

FIGHTING DAREDEVILS OF TODAY'S WAR

AIR WAR

10¢

SUMMER
ISSUE

A THRILLING
PUBLICATION



MITSUBISHIS OVER MANILA
An Exciting Action Novelet
By **TRACY MASON**

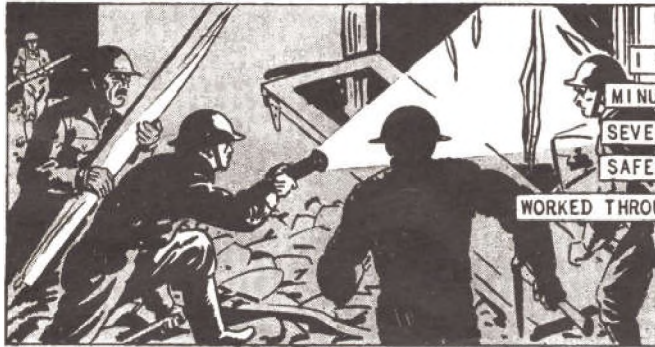
BOMB HITS CROWDED ENGLISH HALL—GAS

PERILS RESCUERS...

A true experience of Frederick Mockford, Incident Officer, Deptford District Civil Defense, London... as cablegrammed by a war correspondent.



DISTRICT POST INFORMED ME
 HIGH EXPLOSIVE BOMB HIT JUST BEFORE
 CLOSING TIME. BOMB WENT THROUGH
 BILLIARD ROOM, CARRYING TABLES
 CLEAR DOWN TO CELLAR.



I GOT MY SQUAD ON SPOT WITHIN FEW
 MINUTES. ESCAPING COAL GAS OVERCAME
 SEVERAL RESCUERS AND MADE FLASHLIGHT
 SAFEST AVAILABLE LIGHT. RESCUE PARTY
 WORKED THROUGH NIGHT UNTIL DAYLIGHT, BOMBS
 CONTINUING TO ROCK BUILDING

I SENT SOS CALL FOR BATTERIES.
 THANKS TO FACT FRESH ONES WERE
 AVAILABLE FOR JUST SUCH EMERGENCY WE
 WERE INSTRUMENTAL SAVING LIVES
 AT LEAST 15 PEOPLE.



"batteries ready for emergencies!

experience—like many such others
 in England—is typical of the
 emergency use of a flashlight.
 The coal gas ignited the coal

conserve
 [symbol]

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... Instead of **SHAME!**

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Skinny?
Weak?
Flabby?**

Will You Let Me
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I KNOW what it means to have the kind of body that people pity! Of course, you wouldn't know it to look at me now, but I was once a skinny weakling who weighed only 97 lbs. I was ashamed to strip for sports or undress for a swim. I was such a poor specimen of physical development that I was constantly self-conscious and embarrassed. And I felt only HALF-ALIVE.

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Atlas*

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VOL. 5, NO. 1

"Every Story Brand New"

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Which comes first — Your second helping? or our second front?

YOU WANT TO SEE THIS WAR WON—and won quickly. You want to see it carried to the enemy with a vengeance. Okay—so do all of us. But just remember...

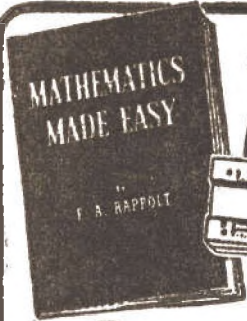
A second front takes food...food to feed our allies *in addition to* our own men.

Which do you want—more meat for you, or enough meat for them? An extra cup of coffee on your breakfast table, or a full tin cup of coffee for a fighting soldier?

Just remember that the meat you don't get—and the coffee and sugar that you don't get—are up at the front lines—fighting for you. *Would you have it otherwise?*

Cheerfully co-operating with rationing is one way we can help to win this war. But there are scores of others. Many of them are described in a new free booklet called "You and the War," available from this magazine.

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A Department Written and Illustrated by JOE ARCHIBALD

THANKS, Flannelmouth, for clearing a path for your superior through the stack of mail bags. We can see there won't be much time for hangar flying this meeting as we have not seen so much mail since we were dunned that time for a final payment on a new tunic.

We see that Liverlips Logan is back and welcome, planeherder. We thought you were ripe for a P-38? Oh, we remember now. You see Liverlips attended a USO party on Long Island and took a deb home which was against the rules and a Doberman pinscher took the seat out of Liverlip's pants. He flew by that seat alone and he will be a kiwi until he finds where the Doberman hides its trophies.

Herman Beep Fooled 'em

Herman Beep is back from the Pacific. He dyed his hair, had a plastic surgeon put putty in the lines around his peepers, had uppers made, and fooled the flight surgeons in the U. S. Navy.

Herman exposed himself even before he got a look at a Zero and he said Washington should take action against men that put fraudulent ads in the journals of the trade. He read where Navy life rafts came complete with stills. Then when he took a test ride in



one of the rafts he found out the still made fresh water out of brine and not corn mule out of mash!

Anyway, the still is going to save a lot of lives. It will turn out three pounds of water an hour and enough fuel comes with it to make more than fifteen gallons of precious

aqua pura. When they gave Herman the first drink, he spat it overside.

"It is water," he howled. "I am poisoned!"

Score 12-6-9

When you read where a fighting ace has a score of 12-6-9, it means he has downed twelve



planes, has six probables and has damaged nine.

It is rumored that the R.A.F. has accounted for 400 of Adolph Hitler's iron horses. No, der Fuehrer hasn't revived the Uhlans. We mean locomotives that haul his vital materiel. No doubt there are signs up over the doors of employment offices along Wilhelmstrasse asking for new Casey Joneses.

As we told you when we came in, the mail is stacked up here higher than Nazi alibie outside Goebbels' office. So we have got to get down to serious business. Before we brief the first report, we must admit we are eliminating certain contributions because it is almost impossible for us to decipher them. Our handwriting expert has been called to Washington to help interpret income tax reports so you citizens who insist on writing with your hands bandaged will have to wait until next time.

Let's have that fat one there to start off, Liverlips. It smells—huh? Of lavender? Oh, my! It is from a future SPAR named Eileen and that's all she wants revealed. Let's see now:

I want to congratulate you on your fine upstand-
(Continued on page 10)



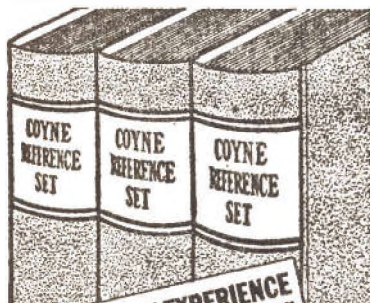
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PROP WASH

(Continued from page 8)

ing magazine. Not only are the stories thrilling, but educational as well. I especially enjoy the short stories by officers in service. I have just finished reading "Silent Wings For Victory" by Charles Bright. To some, the information contained in the story was boring but to others who understand the basic facts of aviation it was a summary that can only be explained by an expert. Keep up Captain Danger!

But this letter was written for two reasons and if it is printed in "Prop Wash" I don't want a single word left out.

Here's my second reason and a fiery reply to a certain Irwin Titunik who had his letter printed in your winter issue. He may live where the Bronx cheer is popular, but he doesn't know how to use it. As the fine Mayor of New York once said, quote, "The Bronx cheer was never born in the Bronx, but brought here by people of the other states." Look it up, Irwin. If Irwin is as loyal to your magazine as he sounds you'll be hearing from him shortly.

Let me enlighten him as to a few facts. Maybe flying was a woman's pastime once and a man's game. Just as guns were back in the old days. But this is 1943 and any female sharpshooter in my state can knock that chip off his shoulder with a U. S. Rifle, Caliber .30, M1.

Listen, chipmunk, have you ever heard the expression "Flyers are made, not born"? Any female bird can't be a "Jac" Cochrane or an immortal Earhart but they can love flying. I know. I've taken a ground course under Don Ryan Mackler and was about to take a flight course when planes were grounded because of the war. I would rather fly than eat. But to me both are essential.

You say girls should keep away from flying. Ever stop to think of the girls ferrying bombers to England so our allies can have war weapons? And at the same time our flyers can be spared this task and fly fighter planes instead? Ever stop to think of the girls training men of the armed forces to fly? Recently a flyer from this region sunk three subs off the Atlantic shores. Guess who taught him to fly.

Again I say, bottleneck, this is 1943 and nothing is entirely a man's game. Oh yes, here's another thing. My hair is just plain naturally curly. I don't wear makeup and feel at home in slacks. I'm 5 ft. 6 1/2 in. tall, green eyes and in spite of all this, never lack male company either with civilians or service men. So you see no girl has to be a Hedy Lamarr to attract men!

I'm sure many girls agree with me so I'll be looking in "Prop Wash" for agreements and arguments. I'm especially good with arguments. You see, I'm Irish. In conclusion I'll say in the future aviation will be one of America's greatest fields for opportunities so why shouldn't females cash in on the profits? Incidentally, my occupation is making parts for aerial cameras, bombs and radios.

Take that and that and that, Titunik! Well, you put out your neck and it looks like some—

(Continued on page 86)



YOU, Too,

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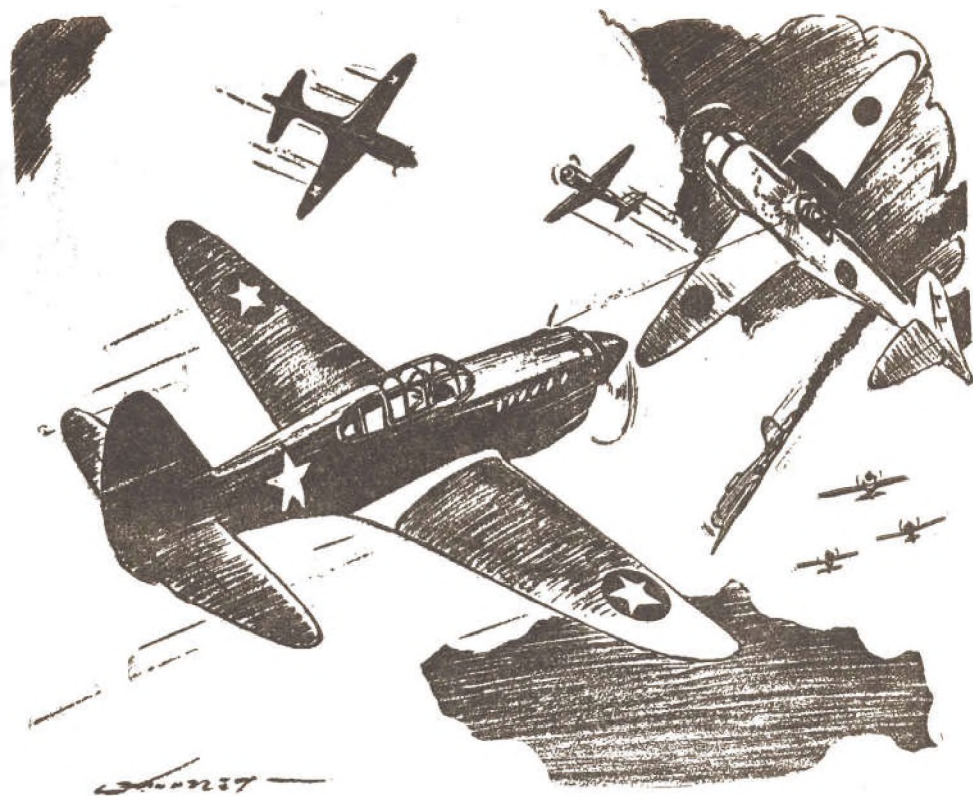


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He saw his tracers pour into the cockpit of the enemy ship

MITSUBISHIS OVER MANILA

By TRACY MASON

For His Own Sake and that of a Girl, Dave Tilden Wanted a Certain Jap Throat Between His Fingers—and No Risk Was Too Dangerous in Battling for that Objective!

CHAPTER I

Japan's Round

THE heat was omnipresent, enervating. The dust clogged nostrils and throats. The food was scant. The water was precious. And day and night, the Zeros and Mitchubishis droned overhead, unchallenged.

Lieutenant Dave Tilden, United States Army Air Force, lay on his back in a shallow fox hole and cursed the Japanese planes that dotted the brazen sky. He

had been swearing at those planes for days, weeks, and his fervor had not diminished. His bitterness had increased in step with the heat, the dust and the number of Nipponese planes that had flown in over the islands, to concentrate on Bataan and Corregidor.

And Dave had had to lie there and take it, the bombing, the strafing, the pamphlet raids. For in all the sector, including Bataan and Corregidor, there were but four—count them—four planes able to fly.

P-40s they were and they were hidden

A SWIFT MOVING ACTION NOVELET

in the jungles somewhere about. Even Dave did not know their exact location. The Japs knew the planes were on the peninsula and the little brown men of Nippon were trying to pull them out of hiding. With a lack of imagination peculiar to the fliers of Tokio, they pulled the same trick, day after day, sometimes five or six times a day.

Inevitably, the Nips would send over a single bomber, unprotected by fighters, and the bomber would loiter around in the skies over Bataan, hoping that the Filamericans would rise to the inviting bait and swarm up to knock down that lone duck. So far, the Yanks and Filipinos had resisted the temptation, but the strain was growing increasingly terrific.

ESPECIALLY with Lieutenant Dave Tilden. Dave had come close to insubordination at times when he had pleaded with the C.O. for permission to take up one of those precious P-40s and knock hell out of the Jap bomber that circled insultingly overhead.

"Don't be a fool, Lieutenant," the C.O. had said curtly. "That's just what they want us to do. You know there's a pack of Zeros hiding upstairs to spot your take-off point. Maybe you would get the bomber—so what? Our hiding place would be blasted to smithereens and we'd lose the few planes we have. Nope, we're saving those ships for a more important purpose than knocking out a Mitsubishi."

"Such as what, sir?" asked Dave in exasperation. "We haven't been up for over a week and those Japs are having things their own way. It—it burns me up, sir, to see them thumbing their noses at us while we just sit around with our hands in our pockets."

"You think I enjoy it?" asked the C.O., quirking an eyebrow. "Don't you suppose I'd like nothing better than to climb into one of those P-40s myself and light out after them?"

"I—I'm sorry, sir," Dave muttered. "It's just this darned sitting around—helpless—not doing anything."

"They also serve who only stand and wait," the commander quoted softly. "Every man in the squadron feels the way you do, Lieutenant, but they're chewing their knuckles and taking it."

Dave nodded. That was true, he knew. Big Rafe Samuels, for instance, had had to be restrained bodily from highjacking

one of the P-40s and going up, after a shower of particularly insulting leaflets had cascaded out of the skies.

Leaflets that had to do with pleasures the Jap officers were enjoying in Manila—with reference to the white women who had been left in the "open" city; the "open" city that had been bombed repeatedly after General MacArthur had told the Nip commander, Homma, that the Filipino capital was undefended.

There had been other instances in which the patience of the grounded fliers had been tried to the breaking point and discipline had vanished in a flare of blind rage. But, so far, none of the P-40s had taken off—so far, the Japanese insults had remained unanswered.

Dave had looked at the C.O. and voiced a question that had been on everybody's lips since that fateful day of December 9th—two days after Pearl Harbor.

"Any—any word about some planes being flown in?" he had asked. "Anything from the top?"

The C.O. had slowly shaken his head but his eyes had told Dave what he already knew. Dave and the others knew secretly that they were kidding themselves, hoping for planes to come booming in to Bataan. At first, there had been supreme confidence that the planes were on their way. A carrier, perhaps, would bring them—roaring pursuits and medium bombers that could wipe the sky clear of Japs.

Then, as days passed and lengthened into weeks, with no planes coming in out of the east, the confidence gave way to hope, and then to doubt and, now, to resignation.

THERE were no planes coming. Homma's force had nearly a thousand planes to work with. A thousand planes—against four.

Who's fault? What difference did that make now? It was too late for recriminations; too late to hurl charges at any one man or any group of men. Now they were all in the same predicament, the careless, the complacent, the stupid, the courageous, the ones who had fought futilely for precautions that were laughed at.

The past was past. The future lay ahead—and a black future it was, now that the hope of reinforcements had gone.

The men, most of them, were stoic about the situation. But Dave Tilden



He drove the knife home in the sentry's back

was fired by a burning hatred; a hatred of all Japs and of one Nipponese "gentleman" in particular—one Mister Hammanita.

Lying in the foxhole now, with occasional sprays of dirt and the pebbles thrown up by the Jap bombs showering him, Dave again conjured up the face of Mister Hammanita and cursed heartily. What he would give, he told himself, just to get that little man's neck between his hands!

There had been a time when the men at Camp Nichols had regarded Mister Hammanita as something of a joke. The little bar the Jap operated, close to the field, was a favorite gathering place for pilots and ground crewmen and it was the fliers' delight to get Mister Hammanita talking about the great friendship which existed between Tokio and Washington.

"It will endure forever," Mister Hammanita would say solemnly, his eyes alight behind the tortoise-shell glasses. "All this talk of war between our countries is stupid. Japan knows that a war between the two great powers would be a suicidal mistake. Yess."

"If there was a war, Hammy," some pilot would put in, invariably, "where would your sympathies lie?"

Hammanita would give as invariable a reply.

"I have been happy here in the Philippines," he would say. "My sons were born here, my home has been here for many years. I have been back to Japan but three times since I came to Manila. My friends are here. The answer is obvious, yess?"

Oh, yess, Dave Tilden told himself bitterly. The answer always had been obvious but it was not the answer the airmen had thought.

They all, every one of them, had laughed at Hammy and his solemnity and he had played them for the fools they had been. While they had mimicked him and drunk his beer and jeered at his oddly incongruous clothes, Mister Hammanita had been sneering at them.

AND Esther had been one of the few—how pitifully few—people who had been afraid of Mister Hammanita and his friends.

"I don't like it, Dave," the girl had said one day. "Have you noticed that close to every field on the islands there's

one of those little Jap bars run by a little Jap like Hammanita? Those little men can see practically everything that goes on at the fields."

"So what?" Dave had said jocularly. "You don't think Hammy and his friends are laying any dastardly plot, do you? That little man hasn't sense enough to come in out of the rain. Oh, he peeks and peers and acts owl-eyed but all Japs are like that. It's their nature. It doesn't mean anything."

Esther frowned and tapped her perfect teeth with a long fingernail. Dave eyed her and felt a warm surge of affection for this girl sweep through him. The islands would be empty, he reflected, when she went back to the States. And he still had to get her promise to wait for him—to wait until his tour in the Philippines was ended and he could get back to some station on the other side of the world.

"I—I'm terribly fond of you, Dave," was the most Esther would say, "but I'm afraid it's not love."

"You're sure?" Dave asked dismally. "You're positive that it's not that you're a soldier's daughter and you've made up your mind that the life of a soldier's wife isn't for you?"

Her eyes were honest and direct when she looked at him.

"That may be it," she admitted. "All my life I've been moving from one Army post to another. I've never been settled. Ever since Mother died, I've been taking care of the Colonel and that means being constantly on the move. His retirement isn't so far away and then, at last, we can have a permanent home, permanent friends."

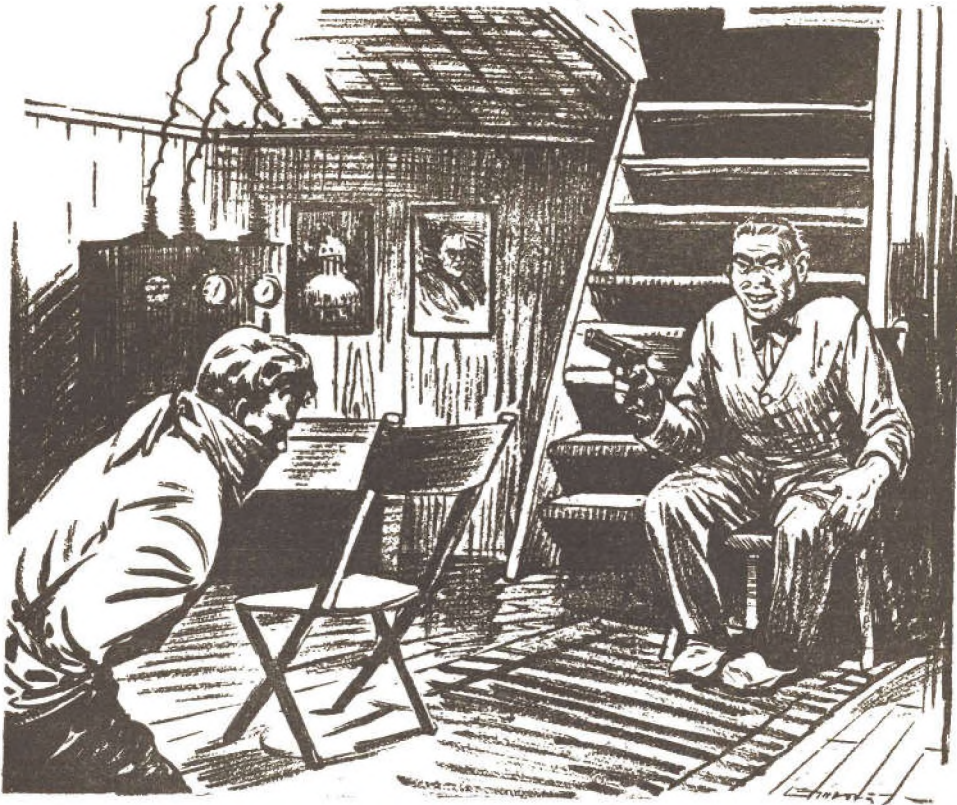
"And a husband who isn't jumping around the world," Dave finished. "But, look, Ess. Suppose I leave the Air Corps when my tour is up. Suppose—"

She shook her head decisively.

"Uh-uh," she said. "You'd be miserable, Dave, and you know it. I can't imagine you selling bonds or insurance, or even flying on a commercial run. You're not built that way. You've told me how flying's been in your blood ever since you were a kid—fast flying, dangerous flying."

"No, dear, your real place is in the Air Corps, Dave, with some girl who loves the life as much as you do."

"There won't be any other girl," Dave said firmly. "There never will be."



"Presently I shall have the pleasure of shooting you in the stomach," said Hammanita

CHAPTER II

Sinister Plot

THAT conversation had taken place on December fifth, 1941. Esther and her father, the Colonel, were due to sail from Manila on the *Ashima Maru* on the tenth. And, Dave had mourned, he probably never would see her again.

He had shaken himself free of the gloom upon him and had taken Esther's arm.

"Come on," he said. "I'll buy you a drink for an early Christmas present. I can't go into Manila with you because I'm due for patrol pretty soon. But we've got time for a beer served by the glittering-eyed Mister Hammanita. Perhaps you can trap him, expose him and prevent the total destruction of our defenses, including Corregidor."

"Now you're laughing at me," she said indignantly. He looked at her, her light hair making a halo about her oval face in the sun, and he laughed.

"I'm sorry," he confessed, "but you're almost as solemn as Mister Hammanita sometimes, though in the opposite direction. There'll be no war, Ess. Every-

body's been whooping up war talk for months and the war's as distant as it always was—in the Pacific, anyway.

"No, it'll be darned dull here, as usual, for years to come. Sometimes, I'd give my shirt to be with the R.A.F. and see some real action."

Her indignation waned but there was the shadow of a frown on her face as she stepped into Hammanita's clean little bar ahead of Dave.

"I hope you're right," she said in a troubled voice. "But Dad thinks—"

She broke off abruptly as the Jap proprietor of the bar slipped out of the room behind the main bar and stood there, bowing and hissing between his teeth to welcome the customers.

"Dad thinks what?" Dave prompted.

"Nothing," Esther said abruptly.

"Military secrets, eh?" laughed Dave Tilden. "Your lips are sealed."

The sun reflected on Hammanita's glasses as he looked toward the girl and then at the Lieutenant.

"Your pleasure, Miss, Lieutenant?" he asked. "It is a splendid day, yess?"

"Yess," said Dave, "and our pleasure will be two beers—unless you'd rather have something else, Ess?"

"I—I think I'll have tea," Esther said.

"I have some excellent tea, recently arrived," said Hammy. "Lately, I am sorry to say, my tea has been of poor quality. The China incident, I suppose. But this tea is worthy of your drinking, Miss Blaney. I shall prepare it."

Esther looked after the Jap as he disappeared. Her eyes were wide when she turned again toward Dave.

"How in the world does he know my name?" she asked. "I've never been in this place before in my life."

"Oh, Hammy knows everybody," Dave explained easily. "He's sort of a walking directory and he's got a great memory. He's probably seen you out here at the field with the Colonel and he's put two and two together, and there you are. Nothing sinister about it, I assure you."

HER frown had come back then as she shook her head.

"Nothing sinister about it," she repeated. "That's what everybody's saying. Everybody's taking it for granted that there'll be no war, that all this preparedness talk is coming from the jingoists on both sides.

"But Japan is having blackouts, Japan is perfecting her air raid defenses, Japan is doing everything possible to get ready for a war. Why all this sudden outburst of war preparations, Dave, if Tokio doesn't expect to go to war."

"It's Russia," Dave said mildly. "Japan is afraid that Russia is going to jump on them one of these days."

"Bosh," the girl snorted. "That's the answer everybody gives and you know Russia has her hands full with the Nazis right now. She doesn't want an eastern front at all."

"Then, perhaps, Japan is getting ready to jump on Russia," Dave admitted. "They've hated each other for years."

"Perhaps," said Esther, uneasily. "But my idea is that when Japan jumps, she won't jump toward Russia."

"Japan," announced Mister Hammanita from the doorway where he had appeared noiselessly, "will not 'jump,' Miss Blaney, if you will pardon my interruption. I couldn't help overhearing your conversation. With a thousand apologies, I must say that you are mistaken. Japan wants no war. Japan is a peace-loving nation."

"She is demonstrating that in China, I suppose," Esther said swiftly. "Nanking was a perfect demonstration of that, eh?"

Mister Hammanita shook his head.

"The China incident is a regrettable affair," he admitted, "but I fear the Americans have heard only one side of the story. Far Eastern politics is an involved subject and one which presents many problems too deep for the uninitiated to solve."

"But—"

"Oh, come on, Ess," Dave had interrupted. "I've only got a few minutes with you before I go on patrol. Let's not waste them talking war. Drink your tea like a good little girl. It's going to be a long time between drinks—of tea—when you go home."

Esther sipped her tea, her face still troubled. Hammanita, with a murmured apology, vanished again into the back room.

"He doesn't talk like a tavern owner," Esther murmured, when the little man had left. "His English is perfect."

"He's been over here in the Islands long enough to talk like a college professor," Dave said. "But let's forget Hammy. Let's talk about us. You—you're sure you couldn't change your mind about me before you sail for home?"

"I'm really a fine specimen. Twenty-six years old, unbelievably handsome, a dashing soldier of the skies, kind to children and animals, and after we're married I'd be the epitome of propriety—wowie, how's that for a little high-sounding talk on my own hook. Hammy's not the only one who can sling words around here."

THE girl laughed. "You nut. I wish—oh, I wish things were different and we were in New York and you had some nice, stodgy business like a haberdashery and I was a home girl who'd spent all her life in correct boarding schools and correct colleges and had my debut and all that."

"Uh-uh," Dave protested. "In that case, you'd be on the make for a wealthy husband and I wouldn't have a dime then, any more than I have now. I'd probably never have met you, as a matter of fact. No, this way is better, even if you won't break down and admit it's me you love."

His tone had been light, but beneath his bantering voice had been a hungeriness that the girl did not miss.

"I'm sorry, Dave," she said. "As I said before, you ought to get yourself a nice little girl who loves flying and the Army life. Forget me—as I know you will before the *Ashima Maru* reaches Honolulu."

"Never," Dave had insisted stoutly.

And later, after Esther had gone back to Manila, Dave repeated that "never" more fervently as he crawled into the narrow confines of the interceptor plane's cockpit. The squadron, with "Hippy" Smith in command, trundled down the field, turned into the wind and was off, streaking into the sky in perfect formation.

In the air, some of Dave's gloom disappeared with the exhilaration that always touched him as he handled the controls of this bundle of power. There were no better planes, no faster, harder-hitting ships in the sky anywhere.

Let the Japs wage the war that Esther and a few others worried about. Everybody knew that the Japs were bad fliers. Look at the miserable showing they had made in China, virtually unopposed. The A.V.G. boys under Chenault had proved that a Jap in the air was no match for a Yank, hadn't they?

It might be fun, he had thought, if the Nips did kick up some kind of a fuss. The Fleet would blast the Tokio paper-and-spit warships while the Army Air Force would wipe the skies clean of all the Nipponese planes.

It would be over in a month, and then, perhaps, the little men of Tokio wouldn't be so cocky. Yes, he had to admit that the Japs were getting a bit too big for their breeches. But that was the work of those strutting little generals and admirals like—what was the new Premier's name?—Tojo, or something like that.

The patrol flight had bored through the sky, over Corregidor and Fort Drum, then over Cavite, and back over Manila. It was a routine flight but Dave never ceased to thrill over the panorama of Manila Bay as his plane swept over. There was little Fort Drum, a tight fortress with its batteries of big 16-inchers. And Corregidor—as impregnable, they said, as Gibraltar.

"Let anybody try to take those babies,"

Dave had told himself. "They'd get their pants warmed before they got to first base."

That had been on December fifth, 1941. And two days later, on Sunday, Dave drew a 12-hour leave and went into Manila to say goodbye to Esther.

SHE had held up her lips for an impersonal kiss as he started to go. Dave, his heart a lump of lead in his chest, held her hand for a moment.

"You'll be back," he said miserably. "You're sure to come back. And I'll be waiting for you when you do. You'll get tired of the States and humdrum life there. You were born to adventure, Ess, and you'll be coming back to Manila some day."

"I—I hope so," Esther had said, without much conviction. "But—please don't wait, Dave. It wouldn't be fair to yourself or the girl you'll meet some day and marry."

"Nobody but you," Dave said, hoarsely. "Nobody—"

The telephone shrilled and Esther crossed the room to answer it.

"Yes—yes, he's here. I—what?"

A hoarse voice rasped at the other end of the line and Dave could hear the click of the receiver. Esther's face had gone dead-white and her eyes were wide as she slowly placed the phone back in its cradle. She put out a hand to steady herself as she turned.

"Ess! What is it? What happened?"

"The field," she said, slowly. "All leaves cancelled. Pearl Harbor—Pearl Harbor—"

He caught her as she swayed.

"Tell me!" he commanded. "What about Pearl Harbor?"

"Bombed," she said heavily. "This morning. The Japanese—the Japanese attacked just after dawn."

"God!" he said. "Pearl Harbor bombed! They did it! The crazy fools did it!"

He whirled and made for his cap on a chair, hesitated only long enough to come to Esther's side and kiss her.

"Don't worry," he said. "It'll be all right. This hotel—it's pretty strong. Get under cover if there's a raid. Oh, Esther—don't let them hurt you!"

Then he was racing from the room, running for the elevators, charging down the steps when the languid lifts failed

to respond to his signal instantly.

Clark Field was a scene of orderly confusion—if such a thing could be envisioned. Pilots were hurrying to their planes. Several squadrons already were in the air. The anti-aircraft batteries were on the alert. The big listening devices were turning constantly, seeking out the expected drone of approaching Jap planes.

Dave dashed into the squad room, collided with Hippy Smith.

"What's it all about?" he panted.

The big squadron leader, who once had been one of West Point's brightest football stars, hunched his heavy shoulders.

"Don't ask me," he confessed. "The place is a hotbed of rumor. All I know is the Japs came down on Pearl Harbor this morning and, from what I understand, they just about knocked it to pieces."

"The fleet—?"

"Who knows? Some say it was at sea. Others say it was squatted there in a perfect target."

"Those sneaky devils! The Nazis were bad enough but this—"

"Don't waste breath cussing them out," Smith said. "Get to your plane and say it with tracers. On the double!"

He had gone up, with the others, on the constant patrol that swept the skies over Manila Bay. Hours had passed, without any signs of a Jap plane. Night fell and still the patrols kept of their ceaseless vigil. Dave came down, grabbed a bite to eat and a few minutes' sleep, and went into the air again.

Close to dawn of December the eighth, Hippy's squadron had been ordered down to rest, to stay in reserve.

"No sense wearing yourselves out before the fighting starts," the C.O. explained. "It's obvious the Nips aren't going to hit immediately. They must have concentrated most of their strength in that raid on Pearl Harbor. Maybe we'll get a few days' grace before they regroup and come at us."

He had telephoned Esther at the first opportunity.

"Looks like Tokio is on my side," he had said with an attempt at light-heartedness. "You won't be able to take the *Ashima Maru* now, my girl, and by the time this is over you'll discover that you love me."

"Oh, Dave," Esther had said. "It's all so terrible. I knew a lot of people in Honolulu and I can't help worrying about what's happened to them. Midge Parkinson and her two babies, Ruth Burns and her family—all of them."

"They're probably all right," Dave had said. "You know how first reports are exaggerated."

"I—I hope so. What do you hear at the Field?"

"Uh-uh, can't say," he told her. "You know—military information and all that. Right now I'm going to get forty winks. Saw your Dad a while back. He's okay, of course. This business looks as though it's taken forty years off him. Slated for retirement and now he's right back in harness again. It'll do him a world of good."

CHAPTER III

Shadow Over Manila

DECEMBER eighth passed without an alarm and the morning of December ninth. Dave had been slated for patrol duty, beginning at 1200 and he had spent the morning wandering about the field, restless, unable to relax. He was walking on the outskirts of the field, watching the formations in the sky, when he remembered Mister Hammanita.

Instinctively, he glanced toward the little bar. His lips grew thin and then he half smiled. Poor Hammy! All his predictions that Japan and the United States never would go to war had been knocked into a cocked hat. And now Hammy was due to be tossed into an internment camp, if he hadn't been already. It was going to be tough on Hammanita, with all his admiration for things American.

He strolled over, tried the front door. It was locked, of course, and a scrawled sign said "Closed." He peered through the window and saw the place was as neat as ever. The picture of President Roosevelt still was in place with the crossed flags under it. The bar was spotless, the glasses in order.

It was as though Hammy had left the place for one of the visits he always was making to cousins in Mindanao and the other islands, instead of having been

trundled off to wherever they were keeping the Japanese.

He turned to go and then stopped, tense, his eyes squinted. Had it been imagination, or had he caught the splutter of a wireless key? He listened, heard nothing, and shook his head.

"Nerves," he told himself. "You'll be catching spies in your sleep if you're not careful."

He turned back, then whirled again. Yes, there was the noise of a telegraph key sounding somewhere—somewhere nearby! He bounded back up the steps. Nothing moved inside. He put his ear to the keyhole and the sound of the clacking instrument was louder!

Lieutenant Dave Tilden never ceased to regret the foolhardy rashness of his next act. His duty was to summon the guard, have the place surrounded and capture—or kill—whoever was inside, operating that wireless.

