

Postscript:

Several weeks later I made another trip to Cairns, but this time not in 'Fat Cat'. The group had another stripped down B-25. This one was a later acquisition than 'Fat Cat' and did not have its history and aura. It had no name but was known only by its tail number '2222.'

The occasion for this trip was to obtain a load of liquor to celebrate the opening of a group officers club. The club was being built by Navy CB outfit. The Seabees were to be rewarded for their efforts by being permitted to buy half the load the B-25 could carry. Bob Dunkel was again the co-pilot on this venture. In addition to the normal flight crew we had two passengers. One was a Seabee Lt Commander and the other a Major from group along to buy the liquor.

Our flight to Cairns this time was relatively uneventful except for a minor incident after landing. We were directed to our parking place alongside a taxiway. The ground adjacent to the taxiway was not paved but appeared to be gravel. The RAAF type, a Leading Aircraftman, I think, directed us to leave the pavement and park perpendicular to the taxiway. We were about half way around when Bob gave a shout and cut the right engine. We were settling quickly on the right side and finally came to rest on the right engine nacelle. Fortunately when we stopped the prop was situated so that none of the blades hit the ground. Have to give Bob a good mark for seeing the situation and killing the engine so promptly.

The ground adjacent to the runway was fill dredged up from the harbor and was not packed down enough to support much weight. It was so soft that when the right nacelle came to rest the landing gear kept on going until the strut was fully extended.

The station people had no equipment capable of getting us out.

Someone said that similar things had happened before and that our Navy people at the small boat repair station could get us but. I called the station, told them what had happened, and they said they would be right out with a flat bed truck and a tractor.

In a short time the Navy crew came out with a chief in charge. When they arrived the chief paid me a somewhat back-handed compliment. When he saw me he said, "Oh, you're Army. You sounded just like a Captain."

What he meant was that from the tone of my voice and my choice of words on the phone, I sounded like a Navy captain. That accounted for the prompt response. Apparently they had done that kind of work several times before. They pulled us out in short order and to a firmer parking area. After some delay the crew chief did a retraction test on the landing gear, and except for a little cleaning up there was nothing wrong.

NOTE:

Subsequent research from Group records indicates that the second B-25 bore the name "Three Deuces" and was B-25D 41-30772 and not 2222 as indicated. It subsequently became designated as "Fat Cat" at the end of February 1945, This aircraft stayed in the Phillipines when the 3rd Group moved to Okinawa in July 1945.

I absolutely had no intention of denigrating the memory of Andrew Weigel by sharing this information.

Gerry Kersey