

GOD IS MY CO-PILOT

By COL. ROBERT L. SCOTT
WNU Features.

(Continued from last week.)

CHAPTER XXVIII

It looked as if we'd get the chance very soon, too, for the field in western Yunnan had been selected by the newly formed Air Transport Command, which was superseding the Ferry Command, as the Eastern terminus of the route to China.

For the purpose of security in future operations, I will not name our base in western Yunnan. But there was a big turquoise-blue lake less than ten miles away from the General and I called Yehching. To us that meant "good hunting," for ducks and geese abounded. The landmark for our base was just one of the many lakes in Yunnan.

Next morning I went out on Lake Yehching, and from the bow of a native sampan I soon shot eighteen of the biggest geese I had ever seen. Even if we were remote from the loved ones at home, we'd have meat for Christmas dinner that was filled with the vitamins we needed.

I had hurried back to the field before taking off for Kunming with my report on the efficiency of the warning net, and was taking pictures of some little, mongol-appearing Miaos who were holding my geese aloft—when we had an air raid alert. There was heavy engine-noise from the reporting stations over towards Burma. We tossed the eighteen geese into the baggage compartment, winding their necks around among the conduits of the radio so that the cargo wouldn't shift, and I took off for Kunming. Then as I heard more reports from the Southwest, I turned South, joined the other fighters on patrol, and looked for the enemy. In about forty-five minutes we spread out to cover more territory, and I caught sight of two enemy planes—Zeros I thought, at first sight. I called to the others and attacked. Even as I approached the Japs I knew they were too slow and too large for Zeros. Then I saw that they were single-engine reconnaissance-bombers. I caught the rear one and gave it a short burst, keeping my eye on the other. The first one went down with most of one wing gone. The next I chased down every valley on the Mekong, getting in several good shots, but I never did see him go down or crash. From the evidence of the thin trail of smoke that I last saw coming from it as I dove and circled to look around again, I claimed it as a "probable."

The first one I had confirmed as a "certain." The others in our patrol engaged four other planes and probably shot down two of them. The General had been correct as usual—the Japs were keeping the end of the ferry route under close surveillance.

When I told the General about my victory, which had been my twelfth confirmed enemy ship, and told him about the geese in the baggage compartment, he said he didn't know whether to congratulate me for the meat or for the Japs—at that time of the year Christmas dinner was more important. As for myself, I told him, I hadn't worried so much about the Japs' shooting me down as I had about their getting a lucky burst through my fuselage and ruining all that good meat with their explosive bullets. Besides, in the maneuvers of combat, if the necks of all those geese had jammed the controls and made me spin in, the Chinese who would have talked a long time about the pilot whom they'd found dead with feathers all over him.

Christmas night, while we were enjoying the geese, George Hazlett came in with his Squadron to report that the Japs had bombed our base near Lake Yehching with eighteen ships on that afternoon of Christmas Day, and the first warning the field had was the sight of the enemy bombers in the clear blue Yunnan sky. Luckily the bombing had missed the field and no ships were damaged, but many Chinese in the village had been killed. Definitely the warning net in western Yunnan made the operation of the Transport Command at Yehching hazardous. I could tell by the General's face that he had some plans he would tell me about in private.

The General had been sick with a cold over Christmas and had a fever that night, when he told me what he had to do at Yehching. At dawn the next morning—December 26th in China, but actually Christmas Day in America—I took off with full instructions. When I left, the Doctor told me General Chennault was running a temperature of 103. All of us were worried about him, and knew that the defeats on Christmas Day hadn't helped his spirits.

As I flew west towards Yehching, 145 miles away, in the half-light I saw the coolies carrying drums of gasoline on wheelbarrows up the Burma Road. Some of these I knew would go on through Kunming to Chungking, 290 miles away by air.

