

CNAC
ASSOCIATION



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When Reg Farrar departed for Hogy Taw on September 24, 2004, just about two years ago, the CNAC Cannonball fell silent. He had edited this newsletter from the beginning, and perhaps it was impossible to imagine anyone replacing him in this role. With the encouragement and advice of Mary Farrar, Fletcher Hanks and Bill Maher, I am going to try. My father was a pilot with CNAC, as well as a writer (you will see an essay he wrote in 1945 later in this issue), and I am pleased and honored to have the opportunity to keep the newsletter going. Please feel free to contact me with ideas and stories. I look forward to seeing some of you at the reunion this year!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eve", followed by a horizontal line.

REUNION IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER!

I'm told that the early responses predict a great turnout for the reunion in San Francisco this year, September 28-October 1, 2006.

The 90 Plus Club has 5 members this year...Harold Chin (94), Moon Chin (93), Robert Sherwood (92), Dick Rossi (91) and Pete Goutiere, who will be celebrating his 91st birthday AT the reunion.

TRIBUTE TO REG FARRAR

Because some of you are new or may not have read these before, here is Reg's farewell to CNAC, as well as a note from his family and a recent letter of commendation written by President Bill Maher.

Over the years since its founding in May 1954, it has been an honor and a privilege to have served the Association just as one of the founders, its Secretary and finally as the editor of this newsletter, the CNAC Cannonball.

Like many of you, my time in CNAC flavored my life forever. It led me to strange and interesting lands and to some of the greatest people one could have ever known and ultimately, to meet and marry my wife Mary who has been a helpmate in these mailings, my friend and the mother of our children.

I hope a book will be written about us someday and we all will be remembered, that these Cannonballs I sent you (and hopefully, Maher saved!) will be used to help CNAC. I cannot predict whether this newsletter will be continued. I hope it will be. In the past I have said it was a cornball, but at any rate, it has been a ball.

Reg Farrar, Editor

It may be that some of you weren't informed of Doc's passing until now. I remember meeting many of you for the first time in 1964 with Reg, and later, working for Pan American in NYC. Reg so enjoyed the reunions, putting together the Cannonball, and making the banner that is hung at each reunion. Our family and I thank CNAC and Captain Bill Maher for the wonderful wreath, which we carried from New Jersey to the grave site in Maine. Also, thank you Captain and Mrs. Bowles for coming to the church and repast in New Jersey. It was very kind of you to travel so far in such stormy weather. It meant a lot to us. Later, at the repast, a giant rainbow spanned the beach from north to south where we all were. Someone said it was Reg, and things would be OK. Please keep the organization going. God Bless you all. *Mary Farrar, for the Farrar family*

(Mary is sorry she won't be able to come to this year's reunion, but she promises to come next year! And she'd love to hear from CNAC friends in the meantime, at 319 Euclid Ave., Loch Arbour, NJ 07711)



CHINA NATIONAL AVIATION CORPORATION ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 984
Jackson, MI 49204

W.J. MAHER
President

HQ AFPC/DPPPRA
550 C Street West Ste 12
Randolf AFB, TX, 78150-4714

RE: Reginald Farrar M.D.
(CNAC Flight Surgeon)

To whom it may concern:

Dr. Farrar was hired by Pan American Airways in April of 1944 to serve with China National Airways in Calcutta, India. From April 1944 to July of 1945, his duties also took him to Dinjan in the Assam Valley of India as well as Kunming, China. He, along with Dr. Richards, were always there for the CNAC employees, treating many ailments foreign to Americans but endemic to the far east.

In view of the above, I believe Dr. Farrar, as a former member of China National Aviation Corp. , ATC Group, is entitled to a discharge from the Army Air Force. Additionally, I believe he is entitled to the World War II Victory Medal, and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with three Bronze Stars. This recognition will have to be awarded post-humously, as he passed away in September 2004.

Dr. Farrar not only served with us in India, but also organized the CNAC Association as well as publishing our newsletter from 1954 until the time of his death. Dr. Farrar was highly regarded by the members of the Association, having always made himself available for consultation regarding their problems and ailments for over sixty years.

