

CBIVA

Published by the
China-Burma-India Veterans Assn.

Sound-off

MEMORIAL EDITION

THE C.B.I.V.A.

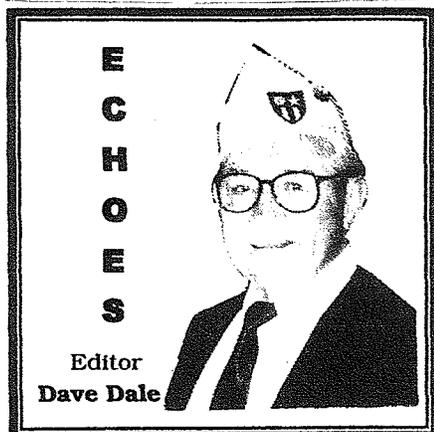
The China-Burma-India Veterans Association was founded in Milwaukee, WI in 1948 as the only veterans organization representing an entire Theater of Operations as opposed to those founded by various units, e.g. The Hump Pilots Assoc., The Flying Tigers of the 14th Air Force, etc. (The CBIVA closed its books in 2005 and contributed its assets to the WW II Museum in New Orleans and the Admiral Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, TX.)

From its birth, the organization had a quarterly publication, *CBIVA Sound-Off*, devoted to publicizing the activities of units being formed throughout the United States.

When I (David Dale) became editor in 1981, the organization had a healthy treasury and its leadership approved an enlargement of the magazine's size. The largest issue had 80 pages but ease of production called for a smaller size and the norm became 64 pages.

With lots of space to fill, the local units, called "bashas" began to send longer articles and photos to help grow their membership. (A basha was an Indian building constructed of bamboo siding and straw and thatch roofing and was the dwelling many CBIers were housed in.)

LTC Joe Shupe (USA Ret.) of Springfield, VA saw the expansion of *Sound-off*



CBI Websites

Two major websites which saved for posterity the history of the China-Burma-India Theater can be found at [Http://cbi-theater.home.comcast.net/menu/cbi_home_detail.html](http://cbi-theater.home.comcast.net/menu/cbi_home_detail.html) and at <http://cbi-history.com/>. The first site is operated by Carl Weidenburner and the second by Gary Goldblatt. Both operate these sites in memory of their deceased fathers, veterans of service in CBITO.

as an opportunity to research and record the histories of many CBI units which contributed to the Theater's unique role in the Second World War.

Joe's articles cover the broad scope of the many units of the U.S. Army and Air Corps serving in CBI. The "Addendum" has been inspired by the articles submitted by CBIers telling their personal or specific unit's contribution to the war in the C.B. I. T. O.

The Best of *The China-Burma-India Sound-off*

In this book we have collected the articles we deem to be the best in the 52-year history of *The CBIVA Sound-off*.

The prime writer was LTC Joseph B. Shupe (USA Ret.). Col. Shupe lives in Springfield, VA, a suburb of Washington, D.C., and he gleaned his facts for his articles from the military archives to which he had access.

CBI veterans always referred to the CBITO as "The Forgotten Theater." A more apt title might be "The Unknown Theater" because even many WW II veterans were ignorant of our presence in Asia at the time.

This collection of histories of the various U.S. military arms in CBI was



LTC Joe Shupe, USA Ret.

was assembled for military museums which we felt might be disinterested in the CBIVA activities but might appreciate 200-plus pages of the histories of outfits posted to this distant and God-forsaken area of the world (to us GIs.)

We hope you enjoy and excuse the amateur production. We produced several of these books. Had we realized the number of ink cartridges used, and mistakes made, etc. we would have considered a professional printing establishment.

David Dale, Editor

Dedication

This project is dedicated to the men and women of the Army, Air Corps, WAC and Red Cross who served in a hostile environment without many necessities or amenities because of the Theater's low priority and the thousands of miles between them and the source of supplies

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ADDENDUM

How We Got to the CBI

What We Did

What Did We Accomplish?

By Joseph Shupe

World War II was the largest and most violent armed conflict in the history of mankind.

Although the major theater of operations were in Europe, we in CBI became involved because the Japanese, the only Asian industrial power, coveted the natural resources of China and Southeast Asia, but found their expansion blocked by European colonial powers and by our country. Having seized Manchuria in 1931, they began a war against China in 1937. The League of Nations failed to effectively counter Japanese aggression in Manchuria and an Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Soon Germany, Italy and Japan became Allies (the Axis) facing western democratic governments that wanted to avoid another war.

Our Congress, having rejected the Versailles Treaty and the Government of the League of Nations after World War I, remained largely indifferent to most international concerns. We firmly discounted the likelihood of involvement in another major war, except perhaps with Japan. Isolationist strength in our Congress led to the passage of the Neutrality Act of 1937, making it unlawful for our country to trade with belligerents. Our policy was aimed at continental defense and the Navy was assigned our first line of defense. The Army's role was to serve as the nucleus of a mass mobilization that would defeat any invader who managed to fight their way past our Navy, and our Army's powerful coastal defense installations.

The National Defense Act of 1920 allowed an Army of 280,000, the largest in peacetime history, but until 1939 Congress never appropriated funds to pay for much more than one-half of that strength. Most of the funds available for new equipment went to the fledgling air corps. Throughout most of the interwar period, the Army was tiny and insular, filled with hard-bitten long-serving volunteers scattered in small garri-

sons throughout the continental United States, Hawaii, the Philippines and Panama. We also had our 15th Infantry in China from 1911 to 1938.

Yet, some innovative thinking and preparation for the future took place in the interwar Army. Experiments were conducted with armored vehicles and motorization, but air-ground cooperation came to nothing for lack of resources and high level support. The Army did, however, develop an interest in amphibious warfare and in related techniques, which were being pioneered by our Marine Corps.

By the outbreak of the war, the Signal Corps was a leader in improving radio communications, and our artillery practiced the most sophisticated fire-direction and control techniques in the world. In addition, war plans for various contingencies had been drawn up, as had industrial and manpower mobilization plans. During the early 1930's, Col. George C. Marshall commandant of the Infantry School at Ft. Benning, GA, had earmarked a number of younger officers for leadership positions. Despite such preparations, the Army, as a whole, was unready for the war that broke out in Europe on September 1, 1939.

Our preparations for war moved slowly. Gen. Marshall took over as Chief of Staff in 1939, but our Army remained hard-pressed simply to carry out the mission of defending our nation. Defending our overseas possessions like the Philippines seemed a hopeless task. In early 1939, prompted by fears that a hostile power might be able to establish air bases in the Western Hemisphere, thus exposing the Panama Canal or our country to aerial attack, President Franklin D. Roosevelt launched a limited preparedness campaign. The power of the Army Air Corps was increased; our military leaders drafted a new series of war plans to deal with the threatening inter-

national situation. The focus then changed from continental to hemisphere defense.

The War Department made plans to expand the Army to 1.5 million men. On August 27, 1940, Congress approved inducting the National Guard into federal service and calling up the reserves. A few weeks later, Congress passed the Selective Service and Training Act, the first peacetime draft in our history. By mid-1941, the Army had achieved its planned strength with 27 infantry, five armored and two cavalry divisions, 35 air groups and a host of support units. But, it remained far from ready to deploy overseas against well-equipped, experienced and determined foes.

The rapid defeat of France and the possible collapse of Britain dramatically accelerated defense preparations. The President directed the transfer of large stocks of World War I munitions to France and Britain in the spring of 1940 and went further in September when he agreed to the transfer of 50 over-age destroyers to Britain in exchange for bases in the Atlantic and Caribbean. In March 1941, Congress repealed some provisions of the Neutrality Act. Passage of the Lend-Lease Act, which gave the President authority to sell, transfer, or lease war goods to the government of any country whose defenses he deemed vital to the defense of the United States, spelled the virtual end of neutrality. The President proclaimed that we would become the "arsenal of democracy."

In the spring of 1941, American and British military representatives held their first combined staff conferences to discuss strategy in the event we entered the war, which was likely to include Japan as well as Germany. The staffs agreed that if the United States entered the war, the Allies should concentrate on the defeat of Germany first. The President authorized active naval patrols in the western half of the Atlantic and in July, our troops took the place of British forces in Iceland.

Just before the passage of the Lend-Lease Act, in September 1940, Japan joined the Axis (Germany and Italy). From this time on, the President and his advisors believed that our country would be drawn into the war eventually, and that the Allies could not win with-

out our help. They also believed that we should send aid to Britain and China. A loan of \$25,000,000 to China was approved in September and another loan of \$50,000,000 in November. The chiefs of the Japanese Navy concluded at about the same time that they could not win unless our fleet was neutralized at Pearl Harbor, so they started planning for that goal.

In October 1940, China asked us for 500 planes and pilots, also for the necessary funds for that purpose. Chiang Kai-shek was advised by Col. Claire Chennault, his air advisor, that with such planes and pilots, the Japanese Navy could be destroyed in their home islands. They also could prevent the Japanese from bombing the Burma Road which had just been reopened by the British. Chiang further said that their economy was on the verge of collapse unless they got some aid. He was also interested in strengthening his own position vis-à-vis the Chinese Communists. The Communists at the time renewed military action against Japan. Fearing defeatism in China after the fall of France, and the possibility of Chiang making peace with Japan the Communists started a 100-regiment offensive by their 8th Route Army in Hopei and Shansi to keep the war alive. This was not to Chiang's liking, so he ordered the Communists to fall back. From this point on, the united front between the two factions was ended.

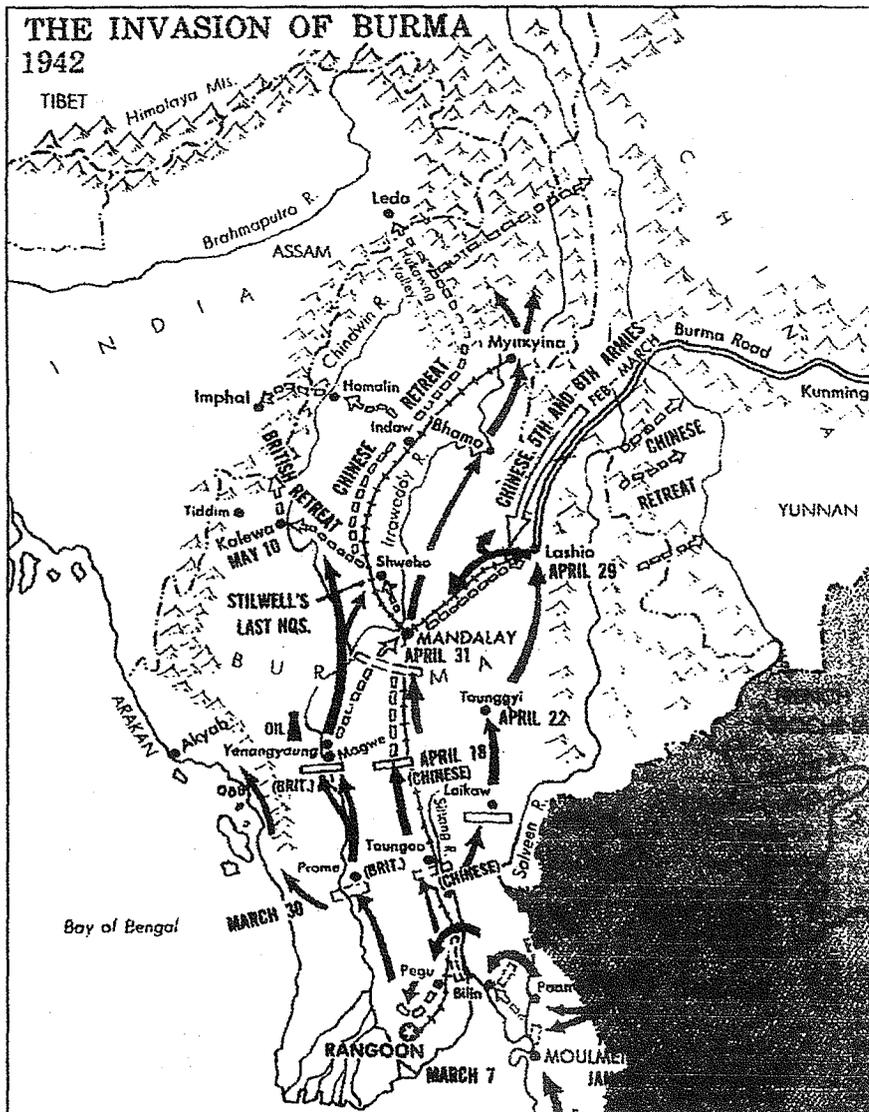
Chennault had been in China since 1937 and had not succeeded in training Chinese combat pilots to be as effective as say the RAF was in England. His great contribution though, was the organization of an air warning system by radio's manned by spotters in the occupied area. So, he proposed to Chiang an American-manned air force. He asked for B-17s to sink the Japanese Navy, also for medium bomber and fighters. Unfortunately, at the time, we did not have enough planes for our own needs. Not everyone in our government favored giving planes to China. Our policy at the time was to keep Japan from spreading southward. Nevertheless, there was sympathy for China's plight in our high circles. The President feared the collapse of China. So, after much debate, all that we could scrape together was 100 P-40 fighters taken from the number

designated for Britain, which they released in the hope of deterring an attack on Singapore. Recruitment of 100 pilots from our Army and Navy Air Forces was helped by the attraction of salaries up to \$750 per month and a bonus of \$500 for every Japanese plane shot down. Release of the pilots for enlistment as mercenaries in the service of China was authorized by Executive Order in April 1941. The American Volunteer Group (AVG), however, did not reach Burma for training by Chennault until November 1941.

The move that opened real aid to China was the Lend-Lease Act of March 1941. That act provided for \$70,000,000 worth of war materiel. China was at once declared eligible. Thereafter, Lend-Lease became the most important aspect of the Sino-American relationship.

Our aid, then, was for Chinese military self-sufficiency base on

the assumption that Chinese armies given arms, equipment and training under our advisors could deter further Japanese aggression. Our plan was to arm 30 Chinese divisions (out of the 300 then available) with full equipment. This was to be supervised by an American Mission to China (AMMISCA) under Brigadier General John Magruder who had been both predecessor and successor to General Stilwell as military attaché to China. AMMISCA was to be staffed by a number of former Americans versed in the Chinese language. Our purpose, however, was not the same as the Chinese. The AMMISCA started work in October 1941 and it soon became apparent that China's demand for war materiel was not for offensive action against the Japanese, but to make Chiang's government safe against insurrection after other nations forced Japan out of China.



Later a report on the Burma Road disturbed Washington. An investigator was sent to find out why not much equipment was moving over the Burma Road; goods were piling up at the docks at Rangoon and in rail yards such as Lashio. It was found out that corruption and mismanagement was rife. As a consequence, an American Technical Group of 46 civilian mechanics was sent by Lend-Lease officials to expedite traffic.

Japan largely devoid of natural resources to feed its industries, looked overseas for supplies of strategic materials such as ores and petroleum. Before 1939, we were Japan's major supplier, but President Roosevelt shut off our supplies on July 26, 1941 and Britain did the same. This was an effort to force Japan to end hostilities against China. The Japanese have long coveted the resource-rich British and Dutch colonies of SE Asia, and as our trade embargo tightened, the Japanese increasingly looked southward for raw materials and strategic resources.

On August 17, 1941, President Roosevelt warned Japan that further attempts to dominate Asia would force the United States to take appropriate steps to safeguard our rights and interests. Meanwhile, in Washington, negotiations were going on between our government and the Japanese ambassador to find ways to reduce the growing tension between the two nations.

Only we stood in Japan's path. Our fleet at Pearl Harbor was the only force capable of challenging Japan's navy, and our bases in the

Philippines could threaten Japan's lines of communication between their home islands and the East Indies. Every oil tanker heading for Japan would have to pass near the Philippines which we held. From these needs and constraints, Japan's war plans emerged. First its navy would neutralize our fleet with a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Japan would also seize our Central Pacific bases at Guam and Wake Island and invade the Philippines. With our naval power crippled, Japan's military would be free to seize Burma, Malaya, Singapore and the Dutch East Indies in a series of rapid amphibious operations. Japan would then establish a defensive ring around its newly conquered empire by fortifying islands in the south and central Pacific. Japan's leaders were convinced that we, once involved in the European War, would be willing to negotiate peace in the Pacific.

By June 1941, the situation in Europe was changing when Germany started a two-front war. The German armies were expecting a quick war with the USSR as predicted by our Secretary of War Stimson and General Marshall. This did not happen.

General MacArthur, in the Philippines, asked for B-17s to defend the islands and if necessary, to attack the Japanese navy.

The ongoing talks in Washington, with the Japanese, were stymied because they would not consent to a settlement in China. They wanted us to recognize their colonial control of China, so there was no area left for bargaining.

In October 1941, with the end of

the one-year draft approaching, our Secretary of War asked for an extension of the draft. The measure passed the Congress by a single vote.

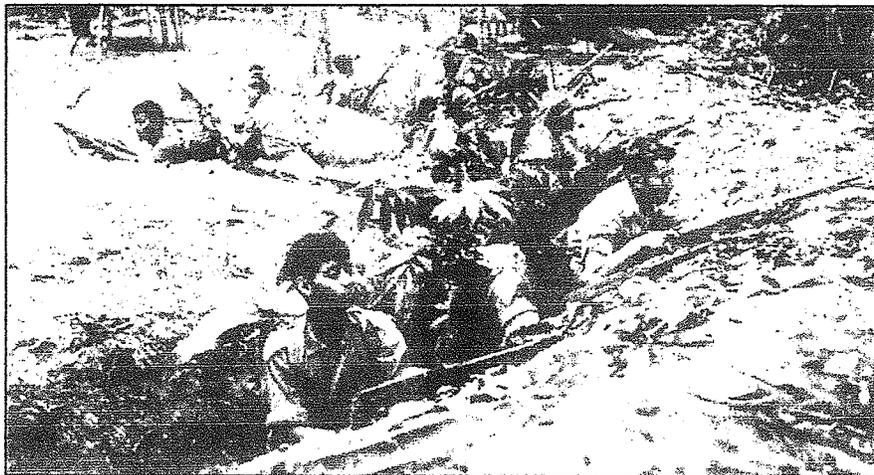
One month earlier (Sept. 4/41) the administration in Washington realized that we were not going to escape the war and that Germany could not be defeated without our participation; also that the British and Dutch probably could not defend Malaya and Indonesia without our help. The Joint Board, headed by General Marshall and Admiral Stark, reaffirmed the strategic decision to defeat Germany first while maintaining a strong defense against Japan. The main part of this would be material support for Chinese offensives against Japanese forces in China.

This strategy was shared by the British but not by the Chinese leader. China felt left out in overall strategy talks. Instead, we sent an old "China Hand," Owen Lattimore to negotiate with the Chinese. He later reported that the Chinese felt politically isolated from Allied conferences. The Chinese noticed that we and the British were warning Japan for excursions into Indo-China, Siam and even Siberia, but not from a drive on Kunming that might close the Burma Road. They also objected to our "Europe first" strategy which they considered disadvantageous to their country.

