

Cannonball

EDITOR: Reginald H. Farrar
132 Gifford Avenue,
Jersey City, N.J. 07304

January 15, 1989

The issue of the Cannonball is dedicated to Potty.

He was born Robert W. Potts Schmidt in Cincinnati in 1911 and was destined to be one of that group of unique, colorful characters who went out to China and CNAC. He was one of the early group. He survived the 1937 cut, returned home briefly and returned to stay with CNAC till after the war. He flew about everything we had, checked many of us out, flew passengers from Calcutta to such remote destinations as Urumshi and Lancum not to mention Kuming and Chungking. I remember the millions he brought back.

Unfortunately, he was skipped over and was never management but remained the archetypical CNAC pilot. He joined the older group with the newer, and probably knew more members. As much as anyone he typified the pioneer aviator in the Orient as well as a member of our association.

Potty wrote his own obituary. It follows and is reproduced in total.

REUNION IN OJAI

Its time to start thinking our next reunion. It will be back at Ojai. I might add, the new and improved Ojai Valley Inn. We do not take over the entire Inn, so it is important to have reservations in early. There are 2 other motels but its better when we all are in the main complex.

There is no program yet but the best part of the reunion will be continuing and renewing old friendships. If you have never attended a reunion come out this year. Even if you never came out before there is certain to be some one you knew who will be anxious to see you again.

It costs a pretty rupee but you can't take it with you.

Every year some one new shows up and that makes sending notices and the Cannonball to everyone we know worth while.

AVG-CNAC REUNION
OJAI VALLEY INN
JULY 2,3, &4, 1989

RESERVATIONS

Ojai Valley Inn - 1-800-422-OJAI
Box L
Ojai, VA 93202
\$140.00 DBL - \$130.00 SGL

El Camino Motel 1-805-646-4341
Box 183
Ojai, CA 93203
\$45.00 DBL - \$42.00 SGL
Seniors - \$40.50

The Ojai Rancho 1-805-646-4305
615 W. Ojai Avenue
Ojai, CA 93203
Seniors - \$46.00 - \$51.00 - \$57.00 DBL
(Only 17 Rooms)

MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS EARLY!!!!

If I can return to the fold its time all of the rest of you shirkers come out or come back. Many of us have few or no friends among CNAC, and maybe many of us didn't distinguish ourselves out there. Although to many of us this was a sort of high in our lives, at least it must be said it was different. A fair sized group attend these reunions and through them friendships are formed and maintained. I personally made many new friends. At the very least you will share a few days, and a few stories from a brief interval of your younger days.

The previous reunions have been highlights of the intervening years.

To wives - it could be that some of us are no longer with us. Remember all of our comrades who have gone on to Hogy Taw are still missed, still loved and still remembered. Those of you who lost husbands are as revered as much as they. Your coming to the reunion brings a part of them back to us. Please come and join us!

THE LIST

Every mailing produces a new group of address changes. Below are some corrections:

Captain R. W. Jenkins
5742 Pine Tree Drive
Sanibel, Fla. 33057-2304

Ralph Johnson
14305 Parkmanor Terrace
Rockville, Md. 20853

Alice Knight
9048 SW 62nd Terrace
Miami, Florida 33173

Mrs. Betty Lucas
467 Powers Blvd.
Waverly, Texas, 37185

Dorothea Dunsmore
Ardmore House
Kinnitty,
Burr County, Offaly
Ireland

Hi Moon Chen
445 South Park Ave., #901
Chevy Chase, Md. 20815

Clinton Mangin
2700 Croton Road, 5-5
Melbourne, Fla. 32935

Captain Richard Steulke
Box 698
Bethel Island, Ca. 94511

F. Kurt Shafer
5 Nantucket Place,
Manhattan Beach, Calif. 90266

Robert Schfield
1770 Avenida Drive.
Del. Mundo #1210
Coronado, Ca. 92118

Eldora Sullivan
2034 E. Larpeuteur
St. Paul, Minn. 55109

Chiu F. Tang
8215 High Point Road,
Panama City, Fla. 32404-5217

The list below are recently lost. They are returns from our last mailing. If anyone knows their new addresses please send the new address to Bob Rengo, 9200 Aura, Kaleva, Michigan.

Kno. Tsun Chang
Annie Liang Moore
Captain Robert McCaleb
James Mabus
James Maupin
James Phillips
James Pellegrini
Captain Wayne Snyder
Byron Sherrill
Charles Vaughn
Captain Sidney Wilson
Y Y Sze

Robert Chang
J.L. Hall
Robert Raine
Milton Caniff *Deceased*

IN MEMORIUM

Since I wrote last many who we all knew have flown west and maybe others. They include Potty, Mack, Natalie, Bus, Bondy, Rocky, Bob, and Arthur Young. They have made Hogy Taw the richer.

NATALIE LESLIE

We knew her as Natalie Nickelson in Calcutta, Mickey's widow. In the United States she was Tata Leslie. In Freeport, Maine and Fort Lauderdale, Florida she was known for her charitable work with A.C.S., Red Cross, Central Maine Hospital and so many others.

She was fluent in most of the Far East languages and was ideal as the manager of our dining hall at Dum Dum. She knew everybody and everyone liked her. Near the end of the war she married Julian Leslie, a Captain in the Air Force. They came to Freeport, Maine where they established the Gasco Bay Trading Post. Natalie nicknamed Tata was active in charitable work in Maine and Florida. Her complete involvement with these projects limited her ability to participate in the affairs of the CNAC Association but the Association owes her much in its birth. I would visit her in Freeport and during one visit in 1953 I lamented that we were not getting together. She said "Why don't you?". I did not believe I was the one but I did it. Her list of CNAC along with Howard Dean became the nucleus of the 1st mailing December 25, 1953.

