



*Bringing stamp and postal-history*

*collectors together since 1919*



# Philatelic Society NEWSLETTER

## Triumph & Tragedy: Part 2



In this edition, Bob “Jumpseat” Ingraham continues the gripping story of the ill-fated Uiver and how a human tragedy became a philatelic legend.

## The Duff Administration



**President Duff Malkin**

Kudos to former Recording Secretary Duff Malkin for stepping into the gaping breach left by retiring President Bob Ingraham. As reported in the last edition of the newsletter, BC Phil chose a new executive on March 12. The new faces are all old, familiar faces. Specifically: Derren Carman, Treasurer; Trevor Larden, Vice President; Tim Woodland, recording secretary. Club Archivist Eric Ranger has kindly consented to chair the Auction Committee. Unfortunately, a President’s message was not available at press time, but the latest Duff Guide awaits you inside...read on!

K.L.

# Duff Guide: Adventures in China

by Duff Malkin

Just to mix things up a little, Duff packs the aerogrammes away to ponder postcards and proves prescient in predicting problems!

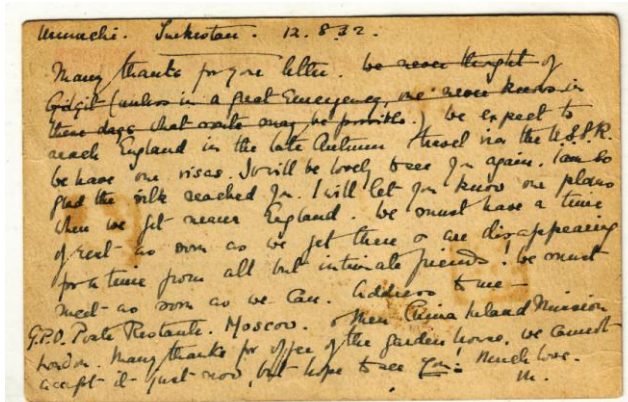
I came across this postal card, which was hidden in a labelled box of other colourful Chinese postcards, while unsuccessfully searching for aerogrammes.

Despite its rather worn, stained condition I decided to pay the \$20 asking price because of its overprinted postage and the written message on the reverse. Subsequently, I discovered the *Higgins and Gage Postal Stationery Catalogue* listed

the card's value at \$16.

The overprints indicate that the card was posted in Xinjiang, a vast, warlord- controlled territory cut off from the rest of the world by innumerable mountains and three significant deserts (Taklimakan to the south, the Moyyunkun to the northwest and the Gobi to the south and east). The Chinese refer to it as something along the line of "Sin Jin" usually spelled "Xinjiang" or "Xinjiang". It has also been called Turkestan , Chinese Turkestan and Kashgaria, amongst other names. Urumchi, the place where the card was mailed, was also known as Urumqui, Urumqi , Urumtsi, Wulumqui, Tiwha, Tihua and Tihwa. Nestled near the Afghanistan border, it is the farthest Asian city from any ocean shore.

Now a bustling, vibrant city of some one-and-a-half to two million people, Urumchi enjoys a very colourful history. In 1911, the Manchu dynasty was overthrown and the Chinese Republic was set up in a rather hodgepodge fashion. Although technically under Chinese control, Xinjiang enjoyed a large degree of personal autonomy. While the Chinese Republic outlawed the opium trade by 1911, it remained legal in Xinjiang up to 1935. By some written accounts, Xinjiang was literally sinking in opium. There are credible references to its high officials being addicts — including the warlord in power at the time that this particular postal card was mailed!



Beginning about 1916, all mail in Xinjiang was censored. This censorship continued right up to 1949. Travellers also faced restrictions, as any visit to Xinjiang required the warlord's permission, and he was not too inclined to give it.

One method of skirting mail restrictions was to go to the appropriate local official to get the postal chop in the morning before the official found his opium pipe, so he would be distracted in his duties. At other times, any officious looking document with a large chop on it could do the trick, as literacy amongst the troops was not very high.

