

Captain Stanley Ormand Kelley, RCAF, USAAF

March 5, 1921 – April 30, 2008

This is written by John N. Hackney, Jr. to supplement various WWII stories I have put together about the wartime experiences of my offshore fishing buddy, Stan, from 1977-2005. He would never put in writing his experiences, but in all day bottom-fishing trips, he told me a lot about his adventures in the military, both while on duty and while off duty. That off duty part is left out to concentrate on his service in three theatres of battle, For the air arm of two countries, plus being wounded in action by both the Germans and Japanese. He carried metal fragments in his spine his whole life because it was too close to his spinal cord to risk removal. He never complained, but on a rough sea he always kept a bottle of Aspirin handy. Stan moved to Gainesville, Florida in the 1920's when his Dad took a job with the Florida East Coast Railroad building the rail line from Miami to Key West. Upon graduation from high school in 1939, he entered the University of Detroit, taking a job in an auto factory to pay for school. In early 1940, Stan saw an ad for Royal Canadian Air Force Pilots. His love of aviation had begun with pilot training in Florida at the age of 15. So he answered the ad, joined the RCAF and after some advanced training in Oklahoma, was sent to England in early 1941, participating in the Battle of Britain flying a British Spitfire Fighter. The USA declared war in December of 1941 so he joined the U.S. Army Air Force in September of 1942, just in time to join the North African Campaign with the 15th Air Force, 307th Fighter Squadron and flying P.51 Mustangs. By doing this, he re-established his rights to American Citizenship. He tells of one assignment he had to fly over and follow a march

of thousands of Italian prisoners being marched back to the coast because the Army could spare so few men to guard them. On another day early in the campaign, the German Panzers were about to overrun their airstrip. Some pilots took to the air to defend their base and those left behind went out to the end of the runway where a disabled P.51 was parked. One pilot got into the cockpit to fire the eight 50 cal. machine guns and more picked up the tail of the plane and swung it around to aim it at a desert pass on the road into the airport. Thus a grounded P.51 entered the battle with pilots on the tail of the plane doing the aiming both in direction & elevation and the man in the cockpit firing the guns, the convergence of the 50 cal. machine gun fire on the pass discouraged entry of the German Panzers. He had two planes shot down in North Africa. In early 1943, German Artillery round dropped on his airfield and wounded him in the leg and in the back. He was sent back to the USA to recuperate and in late 1943 was assigned to a flight-training unit at Millville, NJ. He was not happy training others. In 1944 he volunteered to join the 14th Air Force flying Tigers in China and flew many missions dropping bombs with a P.51 on Japanese positions in China and protecting the supply flights from Burma to China over the "Hump"(part of the Himalaya Mountains). He tells of bombing Japanese coastal shipping in the South China Sea and in the harbor at Hong Kong. One morning in April 1945 while waiting to take off for a mission, he was shot by a Japanese sniper through the back and stomach. His wound was so serious that the flight surgeon stayed with him all the way back to the USA. After a long period of recovery, he was honorably discharged from the Air Corp, and entered Duke University to get a college degree with the help of the G.I. Bill that assisted returning veterans get an education. At Duke he met his wife, Emily Camp. After he retired from Forsyth

Partners, a real estate investment firm of which he was a founding partner in Winston Salem, he lives at his condo at 8 ½ Marina, Atlantic Beach, NC, which is where I met my good friend and long time fishing companion. We were both in our eighties when we fished the last time offshore in the fall of 2005, and the Kelleys moved to Hilton Head, SC to be near their son, Spain. One last story that Emily told me, in 1994 when their Flying Tiger group was invited to visit the free Chinese in Taiwan as a thank you for their defense of China. Emily called the Taiwanese Air Line office in Los Angeles to request a first class seat for Captain Kelley due to his back wound. The Chinese Airways clerk who took the call said to her "yes, Mrs. Kelley. We will do that. I am the orderly who helped get Captain Kelley out of the plane when he was wounded."

Spitfire pilot joins comrades

Stan and Emily Kelley, Atlantic Beach, returned home from England early in September.

One of a handful of remaining Americans who in World War II flew

Ruth Barbour

a Royal Air Force Spitfire, Stan, with his wife, was invited to England as a member of the Presidential Delegation to the Farnborough Aerospace Exposition, the prestigious air show held each year, alternately at Farnborough and Paris.

Late in August the Kelleys received the invitation from Congressman Robert Dornan, 38th District, California, himself a pilot and aviation enthusiast.

The delegation's guests of honor this year were American pilots and airmen who flew with the RAF prior to Sept. 28, 1942. The trip, Aug. 30 through Sept. 6, coincided with some of the British celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, May to December 1940.

The round trip from Andrews Air Force Base was courtesy of the U.S. Air Force. Of the 50 passengers on the plane carrying the Kelleys there were a dozen American pilots.

Stan had arrived in England in the spring of 1941. A year earlier, Hitler's forces in two months had conquered all of Western Europe, but the battered RAF stymied his plan to knock out England's air force, pitifully small compared to the Luftwaffe. Instead of launching a land invasion of Britain Sept. 15, a major Nazi air assault was turned back that day.

The RAF lost a thousand planes and hundreds of men, but Nazi forces never crossed the English Channel.

Unable to gain his first objective, Hitler turned to bombing populated English cities. The period from November 1940 to May 1941 came to be known as the "Blitz."

During that period Stan, in his late

teens at the University of Detroit, read an obscure ad in a newspaper: pilots wanted. Stan had learned to fly at his Gainesville, Fla., home when he was 15. He answered the ad and learned that pilots were needed by the RAF.

Accepted for duty, he and other volunteers trained briefly in Oklahoma. Because it was a violation of federal law for Americans to fight for a foreign power, the volunteers were not put in uniform until they got to England. Stan flew a Spitfire and declares to this day there was nothing like it.

After Pearl Harbor, which put the United States squarely in the war, he was with the U.S. Air Force in the North Africa campaign and later in China with the 14th Air Force Flying Tigers.

Comrades in arms laughingly noted that Stan was the only pilot wounded twice — on the ground. The first was in North Africa. In his bunk during a German strafing attack, he took shrapnel in the leg and was returned to the United States to train pilots.

In China, he was beside his plane reading, when a Jap sniper bullet hit him in the back. Seriously wounded, he had a close brush with death. His wife Emily says his best friend, the flight surgeon, never left his side, and pulled him through.

During air combat, Stan shot down four planes, and had several probables. (Folks who saw the PBS series, *Piece of Cake*, a story of RAF pilots during the Battle of Britain, know how precise the counting of "kills" had to be. A pilot alone couldn't say he shot down an enemy plane. There had to be other verification.)

In China, prior to the surrender of Japan, Stan was a member of an American squadron and later commander of a squadron of Chinese pilots. The Kelleys were invited back to

Taiwan four years ago at the invitation of the Chinese Fifth Fighter Group. Next year a trip is planned to Chinese bases where the 14th Air Force was stationed.

When discharged after the war as major, Stan returned to school, this time choosing Duke University, where he met Emily, a girl from Pennsylvania. They married in 1947 and graduated in 1948, he with a degree in accounting and she with a degree in economics.

In England the recent reception: luncheons, dinners and cocktail parties honoring the Presidential Delegation were numerous and lavish. Aircraft manufacturers of England and America proved to be perfect hosts.

In addition to the Farnborough air show, the guests of honor visited the American and RAF air museums at Duxford, were taken on a four-hour helicopter tour over southeast England, site of bases from which the RAF flew during the Battle of Britain, visited the Houses of Parliament, were entertained at the United States Embassy in London and at the home of our ambassador to England.

Stan wanted to be in the Korea war, but having been twice wounded that was not permitted, much to his wife's relief. They had three children to raise.

Fighter pilots are a breed apart. Toward the end of the war in Europe a RAF pilot shot down a Messerschmitt piloted by Luftwaffe hero Maj. Walter Nowotny. Nowotny died of burns.

Maj. James F. Sunderman, USAF, in his book *World War II in the Air* says that evening in the RAF mess on the day they learned Nowotny died "his name was often on our lips, with respect, almost affection ... that curious solidarity among fighter pilots above all tragedies and all prejudice"

Carteret County News-Times

P.O. Box 1679, Morehead City, N.C. 28557

Tel. 726-7081

Published Sunday, Wednesday and Friday

WINNER OF NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
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Ruth Barbour, who resides in

Sept 1990



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Date: Tue, 14 Nov 2006 14:58:27 -0500
To: hmlmatttox@yahoo.com
From: "Ashton" <ashton@dmv.com>
Subject: From The Island Packet Online: Retired fighter pilot recalls WWII, his passion for flying

Ashton sent you the following article
from The Island Packet Online (<http://www.islandpacket.com>)

You may read this article in its entirety at
<http://www.islandpacket.com/features/story/6147035p-5380458c.html>.

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not be printed or distributed for anything except
personal use.

Comments from Ashton:

Hi Mary Lou:
Didn't know if you saw this article about Pops. Mom is doing OK.
Hope all is well with you.

Retired fighter pilot recalls WWII, his passion for flying

Published: Monday, October 9th, 2006

BY JANUARY HOLMES
THE ISLAND PACKET

A sniper attack almost ended Stanley Kelly's life during World War II.

The strike left him with a bullet in his back.

'They cut me open and couldn't find the bullet,' said the unassuming 85-year-old Hilton Head Island resident of the medical care he received after he was shot. He was a fighter pilot with the Flying Tigers of the United States Air Force in China at the time and at first, his prognosis looked grim.

'They sewed me back up and dug a grave, but doc stayed with me,' he said.

Sixty-one years later, with two Purple Hearts in his possession, he lives to tell the story.

The retired fighter pilot and accountant faced many dangers in the air and on the ground, yet he said each time he'd jump in his plane to meet those perils head-on. When it came to his passion for flying, nothing could get in his way.

That doesn't mean he wasn't frightened.

'When you got Japs and the Germans shooting you, everyone gets scared,' Kelly said.

Kelly's love of flight took off when he was a 9-year-old during the Depression and his father was able to take him on a couple of airplane rides.

At 16, he began flying lessons. An after-school job paid for the lessons, which were \$1 for 12 minutes in the air. He flew his first solo flight with only two hours of training, unlike the standard 8 to 10 hours needed, he said.

'I was a natural pilot,' said the father of two grown children.

The Air Force required their pilots to have two years of college under their belts. But after completing one year of college, Kelly had an opportunity to serve with Britain's Royal Air Force, which had no such requirement. So he took it.

Britain needed volunteer fighter pilots to serve during the war and there were a bunch of men in the United States who were eager to fly, Kelly said.

After more than 150 hours of training, he and several hundred other men became volunteer commission officers with the Royal Air Force. Because they were serving another country, they had to give up their American citizenship, he said.

The pilots served in convoy patrol missions of British ships over the English channel.

'It was very dangerous because you're over water and the English Channel is very cold,' Kelly said.

In September 1942, Kelly was able to transfer to the United States Air Force, regaining his American citizenship while most of his flying comrades continued to serve England. His adventure with the American military brought him to the shores of Africa where he battled Germans and Italians during the war. He was wounded by a surprise air attack the following year -- when he

wasn't even near a plane.

He was scheduled to fly that morning but the Germans descended on his squadron as daylight broke. The pilot was sleeping in his tent, which was heavily damaged by German military fire. Three bombs fell within 10 feet of Kelly, and his leg was hit with shell fragments, he said.

The German attack sent him back to the United States to recuperate.

'I was one of the first to come back,' Kelly said of the soldiers who returned from the war. He was overwhelmed with hugs and kisses from family, friends and complete strangers.

'But that didn't last too long. They got tired of the war after a while,' he said.

And he was tired of being out of the cockpit.

'I couldn't stand it any longer,' Kelly said. 'I had to get back on and fly.'

So in 1944, he joined the Air Force's Flying Tigers division in China and was wounded the following year in the sniper attack. He left the military before the introduction of the atomic bomb, he said.

Though his military career ended, his passion for flying has remained. Some of it spread to his children and his wife, Emily.

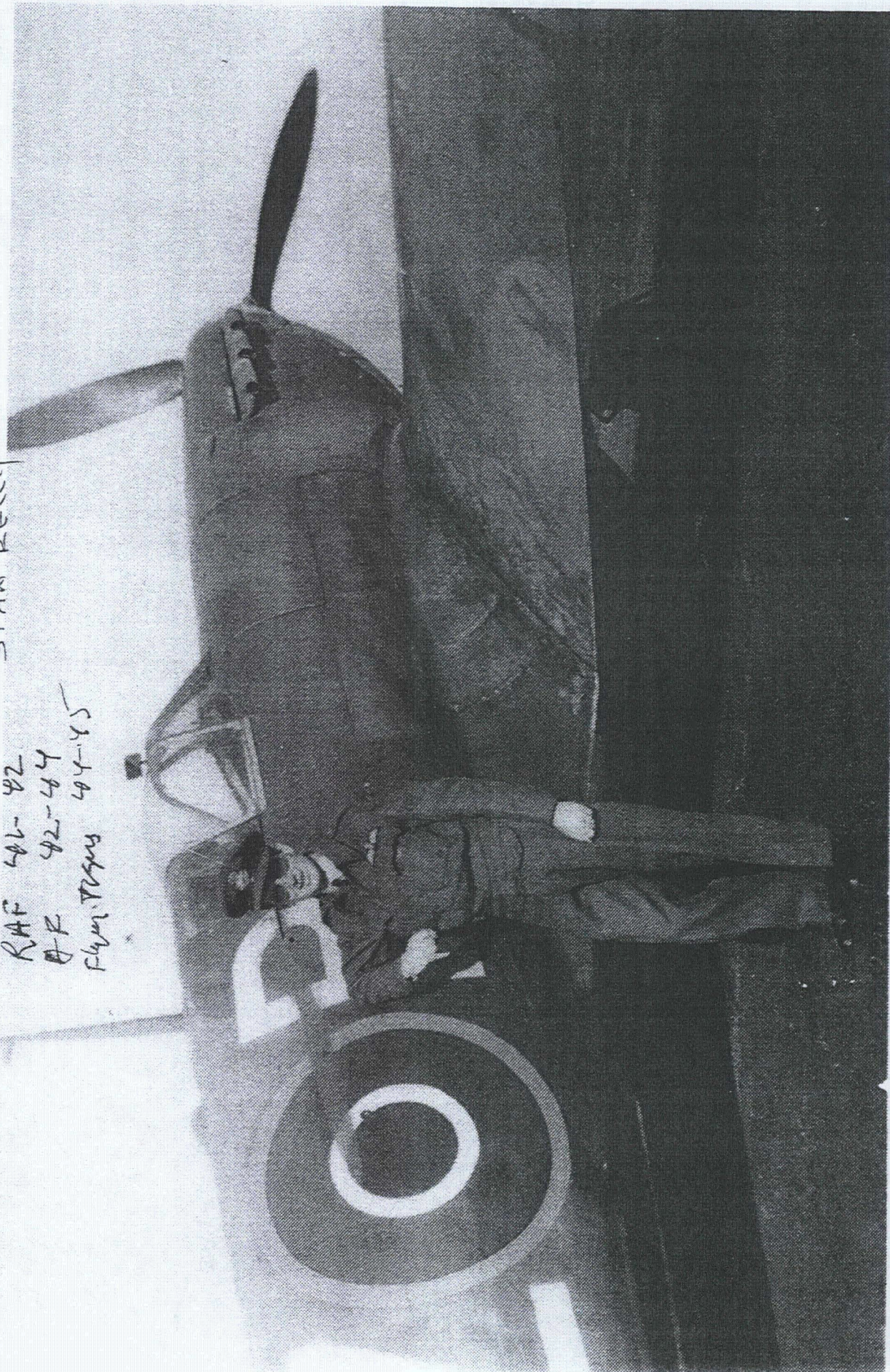
His son, Spain, 55, began flying when he was 16. Having a father who has flown through war zones and received two Purple Hearts is an honor for Spain Kelly, who wonders how American life would be if there wasn't people like his dad around.

'He made great sacrifices for our country,' he said.

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RAF 42-42
AF 42-44
Flynn, P. 44-45

STAN REED



Captain Stanley Kelley

Although Stan Kelley told Paul Peel and others many "War Stories", this particular one deals with only one single event involving a single associate of Stan's in the "Flying Tigers" in China near the end of Stan's military career. The story surfaces again when Stan is confronted with those China flying memories one day at 8 ½ Marina Village over 50 years later.

The event occurred on April 2 1945 in the central coastal part of China near the East China Sea. This was a time when the War had really gotten bloody. Barely 10 months past, "D Day" June 6 1944 created killing zones on the beaches of Normandy. Although Stan Kelly had flown Spitfires for England, this was about the year he ended up in China with the Flying Tigers..

The Marines had invaded Iwo Jima on February 1945 with the greatest loss of life ever to the Marines. Okinawa was invaded by the Marines on April 3 1945, again with an enormous loss of life.

On April 1, 1945, two days before Okinawa, Stan Kelley was stationed in China within striking distance of Shanghai where he was sent on a strafing mission in his P 51 Mustang Flying Tiger. He was some 600 miles Northeast of Okinawa and over 900 miles from Iwo Jima. His mission in the legendary P-51 was to damage Japanese military bases near Shanghai about "high noon" on April Fools day. Coming in low and hot over the base Captain Kelly did all the damage he could with his six 50 caliber wing mounted browning machine guns. After his last low pass with fuel and ammo running low (he carried only 1850 rounds) there was a feeling of relief that the antiaircraft fire had missed him as he rolled the P 51 in a tight turn and headed for the barn. As he gained altitude Stan noticed his engine was not performing properly. The Packard built Rolls Royce "Merlin" 1800 HP engine got him safely to home base where he promptly reported to his boss about the engine problems. His boss dismissed the engine problems as Stan's imagination and insecurity from flying over unfamiliar territory and said "There's nothing wrong with your plane, I'll fly it tomorrow (April 2 1945)".

Stan Kelly said "He did fly it away but he didn't fly it back. He didn't come back for several weeks, and he was walking with a limp when he came". What happened to Stan's boss? Well we have to jump ahead about 53 years to an early Summer day in 1998 at 8 ½ Marina Village in Atlantic Beach, NC.

Paul Peel had published "Hugh Smithwick Descendants", a genealogy, and one of the thousands of cousins that surfaced was Luke Smithwick, a retired VP from Honeywell. Luke was fishing with Paul Peel and telling him about locating a legendary cousin after the book was published, who was a Flying Tiger. As the boat eased up to the dock, Stan Kelly was walking over to his boat docked a few feet away. Paul suggested to Luke that there were so few Flying Tigers that Stan might have known this newly found cousin. As Peel tied up the boat, Luke walked over to Stan, gave him the name and asked if he had ever run across our Flying Tiger Cousin. As Paul Peel stepped on the dock he heard Stan Kelly shout "Clyde Slocumb? That was my airplane he was flying. I told him that engine wasn't running right".

So Major (currently Lt. Col.) Clyde Slocumb, cousin of Paul Peel and Luke Smithwick was the boss in China that Stan was talking about. It seems that the Chinese man that saved Clyde Slocumb's life, wondering if he ever made it back to Stan Kelly's base, had recently written a letter trying to locate him. Luke Smithwick had the attached newspaper articles about

Clyde Slocumb which illustrates just one event in Stan's career. Colonel Slocumb was strafing just like Captain Kelly and could see the tracers zipping by him when his engine quit. He naturally assumed he had been hit. In a phone conversation with Paul Peel he had responded to Stan's comment by saying "But who knows, maybe the engine did have a mechanical problem. I saw the tracers and assumed one hit my the engine, The plane burned after it hit the ground". In any event there was no time to think. I was low and going in. I popped the canopy and bailed out".

The rest of this story is in the newspaper descriptions of this event which are attached. Stan had heard part of the story from Major Slocumb in China but did not know about the Chinese man's efforts to trace Slocumb.

Sometimes it takes a while for the facts to sink into one's brain, but all of a sudden, while just standing on the dock at 8 1/2 Marina, history materialized and became real. The stories told by Stan took on bone and sinew. They were about real people. I didn't have to go looking for legends. I was looking at a legend.

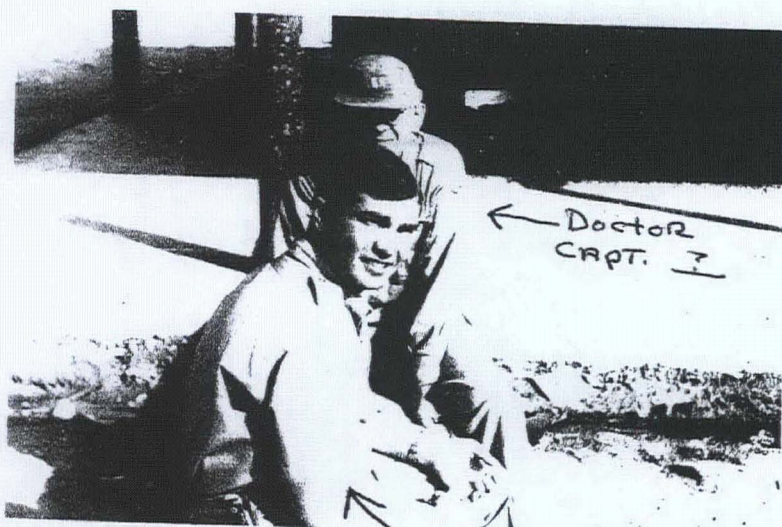
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I really liked Stan. To go fishing with Stan and John Hackney was a fun day. Add Charlie Cook to the crew and it was a blast.

