

Mission for America

Semper vigilans!
Semper volans!

The Coastwatcher

Newsletter of the Thames River Composite Squadron
GON
Connecticut Wing
Civil Air Patrol

S. Rocketto, Editor

website: <http://cap-ct075.com/default.aspx>

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SCHEDULE OF COMING EVENTS

May

3 May-SAT-USAF Graded Training Event
6 May-TUE-PT/Departmental Reports Due
10 May-SAT-ACUT
13 May-TUE-BDU/Aerospace Education
20 May-TUE-Blues/Moral Leadership
27 May-TUE-BDU/Ground Team Training
30 May-1 June-FRI-SUN-Ground Team Training

Long Term Planning

21 Jun-SAT-Wing Rocket Competition
4-13 July-Wing Encampment
21-23 July-AIAA AE Conference-Hartford
19 July-SAREX
20-24 July-AIAA Power Plant Conference

CADET MEETING MINUTES

29 April, 2008

The meeting was our quarterly Parent's Night. C/MSgt Molinari led the the assembly in the

Pledge of Allegiance and the Squadron in the Cadet Oath.

Squadron Commander LtCol Lawrence W. Kinch welcomed the Parents, Officers, and Guests and delivered a short address on the "State of the Squadron." He praised the members for recent efforts which resulted in our recent successes at the Wing Conference, discussed future plans for the Squadron and the Wing, and urged us to even greater effort in the future.

C/ABs James Wallace and Timothy Plourde were promoted to C/Amn and received their Curry ribbons.

C/SrA Abigail Wojtcuk was promoted to C/SSgt and received the Wright Award.

C/SSgts George Abbiati and Mary Biekert were promoted to C/TSgt and received the Rickenbacker Award.

C/SSgt Alexis Wojtcuk was promoted to C/TSgt, and received the Rickenbacker Award and her Red Service Ribbon for two years of service.

C/TSgt Shawn East was promoted to C/MSgt and received the Lindbergh Award.

C/SMSgt Jonathan Scannell was promoted to C/CMSgt and received the Goddard Award.

Capt Roy Bourque was promoted to Major.

In Change of Command Ceremony, C/SMSgt Michael Molinari relinquished command of the Cadet Squadron to C/CMSgt Jonathan Scannell.

Officers who were recognized by the Wing at the Conference on Saturday were recognized and presented with plaques. A list of awardees will be found in the Wing Conference report elsewhere in this edition.

The meeting concluded with refreshments.

A PHOTOGALLERY OF IMAGES FROM PARENT'S NIGHT WILL APPEAR IN THE NEXT EDITION

HIGH POWER RIFLE CLINIC

The Connecticut Rifle and Revolver Association held its Junior High Power Rifle Clinic at the Bell City Rifle Club on 19 April. Cadet Cameron Mills was instructed in the use of the AR-15 rifle and fired two courses of fire on the 200 yard range. Capt Rocketto served as an instructor.

USAF GTE

The Squadron will participate in the USAF Graded Training Exercise on Saturday, 03 May. This event is a biennial evaluation of Wing proficiency in flight, communication, and ground operations. USAF Officers will present the Operations Staff with a set of problems which might involve search and rescue, reconnaissance, or cooperation with other organizations. The Wing Staff will task air and ground operation staffs with carrying out these missions which will be observed by the USAF officials who will then submit and evaluation of our readiness to higher echelons.

GROUND TEAM TRAINING

The Danielson Cadet Squadron will be running a Ground Team Training Weekend starting Friday afternoon, 30 May and ending Sunday afternoon, 01 June. A wide range of activities designed to teach the necessary skills required for basic ground team certification will be taught. Thames River Composite Squadron Cadets are urged to attend. Transportation will be provided and details are forthcoming. The following Cadets have been approved to begin training for Ground Team Three: Alexis Wojtcuk, Abigail Wojtcuk, Kevin Roe, Ryan Montgomery, Patrick Dougherty, and Jonathan Scannell.

Any other Cadet wishing to receive approval must complete the ES 116 test. The information to accomplish this simple goal may be found on the Squadron web-site.

