

The CNAC Diary of Donald McBride:

21 November 1943 – 12 August 1945

Transcribed by Gregory Crouch

In case of accidental death please send this book to my brother Paul McBride, Orchard,
Nebraska, USA.

Captain Don McBride

Nov. 21, 1943. I left Miami Fla. to start work for CNAC. War Correspondent Erne Pyle
was on the plane.

ROUTE

MIAMI FLORIDA	TO	BARANCAN P.R.
BARANCEN	TO	GEORGETOWN B.G.
GEORGETOWN	TO	BELEM BRAZIL
BELEM	TO	NATAL BRAZIL
NATAL	TO	ASCENSION ISLAND
ASCENSION	TO	ACCRA GOLD COAST
ACCRA	TO	KANO
KANO	TO	MAIDUGURI
MAIDUGURI	TO	EL FASHER
EL FASHER	TO	KHARTOUM A-E
KHARTOUM	TO	GURA
GURA	TO	MASIRA ISLAND
MASIRA ISLAND	TO	ADEN ARABIA
ADEN ARABIA	TO	KARACHI IN
KARACHI	TO	AGRA IN
AGRA	TO	CALCUTTA

Arrived Nov. 30, 1943.

At first impression, Calcutta is quite modern but is very filthy & smells worse.

I saw Generalissimo & Madame Chiang K.S. in Karachi, Nov. 28, 1943.

Dec. 6, 1943. Sunday.

On my first Sunday in Calcutta, 35 Jap bombers dropped bombs on Calcutta approximately 500 casualties. Bombed ships (loaded with blockbusters) of Capt. Ray Cousins.

Dec. 10, 1943

Japs shot down 5 ATC ships (from Dinjan) in Fort Hertz Valley.

Dec. 12, 1943

Japs bombed Dinjan – destroyed CNAC operations & supply building – also customs building. I made my first trip to China today. Those mountains are as high as they are beautiful. The highest one I have seen is 24,900 ft. (MT. MINYA KONKI) [*sic*]

Cargo over – gasoline

Cargo return – Chinese soldiers

Captain was Al Wright

Dec. 18, 1943

Captains Al Wright (former A.V.G.) & Cook plus for Chinese boys of CNAC killed this morning when two ships hit mountains on letdowns (instrument) at Ipin (Suifu) China. I had made three trips with Wright this week. Japs bombed Kunming today.

Dec. 19, 1943.

Today at Dinjan I tasted what is probably the world's rarest vegetable – HAMI melon named from town of origin, a small town near Siberian border which lies 700 feet below sea level – only place it grows. Externally it looks like a small round watermelon, internally it looks like cantalope, tastes like a combination of watermelon and maraschino cherries. Capt. Higgs brought it to Capt. Hood. Japs bombed Yunannyi airport today. Howling jackals and Robertson's snoring kept me awake last night.

Dec. 20, 1943.

We were stranded in Sichang for several hours today because of weather at Ipin. We ate at a restaurant in Chinese mountain village. They killed a rooster & bled it in a bowl. They cooked and served it almost whole (head, feet, claws, & part of intestines!), however it wasn't as bad as it sounds. They also served several native salads (both so biting that we couldn't eat them.) We had to eat with chopsticks. the whole village gathered to watch our efforts (which weren't entirely futile). We also gave candy & gum to Chinese children, they had probably never tasted it before. It was my first Suifu trip. We saw wreckage of Wright's plane. Our cargo was T.N.T. & barrels of gasoline. On return trip, Allen & I ran into 2 Jap fighters at sunset. We escaped by diving into dark canyons. Saw Gen. Stilwell.

Dec. 21, 1943.

Air raids on Kunming & Yunannyi today.

Dec. 24, 1943.

Christmas Eve & I am home alone – I returned to Calcutta yesterday with bodies of Cook & Wright. I can hear Christmas carols, bands playing, & occasional firecrackers. It doesn't seem like Christmas. I hope it is a merry one in Orchard.

January 2, 1944.

The holiday season has been very dull. Have been reading and going to shows. Last night on way to show – Bob Erne, Dick ____, and myself had to sidestep an Indian that dropped dead nearly hitting Bob as he fell. Bodies are usually disposed of by burning. A hole is dug in the ground & logs placed on the bottom & a fire started – then the body is placed in & the fire is banked over it – as soon as the body is well done it is gathered up & poured into the Sacred River Hoogli (Ganges). Walking along the river it is not uncommon to see the bodies of babies & children floating downstream. In the Calcutta temple of Kali strange things may be seen. A live goat is brought in & a fellow takes a long knife & decapitates it. Then the women bathe themselves in the spurting blood. Then proceed to pray. There is a sacred tree at which women pray for children & it is rather pitiful to see the old women who visit the temple to pray. I cannot see how they retain their faith. I'm sure they get no results.

Jan. 10, 1944.

Robertson's ship (88) lost an engine at Suifu today. Left gear folded on landing, not badly damaged.

Jan. 17, 1944

Michelson's ship (75) caught fire & burned out left engine at Kunming today. Boyd & I hit lost of ice over the Hump on instruments. Scared me like hell.

Jan 18

Japs shot down three transports over Ft. Hertz valley today.

Jan 19

Japs shot down two transports at Ft. Hertz today. Alert at Dinjan.

Jan 20

Japs raided Ft. Hertz today. I tasted native wine for the first time. Yuna [?] wine is about the best I have ever tasted in my life. It is made in Yunnan Province, China. I am scheduled for two trips over the Hump tonight. I made three trips yesterday. I wish I had a clean shirt with me. I had my picture taken yesterday with Elmer and our pet Himalayan black bear.

