

Good Times! SNAFUS! A Few Miracles?

by
Bernard (Barney) Fudge, Jr.

This is primarily the story of my love affair with the airplane, but it will be interspersed with some personal comments and anecdotes.

I was born October 11, 1919 in the family home at 226 N. Louisa in Shawnee, Oklahoma. My Dad had a motorcycle shop in the barn behind our home where he sold and serviced Harley-Davidson motorcycles. My maternal grandparents, Albert and Carrie Heinkel lived on the corner next door to us at 232 N. Louisa. Grandpa sold and repaired bicycles in the garage behind his home.

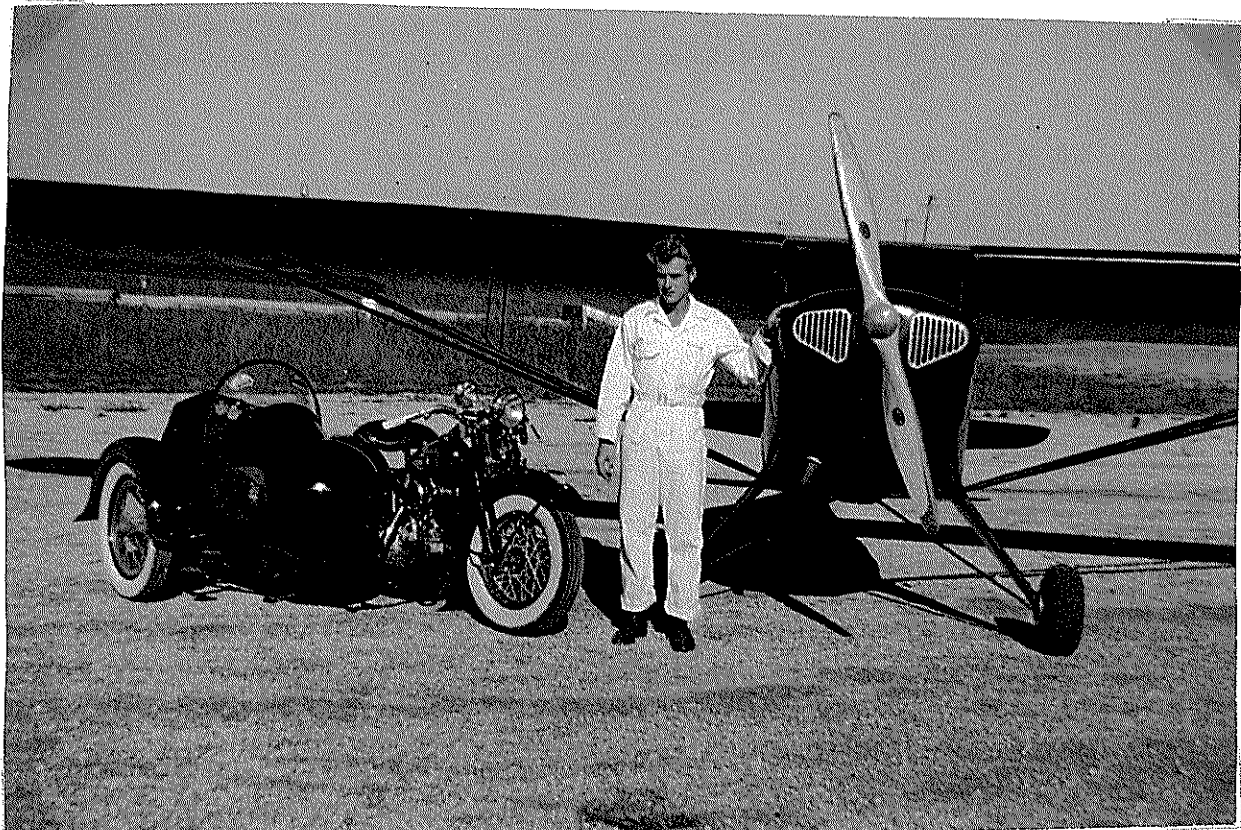
When I was two years old, the family moved to Muskogee, Oklahoma where Dad established a Harley-Davidson dealership and also sold and repaired bicycles and lawnmowers.

In 1926 when I was seven years old, Dad took the family to Hot Box Field where we rode in a very unique airplane. It carried four passengers in an open compartment mid plane with the pilot in a separate compartment above and in front

* Situation normal, all bowled up.

of us. The four passengers were Mother, Dad, brother Wilbur, and I. The love affair with the airplane which has lasted to my present age of eighty began with a vengeance. I started building hand held airplanes from scrap wood, whittling propellers that would turn as I ran with the crude models.

I was never airborne again until my senior year at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. Baylor offered a government program called Civil Pilots Training (CPT) and I was one of the first enrollees. The airplane we used was a side-by-side wheel controlled Taylorcraft. My first lesson was October 24, 1940. I soloed for fifteen minutes on November 11, 1940 with eight hours of dual instruction completed. I received my Private Pilots License on February 4, 1941.



In the spring of 1941 a former Baylor student, who was a Second Lieutenant in the Army Air Corps, came to the campus to recruit a Baylor Unit for training, promising that we would remain together until our graduation from flying school as Second Lieutenants.

I was one of about twenty Baylor students to accept this offer. We started our training at a civilian primary training field, Hicks Field near Fort Worth, Texas on July 22, 1941, flying Fairchild PT-19's.

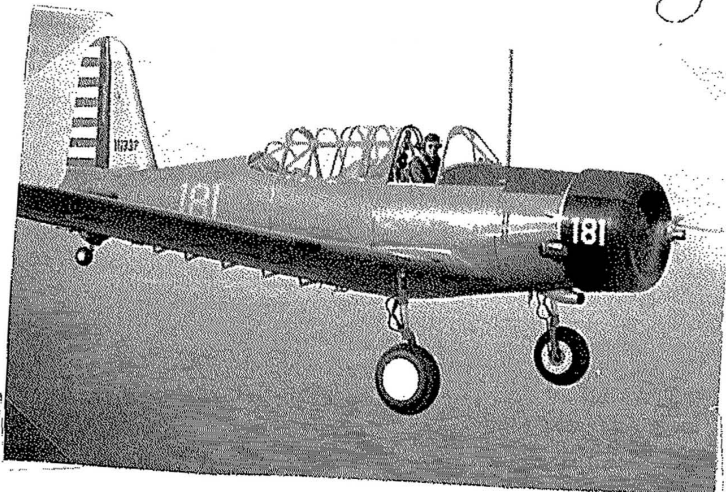


Fudge, Mr. Smith, Gladstone, Anderson, Aber

Mr. Smith, my civilian instructor was impossible to please. He found fault with everything my group of trainees did. He found out that I didn't like flying upside down, and so everytime he flew with me he would request that I do so. Hanging by a web cloth strap in an open cockpit with only air between my head and the Texas soil below was not my idea of learning to fly. I soloed Aug. 6, 1941 after eight hours and one minute of instruction.