Instead, he stepped back a pace and launched his big-shouldered frame at the flimsy door of the bar. The lock popped and he half-sprawled into the place. Then he was heading for the back room.

Bursting through the door, he found himself in the tiny kitchen, as immaculate as the front room. It was empty, silent. The clacking of the telegraph key had been cut off at his first plunge at the door.

He glared about him, his fists clenched, eyeing a room that lay behind the kitchen. This was Hammanita's bedroom and it was empty, its only decoration another picture of President Roosevelt, beside a portrait of President Quezon. Underneath the two prints was a strip of paper which bore the slogan, God Bless America.

Dave Tilden shook his head again. Was he, he asked himself, going nuts? Had he imagined the sound of the telegraph key? There was nobody in this tiny place, nor anything that could possibly indicate that Hammy was a spy or even a Japanese sympathizer.

HE MOVED back toward the kitchen and stiffened again as his bulk crossed a faded carpet close to the bureau. The floor—the floor had yielded a bit under his weight! He bent, whipped aside the carpet and grunted when he saw the ringbolt sunk in the

floor, the hinges that lay level with the flooring strips.

Unthinking, goaded by an unreasoning rage, Dave Tilden wrenched at the ringbolt. If he had expected to find the trapdoor locked from the underside, he was surprised. He staggered back as the wooden flap sprang up under his tug. He peered down into a black cellar.

"Come out of there, Hammy," he called. "Come out before I come down there and kick your teeth in—you filthy spy!"

Silence prevailed.

"Okay, Mister Hammanita," Dave gritted. "You asked for it!"

He half stumbled, half slid down the steep stairs and glared about him, searching for Hammy. Overhead, the trapdoor banged shut, closing out the faint light that came from above. He heard a sibilant hiss and then he was blinded by the glare of a searchlight, turned full on his face.

Tilden launched himself forward, hands grasping for the unseen Jap. He felt one wrist caught in a clutch of iron. An excruciating pain shot through his arm and shoulder. A heavy foot landed in his groin and he yelped instinctively. Then he was whirling through the air, to crash against the wall. After that—blackness.

He could not have remained unconscious long. When he came to he found the place lighted, his wrists and ankles firmly bound and a gag twisted between his teeth.

He lay motionless, watching Hammanita at the telegraph key. The little man's thick glasses were gone now and his face was intent as he bent over the "bug." This was a Hammanita whom Dave never had seen before. Gone was the stolid, slightly lethargic expression the barkeep always had worn.

In its place were the avid features of a hungry fox, and the Jap's face was lit by some inner fire that cast its glow through the yellow skin. Now Hammanita wore the face of a fanatic, and Dave Tilden shuddered.

Harmless, funny little Hammy! How many hundreds, thousands, more Hammys were there in the islands? Hammys who ran innocent, clean little bars close to army posts, naval bases, air fields; who decorated their establishments with American flags and pictures of Quezon

and Roosevelt, and slogans like "God Bless America"? How many of the little Hammys had been at Pearl Harbor? How many were in the States?

"We were the dopes!" Dave's brain screamed. "We were the saps! And Esther was right, all the time!"

He must have made some movement then, because Hammanita glanced at him sharply and saw he was conscious. The Jap turned back to the telegraph instrument, the earphones clamped on his head, and then, after tapping out a brief signal, switched off the apparatus. The little man removed the earphones.

He was still Hammy, with the thick torso and the ridiculously short, slightly bowed legs, but he was no foolish figure now, as he looked down at Dave. There was an evil smirk on his mouth as he reached into a pocket of the ill-fitting jacket he wore and pulled out a pack of cheap Japanese cigarettes. Coolly, the spy lit one and blew smoke through his nostrils.

"Lieutenant Tilden," he said in his correct, stilted voice. "You are an extremely foolish young man."

DAVE glared at him. Hammanita carefully deposited the paper match in a coat pocket and inhaled again.

"Extremely foolish," the Jap repeated. "But then, all you red-headed fools are alike. Scum. Boisterous, egotistical."

He spoke deliberately, as though savoring every word.

"He's getting some of it back, now," Dave told himself. "All the laughs we had over him, all the little digs we thought too clever for him to understand, have been boiling inside him, under that yellow skin. And now it's his turn to laugh."

"The very clever Lieutenant Tilden," said Hammanita, mockingly. "The very funny Lieutenant Tilden. The one who always had something very clever and very funny to say about Mister Hammanita, yess?"

He seated himself in a chair, across the room from the trussed American. His hand moved, faster than Dave's eyes could follow, and came up with a heavy service Colt. Hammanita eyed the big automatic fondly and balanced it in his hand.

"Presently," said Hammanita, "I shall have the pleasure of shooting you in the

stomach. There are more elaborate methods of inflicting death, but unfortunately there is not enough time to initiate you into the more exquisite tortures. I'm forced to merely shoot you in the stomach and leave you here to die at your leisure. Painful, to a certain extent, but nothing like the entertainment I would afford you, had I the time."

"He doesn't dare shoot," Dave told himself. "He knows that a shot would bring the whole camp down on this place."

Hammanita smiled, as though he had read Tilden's mind.

"You're doubtless telling yourself that I wouldn't dare fire a shot, with the Field on the alert, yess? My dear Lieutenant. In a few minutes—seven to be exact—there will be so much noise around this place that I could fire a field piece at you and nobody would hear it."

He leaned closer to Dave, hissing through his big, white teeth, his unsuspecting eyes agleam.

"You see, Lieutenant, in exactly seven minutes, Clark Field is going to be blasted into the same size bits that our glorious heroes made of the red-heads' naval base in Honolulu."

He smiled mirthlessly as he saw Dave's eyes narrow.

"I see what you're thinking," he said. "It is impossible for our bombers to get through your patrols, you say? No, Lieutenant. It is not impossible. I have kept a very careful check on your patrols since the war began. And I have found out certain things.

"With the help of friends who also are working for the Empire, we know that it will be possible for all your American planes—more than a hundred of them—to be on the ground in exactly"—he consulted his wrist watch again—"four minutes. A bit of clever work with a short-wave radio, beamed in on your planes' wave length, plus a few other well-laid preparations, and there won't be a Yankee ship in the sky when we strike."

TILDEN groaned. He recognized the truth of this. Red, Blue and Gold flights came in for refueling at 1200, while his flight, Black, with Green and Yellow, took off. Red-A stayed aloft until the three relief flights were in the air. If Red-A were called in by a fake summons, together with Red, Blue and

Gold, the sky would be clear.

"One more minute," Hammanita was saying. "Ah, you can hear them coming in now."

Tilden listened. There was the sound of planes coming in, roaring down over the little "deserted" bar. Dave tried to count them but found it impossible.

"Your commander," said Hammanita, "probably is trying now to keep your Red-A flight in the air. But he'll find the channels jammed, once our order to come in has been given. And now, we should see some excitement."

Faintly to Dave's ears came the sound of shouting, the splutter of planes being kicked back into action. Over those sounds came a deepening roar. Dave could hear the bark of anti-aircraft guns, the wail of the sirens.

Mister Hammanita carefully dragged at his cigarette.

"Those are the Emperor's planes, Lieutenant Tilden," he said carefully, precisely. "Mitsubishis—the best bombers in the skies."

There was a terrific crash, another, another—explosions smashed down in showers that blended into one sustained roar. The cellar of the Jap's bar was filled with dirt from the concussions. The lights went out and the hole in the ground was filled with thunder.

There was a vivid flash of blinding flame, and noise beyond the ears' capacity. Dave caught a glimpse of Hammanita crouched against the farther wall as the shack that had housed the bar vanished overhead and the acrid fumes of explosives swirled down through the hole that had appeared beside the hidden cellar.

Daylight, murky, red-stained daylight, filtered dully into the cellar. Dave saw

that his legs and torso had been covered with dirt. There was a stunning blow on the side of his head and then, for the second time within a few minutes, Lieutenant Dave Tilden lost consciousness.

HE CAME to when they hauled him out of the wreckage of the bar. Hands stripped off the gag and tore away the bonds at his wrists and ankles.

"Hammy," he spluttered. "Hammanita. Spy! He was using a transmitter. Told me—"

"Yeah," said a rough voice. "You just lie still. You got a bad conk on the head, Lieutenant. Just lie still awhile."

"Lie still, nothing!" Dave struggled to his feet. "I'm all right. What happened?"

"What didn't happen?" bitterly returned the man who had unbound him. "They came in and wrecked the joint. Some phony radio call brought down Red-A and they got the lot of us. More'n a hundred planes smashed."

"I've got to see the C.O.," Dave said. "Help me over there, will you, soldier?"

"Sure," said the man, steadying Dave with a hand at Tilden's elbow. "But it's kinda late to see the C.O., or anybody else, ain't it? Take a look."

Dave looked out over Clark Field and groaned. In mangled heaps lay the debris of the air armada on which depended the defense of the Philippines. Columns of smoke still boiled up from burning bombers and fighters. Here and there, a limp form was being lifted into a stretcher by Red Cross workers. It was an appalling scene of death and destruction.

Mister Hammanita, all the little Hammys, had done their fiendish work well.

The C.O. was haggard and shadow-

[Turn page]



eyed when Tilden got to see him. He listened to Dave's story and shook his head.

"You were at fault, Lieutenant, in trying to get the man alone," he said wearily. "But all of us were at fault—at one time or another. No use disciplining everybody who made a mistake.

"All right, Lieutenant. I'll send out an order to look for Hammanita. Obviously he escaped, unless he's buried in the debris. I'll have the place dug up, but I think he's gone by now. You get to a hospital."

"Sir," Dave said, straightening. "I don't need hospitalization. All I want is a plane."

The C.O. smiled faintly.

"All I want is a couple of hundred planes," he said. "And I haven't got them. Find your flight leader, if you're sure you can operate. Maybe he's got a ship for you."

CHAPTER IV

Sky Clash

HIPPY SMITH was a disheveled, red-eyed, raging giant when Dave found him. The squadron leader was swearing in a monotonous roar, using the same words over and over again as he viewed the ghastly panorama of wreckage that strewed the field.

Already, the bulldozers were at work, trying to clear a runway, filling in the bomb craters. They worked fast and efficiently, but everyone knew that even their engineering magic could not replace the planes that had been blasted in the Jap attack.

"Yeah," said Hippy, "I got two planes. Our flight—what's left of it—is supposed to take off in a couple of minutes. Sure you feel up to it, kid?"

"If I don't get a ship," grated Dave, "I'm going to steal one from one of the other flights. I've got to get into the air."

"Okay," Smith said. "Take the other plane. Maybe we can catch up with those so-and-so's. I doubt it."

It was tricky business, taking off from the pitted, debris-strewn field. Twice, Dave thought that his ship was going over on its nose as it bounced into a cavity in the earth, but each time, some-

how, he managed to get past the gully and, finally, he was in the air, chasing Hippy up through the black clouds of smoke that marked the burning oil tanks.

Dave flew blind for several minutes before he broke out over the smoke pall, to find Hippy a quarter of a mile or so ahead of him and to his right. He jammed back the throttle to catch up to his squadron leader and soon was on Hippy's tail.

Dave kept his head turning, his eyes roaming carelessly. The ships that had made the attack on Clark Field apparently had all flown back to base—those of them that had not been knocked down by anti-aircraft. The sky seemed clear of Japs. Tilden cursed as he saw his chances for revenge, no matter how belated, go dwindling.

"On your right," came Hippy's crackling voice in Dave's earphones. "Start climbing. They look like Zeros."

Tilden stared and felt his heart leap. There, far above them and to their right, were specks which rapidly grew larger to mark them as Japanese attack planes. Dave shoved up the nose of his ship and felt the powerful plane leap forward in a steep climb.

The six Japs came in fast. As Dave watched, they broke echelon and formed a wide circle, which began revolving as the two American ships approached. The formation, Dave knew, was one of the toughest to crack, when the enemy was in superior strength. But they were Japs—friends of Mister Hammanita—and there was no hesitation in either Dave's or Hippy's attack.

Hippy went in first, hornning up into the very center of the circle, oblivious of the streaking tracers that were focused on his plane. He roared up, then winged over and his guns stuttered. One of the Zeros seemed to strike a stone wall in midair, thousands of feet above the ground. Fragments of wreckage spun from the Japanese plane as it appeared to fall apart. Flames spurted and the Nip went down, trailing a long column of white smoke.

THEN Dave was in the thick of the fight. The Japs' circle was uneven now, and he picked out a straggler apart from the others. Squinting through the painted sight of his windshield, he caught the Zero full on, and pressed his

stick trigger.

His tracers were high and the Zero lurched into a sloppy bank. Dave roared past, kicked over his plane recklessly, and got above the Nip. This time, while the Zero zigzagged frantically, there was no escape from Dave's guns. He saw his tracers pour into the cockpit of the enemy ship.

For a split-second he had an exaggeratedly lucid glimpse of the Japanese pilot. He was standing up, trying to pull back the cockpit covering. Then the man's head dropped forward and he sprawled over the instrument board as Dave's plane flashed over his crippled ship.

Tilden banked sharply, then twisted over on his back in a tight loop as he caught a glimpse of the Jap plane pouncing on him. Bullets slammed into his right wing before he shook off the enemy ship. The loop brought him in back of the Jap, but the Nip went careening off, and was lost in the general melee before Dave could send half a dozen rounds after him.

Another Zero, flying erratically, blundered in front of him, wobbling precariously. Dave pressed the trigger and then relaxed his grip. The cockpit, he saw, was empty and the Nip plane was heading for its destiny without a hand at the controls. Some Jap pilot, apparently, had bailed out under Hippy's attack.

He looked around for more game. The Japs, it appeared, had had enough. Now they were streaking away to the northwest, with Hippy hot after them. Dave increased his speed and joined the chase. He had gotten only one Nip plane and Hippy had put down at least two, maybe more.

Then there was a splutter, a hoarse bark of his motor. Dave yelled a purple word and looked at his indicators. Phooey! One of the slugs from the Nip who had been on his tail for that brief second had made a lucky hit. His motor was heating up and the oil pumps were out.

He looked about him. Far away, he could make out the columns of smoke that marked his home field. There wasn't a chance of making that, he knew. Cavite? Maybe, with luck. He nosed down, cut his motor and began nursing his plane toward the naval base.

He had not gone far before he knew he could not make Cavite. He swung the gliding ship and headed for Corregidor. There was no field there, but he could try for a crash landing or, if worse came to worst, he could bail out and hope to get down on dry land.

His plane was fluttering like a wounded bird when the Jap struck at him. Out of nowhere came the Zero and roared down on him viciously. Dave saw the right wing, the one that had been chewed up in his previous encounter, spew bits of metal. Then the Zero roared over him and, miraculously, came into his sights.

Dave pressed the button and grunted when he saw the tracers find their mark. The Zero made a banking turn and headed back for another run.

"Missed!" said Dave Tilden bitterly. "A sitting pigeon and I missed him!"

BUT something was wrong with the Jap's turn. Instead of straightening out, he kept turning, heading a bit downward.

Dave craned his neck and then let out a shout.

"Miss, my foot!" he screamed at nobody. "That so-and-so is hit!"

It was true. The Japanese plane slanted downward toward Manila Bay in a long dive. It kept on diving until there was the geyser, far below, that marked the place it hit.

"Yeeow!" Dave yelled. "Got him. Now to get a couple more and—"

He suddenly realized that he held a dead stick in his hand and the water was very close. He wore no life jacket and the plane he flew, while it might be stalled into a pancake, with luck, was not built to float for more than a few minutes, at best. And there was no chance to reach Corregidor, or to bail out over land.

Delicately, he worked the plane lower and lower. The stubby-winged pursuit was no glider, by any means, but Dave Tilden almost made it one. Then, when he was twenty feet or so over the choppy waters of the Bay, he breathed a prayer and pulled back on the stick.

The plane bucked, then dropped, almost vertically. It hit with a jar that loosened Dave's teeth, and the water rushed into the cockpit.

Tilden was out of his chute in a twink-

ling and hauling back the cockpit cover. He struggled out of the narrow chamber and felt the plane leave him as it settled and sank. He was swimming, encumbered by his flying clothes, splashing awkwardly in the water.

He knew that death was very close. He was still weak from the injuries he had received in the attack on Clark Field and the blow that Hammanita had given him; how weak he had not realized until now. He could not possibly get to land and it was not likely that any boats were abroad, with the sky alive with Jap planes.

He went under, fought his way back to the surface. Then he heard a roar that came closer by the second.

"Nips," he said. "Probably going to strafe me for a little added entertainment. Oh, well, I got two of them."

The roar came closer, then cut off abruptly. Tilden raised his head to see a sleek, yet stubby, small boat make a wide circle about him. Something plopped nearby, and Dave labored through the water to the life preserver that had been thrown him. He was dragged through the water and lifted over the side.

"P-T boat," he told himself. "God bless the Navy!"

He was never to forget that trip back to Corregidor. He had flown through some mighty bumpy air but never had he met up with a jarring nightmare such as the voyage back to base in the P-T boat.

The little craft did not move through the water, it moved over it. It hit each wave crest at its top and ricocheted on to the next one. Dave hung onto a handhold set in the boat's side and felt himself drenched with spray.

"Here they come," said somebody standing near him. "Best get under cover."

He looked up and saw the Jap planes slashing down. The mosquito boat's guns opened up with a hammering roar as the P-T went into a series of neck-jarring turns that reminded Dave for all the world of a roller coaster.

ONE Jap slurred overhead and smashed into the sea just ahead of the boat. Another fell afoul of one of the pom-poms and streaked up into the sky, trailing a long plume of black smoke, before it fell off and flip-flopped back toward the Bay.

The other Nip ships drew off, warily, and circled awhile before they peeled off for their next runs. Dave heard slugs hammer on armor plate somewhere on the little craft, the sound of the hits peculiarly distinct over the roar of the P-T's guns. Somebody yelled and Dave saw another Jap ship twisting seaward, a bright plume of flame.

Then, suddenly, the fight was over. The mosquito boat cut its speed as it slid into its protected slip at Corregidor. The Navy officer beside Dave turned and grinned.

"Fun, eh?" he asked.

"Yeah," said Tilden weakly. "Lots of fun."

He stayed at Corregidor for a week, by order of his C.O. He was there when General MacArthur and President Quezon evacuated Manila and came to the fortress. Itching for action, he was unable to get an order to return to his unit.

"What would you do?" somebody asked him. "There aren't any planes for you to fly."

"They'll be coming," Dave said doggedly. "We ought to have reinforcements any day now."

"Well—maybe," the other man said.

He was at Corregidor when the Japs bombed the city that MacArthur had named an undefended place. He watched the towers of smoke rise toward the sky and he bit back the half-sobs that rose in his throat at his own futility, at his stupidity and the stupidity of so many others in not seeing the Jap menace for what it was.

Esther—what had happened to her?

Then, one day, he learned what had happened to Esther. He had been shifted to Bataan, and with all the other grounded airmen, he was helping build a secret airfield that was to accommodate the planes that were coming to reinforce them. With the Filipino and American enlisted men, the flying officers worked with picks and shovels, with logs to fill in swampy places, to make that airfield on which the planes from the carriers, the planes from Java or New Guinea or New Britain, would land.

At night, after the inevitable twilight Japanese air raid, the men would gather around the big radio—an antiquated battery set of erratic behavior.

Gathered about the horn loud speaker,

they would listen to the Voice of Freedom from Corregidor and hear words of encouragement spoken by Filipino and American announcers. Then, at times, they would hear broadcasts from the Japs, speaking from Manila.

IT WAS one of these Jap broadcasts that told Dave what had happened to Esther Blaney.

"This," said a correct voice one night, "is Captain Hirotu Hammanita speaking. I am speaking to the Filipinos who have been misled into fighting against their friend and protector, Japan. I have some personal messages to give to the Yankees and our friends, the Filipinos, on Corregidor and Bataan.

"You are doomed, you know, unless you surrender. If you do surrender, you will be treated well. If you are so stubborn as to carry on this senseless fight, you must suffer the consequences. Not only you, but those you left behind in Manila.

"One of these left behind, a white woman and the daughter of a Yankee colonel, will speak to you tonight. She will tell you how all-powerful is the Emperor's Army. She has seen them with her own eyes and she will tell you what she has seen. This is Miss Esther Blaney, the daughter of Colonel Ross Blaney of the Yankee Army."

Dave gasped.

The radio crackled and squealed. Then there came a girl's voice. Despite the old radio's distortion, Tilden recognized the voice as Esther's.

"I have been given the opportunity to speak over the radio by Captain Hammanita," Esther said. "I want to ask you all to surrender."

Dave felt sick inside. Some of the men around him shifted uneasily, cursing under their breath.

"Yes, surrender," went on Esther. "Surrender if you know what's good for you. Surrender if you want to live—instead of dying for freedom. If your life is precious to you, so precious that you would rather live a slave than die a free man, surrender.

"Surrender, if you are willing to give up everything that you have lived for, fought for—that your forefathers lived for and fought for. In that case, surrender. Otherwise, fight on—and on—and—"

There was the flat crack of a slap and Dave could hear Esther moan. Then came Hammanita's smooth, correct voice.

"There has been a mistake," he said. "The white fool has been dealt with. Now we will hear a record."

Music blared, while Dave sat beside the radio, his fists clenched and tears spilling down his bearded cheeks. None of his mates made the mistake of saying anything to him. He was left alone in his suffering. . . .

CHAPTER V

Desperate Mission

SO NOW he crouched in his foxhole while the Jap bombs sprayed him with dirt and pebbles. The sound of the ground fighting seemed much nearer than on the previous day. The ambulance trains passing his position toward the shore seemed much longer. And he had to sit there, a bird with clipped wings.

Somebody crawled to him and touched him on the foot. Hippy Smith, a gaunt, bewhiskered giant, beckoned. Dave turned and moved out of the shallow foxhole behind Hippy. Once screened by the thick jungle, they got to their feet and made for the C.O.'s shack.

"What's up?" Dave asked.

"Special orders," Smith said. "The C.O. just got them. You're slated for something pretty big, I think."

The C.O. shuffled some papers on the makeshift desk before he began talking.

"I understand the colonel's daughter, Miss Blaney, is your fiancée, Lieutenant," he said.

"Well—"

"I knew you'd want this detail," the C.O. interrupted. "If you feel up to it."

"Of course," Dave said tensely. "What is it, sir?"

The C.O. rolled a pencil between his palms.

"Colonel Blaney," he said, "was killed at Clark Field."

"I didn't know that," Dave said. "I'm sorry, sir."

"We all are," said the C.O. "But on the day he left for the field, the ninth of last month, he gave Miss Blaney some

papers. He told her to keep them and to destroy them, if necessary, rather than have them fall into enemy hands. She kept them and, when Manila was evacuated by our forces, she destroyed the papers."

He paused.

"But not," he added, "until she had opened them and memorized most of the contents of the dispatches."

He tapped on the desk top with his pencil.

"Colonel Blaney," he said, "was connected with G-2, although few people realized it. The information that Miss Blaney is carrying in her head is of utmost importance to the Allied forces. The Japs suspect it, but they have no proof. The young lady, I might add, has succumbed to neither threats nor mistreatment nor promises."

"But she's a prisoner, sir. What—?"

"She is permitted an hour's walk each day," the C.O. said. "Always accompanied by a guard, of course. Tomorrow, the guard will be a Korean and the hour for the stroll will be just after dark."

"The Korean is anti-Japanese. This thing, if it goes through, doubtless will cost him his life, but Koreans are fiercely patriotic and are perfectly willing to sacrifice themselves. This man has posed for years as intensely loyal to Japan, just for this chance to strike a blow at them. He's not likely to miff it."

"And what do I do, sir?"

"Miss Blaney will be taken aboard a small boat at the waterfront. A Filipino girl, disguised as Miss Blaney, will continue the stroll with the Korean guard. She, too, is giving her life, or more, for freedom."

"We hope the Japs will not discover the switch until the boat has made it back to a certain point—here." He pointed at a spot on the enlarged map of Manila Bay that lay in front of him. "You'll be waiting there with a seaplane."

"Seaplane!" Dave exploded. "I didn't think we had any seaplanes!"

THE C.O. grimaced. "We haven't," he said grimly. "No good ones. This plane is a patchwork of parts assembled from several that were sunk in the first few days. Maybe it will fly, maybe not. We've got to take the risk. We can't

radio Miss Blaney's information because the Nips would be sure to get it. No, she has to deliver that information first-hand to the proper authorities. How about it, Lieutenant?"

"Of course," Dave said. "One thing, though. May I accompany the crew of the small boat that picks Miss Blaney up?"

The C.O. frowned.

"Irregular," he said. "But—well, if the boat doesn't get through; if the whole scheme fails, you'll be of no use—er—yes. I think we can arrange that."

The night was black as the tiny boat, propelled by muffled oars, slid into the quay at Manila, two nights later. There was the lapping of water against the weatherbeaten stone dock, the clump of sentry boots on the street overhead, the constant drone of Japanese planes in the air.

"Two minutes," breathed the naval officer in Dave's ear. "Close squeak back there with that destroyer's flashlight, huh?"

Dave nodded his head. Cold perspiration coursed down his back and he found that his hands were trembling slightly. Suppose the Japs refused to let Esther take her evening stroll. Suppose everything had been discovered and—suppose—suppose.

Footsteps sounded and the naval officer clutched Dave's arm for silence. The sentry's boots were loud on the cobbles as he hurried toward the person approaching.

"*Choto mate!*" the sentry challenged. "*Moshi moshi!*"

There came an answering voice in gabbling Japanese. There was the clatter of the sentry's rifle as he brought it down to port arms.

"Okay," breathed the naval officer. "Now we move."

They went over the side of the boat and up the worn stone steps. The sentry stood with his back toward them and, beyond the sentry, was Esther and the Korean guard.

Dave moved silently, swiftly. His arm encircled the sentry's neck and he jerked backward. The knife the naval officer had given him slid in and out again. The sentry gasped and went limp.

"Quick!" the Korean said, in English. "I followed, believe. Quick."

Dave grabbed Esther's arm and pushed

her toward the steps where the naval officer waited. Then, out of the shadows, came a voice.

"Ah, Lieutenant Tilden," purred Mister Hammanita. "I expected you. I could have killed you the moment you stepped in sight but I waited until you killed the guard. You see, otherwise, I might have been forced to treat you as a prisoner of war—not nice treatment, I assure you.

"But now, seeing you have killed a guard, you can be dealt with as a spy. Those refinements of torture I mentioned at Clark Field that day—you'll know them now."

HE CAME out of the shadows, his pistol in front of him. Dave could see the glitter of his eyes in the darkness.

"Make no move," the Jap ordered. "I would not shoot to kill, just to cripple. Raise your hands, yess?"

It was then the Korean moved. He brought up his heavy rifle and made a smashing sweep toward Hammanita. The Jap's gun yapped once and the Korean doubled in the middle. Then Dave leaped.

One hand struck down the gun, the other grabbed the Japanese spy's throat in a clutch his fingers had been aching for these many weeks. Hammanita kicked, squirmed, bit, clawed, but he was helpless. He screeched out one wild cry before Dave shook him like a rat and heaved him bodily over the sea wall, into the turgid waters of the Bay.

There was a girl standing beside Dave. For a wild moment he thought Esther had come back but closer inspection showed a dark-skinned girl, her face heavily powdered, wearing what obviously was a blonde wig.

"Go now," said the girl in an accented voice. "Hurry! We must not die for a failure!"

Dave whirled and ran for the steps. The boat already was moving out from the pier as Tilden threw himself over the gunwale.

"Row," hissed the naval officer. "Row, if you want to live."

The little boat surged out into the bay. Behind them, they could hear pounding feet, hoarse cries, the single, brief scream of a girl. The oars moved rhythmically and the boat traveled fast.

Dave crouched in the stern, his arm around Esther.

"My dear," the girl whispered. "I—I've found out, now."

"I knew you would," Dave whispered back. "Now, all we have to do is get out of this alive."

All was confusion, back on shore. The Japs, Dave remembered, never appeared at a worse advantage than when they were surprised. Hammanita, apparently, had undertaken the exposure of this escape as a personal mission, doubtless to gain further honors for himself. Certainly, it seemed, he had been accompanied by no patrol.

The shot had brought other sentries but they were ignorant of exactly what had taken place. They had found a dead Korean, a dead Japanese guard, Mister Hammanita—Captain Hammanita—and a girl in a blond wig.

No wonder, then, that the searchlights were slow in coming on. One by one they showed, wavering uncertainly out over the Bay.

The spikes of glaring light cut through the darkness, moving here, there, into the sky.

"Only a question of time," the naval man grunted. "They'll spot us and then it'll be Kitty-bar-the-door. That destroyer—"

"Listen!" Dave said.

There was the sound of plane motors, approaching the shore. There were one—two—three—four of them. And they were P-40s! They came in, sweeping over the Nipponese destroyer and there was the hollow roar of bombs finding their mark. They kept on, toward the brilliantly lighted shore line. Dave yelled aloud as he heard the rattle of machine-gun fire.

"Timed to the second!" shouted the naval officer. "What swell work!"

The P-40s, equipped with makeshift bomb racks, swept down the harbor front, blasting everything in their path. Then, before the Nipponese could recover, they were gone, and behind them lay the searchlight batteries, the anti-aircraft guns, in heaps of smouldering wreckage.

"Okay, now," said the naval officer. "We're out of their range. Start the motors."

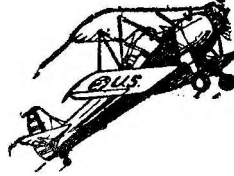
"Good luck," said the C.O., just before Esther and Dave climbed into the

rickety seaplane that bobbed at its mooring in the carefully screened bay. "You'll make it. The P-40s are busy in another sector and they'll draw off most of the Nips. Get through, Lieutenant, and take care of this young lady. She's very precious to us, right now."

"And precious to me, sir," grinned Dave. "We'll get through."

He paused to kiss Esther, in full view of the other pilots and the smiling C.O. There was a brief cheer from the haggard men he was leaving behind.

He would get through. He knew he would. He had to, so that, some day, he could come back to Bataan, to Corregidor, to Manila—the Philippines freed of all the Mister Hammanitas.



American flier Ray Vollmer settles an old score, begun in a soap box derby, against a Luftwaffe ace over Tunisia in

SPITFIRE YANK

By JOE ARCHIBALD

An Exciting Complete Novelet Coming Next Issue

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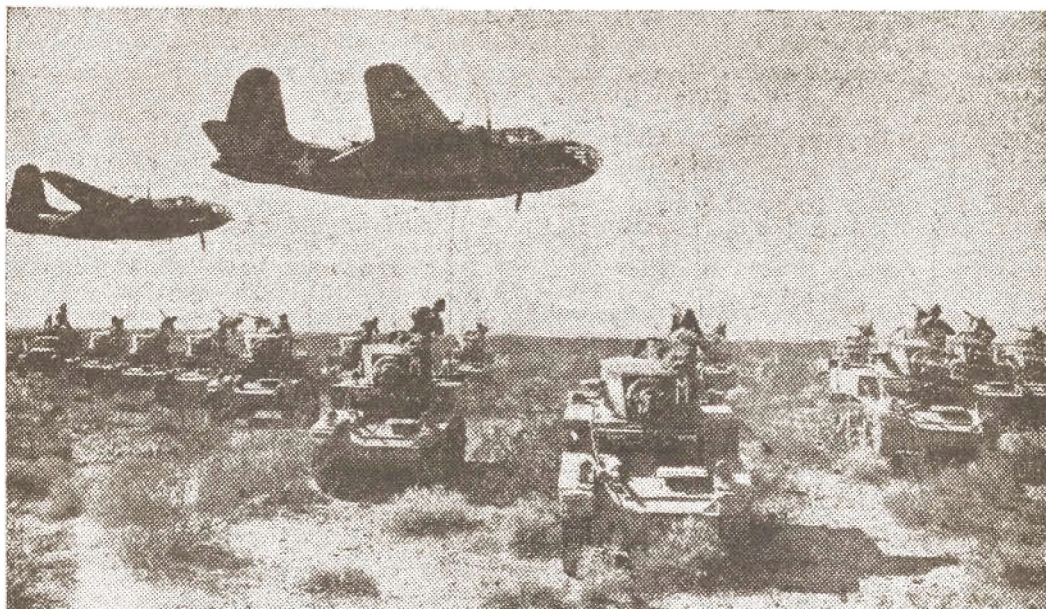
2. APPLY LATHER or Brushless Shaving Cream while face is wet. If lather is used, dip your brush in water frequently



3. TWO EDGES double blade life. Marks indicated above identify edges, enabling you to give both equal use and get extra shaves



4. CLEAN BLADE in razor by loosening handle, then rinsing in hot water and shaking. Wiping the blade is likely to damage the edges



Official Photo, U. S. Army Signal Corps

A combined air-armed forces operation over the California desert—with attack bombers brushing the tops of a light tank company

Prelude to DESERT COMBAT

By

MAJOR JOHN Mc L. REDDING

America's Air and Ground Forces Are Learning to Adapt the Fickle Ways of the Sand Country to the Requirements of Modern Warfare!

THE desert floor is sparsely clothed with stunted growth—cactus, mesquite, Joshua trees, sagebrush and Palo Verde. The soil consists of sand and rubble from the mountains. Like an abandoned brickyard, the loose rock and shale make traveling by foot virtually impossible.

Tanks and half-tracks have supplanted the Gila Monsters and jack rabbits as denizens of the desert. When these armored monsters move, they mark their progress by towering walls of dust. But when they remain still, the tanks and half-tracks blend into the desert floor. With rudimentary camouflage, tanks melt from sight in an unbelievably short distance.

From the air, at 3,000 feet, it is impossible to pick out a stationary tank. An entire armored regiment, if properly dispersed, cannot be spotted. From the air the desert floor seems bare.

"The explanation," explained Colonel R. H. Lee, who led the Second Air Support Subcommand in recent desert maneuvers with the Armored Force, "lies in the distortion caused by the heat.

"When I first flew over this area last May, I couldn't see a hiding place anywhere. But the truth is that the whole desert is one huge hiding place for vehicles that remain stationary. Ground commanders should always remember that. If they let the dust settle and remain stationary the planes above cannot pick up their dispositions."

Desert Distortion

This is one of the lessons learned in the desert by the Air Forces Air Support units. They have learned too that it is impossible to tell the difference between tanks and trucks from normal heights when the vehicles are in motion. The heat waves emanating from the superheated sand destroy all form for the eye.

"But," Colonel Lee pointed out, "there's one thing to remember. When you see a dust cloud, and you can't safely come down to look the column over, there is much to be learned by just watching the dust.

