

War Stories

Monday, Nov. 29: After a pancake breakfast I spent most of day with Captain Ross trying to complete the promotion forms. Sun bathed. After dinner listened to records with Bacot, Spurlock and Cristoforo. Went to movie to see Joe E. Brown in Chatterbox. Need to get a new chute fitted so I can get back to flying.

Tuesday, Nov 30: Went to Ops to help make schedules. Got paid 583 rupees. Will send \$300. home soon. Read Perry Mason. Woody and I may take two plane loads of personnel west from Calcutta tomorrow. Shreve and Capt. Ross sweating out going-home orders. Woody next month, I guess.

Wednesday, Dec 1, 1943: Flew 25 soldiers to Kaliakunda. Stalled my return to spend another night in Calcutta at Grand Hotel. Shot four landings with Ronny who I'm trying to check out as first pilot. Woody, Marshall, Ronny and I went to Firpo's to eat. Ronny got sick and left before eating. Woody and I went to see Gloria Warren in "Always In My Heart."

Thursday, Dec 2: We bought some chocolate candies and returned to Chabua.

Friday, Dec 3: *From this date to Dec 27 his entries are the same:* work in Operations, sun bathing, movies, bull sessions, scheduling flight-pay runs, and eating.

Tuesday, 28 December: Met Breitschoff to discuss Operations. At the pilot meeting tonight we had a pep talk on icing conditions.

Editor's Note: *For the next few days routines change little except Richard packs his own chute, checks out in a L-5 and visits with two pilots who have a German Mauser rifle and played a little with the leopard cubs.*

Sat., 1 Jan. '44: Lost 7 C-46s last night. Four in the valley and 3 over the Hump. Two were crashes, the rest were bailouts. Capt Perry with 26 passengers and crew in a C-87 crashed at Sookerating after two passes at 1:30 AM. Perry was severely burned. Sixteen others were killed. Only five of the survivors could sit up. Perry had a premonition he was going to die in a crash and written his girl friend to that effect.

*To conclude as Part 3 of 3 in the
Fall/Winter 2004 NL.*

Editor's Note: *About Breitschoff mentioned in the above article. He was tall, slender, a Kelly Field Army Air Corps graduate Reserve Officer, recalled from United Air Lines for Hump duty. One of our flights in a C-47 was on a boring valley run out of Mohanbari. When we spotted a British Spitfire base he decided to land and chat with someone about Spitfires. We landed. No one anywhere around so at the end of our landing roll he taxied to a revetment. Visual inspection led to his climbing in which led to engine start. Very smooth in-line engine. He moved forward a few feet and attempted a right turn. He had not unlocked the tail wheel so it snapped. We both pushed the Spitfire back into the revetment.*

Breitschoff left a signed apology under the windshield wiper and we taxied our C-47 back up the runway and resumed our valley run. Never saw a soul on that British base. Two weeks later Breitschoff was reprimanded and an all-bases order succinctly stated British bases were off limits to us Yanks. Breitschoff has since passed on.

ADVENTURES OF HUDSON DOWNING

Hudson Urquart Downing has a bio in Vol. II, China Air-lift-The Hump. He also submits the following: Hudson was born 26 February 1923 in Smiths Station, Ohio. Hudson was drafted 30 December 1942 at age 18 into the Army Air Corps.

During Advanced pilot training he and five other volunteers received specialized training in jungle warfare tactics, intelligence gathering, Morse code and cargo loading. After 17 months of intensive training Hudson and his five companions enjoyed a leisurely flight in a C-54 via Portugal's Azores, Algeria and Cairo where they had a two week rest stop. Eventually they arrived in Karachi where Hudson stayed and the rest went to Calcutta. From Karachi Hudson went to Chabua by C-47 where he was stationed between April '43 and Nov '44.

His first Chabua briefing: "Your ETA in China is four hours from take-off if there are no problems. Flying above the real jungle you will encounter fog, torrential rain, sleet, snow, dark clouds and shifting wind currents." "The weather between here and Kunming, China, and through-out the Himalayas (The HUMP) is the worst flying weather in the world. Icing