

## What They're Saying about *Rough War*...

"*Rough War* presents a highly personal view of air combat and daily life in the WW II jungles of Burma. Walt Shiel skillfully blends a history of that war with young fighter pilot Paul Eastman's personal diary, letters, and photographs. An engaging history of a small part of a global war."

Robert F. Dorr, Author of *Mission to Berlin*

"History, combat memoir, intense love story; they're all here in *Rough War*. The diary entries, the love letters, the beautiful poetry and the pictures that portray a world at war come together to paint a poignant portrait of a man's life. The format that brings it all together is both novel and extremely effective. The war, the China-Burma-India theater and the challenges of the events in the lives of the participants are brought together and will leave the reader with new understanding and a deep sadness at the almost inevitable outcome. *Rough War* is a rare achievement and offers a rewarding, creative approach to history that should be a model for more writers."

Ed Rasimus, Author of *Palace Cobra* and *When Thunder Rolled*  
(Veteran of combat in the F-105 and F-4)

"Constructing a memoir based on wartime jottings is a daunting challenge: what does the author condense, what does he elaborate? It is to Shiel's credit that he included the minutiae of everyday life recorded by Eastman. From the details of flying halfway around the world to his wartime assignment, told with the wide-eyed astonishment of a youngster who until two years previously had not been beyond the borders of Wisconsin, to descriptions of exotic cultures, Eastman is the quintessential innocent abroad. But tales of flying from jungle airstrips, of bombing and strafing missions against the Japanese, of being shot down behind enemy lines, of comrades killed in action and accidents give *Rough War* a rip-saw edge that can only be truly appreciated when the poignant epilogue is reached. In the annals of WWII aerial warfare *Rough War* is a jewel that has been missing for far too long."

Jim Hooper, Author of *A Hundred Feet over Hell*

"Pieced together from letters, diaries, and official records, *Rough War* is far more than the story of a typical American World War II volunteer who served as a fighter pilot in the largely unsung China-Burma-India Theater. It is a story of the war generation, of the forgotten theater, and of the terrible things just being in a war does to people."

Eric Hammel, Author of *The Road to Big Week*

"*Rough War* presents a unique history of the making of a combat fighter pilot. Interspersed with World War II events and in-theater events from the rarely mentioned CBI theater are writings from Paul's journals and letters home detailing his journey into and through combat. While aviation technology changed for America's next war in SE Asia, the threats of the jungle, monsoon, and a determined enemy created similar issues during my own fighter-pilot experiences in Vietnam."

William H. Lawson, Brig. Gen., US Air Force, Retired  
(Veteran of combat in the F-4, F-16, & A-10)

## What They're Saying about *Rough War*...

“*Rough War* brings back lots of memories of my time in that part of the world. In '66-'67 our combat maps of Vietnam and Laos still had large holes of data, and we had to work our way to the war and home just like Paul did. I really enjoyed the format—chronological, big picture, CBI, and Paul's War helped put it all in perspective. Here's to you, Paul. As we say in 2011: Thanks for your service and a job well done.”

Ace Rawlins, Col., US Air Force, Retired  
(Veteran of combat in the F-104 and F-4)

“Paul Eastman was a WW II fighter pilot, one of millions of anonymous Americans who answered the call, did their duty, and returned home. He flew in China and Burma, lost in the shadow of the glamorous 'Flying Tigers,' but had little opportunity for aerial glory. He shot down no enemy aircraft, and his name remains largely unknown. But this book provides a rare perspective, setting Eastman's personal story against the global and regional conflict. His logbook entries and especially his letters home bespeak an era long past and quickly fading. For that reason alone, *Rough War* is worth reading.”

Barrett Tillman, Author of *Whirlwind*

**ROUGH WAR**

## Other books by Walt Shiel

### **Fiction**

*Once a Knight: A Novel of Aerial Combat and Romance in World War I* (2010)

*Devil in the North Woods: A Novel Based on the Tragic 1908 Metz, Michigan, Wildfire* (2005)

*Pilots and Normal People: Short Stories from a Different Attitude* (2005)

### **Nonfiction**

*T-41 Mescalero: The Military Cessna 172*, with Jan Forsgren and Mike Little (2006)

*Cessna Warbirds: A Detailed and Personal History of Cessna's Involvement in the Armed Forces* (1996)

### **Also**

*Flying for France: With the American Escadrille at Verdun* by James R. McConnell

(a modern reprint edited, and with new historical notes, by Walt Shiel)

# ROUGH WAR

The Combat Story of Lt. Paul J. Eastman,  
A “Burma Banshee” P-40 and P-47 Pilot

**by Walt Shiel**



Rough War by Walt Shiel  
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with gratitude and respect for  
his service to his country,  
and to his family,  
who preserved the  
priceless material that  
made this book possible*

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# Army of the United States

## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

*This is to certify that*

PAUL J. EASTMAN O 803 360 1st Lt.

80th Fighter Group, 90th Fighter Sq, 10th Air Force.

