

“MILK RUN”

Oregon Chapter 8th Air Force Historical Society News Update
December, 2009



First 2010 meeting is on **February 13**. 10 AM till 2 PM.

History News

Readers, where's your story?

Lt Rentmeester's Diary: 401 Sqd, 91 BG (H), Basingbourne, England

Editor: I was loaned his diary by his brother and scanned his two memo pad books. His brother is currently living in Florida. This is a transcript from his Dec 22, 1943 entry when he flew as 1st pilot for the first time. I currently have 24 different collections of documents- from 24 different people - that I have digitized and am organizing before they are posted to our 8th AFHS Web site.

Dec 22 – Wednesday

Our first raid today. They sent me out with my own crew today instead of giving me experience as copilot first. We took off around 10 AM and rendezvoused. We hit the target at 1356. The target was Osenbruck (?), ten miles north of Munster. Flak was very much in evidence when we crossed the Dutch coast, over the target and over the coast again.

A lot of fighters Me 109s and FW 190s came in on us and most of our ammunition was used up. Our P-38s and P-47s were chasing them around the sky followed by long swooping contrails. As we came over the target white and black flak burst and German fighters kept boring in. A B-17 ahead of us suddenly went into a spin with firing spilling out of it. It looked like a movie – a big four engined bomber lazily spinning towards white clouds below.

At the same time Bill and I were kept busy holding the plane in flight as the whole group was in prop-wash of the wing ahead. That's quite a job – it keeps a fellow warm even though the outside temperature ere -43C.

Just to make things interesting, the oxygen system leaked. Shortly after leaving the target my oxygen ran completely out. I flew for twenty minutes before passing out and Bill, who had a little left in his lines, took over, at the same time plugging my walk-around bottle in. Then when he passed out, I took over and after my oxygen was nearly gone put the plane into a steep dive to lower altitudes. By that time most of the enemy fighters had turned around and we were through the flak on the Dutch coast. All of the fellows did well and I'm sure they hit a couple of the German fighters. However, they didn't put in any claims. England really looked good coming back. We dove down and came back to Jolly Old England. It's a shame that so many innocent people have to suffer because of the few in power who set up the principles of a country's government. Those poor civilians who were the recipient of our bombs probably never hurt anybody.

Honor Flight

This is a non-profit that arranges WW II Veterans to visit the National Memorial WW II Memorial in Washington DC. www.honorflight.org is the web site; Honor Flight, Inc. 300 E. Auburn Ave. Springfield, OH 45505-4703 Office Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. EST 937-521-2400 is the main office phone number.

You have to submit an application to them – details on the web site. In the future they state they will do the same for the Korean and Vietnam veterans.

Double Mission Bonus and what you do with Parachutes in a B-24

Houston Sipes was a Top Turret gunner flying B-24s out of Italy from late 1944 thru the end of the war with his last mission in May of 1945.

He got credit for 50 missions though he actually only flew 33 – 17 missions were counted as double due to the hazards associated with missions flown from Italy to Germany and back to base.

As to what parachutes are used for – air brakes when your hydraulics are shot out of your B-24.



"The B-24 rolled to the end of the runway and hit some of the planes on the ground. The airfield commander was upset, but the crew didn't care."

<http://www.jacksonsun.com/article/20091111/NEWS21/911080301/1002/NEWS01>

P-51 "Red Tail" Project

Lt Col Harold Brown (USAF, Ret) has put his name to a Commemorative Air Force project of restoring a P-51C to flying status to the cost of \$2.3 million dollars. Their specific web site for the project is: <http://www.redtail.org> .

There is P-51C painted up in the colors of one of the "Red Tails" at the Fantasy of Flight museum in Polk City Florida.

The Tuskegee airmen flew a variety of aircraft, P-39s, P-40s, and P-47s, before finally being converted to fly the P-51s while in Italy. 66 were KIA and 32 became POWs – including Lt Col Brown.

As always various amount of money will get you various thank-you gifts from a hat (\$51) to a call from one of the original members.

I met around 20 of them when they held a reunion at Pearson Airfield in the 1990s and one lives locally here in the Portland Metro area.

Training Accidents in Nebraska

Training could be even more deadly than combat. Bill Seitz (15th Air Force) remarked to me at an Old Bold Pilot's club meeting that after coming back from his first combat tour and then to training command training new people to fly the B-24 Liberator – but using 87 Octane fuel instead of 100 octane which was reserved for use overseas - he thought it was safer in combat so he went back to the 15th for another tour!

