

Into China's Skies...

COLLECTOR'S SERIES X

Flagship of the line, pride of the fleet, the Loening amphibian launched CNAC into China's skies. On October 21, 1929, Birger Johnson and Ernest M. "Allie" Allison inaugurated service on the line, then known as China Airways; Johnson flew from Shanghai to Hankow; Allie commanded the east-bound flight.

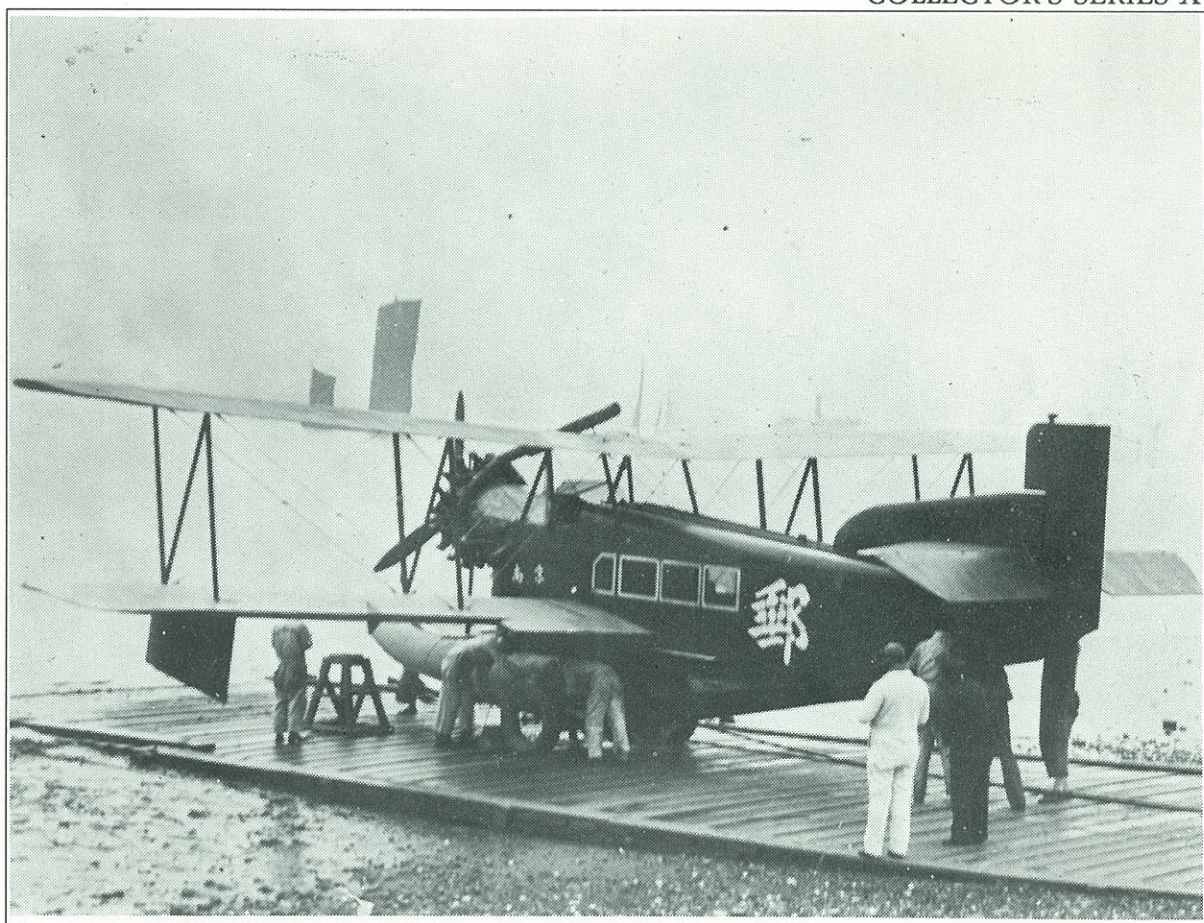
Veteran CNAC pilot Frank Havelick remembers that the plane's 525hp Pratt & Whitney Homet engine was so huge that it obstructed the pilot's view of the river. In order to avoid the sampans, junks, freighters, passenger ships, gunboats and yachts that plied in the Whangpoo, Loening captains had to takeoff and land standing on the rudder pedals, gripping the throttle and the wheel with their hands and peering between the cylinders. Once aloft, pilot and copilot sat side-by-side in the open cockpit above the cabin.

For check-out on the Loenings, Allie, a Yangtze yachtsman, required that all prospective pilots navigate the Whangpoo River in a ten-foot dinghy equipped only with a mainsail, jib and rudder. He felt if they could sail with the wind from the airport down to the main Shanghai business district on the Bund, avoiding the traffic and navigating the currents, then turn and come all the way back, they could handle the bulky airship on water.

In order to secure a Loening to its mooring buoy the copilot lay down on the wing, clutching in his hand a long pole attached to a hook. As the Loening approached the buoy, he grabbed the marker's ring and held tight while the pilot cut the engine; then together they pulled the airplane to the floating anchorage and tied it down for the night.

The six passengers the Loenings carried along the Yangtze route experienced something less than the last word in comfort. Pan Am's China representative, Harold Bixby, wrote of the Loening: "On takeoff the water used to pour in around the doors; and in the air such was the ventilation in those cabins that you had to tie your hat on." For soundproofing the passengers were given cotton to cork up their ears.

Caroline Service, wife of foreign service officer John S. Service, remembers that on a flight from Chungking to Hankow one of the plane doors was tied shut with a string.



George Bell, an old China hand who worked for Standard Oil, recalls: "We were forever having to rescue those Loenings from the Yangtze. When taking off in rough weather, the struts holding the engine would give way causing the propeller to cut through the pontoons."

Forced to land in a rice paddy near Nanking, one Loening was lifted back to the river by well over 100 coolies. The men stretched bamboo ropes under the plane then hoisted them onto poles slung across their shoulders. Singing as they went, they pushed, slid and carried the plane to the banks of the Yangtze nearly two miles away.

Although Loenings may not have been beautiful by today's standards — Allie said one Chinese passen-

ger thought the Loening looked like a steamboat — the amphibians provided safe and reliable transportation for the new airline company. In seven years of service only one fatal accident involving a Loening occurred; that was when pilot Paul Baer clipped the mast of a junk on takeoff.

The Loenings were the ideal planes for the Yangtze route. When the air got rough or the fog closed in, they merely sat down on the river, careering along on the water until it proved smoother aloft; then off they flew, continuing their scenic route down the Yangtze Gorges by air.

Nancy Allison Wright



AVIATION FUELS

CONTINUOUS SERVICE SINCE 1916

Rengo Brothers, Inc.

WHOLESALE SUPPLIERS

9200 AURA STREET • KALEVA, MICHIGAN 49645 • 616-362-3133 • MICHIGAN WATS 800-635-6354 • FAX 616-362-3136

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
DECEMBER 1991 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	FEBRUARY 1992 S M T W T F S 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29		1 NEW YEAR'S DAY	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR'S BIRTHDAY	16	17	18
19	20 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR'S BIRTHDAY OBSERVANCE	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

1992

JANUARY

1992