*honorably served in active Federal Service*

*in the Army of the United States from*

28 MAY 1943

*to*

3 SEPTEMBER 1945

*Given at* SEPARATION CENTER, Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

*on the* 3rd *day of* SEPTEMBER 1945

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## Foreword

This is perhaps one of the most unusual and insightful stories of a young American at war, and it has a particular significance for today. It is significant in that it portrays the degree and variety of skills to which duty during World War II could summon a typical midwestern man. It also shows the dangers, hidden at the time, that were implicit in those skills.

Gleaned from intimate sources—including his family, his diaries and many letters home—this book portrays how a young Paul Eastman embarked on a journey that would change him forever, carry him to new heights of achievement and leadership, but ultimately—and seemingly inevitably—create the conditions that induced what today would be labeled Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Today, with the term PTSD on everyone lips and with suicide rates among members of the armed services increasing dramatically, the Eastman story rings strong and true.

Perhaps the most important point to make here is that , in just a few years, Paul Eastman moved from the conforming status of a young Wisconsin lad recently out of high school to an accomplished air leader, flying the most advanced pursuit planes in one of the toughest theaters of war. Similar stories have been recounted in the past, but none with the poignancy of this well-documented, accurately portrayed story.

Probably to his own surprise, Paul proved to be an excellent pilot and set his sites on blazing a trail of glory in the skies over Europe. He was somewhat disappointed when fate ruled otherwise, and he was assigned to the China-Burma-India Theater. There he would fly with the 90th Fighter Squadron of the 80th Fighter Group (the “Burma Banshees”) in the Tenth Air Force. Initially he flew the Curtiss P-40, famed for its role as a stalwart pursuit plane with the American Volunteer Group, the “Flying Tigers.” Subsequently, he piloted the larger, more powerful Republic P-47—the “Jug.”

## *Foreword*

The skill he had shown in flying school helped him work his way up from the number four slot in a formation to that of flight leader, and then the C Flight operations officer. Anyone who has been an operations officer knows how important it is, how hard the work is, and how little recognition it gets.

Over the 20 months of his tour, he poured his heart out in letters home, detailing the combat actions of the time. He had arrived when the Allies were beginning to push the Japanese back, and Eastman participated in each of the major advances. Life was tough, living in primitive quarters, beset by the wretched, malarial climate, and worst of all, seeing his friends lost in battle.

The stream of letters to and from his wife—a wartime love story—became increasingly important and when the flow was interrupted by the usual wartime delays, it affected his mental outlook, triggering the depression that subsequently would haunt his life.

The author has skillfully interleaved Eastman’s letters and photographs with a succinct and accurate record of world events, so that the reader can maintain a perspective on the times. The presentation provides an unusual degree of intimacy and empathy for a subject that existed but was unnamed at the time, but which is now so prominent in the news.

**Walter J. Boyne**

National Aviation Hall of Fame, 2007 inductee  
*Author, How the Helicopter Changed Modern Warfare*

## Preface

I spent two years reading Paul Eastman's wartime diary—consisting of two spiral-bound stenographer's tablets and one small, shirt-pocket, spiral-bound pad—plus several dozen letters he wrote to his wife Joyce from Burma. I also read through his stacks of official records, orders, etc., the paperwork that accumulate to document a serviceman's career.

One thing soon became clear to me. I may have been in or around the military for almost my entire life—first as an Air Force “brat,” then as an officer and pilot on active duty and in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves, and finally as a civilian in the defense aerospace industry. I may have seen most of the World War II movies and read countless books about that war. And I may be a published military aviation historian. But I really did not know much about the war in the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater beyond the stories of the cargo pilots who flew supplies to China over the “Hump” and the legendary exploits of Claire Chennault and his “Flying Tigers.”

So, I set out to educate myself, using the Internet and all the books I could find. Gradually, I pieced together an overall picture of the history of the war in the CBI.

I wanted to present Paul's own daily observations about his life as a fighter pilot within the context of the larger events in the CBI. Therefore, I overlaid the history of the war to retake Burma on Paul's record of his own participation in the air war in the CBI. Finally, I added key events in the wider World War to help keep everything in perspective.

Thus, throughout the book, I've included brief updates on the worldwide war (*The World War*) and the war in the CBI (*The CBI War*), all in chronological order with Paul's diary entries and letters (*Paul's War*). This should help keep what Paul and his squadron mates were doing in perspective with the progress of the war around the world. It also clarifies why they attacked certain areas when they did, what ground forces they were supporting, and why Paul's squadron kept moving deeper into Burma.

## Preface

I did paraphrase or synopsized some of his daily records to keep the narrative moving along. But where his own words were particularly relevant or poignant, I included the complete diary entry or letter.

In most cases, when quoting from Paul's writings I have preserved his syntax and punctuation, only correcting obvious spelling errors. I hope Paul would have forgiven me for taking that license. Much of Paul's language and terminology reflects the times in which he lived; I did not alter that in any way.

Without further background ramblings, let's launch straight into how Paul Eastman became a fighter pilot, found his way to the CBI, and fought to wrest Burma away from the Japanese invaders.

And eventually found his way back home to the States!