Two good things did happen at Hicks Field. Cadet Henry B. Kuchman and I became close friends and remained so until his death from prostate cancer in 1987. Also, the head cook, Buck, was able to call each cadet by name and treated us with great respect. The food he served was plentiful and delicious as was the food at Goodfellow Field and Kelly Field. Because of all the good food, at the time of my graduation as a Second Lieutenant at Kelly Field, I had to have a waiver because I was too heavy for my height.

Our Baylor Unit left Hicks Field on September 22, 1941 and went to Goodfellow Field in San Angelo, Texas. The other cadets went to Goodfellow and also to many other airfields throughout Texas. After training at civilian operated airfields for primary training, our basic and advanced training was done at military airfields. At Goodfellow we flew BT-13's which were called Vultee Vibrators by those who flew them.



Fudge at Goodfellow Field taken by his instructor, Second Lieutenant Jack Koser.

Not a single bad experience happened in regard to flying at Goodfellow Field. My instructor, Second Lieutenant Jack Koser from St. Louis, Missouri (the first good person to touch my life from there, followed by Richard Fitzgerald in the 74th Fighter Squadron in China and then by Daisy Radley Benner whom I met at a Seven-Up Bottlers convention in St. Louis). Jack was the exact opposite of Mr. Smith at Hicks Field. He frequently complimented my progress toward becoming a military pilot and not once found fault with any of the maneuvers he taught me, which made me try all the harder to please him. We remained friends and corresponded with each other during the war and for many years after. He even visited me once at my bottling plant as he passed through Clinton, Oklahoma.

There was one traumatic experience at Goodfellow Field. My last flight there was on Friday December 5, 1941 and I was to go next to Kelly Field in San Antonio, Texas. On Sunday December 7, 1941, Kuch and I drove in to San Angelo and attended church. Upon our return to Goodfellow to enjoy one of our last delicious meals at that airfield, the guard at the

entrance informed us that if for any reason we left the base in the afternoon or any time thereafter, we would have to be in uniform, because the United States was at war with Japan - our first knowledge of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The Baylor Unit left Goodfellow Field on December 15, 1941 and went to Kelly Field in San Antonio, Texas. Once again the cadets from Goodfellow went not only to Kelly, but to other advanced flying schools in Texas. Had I not been in the Baylor Unit, I would have probably gone to Brooks Field in San Antonio for twin engine training because of still being overweight for my height.

At Kelly my first flight was in a BC-1 which was an exact duplicate of the AT-6, which was the first time I flew an airplane with a retractable landing gear. I only had one hour and twenty-five minutes training in the BC-1 when I was sent up for a fifteen minute solo flight. At that point I felt certain I would become a military pilot. I guess since December 7th they were in a hurry to get us into combat. My instructor, Second Lieutenant Appelt was just as good to me as Jack

Koser had been, although he was more aloof. I only had one bad experience at Kelly. It occurred at the end of a test ride on January 31, 1941 which would determine if I would receive the silver wings of a Second Lieutenant. The tester put me through every maneuver I had learned during the previous six months on a flight that lasted three hours and twenty-five minutes. He instructed me to put the B C-1 (most of my flying time at Kelly was in an AT-6, but my first and last flights and some in between were in a B C-1) into a spin, which I immediately did. All hell broke loose. As the tester grabbed the controls and recovered from the spin performed at his command by me, he unleashed every invective and cuss word I had ever heard up to that point in my life, plus some I had never heard before nor since. I have no remembrance of what altitude we were flying when he requested the spin, but I think it was less than one thousand feet, probably about seven hundred and fifty feet. At least I will use that altitude to continue the story.

He requested an immediate landing at Kelly Field, and I of course knew my dream of becoming a military pilot was no longer even a remote possibility. On the ground he continued to reprimand me vehemently, telling me what a sorry specimen of a pilot I was, ending with the question of why I put the BC-1 into a spin. From the very beginning of our training, a military axiom was drilled into us at Hicks Field and continued through Goodfellow and Kelly Fields. Therefore I quoted, "Mine not to question why; mine but to do or die." He did not say another word to me except, "Not a spin at seven hundred and fifty feet," and walked away. I never heard another word of the incident and received my silver wings and commission as a Second Lieutenant on February 4, 1942, exactly one year after receiving my Private Pilot's License at Waco, Texas.

All these years later as I reflect on this low-level spin incident, I think my response as a cadet to the command of an officer was the correct one. Miracle of miracles, my childhood

dream had come true. Not only was I a pilot, beyond my wildest dreams I was an officer in the Army Air Corps. I had not attained the dream my mother had for me of becoming a preacher nor a lawyer upon my graduation from Baylor, but it was what I had dreamed of since that first airplane ride in Muskogee, Okla. in 1926, a pilot.

What would my fate be now? The most wonderful thing I could think of would be to fly those shark nosed P-40's of Claire Lee Chennault's American Volunteer Group (AVG) in China. Those pilots were making fortunes, so I heard, from bonuses paid them by the Chinese government when they shot down a Japanese aircraft. My friend Kuch had the same dream.

The possibilities of my next duty station were unlimited. I wanted to be a fighter pilot, but anything in the air would do. I had sat in the cockpit of a P-39 while at Kelly Field and had the opportunity to see many other combat aircraft. Could I end up in a

P-47 in England, a P-38 in the South Pacific? A B-25 would be nice. There were two aircraft I didn't want to have to fly; the P-39 cockpit made me feel as if I was in a straitjacket because the cockpit was so small, and I didn't want to fly one of those "One a Day in Tampa Bay" B-26's.

