

## **PART III**

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# **Operation SQUAW II**

*by Bill Chen*

## **Introduction**

Our CAT Association's mission is to preserve the history of CAT and honor those who helped to make that history. An integral part of CAT's history has been its support of U.S. national security objectives.

Operation SQUAW II was CAT's designation for operations in support of French forces in Indochina in 1954, especially during the siege of Dien Bien Phu. The original Operation SQUAW was CAT's support of French forces in Indochina in 1953 – CAT transported weapons, supplies, and personnel to assist the French in their fight against the communist Viet Minh.

## **Purpose**

SQUAW II was probably one of the best examples of the United States' use of CAT when direct U.S. military involvement was not prudent nor desired. As a covert mission and part of broader clandestine operations in support of anti-communist forces in Asia, not much record or literature in the public domain can be found on SQUAW II. The purpose of this article is to recap the review of some available documentation and give proper recognition to CAT Personnel who participated in SQUAW II. In this regard, I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to Jo Bradburn Cabaniss and Mary Shaver for their diligent research of CAT and CAT Association records to verify the accuracy of our CAT Personnel who were based at Cat Bi airport, about four miles southeast of Haiphong.

## **Background**

Washington alerted CAT for SQUAW II in January 1954. The contract signed between the French and CAT in March 1954 called for twenty-four pilots to operate twelve C-119s – loaned and maintained by the U.S. Air Force and flown under the colors and insignia of France. The first contingent from Taipei to Haiphong arrived on March 9, 1954. Operations would be conducted from Cat Bi airport. This significant involvement of American personnel in Indochina highlighted the early U.S. covert support in Southeast Asia.

## **Documentation**

Jack Samson's book **CHENNAULT**, published in 1987, covers SQUAW II and the beginnings of the battle for Dien Bien Phu in March 1954 with CAT pilots who had been flying two three-hour round trips per day – making drops in the C-119s from an altitude of 4,000 to 5,000 feet. The book covered Capt. Paul Holden receiving a flak fragment in his right arm on April 24, 1954, and the Capt. Jim “Earthquake” McGovern and Wallace Buford's death upon the crash of their C-119 hit by flak. McGovern's death was a blow to Chennault as McGovern was a P-51 fighter pilot in the 14<sup>th</sup> Air Force and one of Chennault's “boys.”

Perhaps the most comprehensive book on CAT and CIA covert operations in Asia is William M. Leary's **PERILOUS MISSIONS**, published in 1984. Leary devotes a complete chapter to Dien Bien Phu and has Appendix C – a listing of Airdrops at Dien Bien Phu, March 13 to May 7, 1954, showing names of 39 Pilots and number of Missions. May 7<sup>th</sup> was the surrender date of Dien Bien Phu, one day after McGovern and Wallace perished. Although the source for this appendix listing was “Holden to Newell,” “Squaw Flight Time” for March, April, and May 1954, I found two discrepancies: (1) Wallace Buford is not listed; and (2) R.S. Richardson, E.L. Porter, and J.G. Anastasakes were not on the French Ambassador's honoree list for the February 24, 2005 ceremony when the French Ambassador awarded the Legion of Honor to seven surviving CAT pilots and honored 37 pilots, where the criteria for the Legion of Honor was that the recipients must be living.

The full list of 37 honored by the French Ambassador is:

### **Pilots Awarded the French Legion of Honor**

- Roland Nelson Duke
- William Preston Hobbs
- Allen Lawrence Pope
- Douglas R. Price
- Monson William Shaver
- Roy Furniss Watts
- Robert Lee Brongersma

## **Other CAT Pilots (deceased) Honored**

Wallace Buford  
Walter C. Buttons  
Darrell D. Carden  
Ernest W. Cedergren  
Maurice K. Clough  
Stuart E. Dew  
John R. Dexheimer  
Norwood N. Forte  
William Donaldson Gaddie  
Charles E. Hayes  
Hugh H. Hicks  
Neese D. Hicks  
Paul R. Holden  
Henry J. Hudson  
Frank L. Hughes  
August L. Judkins  
Steve A. Kusak  
David A. Lampard  
S. McDonnell  
James B. McGovern, Jr.  
Hugh L. Marsh  
Michael L. McCallum  
Kenneth L. Milan  
Cyril M. Pinkava  
John R. Plank  
Thomas C. Sailer  
Eric Shilling  
John M. Verdi  
Frederick F. Walker  
Arthur D. Wilson

At this point, I wanted to better understand the rationale for the deletion of the three pilots from the Leary list and seek clarification on whether the 37 were all pilots.

Dr. Joe Leeker's e-book **History of Air America** has a section specifically on French Indochina and coverage of SQUAW and Squaw II. A most valuable document in this section of the Leeker e-book is a CAT

Personnel Roster for SQUAW II because it constitutes a primary source document.

PERSONNEL ROSTER		OPERATION SQUAW		
(as of 8 July 1954)				
NAME	ARRIVED	DEPARTED	ARRIVED	DEPARTED
Kirkpatrick	Mar. 7	May 8		
Judkins	" 9	June 16	June 22	
Stubbs	" 10	May 8		
Forte	" 10	May 5		
Shaver	" 10	Apr 23		
Watts	" 10	Apr 15		
Pinkava	" 10	Apr 26	May 20	June 30
Hicks, H.H.	" 10	Apr 22		
Marsh	" 10	Apr 17	Apr 25	June 16 to 25
Milan	" 10	Apr 26	June 6	June 30
Shilling	" 10	Apr 17	June 8	June 27
Sailer	" 10	Apr 21	June 4	June 23
Hughes	" 10	May 1	July 7	
Clough	" 10	May 15	June 17	July 7
Hicks, N.D.	" 10	May 5	May 20	June 6
Hobbs	" 13	Mar 20		
Garden	" 21	Apr 24	Apr 30	June 16 to 23
McGovern	" 20	May 6		
Fogg	" 20	Mar 25		
Kitchener	" 20	Mar 25	Apr 16	Apr 19
McCallum	" 20	Apr 10	Apr 14	June 16 to 22
Kusak	" 20	June 16	June 22	
Pope	" 24	June 16	June 22	July 7
Cedergren	" 24	June 30	July 6	
Verdi	" 24	May 20	May 25	June 30 to July 6
Buford	" 24	May 6		
Guberlet	" 23	June 16	June 22	
Plank	Apr 3	May 20		
Wilson	" 3	" 20		
Brongersma	Mar 31	May 14	May 26	June 23
Price	Apr 13	June 3	June 8	July 7
Walker	Apr 16	June 30		
McDonnell	" 16	Apr 19		
Davenport, C.B.	" 16	July 1		
Holden	Apr 20	Apr 26		
Hayes	" 21	June 23		
Gaddie	" 28	May 26		
Hudson	" 28	May 26		
Dexheimer	" 22	May 26		
Button	" 24	June 30	July 6	
Kirek	" 26			
Dew	" 30	June 9		
Lampard	May 4	June 9		
Duke	" 4	June 23	June 29	
Porter	" 20	June 16		
Richardson	" 20	June 16		
Anastasakes	" 22	July 1		
Davenport, D.G.	June 8	July 7		
Seigrist	" 13	June 23		
Welk	" 14	July 7		
Kaffenberger	July 7			
Teeters	June 29			

## Review and Analysis

E.C. Kirkpatrick had been assigned as the coordinator for Operation SQUAW II at Cat Bi. In this CAT Personnel Roster, we can see that Richardson and Porter arrived on May 20, and Anastasakes arrived on May 22, 1954. Although these three were on the Leary Appendix C list and may have flown post-Dien Bien Phu missions, they were rightfully deleted from the Dien Bien Phu airdrop missions list of 37 names given to the French Ambassador because they arrived after the fall of Dien Bien Phu.

The 37 names the French Ambassador honored did not list E.C. Kirkpatrick, G.C. Stubbs, J. Fogg, Kitchener, F. Guberlet, C.B. Davenport, and Kirek. Research on these seven names showed that they did not fly C-119 missions; they supported Operation SQUAW II at Cat Bi. Also, we see that the following eight pilots were not among the 37 because they arrived after the fall of Dien Bien Phu: E.L. Porter, R.S. Richardson, J.G. Anastasakes, D.G. Davenport, C. Seigrist, B. Welk, H. Kaffenberger, and D.E. Teeters.

## Recognition and Honoring

We are grateful to the French Government for awarding the French Legion of Honor, France's highest and most prestigious civilian and military decoration to the seven CAT pilots (Robert Lee Brogersma was not able to attend the French Ambassador's ceremony). The intent behind the award is to recognize and honor living individuals for their contributions to France during their lifetime. Unfortunately, their award ceremony was almost 51 years after the last Dien Bien Phu mission. While posthumous awards are rare, it is unfortunate that the loss of "Earthquake" McGovern and Wallace Buford due to hostile fires at Dien Bien Phu did not qualify them for an award of the Legion of Honor on an exceptional basis.

