

ascertained that during the first sorties of Italian Baltimores against German targets an Allied airplane followed at a distance of a few miles, keeping the Baltimores in sight. This caused bitterness among the Italian airmen, and within a few days the H.Q. ceased this "control."

When the War ended the entire Stormo was awarded the Medaglia d'Argento (Silver Medal), which was the second highest Italian award. Later, another pilot of Stormo Baltimore, Lt. G. Badalini, of the 260th Bomb Sqdn, was awarded the Medaglia d'oro.

At the date of V-E Day there were 32 Baltimores in first line service, and about ten in the flying schools. In June, the Stormo moved from Biferno to Rome and its airplanes were used for training and communication. After the War, they continued in use, and during 1946 accounted for 3129 flying hours, and the next year, 1947, for 2542 including maritime reconnaissance. The Stormo moved to Palese airfield on April 1, 1948 and it was disbanded. Its personnel went to a fighter unit, the 3rd Stormo Caccia, equipped with P-38 Lightnings. The remaining Martin Baltimores, the last conventional bomber type in Italian service, were scrapped.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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NOTES:

1. From WWI to the present the basic Italian unit has been the "squadriglia," with a strength of five to twelve airplanes, depending upon its role and first-line equipment availability. Two bomber

"squadriglie" (or three for fighters) made up one "gruppo," and two bomber "gruppi" (or three for fighters) made up a "stormo." It should be noted that the size of a U.S.A. squadron was considerably larger than that of an Italian "Squadriglia." Roughly, the size of a U.S. squadron could be compared to that of an Italian "gruppo."

2. See also Christopher F. Shores, "Martin Maryland and Baltimore Variants," *Profile No. 232*. Windsor (Berks): Profile Publications Ltd., 1972.
3. Red/white/green roundels were the Italian national aircraft during WWI and were resumed after the Armistice in 1943. In the period between the Italian insignia had been the 3 black "fasci" on each wing, a white band around the fuselage, and a white cross on fin and rudder, with Savoia house arms.
4. In the Italian language the idiomatic expression "essere quattro gatti" (to be four cats) implies "to be very, very few people." When the original 278th Torpedo Sqdn. was formed there were only a few pilots with it, and their insignia was a torpedo with two white and two black cats on it. When 132nd Gp. was reorganized with Sq. 278 and 281 the insignia of 278th became that of 132nd Gp. A variation on the theme came when 132nd Gp. went to Baltimores and the motto "sempre i soliti" was incorporated in it. It is interesting to note that the insignia of the 3rd Aerobrigada (formerly 3rd Stormo, after the Stormo Baltimore was disbanded, has maintained the tradition, depicting four cat's heads in its shield emblem.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dott. Ing. Tullio Marcon has been a member of the Society since 1964, and beside a lifelong interest in aviation, has also been a contributor on naval subjects. He is currently a correspondent of the Italian magazine, *Interconair Aviazione e Marina*, which published his articles on the Regia Aeronautica in WWII. His articles on the history of Italian naval aviation have appeared in *Warship International*.

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DAUNTLESS DISCOVERY

Edward T. Maloney, Buena Park, California.

In the summer of 1959, Planes of Fame Museum acquired a battered old fuselage, an ex-Navy SBD-5 "Dauntless" dive bomber. It had sat idle since the end of World War II in a field in San Fernando Valley under a row of pepper trees. Her wings, canopy, and tail feathers were gone — lost due to a fire, and needed some tender loving care. It was still in faded three-tone U.S. Navy camouflage paint of World War II. Nothing was known of its past history and no records or documents could be located.

The 1944 tires were flat but an air bottle soon remedied that and to our amazement the old tires still held air. The SBD was towed on its landing gear to a nearby storage yard and later moved sixty miles to Claremont, California where it remained in storage until 1965.

During Christmas vacation 1965, the SBD was brought out of storage and restoration began. While the aircraft was being prepared for painting hitherto hidden markings appeared on the engine accessory cowl and fuselage during the sanding operation. They consisted of a bird riding a very large bomb with the name "SHIFTLESS SKUNK" at the top. The names "FRANCOIS" appeared in yellow under the left side front cockpit and "UNKA" on the left side rear cockpit. Al Clemens, museum staff artist, carefully restored the markings and though the mystery of its identity still remained it was believed to have been a combat aircraft due to the unique markings and a large amount of spent ammunition found in the flooring and belly compartments of the aircraft. Some battle repairs were also evident.

The key to this SBD's past history was found in S/L Cliff Jenks' article "The Douglas Dauntless in RNZAF Service." This airplane had been one of the 68 U.S. Navy SBD-5 Dauntless' assigned to the Royal New Zealand Air Force during the Pacific War.

Our SBD-5, BuNo 28536 was built at the Douglas El Segundo plant and accepted by the U.S. Navy in June 1943. It arrived at Espiritu Santo Island and was one of 32 SBD-5's assigned to No.

25 Sq. Royal New Zealand Air Force and was further assigned to F/S N.I. Kelly and his gunner F/S B.E. Cullen. Its names and markings, like the majority of names and insignia on No. 25 Sq. airplanes, came from characters in New Zealand newspaper comic sections.

Kelly and Cullen flew the airplane in the campaign against Rabaul and other Japanese strongholds from March to May 1944 and on May 20th 1944, the SBD's of Sq. 25 were flown off Piva Airstrip for the last time. The squadron landed at Renards Field, Russell Island and the aircraft were handed back over to the U.S. Navy.

SBD-5 BuNo 28536 was then overhauled and reassigned to a U.S. Navy-Marine unit and remained in the South Pacific for another year. For some unexplained reason it was sent back to the United States, one of the very few combat aircraft to be returned to the United States. This author would be pleased to hear of any other SBD airplanes.

This RNZAF/USN airplane may be seen at the Planes of Fame Museum in Buena Park, California. It lacks wings and if any reader can locate a pair for the museum a \$100 finders fee will be paid.

REMAINING SBD/A-24 DAUNTLESS AIRCRAFT IN THE U.S.

- SBD-6 National Air and Space Museum — on loan to U.S. Marine Corps Museum.
- SBD-5 Robert Griffin of Confederate Air Force, formerly in Planes of Fame Museum and ex-Mexican Air Force.
- A-24 Painted like SBD, held for U.S. Navy Museum, Pensacola, Fla. An ex-Mosquito abatement aircraft of Portland, Oregon.
- SBD-5 Barret Tillman. Now flyable, at Portland, Ore.
- A-24B S. McGreggor. An ex-Mexican Air Force, ex-photo survey aircraft, ex-Tallmantz airplane.
- SBD-5 Planes of Fame Museum, Buena Park, California

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A SPECIAL MAILING OF THE BOOKING ARRANGEMENT BROCHURE FOR THE A.A.H.S. TOUR TO GREAT BRITAIN WAS MADE (via 3rd class mail) to all Members on 31 May 1972. If you did not receive one, send S.S.A.E. to AAHS, P.O. Box 996, Ojai, CA 93023.