

**CNAC**  
ASSOCIATION



# CANNON BALL

**JUNE 2009**

Eve Coulson, Editor  
291 Russell Road  
Princeton, NJ 08540  
(609) 497-0324  
eecoulson@gmail.com

Peggy Maher, President  
PO Box 294449  
Kerrville, TX 78029  
(830) 896-5030  
PeggyMaher@starband.net

William Maher, past President and lifetime advisor/consultant to Madame President  
PO Box 984, Jackson, MI 49204 (517) 784-5603



**KUNMING MUSEUM EXHIBITION OPENING DAY JANUARY 20, 2009**

## **CNAC'S 21st CENTURY MISSION IN CHINA**

In some ways 2009 is the beginning of a new era for The CNAC Association, as the second generation begins taking on leadership roles as well as increasing our numbers and showing up for reunions. We find our group to be not only surviving, but thriving, which has not been the case for most other such groups. Undoubtedly the most exciting development so far this year was the opening of the CNAC exhibition in Kunming on January 20, 2009. This is the first China-based exhibition documenting our pilots' contributions to CNAC's presence and accomplishments during World War II. It wouldn't have happened without Diego Kusak's months of tireless work, patience, persistence, and thoughtful communication with the many civic and museum folks in China. We are proud and grateful, Diego! He is fifth from the left in the photo, preceding page. Our coverage of the exhibition starts on page 3.

Several other stories in this issue of the Cannonball speak to renewed connections and previously unexpressed appreciation for the efforts and heroism of CNAC. Just before Christmas, President Peggy Maher received a letter from the musician variously known as Lillian, Liao Qiyu, Lady Q, who created the beautiful cantata sung by the Miao choir, a video of which was shown at the 2008 reunion. The letter introduces the cantata written in tribute to American CNAC pilots (though she frequently uses the term Flying Tigers, which is commonly what the Chinese used to refer to their American heroes in the sky, even if they were not officially Flying Tigers). Included is an account of the personal history and experiences that inspired Lady Q. The story begins on page 10.

I also have included another of my father's essays, this time about his mid-century brush with culture shock. "Road to Mecca", written by Captain Bert Coulson, can be found on page 17.

This is my sixth issue as editor of the CANNONBALL, and perhaps the job should be getting easier, but I have to say that for several reasons it has become a bigger challenge. I think this may be because the more I learn from all of you, the more I realize how much there is to know about CNAC—and now, it is becoming apparent that there is both history and *news* to be covered, and not simply deaths of beloved members of the CNAC family. I also don't always understand exactly how what's happening now fits in with the past fifty-some years of the CNAC Association experience—what feels like a new era to me may remind longer-term members of very similar events in the past. What I DO know is that it is amazing and wonderful to see the legacy of CNAC extending into the 21st century. In fact, it may well be that as a new generation of people in China is exposed to CNAC's story of courage and competence, the retelling may serve a new and unexpected purpose of strengthening bonds between our two countries.

**Finally, don't forget to renew your membership and make your reservations as we return to the Embassy Suites in Burlingame, CA, for our next reunion, September 9-12, 2009. Further information and the registration form can be found at the back of this issue on page 23. Hope to see you in September!**

*Eve Coulson*

## **An American in Kunming**

Some of us have been receiving periodic reports via email from Diego Kusak, the CNAC Association's Goodwill Ambassador to China, starting late last year, and leading up to the opening of the exhibition at the Kunming Municipal Museum on January 20, 2009. Here are some highlights, beginning with the remarks he made at the opening ceremony (which was televised).

*It is with great honor and humbleness that I want to invite everyone to see this exhibition. The story of the China National Aviation Corporation, CNAC or Cee-Nack as we like to say is very special to me. Because it was a civilian airline in the middle of many wars it never gained the recognition that a military unit would. It is important to not lose sight of the fact that CNAC was the mother of aviation in China. Furthermore, the Hump was an operation started by this airline. The airline and its personnel inspired books, films and even comics through the 30's and 40's.*

*Personally, when I visit a museum in the US not much is told of CNAC because it was a Chinese civilian airline and not a military unit. When I visit a museum in China, I rarely see any mention of CNAC.*

*I grew up in Spain. My father was a Hump pilot. My next-door neighbor and "uncle" was Joe Rosbert, a Flying Tiger. In fact he was one of the first Tigers to shoot down an airplane that was going to bomb Kunming in December of 1941. There were more Tigers living around me. I grew up with a lifestyle that was learned in China. We ate Chinese food and most of our homes were decorated with Chinese things. I heard their version of history repeated many times whenever a new guest or old friend would visit.*

*This is what I am hoping to do with this exhibition. Repeat what I heard and saw from the tiger's mouth.*

**The following article (author unknown) was posted February 2, 2009 on the Kunming news and information website, [GoKunming.com](http://GoKunming.com):**

### **CNAC: The godfather of aviation in Yunnan**

As domestic and international travel to Yunnan increases, the province has been rapidly expanding its aviation infrastructure. What few know is that the foundation of the province's airport network was laid more than 70 years ago by Americans and Chinese working for an often-misunderstood Chinese/American-owned commercial airline known as China National Aviation Corporation, or CNAC.

Founded in 1929 by aircraft manufacturer Curtiss-Wright, CNAC – originally known as China Airways – ran into difficulties dealing with Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government and was sold to Pan American Airways in 1933.

CNAC fared better in China under Pan Am management and began to service routes linking the US, Pan American's Pacific network, and China's major urban centers, first flying into Kunming in 1935.

It was one of two commercial airlines operating in China in the 30s, the other being Lufthansa's JV with the Nationalists, Eurasia Airlines. Runways were hard to come by in China at the time, and CNAC had a competitive advantage with its several river planes, which often made water landings on the Yangtze and other waterways.

War was to quickly alter the fates of both Eurasia and CNAC. After the invasion of China by Nazi Germany's ally Japan, the Chinese military absorbed all the assets of Eurasia Airlines. By the end of 1941, CNAC was making evacuation flights as well as the dangerous supply runs between India and Kunming for which it became famous.

When the American Volunteer Group (AVG), aka the Flying Tigers, a group of volunteer fighter pilots flying for China, disbanded in July of 1942, the majority of its pilots joined CNAC rather than return to the US military.\* (*See Diego's clarification at the end of this article*) This blurred the lines between CNAC and the Flying Tigers, as the 'original' Tigers were now seen in CNAC civilian uniforms.

