

Emma Jane Foster Hanks died October 17<sup>th</sup> after a short illness. Jane died: no sappy euphemisms regarding an afterlife journey to the great beyond. With Jane you got truth, like it or not. Some did, some didn't. But with Jane you also got wisdom grounded in experiences very few today could even imagine.

At age 25 Jane was a nurse in Kunming, China tending the pilots and crew of the famous Flying Tigers, the American Volunteer Group or AVG, fighting for the Nationalist Chinese against the marauding Japanese invaders. At age 27 she was the pregnant widow of one of these heroic flyers. Jane volunteered to go to China and serve with the Flying Tigers, one of 2 nurses who served. Conditions were austere at best and dangerous most of the time as the Japanese did their best to neutralize the Americans with bombs and strafing.

Jane was born in February 14, 1916 in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania. She earned a BA in Political Science from Penn State. As an undergraduate, she spent a year as an exchange student at Lingnam University, Canton, China, in that university's first class. She returned home and then earned a Masters Degree in nursing from Yale in 1940 intending to return to China to provide medical care for the Chinese people. A year later she was back in China with the Flying Tigers.

Jane's first husband was John Petach whom she met while en route by ship to join the AVG. John was a fighter pilot and Jane, called "Red" by her friends, fell in love with this dashing hero. They were married in China. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the AVG was disbanded, its pilots and crews absorbed into the Army and Navy air forces. Jane and her husband agreed to remain a fortnight longer to provide defensive support until replacements could gain experience. It was during this period that John Petach was shot down by enemy ground fire and was killed.

After Jane's return to the United States in 1942 her daughter Joan Claire Petach was born.

Jane taught nursing at Yale for 2 years and then continued her career in health care until she married Fletcher Hanks of Oxford in 1964. After moving to the Eastern Shore, Jane remained active in public health and Republican politics. Her contributions to public health earned for her accolades from the State of Maryland. Fifty years after the fact, Jane and others who served with the AVG, were awarded the Bronze Star Medal by the United States Air Force for heroism in the war against the Japanese.

To many who never knew Jane but recognized a tall, stooped, elderly lady doddering along with her American flag bedecked walker, she was just another of Oxford's elderly. What a shame they didn't know Jane, or Red the fiery Flying Tigers nurse, the dedicated public health nurse, the devoted mother, the nationally ranked cyclist, the consummate tennis player. A moment with Jane would have revealed there was no loss of acuity, no loss of wit, no loss of candor. Towards the end Jane was frail, but her intellect never failed. Jane is survived by her daughter Joan Petach Randles, 5 stepchildren, and her faithful beagle, Penny.

A memorial gathering for Jane Hanks will be held November 14<sup>th</sup> at the parish house of The Church of the Holy Trinity, 502 S. Morris St., Oxford at 1:00 PM.

Donations may be made in Jane's name to the Flying Tigers Scholarship Fund – Checks payable to Flying Tigers Association, "Scholarship Fund" on the memo line. Mail to Chuck Baisden, Treasurer, 109 Wales Court, Savannah, GA 31410.