

PROP NOISE

Volume 2, Issue 2

The Membership Newsletter for The Military Aviation Museum

Spring 2009

Cat Returns to the Beach

The Grumman Aircraft Company first test flew their newest retractable gear monoplane fighter in 1937. This advanced carrier based aircraft was initially accepted by the US Navy in 1940. The following year in 1941, the name "Wildcat" was officially adopted. With a top speed of 318 mph, the Wildcat was out performed by the more nimble 331 mph Japanese Mitsubishi Zero, but its ruggedness and tactics resulted in an air combat kill-to-loss ratio of 6 to 1 for the entire war.

Four Marine Corps Wildcats played a prominent role in the defense of Wake Island in December 1941. Naval and Marine Corps aircraft were the fleet's primary air defense during the Battles of Coral Sea and Midway and, land-based Wildcats played a major role during the Guadalcanal Campaign of 1942-43. Lt. Butch O'Hare was able in a few short minutes to shoot down five Mitsubishi twin-engine bombers attacking the USS Lexington carrier off Bourganville in 1942. He became the US Navy's first fighter ace and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by President Roosevelt. Today, O'Hare International Airport in Chicago is named in honor of him.

In 1944, the General Motors/Eastern Aircraft plant in New Jersey completed the construction of an FM-2 Wildcat for the US Navy and first assigned to San Pedro, California.

On July 3, 1945, it was reassigned to a small training field in Pungo, Virginia.

As the war ended, it was still stationed in Virginia yet served with various training commands throughout the Navy. Without ever having served overseas or in combat, it was stricken from the records and sold to an Eastern Airlines pilot in 1952. It was sold to its next owner 10 years later and resided in Delaware, until last month.

The same Wildcat fighter that had served with the Navy during the Second World War at the small airfield located behind the Pungo Pizza Restaurant on Princess Anne Road, was acquired by the Military Aviation Museum. It will be making its first appearance back in Virginia

Continued on page 2



FM-2 Wildcat returns to Pungo

Living History Events Bring the Past to Life

by Ed Dillingham

The Military Aviation Museum has been proud to host a series of "Living History" events that highlight the contributions of the men and women of aviation to our country. Each Saturday morning session was concluded with a flight demonstration by one of the museum's aircraft.

Since last August, the museum has sponsored a series of monthly seminars that have hosted WWII and Korean war veterans who discuss their aviation experiences during those wars. Our first speaker was retired US Navy Captain Bob Gohr, who discussed his experiences

flying Navy Hellcat fighters aboard US aircraft carriers during WWII, and a Japanese kamikaze attack that forced him to abandon ship.



Captain Bob Gohr

In September, the museum was honored to host CMSGT Grant Williams USAF (retired) and former Sgt Harold Quinton, both members of the famed WWII Tuskegee Airmen. Both CMSGT Williams and Sgt discussed not only their experiences during the war, but the social issues that they faced during their wartime service.

Continued on page 3

Military Aviation Museum

www.MilitaryAviationMuseum.org

Virginia Beach Airport

www.VBairport.com

Fighter Factory

www.FighterFactory.com

Inside this Issue:

- Valentine Hangar Dance* 2
- Visit from Girl Scouts* 2
- STIHL Conference* 2
- Kellam Class Trip* 2
- Knotts Island PTA* 2
- Inaugural Glide-In* 3
- Avenger Fly-Over* 4

First Annual 1940's Valentine Hangar Dance

Love and Nostalgia were in the air at the museum's first annual Valentine's Hangar Dance. For this sold out event, over 450 people attended and danced the night away to the big band sounds from the Terry Chesson Orchestra. Swing Virginia, a local swing dancing instruction group, enticed everyone onto the dance floor with their own dance moves and mini instruction. One of the evening's attendees was heard saying, the "Big Band" music, dancers, cigarette girls, and costumed attendees all brought back wonderful memories of her dad.

