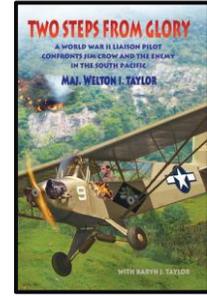


# TWO STEPS FROM GLORY

by Maj. Welton I. Taylor, Ph.D.



## Excerpt from CHAPTER 27: *MIRACLES APLENTY*

All of a sudden, my stomach rose in my throat, the bright blue of the ocean disappeared, and the dark green wall of the jungle re-appeared through the windshield. Worse, the jungle was now above my right wingtip and my left wingtip was almost brushing the trees. How had we lost over a hundred feet in altitude in the blink of an eye...?

A huge banyan tree loomed in the green wall dead ahead with its long tentacles reaching out as if to beckon me with open arms. In that moment, I realized that I no longer had control over anything: not my airplane, not my future, not the future of poor Charlie Sanders who, right about now, probably regretted having won the toss to ride in my back seat.

“I’m dead,” I heard a dispassionate voice announce in my head to no one in particular. How could I not be? My knees were under the dashboard; the gasoline tank was under the windshield; and right in front of the gas tank was the engine—red hot after two hours in the air. When the inevitable happened and I hit the solid four-foot diameter of the banyan tree, the impact would collapse the motor mount struts, the hot engine would rupture the gas tank, and the ensuing explosion would occur in my lap or on my chest. This was exactly what had happened to seven students and their instructors at Fort Sill. And from that horrifying example, I knew that our goose was about to be cooked.

Suddenly, the plane’s left wingtip dug into the trees. The jolt swung us thirty degrees to the left, removed the banyan tree from our path, and sent us plunging downward, instead. Now, the instrument of our deaths wouldn’t be the banyan tree; it would be...