

Stoumen, Lou

Sgt. Stoumen Describes Flight Behind Jap Lines

JUL 1944

"We are flying home to our base in Assam, India, through a night of thunderstorms, bumpy pre-monsoon thermals and the danger of ground fire or attack by Jap night fighters on our unarmed transport."

So in the July 21st issue of Yank, writes Sgt. Lou Stoumen from his place aboard the Troop Carrier Command on a mission behind Jap lines.

Back in the late 30's, as Lou Stoumen snapped pictures for Lehigh University's Brown and White, and ground out copy for the Lehigh Review, he had no inkling that the journalistic skill acquired on college publications would one day be used to report the most devastating world war man has ever known.

Today, the former editor of the Review, son of Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Stoumen, of 105 West Fourth Street, is staff correspondent and photographer for the China-Burma-India edition of Yank, the army weekly that numbers its readers in the millions.

Flying with the Troop Carrier Command, Sgt. Stoumen is one of the men who, at the risk of their lives, make possible the jungle war in Burma. Death is seldom absent from their thoughts.

But the young Bethlehemite goes beyond the exhaustion, the pain, and hazard of this dangerous mission to discover a meaning in all he sees. His words are:

"As we fly, three thoughts strike the observer.

"The first is that this war in Burma, perhaps more than on any other front, is truly an international war. Here the Japanese brand of Fascism is meeting up with the combined anger of a lot of countries representing a lot of races. Americans fight in these jungles. Chinese. The many races of India. West Africans. British. Here the whites and the yellows and the blacks fight shoulder to shoulder, giving the direct lie to Jap and Nazi propaganda that this is a race war.

"Second is the miracle of our deep-in-the-heart-of-Burma landing strips, built overnight by glider-borne engineers using miniature glider-borne grading and bulldozer equipment. The gliders were towed in one night by the big transports of the Troop Carrier Command.

The next night the same planes swarmed in, this time carrying troops, ammo, food and equipment.

"Third thought is that the whole air-infiltration war in Burma depends almost 100 per cent. for its men and supplies upon these sturdy Troop Carrier Command planes, upon their young (20 to 24 is average) overworked crews, upon the smooth-working team of American, British and Indian groundmen back at the hot, wet, insect-ridden base in Assam who keep the twin motors from ever missing a stroke, who pack the supplies and rig them with parachutes, who cook up the chow and man the tower and dig the slit trenches and brief the air crews and file the papers."

Since writing these lines, Sgt. Stoumen has had a new gold stripe added to the three on his left sleeve, each stripe signifying six months overseas service. On his right shoulder he wears the red and gold Yank patch and on the left shoulder the red-white-and-blue CBI patch featuring the U. S. Shield, the Star of India and the Kuomintang Sun of China.

July 27, 1944