Nebraska has lots of training fields and a book called "Nebraska's Fatal Air Crashes of WW II" by Jerry Penry documents them in detail (another book out covering all of the US was published last year.)

Lauren Roach was 11 when a B-17 crashed near his house in 1945 which is covered in the book.

<http://www.northplattebulletin.com/index.asp?show=news&action=readStory&storyID=17748&pageID=3>

"I didn't want to be a foot soldier"

Jerry Korman joined the Army and went to radio school before being posted to Europe flying in B-17s as a radio operator / gunner. He was part of a crew that flew a night mission with the English mapping the Norwegian coast. A few units of the 8th Air Force crews flew night missions dropping leaflets (and OSS agents) throughout the war – which most people have never heard about.

Korman was one of the crews that literally came back to England using only one engines since the rest has been shot away – and nothing left inside the aircraft either since they threw everything out to lower the weight of the aircraft.

<http://www.mydesert.com/article/20091202/NEWS01/912020306/1026/news12/Veteran-saw-Germany-from-a-Flying-Fortress>

Bailing out over Bulgaria

John P. "Son" Courtney was a top turret gunner in B-24s when on his eight mission on July 3, 1944, a German fighter forced the crew to bail out of their aircraft over Bulgaria on a after bombing an oil refinery just south of Bucharest, Romania. He flew in the 15th Air Force.

He kept a diary of his times as a POW as well as all the other records of his wartime experience.

http://blog.al.com/live/2009/11/world_war_ii_vet_recalls_baili.html

Larry Bellarts and his Me-262 engagement

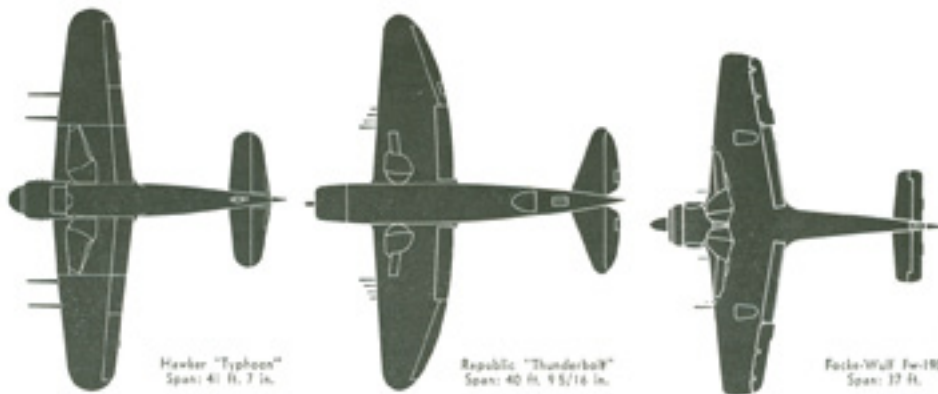
Larry is a local resident of The Dalles Oregon and in this article he talks about his engagement with a Me-262 during the latter part of World War II. I've talked with him at an Association of Naval Aviators (ANA) meeting as well as a meeting of the Oregon 8th Air Force Historical Society.

Nice write up of his story in The Dalles Chronicle newspaper of how a single Me-262 got his three wingmen but missed him and his plane.

<http://www.thedalleschronicle.com/news/2009/11/news11-15-09-01.shtml>

Color Blindness Means You're a Gunner

Ken Hamilton tried to join the Army Air Force and become a pilot, but the colorblind test (he didn't memorize the color chart like Roland Fisher did!) so he ended up flying 30 missions in a B-29 as a gunner.



In air to air combat color is not as important as recognizing shapes of the aircraft approaching you. In the air anything greater than 1/2 mile from you is only an outline anyway – you cannot detect colors till they get close in – and by that time it is often too

late to fire at a closing speed of 400+ mph even in a "slow" bomber.

<http://www.jacksonsun.com/article/20091206/NEWS01/912060302/1002/Gunner-s-B-29-flew-30-missions-over-Japan>

Wil Ketner flies in "Aluminum Overcast"

Ex B-17 pilot Wil Ketner traveled to Capital City Airport, Columbia Maryland, to fly again in a B-17. He flew on one of the very last 8th AF Heavy Bomber mission of the war – to Skoda Armament Works at Pilsen Czechoslovakia to bomb the plants there. He was part of the 359 Squadron based at Molesworth England during World War II. This is where the 303 BG (H) was stationed and was one of the early groups to be assigned to the 8th Air Force. Walter Cronkite (who died this year) flew as a waist gunner while a reporter as did Any Rooney from this base.

