

CNAC
ASSOCIATION



CANNON BALL

DECEMBER 2010

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CNAC Association trip to China
The Peninsula Hong Kong
September 14, 2010

Travels with CNAC

So much has happened since last we met on these pages in July. Some of us have gone to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton for the opening of the CNAC Exhibit, some of us have been to San Francisco for the reunion, and some of us have been to China. The rest of you, I suppose, have been to interesting places too, but I can't report on what I don't know. I hope everyone (even those who haven't been much farther than their mailbox lately!) will enjoy this issue.

Read on for more about the CNAC Association adventures in Dayton, San Francisco, and China. I think you'll enjoy "A Gift From Hong Kong To China in 1949", by Wong How Man. I've included a letter written in 1944 to Don Bussart's mother (by my father Bert Coulson, on the occasion of Don's birthday) which provides a snapshot of everyday life for those men at that time. We also have some late breaking news about an event on November 24 in Palmdale, California honoring Captain Joe Michiels. Please let me know (as Joe's family did) of news you'd like included in the next Cannonball.

Eve Coulson



Nancy Alison Wright continues to go through her photo collection and is hoping someone can identify in the image above **the man holding a hat**, between her father, Captain Ernest "Allie" Allison (behind, on the left) and Chief Pilot, Captain Jim McDivitt, in a trench coat and hat, on the far right. It was taken in Hong Kong, in 1947 or 1948. Any ideas, please email nancyallisonwright@gmail.com.

On the *previous* page, a photo of all members of the CNAC Association delegation who flew from San Francisco to Hong Kong, at the beginning of the China trip. Left to right: Peter DeKantzow (son of Sid), who met the group for an afternoon at the Peninsula Hong Kong; Craig Chinn, Yanni Lieutenant, Carol Chinn, Tom Moore, Donna Willett, Ted Elms, Amanda Slade, Nelson Obus, Moon Chin, Jeffrey Slade, Carol Slade, Valerie P. Kendrick, Russ Coldren, Bob Willett, Shirley Mosley, Bobby Goldsborough, Eve Coulson. (the group was joined in Kunming by Diego Kusak, Petty Jiang, Angie and Annie Chen)

A Message from President Emeritus Capt. Bill Maher:

There is no longer any need for our members or their families to hang on to memorabilia from China. We are getting request from Wong How Man and Diego for material for distribution to museums in China. Almost nothing regarding Americans involvement exists in China as result of the purge by the Red Guard. There is now a great interest in AVG and CNAC's contribution to the Victory over the Japanese War of Aggression. Any material you provide would be prominently displayed along with our history in museums throughout China.

You can send what you have directly to Peggy Maher (see address below) and she will make sure that it is given a place of honor (or held by her in safekeeping until the right home for it is found). -- Bill

We have counseled caution in the past and continue to do so. We know that there is a great deal of interest on the part of private collectors (perhaps not so much interested in history as in making a profit, though they may tell you otherwise), and that museums have been known to accept items that never end up being displayed. You therefore may have been left to think that it's better not to let anything out of your sight. However, we are equally concerned that by holding onto these crucial pieces of historical importance, items that can help tell the story of CNAC for generations to come may inadvertently get lost to garage and estate sales (or worse, just get thrown out). In some cases this has already happened. Family members do not always realize what they have, or that some of what they are sorting through has great value, when faced with the task of organizing, downsizing or closing the home of a parent or other aging relative.

Both Diego Kusak and Wong How Man are actively involved in building museum exhibitions in China and would welcome your contributions. If you prefer to deal directly with either of them, you are encouraged to do so. As you may recall, Diego worked with the Kunming City Museum in 2008 and his efforts made possible the CNAC exhibition that opened there on January 20, 2009 (featured in the spring 2009 issue of the Cannonball). Wong How Man's organization, China Exploration and Research Society, maintains over a dozen active projects and several small theme museums with permanent exhibits. The history of CNAC is on display in one room within the Exploration Museum in Shangri-la. The story of the Hump is told through pictures and a short film his group made during the time they hosted a few pilots.

You can send anything you may have for distribution to:

Peggy Maher, Pres. CNAC
P.O. Box 294449
1294 Upper Turtle Creek
Kerrville, TX 78028

Questions? Call Peggy at (830) 896-5030 or Bill Maher at (517) 740-8476

Reunion Recap

This year's reunion blended events we've come to look forward to and surprises and new developments. Burlingame Embassy Suites was again our home base, and while we wondered about the possibility of low attendance this year, our meetings were lively and well attended and both the gathering at Moon Chin's house and the final banquet were just as enjoyable as ever.

We were particularly happy to have in attendance some people new to the organization/group as well as people we have missed in the last couple of years. We were pleased to welcome Dolly Wang, a special reporter for the US-based World Journal Chinese newspaper-Texas Edition. Her mother is from Kunming and as she wrote Peggy Maher, "I really admire the AVG/CNAC veterans for their heroic actions against the Japanese in Yunnan. I plan to write a book about the AVG/CNAC stories in Yunnan". She was traveling with Yu Ma, of Taiwan, and they gave each of us a keepsake from their country, and they spoke movingly about the importance of keeping the story of CNAC alive.

