

February 2007

Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 33

A monthly publication of the Dr. Alexander M. Lippisch Chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

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Spitfires, Thunderbolts, and Warm Beer By Armin Jacobs

Written by Philip D. Caine, the book begins in June, 1940. The British were forced off the mainland of Europe at Dunkirk. Holland, Belgium and France had been overrun by Hitler's Blitzkrieg. Hitler was preparing to invade England. Hitler knew he had to have control of the air over the English Channel. Germany at this time had 2500 planes and England had 1500 planes. The British lost 400 or 1/2 of their fighter pilots during the 3 month period of August, September, and October of 1940.

This air campaign prompted Prime Minister Churchill to make his often quoted statement, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

Our January Chapter 33 meeting movie "Battle of Britain" was an amazingly accurate depiction of history.

A Canadian Air Marshall devised a plan with the help of an American WW 1 pilot to recruit Americans to learn to fly for the RAF. Recruiting centers were set up in major American cities that had an interest in flying. 6700 potential pilots were signed up during 1940, 41, and 42. They had initial training in the US and Canada. They went on to serve in the RAF and then in the American Eagle Squadron [all American] and subsequently transferred to the US Air Force as time went on and the US became more involved.



Second from left is the pilot, Lt. Col. Leroy Gover.

This is the story of Le Roy Gover from San Carlos, CA. He kept a diary of his WW II service from November 3, 1941 thru March 12, 1944 when he arrives home again. The book author Philip D. Caine and his wife interviewed Le Roy Gover several times. The diary entries are reproduced as Le Roy wrote them. His flying log books, letters written to his parents and sisters and written accounts of incidents he wrote after the war are all part of the book which was written in 1994.

Lee Gover had a love for airplanes. By 1941 he had 800 hours in a variety of planes and was easily accepted for training in the RAF. Initial training was at Bakersfield, CA in PT 17's and the AT-6. Some daredevil antics are told with Clark Gable being involved.

November 3, 1941 Lee Gover and another classmate leave California for England by train and ship. Lee's diary of the Atlantic crossing would make another good movie, scary as hell. Some ships in the convoy were lost to Submarines. The weather was terrible with 80 MPH winds, rain, sleet, and snow, plus rough seas.

The group became RAF officers without losing their American citizenship through some very tricky legalese wording of their oath to the RAF. It is quite an adjustment for the Americans. Their RAF uniforms with the wings sewed on make them instant celebrities in London. One problem is they have no military training. They do not know how to march, or salute. They do not know who to salute.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor changes things in England. The US was then able to send all kinds of material over to help the British war effort. However, Lee Govers training time is brief and rushed. He solos a Milesmaster 2 place trainer with an 850 HP engine with only 35 minutes of dual instruction. He trains in clouds and fog. Now he is ready for the Spitfire? Flying the Spitfire with so little training takes its toll. Three fellows from California were killed in the first month in England.

The training is tough, made more tough by the brutal English winter weather. Lee graduates from Spitfire training with 36 1/4 hours in less than two months. Forty three students and instructors posed for a group picture when training began in England. Thirty three were killed and only five survived without injury.

March 24, 1942 Lee is through with his training and is assigned to the 66th squadron of RAF Fighter Command at Redruth in south east England. There he flies cover for ocean ships and protecting the nearby areas.



Assigned to Ibsley he shoots down a ME 109 on May 19, 1942. On May 31 Lee is shot down. He bails out and is back flying the very next day.

Lee is involved with the British Commando raid on Dieppe, France. He shoots down a FW 190 and damages a ME 109.

On August 2nd, 1942 Lee is transferred to the Eagle Squadron. It is made up of Americans exclusively. It is rumored that the US paid Britain 50,000 dollars for each American that transferred to the Eagle Squadron. Lee gets a new Spitfire IX with a 1650HP Rolls Royce engine. He loves the new plane.

On September 23, 1942 Lee becomes a 2nd Lt. in the USAC. Then in less than four months Lee has many wild missions escorting bombers. On one mission they lose 11 B-17's and 4 fighters but shoot down 40 German fighters. Lee has more time and missions than anyone in his squadron. That is 57 combat hours and 47 missions with lots of damage to his plane to show for it.

January 16, 1943 the squadron switches to P-47 Thunderbolts. They become operational two months later after busting up a bunch of them during transition training. Of the fourteen fellows who completed training in Bakersfield, just two are still in England.

On May 14th, 1943 Lee is awarded the Silver Star medal. June 9th, 1943 Lee puts his P-47 into a dive at 32,000 feet to escape a German fighter. Then at 15,000 feet he is stricken by an intense pain in his head. An ear drum has punctured and he makes a terrible landing and ends up in the hospital.

