

Trucking the Burma Road

1945

By Ben Brown

Here are some notes that I took during my trip I took over the Burma Road. I was part of the 69th Depot Repair Squadron, 301st Air Depot Group, 14th Army Air Force of the Flying Tigers.

We were not the first in crossing the Hump nor were we the last, but we saw things that the convoy following will not see and they saw sights that we didn't see.

A person can travel around the world or half way around as I have and see nothing, nothing but water, sky and more water. So, you can see that there is really very little to write about concerning our boat trip, which began at Riverside, CA. We didn't really begin our experiences until we docked in Bombay.

We were the first ones off the boat and we immediately loaded onto a train. The only thing that this train had in common with the trains back home was that it ran on tracks. The car we were in was about 50 feet long and about 12 feet wide. They packed 33 of us in here and for three hours we waited in the railway at Bombay before leaving. Like most other cities of the east, Bombay smells - not of excrement but of dead matter. Dead people and animals lying side by side. Among this mass of dead lying prone in the main streets were the bodies of people sleeping. If you ask anyone what should be done they would merely say that the society for the burial of the dead is busy elsewhere in the city.

After seeing the living, you dismiss the sight of the dead with the thought that they are probably much better off because when you are dead you have no worry about meals and the maintenance of a body. The main occupation of the living, however, is begging. If they can't steal it from you they beg

it from you. "No-mama-no-papa-no bocshee. Bocshee means "give me." You hate like hell to knock these people in the head with a rifle, but if you didn't you wouldn't have a damn thing left.

We left Bombay and got underway for a four-day trip across the central and hottest part of India. The speed never exceeded 10 miles an hour and due to the lurching and frequent stops, sleep was almost impossible. We had other discomforts like c-rations, malaria, mosquitoes, heat, dirty clothes and no facilities for bathing. Although this country has been a colony of England's for some time it is farther behind than Burma and China. Nothing is conventional here. Even when you have to relieve yourself, you have to read a book on how to use the Hindu version of a commode. We saw women carrying coal on their heads in a basket to fill the bunkers of locomotives. Such common things as a shovel or wheel are considered extremely modern implements.

On the first of April, 1945, we reached the siding at Kanchrapara. Tired, weak, bearded and with an atabrine complexion, we were damn glad to get off the train. We stayed for three weeks awaiting our orders and resting, if at all possible, in the existing weather. It was extremely hot and humid in the daytime, but each evening toward 7 p.m., the wind would rise and the rain began. These quick flash storms would imperil the safety of our fragile tents.

One day we were lined up and Major Hancock talked to us. He asked every man that had ever driven a truck to step forward. Most of us did without even knowing what was to be expected of us later on. They took our names down and the next thing I knew, I was

on the back end of a truck bound for Calcutta about 40 miles from our camp. We arrived at an Ordnance depot and were told to grab a truck and check it over. Wait a minute, what in hell were they doing to me, turning me into a damned truck driver? I had no experience except driving an old beaten down 1-1/2 ton V-8 once. No time to argue and the next thing I knew, I was behind the wheel and driving through the congested streets of Calcutta toward the camp. The truck I had was a 2-1/2 ton General Motors. It was big, clumsy and powerful. I drove it a long time before I discovered the purpose for each of the levers. We arrived back at the camp and started to load our equipment on the trucks. Soon it started to dawn on me. I had been drafted to drive the world's newest and worst military highway, the Ledo-Burma Road!

I had about four tons of equipment on my truck and a little room in back for my cot and other effects. We left Kanchrapara the 22nd of April and boarded flat cars. Late that night we pulled out of the Calcutta rail yard on our first leg of the journey to China.

For 30 hours we rode the flat cars while sleeping, eating and living on the back end of a truck. Our final rail destination was to be Siligoro. This was almost directly north of Calcutta. The scenery was almost the same as between Bombay and Calcutta except that this section of India was not industrialized. Groves of bamboo and lots of poor stock were common. As for the weather, it was not as hot in the day-time but like Kanchrapara, torrents of rain at night.

Our convoy, consisting of 56 trucks, two jeeps and one weapons carrier, arrived at Siligoro about ten in the evening. We immediately drove off heading for a cleared parking lot about two miles from the train. This cleared lot was to be our camp for a day and two nights. As soon as we parked our trucks, most of us climbed into the back and fell asleep, our first real sleep in 30 hours!