The 4¢ red postal card was issued in 1923 and was used to pay the postage for postcards going to China. In 1932, some of the other Xinjiang postal card rates were 1¢ for local area post office delivery, 2¢ for delivery in Xinkiang, 3¢ for parts of Sinkiang and Mongolia and 12¢ for overseas delivery. The overseas postcard rate was also the standard in the rest of China. This particular card

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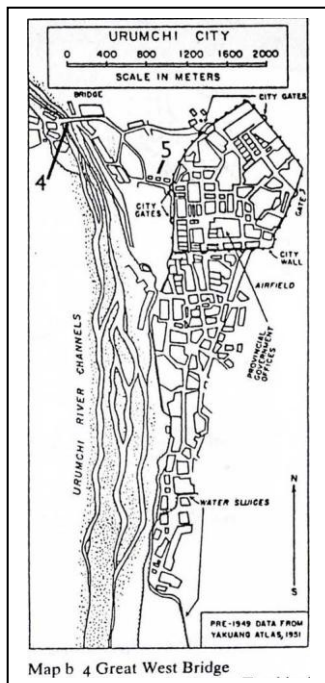
has the corrected second overprint where the characters are all correctly aligned. The 5¢ re-engraved claret stamp also has the second overprint and the stamp was still current, even though it was first issued in 1924. The 3¢ stamp is the older one with the corrected overprint (issued circa 1916-19). It does not have the re-engraved design.

The postcards (and all mail destined for China) had to travel west to Chuguchak, cross over into Russia by *telega* (a three-horsed vehicle) take another vehicle down to Sempalatisk and catch the Trans-Siberian Railroad to Vladivostok from where they would be shipped to China. They traveled by horse and cart in Sinkiang and were contracted out by the post offices to people who would take the mails from place to place. It was, all things considered, a surprisingly efficient operation and mail could travel 1,000 miles from Urumchi to Kashgar in about a week.

These carts could also accept human cargo and there are a few western accounts of passengers briskly bumping along in all kinds of weather. The roads did have some shelters because one would sometimes need to seek refuge in them, or risk being blown off the road and down the mountainside in the dead of winter.

The vehicle used to take the mails and passengers to the railroad was referred to as a bus, but it was really a truck and most of the passengers got to ride with the mail in its open back in all kinds of weather and temperatures ranging from 30°F to -30°F. At various points in time they would be jostled by extra bags of mail being tossed on the bus or by extra passengers clambering aboard. It was a bumpy overnight journey, and they utilized the mail sacks to sit and rest upon. These transit modes may explain the rather roughed-up appearance of the card.

There is little available information on Xinjiang postal material simply because there hasn't been



much made available for study. When the Xinjiang mails arrived, whether in Xinjiang, Mongolia, China or in foreign lands, chances were good that the covers were ruined. The period was not exactly known for cover-collecting which was then in its infancy and more often than not the stamps were simply soaked off their backing and stuck into a collector's stamp book. Catalogue listings have helped somewhat, but they are often maddeningly short on detail.

In terms of cataloguing the H&G reference seems a bit general. The China Stamp Society number is PCI (SK) – 2, the Han catalogue # is 105 & the Basic Card number is PCI – 2.

Recent tour books of China refer to discord between the Chinese and native population and some make mention of the occasional bomb blast. As well, there are references to foreigners being banned from certain roads in Tibet, but still managing to travel on them anyway (this might have been before the protests).

With the Olympic Flame passing through the region, there are still tensions between the natives and the Chinese. It could even be described as “seething”. The U.S. State Department has warned Americans of the possibility of terrorist actions. If the history I've looked into is any indication, then actions taken on the parts of both sides could be messy.\*

— D.M.

**\*Editor's Note: This article was written before the August 4th 2008 terrorism attacks that were attributed to a fanatical Muslim faction in the Xinjiang region of China.**

The B.C. Philatelic Society Newsletter is printed three times a year and is free to all members of the Society.

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The brief glory, violent crash, and  
reincarnation of the DC-2 *Uiver*

By Bob Ingraham

## Part 2 – Shock

Part 1 of “Triumph & Tragedy” concerned the development of the Douglas DC-2 airliner and the spectacular performance of the KLM DC-2 *Uiver* (pronounced *eye-ver*) in the MacRobertson International Air Race. In this issue, Bob writes about the tragic last flight of the *Uiver*, and its interesting philatelic heritage.

