



CANNON BALL

December 2008

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Crash

I can't help it, a theme has emerged in this issue and I am going to go with it. At the reunion this September, we heard two touching and amazing stories of people whose lives had been profoundly affected by CNAC plane crashes. Both made cross-country journeys to attend the reunion for the first time and those of us who were there were fortunate to hear their moving stories. And as most of us know, our seemingly indestructible Fletcher Hanks left for Hawgy Taw this spring, succumbing to injuries sustained in a car accident. He didn't want anything that looked like a funeral, but "if a few people want to meet in the park and swap a few lies and share a few stories" he was amenable. On October 18th, that's exactly what happened in his hometown of Oxford, Maryland, and the CNAC family was well represented. In keeping with the theme, I'm including my father's account of what happened on August 31, 1944, after his plane crashed in the jungles of Burma near Shingbwiyang. Of course, there's also what's been happening crash-wise this fall on Wall Street--but since this isn't Barron's, you won't have to read about that, at least on these pages! I've also included highlights of the reunion, a recipe (a *recipe*???), news of Bob Willett's latest book, and information about the 2009 reunion (never too soon to start making plans to attend). Enjoy, and please be in touch if you have news to share or ideas for the next issue, in May/June 2009.

Eve Coulson

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CNAC Reunion 2008 Recap

Bill Maher has been right about many things (MOST things?)—but in 2002 he said with conviction that the CNAC Association would be history by the end of the decade. We aren't quite there yet, but a trend is in place to prove him wrong. Attendance at the past few reunions has been growing, and this year's gathering was no exception, with 75-80 members and associates (5-10 MORE than last year) participating in a busy schedule that required adding another day to what has in the past been a three day event. It would be impossible to completely and accurately report all that happened during the 4 days of meetings, presentations and conversations over meals.

The highlights included:

- *Nancy Allison Wright's DVD of CNAC photos from 1929-1949

- *A presentation by Barry Martin about Royal Leonard

- *Diego Kusak on what's happening in China—his important work with museums and the growing awareness of CNAC's history and contributions

- *The a telling of the COMPLETE unedited story of Elmer the Bear (to appear in an upcoming issue of the CANNONBALL)

- *Greg Crouch's update on his research and his soon to be completed book

Paul Vick's story of his family's commitment to China and tragic plane crash

- *John Hill, Director of the San Francisco Airport Museum and Aviation Library, who spoke to us at the hotel and led a private tour at the airport featuring the “Six Decades of Cathay Pacific History” exhibition

*Remarks by Li Wang, publisher of biography of Moon Chin

*Friday banquet at Moon Chin's featuring "Old China Hands Curry"

*CNAC Dinner Saturday night in the Diplomat Ballroom complete with awards

Nancy Allison Wright's photos stirred memories for some and gave all of us a glimpse at that era, and what everyday life was like on the ground. Barry Martin had some help from Pete Goutiere and Moon Chin identifying people in the film clips (circa 1937-1950) he showed us, given to him by Royal Leonard's widow. Diego has done what no one else could have to advance the cause of getting the CNAC Hump story told in China and creating opportunities for permanent exhibitions there. Greg Crouch shared some more stories he has uncovered as he continues to assemble a comprehensive account of CNAC history, having been inspired to begin the project by the 2002 reunion, and now hoping for a fall 2009 completion date. Several shared the story of Elmer the Bear, written as a children's story by Valerie, based on a true story with an ending that might best be left out of the children's version. The bear became the co-pilots' mascot, and a logo was created which has been featured in past issues of the CANNONBALL.

We met Paul and Joyce Vick and heard the story of how Paul's father's childhood love for China led to him to prepare for a life of service in China after the war. Paul's parents and their young children (the youngest being Paul) were on a journey to fulfill this dream which was cut short by a plane crash not far from their destination—Paul was the only survivor.

Li Wang, author of *The Life next to the Spinning Propeller*, showed slides as he spoke about his research and offered some new stories about the early years of Moon's life starting with his birth in 1914 until he left CNAC in 1945. The banquet at Moon's was fantastic, as usual, featuring a wonderful main course, Old China Hands Curry, compliments of Valerie Parish Kendrick, a great bartending staff, and *finally*, someone DID fall in the pool!!! (Not the bartenders' fault).

NEXT REUNION

September 2-5, 2009

Burlingame Embassy Suites

Reservations (650) 342-4600

**\$109 per night, full breakfast and happy hour included
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**Reunion questions? Contact Valerie
(707) 459-5165 email rosebud@saber.net**

We saw two amazing new videos at the reunion for the first time—words will not do them justice. One was an animated simulation of #60's final flight over the Hump, which gave pilots and non-pilots a breathtaking glimpse of the experience of that flight from the cockpit. Diego received the following letter in response to his letter of thanks on our behalf:

Hello Dear Mr. Diego Kusak,

First, I'm very honored that we have finally done small thing for those heroes. Even if it just made by inferior devices.

The Hump Flight was really great historical feat. Those pilots and staff of CNAC are our hero. They had given us the hope and the reason to keeping counteraction. Anyway, Every Chinese people should remember that history.

But nowadays, as I know, many of Chinese young people even don't know about that period. That's one of reasons why we have made that video for internet. I thought music and art are the best way to make people t remember something. So I wrote the song and all of the score. I hope young people could remember the history by that song.

For my personal, I love that period of history very much. Not only because it is so great for our winning of the war but also I love the aircraft and the people worked for the hump flight. And I'm very glad that the 6 alive pilots watched our video. Of course I'm always glad to keep contact with CNAC Association, if possible. My friends and I are all glad to be part of this. Also we would like to do more things for those heroes and the history.

"My friends" are those people who worked for the video, they do love the hump flight as me. They are artist, businessman, doctor, train-driver, film director, and musician.

Thank you for your email, I expect for further cooperate with you.

Songming Wu, Music Composer, Beijing, P.R. of China

The second beautiful video was shown during dinner on Saturday night—in it, a choir of Miao people sang in tribute to the pilots. It was hard to say what was more touching—the beautiful, haunting melody; the expressions on the singers' faces; vignettes of their children, some listening and watching, some sleeping in the pews as their parents sang; or the reactions of our group as we enjoyed the musical tribute. Hopefully we will be able to make it available for those who missed it, at the next reunion or in some other fashion. Peggy and Valerie sent the following message to the choirmaster:

It is with deep Appreciation and Pleasure that I write this letter of thanks to you and the Miao people. Your beautiful song sung by the Miao choir was heard by all at our CNAC Reunion Dinner. The DVD of the choir singing was shown on the big screen for all to see, hear, and enjoy. Nine of the original CNAC pilots, ages 88 – 94, were seated at the front table and were visibly moved by the out pouring of love and appreciation expressed by you and the Miao people through the DVD media. They were truly touched as... after all these years since the War of Aggression, they thought they had been forgotten. Please know that CNAC Association, the original members, their families and descendants, join me in saying thank you so much.... for giving of your time, your energy, your talent, and of yourselves.

