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MEMORIES

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Written by: Francis Morgan, Carl Rieger, Watson Lankford, Dwight Collins, Thomas Carroll plus essential material supplied by Harry Changnon, 40th Historical Officer

RICHARD VICKERY'S CREW AND THE NANKING MISSION

Members of the Crew of #237

1/Lt.	Richard Vickery	Pilot	KIA
2/Lt.	Bernard Page	CP	KIA
2/Lt.	Edward Cassidy	B	KIA
1/Lt.	Felix Sinicrope	N	Deceased
2/Lt.	William G. Warburton	FE	
S/Sgt.	Dwight Collins	R	
Sgt.	Frederick Carlton	CFC	
Sgt.	Carl Rieger	RG	
Sgt.	Watson Lankford	LG	
Sgt.	John Myers	V	KIA
Sgt.	George Schuchardt	TG	
Maj.	Francis Morgan	O	Deceased

Sinicrope, Warburton, Morgan, Collins and Schuchardt were rescued by the Chinese Communists. Carlton, Rieger and Lankford were taken prisoner by the Japs. Sinicrope and Morgan are known to be deceased. Schuchardt and Carlton are not on our roster. Efforts to locate them have been unsuccessful so far.

Introduction: As with virtually every combat mission, planning begins with the weather. This, the 15th mission for the XX Bomber Command, was to have as its primary target Omura on Kyushu the westernmost of the Japanese homeland islands and the second most important island in the empire. Secondary target was to be Shanghai, and the target of last resort was to be Nanking. Omura was to be bombed in daylight from high altitude--20,000 feet or higher. Bombing was to be done visually. Takeoff was scheduled for 3:00 a.m.

Tom Carroll was weather officer of the 40th. He tells how important was the weather to the carrying out of the mission and what happened before and after the mission was launched.

Tom Carroll's story: Under war conditions, weather reports, on which the analysis of a weather map is based, are scarce; and because of over-taxed communications facilities, they are normally late in arriving at a forecast center, such as the one we had established at our base at Hsinching. Consequently, forecasts were based on maps which were 12 to 24 hours old and on which the reports were scanty. From the latest maps available, we determined that the weather would be suitable for this mission to Kyushu.

I had just finished briefing the crews when I received a phone call from the weather office saying that some reports had just come in indicating a disturbance northeast of Formosa. I asked if they had notified the Command Weather Officer and was told that he had been notified by telephone, but considered the reports of no significance to the operation. I decided to investigate the weather reports for myself, so I went to the Weather Office where the reports had already been entered on a map. After an analysis of the data, I concluded that a typhoon of moderate intensity was centered northeast of Formosa, that it was moving north-northeast in the direction of Kyushu and would be affecting that area by target time. Kyushu would be covered by several layers of clouds, and visual bombing would be impossible. Meanwhile, there was the fact to consider that the reports upon which this decision was based were so scanty that there was reasonable doubt as to the existence of the typhoon at all and considerable more doubt as to the position, intensity and movement.

In view of the scanty data on which the forecast was based, I knew that there was a strong possibility that Kyushu might not be affected by the typhoon, in which case it would remain clear. Worse yet, Nanking would be overcast. If Kyushu were clear and Nanking cloudy, and I gave the commanders a forecast contrariwise, the entire effort of hauling gas, bombs and other supplies over the Hump to China and the risks of the men who were flying the mission would be wasted. Nevertheless, my decision was that Kyushu would be obscured by cloud and that Nanking would be clear. I started for the control tower to tell Col. Blanchard of this situation. By the time I arrived, the last plane was lining up for takeoff. I explained the meteorological situation to the colonel. He told me to repeat the story to Gen. LeMay who was also in the control tower. LeMay was furious when I gave him the disturbing news about the typhoon. He did not immediately change the plan. He calculated how much time he would have before he had to radio the crews to change targets and asked me to stay close to the situation in the interim and come back in about three or four hours to see if there was any change. I thought this was a shrewd decision. At that time I woke up the Bomber Command weather officer and got him back on the job, too. As can be imagined, he was somewhat displeased, but in the face of the evidence, he had to go along with my forecast.

