



HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

December 15, 1989

REUNION IN OJAI 1989

Reginald Farrar, Editor

Again we met at Ojai as we have done every 2 years since 1954. Initially we never in our wildest dreams envisioned a reunion as remote as 1989 but we did it again. All of us look at this phenomenon a little differently. Some would not cross the street to attend while others cross the world. None of us (except 1 or 2) have lived a life in which our time in India and China did not shine out through the darkness like a beacon. Curiously those of us who by accident or good fortune have exciting tales to tell are those who are the most supportive and come the farthest. No matter what we did or why or when, our reunions have brought together one of the most cordial, varied and interesting groups of men and women. It was a great feeling to see you all again.

The following came to the Reunion in July '89. It was a good showing but there should have been 20 or 30 more. I may have omitted a name or two. Sorry let me know.

Fletcher & Emma Hanks
Robert Raine
Carl Brown
Ray & Joanne Gilliland
Barton & Shirley Hahn
William & MaRY Lee Maher
Glen & Shirley Carroll
Nancy Allison Wright
Les & Marianne Hafferkamp
James & Peggy Dalby
Richard Stuelke
Robert & Andrew Sherwood
Monty & Stella Mantoux
Carey & Cynthia Bowles
Oliver & Rosemary Glenn
Arthur Kunenmouth
Samuel Terry
Robert Schofield
Gerald & Angela Shrawder
Jules & Reggy Watson
Kaye Watson
H.J. & Anne Harden

Robert Bartling
Thomas & Zena Sailer
Dr. Lewis Richards

Joe & Zena Welschmeyer
Felix Smith
Al Odenberg
Mary Smith
Cliff & Margaret Neff
Robert & Marjorie Rengo
Starr & Magee Thompson
Robbie & Lucille Roberts
Jeff & Peggy Weiner
Candice Weiner
Harry Weiner
Dorothea Dunsmore
Reginald & Mary Farrar
Catherine Farrar
Reggie Farrar
Robert Layher
Rich Richardson
Bus Keeton - FT

It has been said that those of us who do not respond with dues or attend should be dropped. To be a member of the CNAC Association as we set it going in 1953 one prerequisite was necessary. One must have worked for CNAC. Our meetings have always been open to our friends but there can be no new members. I have often thought it might be nice if our children might accept the baton. What we did was but a drop to the world but an ocean to us. To pass this affection on to those who individually mean so much to us -- only a thought!

This issue starts a listing of CNAC as we can recall. Much of it comes from stories and memories. Many appeared in the Cannonball. Some day maybe this may be published again in a volume of Wings over China. If your name is unmodified then it may be because we have not heard from you. If what you read is not representative of you or your friends the only way to change it is to write and suitable corrections will be made. The list is not in alphabetical order but to do that would delay its publication. It may not always be accurate but it is better than nothing to a name or a comment. There is nothing as sterile as just a list of names. In this way we want to make them live a little.

The following comments were made by 2 or 3 of us who will remain nameless. I wasn't one of them. This is what I have so send me something better.

Raymond Allen - Oklahoma Indian, Independent, hung with Petach

Carl Amata, Mechanic. Stayed on with Pan American

Bill Bartling - habit of asking "How is your foot?". "You keep asking how I am".

Rus Bevens - ended up as FAA Inspector - handsome. Father was famous old Barnstormer - flew from age of 12. Married a Shanghai girl - but no children. Dependable, unexcitable. Later came to Bangkok and flew for a while. He had just gone to Bangkok. These Thais are great for challenges. He had just checked out as DC4, Bangkok to Kong. No one knew him, crews and mechanics. He went out on the 1st flight as Captain. The Stewardess asked him what he wanted to eat for lunch. "I'm not ready to eat so she fed the crew. There were 2 Thai boys, a captain and operator. They decided to eat their food. She came back and asked what he wanted. He said he'd eat what she ate. They had small Thai peppers, very hot. Brikinus, also called rat shit. He put the plane on automatic. He reached over and got a Brikinus and threw them in his mouth. They thought he'd go out the top of the airplane. "Do you know what you ate?" she asked.

These are nice chili peppers but they are not so hot" he said. There was never any question after that who was captain.

Wife, Elizabeth (Lisa) a singer with the best of them.