CNAC BEEF CURRY RECIPE

(specially prepared by Valerie Parish Kendrick as the main dish for Moon Chin's banquet this year)

CUT RUMP ROAST OR SIRLOIN. ROAST (4-6 LBS) INTO SQUARES OR USE STEW MEAT. BROWN MEAT IN SMALL AMOUNT OF OIL IN LARGE DEEP IRON SKILLET OR DEEP HEAVY PAN—REMOVE TO PLATTER/BOWL.

*CHOP SWEET ONION AND BRAISE IN SAME FRYING PAN UNTIL BROWNISH IN COLOR AND SOFT—REMOVE TO ANOTHER PLATTER. IN SAME DEEP FRYING PAN...BURN 5 TABLESPOONS (OR MORE IF YOU WANT IT HOTTER) OF EAST INDIAN MADRAS CURRY PASTE—DAW SENS IF YOU CAN FIND IT. IF YOU CAN'T FIND IT THEN USE...YOU'LL HAVE TO MAKE YOUR OWN PASTE....

*IN A LITTLE OIL IN THE SAME PAN...ADD 2 HEAPING TABLESPOONS OF PATAK'S ORIGINAL HOT CURRY PASTE (IT'S RED IN COLOR), If you're brave add a little more

*5-6 HEAPING TABLESPOONS OF SUN BRAND MADRAS CURRY POWDER—MERWANJEE POONJIAJEE & SONS, PRIVATE LTD, Some chopped garlic and powdered Cumin. BURN UNTIL VERY FRAGRANT**** burn as in brown...not as in black—if you mess up here....start over

ADD: 5 CANS BEEF BOUILLON... THEN ADD MEAT/ONIONS. COOK MIXTURE FOR 8 HOURS ON MEDIUM TO MEDIUM-LOW HEAT, STIRRING OCCASSIONALLY. ADJUST HEAT FOR YOUR STOVE

AFTER ABOUT 4 HOURS: *ADD 1-2 LARGE PEELED CHOPPED POTATOES AND ABOUT ½ CUP FLAKED BAKER'S SWEETENED COCONUT—THIS WILL THICKEN IT

CONTINUE TO COOK FOR ANOTHER 4 HOURS... TASTING CURRY DURING COOKING PROCESS... ADD MORE CURRY PASTE (or powder), IF YOU WANT IT HOTTER.

HINT... COOK IT THE DAY BEFORE, REFRIDGERATE, AND REMOVE ANY FAT ON TOP OF THE CURRY BEFORE SERVING...MORE FAVORABLE.

***NOTE CURRY PASTE IS DIFFERENT THAN CURRY POWDER. HAS GARLIC AND CUMIN IN IT. IF YOU'RE GOING TO USE CURRY POWDER IT WILL TASTE DIFFERENT, SO ADD CHOPPED GARLIC AND CUMIN.

NOTE... EAST INDIAN MADRAS CURRY IS DIFFERENT THAN CHINESE CURRY.

SERVE CURRY OVER COOKED REAL RICE WITH THESE (8) CONDIMENTS RAISINS-DARK, CHOPPED BOILED EGGS, COCONUT-FLAKED (BAKER'S), DURKEE'S FRIED ONIONS-CRISPED IN OVEN (READ DIRECTIONS),

CHOPPED PEANUTS—USE CHOPPER, MAJOR GREY'S MANGO CHUTNEY—NONE OTHER, FRY BACON UNTIL CRISP - BREAK INTO SMALL PIECES, SLICED BANANAS—SLICE AT LAST MINUTE, TOSS IN SOME LEMON JUICE OR THEY WILL BROWN OUT

(The slightly edited document below, found in the archives of the CANNONBALL, this brief history of CNAC Association, written in 1995, reveals the enduring spirit of this group, the enthusiasm with which it began and still exists. More has been written by and about the group in the intervening years; the membership has shifted to a greater number of associates than original members, and the current total is slightly over 200 compared to 250 13 years ago)

CNAC ASSOCIATION

On Christmas Day, 1953, Reg Farrar, with the help of Natalie Michelson and Howard Dean, timidly sent letters to the addresses they had collected hoping that others would be interested in contact with their friends from CNAC days. The response was immediate and exceeded our wildest dreams. Returns came from all over the country. As a result, a reunion was held in New York City, May 15, 1954 and the CNAC Association was born in the House of Chan Restaurant. Members had come from all over the country—Texas, Florida, and as far away as Arizona and California. The organizational meeting decided on officers, and further meetings, which have been held since, every two years, in Miami, San Francisco, San Diego, Orlando and San Antonio. Regional meetings were held twice a year for several years in New York City.

Reg Farrar was the first president followed by Roy Farrell, Bob Prescott, Sol Soldinski, Art Chin, Jules Watson, Bill Pawley, Fletcher Hanks and Bill Maher. A full slate of officers has been elected at each meeting, including a board of trustees. The board organized trips to Majorca, Hong Kong, The Republic of China in Taiwan and The Peoples Republic on the Mainland.

The Association gained the Chinese war medal, and finally the Honorable Discharge from the U.S. Air Force. CNAC, and we, are proud of what we did. As an airline it stands tall as one of the great achievements of what is now early commercial aviation. The CNAC Association in 1995 has approximately 250 known surviving members who continue to have regular meetings. It has contributed to, and has or will have exhibits at the San Diego Air Museum, the Robbins Field Air Museum.

Two or three times a year the association publishes The CANNONBALL, a newsletter named after the group's song sung to the tune of the Wabash Cannonball. It contains announcements, reports of the group's activities, and lore of the days in the Orient. Unhappily it also contains notices of the members who have made that final flight west to that mythic mountaintop—Hoggy Tau.

Any organization develops stories and incidents in its lifetime. This is its unique history, which builds up slowly over the years and is remembered later. CNAC has been the subject of many magazine and newspaper articles and a definitive book by Dr. William Leary of the University of Georgia. The Association has published 4 books on the history of CNAC. Two more books are approaching manuscript form.

Several members have written autobiographies of their experiences. These include: Royal Leonard, Pete Goutiere, Felix Smith, Roy Farrell, Joe Rosbert, and Eric Shilling.