I am indebted to Stan Kelley for all the dangerous missions he flew during the war to protect the United States and the free world. There is a feeling of pride from just having known him. In fact I can close my eyes right now and see him walking up to my fig tree at the beach to pick a few for breakfast. Just thinking about Stan makes me smile and feel good.

Yes, I do miss Stan Kelley.

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MAJOR CLYDE SLOCUMB

Former 'Flying Tiger' Recounts Escape

By TERRI K. SMITH
Observer Staff Writer

DOERUN—For most people the past is simply a memory, but for Clyde Slocumb of Doerun memories have merged with the present with the arrival of a letter from a man he hasn't seen in 36 years.

"I got a call from John Craft, our postmaster, who said a man named Richard Greenfield with the International Relations Office of the Postal Service had called saying he had a letter from me from a Chinese friend who wanted to talk to me," said Slocumb.

The letter, written in Chinese and addressed to the editor of the "Washington Mail", was from Ming-Chu Huang, a member of the Chinese underground that helped Slocumb escape the Japanese when his plane was shot down behind enemy lines in China during World War II.

"It's been 36 years, more years than most people are old. It surprised me that someone was interested enough to try and contact me," said Slocumb, adding that the letter "brings back a lot of memories, too. It was a long time ago, but certain parts are still very vivid."

Those memories began on April 2, 1945, when the 25-year-old Slocumb was a member of the U.S. Air Force 75th Squadron, 23rd fighter group—the famed "Flying Tigers"—stationed at an air base behind enemy lines near Shanghai.

"I was strafing an airfield one mile north of Shanghai called Kangwon, making passes and shooting enemy planes," Slocumb recalled.

"I shot a Japanese bomber coming in on approach with its wheels when ground fire set my plane on fire."

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at a spot across the Wampoo River from Shanghai, then bailed out of the burning craft between 300-500 feet above ground.

"I bailed out at a very low altitude and you just don't do that," Slocumb explained. "When you bail out, you tend to swing back and forth. At that altitude, I swung out and back, then I was on the ground."

Although the jump itself did not hurt him, Slocumb received a wound to the leg from flying shrapnel. Knowing that the Japanese would be looking for him, Slocumb didn't know what to think when Chinese from a nearby rice field came running up to him with hoes.

"I didn't know if they would hit me or not, but they turned out to be friendly, very friendly. They dug a hole with the hoes and buried my chute, then told me to follow them."

Slocumb's rescuers turned out to be part of a well-organized Chinese underground that was fighting the Japanese occupation. For the next 43 days, this organization kept Slocumb from the Japanese soldiers while helping him work his way back to his base.

"There were so many people that helped me escape. Just where Mr. Huang fits in I'm not sure," Slocumb admitted. "That's one thing I hope to find out when he writes back."

The downed pilot ran behind the Chinese until loss of blood from the wound in his leg forced him to stop. The men then found a bicycle for Slocumb to ride, which he did until weakness again made him stop. At that point the Chinese placed him in a wheelbarrow and continued the run to safety.

"They moved me from person to person because everyone had to be answerable to the Japanese in their proper locale, especially at night. They couldn't just pick up and go from village to village," Slocumb



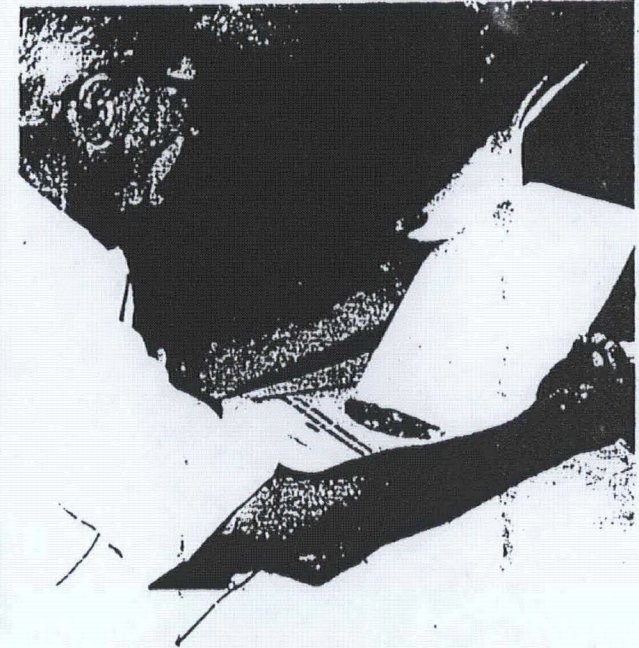
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But luck was with Slocumb that day, as he found out later from his



From Past To Present

Surprised is an understatement when describing how Clyde Slocumb felt when he received a letter, in Chinese, from one of the men who saved his life 36 years ago (above). Slocumb was a member of the Air Force's "Flying Tigers" and flying a P-51 Mustang (left) when he was shot down over Japanese territory in China during World War II. (Observer Photos By Terri K. Smith)

Chinese rescuers.

"The Japanese were held up because my airplane had gone into a Chinese house and killed an elderly lady. The Japanese thought the body was me in the crash and didn't pursue me right away," the Doerun native remembered.

"But when they found out it wasn't me, they started beating the woods real good."

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(Continued On Page 12)

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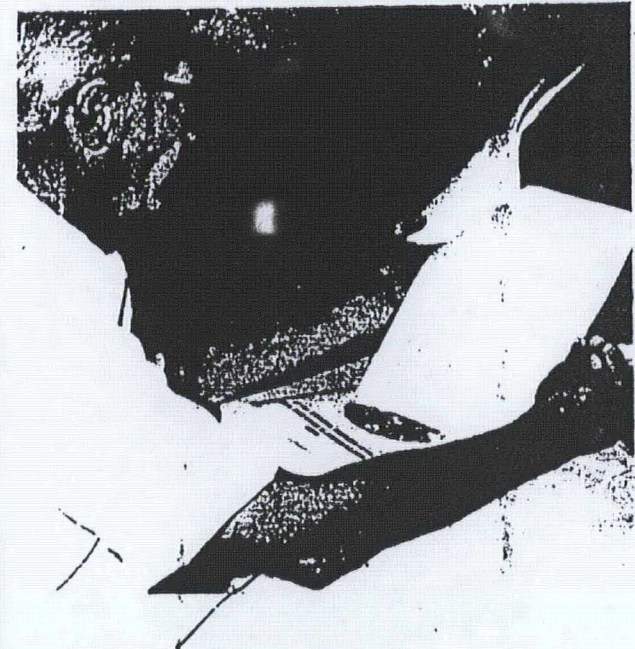
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Former 'Flying Tiger'

(Continued From Page 11)

but always well cared for by members of the underground.

"A nurse showed up several times while I was in hiding," Slocumb said. "She dug the shrapnel out of my leg and changed the bandages several times."

But Slocumb wasn't the only one who knew about the nurse. After his escape, the Japanese discovered she had helped him and tortured her.

"She survived and when the war was over the Americans awarded her a medal for helping me," Slocumb said. "There was a big ceremony for her, but as usual I didn't hear anything about it. I was flying transport back and forth to India to get planes for the Chinese and wasn't there for the ceremony."

The first inkling that Slocumb had that his rescuers had a specific destination in mind and were not just randomly moving him was when he was awakened around midnight and told they had to be at a certain place by a certain time.

"I thought about it and realized we were going toward the Yangtze River. They had to be there by a certain time because when the tide came in, a Chinese junk that was waiting in the mud would sail," Slocumb said.

"They were moving me toward that ship so I could sail and that's what they did."

Because he could not get his injured leg wet, Slocumb was placed on the back of a Chinese man and carried to the waiting junk. He was placed in the hold with 25-30 other people, all Chinese.

"They were part of a trade between Japan and China," Slocumb explained. "Of course, they weren't supposed to be carrying anything like me on board."

The junk sailed to the China Sea, where it proceeded down the coast for several days.

"Every day a Japanese plane looked at the ship and if it was not flying the right flag, then they would shoot it right there," Slocumb said.

"I stayed in the hold all the time because they couldn't take the chance that I would be seen. In other words, it was all Japanese or Chinese. There just weren't any

round-eyes up there."

The junk finally reached Hai Mun, a port controlled by the Chinese and considered to be "safe territory."

"After that it was a lot of walking," remembered Slocumb. "The best I could figure was 370 miles, up hill and in the valleys and on and on."

Chinese soldiers accompanied Slocumb on the trek back to the base to ensure his safe arrival and, while still 150 miles from base, another downed pilot joined the walk.

"Forrest 'Pappy' Parham was one of six pilots shot down the same day I was," explained Slocumb. "He was in the same squadron I was, but had been strafing an airbase south of Shanghai."

The Chinese underground had rescued Parham also and brought him along a different route to safety. The duo walked the last 150 miles together.

"They did a hell of a job by getting me out. It amazed our intelligence people when I got back to the base and reported what had happened. They couldn't believe it themselves," stated Slocumb.

"Rescuing me at 8 a.m. always amazed me. The Japanese had all day to look for me and I just wasn't that far away."

Slocumb only saw one of his rescuers after he returned to the base and, although he's not sure ex-

actly which person Huang was, he believes "you can be sure of one thing, he was in it to have had this information (presented in the letter)."

"I would not be surprised if he was the young boss or chief guerilla running the show," admitted Slocumb.

In addition to the memories stirred by Huang's letter, it has also brought thoughts of returning to the Orient, where Slocumb was stationed for six years during his 30 years in the Air Force.

"It would be nice. I'd really like to and I could now, with Chinese-American relations as they are, but it's a terrible amount of money," Slocumb said.

"I want to see if they had it all lined out from the beginning—where it happened, how far we traveled, a lot of things I want to know that I was not too observant about back then. I was just too frightened, I guess."

One thing's for sure—Slocumb will have a new story to tell his former flying partners when they meet in Atlanta this September for a "Flying Tigers" reunion.

"The Chinese people are so generous and good that I just can't say enough for them," Slocumb said. "I'll be interested when I hear back from Mr. Huang. I'm sure he will reply."

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British novelist Aldous Huxley worked on the script of the movie "Pride and Prejudice" in 1940.

Hands Across the Ocean 36 Years After a Pilot's Life Was Saved

In the trade we call them "evergreens" — pieces that are, in the flow of daily events, timeless. Well, not quite, for in the hard deadline demands of the news business nothing lasts long. Evergreens at least will keep a few hours.

This particular evergreen should not have been allowed to keep at all, for which I am to blame. But I will submit that for once we really do have a timeless tale to tell.

It is a story of a friendship that survives the passage of generations, the differences of cultures, the drumbeat of history, the savagery of war. In the end, it demonstrates anew an old human trait: that friendships can be forged out of the most extraordinary circumstances, and once formed they possess a strength that surpasses superficial differences in nationalities, races, even language.

Early this spring a letter arrived in Washington from Hong Kong bearing, in small neat block letters, this handwritten address:

To: Editor of Washington Mail
Washington, U.S.A.

Because of the misleading address, and that fact that it was from overseas, the letter was sent on to the U.S. Postal Service's International Postal Affairs Office on the third floor of L'Enfant Plaza in Southwest Washington.

The letter was opened. It contained a single sheet of onion skin paper filled with Chinese characters, penned in ink. The letter

was sent out to be translated. When it came back, a postal employee read:

Editors of the Washington Post
Washington, D.C.
United States of America

Dear Editors:

I request your assistance to publish this letter in your newspaper and help me to locate my American friend, Mr. Slocumb. [Spelling based on Chinese phonetic translation].

Mr. Slocumb was a major with the "Flying Tiger" wing which was captained by General Chennault. When Mr. Slocumb was bombing a Japanese military emplacement in Shanghai at noontime of April 1945, his fighter plane was shot down by the Japanese. My friend and I saved his life when he parachuted to land. We helped him out from the Japanese search and protected him to get back to his base.

He was around 23 years old at that time. He was born in California, and his father was the owner of a sugar refinery. If my memory is correct, his serial number was 427775 or 477775.

If Mr. Slocumb or his friends read this publication, please write a letter to me at 2, Yi Chia Ja, Kao Chia Bing, Ling Chiao People's Commune, Chuan Sha, Shanghai, People's Republic of China.

May God bless you.

Sincerely yours,
Huang, Ming-Chu

The letter was turned over to Richard J.

Greenfield, a postal service international relations officer. He immediately went to work.

Greenfield remembered that Anna Chennault, Gen. Chennault's widow, had been living in Washington, D.C. He checked and found she still was, in the Watergate. With the help of her personal assistant, Jean Meale, a roster of living members of the old "Flying Tigers" air group that Chennault commanded in China turned up the identical serial number of that first set of figures in the letter.

The name of the man who bore that number was, indeed, Slocumb — with a "b." But

Haynes Johnson FRIENDS

instead of California he lived in a small town in southern Georgia. By a curious coincidence two members of the "Flying Tigers" were listed as living in that same town of Doerun, southeast of Plains and between Moultrie and Albany, Ga.

Greenfield called the postmaster of Doerun. Did he know if a Clyde Slocumb lived in Doerun? Why, yes, he had been by the post office just that morning. Had he by chance been a member of the "Flying Tigers" in the war? Yes, he certainly was. The postmaster supplied Slocumb's phone number; in minutes, Greenfield was reading him the

translation of Mr. Huang's letter. Later, he gave this reporter a copy of the translation, and the original letter.

Slocumb remembers how "unbelievably close" to the Japanese he was as he parachuted to the ground across the Huangpu River after his P51 was shot down while strafing the north field of the Shanghai air-drome that day 36 years ago.

"Two Chinese came running up just as I hit the ground. One had a hoe in his hands. I didn't know whether he was going to hit me or help me. He helped me dig a hole to bury the parachute, then he helped me run as fast I could. I had been hit in the left knee by shrapnel, and it was bleeding heavily. I continued to run as fast as I could and when I couldn't go any more, they got me a bicycle to ride. After riding as long as I could, I couldn't do that any more and they put me in a wheelbarrow and rolled me around from place to place."

That began a 43-day odyssey in which Slocumb was moved 100 miles, often under the noses of Japanese troops, by night and day, by land and water in a Chinese junk down the Yangtze, until he reached his American base. A Chinese nurse who tended his wounds later was tortured. Every inch of the way he was accompanied by his new Chinese friends. "I felt so close to the people who did so much for me when I was absolutely helpless," he says. "It's something that draws people together forever."

After the war, Slocumb stayed on in the

Air Force, retiring after 30 years' service as a colonel. Now 61, he lives quietly in his home town of Doerun. (He never was from California; that, and the part about his father owning a sugar refinery, are about the only inaccurate recollections in the letter from China.)

As soon as he got the letter, Slocumb wrote a reply, in English, that said in part:

"After 36 years I remember so vividly the wonderful Chinese people who made it possible for me to escape the Japanese. The situation looked impossible. Only through the courageous efforts of you and your friends could such an escape be accomplished. I want you to know that I will be eternally grateful for everything you did for me . . . Thank you for writing to me, for this gives me an opportunity to tell you and the others how grateful I am for what you did. May God bless you always, Clyde Slocumb."

A letter arrived in Doerun from Slocumb's old Chinese friend. Like the first one, it was in Chinese. Slocumb, who neither reads nor speaks the language, took it to the owner of a Chinese restaurant in his area. The translation was not satisfactory, but the meaning of the fragments are clear: "It makes me so happy . . . waited 36 years . . . so nice to hear . . ."

He's going out of town soon so he can have it fully translated, and then carry on the correspondence.

EMILY CAMP KELLEY
February 12, 1926 - July 25, 2008

Emily Kelley was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She graduated from Duke University, where she met her husband Stanley Ormond Kelley. They lived in Winston-Salem many years before moving to their second residence at 8½ Marina Village, Atlantic Beach. While in Winston-Salem, she owned and operated the Old World Gift Shop. Upon an illness, where she needed full-time care, her family moved her to Hilton Head, South Carolina, to be closer to them. She was active in First Presbyterian Church in Morehead City, Carteret Arts Forum, and the Beaufort Historical Association. She was a devotee of the arts, an avid bridge player, golf lover, and loved to entertain. She traveled extensively throughout her life with her husband, sister and mother.

STANLEY ORMOND KELLEY
March 5, 1921 - April 30, 2008

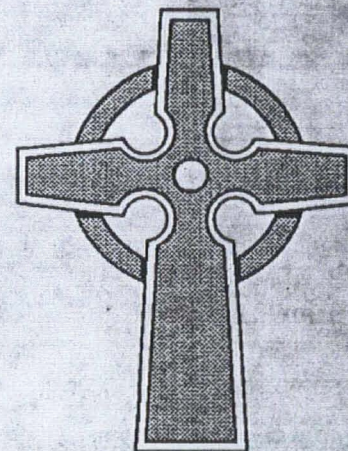
Stanley Kelley was born in Fort Myers, Florida. He had an early love of flying and pursued his interest becoming a licensed pilot during his teenage years. At the age of 19, after preliminary training in Canada, he was recruited by the British Royal Air Force. He subsequently saw action on the North African front flying Spitfires for the RAF Eagle Squadron. Three years later, Stan joined the U.S. Air Force. He served as a member of the 31st Fighter Group of the 8th Air Force, 309th Flight Squadron, and was a highly decorated fighter pilot.

Following his military service, Stan attended Duke University where he graduated in 1950. He had a distinguished professional career with National Cash Register and was a real estate developer and founder of Forsyth Partners in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

The Kelleys are survived by a daughter, Ashton Moorshead Kelley of Still Pond, Maryland; and a son, Spain Camp Kelley of Hilton Head, South Carolina, a granddaughter, Ashton Elizabeth Kelley, and a sister, ~~IN-LAW~~ Barbara Tate. They were predeceased by a son, Brett.

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in memory of

Emily Camp Kelley
February 12, 1926 - July 25, 2008

August 13, 2008
11:00 a.m.

Timothy J. Havlicek, Pastor
1604 Arendell Street
Morehead City, NC 28557

Carolyn H. Meadows, Organist
Church Phone: (252) 247-2202
Fax: (252) 247-1872

ORDER OF SERVICE

PRELUDE

† PROCESSION OF THE FAMILY

† CALL TO WORSHIP

† HYMN - *In The Garden* Miles

† PRAYER

A TIME OF REMEMBERING

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE

Psalm 23 Psalm 8:1, 3-9 Isaiah 40:28-31

MUSICAL MEDITATION - *It Is Well With My Soul* Traditional

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE

John 14:1-3, 6 Romans 8:18, 28, 31 - 39 Philippians 4:4-9

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

† HYMN - 280 *Amazing Grace* (vs 1 - 4) Virginia Harmony

† BENEDICTION

† POSTLUDE

† Those who are able are invited to stand.

*All are invited to greet the family and share the joy of Emily's life
and new life during the reception in the Parlor
immediately following the service.*

PSALM 23

A Psalm of David

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths

of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;

thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

thou anointest my head with oil;

my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life:

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

IN THE GARDEN

I come to the garden alone,

While the dew is still on the roses,

And the voice I hear falling on my ear,

The Son of God discloses....

And He walks with me, and He talks with me,

And He tells me I am His own,

And the joy we share as we tarry there,

None other has ever known!

He speaks and the sound of his voice,

Is so sweet the birds hush their singing,

And the melody that he gave to me,

Within my heart is ringing....

Refrain

*Lesley Allen
1108 Neuse Dr.
Oriental,*

252 249

2242

the
Elks
magazine
MARCH 2008

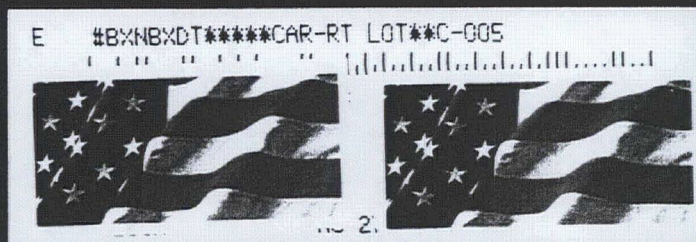
Claire Chennault

and the
FLYING TIGERS

The Elks Accident
Prevention Program
—Success!



