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**From the C.O.'s
Desk**

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KEEP 'EM



FLYING

Thanks to all who helped plan and whose who attended the Squadron 4 Annual Dinner. As always, the food and restaurant were great! Our speaker, Bob DeKerf, set the scene of WWII warriors, just doing their job. Our picture boards lined the walls and there were many tables of aviation memorabilia. The raffles generated revenue to help us continue our services and also provided much fun and excitement for the evening. All the attendees had a great time, and much military aviation was discussed. Those that could not attend sure missed a great opportunity to socialize with warbird-minded people. The evening was a great success.

We also thanked Mark Laatsch for a successful tenure as C. O. of Squadron 4. (And we did surprise him with the jacket!) His leadership really has strengthened Squadron 4.

Hope to see you all at the next meeting in Marengo on April 23.

Tom Buck C.O.

From Mark Laatsch:

For all those who did not attend our Annual Dinner, I announced I was stepping down as the Commander of Warbird Squadron 4. This decision was one that I had pondered with mixed emotions. In keeping with tradition, past Commanders have served for three years and my three years has come to an end. I have chosen to stick with the three year term in that my own personal future is somewhat in limbo. Also, it's time to pass the torch to others, as I believe leadership should change to bring new faces and ideas, to ensure our organization does not stagnate. When I took the role of Commander I had three goals, to increase membership, to increase membership participation and to continue bringing quality programs to the members in regards to our regular meetings and activities. I feel, for the most part, I have succeeded meeting my goals and I am proud of our organization and how we have grown and thrived. I am also proud of our commitment not only to warbird owners and operators, but also to our efforts toward the recognition and honoring of our Veterans, especially those who served during WWII as these are our eldest and most cherished.

I will continue to support the Squadron and our new Commander, Tom Buck, in every way I can. I would like to thank all the members of Squadron 4 for the support and encouragement I have received over the few years of my term as leader of this fine organization.



Female co-pilot to pilot "I knew we should have asked for directions"



Happy Tale of a P-51 RAFFLE Winner by Dan Guenther

Having been very interested in classic fighter planes most of my life, I was elated to learn I'd won a ride in probably the top dog of all classic fighter planes – the P-51 Mustang.

Vlado Lench gave me a ride in his Mustang "Moonbeam McSwine" on August 21st. The weather was perfect – not a cloud in the sky and great visibility. From the instant Vlado accelerated down the runway, I could tell I was in a thoroughbred. The plane leaped into the air. After traveling a little west of the Romeoville Airport Vlado started doing some wingovers – and then some full rolls both left and right. The great bubble canopy visibility and smooth performance of the plane (and pilot) made for an awesome experience. Vlado ended the fancy flying portion of the ride by calling to me: "this is what we'd do if an Me-109 were on our tail" and he proceeded to abruptly tip the plane on its side while pulling back hard on the stick. As we were turning he called out: "...2.5 Gs, 3.0 Gs, 3.5 Gs ...". I expected a lot from the ride, but this experience surpassed everything I dreamed it could be. A thousand thank-yous to Vlado for so generously providing an opportunity to such a great experience.



2006 Squadron 4 dinner – well attended

Photo by T. Dunavin



‘Even has a TBM on the back too!’

Photo by T. Dunavin



Ted and Art – “You take Mark’s and I’ll get Tom.”

Photo by T. Dunavin



Mark Laatsch and our guest speaker, Robert DeKerf

Photo by Stacy Kolls



Tom Buck (CO), Mark Laatsch (past CO) and Tim Bauer “WOW! A New Jacket!”

Photo by T. Dunavin



Mike and Sheryl Kellner with Mark

Photo by Stacy Kolls



Guest speaker, Robert DeKerf. Engineer and Top Gunner on B-24 "WitchCraft"
Photo by Stacy Kolls



Stacy Kolls receives the Merit award
Photo by Ted Koston



David Maren "Havin Fun"
Photo by Stacy Kolls



Jim, Liz, and Katie – havin fun
Photo by Art Sereque



Capt. Downey, Tom, Col. Geuss, and Dan
Photo by Ted Koston



Mindy Closen and her Dad, Frank McCarter
Photo by Art Sereque

VETERANS IN REVIEW

As a new feature of the newsletter, we will be visiting with and reporting about the Veterans, who are members and friends of Squadron 4. It can be found in this spot with each newsletter.

Ted Koston has retired as Squadron photographer and his duties will be taken over by several other Squadron members, who's photos we will see (also in this addition) from now on. A special "THANKS, TED!" as we wish our friend well in the future!

Squadron 4 Calendar of Events

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



4/29-30/2006 - MIDWEST MILITAIRE. at Midwest Conference Center; CONCORD PLAZA, 401 W.LAKE ST., NORTHLAKE, IL
Information: Jeff Stone:708-558-0587

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

7/21/2006 - "Salute to Veterans" Hangar Dance at Dixon Walgreen Field, Dixon, Ill 7:30pm. Tickets are \$20, contact Tim Dunavin for more details.

7/22/2006 – Pancake breakfast at Dixon Walgreen Field, Dixon, Il. Contact Tim Dunavin for more details

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. 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 our regular meetings, 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.

Folded Wings

Squadron 4 regrets the passing of Tom Finkler of Squadron 6. We send our warmest regards to his wife, Sherry and her family. Tom was buried at the little Cemetery near Whittman field at Oshkosh.



The Boulton Paul Defiant was a big, heavy aircraft at 39ft 4in....and grossly underpowered with its 1030 hp Rolls Merlin. Photo from Jim Newman collection (An RAF friend of Tim Dunavin)

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.

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.

2006 Annual Dinner Recap, by Art Sereque

WOW!! What a fantastic Banquet! An overflow crowd forced the banquet staff to provide a third more table settings than had originally been planed for. No problem, the more the merrier.

C.O. Mark Laatsch started the program, as usual, with the "Star Spangled Banner". Chaplin Matt Huffnus led the assembly in prayer, followed by a moment of silence for our fallen defenders of freedom. Taps was then played.

Following a great dinner, the C.O. commenced a business meeting.

Mike and Sheryl Kellner were lauded for their on going restoration of the "Desert Rat", a WWII B -17. Also lauded were all the Veterans present.

It was announced that Squadron 4 may host the EAA B-17, "Aluminum Overcast" possibly in Septemb er. Details are still being worked out.

Meritorious Service Awards were received by; Brian Churchill, Tim Bauer, Stacy Kolls (for "Operation Shoe Box"), Ted Koston, and David Maren.

A Benefactor's Award was presented to Vlado Leno for donating rides in his vintage WWII P-51 Mustang.

A Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Will Martin, for all his contributions to Warbirds.

Guest, Joe Thornburg displayed some fine examples of his Aviation Art.

Our guest speaker, Technical Sgt. Robert DeKerf gave an exciting talk on his experiences as an engineer/top turret gunner on a B-24 Liberator. Training was at Wendover Field, Utah – a "hell hole"! Flying from the States to Dakur they had an engine problem. It turned out an improperly installed ring was causing a plug to foul. His first mission was a milk run to France, but even with electrically heated cloths, at 25000 ft. – it was still very cold. He flew 26 missions in "The Witch", with 4 in other planes due to repairs.

At the conclusion of the meeting, outgoing C.O. Laatsch was presented with a beautiful leather bomber jacket with a picture of incoming C.O. Tom Buck's Grumman Avenger TBM on the back.

Now lets all work together to make Tom's tenure as C.O. as successful as that of Mark's.