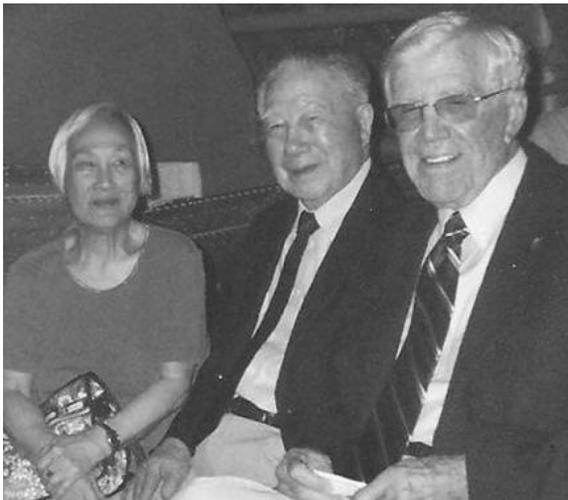
We met Captains Robert "Bob" Christofferson and Drury G. Phebus, both of whom flew with the CBI Air Transport Command and knew the CNAC group. They found their way to our group after their WWII association disbanded and we are happy to have them. Chris Coulson, son of Captain Bert Coulson, also attended the reunion for the first time this year; we were happy to have him!

It was great to see Clayton Khules again this year and hear about his recent adventures and accomplishments. With a 90-day window each year in which to actively look for downed planes, Clayton usually finds at least 4 missing aircraft each year. Since 2001, he has found 25 sites, accounting for 163 personnel. He receives no government funding, relying on outside funding from people who recognize and value this humanitarian project on behalf the families of long-missing Americans and for the historical record. Whether or not you were there to hear his presentation, you must take a look at Clayton's moving and informative website, MIArecoveries.org. Consider making a contribution to this worthy and highly successful effort. (for more information, you can reach him at 928-541-1357)

At the business meeting we discussed the expense associated with the Cannonball, and whether to go to an email version to save money on printing and postage. While many in the room offered to receive theirs electronically, when asked, those same folks quickly put enough money in the hat (whose hat was it?) to cover costs for a third issue this year. To those who responded then, as well as to the appeal in the summer issue, many, many thanks. We also discussed a bit of confusion about payment of dues—currently, members are billed in January, but also given the opportunity to pay dues when signing up for the reunion. If there is ever a question about whether your membership is current, contact Valerie by phone (707) 459-5165 or email rosebud@saber.net.

Meet me in...Ohio?

Thanks to the sustained and determined efforts of Bill Maher and others, we began to hear in early summer of an event that brought out many of the faithful in our group and others with an interest in this piece of history. On Thursday August 19, 2010, the National Museum of the United States Air Force, at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, hosted the opening of the China National Aviation Corporation Exhibit. Those of us who had arrived early were given a 90-minute fast paced tour of a tiny fraction of the museum's holdings (reportedly large enough to require 3 days to see in its entirety). Following the tour, a dedication ceremony and reception were held in the museum, with a number of CNAC pilots and family members in attendance, including Captains Carey Bowles, Giff Bull, Moon Chin, Bill Maher, Kenneth "Kenny" Colthorpe, Peter Goutiere, Hugh Grundy, Bob McCaleb, Arnold Schilproot, and CNAC stewardess Margaret Soong. Langhorne Bond, CNAC Association member and former administrator of the FAA from 1977-1981, was in attendance and made some remarks during the dedication. His father, William Langhorne Bond was a central character in the early years of CNAC and Pan Am, developing air routes and securing land rights in China, from Shanghai to the interior and including Hong Kong.



Margaret Soong, Moon Chin, and Bill Maher



Peter Goutiere in the Wright Patterson AFB Memorial Gardens

Nothing speaks more eloquently than basic facts. In the course of his remarks, curator Terry Aitken spoke of the crucial 10%--the percentage of the total cargo and passengers CNAC brought over the Hump to China, without which, China could conceivably have been forced to negotiate a truce, at which point, all of Japan's 5.5 million soldiers would have been freed up to wreak havoc in other parts of the Pacific.

And sometimes, nothing speaks more eloquently than poetry. Peter Goutiere read the following, written by Eugene Marcoe, a pilot for one of the CBI Combat Cargo outfits.

The war is finally over,
Our job was nearly through,
We had some other trips to make
Hopefully one or two.

We left the base of Charley Man
And stopped at Peter Charley.
Then off again to old Kunming
With a load of tea and barley.

We made it into Peishiyi next
Then left for Oboe Fox.
We made good time along the way
We were way up on the clock.

The years have left my memory dim
But we headed home I'm sure.
A monsoon storm accompanied us
And made the hills a blur.

We were doing fine and making time
When a clearing let us see.
Before our very nose a rock
As big as Tennessee.

We jammed the throttles forward
And hauled the wheel back hard.
We missed that awesome pile of rocks
By much less than a yard.

A plane was missing, someone said
And I think it is your friend.
If the weather clears by morning
We can look for him by then.

