

Book Review

Among Insurgents Walking Through Burma

By Shelby Tucker

(Hard cover, 416 pages, includes four color and 16 b/w illustrations, four maps, an Appreciation by Stephen Morse, a cartographer's note by John C. Bartholomew, a chronology of the Burmese Civil War, bibliography and index. Priced for retail at \$29.95, St. Martin's Press will sell to CBiers for \$23.96, a 20% discount. Send orders to: St. Martin's Press, Scholarly & Reference Division, c/o Roxanne Huete, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.)

Reviewed by David Dale

Shelby Tucker was a 53-year-old American attorney, writer and adventurer with the burning desire to "walk across Burma" in 1988. Ten years of work has finally produced his story. Living in England at the time, he did some research, picked up some obsolete maps and charts and flew to Berlin. By train from there, he proceeded across Russia and Siberia for China, picking up a 24-year-old Swedish ex-army lieutenant as a companion.

From Yunnan, they illegally crossed the border into Burma and soon were taken under the wings of the Kachin Independence Army. Uncertain of what route they would be able to take to achieve their goal; they were completely dependent on the good will and protection of the Kachins.

This book was introduced in Britain in this year and was treated there as a best-selling travel book. But, it is far more than just an adventure story. While there is much adventure in coping with the mountains and jungles of Burma as many of our readers can attest, there is also the constant threat of the Burmese government forces, as well as the troops of other rival ethnic groups.

Not the least of their problems are the leeches they encounter while heading for the border with India. The latter presented its own problem because the Indian government considers the border with Burma to be a very sensitive area which is strictly proscribed to non-government persons. Mats (the Swedish companion) and Tucker were held prisoners and constantly

constantly interrogated by the Indians when they finally crossed into India and were held incommunicado for many weeks somewhere in the area of what we knew as Ledo. Margherita, Dibrigarh, Tinsukia, Kutkai are mentioned often as well as various mile posts which we assumed to be locales en route to Pangsau Pass over the Patkai Range.

Tucker has offered much more than a book of adventure. This is also a history of the people of Burma and the troubles they have survived under the current military oppression of the Rangoon government. The author has offered maps so you can follow his trails to India and complete glossaries so you can identify and understand the Kachin language as well as the military and political groups within Burma.

If there is a complaint, it is that Tucker hasn't related his routes and landmarks with locales known to Americans who passed through this area 50 some years ago. He mentions a WW II American airfield but left this reader guessing what it might have been. All of these sites and trails had to cross the old Ledo Road and weren't we close to Shing, Warazup, Tagap Ga or other place names we could locate on our maps? We can only hold his next to ours and speculate.

Shelby Tucker became engrossed in the history of and future of Burma either before embarking on this adventure or during and after. In any event, he covers the tribes of Burma and their relationship with one another. He gives a history of the drug problem, the relationship of the Chinese and Laotians with those in control of the Burmese borders. Since his return from his adventure, he had become quite active in representing those opposing the dictatorship in control of "Myanmar."

Anyone with an interest in Burma, past, present or future will find this book to be an integral part of their library.

Directory Corrections and Change of Address!

Send to

Adj./Fin. Off. Kenneth Ruff
PO Box 780676
Orlando, FL 32878-0676

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Book Review

CHINA MAILBAG UNCENSORED

Letters from an American GI
in

World War II China and India

Written and Illustrated by
Lou Glist

(Hardbound, 8-1/2" by 11", 300 pages, over 150 illustrations, \$26.95. Texas residents, add 8.25% sales tax. Send orders to Emerald Ink Publishing, 9700 Alameda-Genoa Rd., Ste. 502, Houston, TX 77075. Phone (800) 324-5663. Fax (713) 946-6066. E-mail: emerald@emeraldink.com. Also available from internet bookstores.)

Reviewed by David Dale

That's not quite true. We bought our autographed book from Lou Glist at the Houston Reunion and have scanned it, read selected segments, but haven't had a chance to truly read the book. We have enjoyed the illustrations and feel that they alone would justify the price of the book but look forward to digging in as soon as the Fall SOUND-OFF is put to bed.

CHINA MAILBAG was written from the letters Lou sent home to his wife, Lottie. He was a Chinese Combat Command officer working with 12 Chinese technicians, an American Sergeant and an interpreter. The UNCENSORED part of the title refers to his having added details to his letters for his book which would have been deleted by wartime censors.

At war's end, he is assigned to Shanghai and any CBiers who had the good fortune to receive such an assignment will enjoy sharing his experience as well as the many illustrations with which he enhances the book.

PNC Joe McGuire volunteered the following quote in a flyer which was available at the Houston Reunion: "This is an extraordinary, informative and historical insight of day-to-day duty and living in China of an individual privileged to have served in a capacity not afforded to the mass of military persons. Lou has provided us with information so rich in historical, social, political and military customs and practices, and all with such an overtone of human emotion and humor."