A Rush to Yosemite



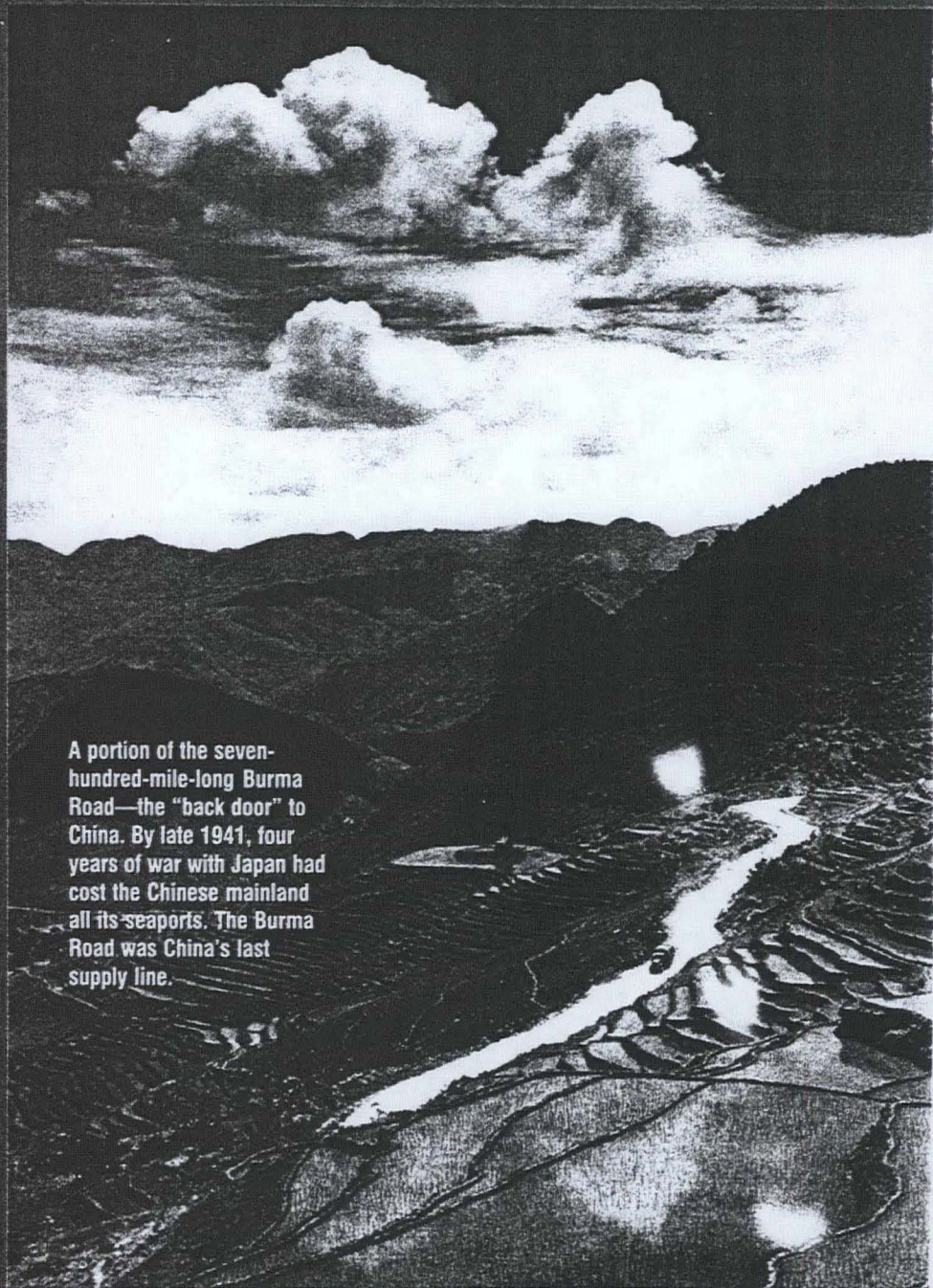
PLUS
On Tour with E. Louis Sulsberger
Looking Out for Your Money
Mind-Body Medicine

Claire Chennault and the

ON December 20, 1941, thirteen days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese air force sent a flight of ten bombers to destroy the Chinese city of Kunming, the eastern terminus of China's last supply line—the Burma Road. Japan's four-year-long war against China had by this time cost the Chinese mainland all of its seaports. Arms and supplies to defend China had to be sent through the “back door”—from British Burma via the seven-hundred-mile-long Burma Road. Closure of the road would have been a disastrous blow.

As they neared Kunming, the Japanese bombers were stunned by the sudden wraith-like appearance of eight P-40 Tomahawk fighters diving out of the clouds, their snouts painted to resemble gaping shark's jaws. Spooked, the Japanese pilots jettisoned their bombs and turned tail, only to be ambushed by still more Tomahawks striking from above, all guns blazing.

When it was over, four Japanese bombers were down, but not one Tomahawk had been lost. It was an amazing performance by an American volunteer fighter unit that less than a year earlier had existed only in the dreams of a former US Army captain named Claire Lee Chennault. How Chennault managed in the face of great difficulty to bring the “Flying Tigers” to life is a fascinating tale of vision plus bulldog determination.



A portion of the seven-hundred-mile-long Burma Road—the “back door” to China. By late 1941, four years of war with Japan had cost the Chinese mainland all its seaports. The Burma Road was China's last supply line.

PHOTO: ARTHUR ROTHSTEIN/CORBIS

Their Due Honors



"Gallantry, determination, and esprit de corps" characterized the American volunteer pilots who flew with the Chinese air force during World War II and became known as the Flying Tigers.

PHOTO: CORBIS

BY the time Claire Chennault's American Volunteer Group was disbanded in 1942, its pilots had already been heralded as war heroes for their exploits in Burma and China. Yet for decades after the end of World War II, the Flying Tigers' seven-month campaign to fend off Japanese bombers and protect the Burma Road was officially deemed a volunteer effort, not military duty.

That changed in 1991, when the Department of the Air Force reviewed the status of the AVG and determined that the pilots and crew who were under private contract to the Chinese air force between December 7, 1941, and July 18, 1942, had performed active-duty military service. Thus, all of the original Flying Tigers who had been honorably discharged from the AVG became veterans of the US armed forces.

In making its decision, the air force review board allowed that the creation of the AVG had been sanctioned by President Roosevelt and that, although officially a volunteer unit, it had functioned under the direct influence of US military authorities. For all intents and purposes, the AVG campaign was the United States' first Asian covert military operation of World War II.

In addition to veterans' status, the original Flying Tigers also received the Presidential Unit Citation. This award, conferred by the president of the United States, is given to a military unit that displays "such gallantry, determination, and esprit de corps in accomplishing its mission as to set it apart from and above other units participating in the same campaign." The 1991 citation honoring the Flying Tigers stated that "their extraordinary performance in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds was a major factor in defeating the enemy invasion of South China."

In 1996, the US Air Force awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross to the pilots of the American Volunteer Group. The ground technicians and crew were honored with the Bronze Star. —S.M.



PHOTO: TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

Ernest Loane, a wingman for the Flying Tigers' 1st Pursuit Squadron, worked as a commercial pilot for the China National Aviation Corporation after the American Volunteer Group disbanded. He later flew for the Flying Tiger Line, a US air freight company. Loane died in 1978. In 1996, he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his service with the AVG.



▲ AVG pilots scramble for their aircraft in this undated photo. On December 20, 1941, Claire Chennault's volunteer fighter unit engaged the Japanese in the AVG's first aerial combat.

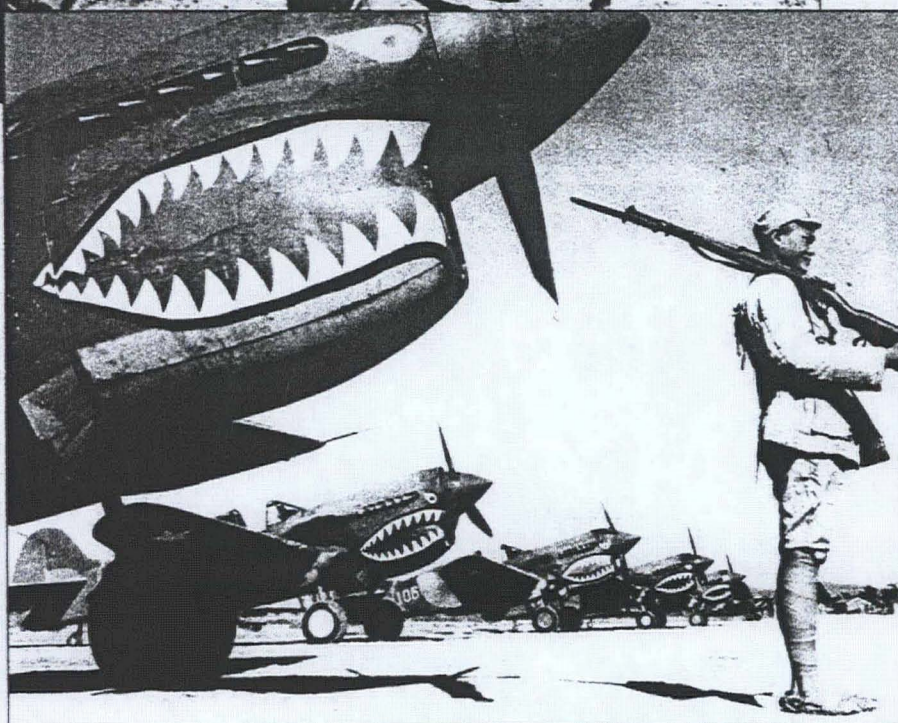
FLYING TIGERS

(Continued from page 33)

of the generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek, the wing would be placed under Chennault's command. The date set for the demise of the AVG was July 4, 1942, less than seven months after its first battle.

In the meantime, concerned for the security of his men, Chennault reassigned them to the relative quiet of Kweilin, in south central China. But on July 4, the AVG's last day, Japan sent a flight of twelve Mitsubishi 97s to bomb Hengyang, north of Kweilin. By coincidence, four AVG P-40s were on a farewell patrol flight and intercepted the Japanese bombers. Despite huge odds, Chennault's men lived up to their reputation by destroying five of the Mitsubishis with no losses of their own. It was a fitting finale for the indomitable Flying Tigers, who, by the end of their brief existence, were credited with the destruction of 297 Japanese planes.

Since the Tigers' first victories, their fame had spread worldwide. They were, in the words of one news service, "a fighting outfit that for democratic spirit and complete lack of



▲ A Chinese soldier guards P-40 Tomahawk fighters flown by the American Volunteer Group. In a few short months, the Flying Tigers had become famous for their extraordinary successes against the superior Japanese air force.

operations formalities may never be equaled. Nor will their record of performance soon be equaled."

For Chennault, it was the AVG's independent spirit that had mattered the most, and it was with regret that he returned to the rigid command structure of the regular army. Yet despite misgivings and growing health problems, Chennault molded another combat wing to take the battle to Japan. By the war's end, he had risen to the rank of major general. China hailed him as a

national hero, and Great Britain made him a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. *Life* magazine lauded him as "the one genius that war on the Asiatic mainland has yet produced."

The final honor came to Chennault just nine days before his death on July 27, 1958. The tough-minded soldier whose twenty-year army career had stalled at the rank of captain was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery bearing the three stars of a lieutenant general in the US Air Force. ■



◀ Claire Chennault, shown here as a US AAF major general in 1944, was an acknowledged authority on air combat whose strident defense of the role of fighter aircraft alienated his superiors in the 1930s.

The victories of these Americans over the rice paddies of Burma are comparable in character, if not in scope, with those won by the RAF over the hop fields of Kent in the Battle of Britain.

—WINSTON CHURCHILL
in a cable to the governor of Burma

Fighting Spirit

A skilled pilot who had once commanded the Army Air Corp's 19th Pursuit Squadron and taught at its tactical school, Claire Chennault was an acknowledged authority on air combat. In 1935, he had written a textbook, *The Role Of Defensive Pursuit*, which stressed the crucial importance of fighter aircraft in military operations. But Chennault's ideas were ahead of their time, and he offended air force strategists who claimed that bombers alone would win the next war. Chennault defended his

views strongly and at length, annoying senior officers and spoiling his chances of promotion.

In 1937, having failed to rise above the rank of captain, Chennault retired from the army. His military expertise would not be wasted, however. Within months, he accepted an offer from

China's Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to conduct a study of the Chinese air force, which was failing to deter Japanese aggression.

Chennault's bluntly critical report earned the generalissimo's trust and eventually an assignment as his personal adviser on air defense. In this role, Chennault also worked closely with Madame Chiang Kai-shek, who was her husband's air defense minister. In late 1940, Chennault made a startling proposal: recruit and train a volunteer fighter wing in the United States that would help Chiang's air force defend China against Japanese attacks. Far-fetched though the idea seemed, Chiang was in dire enough straits that he was willing to try it. He gave Chennault the go-ahead and put him in charge of the project.

In early 1941, Chennault hastened to Washington, DC, where he ran into instant difficulty. The United States was watching Japan warily, still hoping not to be drawn into World War II. Chennault's plan, which would clearly be seen by the Japanese as a provocation, was immediately denounced by high government officials



PHOTO: US AIR FORCE

▲ The P-40 Tomahawk fighter was flown extensively in World War II. This restored aircraft shows the wing markings of the US Army Air Forces and the distinctive shark's jaws made famous by the original Flying Tigers.

—JAPANESE PILOT GOICHI SUZUKI
recalling the air battle over Kunming,
China, on December 20, 1941.

◀ To defend China against Japanese air attacks, Chennault divided his fighter wing into three squadrons, placing one at Toungoo, in southern Burma, and two near Kunming, China, the eastern terminus of the Burma Road.

grinding down the Americans, both the men and the planes. And once Chennault was able to move around again, he sensed a new threat to his battered squadrons. With America now at war against Japan and openly allied with China, more US officers and troops were arriving daily, including air units. How long would the AVG be allowed to go its own independent way, especially under the command of an ex-officer the army had found troublesome?

(Continued from page 32)

wrecked in training accidents or cannibalized for spare parts. Of that eighty-four, only half were combat ready. Chennault split them into three squadrons, each with eighteen planes in good combat shape and ten not so good. He deployed one squadron at Keydaw and two at Kunming, the Chinese end of the Burma Road, which was now in range of Japanese bombers moving into Indochina. The American volunteers were ready in the nick of time. On December 20, Chennault's fighters met the Japanese in that first memorable action over Kunming.

Kings of Pursuit

But Kunming was only a hint of what was to come. Three days later, the Japanese, stung by their first AVG trouncing, sent a formation of more than fifty Mitsubishi twin-engine bombers and some twenty fighters to destroy Rangoon. The Burmese capital was in the zone assigned to the Keydaw squadron, which had at best only fifteen combat-ready Tomahawks. Joining forces with twenty RAF fighters, the squadron closed with the

Japanese in a wild melee that again produced amazing results. In the final tally, Chennault's fighters had shot down twenty-five Japanese planes while suffering a loss of only two men and three planes of their own. The RAF had done less well, shooting down seven Japanese aircraft but suffering a loss of five pilots and eleven planes. It was the Chinese press, in reporting this action over Rangoon, that tagged the AVG with the name that made its way into the history books—the Flying Tigers.

The Japanese struck back with a vengeance. On Christmas Day, they assaulted Rangoon with a massive formation of sixty bombers and thirty-two fighters, provoking an air battle that lasted an hour and a half. Again the Japanese paid dearly, losing thirty-six known planes plus others that limped away and may have crashed later. The Flying Tigers had accounted for the downing of nineteen Japanese planes while losing only two planes of their own.

On the heels of this victory, Chennault suffered a severe attack of bronchitis and was hospitalized in Kunming for all of January 1942. The Japanese continued to attack Rangoon, suffering heavy losses but also

Into the Fold

Chennault's answer came in February with the naming of General Joseph Stilwell as overall commander of the China-Burma theater and Colonel Clayton Bissell, one of Chennault's former tactical instructors, as the ranking Army Air Forces officer. Neither was a supporter of Chennault's doctrine of pursuit combat. Chennault outlined his concerns for the future of the AVG to Chiang Kai-shek, who promised to support him if it came to a showdown. This happened soon, with Stilwell scheduling a meeting in late March 1942 to decide the fate of the Flying Tigers. By this time, Rangoon had fallen to the Japanese, and the full-scale invasion of Burma had begun.

The meeting was a tough confrontation, with Chennault, the generalissimo, and Madame Chiang Kai-shek on one side, and Stilwell, Bissell, and their aides on the other. In the end, a compromise was struck. The AVG had to be disbanded, but Stilwell would create a similar combat wing in the US Army Air Forces. At the insistence

(Continued on page 36)

L TO R

LT. HARWOOD

LT. HACKNEY

LT. PRICE

LT. McEVEEN

LT. CAMPBELL



LT. ERNEST D. HACKNEY
P-51 PILOT - 327TH FIGHTER
SQUADRON - 15TH AIR FORCE
WITH FRIENDS - LEAVE TIME

IN ROME, ITALY. 29 NOV. 1944
DURING A STAND DOWN DUE TO WEATHER
FROM BASE AT FOGGIA, ITALY
ALL ABOVE FROM SAME FIGHTER
SQUADRON OF P-51 PILOTS
EXCEPT LT. PRICE FROM 12TH
AIR FORCE - A P-47 PILOT.
ONLY TWO OF THEM RETURNED HOME WHEN
THE WAR WITH GERMANY ENDED -
LT. HACKNEY AND LT. CAMPBELL.
LT. HARWOOD CRASHED INTO A MOUNTAIN
OFF THE ADRIATIC SEA RETURNING FROM
A RUN TO GERMANY IN SOCKS IN WEATHER.
LT. PRICE WAS SHOT DOWN IN HIS P-47
DURING A STRAFFING MISSION IN
GERMANY. LT. McEVEEN GAVE OUT
OF FUEL RETURNING TO BASE AND WAS
LOST IN THE ADRIATIC SEA - NEVER FOUND.



John N. Hackney Jr.
1120 Watson Dr NW
Wilson, NC 27893-2434

Hi Betty Ray

02/28/08

I have had my Bear
Stomach Keken's Story about
A while in my now-Wilson
Book (Fishing Companion of
25 years at 812 Marina)

When I saw the "EKS"
magazine story on the Flying
Tigers - I wanted to share
both with you - Of course
Eckor Boone flew in the same
Theatre of the war.

Phil Manning has set me up
to talk to the Retired Federal
Employees at the Goldsboro
1130 ~~at noon~~ march 6 about our
- Project - Do you want to help?

Best Regards

John

Captain Stanley Kelley

Although Stan Kelley told Paul Peel and others many "War Stories", this particular one deals with only one single event involving a single associate of Stan's in the "Flying Tigers" in China near the end of Stan's military career. The story surfaces again when Stan is confronted with those China flying memories one day at 8 ½ Marina Village over 50 years later.

The event occurred on April 2 1945 in the central coastal part of China near the East China Sea. This was a time when the War had really gotten bloody. Barely 10 months past, "D Day" June 6 1944 created killing zones on the beaches of Normandy. Although Stan Kelly had flown Spitfires for England, this was about the year he ended up in China with the Flying Tigers..

The Marines had invaded Iwo Jima on February 1945 with the greatest loss of life ever to the Marines. Okinawa was invaded by the Marines on April 3 1945, again with an enormous loss of life.

On April 1, 1945, two days before Okinawa, Stan Kelley was stationed in China within striking distance of Shanghai where he was sent on a strafing mission in his P 51 Mustang Flying Tiger. He was some 600 miles Northeast of Okinawa and over 900 miles from Iwo Jima. His mission in the legendary P-51 was to damage Japanese military bases near Shanghai about "high noon" on April Fools day. Coming in low and hot over the base Captain Kelly did all the damage he could with his six 50 caliber wing mounted Browning machine guns. After his last low pass with fuel and ammo running low (he carried only 1850 rounds) there was a feeling of relief that the anti-aircraft fire had missed him as he rolled the P 51 in a tight turn and headed for the barn. As he gained altitude Stan noticed his engine was not performing properly. The Packard built Rolls Royce "Merlin" 1800 HP engine got him safely to home base where he promptly reported to his boss about the engine problems. His boss dismissed the engine problems as Stan's imagination and insecurity from flying over unfamiliar territory and said "There's nothing wrong with your plane, I'll fly it tomorrow (April 2 1945)".

Stan Kelly said "He did fly it away but he didn't fly it back. He didn't come back for several weeks, and he was walking with a limp when he came". What happened to Stan's boss? Well we have to jump ahead about 53 years to an early Summer day in 1998 at 8 ½ Marina Village in Atlantic Beach, NC.

Paul Peel had published "Hugh Smithwick Descendants", a genealogy, and one of the thousands of cousins that surfaced was Luke Smithwick, a retired VP from Honeywell. Luke was fishing with Paul Peel and telling him about locating a legendary cousin after the book was published, who was a Flying Tiger. As the boat eased up to the dock, Stan Kelly was walking over to his boat docked a few feet away. Paul suggested to Luke that there were so few Flying Tigers that Stan might have known this newly found cousin. As Peel tied up the boat, Luke walked over to Stan, gave him the name and asked if he had ever run across our Flying Tiger Cousin. As Paul Peel stepped on the dock he heard Stan Kelly shout "Clyde Slocumb? That was my airplane he was flying. I told him that engine wasn't running right".

So Major (currently Lt. Col.) Clyde Slocumb, cousin of Paul Peel and Luke Smithwick was the boss in China that Stan was talking about. It seems that the Chinese man that saved Clyde Slocumb's life, wondering if he ever made it back to Stan Kelly's base, had recently written a letter trying to locate him. Luke Smithwick had the attached newspaper articles about

RAF 42-42
PR 42-44
Flynn, Rogers 44-45

STAN DEAN



Clyde Slocumb which illustrates just one event in Stan's career. Colonel Slocumb was strafing just like Captain Kelly and could see the tracers zipping by him when his engine quit. He naturally assumed he had been hit. In a phone conversation with Paul Peel he had responded to Stan's comment by saying "But who knows, maybe the engine did have a mechanical problem. I saw the tracers and assumed one hit my the engine, The plane burned after it hit the ground". In any event there was no time to think. I was low and going in. I popped the canopy and bailed out".

The rest of this story is in the newspaper descriptions of this event which are attached. Stan had heard part of the story from Major Slocumb in China but did not know about the Chinese man's efforts to trace Slocumb.

Sometimes it takes a while for the facts to sink into one's brain, but all of a sudden, while just standing on the dock at 8 1/2 Marina, history materialized and became real. The stories told by Stan took on bone and sinew. They were about real people. I didn't have to go looking for legends. I was looking at a legend.