We came back where we missed the
rock
And found a molten mess.
The overcast didn't break for them
They lay in a deep crevasse.

We searched the mountain over
No sign of anyone.
I realized now my friend
Would be forever twenty-one.

I know it's getting nearer now
The time for me to go.
And face the one who made the
heavens
And all this earth below.

I would like to make just one request
If he would grant this one to me.
I would like to go meet this friend of
mine
In a brand new DC



China National Aviation Corporation exhibit now open

by Sarah Swan, National Museum of the U.S. Air Force

8/19/2010 - **DAYTON, Ohio** -- A new exhibit focused on the China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC), a group that served during World War II, opened Aug. 19 at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.

The *First Over the 'Hump:' The China National Aviation Corporation* exhibit is located in the museum's Air Power Gallery. It tells the story of CNAC's pioneering search for air routes over the Himalaya Mountains between China and India, known in history as the "Hump." CNAC's great success in finding these vital air routes led to the first regular flights over the Himalaya Mountains. Joining with the Air Transport Command, CNAC became a vital partner in the world's first strategic airlift. Between April 1942 and August 1945, CNAC crews are reported to have flown over 38,000 missions transporting 10 percent of all cargo and personnel over the Hump to Allied Forces in China, Burma and India.



For their contributions to the war effort, CNAC aircrews were granted veteran status in 1993 and awarded all due awards and decorations, including the Victory Medal, Air Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

"The Allied success in winning World War II was a result of successfully mobilizing and utilizing all available strategic assets, including commercial airlines," said Terry Aitken, the museum's senior curator. "The experiences of World War II and the Berlin Airlift compelled the U.S. to create the Civil Reserve Air Fleet - aircraft from U.S. airlines that support Department of Defense airlift requirements in emergencies. This exhibit is an opportunity for the museum to acknowledge the accomplishments of the CNAC veterans and their place in history."

The exhibit includes several interesting artifacts, such as a khaki bush jacket donated by Capt. Fletcher "Christy" Hanks, who crossed the Hump 347 times during World War II, and a CNAC lighter and custom-made utility knife donated by Capt. Gifford Bull, who is credited with 252 Hump flights.

"On the opening of the exhibit, I pay tribute to those who made great contributions and sacrifices," Peng Keyu, Consul General of the People's Republic of China in New York, wrote in a letter that was read during the ceremony. "The exhibit will pass on to the younger generation the legacy of friendship between the Chinese and American people."

Reprinted from the National Museum of the US Air Force website

<http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=17136>

For information, call the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force at (937) 255-3286

CNAC Next Generation Travels to China

From dream to reality to priceless memories

Many will recall that the idea of taking a trip to China was discussed at the 2009 reunion. Certainly a number of pilots have returned to China in recent years, but very few of the second generation have had an opportunity to travel and see some of the places for themselves. There is no way to adequately thank Donna and Bob Willett, Diego Kusak and his tireless and capable associate Petty Jiang, and others behind the scenes, for creating an itinerary and making it into a reality. Once the trip was in place, it almost took on a life of its own, and many opportunities to connect with CNAC's history came along that wouldn't have happened otherwise. The group was particularly fortunate that Captain Moon Chin decided to come along—he added gravitas, an extensive knowledge of aviation, his phenomenal memory, and a keen wit, in addition to being a terrific traveling companion.

From a sunrise landing in Hong Kong and a “hit-the-ground-running” six hour grand tour of the city (followed by a much needed nap which for most, extended past and took the place of dinner) to the last evening in Shanghai featuring an aviation award ceremony honoring Moon Chin, the trip was defined by adventures, challenges, surprises and heartwarming moments. And banquets. So many we lost count. Some which took us by surprise and some featuring surprising entertainment, gifts, and cuisine (sautéed bees, anyone?)

The heart of the trip was in the Yunnan province, where we visited Kunming, Dali, Pianma and Luishi. We saw museums, airstrips, met with local officials, members of local aviation associations, and were treated to a wonderful cantata performance in Kunming. We brought gifts and proclamation letters (see next page) and received flowers and priceless keepsakes (among them, handmade vests presented during a special wine drinking ceremony).

Our last stop, Shanghai, included a day trip for some to Nanjing where we had planned to visit a monument with the names of those who died during WWII, but unexpectedly were given a tour of a museum built in 2009 dedicated to this era of history (another organization eager for CNAC stories, photos and artifacts).

A book could and possibly should be written about the September 2010 CNAC Association trip to China. It would not satisfy as a simple travelogue, but would contain the differing perspectives of its group members, each of whom were interested in the land and people of China, but also the history of CNAC, and their relative's part in that history. For now, a brief summary will have to suffice, until a fuller account can be compiled based the journal entries, good memories and the hundreds if not thousands of pictures taken by and of the group. Look to the spring Cannonball for more on this fabulous trip.

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Congress of the United States

Chair
Select Intelligence Oversight Panel
Committee on Appropriations

Committee on Education
and Labor

Permanent Select Committee
on Intelligence

Committee on Natural Resources

September 2010

To the City and the Citizens of Kunming;

Greetings from New Jersey's 12th Congressional District and the U. S. House of Representatives. Thank you for your warm reception of Captain Moon Chin and members of the families of the Chinese National Aviation Corporation Association, the remarkable group who has kept alive the history of the CNAC pilots who ferried supplies over the Himalayas, a route known as "the Hump", during World War II. I feel confident that during their visit they will be steeped in the rich Chinese history of these events.