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**Note:** All times of day are shown using the standard military 24-hour clock, and all dates are in standard military format (e.g., 7 December 1941).





Paul Eastman, age 6 months



Paul Eastman, age 11 years

**Currency**

The currency used in Burma is the same as that in India:

1 rupee = 16 annas

1 anna = 12 pie or 4 pice

The rupee is a silver coin worth about 30 cents in American money. The anna, pie, and pice are all bronze coins having approximate values of 2 cents, 1/6 cent, and 1/2 cent in American money. The Japanese have probably introduced some of their own money, but the paper put out by the Axis occupation forces is likely to be worthless.

**Weights and Measures**

1 lan (4 toun) = 88 inches

1 tain = 1,069 yards (slightly over 6/10 of a mile)

1 dain (4 tain) = 2.43 miles

1 sah = 1 gallon

1 viss or paiktha = 3.6 pounds

**Telling Time**

The same calendar as ours is used, or at least widely known, in Burma. The difference in standard time between New York and Burma is 12½ hours, and the date, because Burma is west of the International Date Line, is one day ahead of New York. At high noon Sunday in New York, therefore it is 12:30 a.m. Monday in Burma; and at 8:30 Sunday morning in Rangoon, it is just 8 o'clock Saturday evening on Broadway.

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Extracted from *A Pocket Guide to Burma*, issued by the US Army's Special Service Division to personnel heading for assignments in Burma during World War II.

## Introduction

Paul Eastman fought World War II in what is often called the “forgotten” theater of operations, one of the most difficult environments of that worldwide war. The China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater included some of the world’s tallest mountains, densest jungles, and heaviest monsoons, with all the diseases and discomforts jungles are known for. Add its sometimes extreme density altitudes, and flying a heavily laden fighter-bomber could become dangerous even without enemy aircraft and anti-aircraft artillery batteries.

Paul did not end the war as a celebrated national hero. No air base was ever named for him. He never became an ace. He never became famous.

Paul was one of thousands of fighter pilots who served honorably, bravely, and with little fanfare during World War II.

Compared to the volume of material written about the European and Pacific Theaters of Operation, few books have been written and few movies produced about the CBI, particularly the air war. Mention the air war in the CBI, and most people immediately think of Claire Chennault and his famous “Flying Tigers” with their shark-mouthed P-40s or maybe the C-47s that flew supplies to China via the infamous “Hump” across the Himalayan Mountains.

The full story of the CBI air war goes far beyond either of those better-known stories. Hundreds of pilots flew daily over some of the most treacherous terrain and in some of the worst weather anywhere, to push the Japanese out of Burma, reopen the Burma Road, provide air support for Allied ground forces, and supply air cover for the transport aircraft flying the “Hump.”

Many pilots during World War II kept diaries and journals, mostly filled with details of combat missions, aerial adventures, and off-duty shenanigans. Paul Eastman recorded

his daily life, both in the air and on the ground, but also expressed his hopes for after the war, documented his fears about the war around him, and wrote about his concerns for his wife and family stateside. Would he survive the war? What would he do afterward?

### Paul's Military Heritage

Paul was not the first in his family to serve in the military, nor even the first to become a military pilot. Before Paul enlisted, the men in his family already had a history of military service. His grandfathers fought for the North in the Civil War.

His paternal grandfather, Joseph S. Eastman, enlisted in Company D of the 13th Wisconsin Infantry on 13 September 1861. According to his official Certificate of Service, he served in New Mexico, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Alabama until receiving a disability discharge on 7 March 1865. His Certificate of Service notes that “the general work of the Thirteenth during its long term of service was the protection of lines of communication in middle Tennessee and Kentucky and Northern Alabama.”

Paul's maternal grandfather, Owen Whaley, enlisted in Company F of the 35th Wisconsin Infantry on 23 February 1864 and served until his death on 5 August 1864 at New Orleans, Louisiana, from an unspecified disease. His Certificate of Service notes that, during Owen's term of service, Company F performed “guard and patrol duty” near Port Hudson, Louisiana.

Harold Joseph Eastman, Paul's father, was born 23 April 1896. His mother, Esther Margaret Whaley, was born 13 July 1897. Harold and Esther wed on 5 April 1917, the same

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**Paul's  
father  
joined  
the US Air  
Service**

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year that Harold joined the US Air Service as an instructor pilot and was stationed at San Antonio, Texas. After the war, Harold and a USAS buddy bought a biplane and toured state fairs giving rides—\$10 for a 10-minute flight. With a growing family to support, Harold returned to Stoughton, Wisconsin, to work at Armour Company. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, he worked for the Works Project Administration (WPA), including a project to line the banks of the Yahara River, which passed behind the Eastman house, placing large boulders to reduce erosion. Some of those boulders can still be found on the river's banks. Also during the Depression, Esther worked at a tobacco warehouse across the street from their home, a location that allowed her to come home at lunch and during coffee breaks.

