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#### REUNION

It's final - the next reunion will be in San Diego California from September 12th to September 14th, 1996 at the U.S. Grant Hotel. There will be more later.

As of now there will be a dedication of a CNAC at the San Diego Air Museum. Several of us will arive 1 or 2 days early. The three scheduled days seem a little short.

We are working on a full schedule of activities. The most important aspect of the Reunion is the renewal of old friendships. Remember "It is later than you think." Send your reservation now.







Jerry

#### **BOOKS & AUTHORS**

Few of us may have led a life which we would consider notable. I do not think I have but some have and have taken the time to write about it and actually publish it or get is published. Many of these attempts are out of print but a few are still available. The autobiographies which have been written describe a time and people who were CNAC. As I gather these books on my library shelves I revel. See these, I was a part of it! These were the men who I knew, lived with, and in a small way, a part of.

# China Pilot Flying for Chiang and Chennault

## Felix Smith

It begins with my last CNAC flight into Chungking's San Hu Pa, backflashes to Pottschmidt and his work, and tells of a trip over the Hump with Potty.

It shows the unlikely birth of CAT--"The harebrained China scheme" that almost crashed before it began--and portrays CAT's work and the characters we encountered during the Cold War--the route that led America from World War II to Vietnam.

For signed copies of China Pilot order direct from:

Felix Smith 12600 West Prospect Drive New Berlin, Wisconsin 53151

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You can order the book, Himalajan Rogue directly from Pete or use the order blank.

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If you wonder why the same names keep coming up, don't be supprised. It is because they write something I can print. Your story would be in there even if it wasn't too exciting The news letter is about all our members and for all our members. We didn't know it then but they were "good old days". Tell me more about them.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO CHINA

#### FRED PITTENGER

It was fall, 1944. PAN AM was operating as a squadron of the navy (Naval Air Transport). I was on an atoll named Funa Futi, Ellice islands, located some 700 miles south of Tarawa. The war had passed me by and I was bored. A note showed up stating that C.N.A.C. could use several more mechanics per Bill Newport. Where do I sign up and how do I get there! I sent a note to my boss in Pearl City, Oahu. So did Chuck Sims and Bill Sanford who were already based at Pearl. We were accepted and headed back to New York. We met Ladd Moore, Maupin, Gibson, Shoemaker and many others ready for their second tour. All were awaiting transportation. We went to C-46 school in Buffalo N.Y. and waited and waited. The war ended but C.N.A.C. still needed us. So finally we went, via South America and North Africa, eventually ending up at Dum Dum Airport, Calcutta.

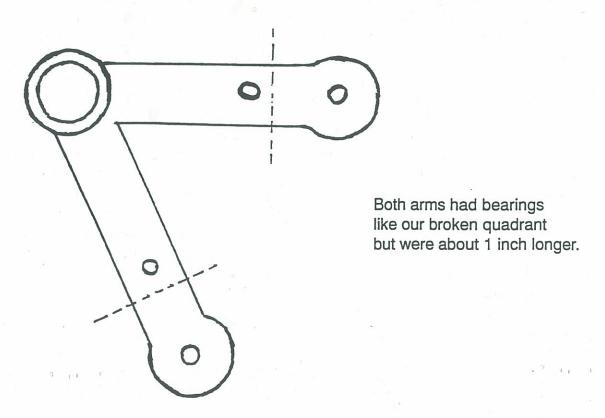
Several days passed as we obtained our various work and residential permits. Word came back that there was a C-47 grounded in Kweiyang with a bad engine. Newport said "Pitt, you're expendable, no assignment as yet, so head on up and change that engine."

A C-47 just out of overhaul was almost ready. Five Chinese mechanics were made available including their leadman, Shorty Wong. From my point of view, none of the mechanics spoke English. We loaded a chain fall, chains, 3 long poles, many railroad ties, spare cans of oil, and the engine on an engine stand and many pieces of pipe for rollers, pry bars, and tools. We were to leave early next morning. I arrived at the airplane early. All of the mechanics were ready. The pilot showed up, It was Hawg-leg Robbie. He stated, "Ha! My new copilot." "No" I said, "I'm the mechanic in charge of changing the engine." "No", Robbie said, " You are my copilot. You have already passed the test. You speak English." So we pre-flighted the airplane, checked the fuel, drained the sumps, filled Robbie's Zippo and then piled on board. The Chinese copilot graciously gave up his seat to me. Robbie instructed me to hold the throttles open with the back of my hand and told me to raise the gear when he told me to. We proceeded to DinJan and fueled . Then across the hump to Kunming. I was deeply impressed with the hump! From Kunming, we flew to Kweiyang. At least I think it was Kweiyang. My memory of names is a bit fuzzy after fifty years. In any respect it was a dirt strip used as a training field by Chinese B-25 pilots. Everything was covered with a very fine red dust. Each time an airplane landed or took off, a thick cloud of red dust would completely blank out the world. We taxied up as close as possible to the grounded airplane. The pilot and crew of the grounded C-47 were overjoyed to see us. We proceeded to build up a "Pig-Pen" of railroad ties at the cargo door. We chained the three poles together, straddling the "Pig-Pen", hung on the chain fall and muscled the engine and stand to the cargo door. We hooked the chain fall to the engine and with much sweat, were able to get the engine out of the cargo door and on to the "Pig-Pen". Then with the chain fall as support, we pulled the "Pig-Pen" apart and eventually lowered the engine to the ground. As you are all aware, there is no way to move the airplane away from any thing between the wing and horizontal stabilizer. Even if we could, we had no truck or trailer available to us. So, with the railroad ties, roller pipes, crow bars, pry bars and muscle, we eased the engine out board inch by inch until the engine was clear of the airplane. My previous experience had been with PAN AM and the Navy. This was the first time I had ever seen two pilots and their crews get their hands dirty and work up a sweat.

As soon as the engine was clear of the airplane, the pilot of the grounded airplane thanked us kindly, loaded his crew on to our plane and took off. This left Robbie, his crew of two and my crew of five on the ground at Kweiyang. Stranded. We had to get the engine changed!

