TWENTY YEARS AGO, at midnight on July 4, 1942, the American Volunteer Group was officially dissolved and passed into history. At the same moment a group of former AVG pilots officially started to work for CNAC, flying supplies across the “Hump” from India to China. Because of a common background in time and place, the two organizations later founded by the survivors of these groups, now meet in joint reunion, commemorating their activities.
FLYING TIGERS
(AMERICAN VOLUNTEER GROUP • CHINESE AIR FORCE)
INCORPORATED

ALL CORRESPONDENCE: 737 BETHANY ROAD, BURBANK, CALIFORNIA

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A brief history of the original Flying Tigers

(American Volunteer Group—Chinese Air Force)

Books have been written and movies made about a group of American men and women who went to Burma in 1941 and in seven months of fighting added an imperishable military record to the nation’s great annals of warfare.

Now it is over 20 years since the landing at Rangoon and the first air battle there but the anecdotes of those early days of World War II and the adventures of the AVG still live vividly in story and film and reunion and the name hung upon the little group by war correspondents—Flying Tigers—is familiar to most Americans.

How the Flying Tigers came into being is a story as unusual as what happened to them between their first battle in December, 1941, and their disbandment in July, 1942.

In the mid-30’s, an Army captain, Claire Lee Chennault, had retired from a pioneer military flying career and had written a book about his concept of aerobatics. The text came to the attention of the Chinese, then engaged in a hit-and-run war with Japan. The beleaguered Chinese asked Chennault to help them develop an air force, and in 1937, he went to China.

Four years later, with war spreading over the globe and the Chinese situation critical, Chennault was empowered by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to seek a core of American airmen to help train the Chinese. President Roosevelt consented to allow members of the American Armed Forces to volunteer for duty with Chennault. A total of 252 men—87 pilots and 165 ground personnel—signed up for a year’s service and were shipped to Burma, where 100 P-40 fighters were sidetracked from other military assignments for their use.

Formed into three squadrons—Adam and Eve, Panda Bears and Hell’s Angels—they had experienced hardly three months of training as fighting units before the aroused Japanese hit them at Christmastide of 1941 over Rangoon.

The fact that they not only survived the Japanese assault but repulsed the enemy with heavy losses electrified the Allied side of the war, which had been repeatedly defeated by the Axis powers. The American victory was once more, as at Lexington some 165 years earlier, a shot that was heard around the world, and the Tigers flew on through the Burma skies to an everlasting place in American history.

Often out-numbered as much as eight to one and fighting under primitive conditions with shortages of both food and supplies, their planes held together by the determination and resourcefulness of ground crews, this handful of less than one hundred pilots checked the Japanese invasion of China.

Their official record in the seven months of fighting as the AVG was 299 aerial victories and 240 more enemy planes destroyed but not confirmed. However, it is probable that their total score against the enemy ran to more than a thousand planes, many of which disappeared forever into the seas, mountains and jungles of Burma and China. Their own losses were unbelievably few.

The tribute paid them on the occasion of their tenth reunion by Chiang Kai-shek sums up their story in a simple but glowing language:

"The heroic deeds of The Flying Tigers will go down in history as one of the great military feats free men have accomplished for the cause of righteousness."
A brief history of CNAC
(China National Aviation Corporation)

"CNAC" is a name synonymous with Flying Tigers among those who had a part in the great China adventure of World War II.

Many of those who flew with General Chennault during the AVG days later stayed on in China to fly with CNAC. Actually, CNAC came into being long before the Tigers reached Rangoon. Set up by Pan American World Airways to fly commercially in China, it had been in operation several years before the start of World War II in 1939.

When the World War spread to China, CNAC began flying supplies and personnel to areas which had been isolated from land connections by the enemy. In fact, many Tigers and their supplies were flown to Chennault bases during the days of the AVG in 1941-42. Eventually, CNAC became the main source of supply for the AVG, flying into Burma and China from India.

