

# CNAC ASSOCIATION

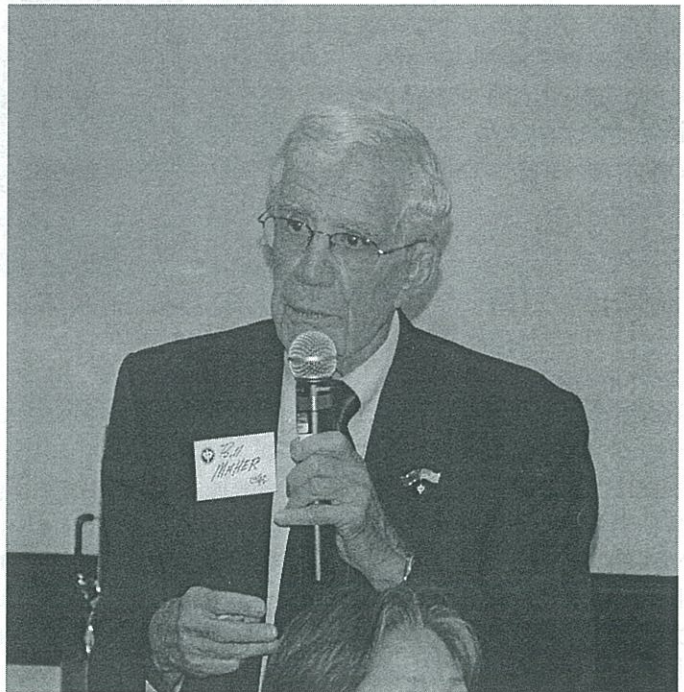


## CANNON BALL

November 2007

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### **Was it *really* the best reunion ever?**

In a phone conversation on Veteran's Day, President Bill Maher (pictured above) said he and a number of others thought this year's reunion was "one of the best, if not THE BEST." Hard to argue with a man whose tenure as CNAC president has spanned 26 years. We had a number of new presentations, and it was great to welcome so many new people. Something was going on all the time, and all of it was interesting. Moon Chin outdid himself again with dinner on Friday, and the banquet for 70 people at the hotel on Saturday night was elegant, exciting and delicious. The hotel can't be beat, with the beautiful bay views, proximity to the airport, the incredible breakfast buffet AND open bar for before-dinner drinks, all for a great price (which will be in effect next year too!).

Bill said, "Sometimes I feel like I'm in the entertainment business."



Possibly the most moving and wonderful development this year was the attendance of many people who had never been to a CNAC reunion before and others for whom it had been a while. Bill orchestrated a wonderful moment one afternoon, by first inviting all the pilots to come to the front of our meeting room (major photo op ensued). He then asked that newcomers and relatives introduce themselves, tell who they were related to and ask any questions they might have. It opened up a number of opportunities for pilots and relatives alike, many of whom spent more time afterwards sitting together and sharing stories.



Nancy Ryba, Jeff Greene, Peter Goutiere, Tom Moore, Diego Kusak, and Carey Bowles

Among those who came forward were the three daughters and a granddaughter of Bob Heilig (having a mini-reunion of their own!), John Parish, brother of Len Parish, Elise Cunningham (the “first associate”), and Nancy Ryba, daughter of James Ruff, attending with her sister Janet Ruff, Carol Sharp Slade, daughter of Chuck Sharp, Peter Stannick, Nancy Alison Wright, Royal Leonard, and Ted Elms (if the notes taken were clearer and the memory better, this would be a more complete report). Suffice to say, it was a chance to connect with people and rekindle memories and emotions from an important time.

Wouldn't you like to be a part of the fun next year? It's not too soon to begin making plans to attend the next reunion! We will return to Embassy Suites in Burlingame, CA, right after Labor Day, Wednesday, September 3 through Saturday, September 6, 2008. Same hotel, same great suite rate of \$109 per night, breakfast and happy hour included. Call 650-342-4600 to make reservations and be sure to mention CNAC Association.

**\*VISIT THE CNAC WEBSITE TODAY\***

Can't wait until the next reunion? Do not let trepidations about the internet, computers, or modern technology keep you from this wonderful repository of information, developed by Tom Moore. You simply won't believe what you will find there! All are welcome to contribute new information and photos. The website address is [www.cnac.org](http://www.cnac.org). If you are not sure what to do, get your daughter, son, grandchild or teenage next-door neighbor involved (they will learn something too!). If you have flown the Hump, you can travel the World Wide Web.





**Bill Maher, John Lee and Lily King (Moon's niece)**

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\* The big day kind of snuck up on me...on November 4, 2007 my father, Bert Coulson, would have joined the 90+ Club. In honor of his birthday, I hope you will indulge my decision to include two of his essays. After reading it last summer, Bill Maher encouraged me to run *The Aspiring Hand*, my father's assessment of the people and politics of China during the 40's and beyond. I have also included *Ze Great Pierre*, which among other things, gives some insight into the CNAC experience of the holiday season and extraordinary everyday sacrifices made on behalf of friends.

This newsletter came together quickly thanks to the enthusiastic participation of all of the authors, as well as support from Bill Maher, Peggy Maher, Valerie Kendrick, and Craig Chinn. I hope you enjoy the newsletter and are inspired to send me letters, essays, reflections, reports from the field, written recently or found in and among saved papers and memorabilia. Thank to all who helped and I look forward to hearing from more of you for the late spring issue!  
 --Eve Coulson, *CANNONBALL* editor

**CNAC ASSOCIATION MINI BUSINESS MEETING**

**SOLANO ROOM BURLINGAME, CALIFORNIA**

**SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 8, 2007**

**Meeting called to order at 10:15 AM PST.**

**The Business Meeting minutes of CNAC Association dated September 30, 2006 were read and presented for approval. There being no additions or corrections...the minutes were submitted and approved by the membership.**

**President Bill speaks and welcomes members/associates and our newest associates.**

**The family members of CNAC pilot Hiram Broiles. ...Betty (Broiles) Young and her family.**

**Also welcomed were the daughters, Carol and Charon, of CNAC Chief Pilot Chuck Sharpe.**

**The family of CNAC Captain Bob Heilig-Judy, Leslie, Alexandria, Linda and daughter Karol were also welcomed aboard.**

**Ced Mah's guest William Leckoeff was given a welcome aboard acknowledgement. He and Ced drove all the way down from Canada for the Reunion.**

**The Treasurers Report was read. There being no Reunion expenses presented as of yet. None were reported upon. Bills presented for payment were the Cannonball mailing expenses, which were paid as presented. The full report will be given at the regular business meeting scheduled for 2008. Dates and times of next year's Reunion to be announced in a letter to be sent out by President Bill.**

**President Bill announced that the families of CNAC Veterans are to contact him for obtaining their loved ones medals. A letter from Senator Sam Levin, Chief of the Senate Armed Services Committee was read concerning these issues.**



Also read was a letter written to George Lucas of Star Wars fame and Mr. Lucas' reply. Letters were also read at the Co-pilots Meeting.

Pete G gave a speech about the China Trip.

Christy Hanks talked about CNAC Plane #53...Foxy's Plane

Felix Smith (President of CAT Association) requested a joint Reunion with CNAC Association. The respective Reunions would be held in the same location...but ...be separate. Discussion followed request.

A call for the vote was presented on the question...shall CNAC Association and CAT Association hold their respective though separate Reunions in the same location and date for the purpose of socializing and comradeship? Question passed by unanimous vote of CNAC membership. CNAC and CAT are to hold their separate Reunions in the same place and date. Considerations of the CNAC vote are to be discussed at the CAT Association meeting for approval.

Moon Fun Chin speaks. He needs help in preparing his home and the food for the traditional get together held at his home all these years. He wants to have the get together earlier in the day. Discussion follows his



request. President Bill suggests he prepare the meat. CNAC volunteers will do the rest.

Lydia Rossi suggests that we have food brought in...catered. It was revealed that on the occasions this was done it did not work out well. Much discussion followed with no concrete ideas.

Valerie is to contact associates to work out a plan.