Walter "Rockey" Roncaglione

Rockey came to us from Pan Africa. He had been in charge of the mess at Accra and Kartoum. He spent a short term at the Condado Hotel in Puerto Rico and then came to CNAC where he took over the hostel in Kunming.

On return to the United States he opened the Uptown Restaurant on Com Ave in Washington D.C. It was popular with many senators and legislators. In the mid fifties he opened the Tail of the Tiger Restaurant in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. We all met him there at our second reunion in 1956. After 2-3 years he opened and developed a chain of restaurants in southern Florida. They were very successful. He was a genius in the food business.

Rockey met Esther in Florida. Their marriage lasted for 49 years. They had one daughter Juanita who now lives in Louisiana.

Rockey and Esther came to all the reunions, usually driving out by car. Remember when he brought Rocky Marciano out to the reunion. I remember Esther and Rocky coming up to Disneyland in the 70's when Mary and I visited there, and a weekend in Ocean City, Md many years ago. Everyone who knew him loved him. I certainly did.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

The following are short sketches about some of us pieced together from correspondence and recollection by various of us at reunions and elsewhere. It is my hope that another WINGS OVER CHINA will be printed to include our membership list. To flesh it out so it will be more than just a list of names, I would like to receive a short biography from each member. I believe it might indicate where you came from, flying experience, and how you got to CNAC. Something about that and what you did later. It should include (at least) names of your family. (Hopefully more). The ones recorded below are incomplete and inadequate but all I have at present. If you do not like them send me something to replace them.

BRIAN F. SHERRILL

Job with CNAC - Pilot

Dates of Service - July 1948 - June 1949

Wife's Name - Marian

Childrens Names - Craig (son) - Marcee (daughter)

How he got there (early life) - He was born in Atlanta, Georgia, October 5, 1921

Canadian Air Force February 1941 - February 1942

USAF February 1942 - December 1945

Pan American November 1946 - May 1948

LESTER J. HAFFERKAMP

Job with CNAC - Captain

Dates of Service - 1943-1945

Wife's Name - Marianne

Childrens Names - Leslie & Susan - (both married)

How he got there (early life) - He was a flight instructor in any army flight school then an instructor in a navy program at Purdue University. First heard of CNAC from one of the students. His sister worked in the Pan Am office in New York.

DON McBRIDE

Job with CNAC - Pilot

Dates of Service - October 1943 - October 1945

Wife's Name - Terry

Childrens Names - Bob - Jerry - Charles - Eileen - Jean

How he got there (early life) - He was a pre-war private pilot - wartime instructor and Pan American Airways pilot.

THOMAS EARL APPLGATE

Job with CNAC - Pilot

Dates of Service - October 1945 - October 1947

Wife's Name - Marcelle

Childrens Names - Thomas Edward

How he got there (early life) - He was born in Trenton, N.J.; United States schooling. Went to Canada in late teens to fly the BUSH, RCAF July 1942 to March 1945, CNAC October 1945 - September 1947; CATC October 1947, CATC November 1947 - June 1949, returned to Canada, gave up flying, reason-right ear going bad.

GLENN H. CARROLL
Job with CNAC - Captain
Dates of Service - October 1943 to October 1945
Wife's Name - Shirley
Childrens Names - None
How he got there (early life) - Graduated from University of Oregon, 1940.
Went into the Army Air Corps in Class 41-A. After graduation was released
to Panagra with 11 classmates. Switched from Panagra to CNAC in Sept/Oct. 1943
Got married in August 1945 and declined to return to Shanghai several months
later when called back.

ROBERT W. JENKINS
Job with CNAC - Pilot
Dates of Service - 1943 - 1947
Wife's Name - Nancy
Childrens Names - Jay and Virginia
How he got there (early life) - Born 1919 Binghamton, N.Y. - Graduate Colgate
University 1941. Began flight training 1939. Graduate of all CPT flight
courses. Flew for PAA - Africa 1942, PAA Atlantic Div. 1942-1943.

GEDRIC MAH
Job with CNAC - Pilot
Dates of Service - April 1944 - April 1946
Wife's Name - Ruth Elaine
Childrens Names - Cheryl Lynn and Jonathan Christopher
How I got there (early life) He was an instructor with the British Commonwealth
Air Training Program operating out of Winnepeg Manitoba and Edmonton,
Alberta 1942 to 1944.

R. Holmes, Flew Supply Missions Over Himalayas During WW II

By Dominic Benicivenga

R.S. Holmes Jr., 70, a former supply pilot who flew through the Himalaya mountain range more than 500 times during World War II, died Tuesday after suffering a heart attack in his Stony Brook, L.I., home.

Mr. Holmes, who was known as "Red," flew supply planes for the China National Aviation Corp. during World War II. It was a time when airplanes were the only way to bring supplies to the Allied troops in China, according to Dick Rossi, a pilot who flew with Mr. Holmes.

"It was really primitive," Rossi said. "There were few working radios, lots of bad weather and Japanese fighter pilots to contend with. Flying over the mountains was also dangerous. One January night, we lost over 100 planes."