On October 17, 1941, Tojo became premier of Japan. A new military government came to power under Tojo, which was supported by Japan's top military men.

On November 5, 1941, the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters, issued a secret plan for simultaneous offensives against our Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor, British Malaya, the Philippines and the Netherlands' East Indies. The plan was to be implemented only if the continuing negotiations in Washington failed to reach a satisfactory agreement favorable to Japan.

On November 15, 1941, Special Japanese envoy Saburo Kurusu arrived in Washington to join their negotiating team. His effort was to obtain our agreement to reopen trade negotiations. Then, on November 26th, Secretary of State Hull stated that the basis of agreement would have to include Japanese withdrawal from French Indo-China and China, and to recognize the Nationalist Government



James S. Fletcher (far right) and other Kachin Rangers take defensive positions in a trench near Shingbiyang, Burma in November 1943. This picture is shown on the history channel in a program called spies.

of Chiang Kai-shek.

November 26, 1941, the Japanese First Air Fleet of six aircraft carriers, supported by battleships, heavy cruisers and submarines left the Kurile Islands in absolute secrecy. We knew of Japan's preparations for war but we expected that the blow would fall on Malaya or the Philippines. Our intelligence services (which had broken the Japanese code) were aware of the movements and location of most major Japanese army and navy units with the notable exception of the First Air Fleet which was moving under strict radio silence, while other radio stations in Japanese home waters simulated the call signals of the vessels of the fleet.

Meanwhile, our strategists had developed two plans to counter possible Japanese aggression - one for our Navy and another for our Army. The Navy planned to fight across the central Pacific for a climatic and decisive battle with the Japanese fleet. The Army saw no way to save the Philippines and favored a strategic defense along an Alaska-Panama line. Writing off the Philippines, however politically impossible, and as the war drew closer, frantic efforts were made to strengthen its defenses. We even sent our new weapon, the B-17 flying Fortress bomber, a few of which were rushed there in the last days of peace.

All of our efforts proved to be too little, too late. The Japanese war plan worked to perfection. On December 7, 1941, Japan paralyzed our Pacific Fleet in its attack on Pearl Harbor. In the Philippines, Japanese flyers destroyed most of MacArthur's air forces on the ground. Freed of effective opposition, Japanese forces subsequently took Burma, Malaya, Singapore and the Dutch East Indies in rapid succession. Four days after the Pearl Harbor attack, Germany declared war on our country. By March 1942, the Japanese had conquered an empire. Only MacArthur's beleaguered American-Filipino army still held out on the main Philippine island of Luzon. In March, the President ordered MacArthur to escape to Australia, leaving command to LGeneral Jonathan Wainwright who held out until May 9, 1942.

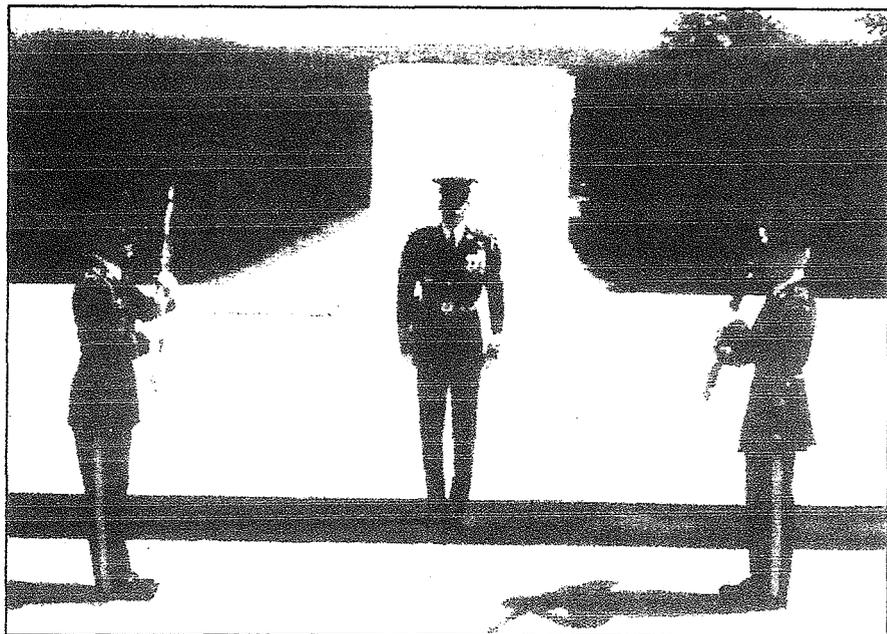
Shortly after the war began, the President called on Congress to expand our Armed Forces. Twenty years of neglect and indifference,

however, could not be overcome in a few days. Our Joint Chiefs of Staff emerged as a committee of military leaders to advise the President and to coordinate strategy with the British. In March, the Army was reorganized into three major commands; the Air Forces, Ground Forces and Service Forces. Thirty-seven Army divisions were being trained, but only one was ready for deployment. Army planners, at the time, estimated that we would need an Army of nearly nine million organized into 215 combat divisions; this was too ambitious for the 90 that eventually were established and supported on far-flung battlefields.

On January 14, 1942, General Stilwell learned from Secretary of War Stimson that he was to go to China. He didn't arrive in New Delhi, India until February 28th. His job was to restore a land route to China for the purpose of keeping China in the war; to tie down Japanese troops, and to serve as a base for future operations against the Japanese home islands. It reflected an idealistic American view of China as a great power, capable of a major contribution in the war, and the romantic image held by many of our people of China's heroic struggle against superior Japanese equipment and arms. For nearly three years we would thus push for a major effort to break the Japanese blockade, forward large quantities of lend-lease materials, and train the fledgling Chinese Army and Air Force.

We soon found the situation to be much more complex than expected. Far from heroic, China's government and army were riddled with inefficiency and graft. Although personally honest, Chiang Kai-shek preferred to leave the defeat of Japan to the other Allies and to husband his resources for a post-war shutdown with his mortal enemies, the Communists. The British, for their part, cherished few illusions about China's war-making potential. They were more concerned about the defense of India and restoration of control over their former colonies, including Burma, and they complained that we could see no purpose for the CBI Theater "except to cover General Stilwell's supply route." British Imperial designs, in turn, met with our suspicion, since we had little enthusiasm for a war to restore the British Empire.

Aside from the trials of coalition politics; the Allies in CBI would face one of the most inhospitable areas for military operations in the world. For us, the Theater not only covered a vast area, but it was also at the end of a 12,000-mile supply route. The area where we would campaign was characterized by extremely rugged terrain, and conditions more favorable for defense which would reduce the Allies' advantage in equipment and numbers. Northern and Central Burma, where we would conduct the bulk of our operations had steep, densely wooded mountain ranges cut by streams. The Allies would



Presenting Arms at the Changing of the Guard at Arlington Cemetery.

Helen Georgeff photo

need to scale three great river valleys - the Chindwin, the Irrawaddy, or the Salween, in order to move south in the heart of Burma. We could also expect our advance to be slowed by the monsoon, near constant rains. Leeches, flies, ticks and other insects, along with such diseases as malaria, dysentery and typhus added to a soldier's miseries.

As late as 1943, our Joint Chiefs of Staff had not adopted a clear strategy for winning the war in the Pacific. Early in the war,

they assumed that the burden of the land fighting against Japan would fall on Chinese forces. The bulk of Japan's Army was deployed in China and Chinese leaders had an immense manpower pool to draw on. But, supplying and training the Chinese Army proved to be an impossible task. Moreover, fighting in China did not lead to any strategic objective. Instead, the growing strength of MacArthur's and Nimitz forces, gave the Joint Chiefs of Staff the means to strike at the enemy in the Pacific.

Military Operations in the CBI Theater

January 1-31, 1942. The British were defeated on the Malayan Peninsula; they were completely outfought and outmaneuvered by the Japanese, aided by overwhelming air power. British troops were forced back to a line 25 miles north of Singapore; this was breached on January 15th and were forced back into Singapore. From February 8-15th, the Japanese took that city, and the 70,000-man garrison surrendered. Total casualties were 138,700 British (mostly POWs) and 9,800 Japanese.

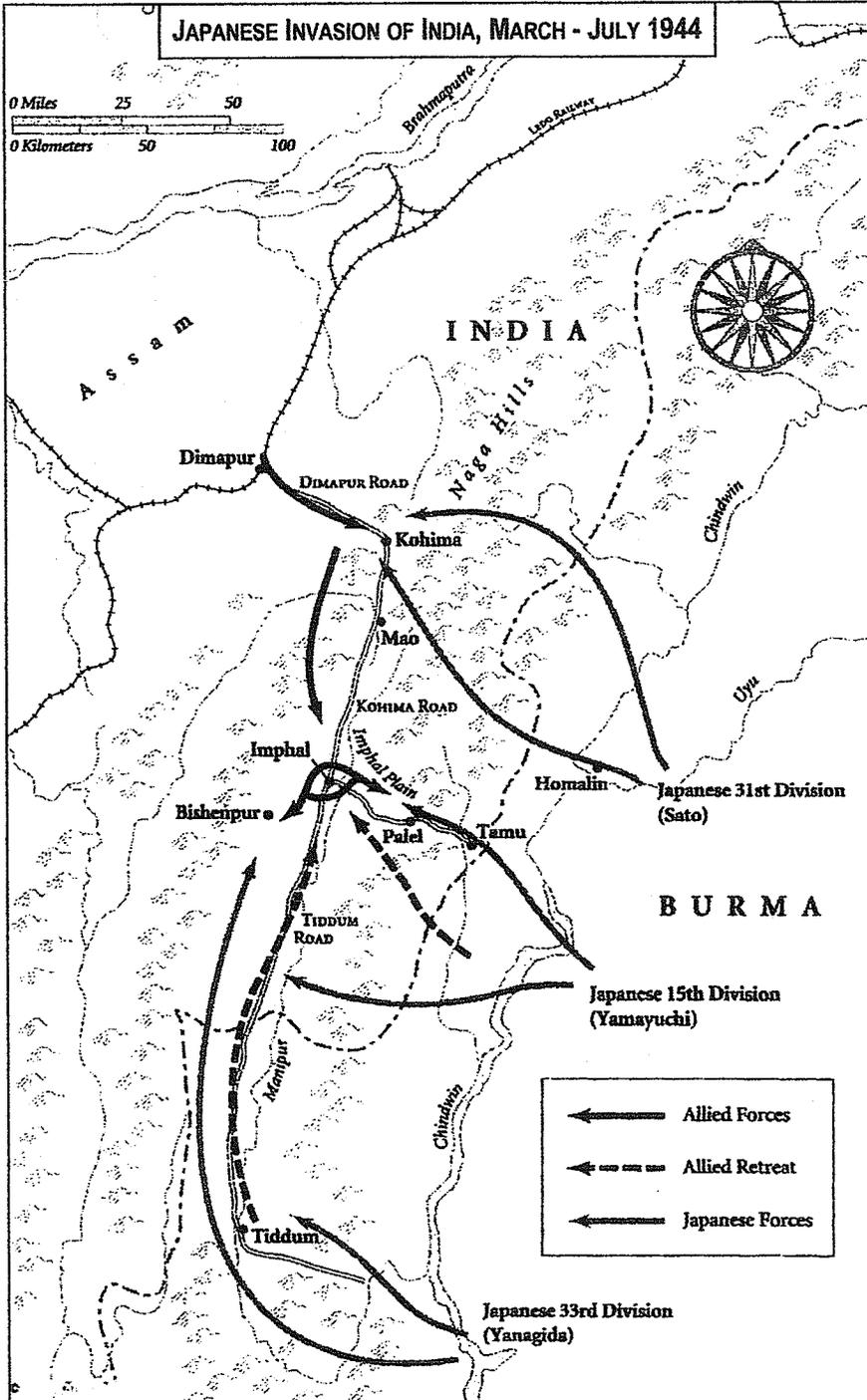
January 12-29, 1942, the Japanese 15th Army after occupying Thailand, then invaded Burma. The enemy was aided by a small group of Burmese revolutionaries who were promised independence from Britain.

January 30-31. The British, with the equivalent of two small ill-equipped divisions of British, Burmese and Indian troops were surprised and driven out of Moulmein with heavy losses. They withdrew across the Salween.

February 18-23. The Japanese crossed the Salween and forced the British to withdraw to the Sittang River. Then, on March 5th, LGeneral Harold Alexander replaced the British Commander Hutton. Alexander managed to get his strength up to two small divisions; he then realized he could not hold back the enemy, so he abandoned Rangoon. With British forces crumbling, in February the British accepted an offer of help from Chiang Kai-shek who sent his 5th and 6th Armies down the Burma Road on March 12th. Chiang sent his new American Chief of Staff, LGeneral Stilwell to command this force in Burma.

March 13-20. Alexander reorganized his forces on the Prome-Toungoo line, while the Chinese 5th Army held the center by the Rangoon-Mandalay Road and Railroad. The Chinese 6th Army held the mountainous area to the east. MGeneral William Slim arrived on March 19th to take over the Burma Corps.

March 21-30. The Japanese made their main attack against the Chinese 5th Army at Toungoo. They cut off the Chinese 200th Division, but were counterattacked by forces under Stilwell's command, further supported by Slim's troops. This permitted the 200th



Division to fight its way out. Japanese pressure, however, drove the Chinese slowly back up the railroad, while the British were forced to evacuate Prome.

April 1-9. A temporary stall resulted as both sides obtained reinforcements. The arrival of the Chinese 66th Army allowed Stilwell to hold the railroad; then he and Slim began to prepare for a counter-offensive. The Japanese were reinforced by two more divisions from the victorious Malaya-Singapore campaign.

April 10-19. The Japanese cut off the 1st Burma Division, but British counter-attacks, along with an attack by the Chinese 38th Division, permitted Slim to rescue the 1st Burma Division.

April 18-23. The reinforced Japanese 56th Division hit the Chinese 6th Army in the Loikaw-Taunggyi area completely overwhelming them. Stilwell personally leading the 200th Division struck at Taunggyi from the west only to find the Japanese had retreated. Meanwhile, the rest of the 15th Japanese Army kept up its pressure against the British and Chinese south of Mandalay, which now began to fall back.

April 29. Lashio fell to the enemy; then during May, Slim retreated back to the India border. By this time, the survivors of the Chinese 6th Army fled back to Yunnan, along with scattered units of the 5th and 66th Armies. Stilwell then led a group of 100-odd men and women (including Dr. Gordon Seagrave) on a 400-mile trek, by jeep and foot across the mountains and jungles to Imphal.

The British suffered 30,000 casualties among the 42,000 involved in the first Burma Campaign. Chinese losses defy estimation. Of the 95,000 involved, only one division (38th) withdrew as a fighting unit. Japanese ground losses were about 7,000.

From May-December 1942, the enemy consolidated their control of Burma, having achieved their goal of sealing off China.

From June-December 1942, the British fearing an invasion of India put General Archibald Wavell in command. He knew Burma could not be regained for at least a year, pending raising enough British and Indian troops and equipping and training them. However, he planned a limited invasion of Burma in the Arakan region. Stil-

well, though, was more anxious to reconquer Burma so he established the Ramgarh Training Center around the nucleus of Chinese troops who escaped from Burma. Reinforcements came over the "Hump" in empty planes from China. He also started construction of a road eastward from Ledo.

Air Operations, December 1941. After December 7th, Chennault sent one of the three squadrons of the AVG to Kunming; another reinforced the weak RAF at Mingaladon Airport, near Rangoon. In its first action, the Kunming Squadron intercepted Japanese bombers, shooting down six with no losses of our own. Three days later, the AVG and RAF at Mingaladon encountered several Japanese planes attacking Rangoon.

January-February 1942. The enemy continued air attacks on Rangoon, and the AVG continued to work with the RAF and support British ground forces. By the end of February, RAF fighters were put out of action, but the AVG, through superior aerial attacks, lost only 15 planes and shot down over 100 enemy planes.

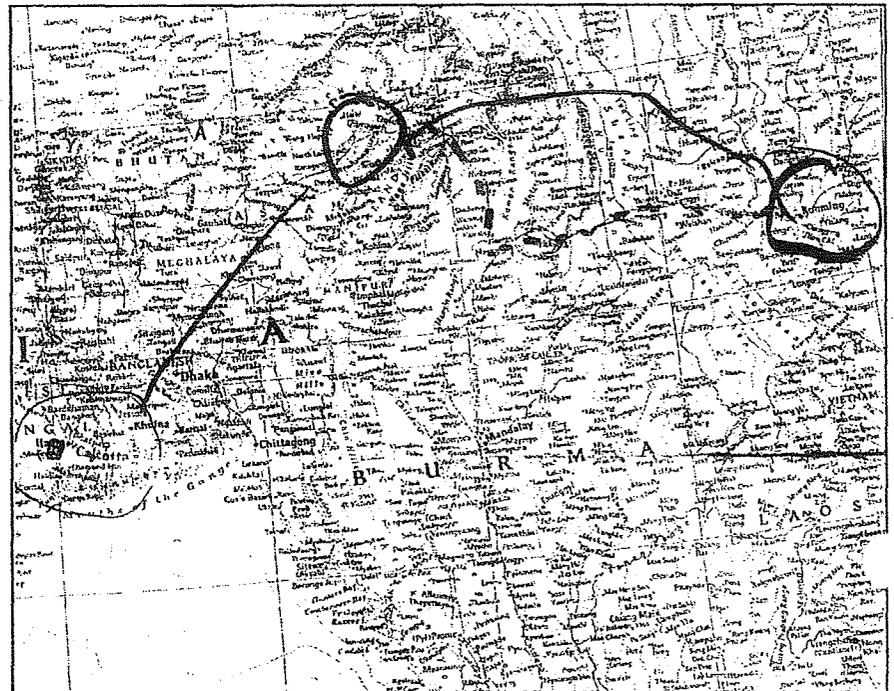
March 1-20. With the enemy nearing Rangoon, the AVG pulled out of Mingaladon to the RAF base at Magwe where they continued their support of British and Chinese ground forces. On March 21st, a massive Japanese air raid caught most of the AVG and RAF planes on the ground and de-

stroyed that base. Only three AVG planes were salvaged and they withdrew north to Loiwing near the Chinese border. The RAF then withdrew to India.

April-May 1942. The AVG and RAF continued to give long-range support to the withdrawing Allied troops in Burma. The arrival of spitfires from England allowed the RAF to engage the enemy on more equal terms. With the loss of Burma, Chennault, concentrating on Kunming, reduced his operations due to lack of fuel and supplies.

June-December 1942. We began a long-range supply airlift from Assam to Kunming. Because the enemy occupied Myitkyina, the planes had to fly over the eastern Himalayas in SE Tibet, climbing to 21,000 feet to get over the mountains. With so few planes, the airlift was feeble. The newly activated 10th AF, under MGeneral Howard C. Davidson, was installed on Indian air bases to protect the "Hump" bases.

