

Missions for America
Semper vigilans!
Semper volans!



The Coastwatcher

Publication of the Thames River Composite Squadron
Connecticut Wing
Civil Air Patrol

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SCHEDULE OF COMING EVENTS

05 NOV-TRCS Meeting
12 NOV-TRCS Meeting-Commander's Call-Blues
19 NOV-TRCS Meeting
26 NOV-TRCS Meeting

CITRUS FRUIT FUNDRAISER

The squadron's annual fund raiser has started. Squadron members who have not received their sales packets should contact LtCol Rocketto.

All orders must be in at the 12 November meeting so there is no time to waste.

Cadets and their parents and senior members should exert a maximum effort in order to make this year's sale successful.

**ALL FRUIT SALE
ORDERS ARE DUE BY
12 NOVEMBER.**

Past Performances

2007-240 cases
2008-229 cases
2009-271 cases
2010-286 cases
2011-293 cases
2012-340 cases



All members are urged to turn in any invoices and receipts which they have at the next meeting. Final sales receipts will be due on 12 November, one week later.

CADET MEETING

29 October, 2013

by

C/SSgt Justin Ketcham

The Squadron used Poquonnock Plains Park as their physical training site.

Hot chocolate and cupcakes were served by C/Amn Michael and Daniel Hollingsworth, and sponsor parent, Mrs. Zimmerman.

A Learn to Lead lesson was presented by C/1stSgt Trotochaud, C/SMSGT VanDevander, and C/1stLt Tine. Cadets engaged in a question and response session and learned the similarities and differences between an expert and a teacher.

Lt. Ray announced that several new cadets will be joining and a cadet officer is expected to transfer into TRCS.

The cadre discussed possible winter activities for the squadron.

SENIOR MEETING

29 October, 2013

A team of seniors discussed plans for the weekend SAREX. TRCS will stage out of Groton and have invited several other squadrons to join with them. The main effort will be run from Danbury.



Are Neilson and Kinch planning the forthcoming sortie or resting after the former sortie?

MAJ JOHN C. FUHRMEISTER PASSES

The Reverend John C. Fuhrmeister, 91, former member of the Thames River Composite Squadron, passed away on 19 October.

Maj Fuhrmeister served as an Air Force meteorologist during both World War II and the Korean Police Action.

He held a graduate degree in physics from the University of Illinois, a degree in theology from the Princeton Theological Seminary, and held a doctorate earned at the Andover-Newton Theological School.

In 1999, while serving as Chaplain for Thames River, he was promoted to major and cited for his service to the squadron.

We are diminished.

TRCS PRACTICES DF SEARCH

On Sunday, a crew from Thames River Composite Squadron practiced direction finding search procedures in 44L, a Cessna 172 which has the distinction of being the platform for the first aerial photos of the collapse of the World Trade Center after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. At that time, the aircraft was attached to the New York Wing.

Maj Keith Neilson, Mission Pilot, LtCol Larry Kinch, Master Observer, and Maj Paul Noniewicz, photographer used varied search methods to successfully locate the emergency locator transmitter and an identification panel.

OCTOBER RIFLE SAFETY AND MARKSMANSHIP DAY

Five cadets from Thames River joined 16 other cadets from Stratford, Danbury, and Meriden at the second CTWG rifle training session on 26 October. TRCS cadets were led by 2dLt David Meers.

The cadets fired fifty rounds over the fifty yard outdoor course at Quaker Hill Rod and Gun Club. Cadet Michael Hollingsworth earned the NRA sharpshooter badge. C/MSgt Matthew Johnstone, C/Amn, David Hollingsworth and Daniel Hollingsworth and C/Basic Chris Jaskiewicz earned the Marksman First Class rating, and C/TSgt John Meers continued to work on his Sharpshooter Bar One level.

LtCol Stephen Rocketto served as Chief Range Instructor and was assisted by Quaker Hill coaches Ryan McKee and Nash Neubauer. LtCol Peter Sanderson from Danbury was Range Safety Officer.

The last event of the year is set for 16 November.

AEROSPACE CURRENT EVENTS

More Jumbos in the News

On the heels of Boeing's announcement to cut back on 747 production, rival Airbus states that it may review the production schedule of its enormous A380, the world's largest commercial passenger jet.

Although Airbus has sold 257 of the super-jumbos, they have received three cancellations this year and no new orders.

Estimates of future orders indicate that in order to keep a production line open, Airbus must build aircraft, at \$400 million dollars apiece, that it could not sell and would have to hold as inventory. Given a two year lead time in ordering certain parts, a management decision must be forthcoming in the near future.



The Vought-Sikorsky VS-44A, Excambian, in pristine restored condition at the New England Air Museum.

AVIATION HISTORY

Cantilever Tails

From time to time, articles in *The Coastwatcher* cause old memories to surface. The memories of three CTWG officers were recently stimulated by references to the Sikorsky VS-44A, the Boeing B-17, and the Consolidated B-24.