Jan 24.

Last night over hump was one of worst in history – snow – ice – rain & high wind.

Jan 24 [Looks like the second entry for that day]

Today four ships went to Suifu – cargo TNT – ours was only ship to return to Dinjan. –

We were forced to go to 21,000 feet to get over the ice & we ran into 100 m.p.h.

headwind. Majors and Apetach lost right engine in both their ships. I don't know what

happened to Goutiere. We haul T.N.T. & copper to IPIN. The Chinese have a munitions factory there.

Feb. 16

George Loux & Eddy Quinn [?] cracked up at Dinjan today. Completely destroyed ship no. 57. Passenger ship wrecked wing tip when gear folded on landing at Kunming.

Feb. 21

One of my best friends, Capt. E. Mickelson is 24 hours overdue. He left Dinjan at 2:00 PM headed for Kmg. He had a Chinese co-pilot that spoke no English & no radio operator. Ship 75. Lost radio contact with him about one hour out. We looked for him today but found no wreckage except that of Fox's plane which cracked up about a year ago. It was completely covered with snow. Mickey was a former Flying Tiger. He recently married a beautiful Russian girl from Hong Kong. I hope for her sake that he bailed out before it was too late or perhaps made a good crash landing. From all calculations we have made, he must have been somewhere east of the Irrawaddy River valley & his crash would land him in the jungles of north Burma, which is Japanese territory. I hope we find his wreckage soon because the suspense is causing lots of unrest among the pilots. The weather is lousy – ice bad & wind strong. He last reported his altitude 6,000 ft. He probably hit a mountain or was shot down in a pass by A.A.

We live about fifteen miles from the new Ledo Road. It runs from northern India into the Hukawng valley which is a jungle region in northern Burma. There is fierce ground fighting going on in there between Americans & trained Chinese troops & Jap

jungle troops. We occasionally fly low over it to watch the fighting. The Ledo Road is supposed to join the old Burma Road eventually.

We use the road as a navigational checkpoint at night because it can be seen for many miles due to the numerous trucks moving over it.

We also fly over about 150 miles of the Burma road. It certainly looks rough. Often see Chinese soldiers marching over it to Burma.

Feb. 21 – 7:00 P.M.

We received a report from the Chinese fifth Army that “an unidentified aircraft made a forced landing near Pao-Chan China. It contained one Chinese & a foreigner.”

It must be Mickey’s ship & there is a possibility that they are alive – We hope!

The Army gives the “Air Medal” for 25 trips across the hump & the “Distinguished Flying Cross” for 50 trips. At that rate I have earned both because I have 60 trips.

We have been losing lots of our mail because the Army jettisons it when they get into trouble so I changed A.P.O. We had a slight earthquake here at Dinjan. It shook the building – knocked plaster off the walls & scared hell out of everyone in general.

Feb. 25

I have been listening to a dissertation upon prostitution. I heard such colorful names as “Singapore,” “Black Tangerine,” “Black Sarah,” etc. One of our boys (Jimmy Scoff) got himself very well plastered & shot the door off a cat house in Calcutta. He

appeared in court accompanied by ex-AVG Cliff Groh (both very drunk) & proceeded to tell the judge to go to hell. It cost him 1500 Rs. [*Rupees, perhaps?*]

Several days ago, a rumor came through the grapevine system that the Chinese 5th army had reported a ship containing one American & one Chinese down near Pao Chan. We assumed it to be Mickey, so one of our ships went after him. It was found that the Chinese knew nothing about the affair. Since Pao Chan is the last point between us & the Japs in that region, it is believed that the Japs have Mickey. He was over Jap territory when last contacted by radio. All of us hope he is dead rather than a captive because we have seen U.S. Army intelligence reports of Jap treatment to our boys. (His wife is going to have a baby. She took the disappearance rather hard.)

The Japs have offered \$10,000 gold for the life or capture of any CNAC pilot. They must not like us.

Each time one of our ships goes down, I place a cross on my map at the approximate scene of mishap. To date, I have 14 crosses on my map.

Three of the fourteen ships just disappeared without any clues or traces to the cause or location. The wreckages have never been found. This time of year the snow is piled hundreds of feet deep on the Himalayas. Perhaps when it melts off during the monsoons we will be able to find the ships lost.

When General Chennault heard of Mickey's mishap, he sent a squadron of fighters to look for him because he & Mickey were good friends & Mickey had been "one of his boys" in the Flying Tigers.

I have secured permission from the Army to accompany them on bombing & strafing missions. I will go along as a gunner. I want to be along when they go to the Jap airbase at Myitkyina Burma because that's where the zeros that chase us are based.

FEB 26.

The famous author Dr. Lin Yu-TAN came through Dinjan today on one of our ships.

FEB 27. The scenery here is probably the finest anywhere & undoubtedly the wildest & most isolated of any in the world. Very few people have ever seen it. There are places in the Himalayas where we fly over dense tropical jungles & a few minutes later are over regions of eternal ice & snow. There are gorgeous waterfalls from the melting snow & beautiful sea-green rivers winding through canyons with vertical sides two & three miles high. I have seen mountains split into two pieces by earthquakes and freaks of nature like the "Devils Slide" of Nevada have been duplicated on a scale that makes the original look like something in miniature. There are valleys in which the Creator could easily have lost the "Grand Canyon." I found a valley west of Sit Chiang China that is an excellent replica of "The Garden of the Gods" of Colorado. There are hundreds of crystal blue lakes hidden in watersheds slightly below the snow line. Sometimes there are native huts & villages on the shores of those lakes & I often think how peaceful their existence must be, surrounded as they are by an excellent climate, good hunting & fishing, & plenty of pure cold water. I almost envy them.

