

Chinese American Hero: Moon Fun Chin

(source: <http://www.trueversy.com/chinese-american-hero-moon-fun-chin-3/>, extracted on 6th September 2010)

This is Week 17 of AsianWeek's salute to Chinese American heroes, in strategic partnership with Chinese American Heroes, a 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to documenting the contributions of Chinese Americans to America and the world.

Last week we saluted a few of our heroic veterans and one special non-veteran (Mr. Wen Tsing Chow) who had made a stupendous contribution to the national security of America with his engineering brilliance. That was followed by US Army Captain Francis Wai who made the ultimate sacrifice with bravery above and beyond the call of duty. Next we honored US Navy Rear Admiral Gordon Pae ia Chung Hoon for extraordinary coolness, courage and leadership of the USS Sigsbee while under intense enemy attack in World War II. Then we applauded US Air Force Lt Colonel Frank S. Fong for outstanding combat pilot skills for shooting down two German Luftwaffe fighters and after sustaining serious injury, commanded the Fifth European Air Rescue Squadron which rescued over 1,000 downed air crew during World War II.

This week we want to salute more heroic veterans and other special people who have also made major contributions to our national security.

We lead off with another unheralded and virtually unknown hero who had undertaken many dangerous missions and along the way saved many lives. He is 95 year old Captain Moon Chin who is not a military officer, but was an airlines Captain who began flying when he was 20 years old left the US to join the Chinese National Aviation Corporation (CNAV), a subsidiary of Pan American Airlines which then was taken over by the Chinese Nationalist Air Force in partnership with the US government. Chin rescued many US Army Air Corps personnel, US Air Force air crews, and hundreds of civilians fleeing the Japanese military advances in China and throughout SE Asia. In 1942, he air

evacuated Lt Colonel James Doolittle (which enabled Colonel Doolittle to eventually become General [4 star] Doolittle) who had just bombed Tokyo and was being ferociously pursued by an angry Japanese ground forces. Chin flew Doolittle to safety in Calcutta. There were many American and a few Canadian pilots who joined CNAV to help the war effort against the Japanese invaders, but Capt Chin was the only volunteer pilot who flew from 1933 until the end of WW II. He personally mapped the Himalayas (the so called 'Hump') which had to be used to transport fuel and supplies to the resistance as the Japanese had cut off all other logistics routes. Be sure to read his bio for other heroic stories about Capt Moon Chin and how he was credited with military service even though was never in the military.

Following Capt Chin, we have another unheralded heroic veteran, US Air Force Colonel Richard F. Hum, who served three wars, WWII, the Korean War and Vietnam. Hum's major contribution was actually during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 when he personally briefed then President John F. Kennedy on the significance of the surveillance photographs taken from U-2 and other platforms which revealed the Russian ICBMs and ground support equipment that had been installed in Cuba and a real military threat to the national security of America. In his military career, Colonel Hum received 5 Legions of Merit awards, an extraordinary achievement and unmatched at the time.

Next, we have another unknown and forgotten hero, Major Arthur Chin (a colleague, but not a relative of Capt Moon Chin), who was also a volunteer to left the safety of Portland, Oregon, to become a fighter pilot hunting for Japanese Zeroes. He found a few, and shot down eight (8) Japanese fighters, becoming the first American Ace, but this was before Pearl Harbor, and the US had not officially started fighting Japan, so his heroic battle achievements are absent from US military records. Chin suffered severe burns over much of his anatomy after a crash landing and had a difficult life after the war.

Our next heroic veteran has been introduced before but that was because of his civilian service as the first Chinese American judge. Judge Delbert Wong, before his civil service, was a World War II navigator on B-17 bombers who flew 30 bombing missions into

German territory. In his class of 30 navigators, only two survived their high risk bombing missions.

Our last hero for this week was also introduced before, and she is Ms. Heidi Shyu who was appointed Chief, United States Air Force Scientific Advisory Board, reporting directly to the US Air Force Chief of Staff and Secretary of the Air Force. For a woman and an Asian woman to hold such a high level technical position is most unusual. That person would not only have an extraordinary scientific mind, but also be extremely capable to manage and successfully complete the complex systems development requirements of the US Air Force. Her span of control would have included the most advance aircraft and unmanned aircraft developments, but also space communications, computer systems and other highly classified projects requiring more than a Top Secret clearance.

Today, Chinese American scientists and engineers comprise about 15% of the technicians and engineers in our national laboratories including research centers like the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center. With parents who strongly encourage their young people to study hard and study math, Chinese Americans will continue to make more than their portion of contributions to our nation's scientific leadership and keep our national security strong.

For additional information about Chinese American heroes, please visit the website at www.chineseamericanheroes.org .

Name in English: Moon Fun Chin

Name in Chinese: 陈文宽 [陳文寬]

Name in Pinyin: Chén Wénkuān

Gender: Male

Birth Year: 1913

Birth Place: Toisan, Guangtung, China

Rescue Pilot honored by Congress

Profession(s): Aircraft Mechanic, Pilot, Airline Executive

Education: 1930, Public School 18, Baltimore, MD; 1933, Commercial Pilot License, Curtis Wright Flying School, Baltimore, MD.

Award(s): 1995 Distinguished Flying Cross; 1995 Air Medal; Presidential Unit Award; World War II Victory Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with 1 silver star, United States Government.

Contribution(s): At the age of 20, Moon Chin went to Hong Kong and joined China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC). He was initially a copilot, then became a captain in 1936 and flew transport missions before and during WW II. He charted and flew many dangerous flights over 'the Hump,' the Himalayas, which are the highest mountain ranges in the world. In March 1942, he safely evacuated Lt Colonel James Doolittle from Kunming in China, transiting from Burma to Calcutta in India after the famous Doolittle bombing raid on Tokyo. Moon and the other brave Hump pilots, both civilian and military, took tremendous risks delivering the critical war materials that helped stop the Imperial Japanese military attempt to conquer China and South Asia. Flying in unarmed cargo planes with minimal communications, limited navigation tools, and flying missions in bad weather or at night to avoid Japanese fighters, many hundreds of flights disappeared, the only sign of their passing being the wreckage littering countless Himalayan mountainsides. Moon and his colleagues were truly brave heroes.

Moon Chin also rescued many US Army Air Corps, US Air Force, and Republic of China (Taiwan) Air Force crew members oftentimes during very dangerous periods of open war such as during WWII or the secret battles of the Cold War up until 1955. His most daring rescue occurred in 1954 when a US Air Force C-119 crew bailed out over the sea in bad weather between Guam and Taiwan. Chin, then the Chairman of the Board for Fu Hsing Airlines, personally flew a PBY Catalina flying boat, found the crew, landed in the water, and rescued 6 of them in stormy sea conditions. Two USAF amphibious aircraft at the scene had refused to land due to the turbulent waters, but Chin ignored the danger and landed anyway.

The rescue effort took over 5 hours because landing and taking off again was so difficult. One of the rescued air crew, Major A W Gristad, described Capt Chin's skill in landing and taking the seaplane off as "the best piece of flying I have ever seen. Captain Chin truly lived up to his reputation as the best 'water man' between the West Coast of America and the China coast." Joining in the praise of USAF aircrews, General William Chase, Chief of the Military Advisory Group at the US Embassy in Taipei added his own commendations to Chin.

Much later, by US Senate resolution, Capt Moon Chin and other Hump pilots received the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal in 1995. As a sign of the tremendous respect felt by the US military for him, Moon was credited for US military service from 1941-1945, even though he never served in the military.