

THE IMPOSSIBLE DITCHING

THE FACTORY REPRESENTATIVE DIDN'T THINK A C-119 COULD DITCH IN WATER AND THE CREW SURVIVE. MAJ. HARRY WITT AND HIS CREW PROVED DIFFERENTLY. HERE, IN MAJ. WITT'S OWN WORDS, IS THE STORY OF AN IMPOSSIBLE DITCHING:

"WE WERE about a hundred miles at sea off Luzon Island's east coast, en route to our home station at Ashiya, Japan.

"Suddenly, oil temperature in the left engine went up and oil pressure went down. I cut power on the engine, switched the radio to the international distress frequency, sent out the first Mayday call, and headed back toward land.

"Later, my right engine started going fast. I couldn't maintain altitude and there were huge thunderheads between us and the base. I decided to try to get into Sangley Point Naval Station, some 50 miles south of Clark.

"Skirting south of the thunderheads, we broke out over Luzon Island's narrow southern neck. Our altitude was about 1,100 feet and I knew we had little chance of making the Naval station, because the right engine was shuddering. I had to make a nerve-wracking decision: should I have my crew bail out over unfamiliar territory, or try to belly-in somewhere? All I could see below was swampland. I decided then on the calculated risk of trying to get the ship in and keep the crew together.

"A few days before leaving Ashiya, I had talked with a factory representative of the Fairchild Corporation, makers of our plane. He contended that the C-119 couldn't be

ditched in water and the crew survive. As far as I knew, it had never been done. I had my choice of trying it or landing in the treetops. It had to be a fast decision, since our altitude was about gone.

"Just ahead I saw a stretch of beach and shallow water. The beach, lined with palm trees, was too narrow to put the plane down. I had to risk the water. Lowering the nose wheel, and with full flaps to break the impact, we started our approach, parallel to the beach and just off shore. I remember particularly lining up on a strip of sand visible under the water. I also remember Lt. Schwartz' [co-pilot] calmness. A Second Lieutenant just out of flying school, he kept chanting airspeeds just as he would in a normal landing—120 feet, 100 feet, 90 feet, 70 feet, 50 feet—and then we hit the water. S/Sgt Brown [engineer] was right in there pitching too. His training really paid off. In the split second just as we hit the water, I could see his fingers flying as he coolly cut switches and shut off fuel lines. It's crewmen of the caliber of Schwartz and Brown, not sure whether they have seconds or years to live, yet doing their jobs without a sign of fear, who make this Air Force tick." END

EDITOR'S NOTE: Soon after the Mayday call went out, a MATS DC-6 was flying beside the C-119. Twenty minutes after the crash landing, the DC-6 guided in rescue craft. Only injury of note was a wrenched back. A passenger's safety belt came unfastened, and he was thrown against a bulkhead.

THE EYES



PERFECT COORDINATION BETWEEN AIR AND GROUND UNITS IS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE JOB BEING DONE BY THE 527TH AC & W GROUP AND THE 68TH FIGHTER-INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

AN AIRCRAFT controller hunches over a radarscope in the operations room of a Ground Controlled Intercept station, which is illuminated only by the glow of half-a-dozen radar screens. He is playing the lead role in a deadly game of hide-and-seek taking place 100 miles away, 24,000 feet above the sea of Japan.

Just 15 minutes before, the call "Scramble" had blared from the public address speaker in the fighter Alert Shack. Three minutes later, the voice of the controller was

vectoring 10 tons of all-weather jet interceptor--an F-94--hurtling through the murky skies at better than 550 MPH, to a rendezvous with and unknown target.

The hunter and the hunted are represented on the radar screen as two pale-green dots, whose altitude and heading are signified by blips. The night fighter bores through the sky toward its still-unseen target. The blips on the screen inch closer, and as the ranges close the interceptor's own radar picks up the bogie. A beam of electrons locks the fighter to

OF JADF



the target, holding the jet on course toward its potential enemy.

At close range, the interceptor pilot, recognizing the bogie as a C-46, requests authentication. The startled USAF transport pilot, slightly off-course on a Korean airlift run, complies. Had the aircraft been recognized as hostile, the .50 cal. guns tucked in the jet's radar nose would have greeted the enemy.

Until positively identified, every bogie approaching Japan is considered a potential enemy.

