



SKY PICTURES

by **RAOUL F. WHITFIELD**

Photographs, military and otherwise, bring trouble to a certain American flying squadron in France.

DOLL" KINGSLAND came into my coop, bummed my next to last pill and sprawled his six feet of skin and bones on the cot. Lieutenant Kingsland had a broken nose, goggle cuts over both eyes, and his left ear had been ripped up a bit in a nose over. Jerry Collins, the ace of the squadron, had taken one look at Lieutenant Kingsland, when he first came up from Colombey-la-Belle, and had tacked on the "Doll."

I risked cutting my throat and took a look at the big boy. He was frowning. He looked more savage than a

Fokker diving with both guns flaming.

"Why the grin?" I asked, and nearly cut my nose off with the dull blade. "The C.O. been riding you again?"

Doll swore heartily. I finished shaving and topped off with a cold-water rub. Then I faced the big boy. He had become silent.

"I've heard them words before, Doll," I stated. "Some of 'em I've heard twice. But why?"

"Some kiwi swiped that picture in my coop, 'Hen,'" Doll stated in his deep tones. "And if I get my hands on him——"

His voice trailed off into a grim silence. I stared at him. That wasn't funny—swiping the photograph. Any sky-riding gent, or ground-striding officer, who had slipped the likeness of the golden-haired girl out of Doll Kingsland's coop—that fellow was crazy. There were several things that Doll didn't fool about, and the picture was three of them.

"I wasn't the kiwi, Doll," I hastened to say. But I knew that the lieutenant wasn't using the word kiwi actually. He was using it condemningly. It was my hunch that a pilot or observer had copped Doll's picture, and that the big lieutenant knew that much.

"You're not that dumb, Hen," he said. "Thought maybe you might have suggestions."

"I'm not that dumb, either," I came back. "But I wish you luck, Doll."

He pulled himself up from the cot. There was a grim smile playing around his narrow lips. Doll had it bad when it came to the girl on the cardboard. He'd talked about her, but not so much. There weren't many jokers with the Fifteenth Reconnaissance. I thought about one of them as Doll moved, toward the corridor.

"See you're up with Candler at three," I said. "Photographic work, eh?"

Doll turned near the clapboard door of my coop. His face was twisted. But he was trying to grin.

"I'm looking forward to it, Hen," he spoke coldly. "Great boy, Candler!"

THEN he went out. I didn't like the way he'd uttered the last three words. They were as cold as a D.H. early in the morning. And I thought of Candler. He was a funny guy, a humorist. He'd been up ten days, doing photographic work. There was irony in that thought. The photograph in Doll's coop was gone!

I slipped on my tunic. Joe Lait came in, five minutes later, and asked me what was the matter with Doll. The big pilot had been in his coop. He'd talked about nothing much, but his eyes had been restless. And he'd poked around a lot. I grinned and told Joe that maybe Doll had lost something. Joe said that Doll hadn't mentioned losing anything. Then Joe tried to bum a cigarette and went out.

Nothing much happened until mess time. I was stand-by for the day; not doing any flying, but ready for an emergency. There was sun at intervals—the reason for the photographic attempt—the first sun in three days. Doll came in late, a grim smile on his face. He sat opposite Candler, a good-looking, dark-haired, one-wing man. Candler didn't talk much, and

Doll didn't talk at all. Once I caught the photographer looking at Doll. He had a peculiar expression on his browned face. Doll was busy eating. I groaned. If Candler had grabbed that picture, he'd run into a flock of trouble. And I had my suspicions.

And there was that locked-door business. Most of the boys let their coop doors swing; but not Candler. He'd rigged up a lock, and when you knocked, he snapped it loose. Of course, any one could break in. The whole, barracks structure was as thin as paper. Candler had been kidded about the lock at first; but the thing had got stale. I thought of it quite a bit as we ate.

While I was thinking of it, we heard a racket back in the corridor. The mess room was at one end of the long, camouflaged barracks. There were shouts and I recognized an orderly's voice. The dog-robber was singing out: "Fire!"

Doll was the first up from the table. And I wasn't far back of him. If the barracks burned down, we'd have cold sleep, wet sleep. I tore down the line between the coops, right behind Doll. There was a lot of smoke, about halfway down. It was oozing from beneath the door of a coop on the left-hand side. The orderly was trying to open the door, but it didn't open. The other officers piled down the corridor back of us.