The 303 BG mission # 364 to Pilsen (8th AF Mission 968) the 303rd Bombardment Group (H) "Hell's Angels" lost one plane. Overall 6 aircraft in the 8th were shot down, 4 were "Cat E" write offs. The Allies warned all the factory workers that they will be attacked three days before the mission was launched in order to avoid killing Czechoslovakian workers. They had to make three passes over the plant before bombs away. However, an Arado 234 was claimed as shot down during the mission.

For more info on the 303rd and Ketner visit their web site: <http://www.303rdbg.com/>

<http://www.examiner.com/x-8658-Philadelphia-Headlines-Examiner~y2009m11d18-World-War-II-Flying-Fortress-pilot-flies-again>

"Hell Hawks" Book

Robert F. Dorr and co-author Thomas D. Jones (Tom) spent 5 years researching the story of the P-47 Thunderbolt equipped 365th Fighter Group by talking with 171 of the men who flew primarily ground support missions – and sometimes bomber escort missions – in the ETO from 1944 till 1945.

(I bought the book when I was at the Dulles Air and Space Museum while waiting for my flight out of DC and met the author while there; I've already read the whole book, very interesting!)

His next book is going to be about "Mission to Berlin," which focuses primarily on the February 3, 1945 mission to the German capital and will be published by Zenith Press in March 2011.

He is asking anyone who was part of the mission to contact him so he can get first person accounts of everything people did in the mission to contact him:

Robert F. Dorr
3411 Valewood Drive
Oakton, Virginia 22124
(703) 264-8950
robert.f.dorr@cox.net

If you'd like a personalized copy, send him a check for \$ 31.64, for the book, an inscription from the authors, and priority mail packaging.

"A Day in the Life of the Mighty Eighth"

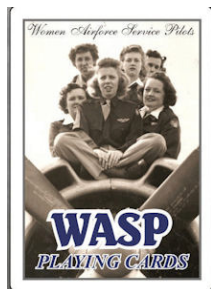
Another book just published is about a single day, Sunday November 26, 1944, when 34 crews were shot down on the day while flying in 8th Air Force mission 725 (1,137 bombers and 732 fighters are dispatched). It is written by John Meurs who was living in Holland on that day when a bomber from the 381 BG (H) crashed near his house.

In its 538 pages there are 34 chapters – once for each aircrew shot down. 314 airmen, out of whom 136 were killed in action, 170 were taken prisoner and 8 were hidden by the Dutch Underground until their liberation by Canadian troops in April/May 1945.

Quail Ridge Press, Brandon, MS is the publisher and he is selling it for \$20 a copy including postage.

John Meurs
Im Gubel 5
CH-8630 Rütli ZH
Switzerland
meurs.john@bluewin.ch

Need to Play Cards during the cold Winter?



You still have time to order the WW II WASP playing cards. They are sold by the International Women's Air & Space Museum for \$10 each and shipping is \$2.60 per pack.

IWASM
1501 N. Marginal Rd.
Rm 165
Cleveland, OH 44114

Night Witches



BBC 4 produced a radio show about the USSR "Night Witches" who flew nighttime bombing attacks against the NAZI troops during WW II. It was broadcast on November 2, 2009 and you can listen to it online.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00nk0g9>

Amy Strebe wrote a book about these women and did a presentation at our meeting about these combat pilot women at one of our meetings before she moved to California. Russia is the only country that organized women into combat formations in ALL aspects of combat: Sniper, artillery, bomber, and fighter units during World War II.

Kilo-Quad - The Underground Ford Factory

What is now an unused space under a south side Chicago shopping mall, was once the largest aircraft engine factory in the world – run by the Ford Motor Company.

18,000 Wright 3350 engines – ones used on B-29s - were eventually produced at the plant from the time it ground was broke on the plant on June 5 1942 till the end of the war.

The book was written by John Kudia about this plant to let people know the historical significance of it. The Germans were not the first to build important plants underground.