China 1942. There was little combat activity during the year. The enemy, occupied elsewhere, was content to hold what they had. The Chinese Nationalists could do nothing since the closing of the Burma Road had cut off their needed supplies. As a result, Stilwell's relations with Chiang worsened because Washington turned down his requests for additional transport planes (other theaters had priority). Also, friction arose



between Stilwell and Chennault (now a Brigadier General commanding the China Air Task Force, which replaced the AVG on July 4th). Chennault demanded priority over all "Hump" supplies, but Stilwell insisted on a balance between ground and air forces.

1943 - Land and Air Operations in Burma. General Wavell, then in command of Allied forces in India, realized he could not be ready for a major offensive until early 1944, but he prepared for two small actions. The first at "Arakan (12/42-December 43). The 14th Indian Division invaded NW Burma; this resulted in a stalemate between January-March 1943 at Akyab. During March and May, the Japanese 55th Division counterattacked from Akyab, while their other units struck at the British left and rear. The campaign ended where it had started with the enemy occupying Arakan.

First Chindit Raid. Brigadier Orde Wingate got the approval of Wavell to try out his idea of "long range penetration" with the 77th Indian Brigade. He believed that a small force, supplied by air, could operate for extended periods of time, behind enemy lines by cutting communications, destroying supplies and creating confusion, to beat the enemy at their own game of infiltration and encirclement. So, on Feb. 18, 1943, he crossed the Chindwin and he set out to cut the Mandalay-Myitkyina and Mandalay-Lashio railroads. On March 18, he crossed the Irrawaddy, then he met increased enemy opposition. As losses mounted, the Chindits retreated back to India. He lost about 1/3 of his 1,000-man force.

In February 1943, as the Japanese came closer to the India border (Hukawng Valley) Stilwell feared they would thwart his road building effort. He, then, moved

the Chinese 38th Division from Ramgarh to protect the road. The enemy then withdrew back into the Hukawng Valley.

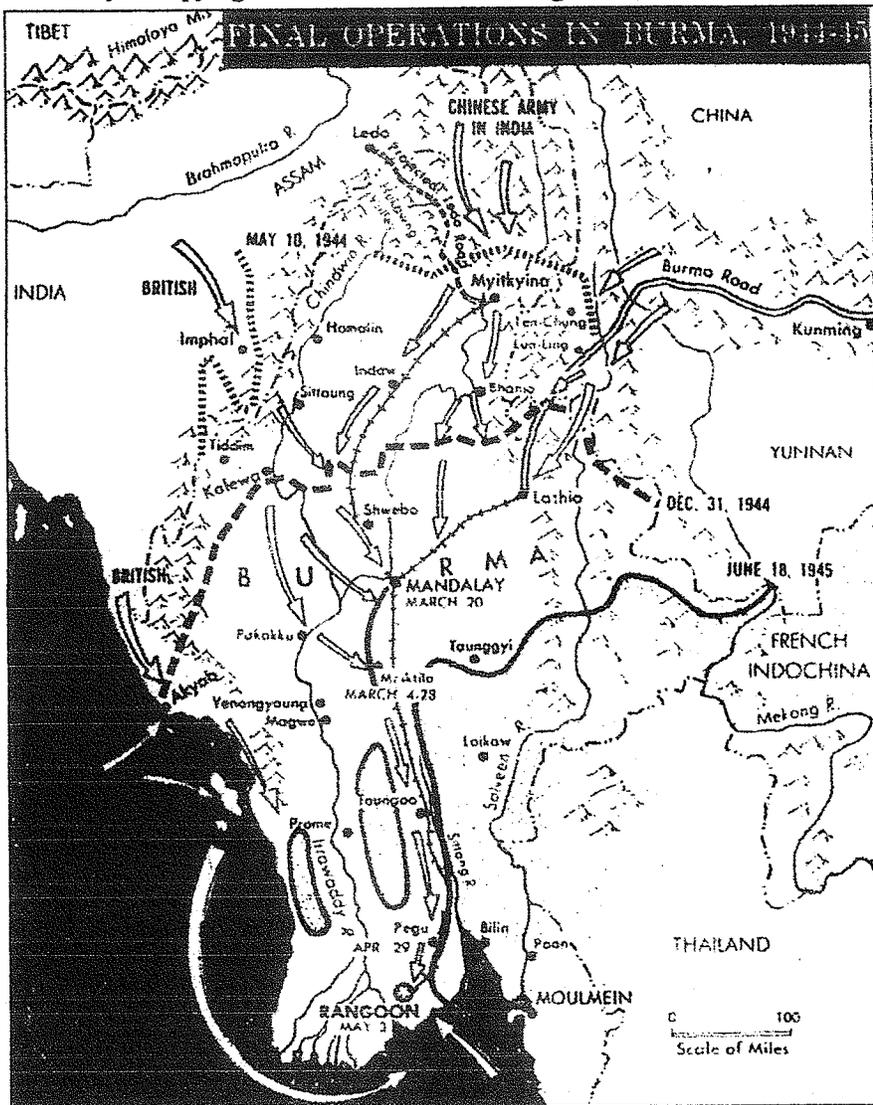
October-November 1943. Disappointed because the British and Chinese did not undertake a major invasion in 1943-44, Stilwell obtained the reluctant approval of Wavell and Chiang to use troops at his disposal. He sent the 38th Division into the Hukawng Valley. That force was to be supplied by air drops. Work on the road was then intensified as more engineer troops arrived.

November 23-December 25. The enemy attacked the 38th Division in the Hukawng Valley. Three of their battalions were surrounded but they were supplied by air, so that the enemy could not overrun them. Then, a stalemate resulted.

December 24-31. Stilwell arrived at the scene and with the aid of light pack artillery, the Chinese counterattacked relieving the surrounded battalions. They, then, cleared the valley west of the Tarung River.

During 1943 within China, the Japanese continued their minor "rice offensive" to obtain food to the detriment of the Chinese people. With our increased air support, the Chinese repulsed one of these offensives during November-December. The addition of more of our transport planes over the "Hump" route led to two serious disputes between our leaders. Chennault's China Air Task Force continued to inflict losses on the enemy on the ratio of 10-1, and he felt that he could win the war in China unaided if he obtained all or most of the "Hump" supplies. Stilwell wanted the bulk of those supplies to go to the Chinese army. Chiang supported Chennault, who won the argument, when he appealed to President Roosevelt. Chennault was promoted to major general and his command was redesignated as the 14th Air Force. With increased "Hump" supplies, Chennault's growing 14th Air Force was able, during 1943, to retain air superiority. His bombers went as far as Formosa inflicting heavy losses on the enemy.

Deteriorating relations between the Nationalists and the Communists in China led Chiang to blockade the Communist region. This took a large number of Chinese divisions away from the war effort against Japan. Stilwell complained



about this, further complicating relations between the two.

In October 1943, the SE Asia Command with Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten as Supreme Allied Commander became operational with headquarters at New Delhi (later transferred to Kandy in Ceylon). General Stilwell was appointed as his deputy. All Allied ground forces operating against Burma in India were grouped under General Slim, including Stilwell's (NCAC) Northern Combat Area Command (with two Chinese divisions who were actively engaged in combat in the Hukawng Valley).

In 1944, the Japanese objective was to take over all SE China and to invade India. The Allies objective was to retake Burma and open the land route to China.

Mountbatten and Slim felt that British forces in India would not be ready until the dry season of 1944-45. They agreed, however, to help Stilwell's NCAC by engaging in several minor activities along the India-Burma border, as well as two limited thrusts into Burma itself. One of these was to be in Arakan, the other an augmented Chindit long-range penetration effort in North Central Burma under General Wingate. Stilwell, with three (to be increased to five Chinese divisions), plus the Merrill's Marauders hoped to take Myitkyina before the start of the 1944 monsoons.

The Japanese meanwhile had six divisions, two in NW Burma, plus the 15th Army (with four divisions) in the north. Three of the 15th Army's divisions were ordered to prepare to invade Eastern India with 100,000 combat troops. Their objective was to seize the Imphal-Kohima plain of Manipur, and to cut the railroad line into Assam. This, then, would cut off the "Hump" supply route, and supplies for Stilwell's NCAC.

Three divisions of the British XV Corps advanced toward Akyab (December 1943-January 1944) but were soon halted by the Japanese 55th Division after a two-month battle.

The Japanese counterattacked on February 4-12, 1944 and encircled the British forces. Then, General Slim reinforced his two divisions by an emergency air supply effort. On February 13-25, the British two divisions by an emergency air supply effort. On Febru-

ary 13-25, the British two divisions reestablished contact (2-24) and wiped out most of the enemy.

In March-April 1944, in extremely heavy fighting, the British XV Corps fought its way through the Maungdaw position, and was about to continue its advance on Akyab, when it was forced to halt and send reinforcements to the Imphal front. Then, a stalemate resulted during the May-December monsoons.

North Burma - January-February 1944. A stalemate came about when the Chinese 38th Division met resistance from the Japanese 18th Division in the Hukawng Valley. At this time, Merrill's Marauders, led by Brigadier General Frank Merrill entered the battle.

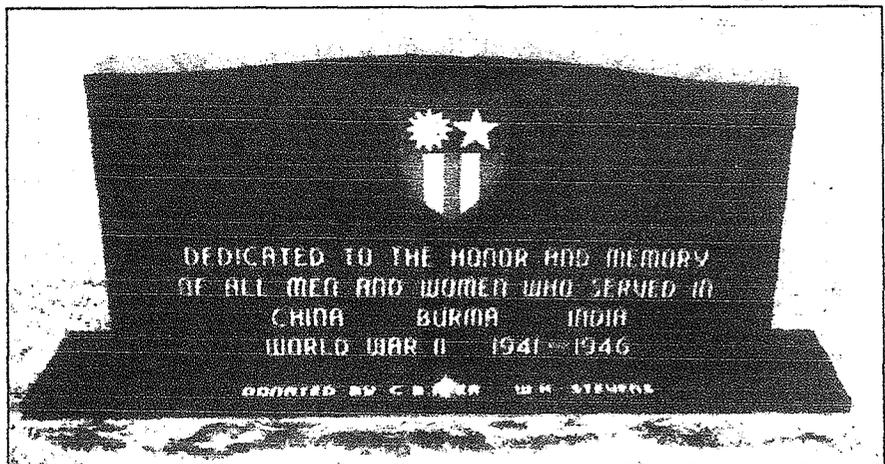
March 3-7. A Chinese frontal attack combined with envelopment by Merrill's Marauders caused heavy losses in the enemy's 18th Division. This forced the enemy to withdraw to a defensive position along a ridge separating the Hukawng and Magaung valleys.

March 28-April 1. One battalion of Marauders and a Chinese regiment encircled the enemy's 18th Division at Shaduzup entrapping two of their regiments. The enemy, after suffering heavy losses, fought their way out, but they managed in a counter attack to isolate one of the Marauder's battalions southwest of Shaduzup.

The 2d Chindit Expedition - January - March 1944. Wingate

organized the 3d Indian Division to be flown behind enemy lines into North Central Burma. His objective was to cut the Mandalay-Myitkyina railroad and to disrupt the enemy's rear areas that were facing Stilwell's left flank and Slim's 14th Army. The air logistical support was provided by Colonel Philip Cochran's air commandos. On March 5-11, this force was transported initially by gliders, then by transport planes to bases called "Broadway" and "Chowringhee." A few columns spread out to create confusion and to destroy enemy supplies, as the main body moved to Mawlu to block the railroad line. On March 25th, Wingate was killed in an airplane crash and was replaced by MGeneral Lentaigne. The new commander abandoned Mawlu as enemy reinforcements arrived as he had been instructed to join with Stilwell's command at a new base near Hopin. There they were attacked by the enemy and suffered heavy casualties and had to withdraw to the west. From June-July 1944, the remaining Chindits operated with Stilwell's NCAC and helped to capture Mogaung.

April 28-May 17. Myitkyina-Mogaung Operations. Stilwell's Marauders now commanded by Colonel C. N. Hunter reduced to 1400 men, due to casualties and disease, along with two Chinese regiments embarked on a secret march over a high rugged ridge to



So, that the China, Burma, India Theater Not be Forgotten in my hometown, County and State, CBI Veteran W. H. "Ham" Stevens of Forest, Mississippi being motivated and inspired by the photo on the front page of Winter 2005 Sound-Off, the Memorial Monument placed in the Poterville, CA Cemetery by CBI Veteran William H. Joss, had a similar Memorial Monument made and erected with permission from VFW Post 4974 of Forest, MS in front of the Post building. As a result of this, the VFW Post is now using this as a center point to make an Engraved Brick Memorial Plaza to the honor and memory of veterans, past, present and future from all benches of service. W. H. "Ham" Stevens photo

take Myitkyina. On May 17-18, they captured the airfield, but were later repulsed when Japanese replacements arrived.

During May-June, Stilwell's Chinese 22d and 38th Divisions advanced down the Mogaung Valley. The 22d captured Kamaing and the 38th, with help from a Chindit column, then captured Mogaung.

May 18-August 3. During the siege of Myitkyina, the Allies suffered heavy casualties forcing the enemy to yield ground inch by inch. Finally, 700 enemy survivors retreated southward to rejoin their main force.

July-August 1944. The 2d Brigade of Chindits (protecting Stilwell's right flank) was sent from

Mogaung to take over Pinbaw. The British 36th Division, under MGeneral Festing replaced the Chindits and seized Pinbaw.

September-October 1944. Stilwell, with five Chinese divisions, the British 36th Division, and the newly organized MARS Brigade (with two U.S. and one Chinese Regiment, plus two light artillery battalions), in a surprise offensive made a screening envelopment of the Japanese 33d Army.

October 18. The above units crossed the Irrawaddy River near Shwegu with the objective of reaching the Burma Road near Lashio. Then, on October 18th, General Stilwell was relieved and replaced by LGeneral Dan Sultan, the commander of the newly es-

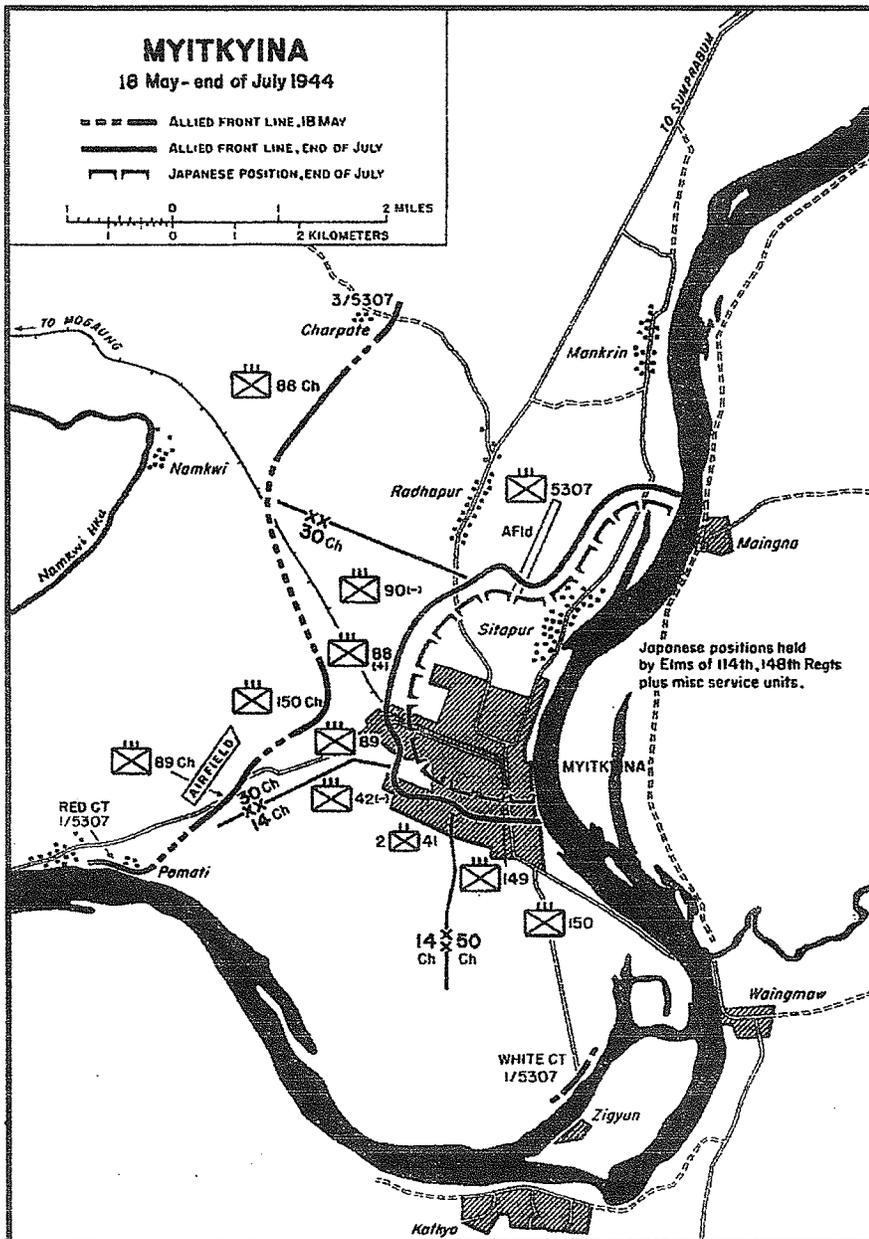
tablished India-Burma Theater.

November 30-December 31. Due to setbacks caused by a Japanese offensive in China, Chiang decided to withdraw two divisions from Burma to help stop the enemy's offensive in South China. The 22d and 14th divisions were flown out of Burma to Kunming in our planes. This caused Sultan to change Stilwell's plan to encircle the Japanese 3d Army. The reduced mission was to open and secure the road from Bhamo to Namkham toward the Burma Road.

Central Burma - March 6, 1944. The Japanese 15th Army sent one division toward Kohima and two divisions toward Imphal thereby isolating the British IV Corps of 50,000 men. On April 5-20, Allied transport planes began an airlift to supply the beleaguered British forces in Imphal and Kohima. General Slim's XXXIII Corps began a drive toward Kohima. The Allied air supply effort, plus Allied combat planes (fighters and bombers) helped Slim's forces to relieve Kohima. Then, Slim headed toward Imphal; both British Corps took that city after a siege of 88 days. By July-September, 1944, the Japanese 15th Army was forced to retreat back to the Chindwin Valley because of heavy casualties, malaria and starvation. The enemy lost 65,000 men; less than half were battle casualties.

September-December 1944. Slim's 14th Army pressed onto the Chindwin Valley. On December 14, the 14th Army linked up with the NCAC.

Air Operations over Burma, 1943-44. During January-March 1943, Japanese air superiority went unchallenged; they bombed Calcutta and raided "Hump" air bases. By March-June 1943, Allied air strength built up in India forced the enemy to stop their raids across the mountains. The Allies then began to carry the war into Burma and soon gained air superiority. From June-October with the monsoons, air operations were greatly restricted. From November 1944 on, the enemy resumed raids against Calcutta and the "Hump" air bases; severe losses were suffered on the ground and in the air by both sides. Slowly, the Allied air forces began to assert themselves. By mid-1944, General Stratemyer's Eastern Air Command dominated the skies



over Burma; this air superiority was never to be relinquished. Logistical air support of the Allies prevailed as the enemy could not keep their supply lines open to support their troops. The Allied ground forces had less artillery support than was necessary, especially in the case of the Chindits. This deficiency was made up by the indirect support provided by Allied fighters and bombers.