American Diego Kusak, whose father Steve Kusak was a CNAC pilot, grew up on the Spanish island of Mallorca listening to stories about CNAC – and 1940s Kunming – told by many of the CNAC and original AVG pilots themselves. Kusak is bringing the CNAC story to Chinese museums for the first time in an exhibit featuring articles belonging to his father as well as local collector Gong Kangyi. 'CNAC over the Hump' is currently the featured exhibit at the Kunming Municipal Museum.

"This exhibit isn't about war, it's about the love of aviation that was behind the founding of CNAC," Kusak told GoKunming.

A major challenge for Kusak's exhibit is to clearly separate the histories of CNAC and the Flying Tigers, a name which was given to them by Kunmingers during the war, and the American military units that later came to fight and to transport over China. Most Chinese and Westerners are still unaware of the key differences between the commercial airline CNAC and the Flying Tigers, who flew missions against Japanese bombers and fighters from December 1941 to July 1942.

As Japanese forces gained ground in southern China and Burma (now Myanmar), Yunnan became a critical launching pad for both CNAC supply missions over the Himalayas - a route that became known as 'the Hump' – and AVG engagement with Japanese planes in south China and Burma. By 1942, when Allied forces came to join China in the war, Kunming became one of the major military air hubs of that time.

Kusak's exhibition is as much about the roots of aviation in Yunnan as it is about the turbulent history and politics of China and Asia in the 20th Century. Even while the Allies and the US military began to take control of most of the air routes over war torn China, CNAC managed to survive as a Chinese-owned, commercial and profitable airline. On one hand CNAC was flying under contract for the Allies, transporting weapons, soldiers, war materiel and medicines over the Hump.

On the other hand, CNAC was the only commercial airline taking passengers from Kunming into India and vice versa via the Hump route. At the time, no safer route existed out of China.

'CNAC Over The Hump' features dozens of photos plus film of China, Yunnan and Kunming in the 1930s and 40s. It will run at the Kunming Municipal Museum through the end of March. The museum is open daily from 9:30 am to 5 pm.

*\*Diego's clarification "...AVG...disbanded in July of 1942, the majority of its pilots joined CNAC rather than return to the US military" is not an accurate statement. The truth is that the majority of the pilots **that stayed in China** went to CNAC, but not the majority of all the pilots. Most returned to the US to positions in the military or civilian life that they had prior joining the AVG (for example as test pilots for the new airplanes being designed at the time. The list I give here is not 100% accurate yet, but it gives an idea of how AVG ended.*

*Out 318 men and women that made the AVG in China:*

*95 were pilots. Out of less than 95 original AVG pilots, 10 were KIA and 7 died in other circumstances. 22 of the pilots were discharged for various reasons before the AVG was disbanded. Out of the 56 pilots left, 31 returned to their posts in the US or jobs they had prior to joining the AVG. 20 went to CNAC, and 5 stayed with the US military in China. These are rough statistics. For example, one of the pilots was POW in 1942 and escaped in 1945. Then he joined CNAC. So it is hard to make bold statements about this unique group of fighters.*

*A more accurate statement would be that "the majority of pilots that stayed in China did so in CNAC and not in the military."*

### **Here are some comments on the exhibition, the first three in response to the GoKunming.com article:**

Very interesting exhibition. I'd highly recommend it to those with any interest in history. I saw it last week after reading about it here, and was impressed with the amount of photos and material collected. Hopefully we can see more focused local history exhibitions in the future.

Excellent exhibit. The number 1 city bus will get you there.

Hi Diego. This is Yanyan from Minneapolis. What an achievement you have made. I am so proud of you. The exhibition is amazing. I have reason to be very grateful to the Flying Tigers. I am from Kunming and was able to come to the U.S. to study thank to Stilwell Scholarship. General Stilwell is one of the Tigers. Thank you so much for doing such a great job to remind people of them and to connect people all over the world. God bless you and God bless America!

### **Comments from the museum guest book:**

Thanks these warriors who loved peace. It's them brave enough to sacrifice themselves to help our China overcome the national calamity. Your spirits encourage us to keep moving bravely and to develop splendidly!

Your elders dedicated their youth to Chinese land. Let's forever remember the exploits, deeds, and achievements, which the elders with different complexion did.

Let martyrs' minds get solace/consolation.

It's a fascinating exhibition that you put on. It's like an eye-opening experience like no other. History is a good teacher. May we be reminded and inspired by the tremendous courage, strong will power and persistence of the CNAC as well as those who joined the Chinese people in the fight for freedom and humanity. Once again, it demonstrates that united, we preserve.

Salute to Flying Tigers!

Don't forget history.

Accept/confess/recognize history

Respect history

Improve friendship

Very good, very harmonious.

Heroes in Flying Tiger,  
Noble spirits last forever,  
Chinese posterity/offspring/descendant,  
Do not forget history.

As a Chinese, shouldn't forget them,  
their blood and their minds.

Thanks those American friends who  
once helped China. Salute to them!



Too moved!

It will be very good if can print as brochures and send out to visitors. It can expand the influence.

The long buried history, the unforgettable memory, and a legend, will be came down forever in this red land. It is pity that just a few youth visit.

The sixty years history show again suddenly. It is very moved. Our parents have already left. They told us many stories of that time. Now we see its truth here. It is very valuable. I express my deeply grateful. Exhibitions like this should be held more and often to let posterity/offspring/descendants do not forget its existence and their heroic deeds.

We should remember history and treasure the relationship between American and China.

A historical teacher

I collect three pressure (precious?) historical relics, which were left by the American Air force during WWII. One is the luggage, which was used by an air force officer. One is the lifesaving mirror used by an air force pilot. The third one is a military knife for opening can. These three relics are preserved very well and very pressure. If you need take pictures for make file, you could contact with Mr. Su.

The buried history, the unforgettable historical facts. Should make the youth know how to engrave in their minds.

It will be very great if the language in the movies was translated into Chinese. Not a few visitors can understand English directly through listening and reading.

We should build a memorial which refers to the Hump, Matsuyama and so on...

Remember the history, value the relationship.

There were a few Chinese youths in CNAC. They sacrificed their lives on this aerial "Burma Road". Please remember them!

