

THE BATTLES OF THE FLYING TIGERS

Although the Flying Tigers were over powered by Japan in World War Two, Chennault and his pilots were considered American heroes for their aerial combat in China. In September of 1941 the AVG arrived by ship on the coast of China. Having no combat experience, they moved north 160 miles to the British Royal Air Force base where Claire Chennault took them through a long extensive training session to prepare them for battle. Tragically, pilots Jack Armstrong, Max Hammer, and Pete Atkinson died during routine flights. However, what seemed as a disastrous training ended in a most successful battle.

The Flying Tigers' mission was to defend the back door of China. They flew to Lashio where they would cover the Burma Road that lead to the Yunnan province. Out of 318 people of the AVG, Chennault only certified 84 for aerial combat. He also divided this group into three squadrons. The first squadron was led by Robert "Sandy" Sandell and was called the Adam and Eve First Pursuit Squadron. The Second Pursuit Squadron was led by former navy pilot Jack Newkirk and named the Panda Bears. The Third Pursuit Squadron, led by former army pilot Arvid E. "Oley" Olson was called Hell's Angels. They consisted of army, navy, and marine corps pilots. Hell's Angels left for Mingadalon Airdrome to help the British over Rangoon. The other two squadrons were stationed 650 miles away at Kunming, the capitol of Yunnan province. In relocating these two squadrons, tragedy struck again but this time with three new Curtiss-Wright CW-21 "Demon" fighter planes. Erik Shilling lost power and crash-landed. Chinese people found him but mistook him for a Japanese. They brought him to their village where he learned that Ken Merritt and Lacy Mangleburg had also crashed. Lacy Mangleburg, in his search for Shilling, tried to land in a nearby stream where the undercarriage of the plane hit bottom and the ammunition exploded covering the aircraft in flames and killing Mangleburg.

On December 20, 1941 the Flying Tigers saw action for the first time. Japanese planes came from Hanoi into Kunming after a mad pursuit down to the border. First and second squadrons were sent up on Chennault's signal. When the ten Japanese Mitsubishi twin-engine bombers saw Newkirk's Panda Bears thirty miles out they quickly dropped their bombs and reversed directions. The Flying Tigers followed close behind but hesitated to shoot which gave the Japanese enough time to escape. As the bombers flew away, only pilot Edward F. Rector chased until he ran out of gas and was forced to jump from his plane. Fortunately, Adam and Eve were waiting for them and shot nine of them down letting only one go. Japan no longer attacked Kunming while the AVG were stationed there. Chennault wrote, "The pilots for a few incredulous seconds could hardly believe the bombers were really Japs. It was strictly a case of buck fever with no team work- only a wild melee and sheer luck that kept the P-40's from shooting each other." (Howard, 99)

On December 23, 1941, Japan struck again, this time on Rangoon. Eighteen Nakajima twin-engine medium bombers came through on the first wave and were able to drop their bombs setting the Rangoon docks ablaze. The second wave came in with thirty more bombers and twenty fighters. Eight of the fighters were the feared Zeros and the others

were Nakajima Type 97's, a small two-gun, open cockpit aircraft. This time, however, they were met by the Hell's Angels' fifteen P-40's and the twenty English, Aussie, and New Zealand allies flying Buffalo fighters. At 18,000 feet Olson split his squadron in two having George McMillan lead the attack, and Parker Dupouy lead the reserves. Using the technique taught by Chennault, McMillan's nine planes dove from above firing on the V formation of twenty-seven Japanese bombers. Charlie Older shot down the head bomber and with several other passes brought down two more. The Japanese then released their bombs and retreated leaving their fighters for McMillan's squad. Once they made contact, the Flying Tigers resorted to individual dogfights.

Meanwhile, Dupouy's squad attacked the second wave of bombers but were not as successful as McMillan. Neil Martin led two others in a dive towards the Japanese. The bomber's turret gunners opened fire ripping apart Martin's P-40 holding it somewhat motionless before falling to China's floor. (Maveric, 149) While the rest of Dupouy's fighters were making their passes, six Nakajima 97's flew on their tails. Four of which shot up the wings of Henry Gilbert, the youngest of the AVG at age twenty-one, causing him to fall to his death. George McMillan, Paul Greene, and Charles Older were also shot down but survived. Overall the AVG had a successful day bringing down twenty-five Japanese planes while only losing five planes and two pilots. The RAF shot down seven, losing five pilots and eleven aircraft. There were heavy damages to their other planes and while ground crews were attempting to fix them, the AVG pilots analyzed the battle and developed new tactics for the next engagement.

