

# Two Klamath Men Home After Flying "Hump" Route Daily For Past Year

By EDNA KAHL  
Flying the "Hump" route, the highest, most treacherous mountain range in the world, has been the daily job of two Klamath men for the past year.

F/O M. J. (Bud) Thompson, son of Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Thompson of Malin, and F/O Andrew Silani, son of Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Kahl of 714 N. 10th, are home for Christmas after being stationed in the China-Burma-India theater with the air transport command.

On their arrival in the Orient, December 22, 1944, the men were stationed at Chabua, India. They agreed that their first flights over the Himalaya mountains were uneventful and that at first it seemed to them that the Hump had been greatly overrated.

"That was before we got to know it better," Silani remarked.

The big C-46 transport planes they flew carried a cargo of 8500 pounds. The wartime cargoes included 75 mm. shells, trench mortars, gas mortars in preparation for possible use of gas, rifles, food and medical supplies, troops and necessary materials for fighting a war. After the cessation of hostilities, their cargoes were not quite so vital.

The mountains over which they flew were of a rolling type which came up suddenly in a jagged backbone of a peak, except for an occasional one rising straight up to a peak, such as Mount Everest, which both men could see on their flights.

**Jungles**  
The jungles below them were comparable to the South American jungles, with trees resembling pine trees, but in stature nearly like the redwoods. Crews forced down faced one of their greatest hazards in hacking their way back to civilization. The longest time that a crew worked to get out of the jungle and came out alive was 91 days.

Since the beginning of Hump flying, an estimated 3600 planes have gone down with only a small number of crews surviving.

That section had the world's greatest rainfall, 600 inches annually. After the planes left the ground in the monsoon season they were flown on instruments beginning at 100 or 150 feet. The monsoons last for six months, beginning in April.

The first check point after leaving their home base was Moran, and then they headed for China. The two fliers stated that the worst time in the flight was on the take-off. After taking the planes into the air, they tried to rise above the "soup" to from 4000 to 12,000 feet where it was clear. The rain and snow encountered necessitated flying by instruments above 12,000 feet. Carburetor icing was a constant danger. Although the de-icers used were very effective, they lasted only a short time because they were torn by gravel in landings and take-offs.

**Ice Fumes**  
When ice formed on the carburetor no gas could get through to the motor. Silani mentioned a time when in a thunderstorm both motors on his plane lost two beats.

"The engine lost two beats and my heart lost 50," he added. Wing and fuselage icing contributed to the dangers encountered. Thompson explained that there was so much instrument flying and so many airplanes in the air holding different altitudes that there was the constant possibility of mid-air collisions. Often, if radio reception was poor, two pilots would be flying at the same altitude, not knowing the other was there.

January 6, 1945, is well-remembered by all Hump pilots. That date marked the worst night in the history of Hump flying. Terrific thunder and lightning storms raked the air, and the blinding flashes lighted up the area for miles around. On that night, 33 planes went down with average crews of three men. Only two of the crews got in. Thirty-one have never been heard from.

Silani and Thompson were among the six men chosen to fly

the "Rockpile Express," the only C-46 passenger run over the Hump. Their passengers were "VIP," very important personnel, and on their way back from China they carried negro Burma Road drivers, who were among the most cooperative passengers they had. Thompson was the first man chosen for the "Rockpile Express."

**Effective**  
Only in the last year has air rescue been really effective. When a plane did not come in, its home base reported it to air search and rescue which searched the area in which the plane was lost. They flew in liaison ships, B-25s, C-47s and P-51s. If the plane was found the search continued for the crew. When the crew was located, supplies were dropped to them, and professional medical jumpers bailed out any possible injured crew members.

The men explained that very often things happened too fast for the crew to be able to bail

out. At times, when a plane went down, it would drop 5000 feet per minute in a violent down-draft. Of the men who successfully reached the ground after bailing out, 90 per cent got out alive despite the jungles, the weather and the head-hunters. Many of the savage tribes who were head-hunters, worked for the highest bidder in the war, often the Japanese. The only tribe in the area which was not eventually won over by the allies, was the fierce Naga tribe. If a crew bailed out over Naga country, their instructions were to stay where they were and not move. All they could do was hope that someone from air search and rescue would find them.

