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*Waller
on Charlie
Urban*

Dr. Reginald H. Farrar
132 Gifford Avenue
Jersey City, New Jersey 07304

RE: Just Beyond the Firelight by R. J. Waller

Dear Dr. Farrar:

We are pleased to grant you permission to reprint the chapter titled "The Boy from the Burma Camp" to be included in your newsletter published by the CNAC Association. Since you are distributing it gratis to approximately 300 members, we will waive any fees.

We appreciate that you will recommend our book to your membership and ask that you use the following credit line adjacent to the material:

Reprinted by permission from Just Beyond the Firelight: Essays and Stories by R. J. Waller (c) 1988 by Iowa State University Press, Ames, Ia. 50010.

Sincerely,

Sherry Johnson
Assistant to the Director

SLJ:me

I have read most of the book and do recommend it.

Editor

Iowa State University Press has many titles on aviation, now and the past and many on technical aspects of flying.

Write for a catalog.

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3895 words

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THE BOY FROM THE BURMA HUMP

by

Robert James Waller

In his apartment in Calcutta, there was a grand piano. He wore khaki then, walked the bazaars and tapped away at the piano or played lawn tennis during his leaves from upcountry. After a week or two, he was ready when the call came for the return to Dinjan.

He carried only a small suitcase for the journey, his "laundry" as he called it, and looked forward to getting back to the jungle and the mountains, away from the sterile and crumbling world of the British raj. His flight left Calcutta, climbing northeast over the Khasi Hills toward Assam, the secluded province that curls off main India and lies snuggled up on the left shoulder of Burma, just short of the Himalayan rise.

At Dinjan, he and the other pilots slept and took their meals in a large bungalow on the fringe of a tea plantation. Well before dawn, he was awakened by the hand of a servant boy. Now he stands drinking thick Indian tea on the veranda, looking out toward the jungle where leopards sometimes go.

An open four-wheel drive command car arrives, and he rides through the heavy night toward an airfield five miles away. Time is important now, in this early morning of 1943. Since losing an airplane to Japanese fighters over the Ft. Hertz Valley, the pilots cross there only in darkness or bad weather when the fighters are grounded. He signs the cargo manifest, checks the weather report, and walks out to the plane.

Like delicate crystal, our liberties sometimes juggle in the hands of young men. Boys, really. Climbing to the top of the arch at the front of their lives, some of them flew into Asian darkness, across primitive spaces of the mind and the land, and came to terms with ancient fears the rest of us keep imperfectly at bay.

There was Steve Kusak. And poker-playing Roy Farrell from Texas. Saxaphonist Al Mah, Einar "Micky" Mickelson, Jimmy Scoff, Casey Boyd, Hockswinder, Thorwaldson, Rosbert,