

Missions for America
Semper vigilans!
Semper volans!



The Coastwatcher

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

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S. Rocketto, Editor
srocketto@aquilasys.com

C/Capt Brendan Flynn, Reporter
1Lt Scott Owens, Paparazzi

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SCHEDULE OF COMING EVENTS

17-18 MAR-Great Starts-Camp Niantic
17-18 MAR-TLC Course (Seniors)-Camp Niantic
18 MAR-CTWG SAREX
31 MAR-CTWG Pilots Meeting
14 APR-LifeStar Field Trip-Backus Hospital
21 APR-CTWG SAREX
21-22 APR-Corporate Leader's Course
28 APR-Glider Orientation Flight Trip (tentative)
04 MAY (FRI)-Ledyard A/S Festival-Juliet Long
16 JUN-CTWG SAREX
16-17 JUN-Quonset Air Show
23-30 JUN-PAWG RCLS Course
12-14 JUL-Casa Wojtcuk Bivouac
21 JUL-04 AUG-Nat'l. ES Academy
04-05 AUG-Westover Air Show
11 AUG-CTWG SAREX
19-22 SEP-CTWG Guided Training Evaluation
10 NOV-CTWG Conference-Cromwell

ERRATUM

LtCol William Dolan noted that the Spitfire which was captioned as a Mark I in the last edition bore a four bladed prop. Therefore, it could not be a Mark I. We believed he is correct and contacted LtCol Carl Stidsen. Here is Stidsen's response:

The 1,511 production Mark I Spitfires were originally provided with a (990 HP) Rolls-Royce Merlin II or Merlin III engine, and were equipped with fixed-pitch two-bladed props. At some point in the (several) production runs, constant-speed three-blade Rotol propellers were fitted (or retro-fitted as necessary or when possible) .

The first production Spitfire Mark to have a four-bladed prop was the Mark IV, which used the higher horsepower (1455 HP) Griffin IIB engine and of which 229 were built.

However - There are always exceptions! the "High Speed Spitfire" (K9834 - a Mark I taken from the production lines) , was fitted with a "Special" (2100 HP) Rolls-Royce Merlin II (later Merlin XII) engine and a four-bladed prop in 1938 for an attempt on the then World Speed record. Likewise, the only airworthy Mk I flying today (AR213) has a four-bladed propeller removed from a Mark IV and refitted to the Mk I airframe. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some surviving Mk Is were retrofitted with a four bladed prop late in their careers.

The "Spit" in the picture is a Mark IX replica at the RCAF Museum in Trenton. Here is a picture of a Mk I at the RAF Museum, Hendon.



Col Stidsen also commented on the Boeing aircraft model designation system:

The 717 designation was originally used by Boeing internally for the C-135 series, but since there were few (if any) civilian C-135 sales, the number remained obscure to the airline public. When Boeing re-designated the MD-95's they didn't want to garbage up the well-known 7(X)7 series with a "foreign" airplane, so fell back on the 717 number. Note that the former and new MD's are referred to in the 717-200 series.

CADET MEETING MINUTES

06 March, 2012

by

C/Capt Brendan Flynn

The meeting opened with a uniform inspection. After the inspection, C/A1C Johnstone gave a Drug Demand Reduction class on ecstasy and herbal ecstasy. He discussed the symptoms, long and short term effects, appearance, DEA federal classification, and composition of both drugs.

C/SSgt VanDevander held a safety briefing on flood safety. He talked with cadets about preparing for floods and actions to take during a flood. He also discussed the consequences of driving on flooded roads.

C/MSgt Bourque led a team building exercise in which cadets composed a "squadron hero." Cadets listed their own hero and several traits that made him or her a hero, then joined in increasingly larger groups, combining their listed heroic traits and names until the whole squadron had devised a single hero possessing the most heroic qualities.

Capt Wojtcuk gave cadets attending the upcoming great start weekend a packing list. The list included the following: camelback/canteen, civilian clothes, BDU's (if applicable), towels and washcloths, a sleeping bag, toiletries, a pillow,

flip-flops/shower shoes, CAP binder and leadership text (if you have them), a notebook, and rub-on deodorant.

SENIOR MEETING MINUTES

06 March, 2012

No group training was scheduled. Officers worked on individual assignments.

AEROSPACE CURRENT EVENTS

Colorado U Students Collaborate on Supersonic Drone

Students at the Busemann Advanced Concepts Lab at the University of Colorado Boulder are working on a 110 pound airframe to house the LFX00 turbojet. The plans are to fly at Mach 1.4 by the end of 2013.

