



# The Burman News



Official publication of Merrill's Marauders Association, Inc.

August 1995

## Steps Back in Time

BY PAUL TOBEY.

At the very beginning of this account I can say without contradiction that we travelled on a tight schedule, stayed in turn of the century hotels, ate Burmese food--which I do not relish as a regular diet as it is highly spiced--inhaled more dusty and polluted air than was good for us, and, of course, left the country quite exhausted and weary and nursing a cough, but more than pleased that at last we had had an opportunity to revisit parts of Burma which we knew so well for over a year, a half century ago. Also as we left we took with us pleasant memories of a friendly people with ready smiles.

The trip was originated and organized by a **BG L. Robert Castorr**. There was no one in the group of twenty five who claimed to have known him. On the flight to Tokyo as I was observing the Alaskan mountains from one of the alcoves as part of an emergency exit he approached me to confide in me that he knew every major figure, American, British and Chinese in the CBI, and listed each one by name, as well as **General MacArthur**, President Johnson and Dean Rusk, and in turn was known by each of them. Indeed it was evident the previous night that he did have access to influential people for the entire group enjoyed a reception, with open bar, and a full Burmese dinner at the Burmese embassy with the Ambassador and his entire staff as hosts and hostesses. In Burma we were met and recognized by those at the highest level of government both during our first days in the country and our last day in the country.

The itinerary called for an overnight stay at a hotel near the Tokyo airport followed by a morning flight to Bangkok with a late afternoon flight to Rangoon

where we arrived shortly after dark. This may be a good place to make some observations about Bangkok, Thailand and Rangoon, Burma. At the end of WWII both countries were faced with problems associated with rebuilding their economies. The two countries, which border each other, have about the same land mass and their populations are similar in numbers. Thailand opted for a free enterprise system while Burma fell under the heel of a series of repressive totalitarian governments including the present day government run by the military.

The airports tell a contrasting story. The Bangkok airport has a huge terminal which is clean and busy with people. It is served by some fifty airlines from around the world. The Rangoon airport has a small dingy terminal which has

regular international service, primarily from Bangkok, by the state operated Myanmar Airways, and apparently from the guide book, intermittent flights by five other airlines including Aeroflot.

On arrival at Rangoon we were ushered into the poorly lighted and dingy airport where we were met by a young lady who was to be our tour guide and contact with the travel agency responsible for our hotel reservations and Burmese travels by commercial transport. The Burmese government imposes a currency exchange of \$300.00 on all foreign visitors.

It was the duty of our tour guide to collect this money together with our passports. This was accomplished albeit with a bit of grumbling. For us the \$300.00 deposit turned out to be a real bargain for we did not spend a single dollar of our money for food, shelter or transportation during our entire stay in Burma.

We were also met by a Burmese military officer in civilian clothes, a Major Ygwe Ton who was to accompany us through our entire stay in Burma whether travelling by commercial or military transport. In addition to the tour guide and Major Ton, we were to be accompanied for our stay in Burma by two news cameramen who photographed our every activity.

The bus trip from the airport to the hotel was a lonely ride for we met very few cars along the way. The hotel was a relic of the turn of the century--old plumbing and no hot water. However the room did have an air conditioner and a small refrigerator stocked with bottled water, soft drinks and beer.

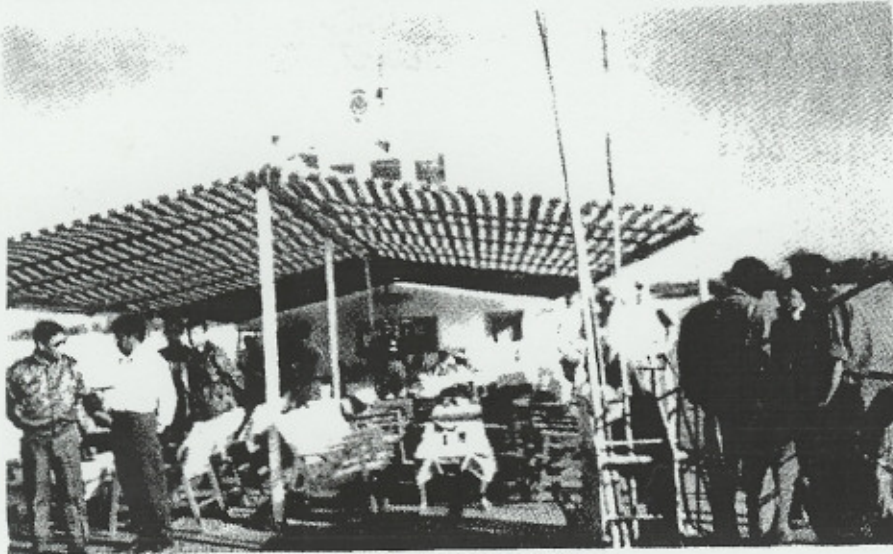
Among the points of interest that we visited was the Commonwealth War Cemetery located at Hytauk-Kyaut some twenty miles outside of Rangoon. A commemorative wreath surrounding a large CBI patch was placed at the base of the central column. Among the 6,000 grave markers are those



LIBERATION STAR

(Continued on page 2)





The General's River Boat

### STEPS BACK . . .

(Continued from page 1)

of three Americans who were with the Royal Canadian Air Force. Besides those noted there are an additional 27,000 names inscribed on the square columns supporting a long passageway. The war in southern Burma also took its toll. The cemetery covers some twenty acres and is meticulously cared for under the supervision of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Small groups of our party made courtesy calls--by invitation--on the Minister of Trade a Lt. Gen. Tun Kyi and on the Deputy Prime Minister a Lt. Gen. Tin Tun. My group visited the Deputy Prime Minister. As we entered the compound we had to pass an armed guard and then a second armed guard as we came to his office building and then a third armed guard in the hallway leading to his conference room. The conference room was a beautifully paneled room with the chairs accompanied with a coffee table placed in a long rectangle with the General's chair occupying the head position. The Deputy Prime Minister greeted us warmly saying that it was an honor to have American soldiers who fought the Japanese in his country fifty years ago make a return visit. He went on to say that he would make every effort to make our stay in his country a pleasant and memorable one.