Capt Galemba's Story

Capt Chet Galemba of the Stratford Eagles recalls the history of the restoration of the sole surviving VS-44, The Excambian.

The aircraft had been beached at St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands, after a mishap which became prohibitively expensive to repair. LtCol Rocketto remembers seeing it there in the '60s, recognized it for its historic importance, and was infuriated when his colleague who was driving the car refused to stop so that he could indulge his obsession to take another airplane photograph.

The legendary aviator Charlie Blair, the owner, donated it to the Naval Aviation Museum at Pensacola which then transferred it to Connecticut's New England Air Museum. The NEAM, supported by Sikorsky, housed the aircraft in a "temporary" hangar at Bridgeport and for over ten years, 120 volunteers spent almost 200,000 man-hours to restore the aircraft to its former glory. Many of these volunteers were the original craftsmen who first built the plane.

Here is Capt Galemba's commentary on the restoration effort.

A few years ago, when I was an active member of the Connecticut Air and Space Center (C.A.S.C.), I was privileged to have worked with a Joe LoSardo. He was a man who was a part of the crew that originally built the Excambian, Excalibur and Exeter in the 1940 era. What is remarkable about this event is that Joe and several of his associates also spent over eleven years restoring the Excambian at first in Stratford and then at the Bradley Museum. Joe donated over 19,000 hrs. on this project. He also narrated the video provided by the NEAM at the exhibit.

Until he passed away, he continued to serve as a volunteer. It was a privilege and an educational experience knowing him. There are so few left of his era and the experiences of their heyday will soon disappear.



Volunteer Joe LoSardo, CAP's Chet Galemba, and legendary legislator Doc Gunther

LtCol Stidsen's Story

Col Stidsen responded to a *Coastwatcher* picture of a B-24 which is now in the Pima Air Museum. The caption stated that the particular aircraft had been "seconded to the Indian AF. Stidsen expands on that caption..

The real story is that it was one of several hundred lend-leased to the RAF and sent to the CBI. With the end of the War, the US did not want them back, and the RAF had no use for them. So - the Brits basically pushed a bunch of B-24Js back into the jungle and left them to rot, a problem for someone else to take care of.

Fast forward a couple of years, to 1949. The newly independent state of India is looking for equipment for its Air Force, preferably cheap but flyable, and someone remembers the 24s in the jungle. About 20 are recovered (without telling the Brits or the US) and rehabilitated back to airworthy status. The B-24Js spend the next 20 years or so equipping two patrol squadrons of the IAF, doing long-range ASR work over the Indian Ocean. (And deflecting inquiries from all over the world about the existence of their bootleg B-24s, despite repeated sightings around India by outsiders) (the B-24 by then had become a Rara Avis, with only 4 or five known airframes left).

Time passes. In 1968, the remaining B-24J's were retired in favor of Air India L-1049 Super Constellations. At which point the IAF confirms to the outside world the existence of the remaining B-24's and offers them for free - in flyable condition - to any reputable Museum, first-come, first serve, FOB Poona, India, the museums to provide qualified flight crews and pay for all expenses to get the aircraft back to the museums. The RAF Museum, USAF Museum, Canadian National Museum, the nascent Pima Air Museum, March AF Base Museum, Dave Tallichet and Collings Foundation all leaped at the offer. The birds begin coming home.

I was in Tucson, at Davis-Monthan AFB, on a

memorable day in April 1969 when an "extinct" B-24J - with all equipment operable (including turrets) flew out of the history books and landed at DM. I was able to visit it while it was still on the flight line in front of Base Ops the day that it arrived. It was pristine! The Pima Museum did not even have any land of its own yet, so the bird (by now named "Pima Paisano") stayed at DM until 1972 or so until the PAM (later renamed Pima Air & Space Museum - PASM) was able to clear its 100 acre patch of scrub desert south of the base. Over the subsequent years, the B-24 deteriorated badly in the sun and neglect, until it was restored as the "Bungay Buckaroo" and placed inside a display building around 1990-95.



The Indian AF B-24 in outdoor storage at Pima.



The restored B-24 honors two heritages. The port side is Bungay Buckaroo representing the 446th Bombardment Group of the 8th AF stationed near Bungay, England in World War II. The starboard side carries the insignia of No. 6 Squadron, Indian Air Force.



Tallichet's B-24 was the next to last 24 to be released. I first saw his bird (with the Nose art : "Delectable Doris") at the fabled P&W Airshow at Rentschler Field in 1975. Tallichet toured the bird around the U.S. over the next several years, its condition getting worse and worse. Finally an FAA Inspector grounded the bird at Bradley around 1995. I inspected her and she was well and truly trashed inside and out. Whereupon, Tallichet tried to donate it to NEAM (in its trashed and unflyable condition) for a write-off of eight million dollars! NEAM said no. So - after a year or so, she was fixed up enough to fly away. Tallichet eventually sold her to the Fantasy of Flight Museum, where she was restored to display condition and is there to this day.