In the morning, we got up, ate a fair breakfast and went to work. We



BEN BROWN

serviced our trucks, tied down our loads, cleaned up and washed our clothes from a stream that flowed nearby.

Quite a few South African troops are near us that have been fighting in the Burmese jungles. They have lots of stories and advice for us. These troops are blacker than the American Negro and as a rule are very big.

To the south of us is the flat desert, to the north and quite close are mountains. We are heading north so we pick up our ammunition knowing that tomorrow, we start the long trek.

Everybody is up at 3:30 and on the road by six. It is raining a little but the road is blacktop and in fair shape. We climb a long grade much like Pine Canyon near Seattle. After reaching the top of this we level out in some entirely different country, the Darjeeling tea country. Everything here is quite fresh and moist, and everything, even the people look cleaner.

Today was the first real driving we have done. It is no cinch because maintaining an average speed of 35 to 40 miles per hour with a heavily loaded truck is a lot of work and dangerous. We had quite a few detours today and two accidents. One jeep bounced off the road and ran into a tree and another, a

6X6 failed to make a curve and went off a bridge. It took us three hours of damned hard labor to get it out. We towed it in and they said they were going to save it. The truck was pretty badly battered up and I doubt if they can save it. Some of the fellows worked all night on the wreck.

We hit our next stop about five in the afternoon. I washed up from a helmet, serviced our trucks, ate and got ready for the sack before dark, a darkness that arrives about 7:30. The cooks are doing a darned good job.

The convoy pulled out at 9 a.m. The wreck is still with us but it sounds like hell. Today, the 26th of April, we have to drive 85 miles. Same sights but the people look much more oriental. Had a little trouble today chasing water buffalo and elephants off the road. We crossed the Bramaputra River this morning by ferry. This river is very wide and took about 45 minutes to cross. There were quite a few porpoises and hippos frolicking in the water. This ferry is operated by Englishmen and they bitch almost as much as the G.I. does. They work 18 hours a day, seven days a week. But after crossing this river, we had to drive like hell to catch up with the rest of the convoy. We hit our camp late, ate and stayed up until midnight boiling water and servicing trucks. The wreck is still with us and still requires a lot of work.

We left here at 7:30 in the morning for another lap. It is quite amazing the way some of these fellows have taken to driving trucks. None of us had any great experience with them but we are learning and what is most important, we are keeping up with our convoy. It feels rather good to be finally doing some good after loafing around and playing soldier in the states.

We arrived at our camp at four in the afternoon and were able to get a shower and even a little ice for our beer. Little things like this are damn good for morale.

Saturday we were up at 3:30, and on the road by five. Today, we have 179 miles to drive which will be our longest stretch so far. There are lots of natives

working on the roads. They carry large rocks on their heads and sit for hours making gravel by pounding one rock against another. So far, the road has been fair; the tar surface has been built or laid by G.I.'s. It is very hard to maintain because of the amount of traffic going over it all the time. The narrow rickety bridges though scare me to death.

The convoy covered the 179 miles with only one 20 minute stop for lunch. It's pretty good here; it was nighttime when we stopped at an air strip. If it's Air Corps, it is usually pretty modern. I got a fair shower, ice, able to wash my clothes and shaved off a week's growth of beard. The Limeys have a camp and due to a lack of imagination, lead a rough life. The G. I. can improvise a lot, steals a little, and leads a good life.

Early in the morning found us on the move again with 110 miles as our goal. We have instructions to run all on-coming traffic into the ditch as all traffic going to the front (towards Ledo) has the right of way. We put a jeep and an English Lorry in the ditch and one jeep into a big gully; anything to kill monotony. This last lap was the roughest to date. The dust was terrible, the road like a washboard and one couldn't see 40 feet ahead of oneself. Goggles and respirators were worn all the way, but we made our goal and pulled into Chabua about 1:30 in the afternoon. We met our first convoy here and swapped tall tales. Our squadron was divided into three convoys each leaving one day behind the other. The first was much like ours; trucks, jeeps, etc. The third was the heavy stuff; the biggest equipment ever driven over this road.

This camp is terrible; one small pump for water to accommodate 500 men. We will be here until Wednesday morning before going on to Ledo. While here, the trucks were serviced, we cleaned guns and rested up in general, and I got myself a native. He is about ten years old, and speaks little English. He washes my clothes, brings water, cleans trucks, etc. I give him chow and cigarettes, plus a few rupees, and he is

very satisfied. Some natives you can trust and some you have to whop.