Mr. Holmes flew "The Hump," as the pilots referred to the Himalayas, 535 times, according to the book "Wings Over Asia — A Brief History of the China National Aviation Corp." He also logged more than 4,000 hours of flight time on the supply missions.

"They never actually saw the mountains when they were flying," said his son, Richard Holmes of Trigg Ranch, N.M. "They only flew in bad weather or at night to prevent enemy attacks. The

mountains, so they had to fly through the mountain passes, using charts and instruments."

Rossi described Mr. Holmes as "someone who was always willing to go out of his way for you." In fact, Mr. Holmes joined the aviation company in the early 1940s to search for a friend who had crashed in the Himalayas, Richard Holmes said. The expedition failed when the group ran out of supplies and one pilot was injured.

After the war, Mr. Holmes volunteered to bring a doctor to the remote Hankow section of China, between Shanghai and Chungking, to save an injured baby whose parents had been killed in an earlier airplane crash, Rossi said.

After the war, Mr. Holmes returned to Amarillo, Texas, where he taught flying. A heart attack ended his flying career in 1960.

In 1966 he moved to Long Island and began working as an air researcher and head of estimates for the Garrett Corp. in Bohemia, L.I., a company that services airplanes, where he worked until 1981.

Along with his son, Richard, he is survived by his wife Mary; three sons, Michael of Sausalito, Calif., William of Stony Brook, L.I. and Tom of Tallahassee, Fla., and two daughters, Patty Deadwyler of Winston Salem, N.C., and Mary

RAY E. GILLILAND

Job with CNAC - Pilot

Dates of Service - October 1943 to January 1945

Wife's Name - Joanne

Childrens Names Ron, 33 yrs, Scott, 28 yrs, Chris 25 yrs.

How he got there (early life) He had a student at Purdue who had a sister working for Pan Am in the New York Office. This is how he found out about CNAC.

ROBERT HEILIG

Job with CNAC - Pilot

Dates of Service - 1943 44

Wife's Name - Lee

Childrens Names Linda Lee, Judy Lou, Leslie Ann

How he got there (early life) He was in the U.S. Army Reserve on inactive duty. At time of hiring to CNAC he was a Glenn L. Martin Test Pilot. Test flew the Martin B26 Maulauder mostly for a three year period. Previous to this time I had received an engineering degree in aeronautics and a mechanics degree from what is now known as the Northrop Aviation Institute. He was also a flight instructor and taught for the Army as a civilian instructor. Joined CNAC in New York and flew over with Snell and Reg Farrar. He was the Co-pilot on the flight.

Reeles + Warren were also on that flight

HENRY R. JOHNSTON

Job with CNAC - DC-4 Instructor Captain

Dates of Service - April 1946 to October 1947

Wife's Name - Allaire G.

Children - None

How he got there (early life) - He came to CNAC with DC-4's after leaving the Air Force in 1946.

PAUL J. LAUBE, M.D.

Job with CNAC - Medical Officer

Dates of Service - June 1943 - June 1944 - Calcutta

Wife's Name - Lavon

Childrens Names - David (stockbroker). Douglas - born in Calcutta-University of Iowa Staff Doctor in OB-Gyn. Edgar - born in Chengtu - China Scholar.

Paula born in Tsinan - Medical Technologist. Sara - born in Dubuque
How he got there (early life) Native Dubuque. Surgical Training Yale University
He heard of PAA need for medical officers in Africa. Served 1 year Fish Lake, Liberia; 1 year Calcutta; transferred with full agreement PAA to Chengtu to join West China and Cheeloo University Medical Staff 1944, under mission suspices. 2 years Chengtu, 2 years Tsinan. 1 year Foochow. 1 year back to Boston for further surgical training Lahey Clinic and since 1950 practicing Dubuque, general surgery. Still going. President Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce 1968. Serve on Board of Directors, University of Dubuque (Liberal Arts College and Seminary); Board of Directors Bethany Home (founded by my Father, 1920). Am summer time river rat on Mississippi, winter time ski bum at local ski area (honest, have great ski area here in eastern Iowa with ski buses coming from Wisconsin!) Enjoy reading Cannonball, Anyone from former days passing through please stop. (Kusaks have done it 4 times).

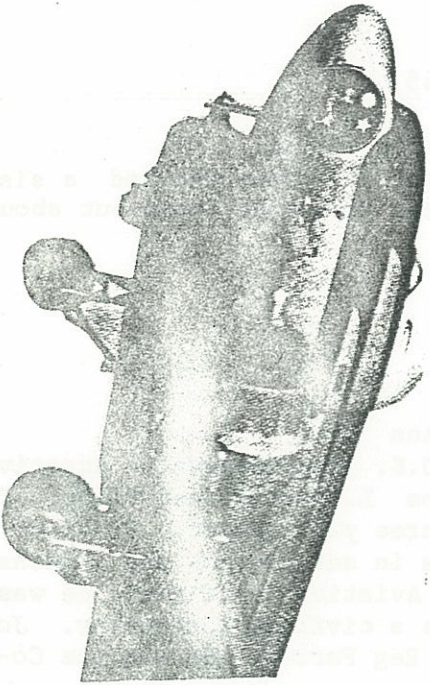
PERILOUS MISSIONS

Civil Air Transport and CIA Covert Operations in Asia

William M. Leary

Civil Air Transport (CAT) occupies a unique place in aeronautical history. Founded in China after World War II by General Claire L. Chennault (of Flying Tiger Fame) and Whiting Willauer, CAT became an important factor in the Chinese civil war. Nominally a commercial carrier specializing in air freight, the American-owned company more often than not served as a paramilitary adjunct of the Nationalist Chinese Air Force. CAT's pilots fought long and hard on the side of Chiang Kaishek's forces, flying troops and supplies into battle, carrying out the wounded, evacuating valuable technicians from besieged cities, air-dropping supplies to isolated garrisons, and performing many other vital tasks. From the evacuation of Mukden to the siege of Taiyuan, CAT labored tirelessly to sustain the doomed regime. And it may well be that the airline delayed the Communist victory.

