

NEWS & COMMENT

FROM OUR MEMBERS

THE LUFTWAFFE vs. THE 8th AIR FORCE SYMPOSIUM, ST. PAUL, 15 OCT. 81

Merle C. Olmsted

The 7th annual reunion of the mighty 8th AF held this year in St. Paul, Minnesota, was, as usual, a kaleidoscope of ceremony, entertainment, air battles re-fought, eating and drinking, reliving the life of wartime England, and general merriment among a group of men and women now in the September of their lives. Although final figures are not at hand, there was a good turnout of veterans of the 8th, with over 1500 people being registered.

There was a new feature this year, which is to be a part of future reunions of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society. This is a symposium on some aspect of the air war in Europe. A panel of knowledgeable people (this year five) is presented with leading questions posed by a moderator.

Although reunion activities took place in many locations in St. Paul, headquarters and seat of most events, including the symposium, was the beautiful Radisson St. Paul hotel in the downtown area. The symposium itself is organized and presented by the 8th AF Memorial Museum Foundation, whose mission is to perpetuate the history of the 8th AF through the collection, restoration, preservation and display of 8th AF memorabilia, and through the establishment, promotion and support of educational activity related to the history of the 8th AF.

The subject of this first symposium was "The Luftwaffe vs. the 8th AF," and the panel was eminently well qualified to discuss the subject. Major Generals John Huston and Philip Ardery (both USAF Ret.) represented the bomber force, Huston the B-17 units and Ardery, author of the recent book, *Bomber Pilot*, the Liberators.

Although Francis Gabreski, the leading fighter ace of the Eighth AF, was scheduled, the gap left by his last-minute cancellation was amply filled by Richard Peterson, 19-victory ace of the 357th Fighter Group.

Colonel Cass Hough, USAF Ret., one-time Deputy Chief of 8th AF Air Technical Section, occupied the fourth chair of the panel, and was a gold mine of information on the technical aspects of the fighter force.

Rounding out the panel, and presenting the Luftwaffe viewpoint was the well-known General Adolf Galland, wartime wing commander, and later chief of the Luftwaffe fighter force.

Occupying the moderator's slot was Roger Freeman, longtime friend, hard-working English farmer and eminent writer and historian. No one is more qualified to discuss the history of the 8th, and matching his knowledge is an outstanding ability as a public speaker, and his handling of the panel was equally adept.

The morning session of the symposium

covered the formative years of 1942-43. An early question posed by Freeman asked if the Luftwaffe had expected the appearance of U.S. four-engined bombers in large numbers, and if their defensive armament proved to be effective. General Galland replied that the appearance of these bombers was expected, but their defensive fire power came as a shock, and was considered quite effective, especially if the bombers maintained a good formation. Stragglers, however, were almost sure to be shot down.

Galland stressed the shortage of Luftwaffe fighters during this period and expressed the opinion that the German fighter force was stretched too thin on the many fronts on which it was in action. The lack of a pilot reserve was also mentioned, a fact of life for the Luftwaffe throughout the war. In further comments on the bombers Galland felt that the tail and top turret guns on the B-17 were the most dangerous, while the waist positions could be generally disregarded by attacking fighters. It was during these early years that the Luftwaffe fighters found the frontal attack the most effective, but it was difficult to train his pilots to attack in the line abreast formation.

Inevitably, the question of exaggerated gunners' claims was brought up. Huston expressed what most now agree was the rather simple reason, confusion and excitement of battle, and often many gun positions in many bombers firing at the same target. Huston added that the higher claims were desirable anyway, to justify aircraft allotment, and to boost morale.

In this writer's opinion, the subject of gunners' claims has never been adequately addressed. Much of the applicable literature on the subject discusses exaggerated claims, just as this symposium did, and invariably the reader is left with the impression that bomber defensive fire was largely ineffective. No effort has ever been made to present a clear picture of Luftwaffe losses due to the fire of the bombers' gunners. Despite the obvious exaggeration which everyone agrees to, it is this writer's opinion that the Luftwaffe suffered significant losses from defensive fire. It would be a most difficult project to sort the matter out at this late date, and no exact counts would be possible, but there are historians capable of presenting a more balanced accounting than has been done to date.

