



ADVANCE OF THE FLYING TIGERS

By WALTER E. PENTECOST and JAMES J. SLOAN

Like every good show, there is an advance man who goes ahead to set up for the coming event. One of the best "shows" ever put on by an American fighting unit was by the A. V. G., the "Flying Tigers." Walter W. Pentecost was advance man for the American Volunteer Group. His job was to proceed to Rangoon and supervise the assembly of the P-40 airplanes used by the A. V. G. in defense of the Burma Road. Later this turned into the trying task of cannibalizing and refurbishing of combat casualty aircraft, but that is another part of the story.

A great deal has been written about the Flying Tigers, but the account of the operation at Rangoon in the months of May through November is not so well known. Pentecost was the first of the crew, recruited in the United States, to arrive, having been hired by The Intercontinent Corporation to put into operational condition the 100 P-40 airplanes procured for them in 1941.

He left San Francisco on 24 April 1941 and returned to New York on 22 April 1942. The illustrations shown here are all from his camera, made during his year in Burma and China. His story was taken from tape recordings and a series of discussions held in 1969. Typically, the interview opened as Pentecost was explaining the locations of the A. V. G. operations. Editor.

"We did our training at Toungoo. That was our A. V. G. headquarters up until the 7th of December; then the Old Man moved to his HQ at Kunming. Some of the Group's operations moved up to Magwe, which is here (pointing to map), and set up a new strip after being bombed out at Rangoon. Later we retreated to Loiwing, and finally to Kunming. Here are pictures of our airplanes being assembled at Rangoon airport."

He stopped for a moment to look away, as if trying to recall some long-forgotten incident of the past, then his voice quickened as he resumed:

"Before Pearl Harbor two of the boys were killed in training, and we lost a lot of airplanes, but it was a never-to-be forgotten experience. It was hot, and dirty, and there was a lot of work, but we had a good Group. The Old Man kept up a fine esprit de corps, though he had to fire a bunch of them. After the 18th of December I moved back up to Loiwing, and eventually got up to Kunming."

Walter Pentecost is still red-headed, some gray, medium height, and a little stouter than some of the pictures show. He has been around aircraft all of his life since he learned to fly at Indianapolis in 1927, at age 16. In between times he has been a barnstormer, Allison engine specialist, B-24 flight test engineer, field representative on the F-102/F-106 program, and until recently was well along into the space age as project engineer on a portion of the MOL (Manned Orbiting Laboratory). He is now back again on airplanes, the Douglas A-4 Skyhawk. The year spent with the A. V. G., like all great adventures, was great while it lasted, but a relief once it was finished. His connection with The Intercontinent Corporation came because he was an Allison engine specialist, from training received at the Allison plant in Indianapolis in 1940.

Early in 1941 Pentecost had just arrived back at his job with North American Aviation in Los Angeles, having spent nine months learning from the ground up all of the details of the Allison engine, from raw material to test block. He happened to see an advertisement in the Los Angeles Times which said, "Aviation people, for work overseas, call this



number ——.” Like the rest of the young men who were to be recruited for the A.V.G., he had no idea of what this eventually would mean, but on investigation the pay sounded good, and it was something new. Walt telephoned the number and later reported to the temporary office of Andy Sargeant and Murph Gerald, CAMCO employees who were doing the interviewing, at Vail Field, Alhambra. CAMCO was the Central Aircraft Manufacturing Company, owned by Bill Pawley, which had a plant at Loiwing engaged in making airplanes for the Chinese government, but it was The Intercontinent Company, a related enterprise, that was doing the intermediary work for General Claire L. Chennault in recruiting the American Volunteer Group.

Walt’s oral interview with Sargeant and Gerald didn’t indicate at that time what would be the ultimate destination, but he did learn that a complete military-type group was being assembled, to include pilots, armorers, photographers, intelligence, administration, ground crew — all types necessary to maintain a pursuit airplane group in the field. Enlightenment came later, when an evening meeting of the accepted applicants from the Los Angeles area was held. Both Bill and Ed Pawley were there to give them the pitch. Pictures of the towns in Burma, the beautiful countryside, the peasants, and many scenes with water buffalos and pagodas were shown, but by this time, as Walt said, “I’d already made up my mind to go; I didn’t care what they showed me. It was something different, and I was ready.” (The heat, and the dust, and the filth didn’t show through on any of these films, of course.)

The “recruits” were offered pay scales from \$350 to \$500 per month, and on up to \$750 for squadron leader positions. At that time taxes were relatively low. An allocation could be taken each month for incidental expenses in Burma, and Pentecost said he took \$100 for

this and later was able to save money out of it. “I played poker a lot, too.”

Contracts were signed for a year. Walter Pentecost’s was with The Intercontinent Corp., later transferred over to CAMCO, though he didn’t realize it. After duly arranging immunization shots, methods of payment to his wife while he was to be gone, and separation from North American, Walt disposed of other minor affairs and departed. All arrangements for his travel had been made through the Thomas C. Cooke Co. by a man from Intercontinent. “We did nothing in these arrangements. They told us where to be, they got the tickets, we just got on a ship.” Walt left his wife, then pregnant, at home in Compton for the year abroad. His daughter was born about two months later.