By this time we were beat. We walked about 15 minutes to a Chinese hostel and obtained a room. The beds had woven rope mattresses, no sheets or blankets. We collapsed until first light. We slept in our clothes to try to keep out the lice - the lice won. The mechanics who slept on the airplane to stand guard, were lucky, no lice. After many hours of sweating, the three pole hoist was in place and we were about ready to lower the failed engine. I was not happy. The hoist looked to me to be about two inches too far from the fire wall. I was afraid the engine would swing out and back and possibly break something. I wanted to move the hoist. Shorty Wong did not. He finally took Robbie's arm and my arm and said: "Go tea house". Then pointing at my watch and raising one finger stated "Come back one hour". I gave up. Robbie and I went for a cup of tea. When we got back. the engine was on the ground. But a very sad looking Shorty showed me the mixture quadrant on the firewall. One arm was broken off. I was not pleased. I knew I should have insisted that the hoist be moved. Shorty was not pleased because he knew that the hoist should have been moved. But our problem was of course, no spare parts. I told Shorty to go check with the Chinese Air Force crews to see if an airplane was cracked up anywhere near by. All of this discussion was with me yelling in English and Shorty yelling in Chinese and Pigeon English. Finally he took off while the rest of us got the old engine out of the way and new engine in place, hoist moved and eventually the new engine was mounted.

Shorty got back and we found out that a C-46 had crashed about an hour's walk from us. Robbie and his Hawg Leg and Cigar, Shorty and I, plus hack saw and tools took off and found the airplane. We found a quadrant with the same one-half inch shaft size and with arms at nearly correct angles to each other but the arms were about an inch too long.



We were pleased to find anything even close. Back at the C-47 we found out that we could not use the long arms. Also the shaft on the C-47 had been line drilled and was not centered correctly.



We sawed off the two arms to near the correct length and drilled. No bearings, just lots of oil.

Because of the offset hole in the shaft, the tapered locking bolt would not fit. We drove an eighth inch cotter pin through the shaft and bent it over and then bolted actuating rods to the quadrant, leaving the bolts slightly loose to prevent binding. We were able to rig the mixture control to obtain On and Off OK.

We installed the prop, but just before we installed the dome, an airplane taxied by and deposited a thick layer of red dust in the prop. We pulled off the prop, washed it out with gasoline, re oiled it and this time got it mounted and dome installed.

Then again with much muscle and sweat, we got the failed engine to the cargo door, built up our "pig-pen" of railroad ties and eventually got the failed engine aboard and tied down. We ran up the new engine and after a few minor adjustments, found it OK. We loaded everything and everybody aboard and took off for Chungking. As you C.N.A.C. Pilots know and I found out, San Hu Pa Airport is in the middle of the Yangtze river and is only 2200 feet long, surfaced with more or less flat cobble stones. From the rivers edge a steep rocky slope raised up 1200-2000 feet. The approach is to fly down the canyon until you cross high tension cables, cut engines to idle, add full flaps and dive for the runway. Crossing the hump impressed me but so did landing at San Hu Pa.

After landing and parking, we boarded a "Ferry" secured to a cable. When crossing the river, the cable prevented us from being washed down stream. As we were crossing over to the shore below the city, I gaped around to see all that I could see.

Suddenly I saw a baby floating down the river. I became hysterical and screamed and pointed. Robbie grabbed my arm, squeezed and snarled, "Shut Up". "Don't make an ass of yourself, its probably only a girl that someone is getting rid of." I managed to contain myself but was shaken up by the experience.

There were many boats along the shore. Endless numbers of coolies with "Yo-Yo" poles carried cargo up and down the 600+ steps up to the city level. It looked like a human ant hill. We barely stepped ashore until we were literally assaulted by coolies trying to grab our B-4 bags out of Robbie's and my hands. All (so I found out) were telling us that they would carry our bags up the steps for the lowest prices. We hung on to our bags and the Chinese crew and mechanics told them "NO!"

Before we got to the C.N.A.C. office and hostel, I began to regret not letting a coolie carry my bag, but I was told that once the coolie got the bag, we might never see the coolie or bag again. I also learned that the sedan chairs being carried up and down the stairs could be carrying wealthy Chinese or women with bound feet. For the first time I began to feel that I was really in China.

At the hostel we bathed and deloused with DDT. Our dirty laundry disappeared and

arrived back next morning clean, deloused, ironed, and folded.

After bathing and dressing in clean clothes, we had dinner and sacked-out in beds with sheets. Next day was an anticlimax. We got up, had breakfast, went down the hill, boated to San Hu Pa, and flew to Kunming. I found out that I was to remain and take over as chief mechanic. Mangam was to take about a week to check me out before he took off for the states. He only stayed about two days. Bill Newport came up and held my hands and introduced me to the two lead mechanics, C.C. Woo and Blackie Wong.

I had written up in the airplane log book, in great detail exactly what we had done as to the emergency repair of the mixture quadrant. And, that it must be replaced as soon as the airplane arrived in Calcutta. Robbie, crew and mechanics boarded the plane and off they went leaving me in Kunming.

End of story? Not quite.

About a month later I was in the hostel dining room one evening when in came Robbie and stated "I'm flying our favorite airplane again, picked it up in Din Jan". After dinner, we had a few Haywood Gins and shot the breeze with other crew members. At around midnight, Robbie stated "They probably never did replace your "Emergency Repair." After a few more drinks and my arguments against Robbie's statement, we decided to go to the airplane and check it. We piled in my jeep, drove the mile to the airport and had some mechanics bring a work stand and screw driver. We opened up the cowl and looked at the mixture quadrant with the aid of my flashlight. My "Emergency Repair" was still installed and obviously working OK. We closed the cowl and returned to the hostel.

Now, the story is ended! I was truly introduced to China!

P.S. The quadrant was eventually replaced but I do not know when.

Fred Pittenger

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MARCH 2, 1996

DEAR REG;

MY WIFE AND I FIRST MET CAPT. SHARKEY AT THE AMERICAN FLYERS SCHOOL AT FORT WORTH IN 1944 WHILE SENT THERE BY CNAC TO GET AN INSTRUMENT RATING. HE WAS QUITE A GUY, AND WE HAD PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF HIS HUMP EXPERIENCES BY WATCHING THE CAMEL CIGARETTE ADS.

MY EXPERIENCE WAS AS A FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR IN LIGHT PLANES, BUT WAS HIRED AT MEMPHIS WITH ABOUT 25 OTHER SIMILAR PILOTS. THERE WAS NO INTERVIEW, NO ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATION WITH THE CNAC OFFICIAL FROM NEW YORK, JUST THE SIMPLE STATEMENT, "CNAC CAN USE ALL OF YOU ASSEMBLED IN THIS ROOM, THANK YOU FOR COMING". AND WE ALL SIGNED UP.