Long live peace!

No visit, don't know the hardship of the Anti-Japanese War; no visit, don't know the greatness of the Chinese and Americans.

Please organize the airline information into a book to sell or commemorate.

I don't have time to read it seriously but I feel it is very good.

60 years, I eventually see the truth. My father once worked at these two places. After Songhu War, he came to Chungking. Later the National Government assigned to Yunnan to prepare airport. My father left his footprints at over 20 airports in Yunnan and in one small plane repair shop. After finishing airports preparation, my father stayed and worked in ... and worked for <logistics> finance until the Anti-Japanese War success. He saw by himself what the Flying Tigers did for Chinese people.

Don't forget the national humiliation!

Please print all information and pictures into brochure (or book) to make convenience for people to collect, educate and make descendants to remember.

This kind of exhibition shouldn't have time limitation.

Related books should be sold here...

Salute to those American friends who helped China for the Anti-Japanese War.

The friendship between Chinese and Americans will last forever.

Very good. Thank you.

Your insistence gave China hope. Sacrifice and transcendence made the human hero epic.

Salute to those heroic Chinese and American pilots!

Salute greatly to those heroes who fought for justice!

Suggestion: This exhibition can set up a permanent museum on Internet.

Relics are permanent proofs of history and are the development history of a nation.

It should organize students to visit this to make them set up patriotic spirits. Be against war and study and strive hard for the world peace.

Cannot forget history, or it is treachery. Thanks America for helping China in the Anti-Japanese War. Without America, China wouldn't get the Anti-Japanese War.

Unforgettable! Unforgettable!

History cannot be forgotten. But the invaluable treasure for descendants is just that spirit which urges people moving forward and encourages people!

Remembering and passing down history is every person's responsibility and obligation!

I am a retiree. I like histories of Kunming and old pictures of it. Thanks Kunming city government for giving me this free visiting chance.

The history of Kunming makes people feel good.

I am a fresh student of senior middle school. Our history lesson is studying this part of the Anti-Japanese War, and we will study the Hump line soon. I feel much after visiting this visiting. I know what we should have as a Chinese. I am very moved for those who made contributions on the Hump airline.

You fought for Chinese people's liberation. I respect you very much hump warriors.

Chinese and American warriors on the Hump! Today's peace, beautiful homeland will last forever!

The exhibition makes people cannot forget the unforgotten history.

Several decades have past. We cannot forget this history. The friendship between Chinese and American will last forever.

Give back history the truth. Let those who distorted history feel shame!

Salute to those foreign volunteers in CNAC who once helped China!

AS THE EXHIBITION UNFOLDS...Keeping us posted by email....Diego Kusak

Jan 28--Hi, I try to go to museum every day. 3 days ago I saw the Chinese-made documentary. It is called "Fly the Hump" or something like that. I brought it home and I will make a synopsis.

2 days ago I went to request that only our "Dragon's Wings" would play continuously.

Today I went to spend some time to review errors and to see the TV room. To my surprise many people would sit and watch "Dragon's Wings" even if they did not understand a thing. I wish I had a magic wand to add subtitles.

Most amazing, it finally hit me a bit what I have done. I was too emotional (tears of happiness) when I heard Bill, Joe, Gill and others speak in the documentary. It was like I was not alone in that room.

Feb 12-During the opening ceremony, several members of the KAA (Kunming Aviation Association) came up to me. At one point I ran out of business cards. Lady Liao (the same one that wrote the Cantata about Jim Fox and Hump pilots) introduced me to a woman that claimed she was an amateur model plane maker. You know, like the ones I have in the glass cases or the one you raffled last reunion. She invited me to go see her collection after the holidays. I went yesterday.

Well, that was a surprise. I was expecting a few planes bought in pieces and assembled by her, but that was not the case. She is actually a professional modeler and some of the planes were almost 10 feet in length. Furthermore, she was not only not an amateur, but she was an engineer who participated in the building of the latest jet fighter plane of the PRC. The models were outstanding and some actually could be opened to reveal interiors... Wow!!!

Well, another surprise was that she had a 1:1 replica of a Flying Tiger P-40 out on the patio!

After the tour we had tea. She got up, went to the back of the house and came back with a painting. It is a C-46 with military markings. Her master and teacher in the arts of modeling and design made it. Apparently this man is extremely famous in China. Well, she handed the painting to me and said it was a gift for me. I really couldn't accept it. In the end I accepted in the name of my father and all other Hump pilots and personnel. I guess it will end up in the museum.

I have been working with Mr. Gao throughout this time and listened one day as he told his 3-point plan to officials. The goals of the exhibition and any and all future such events in China related to CNAC: remember the history in its entirety, educate future generations, and promote the friendship between American and Chinese people. They want me to take this exhibition to America sometime in the future to make promotion for Kunming.

**This was Diego's closing statement at the end of the exhibition:**

*This exhibition is dedicated to all the men and women that throughout the years gave their lives for the love of China. At times it was for the dream of Aviation, and at times it was because of war. Most important this exhibition hopes to reflect on the spirit of cooperation that exists between different cultures under different conditions.*

*During the 1930's, what bonded Americans, Chinese and other nationalities was a dream. The dream was one of a China united by airplanes. Later, during the war, CNAC pioneered the Hump. War against an unjust enemy was what made these people fight and die together. Whatever the cause, let's not forget that that spirit of cooperation is inside of us. That ability to work towards a common dream or goal does not really need to be a war effort but can also be a dream effort. Let's look inside all of us and in our fellow human beings for that spirit. If we focus on the positive we will find it.*

Editors note: We hope and believe that this is the first of many exhibitions in China. Diego has done a spectacular job, unpaid, on behalf of all of us. He has our appreciation but he also needs our support in making connections in China, and gaining access to key people in China and invitations to events that will help him make the case for activities that generate more interest in the story of CNAC. We hope that there will be CNAC Association members in attendance at future exhibitions sites in China. We'll certainly want to talk about all of this at the reunion in September! If you want to contact Diego, you can reach him by email at [diegokusak@gmail.com](mailto:diegokusak@gmail.com).