Above: Delectable Doris at the Pratt & Whitney Airshow. Below: Delectable Doris, now named Joe, at the Fantasy of Flight, Polk City, Florida.



The last B-24 to leave Poona had been salvaged for parts and everything else to support all the earlier B-24 flyaway projects. This was the Bird that the Collings Foundation got. Basically , Collings disassembled her down to component parts (or example replacing most of the rivets, wiring, panels, hydraulics, etc) over the next few years, and she emerged on the Airshow circuit as "All American". around 1989. She has visited CT airports periodically (GON, BDL, HFD, OXF, DXR) , usually every other year, earning her keep as a flying museum and giving "Experience Rides" , Subsequently repainted the "The Dragon and his Tail" and more recently as "Witchcraft" she continues to fly, and is now the last flyable B-24 in the world.



Above: All American taxiing at GON. Below: Witchcraft on final at GON. The aircraft's different color schemes honor three different war theaters in which the B-24 fought. All American flew with the 15th AF in Italy. The Dragon and Its Tail was a Pacific warrior. Witchcraft flew with the 8th AF in the ETO.



Another B-24's which served with the Indian AF

is in England, KN751. The aircraft is a B-24L

which served with No. 6 Maritime Reconnaissance Squadron of the IAF based at Poona.



KN751 was built by Ford at its gigantic Willow Run plant. It was transferred to the RAF under lend-lease and flew combat in SE Asia before its acquisition by the IAF.

Col Herbert's Story

A recent e-mail from Commander Peter Jensen, USCG Auxiliary and former CTWG Commander mentioned that while engaged on a commercial photo mission near Danbury, he noted the EAA B-17, Aluminum Overcast in flight and was able to get a photo of it which he sent to several members of the Wing.



This provoked Col Fred Herbert to recall and unpleasant flight in a B-17 and his experience in the development of one of our first cruise missiles.

Reminds me of how angry I felt when I was transported, in a B-17, from Patrick AFB to Grand Bahama Island for an early 1950s missile launch.

They usually flew me, before dawn of a launch

day, to Grand Bahama in a C-45, a small twin engine transport with about 10 passenger air line type seats. I was the only passenger. One day, I was told that I would be flown in a B-17. I was not pleased. The B-17 was an old bomber, had no air line seats, and there was a full crew of 10 aboard. I had to sit in a small passage way on the floor. I was not a happy camper.

Today, I am glad that I got that B-17 flight. I have hundreds of hours in a B-29 and maybe a little more than two in that B-17.

Attached is a 1953 photo of the all Martin Co. flight crew of "Air Force Zero Two Zero" on the flight line at Patrick AFB. We called the B-29 a Simulated Missile, because we had a Matador Missile Guidance system aboard. See if you can tell which *one is me*----hint, not a grey hair in my head.



The missile guidance system which Col Herbert and his associates were testing was used in the Martin MGM-1 Matador. The early Matador was guided by radio as it was tracked by radar stations. Later versions used a system which utilized ground based microwave transmitters akin to LORAN.

This became the USAF's first cruise missile and was once designated the B-61.



A Matador on display at the Planes of Fame in Chino, California.

THE WORLD SERIES **AN OCTOBER CLASSIC**

World Series fever, the “October Classic,” is once again upon us. Seventy years ago, in 1943, the St. Louis Cardinals were a contender, up against the New York Yankees, the detested rivals of their opponents this year, the Boston Red Sox.

Let us revert back to the thrilling days of yesteryear and recall the first game of another World Series, played in the midst of a World War, and the singular event that occurred in Yankee Stadium on October 5th, 1943.

The story, which was first published in the August/September, 1993 issue of Smithsonian's *Air&Space Magazine*, appears below by permission of the author.

OUTFIELD FLY

by
Hap Rocketto

The 1943 World Series had all the hallmarks of a classic. In a rematch of the previous year's antagonists, the St. Louis Cardinals would attempt to repeat their resounding win over the New York Yankees. The 1942 Cardinals had not been given much of a chance against the New York powerhouse, but with the batting of rookie Stan Musial and the pitching of Johnny Beazley they

defeated a team that had won six league championships in seven years.

But the nation's war effort was gobbling up manpower at a prodigious rate. No one knew who might be playing ball in 1944, or if there would even be a 1944 season. It looked as if this might be the last great series for the duration of the war, which is why the first game drew over 68,000 fans to Yankee Stadium.