### A “Fast Christmas Flight”

For KLM’s President Albert Plesman, the MacRobertson International Air Race had apparently been a prelude to the *Uiver*’s next showstopper — a “fast Christmas flight” to inaugurate a new weekly passenger and airmail service between Amsterdam and Netherlands Indies, made possible by the *Uiver*.

The DC-2 could carry 14 passengers, but to ensure their maximum safety and comfort just three would be embarked. Besides, KLM didn’t need the passenger fares: the subsidy it received for transporting mail made the flight a very profitable proposition. KLM promoted the flight heavily. Mobile post offices topped with a wooden stork made it easy for people to post letters, and post them they did: The *Uiver*’s cargo consisted of 52,893 postal items weighing a total of 348.325 kg, for an average weight per piece of 6.6 grams. Many of the letters were written on KLM rice-paper stationery dedicated to the flight; both envelopes and writing paper feature a printed cachet showing the *Uiver* flying between branches of holly.

All of the Christmas-flight covers received a special red hand-stamped cachet showing a stork flying through a Christmas wreath, and all were franked with the obligatory Netherlands 30-cent triangular airmail stamp,

plus stamps to pay for the basic international rate. KLM’s covers were designed to be returned to their senders, franked with Netherlands Indies stamps, including the colony’s nearly identical triangular airmail stamp.



*Uiver*’s doomed crewmen: (l to r) H.A. Waalewijn, Cpt. W.M.O.A. Beekman, J. van Steenberg and G. van Zadelhoff.

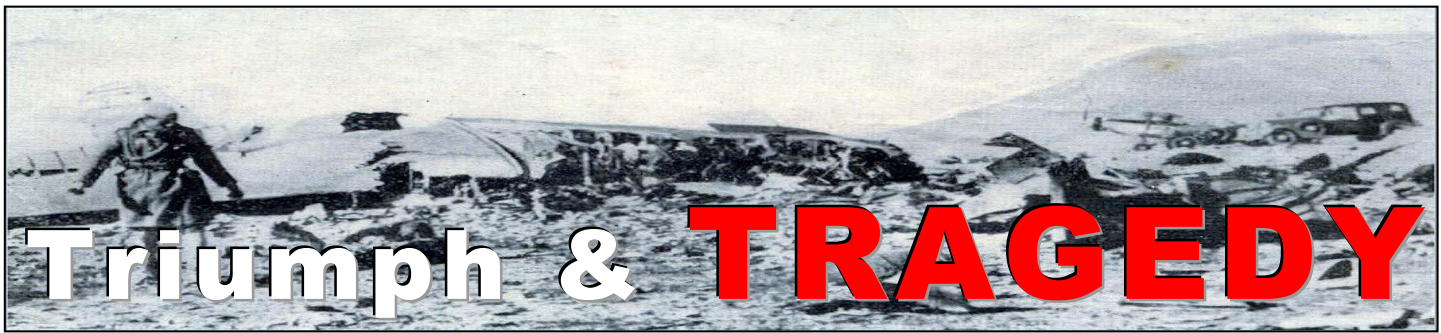
### The *Uiver* leaves Amsterdam

The *Uiver* left Amsterdam before dawn on December 19, 1934. On board were the crew — Captain W.O.A.M. Beekman, co-pilot J. van Steenberg, aircraft mechanic H.A. Waalewijn, and radio-telegraphist G. van Zadelhoff, all veterans of many KLM flights in Asia — and passengers D.W. Berretty, founder and managing director of the Dutch East Indies Press Bureau, in Batavia; Dr. F.W. Walch, professor of biology at the University of Batavia, and J.T. Kort, a Dutch businessman.

Despite the aircraft’s fame, fast airmail flights to Asia had become commonplace; only a small crowd cheered the *Uiver*’s departure, to the stirring notes of the KLM march.

After scheduled stops at Marseilles, Rome and Athens, the *Uiver* crossed the Mediterranean and landed that evening at Cairo. It departed for Baghdad at 9:30 p.m. local time.