Narrative of the Richard Vickery Crew Experience in the 40th:

The crew was formed up and trained at Clovis, New Mexico. They went from there to Herrington, Kansas where they picked up a B-29 to take to India. They left the States the last of June. Due to weather and other delays, the crew did not arrive at Chakulia until early August. Almost immediately, the crew was separated with Collins, Lankford, Carlton, Schuchardt and Rieger assigned to the C-109 operation at Kalaikundi. Others in the crew were assigned to fly cargo to China. The crew was finally reassembled at Chakulia in late October. They flew one trip over the Hump in a B-29 converted to cargo. It is believed Col. Blanchard flew as pilot. Vickery flew as co-pilot.

On November 11, 1944, the crew was assigned plane #237 to go on this mission. Bomb load was eight 500 lb. GP and four 500 lb. M-76 incendiary bombs. In flight, the crew received the message to divert to Nanking.

Major Francis Morgan's statement: (Major Morgan was assigned to the XX Bomber Command and flew on this mission as an observer. He gave this report of his experiences after being rescued. Francis Morgan died in 1984). Shortly after takeoff, we noticed a stream of gasoline issuing from the right wing tank and extending on as far back as the tail. We turned a spotlight on the wing and decided that this leak probably was due to a missing washer from the tank cap so we turned back towards A-1. The flow of gas soon ceased, whereupon Vickery and the Flight Engineer Warburton decided to continue on to the target. Around daybreak, we arrived at the rendezvous point, but other planes had already joined formations and departed.

Vickery proceeded on alone. At a point approximately 150 miles out over the Yellow Sea, we received radio message from A-1 stating that the weather over Omura was bad and ordered planes to return and bomb Nanking. After we had turned, we sighted a 14-plane formation headed west, but did not join them. Instead, Vickery chose to fly on up the China coast past Shanghai, still out over the Yellow Sea.

Nearly an hour after receipt of the radio message, we were still over the water. Later Warburton stated that even had we not been shot down, due to this excess flying time and loss of reserve gasoline, we would have been unable to return to A-1. As soon as Nanking was sighted, we started a straight and level approach on a heading of approximately 170 degrees in a severe cross wind.

No fighters were seen, nor was flak noticed until after bombs away. Within seconds, after bomb release, we felt the jar of an AA explosion. (Later, the tail gunner reported he observed the burst which occurred level with the aircraft and just aft of the #4 engine.) Carlton reported a fire in the rear bomb bay which was burning so fiercely that he could not enter the bomb bay to try to put it out. At the same time Schuchardt called out that #4 engine was on fire with flames extending beyond the tail. We wanted to stay with the plane as long as possible to get away from the Japanese around Nanking. Tokyo Rose had warned us several times that any captured B-29 fliers would be executed, and we had heard about men being tortured by the Japanese.

Warburton called all crew members to alert them for bailout, and they responded. Vickery turned over the plane to Page to fly. Warburton had problems in lowering the nose wheel which took a few minutes to get down. We were losing altitude but not rapidly and were at probably 19,000 feet when the plane lurched to the right. Warburton called the men in the rear, but only Schuchardt, the tail gunner, replied, leading us to assume the gunners and radar operator had already jumped.

When the lurch occurred, Sinicrope, the navigator, dropped thorough the wheel well followed by Warburton. Cassidy, the bombardier, Page and Vickery were forward and ready to jump, but another lurch threw us around. Both Collins and I were thrown into the engineer's compartment with Collins on top of me. The plane was now on its side, and I was standing on the flight engineer's window, looking up at the nose wheel. The plane continued to roll over and then over again. Then it exploded. My last conscious recollection was that I was attempting to reach the nose wheel which was above my head. Sinicrope later reported that shortly after his chute had opened, he observed the plane pass over him in a gentle turn to the right; then it rolled completely over twice. The flames from #4 engine appeared to sweep through the plane and over to the left wing. Then it exploded.