Several days ago, I saw a places such as I have just tried to describe. It was surrounded on all sides by extremely high snow capped peaks.

I guess I must have been thinking aloud, because I voiced the question, “I wonder how those people got there?” The check pilot with me (a pure southerner from Tennessee Sam (?) Shepard ex AVG) answered my question very promptly. I quote, “Them there people is wild bastards, they was borned heah.” [*sic*] Perhaps he was right. I didn’t question his reply because there are many truly wild people living in the mountains & jungles of Asia. There is one tribe in particular that I may have mentioned before – known as “Lolos.” They are an independent tribe and pay allegiance to no country. Their cities & villages are mostly in western China although a few lie in Tibet. Physically & mentally they are aborigines with long heads, short heavy bodies & long arms that reach to their knees. Several times each year they raid the city of Sichang which I occasionally visit on the way to Ipin. They take lots of loot & usually some women for slaves. Consequently, all the villages in that region are surrounded by high walls to repel the raiders.

The Buddhists of China build very colorful temples. Usually they are placed on the sides of a mountain and are of white stone built in the shape on an inverted cone with the typical Chinese convexly curved roof. They greatly resemble the lighthouses of the US coasts. I hope to visit one sometime if it is possible.

Feb. 27 –

Mary Schaffer (alias Graf (?) Murmur) left her job at Kunming today to return to her husband in Calcutta.

March 3.

Three of the boys caught a heavy load of “crabs” (mechanized dandruff) in Black Sarah’s house in Calcutta. Now it is spreading rapidly & it has become dangerous to get into the bunks at the hostels in Kunming and Dinjan.

We have been pestered by the Japs lately. They are based at Myitkinya Burma (on the Irrawaddy River) & they patrol the river valley & the Hukawng valley several times each day. We saw four zeros March first.

The weather has been clear, so we have been flying the northern routes through Tibet & northern Burma.

I hedgehopped across the Irrawaddy & Hukawng valleys yesterday at tree-top level. I have never seen such a tangled mess of jungle growth. I pity the Chinese soldiers who are fighting in there to clear a path for the Ledo Road. I saw some wild water buffalo bathing in the Tani River.

“Great Sharky” just challenged anybody in the house to a craps game at 200 rupees a throw. It is not uncommon to see several thousand rupees on the table at one time.

On the evening of March first I attended a USO show in Kunming China. The cast was: Paulette Goddard, William Gargan, Kenahan Wynne (Ed Wynne’s son, accordianist).

The show was good.

March 12.

Ship no. 86 was lost last night – Capt. Carroll & Chinese crew – They made radio contact long enough to tell they were lost & out of petrol. Visibility was almost zero. Radio bearings indicate that crashed somewhere near the 70° pass [?] where the Brahmaputra River runs out of the Mishna “Hills” in the Himalayas. However, searching planes failed to locate the wreckage due to the dense jungle. We plan to continue the search tomorrow.

“Shorty,” our Chinese house boy at Kunming was missing for several days so several Chinese crew members went in search of him. They found him in jail. He been picked up on the street & Shanghaied off to the army (a common proceeding to get soldiers in China). He refused to “soldier” so they put him in jail. We got him out. War correspondent Johnny Morris is having dinner with us this evening (at Dinjan). (He has been working in Chungking). He is on his way to the states.

March 14

Capt. Hall lost an engine over the middle of the Hump yesterday. He jettisoned a cargo of Chinese currency probably worth several million yuan. I checked out with Shilling this morning.

Capt. Carroll and Mickelson still missing.

March 15,

We lost another ship & crew. It was a new ship being ferried over by Tutweiler. It was overloaded & lost an engine on takeoff in Cuba. All aboard (3) were killed.

Ship number 86 that contained three of our boys was located by plane today. It crashed in the jungles 70 miles NW of Jorhat (?) Assam, India. That raises the number of crosses on my map to sixteen. Fate of the crew is still unknown.

Two of our ships flew Mdme Chiang – mdme & Mr. Kung (President of Bank of China) T.V. Soong & several other dignitaries from Kunming to Chungking today. Both mdmes became ill in flight.

March 20

Capt. Smith checked me out on the Suifu run yesterday. I don't know why they picked me because no one that hasn't been a captain for at least six months is supposed to go there. It is known as the "suicide run." I'm the only "junior" captain checked for it. – cargo Chinese currency. – We went hunting here in Assam today. We killed a large snake in the jungles near the Brahmaputra River.

Last night Fred Stinson (?) shot a jackal in the front lawn of the hostel at Dinjan.

3-20.

We are all on the ground for a few days due to a gasoline shortage. No relief in sight. One of our ships went from Dinjan to Calcutta today – it had one of the highest valued loads ever flown. \$9,000,000,000.00 in Chinese bonds. Headed for the U.S.A.

3-22

Last night we didn't get much sleep. Two leopards were seen about two hundred yards from the house at Dinjan, so seven of us went after them but it was very dark &

they escaped into the jungle through a large tea garden. When we returned to the hostel we were warned to sleep with our guns. A group of natives had revolted & gone on the warpath. They burned down a nearby house. Ghurka troops were called out to settle the trouble.

3-23

Natives reported that a tiger has been killing livestock in this area for the past month.

When a tiger kills it usually buries its kill under leaves & trash at the base of a tree. On the second night it returns to feed. Usually they pick a cow to eat & always start on the udder first.

When a leopard kills it feeds immediately & starts at the tail of the victim.

