



In March 1944, Stillwell and Merrill's Marauders decided that in order to get supply's into China that what they needed to do was to get someway to get back on the Burma Road. To get to it they had to come down this valley. To debark they started down from Ledo. We provided close air support and top cover, air transports dropped supplies to them. We flew the hell out of missions down there dropping all kinds of bombs, anywhere from three hundred and fifty-two pound land mines to one that was twelve hundred and four pounds. That thing would blow the wings off your airplane when it went off if you were below one thousand feet. It sure raised cain with the japs on the ground and just hell in general.

LT adair and Lule Belle

On the 17th of May 1944 Stillwell's troops were at Kamaing, the Japanese were giving them a hard time. The weather in the valley had been terrible, close air support was something we couldn't do everyday because of the weather. It had been about 10 days since they had any close air support, unfortunately to the south at Kamaing the weather was good which meant that the Japanese had clear sailing as far as working over our troops up there and the were screaming for help.

Merrill's Marauders were able to come in and take that Japanese airstrip. It was 4000 feet long, 60 feet wide, rocks, nine and a half miles to the town of Myitkyna and they were using that as their forward base. We had already bombed it, put a big crater right through the middle of it. So they were flying C-47s in there or whatever else they could get in to haul in supplies.

I'd had a lot of experience working down there so on this particular day they set me up to lead a flight of four P-40's with external fuel tanks, a two hundred and fifty pound bomb and a full load of ammo. We were supposed to go down to Kamaing and

dive bomb and strafe a particular spot that we had gotten from intelligence. It was where the Japanese were located.

We finally got a day where we thought it was good enough that we could go in there and do a little close air support. We had gotten our N5's by that time and it had 3 points on there. We could carry more ordinance or more fuel or any combination. What we were doing was going down and bombing and strafing the target, carrying a 75 gallon fuel tank so we could loiter over the area for a while and keep the Japs heads down, and then we could go home.

To take advantage of the element of surprise and since I knew the area so well, I decided to put my other three guys in trail behind me, with enough interval, so that we could go in and make our attack and pull up before the next guy was shooting on our tail. We came in from the north, I went down and bombed and strafed and pulled up and looked up and there were fifteen zeros. They were sitting up there and had already seen us, they were making a big swoop down on our flight.



Lulu Belle armed and ready

I called my guys and said Bandits at 11 o'clock, drop your bombs and your fuel and make sure your switches are armed because we're in for a fight. You are going to have to do the best you can and I'll do the best I can to help you. We were in the middle of a big open area, about fifteen miles of open sky. There were clouds up above this open area and there were clouds below with mountains sticking up through them.

I could see that had already spotted us. I think they already knew we were there. The Japanese had a pretty good intelligence system and they knew where we were. There were actually three flights of four zeros, which was twelve, and one flight of three zeros, which was a total of fifteen.

The first flight of four had latched onto my wingman, Tom O'Connor "Little Okie", and they were coming down as a flight of four to attack him. I called him and said, Little Okie, your about to get hit you better make sure you get your tank and your bombs off and turn right to fly into the clouds to get away from the zeros.

On this first pass this black zero got on Little Okie. I told him to head into the clouds, which he was doing. I couldn't get in there to cut the zero off. This zero was firing on him like crazy when they disappeared into the clouds. I went after them and I tried to shoot the zeros off his tail but there wasn't enough room to do it. I could see him going into the clouds with the zeros in behind shooting at him. I followed them in and they broke off just before they got to the clouds. I went in behind Okie and came back out the other side. I didn't see him again for a long time.

When I came back out the other side, I couldn't see any P-40s but there were zeros out there circling in the middle of this big open area. I looked to see what I could find and there were four zeros across the other side of the open space. They saw me at about the same time I saw them, so here they came. Running wasn't a very good option so I just turned into them. I waited until they got close enough to be in range to fire on them, but they all broke off before I got to them. I didn't get a shot at them



Lullu Belle's gun sight

Back into the clouds.

I came back out again and there was another flight of four zeros, I don't know if it was the same ones or not but it was pretty much the same situation. They turned into me and I turned into them and I didn't see any P40's anywhere. The number one, the number two and the number three zero all

turned to the left. The fourth one wasn't that smart, he kept coming at me, as soon as he got within range of me, I squeezed the trigger. I guess all six 50 cal's hit him on the right wing, it looked like that airplane just disintegrated, I must have hit him dead center because the air plane just blew apart.