These natives play a game much like hockey only it is on the ground and a baseball is the puck. The casualty rate on shins and limbs is high. The larger ones play soccer. They play it barefoot and you can't help admiring their pluck and amazing stamina.

As yet, none of this country is as mountainous or as rugged as the Cascades. Some of it reminds me of the Kittitas Valley.

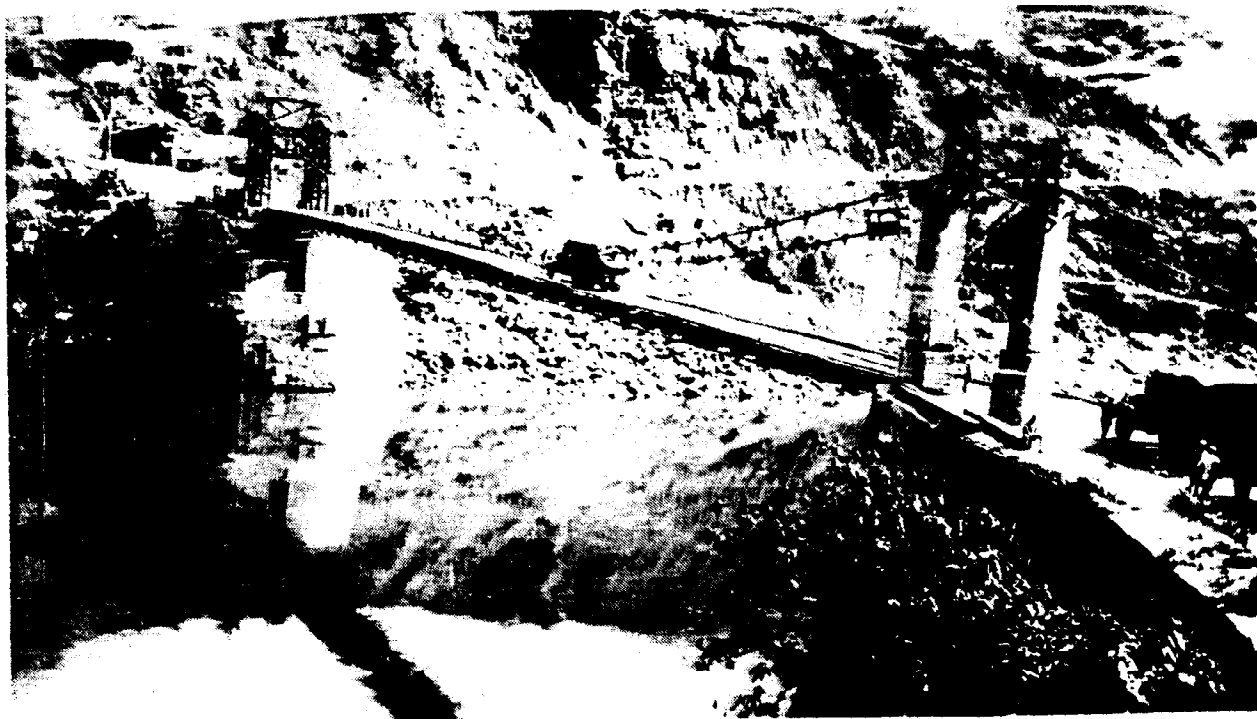
Today is May, the first. Our trucks are still being serviced and we are picking up more trucks for the purpose of hauling gas. Every inch of space on the trucks is being used for the storing of gasoline as the pipeline is not safe and cannot be relied upon after we leave Chabua.

We leave tomorrow morning for what promises to be our real indoctrination on the art of rough driving. It is going to be rough but I wouldn't miss it for anything.

Well, we left Chabua at 6:30. The convoy traveled only 50 miles today (710 since Calcutta) but it seemed like 200. The road was rough as hell; bad curves and oncoming traffic gave us a lot of trouble. We arrived at Ledo at

2 p.m. This place is in the far northeast corner of India. As we look toward the mountains (the Hump), we can see Burma. This place is very busy. One can see trucks whizzing by 24 hours a day. There are quite a few jungle fighters here also. We got some mail, a couple of bottles of beer, but no cigarettes, so we went over to the P.X. and "requisitioned" (swiped) some. Things are scarce and these camps hate to give things to transients. While here, we also heard some peace rumors but evidently they were unfounded.

