

OREGON CHAPTER 8AFHS NEWS

BY CLINT GRUBER 93RD BG

Spring has finally sprung this 9th of May in the Pacific Northwest, and even though it was a beautiful sunny day, 60 plus Chapter members and guests took the day off from garden chores to attend our quarterly meeting. There was a lot to talk about and time to catch up on our friend's doings since the last meeting. Joe Conroy, our "organization memory", was all smiles while reporting the good news that there were no folded wings to report over the past quarter.

After the call to order by President Bert Campbell, the invocation was offered by Chaplain Roland Stewart. In his opening remarks, Stewart pointed out that the day before our meeting was VE Day, but the historic milestone had been almost ignored by local as well as national media. When asked, only two or three hands went up to signify that they had heard, read, or seen any mention of VE Day!

A very interesting display of Army Air Corps equipment and clothing was provided by members of a local WW2 Air Corps reenactors group, including a rare original map of Europe, printed on silk, which many of us remember as being a part of our escape kit. Of most interest though were the three young guys who wore the uniforms we all remembered from our service days in England. Heard more than once was a somewhat wistful comment from a vet to a spouse or friend, "I looked like that...60 years ago!" One of the reenactors, Larry Jones, wore the patch of the 15th Air Force, and the captain's bars and wings of a friend who flew with the fabled Tuskegee Airman.

The program for the day was presented by Dr. Jim Boyle, an Air Force pilot who served in WW2, Korea, and Viet Nam. In addition to his flying career, he also had many years of service as an educator in schools ranging from The Air Force Academy to the University of Portland. His talk was based on the thesis for his PHD earned at the AF Academy, titled "XX1 Bomber Command...Primary Factor in the Defeat of Japan". It was a well-documented and well delivered presentation, emphasizing the fire bombing of Japanese cities which was so devastating to the Japanese war effort. In regard to that fact, a question raised in the thesis is whether the dropping of the A Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was necessary. Dr. Boyle thought not. A spirited discussion of the question followed his talk.

Several of our members with ties to local aviation museums and activities, reported on the banner year Oregon is having for aviation enthusiasts. Warbirds are flying over our area in numbers. This spring we have seen the Liberty Foundation's B17 "Liberty Belle" which flew into Hillsboro/Portland for a three day visit. The EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association) B17, the "Aluminum Overcast" also visited Hillsboro for three days in May. The Collings Foundation's annual tour comes to Corvallis, Oregon June 10 through 12, and to Hillsboro June 12 through 15. Their B24 "Witchcraft" and B17 "Nine O Nine" will be accompanied by their P51 "Betty Jane".

In addition to the warbird visits, Oregon area airfields also offer a variety of activity. The Air Force Thunderbirds will headline the 20th annual Oregon International Air Show at Hillsboro August 29th and 30th. Also performing will be a number of internationally known aerobatic stars, headed by Patty Wagstaff, 3-time US Aerobatic Champion.

Many other aviation and related facilities are well worth a visit in Oregon, including the Western Antique Aircraft and Car Museum at Hood River, and the Tillamook Air Museum which has over 30 warbirds, including a PBY Catalina, SBD Dauntless, F4u Corsair, P38 Lightning, and a P51 Mustang. An interesting feature is the fact that the Museum is housed in a WW2 Coast patrol Navy Blimp, the largest wood construction building in the world.

Just across the Columbia River in Vancouver, Washington is the Pearson Airfield Museum, situated on one of the nation's oldest operating airfields, and housed in a pre-WW2 Army Air Corps hangar. Also in Washington, at Paine Field in Everett, is the new Flying Heritage Museum, the "Home of the Flying Warbirds." A wonderful collection of aircraft, beginning with the "Jenny" of WW1, heads a list of planes made famous by pilots of England, Germany, Japan, Russia, and the United States in WW2.

Down in McMinnville, a short car trip from Portland, is the Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum. A very large and expanding facility, the Museum is rapidly joining the list of favorite tourist attractions. In addition to a number of historic and wartime aircraft, the Museum is the home of Howard Hughes' famous "Spruce Goose". Also new are two recently added museum buildings, the Space Museum, and the IMAX Theater.

Yes, air-minded visitors to the Pacific Northwest will have a good variety of sights to see and activities to attend this summer. Bring your camera!

Walt.

If you have space, here's a pic of reenactor Larry Jones relating a fighter jock's story to Clint Gruber.