3-24

Last night we lost another ship. Capt. Scoff, copilot Stone & a Chinese radio operator were forced to bail out of No. 51 at 4:00 A.M. in the north China hills, after being lost for ten hours after which time the ship ran out of gasoline. The crew was reported safe near Chengtu, China. No. 51 was the best ship owned by CNAC.

This raises my total of map Xs to seventeen.

3-25

Three of us were walking through the Balijan (?) tea estate today and nearly stepped on two cobras. They were about five feet long & dark brown in color. They gave

no warning whatever & scurried away from us. We did not pursue them through the tea bushes.

3-26

I learned today that Copilot Stone (ship #51) suffered a fractured hip bone as a result of his parachute jump. His weight (210 pounds) was too great for a 24 foot emergency chute. His fall was only 600 feet & did not allow the chute time to slow his descent. He is in the hospital at Kunming.

Last night I heard one of the most amazing stories I have ever heard in my life.

One of our CNAC captains, a Chinese boy who was born in Canada & spoke no Chinese went on foot into occupied China to relieve the suffering of his mother & rescued his 13 year old sister. He is soon to send her back to Canada. His journey took five weeks & he traveled by foot, sedan chair, junk, & train. His relatives were in a city about 40 miles from Hong Kong on the Yangtze River.

Each day the Japs had patrolled the river but guerilla fighters always killed them & finally the patrols were abandoned. So as a measure of punishment, the Japs looted the city of all its food. Over 40% of the population starved to death.

When money was sent to relieve some of the suffering, it had to be sent through at the legal rate of exchange. The bankers always kept the money for six or eight months & used it before they turned it over to its rightful owners.

Al Mah's mother had at one time lived in Canada. She had been the no. 2 wife of a wealthy Chinese official. His first wife had been chosen by his parents & he didn't care too much for her so he married another (Al's mother). The two wives didn't get along

very well so after the death of Al's father, the no. 2 wife & family returned to China. Al later came over as a CNAC pilot.

When he learned the location of his family, he went to them. On his journey he encountered many Japs. They captured & killed his partner on the trip.

Al said that he saw one Jap soldier that looked so pitiful that he could not resist the urge to help him – so he gave the Jap 15 yuan.

Many of our pilots have an enviable military record behind them. One Chinese Captain (K.L Mah) was a former Chinese A.F. combat pilot. One day Capt Pottersmidt was kidding him about not shooting down any Japs.

So K.L. bet "Potty" a pound of coffee that he could get a "zero" the next time he saw them. Coffee, at that time, was absolutely unprocurable. Realizing the fact that he couldn't pay his bet if he lost, K.L. (?) decided to shoot down a Jap – He did – Three of them. His airplane was an antiquated old biplane with two 30 caliber machine guns for armament.

Today I flew down into central Burma to avoid bad weather in the north. While I was there I decided to have a look at the Japanese airbase at Teng-Chung near the Salween River. Conditions were perfect for it. Lots of cloud cover & mountains to sneak through. I crossed the northeast end of the field & took a good look. There weren't many ships at the field. Apparently I caught them with their pants down because they didn't get a shot at me. Nor did they get a shot at me when I went over their guns in the Mamien Pass (?).

The right tire on my ship blew off as I landed at Kunming today & I nearly wrecked fourteen tons of good airplane.

3-27

Al Mah told me the true story of the damned Limey's defense of Hong Kong.

When the Japs attacked, the British were afraid to fight so the Americans & Chinese tore down the British flag & replaced it with a Chinese flag – they held out as long as they could. The British surrendered.

3-28

Japs raided here (Dinjan) today. 25 bombers & more zeros than could be counted. They dropped leaflets on Ledo. US Army shot down 12 zeros & 16 bombers. We lost three.

3-29

Japs raided Kunming. One of the new pilots, Dobner by name, made one trip across the hump. The trip scared him so badly that he resigned & went home by boat.

4-1

The Japs have started an offensive designed to flank us and cut off our supply lines between upper Assam and Bengal. They have captured a section of railroad near Shillona (?) & have taken the British airbase at Imphal. Both places are between Dinjan & Calcutta. It is the first territory the Japs have taken in India & they are only one hundred & thirty miles from here. (Dinjan)

We received an official report from U.S. Army intelligence that Captain Mickelson & crew are prisoners of war somewhere in Burma. The report was based on a Japanese radio report so there is a possibility that they may still be free or dead. (Most likely dead.)

4-4

Four Jap prisoners escaped from the British near our base at Dinjan last night.

I talked to Col. Philip Cochran (Flip Cochran) yesterday. His outfit at Hailikandi India flew the planes and gliders into Burma for the invasion. They lost lots of men.

[Crouch: *Cochrane is the US air group commander who supported Wingate's Chindit operations.*]

5/6

The weather has been bad lately. During a 7 hr flight, usually about 4 to 5 hours, all on instruments. Ice has been bad and I was forced to turn back yesterday because I couldn't climb over 14,000 feet. The ship (no. 68) didn't have 2 stage superchargers & picked up enough prop & wing ice to keep it from climbing. Radio-bearings aren't too good now so I have to rely on dead reckoning to get me through.

5/8

Today I nearly broke an eardrum. I have a bad cold & it closed the Eustachian tube from ear to throat. When I let down from twenty thousand feet the pain was bad.

The mosquitoes are getting bad now & it is hot & wet all the time.

We run into lots of thunderstorms & some hail storms. They make flying very uncomfortable at times – one _____ degrees lately _____ getting less.