CNAC was affiliated with Pan American although never a subsidiary. PAA was a minor stockholder. PAA recruited many of us and was paid for this. Very few retained seniority in PAA. Most were not absorbed into the Pan Am system as they had been promised. We were employees on a Chinese corporation, the majority owner. This does not mean to say we do not have great empathy for this great airline. We have always identified with it especially as most of the Americans went through the 55th floor of the Chrysler Building. Very few service organizations can point to such accomplishment. The CNAC Association stands on its record, and continues as a vigorous entity.

Editor's note: *It appears that the House of Chan (7th Avenue and 52nd?) no longer exists, but one has to wonder if a get-together on the east coast, or even other regions might be welcome, especially for those who cannot make it to the reunions in San Francisco. Please let me know if you have any interest in a lunch or dinner with old and new CNAC friends and I will do what I can to get something going. Just email me (Eve) or call (ecoulson@aol.com or (609) 497-0324) and if there's enough interest, we'll find ourselves a new House of Chan!*

Is there someone you have lost track of but would like to contact within the CNAC Association? For privacy and identity protection reasons we have not published or mass mailed our membership list, but we would be happy to help you get in touch with someone. Our secretary Valerie Parish Kendrick can give you the most current contact information that we have. To reach Valerie:

Valerie Parish Kendrick
252 South Main Street
Willits, CA 95490
(707) 459-5165 [_rosebud@saber.net](mailto:rosebud@saber.net)

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CNAC Exhibition opens January 20, 2009 in KUNMING!!!!

Those of you who heard Diego Kusak speak at the reunion most likely were impressed by the amount of energy he has put into working on the CNAC exhibit in Kunming. We have just learned that, due in no small part to his efforts, the exhibition will open on January 20, 2009, to remain for several months. This is wonderful news! Thank you, Diego!

Diego has poured his heart and soul, a great deal of time, and some of his bank account into getting it done and making sure it accurately reflects the CNAC story. If you feel that the exhibit is important to CNAC, a contribution of any size will help assure its continued success. Checks made out to "Diego Kusak" can be sent to Valerie (see address above). You can also make a secure contribution by credit card on Diego's website www.goldshy.com using Pay Pal.

Announcing ...

A New Book "AN AIRLINE AT WAR" by Robert L. Willett

This book was inspired by the memory of my cousin, James Sallee Browne, who lived near our family in Winnetka, Illinois in the late 1930s. Jim was one of Winnetka's first WWII casualties, dying in a China National Aviation Corporation crash in the Himalayas in November 1942. Jim was my idol, a mischievous, fun-loving, happy-go-lucky young man who loved to fly; he flew for the R.A.F. before going to China. He was just twenty-one when he died.

It's a little like my previous books, about lesser-known events of history. But let me have you read the publisher's words – objective, earthy and honest – as they always are”:

“For many, the story of the U.S. and China during the years leading up to, and including, World War II is a period shrouded in mystery. *An Airline at War: The Story of Pan Am's China National Aviation Corporation and Its Men*, by Robert L. Willett, sheds light on this extraordinary period through the adventures and exploits of the pilots who shared a rare and heroic bond in the skies above a war-ravaged China. The China National Aviation Corporation was a multi-national and dual-cultural collaboration, which operated for twenty years, between 1929 and 1949. In its lifetime it took the lives of 150 crewmembers, and some 261 passengers, and was a lifeline for China's survival through civil and international wartime. Accessibly written and scrupulously researched, *An Airline at War: The Story of Pan Am's China National Aviation Corporation and Its Men* will enthrall history buffs, academicians, and anyone who just loves a good story.”

Some of you have asked if you might be able to get a copy, and my humble answer is, “of course!” The book so far is available only in 6”X9” trade paperback size at the cost of \$18.99. You can do it one of two ways: through Amazon.com or from me directly if you want it inscribed or signed. I do add \$3.00 shipping (sorry). Just drop me a line—

Robert L. Willett
4423 Sea Gull
Merritt Island, FL 32953
(321) 454-3016

And let me know how many and how you want them signed or inscribed. Or possibly visit our website at freewebs.com/rlwillett, still a work-in-progress, but there you can use Pay Pal on the website Web Store.

Fletcher Hanks Memorial Service Oxford, MD October 18, 2008

Fletcher's hometown waited seven months to honor the life of Fletcher Hanks—but it was worth the wait. About 70 people showed up on a breezy fall day to remember a man whose life had many chapters in addition to the adventures he had with CNAC. There were several speakers, including President Bill Maher, who read tributes from Chinese organizations and gave one of his own that began, "Fletcher was an asshole---but he was OUR asshole!" which was received with a knowing outburst of laughter by the assembled crowd (and yes, Bill requested and received approval from the family in advance). Giff and Grace Bull and their son Chris, Peggy Maher and Eve Coulson helped Bill represent the CNAC family. We learned about Fletcher the entrepreneur, whose invention of a clam-dredging device revolutionized the industry and should have but didn't make him rich. We heard about his athletic exploits, including organizing a triathlon that become so successful that it overwhelmed Oxford and had to be moved elsewhere. One speaker arrived on Fletcher's doorstep some years ago hoping to acquire some rare comic books (Fletcher's father was a comic book artist) and came away instead empty-handed but with a permanent affection and respect for the artist's son. During the course of the gathering, a special aerial display took place in Fletcher's honor.

We heard from several family members and long time friends and all were welcomed to a reception afterwards with lots of good food and drink and a display of photos, artifacts from his seafood business (the clam digger, signs, cans) and newspaper articles chronicling his various interests and occasional differences of opinion with town officials. Fletcher's wife Jane rose to speak at the reception, expressing in a strong, clear voice her appreciation for all that had been done to organize the day. The CNAC contingent was treated like visiting dignitaries; we were literally wined and dined that night in the home of family member Marguerite Owens and her husband. Two men, Ray Stevens and Bill Dial, did much to make the day a success; Bill Dial researched and wrote a short biography of Fletcher, which was printed and available that day. The following excerpt is of particular interest and shows how much awe and admiration CNAC pilots receive to this day—

"It is hard to imagine, those of us whose scariest moments are experienced while driving down our local highways, how young people in their early twenties, most of them, could climb into a cockpit of a remarkably unreliable airplane, often loaded with things which explode easily, and then fly across the highest mountains in the world, often in the world's worst weather. But that's what CNAC pilots did Flying from India into China and back, across the Himalayas, "The Hump" they hauled in the cargo bays the bombs, bandages, and beans the Chinese and Americans fighting on their behalf needed to fight the Japanese and the fuel needed to move the fight along. The aircraft they flew were slow and vulnerable. An encounter with Japanese fighters ended quickly. Winds tossed them about and slammed them into mountaintops; ice fouled the wings.

For the remainder of his days, Fletcher talked of friends lost and events that haunted him. He also talked of camaraderie and admiration for his fellow aviators and the sense that they really did something important, that maybe helped the war in the Pacific end more quickly.”

