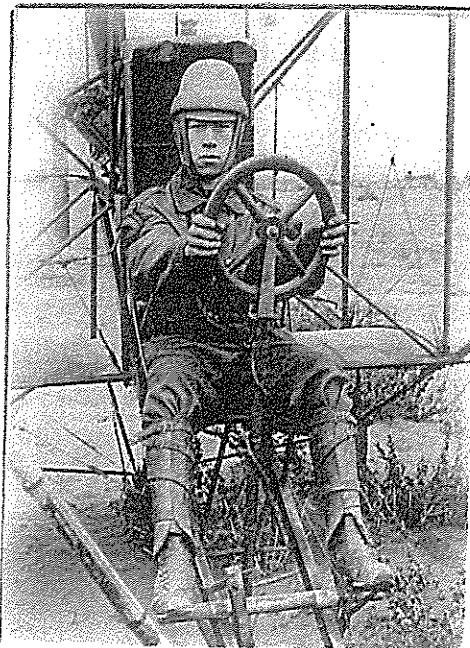




July 2008

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Arthur Lym, Renee Robertson's father (1914)
(see story on page 28)

LOST AND FOUND

We have lost three members of the CNAC family in the last several months—Fletcher Hanks, Dick Rossi, and Charles Rountree. We know they have gone to Hogy Taw and are probably having a great time together, but we will miss them, and we remember and honor each of them in this issue. On the other hand, we have learned that three daughters of John De Tarr Hicks have been brought together after nearly 50 years of searching as a result of a clue provided by the CNAC website. Amazing, and wonderful!

A story reprinted from Angkasa Magazine sheds light on what happened to several CNAC pilots after 1945, and another gives us a glimpse into the life of Renee Robertson's father (pictured above) who was probably the first Chinese in the United States to become a "scientific birdman".

Much is happening in China—President Bill Maher says that there has been a complete change in attitude among the Chinese regarding their interest in CNAC and its important contributions to the country. Two museums, one in Kunming and one in Shangri La are now eager to gather and display CNAC memorabilia, documents and artifacts. Anyone who might want to contribute to one of the museums should contact Valerie Parish Kendrick at (707) 459-5165 or Peggy Maher at (830) 896-5030. We look forward to learning more about this at the reunion!

You sent so many stories and so much new information—I am sure I have left something out! All the more reason to visit the website (www.cnac.org) from time to time and to make plans to come to this year's reunion which is less than two months away. We hope to see everyone in San Francisco this year—Bill is planning to go ALL OUT for this one (although doesn't he always?). Let Bill, Valerie or me know if you have any questions or need any additional information. Please note that the gathering at Moon Chin's house is an afternoon event this year, starting at 2 PM Friday.

Looking forward to seeing you at the Embassy Suites, Burlingame, September 3rd-7th, 2008!

Eve Coulson

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CHINA NATIONAL AVIATION CORPORATION ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 984
Jackson, MI 49204

W.J. MAHER
President

Dear CNACers,

It's time to make your reservations for the 2008 CNAC reunion. It will be held on Sept 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th, at the Embassy Suites, Burlingame. Unbelievably, we still have the \$109.00 rate. Your reservation will include a free breakfast and Cocktail hour. Those of you who have attended in the past know what a deal this is.

Our 2007 Reunion was a tremendous success. Our numbers are holding up well as we had eighty people attend. There were so many things going on that hardly anyone made it into town. Of course, Moon Chin's dinner at his home was the highlight of the reunion.

Each year more and more of our second generation (co-pilots) are supporting the perpetuation of CNAC association, and they continue to bring in memorabilia and stories of their parents that we've never heard before.

This year Barry Martin will be presenting a 72-minute DVD made from Royal Leonard's original pre-war, war and post-war footage in China. He tells me it is of very good quality. This film alone is worth the trip. Barry is committed to a trip to the East Coast and will only be able to present his film on Wed, Sept 3rd, at 1:30.

So be sure and make your reservations well ahead of schedule as we ran out of our special rate rooms last year. Looking forward to seeing you.

Sincerely yours,

W. J. Maher

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CNAC Web Site www.cnac.org

My uncle, Emil Scott, was killed flying CNAC's last DC-2 on a flight out of Kunming, March 14, 1942. Growing up, all I knew was that Uncle Emil was killed in a plane crash on March 14, 1942 in China and that he knew Claire Chennault and had something to do with the Flying Tigers. About 1985 I reconnected with Emil's widow, Georgi Scott. For the next few years we wrote to each other and occasionally talked on the phone. She was living in San Francisco at the time, but moved to Seattle, eventually moving back to San Francisco in 1986. Over the next 20 years we became very close and during that time she gave me the one surviving photo album from China, 1939-1941, which I will always treasure. She died in 2005 and was buried with her "Scotty" at the National Cemetery of the Pacific know also as "Punchbowl".