In recognition of his service in India and his contributions to the success of the China National Aviation Corporation Association, it is my pleasure to recommend him for a discharge from the Army Air Force, and for the awards and decorations that he is entitled to.

Presentations of awards/decorations should be made to his widow, Mary Farrar, and family.

Sincerely,


W. J. Maher

President,

China National Aviation Corporation Association.

Mary Farrar
319 Euclid
Lock Arbour, NJ, 07711
(732) 531-4071

August 20, 1948

Report of Accident - XT-143 China National Aviation Corp.

On Monday, August 16, we departed Rangoon to make a round trip (to) Myitkyna and return. The trip to Myitkyna was fairly uneventful, being contact from Mandalay to Bhamo, where it was necessary to proceed on instruments because of low visibility and ceiling. Near Myitkyna we were again contact and able to make a VFR descent to Myitkyna.

On the ground we checked our remaining fuel at 455 gals., which gave us an estimated hour and fifteen minutes reserve, overhead Rangoon. But, because of the weather at Bhamo, I elected to return direct to Rangoon with no (fuel) stops.

We climbed on course for Mandalay, leveling off at 10,000 feet. Our load consisted of thirty Kachin troops with equipment. We were on top most of the way to Mandalay. Through occasional breaks (in the undercast) we had established our drift at 5 degrees left, and over Mandalay our groundspeed was checked at 165 mph. We headed South on 185 degrees and were soon on instruments again. Mandalay was the last ground fix we received. Estimating an hour out from Rangoon, the ADF and Bendix were tuned to Mingaladon homer with no result. This was further checked at 15 minute intervals, with no success. Fifteen minutes before our ETO, I saw a break and descended contact, trying at the same time to contact Mingaladon tower. At 5-600 feet we again headed South, remaining contact and looking for landmarks. The visibility was variable from 1/2 to 2 miles in rain. With our ETO up I began searching East and West for landmarks, at the same time gradually working South. After 20 minutes of this I headed due South, intending to pick up the Rangoon River on the coast and follow it up to Rangoon. Upon reaching the Coast, we turned left and followed the beach in a northeasterly direction for about 10 minutes. Having found nothing in this time, and remembering the left drift, I turned and we followed the coastline Southwest for approximately 30 minutes. During this time was my intention to land on the beach in the event our fuel supply was exhausted. We then came to the mouth of a large river, where the trees came right down to water's edge.

At this point, the left engine (which had been) running on the left auxiliary tank quit and would not start on the left main tank. We proceeded with the left engine on the right main tank and the right engine on the right auxiliary tank, both gauges of which were too low to read. Although certain that we were not on the Rangoon River, there was no choice but to proceed inland and look for a suitable place to land. The passengers were instructed to fasten their seat belts tightly and the flight (radio) operator sent a message to the effect that we were forced to land.

About 20 miles inland, we spotted a marsh near a bend in the river. The landing was accomplished in this marsh with the gear up, half flaps, and the top hatch removed.

Switches were out at the time of impact. The ship slid for about 100 yards and came to a relatively gentle stop. There was no threat of fire. The flight (radio) operator then sent a report saying that we had successfully landed and there were no injuries to passengers or crew.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this is a true account of the accident, including all contributing factors.

(signed) A. Wilson

Sept. 12, 1948

EVENTS SUBSEQUENT TO THE FORCED LANDING OF XT-143

After our forced landing in the marsh, the passengers (Kachin Troopers) were notified of our predicament, as they had been under the impression that we had landed at Rangoon. Within about thirty minutes, some curious villagers arrived at the ship and were engaged in conversation by the Kachins. From this we learned that the nearest large town was Moulmeingyen, and the batteries were turned on long enough for the radio operator (Mr. T.H. Ma) to send a message saying that we would proceed there the following morning. In the meantime, our passengers had sent the local people back to their village (Myaungbintha) to bring us some food. They returned about 9:00 P.M. with large pails of curry and rice. We all remained in the aircraft over night, as comfortably as possible.

The following morning we were visited by a man from another nearby village, Thaye-Chong. This village was inhabited largely by Karens, hill people from north Burma who had migrated to the Irawaddy delta many years previous, but who still maintain their tribal identity and remain aloof from political matters. This gentleman informed us that town of Moulmeingyun was occupied by Communists, (and) that Communist troops were within three miles of us. We were all welcome in his village.