When resistance on the mainland collapsed, CAT aided the retreat to Taiwan of the shattered remnants of the Nationalist government. There, Chennault and Willauer cultivated ties with the Central Intelligence Agency that had first developed during



the final stages of the civil war. The CIA, which had contracted with CAT in October 1949 to fly arms to anti-Communist groups in western China, began to subsidize the airline, hoping to prevent the bankruptcy of a valuable asset. This subsidy led to the secret purchase of CAT in August 1950. The CIA thereby acquired the cornerstone of an aerial operation that was destined to stretch around the world.

The growth of the CIA's "air force" began with the Korean War. Charged with conducting covert operations in East Asia, the CIA used CAT to deliver guns to anti-Communist elements in Burma, make numerous overflights of China in support of guerrillas, carry operatives between secret bases throughout the Far East, and provide secure airlift for other clandestine missions. The airline's pilots flew without the protection—and benefits—of a uniform. Secret soldiers of the Cold War, they performed their demanding duties with professional excellence, sometimes at the cost of their lives.

The armistice in Korea shifted the arena of conflict in Asia to Indochina. Again, the CIA called upon CAT to undertake hazardous missions in support of American objectives. The climax of operations in Southeast Asia came at Dienbienphu, where CAT pilots flew through intense enemy anti-aircraft fire to keep the beleaguered French garrison supplied with food and ammunition.

William M. Leary is associate professor of history, The University of Georgia, and is the author of *The Dragon's Wings: The China National Aviation Corporation and the Development of Commercial Aviation in China* (1976).

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\$22.50

China National Aviation Corporation

CNAC

Long before the men who came to be known as the Flying Tigers reached Rangoon, a small group of experienced transport pilots were flying a commercial operation in China which had been established several years before the start of World War II by Pan American World Airways.

When the World War spread to China, CNAC personnel were pressed into service to fly supplies and personnel to areas cut off by the enemy from land routes.

Many Tigers and their supplies were flown to Claire Lee Chennault's bases during the days of the American Volunteer Group's service in 1941-42 as CNAC and its men became the lifeline for the AVG.

Early in 1942, CNAC pilots pioneered the world-famous "Hump" route, the last link the world's longest military supply line, which extended from India to China.

It was the world's first major airlift, and it was a pilot's nightmare.

The 500-mile route traversed some of the most treacherous country in the world. Flying with few or no radio aids over inadequately charted areas, under constant harassment from enemy fighters, CNAC pilots had not even the satisfaction of being able to shoot back. Their C-47s and later C-46s were unarmed.

In addition to its regular commercial operations, CNAC carried military supplies between India and China under a Chinese Government contract arranged in 1942 with the U.S. Army, which supplied Douglas C-47 and C-53 planes and, later, Curtis C-46 transports. During the war, CNAC and the U.S. Army Air Transport Command carried approximately 10 and 90 percent respectively of the total amount of lend-lease supplies flown across the Hump. From April 1942, when the Burma Road was lost, to April 1945, CNAC made more than 35,000

trips over the Hump. In 1944 it flew almost 9,000 round trips, or 10,000,000 miles, over this route, transporting approximately 35,000 tons of lend-lease, and also strategic materials. During the war it also transported to Northwest China considerable amounts of strategic materials destined for Russia. Carrying 38 percent of all strategic air cargoes on world routes in 1944, CNAC ranked second only to the Air Transport Command, which carried 57 percent. CNAC also played an important role in the Burma campaign by dropping food to Chinese expeditionary forces, evacuating besieged Chinese and British troops, and supplying the Ledo Road project with men, equipment, medical supplies, and food. Between October 22, 1944, and January 21, 1945, it made 523 trips, dropping 1,836,970 pounds of rice to road-builders.

To fill their ranks, CNAC added many Tiger pilots to their number when the AVG was disbanded, as well as other commercial pilots recruited in the United States and China. Some of the new pilots never had flown anything bigger than a Cub. Most of them never had been at the controls of multi-engine equipment nor were they familiar with instrument flying.

Now they were called upon to fly day and night over the world's roughest and highest terrain in all kinds of weather 16 to 20 hours daily. A trip and a half a day was not uncommon for the men. Many of the pilots — the ones who came back — returned from the war years with 500 trip records — and some with as many as 700 trips.

It was a cruel and demanding operation, from which many CNAC crews and their planes never returned.

"I'll tell you one thing," one former Tiger remarked, "those guys had guts, flying unarmed planes across enemy territory, over some of the roughest country in the world in lousy weather, with none of the modern navigational aids we rely on today.

"Without CNAC there would have been no Flying Tigers . . . and maybe no China!"

F. Kurt Shafer
5 Nantucket Place
Manhattan Beach, California 90266

9-22-88

Dear Dr. Farrar,

I was given your name by Bill Leary, Professor of History at the Univ. of Georgia, as one who was involved in CNAC. My father, Albert Thorwaldson, died in the crash of aircraft #70 on Jan 14, 1945 near Ledo Road. I would like to make contact with anyone who might have known Al.