Upon return to consciousness, I found myself about 2,500 feet above ground. When I pulled the ripcord, it took a couple of tugs to open the chute. After clearing blood from my eyes, I observed two sections of the plane on the ground to my left, both blazing. Fragments from inside the plane pieces of aluminum and odd bits of debris--were falling down beside me. I landed in a rice paddy, which was filled with water, some 65 miles northwest of Nanking. I had seen three other chutes descending so I headed for them. Within 300 yards, I met Collins, Schuchardt and Warburton. Collins was very dazed and suffering from shock, having had as miraculous escape as I. Warburton appeared to be the only one who was not injured. Schuchardt was limping, and I had several facial cuts, broken teeth and a ragged gash on my right wrist.

Before we had time to apply first aid, about 100 armed Chinese appeared over a ridge 100 yards away. They started firing, and we immediately took cover in an adjacent rice paddy behind an embankment. We soon found ourselves surrounded by the armed Chinese who took away our pistols. They indicated that we should accompany them, which we did for several miles. It was about 10:00 a.m. when we were shot down, and we didn't rest until dark after covering about 15 miles. After another mile, we met the guerilla band leader and were fed. The next day we covered 20 miles walking and riding on small burros which provided a painful ride because there were no stirrups on the wooden pack saddles. We met Sinicrope who had been rescued in a similar manner, but who had landed on the east side of the Tientsin-Pukow railway whereas we had landed to the west.

Editor's Note: Major Morgan's report states that the plane was hit by flak whereas other crew members state that bombs collided under the plane causing the damage which resulted in the loss of the plane. His account tells about the evacuation trek to Yenan where they arrived on February 15th. Finally, on March 3, they were evacuated and flown back to A-1, thence to Chakulia and back to the States.

Carl Rieger tells his story: After releasing the bombs in salvo, they were about 50 to 75 yards below the plane when they exploded. Shrapnel hit the right wing, setting us on fire. I was the only one in position to check for other damage, and I found fire in the bomb bay. I returned to my position (RG) to contact others by intercom. I could get no answer, and there was mass confusion by this time. After six to eight minutes, I went to the rear door and jumped. I was the last to leave the waist section.

I landed on the bank of a rice paddy badly spraining my left knee and right ankle. The chute dragged me through to the other side of the rice paddy before I could get it collapsed. It was the only paddy to have water in it. Immediately about 12 Chinese soldiers ran up. I thought I was in good hands, but I found out differently. They searched me and marched me to a small compound about two miles away. After two hours a group of Jap soldiers arrived and marched me to a Jap compound six miles away near a railroad. That was hell because of my sprains. With my hands behind my back, they tied me to a post in a small room and left me there all night. They questioned me early the next morning, and I would give them only my name, rank and serial number, even when they held bayonets four inches from my eyes and threatened to throw powder in my eyes to blind me. I felt certain at least part of the crew eluded capture at that time.

Later in the morning they took me outside, and there was Watson Lankford (LG). We were placed on a train and, after approximately an hour and a half, we arrived at Nanking. There we were paraded through the streets still with our hands tied. We walked at first, but when I could no longer walk because of the sprains, they put us in rickshaws. While in the rickshaw, a Chinese boy ran up and hit me a good blow on the head. The Jap in charge beat the hell out of the boy.

Later, we were taken to what appeared to be an unused university campus. There was a guard building inside the entrance with two 8x8-foot cells. There our hands were finally untied, and Lankford and I were placed in these cells. The Japs interrogated us the next day and every day for the next two weeks. I would not tell them anything. Actually, I knew very little. It was here that the Japs gave me trouble with gun butts to the head, knees and in the groin. My thumbs were tied behind my back. The rope was thrown over a tree limb. I was forced to stand on a stool. The rope was drawn tight, and the stool was pulled from under me. The thumbs hurt for a week, but did no permanent damage. I was then taken back inside and questioned again. I think I convinced them that I didn't know anything because they started answering their own questions such as the location of the field I had come from, etc. After that they left me alone. Watson Lankford and I were in adjoining cells, but were not allowed to speak to each other. The guards would throw cold water on us when we tried. We were freezing as it was because of no bed or blankets and no heat. All we had to wear were our flight clothes. About December 10, we were given two blankets apiece. Our food was a cup of rice three times a day. One day they burned some rice intended for the Jap guards so they gave it to us. We had a feast that day.

