



GOD IS MY CO-PILOT

By Col. Robert L. Scoff



The story thus far: After graduating from West Point, Robert Scoff was his wings at Kelly Field and takes up combat flying. He has been an instructor for four years when the war breaks out, and he is told that he is now too old for combat flying. He appeals to several Generals and is finally given an opportunity to get into the fight. He flies a bomber to India, but on arrival is made a ferry pilot and this does not suit him. After visiting General Chennault he gets a Kittyhawk and soon becomes a "one man air force" in the skies over Burma. Later he is made commanding officer of the 3rd Fighter Group and still keeps knocking down Jap planes. He tells the story of Capt. Elias.

CHAPTER XXI

When I finished the job and pulled up again, I could barely see the last of my flight several miles away. I gradually climbed after them, forgot to look around, and just sat there, "dumb and happy." Just sat there too long over enemy territory, without looking around every second. Without thinking about it, I had become a straggler.

In a high-powered engine, as soon as we go into combat we take military power from the engine—that is, we take as much boost as the engine will stand without "detonating," put the prop in low pitch, high speed position. As you leave the combat and the area, if you're not too excited the hand automatically pulls the prop controls to maximum cruising position to save fuel and to keep the engine from running hot. I began unconsciously to do this.

Just then, very dreamily, I heard—pop-pop-pop-pop-pop. I raised my head slightly, to try to see my other fighters ahead, and pulled the throttle back just a little more. That popping sounded like engine detonation to me. Then I tensed, for I had seen that my manifold pressure was barely 5 inches (on the manometer gauge), and therefore I could not be detonating from too much boost. At the same instant I heard again the pop-pop-pop, and became all attention in a flash; my nose went down—I had been climbing—my prop went back to low pitch and my throttle really went forward enough to cause the engine to detonate. A cold shiver went down my spine, there in that hot glass cage. I skidded the ship to the left and looked around as my speed built up fast.

What I saw in the sun, ahead of me, chilled me more. I saw winking lights and the blurred outline of an airplane—and not so far away. Then I saw another, and I guess there were others. I could see the orange lights winking down at me even in the glare of the sun. They were Japs firing at me, and I had only slightly more than a thousand feet.

Cold turkey and a straggler! While I fumbled with my mike button to my radio to call Holloway and Baumbler for help, I realized the futility of it. I don't believe my dry throat would have made a sound anyway. I just acted—and thank the Lord, my reflexes let me do something. I turned directly towards the ships with my nose down, and pulled up firing. I know now that if I had turned away from them they would have shot me down in their cross-fire. As it was, I surprised them and went underneath them very fast and into the sun. Then, when they looked around, I had the sun in my favor, and from that time on I was using it. But as I pulled up firing, I held the trigger down and "froze." I heard the cannon of the Zero—I felt the recoil of my six guns—I felt things hit "Old Exterminator"—and then I saw a cloud of black smoke in front of my nose. I shut my eyes involuntarily and dove again.

Something hit my ship with the same sound you get when you suddenly fly into heavy rain. I opened my eyes and everything was dark. I smelled the smoke and cordite and gasoline and thought I was on fire. Just then I realized I was still firing. I reached up, grabbed the handle, rolled the canopy open—and saw light. I rolled it shut again and realized that the blackness had been caused mostly by oil on my windshield. The speed of my dive had blown most of that off now, and though I couldn't see very well, I could make out the horizon.

With a long sigh of relief I leveled the speeding ship over the rice paddies, and as they say in the slang of fighter stations, "I took off like a scalded dog." I S-ed and skidded but tried not to lose speed. Looking back, I saw the smoke and oil that I had gone through, and down under the place where I had been I saw fire and a plume of smoke—one Jap that wouldn't fly again. I think I was halfway home before I fully realized that I had shot it down and hadn't run into it.

For twenty miles I skimmed over the paddies, "jinking" to fool the enemy who might be pursuing, skidding to make him miss, and watching my boost read seventy inches of mercury. The engine heated up and the coolant light came on to warn me, before I eased the throttle back a little. I called Ajax Baumbler on the radio and told him I was hit—had been intercepted, my engine was heating up and I didn't know what all was the matter with the ship, but I was on course for home

and going like a bat out of hell. Ajax stood by to take my position if worse things should develop and I should have to land.

