



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: For this issue of MEMORIES, we are trying a different format for two reasons. One is to be able to use short pieces that have been written for MEMORIES by 40th Group members. The second is to try to get more stories published. This means a slightly smaller typeface. We would be glad to hear from everyone what they think about this format. If the type is too small for aging eyes to read, let us know.

Date of event: Summer 1944
Date written: March 1985
Written by: John L. Cella

INTRODUCTION

John Cella was Search & Rescue and Evasion & Escape Officer in the XX Bomber Command intelligence office at Kharaghpur, India, throughout the time the 40th was in the CBI. John is now an honored and honorary member of the 40th Group. Upon reading previous issues of MEMORIES, he volunteered to contribute this story.

A TALE OF THE WHITE GODS

For over 40 years, I have been haunted by a strange story from World War II that involved the XX Bomber Command and in which I had only a small part; just enough to fit two chapters together. Perhaps someone from the 40th can add the missing pieces. I can vouch for the truth of the first chapter, but is the second part fiction?

We all well remember the rugged terrain over which our crews flew enroute from the rear bases to the forward area near Chengtu. During the course of flying the Hump, several B-29's had been lost, presumably in the almost inaccessible mountains along the China-Tibetan border in western Szechwan Province, and no trace had been found of their crews. This area was considered particularly forbidding because, in addition to the treacherous terrain, the natives inhabiting the area were thought to be hostile. These people were known as the Lolos, a fearsome, primitive tribe unrelated to the Chinese, who spoke a combination Tibetan-Burmese language, and who were both polytheistic and animistic, believing in Gods of the sky and earth, winds, lightning and forest. They were also ancestor worshipers.

The neighboring Chinese in the Foothills lived in great fear of them, as the Lolos occasionally raided the peaceful Chinese farmers, slaughtering and carrying off Chinese for slaves. The Chinese regarded them as aboriginal and savage. Very little more than this was known about them, and our usual sources of information, including Chinese Intelligence, could give us little help. However, it was essential we contact those Lolos, and enlist their aid in rescuing any downed airmen who had the misfortune to parachute or crash land in their territory, and to search for survivors of already missing planes. We had to send a team into the area to let them know that we were friendly, and to instruct them that should any American fliers ever land in their mountains, they must be given the best of treatment and returned to us unharmed as quickly as possible, for which service they would be generously rewarded.

It was decided, in order to accomplish this mission, a tough, rugged Irishman named Captain Frank "Moon" Mullen of the Air-Ground Aid Service at Kunming would be the ideal choice. In his early 30's, Captain Mullen had the strong physique and he-man qualities to succeed if anyone could.

Accompanied by a native Chinese who might be able to act as his guide and interpreter, and loaded with gifts such as salt and sugar, and all the provisions and gasoline that could be carried on a jeep, Captain Mullen was flown as close to the Lolo country as possible. Then he and his assistant drove off into the uncharted land, hoping to eventually make contact with a Lolo who would lead them to the tribal king, with whom Mullen hoped to negotiate a pact.

After long and arduous travel, Mullen eventually entered Lolo country, was found by the Lolos and brought into the presence of the Lolo king. Mullen then discovered them to be much less warlike than we had been led to believe, but did find them to be a truly unique and peculiar people, neither Chinese nor Tibetan, but a mountain folk who practiced polygamy, hung their dead in baskets from the trees, and who, he soon learned, believed in fairies.

When they realized he had come in peace and bearing gifts, the Lolos welcomed Mullen with an uneasy friendship, despite the fact that he was the only white man they had ever seen. In his indoctrination of the tribe with the necessity to rescue any Americans who might fall into their hands, Mullen displayed a stroke of genius. Upon discovering their belief in fairies, and already knowing of their worship of the sky, Captain Mullen, a master at story telling described how someday the Lolos might see descending from the sky in huge white parachutes, a number of white men such as he. These persons, he warned, would not be ordinary people like him and the king, but powerful fairy gods, who had it in their power to destroy the tribe if not cared for properly and accorded the greatest respect. They were to be well fed, housed, wounds attended to, and escorted to the area where Mullen designated, where he had started his trip into Lolo country. In return, the Lolo king and his people would be richly rewarded,

Upon the signing of a written pact with the king, Mullen and his aide started on the long difficult trip back to base. When he finally reached our base, mission complete, Mullen was weak and ill from dysentery, suffering from eating unfamiliar food, aching from countless sores and bites and weighing considerably less than when he started out. It had been a tough, wearing ordeal, but just how well had succeeded in his job, I didn't realize until quite some months later. Upon his return to Kharagpur, he briefed the commanding general, and staff, and later visited the group headquarters and squadrons, telling crews what to expect if they should have to bail out in Lolo country.

