

First Flight Over The "HUMP"

COLLECTOR SERIES VI

China National Aviation Corp. was founded by Curtiss Wright in 1929. In 1933 it was taken over by Pan Am and the Chinese Nationalist Government. The company was based in Shanghai until the beginning of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937. Headquarters were then moved to Hankow and later to Hong Kong, where they remained until the fall of Hong Kong in 1941 forced a move to Calcutta. At the end of WWII they moved back to Shanghai.

With the fall of most of the Chinese port cities in 1941, the company explored new air and land routes into Western China from Burma and India. The first flight over the Hump was scheduled after consultation with the British, who governed India. It would originate in Lashio to pick up two British officers from India; five from Singapore and Burma; the British Air Attaché to China; a road expert from the Chinese Ministry of Communications; William Langhorn Bond, Vice President of CNAC; K.I. Nieh, assistant operations manager; and Arthur N. Young, Director of CNAC and Financial Advisor to China. Captain Chuck Sharp was pilot.

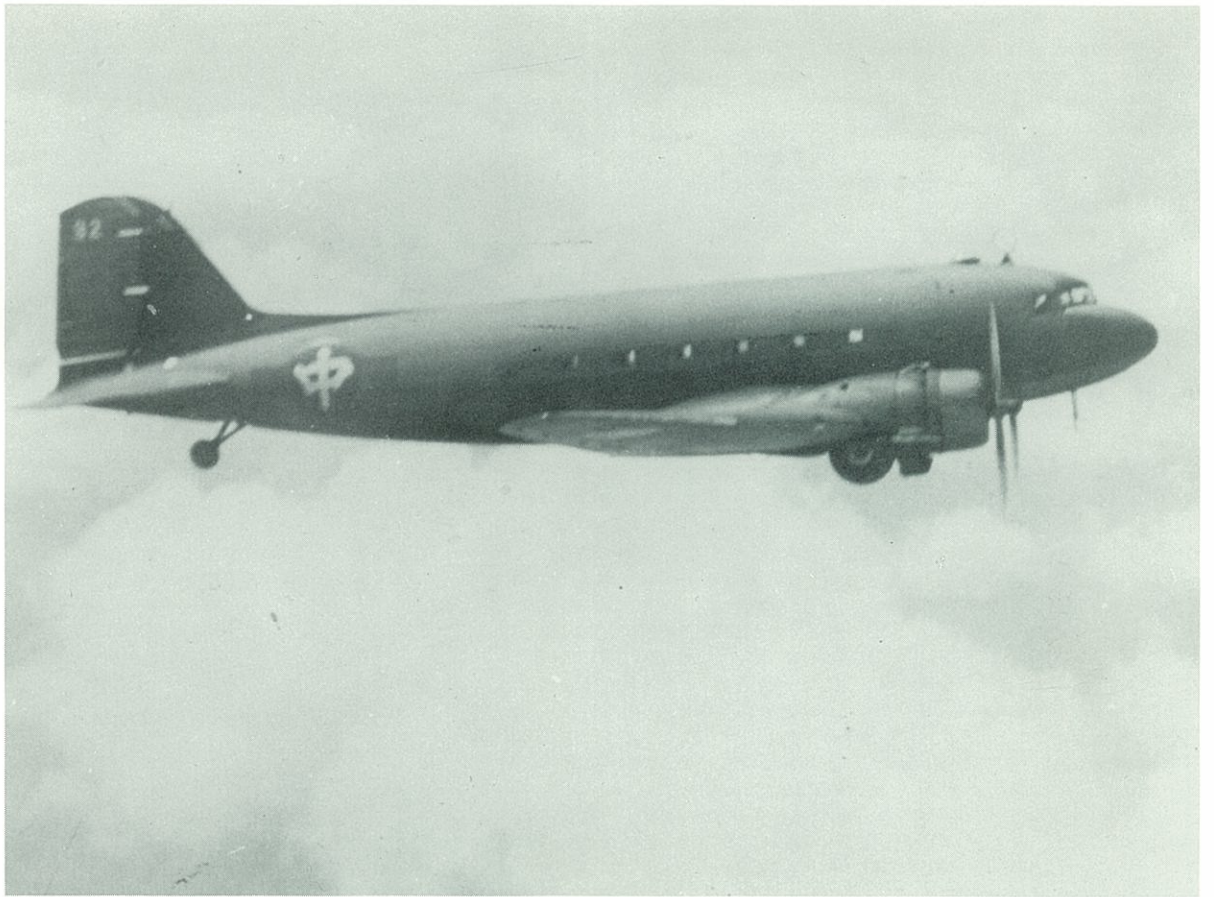
Leaving Lashio about 1:00 P.M., they flew to Nankham, then Loiwing - home of China Aircraft Manufacturing Company - and on to Bhamo, an important port on the Irrawady River and the departure point of Marco Polo's historic trek into Yunnan. The next leg, up the valley to Myitkina at the end of the northern branch of the Burma railways and on to the Brahmaputra River Valley in upper Assam, was the first flight through the 8000 foot pass of the Patkai Bum Range between India and Burma.

Assam was covered with tea plantations. The tea plants were closely packed together with the tops all cut down to about four feet. From the air the pattern looked like an immense linoleum rug. The arrival at 4:20 P.M. was a full day earlier than had been projected by Calcutta operations.

The route east toward China was over Abor Country, which had never been penetrated by white men. The Abors wore no clothes, shot poisoned arrows, and collected heads!

The approach to Fort Hertz, the most northern post in Burma at the famous "Triangle" formed by the two branches of the Irrawady River, was over 12,500 foot mountains. Mountains to the north were 16,000 feet and huge ranges running north and south separated the great Salween, Mekong, and Yantze Rivers - later more popularly known as the Red, White, and Blue because of the distinctive colors of their water.

As he began to climb for the snowy ridge just east of



the Salween, Captain Sharp picked up three of the four oxygen tanks in the cabin for the crew, leaving only one for the passengers to share. When the weather suddenly turned clear, they were able to get through at only 14,000 feet, avoiding the 18,000 foot peaks. East of the Mekong, they passed 24,000 and 25,000 foot peaks.

At Likiang they landed in a grass field to pick up the explorer Dr. Rock. After about an hour with no sign of Dr. Rock, Bondie and Young made motions to the natives to clear the field for take-off. The natives were too astounded by their first flying machine to move until the engines

were started; then they got the idea and the take-off at 8400 feet elevation was made without incident. The first trip over the Hump ended at dusk with the arrival at Kunming.

With the fall of Burma to the Japanese, CNAC became the sole source of supplies into China. Even with the reopening of the Burma Road and the expansion of cargo operations by the U.S. Air Force, it remained the major source until the end of WWII. While never much publicized, this vital link cost more than 1200 planes with crews that were pinpointed by Army Air Rescue. Another 1200 vanished without a trace.



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3	4	5	6	7	8 LINCOLN BIRTHDAY	9
10 VALENTINE'S DAY	11 BIRTHDAY OBSERVANCE	12	13 NEW YEAR'S DAY	14	15 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR'S BIRTHDAY	16
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