Technological developments point toward a changing pattern of air defense, including, within a few years,

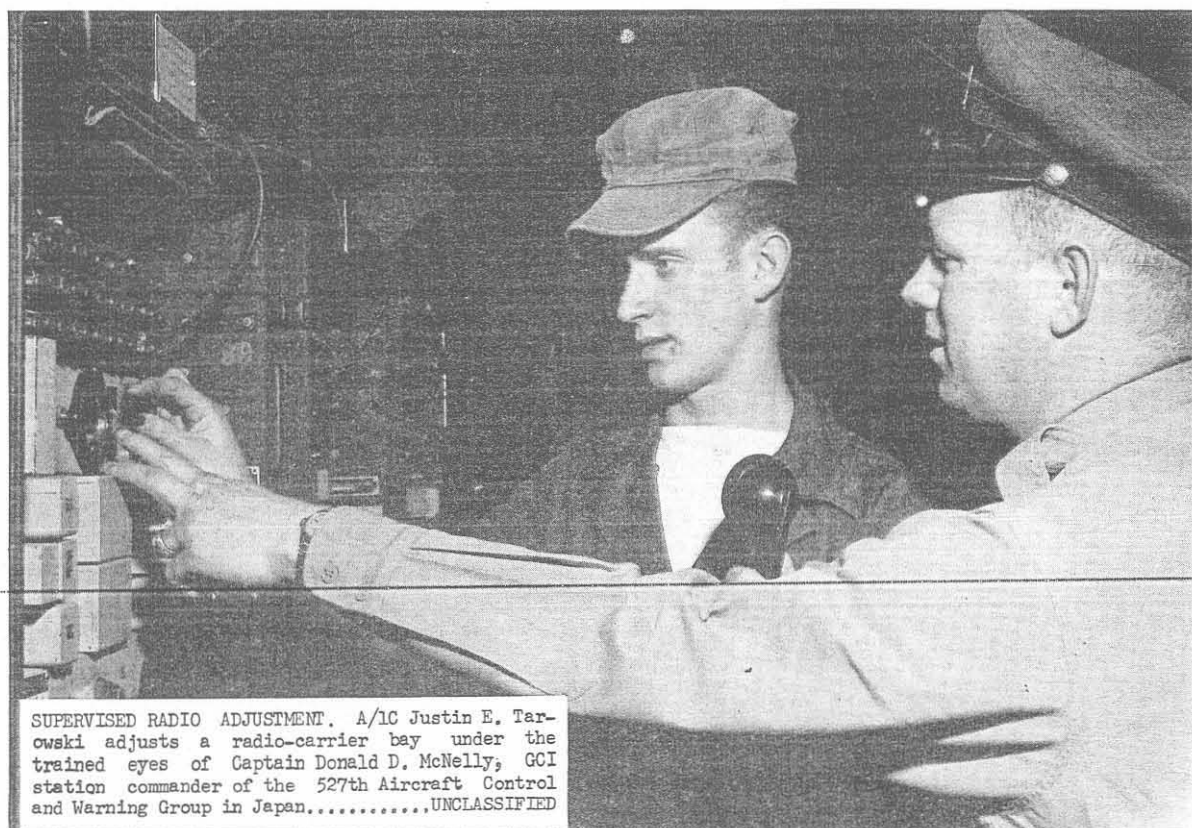
air-to-air rockets, guided missiles, and supersonic interceptors, but until these wonder weapons are in production, the ground controller and the all-weather interceptor crew will continue to be USAF'S first team against aggression from the air.

Another important function of a GCI station is the vectoring in of lost pilots to friendly air stations. When both weather and a near-empty fuel tank team up against a man, there is nothing more welcome than the calm voice of the controller, ready to guide him, through soupy skies, by radar magic, to a safe landing. END

SEE PHOTOS ON NEXT THREE PAGES



TIP-TOP SHAPE. A/2C Frank L. Brown, a radar maintenance technician of the 527th Aircraft Control and Warning Group in Japan, keeps GCI equipment in perfect shape by giving a routine check to vacuum tubes and wiring of a radar set.....UNCLASSIFIED



SUPERVISED RADIO ADJUSTMENT. A/1C Justin E. Tarowski adjusts a radio-carrier bay under the trained eyes of Captain Donald D. McNelly, GCI station commander of the 527th Aircraft Control and Warning Group in Japan.....UNCLASSIFIED



HUNTER AND HUNTED TRACED. The grease pencil of Lt. Carlisle B. Crane marks each movement of the radar blips. Each change of a bogie aircraft is relayed to the interceptor, with heading and altitude corrections, by two-way radio....UNCLASSIFIED



NIGHT FIGHTER ON ALERT. In just 3 minutes after a "scramble" signal, a sleek F-94 night-flying jet-interceptor can be on a bogie-intercept mission under GCI control. Successful interception is the product of F-94 and GCI teamwork.....UNCLASSIFIED

NIGHT FIGHTERS. Captain John R. Phillips (left) pilot, and 2d Lt Billy J. Atto, radar observer leave their F-94 after completing another mission.....UNCLASSIFIED

