



The Squadron



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www.warbirdsquadron4.org

Events

Coming events for 2013 – more details later:

Nov.17 – Veterans' Forum

As always, please check our web site for the most up to date information:

www.warbirdsquadron4.org

From the C.O.'s Desk

As the cold weather approaches, it's time to look at our past year, and to get ready for next year's warbird events. The TBM flew a lot this year and many Squadron 4 members got to be "up close " and hear the rumble of the Wright R2600 engine. We will try to slow up some oil leaks and change a few cylinders this winter, to keep the Avenger in top shape. Weather permitting; we will fly the TBM to Rockford for the Veterans' Forum at Mark Clark's hangar on Nov.17th. We want to invite all Squadron 4 members to taste Stacy's famous soups and come join us on Nov.17th!!!!

Let's show appreciation for our veterans by bringing a veteran to our event.

See you there!

CO Tom Buck

Keep'em Flyin

Buzzing the Airfield By Tim Dunavin

My wife and I would like to thank all those who expressed their concern for our well being; the cards and phone calls were very much appreciated. The van has since been replaced, and we are nearly done with the doctoring. Thanks again!

It seems that our star reporter is not done with the doctors yet – still may be out a while – get well soon, Art!! We look forward to your reports on our events.

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Butch Bejna reports of some more Young Eagle flights, and Mike Hudak gives us a fine report on the B-17 Tour stop. A new reporter, Bruce Hawkins, comes on board with an article – “A Day with Captain Chuck Downey” (We look forward to more fine work from him!)

The Veterans' Forum is just around the corner, so mark your calendars for Nov 17th. We always have a good time and speaker at this event, and we honor our Veterans too. Thanks for serving!

Hope to see you all there.

Young Eagle Program

by Butch Bejna

During the B-17 Tour Stop at Lewis, eleven new Young Eagles were flown. Two of them flew on the B-17 first. The flight route was to the Joliet Speedway and then back to Lewis. I would like to thank Stacy Kolls for doing the registration part of the flights. On Saturday, October 12, six more Young Eagles went for flights at Joliet Airport.

Aluminum Overcast Returns and Cincinnati Radix

By Michael F. Hudak

Once again Squadron 4 was privileged to host the E.A.A.'s Aluminum Overcast at Lewis University this past September. This year we had an impressive number of WWII B-17 veterans turn out to see her one more time and commiserate with each other, some of them for the first time along with several of our "Regulars".



I don't know which the biggest thrill is for me, seeing the plane or talking with the great veterans. I guess it's the best of both worlds talking to the vets and listening to their stories in the shadow of another great "Veteran" the B-17 itself. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all the WWII B-17 vets that made the effort to come out and help make the event a success. They are as follows:

Joseph Belman- 305th Bomb Gr. 366 Bomb Sq. Chelveston England, 3 April 1943-17 October 1945. 8 Missions Waist Gunner, 24 Missions Ball Turret Gunner, and 3 as a Tail Gunner.

Bill Thorns- 96 Bomb Gr. 338th Bomb Sq. Snetterton Heath England, April 1943-March 1944. B-17 Fertile Myrtle 3rd. #42-30366. Engineer, completed 25 missions of which Regensburg and second Scheinfurt.

Emil Pribula- 92nd Bomb Gr. 325th Bomb Sq. Podington, England, November 1944-April 1945. Completed 15 missions-got pneumonia from English climate. Bombed Berlin twice and Cologne twice, but left the Cathedral standing.

Ted Micci- 305th Bomb Gr. 364th Sq. Radio Gunner, 25 missions Chelveston, England, Oct 1942-Oct. 1945.

James Morgan- 351st Bomb Gr. 311Sq. "Devil's Ball" Polbrook Feb. 1942-March 1945. Won DFC Medal and I believe the Silver Star.

Edward Vercelli- 701st Bomb Gr. 612th, 615th Bomb Sq. Lead Navigator, Deenethorpe, England April 30th, 1943-Sept. 1945. After the war 53rd Weather Recon.



Lt. Col. William Haeflinger- (Bill) was John Ferlit's co-pilot. 381st Bomb Gr. 1st Div. Bridgewell,

England WWII, Korea, & Vietnam. December 1942- Feb. 1973. His B-17 named "White Christmas". The fellas wanted to name it "3 Highballs and a Short Beer" but were overruled by John whose sister was a Catholic Nun.

Lt. Charles "Charlie" Mueller- 452nd. Bomb Gr. 731st. Bomb Sq. Depham Green England Lead Navigator flew missions to Berlin. Was shot down on 8Mar.1944(11th mission) and a POW at Stalag Luft III site of the great escape. Purple Heart recipient and a great friend.