## **The Story of Lady Q's Cantata in tribute to CNAC Pilots**

*The following is a letter emailed to Peggy Maher from Liao Qiyu (Lillian) who wrote the cantata many of us were fortunate to experience by video at last year's reunion. Note bene: the Chinese used the term "Flying Tiger" to refer generally to Americans who risked their lives to help the Chinese people, and in this case, it specifically refers to CNAC pilots.*

Sent: Tuesday, December 23, 2008 9:26 PM

Subject: Merry Christmas, a letter from Kunming  
Respected and dearest Peggy, Valerie and all my friends of CNAC,

It's a great honor and a great luck for me to read the important letter from you, special the time, New Year is coming and Christmas. The letter from you is a special worth and meaning Christmas gift for me. I'll keep it forever.

I'm so happy to tell you that we have held a wonderful concert in the evening of November 30, 2008. We sang classical music, also we sang one part from the scene cantata: Green Path and Rainbow—the story of Flying Tigers & Hump Line. The music moved all audiences. Original my plan was that as a Christmas gift for every respected America heroic veteran—members of Flying Tigers and Hump pilots, we took a concert VCD. But she who is in charge of the editor has not given me the edited VCD. I feel regret.

The program about making a VCD of scene cantata: Green path and Rainbow—story of Flying Tigers and Hump Line has been carrying on. But we met a lot of problems. I hope I will resolve every problems and do it again in June. Believe me all my America friends, special my respected heroic Flying tigers and Hump pilots. I promise I will.

The new year is coming. I put some pictures of the concert which to be my Christmas card. Best wishes to you and your family. Warm regard to all respected friends of CNAC. Happy Christmas!

Lillian (Liao Qiyu)

## **The Creation Process of the "Green Path and Rainbow" Cantata**

By Liao Qiyu

I have known the special names of "Flying Tigers" and "Hump Line" since my childhood.

Flying Tigers was a great name given by the Yunnan people that worshiped the culture established by a group of volunteers from the United States Air Force who were led by General Chennault. They assisted the Chinese to fight against the Japanese during the anti-Japanese war period. The Hump Line was the air route from Dingjiang, India to Kunming, China over the Himalayan Mountains, along which all kinds of war supplies were sent to China from the international world.

The Hump Line was forced to move northwards because the Japanese always attacked the cargo planes, which could not be easily defended. The cargo planes had to fly over the west side of the Himalayan Mountains, where the average altitude is higher than 6,000 meters. The aircraft had to fly along the winding valleys and cliffs because of the altitude limitations for the cargo planes in service at that time. What made it even worse were the strong air currents and low air pressures caused by the severe weather of that area, which increased the difficulty for the pilots flying these ill-equipped cargo planes. Because crashes were frequent, the pilots also called the Hump Line the "Death Line."

Although I was born in a peaceful era, generations of people like my grandparents and parents experienced the anti-Japanese war. They will never forget the calamity imposed on the Chinese people by the Japanese invaders. Among those often-told stories about Kunming people during the war, two of them impressed me the most:

One is about a young mother and her two small children. At that time, there were only four very narrow gates located in four different directions of the city of Kunming. This made it difficult for the people to get out of the city when the air raid alarm sounded. One day, the alarm started suddenly. This young mother put one of her children on her back and tied one arm of the other child to her waist with a string, so that she would not be separated from her children during the evacuation. It was not until she got out of the city that she learned that she had lost the child who was tied to her waist. The child's entire body was gone except that arm! The other story is also about the bombing of the city.

Normally, between the air raid warning alarm and the bombing in-progress alarm, there would be a forty-minute interval, which allowed enough time for the citizens to evacuate. But on this occasion, the Japanese airplanes appeared above the city unexpectedly, and the first alarm that sounded was the bombing in-progress alarm instead of the warning alarm. In a flash, bombs covered the whole city. The Japanese planes were flying at such a low altitude that the bottom of side of the planes almost scratched the top of the trees! The Japanese shot the unarmed citizens with machine guns from the airplanes. The planes did not leave until all of their bullets and bombs were expended. When the bombing was over, the entire city was covered in rivers of blood and littered with the dead and wounded. There were so many people killed in the bombing that the survivors had to use horse and cattle wagons to carry the bodies to the square outside the east city gate, where they remained waiting for their families to claim them. After many days, bodies were still piling up. According to the senior citizens, this situation clearly demonstrated that all members of some families were lost their lives in the attack, thus no one was left to claim the bodies. For a long period of time, many people could not fall asleep without worrying about more Japanese bombings. The scene of piled bodies on the square would return and its shadow would hit me when I heard these stories.

In the memory of my childhood, when my grandparents and parents sat together and talked about the war period, they would surely mention the story of Flying Tigers with respect and gratitude. The Flying Tigers came. They are not only brave, but also good at fighting. General Chennault, formerly of the American Air Force was their commander. The first time they met the Japanese, they shot down nine of the Japanese planes. After that, the Japanese did not dare return to

Kunming again. Indeed, it was because of the help of General Chennault and his pilots that this ancient city did not have to suffer from the Japanese bombs any more and millions of lives were saved. Also, thanks to the Hump Line, the war necessary supplies arrived in Kunming and were distributed to all of the battlefields in China. But this was achieved at a great cost in human lives: 609 airplanes crashed or were lost, more than 1,500 American and Chinese pilots were killed, and among them the eldest was not yet 26 years old. This history should be burned into every one's heart!

One day in the 1980's I was reading a magazine and saw an article with a title of "Are We Chinese Really Forgetful?" The article stated that about fifty years ago, when the Flying Tigers were leaving China for their motherland, one of them said that the friendship written with blood between Chinese and American people should never be forgotten. Fifty years later, some of those Flying Tigers came back to Kunming with strong homesickness for the place they had defended. When they stepped into the terminal of the airport, they saw a crowd of people waiting there with flowers in their hands. These Flying Tiger members thought the tumultuous welcome was for them, which touched them deeply. But later they discovered that the welcome was for a business delegation from Japan, and they were left aside. The embarrassing situation happened again on the same day at dinner. When the Flying Tiger group was seated and were ready to have dinner, they were told to move to another table. The reason was that the nice dining tables were reserved for the Japanese delegation. The article ended with a question: "Are we Chinese really forgetful?"

I felt ashamed after I finished reading that article. There is an old saying in China: give me an inch, I'll give you a mile." Those Flying Tiger pilots fought for us and saved our nation with their blood and lives. How could we treat those heroes like that? Since then I have been thinking for many years about a way to express my appreciation and respect for the Flying Tigers. And finally, I chose the opera.