"Bone" Set Combat Record

The B-1B Lancer, better known as "the Bone." has recently completed its 10,000th combat mission in a flight over Afghanistan.

The aerospace giant announced that the B-1 completed its 10,000th combat mission with the Air Force since it entered service June 29, 1985, and has been in nearly continuous combat for the last 10 years. The Air Force has 66 of the aircraft in its fleet. The aircraft has been in service for two and a half decades.

Originally designed as a nuclear bomber, the B-1 now flies a number of conventional missions with a capacity to carry an estimated 100,000 pounds of ordnance in its triple bomb bays and external hard points.



“Bone” on final at Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota

Its four engines, aerial refueling capability, and variable sweep wings allow supersonic speeds but also allow intercontinental range.

Currently, the USAF maintains a fleet of 66 B-1Bs. Maj John deAndrade of Thames River is a former B-1 pilot.

AVIATION HISTORY ARTICLE OF THE MONTH

The Bombing of Zurich and the New London Connection

04 March, 1945

On the 4th of March, 1945, Zurich, Switzerland was bombed by six B-24s of the 392nd Bombardment Wing. Part I of this story made references to the history of “friendly fire” incidents, the geopolitical situation which Switzerland and the Allied Air Forces faced, and the extraordinary conditions faced by Sincock and his crew on the flight to the designated target, Aschaffenburg, Germany.

In the aftermath of the incident, Lts. William Sincock and Theodore Balides were charged with violations of the 96th Article of War and, for the first time in history, US servicemen were charged with criminal negligence for acts committed while carrying out their ordered mission.

Part II will discuss the court martial proceedings, the defensive tactics woven by Lt, Max Sokarl, a New London, lawyer, and what happened to the protagonists when they returned to the United States.

Part II

Blame is Assigned

The Swiss, as might be expected were outraged. Minutes before Sincock's squadron had bombed Zurich, nine B-24s hit the rail yards at Basel, Switzerland. Some very sharp diplomatic notes

were exchanged and the various levels of the political and military chain of command passed their sense of displeasure downward. General Marshall, US Army Chief of Staff, reacting Presidential unhappiness called General Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

Ike telephoned General Carl Spaatz, Commander, Strategic Air Forces in Europe. Tooey summoned Lt. General James Doolittle, Commander, US Eighth Air Force and Jimmy passed the word to Maj General William Kepner, commanding the Second Air Division and then it went to Brigadier General Leon Johnson, who commanded the 14th Bomb Wing of which the 392nd Bomb Group's 597th Bombardment Squadron were subordinate units. Johnson, who had earned the Medal of Honor leading the “Eight Balls” on the low level raid on Ploesti, was unhappy about prosecuting his fliers for later, he testified that “the aggressiveness displayed by this crew was commendable. They could have returned with their bomb load under the weather conditions encountered, and not have been criticized.”

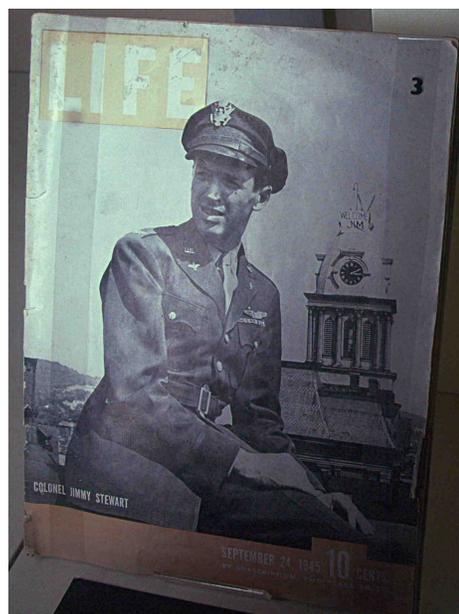
Something had to be done to show the Swiss that we cared to curb the enthusiasm of the USAAF for bombing other than Axis targets. Like material objects subjected to gravity, blame flows down hill. A saying in government service is that no project is complete until blame has been ascribed and so 1st Lt Sincock and 1st Lt Balides were charged under the 96th Article of War which referred to “disorders and neglects to the prejudice of good order and military discipline” and “conduct of a nature to bring discredit upon the military service.” For the first time in history, US servicemen were being subject to a criminal prosecution of what might be termed a “friendly fire” incident.

