

*Missions for America
Semper vigilans!
Semper volans!*



Publication of the Thames River Composite
Squadron
Connecticut Wing, Civil Air Patrol
300 Tower Rd., Groton, CT.

Issue 18.21

24 December, 2024

Lt Col Stephen Rocketto Editor
1st Lt David Pineau, Publisher
Maj Roy Bourque, Paparazzo
Maj Scott Farley, Roving Correspondent

CURRENT EVENTS

Autonomous Fire Fighting Helicopter Tested

Sikorsky and California's Rain Industries are collaborating to develop autonomous Black Hawk helicopters capable of an immediate launch to a newly identified fire and make accurate water drops to suppress the blaze.

In recent tests, a tablet was used to control a Blackhawk equipped with a Bambi Bucket to fly

to a accurately drop water on a 12 inch diameter fire ring while accurately correcting for cross-winds. The helicopter was manned by safety pilots by the entire demonstration was conducted using the remote system.

Navy Contracts for New Aircraft to Support the National Command Authority's Survivable Communications Link

TACAMO, **T**Ake **C**harge **A**nd **M**ove **O**ut, is a Navy very low and super high frequency radio system used to maintain communications with the ballistic missile submarine fleet. The system was first tested in 1961 and three squadrons became operational in 1968.

The original aircraft were Lockheed EC-130G/Q aircraft, the most distinctive feature of which is a trailing antenna up to five miles long. The very low frequencies used is in the 3-30 kHz band and the super high frequencies are 3-30 GHz.

The current aircraft is the E-6B Mercury based on the Boeing 707 but Northrop Grumman has just won a aa \$3.46 billion contract to supply new Lockheed EC-130Js as a replacement.

FEATURE ARTICLE **EROSPACE HISTORY**

The Flying Santa

In the late 1920s, William H. Wincapaw, a floatplane pilot from Friendship, Maine flew a charter, freight, an air taxi service along the New England coast. As is well known, winter flying conditions in New England generally range from marginal to abominable. And in the 1920s, air navigation was pilotage and dead reckoning since radio aids were non-existent. And the instruments and techniques for instrument flying conditions were also non-existent.

Often, Wincapaw would launch into marginal conditions, especially if injured islanders needed mainland based medical attention. His technique

was to fly low and use lighthouses for guidance. He realized that the lighthouse keepers provided a valuable service for him and for coastal shipping as they maintained their lonely vigil. So he decided to show his appreciation.

Starting on December 25th 1929, Wincapaw loaded his plane with a dozen packages containing newspapers, magazines, coffee, candy, and other items - small luxuries that would brighten the lives of those living on the isolated islands more bearable and dropped his gifts to the lighthouses in the Rockland, Maine region. The title of Flying Santa was bestowed upon Wincapaw by the grateful recipients.

The early delivery aircraft consisted of a Travel Air A-6000-A, Fairchild 71 floatplane, Bellanca Airbus, Stinson Reliant, Fokker Trimotor and a DC-3.



Father and son crew the Reliant

During the war years, 1943-1945, Major Paul Dudley of the Civil Air Patrol and Edward Snow flew the missions in a Rearwin Cloudster and a Stinson 10A Voyager.



Snow & Dudley prepare to load the Cloudster.

The first flight started a tradition. Wincapaw increased his efforts and expanded his reach to even more lighthouses and then Coast Guard stations. His son, Bill, Jr. and Edward Rowe Snow, a noted author, journalist, and historian, continued to fly "Santa" missions for the next 40 years.

With the exception of one year during WWII, the flights have continued uninterrupted. The non-profit Friends of Flying Santa was established in 1917 and continue the tradition using helicopters.

There are many ways to express thanks and Bill Wincapaw's grateful example stands as a model of gracious and generous action.

AEROSPACE HISTORY

Dec. 18, 1934 – Stearman Aircraft Company delivers its first Kaydet trainer to the Army. The most common preliminary trainer, some 10,346 Kaydets will be delivered by the end of WWII.



Hap Rocketto and Ed Pease readying the last flight of Ed's PY-17 before donation to the EAA in the 1970s.