"If it billows along in a solid wall, that's a truck column. If the dust wall is marked by curling spires of dust, it indicates track-laying

vehicles—tanks or half-tracks. But you can't always be sure. There's a little trick they pull out here

"They have the peeps dressed up with papier maché coverings that make them look like light tanks. They drag empty gas cans an logs behind them to help stir up dust. When you run into anything like that from the air, you must be very careful. Otherwise you'll have your people outchasing the paper tanks while the real ones smack you somewhere else."

Air support is the big problem of the desert maneuvers. The United States Army in the western desert of California is trying to develop a combination ground-air striking force that can move with speed and power. The highly mobile tank units can strike and be gone within a margin of minutes. To be effective, combined tank and air operations must be co-ordinated to the split second.

Split Second Timing

The low-flying elements of the air support unit must strike immediately in front of the advancing tanks. They must be devastatingly swift. The attack lasts only a few seconds. Then the tanks and the armored infantry take over.

From there on in, with the enemy demoralized by the fury of the air assault, the ground forces can strike their blow. Like the hard swinging right that follows the sharp left, the tanks deliver the knockout.

Air support of ground forces consists generally of four phases:

(1) The planned attack, where the planes deliver their blow according to the schedules laid out in the combined operations tent of the advancing army.

(2) The attack delivered by the air forces when a ground commander finds himself in trouble and appeals for aid through the air support party that travels with a division or a smaller task force.

(3) The "lead-in" attack where high flying, speedy pursuit-type observation planes spot a target and guide bombers summoned by radio to the mark.

(4) The supply support delivered by all types of planes in co-ordinated action.

Of all the phases of air support, probably the most spectacular, from an aerial standpoint, is the "lead-in attack." During one of the later problems of the recent desert maneuvers, this aerial blow was carried out with perfect timing.

How It's Done

A high flying P-43, dodging in and out among the clouds, spots a column of dust marking the movement of enemy vehicles. The keen-eyed pilot is baffled by the dust and by the heat distortions. But he feels that the column moving below might be a target. He estimates the length of the column and flies far out of sight and hearing, drops from his high level and returns.

Now he is flying low. Following the contours of the ground, he approaches at an altitude of from 10 to 30 feet. Finally he bursts on the convoy from behind the screen of a low dune. Making a single pass under the pro-

tection of his own guns, he verifies the composition of the column.

Is it a target? Is there enough strength present to make it profitable for air attack?

There are tanks, half-tracks, personal carriers, trucks and guns—thousands of men on the move.

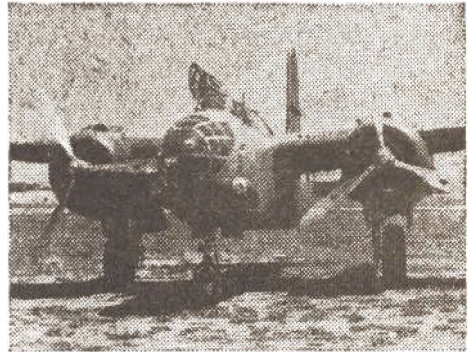
The pilot of the observation plane pulls away abruptly. He leaves the impression that his is merely a strafing enemy plane. Actually he has a far more deadly mission.

Away from the column, he climbs once more, carefully avoiding any contact with enemy planes. Safely free of the area, he radios Air Support Headquarters. He outlines the target, reports its approximate strength, its route and apparent destination. But in the desert rapidly moving armored columns can be lost easily. He is instructed—

Scramble

"Watch them. At 0945 meet bombers at . . ."

Back at the airdrome, everything is in readiness for a mission. Pilots are briefed and



The Douglas A-20 or Havoc, shown here, is the speedy light bomber that cooperates most closely with the ground forces

after an incredibly few moments, the planes take off. Meanwhile, high in the air, keeping out of the way of enemy aircraft, the observation pilot continues to watch the enemy column, marked by dust. He waits until the last possible moment before leaving to keep his rendezvous.

Finally he departs, meets the attack planes and guides them back. This time when he roars in at 30 feet he leads attack planes loaded with destruction. This blow is struck home hard and—the umpires decide—"bloody."

Tying Down the Foe

In this way the enemy can always be kept from moving by day. If he has to move at night, he doesn't have the freedom of movement necessary for victory in the desert. What makes this type of attack especially damaging is the fact that the bombers are always within radio call of Air Support Headquarters. If necessary they can be diverted to other more important targets. It keeps the planes in use, making them an always effective weapon.

Another important operation is the re-sup-

plying of an armored battalion by air. According to one problem set up at maneuvers, an armored battalion was locked in battle, unable to disengage. Ammunition was running low. Gasoline supplies were fast vanishing. Water and rations were needed.

Over his radio net, the ground commander asks for supplies. An air support party with a combat of an armored division picks up the request, passes it on back to support command headquarters. There, after conferences with Ground Forces, G-3, the decision is made. The battalion will not be sacrificed. It will be supplied by air!

At the airdrome where the big transports are based, a ground supply officer makes up the stores needed to keep the battalion going—one fire unit of ammunition, a day's ration of food and water and gasoline and oil for the tanks and half tracks. The supplies are attached to different colored parachutes designed to aid the ground commander in picking up the most necessary items.

Manna from Heaven

Ammunition goes on chutes of one color, water and rations on another, gasoline and oil on a third. While ground men load the big planes, support command headquarters co-ordinates the operation. Pursuit ships must meet the transports and escort them safely to the scene. Low level bombers are on hand to blast out enemy ack-ack and, then, after the chutes are lowered, to sweep across and keep enemy heads down while the supplies are picked up.

By now, the planes are in the air, and the ground commander knows that help is coming. He has drawn up his vehicles in a huge oval. The guns of the battalion are all trained outward. He has his panels out indicating the direction of the wind and the path along which he wishes the transports to drop his supplies.

The bombers come over, then the transports, swinging in at 400 feet. From the opened doors come the chutes. They fall in clusters, mostly within the bivouac. The chutes that fall outside are retrieved by tanks

which move forward, guns blazing.

Men slide from the hatches and double quick their way to the ammunition chutes, dragging them back to the covering tank. Later they will pick up the water, food and gasoline. But first they want the wherewithal to fight.

"Air-Heads"

The attack bombers have kept the enemy down while the ammunition chutes are retrieved. The ammunition is issued and the enemy is driven back sufficiently to permit gassing and distribution of the food and water.

Also, during the maneuver, an "air-head" is established. Transport planes land 100 tons of supplies at an improvised airdrome in the desert flats in an hour and a half. Operations such as this explain the Nazi success in Libya. Our own Army ground-air team is mastering the task.

Excessive temperatures and the constant gritty sand flying about have created a maintenance problem comparable to that experienced in Libya. And competent authorities say that the American desert, on the average, is ten degrees hotter than Egypt.

"Simplest and most important of all the maintenance dodges," Colonel Lee explained, "was one that entailed a little education. We had to teach the pilots to stay out of each other's prop wash. When they get in the wash, the intakes fill up with sand. Simple enough, but very important."

There are many other important technical phases of maintenance. Most of them are secret, pertaining to our own equipment. But Colonel Lee remarked—

"Our planes—the ships we've been using out here have stood up very well. We couldn't ask much more than what we're getting in the way of performance."

A mechanic working under lights at night was philosophical. Said he—

"Gotta keep 'em flying. We frequently work all night. But it's worth it to see these babies take off in the dawn ready for anything."

Captain Pete Standish Was Too Old to Go on Bombing Raids—



BUT, in his reconnaissance missions, he always carried bombs with him—just in case . . .

YOU'LL be amazed what happens when this veteran flier runs head-on into an emergency that would make many a younger man quail in *THE CAPTAIN'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT*, a zooming novelet by Norman A. Daniels that hits thrill tempo on all cylinders.



Coming Next Issue



"The Executioner," Conway yelled, "is being executed!"

COWBOY IN THE SKY

By EDWARD McCRAE

*The Nazi Gloried in His Own Brand of Fiendish Killing—
Until a Texas Puncher Showed Him a New Trick!*

LIEUTENANT TEX CONWAY, U.S. Airacobra Squadron 33 stationed in England, blew his nose violently and hurled his handkerchief to the floor.

"They can't go up without me!" he protested desperately.

Major Amos Hartway, squadron leader, eyed him without warmth. "No flying with a cold," he said firmly. "Want to injure your ears permanently? Besides, this is routine patrol. McSweeney and Lincoln will be okay with-

out you. If you're so worried about them, come over to Communications and listen to their radio report."

Lieutenants McSweeney and Lincoln waved mocking farewells to Conway as they raced to their idling planes.

"So long, cowboy!" McSweeney yelled. "Take care of your precious little nosey-wosey!"

"Don't blow too hard!" Lincoln shouted. "Might injure little man's eardrums!"

Lieutenant Conway swore ferociously

and sneezed. Then he went back to his bunk for a fresh supply of handkerchiefs and ephedrine.

By the time he reached the radio room, reports were coming in. Major Hartway was standing near the radio operator, listening to a brisk babble of voices in the loudspeaker. Conway stepped up and sneezed. Major Hartway motioned him brusquely to silence.

Lincoln's voice came, thin with distance.

"Bandits at 10 o'clock, Mac. Two of 'em."

"I see 'em, baby. Let's go."

There was a chatter which might have been static, or machine-guns. Then an alarmed shout.

"Look out, Linc! Five Messups at four o'clock!"

"Hey, look—it's the Executioner!"

"I saw him first!"

In the radio room, Tex Conway drew in his tortured breath with a groan. The Executioner was a Nazi ace who was fast becoming the nemesis of Squadron 33. More than one of their planes had gone down under his slashing attack. His ME 109G was easy to recognize because of its insignia—a dripping headsman's axe.

THE Nazi, whose name was Heinz Bulow, actually had been a state executioner in Germany before the war. Either because he was proud of his profession or because he realized its psychological effect, he carried on the name and painted his symbol, a bloody axe, on his plane.

The babble of voices in the radio broke out again. Then there was a fierce hammering which was definitely machine-guns. Abruptly the radio went *bloop* and there was only the thin howl of static.

Major Hartway made an involuntary movement toward the dials, then checked himself. The Texan's big fists knotted.

"You wouldn't let me fly with them," he breathed.

The major's eyes were desolate, but still unyielding.

"Sorry, cowboy," he said, his voice little more than a whisper. "You wouldn't be much good to us deaf."

Tex Conway turned his back and strode out.

Blackness settled upon him, deeper than any he had ever known. He'd al-

ways had friends, back on the ranch at home: good friends, with the common bond of background, school, childhood and long years together on the range. But even that had been nothing like his friendship with McSweeney and Lincoln.

The three had been welded together in a common front against death. Their swooping wings and hammering machine-guns had fought off that grim old reaper time and again—brushed him aside as he was about to pounce on one of them. Nothing ties men together like sharing their lives and fates.

Hours later, Tex Conway was tramping the field where the woods crept close, still fighting his grief and despair. Suddenly the raid alarm went off.

As the sirens screamed he looked up to see Yanks pouring out onto the field and dashing for waiting Airacobras. But before anyone could even get to his ship, the invading plane appeared. It was a twin-engined ME 110, flying high and fast.

A hail of ack-ack stormed up to meet it. Miraculously the sky blossomed with puffs of smoke like black snowballs. The ship dipped, seemed to nose down, then rolled over. A black speck dropped and then the white canopy of a parachute bloomed. The plane righted itself and zoomed away.

Tex Conway spotted the parachute's drift and saw that it would come down in the woods. He yanked his .45 from its holster and plunged into the underbrush to cut off the descending Nazi. Behind him he heard the pound of feet as his buddies followed.

The chute was spread over the brush in a little clearing and the crumpled body of the parachutist lay nearby. Conway slowed. Another flyer pounded up beside him.

"Looks like he's hurt."

"Take it easy, bud, might be a trick."

Several men converged on the still shape. As they got closer, a sudden familiarity struck Conway. He dropped caution and sprang in to turn the body over. It was McSweeney.

He'd been shot, several times. On his bloody tunic was pinned a card in good English. It read:

This one had the bad taste to get himself killed. I have the other, John Lincoln, alive

and well, I shall have the pleasure of executing him tomorrow morning, myself. Perhaps next time you stupid Americans will not meddle in things too big for you.

Heil Hitler!

The card was signed with the familiar drawing of the dripping headsman's axe and under it the neat signature, Heinz Bulow, Col.

A red mist obscured Conway's eyes for a moment. He remained on his knees beside the body until his vision cleared. Then he stood up.

"Pack him in for me, will you, boys?" he asked quietly, and, without another word, strode toward the field.

AT THE barracks he hunted up Michalsky, the daredevil Polish ace who'd been shot down in Poland, taken to Germany as a prisoner and escaped, to wind up eventually in the U.S. Army Air Force. Michalsky was said to have known Bulow in Germany.

"Yes," the Pole said quietly. "I know Bulow—the Executioner. He is mad, like Himmler. And like Himmler he kills because he loves it. But he is clever and dangerous in his madness."

"Tell me everything you know about him," Conway said, his lips tight. "Everything you ever heard or read or saw."

One bit of information came from this catechism—one clue to the madness of Heinz Bulow. He gloried in executions—and he lived in deadly fear of being some day executed himself.

Perhaps that was the key to his madness. He executed others in a frenzy to remove enemies who might some day wreak vengeance. Just as Hitler purged and purged in fear of assassination. This was Bulow's madness and weakness.

It was late afternoon when Conway left the Polish flyer. He went to the hangars, found his mechanic.

"The ban's been lifted," he lied cheerfully. "Gas her up, I'm going out."

"Yes, sir, Lieutenant," the mechanic asserted, unsuspecting. "Cold all better?"

"Sure," Conway replied. In truth, the consuming rage which was racing through his veins seemed to have scared off his cold. He went back to his bunk, dosed himself again with ephedrine and dressed for flight. Then, keeping a weather eye out for Major Hartway, he

scampered for his plane and took off.

He was circling for altitude when Hartway's voice crackled in his ear-phones.

"Conway! Where the blue blazes do you think you're going? Return to the field! That's an order! Come back here!"

Conway turned the set off.

As he gained altitude his ears began to hurt. He opened his mouth wide, gulped air, trying to equalize the pressure. It helped somewhat.

At five thousand feet the Airacobra skimmed along with less effort than a bird. It was a beautifully sensitive ship to fly, easy on the pilot.

Conway knew where he was going. They had bombed Bulow's airdrome often enough to know its location. He came over the airfield at dusk, and Nazi interceptors snarled up after him at once. He circled the field and headed back toward England.

Locking the controls so the ship would fly herself, he slid back the canopy and climbed out.

Dusk shielded him as he dropped off the wing. He let himself fall as far as he dared before pulling the ripcord. And overhead Nazi planes snarled in pursuit of the pilotless Airacobra, headed back towards England. They'd catch it and shoot it down, perhaps—never know it was empty.

Conway came down in woods. His chute caught on tree branches and left him dangling in the air. He cut himself loose, gathered up the silk and climbed to the ground. He hid the chute under a rock and in the growing darkness headed for the field.

He counted on surprise, on the fact that the Nazis would never expect a one-man invasion of their territory. His outdoor training, years of hunting in the Texas hills, enabled him to move like an Indian in these open French woods. He evaded the sentries with ease and began a careful inspection of the field.

The Nazi fliers, celebrating a victory over the Americans, never knew that a Yank was making himself thoroughly at home in their base, looking them over, studying planes and hangars and making mental maps. Conway even looked in on the celebration dinner where Heinz Bulow was the principal speaker and honored guest.

Tex Conway was watching through a window when Bulow spoke. He recognized the swarthy, thick-necked man with the light of madness in his eyes from Michalsky's description. And he burned that likeness into his memory.

IT WAS near dawn before he found John Lincoln. The field had a guard-house—a stone building with barred windows. A sentry stood before the door, which was closed with a heavy iron bolt. It was the logical place for a prisoner.

Conway had never enjoyed killing. But for the first time in his life there was a grim satisfaction in his heart as he squatted in the shadows and drew a heavy, sharp hunting knife from his clothes.

A moment later a silent shadow leaped from the dark upon the sentry. An arm went around his neck, shutting off the cry that sprang to his lips. A knee crashed into his back, doubling him backward. And then the knife slid in with cold finality.

Conway drew his automatic, carefully slid back to bolt, and levered the door open. This was the riskiest part of the job. Suppose an erring German flier were in there instead of Lincoln?

"Johnny?" he whispered.

There was a stir in the darkness and a gasp of astonishment.

"Tex! How in the—?"

"Shut up. Come out of there."

Lincoln stumbled out. Conway closed and bolted the door. He caught the sentry under the arms, hoisted the prone body upright. The soldier's belt hooked over the bolt and held him there, although his head lolled forward on his chest. Still, in the darkness, it might fool anyone who did not come too close.

Shutting off Lincoln's eager questions, they ran for the tarmac. Planes were coming in and going out, others were being serviced by Nazi mechanics.

"We've got to swipe one of those 110s," Conway said. "They're two-seaters. Can you fly one?"

"I'll fly it if you steal it," Lincoln replied.

"I'd like to get one crack at Bulow first," Conway growled, "but it ain't sensible. We'll come back in our own ships to get him."

They crept up to the edge of the land-

ing strip and picked out a plane. Mechanics were working on it, apparently readying it for flight. Another ship, a 109, was standing nearby.

"That's a single-seater. We've got to get the two-motored job."

Dawn was beginning to show over the trees to the east. The traffic at the field slowed down. From the hidden messhall in the trees came the continued sound of revelry.

Then came the alarm. From the direction of the guard-house they heard shouts in German. A rifle blasted into the night.

The men on the field looked up from their work. One mechanic started to run towards the scene of the disturbance. The other two stood irresolute. But the Yanks heard the racket from the barracks as the fliers barged out.

"Let's go!" Conway urged.

They darted from concealment and raced for the plane. The mechanics stared, at first mistaking the pair for Nazi fliers. Then they saw their error, and acted.

One was armed. He snatched for his pistol and Lincoln cut him down. The other turned and fled. In a moment the two Americans had scrambled into the plane.

Lincoln took the pilot's seat, up front. Conway slid into the back, on top of a parachute seat pack which had been left there, and grabbed the machine-guns. As Lincoln hurriedly fumbled for the starter and swore at the unfamiliar German controls, Conway swung the guns to cover the approaching Nazi mob.

"Hurry up, sonny," he said. "The welcoming committee is comin' fast."

"Where the heck is the—?"

A burst of machine-gun fire cut off his profanity. Some of the running fliers dived for cover, others fell and did not move. Rifles and pistols spat slugs across the field. Then the ME's motors roared into life.

THEY trundled forward, raced down the flight strip and lifted into the air. Peering down, Conway saw the Nazis racing over the field again, and poured lead at them. Then Lincoln banked the ME and dived.

Two 20-mm. cannon and four machine-guns thumped and stuttered. Pieces flew from the grounded Nazi planes. Men

ran, staggered and fell. Gasoline blazed up with a sodden thump.

Linc pulled out and zoomed. He dived and raked the field again. Death and destruction blazed merrily behind them as they soared once more and pointed west for England.

The dark countryside slid under them and Lincoln chanted a war song. Conway tampered with the radio, trying to find out if he could adjust it to their own wave length so as to signal the field that they were coming in with an enemy ship. Suddenly his earphones crackled, and a harsh voice spoke.

"Wait for me, Americans! We have unfinished business for this morning!"

Startled, Conway looked back. Against the lighter eastern sky, an ME 109 was coming in fast, a scant mile back.

"Hey, Linc, Bulow's here!" Conway shouted. "What luck!"

He swiveled his machine guns, tried a warning burst. The fast 109 darted in. At long range Conway tried to connect. His tracers fell short. Bulow jockeyed for the 110's blind underspot but Linc was on his toes and got away. The maneuver brought the two ships close and the machine-guns really opened up.

Conway saw the orange flames from the 109 twinkle like evil stars. Their plane leaped and thrummed to the hail of lead. Plastic flew in a shower as the storm swept briefly across the birdcage.

Conway felt the scorch of hot metal and the warm trickle of blood on his face. No bad hits. His own guns were hot with the barrage he had poured into Bulow's ship.

Bulow darted in again, clung to their tail. Conway braced himself for the hail of lead, but nothing happened. He stared through the shattered birdcage. Bulow's face was working, and he seemed to be struggling with something.

Had he hit the Nazi? No, the ship flew just as steadily as before, but no gunfire came from it. Realization struck him. His own bullets had smashed the electric firing control—Bulow's guns were out of action!

He cheered hoarsely.

"We got him, Linc—he can't shoot!"

"Is he down?"

"No, he's comin' up under us. Get away from him."

"I can't! He's made hamburger out of our controls—I can't fling this ship

around like I did before!"

Conway leaned over to look. The Executioner was sliding in close under them. They could see his swarthy, gleaming face, teeth bared in hate. They could see the insignia—the dripping axe on the plane's cowling. What was he doing?

Memory stirred in Conway.

"Hey, Linc—he's trying to ram us!"

"He can't do that!" Linc shouted. "That's copyright by the Russians!"

"He's doing it. I guess they learned something from the Russians!"

BULOW was, in fact, trying to bring the shining arc of his propeller up under the tail surfaces of the 110 in the Russian ramming tactic. Properly done, the propeller would slice off the bigger ship's tail and send it plunging down out of control.

The maneuver was new to Bulow. He had now reached the 110's blind spot and was safe from the machine-guns above him, but he was having trouble. Craning his neck, Conway saw him reach up and slide back his canopy so that he could raise himself and see better. Now he was bringing his ship up again, his face lit with fierce triumph.

"Hey, cowboy, can't you do anything?" Lincoln shouted.

"Do anything? He's on our blind spot. I can't reach him with the guns and you can't kick this crate over— Hey!"

The word "cowboy" had suddenly rung bells in his mind.

He snatched his sheath knife and in a moment was ripping at the seat pack under him. He cut through the canvas cover, shredded the silk mercilessly and yanked out the shroud lines. Deftly he cut off several lengths, rapidly braided and knotted them into a sturdy rope. Even as he finished, he felt the first vibration of Bulow's propeller.

Metal screamed and their ship trembled in every part. Then it stopped as the Executioner's nervous handling dropped him away again. He began to creep up once more.

Conway got on his knees and leaned over the side. The rope in his hands had been swiftly fashioned into a loop. Holding it in the deft fingers of a cowboy, he watched Bulow's plane rise under them.

The rope sailed out. Like something

alive, the loop dropped through Bulow's opened hatch and settled around the Executioner's neck.

Conway saw the man's surprise give way to terror. Bulow's hands flashed up, too late. The loop tightened. Conway took a turn around his machine-gun post. A moment later, Bulow's plane dropped and the Executioner was hauled, kicking and strangling, from his cockpit, to dangle in midair.

Lincoln gave a startled yell as the plane swung to the sudden new weight.

"Hey! What happened now?"

"The Executioner," Conway yelled,

"is being executed."

Michalsky had said Bulow's one fear was of being executed. Staring now at the Nazi's popping eyes, his purpling face and flailing hands, Conway knew that all Bulow's fears and hates had indeed come home to roost.

It was with relief that he cut the shroud lines and let Bulow go to a quicker death. The plane righted itself.

"Home, James," Conway said. "And take it easy, whilst I contact our Major Hartway. He's liable to be mad enough to shoot us. Forgot to tell you, Linc, I'm A.W.O.L."



HEADLINERS IN OUR COMPANION MAGAZINES

THE July issue of *SKY FIGHTERS*, now on sale, features *ACES WIN THE HARD WAY*, a smashing novel of South Sea air mystery by Robert Sidney Bowen—*THE HEART OF A MARYLAND*, an exciting novelet by Joe Archibald—plus many short stories and unusual, timely special features.

* * * *

LOOK forward to *ARMS FOR FRANCE*, the featured novel in the coming September issue of *SKY FIGHTERS*. It's the dramatic yarn of Marvin Logan, Yank flier with the R.A.F., who works hand in glove with the French underground to salvage a secret ammunitions cache. Steuart M. Emery is the author.

* * * *

THE Summer issue of R.A.F. *ACES* brings you two of the most exciting novelets of the year—*THE FERRY PILOT*, by Alexis Rossoff, and *A BOMB AND A PRAYER*, by Laurence Donovan—plus many other stories and features, as well as thrilling true accounts of R.A.F. pilots in action.

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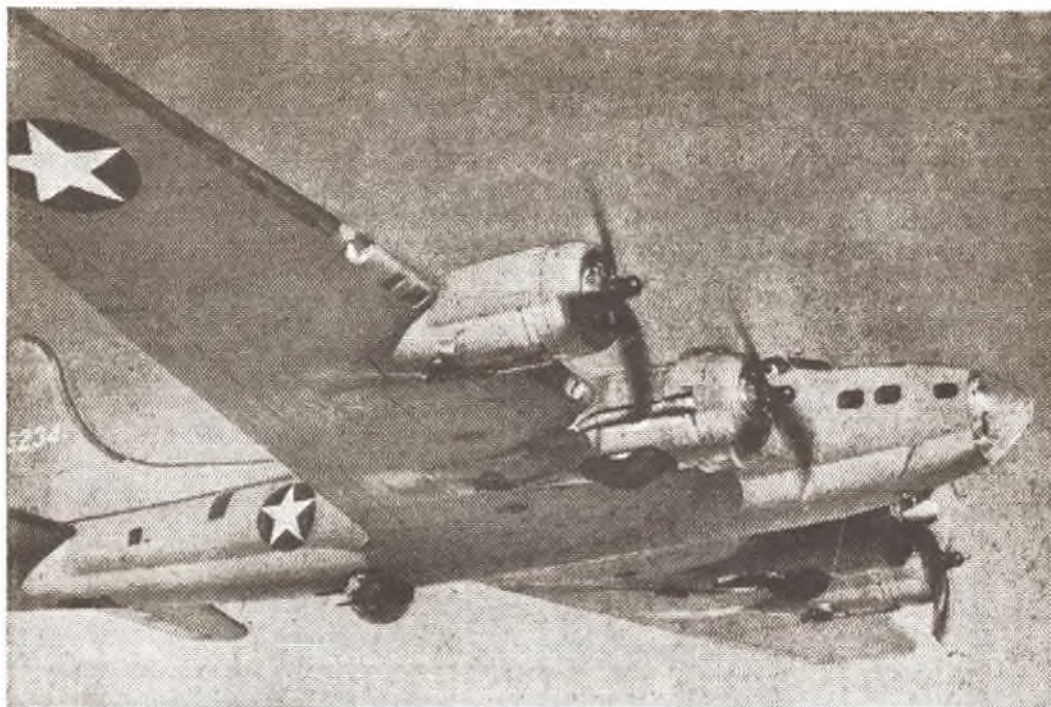
A *SINISTER* mystery of Jap treachery—*COBRAS AGAINST THE SKY*, by Sam Carson—is the feature novel of the Summer issue of *ARMY NAVY FLYING STORIES*. In addition, a novelet by Joe Archibald, several high-powered action stories, and many features—including *AMERICA'S AIR FORCES ATTACK*, by Major N. F. Silsbee of the USAAF.

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"THAT'S FOR ME FOR ENERGY"





Boeing B-17F Flying Fortress

Courtesy Boeing Aircraft Co.

THE FIGHT *over*

By
**LIEUT. HULBERT
 BURROUGHS***
Hickam Field, Hawaii

THE B-17s rolled down the Henderson Field runway early that October morning, on their way to drop a few eggs on a Jap air base at Buka and an enemy shipping concentration at Shortland Harbor. The targets were located at opposite ends of Bougainville Island.

The Zero base at Buka was visited first, and from 12,000 feet, the B-17s laid a beautiful pattern of 1,000-pounders right down the middle of the runway. Five Zeros moved in to attack but they were turned back in short order.

The B-17s then turned south to Shortland and found 38 Jap ships, including battleships, cruisers and destroyers, not to mention troop and cargo transports, all gathered together for a nice bombing. The ack-ack was heavy. But from about 11,000 feet the bombers made their runs and scored direct hits on a cruiser and a transport.

Ten Zeros came up to intercept. Two were shot down. Three B-17s collected a few routine perforations. Another was hit by a 20 mm. shell that failed to explode. One of the navigators was killed by a stray 7.7 Zero bullet. A radio operator was hit in the ankle.

The B-17s turned for home. They arrived

* Lieutenant Hulbert Burroughs, is the son of Edgar Rice Burroughs, creator of Tarzan. Before hostilities began, Lieutenant Burroughs made his own mark as a writer. He collaborated with his brother, John Coleman Burroughs, in a complete book-length novel, "The Bottom of the World," which appeared in the September 1941 issue of our companion magazine **STARTLING STORIES**, and he also authored many other outstanding stories.

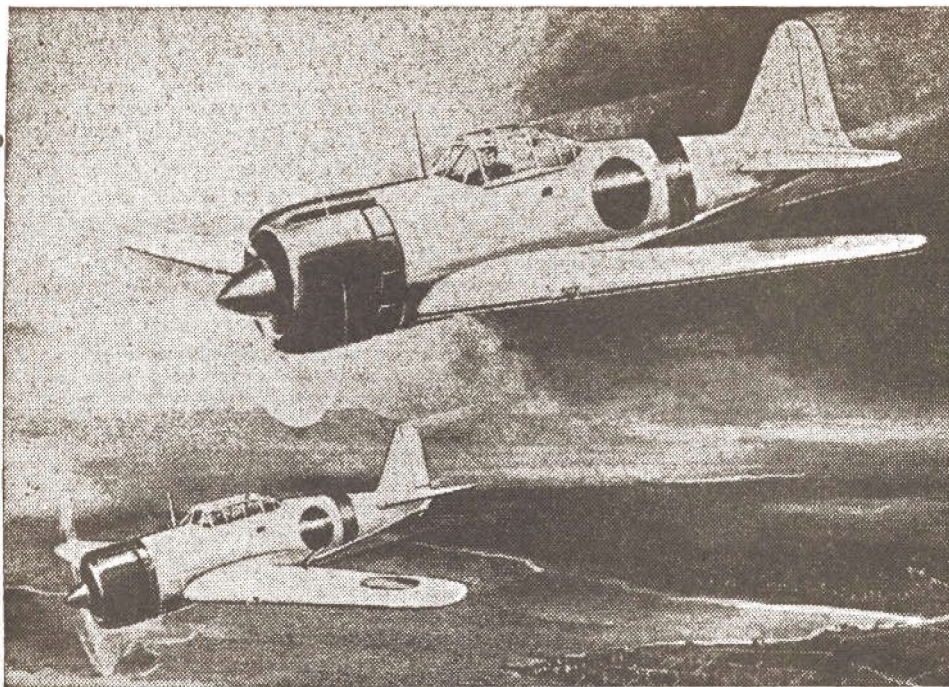
off shore near Henderson Field just as a flight of 25 Jap bombers was pounding the runway. It was easy to see that the B-17's couldn't land on the pock-marked strip, so they began circling high above the area to await developments. From their grandstand seat, the B-17 boys saw quite a show.

U. S. warships near the island filled the sky with heavy anti-aircraft fire. Long condensation streamers curled high in the sky as Marine Grumman fighters dived on the attackers. American landing boats in the process of unloading troop reinforcements cut the water with their white wakes as they chugged rapidly away from their mother ships.

Exploding Jap bombs kicked up huge clouds of dust and smoke on Henderson Field. Finally the bombers were driven off.

No Place to Go

The B-17s flew low over the field but the runway had been hit twice. In a moment, however, Marine construction crews swarmed about like ants repairing the strip. Nearby, a



International News Photo

This drawing has been made by Artist Herman R. Bolling from official photos of wrecked Jap "Zero" fighters

the SOLOMONS

What Happened to the First Flying Fortresses to Reach the Embattled Solomons Shouldn't Have Happened to an Airacobra—but the Big Planes Took It and Dished Out Plenty!

Navy dive bomber, which had been hit on the ground, sent up clouds of black smoke. Other bomb craters dotted the adjacent area.

For two hours, the B-17s circled. Then, when the Marines had finished their job, the bombers landed—and just in time to get right in the middle of a repeat performance of the show they had witnessed from the air.

Within 15 minutes another wave of Jap twin-engined bombers was spotted heading toward the field. For most of the Air Force fliers, the receiving end of a bombardment was a new position. A similarly new experience was their scramble for Marine foxholes.

The 20 Jap bombers, flying at 20,000 feet in their usual V formation, dropped their bombs. Three hit the runway, one failing to explode. One B-17 was hit but only slight damage resulted. Most of the other bombs fell wide. Again the indefatigable Marines scrambled onto the runway and, with shovels and crowbars, trucks and rollers, repaired the damage.

By evening of that day, the men were ready

for a bite to eat and a night's sleep. But that's a little out of routine for Henderson Field.

At 6:30 P.M., a battery of Jap guns from the hills to the west began shelling the field. Five-inch projectiles whistled intermittently for an hour and a half. Red tracers from Marine coastal batteries rocketed back into the hills in reply. All was quiet at 9 o'clock and some of the men turned in for the night. They were optimistic.

No Rest for the Weary

Two hours later, the Jap land batteries opened up again. At 1:30 in the morning, a Jap plane, probably a cruiser catapult type, dropped a flare behind the field and, in a few seconds, a 16-inch shell from a Jap battleship exploded overhead.

Then for two hours enemy battleships, cruisers and destroyers shelled Henderson Field and Marine emplacements with five, six, eight and sixteen-inch projectiles. Some Air Force personnel sought protection in open foxholes. Others crowded into covered dugouts. Throughout the rest of the night, many lay on their bellies on the ground behind logs or in bomb craters.

One Jap shell exploded near a dugout in which six Air Force men were lying. The walls caved in and buried five of them. The sixth, Staff Sergeant Sebastian Maraschiello, of Buffalo, N. Y., extricated himself and, during the height of the shelling, managed to rescue three of the others.

At 3:30 A.M. "Maytag Charlie," an enemy plane so dubbed by the Marines because its engines sounded like a washing machine, dropped a flare just short of the runway and then laid two big bombs down the field.

Four more times before dawn, enemy planes bombed the runway.

Shortly before sunrise, Air Force officers inspected the runway and cleared it of shell and bomb fragments. Miraculously, only two B-17's had been hit, neither damaged badly enough to keep it from flying.

But the runway was damaged, particularly on one end. A conference was held with the B-17 pilots. Could they take the heavy bombers off the shortened runway? They agreed it was worth the try rather than have their ships go through another pasting on the ground. More Jap shells from the hills broke up the conference.

The first B-17 taxied to the end of the runway in the face of the bombardment. The pilot locked his brakes, gunned the motors to full RPM and let her go. The B-17 hurtled down the pitted runway, dodged two craters and leaped into the air just in time to miss three others. A half hour later, all the planes were off the ground.

Another day had begun on Guadalcanal.

More Headaches

The Japs aren't the only headaches for the men in the Solomons. There is the little matter of weather, for one thing. A "front" in the Solomons is nothing less than a cement wall.

Then on the ground in the daytime there are flies by the millions. Malaria-loaded mosquitoes work the night shift, and they come in similar numbers. Mosquito bars are an absolute necessity.