In far off Burma the Japanese had already influenced the course of events drastically for the Chinese. As Japanese forces occupied large areas of China, eventually closing off the coast, the supply lines to China were restricted until only the country of Burma to the south held any possibility of access. The 1,500 mile long Burma Road was begun and eventually opened, to be temporarily disrupted by closing off Burma when Japanese diplomatic pressure was brought to bear on the British. But in late 1940 it was again reopened and the trickle of supplies begun anew in the winter of 1940-41.

The Japanese, however, were infiltrating the area to the east in Indo-China, by diplomatic pressures, by sub-rosa occupation, and by coercion of sympathetic native peoples. By December 1941, Japan was ready for an open occupation of Siam, and the Malay Peninsula.

Gen. Chennault had been placed in charge of China’s air defenses. In truth, it was a deteriorating situation because of the increasing Japanese occupation and strangulation of supplies, hence Chennault journeyed to Washington and with the help of Wellington Koo and T.V. Soong of China, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury, and White House confidantes Thomas Corcoran and Harry Hopkins, prevailed upon its leaders to permit the recruiting of the American Volunteer Group from among U.S. armed forces.

Eventually, with behind-the-scenes persuasion a quantity of 100 Curtiss Hawk type H-81-A-2 airplanes were released to Chennault. The airplanes had been originally scheduled for lend-lease to Sweden but with the fall of France in 1940 the British took over the allotment, and released them, in turn, to the A.V.G. Shipment of these was made through the Universal Trading Corp of New York City, and these were enroute to Rangoon harbor when Pentecost showed up there.

Walt left San Francisco on the S.S. MATSONIA bound for Honolulu, and there he went aboard the inaugural passenger flight of the Pan American Airways system from Honolulu to Singapore. Having known the Captain of that flight, Joe Barrows, from air show days some years before, Walt spent much of the time on the flight deck with the crew during the journey to Wake, Midway, Guam, Manila, and Singapore. It was one flight number, and one crew, all the way. In Honolulu he had run into Clyde Pangborn, also an acquaintance from the air shows, and Berndt Balchen, in the Moana Hotel. They arranged to rendezvous a few days later in Manila and sure enough, when Walt arrived at the Manila Hotel bar, there they were, setting up a few appropriate rounds for some hangar flying. Pangborn and Balchen were engaged in ferrying PBY Catalinas to the Philippines at the time.

The final leg of the trip was again by ship, the S.S. KARDIA. Pentecost found, in his initial contact with Walter Holiday, Rangoon representative for the shipper, that some

of the airplanes were there. In fact, more than a half dozen were already at the airport in crates and another nine were awaiting unloading. The rest were late, coming in two other freighters, and when they showed up they were to dock across the street from the Strand Hotel, so Pentecost made arrangements to stay there for several weeks.

There were no tools or forklifts of any kind and, this being Burma, with large numbers of expendable laborers, everything was done by hand. The only convenience, besides hand tools for the mechanical operations on the airplanes, was a large "A"-frame built near the assembly building for hoisting each fuselage while the wing was installed. Further, with the monsoon season there came the usual torrential rains, so the entire yard adjacent to the building was bricked over. Laborers set each brick in place by hand. The building itself, aside from its brick walls, was erected by the same laborers who scrambled up and down

the framework and roof like monkeys, tying the bamboo together with thongs; no nails were used.

Pentecost had arrived on May 23rd. Within a few days Chennault arrived from Kunming. Upon greeting Pentecost recalled their previous contacts at air shows when Chennault had headed the Army's flying exhibition team, the "Men on the Flying Trapeze." He told Walt he felt the assembly work was in good hands. An additional thrill came the same day. Soon after Chennault left, a messenger arrived from Rangoon with a cablegram, very terse but loaded with feeling;

COMPTON, CALIF. JUNE 4, TO WALTER
PENTECOST. CARE INTERCONTINENT CORP.
RANGOON. GIRL. BETTY PENTECOST.

One by one the Hawks, called P-40's by everyone engaged there, were removed from their crates and pushed, skidded, and hauled into place with the fuselage under the A-frame.