Dec. 19, 1928 – Harold Pitcairn flies his first autogyro.

Pitcairn and the PCA-2, first autogyro to be certified and first to complete a transcontinental crossing.



Dec. 20, 1969 – The highest-scoring North Vietnamese ace of the Vietnam War with nine claimed kills, Nguyễn Văn Cốc, claims an AQM-34 Firebee UAV for his final kill.

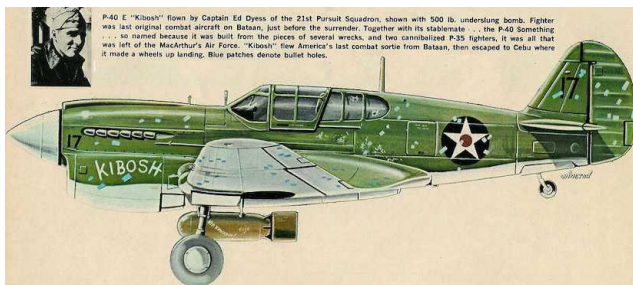


Dec 21-30, 1943 – Douglas A-24B Banshee start dive bombers attacks against Japanese facilities in the Gilbert Islands. The A-24B was the USAAF equivalent of the Navy's SBD-5 Dauntless



Banshee taxiing on its Makin Island base in the Gilberts. (Credit: USAAF)

Dec. 22, 1943 – Lt. Col. William Dyess had been flying the Curtiss P-40E in the Philippines but was captured by the Japanese on Bataan in April of 1942. He escaped a year later and joined the guerrilla forces on Mindanao.



In July, he was evacuated by submarine and returned to the United States for retraining on the Lockheed P-38G.

Col Dyess goes West after an engine caught fire on take-off over a densely populated area. Refusing to bail out, Dyess deliberately crashed into a vacant lot in order to avoid killing his fellow citizens. Dyess AFB near Abilene, Texas honors his heroism.

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15:13

Dec. 23, 1940 – Eddie August Schneider goes West win a mid-air collision.

Eddie quit school at age 15 and devoted his life to flying. In 1929, age 18, he became the youngest U.S. certified commercial pilot and the youngest certified aircraft mechanic.



Three years later, Eddie set three transcontinental speed records for a pilot under the age of 21 and then competed in the two Ford National Reliability Air Tours and ran a flying school but times during the depression were tough.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out, Schneider and two companions were recruited to fly for the Republican side in the Yankee Squadron and was offered 1,500 dollars per month and a \$1,000 bonus for each rebel aircraft shot down. Later he said that

I was broke, hungry, jobless... yet despite the fact that all three of us are old-time aviators who did our part for the development of the industry, we were left out in the cold in the Administration's program of job making. Can you blame us for accepting the lucrative Spanish offer?

He claimed he was never paid in full. The Spanish government claimed otherwise, a familiar situation for those of us who have free-

lanced for unscrupulous charter operators. And of course, those who signed up to fight the fascists were also punished by the State Department. His passport was confiscated and only returned after he swore that he had never forsworn allegiance to the United States.

As a world war became imminent, Eddie went to work for American Airlines and also gave flight instruction at Brooklyn's Floyd Bennett Field. A U.S. Navy reserve pilot in a Stearman Kaydet struck his aircraft from behind and severed the tail of Eddie's aircraft. Both Eddie and his student died in the crash.

CHRISTMAS MIRACLE DEPARTMENT

Christmas Eve December 24, 1971

A Lockheed L-188 Electra, LANSA Flight 508 flying for Lima to Pucallpa, Peru is struck by lightning, catches fire and breaks apart in mid-air.



The doomed LANSA Flight 508 Electra

17 year old Juliane Koepcke, strapped in her seat, falls two miles into the Amazonian rain forest and survives (Is this proof that seat belts work?) There is some suspicion that she was in the central seat of a three seat section and the extra drag retarded her fall. The dense jungle cover may have also helped to break her fall.

Plucky Senora Koepcke, broken collar bone, concussed and with a gashed arm starts waling out and ten days later, reaches a lumberjack camp. She had learned jungle survival techniques while working with her biologist parents it a rainforest research station.

