Flying Tiger
by Jack Swenson

Mickey was a Boy Scout. He was the All American boy. He was a
scamp, too; it's important to remember that. It's important to
remember that heroes are people, too. Think of JFK. Ted Kennedy.

Mickey was a kid that everybody liked. He was modest, friendly,
and adventurous. He joined the Navy and became a pilot, and
before the war broke out, he became one of a little group of
volunteers in China.

I'll never forget the day he came over to our house to visit my
dad. He was on leave. Everybody in town knew that he was a
Flying Tiger. I couldn't believe it; a war hero in our living room! My
dad had been the young man's Boy Scout leader. Mickey was an
Eagle Scout.

I screwed my courage to the sticking point and asked him if he
had shot down any Japanese airplanes. He grinned at me. "One,"
he said. He told us he wasn't flying P-40s anymore. Now he was
flying supplies over The Hump in an unarmed DC-3.

It was a year later that we heard that Mickey was missing and
presumed dead. He had taken off one day and not returned. It was
thought that he perished because of bad weather. They found the
wreckage of his aircraft years later.

In my dotage I read a number of books about the gallant fliers of
the AVG. They were volunteers, Navy pilots mostly, who signed up
to help the Chinese fight the Japanese. Their leader was the famous
general Claire Chennault.

Einer "Mickey" Mickelson is mentioned in the histories now and
again. He got far less ink than some of the more flamboyant airmen,

such as Pappy Boyington. He was well-liked, he did his job. He made waves only once. That was the time he and a buddy abducted Madame Chaing Kai Chek. The airmen had just returned from a mission, and they spotted the pretty Chinese ladies at the airfield and offered them a ride into town. The ladies accepted the invitation and invited the young men to have tea with them. It was later that Mickey learned the identity of the man in the black suit who had waved to them as they sped away from the airfield.