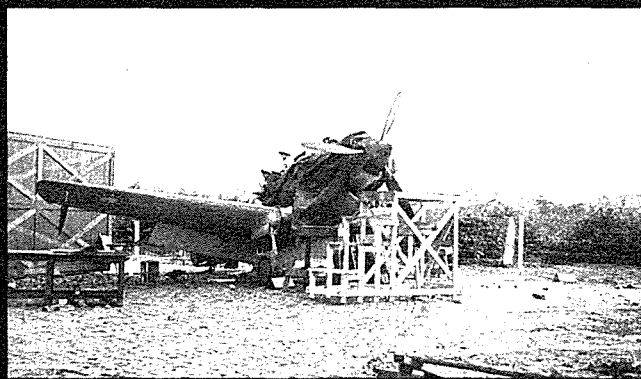
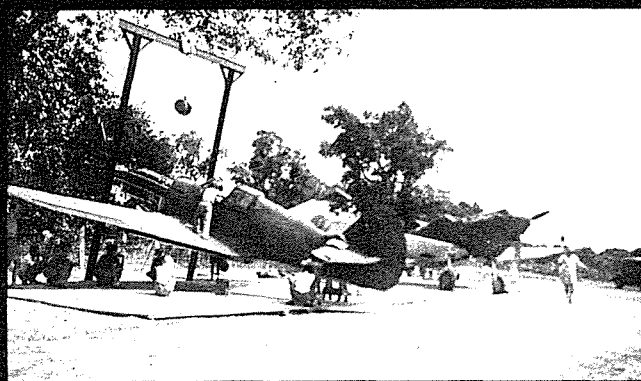
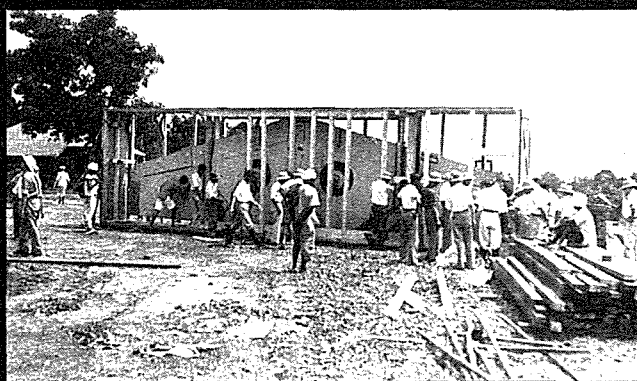
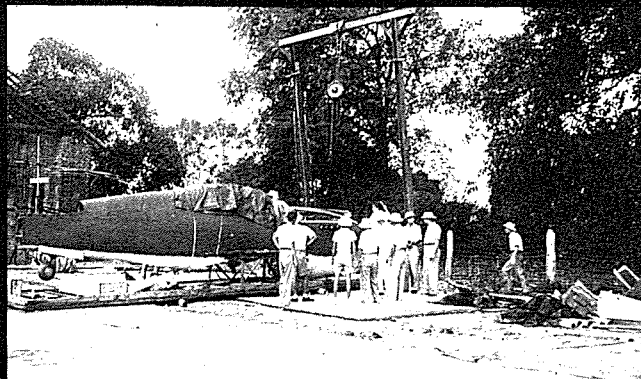
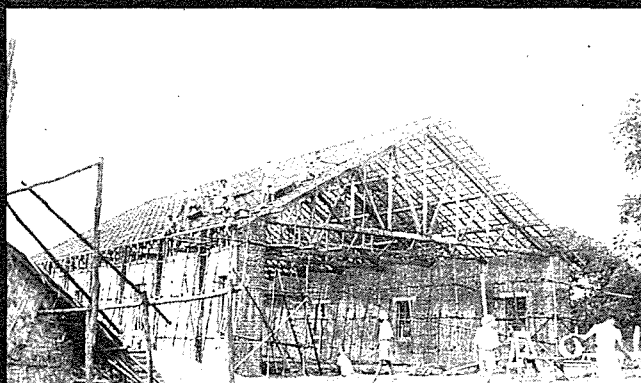
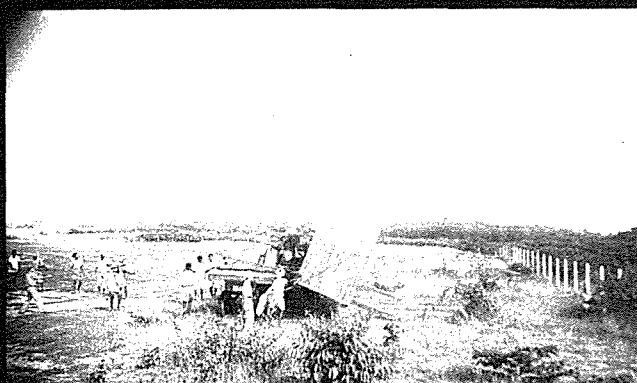
H81-A-2 AIRPLANES DELIVERED TO A.V.G. FROM RANGOON, IN ORDER OF DATE OF DELIVERY.