December 25, 1981 Christmas Day, 1981

Thirty-five miles east of Cape Hatteras, USAF Lieutenant Thomas Tiller, an F-4 navigator-

weapons operator is fished from the Atlantic Ocean by the fishing boat *Odyssey*. Tiller had ejected from his aircraft seven days earlier and had been in a life raft. His only complaints are a salt water rash, thirst and hunger.

THERE IS NO ESCAPING THE LONG ARM OF THE FAA BUREACRACY

The FAA Sikorsky S-76 showed up at Santa's Workshop last week. An FAA inspector, cartwright, and veterinarian disembarked and met with the jolly old elf, notifying him that the time for his biennial check ride and aircraft inspection was due.



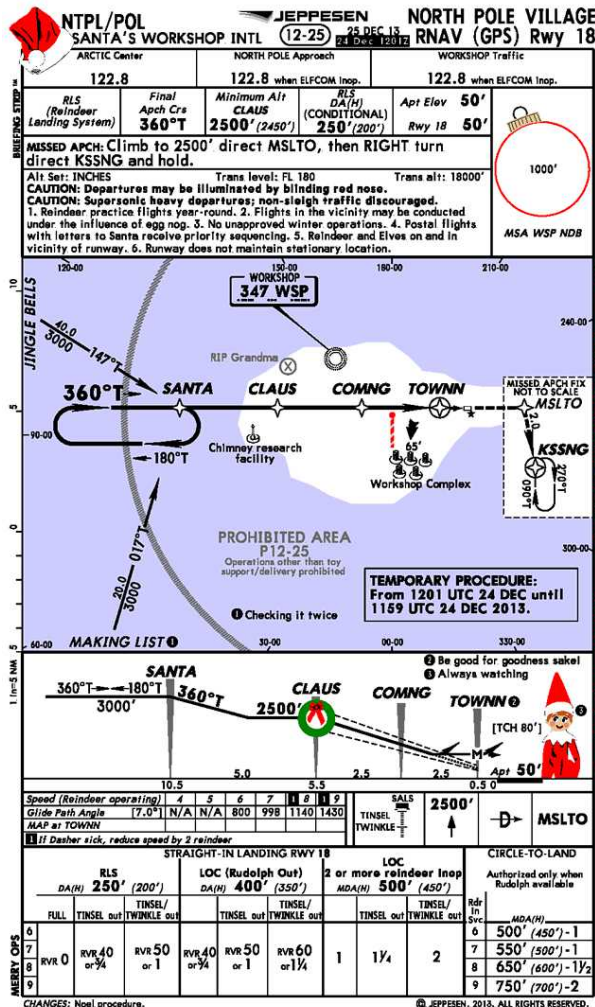
While the cartwright and veterinarian went out to check the sleigh and power plants, the inspector went over Santa's paperwork, and conducted a brief oral exam, focusing on short field landings flight in impossible instrument conditions, and the North Pole Village approach plate procedures.

The oral review completed, the cartwright and veterinarian reported that the sleigh and all nine power plants had passed inspection. The inspector sent Santa out to make the preflight inspection while he guzzled a last cup of Mrs. Kringle's hot chocolate and greedily gobbled the remainder of the sugar cookies.

He then went out and returned to the chopper, removed a shotgun from the baggage compartment and climbed into the sleigh's right seat. Santa, somewhat bemused, ask the inspector the reason for the shotgun. The inspector replied, "Your going to lose an engine on take-off."

SEASONAL APPROACH CHART

North Pole Village



A voice clearly heard over static and snow,
 Called for clearance to land at the airport below.

He barked his transmission so lively and quick,
 I'd have sworn that the call sign he used was "St. Nick".

I ran to the panel to turn up the lights,
 The better to welcome this magical flight.

He called his position, no room for denial,
 "St. Nicholas One, turnin' left onto final."

And what to my wondering eyes should appear,
 But a Rutan-built sleigh, with eight Rotax Reindeer!

With vectors to final, down the glideslope he came,
 As he passed all fixes, he called them by name:

"Now Ringo! Now Tolga! Now Trini and Bacun!
 On Comet! On Cupid!" What pills was he takin'?