But the coolant light finally flickered and went off, the engine cooled off when I got a little of the boost off and stopped abusing it. And I breathed again, feeling that I'd been holding one breath for fifteen minutes. All was clear behind me, and I gradually climbed to ten thousand and went back home to Hengyang. All the boys came out to see me. Of course Elias was missing and they'd been worried lest I was a goner too. There were cannon holes in my wings and tail; one had gone just across the back of the canopy. There were smaller holes in the fuselage from the cockpit back to the tail; there was oil from the spinner of the prop to the tail. Oil from your own ship can hardly get on the very tip of the nose of your ship, and this was proof that it was Jap oil.

As we looked the plane over, I got more and more settled down from my narrow escape. But then I realized that my ship, which I had now flown in combat from April until September 2nd, was badly damaged. "Old Exterminator" was shot to pieces.

We had tea in the alert shack and sent the other mission out to dive-bomb Nanchang and strafe the trains from Kukiang to the North towards Hankow. Also we got the Chinese net looking for Elias, and reported that I had shot down one Zero near Kukiang.

General Haynes led some missions on Canton, and after fair bombing results the fighters stayed behind and engaged the enemy Zeros. Lieut. Pat Daniels shot down his



Fighter pilots ready to take to the air on a moment's notice. They had plenty of opportunity to fight all the time. They never had to sit on the defensive and worry. And, strangely enough, they liked it.

first Jap, and Charlie Sawyer got his third. In the next raid of the bombers General Haynes again led. Maj. Butch Morgan—who the newspapers used to say was the only Yankee on General Chennault's staff . . . "Wonder how he got there?"—was leaning over the lead bomb-sight and directing the bombing. This objective was to burn the docks of Haiphong on the coast of Indo-China.

The small bomber force of six B-25's went in with only three P-40's for escort. Maj. Ed Rector led the fighters, with Lieutenant Marks on one wing and Pat Daniels on the other. Just to make the bomb load against the Japs heavier, the fighters carried a five-hundred-pound bomb on each ship. With these they dive-bombed the docks after the bombers had blasted them and set them on fire. Here the attack was entirely successful; the fighter boys came back and said it was the best bombing that they had ever seen. The bomb train had covered the Haiphong wharves from one end to the other, and when the ships went back to their forward field to refuel and return to base, the smoke was covering the town. Rector led his three fighters down in a strafing attack over the wharf fires and kept the fire-fighters from working.

We were brought back now from the Kweilin-Hengyang front to watch the situation in Burma and to harass the Jap to the South in Indo-China. Our situation was peculiar in China—we were just about surrounded by the Japanese on all sides except to the North, toward Russia, and that was so far and over such mountains that it seemed not to matter. To our backs was Burma, filled with Japs. To the South was Indo-China and Thailand, and out to the front and Northeast were Japanese. Where in hell could you find a worse situation?

But we got to fight all the time; we never had to sit on the defensive and worry. We liked it and there was never a word of complaint.

I had to wait at Hengyang a day longer than the others, for my ship was being repaired enough for me to fly it to the repair depot at Kunming. At Kunming the blow fell: the engine of "Old Exterminator" was bad and there were no more new or serviceable engines. The cannon from the Zero had damaged the wing so badly that pullouts would be dangerous. The fuselage

was peppered with over two hundred holes from the last five months of combat.

But the old ship wasn't junked or salvaged, for we needed parts too badly in China. There were new planes on the way to us now in monthly increments, but we could take this plane and put several back in commission. The scheme that we devised helped my morale greatly, for to have junked the old ship that had been my fighter for five months would have been like seeing the horse that you've ridden for twenty years cast aside and destroyed. I could remember too well that day when I landed at Hengyang and looked at the damage the ship had suffered. There had been a lump in my throat and I had felt as though my sword had been taken away. "Old Exterminator" had taken me nearly five hundred hours into combat against the enemy. That's over a hundred thousand miles—and you just ask any pilot if that isn't a long way on trips where people shoot at you.