There are no luxuries on Guadalcanal. The men sleep in tents on canvas cots with neither pads nor sheets. Officers and enlisted men usually wash their own uniforms. A few have made deals with ex-cannibal Melanesian natives for laundry—provided the fliers supply the soap. There is no hot water, of course—no fresh meat or vegetables, no sweets, no cokes, not much mail from home. And when the mail does come to the South Seas, it's usually a month or so old.

Transportation, mostly via jeeps and 2½ tonners, is "rugged." When it rains—and the yearly rainfall is about 120 inches, most of which falls during the three months rainy season—the mud is ankle deep. When the mud dries up, the dust is ankle deep. GI shoes have at last come into their own with the Air Force officers.

Despite these hardships and discomforts, a tremendous amount of work has been accomplished. One Air Force base in the New Hebrides was hacked out of a dense tropical forest and ready for use in 14 days—thanks largely to the typically American piece of heavy equipment known as the "bulldozer." On one occasion, before adequate servicing equipment was available, one crew, anxious to get into combat, filled the big gas tanks by "bucket brigade," passing five gallon "drinks" from the ground to wing.

Out in the jungle bases, there is little distinction of rank between officers and enlisted men. There is little saluting. A man is taken for what he is really worth. Between officers and enlisted men, there is a feeling of mutual respect and great confidence. This is especially true in combat crews, where morale is very high.

Variety is not lacking in the missions on which the B-17 crews fly day after day. Lieutenant Thomas H. Trent of Hardinsburg, Kentucky, and his crew were out over Kapingamarangi Island (Greenwich Island) near the Carolinas, when they spotted a big Jap radio schooner standing off the reef.

Having no bombs and despite heavy machine-gun fire, Trent dove in for an attack. For 25 minutes, his gunners strafed the enemy vessel from as low as 50 feet. By the time the crew had finished its job, the schooner was burning and had been beached.

Another of Trent's "routine" experiences occurred on the afternoon of October 15 when he flew to Guadalcanal with other B-17's to bomb a Jap invasion force consisting of cruisers, destroyers and transports. While making his bombing run from 11,000 feet on a troopship, four zeros made a concerted attack upon Trent's plane.

All in a Day

In the first blast of fire, he had his right aileron cable severed by a Jap bullet—that one-in-a-million shot. Out of control, the plane fell 3000 feet before Trent was able to right it. Again the four Zeros came in, this time to finish off the crippled B-17. Trent's gunners shot down two of the Japs and drove the others off.

Free at last of Jap fighters, Trent faced the almost hopeless task of trying to save his crippled plane. For five long hours, he alternately nursed and cursed the faltering bomber. In one stretch of rough weather, the plane began to lose altitude. Trent warned his men to prepare to bail out. But again he succeeded in gaining control.

Finally they sighted their home field and were ready to try a landing. In a wide skidding turn, Trent made the run for the field, found his right wing dropping too low. It refused to come up even with full left stick. Trent gunned number four engine, brought the wing up and made a perfect landing.

On the same flight with Trent was Lieutenant William S. Cope, Salem, Ohio, piloting another B-17. As Cope was making his bombing run on a Jap transport, the anti-aircraft bursts grew thicker. Fifteen Zeros waited overhead for our bombers to clear through the ack-ack.

Cope wanted no slip-ups. Over the interphone he told his bombardier to be ready to get bombs away.

In the excitement of the attack, the bombardier caught only the words "bombs away." Thinking that something had gone wrong and that it was an order to dump the load, he hastily jettisoned all the bombs.

A few moments later, two of the cast-off bombs, falling short of the Jap transport for which they had been intended, landed squarely on the deck of a Jap heavy cruiser. Badly

damaged, the ship was later sunk by Navy dive bombers.

Captain Vincent M. Crane, Manchester, Massachusetts, and his crew, spent an interesting twenty minutes over Jap-held Rekata Bay one afternoon. From a height of only 200 feet, they strafed ground installations, sank two anchored sea-planes, poured 700 rounds of fire into a couple of hundred Japs scrambling around the beach, got hit by a 37mm. shell which severed one of the control cables in the tail of their ship.

By skillful maneuvering, Crane made a successful forced landing at Henderson Field, tied the damaged cables together with bailing wire and made it back to his home field.

Returning from a tough bombing mission of Jap installations in the northern Solomons, three B-17's ran into one of those cement wall fronts. For hours, they sought an opening. Lost and out of gas, they were forced down at sea. Lieutenant James Van Haur and his crew spent seven days at sea on a damaged raft. One man died at sea.

In another plane, Lieutenant Colonel Philo O. Rasmusen, Salt Lake City, Utah, was knocked unconscious by the force of the water-landing. As the ship was submerging, the co-pilot, Lieutenant Clyde Shields, of Aberdeen, South Dakota, himself suffering from a deep head wound, dragged the unconscious Rasmusen through the escape-hatch, and swam with him to the raft.

The pilot of the third plane, Lieutenant Willard G. Woodbury, Omaha, Nebraska, and his crew were luckier. Uninjured, they reached shore in a few hours.

Heavy Odds

Lieutenant Sam B. White and his crew will

Next Issue: UTAH TAKES THE AIR, the inspiring story of Wendover Field, by CAPTAIN CHARLES D. FRAZER

have something to tell their grandchildren—if and when. On a mission over Jap territory, they were jumped by fifteen Zeros. In a wild fight that lasted about twenty minutes, White's plane was badly shot up.

Three hundred and fifty bullet holes riddled the ship, but the crew escaped with no injuries. Lieutenant Everett S. Turner of Binghamton, New York, was struck on the sole of his shoe by a 20 mm. shell.

"It was a GI shoe," said Turner. "The bullet suffered more than I did."

On another occasion, White and his men were out on a search mission. At 8,000 feet they flew into what White described as "an awfully pretty white cloud." A terrific downdraft hit the bomber and turned it upside down. Crew members rattled around in the fuselage like peas in a pod. The controls went limp.

White shoved the stick forward, throttled the motors down. For terrifying seconds, the plane careened wildly downward. When it finally broke out of the cloud, it was in a vertical dive.

"She was indicating three hundred and forty miles an hour straight down and with the motors idling," White reported later. "We were at two thousand eight hundred feet before I could get the nose up."

The main spark-plug for such "routine" operations was tough, but affable Colonel L. G. "Blondy" Saunders, one of West Point's former all-time star football players and coach. Working long hours with quiet determination, he still found time beyond his regular duties to accompany his boys on dangerous bombing missions.

It was the Colonel and his boys who had the hectic 24 hours operating out of Henderson Field that early October morning.

I THANK MY
LUCKY STARS
I MET YOU!

THANKS TO
STAR BLADES
I MET YOU!



4 for 10¢



When the Nazis Wangle a Fifth Columnist onto an American War Vessel, Lieutenant Doug McGregor Gets Busy—and Upsets the Plans of the Nazi Spy and a Slue of Nips!



Of a sudden the Jap carrier's flight deck buckled and fire mushroomed in the air



HOODOO CARRIER

By NATHANIEL NITKIN

An Exciting Aircraft Carrier Novelet

CHAPTER I

Mass Stomach-Ache

FOR days, since leaving Pearl Harbor, the task force of the U. S. Airplane Carrier *Essex* and her escorts of light cruisers and destroyers, had been steaming toward the Japanese Mandated Islands. Now they were nearing their goal, the Japanese naval base in Ponape Island. Consequently, the *Essex* threw out constant high and low

patrols, an endless, tiring grind for the pilots.

It was the season of squalls in the South Pacific. The sun would be brassy, the sea was dazzling gold and purple, then a squall would loom. But between squalls, planes were taking off and returning to the *Essex*.

In the ward room, Lieutenant Doug McGregor put down his mug of coffee and filled his pipe. He was a thin, sandy-haired man of medium height, Fighting Squadron Seven's executive officer.

"When I get back to civilization, I'll hire a hotel suite, pull down the shades, and sleep, sleep, and sleep," he said, lighting his pipe. "I'll forget these high patrols. And I'll see Della."

Lieutenant Commander Rainey, the tall, red-haired and green-eyed commander of Scouting Squadron Fifteen, grinned.

"Probably you won't do that for a spell, Bo. We got to attack Ponape to draw the Nips away from the other side. The Marines will take that end. It'll be a fight, man!"

McGregor nodded. He was thinking of the high patrols to guard against surprise attacks on the *Essex's* task force, and of the scouting squadrons and Torpedo Squadron Twenty that scoured the seas for enemy submarines. And of how, back in Honolulu, Rainey's sister, Della, was waiting.

Suddenly the alarm gong clanged. It was the accident signal—a crash.

"Let's go aloft and see who it is," he said grimly, and stopped short.

Rainey had put down his coffee mug and suddenly gripped his stomach, his face pale and twisted with pain. Doug McGregor grabbed him before he fell.

"What's the matter?" McGregor demanded anxiously.

Rainey pushed him aside.

"I'll be okay. Prob'ly something I ate. I'll join you on the flight deck as soon as I finish my Java, Bo. It will fix me up." But Rainey's face was deathly pale.

"I'll find out who it is," McGregor said. "I'll be right back."

HE WALKED out of the bulkhead door, and up the ladder to the walkway that extended the full length of the deck. Then as he climbed the short ladder to the flight deck, he felt a sharp pain grip his abdomen. It was like two white-hot iron prongs pressing his stomach, so sudden that his head split into a throbbing roar, and he was dangerously dizzy. He clung to the ladder as though his life depended on it.

Aviation Machinist's Mate O'Brien, on the flight deck near the ladder, had seen him. He reached down and grabbed McGregor's wrist, helped him reach the flight deck.

Doug shook his head, but the pain was there, violently worse. He could not stand without swaying. O'Brien sup-

ported him.

"Lots of pilots sick today, sir," O'Brien said.

McGregor did not hear him. He was looking aft, at the destroyer *U.S.S. Venable*. She was almost sliding alongside a wrecked Grumman Avenger, kept partly afloat by its inbuilt flotation gear. From the numerals on the torpedo bomber's fuselage, and a painted band ringing the fuselage, crossing the T, McGregor recognized the plane of Lieutenant Commander Delvin, commander of Torpedo Squadron Twenty.

It was unbelievable! Delvin was too good a pilot to have a common accident unless . . . McGregor dismissed the idea of sabotage as fantastic.

After the *Venable* fished the cracked torpedo bomber from the sea, her blinker flashed off and on. Because of his hammering headache, McGregor could not unscramble the code message.

"Delvin's dead, sir," he heard O'Brien say, and then O'Brien asked: "May I help you to the ward room, sir?"

O'Brien climbed partly down the ladder and helped McGregor reach the walkway. Commander Bennett, the plump Air Group Commander, had just arrived in the ward room when McGregor entered, aided by O'Brien.

"Another one!" Bennett groaned, and glanced at O'Brien. "Let Lieutenant McGregor have some coffee and help him to the sick bay. If we get more stomach cases like that, we're crippled. We're supposed to attack Ponape tomorrow."

A messboy brought coffee and McGregor drank it slowly. But after he finished, his pain became almost unbearable. The steward, Cassidy, was busy at the coffee table. Cassidy's face was white, and he was moving with a slightly bent back. McGregor wondered if Cassidy was sick too.

Because of many cases of abdominal pains, the petty officers' ward room had been cleared and converted into a hospital. The sick bay was not big enough to accommodate everyone.

The *Essex's* flight surgeon, Lieutenant Commander Murray, was telephoning when O'Brien helped McGregor into the petty officers' ward room.

"We've a bad attack of stomach poisoning," Dr. Murray was saying. "No, sir. It's ptomaine poisoning. Have every pilot return until the sick ones are sepa-

rated from the others." Dr. Murray paused to listen, then said, "I know sir, but a stomach poisoning attack is sudden. Perhaps that's what happened to Lieutenant Commander Delvin."

Dr. Murray was phoning Captain Williamson, who was frankly worried. The *Essex* was in the midst of the Japanese Mandated Islands, and to recall the pilots, would leave her without a single patrol until sick pilots were sorted out. During this time, an enemy submarine might sneak through and send a couple of torpedoes crashing into the *Essex*'s thin skin, or Japanese patrol bombers would stumble upon the task force and proceed to dog it until bombers or an enemy striking force hit hard at the carrier.

DR. MURRAY hung up the phone, and gave McGregor a careful examination.

"Stomach poisoning, Doug," he said. "Your case is mild though."

He dismissed O'Brien, and with the help of a Pharmacist's Mate, he forced a stomach pump through Doug's gullet. The sensation was terrible. After pumping out McGregor's stomach, Dr. Murray gave him a mild solution of mustard to drink.

"You may go to your cabin now," Dr. Murray said. "I'll report your case to Air Plot. You are relieved of flying duties until you recover. See me when you're better."

It was a short walk to McGregor's cabin, which he shared with his skipper, Lieutenant Commander Jerry Lord, the tall, taciturn commander of Fighting Seven. He undressed and lay down, but the throbbing pain kept him wide awake.

When Lieutenant Commander Lord entered the cabin later, he was tired, and frowned as he saw McGregor.

"You too," he groaned. "Half our pilots are laid up. Good thing the petty officers didn't have lobster at mess last night."

"Lobster?" McGregor asked.

"Yes," Lord said. "Doc Murray looked into the commissary. He's pretty thorough. Says it's due to canned lobster." He took a deep breath. "But know what? The Old Man found that those cans of lobster weren't ordered at all."

McGregor stared. "What do you mean?"

Lord shrugged. "Just this. The quartermaster hasn't any record for canned lobster. The steward doesn't know about it."

"In other words, somebody slipped cans of contaminated lobster into our commissary at Pearl Harbor?"

"That's right," Lord said soberly. He was taking off his flying togs, preparatory to having a shave and shower. "Your friend Red Rainey's in a pretty bad shape," he said. "Doc Murray says his case's serious."

"Will he recover?" McGregor asked anxiously.

Lord shrugged. "Can't tell."

"What happened to Delvin?"

"The *Venable* transferred his body to our ship by breeches buoy. Doc Murray says Delvin died of drowning, poor guy. Apparently he had a bad attack and passed out while taking off. Crashed into the sea. His cockpit was flooded. His gunner and bombardier are okay though. Couldn't get to him on time. It happened too fast."

Doug McGregor had a nightmare as he tossed and sweated in his sleep. In his dreams, he fought an overpowering sense of nausea and his head swelled almost to bursting point. He awoke with a start and found Lieutenant Commander Lord was bending over him with a tumbler of translucent liquid in his hand.

"Drink this," Lord said. "Got it from Doc Murray. Barley water."

McGregor drank it. He was surprised to find that the pain in his stomach had eased, and his head was becoming clearer.

"Thanks," he said.

Lord nodded. "See you later. Got to go to the ready room. Have a patrol."

Doug McGregor fell asleep again. He awoke with the sunrise, and the pain in his abdomen was gone. When he got out of bed he found he could walk as well as ever.

In his flying togs he reported to Dr. Murray. The surgeon gave him a hasty examination and nodded.

"You're okay now," he said. "Recovery from stomach poisoning is swift and complete. Go to the sick bay and wait for me. I must first attend to these men."

He glanced at some pilots lying on folding hospital cots that were set up in the ward room. Tired pharmacist's mates were taking temperature readings and jotting them down on chart boards.

CHAPTER II

Jap Bombers Overhead!

DR. MURRAY was proud of his thoroughness. So when he arrived in the sick bay, he gave Doug McGregor a real flight test including the Schneider Index test in which he felt Doug's pulse while Doug climbed and descended a small step-ladder rapidly. Then followed an orientation test during which the pilot sat in a turning chair and bent double, shielding his eyes. He had to call the direction toward which the chair turned. The final examination was a perception test, wherein he pushed and pulled two rods, twenty feet away, until they were in perfect alinement.

"You're fit for flying," Dr. Murray said. "You may report to Air Plot for duty."

When McGregor reported to Air Plot, Commander Bennett ordered:

"Go to your ready room and take command of the section that's going to relieve Jerry Lord. He's on a high patrol now."

The ready room was almost empty when McGregor arrived. Only four pilots—Ensign Roberts, Reserve Ensign Prince, two petty officers and himself.

The "talker," the squadron yeoman with earphones strapped to his head, and a telephone mouthpiece on a chest plate so that he could maintain constant communication on a battle circuit to Air Plot, was in position at the ready room blackboard. McGregor jotted the figures on the blackboard on his chart board. It was the only way he would find the *Essex* in the trackless wastes of the Pacific.

"Ceiling unlimited," the talker said, passing along data from Air Plot. "Surface wind two hundred and twenty-five degrees. Velocity ten knots, steady."

It was ideal flying weather, and McGregor should have no trouble keeping his patrols spread far and wide to cover as much territory as possible.

"We will maintain line formation, each plane spread out as far as possible, within sight of the other," he said to the pilots. "Signals will be passed by wagging wings. Don't use your radio under any circumstances."

"At six-thirty," the talker interrupted,

"the position of the *Essex* was eight degrees and five minutes north latitude; one hundred and sixty degrees, forty minutes east longitude. Course three hundred and thirty-three degrees, True. Speed thirty knots."

After jotting down the information, McGregor said:

"We'll fly twenty miles ahead of the *Essex*, return, and scout ten miles astern. We'll repeat this procedure constantly."

The bulkhead door opened and the lights dimmed automatically. Commander Bennett entered.

"I'd like to speak to the pilots, Doug," he said.

McGregor stood aside and Bennett faced the pilots.

"Chinese Intelligence sources report that an enemy striking force is hunting for us," he said seriously. "They don't know the enemy's strength, but say that the enemy has a fair idea where we are."

Doug McGregor was abruptly wondering if the matter of the cans of contaminated lobster could be linked to the Japanese striking force.

"Ordinarily," Commander Bennett said, "we would seek out the enemy and give him battle. But we must keep away from the Japs until most of our pilots recover. Japanese patrol bombers may be hunting for us. So if you see an enemy patrol bomber, shoot it down before it betrays our position."

Suddenly the talker said: "Pilots, man your planes!"

The loud-speaker repeated: "Pilots, man your planes!"

Though the *Essex* task force was in the home grounds of the Japanese Fleet, they saw not one enemy plane. Submarine patrols belonged to the scouting squadrons and to Torpedo Twenty, maintaining low altitude picket lines. It was ominous, McGregor thought, because if the Japs were hunting the *Essex* they would throw out their patrol bombers. Perhaps they already knew where the *Essex* task force was.

FOUR hours in the air, and three hours rest followed one another. As sick pilots recovered they were immediately pressed into service.

The *Essex* and her escorts were zig-zagging, neither nearing nor drawing away from Ponape Island. Captain Williamson had said they would not

leave their post until they had raided Ponape. The task force was trying to gain time for more pilots to recover.

Nevertheless, though Doug McGregor felt as if he had become a mere automaton, whose only function in his Vought-Sikorsk Corsair fighter was to keep the *Essex* and her escort ship afloat, at times he thought of the cans of contaminated lobster. Ptomaine poisoning alone had rendered the *Essex* Air Group impotent and had placed the task force in danger. He had several theories about how the canned lobster had been smuggled into the ship, but none of them were plausible.

He discussed it with the pilots, but they knew little about it. In the ward room, he studied Cassidy. The steward, too, had recovered, but McGregor wondered if Cassidy knew more than he revealed. After all, food belonged to Cassidy's department.

Once he found Cassidy alone on Number Three Deck. Though naval customs had erected a high barrier between Cassidy, an enlisted man, and McGregor, a commissioned officer, he drew the steward into a conversation about the lobsters.

"No, it's impossible to tell whether or not food is bad, sir," Cassidy said. "Looks and smells just like good lobster. but though it's harmless-looking, it's deadly, sir."

McGregor dismissed his suspicions when he remembered that navy cooks and stewards were thoroughly trained.

On the second night, Doug McGregor felt unaccountably restless. He knocked dottle out of his pipe, pocketed it, and left the ward room. Climbing the ladders to Number Three Deck, he paced aimlessly.

Suddenly he found himself at the stern. He looked at the track of phosphorescent water that the sea churned, and at the sky. Heavy clouds were passing the port beam. They obscured the stars from time to time.

He was about to turn when he heard the drone of airplane engines. The sound faded, then abruptly grew stronger, the inharmonious throb of planes in formation, flying at low altitude. The noise was totally unlike the healthy roar of the *Essex's* airplanes. It came from astern.

"Planes astern!" yelled a seaman from

aloft.

Doug McGregor darted toward the ladder. A figure suddenly loomed on the deck, and before McGregor saw him, they crashed. The other man was Cassidy, the steward.

"What's it—our planes, sir?" stammered Cassidy.

McGregor picked himself up. "No. Enemy planes."

Without waiting for more, McGregor ran to his squadron ready room and flung open the door.

"Enemy planes overhead!" he yelled. "Warn Air Plot!"

"Aye, aye sir!" the startled talker exclaimed.

McGregor had left his flying coveralls and helmet in the ready room, to make the most of his rest period. Swiftly he donned them.

"Lieutenant McGregor," the talker said. "Air Plot says for you to take your section aloft as soon as they give word, sir. Lieutenant Commander Lord's section has just returned, and their planes will not be ready on time. We do not dare to contact Lieutenant Macway's section by radio."

McGregor jotted down the data from the blackboard, then the latest information the talker gave Lieutenant Parnell, the assistant deck officer, arrived with the spotting sheet, which he tacked on the part of the blackboard marked "Spot."

"We've run through a rain squall," he said. "Hope clouds hide us from these bombers until you fix their hash."

MCGREGOR grinned and studied the spotting sheet. He found his plane, Number Ten, on the starboard and memorized its position. He would have to crawl cautiously along the flight deck in the night toward his own Corsair.

The talker passed more information about the Japanese patrol bomber that shipboard radiolocators revealed. They were still miles behind, though the sound of their engines was distinct. They were circling, apparently waiting for a signal. He gave the probable bearings of the patrol bombers.

Then, abruptly, the talker and the loud-speaker said at the same time:

"Pilots, man your planes!"

After the flight rendezvoused around McGregor's Corsair, he led the pilots on

a steep climb to the starboard of the task force. He watched the rim needles of his altimeter, and his compass carefully, and when the altimeter reached 15,000 feet, he adjusted his oxygen mask.

Slowly the needle swung past 25,000 feet, and when it reached 28,000 feet, he led the section on a long, sweeping bank aft and past the task force, miles away on their right side. He flew straight for ten minutes, and banked again, toward the *Essex*.

Then he saw tiny blue points of flame move below and ahead of him toward the task force—four pin joints. Either a four-engined Japanese bomber, which was unlikely judging from the discordant tone of their engines, or two bi-motored patrol bombers.

McGregor's tactical maneuver had enabled him to make a long detour so that the Japs would not see his section. Now he was springing on the Japs from the rear.

He wagged his wings to catch his pilot's attentions, not yet sure that his men had seen the targets. All the time, he watched, he watched the tiny blue jets so he would not lose them in the black night.

He flashed on the dim light on his turtleback twice in rapid succession, his signal to change to line formation. Because it was necessary to give his orders by blinking that faint, shield light, he was slightly ahead of the line.

Nearing the bombers, Doug McGregor made out their dark mass against a slightly lighter sky. They looked like poor copies of the *PBY Catalina*.

He was waiting until he was near enough to make a sudden diving attack tell when suddenly a bright red light glowed on the sea. It silhouetted the *Essex* and drifted away from the carrier until a destroyer rammed it. But it had lit the sea long enough for the patrol bombers to try to straddle the carrier with heavy demolition bombs.

As he saw the dim bomb bays of the patrol bombers open, he flipped on the radio with desperation.

"Sioux from Comfightron Seven Dog Ten—urgent!" he called. "Sioux from Comfightron Seven Dog Ten—urgent! Enemy patrol bombers making a run on you."

"Sioux" was the *Essex's* code call, and "Dog" was his section code word.

Though radio silence had been decreed, Doug knew that the patrol bombers would have reported her position anyway. Then he began to get the answering call:

"Comfightron Seven Dog Ten from Sioux—Roger."

Just as he heard the last syllable of the acknowledging radio call, heavy bombs hurtled toward the sea. He centered the foremost bomber in his iron sights, then flashed the weak turtleback light on and off—the signal to attack!

Simultaneously he pressed the solenoid switch on the top of his stick. He heard his guns begin their hurried stutter, and saw tracers fountain from his wing guns and from his cannons. He saw tracers of other Corsairs grope for the Jap crates and disappear into their masses. And as his slugs ripped into tail assembly of the bomber he had selected, he saw a frantic response of orange fire from the guns in the Jap blister turrets.

DOUG MCGREGOR eased the stick and slapped on a little more rudder. Brilliant tracers danced explosively along his prey's fuselage, crashed into the port wing nacelle. Suddenly a volume of smoke blacked out the wing. A tiny tendril of fire silhouetted the plane and its mate, which was shuddering under an awful hail of lead.

The wing nacelle of the first bomber exploded. The concussion threw the other off. McGregor bored into it, and suddenly it lurched and trembled. Then fire enveloped her. The patrol bombers spiraled toward the sea like torches falling from a mountain top.

McGregor glanced at his compass and found he was on the course he had calculated. He would find the *Essex* without any trouble unless she was sunk, or gone off course to confuse the bombers. If that were the case he had to keep radio silence so the enemy would not get wind of her new course.

He waited for his planes to rendezvous behind him. Though it was dark, he saw their dim outlines. One was missing, a casualty to the Jap patrol bombers' turret guns.

Then Doug McGregor led his section on a steep glide toward the sea. But where the *Essex* should have been was nothing but the broad sea!

CHAPTER III

A Spy Aboard!

FROWNING, McGregor tried to keep calm. It was a serious moment in which to get lost. The lives of his pilots as well as of himself depended on his judgment. If they were lost, the planes would crash into the sea, and fifteen hundred men on the *Essex*, thousands more on the cruisers and destroyers would be in more active danger because of the loss of valuable fighter planes and pilots.

In such a case, he might be justified in breaking radio silence again to get a new bearing. But the Japanese patrol bombers had reported the *Essex's* position and enemy listening stations would be on a twenty-four-hour schedule to pick the slightest call from the ship's direction. They only knew where she was; they did not know her course. Accordingly, McGregor resolved not to break radio silence until the last moment.

He studied the gasoline gauge. He had another hour of flying left. Then looked at the instruments. He tried to put himself in Captain Williamson's shoes by guessing what course his Old Man would have taken. Then he grinned.

He kicked the rudder pedals and shoved the stick slightly. His Corsairs followed his maneuver, and they skimmed over the sea until they crossed fresh tracks that warships left. And much to his relief, he found that all ships were afloat.

Following the tracks, he overtook the *Essex* and dived over the carrier's "island," zooming sharply near the bow. It was the recognition maneuver. The *Essex* turned into wind and took aboard the returning fighters.

To McGregor's surprise, his assistant plane captain, Aviation Machinist's Mate Second Class Corcoran took over his plane.

"Gosh, we thought you were goners, sir," Corcoran said. "We sent a liaison plane aloft to warn the pilots of our new course. The liaison plane returned without locating you."

"What happened to O'Brien?" McGregor asked.

"Bomb splinter killed him, sir."

"Who lit the Coston flare?"

Corcoran shrugged. "Scuttlebutt gossip's got it that a spy's aboard. He dropped the flare. Everyone says he's responsible for the ptomaine poisoning, sir. We didn't catch him. Too dark on the decks."

Before McGregor could ask further questions, a marine orderly approached him and saluted.

"Captain Williamson's compliments, sir. You are requested to report to him in his cabin at once, sir."

Some of the Old Man's staff officers were in his cabin when Doug McGregor reported. Captain Williamson, a tall, thin man with a chiseled face that was tanned by years of exposure to sea, returned McGregor's salute.

"What type of planes were they?" Captain Williamson asked, after McGregor made his report.

"I think they're poor copies of our PBs, sir," McGregor informed.

Captain Williamson nodded to Commander Bennett, who said:

"Doug, you're in command of Fighting Squadron Seven now. Jerry Lord's wounded by a bomb splinter. It isn't serious, but he can't fly with his arm in a sling."

McGregor saluted, but before he went, he turned back to Commander Bennett.

"Has Red Rainey recovered yet, sir?" he asked.

Bennett shook his head. "I think you'd better go and see him in the sick bay. Jerry Lord's there, too."

"Just a minute," Captain Williamson interrupted. "Before you go, I want you to realize that there is an enemy agent aboard this ship. Until we catch him, we have to be on alert."

DOUg MCGREGOR went to the ward room for a cup of coffee and for a smoke, but did not bother to take off his flying togs. He had to be ready for any emergency, now that the Japs had a fair idea where the *Essex* was.

The presence of the spy aboard complicated matters, for unquestionably the spy was responsible for the contaminated lobster. Was the spy in the steward's department? The messboys hardly looked like spies, and Cassidy himself had been poisoned.

Thinking of the sick pilots, McGregor determined to go to the sick bay as soon

as he had his rest to see Rainey.

In the ward room, he heard more of what had happened while he had been aloft. One of the Jap bombs had been a near miss. Its splinters had wiped out a marine gun crew and killed some plane crews. Lieutenant Commander Lord had been wounded when taking charge of flight deck operations.

Doug McGregor filled his pipe and walked to the coffee table to refill his mug. Cassidy was superintending the messboys. McGregor noticed that the steward's hand was bandaged. He wondered if Cassidy, who had been on Number Three Deck when the Jap planes first had been heard, had been hurt by bomb splinters too.

Draining his coffee, McGregor trampled out the burning tobacco in his pipe and pocketed the briar. Then he left the ward room and walked aft to the sick bay.

There were a few hospital cases, which pharmacist's mates now attended. Dr. Murray was busy bandaging Lieutenant Commander Lord's arm.

"Hello, Doug," Lord greeted.

"Feeling better?" McGregor asked.

"Yes, except I can't fly for a spell. You're in command now."

"Okay, but we'll miss you," McGregor said, and turned to Dr. Murray.

"Doc, may I see Red Rainey?"

Dr. Murray shook his head. "Nobody can see him. He's in a coma."

McGregor bit his lips. "Dangerous?"

Dr. Murray shrugged. "He may come out of it. Or he may not."

"Let me know how he's getting along," McGregor asked.

"I will, if you call me."

Before McGregor left the sick bay, he heard Dr. Murray call out to one of his pharmacist's mates:

"Break out medical supplies for a bottle of ipecac. Do you know what happened to the other? It was fairly full."

"No, sir," the Pharmacist's Mate replied. "We've had a good many patients, but no ipecac case, sir."

When McGregor left the sick bay he did not want to go back to the ward room. He wanted to be alone, to think.

He climbed to Number Three Deck and began pacing, thinking of Rainey. They had been classmates at Annapolis, and also at Pensacola. They had been

together aboard the *Saratoga* too. Rainey was only a temporary lieutenant commander, however, commanding Scouting Fifteen because its squadron leader had been killed in action.

Then Doug McGregor remembered Rainey's sister, Della. The girl who was waiting for him in Honolulu.

He drifted aft to the stern, again watching the phosphorescent glow of the wake. He saw the silhouette of destroyers and cruisers, and thought how easy it would be to drop a red Coston flare fixed to a floating can and weighted down on one end. There was such a can, ringed by cork. When one end was removed, it was rubbed against the combustible material that ignited the flare.

AS HE turned he felt something under his foot. Wondering, he bent over and picked it up. It was a long strip of tin with sharp edges.

Determined to find out what the strip of tin in his hands was, he went to the ward room and examined it carefully under the ward room's lights. It was a coiled strip with a key on one end, like a removable strip of a coffee can. Something dark brown on one edge of it looked like dried blood.

Abruptly he looked toward the coffee table. Cassidy was still there, and his hand was bandaged. Cassidy had been on Number Three Deck when the Japanese bombers had arrived. The poisoned lobster had come from Cassidy's department. Still, McGregor had to remember that Cassidy had been poisoned too.

He walked to the coffee table, holding the strip of tin in his hands, apparently studying it. He took a mug of coffee, then put the strip of tin on the table, and drank his Java. Finally he lit his pipe and sat down. Smoking, he examined the strip of tin carefully. When he finished his smoke, he knocked dottle out of his pipe, pocketed the tin, and left the ward room. He paused for a while, then climbed a ladder to Number Three Deck and walked aft slowly.

Though he saw no one, Doug McGregor was sure someone was following him. His plan was working. He stayed away from the stern, stopped, and steeled himself for the attack.

It came like a thunderbolt. A figure leaped at him out of the dark with fists flying. Though McGregor had been ex-

pecting it, he was nevertheless surprised by the ferocity of the attack.

He retreated slightly, taking blows like a veteran boxer. Then he sidestepped and drove his fist into his assailant's ribs, just below the heart. The man screamed with pain, and McGregor followed his advantage, driving his fists in like pistons. The man grappled with him. They fell on the deck.

The assailant landed on top of McGregor and dug his knee into the pilot's throat. McGregor choked and tried to draw air into his lungs, but his chest pained. His assailant's knee kept a steady pressure on his throat. In desperation, McGregor jerked his body around and, robbed of balance, the assailant rolled aside.

McGregor kicked with all his might and his adversary screamed. McGregor sprang to his feet. The other man staggered to his own feet but before McGregor could stop him with his fists, the man bent double. Doug McGregor toppled over him.

The noise of fighting brought a squad of marines to Number Three Deck just as the man ran aft, toward the stern.

"Stop him!" McGregor yelled. "He's the spy!"

A marine whipped out his automatic and fired.

The man stopped in his tracks and his knees buckled. He struck a cabin wall, and slid to the deck where he lay, partly propped against the wall.

A marine nabbed the young lieutenant, but when he recognized him, he saluted and apologized. Then they ran to the downed man. The marine switched on a weak blue flashlight and played its beam on the fellow. He was the steward, Cassidy.

Commander Bennett arrived on Number Three Deck on the run.

"What's been going on here?" he demanded.

Doug McGregor explained and pointed to Cassidy.

"That man's the spy!" he accused.

The marines picked up Cassidy and carried him to the sick bay. Dr. Murray made a hasty examination and shook his head.

"He's done for."

While he was in the sick bay, McGregor looked around and found Rainey's bed. Rainey was still in a coma,

and a pharmacist's mate was keeping a constant watch, wiping foam from his mouth.

CHAPTER IV

Attack at Dawn

LATER, there was another meeting in Captain Williamson's cabin. Though he was not a smoker, the Old Man had passed a box of cigars to the officers present. They were waiting for Commander Bennett to return from searching Cassidy's effects.

Finally Commander Bennett entered with a sea-bag and saluted. He took his seat beside Captain Williamson, who opened the meeting.

"Lieutenant McGregor," he said, "you are commended for quick thinking. Please explain how you found out that Cassidy was the spy."

Doug McGregor explained again.