China 1944-45. For the last two years of the war, the Japanese did not attack the Chinese Communists. As a result, the Communists consolidated their control of Northwest China. Then, the enemy diverted large forces to South China. During January-May 1944, Chiang approved the use of the Y-Force (two small armies) for an offensive against the Japanese 56th Division in Yunnan who held the cities of Tengchung and Lunling. From May 7-November 30, 1944, the enemy's 11th Army and the 23d Army captured Hengyang; this included seven of the twelve 14th AF airfields. Then the enemy armies turned westward to threaten Kunming and Chungking. During May 11-September 30, the Y-Force advanced across the Salween, and after one month surrounded Lun-ling; then the northern column captured Tengchung. This was done with 14th Air Force support. The enemy then counter-attacked driving the Chinese southern column back almost to the Salween. At this time, President Roosevelt reluctantly ordered Stilwell back to the U.S. to appease Chiang. He was replaced by General Wedemeyer's commander of the new China Theater on October 18. In December 1944, Wedemeyer persuaded Chiang to transfer two Chinese divisions from Burma. Chiang wanted to return all five divisions. These two divisions were airlifted to the north and they engaged the enemy east of Kwelyang. With the aid of the 14th Air Force, they stabilized the situation in that part of China.

Strategic Air Offensive from India and China - April-May 1944. New B-29 aircraft began to arrive at bases near Calcutta to form the XX Bomber Command. Their first combat mission was on June 5th against railway targets at Bangkok. In the meantime, five airfields were being built near Chengtu in North China. From that location, they made their first

air strike with 68 planes to hit a steel plant at Kyushu Island in Japan. From June-December 1944, still based near Calcutta, they carried their own fuel and bombs from India to Chengtu for periodic raids on Kyushu, South Manchuria and Formosa. In addition from their Calcutta bases they attacked Japanese in Southeast Asia. Later commanded by MGeneral Curtis E. LeMay, they became increasingly efficient; then on October 1944, they moved to bases in the Marianas.

Burma - 1945. As the year opened, four major Allied land forces were converging on the enemy in Burma. The British XV Corps was pushing through Arakan toward Akyab. Slim's 14th

Army was advancing through jungle hills between the Chindwin and Irrawaddy rivers. In the north, forces of General Sultan's NCAC were approaching the Burma Road from the west while the Y-Force was moving down that road from Yunnan toward the Burma-China border. The three Japanese armies in Burma were merely conducting delaying actions. They were leading the Allied forces from Central Burma for a climactic battle.

The British took Akyab on January 4th; NCAC and the Y-Force opened up the Burma Road on January 27th. From January 28-February 4th, the first land convoy went over the Burma Road. The road was then renamed "Stilwell Road." Bitter fighting contin-



The B-24 in this photo was autographed by all who worked on it at the factory. A somewhat younger PNC Al Frankel points to the misspelled "Tokio" at a 7th Bomb Group base in India.

ued from January thru March as the Allies fought their way toward Lashio against dogged enemy resistance. A fierce battle took place when the MARS Brigade tried to block the enemy 56th Division on their retreat to Lashio, January 18-February 3. Equally fierce was the battle between the British 36th Division at Myitson, January 31-February 21

By Spring 1945, Detachment 101 (SOS). Under Colonel Peers operated behind enemy lines in North and Central Burma. He led 10,000 native Burmese Kachins in screening the advance of British and Chinese forces on the way to Mandalay and Lashio. They were the only effective fighting force available for General Sultan from April-July 1945, after the American and Chinese forces were moved into China. They drove about 10,000 enemy troops from the region.

The battle for Burma entered its final stages on April 9, 1945 when the British 14th Army drove south down the Irrawaddy and Sittang rivers. This caused the enemy to evacuate Rangoon by the end of April.

On May 2d, the British 15th Corps made an amphibious landing at the mouth of the Rangoon River, meeting only small resistance, then it proceeded to Rangoon. On May 6th, it linked up with the 14th Army. By then, the Japanese forces in Burma were split into three groups. During the remaining months of the war, the enemy attacked to open an escape route to the east. With the monsoons, the enemy failed to break through British lines; it also prevented the British from advancing

east of the Sittang. By June 18th, the enemy pockets had shrunk, and by August the Japanese 28th Army had ceased to exist. During the 15 months of the enemy's Imphal campaign, and the allied counteroffensive, 97,000 enemy dead had been counted. The formal surrender of all Japanese forces in SE Asia, including those in Burma, took place at Singapore on September 12, 1945.

China, 1945. General Wedemeyer convinced Chiang to create a force of 36 divisions (called the ALPHA Force), under a single Chinese commander along with a combined Chinese-American staff. Enemy supply problems, aided by 14th AF raids, bought time for the ALPHA Force to train and be equipped. To this end, General Wedemeyer formed the Chinese Combat Command, headed by MGeneral Robert McClure. All of these 36 divisions had an American advisor (3100 of them). Also, a Chinese Training Center was organized under BGeneral John Middleton to train individual soldiers. We also organized a command and general staff school, and a Chinese Services of Supply (SOS).

In late March 1945, the enemy began an offensive to capture our air bases at Laohokow and Ankang. On April 8th, Laohokow fell. Wedemeyer thought the enemy would next strike at the Chihchiang airfield, the 14th AF largest forward air base which would then pose a threat to Kunming. With the aid of a vastly improved supply system, and the 14th AF, the Chinese 74th Army put up a strong defense under the direction of Wedemeyer. This forced the enemy to retreat.

The Chihchiang campaign demonstrated that a well-equipped, trained and led Chinese Army could match the enemy in battle. Coincident with the invasion of Iwo Jima and Okinawa, the enemy retreated to Central and North China. They also retreated from South China.

General Wedemeyer next turned to the BETA plan to capture the ports of Canton and Hong Kong. This would enable supplies to come directly from the Philippines; also to reoccupy our lost air bases in the Kweilin-Luichow area. This operation, called CARBONADO, was scheduled to start on September 1, 1945. The 10th AF was moved from India to join the 14th AF in China to form the AAF China Theater under General Wedemeyer.

On August 6th, we dropped the A Bomb on Hiroshima, then a few days later another on Nagasaki. On August 9th, the USSR entered the war against Japan. With enemy defenses crumbling as far north as Manchuria, Wedemeyer planned an operation to capture Ft. Bayard on the coast. On August 14th, Japan surrendered.

In the final analysis, the China Theater and the India-Burma Theater remained at the end of the war, as it had since the attack on Pearl Harbor, a sideshow, one whose fate was ultimately decided by battles fought in other theaters.

The China Theater posed unique problems. Civil strife predated World War II. In time, this strife affected our ability to create an effective Chinese army. Our role was to keep China in the war and to tie down hundreds of thousands of Japanese troops which otherwise would have been used in the Pacific Theater. Our major failure was logistical. With the closing of the Burma Road in the early part of the war, it was impossible to equip and train a 30 division Chinese army. By the time the Burma Road was reopened other theaters of war had priority.

The political nature of the Chinese Nationalist Army worked against our goals. Chinese military commanders were selected, based on their loyalty to Chiang Kai-shek, rather than their military ability. Chiang also had to keep his Communist rivals at bay, using his best troops for that purpose.

Both Stilwell and Wedemeyer had competing priorities between the air and ground wars. Stilwell



Three CBI Veterans from Las Cruces, NM converse with one another at a recent meeting. L-R: Ray Luchini, Charlie Saul and Jack Richardson.

was blocked by Chennault's success in selling his air campaign. For political purposes, this won the approval of both Chiang and President Roosevelt.

Early in the war, our Joint Chiefs of Staff assumed that the burden of land fighting would fall on Chinese forces. The bulk of the Japanese army was deployed in China and Chinese leaders had an immense manpower pool to draw on, but supplying and training the Chinese Army proved to be an impossible task. Moreover, fighting in China did not lead to any strategic objective. Instead, the growing strength of MacArthur's and Nimitz's forces gave the Joint Chiefs of Staff the means to strike at the enemy in the Pacific.

We emerged from the war with global military commitments that included the occupation of Germany and Japan. Families pressed the government "to bring the boys home." Our monopoly of the atomic bomb seemed to furnish all the power our security interests needed. Within five months after V-J Day, Eight and a half million service personnel had been mustered out of the service. By 1947, our Army numbers a mere 700,000; sixth in size among armies of the world.

A similar situation occurred in China. We tried to mend differences between the Nationalists and the Communists to no avail and the Communists prevailed.

President Roosevelt hoped to bolster Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist government to serve as a counterpoint against a potentially resurgent Japan.

He saw a postwar China as a major power and partner protecting our interests in Asia. Although we provided massive amounts of aid to Chiang Kai-shek, that assistance failed to create an effective pro-western government or military force. Within four years of the war's end, Mao Tse-tung and his communist forces overran China forcing Chiang and his Nationalist supporters to flee to Formosa. This provided the last act in a drama that began 40 years earlier.

So, what good did we do in CBI considering we had to operate in one of the most inhospitable geographical areas in the world? We did not win the war there but here are some of the great things we accomplished:

Building of the Stilwell Road, a

1,079 miles long road from Ledo to Myitkyina to link up with the Burma Road.

We built pipelines running from Calcutta to Kunming to supply fuel for our forces and allies.

The communications problem was the most difficult of all theaters of war; noteworthy was the building of a 2,000-mile pole line from Calcutta to Kunming.

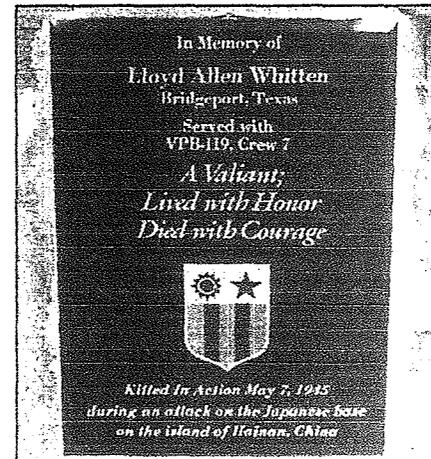
The transportation system heading from Calcutta into Assam was described by a logistician in the War Department as the most fascinating and complex problem in the world which required our specialized troops to build railroads and operate barge lines.

The B-29s were first used in the CBI. This is where they received their real training before deployment to the Mariana's where they were a decisive factor in winning the war. The fact that they succeeded is a legacy to the troublesome gestation through 1944 in the CBI.

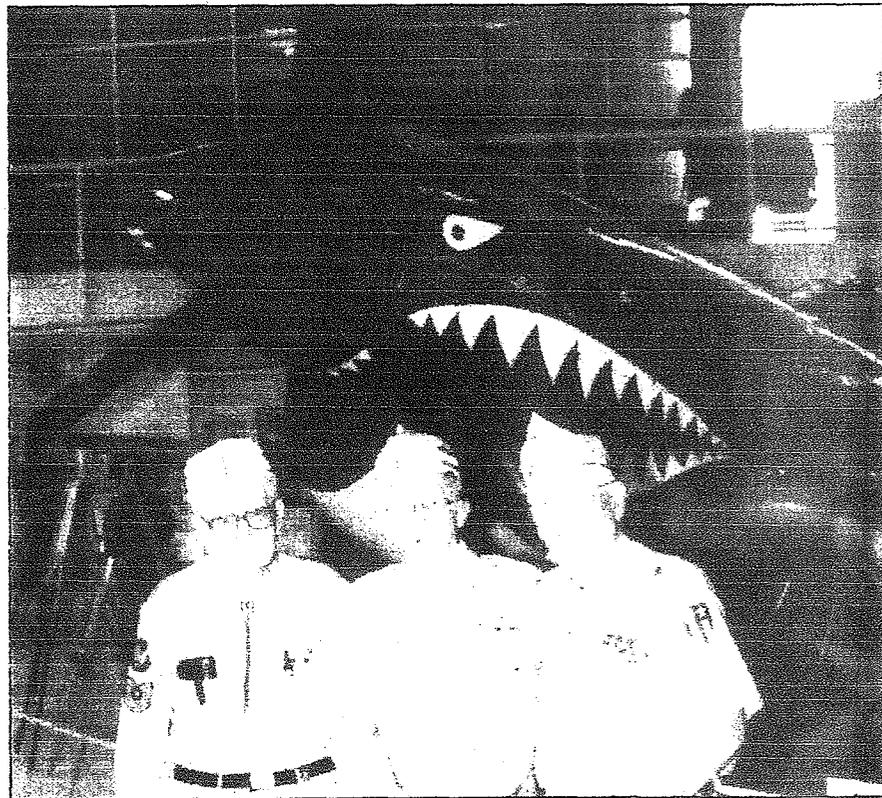
Many techniques for future military operations were perfected in the CBI. Our theater played a significant role in the evolution of air transport and the deployment of global airlift capability. Also, the use of air supply to assist in

ground operations, when cut off from normal ground transport support; this was used effectively in our theater. We were the first to maintain large formations of ground troops by air supply.

(Excerpted from various histories by Joe Shupe.)



This plaque, with the CBI patch is dedicated to Lloyd Allen Whitten who was killed in action during an attack on the Japanese on the island of Hainan. He served with VPB-119, Crew 7, a unit unknown to your editor. The plaque is in the memorial garden of the Adm. Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, Texas.



Three CBI Veterans from Las Cruces, NM pose in front of a restored P-40 at the War Eagles Museum in Santa Teresa, NM. Their names, l-r are Sigmund Kolody, Don Taylor and Lloyd Hackenberg. Jack Diwen photo

14

Woman's Army Corps in CBI

Subordinate commands in the Army Air Forces were allowed to send Woman's Army Corps personnel to overseas stations. The Air Transport Command was granted this authority in November 1943. The Army Airways Communications System and AAF Weather Wing soon gained similar authority.

Not only in decentralization but also in guidance of its commands, the AAF was leading the way in this phase of the WAC program, in the opinion of the WAC historian, "no other Army command so thoroughly explained to the field the problems and the best means for selecting women for overseas duty."

The AAF required that WACs selected for such duty be fully qualified, be recommended by the appropriate WAC squadron commander, and, insofar as possible,

be desirous of overseas duty.

WAC Personnel with Air Forces Overseas January 1945

European Theater	2,835
Mediterranean Theater	457
Pacific Ocean Area	2
Far East Air Forces	694
CBI Theater	287
Air Transport Command	2,755
Other (AACs, etc.)	285

Well before this system went into effect, WACs had been shipped to the 8th AF in England. The satisfactory performance of this group led to many requests from other theaters. For Air Forces in the CBI, for example, came a request for several hundred WACs, while the Far East Air Force asked for more than 2,000. By no means all the requests could be filled, but monthly shipments were begun in April 1944 and continued until January 1945. By that time, WACs

were serving in every major theater of operations.

With a peak strength of about 7,000, the AAF WAC overseas program involved a relatively small group of women. But, this number was sufficient to demonstrate - even to the most skeptical, apprehensive and half-mused airmen - that the Air WACs could contribute to the effective operations of higher headquarters in many different parts of the world. Before WAC units arrived in the theaters, officers charged with their reception often showed concern over the extra trouble which would be required to house and care for female personnel. Visions of disciplinary health, and morale problems caused some commanders to hesitate in requesting WACs. The experience of the WACs overseas soon showed that most of the fears were groundless.

Housing accommodations proved to be bothersome only in the more isolated areas, such as New Guinea, where they were a problem for all troops. In more than one theater headquarters troops enjoyed accommodations frequently superior to those occupied by troops at home, whether men or women.

In July 1945, one year after their arrival in India, Air WACs were reported to have a beauty parlor on the base and Indian laborers to keep their barracks in order. After the headquarters moved up into China in the summer of 1945, about 70 WACs were transferred to the new station, where they were housed in a modern three-story apartment building, with enough privacy to satisfy the shyest, most introspective WAC; instead of 70 women to one large room, only two or three were assigned to a room, while the mess hall had a small table, each seating four women, and native labor was available to do the general housekeeping and run the mess.

With regard to health, the WACs in all theaters, like the Army Nurses proved to be no special problems despite frequent moves necessitated by combat, despite a variety of weather conditions. During the war, the attrition rate for WACs serving in Europe, India and China was about the same as that for noncombat men.

In the matter of discipline and courtesy, the overseas WACs maintained a high standard. With

(Continued on page 51)



Reception in Chungking

More CNAC Tales

(From a forthcoming book, "Saga of CNAC #53," by Fletcher Hanks)

Any memory of CNAC is not complete without thinking of Robby Robertson, one of the best pilots who flew for the airline. He came early and stayed to the end. I asked him why he left the passenger planes that were better maintained, several meals, the crews wore uniforms and had the best of the co-pilots and operators?

Robby replied, "Bondie (CNAC President) was a passenger on my plane on my last trip and as usual he rode as co-pilot so he could talk to me and enjoy the oxygen. He was a big PR man, wanted to know what the pilots thought about the company. Just before he entered the cockpit, I had bit off an unusually large chunk of Bull-

Durham chewing tobacco.

Sometimes chewing tobacco doesn't break off where you expect. He wanted to talk and I wanted to chew. Everybody, but Bondie, knows you can't talk and chew at the same time. Finally, I gave up trying to chew and decided to spit the whole wad in a paper bag that was too small for the job. Just as I was ready to spit in the bag, I sneezed. Bondie was leaning very close to me because I was mumbling with a mouth full and he caught most of it across his face as the whole lot was blown into the little bag and out into Bondie's

face. I looked in the bag and there was practically nothing. I looked at Bondie. He had it all on his face. While he was still mopping up and before he had a chance to talk, I told him that was my last trip on the passenger route. I was going back to the freight line where I could get more flying time."

"Bondie complained, 'That tobacco is strong stuff. It burns my eyes badly.' He retired to the cabin for the rest of the trip with some of the strings of tobacco stuck in his snow-white hair."

I said, "Before that trip, you had a trip whereby your co-pilot was

WACs in CBI - from page 50

an uncanny ability to scrounge or to create cleaning and pressing facilities, they frequently gained the reputation of being "the most smartly and neatly dressed troops" at their stations. Violations of regulations and offenses of all types were significant by their negligible numbers. According to statistics compiled by the Air Provost Marshal, men in the European Theater committed offenses from ten to a 150 times as often as women. "Serious misconduct was lacking and the advance plans for a group of female military police were never carried out."

In all theaters, the WACs standards of conduct and devotion to duty led to a competitive situation resulting in improved discipline and courtesy among the male personnel. The general rise in morale, which stemmed from the combined use of men and women, led many commanding officers to requisition additional WACs.