MY WIFE, JESSIE, WENT ON TO HER SENIOR YEAR AT STANFORD, AND I AGAIN MET SHARKEY IN NEW YORK WHERE WE MADE ARRANGEMENTS FOR VISAS TO TRAVEL TO CALCUTTA. I GREW UP SOUTH OF SAN DIEGO IN PALM CITY AND AS AN UNEDUCATED COUNTRY BOY, SEEING NEW YORK FOR THE FIRST TIME WAS QUITE EXCITING....GOOD PRACTICE FOR WHAT WAS TO COME. WITH THE VISA BUSINESS OVER, SHARK & I BOARDED THE TRAIN TO MIAMI FOR THE TRIP TO CALCUTTA. I LEFT FIRST AND SHARK ASKED ME TO TAKE A NEWLY PURCHASED .38 OF HIS IN MY LUGGAGE. SURE, NO PROBLEM!

ARRIVING IN KARACHI, I WAS ASKED IF I HAD ANY FIREARMS WITH ME, AND, OF COURSE, I SAID YES. I WAS QUITE SURPRISED WHEN ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE. SO, THE .38 STAYED IN KARACHI, AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF SHARKEY. LATER, IN CALCUTTA, SHARK DIDN'T TELL ME HOW HE GOT PAST CUSTOMS IN KARACHI, BUT I COULD TELL HE WASN'T TOO HAPPY WITH HIS NEW FRIEND, PETE BILLON! NOTHING MORE WAS EVER SAID ABOUT IT.

MY FIRST TRIP OVER THE HUMP WAS WITH ROBBIE, ON A MOONLIT CLOUDLESS NIGHT. ROBBIE WAS QUITE SURPRISED THAT I HAD NO MULTI-ENGINE TIME AND ONLY ABOUT 50 HOURS OF HOOD TIME, BUT HE WAS VERY KIND TO THIS TENDERFOOT, AND LET ME WANDER AROUND THE HEADING AND ALTITUDE FOR AWHILE BEFORE TAKING BACK THE FLYING! I ALSO

LEARNED NOT TO SWING MY FLASHLIGHT AROUND THE COCKPIT LOOKING FOR THINGS. THINGS WENT BETTER ON THE RETURN TRIP TO DINJAN.

CHECKED OUT AS CAPTAIN WITH POTTSCHMIDT ONE NIGHT IN 1945, HE DOZED OFF AFTER MT. TALI, SO I KINDA FELT I HAD IT MADE BEFORE WE GOT TO THE ASSAM VALLEY....OR....WAS HE JUST PLAYING POSSUM? PROBABLY!

AFTER ABOUT 110 ROUND TRIPS I RETURNED HOME ON THE TROOP SHIP GREELEY, CALCUTTA TO NEW YORK. CAPT. ANSON LISK WAS ALSO ON BOARD. CAPT. LISK RETURNED TO A FARM AT CIUDAD OBREGON, MEXICO AND WE VISITED HIM THERE AFTERWARD, BUT I DON'T THINK HE IS ON YOUR CNAC LIST. ALSO MISSING ARE A COUPLE OF CAPTAINS WHO DIED IN THE JAN 1946 HONG-KONG PROBLEM .... TUD TARBET AND ROD GREEN.

SINCERELY, (

JOHN "PETE" BILLON, CAPTAIN CNAC

He batted lung conver for a year and a half and had such faith and courage to the way end. I know that the CNAC days was a treasured time of his life, Sincerely,

Lynette Lee

March 2, 1989

Dear In Farran,

I would like to

inform the CAAC

association of the

death of James P.T. Lee

on Oct. 14, 1987 in

Hong Kong.

### MY PLANE WAS HI-JACKED BY COMMIES!

By Capt. Donald Hassig as told to Earl J. Wilson

There was nothing special about the flight. It was a routine trip at strictly CAVU—ceiling and visibility unlimited. Not a cloud marred the clear, wintry, blue sky, and I watched the flat monotony of the Chinese countryside slide by under me without interest as I trimmed my plane and prepared to set the automatic pilot. I had no inkling, no inkling whatever as to what was about to happen.

As a matter of fact, the way we airplane drivers figure it, the run from Shanghai to Tsingtao is a pretty easy shot, 400 miles over the level, innumerable rice paddies of Kiangsu and then a short stretch over the blue—yes, blue—waters of the Yellow Sea. It's only about a two and one-half hour trip from "block-to-block," meaning from the time you start taxing until the time you stop taxiing, which is no strain, no pain.

It was the morning of January 30th, 1949, and I never will forget it if I live to be a hundred. The war was steamrolling down over North China like crazy. Only a few weeks earlier the Communist armies had enveloped Peiping and Tientsin after chunking shells into each for a period of time, and now the red troops were to the banks of the Yangtze, evidently ready to move on and finish the job all over China. Tsingtao, where I was headed, had only recently been de-activated as the main U.S. Naval base because of the onrush of Mao Tze Tung's troops, but it was still in the hands of the Nationalists.

But at the time I wasn't thinking much of any of that. We often fly over Communist-occupied territory and rarely give it a thought, except, of course, when they start shooting at us. I had left the crowded air terminal of Lungwha at Shanghai on the dot of eight. I expected to be in Tsingtao by ten thirty, with a half hour layover to pick up more passengers, then back to Shanghai. All of which was fine, because I had a date with my Portuguese girl friend, Branda Senna, and had every intention of catching the early show at the Cathay and afterwards doing some dining and dancing at the new Airlines Club before the midnight curfew clamped on the city.

That's what I thought then, but I wasn't to see Branda for another 45 days, which is a pretty long time to keep a girl waiting for a date.

The morning had gone as usual for a working day. Promptly at six a.m. the station wagon had stopped in front of my apartment house at 171 Rue Albert in Shanghai's "Frenchtown". And as usual I didn't eat at the house, but just put on my old Army uniform with the CNAC (Chinese National Aviation Corporation) insignia and went outside. The rest of what was to be my crew for the day were waiting, Co-pilot C.L. Hsu, and Radio Operator T. Y. Waung.

1 1 1

Most of the crews are like that, an American as captain with a Chinese co-pilot and radio operator. Hsu was like a lot of the Chinese co-pilots, a like-able guy, who during the hectic days of flying the "hump" had been selected for flight training mainly because he could speak some English. The training, such as it was, being mostly just riding beside a regular pilot until you catch on.

