

An Irish Response to Mrs. G. B. Shaw's Bequest

Reception to Mrs. George Bernard Shaw's bequest of a fund to teach the Irish social graces was not too enthusiastic by the Irish. Typical American-Irish comment was that the Irish were cultured "when the people Mr. and Mrs. Shaw descended from were sharing bones with the troglodytes in the caves of England."

One aggrieved Irishman broke into verse. In a few lines "To Mrs. G. B. S. in heaven," he demanded, as follows:

We Irish need manners? The best of us— And even the worst—cannot see Why you should be judgin' the rest of us By what you observed in G. B.



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GOD IS MY CO-PILOT Col. Robert L. Scott WNU RELEASE

The story thus far: Robert Scott, a West Point graduate, wins his wings at Kelly Field, Texas. He is sent to Panama, where his real pursuit training began in a P-133. Soon he is instructing other pilots, and as the war comes closer it begins to look as though he is scheduled to be an instructor indefinitely. He writes many letters to Generals pleading for a chance to fight, and at last the opportunity comes in the form of a phone call from Washington asking if he can fly a four-motor bomber. When he leaves his wife and child behind he realizes that they really meant America for him, but this heartache soon leaves him. He picks up his Fort in Florida and flies to India.

CHAPTER VIII

Well, the Air Base General had to ask us to carry out the mission, and to ease the monotony we were glad to comply. Taking the bomb-bay tanks from the ship, we loaded with five-hundred-pound bombs and off we went, eight hundred miles into the Arabian Sea, looking for a Jap naval force composed of three warships, five destroyers, five cruisers, and two aircraft carriers—with our one bomber. Due to the low weather we had to fly beneath the cloud base at seven thousand feet. Reaching our patrol area, we searched until it was necessary to return to base for fuel. I have often wondered what we would have done had we had the fortune or misfortune to find that task force—if it existed. After all, from seven thousand feet we could have done very little damage with a single ship. Somehow I'm glad we did not engage the enemy—I always hated to be a clay pigeon, and though the future looked dark, there were interesting days ahead.

Slowly, though, through days in which some of the others took their ships to bomb Rangoon and the Andaman Islands, and finally when Haynes returned from Delhi, the realization sank in that our mission was cancelled. I have never seen thirteen crews of bombers carrying so many broken hearts. Morale dropped like a stone. On April 21, when the base took our ships. I think we would have been justified in getting stinking drunk.

New orders came for Colonel Haynes and most of us in the ill-fated "dream mission" to report to a remote base in eastern Assam, on the India-Burma border, to run the A. B. C. Ferrying Command. This Assam-Burma-China transport command was for the purpose of carrying supplies to China and Burma, to make up as much as possible for the fall of the Burma road. When Colonel Haynes and I arrived in Assam we both considered ourselves "shanghaied." I could tell, as we faced each other across the breakfast table that first morning, that we both knew that things were going to be bad. Our status had changed from participating in what we considered the "greatest mission in the world," to the insignificant task of running a ferry command from India to Burma. Once again combat duty seemed far away.

Our first job was to begin the construction of other fields in the area—this was to permit us to have more than one base from which to work. For our job was that of being ferry pilots for both the Chinese Army and General Chennault's AVG down in Burma. We were to carry high octane gas, ammunition, and food into Burma, and later into China. We were soon to find ourselves returning from Burma with our ships completely filled and overflowing with wounded British soldiers. Col. C. V. Haynes was boss; he was Commanding Officer of the A. B. C. Ferrying Command, and I was his Executive Officer.

We began our work the day after we arrived in Assam. This was April 21. We had thirteen transports manned by the Army and Pan-American pilots. Our job in flying supplies into Burma was a tough one with unarmed transports, for by this time the Japanese had crossed the Sittang and the Irrawaddy and had taken Rangoon.

On April 24, Colonel Haynes and Colonel Cooper transported a load of ammunition and aviation fuel to Lashio for the Flying Tigers, and on their way back an enemy fighter plane made an attack on their transport. Recognizing the ship as an enemy Zero, Haynes and Cooper left the flying of the plane to the co-pilot and went back into the fuselage, to ward off the attack as best they could with Tommy Guns. Don Old, the co-pilot, dove the transport until they were actually skimming over the jungle trees. These evasive tactics kept the Jap ship from coming up under the vulnerable transport. Just one of the Jap tracers in that Douglas would have set it afire.

