

David J. Daly's III war experiences in the Army Air Corp during WWII

Uncle George Daly called today, Sunday January 25, 2009, and we talked for about an hour. Just talked about life and a variety of things until we got to talking about my Father and his war experiences. Dad had told me a number of stories about the war, WWII. He said he had been shot down twice but only talked about one time.

Dad was Crew Chief on a cargo plane, a C-46, flying in the China, Burma, India, theater of war. The Crew Chief was in charge of everything from cargo to engine replacement.



Dad's C-46



Dad replacing an engine (He is far right pushing the stand)

The time that he spoke with me about being shot down was scary enough. Flying over the Himalayas with a cargo of airplane fuel in fifty-five gallon drums his plane was strafed by a Japanese fighter plane. The drums and wings were hit. Dad was waist deep in airplane fuel and had to punch holes in the belly of the plane to drain the leaking fuel which luckily had not exploded.

Holes in the wings kept the plane from gaining needed altitude so the pilot landed the plane in a field. Dad emptied five gallon cans of engine oil, flattened the cans, and riveted them over the holes. The plane took off under fire from Japanese ground forces.

The second time he was shot down, the time he never spoke about to me, the plane crashed in China. Uncle George told me the story. All the crew made it out of the plane but the Japanese fighter alerted ground forces of the location of the crash. Ground forces found no bodies and began searching for the missing crew.

Dad had a broken leg and had been rescued by Chinese peasants and taken to their village. Why did they rescue him? He wore special patches on his flight jacket and carried a cloth with instructions written in Chinese. The rest of the crew was never mentioned; they also carried the same cloths and wore the same patches. I still possess the patches and cloth.



Flag of the Republic of China with instructions below and patch worn on uniform

The patch shows the Chinese sun and the U.S. Star with the stripes below indicating the alliance between China and the U.S.

The peasants assigned a woman to help Dad make it back to Burma, broken leg and all. The woman took care of him and they lived off what she could find in the jungle. Crawling and dragging his leg the trip took four months traveling through Japanese occupied territory.

What bothered him the most was that once back to safety he was immediately put on a plane and flown to India to be hospitalized. He never knew what happened to the young woman who saved his life. He was in the hospital for a long time because he had contracted Malaria while in the jungle. Perhaps Dad never told me story because of the woman.

Uncle George told one more story and I can understand why Dad never mentioned it to me. As Crew Chief he was responsible for many things including the cargo. Flying over the Himalayas, also known as The Hump, was dangerous. Hundreds of US planes crashed trying to make the trip. Pilots often said navigating in good weather was easy; they just followed the trail of plane wreckage.

Most of the time the cargo was fuel, ammo, food, just the normal stuff to fight a war. The Himalayas are the highest mountain range in the world and is the home of Mt. Everest. When flying The Hump the planes flew near their maximum altitude of 27,000 feet and the interior had no heat. The wings would ice up easily in bad weather and the pilot would use hand signals to tell the Crew Chief, in this case my Father, how many hundreds of pounds of cargo to dump out the door to lighten the load. He would guess at the weight of various pieces of cargo and roll the items out the door. Eventually the pilot would signal that all was okay and he would stop off-loading cargo.

On occasion the cargo would be a plane full of Chinese military officers leaving Burma after training and heading back to China. On several flights with a cargo of Chinese officers the pilot would signal to lighten the load! Dad would start tossing Chinese officers out the cargo door until the pilot signaled "okay".

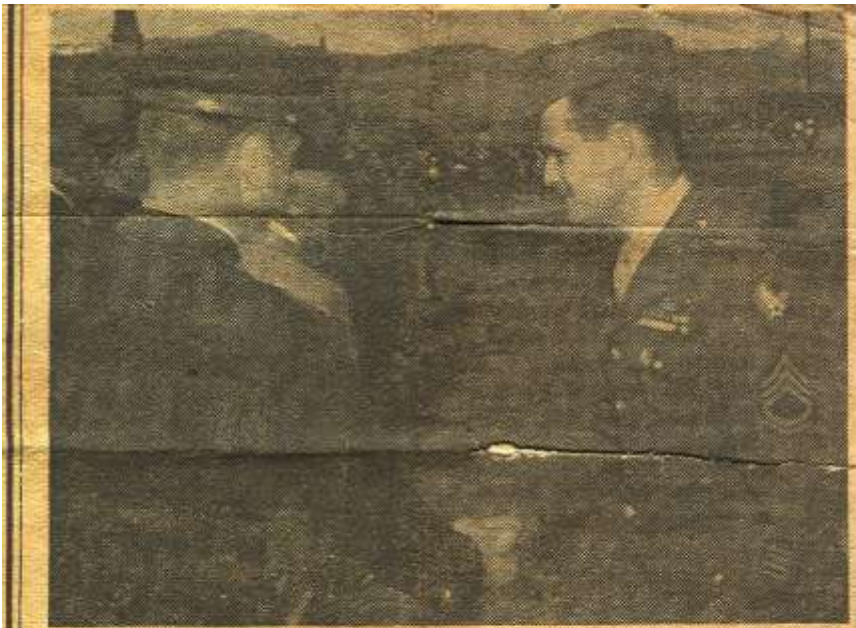
I can't imagine what it would be like to toss seven or eight men out of a plane at 27,000 feet without a parachute. Death from freezing would come quickly. Life and death decisions in time of war are hard to make but all the same must be made. Actions such as these stayed with my Father the rest of his life. It is no wonder that my Mother said he was different after the war.

For his efforts in the war he was awarded the Air Medal.

"The Air Medal is awarded to any person who, while serving in any capacity in or with the Armed Forces of the [United States](#), shall have distinguished himself/herself by meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight."



D. J. Daly III, WWII Air Medal
Photo of presentation and
newspaper clipping in another
section



AIR MEDAL WINNER: Governor John J. Dempsey of New Mexico recently presented the Air Medal to Technical Sgt. David J. Daly of 188 Canterbury Rd., Williston Park. Daly served as an aerial engineer in the China-Burma-India theater for two years. He is at present stationed at the Reno Army Air Base in Nevada. His wife, Mrs. Marcia Daly, lives at the above address.



Better photo of the Air Medal being awarded

After my Father's death President Bush sent a memorial award.



*The United States of America
honors the memory of
David J. Daly, Jr.*

*This certificate is awarded by a grateful
nation in recognition of devoted and
selfless consecration to the service
of our country in the Armed Forces
of the United States.*

*George W. Bush
President of the United States*

This document was compiled and written by David J. Daly IV in honor of David J. Daly III