CAT pilots faced significant dangers, including anti-aircraft fires and challenging flying conditions and day after day risked their lives on combat operations. As written by William Leary in **PERILOUS MISSIONS**, "They flew through the flak-filled skies over Dien Bien Phu out of patriotism, personal pride, and because of the *esprit de corps* that Chennault earlier had nurtured in the American Volunteer Group (Flying Tigers) had passed over to CAT." The pilots were also not government employees and had no federal service benefits.

We must also recognize and honor CAT personnel on the ground at Cat Bi who supported the flight operations: E.C. Kirkpatrick, overall coordinator; G.C. Stubbs, mechanic; J. Fogg, weatherman; R.A. Kitchener, who set up and took down communications at Cat Bi during the Dien Bien Phu operations;; and F.L. Guberlet, brought in from northern Thailand for his French language skills to work with French and pass on critical intelligence to our CAT pilots. Unfortunately, for the name Kirek, in our search of CAT Association and Air America records, we were not able to find Kirek's job title or his duties at Cat Bi.

CAT operations in Indochina continued after the fall of Dien Bien Phu – dropping supplies to isolated French outposts. We should recognize and honor our CAT pilots who arrived in late May and June 1954 after the fall of Dien Bien Phu: E.L. Porter, R.S. Richardson, J.G. Anastasakes, D.G. Davenport, C. Seigrist, W.J. Welk, H. Kaffenberger, and D.E. Teeters.

## **Postscript**

We, as second-generation CAT-ers, marvel at CAT's deeds and accomplishments in its wartime support missions, covert operations, as well as commercial airline operations. We also don't understand the full circumstances under which CAT operated and was used. A case in point is the Dien Bien Phu airdrop missions. On one hand, we know that John Foster Dulles, as secretary of state, discussed and obtained approval from President Eisenhower to use CAT pilots in support of the French in Indochina. And, that John Foster Dulles had received consent on this from his brother Allen Dulles, CIA director. Where CAT was owned by the CIA and the director approved the use of CAT, did that make Operation SQUAW II a CIA operation? If so, where CAT pilots McGovern and Buford died over Dien Bien Phu, why weren't McGovern and Bufford honored with engraved stars on the CIA Memorial Wall like CAT pilots Norman Schwartz and Robert Snoddy who died in 1952 flying a C-47 in Manchuria when attempting to extract an agent?

At best, we can only speculate on the happenings. As an "armchair general," one could say that the decision for the operation was at the highest level and that the CIA did not embrace full "ownership," whereas, with Schwartz and Snoddy, it was a CIA mission with CIA agents John Downey and Richard Fecteau on board the C-47. One could also perhaps say that Operation SQUAW II was more of a "wartime" support mission to assist the French in Indochina. For us on the outside, we also don't fully understand the

nomination and approval process for the Award of the Stars – was there no advocacy within the CIA for McGovern and Buford's loss of life in the service of their country? The Award of Stars for McGovern and Buford would require strong advocacy and a champion within the CIA to revisit the proper honoring for their last Dien Bien Phu mission.



## **CAT Brought into the French Indochina Conflict**

*Excerpts Reprinted, by permission, from "Destiny: A Flying Tiger's Rendezvous With Fate" © 1993 by Erik Shilling*

The French had their backs to the wall and were just barely holding on to French Indochina by their fingernails. Someone in Washington decided the French needed immediate help if there was the slightest chance of saving this hot potato, even though the C.I.A. was against becoming embroiled in the crisis...

Long before Civil Air Transport came into the picture, French General Navarre had decided to lay a trap for General Vo Nguyen Giap, military head of the Viet Minh. Navarre thought Giap's soldiers would be unable to successfully attack such a highly defended group of forts at the North Vietnamese village of Dien Bien Phu. With this in mind, General Navarre built up a ring of nine heavily defended fortresses surrounding the village. There was Isabella in the South, Gabrielle in the North, plus seven others. The first to fall was Beatrice in the North East on March 13, 1954, followed by Gabrielle on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March. Fortress Anne-Marie was abandoned three days later, and by the end of March, after a bitter struggle, the airfield could no longer be used due to Communist anti-aircraft and artillery shells landing on the airfield.

This was approximately the time when CAT was brought into the conflict, and for the next 60 days, the American pilots flying Air Force C-119s were the only source of supply for the beleaguered French forces. The French have ignored the help given to them by the American pilots, although we were Dien Bien Phu's only source of supply after the fall of the airfield. The government of France has never even acknowledged our presence nor thanked us for our help during the battle of Dien Bien Phu.

When Washington decided to help France, CAT was called upon to supply the pilots. The airline sent as many as they could spare from their military contract to Ashiya (Japan) to be trained on the C-119...

After ground school and five hours in the airplane, we all went to Haiphong, where a squadron of C-119s had been delivered by the Air Force

and were waiting for us to fly. As soon as we arrived, they took us into Haiphong and billeted us in one of the local hotels. The next morning, we all went to the French military airport for a briefing. Our mission was to supply the French forces that were surrounded in a place called Dien Bien Phu...

During our briefing, we were only given two drop zones, Isabella and Gabrielle, and a warning that the place was ringed with anti-aircraft guns. From then we were on our own. I made my first drop the same day and every day for the next three weeks. However, I soon discovered the positions of the bigger guns by their muzzle flash and air bursts. Thank God, they weren't accurate at the beginning, but they sure as hell improved as time went by.

We made two drops a day, once in the morning, when the first ship dropped at nine o'clock. A second drop on the DZ was in the afternoon, starting at two o'clock. Both drops were regular as clockwork. Because the valley was so narrow and the DZs so small, we had to drop at five-minute intervals. With this type of arrangement, the Communist gunners on the ground could concentrate their firepower on one airplane at a time. A damn unhealthy situation.

Finally, their accuracy decreased above ten thousand feet. I would fly in at eleven. I headed for a point about a mile north of where I was to drop. Then chopped the power and closed the cowl flaps. I then dove to the deck at redline speed. By the time I had made a 270-degree turn, I was twenty feet off the ground and a mile south of the target. With throttles still closed, the airplane would slow down enough to release my cargo by the time I got to the DZ. Then I would pull the nose up sharply, which helped start the cargo on its way, and then I gave the kickers the signal to drop.

Relieved of my load, I gave the engines full takeoff power and used water injection, which gave me an additional three hundred horses. I wanted to get the Hell out of there and needed all the power I could get. The higher I got, the safer I would be. My first power reduction was when I ran out of water and had to reduce manifold pressure available without water until I was back at 11,000 feet.

As the Communists' aim improved, I thought it would be safer for all of us to start dropping at night. The Viet Minh didn't have radar or search lights, and the C-119s had exhaust flame arresters that made it difficult for the

enemy to see the airplane. With a great deal of coercion on my part, the pilots reluctantly agreed to try dropping in the cover of darkness. I was the first to go in, and I'll never forget this night. Everything went according to plan until I dropped and was climbing out. Then all hell broke loose. I have never seen so damn many tracers in all my life coming up at me...

When we returned to the hotel, we gathered in the bar. A couple of drinks loosened our tongues, and we talked about our experiences of that frightful and unforgettable evening. Each pilot, although unable to see the C-119 in front of him, vividly observed the tracers erupting from the ground, focusing on a point in the black sky where he knew a C-119 was in the middle of it all. As the discussion continued, they all decided that it was not for them and refused to drop again at night. Although I didn't like it either, and agreed it was frightening. I tried to point out that at least the same amount of ground fire was coming up at us during the day, and most likely even more. The big difference was that it would be hell of a lot more accurate.

On another unforgettable drop, I had a new copilot by the name of Cedergreen. I briefed him on what I expected on the flight, especially on the climb out. He was to monitor all the engine instruments and inform me of any impending problem, normal copilot duties. Since all the power was pulled off during the dive, the cowls had to be closed completely to keep the engines from getting too cool. Then, on the climb-out, he was to open the cowls as necessary. Pulling power for the descent, I called for the cowls to be closed, then concentrated on the descent and drop.

Climbing out, I happened to glance at the engine instruments. To my horror, the cylinder head temperatures on both engines were 315 degrees Centigrade, 55 degrees above the maximum allowable. Seeing this, I fully expected both engines to quit momentarily. I pulled the power back to a bare minimum, just enough to hold altitude and put the cowl flaps in the full open position. An eternity later, the heads came down to 260 degrees, and I went back to full power.