Opera is the most splendid crown in the palace of music. It is a comprehensive art form, which develops the story plots in the dimension of time when connected with drama, and constructs the historical sciences in the dimension of space when coupled with painting, artistic design, and carving. Moreover, opera has the combined advantage of voice and symphony, which makes the music more moving and powerful. It does not require a high-level of comprehension of a foreign language to appreciate opera. In Paris there are many performances every year. In order to keep the spirit of the original work, different lists of plays would be sung in different languages, such as German, French, Italian, Spanish, English and so on. Most of the audience grasped the general plot of the story from the program and they will also grasp the core of the opera from the special language: music. We shall also notice that more and more people go to see opera not only for the content, but also for the high-quality artistic enjoyment based on this elegant art form. A good song can be sung thousands of times, even for decades when beautiful lyrics meet with a nice voice, they will take wing and fly all over the world.

All of sudden, I felt that as a musician who has been engaged in the field of music for many years, there will be nothing more suitable, more meaningful for me than to create an opera about the Flying Tigers and the Hump Line. So, I asked my mother to tell those stories again and I went to the United States in 1997 to search for Flying Tiger veterans and Hump Line pilots. I also consulted

with the WWII history expert, Mr. Ge Shuya. In 2002, I went to France as an artist for art exchange activities. Unexpectedly, I received a lot of help from the French teacher, Mr. Thomas, who was sent by the French Red Cross. He downloaded a lot of information related to the Flying Tigers from the Internet, which offered many materials that eventually were highly valued for my creation.

During my 6-month stay in Europe I carried one picture with me all the time. It was the photo of a US pilot, Jimmy Fox, who lost his life on the Hump Line when he was younger than 24. He was the only child in his family. His mother missed him so much that even for many years after Jimmy's death she still dreamed that her little Jimmy would return to her. Every time I looked at his young, kind, handsome face in the picture, thinking that he could have stayed in the US, enjoying his youth and comfortable life; and thinking that more than 1,500 heroic pilots sacrificed their young lives to the Chinese victory of the anti-Japanese war, my tears would drop, and my heart could not be calm. This made me even more determined about the creation of the opera, and this became my promise to God.

The Paris International Arts City (Internationale Cite des Arts, Paris) is located on the banks of the beautiful Seine River. I could see the famous Notre-Dame de Paris from the window of the main building, which is the holy place I have known for many years. And the great masterpiece, "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame, written by the well-known French literary giant Victor Hugo, which created a great picture of extolling the merits of human nature via deep revelation of the truth, kindness, beauty, contrasted by the falseness, evil, and ugliness of humanity, made me think about the distorted side of human nature in myself and my generation for the first time in my life. Every evening I would walk there and then return to the little room where I was living, in back yard of the main building. The Paris International Arts Center is a castle-looking building, which was built in the 16th century. A heavy wooden gate separates the Center from the noisy world. Two backyards are connected, which makes you feel as if you are entering the tunnel of time. Most of the time, I was the only one living in that "castle", and it was so quiet that the only sound heard was my own breath.

One evening, as I was walking along the Seine River the breeze inspired me. So I climbed up the narrow eddying stone stairs in the Notre-Dame de Paris to the roof. Bathing in the glow of the setting sun it seemed that I was talking with Hugo. I stayed there until mid-night. And on that night I finished the first draft of the opera "Green Path and Rainbow." I wanted to mourn those 1,500 lives sacrificed for the Chinese people with my singing! I wanted to show that we Chinese will not forget the blood-written history between Chinese and American people with my singing! Also, I wanted to say "thank you" to the American people with my singing!

The war has been over for 60 years. All of the activities for the 60th anniversary have stopped. Is everything to stop? Does that mean that everything will be easily forgotten?

We, the second generation shall continue our hard working to nurture this tender friendship flower. We must let it blossom more beautiful than before. Let it blossom everywhere!

This is my new year's words for my American friends. Blessings!

## Two songs from the Cantata

*Playwright: Liao Qiyu    Music composer: Chen Yong*

### **No.10 Solemn stirring and glorious mission---Selected from Green Path and Rainbow**

I've just received a letter from America  
Written by a mother's hands  
She didn't know her son---  
An affectionate cargo pilot  
Who was crushed on the Hump line  
Fighting Fascist in the frontline  
Every day the dead remain here  
Yet the saddest sight to encounter  
Are the mothers' hearts of despair

Japanese forces have tried to strand us  
Cut off China's only supply--  
The Tian Burma Road  
But at the same time, a new life line  
Rose up from the land to the sky  
By sweat of the good Chinese people  
Simple tools,  
Bared shoulders, bare hands  
Ten airports set up so quickly  
To secure full support for the land

In the air, our bravest of pilots  
Cross from India Ding Rive day and night  
Cargo plane cannot meet Japan's fighters

Avoid attack of the enemy's flight  
Soaring high above Himalayas  
Over ten thousands meters to jump  
So people call it the Hump  
Any time, weather, fierce winds, low air pressure  
Planes get force down, disappear with no sign  
Pilots call it a new name "the death line"

One name is so cold---  
Aluminum Valley  
One young pilot's daily log read:  
" One still misty day,  
Follow the glistening of metal pieces

Along the valley are the sprinkled bones

Of my comrade in arms who are dead  
We call it: Aluminum Valley...  
I'm only twenty, God bless me  
I don't want my plane to be debris"

Fighting Fascists in the worlds' frontline  
Each day we're taking off once more  
Defying death in the face  
Advance we still bravely embrace  
Blood's the bridge to the trophies of war

Take wings!  
Warriors shoulder the solemn but glorious mission  
Raise your arms, highflying wings greet the sky  
Fight for peace now's emblazoned on high"

**No.11.Chorus: ode---Selected from Green Path and Rainbow**

When first light from the dawn softly starts to gleam  
Places where the air smells especially clean  
There is neither rooster nor village  
Bamboo, pines, wild flowers, towering mountains  
Silence enshrouds 1500 brave men  
On the Hump's silk highway of death

Bright glowing starlight,  
Twinkle, shine bright on the canyons  
East's first light, sun growing bright  
With 1500 lives, Glory of great sacrifice

The smoke of the war has now gone  
The blue sky especially clear  
People from here never forget, never forget  
Brave Flying Tigers, heroes flying high  
Brave Flying Tigers, heroes flying high

You gave your all, your blood and your lives  
To write a great history  
You gave your all, your blood and your lives  
To reach great destiny  
To seal the lasting friendship between us  
We remember for all time  
We remember for all time.