In his turn our General Castorr responded graciously noting that it

was wonderful for us to be back in Burma. He then changed direction saying that last November's election was going to bring about a change in our foreign policy which would be favorable to Burma and then went on to name some of the new policy makers. He continued by complaining about the treatment of the Burmese government and its internal policies by our news media noting that the "Human Rights" problem was exaggerated by the same media. He concluded by saying that our group, by being there, represented the change of attitude towards his country. Initially I was surprised that Castorr would make such remarks in a semi-public meeting in a host country and attribute them as the policy of our group. I surely had no policy agenda other than making a non political nostalgic 50th Anniversary trip to our war time combat areas. How-

ever, in retrospect, I should have realized that our leader was merely reinforcing his credentials which had to be well known to the Burmese diplomatic community otherwise we would not have been there.

As the meeting evolved into an informal discussion General Tun told us that he had taken flight training in the United States and indeed was qualified as a F-10 pilot. By doing this he joined an elite group of pilots. During a period of general questions coffee and cake arrived. He then volunteered that Buddhism was not necessarily a religion but rather a philosophy that was promoted by the government to bridge the differences among the several ethnic groups. At this point I had an opportunity to get involved in the proceedings and asked the Deputy Prime Minister if I could ask two questions. To this he readily agreed. My first question was "Would we be permitted to ask the Commanding General of the Lashio area if he could provide us the transportation to go to Lo Kang, the major battle area of the Mars Task Force, which is 75 miles north of Lashio"? Before he could respond Castorr interrupted to say "That has already been taken care of". This meant to me that nothing had been done or was planned to be done. My second question was "Do we have your permission to take some pictures with you"? He replied with something like "It would be a pleasure". During this period I presented him with a copy of THE SITAPUR INCIDENT.

These two courtesy calls made it clear that the military was surely running the country for the post-

(Continued on page 3)

### FALL IN

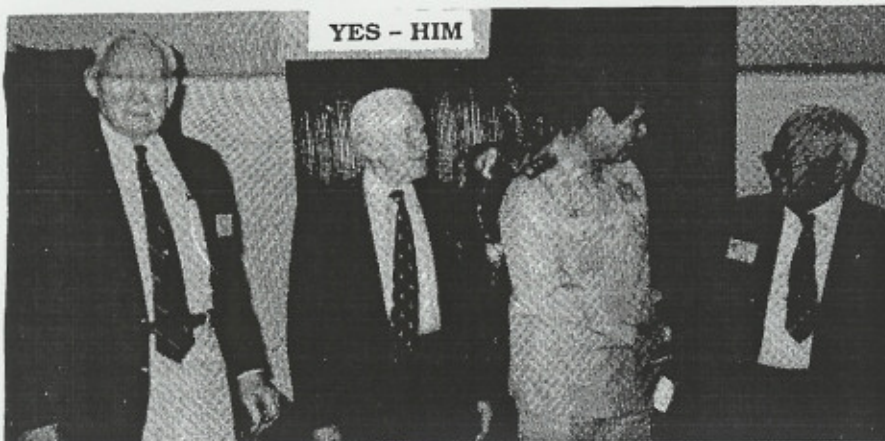
Here are the latest additions to our assembly. Remember them?

- JOSEPH DE FRANCESCO, 1956 59th St, Brooklyn NY 11204, 718-236-6080, 612 FA BN/HQ  
 BARTON D HOUCK, 422 Church Rd, Wernersville PA 19565, 610-670-2320, 5307/1/RCT/A CO/MED DET  
 HAROLD J KOHLER, Rt 1 Box 251, Lawson MO 64062, 816-354-2352, 5307/502 MP  
 RAYMOND J KOPP, PO Box 62, Candler NC 28715, 704-667-3395, 5307/2/BCT/MORTAR SEC  
 ROGER W PRUITT, 3017 S 37th St, Kansas City KS 66106, 5307/3/KCT/33 QM PK TR; 475/33  
 TERRY B RODERICK, 6940 Bright Av, Cocoa FL 32927, 407-631-1144, RANGER; 75INF/CO P  
 JAMES R WILLS, 8192 S County Rd 200 W, Spiceland IN 47385-9719, 5307/236th





Rangoon, Burma, 1-25-95. Courtesy Call on Lt. Gen. Tin Tun, Deputy Prime Minister.



Paul Tobey, Gen. Castorr, Gen. Tun, Roy Matsumoto

restricted by the military. Without formality we were ushered through the crowd and directed to the plane which we boarded ahead of the other passengers. Our baggage had special handling by the ground crew who may have been soldiers. When it came time to take off the plane was full.

At Pagan we were put up at an attractive guest house sited along a rural road. As we were priority guests a party of French tourists staying at the guest house had to find alternate accommodations for the night. They returned to the guest house for dinner and were not too upset about being displaced. Those that were interested were given a tour of the major points of interest one of which was an archaeological museum of some merit.

The following morning we boarded an old bus together with our tour guide, our Major and our two cameramen and set out for Mandalay via Mlektilla. It being the dry season the country side looked barren but with obvious signs of being cultivated during the monsoon season. The road was paved to the width of about a car and one half with the shoulder used by pedestrians, ox carts and other types of farm vehicles. In the heavier travelled portions of the road such traffic created a red dust cloud, for that is the color of the soil, which permeated the bus and was inhaled by all to be coughed up for days to come.

In Mandalay I had hoped to buy some post cards having bought the stamps in Rangoon. This was not to be for it turns out that this was the Chinese New Year, and they being the shopkeepers had closed their shops for the celebrations.

(Continued on page 4)

**STEPS BACK . . .**

(Continued from page 2)

tions which they held would normally be held by civilians. I have no idea how far down the chain of command line that civilians have been superseded by the military.

We also had a luncheon with our Military Attache in Rangoon. For this occasion our attache, Lt. Col. Danwill Lee, had invited some of his peers from other countries including Japan's Military Attache, who, I found upon gaining access to him, was an affable sort with a fluent command of English. He had brought with him a map of Burma on which he had traced the movement of Japanese troops during their occupation and subsequent retreat from Burma. While examining this map it gave me the opportunity to make a couple of inquiries. The first being "How many Japanese troops were in Burma?" The answer 300,000. The second "How many of those troops were left in Burma at the end of the war?" The answer

237,000. Thus only about one in five returned to Japan.