At the field I got my clearance from operations, checked the weather, downed some coffee and scrambled eggs, and went out to the plane to make a routine check. I took a dip-stick and checked the gas—something we like to do ourselves in China—and noticed the manifests called for a couple bags of mail and fifteen passengers. The only thing I noticed about the passengers as they got on was that one woman carried a small baby with the usual Chinese split pants exposing his bare bottom. But I was to take a much closer look at her later.

We had been airborne twenty minutes when my co-pilot decided to dish out the box of lunches and he asked the radio operator to help him. For some reason we didn't have a stewardess aboard on that trip. Good thing, too, because she would have found more than the usual headaches in the passenger compartment.

No sooner had we left the airstrip than five of my passengers stripped off their long Chinese gowns to reveal themsleves armed and wearing ordinary business suits. I suppose they thought the gowns were a disguise. Immediately they spread out—I learned later—brandished their weapons, and told the passengers to sit still and shut up. The woman with the baby was one of them. With one hand she nursed the baby, and with the other she held a gun.

As my co-pilot and radio operator came into the passenger compartment two of the Communist came up from behind and jammed revolvers against them. My radio operator looked at the guy and told him to quit kidding. The Communist did not smile. "This is not joke," he said, and prodded Waung harder with his gun. Both of the dazed crew members raised their hands and were taken to the back of the plane and seated opposite one another.

Of course, at the time I knew nothing of this activity in the back of my plane. All I knew was that a few minutes after Waung and Hsu went to distribute the box lunches some character came and slumped down into the co-pilot's seat and said to me, "Cap, I don't feel so good." I felt no apprehension about his being there, flying is rather informal in China, to say the least, and often some CNAC employee will wander up to the cockpit. I asked the man what was the matter and he just said, "I don't know, I just don't feel so good."

Later I learned his name was C. Li and that he was a former CNAC co-pilot, discharged for inefficiency. He was short and stocky and wore an old Army flight jacket. "Well," I told him "if you feel like it we can go on. But we're still close to Shanghai and if you're really in bad shape I'll turn around and take you back." I figured I could let him off and then continue on the regular trip.

I sensed someone standing behind me, but I didn't look around until I saw the guy in the co-pilot's seat nod his head. I looked around and found myself looking into the muzzle of a 45 calibre revolver and I want to state it had the biggest bore I ever saw in my life. Holding the gun

was a tall, rather handsome Chinese who said to me, "Don't touch anything."

To say I was flabbergasted would be putting it mildly. All I could think of was the only other time I'd ever heard of a plane bing held up in mid-air, and that was an incident that had happened between Hong Kong and Portuguese Macau only six months earlier. At that time the pirates, whose motives were to kidnap the passengers and hold them for ransom, had gotten excited and shot the pilot dead. And there was no one else aboard who could fly the plane! It crashed and killed 26 persons. One pirate was the only survivor.

No, I wasn't about to touch anything. I didn't say a word. All I could do was think about that other hi-jack and keep looking into the big, round, black, hole in the end of the pistol pointed at my head.

The man holding the gun was named Ying Kue-cheng, he was the leader of the group. I didn't know his name then, but later learned he was former assistant director of the Civil Aeronautic Administration's air traffic department for Shanghai. Two of the other gun-wielders were also former CAA employees who had been discharged. The others, including the woman with the baby, were never identified.

The guy with the gun was most polite. "Stand up and follow me, please." he said and I did so while, gun in hand, he backed into the passenger compartment as I held my hands way up high in the air. The plane was an old "bucket-seat" C-47 with canvas seats along the sides and he made me sit in one and fasten the safety belt.

I saw the rest of my crew under the cold eye and gunpoint of a guard at the back of the plane. Another guard stood just opposite me. All the passengers were motionless in their seats. I've been in a lot of airplanes, but I never expect to see a scene like that in one again. I looked at the tall, well-groomed leader and asked, "Well, what happens now?"

"You have nothing to worry about," he told me. 'we are all very good pilots and the man in front has more than 2,000 hours in a C-47." Then he went to the back of the plane where the luggage was piled, dug into his suitcase, produced an Army type hat with some sort of a brass insignia and put it on. After that he vanished into the cockpit.

Presently Ying came back, he had a map in his hand and he showed it to me. One glance was enought to see the hi-jack had been planned in some detail. The course from Shanghai to Tsingtao was clearly marked, and also there was a course turning off to Tsinan, capital of the Shantung Province, and located about 200 miles to the west of Tsingtao. It had fallen into Communist hands the previous August. Ying indicated Tsinan and said, "We go there."

I knew the place well, I'd been there lots of times before the Commies took it over. It is where one of the biggest railroad bridges in China crosses the Yellow River—known, because of its uncontrolled flood waters, as "China's Sorrow." It is a place famous for good pears and apples, and in the summertime we used to pick up real homeside watermelons there. It is a place where

the Japs built a 4000 foot long, dumb-bell shaped runway during the war, and the last time I had been there an old wooden shack had been alongside the strip as a passenger terminal and there had been a rickety bamboo control tower.

"So we go to Tsinan," I said, "then what happens to my crew and the passengers?" Ying told me I could take the plane on to Tsingtao as soon as he and his friends got off. "In that case," I said, "let me do the flying. I'll land where you want me to." Ying said, "That will not be necessary." I tried to argue with him and told him I was the legal pilot and the plane and passengers were my responsibility, but he cut me off. "Not any more," he said, "now they are my responsibility."

So that was that.

From my seat I could strain my neck and see from one of the windows that we were following the coastline of the Yellow Sea. After a time the plane banked sharply to the left and then I was able to recognize Haichow bay and I knew then we were turning off the main course. The next time Ying came into the cabin I told him our regular radio contact was overdue and that the field would be getting worried. I asked him if I could send a message. My request was politely, but firmly refused. He said I could write out a message and send it from the ground. I told him I doubted if we could make contact from the ground but he was adamant. So I wrote out this message:

"Plane landed Shantung Province all crew and passengers okay have been told we will be allowed to proceed Tsingtao in two days—Hassig XT-135"

The message was never sent.

At 11 a.m. we got over Tsinan. I could tell from glimpsing pagodas and other landmarks as we passed over the rolling countryside. Just then the plane began to lose altitude. At about 300 feet the Communist pilot began to circle the field while his friends came back and began throwing long streamers of toilet paper out as a signal. Within a few days I was to feel this a needless extravagance, especially since I learned later no one on the field saw the signal. On the contrary, some of the trigger-happy airport guards were shooting their rifles at us.