At the time, I was really pissed off at Cedergreen. In the excitement of his first drop and all the flak coming up around us, he forgot to open the cowl flaps and damn near cooked the engines. Our necks had hung in the balance for a good fifteen minutes, as we circled at 1,000 feet above the ground at reduced power, to cool our engines before we could climb out of the valley. All during this time, we were within range of anti-aircraft guns and fifty

caliber machine guns. It was a miracle we didn't lose engines or had been shot out of the sky.

## C-119 Airdrops

*From CAT Association Bulletin, Jan – May 2015*

Artillery fire was heavy and the Viet Minh surrounding Dien Bien Phu were quite accurate. Some planes were hit by 37mm fire while most were riddled with .50 caliber bullets, including the one in the photo. Steve Kusak and Bill Shaver were veterans of CAT's Operation Squaw (1953). Scheduled to fly in Squaw II (1954) from Cat Bi outside Haiphong to make unarmed C-119 airdrops over Dien Bien Phu, they were joined by Dutch Brongersma, Dan Carden and others. The Flying Boxcars dropped artillery, ammo, medical supplies, and food to besieged French troops. Daily schedules were two three-hour flights per pilot, to make the drops. The French B-26's, seen on the tarmac, were supposed to provide cover fire. When some night flights were added on, the tracer bullets lit up the dark night sky as they flashed past cockpit windows. Bill Shaver wrote home, "Everyone has been on edge so much that one finds everything difficult...Don Carden arrived yesterday, so I'm going to ask for him as a permanent co-pilot . . . you get better info out of the newspaper. We get the HKG papers every Thurs. and then read up on the situation." Bill returned home after 6 weeks sporting a full beard and over 20 pounds lighter. He flew 48 missions in 5 weeks. Steve Kusak flew 59. Dan Carden flew 52. Dutch Brongersma flew 39.



**Dutch Brongersma, Steve Kusak, Dan Carden, and Bill Shaver, Cat Bi Airfield, March 1954** *(Photo Courtesy of Mary Shaver)*

## **Dien Bien Phu**

*From History Project from CAT Association Bulletin Apr – Aug 2014 by  
Felix Smith*

June, 1953. The Korean War ended, still divided at Latitude 38 North where it began. The loss: hundreds of thousands in casualties, warriors and civilians of all countries involved; and \$67 billion American dollars. A heroic American general said, "I cannot find it in me to exalt."

French citizens asked, "If we cannot achieve a win in Korea with United Nations forces, how can we succeed in Indochina alone?" Their National Assembly demanded an immediate end to the Indochina revolution. General Henri Navarre, a veteran of WWI & WWII, selected a flat valley the size of Manhattan Island, New York, which suited the use of modern weapons after his artillery chief, Colonel Piroth, had assured General Navarre he could silence any cannon the Communists might bear.

The French Chief of Staff flew to Washington, D.C. asking for strikes from American aircraft carriers. If the valley fell, he warned, all of Indochina would go to the Communists, and British Malaya would topple next. The USS Boxer and USS Essex sped to the Gulf of Tonkin, within range of the Valley of Dien Bien Phu. They awaited orders.

Admiral Radford, America's Chief of Staff, wanted an intervention. General Twining, the U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff, agreed. But General Ridgeway, the Army Chief of Staff, believed that military action without political action would be futile. "There's simply no sense in fighting for people who won't fight for themselves," he maintained, "and the Indochinese won't fight for themselves as long as the only alternative to Communism is a continuation of French Rule."

Viet Minh General Vo Nguyen Giap, a former teacher of history, assembled a citizen army of couriers. They dismantled 37mm anti-aircraft guns, carried them piece by piece on bicycles and on their backs, through jungle hills where they were reassembled in the mouths of caves facing the doomed valley. These included American artillery acquired by Chinese Communists when the Nationalists surrendered. They streamed south from Red China's Yunnan Province to Vietnam's border, lights blacked out at night. Some of the couriers carried food. They trekked and pushed bicycles up the

mountains while sacks of rice settled comfortably into the contours of their backs. General Giap told his soldiers, "Dig now, fight later". French soldiers and Legionnaires heard the scraping. Some of it as close as sixty feet to French trenches. By March 13, 1954, French forces numbered 13,000. Viet Minh: 50,000. General Giap ordered the attack. The heavy artillery, coming from the jungle hills, startled the valley's defenders. Colonel Piroth, the French artillery chief, said, "I am dishonored," and blew himself to pieces with a grenade.

The French Cabinet asked for American B-29s. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles flew to London, requesting joint action. Britain refused, saying Dulles himself couldn't tell if the U.S. Congress would approve.

Tom Sailer descended into the valley, undeterred by black puffs of exploding antiaircraft shells. The gunners put a shell through a tail boom and shot away the rudder, but Tom continued his descent, parachuted seven tons of food and ammunition to the drop zone and then returned to Haiphong.

Secretary of State Dulles again flew to London with the message that the U.S. Congress would approve if Britain's Commonwealth nations would join in, but the people refused to enter the French war.

World War II veteran Paul Holden, on a subsequent sortie, occupied the C-119's right seat, giving Wally Buford, a newly-hired pilot, the experience of command. Buford actually was the most experienced C-119 pilot of all, having commanded the Flying Boxcar during the Korean War and twice received the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC). A 37mm shell pierced the right fuselage wounding Paul Holden's hip and the muscles of his right arm. Buford kept the Boxcar level while managing to tie a makeshift tourniquet to Paul Holden's arm. It was bleeding dangerously. In the process, Buford dropped the seven-ton load on the target and returned safely to Haiphong. French surgeons wanted to amputate Paul's arm, but he asked friends to stay with him that night to keep the French doctors from doing so. And in the morning someone arranged for Paul's transport to Clark Air Base in the Philippines, where American surgeons saved his arm. Historian Bill Leary said, had Buford been on Air Force duty he would have received another DFC. But Wally, a veteran of the Kansas Air Guard, yet a newcomer to CAT, was scarcely known.

Jim McGovern departed Haiphong and flew west for an hour and a half and decided to descend into the valley while exploding antiaircraft shells

bracketed him. On his climb-out, the Reds shot away his elevator control, and he roller-coastered his way home on his trim tab "like a jolly kangaroo". When a war correspondent asked if he was discouraged, he said, "When you're invited to a war you expect to get shot at."

The entire valley had been captured except for its last outpost, Isabelle, defended by Legionnaires. A French Air Force C-47 landed with a Flight Nurse to recover some of the wounded, but after the crew exited the plane, an artillery shell destroyed it. The nurse, Genevieve de Garlard-Terraube, became the only woman in the embattled valley. She cared for the huge number of wounded despite the conditions described by military observer Howard Simpson in his magnificent book, *"Dien Bien Phu: The Epic Battle That America Forgot."*

"Close to five hundred wounded were now shoehorned into the available shelters. Blood, vomit, urine, pus, and solid excreta mixed underfoot with the mud to form a sticky, fly-covered paste. Maggots moved in undulating clusters over the damp mud walls and pulsated under dirty casts and soiled dressings. Normal cleanup tasks had to be abandoned as the exhausted medical team fought to save lives, remove the dead, and prepared the seriously wounded for evacuation."

A French officer pinned the Legion of Honor on the blood-spattered uniform of The Angel of Dien Bien Phu. It was her 29th birthday.

John Plank returned from a sortie to report, "A shell fragment came through the cockpit and cut the handle off my briefcase as neat as if I had done it with a knife."

Colonel Lalande, commanding two thousand Foreign Legionnaires at outpost Isabelle three miles south of General de Castries' command post, requested two artillery pieces. Art Wilson and Jim McGovern, along with their copilots said they'd drop them. Jim McGovern asked for Wally Buford as copilot for the precision delivery.

Each field piece, bound for battle, was chained to three parachutes and placed on its own C-119. Flying low so he'd hit Colonel Lalande's small enclave, Wilson dropped his artillery piece and got out with a damaged tail boom.



Jim McGovern approached from the opposite direction to confuse the gunners. Three miles short of the drop zone, a shell hit his left engine. Oil streamed out. He shut it down and streamlined the propeller. The gunners had his range; he was bracketed. Another shell struck his tail. He lost directional control and spiraled down. He started his left engine and used partial power to control the line of flight. Steve Kusak, in another Boxcar, closed in to help. Oil from Jim's shell-torn engine splattered Kusak's windshield.

"Which way are the hills lowest?" Jim called. "Turn right," said Kusak.

Jim headed for the Lao village of Muong Het, sixty miles ahead, where a WWII Japanese fighter strip paralleled the river. Calm and matter of fact, Jim said, "Looks like this is it, son." It was.

Kusak and Al Pope watched a wing snag the peak of a hill. The C-119 cartwheeled as if in slow motion and exploded into a ball of fire and smoke. Jim McGovern, alias Earthquake Magoon, and Wally Buford, a veteran of Korea and the Kansas Air Guard, were dead at ages 32 and 27. They came within a hair's breadth of surviving. Dien Bien Phu fell the next day.