After Mullen's return, we lost several more planes and crews enroute over the Hump. Having sufficient points to be released from service, I elected to return to the states direct from India, rather than go on to the Pacific. By November 1945, I was back in Chicago as a civilian. On the 23rd of that month I picked up my favorite paper, the Chicago Daily News, and turning to the column written by Howard Vincent O'Brien, a feature columnist, read the following column:

*ALL THINGS CONSIDERED-Truth is Stranger Than Fancy
By Howard Vincent O'Brien*

From the farthest shores of the Pacific, where young men still fly on the wings of the morning to the uttermost parts of the earth, comes this amazing story: It is from a flier whose veracity I have no reason to question. He writes as follows:

"I will give you the latest of the horror stories to come out of the 'Hump' walkouts. This is true, and I heard it first-hand this afternoon.

"Two out of three survivors were brought into our intelligence section today by an A.T.C. group at Shingbwang. These men went down in eastern Tibet on the 4th of July this year. They were picked up almost immediately by the members of a singularly unenlightened tribe of what they think were Lolos. These men were rested, fed, and their sprains and abrasions looked after with almost idolic ceremony.

"After nearly 10 days of trying to make the natives understand that they wished to communicate with the outside world, they learned the reason for all the special food and attention. The chief of this particular tribe, together with others in the vicinity, held a general pow-wow and decided that before they would either let these men go or help them out of this virtually inaccessible valley, they wanted a white child out of each of their numerous wives.

"The group, when it was learned what was expected of them, girded themselves for the task ahead. To make a long story short, it took them from the 10th of July to the 3rd of October to accomplish their mission. They told of a great celebration by the chiefs when the last of their wives was pronounced with child by the local witch doctor. At the conclusion of this two-day festival they were allowed food and guides for the projected trip; and walked out.

"Need I relate to you the flurry this story has caused in the group? Intelligence is still at a loss as to how to write this incredible story up for the record."

Such is the story of the tribal king who wanted gods to make love to his wives so that his descendents would be gods, too. Can anyone add a sequel to this story? Who were the airmen who were rescued, and to what crew did they belong? If the story contained in O'Brien's column is true, does the present king of the Lolos have blue eyes and fair skin? What does the tribe consist of today? These are some interesting questions that remain unanswered.

Date of event: July 1945
Date written: Fall 1984
Written by: Robert Stanworth

INTRODUCTION

Bob Stanworth was co-pilot of Wichita Witch (#015) when the Group was flying missions from Tinian against Japan. In these six paragraphs he describes one of the troubling events that took place on a mission to Japan. Not the least of the disturbing things about this event is that there are a number of other theories about this phenomenon.

FIREBALL

When we recount some of the events that happened during our time with the 40th Bomb Group, we encounter all of the emotions that we are capable of experiencing. There was joy, sorrow, humor, anger, fear and countless others, but the event that I am attempting to write about comes under the heading of anguish. It was a tragedy that was the result of misinformation and the type of fear brought about when we try to deal with the unknown.

Around June of 1945 there was talk that the Japanese had developed a magnetic device that was attracted to our aircraft. Supposedly it would track and overtake a B-29 and destroy it by exploding or burning. "Fireball" was the only name that I remember being used for it.

In July the air offensive was still going in full swing, and it seemed that we were going to Japan almost every other night. On this occasion we must have left Tinian about 8:00 p.m. and reached our target around 3:00 a.m. Our bombardier, Tom Sproule, directed the bomb run and after his release we turned for home. It seemed like less than two minutes later when one of our gunners came on the intercom to say that a ball of fire was at 5 o'clock and seemed to be coming toward us.

Our aircraft commander, Tom Doherty, made some slight changes in our course, but this had no effect and the thing was closing on us. There is no question in my mind but that every man on our

crew was convinced that we were being chased by the much talked about "Fireball." While those of us in the front section of the plane were not in a position to see, it was evident from those in the back that some action needed to be taken quickly. We had no idea what effect our machineguns would have, but there seemed to be nothing else to try. Our CFC gunner, Lincoln Manke, had a good view of the object and took control of all available guns. He opened fire and almost immediately it was reported that the fireball was veering away toward our right and losing altitude. From my position in the right seat I looked back as far as possible and saw the bright ball of fire moving away from us and going down. Farther below and in the distance was the glow from the target we had just left, and as the Fireball dropped between us and the target's glow, the outline of a B-29 with an outboard engine on fire became visible. Almost immediately we lost sight of the aircraft.