Today, May 4th, we start on the treacherous Ledo Road. This is the road that the Englishmen said never could be built; this is the road that is all American. All one has to do is see Ledo and drive the first 30 miles and one can see what the G.I. can accomplish. The town of Ledo itself is a monument to the American engineer but things like this road leave one dumb-founded. In 30 miles, we climb 9,000 feet on a road that has 18,000 curves in it, washboard, dust and all. My hat is off to the American Negro. They drive this road at 20-25 miles per hour and this is breakneck speed on some of the curves. The traffic is all regulated. No sooner would we stop



TRUCK CROSSING famous suspension bridge in Burma. Photo by M. Orenburg.

than another convoy would come whizzing by toward Burma.

(5 May 1945) A long time ago when I was a mere child, I used to imagine myself doing great and shining deeds. From books I had read, I would wonder how I would survive if I was ever subjected to extreme or vigorous tasks. I believe this is a common behavior of the mind.

Well, this is rough. Death lurks around each corner and still I am on the road. Yesterday we drove from eight in the morning until seven at night, stopped 20 minutes for lunch; but after climbing 5,218 feet in three miles, we found ourselves through Barra Pass, commonly known as Hell's Gate.

This is the India-Burma border and is the farthest point that the Japanese penetrated. It is here also that the engineers that constructed this road ran into their first encounter with the enemy. The engineers had no infantry to help them. They were the infantry and road builders in one.

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Passing through Hell's Gate was not without incident. Four trucks were burned out, one threw a rod, one burnt out its clutch and one turned over. The driver of the latter was unable to jump and as a result, suffered a lacerated face, wrenched arm and a rough ride. The truck was wrecked beyond repair.

I don't believe I have ever been so tired; but tired or not, my truck has to be serviced and others worked on. We camped tonight on the very top of a ridge. We could look down and see thunder storms below us. This road is carved out of the side of the mountains. We don't follow the valleys, but wind up and down these Burmese mountains.

We left the ridge at 7:30 the next morning (6 May). Seventy-five percent of the trucks sound terrible but mine is fine so far. Ahead of us we faced more ridges and then down grade. A little ways back, I saw a peach of a wreck. A Chinese soldier, driving a light weapons carrier, was coming down a grade about 40 miles per hour when his truck hit some loose gravel and went out of control much like it would do if it were on ice. It swerved twice, rolled over and smacked into the truck directly ahead of me. The bumper of the 6X6 was torn to shreds and the weapons carrier was smashed into salvage. The driver had a bad head wound and was bleeding through the mouth and nose. The fellow ahead of me and I jumped and neither of us were hurt although we were scared to death. I suppose the Chinese driver will be killed for wrecking his vehicle. Don't laugh because it happens every day.

I will admit now that these mountains, although lacking rocky cliffs, are higher than any mountains in Washington State.

We came down into the valley today and finally hit a straight spot. Lots of blown up Jap equipment along the road. It was only about six or seven months ago that the Japs were fighting up here.

Most of the engineers up here are Negroes from Fort Lewis. They are doing a wonderful job. The labor is

done by the natives and the Negroes work as supervisors.

I had a flat tire today so I had to skip lunch and fix it. Did the job in 20 minutes, which is damn fast for these trucks. At 2 p.m. today, we stopped at a river and had a swim. It felt wonderful. Everybody had at least an inch of dust on oneself so you just dump things out of your pocket and dive in with your clothes on.

Stopped tonight by a river. We got in late so I didn't have much time to fix my truck. I washed up though and went to bed. The nights are quite cool and excellent for sleeping.

On the road by seven, the convoy should hit the Burma Road sometime tonight. We will be 900 miles from Calcutta. Along the way today, we saw the price of this road - cemeteries of American personnel, a tombstone for every mile of this road. We stopped today just after crossing the Irrawaddy River. The bridge was a pontoon bridge and the river is about three-quarters of a mile wide. We got here earlier than expected so we were able to clean up our trucks and wash in the river. Some of the fellows went in to the jungle to do some shooting. All around here are signs that the Japs just left. If you will remember back a few months ago into March, you will recall that this town of Myitkyina was the scene of some very furious fighting. We went into town last night but as a town, it just isn't. I don't believe you can comprehend what modern warfare can do to a village. It is simply blown to hell and back. The Americans, after winning the battles, have set up here very fast. The Red Cross is here with a fair set-up, and all in all, it is pretty civilized. We see people all along the road starting to straggle back. They are all armed to the teeth with old fashioned rifles and sharp mean-looking knives. They earn their living by going into the hills and jungles and killing Japs. They receive about ten rupees (approximately three dollars) for each Jap killed.