It had been my intention to remain with the ship until located by search planes from Rangoon, or at least to relegate a guard before leaving it, but with the immanence of insurgent forces there was no choice but to abandon it.

While the Kachin troops were preparing their gear for departure, the radio operator sent a message in the blind telling of our change in plans and eventual intention of proceeding to Myaungmya. He was unable to receive acknowledgment of the message and it was apparently never received. Probably due to the low output of the ship's batteries.

We walked a short distance through the marsh and were transported across a river in small canoes, where it was necessary to walk again. The underfooting was all of viscous mud, and after a struggle, we followed the example of the Kachins, who were carrying their shoes and walking barefoot.

The village of Thaye Chong was situated about two miles from the site of our forced landing. Upon arrival there we were escorted to a large, barnlike structure on stilts, which seemed to be a combination school-house and church. There we rested while food was being prepared and were visited by the village notables, including the village head-man and an overseas Chinese, Mr. Chang. The rest of the day was spent in discussions involving the best time of day (or night) to leave Thaye Chong, the best route to take, where to obtain the necessary number of boats for such a large party and other difficulties. It was finally decided that we should depart the following day, pending the arrival of boats from outlying villages and news concerning the political situation through the waterways which we intended to travel.

We spent the night of Aug. 17th as guests of Mr. Chang, the overseas Chinese national who was to be of such great help to us. He was originally from Fukien province, and as both Mr. C.H. Hsu (co-pilot) and Mr. T.H. Ma (radio operator) were from Shanghai, there were language difficulties which could only be bridged by the use of Chinese written characters.

The following morning we learned that the boats had not yet arrived. There seemed to nothing to do, but wait, but the head-man thought it best to get the three foreigners out of his village as soon as possible. It was therefore decided that we three crew members should depart in the boat belonging to Mr. Chang, and send back motor launches for the soldiers from the first village at which we stopped. We accordingly left Thaye Chong at about 9:00 A.M. in a small sampan with two oarsmen, accompanied by Mr. Chang, the village head-man (Mr. Saw Tun Yin), and two Kachin troopers. The sampan was roofed over with bamboo matting, and whenever we met another boat or passed a settlement, the boatmen hung sacking over the opening to conceal us from sight.

After about three hours, we arrived at the village from where launches were to be sent back for the soldiers, only to find it in Communist hands. We accordingly pushed on, traveling upstream and as nearly as could be judged in the twisting waterways, in a generally North-northwesterly direction. In late afternoon we stopped at another small village long enough to learn that the only motor launch available there was out of commission.

Again, we proceeded upstream, arriving at the village of Laputalook at about 10:30 P.M. We spent the night there as guests of the local Baptist pastor, who was also prominent in the Karen National Union. Laputalook being another village inhabited mainly by Karens.

The following morning we were taken to Wakema in a launch owned collectively by the Karens. With us were the head-man of Thaye Chong village, the two Kachin soldiers, and most of the population of Laputalook. We learned here that it had taken us 13 1/2 hours to travel seven miles. Mr. Chang (had) started on his return journey to Thaye Chong within his boat.

In Wakema we were interviewed by the local District Commissioner. The Karens were anxious to return to Thaye Chong for the purpose of bringing out the Kachin troops and it was decided to send a police launch with them. When these details had been settled, we crew members were taken by police launch to Myaungmya, being met there by the District Commissioner and representatives of the local Chinese community. It was (had been) thought that we could be picked up at Myaungmya by aircraft, but an inspection of the local airport showed it be obviously unserviceable.

We remained overnight at Myaungmya as joint guests of the District Commissioner and the Chinese community. We departed the next morning by police launch for Bassein, arriving there shortly after noon. Here we were met by Captain Costello, whose ship was stuck in the mud at Bassein airport. In late afternoon we were all picked up by two ex-RAF pilots and air lifted to Rangoon, arriving there at 1:00 P.M. on August 20th.