On December 30, we were joined by Fred Carlton and taken by train to Kaingwan Prison Camp near Shanghai. This camp contained over 1,000 men, mostly Marines and civilians captured at Wake Island. There were also Marines taken from the U.S. Embassy in Peking. It was at this prison that we had our first bath and shave since our bailout. We were also deloused and checked over by American doctors. We were kept apart and not allowed to speak to other prisoners.

The next day (31st) six more prisoners arrived in the compound. One of them was S/Sgt. James Meehan, gunner, from a B-29 of the 444th. On February 18, three more prisoners were delivered to the camp; one of them was 1/Lt. Vernon Shaefer, co-pilot from the 462nd. Two more were turned into the camp on April 15. Almost all of these prisoners were pilots from various fighter outfits in the 14th Air Force. The highest ranking of these was Maj. Donald Quigley, squadron commander of the 75th Sqdn, 23rd Group. He was a P-40 pilot.

Editor's Note: In the Winter, 1991 issue of *PROLOGUE,* the magazine of the National Archives, an article details the battle for Wake Island and the taking of prisoners after the surrender. These prisoners were transported to Kaingwan Prison which was close to Shanghai where a large population of non-combatant nationals lived. The Japanese were aware of the presence of these nationals and thus treated the prisoners better than they might have done otherwise as for example in Rangoon and on mainland Japan where their treatment could not be observed. The Red Cross was allowed in the prison, and they were permitted to deliver packages to the prisoners.

Carl Rieger's story continues: Conditions were not too bad at this camp in comparison to other camps I have read about. The International Red Cross was active here. We were required to stay in a barrack-like building and were seldom permitted to go outside except to the benjo (latrine). We were always under guard. We were given an old deck of cards. Maj. Quigley knew how to play bridge, and he taught each of us. We played hour after hour. It was the only thing to keep us from going stir crazy.

My weight went from 160 pounds before November 11 to 130 when I arrived at Kaingwan. It was back to 140 by May 9 when the entire camp was moved to Fengtia, just outside Peking. We were moved in boxcars with barbed wire from door to door. A Jap guard was in the center, prisoners in the ends. At this prison, we were housed in large warehouse buildings, but we were still separated from other prisoners. On May 23 and again on June 6 we received three more fellow prisoners.

On June 19, we were moved by boxcar to Fusan, Korea and here, again, we were housed in warehouse buildings. On June 28, we boarded a ship. There were over 1,000 men in the hold. There was not enough room for everyone to sit down at one time. The hold was only about five feet high. We received no water or food for ten to twelve hours until we landed at Susa on Honshu Island, Japan. We were worried about the American mines, subs, ships and planes, but we made the boat trip without problem. After landing at Susa, we were placed on a train--this time in coaches--and started the trip northward up Honshu Island.

En route, we saw mass destruction and fires from B-29 raids which pleased us, but we were afraid to laugh. The guards started to separate us at Tokyo. I was put in a group of about 200. We were taken to northern Honshu, got off and walked about two miles to a new, large barracks in the hills. This was prison camp Sendia #11, approximately twelve miles south of Aomori.

The group contained one officer, Lt. William Foley, a navy doctor from the Embassy Guard in Peking. There were approximately five Navy corpsmen, approximately 190 civilians from Wake Island and the five enlisted men of our little group--Carlton, Lankford, Meehan, Watts (Sgt. Donald Watts, crew chief of a C-47) and me. We five were placed in charge of the civilians reporting to Lt. Foley and put to work immediately in an open pit ore mine. This was a bad camp. Hard work, brutality and very little to eat. My weight went to 120 pounds.