Did you know him? Do you know anyone who might have? I'd appreciate a word from you at your convenience.

Regards

Kurt Shafer

AVIATION MAN OF THE YEAR. Long-time Kaleva Mayor Robert Rengo was honored recently with a Special Tribute by the Michigan Legislature recognizing the "varied and valuable contributions he has made to aviation, during wartime and peace." The tribute, signed by Gov. James Blanchard, state senators Connie Binsfeld and Mitch Irwin, and state Rep. Ed Giese, was presented to Rengo at the Gaylord Air Show banquet on July 18.

Rengo's flight career began in 1940 when he participated in the Civilian Pilot Training Program at Michigan State. He became a flight instructor in 1941, and from 1943-46 he flew for the China National Aviation Corporation, where he pioneered "hump" flying and received many medals and citations, including the China Freedom Medal.

"Bob's lifetime of aviation dedication has taken him back to China frequently and the result has been the furthering of good will between the United States and China," the tribute states. In closing, the tribute makes note of the fact that Rengo's 40 years as mayor of Kaleva is a record making him "the longest serving mayor in office in Michigan."

West named to Travel

Hall of Fame

Charles B. West, a one-time bush pilot, was named to the Travel Hall of Fame during the recent American Society of Travel Agents' 1988 World Travel Congress in Budapest.

Established by ASTA in 1971, the Travel Hall of Fame recognizes persons whose careers have made "an enduring impact on the development and expansion of the travel and tourism industry."

ASTA describes the award as the highest honor the travel industry can bestow. Since 1972, 58 persons have been named to the group. They include Lowell Thomas, Neil Armstrong, James Michener, the Wright brothers, Charles Lindbergh, and Walt Disney.

West is now the president of West Travel, parent company of Alaska Sightseeing Tours/TravAlaska and Brennan Tours.

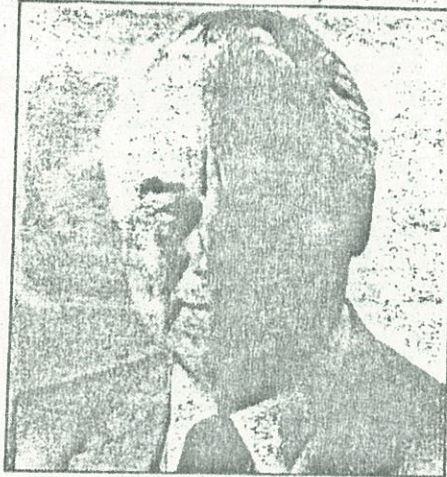
He came to Alaska as a bush pilot in 1945, after flying 153 missions from Burma across "The Hump" into

China for China National Aviation Corp.

In 1946 West organized, promoted and piloted the first air tours from Fairbanks to Nome and Kotzebue and started a company called Arctic Alaska Tours that developed the first post-war tour programs to bring Lower 48 travelers to Alaska.

In subsequent years he founded Alaska Hyway Tours, now Gray Line of Alaska; Alaska Cruise Lines, an Inside Passage cruise operator from 1956 until 1972; and several hotels in Alaska and the Yukon that are now a part of the Westmark chain.

In 1957 West founded Westours, which he sold to Holland America Line in 1973. Since then Holland America has moved its North Amer-



Charles West

ican base from New York to Seattle. He was the international president of the American Society of Travel Agents in 1969/70 and was named

chairman of ASTA's Tour Protection Plan Trust in 1982. In 1985 he published the book "Mr. Alaska, 40 years of Alaska Tourism."

His present company, Alaska Sightseeing Tours, founded in 1973, operates motorcoach tours and sightseeing excursions in Alaska and the Yukon, as well as yacht tours on the Inside Passage and Prince William Sound.

AST owns 92 motorcoaches and sightseeing vans and two yachts, the Sheltered Seas and Glacier Seas. Offices are located in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Denali, Valdez, Ketchikan, Juneau, Haines and Skagway. The company employs about 200 people during the peak of the Alaska tourist season.

West refers to Alaska Sightseeing Tours/TravAlaska as "the largest American-owned tour company in Alaska." His son Richard G. West is executive vice president.

Nancy Allison Wright

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Seattle, Washington 98160 O (206)542-6023

January 6, 1989

Reginald H. Farrar, M.D.
Editor, CANNONBALL
132 Gifford Avenue
Jersey City, New Jersey

Dear Dr. Farrar:

Names first: I'm Nancy Allison Wright. In line with your comments in the Christmas edition of the CANNONBALL, you might say I'm emerging out of the blue. Although I was not a bona fide, first string member of CNAC, I have often felt as if I were, so closely bound to the organization was my dad, Ernest Allison.

You mentioned in the newsletter that your brief encounter with CNAC colored your life ever since. Although my encounter was briefer and a lot more remote, the same holds true for me. I remember as an 11-year old accompanying dad to Lughwa Airport to watch the planes take off and land, visit the pagoda and even one memorable afternoon chase some smugglers around the field. I was always, and still am, a CNAC rooter, from the sidelines.

It seems to me CNAC's contribution to both aviation history and to the history of China is significant and just now coming to light. I understand some aspect of CNAC will be included in James Culp's public television five-part series on the "American Experience in China." I have some wonderful 16 mm footage of the company's early years the producers have asked to review.