Postscript:

[In all fairness, I must give all credit for our speedy return to the people mentioned in the report: Mr. Chang, the Chinese National resident of Thaye Chong; Mr. Saw Tun Yin, head-man of Thaye Chong Village; the Karen population of Laputtalook village, and various officials of the Burmese Government.]

{signed} A.D. Wilson

NEWS FLASH!

Cary Bowles just received the Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award. The FAA so recognizes pilots who have contributed and maintained safe flight operations for 50 or more consecutive years of piloting aircraft.

This is Bill Maher's 25th year as president of the CNAC Association. Not to be outdone by Cary Bowles, Bill is also about to receive the Wright Brother's Master Pilot Award from the FAA. He has been flying for over 60 years, is still a licensed pilot, and still flies. (You will find the letter Bill wrote recommending Cary for the award on the next page. Who wrote the letter for Bill?)

Perhaps there are others who are eligible in our midst? You can learn more about applying for this award on the FAA website, at http://www.faa.gov/safety/awards/wright_bros/

Diego Kusak (son of Steve Kusak) wrote this email to some of us recently:

"I am currently in Beijing. I was very lucky to see and TOUCH one of the planes my father and many of you may have flown in the past. The reason I am writing is because it seems that the museum is changing priorities (or the country). It broke my heart to see the letters starting to peel off. There is actually more deterioration, the letters are jus the most visible and symbolic. Does anyone have a suggestion?"

Diego is may come to the reunion but he will just be flying back into the country on the 30th. His email address is Diegokusak@hotmail.com



ASSOCIATION



P.O. BOX 984
JACKSON, MI 49204

W.J. MAHER
President

Re: Wright Brothers
"Master Pilot Award"
Subj: Carey Bowles

To whom it may concern:

I first met Carey Bowles at American Flyers in 1944. We were sent there by Pan American for instrument certification and ADF training. We were en route to the CBI theater to fly for the China National Aviation Corporation. I soon learned that Carey and I had the same background; four course CPT in college, followed by assignment by the War Manpower Commission. Carey fortunately was assigned to the WAF program.

We soon became very good friends, and this friendship has lasted to this day. Carey, having served with CNAC three more years than I, returned and finished his aeronautical engineering degree at Texas A&M, while at the same time operating a fixed base operation at College Station.

He acquired his ATP and was hired by Flying Tiger Airlines. His superior skill soon became apparent and he rose to chief pilot, having flown all of the Flying Tiger equipment throughout the world. At the time of his retirement he was Senior Captain on 747s.

After retirement, as an EAA project, he built his own aircraft and has been active as a QB. He also was very involved in the aircraft museum aboard the carrier in New York.

I consider Carey Bowles to be one of the most skillful pilots in the world throughout the past sixty-five years, having always been respected for flying by the book.

I feel it has been a privilege to have both Carey Bowles and his lovely and talented wife Cynthia as my friends.

Therefore, I feel that Carey Bowles is more than qualified to receive the Wright Brothers "Master Pilot Award".

Very truly yours,

W J Maher, President, CNAC
ATP Certificate # 61021-41

HALF DRAGON LADY, HALF GEORGIA PEACH

Madame Chiang Kai-shek (1898–2003)

Claire Chennault, the American founder of China's air aces, the Flying Tigers, met his new boss on June 3, 1937. "A vivacious young girl clad in a modish Paris frock tripped into the room, bubbling with energy and enthusiasm," he recalled. It was "an encounter from which I never recovered," and whatever happened, that "young girl" would "always be a princess to me."

Thus Madame Chiang Kai-shek, half dragon lady, half Georgia peach, and an encounter from which many who should have known better never recovered. Her life is a monument to the power of personality in the great sweep of history. Most people who survive to 105 end up as living anachronisms: their world dies long before they do. But even as a frail centenarian taking her walks in Central Park, unnoticed by joggers and tourists, Soong Mei-ling had the satisfaction of knowing that geopolitically speaking, we live in a world shaped in part by her extraordinary character.

Bad news comes in threes, and so for the most part did Madame Chiang. She lived in three centuries. She was one of only three women to wield real power in modern China: Ci Xi, the former concubine turned Empress Dowager in the final years of the Qing dynasty; Madame Mao, who was jailed shortly after the death of her husband and killed herself in 1991; and in between, and on a different scale, Madame Chiang. She was one of three sisters, of whom it was said, "One loved power, one loved money, one loved China." Mei-ling was the first; she did love power, though in the objective sense she never had a lot of it. But America so loved her that it treated her as if she did.

