

Notes for: Charles S. "Chili" Vaughn: Letter and photo

Source: Vaughn Family Collection

In 1932, "Chili" Vaughn was a pilot for the China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC), a joint venture between the Curtiss-Wright Corporation and the Chinese government. (Pan American took over Curtiss-Wright's interests in 1933.)

Unbeknownst to Chili, the flight he was scheduled to fly one day was to be held past its normal departure time for a very special passenger – Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Nationalist leader of China. Some minutes after Chili took off at his normal departure time, the Generalissimo arrived with his retinue, and much to his consternation, he was not going anywhere, at least by plane. .

To placate the prickly leader, CNAC's manager, the courtly and sympathetic William Langhorne Bond, dismissed Chili, at least temporarily. He knew it was unjust and unfair, and in way of explanation and as a morale booster, he wrote the attached letter to Chili. It provides a wonderful example of Bond's stellar leadership qualities, superbly documented in Gregory Crouch's excellent book, *China's Wings*, (Random House, New York; 2012).

Also attached is a roughly contemporary photo of Chili, outfitted for flying in the open cockpits of the day.



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有線電報掛號四五〇〇
無線電報掛號一四五〇〇
譯文電報掛號 Chinese

Sept. 13, 1932

Dear Al Vaughn,

This is another of my very verbose
outpourings, but on a much more important
subject.

When our friend Richard (Punch) himself
Witch goes astray on his job and a little help
raising becomes necessary, that is just a detail
and a rather unimportant one. If you should
have the misfortune to knock the landing gear
off one of our planes or tear off one of the wings
or worse, by purely careless flying, why we
have had that happen before. There are lots
of landing gears and we can get the world at
rebuilding Dues. You have earned the right

to tear up one of you feel like it. I would
have little ultimate effect on you or me or the
future of the company or thing in general.

But a long time before Betty Hunt was
discovered Wallace Wright, the Daughn family of
Tennessee was turning out men. Men who fought
their enemies, laughed at their own misfortunes
and upheld their own treachery. It is a
wonderful heritage. No amount of misfortune
can overcome it, no amount of success can
dull it. Only one thing can - neglect and indifference.
I want you to caution you against this
and that doesn't mean being a prudent either. I
am a little afraid without realizing it you
are beginning to let a few minor and
necessary outlets become more or less of a
habit. I might not seem important

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now but it will take to cost this
sounds too much like one of the Phrases
I would like to add that I am speaking
entirely from experience.

I don't know of anyone other who has any
more right or is any other qualified to make
a success of this game and you are not going to
kick it away by some fool wings that make
you lose your job and your ambition. I
heard you say once you were after my job
and Capt. Westwells. Go right to it. The
field is open. I'll pull for you, but they will
never be handed to you on a silver platter if
I have anything to do with it or Capt. Westwells
either. You have got to earn it. But after

all that is of secondary importance. The main thing is the Old Dargh-Tennessee tradition.

I am writing you this because I have been through the same mistakes, still am, and I know what it does to you.

I am depending on you to apply the necessary brakes for and need me or anyone else to tell you how or how much. This is not a common. Its your orders. Stop to it.

Sincerely
Don