Later, Harold worked as a welder at Highway Trailer in Stoughton, Wisconsin, which made trailers for tractor-trailer rigs. During World War II, Harold made scrapbooks of the letters his sons wrote home. His daughters had to read the letters to him as, by that time, he was mostly blind, having lost his sight in a welding flare-up accident. Harold was admitted to a Veterans Home in Tomah, Wisconsin, in 1945, and his wife Esther and daughter Ruth moved into an apartment. Harold died at age 75, two days after Christmas in 1971.

Regarding those letters home, Paul's sister Lorraine says, "Paul wrote like a novelist—very interesting letters. He would describe everything in detail and you could almost feel you were with him."

Unfortunately, those scrapbooks of letters disappeared during the family's moves. They would have made great additions to the detailed entries contained in this book.

After the war, Esther worked at Stoughton's Hotel Kengosa as a cook until retiring in 1989 at age 72. She spent her last nine years with her daughter Ruth and died at age 90. People in Stoughton still remember Esther and often ask her daughters about her pie recipes.

## Paul Eastman

Paul Joseph Eastman was born 8 May 1919 in Evansville, Wisconsin. Paul was the first of six children—followed by Edward Gordon born in 1922, Jessica Lorraine in 1924, Margaret Ruth (Tootsie) in 1926, George Calvin (Hunky) in 1929, and Catherine Elisabeth (Bette) in 1933. As the oldest, Paul's responsibilities included taking care of the other five whenever their parents were not around. According to Tootsie, Paul was "the authority figure we went to when we had a problem with homework or anything else."

When their parents went out for an evening to play cards with friends, Paul would make fudge for his brothers and sisters. During those difficult Depression years, candy was a rare treat, and their mother would always remind him to use no more than one cup of sugar. Tootsie says, "To this day, when I make fudge, I think of Paul cooking this treat on our old wood-burning cook stove."

Paul's sister Lorraine remembers that Paul was an altar boy at St. Ann's Catholic Church, and as a youngster she always expected he would become a priest, assuming that he would "graduate from altar boy to priesthood automatically!"

Paul's sisters don't remember him ever getting into any serious trouble, and he became a leader of the young boys in the neighborhood, who just naturally seemed to respect him. Paul and the neighborhood boys would often gather around the family's Motorola radio to listen to the broadcasts of boxing matches. Paul also built a boxing ring in the backyard, and Tootsie remembers how the neighborhood boys would practice and have matches there, usually gathering an interested audience.

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**A backyard  
boxing  
ring**

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The Eastman kids enjoyed the river that ran behind their house and became local "River Rats," as Tootsie puts it. They often dove off the nearby Main Street Bridge (something now banned) or off the side of the metal stairs of an adjoining building, probably 20 feet above the water. Paul proved himself the best swimmer and diver in the neighborhood.

Paul always received good grades in high school and, as a result, set the standard for his brothers and sisters and expected similar dedication from them. Tootsie recalls that it "was sometimes hard to measure up to him." He also had a role in the musical Junior Class play.

## Introduction

In 1938, during his senior year, Paul had a tonsillectomy. That same year, he worked for a butcher and helped slaughter cattle in the basement of the building. He did not enjoy the job and would tell the other kids, while fighting back tears, how they had to whack the animal in the head with a mallet before bleeding them.

Lorrayne was born on May 9<sup>th</sup>, the day after Paul's fifth birthday. His parents told him that she was a late birthday present, and he always seemed to be extra protective of her. Once, when playing leapfrog with the neighborhood kids, she leaped over her brother Gordon's back but fell forward and broke her arm. Paul rushed across the street to the tobacco warehouse to find their mother, shouting "Lorrayne's arm is crooked!" A neighbor took them to the hospital, since they did not own a car.

Besides working at the tobacco warehouse, Esther baked bread for extra income. Paul, Gordon, and Lorrayne would load their toy wagon with warm bread, cover it with towels, and deliver it throughout the neighborhood. They charged ten cents per loaf (at that time, they could buy enough meat to feed their whole family for 60 cents). Besides lots of hamburger and bologna, they ate chickens their father raised in the backyard plus bluegills and perch they caught right behind the house in the Yahara River.

Lorrayne says she never fully understood what the Depression was all about, as they never went hungry and always did the best they could with what they had. "We were a happy family," she remembers.

During Paul's senior year in high school, events around the world heated to the boiling point, events destined to change his life forever. When he graduated from high school in June of 1938, Paul and his younger brother Gordon enlisted in National Guard, Company

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**Paul  
enlisted  
in the  
National  
Guard**

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I, 128th Infantry, based in Stoughton. The unit trained in an old downtown ballroom. The Eastman boys' sisters often watched them drill from a vantage at the top of the stairwell.

After high school graduation, Paul worked as an electrician at the Highway Trailer Company where his father worked, making \$125 per month. He continued in the National Guard until August 1941, finishing his enlistment as a corporal.

## The World War

Japan had invaded Manchuria in 1932, occupied it, and moved into eastern Chinese coastal cities. The Chinese Communist forces had kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek in 1936, forcing him to agree to join forces with them to confront the Japanese before deciding to release him. In July 1937, Japanese forces near Beijing clashed with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Chinese (Koumintang) forces and, eventually, won control of Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Nanjing. This launched what has become known

as the Second Sino-Japanese War, marking the initiation of a full-scale Japanese invasion of China.