And so, in the most remarkable of Madame Chiang's threesomes, China was invited to participate with Britain and America in the 1943 Cairo Conference. Roosevelt was insistent that the Chiangs be invited; Churchill thought it preposterous to pretend that General

Chiang's China was—along with Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union—one of the Big Four world powers; its presence at the conference was "an absolute farce." The reason for this difference of opinion was simple: Churchill had never met Madame Chiang;

POST
MORTEM

**MARK
STEYN**

Roosevelt had. Indeed, after visiting with Mei-ling in New York earlier that year, Eleanor Roosevelt announced that she wanted to "take care of her as if she had been my own daughter" and promptly moved her into the White House, which didn't give Churchill a lot of room for maneuver.

Nonetheless, the British Prime Minister's judgment was the correct one, and the languid old Asia hands at the Foreign Office were calling America's man "General Cash My-cheque" long before Washington noticed how much of the billions it had lavished on his country had gotten hoovered up by the generalissimo's near and dear. In fairness to Chiang, a lot of the money ended up in the hands of his wife's family, who were already fabulously wealthy. Mei-ling's father, Charlie Soong, got rich as a Bible salesman in China and then helped bankroll General Sun Yat-sen's 1911 revolution. He had his children educated in the United States, and the girls went to Wesleyan College, in Macon, Georgia. By the time Mei-ling advanced to Wellesley, her English had acquired a southern lilt. The sisters were said to be the first Chinese girls to go to college in America.

Three decades later she became the first Chinese and only the second woman to address Congress. On a prolonged visit in 1943 she enchanted everyone—the Roosevelts, the Republicans, the Hollywood Committee to Receive Madame Chiang Kai-shek (Rita Hayworth, Ginger Rogers, Shirley Temple, and others), an audience of 20,000 at

Madison Square Garden, and one of 30,000 at the Hollywood Bowl. Had America been an imperial power, Madame Chiang would have been one of a type. The annals of British colonialism are strewn with exotic figures—Indian maharajahs and African princes—who would have recognized Madame Chiang's ornately convoluted English as she denounced the "convulsions and perverid paroxysms" of the Cultural Revolution or the "dastardly Communist poltroons" who perpetrated the Tiananmen Square massacre. But the United States is not an imperial power, so Madame Chiang had the field of Americanized exotics all to herself. Her husband spoke little English, and she sold herself to both parties as a bridge between two cultures. Other than the American tenor who sang that quintes-



entially American wedding song "Oh, Promise Me" at their nuptials, to Madame Chiang East was East and West was West, and hardly e'er the twain did meet; for all her love of America, she never troubled herself with whether American notions of liberty or justice would be useful to China. Madame tailored her act to her audience; even

the Georgia drawl was variable.

Many consequences flowed from that smash tour of 1943, among them the Cairo Conference, which so inflated the status of General Chiang's China, and (even more of "an absolute farce") the decision to reward the general's insignificant contribution to the Allied victory by giving China one of the five permanent places on the new UN Security Council. Though the British and the Americans had agreed on much in the preceding years, both had their idiosyncratic fetishes: Washington thought that De Gaulle was a poseur and that Chiang would save his country; London thought vice versa. In the objective sense, neither postwar France nor China merited a Security Council seat. But the former was at least a coherent nation-state. Even in the thirties the Chiangs never ruled China, only a shifting sliver of it. A Japanese puppet emperor reigned in Manchuria; there was a Communist regime in Shanxi; the Soviet Union held Mongolia and Xinjiang; Shanghai and other "treaty ports" were garrisoned and run by Britain, America, France, and Italy; and local warlords carved up much of what was left. Buffeted by these various factions, General Chiang moved his court from town to town according to which of his enemies was chastising him least. Chiang's China was unstable; he was never a likely candidate to hold it together; and it was obvious who the likely successors would be. But the Allies gave him a Security Council seat anyway.