We left our hotel on Friday morning February 27th taking our bus to the airport to board a domestic commercial flight to Pagan an area noted for its pagodas and temples. At the airport I was surprised to find the parking area filled with cars and buses and the terminal full of people making domestic flights. This indicated that people could readily move about those areas not

**PASS IN REVIEW - Deaths reported recently**

**Name & Hometown (Where Known), Organization, Where, When Deceased**

- Harold Cooper, 313 N Evans Ct., Scranton, PA 18504, 5307, PO Notice B/N/5/95
- James M Fay, Box 365, Waynetown, IN 47990, 5307/3 OCT, PO Notice May 95/B/N
- Robert R Hickey, 2528 West 6th Ave, Kennewick, WA 99336, 5307/3, May 19, 1995
- Walter R Noblett, 1268 N Van Buren St, Allentown, PA 18103, 5307/2, May 2, 1995
- Charles A Bright, 2870 Meadowood Dr, Jackson, MI 49202-5367, 5307, December 11, 1994



**STEPS BACK . . .**

(Continued from page 3)

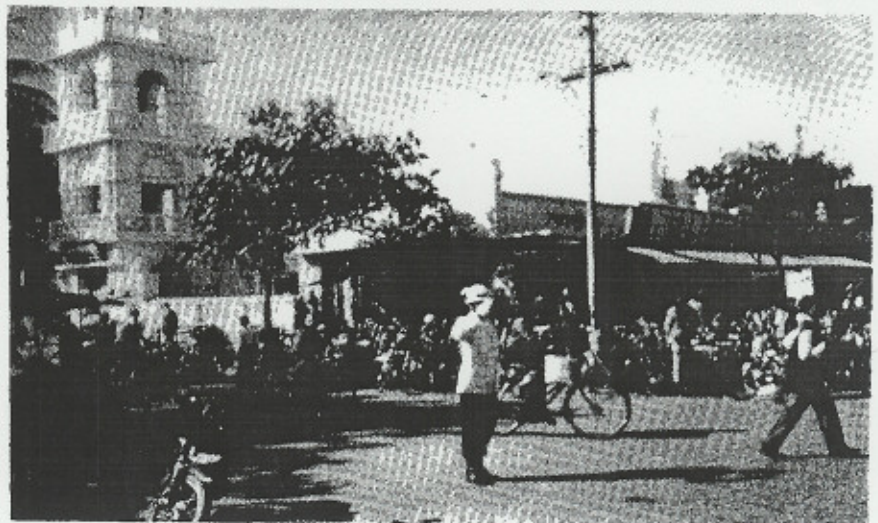
To my surprise few people whom I had questioned knew the meaning of the words "post card". As it turned out I was unable to get my post cards until I got to Bangkok.

Now it was on to Myitkyina--that magnet that drew us back to Burma. We left the Mandalay Pops Hotel by bus for the airport where a military prop jet transport plane awaited us. The baggage was piled on the floor in the front of the aircraft and secured by a safety net. Our tour guide remained behind while the Major and the cameramen joined us for the flight. As we became airborne there was an air of excitement as we realized that the next landing would be our goal--Myitkyina! Getting off the plane was to be a real let down for this was not the airstrip that I remembered. Shortly we were transported to the airstrip which was the one that I landed on on May 19th, 1944.

While there were great changes some landmarks were un-changed. I had little time to reflect on the siege that followed that initial landing for we were hustled into waiting cars and vans that were to make up a military convoy with drivers members of the army. It immediately became obvious that we were on a planned route for there were motorcycle MPs leading the column followed by a jeep with flashing red lights. At each intersection there were MPs already in place. All on-coming traffic whether pedestrian, bicycle, ox cart or vehicular stopped and pulled to the side of the road as *they saw the convoy approach*. I do not know if this was standard procedure or was done out of respect for us. I rather suspect the former.

Where we were headed I did not know except that we were headed north. The road was paved and in good condition and was lined with houses--the first evidence of major changes since our visit fifty years ago. The object of our trip was Jaw Bum a five story tower set on top of the highest point in the area. This tower was built and is maintained by the Myitkyina Baptist Association. From its top one has a commanding view of the whole countryside. One of the known

(Continued on page 5)

**Gen. Lwin, Gen. Castorr, Burmese Veterans - Sitapur****Myitkyina Degree College at Sitapur****Myitkyina - 1995**



**STEPS BACK . . .**

(Continued from page 4)

places that could be picked out was the site of Camp Landis where the 475th Infantry Regiment trained for their campaign to open the old Burma Road. Following our look around we boarded our convoy vehicles and after a short drive we stopped at a cluster of buildings that is known as the Kachin Theological College. In each instance we were warmly greeted by colorfully dressed students while the faculty was gracious and happy to have such a group of special visitors.