Looks like this will be an annual Valentine's Event! Thank you to all of our sponsors; Atlantic Shores



Two party go'ers dancing to the swing music

Retirement Community, Loyola Enterprises, Premier Events Inc., Swing Virginia, Pinup Angels, The Butterfly Garden Back on Track VA, and Captured Moments Photography. Special Thanks to Bill O'Neill for being our MC and to all the wonderful volunteers involved with the event! □



Best Costume Winner-(left to right) - Red-Suited Party Attender, Carmen Miranda's" partner, "Carmen Miranda", Lisa Michels, Debbie and Mike Spalding

STIHL Conference

The International Company, STIHL, brought to Virginia Beach their British Division for a conference. As a promotional treat they hosted a dinner catered here at the museum on March 24th. The night started off with drinks and hors d'œuvre served in the Navy hangar. For dinner they requested to be in the Army hangar in full view of the German and British planes. Elegantly set tables and a 3 piece jazz band provided the group with a relaxing evening. □

Kellam High School History Class Trip

A group of over 50 Kellam High School students in Mr. Christman's U.S. & Virginia History class came by for a lesson on WWII history and the museum's fighter planes on April 2nd. The students searched through the museum on a scavenger hunt as part of

the lesson. It was quite an interesting experience and some of the volunteers showed up to learn a little more from Mr. Christman, who came dressed for the part in an old uniform and accompanied by a bugler and some German and WWI re-enactors. □

Knotts Island PTA and Wild Turkeys

The annual Knotts Island PTA banquet was held at the museum on March 14th. With over 120 people in attendance, they enjoyed great food, music, casino games and silent auction. This was not the first year the PTA picked the museum as their venue of choice, but it was the first time for the National Wildlife Turkey Federation and their annual

banquet. Close to 300 of their members and families attended this fund raising event on March 27th. Another wonderful event and a great group enjoyed the night with fellowship, food, silent and live auctions, and a raffle among the airplanes. They have already booked the museum for next year! □

Cat Returns... Continued from page 1

in over 60 years and is scheduled to fly in the Warbirds Over the Beach airshow on the weekend of May 16/17.

Today this aircraft is the most original example of a Wildcat still flying. It still has folding wings operated by small hand cranks imbedded in the wing fold mechanisms. The retractable landing gears requires 31 turns of the hand operated wheel in the cockpit. It is powered by its original Wright R-1820 radial engine that produces 1350 horsepower. During the war, it was armed with four fifty caliber wing mounted machine guns and could carry two 250 lb. bombs or six rockets.

The aircraft will stay on display at our museum for several weeks after the airshow and then be flown over to the maintenance facility at the Suffolk Municipal Airport, where it will be thoroughly inspected and restored to its original condition as when it first left the factory in 1944. □

Visit from the Girl Scouts

The Girl Scout of the Colonial Coast in conjunction with The Ninety Nines, International Organization of Women Pilots, organized lessons on aviation for area Girl Scouts. The event was held March 14th and taught by members of The Ninety Nines in several areas throughout the museum. Over 50 girls attended this day long event, participating in exercises such as making paper airplanes and using them to taxi down a makeshift runway. The visual learning lessons gave the Girl Scouts a better understanding of how a plane works. Normally "civilians" are not able to touch or climb onto any of the museum's planes. An exception was made and the girls had a chance to sit in the cockpit of the youngest plane in the museum, the T-34 Mentor. Every Girl Scout earned an Aviation Merit Badge at the end of the day's sessions. □



Girl Scouts with T-34 Mentor

Inaugural Glide-in at Virginia Beach Airport is Gone with the Wind

The skies were blue and crystal clear on April 4th, 2009. Joe Mathias' prize antique glider was lowered from its display position high in the museum hangar and Joe had it preflighted and ready to go. Gary van Tassel brought his PW-5 sailplane in by trailer.



Joe Mathias in the Lassiter-Kauffman LK-10 (military designation TG-4)

Two tow planes were available. Two dozen members of the Tidewater Soaring Society (TSS) were on hand to assist with ground handling and hoped to go flying in sight of Back Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

If only the wind had cooperated. Instead it remained strong and gusty all day. Back at TSS home field of Garner in Isle of Wight County the winds were not only strong, but there was a cross wind so the two-place training glider that was to have flown to the

Virginia Beach Airport could not launch.

Although the day did not go exactly as planned, visitors to the museum got to watch some amazing flights by the Tidewater Radio Control Model Club. Led by Jim Stanton the club brought some 20 large scale models of warbirds for close-up viewing.

If only we could have flown..... ☐



PW-5 sailplane owned by Gary van Tassel

Living History... Continued from page 1

In October, the museum held a special evening event. Our guest speaker was noted historian and President Emeritus of Old Dominion University Dr. James Koch. Dr. Koch discussed the "Allied Bomber Offensive in WWII", and the effects Allied bombing had on German war production.