## DO YOU HAVE SOME GREAT PHOTOS TO SHARE?



(Photo courtesy of Shirley Mosley)

This photo was taken at a dinner that O.C. Wilke (father of Shirley Mosley) gave for "a bunch of CNAC employees" in Chungking in April 1940 (O.C. at right front in white suit)

If you see someone you know in this photo, please let us know.

The CNAC Association website ([www.cnac.org](http://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 (if you could fly the Hump, you can surf the internet!) Tom welcomes questions and new 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](mailto:pepperbud@dc.rr.com)

We are currently looking for any photos of the cook at several of the CNAC facilities including Kunming. Please contact Tom if you think you have a photo of him. If you have photos to share either on the website or in the Cannonball, or that you need help in identifying, let us know.

Also, Tom just got some new information about A CNAC pilot named Wu Zidan. He has created a page for him on the website but is looking for current information—still living, whereabouts, family...?? Please let him know if you have anything to add.

## ROAD TO MECCA *by Captain Bert Coulson*

An American in India can do quite well, thank you, without the dubious services of a servant, since he is accustomed to managing the little chores of life in privacy. However, inasmuch as native "bearers" are plentiful and their financial demands small, most of us acquired one or more, and promptly received liberal educations in chicanery, deceit and sinuosity, or if more fortunate, in loyalty, faithfulness and devotion.

A bearer's functions reside somewhere between those of a valet and a bellboy and if he is intelligent he often becomes alter-ego confidant. Most of them are Hindu and receive the rupee equivalent of about ten dollars per month, but I by sheer luck and stupidity acquired the best bearer in the world, a Mohammedan, for a stipulated forty rupees per moon, or approximately twelve dollars.

Now, Abdul Abul-bul Amir was undoubtedly the bravest and boldest son of the Prophet in the ranks of the Shah, but no mention has ever been made of how prolific that Muslim battler must have been. For, inevitably, every Muslim in India is an Abdul, and you may scourge him with the whips of Beelzebub, but an Abdul he will remain.

Such an Abdul was my first bearer and he was as well the ugliest man I ever knew. I simply could not dignify such a formidable visage with the name of Abdul and forthwith tried calling him Sam. Now Sam had taken all manner of vile usages from me, including helping me masquerade as a brown high-caste Hindu, to gain ingress into the temple at Puri to see the phallic figurines, but Sam as a *nom de plume* he would not tolerate. Sam was Abdul and neither silver rupees nor wild horses would deviate him.

Sam bore himself with the dignity invested in a respected high-caste family, especially since he had fathered eight living children, all of whom were sons and presumably were little Abduls. Whether he squatted Indian fashion to shine my boots or held my trousers for my entry or bore a trayful of gin and bitters for my guests, he invested any menial task with dignity and reserve. Occasionally I was able to get humor into his eyes, but no smile, so I finally accepted him as part of my daily routine and forgot about his genie-like presence.

Relations between Sam and me were of the best, although he often cast the baleful eye upon me. Each morning while serving breakfast he always examined my eyes carefully, and often remonstrated by chiding me, "Sahib, you drink too much." I could think of no reasonable answer to this one, so finally ended that solicitous foolishness by beating him to the punch. When the coffee came in...Americans must have coffee with the meal...and I felt his critical eye upon me, I would always look up at him quite reproachfully and in what I hoped to be a tone of great reproof say, "Sam, you drink too much!" This shocked him at first, since good Muslims neither smoke nor drink, but he came to accept it on those mornings when my body was reproaching my thirst of the night before. It was our only joke together.

So I called him Sam, insisted on coffee with my meals, was plain infidel and even was given to singing *Rigoletto*, but for weeks and weeks nothing disturbed the harmony of our existence. In fact, we developed quite an appreciation for each other. I missed his scolding advice when

I was up-country flying, and on one occasion he surprised me on my return by saying, "Sahib, you shouldn't stay away so long; I come every day to keep the apartment in order, but it is too quiet." But such a state of affairs couldn't last, and it didn't.

Knowledge may be power, but my learning to converse with this best of all bearers lost him to me forever. I had visions of taking Sam home with me after the shooting was over, and decided I should improve my knowledge of Urdu, the language he used, and he should brush up on his English. So I bought a series of vocabularies and we studied together. On my part, I learned to speak Urdu well enough, but could not read it well, while, by some quirk of learning, Sam came to read English quite well, but spoke it only painfully.

So, after a couple of months, I not only learned a bit of Urdu, but also noted from close association that Sam prayed morning, noon and night, presumably to Mecca. The curiosity that impels us to discover the universe impelled me to wonder where in hell Mecca was, and therein lay my undoing.

As they say in South Boston, it's like this: the damn fool prayed his bearded chin off at Mecca, but never hit the same point on the compass once. Good navigation being good insurance in my business, flying, it worried me a good deal to see this otherwise perfect Muslim propitiating Mohammad's religious home toward every direction but the right one. One morning he would point that uninhabited beard toward Venus, and beat his chest to a pulp; the next, like as not, would find the beard vigorously salaaming at Orion. Or of evenings he would drop his prayer rug on our verandah and send out to Arcturus a signal calculated to start every World's Fair from now til then.

Finally, in exasperation, I queried old Sam in hesitating Urdu. "My loyal and faithful one, is it Mecca you reverence in all your prayers?"

"But yes, oh gracious Sahib, when my prayer rug I spread to the skies. But when standing, I pray only for family, brothers, or cousins."

Out of curiosity I asked, "When I am away, do you ever pray for the elevation of my soul?"

This, obviously, was an embarrassing question, coming from an infidel, but he answered manfully and honestly. "Nay, Sahib, nay. It is beyond my powers and religion to pray for Sahib, nay. It is beyond my powers and religion to pray for an unbelieving Christian; the Great Prophet and his daughter, Fatima, forbid it in the Book of Books, the Koran. But I am a good Muslim, and have given the Prophet eight strong and loyal sons, and might be forgiven if I prayed for you only once."

