

CNAC Cannon Ball

CNAC News Letter No.6

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Reg Farrar, Editor

OJAI July 1975

Our meeting at Ojai, California was again a pleasant experience. It was as great as it always is. Bill Merrill and his wife Toby were our guests. Bill was our featured speaker and his talk was sensational. He set so many records and flew so many years that it will be impossible for anyone to equal it. I doubt that anyone will ever be able to equal his speech. The CNAC Association was privileged to honor him with our Commercial Aviation Award.

The CNAC Service Award was presented to Robert Rengo for his selfless efforts and devotion to our Association.

Our retiring president was awarded the gavel with our thanks. He stepped in when we lost Sol and did a terrific job.

So with pleasure and pride we add Harold Chinn to our list of distinguished past presidents.

At our business meeting we elected a new president, Robert Potts Schmidt. Potty is one of our most ardent members. He is one of the real pioneers of aviation in China. He came early and stayed late. His record with CNAC was one of the best. His election was long past due.

For the last three years various ones have tried to arrange a trip to Mainland China. Our efforts for many reasons have been fruitless. We are still trying for the wish to reply the Hump strong. There seems to be no possibility to do this in the near future. It might be that this wish best remain unfulfilled. A jet flying at 30,000 ft or even at 20,000 ft would never be the same as those flights up the valleys and across the passes in a DC 3. Would Lekiang seem the same 10,000 ft below rather than when its peak was 5000 ft above. Maybe memories are better. Should anyone have any ideas on this project please contact Mac or me. We haven't given up. We have only postponed it temporarily.

Pictures of the Reunion in Ojai in July 1975 are available for \$5.00 for 8 by 10 from Colour Images, 110 East Matilija St, Ojai, Calif 93023

While we have been looking for the Mainland China trip, we came upon a charter trip to Hong Kong that seemed so reasonable that I am mentioning it here. It is available to CNAC Association members and their friends. It will leave from the east coast on September 13, 1976. There is another leaving from the west coast on July 25, 1976. This one is tentative at the present. The Sept 13 trip is solid. All of this as far as CNAC is concerned depends upon interest. The price is right. Side trips are available to several other spots in the Orient, including Bangkok, Taipei, and others. If there is sufficient interest the Tour company will send out more detailed announcements. Let me know.....

The entire trip at this point is tentative and depends entirely of the interest shown. The price is approximately \$700.00 which will include round trip transportation and hotels. There are many extras as you can see below in a part of a brochure that I took from a previous trip some friends of mine made. The tour company is experienced and has run this tour many times before. Only they can really explain it properly so let me know and I will have them send out the formal announcement. In days of higher prices this is a bargain.

***Round-Trip Jumbo Jet Flights** between the city of departure in the United States and Hong Kong via a DC-10 Jumbo Jet of America's Trans International Airlines, the world's most experienced charter airline with a perfect passenger safety record of over 25 years (see inset upper right).

***Upon Arrival and Departure. Deluxe Motorcoach Transportation for Persons and Luggage** between Hong Kong's Kai Tak International Airport and our hotel, including portage of luggage into and out of hotel rooms.

***A Chinese Welcome Get-Together** for the entire group, featuring Chinese libation. Hosted by our Tour Host Personnel, the gathering will give us a chance to make new friends and plan our activities.

***Deluxe Hotel Accommodations for Eleven Days and Ten Nights** at either the fabulous Hotel Excelsior or the brand new Hotel Plaza (see inset below), our spacious, bright, and ultra-modern rooms all with double or twin beds, private bath and shower, radio, private telephone, and air conditioning.

***Fabulous Full-Course Breakfast Each Morning**, at the hotel, consisting of eggs, bacon, ham, fruit juice, rolls and coffee, tea, or milk, a hearty beginning to each day.

***A Half-Day Motorcoach Sightseeing Tour of Hong Kong**, with English-speaking guide, will point out important places.

The next issue will contain the updated membership list, and excerpts from the book *Topside Rickshaw* written by Bixby. Mr Bixby was Vice Pres of Pan Am and was very influential in the early days of CNAC. This book was published privately in a very small edition. I think some of his experiences will be of unusual interest.