We took the guns out of the ship that General Chennault had given me in April and put them in my new P-40E. They were well broken in, and the Armament Officer, Captain Hoffman, who had been with the AVG and in my squadron in Panama seven years before, had worked them into perfection. I had had no jams or stoppages in over a month. The landing-gear we put on another ship; the instruments were scattered throughout the group; the armor plate was taken out to make a hot-cake griddle for the mess. All parts of the fighter were cannibalized, and in a month were spread out over eighteen P-40's in the organization. I remember especially that the automatic fuel-pump was put on a P-40B, which permitted the lighter ship to go higher than it had ever gone before, and on its second flight with the booster pump, the pilot, Lieut. T. R. Smith, shot down a Japanese observation plane over Kunming.

I never did go out and look at the old engine that had come out of my first fighter. After all, an engine is exchangeable anyway, and we get used to different ones. The shot-up shell of the fuselage, and the wing that had held me up over a hundred thousand miles of enemy country, I didn't want to see again. I just thought of my six fifty-caliber guns flying with me in my new fighter as the real soul of "Old Exterminator." And I thought of the hundreds of parts from Air Corps number 41-1456 that were helping to keep eighteen ships of our Group in the air.

For the men of the Group, the cannibalized ship had been a help, but to me it had been a tradition to keep. In my mind, no matter how long I myself might be fighting in China, "Old Exterminator" would be on all those flights—some of it would be on every mission that it flew. And thus it would fly forever.

On September 25, Maj. Ed Rector led the assault of a flight down to raid Hanoi in Indo-China. I led the support, and we kept a thousand feet above the first echelon. Our mission was to escort ten bombers for the bombardment of Gia Lam airdrome. We went South and "topped-off" our gas load at a secret base, then routed our flight to the West of Laokay to keep from alerting the Jap warning net. Until we were close to Hanoi, we kept well West of the railroad that led to our objective.

Even with these precautions to keep from alerting the enemy, we found the Japanese I-45's in the air and over the field as we came in from the West. The twin-engine fighters absolutely ignored our fighters and made runs on the bombers, but they didn't get very far with their orders. Rector took the first four P-40's in on the leading Japs and hit them five hundred yards behind our bombers, who were already dropping their eggs. I saw two of Ed's flight gang-up on the first steeply climbing I-45, but before they could shoot it down Daniels went in fast to within a few yards of the Jap and shot him down in flames. As the ship exploded I thought Pat Daniels' plane was on fire too, they were so close. We all confirmed the first ship for the eager Daniels, who was from Van Nuys, California.

The bombers were on the way home now, and we sighed with relief and tried to catch the Japs. Ed Rector took the next ship he got his sights on and blew it apart. Then he fought all the way to the ground with two others. Marks shot down one, and the others were about equally divided.

I caught a flight of three I-45's going hell-bent for the bombers from below and to the rear, and shot the last one in the formation down with a short burst. It was point-blank range and occurred very fast. I first saw a thin trail of gray smoke that looked like the usual condensation cloud that forms behind the wings of fighter ships doing maneuvers at high altitude, when the atmospheric conditions are just right. And then flame poured from the right engine. It spread up over the cockpit and stretched thirty feet back in the slipstream. I moved up towards the second enemy fighter and didn't see the flamer go down.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

BY HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, D. D. Of The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. Released by Western Newspaper Union.

Lesson for April 1

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THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH

LESSON TEXT—Matthew 27:42-53. GOLDEN TEXT—Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.—Hebrews 12:1, 2.

Christianity is a resurrection faith! How good it is to recall that, in this troubled year of 1945, even as we share once more the spiritual inspiration of Easter Sunday.

Today we recall that the loving hands of His friends and followers had given themselves in what they thought was to be their final act of devotion to their Lord. His body had been tenderly laid in Joseph's tomb and the great stone rolled in place at its door.

But even as some were kind and loving, there were others who were so relentless in their hatred that they pursued Christ even beyond the grave.