About this time I was wondering just what we were doing with this

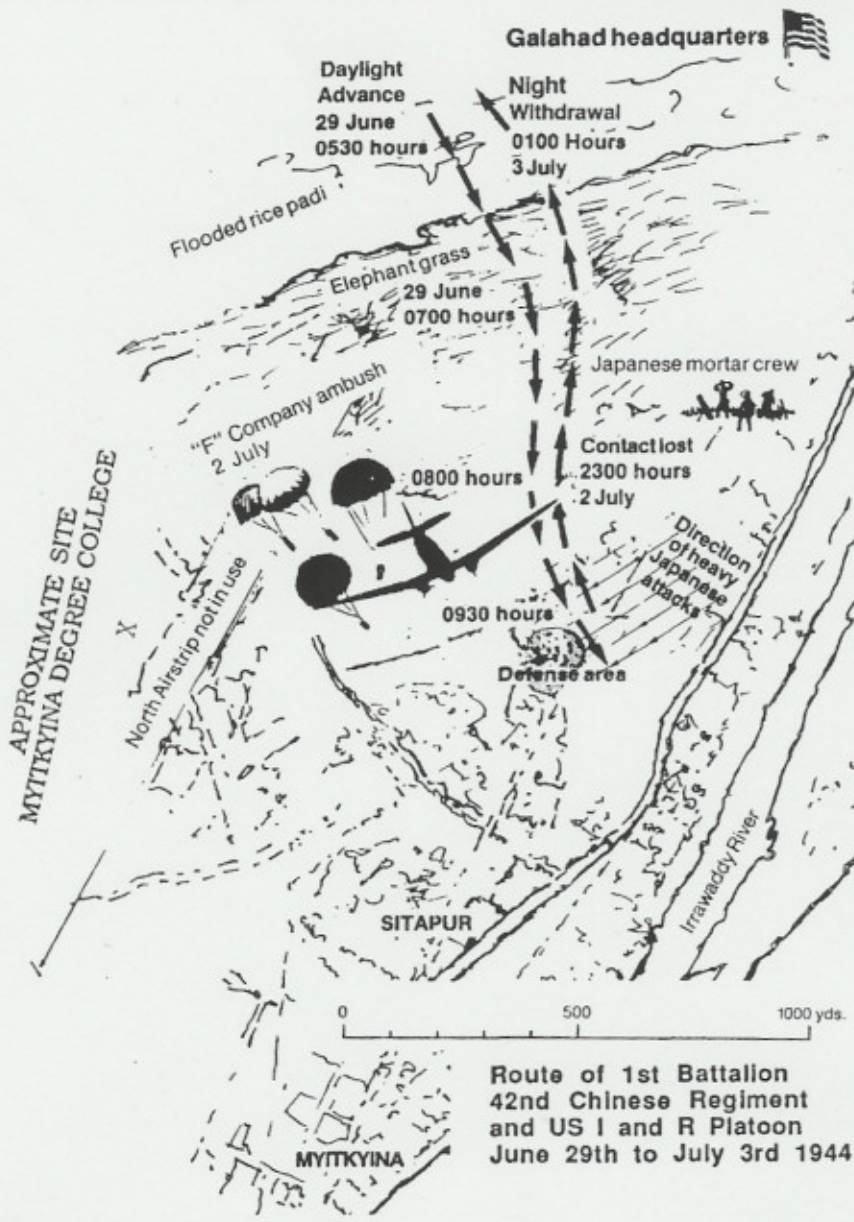
sort of traipsing about when we had real places that we wanted to tramp over. Our next stop was along the bank of the Irrawaddy River with the Commanding General's river boat tied up along the shore line. The vessel had a wide beam and a long open deck, perhaps half of which was protected by a red, green and white canopy. As we boarded by means of a hinged ramp I realized that we were now hostages of our hosts--so the best thing to do was to relax and enjoy what turned out to be a delightful afternoon cruise with the weather cool and clear. Lunch was served. Shortly thereafter someone called out that we were opposite Sitapur. While several mem-

bers of our group knew of my keen interest in Sitapur I was surprised when I heard the announcement realizing that it was for my benefit I felt duty bound to take a picture of that piece of shoreline.

During the cruise I learned that fish were no longer plentiful in the river. During the war such fishing as was done was done with the aid of hand grenades with the stunned fish being harvested on the surface. It was late afternoon when we tied up at the military command's guest house south of Myitkyina. The guest house sat on a bluff well above the river and as we climbed the embankment we were greeted by a spacious lawn and several large and well cared for buildings. We had a group meeting with Major General Saw Lwin whose title read "The Chairman of the Kachin State Law and Order Restoration Council and Commander of the Northern Command". The General initiated the meeting by paying a tribute to our WWII efforts and accomplishments and, in doing this, seemed to be well acquainted with our campaign, logistics, engineering and air support. He specifically spoke of the airfields built in the wake of the advance of Merrill's Marauders saying that they were, after fifty years, still in use. It is their hope to soon connect them with an all weather road and thereby open up the most northern parts of Burma to development. He touched on the ongoing efforts to establish a lasting peace with all the ethnic groups in the region. As the meeting came to a close I presented him with a copy of THE SITAPUR INCIDENT. He then advised us that our quarters were ready, and that we would find our name posted over the door to our room, where we would also find that our luggage had been delivered and placed in the room. Everything was as the General said. As old soldiers we began to realize that we were the guests of a well trained, well dressed, alert and disciplined army. Our experience during the remainder of our Burma stay only reinforced this point of view.

We were served an extravagant buffet on the lawn which was illuminated by hundreds of Christmas tree lights. While it was no longer shirt sleeve weather and

(Continued on page 6)



**Route of 1st Battalion  
42nd Chinese Regiment  
and US I and R Platoon  
June 29th to July 3rd 1944**



**STEPS BACK . . .**

(Continued from page 5)

sweaters and jackets were needed to be comfortable it was a very pleasant evening.

The next morning we packed our bags not knowing what was in store for us. After yesterday's experience I would not have been surprised to have been taken to the airport and sent along our way with the usual smiles and good wishes, for this is what our schedule indicated we were going to do. Fortunately it dawned on our hosts that we did not travel halfway around the world to enjoy a tour of the countryside and a cruise on the Irrawaddy River and not even get into Myitkyina. Without any announcement of change of plans we boarded our convoy vehicles. This time I rode in the General's Mercedes. With the General in the lead and with the Military Police posted we headed north, which is not the route to the airport and in due course stopped at a road junction in Sitapur. Here we were greeted by three Burmese veterans of the war each one wearing on his jacket his military decorations as evidence of his service in some British unit. One of them had been with the Japanese during the Siege of Myitkyina and it was interesting to hear him say that he stayed in the town until the "white" soldiers came in.

This was Sitapur. As I looked around I realized that the rice paddi which the Chinese Battalion crossed was just a short distance further on and just off to the east from the road. I was told that the paddi was now dry for it is the dry season but that it was still in use and soon would be flooded. The small clump of tall trees where our perimeter was set up was just a short distance to the east. If I had been given the opportunity I could have retraced our entire route even though now houses were dispersed throughout the area. That this was no longer vacant country was brought home to me by looking to the west side of the road where a long two story white building greeted the eye. In front of the structure there was a sign made from white stones which read: MYITKYINA DEGREE COLLEGE.

All of this had taken over half an hour and it was time to move on. The thoughtful gesture of rounding



Our Gracious Greeters - Lashio

up the three Burmese veterans did not go un-noticed. As we were saying our good byes the General was heard to say in English to the veterans that if they ever needed anything to just let him know.