Meanwhile, in Europe, Benito Mussolini had disbanded the Italian parliament, ending democracy in that country. Adolf Hitler had been appointed Chancellor of Germany and outlawed all political parties except his own Nationalist Socialist German Workers (Nazi) Party. On 25 October 1936, Germany and Italy announced the formation of the Rome-Berlin Alliance, the Axis.

The year 1937 brought Capt. Claire Chennault onto the Asian scene. The US Army Air Corps had medically retired the 47-year-old, well-known aerobatic pilot due to partial deafness and chronic bronchitis. However, Chennault wasn't ready to retire and, instead, contacted Gen. Chiang Kai-shek, whose struggling air force could only keep 100 of its 500 aircraft in flyable condition and had too few qualified pilots for even those. Gen. Chiang hired Chennault to serve as an advisor to the Chinese Air Force.

Japan, however, continued relentlessly to push the Nationalist forces well back from the coastal ports...and their primary sources of supplies. In a brutal invasion that became known as the "rape of Nanjing," Japan occupied the Koumintang capital of Nanjing and established their own puppet government there.

By mid-1938, Japan controlled all Chinese port cities, either directly or by strength of naval blockades. The Nationalists had to rely on supplies brought in from India via the Burma Road and on through the treacherous Himalayan Mountains.

At the same time, Germany relentlessly expanded its hold on the European continent. War seemed to be everywhere. Germany, Britain, France, and Italy signed the Munich Pact on 29 September 1938 that allowed Germany to invade the Sudeten territories of Czechoslovakia. More and more Americans realized that, sooner or later, the US would be dragged into the conflagration.

The war in Europe continued to accelerate throughout 1938 and 1939 as the German juggernaut steamrolled across Europe. Finally, on 3 September 1939, after futile attempts to appease Hitler's appetite for conquest, Britain, France, Australia, and New Zealand declared war on Germany as her forces drove deep into Poland after ignoring the Munich Pact and occupying all of Czechoslovakia.

World War II had begun.

In 1940, Germany advanced northward into Norway and westward across Europe. Winston Churchill became the prime minister of Great Britain on 10 May 1940. Sixteen days later, following the German invasion of Belgium, Great Britain was forced to launch Operation Dynamo, an unprecedented massive evacuation of the entire British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk using an ad hoc armada of military and civilian ships (just about anything capable of crossing the English Channel).

## *Introduction*

As Germany continued westward across Europe and eastward toward Russia, Italy invaded Greece and Egypt. On 27 September 1940, Germany, Italy, and Japan signed the Tripartite Pact, and the Axis had expanded its reach.

The Japanese Imperial Army pushed ever closer to Burma, forcing the British and Indian forces to close the critically important Burma Road. This left open only the land route through the Soviet Union for delivery of supplies to the Nationalist Chinese.

While World War II gradually encircled the globe, the US attempted to maintain its neutrality.

But on 11 March 1941, the US Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act authorizing President Roosevelt to sell, transfer, or lease war materiel to any Allied country, thereby tacitly ending American neutrality. President Roosevelt quickly authorized the lending of war materiel directly to China. This was followed by the signing of a neutrality pact between the Soviet Union and Japan, which cut off any possibility of moving war supplies through the Soviet Union.

Gen. Chiang Kai-shek and President Roosevelt jointly approved a plan for Claire Chennault to recruit American pilots to join his new American Volunteer Group (AVG) and to purchase US-surplus Curtiss P-40 Warhawks. Initially, Chennault tried to hire only fighter pilots between 23 and 28 years of age, offering \$600–750 monthly pilot pay, double what the US Army was paying, plus a \$500 bonus for every Japanese aircraft shot down. After only a dozen pilots signed up, Chennault relented and accepted older pilots, and even some bomber pilots.

The first AVG pilots and equipment arrived in China in July. They soon painted the noses of their P-40s with the now-famous shark's mouth emblem. Over the next half-year, AVG strength ramped up to 113 pilots and 55 aircraft.

On 7 December 1941, Japan attacked the US base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Like it or not, ready or not, the US was now actively in the war. The US formally declared war on Japan the next day when President Roosevelt gave his “a day that will live in infamy” speech.

The “Flying Tigers” first combat action occurred on 20 December when 14 P-40s intercepted 10 Japanese Mitsubishi bombers en route from Hanoi to Kunming. The AVG pilots shot down three aircraft during the engagement, and six more crashed due to combat damage on the way back to Hanoi. No “Flying Tigers” were shot down (although one ran out of gas and crashed short of the runway on landing).

By the end of the month, both Guam and Hong Kong had fallen to Japanese invasion.

As the US struggled to gear up for another worldwide war two decades after the “War to End All Wars,” it faced three very different types of war in the Pacific region:

- A major naval war to stop the Japanese fleet from gaining total hegemony across the Pacific;
- A brutal, island-hopping, amphibious effort, jointly with the Australians, to retake the Pacific islands, one beachhead at a time;
- A major land war in some of the most inhospitable jungles and mountains in Asia—the battle to push the Japanese Imperial Army out of Burma, Southeast Asia, and China.