IN MEMORIUM

Milton Caniff - died 1988

The creator of Terry and the Pirates was very close to CNAC through Higgs. As many know several of the characters of Terry and the Pirates worked for CNAC. Captain Mack, Gret Murmur and Dude Hennick to name three. Higgs wrote letters to Caniff about the war over there and some of our work was reflected in the comic strip.

Milton Caniff came to one of our reunions as guest and got to know some of us personally. He was living in Palm Springs for several years but the last 6-8 years he was in New York City.

After he stopped doing Terry he drew Steve Canyon strip for several years. Milton Caniff passed to Togy Taw Easter Sunday 1988.

- Charles Vaughan -

Charles "Chili" Vaughan was one of the first. As a young man he came out with Pan American. He was one of the lowest on our combined seniority list. He might have been 30 or 40. He flew the Stinsons, Trimotors and Loenings. He was in fact one of the real pioneers of aviation in the Orient and the world.

Chili returned to the states and Pan Am where he gradually rose in management to become Vice President in charge of operations. He retired to his Long Ilsna home plagued with arthritis. I believe he was the last of the early gang.

- Jeff Weiner -

Fall 1989

Jeff passed away recently. He came to our Reunion in July this year but was obviously in poor health. At this time I can say little about him other than - he was affiable, well liked, loyal to our traditions and faithfully came to most of our reunions. More later.

TERRY

DO YOU REMEMBER DUDE HENNICK? TO GIVE THE NEWER READERS OF THIS STRIP A QUICK FILL-IN:--DUDE WAS A REALLY HOT PILOT WITH WHOM TERRY LEE HAD MANY ADVENTURES BEFORE WE ENTERED THE SHOOTING WAR...IT WAS HE WHO FIRST STEERED TERRY'S INTEREST TOWARD AVIATION...AND WHAT IT MEANS TO ATTEMPT TO SOLVE THE BLUE MYSTERY OF THE SKY.

AS HAS OFTEN BEEN THE CASE IN THIS STRIP, DUDE WAS PATTERNED AFTER A REAL PERSON...HIS LIVING COUNTERPART HAD THE SAME WIDE BUCCANEER-BLACK BROWS, CLOSE-CUT HAIR AND THE SHADED EYES OF THE MEN WHO MUST STARE INTO WEATHER.

LIKE HIS ACTUAL DOUBLE, HENNICK HAD BEEN A U.S. ARMY FIGHTER PILOT WHO RESIGNED HIS COMMISSION TO GO TO CHINA IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE JAPANESE AGGRESSION AS A CIVILIAN FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR FOR CHINESE AIR CADETS.

THE MODEL FOR DUDE HENNICK WAS CAPT. FRANK HIGGS, A CLASSMATE OF MINE AT OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY... DURING THE BITTER, BARREN WAR YEARS HE FLEW UNARMED CARGO AIRCRAFT OVER THE HUMP INTO CHINA -- UNTIL HE WAS KILLED IN A CRASH IN THE HILLS SOUTH OF SHANGHAI...

TODAY YOUR MIND WILL BE ON YOUR PARTICULAR GOOD JOE WHO DIDN'T COME BACK FOR CHRISTMAS... BUT IF YOU LIKED DUDE HENNICK YOU MAY WISH TO SPARE A THOUGHT FOR FRANK HIGGS... DUDE DIED WITH HIM...



◆ The woman choked. This child-ϕ-hours ago, according to the radio, ϕ

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October 11, 1989

Dr. Reginald H. Farrar
132 Gifford Avenue
Jersey City, New Jersey 07304

RE: Just Beyond the Firelight by R. J. Waller

Dear Dr. Farrar:

We are pleased to grant you permission to reprint the chapter titled "The Boy from the Burma Camp" to be included in your newsletter published by the CNAC Association. Since you are distributing it gratis to approximately 300 members, we will waive any fees.

We appreciate that you will recommend our book to your membership and ask that you use the following credit line adjacent to the material:

Reprinted by permission from Just Beyond the Firelight: Essays and Stories by R. J. Waller (c) 1988 by Iowa State University Press, Ames, Ia. 50010.

Sincerely,

Sherry Johnson
Assistant to the Director

SLJ:me

*I have read most of the book and do
recommend it.*

Editor

Iowa State University Press has many titles on aviation, now and the past and many on technical aspects of flying.