"It was easy for Cassidy to include the cans of contaminated lobster in the commissary," he said, in conclusion. "It was his job to purchase food. And he could fix it so we'd eat the lobster and there'd be a wholesale attack of ptomaine poisoning just before we attacked Ponape Island.

"He was on Number Three Deck when the Japanese patrol bombers arrived. He must have known they were based on an island in vicinity. As for the flare, it was only a floating can such as is sometimes included in a lifeboat's equipment. It could have been camouflaged as an ordinary can, and when he was ready he only had to slip a cork ring through the can. If he hadn't been in such a hurry and had made sure he had thrown the strip of tin overboard he might still be spying for the enemy."

"Cassidy certainly had plenty of nerve," Captain Williamson observed. "He poisoned himself to throw off suspicion."

McGregor shook his head. "I heard Dr. Murray complain that a bottle of ipecac is missing sir. I did not know its significance until after Cassidy was killed. He faked stomach poisoning by taking ipecac."

Captain Williamson nodded. He turned to Commander Bennett.

"What have you found among Cassidy's effects?"

Commander Bennett drew a long green steel box out of the sea-bag, which he gave to Captain Williamson. At the captain's directions, the officers broke open the box and found a bunch of letters held together with rubber bands. As Captain Williamson read letter after letter his face turned purple.

Then he cleared his voice and said:

"These letters give a clear picture of Cassidy's activities. His term of enlistment was over a few years ago, and he ran an export house which was a front for arms smuggling to Mexican and Central American revolutionary parties under Axis sponsorship. He organized the Columbia Police Reserve Association, which was a secret army of fifth columnists. He was trained in navigation and sabotage by the Japanese Navy. He was recalled to active service after Pearl Harbor—a paid enemy agent all the time."

The captain turned to McGregor.

"Lieutenant, do you know the reason for Cassidy's sabotage?"

"Perhaps to weaken us so that a Japanese carrier task force would sink us," McGregor said.

"You guessed right, Lieutenant. He had his plan of escape after we should be sunk. He meant to launch a big balsa raft from Number Four Deck and wait to be picked up by the enemy. These papers would entitle him to consideration.

"He had betrayed our mission to the enemy. I don't know how he did it, but the Japanese carrier, *Koryu*, and her escort warships that were cruising just out of sight of Ponape knew exactly when we would bomb Ponape, and they have devised a neat time-table schedule of their counter-moves. The idea was that if he failed in his ptomaine poisoning attempt, the *Koryu* would launch her planes and attack us while our Air Group was bombarding Ponape. If we did not attack Ponape, the enemy would know the reason, and the *Koryu* would attack us—tomorrow afternoon! The rendezvous of the carrier the night before the attack, and the time-table of her movements is in this paper, so near that we only have to send our planes across to spot her."

"Sir," M c G r e g o r said, "while the

enemy patrol bombers betrayed our position, the enemy would still not know exactly where we are. On the other hand we know where the *Koryu* is. Wouldn't it be a good idea to give them the works at dawn before they have a chance to attack us? If we sink the *Koryu*, we'd accomplish more than by raiding Ponape. The Japs will have to reshuffle their fleet, and it will be an ideal time for the marines to carry out their mission."

Captain Williamson smiled. "I was thinking of that, too." Then his face became grave. "We're still undermanned. Cassidy saw to that, and the Japanese wouldn't dream we would attack them for a time. This means not only that surprise must be complete, but that the enemy high patrol must be wiped out. It is your mission, Lieutenant McGregor. All depends on its success, or the attack ends in disaster."

"We will wipe out the enemy high patrol," Doug McGregor promised firmly. . . .

LIEUTENANT MCGREGOR felt the *Essex* tremble as she raced to get into a strategic position to launch her attack. He was fresh, having had a good four hours' sleep, a shave, and a shower. Now he was in the ward room, drinking a mug of coffee before going to his squadron ready room.

Lieutenant Nordhoff, executive officer of Scouting Eighteen, entered the ward room, beaming happily. Taking it as an omen, McGregor brought him a mug of coffee.

"Have you heard from Red Rainey?" he asked.

Nordhoff nodded. "He's out of his coma. He's getting better now. Say, he asked me to tell you to phone him."

With a grin, McGregor picked up the ward room phone and called the sick bay. After preliminaries, he talked hurriedly with Rainey and hung up smiling. Then he went to the ready room.

After transcribing data from the blackboard, he faced the pilots.

"This squadron's mission is to destroy the enemy high patrol with a single stroke," he told them grimly. "Failing that, we must keep the enemy engaged at high altitude while the scouting squadrons and Torpedo Twenty give the Nips the works. But we must not fail."

"At three-thirty," the talker interrupted, "the position of the *Essex* was nine degrees, eighteen minutes north latitude, and one hundred and fifty-nine degrees, five minutes east longitude. Course one seven zero True, speed thirty knots."

McGregor marked the data in his chart board and checked it with the notations the talker made on the blackboard.

"We shall drive our planes to maximum altitude," he went on then. "We must stay in formation, always. To wipe

Gregor found that Torpedo Twenty's Avengers, because of their great size, were spotted ahead of Fighting Seven's Corsairs.

Then the talker cocked his head and said:

"Pilots, man your planes!"

The loud-speaker repeated:

"Pilots, man your planes."

The bulkhead door opened, accompanied by simultaneous dimming of lights. McGregor led his pilots out into the passageway, and up the ladder to the

BATAAN

By

DON

BLANDING



Bataan . . . Bataan

Bataan falls! Bataan!

*Like the tramp of feet on the road of doom,
Like the bomber's roar . . . like the cannon's
boom,*

*Like the drums of death the words command
Men and Women of every land
To stop! To listen! To understand!*

To pulse our hearts to the weary beat . . .

Advance . . . retreat . . . advance . . . retreat.

*There is glory in such defeat,
For each man gave of the best he had,
Bearded veteran . . . beardless lad*

*Gave of his strength, his hope, his life,
For mother, brother, friend and wife.*

*Unknown heroes whose fame is sung
When "Bataan" is uttered by any tongue.*

*Take those banners from wounded hands
And carry the battle to stricken lands.*

Work and sacrifice, hope and give.

*That glorious word must forever live,
Symbol of courage. That splendid name*

*Should be stamped with blood and seared with
flame*

On the heart of every woman and man.

Dare to forget it . . . if you can!

BATAAN!

out the enemy with a single stroke"—he stressed his words to accent their importance—"we must have formation, team-work, and timing."

As he spoke on, the talker occasionally interrupted, passing information from Air Plot, data about the weather, the position of the *Essex* task force, direction and speed after the attack was over, and the direction and position of the nearest land.

Then Lieutenant Parnell arrived with the spotting sheet, which he tacked to Spot. The pilots studied it, memorizing the location of their planes. Doug Mc-

walkway. The night was clear, starry, and brisk. McGregor walked aft cautiously until he came to where the Corsairs of Fighting Seven were spotted. He climbed the ladder to the flight deck and flopped on his belly.

As he crawled along the flight deck in the night, to escape the whirring propellers that could cut a man in half, he felt the *Essex* turn into the wind. At last he came to his plane, Number Ten, and rose slowly.

"She's okay, sir," Aviation Machinist's Mate Corcoran said with enthusiasm. "Bag a Nip for me, sir!"

McGregor grinned. "I will," he promised.

He boarded his Corsair and left the 'chute straps dangling free in case of a crash. He fastened his safety-belt.

Now the palisades were down, and he heard the roar of engines springing to life. The Avengers ahead of him were taking off one by one.

Then it was his turn, and he eased his Corsair into take-off position. On the forward end of the island, he saw the dim light of the deck officer's hooded flashlight sweep skyward and make a couple of circles. He locked his brakes and gunned his engine. Then the light swept forward and downward, and simultaneously McGregor released his brakes.

HE FELT his Corsair hurtle forward. The figures on the walkway were blurred. Then the *Essex* rode over a swell, and the Corsair was thrown into the air. Before the fighter could stall, the pilot eased her and rose to five thousand feet, where he waited for his squadron to rendezvous behind him.

At last Fighting Seven rendezvoused in sections formation, and McGregor led them on a long climb. He donned his oxygen mask and expected his pilots to do the same when the altimeter passed the thirteen thousand-foot mark. Still the squadron climbed.

Suddenly the stars dimmed, and there was a graying on the eastern horizon. It was a sort of chilly gray that made Doug McGregor shiver in spite of his electrically warmed coveralls. He glanced at the altimeter. It read twenty-five thousand feet. He calculated the planes would reach the enemy force just before dawn reached sea level.

Still he led his Corsairs on a long climb. Now ice was forming on the wings, and he shivered again. He turned on the de-icers, and the ice coat snapped off explosively.

Then the altimeter read thirty-seven thousand feet. The geared superchargers could not take in any more altitude, and McGregor leveled off. Now dawn reached sea level. The air was blue with a weird luminosity. The sun would break out of the horizon any minute. The dive and torpedo bombers were getting ready.

Hardly had the squadron reformed

when, ahead and below him, McGregor saw a thin line of Mitsubishi Double Zero fighters in line formation sweep the skies. These Zeros would see the dive and torpedo bombers unless the Corsairs attacked the Japs first.

McGregor wagged his wings to call his squadron mates' attention to the Zeros. Through his rear view mirror, he saw his fighters reform into right step echelon formation, the maneuver he had described in the ready room. Then he kicked his rudder bars, and his Corsair went into a vertical bank.

He kept his Corsair in a controlled dive that was almost vertical, centering the leading Zero in his iron sights. The distance was not great, and he thumbed the solenoid to warm his machine-guns and cannons. Then he studied his opponent.

The Zero was a sleek and streamlined job, but it lacked armor protection for its pilot. If he put his first slugs in the target area, the Jap pilot would be a goner before he knew it. That, Doug McGregor resolved to do.

He watched the Zero grow alarmingly as though the plane were determined to collide into the Corsair. It was an illusion, he knew, and he shoved it out of his mind to judge distance accurately. Then the Zero was well within gun range, and McGregor flipped on the radio.

"Fightron Seven from Comfightron—attack!"

Simultaneously he pressed his eye against the eye-piece of his telescopic sight. The Zero seemed to leap toward his eyes. He saw the Jap pilot's helmeted head. The Jap was looking at him with startled eyes, but he could do nothing to get out of his hopeless trap. The Corsair was diving vertically, and every move on the Jap's part would be easily countered by a slight shift of the Corsair's dive.

McGregor thumbed his solenoid. His guns yammered, and his tracers lanced at the Jap. His slugs ripped into the Zero's thin hide, just aft of the pilot's cockpit.

He corrected it with a little elevator, and the exploding holes walked forward. They disappeared into the cockpit, thudding into the Jap's face. McGregor took his eyes out of the telescopic eye-sight to avoid the sickening sensation caused

by the sight of bullets mashing a human face.

He shoved the Corsair slightly, diving past the stalling Zero before leveling. In the battle, Fighting Seven was making out well, but there were quite a few Zeros that had escaped the initial rush. Accordingly, he zoomed and skidded under the belly of another Zero. He hammered it with burst after burst of hot lead. The Zero lurched, enveloped by a thick column of oily black smoke.

THE fight was over almost as soon as it started, without a single instantaneous fatality to the Corsairs. A few were so wounded that they had to limp back to the *Essex*. McGregor feared that one of them might crash into the sea, though.

"Last plane, Scouting Eighteen, beginning dive," he heard over the radio.

It was a signal to the *Essex* to get into position to take aboard returning planes.

Doug waited for the Corsairs to reform behind him and fill all gaps. Then he led them on a gentle glide to lower altitudes.

He saw the main battle then. The Japanese carrier, *Koryu*, was rocking under a hail of light and heavy demolition bombs. Fore and aft, huge columns of smoke shot skyward, punctured here and there by red fire. The breeze carried the smoke clear over the carrier, obliterating her flight deck from observation.

But the dive bombing attack was not accomplished without casualties. The warship's A.A. guns barked vigorously, sending great globs of flame ranging skyward. Shrapnel blossomed everywhere, and some hit Scouting Fifteen Dauntlesses, and some killed Scouting Seven-

teen's Helldivers. But on the whole, the A.A. fire was ineffectual, for the dive bombers had done their work.

Now Torpedo Twenty's Avengers broke through the destroyer screen and skimmed over the surface of water toward the *Koryu*. Japanese cruisers turned their turret guns to raise geysers of water to stop the torpedo bombers. They were too late. The tin fish were off, cutting through the water toward the stricken Japanese carrier.

Suddenly a torpedo exploded on the *Koryu's* stern. She turned around like a shaking thing, and then a huge column of water shot to the sky on her bow. Another ripped into her midships.

All of a sudden, the carrier's flight deck buckled. A wall of fire burst out explosively and mushroomed in the air. Flame spread far and wide, and then the "covered wagon" listed sharply to starboard.

Doug McGregor watched the doomed carrier grimly. She was gone, and all the treachery, deceit, and murder she had brought had boomeranged on her. Then, as the Japanese cruisers and destroyers realized they had failed to protect the *Koryu*, they left the burning carrier to her fate.

Lieutenant McGregor grinned mirthlessly. The cruisers and destroyers were not going to be let off so easily. The scouting squadrons and Torpedo Twenty would return to the *Essex* to rearm. They would seek out the fleeing warships to sink as many as they could before Japanese reinforcements arrived.

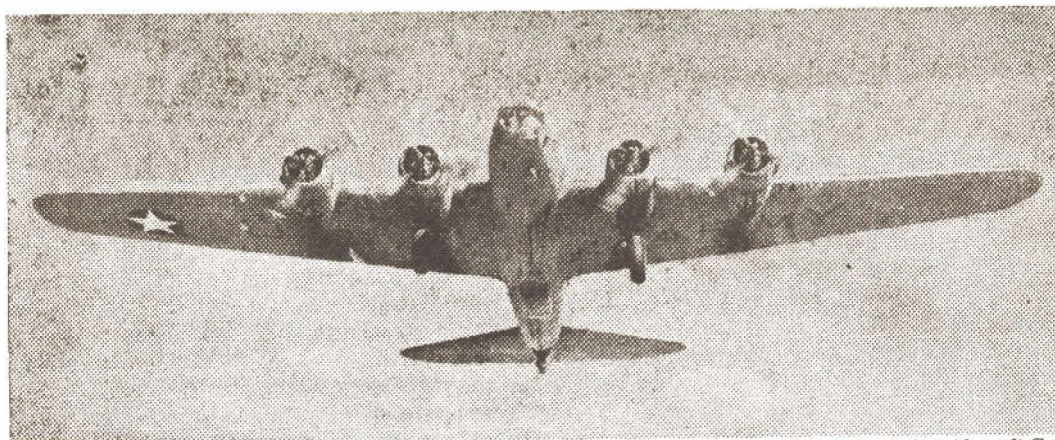
McGregor flipped on the radio.

"Sioux from Comfightron Seven—scratch one flat top, scratch one flat top," he said laconically.

NEW SUCCESS OVER ATHLETE'S FOOT

NEW SCIENTIFIC 2-WAY TREATMENT WITH QUINSANA POWDER -ON FEET AND IN SHOES - IS PRODUCING AMAZING RESULTS. IN TESTS ON THOUSANDS OF PERSONS, PRACTICALLY ALL CASES OF ATHLETE'S FOOT CLEARED UP IN A SHORT TIME.





Boeing B-17E FLYING FORTRESS

Courtesy Boeing Aircraft Co.

“Phyllis Had the Stuff . . .”

By
LIEUT. CHARLES W. PAINE

AT 5 A.M. on October 3, 1942, I was awakened at a mission hut in one of our bomber stations

in England. It was dark, and for a moment I didn't know quite where I was. The hut was so small that I could reach out on either side of me and touch the other officers in their beds. I wondered what I was doing awake at that hour.

Then I remembered that, the day before, I had been assigned as pilot of a B-17 on a bombing operation over Occupied France. At the moment I didn't know the exact location of the objective, but I had been told that it was a munitions plant that was now making goods of war for the Nazis.

I dressed quickly and gulped down the tea that was brought me. After that, I went to the Intelligence office, where they gave me the exact location of the objective. My navigator, Lieutenant Thompson, of St. Louis, and my bombardier, Lieutenant Komarek, of Muskegon, were there, and I then met them for the first time. We learned that the objective was the Potez plant at Meulte, in Occupied France.

Very shortly after, we got news that the operation wouldn't take off as

A Flying Fortress Proves Her Mettle When Grim Enemy Fire Makes a Sieve of Her—But She's No Tougher Than Her Daring Pilot and Her Crew!

planned, but we were to stand by. There was a good possibility that we'd “get on with it”—as the R.A.F. says—before the day was out.

Getting Acquainted

We stalled around until about noon while I got acquainted with my crew. I had never met any of them before. They had worked together, but I was a stranger to them. We were polite about the whole thing, but we wanted to know more about each other.

As C.O. of a B-17 that was going to take off on an operation over enemy territory, I wanted to know more about them. They'd flown together as a crew and called each other by their first names. A good crew does that.

In the air you're all out on the same party. You have to know what each member of a crew will do under any situation of the thousand and one that may come on you without warning.

But I didn't know them, so I went through the motions of inspecting the ship. I discovered her name was Phyllis.

It was because of a picture on her front end. It was a picture of a swell girl, but no one in the crew could quite agree as to whose girl it was.

The rear gunner, Technical Sergeant Taucher, a coal miner in normal life, said it was because "Phyllis" was two of the crew members' girl. That remark caused indignation among the rest, and the thing has never been finally settled. The ship, so far as I could see, was just called Phyllis because she was Phyllis.

I went through the usual routine of checking the ship and seeing that everything aboard—including the guns—was okay. I've never seen a sweeter functioning aircraft than Phyllis when we took off. She had a good crew, and I hope that I—the pilot and captain—am in their class.

Lawyers Aloft

One thing I found in our favor was that two of the crew—myself and Lieutenant Long, the co-pilot—were lawyers, and that Lieutenant Komarek, the bombardier, was in his last year of law before he got in the Air Force.

Lawyers are often looked down upon, but I can only say that my co-pilot and my bombardier were swell airmen. The rest of the boys did okay, too, in spite of being commercial artists, truck drivers, statisticians and other assorted trades.

In the middle of the afternoon, the signal for our take-off came. As is usual at these moments, I was so scared I could hardly walk. Somehow, though, I managed to make it.

Phyllis was a long way from her home in Seattle, but she was magnificent. That was what our ground crew did for us. The guys who'd like to fly, but who take out their yearning by seeing that everything is right before the take-off.

We were in vee of vees all the way in to the target. The main formation was in vees, and we, who were in the "rear guard," were in echelon of vees, from left to right, inside the rear wings of the main formation. Our ship was "Tail-end Charlie." We were the rearmost left-hand ship in the formation, and hence the last to bomb.

Making the Run

We hit scattered heavy (high altitude) flak on our way in, but it was slight, and did no harm. We got well over our targets, in formation and un-

molested, when I heard the bombardier yelling through the inter-phone.

"Bomb doors open! Left! Right a bit! Right hard! Right, damn it! Right!"

I kept trying to follow his directions. It was tough because we were in the slipstreams of the ships ahead and it took a lot of rudder to keep Phyllis on the course he wanted. At last he was through.

"Okay! Bombs away! Button her up!" he said, which meant for me to get the bomb doors closed. Then he said "Hit-Hit-HIT on target!" It sounded fine.

The bombing part was easy. We'd got over the target and dropped them on the nose—by the grace of Lieutenant Komarek. All we had to do now was get back.

But that's when they started to pour in on. The open bomb doors had slowed us down a lot, and we were behind the formation. The Germans' strategy was obviously to pick on the last ship and shoot it down.

Most of the others got no attention at all from them. And I might say that I think it would be a lot better if the last ships in a formation were to slow down momentarily and let "Tail-end Charlie" get his bomb doors closed and catch up before they hightail for home. You can get a lot of interprotection from even two other B-17s. And we certainly needed it right then.

"Tail End Charlie"

But there we were—behind the others, pulling between 47 and 50 inches of mercury—a heck of a lot at that altitude—and trying to catch up, meanwhile taking evasive action. The flak was really being poured on, heavy flak. I saw it below me, in front, and then above me.

We were bracketed, and I knew that when it came next, they'd have us. They did. We started getting hits and plenty of them. I could feel the ship buck and shudder each time they hit us. And I might say, incidentally, that one of the boys in the other ships saw them hit and destroy one of their own pursuits, an ME 109-G.

Things were happening fast, and it's a little hard to get them in their proper order. I'm trying to tell what occurred in about five seconds, but it's going to

take a lot longer than that to do it.

I was talking about their pursuits. I forgot to say that I had seen a dogfight—or what looked like one—ahead and above me—just a flash of it. That was when we were on the target.

Then came the flak, as I've said before. And then the hits. But after that came something worse. The flak suddenly stopped cold, and I knew we were in for it. That's the toughest moment of a bombing raid—the few seconds between the time the flak stops, and the enemy pursuit comes at you. I found time to be scared, but not for long.

Enemy Aircraft

Just then all the gunners in the crew started calling through the interphone.

"Enemy aircraft at three o'clock, Lieutenant! . . . At five o'clock! . . . At nine o'clock!"

Sergeant Taucher, the rear gunner, was more specific.

"Hell, Lieutenant, they're coming in! From behind! There's a jillion of 'em! They look like pigeons!"

"Give 'em hell, boys!" I said, or something like that.

"I can't," he said. "My guns are jammed. I'm trying to clear 'em!"

"Keep swinging them around so it looks like you're firing," I said.

"Okay, Skipper!" Then, "I've got one gun cleared now." He started firing.

He told me later that once he got his guns going he didn't take his finger off the trigger from the time their formation started to come in until the last ship of it had gone out.

They were employing two tactics that were new to me—and darned effective. When they peeled off to attack, they came in so close together that by the time one ship had shot us up and banked away, the next in line had his sights on us.

Dogfight

The other dodge they used was to pretend to come in on one of the other ships and then do a twenty-degree turn and shoot hell out of us. And while Taucher said their fire came mostly from a range of about 1,200 yards, he also said that they were so close when they finished firing that he could see their faces.

Mostly they came from the rear, but at least one of them got up under us from in front, stalled and, as it fell off,

raked us the length of Phyllis' belly. I could feel his hits banging into her.

As a matter of fact, I could feel the effect of all their fire. It was rather like sitting in the boiler of a hot water heater that was being rolled down a steep hill.

Tough Going

I began to realize that things were getting tough. There was an explosion behind me as a 20-mm. cannon shell banged into us just behind the upper turret and exploded. I kept thinking, "What if it hit the flares?" If it had hit the flares and ignited them, I knew we'd go up like a rocket.

Then I looked out at the right wing and saw it was shot to pieces. There were holes everywhere. A lot of them were 20-mm. cannon holes. They tear a hole in the skin you could shove a sheep through. The entire wing was just a bunch of holes.

I looked at Lieutenant Long, the copilot. That was a treat. There he was with his wheel shoved clear over to the right in a desperate-looking right-hand turn which seemed, at the time, very funny because my control wheel was centered.

I started to laugh and then decided there wasn't anything to laugh about. The position of his wheel meant his aileron control cables had been shot away.

That wasn't funny at all.

About that time several other unpleasant things happened all at once. First, the waist gunner, Sergeant Peterson yelled through the interphone.

"Lieutenant, there's a bunch of control wires slapping me in the puss," which meant that the tail surface controls were being shot up. Second, the right-hand outboard engine "ran away," and the engine controls were messed up so we couldn't shut it off. Third, the left-hand inboard engine quit. And fourth, the ship went into a steep climb which I couldn't control.

More Grief

I forgot to say that the whole left-hand oxygen system had gone out with the first burst of flak, and that I was trying to get the ship down to 20,000 feet to keep half my crew from passing out. I forgot to tell about this before because things were happening too fast to tell them all at once.

Behind me there was a pretty nice little piece of drama going on that I couldn't see. My radio gunner, Sergeant Bouthellier, passed out from lack of oxygen, and the radio operator, Sergeant Parcells, seeing him lying by his gun, abandoned his own oxygen mask and put the emergency bottle over his face.

Sergeant Bouthellier revived, just in time to see Sergeant Parcells pass out himself. He, in turn, took the emergency bottle off his own face, and revived Parcells. After that, on the verge of going out again, Bouthellier called through the interphone to tell me that the oxygen supply line was damaged.

With Lieutenant Long's help, I managed to put the ship into a steep dive and leveled out at 20,000 feet. At this altitude, everyone could keep going without oxygen.

To return to the fourth unpleasant thing that happened—when Phyllis went into a steep climb, I simply couldn't hold her level. There was something wrong with the controls. I had my knees against the wheel, and the stabilizer control was in the full-down position.

The control column kept trying to push me through the back of my seat. I motioned to Lieutenant Long to help me and between the two of us we managed to get it forward and assume normal level flight.

Roll Call

Then I started to think. The enemy fighters were still shooting us up, we had a long way to go to reach England and safety, we were minus two engines and it took almost full left aileron to hold that damaged right wing up.

It was clearly time to bail out of that aircraft. It seemed a funny idea, but I decided it was the only thing to do. So I yelled into the interphone.

"Prepare to ditch!"

Then I started to call the roll. Everyone answered "Okay, Skipper!" except the top gunner, Sergeant Coburn. Sergeant Peterson was badly hurt, but he answered, "Okay, Skipper," and even had time to ask me if I were wounded.

"How's the ship, Lieutenant?" he said.

"Okay," I said.

"On second thought," he said, "what I really want to know is, how are you?"

I might say right here that it was the finest bomber crew that ever took off.

The whole gang was right on the nose. Everyone did his job every inch of the way.

I'm the one who is telling the story, because I was the guy in command. But there were nine other men in Phyllis, and any of them could tell you a better story of what happened. Phyllis had it all right—but so did her gang.

But to get back to what happened—I gave the order to prepare to "ditch" ship with visions of a German prison camp in my mind. But just about that time, Sergeant Coburn, the top gunner, slid out of the top turret, and fell to a position between me and CO-pilot Long.

Coburn's face was a mess. He was coughing blood, and I thought he'd been wounded in the chest. It later proved that he wasn't, but he was clearly in no condition to bail out of an airplane.

Long Voyage Home

Things were tough right then. They were still shooting at us, and the coast of France was a long way away. Our target had been about 60 miles inland, and with our reduced speed—two engines out of action—it would take us quite a while to get to the coast.

I felt a little sick inside. I yelled through the interphone that anyone who wanted to could ditch right then and there. But no one wanted to. Phyllis was still "airborne," as the British say, and I guess by this time they trusted her. Meanwhile, the enemy pursuit kept pouring lead into us, and there's no evasive action you can take when you are shot up the way we were.

Lieutenant Long left his controls and went back to give first-aid to Sergeant Coburn. Immediately, I had the problem on my hands of keeping Phyllis from climbing through the ceiling. The stick just wouldn't stay forward, and I kept on gaining altitude.

I called for help through the interphone, and I'm sure everyone on that ship thought I was injured. Lieutenant Komarek tried to get up through the hatch to help me, but he couldn't because Lieutenant Long and Sergeant Coburn were on the door in the floor through which he'd have to come.

I didn't dare throttle the engines, either, for fear we'd just quit flying. Phyllis, at this point, had a stalling speed of about 160 m.p.h., in spite of

her ambitious climbing tendencies. So I just fought her.

Meanwhile, Coburn was doing his best to bleed to death. Throughout, however, he never lost consciousness, and he kept making funny remarks.

Finally, the radio operator, Sergeant Parcells, came forward and took over first aid for Coburn, allowing Lieutenant Long to crawl back into the co-pilot's seat. Between us, we got Phyllis under control.

We were over the Channel by that time, and some British Spitfires took us in tow. The Jerry pursuit stuff gave up and departed for home. We went into a dive from 20,000 feet for anywhere on the coast of England.

Bellylanding

The runaway engine gave us a lot of trouble. The electrical system was shot, and we couldn't shut it off. Long tinkered with the fuel valve, but no soap. I was afraid to tinker with the fuel valves. Finally we gave it up. Phyllis was still flying, and I didn't want to ask her too many questions.

We made a wheels-up landing at the first aerodrome we saw in England. We could only make left-hand turns because both Long and I knew that if we ever got that shot-up right wing down we could never pick it up again.

I buzzed the field once and scraped a chimney or two off some buildings at the end of the runway. I knew we were going to have to crash-land because the hydraulics were shot, and I couldn't get the wheels down.

Besides, I didn't want to land Phyllis normally at 160 m.p.h. She'd have coasted clear across England.

So we bellylanded her the long way of the runway and cross-wind. It was a darned fine landing—marred only by the fact that Coburn, the wounded man, kept making remarks about how tired he was of flying—sarcastic remarks.

I promised him that I'd put him on the ground and was lucky enough to do it in good shape. We all walked away from that landing. Bellylanding a B-17 is an art, and both Long and I agree we have mastered it. Sergeant Coburn agrees, too.

And next time anyone tells you a Fortress can't take it, give them the works. One of the boys said it after we got back.

"Phyllis had the stuff." God rest her soul.

Oh, yes, Komarek, the bombardier, got sick after we landed. But he was considerate about it. He took off his flying helmet and used it as a receptacle so the kids that dismantled Phyllis wouldn't have to clean up after him. We all laughed about that.

Calling All Radio Hams!

THERE'S good news for America's army of radio amateurs. The Office of Civilian Defense announces the WERS, the War Emergency Radio Service, a home-grown network of communications which will require the volunteer aid of every capable "ham" in the country.

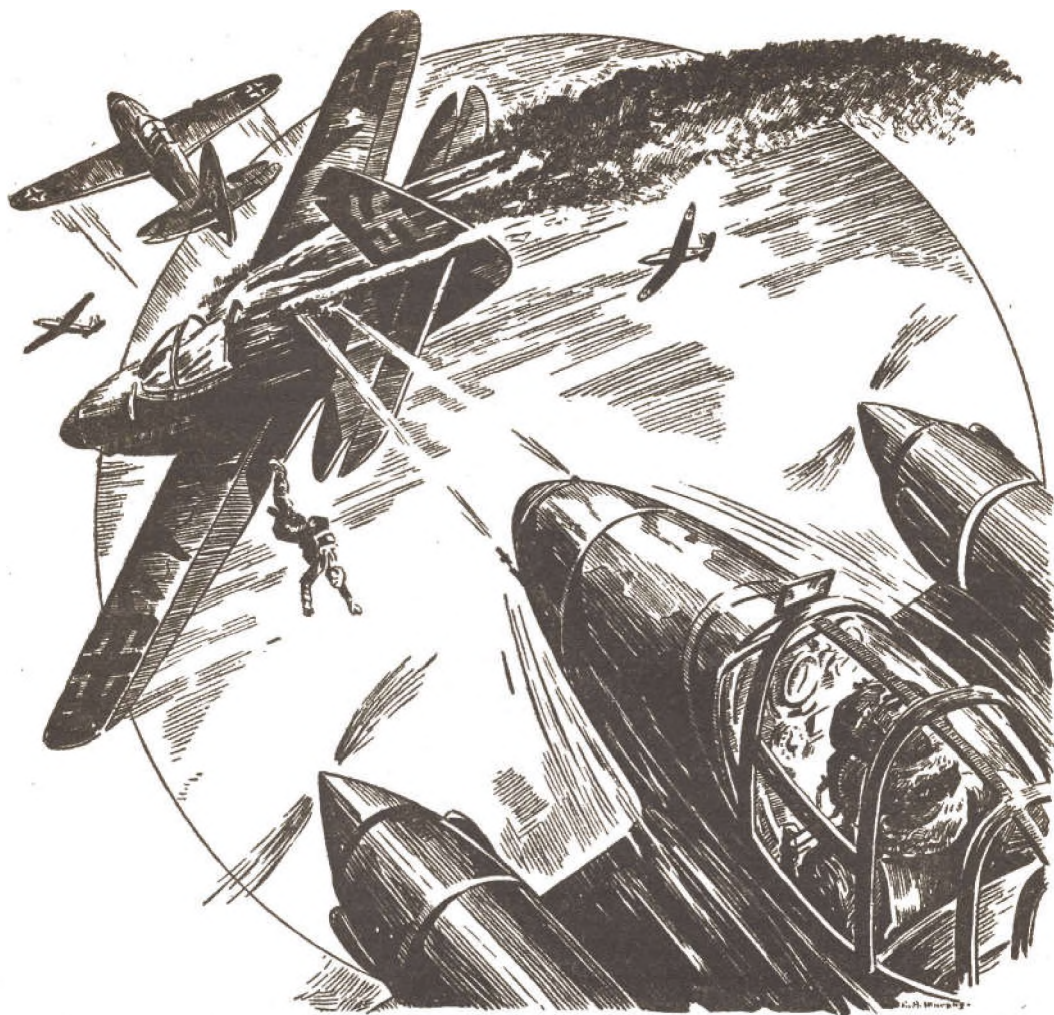
Using transmitters with a maximum of 25 watts input power, on three bands, WERS will connect Civilian Defense control center with all district controls, with wardens' posts, fire houses, hospitals and industrial plants, as well as with mobile forces like fire-trucks and emergency medical teams and walkie-talkies.

The use of thousands of sets unhampered by wires or cables, means the

new system will be virtually invulnerable to bomb hits or sabotage. Its use in air raids is obvious, but it will also be used in emergencies of any kind such as floods, fires, hurricanes, explosions or any other catastrophe where telephone lines may be down.

Amateurs are urged to apply and to collect junked sets and unused materials which can be assembled into communicators. Not only amateurs, but repairmen, electrical workers, radio engineers and licensed operators are needed.

Personnel selected to operate the new stations will be trained and after passing an elementary FCC test, will receive licenses. Write to: War Emergency Radio Service, Office of Civilian Defense, Washington, D. C.



The German ship seemed to hang in the air for a moment while smoke poured out of the cockpit

BORROWED STRATEGY

By LIEUT. SCOTT MORGAN

Forced Down Behind the German Lines in Tunisia, Captain Danger Puts to Use Some Lessons He Learned from the Huns Themselves!

CAPTAIN Allen Danger cruised at a little less than two hundred m.p.h. The Lockheed Hudson wasn't on a bombing expedition this time. Instead, a large panoramic camera was being operated amidships, the lens taking in as much of Tunisia as possible.

There were mountains and fields and desert. Not far east was the Mediterranean, the next objective of the Allied armies. Occasionally, flak started flying at them, but Captain Danger flew

high and paid little attention to it.

This was all enemy territory, but wouldn't be much longer. The Americans were moving forward. The Free French were cutting into the Hun lines and the British Eighth Army was daring Rommel's remnants to turn around and fight. The days of the Axis in Africa were truly numbered.

If Captain Danger's mission was a success, those days would be fewer than ever, for he was trying to establish their

lines and how the enemy would disperse when the attack started. Such information was vital. It meant the saving of thousands of lives.