In 1949 the Chiangs left mainland China for the last time and took their government into exile on Formosa, recently returned to the Middle Kingdom by Japan. Mei-ling was no longer the force she once had been in America, but her residual aura helped persuade Washington to endorse an illusion: that she and her husband were the real government of China. Thus for the next two decades one of the five vetoes in the UN Security Council was wielded by a quasi-colonial dictatorship of outsiders on

a small, insignificant island. The Soviets were so affronted by America's refusal to cede China's seat to the fellows who actually ran China that they walked out of the council, and in their absence the UN voted for the Korean War.

Maybe some of this would still have happened without Madame Chiang. But it's doubtful that a conventional, locally raised Chinese wife would have so intoxicated an American audience. And the austere general couldn't have done it on his own. In January of 1938 he was one half of *Time's* "Man and Wife of the Year," a formulation that tells you what angle Henry Luce was interested in: the American college girl running an ancient civilization.

In 1936 Chiang was kidnapped by Marshal Chang, who wanted him to quit battling the Communists and take on the Japanese. Eleven days after his capture Mei-ling flew to Xian to be by her husband's side and turned her charm on Marshal Chang; within forty-eight hours the generalissimo was freed. If she'd stayed home, and if Chiang had been killed by his kidnappers, the last half of the twentieth century might have been very different. China, the UN, the Korean War, McCarthyism—the fragile skein of history snaked back to a delicate, small-boned lady of fierce determination. At the end of her life a woman who'd come into direct contact with all the great forces that blew through her country—from the emperors to Japanese militarism to communism—found that the most potent was the one that made her dad rich a century ago: China is once again Christianity's most fertile recruiting ground.

"Who lost China?" America's anti-communists agonized. Nobody. China was never lost. Chiang Kai-shek had never won it in the first place. And if not for its sentimentalization of "a vivacious young girl clad in a modish Paris frock," America might have seen that six decades ago. ■

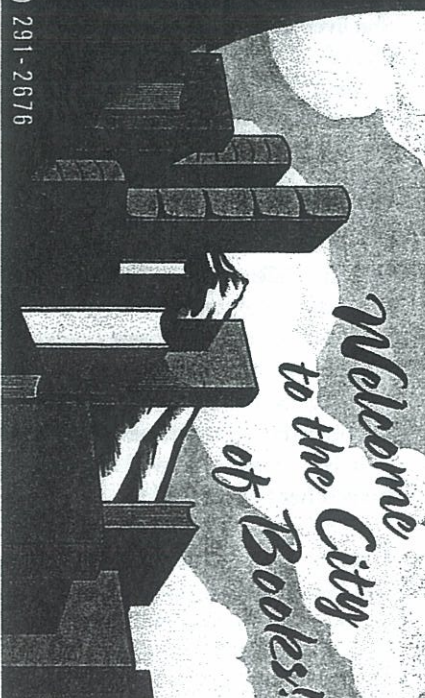
Mark Steyn is a columnist for Britain's Telegraph Group, the Chicago Sun-Times, and other publications.

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BEST OF THE WEB
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END OF THE LINE

My father, Ursel Elbert (Bert) Coulson, was a pilot with CNAC. He and Fletcher Hanks were roommates in Calcutta. In 2002, my mother, Joan Coulson, happened to find the CNAC website, and without which I might never have known about or met any of you. Fletcher contacted me after I posted some new information about my father on the website, he encouraged me to attend the 2002 reunion (which I did!) and we have had several wonderful visits.

About ten years ago my mother sent me a great treasure in the form of a number of essays my father wrote while a part of the CNAC adventure. Because he died in 1959, he did not have the opportunity to reconnect with all of you, much as I suspect he would have loved to. It occurred to me that sharing one of these essays with you would be a way bringing his voice into the group, as you have shared memories with each other in person. Here is one he wrote shortly after joining CNAC, in 1945:

“How ya comin’, Gents? Glad to be back to CNAC. China National Aviation Corporation...the end of the line for the draft-dodgers; how’s the food?”