**President Bill is to speak with Moon and decide how Moon wants to engineer the dinner and let the Associates know what he would like done.**

**Board Members leave meeting with the exception of Vice-President Carey Bowles...who continues to conduct the meeting. He gives his presentation on the Chungking Airport.**

**Meeting re-convened with all present and accounted for Board Members**

**Medals were given out to Pete Goutiere, Felix Smith, Ced Mah, Boone Wen and Anson Lisk who has said in the past...that he would probably never live to see the day that would happen. Surprise!!! He did!!!**

**President Bill discusses the official discharge papers from the Army Air Corp. Family members or members are to contact him for discussion and presentation of documents that would verify enlistment/discharge. He and Christy to work on these applications for submission to the proper authorities for the purpose of obtaining medals and acknowledgments of service**

**A proposal has been made to the membership that the CNAC Officers be replaced by the CNAC Co-Pilots The proposal is to be considered and voted upon at the CNAC Business Meeting in 2008.**

**Meeting adjourned @ app 12:30 PM PST.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Valerie Parish Kendrick (Co-pilot to Jerry Shrawder CNAC Sec/Tres)**

## **SOLD OUT!!**

**THE CNAC DOCUMENTARY DVD SETS AND CNAC C-47 MODEL AIRPLANES ARE NOT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE, AS WE SOLD WHAT WE HAD AT THE REUNION. WE ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON UPGRADING AND COMBINING VOLUMES 1-3, AND ALSO INCLUDING ALL THE PILOT INTERVIEWS, WHICH WILL MAKE FOR A MUCH MORE DETAILED ACCOUNT OF CNAC'S HISTORY. LET BILL MAHER KNOW IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ANY OF THESE ITEMS AND HE WILL LET YOU KNOW IF/WHEN MORE ARE PRODUCED.**

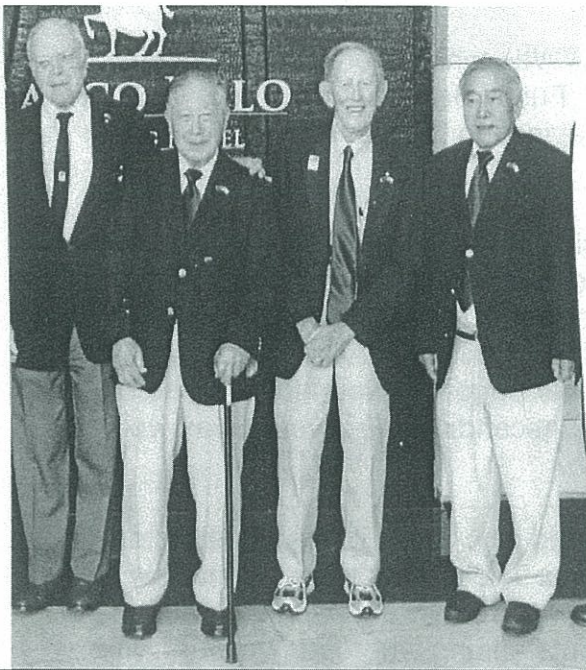


*This report is written by Fletcher Hanks, one of the four CNAC captains who went on the tour in September following the CNAC reunion. He says, " We all returned home tuckered out and facing over one hundred e-mails, so it took us longer to report on our trip than we anticipated." It was worth the wait!*

## CNAC'S TOUR OF THE CENTURY

The first time we went to China most of us were boys and we came home as men. There is nothing to mature you like being in a war in a foreign land and watch a couple friends get killed doing what you are doing. This time we went to China as philosophers trying to figure where China is going to end up in its wild expansion. CNAC pilots, who flew the Hump, are part of China's history. We helped win the war and watched General Joseph Stilwell, Commander of All Forces of the CBI, become embittered and in November of 1944 he was withdrawn from his command by President Franklin Roosevelt. The revengeful Stilwell convinced General George Marshall, Chairman of the U.S. War Department, to allow the Mao communists to arm with the defeated Japanese modern weapons and thus giving away the peace of WWII. Now China is succeeding to be an industrial power like the United States.

We left San Francisco after our CNAC Reunion that ended September 9, 2007. We toured the amazing port of Hong Kong. This city meant a lot to us as some of us had flown into the old airport and remembered when the harbor was crowded with sail-driven junks. We recall when Charlie Sunby crashed at the old airport with a load of passengers, killing all of them. The new airport is a dream but it requires walking a lot in arriving and departing.



The four CNAC captains at the Marco Polo Hotel in Hong Kong, September 13, 2003, left Peter Goutiere 94, Moon Chin 94, Fletcher Hanks 90, and Ced Mah 85.

The Marco Polo Hotel had excellent accommodations and was convenient to the business district. How Man Wong, our host, arranged for us to have lunch at a club where we dined with some of the business people of Hong Kong and another luncheon was at the Baltimore Clipper Room with memorabilia of the time when Pan American World Airways landed the huge Martin seaplanes in Hong Kong Harbor. One of them continued to Rangoon with a plane full of rubber tires for General Chennault's Flying Tiger P-40s. Then it continued west and circled the globe in getting back to San Francisco.

Thanks to the generosity of How Man Wong, the number one explorer in China, five CNAC pilots who flew the Hump were invited by him to join him in a tour of western Yunnan Province where we had flown during WWII. He knew he would hear untold history, as the



pilots would have recall when seeing something that they hadn't seen in over 60 years. With these pilots traveling together, a synergism would be created. He got some surprises as the pilots argued among themselves of how and when an instance occurred. It showed that for accuracy, one must rely on the logbook entries, written at the time and not on pilots' memories.

How Man personally conducted the tour starting in Hong Kong on September 13 and ending back in Kunming on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Then our group was free to split up and go where we wanted until our departure from Hong Kong September 30.

The members of the tour were Moon Fun Chin, 94, who left Baltimore to become a pilot for CNAC in 1933, Peter Goutiere, 94, who grew up on an indigo farm in India joined CNAC in 1942, Cedric Mah, 85, a Canadian "bush pilot" who joined CNAC in 1944 and me, 90, who started flying for CNAC in 1943. Bill Maher, the president of CNAC, was also scheduled to go but canceled because his wife, Mary Lee had a severe heart attack at the time he was scheduled for departure.

We departed from Hong Kong for Kunming on the 14th. This was an important city to us as we had unloaded most of our freight there after flying the Hump during WWII. My wife Jane, while the only nurse with the American Volunteer Group watched her first husband take-off in his Flying Tiger P-40, July 10, 1942. He was missing when the group flew over the field when they returned. He was shot down that day. All of us CNAC still have vivid memories of close friends who flew the Hump and who died at Kunming. It became the busiest airport in the world during WWII and we were four of the 75 CNAC pilots who made the first airlift a success. We have the memories and it all came back to us on this trip.

We left Kunming for Yunnanyi and Dali (Tali during WWII), which were on our Hump route. Tali Mountain, at 14,500 feet, where my close friend, Fussy Ball crashed. There were two conspicuous pagodas on mount Tali that were our navigation fixes during WWII, one on the north side and one on the south.

We spent a day reaching the pagoda on the north side at 14,000 feet. We went by bus until it was too steep for it and then two-man sedan chairs carried us for three hours until it was too steep for them. There a ski lift carried us the rest of the way. At the top, there were impressive elaborate temples trimmed with gold leaf and containing valuable artwork where the faithful could pray and pay. We found the seven-tier pagoda shrouded in dense clouds. We had a good meal prepared by the monks before descending the reverse way we had ascended.

We spent the night in an elegant one thousand year-old city. Since it was constructed principally of wood, I wondered how it survived so long. The streets were too narrow and crooked to accommodate an automobile. There were no fire hydrants and no evidence of methods of fighting fires. The Chinese meals were outstanding wherever we went. The hotels were comfortable with modern toilet facilities. At one hotel we shared a compound with city dwellers. They all had small dogs that were tethered on their porch. The little dogs were very friendly.



On our way to our goal, Shangri-la, we looked forward to stopping at Likiang, which I considered one of the most challenging places to land during WWII, grass, downhill and a strong tail wind. We never found it; perhaps the area had been changed too much.