I was getting more and more nervous, the Commie pilot was rough and sloppy on the controls and besides I hadn't heard him extend the landing gear or lower the landing flaps. He made a steep left turn into the runway, losing altitude like mad and finally got down so low that the left wing tip was clearing the ground by only thirty feet! I strained to see the runway, but couldn't. All of a sudden this so-called pilot changed his mind and made a steep right turn and lost even more altitude! The plane was in a thirty degree bank with the right wing tip no more than five feet from the ground!

I couldn't stand it any longer and started unfastening my seat belt and yelling at the guard to let me go up there and land the plane before that idiot killed us all. But the damned guard just moved in closer and pushed his pistol closer to my head and said, "Not necessary."

Just then the plane leveled off, still down hugging the ground, and the leader came back from the cockpit with a worried look on his face. I yelled at him to let me land the plane, but he ignored me completely and went to the back of the plane to where my co-pilot was sitting. At gun point he forced Hsu forward,, with Hsu protesting all along that I be permitted to land the plane. It did no good.

When Hsu reached the cockpit, he told me later, his heart went in his mouth. Everything was wrong. The plane was at a dangerously low attitude and the landing gear was still up and so were the landing flaps. The props were in full high RPM, the throttles full forward, the cowl flaps closed, and both cylinder head temperatures were above 250 degrees. As the plane was only a few feet above sea level and the throttles full forward, the manifold pressure was several inches above the maximum allowable!

Hsu rapidly set everything as it should have been and made a good landing. I was never so glad to get on land before in my life. After we stopped rolling Ying told me I could go to the cockpit and get my stuff. By the time I had picked up my briefcase, headset, maps, route manual, manifests and so on I came back to find the passengers had been unloaded and taken away. Outside Ying was surrounded by a crowd of soldiers dressed in yellowish quilted Communist uniforms. They were all talking and smiling and shaking him by the hand and he was acting the big wheel.

I didn't want to waste any time, so I pushed into the crowd and asked Ying if I could send the message now. He said, "Later," so I told him I wanted to see the Commanding Officer, and he said, "Later," to that too. Presently a 1946 Ford truck came up and took me and the other two crew members off to a nearby shack under guard.

Outside this building there was a crowd of about 100 curious soldiers, both men and women, all in their clumsy quilted uniforms, not one with any insignia whatever. I never did see any insignia on any of the Communists. We were given some tea to drink and different people kept streaming in to see us like monkeys in the zoo. Some spoke good English, in fact one guy asked me if I hadn't been one of his flight instructors at Luke Field, Arizona, during the war. Others asked the usual questions about "Where are you from in the States?" and so on, but I didn't want conversation. I wanted to see the C.O. and said so. But I didn't get to see him.

In a little while we were taken to another room where the passengers were waiting. The bandits had disappeared. This was my first chance to speak with the passengers. During the coming weeks I was to get to know them all very well. There was Father Joseph Kaufhold, Regional Superior of the Divine Word Mission in Tsingtao; short, stocky, with a fringe of red hair and horn-rimmed glasses. He came from Dusseldorf and had been a missionary in China for more than 21 years.

There was W. Haesloop, a huge man, six three and weighing over 200 pounds. He was a German who owned a carpet factory in Tientsin specializing in the making of Lama patterns. He was about 50, with thin sandy hair and he wore baggy knickerbockers, checkerboard socks, and a black homburg hat.

And there was D. C. Chow, young assistant director of the Bank of China in Tsingtao, and his beautiful young bride of five days. She was dressed in slacks, wore a bright red Mandarin jacket, and suede jodpurs. In one corner sat Captain T. W. Chen of the Chinese Navy, who is in charge of the dock yards at Tsingtao. He was dressed like a captain in the U. S. Navy except for the Chinese insignia over the scrambled eggs on his cap. Captain Chen and none of the rest of us knew them that China's biggest warship, the Chungking, a recent gift from the British, was about to desert to the Communists. Recently it has been located by the Nationalist Air Force and is claimed to have been sunk with 1000 pound bombs.

And then there were three Chinese merchants in long gowns, who not many years ago wouldn't have dreamed of riding a foreign devil sky wagon. Now they take such transportation for granted. One of them I nick-named "Junior" and all during our imprisonment the name stuck. None of them could speak English.

Pretty soon we were all led out to a rattletrap Jap-built truck and taken on the five mile trip over a rough road into the city. We passed countryside that outwardly looked no different from Nationalist China. There were the farmers working in the field, the rickshaws, wheel barrows, and little carts pulled by mules along the road, and the men and women carrying produce in to the city on long bamboo poles. We wound up in a building located in some sort of a park. I noticed a tall flag pole in the center of the park, but it had no flag. During my entire time behind the Bamboo Curtain I never saw a flag of any kind. In the room where we were taken, however, instead of the usual picture on the wall of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, founder of the Chinese Republic, there was a picture of Communist leader Mao Tze Tung.

One man came in and harangued us in Chinese. I don't speak the language, but later my co-pilot told me it was a little talk on the merits of Communism. We were also each given a piece of paper on which to write our names, ages, address and the kind and amount of money we were carrying besides any suggestions we might want make. I put down that I was born in Cope, Colorado in the U.S.A. and that I had some Chinese Gold Yuan, some Hong Kong dollars, and seventy-five bucks U. S. And I also put down that I had repeatedly asked to see the Commanding Officer and that I still wanted to see him.

It was about this time that Mr. Chang appeared on the scene. He said he was secretary to the mayor, and maybe he was and maybe he wasn't, but we all got to see a lot of him as the days went by. With Chang was a man from the police who wanted to search us. He took away my headset, oxygen hose and adapter, manifests, ticket application forms and such, but when he tried to take away my American passport I began to scream and so finally he just made a few marks on a piece of paper and let me keep it.

When the cop finished Chang took over. He was a short, fat man with horned rimmed glasses and most of the time his face was wreathed in a big smile that showed a dimple in one cheek. And he wore the usual yellow padded uniform without insignia. He said he would show us to our quarters, which, he assured us, were the best in town. With that he led us under guard one block away to the Stein Hotel. This was a European-style brick building with two courtyards completely surrounded by various parts of the structure. We were to have freedom of the building and the courtyards, but we couldn't go outside and there were guards with rifles to see that we

didn't, both at the entrance and in the yards.