At this point in the discussion, General Ardery got a laugh when he repeated one of the grim B-24/B-17 jokes of the period, to the effect that B-17 crews did not care if they had fighter escort or not, just as long as the B-24s came along. Galland agreed that the German fighter pilots preferred to attack B-24s, and would leave the B-17s alone if they had the chance. The B-17/B-24 rivalry surfaced many times, but after so many years it was all in good humor, with Freeman doing a fine job of keeping the factions apart.

Cass Hough was a mine of information on the technical aspects of the 8th fighter program. Among subjects discussed were the development of the pressurized drop tank, which Freeman called a "war-winning combination." The first drop tanks received from

the Zone of Interior were totally unsuitable, as they would not feed fuel much above 20,000 feet. The solution came to Hough in a pub one night listening to two RAF types talking about the pressed paper tanks they had used in the western desert. The sudden realization that the engine vacuum pump had a pressure outlet completed the picture. Although considerable development work remained, the pressurized drop tank was born.

Colonel Hough, obviously fond of the P-47, discussed its early problems, short range, engine difficulties, which he felt were mostly the result of improper pilot management. All in all, he felt the P-47 came through with fewer problems than would be expected.

The fighter representative on the panel was P-51 ace Richard Peterson. Admitting that he was probably asking for trouble, Freeman queried him as to his opinion of the Thunderbolt. Peterson admitted to flying a P-47 only once, one he had borrowed, for about 45 minutes, and was "never so scared in my life." Galland, who had also flown the *Jug* added that his first impression was that the cockpit was big enough to walk around in.

Freeman's question as to the most dangerous slot in the bomber formation, and the most dangerous crew position brought the comment from Huston that there were too many variables to say, but lead and deputy lead aircraft were always tempting targets, and were the worst to fly in. Huston and Ardery agreed there was no practical difference in crew positions.

The morning session ended with questions from the audience, most addressed to Galland, who was asked at one point if Goering flew very much. This produced a laugh from all, as did Galland's Luftwaffe joke which told of Goering being seen over London during the Battle of Britain. This was denied the next day, saying he had been mistaken for a barrage balloon.

During the lunch break, Freeman presented to the assembly the three 8th Air Force Medal-of-Honor recipients who were present. There was a mad scramble by everyone with a camera to photograph the three together, with only partial success by this writer. The three, all B-17 pilots, were John Morgan, 92nd Bomb Grp., and William R. Lawley, Jr., and Edward S. Michael, both of the 305th Bomb Grp.

The lunch break ended with the unannounced appearance of Lt. General Edgar Harris, Jr., the present commander of SAC's 8th Air Force, who presented a short briefing on the Eighth's mission and capability.

The afternoon session was to cover the years 1944-45 and Freeman began with the problems faced by the P-38 and the P-51.

Hough, who has a great affection for the P-38, said that Wright Field and Lockheed put too many unneeded restrictions on the airplane. Engine problems and an induction system that was too small were major defects, the former again being partly caused by improper operation by the pilot. Galland's opinion of the P-38 was similar to his opinion of the Me 110—the twin-engine fighter can-

not compete with the single-engine type.

The P-51, master of the skies over Germany that it was to become, had many serious problems in its early days. Hough and Peterson mentioned the familiar gun problems, wheel well doors tending to drop open, structural failures, and handling troubles brought on by the 85-gallon fuselage tank when it was full. Not surprisingly, Peterson felt the P-51 was a "real sweetheart" as a fighting machine.

Galland indicated that he knew the P-51 was coming and of its outstanding performance, but was unable to convince Goering of this fact. Galland was most impressed with the P-51's great range and its performance at altitude, saying it was the best escort fighter of WWII.

While on the subject of escort fighters, Galland retold the famous story of his encounter with Goering during the Battle of Britain. Goering had been berating his fighter leaders for their failure to protect his bombers. He then asked each what he wanted to do the job better. Galland replied that he would like a wing of Spitfires (he felt that they were a better escort fighter due to their lower wing loading). After a long silence, Goering left without reply, and Galland went back to his unit to await punishment. He never received the punishment, but he never got the Spitfires either. There again was considerable laughter at the expense of Herman Goering.

In reply to a question by Freeman, Galland stated that strafing attacks on airfields were very effective and cost the Luftwaffe heavily. Peterson presented some rules of successful airfield strafing, stay low, well below treetop level, use small groups, hit and run and never go back.

The afternoon session ended with Galland discussing the jet-propelled Me262 and the rocket-powered Me163. This was touched on only briefly as he was scheduled to present a lengthy discussion of the subject later in the reunion.