<http://www.suntimes.com/technology/guy/1870383,CST-FIN-ECOL07.article>

Another place that turned out engines was Muskegon. They turned out aircraft and tank engines – some US tanks were power by air-cooled radial engines!

http://www.mlive.com/news/muskegon/index.ssf/2009/12/muskegon_was_the_arsenal_of_de.html

The Power of Women

In MAY or JUNE of 1941 the 54th PURSUIT SQDN of 55th PURSUIT GROUP rolled into their new station at Portland, Oregon.

As we passed thru PORTLAND the men saw GIRLS on the streets and would CAT CALL and whistle at them. (All in good fun.) The OUT COME of that was that the BASE COMMANDER thought it was awful for his men to act so bad, so he RESTRICTED us to the base for 6 weeks.

Now the girls stepped in and every time the BASER CO went to play golf a bunch of girls would follow him around on the golf course and CAT CALL AT HIM and whistle. After 2 weeks of that he RESCINDED the order.

- H.R. "MAC" McGalliard (Editor, of the 11th Air Force News)

USS Ranger Foundation

The letter writing campaign is still going on – writing to Oregon public officials in order to allow the USS Ranger to be docked in Portland as a permanent museum. The Ranger was commissioned on August 10th of 1957 and is the last of that class that can be used as a museum. <http://www.ussranger.org/>

USS RANGER FOUNDATION
1505 SE Gideon Street
Suite 650
Portland, OR 97202

ZERO Stats

Number of "ZEROS" produced during WW II: 6570 by Nakajima, 3880 Mitsubishi, 512 trainers by others

"You know what DFC stands for, don't you?" -- "Don't fly combat."

During a visit of Aluminum overcast to Tulsa at the end of October, Gerald Gents, who was based at Great Ashfield, England flew his first combat mission on December 24 and also flew on the February 3, 1945 – the largest 8th AF mission of WW II, flew in the

EAA aircraft along with Col. E.J. Hitt who few 47 B-17 missions over Europe and then later on flew 35 P-51 missions.

"All the pilots were young, if you had a 25-year-old pilot, he was an old codger." – Gerald Gentis

http://www.tulsaworld.com/business/article.aspx?subjectid=45&articleid=20091031_45_E1_WorldW21078

'Last Roll Call'

Not many books have been written by the people of the 15th Air Force, but this past November a new 184 page paperback book "Last Roll Call" about a tail gunner flying out of Italy was published. After training he ended up in the 97th Bomb Group, 414th Bomb Squadron, at Amendola, Italy.

<http://www.newsherald.com/news/wwii-78725-eastpoint-memoir.html>

Q: How do you know if there is a fighter pilot at your party?

A: He'll tell you.

Flying Replica P-38



Jim O'Hara is a member of EAA chapter 493 in San Angelo and he and his wife built this 2/3 scale P-38. Photo is from October 24, 2009. It took them 15 years to build it. Jim is 81 years old and is trained as an engineer. It first flew in July 2009.

Japanese Subs found off of Pearl Harbor

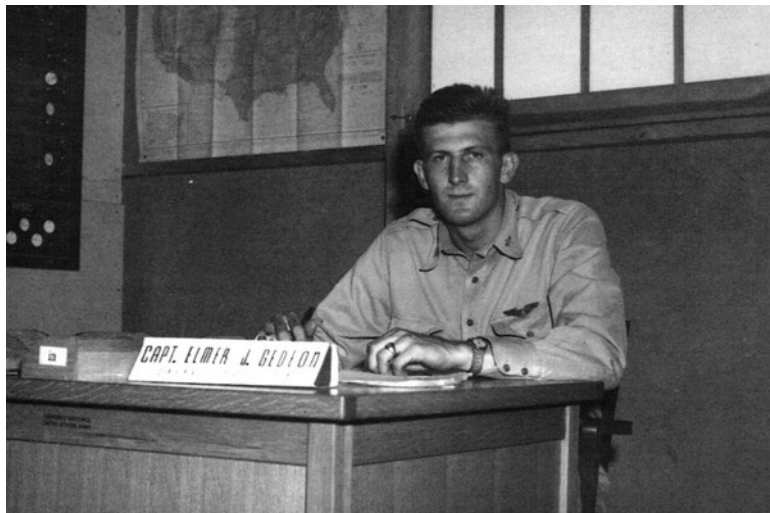
Two WW II I Cclass Japanese submarines, purposely sunk at the end of WWII so that details of them would not have to be shared with the USSR (per treaty agreements) were located in deep waters off Hawaii in November. The I-14 was 400 feet long and