Into the clouds again, and back out. This is what I was doing most of the time, getting out of the clouds. I came out again and another flight came up from the south and I tried to get a shot at them. I didn't have any luck, I was making a turn and as I rolled over upside down trying to dive down and pick up a little speed I saw this beautiful zero there. He was going in the opposite direction from me and he was too far away. That zero was painted bright green on top, shiny as could be, had what looked like the rising sun painted on it. The red ball was up on the cowling and then the sun's rays came out across the wings, that airplane was well, it was a thing of beauty. Just like that it was gone and I never saw him again, that I know of. I was distracted for a split second by it, because just as I turned over I could see some more airplanes down there. There was another one going the same direction down lower than me. I had some altitude advantage, I turned and swung in behind him and got a good deflection at him and shot him down. I saw him roll over and just go in the ground. I knew that was two I had shot down and I had shot at several others

After that I couldn't see any P40's around and there weren't all that many zeros around that I could see. I'm sure there must have been plenty. Eventually I wound up circling there to see if any more P40's were going to show up and they didn't. Finally I wound up with four zeros on my tail. I'm in this same kind of maneuver I was talking about earlier, trying to keep them from hitting me, they were all shooting at me. The airplanes they had were faster than ours



LT Adair and Lulu Belle

and more maneuverable so they could out turn us and outrun us on the straight and level. If there's room enough, we can dive away from them, but we didn't have a lot of room. The upper cloud layer was only five thousand feet above the ground.

So, I see some zeros heading towards me, by this time the flights had pretty well broken up and they were more or less flying individually. I could see an airplane that had spotted me and headed towards me, I headed towards him he kept coming and coming, when he got pretty big in my sights I figured he's well within range now. I squeezed the trigger and I was shooting at him, he was shooting at me. I couldn't see the bullets but I could hear tracers going by, you could hear those things, when they get real close to the wing they go "ping" "ping" "ping". That's when I realized those were bullets going by and that's a super sonic shock wave hitting the wing making that noise. All of a sudden the canopy just got so big in my gunsight that I knew he was real close and he went right over the top of my airplane and when he did he was close enough I could both hear and feel this whomp as he went by.



Lulu Belle II

I finally found some clouds down at a low level with some big rocks sticking up through them so I flew into them. When I came back out none of the zeros were on me. I circled a bit more and tried calling my flight. No answers, so I headed home. Here I am by

myself, never lost an airplane before and here I think I lost my whole flight.

So, I head home I get about twenty five miles and I see an N1 and it's circling and I didn't know what it was because zeros and P-40s at certain angles look quite a bit alike. It might be a zero. I get up there and it's my wingman, Little Okie, he

still had his belly tank on. I pulled up along side of him and his airplane was a horrible mess. He had a 20mm canon hit that struck right below the left side of his canopy and it blew the radio mast away. I looked at that airplane and it had bullet holes in it from every direction you could think of. Obviously, Little Okie was hurt he'd been hit by that 20mm on the first pass. All he could do was signal, he couldn't really tell me anything, so give him a thumbs up as best I can so we can head home.

We get about another thirty or forty miles and I hear someone calling on the radio. Sadly and very faintly " Bamboo leader, this is Bamboo three do you read me?". That's Tom Rogers, my element leader " Bamboo leader, this is Bamboo three, I'm up at Sadiya" " I've been hit and I don't know what kind of shape I'm in" " Do you suppose you could come up and take a look at me?"

I hated to take O'Connor up out of the way but I didn't have any options. I went up and found him, his airplane was pretty much in the same shape as Little Okie's but it didn't have any hits on the canopy. All three tires were flat, Tail wheel both main wheels and the airplane looked like a sieve.

I said to Tom, " We're going to go home" I don't think Little Okie has an instrument indicator so I want him to fly my wing and I'm going to fly him right down to the ground then I'm going to come around. Since your tires are flat, you land behind him and I'll get down whatever way I can. That's what we did and that's how they both got on the ground.



Lulu Belle Ready for the next flight



Lulu Belle good old #44 P40 N5

We get down there and I told my crew chief to be sure you get that airplane turned around really quick because we don't know what the situation is. I didn't even make it back to the alert tent before the alert went off again. There I go, going off into the sky again by myself. Everybody else was refueling. So I go off on a goose chase down below the Nagi Hills. After about 20 minutes or so they called and said it was all clear again. I could go ahead and come on back.

So I did, the field was deserted, everybody had gone home. The Ops clerk and the Intelligence clerk were standing their for debriefing. I found out that number four man who I didn't know where he was, he went home straight away. He had sixteen bullet holes in his airplane.

My wingman, Tom O'Connor had one hundred and eleven bullet holes in his airplane. There were bullet holes that went into the rudder on his plane and directly out of the front, whoosh straight through. He had bullet holes in the front, both sides, it was a mess.

Tom Rogers, the Element leader, his airplane had one hundred and twenty-three bullet holes in it. Mine didn't have any in it, don't ask me how to explain that, I can't.

This mission, the airlift, went on for one thousand and seventy four days. Between ATC and the other forces over there, the 10th Air Force, they lost about 1,100 planes, how many crew, I don't know. It was probably the longest airlift that occurred anywhere that I know of.