In the words of one officer in the European Division of the ATC, "The WACs were like a tonic. They gave the men competition on the job and a new interest in social life on the base. The WAC Department was the finest morale booster that the base ever had." To both the GI who was homesick for the sight of an American girl and to the general who had not seen an efficient secretary in three years, most WACs were a welcome addition to the overseas air forces.

Extracted from the History of the AAF in World War II by Joe Shupe.



Arriving in Chungking

Madame Chiang Kai-shek, wife of the Generalissimo, the most respected and powerful woman in the world."

Robby replied, "Yes, she always rode as co-pilot so she could smoke. She didn't want people to know she smoked because she was heading a youth movement that prohibited smoking. I had indigestion from eating Chinese chow on the plane. I had gas in my intestines like I never had before or since. The flying was difficult so I couldn't leave the cockpit. I held it as long as I could but finally I had to let it go. I slid the side window open but that was not enough. The Madame unfastened her seat belt and in her haste to get to the cabin, she fell on her back with her skirt over her head. I think she expected me to stop flying the airplane and help her up. I just looked down at her with an indifferent expression and thought how all the women look alike when you stand them on their heads. She didn't come back to the cockpit on that trip."

I said, "I understand you set the record going from Dinjan to Kunming on the passenger run. I thought those flights were more laid back and cautious. I'd never expect anyone to set the record in a passenger airplane."

Robby said, "Fate played his hand that night. I landed at Dinjan to refuel. On inspecting the outside of the plane, I found a huge bubble on one of the tires about the size of a football. I called Arnold Weir and he changed the tire. I was annoyed

because now I was going to get into Kunming during daylight, when the Japs were supposed to make a raid. I thought that maybe they would be gunning for this plane with the first lady aboard. I took off from Dinjan at four a.m. the ceiling was 200 feet and raining. Icing started at 13,000 feet, the turbulence was terrific and there was no reception on the radios. I went upstairs to 22,500 feet where I was above the overcast and in smooth air.

"The passengers were passed out from lack of oxygen and the cabin was below freezing. The static was so bad that I couldn't get a fix. It was light when, through broken clouds, I saw a lake. Since my ETA for Lake Tali had run out, I assumed it was Lake Tali. Another glimpse through the clouds convinced me it was Lake Kunming. I was only one hour and 22 minutes out of Dinjan. I had flown the 553 miles at the rate of 384 miles per hour. I had had a 200-mile-per-hour tail wind. This time is recorded in the company records.

"I called the tower for landing instructions. They said the field was closed, ceiling 200 feet and raining. I came back 'I'm coming in anyway.' I was the only plane in the area so I let down fast. When I landed, the tower chewed me out for landing when it was below minimums, which is normal but they couldn't do anything about it because I was not in the Armed Forces. I had lost altitude rapidly and some of the passengers were



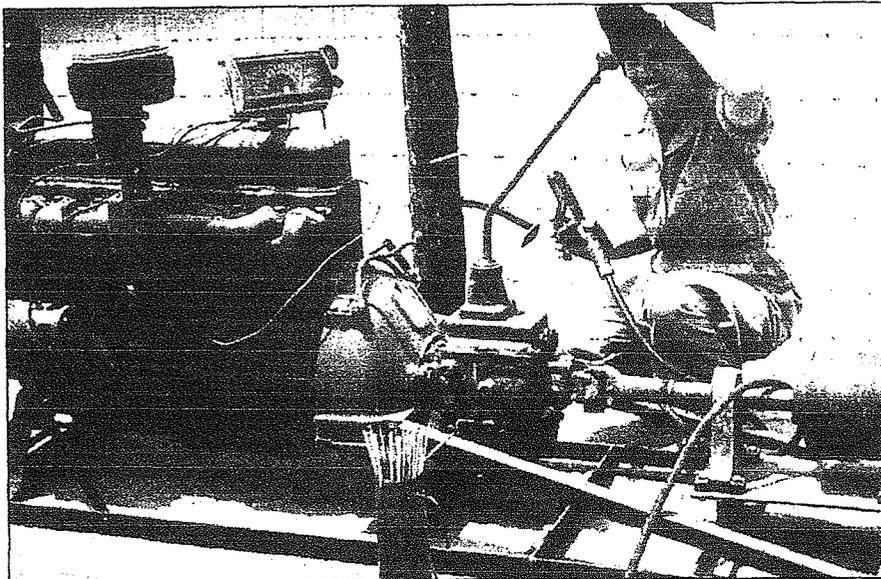
Over the Hump to China

in great pain from earaches when they started gaining consciousness. The operations manager complained to me about the danger of flying the passengers so high for so long without oxygen. He said that some thought they had suffered brain damage. I was in a hurry to take-off before the Japs found me. I was lucky because if Bondie had been on that trip, he would probably have fired me when we got on the ground."

Robby concluded, "This is where fate entered in the flying business. If I had taken off at the normal time, I would have passed Kunming Lake and let down on Kweilin which was held by the Japanese. If I had been flying west instead of east, with a 200-mile-an-hour head wind, I would have flown backwards in a lane that only cruises at a 180-mile-an-hour, true air speed."

* * * * *

Robby had several brushes with Jap fighters. One night it was clear at 15,000 feet near Yunnanyi. When he was jumped by a Jap fighter, he immediately switched off all of his lights, went into a steep free-fall dive without power so the exhaust couldn't be seen. He headed for Lake Tali. Robby knew he could let down to within a few feet over the lake and cruise at very slow speed so no exhaust would be reflected off the 25-mile lake. Even if he saw Robby's plane he probably wouldn't get low or slow enough to shoot him down. Robby flew a course over the lake until he was sure the bandit had left the area.



Air WAC: Welder for ATC in India.

Corps of Engineers in the CBI

Part I

The Early Days - 1941-42

Extracted by Joe Shupe from

History of the Corps of Engineers - War Against Japan

The attempts to develop a major theater of operations in CBI would require prodigies of engineering. Before China could be helped, a line of communications would have to be created, and the only feasible route would be through India; and with the Japanese holding Burma by the end of May 1942, supply by air was the only alternative.

Thus, for the first, engineers in the CBI, construction of airfields, not only to defend India, but also to support an airlift to China was of paramount importance. Late in 1942, when the Allies completed plans to recapture Burma, the engineers were given the job of building ground communications for such an effort, and to make possible the sending of large quantities of supplies to China. Our engineers were to help by improving the Burma Road. They were also to take charge of constructing the Ledo Road from NE India to a junction with the Burma Road.

With the development of the B-29 bomber, in August 1943, this opened up the possibility of long-range air assaults against the Japanese homeland from bases in China. The engineers of CBI were consequently the first to build overseas bases for the big bombers. Also, they were called upon to link Eastern India and SW China with the most extensive military pipeline ever constructed; also to supply our air units in China. Many of the engineer feats in CBI actually, in the end, contributed little to defeating Japan. But, the fact remains that engineer projects in our theater, because of their sheer magnitude were among the most impressive in WW II. In no other theater were engineer officers to fill so many of the key positions in the chain of command.

Pre-War Efforts to Help China

We began to support China well before Pearl Harbor. With the signing of the Lend Lease Act in April 1941, \$125,000,000 was allocated to support China. Part of this was to buy materiel and rolling stock for a railroad the Chinese and British were building from Kunming to Lashio where it would connect with the Burmese railroad system, and partly for the AVG. In July 1941, an American mission in China was established for the pro-



General Wheeler

curement, shipment, care, and use of American equipment.

To obtain the first of approximately 30,000 tons of rails needed, the Corps of Engineers (CE), procured and started dismantling a 125-mile stretch of the abandoned narrow-gauge railway of the Denver, Rio Grande, and Western in New Mexico and Colorado. In September, the Shell Oil Co., which had just perfected a light "invasion-weight" petroleum pipeline, interested the American Mission in installing such a line between Kunming and Bhamo. The Chief of Engineers in Washington reported that such a line had merit.

Help for

China After Pearl Harbor

After the attack, all these efforts to help China were in jeopardy; being all of SE Asia appeared threatened. Singapore was captured by the Japanese, as was the railroad from Rangoon to Lashio (an important railhead and southern terminus of the Burma Road) - China's last line of surface communication with the outside world.

At the Arcadia Conference, Roo-

sevelt and Churchill agreed that China should constitute a separate theater under Chiang Kai-shek; they proposed that Chiang establish a planning staff to include American, British and Chinese officers. Chiang agreed and asked for an American general to act as chief of the Allied staff. So, we sent Gen. Stilwell.

As his engineer, Stilwell chose Col. Wm. H. Holcombe (who previously had been picked as engineer advisor to Stilwell in planning for the invasion of N. Africa).

When Stilwell and his group reached New Delhi, and conferred with Gen. Wavell in GHQ India, Stilwell brought with him an impressive list of American plans. To carry out these plans, he intended to increase lend-lease shipments moving by rail from Rangoon to Lashio. Should Rangoon fall, he hoped to fly supplies from the RAF fighter field at Dinjan in Assam to Myitkyina, and then truck them to the Burma Road through to China. This roundabout way, he felt, would somehow be shortened.

Work was already in progress to extend the road eastward from the coal mining town of Lashio, across N. Burma, to link up with the Burma Road. The Chinese and British agreed to help in its construction. Stilwell then instructed Holcombe to help the British and Chinese who were preparing plans for this road.

On March 3rd, Stilwell set up his task headquarters in Chungking, and three days later Chiang told him that he would head the Chinese Expeditionary Forces which were then moving into Burma to bolster the British forces. On March 6th, the Japanese occupied Rangoon; then the British retreated northward toward Mandalay, and Stilwell hastened to Lashio to command the six Chinese divisions there. Stilwell's plan was to retake Rangoon and reopen the supply line to Kunming. Failing this, he hoped to dig in around Mandalay to protect the future line of communications from India across N. Burma to China.

Meanwhile, air reinforcements began to arrive. On February 22nd, Col. Clayton Bissell was appointed as Stilwell's air advisor to coordinate the receipt of several consignments of aircraft for the 10th AF and for Chennault's AVG. In another action, General Brett of the ABDA Command ordered Gen.

Brereton to evacuate Java and re-establish the remnants of his task force at Karachi which was activated as his base and training center in early March. Brereton was named commander of the 10th AF and he was directed by Gen. Marshall to provide combat air support to Chiang in China, to the British in Burma, and to make plans to supply China by air. He was to be subordinate to Stilwell.

Engineer Work Begins

Holcombe, while in New Delhi, was appointed temporary engineer of the 10th AF. He was directed to advise Brereton of the most feasible way to provide facilities for the airmen. So, he and Brereton had to deal with several problems—the organization of a port of debarkation, and of a training base in Karachi. The 2,000 mile supply line to China would require building numerous airfields, particularly in Assam and SW China. To accommodate our aircraft to help defend India, either bomber fields would have to be built in the central or eastern parts of India, or British fields taken over and improved.

This would require a major construction effort. Holcombe helped draw up plans for the Air Force Headquarters at Willingdon Airdrome near New Delhi, expansion of Karachi Airdrome, construction of five bomber fields near Calcutta, an air depot at Agra, and four airfields in Assam. The plans were then forwarded to British GHQ (India) who put them in final form.

Since no engineer troops were available, we had to turn to the British for construction as part of reverse lend lease. The work was usually done by Indian contractors employing their own labor gangs.

Brereton and Holcombe could not fail to be impressed by the immensity of the challenge to the engineers. In the CBI area, nearly half of the human race lived; the towering Himalayas; prevalence of disease; monsoons from May to October drenched Burma and much of India with the world's heaviest rainfall. In various ways, the monsoons would create engineering problems.

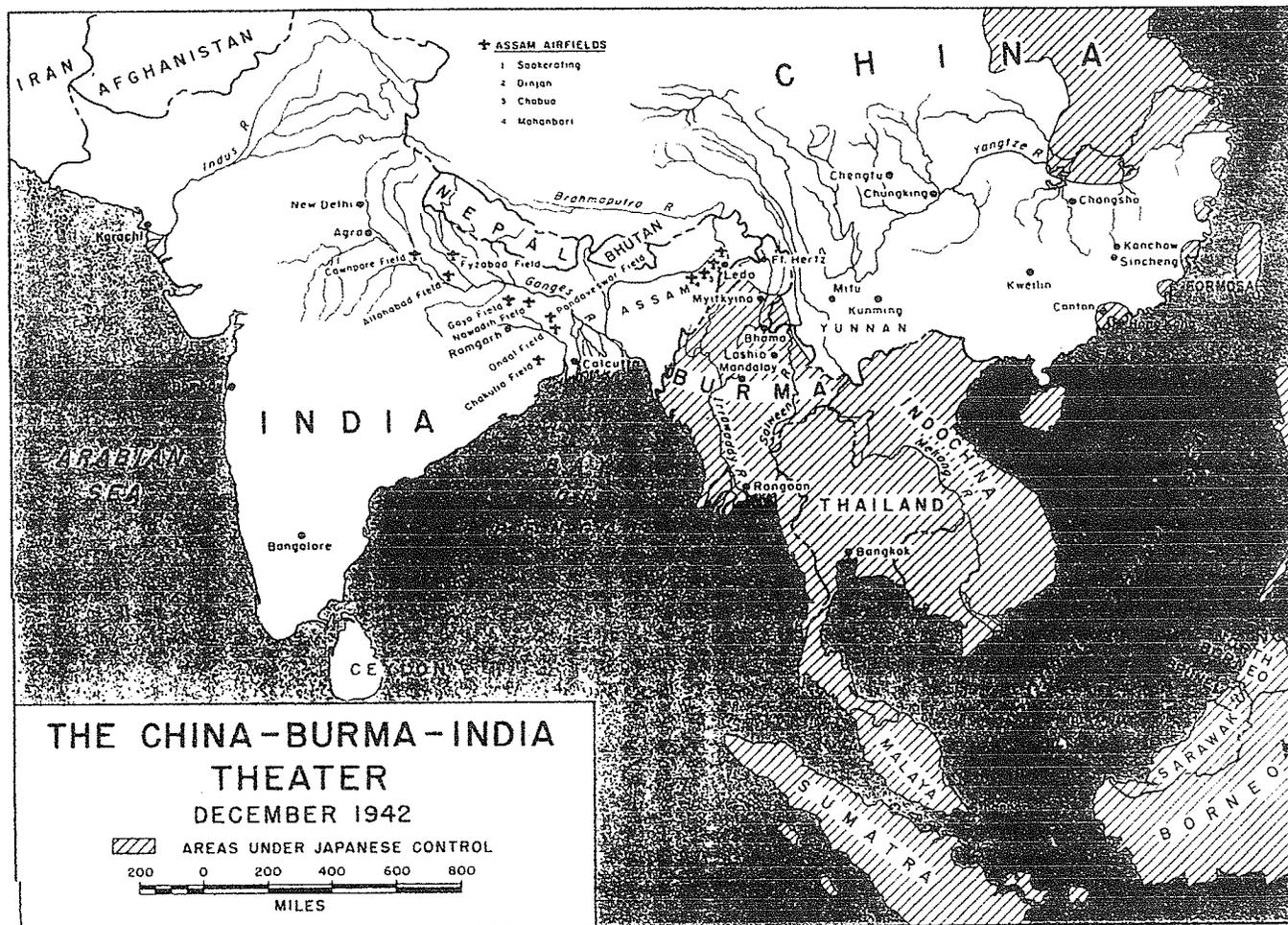
Constant repair of waterlogged roads would be necessary; work-

men would be scarce (they were needed to work on the rice and tea plantations); and land communications were far from ideal. In the 1800 miles from Karachi to Assam, rail gauges changed four times, and there were but few stretchers of high speed highways. The scanty Burmese road and rail net was not connected with the India transportation system. In China, the Japanese controlled all of the modern highways and railroads. Chiang only had the underdeveloped part of China.

Brereton encountered almost insurmountable obstacles in attempting to have airfields constructed. It seemed to him that the British, despite the threat to India, did not shake off their peacetime routine, the Government of India, fearful of provoking Indian nationalist outbursts, by stepping up demands on the country's agrarian economy, appeared to show little energy in meeting our requests.

Establishment of a Services of Supply (SOS)

The expanding scope of our projects in India pointed up the



urgent need for a logistics organization. In late February 1942, the War Department directed the head of the US Mission to Iran, Maj. Gen. Raymond Wheeler, an engineer officer, to report to Gen. Stilwell to create an "SOS USAF in CBI." Wheeler, whom Stilwell had regarded highly since West Point days, was to have considerable latitude in determining his mode of operation. He was the first of many engineer officers to achieve a prominent command position under Stilwell.

During March and April, Wheeler, with a small staff borrowed from his Iranian mission, strove to establish order in the supply and construction situation in India. He worked out with British officials a program for expanding storage and dock facilities at Karachi, and discussed with Stilwell's staff regarding the organization of the SOS. On April 17th, Stilwell directed Wheeler to operate lines of communication (LOC's) from ports in India to the airfields in Assam, and to provide technical advice to the Chinese Army in the operation of their communications zone.

Brereton, disgusted with the slow pace of construction under reverse lend lease, and having no engineer troops under his command, suggested to Stilwell that all of our construction be put under Wheeler. On April 14th, Stilwell did so. Stilwell also asked the War Department to send a general service regiment, an aviation battalion, and a dump truck company for Wheeler to do the job.

Wheeler then set up an engineer section, and put Col. Fabius H. Kohloss, an engineer, in charge with seven additional officers. On April 27th, Wheeler chose Maj. John F. Johnson from Iran to be his chief engineer, and on May 27th moved his headquarters from Karachi to New Delhi.

In May, Wheeler set up his field organization to include two base sections, two advance sections in India, and one advance section in China. Engineer officers were put in charge of four of the five field organizations. Col. Paul F. Yount from the Iran Mission took over Base Section 1 at Karachi (west half of India); Maj. H. Case Wilcox (also from Iran) went to Agra to set up Advance Section 1 in Central India; Maj. Henry A. Byroade to command Advance Section 2, Assam; also Maj. Charles F. Price (from Iran) to establish Advance Section 3 in Kunming. Only Base Section 2 at Calcutta, was not commanded by an engineer officer. Its chief was Col. Edwin W. Sutherland, Infantry.

Construction Progress

Work was urgently needed at Karachi, our major port, since British shipping overtaxed the port at Bombay, and Calcutta was too exposed to enemy attack. So, Maj. Johnson with Indian contractors, and the British engineers started construction of a 5,000 foot concrete runway, and on two outlying fighter strips.

Various improvements were also underway at the new Malir and Landhi airports, 12 miles east of Karachi. Also, in late spring, pro-

jects were underway to extend the wharves and warehouses at the port, remodeling of hotels to provide billets in the city, and construction of a cantonment for 20,000 men at Malir.

Much engineer work was needed in Assam to support the airlift to China. Maj. Byroade found the British engaged in improving the Hump fields. This area was a scene of confusion at the time (May '42) the Japanese were approaching India, retreating and disorganizing Chinese troops were straggling over the frontier, and the natives were panic-stricken. The British Army engineers and the Central Public Works Dept., of India, supposedly cooperating to prepare necessary airfields, were engaged in a bitter struggle for the control of construction. Fortunately, so after Byroade's arrival, the British GHQ (India) intervened and placed the Royal Engineers in charge. Byroade at the time had no staff, his job was that of liaison officer.