Shangri-la is a special place. You won't stop ageing while you are there as it had happened in the 1933 movie "Lost Horizons" to the passengers who survived a crash in the snow fields of Tibet, but you will find it different from any place in China or in the world. It is the product of the imagination of How Man Wong. He excels in the wilds of China just as Moon Chin did flying for CNAC in the late 1930s. To travel with Moon today in the land he explored is a great experience. Our curiosity concerning Shangri-la was finally satisfied. It is a spacious suburb of a city in southern Tibet. The buildings are new and made of beautiful very light-colored native wood, similar to our maple. Tibetans maintain Shangri-la and do all the work with obvious cooperation and enjoyment. The large building faces down the broad valley to a lake and an airstrip.

After four days we flew to Kunming and there said good-bye to How Man and his able crew of tour guides who we had enjoyed for a week. I had had a lovely girl escort who was earning money to go to an American university.

There I would split with the other pilots and go to Pian Ma, the small village that the Japanese held during the War. It was always easily identified by the red tile roofs. It was the halfway point of the 525-mile route of the Hump. It was 25 miles down the Burma side of the Hump. Japanese had a garrison of troops there to support their troops in the pass on the top of the Hump.

Lady Deng, the cultural leader for Yunnan Province, who visited me at my home in Maryland this spring, arranged that Diego Kusak and Ge Shuya would accompany me on the trip to Pian Ma and return to Kunming at the expense of the Chinese government. My two escorts met me at the Kunming Airport and I transferred to a plane that would take us to Paoshan. When we deplaned at Paoshan, we boarded a bus for Lushui, where we would spend two nights. It was a very scenic bus trip as we climbed 7000 feet. We stayed at a great hotel on the river. Like everything else in China, it was expanding on two sides. We were treated royally there. We left Lushui by mini-bus at 9 AM for Pian Ma, the most western town in China, on the Burma-China border. This little town was on CNAC's direct route. It allowed us to fly the Hump at only 10,500 feet and save 50 gallons of gasoline per trip and not use tanked oxygen. This pass was held by the Japanese so it took a little nerve to fly through it, as we were an easy target within a hundred feet of the armed soldiers. We could see the whites of their eyes as we slipped through the pass and stay below the overcast at 10,600 feet.

Two hours into our trip, we stopped at Pian Ma Pass. It was great to walk it again and recall that I was the only living captain who had flown the Hump in WWII and also walked it. I recalled how in 1997, from this spot I was led up to the ridge in a severe tropical thunder storm with lightning striking all around us. Then I remembered how during WWII I often squeezed through the pass and under the overcast that covered the top of the Hump. What a great experience, as the turbulence bounced the plane in every direction.



We left the pass to drive down the steep mountain on the Burma side of the Hump. As we drove into Pian Ma, I saw how they had decorated it for a huge celebration for me. In 1997 I had given them a national focus as the site of the transport that proved there was a WWII and Americans brought men, planes and war material that defeated the invading Japanese who had raped their women and who cruelly slaughtered their men. After the Americans had sacrificed so many lives and wealth to save China, they went home without acquiring any land. There was no other similar benevolent sacrifice in Asian history.

It was noon so we had a 15-course dinner. Then it was off to the CNAC #53 celebrations and for the people of Lushui County to show me the museum I had encouraged them to build for CNAC #53. The main street was lined with people on both sides as we strode up

it to the museum. It was obvious that the museum was the cultural center of their county. The celebration was beautifully planned. All the government officials were on hand to greet me. A large brass plaque, set in the wall, commemorating the day's occasion was unveiled. There were several speeches capped off by my emotional speech. I related how important CNAC #53 was in modern Chinese history. After WWII the communists would not allow any mention of the Nationalist Government, led by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-cheek and their American allies who jointly



Ge Shuya, the explorer who reached CNAC #53 before Fletcher Hanks and Diego Kusak my interpreter and son of Steve Kusak, CNAC captain who tried to reach CNAC #53 in 1944. The three give a "thumbs up" in front of CNAC #53.

defeat the invading Japanese. The communists claimed the Russians were the Chinese allies who defeated the Japanese, which was not true. All archives and libraries were destroyed because they told the accurate history of WWII. The significance of CNAC #53 was that it was on a mountain out of reach of "The Gang of Four", Mao's enforcers of his decree. I knew where CNAC #53 was but it took seventeen years to convince the president of China, Jiang Zemin that that crashed transport should be used to bring the truth of WWII to the Chinese. In 1997, Jiang Zemin allowed me to go to CNAC #53 and he allowed Li Zing to publish the headlines in the China Daily Newspaper that revealed that Jim Fox, an American pilot with a Chinese crew died in a freight transport, built in America, was flying war material to beleaguered China in its darkest hour. This was the first time proof of WWII was spread across China.



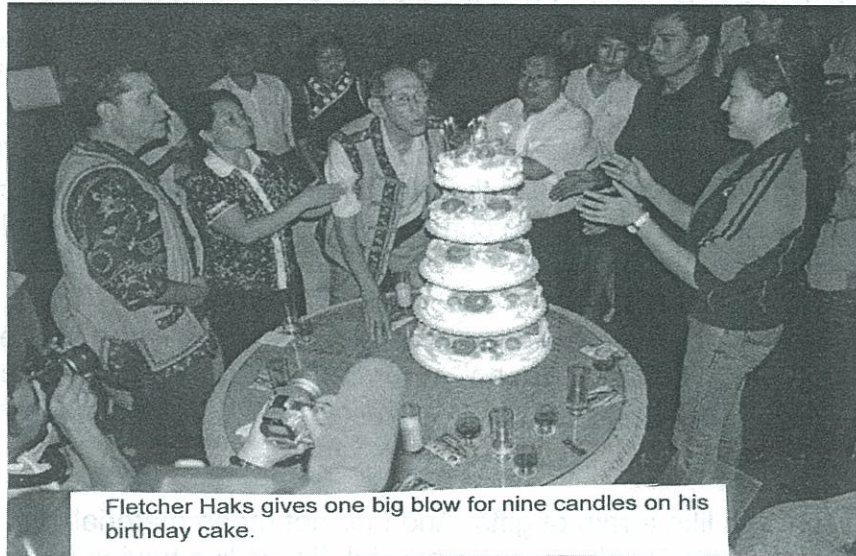
This sudden burst of free speech was too much for the ruling Communist Congress. They ruled that the president who allowed it must be removed from power. President Zemin dropped out of existence as a person of the world. Now he can't be contacted and he can't send a message to anyone. None of my Chinese contacts can tell me if he is dead or alive.

The speeches at the ceremony at the Pian Ma museum showed great respect for those Americans who were responsible for their success in saving China from defeat.

After the ceremony we returned to the restaurant where we had the big meal. This time the important occasion was the surprise 90th birthday party for me. They had prepared a five tier white cake.

I have never seen so many happy people. They had a floorshow of dancing and singing beautiful Lushui girls. I

blew out the nine candles on top of the cake. Everyone had a slice of cake and a glass of wine. Everyone wanted a toast with me. Finally, I said farewell and promised to return with other Hump pilots next year. We returned to our hotel in Lushui.



Ten years ago I had plans to fly a DC-3 transport, like CNAC #53 that was built during WWII in Long Beach, California. It would be christened "Freedom" by the U.S. Secretary of State and flown from Long Beach to Kunming, China. From there it would be flown a round trip to Dinjan, India over the Hump. Then it would be presented to authorities in Kunming to be preserved as an international memorial to those American and Chinese who flew the Hump. But with the political situation in China, I consider it is impossible to get permission to fly the plane over China. Therefore, I will now apply my efforts to improve the American relationship with the Chinese people by having an annual tour to Pian Ma. I plan on starting it next September following our CNAC Reunion. Ge Shuya and Diego Kusak, with the guidance of Lady Deng, will plan it.

I will use the funds in the CNAC Fund, Inc. to promote this worthy cause. The tour will be limited by the number of accommodations in Pian Ma for two days and those at the reunion in San Francisco. I anticipate many of the young people will want to climb the mountain to reach the crash site of CNAC #53. They will observe the monument placed there by the people of Pian Ma and see what we saw when we flew through the pass.