"It's—Lieutenant Candler's."

THE orderly was choking. The smoke was pretty thick. It smelled like burning cloth.

Beside me, Doll Kingsland swore. He raised his voice.

"Smash open that door!" he ordered. "Give it the shoulder!"

And then, through the smoke, came Candler's voice.

"Hold on! I can get in there and put—"

The crashing in of the clapboard door drowned the rest of his protest. I got a glimpse of Doll's body pitching into the coop. The smoke filled the place. I started in after Doll, but some one shoved me aside. I heard Doll stamping on the boards of the floor; Candler was inside, too. The smoke was rushing out into the corridor, thinning out in the coop. It looked as though a lot of rags had been burning. There was a lot of excitement in the corridor. I went into the coop.

The first thing that I saw was Doll's shoulders and head. He was standing stiffly, staring, blinking, toward the wall across from the cot. My eyes blinked in the same direction. And I spotted the picture. I'd seen it enough, so there was no mistake. I took one long look and

turned. The fire was about out. I shoved my way through the rest of the gang and went back into the mess room.

"The damn' fool!" I muttered to myself. "The crazy shave-tail!"

AFTER a few minutes the boys came back. There was a lot of talk about how the fire started, how the rags got on the floor and so on. I was doing a little thinking. Burlap and wood covered the barracks windows. Either material could easily be shoved aside. Doll had come in late for mess, long after Candler; and he'd been quick to get into the corridor. I swore softly and waited for him to come back.

Candler came back first. He was scowling, muttering to himself. The boys shot a lot of questions at him, but he didn't answer any of them.

"That's my idea of a poor joke!" he muttered. "Setting a bunch of rags on fire in a coop that's—"

He broke off to mutter to himself again. I stared at him. It looked as though Doll hadn't done anything about the picture—or else Candler was trying to bluff.

Then Doll came back into the mess room. He looked pretty white, but he was smiling. It was a tight-lipped, nasty smile. Joe Lait spoke up:

"Some fireman, you are, Doll! Sure got to the scene in a hurry!"

Doll Kingsland grinned. His eyes flickered to those of the lieutenant opposite him. Candler was bent over his plate.

"Figured the lieutenant might have something of value in there," he said slowly. "Always has the door locked."

He chuckled. But it wasn't a funny chuckle. I groaned inwardly. They *hadn't* had it out, that was clear. Doll was holding back. But why? It was his picture, and he'd caught Candler with it. And why hadn't that officer come clean? It was a joke—even if it were a poor one.

I looked at the faces of the others. It was my idea that Joe Lait had spotted the picture. Maybe the others hadn't. Probably all of them hadn't gone into the coop. And Joe had sense enough to keep quiet.

Then I remembered—remembered the three-o'clock patrol. Doll would be at the stick and rudder, winging the Reconnaissance D.H. across the lines; and Lieutenant Candler would be riding in the rear cockpit with the camera. That wasn't so good.

We finished lunch. I went into my coop for a nap, but it didn't come. So I went along the line and dropped in on Doll. He was lying on his back and

looking up at the ceiling. I sat down on the foot of his cot. There was a little silence.

"Well." I breathed finally, "how about it?"

Doll looked blankly at me.

"How about what?" he asked.

"The picture," I muttered questioningly.

Doll closed his eyes. "What picture, Henry?" he asked slowly, and in an amused tone. But there was another note, beside that of amusement, in his voice.

I didn't answer his question. After a little silence, I spoke slowly:

"You've been up front a long time for this game, Doll. And your nerves are good enough, I suppose. But don't lose your sense of proportion. A joke's a joke—even if it is a rotten one."

DOLL smiled with his eyes closed. He spoke very calmly—too calmly.

"Don't know what you're getting at, Hen. But you're right about a joke. And a joke's a joke—back of the lines, or over them, eh?"

I felt my nerves jump a little. I started to say something, then saw Doll's eyes on mine. I got up from the cot.

"*One* damn fool in this outfit at a time—that's plenty!" I stated. "Don't wash yourself out, Doll."

The big pilot closed his eyes again and lay motionless on the cot. I stood near the door of the coop. There was a tap. Doll called out, and the door opened. Private Beggs, Doll's orderly, came in, smiling at Doll. He held an old copy of a magazine in his hand. Opening it, he took out a sketch. We both stared at it, startled. It was a good one, and it was a sketch of the photograph Doll had kept on the wall. The big pilot was off the cot in a flash.