Trundling these crude wooden-wheeled vehicles of the ages gone-by, these patient workers would require seventy days of constant effort, at their dogged trot, to reach the capital at Chungking. The two-wheeled Peking carts with three drums would take a shorter time—44 days. I saw coolie boys plowing in the rice paddies halfway up the sides of the mountains—paddies built like steps from the top of the hill to the valley, so that the irrigation water could be used over and over. I laughed as I saw the ancient means of cultivation—the boy, standing with his feet on the wooden scraper, was using his own weight to make it scratch the mud, but was holding on

to the water buffalo, with his hand gripping the tail of the ponderous animal.

Again I found myself pitying these earthbound creatures. I said to myself: "When you reach the end of that paddy, I'll be many miles from here." I suppose I get arrogant like that because I'm sitting up there with six good American fifty-caliber guns in front of me charged and ready, and off on a mission bound to be exciting. It didn't matter now that some other day I might be letting down somewhere around there in bad weather, with night coming on or with my fuel running low; I might see that same coolie boy and might reflect how lucky he was to know his whereabouts and not be on the point of cracking up a good airplane that couldn't be replaced. For a moment might come when I would give anything just to be able to ask in sign language: "Where is the Burma Road?" or "Is Yunnanfu this way?"

Landing at the threatened air-drome, I put the General's plan into immediate effect.

I commanded the necessary transportation on Yehching field and placed it ready for the instant movement of pilots to their dispersed fighters, which were scattered in all parts of the air-drome. The P-40's were pointed in the direction of a run for immediate take-off. All this was to save even the barest minimum of lost time, for when the alert came we would have to move fast and furious. Every one of the thirty pilots was kept on alert, and constant patrols were begun at dawn. We sent two ships above the field at seven o'clock and doubled the number at nine. At eleven o'clock we doubled again and continually had eight high in the sky.

The Jap had attacked the day before at 2:35 in the afternoon, or 14:35. The General had told me many times of the propensity of the Japanese for the exact duplication of former military operations. We were going to get gradually more vigilant and stronger above the field for the expected blow. At the same time we were going as far as was commensurate with safety to conserve the invaluable aviation gasoline. Most of the fighters kept right over the field or slightly away in the direction of the expected attack from Burmese bases. Four fighters began to patrol from Yehching to the Mekong, on course to Lashio and seventy miles from where we were waiting.

At two o'clock I sent all planes into the sky except mine. I sat in that on the ground, listening for Harry Pike's expected report from his patrol to the Mekong River. I was within shouting distance of the ground radio operator, who would tell me of any developments on the weak-functioning warning net. The Jap would come today, I knew, between two and four—that's 14:00 to 16:00 hours.

At 14:34 I saw the radio operator wildly running for my ship. He yelled, "Report from W-7 says heavy engine noise coming this way—the report is right recent." I was already energizing my starter when Harry Pike called excitedly: "Here they come—fighters and bombers—I'm just East of the river." I knew then that the Japs were close to fifty miles away; we had all we could do to get set and be waiting for them.

When Pike called in, as I got the engine started, I heard that the Japs were at seventeen thousand, and I called to him to take the fighters, for I hoped by that move to make the bombers come in unescorted. From Yehching at its level of 6000 feet I was climbing with full gun, climbing for all the altitude I could grab. I watched the temperature but drew all the boost I could without detonating too badly. At exactly three o'clock I reached twenty thousand feet and picked up most of my Group, which today was made up of Hazlett's Squadron.

Just six minutes from the time I had given the ship the gun, I saw flashes reflected by Japanese windshields in the sun. They weren't far away, but I grinned—for they were below us. I heard from the chatter on our frequency that there was a fight going on towards were Pike had seen the formation cross the river. As the enemy ships materialized on the horizon, I knew that Pike had done his job well, for there was only one fighter with the bombers as escort—one fighter with nine heavy bombers. I think I knew then that we were going to make it tough for the Japs.

I called for the attack, in order to get the enemy before he could bomb the field. As I dove for the attack that I had always longed for, I saw one P-40 take the lone Zero head-on and shoot it down, and I knew from the way the shark-nosed ship pulled up in his channel of glory that Dallas Clinger had become an ace with his fifth enemy ship.

