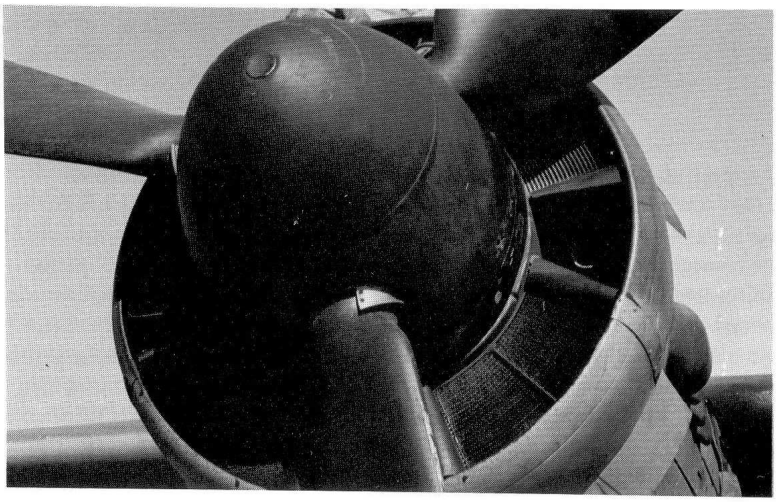
watching the aircraft. The stability of the aircraft was amazing it flew as if it were controlled by a precision autopilot.

Following lunch I filed our clearance at base operations and returned to the aircraft. We talked to the crowd for a few minutes and then climbed in the JU, fired up, and took off. Even in the tropical heat, we were now lifting off at about 180 kmph (110 mph) and before we reached the 4000 ft marker. We turned on heading and climbed to a cool and comfortable 8500 ft, out of the humid jungle heat. This leg was 1012 miles long, terminating at Accra, Ghana (previously referred to as the Gold Coast), on the west coast of Africa and the North Atlantic.

The terrain continued mostly jungle wilderness and some mountains, but more developed areas as we approached the coast. Most of this flight was over Nigeria, but we also passed over Benin, Togo, and, of course, Ghana. Throughout the day the JU 88 performed and handled beautifully. The stability of the aircraft was amazing—it flew as if it were controlled by a precision autopilot. With only heading-hold on autopilot, the trim system and lateral and longitudinal stability had to be exceptionally good to hold altitude and wings level as well as it did. Cook had just gone over our fuel situation on the previous flights and we were doing better than planned. On the Khartoum to Maiduquri flight of 1341 miles, we landed with near full wing tanks and about 100 gallons in the bomb bay tanks. Our longest leg was 1420 miles going into South America. We had solved our fuel problem with the 600 gallons in the P-38 drop tanks and now had a very large reserve even on our longest legs.



Close up shot of engine inlet. Note the annular radiators and cowling, an unusual arrangement for a liquid cooled inline engine (35-1).

Our flight into Accra was uneventful with the aircraft continuing to perform better than we expected. About 75 miles out, we overtook a C-87 (a cargo B-24). He called us and we chatted a bit as there wasn't much traffic in this part of the world then. We landed as planned a few minutes before sundown with no write-ups. As we parked and shut down, another crowd assembled. The service crew had arrived at the airplane, so Cook started his refueling and performed a complete post flight inspection, as the next two flight legs were over the North and South Atlantic Oceans. He had all the help he could use. I answered questions from the crowd for a few minutes, then picked up my flight kit and went to close the flight plan. I very carefully checked weather for the ocean route and well into the interior of South America; it looked good, with mild, stable wind. No problems were noted in the notam file.

I then went over my charts and logs and double checked all data. These two legs were our high risk legs with the toughest navigation, as there were no check points or navigational aids enroute. Also, I had to time-plot five heading changes to correct for 12 degrees of variation change between Accra and Ascension Island. Ascension is small, approximately seven by nine miles, and the nearest other land mass is over 500 miles away. Finding it was our only option for success and survival. The very light winds would be a minor factor, if the forecast was correct.

There was another officer working up flight data on the next table. I was finished and packing my flight kit when a pilot walked up to him. I started to walk away when the pilot inquired as to whether I was the pilot of the JU 88. I said I was and he said that he was the pilot of the C-87 we had passed and talked to on the way in to Accra and the officer was his navigator. When he learned we were planning to depart in the morning for Ascension Island without a navigator, they were surprised. As we talked, he said he was leaving at dawn and offered to let us fly along with him. We discussed air speeds; she normally indicated around 190 to 195 mph and we were indicating 230 to 245 mph. He said he was light and could manage 200 without any trouble.

I liked the idea of tailing another ship with a navigator and liaison radio, but I did not know how the JU would handle at 200 mph. We agreed to give it a try at least part way and set a time to meet at operations. I asked the navigator if I could compare notes. Our headings were nearly identical except he changed headings every 1° of variation change, where I had corrected every 2°. I sent the usual progress message to all stations and gave planned flight legs for 10 October.

Lt. Cook arrived at base operations with word that the JU was serviced, the post flight was complete, the aircraft was clean, and the aircraft had been taken to an isolated area where it would not be available to casual visitors. We had dinner and turned in.

I awoke about 0330, dressed, and opened the rather thick sealed letter. To my surprise, it contained orders promoting me to major and included a couple of leather flight clothing oak leaf insignia as well as a pair of pin-on. The promotion order was signed by the commanding general of 9th Air Force. I was naturally pleased with the promotion, but even more gratified that some key 9th AF personnel thought enough of my work to go to the trouble they did to make the promotion a reality. The restriction against leaving Africa before 10 October was apparently based on the promotion date. Being a theater promotion, I needed to be in the 9th Air Force area—the western boundary was the west coast of Africa.

Lt. Cook and I had a quick breakfast and I went to base operations and he went to the aircraft. At base operations, the C-87 pilot was preparing his clearance. We set an estimated time of departure and advised operations that we planned to fly together and wanted a close interval takeoff. Weather, winds, and notams all reflected good conditions, so I annotated my clearance for takeoff and flight with the C-87 and filed. At the JU-88 Lt. Cook had our gear loaded and the bird ready to go. We could see the C-87, so we