I didn't have to wait long to know the answer to these questions. By February 17, 1942 I was in Meridian, Miss., stationed at Key Field where there was a line up of new P-40E's which had been built to go to England, but were given to our air corps after Pearl Harbour. What beautiful pieces of machinery they were. I was mesmerized by them, I could have been happy just looking at them, but I was actually going to get to fly one. After a few hours of cockpit familiarization, I made my first flight in a P-40. What power! What freedom! This was heaven-right-here-on-earth. My first flight lasted one hour. Now it was time to get the magnificent beast on the ground. Having read about the P-40's propensity to groundlooping, I

came in "hot" and made a wheel landing, touching on the west end of the runway. Too "hot", too fast! I couldn't stop before running off the east end of the runway into mud. It's a wonder I didn't nose over as I ran into the mud, but fortunately I didn't. My second chewing out, not counting all the ones from Mr. Smith at Hicks Field. From that day forward I made three point landings when flying an aircraft with a tail wheel.

In March 1942, after only about six weeks at Key Field, our 20th Pursuit Group moved to Orlando, Florida where we continued to become proficient P-40 pilots, flying mostly four plane formation. No gunnery nor combat tactics yet. No traumatic flying incidents occurred in Orlando. We got to fly to many different air fields in Florida, and I enjoyed living in Florida and seeing it for the first time.

May 14, 1942 the group split up, and I went to Charlotte Air Base in North Carolina as the 79th Pursuit Group where we became a Fighter Replacement Training Unit (FRTU), doing the same thing for flying school graduates as

had been done for us at Key Field in Meridian, Mississippi, cockpit orientation. I was assigned to fly P-43's, which were a radial engine exact smaller version of the P-47.

P-43



at Charlotte Air Base we started doing some combat tactics, acrobatics, and ground gunnery. We used both P-40's and P-43's, but I only flew P-43's while there.

Sept. 1, 1942 we moved to Drew Field in Tampa, Florida. After only six months as a Second Lieutenant, and I was at my fourth duty station. At least I was in Charlotte, N.C. twice as long as I had been at Meridian, Miss. and Orlando, Florida. At Drew Field we received new P-40's, and I was most happy to be back in P-40's

rather P-43's. The P-43 was sluggish compared to the P-40 and not as enjoyable to fly.

Jan. 5, 1943 we moved again. This time just a short distance south to Sarasota Army Air Base, still flying P-40 K's. I was truly in paradise now; living in a luxury apartment complex of eight units, four below and four above. Our group commander also lived there, a Lieutenant Colonel, and we had a large swimming pool and beautiful gardens. We were across the street from a country club where professional golf tournaments were played.

At Sarasota we added aerial gunnery to our training program, firing at targets towed behind P-40's over the Gulf of Mexico. We also had a ground gunnery range at Longboat Key, just off the mainland west of Sarasota. Our four months in Sarasota were the happiest time of my life up to that point. I had never lived so luxuriously and had so much fun flying. However,

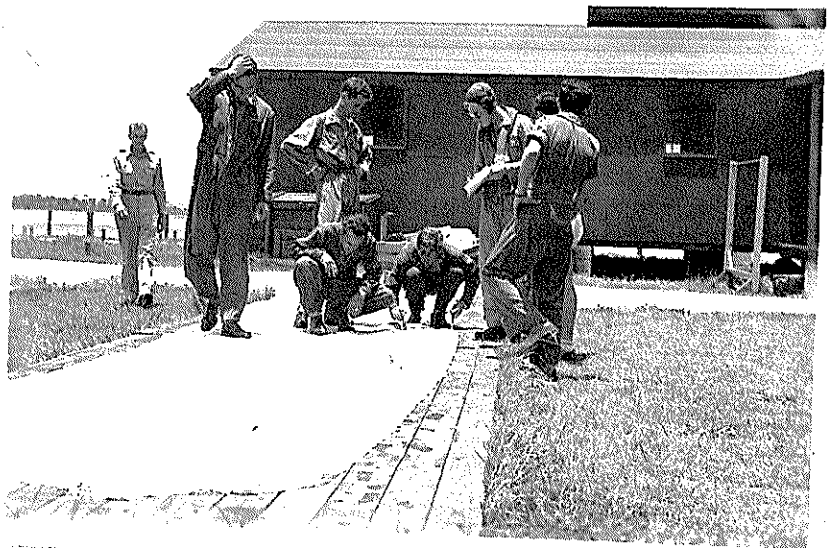
on Sunday March 14, 1943 two of us instructors got into trouble. Sort of one of those notorious, at that time, incidents of flying under bridges along the Mississippi River. We were given permission to fly to Miami and Key West. In Miami we had lunch with my close friend from Baylor, Carol Royston Pittman who had married an infantry officer stationed there. She suggested we fly low along the beach in front of her hotel as we left for Key West. Did we ever fly low! My wing man, Royce Hudgins, who also attended Baylor, said spray was coming up from my prop due to our being so low to the water. We were reported for this infraction of rules to Third Air Force Headquarters in Tampa, Florida by a General who had witnessed the incident. However, before we knew we were in great trouble, there was to be more fun ahead. After a short stay in Key West, the base operations officer asked, or suggested that we fly over the runway and do slow

rolls as we departed. Again we over-
did it. We dived at high speed toward
the runway and did a series of slow
rolls as low as we could. This must
not have been what the operations
officer had in mind, because again
we were reported to Third Air Force
Headquarters. On the way up Gulf
coast of Florida from Key West to
Sarasota we passed Fort Myers, Florida
which had some beautiful beaches on
islands just off the mainland. In later
years Daisy and I would visit these
islands, Sanibel and Captiva, many
times. Barney, Sanibel Island is the
place the Payshex incident took place
in 1986. As we approached the beaches
we could see that they were crowded
with bathers, probably mostly military.
We just couldn't miss our chance for
a grand finale on what had been a
really fun day. We gave the beach a
memorable buzz job just as we had a
Miami Beach. You can be sure we
were really in trouble now. Reported
again! Three times in one afternoon!