*-Fletcher Hanks*



*The following account was written by Diego Kusak (son of Captain Stephen Kusak), who traveled with Fletcher Hanks (aka "Christy") during part of the trip described in the previous pages.*

## TRAVELS WITH CHRISTY

While living in Kunming I had the honor of meeting Ge Shuya. Fletcher had spoken of him many times during presentations at the CNAC reunion. Within my father's papers I found a diary with some notes written in 1944 about the trip to plane 53. I also found a "Wings of Asia" book with Red Holmes account of the "walk to plane 53." Mr. Ge had translated that into Chinese. Meeting him made the airplane more real. When I was told I could be invited to a ceremony to see the plane in Pienma, it was like someone asking me: "I have a spaceship, do you want to come to the moon?" Really, I could not believe I would actually go to see the plane.

In the 2007 CNAC reunion in San Francisco, I had spoken to Fletcher and other pilots about the plane. I am not a Hump pilot; I am the son of one. I humbly do not believe I have the honor to be treated like one of them. Therefore, when I was officially invited to go I was expecting to be sitting in the last car with the reporters.

The trip was like a rain of gifts. And I do not mean material gifts only. For example, the time spent with Fletcher was wonderful. It was like having my father for a second time. During the trip I was able to ask him about things I never thought of before. When my father was alive, most of our conversations were about business and life. Very little was spoken about the everyday life in Kunming during the war. The trip gave me a chance to ask Fletcher about those things.



We took a flight from Kunming to Baoshan. I knew this trip would be special the moment a woman from Yunnan television (Shirley) came to the plane and filmed Fletcher (even while snoring).

Imagine, a small plane with this tall man with a huge TV camera filming us. It was a long time since I was the center of attention.

Arriving to Baoshan confirmed my suspicion; this was going to be a special trip. We were greeted by the local authorities, and received tons of flowers. Fletcher and I went into the second car. The first one was a police car with the lights on. We were treated like celebrities or high officials!

We drove for 3 hours until we arrived to the border of Nujiang prefecture. We were given more flowers. We met more officials (I wish I remember the names and official titles), and Mary our official translator (which by the way did a fantastic job). We arrived to a hotel in Luku where we were treated like guests of honor.





The dinner that night will be something I will never forget. It was a large room beautifully decorated with many flowers. There was the main table (25 or more people). Fletcher and I were seated as guests of honor. I need to say here that I cannot drink alcohol; I am very allergic to it. So, it was important to me to make sure I would get juice or Pepsi Cola in my small "Gambei" cup. In China, there is this venerable custom of going to the guest of honor while eating and tell him or her what an honor it is to have you here. Multiply this by the 25 honorable Government officials and it is a lot of drinking. However, I have to honestly say that many of their words came from their hearts. It was very touching.

The surprise came later. At one point several beautiful women dressed in the local minority dress came to me. They sang me a song and we hugged while we drank (Pepsi, I promise). I was then invited to do another ceremony. This one involved having the girl on my lap, and then we kiss and drink at the same time. My heart was warm and my mood very happy. Well, somehow I had done something right because I would be treated to the next local custom: "The three rivers." Nujiang prefecture is unique in the sense that it has 3 mayor rivers of China in a radius of 100 km. The 3 rivers custom involved 2 girls and me (the 3 rivers). Each woman sat on each of my laps. Now this one was tricky. As we drank, our lips touched (kissing). I was in heaven... Please, let me reassure there was nothing sexual to this, it was very sensual and heart warming. Honestly, I felt like I belonged to that group of people.

The next morning I took Fletcher to my room where through the Internet we were able to call his wife Jane. It was Fletcher's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

After breakfast, we drove to Pienma. Shirley from Yunnan TV came with Fletcher and me in the second car. She wanted to film us, and could help translating (she speaks good English). Now here is were I started to realize the true meaning of this trip. It was while going up the mountains and seeing the river down bellow that my brain connected the old black and white film of my father with reality. My father had walked the same place that we where now driving!!!!



Fletcher told me many stories about that trip. Things I am not sure I want to repeat. He told me that for miles they would see bones or decaying bodies with the skull crushed. He told us that during the Japanese occupation, the women were taken and raped, while the men were taken to work. When a man was too weak and fell to the ground, a Japanese soldier would use the butt of the rifle to crush the skull of the Chinese overworked man.

We stopped at Pienma Pass. It was the first time that all the old pictures, films and papers came to life. I am a film and visual person. I actually saw with my imagination my father flying above me in his CNAC plane. How I wish I could make a film and have a real plane fly above me on that pass....



Pienma is a small border town near Myanmar. We met with local authorities and had lunch (more Pepsi and Gambei). I have no words to express what came after. It was hard for me to accept that I could be treated so honorably.

We walked up to the museum while the citizens of the town were on the sides of the streets. At the bottom of the stairs of the museum we were given hand made vests from the local minorities. Kids were playing drums on the sides of the stairs.



When we arrived to the top of the stairs we could see a group of kids in formation to the left, and a group of soldiers to the right. In front, a chair for Fletcher and Fox's memorial covered with a tarp.

We had speeches that were very well translated by Mary. Honestly, this day was very

important for the people of Nujiang, Luku and Pienma. Most speeches were written from the heart, and I mean it. I was very emotional and some times tears would simply flow out of my eyes.



The ceremony involved unveiling the memorial, putting a crown of flowers, and planting two trees. I am embarrassed to say that I misunderstood what I was supposed to do. Fletcher was going to plant a tree with the governor of Nujiang, and I was supposed to plant the second tree with the Secretary of Propaganda.

However, when it came to the planting of the trees I ended up helping Fletcher with his tree, and I did mine anyway. So in reality I planted both trees. I sincerely hope my son and his future children can come and visit the trees one day.

Then we went into the museum. Wow! A real C4-something (I still don't know my planes). Just like the ones my father flew. I was a bit disappointed by the fact that the plane was painted with Army markings on one side. However, it was understandable. CNAC planes



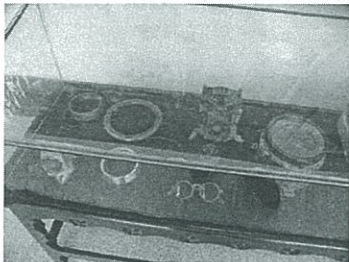
were bought second hand from the Army, and the CNAC logo was painted over the Army symbol. Years in the mountain took out the CNAC paint and exposed the old signs.



One very special moment for me was when I saw the "Chung", the CNAC logo on the other side of the plane. You must understand this. All the pilots from the 40's that flew for CNAC took a picture of themselves with the logo behind them. Back in the 40's it was very exotic, and was the preferred picture to send back home to the family in the USA. I politely jumped the line and Ge Shuya took a picture of me with the Chung behind me (just like my father and all of his friends). This was very special to me.



The museum is great; it has many artifacts found around the plane. Some were Fox's personal belongings. Later that night, in a move that I admire a lot, the Governor, and the Propaganda Secretary ask Fletcher and I what we honestly thought of the museum. They ask us how to improve or if we had any suggestions. We were able to explain how we wish we could find more of the original parts and finish the plane (many were sold or stolen along time ago). We were able to explain how we wished the plane would be painted as it was when Fox flew it, and more information about CNAC could be displayed.



Many things happened and I apologize if I forget names and events. We drove back to Luku where we had a dinner in honor of Fletcher. The food was the most exotic I had so far (fried queen bees). Here, a minority group sang to us ancient songs from the land. In a way that was very beautiful, they also sang Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> symphony. The lyrics of this song are about friendship and union between the people of the world. Very moving. We then had a surprise for Fletcher. Our hosts had a birthday cake bigger than any wedding cake I ever saw. The minority group sang happy birthday in their local language. It was a very happy moment. The next day we returned to Baoshan, and flew back to Kunming. I will never forget the warmth and honesty of the people I met while I had the honor of represent my father. In fact, as I am writing this I am having tears of joy. There are many more things I wish to say!

