



## Cedric Mah

Cedric Mah's passion for aviation started when he was three years old and, for the first time, saw a plane flying over Prince Rupert. Much later, Cedric's brother, Albert, learned to fly at California Flyers Aviation College, financed in part by Cedric working at the family business 'Sunrise Grocery'. In turn, Albert helped Cedric to learn at the same flying school, one of the first student pilots to be trained by a female instructor. By 1942 Cedric held a private and a commercial licence, had instrument training and 300 flying hours. He went to Edmonton hoping to find work as a bush pilot, only to find that all the bush outfits were shut down for the duration of the war. Cedric wanted to serve in the war but the RCAF would not allow ethnic Chinese to fly with them. He finally got a job with the BCATP teaching others to fly, as his brother had done before him.

After a year of instructing in Winnipeg, Cedric paid a visit to Edmonton where Wop May was based and Wop introduced him to the idea of flying in China. Pan American Airways were recruiting and training pilots to fly the Burma Hump run supplying Chiang Kai Shek's Nationalist armies. These pilots became honorary

members of the 'Flying Tigers'. Cedric and Albert were both hired to fly unpressurized Dakotas over the highest mountain ranges in the world. Cedric made a total of 337 missions flying around 6,000 hours, second only to his brother for the record number of hours flying those dangerous routes. After the Japanese surrendered, the two brothers continued to supply the Nationalists until 1949 when Chiang Kai Shek was defeated by Mao Zedung. Cedric flew the last airplane out of Nanjing and was the last pilot to fly out of Shanghai before it fell. Both brothers were awarded the DFC and the Air Medal of the USAAF but, as Chinese, had to wait until the 1990's to receive them.

After the war, Cedric continued to fly as a bush pilot out of Prince Rupert flying Beavers and Norsemen for **BC Airways**. When Carl Agar brought in the first helicopter, he tried a few hours but decided it was not for him. He spent 20 years flying the Pacific West Coast and the Arctic. A mountain in the coastal range was, for a while, named Mount Ced Mah in his honour.

Cedric loved the life of a northern bush pilot. In later life he reflected on the short history of the "by guess and by God, seat of the pants" style of bush flying". He said 'We thought it was going to last forever, but it's gone. We should be content that we were able to put in 50 or more years doing what we'd dreamed about. Very few people are able to match that'

During his career, Cedric flew nearly every kind of airplane in civil, commercial and military ventures. He pioneered routes in Thailand, Laos and Indo-China and flew thousands of miles of barren lands over the arctic landscape. When he finally retired, he settled in Edmonton where he became a member of the local flying club and volunteered at the Edmonton Aviation Museum, where he delighted visitors with his tales from the past.

*More can be found about Cedric Mah in 'Flying the Frontiers' Volume II available in the museum library and from documents held at the library*

**Born:** 1922

Prince Rupert B.C.

**Died:** 2011

**Family:**

1<sup>st</sup> wife Mamie Lewis

2<sup>nd</sup> wife Ruth Gronland

1970 - 1983

Stepdaughter Cheryl,

Son Jonathan

Brother pilot Albert Mah

RCAF DFC

**BC Airways**

**PWA**

