

# “MILK RUN”

Oregon Chapter 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society News Update  
May 2010



Next Meeting is on **May 8**. 10 AM till 2 PM

## 8 May is VE Day

### History News

*Readers, where's your story?*

#### Twins Navigators in the “Cottontails”

Both brothers were navigators at the same time in the same squadron in Italy. Both completed 50 missions.

"Surviving combat is 99 percent luck and maybe 1 percent skill. But as the guys always tell me, 'You better have that skill when your luck runs out.'"

Earl Shanken, Navigator, 722nd Squadron of the 450th "Cottontail" Bomb Group.

<http://www.mydesert.com/article/20100326/NEWS01/3260310/Twin+navigators+flew+bombing+missions>

#### B-17 / P-51 Pilot Jack Hitt

As a pilot of the B-17, Jack Hitt flew 47 combat missions. He later flew 35 combat missions as a P-51 Mustang fighter pilot.

Hitt won two Distinguished Flying Crosses and eight air medals.

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

Gentis participated in one of the largest raids of the war during a mission to Berlin on Feb. 3, 1945.

"There were about 5,000 planes that took part from dawn to dark," he said. "We were told it would be 10/10 coverage — full cloud cover, which meant we wouldn't see the target. The lead aircraft had a Pathfinder radar. We would release whenever they would. We weren't in radio contact."

[http://www.tulsaworld.com/business/article.aspx?subjectid=45&articleid=20091031\\_45\\_E1\\_WorldW21078](http://www.tulsaworld.com/business/article.aspx?subjectid=45&articleid=20091031_45_E1_WorldW21078)

#### Bill Varnedoe Waist Gunner

On March 2, 1945, "Possible Straight" [his B-17] was part of a formation being pummeled by enemy fire. He had lined up a waist machine gun on an enemy fighter, but nothing happened when he pulled the trigger.

Varnedoe used gloved hands to open the ammunition box - it was 40 degrees below zero at altitude so you couldn't touch metal with bare skin - and found a bent link in the chain of bullets that fed the machine gun, fixed it, and within a moment had turned his attention back outside the plane.

"They had shot down both of my wingmen," Varnedoe said, and also the plane that had been in front of his.

"The war wasn't over yet," he said.

[http://blog.al.com/breaking/2009/10/world\\_war\\_ii\\_veteran\\_takes\\_fir.html](http://blog.al.com/breaking/2009/10/world_war_ii_veteran_takes_fir.html)

## Doolittle Raiders Meet Again



Four of the Eight remaining "Doolittle Raiders" met at the Air Force Museum. The four were retired Lt. Col. Richard E. Cole, 94, of Comfort, Texas; Maj. Thomas C. Griffin, 92, of Cincinnati; Lt. Col. Robert L. Hite, 90, Nashville, Tenn., and Master Sgt. David J. Thatcher, 88, of Missoula, Mont. As part of the event a flyover of B-25s were staged in their honor. 17 privately owned B-25s from throughout the country

were on the museum runway to help celebrate the occasion.

April 16 is when then Col. Doolittle lead his land based B-25s off the deck of the carrier USS Hornet and attacked various targets throughout the main island of Japan. Damage was little, but the psychology damage to the Japanese – and the morale lift in the US and the rest of the Allied world - plus the direct military changes in keeping planes in Japan to protect against another raid, did alter the Japanese strategy in 1942 and for the rest of the war.

<http://www.retirees.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123201041>

## B-17s Left in the World

From Tommy Garcia, via the 398<sup>th</sup> BG Newsletter published a list of all the B-17s known left in the world. 13 are flyable, 21 are on static display, 12 are undergoing restoration, and 4 are in storage giving a total of 49 known airframes.

## **Eisenhower Memorial in DC Planned**

There are plans to create a Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial in Washington DC on a four-acre site at the base of Capitol Hill between 4th and 6th Streets SW, south of Independence Avenue.

There is a statue of him outside of Bayeux, France (in the middle of a round-a-bout) but there nothing in DC other than a few of his quotes on the WW II memorial.

