

December 2007 / January 2008 'Milk Run'

A News Update

8th Air Force Historical Society of Oregon



From Tom Philo: Oregon Chapter Secretary.

News New Treasurer for Oregon

Chapter

Hail & Farewell

After doing many tours of duty as Treasurer, Jerry Andrews rotates out of the Treasurer duty. He had to step down as of December 31, 2007 as a result of outside work requirements.

Bert Campbell now takes over as of January 1, 2008 as the Chapter Treasurer.

Chapter Dues

If you have NOT sent in your Oregon Chapter dues for 2008, please send your \$10 check to Bert at his mailing address:

Bert Campbell
8th AFHS Treasurer
P.O. Box 275
Beavercreek, Oregon 97004-0276

New Board Members

Clint Gruber, 93rd BG (H)
Wally Groce, 56th FG

They replace the board members whose terms expired on December 31, 2007: Eldon Bevens, Vaughn Erickson, & Don Millar. Many thanks to all of them for helping guide the chapter during their tenure.

The next board meeting is on January 19, 2008.

Contact any board member, or any chapter officer, to get answers to questions, or have suggestions for the chapter.

Next Chapter Meeting

The next meeting of the 8th AFHS of Oregon is on February 9, 2008.

New Members

The chapter has 169 paid members and another 50 or so people who get mailings but are not members – yet! We lost and gained members at the same rate throughout the year leaving the membership count

basically unchanged. This is good, but we need to really increase the membership due to the age of our WW II veterans.

As a fact of life the original members who flew combat in the 8th and who are the core of the group are getting old. A lot of our members can no longer travel to attend meetings and so attendance is down as a result – the interest is still there but they just cannot travel to attend. And since they are getting old, the need to have new people join and participate – really just by showing up - is something the board has been working on for years now. It started when the “Associate Membership” category was eliminated leaving in the bylaws only the category “Member.”

The change of meetings to Saturday was also a way to allow younger non-retired people a way to attend the quarterly meeting – and it helped tremendously in getting daytime working people involved in the chapter.

Throughout the year make an effort to tell people you know, or just happen to meet, about the chapter and encourage them to attend a meeting.

Chapter informational flyers can be obtained at the meeting for you to give to people as well as a poster. Both are also on the web site and can be downloaded and printed out easily.

<http://www.8thafhsoregon.com/> is our web site.

Web Site Updates

More archive material has been added, new sections about aircraft, history of mission information, and other stats about the 8th is now online.

Archive

If you have material that you wish to have placed into the archive please contact Tom Philo. Material can be borrowed, scanned and returned. Or you can donate it permanently so that it stays with the chapter. It will then be scanned so that the original items are handled the least amount of times as possible to preserve them but can be viewed via a computer with ease.

War in the Sky DVD

As mentioned in the past meeting, National Combat History Archive is selling these to us at cost. If you wish to purchase a copy please e-mail or send a letter to Bert Campbell, Tom Philo, or Tom Davis that you would like one. Cost is \$30. We can then deliver it to you at the next meeting. You can also stop by their office and pick one up directly from them:

Combat History Archive
5801 NW Cornelius Pass Road
Hillsboro, Oregon 97124
503-597-7030

Winter Wonderland

Merry Christmas from you 8th AFHS Chapter Secretary, Tom Philo.



Huey AH-1G Cobras Christmas 1977
Fort Richardson, Alaska
© Tom Philo

Huey AH-1G “Cobra” Gun ships armed with rockets and a chin turret in front of their hanger in December 1977 at Fort Richardson Alaska.

Snow, ice, and drizzle was a constant ground crew problem for the 8th during the three winters they were in England as it was during the three years I was in the Army in Alaska.

The Ball Turret Making a Comeback?



The Advanced Tactical Laser aircraft flies over Albuquerque, N.M.
(Photo Credit: Ed Turner, Boeing)

Boeing Engineers have brought back the ball turret - this time on a Lockheed C-130 Hercules cargo plane. Instead of a man inside the ball turret directing fire, it is a remote controlled turret (like those top turrets on B-29 Superfortress) equipped with a laser that will shoot down missiles - and whatever else it is aimed at in the air or ground.

They are also working on a Humvee vehicle version.

Seattle Museum of Flight

On January 19, 2008 at 2 PM there is a panel discussion with three night fighter aces. James F Luma, Fred L Dungan, and Russell L Reiserer.