At any rate they gave the best room to me and my crews members. It was about thirty by twelve feet with dirty walls, a ragged carpet, some old beat-up furniture, and three bunks. Four ancient amateurish oil paintings hung on the walls and there were windows with missing panes of glass that overlooked one courtyard and the street outside.

Meanwhile back in Shanghai they had begun to look for us. Three planes were sent out on search missions and one of them, the plane flown by my friend Dean Anderson, I learned later, spotted my ship on the Tsinan airfield. Communist soldiers were busy trying to cover the plane with straw mats, but the tail was still visible and he was able to read the number, XT-135, and spot the CNAC symbol. Anderson roared down over the field at fifty feet trying to spot us. He was planning to land if he could see us and fly us out. Otherwise, he had instructions to try to set up a radio appointment to talk to me. But he was unable to raise a response from the radio on the field so he scribbled a message on the cover of a lunchbox and dropped it as he made another pass over the strip. On the ground the soldiers were wagging white flags at him to land, but when they saw he wasn't going to they began shooting at him.

I heard his plane flying low and knew it must be one of my friends searching. During that first day and the days to come I was to hear many other planes come over. Actually Tsinan is directly on the air route to the city of Tainyuan, the last stronghold of the Nationalists in North China. Completely surrounded by the Red troops, the city was being supplied with rice, medicine, ammunition and other items through parachuted air drops. Sometimes I would hear as many as 30 or 40 flights in a day going over. And every single time one of them went over the Communists in the city would blow their air raid siren.

The alarm was three ten second blasts on the siren, and the all clear was one thirty second blast. If a plane was coming over after dark they would pull a master switch and douse all the lights in the city. But I never saw anyone pay the slightest attention to the alarms and I never saw any shelters and I never saw anything other than cargo planes in the sky.

Soon after we settled in the Stein Hotel a man came to see us who claimed to be a Communist correspondent. We gave him our names and addresses and he promised they would be broadcast over the Communist radio at Yenan. But no one ever heard them broadcast, so I suppose the man was just another policeman. Chang came back with his big grin the same day and again asked the routine questions.

By this time it was quite clear that I wasn't going to get my plane back. Chang told us that if we wanted to stay we were welcome, but if we wanted to leave Red China we were free to do so. We all informed him that we were most anxious to get back to our homes. He smiled and said it would be arranged. And then he said, "It will take a little time, of course." Later I was to learn that his idea of a little time and mine differ more than somewhat.

During the second day four men came at various times to question me. They were from one government bureau or the other. And they asked a lot of leading questions. They wanted to know how many planes CNAC had, how many American worked for the line, the names of the

American pilots, how much money they made, and what I thought about Communists.

"I don't think anything about it," I told them. "I'm just out here to drive an airplane.

Then they wanted to know about my wartime flying experience, the names of the different organizations I had been with, the component parts, how many missions I had flown during the war (35 combat missions—Editor's note) what cities I had bombed, but I told them I was not permitted to give out such information and they didn't press me. Then I asked them for permission to notify the American Consul General at Peiping that I was okay, but they said they'd have to take that up higher. And they also just gave me double-talk when I asked to see the "head guy" around there.

(Had Hassig wished to tell of his wartime experiences he might have told them about the time over Western Germany on the way back from a bombing mission when he ran in heavy flak which knocked the rudder and elevator off his plane, the Liberty Belle, cut most of the control cables, killed the radio operator, one of the gunners, and nearly blew an arm off another gunner. He could have told them of fighting his crippled plane back for an hour in that condition and finally setting down on a fighter strip in Belgium and saving the life of his gunner. And he might have mentioned they gave him the Distinguished Flying Cross for that piece of work, all of which might have given the Communists a little something else to mull over—Editors Note.)

At first we were all optimistic about being released, but when nine days passe during which we had been able to learn absolutely zero, we decided to write a letter to the mayor. It was written in both English and Chinese, but the only good it did was to get our food improved a little. Previously we had had mostly mantos to eat, heavy soggy dough cakes made of barley, with a few onions, cabbage, celery and such, a typical poor Chinese farmer's diet. But after the letter we began to get a little meat occasionally, some rice now and then, noodles, and fried lotus roots.

Meanwhile, though I didn't know it at the time, because of our situation CNAC had begun to take special precautions against further piracy of their aircraft. They authorized all North China-bound plane crews to carry weapons, and the pilots were required to enforce the compulsory disarming of all passengers before each flight. And the communication door between the cockpit and the passenger cabin were all equipped with stout locks.

The CNAC officials had a pretty good idea of what had happened to my plane. The second day it disappeared from the airfield. Then a week later it turned up again. The Communists were known to be operating a night airline from Tsinan to Soviet-held Port Arthur and evidently my plane was now added to the shuttle. I kept a diary at the time and one night wrote, "Siren 2210 hours—Who dat?" I figured it was the Port Arthur plane, possibly even my own.

Time lay heavy on our hands. I guess boredom is the worst enemy of all prisoners. We were never allowed out of the hotel, even Father Kaufhold was refused when he asked permission to be taken to Mass on Sunday. We could walk out into the courtyard, but it was small, dirty, and cold, and there was always a rifleman there. We had a "hall boy" to clean our room, make our beds, bring us tea and hot towels, so that we did not even have these few simple chores to help kill time.

One of the Chinese merchants—"Junior"— had a deck of cards which were almost worn out by the time our confinement was over. Only a few of us played bridge in the beginning, but the others soon learned, especially the merchants, who even learned enough English to bid.

Haesloop and myself made ourselves a chess set out of the top of a cardboard box and we cut out squares and lettered on the names of the pieces. He was a good chess player and so was Father Kaufhold. And during the time there I even learned to play Chinese chess which is entirely different from the game we know. It has a general instead of a king—no queen—and general's aides that move somewhat like bishops. There is a tank—like our castle—two guns, horses, and soldiers instead of pawns. The board, too, is different, being merely intersecting lines instead of a checkerboard. The men are placed where the lines intersect. It was pretty interesting, but the time still dragged.

We would indulge in long bull sessions about when we would be released. The next day? Next week? The next month? And our spirits would go up and then down again as the days passed. Sometimes I would watch the street from my window, especially on the day when the Chinese had their holiday for the first full moon of the Chinese New Year. There were parades the live-long day, not the kind that I had seen before, little patrols of Communist troops, but long lines of the townspeople wearing fantastic masks and costumes and stilts strapped to their legs, beating gongs and shooting off firecrackers. But that only lasted a day and the people went back to the monotony of their lives and I went back to mine.