My first contact with a Flying Tiger was with Dick Rossi in 1992 when McClellan AFB hosted a luncheon for some of the Flying Tigers; Dick Rossi, Tex Hill and his beautiful wife, Duke Hedman and Ed Rector. Dick got me off on the right foot for researching my uncle, as he knew about the plane crash that killed him and that he worked for CNAC. Although my uncle was never a Flying Tiger, he knew many of the Flying Tigers.



My general interest in computers and the advent of the Internet made it a natural for me to build a web site in honor of my uncle. In October of 1999 I built the first un-official CNAC Internet Web Site. After talking with Jim Dalby and Jim talking with Bill Maher, the Official CNAC Web Site opened for business November 6, 1999. Thanks to the efforts of John Kenehan and his son John, we established our own domain name of cnac.org -- Thanks also go to Peggy Maher, daughter of Bill Maher, for underwriting the hosting of the site. We went live with our own domain name on April 2000.

The site has continued to grow with the help of former CNAC employees and their families. I now hear from spouses, friends, siblings, nieces, nephews, children, grandchildren and even some great-grandchildren of former CNAC employees. So, if you have anything you'd like to add to this site no matter how big or small, please let me know.

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This is the history of what happen to several of CNAC pilots after 1945. I am sure our people will be interested. This article clears up a lot of questions I've had for years concerning the whereabouts of a number of the guys who stayed after I left. I am sure many of the other members will be interested.

AURI Foreign Pilots and Instructors
Marc Koelich

Article published in Angkasa magazine in three parts: October 2006, November 2006 and January 2007.

Bill

Forgotten Heroes?

The purpose of this article is to bring to the reader's attention the participation of foreign airmen, many of them being American citizens, during the first years of AURI's history. As the reader will see, many of them had an interesting background before joining the Indonesian cause.

Indonesian Airways, the Burma Operation

In October 1948, a few months after President Sukarno had toured Sumatra with Bob Freeberg in RI-002 and collected money to purchase an aircraft, a Dakota suitable for purchase was found. Originally, the Indonesian authorities thought about purchasing a Lockheed Hudson registered VH-ASV. It was a former RAAF naval patrol aircraft that had been modified to a transport plane with a capacity for ten passengers after the end of the war. VH-ASV had done several flights between Europe and Australia during 1947 and 1948, bringing immigrants to Australia. By mid-1948, it was reported in Burma with a damaged tail wheel and was reported as being for sale. Some reports mention that the Burmese Air Force actually wanted to purchase this Hudson. At the beginning of August 1948, Hudson VH-ASV reportedly came to Bukittinggi and Pekanbaru, and OU III Wiweko Soepono left for Rangoon via Kutaraja (Aceh) on 03 August 1948, with mission to evaluate the aircraft before it was purchased. However Wiweko's assessment was that a larger aircraft with a longer range was needed because of the Dutch blockade, so that the purchase of the Lockheed Hudson was cancelled. Meanwhile, Maryunani, the Indonesian representative in Burma, introduced two foreign pilots to Wiweko: Captain James Tate and Captain James Maupin. Both gentlemen were former captain-pilots of the China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC).

Before we go any further, a brief history of CNAC is required. China National Aviation Corporation was founded in 1929 as a joint venture between the American aircraft manufacturer Curtiss-Wright Corporation and the Chinese government. The idea was to start a network of air routes between the main cities of this huge country that was still in its reunification process. At the beginning, the relations between the two partners were often difficult, and Pan American Airways took over the airline from Curtiss-Wright in 1933. From its original base of operations Shanghai, CNAC acted as a commercial aviation pioneer for China, always opening new lines. When the Japanese attacked Shanghai in 1937, CNAC lost much of its equipment and moved its main base to Hong Kong. Later, just after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the airline had to move its headquarters to Calcutta after Hong Kong became a target for the Japanese. The airline's DC-3s had evacuated around 400 passengers from the besieged Hong Kong city. During that time, CNAC already started flying support missions in China for the American Volunteer Group, a unit better known as the Flying Tigers. The airline also started pioneer flights over the Himalayan mountain range, which the pilots called the "Hump". Hump flights would become the main occupation of CNAC during the war, especially after the Burma Road was lost by the Allies, and several aircrews were lost during the more than 35.000 trips flown by the airline over the Himalayas. CNAC also made many flights in support of Allied troops operating in Burma, and who were often far way from the main supply routes. Starting in 1942, CNAC started to paint roundels on its aircraft to make identification easier. The roundel consisted of a dark blue disk with a white Chinese character "Chung" in the middle. "Chung means the