Anyway, this preamble is only by way of getting to the real point of this letter which is to ask if you would include in your next edition of CANNONBALL a request for reminisces of my dad. I'm writing a biography of dad's aviation career and would greatly appreciate hearing from people with anecdotes to tell. Please be assured I'm not seeking to canonize him, so they don't necessarily have to be flattering, just real. I'm planning to attend the reunion in July and look forward to hearing many good CNAC stories then.

Thanks so much.

Regards,

Nancy

Nancy Allison Wright

Editor's note

He has already been canonized by our association. Nancy, come to the reunion

Freelance Article Writer

Biographer

I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in February, 1911. About 1931 I had a ride at Lunken Airport in a WACO piloted by a fellow from Texas named Dee Graham. He was a cousin of my close friend.

In January, 1933 I enrolled in the Master Pilots Course of the Boeing School of Aeronautics at Oakland, California. The school was a subsidiary of United Air Lines and prospects seemed good for getting a job as copilot with United. My first solo was in a Boeing 203. After 60 hours of flying, a quarter of ground school and a private pilots license I dropped out of school to reconsider the wisdom of continuing as the tuition was costly and the prospects of employment seemed uncertain. I reentered school in 1934 and ran my flight training total to 200 hours and got a commercial license. Part of the training was to overhaul an OX5 engine. I dropped out of school again for reconsideration. I got my OX5 checkout and a short flight at a small field in Monrovia, California. Back to Boeing School in 1935 for the last 50 hours of flight training which included advanced instrument flying and some multi-engine experience. The instrument flying was in a Boeing 40B4 and I got a little time in a Ford, a Boeing 80A and a Boeing 247. In September, 1945 I was hired at Swan Island as a radio telephone operator by United. Next January I was transferred to Boeing Field, Seattle. After several weeks there I was offered a flying job with China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC) provided I pay my own way to Shanghai. The contact for this opportunity was through George Myers, chief flight instructor at the Boeing School and his former air mail buddy Ernie Allison, operations manager for CNAC. Allie was an OX5 Pioneer.

I arrived in Shanghai in late March, 1936 after a 3 week trip from Seattle on the President Jefferson. My wife and 2 year old son remained in Cashmere, Washington. They arrived in Shanghai 6 months later. After several weeks instructing Chinese pilots in a Stearman and about 3 months as copilot I checked out as an airline captain on a 6 place Stinson Detroit on the Shanghai-Peking run. The cabin was small and once a passenger sitting behind me vomited on the back of my neck. Among the passengers on my first trip was Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney, a Pan American Airways director. Pan Am owned 45% of CNAC. He didn't smile when I told him it was my first trip as captain. On one of these trips on the Tsingtao-Tientsin leg, normally a 2 hr. 45 min. flight it was going to take 4 hours due to a 40 mile headwind. It was cold and bumpy. About 2 hours out we were over the Yellow River delta area and the unpopulated surface was smooth and dry and my bladder was aching. My American copilot, Harold Brown handed me a note: "I've got a belly full". Without a reply I closed the throttle and we landed straight ahead. The three passengers and we two crew members got out and had a good pee. These Shanghai-Peking trips continued for me until Friday, August 13, 1937.

This was the date the Sino-Japanese war started in a serious way. I was on a Peking-Shanghai trip this day and a little way out of Peking I passed some Jap bombers on their way to do a little bombing at Peking. The remainder of the trip was uneventful with stops at Tientsin, Tsingtao and Haichow. On arrival in Shanghai I was told I would have to take my plane ^{out} because Japanese warships were already shooting up the area north of the International Settlement. Hal Sweet and Moon Chin also flew Stinsons with me to Nanking and Donald Wong flew a Ford there. The DC-2's were later safely evacuated from Shanghai. The next day we four planes headed for Hankow in loose formation. About halfway to Hankow Donald got a message ordering us to return to Nanking. The reason for this is still obscure to me but funny things happen when Chinese generals start giving orders in a wartime situation. So we four returned to Nanking. It must have been a mistake as we started to refuel to resume

our trip westward to Hankow. During this refueling interval the air alarm sounded and shortly about 6 Japanese bombers came in under an 800 ft. ceiling and bombed the airport. I can't describe how scared I was but I tried to crawl into a muddy ditch about six inches deep. We didn't do any more flying that day (Aug. 14). Fortunately none of our planes got hit. We spent the night in a hotel in Nanking. There I made the acquaintance of Billy McDonald and Claire Chennault, two of the three men of the famed Flying Trapeze noted for performing acrobatics in close formation. The next day our 4 plane formation made an uneventful trip to Hankow.

During the few days I was in Hankow instructions came from our American superiors in Shanghai to quit flying and get out of China. These instructions apparently originated with the U. S. State Department explained as follows. Chuck Sharp, after landing a load of bank notes at Changsha August 14 was ordered by a Chinese Colonel to take a load of bombs to Hangchow on the east coast under threat of being shot. Chuck described these circumstances to his bosses in Shanghai by radio asking what to do. He was told not to get shot in any circumstances. It seems these uncoded messages were intercepted by the Japanese who promptly protested to the State Department. Remember we were still at peace with the Japanese until the Pearl Harbor attack 4 years later. August 14 was an historic day for another reason. Chinese bombers aiming at a Japanese warship in the Whangpoo River and missed their target and dropped a 1100 lb. bomb on Nanking Road, Shanghai's busiest street killing at least 1000 and wounding another 1000.