Specifically, Sincock was accused of “wrongfully negligently, and contrary to the provisions of Field Order Number 618” caused his aircraft to drop bombs on a friendly nation. Balides was charged with “failing to maintain a complete and accurate log and chart” and “negligently and incorrectly determined the then existing geographical position of his aircraft...and convey such incorrect information to the officer commanding said aircraft” thereby causing the aircraft to drop bombs on a friendly nation. The maximum punishment could be life at hard labor!

During the next three months, the officers of the court were appointed, defense and prosecution prepared their cases, and, on June 1st, three weeks after Germany surrendered, the Court convened.

Hollywood Meets New London

The president of the court was none other than Jimmy Stewart, now a colonel and combat veteran of the Second Air Division. Stewart had made over 24 films including major hits such as *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *The Philadelphia Story*. Before the war, he earned a commercial pilot's certificate and owned a Stinson 105. After gaining weight to meet physical standards, he was inducted and accepted for military flight training. He flew 20 combat missions and at the time of the court martial, was serving as chief of staff of the Second Combat Wing.



Stewart, as he appeared on the cover of Life magazine, in September of 1945.

The defense was an odd bag of officers. Leading the team was Capt. Jackson Granholm, a group navigator. Assisting him was lawyer and engineer Capt. Irving Goldman, the group radar officer and 1st Lt. Max Sokarl, intelligence officer, also a lawyer and aide-de-camp to Brigadier General Walter Peck, commander of the 96th Combat Wing. All three defense counsels had served together and knew each other quite well.

Max Sokarl was a lawyer from New London, Connecticut. He was probably in his mid-thirties, somewhat older than the combat crewmen and possessed a colorful reputation among his acquaintances. He was a beneficiary of the patronage of the Group Adjutant, Major Pierce Manly, who recognized the value of having the canny and resourceful Sokarl as his “dog robber” adept at performing a wide variety of unusual tasks not necessarily defined by a military occupational specialty. At different points in his career, Sokarl was provost marshal, and held assistantships as a squadron adjutant, supply officer, recreation officer, liaison officer for public education, and fatality and graves registration officer.

Among his most notorious achievements was his responsibility for the four day disappearance of a privately owned bus. He surreptitiously pirated the vehicle in order to transport some officers to another base for a visit. When a formal complaint was lodged, Sokol then maneuvered himself into the position of investigating officer!

Sokarl was a preeminent yarn spinner and, in the officer's club, was often surrounded by his fan club. He was loquacious, a prankster, raconteur, charmer, and a libertine. He had a Machiavellian streak in his nature, was easily bored, and with his sense of the dramatic, would turn ordinary tasks into grand theatre. If nothing else, he provided a modicum of entertainment to a group of lonely young men, far from home, leading lives which switched from tedium to mortal danger on a near daily basis.

His major criminal case while serving in England was the defense of Private George Smith on a charge of murder. Smith, a thoroughly reprehensible character shot Sir Eric Teichman when Teichman confronted him while poaching on Teichman's estate. Smith confessed and Sokarl had him plead not guilty by virtue of insanity. Sokarl used Smith's previous incarceration for car theft, known incidences of being absent without leave, drunkenness, involvement in eight previous courts martial, and proclivity to torture small animals as the basis for the claim. Smith was convicted and hanged. Sokarl claimed pyrrhic victory in that he got Smith hanged instead of shot.

Brigadier General Peck, the Wing Commander, recognized Sokarl's unique talents and had him reassigned as his *aide-de-camp*. This had placed Sokarl in position to dragoon Granholm and Goldman into defending Sincock and Balides.

Granholm was appointed as Chief Defense Counsel and Goldman as an assistant. Granholm would be their navigation expert and Goldman would parse the fine points of legal terminology. The loquacious, verbally nimble Sokarl would function as mouthpiece.

Goldman, in speaking to Granholm, referred to a legal proposition: If the facts are against you, argue the law. If the the law is against you, argue the facts. To this Sokarl would add a corollary: Whether the law or the facts are with you or against you, baffle them with rhetoric and captivate the with drama. For the application of this corollary, no one in the Eighth Air Force was better equipped than Max Sokarl.

The opening of the case dwelt on a defense argument parsing the difference between civil and criminal law. The prosecution would have to prove that Sincock and Balides were willfully negligent due to criminal intent. Merely doing damage, making mistakes in navigation, and failure to follow Air Force policy were insufficient grounds for criminal prosecution.