<http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org/>

## **Hunting Subs on a Jeep Carrier**

The Rev. Richard J. Hardman, 87 was stationed on a converted oil tanker turned flattop, the USS Block Island, flying TFB Avengers on 8 to 12 hour patrols at night when the sub they were hunting sunk it.

He ended up with a land vacation in Casablanca.

<http://www.tcpalm.com/news/2010/apr/02/veteran-spotlight-priest-was-once-a-wwii-navy/>

## **The Legacy Flight Museum in southeastern Idaho**

This aviation museum now owns an SNJ-3 – the Navy version of the AT-6. They have a P-63, P-51s Skyraider and other a/c.

<http://www.legacyflightmuseum.com/>

## **Salvaging a/c Parts while under Fire**

Nick Knitter, 90 years old, was finally awarded a Bronze Star in Galloway Wisconsin at a VFW ceremony after his caregiver found papers stating that he was put in for it in 1945 but the paperwork never went through.

<http://www.wkowitz.com/Global/story.asp?S=12270263>

## **Nancy Baker and Virginia Wood Gets their Congressional Medal**

WASPs were everywhere, and they have settled everywhere, and in Fairbanks, Alaska, Nancy & Virginia were presented with their by Senator Lisa Murkowski.

[http://newsminer.com/view/full\\_story/6930368/article-Two-Fairbanks-women-who-flew-airplanes-in-World-War-II-honored?instance=home\\_news\\_window\\_left\\_top\\_3](http://newsminer.com/view/full_story/6930368/article-Two-Fairbanks-women-who-flew-airplanes-in-World-War-II-honored?instance=home_news_window_left_top_3)

## **B-17 Navigator gets Air Medal**

2nd Lt. Robert L. Giles was over Berlin on April 18, 1944, when their plane was attacked by Luftwaffe fighters and set on fire. Staying in the aircraft as it was on fire and starting to go out of control, he got his wounded bombardier, Lt. Quintin Brown, into a parachute dragged him to and then out the hatch, before getting out himself.

They both spent the rest of the war in Stalag Luft III.

A person received an Air Medal after every five missions, but he was shot down before it could be awarded to him.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5g8fXuDTdqbFaf9mLteHsRAtsAFJAD9ETQN501>

## **Morris R. Jeppson, an Enola Gay weaponeer, dead at 87**

Morris was one of two men who actually armed the atomic bomb carried to Hiroshima by the Enola Gay.

He flew only 1 combat mission during the war which was on August 6, 1945 flying out of Tinian.

Navy Capt. William S. Parsons installed the charge for the uranium compression explosion while Lt Jeppson armed the electrical system and the three fuses it used which set off the other charge.

Lt. Jeppson likely "put the last thing into the bomb that made it hot," said Dik Daso, curator of modern military aircraft at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum.

He stated that his wife's car had a bumper sticker that read:

*"If there hadn't been a Pearl Harbor, there wouldn't have been a Hiroshima."*



<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/06/AR2010040604104.html>

## **Flight Lieutenant Norman Carter Macqueen**

The campaign to keep Malta supplied from 1940 thru 1943 was one of where both naval and aircraft had to work together to get supplies through. Being a fighter pilot on Malta from 1941 thru 1943 was a very dangerous place to be stationed during this timeframe. Lt Macqueen was KIA on 4 May 1942 during an air battle.

He was an ACE with 5 confirmed kills when he died.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/wales/north\\_east/8623165.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/north_east/8623165.stm)

## **Bill Seitz Flies Another Mission**

Bill Seitz, a B-24 "Liberator" Pilot who flew 85 missions from 1943 thru 1945 as part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force which operated in the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations (MTO) flying missions out of both North Africa (Tunisia) and later Italy, and ended up his WW II combat missions in the 344th squadron, 98th Bomb Group, 47th Wing, was surprised with an awards ceremony and a flight around Oregon this past April 8 on the anniversary of his last WW II mission. On the April 8, 1944 mission he was the lead plane, lead squadron, lead group for the whole 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force into Germany -- some 1000+ bombers.

No one shot at him this time around.