If the test pilot at Kelly Field burned my ears, it was nothing compared to the chewing-out I got from the Commanding General of the Third Air Force when I was summoned to his office from Sarasota to Tampa. I'm truly surprised I wasn't grounded and transferred to the infantry. I guess they were too desperate for combat pilots at that time since we had them in every part of the world. Our punishment was to be confined to the base for two weeks, a real serious punishment for a guy that had only been married less than a month. We were also fined a months pay.

In May we moved to Pinellas Air Base just north of St. Petersburg, Florida and across Tampa Bay from Drew Field. We were now flying P-40N's a dream of an airplane. I really enjoyed flying it since it handled more responsively than previous models of P-40's. We still used targets towed by P-40's over the Gulf of Mexico for aerial gunnery and Longboat Key near Sarasota for

ground gunnery. Two incidents come to my memory of our time at Pinellas. First, we instructors would fly a BT-13 and land on the beach at Longboat Key to control by radio the passes the other instructors and their students made on the ground targets and recorded their scores by the color codes on the nose of their 50 caliber ammunition. This same scoring method was used to record hits on the aerial gunnery towed targets.



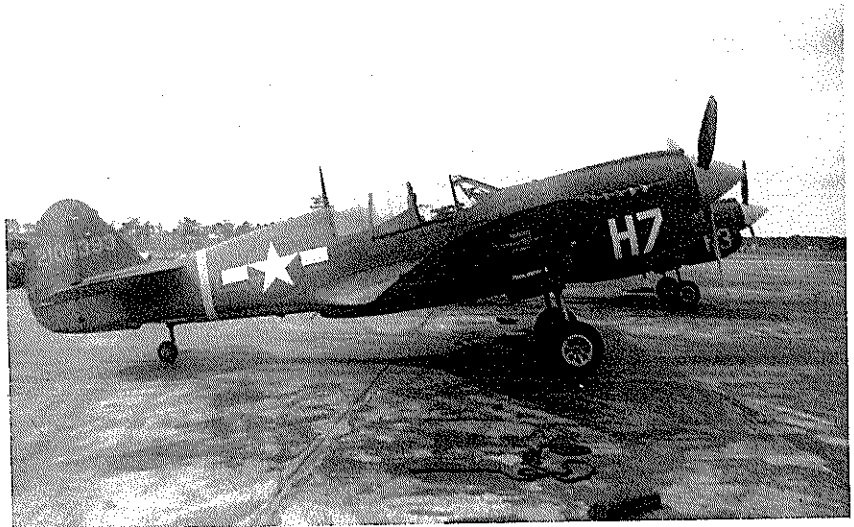
Scoring towed targets at Pinellas. I am the one holding the score pad.

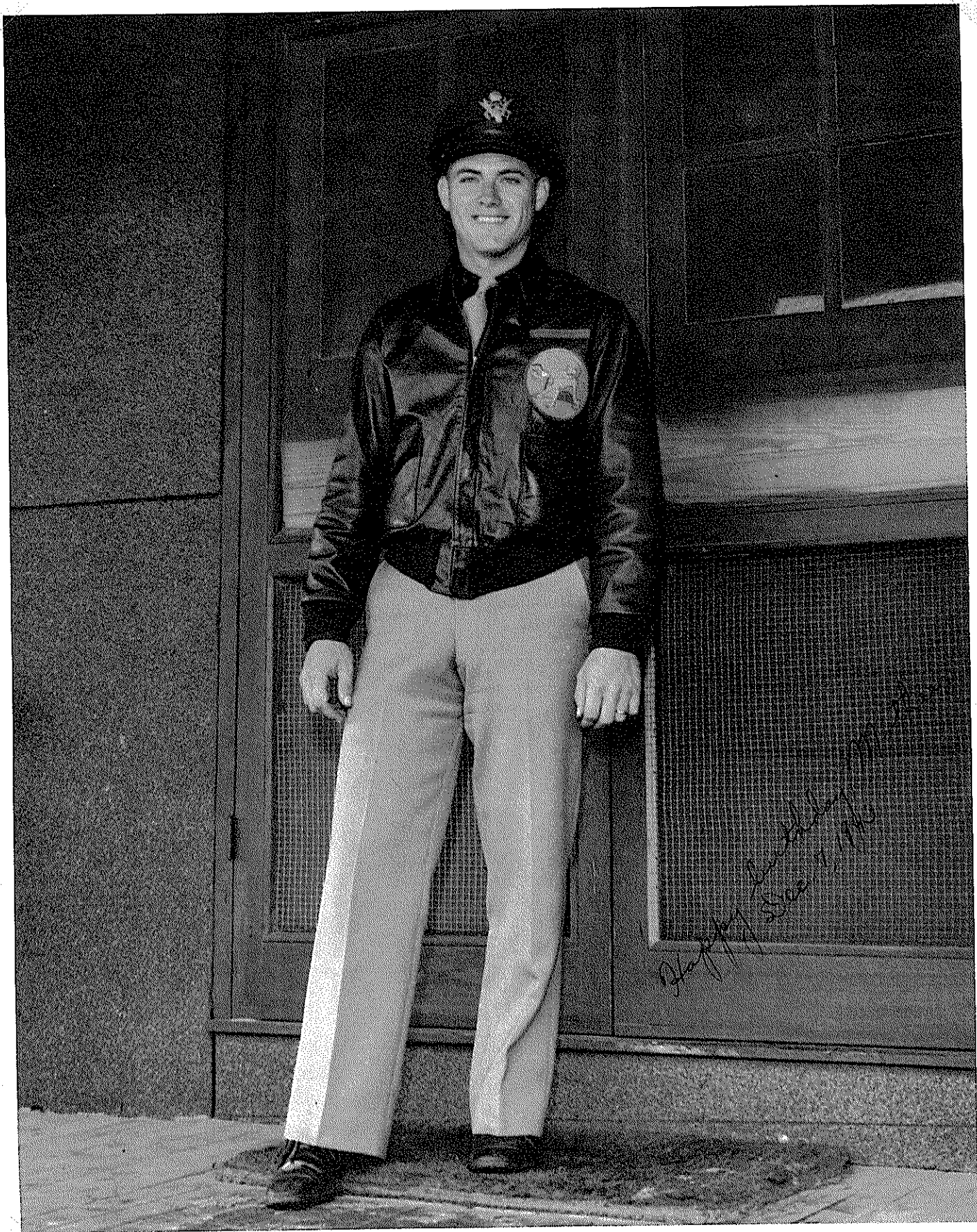


P-40N's at
Pinellas



My assigned
plane was
H7. The
stripe near
the tail des-
ignates that
I was a
Flight Commander





