

War Stories (Cont.)

I was part of a small group of signalers stationed at Ft. Hertz, Northern Burma. During 1943 the Japanese bombed a nearby native village and seriously injured many of the villagers who had been watching the flight of these strange bright birds. The victims were mostly women and girls.

The Kachins knew nothing of the ways of the West, never used money and made their living from the land. There were no roads, only trails made by elephants or other animals. It was an extremely isolated part of the world entirely enclosed from the North, West and East by high mountains and jungle. The air bridge between India and China over the Hump went over Ft. Hertz.

Darkness had fallen, when in response to our plea, an American medical team flew in to provide surgery and succor. The flight, especially at that time of night, was a particularly hazardous undertaking over the high and treacherous mountains and all praise should go to those who undertook it.

The surgeon and nurses worked all night in a simple hut where I had rigged up rudimentary theatre lights powered by my petrol-electric generator and with reflectors made of bright tin sheets cut from the containers of our supply of dried potato. Naturally, I have always wondered who these medical people were who came to the rescue, and what their side of the story was. Recently, searching the web for information about Ft. Hertz, I came across a reference to the 803rd Medical Air Evacuation Transport Squadron on the site of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

The interviewee, Mrs. Betty Godin, mentioned that they had been called to an incident in Ft. Hertz and that is how I came to focus my efforts on the 803rd.

If you served with the 803rd if you have any information about the incident described above I would be very pleased to hear about it, or perhaps you would know how I could get in touch with anyone from the 803rd?

Sincerely,
Frank Slater

Editor: Can anyone help?

A Mutiny of One

by Milton Golin

Editor: As reported by Robert Kurson in the REPORTER.

In 1942 at age 21 Milton was a police reporter at the City News Bureau of Chicago where it seemed he might remain forever.

Milton approached an Army recruiter who convinced Milt that the Air Transport Command (ATC) urgently needed navigators for the delivery of bombers; that navigators used compasses, slide rules, the stars, sun and instinct, so Milt signed up. After several months training Milton graduated to an ATC base near Chicago, where navigators got extra training to fly the longest transoceanic routes, the ones where airplanes sometimes reached their destinations with only fumes in their gas tanks and well worn rosary beads in the cockpits.

Milton's job was to navigate from the point of departure in the United States across the Atlantic to the European shore, deadhead back to the US and repeat with a new crew in another delivery.

Milton flew seven missions without incident. Before each mission he and the new crew met at a flight briefing at which the details of that day's flight were discussed.

On Milt's eighth delivery, a brand new B-25 from Natal, Brazil to Ascension Island, an eight hour hop of over 1,200 miles where they would refuel, remain overnight (RON) and proceed the next day to Accra, Gold Coast, Africa, the plane's pilot failed to attend the briefing.

The navigator sat behind the cockpit on the left side and the flight engineer sat behind the copilot across from the navigator.

Ascension Island is just a speck in the ocean on a heading from Natal of about 100 degrees with on course corrections to compensate for wind drift which required constant position monitoring and plotting. It is not until the plane is close to the island that the ADF (Automatic Direction Finder) will pick up the Ascension Island radio signal. These computations and course readings are given to the pilot, the plane's crew captain, for his heading confirmation or change if necessary.