

COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

→ → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

October / November 2004 • Vol. 20, No. 6

Photoreconnaissance Pilot and former Prisoner of War shares his experiences

Mr. Robert Ecklund of Emporia, KS was our guest speaker at the August Membership Luncheon. He told us about his experiences as a photoreconnaissance pilot during World War II flying F-5 versions of the Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter. The F-5 was an unarmed version of this famous twin-engine fighter. Instead of guns, the F-5 carried up to five cameras in its nose and forward fuselage. Mr. Ecklund said missions were flown from 500 feet to 30,000 feet, depending on what needed to be photographed. He flew with the 5th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron, 3rd Photographic Group (Reconnaissance), in the 12th Air Force.

His primary and basic training were completed in southern California and advance training for twin engine aircraft in Roswell, NM. Two brothers were also in the Army Air Corps. Both were bomber pilots flying out of England. One flew B-17 Flying Fortresses and the other B-24 Liberators. The B-24 brother was shot down in March 1944 and became a POW at Stalag Luft III.

Ecklund explained the types of missions photo reconnaissance aircraft flew. Flight surveys of pre-invasion beaches were a major mission for photo recon units. In some instances, pre-invasion reconnaissance of beaches began two years before the invasion took place. Missions were flown endlessly and repeatedly, putting the beaches under constant surveillance. The high and low level missions showed such things as beach obstacles, gun placements, troop concentrations and buildups, and road and rail routes

into the area. The photos also showed possible landing sites and drop zones for invading airborne troops.

The missions flown to survey the beaches used in the invasion of southern France on August 15, 1944, actually covered a 700-mile span from Spain to Italy. Ecklund said this was done to mask the objective of the reconnaissance flights. The Germans knew that the flights were associated with a probable invasion, but did not know where.



Mr. Robert Ecklund

See "Recon", continued on page 4

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Museum Hours

Monday - Saturday

9 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

Last Admission 3:30 P.M.

Sunday 10 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

Last Admission 3:30 P.M.

Plane Talk, the official newsletter of Combat Air Museum of Topeka, Kansas, is published bi monthly. Your questions and comments are welcomed.

Any information for **Plane Talk** should be submitted to CAM office.

You could be helping the Museum as a docent, running the Gift Shop or building mock-ups. Volunteer today!

There is a need for several more tour guides. Anyone interested please call (785) 266-3296. **Ralph Knehans** can explain what is involved in becoming a tour guide at the Museum.

At present, we have fourteen training manuals completed for aiding tour guides. There is also a folder containing pictures and information on our aircraft. It is located in the Gift Shop. It can be checked out on the sign-up sheet for use in the Museum, but needs to stay here and be checked back in by the end of the day.

Being a tour guide provides a needed service for the Museum and great satisfaction for the tour guide. Please consider being a docent and helping our your Museum.

We also need volunteers to run the Gift Shop. If you have an interest to help in that area, please call **Jane Weinmann**, Office Manager, Monday-Friday, between 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. for information. You'll start by working with other Gift Shop operators, to get a feel for the job, before working solo.

If guiding visitors and working a register are not your interests, we have hangar projects waiting for workers. At different times we have heard folks say they would like to work on the Bf-109 movie mock-up. Well, the time is now. **Dick Trupp** has researched the markings the mock-up will eventually be put in, and we need folks to start sanding and doing work on the fuselage to prepare this mock-up for exhibit. **Dave Houser** is doing work on the wings and can probably use some help there, too. If you are interested in this project, contact Dick Trupp at (785) 862-3303. →

2004 Calendar

Events subject to change

October

23 – Hangar 602 reserved for
Air Explorer Squadron 8
Fundraising Dinner

December

Christmas Break –
Aviation Education Class

→ → →

Join the Combat Air Museum!

Your membership and
support are
important to us.

**October/November
Calendar of Events**

OCTOBER

Monday, October 11
Membership Potluck Luncheon
Jean Wanner Education
Conference Center
11:30 a.m.

Mr. Randy Thies of the
Kansas Humanities
Council is our scheduled
guest speaker.
"Gravestones to Die For"

Saturday, October 23
Air Explorer Squadron 8
Annual Fundraising Dinner
5:30 - 9:30 p.m.
Hangar 602
Tickets: \$50 per person

NOVEMBER

Thursday, November 25
Thanksgiving
The Museum is Closed

There is no Membership
Luncheon in November.
Thenext luncheon is Monday,
December 13.