The Battle of Dien Bien Phu defined the end of France's and the beginning of America's Vietnam. Wallace Buford and James McGovern were the first American airmen to die in that unpopular war. CAT had flown 682 sorties.

# **Three Hours of My Life with a Hero *The Last Mission, The First Step into the Legend***

***by Colonel Jean Arlaux***

*From CAT Association Bulletin, Vol. 29-1, Jan. – Mar. 2004*

May the 6<sup>th</sup>, eve of the final battle of DBP, last step of the Castor military campaign started November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1953, a vast operation with 15,719 French forces involved, under the command of Colonel de Castries, the 56<sup>th</sup> day of the fierce battle with the Viet Minh. It is beginning of afternoon. In Haiphong, stationed on the Cat Bi airstrip, 6 planes have started their engines, ready to take off. Destination: Dien Bien Phu. Target: Isabelle encampment. Operation: Drop Zone supply bailing out. Isabelle, the last standing sentinel, unsunderingly fighting, commanded by Col. Lalande, an outstanding character of the French Foreign Legion. DBP, 350 km west, North of Vietnam, in the French colonial province of High Tonkin, near the Lao border that the French want to keep safe from the enemy advance. DBP a 20 km square piece of land in between hills, a 17 km long by 7 km wide valley watered by the Nam Youm river, each side of which French army has positioned encampments, such as Gabrielle, North, Isabelle, South mountains, peoples by the poppy growers and traders in Meos, in the highlands, and Thais peasants, cultivating rice and raising animals, in the lowlands. DBP, linked to the outside by two roads, RP 41 to the east, Pavie to the west, and a now abandoned airstrip, between the river and the 6 Huguette redoubts. DBP, a peaceful village, in a pastoral valley surrounded by forested low.

DBP, head town of French border administration, close to Laos and China, a strategic location that the French colonial government even envisioned to be an appropriate capital for the Tonkin province.

The battle is raging. It is May the 6<sup>th</sup>. I am not completely aware of the real situation back there. News is scarce.

Monsoon season has begun with its tedious day-long rains causing disastrous mud slides, collapsing of defense bunkers and flooding of trenches. It adds its part to the manned operated organized and carefully planned destruction. DBP, the final stake of the war, where Viet Minh and French are desperately fighting for the final and decisive victory, French soldiers, the elite of the Legionnaires and other expeditionary corps, trapped in their trenches or besieged in those encampments named with female names, such as Isabelle, Eliane, Huguette, Beatrice, Dominique... The Viet Minh massively outnumber the French by thousands, hiding in 400 km of tunnels, limestone cliff caves, slowly, but inexorably, asphyxiating the French positions in their slow but progressive advance, heavily equipped in artillery and men, led by the charismatic General Giap and backed by the Chinese and Russian killing hardware.

Each camp is determined to hold high the victory torch and put a conclusive term to this endless war, at whatever cost. The future of 2 cultural worlds, the eastern and the western, is at its turning point. The heart of history is beating, and a final mortal blow has to be inflicted on one of the protagonists in order to seal, once and for all, an overdue outcome. It is not a matter of days, but of hours. The anxious capitals of the world are holding their breaths.

We are the second in a row, a Fairchild-Packet C-119, tail number 149. The cargo plane is piloted by James McGovern, appropriately nicknamed "Earthquake McGoon", his copilot is Wallace Buford. James McGovern has set records in air mission. He is a WW2 Far East war veteran and has a good experience of the area. Wallace Buford is fairly new in the CAT. They are civilians flying for CAT, assigned by the CIA, to fly food and ammunitions supplies to the French expeditionary corps besieged in the hole of Dien Bien Phu. That day the encampment of Isabelle, 5 km south of DBP near the RP Pavie, is the mission target: bailing out 6000 kgs of supplies. Each pallet has been carefully conveyed into the rear of the plane, bundles are hooked to a ring fixed on a line, strapped

with parachutes, ready to be released by a mechanical device when altitude and precise goal is properly assessed. This is difficult in the present situation, because the massive Viet Minh presence in everywhere, fighting openly or from secret hideouts, shelling from trenches, caved and hill-posted encampments taken from the French. Most of the parachuted packets missed the goal and fall into the enemy lines or get lost.

The three bailers of the C-119 are French servicemen. Bataille, Rescouriou, and Moussa, well-trained paratroopers, wearing olive drab uniforms, red berets, boots. Myself, then second-lieutenant, accompany them as an advisor, or rather an observer. I have no jumping experience. It is my first war act. I am 24 years old, graduated from the prestigious and conservative cadet school of Saint-Cyr. I landed in Saigon April 27th and was assigned to the 5th unit of CRA (Air Supply Company), then was reassigned to the 6th unit and rushed to Haiphong on the 3rd of May to assist an air supply mission as an observer. The captain at the air base recommends me to fly with an American crew, great people he says. So, no hesitation, I choose an American crew. Quick briefing about the current situation in the hole of DBP, then my first encounter with the American crew, 6th of May, on the tarmac. James McGovern, the pilot, creates an unforgettable impression on me right from the first meeting. On the airstrip of Cat Bi his figure is quite heavy, he wears carpet-slippers and a very loose Hawaiian-style shirt, colorful and flowery. He looks at me with a hearty, lovely smile and puts his arm around my shoulder. I am totally under the spell. I was not familiar with this sort of attitude, and discovered a new dimension in human relationships: friendship and informality, sincere kindness, cheerfulness and an unabated optimism in spite of the hardships and gravity of the situation.

With McGovern nothing is to be worried about. "This time, this is it, son," as he would say to a desperate Steve Kusak, who was piloting his aircraft above us a few hours later and urging him

to jump out.

Yes, we would make it, no problem, and we all believe in him, sincerely, truly. McGovern, with the back of his hand, had dispelled all of the tension, frustration and resentment I experienced during the last weeks. His copilot, Wallace Buford, stands beside him, reserved and silent. His quiet and discreet presence counter-balances the commotion provoked by James.

The engines are started now. We have taken our seats in the plane, all is ready. The plane takes off around 15:20, between Kusak the leader, tail number 578, and John Verdi in 3rd position, tail number 532.

The sky is blue, air is warm. Perfect weather for the visibility. Engines are making a rattling noise though, which in a way occupies our minds and evacuates all fear or anxiety. Now that we approach DBP things are changing, air is filled with puffs of smoke caused by the flak bursts, land is covered with white astrawn parachute canopies, vegetation is getting scarce as we get near to the mountainous region of DBP. The battle is fierce, obviously the Viet Minh artillery is in full deployment. I am sitting in the cockpit just behind the pilot.

Radio messages are received and sent. I understand that all is running smoothly. We will reach Isabelle soon. I can see DBP in the distance ahead.

Suddenly, before we can reach the DZ, near Isabelle, and adjust the bailing the cargo out at the right spot and time, the plane is under attack. The shell's explosions cover the engine noise of our own plane.

We are flying at an approximate altitude of less than 7,000 feet, the only possibility left at such a risky situation. Hell is underneath and in the air too, bombs explode in the air, so we have to reach a

fairly high altitude, which of course impedes the visibility and disrupts the targeting schedule of our pallets droppings.

Our planes fly over a massive artillery attack suddenly launched in the afternoon.

A 1st DCA shell hits the left engine, oil leaks out of the tank, the conduit is broken. From the open hole on the damaged body a thin coiling of clear oil is coming out, but no smoke, no flames. A second 37 mm shell hits the stabilizer; cutting it right off in its middle.

I rush to the back and I am relieved to find that my bailers have already kicked out the whole cargo of ammunitions and other supplies. Right decision. No danger of explosion now. My men are quiet, relaxed and wait for the next.

McGovern has to keep his aircraft on the move, in spite of a propeller stopped at operating pitch (cross-position) and the frozen engine. He has to find a direction too, away from the battlefield: a river valley. He maneuvers the aircraft in order to add more power to the right engine and fly over the natural obstacle of a 7,000 foot ridge. We have no choice but to follow the river valley of the Sang Ma to the southeast, and then proceed to the south, crossing over the Vietnam-Lao border on the way. The plane is descending slowly. We are below parachuting altitude now. Anyway, the idea of bailing out never crossed our minds. We are calm in the back of the planes. We four men are just standing or sitting with our parachutes on, silent.

I pray with one of them, Moussa, A Muslim from Malaysia. He asked to join me in my prayers, and both of us share in our hands the Holy Virgin medallion I always wear since I left France for Vietnam. It has been blessed during a Catholic mass performed in Paris, a few days before my departure for war. This medal is very precious for me and will help me all along the way.