"middle" or "center", and China is also known as the "Kingdom of the Middle". This "Chung" symbol later remained on the airline logo until the demise of the company. After World War II ended, CNAC returned to Hong Kong and Shanghai, but China was now a battleground between Chang Kai Chek Nationalist forces and Mao Ze Dong Communist partisans. While the Nationalist troops retreated, so did CNAC, losing many of its destinations to the advancing Communist Popular Army. However, CNAC tried at the time to expand its routes to other Asian countries, for example CNAC C-46s and C-47s could be seen in Burma after the war. The airline also started flights to the Continental USA (San Francisco) with stop-over at Honolulu, Hawaii, using their new DC-4s. Other international destinations included Calcutta via Hong Kong and Kunming, and Manila via Hong Kong. Interestingly, CNAC also carried out a single survey flight from Shanghai to Indonesia between 21 and 28 August 1947. The survey aircraft was a C-54 and stopped over at Hong Kong, Saigon, Bangkok, and Singapore before landing at Batavia. However this survey flight was not followed by the establishment of a regular route. With China's large cities falling into communist hands one after the other, it became obvious that the near was near for CNAC. The airline actually took part in the emergency evacuation by air of several cities that were about to fall to the communists, lost a DC-3 to anti-aircraft fire in October 1947, and CNAC management was trying desperately to prevent the aircraft from falling into the hands of the Red Chinese. However, in November 1949, while the airline was operating from Hong Kong, Chinese crew left, bringing with them ten Dakotas. The end of CNAC came on 31 December 1949, when the China National Aviation Corporation officially ceased to exist, with most of its fleet being grounded at Hong Kong Kai Tak Airport.

What was left of the CNAC was a rather large number of pilots and technical staff, highly experienced, used to work under the worst conditions, used to take risks, and for many of them willing to stay in Asia. Many of these pilots and airline staff were convinced that there were great opportunities of development for air transport in Asia, and they started to work for all the small airlines that flourished in Asia after the Second World War, airlines whose fleet mainly consisted of war surplus Dakotas.

James Maupin and James Tate were two of these pilots. During our research, we were not able to find out much about the career of these two pilots before they joined CNAC, except that Captain Maupin had a mailing address in Ohio during the war, while Captain Tate's given address was in Pomona, California. Captain Soedaryono remembers that Captain Tate was always wearing a uniform with a pilot's cap while other were often dressed more casually. Both CNAC veterans were in touch with another former CNAC pilot named Ladnor Maurice Moore, or more simply Lad Moore. Born in Texas in 1914, Lad Moore learned to fly airplanes in the mid-1930's, and became a flight instructor for the USAAF at Jones Field, Bonham, Texas until 1943 or early 1944. He then moved to Asia and joined CNAC in February 1944. CNAC records show that Lad Moore, now a Captain, made 252 "Hump" flights in C-47 Dakota over the Himalaya during the last two years of the war. After the end of the war, Captain Moore stayed with CNAC and flew mainly in China, both in C-47 and in Curtiss C-46 Commando aircraft. In the middle of 1947, Lad Moore left CNAC and we were not able to find more details about his life until he got involved with the Indonesian independence struggle in 1948 or 1949.

After the purchase of Hudson VH-ASV had been cancelled by AURI on the advice of OU III Wiweko Soepono, the Indonesian started looking for a larger aircraft, if possible a C-47 Dakota. James Maupin and James Tate agreed to help find this Dakota, and start a partnership with AURI. There is conflicting data regarding the origin of the Dakota they found, and that was to become RI-001, and it is not clear if it was first purchased from war surplus in the Philippines, or if it was already in Hong Kong at the time. Moreover, the owner of the Dakota before its transfer to the Indonesians was possibly Lad Moore or James Maupin. A Dutch book mentions that Dakota VR-HEC was purchased by Captain Lad Moore, and that administrative problems followed because Lad Moore was an American citizen, but only English citizens were allowed to have airplanes registered in Hong Kong, still a British colony at the time. The problem was eventually solved, possibly by using a British middleman or company or maybe Cathay Pacific to register the Dakota, and VR-HEC left Hong Kong in September 1948 for Rangoon flown by Captain Maupin or Capt Moore, or possibly both. On inspection upon arrival, OU III Wiweko found the general condition of the airplane and engines satisfactory, except for the fact that the additional long-range fuel tanks the Indonesians had requested were not installed. The purchase was concluded by middle of October, even though Indonesia could not pay directly the full amount. At the end of October 1948, with OU III Wiweko Soepono acting as navigator for the Indonesian part of the trip, VR-HEC left Rangoon for Maguwo. The pilot was Captain Maupin, and the co-pilot was either Lad Moore or James Tate. There was also an American flight engineer, who was possibly Wallace Casselberry. To avoid being intercepted by Dutch fighters, VR-HEC took the longer route via Pekanbaru and Jambi, where the aircraft refueled, and then on to the southern coast of Java, so it would not fly over the areas controlled by the Dutch. Moreover, the part of the flight over the Indonesian archipelago was done at low altitude. On arrival at Maguwo, the aircraft's registration was modified to RI-001 by the Direktorat Penerbangan Sipil AURI.

