

War Stories (Cont.)

who was 7 years old on that time, told me a month ago that he saw the pilots eating Chinese rice noodle but did not know how, and my grandfather was trying to show them how to do that.

One of the days, my grandfather took the pilots to a school nearby to attend a welcome meeting. The students stood in a line like a “U” to listen to the pilots’ short speeches. After their speeches, the students asked the pilots some questions. One of the questions was that how the pilots could see a ground target during the night. Mr. Yi-shen Zhang, who is living in Taiwan now, was one of the students and remembered clearly this question.

Before they left, the pilots gave my grandfather their names and addresses in the US in the event my grandfather would have an opportunity to visit them someday. My grandfather made arrangements for the pilots to go to Hen Can, and later on to the commander office of the 5th Chinese infantry. From there, they went to the city of Chongqing, and later on to the unit in Kuen Ming.

Not long after the pilots left, the Japanese went to the county (about 50 miles away from the Japanese’s unit) and burned my grandfather’s house (a big ranch with more than thirty rooms). It is unknown whether it was related to the experience of my grandfather with the three pilots or not.

When the pilots left, my grandfather gave them some money and a pair of Chinese traditional shoes. He requested the pilots to pass the money and shoes to my older uncle who was studying at a college in the city of Chongqing. During the time, there was no mail delivery between the county and the city due to the war. The pilots went back to their unit through Chongqing, and my uncle did receive the money and the shoes. After receiving the money, my older uncle invited another uncle to have a dinner. This uncle is still alive and remembered this story.

When the American pilots were in my grandfather’s home, my mother was in another town and did not know about this. To my grandfather, assisting in sending the pilots back to the unit and hosting them at home were something he should do, and he did not talk about that to those who did not know, especially after 1949 when the communist took the power in China. As for the pilots’ names and

addresses, my grandfather could not keep them for long because the Americans were the enemy of the communist government after 1945 during the war in China, especially after 1949 when the Communist took the power. In addition, there was no motivation for him to keep them as he thought he would never have a chance to visit the US, and he would never think his grandson could come to the US 45 years later.

At the end of January this year, one of our relatives mentioned unintentionally the pilots’ story to my father when they had a conversation about my grandfather. Later, my father contacted our relative in Taiwan who was supposed to know more about this. The information I wrote is based on what the relative’s recall.

I am very glad to know that my grandfather helped save the three pilots and hope to see the three pilots to know more about my grandfather who I have never seen (I was born after he died) and the pilots’ story. I wonder if we cannot find the three pilots’ names, can we find the information from a military record in some way that may have the information on the shot-down plane and the survived pilots or their family members.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at nlw908@yahoo.com or at (704) 321-9515.

Mark Li

Aviation Trulisms

If you’re ever faced with a forced landing at night, turn on the landing lights to see the landing area. If you don’t like what you see, turn ‘em back off.

A check ride ought to be like a skirt, short enough to be interesting but still long enough to cover everything.

Speed is life, altitude is life insurance. No one has ever collided with the sky.

Always remember you fly an aeroplane with your head, not your hands.