I. The Hatred of Christ's Enemies (27:42-46)

We sometimes wonder at the bitterness of the enemies of Christianity in our day. Had we given more earnest heed to the Bible story we should have known that it was so from the very beginning.

The wicked men who brought about the crucifixion of Jesus were not content to let Him rest in His grave. They had lusted after His life and they had taken that, but even as He lay silent in the tomb, the priests and the Pharisees came to Pilate and called Him "that deceiver" (v. 63) and demanded a special guard.

They feared that His disciples would perpetrate a fraud, and after stealing the body declare that He is risen. Wicked and deceitful arts can imagine all sorts of treachery on the part of others.

The hatred of unbelievers toward Christ and toward His followers knows no stopping place. In civilized lands and among cultured people it operates under a cloak of respectability, but it is nonetheless bitter and relentless in its pursuit of Him and of His church.

II. The Victory of Christ (28:1-6)

Victory and praise should be the keynote of Christianity. Why should we be doleful and sad? Our Lord has come back victorious from the grave! We may be glad and sing even in the midst of earth's sorrows and distresses. Let praise be the employ of our lips constantly as we worship Him and work for Him.

The picture that greeted the surprised eyes of the two women as they came to the grave, as it began to dawn on the first day of the week, was one resplendent with the glory and majesty of God. The earth quaked as the lightning flashed. The angel of the Lord broke through the supposedly unbreakable seal of Rome and rolled back the stone which was to have permanently closed the door to the tomb.

This was done, not to release Christ—for He had already gone, no grave could hold Him—but that men might see the empty grave and know that He was risen. Other religions keep the graves of their founders. Christianity points to an empty tomb.

To the foes of Christ represented by the keepers, the coming of the angel and the revelation of the power of God brought absolute discomfiture. That is still true. Men will argue with theology, church methods, even Christian profession, but when they see the power of God revealed, they can only be "as dead men."

To the friends of Christ, the angel brought comfort and assurance. Their fears were assuaged by his word of comfort, and then their faith was revived by the assurance that Christ was risen. The resurrection declares that He is the Son of God with power, the Saviour of the world.

III. The Joy of Christ's Disciples (28:7-9)

The followers of Christ had their share of fear and unbelief, but it was quickly overcome by joy and assurance as they knew that their Lord was risen.

The note of great joy is highly appropriate on Easter Sunday, but just as proper on every Sunday—yes, every day of the Christian's life. He is risen from the dead! That settles all questions about His deity, His power, His salvation. It meets the problems of our lives with an unfailing word of confidence and joy.

Be sure to note that such good news must not be kept to ourselves. We should emulate the zeal of the disciples, who "departed quickly" to make it known to their families and friends. The story of the victorious Saviour is still unknown to many thousands—possibly we should say millions. Let someone depart quickly to tell them of Jesus. And don't forget to ask yourself, "Should that someone be me?"

Jesus met them on the way with a greeting of peace. He loves to fellowship with His people as they go on His errands. You will find Him there awaiting your coming.

Mail for Milly

By MARY EDNA RITCHIE
McClure Newspaper Syndicate.
WNU Features.

"ARE you in doubt about yourself or another? Send a dime with a specimen of handwriting. It may change your whole future. Write Cassandra."

Mrs. Norton looked from the newspaper clipping to the girl cleaning the living room window. "But I thought you liked housework, Milly."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Norton, I do. It's easy here after the farm. Water from a tap and milk in a bottle and all that. But I sometimes wonder how it would be to work in a factory the way Pansy Evans from home does."

Mrs. Norton tucked a loose pin firmly into her carefully waved gray hair. "Have you sent the dime yet, Milly?"

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Norton. Last week. When do you think I'll hear?" "Any time now, Milly." Mrs. Norton moved the Dresden vase aimlessly on the mantel. "And now I'll finish up, Milly. You have some work in the laundry. Hand me the brush for the Venetian blind, please."

According to the paper "Domestic Problems," which Mrs. Norton was preparing for the next club meeting, practical cooperation strengthened the bond between mistress and maid. It was in the interest of this paper that she had been helping Milly for several days while drawing her out—the maid touch would point it up. And Milly, in a burst of confidence inspired by Mrs. Norton's sympathetic questions, had shown her the handwriting advertisement.