At Calcutta, and in Central India, work made little headway. The exposure at Calcutta to enemy attack obliged Wheeler to mark time there. Matters were more critical in Central India. Brereton was anxious to complete a large depot at Agra, and bomber bases across North India at Cawnpore, Fyzabad, Allahabad, and Gaya. Contractors were far behind schedule. The onset of the monsoons made it difficult to keep laborers on the job, and critical materials did not arrive on time. Our airmen became increasingly irritated over the slowness of the British effort, and had to live in tents, while barracks were being built.

The campaign in Burma, had, in the meantime, come to its disastrous end. By the time Stilwell walked out of Burma in May, the Japanese had overrun all Burma, except for the northern part, and had occupied part of Ching Yunnan Province. Contacts between CBI units in India and back in China were possible only by air. The critical lack of air facilities in India and China would require major construction effort.

The Broadening of Stilwell's Mission

Since the plan to keep China in the war would require greater efforts than contemplated before, Stilwell had to broaden the scope of his mission. The latter part of June he began referring to



Marshalling Yard, Parbatipur, India.

Rocky Agrusti Photo

command as a "theater" instead of a task force. On July 6th, he set up a theater type organization with a forward headquarters in Chungking, and a rear headquarters in New Delhi. Wheeler and Brereton were his two major subordinate commanders.

By mid-July, Stilwell's command was generally known as the CBI Theater. For that part lying in India and Burma, Stilwell was still under Wavell; in China he was under Chiang. Stilwell also had other responsibilities. When he took over the American Mission to China, he was under the command of Gen. Marshall. He also served as President Roosevelt's military representative in Chungking. This imposed on his numerous and sometimes conflicting obligations; the resulting confusion made the work of the engineers more difficult.

First Engineer Troops Arrive

Fortunately for Stilwell's constructive program, engineer troops were on the way. At the end of July, the 45th General Service Regiment under Col. John C. Arrowsmith, and the 823rd Aviator Bn., under Major Ferdinand J. Tate, disembarked at Karachi. Soon thereafter, the 195th Engineer Dump Truck Co., under Capt. Clyde L. Koontz, arrived.

Their landing coincided with the heightening of domestic tensions in India, where rabid nationalists were urging the natives to violence against British rule. As a result, port authorities had to issue ammunition to the nearly 2,000 engineers; they were loaded on trucks and sped to Malir Cantonment through Karachi, amidst unfriendly signs: "Americans Quit India."

The 823rd was assigned to the 10th AF; its first job was the construction of a bomb shelter at the Karachi Air Base. The dump truck company was placed on transportation detail at the port. Arrowsmith's unit was split. The 1st Bn. was held in reserve at Karachi. The 2nd was kept at Base Section #1 to improve roads, erect buildings, and provide camouflaging. Since the units arrived without their equipment, machinery from lend-lease stocks earmarked for China was used, but was mostly ill-suited for the jobs ahead.

On 1 August, Col. Arrowsmith became Wheeler's chief engineer. He borrowed officers from his regiment to man the SOS Engineer

Section. Arrowsmith then went out to inspect the projects for which the engineers were responsible. At New Delhi, the British were improving housing and hangars for the 10th AF at Willingdon Air-drome. Then he went to North India to see that the Royal Engineers were continuing their expansion of RAF fields into bomber bases; in South India they were developing the field at Bangalore, and in Central India, the fields at Guskhara, Nawadih, and Pandaveswar near Calcutta.

Brereton had chosen Ondaal (north of Calcutta), as his service center, and Agra (near Delhi) as his main air depot. He found that progress was way behind schedule. The British blamed heavy rains, religious holidays, and the slow procurement of cement (which the British insisted on using for runways to stand up to the monsoons), for the slow progress. Arrowsmith was convinced that engineer troops would have to be concentrated in the most vital areas - Karachi, Agra, and Assam.

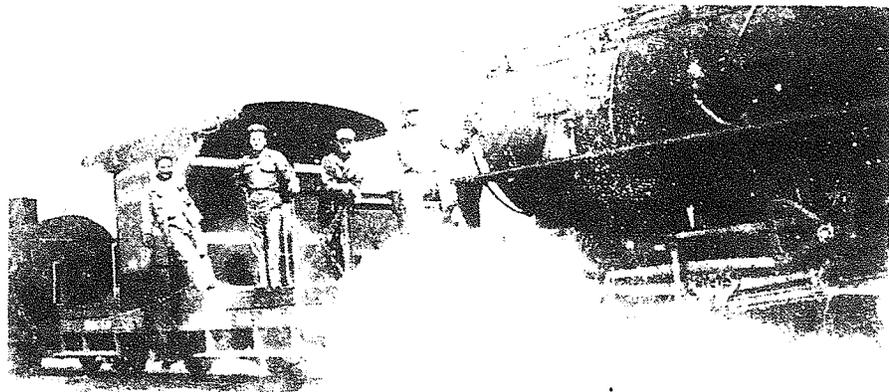
Capt. Robert A. Hirshfield, who replaced Maj. Johnson at Karachi in July, was soon able to report progress. Civilian contractors were used to make workshops and parking areas at the port, 38 mess halls and 175 ammunition sheds at Malir, and parking aprons and an operations building at the civil airdrome. Early in August, the 2nd Bn. of the 45th Engineers, was assigned to Hirshfield. He then expanded constructions to include a 20-mile-road from Karachi to the

radar station on Cape Muari, which included refrigeration and power plants.

To expedite work at Agra, the 1st Bn. and half of Hqs & Sv Co. of the 45th, was sent to help out the contractors. They made much progress but the Royal Engineers had trouble getting the needed labor and materials. Because of efforts by Indian nationalists to sabotage construction, one engineer company had to be on constant guard duty, at a time when every engineer was needed for construction.

The most critical area of all was in Assam. Byroade's engineer section by late July had only two officers and two enlisted men; this was not enough to prepare layouts and inspect work at the four fields. Contractors and laborers made slow progress during the long rainy season. Byroade could do little except to resort to friendly persuasion, but the British excuse for the slow progress was due to inadequacy of materials and transportation.

On August 18th, B. Gen. Clayton Bissell, who replaced Brereton as 10th AF commander, took the 823rd off bomb shelter construction at Karachi, and ordered them to Assam. They arrived by the end of September. About half of Co. A was put to work on camouflaging the airfield at Chabua; the other half and Co. B took over the freight handling at Chabua and the three other Hump fields at nearby Mohanbari, Dinjan, and Sookerating, from which planes took off for China.



MAXWELL - ROCKY

BROWN

Left to right: Malcon Maxwell, Rocky Agrusti, John Dardani and John Bruno. (Photo too late for last issue's history of 721st R.R. Bn. but too good to leave out. - Ed.)

While the use of aviation engineers was not to the liking of Byroade and Tate, at least they did the job efficiently and reduced pilferage and breakage, and allowed natives to return to airfield construction. Meanwhile, Co. C, at nearby Dibrugarh, began assembling urgently needed trucks. The surveyors, draftsmen, and truck drivers of Headquarters Co. were also welcome reinforcements to Byroade's hard-pressed engineer section.

One recurrent note was the insistence of the Royal Engineers upon concrete runways. Byroade held out for asphalt which was available from lend-lease materials destined for China, stored nearby, but also there was an oil refinery in the province. Since May, Byroade tried to persuade the British to that end, but by summer he finally succeeded.

With the end of the monsoon in October, the Japanese made several air raids on the airfields at Assam. In addition to damaging the fields, the ensuing panic reduced the number of native workmen at the fields. Meanwhile our engineers were alarmed by the apparent apathy of the British. Col. Kohloss, after inspecting the aftermath of the raids, was especially critical of British laxity in construction and repair; he noted that at one field, Byroade's engineers were repairing the runways hours before the British "garrison engineer" appeared with his coolies.

Problems of Reverse Lend Lease

By autumn, we had many complaints with regard to construction under reverse lend lease due to the British being so slow in untangling "red tape" and approving requests for construction. We also suffered from the preoccupation of the British with their own projects. The weak link was the native contractor, as a rule poorly-educated, with little concern with specifications and deadlines, and scarcely familiar with machinery. Arrowsmith would complain to the British while his engineers would encounter dissatisfaction of Air Force commanders over the failure to finish air bases on schedule.

It had been agreed at the outset that the British would build accommodations for us on the same scale as for equivalent British units. Our airmen, all too often,

sought greater refinements than the standards allowed. Their insistence on showers and sewerage at airfields caused several disagreements with the SOS, which was carrying out construction according to theater policy. In general, Arrowsmith could point out that, while British standards must govern, our airmen were receiving more elaborate accommodations than those they would have obtained under War Department specifications for theater of operations construction.

Equipment and Supplies

Engineer troops on construction duty were hampered by the scarcity of supplies and the lack of equipment. The units that arrived in July had not received their machinery by Fall. SOS had to provide them with makeshift allowances to get their work underway. For months, they had to rely on stockpiles of lend-lease materials scheduled for China. This source provided trucks, rock crushers, air compressors, road rollers, generators, power shovels, pneumatic drills and concrete mixers. However, each diversion of lend-lease machinery required Chiang's personal approval.

The British loaned us a great deal of trucks and trailers. Lesser amounts of supplies and equipment were procured locally, or from diverted shipments, and distress cargo. But, it was not possible to build up large stores. By the fall of 1942, the engineer supply officer of Base Section #1, at Karachi, managed to assemble a small assortment of pioneer-type equipment and drafting supplies - the only stockpile of engineer materials and equipment for our forces in India.

The Engineers in China

There was little activity in the Advance Section of SOS in China. The Engineer Section set up by Major Price on July 4th consisted, during the next few months, of Lt. Francis C. Card. He gave most of his attention to improving the airfield at Kunming, and planning new fields near the city. He persuaded local officials to extend runways of the Kunming field to about 6,800 feet; begin expansion of hangar and storage facilities, and construction of a headquarters for Chennault's airmen (China Air Task Force).

By September, plans were

worked out for two new transport fields, one at Chengkung (outside Kunming), and another at Yangkai (40 miles to the north). This was to be done by the Chinese government. Housing and recreational facilities would be paid for by reverse lend-lease. By October 2, work was underway at the airfields at Chengkung and Kunming.

Training

Having won Chiang's consent to organize a Chinese corps in India, Stilwell had to train these troops, so he arranged with the British to provide a camp at Ramgarh (200 miles north of Calcutta). Here he assembled the Chinese survivors of the retreat from Burma and filled with replacements flown in from China. SOS established an Engineer Section under Capt. George J. Mason to build the necessary facilities such as access roads, firing ranges, utilities and housing. One officer and 42 enlisted men in the 195th Dump Truck Co. were at Ramgarh from August on to assist with the engineer phases of the training program. Lt. Col. Edwin B. Green was in charge of basic and unit engineer training for Chinese engineer officers on bridges, road construction, mine warfare, etc. Green's staff consisted of over a dozen engineer officers who also helped organize a Chinese task force of pioneer-type engineer units modeled after German pioneer organizations. In turn, the Chinese officers then trained their troops.

The end of October found the engineers at work in an area from Karachi to Kunming (some 2,000 miles). Numbering only 14 in late spring, to 1,986 by the first of October 1942. But, even this force was insufficient to construct seven transport fields in East India and Southwest China, and about 20 bomber fields throughout North India. Although most of this work was done by Indians, British, and Chinese, our engineer troops were applying their efforts in the most crucial links of the chain - Karachi, Agra, and Assam. Far too weak in people and equipment for the tasks at hand, the engineers had at least achieved an organization which was making the best use of available resources.

(Part II will appear in a future edition of SOUND-OFF and will cover the construction of ground communications to support a future offensive in East China.)

Corps of Engineers in the CBI

Part II

Fall 1942 to Early 1943

Extracted by Joe Shupe from
History of the Corps of Engineers - War Against Japan

While the engineers were trying to build airfields, the War Department gave them additional jobs - to construct roads and pipelines for a future offensive in Burma. After Stilwell was forced out of Burma, Allied planning for re-entry into Burma was halted because of domestic turbulence in India. This cast doubts of the usefulness of India as a base for military operations.

On August 25, 1942, Gen. Marshall warned the combined Chiefs of Staff that only by opening up North Burma, could China be kept in the war. The next month, the War Department made a plan for a combined Chinese-British re-entry into Burma. Pres. Roosevelt, on October 14th, stressed the need to open up the Burma Road. Chiang then directed Stilwell to plan the operation; so along with Wavell they set the date of March 1, 1943, as the start of the attack.

Wavell told Stilwell that the British could do no more than occupy the western fringes of Burma during the first part of 1943. The plan called for the Chinese to bear the brunt of the fighting. Stilwell's Ramgarh-trained Chinese X-Force would proceed from Assam, and a Chinese Y-Force would advance westward from Yunnan. This would then force the Japanese from a large part of North Burma.

The Ledo and Burma Roads
The clearing of North Burma



An example of the amount of human labor that was necessary to build an airfield in the CBI. Earth was moved in the same way it had been for thousands of years. Note rollers pulled by crew of coolies.



Surveying party planning for a portion of the Ledo Road across abandoned rice paddies.

would make possible the construction of a road to link India with China. Since Wavell gave the job to Stilwell, his operations officer, LCol Frank Merrill suggested that on October 28th, that Gen. Wheeler's engineers start to build a base at Ledo to replace the British. He suggested that the most likely route would run east from Ledo to the Patkai Range, then to veer south to Myitkyina and Bhamo (275 miles); then east to the Burma Road about 500 miles. The part from Ledo to Myitkyina (275 miles) was through largely uncharted jungle. Beyond Myitkyina, a one-lane, dry weather track extended to Bhamo. From there a one-lane blacktop road went to the Burma Road. The last 275 miles would be the toughest. Merrill believed that the first stretch should run east from Ledo to the Patkais; then south to Shingbwiang - about 120 miles. Shingbwiang would be the starting point for the coming offensive. On October 29th Stilwell told Wheeler to carry out Merrill's plan, and that he wanted the road open to Shingbwiang by March 1, 1943.

Then Stilwell went to Chungking to persuade Chiang to assemble a force along the Salween River; also to start construction of the demolished Burma Road to Western Yunnan. Chiang agreed to use 15 divisions (the Y-Force) along the Salween, but he reserved the right to cancel the offensive if the British Navy did not do its part in preventing the Japanese from reinforcing its forces through the Bay of Bengal. Stilwell called on Wheeler to discuss with the Chinese toward forming a services of supply (SOS) to support the Y-Force, in addition to developing the necessary roads.

Preparation for Ledo Road Work

Wheeler, on October 29th, placed Col. John Arrowsmith in command of the Ledo Base and road projects, and instructed him to prepare the necessary plans. After consultations at New Delhi, Arrowsmith's plan was to use the "refugee route" which the British used in withdrawing from Burma; roughly the same route recommended by Merrill. The road to be all-weather, one lane with turn-outs. At the time, there were but three engineer units in CBI, but only part of the equipment of the 823rd and 45th Engineers had ar-

rived, and only that of the 823rd was heavy enough for road construction. So, Arrowsmith asked Wheeler to request that the US, among other units, a general service engineer regiment, a maintenance company and a depot company. He also asked for several thousand tons of equipment including 40 D-7 bulldozers, 20 H-20 steel bridges and a six months supply of spare parts, to reach Ledo by March 1, 1943. After a reconnaissance with the British of the area concerned, he made his plan for the road. On November 7th, Stilwell was given a road construction plan. Stilwell approved it, and a message was sent to Washington for the needed troops and equipment.

Then came the hard part, implementing the plan. The 45th and 823rd Engineers were alerted early in November, but it would take a month for them to arrive at Ledo. To get started, the British in the middle of November, put several hundred natives to work on extending the road out of Ledo. Later that month, an Indian excavation company arrived to help. Arrow-

smith directed LCol James W. Sloat of the 45th Engineers, and Maj. Robert Hirshfield (Base Sec. #1, Engineer), to start the work.

The British showed little enthusiasm for the forthcoming offensive or for the construction of a road out of Ledo. Wavell's staff felt they could not spare the resources to tide the Americans over until March; they felt that they had been taxed to the limit to build or modernize 222 airfields, develop training centers and other installations for the expanding Indian Army. They were also directed to provide resources for the 8th Army in Egypt. They somewhat felt that mud and malaria would drive us out of Burma. Arrowsmith, on November 2nd, said that he intends to carry out the project even if he had only one man.

Preparations for Work in China

Meanwhile the Chinese showed little inclination to proceed with their part of the job. Unknown to Stilwell, they became enamored with Chennault's new plan for a air offensive in East China. This appealed to the Chinese because it

involved little or no effort on their part. During the last week in November, Stilwell learned that the War Department was halving his request for troops and equipment because of a shipping shortage.

Despite this bad news, Gen. Wheeler concentrated on organizing a SOS for the Y-Force. He placed Col. Fabius Kohloss in charge at Kunming to work with the Y-Force toward this end. He put his engineer, Maj. Louis Dawson to work with a Chinese highway agency to reconstruct the Burma Road in the rear of the Chinese divisions which would be moving south against the Japanese in Burma.

Work Begins on the Ledo Road

In December 1942, Gen. Marshall declared that a dependable line of communication with China was needed so that air operations could proceed to destroy Japanese shipping and sources of supply. But before this could be done, the Chinese, with the help of the British, would have to advance in order to clear the area for a road. The Combined Chiefs of Staff gave

Watery Challenge to Allied Ingenuity

Burma's rivers presented a major logistical problem for troops fighting in the jungle. Both bridges and boats were scarce, and Allied engineers had to build hundreds of teak-log barges that looked to one officer "like Noah's arks without the houses." Each barge carried 10 tons of equipment, and three of them lashed together could ferry anything up to a Sherman tank. To tow the barges, tugboats were transported to crossing sites in sections, then welded together on the riverbanks; outboard motors to power the barges were flown in from Calcutta.

When floods destroyed existing bridges, replacements were quickly erected. One unit constructed 40 bridges in 40 miles. Spans were built of everything from simple planks to 150-girders, including parts hauled by truck more than 300 miles across the mountains.

Salvage operations dredged up Japanese landing craft, even small steamers. Everything that floated was put to use. But often it remained for soldiers and pack animals to ford Burma's waterways on their own.



General Stilwell leads his men across the Tarung River on a bridge constructed from jungle materials.

them a priority surpassed only by that of the North African campaign, then in its critical stage. Marshall then gave Stilwell some hope on December 10th that the requested 6,000 engineer troops and 63,000 tons of road equipment could be delivered to Ledo by early March.

Arrowsmith, early in December, assumed command of the Ledo area. At the time, the British were barely making headway. An advance element of the 45th Regiment, arrived in late November, the rest of the unit and the 823rd Battalion, to arrive early December. Dissatisfied with the slow progress, Arrowsmith made Col. Sloat the "Road Engineer." Then the road work speeded up.