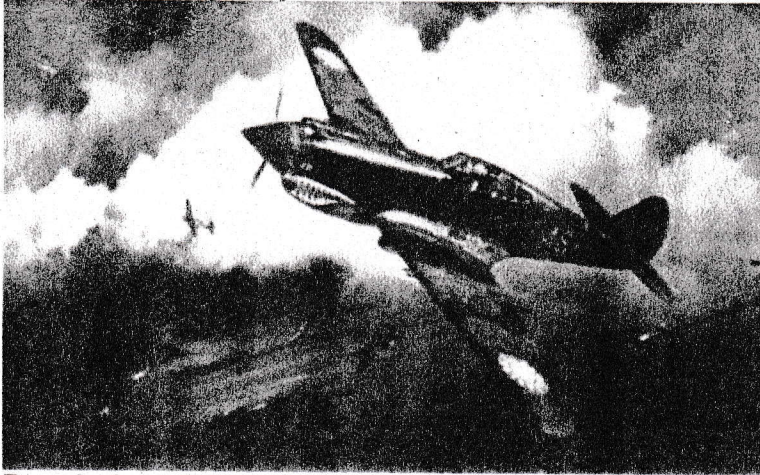
The Japanese returned on Christmas day 1941 with an even larger air fleet. Sixty bombers and up to thirty fighters flew the skies of China. This time the AVG were waiting for them, sending up twelve P-40's as well as sixteen Buffaloes. The RAF and AVG had a most triumphant day pulling down almost forty-five Japanese aircraft losing two Tigers and nine British fighters. Pilot Robert Hedman shot down five enemy planes making him the first American ace in the war of Asia.

The air battle over Rangoon lasted seventy-five days. General Chennault moved the Panda Bears and Adam and Eve to help out, but even with the two squadrons the Japanese overpowered them. Japan reached the outskirts of Rangoon at the end of February while the Flying Tigers moved to a place called Magwe in Northern Burma. Although Japan won the battle, the AVG had 297 certain victories and another probable 153 with only ten combat losses. (*High Honor* -) Of the 318 originals, 253 remained until the end and sixty-five left before disbandment. (*Roar* -) They were fortunate as inexperienced pilots to only have four deaths in six months. Due to these reasons the AVG was considered by Americans as the bright spot in the war against Japan. (*Roar* -)

In 1942 General Chennault returned to active duty in the Army Air Force. The Flying Tigers were asked to give up their mercenary status and fight under Chennault in the Fourteenth Air Force. Six transferred over and the rest went back home to America. On July 4, 1942 the American Volunteer Group was disbanded.

http://mcel.pacificu.edu/as/students/flyingtigers/info/mark_asia.html

First Blood by Roy Grinnell



Four shark-nosed P-40 Tomahawks of the 2nd Pursuit Squadron, AVG, took off from Rangoon's Mingaladon Aerodrome in the crisp pre-dawn of 3 January, 1942. One turned back for engine trouble, leaving three to continue to their target, Raheng Aerodrome, a Japanese-held airfield outside of Tak, in northwestern Thailand.

Squadron Leader Jack Newkirk led the formation, with David L. "Tex" Hill flying Jim Howard's wing. As they approached the Japanese airfield from the southeast, they observed several 1-96 and 1-97 fighters on the ground warming up for takeoff, with more circling the field at 2,000 feet. With the sun at their backs, Newkirk peeled off in a 250-mph dive as Howard and Hill followed in string. As "Tex" Hill described it:

"The first thing I noticed when we broke into string to strafe the field, there were more than three airplanes in our pattern. A Jap fighter got an Howard's tail and I pulled up behind the fighter and kinda hosed him down. At the same time a Jap made an overhead pass on me and shot 33 holes in my airplane. I pulled up sharply to the left into two Japs and was in a position for a head-on pass. I squeezed the trigger and he blew up." The victories were Hill's first two of a string of 12-1/4 with the AVG, making him the second highest scoring ace in the Flying Tigers.

<http://www.sinoam.com/burma3.htm>

Flying Tigers: Finest Heroes

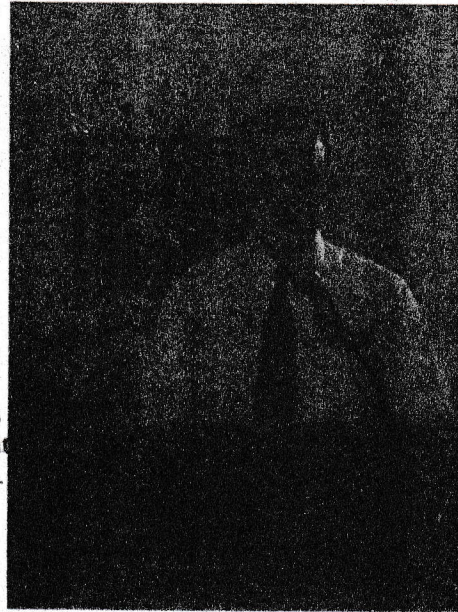
There are heroes among us

In an age where heroes tend to be hard to find, where a man's success is judged by his wealth, his influence and his power, it is sometimes worth taking a moment to remember that bravery is a great virtue and one which seems lacking in the safe and insular world in which we live today.