Flight Commander Fudge at Pinellas

Longboat Key was inhabited with very brilliantly colored sand crabs which were quite small and which travelled quite rapidly across the sand and would

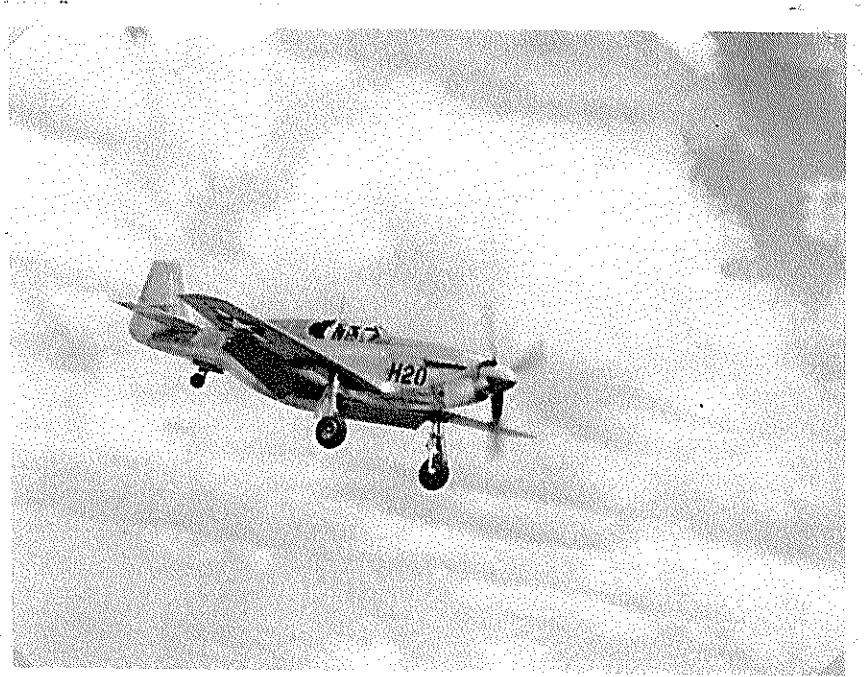
bury themselves in the sand before you could reach them. Between gunnery missions I delighted in observing them. The second incident involved a flight of instructors. By this time we had several instructors who had returned from combat, mostly in the Pacific. One of my earlier trainees, Sammy Pezza, returned from duty in the Pacific while I was still an instructor and we are close friends to this day. It was arranged to give the trainees a day off, but to make the local citizens (this was truly the reason given us) think we were making an all-out war effort, the instructors would fly so there would be fighter airplanes over the area every day. I had been promoted to First Lieutenant when I became a Flight Commander of C Flight and to Captain when I became gunnery officer. On Feb. 13, 1944 I was flying second element leader in a flight of four P-40N's. Captain Blankensma was our flight leader (+^{me} +). He was putting us through some difficult maneuvers which

required much changing of position. As he did a maneuver which in a single airplane would have been called a lazy-eight, it required much moving from one side to the other. At one point as I passed below him as it was necessary for me to do, I misjudged his descent and didn't allow enough space as I passed under him. His propeller cut off the tail section of my P-40 just behind the cockpit. Had it been three feet farther back from his position I would have been hamburger. Another new experience! I bailed out and floated down in my parachute. I still have the rip-chord. I could see no other airplanes by then except my P-40 which had crashed into a pine forest. I prayed Blanksma made it back to the field all right, which he did and had to make a belly landing. What a waste. Two nice P-40's destroyed just to make a show for the local population. I landed in the top of a thirty foot pine tree and got a black & blue bruise that remained with me for weeks.

We got new P-51's in May 1944. I couldn't believe I would ever fly an

airplane that I liked better than the P-40, but the P-51 now became my airplane love affair. It was really easier to fly than the P-40 and handled like a dream.

The P-51 assigned to me at Pinellas Air Base.



I remained at Pinellas Air Base until Sept. 5, 1944. During 1942 to 1944 I had the thrill of flying the following airplanes - P-39, P-40, P-43, P-47, P-51, DB 7, B-18, B-26, A-36, C-86, UC-78 and B-25. My hope was

to get to fly every combat fighter of World War II, but there were two which I never had the opportunity to fly - the P-38, which was a twin engine



fighter in which the pilot sat in a cockpit between two engine pods that extended from the wing to the tail, and the P-63 which was a larger version of the P-39 just as the P-47 was a larger version of the P-43.

On Sept. 5, 1944 a group of us from Pinellas Air Base went by train to Jacksonville, Florida for overseas assignments. From there some of us continued by train to Miami, Florida. As the ranking officer of the group, a Captain, I had a private compartment. What a luxurious ^{way} to head off for overseas combat. We had no idea where we would be sent from Miami, but the hottest rumor was Italy, since we had just recently taken North Africa and were then moving north through Sicily and Italy.

We crossed the Atlantic, landing at Bermuda, the Azores, on to Casablanca, Tunisia, Tripoli and Cairo, Egypt where I was happy to get to see the Sphinx and the Pyramids of Giza. Never in my life had I seen such filth and squalor as I saw in Cairo, Egypt.

Now rumors really began to fly as we headed east out of Cairo rather than north toward Italy. We landed in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and finally Karachi, India. We were headed for China, and for

one week were instructed in General Chennault's combat tactics flying P-40's.

On October 13, 1944, two days after my 25th birthday, we left Karachi with new P-51 C's headed across India for China. The last two numbers of the serial number on the P-51 I was flying were 13. We landed at Agra for an overnight stay, and I got to visit the most beautiful man made structure my eyes had ever beheld up to that point of my life - the Taj Mahal.

From Agra we continued east to Oudal, India and to Mohanbari, India at the base of the Himalayas referred to as "the hump". At Mohanbari we became a flight of 13 aircraft - twelve P-51's and a B-25. The B-25 was to navigate for us over "the hump" into China. We left India on October 17, 1944.