As the teams took batting practice and the pitchers warmed up, four Army Air Forces B-17 bombers were droning toward New York City on their way to combat bases in England. At the navigator's station of *Thru Hel'en Highwater* [42-39785], sat my uncle, Second Lieutenant Harold Rocketto of Brooklyn. Second Lieutenant Jack Watson was the pilot; the other bombers were piloted by Second Lieutenants Robert Sheets, Elmer Young, and Joseph Wheeler.



Jack Watson Crew

(Back L-R) 2Lt Jack W. Watson (P), 2Lt John C. Doty, Jr. (CP)(POW), 2Lt Harold J. Rocketto (N)(KIA), 2Lt Vance Colvin(B)(KIA)

(Front L-R) Sgt William H. Fussner (RWG)(KIA), Sgt Fred H. Booth(BTG)(KIA), Sgt William H. Fussner (RWG)(KIA), Sgt Harry Romaniec (RO)(POW), Sgt Eugene R. Stewart (LWG)(POW), Sgt Samuel J. Rowland (E)(KIA)

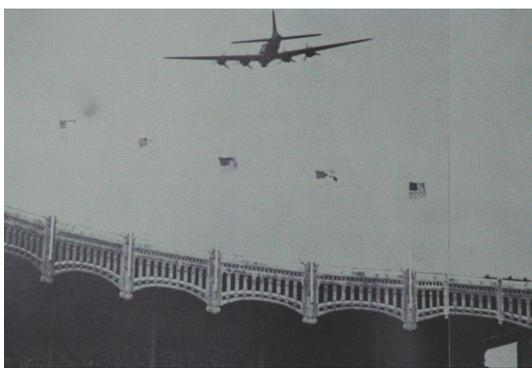
Walla Walla, WA, 1943

As Rocketto, a Brooklyn Dodgers fan, scanned the landscape trying to pick out boyhood haunts in the Bensonhurst section, the idle chatter on the intercom turned to the World Series. No one is sure what sparked the next move. Perhaps it was Rocketto's desire to seek revenge against the

Yankees for their 1941 victory over the Dodgers. Then again, perhaps it was just the high spirits of young men facing a dangerous future. Whatever the reason, the fans at Yankee Stadium were about to be treated to an impromptu demonstration of the nation's bomber force.

As the aircraft crossed the Hudson River, the pilots headed for the Bronx and put the formation into a shallow dive. Picking up speed, the bombers thundered over Yankee Stadium in a low pass from home plate to center field. After they climbed out the B-17s wheeled about and circled the field while Watson returned for an encore. He cleared the upper-deck flagpoles by a mere 25 feet, prompting the Associated Press to later report that "an Army bomber roared over Yankee Stadium so low that Slat's Martin could have fielded it." Watson then rejoined the formation and headed east.

"We knew we were heading for a combat zone and dropping in on the World Series seemed like a good idea at the time," Wheeler told a reporter months later. "The announcers must have thought it was part of the show because after we went over the first time we could hear them on the plane radio talking about the big Air Force review. We figured they were enjoying it so we turned around and came over a second time. We thought nothing about it until later when we found we had caused a sensation."



B-17 Departs Yankee Stadium Over Outfield Facade

New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, a World War I Army pilot, was watching as the bombers swooped overhead. La Guardia initially appreciated the panache of the young men, but admiration quickly gave way to his greater duty as

mayor. Outraged, he burned up the phone lines to the Army Air Forces brass. "That pilot should be properly disciplined, endangering the lives of the citizenry of New York in that manner," he fumed.

When they landed at Presque Isle Airfield in Maine, Watson and the three other pilots were confined to quarters while court martial proceedings were undertaken. They were released a few days later when the Army realized it was foolish to keep four badly needed aircraft and crews out of combat because of a youthful indiscretion. "Besides," a general told Watson, "you and your crew will probably be killed anyway."

Five days after the buzzing brouhaha the four aircraft continued their journey to England, each pilot's military record heavier by a letter of reprimand and his wallet lighter by a \$75 fine - no small sum to a second lieutenant back then.

Because of wartime news restrictions so tight that sports announcers were forbidden to comment on the weather lest the enemy pick up valuable intelligence, the buzzing incident went almost entirely unreported. The names of the crews were unknown to all but the authorities until three months later.

January 11, 1944, was one of the costliest days of air combat in history. Some 60 U.S. bombers were destroyed and more than 600 airmen were killed, wounded, or reported missing. On that terrible day, Watson, flying with the 303rd Bomb Group, single-handedly returned his badly shot-up and burning bomber to England. In a radio interview he brought up the stadium incident by voicing hope that the mayor of New York was not still sore at him. After hearing the interview, LaGuardia sent Watson a message:

"All is forgiven. Congratulations. I hope you never run out of altitude. Happy landings. We'll be seeing you soon."

Watson replied:

"Thank you, Mr. Mayor, and it can't be too soon for me." Watson replied, then added, "We'd sort of like to go back together some day and drop in on the Rose Bowl game."