

WE FLEW Without GUNS

This is a true story of the men who fly the "hump"—carry- ing passengers and cargo over the high Himalayas between India and China. Pilots call it the toughest airline route in the world.

THE MOST DANGEROUS CARGO

IX
TONY MERCEDE, Gingies and Fox and I were sitting in the C. N. A. C. pilots' lounge later the same day when the air-raid signal sounded. "Potty" Pottschmidt was at his desk in the adjoining office, but he kept right on working for a couple of minutes. Then he got up and came out into the lounge, lighting a cigarette.

"They must have heard Chennault's away," he remarked. I had heard previously that General Chennault had left Kunming on some important military mission and was not expected back for a week or so, but I didn't attach any significance to Potty's remark until later when I learned that the General had an almost foolproof system figured out for anticipating and gauging the strength of Jap attacks on the Kunming area long before the attacks took place. It involved an elaborate chart showing a score or so of possible Jap plots or strategies. The chart was not really foolproof, of course, but coupled with Chennault's superb ability as a strategist and a tactician, it worked like a charm for him.

But this day he was away. Taking his place at the 14th Air Force headquarters was a brigadier general newly arrived from the States.

Chennault's alarm system had probably been explained to the new general before he was left even in momentary charge, but in the excitement of having to apply his sketchy knowledge he devel-

oped a bad case of jitters, and the planes were almost over the field before he gave any orders. Then it wasn't because he had figured out the chart or knew the least thing about the direction and strength of the attack; he simply remembered that nearly the entire gasoline supply for the 14th Air Force was concentrated there at Kunming airbase.

The general raced out onto the field. We watched him in amazement from the C. N. A. C. lounge. The mechanics had pushed our planes as far out of harm's way as possible; there was nothing else we could do. The Army handled the anti-aircraft batteries, and their planes were already camouflaged or hidden under trees surrounding the field. The general probably had something in mind when he started running, but he forgot it halfway across the field as the Jap bombers came in over the rim of the hills to the north.

The bombs rained down. The gasoline dump blew up with a roar and a sheet of flame; four bombs hit the landing strip, and half a dozen planes were wrecked or damaged. When the smoke and dust settled down we saw the general staggering back from the center of the field with his hands clutched in agony to the seat of his pants. A first-aid gang rushed out to meet him, and he was the first man I ever saw brought in on a stretcher face down. It took the surgeon at the base hospital half an hour to pick the shrapnel out of his fanny.

FOR the next two weeks the C. N. A. C. flew nothing into Kunming but aviation gasoline, and there's nothing in the world more dangerous than that to transport by air across the Himmala-yan Hump. A C-47 can take a lot of machine-gunning from a Jap Zero when it's loaded with tin ingots or tungsten or mercury

and antimony bars, or even passengers, but when it's loaded with high-octane gasoline one bullet in almost any part of the fuselage can set the whole ship aflame.