Members of Ken Tucker's air crew, while they trained at Alexandria Army Air Field in Louisiana, standing from left, are Clyde Dwight, Malcolm Vignes, Michael Joyce, Jack Taylor, Kenneth Snow and Tucker. Squatting, from left, Louis Dunigan, James Garrison, Halsey Nisula and Donald McQuistion

40 feet high and carried a crew of 144, while the I-201 more resembles modern designs.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-sci-japanese-subs13-2009nov13,0,2197281.story?track=rss>



Baseball Heros

Having a career and giving it up to serve in the Military during WW II was not uncommon – a lot of movie actors, and a few real movie stars signed up, but baseball was the most visible group seen on a daily basis in the early 20th century and lots of players signed up (or were drafted)– and a few were killed during the war. Two Major league players were killed during the war while 126 minor league players were killed. Most major league players were older and thus were not drafted during the war

years. Harry O'Neill was KIA on Iwo Jima while Elmer Gedeon was KIA when the bomber his was piloting was shot down over France on April 20, 1944.

<http://bleacherreport.com/articles/295204-baseball-in-wartime>

F6F Raised from the Water

Out of Lake Michigan, about 50 miles from Chicago, a WW II F6F was pulled from 250+ feet of water by A&T Recovery. It will be restored back to non-flying status.

Lt. Walter Elcock was flying the plane when he ditched it on January 4, 1945. He is still alive.

A Spitfire is still Tricky To Land

Doug Brooker ran out of runway in New Zealand in his Spitfire – so it is still tricky to learn how to land it after all these years. This is the second accident for him in his \$3 million dollar two seat Spitfire.

Local Chapter News and Groups

Archive Update

Old Bold Pilots Club

Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from around 11:45 Noon till when people leave.

Meetings are at The Village Inn Restaurant; 17070 SW 72nd Tigard right at Lower Boons Ferry Road and I-5 on the west side of I-5 at Exit 290.

ANA – Association of Naval Aviators

Meetings are the last Thursday of each month at the Elks Lodge next to Gateway Transit Center. 711 NE 100th Avenue, Portland, Oregon. Meeting is from 11:30 till around 2 PM.

Contact LtCol George Bickford (Ret) at 503-789-8061. e-mail: bick @ teleport.com
Mailing address: Flying Beaver Squadron; PO Box 432; Clackamas, Oregon 97015-0432

Southern Oregon Warbirds Association

If you live in southern Oregon you can meet x-aviation personnel at the Southern Oregon Warbirds Association (SOWA) <http://www.southernoregonwarbirds.org>. Meeting location: New Life Christian Center, 1723 NE Vine Street. Roseburg, OR and they meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 12:00 noon. The July / August dinner meeting is on the fourth Tuesday of those months at the American Legion Hall 406 SE Oak Street. 6:30 pm Elmer L Giles, Sec.. POC: Elmer L Giles, 102 Shadow Ranch Lane, Roseburg OR 97470 Cell phone 541 430 4165. Dues \$10 a year.

Breakfast at Twin Oaks Airpark

EAA chapter 105 <http://www.eaa105.org/> holds a breakfast at Twin Oaks Airpark www.twinoaksairpark.com on the 1st Saturday of each month. Cost is \$5 and you get to eat in the hanger. Their next breakfast is at the same time as our 8th AFHS meeting on November 7th. It is a pancake breakfast so you could go there and then still get to the 8th AFHS meeting that starts at 10 AM.

Bomber Restaurant Breakfast

On the first Friday of each month people meet at The Bomber Restaurant (find the B-17 along McLaughlin – hard to miss) at 10 AM till noon.

Aviation Breakfast Club

This is the Walt Bohrer Chapter and they meet on the 2nd Sunday of each month (except Easter and Mother's Day) from 10 AM till 12 Noon at various places now that their long time meeting place shut down. Call for details: 503-254-5555; e-mail: aviationclub @ aol.com

“Milk Run” Definition

Milk Run: noun; uneventful, routine. Slang for an “easy mission”. A combat mission where you attack the enemy and get credit for a mission toward your tour total but no enemy fighters, nor any effective anti-aircraft guns, are expected to be firing at you. Word origin based upon the routine nature of delivering milk every morning to people in the US in the 1920s. First referenced in print 1925. See “cake walk”. Antonym of Schweinfurt.

Contact Information E-mail and Postal

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