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Under normal circumstances, the *Uiver's* flight time to Baghdad, 800 miles to the northeast, would have been about four hours. Circumstances, however, were *not* normal: After midnight, the *Uiver* apparently encountered a system of violent storms so extensive that it covered much of the Middle East.

In Baghdad, officials became alarmed when the airliner failed to land on time. At 2:30 a.m. local time on December 20, a radio message from the *Uiver* received at Rutbah Wells, 235 miles west of Baghdad, indicated that the crew was lost. By dawn, it was evident that the airliner was missing.

### “Anxiety for Dutch Airliner!”

European newspapers reported the *Uiver's* disappearance the same day: “ANXIETY FOR DUTCH AIR LINER” headlined a London *Times* story, datelined The Hague.

Another story, from Baghdad, reported that the Royal Air Force was making a “determined effort” to find the airliner before storms developed the next day.

On December 21, the

*Times* reported that RAF searchers had found the burned-out wreckage of the *Uiver* about 80 miles west by south of Rutbah Wells.

There were no survivors.

*Time Magazine* covered the crash in its December 31, 1934 edition:

Out over the Syrian Desert last week flew 24 British Royal Air Force planes, fanwise, in quest of something. Across the rain-soaked sands beneath them crawled British armoured cars, likewise looking.

Finally one of the pilots found what they all sought. Round and round he circled over a black smudge on the dun-coloured wasteland.

Dipping earthward, he saw a tangled mass of charred metal, a few corpses, letters scattered like snow upon the sands.

The mail that the *Uiver* was transporting was, of course, secondary to the tragic loss of seven lives and the shock of the loss of what was arguably the best and most famous airliner in the world.

Nevertheless, the mail that survived has remained an important part of the *Uiver's* story.

### The philatelic legacy of the crash

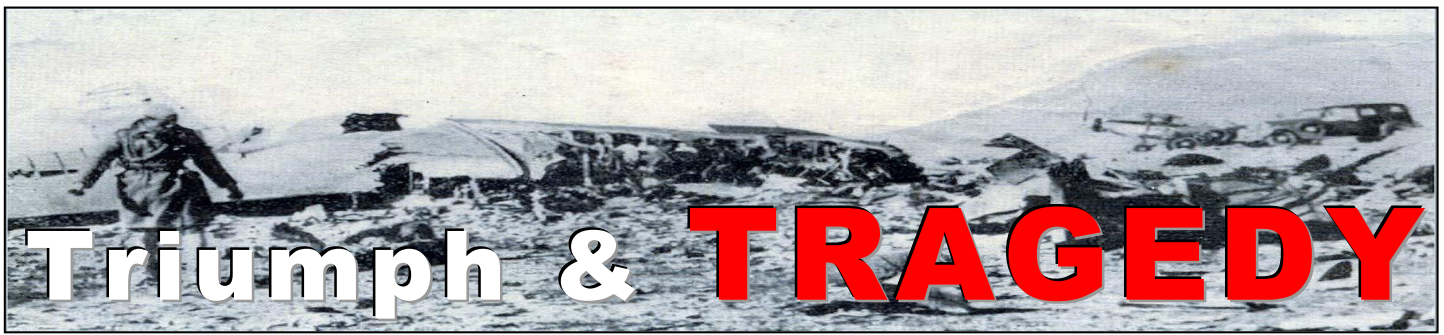
When RAF searchers arrived at the crash site, letters which had burst from their mailbags were being picked up by Bedouins.

About 60 per cent of the mail, weighing 208.5 kg, was salvaged. It was clear that this mail would have great philatelic value; an American, P. W. Ireland, who was at Rutbah Wells at the time of the crash, stole part of the collected mail. Later, he was arrested in London when he tried to sell some of it; he still had 36 envelopes in his possession.

Fifty crash covers were retained by the commission that was formed to examine the circumstances of the *Uiver's* crash. The remainder of the mail was picked up in

**Cont. on page 6**

Club member Mike Strachan went on an extended military history trip in Europe in April and May. He followed the path taken by his father and uncle who were in Canadian Army regiments in World War Two, all the way from D-Day in Normandy to VE day in Germany. Mike e-mailed his daily journal entries home and to friends. You can read all about Mike's trip and his Tips for Travellers, online at [www.bcphilatelic.org/Mike\\_Strachan\\_intro.html](http://www.bcphilatelic.org/Mike_Strachan_intro.html)



# Triumph & TRAGEDY

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Baghdad by another KLM airliner, the Fokker F-XVIII *Rijstvogel*, which was on a routine flight to Netherlands Indies. It arrived in Batavia on December 28<sup>th</sup>, as indicated by arrival postmarks.

