

Pilot receives Chinese medal

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said Smalls, who noted he had to include a copy of his discharge papers.

The Missouri-based association represents 5,000 air crew members and support personnel who took part in the China-Burma-India Theater in World War II.

HUMP PILOTS flew all of the supplies for the American and Chinese armies and air forces in China — the first time such a massive airlift was ever tried.

Terrible weather and rugged terrain posed as constant a danger as the Japanese fighters and bombers. The route over the Hump became known as the aluminum trail because the mountains are supposed to be littered with the wrecks of 3,000 planes that didn't make it.

Smalls hauled gasoline from June-December 1945, making the four-hour flight in a C-46 cargo plane from Texpur, India, to Kunming, China.

"I thought it was a good deal until the first flight," he said. "The first three months were the monsoon season. You couldn't fly below 16,000 feet, which included a 2,000-foot clearance for the mountains."

At first, Smalls was glad he didn't have to haul bombs. "But then I learned they were safer to haul than gasoline because they had to be fused before they could be detonated," he said.

One time, Smalls said, he and other crew members thought they "were goners" when a cable broke

on his second flight as a co-pilot. "We couldn't hold altitude. We just barely made the air field in Kunming. After we landed, the tower told us to put our flaps up. It was just about the biggest scare I ever had."

SMALLS DIDN'T fear being shot down because "the Japanese were afraid to fly in the area because of the monsoons and the ruggedness."

Before going to India in December 1945, Smalls was a basic flight officer for two years at Army fields in Bainbridge, Ga., and Montgomery, Ala.

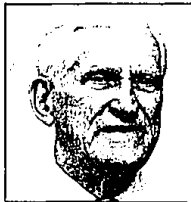
Smalls' other decorations include the American Defense Service Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Theater Ribbon, World War II Victory Medal and American Theater Ribbon.

He was discharged from the Army Air Corps as a first lieutenant in January 1946.

The Chinese government authorized the China War Memorial Medal in September 1945, at the end of World War II. But the authorization, Circular No. 166, was misplaced amid the hasty retreat of U.S. armed forces and the general confusion then existing in China.

The decoration was noted on some discharge documents and service records, but no one ever saw it or received it. It was generally considered to be a myth by those who had heard rumors about it.

But Graham Kidd of Florida, who had served in the 14th Air Force Headquarters in Kunming, China, kept on investigating. After 29 years, he succeeded in locating a copy of Circular No. 166.



Victor Smalls 'really elated'



photo by RANDY BORST/staff photographer

In the center of the medal is the Lu Ku Bridge near Peking, China, where the fighting broke out. Behind the bridge and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, are factories with smokestacks, which indicate the victory and prosperous future of China.

Design triggers concern

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neighbors they would be informed about plans before they are taken to the Farmington Hills Planning Commission.

April 13 is the date set for preliminary site plan review, according to information from the city.

The proposed new school will be approximately 85,000 square feet and will have a multi-level design because of the property's hilly terrain. It will be nestled into the wood-

ed corner of the parcel; architects said they must follow a new Farmington Hills tree ordinance that regulates the destruction and removal of trees.

PROPOSALS SHOW the interior will likely be zoned into three areas: early elementary learning and play areas to the east; academic classroom areas, including the school's media center, in the middle; and a grouping of "noisy" areas, including cafeteria and gymnasium and school playground, to the west.

The total project is expected to cost \$7.7 million, with \$7.3 million from the approved bond money and the balance earned interest on the money, according to a report from project manager Bill McCarthy.

About \$5 million is for building costs. The remainder of the money will cover administrative costs, site and utility costs, equipment and furnishings, insurance, attorney fees, contingency projections for inflation and other necessary items.

Schools adopt sibling priority

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day on how to handle vacancies at Highmeadow in grades two through five. The policy would give priority to any children left on the waiting list from last year's open lottery.

If openings remain, children who

have siblings at Highmeadow and are from the attendance areas of Flanders, Longacre, Larkshire or Wood Creek would be given second preference. Children from any area with siblings at Highmeadow will be given third preference.

Highmeadow is considered an alternative elementary, which offers a choice-oriented curriculum for students in grades one through five. It also offers integrated programs for any gifted students attending the school.

Trustees will consider request

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The request will be put on next Tuesday's school board agenda, said president Jack Cotton Tuesday night. Cotton called the request "very legitimate."

Economists from Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. of America in Farmington Hills requested the legal report from district administrators March 3 under the state's Freedom of Information Act. The report supports the district's position that it cannot use operating funds to build a new school. It was used during two recent bond campaigns. On Jan. 31, voters approved \$7.3 million in bonds for a new west-side elementary school.

On March 8, district administrators refused the request from Patrick Anderson and Joel Wittenberg,

economists with the company, after the two had twice requested the report verbally. The district claimed it was privileged information between the district and its attorney.

ANDERSON APPEALED to trustees at Tuesday's school board meeting, reiterating his position: "The district administration and school board had consistently used this opinion to actively campaign for the bond," he said. "Furthermore, the counsel's opinion had been used in at least three written pieces and at

many public meetings. In short, the school district administration and board have made the opinion a public document."

Chairman of the board for Alexander Hamilton, Richard Headlee, said he believes the Farmington district "has correctly interpreted the State School Code and the constitution regarding this matter. Our major concern is: Why would the Farmington school board hide behind the attorney/client privilege defense, when we the taxpayers are the clients and we pay the bills?"

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