



Missions for
America
Semper vigilans!
Semper volans!

CADET MEETING

02 May, 2017

The first half of the meeting consisted of physical training, rocket building, and testing after which retired naval weapons officer Gerry Shafer spoke.

The Coastwatcher

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Mr. Shafer is a former submariner whose training in weaponry led to a career in the aerospace industry. The bulk of his work was in the field of missile defense systems.

Issue 11.16

02 May, 2017

CALENDAR

See the Squadron Calendar for Meeting Details

06 MAY-Corporate Learning Course
20 MAY-CTWG Conference
03 JUN-MEAM/springfield Arsenal Field Trip
17 JUN-Commander's Cup Rocket Contest
19 JUN-01 JUL
25 JUN-WAA Pancake Breakfast
23 JUL-ACES
14-20 AUG-CTWG Encampment
19 AUG-National Aviation Day
09 SEP-CTWG Smallbore Rifle Clinic
23 SEP-WAA Young Eagles
06-07 OCT-AOPA GON Flying
21 OCT-CTWG Smallbore Rifle Clinic

He was a test director during the development of the Exo Atmospheric Reentry-vehicle Subsystem (ERIS). ERIS used second and third stage boosters from the Minuteman ICBM to propel its warhead which used radar and infrared guidance to seek its target. A kinetic-kill weapon, ERIS carried an inflatable “net” system, which when deployed collided with the target and destroyed it.

The interception experiments were based on Meck Island in the Kwajalein Atoll and the targets were launched from Vandenburg AFB in California.

Mr. Shafer used a number of videos to illustrate the missile system and the intercepts of incoming ICBM targets. He concluded by answering questions from the cadets.

CADET FIELD TRIP

The Squadron will sponsor an all-day field trip on July 1st. The New England Air Museum and the Springfield Arsenal will be visited. Expect to depart at 0830 and return around 1800. The Air Museum charges and entry fee and we are negotiating with them on the group price. It is anticipated that the cost will be no more than five dollars.

Experts will be on hand to discuss the exhibits. Transportation will be provided. Interested cadets should speak to their parents. A commitment to attend should be made by the meeting on May 23rd. Notify Lt. Col. Rocketto if you wish to go.

SENIOR MEETING

02 May, 2017

Lt Col Rocketto reviewed the high points of the USAF evaluation of the CTWG held last week.

Maj Farley reviewed the status of Squadron goals and future programming.

Officers made brief reports on the status of their departments and programs.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Lt Pineau passed a Form 5 check ride.

USAF EVALUATES CTWG

During the last week, a team from the USAF evaluated the search and rescue capabilities of the Connecticut Wing. A variety of air missions were scheduled on the weekdays and on the weekend, the Air Force put on a “full court press.”

Activities opened at Brainard Mission Base with two air missions and two ground missions. Then the evaluators threw a wild card into the pot. The building had to be evacuated. When the roll call of evacuees was completed, the CTWG team was told that the building had “exploded and was unusable.” CTWG operations switched to the

nearby mobile tactical command van and as more requests for assistance came in, a decision was made to simulate an evacuation to the Silver City Squadron's offices in Meriden. At that point, the CTWG was allowed to return to the Brainard facilities and resumed “normal” operations.

The Incident Command Staff, ground teams, and air crews continued to work in a high pressure environment. Photo and ground reconnaissance and search and rescue missions were dispatched swiftly and the composure of the participants was calm and confident.

On Sunday afternoon, CTWG Commander, Col Kenneth Chapman met with the Evaluation Team who informed him of their appraisals of our performance. Col Chapman then sent the following message to the Wing:

Congratulations to CTWG for receiving a HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL rating on the OPSEVAL conducted by the Air Force. According to the Air Force evaluation team, this is the first time that they have seen every section receive a rating of HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL or above. That is amazing -- great job!

Approximately 80 Wing members participated. Thames River, ten of which were from Thames River: Cadets C/MSgt Hannah Ramsey, Benjamin Ramsey, Daniel Ramsey, 2d Lt Schmidt, 1st Lt Heard, Majors Neilson, Noniewicz, Farley, and Lt Cols deAndrade and Rocketto.

CURRENT EVENTS

Scientists have hypothesized that many of the unexplained electrical failures in satellites might be due to impact with micrometeoroids. The objects do not have enough energy to destroy spacecraft structures but upon impact, vaporize into a plasma which produces a pulse of high energy electromagnetic energy. Tests indicate that the cloud formed by the impact creates a current which mimics the electromagnetic pulse emitted by a nuclear explosion. Researchers continue to

explore the phenomenon and are working to collect more data which can provide explanatory details.