We made the attack from three directions simultaneously. Lieutenant Couch led his ships on a stern attack that I did not see, for I was diving on the flank where the low sun was. I was going in for a full-deflection shot from out of that sun, for I had planned this method of how I wanted to attack a bomber formation long ago. On my wings were six fighters in two ship elements. In Couch's flight were four fighters, and Hazlett had four coming from above the Japs on the other flank.

I had to dive from 20,000 feet to 17,000 feet to get on the level with the enemy formation, and when I got there I had plenty of excess speed over the Japs. I passed them, but could see their tracers curving short of my flight. When I had over-run them a thousand yards, I turned right into the bombers and we went after the three Vee's of Mitsubishi bombers. By being on the same level with them I'm sure we caused part of the enemy formation to blanket out some of their own ships from firing at us. I opened fire from six hundred yards and led the enemy leader by at least a hundred yards; it must have been just right, for the tracers seemed to go into the top of the wing. I just held the trigger down and kept going into the sides of the Japs—they blossomed out of the sky at me, growing larger and larger, "mushrooming" in my windshield. As the bombers passed by, my bullets were raking them with full-deflection shots, and as fast as my formation turned the other five men were doing the same. I saw the lead bomber climb a little, then settle back towards the formation with one wing down.

As I saw the second Jap in front of me—the left wing man of the leader—I realized I'd have to dive under the enemy very soon or I'd run into them. Things hit my ship now, and with noise like a wing coming off, the side glass of my windshield was shot out. I was three hundred to two hundred yards from the second bomber when I got my long burst into it. There was a flash ahead, and I dove as fast as I could above the nose down. As I went under the smoke and orange flame, I thought that the Jap I was shooting at had caught fire, but as I pulled around, back to the direction the formation had been going, and climbed, I saw what had happened.

There was only smoke above, and the formation had broken, for I knew the bomber had exploded—no the bombs had been detonated by the fifty-caliber fire. Behind, over the trail the Japs had come were four plumes of smoke where their bombers were going down. Below there were bomb bursts all over the paddy fields where bombs had been jet-tisoned in the unanticipated interception. I pulled up behind one of the lone bombers that I could see and began to shoot at it methodically from long range. Over on the left were three more, and I saw P-40's making passes at them. Over the radio I could hear happy American English, with unauthorized swear words aimed at the Jap that the individual pilot was shooting at, and by the tone of the pilots I knew that we were winning this battle and that the General was also going to be very happy.

From 800 yards I'd squeeze out a short burst at one engine, then skid over and aim carefully at the other engine and throw out another short burst. The Jap ship was diving with all the speed he could get, but the P-40 kept moving up. I think all their ammunition was gone, for I saw no tracers. In my second burst on the right engine I saw some gray smoke—thin, like gasoline over-crowling a tank and blowing back into the slipstream. The next time I came over behind that engine from closer range I saw two red dots near the engine, two dots that became fire. The flame ran to the engine and to the fuselage, but by that time I was over shooting at the other engine again. I last saw the bomber diving, with flames that were orange against the green of the mountains below.

There were no more bombers to be seen, but I saw seven P-40's. Clinger came over and got on my wing; as I recognized his ship I slid my hatch-cover back and waved at him. Even before we landed I thought that we had gotten all the field, with me trying to dodge the cold air that was knifing through the hole in my windshield and bringing a particle of glass against my face every now and then. I realized why we still had to wear goggles in fighter ships in combat. Below on the Yunnan hills, I saw eight forest-fires that could have been started only by burning airplane wrecks, for they had not been there when I took off.

I kept some of the planes up for top cover while we landed those that were shot up or low on fuel. Later, when I had the combat reports made out before the pilots could talk the battle over between them, the "certains" out of the nineteen that had come in—nine fighters and nine bombers and one observation plane—were fifteen.

(To be continued)

Small Business

Of our 646,000 service businesses—barber shops, plumbers, tailors, shoe men, etc.—385,000 (over half) employed no salaried help. Of the remainder, a considerable proportion had only one employee each, with, perhaps, an additional part-time employee for apprenticeship or deliveries.