National World War I Museum

This is located **under** the Kansas City Monument to World War I. 30,000 square feet of exhibits, including a recreated trench and a WW I tank. Address is 100 West 26th St. www.nww1.org

National World War II Museum

This is in New Orleans. It was only lightly damaged during Hurricane Katrina being on high ground and more solidly built than other structures. It is on the site where the Higgins landing craft were designed and made. It transformed itself from a museum of just the landing craft to all of WW II since there was no WW II museum.

The Great B-17 – B-24 Controversy

Yes, each plane is good – but very different in design philosophy and how they came about.

Background about “Common Knowledge”

When you consider that almost EVERY Hollywood movie ever has the B-17 as the star (one exception is “Sole Survivor” with Richard Basehart based upon the “Lady Be Good” B-24 discovered in Libya in 1956) the Flying Fortress is the most well known World War II bomber to the common worldwide public. The movie “12 O’Clock High” (based upon Col Armstrong’s management style when he took over the 306th on 4 Jan 1943 written almost verbatim as it occurred into the movie during the inspection by General Eaker) and the TV show of the same name, add in the “Memphis Belle” 1943 movie and 1992 movie publicity has made the 12,751 Boeing B-17s produced much more well known than the 18,188 B-24s that were produced.

Part of the whole comparison problem is that the B-17 was the first in combat -- not until mid 1943 did enough B-24s get to the UK to fly missions (and most were diversions and aborts due to teething problems that all planes go through). The Ploesti raid (Operation Tidal Wave) put the B-24s into the public eye and got a lot of press but it was not sustained. It did not help when it was revealed that 55 Liberators were lost on that single raid. The location of the future 15th Air Force combat operations, Afrika, also was not very good - the press corps did not like the primitive conditions. The happier the press was the better the press reports were. Based on their reports, the press did not like Africa much.

The press corps in England also got off to a bad start with B-24s. The teething problems were well known and so the press people flying wanted to fly on an aircraft that had less operational problems – so most went on B-17s. It did not help that the first few times that a non-military War Correspondent went on a B-24 to targets which were also being visited by B-17s the B-24 they were in was shot down and they were killed or captured. Andy Rooney related this as did Walter Cronkite who went on the same mission that the only one of the seven war correspondents that went on that bombing mission who did not come back was in the B-24 group.

Design Goals

Different planes designed for same purpose but with different design philosophies. A B-24 flew faster, farther, longer with a 3 ton larger load than the B-17s ever could (and if they tried to fly as far then they lost 1/2 their bomb bay for extra fuel tank). The Davis wing on the Liberator creates a design limit to get the speed efficiency which limited its high altitude ceiling - thus with a combat load it could not get to the same altitude as a B-17. The B-17 wing is a pre-war era design and is THICK for heavy lift efficiency. The power of the engines available dictated this thick wing design. The wing is a lot like those found on C-152 Cessna. And like that wing – you cannot get a lot of speed due to heavy drag it causes. B-17s flew at 155 indicated in formation while B-24s flew at 165 indicated. Which does not seem like much of a difference but at ALTITUDE that 10 MPH can translate into an extra 10 to 30 MPH TRUE airspeed difference - thus they get there faster and are subject to less time over the enemy territory - making them safer. 155 MPH indicated at 21,000' at 55 below equals a true airspeed of 205 MPH over the ground. Going at 165 MPH comes out to 220 MPH. So the B-24s are flying 15 MPH faster than a B-17 at the same altitude.

The 10 MPH difference in formation cruise is the main reason why they never flew in the same combat formation. They tried it in 1943 and it was just too difficult. This is why after initial try at flying in mixed formations they stopped it. So B-24s flew only with other B-24 groups. This often meant the B-24s could take off later, fly the same distance to bomb a target, and were already on the ground before the 17s ever got back to the English shore.

A Two Week Design

“Early in January, 1939 Fleet called designer Frank W. Fink into his office and told him they had decided to build a better bomber than Boeing's B-17. They informed Fink that he was to be project engineer for the new design and that a wooden mockup was to be ready in two weeks. When Fink asked what the new bomber looked like, he was told that this was to be a completely new project and the design hadn't even reached the basic drawing stage. He was then given a quick description of the new bomber - he would use the Model 31's Davis wing, its twin tail, four engine nacelles from the PBY Catalina and he would design a new fuselage with two bomb bays, each as large as the bomb bay of the B-17. He had 14 days to create the mock up, while Fleet and Laddon went to Washington to sell the new bomber to the U.S. Army.”

From http://www.fourays.org/features_2005/great_combat_aircraft/b_24/b24_1.htm

And you thought the 90 days to design and build a P-51 from drawing to first flight was fast.

