

OREGON CHAPTER NEWS

By Clint Gruber

The August quarterly Chapter meeting was held on the 11th of the month at our regular site, the Beaverton Elks Lodge. The date happened to conflict with the Blue Angels headlining the annual three-day Oregon International Air Show at nearby Hillsboro Airport, which accounted for a somewhat reduced number of members and guests attending the Chapter meeting. Also a factor was, as usual for the mid-summer meeting, some really hot weather. Here in Ory-gun, we consider temps in the 90's combined with humidity readings anything over 30% to be uncomfortable!

Following our schedule for keeping up to date with museums and other aviation activity in our area, President Davis called upon members for reports. Veteran Chapter member Eldon Bevens, a B17 ball turret gunner who flew in the 390thBG, gave today's report on the Evergreen Aviation Museum at McMinnville, Oregon. Eldon has served as one of Evergreen's most valuable volunteers from its very beginning.

Evergreen is one of the most active and popular museums on the Pacific coast, and is rapidly becoming a top tourist attraction in Oregon. The museum is home for its most publicized and most popular exhibit the "Spruce Goose", a name bestowed upon the giant airplane by media reporters; a name reportedly detested by its designer and builder, aviation legend Howard Hughes. The museum has grown rapidly since inception and now, new construction has provided space for many more historical and important aircraft and related displays, as well as the just-opened IMAX Theater.

The program for our meeting was presented by Gary Mortensen, President of the National Combat History Archive. The NCHA, with offices in Hillsboro, Oregon, is the largest non-government military archive in the country, containing rare film and video footage as well as still photographs and written and oral histories of all the wars of the 20th century. Mortensen welcomes inquiries from researchers, as well as input for the archives from veterans. The NCHA website is info@combatarchive.com.

Mortensen has just finished the production of a feature length documentary titled "This Is War-Memories of Iraq", and his program for our group consisted of three excerpts from the film, telling the story of a unit of the Oregon Army National Guard during its year-long stint in Iraq. Nearly 90% of the very graphic film was actually shot by soldiers of that unit, and is accompanied by narration of many soldiers who participated in some of the most dangerous and critical actions in such Iraqi hotspots as Najaf and Fallujah. Adding to the impact of the film was the presence of Oregon Army National Guard Sgt Kris Peterson, who appears in many of the scenes in the film, and who was kept very busy after the showing fielding questions from veterans of "our war". At closing, Sgt Peterson was given a well-earned standing ovation for his, and his fellow soldier's service to our nation.

Our November 07 quarterly meeting is scheduled for Saturday, the 10th, at our regular meeting site, the Beaverton Elks Lodge, Beaverton, Oregon. If the reader expects to be in our area at that time, you will be welcome to attend. For details, contact President Tom Davis at tdavis262@aol.com. Or, Secretary Tom Philo at tom@taphilo.com.