Using information given by radio messages from Kusak's

plane above, McGovern plans to land on an abandoned airstrip close to the Nam Ma River. It is spotted precisely at 104-04E, 20-51N. McGovern has made his decision: emergency landing is close at hand. He will make it, for sure. They will make it, as Wallace does not contradict him in his plans.

"This time, this is it, son" are James' last words received on the radio. Destiny has its last words, too, and has decided otherwise.

After 40 minutes of incredibly difficult but successful flight, the plane's control is lost, the left wing hits a tree in its attempt to reach the airstrip half a mile away. The plane crashes on the ground, cartwheels, breaks off into 2 parts and starts burning. The crash occurs at 17:54, near the village of Muong Het, a few yards away from the Nam Het river bank.

The two pilots are killed on the spot, along with 2 kickers. Myself and Moussa lose consciousness. A few days after the crash, we recover and find ourselves in a pirogue, taken as prisoners by Lao soldiers. Moussa, severely wounded, will die a few days later.

That day 196 tons of supplies, the largest drop in 8 days, have been bailed out, by 50 C119s & C-47s.

Later in the evening, at 21:00, the final assault is given. At 23:00, it is the end. Isabelle, after a failed sortie, will stop firing in the early hours of May the 8th.

May the 13th, I will be officially declared missing in action. My wife, then pregnant with my second child, will not have any news about me till my liberation, October the 13th. All along my captivity, the idea that my wife does not know about me, dead or alive, will be mostly painful, more than the hardships of hunger, diseases, solitude or uncertainty.

End of September, all prisoners are released. Lists of prisoners' names are no longer aired on radio. Mine is not announced. Ironically, it will be engraved on a memorial, along with the names of dead soldiers.

Nevertheless, hope will never be abated. I will be among the last prisoners to be liberated October the 13th, after 5 months of captivity in the Lao jungle. Mid-December, I reach Marseilles, my parents will meet me, my wife could not make the journey, too far, too emotional, and she has a new born baby to take care, my daughter Dominique.

Many years after, I will officially be granted the "Croix de la Legion d'Honneur," as a mark of gratefulness and recognition offered to courageous soldiers of all causes, who accept to risk and even to sacrifice their life for the benefit of mankind.

My most sincere hope now is that the two American pilots who flew the C-119 that day of May the 6th and sacrificed their life for France will be at last officially and duly honored as heroes by the French nation, as a mark of respect and gratitude.  
James McGovern, Wallace Buford, Adieu.



# Earthquake's Final Flight

*by Jeffrey W. Bass Oil on Canvas, 2006*



James McGovern was flying a Civil Air Transport aircraft to deliver supplies to French forces in northern Indochina when he was shot down by Communist anti-aircraft fire. This painting is part of CIA's Intelligence Art Gallery.

This painting commemorates air operations of Civil Air Transport (CAT, an Agency proprietary) and its CIA contract pilots in support of French forces at Dien Bien Phu during the final days of the conflict between the French and Viet Minh in 1954. In Fairchild C-119s with US Air Force markings hurriedly painted over with French Air Force roundels, 37 CAT pilots volunteered to fly supplies from the French airbase at Haiphong to the battlefield near Vietnam's border with Laos.

In a concentrated operation to resupply the beleaguered French forces, the pilots and crews made 682 airdrops between 13 March and 6 May 1954, flying through murderous antiaircraft fire that ringed the valley at Dien Bien Phu. On 6 May, the day before the Viet Minh overran the French fortifications, antiaircraft flak hit an engine and control surfaces of the C-119 flown by legendary CAT pilot James McGovern (nicknamed “Earthquake McGoon”) and copilot Wallace Buford, who struggled gallantly to stay airborne. The plane limped over the border into Laos and crashed, killing McGovern and Buford – the first two Americans to die in the early days of a conflict later to be known as the Vietnam War- and two French paratroopers.

The painting depicts McGovern’s C-119 shortly after a flak burst has disabled its port engine over the drop zone at “Isabelle,” an outpost of the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu. After the shell impact, oil streams out of the engine nacelle, causing the engine to seize and its propeller to become frozen at operational pitch in a cross position. Having ejected the plane’s cargo over Isabelle, the cargo kickers sit in the rear opening of the fuselage, resigned to their fate.

The crash site was located in 2002, and DNA tests in 2006 confirmed the recovered remains were McGovern’s. He was buried with honors at Arlington National Cemetery on 24 May 2007. Pieces of his valiant C-119 are now in the CIA Museum collection.

When the painting was unveiled at his residence in 2005, French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte presented the French Republic’s highest award (the Légion d’Honneur) to five of the six (*Editor’s Note: correction – at the ceremony, the French presented six of the seven*) surviving CAT pilots for their heroic performance in the epic battle that marked the end of French colonial rule in Indochina.

# **Flying into History: Wallace Buford's Last Mission ©**

*by J. Arron Small*

*Reprint and online publishing approval granted by J. Arron Small*

Like most people, you have probably never heard of Wally Buford of Kansas City, Kansas, though he deserves to be remembered, since he was one of the first two American combat deaths in Vietnam. He died years before the United States was even officially involved in the complicated Vietnamese conflict and before most Americans had even heard of Vietnam or could find it on a map. But he died doing what he loved most – flying for his country. Wally Buford particularly loved flying in dangerous situations. On his final visit home to see his parents before leaving on his fateful trip to French Indochina, he had a conversation with his mother. “I love flying, Mom. Flying *is* my work,” he told her after she asked why he wanted to do something so dangerous.

Wallace “Wally” Abbott Buford was born on 11 June 1925, in Ogden, Utah, to George and Lillian Buford. When he was ten years old, George and Lillian brought their family back to Kansas City, Kansas, where Wally went on to graduate from Wyandotte High School in 1943. A gifted athlete, he was a standout guard on the Wyandotte Bulldogs’ football team, as well as on the Kansas City Kansas Junior College football team. Not long after his graduation from KCKJC, he enlisted in the U. S. Army Air Corps and was trained at Scott Field (now Scott Air Force Base) near Belleville, Illinois. Commissioned as a second lieutenant, during World War II, Wally piloted B-24 heavy bombers in Europe with the U. S. Eighth Air Force.



**Lt. Wally Buford**

Discharged from the Army in 1946, Wally returned home to Kansas City and eventually enrolled in the University of Kansas in Lawrence, where he pursued a degree in engineering. Unable to shake his love of flying and adventure, he also joined the U. S. Air Force Reserve's 442<sup>nd</sup> Troop Carrier Wing then stationed in Olathe, Kansas, at the former Naval Air Station (NAS). His college career was cut short in 1950 when he was recalled to active duty by what had become the U. S. Air Force and sent to Korea.

During his 29 months serving in Korea, Wally performed his most courageous acts as a pilot to date. He was an artillery spotter flying the AT-6. Flying over 100 missions as a pilot observer, his sole job was to draw Communist anti-aircraft fire so that every pilot who followed him knew where each of the enemy anti-aircraft batteries was located. His dangerous flights earned him the U. S. Air Force's Distinguished Flying Cross. In what would play a big role later in his life, Wally also learned to fly the Fairchild C-119 "Flying Boxcar" while in Korea.

Not too long after returning home from his second war and while on duty at the Olathe NAS, Wally saw a rather plain notice tacked to a bulletin board. The notice that would change his life's trajectory and put Wally in the history books was from a little-known company called Civil Air Transport (CAT). Headquartered, in Taipei, Taiwan, CAT was looking for experienced pilots to help them in the Far East. Without hesitation or even a second thought, and in keeping with his great love of adventure, Wally took the job. He just wasn't cut out to be an engineer.

Civil Air Transport was founded in 1946 by the world-famous former commander of the Flying Tigers (14<sup>th</sup> Air Force, USAAF), General Claire Chennault. The airline's first missions were to airlift United Nations relief and rehabilitation supplies to the China Interior and helping supply the anti-communist forces of Chiang Kai-shek against the Chinese Red Army during the Chinese Civil War. After Chiang's defeat and retreat to Taiwan, CAT became a subsidiary of the Central Intelligence Agency's Airdale Corporation. While maintaining the appearance of an ordinary airline that flew regularly scheduled passenger flights around Asia, simultaneously CAT was also being used in a variety of covert operations for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), during the Chinese Civil War, the Korean War, and eventually the First Indochina War that saw the French defeated and ultimately expelled from Vietnam.

Wally's new job as a CAT pilot took him to a remote, dangerous corner of Vietnam as the First Indochina War reached its dramatic and bloody conclusion. The communist Viet Minh forces—fighting to sever Vietnam from colonial French rule once and for all—had surrounded the last French army on the peninsula at Dien Bien Phu and were close to overwhelming it. Determined to stop yet another communist victory in Asia, the CIA, with Allen Dulles at the helm, engaged in secretly supporting the beleaguered French forces. 37 CAT pilots, between 13 March 1954 and 7 May 1954, flew 682 combat missions to resupply the desperate French troops trapped in the valley. All 37 pilots knew the risks of their mission.

