the old Chinaman's nervous leadership, until a half a mile or so further on we approached a large farmhouse. As we came near the outer wall a soldier on a little burro, dressed in what I took to be the uniform of the Chinese Nationalist Government, rode out to meet us. He got off, tossed me a snappy salute, and we grinned and shook hands.

This was it! I had been brought to an outpost of the Chinese Nationalist Army which was to the south of us. I remembered this from our intelligence maps.

He took me indoors where we were met by two other soldiers and some civilians. We always carried a Pointy-Talky (Chinese writing opposite English) which I quickly produced and pointed out the following message which a civilian painstakingly read to the others.

"Please take me to Layang." "My government will pay you well."

They grinned broadly and nodded their heads in what I took to be assent. With that they brought on the food which consisted of noodles, some kind of foul-tasting nuts and some green stuff that tasted like grass. I ate the nasty-tasting stuff in a spirit of



goodwill, and gave 'em the thumbs up and "Ding hao". They merely grinned and nodded.

I then made signs that I was cold, particularly at the tear in my trousers which had apparently happened in the bailout but I had only just noticed. It's not a routine thing for a guy from a small town in the U.S.A. to drop suddenly down in the middle of China with no knowledge of the land, people, or language, so naturally I was a little bit excited.

Very soon the three soldiers and I left the farmhouse and once more proceeded in a southerly direction. As we walked along, the Chinese in charge asked me for my gun. I gave it to him belt and all. He was to be my rescuer, so he could have my shirt too if he wanted it.

#### CHAPTER 29

We had walked less than ten minutes when we met two soldiers coming up from the south. After a few words, we turned and went back to the farmhouse. The time must not be right. Surely that was it. Our Intelligence Officer had said their methods were peculiar but to trust them and they would take us out.

We sat once more in the farmhouse while food was brought, but this time it was more edible - some kind of porridge. Several people were crowded into the room. They peeked curiously at me and giggled every time I said "Ding hao" and gave the old thumbs up. I could really tell some tales when I got back home. The idea that I wouldn't return to the base never occurred



to me.

When it was dark, the atmosphere seemed more tense, so I rather sensed that we were waiting word of some kind to proceed. We hadn't long to wait. Presently two soldiers strange to me appeared and we immediately were on our way.

The night was pitch black - moonless. As we went out the gate it seemed to me that we took a different direction, however it seemed a perfect night for escape and I was totally committed and thoroughly believed in my developing liberation. After several minutes walk I heard the ugly sound of approaching troops, who exchanged some sort of challenge with my escort and passed on.

"The guerrillas must be out giving the Japs hell tonight," I thought.

#### PART SEVEN. CAPTURED

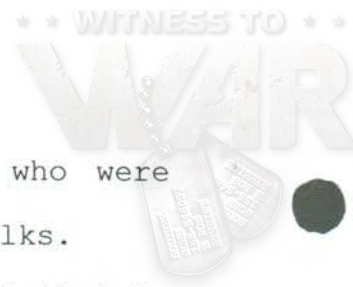
#### CHAPTER 30

No sooner had these passed than I heard more troops. Again the exchange of challenges. Then out of the dark many hands grabbed me, a light flashed, and I saw the little peaked caps.

"Japs!" I had been betrayed by my saviors.

As they grabbed me they started feeling for anything they could find on my person. It's a tough thing to be grabbed and mauled for whatever they can take, so I shelled out my pockets and let them have my watch, cigarette lighter, chocolate, etc.

I had been captured by a patrol of about fifteen Japs under the command of an officer, who dragged me back to where my plane



had crashed. There were about ten more soldiers there who were roasting some kind of potatoes in a fire of dried cane stalks.

I was placed on the ground and two soldiers were detailed to guard me while the others joined in the potato roasting. The officer seated himself beside me and spoke in fair English asking me several questions. He rapped me on the head with his knuckles when I evaded his questions.

