
CAA Chapter 32 News

The official publication of Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 32 - St. Louis, MO (Jim Bower, Editor)

September, 2021



**Fly with our friend Ron Burnett on his journey to the annual
Antique Airplane Fly-In.**

**WE HOPE TO SEE ALL OF YOU AT THE SEPTEMBER MEETING! 10:00 AM SEPTEMBER 18TH AT
THE ARC. MASKS ARE NOT REQUIRED IF YOU'VE BEEN VACCINATED, BUT WE'RE STILL
PRACTICING SOCIAL DISTANCING.**

Newsletter Contributions and Deadlines

Anyone wishing to submit articles, advertisements, rants, etc. to the newsletter should send them to your friendly editor on or before the Saturday ahead of the scheduled meeting. Send contributions to newsletter@caa32.org.



President's Corner

by Bill Doherty

Meanwhile EAA is launching AeroEducate, which is a self-guided online program based on a STEM format. The beta version is available at AeroEducate.org now if you want to take a look at it. Again, another option for the question of what's next after Young Eagles.

October also means St. Charles Regional Airport (KSET) will have its annual Open House on Saturday, October 30. Chapter 32 will have our food booth set up to provide meals for the event and to be a major fundraiser for the chapter. I plan on a menu of hamburgers, cheeseburgers, hot dogs, brats, and chips along with dessert of pumpkin pie. We'll also sell our usual assortment of soft drinks, water, and hot chocolate. We'll certainly need lots of volunteers for this event. We have a great vantage point to watch the pumpkin drop put on by St. Charles Flying Service. The highlight, if you haven't seen this is the CAF B-25 and TBM attack runs with lots of pumpkins being turned into mush out in the infield. We just handle the food sales for the day. Hence the pumpkin pies.

And lastly for October we'll have elections for two of the officers and two board members. The candidates for office include:

For Chapter Vice President: Jim Hall

For Treasurer: Bob Murray

Nominations from the floor are open during the September meeting. We still need 2 candidates/volunteers to serve on the Board of Directors. We'll plan on a Board meeting in November.

EAA has restarted the Chapter Leadership Academy which is the in-person workshop for any leadership position in the chapter. Dave Doherty and I attended one in January of 2010 as we began our leadership of the chapter. It was and still is enormously beneficial. If there's space available, I plan to attend the January academy again. This is a two-day workshop and accommodations are in the EAA lodge. It's a great learning environment and a great opportunity to meet leaders from other chapters as well as the HQ staff.

Well, we just keep steaming along with our Young Eagle events this year. It seems like they're continuing to grow in numbers of Young Eagles flown. This past Saturday Chapter 32 flew 62 kids! It was a little bumpy aloft, but everything went fine. As the winds shifted to the west, the pilots switched to runway 27 at KSET. It's great to see so many young faces wearing grins from their first flight.

Coming up in October we have another big month of activities. We're going to return to Creve Coeur Airport (IHO) for our Young Eagle event on Saturday, October 9. This will be in conjunction with the Gateway Youth Aeronautical Foundation. We'll have our rally as usual, while they'll have lots of additional activities to captivate the interest of the kids, teens, and their families. They'll have their F-4 cockpit ready to go along with some really nice simulator workstations among other activities. Of course, we want the Young Eagles to continue their interest in aviation beyond just that first flight or merit badge. The Gateway Youth Aeronautical Foundation is just one of many options for what's next and provides local depth of aviation opportunities to explore.

It's also great to see multiple entities forming to work together and provide a broad scope of activities. Working together minimizes duplication of efforts and benefits all the participants and organizations. We all want young people to expand their interest and participation in the aviation community, hopefully joining one or more of our organizations along the way. We happily welcome them to our family.

Most memorable to me was the opportunity to sit one on one with EAA #1, Paul Poberezny in front of a roaring fireplace in the main lodge and just casually chit chat with him. Audrey was there too. Great memories.

Also included is a special tour of the AirVenture Museum. It's definitely worth the trip, even in the winter.