"How'd you—make that?" he snapped.

Private Beggs drew something from between the pages of the magazine—the picture—the photo of Doll's girl!

"Didn't think you'd mind my taking it for a few hours, lieutenant," he stated simply. "Not when I was—making this copy."

Doll swore grimly. "You've had it all the time?" he snapped.

The orderly nodded. "Took it when I cleaned up this morning," he stated. "Figured I'd surprise you."

Doll looked at me and spoke dully. "You sure did!" he muttered.

His eyes narrowed. I knew what he was thinking; I was thinking the same thing. Lieutenant Candler hadn't copped his picture, but he had another of the same girl!

It might have been funny, but it wasn't; not the way Doll was taking it.

I felt sorry for him. I wanted to laugh, but didn't.

Doll did; it was a harsh laugh. Then he recovered himself and smiled at Private Beggs.

"That's nice work of yours, Beggs," he stated. "Very nice. Isn't it, Hen?"

I agreed that the pencil sketch of the photo was nice. Doll kept nodding his head.

"It's very good," he said slowly. "So good that I think I'll show it to Lieutenant Candler. Perhaps he'd be a better judge than myself."

I groaned. "Wait until after the photographic flight," I suggested. "It won't do any good to—"

But Doll was moving past me now, with the picture in his hand and the picture sketch. He was smiling in that grim way of his.

"I want to ask Him questions about it," he stated. "Stick around, Hen." Then he was gone.

I SMOKED two out of my last pack of pills while Doll was gone. When he came back, it was two thirty and he and Candler were due to get off the ground in a half hour. He came in and smiled at Private Beggs, who had been pretty quiet while Doll was gone.

"Lieutenant Candler likes it, Beggsy," he stated cheerfully. "It isn't quite finished, is it?"

Private Beggs admitted that it wasn't. Doll nodded his head and spoke very grimly.

"You go ahead and finish it, Beggsy," he advised. "And when it's all done up nice and pretty, take it in to Lieutenant Candler—with my compliments."

Private Beggs stared at Doll. But that officer had turned his back on both of us. He had fairly bit out the last few words. Now he grabbed his flying overalls, helmet and goggles from a nail, and moved out into the corridor. Beggs stared after him, then looked at me. There was a puzzled expression in his eyes.

"I didn't know the two lieutenants were such good—"

He broke off. I swore softly. Beggs was no fool, and the enlisted men knew plenty. I followed Doll out into the corridor. An orderly met me, told me that the C.O. was on the field, and that I was wanted ready for the air.

I grabbed my flying togs and the Colt service weapon and hurried out. I was feeling pretty rotten. Candler had never had much use for Doll, and that went both ways. And now they both had pictures of the same girl, and now, Candler would know that Doll had suspected him of swiping the picture. He would know that Doll had tossed burning rags into the coop.

Out on the field I reported to Captain Tracke. He was standing with Jerry Collins, a frown on his face. Jerry was set for the sky, too. Bill Robbins, his gunner, was talking with Sergeant Peat.

"Staff's damn anxious to get the pictures of that converged second and third trench line," the C.O. stated. "But the air's filled with German ships. Want you and Jerry to get up there and give Doll a lift. Don't fly formation and pull ships up after you. But stick around to help. Can't get a single-seater to sit up above and watch—all working."

I nodded. Eddie Wright, my observer, came along. I told him what was doing, and we watched the ground crew bring our flaming coffin out. On the far side of her was the ship Doll was to fly. I walked around that way, while a sergeant was revving up the engine, and Eddie was looking the rear-cockpit gun over.

DOLL was standing a few feet from his ship's rear cockpit. He was talking in a low, hard voice. Lieutenant Candler was in the rear cockpit, standing close to the machine gun on the bracketing. He held his aerial camera in both hands, but his eyes were narrowed on Doll's.

"—and don't forget you're supposed to know something about gunnery, too!" Doll snapped coldly as I came up. "If you let us down by—"

"Stick to the front-cockpit work—and don't let any rags catch fire!" Candler snapped back, interrupting. "I'll handle my end of things!"

I saw Doll's body stiffen. The reference to burning rags got him. He crackled words up at the rear-cockpit man.

