



**Bergstrom
Austin
Community
Council**

c/o 10001 Jupiter Hills Dr.
Austin, Texas 78747
512.292.1194
Fax 512.292.1163
kpillmore@austin.rr.com

MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kathy Pillmore, 512-292-1194, kpillmore@austin.rr.com

July 19, 2006

SIX FAB-100 MEDAL OF FREEDOM RECIPIENTS WILL ATTEND DEDICATION CEREMONY OF EXHIBIT IN THEIR HONOR.

Austin, TX — Six of the 13 living FAB-100 *Medal of Freedom* recipients will be in Austin for the July 30, 2006 dedication of an exhibit that honors the story of their top-secret mission to the United States in 1945. Of the six attending the ceremony and reception following, three were stationed at Bergstrom Army Air Field.

Dedication/Reception details:

When: Sunday, July 30, 2006 at 1:00 pm

Where: Dedication will take place at the Bergstrom AFB Memorial display located in the ticket terminal of Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (across from the Jet Blue ticket counter.)

The reception will follow at 2:00 p.m. in the Hilton Austin Airport and is by invitation.

The story of the FAB-100 is attached to this advisory. The gentlemen who will be attending the dedication and reception are:

Tommy Cheng (from Fairfield, CA — stationed at Bergstrom);

Robert Chin (El Cerrito, CA);

Hai C. Tan (Hacienda Heights, CA);

Joseph Tso (Napanoch, NY — stationed at Bergstrom);

S. L. Wang (Cortland Manor, NY — stationed at Randolph Field, San Antonio); and

Eugene Wu (Menlo Park, CA — stationed at Bergstrom).

Personnel from ABIA will be conducting a tour of the airport property for the FAB-100 prior to the dedication. Arrangements for interviews other than at the dedication or reception may be made by calling Kathy Pillmore at 512-292-1194.

In addition to the FAB-100 members, guests invited to speak at the dedication include: Mayor Will Wynn; Mr. Hua Jinshou, the Consul General of the People's Republic of China, Houston Consulate; Ms. Amy Mok, President & CEO of the Asian-American Cultural Center; and Mr. Larry Tu, Sr. Vice President and General Counsel of Dell, Inc. who's father, now deceased, was a member of the FAB-100.

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FAB-100 Dedication and Reception

July 19, 2006

The Bergstrom-Austin Community Council was formed in the 1950s by members of the Austin business community who saw the need for an organization that would represent the civilian community in support of the men and women at Bergstrom Air Force Base. From the beginning, the goal was to form a bond and partnership between the Air Force and Austin.

With the closure of Bergstrom Air Force Base, the BACC members gathered the funds to create the memorial to the history of the base that currently resides in the ABIA ticket terminal. The memorial is a chronology of Bergstrom from its formation in 1941 to the departure of the last units in 1997. The memorial is funded through private donations.

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The Story of the FAB-100

In the Spring of 1945 the war in Europe had ended, but the battle in the Pacific raged on. One hundred Chinese officers attached to China's Foreign Affairs Bureau were chosen for a top-secret mission that would find them in the service of the U. S. War Department.

All of the officers were college graduates and spoke fluent English. In China they interpreted and translated as members of the American Army Liaison teams working with their counterparts in the Chinese Ground Force. Some had seen battle on the front lines and in campaigns in Western Yunnan Province and Burma. They would use their experience in America interpreting for Chinese pilots who were being trained for a mission against Japan.

The FAB-100 left Kunming, China (home of the American *Flying Tigers*) in two groups of 50. The first group departed April 17, 1945 in three C-46 cargo planes. The Pacific route was closed to non-combat flights so they took a more circuitous route by way of India, Africa and the Atlantic. They refueled in Myitkyina, Agra (Agra), New Delhi, Karachi, Abadan, Cairo, Tripoli, the Azores and Newfoundland and eventually arrived at LaGuardia Marine Air Terminal in New York on April 21, 1945. Their next stop was the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center where they lived in isolation until new orders arrived from Washington. The second group of 50 left Kunming in three planes on June 19, 1945. Two planes landed in New York on June 24 and one was diverted to Washington D. C. because of foul weather. Their next stop was Minter Air Field in Bakersfield, California.

According to news accounts, "the FAB-100 orders allowed for no layover at any of the fueling stops to preclude tipping off the Axis agents that Chinese officers were hurrying westward to the United States. Their mission was of such a priority that they flew through weather that would have grounded other aircraft. So highly classified was the FAB-100 journey, that general officers in New York were unaware of the officers' arrival."¹

Once at their destinations, the interpreters translated for American instructors and the Chinese Air Force cadets. They worked in the classrooms, labs and shops, on the flight line and sometimes in the air. They covered specialty training for aviation mechanics, bombardiers, meteorologists, navigators, pilots and radio mechanics and operators. They were stationed at most of the major air bases in the south, Midwest and western states.

Those stationed at Bergstrom Army Air Field helped to train troop carrier pilots and crews. Instructors from the 349th Troop Carrier Group and their students were commended for a job well done by Col. James E. Duke, Jr., commanding officer of Bergstrom Field. "Considering the language difficulties and the limited time in which the C46 transition school had to be organized, the program has been an outstanding success."²

Their graduation was slated for July 31, 1946 and the *Statesman* noted that the date "will formally mark the end of their training, with graduation exercises to be attended by dignitaries and officials from all parts of the country and from their homeland. On that day, and on the day following...Bergstrom Field will hold open house in a two-day program commemorating the graduation and National Air Forces Day, respectively."

The true nature of the mission of the FAB-100 and their pilot counterparts was never revealed; however, historians have surmised that the Allies planned to open a second front on the Chinese mainland prior to landing in Japan in order to draw off Japanese troops from the homeland defense. The plan might also have called for the Allies to trap the large contingent of Japanese troops already on the Chinese mainland and deny use of these troops for homeland defense.

With the surrender of the Japanese on September 2, 1945, the mission of the FAB-100 was ended. They were officially disbanded in January, 1946 and were given the option to return to China or remain in the United States under the condition that they continue their college education. Fifty-six chose to stay, and many acquired advanced degrees.

In July of 1945, President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order No. 9586 instituting the Medal of Freedom in order to recognize foreigners who assisted in the U. S. military operations. Twenty-two of the members of the FAB-100 were awarded Medals of Freedom; however, it took almost 50 years for the medals to get into the hands of the recipients.

Portions of the FAB-100 story were extracted from the FAB-100 Commemorative Album written by S. L. Wang, FAB-100 member

¹ *Air Force Times*, December 21, 1998

² *Austin American-Statesman*, July 19, 1946