

8th AF General Membership Meeting

August 8, 2002

Invocation

Pledge of Allegiance

Treasurer's Report was given.

Announcements

Rose Festival Air Show

Want some veterans to attend: get free parking, entrance etc and in return you tell your stories..

398th BG reunion at Monarch Hotel September 25-28th

Bomber expansion and USO party in Milwaukee. See bulletin for more details.



Governor renewed the 8th AF proclamation for October. This proclamation was a result of the raids in 1943 to Regensburg/Sweinfurt.

New applications available for the society.

Need to promote associate members to join. Take applications to the Air Show. \$5.00 to join and \$20 for the national: \$25.00 total

The Annual Bi-Plane fly-in at Pearson this Saturday. 8 AM breakfast with the pilots, event lasts all day.

Tape of interviews of the pilots is now available at The Bomber.

On Fox cable (channel 48) Ollie North has a show called "War Stories" this Sunday is about the "Bomber Boys" of the 8th Air Force.

Displays

Don Keller brought books, chaff and xerox copies of original flight logs etc.

Also Don brought a display memorial for Elbert Pyles..

Tom Philo brought two models of Aircraft found in closeout store in Troutdale: P-47 and a combo set of 109 and Zero.

Dessert

Tom Philo brought a "photo cake" from Beaverton Bakery that had a B-17 and B-24 printed in icing.

Guests

Hal Button, medic in the 3rd Army.

Jack Young (son of Terry Young) served in Vietnam.

Ralph McQurik of Bomber Complex brought Chuck Cater.

Sam Snodgrass of the 933rd Sqd. Member of the Flightline Staff.

Debbie, Lori, and Cathy Keller were here. Walt Fisher also brought to the meeting by Don Keller.

Rose Festival August 18th

Lt Col Sutter from the Air National Guard talked about how he came up with the ideal of 8th AF members attending the Rose Festival Air Show. “Freedom Takes Flight” is the theme at Rose Festival.

General Cunningham and the Lt. Col. Sutter Came up with this idea for 8th AF members. Each vet gets two free tickets to the airshow, a parking pass in the chairman’s section in Reserved seating.

Gates open at 2 PM for the show till 10 PM or so.

TAPS

Elbert Pyles passed away since last meeting.

Nominating Committee

Eldon Bevens is head of nominating committee. Tom Philo is also on this committee.

Speaker

Pete Hardiman.

Born and raised in Williamsburg Virginia, then lived near Crawford Texas (where President George W. Bush has his summer home) from 11 onward. Open range then near Austin and handled 1000 head of cattle.

Right after HS in 1941 went to Army Air Force to join and they stated you needed two years of College before joining and becoming an Officer. Pete had read an article in a paper about Canada Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Went to Toronto Canada where the primary recruiting center just happened to be and joined up.

From there he went to Regina flight school in Schchawaqan. There are now houses on the fields where the flight school was in 1941.

He trained in both the Tiger Moth and the Fleet biplane (Fleet was a radial engined plane whereas the Tiger Moth was a 4 cylinder inline). Then they went onto PT-17 Stearman, AT-6 (which the Canadians called a “Harvard”) and in both the PT-17 and AT-6 the controls shifted to the other side from US style (they also had 30 cal guns on it, 1 in each wing and did gunnery practice with them). Once finished with the initial primary training he then finished on a twin-engine called UC-78 Bobcat which was made by Cessna (called “Crane” in Canada). They all then had to travel to Trenton to graduate – which was just a ceremonial formality – and graduated as Sgt Pilots.

After getting his wings he had the option of flying before shipping out overseas. So he volunteered for this flying and did three weeks of flying navigators around instead of waiting in a twin engined plane. This three weeks of flying 6 to 12 hours a day for three weeks came in useful later in his flying career.

When transportation was ready his whole group was shipped to shipping via a DD (Destroyer).

To get on board a British ship you must salute the officer, he then allows you on board, then you salute the fantail where the flag is.