Royal Leonard wrote a book about his years in China partly as the private pilot of Chiang Kai Chek and then in CNAC. He attended many of the reunions in California and in Florida. The following is a short excerpt from his book, "I Flew for China" published by Doubleday Doran in 1942. This portion deals with Foxy Kent.

the battles of Shanghai, I was sure that the city was being bombed by the Japanese. I was awakened at dawn by what seemed like a terrific explosion when bits of stone from the window ledge scattered over my bed. I leaped for the door but stopped when I saw a man's face at the window. I discovered that he was standing on a scaffolding and whacking away at the window ledge with a sledge hammer. The stone had crumbled, and he was preparing to replace it.

Later, at Ichang, where I lived in a local hotel called the Navy Club, I was eating aboard the gunboat *Tutuila*. After supper the officers, crew, and I used to exchange tall stories. I told them about the kidnaping of the Generalissimo at Sianfu. After we had said good night and had gone to bed my own story must have impressed my subconscious more than it did the gunboat audience. I was sound asleep, dreaming about those eventful days, when suddenly I heard machine-gun bullets and running feet outside my door.

"Mutiny!" I mumbled to myself. Half asleep, I dragged myself out of the blankets, fumbled for the night stand, and picked up my gun in one hand, a flashlight in the other. It seemed as though machine guns were exploding outside my door.

"I'll shoot the first guy that tries to break in!" I decided hazily. "I might not be able to get out alive, but I'll make my killing expensive for anyone who tries it!"

I thought that under the bed would be better cover, so I crawled under but couldn't get a clear sight at the

door. I got out as the machine gun went off again, still drowsy, and backed slowly into the fireplacc. Unfortunately the fire was still burning. I yelled and decided to die in the hall. I jumped for the door and rushed outside. The hall was filled with the crew of the *Tutuila*, laughing their heads off. They had staged a "mutiny" with Chinese firecrackers.

Woody, who was the first C.N.A.C. pilot shot down by the Japanese in China, told me that the jitters affected him too. Flying out of Kunming, after he had been shot down in the Canton River and had fourteen of his fifteen passengers murdered in cold blood by the Japanese, he suddenly saw a pursuit ship behind him. Not being able to spot its insignie, he began to twist and turn, dive and squirm, to escape it. When it stuck right on his tail Woody despaired of getting away alive. He was on the verge of power-diving down to an emergency landing when he caught on. It was a lost Chinese pursuit pilot who was following the C.N.A.C. route back to his home field.

I wish that all the encounters with the Japanese which our American flyers had in our relatively slow transport ships could have ended on as humorous a note as that event of Woody's in 1938. But they didn't. In 1940, after I had been flying for C.N.A.C. two years, "Foxy" Kent was killed. He was a happy-go-lucky redhead from Louisiana, flying the route between Kunming and Lashio, Burma, twice a week. He was one of nine C.N.A.C. pilots. Any one of us could have received the same dose from the Japanese as he did. But it was

his number that was up. Foxy was warned of Japanese bombers over Kunning, so he landed on a neighboring emergency field. There five Japanese planes spotted the C.N.A.C. ship, as clearly marked as Woody's had been two years before, with great man-sized black letters on the metal-colored wings and fuselage, MAIL AND TRANSPORT.

Foxy's wheels had just hit the ground. The first shot from the leading plane got him through the chest. The plane ground-looped to a stop. Foxy's co-pilot and radio operator tried to make the passengers get out. Terrified, they refused to leave what they thought was the protection of the plane. The co-pilot and the radio operator abandoned their efforts, dropped to the ground, and rolled as fast as they could out of the line of fire. The Chinese stewardess started to run from the plane, but her white uniform made her a perfect target against the brown fields. The Japanese planes gunned her to death. They strafed the C.N.A.C. transport time and again. The gasoline tanks caught fire, and most of the passengers were burned to death. A few scrambled, screaming, to safety.