--Diego Kusak,  
son of Captain Stephen Kusak



*This undated essay was written by Bert Coulson most likely in 1944 or at most a year or two later. It is part of a manuscript that he had hoped to publish but never did. It is wonderful to be able to partially fulfill that dream of his through the CANNONBALL.*

## THE ASPIRING HAND

Men who fly are more interested in things than people, map reading rather than sociology, engines rather than labor problems, mountains rather than politicians. Right or wrong, it is natural that it should be so, for things are more decisive than men, and usually more dependable. The mere act of flying does not make pilots that way; pilots fly because they were that way to begin with.

So most of us were quite detached and indifferent to the people of China, but deeply and personally interested in the land of the Chinese. The rice-paddies and terraced fields along the Stillwell Road change color with the seasons; the rich reddish-browns of the dry season become purple and yellow before succumbing to the fresh greenesses of the rainy time, and this earthy spectrum changes the appearance of the landmarks from the air. Near Yunnanyi is a landslide in the road which can be seen from fifty miles away when it is dry, but which disappears from view if wet. The lakes of Mowthing are ugly barren splotches until cold waters off the mountains make a huge division sign out of three of them, and from the air eight others become sparkling spikes on the back of a writhing dragon. A peak of the Yangtze, which towers to eighteen thousand feet and over, does not betoken monks and prayer-wheels on its slopes; it becomes familiarly known as "Old Likiang Mountain", with a grim and dreaded personality to be respected and avoided. One feels affection and satisfaction when "Old Likiang" can be seen tossing his snow-covered mane through the cloud layer, and you ease a wingtip up against his shoulder to show him what a puny thing a mountain can be. But when all is overcast and icy storms rage about his angry head, "Old Likiang" makes his brooding presence felt, although you can't see him through the blackness of the storm clouds through which you fly and anxiously check your position lest you get off course and crash into his rugged face.

Or finally, when you learn that the citizens of Kunming are to be given electricity once more, you do not visualize Pearl Buck's sturdy, idealized peasants. You picture in your mind, rather, the orange glow arising from the city on some rainy night full of weather, a night when that welcome glow makes an avenue of safety in those few hundred feet between the ground and the turbulent clouds. There'll be an airport between the lights of the city and the lake south of it, with no crouching mountains lurking between.

The land of the Chinese, I repeat, was of more immediate interest to us than the people of the land. But ours was a Chinese airline, with Chinese crews, mechanics and operations men. Our passengers were often Chinese men of affairs and our cargoes consisted of consignments of gasoline and oil, paper money and uniforms...all for China or her protection. Our destinations were cities and towns with strange, tinkling names reminiscent of musty geographics and painted screens, and our landing fields were built by hand. So little by little, we were forced to know something about these Oriental cousins and to have opinions about their customs, politics and ambitions. Unlike the unnumbered men and women of all professions who visited China with the express purpose of "understanding the Chinese problem", we avoided having any opinions or conclusions except those forced upon us by experience and stubborn circumstances. But understandably enough, we soon discovered that our conclusions about the Chinese were more often than not shared by the "old China hands" and greeted



with amazement or outright disbelief by representatives of the "folks back home". But that was all to the good, for the "old China hands" represented a varied series of people who should know what they are talking about. Free-lance mining engineers who have conducted surveys of missionaries of all creeds who feel their influence to be only a breath of civilized air in a tornado of superstition; representatives of great oil monopolies who fearfully speak of what might happen to the world if China's leaders take the Manchurian border and long-time sailors of the China Coast who are vastly amused at any Chinese pretensions to democracy; these and others who know the Orient, and knowing, are filled with many troubling doubts.

The conclusions one is forced to reach about China arrange themselves into diverting explosions of several high-blown myths. Some of these illusions are merely amusing; others contain grave and serious implications. To set down such conclusions is no effort at raising the journalistic ghost of the "Yellow Peril"; the process of challenging any type of propaganda is always highly entertaining food for thought, let the icons fall where they may.

### THE MYTH OF CHINESE DEMOCRACY

In a sordid little park in San Francisco stands a weathered statue that presides over the usual dirty pigeons and round-faced Chinese and Portuguese children at play. This particular image represents the benign and noble Chinese gentleman most people think of when Dr. Sun Yat-Sen is mentioned. No discussion of Chinese "democracy" is complete without him, in spite of the fact that the democratic government he supposedly established was no more real than the bronzed statue itself. It would be impossible to convince most Americans that the metal likeness is actually a living man, but such clever propagandists as Madame Chiang Kai-Shek and Lin Yutang have no trouble in assuring millions that the "beloved Doctor" established democracy in China as a living reality. Wishful thinking no doubt has much to do with the readiness with which Americans will believe in the "democracy" of such nations as China, or Argentina. Even after the chaos of two wars we cling wistfully to the dream of a world safe for democracy. But democracy, or even a federated republic such as we enjoy at home, has never existed in China, and probably never will.

In the day when Dr. Sun Yat-Sen was such a power in China, the sprawling unorganized area was nothing more than a series of feudal provinces, armed and embattled against each other. The size and wealth of a warlord's province depended exactly upon how powerful in guns and men he was. Fundamentally, there has been little change since that day. Great wealth and incredible poverty, dictatorial power and literal serfdom, military control and ancient methods combine to make China a feudal mass, much like Spain in many ways. It is no accident of war that Chiang Kai-Shek insists upon dictatorial control over the central government; such iron rule is a grim necessity of habit on one hand and the character of the land on the other.

True, there was and is, a nominal central government. But that was the price the shrewd Sun Yat-Sen paid for the lucrative foreign trade and foreign investments. Business cannot flourish in the chaos of constant civil war and Sun Yat-Sen, in alliance with the powerfully wealthy Soong family, knew the answer. Give the military and political support to the strongest of our warlords, whom we represent, and we will insure you a comparative safety in which to exploit the land and do business. We will also, San Yat-Sen went on, go through the motions of being a democracy so that the people of the United States and the British Empire, say, will be willing to grant that support.



Chiang Kai-Shek, the most obvious of the more powerful warlords, was chosen to head the Chinese protective association, and Sun Yat-Sen was his front, with the Soong family the power behind the operation. When Sun Yat-Sen died, the sister of T. V. Soong and wife of Chiang Kai-Shek, slipped naturally into his position. Without her brilliant and charming effect on American public opinion, it is highly improbable that her husband could have remained in power so long as he has. Half the people of China have never heard of Chiang Kai-Shek, and great segments of those who *have* mistrust his leadership.

With the advent of the Open Door Policy in China the coast sections became somewhat industrialized, and graduated from the feudalism of agriculture to the plutocracy of rule by money and trade. The speculative bankers and import-exporters had come into their own. Feudalism of the most primitive form still obtains in the more backward areas, but the entire disconnected system is protected not by the civil laws of the representatives of the people, but by the military and political power of the Generalissimo. Democracy in China? Let us not be deceived.

The clever Chinese found it a simple matter to guide such well-meaning emissaries as Donald Nelson and Henry Wallace through a series of conducted tours and sumptuous dinners, and they naturally reflected upon the American people their own rosy opinions of the "poor struggling Chinese". The people are struggling alright, but not toward democracy or any other goal outside the personal ambitions of their own local rulers. General Stillwell obviously knows the answers about China, and General Hurley will know them soon, but neither are in a position to speak publicly. Time and Newsweek magazines have begun to scratch the surface, but censorship being what it is, the news will reach the American people only too slowly. The San Francisco conference represents a world-wide sounding board for all pretensions at a "free and democratic post-war China". This, like all propaganda, will bear critical and well-informed inspection.

### THE MYTH OF UNLOCKED DOORS

One of the more amusing illusions our Chinese brothers like to foster has to do with the so-called "Oriental outlook on life". On some occasions we are begged to give aid and assistance to the poor but honest underdogs of the Far East who have withstood Japanese aggression for lo these many years. On other occasions it is impressed upon us that in spite of the poverty and disease of the Orient, your lowliest coolie has developed such a wonderful philosophy of patience and resignation that no Occidental can ever comprehend it. It is interesting to note that water buffaloes and mules have much the same philosophy. It is altogether possible that the collies would have no need for such an outlook if they were clothed and fed; so by clothing and feeding them generous old Uncle Sam would be destroying a philosophy it has taken the Chinese five thousand years to develop. An enlightening sidelight seems to be that once a coolie has stolen enough to set himself up in business, he loses his mystical outlook and becomes a highly impatient competitor.

