

## Allan Chambers flew the “HUMP”

Allan Chambers was born in Liberty, Texas in 1920. He graduated from Liberty High School and then Schreiner Institute in Kerrville where he became a flight instructor for the Army Air Corps. He was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army in October, 1944 and then joined the C.N.A.C. (China National Aviation Corp.) He became a Captain and spent 18 months flying Douglas C-47's and C-46's in India and China – including almost 100 trips over the “Hump” – the air route over the eastern Himalaya Mountains, an unprecedented, difficult and dangerous way to supply China during and after WWII. The following excerpts are from letters he sent to his mother in Liberty during his time in India and China.

**May 5, 1945 Karachi, India** We left New York and went to Newfoundland, Azores, Casablanca, Tripoli, Cairo, Abadan and here, Karachi, India. I saw Will Partlow for a few minutes in Cairo.

**May 6, 1945 Calcutta, India** Arrived here in Calcutta. It is a big place, but very dirty and hot. I received \$100 pay in rupees, and it filled up my pockets. I went to church this morning.

**May 8, 1945 Calcutta** We heard Germany surrendered, so today was declared a holiday.

**May 12, 1945 Calcutta** You can sure see a lot of queer sights here. Everyone drives on the left side of the road and there are cars, horse carts, ox carts and hand carts. They use brahma cattle and water buffalo to do work.

**June 11, 1945 Dinjan, India** I have been flying with the Chinese fellow that brought Doolittle out of China. <sup>1</sup>

**June 20, 1945 Dinjan** That big shot in China came down here yesterday, I won't attempt to spell his name but he's the President and everything else. <sup>2</sup>

**July 20, 1945 Dinjan** I did quite a bit of flying this month. I put in 21 round trips. Some of the snow-capped mountains look like Colorado, except they are higher here. I am sorry to hear about Nolan and Glynn. <sup>3</sup> That is too bad.

**July 22, 1945 Dinjan** We have to fly on a different type of airplane than we have been flying. ...got a haircut in a regular barbershop in town, it had chairs and electric clippers.

**August 1, 1945 Dinjan** I am glad to hear the cattle are fat, and it seems like now would be a good time to sell some calves and all of the old cows. I am sorry for the Miles and the Picketts.

**August 12, 1945 Calcutta** I hear the Japs are about to quit the war.

**August 15, 1945 Calcutta** I just heard the war is over...since that new bomb came out, it must be a very powerful thing.

**August 22, 1945 Calcutta** The war is over! But there's still a lot to do in China and Japan. I might quit flying the Hump but then again I might not. I am flying a different type plane here in Calcutta.

**August 29, 1945 Dinjan** I'm still flying the Hump, but I heard I might be moving to Shanghai. If I do move into China I guess I'll be out of India altogether. There has not been a lot of changes made since the war is over. I hear Hong Kong and Shanghai were nice before the war, so maybe they'll be an improvement over Calcutta.

**Sept. 6, 1945 Dinjan** I have been flying out of Dinjan which is in the Assam Valley of northern India. We made trips to Kunming and Luhsien, which is near Chungking. We see mountains that are 17,000, 18,000 and 20,000 ft. along the way.

**Sept. 7, 1945 Dinjan** Even though the war is over there is still plenty of flying to be done.

**Sept. 11, 1945 Dinjan** I got back up here to Dinjan on the 11<sup>th</sup> and I made a trip to Kunming yesterday and will probably make one today.

**Sept. 16, 1945 Dinjan** I have been flying the last few days and have been to Kunming two more times. I started to go to Canton and Hong Kong but did not go on that trip. Today was like fall in Kunming, cool and clear.

**Sept. 23, 1945 Dinjan** From Kunming the other day I went up to a place called Hsichang, up in the mountains. One of our planes was stuck in the mud. That country is sure pretty when you are on the ground. The little airport is just a green field 5,000' above sea level. On all sides there are 12-14,000 ft. mountains. They look straight up when you are down in this valley. The U.S. is sure putting a lot of money into China.

**Sept. 27, 1945 Kunming, China** I am here in Kunming and make about a trip a day over the Hump to Dinjan and back. The weather has been pretty good on the Hump.

**Oct. 3, 1945 Kunming** I am staying here in Kunming and flying to Dinjan. Two different government groups are fighting in town, there will probably be a lot of trouble in China before long. I might quit flying the Hump at the end of this month and move to Shanghai.

**Oct. 8, 1945 Dinjan** Yesterday we took a load of money to Luhsien. It was about \$100 million. Now we are hauling gasoline, steel, some money and radio and medical supplies. While the war was on we hauled gasoline, shells, powder, dynamite, steel and bales of cotton. We fly C-46's and C-47's. The C-46 is a bigger plane.

**Oct. 18, 1945 Calcutta** I am back in Calcutta today. I came all the way from Shanghai in one day. It was 13 ½ hours flying time with stops in Kunming and Dinjan. The Hump flying may be over soon.