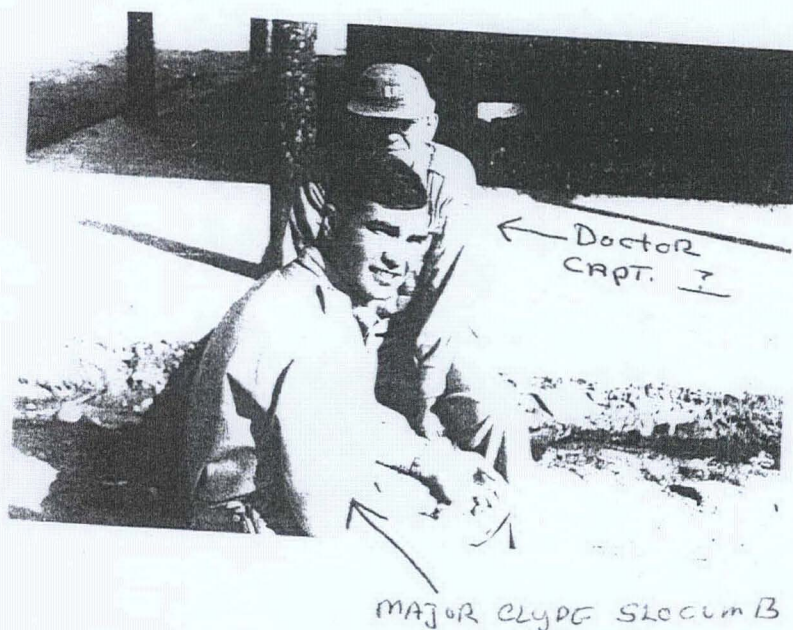
Stan found pictures of my cousin, Clyde Slocumb, which are attached. Both had lived through, and participated in, events that are now legendary.

I really liked Stan. To go fishing with Stan and John Hackney was a fun day. Add Charlie Cook to the crew and it was a blast.

I am indebted to Stan Kelley for all the dangerous missions he flew during the war to protect the United States and the free world. There is a feeling of pride from just having known him. In fact I can close my eyes right now and see him walking up to my fig tree at the beach to pick a few for breakfast. Just thinking about Stan makes me smile and feel good.

Yes, I do miss Stan Kelley.

Paul Peel



Former 'Flying Tiger' Recounts Escape

By TERRI K. SMITH
Observer Staff Writer

DOERUN—For most people the past is simply a memory, but for Clyde Slocumb of Doerun memories have merged with the present with the arrival of a letter from a man he hasn't seen in 36 years.

"I got a call from John Craft, our postmaster, who said a man named Richard Greenfield with the International Relations Office of the Postal Service had called saying he had a letter from me from a Chinese friend who wanted to talk to me," said Slocumb.

The letter, written in Chinese and addressed to the editor of the "Washington Mail", was from Ming-Chu Huang, a member of the Chinese underground that helped Slocumb escape the Japanese when his plane was shot down behind enemy lines in China during World War II.

"It's been 36 years, more years than most people are old. It surprised me that someone was interested enough to try and contact me," said Slocumb, adding that the letter "brings back a lot of memories, too. It was a long time ago, but certain parts are still very vivid."

Those memories began on April 2, 1945, when the 25-year-old Slocumb was a member of the U.S. Air Force 75th Squadron, 23rd fighter group—the famed "Flying Tigers"—stationed at an air base behind enemy lines near Shanghai.

"I was strafing an airfield one mile north of Shanghai called Kangwon, making passes and shooting enemy planes," Slocumb recalled.

"I shot a Japanese bomber coming in on approach with its wheels when ground fire set my plane on fire."

The pilot aimed his disabled plane

at a spot across the Wampoo River from Shanghai, then bailed out of the burning craft between 300-500 feet above ground.

"I bailed out at a very low altitude and you just don't do that," Slocumb explained. "When you bail out, you tend to swing back and forth. At that altitude, I swung out and back, then I was on the ground."

Although the jump itself did not hurt him, Slocumb received a wound to the leg from flying shrapnel. Knowing that the Japanese would be looking for him, Slocumb didn't know what to think when Chinese from a nearby rice field came running up to him with hoes.

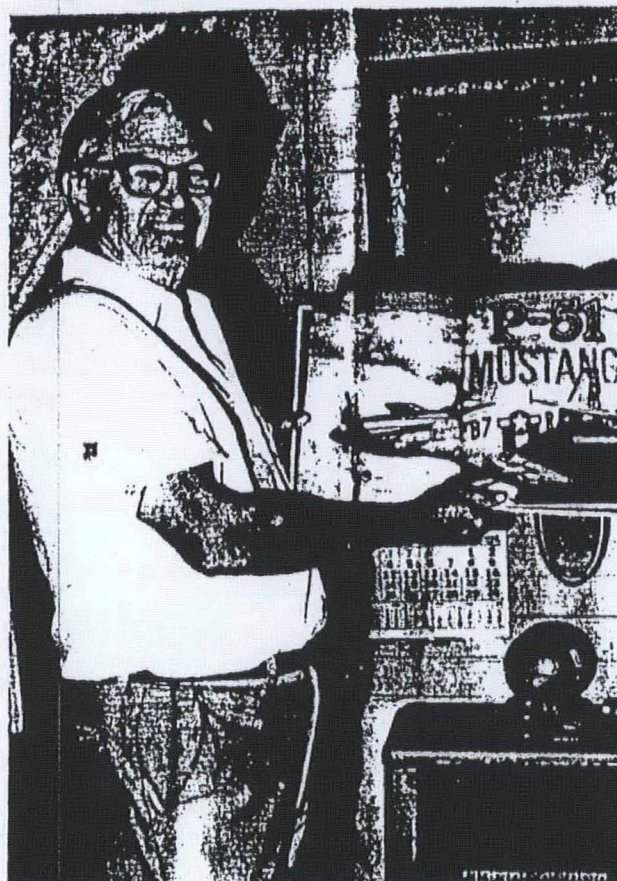
"I didn't know if they would hit me or not, but they turned out to be friendly, very friendly. They dug a hole with the hoes and buried my chute, then told me to follow them."

Slocumb's rescuers turned out to be part of a well-organized Chinese underground that was fighting the Japanese occupation. For the next 43 days, this organization kept Slocumb from the Japanese soldiers while helping him work his way back to his base.

"There were so many people that helped me escape. Just where Mr. Huang fits in I'm not sure," Slocumb admitted. "That's one thing I hope to find out when he writes back."

The downed pilot ran behind the Chinese until loss of blood from the wound in his leg forced him to stop. The men then found a bicycle for Slocumb to ride, which he did until weakness again made him stop. At that point the Chinese placed him in a wheelbarrow and continued the run to safety.

"They moved me from person to person because everyone had to be answerable to the Japanese in their proper locale, especially at night. They couldn't just pick up and go from village to village," Slocumb



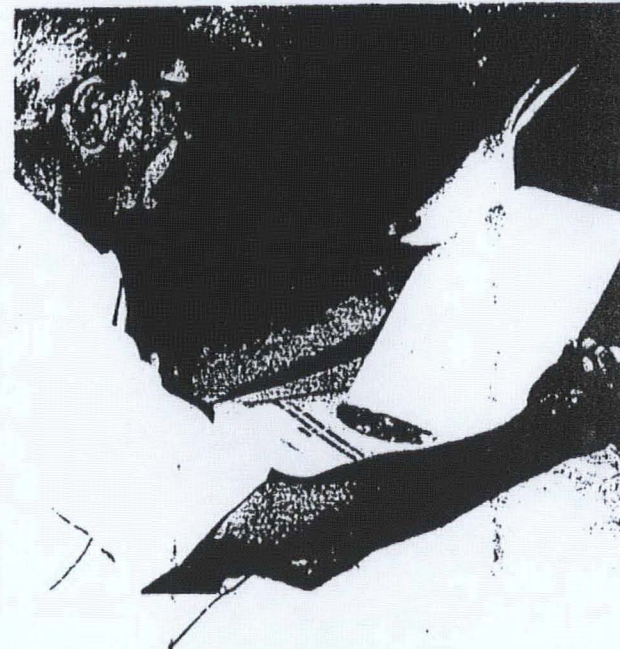
said.

That first day's flight away from the area where he was shot down was essential, Slocumb noted, because he had been shot down before 8 a.m. and the Japanese had the whole day to look for him.

"To get an American pilot was a

prize to the Japanese. There was an award posted by the Japanese for any U.S. military they could get," Slocumb explained. "I was a major and a squadron commander so I was really a prize."

But luck was with Slocumb that day, as he found out later from his



From Past To Present

Surprised is an understatement when describing how Clyde Slocumb felt when he received a letter, in Chinese, from one of the men who saved his life 36 years ago (above). Slocumb was a member of the Air Force's "Flying Tigers" and flying a P-51 Mustang (left) when he was shot down over Japanese territory in China during World War II. (Observer Photos By Terri K. Smith)

Chinese rescuers.

"The Japanese were held up because my airplane had gone into a Chinese house and killed an elderly lady. The Japanese thought the body was me in the crash and didn't pursue me right away," the Doerun native remembered.

"But when they found out it wasn't me, they started beating the woods real good."

During the course of his odyssey, Slocumb was hidden in everything from barn lofts to cow stalls, often within earshot of Japanese soldiers.

(Continued On Page 12)

Former 'Flying Tiger'

(Continued From Page 11)

but always well cared for by members of the underground.

"A nurse showed up several times while I was in hiding," Slocumb said. "She dug the shrapnel out of my leg and changed the bandages several times."

But Slocumb wasn't the only one who knew about the nurse. After his escape, the Japanese discovered she had helped him and tortured her.

"She survived and when the war was over the Americans awarded her a medal for helping me," Slocumb said. "There was a big ceremony for her, but as usual I didn't hear anything about it. I was flying transport back and forth to India to get planes for the Chinese and wasn't there for the ceremony."

The first inkling that Slocumb had that his rescuers had a specific destination in mind and were not just randomly moving him was when he was awakened around midnight and told they had to be at a certain place by a certain time.

"I thought about it and realized we were going toward the Yangtze River. They had to be there by a certain time because when the tide came in, a Chinese junk that was waiting in the mud would sail," Slocumb said.

"They were moving me toward that ship so I could sail and that's what they did."

Because he could not get his injured leg wet, Slocumb was placed on the back of a Chinese man and carried to the waiting junk. He was placed in the hold with 25-30 other people, all Chinese.

"They were part of a trade between Japan and China," Slocumb explained. "Of course, they weren't supposed to be carrying anything like me on board."

The junk sailed to the China Sea, where it proceeded down the coast for several days.

"Every day a Japanese plane looked at the ship and if it was not flying the right flag, then they would shoot it right there," Slocumb said.

"I stayed in the hold all the time because they couldn't take the chance that I would be seen. In other words, it was all Japanese or Chinese. There just weren't any

round-eyes up there."

The junk finally reached Hai Mun, a port controlled by the Chinese and considered to be "safe territory."

"After that it was a lot of walking," remembered Slocumb. "The best I could figure was 370 miles, up hill and in the valleys and on and on."

Chinese soldiers accompanied Slocumb on the trek back to the base to ensure his safe arrival and, while still 150 miles from base, another downed pilot joined the walk.

"Forrest 'Pappy' Parham was one of six pilots shot down the same day I was," explained Slocumb. "He was in the same squadron I was, but had been strafing an airbase south of Shanghai."

The Chinese underground had rescued Parham also and brought him along a different route to safety. The duo walked the last 150 miles together.

"They did a hell of a job by getting me out. It amazed our intelligence people when I got back to the base and reported what had happened. They couldn't believe it themselves," stated Slocumb.

"Rescuing me at 8 a.m. always amazed me. The Japanese had all day to look for me and I just wasn't that far away."

Slocumb only saw one of his rescuers after he returned to the base and, although he's not sure ex-

actly which person Huang was, he believes "you can be sure of one thing, he was in it to have had this information (presented in the letter)."

"I would not be surprised if he was the young boss or chief guerilla running the show," admitted Slocumb.

In addition to the memories stirred by Huang's letter, it has also brought thoughts of returning to the Orient, where Slocumb was stationed for six years during his 30 years in the Air Force.

"It would be nice. I'd really like to and I could now, with Chinese-American relations as they are, but it's a terrible amount of money," Slocumb said.

"I want to see if they had it all lined out from the beginning—where it happened, how far we traveled, a lot of things I want to know that I was not too observant about back then. I was just too frightened, I guess."

One thing's for sure—Slocumb will have a new story to tell his former flying partners when they meet in Atlanta this September for a "Flying Tigers" reunion.

"The Chinese people are so generous and good that I just can't say enough for them," Slocumb said. "I'll be interested when I hear back from Mr. Huang. I'm sure he will reply."

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British novelist Aldous Huxley worked on the script of the movie "Pride and Prejudice" in 1940.

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Hands Across the Ocean 36 Years After a Pilot's Life Was Saved

In the trade we call them "evergreens" — pieces that are, in the flow of daily events, timeless. Well, not quite, for in the hard deadline demands of the news business nothing lasts long. Evergreens at least will keep a few hours.

This particular evergreen should not have been allowed to keep at all, for which I am to blame. But I will submit that for once we really do have a timeless tale to tell.

It is a story of a friendship that survives the passage of generations, the differences of cultures, the drumbeat of history, the savagery of war. In the end, it demonstrates anew an old human trait: that friendships can be forged out of the most extraordinary circumstances, and once formed they possess a strength that surpasses superficial differences in nationalities, races, even language.

Early this spring a letter arrived in Washington from Hong Kong bearing, in small neat block letters, this handwritten address:

To: Editor of Washington Mail
Washington, U.S.A.

Because of the misleading address, and that fact that it was from overseas, the letter was sent on to the U.S. Postal Service's International Postal Affairs Office on the third floor of L'Enfant Plaza in Southwest Washington.

The letter was opened. It contained a single sheet of onion skin paper filled with Chinese characters, penned in ink. The letter

was sent out to be translated. When it came back, a postal employee read:

Editors of the Washington Post
Washington, D.C.

United States of America

Dear Editors:

I request your assistance to publish this letter in your newspaper and help me to locate my American friend, Mr. Slocumb. [Spelling based on Chinese phonetic translation].

Mr. Slocumb was a major with the "Flying Tiger" wing which was captained by General Chennault. When Mr. Slocumb was bombing a Japanese military emplacement in Shanghai at noontime of April 1945, his fighter-plane was shot down by the Japanese. My friend and I saved his life when he parachuted to land. We helped him out from the Japanese search and protected him to get back to his base.

He was around 23 years old at that time. He was born in California, and his father was the owner of a sugar refinery. If my memory is correct, his serial number was 427775 or 477775.

If Mr. Slocumb or his friends read this publication, please write a letter to me at 2, Yi Chia Ja, Kao Chia Bing, Ling Chiao People's Commune, Chuan Sha, Shanghai, People's Republic of China.

May God bless you.
Sincerely yours,
Huang, Ming-Chu

The letter was turned over to Richard J.

Greenfield, a postal service international relations officer. He immediately went to work.

Greenfield remembered that Anna Chennault, Gen. Chennault's widow, had been living in Washington, D.C. He checked and found she still was, in the Watergate. With the help of her personal assistant, Jean Mesle, a roster of living members of the old "Flying Tigers" air group that Chennault commanded in China turned up the identical serial number of that first set of figures in the letter.

The name of the man who bore that number was, indeed, Slocumb — with a "b." But

Haynes Johnson

FRIENDS

instead of California he lived in a small town in southern Georgia. By a curious coincidence two members of the "Flying Tigers" were listed as living in that same town of Doerun, southeast of Plains and between Moultrie and Albany, Ga.

Greenfield called the postmaster of Doerun. Did he know if a Clyde Slocumb lived in Doerun? Why, yes, he had been by the post office just that morning. Had he by chance been a member of the "Flying Tigers" in the war? Yes, he certainly was. The postmaster supplied Slocumb's phone number; in minutes, Greenfield was reading him the

translation of Mr. Huang's letter. Later, he gave this reporter a copy of the translation, and the original letter.

Slocumb remembers how "unbelievably close" to the Japanese he was as he parachuted to the ground across the Huangpu River after his P51 was shot down while strafing the north field of the Shanghai air-drome that day 36 years ago.

"Two Chinese came running up just as I hit the ground. One had a hoe in his hands. I didn't know whether he was going to hit me or help me. He helped me dig a hole to bury the parachute, then he helped me run as fast I could. I had been hit in the left knee by shrapnel, and it was bleeding heavily. I continued to run as fast as I could and when I couldn't go any more, they got me a bicycle to ride. After riding as long as I could, I couldn't do that any more and they put me in a wheelbarrow and rolled me around from place to place."

That began a 43-day odyssey in which Slocumb was moved 100 miles, often under the noses of Japanese troops, by night and day, by land and water in a Chinese junk down the Yangtze, until he reached his American base. A Chinese nurse who tended his wounds later was tortured. Every inch of the way he was accompanied by his new Chinese friends. "I felt so close to the people who did so much for me when I was absolutely helpless," he says. "It's something that draws people together forever."

After the war, Slocumb stayed on in the

Air Force, retiring after 30 years' service as a colonel. Now 61, he lives quietly in his home town of Doerun. (He never was from California; that, and the part about his father owning a sugar refinery, are about the only inaccurate recollections in the letter from China.)

As soon as he got the letter, Slocumb wrote a reply, in English, that said in part:

"After 36 years I remember so vividly the wonderful Chinese people who made it possible for me to escape the Japanese. The situation looked impossible. Only through the courageous efforts of you and your friends could such an escape be accomplished. I want you to know that I will be eternally grateful for everything you did for me . . . Thank you for writing to me, for this gives me an opportunity to tell you and the others how grateful I am for what you did. May God bless you always, Clyde Slocumb."

A letter arrived in Doerun from Slocumb's old Chinese friend. Like the first one, it was in Chinese. Slocumb, who neither reads nor speaks the language, took it to the owner of a Chinese restaurant in his area. The translation was not satisfactory, but the meaning of the fragments are clear: "It makes me so happy . . . waited 36 years . . . so nice to hear . . ."

He's going out of town soon so he can have it fully translated, and then carry on the correspondence.

Spitfire pilot joins comrades

Stan and Emily Kelley, Atlantic Beach, returned home from England early in September.

One of a handful of remaining Americans who in World War II flew

Ruth Barbour

a Royal Air Force Spitfire, Stan, with his wife, was invited to England as a member of the Presidential Delegation to the Farnborough Aerospace Exposition, the prestigious air show held each year, alternately at Farnborough and Paris.

Late in August the Kelleys received the invitation from Congressman Robert Dornan, 38th District, California, himself a pilot and aviation enthusiast.

The delegation's guests of honor this year were American pilots and airmen who flew with the RAF prior to Sept. 28, 1942. The trip, Aug. 30 through Sept. 6, coincided with some of the British celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, May to December 1940.

The round trip from Andrews Air Force Base was courtesy of the U.S. Air Force. Of the 50 passengers on the plane carrying the Kelleys there were a dozen American pilots.

Stan had arrived in England in the spring of 1941. A year earlier, Hitler's forces in two months had conquered all of Western Europe, but the battered RAF stymied his plan to knock out England's air force, pitifully small compared to the Luftwaffe. Instead of launching a land invasion of Britain Sept. 15, a major Nazi air assault was turned back that day.

The RAF lost a thousand planes and hundreds of men, but Nazi forces never crossed the English Channel.

Unable to gain his first objective, Hitler turned to bombing populated English cities. The period from November 1940 to May 1941 came to be known as the "Blitz."

During that period Stan, in his late

teens at the University of Detroit, read an obscure ad in a newspaper: pilots wanted. Stan had learned to fly at his Gainesville, Fla., home when he was 15. He answered the ad and learned that pilots were needed by the RAF.

Accepted for duty, he and other volunteers trained briefly in Oklahoma. Because it was a violation of federal law for Americans to fight for a foreign power, the volunteers were not put in uniform until they got to England. Stan flew a Spitfire and declares to this day there was nothing like it.

After Pearl Harbor, which put the United States squarely in the war, he was with the U.S. Air Force in the North Africa campaign and later in China with the 14th Air Force Flying Tigers.

Comrades in arms laughingly noted that Stan was the only pilot wounded twice — on the ground. The first was in North Africa. In his bunk during a German strafing attack, he took shrapnel in the leg and was returned to the United States to train pilots.

In China, he was beside his plane reading, when a Jap sniper bullet hit him in the back. Seriously wounded, he had a close brush with death. His wife Emily says his best friend, the flight surgeon, never left his side, and pulled him through.

During air combat, Stan shot down four planes, and had several probables. (Folks who saw the PBS series, *Piece of Cake*, a story of RAF pilots during the Battle of Britain, know how precise the counting of "kills" had to be. A pilot alone couldn't say he shot down an enemy plane. There had to be other verification.)

In China, prior to the surrender of Japan, Stan was a member of an American squadron and later commander of a squadron of Chinese pilots. The Kelleys were invited back to

Taiwan four years ago at the invitation of the Chinese Fifth Fighter Group. Next year a trip is planned to Chinese bases where the 14th Air Force was stationed.

When discharged after the war as major, Stan returned to school, this time choosing Duke University, where he met Emily, a girl from Pennsylvania. They married in 1947 and graduated in 1948, he with a degree in accounting and she with a degree in economics.

In England the recent reception luncheons, dinners and cocktail parties honoring the Presidential Delegation were numerous and lavish. Aircraft manufacturers of England and America proved to be perfect hosts.

In addition to the Farnborough air show, the guests of honor visited the American and RAF air museums at Duxford, were taken on a four-hour helicopter tour over southeast England, site of bases from which the RAF flew during the Battle of Britain, visited the Houses of Parliament, were entertained at the United States Embassy in London and at the home of our ambassador to England.

Stan wanted to be in the Korea war, but having been twice wounded that was not permitted, much to his wife's relief. They had three children to raise.