I have super-imposed the location of this stop on the following map copied from THE SITAPUR INCIDENT page 105. Our convoy now headed back to Myitkyina and ended up right in the middle of town near a large bazaar section. Military Police and uniformed soldiers seemed to be everywhere. As we moved about on foot it was obvious that there were numerous security personnel in civilian dress. We mixed with the people in the crowded bazaar with the security forces keeping a close

eye on us. In the center of town the Japanese had put up a Memorial Marker. It was interesting to walk through the railroad yard, which, of course, is now completely rebuilt, and to notice that some of the structures still standing at the end of the siege were repaired leaving the outline of the building intact and recognizable. One landmark that I remembered was a ridge on the south of the town beyond which we had our command post. This ridge is now covered with housing. Going from a population of about 8,000 to now over 100,000 vast changes have taken place obliterating the battle sites.

On the way to the airport we

(Continued on page 7)



**STEPS BACK . . .**

(Continued from page 6)

stopped at the incoming WELCOME sign and the outgoing FAREWELL sign to take our last pictures of Myitkyina. We boarded the aircraft to find that our luggage was already piled at the front of the plane. As we took off for Bhamo some two hours late we were in good spirits for we had had a memorable morning having had an opportunity to trod on some of the ground that it took us over ten weeks to acquire being opposed by the Japanese and the monsoon season and a generally hostile environment of a variety of unpleasant bugs and insects.

At Bhamo we received another friendly welcome. Among the luncheon guests was a veteran who drove a truck over the old Burma

Road making a number of ten day round trips. After the Japanese occupied Burma he became a driver in one of the British transport units in India. He had a good command of English. At present he lives with his daughter who operates a shop in the local bazaar. As we toured the city he was proud to be able to point out the shop to us.

Then it was on to Lashio. This segment of the flight took us over our battle area of Loi Kang--another locality of lasting interest to some of us. While we did not get a chance to go there I rather suspect, contrary to Myitkyina, - that today it is much as we left it, as we moved south on the Burma Road and then on to China.

Our colorfully dressed Lashio greeters were accompanied by little girls attractively dressed who

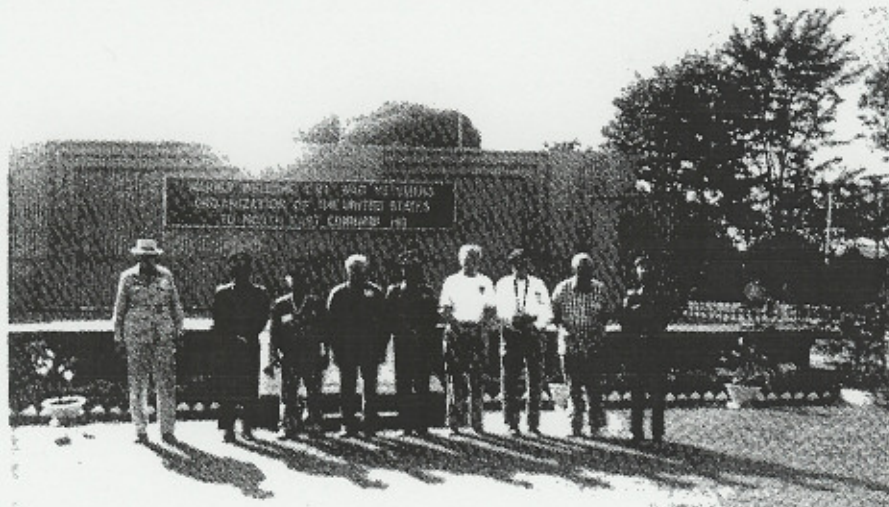
offered us a neatly packaged bouquet as we passed down the line. On the organized tour of the city we were taken to the site of a school being under-written by veterans of our OSS who also have an emotional attachment to Burma. To indicate to us that the public sector was not being neglected we were taken to two projects in process: one was a large water supply system and the other was the refurbishing of the city hall.

Opposite our large and comfortable guest quarters was a welcoming sign under which was a stage fronted by a ceremonial parade ground. Here under clear skies and real cool weather, requiring additional clothing, we were treated to another banquet and a festive evening with an elaborate stage show. As the evening came to an end we all became part of a ritual dance by parading around the area in front of the stage. The Commanding General, Major General Aye Kyaw, was a friendly and affable officer who joined in all of the evening's activities with enthusiasm. Earlier I had given him a copy of THE SITAPUR INCIDENT and later during the evening he presented me, and each of the others in the group, with a soldier's brown knit wool hat. I am glad to report that this gift survived the trip home.

The next morning we left Lashio for Rangoon on board the military aircraft. About the airport and access roads the military were in evidence. As the plane sped down the runway for take off we were protected by soldiers facing away from the runway and positioned some 100 feet apart along the length of the runway. Our safety surely was given a high priority.

The military bases at Bhamo and Lashio were, like the one at Myitkyina, examples of superior installations each with courteous and efficient personnel to care for us.

We landed at the military airfield at Rangoon and were met by our tour guide, whose name by the way was Grace. She had a comfortable bus for our trip into the city where we had an appointment to meet with the STATE LAW AND ORDER COUNCIL Secretary (1), Lt Gen. Khin Nyunt. In a relatively small



This sign is just one of the many details in honor of our visit to Lashio.

(Continued on page 8)



**STEPS BACK . . .**

(Continued from page 7)

conference room he presented, through an interpreter, something resembling a "State of the Union" address by our president -- all is well and getting better.

Shortly thereafter we were guided into another building and thence into a large exquisitely paneled room which was probably reserved for state functions. We were there to be individually presented with Burma's highest award the LIBERATION STAR. There to witness the ceremony were the members of the General Military Staff, perhaps ten in number, attired in their dress uniforms adorned with their many decorations. The medal was

awarded and pinned on each of us by the Vice Chairman of the State Law and Order Restoration Council, General Maung Aye. With the medal we were each presented with a beret--in my case green for infantry. Attached to the beret was a crest which was said to be the Burmese Crest. The entire ceremony was indeed impressive.

This exercise officially ended our stay in Burma. As we immediately departed for the airport I was reminded that the main streets were clean but among those using the sidewalks, and they were numerous, there was little evidence of old people but plenty of evidence of children.

While Burma, now Myanmar, has changed many of its old-place names you will note that I have used the old and familiar names

throughout.