About August 20, the Japs stopped sending us to work, and on the 24th, they told us about the armistice (surrender). The Japs were as happy as we were. We took complete control of the camp and a few days later B-29s and Navy dive bombers dropped us more food than we could eat. Men would eat all they could, then vomit, then go back to eating. We got in touch with American troops and met them on September 13 at Sendia. We requested that camp guard S/Maj. Subano be held for war crimes investigation. The Jap officer in charge of the camp committed Hari-Kari about August 16.

I was taken by a British destroyer to Yokohama, put on a bus to Tokyo where I got on a C-54 that took me to Okinawa, Iwo Jima, Guam, Kwajilien, Johnson Island, Hawaii and to San Francisco. I arrived in San Francisco on September 19. There was a twelve-day stopover at a hospital on Guam. It was a bad experience, but I got back in one piece and regained my health quickly. Considering everything, I am in good health today.

Watson Lankford's story: I entered the service from my home in rural Georgia on 11 November, 1942. (Note: this was two years to the day before the Nanking mission.) I went through basic at Miami and from there it was to Gulfport, Mississippi; Chanute, Illinois; and to Seattle to the Boeing aircraft engineers school. Before leaving Chanute for Seattle, we were told that upon completion of the school there, we would be given officers' commissions. It never happened. From Seattle it was Lowry Field for armament training and then to Clovis where we were formed up into a crew and started B-29 training. Rather than B-29s, we trained in B-17s; however, every three or four days we would get in B-29 flying time.

As a B-29 crew we were sent to Harrington, Kansas where we were to pick up a B-29, get 25 hours of crew time in it and then take it overseas. We had time in our first plane when a CO_2 bottle flew out and damaged the stabilizer. Engineering said the stabilizer would have to be replaced. Since we were behind schedule and this would put us further behind, it was decided to give us another plane rather than have us wait for our plane to be repaired. We were issued a new plane that wasn't as good as our first one. However, we got in our crew time and shipped out to India via West Palm Beach, Brazil, Africa, etc. I was hospitalized when we got to Karachi. Finally, in August, we arrived in Chakulia where we were relieved of our plane and assigned to various duties other than as a crew.

Some major, as I understood it, had flown a number of missions and asked to sit out this one so we were offered the chance to fly his plane. Our crew grabbed the chance because this gave us the opportunity to fly a combat mission and get into the war. We were en route to Omura when we received the message to divert to the last resort target at Nanking. Because we had been advised that there would be heavy AA and fighter cover, Lt. Vickery flew northward over water looking for planes to form up with. Finally, the flight engineer told him that we would have to go for the target then, or we would not have enough fuel to get back to base. Vickery told the navigator to give him a heading to A-1 by way of Nanking.

We headed for the target which appeared cloud covered so the radar operator was told to prepare for a radar bomb run. About two minutes from the target, the target appeared clear so the bombardier told radar that he would take over. We had been instructed as gunners to watch for the bombs hitting. Immediately after the bombardier said, "Bombs away," he called, "Any of you see where the bombs hit?" Almost immediately thereafter the explosion of the bombs under the plane took place. The right wing tanks ruptured, and the wing caught fire. We got a message on intercom from the co-pilot to stand by. Our radar man decided he was going to get out. He took an axe to cut an opening in the bulkhead which depressurized the plane. Carlton, Rieger and I formed up to go out the rear hatch. We were sort of taking our lead from Carlton since he was the CFC gunner. I was at the hatch when suddenly I was pushed out. Rieger followed and then Carlton. All four engines were still going. We never got a bailout order.

When I landed on the ground, I tried to gather my parachute together to bury it when some Chinese soldiers appeared. I thought at first they were friendly since they were Chinese, but they turned out not to be friendly, and they turned us over to the Japs. I was taken to a prison in Nanking where I met up with Carl Rieger. Although we were within talking distance from one another, neither of us could see the other. The guards, except for one, would not let us talk. This one guard would let us talk at times.

We were subject to interrogation. Mine was not so severe, but we were told, "If you lie, you die." One of the interrogators was an American-born Japanese who was educated at UCLA. He was invited by the Japanese to visit Japan in 1940. When he got there and the war started, he was told he could join the Army or work for the Army as an interpreter or interrogator. He interrogated me. He asked me what I would have done had I been in his situation. To play along with him, I said I probably would have done the same thing. This interrogator asked me who was going to win the war. I told him he knew very well what the answer was to that. He said he wasn't in a position to express his own view.

