

A Memorable Visit

At a Flying Tiger/CNAC Reunion in Ojai, California, Gen. Jimmy Doolittle is explaining to CNAC Captain Bob Rengo his personal experience with China National Aviation Corporation. This was following the Doolittle raid in which all of his B25's crashed in China following the first bombing of Tokyo. He is telling of the beginning on May 5, 1942 (before Bob Rengo had arrived in India as a civilian volunteer) of his appreciation of CNAC flying him out on a converted bucket seat DC3 from Chungking to Calcutta. The pilot was Captain Moon Chen of San Francisco.

Two hours out of Chungking, enroute to Kunming, a radio warning was received that there were Japanese fighter planes close by. They immediately landed in a nearby pasture and everyone including the pilot, co-pilot and six passengers took cover in a nearby dry irrigation ditch. After a short while, they reboarded to proceed on to Kunming where they were met by General Claire Chennault.

Doolittle and Chennault had been promoted to Brigadier General on the same order. As Chennault did not yet have his stars, Doolittle gave him his which he had just gotten in Chungking from Clayton Bissell who had an extra pair.

They then flew on to Myitkyina to pick up fuel. Doolittle had been briefed that morning in Chungking that the Japs intended that day to take Myitkyina and so advised Moon Chen. Despite the warning, Moon decided to land. The south side of town was already under attack and the gasoline service crew had fled to avoid the Japs. Chen had to proceed without fuel.

While at Myitkyina the plane was charged by



refugees who also wanted to get away from the Japs. Police, however, quickly got the mob under control and Chen finally took aboard some sixty passengers in the 21 passenger DC3, mostly old men, women and children, each with their pitiful belongings wrapped in small bundles. Chen then took off. Upon arrival in Calcutta after dark and almost out of fuel, they found four more refugees stowed away in the baggage compartment.

Total flying time to Kunming had been two

hours and fifty minutes; Kunming to Myitkyina two hours and twenty-five minutes; and from Myitkyina to Calcutta, at minimum fuel consumption, four hours and twenty minutes. It was real obvious the arrival was almost on fumes alone and Doolittle was once again, grateful to have made it!



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AUGUST 1991