The Burma Road eluded us yesterday, but today we go south to meet it.



SIGN on one end of the Salween River Bridge. Photo by M. Oxenburg.

The road now is new, just built and therefore it's rugged. We see lots of jungle and beautiful valleys. There are lots of Chinese troops going up from here. They are young and keep themselves quite clean which is more than I can say for the Indians.

As I write, one of our trucks just rolled off over a grade. Don't know if anybody was hurt. Found out later that no one was hurt but a little farther up we had another one roll off the grade. Wrecks are now common place but so far, the drivers have been damn lucky.

Coming into Bhamo today, we saw lots of enemy activity. The camp seems quite old, but just the ruins are fresh and the bomb craters are pretty new. No shower set up here and the weather, due to our location, is hellish hot. The damned flies are eating me up. While we were here, we got hold of a staff car and went swimming in the Irrawaddy. From the river, we could look up at the town and see what a beating it took. Everybody packs a gun here.

The convoy left Bhamo early the next morning. I had little sleep last

night as I was up all night fixing flats. The road today was all under construction and down grade. You can look out on the hilltops and see where the Japs had their artillery. More Chinese troops are going to the front by foot and horse. The Chinese are strange fellows. They are very young and short, and well built, but their arms are a conglomeration of U.S. Tommie Guns, English Brans, Japanese .25 caliber, German Luegers, etc. The noticeable thing about them is their sturdy posture.

We made camp tonight in the midst of a country of rolling hills and fertile valleys. This country of Burma, as a whole, looks much better than India. While traveling today, we went over lots of rivers and gorges that had bombed out bridges. All along the sides of the road were signs of the recent war that had ravaged this land. In here though, most of the natives were coming back. New buildings have been built to replace those gutted by shell and fire. In the rice fields, one could see the farmer plowing behind his water buffalo unconcerned about the shell craters that pack his farm. In a way, it is much like Pearl Buck's novels. The people can live through anything; flood, famine and even war, yet they always return to the land from which they were born.

Tonight, I had my first introduction to rice whiskey. This is called "saki" after the favorite Japanese beverage. It is distilled, "aged" and "distributed" in 55 gallon drums. Saki is very raw and a beer bottle full can make you as drunk as a quart of bourbon. It is poured from these drums into old used beer bottles or cans, corked with a wooden plug and sold to the ever thirsty G.I. A bottle of saki sells for a pack of cigarettes which are worth about five dollars here.

Last night, some of the fellows heard the first sound of war; an aerial bombardment somewhere in the distance.

On the road again by 7:30. We should leave Burma today and enter China. I'm getting very tired of K-rations, dust and driving this truck. Quite a few of the fellows are beginning to get kidney and back trouble from the continual bumping and jostling that they have

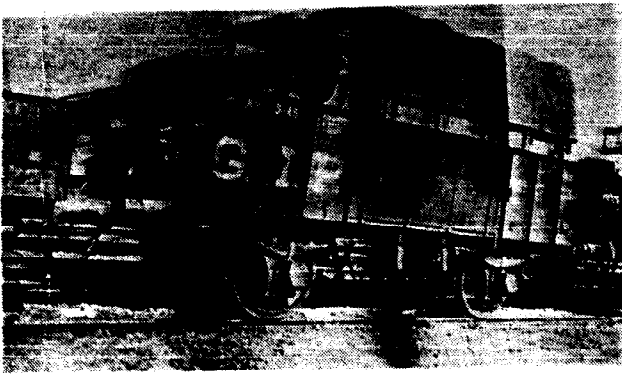
received while driving this road. So far, I'm still healthy. I, and of course, all of the other fellows with me, are very yellow from our diet of atabrine. I wonder how many of these fellows are actually going to get malaria. I had a little but it couldn't have been very serious as I've only been ill with it once. Those who have had malaria must have been about 30 percent.