The following question period brought forth the long-lived myth of Cass Hough exceeding the speed of sound during a terminal velocity dive in a P-38. Hough has been trying to bury this story for years, with little success. At no time did he, or the USAAF, claim that the P-38 had exceeded Mach 1. The press had managed this by distorting the story of a hair-raising terminal velocity dive over England in 1943.

Philip Ardery was queried as to whether the later B-24s with nose turrets were an improvement over the old. Ardery's rather surprising reply was that he preferred the B-24D for its better performance. The turrets caused more trouble than they were worth, and weight-and-balance were critical on the later models.

Late in 1944, 8th Air Force escort fighters began to achieve superiority over Germany, and Peterson and Galland were both asked to express their thoughts as to why this occurred. Both agreed that it was the P-51's superior performance, plus the all-important change in tactics, which released the fighters from purely defensive operations, to the offensive tactics.

The past 10 years have seen a heavy flow of literature covering the air war in Europe from many different angles. Whether this first symposium covered any new ground is doubtful. Nevertheless, it was fascinating to hear it from people who were there, with an audience of people who also were there, and who relived, what were for the majority, the most momentous times of their lives.

Most of them will, I believe, be in Cincinnati in 1982 when Roger Freeman opens the 2nd Symposium, whose subject will be "Escape and Evasion and the Life of a POW."

LOCKHEED ORION 9D—SILVER DUST

Edward W. Wolak, East Point, GA

Reference Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 1971, Terrance A. Geer's article, "The Lockheed Orion 9D, An Aircraft Between the Ages," indicates that NC 12222 is the only remaining example (1970). The Swiss Transportation Museum in Lucerne has one of the two sold to Swissair (No. 167) on display in all its crimson and white glory! A beautiful sight to see but my pictures turned out too fuzzy to reproduce.

Reference Vol. 25, No. 3, Fall 1980, page 239, concerning the Keystone K-47C, Pete Bowers asks what "Silver Dust" was. It was soap powder though I can't remember the company. They also made soap powder under the "Gold Dust" label, using the "Gold Dust Twins" and "Silver Dust Twins" in advertising.

FOKKER "FRIENDSHIP"

Lt. Col. Harry J. Jenkins (USAF Ret.)
San Diego, CA

I read the letter from Richard S. Allen anent the FRIENDSHIP, the Fokker monoplane in which Amelia Earhart flew across the Atlantic. I felt Mr. Allen's letter had an apparent omission.

I was often present at the Boston Airport when the FRIENDSHIP was being prepared for the Atlantic flight at a point just beyond the Army Air Corps hangars. It was my understanding at the time that the FRIENDSHIP was owned by Amelia Earhart, through its purchase by G.F. Putnam of Putnam Publishing, and others joining in the venture.

Day after day I watched Wilmer Stultz and a mechanic preparing the plane; the change from wheels to pontoons; and the almost daily visits by Miss Earhart to check on the progress of the preparation and check with Wilmer Stultz, who was to be her chief pilot on the trip.

Amelia Earhart was far from being an unknown and in fact had been quite well known around the Boston Airport, and during her social work at a Settlement House in the Boston area. When she first learned to fly, several stories hit the Boston newspapers about her aeronautical activities. It was through some of those stories I first learned of the interest of Mr. Putnam in Miss Earhart. This interest, of course, culminated in their marriage.

I had often wondered about the eventual disposition of the FRIENDSHIP, and I appreciate the information gleaned by Mr. Allen. It filled a gap in the history of that aircraft. Thanks, Mr. Allen.

AIR MAIL AND ARCIER

Jesse Davidson, Great Neck, NY

I have recently acquired a copy of *Air Mail—An Illustrated History 1793-1981*, authored by Donald B. Holmes, a member of the AAHS.

It is a fine book, quite detailed and most informative—especially to air mail philatelists and collector of airmail memorabilia. However, for the reader whose interest lies in the physical part, that which concerns the actual types of aircraft and their roles as mail transports, I must take issue with the author and would like to contact him. (Some errors and lack of desirable information he should know about.) I believe he lives in Connecticut. Several years ago we did have some correspondence with each other but I have since lost knowledge of his whereabouts. Would you be kind enough to send his membership address.

I have recently served Time-Life Books as a consultant for one of their *Epic of Flight* series, this one titled *Flying the Mail*, and every effort was made to insure historical and technical accuracy. Quite a number of previously published books on the air mail have contained inaccuracies and these have been perpetuated by other writers in their published works.