It was a long and quiet return trip to Tinian. We told the debriefing officer what had happened, and very quickly an order was issued advising all crews that Fireballs were not enemy weapons but B-29 aircraft on fire and in grave trouble.

I don't have the ability or the vocabulary to express the anguish and guilt that I felt and that I still reflect on. There is no doubt that the other members of our crew were affected every bit as much as I.

Date of event: 8 June 1944
Date written: January 1985
Written by: M. E. "Red" Carmichael

INTRODUCTION

Our estimable Association Treasurer and former crew chief in the 44th Squadron, "Red" Carmichael was the focus of many events in the history of the 40th Group. This is one of those events that took place in Chakulia, India. In this case, rather than have the story told about him, Red tells the story himself.

THE NIGHT THAT AIRCRAFT #289 BURNED

I had sent a portion of the crew to chow. Clint Cheney, two other mechanics and myself were working on engines #2 and #4 on A/P 250. Jake Belknap and his crew were preparing A/P 289 for an early morning flight. One of the mechanics on 289 spilled some fuel while servicing the bomb-bay tanks. While sweeping the spilled fuel from under the airplane, he dropped an extension light and started one hell of a fire.

Clint Cheney and I were working on engine #2 (nearest 289) when the fire started. We jumped down from the maintenance stand and started to run for A/P 289, but I saw immediately that we couldn't get the fire under control. So I yelled at Clint, "Let's get all these stands, equipment, etc., out of the way." Then I ran to the other side of A/P 250 to get the other mechanics started on removing equipment, so we could get A/P 250 out of there.

Would you believe that they weren't there? All I could see were their backs going up the ramp. I yelled at them to come back and help me, but got no response. So I started throwing things out of the way, expecting at any time that someone would bring the tug and hook onto A/P 250 so we could get it out of there.

By this time A/P 289 was completely engulfed in flames, and the flames were beginning to lap over the wing tip of 250. I remember going over in my mind during this hectic period: "Did Jake get his wing tanks serviced? Did he have bombs aboard? etc." If he had the wing tanks serviced, the A/P wouldn't blow, and if he didn't have bombs aboard, we weren't in any danger from an explosion--just the flames now coming over the wing tip. I knew A/P 250 would blow, because we hadn't fueled it; if the flames got a little bit closer.

Clint came running around to my side of the airplane and yelled, "All the big stuff's out of the way on the left side," and he started helping me move the rest of the "big stuff" from the right side. We were working at a very fast rate. As I threw the last piece of equipment out of the way, I yelled at Clint, "Get the chocks on the left side while I get these on the right."

The flames from 289 were now almost unbelievable I had never been that close to an airplane that was burning. I looked up the ramp for a tug and saw none. Then I decided that we were either going to have to leave 250 or taxi it out of there. I chose taxi; yelled at Clint, "Start the putt-putt," as I ran for the engineer's position. I started throwing switches, getting ready to start #3 engine. Clint Cheney hit the ladder coming up to the cockpit and yelled, "Putt-putt started." I yelled back, "Dammit, get it on the line!"

As he started down the ladder, Emil Dobrowolski ("Doby") blocked him. Doby had run up the ramp from his airplane to help (the only person on the ramp to do so). Doby yelled, "What are you going to do, Red?" I replied, "Taxi this damn airplane out of here, but the putt-putt's not on the line." He yelled, "I'll get it," and started running for the rear of the airplane. During this time, I was trying to start the engine using only battery power but didn't have enough power to get it going.

It seemed like only one or two seconds after Doby left when the putt-putt on the line light came on, and I was energizing the starter on #3 engine. Just as I was ready to engage the starter, body came running up the ladder to the cockpit and said, "I'll get the engines; you drive." I nodded agreement, and he took my place. I remembered we only had two engines we could operate--#3 and #1--so I gave him this information.

As I reached the pilot's seat, #3 started. I kicked off the brakes and jammed the throttle full forward. The airplane started to move but was trying to rotate to the left rather than go down the taxi strip. I was "herding" it but wasn't getting anywhere. I had to use full right brake to keep the airplane from turning in a circle. Then #1 started; I grabbed the throttle and jammed it full forward. By this time A/P 289 is really burning. The flames from it are coming over my left wing, and the flames are blistering my face, but we are now moving. I only have to use a slight left brake to keep from rotating to the right.