Write for a catalog.

At Dinjan, he and the other pilots slept and took their meals in a large bungalow on the fringe of a tea plantation. Well before dawn, he was awakened by the hand of a servant boy. Now he stands drinking thick Indian tea on the veranda, looking out toward the jungle where leopards sometimes go.

An open four-wheel drive command car arrives, and he rides through the heavy night toward an airfield five miles away. Time is important now, in this early morning of 1943. Since losing an airplane to Japanese fighters over the Ft. Hertz Valley, the pilots cross there only in darkness or bad weather when the fighters are grounded. He signs the cargo manifest, checks the weather report, and walks out to the plane.

Like delicate crystal, our liberties sometimes juggle in the hands of young men. Boys, really. Climbing to the top of the arch at the front of their lives, some of them flew into Asian darkness, across primitive spaces of the mind and the land, and came to terms with ancient fears the rest of us keep imperfectly at bay.

There was Steve Kusak. And poker-playing Roy Farrell from Texas. Saxaphonist Al Mah, Einar "Micky" Mickelson, Jimmy Scoff, Casey Boyd, Hockswinder, Thorwaldson, Rosbert,

It gets dicey about here. If an engine fails, he does not yet have enough air speed for rudder control. And he's lost his runway, so there is no chance of chopping the takeoff. But he gains altitude, turns southeast from Dinjan, and flies toward that cordillera of the southern Himalayas called the Burma Hump.

His copilot and radio operator are both Chinese. In the next four hours, they will cross three of the great river valleys of the world: the Irrawaddy, the Salween, and the Mekong. In the place where India, Tibet, Burma, and Yunnan province of China all come together, the mountain ranges lining these rivers constitute the Hump.

This is the world of the China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC--pronounced "SEE-knock"). Jointly owned by China and Pan American Airways, CNAC flies as a private carrier under nominal military control of the U.S. Air Transport Command. In the flesh, CNAC is a strange collection of civilian pilots from the U.S., Australia, China, Great Britain, Canada, and Denmark.

They are soldiers of fortune, some of the best hired guns in the world at pushing early and elemental cargo planes where the planes don't want to go and where most pilots won't take them. As one observer put it: "All were motivated by a thirst for either money or adventure or both,

water. So it fell to the pilots to ferry materiel from Dinjan to Kunming. To fly the Hump.

As he reaches higher altitudes, Charlie pulls on a shirt, chino pants, woolen coveralls, and a leather flight jacket. Going through 10,000 feet he switches over to oxygen. At 14,000 feet, he needs more power in the thin air and shifts the superchargers to high. Above the Hump now.

In summer, the monsoons force him to fly on instruments much of the time. With winter come southern winds reaching velocities of 100-150 miles per hour, and he crabs the plane 30 degrees off course just to counter the drift. Spring and fall bring unpredictable winds, frequent and violent thunderstorms, and severe icing conditions.

He will fly over long stretches where there is no radio contact with the ground, up there on his own, blowing around in the mountains without radar. "You had good weather information on your point of origin and your destination, and that was about it," he remembers. The primary instrument in use will be Charlie Uban's skills and instincts.

The winds push unwary or confused pilots north into the higher peaks where planes regularly plow into the mountain sides. And there are other problems. Ground radio signals used to locate runways in rough weather have a

A 100-hour month earns him roughly \$9,000 in 1987 terms. The rare melding of technical competence, practiced skill, good judgment, and courage always pays top dollar, anywhere. The CNAC pilots chronicle their exploits by making up song verses using the melody to the "Wabash Cannonball:"

Oh the mountains they are rugged
So the army boys all say.
The army gets the medals,
But see-knack gets the pay...

Not everyone can do it. They arrive as experienced flyers and are trained for the Hump by riding as copilots, committing the terrain to memory, absorbing the mercurial techniques of high-mountain flying, and practicing let-downs in bad weather. There is no time for coddling. Those who can't move into a captain's seat in a few months are discharged. Charlie Uban got his command in three weeks.

One veteran pilot makes a single round trip as copilot, is terrified, and asks to be sent home by boat. Others will hang on, but are so intimidated by the Hump that they develop neuroses about it and become ill. Or, bent by their fears, they make critical mistakes where there is room for none. The Hump, rising out there in the darkness and the rain, is malevolence crowned.