The prosecution was prepared to demonstrate that mistakes had been made and damage had resulted by Sokarl planned to trump their arguments when, with his flair for drama, wrapped his arms around both defendants and called upon the tenets of criminal law and the presumption that his clients were innocent until proven guilty of criminal intent and that until that time, they were cloaked in the protection of their constitutional rights.

Sokarl emphasized this point in his preliminary address to the court. A want of due care would be insufficient grounds for conviction as would navigational calculation mistakes or failure to perform up to Air Force standards. The court would need to say that the incident was the result of "...gross, willful...culpable negligence ...(with) criminal intent!"

Sokarl then started piling up points as he cross examined the witnesses. He got the mission briefing officer to admit that he had not informed the lead crews that the route of the

attack would take them within 12 nautical miles of the Swiss border. The briefing officer then admitted, under cross examination that the information given about what constituted a target of opportunity and where they might be located amounted to dropping bombs where you think an important target lies. Finally, Sokarl got the witness to admit that the Air Force directive requiring a target to be "positively identified" had not criteria for what constituted a "positive identification."

The next hand played by Sokarl was the cross examination of the Group Weather Officer. Under cross examination, the weather officer wandered through long technical explanations of meteorology but admitted the discrepancies which existed between the briefed weather and the actual weather and that the group's assembly point was within a deck of clouds!

Sokarl next mark was the Group Intelligence Officer who briefed the lead crews on targets. Once more, longwinded technical points were offered but in the end, it was once again established that there was not criteria for positively identifying a target but that the charts supplied to the crews did show data concerning the location of such targets.

Sokarl was playing a clever game. Many on the court were rated aviators; pilots and navigators. The expert witnesses were, to use a common term of the time, "paddlefoots," non-rated staff officers. Sokarl was using a strategy which exposed the confidence of the staff in the factual nature of their briefed information but which those who flew knew often failed to resemble the actual conditions faced in the hostile skies of Germany. Weather forecasts which were akin to guess work and charts which showed major navigational details such as rivers and large cities but in no way displayed the precise factories and power plants which the Air Force claimed to target.

Max Sokarl was enjoying the game. His natural propensity to needle the pompous and his irreverence for senior officers were a source for his enthusiastic display of legal maneuvering.

And so it went.

Experts testified and Sokarl pushed them to explain arcane details of their responsibilities which often showed that although they met them satisfactorily, the bombing of Zurich were less the fault of the crew than a less than perfect battle planning system. Goldman and Granholm's anxiety index peaked as they watched Sokarl's performance and feared he might alienate the court. Sokarl told them not to worry as he had the prosecution right where he wanted them to be.

On the other hand, the Court President, Colonel Jimmy Stewart, played a role similar to that which he often took in the cinema, Mr Nice Guy. The court stenographer, a young WAC, would occasionally become confused by the torrent of navigational technical terms and methodologies which formed part of the testimony. At that point, Stewart would interject with instructions phrased in his unique and kindly country boy speech pattern to slow down the testimony, clarify details, and grant her time to catch up. His concern for one of the lowliest members of the court displayed his fundamental decency and served to temper the proceedings.

The crew members were called to the stand and their testimony revealed that they had aggressively pressed on to complete the mission notwithstanding an extraordinary series of equipment mishaps and navigational difficulties. They returned to base after take-off due to failure of some of their electronic nav gear but had the initiative and the sense of

responsibility to switch to another aircraft. In the chase to catch up with their squadron, they fixed a malfunctioning heater and improvised a route which allowed them to assume a squadron lead as initially planned. After the confusion caused by the radical maneuvering of the aircraft ahead of them and receiving the order to abandon the original mission, they, according to orders, sought out a target of opportunity and, in spite of the sub-standard performance of their electronics and enemy jamming, dropped their bombs. Unfortunately, the result of their efforts was the destruction of some property in a neutral nation and the death of five Swiss citizens.

As the court martial drew to a close, Sokarl's adroit questioning, especially of the prosecution witnesses, developed an account of a raid gone bad due to poor intelligence and shaky weather briefings, vague and ambiguous orders and policies, and communication and equipment failures. In his histrionic summation, Sokarl wrapped his arms around the two defendants and with teary eyes spoke of "...these innocent young men, the pride of our nation, caught up in the web of relentless fate" and justice demanded that they be exonerated. Sincock and Balides were found not guilty on all counts.

What Happened to the Protagonists?