A.V.G. No.	Curtiss Seq. No.	Curtiss Ser.No.	Date Del'd.	Test Flown	Delivery Pilot	Note						
P-8124	689	15481	8-3	8-1	Glover	1	P-8193	873	15965	10-10	10-9	Kuykendall
P-8108	639	15431	8-7	7-23	Glover		P-8183	858	15950	10-10	9-18	Hedman
P-8126	696	15488	8-9	7-31	Glover	2	P-8171	838	15930	10-10	9-18	Rector
P-8102	627	15338	8-18	8-12	Olson		P-8132	717	15509	10-10	10-8	Christman
P-8103	628	15339	8-18	7-15	Cook		P-8181	855	15947	10-11	9-10	Mott
P-8105	632	15424	8-18	8-8	Atkinson		P-8199	879	15971	10-15	9-12	Schiel
P-8109	640	15432	8-20	8-1	Walroth		P-8147	794	15886	10-15	10-6	McMillan
P-8112	647	15439	8-20	7-24	Martin	3	P-8195	875	15967	10-15	9-15	Mangleburg
P-8113	652	15444	8-20	6-29	Little		P-8170	836	15928	10-17	9-16	Sawyer
P-8106	633	15425	8-21	7-8	Moss		P-8185	862	15954	10-17	10-15	Reed
P-8115	660	15452	8-22	8-16	Dupouy		P-8198	878	15970	10-17	9-15	McGarry
P-8118	668	15460	8-22	8-4	Neale		P-8179	852	15944	10-21	9-12	Jones
P-8122	682	15474	8-22	8-22	Sawyer		P-8182	857	15949	10-25	9-17	Walroth
P-8123	688	15480	8-22	8-8	Geselbracht		P-8129	709	15501	10-27	10-25	Newkirk
P-8114	653	15445	8-26	7-19	Newkirk		P-8111	646	15438	10-27	10-25	Olson
P-8178	850	15942	8-27	8-25	Brouk		P-8116	661	15453	10-29	10-14	Wright
P-8136	730	15522	8-28	7-16	Rushton		P-8121	681	15473	10-31	8-13	Merritt
P-8125	695	15487	8-28	7-25	Merritt		P-8160	819	15911	11-5	10-28	Hill
P-8119	674	15466	8-28	8-21	Swindle		P-8128	703	15495	11-7	11-4	Older
P-8117	667	15459	8-29	7-12	Probst	4	P-8191	871	15963	11-7	11-5	Jernstedt
P-8131	716	15508	8-30	8-27	Armstrong		P-8165	828	15920	11-9	11-8	Criz
P-8174	843	15935	8-30	8-20	Howard		P-8163	824	15916	11-10	11-10	Merritt
P-8107	637	15430	9-1	8-21	Petach	5	P-8150	800	15892	11-10	11-8	Hastey
P-8188	867	15959	9-1	8-23	Bacon		P-8197	877	15969	11-11	11-10	Hodges
P-8189	869	15961	9-1	8-23	Sandell		P-8168	833	15925	11-12	11-12	Mott
P-8200	880	15972	9-2	9-2	Wolf		P-8167	831	15923	11-12	11-11	Haywood
P-8190	870	15962	9-4	9-3	Shilling		P-8144	784	15876	11-12	11-11	Farrell
P-8172	839	15931	9-5	9-3	Bright		P-8166	829	15921	11-14	11-13	Geselbracht
P-8192	872	15964	9-5	9-3	Wright		P-8162	823	15915	11-14	11-13	Bartling
P-8110	641	15433	9-5	9-2	Howard		P-8141	763	15855	11-16	11-16	Hodges
P-8169	834	15926	9-6	9-4	Geselbracht		P-8138	742	15834	11-16	11-15	Bright
P-8120	675	15467	9-6	9-6	Mangleburg		P-8140	756	15848	11-16	11-15	Wright
P-8196	876	15968	9-8	9-8	Glover		P-8164	826	15918	11-16	11-15	Howard
P-8177	848	15940	9-11	9-6	Swindle		P-8145	790	15882	11-16	11-14	Hedman
P-8175	845	15937	9-11	9-3	Hodges		P-8152	804	15896	11-16	11-14	Greene
P-8187	865	15957	9-12	9-11	Martin		P-8154	808	15900	11-17	11-14	Liebolt
P-8186	863	15955	9-12	9-11	Kelleher		P-8151	802	15894	11-17	11-16	Little
P-8184	860	15952	9-15	9-12	Mott		P-8161	821	15913	11-19	11-17	Hastey
P-8180	853	15945	9-15	9-10	Sawyer		P-8149	798	15890	11-19	11-18	Smith
P-8173	841	15933	9-15	8-15	Criz		P-8148	796	15888	11-19	11-18	McMillan
P-8176	847	15939	9-18	9-13	Hastey		P-8153	806	15898	11-21	11-20	Paxton
P-8146	792	15884	9-20	9-18	Neale		P-8139	749	15841	11-22	11-13	Cole
P-8142	770	15862	9-22	9-22	Newkirk		P-8194	874	15966	11-25	11-24	Wolf
P-8155	810	15902	10-1	9-30	Shilling		P-8101	626	15337	11-28	11-26	Glover
P-8156	812	15904	10-2	10-1	Bacon		NOTES:					
P-8137	736	15828	10-2	10-1	Wolf		1. Returned from Toungoo by Newkirk with front thrust bearing trouble, used as test airplane for bearing "fix."					
P-8127	702	15494	10-4	10-4	Jones		2. Spun in by Hammer on 9-22.					
P-8159	818	15910	10-4	10-3	McMillan		3. Head-on collision 9-8. Armstrong killed. See P-8117.					
P-8135	729	15521	10-4	10-3	Schiel		4. Head-on collision with P-8112, 9-8. Bright safe, bailed out.					
P-8134	723	15515	10-4	10-1	Bright		5. Crashed in training. Schiel safe, bailed out, reported inverted spin.					
P-8130	710	15502	10-4	10-3	Smith		6. Crankshaft broke in flight, Roger Reynolds made dead stick landing at Mingaladon.					
P-8143	777	15869	10-7	10-2	Leibolt		7. Photo reconnaissance airplane, later fitted with camera, not intended to have armament, but two guns were left in place.					
P-8158	816	15908	10-7	9-22	Hill							
P-8133	722	15514	10-9	10-7	Smith							
P-8104	631	15423	10-9	10-6	Greene							