Fighter pilots are a breed apart. Toward the end of the war in Europe a RAF pilot shot down a Messerschmitt piloted by Luftwaffe hero Maj. Walter Nowotny. Nowotny died of burns.

Maj. James F. Sunderman, USAF in his book *World War II in the Air* says that evening in the RAF mess on the day they learned Nowotny died "his name was often on our lips, with respect, almost affection ... that curious solidarity among fighter pilots above all tragedies and all prejudice"

Carteret County News-Times

P.O. Box 1679, Morehead City, N.C. 28557

Tel. 726-7081

Published Sunday, Wednesday and Friday

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Ruth Barbour, who resides in

Date: Tue, 14 Nov 2006 14:58:27 -0500

To: hmlmatttox@yahoo.com

From: "Ashton" <ashton@dmv.com>

Subject: From The Island Packet Online: Retired fighter pilot recalls WWII, his passion for flying

Ashton sent you the following article
from The Island Packet Online (<http://www.islandpacket.com>)

You may read this article in its entirety at
<http://www.islandpacket.com/features/story/6147035p-5380458c.html>.

This article is protected by copyright and may
not be printed or distributed for anything except
personal use.

Comments from Ashton:

Hi Mary Lou:
Didn't know if you saw this article about Pops. Mom is doing OK.
Hope all is well with you.

Retired fighter pilot recalls WWII, his passion for flying

Published: Monday, October 9th, 2006

BY JANUARY HOLMES
THE ISLAND PACKET

A sniper attack almost ended Stanley Kelly's life during World
War II.

The strike left him with a bullet in his back.

'They cut me open and couldn't find the bullet,' said the
unassuming 85-year-old Hilton Head Island resident of the medical
care he received after he was shot. He was a fighter pilot with
the Flying Tigers of the United States Air Force in China at the
time and at first, his prognosis looked grim.

'They sewed me back up and dug a grave, but doc stayed with
me,' he said.

Sixty-one years later, with two Purple Hearts in his
possession, he lives to tell the story.

The retired fighter pilot and accountant faced many dangers in the air and on the ground, yet he said each time he'd jump in his plane to meet those perils head-on. When it came to his passion for flying, nothing could get in his way.

That doesn't mean he wasn't frightened.

'When you got Japs and the Germans shooting you, everyone gets scared,' Kelly said.

Kelly's love of flight took off when he was a 9-year-old during the Depression and his father was able to take him on a couple of airplane rides.

At 16, he began flying lessons. An after-school job paid for the lessons, which were \$1 for 12 minutes in the air. He flew his first solo flight with only two hours of training, unlike the standard 8 to 10 hours needed, he said.

'I was a natural pilot,' said the father of two grown children.

The Air Force required their pilots to have two years of college under their belts. But after completing one year of college, Kelly had an opportunity to serve with Britain's Royal Air Force, which had no such requirement. So he took it.

Britain needed volunteer fighter pilots to serve during the war and there were a bunch of men in the United States who were eager to fly, Kelly said.

After more than 150 hours of training, he and several hundred other men became volunteer commission officers with the Royal Air Force. Because they were serving another country, they had to give up their American citizenship, he said.

The pilots served in convoy patrol missions of British ships over the English channel.

'It was very dangerous because you're over water and the English Channel is very cold,' Kelly said.

In September 1942, Kelly was able to transfer to the United States Air Force, regaining his American citizenship while most of his flying comrades continued to serve England. His adventure with the American military brought him to the shores of Africa where he battled Germans and Italians during the war. He was wounded by a surprise air attack the following year -- when he

wasn't even near a plane.

He was scheduled to fly that morning but the Germans descended on his squadron as daylight broke. The pilot was sleeping in his tent, which was heavily damaged by German military fire. Three bombs fell within 10 feet of Kelly, and his leg was hit with shell fragments, he said.

The German attack sent him back to the United States to recuperate.

'I was one of the first to come back,' Kelly said of the soldiers who returned from the war. He was overwhelmed with hugs and kisses from family, friends and complete strangers.

'But that didn't last too long. They got tired of the war after a while,' he said.

And he was tired of being out of the cockpit.

'I couldn't stand it any longer,' Kelly said. 'I had to get back on and fly.'

So in 1944, he joined the Air Force's Flying Tigers division in China and was wounded the following year in the sniper attack. He left the military before the introduction of the atomic bomb, he said.

Though his military career ended, his passion for flying has remained. Some of it spread to his children and his wife, Emily.

His son, Spain, 55, began flying when he was 16. Having a father who has flown through war zones and received two Purple Hearts is an honor for Spain Kelly, who wonders how American life would be if there wasn't people like his dad around.

'He made great sacrifices for our country,' he said.

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the
Elks

magazine

MARCH 2008

Claire Chennault

and the
FLYING TIGERS

The Elks Accident
Prevention Program
—Success!

A Rush to Yosemite



PLUS

On Tour with F. Louis Sulsberger
Looking Out for Your Money
Mind-Body Medicine

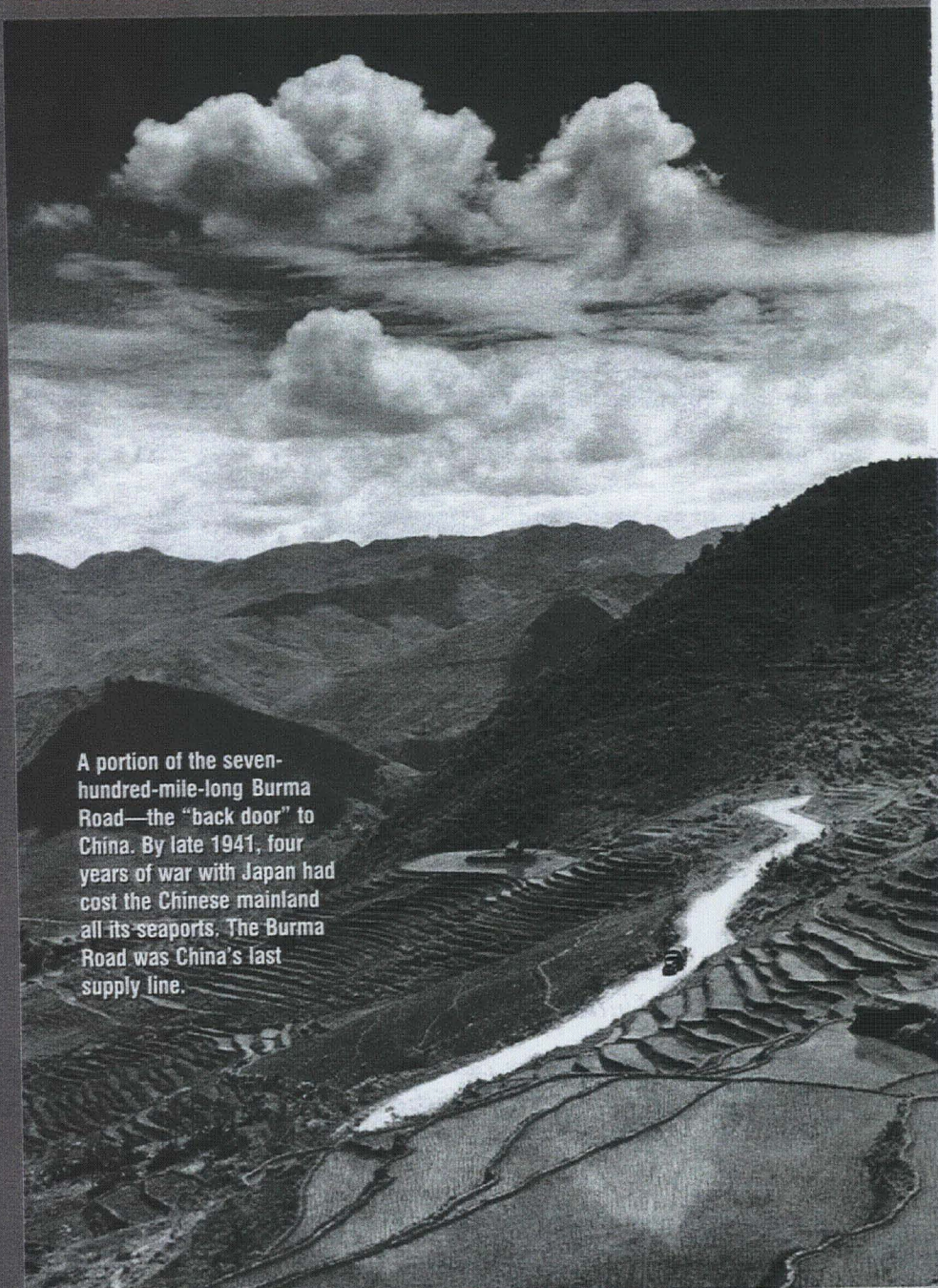
Claire Chennault and the

FLYING TIGERS

ON December 20, 1941, thirteen days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese air force sent a flight of ten bombers to destroy the Chinese city of Kunming, the eastern terminus of China's last supply line—the Burma Road. Japan's four-year-long war against China had by this time cost the Chinese mainland all of its seaports. Arms and supplies to defend China had to be sent through the “back door”—from British Burma via the seven-hundred-mile-long Burma Road. Closure of the road would have been a disastrous blow.

As they neared Kunming, the Japanese bombers were stunned by the sudden wraith-like appearance of eight P-40 Tomahawk fighters diving out of the clouds, their snouts painted to resemble gaping shark's jaws. Spooked, the Japanese pilots jettisoned their bombs and turned tail, only to be ambushed by still more Tomahawks striking from above, all guns blazing.

When it was over, four Japanese bombers were down, but not one Tomahawk had been lost. It was an amazing performance by an American volunteer fighter unit that less than a year earlier had existed only in the dreams of a former US Army captain named Claire Lee Chennault. How Chennault managed in the face of great difficulty to bring the “Flying Tigers” to life is a fascinating tale of vision plus bulldog determination.



A portion of the seven-hundred-mile-long Burma Road—the “back door” to China. By late 1941, four years of war with Japan had cost the Chinese mainland all its seaports. The Burma Road was China's last supply line.

PHOTO: ARTHUR ROTHSTEIN/CORBIS



◀ Claire Chennault, shown here as a US AAF major general in 1944, was an acknowledged authority on air combat whose strident defense of the role of fighter aircraft alienated his superiors in the 1930s.

Fighting Spirit

A skilled pilot who had once commanded the Army Air Corp's 19th Pursuit Squadron and taught at its tactical school, Claire Chennault was an acknowledged authority on air combat. In 1935, he had written a textbook, *The Role Of Defensive Pursuit*, which stressed the crucial importance of fighter aircraft in military operations. But Chennault's ideas were ahead of their time, and he offended air force strategists who claimed that bombers alone would win the next war. Chennault defended his

views strongly and at length, annoying senior officers and spoiling his chances of promotion.

In 1937, having failed to rise above the rank of captain, Chennault retired from the army. His military expertise would not be wasted, however. Within months, he accepted an offer from

China's Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to conduct a study of the Chinese air force, which was failing to deter Japanese aggression.

Chennault's bluntly critical report earned the generalissimo's trust and eventually an assignment as his personal adviser on air defense. In this role, Chennault also worked closely with Madame Chiang Kai-shek, who was her husband's air defense minister. In late 1940, Chennault made a startling proposal: recruit and train a volunteer fighter wing in the United States that would help Chiang's air force defend China against Japanese attacks. Far-fetched though the idea seemed, Chiang was in dire enough straits that he was willing to try it. He gave Chennault the go-ahead and put him in charge of the project.

In early 1941, Chennault hastened to Washington, DC, where he ran into instant difficulty. The United States was watching Japan warily, still hoping not to be drawn into World War II. Chennault's plan, which would clearly be seen by the Japanese as a provocation, was immediately denounced by high government officials

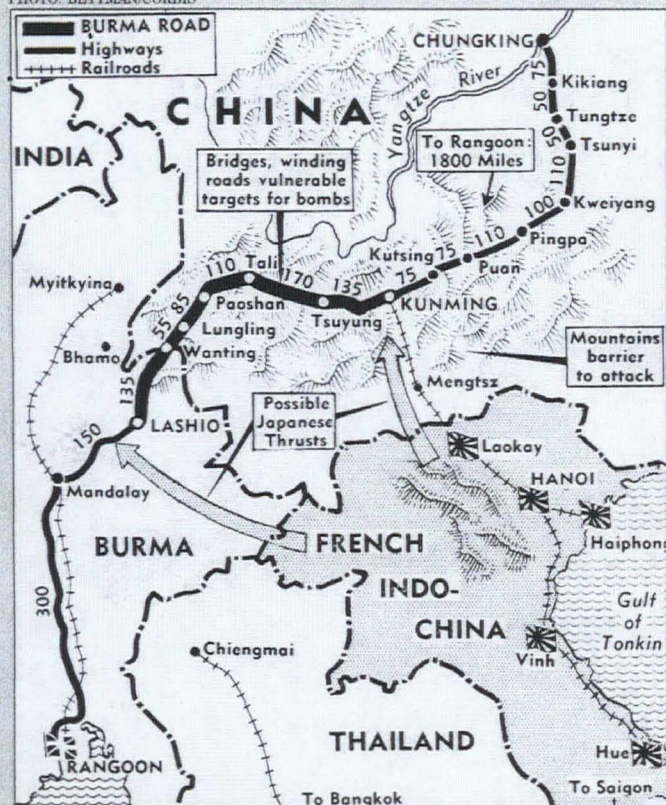
The victories of these Americans over the rice paddies of Burma are comparable in character, if not in scope, with those won by the RAF over the hop fields of Kent in the Battle of Britain.

—WINSTON CHURCHILL
in a cable to the governor of Burma



PHOTO: US AIR FORCE

A The P-40 Tomahawk fighter was flown extensively in World War II. This restored aircraft shows the wing markings of the US Army Air Forces and the distinctive shark's jaws made famous by the original Flying Tigers.



They flew directly toward us, and we immediately recognized them. Although the marks were Chinese, it was clear that the pilots were American because they were brave enough to come in such close quarters.

—JAPANESE PILOT GOICHI SUZUKI recalling the air battle over Kunming, China, on December 20, 1941.

◀ To defend China against Japanese air attacks, Chennault divided his fighter wing into three squadrons, placing one at Tounghoo, in southern Burma, and two near Kunming, China, the eastern terminus of the Burma Road.

grinding down the Americans, both the men and the planes. And once Chennault was able to move around again, he sensed a new threat to his battered squadrons. With America now at war against Japan and openly allied with China, more US officers and troops were arriving daily, including air units. How long would the AVG be allowed to go its own independent way, especially under the command of an ex-officer the army had found troublesome?

Into the Fold

Chennault's answer came in February with the naming of General Joseph Stilwell as overall commander of the China-Burma theater and Colonel Clayton Bissell, one of Chennault's former tactical instructors, as the ranking Army Air Forces officer. Neither was a supporter of Chennault's doctrine of pursuit combat. Chennault outlined his concerns for the future of the AVG to Chiang Kai-shek, who promised to support him if it came to a showdown. This happened soon, with Stilwell scheduling a meeting in late March 1942 to decide the fate of the Flying Tigers. By this time, Rangoon had fallen to the Japanese, and the full-scale invasion of Burma had begun.

The meeting was a tough confrontation, with Chennault, the generalissimo, and Madame Chiang Kai-shek on one side, and Stilwell, Bissell, and their aides on the other. In the end, a compromise was struck. The AVG had to be disbanded, but Stilwell would create a similar combat wing in the US Army Air Forces. At the insistence

(Continued on page 36)

FLYING TIGERS

(Continued from page 32)

wrecked in training accidents or cannibalized for spare parts. Of that eighty-four, only half were combat ready. Chennault split them into three squadrons, each with eighteen planes in good combat shape and ten not so good. He deployed one squadron at Keydaw and two at Kunming, the Chinese end of the Burma Road, which was now in range of Japanese bombers moving into Indochina. The American volunteers were ready in the nick of time. On December 20, Chennault's fighters met the Japanese in that first memorable action over Kunming.

Kings of Pursuit

But Kunming was only a hint of what was to come. Three days later, the Japanese, stung by their first AVG trouncing, sent a formation of more than fifty Mitsubishi twin-engine bombers and some twenty fighters to destroy Rangoon. The Burmese capital was in the zone assigned to the Keydaw squadron, which had at best only fifteen combat-ready Tomahawks. Joining forces with twenty RAF fighters, the squadron closed with the

Japanese in a wild melee that again produced amazing results. In the final tally, Chennault's fighters had shot down twenty-five Japanese planes while suffering a loss of only two men and three planes of their own. The RAF had done less well, shooting down seven Japanese aircraft but suffering a loss of five pilots and eleven planes. It was the Chinese press, in reporting this action over Rangoon, that tagged the AVG with the name that made its way into the history books—the Flying Tigers.

The Japanese struck back with a vengeance. On Christmas Day, they assaulted Rangoon with a massive formation of sixty bombers and thirty-two fighters, provoking an air battle that lasted an hour and a half. Again the Japanese paid dearly, losing thirty-six known planes plus others that limped away and may have crashed later. The Flying Tigers had accounted for the downing of nineteen Japanese planes while losing only two planes of their own.

On the heels of this victory, Chennault suffered a severe attack of bronchitis and was hospitalized in Kunming for all of January 1942. The Japanese continued to attack Rangoon, suffering heavy losses but also

Their Due Honors



"Gallantry, determination, and esprit de corps" characterized the American volunteer pilots who flew with the Chinese air force during World War II and became known as the Flying Tigers.

PHOTO: CORBIS

BY the time Claire Chennault's American Volunteer Group was disbanded in 1942, its pilots had already been heralded as war heroes for their exploits in Burma and China. Yet for decades after the end of World War II, the Flying Tigers' seven-month campaign to fend off Japanese bombers and protect the Burma Road was officially deemed a volunteer effort, not military duty.

That changed in 1991, when the Department of the Air Force reviewed the status of the AVG and determined that the pilots and crew who were under private contract to the Chinese air force between December 7, 1941, and July 18, 1942, had performed active-duty military service. Thus, all of the original Flying Tigers who had been honorably discharged from the AVG became veterans of the US armed forces.

In making its decision, the air force review board allowed that the creation of the AVG had been sanctioned by President Roosevelt and that, although officially a volunteer unit, it had functioned under the direct influence of US military authorities. For all intents and purposes, the AVG campaign was the United States' first Asian covert military operation of World War II.

In addition to veterans' status, the original Flying Tigers also received the Presidential Unit Citation. This award, conferred by the president of the United States, is given to a military unit that displays "such gallantry, determination, and esprit de corps in accomplishing its mission as to set it apart from and above other units participating in the same campaign." The 1991 citation honoring the Flying Tigers stated that "their extraordinary performance in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds was a major factor in defeating the enemy invasion of South China."

In 1996, the US Air Force awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross to the pilots of the American Volunteer Group. The ground technicians and crew were honored with the Bronze Star. —S.M.



PHOTO: TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

Ernest Loane, a wingman for the Flying Tigers' 1st Pursuit Squadron, worked as a commercial pilot for the China National Aviation Corporation after the American Volunteer Group disbanded. He later flew for the Flying Tiger Line, a US air freight company. Loane died in 1978. In 1996, he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his service with the AVG.



▲ AVG pilots scramble for their aircraft in this undated photo. On December 20, 1941, Claire Chennault's volunteer fighter unit engaged the Japanese in the AVG's first aerial combat.

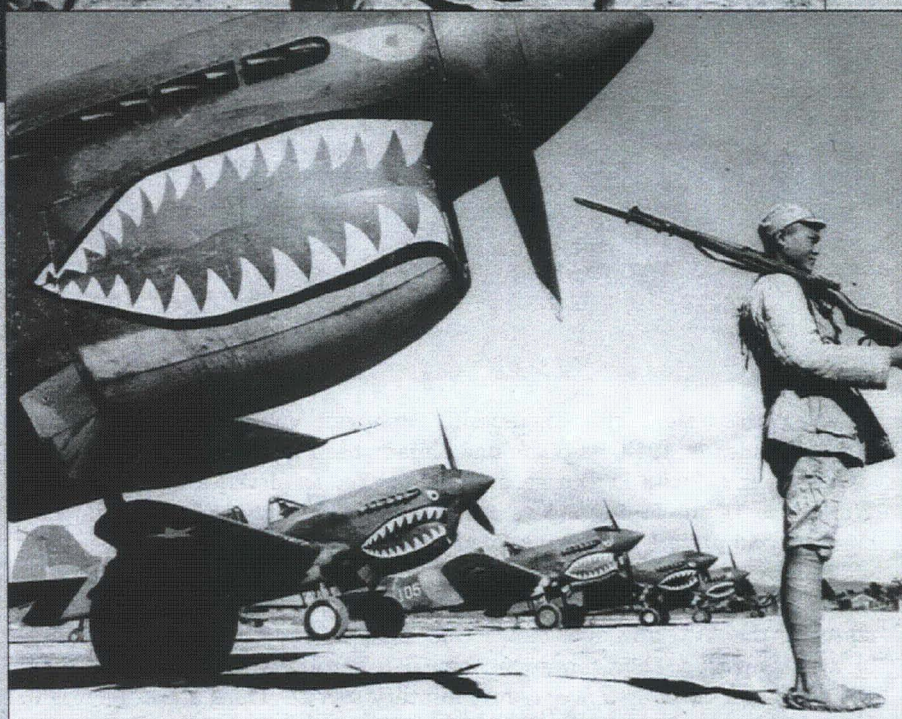
FLYING TIGERS

(Continued from page 33)

of the generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek, the wing would be placed under Chennault's command. The date set for the demise of the AVG was July 4, 1942, less than seven months after its first battle.