My wife and son were among 410 American women and children evacuated from Shanghai on August 17. This involved a perilous transfer of passengers from a tender to the President Jefferson in the wide Yangtze River in heavy seas. This incident is described by Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. in the October 30, 1937 issue of the Saturday Evening Post. In the meantime I left Hankow for Hongkong as a passenger on Eurasia Airlines Junkers JU-52 and eventually joined my family in the Phillippones. All American personnel of CNAC except Hal Sweet proceeded to the U.S.A. in accordance with previously mentioned instructions. Until the spring of 1938 the airline continued to function with reduced operations in Western China with Hal Sweet and 4 Chinese pilots along with competent Chinese ground personnel.

In March, 1938 senior pilots Chuck Sharp and H. L. Woods returned from the states to revive operations with Headquarters in Hongkong. I returned in June. The principal route was to be Hongkong to Chungking which had become China's wartime capital. To operate out of Hongkong we had to fly over the adjacent territory occupied by the Japanese. It was incorrectly assumed that the Japs would not attack an unarmed civilian plane carrying passengers. On August 24, 1938, Woods on a flight heading west out of Hongkong was attacked by eight Japanese planes near Macao. He ditched his plane in a river and the Japs continued to strafe the ditched plane. Woodie, his radio operator and a Chinese passenger were the only survivors out of 16 aboard the plane.

My checkout on PC-2's happened in an unusual way. Shortly after Woodie was shot down he and Chuck Sharp were off on a brief rest trip to Bali. Mr. Bond got an urgent request from the Chinese Air Force to send a crew to Kweilin (about half way between Hongkong and Chungking.) to pick up a PC-2 and fly it up to the Chungking area as intelligence indicated that the Japs were about to bomb Kweilin. The plane had been stored there under camouflage and the CAF had no qualified pilots. With Hal Sweet flying a shuttle between Chungking and Chengtu there were no pilots around except me. So I and 4 other crew (copilot, radio operator, 2 mechanics) were dispatched from Hongkong to Kweilin by surface travel. This was to Canton and Wuchow by boat and then 3 days by charcoal fueled bus to Kweilin. While lunching at a restaurant in Wuchow the Japs bombed an intersection one block away from us and destroyed all the adjacent buildings. Otherwise the trip to Kweilin was without incident. We test flew the plane swinging the compass using the directional gyro. The next day we headed for Chungking CFR as we had no navigational radio, had to return to Kweilin account weather. The next day we made it to Chungking. Then Ernie Allison who had been retained by T. V. Soong

as a consultant was assigned to fly this plane for the Chinese Air Force. Allie had been eased out of CNAC as apparently it was thought somebody should be blamed for the fiasco of the 1937 evacuation of Shanghai. Well, I was Allie's copilot for a couple of trips and then I was pilot as he was anxious to get back to the U.S.A. After about a month on this job and some interesting trips to places I would never have seen on the CNAC routes I returned to CNAC service as a qualified captain. No more check rides. Incidentally, Allison was rehired as operations manager in 1947 having served part of the meantime as a Boeing test pilot.

The Jap attack on Woodie's plane resulted in our changing operating procedures by limiting all flying within 1 1/2 hours of Hongkong to hours of darkness. In 1939 three DC-3's and three Curtiss Condors were added to our fleet. Our Douglas planes were equipped with Telefunken direction finders which used manually operated loop antennas in conjunction with headphones which gave A-N code signals to eliminate the 180° ambiguity characteristic of loop antennas. These radios were 100 percent reliable and enabled us to make low ceiling instrument approaches. Regular flights were conducted throughout western China including scheduled trips to Hanoi and Rangoon. Throughout this period of the Hongkong operation from 1938 up to the time of the Pearl Harbor attack there were no passenger injuries or fatalities except for two incidents of our planes being attacked by Japanese. Besides the Woods incident pilot Foxy Kent and some others were killed when his plane was strafed in its landing roll at Chanyi in October, 1940.

I was on home leave at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack. The Hongkong airport was bombed the same morning. Within a few days Hongkong was occupied by the Japanese. The DC-2's and the Condors were destroyed but the DC-3's did a dramatic job of evacuating essential equipment and personnel plus 400 passengers. Operations and maintenance headquarters were set up in Calcutta.

A period of CNAC's great expansion started in early 1942 through a contract with the U.S. Army to fly cargo over the hump - India to China. In this period the Flying Tigers were disbanded and 18 of their pilots were hired by CNAC. Among these was Bob Prescott, founder of the Flying Tiger Line. Until the end of the war in August, 1945 CNAC got 2 new planes every month on U.S. - China lend lease. These were C-53's, C-47's and C-46's. The principal route was Dinjan, in upper Assam, to Kunming although many longer flights were made to places on the Yangtze River in Szechwan province. As the senior active pilot I was the instructor-check pilot and most of the CNAC hump pilots were checked out by me. We operated up to 40 round trips a day over the hump. During this wartime operation CNAC lost 32 planes and 25 flight crews. Our safety and efficiency of operation was remarkably better than that of the ATC. This was due to our greater background of experience and our ability to attract more experienced pilots.