"There are a lot of ways of getting a picture!" he stated. "Any girl would hand one out if she thought it would help a weakling to—"

Candler laughed. It was a mocking laugh; it came down from the rear cockpit loudly, clearly, and it stopped Doll's words. I grabbed him by the arm, and he swung on me with blazing eyes.

"Be yourself, Doll!" I snapped. "Cut the kid stuff—there's a war on. The Boche don't know anything about two birds scrapping over a snap. And if both of you do not handle that ship—"

Candler got my words and laughed again.

"What a chance I've got!" he muttered ironically. "Riding with him!"

Doll's face was white, his lips twisted. He tried to speak, failed. And then, slowly, speech came.

"Listen, Candler," he said thickly, "you'll get those pictures—see? And you'll get back here. If I have to

fly that ship without wings, and with my carcass filled with lead, I'll get you back!"

Eddie called to me. I groaned as I turned toward my ship. Two men going across on about as tough a job as the front-line air offered—both hating each other from the inside out! I didn't know what Candler had told Doll about the picture back in the barracks, but I could imagine. It was my hunch that Candler had established some sort of a prior right—or why was Doll handing over the sketch with his compliments?

CLIMBING into the front cockpit of my ship, I revved up the engine, saw that Jerry's D.H. and the photography plane were motionless and gave her the gun. I'd get up above and wait around near the front. That was what I thought.

I taxied straight out into the wind, and then Eddie shouted. I twisted my head to the right. Eddie was pointing wildly to the left. I got my eyes turned in that direction, and none to soon. A D.H. was cutting in on the left, across my ship's nose. Doll's D.H.!

I pulled back on the stick, lifted her wheels and tail skid off the earth and kicked right rudder. She skidded, and the other shape zoomed away. But it had been close, very close. I swore grimly as I straightened the plane out, then got her into a mild climb toward the front. That wasn't like Doll Kingsland, unless—

That was it; he was trying to tell me to keep out of the mess, to let him handle it his own way. And he was right, of course. But I liked Doll, and he was a damn good pilot. And there were a lot of other girls back in the States. It would be easier to recover from that business than from a stomach full of tracer bullets.

I winged the D.H. up after the other ship; and it took wide-open flight to stay within a half mile of her. Once I looked backward and downward. Jerry's ship was a speck, just getting off from the field. But he had the map spot of converged trenches—the approximate spot—and he'd be along by the time Doll and Candler went to work getting pictures. I suspected that the coordination wasn't accurate and that Staff wanted a picture check-up for the batteries.

My ship was wide open, but Doll gained on her. Doll wasn't after any ceiling; he went over the Allied rear lines at two thousand, and they kicked up some A.A. fire for him on the other side. I got four thousand and needed it. Looking back, I saw that Jerry was playing safe and taking five thousand or better.

Doll roared his ship straight for the target. It was to the south of the spot where he'd crossed the lines. I

picked up another thousand and looked the sky over. There were plenty of ships in sight.

OFF to the northward, circling, were two little planes; Fokkers, Albatroses, Nieuports or Sops, there was no telling which. But there were two larger ships three or four thousand feet below them, and it was my guess that they were Rumplers—enemy fighters, watching over the planes below. I pointed them out to Eddie and banked to the southward.

Doll was down around fifteen hundred, and A.A. shells were bursting all around his ship. I groaned. The converging trench spot was important, that was sure; they were giving it plenty of protection.

The camera ship was over the spot, I guessed. As my plane roared along the line of trenches, I saw Jerry's ship cross the line. He was flying high, and staying high. It was a wise play. There should have been *chassé* planes guarding Doll's D.H.—but there weren't. And about the only use we could be was to hold off attackers until Doll got his ship's tail across the line again.

Doll was circling the plane now. We roared over him, three thousand feet above him. A.A. shells were spreading all over the place; and they'd attract attention. Candler would have to work fast. I could see him in the rear cockpit. He was working with the camera.

Keeping my neck moving, I saw that Jerry Collins was staying high and winging along the line of trenches. The ships to the northward were still circling, and their pilots, granting that they were enemy planes, must have spotted the A.A. fire.

I banked around, headed back northward. There was only a mild wind, and the day was a sweet one—for this section of the front. My eyes went down to Doll's ship. She had a wing tilted and was slipping; avoiding A.A. bursts, I figured. Our D.H. vibrated as a shell spread smoke above and to the westward. I let her drop two hundred feet or so and then banked her mildly.