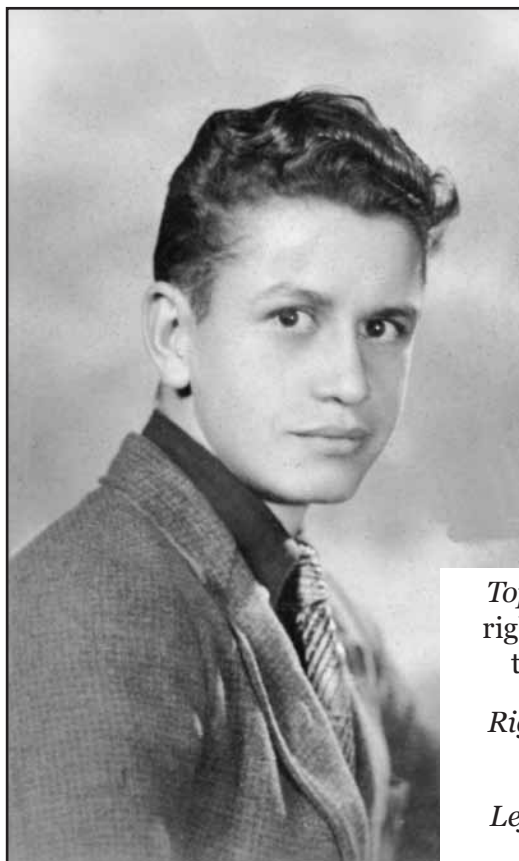
Paul Eastman did not yet know it, but he was destined for that latter front, in what soon became the China-Burma-India Theater...the CBI.

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**Note:** Maps can be found beginning on page 229.



Harold Eastman in the US  
Air Service at San Antonio,  
Texas, in World War I  
(Harold is on the right  
in the right photo)