The co-pilot and radio operator, who were saved, said that Foxy had landed because he saw three Chinese planes on the ground and thought that the "All Clear" signal had been given. It was a mistake. The alarm was incomplete. The Chinese, unable to fly their three planes away in time, had followed their usual custom. They had drained out the gasoline and left the planes to the mercy of the Japanese machine guns. They knew

that bullet holes could be repaired but that a burned ship was a total loss. Foxy's death had more than the usual note of tragedy, for he was supposed to have returned to Hong Kong on his next trip, to celebrate his birthday and to see his wife off for the States. He might have been pleased to know that his death did not interfere with the routine flights of C.N.A.C. The company merely gave up carrying stewardesses for four months, and operations went on as usual.

The most ghastly Japanese outrages were those perpetrated on defenseless Chinese civilians. I remember the first raid on Ichang, which was thought, in the early months of the war, to be beyond Japanese bombing range. Thousands of coolies were at work on the landing field and in the vicinity. Although the Japanese planes were detected, no air-raid alarm was given, because the Chinese field commander had been playing mah-jongg late the previous night. He had left strict orders that he was not to be awakened the next day on pain of death. Hence, no alarm. The coolies thought that the approaching planes were merely Chinese students practicing at the near-by bombing range.

The slaughter of those thousands of coolies was the most horrible carnage I have ever seen. When I landed at Ichang an hour after the raid the ground was soggy with human blood. Bits of bodies, still smoking in the cold air, lay about the field. The cries of the wounded and dying were drowned by the wails of the mourning. Hundreds of bodies were laid out beside the field, and hysterical relatives were shaking the torn corpses, shout-

WHO WE WERE

Joe Hall, 265½ S. Orange St.,
Orange, Calif. 92666

Joe Hall from Moscow, Idaho, Uni v. of Ill. CPT Had every course they ever gave of that.

Instructor in Army in Tuson from there to CNAC Feb. '45

Seniority list - Lisk or Carey Bowles right in front of me, Parish, Hall, Maher, Rengo, Sam Terry, Harbet in same group. Flew 47 and 46 stayed till ended up.

Briefly what happened 3:30 in the morning in Calcutta. THE BUFFALO - I was scheduled to take off. I followed a jeep down the runway. Had a British army guy on each fender to chase the buffalo away. Got down to the warm-up circle, ran my engines up, everything was OK. Cleared for take off, started to take off, just got airborne when I hit something with the left wheel. Shook the whole airplane, scared me somewhat. Checked the engine instruments, everything was running fine so I decided to take it upstairs. Just before I got to the end of the runway the left engine quit, and I looked, it was fuel pressure of left engine. Pulled the left prop back - nothing happened. I feathered it and the lights went out. I hollered to the copilot 'there's a rheostat down there by each window. I hollered to turn his on. It didn't move. I turned mine, it just flicked and went out again so we hit the overhead lights, dome light. I was in a bank into that dead engine. Straightened it out, took it up to 400 feet, the tower was screaming at me but I was a little busy. Started to turn to the right, called the tower, I couldn't even hear my own voice. I switched over to our Charlie channel on VHF and called Dum Dum tower and give them a May day too. Told them I hit something on the runway and was going to come back in and didn't want to hit it again. Whoever it was said this is Dum Dum Homer, call Dum Dum tower. So I gave them another May-day and told them it was the only frequency I had on that airplane that could get to them. Repeated my message and he repeated this was Dum Dum Homer, please contact Dum Dum tower. I told him what to do to himself. Threw the mike on the floor and sweated it in on the belly. I hit a water buffalo, tore the left gear out and the gas line to the left engine. Had 49 passengers on board. What are you going to do. Next day I got a wire from Woods, who was Operations Manager at the time. Congratulations on your flying under extremely adverse conditions

You remember Robby. He was in Calcutta. I saw him that day, told him about it. He says "Joe, if you'd killed yourself you would have been a God dammed hero, but this way you just busted up one of their airplanes.

I am home and have done a little bit of everything, Salesman etc.

