

Report of Accident - XT-143 China National Aviation Corp. August 20, 1948

by A. Wilson

On Monday, August 16, we departed Rangoon to make a round trip (to) Myitkyna and return. The trip to Myitkyna was fairly uneventful, being contact from Mandalay to Bhamo, where it was necessary to proceed on instruments because of low visibility and ceiling. Near Myitkyna we were again contact and able to make a VFR descent to ' Myitkyna.

On the ground we checked our remaining fuel at 455 gals., which gave us an estimated hour and fifteen minutes reserve, overhead Rangoon. But, because of the weather at Bhamo, I elected to return direct to Rangoon with no (fuel) stops. We climbed on course for Mandalay, leveling off at 10,000 feet. Our load consisted of thirty Kachin troops with equipment. We were on top most of the way to Mandalay. Through occasional breaks (in the undercast) we had established our drift at 5 degrees left, and over Mandalay our groundspeed was checked at 165 mph.

We headed South on 185 degrees and were soon on instruments again. Mandalay was the last ground fix we received. Estimating an hour out from Rangoon, the ADF and Bendix were tuned to Mingaladon homer with no result. This was further checked at 15 minute intervals, with no success.

Fifteen minutes before our ETO, I saw a break and descended contact, trying at the same time to contact Mingaladon tower. At 5-600 feet we again headed South, remaining contact and looking for landmarks. The visibility was variable from 1/2 to 2 miles in rain. With our ETO up I began searching East and West for landmarks, at the same time gradually working South. After 20 minutes of this I headed due South, intending to pick up the Rangoon River on the coast and follow up to Rangoon.

Upon reaching the Coast, we turned left and followed the beach in a northeasterly direction. for about 10 minutes. Having found nothing in this time, and remembering the left drift, I turned and we followed the coastline Southwest for approximately 30 minutes. During this time was my intention to land on the beach in the event our fuel supply was exhausted. We then came to the mouth of a large river, where the trees came right down to water's edge. At this point, the left engine (which had been) running on the left auxiliary tank quit and would not start on the left main tank.

We proceeded with the left engine on the right main tank and the right engine on the right auxiliary tank, both gauges of which were too low to read. Although certain that we were not on the Rangoon River, there was no choice but to proceed inland and look for a suitable place to land. The passengers were instructed to fasten their seat belts tightly and the flight (radio) operator sent a message to the effect that we were forced to land. About 20 miles inland, we spotted a marsh near a bend in the river.

The landing was accomplished in this marsh with the gear up, half flaps, and the top hatch removed. Switches were out at the time of impact. The ship slid for about 100 yards and came to a relatively gentle stop. There was no threat of fire. The flight (radio) operator then sent a report saying that we had successfully landed and there were no injuries to passengers or crew. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this is a true account of the accident, including all contributing factors.

EVENTS SUBSEQUENT TO THE FORCED LANDING OF XT-143 September 12, 1948

After our forced landing in the marsh, the passengers (Kachin Troopers) were notified of our predicament, as they had been under the impression that we had landed at Rangoon. Within about thirty minutes, some curious villagers arrived at the ship and were engaged in conversation by the Kachins. From this we learned that the nearest large town was Moulmeingyen, and the batteries were turned on long enough for the radio operator (Mr. T.H. Ma) to send a message saying that we would proceed there the following morning. In the meantime, our passengers had sent the local people back to their village (Myaungbintha) to bring us some food. They returned about 9:00 P.M. with large pails of curry and rice.

We all remained in the aircraft over night, as comfortably as possible. The following morning we were visited by a man from another nearby village, Thaye Chong. This village was inhabited largely by Karens, hill people from north Burma who had migrated to the Irawaddy delta many years previous, but who still maintain their tribal identity and remain aloof from political matters. This gentleman informed us that town of Moulmeingyun was occupied by Communists, (and) that Communist troops were within three miles of us. We were all welcome in his village. It had been my intention to remain with the ship until located by search planes from Rangoon, or at least to relegate a guard before leaving it, but with the immanence of insurgent forces there was no choice but to abandon it.

While the Kachin troops were preparing their gear for departure, the radio operator sent a message in the blind telling of our change in plans and eventual intention of proceeding to Myaungmya. He was unable to receive acknowledgment of the message and it was apparently never received. Probably due to the low output of the ship's batteries. We walked a short distance through the marsh and were transported across a river in small canoes, where it was necessary to walk again. The underfooting was all of viscous mud, and after a struggle, we followed the example of the Kachins, who were carrying their shoes and walking barefoot.