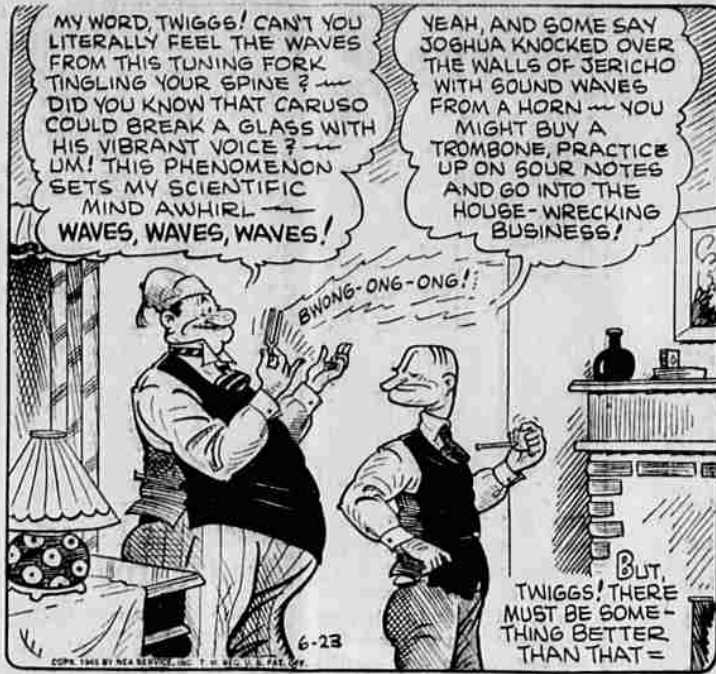
Not only are the Zeros a threat at a time like that; the weather itself can be your undoing. On two of my trips across that week I had to climb so high to find ice-free air that the fuel drums I was carrying burst at the seams from the lowered air pressure. On one of those trips—the first one—I was rather enjoying the weird phenomenon of St. Elmo's Fire as the blue flame swept back and forth through the rain on the leading edges of my wings and spread like a thin sheet over the windshield. Two or three times I had put a finger within an inch or so of the air-speed indicator and watched the arc of blue flame bridge the gap between my finger and the instrument. Then, with a report like a smothered bomb, I heard the first drum burst in the rear of the plane.

I couldn't see the tail surfaces of the plane, but I knew that St. Elmo would be dancing his blue fantasy on their leading edge, too. And I wondered how long it would take for the gasoline to seep through some tiny crevice in the body of the plane and stretch an incendiary ribbon back along the fuselage to that flame.

St. Elmo's Fire wasn't the only hazard; I knew we would be out of the climatic condition that caused it within a matter of minutes. But the occasional sparks and constant searing blast from the exhaust pipes on either motor were hazards that would ride with us all the way to Kunming. At times like that it wouldn't matter how good a pilot you were or how carefully you handled your plane. You still couldn't do anything to keep a tiny spark from touching a tiny, leaking drop of gasoline; and that's all it would take to blow you to Kingdom Come. You were absolutely helpless. All I could ever do at such times was pray. I probably said on an average three Acts of Contrition every time I flew across the Hump.

(To Be Continued)

Our Boarding House With Major Hoople



Out Our Way J. R. Williams



Boots and Her Buddies



By Edgar Martin



Morning Glories



5002

By MRS. ANNE CABOT
For those who like to do embroidery in outline and satin stitches this design is a perfect one. The delicately shaded flowers in lavenders and purples and the leaves in soft greens will be easy and pleasant to work and the result is certainly going to be highly gratifying!

To obtain the two transfers for the morning glory designs (pattern No. 5002) color chart for working, send 15 cents in coin, plus 1 cent postage, your name, address and the pattern number to Anne Cabot, La Grande Evening Observer, 709 Mission St., San Francisco, Calif.

City News In Brief

Cars driven by A. J. Brazille, Cove, and James E. Robertson, route 1, La Grande, figured in a minor traffic accident Wednesday evening on Highway 82 one mile north of La Grande. Damage to the two vehicles was not listed in the official report.

Dr. W. M. Peare will leave tonight for Portland where he will attend the funeral services of Mrs. Peare's mother, Mrs. T. J. O'Day, at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning at a Catholic church in that city.

Woolf Will Ride At Santa Anita

ARCADIA, Cal., June 22 (UP)—Jockey George Woolf today was still wondering what horse he'll ride in tomorrow's \$50,000 derby at Santa Anita, while entries for the 1 1/2 mile race narrowed to a field of nine horses.

GOLF CHAMP MEET

DETROIT, June 22 (UP)—Byron Nelson, king of the fairways, faced another challenge to his leadership in the golf world today in a 72-hole medal match against national open champion Craig Wood, Harold Guggenbuhl and Sam Byrd.

The U. S. post office department handles approximately 500,000,000 pounds of newspapers and magazine annually.