I was fortunate enough to have experienced such a moment recently.

On 11th November at eleven minutes past the eleventh hour a ceremony is held every year at the Chiang Mai foreign cemetery, as indeed it is held in thousands of other locations around the globe. Originally marked as a day to remember the allied soldiers who lost their lives in combat during the Great War (First World War), the remembrance ceremony, together with the red roses of Flanders, has subsequently been extended to cover the dead of more recent wars. It is salutary when you take a moment out of your life to remember that the world is as it is today because millions have sacrificed their lives in combat to allow it to be so. And frankly we should all be more grateful.

To be honest it wasn't Remembrance Day which took me to Chiang Mai's Foreign Cemetery this year, but an invitation to attend the dedication ceremony for a memorial honouring the American Volunteer Group (AVG), better known as The Flying Tigers.



At 4 a.m. on 24th March, 1942, ten P-40 Tomahawks lifted off into the darkness from a small British auxiliary field in Burma. Three of the pilots had never flown at night before and only one had been to Chiang Mai. They were heading to the new Japanese air bases in the Chiang Mai valley. Flying at ten thousand feet in pitch darkness in a blinding haze using only time and direction as their navigation tool, Vice Squadron Leader Charlie Bond made a call when he calculated that he must soon be at his target.

"I took a risk and nosedived 45 degrees to three thousand feet and there below, amazingly, was Doi Suthep and the Chiang Mai valley," said Charlie Bond at the dedication ceremony. They had found their target, for, lined up in neat rows below, and visible by the slight seepage of light as the sun made its progress from beyond the horizon, were Japanese fighters and bombers. "We made a pass, firing ammunition, not bombs, onto the surprised Japanese below. I still remember the second pass, which was so low that I could see the look of shock on the faces of the Japanese soldiers as I swooped by and let fire," he told us as we sat enraptured listening to his stories.

In total Charlie Bond made four daring passes that morning, and twenty planes were destroyed before the squadron headed back for safety.

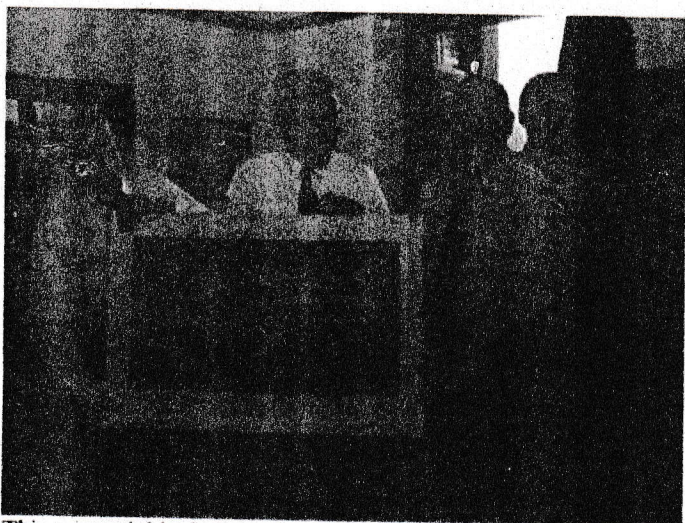
At a time when the allied war against Japan was fought on the defensive this was a major victory for allied morale and a great blow to the Japanese.

Flight Leader William 'Black Mac' McGarry's plane was struck by ground fire just before the end of the raid but he managed to parachute into the jungle near Mae Hong Son before his plane crashed into the hills of Chiang Mai. He wandered the jungle for 28 days before being found by Thais, who then turned him over to the Japanese. Happily he was rescued by the Seri Thai (Free Thai) in September 1944 and reunited with his squadron at their headquarters in Kunming before the end of the war.



Sadly, the leader of the AVG's Second Squadron, John Van Kuren 'Scarsdale Jack' Newkirk's plane was hit by ground fire and crashed near Lamphun as he was leading the squadron on a separate attack on a Japanese airfield at Lamphun. He was not so fortunate as to walk away.

Then there was Charles Mott, who was the first AVG pilot to have been captured by the Japanese, and this was on 8th January 1942, when he was on a raid to an airfield at Mae Sot. His parachute was snagged on a tree and he was subsequently sent to the POW camp at the River Kwai. Getting on the wrong side of some Japanese soldiers later on, he was about to be shot when fortunately a Japanese officer, who knew Mott from the University of California in Los Angeles where they had both attended prior to the outbreak of the war, stepped in and saved him. He survived his years in Kanchanaburi relatively unscathed. Mott returned to Chiang Mai in 1994 with members of the AVG and their families to view the wreckage of 'Black Mac' McGarry's P-40 when it was discovered by the Foundation for the Preservation and Development of the Thai Aircraft.