AEROSPACE HISTORY

Flying Blind

Part One

by

Stephen Rocketto

Prologue

Fellow pilots have long suspected the vision of the editor, given his use of a magnifying glass to set the barometric pressure in the Kollsman Window and squinting at charts and instruments through his trifocals. However, his memory is good enough to remember the names of all the Polish guys on the Snellen Chart used to test vision including the hearing impaired fellow, DEFPOTEC, on the 20/20 line.

In days of yore, an instrument rating was not needed to hold a commercial certificate and when new regulations required the rating, the old timers became “grandfathered” commercial pilots, *sans* legal instrument flight authority. This was not much of a handicap. Most flying in the air taxi business is governed by FAR 135 and single engine aircraft were not allowed to carry paying passengers in instrument conditions. So the old timers became experts in low visibility navigation.

Some still remember the wave skimming VFR (visual flight rules) route back from Fishers Island: Runway 25 to Race Rock Light, a turn to the correct heading to hit the Latimer's Reef Light, a slight correction left to the mouth of the Jordan River, then due north and a straight shot to runway 36 at Waterford, remembering to avoid the Hendel tower just south of the airport. Every air taxi pilot became expert in exploiting Special VFR clearances, visibility of one statute mile and clear of clouds. If memory serves me right, you could even depart JFK on a special. There is even one report that an enterprising aviator developed

an automatic direction finder (ADF) approach into Waterford using the 1510 MHz transmission from the nearby WNLC antenna! Surely, Aether, the Greek god of the atmosphere protects such fools.

Eventually the prudent grandfathered commercial pilot, hoping to survive to become a great-grandfather, earned an instrument rating. Flying single engine IFR (instrument flight rules) was *verboten* but sometimes, after dropping off passengers, one wanted to get home and if the meteorological conditions had deteriorated, you might get stuck on some place like Fishers Island in the winter and a “remain over night” decision was an unpleasant option.

There is one tale about a pilot who departed Fishers and just after lift-off, Groton went full IFR when a fog bank rolled in. Weather was better to the northeast and our intrepid aeronaut made for a haven in Rhode Island. Just before landing in Rhode Island, Groton cleared so the return journey was successfully made without an intermediate stop. However, the boss was unhappy. He paid pilots by time on the Hobbes meter and the normal 18 minute round trip logged a record 1.3 hours for the lucky pilot.

Now, I would venture that just about all of the grandfathered commercial pilots have either earned their instrument ratings, retired, or traded their leather jackets for that final flight west where, “there will be apple pie and rock and rye and the pilots go there when they die in the aviator's heaven.”

Flying Blind, For Real

Anyway, in aviation “blind flying” or “flying blind” refer to flight without ground reference maintaining attitude and course using instruments and electronic aids. But what about really flying blind, physically blinded and unable to resort to the horizon or cockpit instruments. There are three documented cases in which naval aviators, blinded by combat injuries have successfully landed on an aircraft carrier. All occurred during the Korean War.

An arrested landing on an aircraft carrier is known as a “trap.” In the early 1920s the United States commissioned its first aircraft carrier, a converted collier, the *USS Langley*. During its first cruise, Kenneth Whiting, a pioneer naval aviator served as executive officer. His observations of landing aircraft convinced him that some sort of a signal system would be a valuable asset. In order to be visible to a nose high landing aircraft, Whiting stationed himself on the aft port corner of the flight deck. Pilots reported that the “dance” which Whiting performed as he sub-consciously imitated the movements of the incoming aircraft was helpful. The Landing Signal Officer was born.

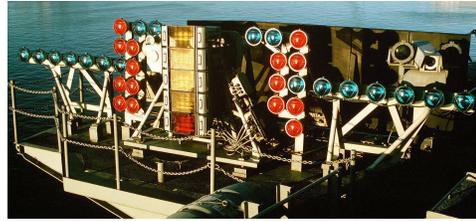


Landing Signal Officer School Patch

Traditionally, a trap consists of a final approach visually guided by a landing signal officer equipped with a set of paddles who indicates the quality of the approach and touchdown: pattern, glide slope, attitude, and speed using a standard set of signals. Modern carrier approaches a guided by an optical system comprised of gyro-stabilized and highly directional colored lights and a landing signal officer in direct radio contact with the approaching pilot.



A “batsman” brings a Fleet Air Arm Martlet aboard.



The complex array of lights which comprises an optical landing system

Even an Air Force fighter pilot might admit that a deck landing is a “sporty” operation. The distance in which the tail hook can engage and stop the aircraft is about 300 feet long. The ship is moving front to back (surging), side to side (swaying) and up and down (heaving). It is also free to pitch, roll, and yaw. Add some turbulence created by the structure of the ship. Make it a night operation and the pucker factor skyrockets. Tests have shown that aviators show more physiological stress during a carrier night landing than during combat.