RI-001 was immediately put into service and reportedly made a return flight Maguwo-Rangoon, after which the Dakota brought Vice-President Mohammad Hatta on a tour of Sumatra during November 1948. The stop-overs were Jambi and Payakumbuh, where the Vice-President stayed. RI-001 continued to Kutardja (Aceh), so that the people of Aceh could see the airplane that had been purchased with their donations. Another more unusual mission was flown on 29 November 1948 in order to take aerial photos of Gunung Merapi at the request of the Mining and Geological Service (Jawatan Pertambangan dan Geologi).

The original plan by AURI to install long-range tanks on RI-001 had not been abandoned, and, because the Dakota also needed an overhaul, it was decided to fly the aircraft to India and have both operations performed over there. At the beginning of December 1948, RI-001 left for Payakumbuh with the usual crew, together with a group of ALRI cadets. At Payakumbuh, OU III Soetardjo Sigit joined the crew. The flight continued on 04 December for Kutardja, where the cadets disembarked. Two days later, RI-001 took off for Calcutta. It should be remembered that at this point RI-001 had not yet been fully paid by the

Indonesian Republic, and OU III Wiweko Soepono was in India since the middle of November struggling to recover the money that had been prepared for the purchase of RI-001. Also present in India at the time was OU III Soedaryono, who had been placed in charge of the 20 Indonesian cadets undergoing training in two Indian flying schools. On arrival at Calcutta, Sutardjo Sigit contacted Wiweko Soepono at Delhi. Both met and Wiweko asked Soedaryono to join them at Calcutta.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, it was becoming clear that the Dutch forces were getting prepared for a major offensive and plans were made to evacuate the Republican key personalities from Yogyakarta. Unfortunately, by mid-December, RI-001 was not ready yet to fly back to Indonesia. The overhaul was going on, the installation of the additional fuel tanks was not done yet and the aircraft was still receiving a camouflage paint scheme. As a replacement, a four-engine De Havilland DH-86 was leased by the government and arrived at Maguwo, but it was too late. The Dutch airborne assault on Maguwo on 19 December 1948 allowed them to capture first the DH 86 on the ground, and later RI-006.

The AURI officers present in India now faced several problems, they had to pay for the overhaul and modifications, and, while they could not return with the aircraft to Indonesia, they had to pay for the airfield and hangaring costs in India, plus the living costs of the crew. Thus the idea was born to create a charter airline. However, despite the efforts of the Indonesian Representative in India, Dr. Soedarsono, the Indian authorities did not grant permission for RI-001 to operate in India. The solution came from Burma, when the Indonesian Representative there, Maryunani, informed Wiweko that there was a demand in Burma for a charter airline. Around that time, the Union of Burma Airways had no airplanes larger than a De Havilland Dove, moreover the country was facing civil war, and transport planes such as a Dakota would be needed both for civilian and military use. Thanks to the assistance of a Burmese journalist from Burma Post named U Maung Maung, the authorization to operate in Burma was granted on 20 January 1949, and on 26 January 1949, a camouflaged RI-001 and the AURI personnel present at Calcutta left this airport for Mingladon, Rangoon. Within two days, Indonesian Airways was registered in Burma, with the following flying personnel: Captain-pilot James Maupin, co-pilots Soedaryono and Soetardjo Sigit, radio-operator Sumarno and flight engineer Casselberry. Wallace Casselberry was an American citizen born in 1912 and a former Line Chief with CNAC, consequently he knew Maupin, Tate and Lad Moore well from their days in China.