While on this DD going over to England each person had to pull duty. The routine was 6 hours on and 6 hours off. For 24 hours then 8 hours off. Then it repeats with 6 on 6 off. Pete was assigned to work on the bridge and spent his time on duty there next to the helmsmen.

The DD sailed into Portsmouth and there they were met by the RAF. The group then went to an RAF station where no flying took place. Pete then held up a display showing the various shoulder patches he wore including special one with Canadian flag with USA underneath.

Once at the RAF station during the initial interview it was noted he was American and interviewer told him "I know where you are going". Pete got kind of worried but the man told him to "Sit there on that bench and wait someone will come and collect you. You are going for Southend.." A man came along and duly gave him tickets to go to London. Where he almost went the wrong way but eventually he go the the right station where another RAF person told him found out that that he was going to Rochford. He was being assigned to 121 Eagle squadron!

Over door was a sign "All those who enter here"

The day he arrived he had his very first flight in a Hurricane. The officer there told him how to start it, he did and aimed the airplane at wind sock and off he went.

After a few circuits around the field he landed. When asked what he thought about the Hurricane he stated : "I can't wait to fly a Spitfire. If it is better than the Hurricane I can't wait to fly it."

The squadron came back after 1 ½ hours and were at this time flying Mk V Spitfires.

These had two 20mm cannons and two .30 caliber machine guns next to the cannons in each wing. The 30s were used for tracers to aim the cannons did the 20mm cannons do not have tracer ability.

Don Blakeslee was the CO of 121 Squadron when he arrived. He took him out for the first hop. He had dreamt of the day when he could fly a spitfire when he became a pilot and here he was at 121 Eagle Squadron flying Spitfires.

While on alert duty if a phone call came in, guy would reach out ring the bell and all would run to their planes. All planes were all aligned with no other plane in front another and they ALL would take off at same time.

After scramble 6 would be designed to attack the bombers and the other 6 would hold off. If any got damaged the other 6 would pick off the damaged Heinkels.

Southend is on the north side of the Thames.

He never shot down any enemy aircraft during this time, only got bits and pieces of them. He was not part of the chase crew.

Later on the Germans would send fighters along as escort. Then 6 would go against the fighters and 6 to the bombers. Every other day they would go on patrol from due East of Rochford, across the channel then down to Rouen and back.

The mark V, IX, and XII had two and ½ hours flying time. Coolant would be cooled by one radiator (left) the oil in the other on the right so there was no room for more fuel. The IXs had belly tank. V and XII did not.

RAF 71 Squadron was the first Eagle Squadron formed right after BOB. During 1942 this squadron was to meet an A20 Havoc (Boston) which was to lead them over Brittany to a target. When 71 got there they “stooged” around waiting for the A20 to lead them to target. It never showed up and no one was paying attention to their fuel so all 12 Spitfires and pilots ran out of fuel and they all bailed out. There was 10/10 cloud cover and they could not see the land so they all bailed. They never even made it back near the French coast once they realized they were that low on fuel!

Originally the Americans flying for the RAF and RCAF were all scattered around in various squadrons. An US Embassy official suggested they pull them all together into the same unit. Thus the Eagle emblem was used and the Eagle Squadron was formed. In 1941 the 2nd 141, and the 3rd 133 at end of 1941 it was formed.

If you wanted to fly and went directly to England you had to be a pilot before getting there to let you in. That is why he went and joined up in Canada and got trained there.

The Patch “E S” was on the left and the right side was the NCO emblem.

In squadron area the ground was “sacred” and only people in the squadron could invite people onto the land. A white line ran down the middle of the road and one side was station and the other was squadron. Squadron was where the planes were. Station property was everything else. The rule was that people do not have to salute when on squadron area of a station.

A penguin is someone who does not fly. One time Pete was walking on squadron and did not salute this penguin who got was upset that he did not salute. Course the Penguin was

on station property and crossed onto Squadron with being asked. He then reported him to the adj. Because of this Pete was not likely promoted to WO 1st class. Canadians had two classes of Warrant Officer, British had one.