November saw an event featuring retired Air Force Lt.Col John Corley, who discussed his three decades of aviation experiences including WWII, Korea and Vietnam.



Lt. Col. John Corley

Lt. Col Corley saw combat in all three wars, and finished his military career as a forward air controller during the Vietnam war.

January 2009 featured the "homecoming" event for the museum's FG-1D Corsair. The "Bent Wing Bird" event was hosted by the MAM's own staff pilot retired Navy CDR C.J. "Obie" O'Brien, who fascinated the guests with his stories of flying the Corsair on ground attack missions off

the USS Boxer to support US troops during the Korean war.

2009 continued to highlight the experiences of our aviation veterans. In February, former Air Force Capt. Joe Russo discussed his experiences flying P-51s in the Pacific Theater of Operations during WWII.

The month of March was the museum's opportunity to honor the women who contributed greatly to the Allied war effort. "Rosie the Riveter" was the subject of the monthly event, featuring Rosie reenactor, Ms. Cherie McClung.

April featured USAF LtCol. Don "Buzz" Wagner, who flew 43 combat missions in



Retired CDR C.J. "O'bie" O'Brien straps on his Corsair assisted by AECM (ret) Shane Kaufman USN

a B-25 ground attack aircraft in the Pacific theater. His squadron, the 500th Bomb Squadron, attacked the Japanese during the Philippines and Okinawa campaigns. Col Wagner transitioned to fighter planes following the



Lt Col. Don Wagner describes his experiences

war, and ended up flying the advanced F-104 before retiring in 1966. The crowd was thrilled as the museum B-25 flew a demonstration with Col. Wagner onboard.

In June, the museum will be proud to host noted author Mr. Robert Mrazek, who will discuss his new hit book, "A Dawn Like Thunder". The book features the story of famed Navy Torpedo Squadron 8, who attacked the Japanese fleet at the battle of Midway. Mr. Mrazek will sign copies of his book following his presentation. In addition, the museum will fly a demonstration of it's own TBM-3E Avenger, which is prominently featured in the book.

The museum is proud to give these veterans and other special guests the opportunity to tell their stories, and looks forward to many more of these events in the future. ☐

Eastern Avenger Does HW Bush Fly-Over

By Felix Usis, Museum Docent

The Avenger was originally designed and built in 1940 by Grumman Aircraft for the United States Navy's need to expand and replace the older obsolete Douglas TBD-1 Devastator. But in early 1942, to meet the growing production requirements, General Motors Corporation was asked to establish a second source for the Avenger. Ultimately, General Motors, Eastern Aircraft Division built 7546 Avengers.

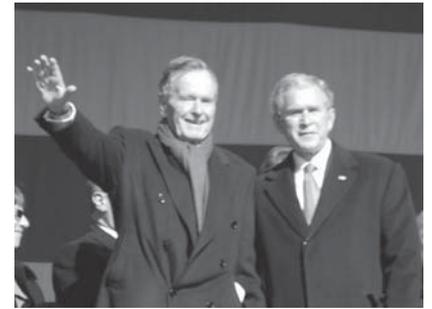
In January 2001, An Avenger was acquired by the museum. In a recent major public appearance, the Avenger did a fly-past at the 10 January 2009 commissioning of CN-77 USS George H. W. Bush in Norfolk, Virginia. The former president, George Bush Sr., was the youngest Naval Aviator when he received his Navy Wings of Gold at the age of 19. Twenty-year-old Ltjg. Bush flew 58 combat missions in the Pacific as a member of Torpedo Squadron 51 (VT-51) in USS San Jacinto (CVL30). During a strike against the Japanese held island of ChiChi Jima, he and his crew were shot down by flak and had to bail out. Ltjg. Bush was the only one to survive from his three-man crew. He was eventually rescued by the submarine USS Finback (SS230), but he did not return to VT51 until October 30, eight weeks after being shot down. Thus the fly-past during the commissioning of the carrier that bears his name. □



Former Presidents, George HW Bush and George Bush, former first lady Laura Bush



Eastern Avenger, in flight. Photo by Kurt Gibson



Former Presidents, George HW Bush and George Bush

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
OPEN DAILY

(757) 721-PROP

1341 PRINCESS ANNE ROAD
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA 23457

CURRENT RESIDENT

MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER FOR
THE MILITARY AVIATION MUSEUM