*Top:* Paul (second from right) with local boys in the National Guard

*Right:* Paul at National Guard camp

*Left:* Paul's graduation picture

**PART ONE:**

**Burma Falls to Japan**

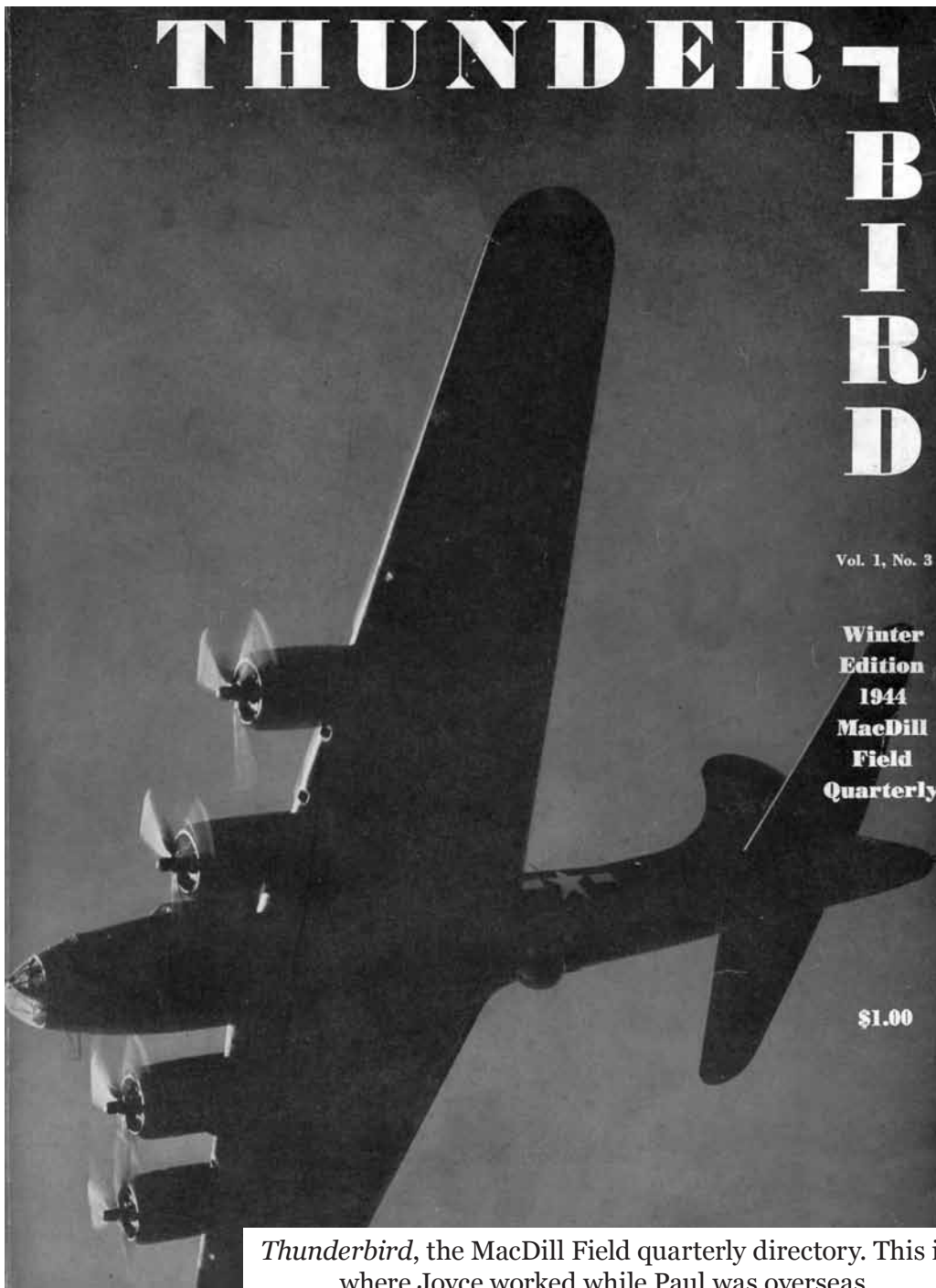
**January 1942–November 1943**

Paul and Joyce Eastman  
shortly before he left the States  
for the CBI.



Paul's first official Army  
portrait.





*Thunderbird*, the MacDill Field quarterly directory. This is where Joyce worked while Paul was overseas.

Pretty women chauffeurs drive anything from jeeps to one and one-half ton trucks.

*Joyce  
Theresa  
Kara*  
*I never forget the  
look on my 18-19-20  
year old faces  
chauffeur*



*Joyce -  
Theresa is a very  
happy girl  
you will find  
Linda &  
Kara*

# BASE MOTOR POOL

**S**INCE ARMIES first existed, some mode of transportation has been necessary. With the fast pace set by the present world conflict, men and equipment must be moved swiftly. This is the role which the Base Motor Pool is playing at MacDill Field.

At air bases, such as MacDill Field, the need for transportation, though not as great as required in

*One Hundred Twenty-two*

combat areas, is necessary to facilitate supply and administration.

Furnishing the necessary vehicles to the proper authorities is a vast job, requiring an intricate dispatch control organization to keep a complete check on all vehicles and their whereabouts at all times.

This responsibility falls to the Base Motor Pool, which operates under the supervision of the Base Quartermaster. The main objective of this organization is to obtain the maximum use from the equipment available.

With the exception of vehicles assigned to the Sub-depot, Third Bomber Command and Post Engineers, all motor transportation on the base must clear thru the Base Motor Pool before they may be dispatched for a post or city run. Emergency ambulance runs is the only other exception to this rule. The Motor supplies vehicles of its own, as well as dispatching those assigned to other organizations.

Any authorized person requiring transportation makes a request to this transportation center. After approval of the request, a trip ticket is filled out, with all necessary instructions, and given to a qualified driver who will carry out the assignment. After com-

*(Continued on page 124)*



Joyce was one of the "pretty women chauffeurs" mentioned in the caption for the top photo in this issue of the MacDill Field *Thunderbird*, which Joyce saved.

# Chapter 1

## **“We got a hell of a beating”**

### The World War

On 14 January 1942, the Arcadia Conference between the US and Britain ended in Washington, DC, with President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill agreeing to a combined operational command structure. They decided that the Allies' first priority would be to defeat Germany. Two weeks later, the first US troops arrived in England.

### The CBI War

Unbeknownst to Paul, and with a personal significance he would not have guessed, the US Army Air Corps constituted the new 90th Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) as part of the 80th Pursuit Group (Interceptor) at Mitchell Field, New York. In February 1942, these units were officially activated, soon joined by their sister squadrons, the 88th and 89th Pursuit Squadrons, and assigned Republic P-47 Thunderbolts to prepare for assignment to the European Theater.

With the Japanese advancing through Burma, threatening both China's only supply route and potentially India itself, on 23 January Army Chief of Staff Gen. George C. Marshall assigned Lt. Gen. Joseph “Vinegar Joe” Stilwell one of the toughest assignments of the new war. Stilwell would not only be the commanding officer of the CBI Theater but also Chief of Staff to Gen. Chiang Kai-shek with responsibilities that included management of the Chinese lend-lease program, training the two million Chinese troops, creating a viable aerial transport system to supply the Chinese over the massive Himalayan

Mountains (the “Hump”), and building a new road (the Ledo Road) to connect India with the existing Burma Road. Not to mention trying to pacify and soothe the raging ego of Chiang Kai-shek himself.

By the time Gen. Stilwell arrived in India to take the reins of his new command, Japan had taken the Philippines, attacked Australia and New Guinea, and established occupation forces in Borneo, Thailand, Singapore, Malaya, Indochina, and the Dutch East Indies. They were also rapidly moving deeper into Burma.

When Stilwell met with Chiang Kai-shek in early March in Chungking, he was disheartened by the sorry state of the Chinese army’s training, readiness, and available weaponry. While he was in Chungking, the Japanese captured Burma’s key port city of Rangoon and turned northward into the heart of the country.

Back in India, Stilwell met with his British counterpart, Lt. Gen. Sir Harold Alexander. They decided to make a stand in Burma and stop the Japanese invaders 150 miles north of Rangoon. They put British Lt. Gen. William J. Slim in command of the Allied forces in Burma.