As has been mentioned previously, we do still have some ARC improvement projects to work on. Most noticeable of these is the sign out front. I want to form a work group to redesign the sign and rebuild it, so it doesn't look like it went through a couple floods. It's constructed with metal on either side so we could repaint it, preferably with our chapter logo and/or the heritage EAA logo. (I'm not a big fan of the "swoosh" logo, personally.) Or we could come up with some other ideas to make it more attention getting, like having the logo part cut out and backlit internally. Let's get creative with it, within reason and cost of course.

The exterior paint needs attention too. Some of the blue on the garage doors is peeling away and the entry doors need to be repainted along with the flagpole base and possibly some of the guttering. It's our chapter home so we need to take care of it with pride. Volunteers needed.

And I haven't forgotten about palletizing the large items in the ARC. We have pallets to work with and I can get more if needed. Eventually the river is going to come at us again and having things palletized will make bugging out much easier.

This winter we can also work on building some Adirondack chairs too, one of which can go to AirVenture in the Blue Barn. From what I've seen other chapters do, we could incorporate our chapter logo in the chair back by shaping it in the curve of the Gateway Arch and creating the Spirit of St. Louis in the middle. Anybody skilled at woodcarving?

Don't forget the chapter directional sign to go in front of the Blue Barn as well. I think this also needs some form of our logo, bearing, and nautical distance. Maybe one for here as well with the bearing and distance to KOSH. Just a thought...

That's all I have for this month. Here's a link to the chapter video if you want more information from Charlie Becker.

<https://www.eaa.org/videos/chapters#.YT-Un84zpDk.link>

I'll see you at the ARC or maybe around the pattern! Until then stay vigilant and fly safe!

***Blue Skies!
Bill Doherty,
President
EAA Spirit of St. Louis Chapter 32***

August Meeting Minutes

Dave Deweese



August's meeting began with the Pledge, Bill Doherty presiding.

New members: Jennifer and son Ben are visiting after a YE flight, they're national members who have not yet attended a chapter meeting.

Dave Zilz is attending his first chapter meeting.

James Braley works at Boeing and is thinking about building an airplane.

Joe Davenport was a jet mechanic in the military, flew FAC in Viet Nam, also military helicopters. He's in Cottleville off Knaust road and has some workspace available: if you'd like to trade knowledge and expertise for square footage contact Joe.

AirVenture was a big success: 608,000 attendance at the gate. The chapter campsite was full. Bill and Jim Hall got hold of all the chapter correspondence - actual mails sent to HQ. Also checked out the Explorer tent with Andrew Mallek. They dodged a big storm: about 35 knots at the airport, but Ripon recorded around 100. A number of members spent the evening in the theater.

Note that our meeting is a week late: last week was the memorial service for Gale Derosier, a number of us attended.

The river's at 15.98 feet: holding level.

Don gave the treasurer's report including checking, savings, and Ray Foundation account balances.

Chris Ward gave the Ray Foundation report: one of our candidates (Vasili) is getting his student pilot certificate today.

Rick reported on our recent Young Eagles event. So far this year we've flown 176 kids. We're qualified for two slots for advanced air academy. John and son Isaac (from St. Peters) went to Oshkosh this year, both are going through Sporty's ground school. John's stepdad (Larry Fruits) was in a partnership with George Stephenson in the Cessna 172, also an EAA32 member. Isaac is one of our potentials for air academy. Rick asks where we'll hold our October event: we could go to 1H0. Jim notes that there's an Open House there the first weekend of October; Bill recalls the crowd and traffic we had at a previous event. Carmelo (hosting our last 1H0 visit), was at our last event and posted pictures on his blog. "Aeroexperience"

Jim Hall says that Boeing has offered to sponsor our Explorer Scout group, Andrew Mallek is in contact with them. They're planning the recharter for early fall. EAA32 is still a sponsoring organization, they're talking with Carmelo around including his group as well. There's a program called "Build A Plane" that gets donations of aircraft and sends them to groups like our explorer post. Jim's got plans of the Adirondack chairs if you're interested.

Fundraising: Ron Burnett has food cards. There's a cost involved with physical Dierberg's cards, there are some advantages to the eScrip program.

Last month we formed an officer nominating committee for November's elections: Vice President and Treasurer. Candidates announced in September.