This memorial is dedicated to the memory of the AVG Flying Tigers. On the side of the obelisk monument

there is also an inscription which honours these men, their Commander Claire Lee Chennault, and the Free Thai.

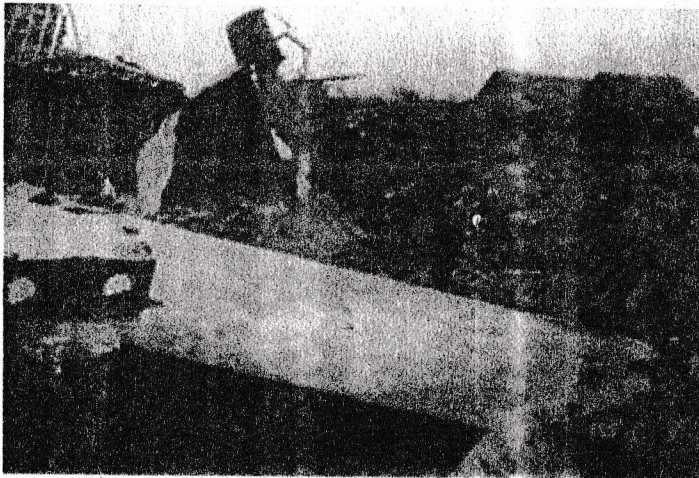
Four of the remaining eleven Flying Tigers came from the States for this dedication ceremony: Charlie Bond, Dick Rossi, Bob Laher and Peter Wright. Also attending the ceremony were three members of the Free Thai including Prince Bhisadej Rajanee; the United States Ambassador to Thailand, Darren Johnson and the Deputy Assistant Undersecretary of State, Matthew Daley. Many Second World War heroes from England, France and the United States were present as was the Royal consort, Group Captain Veerayuth Didyasarin who represented the Foundation for the Preservation and Development of Thai Aircraft. Local personalities and members of press attended.

I was fortunate enough to have been honoured with an invitation to lunch at the United States Consulate General after the ceremony where we mingled informally with these heroes, heard their stories, shared in a small way some of their experiences and learnt in a crushingly humbling manner of their achievements.

My calendar shall always be marked on 11th November from this day forth.

by Pim Kemasingki

Following the pummeling of Magwe, the Japanese concentrated on wiping out the British remnants on the west coast of Burma. Raiding Akyab on **March 23**, the 64th Sentai lost one Hayabusa, cause unspecified. (The British claimed two bombers and one fighter.) A return trip was almost spoiled by the AVG's **March 24** raid on Chiang Mai, which destroyed three planes and sidelined 10 more to strafing damage. (This number apparently included both of the "werewolf" Hurricanes that the 64th Sentai had brought from the Indies. For their part, the Flying Tigers were credited with destroying 15 aircraft at Chiang Mai.) When the raiders struck, four Hayabusas of the 3rd Chutai were apparently preparing to take off for a raid on Akyab.



Updated: Though identified in Japanese histories as Newkirk's plane, this wreck bears the CAF serial P-8165. Either AVG records are wrong or this is the Tomahawk that made a forced landing near Lashio in late March or early April.

The Japanese historian notes that "the immortal Jack Newkirk was shot down" by ground fire, along with William McGarry, who was captured by Thai police, brought back to Chiang Mai by boat, and there interrogated. by The Japanese "strictly pushed him to answer the questions"—an ordeal that must have been very unpleasant for McGarry. However, it was less than satisfactory for Colonel Kato: there was no one at Chiang Mai who spoke both English and Japanese, so one Thai asked the questions and translated McGarry's answers into French for the second interpreter, who then rendered them—apparently ineptly—into Japanese. "Commander Kato was greatly annoyed because he could not understand the French language," the Japanese historian relates. In consequence, it was "hard for him to understand what was happening in this combat" between the AVG and the 64th Sentai. Later, the Japanese concluded that McGarry had given "a lot of incorrect information" to his questioners.

John "Scarsdale Jack" Newkirk

(8) John Newkirk *



The newspapers called him "Scarsdale Jack," though he was actually a native of New York City, born there on November 15, 1913. Improbably, he had worked as a copy boy for *Time* magazine. He also served a three-year hitch in the U.S. Army as an infantry lieutenant, before switching to the Navy and flying, and somewhere in there he apparently also flew for American Airlines. Jack was a fighter pilot aboard *Yorktown* when he volunteered for the AVG. At the age of 27, with his leadership training, he was already a dominant figure in the group by the time he arrived in Burma. By the time he was killed on the Chiang Mai raid, he too had been credited with 7 air-to-air victories, though some AVG veterans hinted broadly that were skeptical of his claims. (It is certainly true that the squadron leaders, who had the primary responsibility for signing off on victories, generally built up their scores more quickly than the other pilots.)