On October 10, 1943 I got a message from Mr. Bond that I was to fly T. V. Soong the next day from Assam to Chungking with an early morning departure. T. V. was China's minister of finance and brother of Madam Chiang Kai Shek. I advised that I would pick him up at Chabua, the ATC base, where he had arrived by ATC. I planned a 5 a.m. departure. On the evening of the 10th T. V.'s emissary found me to tell me that T. V. wanted to leave at 2 a.m. and he would be at our base at Dinjan. So it went according to his plan - a 5 1/2 hour flight non-stop to Chungking. Two days later, Oct. 13, there were 5 transport planes shot down over north Burma including one of ours - the others were ATC. This was the first time planes flying the hump were attacked. I must have realized later that T. V. knew through intelligence what the Japs were planning. Later Chennault told me that he was the who advised T. V. to cross the hump at night.

I'll describe one of my memorable flights. There had been a story in TIME magazine about an American military pilot who reported climbing up through an overcast and breaking out on top at 30,000 ft. and seeing a mountain prominently sticking its peak up through the clouds. The name of the mountain was given "Amne Machin". This mountain shows on our Air Force charts at roughly at 35° North,, 100° East. One day in 1945 I had an opportunity to fly an empty C-46 non-stop Lanchow to Pinjan. On the morning non-stop flight Pinjan-Lanchow (by way of Likiang and Chengtu for safety with a loaded plane) the weather looked perfectly clear. Out of Lanchow we headed straightfor the Amne Machin which was about 100 miles to the right of a straight course to Dinjan. The Amne Machin was nothing impressive - there were 2 peaks about 20,000 ft. - as the map showed two peaks both marked 19,988. (chart # 435). The visibility here was unlimited so if there was anything near 30,000 ft. we would have seen it. We continue on our course for Dinjan at 20,000 and about 600 miles later we run into an overcast at 21000 ft. and a little later right ahead a mountain range sticking up into the clouds. There is no alternative except to climb on instruments to a safe altitude. A wide 360° turn put us at 25,000 indicated. I knew this was safe as I had seen this range from about 50 miles to the south and judged it to be about 22,000 ft. We stayed up there until a radio bearing put us back on the regular hump route. Related to this flight is attached a copy of a newspaper clipping from the Shanghai Evening Post & Mercury printed in 1948.

Come September, 1945 with the war over it is time to move our base again. Naturally, back to Shanghai where we started in the early thirties. Operations out of Shanghai became very active - reviving all of the old routes in eastern China as well maintaining those developed in western China during the war years. In 1947 CNAC acquired 5 DC-4's which were used largely on international routes to Japan, Formosa, Phillippones and a weekly trip to San Francisco. Part of our service involved dropping supplies to towns in North China besieged by the communists. For the second time CNAC moved its base from Shanghai to Hongkong. This transfer was done in an orderly fashion and lasted throughout the year 1948, and was motivated by the steady progress of the communists from North China toward the south. In early 1949 our trips to Shanghai were terminated.

CNAC operations out of Hongkong proceeded smoothly until one day in early/1949. The Chinese personnel had been having secret meetings and the consensus was to switch loyalties from Chiang Kai Shek to Mao Tse Tung. There were 10 regularly scheduled flights with everything normal up to the time to load passengers for a flight to Kunming, Taiwan or wherever. These passengers were told their flights were cancelled. The 10, planes, all DC-3's or C-47's took off for Peking loaded with key personnel and equipment. Of course, all crew members were Chinese. We had 15 Chinese captains at the time. CNAC as a functioning airline ceased forever.

All of us Americans were there in Hongkong with nothing to do. The airline property including about 70 CNAC planes became a matter of litigation hinging on which was the government of China - the Nationalists of the communists. The Hongkong court decided in favor of the communists but this decision was appealed and reversed about 3 years later. The American personnel were given termination notices effective December 31, 1949 with 30 days more salary plus transportation expenses to the U.S. for employees and family members. I gave Mary Margaret power of attorney to collect the \$6500 due me and left in Jnauary, 1950 for Burma to join some former colleagues who had started a freight airline there.

One of the founders of this Burma operation, Jim Maupin, had endeared himself to the Indonesians by making some flights between Burma and Jogjakarta, Java running the Dutch blockade while the Indonesians were having a little civil war with the Dutch in their struggle for independence. Their independence was soon achieved peacefully with the help of United Nations. By June, 1950 with Maupin as my boss I was in Java as senior pilot of the air transport division of the Indonesian Air Force. Mary Margaret and my son Bob, then 4, joined me in a pleasant home in Bandung which has a delightful climate at 2800 ft. elevation. My son Louie, then 16, learned to fly in a Piper Cub - cost \$2 per hour for plane and instructor. Louie now flies helicopters for Weyerhaeuser after service in the Air Force including a tour in Vietnam. I flew to all parts of Indonesia in C-47's and also did a little flying in PB-Y's and B-25's. In 1953 I got a DC-3 Air Transport Rating from an American F.A.A. inspector who was visiting Indonesia. I resigned in June, 1955 thus ending my professional flying career.

Among well known persons who have been my passengers are Ernest Hemingway, Lowell Thomas, Roy Howard, Henry Luce, Madam & Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek.

In the years 1956-61 I was a participating principal in a small fertilizer business in Wapato, Washington. I was employed as an assistant actuary with a Portland branch of a national consulting firm from October, 1962 to July, 1978.

I did no flying from June, 1955 until August, 1970. Since then maintained my Class III medical and occasionally fly a Cessna or Piper Arrow. Got a glider rating in 1973.

Mary Margaret and I visited China in June, 1980 and I had a pleasant visit in Peking with two of the pilots who had flown planes to the communists in 1949. In China we were passengers on a 747, British Tridents and a Russian twin engine turbo prop plane.

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