

**CNAC**  
ASSOCIATION



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Eve Coulson, Editor

Peggy Maher, President



**Valerie Parish Kendrick and her uncle John Parish**

This year we have had some departures of beloved family members as well as some heartwarming reconnections. Late last December (2016) we lost John Parish, in April, Boone Wen, and this past August, John Lee. Though few of us have seen Felix Smith in recent years, William Dill's sons Tom and David and daughter Diane have not only reconnected with CNAC and learned more about their father's experience, but found that Felix Smith is practically a neighbor and have had some great visits with him. And if that wasn't enough, in the department of heartwarming and amazing: the story of Bernardine Bowersox being found by family she never knew, thanks to Tom Moore, Greg Crouch's China's Wings and the determination of cousins unwilling to stop looking for her. We were so happy to have a number of Bernardine Bowersox's family in attendance for the first time. These reconnections add so much to our understanding of each other's stories, since they are often intertwined.



John Lee with good friend Moon Chin



Boone Wen and wife Grace at 2006 reunion

Some timely wisdom from Felix Smith: *This so-called closure with one's passed on relatives and friends seems like baloney to me. I still miss relatives and friends from time to time when something occurs I gotta tell so & so, but I realize they've left the planet. I miss those long conversations with Bill (Maher). His talent for enjoying life was always an inspiration!*

REUNION SEPTEMBER 7-10, Embassy Suites Burlingame, CA

Moon Chin and Margaret Soong, two of our most durable and storied founding members, made it once again to the reunion. Peter Goutiere, who completes the triumvirate, was advised to stay out of planes by his doctor, but "flew in" anyway---via a video created by Chris Bull and Barb Evenson during a visit with him in Katonah, NY in August. Also attending (for the first time) FOURTH GENERATION (are we excited or what?) CNAC Association member Isaac Addison, great grandson of Chuck Sharp, grandson of Carol Sharp Slade, son of Amanda and Kurt Addison (Carol, Amanda, Isaac, and Kurt, pictured above).



Some years ago, Diane Dill Kuban (daughter of Captain William Dill) got an unexpected package from Tom Moore, with information about her already deceased father. Partly because it showed up so unexpectedly, she turned it over to one of her brothers, and didn't give it much more thought. Like many, he had said very little about his wartime experience. In a phone call with Peggy they learned that he had been close to Bill Maher and Peter Goutiere, as well as Felix Smith. After speaking with Peggy, though tempted to come to a reunion, upon learning that Felix was literally 10 minutes away, they made contact and visited him and have stayed in touch. In 2016 Diane and David came to the reunion and were able to talk with Pete Goutiere and Frank Watson, among others. This year all three of Captain Dill's children attended the reunion. They reported that with Billy McDonald's help, on behalf of their father they are close to receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross Award, a huge effort with many delays and seeming dead ends, but a very meaningful accomplishment and well-deserved honor.

## THE SAGA OF BERNARDINE BOWERSOX

This is a good story that just keeps getting better. In 2015 Bernardine, her husband Ken and daughter Linda came to our reunion after having found information on the CNAC.org website about her father. There was a lot of excitement all around at that time over her discoveries related an important part of her history. This April, she met a number of family members for the first time who she didn't even know she had. Her cousin, Lily Liu of Vancouver was had known of her existence from childhood and finally found her. In Lily's words:

*Yes, it is a miracle for finding Bernardine. All my friends said it is amazing, it seems impossible but it happened. I have been starting searching 6 years ago, but no clues. My mother's generation has gone to history, I am one of the eldest of my generation, when my Uncle Bernard was killed during the plane crash I was barely 9 years old. All information I knew is my uncle's name and CNAC. I even don't know the name of Bernardine and her mother, are they still alive, where are they? I read Gregory Crouch's "China's Wings" when the book first published in 2012, but only find the information about the night of plane crash. The first time I came to know my cousin's name was when I read the book again at 2014 and find Bernardine's message at author's website. in the winter of 2016, when in a family gathering, my nephew Sammy said, "Auntie, you are the only one could do something help to find Aunt Bernardine, otherwise we will lose her forever." Thank God, I found CNAC's website and sent an email to Tom attached with the photo of Uncle Bernard's wedding.*

*I have read a lot of stories, documents, books related to Hump airmen during my search. I was and am always moved to tears by their heroic sacrifices. Each flight could be the last one, the Japanese had setup radio interference, or their fighter plane was waiting for interception chase. So, now I understand why Uncle Bernard and other pilots choose to fly at night, in the bad weather, because their planes were transport aircraft, their task was supply transport not fighting. They knew it's dangerous, they have no choice, they kept on flying.*



Bernardine seated center with her newfound family in April (husband Ken seated far right)

## BOB WILLETT: AUTHOR AND ACTIVIST

Here's how Bob Willet's latest published article, "Once More, Over the Hump" begins:

*Last March in Guilin, China, the symbol of rare cooperation between China and the United States went on display at the Flying Tiger Heritage Park. The park occupies the site of a former airfield where in June 1942, General Claire Chennault set up a forward base for the American Volunteer Group—the Flying Tigers—revered by the Chinese for taking on the Japanese bully that had been pummeling them since 1937. The symbolic object now on display there is an airplane, but not a dashing shark-mouthed P-40, the Flying Tigers fighter that bedeviled Japanese bombers. It's the dumpy C-47 Skytrain, painted on one side with the star and bars of the U.S. Army Air Forces and on the other with the Chinese character representing the China National Aviation Corporation, an airline jointly owned in the 1930's and 40's by the Chinese government and Pan American Airways. Had it not been for the C-47s and other supply aircraft flown by those organizations on a treacherous route across the Himalayas, the P-40s of the Flying Tigers wouldn't have had the gas to fight.*

He goes on to tell the story, familiar to many of us, of his cousin Jimmie Browne crash in November of 1942, and the efforts in recent years by Clayton Kuhles to locate the plane. We also learn about the last C-47 to fly the Hump, now enshrined in the Flying Tiger Heritage Park, and the many seemingly insurmountable challenges to acquire and transport it there, faced down by international team of mechanics, pilots and funders. You can read "Once More, Over the Hump" in *Air & Space/Smithsonian*, October/November 2017. You can also find it online at [airspacemag.com](http://airspacemag.com) as "A Celebration of U.S. WWII Pilots—in China"). Thank you, Max Batzer, for calling this to my attention.

As to the activist part, Bob has hoped for years to bring cousin Jimmie and Captain John Dean home. The expedition by Clayton Kuhles in 2011 came close to accomplishing that. This past November 16<sup>th</sup>, a day before the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crash, Bob launched an internet fundraising campaign to support another expedition next year. You can learn more about the crash, previous efforts to recover these men, and the plans in the spring of 2018 to finally bring them home. Contribute to making that a reality at <https://www.gofundme.com/bringmiashome>. You can contact Bob directly at (321) 338-2465 [willettr@att.net](mailto:willettr@att.net). His home address is 1112 Geiger Street, Rockledge, FL 32955

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Contact any one of us with questions, changes in your contact information, news, and if you want to be in touch with other members but don't know how to find them.