Flying for the Republic in Burma

Even though Captain Maupin was the official captain-pilot of Indonesian Airways, there is proof from logbook that James Tate and Lad Moore also flew RI-001 as captain-pilots in February 1949 and afterwards. This was necessary at the time because no Indonesian pilot had an internationally recognized qualification as captain-pilot. Soon RI-001 and the Indonesian Airways team found themselves very busy because the demand for a larger transport plane in Burma was huge. Moreover, RI-001 was chartered by two very different customers. First the civil Union of Burma Airways needed aircraft the size of a Dakota to carry passengers and cargo all over the country. There was a state of civil war with several ethnic minorities, and air transport was sometimes the only possible link between Rangoon and the main cities. For example, the main road between Rangoon and Mandalay, the second largest city, would be cut most of the time between 1949 and 1951. To add to the confusion caused by ethnic rebellion, the Burmese Communist Party had already started a rebellion in 1946, even before Burma became officially an independent country. Their army was named the Red Flag and was eventually beaten by the Burmese Army, then called the Burmese Volunteer Force and still under British control, with the assistance of the RAF transport planes. After the independence in January 1948, the communist party resumed its rebellion, this time with the name of White Flag Army.

While the Karens had at first joined with the Burmese Army to fight the communists, attacks perpetrated on Christmas Day 1948 by Burmese militiamen against the mainly Christian Karens pushed them into open rebellion. The Karens, together with the communists, were the most serious menace to the central government, but there was trouble in many spots. The Muslim minority in the Arakan Province on the south coast also rebelled as they wanted to join with the State of Pakistan rather than with Burma. Luckily for the central government, the rebel groups never joined forces or coordinated any action.

The Union of Burma Air Force (UBAF), called Tandaw Lay in Burmese, had some combat aircraft, namely Spitfires, with Burmese pilots trained by the British during the war, and serviced with the assistance of RAF personnel detached to the UBAF, but there was a lack of transport planes to ferry troops to the remote areas of the country and to fly supplies to troops engaged in the fight against the rebels. Several cargo companies were operating in Burma, and aircraft such as Dakotas, a C-54 or a CNAC Curtiss C-46 Commando could be seen at Mingladon airport in Rangoon, but none of these operators was ready to fly dangerous supply missions to the front line... except Indonesian Airways.

The newly-registered airline was immediately approached by General Bo Ne Win's War Office to fly logistic supplies to the many combat zones. After consultation, the personnel of Indonesian Airways accepted the job. Because General Bo Ne Win had a budget but no transport planes, it was also a way to generate income for the airline, but a dangerous one. Business was good. During February 1949, it was usual for RI-001 to fly up to four missions a day.

In early 1949, the Karen rebels had closed on Rangoon and moved anti-aircraft guns close to the city of Insein, only a few kilometers from Rangoon, so that they could shoot at the planes taking off or landing at Mingladon Airport. Many missions flown for the War Office were dangerous and involved low-level free-dropping of supplies to government troops near the front line. The supply bundles were simply kicked out of the cargo door, and the Dakota would gain altitude, often under enemy small arms fire. Capt Sudaryono remembers that on a mission with Lad Moore as Captain-pilot, their Dakota was hit several

times. Instinctively, they ducked behind the instrument panel in the cockpit, which was useless as the bullets came from below. On that mission, OMU III Sumarno, who was at the same time radio-operator and assisted the loadmaster, was hit in the arm. Luckily the wound was not severe. On another mission, the Dakota's hydraulic lines were hit and the landing gear had to be lowered manually. On another occasion, RI-001 landed at Meiktila and realized too late that the airport was now occupied by the rebels. The crew was treated well, but the rebels asked to be flown to Anisakan. There, the Indonesian Airways crew argued with the rebels that the fuel was low and that they needed to go to another base to refuel. Surprisingly, the rebels let the Dakota take off again.

It soon became obvious that Indonesian Airways could use another Dakota, and the staff, led by Wiweko Soepono, decided to find and purchase by themselves the second airplane. With the assistance of captain Maupin, who also borrowed part of the money to Wiweko, a suitable Dakota was located and purchased. Captain Lad Moore had traveled to Hong Kong to find this aircraft, and he later reported that he was followed most of the time while in Hong Kong, most probably by Dutch agents. The Dakota eventually arrived in Rangoon on 02 May 1949 and was registered RI-007. At the beginning, its only marking was the registration; the rest of the aircraft was natural metal colour. With a second plane, and still a fully booked schedule, Indonesian Airways needed more pilots. In May/June 1949, two captain-pilots joined the group: Carl Wiss and Chad Brown. While we were not able to find more about Chad Brown during our research, there is more information about Carl Wiss: he was a CNAC veteran, like James Maupin, James Tate and Lad Moore. Born in 1919 and coming from Chicago, he had joined the China National Aviation Corporation in 1944 and made flights over the Himalayas. After the war, he stayed with CNAC and flew missions in China, including the evacuation of cities that were about to be taken by Mao's communist troops. On 20 January 1948, Captain Wiss was trying to take-off in a snowstorm with a C-46 full of Chinese refugees out of the city of Mukden surrounded by the communist forces. After lifting from the ground, the aircraft went nose-down and crashed. Three Chinese were killed and many injured. Carl Wiss himself received head and face injuries and had to receive some plastic surgery. On photos taken in Burma when he was with Indonesian Airways, the scars are still visible on his cheek. Regarding Chad Brown, there were several Browns flying for CNAC, but we could not confirm if one of them later joined Indonesian Airways. Chad Brown was previously flying a PBY Catalina in Burma, so he might also have come from a different airline.