Twenty-five or thirty pilots were sitting about the dining room tables of a large plantation house located in the center of acres of tea bushes in Upper Assam, India. The house had been rented for the duration for use as a pilot’s hostel at the Indian terminus of the India-China run. The dining room was large, and served as ready-room for pilots on call, lounge, and central point of interest for poker-games, crap shooting, gin rummy, and bull sessions. In one corner was a large charcoal fireplace over which was a mantel loaded with bottles of Chinese wine, gun and knife belts, maps, canteens, and other odd impedimenta of flying. Over the mantel was a lettered placard: “Do not burn paper in this fireplace; this is a thatch-roof”.

A tired-looking man glanced up from his magazine and responded to the newcomer’s greeting. “Food’s lousy as usual. So’s the weather. Just got back from the States, eh? Speaking of draft-dodgers, what made you come back to this ungodly place?”

“Too tough for me back home...no Scotch, no sugar, no tires, no nuthin; It’s a rough war. Fact is, my draft board thinks so highly of me they advised me to get out of town and win the war someplace else; otherwise they might

have a few suggestions from my friends and neighbors. Home is no place for Mrs. Brown's eldest."

Brown, a tall, sardonic pilot, sat down at a table and ordered dinner from one of the native bearers. He and I had ferried a transport from Miami, and had just arrived at this advanced base of China National Aviation Corporation. This airline had expanded from a pre-war bush-league operation with only a few old aircraft to a large and successful transport basis, with many planes, and over seventy-five qualified captains. It had, and has, a number of bases in both India and China, and in cooperation with the Air Transport Command of the United States Army, serves as a connecting link between China, India, and the outside world. In the dark days when the Japanese had cut the Burma Road, CNAC was the only means of communication between China and her Allies, hauling supplies and personnel over the Himalayas.

But we are not concerned here with the truly heroic work accomplished by the early pioneers of CNAC, nor with the obvious hazards of flying the well known "Hump-Run"...enough has been said already. Neither will flying or flyers as such interest us...more than enough has been written about one of the most monotonous jobs in existence: flying. In all respect to the really great aviators of the war and the past decade, your everyday run-of-the-mill pilot is nothing more than a man who happens to be qualified to do a rather routine job, and who likes to do it...Hollywood glamour notwithstanding.

However, the pilots and mechanics of CNAC were, and are, unique as a group. From the evening I entered the hostel with Brown and heard his comment on "draft dodgers" until my contract expired, I felt that here was an unusual group of Americans...unusual for many and divergent reasons, and somehow different. Unusual in what way? Different in what sense? In that dimly lighted room that first night, I determined to find out...it might be interesting.

There had been, I recall, other reactions to Brown's sally, "...the end of the line for draft-dodgers..." Fighting words? Maybe.

From one mechanic: "Where were you when the lights went out at Surabaya? And Dutch Harbor? Blow it out your Arse!"

From a pilot: "Draft-dodger, eh? What's the draft?"

And another: "End of the line, hunh? The Army discharged me once, and they don't want me back, even if I am still warm!"

Another: "Hell, yes! You can't win a war without mercenaries...tell that to your friends and neighbors..."

Another: "Haven't you heard...there's a war in progress. The Chinese gotta eat, and so do I..."

And yet another: "Slackers, hunh? Wait'll you get an load of that wing-ice on the ridge this month...nothin' like last year..."

And so it went. There were a few, of course, who took the epithet seriously, and resented Brown for it. They were among the few who were out of the States for the first time, having come from Civilian Pilot Training programs, airlines, and private flying. They had personally felt the social pressure against healthy men out of uniform, so had come to China. But this group was a small minority: most of the pilots and mechanics had nursed a stick for the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Eagle Squadron, Flying Tigers, etc., long before the electrifying news of December 7th. They were long since indifferent to any epithet, having been called so many in so many ports of the world.

I had a feeling these men were different in some other respect than being flyers in China...their flying backgrounds were too divergent. Some were grizzled veterans of cotton-dusting jennies and county-fair exhibitions...exhibition parachute jumps and stunting until the guy wires sang "Nearer My god to Thee"; others were so young they had never heard of jennies. Some had been "airport bums"...growing up around cow-pasture ports, working for rides, begging time, fighting for practice hours, learning to fly; some had run rum from Cuba and everything from Mexico in rickety baling-wire crates; others had been to Spain and back during the revolution, or to Labrador and back on sealing expeditions.