It was during this time, early in 1942, that CNAC pioneered the establishment of the world-famed "Hump" route over the Himalayas from India to China—the last link in the world's longest military supply line.

Originally, CNAC was a small core of experienced transport pilots. To their ranks were added many Tiger pilots as well as adventure-seeking commercial pilots, some of whom had never flown anything bigger than a Cub. Most of them had never been at the controls of multi-engine equipment or done any instrument flying. But these were the men who manned CNAC's small fleet of C-47's, later reinforced with C-46's, and became China's prime contact with the outside world.

For many months, these Hump pilots, now flying night and day over the world's roughest and highest terrain in all kinds of weather, fair and foul, provided almost the entire airlift for all the U.S. forces in China.

With little or no radio aids—under constant harassment by enemy fighters and flying unarmored over inadequately charted areas on daily flight schedules in which 16 to 20 hours of work was routine, they poured an ever-increasing trickle of supplies into starving China.

It was an operation as rough as the country and many CNAC crews and their planes are still out on the Hump, a never-to-be-forgotten monument to the sacrifice that built a supply route which eventually made its all-important contribution to V-Day.

By the war's end, hundreds of Air Force planes were flying the Hump with radio aids and controlled traffic, alongside the small group of CNAC planes which continued daily to bring in hundreds of tons of munitions, supplies and personnel. A trip and a half a day over the 500-mile Hump route was common. There were many CNAC pilots who came out of the war with 500-trip records over the Hump and some with trip totals as high as 700.

These were the men—CNAC—who plugged the dike until the great might of United States manpower and supplies could be massed to stem the enemy tide.
1957 at Ojai

1958 at San Francisco

1959 at Ojai
1962 REUNION PROGRAM

THURSDAY, JULY 26TH

10:00 A.M.
Transport leaves
Hollywood for Ojai

12:00 NOON
Luncheon

AFTERNOON
Use of Ojai Valley Inn’s
Recreational Facilities

6:30 P.M.
Joint Oil Companies
Cocktail Party

8:00 P.M.
Outdoor Western
Steak Fry

FRIDAY, JULY 27TH

MORNING
Breakfast at
Your Convenience

LUNCHEON
At Your Convenience

AFTERNOON
Showing of AVG and CNAC
Films by Members
and Golf Tournament

11:00 A.M.
AVG Business Meeting

6:30 P.M.
Rolls-Royce
Cocktail Party
Host: Ernest Gerber

8:00 P.M.
CNAC Banquet
Introduction by Dick Rossi
Tall Tales of the Himalairs
Under the Monitorship of
Red Holmes and Bob Prescott

SATURDAY, JULY 28TH

MORNING
Breakfast at
Your Convenience

AFTERNOON
Golf Tournament
or
Enjoy Yourselves

11:00 A.M.
CNAC Business Meeting

LUNCHEON
At Your Convenience

6:30 P.M.
Canadair Cocktail Party
Hosts and Hostess
Fred Kearns
Mr. and Mrs. Miller Smith

8:00 P.M.
AVG Banquet
Introduction by Dick Rossi
Vince Barnett, Master of Ceremonies
Introduction of Miss Flying Tiger of 1962
Introduction of Guests
Reminiscences by Thomas Corcoran
Presentations of:
AVG Scholarship Award to
Miss Joan Claire Petach
Flying Tiger Pilot Award to
Major Robert M. White
Flying Tiger Pilot Award

In 1952, at the first reunion of The Flying Tigers on the tenth anniversary of their disbandment, the Group voted to establish a memorial award to be presented at each reunion. The award is made to a pilot whose achievements in aviation constitute a record of distinction, emblematic of the AVG. The trophy thus designed, based upon the history of the Group and its own record, is awarded by a poll of members and is called "The Flying Tiger Pilot Award."

1962 Award Winner

Major Robert M. White, USAF, First Winged Astronaut

Winner of the 1962 award is Major Robert M. White, the first man to qualify as an astronaut in an airplane. Major White has been the principal Air Force pilot for the X-15, an experimental high altitude, manned research rocket aircraft. In the X-15, he has flown a manned aircraft higher — 310,000 feet — than any other aviator. He has previously been awarded the Harmon Trophy and the Kincheloe Award for his work with the X-15.