**Looking for a special gift?
Stop by the Gift Shop**

NEW!!

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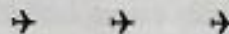
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Walnut, Wenga,
and Zebra Wood.

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at the CAM Gift Shop
(Remember your
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Visitors

During **July**
the Museum had
1,565 visitors
from **40** states
and
Austria
Mexico
Taiwan

During **August**
we had
1,036 visitors
from **38** states
and
Australia
Belarus
Canada
Denmark
Germany
Great Britain
Hungary
Japan
Mexico
Poland
Switzerland



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www.combatairmuseum.org

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Letters and mission logs from Korea

Excerpts from letters and combat mission logs written from South Korea in 1952 by USMC Second Lieutenant John Walker Hatcher, who flew Corsair fighter-bombers. Times are based on a 24-hour, military clock. USS BATAAN (CVL-29) was a light aircraft carrier. The text appears as originally written.

Mission #15 [USS Bataan] 7 June

CAP (with Villareal)

Armament – 4 20 mm's

TO – 1230 Land – 1435

A routine hop. Given vectors by Uphill, cruised around 2 hours, intercepted returning flights. No outstanding incidents.

Mission #16 [USS Bataan] 8 June

TARCAP - with (Shonie)

Armament – 1 x 500# GP, 6 x .50 cal's

TO – 1030 LB – 1050 Land – 1245

A 2 plane flight. Contacted SD, who asked us to recco [reconnaissance] a certain area for possible NGF [Naval Gunfire Support] spot. We could not find any, so dropped our 500 #er's on a bunker and gun emplacements with fair results – near misses. We found some (4) boats at XL 820716, and got some near misses, no direct hits – strong cross-wind. Strafing some trenches, etc. No outstanding incidents.

Mission #17 [USS Bataan] 8 June

CAP with (Shonie)

Armament 6 x .50's MG

TO – 1445 Land – 1645

Regular CAP [Combat Air Patrol]. Vectors, intercepts. Nothing outstanding or Interesting.

Mission #18 [USS Bataan] 9 June

RECCO (SW) Haiju - Chinnampo

Armament 1 x 500#, 8 x 100#, 6 x .50's

TO – 1655 BL – 1715 Land – 1845

4-plane recco, with Shonie, Folmar, & Det. Primary target was RR bridge west of Haeju. Also RR & HW Bridge at YC 049007. Missed them both. Then reccoed road from there up toward Chinnam'po. Found a highway bridge but missed it, too. (Strong wind?). Found some oxen, etc. in some farmlands along the way,

strafed a little. Got 1 ox, possibly 2. Otherwise, nothing interesting.

Mission #19 [USS Bataan] 10 June

TARCAP (with Shonie) Pungchon (north)

Armament 1 Napalm, 8 x WP, 6 x .50's

TO – 0530 BL – 0555 Land – 0745

Assigned 2 mess-halls, battalion mess-hall and combination Officer's Mess – CP at XC 748585 near Pungchon. Destroyed them both, 1 with Napalm and 1 with WP's [White Phosphorous]. I had good hits this hop. Also hit a big U-shaped building near there with WP. Then we recco'ed the general TARCAP area, strafing bunkers & trenches. Found one oxcart, ox, and a man hiding in trees beside road. Ox got scared, ran out in road, pulling cart. Man tried to stop him. I got all 3 (not sure about man). Otherwise, nothing. BAD WEATHER this hop.

Excerpts from Letter No. 13 [USS Bataan]

Monday, 10 June

-000000

Everything is going satisfactory this cruise, with the exception of one plane being shot down yesterday morning. He was on fire and bailed out (safely), but got second & third-degree burns on the face and hands. He was rescued in about 15 minutes, which is how we like to see things go.

You all are probably wondering how our (this carrier's) pilots can be rescued so swiftly when they're way up well behind enemy lines. Well, here is the secret. We (the US) captured and held (earlier in the war) (and are continuing to hold) Cho'do Island, which is a small island about 5 miles off-shore near Chinnam'po, to cover downed pilots until the helicopter gets there. The Rescap [rescue combat air patrol] strafes any troops or persons trying to get near the downed pilot. It has proven to be a pretty good system, and usually works out. One good change that the Commie's seem to have made recently in their tactics is that they now will take pilots prisoner, whereas earlier in the war, they would not. However, it all depends on where you are, and the breaks; one of the fellows I came over with on the 20th Draft, Capt. Perry Porter, bailed out over the Punch Bowl at 1500' and the Commies used him for MG practice. So it just depends on the sector you're in; I think that ours is fairly good.