By the end of July, 1943 Lee has 95 combat missions and 5 Air medals, the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Silver Star. He receives a second Distinguished Flying Cross in September, 1943. As more and more bombers arrive in Britain it means more missions for the fighters.

The Air Force abandons flying bomber missions that exceeded the fighter escort range when on October 14, 1943 the US lost 148 bombers on one mission. That equates to 1480 casualties. The same day Lee Gover is promoted to Major.

On Christmas Eve 1943 Lee is told he can go home on a 30 day leave. Lee's orders get screwed up and he waits in London until February before he can depart England. During this time the Germans begin nightly bombings of London. Lee has some more close calls and his favorite hotel gets a hit and he has to move to another.

February 27 Lee boards the Ile de France for his trip to New York. He arrives home in San Carlos, CA on March 12, 1944. Instead of going back to England he is assigned other duty in the US. He retires as a Colonel in 1962 and was in his 80's when the book was published in 2000.

The book is available both at Barnes and Noble in Cedar Rapids [special order \$ 8.95] or at Amazon.com [\$ 8.95 plus shipping]



Read Back – Bury Us Upside Down

By Jim Meade CFII

From June of 1967 to May of 1970, a little known Air Force unit code named Commando Sabre and nicknamed Misty flew forward air controller (FAC) and interdiction mission against the Ho Chi Minh Trail in North Vietnam. They flew the two-seat version of the F-100 fighter, searching for and calling for air strikes on supplies and equipment moving down the trail to South Vietnam. 34 of the 157 pilots who flew with Misty were shot down, two of them twice. 3 were captured and sent to Hanoi, including the first commander, LtCol Bud Day who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic resistance in captivity. Seven of those shot down were eventually declared killed in action.

Bury Us Upside Down is a book about the development of the fast FAC concept that was introduced when slow propeller planes became vulnerable to massive antiaircraft artillery (AAA). Besides Day, other well known pilots included Dick Rutan, who flew the plane Voyager non-stop around the world, and Don Shepperd, one of the authors, who became Chief, Air National Guard. The other author is the journalist Rick Newman who has covered several recent conflicts.

The book is filled with the flavor of unique unit operations in Vietnam. A small unit, filled with mavericks and mustangs, operates as much on its own as it can. Protected by a senior Air Force general, it still must maneuver in the bureaucracy of the Air Force establishment. Its record for getting planes shot up does not endear it to senior officers concerned about loss rates.

The book tells of heroics, daring-do and flaunting of regulations is woven around the thread of one pilot, Howard "Howie" Williams, one of the pilots who was shot down. 24 years later, his remains were recovered and his family and the Misty family converged for a funeral that invoked old memories, good and bad, for all parties. There is considerable sympathetic coverage in the book of the lives of several of the wives and widows of Misty pilots. Because it was a secret unit on secret missions, families were not given information that might have eased their plight. Many of the wives remarried, but not all, and not all their stories are happy.

The book has lots of stories of fantastic combat flying of what was even then an aging airplane. Gun runs on AAA sites, SAM (surface to air missile) busting and controlling rescues of downed aircrews are described in vivid detail.

The unit was disbanded in 1970 and its missions covered by units flying the F4 Phantom. Navy units flew FAC on other parts of the North Vietnamese end of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The personal side of combat is also covered. Included in that is a fair representation



These are the Misty pilots in March 1968, a month after the Tet Offensive, when the battle for the Ho Chi Minh Trail was fierce. Of the 16 pilots in this picture, nine were shot down, one was captured and became a POW, and one was killed in action.

of the gratuitous, almost obligatory profanity and vulgarity that can be found in a military operations room or the enlisted or officer's club. If you don't like bad language, don't read this book.

As an Army veteran of Vietnam, books like this reawaken in me strong feelings about the danger and how young men react to it that are not always welcome. But for others, you may find a book like this brings a measure of peace or conclusion to such an overwhelming event. Several Misty pilots returned to Vietnam recently and walked or drove over areas they had bombed and strafed.

Bury Us Upside Down was published by Presidio Press in 2006.

I liked the action and felt empathy for the families. The screwball, out-of-channels way of doing things sometimes gets results and sometimes gets in the way, as I see it now. As I get older, I get less tolerant of what I think is unnecessary foul language, so books like this make me wince when I read them. These are my personal impressions. If you want to read about some hotshot flying in North Vietnam on missions without a lot of red tape, you'll enjoy this book.

Next Generation Aircraft Expo

February 10, 9:00am – 5:00pm (Bad Weather Date: Feb. 17)

Location: PS Air at the Cedar Rapids Airport

Hosted by: PS Air & Iowa Flight Training

See the newest and fastest composite airplanes and the latest generation of avionics.