Bob has contacted All Occasion banquet center, the second Saturday is booked, Friday and Sunday are available. He's also contacted Al Stix at Creve Coeur but hasn't heard back yet. The latter is free, the former requires a \$500 non-refundable deposit: a concern with potential COVID cancellations. Motion made and seconded to hold the event at 1H0, pending approval from the airport. Note that they have to have an employee there, so it's costing them a little, Jim Hahn suggests a donation to the museum.

With Gale's passing we're down to one Technical Counselor, if you're interested in being one yourself please contact Bill.

Chris is going to Zenith next week to pick up landing gear for his 750, installing it Thursday or Friday.

Art and Rusty have the wings mounted, hopefully for the last time. They're running down punch list items before calling a tech advisor. Currently working on seats and 5-point harnesses. Note that Santa and the Mrs. donated more lights which are now installed.

Mr. Clark will have his airplane at KSET next week and in the hangar.

The RV-6A group got the windshield installed this week: Joe Sargent helped with the fiberglass work. They're doing some fitting and are close to sending out parts for painting. (West County Auto Body).

Jim Hann brought in a control panel out of a Starduster: a new project. It's in a trailer out at Creve Coeur - primarily an assembly and paint project. They need help unloading on Monday morning. His project partner's plan is to fly it to Oshkosh in 2023.

Remember the SET airport open house, 10/30: we'll need volunteers. We'd like to do a pancake breakfast/fly-in early 2022.

No movie this month, we'll try in September.

Newsletter trivia answer: our original newsletter name was Sport Wings.

Any suggestions for meeting speakers and workshops are welcome.

Rick May reminded us of the Young Eagles workshops, similar in some ways to ground school. We'll need people to teach various modules. Joe asked if we can see who took advantage of the Sporty's ground school curriculum: those might be good candidates for students. Ron notes that the course is \$199 at Oshkosh, \$249 otherwise. Note our next YE event is on 9/11.

We presented some artwork to Rick as thanks for his work, Chris Hinote will be by later to take him for a sure-enough seaplane ride.

The CAF will resume the hangar dance this year, tickets are \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door.

We're raffling off a sheet metal nibbler: \$1 a shot, \$5 for 6.



Blue Skies and Smooth Air, Gale

Dave Deweese

A FAMILIAR FACE FROM THE AIRPLANE CLUB PASSED AWAY LAST WEEK: "GONE WEST", AS WE LIKE TO SAY. WE LAST HUNG OUT IN JULY, WHEN THE B-25 OUR NATIONAL



ORGANIZATION OPERATES LANDED AT SPIRIT IN CHESTER FIELD. THAT WAS A GOOD DAY. LATER THAT MONTH HE ATTENDED AN AVIATION-THEMED GATHERING AND WENT TO THE HOSPITAL AFTERWARDS. IT WASN'T COVID-RELATED, SO MAYBE THE EXCITEMENT AND FUN OF SUCH AN EVENT WAS A THING WHICH TRIGGERED SOMETHING ELSE. LOSS IS SAD, BUT TO KNOW HE WAS ENJOYING LIFE RIGHT UP UNTIL THE END, WELL, I HOPE I'M SO LUCKY. NO REAL POINT HERE OUTSIDE THE URGE TO SAY SOMETHING.



SO LONG, GALE.

Editor's Corner

Goodbye, my friend

Gale Derosier was a great friend and I am going to miss him. I can't count how many times over the years he was there to help the Chapter in general and me in particular.

Over the years, I interacted with him on many occasions, mostly social; some business. He congratulated me at the Christmas party when I had secured permission to start my RV-6A project. He signed off several in-process inspections as my technical counselor, and volunteered his truck, trailer, and muscles to help me move it to the ARC for final assembly.

Gale used to have a Mustang II aircraft powered by a Chevy V-6 engine. I got a ride in it once...sort of. We blasted off down the runway, but he realized we weren't going to fly (could it have been my fat butt?), and stood on the brakes. It turned out that even though we were using runway 18, the wind was favoring 36. Oops. Well, no harm done except for a blown brake line.

Many times I needed his help, and he was there. So long, Gale...