From Rangoon we went on to Bangkok where we spent several days, sometimes doing the usual tourist bit. We did take a day trip in a very comfortable bus to see the Bridge on the River Kwai Memorial at Kanchanaburi seventy miles north of Bangkok. Although well known to those familiar with the Japanese occupation of Burma this phase of the war was brought to the attention of the reading public by the book THE BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER KWAI by Pierre Boulle. This book was a fictional story by a French author about a British Army officer and his battalion being forced by the Japanese to work in a hostile land forbidding terrain on a railroad line to carry supplies to their forces in Burma. While fictional the story is based on fact. The story was brought to the attention of the world by the movie with the same title. Today the memorial stands as a lasting reminder of the brutal mind set of the WW II Japanese military. The Japanese held over 61,000 allied POWs: 30,000 British, 13,000 Australians, 18,000 Dutch and 700 Americans. Some 18,000 were to die building the railroad. Less well known was that in addition to these POWs the Japanese had impressed at least 200,000 Asians, from countries that they had overrun, and 100,000 of these also died from lack of food, disease, and a gross lack of medical attention.

The railroad now operates on a daily schedule over 40 miles of track providing transportation for the local people living along the line and the school children as well as the tourists like us. It was an interesting trip confirming the forbidding mountain terrain that had to be negotiated. This is how we spent our last day in Thailand for on the morrow we were to start return trip to Washington and home.

Our return trip to Washington was made up of two consecutive all night flights with a five hour layover in Toyko. As we wearily came out of the customs area at Dulles Airport there was the Burmese ambassador and his wife to greet us. Having, in the meantime, kept a detailed account of our activities in Burma.

Our trip from our point of view

(Continued on page 9)



Maitkvaia



**STEPS BACK . . .**

(Continued from page 8)

was a great nostalgic adventure. For its success we are forever indebted to Gen. Castorr who had the foresight to initiate it and the perseverance to see it through the many diplomatic, organizational and practical scheduling problems. The credit for its success belongs to him.

Our Burmese hosts from all walks of life deserve a word of genuine appreciation for everywhere they were friendly, courteous, efficient and cooperative. If we had been heads of state we could not have had better care and treatment. I realize that our presence was compounded by security considerations which would, perhaps, have been better understood if they had frankly told what was going on, as from one soldier to another, rather than leave us to speculate on, for instance, why we did not go to Loi Kang. The actual situation when known is usually less damaging than the speculation that develops about it. Paul Tobey.

**GENERAL CASTORR'S REPORT  
C.B.I. Veterans  
Composite Unit 45/95.**

The above caption FORMULATED by a consensus of the stalwart veterans of the Burma Campaign of 1943-1945 and with the few grandsons and nephews of our past comrades that accompanied those of us in returning to the land where we fought the Japanese 50 years ago; best describes this group for the history books. For there never will be another.

Motivated by all the fanfare given to commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the War's End in Europe, Brig. Gen. L. Robert Castorr, Army Inf. Ret. and a former Merrill's Marauder and later becoming the General Staff Officer G-1 to Gen. Joseph Stilwell in the Burma Campaign, decided there were those of us who also played a part in the big war and so, should be recognized. Months of organization and preparation launched the movement day on Jan. 22nd, 1995. Twenty five men coming in from all over the U.S. into Washington D.C. did depart to a country, nostalgic in memory of the bad times in hardship and death all around that they endured a



**Once again I stand on the edge of the the Myitkyina Airstrip.**

lifetime ago. Most of the group were of the Marauders. A few were assigned to NCAC HQ and attached to the Chinese. Others in supporting roles.

Upon arrival in Rangoon, or Yangon as known today, much festive greetings were showered upon these "Jungle Warriors" as one large sign on the many curbed lined streets of the local citizenry signaled their salutation as our convoy passed. Anyone could readily see that we were truly hailed as heroes everywhere we journeyed. Appreciation and thanks were evident by the sincere warmth of affection shown us for our fight in their freedom and independence from the aggressor.

A light day of rest to pay tribute and honor the Fallen Heroes Memorial at the Hytau-Kyant War Cemetery and laying a beautiful CBI inscribed wreath with prayer and a salute, highlighted our second day. Courtesy calls upon high ranking Generals in the persons of the Minister of Trade and of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Union of Myanmar also was arranged.

Sightseeing took in our third day to the huge Shwedogon Pagoda layered with tons of solid gold leaf, as well as to other worthwhile points of interest.

Our American Military Attache was kind enough to host a luncheon for us at his residence enabling us to meet personnel representing our interest within our Consulate there.

Traveling by air, we departed for

the city of Pagan and known as the Worlds Capitol of Pagodas and there are literally thousands of them dating back to the 1st century.

"On the Road to Mandalay" we went by coach which gave us a closer look to the villages and the people enroute. Mandalay itself is a step back in the time of Rudyard Kipling with its British colonial atmosphere. The focal point being the Golden Palace of their former King and which was destroyed during the war by Japanese Bombers but is now being fully restored preparatory to the big offensive tourist trade the Government is gearing up for 1996.

Our big day of anticipation has arrived as to where we fly to where we all wanted to go in the first place when this trip was conceived-Myitkyina. Who could forget those days back when the airstrip was taken by us and thus the event became the beginning of the end of all the nightmares we were a part of in the war that the rest of the world almost forgot.

From the juncture of our journey, Mandalay-Myitkyina-Bhamo-Lashio the wonderful and I mean wonderful, host of our Myanmar Government Officials, took over full control and all responsibilities for our welfare, comfort and transportation. We traveled by their military planes and other conveyance.

Personalized efficiency prevailed unbelievably, like clockwork. Nothing was left unturned in providing each of us the hospitality and graciousness that one would have to see for themselves to appreciate, as we did. We were given every access to our wishes to see our old battle sites and to seek answers to our questions that laid dormant for so long. Security was all around us at times just in case there might have been a dissident lurking around but to the contrary, all we saw were contented happy faces prevailing everywhere we traveled.

Lavished banquets for us and gayety was part of our course of stay where on the moonlight waters of the Irrawaddy River reflected upon us as we dined on its banks alongside of our accommodations within the guest quarters of the military compound

(Continued on page 10)



## STEPS BACK . . .

(Continued from page 9)

of the Commanding General of that Myitkyina Province. Same extended hospitality at Bhamo and Lashio. At Lashio, the General included music and a stage show of beautiful girls in their native costumes for our pleasure besides gifts galore for each of our men.