Doll was working very low. If they got pictures, they'd be good ones. And there was more A.A. fire in one sky spot than I'd ever seen before. Again the D.H. rode the concussion waves of a burst—again I slipped her. I could imagine what it was down below.

I WAS banking westward when I looked up and saw Jerry rocking the wings of his ship. He had her nosed toward the north, and one glance was enough. The two bigger ships that had been circling below the small ones were tailing it for somewhere back inside of

German territory. But the little fighters were winging toward us and coming fast!

Looking over the side as I let her come around, I saw that Doll was roaring low over the converging trench line.

I rocked my own plane's wings. Eddie shouted at me above the beat of the Liberty, and I nodded. But Doll didn't seem to see either our D.H.s or the oncoming German planes. He was busy giving Candler something to snap—too busy.

I had a choice—to climb and put up a fight near Jerry or to dive and be certain that Doll was warned. It was my hunch that the German pilots would spot the ship that was getting the pictures right away and pique on her, letting us go. The Boche front-line tactics, air tactics.

Swearing, I let Jerry stick it out alone and sent screaming the two-seater downward. At two thousand I had to pull up; the left wing of the ship tilted sharply as we nearly dived into a bursting shell. The air was filled with them. Diving again, I picked up the camera ship, roaring back toward the Allied lines. I waved my arms as we got in close to her and pointed up toward the sky, then waved him on. I saw Candler look up, then reach across the fuselage fabric that separated the two cockpits and grip Doll by the shoulder. The big pilot twisted his head. Candler got an arm out in the prop wash and pointed up.

And then, suddenly, Doll Kingsland banked the camera plane; banked her around and deliberately headed back toward the German third-line trenches again!

I swore fiercely. As I banked my plane I could see Doll's head. He was leaning out from the cockpit, looking up. He saw the enemy ships above, but still he held the camera ship in her flight toward the German rear lines. Then I zoomed, zoomed up toward Jerry Collins' plane and the diving enemy ships. One glance was enough; they were Fokkers. Already Bill Robbins, flying with Jerry, was squeezing lead out of his rear-cockpit gun. One of the Fokkers banked off and zoomed again.

JERRY was banking. I saw tracer bullets from the second Fokker slant close to the D.H.'s undergear. And that little plane didn't bank off and zoom. Her pilot held her in a screaming dive straight toward the D.H. camera plane!

I twisted my head and shouted at Eddie.

"We got to—get this Heinie!"

My plane was almost at the peak of her zoom stall,

but if I banked out of it now, the Boche pilot would go screaming on past us and drop on the camera plane. Doll Kingsland had gone crazy; he was thinking of the girl and Candler—not the pictures they had got. Some one had to stop the enemy fighters.

Five hundred feet of air separated us from the diving Fokker now. Now three hundred. But my ship was commencing to flutter; she was out of control. No forward speed!

I squeezed the stick trigger and saw tracer bullets rush in yellow-green color toward the little Fokker. It looked like a hit; and then we were falling off on a wing. I heard Eddie shout hoarsely and heard his rear-cockpit gun clatter and roar.

A strut sprayed splinters. Lead beat into the fuselage back of me. A shape dived past us at terrific speed. I fought the D.H. out of a spin and let her roar downward. She was almost on top of the Kingsland plane now. I got a flash of Candler, swinging the bracketed machine gun. But he never squeezed lead.

There was a spread of smoke—an A.A. fire burst—directly between the diving Fokker plane and the camera ship. It seemed nearer the Fokker. That plane rushed into the mushrooming clouds and was lost from sight. We had flying speed now, so I pulled up on the stick. Twisting my head, I saw that Eddie was gripping his right arm tightly with the fingers of his left hand.

His face was white. The gunner had been hit!

I swore fiercely, and then we were beyond the A.A. burst, and I saw two things, at almost the same time. The Fokker was plunging straight toward German soil! And Doll had banked the camera ship around; she was winging toward the Allied lines. But she was crippled. She was flying with a terrible left-wing droop. I could almost see that wing spread warping as she flew. She, too, had been hit, and hit hard.

I glanced upward, toward Jerry's plane. He was slanting downward, toward us; and the Fokker with which he had been combatting was going down in flames, far back of the enemy lines! Both enemy ships had been downed, perhaps one of them by his own A.A. fire. But the camera ship had been hit. And with that warping left wing—

Lower and lower I dropped my plane. Twisting my head, I shouted at Eddie:

"Is it bad?"