J.R. McClesky

He grew up in Louisiana, and attended the University of Arizona. On graduating he took Military flight training and came out to China in 1933. When CNAC moved out of Shanghai, he and Frank Havelick went with Pan Agra where he stayed until he retired. He settled in Miami with his wife Peggy until his death last winter.

Henry Schaus "Red" Red hair and freckles I used to have. Southampton, Long Island, Aug. 24, 1920 - School there. U.S. Government Griffin, Ga. Started planting peanuts getting ready for the bit war. Then it came and I went into the military.

Flew the hump C46's with 20th airforce.

The man who hired me was my Maintenance officer in Reno when I was in the training program C46's ATC - I enlisted in the airforce as ground crew and flight engineer. Bill Prevost when he was picked to head APA program for PAA & CNAC. He asked for men who had been in air training program and I was picked.

Sam Westbrook, mechanic.

Ray Saliba never did make it over to China

We went through the flight engineers school at LaGuardia with PanAm. Some of us, Sam Westbrook, Joe Walsh, Bob Bartels and myself and Marty Gordan (?) all went by freighter from Houston to Shanghai to get ready for the 4's when they came in.

It was a long time before they came, so we blended in with the CNAC organization in 1946. Lived in a little place called Boy's town in Shanghai (which had something of a reputation). Stayed till the time of the strike when we were all furlowed, then rehired, a selected few in late '47. I was given an offer to go back to work for them but I went back home instead. I went to Long Island and worked for Grumman Aircraft. Worked for them for 25 years. I spent 15 years in Europe as head of European Field Service program then I came back and was Quality Control for SO. East U.S. Then I took an early retirement and am now living at 3 River Drive, Sequestra, Fla. Married Gloria Dixie, Michael, Christopher.

ROGER REYNOLDS

Exerpt of a conversation in 1974

Roger Reynolds; out in Dec. 37, 2 years contract with Chennault for Republic of China Aviation. I was instructor in persuit aviation-fighters a couple of years there. Pawleys company was getting started just moved back because of the Japanese to Loi wing. I was a test pilot. We assembled the flying tiger planes. I was Pawley's pilot. I flew him around and Chennault. Then after Pearl Harbor I ended up at Hindustan air craft for 2-3 years. That was Pawleys other factory. Then eventually I went to CNAC.

Woody gave me a little bit of a break so when I went up country I took about 6 trips and checked out. I checked out just ahead of Fletcher Hanks.

Frank Higgs and Frank Angle were in the 6th squadron in Hawaii 4 of us left the army and ended up as advisers of the aviation dept. of China & Eventually ended up with CNAC.

B: What ever happened to Bob Angle?

Bob Angle went home a little bit early from CNAC. The last I knew he was in Connicut somewhere near Greenwich Conn. I heard from him 5 years ago. He and Chris had just returned from HongKong. I haven't heard from him since. He and I were the only 2 of the 4 that came back.

Joe Hall: Speaking of Robby up in Calcutta up to my place, got in a crap game. I was hotter than a pistol. Robby was into that money belt all the time. I just about had him flat. He asked me for some rupees, 1000 rupees. I said "Hell, no Robby, I wouldn't give you 1000 rupees when I'm gambling." That time in his career he always had a brief case. He reached down in his brief case and pulled out that long barreled 44 or 45 and he laid it on the desk and said "are you going to loan me that 1000 rupees?" Sure Robby, anything you want,

Rockey: Moose & Jeff Weiner and Dave Majors were going out one evening, you know. They arrived at Majors house. He wasn't completely dressed so Moose had a pair of crooked dice with him. See, so he got to Jeff & he said "Jeff, let's take a hold of Dave. Take his money and tell him we used crooked dice and give him his money back. Sure enough in a little while, Majors came out and they said "It's a little early lets shoot a little craps. He said "all right", so some how or other Majors wound up with the dice and he broke both Weiner and Moss. So when it happened Jeff Weiner and Moss got together and asked each other how much they lost. One lost something like \$1300. and the other \$1700. So they said we'll have to split the losses. So Jeff Weiner said "No", lets tell Majors we were shooting with crooked dice and we'll tell him it was a joke we were playing on him, and tell him we were going to give him his money back. So Moose says "are you kidding".