ACUT

The Wing Communications Section will hold an Advanced Communications Users Training program on Saturday, 10 May. Attendees must hold a BCUT certificate. The Squadron will provide transportation to this event. Contact Capt. Rocketto if you wish to attend.

WING CONFERENCE

The Wing Conference was held on Saturday, 25 April in Cromwell. Twenty three members of the Squadron attended. For the second year in a row, Thames River won the Aerospace Display Contest with our presentation which illustrated the history of manned rocket flight by the United States from Goddard to the proposed Ares V. Our Safety Display consisted of the implements required for an aircraft survival pack.

Captain Rocketto presented two workshops in aerospace education. One workshop focused on simple devices and demonstration which enhance the teaching of lessons presented in the Cadet modules. The second discussed current issues in aerospace education in our Wing. He also set up a display board which described the CAP ARCHER and SDIS equipment.

Seven Thames River members were honored by the Wing and selected as "Officers of the Year" in their specialty tracks or duty stations. Paul Jalbert in Administration, William Wholean in Moral Leadership, Robin Wojtcuk in Personnel, Paul Noniewicz in Safety, Edward Miller in Supply, and Stephen Rocketto in Aerospace Education.

MEMORIES OF MAY'S PAST

01 May, 1930-Jean Mermoz pilots a Latecoere 28 from Marseilles to Natal carrying the first airmail across the Atlantic.

02 May, 1923-Lt. John McCready and Lt Oakely Kelly pilot a Fokker T-2 from Long Island to San Diego in the first non-stop U.S. transcontinental flight.

03 May, 1952-A Douglas C-47 piloted by Lt Col William Benedict makes the first successful landing at the North Pole.

04 May, 1941-A BOAC Liberator flies from Canada to Great Britain making the first commercial airline crossing of the North Atlantic by heavier than air aircraft.

05 May, 1950-First flight of the Northrop YRB-49A.

06 May, 1931-The airship Hindenburg burns at Lakehurst.

07 May, 1937-A Lockheed XC-35 Electra successfully demonstrates the first pressurized cabin.

08 May, 1945-V.E. Day

09 May, 1949-First flight of the Republic XF-91 Thunderceptor.

10 May, 1972-First flight of the Republic A-10A Thunderbolt II.

11 May, 1926-Roald Amundsen, Umberto Nobile, and Lincoln Ellsworth in the semi-rigid airship Norge make the first flight over the North Pole.

12 May, 1950-Chuck Yeager makes the last flight in Bell X-1 No. 1, *Glamorous Glennis*.

13 May, 1940-First free flight of the Sikorsky VS-300 equipped with a tail mounted anti-torque rotor.

14 May, 1973-Skylab I is launched.

15 May, 1941-First flight of the Gloster E28/39 powered by a Whittle gas turbine engine.

16 May, 1929-The Paramount Studio aviation epic, *Wings*, wins the first Oscar ever awarded for best picture.

17 May, 1945-First flight of the Douglas XB-43 Jetmaster.

18 May, 1953-First flight of the Douglas DC-7.

19 May, 1953-First flight of the Grumman XF-10F-1 Jaguar.

20 May, 1951-Capt James Jabara flying a North American F-86 becomes the first jet ace in the USAF as he shoots down his fifth and sixth MiG.

21 May, 1932-Amelia Earhart flies a Lockheed Vega from Nova Scotia to Ireland and becomes the first woman to solo the Atlantic.

22 May, 1916-The French make the first use of air-to-air rockets when they attack German observation balloons.

23 May, 1931-Floyd Bennett Field is officially opened.

24 May, 1976-A BOAC and an Air France Concorde land at Dulles International Airport making their first appearances in the United States.