No, it wasn't flying as such that set these men apart...it was something basically American, but vaguely out of the frontier past of America. It had nothing to do with shiny super-charged high-altitude jobs or glamour-boy exploits in the air...

What did they have in common, besides being in the Far East as pilots? Oh, many things, some significant, others not.

Background? Well, few had come from the right side of the tracks, but most had eased over in one way or another. All occupations and professions were represented, naturally: they had been undertakers and miners, bartenders and engineers, farmers and bookkeepers, seamen and burlesque showmen, dancers and pin-setters in bowling alleys. There were radio-announcers and ranchers, musicians and cooks. There was an ex-minister present, as well as a refugee from a New York law firm.

Religion? Forty percent were professed Christians or believed in a Supreme Being; some forty percent were avowedly agnostic or atheist and held Rickenbacker in great contempt, while twenty percent had respect for neither God nor man: "It's a great life in the Far East...I don't trust nobody..."

Politics? Over fifty percent were conservative and Republican, with a number of Southern Democrats and many indifferent, plus a few radicals. Age? Hardly...the average age was twenty-six, ranging from "Peck" Dalby and "Hooligan" Hurst at twenty or twenty-one, to "Pop" Kessler who was probably flying in secret before the Wright Brothers went to Kitty Hawk.

Experience? Their accomplishments and abilities were varied and diverse—in many instances exotic. The inevitable braggarts among us found it difficult to be convincing, inasmuch as someone among the pilots and mechanics had either been there or had done it. A few of the younger men had never been away from home before, but most had been around the world at least once, and were equally familiar with the palaces of potentates and the calaboses of many ports. As a matter of fact, the majority had been in jail at one time or another for minor offenses and disturbances of the peace. It was always good for a laugh when some wit would grasp imaginary bars in his hands and shout mock-angrily, "Someone get me out of this ding-dong lousy limey jail—I wanta see the American consul!" One of our better-known dissipates...now missing somewhere over the Hump...found himself in just such a predicament one rainy monsoon night when he felt compelled to shoot the lock off the proverbial henhouse door; a house of ill-repute known locally and internationally as "Madame Lizzie's School for Brides". He complained bitterly that he had supported those gold-digging dames for years, but on that particular night they had refused to work overtime just once, or even permit him to come in out of the rain.

Education? Diversity in educational background was evident, ranging from men with doctorates in engineering and the liberal arts to a number who had not completed the eighth grade of grammar school. Forty percent had at least two years of college or university life, and there was a sprinkling of Master's degrees in teaching. This differential in educational experience naturally led to interminable discussions relative to what a pilot's attitude should be, whether flying is a science or an art, what the blankety-blank hell good a college degree is when the ice hits the fan, ad infinitum.

Place of birth in common? The great preponderance came from Pennsylvania or Texas, but there were hillbillies and city-bred men, farmers' sons and Brooklyn-born, sons of Southern sharecroppers and Westerners. There were a few Australians, and naturally, quite a number of Chinese, most of whom hailed from Canada, Australia, or the United States.

Women? Ah, yes, brother! Perhaps now we are getting somewhere. But the attitude of these men relative to the enigmatic fair sex has probably not limited to them alone, and therefore, not characteristic. As with all lonely men throughout the world, our conversations and bull sessions invariably culminated in dogmatic appraisals of ladies we had known, or did know, or were going to know. Strangely enough, and contrary to the opinion of the bluenoses, sex and its manifestations were not always uppermost in importance. An agenda of the bull sessions might include such topics as "The Ideal Wife"; "Should Your Wife Work?"; "Birth Control and the Church"; "War-Marriages"; "Effect of the War on the Home", and so on.

Most of the men were married, or had been married at least once. One youngster was actually a virgin, in the physical sense, but was likely to rectify that discrepancy in his education quite soon, the Orient being the Orient. But these Americans were merely normal relative to the tender sex, and shared with all men the feeling of some anonymous, but immortal Frenchman, "there is a difference between the sexes; merci Dieu pour l'echange! (Thank God for the difference!)"...

Bert Coulson-1945

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