I have deep respect for both the aviators and Chinese combat troops who joined forces to keep a pathway open to China using an air route over the Himalayas. The more than 38,000 missions, bringing cargo and personnel over "the Hump" to allied forces in China were some of the most strategic and dangerous achievements of the war. Without the successful partnership of excellence, efficiency and bravery, United States could have lost a strategic ally in the war.

Thank you to the City of Kunming for serving as CNAC's "second home" during WWII and offering your warm hospitality in the face of the horrors of war. Your generosity honored the valiant exploits of the CNAC and the bravery and success of the Chinese forces.

The legacy of friendship between the Chinese and American people is something to celebrate, and together we remember with gratitude the service of the CNAC. I send my best wishes for your continued prosperity and success.

Sincerely,

RUSH HOLT
Member of Congress

A LETTER HOME IN 1944

Pilots' Bungalow, India
December 19, 1944

Dear Mrs. Bussart,

Your indolent son is basking in the sun, and since yesterday was his natal day, I rather thought it appropriate that he write you a letter. He thought of it too, but has been procrastinating about it for twenty-four hours. So, with his consent and my observations of his behavior, health and general welfare, we'll attempt to accomplish man's greatest chore: a letter home.

Like all of us away from home, we think of how little we appreciated our families and the American way of living. We also get homesick oftener than you might think, but seldom have enough courage to say so. What I am trying to say in a fumbling way is that Don and I will be happy to gather round that hearth back home when the great day comes.

I have been here almost a year now, and am no better than an average pilot, and have complete confidence in my ability to fly the hump safely. I have flown with Don, and he is at least as safe in flying as I am, and I can assure you that you need have no concern in that direction. I imagine you may think of the danger occasionally, since my mother does, and that's the reason I mention Don's abilities as a pilot.

Conditions for flying are improving steadily in this area, and we enjoy our work in that it is so different from any other type of flying in the world.

We have a day off today, and tonight, and plan on doing some tiger hunting tonight. One of the natives came in a moment ago to tell us the tiger is in the vicinity, and we are hopeful of bagging Old Stripes tonight. We killed one a few weeks ago, and hope to get another.

Don insists I tell you something about myself, so I'll note it briefly:

1. Worked for KWK and KWOS (newscaster and Man on the Street in 1938-39.)
2. Am writing a book about CNAC, which I hope to publish in about six months.
3. I bailed out over the jungle in September and walked out to a native village in a week—subsisted on grubworms, leaves, roots, berries, and leeches. The leeches were taking my blood, so I decided to eat them and take it back. Grasshoppers are really good—taste like shrimp—once you get accustomed to the taste.

We're looking forward to the Xmas packages we are to receive soon (we hope). We'll put them in a big pile and share them. It's the new See-Nack policy of sharing the wealth.

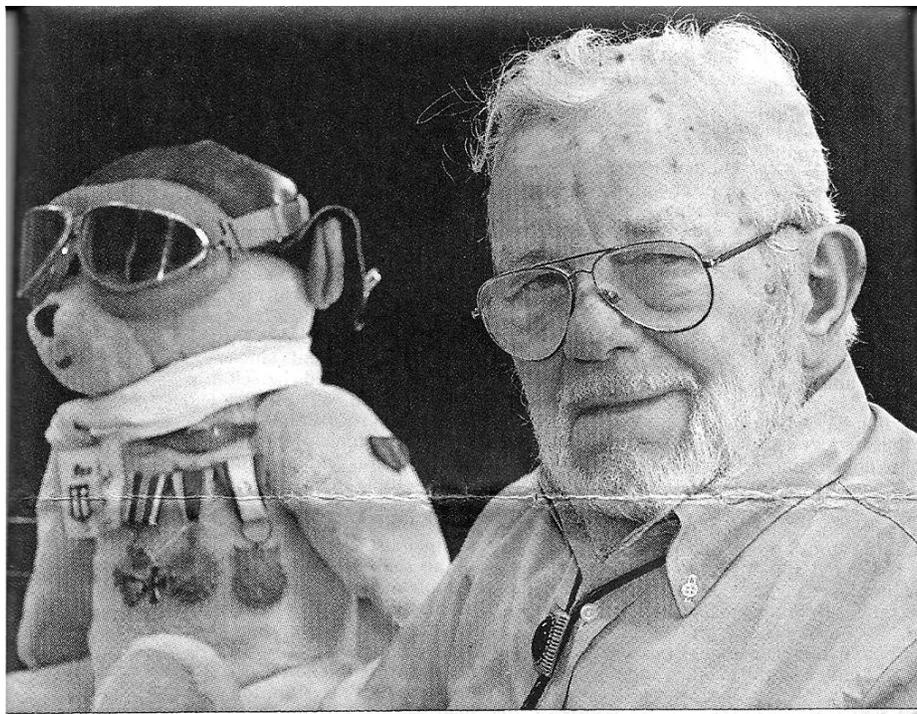
McClellan is safe and sound—he had a bailout job too, and is resting up in Calcutta. He'll be back on the ridge soon.