The need for some visibility and a controllers voice is somewhat akin to an instrument landing using Ground Controlled Radar or Surveillance Radar Approach. But the airport, unlike a ship, is firmly rooted in one spot, provides thousands of feet for a touch-down and requires a minimum visibility requirement. Imagine what it might be like if impaired vision cost you the loss all of the visual cues. Now that is a real blind landing.

Blind Landing #1, Korea, 17 September, 1950

The first incident occurred on September 17, 1950. Edward D. Jackson, Jr., based on the *USS Philippine Sea* was flying a Grumman F9F-2 Panther. His wingman was Ens. Daryl E. Crow. The mission was to strafe of an airfield near Pyongyang, the capital of North Korean. The airfield has already been wrecked so Jackson and Crow decided to see if more promising targets could be found along the rail line to Seoul. They found a locomotive and set it on fire.

The two aviators then followed the Han River east towards the Yellow Sea and spotted a flotilla of small boats crossing the river. A low pass drew fire so they strafed the boats from an altitude of about 50 feet. At the end of the strafing run Jackson looked ahead and glimpsed something. The North Koreans has strung a steel cable across the river as a defense against low flying aircraft. It worked.

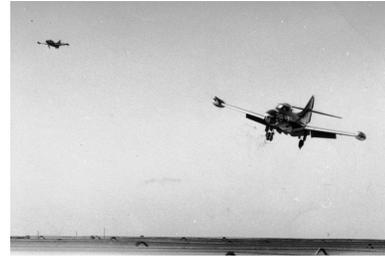
The nose of the Panther broke the cable but it snapped across the right wing, wrecked the tip tank and whipped across the canopy, destroying the windscreen. Jackson's goggles were knocked loose and fragments of plexiglass ripped into his face. Momentarily, he lost consciousness.

Crow, astern of Jackson, spotted a stream of fuel from the ruptured right wing tank. He pulled alongside and saw the damage, a shattered blood splattered canopy and radioed "Power, Jack, Power." Retaining consciousness, Jackson eased back on the throttle to reduce the wind on his face. And then he realized that he could not see! He radioed Crow, "For God's sake, Daryl, I'm blind."

Flying wing, Crow coached Jackson. They added power, climbed and set course back to the ship. Jackson would lose consciousness intermittently and Crow would radio instructions which snapped Jackson back to flying the aircraft. They reached the sea and Jackson rejected an ejection. During his first catapult launch in a jet aircraft, the catapult failed and he attempted to eject. His seat failed to clear him from the aircraft and it almost cost him his life. He also knew that in his weakened condition a water landing would be unsurvivable.

As they approached the carrier, the deckhands cleared the flight deck for an emergency landing. Flaps, landing gear, and tail-hook were lowered. When lined up on the approach, the landing signal officer, Lt.(j.g) Les Bruestle started to talk Jackson down. Bruestle issued a stream of speed, attitude, and direction instruction and then the "Cut" command. The Panther slammed down on the deck and caught the number five wire.

Jackson was pulled clear and Crow landed catching the third wire. Before Crow could be towed clear his engine flamed out due to fuel exhaustion.



A Navy archives photo of Jackson's final approach.

Jackson was assisted out of the cockpit, tried to walk, and collapsed on the deck. In sickbay, he received a transfusion, 36 stitches and a few days rest. His vision returned and aside from a scarred cheek, he incurred no permanent harm. Inside of a week, he and his damaged Panther were flying again.



Jackson is assisted out of the cockpit.

Blind Landing #2, Korea, 21 March, 1951

The second incident occurred on March 21st, 1951. Ensign Floryan "Frank" Soberski was flying a Grumman F9F Panther off the *USS Princeton*. As he made a low level pass on a possible target, gunfire shattered his canopy. The fragments of Plexiglass struck his eyes, reducing his vision to a "dim gray light." Soberski conferred with his wingman Lt (jg) Pat Murphy and they considered ditching or parachuting into the sea but the 33 degree water precluded this as a viable option. A decision was made to return to the *Princeton* and attempt a deck landing.

Murphy flew along side and directed him back to

the sea, radioing control corrections as needed. As they neared the ship, Murphy took Soberski through the landing checklist. On approach, the Landing Signal Officer took over and “talked” Soberski” to a safe landing. Evacuated to a medical facility, surgery restored Soberski's vision.



Soberski's face receives a quick inspection before his removal from the cockpit.

(Photo Courtesy of Wally Smith)

Both Sobreski and Murphy stayed in the Navy. Sobreski served aboard the USS Coral Sea and the USS Boxer. Murphy served a two year tour with the Blue Angels Both aviators held squadron and ship commands before retirement.