- 3 Jan 1942: 1 Ki-44 Shoki? fighter, 1 Ki-27 Nate fighter
- 20 Jan 1942: 2 Ki-27 Nate fighters
- 23 Jan 1942: 1 Ki-21 Sally? bomber, 2 Ki-27 Nate fighters

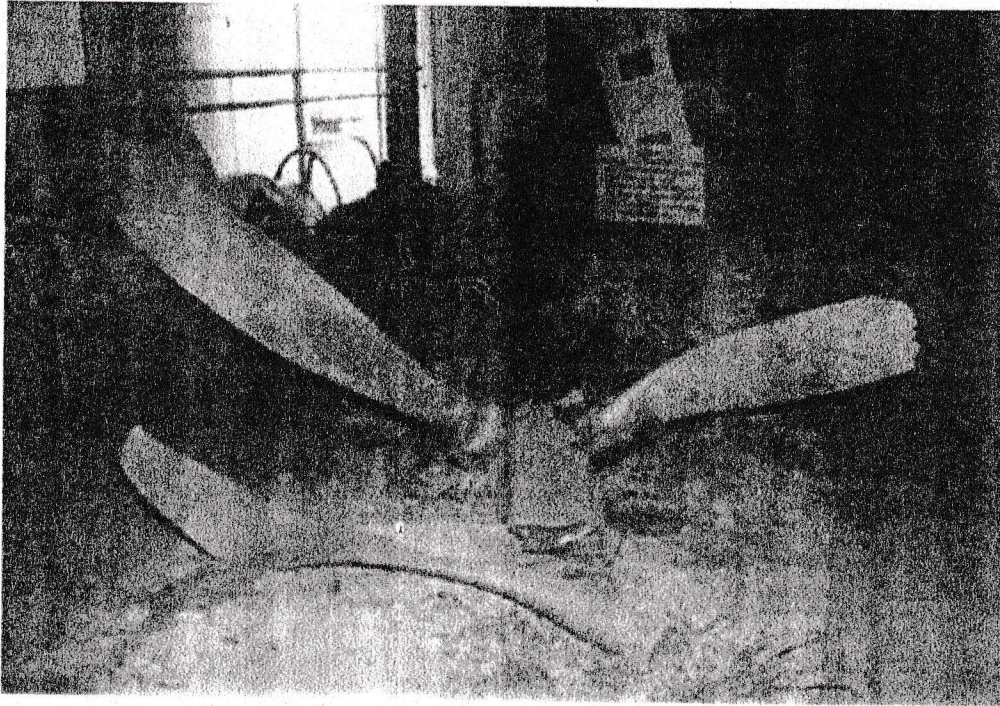
Mac McGarry, Down in Thailand



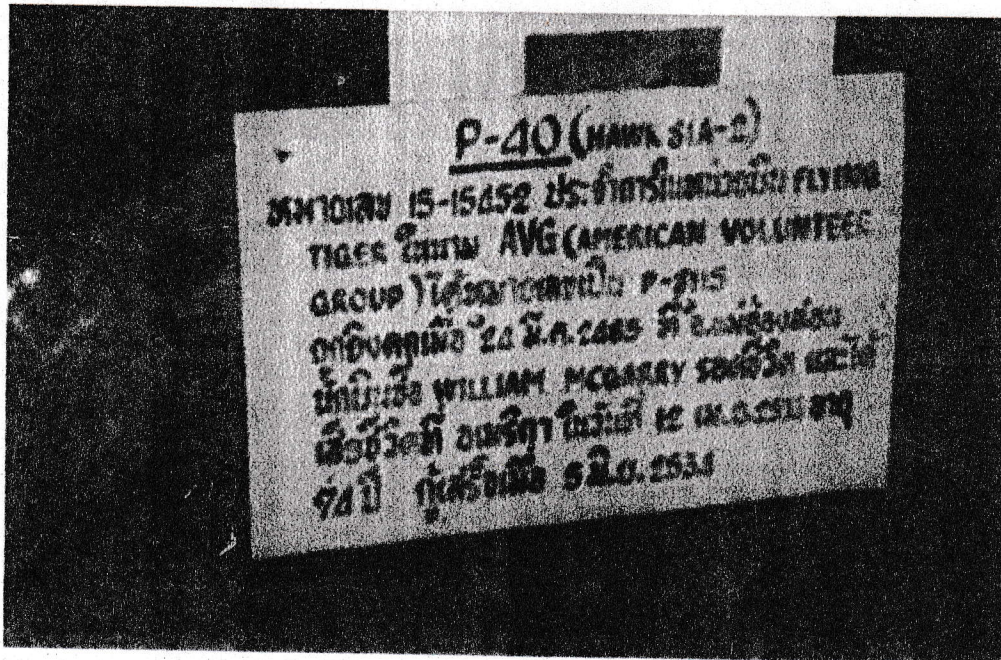
ซาก U.P.-40 ของ William McGarry

William "Mac" McGarry was hit by anti-aircraft fire over Chiang Mai, Thailand, on March 24, 1942. His Tomahawk crashed in the rain forest in northern Thailand, and McGarry spent the rest of the war in a Thai prison. A tip of the virtual hat to John MacGregor of Scotland, who photographed the wreckage at Chiang Mai Air Force Base in Thailand, and who also sent along clippings from a Thai aviation magazine called (yes!) *Top Gun*. Above is the wreck of McGarry's aircraft as it was discovered in the summer of 1991.

This was just before Flying Tigers: Claire Chennault and the American Volunteer Group was published, and the excitement of the find was what prompted me to write the novel Remains, which begins and ends with the wreckage of a Tomahawk in the rain forest.



Above: the Tomahawk's Hamilton-Standard prop mounted on a sort of terrarium of local earth and plants. Behind at left may be part of the canopy, and to the right is a poster about the P-40. Below: a sign tells the story in Thai. The engine from this aircraft—CAF serial P-8115—is said to be in Torrence, Calif. Below: the story in Thai.



Photos copyright by John MacGregor, Dundee, Scotland.

<http://www.warbirdforum.com/bertart.htm>

Tomahawk nose art by Bert Christman

Allen "Bert" Christman of the AVG 2nd Squadron (aka the Panda Bears) had been a comic-strip artist in civilian life. As the story is told, he created the "Scorchy Smith" series about an American mercenary pilot in South America. Then life imitated art, as it often does, and Christman became the pilot-adventurer he'd drawn for the comics.



BRIGHT - 56

I don't know how many of these sketches were applied to the AVG Tomahawks, though Terrill Clements says that the cowboy did make it onto the fuselage of the Tomahawk crashed by Tex Hill on the first night of the war. The cartoons are inside jokes: Jack Newkirk as the well-dressed party boy, Moose Moss with a jug of moonshine and a checkerboard, Gil Bright parachuting to safety (he was in a mid-air collision with John Armstrong on September 8), Tex Hill as a cowboy, Peter Wright as an uptight easterner. Apparently the drawings were done at Toungoo before the outbreak of war.