A big bull session is beginning just now, and Don and I can't keep out of it. It involves airplanes, and will probably wind up in a discussion of the fair sex—they usually do! We have made some pictures of this tea plantation on which we live, and will send you some of them soon.

Yours for a very merry Christmas and a bright New Year! Bert Coulson

Approved by your Big Baby Boy Donald P.S. Tell all at Home Hello

ELMER LIVES ON IN PERPETUITY!!!



Picture Toledo Ohio Blade Aug 19 2010

The Story of Ken Colthorpe's Red Bearon

Cynthia Mahrt Taylor—Daughter of CNAC Captain Harvey Mahrt

As a former airline captain for the China National Aviation Corporation for four years and after having flown the same routes for a year alongside CNAC while with the U.S. Air Transport Command during World War II, Ken Colthorpe said he was honored to attend the opening day exhibit of CNAC memorabilia on August 19th at the National Museum of the Air Force in Dayton, Ohio. Prior to the opening of the exhibit, Mr. Colthorpe was interviewed by a Toledo, Ohio Blade newspaper reporter. He was also photographed with his Good Bears of the World Booster Teddy Bear, the Red Bearon. The photo subsequently accompanied the Blade's article.

The Red Bearon was a special gift to Ken from his wife, Corinne, over a quarter of a century ago. Corinne is a dedicated arctophile (teddy bear lover) and a charter member of the Toledo Den of Good Bears of the World, a charity organization that has provided thousands of teddy bears to traumatized children and the forgotten elderly. When Corinne purchased the Bearon for him, ironically a bear that had been manufactured in China, she realized that the Red Bearon would be the perfect way to display Ken's World War II medals and memorabilia. The Distinguished Flying Cross, the Airman's Medal, and a special award from the Chinese government, are a few of Ken's medals

the Red Bearon proudly sports. He also wears a leather flight helmet, goggles, and silk scarf worn by Ken earlier in World War II while instructing aviation cadets. (As my father, Harvey Marht, was doing at the same time.) Quite a dashing bear!

The Red Bearon has accompanied the Colthorpes to many organizational functions over the past 25 years. He is always a great icebreaker and obviously sometimes steals the show. At one such function many years ago, at another dedication at The Air Force Museum, the Red Bearon was stolen for over an hour and was feared to be lost forever. Fortunately, the female kidnapper returned him unharmed and in very good spirits. The Red Bearon is also always a hit when he appears at Teddy Talks for youngsters and oldsters. Ken said, "The Red Bearon is a sentimental reminder of many things including flying the Hump, China, Burma, India, and of CNAC."

Janis Mahrt Cordray wrote: *Valerie, here is a little info from my mom. She never was in Kunming but her fondest memories were in Shanghai at the Hamilton house where she was neighbors with your parents, Ken & Corrine, Stella Montaux whose husband was Capt Moore (no other knowledge of his full name), and the O'Hare's. Their afternoons were filled with Mah Jong games, shopping for the beautiful silks they brought home and the luxury of both having their legs shaved w/ silk threads and of having "house boys" clean and prepare the families meals and ah mahs help with the children.*

Their life was such a contrast to what was happening at that time. Every morning the women really didn't know if their spouses would return home. This fact probably wasn't mentioned as to why they played hard. The nights were filled with many parties. They were young and so full of life in a war torn world. I don't believe it was out of arrogance that they felt so fortunate but of unbelievable fortune to be able to experience their surroundings. The aura of the Far East always stayed with my mom. She never got over the feeling of having experienced the rich culture of the orient.

Valerie added: *Peggy Watson gave me an insight as to why they had so many MahJong and bridge games. When the war was particular bad, and the pilots/dads were flying non-stop and evacuations were very possible. On an attempt to be "normal"... the woman and kids would gather at certain houses and pass the time playing games, while the kids played with each other. If there was to be an evacuation...the CNAC would send vehicles to load everyone up for an airplane ride. No one panicked. The kids never knew how bad things were...they just thought it was time to play games and visit with one another....like a birthday party.*

"LOST" CNAC LOGO FOUND

Report from Felix Smith

I received the following email on October 25, 2010, from Lloyd Coleman, son of CAT/Air America pilot Ben Coleman who was killed in September 1972, on a CIA mission to the Kingdom of Laos. Lloyd's recognition of the "chung" confirms CNAC's position among the legends of aviation history. At the time

we were flying the Hump, Lloyd was yet to be born. He was a boy when he reached Taipei in 1962, and a teenager in 1972, enrolled in the Taipei American School when his father, Ben Coleman, was killed. After the Vietnam War, speaking fluent Mandarin, he conducted Yangtze cruises through China's great gorges. Today he manages the Aberdeen Travel Agency in Long Beach, CA.