As the Jap dove towards them, Cooper and Haynes and their crew chief, Sergeant Bonner, fired magazine after magazine at the Jap. This either discouraged him or the enemy ship lost the transport in a turn, for they got away. But even considering the bravery of these flyers in using their meager armament against a fighter ship, it is a poor policy to shoot Zeros with Tommy guns; 45-caliber ammunition is not very effective against aircraft, but, as usual in a case like this, if you have only a pop-gun to point at the enemy, it helps the morale. Most of our pilots had been chosen

from the crews of the thirteen ships of our original mission. Even with the loss in morale they had suffered when the attack on Tokyo was called off, they were still the best transport pilots I had ever seen. Colonel Haynes was a veteran big-ship pilot, and for the last ten years he had worked in four-engine bombers. The records that he had set with the giant B-15 will inspire the Air Force forever. Here was a big, cheerful master pilot who never asked another man to do a job he wouldn't do himself. We of the A. B. C. Ferrying Command looked upon him as the best, and Haynes will always stand out in my mind as one of the greatest officers of our army. This jovial veteran was ready to do anything to help win the war, but we all knew he preferred to kill Japs rather than rustle freight across to Burma. I lived with Colonel Haynes on one of the tea plantations in Assam, where we were billeted with a Scotsman, Josh Reynolds of Seakotte Tea Estate. Major Joplin, whom we called "Jop," was another of our pilots. This man claimed that he had been born in a DC-2 and weaned in a C-47. One of the Pan-American pilots had made a forced landing with one of the transports, putting it down with the wheels up in a rice



Col. Meriam C. Cooper watches sky for return of U. S. planes.

paddy near the Brahmaputra. Jop took a crew to the transport, took the bent propellers off and roughly straightened them. With his crew and some volunteer natives, he dug holes under the folded-up landing-gear and then let the gear down until it was fully extended, with the wheels down, to the bottom of the holes. Now he placed heavy timbers from the wheels to the surface of the rice paddy, putting them in at a small angle to form an inclined plane. Next he had about a hundred natives pull on ropes that were tied to the wheels, and dragged the Douglas transport up the inclined plane until it rested on the more or less level ground of the rice paddy. Then Jop demonstrated that he could justify all his claims of having been born in a Douglas transport. He gave the ship the guns, and in a flurry of mud and water and rice stalks, bounced it from the field and flew it home to base.

All the pilots were good, and they were eager. The weather never became too bad or the trip too dangerous for men like Tex Carleton, Bob Sexton, or the others to get through. The enlisted men were the best. There in Assam they fought a constant battle against boredom, malaria, and tropical disease.

Even with the hardships we enjoyed the assignment—for after all, Burma was just over the Naga Hills and they said a war was going on over there. Down in his heart, each man really wanted to do something to stop the Japs from their rapid movement to the North through Burma. But we had no fighters and no bombers. I often heard of plots among the crewmen for going back to Karachi and stealing the thirteen four-engine bombers, but of course they were just soldier rumors. The small amount of good that we figured we were doing by flying ammunition, aviation gasoline, and bombs to the AVG was barely enough to keep our morale above the sinking point. Personally I made a trip almost every day over into Lashio and Loiwing, and some days I went on farther East to Kunming, China.

One day, during the last of April, two Chinese pilots landed with two P-43A's. These were good, fast-climbing little fighter ships, the forerunner of the "Thunderbolts." But their fuel tanks had developed leaks, and when you added to that the fact that the turbo was underneath the rear of the fuselage, the greatest fire hazard in the world was born. So far had their ill fame spread that the ships were grounded until the faults could be remedied. So the Chinese left the P-43A's with us and went on back to China. Colonel Haynes and I fell heir to the two little fighters.

Sergeant Bonner worked diligently with everything from chewing gum to cement and finally repaired the leaks, at least to a point where they didn't catch fire right away on the take-off, as some of them had done. I took one of these ships and decided to use it to protect the ferry route. Even one lone fighter that could fire back at the Japs

would be a good morale element for the crews of the unarmed transports.