He soon tired of thumping me on the head and hearing me quote my name, rank, and serial-number, none of which he was particularly interested in. Besides, all the sweet potatoes were gone. They then loaded me on a dilapidated truck. The driver proceeded to stoke the boiler with charcoal, and after much grunting and groaning on the part of the soldiers pushing it off we were under way. Naturally I was apprehensive about what lay ahead of me, but I was certain it would be unpleasant.

#### CHAPTER 31

We finally arrived at the gates of a Chinese walled city, and were duly admitted into the gates. The town was quiet and dark as death itself. A cur dog poking about the refuse in the gutters of the narrow streets was all that I saw out of the back of the truck.

After much maneuvering we came through the gates of what was apparently an old fort within the town and entered a small courtyard. I was removed from the truck and shoved into a small room onto a sleeping mat. There was a guard in the room at the door and another just outside the door. I also noted upon



entering that the one exit to the compound had a double guard.

"They must think me a desperate character," I thought.

Upon further reflection I realized that I was such a character and would break out if anything but a suicidal opportunity presented itself. It was my duty to escape.

I lay awake feigning sleep, and watching the guard from under narrowed lids. After several hours the Jap began nodding. Immediately my nerves were on edge as I waited my chance. After interminable minutes his head dropped to his chest as he sat in the chair by the door. I cautiously pulled my legs up under me and began to creep toward the edge of the mat so I could silence him quickly.

He awoke with a start and instantly his bayonet was at my face. He forced me to move into the farthest corner from which I watched him as before, awaiting another chance. However, he remained awake and alert for the remainder of the night with his rifle trained on my head. He seemed eager for an excuse to shoot me dead between the eyes.

#### CHAPTER 32

In the morning I was placed in the guard house at the entrance of the compound where all the Chinese citizenry, who were now very much in evidence, came to see the defeated American Airman. They stood at a distance and jeered appropriately.

The officer soon appeared and asked if I was hungry.



"I am very hungry."

A bowl of rice with some of curried meat on top of it was brought and my hands were untied. I was given a pair of chopsticks. I nearly gagged on the first bite. It was foul tasting stuff and by American standards should have been relegated to the nearest garbage can. Since it didn't take a mental genius to figure that this wasn't America, I ate all of it. I was surprised how hungry I was.

We returned to the wreckage of my plane which was loaded on the truck by many Chinese hands. The Japs made me give up my coat to these people, so I was certain that the ones who turned me over to the Japs were either in cahoots with them or else they had been offered more rewards than our government usually paid in such cases.

My plane, or what had been my beautiful new plane, was surprisingly intact. The whole tail assembly was in fair shape, and the engine all in one piece with the prop folded back against it. The squadron tail markings and yellow prop spinner were still in evidence.

I saw what had brought me down. A large, jagged hole was in my oil radiator entering from directly behind and below at an angle of about 45 degrees. It appeared that a bullet fired by my wing-man had ricocheted from the boiler of the locomotive and smacked my plane in the most vulnerable spot! I will never know for sure, but the evidence seems overwhelming as you will see





later.

The wreckage was loaded on two trucks and I was perched atop it bound in what the Jap manuals must have specified for prisoners.

My hands were tied in front, rope around the upper arms pulled tight in back, and a leash tied to the arm bindings behind with a soldier always holding onto the leash. In this fashion we proceeded down a road and ultimately entered a town which I instantly recognized as the very place where my plane had met the bullet which had caused all this. We arrived at a Jap Army Post on the edge of town where I was placed in the post "iso", or guard-house.

### CHAPTER 33

About dusk I was removed from my cell and marched into a small room, seated in the midst of three officers and two enlisted men, and asked the usual preliminary questions.

Then, "What is your home field?"

I shook my head, but they were sitting there looking at my maps. The officer asking the questions slapped me, hard.

"Why do you not speak?"

"International law does not require me to answer."

He scoffed and hit me again. Hard!

I was pissed off inside, but realized that I was trapped and helpless. That phrase repeated itself over and over in my head.

"Why are you not frank with us," one of the enlisted men asked in a hurt tone of voice.



I am still an American soldier," I replied.

"But you are now under the control of the Imperial Japanese Army. Why did you not kill yourself? You were captured by a lowly Chinese farmer," the questioning officer said.