Gale is working while 4 guys supervise.



"We made it!"



Learning as we Go

“LODA

Letter of Deviation Authority
For Flight Instruction and Compensation
Or a FREE Flight?”

mr. bill



Well, I see that the **EXPERIMENTAL** community did not jump on the LODA-Letter of Deviation Authority to be able to fly their **EXPERIMENTAL** airplanes **IN A FLIGHT INSTRUCTION APPLICATION**. Though some U.S. Senators are trying to **FIX** this knee jerk reaction of the FAA, remember they are the FAA and **“THINGS”** can be troublesome if they come and wanta play with you on a **RAMP CHECK!** So, click on this hyperlink and just fill out the needed info and you will have a piece of e-mail and/or **PAPER PERMISSION** that will cover your **EXPERIMENTAL AIRCRAFT**.

[Letter of Deviation Authority \(LODA\) Template Instructions - FAA](#)

It is better to have the LODA than not have it and it is an “easy-peasy” thing to get. I know it says Flight Instruction and Compensation, but someone in the FAA determined that a “FREE FLIGHT” has some sort of “Compensation” attached to it now, and it **NOW** requires a LODA. So, cover your tail feathers!

We all remember when Mr. Robert “Bob” Hoover was challenged with his situation of jumping thru a lot of hoops and **LEGAL ISSUES** just because some FAA man did not like what he was doing in airplanes.

LIGHT AIRPLANE “ROAD TRIP”

My summer adventures this year included a visit to an airplane **FOR SALE** in Louisiana that an 86-year-old man could no longer get in and out of the fuselage. It was built by a well-known modeler in California that

saw the Volksplane -1 plans and decided to try his hand at building a **REAL** airplane in 1972.

Twenty years ago, I saw this airplane **FOR SALE** somewhere and marveled at the **CRAFTMANSHIP!**

When I realized it was 240 miles from my DFW hideaway and it was only 1:00 pm in the afternoon on a Sunday, I said **“ROAD TRIP!”** The seller, a retired 86-year-old Corporate Pilot, Captain Bill Long, was excited that I was driving to Louisiana to see him and the plane. He wanted someone to preserve the Legacy of this Volksplane 1.

The story goes that the original builder passed away and his son took the RC model of the VP-1 and pawned it at the local shop in California for drug money. Bill Long bought the **BIG VP-1** airplane and brought it to Texas. He learned about an airpark across the lake in Louisiana and that started his love affair with this airplane and his airpark.

After 20 years though Captain Long could no longer exit the fuselage of the airframe so he put the airplane up **FOR SALE**.

So, on my big airplane layover I took out my iPhone with the Foreflight application, and I planned the 512-statue mile trip from Mansfield, Louisiana to Saint Charles, Smartt Field, in Missouri.

My main goal was to have fuel stops every 1 hour and 30 minutes to use half of my 3:00 hour total fuel supply. The tank would only be half empty at each landing. That was my **SAFETY OUTLET** for the flight time over the many forested areas on this flight.



All photos from mr. bill's article

The trip was postponed for several weeks due to the Big Airplane Company not having enough flights (no first officers to pilot da jets) and canceling the last two flights down to DFW each day for five days in a row from St. Louis, MO.

When the day arrived, I did make it out, but while climbing out of St. Louis Lambert Airport in the flight deck jumpseat of an Airbus 320, I looked down and could NOT see the ground!

“What is going on,” I asked? I did not realize that the fires in California and in Canada were dropping visibilities in the Midwest to 3 to 5 miles with all the smoke from their forest fires. We are still having awesome sunsets because of those forest fires.

So, the Flight Plan for the trip to Smartt Field was planned with an airport stop every 90 miles up the road. And speaking of roads, there are several legs of this trip that is nothing but forest. And I am not talking about GUMP! For this flight I will need to stay over a highway and follow the highway instead of straight line flying from point to point.

WHAT IS MY **SAFETY OUT** FOR THESE LEGS?

At the first fuel stop I took on 4.7 gallons for my 1:36 flight and traveled 100 miles. I knew I had a strong headwind BUT there were FORECASTED to diminish as the day went on.