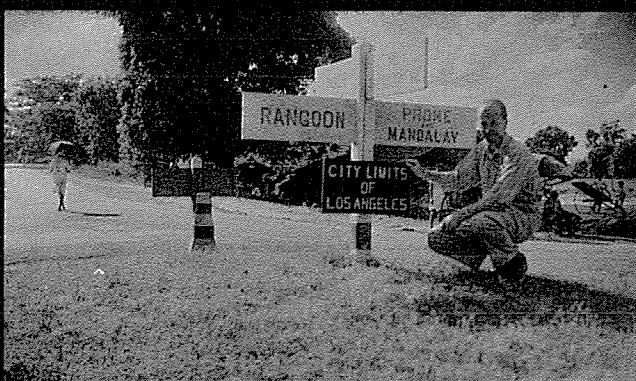
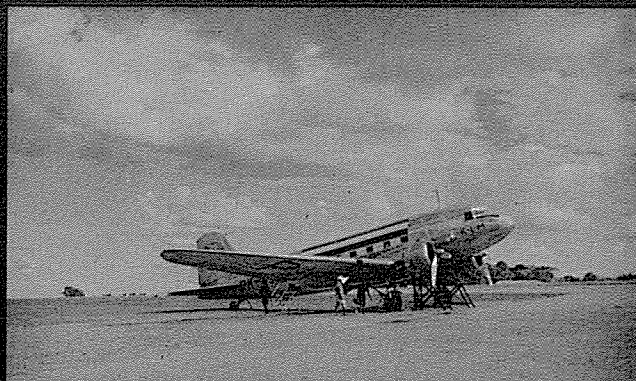
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NOTES:

1. Returned from Toungoo by Newkirk with front thrust bearing trouble, used as test airplane for bearing "fix."
2. Spun in by Hammer on 9-22.
3. Head-on collision 9-8. Armstrong killed. See P-8117.
4. Head-on collision with P-8112, 9-8. Bright safe, bailed out.
5. Crashed in training. Schiel safe, bailed out, reported inverted spin.
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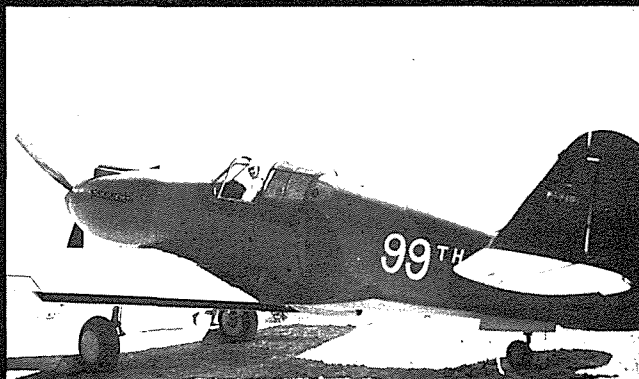
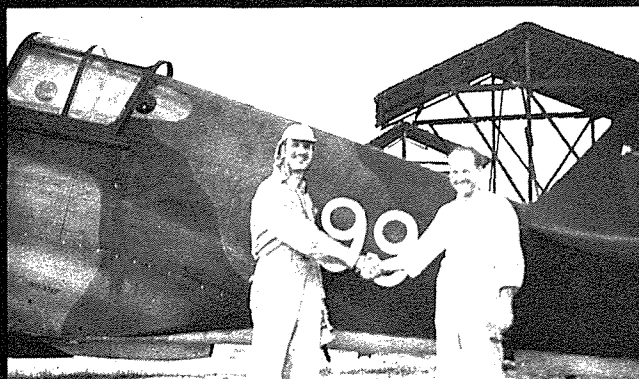
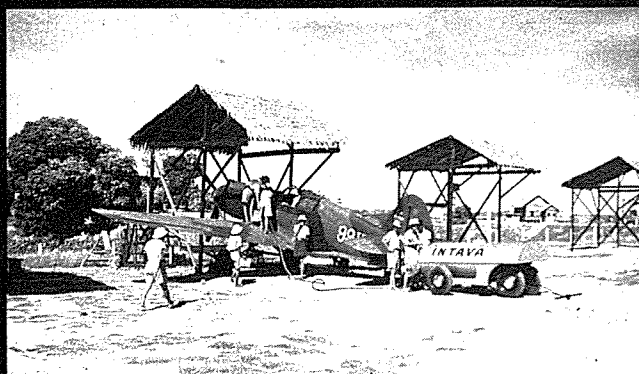
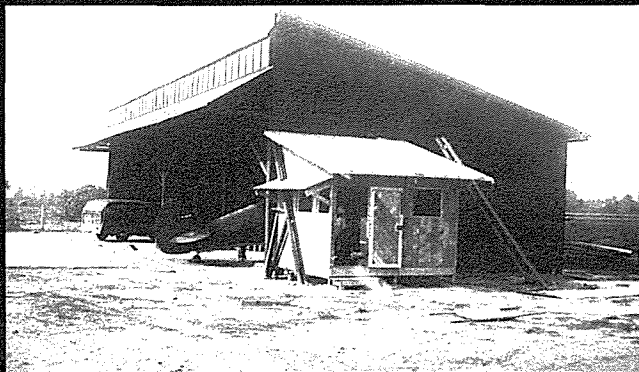
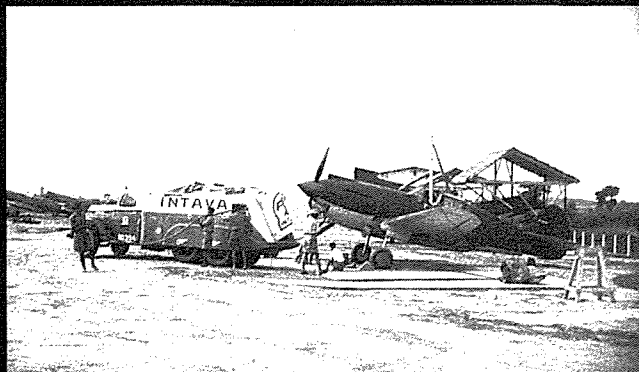