Although Ben Coleman never flew with CNAC, a number of CNAC's WWII Hump pilots later joined CAT. Joe Rosbert became the Director of Operations while Eric Shilling and Dick Rossi were its first chief pilots. Jerry Shrawder, Bus Loane, Randal Richardson, and Felix Smith were line pilots. Harvey Wirta became a CAT Maintenance Chief and Dave Gluskin was one of CAT's first Chief Engineers. Hugh Grundy improved CAT's maintenance procedures and then became the last President of CAT/Air America. Of all these guys, Rosbert, Rossi & Shilling had flown for just about every Air Group China ever had: CNAC, Chennault's AVG, Moon Chin's CATC, Chennault's CAT/Air America. It's good to know that the young military veterans of Vietnam who joined the CAT/Air America complex look upon CNAC pilots with admiration. They put Felix on the podium, alongside General Heinie Aderholt to answer questions "about those days." The following year, they placed Pete Goutiere up there and he delighted them with stories and photographs of the early days of WWII CNAC. They're holding the next reunion at Wright Patterson. I told them to be sure to see the CNAC exhibit.

Hi, Felix: I read your book on the flight home to Los Angeles. What a beautiful flight it was because of your stories. I lived every minute of every page as if I were there with you. Especially your Chungking landing story at the beginning...I read along, and found it quite remarkable to think, that out of the second generation, I just might be the only one who actually lived in "modern day" Chungking (now Chongqing). Did I tell you that when I arrived in CKG to go to work on the Yangtze, back in Dec 1979, I had to wait for 3 hours at the small little building they called the air terminal for the one and only taxi in the city to come and get me? As I sat there alone, the only "round-eyed" person literally in a city of 6 million people in Mao tunics, a feeling of great apprehension set in and I began to have "buyer's remorse" about being in this dark, damp, miserable communist land. Beginning to feel blue and wondering why I had left the love of my life back in Los Angeles for "this" was a powerful emotion that caused my blood pressure to rise. The taxi was taking an eternity to get there, so, while I waited, I sat at a little bamboo tea table in a small damp windowless room, with heaps of dried mud on the floor. Out of sheer boredom I started scraping the dried mud away as I slid my shoe back and forth across the floor...and lo and behold, the big chunks of caked mud on the floor gave way to a flooring yet still below the mud and then something amazing became exposed beneath the layers of dried mud and another substance (that felt and looked like floor tar...). It was a round, big brass inlay in the stone floor below with the character and the letters CNAC revealed themselves...all were well worn down and quite oxidized by years of damp flooring placed over it. I was sitting right on top of history that hadn't yet been torn down or apart, just neglected over lots of years. I remember becoming overwhelmed with emotion. I took it clearly as a signal from Dad in heaven that I was right where I was supposed to be.

Regards, Lloyd Coleman

A GIFT FROM HONG KONG TO CHINA IN 1949

FR10.21 by Wong How Man (Kai Tak, Hong Kong – October 27, 2010)

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It was November 9, 1949 barely a month after Mao declared on Tian An Men that the People's Republic of China was founded. Lin Yushui, otherwise known as Leonard Lam, was at the captain's seat on the left side of the cockpit inside his DC3, code XT-525. With a signal from his ground crew, he started his plane and revved up the engines. Around him, eleven other airplanes, mostly C-47 transport version of the DC3, started their engines one after another. Lin and his colleagues were on a special run, a stealthy mission, on this very fateful day.

Between 6am and 8am, twelve airplanes of CNAC (China National Aviation Corp) and CATC (Central Air Transport Corp) were to take off from Kai Tak runway and headed north, landing in Beijing and Tianjin within a few hours. To most people at the time, these pilots and crew defected with their planes to the communists. To others of the young PRC, these were heroes in an uprising, bringing their planes back to the arms of the motherland. Mao was to hand-script a letter of commendation to all the crew members three days later. Twelve airplanes descended from heaven were like a godsend in those early days of the PRC. Sixty years have passed since that tumultuous day when the world watched in awe as one of the largest aviation fleets defected en masse.



CNAC Queen's Road Office



Kai Tak Airport in 1949

As the planes roared above Hong Kong, Captain Moon Chin, founder and deputy general manager of CATC, looked up at the sky and sighed in despair. He knew the day was drawing near. Over the previous two days, he saw two strangers outside his house near Kai Tak Airport, seemingly put there to watch his every move. After all, he too, was approached several times by underground Communists from the Mainland trying to persuade him to also defect. In fact, his reluctance to return to China prompted a number of others to stay. Otherwise as many as 8 more airplanes from CATC might have left the airfield that day.

The plan to take the airplanes and the company to China though secret, was executed with great care and detail. During the final days, the inner circle committee directed the event with their headquarters based at the Peninsula Hotel. Each airplane was to be loaded with parts and equipment worthy of the next three months of operation after defecting to China. The original plan called for ten planes each from CNAC and CATC to be dispatched. More than 20 planes taking off in close succession, requiring up to two hours, would trigger suspicion on the British who controlled Kai Tak Airport. The 20 planes were calculated based on available crewmembers who were committed to the

cause to operate the airplanes. Last minute changes, not least due to Moon Chin's refusal to join, resulted in only two planes from CATC participating.