**Walnut Ridge, Arkansas fuel stop
The B-737 was a restaurant on the airport**

The interesting part of the trip was going to be from KARG Walnut Ridge, Arkansas to Farmington, Missouri. The flight is over 120 statute miles and at 75 miles per hour, that should take about 1:36 minutes. BUT, the flight is over densely forested areas and I wanted to stay over Highway 67.

WHAT WILL BE MY **SAFETY OUTLET?**

Take a look at this planned leg from Walnut Ridge, AR to Farmington, Missouri. Only 120 statute miles. The weather briefer said, “I would have a tail wind on that leg.” Well, I did NOT. So SAFETY FIRST.....



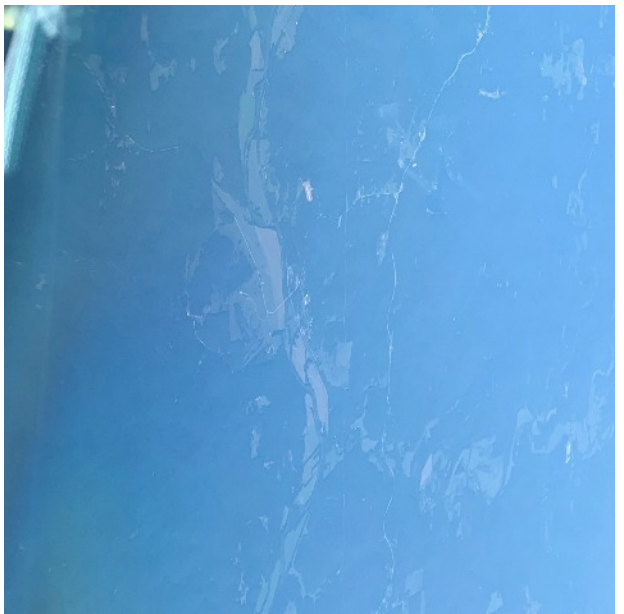
So, to stay IFR- I FOLLOW ROADS (or flying OVER roads when flying behind a 1600VW, 53 horsepower engine) I decided to fly (divert) to KPOF-Poplar Bluff Regional Business Airport AFTER AN HOUR OF FLYING, to fill the fuel tank incase...of headwinds, and to give me another 60 minutes of flight time, and to ensure I had the best situation for a flight following highway 67 into Farmington, Missouri.

As you can see the road is NOT straight and there is thick forest to the left and the right of the highway.

SAFETY OUTLET- Having taken on 2.9 gallons of fuel (FULL TANK) gave me another 60 minutes of flight time to cover the meandering road of Highway 67.

A good groundspeed check was to watch the trucks on the highway which I figured had a “ground-speed” of at least 80 miles per hour. With no wind now I was doing 80 miles an hour in the air.

A quick distance/time check showed that I would have made it to Farmington, MO 6 minutes late (2:06 INTO MY 3:00 HOUR FUEL SUPPLY without the fuel stop) **BUT** by stopping in Popular Bluff Regional Business Airport (KPOF) I assured myself **60 MORE MINUTES** of flying over the top of Highway 67 which was the SAFEST route I could take. Remember, FUEL IS BRAINS!



Here is what that area around Hwy 67 North of Walnut Ridge, Arkansas looks like from the B-737 and 37,000 feet. The thin white line is the Highway. Not too many places to land SAFELY around there.



So, with a full tank of fuel **(NOTICE THE FLOAT FUEL GAUGE WIRE STICKING UP OUT OF THE TANK?)**

and a close watch on the flight timer I was able to follow Hwy 67 into Farmington for my last fuel stop.

Also, that TAIL-WIND finally did show up and was helping push me

IFR- I Follow Roads Hwy 67

and the VP-1 to 100 mph over the ground. The **SAFETY OUTLET** is for when the tailwind does NOT show up or it remains a headwind.

After a quick refueling in Farmington, MO it was now a race to land, within 30 minutes **AFTER** Civil Sunset. The VP-1 is mighty, but it has no electrical system and has no navigational lights.

Again, the **SAFETY OUTLET** was to land at Creve Coeur, MO Airport in case the daylight was lost and time ran out.