House Frock



8876 1-6 yrs.

By SUE BURNETT
A complete summer wardrobe for your lively young daughter. She'll love dressing herself in these gay playtime clothes. They're easy for mother to make and take care of, too!

Pattern No. 8876 is designed for sizes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 years. Size 2, dress, requires 1 1/2 yards of 35 or 39-inch material, plus 2 yards ric-rac for trimming; slacks, 1 1/2 yards with 2 yards ric-rac; sun-suit, 1 yard; 4 yards ric-rac to trim.

For this pattern, send 20 cents, in coin, your name, address, size desired and the pattern number to Sue Burnett, La Grande Evening Observer, 709 Mission St., San Francisco, Calif.

INSTINCTIVE FLIGHT

Male silkworms will fly in a direct line to meet a mate that has just emerged from a cocoon, even though she is several blocks away, downwind, and inside a building that has no open windows.

Hold Everything



"I washed the horsehair sofa and I can't do a thing with it!"

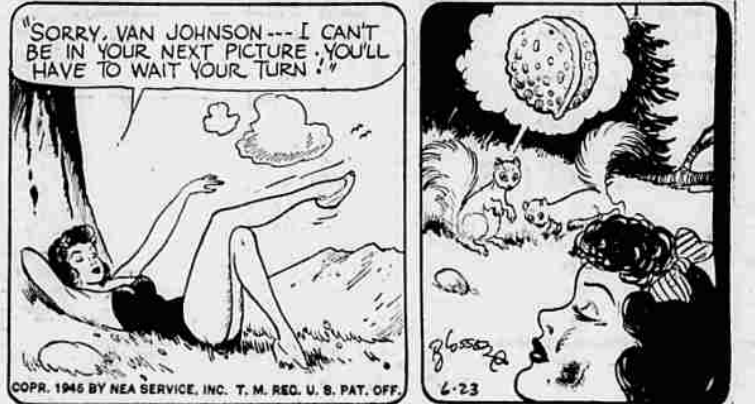
Freckles and His Friends



Red Ryder



Merrill Blosser



Fred Harman



U. S. Naval Air Unit

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Depleted insignie of Squadron | 58 Rocky pin-nacle |
| 2 U. S. naval aviation | 59 Member of air crew |
| 3 Aged | 1 Carry (coll.) |
| 4 Behold! | 2 Palm leaf |
| 5 Division of geological time | 3 Road (ab.) |
| 6 Girl's name | 4 Otherwise |
| 7 Slave | 5 Completed |
| 8 Trim | 6 Symbol for tellurium |
| 9 Anger | 7 Was victorious |
| 10 Cong part | 8 Heavy blow |
| 11 River (Sp.) | 12 Be carried |
| 12 Ambary | 13 Asiatic country |
| 13 Hebrew letter | 14 Cloth measure |
| 14 Near (ab.) | 15 English verb |
| 15 Debit note (ab.) | 16 Helps |
| 16 Peer | 18 Musical quality |
| 17 Taut | 19 Vendors |
| 18 Sesame | 20 Gives as an maliceable |
| 19 Blackbird of cuckoo family | 21 Possession |
| 20 Cube meter | 22 Couples |
| 21 Runs disconnectedly | 23 Tears asunder |
| 22 Ellis English (ab.) | 24 Indian |
| 23 Senior (ab.) | 25 Nothing |
| 24 Lone Scout (ab.) | 26 Individual person |
| 25 Music note | 27 Tissue (anat.) |
| 26 Doctor of Laws (ab.) | 28 Goddess of |
| 27 Games fixedly | 29 Palm lily |
| 28 Pastry | |
| 29 Card game | |
| 30 Dill | |
| 31 Job | |
| 32 Malayan coin | |
| 33 Symbol for | |

Answer to Previous Puzzle



Wash Tubbs



By Leslie Turner



Alley Oop



By V. T. Hamlin