These three incidents involving the number 13 which occurred within four days of each other, left me fascinated with this number just as I had already been with the number 7. Remember the number on my P-40 at Pinellas was H 7. Our license numbers on our cars at this time are FAH 713 and FFC 713.

Now for my next SNAFU followed by a miracle. Those years in Florida I seldom flew as a wing man. I led formations of

various sizes most of the time. Remember, I had a mid-air collision once when I was flying as a wing man.

As our flight of 13 airplanes approached "the hump", I could see a mountain directly in front of us extending into the clouds. I couldn't believe the B-25 wasn't changing course to go around the mountain as any fighter pilot would have done. He continued on an unaltered course into the clouds, and, stupidly, I wasn't close enough in formation to maintain visual contact with the B-25. Here I am the first airplane on the right totally disoriented in the clouds with five other airplanes extending to my right. I wasn't quick enough to go on instruments, and besides, I had never flown on actual instrument conditions. I had many hours of instrument training in a Link Trainer; many hours of flying a P-40 and a P-51 during sunlit days with a hood over me in the cockpit with an observer pilot flying beside me, but there was always enough peek spots around the hood that you were never in any danger if you failed to rely on your needle, ball, and airspeed. In an instant I realized I was in a spin in the clouds somewhere over the Himalayas with my last memory of a mountain peak below me. I tried to jettison the canopy in order to bail out, but no effort on my part would release it. Many years later I learned

through the Jung I saw younner, a news cener
of the Flying Tigers of the 14th Air Force,
that this was a defect of this model P-51
under stress, the canopy would not release.
Just as quickly as this started, it ended
with me headed straight down. I had
stopped the spin. Below was a beautiful
green sunlit valley with a deep gorge and a
large river. Could this be heaven? It was
beautiful enough to be. Fortunately, the
valley was deep enough that I miraculously
pulled out of the dive before crashing.
There wasn't another airplane in sight.
I had killed five innocent pilots! I
was remorseful, ashamed and devastated.
I knew the course to Kunming, China where
Gen. Chennault had his headquarters, and now
I could fly by visual contact without
getting into the clouds. In all that dis-
tance on into China I never saw another
airplane until I landed at Chungking, the
airfield a few miles south of Kunming
on a large lake with a tall mountain
on the opposite side of the airfield.
I had reached my destination in China

When I landed, I couldn't believe
the reaction of the pilots on the ground
who greeted me. I had not too long ago
killed five young American fighter pilots,
due to my ineptness. They greeted me
like a hero and seemed truly glad to see
that I was alive, since I had arrived at
the base some interval after they had. The
entire twelve other pilots were there. No

one made me feel guilty I guess because as fighter pilots they could see how the situation occurred, and they, having been flying wing positions in all their flights, were used to flying in close formation. Could my mid-air collision in Florida have had any effect on my not flying in close enough to the B-25? I really think it did.

We new arrivals reported to 14th Air Force headquarters in Kunming. On the way it was like a dream world with shriveled up old ladies with tightly bound feet carrying heavy loads over their shoulders on pogo sticks, carts pulled by oxen, masses of foot traffic moving in both directions on the road, motorcycles with sidecars, ancient buses with strange contraptions fastened to the rear which were their wood burning power source, an occasional staff car and a few ancient non military cars.

At headquarters in Kunming we were assigned to our various squadrons. I had left Florida with my friend, Richard Davis, a superb pilot. We knew we would be assigned to the same squadron and were both devastated when it didn't happen. We ended up in different parts of China.

I was assigned to the 74th Fighter Squadron of the 23rd Fighter Group, which would have been my choice because it was the outgrowth of the AVG and was known for its many successful missions and air victories against the Japanese in China.

Another SNAFU and miracle. For two years I had been flying off airfields not much above sea level. I can't remember at any time in my training being told that a take off from a runway 6,300 feet above sea level was any different. Common sense and a simple knowledge of physics should have prevailed, but it didn't, and I made another mistake. I tried to get airborne quickly as I was used to doing, but I could tell something was radically wrong. My take off run was taking too long and the end of the runway was rapidly approaching with a lake as my destination. I forced the A-51 into the air in a near stall and had the feeling a crash was inevitable. But another miracle — I became airborne over the lake. The rarefied air at high altitudes of course require a longer take-off run.

We flew to Luliang to the east of Kunming where the 23rd Fighter Group headquarters was located. The 23rd Fighter Group consisted of three Squadrons, 74th, 75th and 76th all located at different airfields in southeast China. Those of us going to the 74th were headed for Kanchow. Due to bad weather ahead, we had to land at Linchow where the 76th was stationed. Linchow remained closed in by bad weather for four days during which time we spent some time each night in water logged slit trenches when Japanese bombers came over dropping bombs, but never hitting anything. They were coming from Canton. How they were

able to fly at night whenever we couldn't
fly during the day I'm not sure. I guess
the clouds would lift at night and come
back down at daybreak. The bombing
raids were of short duration with
mostly one bomber coming over each night,
so our time in the slit trenches was
of short duration. During our stay at
Liuchow an entertainment group including
Jinx Falkenberg, an American tennis star
at the time, Pat O'Brian and a group of
three musicians entertained us nightly.

On Nov. 1, 1944 we attempted to fly
to Kanchow, but had to turn back to
Liuchow due to ground level clouds ahead.
Wayne Bernard Fudge was born Nov. 1, 1944,
but I didn't learn of it until a month
later. Dad sent the wire the day our
son was born, but it took that long
for even a wire to reach us in China.
Letters took much longer.

We remained at Liuchow another
seven days and the situation was getting
very critical. At this time the Japanese
were making a concerted effort to reach
Canton and had previously taken our
airfields to the north of Liuchow. If
they could reach Canton they would have
southeast China where Kanchow was
located completely surrounded.

The Japanese had already caused us
to evacuate airfields at Hengyang, Lingling,
and Kweichow. Now they were closing in
on Liuchow. The 74th had been stationed

at Kweilin and went to Kanchow when it was evacuated.