## Paul’s War

On 19 January 1942, about the time of the Japanese brutal invasion of Burma, 22-year-old Paul enlisted in the active duty Army. His brother Gordon, now 19, enlisted at the same time. The Army sent them both to Louisiana for training.

Sometime during the first quarter of 1942, Paul met Joyce Atchison through an introduction by a mutual friend. On 11 March, he wrote her a letter from his post in Louisiana:

I would like you to come so you could be here Saturday night. There is no bed check on Saturday night, so we could spend a little time together...I wrote a letter to Mother and Aunt Frances and told Mom that you were here Sunday. I know that she will be tickled to find that out. Baby, she speaks of you in every letter that she writes. I guess maybe she likes you a lot already even though she hasn’t seen you yet...have had lots of the boys say something to me about your being here Sunday. Darling, I told you that you would take the cake...I’ve been thinking about kissing you Sunday night ever since you left. I have never had anything to thrill me so much...I’ll be so glad when I can come home. Even just for a night and a day. I want to hold you in my lap so bad.

## The CBI War

Guerrilla forces of the Chinese 55th Division were already engaged with the Japanese in Burma but desperately needed supplies. That task fell to the US Tenth Air Force, based in India. Those supplies had to be flown 530 miles across Burma and over the towering Himalayan Mountains. The first flights over the "Hump" took off in mid-April.

While supplies were being delivered, the Japanese Army slammed into Gen. Slim's Allied forces, pushing them steadily back. On 15 April, Slim ordered the 5,000 oil derricks at Yengyaung (his forces' only source of gas and oil) destroyed to prevent the Japanese from gaining control of them. He then withdrew back into India, while the Chinese 55th Division melted into the hills.

Morale received a boost in April, however, when news that "Doolittle's Raiders" (under the command of Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle) launched 16 B-25 bombers from the deck of the US Navy carrier USS Hornet on the 18<sup>th</sup> to bomb the Japanese homeland. The daring, risky attack caught the Japanese by surprise as it occurred so soon after the US defeat at Pearl Harbor. Doolittle and his crews successfully bombed five Japanese cities, including Tokyo. Although none were shot down, 15 of the bombers had to crash land in China or ditch offshore as they ran out of fuel. Nonetheless, the attack cheered the Allied forces taking a beating in battles across the Pacific and Asia.

The Japanese army, however, quickly retaliated with a massive series of raids that destroyed Chinese villages and killed a quarter-million villagers as retribution for aiding the downed American bomber pilots.

On 4 May, the US Navy defeated the Japanese navy in the Battle of the Coral Sea, which helped save Australia from an imminent Japanese assault. Two days later, US forces on Corregidor in the Philippines surrendered to the Japanese. This was followed soon by another major defeat for the Japanese in the Battle of Midway, which also marked a turning point in the war in the Pacific.

On the heels of this counterattack, Gen. Stilwell received orders on 1 May to abandon his southern Burma headquarters at Toungoo. After ordering most of his immediate staff to board the transport aircraft sent to evacuate them, Stilwell chose to remain behind to lead the convoy, with the rest of his headquarters personnel, out of Burma.

"Vinegar Joe" and his 80-man contingent headed out of Toungoo on 3 May on deeply rutted, two-track ox trails, which soon damaged all the vehicles so badly they had to destroy them and continue on foot. The Japanese had cut off the road to Myitkyina, so Stilwell's party had to cut northwest through the dense jungle to India with no more than what they could carry. They subsisted on half-rations and most of the party contracted malaria and/or dysentery by the time they reached the Uyu River. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, a British

Royal Air Force bomber air-dropped badly needed food and medicine to them. Then the monsoon season set in, making their already arduous trek even more difficult. A British officer, forward based in Burma, loaded a mule train with supplies and managed to find them. On 19 May, Stilwell reached Imphal, India, without losing a single member of his original party.

While Stilwell marched out of Burma, Gen. Slim led another retreat, under constant Japanese attacks, with his combined British, Gurkha, and Indian forces. In the 10-day retreat, Slim lost 1,000 of his 13,000-man force to combat action.

In a press conference back in Delhi, Gen. Stilwell said, “All retreats are ignominious as hell. I claim we got a hell of a beating. We got run out of Burma, and it is humiliating as hell. I think we ought to find out what caused it, go back, and retake it.”



**China-Burma-India Theater Shoulder Patch**

The official emblem of the China-Burma-India Theater, typically worn on the shoulder of the uniforms of unit personnel, reportedly was designed by Big. Gen. Frank Dorn in June 1942 while he served as an aide to Lt. Gen. Stilwell. The choice of the colors—red, white, and blue—is obviously a reflection of the US flag. The orb in the upper left represents the Kuomintang Sun (the Kuomintang being the ruling political party in China at the time, led by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek). On the upper right is the Star of India, the third key member of the Allied forces in the CBI. Paul Eastman wore the patch photographed above on his uniform while serving in the CBI. (A color version of this can be found on the book’s back cover.)