Silani and Thompson trained together in the United States, went overseas together, and have returned to the United States together. They both wear the Asiatic-Pacific ribbon, the Air Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

## Crash Victim



T/5 Ned Neasham of Lakeview, shown above, was one of 17 overseas veterans killed in the recent crash of a transport plane at Billings, Mont. He was the son of Ed Neasham, formerly of Lakeview. A sister, Mrs. Ralph Baker, lives at Lakeview.

## Gift Program For Marines

Here's your chance to make a hospitalized service man a little happier on Christmas day.

The Red Cross announced today that presents will be given hospitalized marines at the Barracks, if local people will donate them. Since it will be a lonely day a long way from home for most of the 40 or 50 men in the wards, the presents will be appreciated.

Any suitable gift except food will be welcomed, and the packages will be dropped by high school girls. Donors are asked to put a slip on the outside of the package telling what is inside.

Two radios are also needed at the Marine Barracks, and electric Christmas tree lights will be welcomed. Anyone who cares to donate these items should contact the Red Cross.

## Music Firm Head Claimed By Death

MINEOLA, N. Y., Dec. 18 (AP)—Edward B. Marks, 80, head of Edward B. Marks Music corporation which published more than 20,000 songs over a period of 50 years, died of pneumonia last night at Nassau hospital. His first published song, "The First Song of Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern and Sigmund Romberg."

Such old favorites as "My Mother Was a Lady" and "The Little Lost Child" were among Marks' own compositions.

line, a box of mandy bars and about \$12 in cash.

## Moose Members Play Host At USO Here

Members of the Loyal Order of Moose and women of the Moose served at the USO Sunday, with Agnes Vasak acting as chairman for the day.

Cakes for the occasion were contributed by Fannie May Thompson, Ruby Weinberg, Gracie McFarland, Marcia Waits, Kathleen Hepburn, Agnes Vasak.

Women of the Moose will have their regular meeting to night with a Christmas party and gifts. Initiation of new

members will be held and officers and escorts are requested to wear formals.

Cinchona plants in the Belgian Congo are expected to begin producing quinine this year.

Stromberg-Carlson Radios, Derby's Music Co.

Re-enlists—Donald E. Fortney, Ch. AMM, re-enlisted in the U. S. navy Saturday. He was stationed at the Klamath naval air station for the past year. His wife, Jean Ruth, a former Wave and native of Klamath Falls, will make her home at 127 Mortimer.

## Klamath Crew Member Of Submarine Declared Dead

Mr. and Mrs. Guy Robert Wells, 2213 Ogden, have received a letter from James Forrestal, secretary of the navy, informing them that their son, TM 3/c Richard Warren Wells, who has been missing since November, 1944, has been declared dead.

The 21-year-old sailor was a crew member of the submarine Shark which failed to return to Pearl Harbor after a war patrol in the China sea. The Shark left Pearl Harbor September 23, 1944, and was not heard of since.

Forrestal's letter said that the vessel had probably been lost as a result of enemy action and that Wells' name had not appeared on any lists of prisoners taken by the Japanese.

That was the Klamath man's

## Small Private Plane Stolen

ELLENSBURG, Dec. 18 (AP)—The boys in the blue coats had best look to their wings, what with the latest in high-class thievery.

James Devere, owner of a plane field at Cle Elum, Wash., reported to the sheriff's office a thief has stolen a small private plane owned by A. H. Schular, after first changing the paint job before flying it away.

Devere said his own ship had been pushed back in the hangar, the air compressor had been used, a spray gun and a gallon and a half of black paint were missing.

Schular's plane had been yellow and black. Also missing, said Devere, were his log book, parachute, and a can of gaso-

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