TEX HILL - 48



MOSS - 39

The spots that appear on some of these drawings might be panda footprints. The numbers are the fuselage numbers of each pilot's Tomahawk.



NEWKIRK - 34



WRIGHT - 44

These sketches were emailed to me by someone, whose covering message I've lost, so I don't know his name or where he got them. But here they are.

Flying Tigers Memorial - Chiang Mai, Thailand

From: Archie Hall

Date: 11/13/2003

Time: 10:16:10 AM

Remote Name: ACA7EA74.ipt.aol.com

Comments

Article published Nov 13, 2003 Thailand Erects Flying Tigers Memorial

By DANIEL LOVERING Associated Press Writer

A memorial has been erected in northern Thailand to the Flying Tigers - a group of volunteer U.S. pilots who attacked Japanese bases in Thailand during World War II, a U.S. official said Thursday.

U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Darryl Johnson and Prince Bhisatej Rajani of the Free Thai Movement, an allied group that resisted occupying Japanese forces during the war, inaugurated the memorial Tuesday in the city of Chiang Mai, about 360 miles north of Bangkok.

Around 150 people, including former Flying Tigers pilots, gathered for the unveiling of the shoulder-high black obelisk at the Foreign Cemetery, also known as Ban Den, said Henry Jardine, an administrative officer at the U.S. Consulate in Chiang Mai.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Daley, former members of the Free Thai Movement and World War II veterans from France, Britain and the United States also attended the event, which coincided with Veterans Day.

During the ceremony, ex-Flying Tigers pilot Maj. Gen. Charles Bond described a surprise attack on a Japanese airfield in Chiang Mai, Jardine said. Bond was among four of the 11 surviving members of the Flying Tigers at the ceremony.

Another former pilot, Bob Layher, 87, planned to travel to Kunming in southern China after the ceremony with five other veterans to witness the raising of one of the group's airplanes that crashed into Dianchi Lake in April 1942.

The Flying Tigers - so named because they painted tiger shark mouths on the noses of their planes - was a group of 97 U.S. pilots who in 1941 helped the Chinese Air Force protect the Burma Road, China's vital supply route, during its war with Japan.

The Tigers, who flew under the Chinese flag, went on to attack Japanese military bases in northern Thailand during their yearlong campaign.