I asked Chang on one of his visits for something to read and he obliged with a year-old copy of the Saturday Evening Post and an equally ancient copy of Life. But not so old at all was the Communist literature in both English and Chinese that he gave us. I had eight copies of the New Times, a weekly printed on slick paper in Moscow. The latest copy was only three months old and contained mostly anti-American material.

When I had gone through these I looked at the ones printed in Chinese. I couldn't read them, of course, so I just looked at the pictures. That was enough to get the gist. There were pictures of dead Nationalist troops, shots of Nationalist trucks burning, scenes of the Communist soldiers winning a street fight, photographs of high Nationalist generals that had been captured, and cartoons showing such things as an imperial Uncle Sam dictating to Chiang Kai Shek and giving him war weapons.

On the twelfth day the newly-weds, Mr. and Mrs. Chow and Captain Chen were suddenly spirited away. Five days passed before we heard anything about them. Then they returned as quickly and quietly as they had been taken. During this time, they told me, all had been locked up in the local political headquarters and questioned two and three times daily. Such is life in the police state.

For days at a time we would see nothing of our mentor, Chang. Then we would write a letter and invariably he would pop up, polite and smiling, giving us always the same answers.

On the twentieth day I noted in my diary:

"Chang came 1730 stayed about an hour. Same old malarky with variations. Says hopes to give definite info in three to five days. Will leave in twenty days at most. Hooey!"

The guy was driving me crazy. On the twenty-fourth day he came in all smiles and said we were definitely leaving, and then by gosh if a whole week and a half didn't go by without his even showing his face. It was a black time for us. I celebrated my thirtieth birthday by looking in the mirror and saying, "Happy birthday," and let it go at that. And during the time we passed the day when my radio operator, Waung, was to have been married in Shanghai.

We were just about at the end of our rope when Chang came again showing his teeth and told us that we were to leave that very evening after a farewell dinner had been given to his "guests." We couldn't believe it, but it was true. We sat around the big table in the dining room and had a small Chinese feast complete with that liquid dynamite, kiasliang wine. And Chang beamed through it all.

But we didn't feel like being merry at the feast table in the usual Chinese fashion and as soon as the meal was over we got up and said we were ready. Chang took us outside where our "escort" was waiting. This consisted of three men from the municipal government and ten Communist riflemen. With them we walked the four blocks to the railroad station. Only six months before the trains—then in Nationalist hands—had not been running. Communist guerrilla would rip out the tracks and carry them away to hiding places, they would pull up the ties and burn them, smash the insulators to dust on the telephone poles and carry off the wire. But now the train was actually there and waiting to take off.

It consisted of both freight cars and passenger cars, but passengers rode in both. We were lucky enough to get assigned to one end of a passenger car of ancient vintage with all the window glass missing and hard wooden benches to sit on. The other end of the car was jammed with people holding bundles, children, farmers, and merchants, all up against one another. A cold wind blew through the car, but uncomfortable as it was we weren't about to complain.

We started off at night, probably to avoid being strafed by Nationalist planes, and travelled about 200 miles during the next twelve hours, finally arriving by dawn at Wei Hsien, a place used by the Japs as one of their internment camps during the war. We were all tired, cold, and hungry and were glad to see even the small dirty Chinese inn where we were taken.

That night we slept at the inn in a "community bed," which is just a long wooden shelf covered with straw mats down one side of the room. All eleven of us "guests" slept in the same bed with the bride occupying one of the end positions for the sake of propriety.

Early the next morning we started out in an old truck, that is we started out after tinkering with the engine for two hours. We covered 120 miles in this old heap before a tire blew out and the inn we found ourselves in this night was worse than the previous one.

Our mode of transportation changed again the next morning. Our escort had hired a

bicycle and rider for each of us. We had to sit sideways on the baggage rack. I had often seen Chinese ride this way, but it is quite precarious. However, we managed. When we reached the edge of the village our "escort" lined up and waved goodbye to us and we breathed a sigh of relief, because for the first time in 37 days we were on our own.

We rode those bikes for an hour until a stiff head wind blew up. Then we got off and walked until we came across several farmers with wheelbarrows. These contraptions are made of wood with a big wheel in the center of the barrow and are pretty clumsy. But they were better than nothing and so using some Communist paper money that we had exchanged for Chinese silver dollars we hired them. And in this way, seated two to a wheelbarrow, we pushed on a little farther.

At the next village we hired more wheelbarrows and more pushers and were about to start out when we got our first intimation that we were nearing the edge of Red China. It came when one of the villagers asked if we wanted to change our Communist money for Gold Yuan currency, as that was in use at the next village. Hurrah! We reached there by wheelbarrow three long dusty cold hours later and sure enough we saw our first Nationalist soldiers. And from there we were able to summon a truck from Tsingtao.

I dropped off with my crew at the Dutch Villa. That's where all the flying personnel stays in Tsingtao. It was close to midnight and some of my fellow pilots were in the bar. I sure was glad to see them, and they almost fell over backwards when they saw me.

I gave them the gist of what happened in a hurry, had a few drinks and went upstairs for a hot bath before I hit the sack. It was the first time I'd had my clothes off in 38 days. I was dog-tired, and to mix a metaphore, I slept like a kitten.

But it wasn't my being so tired, or the drinks, or the hot bathe either that made me sleep so well that night. No sir! Brother, I found it was just plain relaxing to finally be back on my own side of the Bamboo Curtain. Cozy. Know what I mean?

Exclusive
Non—fiction
4708 words

August 10, 1995

Kuo W. Cheng 23329 E. Quail Summit Dr. Diamond Bar, Ca. 91765 (909)861-0209

CNAC CANNON BALL Reginald H. Farrar, M.D. 319 Euclid Avenue Loch Arbour, New Jersey 07711

Dear Reginald,

Thank you for your consistent updating of the events and happenings of CNAC members throughout the past years. I am sure it is a greatly appreciated service.

m old to

I am writing in regards to my father; Pai Hua Cheng, regretfully to inform you that my father passed away to a much better place recently. Of Tuesday, October 27, 1994 at 7:30am, my father no longer walked beside us in this world. He passed away very peacefully and in the comfort of his own home.