These are all scenes at Rangoon. We skidded the big P-40 boxes off the truck sideways — just sheer manpower. The same with building the assembly shop and laying the bricks in the yard. Our A-frame was used to raise the fuselage so the boys could tote the wing under it. That's the completed assembly building at lower left and a nearly finished P-40 at right. I kept my umbrella handy, because the rains were frequent.



One of KLM's DC-3s was in Rangoon every couple of days. I lived in one half of the house that belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Joe Siddon. He was Rangoon rep for Minimax. The P-36 was assembled at Rangoon and flown once by Erik Shilling. The canopy collapsed in a terminal velocity dive. The Old Man grounded him. I hung that L.A. sign at the traffic circle. That's the RAF hangar in the lower right picture.

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The P-40 line is of the first shipload we assembled. Roger Reynolds washed out the Lockheed's right landing gear; I got the pictures for the insurance claim. That building with the half-finished lean-to was our workshop near the main Rangoon runway. That's Byron Glover in the cockpit and Arnie Butteberg, the Allison rep, on the wing. Byron and I shook hands over 99 just before he took it away at the last of November.

As the fuselage was hoisted, the laborers laid the wing flat and, carrying it on their shoulders, "walked" it under the fuselage. Bolts were inserted, and then the crew could relax. Afterward the landing gear was extended and locked and the whole weight could rest on the wheels.

Each airplane was pushed into the assembly building for further work. When far enough along, and after a hydraulic check to be sure the brakes would work, it was pushed and towed around the traffic circle to the airport taxiway. A number of thatched-roof sunshades had been built and work could proceed under these, out of the blazing sun, and sometimes torrential rains. Propellers were intalled in a two-bay shed adjacent to the taxi strip.

Walt found his training on the Allison engine in good stead. One of the first, and most persistent troubles to show up was the front thrust bearing which became leaky, and in many cases were rusted. He devised a "fix" for this condition in which an experimental plate was attached to the bottom of the thrust bearing plate to act as a sump. This was done on P-8111 and flown away by Arvid Olson of "C" or Third Squadron for observation. Olson had had 450 hours in the P-40 type already. The "fix" apparently worked, and Pentecost sent the information.

The American Volunteer Group pilots and administrative and ground personnel arrived in Rangoon harbor on either three or four different vessels, the first contingent coming in June, followed by others in August, September and October. (A group of these, resigned or discharged, were later to go home in November). After a look-see around Rangoon they proceeded to Toungoo where Chennault had set up his training base, and launched into the familiarization phase.

Twenty two airplanes were delivered in the first month, (August). As each was completed, Toungoo was telephoned and Chennault dispatched a pilot, or several, to Mingaladon for the delivery. Some days there would be five or six pilots flown in by William Pawley's Beech; other days one or two would come down in the Stinson 105.