Crash mail is normally identified as such through the use of purpose-made rubber stamps. For example, when a B.O.A.C. Stratoliner crashed at Prestwick, Scotland in 1954, salvaged mail was stamped “SALVAGED MAIL / AIRCRAFT CRASH / 25-12-54”. However, crash covers from the *Uiver* have no explanatory postal markings concerning the crash or the delay in delivery. Only their cachets, addresses, and postmarks serve to identify them.

Some of the *Uiver*'s crash covers were undamaged; collectors and dealers are often unaware of the dramatic story behind them. Damaged *Uiver* crash covers bear scars ranging from minor smoke and water stains or scorching, to severe damage by fire, water, and mud. Some are saturated with oil. Rain washed some stamps off, and faded the hand-stamped cachets and addresses.

In philately, condition counts for a great deal — most collectors won't look twice at damaged stamps or covers. For crash-cover collectors however, that rule is weirdly inverted: badly mangled but identifiable covers are the most sought-after (and the most expensive).

Damaged *Uiver* crash covers are quite common, and rarely sell for more than \$100, often for quite a bit less. You might pay \$12 to \$15 for an undamaged one. Beyond their commercial value, however, they are artifacts that reveal much about the extreme weather that the *Uiver* encountered on its last, fateful flight, and about the extreme violence of the crash itself. They are poignant reminders that humans have always challenged the skies at their peril.

The cause of the *Uiver*'s crash has never been conclusively determined.

**In the third instalment of *Triumph & Tragedy*, Bob looks at some possible reasons for the crash and discusses the remarkable “reincarnation” of the amazing *Uiver***



Salvaged mail from the *Uiver*. The top cover escaped unharmed, the middle one shows fire and water damage, and the bottom cover is soaked in motor oil. The more damaged the crash cover, the more interesting (and valuable) it is to collectors. (Ingraham collection)

All in all a pretty good show, but changes will be necessary in future if we are to continue at the church venue. A one-day show is just too rushed. I was 'pooped' at the end of Saturday – others had to be the same. In future, we will try for a two-day (Friday and Saturday) show with a 48-hour 'window of opportunity'. This will depend on the church, however. With the manager leaving, and not being replaced until September, there is no answer on the two-day show as yet. If this is possible, we could enlarge the show by 16 – 20 frames and two dealer tables, and perhaps actually have a 'Regional Vanpex' show. We could then have our medals, generic pre-created certificates, and our own created ribbons. We could keep costs, and more importantly, the 'running and jumping time' to a minimum. With the longer time frame, there would be no excuse for late arrivals in putting up exhibits. Also, there would be no exhibits after the fact. (Chairman Derren will be ruthless – a 'Stalin of Philately!') For now, we must wait and see what the church will offer. The one-day experiment was fairly successful but it would be nice to have 'set-up' and 'pull-down' in two days. And there it was, tiring but fun – and fun is what I still want; and lots of hands for the work – some of us will be a year older; and the work component will diminish. Will keep you posted. – T.L.

### PIPEX 2008 Seattle, WA - May 30, 31 & June 1, 2008

I attended the 67<sup>th</sup> Pacific International Philatelic Exhibition held in Seattle Washington, which was sponsored by the Northwest Federation of stamp Clubs, as the delegate of the British Columbia Philatelic Society.

The exhibition was held in the Rainier, Olympic and Orcas rooms at the Seattle Center. The bourse was located in the Rainer room and the exhibits were housed in the spacious, well-lit Olympic room. The Orcas room was used for meetings and seminars.

There were a total of 176, sixteen-page frames composed of 35 exhibits. The calibre of the individual exhibits was outstanding. Sixteen gold, four vermeil, four silver, seven silver-bronze and three bronze medals were awarded.