November 7, 1944 we had to evacuate Luchow regardless of the weather. We would be entering clouds just as soon as we left the runway and immediately be forced onto instruments, which was a real challenge to a fighter pilot. We were to take off two planes at a time, a leader and a wing man. Although I had over 1,000 hours in a P-40 or P-51 by this time, and was a Captain, I was assigned to be the wing man of a young Lieutenant with maybe a few hundred hours fighter time because of his China flying experience. By then I was much more cautious, and I don't know how I did it, but as we took off in close formation and entered the clouds, things just didn't seem right and I guess I glanced at my instruments rather than keep my eyes on my young leader, and I could tell he was in a climbing turn rather than a straight course as he should have been. I purposely started flying a straight course on instruments rather than stay with my leader. When I finally reached our destination of Luliang, I learned that my leader had crashed into a mountain and was killed.

I reached a spot in the overcast where there was a cloud layer above me and below me, so I was able to fly toward Luliang without the use of instruments. After flying

long enough that I should have been at my destination, I was still in the open layer of clouds looking for an opening to get below them. I decided to call on my radio for a fix so I would know how close I was to Luliang. This was a common technique for lost pilots in the U.S. a voice advised me to transmit for a minute and then gave me a vector to fly to Luliang. When I was near Luliang there was an opening in the clouds and I could see the runway. When I landed and told this to the other pilots, they laughed at me as if I were nuts and said there was no equipment in China to give a lost pilot a fix. The technique used was to buzz a village and the Chinese network which was very efficient by then would report an airplane in their area that was obviously lost and the pilot would be given the direction to the nearest U.S. base, something I had not been told before.

I never mentioned this incident again until sometime after I returned home. I told the story many times during the following years and convinced myself that I hadn't actually heard a voice giving me directions but that God had put the vector in my mind that got me safely to Luliang.

In recent years I wrote the story to the Jing Bao Journal, a newsletter of the 14th Air Force Association, and I received a

reply from a Navy radio operator who said he was with a unit on the China east coast that had the capability. His outfit was not a part of the 14th Air Force but was to assist Navy pilots involved in the retaking of the Philippines, I still call it one of my life's miracles, of which there have been many.

On November 12, 1944 we started for Kanchow in bad weather once again, but we were able to find an opening in the clouds and fly above them. The weather got so bad that we had to land Chichang where the 75th Squadron was stationed rather than continue on east to Kanchow. I was thrilled. My good friend Billy Johnson from Pinellas had gone to China several months before and was assigned to the 75th. Rhea and I were seated "within the ribbons" when Billy married Mopsy White, and they got an apartment just across the walkway from us in the Hegrado Apartments in St. Petersburg, Florida. We had many good times together playing bridge and going on picnics at scenic spots in Florida. However, Billy was away on detached service, I can't remember where, but I suspect he had gone back to India to ferry a new airplane to China, which was frequently

done. However, thrill of trucks, Kelly had an air mattress on his bed, which was quite a luxury, and I slept in his bed the three days we were in Chickiang waiting for the weather to clear so we could continue to Kanchow.

In route to Kanchow we flew over Lingling which the Japanese had taken from us a few weeks earlier, and I saw my first flak and knew that at last I was in combat. We pilots of the 74th were flying top cover for a flight of 75th pilots who were strafing the airfield at Lingling. After giving this support to the 75th we continued on to our destination of Kanchow without incident. I flew my first mission in China three days later.

From Kanchow we could fly missions in all directions since we were in a pocket surrounded by the Japanese. Our Squadron Commander, Pappy Herbst, was an ace, having flown with the British in England before going to China. He had shot down Germans as well as Japanese. Pappy chose the most lucrative targets for the 74th. To the south we could attack Hong Kong and Canton. To the

past there were many targets along the coast and shipping in the Formosa Strait. To the north we could reach Hankow, Nanking and Shanghai.

Most of my missions from Kanchow were to attack shipping, air fields, railroads and bridges.

The most outstanding mission I flew out of Kanchow was about one month after arriving there. On December 10th Captains Brown, Finberg, Fudge and Lieutenant Cole flew to a grass runway one evening south of Kanchow to fly a mission to Canton before dawn on December 11th. We took in pairs, Brown and Finberg the first element and Fudge and Cole the second element. This take off was most difficult to accomplish for two reasons. First, our only reference for take off was the lights of a jeep at the end of this short grass strip. Second, when the P-51 started a straight run down the grass strip, you couldn't see the lights of the jeep until you attained enough speed to raise the tail, and then you could finally see the lights that had been hidden by the engine of the P-51 before.

We reached Canton at 5:47 a. m. in total darkness, what a sight - lighted

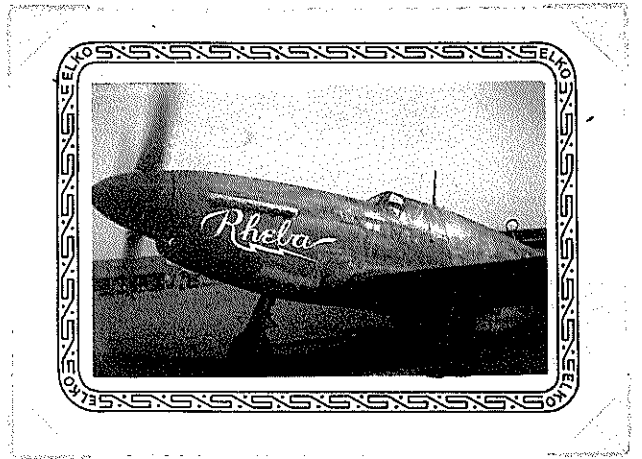
barracks and airplanes along the runway being preflighted and only visible by the flame of their exhaust. You couldn't tell if they fighters or bombers. We made several passes over the barracks and lined up airplanes without receiving any return ground fire. The Chinese reported that we killed 40 pilots and 100 ground troops as well as 4 bombers and 16 fighters destroyed.

The next important mission was on December 25th to Nanking, where I saw another land mark as important as the pyramids in Egypt and the Taj Mahal in India that I had seen on the way to China. This land mark was the Sun Yat Sen Memorial which I had heard about and seen pictures of. In 1989 on our trip to China I was happy again as a result of getting to visit this tomb of Sun Yat Sen which I had flown over in 1944. On this mission I shot down a Japanese Tony, a fighter airplane, when I attacked him, he must not have seen me. He took no evasive action and was an easy target. After I fired on him he continued in a slow descending curve and crashed and burned. I assume I killed the pilot rather than disabled his airplane.

