



HOME DPA HISTORY

Post 9957 History

The Flying Tigers Post 9957



"Post 9957 History"

Chartered: 11 April 1964

Original Location: Taipei, Taiwan

Commander-in-Chief: Joe Lombrado

The full name of the post is "Flying Tigers Post 9957" located in Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China. This was the initial VFW Post to be chartered in Taiwan. Its name came from the famous flying Tigers that flew combat missions in China during the early stages of the between China and Japan. These heroes became part of the 14th Air Force during WW-II when the U.S. declared war against Japan. This post was very close with the Vocational Assistance Commission for Retired Servicemen (VACRS) when it first formed in 1964 and still has an established reputation with that organization. All VIP's from National Department visiting Taiwan are hosted by VACRS with Post 9957 being the coordinating post for the District. At the same time the post was chartered a Ladies Auxiliary was chartered along with it. The Ladies Auxiliary lasted until 1992 when it surrendered its charter. In November 1964 the post voted to accept Cooties Pup Tent 11 and the Pup Tent remained part of the post until 1991 when it surrendered its charter.

In the late 60's the post established a Post Home and Canteen operation, which lasted until the early 90's. The post membership peaked out in the late 70's with 713 members and is currently at 517 members, with 92% of membership Life Members. The post has never changed location, consolidate, nor disestablished and later reestablished. The Past

Department Commanders that are now members of the post are Donald O. Webster (74-75), Raymond E. Steel (83-84) and Paul T. O'Dowd (86-87).

POST COMMANDERS

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Dates Where Known

YEAR	COMMANDER	YEAR	COMMANDER
1964-65	John Faber	1985-86	Von Hawk
1965-71	Don Webster		Jack Copenhaver
	Mike Chike		Bud Porter
	Elliott Aandahl	1992-93	Bill Kendall
	Louis Tempia		Phil Moriarty
	Robert Greathouse	1994-95	Tim LeCompte
	Ray Steele	1997-2003	James Ascencio
	Bill Wichmann		
1983-84	Cliff Wilsey		
1984-85	Lee Jacobs		

"Pictures of the Past"

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History Behind the Post Name

General Claire L. Chennault Post 9555 (Yokota, Japan; chartered 10/30/52)

Flying Tiger Post 9957 (Taipei, Taiwan; chartered 4/11/64)

The history behind the Post names of General Claire L. Chennault Post 9555 in Yokota, Japan, and Flying Tiger Post 9957 in Taipei, Taiwan, cannot be separated. How can one discuss Chennault without mentioning the Flying Tigers, or discuss the Flying Tigers without mentioning Chennault?

Naturally, a short article like this cannot cover the history of Chennault and the Flying Tigers. But maybe it will make some readers interested enough to look for further information in books or on the Internet.

Claire L. Chennault (1893-1958) was one of the most argumentative and controversial military men of the 1930s and 1940s. Hailing from Waterproof, Louisiana, he joined the Army Air Corps during the First World War. When he arrived at the Air Corps Tactical School in 1930 he already had a reputation as a premier pursuit pilot, and he developed his ideas on pursuit employment from much thought and practical experience. Unfortunately, the Air Corps was making a decisive shift toward bombardment, and Chennault's attempts to influence that thinking were futile. As well, his abrasive personality negated his arguments.

Even in the mid-1930s Chennault seemed a generation older, his face seamed and his hearing dimmed from years of flying open-cockpit planes. As well, his lungs were wracked by bronchitis, the penalty for a two-pack-a-day addiction to Camel cigarettes. The Army forced him to retire in 1937, supposedly for health reasons but more likely because his theories of using fighters to attack bombers were out of tune with Air Corps policy.

Soon after, Chennault moved to China, where he served as an adviser to Chiang Kai Shek. That's where he formed the American Volunteer Group (AVG) of fighter pilots. Heading the AVG to fight an air battle against the Japanese was well suited to Chennault's aggressive and unconventional personality. Other descriptions of Chennault include the words gruff, stubborn, iconoclastic, flamboyant, abrasive, but gentle and cultured.