Was Charlie Uban afraid? He thinks about the question for a moment, a long moment, and grins, "I'd say respectful

like a lot of others, tried and failed. If a crew goes down in the Hump region, no search party is sent. The territory is wild and rugged, settled sparsely by aboriginal tribes or occupied by the Japanese. The snow accumulates in places to a depth of several hundred feet, and a crashed plane just disappears, absorbed by the snow.

The pilots suffer through it and gather strength from one another, talking quietly when a plane is overdue and cataloging the optimistic possibilities. After a few weeks, the missing pilot's clothing is parceled out among the others, and his personal effects are sent home.

Charles L. Sharp, Jr., operations manager for CNAC, is a realist. Roosevelt demands that China be supplied. There is not enough time for proper training. The weather is wretched, equipment humbled by the task, and the planes, which are cargo versions of the venerable DC-3s, always fly above the standard gross weight.

So lives are going to be taken. Sharp accepts that. Still, he grieves for the pilots who vanish out there in the snow or thunder into foggy mountains during let-downs in China or blow up on the approach to Dinjan, and he worries about those who keep on flying.

Small samples from his logs in CNAC's war years intone a litany to risk and a chant of regret.

As Stilwell begins his 1944 push back down into the jungles of Burma, Charlie will haul bagged rice that is booted out of the cargo doors at low altitudes to construction crews following the armies. The crews are building a new land route, the Ledo Road, from India across northern Burma to China.

Conditions are seldom good enough for daydreaming. Most of the time he concentrates on his gauges and listens to the engines, "...envisioning midadventures and figuring out what to do about them ahead of time."

But now and then in clear weather he thinks about other things. He thinks about his girl, Emma Jo, back in Iowa and calculates the days left before he gets his three-month leave in the States. And he remembers Charles Lindbergh's solo flight across the Atlantic in 1927. He was six years old at that time, but somehow understood the magnitude of Lindbergh's achievement even then. That's what brought him here.

His family moved to Waterloo, Iowa, where he grew up building model airplanes and reading magazine articles about the new world of flight. At 15, he bicycled out to the old Canfield Airport and used \$2 from his Des Moines Register paper route to purchase his first airplane ride on a Ford Trimotor.

percent of CNAC, he applied for a transfer, and by the fall of 1943 he was flying the Hump.

The C-47 settles down on the runway at Kunming. It's 9 AM. Charlie will spend the day at a hostel near the airfield. He will nap, play cards, and talk with other pilots. In late afternoon, he takes off for the westward flight back to Dinjan. Tomorrow he will fly the same route once again. Often he will make one-and-a-half, or even two, round trips in a single day.

Charlie Uban made 524 flights over the Hump in two years and knows of only one CNAC pilot who claims more wartime crossings. After the war, CNAC moved its operations to Shanghai. Charlie went along, flying all over the orient--north to Muckden in China, west to Calcutta, and south to Manilla.

Things got messy though. Four planes crashed in one day in Shanghai due to weather and radio interference from commercial stations operating at illegally high power levels. The Chinese communists had begun firing on the CNAC planes, and there was dissension among the pilots over the way operations were being run.

Charlie had enough and came home to finish his mechanical engineering degree at Iowa State. He graduated in 1949 and entered the family oil business in Waterloo. In

Kanchenjunga to the northwest on a clear day as you come in to Dinjan?

Most of us think of life as a long upward sweep to some modest glory in our middle years. But, if you have battled the great whale in your early times, what can ever compare? Maybe Hannibal or Lindbergh or the foot soldier at Normandy or even Orson Welles also has suffered these proportions.

On the other hand, maybe none of this is important. Maybe it is enough to have done it and to live a life on the memories of having done it-- of having swept upward from a thousand blacktop runways into the jungle nights on your way to China.

Others will do it again, but not in that place, in that way. The Hump, as a presence, has disappeared. It was a concoction of the times and the available technology. In a jet airplane, at 40,000 feet, the Hump no longer exists.