Representative of such fantasy at its subtlest best is Lin Yutang, who has escaped farther from the realities of existence than the High Lama of Tibet. One of his colorful criticisms of America has to do with his aversion to locked doors and elaborate police systems. No one in America, he implies, dares trust anything or anyone. The brilliant satire came home to him on a recent trip he made from the United States to China. Not even a collar button was lost until he arrived at his last stop in Chungking,



whereupon a team composed of a baggage-coolie and a customs officer relieved the respected philosopher of two Gladstone bags. Locked doors, any G. I. In China will tell you, are not enough; you'd better have your portals guarded by an M.P. with a cocked carbine. A widespread suggestion to China-bound American officers has to do with carrying a baseball mask with a lock on it for sleeping purposes. This warning is given, of course, only to officers who have a number of gold fillings in their teeth. You can't blame the starving coolies for trying to steal possessions of yours, which represent to them a fortune on the black market; neither can you be blamed for carrying a baseball mask.

## THE MYTH OF ALLIED FRIENDSHIP

Nations do not form alliances on the basis of friendly feelings toward one another. Peacetime alliances are too business-like and military alliances are too grim for such gestures. The internal policies of a wartime ally are neither important to military success nor any of our business. The successful combination of the American Republic, the Russian Dictatorship and the British Monarchy should be sufficient evidence. But the moment anyone adopts a critical attitude toward any policy of one of the allies, all manner of unpleasant names are called. Ask any foreign correspondent.

Now it is an unmitigated fact that most Americans in China for military purposes do not like China or the Chinese people. Whether they do or not makes no difference; they have a job to do. Too often these military jobs have been hampered by the Pollyannaish attitude of our muddling political representatives abroad and at home. American diplomats, for example, must learn that international poker is like any other poker game...you're not sitting in the game just for the friendly atmosphere and pleasant company.

The British have long since learned that it is better to be respected out of fear or anger than liked because of foolish generosity with no strings attached. When the United States begins attaching strings to Lend-Lease, Foreign Relief Appropriations and military assistance, she will have learned her first practical lesson in international politics. We will be permitted to kibitz the game no longer; we either must play our cards well or get out. And we can't get out at this stage of what is patently one world.

Why should Uncle Sam pay Chinese duty on American gasoline flown into China in American airplanes for use in American vehicles of war used to protect China? Or, for that matter, British and Indian duty in India? Or why should American taxpayers build airstrips in jungles from which to bomb the common enemy and be forced to pay rent for the land on which they lie? Or why should Chiang Kai-Shek be permitted to use Lend-Lease supplies to equip his personal army, when the Generalissimo has consistently evaded using that army for the protection of American planes, personnel and supplies from Japanese aggression? Why should the best Chinese division be diverted to neutralize the so-called "Communist threat" from the North while only the rag-tail troops are flown to Burma against the Japanese?

The apologists for our international muddling answer all charges in terms of "Reverse Lend-Lease", "exigencies of war", "post-war security" and so on, but economics isn't that difficult to understand; when a nation pours out men and money, what is so wrong with expecting something in return? Something more than professions of "democratic futures" and "eternal gratitude and friendship", we hope.



All these speculations about the Orient, and China in particular, are best symbolized by two religious figures in a Buddhist temple built into a cliff near Kunming in Yunnan Province. One is a huge Buddha, who from his great height of forty-five feet, presides in mystical dignity over a gloomy, cave-like chamber filled with the figures of hundreds of lesser gods. An enigmatic smile creases the bland face, and the great orange eyes seem filled with the accumulated wisdom and satiric speculation of millions of years. The thumb and second finger of the Buddha's left hand are held forward from the massive body in a cynical disregard for the puny projects and ambitions of man.

Buddha's disdainful left hand is a universally accepted symbol among the genuine scholars and wise men of China, as well as among the hopeless millions of peasants and coolies. It represents, as does Buddha, the utter futility of life in ancient China and most of modern China. It opposes itself to change and invites refuge in religion, since life itself is admittedly beyond control or escape. This Buddha's pose is characteristic of the Chinese culture we know best, and which in the past has contributed much to the arts and the sciences of the world.

Among the lesser gods erected about the walls of the temple is a strange image, which lacks the dignity and inscrutability of the Buddha. Its body is only ten feet in height but its right arm stretches toward the ceiling for a good twenty-five feet. This unusual extension of the arm and hand are supposed to represent a straining toward heaven and the hereafter, while the lump of gold clutched in the left hand symbolizes an attachment to earth by love of material things. The face of the image is half-demon, half-human and is tortured by an expression compounded of greed and worship.

A Buddhist priest in attendance at the temple translated the name of this god to mean "The Aspiring Hand", and it seems to represent all the ambitious projects of "The New China". The aspiring hand will not be directed toward heaven, however, but rather toward a highly industrialized future for a strongly ambitious China. It suggests a danger, which perhaps only the Russians have fully recognized. With foreign capital to exploit natural resources, build railroads, develop communications and airlines and establish industry, there is no limit to the expansion possible in China in the next generation or so.

With a strongly militaristic government in control of a necessarily centralized economy, China can easily pose a threat to world peace and security. Nationalism and an intense patriotic devotion have already begun to affect Chinese domestic policies, and the use of radio propaganda will further enhance such feelings. The most ignorant coolie can hear and be influenced by radio.

China's present dilemma is akin to the of a man lost in a desert who knows there are life-giving oases to the north, east, south and west of him, but who possesses no compass beneath a sky constantly obscured by blowing sand. Any one of four directions will lead him to security, but there remain three hundred and fifty six compass headings he may take toward failure and death. For the security of not only China but of the entire society of nations the present strong powers must provide realistic paths of destiny for her to follow. To permit China to exercise a complete freedom of choice would be disastrous; a firm guidance toward a secure economy and a decentralized form of government is called for. In the Orient, as well as throughout the rest of the world, the American Eagle, the Russian Bear, and the British Lion must unite in strength and intelligence to insure comparative security. The world, alas, still bears a stronger resemblance to a savage jungle than to an ideal civilization, and only the strong survive in any jungle.

*-Captain Bert Coulson*

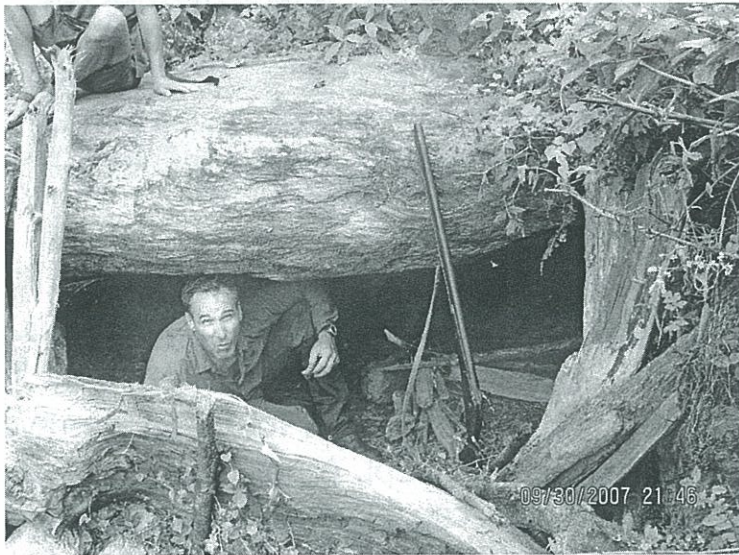


***Many of you have met Clayton Kuhles, most recently at the 2006 reunion. He has taken on the very worthy mission of searching for missing-in-action aircraft and reporting on his discoveries. You can learn more about his efforts on his website [www.MIArecoveries.org](http://www.MIArecoveries.org). We contacted Clayton recently and he sent us this report on his most recent accomplishments--***

## PIECES OF THE PAST

I'll try to give you a brief update on my MIA aircraft search expeditions during the Fall 2006 and Fall 2007.