With the help of General Bo Ne Win, the Indonesians in Burma managed to procure weapons, including Bren light machine guns, ammunition and radio equipment from Burmese stocks. It was decided to try and bring this equipment by air to Sumatra. The first blockade-breaking flight was made by RI-001 on 08 June 1949. Under the coordination of Wiweko Soepono, the crew consisted of captain-pilot James Maupin, co-pilot Boediarto Iskaq, radio-operator Soemarno and flight engineer Casselberry. To avoid raising suspicion from possible Dutch spies, the flight was carried out like a normal flight to Tavoy and Mergui, at the southernmost point of Burma. The weapons were loaded at Mergui by Burmese troops before the aircraft continued to Blang Bintang airfield at Kutardja, where it arrived after nightfall. Over the sea, the Dakota had to fly at low altitude to avoid being spotted by Dutch radars. To make things even more dangerous, the airplane had to be refueled manually by the crew in flight from fuel drums inside the fuselage because the long-range tanks had not been installed at Calcutta. After unloading at Aceh, RI-001 and its crew returned to Mergui in the early morning. A second similar mission was flown two weeks later, but this time the airplane landed at the former Japanese airfield of Lok Ngah.

In August 1949, captain-pilot Carl Wiss and co-pilot Soedaryono took RI-007 to Hong Kong for an overhaul. The flights to and from Hong Kong were made with a stop at Bangkok. The overhaul was conducted at the facilities of HAECO, the Hong Kong Aircraft Engineering Company, an aviation workshop well-known all over Asia.

Still in 1949, another CNAC veteran joined the Indonesian Airways team: Captain Bernard T. Kuhlmeier. Born in 1920, he joined CNAC in the 1940's and remained until 1949. Captain Sudaryono remembers that Bernard Kuhlmeier flew a CNAC C-46 in Burma. After the collapse of Nationalist forces in China and the subsequent liquidation of CNAC, Captain Kuhlmeier was most probably contacted by his former colleagues. From logbook records, it appears he joined Indonesian Airways some time after Captain Wiss and Captain Brown.

The expanding airline needed additional personnel, and not only more captain-pilots. Four AURI cadets had arrived in Rangoon from India and started to be trained as co-pilots: Boediarto Iskaq, Sjamsudin Noer, Soeharsono Hadinoto and Soesatyo. Radio-operator Sumarno, who was already assisted by a Burmese operator named Quinn, also received assistance from AURI operators, and Burmese mechanics had been hired to assist Wallace Casselberry.

During the course of the year 1949, the number of military support missions decreased, but the Union of Burma Airways still needed more transport planes for its flights between the major cities. A third Dakota was leased, and not purchased, by Indonesian Airways. The actual owner was possibly located in the Philippines. Unlike RI-001 and RI-007, this third Dakota was a civilian DC-3 with passenger seats and only a passenger door on the left fuselage rather than the large cargo door of a C-47. It received the registration RI-009 and started operating in natural metal colours, without any other markings than its registration. The Indonesian Airways livery was added later. With the new aircraft came also new pilots. At the time, Wiweko Soepono already had plans to reorganize civil air transport in Indonesia after the departure of the Dutch, and all these qualified foreign captain-pilots would come in handy on the future Indonesian domestic and international lines.

During the first five months of 1950, the following foreign captain-pilots joined the Indonesian Airways team: Robert W. Pottschmidt, Donald E. Bussart, Wells, Tom Sailer, Hugh Hicks and Perry Briggs Cutburth. No additional info could be found about a Captain Wells, but all the other new pilots also came from CNAC. Robert "Bob" Pottschmidt was born in 1911 in Cincinnati, Ohio, and learned to fly in 1933-1935 at the Boeing School of Aeronautics at Oakland, California. After flying