Senior Class Day Set for May 29th

The annual Class Day exercises will be presented by the seniors of the high school Tuesday, May 29, at 2:45 p. m. in the high school auditorium. Parents and friends of the graduates are invited to attend. The program will be as follows:

Class Roll—Bob Moore, president.
"Cee Gee, We Toast Thee," Class of 1945. (Words by Barbara Houser)
"Blind Man's Movie," senior band, Byron Foster, Stanley Daugherty, Don Wickendall, Velda Smith, Caroline Coop, Ruth McCall, Choris Roberts, narrator.
"After the Doors Have Opened," class poem, Eunice Allen.
"Cracked Records," class prophecy, Three Maniacs: Joan of Arc, Napoleon Bonaparte, Herr Hitler.
Place: Insane Asylum, Salem, Time 1975.

"Beautiful Class of '45," Class of 1945. Words by Abigail Trask and Barbara Houser.
Novelty. Solo—Barbara Houser, "Little Sir Echo," senior septet, arranged by Trinkhaus; "Serenade in Blue," by Warren, senior septet, Phyllis Baldwin, Sara Bjorset, Eunice Allen, Choris Roberts, Joyce Clark, Norma Wicks, Marie Lombard.

Vocal Solo—Lucille Eastburn. Advice to Juniors—Ray Ross. Junior Response—Herold Witherspoon, president of class of 1946. Presentation of Gavel—Bob Moore.

"Fond Memories of Cee Gee"—Class of 1945.
"Ah, Well I Remember," Class of 1945.

Accompanists—Abigail Trask, '45; Betty Bagley, '47; Irene Schaffer, '46.

Creswell

Found—A good ladies black cap with jeweled chin strap, lying beside the road in front of the H. S. Joslin home. The cap is ornamented with several service buttons and a two star service pin.

Home Economic club met last Tuesday at the grange hall. Mrs. Chas. Wetzel, Mrs. Roy Smith and Mrs. M. J. Sargent were hostesses. Notice has been served to all grangers that there will be no annual state grange convention this year, having been cancelled by State Master Morton Tompkins, because of travel restrictions. The convention was to have taken place in Baker June 18-22.

Cpl. Chester Elliott of Fort Bragg, N. C., has been enjoying a short furlough at home with his mother. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Elliott of Portland came down to visit him also, before Cpl. Elliott left for camp again.

The W. S. C. S. of the Methodist church met last Wednesday at the annex, and a potluck lunch was served at noon. Considerable trouble has followed in the wake of the rainy weather—hampered work in the fields and a common sight to see a groaning, smoking tractor stuck in the mud. Exasperated gardeners are fighting all sorts of pests with everything they know of or is advised, from O.S.C. to "Dusted" tomato plants remain dusted only a short time to be washed down by a sudden shower, moles play through the rows of radishes and peas—one disgusted gardener was heard to remark—"Aw what's the use—might as well go fishin'."

Mrs. Arthur Hendershott and daughter Betty Jane and little Judy Hendershott were Sunday visitors at the H. S. Joslin home.

CIVILIAN DECORATION FOR PATRIOTIC SERVICE



It is your privilege once each year—on Memorial Day—to wear a Buddy Poppy. Wear this little red flower as your Decoration for Patriotic Service to the cause of veteran welfare.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF U. S.

Miss Betty Jane is a former teacher in the Creswell grade school. Mrs. Alice Taylor left suddenly for Manitowoc, Wis., summoned there by the serious illness of a son-in-law.

Mrs. Anna Uhl and son Richard of Portland were visitors Wednesday at the H. S. Joslin home. The Uhls are old friends of the years of Mrs. Joslin.

A. L. Hassard, MM3/C is enjoying a short furlough with his family. He has been in Guam for over two years. He is grateful indeed for this visit home.

H. G. McDonah has been employed by the Goddard Electric company at Cottage Grove.

Mrs. Stafine has been a weekend guest of Mrs. Olive Parlin.