On 24 April 1954, about two weeks after he arrived at the air base in Cat Bi, located near Haiphong, Wally was piloting a “loaned” C-119 over Dien Bien Phu when a 37 mm anti-aircraft shell hit his plane and exploded on the flight deck. The explosion severely wounded his companion, another veteran pilot, and fellow Kansan, Paul Holden from the small town of Greenleaf, Kansas. Despite the shock and the damage to the plane and his own injuries, Wally was able to stabilize the aircraft, tie a tourniquet around Holden's bloody arm, drop the seven tons of vital supplies carried on board to the French, and return to the airbase at Cat Bi. That's when the other CAT pilots learned that, when it mattered most, Wally Buford was the real deal.

They were impressed with his flying skills and his unflappable demeanor in the damaged cockpit.

A photo taken not long after Wally brought the damaged plane and the injured Holden back to base shows Wally standing relaxed with his heavily bandaged hands hidden behind his back and a shy, boyish grin on his face in front of the clearly damaged C-119, as if what he had just done really was no big deal. The hole in the side of the plane was bigger than a beach ball. He deliberately hid his hands so that when he sent the photo to his parents they would not be alarmed.



**Wally Buford in front of damaged C-119**

Wally's skills that day made headlines around Asia. In his last letter home, trying to reassure his parents in his usual understatement mixed with a little swagger, he wrote that his secret flights weren't really *that* dangerous: "My name was [all] over the news broadcast from Hong Kong several days ago; you may never hear about what happened but there is nothing to worry about anyway."

Despite that harrowing flight, CAT continued its supply missions over Dien Bien Phu. On 6 May 1954, Wally was the co-pilot in C-119, No. 149. That morning the China-Burma Theater veteran, James B. McGovern, Jr.

(famously known all over the Far East as “Earthquake McGoon” of the Fourteenth Air Force) piloted the ill-fated aircraft that was trying to drop a howitzer and ammunition to the surrounded French forces. The anti-aircraft fire over the drop zone was thick; Viet Minh gunners had plenty of time to zero in on the first aircraft, and Wally and McGovern were in the second plane in a flight of six. Their plane took a direct hit to its left engine and moments later another anti-aircraft round hit No. 149’s horizontal stabilizer. The damaged stabilizer made it very difficult to keep the aircraft level.

Despite the damage, McGovern kept the plane flying for nearly forty minutes, out of the valley filled with anti-aircraft guns and Viet Minh. With only one working engine, C-119 No. 149 flew seventy-five miles into Laos while slowly losing altitude. Their goal was to reach a remote small landing strip that had been created for such emergencies as theirs. Finally, just a few hundred yards short of their goal, No. 149 was so low that a wing clipped a tree and it spun into the ground near the village of Muang Et in Houaphan Province and very near the Nam Ma river.

Wally and McGovern were killed instantly as their aircraft was ripped in half. Two of the French aircrew were also killed; one more died shortly after, and just one, 1<sup>st</sup> LT Jean Arloux, survived to tell the heroic tale of Wally and McGovern’s final flight to Dien Bien Phu. Due to an unfortunate clerical error, Wally’s parents learned of his death from a news bulletin on the radio as they were sitting down to breakfast back home in Kansas City.

The very next day, 7 May 1954, after a punishing 57-day siege, the French army of almost 12,000 soldiers surrendered. Although the United States eventually recovered McGovern’s remains in 2002 and interred them in Arlington National Cemetery in 2007, Wally’s remains have yet to be found. He is still in Laos waiting to return home.

Very few people get to follow their life’s passions as unwaveringly as Wallace Abbott Buford—and that’s why everyone needs to remember Wally’s passion and bravery in the cockpit as a patriotic American pilot who

flew into history. “He would have done it again without hesitation,” Roger Buford said of his older brother. “He loved being up in the clouds.”



## **CAT Evacuations of North Vietnam and Operations in Laos**

*From History Project CAT Association Bulletin Aug – Dec 2014 by Felix Smith*

1954. Dien Bien Phu falls on the 7th of May, the morning after James B. “Earthquake” McGovern Jr. and Wallace A. Buford are shot down.

Observers believe the crew perished in the explosion, but no official of CAT or the CIA notifies the next of kin even though security is not an issue. Photographs in Life Magazine and media throughout the world present CAT as a commercial airline registered in China. The actual owner of CAT remains a closely guarded secret. McGovern's brother, John – a sports writer for an Elizabeth, New Jersey newspaper – listens to the 5:00 A.M. news in his office. He learns of his brother's death and hurries home to keep his parents' radio off until he can tell them in his own gentle words.

Indochina guerrillas have whipped a major European Colonial power. A pall hangs over France. Notre Dame holds a special mass. Who can perceive that American children, then in kindergarten, will grow up to die in Vietnam?

On July 21, 1954, a Geneva peace agreement temporarily divides Vietnam at its 17th parallel of latitude. France agrees to withdraw from Indochina. North Vietnam temporarily becomes the Viet Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam, led by Ho Chi Minh, while the South is temporarily ruled by Emperor Bao Dai and Ngo Dinh Diem, a Christian poster boy of U.S. Senators. Even though the Geneva Conference stipulates that elections will occur in 1956 to determine who will rule a unified Vietnam, it precipitates one of the largest migrations in human history. Of Indochina's 1,600,000 Catholics, all but 400,000 live in Red Vietnam where their votes will vanish. CAT flies 30,000 to Saigon. Another 350,000 Catholics flee south via French and U.S. Navy troop ships. But Ngo Dinh Diem refuses to allow the promised elections. The boondoggle leads to the 2nd Indochina War, known to Americans as The Vietnam War. CAT employees again witness and participate in horrendous events which change the face of Asia.

The Kingdom of Laos parallels Vietnam's western boundary, many of the miles along the Mekong River, the same shape as Italy without the boot. The Geneva Conference assures its independence as a Kingdom. Neighbors call it The Land of a Thousand Elephants. After WWII, the Allies dispatch

Chinese troops to the Kingdom to accept the Japanese surrender, but the Japanese have departed. The Chinese remain to loot the peaceful land. The notorious Ho Chi Minh Trail from Red China to Vietnam cuts across the Kingdom. It draws guerrillas and bombs. At Vientiane King Vatthana steps from his private C-47, followed by stunning women in pastel-colored silk sarongs with gold embroidery. An oompah band plays off rhythm and out of tune. Comic opera, it seems, until King Vatthana speaks, and tears flow down his cheeks. When I read the translation in a Bangkok newspaper I ask, who among us shall not weep?

"Lao People," the King had said..."Our country is the most peaceful country in the world...We have always strictly applied the teachings of Buddha concerning forgiveness, gentleness, charity...At no time has there ever arisen in the minds of the Lao People the idea of coveting another's wealth, quarreling with their neighbors; much less fighting them. And yet, for the past twenty years, our country has known neither peace nor security.....The misfortunes that have befallen us have been the disunity of the Lao on one hand, and the foreign interference on the other. Foreign interests do not care about our interests or peace; they are concerned only with their own interests."

I want to see more of Laos. Captain Kong Le, born in 1934, a paratroop officer of the Royal Lao Army is young; but while daydreaming in his birthplace, Viengchan, he envisions a frog swallowing a snake. The omen gives him energy to dedicate his life to the destruction of the Soviet-backed Viet Minh.

Hmongs – the hill people – fascinate us. Their leader, General Vang Pao, has a personal chauffeur. He is Captain Fred Walker, our red-headed Yankee Pilot from Boston. His vehicle is a Helio Courier with wing flaps, spoilers and a powerful engine which help Fred to perch like a bird on a mountain top. When General Vang Pao wants to confer with villagers where there's no air strip, he drops a few picks and shovels, and "Captain Fred" soon has another airport.

The villagers perhaps migrated from Tibet centuries ago. They catch on fast. A wind sock is the key. When it stretches horizontally and whips in the wind, crosswise to the runway, Captain Fred doesn't land. But a limp sock is a cinch. The Hmongs place rocks in their socks. Fred's New England courtliness, six-foot four-inch frame, fractured French lingo, a few Lao words

and gentle gestures convince the Hmong mountaineers that a gusty crosswind can harm General Vang Pao's airplane.

These new allies – Captain Kong Le holding the Pathet Lao at bay; and General Vang Pao, engaging two divisions of Viet Cong who can otherwise kill American soldiers in Vietnam – are our new allies. Captain Frederick Frye Walker, a direct descendant of General Frye (a Revolutionary War hero) is Chief Pilot – actually ambassador and director of operations of that distant area. One of his pilots – a fellow Yankee, Capt. Benjamin Franklin – is a direct descendant of America's legendary original.