school, he spent several months with the Boeing Company before being offered a job in China with the China National Aviation Corporation. Based at Shanghai, Bob Pottschmidt started to teach flying to Chinese students before he himself graduated as captain-pilot. In 1937 the Japanese started a serious offensive against China, and Bob Pottschmidt and his family had to be evacuated from Shanghai. While his family took a boat out of China, he moved to Hong Kong, where CNAC resumed activity in 1938. Captain Pottschmidt was on leave in the USA the day of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Hong Kong was attacked several days later, and CNAC moved its operation base to Calcutta in India. As a senior pilot, Bob Pottschmidt helped to check out younger pilots on the "Hump" flight over the Himalayas. Felix Smith, one of these newcomer co-pilots has given a good description of Bob Pottschmidt: "He resembled a contemplative bookkeeper ... outsiders never guessed he drove airplanes. He didn't have hair on his chest, he had feathers... his analytical brain never rested". Since 1936, Bob Pottschmidt had been a pioneer of aviation routes in China and over the Himalayas, checking the mountains' altitude by flying near the peak. He also wrote approach procedures for airfields that had none. He made the junior pilots remember by heart the altitudes of the mountains and the distances to other airfields along the routes they were going to fly. According to Felix Smith, Bob Pottschmidt often pretended to be asleep to test the younger pilot he was checking out. After the end of the war, he returned to Shanghai with the rest of CNAC, before having to move again to Hong Kong in 1948 to escape the progressing communist forces of Mao Tse Dong. He stayed with CNAC until the company was litigated and he was made redundant in December 1949. In January 1950, he left for Burma at the request of his former colleagues who worked with Indonesian Airways. Captain "Don" Bussart was born in 1919 on a farm in Illinois. In 1938, he earned his pilot's license and reportedly joined TWA. During the war he was based in the USA before joining CNAC in May 1944. Besides flying on most CNAC routes in and around China, he also made the trans-Pacific flights on DC-4s. When the airline ceased activity on 31 December 1949 at Hong Kong, Don Bussart was made redundant and he went to Burma to join Indonesian Airways. Captain Thomas Sailer, born in 1918, was also a CNAC veteran. His glory day with CNAC was when he flew boxes containing Gold Yuan worth millions of dollars from Shanghai to Canton, so that the money would not fall into communist hands. On arrival at Canton, Nationalist soldiers took control of the money crates. Captain Hugh Hicks, born in 1917, started to fly in the 1930's in small aero clubs, and was later picked to join the Air Corps Training Command. After America got involved officially in World War II, Hicks decided to join the fighting and found his way to China, where he joined CNAC in 1945 and left in 1948. Finally Captain Cutburth, who had been with CNAC from 1944 until 1949, was born in 1914 and lived in Pittsburg, Kansas. He had taken part to the evacuation of Shanghai together with Captain Parish, who will later also get involved with AURI.

Back to Indonesia

Wiweko's plans for an airline are cancelled

While still in Burma, Wiweko Supono already had plans to take over the operations of KLM -Inter Insulair Bedrijf (KLM-IIB) in Indonesia, possibly using the transport aircraft that would be handed over by the Dutch on leaving their former colony. Wiweko had already made contacts to prepare for future international flights to several other Asian nations. To expand and prepare for this, he hired several other pilots when it was clear the Indonesia would soon be independent. Most if not all of these new pilots came from CNAC, who had found themselves jobless after the collapse of Chang Kai Chek and the end of CNAC operations in China in 1949. They had extensive experience of flying transport airplanes under difficult conditions and with minimal logistic support.

In Indonesia however, the government had other plans, and arrangements were being made to set up a national airline with the collaboration of KLM. As a consequence of these arrangements, there was no need anymore for the American pilots in the new national airline as planned by Wiweko. It must also be remembered that Wiweko Supono was still a military officer in active service, and it is possible that some people in the government considered the establishment of a national airline was a civilian and not military matter. Wiweko was then ordered to liquidate the airline in Burma, and all its personnel was scheduled to join AURIS in Indonesia together with the remaining Dakota RI-001. RI-007 was handed over to the Burmese authorities as a sign of thanks and RI-009 was returned to its owner.

Setting up a flying school

It was then decided that the Americans would serve as advisors and instructors at the new flying school being set up at Andir Air Base. The flying school used the facilities and airplanes handed over by the Militaire Luchtvaart, which included a large number of L-4J Piper Cubs, and 20 to 25 AT-16 Harvards. Not all the Piper Cubs and Harvards were assigned to the flying school; some were also used by the various squadrons.

The first duties of the American instructors was to establish some kind of curriculum based on their personal experience, and also to conduct the Advanced Training Course for the cadets returning from India. These cadets had only undergone Primary and Basic Training while they were at the Indian flying schools at Allahabad and Bareilly, using Piper Cubs, Tiger Moths and Chipmunk aircraft. As the training originally performed at Andir was Advanced Training, and the continuation of a basic training, the name Sekolah Penerbang Lanjutan (SPL) was used. The same applied to the cadets trained at TALOA, who still needed to be confirmed as military pilots by undergoing some advanced training at Andir. Later, even when Elementary and Basic training were also done at Andir, the name "SPL" remained.

