

## War Stories (Cont.)

Later, on his way to Chabua, Gick picked up two pilots in Agra, Alfred Wood who became General in time and C.P. Williams, returning from leave. They became fast friends.

Dick's C-46 was one of the first to arrive at Chabua.

At midnight on Wednesday, 16 Nov, Dick, Lt. Hotard, Sgt Haug and Cpl Halleson left for Kunming with the usual load. It was one of those stormy nights when no two compasses anywhere showed the proper heading to Kunming. Finally, at 9:15 am, out of gas they bailed out. Dick became entangled with the chute shrouds and landed so hard he almost broke his back.

He and Hotard walked about two miles to a village. Helleson was there already. They slept all afternoon and night, after hot tea and boiled egg soup, in a barn.

Thursday, 18 Nov, after a boiled egg breakfast, they were led to the plane to recover whatever they wanted then hiked over almost impossible trails about 7 miles to a poor woman's hut. More boiled eggs and tea. Parachutes were sheets and blankets. Provincial soldiers were guides and body guards. Bearers carried the gear.

They left at 10 am 19 Nov and hiked five miles to a ferry where they had eggs and chocolate, crossed the river and walked another 5 miles to Pankio where they tried without success to call Kunming. They made some cocoa and ate some chicken prepared by the Chinese. Unused to hiking their feet were tired. They spent the night here.

Bearers were conscripted by the soldiers and were changed daily, or more often sometimes, so Saturday 20 Nov was a late start and the longest nonstop hike, 26 miles on fairly level ground, to Loping, a small Chinese garrison.

Here they met the governor and town banker, Mr. Peng. They sent a message to Kunming, stayed at the banker's house where they ate dinner with chop sticks and went to bed. It has been three days now without a change of clothes.

Sunday, Nov 21, Mr. Peng called Chanyi and a truck was sent to pick them up. Chinese Lt. Lu, US Sgts Buck, Foster and McReynolds in a 6x6 with

blankets and C-rations finally arrived. They ate at the Governor's and spent the night.

22 Nov it was 108 miles in 8 hours over the roughest road Dick had ever experienced to Chanyi Airbase where they met Major Ray, Lt. Brice Thomas, and others had a wonderful supper at the mess hall and a very comfortable sleep in the Base Hotel.

Tuesday, 23 Nov, Dick waited all day for the transportation from Kunming which never arrived, looked the base over, had his picture taken for a movie by Lt. Thomas Jones of the 15th Combat Camera Unit and wrote a short piece to go with it.

Wednesday, 24 Nov, Dick borrowed some clothes, took a bath, had a Chinese barber cut his hair and prowled the base. Sent another wire to Kunming. Hotard brought his diary up to date and gave it to Lt. Thomas. Thursday, Nov 25, Thanksgiving. Dick had six fried eggs and pancakes for breakfast. Just as Chanyi was going to have turkey and fixings the plane from Kunming arrived. Dick's crew and the planes crew managed to get a piece of pie and slice of turkey before heading to Kunming and a punk dinner.

Friday, 26 Nov in Kunming was more pictures, with a C-47, and riding all over Kunming Airbase to take them. Deadheaded back to Chabua in a C-87.

Dick was glad to be back with his friends but his back still hurt and he was fed up with parachute jumping and walkouts.

*Editor: This is a two part narrative. More of his 31 hand written page narrative will be in the Summer Newsletter.*

### Excerpt from a letter to member Ruth Heckinger

from Frank Slater

12 Roundwood Grove  
Hutton, Brentwood, Essex, CM13

2 NE, England 27 April, 2003.

I served with the British Army in India and Burma from the summer of 1942 to the end of 1945. For part of 1943 and 1944.