May 16,

We lost another ship today. No. 90. Leo Atwater took off from Dinjan headed toward Kunming – was cleared out over Roger Uncle to ___ Harve (?) on item course to Tar King (?) boundary. He reported position when 26 minutes out. That was his last message. He probably hit a mountain on the west range of the Patkai. The weather is all instruments.

May 18,

We lost another plane today. Jim Scoff landed No. 92 at Dinjan with one brake locked. He ground looped into General Oldes' B-25 & wrecked both ships. No one seriously injured.

May 24

We lost another plane. No. 96. Ex-AVG Robert "Moose" Moss & two navigators are in the hospital. Probable cause – power failure on takeoff. Plane completely wrecked.

May 27

It appears as though we have lost another ship. No. 82 is twelve hours overdue. Capt. Marchant left Calcutta at 4:00 P.M. yesterday headed for Dinjan. The weather is Pa

Han (?) [*sic*]. The Army has no record of any landings on their bases between Calcutta & Dinjan. He had four extra crew with him.

We are having trouble with our gasoline supply. Due to the monsoon rains, the fuel tanks condense too much water. We had two power failures yesterday due to the excess water. There is also a lot of carburetor ice at present. Two ships were forced to return to Dinjan last night because of severe external ice. Both clear & rime.

May 31, 1944

Today I celebrated my 23rd birthday by flying to China & return. The weather was good but I lost a mag on each engine & that isn't good, particularly when it happens at 15,000 feet over the middle of the hump.

June 1

Ship no. 82 is still missing. It has turned into the worst disaster CNAC has suffered. There were at least 14 persons on board & possibly more. Three were very good friends of mine. Hal Hughes, Dick Marchant, & Jack Hanbelt (?). Some wreckage has been found that may be 82 but so far has not been identified because the largest piece found was a wing tip. The US Army & RAF also lost ships in the storm that night.

The weather has been very bad at night lately due to the terrible thunderstorms over the Patkais & the hump. I will be glad when we stop night operations. Ships no. 75 & 90 have never been found.

JUNE 5.

We had another air raid at Dinjan today. Saw three Jap bombers and three zeros.

JUNE 8

Another ship and crew lost today. Tom Loomis & crew (total 4) were killed today when plane 85 blew apart in the air over Kunming, Yunnan, China at about 01:30 G.M.T. (8:00 AM India time) this morning, five of us were making instrument letdowns over "Roger Queen tower at Tommy King." We started our letdown at 16,000 feet. My ship was the first one to descend. At 10,000 feet (4,000' over the field) I broke out of the overcast & made contact with the ground. Several seconds later a burning plane fell past the nose of my plane. It was in several pieces & many small ashes & burned parts fell around us. I saw the plane hit the ground almost directly under me. There was a large burst of flame & smoke for several minutes during which time I circled over the wreckage and identified it as CNAC ship & notified the control tower.

The remainder of my trip was canceled so that I could help identify parts of the plane & bodies.

We dug for several hours before finding the crew. They were beneath the wreckage & about three feet underground. All were burned and mangled beyond personal identification but we managed to establish identification of two bodies by personal effects on them & by their position & safety belt buckles. Loomis was from California & the remainder of the crew were Chinese. I also found 15 tollas of gold that one of the crew was smuggling into China. It was later rumored that there were 80 tollas aboard. The cargo was Chinese money (over 100,000,000) yuan. [sic]

JUNE 14

Nearly lost no. 86 today. One of the oxygen tanks in the rear end of the fuselage exploded & blew a large hole in the ship. "Pop" Hinkel flew it in O.K.

I often wonder at the value of the cargoes we fly to & from China. It is beyond my wildest imagination because I often take cargoes of gold, tungsten, mercury & tine. Many times our planes are loaded with Chinese currency. The usual load of currency is about 4500 kilos or 10,000 lbs. Its value would be slightly over five million dollars U.S.

JUNE 24

Lost another ship last night. Pop Kessler – one of the oldest pilots in the company, left Kunming for Chungking at 8:30 P.M. Five hours later he reported by radio that he was lost & had only 20 minutes gasoline. About 20 min. later he called again and said they were on the way down & he didn't know what was below. They had no parachutes on board so they couldn't bail out. No more has been heard from them.

JUNE 27

Wreckage of no. 71 (Pop Kessler's ship) found. Almost totally destroyed. Pop was slightly injured – copilot badly injured & one passenger (US Navy) killed.

July 9

The Japs are getting active again. Have been seeing their patrols out near Myitkyina & Pao Chan. They have been getting lots of transports but so far have been missed all of our boys. Myitkyina is half in the hands of US & Chinese troops & the Japs

have the other half. As I flew over it several days ago I saw a few P-51Bs strafe the Jap half.

July 9.

I flew over the Jap air base at Teng Chung today but was protected by broken clouds so Japs couldn't see to shoot at me.

July 27

Today as I was entering the north end of the Hukawng I saw an explosion of a large mushroom of black smoke in the jungle near the Gedu River. As I letdown to investigate, a parachute appeared out of the clouds. We circled until it hit & got the exact location. I then tried to contact ATC by radio & couldn't so I reported the position when I landed at Sookerating (?) to unload Chinese troops. A rescue squad & plane was sent out to bring in the flier. I don't know whether he has been found or not. But he shouldn't have too much trouble because he is inside our lines & can float down the river to the Ledo Road.

Aug. 1.

We lost another plane & crew today. Chinese Capt K.L. Mah & crew plus two extra crew hit the face of a three thousand foot cliff on "Old Baldy" mountain near Kunming, China shortly before daylight this morning.

The wreckage of the plane (no. 73) is nearly completely destroyed. Part of it fell to the edge of the lake below, part of it is burned & the remainder (containing the five bodies) is hanging on the edge of the cliff.