After 51 days in jail in Nanking, where we were given no water with which to wash, we were transferred to the prison in Shanghai. Our treatment there was better. We were given a chance to bathe, shave and to clean up. During the six months plus that we were in the Shanghai prison, I was given six Red Cross packages. They did not contain a lot, but by using them to supplement our prison rations, it was not too bad. About 12 to 15 POWs, who, like us, were taken late in the war, were housed together in the prison near Shanghai. There was a surprising variety of prisoners there - Italians, Romanians, civilians taken from Wake Island and from other locations where the U.S. had retained civilians on construction work. B-25, B-29, crews, fighter pilots and Navy medical people were housed with us.

From Shanghai, we were taken to a prison in Peking and from there transported to Japan. We went through Tokyo en route to the prison in northern Honshu Island. I believe I was in Tokyo on July 2, 1945. It was burned to nothing. There were no buildings standing except some along the railroad tracks and along the harbor. At the prison camp in northern Honshu we were on starvation rations.

Suddenly the war ended. A Navy lieutenant, a doctor who was the highest ranking officer among the prisoners, took over. He told the Japanese that they were to provide us with meat. Shortly thereafter the Japs brought in a live calf. Before the B-29 rescue planes learned of us and flew over with food drops, dive bombers from the aircraft carrier Bennington discovered us and dropped food.

We were taken from the prison camp to Sasebo where we were put aboard a hospital ship, then another ship which took us to Manila. Finally we boarded a C-54 and were flown to Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco. After a period of recovery, I was discharged and returned to Georgia where I live today.

Dwight E. Collins Recalls: Our plane was set on fire directly over the target area, the drydocks at Nanking. There was some scattered flak in our area, but it was the concurrence of those who bailed out of the forward compartment, that the fire was started by an explosion of our own bombs immediately after release, instead of by enemy fire.

Those of us in the forward compartment attempted to stay with the plane a little longer to avoid bailing out over the target area. In retrospect this was an unfortunate decision because Capt. Vickery, Lt. Page and Lt. Cassidy failed to get out.

Lt. Sinicrope was first to bail from the forward cabin. I believe Maj. Morgan was second. Lt. Warburton was next, and I was to follow him. Just as Lt. Warburton was dropping through the escape hatch, the right wing collapsed, the plane went into a downward spin, and that threw me down under the engineer's panel. The last thing I remember is seeing the escape hole directly overhead. I was pulling with all my might to reach it, but the force of gravity was so great, I was pinned down to the floor.

Next, I vaguely remember pulling the ripcord of my chute and receiving a bad jerk when it opened. I can recall seeing water below, and I thought I was going to land in it. It turned out to be only water on a rice paddy, and I landed on the bank instead of in the water.

According to Lt. Sinicrope, who watched the plane after his chute opened, the wing collapsed, the plane made about three downward spirals and then blew into hundreds of pieces. My hair and eyebrows were singed, but I had no visible burns on my skin.

Needless to say, I was in shock. Lt. Warburton was first to reach me. According to him, I was sitting on the bank of the rice paddy, my elbows on my knees, my chin in my hands and a dazed stare in my eyes. He told me to get up and bury my chute so we would not be strafed by enemy planes. I did not respond, so he pulled me up, slapped me a couple of times, and that brought me around.

Lt. Warburton was applying a compression bandage in the area of my temple to stop blood flowing from a cut along the hairline above my left eye when we heard shots, and the ground near our feet was scratched up by bullets. We could see a Japanese patrol running down a hill perhaps 500 yards away, shooting at us as they came our way. We jumped into a ditch, not knowing what to do next.

It seemed that out of nowhere, about 10 or 12 Chinese guerilla soldiers appeared in the ditch beside us, started shooting back at the Jap patrol with three or four of them making motions for us to run down the ditch with them. This certainly seemed like the better alternative so we did not hesitate.