It's been 43 years since Charlie Uban flew the Burma Hump. He talks about those times, late of an April afternoon, while Emma Jo makes supper noises in the kitchen. "I remember the time I realized I was doing an excellent job of flying this tough, tough route, and it just did wonders for my self-esteem." "If you're doing a good job, and somebody knows it and appreciates it, that's about as good as life gets."

the southern Himalayas where some of his friends still lie.

I listen not so much to the words themselves, but rather to the sound of his memories. It's something like the drone of a C-47 cruising out there east of Dinjan, above the Burma Hump, in the days when it was pretty clear who was right and who was wrong. Over his shoulder I can see airplanes coming and going at the Waterloo Airport a mile away.

Just outside the window, wood ducks are circling among the trees by a pond, peering through the fog at the end of a rainy afternoon, looking for a place to land. Capt. Charlie Uban watches the lead drake come in through the dusk on his final approach, sees him catch the headwind as he lets down through the haze, and nods his appreciation...from one old pilot to another.

Whether it's Dinjan or Calcutta, Kunming or Shanghai, or a small pond in Iowa, those who live on the wing understand one another. They have been taken aside by Iris, trained by scholars of the twilight. And, while the rest of us plead for guidance and struggle for the trace, old fliers have no need of that, for they know secret things and hear distant ragas that carry them along the great bend of the night toward home.

THE END

Name _____

Address _____

Wife or Husband: _____

Children: _____

Place of Birth: _____ (when optional) _____

Early activity before CNAC _____

How I got to CNAC _____

CNAC history _____

Where I lived Calcutta _____

Shanghai _____

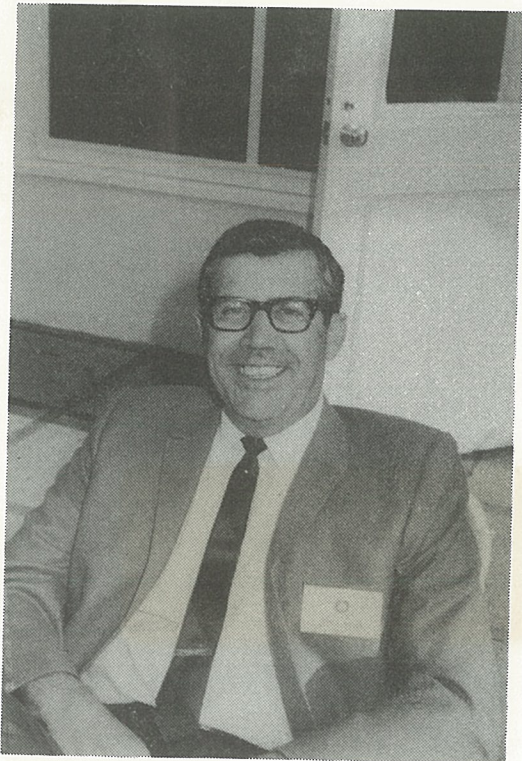
Activity since CNAC _____



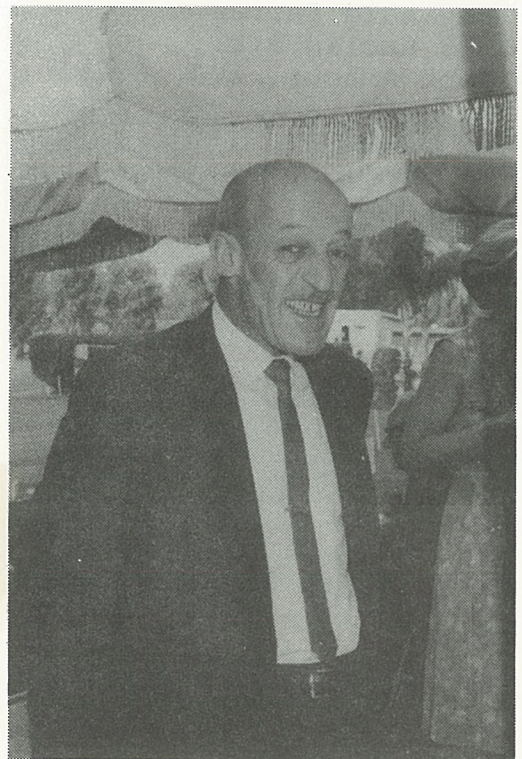
Jim Moore
Indian Jim



Hiram Broiles



William Maher
President



BUS LOANE