ON NOVEMBER 11, 2003, A memorial to honor the American Volunteer Group (AVG) Flying Tigers was dedicated in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The simple marble obelisk is inscribed on all four sides. On the front is written: "In memory of the American Volunteer Group (AVG) Flying Tigers and Free Thais." An inscription on the side honors AVG Commander Claire Lee Chennault and three AVG pilots: Squadron Leader Jack Van Kuren Newkirk, who was killed in North Thailand on March 24, 1942; Flight Leader Charles Mott and wingman William McGarry, who were Japanese POWs in Thailand.

The AVG memorial dedication was attended by representatives from the Flying Tigers Association, the American Embassy, the Royal Thai Air Force and the Free Thai. It was hosted by the Foundation for the Preservation and Development of Thai Aircraft.

-Bob Bergin

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On 11 November 2003, a memorial honoring the American Volunteer Group (AVG) Flying Tigers was dedicated in the city of Chiang Mai in northern Thailand. The dedication ceremony was attended by representatives from the AVG Flying Tigers Association, the American and British embassies, the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF), and the Free Thai Movement. Hosting the event was the Foundation for the Preservation and Development of Thai Aircraft, a group dedicated to preserving Thailand's aviation heritage.

The memorial is a simple marble obelisk with inscriptions on each of its four sides. The front states simply: "In memory of American Volunteer Group (AVG) Flying Tigers and Free Thais." Below the English words, the statement is repeated in Thai script. An inscription on the side honors AVG Commander Claire Lee Chennault and three AVG pilots: Squadron Leader Jack Van Kuren, killed in north Thailand on 24 March 1942; Flight Leader Charles Mott and William McGarry, who were both held as POWs by the Japanese in Thailand.

The ceremony was simple and dignified. A color guard composed of USAF and RTAF airmen posted the colors. Pastor Bates of the Chiang Mai Community Church gave an address that spoke eloquently of service to country and put the AVG Flying Tigers into an historical context.

AVG pilot and Chiang Mai Raider Maj. Gen. Charles Bond described the 24 March 1942 AVG raid on the Japanese air base at Chiang Mai. Haze and darkness made it impossible to make out landmarks until Bond spotted Doi Suthep, the mountain that stands like a sentinel over the airfield. Bond had overflowed Chiang Mai before and now took the lead as the six AVG P-40s dove down to strafe the Japanese aircraft parked wingtip-to-wingtip on the ramp. The P-40s were so low that Bond could see Japanese pilots ducking

their heads as they ran toward their fighters. Bond made a second and a third pass, then a fourth one as anti-aircraft fire grew more intense. he noted that one P-40 went down; its pilot imprisoned by the Japanese but he would be rescued by the Free Thai. Listeners commented how moved they were by Maj. Gen. Bond's remarks and how his vivid description of the raid made them feel they were part of the action. An RTAF officer said that listening to Bond as RTAF OV-10 Broncos passed overhead gave him a bad case of goose bumps.

Wreaths were laid by Darryl Johnson, US Ambassador to Thailand, and Maj. Gen. Bond, and by the senior Free Thai representative, Prince Bhisatej Rajani. Also in attendance were US Deputy Assistant secretary of State Matthew Daley, former members of the Free Thai movement, and WWII veterans from Britain and the USA. The AVG Flying Tigers pilots attending were Charles Bond, Dick Rossi, Bob Layher, and Peter Wright.

The idea for the memorial began when AVG members and their families visited north Thailand in November 1994 to view the wreckage of William "Black Mac" McGarry's Curtiss P-40. The plane had crashed on the 24 March 1942 Chiang Mai raid. Japanese anti-aircraft fire was intense, but the six AVG Tomahawks that carried out the raid were credited with destroying 1 S Japanese aircraft on the ground. It was a significant victory at that early stage of the war when the Japanese seemed invincible and the Allies were seeing little but defeat in Asia.

While making a final strafing pass over the Chiang Mai field, McGarry's P-40 was struck by ground fire. McGarry tried to guide his damaged aircraft back to safety in Burma, but was unable to clear a ridge. he rolled the P-40 over, dropped out and parachuted into a jungle clearing. The aircraft crashed nearby. Its wreckage lay undisturbed in the dense jungle until it was discovered almost 50 years later by hill tribe hunters. In 1992, with the help of an RTAF helicopter, the Foundation for the Preservation and Development of Thai Aircraft moved the wreckage to the RTAF base at Chiang Mai, the same airfield the AVG attacked in March 1942.

During their 1994 visit to north Thailand, the AVG group also traveled to Lamphun, about 15 miles south of Chiang Mai, where John Van Kuren "Scarsdale Jack" Newkirk crashed on that same day in March 1942. Leader of the AVG's second Squadron "Panda Bears," Newkirk had been in the thick of the action during the early months of the war when the AVG fought alongside the Royal Air Force in defense of Burma. At the time of his death, Newkirk was one of America's leading aces, credited with 10.5 victories over Japanese aircraft. he was among the first Americans decorated by the British when he received the Distinguished Flying Cross a month before his death.