The Kingdom of Laos, The Land of a Thousand Elephants, is our new battlefield.

## Seoul Inaugural Flight

*From CAT Bulletin Vol. 7, No. 10, October 1954*

CAT's luxurious four-engine Douglas aircraft, B-1002, took off from Taipei on the night of September 8, 1954, on an inaugural flight to Seoul to mark an auspicious event in the history of CAT.

The extension of CAT's "route of the Island Chain" to Seoul. Scheduled to commence on July 28, 1950, was disrupted by the Korean War causing the fall of the Seoul Airport to the Communists on June 29 of the same year.

With Capt. Roy Watts at the controls and "Pinky" Pinkava as First Officer co-pilot, the plane arrived in Tokyo before dawn the next morning. Among those on board were President A.T. Cox, Vice-President C.J. Rosbert, Chief Pilot Paul Holden, Special Assistant to President, John H. Mason, and Taipei PRO photographer Dennis Chin. Other members of the crew included flight operator K.S. Wong, flight attendant Frank Chien, and flight stewardess Josephine Yue.

The crew, which took over before resuming the flight to Korea at 8:30 a.m., comprised Capt. Eric Schilling, co-pilot S. Pan, F/O P.C. Mok, Flt. Engineer Rudolph Basco, Chief F/A Harry Kwan, Chief F/S Doris Chao, and F/S/ Eva Kiang.

As the flight winged its way through the clear blue skies of Japan, all aboard enjoyed the in-flight breakfast prepared by CAT's efficient purser and pretty stewardesses.

Before arriving at Seoul, the passengers were served the inaugural flight luncheon consisting of cold bouillon, cold plate of ham, cheese, turkey, sliced beef, rolls, relish, peace pie, coffee, and tea – this was a specialty of Bill Ellsworth.

The Korean coastline appeared on the horizon shortly after noon and by 1:15 p.m. the CAT plane had landed on the Seoul City Airport. The arrival of the Free China Flag Carrier brought international goodwill and close friendship to the people of war-torn Korea.

# **First in the Far East**

## **Civil Air Transport maintenance facilities certificated by the United States Civil Aeronautics Administration**

*From CAT bulletin, Vol. 7, No. 10, Oct. 1954*

Civil Air Transport was awarded a U.S. CAA Certificate for its Tainan (Formosa) Maintenance and Supply facilities by Mr. Harold J. Carrick, Chief Advisor, U.S. CAA International Field Office, Tokyo, recently

. The Certificate makes CAT the first and only U.S. CAA-approved repair station in the Far East with ratings for all of the following: Class IV Air Frame, Class II Propeller, Class I, II, II, Radio, Class I, II, II, IV, Instrument, Class I, II, II Accessory.

At presentation ceremonies held at CAT's Tainan Base, Mr. Carrick stated that he had presented similar certificates to a number of repair stations outside the U .S.A. but, in his 24 years of service, he had never been more pleased with the combination of spirit, facilities, equipment and personnel he had encountered in CAT. He said that CAT's Maintenance installation compared most favorably with the better installations in the U.S. He added that he was "particularly impressed" with the enthusiasm of everyone in CAT and the remarkable way that all of its employees seemed to work together as one big happy family.

Accepting the Certificate on behalf of CAT, Mr. Hugh L. Grundy, CAT Vice-President for Technical Services, paid tribute to the part each individual in CAT had played in making the award possible and pledged that the principles for which the Certificate stood would be upheld.

Also present at the certification ceremonies was Mr. Frederic H. Stephens, Chief, Civil Aviation Group, U.S. Operations Mission to China who examined electronics facilities. The balance of the inspections were performed by Mr. Joseph G. Markovic, Aviation Safety Advisor, U.S. CAA.

# **CAT Growth on Taiwan**

*From CAT Bulletin Vol. 7, No. 10 October 1954*

It has now been five years since Civil Air Transport inaugurated its first flight on Taiwan in July 1949 and began rebuilding its maintenance and operations departments at their present-day level. Today CAT is an efficient and systematically run airline that is not only outstanding in the Far East but compares favorably with the best world airlines. The airline has played a very important part in strengthening ties between the peoples of the Orient and has assisted in the growing economic stability of the Taiwan government through its domestic and international flights. Recently CAT has been awarded a citation for aviation safety by the Chinese CAA, the first such award made in Free China. In addition, the United States CAA, in awarding CAT a certificate of approval for its maintenance department on August 10, 1954, focused worldwide attention on the fact that the Far East now has superior maintenance facilities. To have achieved this high standard of operation in such a short space of time and under conditions made difficult by the lack of many essentials is proof of CAT efficiency.

## **Evacuation from the Mainland**

As the Iron Curtain rolled down on the Chinese mainland, CAT of necessity moved its personnel, planes, and maintenance shops from Shanghai to Canton, Canton to Kunming, Kunming to Hainan Island, and finally to Taiwan. To those who are aware of the importance of permanent and well-equipped maintenance facilities to a successful airline, it is understandable that CAT had a difficult time during 1948-49 when the whole operation had to evacuate from one town to another a few jumps ahead of the Communists.

## **Expansion of Routes**

When the airline moved its headquarters to Taiwan in April 1950, there were no established international scheduled air routes. Most flights were on a charter basis. Through the efforts of General Chennault, Mr. Whiting Willauer, and other officers of the company, routes were gradually established to link Free China with other non-communist areas of the Far East. First to be inaugurated was the domestic route (the Round-the-Island flight) to bring fast communication facilities to the residents of Taiwan Island. Schedules to

Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand, Okinawa, and the Philippines followed later. These schedules have brought a steady increase in business not only for Civil Air Transport but for the people it serves well.

In 1952, CAT extended its scheduled routes to Pusan, South Korea thus enabling CAT to offer a through flight from Bangkok to Pusan via several intermediary points. With a view to rendering a more comfortable and competitive service to the public in the Far East, CAT inaugurated its DC-4 service on the "Route of the Island Chain" on Sept. 19, 1952. This luxurious Skymaster flight was scheduled between Hong Kong, Taipei, Tokyo, and Pusan.

### **Evacuation of Guerrillas**

1953 was a difficult year for CAT. It was then that CAT carried out the historic mission of evacuating a large number of Chinese guerillas from Lampang, Thailand to Taipei. CAT pilots and flight and ground crews showed great enthusiasm in making this project a success through their unstinting efforts. Records show that as of March 23 this year 5,704 guerillas including dependents and babies had been carried without the injury or death of a single person. This safety record, noteworthy in itself, actually is only a part of CAT's seven-year safety record. Throughout 1953 CAT charter flights carried all types of cargo in the Orient, the Middle East, and up to Europe's North Sea Coast, bringing the flag of Free China to many parts of the world. In July 1953 CAT established a scheduled weekly flight to Manila, thus bringing Free China in direct air communication with most of the free countries in the Far East outside the Iron Curtain.

### **New Taichung Schedule**

Nine months of 1954 have elapsed. As the need of the traveling public in the Far East continued to increase and to do its part to build Taiwan's economy, CAT added to its air fleet on March 26 another, new, well-equipped Skymaster with a modern interior designed by its own Technical Services. CAT has also increased the Taipei-Hualien schedule by two extra shuttles each week at the demand of air-minded customers. Since May 11, 1954, CAT has been operating 11 flights per week, including the 6 regular round-the-island flights, between Taipei and Hualien. On August 17 this year CAT added a new schedule, Taipei-Taichung-Taipei, providing tourists and businessmen with a quick means of reaching the central town of the island. It

is the 6<sup>th</sup> city in Free China served by CAT on a scheduled basis and the arrival of CAT in Taichung was most welcome to its citizens.

### **Aviation Safety Award**

The month of August saw two outstanding events in CAT history: (1) the award of China's first citation for aviation safety to CAT by the Chinese CAA on August 8 and (2) the award of the U.S. CAA Certificate to CAT for the quality and high standard of its maintenance facilities at Tainan on August 10. CAT's safety record shows no loss of passenger lives during seven years of operation. This fact becomes more significant when the situation is visualized in the light of some traffic statistics. In the past four and one-half years 238,542 commercial passengers travelled by CAT. The total commercial passenger traffic was 88,202,619 passenger miles, which means the average distance traveled by each of the passengers was 370 miles. The total commercial cargo traffic during the same period was 8,237,327 ton-miles, which is equivalent to 2,750 motor truck loads carried over a distance of 1,000 miles.

Mr. Harold J. Carrick, in presenting the U.S. CAA certificate stated that he had presented similar certificates to a number of repair stations outside the U.S.A., and in his 24 years of service, he had never been more pleased with the combination of spirit, facilities, equipment and personnel he had encountered in CAT. He further stated that CAT's maintenance installations compared most favorably with the better installations in the U.S.