25 May, 1927-Lt Jimmy Doolittle flying a Curtiss P-1-B performs the first outside loop over McCook Field, Ohio.

26 May, 1969-Allan Lockheed goes west.

27 May, 1955-First flight of the Sud Caravelle.



LAN-CHILE Caravelle

28 May, 1912-Wilbur Wright goes west.

29 May, 1940-First flight of the XF4U-1 Corsair

30 May, 1972-First flight of the Northrop A-9A.



Northrop A-9A

31 May, 2003-The last Concorde service departs JFK and lands at Charles de Gaulle.

EARTHQUAKE'S FINAL FLIGHT

by
Stephen M. Rocketto

We all have our heroes. Mine often turn out to be eccentrics. As an aviation entranced eleven year old, I built model airplanes, read everything I could find on aviation, and yearned for that day when I could finally fly. One of the rituals in our house was the morning session listening to CBS News on the radio as we ate breakfast and prepared for school. CBS, at that time, was a national leader in broadcast news featuring such luminaries as Edward G. Murrow, H. V. Kaltenborn, and Lowell Thomas as well as the celebrity aviator Arthur Godfrey. On one morning, I recall hearing the news of the death of James B McGovern, a New Jersey native known to his friends as Earthquake McGoon, in an air crash at some place called French Indochina.

I knew Earthquake McGoon was a character in Al Capp's popular Li'l Abner comic strip but of Indochina I knew naught so at the first opportunity, I decided to find out more about this unusual newsworthy occurrence.



Earthquake, the fighter pilot

According to his brother, McGovern always wanted to be a pilot and loved to fly. He served with the 14th Air Force under Claire Chennault in the China-Burma-India Theater of World War II. When the war ended, Chennault formed an airline called Civil Air Transport (CAT) and flew for Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalists who were by then engaged in a civil war with the Chinese Communists led by Mao Tse tung. McGovern joined CAT, grew a beard, and established his reputation as an irrepressible character. His prodigious appetite resulted in a rather impressive girth and he acquired the nickname of 'Earthquake McGoon.'" McGoon was a bearded giant in the comics and prided himself on being the world's dirtiest wrestler. McGovern's name and features were so like the comic character that his nickname was almost inevitable.

*From Hong Kong and Shanghai to far-off Tibet
This legend is growing with time
Of the behemoth creature who flies in the sky
Who knows neither reason nor rhyme*

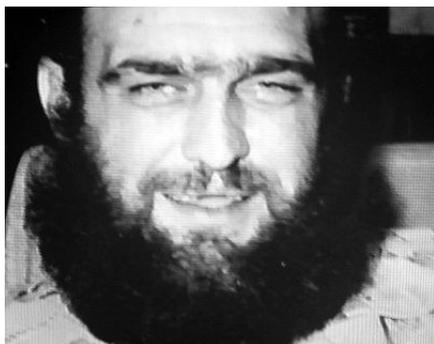
*His three hundred pounds shakes the earth when he walks
Yet he soars with the grace of a loon
The legend makes claim that this beast from the east
Is known as Earthquake McGoon.*

(from The Ballad of Earthquake McGoon ascribed to Al Kindt)



*Earthquake mugs for the camera.
(Felix Smith Collection)*

Stories about his adventures abound. At one point, his C-46 had to make a forced landing and he was captured by the Communists. They held him for six months but, according to the story, they released him when they could no longer afford to feed him. Upon his return to the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong, a much thinner McGoon immediately made for Nathan Road and his favorite watering hole, E. T. Gingle's cafe, where he indulged himself in his favored dish, heavily buttered lima beans. "Pop" Gingle was a retired Navy chief, an Old China Hand, who had retired to the Orient and established a restaurant and saloon renowned for its chili and its friendliness to expatriate pilots. Gingle may have been the person who gave McGovern his nickname and during McGoon's captivity, had tried to ransom him.



Upon his return from captivity

Earthquake's imprisonment by the Communists hardened his attitude towards them. No Stockholm syndrome here.

As rough as he was, McGovern could charm children and had a finely tuned sense of humor. They say he flew seated in a comfortable wicker chair which he had installed in the Boxcar's commodious cockpit. During the flight to the drop zone, he would tear up his many bills and

strew them over the landscape from an open cockpit window.

The Communist movement was cresting in the Far East. The Nationalists abandoned the mainland and fled to Taiwan. The North Korean Army crossed over the 38th parallel and invaded South Korea. In the French Colony of Indochina, a former pastry chef named Ho Chi Minh was leading an insurgency in an attempt to achieve independence. CAT became deeply involved in the conflicts and flew missions both overtly and covertly as it morphed into what became Air America.