Take off at 0830 and land 1945 hours! Safe and tired in the Smartt Field Hangar

Well, I DID make the airport with 15 minutes to spare and while turning into the pattern at Smartt Field, KSET, my destination, and calling my traffic advisory position, a Cessna C-172 pilot was in the traffic pattern called me telling me to turn on my lights. Brother, I do not have any navigational or landing lights.

There was plenty of sunlight rays available for my approach and landing BEFORE 30 minutes past sunset.

What a GREAT DAY! 518 “straight line” miles with 6 stops. One as a very important **SAFETY OUTLET** stop to assure there was plenty of FUEL (a 9-gallon fuel tank with a 3.0 gallon per hour burn) to give me options if things went sideways.

Handwritten flight log on lined paper. At the top, it says "445nm". Below is a grid of numbers:

4.7	82	94.5m
56	72	83
47	39	44
29	88	101
30	100	115
31	70	81

Below the grid, it says "4510 NM" and "578". At the bottom left, it says "24 gal" and "21.5 miles/gallon".

All total: 8:12 of flying. Without a Co-Pilot, or a Flight Attendant, or an Autopilot, or an engine electrical starter, (yep, had to hand prop the engine to life,) or a lavatory! It was a BLAST and some cool, Old-School Flying.

BIG AIRPLANE JOB

Well things at the day job have settled down now that the kids are back in school. The airplanes are not totally full, but we are making money.

Also, the hiring BOOM is going full blast right now and really shows no end in sight.

Q? On September 09, 1971, what airplane received its Type Certificate from the FAA?

A: On this date the Cessna Citation 500 was awarded its type certificate.

Q? How many jets has this manufacturer produce?

A: 7,831 versions of the Citations have been delivered. The first one had a price tag of \$695,000.



September Young Eagle Rally

Rick May



This past Saturday we held our September Young Eagles Rally. In checking the forecast previous to the day, it appeared all would be great, high ceilings mild temperatures, low humidity maybe a little breezy (10 mph SSW) but we can do this. Until pilots, on arrival, reported up to 30-mile head winds and shall we say light to heavy chop. Needless to say, a big thank you to all our pilots for the day. David Brickhaus, Ron Burnett, Jim Hann, Bob Murray, Jeff Stephenson, Joe Sargent and Louis Pudor, all kept us flying for the kids. Speaking of which, how about 62 Young Eagle flights for the day? That added to our previous tally for the year and puts us at (by my numbers) 238 YTD with another event yet to come. If you know your chapter pilots to planes, of the 7 names 5 of them are 2 seats each. Put that number into the number of flights, and it's pretty clear, everyone had a very busy and a little longer than normal day. In addition to the kids, it appeared every time I looked to the grass there was 20 – 30 adults out under the pop-ups taking in the nice weather and watching airplanes. While really busy I think our guests and our volunteers all had a pretty great day as usual. A big thanks also to all our ground crew members as well: some 15 of you. Everyone really makes our guests feel so welcome and shares all you know about aviation with anyone who has questions. If you have not had a chance to come out to any of our events this year believe me you owe it to yourself to come see what this is all about and how enjoyable the day can be. Let me give you one example of something that happened Saturday.

Lauren Peca, a high school sophomore and her father, Bob showed up Saturday. As they came in, I somewhat recognized them and was able to greet them. They had previously been at a chapter meeting and perhaps she had a previous Young Eagle flight. Bob stated that he and his daughter wanted to join the chapter and further stated that they wanted to come out and see if they could participate, perhaps she could fly, and what they could do to help. Further she had taken about 4 hours of flight training and was going to do try some stalls tomorrow with her instructor in a C-172, she would prefer to

fly in something other than a 172. She went up in the RV12. Wanting to help I suggested she sell some refreshments and perhaps Bob would like to hang around with Dave Deweese and see what ground crew is all about. So, 3 hours later Lauren had her flight stating “can I do something else other than sell food next month” and Bob was handling ground crew pretty much on his own. By the end of the day, they had both joined the chapter, got some new t-shirts and were ready to learn all about aviation and EAA. Make sure you say hi to them at the next meeting. Promoting General Aviation that's what its all about.