So far, air reconnaissance hadn't been too good. The Huns were masters at the art of camouflage and in the shielding of troop movements. Also, they almost always sent up fighters to drive off any reconnaissance or photography planes. That was why Danger kept his eyes open and was set to streak for safety if any of those Heinkels or Messerschmitts came up to greet him.

"How is it going back there?" he spoke into the intercom.

A lieutenant at the camera answered that he was taking pictures of the whole area, but unless the camera saw more than he did, their mission wasn't going to be considered very successful.

Then the opposition came. Apparently, the four Heinkels had been on patrol somewhere and were notified by radio of the presence of the intruder. They flew very high and into the sun, so that Danger didn't see them until they were actually diving upon him.

"Battle Stations," he called tersely. "Four Heinkels coming from starboard. Welcome them warmly if they get too close. Hang on, boys, we're going home."

Danger's orders were for him not to fight unless necessary. It was much more vital that he get those pictures to the base. But the Heinkels were swifter than the Hudson, and they swarmed down on it like a quartette of hummingbirds intent on one honey-dripping flower.

The tail turret started blazing away and the four Heinkels veered off. They knew better than to try sampling this honey. Two of them came back from starboard, two from port. Captain Danger turned his nose left and opened up with the forward guns and cannon. The tail gunner started blazing at the other pair.

Danger was busy at the radio, too, calling for help. Several times the Hudson staggered under the impact of bullets, but none hit a vulnerable spot. He saw a cloud formation ahead and raced for it with the four Heinkels on his tail. They were about a thousand feet higher and maneuvering to dive, one by one, in an attempt to quiet that tail gun.

The first Heinkel swooped down, guns

flaming. Its port wing suddenly developed a bad case of termites, for pieces flew off. The plane went into a spin that ended in the trees below.

The second one came down and strafed the Hudson hard, but there were no casualties and the ship was still quite manageable. Then clouds closed around it as the third and fourth Heinkels plunged. Danger gave her full gun and took advantage of the lull to wipe sweat and oil from his face.

There was something wrong with the starboard motor. Bullet trouble probably. He could limp home on one engine, but he couldn't fight those Heinkels without both motors in action.

THE clouds suddenly thinned and he was in clear sunlight again. Directly ahead, he saw a welcoming sight. Six Lockheed Lightnings were roaring his way, their pilots eager for a go at the Huns. The Heinkels spotted them about the same time, made one last savage attempt to knock down the Hudson and then gave up.

The Lightnings swept past like meteors. Captain Danger had a pretty well-founded idea that all of the Heinkels wouldn't get home. He idled the motors a bit, nursed the half crippled one and made his base without any more trouble.

The tail gunner had a wounded arm and a big grin. He'd got his first Heinie and the excitement of it made him forget the pain from the bullet gouge. Danger complimented him, supervised the removal of the camera and the plates and while they were being developed, he walked briskly to Headquarters.

A grim-faced major-general listened to his report and frowned.

"They're a smart lot, those Jerries," the general said. "We'll be ready to start a general offensive in a very short time, and so far, we know nothing about how those devils will deploy their troops. Air reconnaissance does little good, and we have no espionage system within their ranks at all."

"But they have plenty of espionage within ours, sir," Captain Danger said. "They built up an excellent spy system before they left. They probably know just about when our attack will begin."

"No, Captain." The general smiled. "But the only reason they don't, how-

ever, is because not even I am sure of the zero hour. I'm afraid when it comes, we'll just have to push through and take our chances."

Captain Danger shook his head slowly from side to side. "It will mean bigger losses, sir. I have an idea, though. It requires considerable cooperation. First of all, we still have troop transport planes flying around the area, haven't we?"

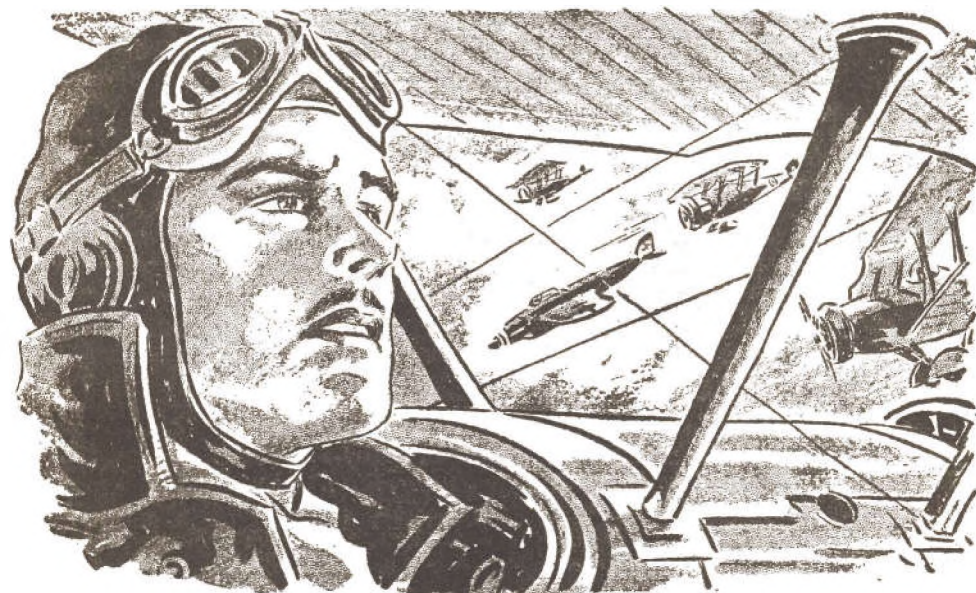
"Lots of them. Three armies are linked by radio and by air. We exchange officers and information, naturally. Why?"

Captain Danger spoke for ten minutes, eagerly, but with his voice cold as ice. Few men had a greater hatred for

nally, he ordered his own plane, a Lockheed Lightning, fueled to the hilt. He bought rations at the canteen and returned to the general's office.

When he emerged this time, he carried a brief case in one hand, a .45 automatic in the other, and he stopped to talk with no one. The props were ticking over, the ground crew moved away and Danger climbed into the plane without any help.

He raised one hand in a signal and then roared down the field. A moment later he was in the air, nose pointed toward Libya. Behind him, he left the impression that he was travelling far and fast. The brief case and the drawn gun indicated the contents of the case



CAPTAIN DANGER

the Axis powers. Captain Danger had been fighting in this war for years—even before the United States was in it to the hilt. He knew the enemy, appreciated their courage and staying abilities, but he also knew that they were now on the defensive and things were changing.

When he left, Captain Danger went straight to the canteen, greeted friends on all sides and ordered a soft drink. While he swigged this, he talked about a contemplated trip and a chance for the boys to get some letters out in a hurry.

Then he went to his quarters and changed into his newest uniform. Fi-

were very important and his mission vital.

Once in the air, he relaxed and grinned. If the enemy spy organization had no more than fools on its staff, they'd have flashed word about that brief case. He adjusted the safety belt, pursed his lips and whistled shrilly. He warmed up the guns, tamed the engines a bit and waited hopefully.

What he had to do was extremely dangerous. It might end disastrously for him and even if it didn't, he'd be required to take one of the major risks of his already peril-filled career.

At ten thousand feet he was breathing oxygen and reaching for more sky.

At twenty thousand he settled back. He was already in enemy skies and things would happen fast.

TWENTY minutes later they did. This time the Huns were taking no chances. A whole squadron was scouring the heavens for him. Two Heinkels made the first contact, radioed frantically and in a moment the sky was alive with planes, all intent on knocking him down.

Danger's whistle faded as he turned the safety ring and dusted the top of the firing button with his thumb. The only pleasant feature of the whole affair lay in the fact that he had to make this seem very, very real. To do this, the more Hun planes he shot down, the better.

Two were coming at him head on. Below, were a couple more and behind him were half a dozen. Danger's lips parted in the grin of battle, he braced himself and moved the stick. The Lightning nosed down, engines screaming.

He singled out one of the pair below and rode at it with guns pounding. The enemy plane started wild maneuvering to avoid the hail of death, but Danger's firing was too accurate.

The German ship seemed to hang in the air for a moment while smoke poured out of the cockpit. Then a small object went hurtling out. A moment later the parachute blossomed.

The others were upon Danger now. They were all aiming for his tail assembly in a very apparent effort to cripple him so he'd have to go down. Obviously, they didn't want him to fall in flames.

The Lightning suddenly refused to respond to the controls. She began to flutter like a wounded bird. This was it. Danger set his jaws, threw the cowling back in case he had to hit the silk, and started a spin to earth. One hand clutched the briefcase.

At two thousand feet, he managed to whip the hurtling craft out of its spin, but it was a dead pigeon and he knew it. Nothing but the stamina built into it by American plane workers, kept the ship together. He looked for a spot to land, saw one in the distance and went into a glide.

Farther away, he could see tiny objects moving fast along the roads. That

would be armored car and motorcycle patrols out to encircle him and close in before he could get away.

Danger cut the engines as the ground came up in a sudden spurt. Landing under the belly of another Zero, his gear made contact, but the field was very small, very rough and studded with dwarfed trees. One of these encountered the port wing. The plane was whipped half around by it, struck more of those trees and came to a shuddering halt.

Captain Danger was thrown forward by the impact. His stomach hit the crash cushion so hard that despite its softness, he had the wind knocked out of him. Blood ran down from a laceration on his temple, too.

Five minutes went by before he managed to clamber out of the plane. He stepped back a few paces and listened. The sound of the motorcycles and armored cars was very close, even easily distinguishable above the roar of the enemy planes swarming overhead.

Danger hurled the brief case into the plane, drew a wide-barreled pistol and aimed it. Before he could pull the trigger, one of those Heinkels opened up with its machine guns, pounding the earth in front of Danger so that he was forced to drop flat.

When he got up, another swooped down. Danger fired one incendiary bullet from the special gun he carried. It missed the Lightning, and more machine gun bullets compelled him to retreat fast.

Soldiers were swarming onto the field. Rifles and sub-machine-guns were aimed at him. Danger raised his arms high and threw away the incendiary pistol. A pair of soldiers seized him. He was searched, and his arms were roughly tied.

One of the Heinkels made a landing farther down the field where there were no trees and taxied part way over. Its pilot leaped out. He was a blond, narrow-faced man. At first glance, Danger wondered how anyone so old would be allowed to fly a plane. Then he saw that the pilot was really young. His set face and the deep wrinkles under his eyes were the result of too much flying and fighting.

HE SPOKE good English and stepped up to Captain Danger.

"You made a very good landing, *Mein Herr*. At first, I believed we had damaged your plane so badly you were bound to crash."

Danger stared at him. "I don't seem to understand. You mean you tried to shoot me down intact? First time I ever heard of a German trying to save the life of an enemy."

"For your life we care nothing," the pilot barked. "It is the brief case you carried. Where were you destined?"

Danger gave him a sarcastic laugh. "If you knew I carried the brief case, you must also know where I was going."

The pilot demanded Danger's papers and a soldier turned them over. He whistled in amazement and there was a tinge of respect in his voice when he addressed Danger again.

"So—we were more fortunate than we thought. Our friends back at your camp did not say it was Captain Allen Danger who was acting as messenger boy. I had a number of friends who met you, Captain. They are no longer alive."

Danger said nothing. He did pretend to be agitated when he saw soldiers looting his plane and he swore softly as one of them appeared with the brief case. This was turned over to the German pilot. He opened it, sat down on the grass and motioned Danger to sit beside him. Danger got down on his knees clumsily for his arms were bound behind his back.

The German extracted a sheaf of important looking papers. He scowled at them.

"Code. Of course I suspected as much. This means you carry important messages, Captain. Perhaps you will read them for us."

"You know better than that," Danger snapped. "If you and your pilots had not been smart enough to lay down a machine-gun barrage between me and my plane, you'd never even have laid eyes on those orders—I mean plans."

"So—they are orders. Very well, Captain. You will be taken to our general headquarters at once. It isn't far away. I will meet you there and, as one pilot to another, Colonel Graum is anything but gentle. He is the Gestapo man who will have the task of making you talk. Don't be a fool, Captain. Colonel Graum has special treatment for fools."

Danger was helped to his feet, hustled into an armored car and driven to the Nazi field base. It was in a town about seventeen miles from the sea. Danger took advantage of his position to note the tanks, artillery, flame throwers and infantry concentrated around this spot. He noticed also the elaborate camouflage which kept most of this hidden from the air.

Colonel Graum proved to be a small, extremely thin individual with a face like a hatchet. On the surface he looked like a school teacher who might be afraid of his bigger pupils, but Danger wasn't deceived.

Perhaps, at one time, Graum had been just such a school teacher, but the Gestapo had taught him different methods of handling men. Now he was a cold demon, trained in all the wiles of torture and the arts of mayhem.

Graum didn't arise. He merely looked up at Danger as if he were a new specimen of worm with legs. He glanced at Danger's papers.

"Ah, yes," he said in a mild voice. "So we have the good fortune of capturing Captain Danger. You understand me, Captain?"

Danger replied in German that he did. Graum eyed him coldly for a moment or two. Then he concentrated on the contents of the brief case. With all the papers spread before him, he went over them, one by one.

"They are in code, but signed by high commanders of your forces, Captain. They are very important. Where were you taking them?"

"To Berlin, *Herr* Colonel," Danger replied. "I thought Hitler might like to see them. Naturally, we all want to oblige *Der Fuehrer*. By the way, where has he been hiding lately? I've been praying one of those British bombs would crawl down his neck."

GRAUM'S face turned slightly pink. "Our *Fuehrer* has been too busy defeating the Russians to address his people as often as he'd like. You will refrain from commenting on him, do you hear? You are not fit to speak his name. Now—answer my question without any further foolishness."

"I gave you the only answer you'll get," Danger shouted. "So go ahead and put your little boys to work on me."

Graum smiled. "Very brave. Ah, yes, you Americans are stupid pigs. You underestimate us. You think we resort only to direct methods to get our information. Sometimes we do, yes, but mostly our superior brains contrive ways to get any information we are after."

Danger laughed scornfully. "Then let's see you try and read that code, Colonel."

Graum snapped an order. In a few moments, a lieutenant appeared. Graum addressed him.

"You will contact the usual sources near the American base. Demand a full explanation of the code used between the Americans, British and French. Have it relayed here at once, by radio. There is to be no delay, is that understood?"

The lieutenant saluted and disappeared. Graum leaned back and tapped his fingertips together.

"You see, Captain, we are quite able to get that code and within an hour or two, also. Meantime you will be shown how much better it is to comply with my demands. Remember, you are a prisoner of war. I shall treat you like one, provided I get the information I need. Otherwise—well, you shall see."

The pilot who had helped to shoot down Captain Danger came in and saluted stiffly. Graum gave him orders to escort the prisoner about and give him the full benefit of the scenery. Danger's arms were freed and he rubbed circulation back into them as the German pilot led him out into the streets.

"I am Ludwig Freytag, Captain. Your education begins in this courtyard. Come this way. And, Captain, if you have any ideas about escape, drop them. There are more than a hundred thousand troops between you and freedom. Also, I will shoot you down if you make any stupid attempts."

Danger shrugged. "I can't see how an opportunity could arise, but if one does, I'll take my chances, Freytag. Once out of this town I could give you a good chase. You see, I've flown over here so often I know the shortest and best route back to my own lines."

"Across the desert?" Freytag derided. "Absurd unless you have a car or a plane and how can you hope to get them? Anyway, I am obliged that you have informed me of the route you will take.

Should a miracle happen and you do get clear, I shall make it my business to capture you again. Now—you will stand here."

Danger stood with his back against a cement wall. Freytag remained beside him. Then Danger gasped. A squad of eight soldiers marched into the courtyard and lined up facing him. To him it looked like a firing squad.

"Now look here, Freytag," Danger said, "what is this? I'm a prisoner of war, and I possess information you fellows need. Therefore, you won't shoot me, but is it just one of your well known scares? To level rifles at a man or even instruct your squad to shoot and miss just to scare me into submission?"

"No, Captain," Freytag replied. "I know better than that. With someone else it might work, but your reputation is too well known. You do not scare. Therefore, we shall work on the greatest weakness an American possesses."

"The greatest weakness," Danger pursed his lips. "I'm interested."

THREE more men entered the courtyard. Two were soldiers, the third an old man who could barely stand erect. They hustled him against the farther wall and propped him against it. The two soldiers got out of the way fast.

Brief commands were given. The squad did an about face, rifles clicked, rose to shoulders and a volley blasted the old man into oblivion. Captain Danger shivered.

"I'm beginning to understand," he said. "You believe an American's greatest weakness is his sympathy. Perhaps you are right, Freytag. Until some months ago we believed in helping people, in feeding the hungry and ministering to the old and sick. But something happened when Pearl Harbor was struck.

"We've become tough. We have developed a brand-new mission. To kill, Freytag. To kill Nazis and Japs and Italians. Blood-letting has become our business and you and your kind have proven able teachers."

Freytag scowled. "That man," he said, "could not have been saved, no matter if you promised to tell everything. He murdered one of our troops. However, you will now accompany me into the prison. And you will also refrain from

criticizing the Axis."

Danger walked beside Freytag into the dampest, darkest hole he'd ever been in. Once the prison had been used to punish natives. Now it was a German concentration camp. Cells were packed with scrawny, bleary-eyed men who had no hope left. Most of them were French. Nazi Gestapo guards, armed with short, thick clubs, patrolled the corridors and not a prisoner made so much as a whimper. They knew better.

Freytag motioned with one hand to encompass many of the cells.

"These pigs," he said stonily, "are a nuisance. Some are here because they refused to pay proper respect to the forces of *Der Fuehrer*. Some we suspect of being spies. Others are sympathetic to Britain. We also have a woman's division. Would you like to see it?"

"No," Danger said curtly, "but I wish to thunder some of our boys could see this. Also, some of our workers back home. They'd get a pretty good idea of what we're fighting for."

"The New Order," Freytag snapped, "does not know the meaning of softness. However, you as an American, do. Now you will tell Colonel Graum exactly what he wishes to know. Otherwise, you will be forced to stand in the courtyard and watch one of these pigs be executed every ten minutes."

"So that's what you're driving at," Danger said coldly. "I should have guessed."

"There are enough," Freytag pointed out, "to keep firing squads busy for hours. Can you stand to watch them being executed because you are stubborn? We shall see."

Danger managed to glance at his watch as Freytag led him out of the prison. As they crossed to the courtyard, Danger heard the sound of a multi-motored plane and he looked up.

Freytag said, "Don't look for help, Captain. That is one of your planes. A transport by the sound of it. They are used to ferry wounded to hospitals in Egypt or Casablanca. Unless we have nothing else to do, we never bother with them."

"Listen," Danger said, "that one seems to be in trouble."

The engines whined to a shrill pitch and then stuttered a few times as if the plane was out of gas. Finally, they were

shut off altogether and even Freytag became excited. Then the roar came back and gradually faded away as the plane raced out of earshot.

Danger and Freytag stood against the wall again. A fresh firing squad appeared and a few moments later another victim was dragged out. This one was a woman of about fifty, speechless in terror.

"You and your kind," Danger said slowly, "rival the reddest devils in Hell, Freytag. Call off the party. I can't stand here and watch that woman shot and you know it."

FREYTAG smiled and barked a command. The firing squad lowered its rifles.

"So," Freytag nodded, "it is as easy as that, eh, Captain? Colonel Graum is very clever. He said you would hardly stand more than four or five executions. You see, we do not resort to physical violence. It is quite unnecessary. Now take a final look at the prisoner. She will remain there, facing the squad, until you have told the entire truth. If you hesitate, a signal will result in her immediate death."

Danger walked with his shoulders drooping, his footsteps lagging. He cursed under his breath and his hands clenched and unclenched until Freytag became apprehensive enough to draw his pistol.

Colonel Graum was in his quarters, as mild looking as ever. Freytag made a brief report. Graum looked at Danger.

"You were going to tell us, *Herr* Captain, where you were bound with those code messages. Also what they are. Do you need a hint that we are in a hurry?"

"I'll talk," Danger said with a long sigh. "I was to deliver one set of orders to the British Eighth Army and another to the British Air Forces on Malta. I don't know what the orders are."

"The Eighth Army and Malta," Colonel Graum breathed. "Ah, yes, I suspected as much. Now, Captain, perhaps you do not know what is in the messages, but you do know the purpose of them. Talk!"

"I'll say nothing more!" Danger shouted.

Graum raised one hand. Freytag opened the door and spoke to a non-com outside. Danger slumped into a chair.

"All right," he groaned, "I'm finished. Don't have that woman shot. There is talk of a general attack on your lines, Colonel. It will come from all sides and air armadas from Malta will take part. Perhaps those papers contain the zero hour. If they do, rest assured that I don't know it."

Graum smiled. "That is the truth, Captain. It is well that you did not lie. Already, most of these papers have been decoded. The zero hour is tonight, right after darkness.

"Your generals do not know you have been captured. Those to whom you were dispatched with messages were ordered not to radio for confirmation. We have time enough to prepare and you shall have the privilege of seeing how we can stop your attack. Stop it short and slaughter your men until the casualty lists will make America gasp in horror."

Graum picked up a phone. He made a terse report, hung up and leaned back.

"My High Command awaited only the verification you just gave me. Now we are taking steps to hold your forces back. Strong positions have been formed weeks ago and they will now be manned. Guns are strategically placed and ready to rip your ranks to pieces."

Danger didn't reply. He just stared at the tips of his shoes. Freytag stepped forward at attention.

"*Herr Colonel*, my orders are to take part in the defense. With your permission I shall join my squadron."

"Permission is granted," Graum nodded. "I too have a part to play, but not quite yet. I shall have a car waiting, but until the guns start to roar, my place is right here, entertaining Captain Danger to whom we are most grateful. You will have my car brought to the door."

Freytag saluted, turned and goose-stepped out. Graum laid a Luger on top of his desk with studied deliberation that wasn't lost on Danger. Ten minutes went by. Outside, there was a chaos of sounds as men and machines were moved into position. Danger slumped still lower in his chair while Colonel Graum's smile became broader.

TEN more minutes went by. The confusion had died away already. The Nazis were certainly ready to take their pre-arranged positions. Danger stirred restlessly.

"How soon?" he asked.

"In about an hour," Graum said. "A diversionary movement will be started by the Free French column. It is supposed to throw us off guard. Then the Americans will attack our center front. The British will push forward and your fighter squadrons from Malta will fly in. That is, they will start, but our forces will meet them before they reach the shore. Be patient, Captain."

Danger put the flat of both feet firmly on the floor and drew erect in his chair. Now and then, he glanced at a clock behind Colonel Graum. It would be dark soon. By now, the Nazi forces were either in position or well on the way.

Suddenly, Danger came out of the chair in one leap. It carried him to Graum's desk and he slid on his stomach across it. Graum tried to pick up his gun, but he had been a fraction too sure of himself. Danger whisked that Luger out of the way. He reached both hands forward and grasped Graum before he could arise.

Strong fingers encircled the colonel's throat and silenced the shout that arose to his lips. Those fingers dug deeper and harder. Graum's face turned red and then purple. His struggles grew weaker, but Danger didn't let go until the man was dead.

Lowering the body to the floor he picked up the Luger, made sure it was ready for action and went to the door. There would be a guard outside, but patrols were bound to be few. The Nazis didn't have any too many men to spare. The barracks and streets should be empty.

He opened the door a crack. A sentry stood about four feet in front of the door and a car was pulled up with a driver dozing over the wheel. Danger opened the door wider, brought down the gun on the back of the sentry's neck and before he collapsed, Danger was running straight toward the car.

The driver saw him, pulled a pistol and Danger shot the man through the head. That shot aroused all troops left within the town and some came out of the prison.

Danger got the car door open, hauled the dead driver out and slid behind the wheel. In a second he was gaining speed down the street. Rifle shots banged. Steel whizzed by his head and more

steel peppered the car, but it was traveling at top speed by now and in the advancing dusk became a difficult target.

Danger saw a barricade at the end of the road. It was a flimsy affair and he crashed through it before the startled guards unlimbered machine guns. He tore down a desert road and prayed the tires would hold up.

Gradually, he came into wilder country, and then the whole expanse of the

believed to be imminent.

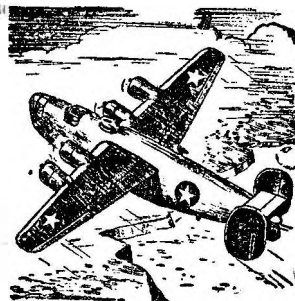
The car motor seemed to have developed an extra loud roar. Danger fiddled with the choke and the roar became even greater. He looked up. A Heinkel was circling him. He'd been seen.

There was no doubt about it because the red sun was barely behind the horizon and still threw crimson rays across the desert.

The Heinkel came down in a dive with

Do You Know YOUR AIR FORCE?

CERTAIN correct and incorrect facts are given with each of the ten statements below. Circle the item under (a), (b), (c), etc., which you believe is right, and mark yourself 10% for each correct answer, after checking up on page 97.



1. A hubble octant is used to measure (a) the amount of gas in a tank; (b) the air speed; (c) the oil pressure; or (d) the angle of elevation of a celestial body.
2. The first successful powered flight by the Wright brothers took place at Kittyhawk in (a) 1909; (b) 1896; (c) 1903; (d) 1918.
3. The highest award which can be won by a member of the Army Air Forces is (a) Distinguished Flying Cross; (b) Congressional Medal of Honor; (c) Distinguished Service Cross; (d) Silver Star.
4. In the R.A.F. a Squadron Leader is equivalent to our (a) Lieutenant; (b) Major; (c) Captain; (d) Lieutenant Colonel.
5. The B-25 is (a) a low-wing monoplane; (b) a mid-wing monoplane; (c) a high-wing monoplane; (d) a biplane.
6. Stewart Field is located (a) in Texas; (b) in California; (c) near West Point, N. Y.; (d) in Missouri.
7. The German Focke-Wulf 190 is (a) a two-place, single engine pursuit plane; (b) a medium bomber; (c) a single place, single engine pursuit plane; (d) a heavy bomber.
8. The basic tactical and administrative unit in the Army Air Forces is (a) Flight; (b) Group; (c) Squadron; (d) Command.
9. The troposphere is (a) above the stratosphere; (b) below the stratosphere; (c) some place in Russia; (d) six miles due west of New Zealand.
10. Owen Stanley is the name of (a) the donor of the ice hockey cup; (b) the man who found Livingstone; (c) a mountain range in New Guinea; (d) Assistant Secretary of War for Air.



ANSWERS ARE ON PAGE 97—IF YOU MUST LOOK!

desert was before him. Here there were no roads, only endless miles of sand. He roared up and down dunes, negotiated small wadies and kept the throttle wide open. It was almost dark now, but the danger of pursuit was heavily present.

It wouldn't come except by air, but that was the worst of all. Some fifty miles ahead were his own outposts, but there were bound to be strong German formations hidden there waiting for the general attack the Nazi commanders

guns chattering. Danger slapped the brakes hard. The car skidded around crazily, but this move had outwitted the pilot in the Heinkel. Not for long though. The plane nosed upwards, circled again and this time it was bound to catch Danger in the full blast of its guns.

DANGER opened the throttle wide and scooted across the sand. He topped a ridge and below him was a steep wadi. He had the car door open and as the machine rolled over the bank,

he hurled himself out. The moment he hit the sand, he kept rolling, but not down into the wadi. When he stopped, both hands dug frantically into the sand, throwing it upon himself as camouflage.

He lay very quiet as the Heinkel dived. Its guns strafed the car. Cannon shells set it afire. The car turned over on its side and flames leaped high. The Heinkel rose once more, scooted off and then banked to come back for a landing.

Danger waited until the plane's propeller was kicking up a miniature sand-storm. At that moment the pilot's vision would be clouded. Danger arose and jumped down the incline into the wadi. It was littered with big stones and he crouched behind one, Luger ready.

The pilot started sliding down the incline, too, and he was prepared for trouble. A sub-machine-gun was held ready. The light from the burning car brought the pilot into bold relief. It was Freytag. Danger called his name.

Freytag turned quickly and Danger shot him in the chest. Freytag's gun stuttered a few times and then he dropped it. Before Danger reached his side Freytag had fallen beside the gun, but he made no attempt to pick it up.

Danger knelt and turned Freytag over.

"I knew you'd come," he told the German. "That's why I told you how I'd make my escape if the chance came. You wanted all the glory of getting me and I also knew that's how you'd think. I wanted your plane, Freytag."

Freytag coughed blood. "Clever of you, Captain. What difference does it make? Your armies will be hurled back."

Freytag was dying. Danger could see this, but he could also see, in his memory, how Freytag had enjoyed the spectacle in the courtyard where the firing squads worked.

"There will no attack," Danger told him. "None was contemplated for tonight. Those code orders were faked. I deliberately let myself be shot down.

When your agents at our base went after the code book, it was ready for them. They were permitted to radio it and by now they are probably dead. As soon as your High Command believed an attack was imminent, they deployed their troops. They went to arranged spots where heavy guns and pill boxes were hidden. We had to find out where these were. By taking up these positions, the troops gave away every strong point on your lines, Freytag."

The German's eyes burned in fury and pain. Danger went on talking.

"Those transport planes you believed to be carrying wounded men were equipped with cameras. Pictures were taken of every move your army made. Right now, our forces know every single strong point and when the attack does start, we shall know where to throw our men with the greatest hope of success.

"It isn't a new trick I worked, Freytag. Your own forces pulled it long before France was invaded. They wanted to see how the Belgians and the French would deploy, so one of your planes made a forced landing with papers, just as I did. The French and Belgians moved into position and your observation planes took it all in. I merely borrowed the strategy, Freytag. Freytag . . ."

The German was dead. Captain Danger arose and sprinted up the side of the wadi toward Freytag's plane. In it he'd be quite safe until he reached his own lines. Then there would be a chute. He didn't have to risk being shot down by his own guns.

Danger looked around in the gloom just before he took off. The desert was quiet now, but very soon Americans, British and French would sweep across it in a wave that couldn't be stopped. The Nazis would have a Dunkirk of their own as soon as they were driven to the beaches.

Coming Next Issue

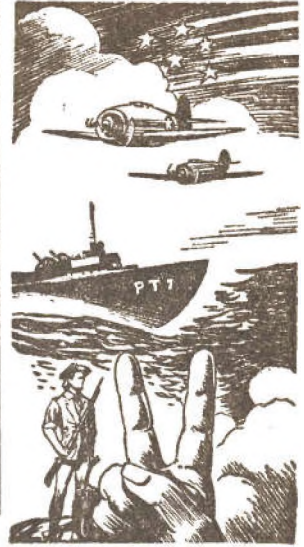
LEND-LEASE FOR RUSSIA

Another Exciting Captain Danger Story

By **LIEUT. SCOTT MORGAN**



C. S. FORESTER



HOW UNCLE GEORGE BOMBED TOKIO

By C. S. FORESTER

*Author of "Captain Horatio Hornblower"
and other famous novels*

MY Uncle George was an eccentric person; he was not merely eccentric in that he kept a very large cash balance in his bank account, but he was also eccentric in that when he died last year he left that money to me.

Ten thousand dollars it was, and except for saying that Uncle George was eccentric I will take back all the hard words I have ever said about him.

I bought War Savings Bonds with that ten thousand dollars, of course. Some for myself, some for my wife, and some for my children, so that I still haven't used up yet the full quota that we can buy this year; I hope to do that soon.

But meanwhile, I thought rather proudly to myself that ten thousand dollars would be something for Uncle Sam to get along with.

Uncle Sam is spending 50,000,000 dollars a day on this war. It was quite a surprise to me when I worked out that

my handsome ten thousand dollars was only paying for three minutes of it; but still, I was paying for three minutes of the war and I wanted to know which three minutes it would be.

I let chance dictate that; I did tit-tat-toe on the calendar and got April 18th, and I did tit-tat-toe on the clock and got 9 o'clock and I spun a penny to decide whether it was a.m. or p.m. and it turned out to be p.m. It didn't seem to be a very interesting bit of the war to own, 9 p.m. on April 18th, but when I turned my radio on and heard that Tokio was complaining bitterly of having been bombed at noon that day I did a few more calculations.

I think I have got it right although sums to do with longitude and summer time nearly give me delirium tremens. My calculations seem to show noon in Tokio is 9 p.m. here in New York. If that is right I paid for the bombs that fell.

Either me or my Uncle George.

A WAR BOND MESSAGE FOR ALL AMERICANS!

SHALL LIVE TO FIGHT

By
**JOSEPH J.
MILLARD**

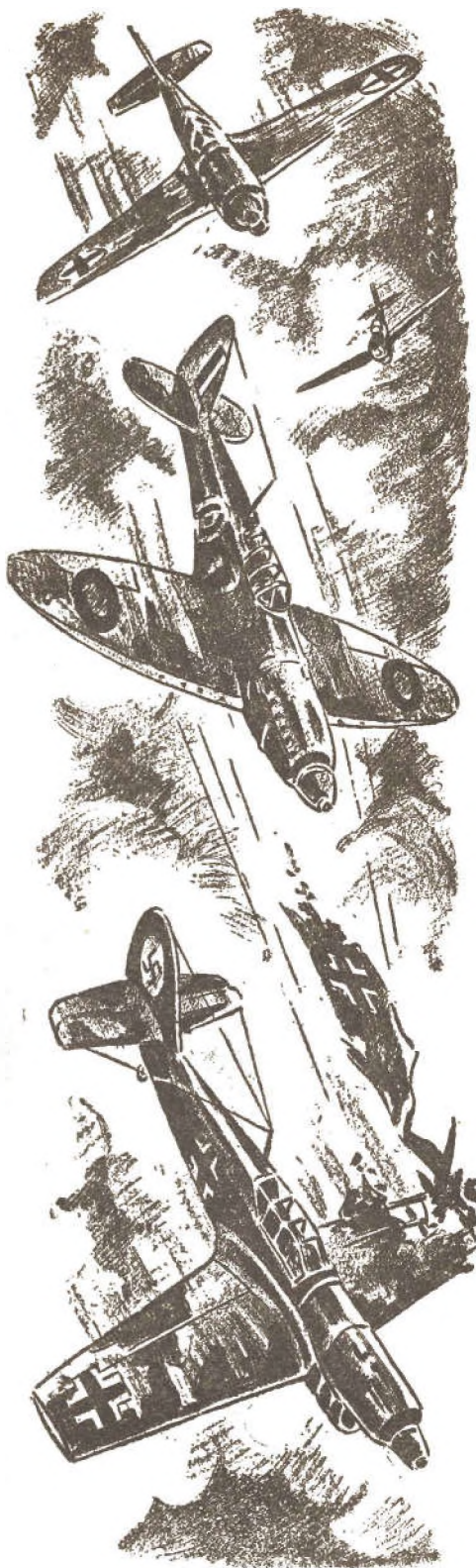
*A Yankee Maverick on the Sky
Range of the R. A. F. Can't
Keep His Feet on the Ground
When His Heart Is in the Air!*

IT SEEMED to Cincinnati that the fight had just begun when the voice of Squadron Leader Congreve came through the phones. "Brush off, you chaps. Disengage and brush off for home."