"Well, don't get in the bad graces of the Prophet over me," I laughed. "But tell, me, Sam, if you were to pray for me that once, how would you go about it? Would you stand or kneel or perhaps pirouette like a ballet dancer?"

"Nay, Sahib, do not jest. Only if your life became a price you might pay, could I pray for you. And I would require your knife to place before me."

"But I don't carry a knife...American Sahibs use guns, if anything."

Sam was a bit dubious about the use of a firearm for such a holy function, but finally asked for an antique derringer I had purchased at an auction. I gave it to him, and hoped he'd never find it advisable to break out the old weapon, place it before him on the prayer rug and waggle his beard at Mecca on my behalf.

At all odds, I was still concerned about my good Muslim's prayer rug penitences; they worried my navigational mind. I had never seen any of his vertical voicing in behalf of his family, brothers and cousins so decided all his relatives had either gone over to the Hindus or had been drowned when the rains came. Nor did I take seriously his promise to bend the knee in that one prayer he saved for me; if one becomes too nervous about his life he usually meets his watery end in a slippery bathtub.



Sam just had no sense of direction and the problem of inducing him to pray Mecca-wise intrigued me. Something had to be important to one in the Orient, and this might as well be it. My job consisted of sitting on my fundament and

watching an airplane fly itself to China and back. I had no love in the States and local ladies were amenable, so this may as well bother me: you can't improve our mind in the Far East; all you can do is tickle the cerebrum with a worry.

A few days later I was scheduled for a short trip and on the return trip I let Sam's navigation bother me again. Had I not encountered a terrific storm, I probably would still have the best bearer in India. But when we emerged from the ice, turbulence, rain and general knocking about, I observed balls of St. Elmo's fire running from the wingtip to the cabin and began to mistrust my magnetic compass. Being magnetic, but unshielded, the compass was open to the suspicion of reading all directions but the correct one; it had a tendency to spin like a roulette wheel. So I dropped down under the storm to navigate the landmarks. Since landmarks can't be wrong, but compasses can, I set the aircraft on automatic pilot, relaxed and had the fatal inspiration.

By the time I landed in Calcutta, I knew the answer to Sam's difficulty in pointing Mecca-wise; I would install a compass on his prayer rug and teach him the magnetic leading to the Promised Land. Since Mohammed the Prophet is undoubtedly a generous deity, we would not

find it necessary to compensate for deviation, wind drift or variation, especially since my Abdul had been missing even the general direction all these years.

So that evening, while Abdul slept outside my door, I broke out my sewing kit, installed the compass on his embroidered prayer rug and placed this holy yet efficient path to glory on the verandah in its customary place. Too, I was meticulous installing so that the needle pointed Mecca-ward, to insure his prayers would thenceforth be on a true course from Calcutta to the holy city of the Muslims.

Next morning, Sam awakened me with the customary tea and "Sahib, Sahib! Most generous of masters! For the beautiful compass a thousand thousand salaams and prayers!"

I was a bit taken aback by this demonstration. In the first place, I expected him to demur at the use of a compass; secondly, I didn't think he knew a compass from a bass fiddle, and further, a thousand thousand prayers seemed a few more than he had promised me.

"But, Sam my Abdul, how did you know it was a compass? You've never shown any interest in instruments of direction before; on the contrary, I believe."

"True, Sahib, but you graciously teach me English, and to read with vigor. So while you gone to China I read your beautiful books, and looking at your maps, and am altogether understanding with such things!"

So the sly old rascal was not so stupid, after all. As I watched him point his prayer rug in exactly the right direction with aid of the compass, I smugly commended my contribution to the happy union of science and religion. Day after day Abdul waved his solemn beard in the direction of the home of the True Prophet, never deviating one degree from the proper heading. He even became meticulously correct about the whole thing, as he read more and more in those "beautiful books" of navigation. He discovered from reading that airplanes are "swung" on huge "compass roses" on airports, the "compass roses" being nothing more than large painted circles on the cement near the hangar. Around the circle are painted in large numerals the various directions of the compass. For example, 90 degrees for East, 180 degrees for South, 270 degrees for West and so on. To "swing the compass" of an airplane, you merely place the airplane in the center of the circle, and correct the compass to the painted "compass rose" by means of dropping a plumb-line to the ground and correcting the compass in the airplane accordingly.

Now in Abdul's case, he wished to "swing" his prayer rug, and to do so, brought in native artisans to construct his circle. The finished product was beautiful, for on the floor of the balcony from which Sam the Abdul prayed, there appeared a mosaic circle with all the compass directions artfully numbered in. In the center, of course, was Abdul's rug. On many a rainy monsoon morning, I awakened from a fitful sleep with the expectation of seeing my venerable Muslim souring off toward Mecca on that magic carpet of prayer. And such an event may as well have occurred, since I finally did lose the services and company of the bearded old patriarch, but not in such a spectacular manner.

But all went well for some time, and I hope Mohammed appreciated our efforts. I then went up-country for a few weeks, and in the press of work, the interest I had had in the prayer rug faded. It was not until some weeks later that I even had occasion to think of it. Having been forced to leave my airplane by parachute over jungle area, I started walking out. After a few days alone in dense Burmese jungle, I began to entertain some doubts about ever reaching even a native village. Having nothing to do but walk and think, I recalled with some amusement, old Abdul's promise to pray for me. He had said he could offer up one prayer for me, if my life were in danger and no doubt the peril-mongers among my acquaintances would have told him by now why "Sahib" had not returned. Pray your beard off, you old villain, I thought; now is undoubtedly the time for all good bearers of Muslim persuasion to use their influence to the best advantage...

It was a passing thought to while away the lonely hours of walking through the dismal jungle, and when I finally did reach my base again, I idly wondered just what effort, if any old Sam the Abdul had made in my behalf.

I was not long in learning the answer to this query, for a letter from Abdul was awaiting me. In his painful scrawl, all was made clear to me.