As I recall, this all took place somewhere around 11:00 a.m. The Chinese guerilla troops ran us as hard as possible the rest of the day. A certain number stayed at the rice paddy where we landed, fighting the Jap patrol until we could gain distance.

About dark, we were taken through woods to a small mud hut. There was straw on the ground in the hut, and we collapsed. They let us sleep until about midnight, then awakened us, gave us hot broth, and began making motions that we would have to move on.

At this time, our "pointy-talkie" came into use. We pointed to the question asking if they could return us to American forces. With a smile, they began nodding their heads in the affirmative as though that would be only over the next hill. It was good to know that we were with someone who could read the Chinese in the "pointy-talkie."

I had a dislocated collarbone, was spitting up blood, and could not breathe sufficiently to walk any distance. They rounded up some burros for us to ride and put a soldier on each side of me to hold me on. We took off into a dark moonless night. After a few hours, the pain in the part of my anatomy placed upon the burro was much greater than the pain coming from my collarbone and chest. I think it was the second or third day before all of us who had bailed out and evaded capture were brought together.

Thus began our travels for the next several months. The best we could judge, we were some 400 miles behind enemy lines, had we been able to go due west. I have referred to the Chinese soldiers with us as guerilla troops because that is the way they were fighting. In fact, they were soldiers of the New Fourth Communist Army. There were two communist armies in China at that time, the New Fourth and the Eighth Route Army.

We were told that the Chinese Nationalist Army had refused to accept any more fliers rescued by the communist armies because some previous American fliers who were returned to the Nationalist troops had reported to American Intelligence unfavorable things about the Chinese Nationalist's ability and will to fight the Japs. Whether or not that was true, I cannot say. In any event, the communist troops escorting us were taking us through their own territory northward to Yenan. That increased our distance of travel some two-hundred or more miles.

It was my understanding that a small American delegation existed at Yenan for the purpose of working with the communist troops in returning downed fliers. If that was true, we never came in personal contact with any of them. However, those in charge of our rescue did have radio contact to transmit our name, rank and serial number to American authorities.

The number of Chinese troops escorting us varied--sometimes only 10 to 15 if we were in a relatively safe area. Other times we might have to wait two or three days for more troops to arrive to escort us through a more heavily Japanese-occupied area. On one occasion, a Chinese cavalry unit escorted us at much grater speed for two days because the area had many Jap troops. When necessary to cross a railroad, a major roadway of any line of communications, we were guarded far more heavily.

We were given the same clothing or uniforms the communist troops wore so as to be less conspicuous as we passed through small towns and villages.

The Chinese communist rescue organization was amazingly good. About every ten days we would be turned over to another group so that those escorting us did not travel too far out of their own area. After the first or second week an interpreter was always with us. Some spoke very good English, perhaps more accurate than ours.

Many interesting things happened along the way. In some respects we were being used for propaganda or to boost morale among the people.

When in a relatively safe village, they liked to have us meet the local officials, who I assumed to also be the key politicians for the Communist Party in that area. These meetings took place usually at a banquet-type dinner in our honor. The story they wished to convey among their own people was that we were Americans who were evaluating their needs for more military aid from America in the form of arms and ammunition. Once away from the Nanking area, I doubt that most who attended such affairs were even aware that we were downed American fliers.

Major Morgan, being the ranking officer, was our spokesperson. They always wanted him to speak at these meetings. The Major's talks were brief and limited in general to complimentary remarks about their war efforts, their local countryside, and how we all looked forward to the day Japan was defeated. In other words, he diplomatically skirted around the issue, yet left room for the interpreter to tell the Chinese present whatever he wanted to tell. On many occasions the interpreter spoke far longer than was necessary to interpret anything the Major had said.

On one occasion, I recall the interpreter telling Major Morgan he would like him to speak at a planned gathering. The Major asked, "What do you want me to talk about?" The interpreter replied, "Anything you like. I have my speech all ready."