Tributes to Fletcher Hanks read by Bill Maher at the memorial in Oxford, MD on October 18, 2008:

“I am deeply gratified to learn that an important commemorative activity will be held for a famous international airman, Mr. Fletcher Hanks at his hometown of Oxford, in the American state of Maryland.

Unfortunately, due to both time and remote distance, I cannot personally attend this opportunity to commend the significant contribution that Mr. Hanks made for the victory of the Chinese people in the Anti-Fascist War of Resistance Against Japan and all mankind during the Second World War, and to commend and reaffirm the profound friendship that has been established between Mr. Hanks and People of Nuijiang. And finally, it is my sincere hope that the spirit of “The Hump Airlift” will be remembered by, and inspire the people of China and the United States forever.”

-MPu Jianxiong, President of Niujiang Memorial of the Hump

“The Oral History Project* group of the Chinese National Network (CCTV), and the Flying Tigers Association, wish to convey our profound sympathy to Mrs. Emma Jane Hanks and her family at this memorial gathering in honor of Fletcher Hanks.

Mr. Hanks was a good friend to the AVG and the Chinese people. When he was a young man, he risked his life to help China during the most difficult time in its history. He flew unarmed planes in the most hazardous weather over the Hump—the death route.

Fifty years later he returned to China to find the crash site of CNAC #53 in the Himalayas. He wanted to tell the Chinese people that Americans were and are their friends, and that Americans once shed blood in their land. For that the Chinese people will be forever grateful. The bonds of friendship between our two nations were forged by individuals like Mr. Hanks and his fellow aviators.

We are sorry that we can’t attend the memorial service today, but we’ll honor him by telling the Chinese people about his dedication to preserve history and his friendship with the Chinese people”.

-Simone F. Wright, Director of China Project

*From September 26th through October 13th, journalists from China Central Television (CCTV) and Simone F. Wright conducted and recorded interviews with 37 veterans who served in China during World War II and their families and friends. The interviews took place in Washington D.C., Virginia

VERY SUPERSTITIOUS

From Bob Willett, here's a recounting of little known story from decades ago with a recent update—

The characters:

Jimmie Browne, CNAC copilot of #60 (my cousin)

John Dean, pilot of CNAC #60 and former Flying Tiger

Gen Genovese, CNAC pilot and friend of Jim's who knew him when they flew for the RAF in England in 1941. He had joined CNAC a few weeks after Jim and had seen Jim's fiancée in Chicago on his way to China.

Bob Raines, CNAC pilot and former Flying Tiger

Robert Pottschmidt, CNAC Chief pilot

The scene: The Operations Shack at Kunming Airfield. The four pilots had flown in from Dinjan, India and were being loaded with tin ingots for the return flight to Dinjan.

Genovese: "Jim, here's your good luck charm from your lonesome lady-friend in Chicago" He hands Jim a small, green stuffed elephant.

Jim: "What the heck, Gen, does she think this is a kindergarten over here, sending me that kind of stuff!"

Gen: "No, sonny, she wants you to have it for good luck. She figures you may need it...!"

Phone rings, Pottschmidt answers and after a short minute--

Pottschmidt: "OK, Guys, it's the Nips heading in so get your airplanes out of here!"

All four run to their planes, but Raines and Genovese come back to the Operations shack...their plane wasn't ready to go. The Jap bomber had never gotten close to the airfield and had bombed some nearby woods, so it was all clear.

As they open the door to the shack, the first thing Genovese sees is the stuffed elephant, still sitting on the seat next to Jim's. Pilots are superstitious souls, and

Gen: "My, God, Jim, you should have taken him..."

They all stood outside watching the C-47 fade into the distance, not knowing they would never see the aircraft or its crew again.

Now the conclusion: In early November Bob's phone rang and it was Gen Genovese. Bob says. "I had sent him the flyer about the new book, and he reminded me of Jim's final takeoff. Then he said he still had the stuffed elephant, which he has kept for 66 years. He graciously offered it to me and I wait every day for its arrival."

Bart Hahn

Tom Moore received this message from Lisa Christman Shireman (Bart Hahn's daughter's niece) on November 22, 2008--

Just wanted to let you know that Barton Hahn passed away on September 27, 2008. I am including his obituary for you in case you're interested. Thank you so much for your website. I enjoyed seeing the pictures of Bart—especially the one of him on the elephant!

Barton N. Hahn, 88, died September 27, 2008, at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis. Born January 30, 1920, in Peru, he was the son of the late Herbert and Ninetta (Robison) Hahn. He married Irene V. (Freymark) Hahn on October 2, 1941. She died November 9, 1986. He married Shirley (Goss) Albertson Hahn on June 3, 1989 and she survives in Martinsville.

A graduate of Ball State University, he went into the Army Corps Transport Command during World War II. He was an instructor for the Air Transport Command from 1943 to 1945, teaching pilots to fly on instruments at Romulus Air Force Base near Detroit. He then became a pilot for the Chinese Airline, where he flew several dangerous missions transporting supplies from India to China during World War II. About half of the airline crew was lost in crashes due to bad weather. The Army gave him permission to become a pilot for the Chinese Airline.

After returning from China in 1946, he worked for seven years as an FBI agent stationed in Washington, DC, Miami, Baltimore Boston and Indianapolis. During that time, he was a special agent investigating crimes. He was transferred from Indianapolis to Gary, but didn't want to rear a family in that area, so he resigned from the Bureau and move to Martinsville in 1956.

Other survivors include a son, Jeff Hahn of Fort Wayne, a daughter, Teresa Carpenter of Martinsville; a sister, Odessa DeHaven of Albany; four grandsons and five great-grandchildren.

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The CNAC website, (www.cnac.org), developed by Tom Moore, continues to grow and provide a wealth of information and priceless opportunities to learn about and connect with individuals associated with this grand adventure. If you are curious but don't know how to navigate the internet, get someone to show you (really, if you can fly the Hump, you can tackle the internet!). Tom welcomes comments and additions to the site. He has recently moved and has all new contact information. Here's how to reach him:

Tom Moore
69647 Camino De Las Brisas
Cathedral City, CA 92234
(760) 832-8213 pepperbud@dc.rr.com

(An article from the Carroll County Times of Maryland, dated August 20, 2008, tells the story of Russ Coldren re-connecting with the memory of his uncle, Captain Russell Coldren, whose plane was found by Clayton Kuhles. Russ attended our reunion for the first time this year)

Discovery brings closure

By Bryan Schutt, Times Staff Writer

GAMBER—Though the chance 2002 discovery of a C-47 cargo delivery plane in the Himalayas itself may have been somewhat unremarkable — hundreds of American airplanes disappeared flying “the Hump” from 1942 through 1945 — the findings have trickled down to the home of Russ Coldren, providing some closure to him and his family.

