



A Publication of EAA Warbird Squadron 4

For Members and Friends of Warbird Aircraft

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**KEEP 'EM
FLYING**

Welcome to another new year for Warbird Squadron 4. In our 13 years of existence, the Squadron has seen many changes. Most of these changes have been for the good, bringing new people, programs and history into our midst. This year the Squadron will see more changes in the form of new Officers and Board members, new general members, and new events and programs for the membership to enjoy. This year, Squadron 4 has been offered at stop on the EAA's B-17 National Tour which brings one of about 15 (worldwide) flying B-17 to our area, offering the public the opportunity to fly in the aircraft, or just to climb through the plane on the ground. This opportunity enables our Squadron to participate in a unique educational process, exposing these machines and dedicated owner/operators to the general public. The focus and direction of our organization has always been on ex-military (warbird) aircraft. Our primary goal for existence has been dedicated to the preservation and operation of warbird aircraft, as well as educating the membership and public with the history of not just the aircraft but also the personnel involve with the machines throughout their existence. I hope we can all enjoy another prosperous and enjoyable year to come.

Squadron 4 2006 Annual Dinner

The Annual Squadron 4 Banquet will be held on February 18 at the William Tell Holiday Inn, in Countryside, IL. This annual event has traditionally been held in January each year and invariably, the weather has been less than desirable for travel. Last year, we were forced to cancel the event at the very last minute due to a sudden severe snow storm. We re-scheduled in February and despite the inconvenience to our members regarding personal planning, we none the less hosted an extremely successful event with the largest ever attendance. Our thanks again to Col. Viv Lock for his highly educational presentation of just some of his experiences as a B-29 pilot flying bombing missions over Japan at the very end of WWII.

This year we have decided to move the event to February in the hopes of better weather for those traveling to the gathering. The plans for this year's event prove to rival last year's program not just in regards to our guest speaker, but also in regards to our traditional raffles, door prizes and a few new additional activities.

The main attraction for this year's event will be our honored guest speaker, a WWII Eighth Air Force Veteran who served on the original crew of one of the most successful B-24 bombers to fly missions over Europe, having completed 130 missions without losing a man. Our guest speaker, Robert DeKerf, served aboard the B-24 "*Witchcraft*" as Engineer and top turret gunner, in early 1944, as part of the original crew of the aircraft. Early in the war, bomber crews were offered the incentive of being allowed to return home after completing 25 missions as a way to counter the deteriorating moral due to heavy losses of aircraft during daylight bombing missions over Europe. Later in the

war, the mission requirement for early release was increased to 50 missions, but none the less, the actual airplane continued on. *Witchcraft* had several crews over the course of her service, but Robert Dekerf was among the first. Robert also is credited with painting the nose art on his aircraft, and recently (this past summer) at DuPage Airport, when the Colling's Foundation brought their B-24J, which incidentally is now painted in the color scheme of the original *Witchcraft*, Robert made a little correction to the nose art painting to ensure historical accuracy.

This will surely prove to be an event not to be missed as we will have a very full evening planned. The venue will include a cash bar, full course dinner, raffles, prizes, awards and recognitions and of course our guest speaker who I'm sure will have a good number of interesting and educational stories to tell. The William Tell Holiday Inn is located at 6201 Joliet Road, Countryside, IL 60525, Phone: 708-352-1101 (on the north side of Joliet Road, just west of LaGrange Road). The cost for this event will be \$25.00 per person (bargain at twice the price). Reception will begin at 5:00 PM with dinner at 6:00. RSVP by contacting Dan Guenther at 847-835-4350 or Mark Laatsch at 773-695-8122. Pre-pay for the event (if desired) by sending a check (made out to E.A.A. Warbird Squadron 4) to Dan Guenther, 470 Drexel Avenue, Glencoe, IL 60022, or pay at the door upon arrival (we're flexible).

DON'T MISS THIS EVENT!!!!

2005 Veteran's Forum Re-cap

By: Art Sereque

Rumor had it, while Squadron 4 members braved the frigid winter winds in Rockford, C.O. Mark Laatsch was lying poolside in balmy Mexico, pina colada in hand, while a bevy of beautiful bikini clad blondes wiped away tears, as he bemoaned the

fact he could not be with his buddies at the Veteran's Forum.

Fortunately, past C.O. Jim Delaney, one who could bear the brunt of winter weather, took over and did a magnificent job of running the meeting.

After opening remarks and singing the National Anthem, Jim introduced Mark Clark, President of Courtesy Aircraft Sales, who was our gracious host. Mark gave a brief synopsis of his business making special note of the planes on display in the hangar. A P-51 Mustang, *Hurry Home Honey* had just been sold for 1.3 million dollars. A Spartan (that looked like an 'Executive') was actually a Model 12, the only example ever built. A Navy Stearman, N2S-3, was sitting next to a rare Ryan PT-22.

Chaplain Matt Huffnus gave a prayer for our Veterans followed by the hungry horde attacking the food table prepared by Quartermaster Stacy Kolls, ably assisted by Katie Hinkle of Squadron 6.

After chowing down, the "mike" was passed around and members of the audience mentioned their service activities.

Art Sereque presented Captain Chuck Downey with a framed photo of four WWII combat pilots, taken at, and in appreciation of, the Captain's annual BBQ. Following this, five WWII combat Veterans sat at a table in front of the membership and talked about their experiences.

Judson Dulmage told of his view of the action sitting behind the pilot of a Grumman Avenger TBF (for the uninitiated, TB is torpedo bomber – F means it was assembled by Grumman. A TBM would have been assembled by General Motors). As a gunner AMM 2nd class, he flew with Air Group 9

aboard both the U.S.S. Lexington and Yorktown. Fortunately for Judson, he saw combat at a couple of quiet tropical islands called Iwo Jima and Okinawa. He served there between January and July of 1945.