It was customary at these banquets for the Chinese to toast us many times. We were not to be outdone and, in turn, each one of us toasted them. On one occasion, the translator became "stoned." He proceeded to carry on a conversation between the Major and the ranking Chinese official without either one of them saying anything.

While traveling across the peaceful countryside one day, we jumped a rabbit. Lt. Warburton talked us into chasing the rabbit, telling us that if we hollered and made lots of noise, the rabbit would freeze, and we could catch it. I don't know what kind of rabbits they had in his hometown, Chicago, but I can assure you that those Chinese rabbits do not freeze at the sound of loud noises. Instead we froze with exhaustion after an hour of chasing.

On another occasion, we were housed in a mud hut on the outskirts of a village. The interpreter had told us there was a good number of Jap troops in the area, and it would be best for us to stay inside. Sometime during the night we were awakened by the rattling of the paper cover that was used for glass on the window. We thought it to be someone trying to slip in. We always slept with pistols close at hand. Very quietly each reached for his pistol and aimed it toward the window. In a minute or so a rat could be seen crossing the windowsill by dim moonlight. All were then at ease and went back to sleep.

Interesting events never ceased to come along. We were housed in another village one night and all night long, a Buddhist monk beat a tom-tom (the correct word for a Chinese drum escapes me) keeping us awake. Next morning we asked the interpreter what was going on. He said there was a very sick water buffalo nearby, and the monk had been called to pray for its recovery. He asked the interpreter to take us there. Sure enough, stretched out in another mud hut a few doors away lay a huge water buffalo. The monk and several other Chinese believed to be the owner's family were in the room with it. Through the interpreter someone asked if we would say a few words for the sick animal. Again, I must credit Lt. Warburton for his never-ending ability to rise to the occasion when it concerned animals. He suggested we form a circle around the buffalo by holding hands and that we then sing "Morphine Bill and Cocaine Sue." (Some reading this may remember the words better than I.) We did exactly that. Next morning the water buffalo arose and ate some hay. The entire village came to our hut to express their gratitude for our effort in helping heal the ailing buffalo.

Finally, we reached our destination--headquarters of the communist army at Yenan. There we were told an American plane would pick us up at approximately 11:00 a.m. on a certain date.

The night before the plane was to arrive, it snowed an accumulation of six to eight inches. We were given the option of having the plane flight canceled or having a landing strip cleared of snow and run the risk of attracting Japanese planes. I suppose we had seen enough and had enough adventures by this time. All of us wanted to clear the landing strip. In almost no time there appeared on the open field where the plane was to land hundreds and hundreds of Chinese. They proceeded to clear the snow for a landing strip. Most did not have as much as a shovel to work with. They were using small pieces of boards, buckets, cooking utensils or anything else that would dip or push a little snow. Some two to three hours later, the landing strip was ready. We carried some straw to the field, threw enough snow on it to make it smoke good when it was lit in order to provide wind direction for the rescue plane.

At exactly the designated time, a stripped-down B-25 (all armament removed) and four P-51 fighter escorts circled the field. We started the fire and on the next pass, the B-25 sat down as easily as if landing at O'Hare in Chicago. The fighters continued coverage overhead as we almost trampled each other getting aboard. It gives one a very patriotic feeling and a feeling of great pride in his country to know that, in spite of what little a man may have done or contributed to the war effort, his country still goes to great effort and expense to get him back.

By the time we were picked up by the B-25, we were a party of nine. Three American fliers shot down in a cargo plane and one fighter pilot shot down while strafing a train had joined us somewhere along the way.

We were flown to Kunming and interrogated by American Intelligence officers. The Chinese had given us maps indicating major concentrations of Japanese troops and also where the coast was likely to be heavily mined, plus other intelligence information they thought might be helpful. Priority orders were immediately issued returning us to the States and to some intelligence outpost in the hills of Virginia near Washington, D.C. Two days of intense interrogation took place during which time we were kept loose and talkative by an unlimited supply of good Scotch. How refreshing it was after months of rice wine!

I paraphrase a saying of Will Rogers when I say, "I've never known a Chinese I didn't like."

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Address Correction Requested