

# UNBELIEVABLE

## Best Shot with a 1911. Ever.

By Philip Bourjaily

While compiling the timeline for “Pistol of the Century,” our tribute to the 1911 in the June issue of Field & Stream, I read through many accounts of the 1911 in combat.

The most unusual shot, (and possibly the best ever) made in wartime with a 1911 pistol had to be the one fired by a USAAF B-24 co-pilot named Owen J. Baggett in March, 1943 in the skies over Burma. Of course, I am biased toward this one as it involves a flying target . . .

On a mission to destroy a railroad bridge, Baggett’s bomber squadron was intercepted by Japanese Zero fighters and his plane was badly damaged. After holding off the enemy with the top turret .50s while the gunner tried to put out onboard fires, Baggett bailed out with the rest of the crew. He and four others escaped the burning bomber before it exploded.

The Zero pilots circled back to strafe the parachuting crewmen, killing two and lightly wounding Baggett, who played dead in his harness, hoping the Japanese would leave him alone. Though playing dead, Baggett still drew his .45 and hid it alongside his leg..just in case. A Zero approached within a few feet of Baggett at near stall speeds. The pilot opened the canopy for a better look at his victim.

Baggett raised his pistol and fired four shots into the cockpit. The Zero spun out of sight. Although Baggett could never believe he had shot down a fighter plane with his pistol, at least one credible report said the plane was found crashed, the pilot thrown clear of the wreckage with a single bullet in his head.

If Baggett really did shoot down a fighter with his 1911, it has to count as one of the greatest feats ever accomplished with a 45. Baggett survived two years in a Japanese prison camp in Singapore and eventually retired from the Air Force as a colonel.