Maurice Rinke- Pilot B-17. A great pilot who flew out of Italy and saw a lot of combat whom from what I have heard always looked out for his crew. Morrie always comes out and I apologize for not having more info, but I will correct that error ASAP.

Angelo Savaino- 94th Bomb Group 410th Bomb Sq. Bury St. Edmunds Radioman B-17 "Northern Rose".

A group of veterans from the Senior Star also came out. Among them were: Tom Hirsh- Navy WWII, Ed Kroll- Navy 1942-1946, John Likosar- Navy Pilot who flew the Wildcat and Hellcat, and Tom Stanek- radioman on B-17 and B-29.

That's a very impressive group, and I'm sure I missed a few.



As a squadron we want to thank all the warbird owners who displayed and flew their planes. Some of the participants were: John O'Connor, Butch Benja, Keith Birsa (who just gave me a great ride in his Stearman, thanks Keith), Rick Siegfried, Tom Buck and Harry Pick, who was the first warbird owner to arrive with his beautiful Culver. I am not going to say that Harry buzzed the crowd on

departure, but I swear I saw a red streak of something go by on Sunday. Our thanks go out to all of you who kept the show interesting during the ground tours.

I would say the show went smoothly other than a poor cadet who lost her lunch in the rear of Tom's TBM, and I specifically told Tom that I didn't think flying inverted was a good idea. All I can say is that George Barbauld got stuck with a dirty job that day....the man's loyalty cannot be questioned.

I'd like to thank all my fellow squadron mates as it was my pleasure to work with you all and especially Stacy Kolls who made the tour stop a reality. We all look forward to the event every year.

Cincinnati Redux; The Saga Continues
By Michael F. Hudak



I was fortunate to be selected to fly on the B-17 to Cincinnati along with Mike Kelner, Ron Liebman, Dean Stanley, Smilin' Jack Mejdrich, and a gentleman named Wes who works with Mike Kellner which is basically the same crew as last years' with the addition of Wes, who's last name escapes me; I'll get on that too. We found out that Wes is a very interesting fellow, as he is a Vietnam Veteran who flew F-4's and several other types of aircraft in Vietnam. It was an honor to fly with him.

The flight was a real thrill. As you can imagine, it never gets old. However we did have to fly IFR, and that put a damper on our chances of getting a little "stick time" (ya ya I know it's a yoke) which was a little disappointing, but there's always next year....I hope!

It seemed like the closer we got to Cincy, the heavier the overcast got, with a little rain mixed in

for good measure. From my perch in the nose, it dawned that this would be considered a fair weather day in England circa 1944. It was sort of an eerie feeling flying through the clouds in a B-17 looking through the fog at the cities below, the rivers, bridges, and buildings. We even felt a few drops of rain that found their way through the plexi onto my shirt sleeve. I have to say that even though we flew IFR through clouds and rain, our pilot George did a fantastic job, as it was an extremely smooth flight.

We were really surprised and thrilled at the sight of the "Welcoming Committee" that met us as we deplaned. Our friend Herb Hielbrand WWII B-17 pilot and author of the book, *Black and White Pilots* rushed up to greet us. Herb was really excited to see the Aluminum Overcast, It seemed like a trip to the Fountain of Youth for him and we all got a big kick out of it. I never saw a 90 year old plus so excited in my life. He was hugging us and shaking our hands, treating us as some kind of big shots-it was a little embarrassing as Herb is the real hero.

We were all posing for photos with Herb under the starboard wing, and as we talked, the rain poured down in buckets, but no one cared. We'd just had a great flight on a B-17 and were met by a great veteran and an appreciative crowd. It was pretty cool standing under the wing of a B-17 in the pouring rain having a conversation with a WWII pilotGreat stuff!

When the rain let up, we went in to eat lunch. As we were eating, we happened to glance out the picture window to see Herb boarding the 17 for another mission, and I am sure he made a beeline for the cockpit!

Have you ever tried to get 5 guys loaded into a mini van and drive them for 6 hours or so? Well, I have, and it can be a challenge. Everything went fairly smoothly at first, and we made it to the highway okay, but I blew past our first exit. I blame it on the noise level which my buddy Smilin' Jack Meydrich is usually at the heart of.

This time Ron Liebman rode up front with me and Jack sat in back next to his new victim the new guy Wes. I was thinking, poor Wes. He doesn't know what he's in for. Although Smilin' Jack found a new ear to bend, it didn't prevent him from trying

to "tweak" Ron, but this time Ron wasn't taking the bait. Jack, as hard as he tried, could not get much of a response from Ron, and I think he got a little frustrated.

I know what Ronny was up to. He was employing a sophisticated method of psychological warfare by basically ignoring Smilin' Jack's taunts, much to Jack's chagrin.