Admission: \$5.00

Columbia – Dave Gilbertson, PS Air, Cedar Rapids

- 319-846-3600 Dave@psair.com

Diamond – Dave Clark, ASI Jet Center, Flying Cloud, Minneapolis, MN

- 952-941-6255 dclark@asijet.com

Cirrus – Taylor Huether, Cirrus Design, Duluth, MN

- 612-670-3495 thuether@cirrusdesign.com

Flight Design CT – Bob Ellefson, Aircraft Supermarket, DeSoto, IA

- 515-834-2225 sales@aircraftsuper-market.com

For More Information, Contact: Tim Busch, Iowa Flight Training

- 319-373-3971 Info@IowaFlightTraining.com
- www.IowaFlightTraining.com



Last Meeting - Family Movie Night

For January meeting we got together and watched the 1969 movie "Battle of Britain". If you missed the meeting I highly recommend you rent or buy the DVD for yourself. In addition to being a very accurate portrayal of a pivotal time in history, it has some amazing flying sequences of some very historic aircraft. I doubt any movie will every be made again where 32 Heinkel He-111 bombers, 27 Spitfires, and 17 Me 109s will all be in the air at one time.

In true movie fashion, we also got to see some previews of "Behind Enemy Lines". Thanks to Randy Hartman for providing that DVD and arranging for the room and projector.



Next Meeting - Curtis P-6E Replica visit

In January, Carl Carson contacted me, inquiring if there are any aircraft scales available to weigh a friends project which was getting close to completion. Always eager to help, I put him in contact with Randy Hartman who is the current keeper of the Chapter's scales. Carl's friend turned out to be Keith Roof of Iowa City, a long time EAA/Vintage Aircraft member and his project is a 82% replica Curtis, P-6E, Hawk. Keith built it from scratch. He got drawings from the Smithsonian that were scaled down 82%. Keith started building in summer of 2001



and will be done this spring. The only thing left to do is wheel pants and FAA cert. Otherwise it is all painted and ready to fly.

With a very little bit of arm twisting Keith has agreed to give the Chapter a tour of the plane. We will meet at the Iowa City Airport, Building G, Hanger 32 on February 17th at 10AM. This should be quite a project visit and I hope to see you all there.



Annual Chapter Dues are Due

As always happens this time of year, we need everyone to renew their chapter membership. Dues are \$15 per year payable each January. You can also renew, \$25 for 2 years, or \$35 for 3 years. Please send your check to: EAA Chapter 33, Thomas Meeker, 440 N. Troy Rd, Robins, IA 52328. You can check your dues status at our Chapter Website <http://www.eaa33.org/members/index.php> Sign-in with your last name and EAA #.

Everyone can receive the electronic newsletter (as well as attend Chapter functions) but to save money and work we are discontinuing printing and mailing the newsletter. If you would still like to receive a paper newsletter we ask you include an additional \$10 per year with your normal dues to cover the costs of paper, printing and mailing. However, we encourage everyone to sign up for the Chapter's email list <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/eachapter33/join> or send me an email david.koelzer@mchsi.com and I'll get you signed up.

Fly Market

FOR SALE LANCAIR IV-PT KIT 70% complete, \$160K. Walter 601D, wings closed out, wings and gear installed, Fuselage mostly complete, partially primed/painted. Dukes cabin pressure controller, VSI, Alt, AS, Bendix/King VOR/LOC, Garmin GTX330, GNS530, GNS430, GMA340, Avia propeller, step and wing fairings complete, windows installed, pressure door installed, strobes, speed brakes installed, most of the body work is complete. Firewall-forward remains to be done along with some interior build. Contact Alpha Omega Aircrafters owner Randy Hartman randy@aoaircrafters.com (319) 362-9055 for full evaluation or Graig Cone (319) 533-1036.

FOR SALE 2000 Phantom X1 Ultralight, 125 total hours, Rotax 447 engine, BRS 750 parachute, 10 gal tank, Great Flying Aerobatic Airplane, More info available at www.phantomaeronautics.com \$7000 or make an offer, Jerry Maxwell Phone (319) 393-8560



Chapter 33 Calendar

Feb 10 9am-5pm Next Generation Aircraft Expo, Columbia, Diamond, Cirrus, Flight Design, The Eastern Iowa Airport , PS Air

Feb 11 11am Chili Feed, Platteville Municipal Airport, Platteville, WI

Feb 17 10am Chapter Meeting, project visit, Keith Roof's Curtis P-6E Replica, Iowa City Airport

Feb 17 10am FAA Pilot Safety Seminar, Kirkwood Community College 6301 Kirkwood Blvd (Iowa Room on 3rd Floor of Iowa Hall), Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Mar 6 7pm AOPA Safety Seminar, Kirkwood Community College 6301 Kirkwood Blvd (Iowa Room on 3rd Floor of Iowa Hall), Cedar Rapids, Iowa



Caution Wake Turbulence

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