In Fall 2006 I returned to northeast India to continue searching for more US aircraft wrecks. As usual, I traveled without any other Westerners, using only a local guide / interpreter, local hunters to guide me to the wrecksites, and a few local young men to work as porters. The group size would typically be about six people, including myself. A return to the Lohit District



and the upper reaches of the Ghallum / Kalong River resulted in locating the wreck of CNAC 58. The wreck is at the headwaters of the Ngat River, high in the mountains close to the Burma border. This river is a tributary of the Ghallum / Kalong River, which in turn joins the Lohit River at Minzong, which joins the Siang River near Sadiya

to form the Brahmaputra

River. From the Minzong area I moved westerly to the area north of Tezu. In densely- jungled hills north of Tezu I documented the wreck of C-87 #3791. This C-87 disappeared on April 09, 1943 with six crewmembers aboard (see pg. 11 in The Aluminum Trail). From the Tezu area I moved to Pasighat on the Brahmaputra River, then across the Siang River, then north 60 miles to the Abor tribal village of Damroh. In Damroh I retained a local hunter who guided us further north through more dense jungles to the wreck of B-24 #42-73308. This aircraft disappeared on Jan 25, 1944 with eight crewmembers aboard (see pg. 93 in The Aluminum Trail). I've since been contacted by relatives of all



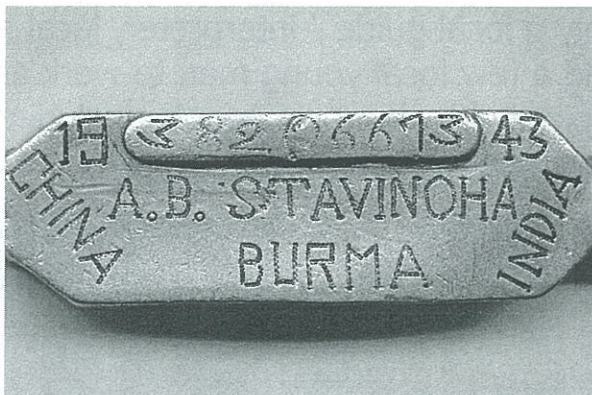
eight crewmembers. The sister and nephew of the co-pilot live near me in Arizona, and we met yesterday.

This fall, I again returned to northeast India to follow-up on leads which I accumulated the previous year. My guide had heard rumors of an aircraft wreck up the Halai River. The Halai River is in the upper Lohit District, west of Minzong, and is a south-flowing tributary of the Lohit River. We trekked to the last village of Mangung, then to very headwaters of the Halai River to discover the wreck of C-46 #4724. This aircraft disappeared on Feb 20, 1944 with four crewmembers aboard (see pg.106 in The Aluminum Trail). From the Halai River, it was then to Sadiya on the Brahmaputra River, then north to Roing and further north to the village of Bishmaknagar, then trekking through rocky riverbeds and thick jungles to the wreckage of C-109 #44-49628.

This aircraft disappeared on July 17, 1945 with four crewmembers aboard (see pg.457 in The Aluminum Trail).

Numerous human bones were found on the ground surface at this site and in a nearby creekbed. These were collected, and will be sent to JPAC at Hickam AFB. I

then went to Itanagarh to investigate word of an aircraft wreck north of that town. This wreck proved to be C-46 #41-24717, which disappeared on March 24, 1944 with four crewmembers aboard (see pg.117 in The Aluminum Trail). The remains were reportedly recovered later in the war. However, I found an engraved



ID bracelet at the site belonging to Cpl. Arnold Stavinoha and the eagle crest from an officer's cap. I've since located the Stavinoha family in Texas, and have made arrangements to send them Arnold's ID bracelet. He still has two living sisters. Treks to several other reported aircraft wrecks had to be postponed due to inaccurate or non-verified info.



My plans are to search in Bangladesh and return to Burma before the monsoons begin next year, and then search for CNAC 60 and other aircraft in Yunnan province of China next Fall.

Best regards,  
Clayton



## ZE GREAT PIERRE!

By the time we had all forgotten how nice it would be to be home for turkey and Thanksgiving, there were many left-handed signs of Christmas in the air. If you were on the India side, you were always promising someone to bring an evergreen from China. In China, you were always begging someone to bring you just one package from Calcutta. No one ever took these signs seriously. They even studiously avoided any discussion of the coming season. Who ever heard of an evergreen in a jungle? Forget it, son, you'll be home someday. You don't think the reindeer could get over those hills, do you?

Men did, however, sneak away from poker games and write a letter for the first time in months. It was noised about that a few half-hearted red and green Chinese bills were sent out. They're engraved, ain't they? And of course, a few drunks were heard staggering home under an aura of Chinese wine and Christmas carols. But you know what the jingbao juice is.

Word reached us that some Army nurses deep in the heart of Burma had gone so far as to decorate their quarters and hospital with ivy and mistletoe smuggled in in a B-4 bag. But people were always gossiping about the gals; leave 'em alone, for Chrissake! Life is rough enough over here for a woman as it is.

In such an atmosphere of pushing Saint Nicholas behind our backs, heresy had to be committed. But the non-shaving, cynical, unsentimental mechanics and grease monkeys...they were guilty. A few night before Christmas it got cool enough on the India side to wear a shirt, so a few heavy-handed mechanics built a glowing charcoal fire, turned out all the lights and a little self-consciously invited us to gather 'round and sing carols..."It's Christmas time, ain't it? Now Gawddammit, sing, you, lousy flyboys!"

With simulated egnogs and homesickness as stimulants, who couldn't sing? It wasn't sentimental, it was maudlin. When we had exhausted ourselves, Howie Dean had a suggestion. Possessed with the lousiest tenor and the sincerest voice of anyone I have ever heard, Howie demanded that everyone either sing or perform in some other way. This was revelry pure and simple, and to our liking. The Star of Bethlehem had been persuaded to shine over India for a few hours, and as our Southern lads would put it, "Evahbody just natcherly loved evahbody"...



One of our guests was a Major Duke, a lean and hungry looking pilot who was commanding officer of a squadron which flew off our field. Duke had joined us in the singing, and had suffered through a series of impersonations, gymnastic feats, Bunyanesque flying tales and so on. When it came time for him to sing or perform, he chose to tell a series of stories centered about the amorous adventures of "One Frenchman by ze name of "Ze Grr-ate Pierre"". What with a bona fide French-Canadian accent, the use of an Aussie hat turned sidewise and a good sense of time, "Ze Great Pierre" had us climbing the walls with glee.

It was soon midnight and time to knock off the noise since some of the men had to get enough sleep to work at four the next morning. But it had been a good Christmas party, and we all took a little of it away with us. Come Christmas Eve itself and the mechanics would be on the line working and the pilots would be scattered all over the sky, since Tojo had promised us many raids on that night.

But Duke..."Ze Great Pierre"...had just begun to go and insisted that we carry the Yuletide spirit over to his Officers' Club, some fifteen miles away. So we loaded down two jeeps with unscheduled men, and kept the bells a-jingling en route. On arrival we aroused the one-half of his men not alerted for possible duty, and continued the celebration.

Duke was the rough diamond, with all the emphasis on the hardness. He could have been twenty-five or fifty, but was actually thirty. His discipline was the perfect answer for young Americans in wartime; it would work on no one else. A combination of lead and push, it would have survived five minutes in the Pentagon Building and perhaps only five years in the jungle, but it worked where he was. His men were men only in the sense that they did a man's work, a commonplace occurrence now. Bright-eyed lads they were, and most still shaved in private, but there they were. It's like discovering another personality in an immature boy to realize that he's a different person in the air than on the ground, afloat than ashore, on the infantry line than on leave.

Typical of such paradoxical youthfulness and maturity was one Schmidt, who was shyly singing with us. Duke called him over to meet some of us. "Schmidt, come along to this end of the bar and have a drink. We'll toast your family."