Just as we really got moving, here comes one of the mechanics who had run off and left us. He was running up the ramp with a small fire extinguisher in his hand. He must have decided we weren't going to stop because he dived for the side of the ramp to get out of the way. I started easing back on the throttles after we had moved to a safer position down the taxi strip, and finally stopped in a safe position. Doby shut off the engines and dashed down the entrance, running for 289. Someone came over and stuck some chocks under the wheels; I released the brakes and I started shaking. I was terrified as I thought of all the things that could have happened. I don't know how long I sat there trying to get my nerves calmed down to get out of the airplane. I probably would have been there longer, but Col. Coira and Col. Cornett came driving up in a command car, so I climbed down.

Col. Cornett says, "Sergeant, are you qualified to taxi a B-29?" I replied, "I am now, sir." Col. Coira suggested I move the airplane out of the way so the early morning flights could get by.

Aftermath:

We never found part of the cowling that was blown away by the engines as we taxied out. Doby asked me, "Do you know what the oil pressure reading was on the engines as we taxied out?" We had to accomplish a complete inspection on those two engines. Both of them survived the inspection. I believe they were still on the airplane when it rotated back to the States. We didn't have a cylinder oil lock on those engines when we cranked them up!

I have often thought about us saving that blasted airplane from the fire, and wondered why. It was a lemon from the time we received it in Pratt, Kansas, until it rotated back to the States. I honestly believe it would have been better to have let it burn.

Lastly, "Doby, thanks for the help; we wouldn't have made it without you. And I also want to abolish the myth that Col. Cornett chewed me out for taxiing that airplane. Sorry Fellows, he didn't!

Date of event: April 1944
Date written: Fall 1984
Written by: Father Bartholomew Adler

INTRODUCTION

In 1984, Father Adler was persuaded by Ivan Ports to make some tape recordings of his recollections of the time he served as Chaplain of the 40th Group. On one of those tapes, Fr. Adler recorded the experience of the troop movement from Newport News, VA, to Africa. Naples harbor, Italy, and eventually to Bombay. After a stop at a British camp north of Bombay, the troops traveled by train across India to Chakulia. Here is one amusing segment of Father Adler's account of that journey.

INCIDENT IN BOMBAY HARBOR

An incident took place in Bombay harbor that always amused me. As we arrived in Bombay and dropped anchor, the port chaplain came aboard and wanted to know how I was fixed for supplies, particularly with reference to whether I had enough hosts (communion bread) and if I had enough sacramental wine. I said I was low on both items. He said we were very fortunate because he had just received a shipment of sacramental wine, in fact there were 16 cases of it right down on the dock.

I said to him, "Did you put a guard on that wine?" He said, "Oh no, it is plainly marked 'sacramental wine'." I said, "Well you ought to have a guard on it." Lo and behold, my fears were realized. As our people got off the ship and our GIs walked by these cases of sacramental wine, why immediately one fellow handed his duffel bag to another one, and in five or ten minutes all 16 cases were gone. They held up our departure by train several hours while they were trying to recover this wine, which they never did because the wine was passed around and got in many duffel bags.

EDITORS' NOTES

With the approval of the board of directors of the Association to publish six issues of MEMORIES annually, we have been able to make some comprehensive plans. We have settled upon subjects for several future issues, as we must with an issue scheduled every other month. However, we don't want to get too far ahead because we want more people to have opportunities to write us their stories. Let us hear from you. We know there are guys with good stories to tell who don't think they can write. The fact is, the story is more important. If you want to have a story told but you don't want to write it, tell us about it.

There is much to be told. George Lowry has written a piece about what it was like to fly the Hump. The Tokyo missions of May 23 and 25 are a story in themselves (including Dale Johnson's account of bailing out over Tokyo and being taken prisoner). The "Battle of Kansas" has yet to be covered. Louis Jones, in his talk at Denver, told us what it was like to live with the Communist Chinese at Yen-an and to help downed crews get back to our lines. We plan to publish the script of Louis' talk. Then there is the matter of "The Rock" -- the story of patrols from Guatemala, Ecuador and Peru to the Galapagos. All of these--and more--make up the story of the 40th Group. Write or tell us anything you want. Don't worry about the format. Send your material or letters to: W. A. Rodney or R. L. Hall, 517 1/2 Ridge Road, Wilmette, IL 60091. Remember also that Harry Changnon is 40th Group Historian. His address is: 10455 Westacres Drive, Cupertino, CA 95014.

Publication of MEMORIES is dependent upon contributions to pay for the printing and mailing. If you should like to help pay some of this expense, send your check to M. E. Carmichael, Treasurer, 40th Bomb Group Association, 2514 Oregon Avenue, Alamogordo, NM 88310.



40th Bomb Group Association
517½ Ridge Road, Wilmette, IL 60091

Address Correction Requested