### **Seoul Inaugural Flight**

On September 9, 1954, CAT opened a new air route to Seoul, Korea – the 13<sup>th</sup> station on CAT's international routes in the Orient. This brings to culmination the negotiations started in early 1950 to establish communication between Seoul and Taipei which had to be shelved because of the Korean War.

### **The Orient's Own – CAT**

So much for the past and the present. As to the future, we confidently expect it to be bright and more promising. With the able management of the various efficient divisions -- Operations, Sales, Traffic, Promotion, General Maintenance, Aircraft Maintenance, Supply, Personnel, General Affairs, Secretariat, and Security -- the reputation for being a successful, dependable,



and efficient airline in the countries we serve will undoubtedly grow with the march of time.

## **CAT Reorganizes**

*From CAT Bulletin Vol.8, No. 4 April 1955*

On February 28, 1955 Company officials completed a reorganization of CAT to meet the requirements of pertinent laws of China, namely the Civil Aviation Code, the Company Law, the Foreign Investment Statute, and the terms of the International Civil Aviation Organization. The two new Companies resulting from the reorganization commenced business on March 1st. This reorganization was successfully carried out with the full approval of the Government ministries concerned. The air transport business heretofore operated by Civil Air Transport, CAA-MOC, is succeeded by the newly incorporated Civil Air Transport Company Limited, and will as before embody scheduled and non-scheduled domestic services as well as international services by designation of the agencies concerned of the Chinese Government.

Civil Air Transport Company Limited is a Chinese Company limited by shares incorporated under the Company Law. The major portion of the stock is held by Chinese private individuals and a minor portion by American interests. The Chinese Government has made no investment in the Company. The majority of the Board of Directors is Chinese, as is the Chairman. Besides the registration certificate it holds as a company limited by shares, CATCL holds a Civil Air Transport enterprise permit issued by the Ministry of Communications. In addition, it holds air route licenses issued by the CAA for all domestic and international routes previously served by Civil Air Transport, CAA-MOC.

The Asiatic Aeronautical Company Limited is also a Chinese company limited by shares incorporated under the Company Law and the Foreign Investment Statute with stock held by private American investors. General Chennault was elected Chairman of the Board. The terms of its incorporation certificate permit AACL to conduct commercial aviation business including aircraft maintenance activities. AACL will also assist CATCL in the execution of the airline operation. The capital structure of both new Companies was designed in line with modern principles of corporation financing. Although the registered capital in both cases was NTW\$400,000, the actual capital assets invested in each company are considerably greater.

The air fleet of the former CAT-CAA-MOC will continue to be used by CATCL in the operation of its authorized routes.

The Directors of CATCL are Dr. Wang Wen-san, General Chennault, Chu Yi-cheng, Chen Yen-chun, and Hugh L. Grundy. Dr. Wang was elected Chairman of the Board and Mr. Grundy was elected Managing Director. There were no major changes in personnel operating the airline and officials of both Companies stated that the public may rest assured of the continuance of the same efficient service and high safety standard that CAT has hitherto offered and also of the high-quality maintenance work which has won international renown.

## **But Memories Linger On**

*From CAT Bulletin Vol. 9, No. 10, Oct. 1956 by W.D. Bigony*

When reminiscing of CAT's early days, my thoughts always drift to the original CAT insigne, which was the side view of pussy cat, half tiger and half house cat with its head turned to expose his long whiskers and an expression as though he were the "Cat's Meow." Over the cat, the Chinese sun and American star denoted the Sino-American relationship of CNRRA (Chinese National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) Air Transport, CAT's original name. The artist who designed the insigne used today is our Acting Traffic Manager in Bangkok, Bruno Braga, who, back in 1946 was beating out the rhythm on a base fiddle in his brother's Shanghai orchestra. The complete paint design for the CAT fleet was submitted by Bruno during a contest in which 32 other designs were considered, and the blueprints were carried to Manila so the aircraft could be painted before departing for China. We all were naturally very proud when the first planes arrived in Hong Kong and Shanghai with the brightly painted insigne.

To relate some of the early flight experiences, surely General Chennault will never forget the time when he visited the cockpit of a C-47 during a flight and noticed the airspeed indicator was at zero. The Captain calmly explained that in the rush to get off before the weather closed in and grounded the flight, the removal of the pilot covers had been overlooked. Since the weather was bad at the departing station he figured that rather than return and make an instrument let-down he might as well proceed to their destination and make an instrument let-down there. Since the crew showed no sign of alarm or concern the General didn't seem the least bit worried either. The let-down and landing were accomplished with the use of power setting and aircraft attitude alone. Some of you didn't know a plane could fly with zero airspeed, on the indicator anyway. Now we have checklists.

Then there was the time when one Captain had three single engines in one day flying fully loaded between Mukden and Chengchow. Needless to say, he was the most qualified single-engine pilot twin engine equipment the Company had.

I've heard of numerous cases of pilots taking off with a flat tail wheel tire but the first and only known time of a pilot taking off in a C-47 with one

of the main gear tires flat was the time a CAT Captain did it at Tientsin, when the Communists were approaching the field where the C-47 had been grounded for a main wheel tire. Nothing like the stimulant of machine guns.

There were very few navigational aids in the mainland interior and pilots flew and navigated mostly from experience and a sixth sense as to the winds. CAT flew 'round the clock' and needed only crude flare pots for runway lights. The other two airlines in China were mostly daylight operators. CAT gained experience in moving all types of cargo and passengers with such speed and efficiency that no other carrier was ever able to match our record for mass movements. Turnarounds, which included off-loading a full load and reloading a full load were generally performed in 30 minutes, and at times were done in as little as 15 to 20 minutes. Crews would cable in for chow to be ready and waiting as there wouldn't be time for a quick snack if you waited until arrival to order.

On occasion, CAT pilots and ground personnel lived in tents, like gypsies. As there was no water at one base of operation, we used beer for drinking, washing, brushing our teeth, etc.

The currency in China used to change so rapidly that if one stalled in paying his bill the actual cost of the purchase could be reduced by half or more. By the time one paid his long-distance phone bills at the end of the month each call to the States cost only a few cents.

Flight crews used to double as Traffic and Sales men. They would generate a load, fill the manifest on the elevator, and help load and unload- besides flying the load to its destination.

In the early days, it was acceptable if flights departed within two hours of schedule. Now a flight is permitted 2 minutes grace beyond scheduled departure time, or somebody must answer for it. We have earned the reputation of being the most dependable and reliable carrier in the Far East.

On the mainland, one could tell when the Communists would be approaching and CAT evacuating by checking the progress on the permanent nose hangars being built. By the time the nose hangar was completed, all would be ready to evacuate, for the time was at hand. We have no present plans for constructing permanent nose hangars.

## ***CAT With Many Lives***

*From CAT Bulletin, Vol. 9, No. 10, Oct. '56 by C. J. Rosbert*

The most interesting feature of CAT during the past ten years is its amazing survival of the Communist overrun of the China mainland and its gradual transformation from a non-scheduled cargo carrier to the best regional scheduled passenger airline in the Far East.

That is a lot to say in one breadth, but it is almost impossible to name any one specific thing that can be called an interesting event in our ten-year history. We are all aware of the literally hundreds of events, known not only to us but throughout the world, any one of which might logically be termed to be such an event.

CAT got its start despite the bitter and prolonged objections filed by the two large existing carriers in China at the time, the China National Aviation Corporation and the Central Air Transport Corporation. We not only overcame their objections but defeated them in all phases of their formidable competition before their defection to the Communists in November 1949.

History pages are filled with factual stories of CAT planes being the “last ones out” or “the first ones in” during evacuations and supply missions. Each of us knows of many of the flight and ground crews who worked “round the clock” to keep the planes flying as time was running out.

CAT's early history is packed with emotion and the stirring heroism of its men and women.

Survival of the first six months of 1950, real dark days for us all, was a display of the real heart and strength of CAT. When everyone had seemingly given up Taiwan, we simply tightened our belts for the lean times ahead and pushed out.

The Korean War again tested our strength to the breaking point, but we emerged stronger and with the beginning of a genuine scheduled airline. True, we faced formidable competition from the large international carriers with their modern four-engine aircraft while CAT had mostly C-46 Commandos.

But we concentrated on service and retained our reputation for reliability which, together, overcame most of the competitive differences.

Today, with four-engine equipment, with the same excellent service and reliability, and with our DC-6-type interiors done in our shops at Tainan and Kaohsiung, we can proudly say we have the best regional airline operation in the Far East.

That, in as few words as possible, is my impression of the most interesting thing about CAT.