Born in New York City July 6, 1924, he graduated from New York University with a degree in electrical engineering and began his military career in 1942 as an aviation cadet with the Army Air Corps.

He received eight Air Medals for 52 combat missions over Europe in World War II during which he was shot down and captured by the Germans. After the war, he graduated from the Air Force Experimental Test Pilot School in 1955 and was appointed Air Force project pilot for the X-15 program in 1958. He has been flying the X-15 since April 15, 1960.
1952 AWARD WINNER

1956 AWARD WINNER
George F. Smith, Test Pilot for North American Aviation, the first pilot to survive a supersonic low altitude bail out.

1954 AWARD WINNER
Awards

1958 AWARD WINNER
Lt. Gen. Claire Lee Chennault, father of the modern concept of aerobatics, founder of the AVG and Commanding General of the 14th Air Force in World War II.

1957 AWARD WINNER

1959 AWARD WINNER
Major Walter W. Irwin, United States Air Force, who established a new world speed record of 1404.09 mph in an F104-A starfighter.
More Memories
THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Message

I am pleased to learn that all former members of the American Volunteer Group, and those who flew with the China National Aviation Corporation, will hold a joint meeting at Ojai, California, to observe the 20th anniversary of the disbandment of the Flying Tigers and to pay homage to your late beloved commander, Lt. Gen. Claire Lee Chennault. On this important occasion, my thoughts and prayers are with you though I am thousands of miles away.

The Flying Tigers came to our help when the rest of the world had yet to realize the significance of China's resistance against aggression. They proved by deeds that there are always people ready to defend their basic beliefs even before their own country is involved in war.

Today we are facing a common enemy who is a thousand times more vicious than the one we jointly fought to defeat. World peace and human freedom are once again in danger. But I am confident that so long as we hold fast to our faith in democracy and decency, we shall certainly achieve victory.

At a memorable time like this, I share your recollections as well as your expectations. To all of you and your families I send my most sincere felicitations and best wishes.

Chiang Kai-shek
President of the Republic of China

YOUNG SWISS

Chinese Delegation
UNited Nations
MILITARY Staff Committee
606 East 55th Street
New York 22, N. Y.

26 June 1962

Mr. Dick Rossi
Chairman
Flying Tigers Inc.
7009 Southway Road
Sanford, Calif.

Mr. dear friend Mr. Rossi,

I am very grateful to have received the invitation to the reunion of the ex-members of the AVG and the USAF to be held at Ojai this summer. Thank you very much.

As you know, I was the leader of the Chinese personnel of the AVG and an old friend and comrade-in-arms of the late General Chennault. Naturally, I would very much like to participate in this memorable event. Unfortunately, I am engaged elsewhere at that time and the Military Staff Committee of the United Nations falls to me in it. A meeting on the Committee calendar for the 26th, a diplomatic engagement has already been made for the 27th. Then, I have just accepted an invitation from General Fisher, Commander in Chief of the North American Air Defense Command, to go to Colorado Springs on the 28th for a series of military activities to be held there from the 26th to 28th. These include the presentation of General Fisher's retirement and the Change of Command.

I regret therefore, I shall be deprived of the time and pleasure to join you for the happy get together. I have already told Mrs. Chennault about this in person and asked her to send my regrets to all our old friends when she gets there.

Let me regret, I am most respectful and sorry to be unable to participate that meeting. From the bottom of my heart, may I ask all our old friends good health and happiness and a big success for the reunion it help.

Yours sincerely,

S. K. Peng
General, C. A. F.
The AVG and CNAC wish to acknowledge and thank the many guests, friends and firms that have helped to make this reunion possible.

In addition to those listed on the back cover of this program we also wish to acknowledge

Tempo Artists, Inc.
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Acknowledgements:

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