The masterful Ron delivered a stroke of genius by suggesting we stop at a Dairy Queen for ice cream sundaes. To all our amazement it actually sweetened up old Smilin' Jack; however the effect was only temporary, but everything worked out like it usually does and we made it back home once again hoping to do it all over again come what may ...We had a BLAST!

Saturday September 21, 2013, a day with Captain Chuck Downey

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The weather could not have been better for a day with "the Captain", 66 degrees and mostly clear. Being new for this Squadron 4 member, it means that every event is somewhat of a journey into the unknown. I do look forward to these missions. I get to meet other members and people attending and also see some of the best aircraft around.

For this mission I had the unbelievable fortune to arrive in real style. First, if I may give a little background on the day. It was going to be a VERY busy day for me, I had a family event to attend that evening also, and for that family event I was to prepare potato salad which got me up at 5:30A.M. To do so I could still leave the house by 9:30ish and get to Poplar Grove. The potato salad prep went great. I got done by 8A.M.!!! After some breakfast and catching up on the news, it was about 9:25A.M. I grabbed the Garmin and set the address for the trip. I was just saying good-bye to my wife and my cell phone chimed in. I received a call from Tom Buck. He asked if I was planning on going to the

event and I said "Yes, I was just about to leave." Tom asked if I would like to ride in the TBM, so I replied, "Well, ummm, YES!" He gave me the particulars. When I hung up the phone, I must have had a smile from ear to ear, and my wife overheard the conversation and just shook her head and said something about horseshoe somewhere..... Next thing I know we are heading to Poplar Grove, Let me tell you, this flying thing sure cuts the travel time down and the sights are considerably better. I had a great seat and of course took some pictures and video of the scenery; I just couldn't help myself.



We arrived in Poplar Grove in true Warbird style, a couple of passes over the event first and then we got in line to land as there was some considerable traffic with the excellent weather.



The community is just beautiful, kind of neat seeing houses with hangers and planes parked in the yards.

Several others had either flown in or displayed their planes for the day including Harry Pick and his Culver PQ-14B. That is one very nice plane and

Harry did a very nice fly by when he left.



Also on display was a Meyers 1941 OTW-145, another great looking plane.



Brad Deckert flew his TBM in. I believe Brad is based out of Peoria, Illinois. It was really nice to see the two TBM's sitting so close together.



Butch Bejna and his familiar Cessna 150F also made an appearance and it was looking as good as ever.



I took some time and wandered through the hangar/garage of Captain Downey; what a treat to see great memorabilia and pictures throughout the area! One very interesting thing I noticed was a frame with a letter in it from President George Bush congratulating Captain Downey on being the youngest Naval Aviator in WWII. I can't imagine what that must have been like, 18 years old and doing such a dangerous and courageous job! I am truly thankful to you and all of our men and women

both past and present who serve so honorably and bravely in our military.

We loaded up in the TBM around 3P.M. and much to my surprise we did a little formation flying with Brad and his TBM and a chase plane taking pictures and video of it. It was, I must admit, a bit odd to see another plane literally a few feet from us, and truth be told I was very close to asking if they should be as close as they were at one time but I didn't want to be "that whiney guy". I did get some very nice pictures and video of it.



I would like to thank Tom and the crew of the TBM, George and Steve, for the awesome experience.

Squadron Officers

(Partial listing – see website for full board)

C.O. Tom Buck
(815) 726-5059

ADJ. Tim Bauer
(815) 501-1468

Com. O./Treasurer Brian Churchill
(847) 356-9056

SEC. Ted Kowalik
(603) 289-2785

Q.M. Stacy Kolls
(815) 544-1223

Warbird Squadrons

You can find all of these links on our site under the "WOA Squadron" button. Listed below is the text for the links.

Warbirds of America Link:

<http://www.warbirds-eaa.org/>

Seattle, WA Cascade Warbird Squadron 2

Link: <http://www.cascadewarbirds.org/>

Eugene, OR Warbird Squadron

13 Link: <http://www.squadron13.org/warbirds/>

Chino, CA Warbird Squadron 16 Link:

<http://www.warbirdsusa.org/>

Cincinnati, OH Warbird Squadron 18 Link:

<http://www.cincinnatiwarbirds.org/>

Florida Warbird Squadron 24

<http://www.floridawarbirds.org/>

WARBIRDS OF SQUADRON 4

Spit Fire MKXXVIII	Rudy Frasca
T33	Vlado Lenocho
F8F Bearcat	John O'Connor
TBM Avenger	Tom Buck
T6	Rick Siegfried
SNJ	Vic Krause
T6	Rudy Frasca
T6	John O'Connor
SNJ	Tom Buck
Yak	Bob Fitzpatrick
OW Meyers	Chuck Downey
T34	Rudy Frasca
Wildcat	Rudy Frasca
PQ-14B	Harry Pick
T34	John Rippinger

Keep'em Flyin'