Chennault never rose above major in the Air Corps but in China he called himself "colonel." He developed the theory of "defensive pursuit," attacking enemy bombers before they reached their destination. He quickly proved the theory reliable as his Chinese pilots cut a murderous swath through unescorted enemy bomber squadrons. He also called upon a small cadre of American pilots who knew him from service in the U.S. Army Air Corps, including the famous Luke Williamson and Billy McDonald, Chennault's wingmen in the Flying Trapeze, a precision flying team that prefigured today's Thunderbirds.

To reduce their losses from the AVG, the Japanese brought in Mitsubishi A5Ms, open-cockpit monoplanes with fixed landing gear and two rifle-caliber machineguns. The A5Ms were faster and more agile than the U.S.-built biplanes the Chinese pilots were flying, leading to a dark period for the AVG. Finally, in 1940, Chiang Kai Shek sent his wife's brother on a mission to Washington to request U.S. aid; Chennault accompanied him as air adviser. The visit resulted in the U.S. giving Chiang "100 good pursuit planes," Curtiss P-40Cs (Tomahawks). In addition, 100 "fair pilots" were recruited from the U.S. armed services. Two hundred technicians were also needed. It was November 1941, however, before the last contingent reached Burma. In the first week of December 1941, Chennault counted 62 Tomahawks on the flight line, with about the same number of pilots qualified to fly them.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, they also attacked British and Dutch possessions in Southeast Asia. With no reinforcements in sight, Chennault's three understrength, half-trained squadrons in Burma had to defend the entire 2,000-mile "Burma Road," from Rangoon to Chongqing. Chennault relocated his planes to Kunming in the highlands, and it was near there that the AVG was blooded on December 20, 1941. They attacked 10 unescorted twin-engine Japanese bombers sent north from Hanoi, shooting down three or four at the cost of one Tomahawk that crash-landed after running out of fuel.

This was when the AVG earned the name the "Flying Tigers." Persons in China's military aid office in Washington, D.C., coined the name, and its first wide public use was in the December 27, 1941, issue of Time magazine, in a report on the above air battle. That, incidentally, was the first Allied victory of the Pacific War.

In the next six months of combat, Chennault's irregulars were credited with destroying 296 Japanese planes and 1,000 airmen, at a cost of 16 Americans killed or captured in combat operations. The fights with the Flying Tigers marked the first time Japanese pilots came out second best. The psychological value of the Flying Tigers' record was incalculable as the U.S. and its Allies geared up to drive the Japanese back to their homeland.

The AFG was incorporated into the U.S. Army's 14th Air Force in July 1942, and Chennault was made a brigadier general. Although he was eventually promoted to major general, he continued to battle his own superiors. George Marshall called him "disloyal and unreliable" because Chennault liked to go directly to Chiang Kai Shek and Roosevelt; Hap Arnold considered him a "crackpot"; and Joe Stilwell (his superior in China) called him "a jackass." He retired in 1945. His later years after founding the Chinese Air Transport Company are a separate story.

Some say the only true Flying Tigers were the irregulars who flew with Chennault until July 1942. But the pilots of the 14th suffered a logistical poverty as great as the AVG and like the original Flying Tigers they outfought the Japanese air units almost every time they met. The American press thus continued to

call them Flying Tigers.

Chennault left China on August 1, 1945. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese filled the streets of Chongqing, inspiring Chennault's driver to turn off the ignition, put the shift in neutral, and let the throng push the car all the way to the airport. As if to symbolize his dual loyalty to the U.S. and China, Chennault's grave is the only one in Arlington National Cemetery to bear a Chinese inscription, and the bust of him in the Taipei New Park is the only statue of a Westerner to grace that city. Post 9957 has always conducted its Memorial Services before that statue.

Two VFW Posts – Post 9555 in Yokota, Japan, and Post 9957 in Taipei, Taiwan -- tied across thousands of miles of water through closely related names.

Compiled by Tom Elliott

Yokohama Post 9467

If you have anything to add to the History of the Department of Pacific Areas, either to the Department, Districts or Posts, Please Email dpahist@vfwdeptpacific.org with the information in Document format.