I have spent more than 25 years researching this subject and feel qualified to discuss it, and willing to share my information with others in the interest of historical and technical accuracy.

With regard to the biography of A. Francis Arcier (1890-1969) by G. Allison Long, Jr., Research Project 7219, I would like to call your attention to two items. (*AAHS Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Summer 1981.)

On page 133 you publish a photo of a DH-4 with the caption thus: "Witte mann-Lewis Co, modified the De Havilland DH-4 for airmail service with incidental passenger service." The illustration is NOT a DH-4 modified for air mail service. Note that it has the pilot's seat aft of the trailing edge, and there is a rear gunner's accommodation with a scarf ring to mount twin machine guns. In other words, this photo shows a U.S. Air Service military De Havilland 4 (with Liberty engine) of 1918-1922 vintage.

I can provide photos of the DH-4 modification by Witte mann specifically for the air mail (as made at Teterboro) including one that shows a before and after configuration. Therefore, the use of the photo on page 133 is rather misleading. Further, Witte mann never made a DH-4 modification to carry passenger(s) along with mail. P.O. Dept. strictly forbid the carrying of passengers per se—unless the "passenger" rode in the empty mail pit on official business or sat on some mail sacks.

The mail-carrying DH-4 used from 1919 through 1927 had its mail compartment under the center section of the top wing, and

the pilot's seat about the midway point of the fuselage. Also, the DH-4 mail plane had larger wheels and the landing gear moved up ahead six inches to prevent nose-overs.

On page 136 the author quotes Mrs. Helen Aitken Boesch as saying that "... we shared entertaining Berni Balchen, Bert Acosta, J.D. Hill (who disappeared over the Atlantic in a flight to Paris with Levine.)"

This quoted statement is in error. James D. Hill, an air mail pilot, was lost over the Atlantic along with Lloyd W. Bertaud, also an air mail pilot, in the single-engine Fokker OLD GLORY, in the fall of 1927. Levine (Charles A. Levine) flew to Germany (as passenger) with Clarence Chamberlin as pilot, shortly after Lindbergh made it to Paris. Levine and Chamberlin landed short of their Berlin destination and came home to a ticker-tape parade in New York City in June 1927. Levine was jailed for a short time due to some illegal stock manipulations in the early thirties.

I think that a correction concerning the facts in the foregoing paragraph should be included in an early issue of the *Journal*—with all due respect to author G. Allison Long and Mrs. Helen Boesch's faltering recollection in her letter dated January 17, 1973.

I'm afraid the DH-4 error is mine, not Mr. Long's. The photo he supplied was rather blurred and of poor quality, so I substituted one from my own files. My apologies.

—Editor

ARCIER/HANDLEY-PAGE

R.D. Layman—Corte Madera, CA

"The Biography of A. Francis Arcier" in the *AAHS Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Summer 1981) refers to Handley-Page bombers "in use against the Axis." Axis is the term designating the alliance of Germany, Italy and Japan in World War II. The combination of Germany, Austria-Hungary and their allies in World War I is commonly called the Central Powers.

References are made in the article to the "Royal Navy Independent Air Force." No organization with such a name ever existed. It is true that the Royal Naval Air Service pioneered the concept and practice of what would come to be called strategic bombing, and that the Handley-Page 0/100 was created to fill Admiralty requirements. But the Inter-Allied Independent Air Force (usually called simply the Independent Air Force) that came into official being on June 6, 1918, two months after the Royal Naval Air Service ceased to exist, was neither administered nor operationally controlled by the Navy. Its only naval association was the incorporation of some former naval aircraft and personnel.

The Handley-Page V/1500 was not, as the article indicates, designed for or ordered by the Royal Navy, although RNAS experience influenced the decision to create the aircraft. That decision was made by the second Air Board (sometimes known as the Cowdray Board from the name of its chairman), a policy-making body composed of Army, Navy and civilian members that preceded the Air Ministry.

Finally, with all due respect to George Volkert, his quoted statement that "a squadron" of V/1500s was formed must be considered an exaggeration, for only three V/1500s were in service at the time of the Armistice.

THE SPANISH SEVERSKY—ADDENDA

Richard S. Allen—Albany, NY

The much-modified and well-traveled SEV-3 was approved on December 8, 1936, for license NR-2106, "for long-distance flights" as a "BT-8" (landplane). According to CAA/FAA records it then had a Wright R-1820 engine, c/n 21786, modified to a G-2 type of 810 hp.