Coldren was named after his uncle, Russell Coldren, who disappeared Jan. 6, 1945, while flying over “the Hump” for the China National Aviation Corp.

The plane discovered in 2002 was Russell Coldren’s.

And although Coldren wishes he had found out about the discovery sooner than three weeks ago, since he learned of his uncle’s final resting place, he gets emotional every time he thinks about it.

“I’ve heard about him all my life, and to hear something like this is great,” Coldren said. “The information has brought some closure to my uncle’s life.”

Russell Coldren

A memorial service on May 30, 1948, in Newmanstown, Pa., for men who died in World War II featured this excerpt:

“September 1943 [Russell Coldren] left for India where he became a flight captain for China National Aviation Corporation transporting supplies from India to China.

“On Jan. 6, 1945, he had delivered his cargo to Kunming, China and was returning to Dinjan, India by way of ‘the Hump’ when he was caught in a severe storm and has been missing ever since. The route is considered the most difficult and hazardous in the world.”

The booklet from the service sits in the home of Russ Coldren.

Before three weeks ago, it was one of the few memoirs Coldren had of his uncle. He knew his father, Ken, was close with his brother before he disappeared during the war. Both his father and his uncle were airplane crazy, Coldren said, and wanted to start an airport together.

“Who knows how life would be different if he made it back,” Coldren said. “If only [my father had] known what happened before he died.”

Armed with information

Earlier this month, Coldren came across Russell Coldren's plane discovery in a CNAC publication, Cannon Ball. Since then, aviation information has enraptured him.

Now he's armed with more information than he ever thought he'd have, and, through hours of research and e-mailing, Coldren, his wife and some newly formed friends the Colrens have connected with in their research are learning even more about the deceased pilot Russell Coldren.

Coldren's wife Susan has been just as wrapped up in the information collection as her husband.

She said the three weeks since they found out about the discovery have been crazy, and she has seen a more emotional side to her husband than he usually shows.

"It's brought us closer as a family, and it ties up loose ends," she said. "When you lose someone and don't know what happens to them, it's tough."

Now they've learned more about "the Hump" and Coldren's uncle's adventures than they ever thought they would.

"We're putting it all together and filling in gaps within his timeline," Susan Coldren said. "It was so out of the blue and so unexpected we can't help but be at awe. It's been a very emotional time."

Russ Coldren said now he hopes he can take all he's learned from other pilots and put it together, head to China and submit the facts to a museum.

Coldren said Diego Kusak, the son of another CNAC member who flew "the Hump," is hoping to set up a museum detailing all that CNAC did. According to Coldren, the history books in Asia virtually exclude the American assistance provided during the time, and Kusak's mission is telling the untold stories and bringing more attention to the valiant efforts of the thousands who helped fly though Burma.

The site and the explorer

Jan. 6 and 7, 1945, were the worst days of "the Hump" operation, according to the book "Born to Fly ... the Hump: A World War II Memoir" by Carl Frey Constein. On those two days, Constein writes 13 planes were lost and from January to March of 1945 approximately 140 pilots and crewmembers were killed in 77 major crashes. Russell Coldren had performed about 300 flights before the crash, according to his nephew. At the crash site, his plane sits about 300 feet from clearing the top of the mountain it rests on.

Clayton Kuhles, an Arizona-based mountaineer and explorer, first came across the plane in 2002.

Kuhles took frequent expeditions to the eastern part of the world. He was exploring Burma with a guide researching World War II battle sites when the

guide asked if he wanted to visit a plane crash site. The two-week side trip around India's border near Tibet led him to Coldren's uncle's C-47.

It was the first plane he found, and he visited the site twice to properly document his findings.

Kuhles said he was happy when Coldren contacted him, so happy that he sent him parts from Russell Coldren's plane that were sitting on Kuhles' fireplace.

Since his first discovery, Kuhles has taken several more excursions to the east, looking for MIA pilots and their planes.

Learning about 'the Hump'

Kuhles said he's always been interested in World War II and is amazed at what he's found out about "the Hump."

"Upwards of 600 planes with crew and passengers crashed, and the vast majority was never found," Kuhles said. "There's been no real organized effort to find wrecks. Probably a few thousand people were just written off."

Kuhles said many people don't even know about the history of the east during World War II and flying through the Himalayas to supply the Chinese was a massive endeavor.

He said he's discovered 14 sites, eight of which have been positively identified by him and the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command. He knows of about six to eight more sites he'd like to explore.

"The families that find out are obviously very surprised to get information like this," Kuhles said. "Everyone has expressed greater interest and appreciation. It makes me feel good to solve a case ... it gnaws at me if get info and can't solve a case."

He said he'd gladly work with the U.S. government for more exploration and would enjoy the chance to spend more time doing it, but it just costs too much for him. Kuhles said he's spent about \$50,000 of his own money on his expeditions.

"Funding is the main issue," Kuhles said. "Expeditions are a costly endeavor. Number one impedance is finding money."

Susan Coldren said she's been surprised there hasn't been more of an effort like Kuhles' to find the crews and planes still missing.

"It's too bad it's not been researched more before and we didn't find out sooner," she said. "There's still like 300 planes lost."

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Clayton Kuhles is still planning on an expedition to look for CNAC # 60 in Yunnan Province. Up to now he has financed all his expeditions himself from his Arizona business interests, but with the economy in its present shape, he is looking for some financial assistance. If any of the CNACers can send a small contribution to Clayton's non-taxable status Foundation, it just might help turn up another CNAC C-47. He can be reached at claytonkuhles@cableone.net.

(This is the first-person account of the flight of #97 on August 31, 1944 written by Captain Bert Coulson (father of CANNONBALL Editor Eve Coulson))

SAGA OF THE NEW NINETY-SEVEN

The time has come, the Walrus said
To speak of many things—
Of planes, and crews and income tax—
Of men with metal wings.

And that's about all, brother---even the ladies were often neglected as conversational subjects in the hostels of China National Aviation Corporation, that enigmatic airline dedicated to flying the stuff to China. We talked and lived airplanes, and never heeded the age-old injunction meant to deflect the trend of talk, "F' Kee-Rist's sake, run the airplanes back in the hanger!" We didn't have any hangars. So by policy and necessity we kept the fans a-turnin' day and night—actually and conversationally.