There, she had finished! And now she must type "Domestic Problems." The postman was coming up the walk. No mail except for Milly, New York postmark. It would be from the handwriting person, Cassandra. Milly was still downstairs in the laundry, so Mrs. Norton put the letter on the hall table.

She set up the card table and opened her portable typewriter. Only an hour before leaving for a downtown luncheon date. But Milly's letter bothered her. Suppose the analysis resulted in the girl's yielding to the urge to try something different? Mrs. Norton simply could not manage. Who would get dinner on the afternoons she attended meetings?

And then Mrs. Norton had an idea. She brought the letter in and set down in front of the typewriter. The envelope flap was stuck just a tiny bit and only in one place. It wasn't like tampering with personal mail. Mrs. Norton would never think of doing anything so terrible as that. Never!

She scanned the single sheet. The heading was printed, of course. Well, she'd have to type it, but Milly would think that was the way it should be.

Two short paragraphs. The first would do. Mrs. Norton hammered it out and then went on— The letter "d" reveals that you are somewhat inclined to be unappreciative of the people about you. The letters "u," "v" and "w" denote the truly domestic type of person who is at her best when catering to the comfort of others in the home. Persons of this type rarely make good out in the world and should avoid club work, office positions and factory jobs.

There, it was done! Sealing the envelope, Mrs. Norton put it back on the hall table. Almost time for her to go. She called down to Milly that there was mail for her, and to remember about putting the roast in the oven at four-thirty.

It was almost five o'clock when Mrs. Norton found herself on the way home. Milly really had a good place. No going out in all weathers as in factory work. And one could never be sure about boarding houses either. Then, Mrs. Norton was not like some mistresses. She'd never put paper doilies under the rugs to find out if the maid vacuumed them properly, or stuff cleansing tissues at the foot of the bed to trap her in careless bedmaking. Mean tricks, those.

Mrs. Norton opened the door of her house. "Oh, Mrs. Norton, I'm glad you've come. I didn't want to leave a note." There was Milly, dressed for the street, coming downstairs with a suitcase.

"Why, Milly, what in the world is wrong?"

"It's like this, Mrs. Norton." The words tumbled out. "Pansy Evans phoned me that I can get in where she works. Same shift, too. But I'll have to start right away. And I can board where she does."

Mrs. Norton's world was coming to pieces. "But, Milly, I thought you liked it here."

"Yes, Mrs. Norton, but I stayed on partly because I didn't know if you could manage alone. But you've been doing fine at the work since last week. And this makes me feel different about you." Milly took the letter from her handbag.

Mrs. Norton glanced over it. How well she knew every word! "Why, Milly, don't you think you have things mixed? It seems from this that you should be staying."

Milly picked up the suitcase. "You see what it says about being at home. That's what I meant."

"Me? Why, it's you, Milly. It was your handwriting."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Norton. That's what I'm trying to explain. It was yours I sent."

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The Questions

1. What two brothers signed the Declaration of Independence?
2. How old was Joan of Arc when she led the French army to the relief of Orleans?
3. Who started the construction of the Panama canal in 1879?
4. Who, according to legend, helped the Swiss gain their independence by killing Gessler, the tyrant?
5. How many sins are named as "deadly sins"?
6. What does the abbreviation "ign" mean?
7. From what source do we get the quotation, "Goodnight, goodnight! parting is such sweet sorrow—?"
8. What is the Aurora Australis?
9. The highest altitude ever reached by man was 14 miles. This altitude was reached by means of what?
10. What safeguard for preventing train wrecks from loosened rocks and slides is installed in many parts of the Rockies?

The Answers

1. Richard and Francis Lee of Virginia.
2. Seventeen years.
3. The French started the construction of the canal in 1879.
4. William Tell.
5. Seven—pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth.
6. Unknown (ignotus).
7. Romeo and Juliet.
8. The "northern lights" of the southern hemisphere.
9. A balloon.
10. Electrical fencing, which flashes an instant "stop" signal if moving rock touches the fence.

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