Aug. 4.

The rescue & salvage crew finally reached the wreckage of 73 today. It was impossible to climb the cliff & they were finally forced to lower themselves down to it by ropes.

Aug 6.

The U.S. Army made a little mistake several days ago and bombed our own field at Pao Chan. They mistook it for the Jap base at Tengchung which is only a few miles west. Now all of us are restricted from flying over Pao Chan & the Burma Road bridges on the Salween & Mekong Rivers.

Sept. 1

Tengchung is now in Allied hands. Another hazard eliminated.

We lost another ship yesterday. No. 97. The second newest ship in the fleet. I wish the boys would wreck the old ships instead of the new ones. Capt. Coulson & crew were returning from Suifu. They stopped at Yunnanyi China for gasoline. About two & one half hours later they radioed in saying that both engines were causing trouble. He said that he thought there was water in the gasoline. His E.T.A. put him in the Hukawng Valley. The Army reported a burning plane sighted about 20 miles south of Chingbuyang

(?) about that time. I tried to search for wreckage today but the ceiling was too low. It was about 100 feet & that is too low to search unfamiliar territory. I'll try again tomorrow.

The Army had failed to locate the flier & wreckage that I reported down near the Gedu River in north Burma the last of July, so I had to go out with them in a rescue plane & find the wreckage. I located it O.K. & also found another about two miles from there. Also found a small basha (?) hut several miles down the river. There are not supposed to many natives except a few cliff dwellers in the area so it is reasonable to suppose it was built by the parachutist.

McBRIDE INSERTED A MAP OF BAIYEE PEOPLE

The Baiyee people are a branch of the Lolo (or basket people so called because they hang their dead in fruit trees in a basket – so all their peoples are multiplied) tribe & are the cleanest people in Asia. They are water worshippers. To indicate that you love a woman – just throw water on her three times – If she reciprocates – she will do the same – However, among the Lolo's or Moso's (?) marriages are not binding.

The marriage ceremony of the northern Lolo's consists of the woman spending three days with the man. Then she goes home for nine months. If she becomes pregnant she returns to live with the man at the time the child is born. If she doesn't become pregnant she doesn't return to the man – but very few fail to return because during the time she is at home – she is open prey for all the men of the tribe.

The flier that I saw bail out in the Hukawng was finally found. He was in very bad condition & would have been dead in another day or two. He would have been found much sooner but the rescue party misread the map I prepared for them & they went to the wrong place. He was lost for two months.

Oct. 8.

Jim Scoff is two days over due on a flight to Suifu. So we have lost another ship (#101). I hope he bailed out somewhere in the mountains because he is one of my best friends.

Oct. 13.

Friday the 13th & I guess it really is a bad day because I spent a long time searching for the wreckage of Jimmy's plane & found nothing. I guess he is gone for good.

Today I learned that Eric Shilling – one of our pilots & ex-AVG – was the fellow that invented the shark mouth designs used on the Flying Tiger's P-40s & many other fighters.

The war isn't going so good in China. The Japs are advancing rapidly & zeros have shot down seven transports on our course over the hump recently.

The monsoon weather is breaking up so I suppose the Japs will start pestering us again, regularly.

Some Army friends of mine are out on a big raid on Formosa now. It has been going on for several days.

Oct. 17.

Last night was a “pooja” event for the Assamese Hindus. I’m not certain whether they were honoring “Krishna” or “Vishnu” or “Kali.”

As I flew into the Brahmaputra river valley I saw more lights than I had ever seen before. The entire valley was glowing. There were lights all over the jungles. When I landed I saw the small oil pots burning everywhere. On every bamboo gate post on every bamboo picket fence & on each verandah & roof were dozens & often hundreds of the tiny pots of burning oil.

Nov 13.

Lost another plane several nights ago. #80. Don Codrea was pilot. Crashed two miles from Dinjan field.

I located the wreckage of an old CNAC plane crashed on a mountain peak near the Salween river about halfway between Pao-Chan & Tengchung. The “Chung” was visible on the ship but not the number. There is little doubt that it is Mickelson’s plane.

Holmes, Kusak & Hanks returned empty handed from their proposed trek into the wreckage of Jim Fox’s plane. They ran out of water & their coolies rebelled. They were forced to turn back after a week of tough going and they were within one half miles of the wreckage.

We have recently been given an additional job. That of dropping rice to surrounded Chinese soldiers & laborers.

An effort was made to build a road from the Irrawaddy river at Myitkyina Burma to a point on the Salween River in China. However, the Japs intervened & are closing in on the Chinese. When starvation entered their ranks, we were ordered by the Generalissimo to drop food & blankets to them.

Our first attempt was futile because our objective was captured by the Japs (unknown to use for several days) and all the rice we dropped went to them. Now we are dropping supplies at a point several miles from there. The Japs are within two miles of the spot on each side & when we pull up after a tree top level drop, we are forced to pull up over the Jap camps. So far we have had no casualties.

Nov 16.

Another plane wrecked. #98 – Captain Petach. Piled up on the runway at Yunnanyi when the Chinese radio operator (He had no co-pilot) pulled the landing gear up before the ship was airborne.

I dropped rice near Ft. Harrison Burma again today to a group of American & Chinese Burma road engineers. It was the toughest spot I have hit so far.

C.A.T.C. (our competitors) killed twenty people in Kunming when their Lockheed overshot & spun in.

Nov. 17.

The big battle for Bhamo Burma has started. We are hauling Chinese soldiers into the area.

The B-29s from Chentu (?) are bombing Formosa & Japan regularly. Each one carries 20 – 1000 lb. bombs.