Captain Downey, a dive bomber pilot, gave brief remarks, stated most of us had heard them already.

Colonel J.J. Guess told about flying a plane feared by the Nips, the Chance Vought Corsair.

Obergefreite (PFC) Joe Heinlein saw action in Germany with the Wehrmacht. Yes – he was shooting at us! Actually, Joe operated the binocular, which was really a telescope about 12' long. It had a range finder and was so powerful he could see the pilot's face. It was connected electronically to a battery of 36 88s arranged in a semi-circle about ½ mile around. When he turned the binocular, the triple A tuned. One time two planes came in really low. Joe aimed the binocular and the 88's fired. Unfortunately, the attacking aircraft were flying so low, the guns overshot them and destroyed a German village.

RAF Spitfire pilot "Wild Bill" Scanlon served in North Africa and was shot down six times. Bill said that the best way to learn about his action was to buy his book! Bill also brought some beautiful miniature guns that he made himself.

All in all, a great meeting.

P.S. Mark, tell us the truth, where would you have rather been?

Well Art, I truly did regret missing the Veterans, as I do have the utmost respect for these guys, and I eagerly look forward to hearing their history. I would also like to thank Mark Clark for hosting the event and for those Veterans who most graciously shared their history with our group. I salute you all.



"WITCHCRAFT"
 ORIGINAL AIR CREW, AFTER FIRST MISSION APRIL 10, 1944. TARGET A/F SOURDOES, FRANCE
 REAR: SGT. HENRY KUBACKI WAIST GUN, SGT. ALEX McLEAN BALL T, SGT. MELVIN BLAND NO.
 SGT. YERMON BONDROCK WAIST GUN, SGT. ROBERT MOENEN TAIL TURRET, T/SGT. ROBERT DEKERF
 ENG/TOY TWR. FRONT: SGT. JOHN OREN CO PILOT, LT. GEORGE W. REED PLANEY, LT. JOHN BRAMER BOMB
 NOTE: LETTERING OF WITCHCRAFT NOT PAINTED IN YET. NOSE ART BY ROBERT DEKERF, BOB MOENEN
 AND MELVIN BLAND.

Original *Witchcraft* crew after fist mission 4-10-1944



Host Mark Clark with "Wild Bill" Scanlon Photo by Stacy Kolls



Veteran Forum participants Photo by Art Sereque



Katie Hinkle and Stacy Kolls preparing food for the troops Photo by Art Sereque



Veterans at November meeting Photo by Stacy Kolls



Ken Fukuyama and Bill Scanlon



Col. John Geuss and Ron Molinets Photos by Stacy Kolls



Frank Bartilotta dreams of being a fighter pilot Photo by Stacy Kolls



Laurel and Hardy



Chris Huffnus Photos by Art Sereque

Squadron 4 Calendar of Events

4/23/2006 – Visit to B-17E restoration, hosted by Mike and Cheryl Kellner in Marengo, IL

5/13/2006 – A day on the Western Front hosted by Tim Dunavin in Rock Falls, IL

6/25/2006 – Joint Squadron 4 and 6 regular meeting in Kenosha, WI

7/20-23/2006 – Squadron 4 hosts a stop for the EAA B-17 tour at DuPage Airport

7/24-30/2006 – AirVenture in Oshkosh, WI

8/13/2006 – Annual Squadron 4 BBQ at Joliet Airport, Joliet, IL

9/10/2006 – Regular meeting at Lindenwood Field hosted by Tim and Barb Bauer in Lindenwood, IL

11/12/2006 – Annual Veteran's Forum in Rockford, IL

Member News

Operation Shoebox

Thanks to the outstanding efforts by Quartermaster Stacy Kolls, more of a 'little bit of home' was sent over to our Service personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan. Stacy has been collecting contributions in the form of necessary and relief items to send to the troops for over a year now and she reports that our latest contribution to the moral of the troops was well received. Squadron 4's own Steve Huffnus received a "care package", out of which, according to Stacy, the cigars and phone cards were a big hit. Please help Stacy continue her efforts to supply, if only a few of our troops, with a little something from back home. Those personnel who have been the recipients of the donations have been

overwhelmingly appreciative. Questions and informational requests should be directed to our Quartermaster, Stacy Kolls (815-218-9202).

Squadron 4 Merchandise

Squadron 4 will have merchandise available for sale at the annual dinner, mainly consisting of patches and clothing. Squadron 4 embroidered logo hats and shirts are available with prices ranging from \$10 - \$25. Information on special order logo merchandise can be obtained from Tim Bauer at the meeting.

Folded Wings

Squadron 4 regrets the passing of Penny Driscoll this past late December. Penny was the wife of long time member Larry Driscoll.

Annual Membership Dues

It's time again to renew your membership in Squadron 4 to help maintain our organization and support our efforts within the Warbird community. Although there was consideration of raising the annual dues from our present and original fee of \$25.00, our Officers and Board of Directors have decided to leave the dues at the current level and pursue alternative ways of increasing the Squadron's finances. Please use the enclosed membership form or if you plan on attending the annual dinner, renew at the event.

Restoration Projects

The near future may bring a couple of restoration project to the members of Squadron 4. The first deals with the pending acquisition of a WWII era Link Trainer, and the second involves a early to mid '60s Chrysler that member Roger Paykert is considering turning into a Vietnam era Military Staff car. Stay tuned for further information on how you can become involved.