As the French position in Indochina became more desperate, they gambled on establishing a base at a former Japanese airstrip in the northwest called Dien Bien Phu. The French hoped to cut the supply lines from Laos and lure the Viet Minh into an open battle which they hoped to dominate with their superior firepower. The strategy failed. Under the leadership of a former school teacher, Vo Nguyen Giap, seized the high ground and invested the French positions using classic siege tactics. They emplaced 105 and 155 mm artillery in cleverly concealed bunkers and lined the approach route to the valley with 37 mm anti-aircraft guns. Much of this ordnance was of U.S. manufacture, supplied by China after capture in either North Korea or taken from the Nationalists. The volume of fire overwhelmed the French defenses and rendered the airstrip useless.

Once the French lost control of the airstrip, all supplies had to be delivered by air drop. By the transports faced a maelstrom of fire as they made their approach down the long axis of the valley.

The situation deteriorated to the point that an attempt was made to convince the United States to use nuclear weaponry to lift the siege. President Eisenhower refused. However, a number of U.S. Air Force C-119's Flying Boxcars were supplied to the French Union forces and CAT pilots engaged to fly them. James McGovern was one of this cohort of adventurous pilots

Fairchild's C-119 Flying Boxcar was the daughter of the C-82 Packet. Sometimes called "the dollar nineteen," she carried two Pratt and Whitney or Wright radial engines and sported a unique twin boom arrangement which allowed the parachute dispatch of cargo from the aft section of the fuselage. A unique and useful materials carrier, the aircraft was also used in more glamorous roles. Using specially designed gear, the "dollar nineteens" snagged Genetrix Project spy balloons from midair and later, performed the first mid-air recovery of a capsule ejected from an artificial satellite. C-119s were also converted to gunships and served in Vietnam. Another version was equipped with a single Westinghouse jet engine mounted in a pod over the fuselage and was used as tanker to fight forest fires.

However, the C-119 had its faults. Its original versions had weak booms and instability problems and its single engine performance was unimpressive. When the CAT pilots were briefed by the Air Force before checking out, Felix Smith reports that they were told that "A C-119 is two corncob engines and a landing gear held together by tissue paper. Nobody ever ditched or belly landed one successfully. Better to bail out. If you have to ride it down, don't land on the belly-it'll curl under and chew you up. Extend the landing gear."

On the day before the fortress fell, McGoon, his co-pilot Wallace Buford, and four French soldiers loaded their aircraft with six tons of artillery ammunition and departed with the intent of supplying the ordnance to Isabelle, the southernmost and most isolated outpost of the besieged French forces at Dien Bien Phu.

As they approached the drop zone, 37 mm anti-aircraft rounds damaged the left engine and the horizontal stabilizer. The aircraft pitched and rolled, nearly spinning, but Earthquake recovered, feathered the left prop, and jettisoned the cargo

As the C-119 descended, Steve Kusak and Al Pope, the crew of another C-119 closed in to

assist and provided directions over the lowest hills. Earthquake was making for a small airstrip about 60 or 70 miles away by following the Sang Ma river valley.. Kusak advises them to bail out. Earthquake replies, "Shut up, I'm busy."



Earthquake's Final Flight
(Jeffrey W. Bass, Artist)

Earthquake and Buford fight to control the aircraft but it continues its inexorable descent. Less than a half mile short of their haven, Earthquake radios, "Looks like this is it, son" A wing hits a tree and the plane cartwheels, crashes, and burns. The United States has suffered its first two aviation combat casualties in what will become the Vietnam War.

Two of the Frenchmen survive the crash and are taken captive but one dies of injuries the next day. The others were buried in the vicinity. Forty eight years later, aircraft fragments and skeletal remains are discovered near the crash site. The site was excavated and in 2006, McGoon's remains were positively identified and returned to the continental United States. On May 24, 2007, Captain James B. McGovern, Jr., Captain United States Army Air Force and Central Intelligence Agency operative, was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery. A half century after leaving for the Far East, Earthquake was home.