Here at Lashio, situated on the Thailand border, we witnessed the on-going site of construction for a school of general education and sponsored by our esteemed OSS-101 Detachment Forces who initiated the finances as a thank you to the Kachins who played such an integral part of their intelligence gathering information in order for those of us to gain our objective in the war zone.

So we came, we saw and now time to leave with further memories to reflect upon. Flying back to Yangon, the climax of our visit was yet to come. We were assembled for the "frosting on the cake" as it were and there escorted to a beautiful building obviously reserved for dignitaries of state and therein, dressed in full military dress, were the General Military Staff of the Government of Myanmar. We were each to be presented with the Burma Medal of Liberation as freedom fighters for their independence long ago. It was a heart rendering ceremony when, in this historical assembled occasion, the Minister of Defence and, also as the Vice Chairman of the State Law & Order Restoration Council of Myanmar General Maung Aye, pinned the medals upon the chest of each of us and further presented each with a green beret with their coat of arms insignia thereon. Citations will be sent to each recipient after their Armed Forces Day on March 27th, at which time our names will be officially proclaimed and recorded in their military archives.

With that chapter of our lives closed forever, we necessarily had to "get our show on the road" and so with bag and baggage we were off to Bangkok. More sightseeing, more shopping and more exotic food was the course of our stay until it was time to depart by a luxury type coach for our days journey to "The Bridge Over the River Kwai". It was noted of course



**Receiving the Liberation Star Medal from General Maung Aye at Rangoon-Yangon.**

concentration camps and the brutality upon their British captive slaves. We laid another wreath on the memorial grounds of this British cemetery in tribute to the valor of these gallant men. To complete that memorable visit, we actually rode on the train that took us over and across that Historical Bridge onward for some 40 kilometers to its end and near the border of Burma on the Thailand side. Our understanding, is that, the Thai Government is now about to extend the RR into Burma for the tourist trade they hope to induce.

Reflecting backward on this wonderful adventure, to those of us who made it, there were many trials and tribulations in the organizational aspect of such a tour of this nature. Many unponderable and unknown questions were never fulfilled simply because of the complexities in the cultural, political and communication difficulties encountered from our point of view and theirs.

However, it did take perseverance, trust and a prayer that all would work out in a manner upon which it did. There were no mishaps to dampen our spirits we had no problems individually. We all took things in stride and enjoyed all.

Much praise and appreciation must go to Ambassador U Thaug of the Embassy of Myanmar in Washington D.C. for his dedication and thorough conscientious follow through of the many details and coordinating efforts on behalf of Gen. Castorr, otherwise this trip could never have been accomplished in the manner in which it

# Letters

## EDITOR

Looking at the roster, I was reminded that the 75th Infantry was re-activated and served about two years on Okinawa, 1954-56. The 612th FA was also re-activated at this time and again attached to the 75th on Okinawa. We have a member who was in 612th during this period. This was soon after the end of the Korean War. At activation on Okinawa the 75th RCT took over positions and some remaining property, previously belonging to the 29th Inf, which had been the Occupation Army Force on Oki until July 1950, when it was rushed into commitment in the Pusan Perimeter. There it was first attached to 25th Div. Then, 29th Colors were returned to Oki and all personnel re-assigned en masse to the 25th Division. 1st Bn 29th at this time became 3rd Bn 35th - my unit. That is, L Co 35th began that war as C Co, 29th. At same time the 3rd Bn, 27th Inf, sister regiment with 35th in the 25th Division. Almost all regiments in FECOM at this time had two battalions only. W B Woodruff Jr, PO BOX 515, Decatur TX 76234

## FROM EDITOR

You all must have noticed that Lana Turner died the end of June. It reminded me of an incident that happened in Deolali - The Indian Army Transit Camp that we stayed at after arriving in Bombay. The Camp had a practice of permitting the Indian natives to make and sell Hot Tea in the Camp. The place where this was prepared was not far from the Hq Basha so I had many opportunities to check them out. First, they made a big bonfire. Then they boiled water in a big pot, placed tea leaves in it and waited for it to steep. When it was ready, the salesmen - Tea Wallahs, filled their canisters with the tea, and also carried around milk and sugar if you wanted to add that. They sold the hot tea for two annas, roughly a nickel as I recall. They would walk around the camp, calling out, "Tea Wallah (probably spelled wrong)". Someone in our outfit persuaded them that they would do better in sales, if they called out, "Lousy Tea Wallah".



## LETTERS . . .

(Continued from page 10)

This changed to the call, "Lana Turner Tea Wallah". That was alright, but then they changed it to a more disrespectful term (not to be used in a family publication). The Tea Wallahs also paraded through the British Army family section and that was not acceptable so we had a stern rebuke from them about the conduct of the American soldiers.

Shortly thereafter, we had another stern request to have all of the Non-coms wear the appropriate stripes so that the British could call on them to maintain appropriate (British-style) discipline. All of us who had come out of Camp Stoneman had been issued new khakis without stripes and we never did get a pass to go to town to show off our stripes, patches, etc. It was a case of change your uniforms and get on the boat.

Since I was in the Hq when this pronouncement was made, I was first in line to go to the native bazaar where there was a tailor with an old Singer sewing machine. Two of the Personnel Section men and I discovered that he could make stripes and we ordered several pairs each. At that point we discovered that he would only make them while we waited and paid for them immediately. We tried to explain to him that he could make a hundred of them because of all the NCO's who would be needing them. While we were trying to make him understand the American economic system, he was busy explaining to us the "caste" system. He said he could not use more than a rupee a day because of the caste that he was in.  
Ray Lyons

MERRILL'S MARAUDERS WAR IN BURMA video tape will be ready for shipping August first. Price \$50.00 to MMA members includes packing and postage. Send check or money order to: Herbert Clofine, Treasurer, 1632 Surrey Lane, Havertown, PA 19083. A great Christmas gift for the sons, daughters and grandchildren of Marauders. All proceeds go to Merrill's Marauders Association to amortize cost of production.