As of December 23, 1936, the aircraft was sold to Col. Roberto Fierro of the Mexican Air Force, in Mexico, D.F. Mexico. Major Seversky personally flew the ship to Mexico, and delivered it to Fierro, who was acting as an agent for the Spanish Republican Government. No American export number is recorded. A set of floats is believed to have been sold with it.

The airplane was licensed in Mexico as of December 15, 1936, and assigned the registration XB-ABG. It is unknown as to whether or not this registration was ever applied. On February 27, 1937, the Seversky was flown from Mexico City to Tejeria Airport near Vera Cruz by American pilot Cloyd Clevenger. President Lazaro Cardenas of Mexico delayed shipment of this and other American-built aircraft, at the request of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull, in keeping with the American embargo on arms shipments to Spain.

On April 13, 1937, the Seversky was spotted in storage at Vera Cruz, and three months later was on the Sanitary Pier in the port city, with the markings "Avion 14."

NR-2106 was finally crated and put aboard the S.S. *SIL*, which left Vera Cruz on Dec. 26, 1937, during a temporary absence of the watchful President Cardenas. Off-loaded at Bordeaux, France, it was hurriedly shipped into Spain during a period of a few weeks when the border was open in the spring of 1938.

ADDENDA ON "FRIENDSHIP"

Richard S. Allen—Albany, NY

The small lake near Northville, in the Adirondack region of northern New York State was established expressly for use of Mr. Donald Woodward's float-equipped Fokker FRIENDSHIP. A dam was built and a swampy area flooded. The resulting body of water is still known as "Woodward Lake" (or "Winneys Pond") today.

Phone conversation with Lewis G. Decker, Dept. Fulton Co. Historian, 6/81.

General Enrique Bravo is mentioned as one of four men who "flew to Concepcion (Chile) ... from Mar del Plata, Argentina, in an unsuccessful attempt to start a rebellion against (President/Dictator) General Carlos Ibanez a year ago."

Exiled with his companions to Easter Island in the Pacific Ocean, Bravo escaped, and in August 1931 was named Minister of War in

the new government of Chile.

New York Times, 8/16/31, courtesy of Allen Levine.

John Gunther's "Inside Latin America" (1941) has several paragraphs on Colonel Marmaduke Grove Vallejo, then in his 60s and the "No. 1 Socialist of Chile." (Grove was the son of an Irish doctor and a Chilean mother, and was trained in youth in the German Army.)

"He became chief of the Chilean Air Force ... [and] ... military attache to London." Dismissed from the army, he went to Buenos Aires:

"... and managed to get an airplane from the newspaper *Cronica* which was always looking for a sensation; he flew back to Chile and attempted to make a revolution. The Ibanez government thereupon sentenced him to 10 years of exile on Easter Island ... some of his good and distinguished friends chartered a schooner and promptly rescued him. In 1931 he returned to Chile, after Ibanez had fallen, and became Minister of Defense. The next year, with Carlos Davila, he overthrew the government and proclaimed a socialist state." (It was short-lived.)

(Grove, a controversial character, was still around in Chile in 1941.)

It would appear that Bravo and Grove may well have been two of the passengers on the FRIENDSHIP, bent on overthrowing the Ibanez dictatorship of Chile in September 1930.

But we still have no word of the Fokker FRIENDSHIP after it was impounded by the Chilean government at Concepcion, Chile, some 51 years ago.

ARCIER BIOGRAPHY—CORRECTIONS

Jesse Davidson, Great Neck, New York

The biography of A. Francis Arcier by G. Allison Long, Jr., makes the incorrect statement that "J.D. Hill disappeared over the Atlantic on a flight to Paris with Levine (Charles A.)." The correct facts are that Charles A. Levine was a passenger with Clarence Chamberlin in the Bellanca COLUMBIA, and they made a successful flight to Germany, although they made a crash landing at the end of the flight.

J.D. Hill was lost with Lloyd Bertaud and Philip Payne in the Fokker OLD GLORY in the fall of 1927. J.D. Hill and Lloyd Bertaud were both airmail pilots. Philip Payne was the managing editor of the *New York Daily Mirror*.

VOL. 19, NO. 2, 1974—CORRECTION

Ben L. Donahue, Mountain View, CA

I recently purchased a number of back editions to your fine quarterly *Journal*. Filling out a little more my personal library. Each and every one makes good reading.