But shoptalk palls, and change enthalls, and efforts were made to leave airplanes and talk of them on the field when trips were done. Some of the efforts succeeded, temporarily. Dick Marchant, an ex-physics prof at Cornell (and now missing) and Bill Bartling, an one-time AVG pilot with 9 kills, changed the course of bull sessions by introducing guessing games about familiar personalities of history. "Indian Jim" Moore of erstwhile Eagle Squadron sorties often involved us in fantastic post-war schemes, while rotund Bob Erne regaled us with dreams of a colossal burlesque theater to be erected in Singapore. Occasional respites were provided by the hunting forays of "Fuzzy" Ball of Houston and "Moose" Moss of South Joe-jah—another former Army and AVG pilot; they ran the gamut from chasing tigers and antelope to being chased by rogue elephants and disgruntled natives of the local jungles.

Few attempts were long-lived: women will talk of rivets and seams, and pilots knowing little else, must speak of aircraft and their vagaries.

But we did strike upon one device, which gave the shoptalk a new flavor. It all started one night when Russ Bevins and I were flying back from China together, and remembering it was Saturday night at home, we tuned in the Services broadcast on the ship's radio. We were especially pleased to discover the Grand Ol' Opera in progress, inasmuch as Russ and I have claimed the bucolic distinction of being the only bonafide hillbillies in CNAC—both of us having been born in the section of the Ozarks locally known as Lapland: where the Missouri and Arkansas borders intertwine.

Much to the dismay of our Chinese radio operator, we began harmonizing with the songs we heard. It was with considerable surprise that we heard the announcer dedicate the next number, "The Red River Valley" to all who might be thinking of it, as we were—it was just below us. It was a river called 'Red' for purposes of security and easy pronunciation, and a valuable checkpoint on the

trip between China and India. So we decided to make a parody relative to our own Red River Valley, and further, to require all hangar pilots to sing their tales of aviation woe, rather than talk of them. On arrival in India that night, a number of men booed our idea roundly, but the idea caught on.

Having been slightly off-course one dark night, Glenn Carroll contributed the lyrics for Pistol Packin” Mama—“Turn that Dee Eff (Direction Finder) on, lad, turn that etc.” Steve Kusak responded with the See Nack Cannonball, which made the Wabash look like a milk run. Another we dedicated to the Operations Department, whose constant cry at all hours lyricized the burlesque song—“Take ‘em off, take ‘em off—that’s all we can hear”. Jim Phillips got his dander up and wrote an original set of lyrics for one he called “Men Against (and I DO mean against) the Mountains”. They had been spinning in too often for comfort at that time. None of us came forward with a sufficiently macabre melody for that particular effort.

Of course, our choices did not all run to corn—operatic favorites bore the brunt as well. One favorite was “Women So Changeable” from Rigoletto. The obvious parody was “Weather So Changeable”. A chorus from Tannhauser took a beating as well—a monotonous lament to the effect that “The ice hit the fan (propeller), it’s enough to separate the boy from the man”.

And so it went. And thereby hangs a coincidence, one that resulted in one of my more dissonant efforts...The Wreck of the New Ninety-Seven. For until now we had no lane numbered 97, but we expected it any day. I wrote one for its arrival; its christening with a bottle of Yunnan wine (otherwise known as Jingbao Juice, a Jingbao being the Chinese equivalent of an air-raid). The ice really hit the fan when I wrote a foolishness relative to its final trip.

Pilots being superstitious, heads were shaken in horror at this last bit of parodying called The Wreck of the Ninety-Seven. In the first place, aircraft were scarce, 97 was a new beauty and it sounded like sacrilege to name the month, conditions of demise and area of said crash. But the songs survived, and though some of the pilots demurred at flying the bird in question, most were glad to get her. She had an automatic pilot, a good heater, new engines and everything a man could ask.

So it was a wet and soggy morning
In the middle of August
And the ice was on the Hump
Ol Jim said, “git up, boy”,
As he waved his manifest
“You can’t punch a cow from a stump...
Now it ain’t sixty-four, but it’s new 97”...

Nothing slow about you, dear reader...you’re on the beam. New 97 was scheduled, and I was it in our endless game of playing hide and seek with the rock-filled clouds.

In retrospect I would swear I had a premonition of disaster, and can prove it to my alter ego since I checked that ship as zealously as a paratrooper checks his

silken life insurance. But she was shipshape and all squared away, so off we went into Colonel Scott's wild blue yonder...

The first four hours consisted merely of monotonous cruising...monotony being the chief characteristic of most flying. Impressively high peaks rose up through the clouds in this section of the world, but their beauty was synonymous with ennui after a short time. The only incident worthy of mention occurred during a period of rough air, when it became advisable to lower the landing gear. Such an action lowers the speed, and reduces strain on the vital members of the aircraft's structure. When I told the Chinese co-pilots to lower the gear, he demurred. "But why," I asked, "shouldn't the gear be lowered now?"

His answer was typical. "But Captain, we have only 17,000 feet of altitude...if we lower the gear we'll be taxiing!" Just an old hump joke he had heard and chosen to believe. But almost true. For only five hundred feet below us the jagged peaks reared up formidably. The gods helps us, I thought, if we lose an engine. No comin' in on an engine and a prayer here. But our maintenance crews were old veterans, and did all that was humanly possible to keep "those fans a 'turnin'".

We landed at our destination in Northern China, unloaded our cargo and started back to India. By now it was almost dusky in the West, and the long shadows were wrinkling the earth like the face of a gargoyle. This experience always called to mind a few lines dimly remembered out of the past, 'The face of earth is rough, and beautiful enough, but man must light for man, the Fires no other can'... I glanced at my Chinese co-pilot, now snoring contentedly in the right seat, and through the drone of New Ninety-Seven's engines heard the chatter of the radio-operator's telegraph key, telling India we were on our way back. All instruments were normal, and night settled over our journey west.

Two uneventful hours later, we were on course, the weather was beautiful, the co-pilot had completed his nap, and we were one hour and ten minutes flying time from our home base in India. New Ninety-Seven's gauges were indicating perfect temperatures and pressures, and I began to ease her nose down to slip under a bit of cloud ahead. At this point I looked at both wings to determine how much ice I had picked up on the leading edges, and marveled, as always, at the mystery of flight. In spite of all the theories and formulas of aerodynamics I have studied, I still can't figure out what makes the damn things fly. But I soon had more important considerations to occupy my mind...

She was roarin' thru the valley at a thousand miles per hour
When a son of Heaven came in sight
He radioed back, "Those red lights are tracers...
They can't be the Northern Lights!"
So he bent his throttles and he dumped his cargo
And he kicked her into the soup
He bored a mighty hole through the black night's curtain
And bailed out at the top of his loop.

At any rate, there I was, drifting down into the Burmese jungle. With a black eye. A black eye, indeed, for in assisting my crew to dismount from our careening

stead, I had banged against one of the bulkheads of the plane, A parting caress from a beautiful creation of aluminum and steel.