On 24 March, when the six-plane flight of P-40s led by Bob Neale attacked Chiang Mai, Newkirk led a second element of four P-40s against a Japanese field at Lampany some 40 miles southeast of Chiang Mai. When no Japanese aircraft were found there, Newkirk turned the flight back toward the main action at Chiang Mai. En route, just outside the town of Lamphun, he dove on a ground target, possibly a Japanese armored vehicle. His wingman saw a ball of fire and realized that Newkirk had crashed.

The precise location of Newkirk's crash was not known. In November 1992, after the discovery of McGarry's aircraft and its move to the RTAF base at Chiang Mai was publicized, an unknown man walked up to a gate guard at the base and handed him a shard of aluminum. A note identified it as coming from an American aircraft that had crashed at Lamphan on 24 March 1942.

A two-year investigation by the Foundation for the Preservation and Development of Thai Aircraft followed. Although the man who approached the gate was never found, the search found five witnesses who were children in 1942 when they witnessed Newkirk's crash and burial by the Japanese. During their visit to Lamphan, the Flying Tigers were taken to the sites where Newkirk crashed and had been buried, and then met with the Thai witnesses. Thai provincial authorities erected a memorial to Newkirk and expressed hope that it would one day be made permanent. (Years after the war, Newkirk's grave at Lamphan was located by a US military team and his remains were returned to the US. he was buried on 11 May 1949 in the yard of the Episcopalian Church of St. James the Less in Scarsdale, NY.)

The third pilot honored, Charles Mott, was among the Flying Tigers who visited Thailand in 1944- he was the first AVG pilot to be captured by the Japanese. It was 8 January 1942. The war was just a month old when Mott led four P-40s on one of the AVG's first raids against the Japanese. The target was an airfield at Mae Sot, Thailand, where Japanese aircraft were based. As Mott dove down and roared across the field strafing enemy aircraft, he was hit by ground fire and the Allison engine quit. He pulled his P-40 up to 300 feet and bailed out. His parachute opened almost immediately and then snagged in a tall tree. That probably saved his life, but a fall from the tree seriously injured him. The Japanese put him on a train and sent him to one of their compounds in Bangkok, where he was left to treat his own injuries. When he started to recover and tried to escape, the Japanese transferred him to the infamous POW camp at the River Kwai. He spent the remainder of the war working along the "death railway."

In the years that followed the 1994 AVG visit, Thais involved in the visit spoke of establishing a permanent memorial to Newkirk and the AVG. It was thought that any permanent memorial should be placed at Chiang Mai, Thailand's second largest city and a popular holiday destination for Thais and foreign visitors. A memorial there would be easily accessible. The location selected for the memorial was the Chiang Mai foreign cemetery - a pleasant, well-located site that in the late 19th century was given by the Thai King in perpetuity to the foreign community.

It is significant that the Free Thai are part of the main inscription on the memorial's face. It was the Free Thai who freed "Black Mac" McGarry from Japanese captivity and assisted his exfiltration from Thailand. They were Thailand's anti-Japanese resistance movement. They operated behind the lines and worked closely with the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS). After Black Mac bailed out, he wandered the jungles for three weeks before being found by Thai police who had to turn him over to the Japanese. He was taken to Bangkok and held in a compound on the banks of the Chao Phya River. When AVG Commander Claire Chennault received a report that McGarry was a POW,

re-requested the OSS to find and free him. The OSS turned the problem over to the Free Thai who located and freed the pilot. They took McGarry down the canals and rivers to the Gulf of Siam where the OSS sent two PBY Catalinas to pick him up. In his final weeks on the River Kwai, Charles Mott was also contacted by the Free Thai and guided through the jungle to a small airfield manned by the Free Thai and an OSS team.

A lunch hosted by the American Consul General at his residence, and a dinner at the Chiang Mai RTAF base hosted by the Foundation for the Preservation and Development of Thai Aircraft and RTAF Wing 41, was an opportunity for old allies to meet and talk. Among the officers of the Free Thai present was Piya Chakkapak, who was 18 years old when he joined the Free Thai. His father, also a Free Thai officer, was a government official in charge of all water transport. It was one of his boats that carried Black Mac to freedom. Dick Rossi and Roy Hudson, a young British Army officer in 1942, reviewed an AVG/RAF strafing mission directed at Japanese units marching on Rangoon, that came uncomfortably close to the British position. A Thai gentleman whose family residence stands not far off the Chiang Mai runway spoke of bullet holes found in the rafters during recent renovations - and he was referred to Maj. Gen. Bond.

The AVG memorial at Chiang Mai represents only a small part of the Flying Tigers' story. To all who see it, it will speak of the days when the AVG's shark-nosed P-40s prowled the skies over Thailand, China, and Burma.

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