

GA CHINA

中国通航博览

<3季度刊>总第廿五期
2017 3rd Quarter



BRIDGING THE GAP OF COMMUNICATION

INTERVIEW WITH **ELAINE QIAN SIYIN**,
EXECUTIVE MANAGING EDITOR, GA CHINA MAGAZINE

Interview by Litalia Yoakum



Born into an aviation-minded family in Beijing, Elaine Qian Siyin is now the Executive Managing Editor of one of China's most trusted general aviation publications — GA CHINA Magazine. Upon first glance Elaine doesn't seem like your typical GA enthusiast. She has a spunky sense about herself and an interesting take on life, intertwined with a sense of adventure. But perhaps it's that same sense that has led her to develop the bilingual, quarterly magazine into the well-known source of information it is today.

After completing her studies through the University of Huddersfield in both the UK and Singapore, Elaine remained in the city-state where she worked for an events management company for three more years. Although she didn't work in aviation at the time, she was still able to visit the Singapore Aviation Academy on a few occasions, where she admits the facilities amazed her.

Still, the credit for Elaine's curiosity of aviation stems from family. "I got to know the field when I was younger, through family members," says Elaine. "Especially my dad, who is somewhat of a pioneer in this industry."

Elaine's piqued interest led her back to China seven years ago. "This was also the time the GA industry was really starting to

pick up [2010] and at that time there wasn't a lot of reporting or content on GA aviation."

Starting out as a writer for an internal GA publication for the Capital Research Institute for General Aviation (under the Department of Information), Elaine evolved — along with the publication, which would later become GA CHINA — into the leader of the magazine.

Throughout those seven years, a lot has changed, admits Elaine: "When I came back seven years ago, the industry was just getting started and everyone was crazy about it; investors wanted to 'catch the train to success'. After the initial two to three years, there was a second stage where everyone realized the gap in the market between China and the other part of the world."

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Elaine stressed the evolution of aviation culture, safety and communication during this time, which has contributed to the establishment of consulting companies and industry organizations offering the community necessary information.

Since that time, the government has brought general aviation to the forefront of its agenda. Yet, the challenges remain.

“The industry has still not learned to communicate effectively,” explains Elaine. “There’s huge potential but market opportunities are on a small scale, so people are fighting for profit. Because of this, it’s really important to trade and provide relevant and solid information about the industry.”

“Also, the lack of professional personnel is a significant issue. During this time, companies are being established fast. They are eager to build something up, but there is no focus on training. The industry pays attention to pilots, but we lack experienced pilots, flight instructors, and management level personnel.”

While the industry continues to evolve, so does Elaine. In doing so, she has had plenty of unique experiences of her own. There’s the time she interviewed the first test flight pilot for Bell Helicopter in China, who shared some of his crazy past stories; or the time her interview led to a newfound passion of skydiving.

“I did an interview with representatives from a skydiving company in New Zealand,” explains Elaine. “I got to know the company, staff, its training process, and the operational aspect of it – all the way to the actual skydive.” Elaine, who has since skydived multiple times since her first jump, recalls the experience as “amazing”, enjoying the feeling of flying on her own.

She went on to explain skydiving’s influence in China. Not needing to apply for all the applications as a typical aircraft, skydiving has become something many Chinese companies are now considering as an operational segment.

The most memorable interview yet was one Elaine did about two years ago. “I was in London and was able to interview The Red Arrows from the UK’s Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team. Their level of professionalism and training was amazing,” says Elaine, who conducted a video interview, which was later posted online, as well as published in print.

Since those interviews, Elaine has continued her adventurous spirit, traversing the globe at every chance she gets. Currently, she calls Auckland,

New Zealand home, while she finishes up her Master’s of Management degree. The pursuit is her own effort to improve herself and her team. “GA is a demanding industry and there’s large volume of information and data to get through,” explains Elaine. “Seeing this, I understand that there’s so much for me to learn still. I have this obligation to the magazine, the industry and the team, to learn as much as I can.”

Once the program is complete, Elaine will once again pack her bags – this time heading to Washington D.C., where she was nominated, by the US Embassy in Beijing, to complete an International Leadership Program.

When back in China, Elaine is ready to continue taking on the industry and leading the magazine – at maximum speed. “We have some exciting things ahead for the magazine, and our readers are as curious as ever.”

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GA CHINA MAGAZINE

Established at the end of 2013 as an internal industry publication for the Capital Research Institute of General Aviation in Beijing, GA CHINA Magazine (《中国通航博览》杂志) has since transformed into the first bilingual general aviation publication, acting as a go-to source of information and market data on the industry in China. The publication — published quarterly, in print and online — provides an understanding of the industry through interviews with key leaders — domestically and internationally, policy and regulation interpretation, a guide to purchasing aircraft and helicopters, model comparisons and the latest industry news.

Not only does GA CHINA aim to promote the development of the industry in China, it also aims to build a bridge of communication between the country and other parts of the world. The communication comes in various forms: exhibitions, events, photography competitions and tours, including a series of GA Airport Tours that took place from 2015 to 2016.

As the industry develops and the government works toward boosting it, interest has piqued. Readers are now drawn to insiders' perspectives and overseas' opportunities, as well as operations and management knowledge, particularly for helicopter operations, such as emergency medical services and scenic flight sectors, as well as sport aviation. Additionally, the audience has developed a relatively comprehensive understanding of the tremendous gaps and differences between markets in China and that of other parts of the world. Industry "know-hows" have also provided a chance for readers, particularly those in the GA industry, to gain a better understanding of all facets — management, technical and operational.

To engage with the community, GA CHINA Magazine has several events coming up in 2017. Collaborating with the China Heli-Expo in Tianjin, the magazine held a Helicopter Safety and Operation Management Forum during the first few days of the show. The magazine's aviation photography competition results were also included. "The Most Beautiful Moment" competition results were unveiled at the Heli-Expo. In November, GA China will host about 70 industry leaders at a Summit and subsequent party in Beijing, where attendees can exchange ideas in an informal, yet constructive, setting.

Culminating in what will have proved to be an exciting and busy year for the magazine is its special year-end issue. Covering all key topics from 2017, the year-end issue will be packed with original content from the publication's own reporters, as well as contributors from inside the industry — an uncommon occurrence for GA publications in China.

In the coming years, as the industry develops, so will GA CHINA Magazine. As Chief Executive Editor Elaine Qian puts it: "A magazine (or media) should never stay where it is. It should always search and explore the unknown and discover the unspoken, while putting the knowledge into action." And so, the magazine is. In addition to its regular round of quarterly issues, GA CHINA Magazine will launch its own aviation video show, which is now in production. The team also hopes to enhance its inaugural Helicopter Safety and Operation Management Forum into a renowned and recognizable brand that serves the country's helicopter community. Enthusiasts living abroad can also expect to see GA CHINA's English edition, in the near future.