And end of 1942 General Jimmy Doolittle brought over the B-17s. During a fight an equal number of fighters vs B-17s the B-17s can hold off the attacking fighters. However, if you double # of fighters then 17s cannot hold on since they other set can attack the bombers without being disturbed by the gunners. Because of this, many B-17s were being lost due to fighter attacks once the Germans figured this out. Jimmy wanted fighter squadrons but there were no Americans to be brought over since they were all in training. However three squadrons of Americans were flying for the RAF. But there was a catch.

If you swear allegiance to foreign nation you violate citizenship laws. Thus you are no longer an "American." Because of this they could not take the Eagle Squadrons into the US Army Air Force. So General Hap Arnold went to President who got Congress to grant amnesty to all Americans flying in the RAF so they could move over to the Army. Thus the 4th FG was born.

They were transferred to the US Army and moved to Duxford – but kept Spitfires for three months till they got P-47s.

During this same time that the 4th was flying Spitfires Pete was assigned, due to his twin engine time in Canada, to a Mosquito outfit that dropped OSS agents.

In a clamshell pod inside the bombbay would be the agent. They would not see him at all so as to compromise anything if they got shot down. Col. Elliott Roosevelt was in charge of this OSS operation. Pete met him along with An Air Vice Marshall. Col Elliott was originally in charge of setting up OSS operations in the Middle East. The AVM was in charge of the pathfinder force which flew Mosquitos that he would be trained in for navigation purposes. So Pete went to training school to fly Mosquitoes in the pathfinder force. He flew three missions with them before going on their own OSS missions.

The Mossie used GEE to navigate out to get close to a drop point by flying along each square (each part of Europe was mapped out in grids) and by looking at the ground. OBOE was then used to pinpoint exact lat and long. Dial in what you want on OBOE and when the circle moves down the center and at the cross hairs the numbers at the bottom light up and you are there. OBOE was never left on for more than three minutes to avoid being detected and shot down by German night fighters.

They always flew at 5,000 or less. He once flew once to just north of Nuremburg and dropped off an agent. On this mission they never flew 500' there and back. This was done during the night of course. All instrument flying,

In a Mossie both engines turn in the same way. 8 degrees of right rudder trim, both feet on rudder, till rudder comes up 350 to 400' on takeoff no control at all. One engine full one partly, till it comes up then take off.

He once flew at 452 MPH at 20,000' in the Mossie. Some others had flown faster.

He went back to Debden and the P-47s after this tour.

This was now late in 1943 and spent time training and gunnery practice over "The Wash."

Once after taking off the CO's P-47 the engine failed doing 150 MPH. In Stars and stripes there was a cartoon of just a P-47 tail sticking up. "Don't need to bury a P-47 pilot" cause once it fails it goes right down.

Pete put it into a wet field. Did not want to get his good RAF boots muddy so went to the wing and waited for the crash truck. Truck came up to the wing and he stepped right onto the truck then from there to the medic truck. Never once had to walk in the mud of the field.

Blakeslee came back and told him that he took the best plane and put into a farmer's field. He then told him that he pulled an abort since he did not want to fly that mission. Only time he knew Blakeslee to laugh.

During 1944 he flew the shuttle mission to Kiev. (8 hours in the air) Then shuttled to Czech and bomb the Arado factory which were making of 234s Jet bombers then onto Italy and landed at Foggia.

On the way back the B-17s they were escorting bombed St. Nazier. Three groups of 17s: 1st group dropped HE to get the dirt; 2nd then dropped 1000 lb AP to crack the concrete; then third group dropped 1000 lb to get inside the U-Boat base. It worked.

Not one P-51 engine failure. No service at all anywhere. Just sparks and fuel.

Pete finished his flying days F-86s in Korea.

Raffle

\$10 to 644

\$15 to 690

\$25.00 to 633

Closing

Roland