This little correction goes back a few years. I was unable to find any correction in subsequent copies.

The Vol. 19, No. 2, 1974 edition carries the story, second part, of the 445th BG's mission to Gotha in Feb. '44. While on pg. 119 of the mission story a picture is shown that is in-

correct. I am sure the group did have such aerial tragedies on a mission. But the '24 really belonged to the 464th BG of the 15th AF in Italy. She was lost on a front-line mission in northern Italy in April of '45. I know. I saw her go down. I then got a pic of her the next day off the original negative, which I still have.

All that she was ever known as was *Black N for Nan*, becoming famous as one of the dramatic combat pictures coming out of the Army Air Corps.

Continue to do the fine work you have been doing.

M/SGTS. CARLTON E. EDSALL AND WILLIAM ("COWBOY") WRIGHT

Wm. R. Wright, Rantoul, IL

Enclosing a check for two copies of the *AAHS Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Fall '81). This issue has an article concerning M/Sgt. Carlton E. Edsall and M/Sgt. William ("Cowboy") Wright, *me*.

After all these years someone has seen fit to give us a little credit for some of the things we did. Edsall and I helped put the first one (P-35A) together. Made one mistake—put one bolt in wrong on mounting the rudder.

Then after they blew the airscoop off that plane trying to start it, I did a little checking and decided that a little red button had to be used as an aid in starting. I told the T/Sgt. from 20th Pursuit Squadron, who was getting them ready to run, that I would show him how to start it.

I told him to start it as he would any other aircraft, and as soon as it started press the red button and hold for 30 seconds or until the engine started running too rich, then release it. The carburetor on the Swedish P-35As had no venturi tubes. The red button let gas trickle down into the carburetor.

I also got into trouble with our line chief

because I had told Major Gregg he could fly the P-35A without a battery.

For some reason they didn't send the batteries over with the aircraft, and about the 8th of January 1941 they sent the 17th to Batangas for three days. King had already told Edsall and me that we had to go along. That was his excuse to get us away from the depot.

The day before we left, Major Gregg said he would like to fly a P-35 to Batangas. I said, "Why not?" He said, "No battery!" I told him if someone would start it for him I would get it started when he was ready to leave Batangas. Once it was running, the generator and regulator would take care of the radio and landing gear.

Major Kirkley Gregg died right after completing the Death March and Sgt. King died in 1968. I got the nickname "Cowboy" in 1937 and carried it through POW camp.

OLDEST PILOT?

Shelby B. Hagberg, Greenville, IA

Not wanting to detract from Billy Parker (*AAHS Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 4), as in my book he was a wonderful man, but I think your verbiage is wrong. I wouldn't doubt that Billy Parker had been flying longer than any other living person, but I'm sure there are several other older pilots still living. Tommy Martin of S. Sioux City, Nebraska, comes to mind, for instance. He was 82 years old last September with 52 years in aviation and still flying.

Or Clyde (?) of South Dakota, still crop-dusting at 80, still flying at 85, and must now be near 90. He's one of the legendary flyers of the Midwest. If there hasn't been a story on him in the *Journal*, there should be. It would make a good research project.

Also, page 333, picture number 1 of the Waco CTO. This photo appeared in Decem-

ber 1929 issue of *Aero Digest*, page 227. It may have been taken near Troy, Ohio. The caption under the photo was: "Waco 220 taper-wing with special paint job, owned by James B. Hall, New York City." Same photo was in *Aircraft Yearbook* for 1930. It identified Mr. Hall as a stock broker.

FATE OF SIKORSKY VS-44A (NC-41882)

Robert C. Mickesh, NASM, Smithsonian

In the Forum of Flight column, Fall 1981 *Journal*, page 246, appeared two photos of Sikorsky VS-44A (NC-41882). The author of the captions, unaware of the aircraft's fate, requested any information available. In answer I'm enclosing portions of the late Charlie Blair's book, *Redball in the Sky*, that contain an account of the crashes of two VS-44s; 880 was last at Gander in 1942, and 882—the subject of his question—being lost at Lima in 1946. Following is an excerpt.