Hanging from my parachute and oscillating gently to and fro, I became aware of the oppressive silence broken only by my hard breathing; it had been an effort to release a jammed emergency exit. After about a minute I had eased down through the cloudy overcast into light rain about three hundred feet over the jungle. Some ten miles away Ninety-Seven was making her final graceful turn, and seconds later she exploded among the trees with a dull boom. One huge column of flame marked her passing, and then the black smoke crept over the silent jungle.

From the security of a cockpit, the jungle had always resembled a smoothly rolling lawn, but now the similarity was completely lacking. Looking for an open place in which to land, I saw none. My low altitude would have prevented my maneuvering of the shroud lines, at any rate. I grasped the lines above my head, bent my knees and waited. When my body entered the trees, it reminded me of sliding down a dark well on the bucket rope, as I had once done as a boy. I kept waiting for the shock of hitting the ground, but it never came. The trees having cushioned my fall, I missed all the large limbs and was surprised to find my feet in two feet of water on the jungle floor. Still breathing hard, I sat down in the cold water and began to realize a lot of things which weren't there. Millions of rain drops on millions of leaves told me Jap patrols were on the verge of capturing me; they told me this was genuine jungle populated by the tiger over behind that huge tree and that python just above me; the incessant rain told me my crew was calling for me from nearby, "Over here, Captain...Come over here..."

After what must have been thirty minutes the fact that I was cold impelled me to gather my chute and climb a tree for the night. The silk made a good hammock among the branches, and also served to keep me warm. Fortunately, it was too cold for the presence of mosquitoes.

I had instructed the crew to remain where they bailed out, since we had to be in the same general area, and I hoped to find them before they...and I...became completely lost. I had planned to search in each of the four cardinal directions half a day each, coming back to my chute each time. But I soon discovered such a plan was impractical. First there was no way of discovering where north was, the sun being obscured by overcast and clouds day and night at this monsoon time of the year. And second, going in any particular direction in the jungle would be difficult with a bulldozer, and I didn't have one with me. So I compromised by following the animal trails to their limits in a thicket or a swamp, then retracing my steps. I marked all the trails I searched with pieces of parachute silk, and by dark of the first day had amused myself by pulling off the dozens of leeches I had acquired during the day. The jungle leech is about the size of a green bean and grows larger as he fills himself on your blood. There is no way of avoiding them inasmuch as every bush is covered with the creatures.

The second day was no more encouraging than the first, and I began to be concerned about food and water. The monkeys had eaten all the berries and small fruit in reach, so I decided I must subsist on grub worms I found under logs,

grasshoppers, grass and tree bark. My only weapon against the jungle was a pair of pliers, so I used them to peel off long strips of the sour bark of waterlogged trees. Water was a problem, because I had no knife with which to obtain fresh water from bamboo. Drinking swamp water would have filled me with fever in hours. I finally solved the problem by waiting near fresh elephant tracks until they had filled with rain. I hoped the fresh water would keep me going for seven days. If I hadn't broken out of the jungle by then, I believed, it wouldn't matter anyhow.

Until now animals had given me no trouble, although I had seen many mule deer, two leopards and a few elephants. But on the second night I had climbed my tree, de-leached my body, tied myself in and dropped off into a fitful sleep. I heard some noises down below, but decided they were nothing more than a pack of wild pigs looking for food. But on looking down I saw something far removed from the actions of wild pigs. Four elephants were nosing around below, and one, apparently out of curiosity, was investigating the vines on my tree. Shaking them tentatively, he succeeded in disturbing both my sleep and peace of mind. Another tree stood a few feet away, so I jumped to it. The plan was good, but the execution was somewhat sloppy, inasmuch as I slipped and slid down the wet trunk to the ground, painfully spraining my ankle in doing so. I looked over my shoulder, contemplated the curious elephant, which had not moved, and shinnied back up my tree like a squirrel. He had not seemed offensive, but I didn't tarry to carry on any extended exchange of greetings. Next morning, on awakening, I discovered I must have been a bit frightened, for on looking down I got a dizzy sensation of being as high as the Chrysler Tower.

The third day was punctuated by discovering a tree full of very sweet small berries the monkeys had overlooked. I ate as many as I dared, and spent the remainder of the day worrying about their being poisonous.

On the fourth afternoon I was still amazed by how much the human body will bear, and wondering which would fail me first, my body or my mind. The mental strain was becoming a problem, since I had been sloshing through the rain for four days now, and had discovered no sign of human life except a few abandoned foxholes and a number of Chinese graves. Too, I had had some difficulty in convincing myself that one portion of the jungle was not a native village. The mirage included a strip of clearing, a hut, two goats in the yard and a well with a bucket. When the mirage faded into the jungle, I squatted on my haunches and continued the endless search for leeches. By this time I had evolved a theory about the leeches. I had estimated they were taking half a pint of blood per day, and since blood was all I had to keep me alive, it had worried me. So I figured that if I ate them, my gastric juices would kill them and the blood might go back into my system. They didn't taste any worse than grub worms, anyhow. Since then the medics have informed me that my theory is shot full of holes. But at the time it did me a lot of good, for I thought I had licked the jungle in at least one respect, and that was encouraging.

The morning of the fifth day brought a break. It was a clear day and a formation of airplanes flew overhead. From the time of day, type of planes and their

altitude, I was able to estimate where north, south, east and west were. I knew streams here ran north and south, so decided I must go either east or west until I found one. Then I could possibly follow it downstream to a native village. But which to choose was the difficult decision...east or west? The jungle was just as thick either way, and I had no means of knowing how far the first river would be. Five miles? One hundred miles?

It's a long roll of the dice, I thought, and remembered for the first time a pair of red dice I carried for luck. So I took them out of my pocket, cleared a space and reasoned it out. Now I'm left handed, I thought, and I like to make an eight as a point. I'm facing north, so if I make an eight, I should go to the left, or west; if I crap out with a seven, I should go to the right. After four passes I made the eight and bore to the left. It seemed a good omen. That is, it seemed a good omen for the first four or five hours. I kept walking even after the sun went down, as I knew I must not stop this time until I found something encouraging. The tendency had been growing of late to just lie down and stay there. At about midnight I saw a herd of elephants, waited for them to lumber slowly off, and followed them. They led me to a small river within an hour. Moses could not have been happier when he sighted the Jordan. Lacking a Mount Sinai, I climbed a tree and dreamed great visions of steaks and sparkling water and an existence free of leeches.

Next day I happily followed the sluggish flow of the river...now "my" river...for an hour before I was hopelessly lost again. That is, I tried to follow the river, but having found the jungle absolutely impenetrable along the riverbank, I was forced to skirt it at a distance of a hundred yards or so. This was my undoing, for I had lost it completely. My spirits reached their lowest ebb at this point...I leaned against a tree in the cold downpour, pulled the remains of my parachute over my head and wept like a child. Discovering that this did me no good, I tried to sing a bit to enliven the dismal scene. To no avail: the only thing I could think of was one line from "Paper Doll" ...'I tell you, boys, it's tough to be alone'.