In December, Gen. Wheeler activated Base Section #3 at Ledo. Arrowsmith was now in formal command of the road work on the Ledo Road, as it was henceforth called; also he continued as Engineer, SOS. Since the frontier was mostly uncharted, several from the 823rd were sent to Arrowsmith's headquarters, to make the needed maps. Maj. James Walker set up a supply depot at Likhapani, four miles east of Ledo. Maj. Hirschfield took over as base engineer and started converting Ledo into a major supply point. The Chinese divisions and US service troops expected soon would be bivouacked in the tea estates.

The "refugee trail" appeared to be the best route since it had been

used for many years as a caravan route. An alternative was the route of a proposed railway which has been surveyed 20 years earlier. The latter route was later eliminated because it would have required large tunnels and long river crossings.

By late December, the road team had taken shape. The 823rd Engineers were in charge of reconnaissance. Several Royal Engineer surveyors helped select the right path. Most of the 823rd followed close behind; clearing a roadbed through the jungle. They had six bulldozers, all without blades, which they had to borrow from a British unit. When one bulldozer was sent back for repair they took the blades off and put it on a good bulldozer. The 45th then followed and did the final grading and graveling. A British unit worked briefly on the road. The pace picked up and the 823rd graded five miles during the first week of December.

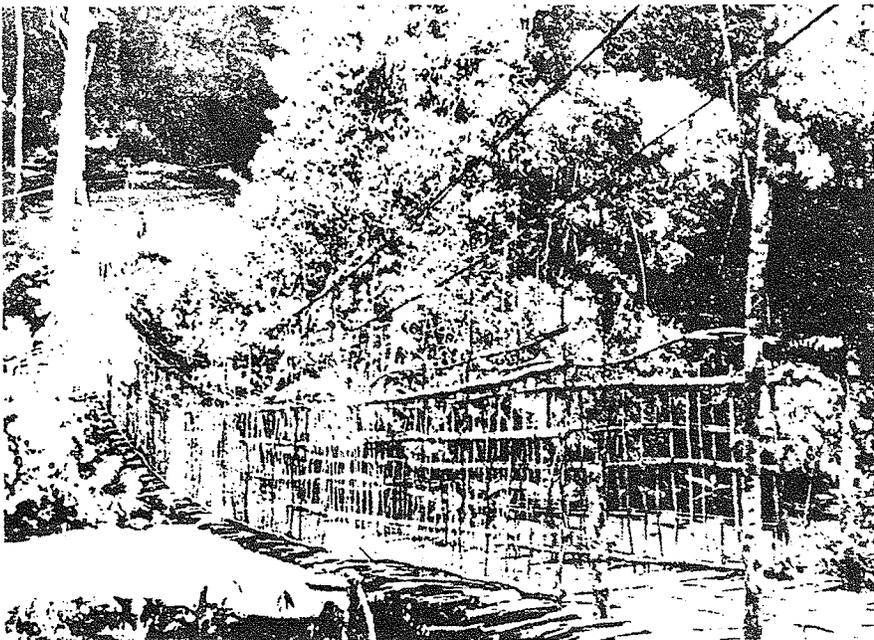
By mid-January 1943, the lead dozer was 30 miles from Ledo and nearing the mountains. Progress was faster after Arrowsmith got two more blades from Lahore. Chinese troops then moved in to protect the road force. The road was very windy; this was inevitable because of the way it was being built. First they bulldozed a narrow path through the jungle. Then they moved up more equipment to clear out trees and underbrush on both sides, and lastly they fit the road into the best part of the clearing.

Because the light dozers of the 45th could not always cope with the rugged terrain, detours had to be made around the large stumps which the machines could not pull out. They put up temporary bridges and culverts at the minor water courses. In the flat sections, the road could easily take two lanes of traffic, but on the sides of hills it was quite narrow. On January 21, 1943, graveling had reached Mile 26. Stilwell was jubilant about the progress at that point.

Progress continued during February, but at a much slower pace; they reached Pangsau Pass on the Burmese border at month's end - 38 miles from Ledo, but still some 80 miles from Shingbwiang. The slowdown was caused by the rugged terrain of the Patkais; greater effort was required to widen the road and slope the high banks. In mid-March, an early monsoon temporarily halted work; the road was so sodden that trucks could not get through. Natives had to be used to carry supplies to the 823rd. After the weather cleared, operations were back to normal, but by the end of the month, they were still short 70 miles from their goal.

Since the monsoons were approaching, Arrowsmith hoped to get his first reinforcements before it struck. Early in March, the 330th Engineer General Services Regiment, the 479th Engineer Maintenance Co., and a platoon of the 456th Depot Co. arrived in Bombay. Only the depot platoon was on the road by the end of the month, and took over operation of the engineer depot at Likhapani. Gen. Wheeler got the Chinese to send in their 10th Independent Regiment, which arrived in mid-March to clear the jungle and to do pioneering work ahead of the 823rd. During March and April, the 823rd's blades and the D-7 tractors and other heavy equipment arrived at Calcutta and began moving up to Assam; but whether they would arrive before the monsoons was doubtful.

Early in April, Stilwell visited Ledo and expressed dissatisfaction with the progress thus far, and wanted more effort to provide better housing. He believed Arrowsmith was concentrating too much on the road to the neglect of providing access roads in the base



Native bridge on the Refugee Trail.

and preparing supply trails for jeeps to Chinese outposts along the eastern slopes of the Patkais, but after considering the critical shortage of troops and equipment, he finally said he had no business to criticize.

The monsoon, unusually early, was in full swing by the first week in April, so top priority was given to sloping, widening and ditching. Late that month, advance elements of the 3305th Engineers came up to reinforce the 823rd. The 1st Battalion, of the 45th Engineers, then turned to road maintenance, while the 2nd Battalion moved back to Ledo to repair access roads. By May, the engineers were trying to restore or save more than 120 miles of roads in and out of the base. Fortunately before the rains came, permanent bridges were in place. We and the British put in steel spans over the larger rivers, while the Chinese engineers built timber bridges over the smaller streams.

The monsoons struck just as the condition of the equipment was nearing an all time low. There were almost no spare parts. Some equipment arrived from Calcutta, but the greater part would not arrive until summer. By the end of April, one-third of the 823rd's tractors and trucks were awaiting parts. A month later, about two-thirds of them were out of service. The 45th Engineers fared no better. All of this meant that they were unable to extend the road much beyond the Mile 50 mark during the remainder of the monsoon.

Engineer Work in China

In China, likewise, work on roads was the main concern during the first months of 1943. We and the Chinese generally agreed that the main Chinese drive would follow the route of the Burma Road toward Lashio. A secondary route would follow the partially completed right-of-way of the Yunnan-Burma railway. The latter route left the Burma Road near Mitu some 225 miles west of Kunming and wound south through the mountains east of the Burma Road. Col. Kohloss believed the Chinese should establish a depot along the Burma Road, and that the road itself should be put in shape. Also, they should build a highway from Mitu into Burma. He also tried to persuade the Chinese Y-Force commander to organize an SOS. In

the winter of 1942-43, Kohloss and Dawson found much apathy towards reaching those goals from the Chinese officials because of the runaway inflation and their technological backwardness at the time.

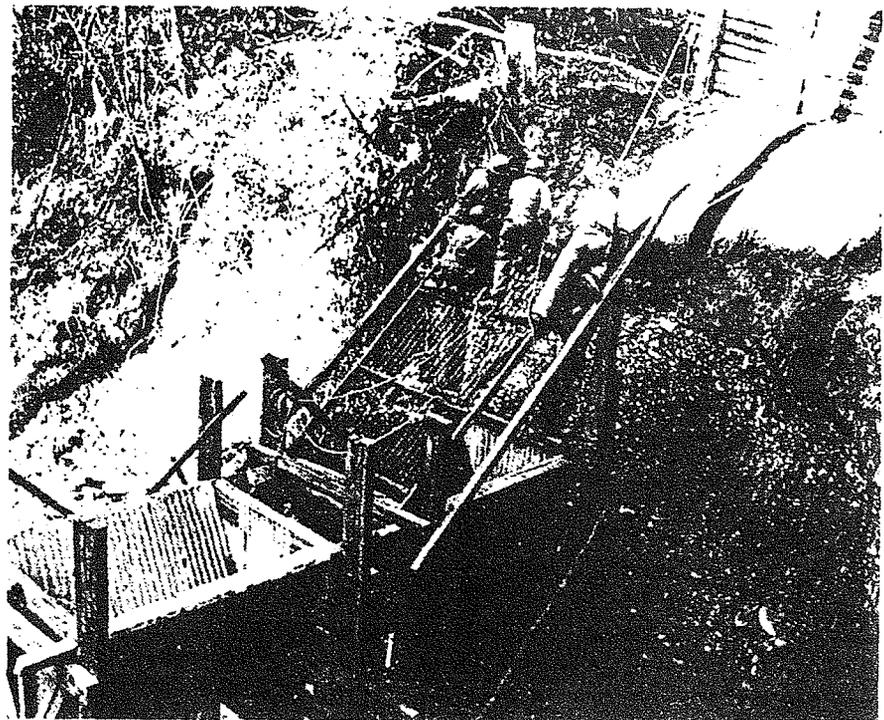
Dawson's main job was to help the Chinese improve the Burma Road. He first made a reconnaissance of the area and found that the road was not a highway in the American sense. He noted that each local district built its section as cheaply as possible; it was two lanes in some sectors, but poorly surfaced and partially demolished. The surface for the most part was crushed rock and clay, with some sections asphalted but in poor condition; dusty when dry and slippery when wet. Dangerous hairpin curves were frequent, grades were steep, and shoulders were eroded. There were 14 passes higher than 7,000 feet. The bridges were usually one-lane, and lower than the level of the road, and some had superstructures of rotting wood. The more he saw, the more he was convinced that only a major construction effort could put the road in shape.

With the above information, in late February 1943, Kohloss got the commander of the Y-Force to make a 430-mile-inspection-trip; they took along a senior Chinese engineer. The Chinese then agreed

to accept Dawson's participation in their planning work. At the same time, the Chinese Highway Administration, at our urging, ordered a thorough road survey, the first in the road's history. Dawson also got the Chinese to promise that they would get their mechanical equipment repaired in order to do the road job.

In the latter part of February, Dawson and his Chinese counterparts completed their cost estimates. Their estimate almost 80 million dollars to improve the 370 miles stretch between Kunming and the Mekong River and about 38 million more to restore the 226 mile stretch from the Mekong to the Burmese border (total of almost \$6 million US). But then there were the uncertainties of the runaway inflation at the time. As a result, the Chinese almost tripled Dawson's estimates. The figure eventually agreed upon was 300 million Chinese dollars. This estimate was sent to Chungking; so there was nothing to do but wait.

Then followed a long period of inactivity. The few workers on the road stopped work when the April rains started. Then in May, a new group of Chinese administrators took over from which Dawson encountered more indifference, so little action was taken. As a result, the only solid engineering achievement of the first half of



Engineer troops on the Ledo Road building the first gravel screen to be used on the Ledo Road construction project.

1943 was a 160 mile reconnaissance of the route out of Mitu to a point 50 miles west of the Mekong which was carried out during April and May by one of Kohloss' deputies.

Underlying the official apathy was the Chinese disagreement with our strategy - the need for a successful campaign in Burma to make possible ground communication between India and China. The Chinese were far more interested in aerial supply and air power. However, they displayed a different attitude toward airfield construction. Back in November and December 1943, Yunnanese officials impressed thousands of coolies to enable the Yunnan-Burma railroad organization to complete the airfield at Chengkung. Chiang himself ordered a bonus paid to the coolies. By late January 1943, advance Section #3 had three transport fields in operation at Chengkung, Kunming, and Yangkai. By spring, Capt. Harry Kirkpatrick, Advance Section #3 engineer, began making improvements at two fields near Kunming formerly used by the AVG (Chanyi and Yunnanyi). By May 31st, major construction at Yunnanyi was completed; progress was slower at Chanyi.

The Theater Engineer

Ever since Col. Holcombe went on convalescent leave in June 1942, Stilwell had been without an engineer on his New Delhi staff. When Holcombe returned to duty, it was as Gen. Wheeler's deputy. The positions was refilled on January 3, 1943, by Col. Francis Newcomer, but he soon concluded that his office was unneeded in India because Arrowsmith, as SOS engineer, had the major engineer role in India. The problem, however, was that Newcomer could not exercise much control over construction in China. Consequently, Newcomer was transferred to Chungking. His job was to work with the Chinese on airfield construction, mapping, supplying Chinese troops at Ramgarh and in Yunnan, and housekeeping for our rear echelon in Chungking.

Airfields in India

Since our main engineer effort in late 1942-early 1943 was directed toward opening ground communications across Burma, the airfields in India received little attention. Work on them was beset with difficulties and slow rate of progress, especially in Central India. This severely strained relations among the engineers, the 10th AF, and the British. Keeping

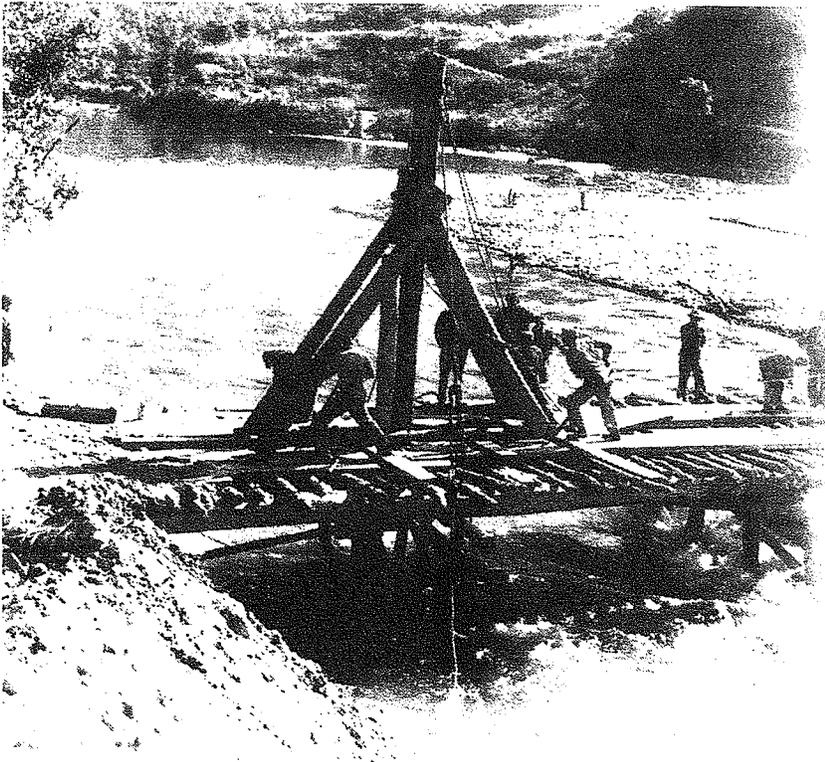
an anxious eye on the bomber fields near Calcutta, Gen. Bissell, during December 1942 and January 1943, repeatedly complained that the engineers failed to regularly inspect the work being done by native contractors. Maj. James Hyland, area engineer at Chakulia, said that he and his one assistant were giving a "pro rata" share of their time to each of the five fields in their area. Hyland complained that progress was slow because of the inefficiency of many of the native contractors, and the inability of the Indian Public Works Department's few engineers to give effective supervision.

Work on the four Hump fields in Assam was left almost entirely to the British since the start of the other Ledo projects. The plan to complete work on the fields before the rains could not be carried out. from our point of view, the British failed to give adequate priority to these fields. British authorities persisted in diverting resources away from the airfields. On March 3, 1943, Maj. Byroade said that only about 75% of the work would be completed on schedule. Holcombe complained on April 28th to the new British engineer-in-chief, Gen. Roome, that they should make every effort to complete the airfields. Col. Frederick Strong took over as Engineer, SOS, in April, so that Arrowsmith could give full attention to the Ledo Road project.

Things seemed no better at Karachi, where there were many differences of opinion between the engineers, our airmen, and the British. Indian officials complained that SOS engineers slowed construction by stopping work at sunset, and by refusing to mix concrete by hand when mechanical mixers were out of order. Maj. John Notling, Hirshfield's successor as base engineer explained that he stopped work at nightfall because of insufficient lighting and he would not allow mixing by hand because inexpert native labor might unwittingly cause a runway failure.

Chennault and the Air War

As 1943 wore on, there were few signs that an offensive in Burma was near. Stilwell thought that the British were pessimistic and obstructionist about it. Chiang wrote to Pres. Roosevelt in January that he was in favor of Chennault conducting an all-out war against Ja-



Engineers build a bridge without the benefit of large construction equipment. Signal Corps photo

pan as a substitute. At the Casablanca Conference, in January 1943, Gen. Marshall argued for an early rescheduling of the invasion of Burma. At the close of the Conference, the Combined Chiefs of Staff approved planning for a ground campaign to start in November 1943. Roosevelt gave strong support to Chiang's views, despite opposition by Marshall and Arnold. He directed strengthening of Chennault's air force "to see that . . . (he) gets a chance to do what he believes he can do." On March 3rd, Roosevelt nominated Chennault as B.General. Eight days later Stilwell activated the 14th AF under Chennault. Gen. Wheeler then set up an Advance Section 4, SOS, at Kweilin. Major Price was placed in command with the mission of building six bomber fields around Kweilin.

On 14 April 1943, Stilwell and Chennault went to the TRIDENT Conference to advise Roosevelt and Marshall. Two weeks earlier, Chennault greatly impressed the President when he said he could "sink and damage over a million tons of Japanese shipping, if he could get 10,000 tons of supplies over the Hump." Stilwell's plans to reform the Chinese Army and the reconquest of Burma failed to fire the President's imagination. So, Roosevelt went to the Conference apparently committed to Chennault's program. On May 9th, Wheeler was ordered to rush construction of airfields in Assam by September so that Chennault would get the supplies he wanted. TRIDENT reduced the campaign in Burma to air-ground action after the 43 rains, and limited it to North Burma. Stilwell: ". . . everything was thrown to the air offensive."

Renewed Priority on Airfields

TRIDENT meant that the airfields would again require a major effort by the engineers; later they would be required to support an offensive in North Burma, that is if the resources were available. Also, they would have to continue the work on the road from Ledo to Kunming. TRIDENT conferees decided that the road would also include telephone and telegraph systems, auxiliary airstrips, depots, and hospitals. In February 1943, the War Department SOS Commander, Gen. Somervell, stressed the need for a pipeline. At TRIDENT, authority was granted to

start such a pipeline from Assam to Kunming, to be built by the few engineers in CBI, with such help that could be obtained from the British and the Chinese.