McDonald:

It happened that a couple of times they'd have double gross (double loads) in the airplane. We were coming out of Kinming, going to Hanoi with a load of hand grenades - 6000 ft. I got the gong right down to the end of the strip, all 8000ft of it and just got off. I went on down to Hanoi, landed right at the end of the strip and burned my brakes right down to the other end. Finally got it stopped and we checked the cargo. Those boxes were heavy so they saw there was plenty of room so they just went on and filled it up. We hauled a lot of mercury out. There were 52 Kilo, of course you know mercury, they put it under those bucket seats.

The damdest story I ever heard. I think the guy's name was Hockswender. I was on vacation - he got hired, checked out up there, cracked up and went home while I was on vacation. Somebody said this guy is going to land at Sukerting and pick up 2 or 3 drums of gas or oil or something. So he did. He neglected to tie this down. He rolled it up to the front so when he takes off this rolled all the way back to the tail. He got off the ground and came in to Tientsin and made a tail wheel landing. He got out of the airplane and said "I think I'll go home.

Joe Hall: - Who was the group that got together in Calcutta with the race horse?

Sims was in on it. They were going to make quite a bundle because it was hyped up. It took off like a scared rabbit and it was leading all the way around and about 20 feet from the wire it died. They didn't even go back to drag the horse off. Where was it - Tolly gunge. Newport was in on it I think

Al was a flying Sax at 19000 ft. You'd call him on the radio and get a few notes on the Saxophone. He never used oxygen.

Charley Sunby used to put it on autopilot and walk up and down the cabin to get his exercise all the way across.

Rocky:

It started with a stamp conversation in a bar. They were saying. I've got this stamp, we got that stamp. Cliff said "do you have such and such a stamp from Siam?"

"Sure"

Cliff said "You're a God dammed liar, there ain't no such stamp." The guy challenged him to a duel.

Link Laughlin was going to be a second for Cliff Groh and they picked Edwards. They had to find a place where they could get swords. Across the way from the Great Eastern Motel was a military tailor shop. They had had two crossed swords in the window, so they put a deposit up to borrow the swords and they set the time for 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning, I don't remember which. One fellow got to the Britisher and he says "don't you dare go down there and duel with this man because he was the US Intercollegiate champion. So Link and Cliff Groh arrived at the site - the Britisher never did.

Chinese War Memorial Medal

While we were at Ojai those present who were with CNAC during the World War years were awarded the Chinese War Memorial Medal. This was originally authorized during the war but was never implimented. The award was discovered and has been awarded to various members of the U.S. Army who served there, to the AVG, and to CNAC. Those of us who were eligible received the medal at Ojai last July. Provision was made for further awards. If you are eligible and would like to receive it please write the Secretary, Reg. Farrar, 132 Gifford Ave., Jersey City, N.J., 07304. It was not necessary to have been in the armed forces of either the U.S. or China, employment with CNAC in the Orient qualifies.

Address Changes

Julius Petach, 207 Dorchester Rd., Anchorage, Kentucky. 40223

Robert Prescott, 201 Ocean Avenue, Santa Monica, Calif. 90402

New Members

Charles Gomes, 6th Avenue Trailer Park, 14752, NE 6th Ave. Miami, Fla. ww161

Alice Ching Woo, 399 East 72nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10021

Passionate Plea: Please let me know if you are moving, and send me your new address. This news letter would be better if I didn't have to spend so much time looking for you. Also pay your dues or Bob Rengo will be after you.

New York Regional Meeting - Feb. 25, 1976, Wednesday, ~~at the Garden~~ 2628 Broadway (at about 100th St), 7:30 PM. I have eaten there and the food is good and for a change reasonable. It is, however, not pretentious. Come one come all but it will help if we know in advance that you will be there. RSVP Reg Farrar, 132 Gifford Ave., Jersey City, N.J., 07304

In Memorium

Roger Reynolds, July 1975, in Fort Lauderdale. We learned of his passing during the Reunion in Ojai.