Nov. 19.

Several days ago the CNAC radio transmitter at Dinjan burned out a bunch of fuses. Upon investigation a snake (well fried) had crawled across the wires inside the transmitter box.

Nov. 24.

Capt. Sherwin (Fuzzy) Ball killed a 450 lb. tiger several nights ago near our pilot hostel at Dinjan.

Japs raided Pao Chen again yesterday & Jap ground troops are within 120 miles of Kunming & advancing rapidly.

The battle of Bhamo is nearly over. North Burma is rapidly being rid of Japs.

I spent a day touring air bases in Burma last week. Was in Myitkyina – Waragup & Talang – Ga (Tinkoxa Ka) (?)

Have been dropping rice & supplies almost every day.

Nov. 25.

Another air raid at Kunming last night. 3-ball alert. The P-61 were busy.

Nov. 26.

Last night was a rough one for everyone. We lost one ship & the Army lost twelve. No. 106 – McClellan as pilot is missing.

Nov. 27.

Army reports wreckage at Lat. N 26° 30" & Long E 100° 30". That places it south of Likiang China near Lake Cheng Hi. It is quite possible that the crew bailed out during their return trip from Suifu.

Dec. 16.

The crew from plane 106 were found and all O.K. They bailed out between Kunming & Kweilin only a few miles from Jap territory. We lost another plane last week. No. 56. (DEC 12-1944) George Anderson, a new captain, was flying. The wreckage was found on the Patkai range in Naga country. All three were burned & mangled. Bodies were buried beside the wreckage in the jungle. Natives described the plane falling & it apparently spun in (Both props feathered).

The Japs are busy again. They attacked three C-47s several days ago near Bhamo & shot down one & damaged the other two.

Plane 104 is stuck in Sichang with a damaged tail section.

We are getting C-46s next month. Some of the pilots have already started their transitions.

Chungking has been bombed again & we were alerted at Yunnanyi (?) yesterday.

Christmas night & I am drunk.

Last night they (the Japs) blew the hell out of Kuming & our plane No. 03 has two hundred holes in it (?). I spent Xmas in Tengchang --- THE REST OF THIS ENTRY IS ILLEGIBLE.

Con't 12-28

We have been having air raids every nite during the past week. Bombs have hit the runway twice.

Christmas was very unusual. Dec 24th I flew a load of gasoline & supplies to the Burma Road engineers in Tengchung China. On the way in both engines developed trouble & I was forced to stay until repairs were flown in the next day.

Tengchung was recently captured from the Japs & there are 7000 Jap bodies lying around besides a larger number of Chinese dead. The fighting must have been severe because every tree is blown to pieces & is full of bullet holes. There isn't a single building standing inside the miles square walls. The Japs had been there for years & many had homes established. As soon as the Japs saw they were defeated they killed many of their wives. They also put forty prostitutes in a cave & machine gunned them, then threw two hand grenades in to finish the job. The bodies are still there.

The city is full of caves, trenches & fox holes. Most of them full of dead bodies. In two places I saw hundreds of dead bodies piled up. One pile had been burned & the others were left to rot away. The place certainly smells. I have lots of Jap money but most of it is damaged by fire because part of the Japs were killed by flame throwers. Gas was also used in the battle – gas masks are lying everywhere. Every day Chinese are brought

to the hospital for treatment from explosions. There are still many unexploded “boobie traps” & grenades, rockets, bombs, mortar shells are lying everywhere.

Christmas Eve there was a brief church service by a missionary flown in during the afternoon in an L-5. There were about ten or fifteen of us there & three of us took communion.

The boys don't get any liquor rations there so they drained two gallons of alcohol from the propeller de-icer tank on my ship.

The bombings at Kunming have been very unusual. The Japs come into the traffic pattern, call the tower, make a regular approach then blow up the runway. Christmas Eve the Japs called the control tower in perfect English & told the tower he had a Xmas present for him then let the bombs go. One of our CNAC ships was in front of him & another behind him & at night the Americans thought they were all our ships. The Jap dropped bombs & got away unharmed. Joe Kurzman (?) was flying the ship behind the Jap & saw the bombs hit.

Jan 23

The moon is getting bright again & the Japs are starting nightly raids as usual.

This has been one of the most trying months in CNAC history. We have lost five planes & five complete crews. One of the pilots (Russel Coldren) has been my roommate in Calcutta for a year.

We lost nos.:

74 – William “Hardhead” Warren

77 – Russ Coldren

02 – Sherwin (“Fuzzy”) Ball

70 – Al Thorwaldren

93 – George Hwang

The planes were lost during the week Jan 8 to Jan 16.

So far we have found the wreckage of three. No. 74 & 77 still missing.

02 was found in a Chinese graveyard on the side of Tali Mountain. 70 lies in the jungle (totally burned) at Rice target “E” on the new section of the Ledo-Burma road near Sadon (Ft. Harrison, Burma). 93 was a passenger plane on a Charter trip. Luckily it had a load of high priority silk rather than passengers. It lies on a mountain top at the north end of a small lake 90° from Kunming.

Several days ago I took Nicol Smith, author of the book “Burma Road” on a special trip. It was a scenic tour from Kunming to Dinjan VIA five countries. China, Burma, Tibet, Nepal, India. He has flown the hump eleven times but he said this had been the first time he had ever had a complete look at it or enjoyed the trip. The reason he had a good look was the fact that I was searching for 74 & 77.

Smith said that I am to be one of the characters in his new book to be published as soon as the war is over. He is a Major on Gen. Chennault’s staff & can’t write during wartime.

Jan 24.