Received from THE INTERCONTINENT CORPORATION

(1) Airplane Type H-81-A-2 Number 8167

For Ferry to A I have 29 hours experience
in this type of airplane. I am familiar with the operation
of this engine and this airplane.

I have ~~have not~~ a map of the route over which I am to fly.

Signed T.L. Haywood

(pilot)

Glover had to leave one at Toungoo when he was forced northward by bad weather during his test flight of P-8196. It was pronounced okay on delivery. P-8158 developed high oil temperature for a while until it was found that an oil line cover had been left in the line at the factory, restricting flow of oil. P-8101 had a significant number of missing parts from the very start, so it was used to supply parts to other airplanes in a cannibalization process that continued up to the last. Finally, in late November the last of the missing parts were replaced and it was flown away as the last airplane delivered. The crankshaft in P-8121 broke in a test flight and Roger Reynolds force landed on the field at Rangoon in mid-August. In October another engine was installed and finally it was flown away by Ken Merritt. Pentecost's record card said, "This ship has been a jonah to us ever since it came to the field. Sure glad to send it out."

Most all of the airplanes delivered in August were used for training, both for pilots and ground crews. P-8124, the first one, delivered by Byron Glover, was returned after a few days by Jack Newkirk with the first of the front thrust

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bearing troubles. The bearing was replaced and replaced again, with test flights being made in between. Finally a new nose vent, recommended by Allison, was installed and Swartz took the final delivery on November 16th. P-8139 suffered the same trouble as 8158, high oil temperature, and a gasket was found installed upside down, covering one necessary port.

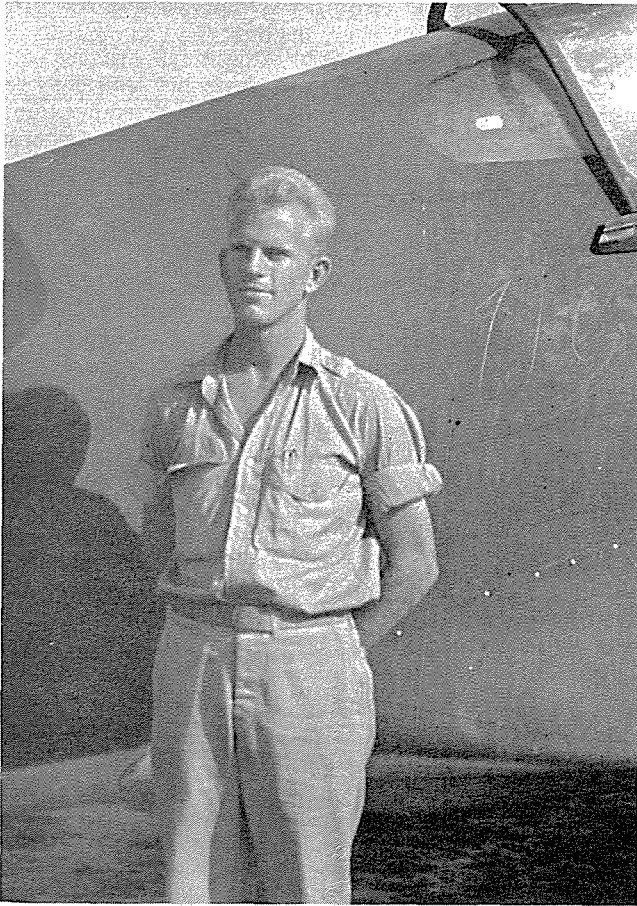
Several of the training airplanes went on into active combat, and wound up at Loiwing in January and February as "war-wearies," full of bullet holes. One was cannibalized and was trucked to Loiwing in December — P-8157 had its wings taken for P-8194. The wings for P-8194 dropped in the harbor while off-loading at Rangoon and after three and a half days in the salt water, Pentecost felt that corrosion of the dural skins and other parts was too severe to use.

P-8125 and 8126 were among the training group. Glover had tested them on August 28th and August 9th respectively, but on October 24th P.W. Atkinson was flying P-8125 when it blew up in the air. He was killed, although blown clear of the airplane, still fastened to his seat and probably unconscious. The best guess was that gas fumes had collected suddenly and ignited, but the official version was "wings came off in a dive." M.C. Hammer was also killed during training when he spun in on September 22nd while in -8125.

It has been said that the P-40's arrived in Rangoon with RAF insignia, but no evidence of this has shown up. The Chinese national insignia was painted on a few of the first of the assembled airplanes at Mingaladon, but later as the urgency grew for training airplanes this was omitted and the wing markings were put on at Toungoo. Likewise, the shark-mouth insignia was put on at Toungoo. The only distinctive markings applied at Mingaladon was done by Pentecost in an effort to save wear and tear on the tires, a difficult spare part to find. Some small vanes were placed on the wheel covers, oriented to the airstream in such a way as to induce rotation of the wheel when the landing gear was extended, and the wheel covers were painted half blue and half orange. The wheel covers were painted orange and blue in order to tell if wheel rotation was obtained, as indeed it was. At times, the wheel turned all orange, the predominant color. It appeared to be a good idea but the pressure of training requirements and the increasing tempo of war preparations kept the modification from being effected on all airplanes.