Johnny Shane, the Yank from Cincinnati, glared around at the remaining planes of Squadron Thirty-One. Three or four were still mixing it up with a flock of Messerschmitts but they were gradually edging westward. The remaining Spitfires had already slipped free and were forming out over the Channel. The battered 'Schmitts and Heinkels that had started the scrap seemed to be perfectly willing for Thirty-One to quit and go home.

"Why, you tea-table cream puffs," Johnny Shane growled disgustedly, "what's the matter? Did the Fighter Pilot's Union put you on a thirty-hour week or something?"

Thirty-One hadn't started out like a bunch of quitters. When this aerial combat, Johnny Shane's first, had exploded around his ears, the tea-drinkers of Thirty-One had gladdened his heart with their responsive fury. His first day and first patrol with Squadron Thirty-One had begun to look like



The Nazi tried to dodge but pieces of wing began to fly off the 'Schmitt, then a roll of black smoke!

a disappointment to Johnny Shane until it happened.

They had completed a leisurely patrol and were out over the Strait, wheeling around for the return to base, when the squadron of 'Schmitts and Heinkels blatted down out of the clouds without warning. After the first numb shock of meeting reality face to face, Shane had hurled himself into the fight with the same gleeful enthusiasm he had once carried to the football field and, later the prize ring.

Consciously he forgot everything he had learned in weeks of training and knew only the fury of conflict. But subconsciously that training did its part.

The Spitfire became merely an extension of his own fighting fists and the controls a delicate part of his own hair-trigger nerves and muscles.

He had hurled the Spit around the sky like Joe Louis's left, darting it in and out, striking and feinting and dodging the lacing fingers of death a score of times. He hadn't downed an enemy yet but he had seen his tracers go home twice, had seen bits of wreckage fly out from the impact. His own wings were spattered with holes that he couldn't blame on moths, and a screaming demon had sliced in over his right knee to take the glass off his turn-and-bank. But Shane himself was unhit and thirsting for more fight when this screwy walk-out was called.

IT DIDN'T make sense. What if the R.A.F. boys had been outnumbered seventeen to twelve? Congreve and Wheeler had each taken out a 'Schmitt and young Fillstaff had laced a shroud for a Heinkel to bring down those odds. Now the Messerschmitt he himself had crippled was edging out of the scrap and he'd be darned if he'd let it stagger home for repairs.

They were beyond the Channel, now, over the coast of occupied France. Anything that didn't blow

up or burn up on the way down now had a good chance to salvage, and Johnny Shane hadn't jumped a job and come to England just to make Nazi repair crews put in some overtime.

"Brush off," Congreve's voice came again. "Brush off and no more fooling about it."

Johnny Shane looked back at the huddle of Squadron Thirty-One and then back to where the crippled 'Schmitt was slanting eastward. His lip curled.

"Nuts to you, McGillicuddy," he howled, and pounded the throttle of his Spitfire against the brass. "You panty-waist go on home. I'll see you at tea-time."

The Spitfire said har-roooooom and went down toward the fleeing Messerschmitt like a bat out of hell. Heinkel saw the dive and tried to intercept. The Nazi pilot kicked his crate back out of the way again at the last moment, bubbling round German oaths at the madman who apparently would as soon go through him as around him. Tracers and a couple of thirty-seven millimeter nose-gun shells kicked around under the Spit's tail and only added impetus. Johnny Shane had a date with the 'Schmitt and no foolin'.

"Saint Louie woman," he caroled, hurling his voice against the howling thunder of the Merlin, "with her diamond ring . . ."

The Nazi saw destruction roaring down and tried to dodge. Johnny Shane laughed and led off, exactly the way he used to lead off on a V of ducks with his old over-and-under shotgun. The Spit danced to the back-lash of the eight Brownings and thumbed its nose, wagging smoke fingers of tracers at the enemy.

Pieces of wing began to fly off the 'Schmitt, then a roll of black smoke and, last of all, the pilot. Johnny Shane hung on long enough to see the parachute blossom and then snapped up and back and practically into the arms of two Heinkels.

Something went *powp*, like a blown up paper sack, and the Spit tried to roll over on her back. When Shane got the left wing down again, streamers of fabric were fluttering where shrapnel from a nose-gun had shredded the tip. He whip-sawed, spoiling the Nazi gunner's aim, and darted toward one of his annoyers.

That Heinkel promptly cut away, making him waste cupro on the empty air.

"Come, Krautie," Shane coaxed, tightening his pursuing turn. "Nice Krautie. Come to papa and taste some nice, hot sluggie-wuggies."

The Heinkel ignored the bait and led Shane into a merry-go-round. The merry-go-round broke down abruptly when a couple of 'Schmitts climbed aboard with the idea of riding Shane's tail. One of them stopped playing and got serious, and Shane skidded out of the circle with his wind-screen gone and a rip in his nice new flying suit.

HE flipped and tried to get around to make it an even exchange. A Heinkel and a 'Schmitt had been sitting upstairs, waiting for just such an opening. They converged on Johnny Shane with a lot of enthusiasm and he discovered things suddenly weren't going so well. Space has three dimensions and there were four Nazi crates. The result was that every way he turned, he was running into the fire of somebody's tracers.

The net began to tighten and Shane began to perspire. At training school, they'd taught him that a Spitfire going three hundred miles an hour takes three miles to turn around. The devil of it was that some flannelmouth had apparently told the Nazis the same thing, for every time Shane made such a turn, they were there ahead of him. A Heinkel skidded into his path and lost the war then and there, so far as its pilot was concerned, but the remaining three still had Shane bracketed nicely.

"Well," Shane philosophized, "I wanted action and I got it—while it lasted. It's been nice knowing you."

Streams of tracers converged up ahead of the Spit's nose and he was headed for them, with no chance in the world of doing anything about it. Shane changed his song to *Bury Me Not On The Lone Prairie*, and thought wistfully of a gal in Cincy.

Then suddenly the tracer streams broke apart, whirling aside to let the Spitfire thunder through, untouched. Shane screwed around to analyze the miracle and saw his erstwhile enemies going east with all the symptoms of a sudden and intense homesickness.

He looked up to find the reason and gulped.

The reason was just over his head in the form of Squadron Thirty-One, diving to the attack. They hadn't gone home after all.

Maybe, inspired by Shane's daring, they had decided to come back and make it a mop-up.

"Good boys," Shane roared. "Ride 'em down, cowboys!"

But Thirty-One had different ideas. With the Nazis in full flight, the entire Squadron wheeled and engulfed Shane's Spit. Once more the voice of Congreve, brittle with anger, clashed in the phones.

"Brush off, Cincinnati. And in case you aren't familiar with our English terms, that means go home—*fast*."

Shane slumped in the pit, mopped perspiration and glowered. A swell bunch of cold potatoes he'd hooked up with. Here he had not only downed two Nazis single-handed but had set up the rest for an easy kill, and what thanks did he get? None. The lily-livered tea-drinkers were sore because he put up a scrap for their confounded little blob of an island. Nuts to them!

Shane glared at his ruined dash and sulked. This was a helluva war, anyhow. He'd come over from America and enlisted with the R.A.F. because he pictured the fighter pilots as

plucky, hard-fighting lads who deserved all the aid they could get. And what did he find?

Poey! Up at six-fifteen, with an hour for bath and dressing. Breakfast at seven-fifteen. With tea! Tea for breakfast, and a lot of meaningless chatter about cricket and rugby and square-pushing. And a guy to lug your outfit and help you dress! Double poey! They called him a batman but when Shane tried to talk about the Cincinnati Reds and their pennant chances, the dope only looked vague and said: "Oh, quite. Quite." If the English really wanted to discourage Hitler, let 'em invite him over for a cup of what they called coffee. That would cure anybody of wanting to move in.

BY the time Squadron Thirty-One sat down on its home grounds, Shane had worked himself into a swell case of homesickness and general malcontent. One peep out of sissy-pants Congreve and he'd give that gentleman what he gave Kid Carnivan back at the Golden Gloves in Chi and then walk out on their tin-horn war.

He climbed stiffly out of the pit and saw Squadron Leader Congreve's slim figure striding toward him. The Point's face was white with anger and his eyes were dark, snapping hollows of flame. Shane wriggled out of his Mae West and stood waiting with fire in his own blue eyes and a pugnacious set of his square jaw.

He saw the other pilots of Thirty-One climbing down, not paying any attention to him and being very obvious about it.

"Shane!" Congreve's voice crackled. "Suppose you explain yourself."

Shane dropped his eyes and hung his head in mock embarrassment.

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry, sir. I'm afraid I played a little too rough and broke two of the Nazis' nice aeroplanes. And one of their pilots got hurt, too. I didn't mean to. Really, I didn't. I only meant to slap their

wrists and just scare them a little, but—"

"Shane!" Congreve was trembling with suppressed anger. "I think you're crude humor is out of place. Did you or did you not hear my order to withdraw from contact with the enemy and return to base at once?"

Shane's head snapped erect.

"You're darn tooting I did, he barked. "And if I'd listened to it, there would be two more Nazi planes to come back and smack you around next time. Maybe the British method of making war is to dance around, sticking out your tongues at one another, but I don't play that way. I came over here to fight and I mean fight! If I'd had three Cincinnati school kids up there with me, there wouldn't have been a Nazi left. The one thing they don't teach us in America is how to quit and run when the fighting's hot."

"Then," Congreve's voice shook, "you still have the most important lesson of this war yet to learn, Shane. Listen to me. I'll excuse some of your impetuosity because you're new at this business, but I won't excuse deliberate disobedience of orders. If you wanted fight, I wish you'd been with us over Dunkirk or before London when the *Luftwaffe* came. There is a time to fight and a time to retreat and I'm leader of Thirty-One because I'm supposed to be able to judge which time is which. Do I make myself clear?"

SHANE felt vaguely ashamed. Mention of Dunkirk and the memory of what he had seen of devastated London was a grim reminder that this war was not, after all, quite the pink tea he had painted it. Congreve was drilling on, not waiting for an answer.

"The Reich, Shane, has most of Europe turned into a supply factory. From the beginning, Hitler has had more planes than we, and more opportunity for replacement. We've cut

down that lead, thanks to our own efforts and the help of you Americans, but it still isn't even. Hitler can lose planes and pour more into the breach. The loss of even one Demon jars Britain's defenses clear to their foundations. We've had to learn a bitter lesson, the one I'm teaching you now. We've had to learn to fight and run away, in order to be here with a plane to fight another day.

"You still don't know why I gave the brush-off order when I did out there. You didn't know, as I do, that the Nazis were deliberately working us back over their own ground, that a scrap that started over the Channel finally ended miles inland over occupied France. It was a beautiful trap, Shane. We were being decoyed over a hidden battery of AAs. At the proper time, the Nazis would drop out and leave us nicely centered above the keenest gunners in the Reich. You were safe because you kept their planes in the line of fire. That was why we didn't pursue them any further. We don't like seeing the enemy escape any better than you do and we've tried plenty of times to blast those guns out of business. But so far the guns are still there and we're still forced to fight and run away to live to fight another day."

RED washed up into Shane's face but the anger remained in his eyes.

"You knew all that," he snarled, "but I didn't. What am I supposed to be—a mind reader? Do you think I'd have wallowed around over their Bofors if you'd bothered to let me in on your little sewing-circle secrets? Do I look—"

"That is not the question, Shane. I gave an order. You deliberately disobeyed, thereby endangering the lives of the other Squadron pilots and risking a valuable Spitfire. This is war, Shane, and orders are not generally accompanied by alibies and explanations. You ignored a superior officer's com-

mand. What punishment that will rate, I haven't yet decided. You will go to your quarters and remain there until I send for you. Dismissed!"

Shane straightened, his mouth a thin angry slash across his white face, and marched toward his quarters, conscious of the unfriendly faces of his squadron mates. Nuts to them! Nuts to all of them! So he was in the wrong, but Congreve didn't have to get so tough about it. Everything came out all right and he *did* down two enemy planes in his first combat. But would the tea-drinkers acknowledge that or pop in a word of congratulation? Not they. Not when one of their bloody, blasted rules had been infringed.

Slumped on his bunk, brooding into his cupped hands, Shane heard the other pilots of Thirty-One clump into the briefing room. There was a mutter of low-voiced talk, the words inaudible. He could make out Congreve's voice above the others, probably pooling all the resources of Thirty-One's brain power to decide on a fitting punishment for Cincinnati, as they'd called Shane when he arrived.

SHANE growled under his breath. Presently Congreve's voice raised to audible volume.

"Orderly. Oh, orderly. Get this special report off to Wing at once. It concerns a matter that must have immediate attention, so rush it."

So that was it? Going to carry his beef up to the potbellies who flew mahogany desks, was he? Deah, deah! That new chappie from Amedika was a naughty boy today. He fractured one of the precious rules. Would you advise sending him to bed without his supper or something more drastic, like a slap on the left wrist?

The whole trouble with Johnny Shane was that there hadn't been any such word as "discipline" on the side of the tracks where he grew up. You came out of the cradle fighting and you kept on fighting to get anywhere. But it was every man for himself and

luck rode the hardest fighter. Being told how to fight and, worse, *when* to fight, was a new experience that simply refused to cog itself into the machinery of his makeup.

He could realize Congreve's position and the justness of his anger. In his heart he knew these British lads were first rate scrappers who could smile in the face of death and take time off for a spot of tea.

But, Johnny Shane told himself again, they didn't have to get so tough about it. . . .

Trouble was the British had no sense of humor. Like that time during training when the Rolls engine on Shane's Miles Master trainer pood out on a solo hop. Shane landed the miniature fighter safely but had to walk a mile back to training base. The instructor met him.

"I say, Cincinnati, what happened? Where's your plane?"

And Shane, feeling flip, had explained with dead seriousness:

"Well, you see, sir, I was cruising along at two hundred when a Spitfire passed me. He was going so fast I thought I was standing still and got out to look at my engine."

The instructor had stared, shocked and solemn.

"Oh, I say, now. That was a bit silly of you, what? You should have noticed the jolly old earth wasn't under your wheels."

THE siren over the dispersal office chose the moment of Johnny Shane's deepest gloom to let go with a whoop that lifted him right off his bunk. Automatic reflex made him snatch at his Lewis helmet with its wash-basin-size earphones zippered into the flaps. He was half-way to the door when the thundering herd pounded out of the briefing room and down the hall, right past his quarters.

Shane stiffened with his hand still reaching for the door knob and the eager light faded out of his blue eyes. So that was it. Johnny Shane was in

the doghouse. Thirty-One was going up without him. They'd rather depend on a moss-covered regulation than on a pair of fighting wings and eight eager Brownings. Okay! Let 'em. From now on, Shane told himself bitterly, he'd obey the absolute letter of every order in the book—until some of those laddie-bucks grew sorry orders had ever been invented.

He stamped back, hurled his helmet into a corner and slumped onto his bunk, trying to tell himself that he didn't care. But he did. Coming over here in the first place had been more than a lark. To Johnny Shane, the kind of life people in England and America took for granted was worth fighting to preserve. Bottled up inside him, suppressed by the hard shell he wore as a mask, was a surprising amount of sentiment over this thing called *Freedom*. Being left out of a chance to fight for it—hurt like the very devil.

Outside, the Merlins alternately thundered and whispered and then thundered again, taking off. He heard Thirty-One circle once to assemble formation and then go streaking south and west. Shane made a tight gulping sound, swallowing the sudden lump in his throat.

He stood it for eight minutes and then wandered dismally out and over the dispersal.

A blank-faced communications sergeant hesitated and finally answered his question.

"No harm in the telling, I guess. It's the same bloody routine the laddies have been hitting for a week. Every afternoon a mess of 'Schmitts and Heinkels come over and make a stab at Portsm'th or Southampton, like. Then, when the interceptors go up, they start a running fight back for home, using all sorts of tricks to decoy a squadron in over that blasted AA trap they've set up inland.

"Congreve is too smart for them, though. He fights them up to here"—he stabbed a forefinger onto the map—

"and then cuts away before they can nip him. It's getting beastly tiresome, though the boys bag a few on the way. Not enough to pay for the petrol they waste, I'm thinking."

Shane was staring at the map, his eyes wide. The sergeant's stubby forefinger was resting almost on a sweeping curve in the river. Just beyond that curve, a cross-hatching of red lines with cryptic numbers and symbols arrowed around it, marked the location of the Anti-aircraft Trap. A light was beginning to glow in Shane's eyes.

"Does Thirty-One always turn back at that curve?"

"Surest thing, fellow. Make a lark of it, those lads. They call the bend there their pylon and fine the laddie who cuts it too close a round of drinks."

"Um-m-m." Shane's mind was clicking at top speed. "They'll get a sweet shock if their lovely pylon blows up under the seat of their pants one of these fine days."

HE turned and dogged out onto the field, wandering aimlessly. His Spitfire stood behind the line, checked and ready. Mechanics had finished slapping strips of doped fabric over the leading edges of the two wings, covering up the eight gaping gunports. It was a trick they'd started only recently. Not only did the fabric keep damp out of the gun barrels but, by sealing the ports, it added some three or four miles to takeoff speed. Later, when fighting time came, a single burst ripped away the fabric and left the guns dry and eager for their deadly work.

Shane's eyes were narrowed and a frown creased his forehead. He couldn't get the thought of that bend in the river off his mind. The Nasties weren't so dumb. If they tricked the R.A.F. lads into the habit of turning on that bend every afternoon, it was only a matter of time until some smart Kraut got the idea of setting another

AA trap back there. The moment when Thirty-One, abandoning pursuit and reforming for the flight home, were wheeling leisurely above that bend would be the perfect time for Bofors and pom-poms to open up on a cold meat target.

CURSING to himself, Shane went back and told his worries to the sergeant.

"Lumme, Cincinnati," the big com-man smiled, "we've thought of all that. It would be a right trick, but they're missing it. We photograph that section of river every morning for a sign of activity. After all, you know, those chaps can't just carry an AA battery in their coat pockets and pop it down any old spot. There aren't roads solid enough to move up batteries along there and you can be sure, if so much as a pickaxe moved down there, Control would know it."

"Nuts!" Shane snapped. "You don't needs roads with a river that wide. What's to prevent their setting up a battery on a barge and floating it down there after a photo flight?"

"Oh, they can't." The sergeant was shocked. "The river's too shallow, for one thing, and for another, it would take a heavily ballasted barge to give their guns a firm footing."

The sergeant dismissed the whole silly idea with a wave of his hand and returned to his book work. Shane studied the map a moment longer and then went out. He was still worried. The gag was just too good for smart Nazis to overlook.

Suddenly he stiffened, mouth dropping open. Of course! The very shallowness of the river. Of course a light barge of shallow draft would rock under the recoil of guns, making aiming uncertain—

But a light barge wouldn't rock if it were run aground and firmly wedged on sand bars. And it could be pulled down by tow-ropes, if there wasn't draft enough for a tug.

The idea exploded fire in Shane's

eyes. He started to whirl back toward dispersal office and then stopped. The vision of the complacent ground man jarred him. He looked across and there stood his Spit, practically whistling for him to climb aboard. For a single moment Shane hesitated, thinking of his orders to remain in quarters.

"To hell with orders," he barked, and legged it for his ship.

A Spitfire can climb twenty thousand feet in nine minutes. Shane had his up and was crowding that record before the ground men got outside to see what was happening.

FOR the first time, he began to wonder what he could do about it, even if his crazy hunch had a grain of foundation. Thirty-One had been gone twenty minutes and they'd be using full throttle along before this. He'd never catch them.

Suddenly he remembered the direction of their flight. South and west. Of course! Thirty-One was heading for Portsmouth or Southampton first as interceptors to bang in on the Nazi feint. That meant practically straight west, time out for a scramble over the Channel coast and then a running fight back south and east.

By slamming straight across the diagonal, cutting across between Havre and Rouen, he might beat or at least meet them.

And then what? Shane's lips curled wryly. He'd slam up to the squadron and start yelling his crazy hunch and what would happen? Congreve would give him what's what for breaking orders and refuse to listen.

And if Shane tried to relay his guess to Control, he'd probably get a cold shoulder.

If Congreve had actually reported his defection to the higher-ups, the name of Shane would smell bad clear up to Adastral House. And besides, his hunch might be all wet. Or it might be good for later but this might not be the particular day the Nazis picked to uncork their surprise.

Thinking of all this kicked Shane's mind into a whirling tangle but didn't stop him from driving toward France with everything the Merlin could pour into the prop. If he was right and did nothing about it, Thirty-One was due to be blown right out of the blue sky.

Shane leaned forward in the pit, holding his breath, banging at the throttle gates for an extra sliver of speed. The blue Channel fled away beneath him, giving way to green that was France.

He studied his instruments and corrected his course a trifle, inching south a little.

Almost abruptly, he came on the scramble. The whirl of scrapping planes literally popped out of the sky off to his right. A trail of smoke was arcing downward out of the mess but he was still too far off to identify the victim's nationality.

Shortly he could make out the planes and see that, true to form, the Nazis were making it a running fight and gradually pulling out of it, getting set for the break-away. Up ahead, toward the horizon, a silver snake crawled across the green. The river—and the bend where Thirty-One turned back.

For a moment Shane considered swinging around and hurling himself into the scrap from the east. Maybe, if he tore up enough sky, he could herd the Nazis back into the arms of Thirty-One for a payoff fight before they reached the bend. The idea died almost at birth. For one thing, he lacked enough leeway to make the sweep around. And for another, if his crazy hunch was sound, the Nazis wouldn't let one lone Spitfire stand between them and their coup.

No, there was only one thing to do and Shane did it. From twenty thousand, he pointed the Spitfire's nose down the long slant toward the distant bend. His only chance was to get there first and either spring the trap or prove himself a complete idiot.

Suddenly his earphones began to crackle.

"Cincinnati! Cincinnati! Point calling Cincinnati! Are you completely insane, man? Get back here. That's an order. Pull into place at once. When we get back, consider yourself under arrest."

SHANE'S lips peeled back from his teeth. The wind was howling at the pit-cover and the Merlin was screaming defiance at the universe. The air-speed needle was thumbing its nose at the four hundred mark, and the scramble of planes was already dropping back and up. The noise and the excitement fanned the rebellion in Shane's breast to a consuming flame. He thumbed on his transmitter and lifted the flap mike.

"Cincinnati to Point," he yelled gleefully. "Here's an order for you. Ground me for doing my job, will you? Bellyache to the brass-hats because I play for keeps, huh? Well, kiss my prop-wash and run for home, Clarence. I'm heading east and I may not be back."

He snapped off the mike, then, and jerked his phone jack. Let Congreve yell his throat out. If a game was worth playing, it was worth playing to the hilt.

Shane was in this, now, and he'd see it through and take the consequences afterward.

He looked out the side of his pit and jerked as a long trail of white snakes went wriggling past, scant inches from his wing. A Messerschmitt was on his tail, crowding down and feeling for him with its tracers. Shane kicked his Spit out of line and saw bluish vapors puffing from the 'Schmitt's nose as the automatic cannon fumbled for him. No bursts came, though, so he knew he was still beyond effective range. Those were contact shells, exploding at a touch, but keeping still without.

Shane whirled back and there was the river, leaping out into a broad sheet almost in his face. He tugged back the stick, tensing his stomach muscles and grunting at the impact of

the pull-out. For a moment he thought the Spit was stuck in the groove. Then it began to lift and he was rocketing up the river, so close to the water that he could see the geysers ahead where the Messerschmitt's misses were striking.

Directly ahead, the silvery sheet bent into a sweeping curve to the south. It was somewhere along that curve that Shane should meet his future. He'd already determined from the map that this was the only definite spot where Thirty-One made a practice of passing. If there was a trap, it must be here.

The Spit trembled suddenly and did a little flirt that indicated cupro nickel in its tail. The controls were suddenly sluggish but they still functioned. Shane kicked up into a sharp-banked S-curve, saw tracers race by and turned his attention to the banks of the river.

For a moment he felt sick with disappointment. The broad river swept on between its low green banks and vanished around the lazy curve, without a sign of barge or hidden AA battery anywhere. Then he was wrong and the consequences of his brain-storm would be the worst lacing any fighter pilot ever got from his superiors.

He took the curve in the river with a sharp bank, eyes sweeping the shore lines with waning hope. Here again, as far as he could see, there was nothing suspicious.

Not even a—

Suddenly Shane was stiffening, staring wide-eyed at a spot on the east bank of the curve. Something there didn't look just right. The red clay bank was a different shade.

SHANE abruptly yelped aloud. It was there, and he'd almost missed it. A wide, flat barge was pulled in there, covered with a layer of clay and sand from which protruded queer humps and mounds of painted canvas. Not satisfied with mere camouflage,

the barge had been cut into the very shore itself to keep it from making a noticeable bump on the shoreline. It was the wetter clay, still fresh from digging, that had betrayed the trap. From higher up, it would be invisible.

Upstairs, the milling fighters were separating. The van of the Nazis were already nearly overhead, streaking eastward. In another moment Congreve and his Squadron would be wheeling lazily into a turn, directly above the waiting battery.

The Spitfire trembled again and a lacing of holes licked across the right wing. Shane had ignored the 'Schmitt, giving it time to set itself for the kill. He ruddered desperately, kicking away from the slugs. But he was too low for maneuvering and the 'Schmitt was glued to his tail. The tracers followed, nipping at his wings and tabs, licking toward the pit with eager hunger.

Over there the barge waited quietly, holding its load of death for the bigger game up above.

The swing had carried Shane away from the barge, into a tight turn, with the 'Schmitt turning at his heels. Shane took a deep breath, tucked his head down between his knees to force blood to his brain and yanked on the stick. The screaming Spitfire literally spun on one battered wing, almost scraping the low river bank.

Then suddenly it was around and levelling, and the gray-green curtain of impending blackout was lifting from Shane's eyes. The Nazi had tried to follow that turn but he lacked the belly for it, as the British say. The maneuver ended with Shane cutting back almost at right angles to the Messerschmitt.

He thumbed the red button long enough to pour a hammer-blow of .303s just below the hatch cover. The Nazi skidded away from him sideward, as though actually knocked aside by the impact. One wing came up sharply and the nose plowed water. It ended with the 'Schmitt up-ended, its tail

and one wing sticking grotesquely into the air.

No one tried to get out of the partially-submerged pit.

All this was split-second stuff, and then the ruined Messerschmitt was behind Shane and the barge was dead ahead. He could see queer, frantic scurrying and humpings under the canvas and a pair of red eyes began to wink at him from a dark hollow amid the camouflage.

Shane ruddered until the winking eyes were swimming over the orange tip of his gunsight image on the wind-screen and tripped his own guns. The Brownings said *Brrrrup-pup-pup* and shook the plane. The canvas shield on the barge began to jerk and rip and the red eyes stopped winking. A shapeless thing rolled around under the canvas and stopped with one queerly human leg poked out into sight.

Then Shane was lifting the Spitfire, skimming the deadly barge and zooming. Little patches of daylight came into his pit, suddenly, and a strap of his chute pack tugged into two jagged strips and fell away from one knee. Shane whirled the Spit over and down and rode a steady stream of liquid fire back across the barge, raking it from side to side.

HE lifted again, winged over and came back from down-stream to pour more hell into the trap from stem to stern. A pom-pom let go almost under him and the blast of its muzzle gas threw the Spit over on one wing. Overhead, black puffs bloomed out in a rough circle but Squadron Thirty-One wasn't in that ring of shrapnel.

In a tight line, nine of the original eleven ships were cutting away, wheeling and doing a follow-the-leader down the river along the path of Shane's repeated dives. The Nazi barge, its camouflage torn away now, tried to pump down the muzzles of a battery of rapid-fire guns to meet the menace.

"You kids never learn, do you?"

Shane said, and poured cupro across the barge just behind the gun butts, cutting through just ahead of Congreve's ship to do it. The AAs stopped moving.

The Spitfire zoomed again and hung on its side for a moment, making the turn. Down on the barge, someone led off with an automatic rifle on a target that was momentarily pinned in the air.

A bee whined into the pit and filled Shane's hand with the splinters of his battered stick. Another one hummed through and set Shane's leg afire. Still a third one hit him somewhere. He could not tell where, but it knocked the wind out of his lungs and pulled a shadowy curtain over his eyes.

Shane fought the curtain, holding it back by sheer physical effort, while he got the Spit levelled off. Back along the river, nine Spitfires were systematically pouring the barge full of death, roaring down in short strafing dives until nothing moved below. Shane set his teeth against the numbness and headed home.

HE never remembered that trip. Memory cut off at that moment when Congreve's boys were strafing the barge and took up again when ercks were hauling him out of the pit back at Squadron Thirty-One's home base. Since there was nobody riding with him, Shane concluded he must have flown the Spitfire home and landed it unaided. But it was, so far as he was concerned, a conclusion based entirely on circumstantial evidence.

After a while, Shane was lying on a table with what felt like live coals bandaged onto one leg and his chest feeling as though he'd walked into Joe Louis's left. Other than those annoyances, he felt pretty good—physically. The flight surgeon had his back turned and was fussing over somebody on the next table.

Presently the FS moved and the somebody turned out to be Congreve.

His lean face was white and there was a shiny dew on his forehead but he managed to smile at Shane. Shane stuck out his jaw.

"Okay," he growled. "Dish it out, fellow. I can take it. So I kicked over on orders again. What do I rate for this shindig?"

CONGREVE closed his eyes and opened them again.

"My job," he said softly.

"Huh?" Shane gaped at him. "You off your base?"

"No. Off my legs—for at least a month. Some Knott-Bremse went through both of them, just above the knee." He winced as the surgeon dropped antiseptic. "You got out with a scratch, Cincinnati."

"Yeah, but—" Shane fumbled for words and got out the first thing that came into his head. "That report. I'm—I mean, you put in a bad mark on me—"

Congreve twisted around, fumbled in his jacket pocket and tossed a folded sheet to Shane.

"Copy of my report, fellow. Read it."

Shane got it open.

It read:

"The new Yank replacement is going to be our prize. He fights like a demon and has a priceless sense of humor worth pounds to our morale. Like most Yanks, he's a bit headstrong. Had to discipline him for over-eagerness but he'll come through. Suggest if I stopped a pack, Shane would do splendidly in my place. The other lads seem to take well to the idea of following him. We're giving him the brush-off right now to sober him down, but he'll fit."

Shane wet his lips. "But—but—"

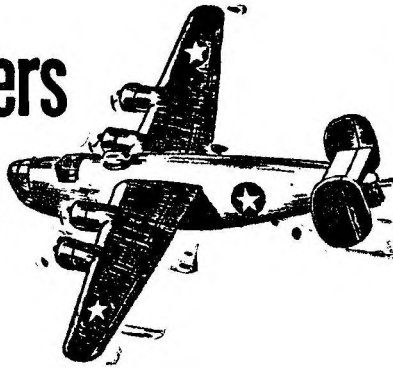
Congreve grinned. "You Yanks have some priceless slang expressions. One is particularly apt right now, Cincinnati."

Congreve rolled back, grinned up at the ceiling and said softly:

"Nuts to you!"

From Numbers

to Names



B-24

THE LIBERATOR

UNCLE SAM'S FIGHTING PLANES

Below is a listing of names (by the numbers) accorded official recognition by the Army and Navy as popular designations for American aircraft. For official use within the Army Air Forces, numerical designations will be retained. (Navy symbols are shown in parentheses.)

HEAVY BOMBERS

B-17 *Flying Fortress*
B-24 (PB4Y) *Liberator*

MEDIUM BOMBERS

B-18 *Bolo*
B-23 *Dragon*
B-25 (PBJ) *Mitchell*
B-26 *Marauder*
B-34 (PV) *Ventura*

LIGHT BOMBERS

A-20 (BD) *Havoc (Attack)*
A-24 (SBD) *Dauntless (Dive)*
A-25 (SB2C) *Helldiver (Dive)*
A-29 (PBO) *Hudson (Patrol)*
A-34 (SB2A) *Buccaneer (Dive)*
A-35 *Vengeance (Dive)*
(SB2U) *Vindicator (Dive)*
(TBD) *Devastator (Torpedo)*
(TBF) *Avenger (Torpedo)*

PATROL BOMBERS (Flying Boats)

OA-10 (PBY) *Catalina*
(PB2Y) *Coronado*
(PBM) *Mariner*

FIGHTERS

P-38 *Lightning*
P-39 *Airacobra*
P-40 *Warhawk*
P-43 *Lancer*
P-47 *Thunderbolt*
P-51 *Mustang*
(F2A) *Buffalo*
(F4F) *Wildcat*
(F4U) *Corsair*

SCOUTING OBSERVATION

(SO3C) *Seagull*
(OS2U) *Kingfisher*

TRANSPORTS

C-43 (GB) *Traveler*
C-45A (JRB) *Voyager*
C-46 (R5C) *Commando*
C-47 *Skytrain*
C-53 (R4D) *Skytrooper*
C-54 (R5D) *Skymaster*
C-56 (R5O) *Lodestar*
C-61 (GK) *Forwarder*
C-69 *Constellation*
C-76 *Caravan*
C-87 *Liberator Express*
(JR2S) *Excalibur*

TRAINERS

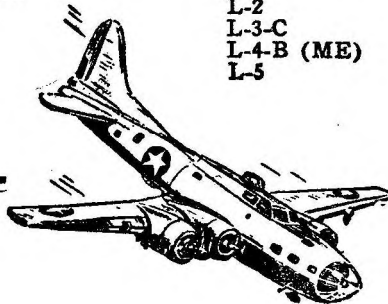
PT-13 & 17
(N2S1 & 3) *Caydet*
PT-19 & 23 *Cornell*
(N2T) *Tutor*
PT-22 (NR) *Recruit*
BT-13 & 15 (SNV) *Valiant*
AT-6 (SNJ) *Texan*
(SNC) *Falcon*
AT-7 (SNB2) *Navigator*
AT-8 & 17 *Bobcat*
AT-10 *Wichita*
AT-11 (SNB1) *Kansas*
AT-13 & 14 *Yankee-Doodle*
AT-15 *Crewmaker*
AT-19 *Reliant*

LIAISON

L-1 *Vigilant*
L-2 *Taylorcraft Grasshopper*
L-3-C *Aeronca Grasshopper*
L-4-B (ME) *Piper Grasshopper*
L-5 *Sentinel*

B 17 E

FLYING FORTRESS



PROP WASH (Continued from page 10)

body washed it for you, pal! Don't you realize that Napoleon and Julius Caesar never got ahead of the femmes, so who do you think you are? We have to agree with a lot Eileen says, too. Well, did we leave a word out, Eileen? You tell them again sometime. We get on to Buddy Woods, 83 Jackson Ave., Langly View, Virginia. Ah, here's one of our boosters. File that with the war stamps of ours, Flannelmouth. Buddy says:

I have read your mags and like AIR WAR best. In the last issue, all the stories were good, especially the one written by Joe Archibald. How about an Ambrose Hooley story? I am enclosing a self addressed envelope and three name strips for my World War Portraits. So long and please send my portraits at once.