Beauty in the Eyes of the Beholder

The B-24 design is very functional - but as a photographer you have to work harder to get better pictures. The human mind likes curves.

The Fortress is to the Spitfire like the Liberator is to the Hurricane. There were more Hurricanes in the Battle of Britain and they shot down a higher percentage of Germans than their ratio would suggest than the Spitfires - but the Spits got all the press! They just looked better in flight and on the ground in photographs.

The B-24 Liberator is treated the same way.

The Loss Rate

All loss rates are miss-leading. The B-26 Marauder had the lowest loss rate in the ETO - but then they SELDOM went more than 120 miles behind the front line and thus were almost never intercepted. One

time they were jumped by an organized Gruppe of Fw-190s (around 40 FWs) and they lost 26 out of 36 a/c - in 20 minutes. This was during the Battle of the Bulge. As a percentage by mission there is almost no difference in the loss rate between B-24s and B-17s in the same timeframe.

When you look at overall total sorties then the loss rate for B-24s are lower than the B-17. This occurs since from 1944 onwards there were twice as many B-24s flying than B-17s and so the sheer numbers skew the overall WW II percentage downwards. 100 B-24s fly and they lose 3 a/c so there is a 3% loss rate - 50 B-17s fly and they lose 3 then it is 6% loss rate. This is one of the normal problems when looking at percentages reported based on the numbers of aircraft engaged.

The B-24 really started arriving en-masse in the spring and summer of 1944. By then most of the problems with the B-24 had been corrected but some design problems would always remain. Having a thinner smaller wing meant that cannon shells hitting it would not only cause problems on the side it hit but the shells would also cause about the same amount of damage to the opposite side. It also meant that a few shells in the smaller wing cross section would cause the wing to fail faster than the much longer chord, and thicker, B-17 wing. Other areas of the plane – being bigger and with twin rudders – meant that the B-24 could take some hits and not be affected – pretty much like the B-17. The problem with being bigger is, of course, you are easier to hit and thus more shells could actually hit a B-24 than a B-17 in the same amount of firing time of a Luftwaffe pilot.

The British

The most effective bomber of the war actually would be the Lancaster - but I sure would not want to fly in them. 55,000 bomber command crew members were killed during the war - and often the whole crew would die in a Lancaster. This is due to the way the two emergency exits from the a/c were laid out. You had only two, one in front for 6 men, and 1 in the rear for the tail gunner. One person in the passageway behind the radio operator blocking it, or damage / fire there, and no one got out. Since these men were flying at night other causes to contribute to their high loss rate could be that the crew never even knew the plane was going down – with no visual reference point to see what the plane is doing - diving or climbing, or even in a slow spin - most likely stayed at their station waiting for the bailout signal that never came.

Summary

The two heavy bombers of World War II that flew in the 8th, 15th, 5th Air Forces were designed years apart, using different aeronautical ideas, because of competition to get military contracts. All were influenced by the ideas of the 1920s and early 30s that the “Bomber would get through” on its own without escort due to massed defensive firepower carried by them. The airpower proponents also expected that they could target industries and cripple the war effort though precision strikes on key targets (enemy aircraft plants, rail (transportation), electric, fuel, some key industries– think Schweinfurt -- and general war production factories) to disrupt the whole economy so much it would make them unable to wage modern war. The B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator both accomplished these same takes in the same manner at the same level of efficiency.

Other Groups

Association of Naval Aviation

Association of Naval Aviation meets monthly on the Last Thursday of each month at 11:30. Location varies. They normally meet at the Gateway elks Club, 711 NE

100th Avenue. Contact Lt Commander George Bickford (Ret) (503) 789-8061 e-mail at bick@teleport.com

Oregon Old Bold Pilots Club

OOBPC meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at noon at Davidson's Casual Dining, 12830 SW Pacific Hwy (Highway 99), Tigard, Oregon. Davidson's is located on the south side of Highway 99 one mile West of Highway 217. This is where the traffic light at Walnut and Highway 99 is at. Tom Davis coordinates this meeting also. Open to any and all people who like aviation you do not have to have even flown in an a/c – topics are whatever aviation topic you want to talk about from any era.

Bomber Restaurant

This is at the B-17 Lacy Bomber in Milwaukie. They meet 1st Friday of each month for breakfast 10 AM till Noon.

8th AFHS Contact Information: E-Mail and Postal

Secretary 8th AFHS Oregon

Tom Philo

17502 SW Kimmel Ct.

Beaverton, Oregon 97007-6877

Ph and Fax 503-591-3227

secretary@8thafhsoregon.com

<http://www.8thafhsoregon.com>