Gen. Chennault had trained his A.V.G. in Burma in order to keep from having the group set upon by the Japanese. Being in a neutral area, they were spied upon by Japanese agents but could not be bombed. But it was becoming increasingly apparent that there was something brewing in the Pacific. The feeling mounted all through 1941; intelligence reports were making things more and more tense in the early days of December. Finally, on the 7th, the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor, and the General put into effect long-laid plans for evacuation of his A.V.G. to the fighting areas over the road from Chunking to Lashio, the middle section of the Burma Road, and to Rangoon for defense of the port.

As the day of the "takeover" of the Indo-China peninsula came Chennault wanted specific information as to the disposition of the enemy air forces. He had moved First and Third Squadrons to Loiwing, and Second Squadron down to Mingaladon in anticipation of enemy bomber sweeps over Rangoon harbor. The first real action of the A.V.G. against Japanese forces came on December 10th in a photo-reconnaissance flight over Bangkok. Erik Shilling, who had been assigned to fly the photoship, P-8153, Allen Christman, Group Intelligence Officer, and Ed Rector, who later became an ace in the Group, took off from Loiwing



Erik Shilling, who with Ed Rector and Bert Christman, made the reconnaissance mission over Bangkok on December 10th in the P-40 with a 20 inch Fairchild aerial camera mounted in the baggage compartment. It was the first air action of the American Volunteer Group against Japanese forces.

early in the day, landed at Rangoon for refueling and armament, and then flew on to the RAF base at Tavoy, closer to the Siam border and refueled again.

As the trio approached Bangkok they came into clear skies and climbing on up to well above 20,000 feet Shilling obtained a series of aerial photographs that proved to be most frustrating back at headquarters. They were clear and excellent photos, and showed 91 or 92 enemy airplanes on the ground in the vicinity of Bangkok, about half of them fighters, the rest bombers. Chennault grasped immediately, when the pictures were developed, that if his force had had a few bomber airplanes, B-17, B-24, or even B-25, a sizable dent might have been made in the Japanese Army Air Force that day. Shilling, Christman and Rector returned without incident, and within a few weeks the Japanese launched aerial bombing attacks in their full fury. A print of that frustrating picture hung on the Operations Office wall at Loiwing for weeks.

The Japanese were to be met by the *Flying Tigers* now, The A.V.G. had been divided into operating squadrons, each with its organization, airplane assignments and squadron insignia, and most importantly, a spirit which was to serve them well in the months to come. But that is another part of the story.

Walt Pentecost, his work of assembly completed at Mingaladon, and all deliverable airplanes already gone, had only to fold up the Rangoon operation and proceed to Loiwing. In a telegram of 11th or 12th December, Chennault ordered Walt to Loiwing. Everything possible, including a few cases of excellent whiskey obtained from the docks (under duress, it is said) was loaded on trucks and sent ahead. Walt left on the 18th, with a hand gun and a pair of goggles, a few ivories and his camera film.

Within the next four months he was able to retrieve from the mountains and jungles a number of the downed P-40's, enough to provide parts for repair of five airplanes, and send these off to Kunming. This will be continued in Part Two.

THE ARTIST

The painting of the three Flying Tiger P-40's shown here is by Phillip E. Hartlep of Rockville, Maryland, a young artist whose talent is completely self-taught. Phil has wanted to fly and to paint for as long as he could remember. He obtained his private pilot license only last year, and recently went on a flight over the Shenandoah Mountains to get the feel of mountainous terrain for this picture.

After a term in the U.S. Air Force as radio operator, Phil worked his way through the University of Minnesota, with the help of wife Jo Lane, and by working full time at commercial art. When he graduated in 1965 with a B.A. degree in political science he stayed on for two more years with the firm he was working with as Assistant Advertising Manager, then came to the Washington Marketing Region personnel staff of Control Data Corp. in 1967. He has done paintings for people with personal interests in their aircraft, like the crew chief of a government VIP helicopter, and various antique airplane owners. His work covers a wide range of subjects in aircraft, as shown by the background painting of BRENNAN'S CIRCUS on its way to Schweinfurt on 14 October 1943.

At request of the Editor, Phil painted the picture of Erik Shilling, Ed Rector and Bert Christman on their way to Bangkok on the photo reconnaissance mission of 10 December 1941. This was the first real action of the

American Volunteer Group against the forces of Japan, and the trio flew high above the jungle and mountains to obtain photos of the enemy forces already occupying Siam. Within three weeks the A.V.G. was to engage them in the air over Rangoon in a fiercely fought contest, the first of many that lasted until June of 1942, and in which the Flying Tigers were to achieve lasting fame.