For the last year and a half of the war, the United States had attempted to mollify the Swiss. On at least a dozen occasions, US bombers and fighters had bombed or strafed Swiss targets. Some of the combat airmen were unconcerned since many maintained a hostility towards the Swiss for what they perceived as a pro-German attitude. But the diplomats and politicians had more nuanced views. No less a personage than General Spaatz, Commander of the USAAF in Europe traveled to Bern to apologize and promise the imposition of policies to prevent further incursions of Swiss air space. Expressions of sympathy were extended by the US ambassador and the Secretary of State and after the war ended, negotiations for reparations

commenced. In October of 1949, an agreement was reached and the US government provided a settlement of just over \$14 million dollars in addition to monies tendered during the war.

Sincock earned a doctorate and went on to chair the education department at Allegheny College. For the rest of his life, he suffered from periodic bouts of remorse for what happened on Mission 251.

Balides was recalled to the Air Force during the Korean War and eventually retired as a colonel.

Granholtm graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in physics, worked for Boeing, and held a number of positions related to aerospace engineering and technology. In 2000, he published a book, *The Day We Bombed Switzerland*, from which many of the details of this essay were taken.

Goldman returned home to upstate New York and became a judge in a family court. He established a reputation for fairness and compassion.

Jimmy Stewart remained in the USAF Reserves, flew his last combat mission in a B-52 in Vietnam and retired as a brigadier general. Stewart's film career encompassed 81 films including the classics *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Winchester 73*, *Rear Window*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*, and *The Shootist*. Stewart's aviation themed films were *No Highways in the Sky*, *Strategic Air Command*, *The Spirit of St. Louis*, *X-15*, *The Flight of the Phoenix*, and *Airport 7*

The Gremlin's Roost, B-24 44-49577, which evidence indicates was flown by Sincock to Zurich, completed eight missions and returned to the United States via Bradley AAF, Windsor Locks, Connecticut. It ended up at the Reconstruction Finance Corporation's aircraft depot, Kingman, Arizona where it was broken up, smelted, and turned into consumer wares. In all over 60,000 aircraft were processed. A B-24 could be purchased for \$13,750!



*B-17s Awaiting Final Disposal at Kingman,
Arizona*

And what of the charismatic and eccentric Max Sarkol. Sarkol returned to New London. In November of 1954, he voluntarily checked into the Institute of Living in Hartford, a facility with an international reputation for diagnosing and treating mental health problems. After several days of examination, the hospital staff could find no specific problems but was asked to stay on for a few day. On Thanksgiving Day, the duty nurse noted him absent.

In a three story building across the street, a tenant noticed a man on his fire escape and questioned him. He replied that he replied: “Looking for the painter.” A few minutes later, police were summoned and found the body of the mortally injured Max Sokarl, a larger than life personality whose complex personality housed talents and flaws sufficient to equip a legion of lawyers.

A Note on Sources

As a rule, *The Coastwatcher* does not publish references for its articles although they are available for the asking. However, research on the incident at Zurich did rely heavily on three documents. The first and most important was Jackson Granholm's book, *The Day We Bombed Switzerland*, published by Airlife in 2000. Dr. Jonathan E. Helmreich authored two papers which were invaluable. The first was his *Bombing of Zurich* and the second was titled *The Diplomacy of Apology: U.S. Bombings of Switzerland during World War II*, both first published in *Aerospace Power Journal*, Summer of 2000. Both are available on the web.

Ms Annette Tison, researcher for the 392nd Bomb Group gave me permission to publish several pictures which appear on their website: www.b24.net and answered a number of questions concerning the crewing and aircraft involved.

LtCol Carl Stidsen, Research Librarian at the John W. Ramsay Research Library, New England Air Museum and Ms Tison participated in a search for details about The Gremlin's Roost, the B-24L-10-FO which we believe was flown by Sincock to Zurich. We discovered almost a dozen aircraft, including at least five B-24s which bore that name.

The 392nd Bombardment Group, Eighth Air Force had two B-24s named *Gremlin's Roost*. The first, 42-50502, a B-24J-401-CF was shot down over Holland on the 6th of February, 1945. The second, B-24L-10-FO, tentatively identified as Sincock's craft, was received by the 392nd on the 20th of February, 1945, flew eight missions, and then carried veterans of the Group back home before being scrapped as previously stated.

TWO LIBERATORS VARIANTS



LB-30 "Diamond Lil"



B-24D "Strawberry Bitch" at USAF Museum