So you like us, Buddy. There will be people who will disagree with you, the ones that have a jealous nature. When you come to New York, call at our office and we will give you a cigar. Who said that? Our cigars—well, here is a character that belongs in Ripley's column. He never heard of Ambrose Hooley. His name is Dave O'Toole and lives at 118 Park St., Clinton, Mass. Here is Dave's dish:

I've been reading your mag now for about two years and I think it's tops. For my dough I'll take AIR WAR and its companion mags, everytime. I don't know why you waste ink and paper by printing R.A.F. Aces, though.

One thing I can't figure out, why do all these guys keep writing and telling you not to print World War I stories. I've been reading AIR WAR for quite a while and I can't remember any such stories. Personally, I like World War I stories. Why don't you junk R.A.F. stories and put in a few about the Marine Air Corps?

Who is this Ambrose Hooley guy? I can't place him.

I just bought the Spring issue but haven't had time to read it yet. I read Prop Wash though, and I think that Mart Caidin and Jimmy Gaddy should get together and write a contradiction of Major Seversky's "Victory Through Air Power."

Well, peel me off an Archibald original and a picture of you.

I thought "Tokens for Tojo" was in the groove, and that's no kidding.

Watch out for Ambrose in one of our companion journals, Dave. Maybe Marty and Jim will take you up on that suggestion, but get that tongue out of your cheek, Dave. All right, you like stories of the last rhubarb and we still wear the old fashioned nightshirt and we gotta right to! This is a free country, Dave. We wish you would try to like R.A.F. ACES though. Awright, we only asked.

Now, here is a communication from Staff Sergeant James Campbell, Fort Clark, Texas. Right from the feed bag, pals, so look alive here! The Sarge says:

After reading your magazine AIR WAR I found that I enjoyed most of your stories immensely. Especially "Desert Hawk" by Ralph Oppenheim. There should be more stories by that author. I am inclined to agree with some of your readers concerning the stories of Captain Danger, I think the stories about him are too fantastic and impossible.

Also I think it would be a good idea to have some of your air heroes working with the ground force, it would be more interesting as after all in modern warfare it has to be that way in order to get coordination to win a battle, coordination between Planes and Tanks.

Also please do not have women in the picture, I think it would only spoil your stories. There are men like myself who are against it. And I am sure that you have more men readers than women.

A soldier spurning the pigeons! The next

thing we will expect is to hear that Musso is building a new villa with specific instructions to the architect not to put a balcony on it. But we generally go along with the service men, especially top-kicks, Jim. Thanks, and good luck to all you boys here.

You got ONE from HIM, Liverlips? Give it here. It's that Irwin Titunik of 3307 Fish Avenue, the Bronx, N. Y., the guy Eileen brushed off. Oh, we just can't wait!

I would like to clear up some things that were in my letter in the Winter 1943 issue of AIR WAR. In the closing paragraph I asked for pen-pals, preferably blondes. Well, as some may have realized I was only kidding around. Some moron from Alabama took me seriously and actually wrote me and said she fitted that description. I got another letter from a lady who doesn't know her rudder from her allerons. She wrote complaining about the first part of my letter. I still am dead set against girls in aviation. Look what they did when they started driving automobiles!

Your mag is OK. Keep the stories in World War II.

As for pen-pals let's have some soldiers, sailors and airmen (particularly airmen) dropping a few lines to the above address. I write to six fellows in the service now, two of whom I got with the help of your mag.

I am nuts about aviation and hope to be a pilot in the Army Air Force in about five years.

Look at him, guys. Again he sticks out his neck! And we liked him so much too. That "moron" from Alabama will skin you, pal! Thanks for your good word about AIR WAR though.

Here is one we like. It is from "Snuffy and the Boys," U. S. Naval Air Station, Lake City, Florida. When the members of the fighting forces like us, we can take the lumps from the civilians, Snuffy! The gang tells us here:

I won't start off saying that I'm a regular reader of your mag; because I'm not. I've read two copies though, and my buddies and myself find it a swell magazine. We are all sailors, and are connected with aviation, and we would like to see more stories of Naval aviation appear in your mag.

How about some stories on T.B.F.'s, Grummans and the best Navy fighters going, the F4U. How about doing us gobs a good turn? We also would like to see this letter in your mag.

Leave it to us, Snuffy. There is nothing too good for the gobs, not even a Marine's best torch. Pancake Potts and your correspondent will never forget sailors. We chased a Zep over the channel once and forced-landed on a cruiser. Pancake was going down the funnel when a gob reached out from the crow's nest and pulled him to safety. Pancake got a crow de guerre. Where were we? Frank Broccoli-pardon-Troccoli of 22-26 21st St., Astoria, L. I. Frank is just that about our magazine. Wouldn't you think?

I am happy to inform you that I have finished your magazine called AIR WAR. Thinking it my duty to inform you of the good and bad parts of your mag, I decided to write.

First of all I'll tell you of the good part. Well, the most interesting thing in this book (I think) is "Prop Wash." (Don't get a swelled head as I can change my mind). The best story was "Tarnished Wings" and I liked "The Yank and The Unicorn" too.

Now I'll have to bring down that swelled head of yours by giving you the bad news. Well first of all I'm afraid I'll have to agree with all your other "fans" that Captain Danger isn't so hot.

Then in the Winter issue of AIR WAR you referred to a Flying Fortress (B-17) as a Consoli-

dated E-24. ("The Odds Be Damned," by Lieut. Robert B. Holtz, page 85.)

For the following mistake I shall not give you credit. In a letter sent in by Martin Caidin it was stated that the P-38 was the fastest plane in the world. May I call Martin's attention to the P-47 Thunderbolt which dived at the rate of 725 miles per. I am sure Martin would be interested in this. Now before I take off I would like to ask you for an autographed picture of your pan!

Now we accept pats on the back, Frank, without getting excess suet in our noggin and may we say our clavicles are used to the Oscars? Please don't change your mind or the C.O. here might, if you get what we mean. After all, we have a right to make a living like normal guys and—well, the P-47 Thunderbolt is faster than a P-38, Frank.

Oh, we make mistakes and everybody else does. Until this war goes on another year, we all won't get our crates straightened out. Thanks for everything.

With time so precious, we lay off the solo flying for the nonce and bring in a formation of sky writers which we introduce to you as they zoom over the spotter's cubby hole on the roof. Bob Harmon, 10 Crestmont Rd., Montclair, N. J., Donald Bradley, 1645 Boulevard, Jersey City, N. J., Allan Paterson, 13180 Sorrento, Detroit, Mich., and Milt Halpern, 1300 Patterson St., McKeesport, Pa. They drop these neat bits of AIR WAR propaganda:

This is the first time I ever read your magazine and I think it's swell. But I hope you won't jump down my neck for this but I like flying stories about World War I too, just like John Paul Stauter, Jr., and I'm not wacky. The best story in the Spring issue I think was "The Desert Hawk." Captain Danger was good too. But I did not like that "Biscuits for the Squadron."

From now on I'm going to get your mag all the time. Please put at least one World War I story in the book. It doesn't have to be a long one but just a good story.—Bob Harmon.

[Turn page]

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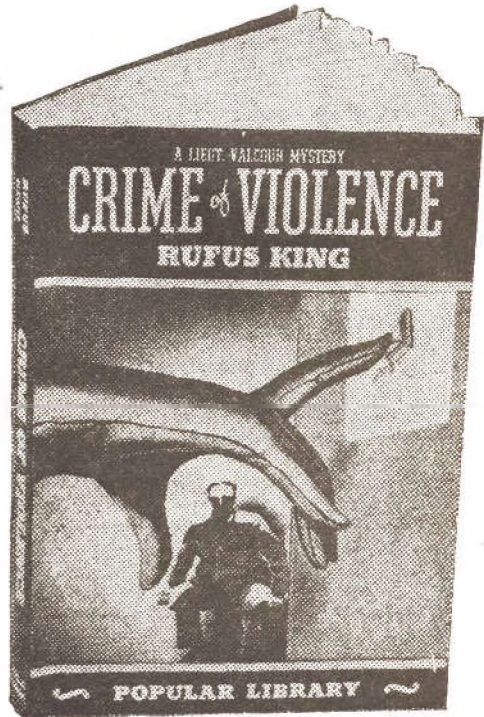


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I have just finished reading the spring issue of AIR WAR. I enjoyed all the stories but I enjoyed "Desert Hawk" and "The Weeping Crocodile" most. I enjoy your column "Prop Wash" very much.

Enclosed you will find three name strips and a self addressed and stamped envelope for my set of famous World War I Aces.—Donald Bradley.

Included are three covers from SKY FIGHTERS, R.A.F. ACES, and AIR WAR. Would you please send me the set of twelve portraits of World War Aces? I am very interested in any information concerning W.W. flying. I have just finished reading "Sky Hawk" and it was very good. Keep up those articles on the other country air-wars.—Allan Paterson.

I just read the spring issue of your mag and I personally think it is the best air magazine I have ever read. The Captain Danger story was exceptionally good and if you take him out like Smart Alec Bob Chute says you should, I wouldn't give a plugged nickel for your mag's chances of remaining the popular mag it is at the present.

I read your column first when I got the magazine and I think you have the right idea when you give your fans a chance to complain. Please try to see your way clear to send me a picture of yourself so that I will be able to fill that extra space in my rogues gallery.

The thing I like best about your magazine is that you don't mess the stories up by putting dames in them. Too many mags ruin their stories by inserting girls who don't have any right to be sitting in the cockpit of a P-40.—Milt Halpern.

Have patience, Bob. Our heart is kind of in the old fuss too. Part of it. We lost the chunk over Mont Sec when we were all alone and seven Fokker D7s jumped us. We are here so did not get killed. Donald can come in and land and have a Babe Ruth bar with us for the PROP WASH plug. Thanks, Allan. Pretty soon we will get our pictures taken and it will serve all of you right, Milt. We had one taken last week but when they were developed, you could see the shrapnel we caught over Conflans right next to our floating ribs. We got into an X-Ray studio by mistake. We also know what happened to an arrow that got shot off our altimeter that day too.

On every menu there is always something special so our plate du jour this evening is a swell bit of correspondence from Air Cadet Mel Porter, San Antonio, Texas. All of you gather up front and take a tip in the art of letter writing containing constructive criticism and unbiased opinions. Everybody paying attention? Here's a real flyer!

I just finished the Spring issue of AIR WAR. Before I pass judgment upon it I would like to comment on different articles in it.

Ralph Oppenheim's "Desert Hawk" was a well written story written around a rather stock plot. Good reading however.

The novelet, "Captain Danger's Convoy," was, to say the least, a little fantastic. Any man who downs 6 enemy aircraft in one day, destroys an entire squadron of Junkers 87s, and, though tied at the wrists, manages to escape from an armed guard, is much more valuable as publicity than as a combat pilot.

"It Takes All Kinds," by Lew Martin was tops as a short story. I was rather prejudiced, however, as I came into Cadets from Glider Training.

Bowen's "Killer of Kalmin" doesn't quite add up to what I would expect from a writer with his background and experience. And four ME 109s felled by one, single, two place fighter. Tsk, tsk.

"The Weeping Crocodile," by Norman A. Daniels, was very good reading, but do those things really happen? Also, any fool who knows what our hero did in this opus, and takes the foolish chances he did, should be made to wear a pointed cap!

Please, don't get me wrong. I don't dislike your mag, in fact it was swell and took my mind off the war for a while.

The thing that impressed me most was the remarkable balance you gave to the stories. The fic-

tion was evened up remarkably by the facts presented in the fillers.

I hope some day, to do half as much for my country as the true writeups about the boys over Midway, Guadalcanal, and Burma reveal they did.

I am 19, come from Spokane, Washington, have 75 hours of govt. training, am a "Gadget" waiting for pre-flight to fighter (I hope) training. All the luck in the world from a lucky fellow to a talented gentleman. (That's you, Joe, I've read your stuff, too.)

We wish we had the knack of briefing our alleged authors that you have, Mel. It looks like you get your unsurpassed tact from tactical flying, hah? We blush at your last words of encouragement, Mel. Now, why can't all guys be nice like you? It must be the environment. We are glad that most of the fresh fish have been rationed. We all join together here in wishing you the best of luck grabbing those wings. Let us know!

An irate female drops a Lewisite bomb on that Irwin Titunik and it looks like we will have to put a ceiling on him for the sake of harmony in this guerre. Shirley Rosenstock, 71 Herzl St., Brooklyn, N. Y., yelps:

Boy am I boiling! I wish Irwin Titunik would do the world a favor and go boil himself in oil. Who does he think he is, anyway, telling girls to keep their noses out of flying? Where does he think the air corps would be if the girls didn't help in the factories making ships to fly in? What about the Women's Ferrying Sqdrn? They're relieving men for the Air Corps.

He's a fine one. He can't see farther than his nose. Who is he to tell the girls what they should do and what they shouldn't do? Boy, he doesn't want much does he: Blonde, Female, Blue Eyes, between 12½ and 13, between 4 ft. 11 in. and 5 ft. tall, streamlined figure and personality. He couldn't get anything half as good as that with the bee-ootiful personality he's got.

Give Dave Lockyer my thanks for backing up the fairer sex. He must be a swell fellow!

Please send me the set of World War Aces and how about a picture of your cute face. Your mag is swell. Keep it that way.

We make no comment or offer a way out for Irwin. From Brooklyn this pigeon is, pal! Well, you better start wishing they will tear down all the bridges between Manhattan and Flatbush, that's all. And you notice how she likes Dave? Tsk, tsk, Irwin, you step right up and say you are sorry. No more time for you right now, woman hater.

When Martin Caidin of 1210 Wheeler Ave., Bronx, N. Y., writes us, we have our hands full. Space does not permit us to publish Marty's long letter in its entirety. But we just have to let Marty in PROP WASH, so here he is.

After practically murdering and threatening the guy who sells mags around the corner for almost two months, I finally found the May issue of AIR WAR, and my number 1 complaint this month, is that the mag is not produced quite enough. We have to wait too long for it.

Gaddy previously pulled two decisive boners in his letter. One was his statement of the Thunderbolt being the fastest ship flown. Uh uh, not yet! The following was given out by the Army. The P-47 Thunderbolt is the fastest single-engine plane today in the world, and will probably surpass the high-speed P-38 Lightning at extreme altitudes of above 38,000 or 40,000 feet.

It was also said by the army that the Thunderbolt holds the world's record for speed in a power dive, at a speed of 725 mph. But did you guys ever think that the true diving speed of the Lightning is a secret that the Army refuses to give out? This statement was also given by the Army. Getting it all together, our P-38 today is the fastest diving, fastest flying, and fastest climbing ship in the world.

Where did Jimmy ever get the idea that the Whirlwind is in the experimental stage? Boy, you sure are behind time on that one. The Whirlwind has been seeing action for over a year, and success-

ful action, too. It uses the same tactics as the Lightning, diving and zooming to attack and then going like hell. Its firepower is concentrated like the P-38.

Well, although this cover of AIR WAR was one of the best, I still see some errors. Take another squint at the size of the Jap pilot bailing out compared to that of the bomber. What is the ship, the B-19? Japs aren't that small; yet. And the Wildcat. I know that some models of the Wildcat carry 6 50 calibre wing guns, they are in service with the British Fleet Air Arm. But, notice the end gun of the three 50s. That gun should be quite nearer the insignia, instead of all three together. The arrangement is something like the early Spitfire Mk. 1, which had the guns widely separated. Look at the Hurricane (early model), and notice the difference. But, the covers are getting better. Couldn't our inside illustrations be a little better? They are rather poor, you know.

That's all for me right now, so we can also consider this part of a personal letter to Jimmy, as that is what he asked for.

What do you think, Jimmy? Caidin is one character we do little quibbling with as he must live inside the sanctum sanctorium where aircraft data is compiled. I suggest that you two guys exchange letters personally to get all your differences straightened out. Thanks for your corrections and suggestions in respect to AIR WAR, Marty. And keep writing.

Comes a citizen with a flair for insulting his superiors and he is William Jameson, 153 Syme St., Sharon, Pa. He addresses us as a reprobate and signs off with love. But we are willing to indulge a character who goes for AIR WAR. Bill's burst is about a four second one and here it is:

Having nothing better to do, I take up my pencil and write. I just finished reading the spring issue of AIR WAR. "Desert Hawk" was a swell story. "Biscuits for the Squadron" was good. This is my first letter to you, or for that matter, the first to any mag. You really have a good mag here. I have been reading it for about 1 1/2 years.

You really ought to have at least one World War [Turn page]

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I story in your mag. Those stories are a thing of the past, but they are still my favorites. I am shooting a Name Strip and 15¢ your way, so if you still have any of them old dusty Patriots you rave about send them to me, you old incendiary.

Well, I got to close now . . . My, these fleas are thick! They keep running out of the seams of your book, AIR WAR.

My brother is a Flying Cadet in the Army Air Corps and he is stationed at No. Carolina state college for preliminary training.

A request for World War I. We bet Hitler would like to unload the headaches he's got at the present in the 1917 Kaiser's lap. Okay, Bill, as long as you send soothing syrup in the same package with the arsenic, we can take it.

The next epistle tickles our slightly frayed vanity. Jud Rosenberg, 6 Ellsworth Ave., Cambridge, Mass., wants a loan of our amazing technique. He must have been talking to Pancake Potts somewhere. But let him speak.

I have just finished reading the Spring Issue of AIR WAR, and I can sincerely say that I thoroughly enjoyed it, except for the fact the Captain Danger story was too lengthy.

How about some stories about China, and Russia, omitting these so-called American and British crack aces? I think without these stories your magazine will become rather monotonous. After all, I really think these vallant nations deserve some praise, earned by their own merit, and not by ours. Right?

I would also like to hear from some of your other readers, preferably those of the female sex.

If I may ask, may I borrow some of your sense of humor? You see, I'm in the habit of dating up pigeons and your sense of humor might come in handy.

We agree with you regarding China and Russia, Jud, 100 percent. Look for a great lead novel in a coming issue of AIR WAR that shows the Russian flyers in action. By—now who do you think?

You give us nostalgia, Jud, asking for some of our "Way with the dolls." In Longeron, France, 1918, we were famous as a raconteur and appeared before the Daughters of Jeanne d'Arc as toastmaster. They all screamed at us—the gendarmes came in—there was that four days in a bastille for telling a perfectly harmless story about a peasant's daughter and the traveling snail sauce salesman.

You can take our word—but here is another letter coming along and the mail sacks keep piling up—no it is three letters, all quickies. The trio, from left to right, are Ed Rafferty, 700 Chess St., Bridgeville, Pa., Delbert Denton, Box 258, New Milford, Conn., and Richard Foltz, 195 West Street, Leominster, Mass. Rafferty leads off in what we think is a baritone voice.

I have just finished the Winter Issue of AIR WAR. I think it was all swell, except the Capt. Danger story. This time it didn't seem so good. Why don't you put some Ambrose Hooley stories in your mag?

I am enclosing three name strips for the portraits of World War Aces.—Ed Rafferty.

I just bought my first copy of AIR WAR and I think it's tops for anybody who likes aviation stories. I'm seriously thinking about klekking myself in the pants for not buying it before. I particularly liked the fact articles in the Winter issue. Keep it up. I am also enclosing three name strips and a self-addressed envelope for the set of pictures of World War Aces.—Delbert Denton.

I have just finished reading the Spring Issue of AIR WAR and I think the story "Desert Hawk" was swell. I also liked Capt. Danger. Please stick to World War II stories. Why not print AIR WAR more often? I think it's the best mag, on the stands. If you send a set of septa World War Aces I sure would appreciate it. Here's hoping you print this.—Richard Poltz.

We will consult Ambrose about this, Ed.

We are beginning to think Capt. Danger takes more in the Prop Wash than he does from the Nazis and all other enemies.

Who can find fault with Del's nice letter? And thanks, Dick, for those kind words.

A customer named J. W. Knowles, Nederland, Texas, makes his debut in PROP WASH and hopes he makes good. Give him a chance here!

This is my first letter so don't bawl me out if it's terrible.

I have something to say about Martin Caidin's letter. He was talking about P-38s not being used for fighting Japs. Well, I can say that a Jap Zero can turn faster and on a dime at that. (A P-40E is not good for the Japs.)

My favorite plane is the P-39 low-altitude fighter. Don't listen to those boys who want Navy stories. I don't like the Navy or their planes. I want to get in the Army Air Corps.

I think you have a swell mag, and I think Capt. Danger is good.

By the way do you know the speed of the Focke-Wulf 190?

Of course you like the Navy, J. W. The Focke-Wulf 190 has a speed of 375 miles per hour. Nice stint for the first try and luck getting into the ARMY air corps.

Bill Hasselbrink comes right to the point and we felt it! Billy lives on Rural R. No. 2, Princeton, Indiana. The Hoosier hot shot shoots this sharply at us.

I have been reading AIR WAR for a good while, hoping each time I open your magazine to find a story about the first big fuss, but I usually don't! So I just read those corny stories about World War II. Occasionally I find a good one such as "Tarnished Wings." Some of your readers praised "Burma Boy" highly, but frankly I thought it reeked!

Capt. Danger is fair, but I have read better stories.

How about tossing in a story about World War I? The name strips and stamped and addressed envelope are for the World War I Aces pictures.

Corn, he says. Fighter planes with great intrepid pilots pouring on the coal to the tune of anywhere between 300-450 miles per hour and shooting cannon and machine guns. Oh, Bill! We wonder if you think Hedy Lamarr is an iceberg and Greg Rice a wheelchair hermit. Well, if everybody in the world liked the same thing as the next guy, there would be plenty of bloodshed in front of the marriage license bureaus. We'll see if we can

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satisfy you, Bill, as you act like a deserving client.

Comes a Dave Lockyer type who wants some of Dave's chicks. Elray Estes, Gen. Del., Goliad, Texas, goes all out for the distaff side, particularly blondes. He also challenges the crate diagnostician, Martin Caidin. Elray, which must be pig latin for Rayel, writes:

Well, pardner, I finally made up my mind to write your run down mag. Why is it run down? Well, how can it be anything else with Captain Danger in it?

Say, will you tell this fellow Martin Caidin who thinks so much of his Grumman XF5F-1s that I wouldn't trade him one Thunderbolt for all the XF5F-1s you could put in Texas.

Another thing I agree with Dave Lockyer in his little speech about the dames. If you could spare some of the numbers out of your little black book Dave, I sure would appreciate them, and if some of the little blue-eyed blondes ask what I look like, tell them I'm sorta on the Clark Gable side.

There's one little thing I want to tell the rest of you guys and that's to leave this fellow Janostak alone cause he's my pal, see? If anything happens to him I'll beat all of your noses to a pulp!

Well, I guess that takes care of the criticism for the time being; I am enclosing three name strips for my portraits of World War Aces, and I better get them or else!

You had better start asking them to put an ell on the Goliad post office, Elray, if you are a Gable type. We will watch the papers to see if you have made a bottleneck of the mail service there. Speaking of necking—address books, we will stack ours up against Dave Lockyer's. Not that you asked us—say, we have lost it. Liverlips! Flannelmouth! You both come here. Search them. Oh, if the Mrs. gets—while the search goes on, let's turn to this flimsy from Jimmy Fleming who has a most unusual beef. Look:

This is the second time I have written to your mag., only this time I have a complaint to register. On the cover of your last issue it looks like the American fighter pilot is waving to the Japs bailing out of their bomber. And the Japs are waving back. I REALLY don't think that happens! Those Japs are just yellow rats and everybody knows it except themselves. And why one of our pilots should wave to them after their dirty back-stabbing job on Pearl Harbor is beyond my comprehension.

But besides that your mag is really good, especially the stories "Desert Hawk" and "It Takes All Kinds." Those were swell stories. Until I can find something else wrong with your mag I sign off.

About that picture, Jimmy. Are you sure the U. S. pilot was not thumbing his—of course not, as our artists are very refined gentlemen! Nice letter, Jimmy. The Japs are what you say.

Jimmy Solen is a card and should get sent two thousand miles for a cent and a half. We are kidding, son. Jimmy is rationed at 1355 State St., Bridgeport, Conn. Mr. Solen sells us this bill of goods as we are a pushover today.

To start at the beginning, the cover on your Spring issue was very nicely drawn, but weren't those Japanese flyers a trifle small?

I like those slogans on the contents page and the new space-saving printing. Those inside pictures are really something to write home about.

I have never read a magazine with so much space for the readers. The number of articles you print in each issue surprised me. That article on the Army Air Forces by Lieutenant General Arnold was very good.

Boy, oh, boy, is that Captain Danger fantastic! In this issue alone he should hardly be able to walk with all his medals!

For some *stra-a-a-nge* reason I like your column; probably because there is so much freedom and informality.

Well there is no sense in my taking up a whole column but I will write again before those men in white coats with butterfly nets and ersatz Mae Wests catch up with you.

Somebody has got to see that a U. S. hero has more medals than Tubby Goering. It might as well be Captain Danger, dear reader. They say when Tubby crosses Unter Den Linden, he makes a noise like three armored Knights playing ping pong on a tin roof. But the best part of your letter was where you said you liked our column! It shows us you are above the average in intelligence and will go far in life.

Robert Smith, 364 N. Main St., Canfield, Ohio, is next on our hit parade for this month. Bob promises to support our cause much better than he has in the past and just write and ask us if you need encouragement in your wonderful new endeavor, Robert.

I have just read the Spring issue of AIR WAR, and have considered it the best magazine I've read. This is my first issue of AIR WAR, and I have enjoyed it considerably. All your stories in this issue are very interesting, especially "Captain Danger," and "Desert Hawk." I agree with Gene Underwood and wish you would set aside a page or two for pictures of fighter craft. I shall hope to purchase many more issues of AIR WAR in the near future.

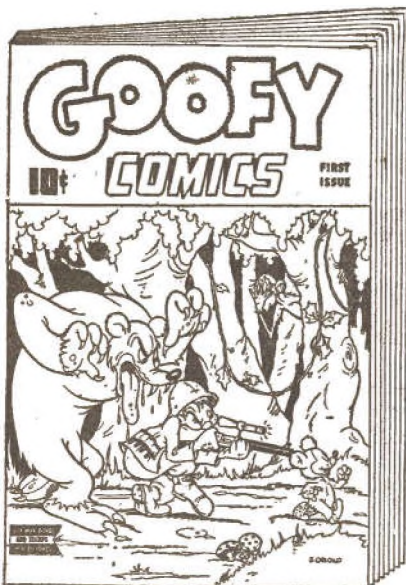
We bring up the tail-end Charlie of this flight, H. Loren Sinn, Carnation, Washington, Rte. 1. Mr. Sinn certainly does not sin against AIR WAR as he likes everything about it. We will show you:

I like Captain Danger's stories about the best of any in your magazine. They are a little on the fantastic side; the way I like 'em! That's one reason I've followed your companion science fiction mags for 3 years. One author I would like to see on your contents page is Ralph Oppenheim, author extraordinary. Ouch! I see he is coming up in the next issue! I like your stories. I like your authors but I do not like your quarterly schedule! Let's have a bi-monthly. I also get your companion air mags.

So we finish at this point and send Liverlips and Flannelmouth out with the mail that will have to be held over for the handwriting expert.

We regret that we are unable to print let-
[Turn page]

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EVERY MONTH—10c AT ALL STANDS

ters from an old pal, Vaughn Hunt, and Harry Bingham, Jr., Don Robinson, Bob Congdon, Robert Pasdue, Dick Bolitho, Fred Yoroslavsky, and Peter Gray, in this issue. We are giving our personal attention to a letter by Alfred Siman, 217 Myrtle Ave., Brooklyn, and he will hear from us. We hope "Dem Bums" win this year, Al.

We have read in the papers that a man is to be hanged for sheltering an escaped Nazi pilot and it is the penalty he deserves. We would like to see the penalties for black marketing and war profiteering made more severe. Any individual that takes advantage of the war to line his pockets with legal tender is just as vicious as the harbinger of an escaped Nazi prisoner.

Save the fat and do not chew it too much. We believe that is a very good slogan for a war poster. We notice in our own section of the country that interest in civilian defense is below sea level and let us remind everybody connected with this vital American battle line that with each passing month, the ocean becomes narrower. The cruising range of the new bombers increase with every month. Let's keep on the alert!

Japan is still a very menacing octopus in the Pacific and we have only nipped at one of its dirty yellow tentacles. It looks like Rommel is to give up the last chunk of Mussolini's African empire, but after that, the hardest struggle comes. The next year will be one to try the stoutest hearts among us and we've got to be ready to make the sacrifices that are absolutely essential when freedom is at stake.

We will give Liverlips Logan just three seconds to hand over our address book as our night is ruined if we don't. We mean we jotted down the name and address of a very civic minded lady in Hackensack who asked us to speak in behalf of man's best friend in time of war. Our subject was to be "Chow Dogs and How They Carry the Mess to the Soldiers in the Field." So we appeal to your patriotism, Liverlips. You got just one more second.

Be seeing you next issue.

—JOE ARCHIBALD.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

NEXT issue of **AIR WAR** brings you two novelets of the kind that makes us twirl our props with pride. **SPITFIRE YANK** is by Joe Archibald, and having read it already,

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Hero of SPITFIRE PILOT is Ray Vollmer, a Yank from Cleveland, Ohio, who had a very special meeting with a Nazi ace named Lothar Ritter. Back in Cleveland, nine-year old Ray Vollmer was dumped out of a soap box derby by Lothar Ritter and given some scars to remember.

Years later, Ray's brother Marty met Lothar Ritter again in an air derby in Cleveland. Ritter crowded Marty into the pylon and won. So the German had two silver cups and Ray Vollmer had his dead brother and a scar on his chin to remember.

And then Ray Vollmer met Lothar Ritter again in the sky over Africa. You take it from there, telling any more'd be cheating!

Companion novelet in the same issue is THE CAPTAIN'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT, by Norman A. Daniels.

Captain Pete Standish of the RAF was too old for combat flying—or even piloting a bomber. His Ventura went out on reconnaissance missions only—the pilot snapping off camera shutters in the Fuehrer's face. The final blow came when Standish was put into a grasshopper—a Vultee Sentinel with all of 120 horsepower—and sent out to spot tanks.

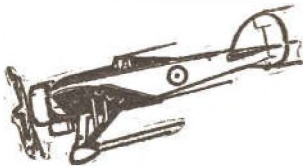
It looked like curtains for Standish's thirst for action. But Woji, his devoted Polish mechanic, had other ideas. The Captain's birthday was coming up and Woji wracked his brain trying to think up a suitable present. When he got it—will you be surprised!

Keep your eye peeled for these two super-duper novelets, in next issue's AIR WAR. And also—look forward to another grand Captain Danger yarn, LEND-LEASE FOR RUSSIA, by Lieut. Scott Morgan. It's a real thriller! See you then—happy landings!

—THE EDITOR.

What do you think of AIR WAR? Please address your letters and post cards of comment and criticism to The Editor, AIR WAR, 10 East 40th St., New York, N. Y. Thank you!

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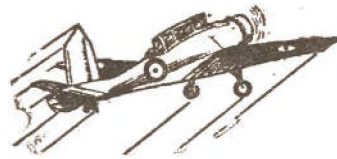
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Off the Runway

AVIATION NEWS AND NOTES

NOW that the "amphibious Jeep" is an established reality, it is hardly surprising to learn that a "flying Jeep" is already in production at the Wayne, Michigan, plant of the Stinson Division of Vultee Aircraft. The newest Jeep is a small, highly-maneuverable plane designed to be the "eyes upstairs" of the artillery, armored forces, cavalry and infantry. Carrying pilot and observer, it can land on cow pasture or highway, weighs barely a ton.



IT makes good reading for American eyes to discover that German-made training planes in two more South American countries have been displaced by new and advanced U.S. trainers. Fairchild has announced proudly that a shipment of PT-19s has just arrived in Uruguay while another PT-19, first of a large number to follow, has been flown from Hagerstown, Maryland, to Argentina. Other PT-19s are already in use in Brazil and Chile.



IN order to whip up the tempo of blueprint deliveries in its Dallas, Texas, plant, North American has introduced a new type of light trailer which is attached to a bicycle pedaled by young women employees of the corporation. There are a number of these trailers and riders, and all of them are kept plenty busy rushing the blueprints to the far corners of the NAA and B plants in the Texas city.



DURING the last 11 months of 1942, American combat planes in action shot down almost three Axis planes for each American loss plus another enemy plane probably destroyed, according to a recent compilation by Secretary of War Stimson. A comparison by types indicates the following.

	ENEMY LOSSES		
	Shot Down	Probables	U.S. Losses
Bombers	480	226	110
Fighters	294	75	164
Miscellaneous	213	61	35
Totals	987	362	309

AUTOMATIC 100 per cent salvage of vital war material is being accomplished by a pneumatic chip collector which uses a jet of air to blow the metal chips and shavings into a covered container on lathes at the General Electric plant at Schenectady, N. Y. Ordinarily, because metal parts are machined at high speed, the chips fly around the machines and on the floor and can be contaminated when they are shovelled up for salvage.



HUNTING U-boats by airplane is not the simple process it appears to the uninitiated. Two times out of three, the submarine crew will spot the searching plane first and dive before the plane sights it and comes in for the kill. The U-boats have perfected a look-out system calling for three crewmen to stand back to back on the conning tower, thus covering all air approaches. The plane, on the other hand, must fly low to spot the submarine under water.



CONSTRUCTION of thousands of helicopters, the direct lift airplanes that can hover within a foot of the ground, go backwards or forwards with equal ease, is predicted by Igor I. Sikorsky, founder and engineering manager of Vought-Sikorsky. He firmly believes that the helicopter, which he has developed to new heights of efficiency, is the logical solution to the introduction of aviation to millions of persons within the next two decades.



A LATE model of the Japanese Zero fighter plane which was captured intact in China has just reached this country for examination by Army and Navy engineers. Tests of the Zero, made soon after its capture, indicated that its wings fluttered dangerously at a speed of 400 miles an hour. It was found to be extremely fragile, with a thin skin, its wings and fuselage built in one piece, and armed with two 20-mm cannon and two 30-cal. machine-guns.

Answers to Questions on Page 71

1. (d) to measure the angle of elevation of a celestial body.
2. (c) 1903.
3. (b) Congressional Medal of Honor.
4. (b) Major.
5. (b) A mid-wing monoplane.
6. (c) Near West Point Military Academy, New York.
7. (c) a single place, single engine pursuit plane.
8. (c) a Squadron.
9. (b) below the stratosphere.
10. (c) a mountain range in New Guinea.

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