"American soldiers do not kill themselves as long as there is hope," I said. That drew a very hard fist to the nose.

Then they asked what the American newspapers had to say about the battles in the Phillipines and the South Pacific. I gave them as much detail as the true accounts of our news reports had given us in China. They didn't like my answers, and smacked me some more.

They talked among themselves for a moment and then passed me a note which said, "we are all laughing at you."

"Why do our troops keep advancing?" I asked while flinching for the next smack to my head.

"Oh, we are just drawing you in for the final blow." Bam!

Those people may have believed that once, but now it seemed to me that they were beginning to wonder about the manufactured news that they were fed. It made them madder.

They came back to their questioning once more. I was nearly insensible from fist blows about the head, so they took a new tack.

"Which do you take, life or death?" the Jap said with his face right in mine. He kicked my shins.

"That's up to you." Another kick.



He repeated himself, so I shrugged my shoulders in reply. Upon that note I was sent back to my cell. He must have worn himself out on me.

#### CHAPTER 34

I noted every detail possible about the grounds and jail, while returning from the questioning ordeal. They took my shoes. There were guards, guards everywhere. My only glimmer of hope for escape was the poor lock on the door to my cell. Upon that I concentrated, but I could never even get near the door since a guard was posted right at the door and he didn't even give any signs of sleepiness. I finally slept from sheer exhaustion.

Next morning I was awakened with a meal of steak, lettuce and rice. The Jap soldiers started coming in one or two at a time and squatting on their heels to sit and stare at me for what seemed like a quarter of an hour at a time. I saw no evidence of hatred.

Their looks were only the curious stares of children. About mid-morning the officer who beat me came in, opened the cell door and forced me to sit in the doorway.

"What kind of treatment do you expect?" he asked.

"The same kind a Japanese captured by Americans would receive."

He kicked at my face viciously, missing as I rolled back into the cell. I returned to a sitting position fully expecting a thorough going over, but there stood the Jap with a broad grin on



his face.

"Which do you take life or death?"

I once more shrugged my shoulders and lifted my hands in a gesture of disdain.

I was then bound and marched out in front of the jail. A Jap non-com took his place beside me and a squad of soldiers with fixed bayonets lined up behind and we headed for the gate.

The officer grinned broadly and said, "goodby."

This was it. My time had arrived. I was being carried out for execution. I was resolved that none of the Chinese along the road would see my fear. My head was high as I marched at rigid attention. All I wanted now was to get it over with.

#### CHAPTER 35

We soon turned and headed in toward the center of town. I naturally concluded that I was to be executed for the benefit of the Chinese populace to impress them with the superiority of the Imperial Japanese Army. However, we marched on through the town crossed, the railroad tracks and to my relief and surprise stopped at the station.

There on a siding sat the same locomotive that I had shot up two days ago. No gun emplacements were in evidence anywhere. Furthermore, it showed evidence of having been thoroughly punctured with .50 caliber ammo from an entirely different direction from that which I had strafed it.



Had I been shot down attacking a worthless target? Was I hit with an American bullet? Those questions brought bitter bile to my sore mouth.

#### CHAPTER 36

The next six days I was moved from place to place. Always there was a consistent pattern of questions accompanied by slaps, fist blows, and threats on the part of the officers. On the contrary, I received open-mouthed curiosity on the part of the common soldiers.

There was one notable exception. At one place, an officer had me taken out of my cell after dark, and fed me on red wine and biscuits. He spoke perfect English and claimed to have been on the Japanese Olympic Team at the Berlin Olympics in 1936. We talked for about two hours on sports and customs of our respective countries. Nothing was said of military matters except a few things I asked him. If he had an angle it was never apparent. He said that he would like to see a negotiated peace.

#### PART EIGHT. PRISON

#### CHAPTER 37

At the end of the six days of movement I arrived in a large Chinese city. I didn't know where I was since the last part of the trip had been made with my eyes covered by a blindfold which was only removed upon entering the city. We proceeded by car through paved streets to the "iso". Here I was turned over to the guards