

War Stories (cont.)

McCarthy was ready to leave the ship when he discovered the wrong tuning unit in his transmitter was preventing communication attempts. Once corrected everything went fine and they arrived in Dakar on schedule

E. J. was surprised natives did the gas and oil chores. They borrowed a key from another crew to lock the plane. After chow and briefing they attended a show "The Horn Blows At Midnight" with Jack Benny and Alexis Smith.

E. J. discovered native thatch huts, built on stilts, contained GI beds (thick mattresses and mosquito nets) provided a good night's rest.

July fourth at Roberts Field was a disaster. The water was warm and scarce, the food was abdominal, lodging the worst yet. The only saving grace was the ability to buy a wife in town for \$5.00. None of the crew exercised this option. An additional shock was the dirty, smelly towns and the inhabitants as well.

The Navigator got into a tiff with E. J. over meeting check points but was gracious enough to admit he was wrong and apologized to E.J. Good to have two people besides the pilots plotting and verifying their positions.

The ride to Marakech at 9,000' listening to BBC was great until they encountered sand storms and ferocious winds, a forecast of what was to come. A phenomenon not encountered in our theatre was the "over-rides" which blocked transmissions. If it wasn't one thing it was something else to tax them.

It was Cairo before E.J.'s crew discovered the beggars endemic to the entire region. Buildings were very nice but dust and the overpowering smell of horse droppings did nothing to encourage taking up residence. They did enjoy the drinks on the front veranda of the famous Shepards Hotel. Good drinks and soft chairs. Here they met magicians who surpass anything in the U.S. and the boys selling, or stealing, anything and everything. Brown shoes got a black mudge if the shoe shine offer was declined.

On their flight over Iran to Abadan the sun shone through the engine fire amber light alert so they thought they had an engine fire

They're in Karachi on the 12th of July and leave for Agra on the 13th. This passage was a continuous battle with wind, rain and static. (Sound

familiar? E.J. makes no mention of the slaughter house between the river and the landing strip."

Arrived in Hathazar by way of Ondal (bases I've not heard of) two days later with no let up in the fowl weather.

THE SHORT-LIVED AND ILL-FATED C-87 PASSENGER OPERATION AT CHABUA

by Warner F. "Tex" Rankin

C-46 2420 was en route from Chabua to Kunming on Aug. 2, 1943 with a load of 20 passengers. After losing an engine, and not being able to maintain altitude, the pilot ordered all aboard to bail out. (Complete details on the rescue of those aboard are available on page 17 of Chick Marrs Quinn excellent book, THE ALUMINUM TRAIL)

One of the survivors was Eric Severeid, the well known newscaster, who was listed on the passenger manifest as "War Correspondent". Apparently after Mr. Severeid returned to the USA, he decried the fact that personnel were being flown over the most dangerous air route in the world (The Himalayas and Japanese-occupied Burma) in twin-engine aircraft. He must have struck a chord at a high level. In early Oct. Jorhat was directed to transfer two C-87's and four crews to Chabua to transport passengers from the Polo Grounds to China

On Oct. 9 1943, Captains Earl Perry, Kenneth O. Elkin, Ed Fallon and I flew our flight crews and C-87's 42-107268 and 269 to Chabua on a permanent change of station. We planned to make two flights each day. Perry and Elkin would alternate on 269 and Fallon and I would alternate on 268. Earl was ill on Oct. 11, so I took his flight that day. I also offered to again fly his 269 on the 13th since Earl was still DNIF: however. Ken said "Tex. you have made three round trips to China in the last three days. I will take 269 tomorrow"

Ken Elkin took off from Chabua around 9 AM on the 13th. He was intercepted by Jap fighter aircraft 30 minutes later, was shot down and crashed in the dense Burmese jungle. (See page 36 of THE ALUMINUM TRAIL.)

We also lost our Chabua base commander at about this time. Col. Renshaw overshot a runway in