One almost new airplane, a Convair-240 belonging to CATC, took the two managers of the two companies and inner circle of the uprising to Beijing. That same evening, Zhou En-lai hosted a dinner at the Peking Hotel for members of this group. The other eleven planes flew to Tianjin, circumnavigating around southern China to avoid Nationalist Air Force based in Guilin, which might intercept. The event became a major coup for the communist and their propaganda machine, scoring high marks among those who had progressive or leftist leaning both in China and Chinese communities around the world. For the retreating Nationalists, it was a major setback and the battle to acquisition the remaining aircrafts stranded in Hong Kong dragged on over the next three years.

Percy Chen, a leading barrister at the time in Hong Kong, fought in court in an attempt to recover for the PRC the seventy one remaining planes claimed by the Nationalist yet under British jurisdiction. Claims and counterclaims resulted despite a Chief Justice ruled in May 1950 that the planes should belong to the new government of China. The case got so bizarre that at one point the US intelligence director (CIA), claiming as creditor who has purchased the assets of CNAC and CATC, sued General Chennault in a desperate bid to secure these airplanes. But the case was dismissed by the court for lack of evidence. In another incident, seven planes were bombed and sabotaged while parked at the airport. It seems all stops were pulled to avoid the airplanes be procured by China.

As the fiasco rolled on, the US warned Britain that bilateral relationship would be damaged if the planes were to fall into communist hands. Ultimately the British yielded to US pressure as they too were dragged into the Korean War. The colonial government succumbed to intrigues of a US-sponsored Nationalist government in Taiwan, in collaboration with Gen. Chennault of Flying Tiger fame. In 1952 Chennault finally acquired the remaining planes under CAT (Civil Air Transport), an airline which later became Air America, a proxy operation for the CIA.



Gen. Chennault during the war



Kai Tak runway in early days

For those who defected or heroes of an uprising, depending on the viewpoint, some were inducted into the fledging Chinese Air Force. Others continued to serve in its budding civilian airlines. In all, over 2500 staff members of the two airlines, CNAC and

CATC, signed a declaration to remain with the companies and served under the new government.

Lin Yushui who piloted the DC3 to Tianjin was a veteran flyer of the Second World War. Lin first joined the US 14th Air Force in China and became an Ace pilot. While serving with the Air Force, he flew both the P40 Tomahawk of Flying Tigers fame, and the P51 Mustang, then known as the fastest and best maneuvering fighter of the day. He was credited with downing at least 5 Japanese airplanes in air battles. After the War, he was recruited by Moon as a pilot for CATC.

Lin's flying distinction, which was at first an asset, quickly turned into a liability when the Cultural Revolution started. Being an overseas Chinese from the Philippines, he was soon singled out for attack and criticism before being banished to a reform farm outside of Shanghai, raising and tending pigs for 13 years. Lin first returned to China as a teenager. Unlike others who falsified their age to avoid draft or conscript into the army, he faked his age to enter flight school in Kunming in order to fight the Japanese. That, however, counted nothing to his credit in the eyes of the Red Guards. Instead, his days with the US forces were enough to put a death spell on his tainted history.



Lin holding certificate & wearing medals



Moon inside Eurocopter at Kai Tak.

Today, sitting with me at the Aviation Club at the corner of former Kai Tak Airport in Hong Kong, 90-year-old Lin reminisced the day in 1949 which changed his life and destiny, forever. "I was the only one who brought the entire family along when we defected. My wife Rita and two-year-old daughter Wei Ci were the only non flight personnel who came along," Lin said proudly as he recounted some of the details of that fateful day to me. "Recently, newspapers reported that the last Flying Tiger pilot has died in China. Actually I am probably the only remaining one," quipped Lin while showing off his Distinguished Flying Cross medal from the US Air Force (pilots of the 14th Air Force inherited the iconic name after the original American Volunteer Group disbanded). As a final word of wisdom, he added, "To love your country, you have to pay a price."

Moon Chin, on the other hand, lay back in his mansion-like home in San Francisco, pondering how life might have been different had he chosen to change sides during that momentous November day. Lin has been remorseful and hoping to meet Moon again, but the latter still felt being wronged when Lin took off in the airplane without his consent. "Moon is a genius pilot," Lin repeated the same statement with sincere admiration several times over our conversation.

Moon's flying career spanned over half a century beginning in 1932. He flew the Hump during the War as well as pioneered a new route in the western Himalayas K2 region from Xinjiang to India. At the end of the War, he was Chief pilot for CNAC and had flown dignitaries including Chiang Kai-shek and Mm Chiang. After the War, he founded CATC together with a friend, purchasing over a hundred surplus airplanes. In 1951, Moon founded another airline, Fooshing Air, in Taiwan. Over the next few decades, his airlines took on many covert and surveillance jobs, including chartered by the French during the French-Indo China War and by the US during the Vietnam War.

He and his crew undertook dangerous airdrop missions both in China's southern border as well as into the Mainland. It was a lucrative business in those heady days. Air catering business also provided further returns for someone with entrepreneur skill who calculated his risks carefully. Fooshing, also known as TransAsia Airlines, flourished and is still in operation today. Moon sold his shares upon retiring in 1983 and moved back to America, spending his summer in Toronto and winter in San Francisco.