In the meantime, concerned for the security of his men, Chennault reassigned them to the relative quiet of Kweilin, in south central China. But on July 4, the AVG's last day, Japan sent a flight of twelve Mitsubishi 97s to bomb Hengyang, north of Kweilin. By coincidence, four AVG P-40s were on a farewell patrol flight and intercepted the Japanese bombers. Despite huge odds, Chennault's men lived up to their reputation by destroying five of the Mitchubishis with no losses of their own. It was a fitting finale for the indomitable Flying Tigers, who, by the end of their brief existence, were credited with the destruction of 297 Japanese planes.

Since the Tigers' first victories, their fame had spread worldwide. They were, in the words of one news service, "a fighting outfit that for democratic spirit and complete lack of



▲ A Chinese soldier guards P-40 Tomahawk fighters flown by the American Volunteer Group. In a few short months, the Flying Tigers had become famous for their extraordinary successes against the superior Japanese air force.

operations formalities may never be equaled. Nor will their record of performance soon be equaled."

For Chennault, it was the AVG's independent spirit that had mattered the most, and it was with regret that he returned to the rigid command structure of the regular army. Yet despite misgivings and growing health problems, Chennault molded another combat wing to take the battle to Japan. By the war's end, he had risen to the rank of major general. China hailed him as a

national hero, and Great Britain made him a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. *Life* magazine lauded him as "the one genius that war on the Asiatic mainland has yet produced."

The final honor came to Chennault just nine days before his death on July 27, 1958. The tough-minded soldier whose twenty-year army career had stalled at the rank of captain was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery bearing the three stars of a lieutenant general in the US Air Force. ■

Dear John:

As you can see, I found my Dad's outline - it's hard to read but you can figure it out better than me.

I will be staying here for Xmas. Looking forward to not traveling but I miss not seeing mom & Dad this time of year. I put my tree up & decorated.

It's been a cold Nov & Dec but I don't mind, not riding right now. May have a mild Jan, who knows. My business is dead! Worried about 2009 -

I hope all is well and love is in the winds. Please give my love -



Enjoy my
pics! P

Wishing you old-fashioned pleasures,
happy memories and all the joys of Christmas

Paul
Ashton

12/18/08 - Betty Ray

Put these with the Stanley & Kenney history
A

1930-31 DAD GAVE RIDES in auto gvw, later Robin, BIRD

1937 ^{after hrs} WORKING ^{25¢} 50¢ hr. SAVE for ~~100~~ 12 months

Friend had student permit solo me in 2 hrs dual

1938 Loops, spins etc in 12 months

39 NIGHT flights over Tung Oil Groves

Loops spin @ rate - D. BUT STUDY HAD to spend on yr ^{school}

40 VINTAGE Detroit School & working notes - ^{FLYING more in Detroit} expenses

41 Spring bought with several other J-3 Cub

41 ~~Supervisor~~ Retired RCAF 600th New

Told me about RAF recruits ^{TAKEN Pres in letter} ^{him recruit P.C.O.T.S}

Clayton I thought comm. Rush-Rush

Cleveland for check ride - OK & PASSED physical

HAD to read Log Book - get enough 8 in

Gave me ticket to Tulsa - FIRST airline ride

41 SPATAN School of Aeronautics

using Army A/C airplanes, civilian instr.

no uniform

Army COM GAVE check ride Comm. P/O RCAF

in USA - ^{H2 like me for work & gain} and

off-to Canada - Bannock BORT cold

Atlantic ~~off~~ ocean - Convoy ahead us

saw 9070 if ships -

Land England ^{or} give clothes @ Love pool

off London for better uniform ^{ARRIVED}

42 ops training & then op. in SPIT fire

Convoy Patrols - searchlights etc

Posted LAST time RAF on my first CHASING

in 86 Photo plane -

International
Sq. Polo, chess
M.Z. FIRST
etc

Sept 42 - Went London for Val Transfer

80th RAF 300 - USAF

80th didn't pay for bill for month

HAD BAT women - would WAIVE, cut Tea
clean cloth etc - American didn't
HAVE that which missed

Sept 42

Transfer to 31st FL 309 q's they
were on a two gr. Jby ST. fima

OCT-42

order to GLASGOW Scot. - Covey
to G.I.B. - all Pilots on one BOAT

~~move.~~

all for inv. N. Africa

600 A/c on on Runway in G.I.B.

Nov. -

flw over N.A. on INV. - first French

3 Days - STARTED flying for us

Dec - JAN

Covey Patrol - chasing PHOTO REC.

Feb

move to front on sq unit

telecom Air Gun - ALL SAND - Live

with ground - no bath etc

Feb

KASSINE PASS. Romuald Kaze Fred

General PATTON

move to M.T. RAIN - HOT BATHS

ATL

Flw up to 6 miles @ DAY

Italian M-202 - WE 189 - TEA 190

May -

Flw all DAY & some 200,000 ITAL

Prisoner

Flw my A/C before Morocco LEAD 100

wounded - Gen 6

Aug 43 Hosp - Flew back to State CASABH, Scotland
Iceland - Home

N.Y. - Some first Home

June 44 Train Pilots, many Good friend -

Couldnt stand not being combat

Vol - Picked chance Why?

Chosen
col Dead

Sept 44 Changing to front line

Jap Took Air field

move to Mt. Chick -

Feb 45 - several air battles - mostly strafed down Barb

Some into messes

MAR Jet Army - Swatons Eng cut out

MAR 45 Vol China CACW Picut Crown

Apr - Wounded

June 45 flew Home 6 stops in Hosp ship

Sept 45 and - went Duke Island - Nov -

From the Desk of

John N. Hackney, Jr.

Carteret
County
05/11/09

Stanley
O.

Kelly

Hi. Berry Ray
Please put this
History of the Eagle
Sparrow with that
of my friend Sam Kelley
Leften with that
Sparrow in the bottle
or bottle.

Thanks

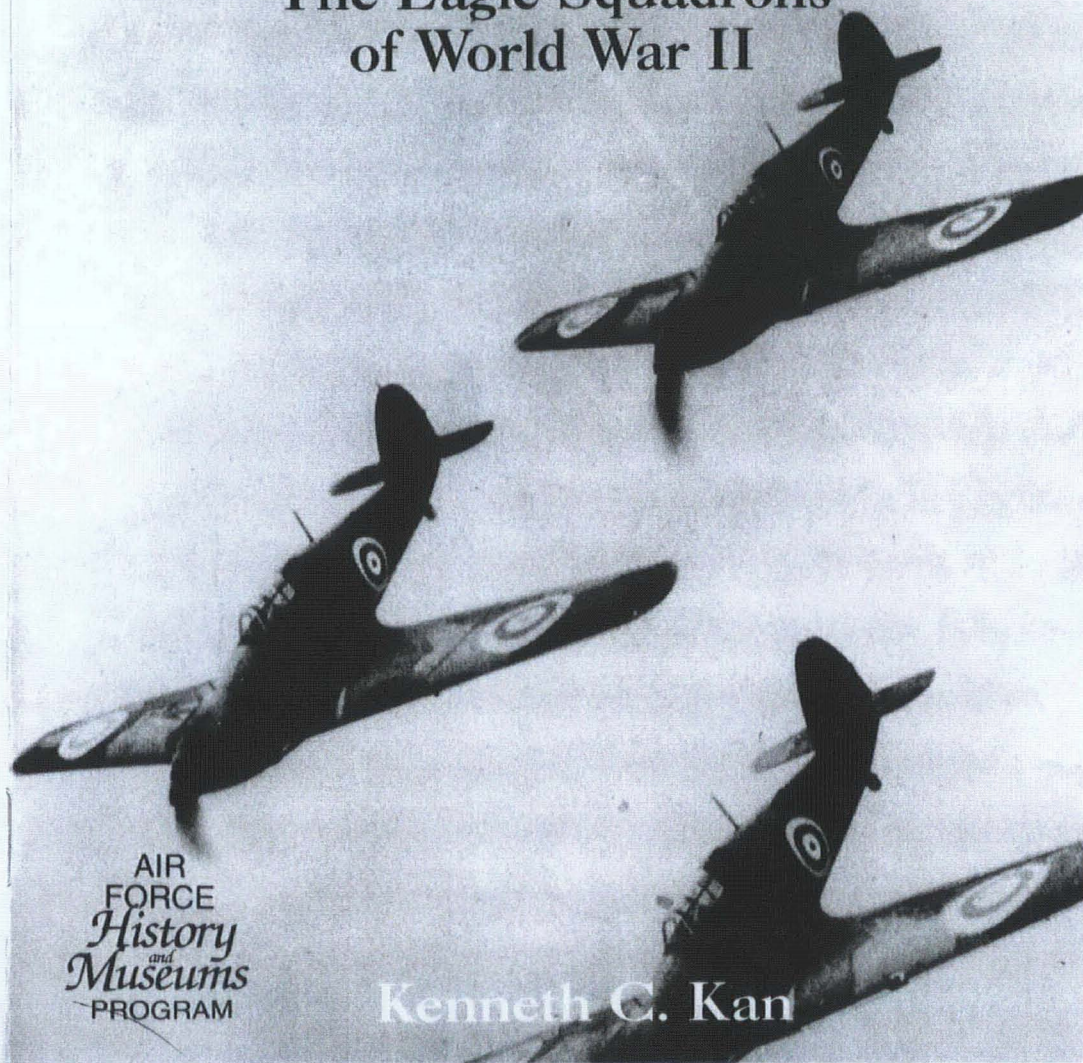
John

Air Force Sixtieth Anniversary

Commemorative Edition

FIRST IN THE AIR

The Eagle Squadrons of World War II



AIR
FORCE
History
and
Museums
PROGRAM

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4th Fighter Wing
History Office

Acknowledgments

Many people assisted me while preparing this pamphlet. In the Office of Air Force History, John Sullivan, George Watson, and Perry Jamieson, kindly read the manuscript and offered invaluable suggestions; Yvonne Kinkaid and Terry Kiss, provided reference assistance; and David Chenoweth guided me through the office photo collection. My appreciation to Brett Stolle of the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, and James R. Ferguson of the Air Force Accessioning Center, Bolling AFB, D.C., who secured additional photographs.

Kenneth C. Kan

First in the Air The Eagle Squadrons of World War II

During the perilous years of 1940-1941, a small band of Americans joined the Royal Air Force to help England resist Nazi Germany. They did so while the United States remained a neutral power and overcame significant obstacles to accomplish their objective. Over time, the RAF formed three fighter units, known collectively as the Eagle Squadrons, around these volunteer pilots. These Americans flew alongside their British comrades in fighter and bomber escort missions until 1942, when they transferred into the United States Army Air Forces. The Eagle Squadron pilots made noteworthy contributions to the RAF, assisting them in their transition from fighting a defensive war to waging an offensive campaign against the German *Luftwaffe* and helping pave the way to an eventual Allied victory.

* * *

In 1940, Nazi Germany held continental Europe in its deadly grip. German armies had crushed the armed forces of Poland, invaded the neutral nations of Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, and easily dispatched French forces in Belgium. France held out longer, but on June 4, 1940, the British evacuated from the beaches at Dunkirk and on June 22, France surrendered. Great Britain now faced Hitler virtually alone.

The British government relied heavily on the Royal Air Force (RAF) to protect England from the seemingly inevitable German invasion. The British Army suffered severe losses during the Battle for France and the British Navy was vulnerable to German air power. In addition, the RAF suffered significant losses from its aerial combat over France. More than 900 aircraft were lost in six weeks; of this total 453 were fighter aircraft: 386 Hurricanes and 67 Spitfires. Moreover, the RAF lost 1,382 individuals, which included 534 pilots, killed, unaccounted for or wounded. The Germans, lost 1,279 aircraft destroyed or damaged, including 300 fighter aircraft.

The German High Command called upon the *Luftwaffe* to inflict a decisive defeat upon the RAF. The *Luftwaffe* and the RAF's Fighter Command dueled in the skies over England during the Battle of Britain from July 10, 1940 until October 31, 1940. Initially, the *Luftwaffe* focused on engaging the RAF itself in aerial combat, and attacking military airfields, and the logistical pipeline and aircraft production facilities. However, in September, Hitler ordered his bombers to attack English cities but the RAF, aided by radar and intelligence gained through the *Ultra* communications intercepts, prevailed over the *Luftwaffe*. Each side took tremendous losses: the *Luftwaffe* lost 1,882 aircraft and Fighter Command, 1,017 and the *Luftwaffe* lost an estimated 2,662 aircrew and Fighter Command, 537 pilots. But most importantly, the RAF deterred Germany from invading England.

England took advantage of the momentary breathing space. The British war industries increased production and the RAF expanded its ranks. In addition to Englishmen, pilots came from other Commonwealth countries such as South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Rhodesia.

Many Americans, too, wanted to join the conflict. In 1940, the United States was officially a neutral power. Unofficially, President Franklin D. Roosevelt wished to help England during its time of need, but was constrained by the dictates of the Neutrality Laws and Presidential Proclamations that had been passed and issued between 1935 and 1939. Of particular import to the wishes of Americans desiring to fight in the skies over Europe was the Presidential Proclamation 2348, *Proclaiming the Neutrality of the United States*, issued on September 5, 1939. This declaration specifically prohibited Americans from accepting a commission or enlisting in the service of one of the belligerent nations (Germany and France, Poland, the United Kingdom, India, Australia and New Zealand) "... against an opposing belligerent." The document's stipulations included the prohibition against "Hiring another person to go beyond the limits or jurisdiction of the United States with intent to be enlisted" The same proscription applied to those wishing "... to be entered into service"

For Americans such as Colonel Charles Sweeney, however, they were willing to circumvent the Neutrality Acts and Presidential Proclamations. Colonel Sweeney, a soldier of fortune had fought in the French Foreign Legion and the United States Army during World War I. He later served in Poland with other Americans in the Polish Army during the Battle of Warsaw in 1920. He then went on in 1925 to Morocco and spent time in Spain during its Civil War in the 1930s to observe how well French aircraft were faring in that conflict.

When war looked all but inevitable in 1939, Sweeney, in conjunction with U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Henry J. Reilly, worked on a plan to bring American volunteers to France. The French were receptive to the plan and in order to skirt the neutrality laws planned to use American volunteers as ambulance personnel. Sweeney, however, wanted these volunteers to serve as combat personnel and got the approval of General Paul Armengaud, former commander-in-chief of the French Air Force, to recreate a contemporary version of the Lafayette Escadrille of World War I fame. In late 1939, Colonel Sweeney returned to the United States and sought out recruits in California. He had to tread carefully, as American officials including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), kept a close eye on his activities lest he violate the Neutrality Laws. His activities were also under the watch of Canadian officials who knew of the FBI's interest in Sweeney. Despite the scrutiny, Sweeney recruited 32 American pilots who arrived in France in April and May 1940. Some individuals, such as Chesley G. Peterson, who tried to go to France through Canada, were turned back due to the Neutrality Laws. However, Peterson tried again and later made his way to Britain where he joined the RAF.

By this stage of the war, France's future was imperiled. Accordingly, American pilots did not have a long stay. Of the 32 who arrived in France, 4 were killed, 11 became prisoners, 5 went to England. The whereabouts of the remain-

ing 12 were unknown. At this stage, Colonel Sweeney ceased his active recruiting of pilots and passed on the task to his nephew, also named Charles. This Sweeney and his brother Robert were Americans residing in England and pursuing finance as their line of work. They had been active in trying to help the British cause. In 1939, Charles, over the objection of then-American Ambassador to the Court St James and father of a future President of the United States, Joseph P. Kennedy recruited Americans living in London, to form the First Motorized Squadron, home guard organization. Ambassador Kennedy believed such efforts were vain, as he held little hope that England would defeat Germany.

After forming the motorized squadron, Charles moved on to recruiting which became known as the Eagle Squadrons. In June 1940, he wrote to Sir Hugh Seeley in the British Air Ministry suggesting that an American Air Defence Corps be organized. He buttressed his suggestion by stating that his uncle, Colonel Sweeney still had in-place a recruiting organization with a large pool of potential American recruits to draw upon. Charles Sweeney did not stop with Sir Hugh Seeley; he also contacted Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Aircraft Production, and Prime Minister Winston Churchill's personal assistant Brendan Bracken. Charles Sweeney eventually made a presentation to the British Air Council which approved the idea on July 2, 1940—provided he had 25 pilots and 25 reserve pilots already on-hand.

The new unit acquired the Eagle Squadron name based on a shoulder patch Charles Sweeney designed for the Americans to wear on their RAF uniforms. The patch featured an eagle similar to that found on a United States passport. After seeing the patch, Charles' father thought up the idea of naming the new unit the American Eagle Squadron (AES). Charles presented the name recommendation to Sir Hugh Seeley and it received Air Ministry approval. The first patches had the letters AES on them but the A was later dropped and units were forever known as the Eagle Squadrons.

The only significant British opposition to the plan came from Under Secretary of State for Air, Captain Harold H. Balfour. He was concerned the plan would conflict with recruiting efforts in the United States for instructor pilots for the Empire Air Training Scheme (later British Commonwealth Air Training Plan). The training scheme instructors taught aspiring pilots throughout the British Empire and the United States. The scheme, officially established on December 17, 1939, consisted of the United Kingdom providing aircraft and a core of individual instructors while the host countries provided everything else. Eventually, Canada, Australia and New Zealand established a variety of schools ranging from elementary flying training to service flying training, air observer, bombing and gunnery and navigation training. Southern Rhodesia and South Africa also participated in training pilots for the RAF. The first classes began in April 1940 and the program peaked in 1943 with 333 flying schools. After receiving assurances that the plan would not conflict with the training program, Balfour gave his consent.

While the Sweeney initiative progressed, another American, Clayton Knight, pursued another, even more ambitious, effort that had British and Canadian government support. Knight flew in combat in World War I but was shot down, tak-

prisoner and remained in German custody until being released at war's end. In September 1939, Canadian Air Vice Marshal, William "Billy" Bishop telephoned Knight who was pursuing his craft as an aviation artist at the Cleveland Air Races. Bishop, a World War I flying ace, asked Knight to form a recruiting organization for Americans wishing to join the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and RAF. Initially, the Knight organization concentrated on recruiting instructors to train pilots through the Empire Air Training Scheme.

Homer Smith, another World War I Canadian pilot, served as Knight's assistant. Smith was sworn in as Royal Canadian Air Force wing commander and set up an office in New York in anticipation of Knight getting, at the very least, nodding approval from American military officials to conduct recruiting activities in the United States. Knight met with Maj. Gen. Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, chief of the Army Air Corps and Rear Admiral John Towers, the Navy's chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics. Knight had become acquainted with the military leaders through his work as an aviation illustrator. Arnold and Towers agreed in principle to Knight's recruitment effort with the assurance that they would not draw individuals away from entering the United States armed forces or those already serving on duty. In actuality, the Canadian and United States standards differed in significant respects, which precluded the Knight group from trying to recruit the same individuals. United States requirements stipulated two years of university study, 20/20 vision and be no more than 30 years old. The RCAF had more flexible age limitations and permitted married men to hold flight status.

Knight next turned to coordinating his work with the United States Department of State. Generally speaking, the United States government did not object to the idea of recruiting American pilots for Commonwealth air forces. However, given the idea's political sensitivity, Roosevelt Administration officials, during discussions with British and Canadian representatives, asked that such activities be done without much fanfare. In a later communication to the Canadian Legation, a United States official passed on a message from the 'highest quarter,' stating that the United States government would not object to Americans traveling to Canada for enlistment purposes. These sentiments notwithstanding, Knight proceeded cautiously. Since he did not have any prior contacts he could draw upon, Knight asked his former World War I commander, New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, to act as an intermediary and arrange a meeting with the State Department officials. Knight was able to find an acceptable solution to specific United States concerns. In terms of the prohibition of actively recruiting individuals to serve in a foreign military service or on a ship, Knight adopted the position that his organization would not engage in any advertising or recruiting activities, but simply provide advice and assist in their training and travel to Canada and England.

The citizenship question, however, proved more difficult to surmount and remained troubling for years after the war had ended. According to the Citizenship Act of 1907, American citizens who took an oath to another government would lose their citizenship. Knight did not realize that this law had caused a great deal of difficulties for many Americans who joined foreign military ser-

vices in World War I. He devised a way around this impediment which received the concurrence of the Canadian and British governments. Instead of pledging allegiance to the King, those wishing to join the RCAF and RAF only pledged to obey their commanders' orders. The United States Department of State and the Department of Justice kept a watchful eye on the Knight Committee's work, but ultimately decided not to pursue any legal action, given Britain's urgent need for foreign support, especially after France fell to Germany.

Once the legal issues had been dealt with, however imprecisely, the Knight Committee set about its recruiting efforts. The Committee first concentrated its work in California where there was a large pool of aviators. Eventually the Committee established offices in cities from coast to coast, including New York, Cleveland, Chicago, Kansas City, Oakland, and Los Angeles. Each applicant had to meet specific criteria: possess a high school diploma or equivalent; be between the ages of 20 and 45, if under 21, have a parent's or guardian's permission; in terms of piloting qualifications have at least 300 documented flying hours and hold a Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) license. For applicants applying to join the RAF, the age limit was set at 31 and they had to be unmarried. During the slightly more than two year existence of the Knight Committee (later known as the Canadian Aviation Bureau), about 6,700 out of the some 49,000 American applicants were selected for the RCAF and RAF and to staff flying schools as of part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Program.