Here we are after a ten mile drive on the border. Fox-holes, trenches, shell craters, ruins and the usual debris of war are everywhere. Ahead of us lies a high ridge and more mountains. We have to stop here at the border so the Military Police can survey our trucks before allowing us to enter China. There are lots of Jap skeletons here.

This leg of the Burma Road that lies in China is very old, in fact it is probably as old as China itself. Marco Polo went over much the same route. I am of the opinion that if old Marco were to travel this road today, he would probably exclaim that it hasn't changed much. It is very old and maintained by coolie labor. All of the bridges were blown up so we either have to drive across logs or ford the streams. Shell craters in the road are not even filled in. To top this all off, it rained. As is expected of a former citizen of Seattle, I love the rain but rain like this I've never seen before. The roads have a clay surface and rain turns driving into a slippery, tricky adventure.

These trucks are open and, of course, I got soaked. Along one exceedingly bad spot, I had to work for two and a half hours in pulling trucks up a steep incline. After this was done, I had to drive as fast as I could to catch up and take care of any stragglers. Herding a large, heavy truck down these slippery grades at 25 to 30 miles per hour is not an exceedingly easy way to make a living.

We didn't make our next stop until late at night, about 9 p.m. Due to the fact that I was late, I came in all by myself. As I drove down the last grade in the darkness, I could see and hear the streak and sharp explosion of can-



6 x 6 TRUCK on an Indian narrow gauge box car. Photo by M. Oxen-burg.

nons and machine gun fire hitting up against the wall of the mountain. Frankly, it scared the devil out of me but it wasn't until later that I was able to find out the reason for this. They had about five medium tanks there and they were celebrating the surrender of Germany. Dimly, I could picture the celebration back home; civilians slapping each other on the back and saying, "We sure gave them hell, didn't we?" You could hear the firing of the guns and the shouts of G.I.s, but it was all anti-climax to us. War is nothing but waiting or sweating it out. War even reaches the point where the defeat of your foe is just another day. One thinks that when the war is over one can revert to a new life, but one can't.

My celebration consisted of servicing my truck in the rain, eating a dinner of K-rations and sleeping for an hour before going on guard duty. My, how I have changed!

In the various towns we passed through yesterday, you could see the grim story of China. All the buildings were flattened so the people moved to caves in the hills. Take for example, a city the size of Cashmere completely flattened by war. I wonder if the citizens of that city would remain to work their farms and live in caves as the Chinese do. Mothers with many children, looting the garbage pails for food, appear much like a pack of dirty dogs. The guards hate to keep them away but they have to or they would steal everything they could get their hands on. Inflation is terrific, a

Chinese soldier offered me \$200 for a pack of cigarettes. The women here are not as pretty as the Burmese women but they are much more forward. In India, one rarely saw a native woman as it was forbidden for them to appear before a strange man. In China, it is much the opposite. It is considered a great privilege if a Chinese woman acquires a foreigner. Girls between the ages of 15 and 25 follow a G.I. around like a dog. I'll leave the acquiring of a concubine strictly to the married men.

The road to Kunming is blocked so we shall wait here for a few days. Heard the radio today from Honolulu. It is an airplane transmitter and has quite a range. We pick up Chunking, Shanghai, Frisco and Tokyo.

I would be foolish and biased if I were to form an opinion of China solely from what I have seen so far, but never have I ever dreamed of seeing a race of people so degraded. These people are reputed to have a government of major distinction, yet have no economic structure and no way to better its people. In sober judgment, my advice is the same as one senator said but was bitterly scoffed for saying it, "Why not let the Japs have China?" Surely, in spite of all of Japan's brutality, they must have some form of stable government. Beggars who haven't money or cloth for clothes to protect them from the cold have a roll of bills sufficient to paper the kitchen of the house at home. The money is drawn on banks in Nanking and Shanghai, banks that no longer exist. China has lots of fertile valleys and yet it wastes away. This is a vast country but I think until some foreign power moves in here and stabilizes things, China as a prosperous country is impossible.

We left this camp at 7:30, accompanied by half of the third convoy and shortly thereafter crossed a big suspension bridge across the Salween River. It was quite a bridge only it was very weak and could only carry one truck at a time.

These valleys are quite beautiful. The valley we are in now reminds me somewhat of the Wenatchee Valley in

Washington State. The hills and mountains and the color of the gorges and canyons are very similar, but instead of fruit trees, you have rice paddies and ponds of water.

