

[HOME](#)[Fly the Hump](#)[Photos](#)[News Articles](#)[Families](#)

CHRONOLOGICAL EVENTS OF GORDON POON (PAN GUODING)

[Tibet - Top of the World](#)[CNAC Stories](#)[Boeing School in Oakland](#)**1915**

Born in Hong Kong.
Father is the inventor of the famous Chinese Chan Pui Mui / Preserved Plum, a classic Chinese snack.

Sept 1935

Came to the USA (Seattle, Washington) to study & learn to fly.
Attended the University of Washington studying engineering. Met Esther Chinn (first wife) while coaching basketball in Seattle.
Flew Stunt exhibitions at different country fairs

1936

Attended the Boeing School of Aeronautics at the Oakland Airport. (See extract from MSS "Wings Over San Francisco Bay" by R. Reuther 1/28/1999).

1939

Unable to get a job here, Gordon took his family and moved back to Hong Kong with wife Esther & daughters: Connie and Judy

1/1940 to 11/1949

Became a pilot for the CNAC (Chinese National Aviation Corp)
When the Japanese invaded China he went to Kuming to support the Flying Tigers. Then to India and flew the Humps to support the Flying Tigers in Kuming. He flew (Calcatta to Kuming) more than 500 trips (more than any hump pilot during the war)

1945

War is over- Poon brought his family to Shanghai - continuing flying for the CNAC. When the Communists started to move south Poon continue to escaped the invading Red army with his family. Late in 1949 Poon, with the Chiang Kai Shek controlled CNAC, flew a fleet of aircrafts from China to Hong Kong fleeing from the invading army of Mao Tse Tung.

Nov 9th 1949

Unhappy with the corruption of the Nationalists, Poon had no desire to follow the Nationalists to Taiwan, Poon led the famous defection of a large contingence of pilots, aircrafts and mechanics from Hong Kong back to China. He led the defection of 12 aircrafts from Hong Kong to China near Beijing which was followed by 2,800 crew members and technicians. Premier Chou Enlai welcomed Poon and the group in Beijing.

Dec 1949

The following month, Chou gave the order to start up CAAC with Poon's Convair christened Beijing with Mao himself writing the stylized calligraphy for the plane and the logo that the fleet still carries today. Poon became the first chief pilot to lead and build the CAAC for China. He took great pride upon the CAAC he helped to build from scratch.

1950

Poon Family - The decision to defect to China was a matter of strong feelings of attachment for the motherland. He suffered many personal consequences from this fateful decision. For one, Poon had left his family behind in Hong Kong and for the next 30 years they were out of touch. Poon's wife stayed back in Hong Kong waiting for him to make contact and sent the three daughters back to the U.S. to live with her brother's family in Seattle. After waiting for 5 years in Hong Kong without any success she returned to the United States and lived in Seattle then moved to San Francisco to take care of the three daughters and a son that was born a few months after Poon defected to China.

1950 to 1953

May 29th 1956

**August 1st 1950 - Flew the first CAAC inaugural flight from Beijing to Guangzhou
July 1950 Led 3-C46 to Chengdu, opening up the western frontier
Sept - Nov 1953 -Opening up many air routes to other cities in China**

1950s

A crew headed by Pan Guoding, in a CV-240-401 aircraft with the insignia of "Beijing" personally inscribed by Chairman Mao, flew from Chengdu to Damxung Airport, the Top of the World (Tibet). He broke the "forbidden Zone in the Air" a landmark event in China's aviation history. His plane is exhibited in the Beijing Air Museum. Promotional video of Boeing 777 featured Gordon as the first pilot that reached the "Top of the World" and the Boeing 777 is able to fly to Tibet with only one engine on.

Other important accomplishments in the CAAC

1966

During the 50s -Gordon took a passenger plane without permission and flew up north to look for his Russian girl friend, Zoya. He found her at a hard labor camp site and refused to come back to work. He told the CAAC that he would come back to work only if they release Zoya. CAAC had no authority to release Zoya. Gordon then asked Chou En Lai (Gordon was the personal pilot for Chou and a good friend) to release Zoya and Chou immediately issued the order to have her released.

1967 to 1977

The fanatic xenophobia began to envelop China in Mao's disastrous Cultural Revolution. The Red Guards swept through CAAC looking for anybody who was educated, had ever been in contact with foreigners, or spoke a foreign language. Poon qualified on all counts - and worse - had a wife and children who were citizens of the United States.

For the next 10 years Poon was jailed in harsh and solitary confinement. Poon survived this ultimate humiliation by the country he loved. Many of his long-time associates did not survive the experience. While in the hard labor camp, the Gang of Four (Red Guards) was trying to disgrace Chou En Lai. They wanted Gordon to confess that he was making preparation for a long distant flight to help Chou defect to Taiwan. Gordon refused (Gordon was a very honorable person) and was under constant torture and he was transferred from camp to camp so other influential people cannot locate him. His health was ruined by all the beatings that he received. Being a Russian, Zoya was able to

travel all over China looking for Gordon. Finally she located him after many years and she sneaked out a letter from Gordon to Chou En Lai informing Chou of the plot to oust him. Chou immediately had Gordon released and re-instate him to high position in the Government.

Jan 12th 1999

Serving five 5-year terms as Beijing Representative to the China National People's Congress (25 years - longest serving congressman) His oldest daughter, Connie and husband Henry were on a trip to Bangkok. While visiting Hong Kong some distance relative from China informed her that her father believed to be dead is now living in Beijing. The Changs revised the trip itinerary and went to Beijing to search for the father. Connie and her father met first time in 30 years.

Passing of Gordon Poon in Beijing. Since Gordon refused to be a member of the Communist Party he did not receive a Party ranking when he was alive. After his death the Central government honored him by creating a special title just for him (the highest ranking title for a non-communist member in the country).

Surprise at the Funeral - Connie met her new brother (Jim) and sister (Betty) from Hong Kong that she did not know she has. . They are about 45 to 47 years of age.