Airfields in China

By early June 1943, Major Price planned more construction on seven fields near Kweilin. This would provide communications facilities, repair shops, taxidways, retments, and housing for 1,500 airmen. Six fighter strips nearly were to be improved. Byroade, who relieved Price early in August, reported to Wheeler that work was proceeding slowly. The local government was so disorganized, it was at times difficult to know who to deal with in the selection of contractors. The engineers wanted some of their own men from Kunming and elsewhere to work on the fields. The construction of fields at Kanchow and Singcheng was delayed because local officials favored their own cronies for "squeeze" purposes of American funds. Regarded as proper in China, "squeeze" was considered racketeering by Americans. In August, Byroade put his own contractors at work in Kanchow; they were put in prison by local authorities; so that was out. He henceforth had to deal with local contractors and pay a higher price because of "squeeze."

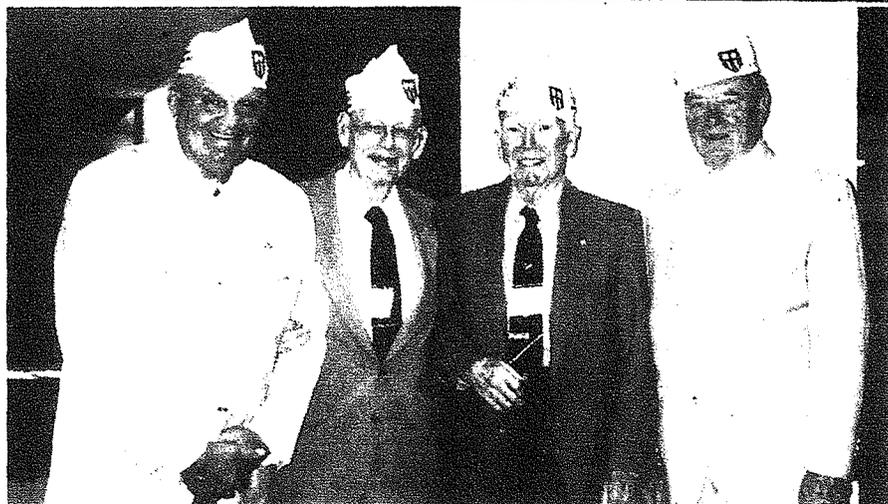
Airfields in Assam

After TRIDENT, the main objective was construction of some 12 transport and fighter fields in Assam. Marshall told Wheeler on May 22nd that four fields were to be ready by July 1st, so that 7,000 tons a month could be sent to

China. This required the most strenuous effort, but there was hope that it could be achieved. The War Office in London sent a harsh message to GHQ (India) directing a speed-up of work in Assam. We were then told that Wavell's staff was marshalling the necessary resources to do the job. But, later they said that they would like for us to take over provided that we could bring over the needed men and materials. Wheeler tried to carry out the goals of TRIDENT by borrowing men from the 330th Engineers and bulldozers and other equipment from units working on the Ledo Road. While some progress was being achieved, the work never caught up with the schedules. By July 1st, three of the runways were completed; four others needed extra steel plank, and three others had only been graveled. As a result, the transports could only deliver up to 4,500 tons in July.

Extracted from "History of the Corps of Engineers: The War Against Japan," by Joe Shupe. Part III will be published in a later edition off SOUND-OFF.)

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Harold Wilds, Mahoning Valley Basha; Milton Ebbert, Roof Garden Basha; Les Dencker, Milwaukee Basha; and Nick Visnic, Tarpon Basha, captured by photographer at Cincinnati National Reunion. (Right to Left).

Photo by Ruth O'Dell

Corps of Engineers in the CBI - 1943

Part III

Preparations for the Offensive in Burma

By Joseph B. Shupe

Stilwell returning from the TRIDENT Conference in mid-June 1943 set out to reorganize and unify our effort to support the Chinese Y-Force. On 18 June, he organized the Y-Force Operations staff (Y-FOS) at Kunming. He placed Col. Frank Dorn in charge, who made Col. Kohloss his G-4 and Maj. Dawson his engineer. The latter two continued their attempts to get the Chinese to improve their logistics. They succeeded in persuading the Chinese to build general depots at Kunming and Yunanyi early in August, but they had few illusions about the future. The Chinese continued to show almost no interest in an offensive beyond the Salween - Chiang even proposed that the advance be held off until January 1944, and there were no signs during the summer of organizing the Y-Force for a campaign in Burma.

The Road Projects

Despite the priority given to Chennault's air war, and the above, the engineers continued to push their road projects. Since it appeared that the Chinese would procrastinate, Stilwell himself appealed to Chiang. On July 6th, he succeeded in getting one of Chiang's officials to start work on

the Burma and Mitu Roads (see map) to open them up partly to trucks by October. Only 100 million dollars were authorized solely for improvement of the Burma Road, and with inflation, this amount was rapidly decreasing. Dawson tried to get the Chinese to widen the road rather than resurfacing it during the dry season so trucks could go through. The Chinese agreed.

By the beginning of August planning was complete, and the Chinese allowed our engineers to be on duty at each of the Highway Administration district offices along the road. Kohloss arranged with the Chinese to set up, in August, a "Mobile Construction Force" to operate under the Chinese direction. This was commanded by Capt. Harvey Gehr and four other American officers and six equipment operators, four Chinese engineers and a crew of coolies. They were to improve those sections of the road where machinery would be effective. By far the greater part of the road work would be done by hand labor. In August, the Governor of Yunnan agreed to conscript 36,000 peasants who were to start work late that month. But, the Governor was

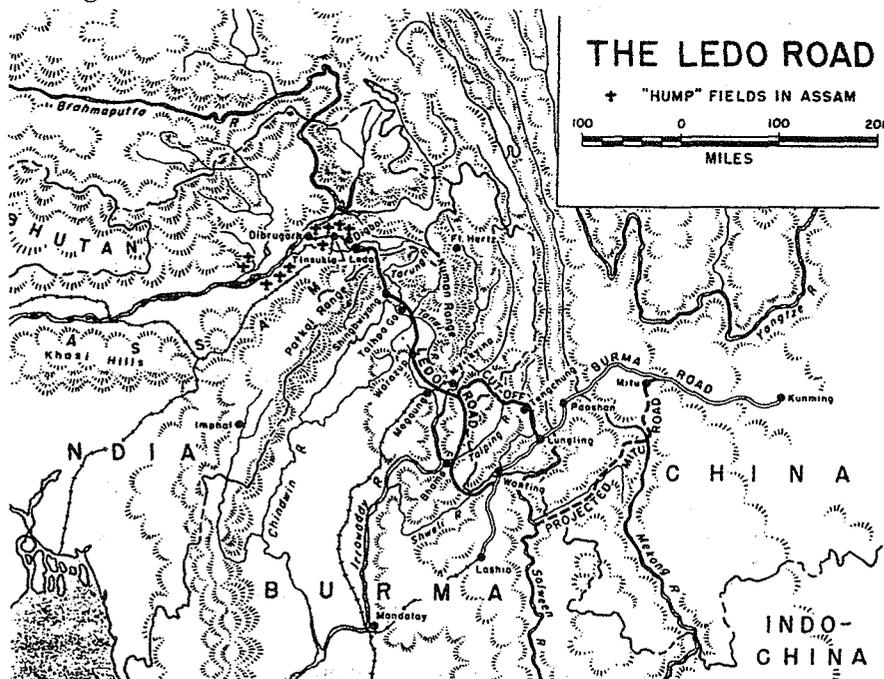


Brigadier General John C. Arrowsmith. (From a photo taken during his service as a colonel and deputy chief of the Army Security Agency not long before his retirement from the peacetime Army in 1953. (US Army photograph)

a month late in getting the coolies on the road; also his highway officials were "dragging their feet" in doing the necessary planning. Kohloss tried to get the Chinese government to increase the allotment of funds by 44 million, but inflation kept eroding that amount downwards. Our officials felt the work being done was haphazard, and early in October the money ran out; and the road was essentially what it had always been - a one-lane road with steep grades, horseshoe curves, and narrow bridges. And, now, it was more in need of repair than before.

The renewed emphasis on air-field construction placed the Ledo Road in a precarious position. Its loss of priority in troops and equipment in May 1943 came at a bad time. With the roadhead at the crest of the Patkais, the monsoons created endless problems. Bridges were swept out as well as culverts, and the roadway was undermined. Rain soaked embankments, collapsed and blocked the road with massive slides. Disabled equipment piled up as the few mechanics struggled against forbidding odds to make the needed repairs. Malaria rates rose steadily shrinking the ranks of the engineers. As a result, work went into low gear, and once again high morale sunk. Nevertheless, the engineers continued improving the road insofar as possible, although little could be done to extend the road through the jungle.

Early in July, Maj. Gen. Wilhelm



Styer, Somervell's chief of staff from Washington inspected the road. He, then, urged his boss to immediately ship out five general service engineer regiments, among other things. He referred to British comments that the Americans are crazy for trying during the monsoons. There was much to justify their views. Among our troops, the malaria rate had reached 955 per 1,000 per year; and among the Chinese it was 2,200. Styer concluded that "in spite of all the obstacles, construction is proceeding, and Gen. Wheeler and his forces deserve a great deal of credit for what they have accomplished under the conditions imposed upon them." Shortly thereafter, an Air Corps officer, inspecting the road at Stilwell's request, found that the engineers were doing a good job under the circumstances. But, others had different opinions. Col. Frank Merrill, theater G-3, inspected the road a few days before Styer, and was very critical. While he admitted that many of the engineer's road resources had been drained away to the airfields, but that they were making too much of the effect of such diversions on the rate of progress on the road. He particularly blamed Arrowsmith, recently promoted to B. General. He felt Arrowsmith's leadership as not sufficiently energetic for such trying circumstances.

In mid-July, Stilwell came for a firsthand look. Finding his "vinegary," Wheeler and Arrowsmith tried to mollify him and give him a clearer understanding of the difficult situation. Wheeler again emphasized that Base Section 3, "milked daily" of troops for other projects could use "thousands" of engineers. Stilwell stayed for three days, but made no specific complaints.

Later on August 9th, Wheeler said that Base Section 3 had shipped to the airfields in Assam, 5, 612 carloads of gravel, enough for over 30 miles of single-track road. The 330th Engineers who should have been working on the road, had been put to work as stevedores in Calcutta until July, and, upon arriving at Ledo, much of the regiment worked on access roads, and in gravel quarries. Wheeler also complained that the British failed to provide sufficient laborers. He should have added that Arrowsmith had been obliged during the summer to rotate the

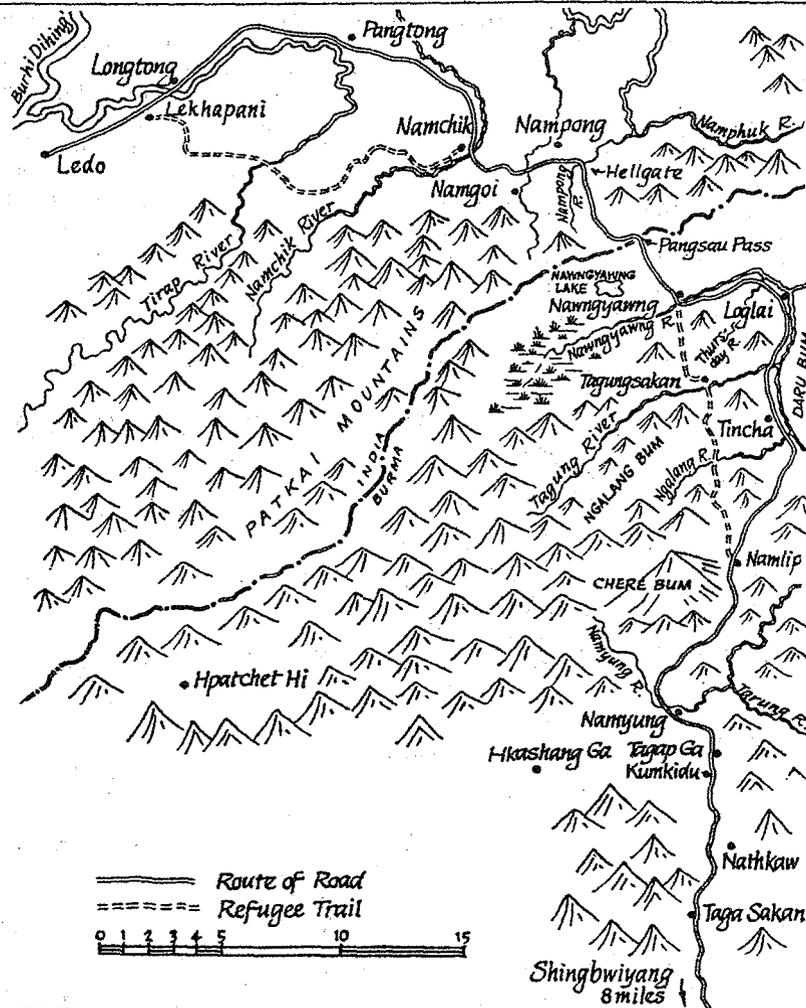


Lieutenant General Lewis A. Pick, 1890-1956. (U.S. Army photograph)

823rd and 45th engineers to rest camps in Calcutta to forestall exhaustion from their continual around-the-clock efforts.

Anxious to get the road to Shingbwiyang before the Fall, and stung by "I told you so" smiles of the British, Stilwell wanted no excuses. On August 21st, he again visited the road. After a series of meetings with Arrowsmith, he seemed to indicate no displeasure of how things were going. Nevertheless, he sent a message to Wheeler ordering Arrowsmith's relief. Going along with Merrill, he said he could not "take chances on that project." Branding progress on the road as a threat to the "whole operations" in North Burma, Stilwell asked Wheeler to look into the possibility of getting a "top flight man" from the States.

Wheeler reluctantly recalled Arrowsmith and placed a Quartermaster colonel, Ellis Altman, temporarily in charge. On August 29th, Arrowsmith's command of a



Ledo Road—Patkai Mountain Sector

Letters

House-Boy Spy?

To the Editor:

It was in the Spring of 1942 that the vaunted 373rd Heavy Bomb Squadron tested its wings at the Davis-Monthan Field in Tucson, Arizona.

It was in the Spring of 1943 that the 373rd rested its wings at Yangkai, China.

My hostel sat atop a pine-covered ridge overlooking the air strip. The hostel housed our communications section and some combat personnel.

During the span of our military lives, we all have met many varied personalities. Some have receded into oblivion while others have become deeply enconced in our memory banks and occasionally flicker in our idle thoughts. One such character was our hostel's house-boy.

I am sure that many of the 373rd can recall our house-boy Bunky. Phonetically his Chinese name could have been Bhan Kee. But, of course, without ceremony or hesitation his name was anglicized and Bhan Kee became Bunky. The run of the mill house-boys were in their late teens. Bunky was not the average house-boy. He could have been in his early or mid-thirtys.

In the early 1930s, the Russians weren't as well versed in the English language as they presently are. The Russian diplomats had a hard time with the letters H and G.

They gave the letter H a G sound and conversely a G as an H. Pres. Roosevelt's right-hand man, Harry Hopkins, was referred to as Garry Gopkins.

I was chatting with Bunky one morning. During our chat I heard him use the term "American Hov-ernment." This suddenly alerted me for here was a Chinese speaking English with a Russian accent. So, in my street corner Russian, I asked him if he understood Russian. His eyes widened and after a little hesitation he nodded and answered "Da" which is yes in Russian. I had a feeling that he surmised that I also was one of "Them."

Feeling that I had gained his confidence, I asked how and where he learned his English. He replied he had gone to a military school in Harbin which was located in North China. The school was run by Russian officers and Bunky came out as a lieutenant.

My question is - in whose service was this "house-boy"? How did he pass screening and by whose authority was he allowed to work on an airfield that housed American personnel?

To my regret, I have never revealed this information before.

Ted Jackowicz
400 N. Lake Park
Bristol 4 N.
Hobart, IN 46342

Trip Home

To the Editor:

The Fall, 1991, CBIVA Sound-OFF "Ships Column" brought back

memories of when I departed India.

After a few stops within India, I finally made it to Karachi, the last stop. Then we hit Aden, Africa, South America, on to Trinidad, Puerto Rico and finally, to Florida.

Between Puerto Rico and Florida we had engine trouble and had to make a stop at South Caicos in the Turk and Caicos Islands chain.

Lawrence Cuomo
1209 40th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11218

New Delhi Victory Parade

To the Editor:

Our outfit, the 3150th Signal Co., was deactivated after VJ Day and those that were left became part of the 835 Signal Bn. at Canning Barracks, New Delhi. I was Supply Sgt. of "A" Co. and re-enlisted in January 1946. LTC Cabrera was the Bn. C.O.

About 200 of us were selected to participate in the "Victory Parade" held in New Delhi. The parade units included British, Indian Burmese, African, Naga, Gurkha, WRINS, as well as our small group of Americans. Mules, elephants and camels were in the line of march which went on for miles.

The Viceroy of India, the Supreme Allied Commander Southeast Asia and distinguished guests were in the reviewing stand. As we approached the "pass in review" point, the Royal Scots Pipe Band ahead of us sounded off with a rousing tune that had us all doing the "Lindy Hop." However, we seemed to correct in time to pass smartly for the reviewing officer. It was a great day and I was proud to be a GI representing the USA.

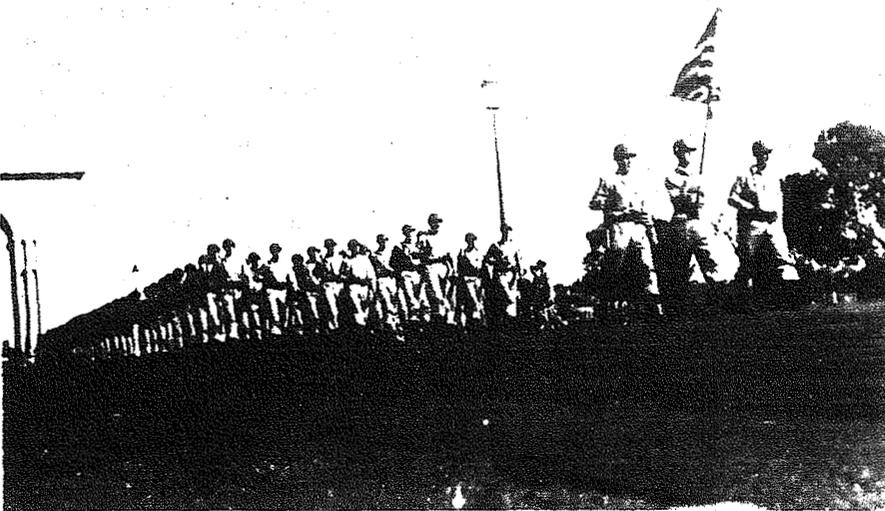
Our remaining days in the CBI were coming to a close and old buddies departed on a daily basis. They just seemed to "fade away" and our farewell parties were smaller and smaller until "BAS!" (Unknown expression to me - Ed.)

Although it has been many years ago, I have fond memories of those final days in CBI.

Donald D. Ferguson
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Glen Gardner NJ 08826

Editor's Note

This page inserted to overcome an error in assembling pages. Please enjoy.—Ed.



The American GIs selected to participate in New Delhi's Victory Parade in 1945 are shown passing in review.

Donald Ferguson Photo