The United States government's lack of insistence on strict adherence to the Neutrality Laws was not surprising given the desire of the Roosevelt administration to assist Britain's war effort. As of August 15, 1940, Britain had ordered 20,000 aircraft and 42,000 engines. Moreover, American suppliers provided high performance 100 octane aircraft fuel which improved the performance of the Rolls-Royce Merlin engines that powered the British Hurricane and Spitfire fighters. All told, by September 1940 the British already had in hand or expected delivery of a variety of first-line American combat aircraft such as P-36, P-38, P-39, and P-40, pursuit planes and B-17 and B-24 bombers.

While the Knight Committee continued its work, the elder Charles Sweeny moved forward on his scheme to bring American pilots to fight in Britain. By the summer of 1940, a number of Americans had traveled to Britain via Canada. Once in Britain, the first arrivals received basic training in skills such as aerobatics and formation flying. Acquiring combat training was in the words of one early pilot "woefully inadequate, most of us learning these skills 'on the job.'" By mid-1941, after the initial push to get pilots into combat had eased, recruits went to Bournemouth to receive indoctrination in RAF flying methods and military training before being assigned to an operational training unit. After November 1941, the new arrivals also attended advanced flying training for three weeks before being assigned to an operational training unit.

For those individuals who never had pilot training, more than half of them received their first opportunities to fly through the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CFTP). Initially, Congress created the CFTP to assist civilian pilot training schools to weather the economic downturn of the Great Depression. Pilot

training would be conducted at Civil Aeronautics Administration-certified flying schools and American colleges and universities. Overall, the program did not meet Air Corps approval. As President Roosevelt noted on January 7, 1941, the program graduates did not have any military obligation to perform in exchange for having their training paid for by the federal government. The graduates were not trained for military aviation duties but the CFTP did provide the foundation for a cadre of pilots who later served in the Eagle Squadron.

Knight's recruits who were pilots received opportunities for refresher training. In October 1940, Maj. Gen. Arnold received the approval of Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson to allow American volunteers to undergo this training at Air Corps civilian contract flying schools. The volunteers received their instruction at three schools, which became operational in November 1940, and located in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Dallas, Texas, and Glendale, California. In 1941, another school, in Bakersfield, California, provided similar training. All Eagle Squadron-bound pilots signed up in America after November 1940 went to one of these schools.

Another group of Eagle Squadron pilots received their training through the Royal Canadian Air Force. These individuals joined the RCAF on their own accord and had no connection with either the Knight Committee or Charles Sweeney. Upon completion of the RCAF training, the graduates were more prepared for RAF service than their counterparts who went through the United States civilian contract training program. The training they received was oriented toward military flying operations and standardized so pilots received the same instruction as participants in the Empire Training Scheme. Of note is the fact that these Americans in the RCAF remained RCAF members until the Eagle Squadrons transferred to the Army Air Forces.

In contrast to the early cloak and dagger atmosphere surrounding pilot recruitment, by August 1940 there was no effort to conceal the fact that American pilots arrived in England and joined the RAF. The *New York Times* noted at the time that about 40 Americans volunteers, in the tradition of the Lafayette Escadrille, would be joining the RAF under the command of Colonel Charles Sweeney. This initial report suggested that these pilots would be flying Lockheed-Hudsons, a two-engine aircraft used for anti-submarine and reconnaissance duty, as part of Coastal Command. In September 1940, British Air Minister Sir Archibald Sinclair, officially announced that Colonel Sweeney was organizing an "Eagle Squadron" made up of American fliers who wished to fight for England. Although Colonel Sweeney did not exercise any operational control and did not play a major role in creating the Eagle Squadron, he was made an honorary commander of the soon-to-be-formed 71 Squadron and received the temporary rank of RAF Group Captain as his presence lent publicity value to the squadron's formation.

On September 19, 1940, Number 71 Squadron of the RAF's Fighter Command was formed at Church Fenton, near the city of York. The Eagle Squadron's unique nature led to an awkward and contentious period regarding the appointment of its first commander. During the initial organizational process, Charles Sweeney had suggested Billy Fiske, an American living in London take



Eagle Squadron pilots completing training, October 1940. (Photo courtesy of National Museum of the United States Air Force.)

the position, but Fiske, an RAF pilot, was killed while landing his damaged aircraft in August 1940. Sweeney then recommended William E.G. Taylor, a former US Navy and Marine Corps pilot who flew for the British Royal Navy and participated in aircraft carrier combat operations. However, another individual, Squadron Leader Walter M. Churchill, a decorated English RAF fighter pilot, was appointed the squadron commander and arrived on station on September 19, 1940. Churchill had extensive combat and command experience. He had eight aerial victories to his credit, served as 605 Fighter Squadron commander, and was involved with the establishment of two Polish volunteer fighter squadrons. When Taylor arrived at Church Fenton, he found Squadron Leader Churchill had assumed the commander position and clearly had matters in hand. Taylor attempted to seek a temporary reassignment at another base. When Taylor returned to the squadron, now at Kirkton-in-Lindsey, nothing had changed. Taylor left the squadron again for further training, this time with RCAF Squadron 242 under the command of Douglas Bader. Upon Taylor's return to 71 Squadron, he found Churchill still held the commander's position. He decided to force the issue and made a plea to the Air Ministry to right the situation. The matter was finally resolved in January 1941 when Churchill became ill and Taylor took command of 71 Squadron.

The squadron's initial cadre of pilots had widely differing amounts of experience. The first three pilots, Eugene Quimby Tobin, Andrew B. Mamedoff, and Vernon Charles "Shorty" Keough, followed a circuitous route in their quest

fight in World War II. Tobin and Mamedoff were recruited through the Sweeny organization to fly combat missions in Finland. However, Finland fell to the Soviet Union and Tobin and Mamedoff were told to go to France and fly for the French Air Force. While awaiting transport in Montreal they met Keough and all three set off for France. Once in France, the French Army and government was already unstable and the three barely managed to escape before France capitulated to Germany in June 1940. Once in England, the three men approached the RAF. After being initially refused, they were accepted and eventually assigned to 609 Squadron where they saw action during the Battle of Britain and credited with aerial victories. With the establishment of the 71 Squadron, the three were transferred, forming the core of the new unit.

Initially, the RAF equipped the first Eagle Squadron with Brewster Buffalos, an American-made fighter aircraft which paled in performance compared to the Hawker Hurricane and the Spitfire. In order to rid the squadron of the unwanted Buffalos, Squadron Commander Churchill told the pilots not to lock the tail wheel when they came in for a landing knowing full well that this would cause the plane to go into a ground loop. Squadron pilots followed Churchill's directive and as a result the planes were damaged and replaced by Hurricanes in November 1940. Although eager to get into combat, the Eagle Squadron pilots continued training and were not declared combat ready until late January 1941.

British governmental and military officials gave the 71 Squadron members a warm welcome. Speaking before squadron members and other foreign volunteers at London's Overseas Club in December 1940, Under-Secretary for Air Balfour said the Eagle pilots were "ambassadors of good-will as well as airman . . ." He also added they would also provide insight to the American people of what England faced in its fight against Germany. While in Washington D.C. in early January 1941, Air Chief Marshal Hugh C. T. Dowding, former head of the RAF's Fighter Command, commented during a news conference, that although England was not in dire need of airmen, the 71 Squadron had great symbolic value.

A declaration of being combat ready, however, did not bring 71 Squadron the long-awaited opportunity for action against the *Luftwaffe*. Instead the American Eagles were assigned the job of escort duty for North Sea shipping. This necessary but hardly glamorous assignment, however, did not last for long.

In late 1940, RAF's Fighter Command prepared to go on the offensive after weathering the Nazi onslaught during the Battle of Britain. Air Chief Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas now guided Fighter Command; he had taken over from Air Chief Marshal Dowding who had served from July 14, 1936 to November 25, 1940. While Douglas was still at the Air Ministry, Air Marshal C.F.A. Portal had discussed with him future use of fighter aircraft. Portal said that, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Trenchard, who had served as chief of the Air Staff until his retirement in 1929, advocated a more aggressive stance, which he indicated should be to "lean towards France," including fighter sweeps across the English Channel similar to the approach used by the British during World War I.

Initially, Douglas was hesitant to adopt this policy. He felt, based on Britain's experience during World War I, there would be a large number of

casualties which would outweigh any benefits gained by taking offensive fighter actions. Upon further reflection, Douglas changed his mind, and believed Trenchard's recommendation sound and he opted to pursue an aerial offensive. Accordingly, in mid-December 1940, British fighters and bombers flew missions into occupied Europe. When flying independently, the fighters flew what were called "rhubarbs," and when in the company of bombers, these missions were called "circuses." The object of these schemes was to destroy enemy airfields, fortifications, and ports. With regard to the circuses, the British hoped to entice the *Luftwaffe* into joining the battle and destroying their opponents in aerial combat. The bombers would cause sufficient damage that German fighters would have no choice but to respond in defense and fight on terms favorable to the British. The end result would not only be the destruction of enemy planes and pilots but the Germans would be forced to shift forces away from other theaters of operations to defend against the increasing British attacks.

The RAF implemented this new approach in a measured fashion. Initially the emphasis was on strengthening the air defense system. When the war began in September 1939, Fighter Command consisted of three groups with 36 squadrons. In January 1941, there were five fighter groups consisting of 76 squadrons, one signals group and one training group. By the middle of 1941, Fighter Command's increased strength allowed it to include all of the British Isles with varying degrees of coverage within its air defense net. Command changes also took place. In addition to Air Chief Marshal Douglas' appointment, Air Vice-Marshal Keith R. Park was replaced by Air Vice-Marshal Trevor Leigh-Mallory as Air Officer Commanding No. 11 Group, the largest fighter group.

With Air Chief Marshal Douglas in charge, Fighter Command moved toward adopting the large "Big Wing" formation. During the Battle of Britain, Air Vice-Marshals Park and Leigh-Mallory had a highly contentious debate regarding the merit of attacking incoming German fighters and bombers with individual squadrons versus waiting for several squadrons to join together to form a "Big Wing." Park argued for attacking the enemy aircraft before they had an opportunity to attack or drop their bombs while Leigh-Mallory believed it made more sense to assemble several squadrons together before sending them into battle. During the height of the Battle of Britain, Park had little time to react as his 11 Group was responsible for protecting the most heavily targeted part of England. In contrast, Leigh-Mallory's 12 Group covered a less targeted portion and thus had more time to launch his fighters, and in-fact served as reinforcement for 11 Group. In short, the philosophical difference between the two group commanders reflected, in part, the difference circumstances that they faced.

In the midst of these new RAF efforts, 71 Squadron moved again, this time in April 1941 to Martlesham Heath as part of 11 Group. Moreover during the month, 71 Squadron replaced its Hurricane Is with Hurricane IIs. This new Hurricane variant had a Roll Royce Merlin XX engine which improved the airplane's performance. But it still could not hold its own against the German Messerschmitt Bf 109. The RAF received this aircraft in quantity in late 1940.



Hawker Hurricane II.

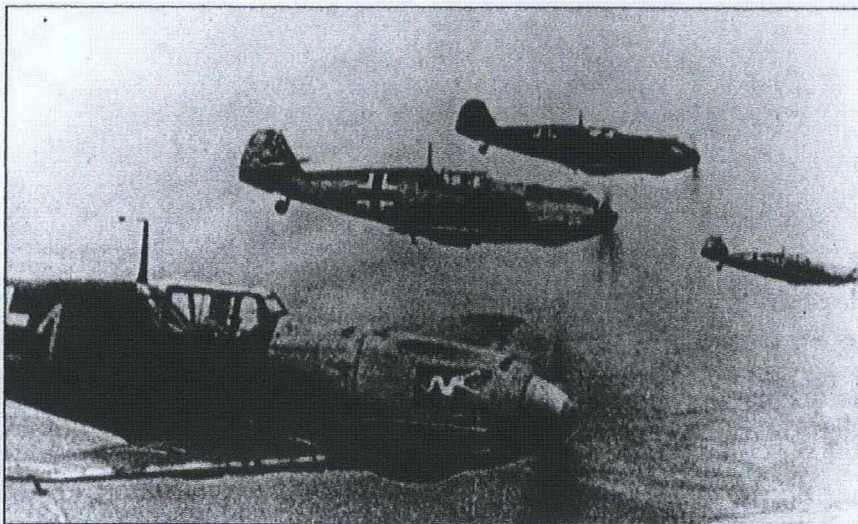
The squadron's move came at an opportune time. Maj. Gen. "Hap" Arnold was visiting England in April 1941 on a fact-finding mission and had a visit with Colonel Sweeny whom he called the "coordinator for Eagle Squadron." The American general expressed his view that the time for the Eagle Squadron to continue training had ended and commented approvingly on the fact that it was "... moving up front for combat duty: a good thing, either it fights or is disbanded, in my opinion." For his part, Air Chief Marshal Douglas felt that the American volunteers were high-spirited but as he put it he "did not pay much attention to that." ACM Douglas believed if the squadron commander exercised a firm hand they would be alright. The Eagle pilots had become restless and eager for action. Chesley Peterson, a squadron pilot, exceeded his authority by speaking directly to 12 Group Commanding Officer, Air Marshal Hugh Saunders. Peterson told Saunders that the unit needed to get into action and requested that it be moved into the 11 Group's sector of operations and have more combat opportunities.



Maj. Gen. Henry H. "Hap" Arnold.

The American Eagle Squadron pilots did not have to wait long for their first taste of combat. After arriving at Martlesham Heath in April 1941, 71 Squadron pilots flew several missions including one off the French coast, south of Boulogne where they encountered German aircraft but did not record any aerial victories. On May 15, two Eagle Squadron pilots engaged in a dogfight with three Bf 109s over the English Channel and during this encounter, one Bf 109 was damaged near Calais. The Americans, however, did not escape unscathed: one Hurricane was damaged, due in part to being hit by fire from another American aircraft, and had to crash land.

In June, 71 Squadron underwent a change of command and moved again, this time to North Weald, north of London. Taylor was replaced by Henry de Clifford Anthony "Paddy" Woodhouse, an Englishman who had flown during the Battle of Britain. Taylor was told by his Group Commander, Leigh-Mallory, that he had exceeded the number of operational hours he was permitted to have and



Bf 109s.

since he was 36 years old, he was too old to command a fighter squadron and instead the plan was for him to take charge of a fighter training unit. However, Taylor opted to return to the US Navy and left the unit on June 7.

On July 2, 1941, 71 Squadron pilots recorded their first confirmed aerial victories. The squadron was part of a large group of fighter units escorting 12 Bristol Blenheims, a two-engine bomber, to Lille, France. The Lille mission was of the Circus category in that the bombers were intended not only to bomb a target, this time an electric power plant, but also draw German fighters into battle. In this case, 25 to 30 German aircraft attacked the British formation. The 71 Squadron pilots acquitted themselves well as three enemy planes were shot down plus one probable and one damaged. Squadron Commander Woodhouse, and Pilot Officers William Dunn and Gus Daymond were each credited with destroying one enemy plane. The 71 Squadron lost one plane and the pilot, William Hall, was taken into enemy hands and became a prisoner of war. For the remainder of the summer, 71 Squadron pilots continued participating in defensive operations over Britain and as fighter escorts for bomber missions into France. They were indeed busy and during the month of July alone, 71 Squadron flew 568 operational missions.

In August 1941, the 71 Squadron transitioned from Hurricane IIs into Spitfire Mark IIAs. The Spitfire, although armed like the Hurricane with eight .303 Browning machine guns, had a higher top speed of 370 miles per hour versus 340 for the Hurricane, could climb faster and higher, and best of all it could stand up to the Bf 109 on equal terms. 71 Squadron members needed little time to transition into the new aircraft. Within a month, 71 Squadron converted again this time to Spitfire Mark VB, basically, a Mark I or II airframe with sturdier longerons that supported a more powerful Merlin engine. The pilot could now choose between firing four .303 machine guns,



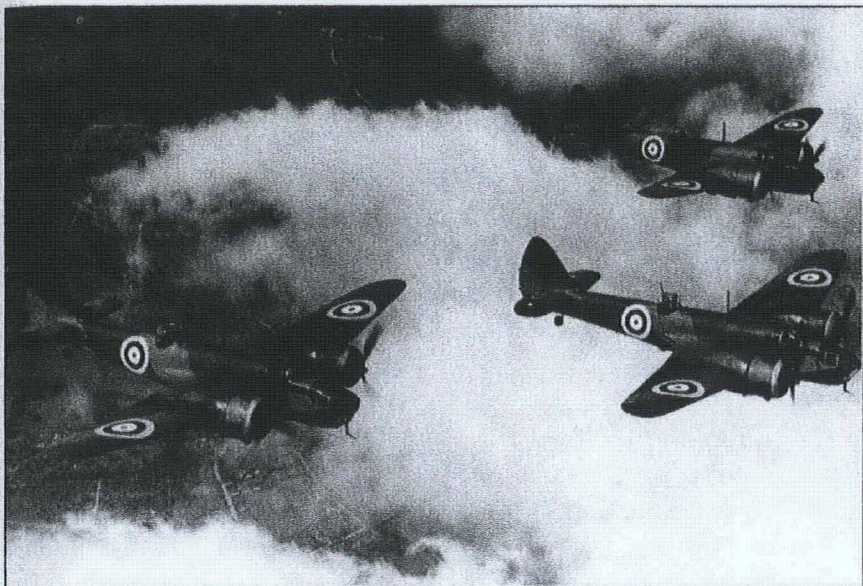
71 Squadron pilots scramble to their planes. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of the United States Air Force.)

or two Hispano 20 mm cannons, or both at the same time.

In addition to receiving more capable aircraft, the RAF adopted different combat formations. In 1940, fighter pilots came to realize that the standard formation of three aircraft: one lead with two crossing behind to protect the lead and one another was no longer practicable. Instead, the two-plane formation: one lead followed by a wingman formed a pair. This gave more flexibility for pilots to engage in combat permitted by the higher performance aircraft the RAF had available and ensured the lead pilot would still be protected during a dogfight.

In June 1941, the situation in Europe took a decisive turn due to Hitler's decision to wage a multi-front war. German air and land forces were sent to the Eastern front when Hitler decided to invade Russia. The Soviet Army and Air Force, however, fought the invading forces to a standstill. Once the German invaders bogged down they were forced to endure the harsh Russian winter. Hitler also directed forces to the Mediterranean to support Italy's offensive actions in that region. By moving his forces away from the western front, British leaders saw the opportunity to strengthen their homeland defenses since an anticipated German invasion appeared unlikely. Moreover, the British could pursue an even more aggressive air offensive over continental Europe.

On May 14, 1941, a new Eagle unit, 121 Squadron, stood-up, as part of the British fighter unit build-up. This unit was first stationed at Kirton-in-Lindsey and flew Hurricane Is. By this stage of the war, the Knight Committee had smoothed out its procedures and became a well-functioning organization. There was a steady flow of applicants for overseas postings, enough to fill out another squadron. Recognizing the long time the 71 Squadron took to go from organization to combat readiness, personnel who went into the 121 Squadron received exten-



Bristol Blenheims.

sive training before going to England. Once formed, RAF officials assigned Squadron Leader Peter Powell, as commander. Powell's assignment reflected Fighter Command's policy of having British officers serve as commanders of the Eagle Squadrons. Also joining Powell were Flight Lieutenants Hugh Kennard and Royce Wilkinson. The latter officer, originally with 71 Squadron, was the first among those transferred from one Eagle Squadron to a newly formed one in order to fill its ranks with experienced personnel. The squadron reached its full complement of personnel by mid-June; and in July the unit transitioned to Hurricane IIs. The unit saw its first action on August 8, 1941, when Pilot Officer Selden Edner and Sergeant Pilot John Mooney claimed a probable kill of a Ju 88.

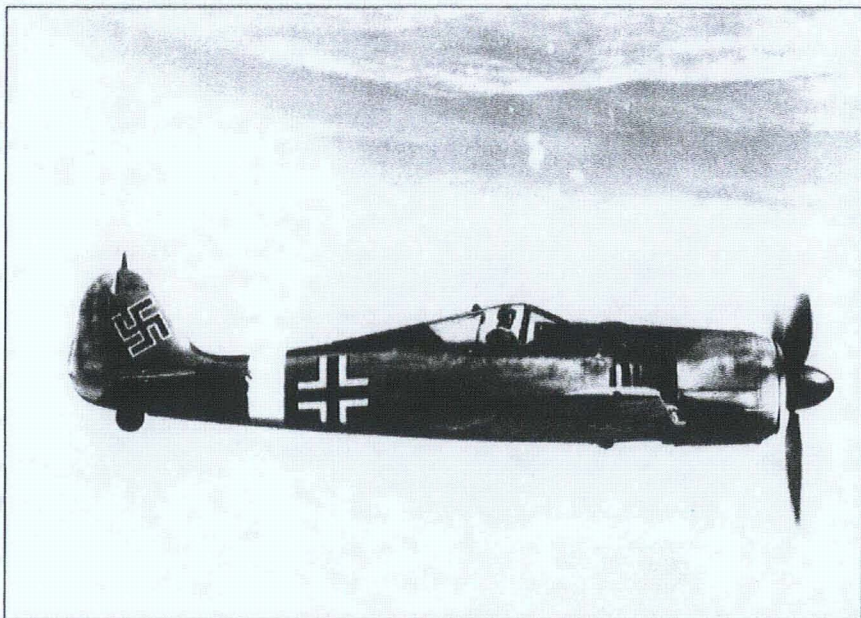
On August 1, 1941, the final Eagle unit, 133 Squadron, was activated at Coltishall, near Norwich, in Norfolk. Squadron Leader George A. Brown, an Englishman, transferred from 71 Squadron, to take command of the new unit. Flight Lieutenant Andy Mamedoff, one the first pilots to join the 71 Squadron, also transferred and became one of the two flight commanders, the other being an Englishman, Flight Lieutenant Hugh A. S. Johnston. In contrast to 121 Squadron, which received many pilots from other operational units, 133 Squadron took some time to reach combat readiness; it attained day operational status on September 26, 1941, when its pilots completed OTU instruction. After relocating a few times and flying some North Sea patrol missions, 133 Squadron settled at Eglinton, Northern Ireland, in October 1941, and carried out convoy patrol duties. During the transfer from Fowlmere, England to Eglinton, fifteen aircraft and crews departed on October 8, 1941. However, four pilots crashed due to inclement weather with three confirmed deaths; one pilot could not be found.