Yesterday I had one passenger from Kmg. to Djn. Major Bledsoe. He is a pilot with the 14th A.F. & has been with Chennault since 1938.

Feb. 3.

The new Ledo-Burma road is officially opened. The opening ceremony took place on the road near Mengshih (?). Several of the more important brass hats (including General Sultan) were present. The Japs were also there to help things along. During the ceremony they opened fire from the mountainside with cannons & mortars so the General couldn't finish his speech until several days later when the Japs had been driven out. The Japs bombed Mengshih Jan 30, but didn't do much damage. One zero was shot down.

Feb. 7.

Today I had one of the toughest assignments I have ever had. I had to deliver a 1500 pound generator & six barrels of gasoline to Likiang. That is an airport that lies 9000 feet up a 19000 foot mountain. The weather is consistently worse there than any place in China.

While I was there I met two Tibetans walking out of the hills. I took their pictures & gave them some candy. They had never seen candy before. They were going to the city of Likiang to sell some rugs they had made. Their home was near the mysterious city of Chungtien – known as Shangri-La to us because of its situation in a beautiful valley north of Likiang.

There is a Buddhist temple in the valley with a gold roof on it. The statues of Buddha are about thirty feet high & two thousand years old. Almost five thousand monks live in the white-walled temple.

Feb. 26,

Lost another ship last week (105). Homer Anderson was forced to bail out in the Irrawaddy River Valley when his plane caught fire. All three crew O.K. I had one of the worst scares of my life several nites ago when the left engine on plane 87 caught fire about 30 minutes after I took off from Kunming. It was about 11:00 P.M. when I saw the fire. I feathered the prop & flew 70 miles on one engine. The fire extinguisher didn't work but fortunately the fire went out by itself.

May 29.

We have lost several planes since my last entry in this record. On March __, plane 96 crashed at Kunming when the gear collapsed on landing. Mulloy & crew not seriously injured but plane demolished. On April 9th, Hal Smith flying plane 88 left Kunming for Sichang to pick up a load that Stuelke left when his plane had engine trouble enroute from Suifu. Hal never reached there. The wreckage has never been positively identified, but we think it is about eleven thousand feet up on the side of a mountain halfway between Kunming & Sichang.

Planes 54 & 55 have both been damaged in Calcutta in the instructor program.

We are getting lots of new Curtiss C-46 Commandos. So far we have ten & there are ten more on the way over. They are much larger than our Douglas'. They have two 2000 HP engines.

August

Plane 87 crashed on the runway at Dinjan. It can probably be repaired. (June __
(?)) Pilot H.E. Anderson. We lost our first C-46 last week. No. 114 crashed in a rice

paddy shortly after takeoff at Dinjan. Pilot & crew not seriously injured (Sullivan – Capt.)

It looks as though the war with Japan is nearly finished. Russia's entry into the fracas & use of the atomic bomb has finally persuaded them of the futility of further resistance.

The U.S. & Chinese governments are trying to stabilize Chinese currency by sending tons of gold bullion to the treasury of China. Several weeks ago CNAC transported nearly 30 tons of it across the hump. It amounted to US \$25,800,000.00

Ten of us flew C-47s to Calcutta to pick it up then flew it to Dinjan where it was transferred to C-46s for the hump ride. I flew one of the planes on each section of the trip. We delivered the gold (about \$2,500,000 per plane) to Peishiyi (?) airport which is about 30 miles WNW of Chungking.

Aug. 12,

During the past few days there has been a large revolt in Yunnan Province in China. Governor Lung's forces have rebelled against the Army of the Central Government. Lung's army is large & well equipped. The uprising is in the Kunming area consequently CNAC planes proceed with extreme caution because we work for the Central Government, directly under the control of Gen. Chiang Kai-Shek & we are not popular with Lung's army. Consequently we would promptly be shot if within range of their private little war.

Lung has on several occasions attempted to hire several of us to fly for him. He offered \$2000.00 US per month but to accept it would mean the loss of our US citizenship.

The low ceilings of the monsoon season nearly cost CNAC a new C-46 & the life of one CNAC pilot (namely me!) last week. I left Dinjan early in the morning. It was raining & foggy & was necessary to make an instrument takeoff. About 45 minutes out my ship developed engine trouble & it became necessary to make a speedy return to an airbase. As luck would have it, every base in the Assam & Hukawng valleys was closed. I made an instrument letdown but failed to break out of the overcast at the prescribed minimum altitude so had to pull up again & make a second attempt. The control tower operator finally saw me but due to heavy rain splattering on the windshield I couldn't see out. The control tower operator tried "talking me down" i.e. giving verbal directions over the radio but he lost sight of my plane just at the crucial moment & I had to make another pull up. It really scared me because a loaded C-46 (48,000 lbs.) just doesn't pull up when the wheels & flaps are extended so I nearly made a new runway through a bunch of trees but finally made it. That left only one thing to do – try a radio D.F. landing with nothing but a localizer to work from (we have no glide path). By that time I was really "sweating it out" because I have seen a number of examples of a C-46 mowing down jungle trees like a lawnmower chopping blades of grass & I could see myself being picked up in a basket. But as luck & the good lord was with me I managed to be accidentally (?) lined up with the runway marker beacon & when the wheels hit the deck I was lined up almost perfectly with the runway. It is impossible to describe the relief one feels to be able to stagger out of the plane after about 30 minutes of that type of procedure.

Home leaves have been canceled again but I'm quite certain I shall be able to get home the latter part of September providing nothing else interferes.

(?) BACK PAGE: Mrs. C.H. Sass, West Point, Nebraska (In courthouse) Bill Wendt's...