[http://www.oregonlive.com/news/index.ssf/2010/04/world\\_war\\_ii\\_pilot\\_takes\\_to\\_th.h tml](http://www.oregonlive.com/news/index.ssf/2010/04/world_war_ii_pilot_takes_to_th.h tml)

## **Veterans History Project May 8th**

Veterans are invited to share their first-person military accounts, which will be recorded free of charge as part of the Library of Congress's Veterans History Project between 1 and 5 pm. You must call and schedule in advance.

Ten 45-minute interviews will be conducted, and preregistered veterans will also receive free admission. Those who participate in this exciting opportunity to archive history will be mailed a copy of their interview, which will also be donated to the Library of Congress.

Contact APH at (503) 560-1945 or Joan E. Hamilton [JHami828@aol.com](mailto:JHami828@aol.com) to pre-register for interviews and visit [www.ohs.org](http://www.ohs.org) for more information.

## **Recording the Stories of the Aircraft Workers**

Starting in the fall of 1942 Betty Oelke decided she wanted a job in the Willow Run aircraft plant which was starting to make B-24 "Liberators" 4 engine heavy bomber for the war. Though at 18, and a newlywed, she joined in to what became a 40,000 person around the clock work force turning out B-24 at that single Ford plant.

A complete B-24 -- ready to fly off to the fitting out depot -- rolled off the assembly line every 55 minutes -- 428 a month at the peak.

Every worker had to be trained first before they could work -- there were no skilled aircraft people in the immediate area -- so it took a long time before the factory reached that production speed in 1944.

<http://www.annarbor.com/business-review/86-year-old-belleville-woman-recalls-days-working-in-willow-run-bomber-plant-to-help-war-effort/>

## **Bailing out of a 349th Bomb Squadron B-17 of the 100th Bomb Group**

B-17 tail gunner Jon Kaiser felt the AA shell hit on the #2 engine and could see the result so he bailed out – not knowing that the pilot had told to crew to stay put till they got back over Russian lines – he lived and the rest didn't.

He became a POW on March 31, 1945 and was liberated just three weeks later.

He went flying again in "Aluminum Overcast" as it is making its tour around the USA.

<http://www.independent.com/news/2010/apr/24/flying-aboard-fortress/>

## **Robert Grimes dies at 87, shot down during 2<sup>nd</sup> Schweinfurt**

Shot down near Brussels on the return leg of the October 20, 1943 mission to Schweinfurt ball bearing factories (60 B-17s were shot down) he was able to evade capture and make it to Spain using the "Comet Line" escape organization which is estimated to have helped 700 airmen evade capture during the war.

When out celebrating his birthday while evading: "I gave the first guard my Belgian ID card and got through it. Then the second guard came and asked me in French if I'd already shown my identification. I somehow saved myself with my high school French. And this was what I said, 'Oui, oui.' Those words saved my life."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/22/AR2010042205666.html>

## **Local Chapter News**

Joani Hamilton was appointed to finish out Joe Conroy's time on the board.

### ***Archive Update***

Another 10 sets of archives has been processed and posted onto the web site. There are now 50 sets of archived information from our chapter posted onto the web site plus additional material loaned to our chapter from other people which is also posted there.

<http://www.8thafhsoregon.com/archive/Oregon-Chapter/index.aspx#toc>

## **Local Aviation Groups**

### ***Old Bold Pilots Club***

Meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

### ***Evergreen Museum***

*Member Appreciation Day on February 27, 2010*

8 am breakfast in the Aviation Museum followed by a members-only presentation by John Collins, the Paper Airplane Guy, at 8:45. RSVP required for breakfast. Call 503-434-4007 or email [membership@sprucegoose.org](mailto:membership@sprucegoose.org)

### ***ANA – Association of Naval Aviators***

Meetings are the last Thursday of each month at the Elks Lodge next to Gateway Transit Center. 711 NE 100<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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](http://www.twinoaksairpark.com) on the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS meeting on November 7<sup>th</sup>. It is a pancake breakfast so you could go there and then still get to the 8<sup>th</sup> 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. The Bomber Complex, Inc. 13515 S.E. McLoughlin Blvd.; Milwaukie, Oregon 97222; 503-659-9306

The B-17 restoration project has its own web site at:

<http://www.b17wingsoffreedom.org/>

### ***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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