The job of being a ferry pilot had to go on nevertheless. As the leaks developed again in the tanks of the P-43's, I went back to flying the Douglas transports into Burma and China. One day while I was acting as co-pilot for Colonel Haynes, we loaded two disassembled Ryan Trainers in the C-47 and headed for Kunming. Besides this cargo we had some ammunition and food for the AVG at Loiwing, especially a bottle of Scotch whiskey to be left as a present for General Chennault.

We landed at Loiwing and delivered the designated cargo. The air raid alert came just as we were talking with the General. He didn't ever change expression, but calmly said, "Guess you're going to have some Japs—you all had better get those transports off the field." The Flying Tigers were already taking off, their shark-painted noses gleaming in the sun. Lord, but my mouth watered as I saw them—I'd have given anything to trade my Colonel's eagles and that "delivery wagon" that I flew for the gold bars of a second Lieutenant and one of those shark-nosed pieces of dynamite!

But we started the Douglas up and took off for China with the cargo of trainers. Even as we cleared the field and climbed towards the Salween, I heard the call "Tally-Ho" from the AVG, and then others more like "Here come the sons of bitches." A few seconds later the Jap bombers arrived over the field at Loiwing and we knew all the transports couldn't have gotten off. The AVG radio man, "Micky" Mikhalo, called, "They're bombing hell out of the field." Then, in lighter vein, he said the Japs were falling like leaves—or he hoped they were Japs, for he could see many smokes from burning planes. Every now and then we could hear one of the AVG say to some unlucky Jap, "Your mother was a turtle—your father was a snake,"—and then the rattle of fifty-caliber guns over the radio.

We stayed low in the gorge of the Salween until we got to the old bridge near Paoshan, then turned East for Yunnanyi. Behind us the Japs damaged the tail of one of our transports with a bomb, and also blew up the bottle of Scotch that I had brought General Chennault—it had been left in one of the jeeps that was hit. But they had paid heavily for the transport tail and the quart of whiskey. I believe that even the Woman's Christian Temperance Union would have approved of the trade—for the AVG had shot down thirteen of the Zeros and bombers, while as usual they lost none. At Kunming, with the surprised Chinese looking on, we unloaded the two small training planes from the fuselage of the big Douglas. Then, after something to eat, when I had just about arranged with the AVG squadron commander to go along with them on the morning raid into Indo-China, we received a radiogram that changed all plans.

Colonel Haynes and I were ordered to leave immediately for Shwebo, Burma, down on the Mandalay-Rangoon Railway, and evacuate the staff of General Stilwell. It seemed that the Japs had crossed another place on the Irrawaddy and were about to capture the entire American Military Mission to China—the Ammisa. We didn't even know whether or not there was a landing field in Shwebo, but I found it on a map and in the late afternoon we took off for lower Burma.

We flew through black storms all the way to the Mekong; then, turning South, we found better weather, even if we were getting into Japanese-controlled skies. We landed at Myitkyina and while servicing (so that we would have plenty of fuel to take General Stilwell anywhere he wanted to go), we learned from a British pilot that we would find a small field to the Southeast of the town that was our destination.

Flying as low as we could without hitting the tops of the jungle trees, we followed the Myitkyina-Mandalay railroad to the South. We knew that all the British had evacuated the area about Shwebo except for a small detachment left with the wounded; so we were expecting trouble. I know that neither of us had ever before been so careful at watching the skies. I had my ever-ready movie camera right by my side, but in the excitement I forgot to take pictures as we flew over the burning towns of central Burma. Long afterwards, Colonel Haynes told everyone that I had missed the best pictures in the world, but I imagine he would have dumped me out of the ship if I had raised that movie camera instead of diligently watching the skies.

All the country ahead of us was marked with columns of black smoke, rising straight into the clear sky. We looked for hostile ships until our eyes ached—or for any ship at all, for we knew it would be a Jap, ours being the only Allied plane in the air. We had been flying those unarmed transports so long that both of us had become used to it. Behind us in the empty cargo space I could see the crew chief and the radio operator searching the skies on both sides, with their inadequate Tommy guns at "ready" position. (TO BE CONTINUED)

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