The third important mission was two days later on December 27, 1944, once again to Canton. On this mission I shot down a

Tojo fighter. This time the damage was to the airplane because the pilot bailed out and landed in a rice paddy. I also destroyed a Lily bomber on the ground.

This is the P-51 assigned to me at Kanchow. My crew chief, Art Holben, had his wife's name, Edith, on the other side



after I had been at Kanchow a little over two months we were causing the Japanese so much grief that their ground troops moved toward Kanchow, and there was no Chinese army in the area to defend our airbase.

Once again we had to evacuate an air base in bad weather. The transport plane containing all our flying records crashed in the bad weather as we left Kanchow headed for Luliang. I see by my log book that it was a four hour thirty minute flight above the clouds.

I need to mention that we had excellent facilities at Kanchow. It wasn't Florida, but for China where all our other quarters were tents, Kanchow was

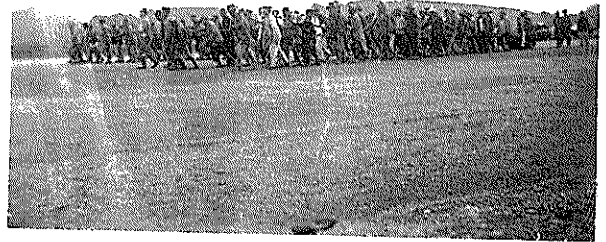
a country club base. It had been built by the Russians who had come to China in the 1930's to assist the Chinese against the brutal attack from the Japanese. We even had heated showers and flushing toilets - an unknown at all the other bases I saw. Our quarters were two one story buildings. Next to the quarters was a mess hall. In front of these three buildings was a recreation hall where we had pop corn and played games. We had a pop corn pepper made by a local tin smith in Kanchow and one of the pilots had pop corn sent from home.

We evacuated Kanchow on January 22, 1945 and remained at Luliang until March 27th. This was a very boring time as we flew no missions out of Luliang. We played all sorts of games and spent one week at a rest camp on a beautiful lake between Luliang and Kunming. Luliang was a huge base with a large contingent of support personnel. It was even a larger base than Kunming. There was an active group of personnel who put on frequent entertainment for us such as plays and musical programs.

On March 27th we moved to a base

that had been specifically built for our squadron. It was located to the northwest of Liuchow, the first airbase I had evacuated. These bases were all built entirely by man and woman power. Women would crush rocks with a hammer. Men would spread the rock on the runway and pour mud over them. Dozens of men would pull a huge roller over the runway to smooth it.

coolies pulling
the roller on
the new airstrip
at Tushan, China.



The air field at Tushan had been built by taking a hill Δ and cutting through it \square so as you took off it was much like taking off a Navy carrier with walls on each side in the middle of the runway and with fifty foot or more drop offs at each end.

I flew missions from Tushan to the Liu River between Kweilin and Liuchow destroying boats, bridges, infantry and cavalry. I even flew one five hour fifteen minute mission from Tushan to Hong Kong where I destroyed five barges on the West River.

I was Squadron Operations Officer at Tuskan. I had been promoted to Major while there. I was there about three months.

My tent
mate,
Paul Crews,
from Durant,
Okla.



The P-51
assigned to
me at Tuskan.



Art Holben was my
crew chief at both
Kanchow and Tuskan.
at Tuskan pilots re-
ceived a liquor ration.
I gave mine to Art
which made us great
friends, remaining so
until his death a few years ago.



The war in China was winding down due to the outstanding success of the 14th Air Force. Our squadron began receiving an influx of pilots, and when two Majors were assigned to the 74th who outranked me, I was surplus.

On July 3, 1945 I was sent back to Karachi, India where I was assigned to a base that trained Chinese pilots and remained there until the end of the war in August, a period of about two months. My friend, Richard Davis, was there also. He had been shot down in China, and a pilot was not allowed to fly missions after being shot down and rescued by the Chinese behind enemy lines.

The Chinese Air Force awarded all of us Chinese Pilot Wings for our work training their pilots. I cherished these wings highly, but they were taken when our home was burglarized a few years ago.

I returned home by ship from Calcutta, India through the Suez Canal, Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean, landing in New York.

In 1946 I opened a Seven-Up Bottling plant in Clinton, Okla. During the

next two years I flew very few times. I had remained in the Air Force Reserves and went to Tinker Field in Oklahoma City where I had access to an AT-6 and a P-51D. These were flights through which I relieved some of the fatigue from the long hours of the bottling business.

I had chosen the bottling business over going into the motorcycle business with my Dad with the expectation of making enough money to own my own airplane. Although I seldom got to fly, it was still my passion.

Tinker discontinued having airplanes for inactive reserves to fly after a couple of years, and my rank of Major kept me from getting in an active reserve unit.

From that point on during the ten years I was in Clinton my flying consisted of renting various airplanes at the airport in Clinton and at an airport at May Avenue and Britton Road in Oklahoma City. I also joined the Civil Air Patrol in Cordell, Okla. where I had access to small aircraft; airplanes I flew during those years

in Clinton were Cessna 140, 110, 112 and 152, Navion, Taylorcraft, Aeronica L-3, Bonanza, and Luscomb Silvaire. The most hours of flying were in the Civil Air Patrols L-16A which was a small tandem airplane. To show how small it was, I had taken Mr. Radley, Dairy's Dad, for a ride and flew north from Cordell over Clinton and on to the north over the farmland of the area. Not realizing that a strong south wind had come up, when I turned south to return to Cordell, I was stunned to see that we were practically stationary over the ground below us. The top speed of the L-16A was little more than the south wind velocity, but we made it back to Cordell before running out of gas.

After ten years of owning and operating the Seven-Up Bottling Co. in Clinton, any hopes of owning an airplane were gone. I was \$30,000.00 in debt even after selling the business to the Dr. Pepper bottler in Elk City, O. Bla. In retrospect I am sure I

would have come closer to having my own airplane if I had gone into the motorcycle business with Dad, which I finally did in 1956.

My last flight as a pilot was in a Cessna 182 in Oklahoma City on December 21, 1966.

Written the summer of 2000.