



Tale of a Tiger

Robert T. Smith

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Bob Smith was all of 10 when, against parental orders, he got his first airplane ride in a rickety old biplane flown by a barn storming pilot from a cow pasture outside the little Nebraska town where he lived. From that moment on there was no doubt in his mind as to what he would do when he grew up; he would become a pilot, and seek adventure in far-away places that most people find only between the covers of National Geographic. After attending the University of Nebraska, Smith began his flight training as a flying cadet in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1939, completed the rigorous training program and was commissioned a second Lieutenant in June of 1940. A year later, now a flight instructor at Randolph Field, Texas, he learned that a small number of military pilots were being allowed to resign their commissions in order to volunteer for duty as fighter pilots in the Chinese Air Force. The idea was to put a stop to the indiscriminate bombing attacks of the Japanese invaders, with particular emphasis on keeping open the Burma Road, China's only remaining lifeline for supply from the outside world. Although he had never flown a fighter plane, indeed have never ever seen a P-40 - the type with which the little group of volunteers was to be equipped - this sounded like an opportunity much too good to pass up. So it was that in July of 1941, nearly 6 months before Pearl Harbor was attacked, "R.T." as he was now called was on a boat heading for Burma. Those far-away places in the adventure he sought were soon to be found in untold abundance!... Tale Of A Tiger takes the reader along on wild and hazardous flights into the skies over Burma and China, told by one of the leading Aces of the Hell's Angels squadron who was involved from beginning to end. Smith's diary is reproduced in its original form, exactly as written at the time, with a generous helping of interesting and insightful footnotes, plus dozens of photos, many never before published. --- from book's dustjacket

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