*Gracious Sahib: To who these presents may be brought, and with deep respect, from me, knowing been to Sahib as Abdul the Mohammaden, I am greetings giving. When I was learning from your disappearing, the great sorrow is overwhelmed with me, and I am tearing the beard with sorrow. So Mohammed the True Prophet from his people make the promises keeping, and I remembering Abdul must pray to Mecca for Sahib when the great airplane not fly. And the airplane with Sahib not fly, and Sahib coming lost. Abdul making ready the Rug of Prayer, and the Sahib's Little Gun. But when placing Little Gun on Rug of Prayer by Most Magnificent Compass, the needle not pointing to Mecca. Abdul, he pray, and Abdul, he moan in sorrow, but needle not pointing to home of True Prophet. Compass Circle, him is good, and Compass, him is good, and Abdul, him eyes is good, but needle not pointing to degrees for direction to Mecca. So Abdul say to Sahib in great sorrow, Sahib must go back to jungle and die, if him receiving this greetings, with needle not pointing proper to Mecca. Mohammed the True Prophet, him angry with Sahib, and angry with Abdul, for Most Magnificent Compass is works of man, and not for prayer. So Abdul throwing Most Magnificent Compass in Ganges River of the Hindus for a curse, and leaving the house of Sahib forever, with sorrow. Abdul not understanding needle pointing away from Mecca, and Mohammed being angry, bending needle away, maybe. Abdul saying farewell, Sahib, and serving pale infidel no more. Respectfully yours, Abdul*

So that's the way it is, I wryly thought. Sam the Abdul had not read far enough to discover, of course, that a piece of iron and steel, such as my "Little Gun", would cause the delicate needle of any magnetic compass to deflect from its true heading. So the needle wouldn't point toward Mecca, eh? So I was a pale infidel to be advised to go back and die in the jungle? So he was leaving me with sorrow, but respectfully? So!

Naturally, the local papers soon carried my advertisement for a new bearer. Wanted: one Hindu bearer, with no, repeat no English, preferably deaf, dumb, and blind.

## CNAC Association Officers

Peggy Maher, President; daughter of CNAC Captain Bill Maher  
peggymaher@starband.net (830) 896-5030

Valerie Kendrick, Secretary/Treasurer; daughter of CNAC Captain Len Parish  
rosebud@saber.net (707) 459-5165

Eve Coulson, Cannonball Editor; daughter of CNAC Captain Bert Coulson  
eecoulson@gmail.com (609) 497-0324 (917) 439-4702 (cell)

Craig Chinn, Communications; son of CNAC Captain Harold Chinn  
cchinn2520@att.net (415) 517-9885 (cell)

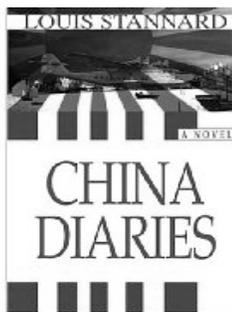
Tom Moore, Historian and Web Editor; nephew of CNAC Captain Emil Scott  
pepperbud@dc.rr.com (760) 832-8213

Diego Kusak, CNAC Association Goodwill Ambassador; son of CNAC Captain Steve Kusak  
diegokusak@gmail.com (831) 601-5484 (cell)

CNAC Captain Moon Chin, Pilot Emeritus  
moonchin@comcast.net (650) 342-8788

Bill Maher, Past-President and Consultant  
Home Telephone 517-784-5603 (after 10:00 A.M EST) Office Telephone 517-787-8188  
Office FAX 517-529-9686

## Looking for some summer reading?



If you haven't yet read Louis Stannard's book, *China Diaries*, you should! It is available on Amazon.com or can be purchased directly from Louis—call him at (919) 881-9647 or (919) 889-9082 or email [lstannard1@earthlink.net](mailto:lstannard1@earthlink.net)

Author Robert Gandt says, "This is historical fiction the way it ought to be...*China Diaries* just happens to be a cracking good story!"  
Learn more at [www.chinadiaries.com](http://www.chinadiaries.com)

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And Robert Willet's *An Airline AT War: The Story of Pan Am's China National Aviation Corporation and Its Men* is also a must read. Inspired by the memory of his cousin, James Salles Browne, who died at the age of 21 in a CNAC crash in November 1942. Look for it on Amazon.com or contact Bob directly at (321) 454-3016.

**CNAC REUNION**

**SEPTEMBER 9-12 2009**

**SAN FRANCISCO - EMBASSY SUITES, BURLINGAME, CALIF**

Depart on Sunday September 13th after breakfast

Hello CNAC Members-Associates-Interested Parties--

Our 2009 Reunion will be held in September at the Embassy Suites, 150 Anza Boulevard, Burlingame, CA 94010. Please contact Rachel Fuller in the Sales Dept, phone-...650-340-0327 Ext 151. Tell the representative that you are with the CNAC Association group and ask for the special room rate of \$109.00 US. Breakfasts are included. The daily cocktail hour starts at 6:00pm and are also free. Please do not delay in making your reservations, as the hotel will only hold these blocks of rooms for so long.

The Reunion will start, this year, on Wednesday Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm. Starr Thompson and Valerie Parish Kendrick will be there to greet you and give you your nametags prior to the event.

We will dine as a group on Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup>. The menu for the CNAC dinner will be Prime Rib of Beef complete with side dishes, dessert, and wine/coffee/tea. Pre-dinner cocktails will be served in the Hotel Lobby...free!

Moon is hosting Friday Dinner at his lovely home...Friday, September 11<sup>th</sup>. He needs to know who will be coming so that he can plan dinner/seating accommodations.

Please mail the completed form with your check made payable to CNAC Association-Reunion to Valerie. Should you find it necessary to cancel, for whatever reason, please contact Valerie and she will refund your deposit.

Peggy Maher  
President  
P.O. Box 294449  
Kerrville, TX 78029  
Phone... 830-896-5030  
PeggyMaher@starband.net

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CNAC REUNION SEPTEMBER 9-12, 2009	<u>Number of people</u>	<u>Total</u>
Registration Fee.....\$ 55.00 per person	-----	-----
CNAC Dinner-Saturday-..... \$ 55.00 per person	-----	-----
CNAC Yearly Dues...\$ 40.00 per member/associate/interest	-----	-----
**** If you've already paid....Please disregard		
<u>Friday Dinner...Moon Chin-Host... Number of Persons</u>	_____	

Mail completed form to:  
CNAC  
Valerie Parish Kendrick  
252 South Main St.  
Willits, CA 95490 Phone# 707-459-5165 Email.... rosebud@saber.net

**CNAC CANNONBALL**

Eve Coulson, Editor  
291 Russell Road  
Princeton, NJ 08540