“Yes, Sir, and thank you. We’ll drink to all our families, sweethearts and wives included.”

Major Duke fixed a stern inspection eye on his pilot and began the interrogation.

“Mister, what is your name?”

Picking up the cue with a twinkle in his eye, Schmidt threw a stiff brace at attention, and exaggerated his “Schmidt, Sir, A. E. by initial, Serial Number so-and-so, A.P.O. Numbers unknown, Second Lieutenant by rank and my grandmother has a glass eye, Sir!”

“Lieutenant, what is your age?”

“Nineteen, Sir,” with a double brace. “How do you fly in this outfit, Lieutenant Schmidt?”

“Like bats outta hell, Sir!”

“How do we drink?”

“Like gentlemen of the old school, Sir!”

“How do we treat the ladies?”

“With proper decorum, Sir!”

“And what, Lieutenant Schmidt, is proper decorum?”

“With proper decorum, Major Pierre, is defined by this squadron as follows, Sir: ladies are to be treated like chippies and chippies are to be treated like ladies, within certain bounds, Sir!”

“And how are the bounds defined?”

“By the Military Police, God save their unholy souls, Sir!”

“What is the unforgivable sin, Lieutenant Schmidt?”



"To let down your crew, Sir!"

"And what is the second unforgivable sin?"

"To wave the flag in the presence of your betters, Sir!"

"And who are our betters, Lieutenant?"

"Them who has been there more than what we has, Sir!"

"And how do you get to be better than you are?"

"By getting there the fastest with the leastest gas, Sir!"

"What about getting back?"

"To hell with that, and Merry Christmas, Skipper!"

We could drink to that, and did. The catechism finished, Duke nodded to this lad who represented what he respected in all his men, and chewed another inch off his cigar. "I don't say this out of vanity, I hope but only pride. We have a going concern here, and we know it. You've heard this all over the world, and it is true all over the world. If I am forced to order any of these zoonies to fly into a mountain, they'll do it and trust the judgment to be right. Who says there ain't no discipline in Americans?"

"I see what you mean," agreed one of our old timers. "But you can lead only eight or nine out of ten; what about that other man? Don't you have an exception here to prove that rule?"

"You're damned right I do," Duke replied. "Like you to meet him. I sent a man after Captain Uhling, our flight surgeon. He tells me to go to hell, and I listen. I drive the boys too hard sometimes, and he holds the check rein. I can't handle that damn fool...he's a Christian!"

"You mean he makes a Christian out of you?"

Duke nodded. "Yeah, and something more. Like all the medics, he's a good officer but his work comes first. Unmilitary as hell! He gets around me by quoting parables. Damndest guy I ever saw."



Uhling entered the bar rubbing sleep out of his eyes. He was a self-contained man of about thirty. "What's up, Duke...you suffering from delusions of being able to sing again? I'll venture that the little town of Bethlehem was never like this. I'll drink to the season, however."

"Wanted the boys to meet a calm Christian, Doc," our host responded. "Like me to put your through the squadron catechism?"

Uhling smiling. "Thank you, no. That's a good device for our men, but not for me. You either do your job or you don't. Maybe I need a philosophy because I don't fly as much as they do. Your men have courage with no frills. But I am involved in a job opposed to killing, and need a philosophy akin to that idea. Your men know how they feel about killing and being killed, having been there. Not so in my case, so I can afford to be serene. It doesn't cost me so much."

"You are serene all right," Duke acknowledged. "Maybe that is how you get around me. But you talk me into the damndest things with that peaceful non-resistance attitude you have. Like sending those kids home because of pilot fatigue. Hell, there ain't no such thing in a war!"

"That's my department," Uhling parried. "And you worry about your brood twice as much as I do. But let us cease to quibble and invite our souls. Curfew shall not ring tonight."

Duke glanced about the noisy room and wryly observed that he would impose no curfew, but would keep flight crews alerted, since the net had picked up unidentified aircraft earlier.

When the alarm sounded an hour later, it interrupted a discussion of what a good impression Pat O'Brien and Jinx Falkenburg had made in the CBI area. The alarm meant that enemy bombers in force with fighter cover were approaching, and Duke picked up a microphone nearby to give hasty instruction.

"Disperse all aircraft other than fighters down the valley out of range...you know where to go. Flight crews will man the first planes they come to and get off the field immediately. Break radio silence only in emergency on



assigned frequencies. Leave the hunting to the fighters and get out of the area. Let's go."

Those of us who were guests at Duke's field knew he was short of flight crews at the time, and joined his men in stumbling through the darkness toward the parked planes.

The fighters got off first to intercept the enemy, and the bombers and transports lumbered off after them, but headed back down the valley toward several fields out of range. The big planes had to clear one high ridge of mountains before they could let down into the safety of the valley some fifty miles away, and could take one of two routes. These routes led through two low passes, either of which would permit entry into the valley without wasting precious minutes to climb up and over the ridge. Between the two passes was a "False Pass", since it curved to the north, not into open valley, but into a mountain wall ten thousand feet high. A blind alley we had all learned to avoid.

Having gone along as co-pilot for Duke in a B-25, I saw the shadows of one of the good passes looming up only ten miles ahead of us, and decided that none of the enemy fighters had broken through our interceptors. The radio had been quiet, and in a few minutes all of us would be roaring through the passes and down the valley at jungle level to the safety of the various fields.

Duke had removed his cigar from his mouth and started to say something when the emergency frequency started to crackle in our headsets and a flatly familiar voice came in.

"Able Peter Squadron from Truckdriver four-seven...five yellow bellies on my tail, and they have me isolated. Stay away from False Pass...I'll try to jump over the top of it before they get too close. You guys take the North and South Passes; looks like you are not spotted yet. Over and out."

Duke cursed viciously and grabbed his mike. "For Chrissake, Doc, what in hell are you doin' up here? Stay low and run for North Pass! Over, out!"

"Duke from Doc. Came along as Schmidt's co-pilot. We were last off the field, and the Japs jumped us at the end of the runway. They got Schmidt, and I ran for a cloud, but they were waiting on the other side. Will evade if possible and jump the ridge. Over and out."



“For God’s sake, Doc, you can’t make it now. Take the North Pass low...we should all be through by then. It’s under my right wing-tip now. Over, out.”

“Duke from Doc. No can do. These guys are making another run, and I gotta dive for a cloud. Anyhow, there are planes behind you and I would lead them right to you. Over and out.”

We knew and the flight surgeon knew that he could never hope to regain enough altitude to hurdle that high ridge over the False Pass. He was purposely acting as decoy to keep the Japs away from the rest of us. Some of us were armed, but out of formation as we had to be, we would have been ten pins for those fast enemy fighters. As we nosed down through the North Pass into the security of darkness of the green valley below, we felt helpless in the face of Uhling’s plight.

Duke interrupted his bitter cursing a moment to pick up the mike again. “Doc from Pierre. You ain’t comin’ back, Ol’ Son. Why in hell did you do it?”

The doctor’s answer is now a byword. “Duke from the Christian. For ze Great Pierre! Ironic, ain’t it?” There was a brief pause and Uhling added, “Can’t jump the ridge. I’ll lead ‘em down the False Pass and take a couple with me. Don’t forget to give the lads their catechisms. Over...out.”

And that was the last we ever heard from the Christian who had wondered about his courage. The next day Duke and I flew over the False Pass and spotted the crumpled wings of Schmidt’s and Doc’s plane, high up on the mountain, but not quite high enough. But the two Zeroes who had been directly on his tail had gone in with him. They had seen the trap too late, and their wreckage had scarred the mountainside into which Uhling had led them.

On the way home Duke had little to say, but when we landed he lifted an eyebrow and said it. “Courage, eh? Doc had it all right. Reminds me of a Bible verse he was fond of quoting. Wish I could remember it; something about ‘no greater love hath any man than that he lay down his life for his brother...’”

*-Captain Bert Coulson (father of Eve Coulson) circa 1944*



# NOTES



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# CNAC CANNONBALL

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Somewhere Over India