While controllers were sittin', and scratchin' their head,
 They phoned to my office, and I heard it with dread,

The message they left was both urgent and dour:
 "When Santa pulls in, have him please call the tower."

He landed like silk, with the sled runners sparking,
 Then I heard "Left at Charlie," and "Taxi to parking."

He slowed to a taxi, turned off of three-oh
 And stopped on the ramp with a "Ho, ho-ho-ho..."
 He stepped out of the sleigh, but before he could talk,
 I ran out to meet him with my best set of chocks.

His red helmet and goggles were covered with frost
 And his beard was all blackened from Reindeer exhaust.

His breath smelled like peppermint, gone slightly stale,
 And he puffed on a pipe, but he didn't inhale.

His cheeks were all rosy and jiggled like jelly,
 His boots were as black as a cropduster's belly.

Christmas Eve on the Flightline

'Twas the night before Christmas, and out on the ramp,
 Not an airplane was stirring, not even a Champ.

The aircraft were fastened to tie downs with care,
 In hopes that come morning, they all would be there.

The fuel trucks were nestled, all snug in their spots,
 With gusts from two-forty at 39 knots.

I slumped at the fuel desk, now finally caught up,
 And settled down comfortably, resting my butt.

When the radio lit up with noise and with chatter,
 I turned up the scanner to see what was the matter.

He was chubby and plump, in his suit of bright red,
And he asked me to "fill it, with hundred low-lead."

He came dashing in from the snow-covered pump,
I knew he was anxious for drainin' the sump.

I spoke not a word, but went straight to my work,
And I filled up the sleigh, but I spilled like a jerk.

He came out of the restroom, and sighed in relief,
Then he picked up a phone for a Flight Service brief.

And I thought as he silently scribed in his log,
These reindeer could land in an eighth-mile fog.

He completed his pre-flight, from the front to the
rear,
Then he put on his headset, and I heard him yell,
"Clear!"

And laying a finger on his push-to-talk,
He called up the tower for clearance and squawk.

"Take taxiway Charlie, the southbound direction,
Turn right three-two-zero at pilot's discretion"

He sped down the runway, the best of the best,
"Your traffic's a Grumman, inbound from the west."

THAMES RIVER COMPOSITE **SQUADRON MINUTES**

Congratulations

C/TSgt James Robertson earned an amateur radio license at the technician level from the Federal Communications Commission. He is now awaiting the assignment of a Charter Oak callsign from the Connecticut Wing.

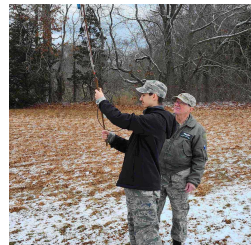
UDF Training

On December 22, the Squadron conducted additional training to qualify members for the Urban Direction Finding Team (UDF) qualification. Maj Roy Bourque conducted both the classroom and in-field training with Maj

Farley, Lt Regan and C/TSgt Robertson attending.

Skills practiced included detecting, locating and silencing an Electric Locator Transmitter (ELT). For a UDF team, this is the primary reason they would be deployed.

A majority of ELT alerts are false alarms. The ELT signal is generally detected by commercial airlines who monitor the ELT frequency (121.5 MHz), know as the "guard" frequency. An alert is generated and CAP and other agencies search for the signal source.



The UDF team will deploy to the general area of the ELT location and then using direction finding equipment attempt to locate the ELT. If successful, CAP mission base is contacted and efforts are made to located the owner of the unit so that it can be turned off.

Annual Holiday Pot Luck Party

On First Flight Day, December 17th, Squadron members met bringing a plethora of edibles for the mutual enjoyment of the membership.

Fun and games followed, the highlights being a game in which cadets attempted to consume doughnuts hanging from the ceiling by a string in the shortest possible time, Easier said than done. This was followed by Capt Thornell's holiday trivia contest during which the participants were challenged to name the Three Wise Men from the East, the names of Santa's reindeer, the number of candles on a menorah and other minutiae about the seasonal festivities.