Blind Landing #3, Korea, 22 March, 1952

Ensign Kenneth Schecter was not scheduled to fly that day. But replacement pilot was needed for a sortie to attack the North Korean transportation systems so Schecter attended the briefing, suited up, and clambered aboard his Douglas A-1 Skyraider. It was to be his 27th mission off the USS Valley Forge. During an attack on the Wonsan marshaling yards, Schecter was hit by flak, his canopy shattered, and fragments of plexiglass blinded him. He radioed “I’m blind! For God’s sake, help me!”

Lt. Comdr. Howard Thayer, another member of the strike package, heard the call and asked the “plane in trouble” to rock his wings. Schecter complied and Thayer joined up with the wounded pilot. Thayer radioed instructions which got Schecter leveled off and turned back to the carrier. Schecter dumped a canteen over water over his head trying to clear his vision but to no avail.

U.S, naval forces were offshore and Thayer attempted to guide Schecter towards them and suggested a bailout. Schecter refused. While on

his second mission in Korea, Tom Pugh, his wingman had to make an over-water bail out but drowned before help could arrive. The frigid waters of the Yellow Sea and a blind aviator was not an inviting option.

Thayer searched for a field flat enough for a belly landing and then remembered that “Jersey Bounce.” a maraginal 2000 foot airstrip used by army reconnaissance pilots was just behind the front lines. In a few minutes, Thayer had guided Schecter to the field. Schecter was failing fast but when Thayer told him to lower his gear, he decided that a gear up landing would be safer. Thayer's verbal instructions guided Schecter in.

“We’re heading straight,” “Hundred yards to runway. You’re 50 feet off the ground. You’re level. You’re okay. You’re over the runway. Twenty feet. Kill it a little. You’re setting down. Okay, okay, okay. Cut!”

The Skyraider skidded to a stop and Schecter was helped out by some army troops and transferred to hospital facilities. He permanently lost vision in his right eye, was medically discharged, returned to finish college, and lived to enjoy his seven grandchildren. Thayer was best man at his wedding.



The blinded and bleeding Schecter is guided by a comrade after his return to a naval medical facility.

(Naval Aviation History Files)

Years later, both pilots were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Thayer's award was posthumous. In 1961, on a night mission, Thayer was guiding another pilot whose plane had lost its electrical system and crashed into the Mediterranean.

The stories of the three blind landings were conflated and appeared as a sequence in the 1954 motion picture, *Men of the Fighting Lady*. The stories were “Hollywoodized.” The film depicted Schecter, played by Dewey Martin and Thayer played by Van Johnson working together to land a Panther on the deck of the *USS Oriskany*. The landing results in a flaming wreck but Schecter survives. Hollywood productions are no place from which to get an history lesson.

All of the proponents of these stories are now gone but a fitting epitaph can be found in another Hollywood production, *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*. Rear Admiral Tarrant, played by Frederick March

is lamenting the loss of one of his pilots, a retread named Brubaker. Brubaker reminds Tarrant of his son, another aviator lost in combat. He asks a question.

Where do we get such men? They leave this ship and they do their job. Then they must find this speck lost somewhere on the sea. When they find it they have to land on it's pitching deck. Where do we get such men?

In the background the IMC booms out “Launch Jets!”

Part Two will appear in the next issue. Royal Air Force pilots guide two blinded pilots to safe landing.

AWARDS LUNCHEON SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISER

The Connie Nappier, Jr Chapter of the Black Pilots of America will hold a fundraising event on May 6th. Their primary purpose is to benefit their Youth Aviation Education Program which will provide a scholarship to send a deserving teenager to the Summer Flight Academy at Texas Southern University this summer.

Contact Maj Roy Bourque for further information(bourqueroy@sbcglobal.net)



Connie Nappier, Jr. enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1943. He was part of the Tuskegee Experiment, a program supported by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, to train African American fighter pilots.

He was sent to Midland, Texas to train as a bombardier navigator, at the time, crew members more needed than pilots. He graduated, awarded his wings, and promoted to flight officer and assigned to the 477th Medium Bomb Group, Freeman Field, Indiana.

Resisting the Jim Crow laws enforced by their commanding officer, 101 members of his unit, Nappier among them, were arrested and sent to the stockade. President Truman ordered their release and Nappier returned to Tuskegee and entered their last pilot class. The war ended and the training program was eliminated.

He received his discharge for the Army Air Corps and returned home to Hartford. The G.I. Bill of Rights enabled him to attend college and train as an architect.

In 2007, Connie Nappier and other veterans of Tuskegee received the Congressional Gold Medal in Washington, D.C.