The fact that the training was conducted in English posed a problem for some cadets, and some of them who showed the proper skills to become pilots still had to follow extra English language classes to be able to understand the classes and

communicate with the instructors. However most of the young Indonesian cadets, who had for many of them been involved in the fight for independence, preferred to be trained by Americans than by Dutch instructors. However, there were still some Dutch instructors from the Military Mission, mainly teaching tactics and strategy. Many of the cadets would be washed out during the training, and this decision was always taken and notified by the Indonesian staff, not by the foreign instructors who only acted as advisors. For minor mistakes during training, the usual punishment for cadets was to run around the airfield with their parachutes on. At the time, the parachutes were very cumbersome and heavy, attached to the lower back with many straps, and running with a parachute on was not an easy task.

While all installations at Andir were under the supervision of Wweko Soepono, the flying school was placed under the authority of two former India graduates: School Commander was LU I Partono, and Deputy Commander/Chief of Operations was LU II Sudarmo. There were also several other Indonesian staff, mainly involved in ground school, Link simulator training, and flight dispatching. However, before 1952, no Indonesian pilot had been trained as flight instructor.

It can be noted that the flying school originally had no aircraft suitable for Basic Training. This was solved when Wweko traveled to the USA and purchased war surplus Vultee BT-13 Valiants and additional AT-6s with the assistance of some of his American colleagues.

The first instructors were some of the Americans that had come to Indonesia when Indonesian Airways was liquidated in Burma. Captain Wells gave advanced training to LU I Partono and LU II Sudarmo, while Captain Pottschmidt gave navigation training.

At the time of SPL-4, the first lifting entirely trained at Andir, the flying school curriculum was as follows: Primary Training was conducted on Piper Cub L-4J during four months, followed by Basic Training on BT-13 Valiant during four more months, and finally Advanced Training, which lasted for five to six months and was conducted on the various versions of AT-6/AT-16/T-6G.

Other duties

Several American pilots were also involved in regular DAUM (Dinas Angkutan Udara Militer) flights in the early 1950's. Capt. Sudaryono remembers that Captains Lad Moore and Pottschmidt joined several survey flights to remote airfields like in Sulawesi or the Moluccas to prepare the setting up of DAUM services. Other pilots involved were Captains Hicks, Brown and Bussart.

There were also some foreign instructors working with the bomber squadron, like Captain Mars, or a Captain Perris mentioned in a 1950 or 1951 issue of Angkasa magazine. It is possible however that Captains Perris and Parish are the same person. When the PBY Catalinas entered service with AURI, they first formed a preparatory squadron, and there was at least one, and possibly two or more foreign instructors attached to this training squadron. This instructor used to fly PBYs in Burma and was a friend of Chad Brown. When Chad Brown came to Indonesia, his friend joined as a PBY instructor.

However, the foreign pilots did not take part in the operations against the RMS rebels from 1950 until 1952. The Dakotas and Mitchells used during these operations were operated by all-Indonesian crews.

Who were the instructors?

Several of the original instructors did not stay very long in Indonesia, like for example Captain Wells, who had come from Indonesian Airways, or Captain Morgan. Captain Morgan was possibly Ogburn "Toad" Morgan, who had learned flying in South Carolina and Texas before World War II and then joined CNAC. Ogburn Morgan reportedly later lived in North Carolina and passed away in 1984.

During the research for this article, it seems that no complete list has been published. We must also remember that some stayed only a couple of years, and that other arrived later, so the people mentioned here-after were for sure not all present in Indonesia at the same time. It seems that by 1955, all the American instructors had completed their contract with AURI.

What is sure is that there were basically two groups among the instructors, those who were former CNAC pilots, and those who had been hired directly from the USA, most of them if not all had been flight instructors for USAAF military pilots in the USA during World War II.

The American instructors and their families lived in Bandung. When the SPL started to move to Kalijati in 1953, the instructors used to fly there from Bandung, using mainly AT-6/AT-16s or Piper Cubs. It's also interesting to know that Louie, the elder son of Bob Pottschmidt, used to exercise with the Link trainer, and later took flying lessons in the L-4J Piper Cub; he ended up flying helicopters in the USA and in Vietnam.

On a group photo of lifting SPL-4, the following foreign instructors are present: Captains Powers, George, Gianotti, Hall, Smith, Tracy, Hicks, Luna, Hinkel, Knapp and Trunnell. It is also confirmed that Captain Wells and Pottschmidt delivered some training during the early years of the flying school. From interviews, biographies and other books about the history of AURI, more names were quoted, including Captains Parish, Weaver, Beamer, Rountree, Stagg, Cable or Gable, Russel, Presridge, Grimshaw, Noemis or Noomis, and Richard.