He tried to grin, and then suddenly his body slumped forward and his head vanished from sight back of the rear-cockpit cowling. Eddie was out!

I groaned. It might have been a ricocheting bullet, or it might have been a direct stream. What we needed was wide-open flight back to the squadron.

WE PASSED close to the camera plane. Her left wing was shattered near the tip; it trailed struts and fabric. Several flying wires dangled loosely. She was losing altitude steadily, but Doll was flying her with all the skill he possessed. He was using the right wing surfaces, as much as he could, and I could see that both he and Candler had their weight to that side of the cockpit. She wasn't wide open, but she was roaring steadily—and dropping.

A.A. fire chased us almost to the front lines. We got over, flying at eight hundred, with my ship gaining steadily on Doll's. Back of us came Jerry Collins.

Eddie was still out of sight in the rear cockpit. Again and again I jerked my head, watching the plane behind. Jerry had his ship up close to the camera plane now; and Doll only had a few hundred feet altitude. But we were within a half mile of the squadron field. I guessed that Doll had opened her up wide, taking a chance on ripping the wing off in order not to lose more altitude. He was a flying fool, and I remembered his words to Candler: "If I have to fly the ship without wings, I'll get you back!"

I circled the field at three hundred feet, getting around into the wind. And as I dived, the camera ship came in. She came in just skimming the eastern treetops, and she didn't get around into the wind. I was forced to roar up and bank around again to give her room.

She dropped the last thirty feet in a stall, and most of the left-wing surfaces dropped before she did. Ground-crew men were running out toward her. I saw the prop splinter. Then my ship hit in a fair landing and rolled toward the dead-line. I cut the switch, stood up in the front cockpit and shouted:

"First aid for my gunner!"

"Doc" Manley, riding a motor cycle side car, saw me waving. The driver headed toward the ship as I climbed over the side. I saw Doll drop down from the cockpit of his plane, saw Candler swinging a leg over the side. The crash stall had been a sweet one. There was something gripped in Candler's arms; the plates, I guessed. The ground-crew men had run up; they got Eddie out of the rear cockpit. He moved a little and half grinned at me. Jerry Collins was setting his D.H. down, close to the dead line. The adjutant's voice sounded.

"Clear this field! Snap into it, men! We'll have all the damn Heinie bombers in the sector if you don't."

I reached for a pill. My hands had been pretty steady; now the fingers started to shake. I needed the smoke. Things had happened—air things. It had been a swell stand-by session.

WHEN I left the field hospital, Eddie was sitting up and taking nourishment. He'd lost some blood, but there were only two bullets in his arm, above the wrist. That is, there had been two. Doc Manley had probed and got them loose. And Eddie had been lucky. They were the right mixture—not tracers.

I walked along the barracks corridor. The door of Candler's room was open. He called to me as I passed. I went in. Doll Kingsland was sitting on the cot beside the observer. He had a peculiar smile on his face.

"How's Eddie?" he asked, and I told him.

"How were the pictures? Come out yet?" I asked.

Candler nodded. "They look good," he said slowly. "Hell! They should be good!"

Doll grunted. Then he grinned. "I figured you liked pictures, so I gave you every chance," he stated.

Candler swore slowly. I got the idea that these two were sort of kidding each other, in a grim way. There wasn't that feeling of hatred; that was gone.

Doll looked at me. He grinned sort of sheepishly, then spoke to Candler.

"Show him the letter—he's in on this, anyway," he said.

Candler groaned. "I don't want to even handle it," he muttered. "Tell him, big boy."

Doll swore, then he looked at me.

"Made a fool of myself—all for nothing, Hen," he stated. "This blond baby was stringing us both along. There was a letter waiting for Candler. Guess mine hasn't got through the A.E.F. sooner-or-later system yet. She's married a cadet—a flying cadet—back in Dallas!"

I swore a little. The picture that had been on Candler's coop wall was gone. I guessed that Doll's was gone, too. And I felt sorry for the orderly's pencil sketch.

"Well," I said slowly, "those things will happen. You birds lost a couple of pictures, but you got some important ones. That makes it even up!"

Candler grunted. "Sure," he said weakly. Doll Kingsland shook his head.

"A cadet at Dallas!" he muttered. "Practicing figure 8s and tail spins, I bet! Can you beat it?"

There was a lot of silence.