## OFFICERS ROW

### PRESIDENT - PHIL PIAZZA

### EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - RAY LYONS

There is going to be a BIG WW II veterans parade in NYC on November 11th. It will be part of Weekend, November 10, 11 and 12th, celebrating 50th anniversary of end of War. Ticker tape down lower Broadway. Cynthia Combs is the Veterans Project Director for Canterbury Tours, at 1-800-653-0017. They are running two Package Tours, Number 1 is for 3 days and 2 nights, costs \$199.00 per person (double occ).

Write to your Congressman asking for support for the General Stilwell Commemorative Stamp.

We have the new, improved second edition of the "The Merrill's Marauders War in Burma, Volume I". The price will be \$15.00. Senior Citizen rate \$12.

FATHER GLAVIN is celebrating his 60th Anniversary of his Ordination to the Priesthood on Sunday afternoon, 2 PM, October 22, 1995. St Mary's Church is at 156 East Main St, Amsterdam. He is extending a general welcome to all to come. In addition to a Mass at 2 PM, there will be a Deluxe Buffet Reception following.

### REUNION CHAIRMAN - LOGAN WESTON

The Hotel advises that they no longer will hold the block of rooms

open for the Merrill's Marauders Association but you can still call them at 1-800-733-3211 to ask for reservations at the same package rate. Don't delay.

### ANNOUNCE COMPLETION OF MERRILL'S MARAUDERS WAR IN BURMA VIDEO TAPE.

This historical study has been in production for over four years. It was produced for the Merrill's Marauders Association by film and video professionals. The tape will be about three and a half hours in length and will be packaged in two separate tapes enclosed in a double presentation album.

Incorporated in the production are over 35 animated maps of all of the Marauder battles with additional maps of all of the routes taken by the unit from Ledo to Myitkyina. The training at Deogarh and the 10 day trip by train and river boat are shown. Some hour and a half of Signal Corps and 10th Air Force Combat Camera Unit motion picture footage reveals the campaign as it was. The complete coverage of the glider landings from takeoff to crash landings at Mitch, zeros strafing the strip are some high points; as are the dozens of animated still photos from our collection. The study begins with President Roosevelt's call for volunteers for a "... dangerous and hazardous mission" and ends on August 3rd 1944 with the fall of Myitkyina.

### HISTORIAN - DAVE QUAID

The following Marauders share their candid combat experiences on camera:

Logan Weston \*  
Kenneth Ferguson  
Warner Katz  
Norman Janis  
George Rose  
Calfson Johnson  
Warren Ventura  
A. Lewis Kolodny  
David Quaid  
John Eichelberger  
Richard Gillette  
Andrew Pung \*  
Victor Weingartner  
Henry Gosho  
Leslie McKle  
Edward McLogan  
Perry Johnson  
Raymond Lyons

John Dalton  
James Hopkins  
David Richardson  
Rex Beach  
Theodore Zakotnik  
Gilbert Howland  
Grant Hirabayashi  
John Acker  
Bernard Martin  
George Davey  
Ray Mitchell  
Phillip Piazza \*  
David Hurwitt  
Roy Matsumoto \*  
Joseph Magnotta  
Anthony Columbo  
Donald Delorey

\* Ranger Hall of Fame Members





### ANOTHER CHAPLAIN WHO SERVED AND DIED IN INDIA/BURMA

Father Ladislaus Polewski, Milwaukee WI served with the 475th Infantry, Second Battalion. We have heard from Father Glavin that he had been assigned to a Hospital back in India and decided that since the Infantry had a shortage of Chaplains, he would be another volunteer. We know from Don Delorey that he had promised to conduct the marriage ceremony for Don and his Nurse - wife to be, Mary Anne. One of his first difficult assignments was to provide burial services to the 17 men of the 2nd Bn who died during the Battle at Tonkwa. He had difficulty in hiking the trails due to his age, lack of hiking training. Most of the days, he would wind up behind the column, arriving after camp had been set up. It is believed that he had come down with scrub typhus early on, prior to the approach to the Hosi Valley

and Loi Kang Ridge. This was known to him and to others in the march serial. It was equally understood by all that no means of evacuation existed. He refused to give up or just fall out; but kept on as best he could.

He made it to the top of Loi Kang Hill and continued to discharge his religious duties for a few more days. It was several days after arrival at Hosi Valley before evacuations became possible, due to the requirements to level the rice paddy for the runway, and to ensure the strip was free of at least enemy small arms fire. Finally the air strip was put in and they began to fly out casualties in the Liaison planes. He was on the third plane flown out. Captain McLaughlin met Father Glavin as his outfit arrived at the Hosi Valley and told him that Father Polewski had scrub typhus and was in a bad way. It turned out that he along with Father Barrett in the First Campaign had indeed come down with scrub typhus. He also did not survive it, dying 29 January 1945.

W B Woodruff, Jr, PO Box 515, Decatur TX 76234, has not forgotten him. During a fund drive to raise money to create a proper, lighted sign in front of the local Catholic Church, Woody volunteered (again!) to start the campaign with an understanding that it would be dedicated to Chaplain Polewski. IT HAPPENED! Chaplain Polewski's heroism is briefly mentioned on page 156 of "Marsmen in Burma". His memory

is indelibly carved into the minds of those of us who knew him in Burma. If he had family back in Wisconsin, they would surely be gratified to know that his memory lives on -- as they will surely be surprised to find his name set in bronze in faraway Decatur TX.

Woody recalls also having a vague recollection of religious service being conducted on Loi Kang by Father Polewski. He has a distinct memory of passing the "cemetery" one morning, en route to drop zone with mule in tow, and observed the enlisted Chaplain's Assistant conducting burial of those lost during the preceding night. This is what brought home to him that our Chaplain was no longer with us.

Further in regard to the burials daily at Loi Kang: For some weeks we held north end of this ridge, and Japs the south end. Connecting the two areas was a stretch of ridge, very narrow and steep-sided. Only way to advance was along single trail. Many Jap automatic weapons made this hazardous. Also Japs used snipers concealed in trees and brush. Another problem was long range artillery probably being adjusted by FO's on the ridge. Thus it was that we had the daily morning burial detail.

W B Woodruff Jr, PO BOX 515,  
Decatur TX 76234, 817-627-3745

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In a future issue of the Burman News, two photos of Polewski's monument will appear.



### MERRILL'S MARAUDERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

RAYMOND V. LYONS

Editor

11244 N. 33rd St.

Phoenix, AZ 85028-2723

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