Next and last Young Eagle event for chapter #32 in 2021 is scheduled for October 9th and will probably be held at Creve Coeur airport. More to come on that shortly.

See you at the ARC Saturday. Gentle Tail Winds (at least ½ the time) Rick



All Young Eagle photos on these pages courtesy of Lisa Miano



Antique Fly-In

Ron Burnett

Years ago chapter member Ron Wright invited me to go to the annual Antique Fly in near Ottumwa, IA and I have not missed a year since. Decided to be a lifetime member Weather permitting, I fly my 1947 Luscombe



there, arriving Thursday and departing Saturday after the Luscombe meeting. I usually spend the two nights camping under the wing.

Weather made plans more difficult this year with 100% chance of rain there moving in Friday afternoon and all day Saturday. Okay, I'll fly up Thursday and depart noon Friday. Plane loaded, greeted hangar gecko goodbye, strapped in, oh crud, who left the switches on?? Could prop it but no electric or radio. Gear out, remove rear baggage panel, take battery to Wholesale for rejuvenation.



By Sunday am storms had passed, and this time it is a go.

Follow purple line on iPad, 1:48 at 2500 feet, NW winds so not beneficial to go higher. Nice shot of gravel pit out the window and sure enough, there is the twin cross picks on the map. Later, crossing a railroad track, with two ties rather than the single, and sure enough, a long choo choo, headed to...Chicago?



No radio there, expect to land north, sure enough, oh wait, where are all the planes? Only about 50 rather than 200 plus, Oh yes, ... landing,

Encoupe used as windsock pointed North, so downwind, mind the 350 AGL tower near base turn, over the bean field, green flag waving by traffic volunteer, do it good as there are dozens of critics seated watching, kerplunk, not too bad. Taxi past the Stearmans and to the modern section where the 1930s to 1960s planes are parked.

Hyvee serves hot food, always good. Buy some rare paperback books, some sectionals from the 1960s, and a couple tee shirts. Get 16.5 gallons of fuel and return home. A nice day and as the saying goes, a mile, generally less, of runway will take you anywhere. Flight time 3.4 or round trip drive, 8 plus hours. Aren't we blessed as pilots?



“the greatest fighter pilot story of WWII” held off 30 German fighters from attacking a squadron of B-17 bombers for over half an hour

From “War History Online”

By Jack Beckett



During WWII, he single-handedly protected a bomber squadron against German planes... even when he ran out of ammo. They called him the “One Man Airforce” after that.

James Howell Howard was born on April 13, 1913, in Canton (now Guangzhou), China. His parents were doctors who expected their son to enter the medical profession, as well. But it wasn't to be.

They moved back to America when he was 14, which wasn't easy for him. Other kids called him “China” and asked if he really was an American. Perhaps that's what made him do what he did next.

For during his senior year in college, he decided that medicine was no longer his thing – the military was. So after graduation, he signed up to learn naval aviation.

Of the 140 other applicants who tried, he was one of 15 who made it – becoming Navy Seaman Second Class. By 1938, he was in Class 109-C at the Naval Training Station in Pensacola. There he became an Aviation Cadet in the Naval Reserve... but not for long.

His first assignment was aboard the USS Wasp, with the Fighting Squadron Seven (VF-7). The year after that, he was with another ship learning to fly yet another plane. It went on like this till 1941 when his life would again take a different turn.

The Navy offered him a regular commission – a rare honor, and at the time, given to only one other

ensign. But Howard refused. He wanted to go back to China.

America was unhappy with the Japanese occupation of China, but was determined to remain neutral. At least officially. Solution? A secret group of fighters taken from different branches of the US military.

Except that they couldn't go to China. Too obvious. They went to Burma, instead... right across the Chinese border. And that's how Howard ended up joining the American Volunteer Group with the Flying Tigers.

Based at the Kyedaw Airdrome outside the town of Toungoo, he was put in the Second Pursuit Squadron. Then Pearl Harbor happened, so many returned to the US.

But Howard stayed to protect the Chinese and Burmese. He was part of the joint US-British operation that destroyed the Japanese advance on Rangoon on December 25, 1941. The following year on January 3, he was one of four pilots who attacked the Japanese airdrome at Tak, Thailand as they were preparing another attack on Burma.