**Oct. 25, 1945 Dinjan** I have been flying nearly every day. Dinjan is in a valley surrounded by mountains that usually have clouds on them.

**Nov. 8, 1945 Calcutta** My new job is flight instructor. We have Chinese students and they don't understand English.

**Nov. 15, 1945 Calcutta** We are about finished flying the Hump. On the way down here, we flew over Myitkyina, Burma. There was a big fight for the city during the war and now there are only 2 or 3 buildings left.

**Nov. 16, 1945 Calcutta** I have 3 students that I fly in the mornings. It looks like they're going to have a real civil war here in China. I sent Billie 20 yards of silk.

**Dec. 2, 1945 Calcutta** Not much flying lately, our airplanes have had engine trouble. I can't find a rosary here. Thanksgiving was last Thursday, but it was just another day for me.

**Dec. 19, 1945 Calcutta** I will probably be going to Shanghai the first of the year. It's cold up in China and the Japanese took all the heating systems out of the buildings.

**Dec. 28, 1945 Calcutta** I'm through instructing and will be going up into China soon. This is an R.A.F. airfield and will soon be abandoned. There are millions of dollars of airplanes that are being destroyed, but I guess that's the only thing to do.

**Jan. 24, 1946 Nanking, China** I have been all over China since I wrote last. Over to Chungking, Peiping<sup>4</sup>, Hankow and up to Tsingtao. I'm going to Chungking tomorrow, hauling gasoline and bringing people back. They crowd people in these planes like you would cattle in a box car! There are a lot of Japanese planes here that people are fixing up and flying.

**Feb. 3, 1946 Nanking** I have been flying all over the country. I left Chungking yesterday and flew to Peiping and back to Nanking today. General Marshall was at my hotel in Peiping the last time I was there.

**March 17, 1946 Shanghai, China** There is a world of business here in China. Since C.N.A.C. is a government organization they should to have the inside track.

**March 23, 1946 Hankow, China** The weather is bad, cold, rainy, muddy. I'm going on my way to Nanking.

**April 28, 1946 Shanghai** We have been moving equipment out of Kunming. We quit flying the Hump last week. My base pay is \$800 a month and up to \$400 extra for overtime.

**May 5, 1946 Shanghai** I just got back from Chungking. The next time I go out it'll probably be for a couple of weeks.

**May 31, 1946 Shanghai** I haven't flown for a week because everybody's on strike. We quit flying the Hump about a month ago, I was high enough on the pilots list that I wasn't sent down there. I got about a hundred trips over the Hump when I was there. The civil war is still going on in North China. Anything can be bought on the black market.

**June 7, 1946 Shanghai** The Chinese Air Force took over the airline. Now we have about 3 ships flying a day and the Chinese Air Force flies 3 or 4.

**June 27, 1946 Shanghai** There is supposed to be a truce on the civil war but I think both sides break it each day. People all over the world never had it so good as when the U.S. Army & Navy were there, or any Americans. I will probably go to Chungking or Hong Kong tomorrow.

**July 12, 1946 Shanghai** I think I'm going to Hong Kong tomorrow. We are about finished moving the government to Nanking. I should be getting a \$200 a month increase in pay.

**July 23, 1946 Shanghai** We are getting men from the U.S. every month. We have about 75 planes now and supposed to get 6 new ones next month. I am going to Hong Kong tomorrow.

**August 3, 1946 Shanghai** It's hot here, but not as hot as Calcutta. I'm supposed to go to Chungking tomorrow and be back the next day. The civil war is still going on.

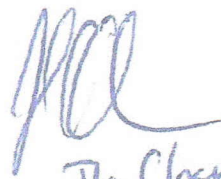
**August 16, 1946 Shanghai** We are flying passengers now like a regular airline. I flew to Kuling the other day, that is where all the big shots spend the summer months in China.

**Sept. 27, 1946 Shanghai** I am flying C-46's and C-47's and am carrying passengers to Chungking, Canton, Hong Kong, Hankow, Nanking, Tsingtao and Peiping. Summer is over.

**Oct. 16, 1946 Shanghai** I have transportation on the S.S. Marine Lynx to leave tomorrow for San Francisco by way of Hong Kong and Manila. The shipping company said they had an extra ticket. I better take it because it is a lot of trouble to get out of China.

Allan Chambers arrived in San Francisco in November, 1946. His wife, Billie, met him there. They were together the next 50 years until his death in 1996. After his return from China he lived in Liberty the rest of his life in the house his grandfather built.

1. Moon Fun Chin – a Chinese pilot who flew Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle out of China after his aerial raid on Japan in 1942
2. believed to be Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek
3. Nolan Pickett and Glynn Miles, both from Liberty, were killed in WWII
4. now Beijing; formerly Peiping and Peking

 6-28-17  
Th. Chambers