I spent three hours or so finding the river again, and was determined not to lose it again. There was obviously only one solution...get in it and stay in it. The water was probably too cold for snakes or crocodiles, I hoped. At any rate, I never saw any. I did see, however, a quartet of beavers, which persisted in guiding me downstream. I imagined how luscious they would taste and tried to kill one with a club, but they thought I was playing a game, so would duck the blow, and reappear just out of reach, standing on their tails and thumbing their paws at me. They kept me company until the middle of the afternoon when they were frightened away by a herd of mule deer crashing through a ford ahead of us. I was sorry to see them go...they had been good companions.

I had heard aircraft overhead all day, but could not see them through the thick mat of the jungle ceiling. But I reckoned the deer trail might head me to a swamp or other open grazing ground, so I oozed out of the river and followed them. Sure enough, I came upon a swamp one hundred yards in diameter...the first open place I had seen in a week. Here I quickly took off my clothes, de-leached myself completely and hoped for airplanes. A number of them flew across at high altitude during the course of an hour, and I had almost decided to get back in the river, I had just reached for a boot when the might roar of engines at low altitude

indicated one was near by; in fact, I could see him just over the tops of trees heading directly toward me. Grabbing the remnant of my parachute, I waved it wildly and knew I had been seen. That is, I knew it until CNAC #74 turned away directly overhead and headed east, circling. I could even see the face of the Chinese co-pilot as they turned away to the east. I later learned "Meatnose" McBride had used all the gasoline available to search for me; his heart being quite as great as his magnificent proboscis. It was not until this experience had occurred five times more that I resignedly turned back to the river. I had even seen the face of "Cap'n Jack" Blackmore in a small aircraft he had borrowed from an Army field. But a man is quite a small needle to locate in the million square mile haystack of a jungle.

Late in the afternoon the river was getting wider, deeper and colder and I began to hear nonexistent voices and sounds again. It was not until I heard sounds of men chopping trees for the fourth time that I stumbled out on the muddy bank and through a great growth of bamboo trees. I reached the edge of another swampy clearing and saw a now familiar mirage: a jungle hut built on stilts, two men in it, a rice paddy with one man walking through it and a few goats. I shook my head, looked again and began to jabber like a female bride party; the mirage was still there! And the men in the hut were scampering into the jungle while the other came slowly through the rice paddy toward me. Even if they are Japs, I thought, I'll welcome their company. Whereupon, I collapsed like a flat tire.

Now my legs are deceiving me, I said to myself. Come on pins, we're in...do you understand...we're in! I got to my feet and immediately fell in a heap again. The old body had done it, and reaching success, had decided it was time for a rest.

The tall Kachin...for I had recognized him as a friendly Burmese native by now...slowly picked me up, and carrying me like a baby, took me into the hut. He gently unclothed me and began the bloody job of delecting me. His system was novel, but effective. Withdrawing his dah (a long knife) from the scabbard, he deftly flicked the loathsome creatures off, and stopped the flow of blood with hot ashes from the fire. The other Kachins, having cautiously returned by now, were ordered in a tone of quiet authority to procure dry clothing for me. Once attired, I made motions of eating to the tall native, whereupon he indicated I was to follow him.

The village was only a mile away, but seemed the longest five thousand feet I ever walked. And my guide persisted in various digressions, either to show me where he had killed a Jap, or to point out Chinese trenches or to stop and flick leeches off his bare legs. However, we eventually arrived at quite a large village on the riverbank, the river now assuming the proportions of the Mississippi. Dozens of naked children and dogs announced our arrival, and followed us to the site of the chief's hut. For my guide was the headman called Mashaw Ga, and I was to be his guest.

On entering the hut, I relaxed against the wall while Mashaw Ga ordered his wife to prepare scrambled eggs and cocoa. Even in my fatigued state I had to notice how indefinably graceful was his wife. She was clad in only a brightly colored

skirt, and was about 18 or 19 years old, but moved with the dignity and aplomb of a dowager. What a smell, that cocoa! What a repast, that meal!

Meanwhile, the headman had relaxed gracefully beside me and was firing up his opium pipe. When I had quite finished the meal, he seemed perturbed, as if he thought that his hospitality was lacking in something. He offered me his pipe, which I had to refuse, and then arose and started searching in a corner of the hut. He emerged triumphantly with a cellophaned pack of my favorite brand of cigarette---Stateside!

What a pleasant surprise in the middle of the jungle, for I hadn't had a smoke in a week. I had just lit the second cigarette and begun to wonder about the anomaly of fresh cigarettes here, when I looked up and saw in the doorway the ugliest, most handsome GI face I had ever seen. He scratched his stubbly jaw, looked bewilderedly at the chief and at me, and said, "Wal Ah'll be switched! Whut the Gawddamned hell are ye doing heah," and as an afterthought, "Suh?"

"Just knock off that 'Suh' noise and get me out of here!" I replied. "Who in the devil might you be?"

"Oh, Ah'm jest a Florida sand crab that's been lookin' for ye fer the bettah paht of a week...we got a bunch of hillbilly engineers down the river in my boat and we seen youah plane go in...figgered youall was sorta lost. Was comin' down the river and one of Mashaw Ga's squaws hollered fer me to come ovah. See ye are smokin' one of my barter cigarettes...are yuh fit to travel?"

After giving Mashaw Ga a chit of recommendation for loyal services rendered to the Allied cause, etc, and watching him refuse my offer of Indian rupees with admirable dignity, I climbed in the GI's boat and we putt-putted merrily downstream ten miles to his camp. There his commanding officer fed me again and chased those wonderful "C" rations with some "jungle juice"...a liquor distilled of rice and fusel oil, no doubt, which his men had knocked out with a homemade still. Mercy rations, he explained, only for use in internal emergencies. He hoped it would either intoxicate or kill the leeches I was still harboring in my intestines.

We immediately instituted a search for my Chinese crew to supplement the one in progress. The co-pilot was never found alive, but the radio operator was discovered entangled in his parachute where it had become fouled on the tail surfaces when he bailed out. He had probably pulled his ripcord a bit too soon.

And so ends the saga of the New Ninety-Seven, with one exception. Who can say where the truth lies in the lyrics of the last stanza?

It's a long, hard haul from the Ganges to the Yangtze
And the ice will hit the fan;
It's a far, far cry from the Main Streets of Hometown
It'll separate the boy from the man...

CNAC CANNONBALL

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