Tonight, I went into the village of Paoshan with its narrow streets, smells of burning food and the oriental way of life to which I am becoming accustomed. I was very surprised to be able to get a quite decent American meal. It cost me 1100 Chinese dollars. Souvenirs and curios are quite scarce on the legitimate market but on the black market one can get some very valuable things. Two cartons of cigarettes would have gotten me a German Mauser automatic pistol.

Like a huge rope wound around these high mountains, it winds up one side and down the other - up and down - so goes the Burma Road. The scenery of these valleys is very beautiful but the sight of the poor natives is forever marring its true beauty. Each day is a little harder as far as driving is concerned.

Yesterday, the 12th of May, it was all up and down, but today we are resting in a narrow valley. Not over ten miles in front of me is a ridge that is all of 10,000 feet high. So, it looks as though we will cross more and more mountains.

While here, I visited some of the Chinese temples. The prevalent religion of China is based on a form of Buddhism that worships many idols and gods. These temples possess scores of such idols. The idols make beautiful figures and become even more so when one realizes the work that was required to make them. Faces and features are life size and the idols appear much like huge dolls. They are all handmade of red mud. The temples were large, well built and didn't even have a nail or hinge in the whole works. They are, I believe, as old as America, if not older.

May 14th. Here we go for 155 more miles. Little happened today. The road was not as steep as in the past but very rough and dirty. We didn't get into our night spot until late.

We stayed here for two days and left early in the morning. Today, the 16th of May, should put us into Kunming, our final destination. Needless to say, I will be very glad because I am getting tired of living in a truck.

One hundred and seven more miles and lo the Kunming valley. They could have never told us our destination or where we would end but all we would have had to do was to drive out of this slit in the mountains, look down on this valley, and one just naturally would know that this was the end of our journey. It is all over now, we went through two countries (India and Burma), had lots of experiences and 1,809 miles behind us. I have ridden with one foot on the running board ready to jump, I've pulled grades in low-low and wish to hell I had another low. I have seen the importance of the road and the pipeline that parallels it, I have seen a little of the battle they are waging. A battle solely dependent on this road and the planes that fly over it. I'd never do it again, but I wouldn't trade my experience for a million dollars.

As for Kunming, my opinion is varied. Climate wise, it would be hard to beat. As for enjoyment or entertainment, there wasn't any but I didn't come over here to be entertained. It was all through China, people using their sidewalk for a bathroom, smells of dead and groans of the dying, bombed buildings and wrecked planes; both ours and the Japs. I think I had it good and I'll tell you why; it's simple, just three words will explain it - "I'm still alive!"

P L E A S E !

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1711th Sig. Serv. Det.

• In early 1945, I was a member of the 1711th Signal Service Detachment, a group of telephone technicians, assigned to manage the communications at the 14th Air Force headquarters in Chungking, China. We left from Los Angeles and sailed to Bombay, India, via Melbourne, Australia. We went cross country by rail from Bombay to Calcutta where we had a layover at Camp Kanchrapara. We were assembled with other groups headed for China and proceeded by train to Siliguri in Assam.

We found the only way to get vehicles to China was to drive them there over the Burma Road. Everyone was assigned to a vehicle regardless of driving experience. I was assigned to share the driving of a 2-1/2 ton 6X6. Fortunately, my partner had some civilian truck driving experience. I had to learn to double clutch for mountain driving. It made for some interesting situations. I gave my partner some grey hairs! After five days of driving, I was an experienced driver and was assigned to drive solo in a 3/4 ton weapons carrier. I drove the weapons carrier in Burma Road Convoy #138 to Kunming, China.

From Kunming, our detachment was flown to Chungking on a Chinese Air Force C-47. This was an experience. the plane was pretty well beat up. We were told they transported mules on occasion. The door had to be tied closed. Attesting to

**Roundup is a
Welcome Gift!**



GENERAL CURTIS LEMAY smokes his cigar while others drink beer. Photo by Malcolm J. Setzer.

the ruggedness of the old C-47s, we made it to Chungking.

We were assigned to the 1712th Signal Battalion and took over operation of the 14th AAF Headquarters communications at Peishiyi Air Base. Various of our people were assigned to remote air bases reporting into the headquarters terminal. I was assigned to the base at Chengtu, one of the early B-29 bases. While at this base, the atomic bomb was dropped and the war came to an end.

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