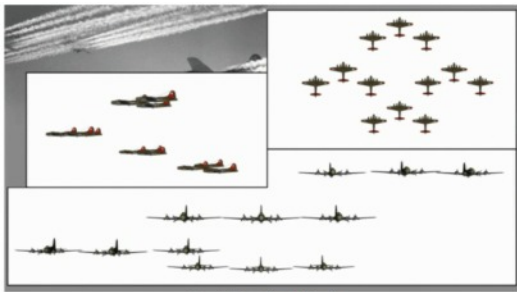
The Flying Tigers were disbanded on July 4 because America needed all its men. Having shot down six Japanese planes in 56 missions, Howard became an ace. Back in the US, he joined the US Army Air Forces as a commissioned captain with the rank of major and command of the 356th Fighter Squadron in the 354th Fighter Group.

Howard got a P-51 Mustang, complete with his personal emblem – Ding Hao! (“very good” in Mandarin). Based in Britain, he had the honor of joining the longest fighter trip to Kiel, Germany on December 11, 1943 – setting a record.

On January 11, 1944 he set another – one that would put him in the history books. His squadron was escorting a group of bombers tasked with hitting the German town of Oschersleben because of its airplane factory – the AGO Flugzeugwerke.

German planes met them, so Howard dispatched his fighters as best he could. The bombers were built for carrying heavy payloads, not aerial gymnastics, so they were particularly vulnerable. And that’s where the Mustangs came in.

Howard didn’t remember much about the first skirmish, only that he got separated from his squadron. Flying back up to bomber altitude, he saw a combat box (attack formation) of about 20 bombers under fire from six fighters.



Combat box. Photo Credit.

So he shot at one plane... hit it and dove after to make sure it was out of commission. It blew up on the snow-covered ground as Howard banked upward for more.

Just before he reached the bombers, a Focke-Wulf Fw 190-A3 flew beneath him. Howard fired... and hit! The pilot ejected, almost hitting the Ding Hao! with its canopy. The former Flying Tiger zoomed back toward the bombers when a Messerschmitt 109 flew beneath him several hundred yards ahead.

The Me-109 slowed, hoping Howard’s momentum would carry him forward so he could be shot from behind. But the American knew that trick, so he also slowed down to keep the German ahead of him. The

enemy responded by going into a dive. Howard fired... and hit again!

No time to see if the plane crashed, because a Mustang and another Me-109 were zooming his way. The American saw Howard and dove. The German did, too, not seeing Howard – who fired. Howard didn’t know if he hit the target because more German planes were attacking the bombers.

Reaching them, he hit a Messerschmitt Bf 110, which flipped over and trailed smoke before moving out of sight. Howard didn’t claim this as a kill, though some of the bomber crews he was protecting swear they saw it crash.

Zooming toward another bomber squadron, he saw a Messerschmitt weaving among the bombers to avoid getting hit. Howard stayed outside the formation and waited till the German zagged out... and fired. Another hit!

Howard later claimed that, “I never did see thirty or forty of those planes all at once the way the bomber people tell it. I’d see one, give it a squirt, and go up again.”

He shot another German plane, which dove in a spiral. Howard followed and emptied his last bullets into the enemy, then zoomed back up to meet a Dornier 217 aiming at a bomber. Howard flew above the plane and dove. The Dornier did the same, probably wondering why it wasn’t being riddled with bullets.

Brigadier General Robert F. Travis, head of the bomber formation, said, “For sheer determination and guts, it was the greatest exhibition I’ve ever seen. It was a case of one lone American against what seemed to be the entire Luftwaffe. He was all over the wing, across and around it. They can’t give that boy a big enough award.”

So they gave him a Medal of Honor – the only fighter pilot in the European Theater to get one. They also made him a Brigadier General.

But he was running out of ammo. So he used Ding Hao! to scare them off, using the kamikaze tactics he saw over Burma and China.

As Howard put it, “I was quite busy in a constant merry-go-round... presenting a good enough bluff for them to break off and dive away.”

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