Robert D. Forster won the PIPEX Grand Award for his outstanding exhibit "*British Columbia and Vancouver Island 1858-1871*". The Reserve Grand went to Anne Harris for her display exhibit "*The Golden Age of Horses*". The Single Frame Grand Award went to Louis Fiset for his "*Mail Linked to the Two U.S. – Japan Diplomatic Exchange Voyages in World War II*".

The bourse was composed of 26 dealers. In addition, the United States Post Office, the American Philatelic Society, Boeing Employee Stamp Club Cover Sales, Pacific Northwest Postal History Society, the American Airmail Society and the China Stamp Society each had a table.

The Northwest Distinguished Philatelist Award for 2008 was awarded to Dickson Preston of the Puget Sound Collectors Club.

Alex Hadden was nominated to serve another two-year term as the Federation Treasurer. Len Lukens was nominated as the new U.S. Director and Eric Ranger was nominated to serve another two-year term as the Canadian Director.

I thank B.C. Phil for allowing me to attend PIPEX 2008 as their delegate.

**Eric Ranger**  
**June 4, 2008**

Future PIPEX Shows:-

PIPEX 2009 - Portland, Oregon - May 22-24, 2009

PIPEX 2010 - Spokane, Washington

# BC Philatelic Society Program Schedule: Sept 2008 - Jan 2009

## September, 2008

- Monday morning, September 1 (Labour Day), 10:30 am - 1:30 pm — **Swap & Shop social**
- Wednesday evening, September 10, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Speaker Night:** BC Phil member Tim Woodland presents a program about Portugal.
- Wednesday evening, September 17, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Club Auction**
- Wednesday evening, September 24, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Special presentation:** Part II of "The Nazi Scourge," a DVD dramatization based upon the exhibit of Ken Lawrence.
- Monday morning, September 29, 10:30 am - 1:30 pm — **Swap & Shop Social**

## October, 2008

- Wednesday evening, October 8, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Swap & Shop Social**
- Wednesday evening, October 15, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — Club Program: "**Secret Stamp Night**" — Members ask 20 questions to identify each of several stamps that program moderator Bob Ingraham has in mind.
- Wednesday evening, October 22, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Monthly Auction**
- Wednesday evening, October 29, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Pre-Hallowe'en Swap & Shop Social** (costumes optional)

## November, 2008

- Monday morning, November 3, 10:30 am - 1:30 pm — **Swap & Shop Social**
- Wednesday evening, November 12, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Speaker Night:** Join BC Phil member John King for a "flighty" program about *aerostats* — lighter-than-air objects including free balloons, airships, moored balloons and tethered heli-kites.
- Wednesday evening, November 19, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Monthly Auction**
- Wednesday evening, November 26, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Swap & Shop Social**

## December, 2008

- Monday morning, December 1, 10:30 am - 1:30 pm — **Swap & Shop Social**
- Wednesday evening, December 10, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Club Program:** A night to share with fellow members those non-philatelic items that you have been inspired to collect because of your philatelic collections. Bring up to six items.
- Wednesday evening, December 17, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Monthly Auction**
- Wednesday evening, December 24, 7:30 - 9:30 pm -- Christmas Eve, no meeting
- Wednesday evening, December 31, 7:30 - 9:30 pm -- New Year's Eve, no meeting

## January, 2009

- Monday morning, January 5, 10:30 am - 1:30 pm — **Swap & Shop Social**
- Wednesday evening, January 14, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Speaker Night:** guest speaker Robin Clarke of Victoria presents "'C Force' and the fall of Hong Kong," the story of what happened to Canadian troops who became Japanese POWs in 1941.
- Wednesday evening, January 21, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Monthly Auction**
- Wednesday evening, January 28, 7:30 - 9:30 pm — **Swap & Shop Social**

The BC Philatelic Society meets weekly, September through June, in the South Community Room of the West Burnaby United Church, 6050 Sussex Avenue, in Burnaby, within easy walking distance of the Metrotown SkyTrain Station, just one block north of Kingsway. For more details, refer to our on-line schedule at [www.bcphilatelic.org/bcphilmeetings.html](http://www.bcphilatelic.org/bcphilmeetings.html).