Pai Hua Cheng was a very simple man, with a simple philosophy. Smile one day, and one more day of happiness is added to your life. Frawn one day, and one more day of sorrow will be added to your life. As his tombstone reads: "Remember me with smiles and laughter, for that's how I shall always remember you." Living his philosophy, Pai Hua weaved many good friendships throughout his life. One being mine. Not only was Nir. Cheng a good man, but proabebly the best you can ask of any man for a father. I know no other man in this world that meant more to me than my own father.

Should any one be interested in paying tribute to Pai Hua Cheng, you may find him at Rose Hill Cemetery in Los Angeles Calif. Through the main gate, pass the rose gardens, proceed up the main road. On the seventh row on the right side, take a right towards the chapel on top of the hill, follow this road around another right turn, proceed approximately 100 ft., just past a water spout, and look for his placement on the leftside yard. Or one may ask the information desk for the exact site.

Pai Hua Cheng is survived by his two son's, and two daughters; Yu-Tien Cheng, Kuo W. Cheng, Margaret Han, and Rita Lee.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time, and I wish to all CNAC members the best.

Sincerely yours,

## CRASHED IN 1943 — WILL IT FLY IN 1996?

During most of WW II, the only contact China had with its allies was by airplanes over the Himalaya Mountains to India. All material to keep China fighting the Japanese were flown in. It was the world's first airlift – everything went by air.

March 11, 1943 Jim Fox flew a C-47 (early freight version of the famous DC-3) from Kunming, China west across the south end of the Himalayas in the direction of northeast, India, There was a solid overcast at 10,500 feet when he reached the Hump. The turbulence was severe and it was snowing. As he went through the lowest pass he was hit by a down-draft. He immediately went into maximum power and maximum climb. It was too late. #53 settled to the ground with an air speed of probably 80 mph. It was a relatively soft landing because he had a 60 mph head wind. From that time on it was known as Fox's Pass because Fox and his two Chinese crew members were never heard from.

It is believed that no one has ever been to the plane as the natives at the nearest village had not visited it by the spring of 1992.

It is my plan to reach it on foot to learn what happened to the crew and determine if it can be repaired so it could be flown off the mountain.

Since WW II, a road has been extending from the Paoshan-Yunnanyi Road to Liuku. By truck, from Kunming, it would take approximately 11 hours. Liuku is on the Salween River and is 18 miles from Hpimaw Pass, just 4 miles north of the crash site of #53.

It is anticipated the round trip from Kunming to the crash site would take 2 or 3 weeks. Once the plane wreck is found careful inspection would be made by an airplane mechanic to determine if the plane could be made airworthy. We would take cameramen to record the expedition and details of the airplane for evaluation by Douglas Aircraft engineers to determine the damage. They built the plane and have detailed plans of it.

If there was a possibility that #53 could be repaired for flight, then a rough airstrip would have to be planned while on the initial trip. I recall that there was approximately 750 feet of rather level terrain sloping from the crash site northeast. That is ample distance to launch an empty C-47 at that altitude, especially since it is downhill.

Upon returning to the United States, the feasibility of making #53 airworthy would be determined by Douglas Aircraft engineers and the repair contractors. If it was decided that it could be made airworthy, the expense would be estimated. If funds are made available, then the project would go forward. The airstrip would be ordered to be built. All the parts necessary for repairs would be arranged to be flown to Kunming, where they could be transported to #53 as needed by the mechanics. The necessary mechanics would be hired by the contractor who would direct the repairs.

As soon as money is available for the first expedition, it will go at the first window of good weather: October or May.

The profit from the sale of T-shirts will be used to finance the preliminary trip, estimated cost \$25,000. Other contributions of money and supplies will be sought.

Any profits left over from the initial expedition will be applied to the second trip. The fund-raising will be on-going as money will be needed to preserve #53 as a memorial where it is or if it can be flown to Kunming where it would become a permanent memorial to those 2,500 Americans who lost their lives flying the Hump during WW II.

I have been told by those who are familiar with repairing C-47s, that they can make it airworthy where it is at 10,400 feet providing we can supply the money and deliver the parts needed to the crash site during above freezing weather.

If you purchase a T-shirt for \$19.95 to help the cause, it will be appreciated, but

don't expect a refund if we find #53 has been disassembled by the natives and it can only be made a memorial where it is.

I consider it a great opportunity for those who were in the CBI during WW II to leave a lasting memorial either on the Hump or in Kunming. It is probably the only C-47, that actually flew the Hump, that has a possibility of landing again at Kunming. It will be important to those who flew the Hump and it will have meaning for those who fought on the ground because all received aid from a C-47.

Making #53 a memorial will help to renew our bonds with the Chinese people. We fought WW II together and we all had wonderful friends who died in that conflict. We want to make certain there is never a conflict between our allies of WW II. We must continue to build respect for each other.

If #53 stays where it is at 10,400 feet, it will become accessible for organized tours with a beautiful three-day walk to the site, gaining 7,500 feet in altitude. If the plane is maintained in one piece, those on the tour could sleep in the plane while on the ridge. It will be a piece of Americana in a very remote part of China; the plane built in California and the pilot raised in Texas.

The flight of CNAC #53 was a joint effort – Jim Fox, the American captain; L. Thom, the Chinese co-pilot and K. Wong, the Chinese radio operator. It will require a joint effort to establish it as a memorial.

The C-47 was the instrument that kept China in the war fighting one million Japanese who planned on defeating China quickly so the troops and equipment could be sent to the Pacific Islands to fight the Americans. It didn't happen that way. We kept China in the war.

I wish to order T-shirt(s) depicting the sthe crash and on the back depicting the flight off the	ORDER FORM saga of C-47 #53. The shirt is all comoutnain after repairs.	otton with a 5-color picture on the fro	nt depicting
I want size(s) S, M, L	, XL		
Name:			
UPS Address:	State:	Zip Code:	
Price per shirt delivered: \$19.95. Make check or mor	ney order payable to the "C-47 #53	Fund". Those who purchase shirts wi	Il receive
free periodic progress reports on this endeavor.		The state of the personal of this will	11000140
Mail to: Fletcher Hanks, P.O. Box 560, Oxford, MD	21654. (CNAC pilot during WW II	i	





Leon Roberts on or SA

Roy Darrell

Reginald, H. Farrar, M.D. 319 Euclid Avenue Loch Arbour, New Jersey 07711



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