William Dunn in his Supermarine Spitfire Mark IIA at RAF Station North Weald, 1941. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of the United States Air Force.)

Andy Mamedoff, one of the original Eagle Squadron pilots, was among the deceased.

Significant changes were also taking place in 71 Squadron. In August 1941, Paddy Woodhouse was replaced by Squadron Leader E.R. Bitmead as commander. Bitmead, served during the Battle of Britain, but become mentally and physically exhausted from constant duty and was replaced after only a few weeks as squadron commander by Stanley T. Meares, another Battle of Britain participant who also saw action over Dunkirk. Under Meares' leadership, 71 Squadron made great strides and during October 1941, recorded the destruction of nine enemy aircraft—high among all RAF squadrons. The next month, the squadron again led RAF squadrons in enemy planes destroyed but suffered the loss of Squadron Leader Meares and Ross Scarborough during a mid-air collision while conducting a training flight. In recognition of 71 Squadron's outstanding achievements during Meares' tenure as commander, King George VI awarded the British Distinguished Flying Cross to three 71 Squadron members: Gregory Daymond, Chesley Peterson and Carroll W. McColpin, on October 4, 1941. The squadron could also boast that it had three aces: William Dunn, Gus Daymond, and Carroll McColpin. During one particularly intense combat action on October 2, the 71 Squadron joined in a fighter sweep from Berck to Abbeville and then to Le Treport, with two other Spitfire squadrons. The British units engaged Bf 109s from *Jagdgeschwader* (JG) 2 over Abbeville and 71 Squadron recorded five enemy aircraft destroyed. Following Meares death the RAF tapped Chesley Peterson to take command of 71 Squadron. This marked a significant event, as

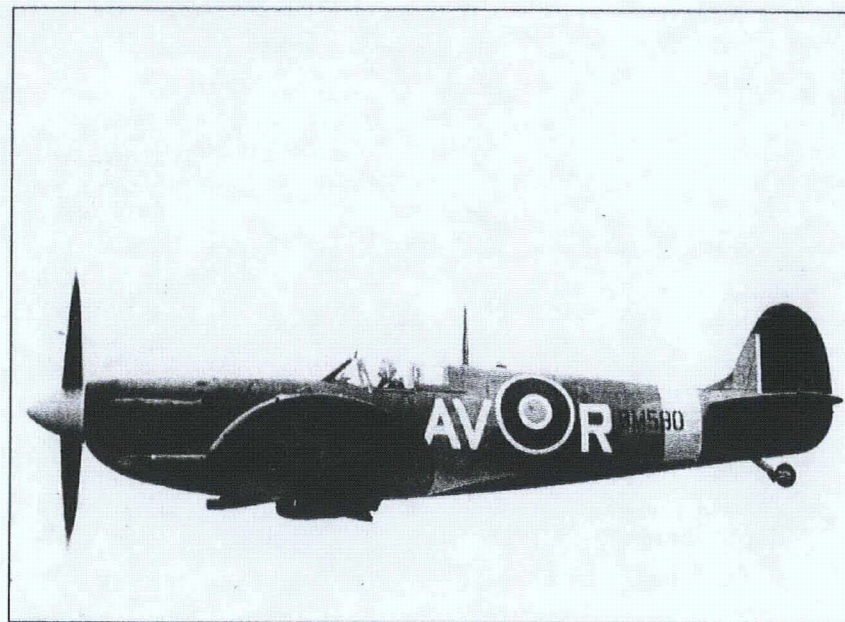


Fw 190.

Peterson, only 21 years old at the time, became the first American to command an Eagle Squadron.

In December 1941, the United States entered World War II following Japan's surprise attack against Pearl Harbor. Eagle Squadron personnel welcomed the news of America's entry as they now believed they would be joined by other Americans in the war against the Axis powers. Personnel from the 71 and 121 Squadrons decided among themselves that they wanted to join America's fight and sent representatives to the American Embassy in London to make the request. The Americans spoke to Ambassador John Winant, who had replaced Joseph P. Kennedy, and asked that 71 Squadron be transferred to the Pacific Theater so it could fight against Japanese forces. Ambassador Winant replied that the Eagle Squadrons would be eventually absorbed into the United States Army Air Forces. Air Marshal Douglas denied the request for Pacific Theater duty believing it would be futile to send the squadron to Singapore because the Crown colony would likely fall to Japanese forces, so the units remained in England.

With their request for Pacific Theater duty denied, 71 Squadron members fought to stay engaged in European combat operations. In December 1941, in accordance with RAF standing policy, the unit was scheduled to rotate to a base in a less active part of England. Peterson protested the move to his group commander, Leigh-Mallory, who told them to move as ordered. However, Peterson would not accept this decision and made a direct appeal to Air Chief Marshal Douglas. The head of Fighter Command agreed to reverse Leigh-Mallory's order and 71 Squadron moved to Martlesham Heath, still in 11 Group's zone of opera-



Supermarine Spitfire Mark VB.

tion; 121 Squadron moved to North Weald and 133 Squadron transferred to Kirton-in-Lindsey.

By the end of 1941, the RAF had vastly increased its fighter force. There were now 100 squadrons: 71 were single-engine units, 2 flew two-engine planes, 9 and 14 were equipped with single and twin-engine night fighters, 2 were fighter-bomber units and 2 flew Intruders. There were 66 British squadrons and 34 made up of pilots from Canada, Poland, Australia, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, New Zealand, Newfoundland, and France besides the American Eagle Squadrons.

As 1942 began, the RAF, despite its increased number of squadrons, faced a great challenge as *Luftwaffe* units in Western Europe were being equipped with Fw 190s. The new aircraft, introduced in September 1941, proved superior to the Spitfire Mark V which the RAF and Eagle Squadrons used successfully against the Bf 109F. The Fw 190s were powered by a radial engine, were slightly faster than the Spitfire Mark V, carried strong armaments, and had outstanding maneuverability. The RAF would not have an answer to the Fw 190 until 64 Squadron received the first Spitfire Mark IXs in July 1942.

The Eagle Squadrons made the best of their situation despite the German fighter superiority. The three squadrons flew a variety of missions during the first six months of 1942: rhubarbs, convoy escort duty, and circuses, steadily adding to their victory totals. In February 1942, 121 Squadron participated in the British pursuit of the German capital ships: the battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* and heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*. These ships harassed British convoys in the

Indian Ocean, but now lay at anchor in Brest, France in need of refitting in Germany. After reviewing available options, German naval authorities opted to make a "dash" through the English Channel. Aided by the cover of poor weather, the German ships initially avoided British surveillance. Once discovered, they beat back British naval and air attacks, assisted by escorting ships and air cover. The *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst* struck mines as they neared the end of their journey and suffered significant damage. However, the ships evaded the British attacks much to the intense displeasure of Prime Minister Churchill.

During this time, the Eagle Squadrons focused much of their attention on flying circus missions. On March 24, 1942, the 121 Squadron, in concert with six other fighter units, participated in a two-part bomber mission. The first portion consisted of escorting 12 Boston bombers which were to bomb the Comines, France power station. On the way to the target, approximately 50 Fw 190s attacked the British formation, broke through the outer escort ring and almost reached the bombers. On the trip back to England, German fighters continued to attack the formation over France, but again were successfully fought off. During this engagement, 121 Squadron pilots claimed one enemy plane as probably destroyed but lost one of their planes which crash landed after running out of fuel.

This March 1942 mission was part of a renewed RAF offensive which lasted until June 1942. The RAF pursued a day and night offensive: daylight operations consisted of fighters and bombers flying circus missions and night operations were intruder strikes on enemy airfields. British pilots flew approximately 22,000 fighter sorties for an average of 180 a day during this period against targets in France and Belgium. The RAF reported losses of over three hundred fighters. The British light bombers executed 700 sorties across the English Channel and lost 11 aircraft. The total British losses were 314 fighters and bombers. The British claimed they had destroyed 205 German planes but in reality the enemy had only lost 90 aircraft. The aircraft tally favored Germany but the fact remained that the *Luftwaffe* had to keep two of its most capable fighter wings on alert in Western Europe.

By August 1942, the Allied powers were planning how to take the offensive against German forces on continental Europe. Soviet leaders had been calling for a second front in order to force Hitler to shift forces away from the Eastern Front. Political leaders in London and Washington D.C. were decidedly aware of the Soviets' urgent request. British and American forces, however, were not ready yet to embark on such a major undertaking. The United States was still mobilizing its industries to a wartime footing and there was not enough men and material available. Moreover, American political and military officials also had to contend with plotting strategy on how to best deal with the Japanese in the Pacific theater. In addition, the Battle for the Atlantic was still raging on as German U-boats were menacing Allied convoys.

American and British leaders had genuine concerns but they recognized the importance of preparing for a second front. To test German reaction and get a sense of what would be necessary to mount a landing in northwest Europe, British military officials led by Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of

Combined Operations, decided to attack German forces at Dieppe, France. On August 19, 1942, two brigades of the 2nd Canadian Division and a Canadian Tank Regiment plus British Commandos and 50 American Rangers stormed onto the beaches at Dieppe, during what was codenamed Operation Jubilee. There were a total of some 6,100 troops of which 5,000 were Canadian. The attacking forces were tasked to accomplish "... limited air and military objectives ... They were to destroy enemy fortifications in Dieppe, capture prisoners, destroy airfields, and seize and take away sea vessels such as landing crafts. The RAF also hoped to lure the *Luftwaffe* into a major engagement.

Air Vice-Marshal Leigh-Mallory commanded the covering air umbrella. He had at his disposal 70 squadrons of which 61 were fighters plus fighter-bomber, light bomber, and reconnaissance units. Initially, Leigh-Mallory wanted to employ 300 heavy bombers but this idea was dropped as Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur T. Harris, commander of RAF's Bomber Command, could not guarantee that the buildings on the sea front of the harbor could be struck without hitting the town itself.

The ground landings took place as planned but encountered fierce enemy resistance. The Canadian forces suffered 3,367 casualties as the landing force came under unrelenting enemy fire. While the Allied forces struggled on the ground before withdrawing, a raging air battle took place overhead.

Operation Jubilee marked the one and only time all three Eagle Squadrons participated in the same air battle. On August 19, the American pilots flew multiple missions: 71 and 133 Squadrons each flew four while 121 Squadron flew three. They provided air cover, in concert with other RAF units, for the ground troops and fought off German bombers and fighters. At the end of the operation the 71 Squadron claimed one destroyed, one probably damaged, three damaged and two of its own planes destroyed; 121 Squadron claimed one destroyed, two probably damaged, one damaged, two missing in action/two aircraft destroyed; and for 133 Squadron, seven destroyed, one probably damaged, and ten damaged. All told the three units compiled a total of nine German aircraft destroyed, four probably damaged and ten damaged. The Eagle Squadrons tally accounted for a good portion of the RAF's overall total of 48 German aircraft destroyed and 106 damaged. For its part, the RAF recorded losses of 106 planes and 77 pilots killed or missing. Despite the ground attack's lack of success, the RAF's air umbrella fended off the *Luftwaffe*.

Several American pilots distinguished themselves during the Dieppe raid. Flight Lieutenant Donald Blakeslee claimed two German planes destroyed. His story was typical of many of the Eagle Squadron pilots. He originally flew in the RAF as a member of Royal Canadian Air Force's 401 Squadron; he then joined 133 Squadron eventually rising to become squadron commander. While with the RAF he had 13 claims and later had a illustrious career with the United States Army Air Forces. Pilot Officer Dominic "Don" Gentile was credited with one Fw 190 destroyed during the Dieppe raid and had two aerial victories overall while with the 133 Squadron. He went on to become a leading ace after transferring to the Army Air Forces.



Col. Donald Blakeslee in US Army Air Forces. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of the United States Air Force.)

American air units were becoming increasingly involved in the war in Europe at this time. On August 17, 1942, 12 B-17s of the 97th Bomb Group took part in the first heavy bomber attack from the United Kingdom when the aircraft attacked the Rouen-Sotteville, France, marshalling yards. The B-17s were escorted by RAF Spitfires included ones flown by 133 Squadron pilots. During the Dieppe Raid, the American 309th Fighter Squadron, 31st Fighter Group, provided air cover over the ground operations and 22 B-17s dropped 34 tons of bombs on the Abbeville/Drucat, France airfield in an attempt to draw German fighters away from the landing force.

By this time, the Eagle Squadrons had made noteworthy contributions to England's war efforts, which were duly noted by a variety of American news out-



Dominic "Don" Gentile in front of his Spitfire Mark VB. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of the United States Air Force.)

lets. The *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Time* magazine published many stories, especially when squadron members received British decorations for gallantry in combat. Another venue occurred through the medium of motion pictures. In July 1942, the American-made movie, *Eagle Squadron*, received its premiere showing in London. Members of 71 Squadron were not involved in the actual production of the film but believed it would be a documentary style film. This belief was reinforced by the fact that movie crews had filmed scenes of the unit at North Weald. As the case turned out, the film which featured Robert Stack, Diana Barrymore, John Hall, Eddie Albert and Nigel Bruce, turned out after a brief introduction by the respected journalist Quentin Reynolds to be a typical Hollywood fictionalized war story. Most of the Eagles who attended the premier

came away vastly disappointed, indeed many did not stay in the theater to see the entire film. The critical response was not much better and the film enjoyed only a short run in United States' theaters.

In the midst of on-going flying operations, United States and British officials began talks on the transfer of the Eagle Squadron pilots into American Army Air Forces units. Although the United States had entered into the war in December 1941, time was needed to activate operational units and work out specific transfer details. The Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron of Eighth Air Force, who would become the major organizational unit for European operations, were activated on January 28, 1942, in Savannah Georgia followed by the activation on February 1, 1942, of the VIII Bomber Command at Langley Field, Virginia and VIII Interceptor Command at Selfridge Field, Michigan. The latter two units later relocated to Savannah and Charleston, South Carolina, respectively. Initially, Eighth Air Force's mission was to support operations in Northwest Africa. However, these operations were abandoned once it became apparent that United States forces could not support such undertakings at that time given on-going needs in the Pacific theater. Eighth Air Force was therefore left without a specific operation. On March 31, 1942, Maj. Gen. Carl Spaatz, commander of the Air Force Combat Command and upcoming commander of the Army Air Force in Great Britain (AAFIB), recommended that Eighth Air Force be assigned to the AAFIB. Army Air Forces officials accepted his recommendation by basing the unit in England. Eighth Air Force now had the responsibility of performing strategic bombing missions over Germany. Many details had to be worked out to carry out the proposed American air offensive: planes and material had to be delivered to England and joint plans worked out with British counterparts.

An ambitious ferry operation was devised by which planes were flown along an air route that began in Maine, moved forward to Labrador, then to Iceland, and finally England. Other aircraft arrived crated aboard ships. Strategy sessions were held where American leaders expounded their firm insistence on carrying out daylight bombing as opposed to the British preference for night bombing. The first American planes arrived on July 2, 1942, after completing the long North Atlantic air crossing. In terms of fighter aircraft, by August, there were four American fighter groups stationed in England: the 1st and 14th flew P-38s and the 31st and 52nd which were equipped with Spitfires. As more personnel and equipment arrived in England, Maj. Gen. Spaatz conducted further discussions with his British counterparts on how United States forces would be utilized in the overall allied air offensive.

Several issues had to be resolved regarding transfer of the Eagle Squadrons. Maj. Gen. Spaatz and Air Chief Marshal Wilfred Freeman, Vice-Chief of the Air Staff, discussed the matter during a meeting held on August 8, 1942. As talks continued between British and American officials, one matter of importance was what rank the Americans would have once they became members of the Army Air Forces. The Eagle Squadron pilots who held officer ranks in the RAF wanted to have equivalent United States grades. Accordingly, prior to transfer, all transferees were interviewed and then assigned a rank based on their experience and



General Carl A. Spaatz.

qualifications. Senior leaders like Chesley Peterson came in the Army Air Force as a lieutenant colonel. Eagle Squadron unit personnel also did not want to be split up and assigned to different units so British and American officials reached understanding that the units would transfer intact.

Shortly before the Eagle Squadrons transferred, the 133 Squadron flew a tragic last mission. On September 26, 1942, 133 Squadron, now flying the more powerful Spitfire Mark IX, a plane that could meet the Fw 190 on equal terms, was assigned to escort duty, alongside two other Spitfire Mark IX squadrons,



Brig. Gen. Frank O'D. "Monk" Hunter.

24 B-17s bombing enemy targets at Morlaix, France. During the preflight briefing, the Eagle Squadron pilots were told to expect 35 mile-per-hour winds. Once aloft, the squadron did not find the B-17s they were suppose to escort and encountered 100 mile-per-hour winds and poor visibility. The squadrons continued to search for the bombers not knowing they had arrived at the rendezvous point early and traveled toward the target. The RAF fighter squadrons then lost radio contact with their ground control and decided to continue southward to try and connect with the bombers. They did encounter another group of bombers and

began escorting back to England but the fighter's fuel supply became a critical issue. The squadron leader, Flight Lieutenant Edward Brettell, who was serving in Carroll McColpin's stead while he was in London preparing to transfer to the AAF, decided to descend out of the overcast sky to try and get his bearing, the rest of the squadron followed. Instead of being over England, the strong winds had blown the squadron over Brest, France. The Eagle Squadron pilots attempted to land at an airfield and ran into enemy anti-aircraft fire and Fw 190s. The 133 Squadron lost all 12 planes that left on this mission. Six pilots were shot down and became prisoners of war with one later killed for plotting to escape. Four others died after being shot down or running out of fuel. Another pilot bailed out over France and later made his way back to England. Only one pilot returned to England from this mission but he was seriously injured after running out of fuel and crash landing. The other two RAF squadrons lost two and one aircraft, respectively.

On September 29, 1942, at a ceremony held at Debden, the three Eagle Squadrons transferred from the RAF to the Army Air Forces. The 71 Squadron became the 334th Fighter Squadron; 121 became the 335th and 133 became the 336th. The three squadrons were assigned to the 4th Fighter Group and all were collocated at Debden. Pending the arrival of additional American-made fighters into the European theater, the squadrons flew Spitfires (the older Mark Vs not the Mark IXs) but with United States markings.

Numerous dignitaries attended the ceremony. ACM Douglas, Air Marshall Harold Edwards, air officer commanding-in-chief (AOC-in-C), RCAF Overseas; and Maj. Gen. Spaatz and Brig. Gen. Frank O'D. "Monk" Hunter, head of VIII Fighter Command represented their respective air forces during this occasion. During his address to the assembled unit personnel and other dignitaries, ACM Douglas' remarks included the following comments:

We of Fighter Command deeply regret this parting for in the course of the past 18 months, we have seen the stuff of which you are made and we could not ask for better companions with whom to see this fight through to a finish.

It is with deep personal regret that I today say 'Goodbye' to you whom it has been my privilege to command. You joined us readily and of your own free will when our need was greatest.

There are those of your number who are not here today—those sons of the United States who were first to give their lives for their country. We of the RAF no less than yourselves will always remember them with pride.

The Eagle Squadron pilots took their place in the United States Army Air Forces. The Fourth Fighter Group would go on to amass one of the most impressive records among all United States fighter units in World War II: the unit claimed it destroyed 1,016 enemy aircraft. Individuals such as Chesley Peterson and Donald Blakeslee, who had learned much in the way in fighter combat and leadership qualities as Eagle Squadron pilots, had distinguished careers, Peterson



Group picture of former Eagle Squadron pilots in the USAAF. (Photo courtesy of the National Museum of the United States Air Force.)

as one of the youngest colonels in the USAAF and Blakeslee as commander of the Fourth Fighter Group.

The Americans who joined the RAF and formed the Eagle Squadrons did so for a variety of reasons. Some were adventurers and were attracted by the exploits of British pilots who flew during the Battle of Britain in their Hurricanes and Spitfires. For these individuals, the lure of flying high-performance aircraft outweighed patriotism and the wish to help England which drew other recruits. Others believed the United States would eventually be drawn into the war and wanted to enter into military service on their own terms rather than being drafted. Whatever their motivations, these Americans were willing to join a foreign air force and go into combat.

The Eagle Squadrons made a significant contribution to the RAF's wartime effort. The units came into service during England's transition from a defensive to offensive effort that brought the war directly against German forces on the European continent. By flying convoy and bomber escort missions and fighter sweeps, the Eagle Squadrons played a significant role in stemming the German offensive while Britain built up its forces. Moreover, the Eagle squadrons helped solidify the growing Anglo-American alliance that, coupled with the wartime efforts of the Soviet Union and other Allied nations, spelled the ultimate defeat of the Axis powers.

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