

Schoenberger, Howard S.

Nazareth Radio Man Helps Save Chinese

Sgt. Schoenberger Cited for Bravery in 325 Combat Missions

HEADQUARTERS 10TH AIR FORCE IN BURMA—Sgt. Howard S. Schoenberger, 21, of Nazareth, Pa., a radio operator, recently topped a thousand combat flying hours, the first Tenth Air Force Combat Cargo crew member to hit this total. Flying in Combat Cargo unarmed and unescorted transports, Sgt. Schoenberger has tangled more than once with enemy fighters during his flights

over northern Burma. Flying 325 combat missions, often ten and twelve hours of combat a day, Schoenberger has amassed his tremendous total in only six months. This is a tribute to the incessant flying of the Combat Cargo crews who are supplying by air our forward elements in Northern Burma, as well as fighting units of the British, Indian, and Chinese troops in that area.

Schoenberger recently was a member of a Combat Cargo Crew who aided a large force of isolated Chinese troops to evade annihilation, at the hands of an attacking Japanese force. The besieged Chinese had exhausted their supply of ammunition and food, and had lost communication with the remainder of their fighting unit. Rear area headquarters were informed of this and Sgt. Schoenberger and his crew were dispatched, with a plane load of supplies to aid the beleaguered men.

PLANE RIDDLED

As Schoenberger's ship reached its destination the crew became the target of machine gun fire from nearby Jap ground forces. For eight successive passes at the target, as supplies were being dropped, fire was directed at the crew from ground positions. Bullets riddled the plane on each pass, two streaming through the cockpit, narrowly missing the crew. Another bullet punctured the auxiliary gas tank, but fortunately the tank was completely full and did not explode.

Despite the continued ground fire, the combat cargo transport completed their drop mission and later enabled the Chinese to escape their trap. As the bullet-riddled plane was landed at an advanced strip, the engines gave a last dying cough as the punctured gasoline tank ran dry, just as the plane hit the ground.

On another occasion Schoenberger on a combat cargo plane, had just landed at the now famed battle-scarred Myitkyina air strip in Burma, one of the first transports to land supplies at that base. Fighting was still in progress at one end of the strip, with Merrill's Marauders and the Chinese forces busily engaged in pushing the Japanese back. As Schoenberger climbed from his plane, Jap Zeros came screaming from the sky above, and before he and the others on the ground were able to jump into a slit trench, the plane opened fire, spitting lead directly in front of the ground that Schoenberger was hugging.

ESCAPES INJURY

Eight men not many feet from Schoenberger were hit by the enemy bullets, but luckily he was missed. Again, but two days after this incident, the "static chaser" was the victim of an attack by an enemy plane, this time when in flight, but before the Jap could open fire the combat cargo unarmed transport raced away to the protection of nearby clouds.

Schoenberger's 325 combat missions are an exceptional feat, as a major portion of these were flown during the torrential rain of the Burma monsoon season, considered the worst flying weather in the world.

Sgt. Schoenberger has been the recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with an Oak Leaf Cluster.

Before joining the armed forces, almost two and one half years ago, he attended Nazareth High School, where he starred on the football, baseball and boxing teams.

He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Schoenberger, of Nazareth R. D. 3.

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