My effort to broker a reunion between the two aging aviators was almost complete as 97-year-old Moon revisited Hong Kong last month. Unfortunately Moon came down with a flu and had to cancel the meeting. Sitting with two lady caretakers in front of the window inside a suite on the upper floor of the Peninsula Hotel, Moon watched with fascination the colorful display of fireworks of this year's National Day celebration. The harbor-view room he booked was over USD700 per night. When he flies, he takes First or Business Class. His two chaperons would sit in the back.

For Lin Yushui, his fortitude is quite different. Just down the road from Tsim Sha Tsui at Hung Hom, Lin may likely be watching the same firework display, but only on TV. Tucked away in a tiny apartment, he can consider himself lucky, being released from China in 1978 among the first batch of former nationalist officers who suffered much deprivation and labor terms during the Cultural Revolution. In Lin's pocket when he crossed the Lowu Bridge into Hong Kong was: Twenty Hong Kong Dollars.



Defecting aircrew on Nov 9, 1949 at Tianjin. Lin at front row right, wife and daughter behind

Former CNAC Capt. Joe Michiels Honored



On Wednesday, November 24, 2010, The City of Palmdale, California and the wonderful volunteers at The Joe Davies Heritage Airpark at Palmdale Plant 42 dedicated a beautifully restored C-46 as the latest addition to their excellent collection of aircraft on display at their Airpark in Palmdale. Wednesday November 24 was officially proclaimed and celebrated as "Capt. Joe Michiels Day" by The City of Palmdale in honor of the late Joe Michiels, and the beautifully restored C-46 was

dedicated in his honor in ceremonies held at the Airpark. Joe's name is on the plane's nose/cockpit and a plaque honoring him now permanently accompanies the airplane. (pictured above, Isabel Michiels with her family receiving Capt. Joe Michiels Day proclamation from Mayor Ledford of Palmdale)

The Joe Davies Heritage Airpark is located adjacent to the U.S. Air Force Plant 42 base, and very close to where Joe Michiels once farmed alfalfa following his CNAC years. The Airpark celebrates the local heritage, people and aircraft that have made the Antelope Valley a worldwide leader in aviation and aerospace flight test, design, and manufacturing for many decades. Aircraft on display are meticulously restored by the dedicated and skilled volunteers of the Airpark, including a dedicated small team that has spent more than five (5) years restoring this particular airplane. This C-46, in USAF markings and once actually used by the Air Force at Plant 42, is like those prominent among the aircraft once flown by CNAC.

Joe Michiels first arrived in the Antelope Valley in 1942 to teach flying to British and American Air Corps cadets. There he met Isabel Seminario, the daughter of a local alfalfa farming family. Always a civilian, in 1945 he was recruited to fly The Hump between China and India and within China for CNAC. Isabel joined him in Shanghai where they were married and began their married life. After Joe's CNAC years, they returned to the Antelope Valley and Joe started farming alfalfa immediately adjacent to USAF Plant 42. In 1965 the Michiels sold their ranch and moved into town, and Joe continued to be active in real estate. Joe died 28 years ago in December 1982.



Isabel Michiels and the entire Michiels Family have been deeply touched by the kindness and generosity of the City of Palmdale, The Joe Davies Heritage Airpark, and *especially* the volunteers of the Airpark in remembering and honoring Joe Michiels for his years as a pilot, farmer, realtor and friend. They also want to thank Tom Moore and Eve Coulson and others of the extended CNAC Family for sharing this news and for their ongoing efforts in keeping the CNAC legacy alive. Isabel and her family also hope that everyone will someday get to visit the Airpark to see this beautiful C-46 and the other airplanes so wonderfully restored and displayed there. (pictured above, grandson Joe Michiels in the cockpit of the C-46)



Joe Michiels loved flying, farming, the real estate business, and the Antelope Valley. He loved his years flying for CNAC and flying the C-46. Nothing would have pleased him more than to be honored in this way at this place. Laughter, fond memories, good stories and fun humor were shared by the many family members, dignitaries, fantastic Airpark volunteers, and others at the dedication ceremonies. Joe would have loved all of it immensely.

Submitted at the request of Isabel Michiels by one of her children, Steve Michiels (michiels@sonic.net). For more information see City of Palmdale website <http://www.cityofpalmdale.org/airpark/> and CNAC website <http://www.cnac.org/michiels01>.

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SAVE THE DATE—NEXT YEAR'S CNAC ASSOCIATION REUNION SEPTEMBER 8-10, 2011

A big thank you is overdue to John Lisk, who took on the job of managing our members list and mailing labels a couple of years ago. His careful efforts have made it much easier for us all to stay in touch. Thanks so much, John!

We want to acknowledge new members Captains Christina and Joe Zarinnia of Michigan, both of whom are pilots (he flies for Spirit Airlines). Welcome Christina and Joe!

Visit CNAC's website, created by Tom Moore, at cnac.org. New information and photos all the time!

Captain Joe Michiels (courtesy of Michiels family)



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