"The sister ship to our airplane—the S-44 left behind in Montevideo—fell victim to this night-flying deficiency later in the summer. After failing to effect a daylight rendezvous with rebel gunboats on the Paraguay River, it returned to Montevideo after dark, still heavily burdened with its load of supplies. The pilot, who had a shortage of seaplane experience at night, attempted to land on the black, glassy waters of the River Plata without the aid of waterborne lights for guidance. Failing to level off, the big flying boat went to the bottom of the broad river to join the scuttled German battleship GRAF SPEE close by."

All three of the Sikorsky VS-44s were named FLYING ACE, and yet had additional names. These were: NC-41880, EXCALIBUR; NC-41881, EXCAMBRIAN; and NC-41882, EXETER. NC-41883 was started but not completed. NC-41881, the sole survivor, is at the Naval Aviation Museum in very poor condition.



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B-29 INSIGNIA

Recently donated to the AAHS Negative Library was a unique collection of 35mm color slides. They were taken by Robert F. Schirmer, Col. USAF (Ret.) when he was commander of the 4105th Army Air Force Base Unit (Aircraft Storage) at Davis-Monthan Army Air Base, Tucson, Arizona. The 4105th was under the command of the San Antonio Air Technical Service Command (SAATSC) commanded by Brigadier General George H. Beverly.

The mission of the 4105th AAFBU was to operate a "cocooning" project to preserve B-29 and C-47 aircraft in that facility. Many of the aircraft were combat veterans of both the 40th Bomb Group and the 444th Bomb Group, deactivated at D-M. They totaled about 700 B-29 and 300 C-47s. The unit had custody of several "museum" aircraft including the *Enola Gay*, *Bock's Car*, *Puscan Dreamboat*, B-32, XB-19, Wendell Wilkie's C-87, etc. The unit employed approximately 500 civilians who eventually "cocooned" 475 B-29s. The balance met the scrappers torches.

Lt. Col. Schirmer took command of the 4105th in September 1946, and during 1946/47 had the foresight to record for us in color much nose art and insignias. A small sampling of this collection is shown here. We hope to have Col. Schirmer tell the story of the 4105th in a future issue of the *Journal*.

1. Illustrates the unofficial 40th Bomb Group insignia frequently used by the unit when based in the Marianas. The A/C s/n is 42-24737 and was assigned to the 45th Bomb Squadron.
2. Illustrates the insignia of the 25th Bomb Squadron, 40th Bomb Group. *The Executioner* design dates from 1924. A/C s/n unknown.
3. Illustrates the insignia of the 444th Bomb Group on *Dream Boat*. This insignia is unofficial. Note red painted bomb for last mission of WWII. A/C s/n unknown.
4. Illustrates the insignia of the 676th Bomb Squadron, 444th Bomb Group. *Cajun Queen's* A/C s/n unknown. Note black painted bottom of aircraft for reduction of light reflection on night missions.
5. Illustrates *Skippy* of the 678th Bomb Squadron, 444th Bomb Group. Note three Japanese flags for aerial victories, and camel designs denoting "Hump" missions. *Skippy* apparently was a CBI aircraft and may have been returned to the U.S. prior to the end of the war as "War-Weary". A/C s/n unknown.
6. Illustrates the insignia of the 462nd Bomb Group. *The Hellbirds* usually painted nose art on the pilot's side of the aircraft with the group insignia painted beneath the co-pilot's side.
7. Illustrates the insignia of the 468th Bomb Group. "The Billy Mitchell Bomb Group" usually presented the insignia on the tails of their aircraft. The insignia is the House Flag of Gen. Wm. "Billy" Mitchell. A/C s/n unknown.
8. Illustrates the insignia of the 509th Bomb Squadron. "The Atomic Bombers" were not assigned to the 58th Bomb Wing until after the war. The aircraft is the *Enola Gay*, then awaiting its historic aircraft status at D-MAAB.
9. Illustrates the insignia of the 73rd Bomb Wing. The 73rd achieved a high degree of marking standardization throughout its combat operations. The aircraft is *Fever From The South*, of the 500th Bomb Group, A/C s/n 42-63497.
10. Illustrates the insignia of the 314th Bomb Wing. The 314th also achieved a high degree of standardization. Each crew was allowed to select a U.S. city to be represented in the banner. A/C s/n unknown.
11. Illustrates the insignia of the 6th Bomb Group. The "Jean La Fite" was utilized commonly with the aircraft's name painted in the streamer. A/C s/n unknown.
12. Illustrates the insignia of the 43rd Bomb Group. The 43rd did not operate B-29s until October 1946, having operated B-17 aircraft throughout WWII with the 5th Air Force.

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