Cal Jackson left for Seattle this week to join his wife who is visiting there with relatives.

Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Stratton of Cottage Grove were guests Saturday at the B. Vaughn home.

Latham

Leonard Newman, one of the winners in this county of the Sears, Roebuck Victory garden contest, was awarded his choice of \$2.50 worth of seeds and plants. This was awarded on the merits of a plan and story. At the time of the garden exhibits this fall other prizes will be awarded in this contest which was open to 4-H garden club members.

Mr. and Mrs. Leo Paschke of Marcola were overnight visitors at the O. A. Nichols home recently.

Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Trunnell visited the A. R. Land's in Creswell Sunday and attended the church dinner in honor of Paul Schnyder, returned missionary from China.

A group of young people held a track meet near the Leon Godard home Sunday.

Mrs. John Lamb returned with Mr. Lamb from Eugene Saturday and spent the week end at her home here. She is employed at the Sacred Heart hospital.

Mr. and Mrs. Delbert Beers and son will move into the A. A. Hull house this week. They came from Washington recently.

The Latham school program and eighth grade graduation will be held May 29 at 8:00 p. m. in the gymnasium. A picnic will be held on Friday June 1.

Mrs. Lee Williams returned Monday after a few days visit with her mother, Mrs. Anna Seybold of Grants Pass.

Merle Porter went as far as Portland with David R3/C when he returned to service in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Mr. Porter visited his sisters while in Portland and Mrs. Jack Gilroy.

Dorena

Pvt. James Cooper of San Diego visited Saturday at the home of an uncle, Henry Cooper and family.

Ed Twing returned home Sunday from a few days business trip to San Francisco.

Mrs. Louis Dodge and son Wilburn spent Sunday at Reedsport at the home of Mrs. Dodge's sister, Mrs. Everett Wright and family.

Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Green and son Gale of Veneta spent the week end at the Ralph Conklin home.

The Henry Cooper family spent Sunday at the Gilbert Ward home at Veneta.

Jerry Mosby of Eugene spent Tuesday at the home of his mother, Mrs. M. Mosby.

Meat Sellers Should File Permit With Local OPA Board

Farmers who slaughter meat for sale, transfer or gift, or expect to, are urged by the chairman of



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the local OPA Board to file an application for a permit at once with the local Board if they have not already done so.

"Applications for permits for Class 3 slaughterers will not be taken after the July 'deadline,' the chairman emphasized. It was pointed out that farm slaughterers who did not apply by May 13 may not sell or transfer meat until they get their applications in, and that farmers should not put off meeting this requirement any longer and risk losing the chance to get a license or permit."

It was explained that Class 3 slaughterers include persons who "live on and operate a farm and slaughter, or had slaughtered for them livestock from which they sold or transferred during 1944 or during a 12-month period from January 1, 1944 to March 31, 1945, not more than 6,000 pounds of meat."

Farmers who delivered no meat or less than 400 pounds in 1944 may obtain a permit to deliver up to 400 pounds.

No limitations are placed on slaughter for home consumption.

THREE CABINET POSTS FILLED

Harold Ickes, secretary of the interior, was the only member left of the 1932 Roosevelt cabinet as President Harry Truman yesterday announced the appointment of three new names to cabinet posts. Tom C. Clark of Texas was

appointed attorney general succeeding Francis Biddle; Lewis B. Schwellbach, federal judge at Spokane, Washington, secretary of labor, succeeding Frances Perkins and Clinton P. Anderson, representative of New Mexico, secretary of agriculture, succeeding Claude Wickard. It is understood, will be made rural electrification administrator.

COTTAGE GROVE FLOUR MILL SOLD

The sale of the Cottage Grove Flour Mill to J. F. Roy, formerly of Redmond, is announced this week by the retiring owner, Geo. Matthews. The new owner took possession on May 1. The new owner will continue to operate under the same name, although flour is no longer made here and will continue to handle all kinds of feeds as well as hay, etc.

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