This is just to give you insight on a few of the things over here, but don't worry. I still have the same old confidence and luck. Don't worry!

Love, Johnny

**Mission #20 [USS Bataan] (1HOLE) 11 June
RECON (SW) Schone, Jesse, Det Haeju – Coast
Area**

**Armament 1 x 500#, 8 x 100#, 6 x .50's
TO – 1655 BL - 1715 Land – 1845**

Target 2 RR bridges, same as #18, better hits, same general route. I damaged one RR bridge with 500#er, 1 HW bridge with 2 x 100ers. Killed or wounded 8 oxen, 1 gray horse. Picked up 1 hole (?) in right horizontal stabilizer.

**Mission #21 [USS Bataan] 12 June
River Recco Haeju – Chinnam'po**

**Armament 1x 1000#, 4 x 100#, 6 x .50's
TO – 0910 BL - 0930 Land – 1125**

(With Schoneberger, Detmering & Folmat).

This was my best mission thus far. Jesse Got a direct hit with his 1000# bomb on a RR bridge, and I got a direct hit on another RR bridge with my 1000# bomb. Carl missed with his 500#, and Schone was photoplane, only carried 4 x 100#. I got a hit among some boxcars on a siding, also, and caused a secondary explosion. Also with 100#er's, I destroyed some (at least 2) buildings in a village west of Chinnam'po, and hit a gun position on a mountain south of there. We got 37 mm Flak over Sariwon, and 20 mm over Chiannam'po. Otherwise, no incidents.

**Mission #22 [USS Bataan] 12 June
CAP (Schone)**

**Armament 1 Rescue Kit
TO – 1505 Land – 1655**

An average CAP hop. No incidents.

**Mission #23 [USS Bataan] (Friday 13) June
TARCAP (Schone)**

**Armament 1 x 500# GP, 6 x 100# GP, 4 20 mm
TO – 0730 BL - 0750 Land – 0920**

A good hop. I unloaded 1 x 100# on a 40 mm radar control station, direct hit. Unloaded another on a gun position below Amgac peninsula, got a direct hit. De-

stroyed 3-4 bldgs with 2 bombs in a village near first gun position. Schone dropped his Napalm on warehouse in Ullyul, I dropped my 500# on a HW bridge west of there. Got a road cut and damaged one end of bridge. (Pissed me off to hit that close and not collapse the bridge). Schone set fire to several bldgs, etc. with his 8 x WP. I had OIL on windshield, but made a fair pass.

**Excerpts from Letter No. 14 [USS Bataan]
Friday, 13 June**

Dear Folks,

Today is "Friday the 13th", and it looks like it is going to be a rough day. I have already had my hop, though, so I guess I'm safe. It is just eleven o'clock in the morning now, but already we have had about 6 different instances of trouble. My wing-man had a partial aileron lock on his plane, and just barely got back aboard, after our TARCAP. I had oil streaks all over my windshield & canopy, and just barely got aboard. Three out of four planes on a far-north recco got hit by 20 mm's shells; one got hit in the canopy (the 2 steel braces at the front saved him), and another got about 1/4th his aileron shot off. So it is just these little things that make it rough. However, here is one good note: although we get hit and shot down, etc., we hardly ever lose the pilot. We're careful, though, and I still like it...

We have only two more days on this cruise, and then we'll be in port at Sasebo for about 5-6 days. I'll write another note before we get there.

Love, Johnny

**Mission #24 [USS Bataan] 14 June
CAP (Detmering)**

**Armament 4 x 20 mm
TO Land**

Average CAP. I led most of the hop for experience.

**Mission #25 [USS Bataan] 15 June
CAP (Smith)**

**Armament 1 x Reskit, 6 x 50's
TO – 1505 Land – 1700**

Average CAP

→ → →

Gravestones to Die For
is the provocative title of the next
Membership Luncheon presentation.
Get in the Halloween spirit and
come learn what it's about

The scheduled speaker for the October Membership Luncheon is member **Randy Thies**. Randy will speak to us on behalf of the Kansas Humanities Council. His topic will be "Gravestones to Die For". That is all we know, other than Randy gives this presentation throughout the state. So, come on out, enjoy our selection of potluck dishes, and see what Mr. Thies has in store for us. Membership Potluck Luncheon is **Monday, October 11**, Jean Wanner Education Conference Center, 11:30 a.m. →

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