



SCHAFA Newsletter December 2018-

Reminder: The next SCHAFA Open House will take place Saturday, December 8, 2018. 10am-1pm at Hangar Y-1 Hamilton/Owens Airport.

Merry Christmas to everyone from the folks at SCHAFA. We hope you have a safe a happy holiday season.

Foundation Happenings-

One work night in November, we were very excited to have our friends from the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum stop by the hangar. Bill Rouw always gives us great pointers on working on the B-25. As many of you know, he is the chief flight engineer for the flying B-25 at the CWHM. His knowledge of the B-25 is invaluable to the work being done on our own GF2. Leon Evans is the chief pilot at the CWHM. He flies their Lancaster, B-25 and so many other planes. He was telling so many amazing airplane stories that I could have listened to him for hours! The most encouraging statement he said all night was how he has seen something that may seem disastrous on a plane can always be fixed. He said he can now look at pictures of horrible airplanes crashes and think "We can fix that". While sometimes the work being done on GF2 can seem daunting, we have the constant attitude of "we can fix her"! Last but certainly not least was Shirley Salomone who is an amazing volunteer who assists with all of the planes and events happening at CWHM.

David is showing Bill and Leon some of the work he did replacing fuses inside our Yale. David was able to get the lights on the Yale to work. (It always helps to have an electrical engineer in your hip pocket!) Leon was able to share some interesting tidbit information as well. For instance, there were red night vision bulbs used to light the dash of the Yale.



Pictured here are the visitors from CWHM along with some of the SCHAF restoration crew. Pictured left to right are Katherine, Niall, Ron, Shirley Salomone (CWHM), Bill Row (CWHM), Leon Evans (CWHM), David and Pierce.



Historical Notes-

The following is Part 1 of a story submitted by John Tokaz regarding his father's service in WWII. Part 2 will be featured in next month's newsletter.



Col Tik Tokaz Commander, 340th Bomb Group in 1943 preparing for a flight in piloting a captured German Messerschmitt ME-109 fighter at Catania, Sicily. To his right is Major Lou Keller Commander, 486th Bomb Squadron and a Doolittle Raider backup pilot. The 340th veterans that were there told me he really put the ME-109 through its paces and zipped all around the airfield. In not so many words they referred to him as a real "hot" pilot and all admired his flying abilities. He said cockpit instruments were all in German but it was easy to figure it out by looking at them. The instruments were all similar to US instruments. He did this flying in his days off as a form of relaxation. He said he did worry that one of his anti-aircraft gun crews might not have

gotten the word about his ME-109 sport flying and shoot at him. The only thing else to decompress from nerves was alcohol and General Doolittle as 12th Air Force commander was known to fly in and hand out bottles of alcohol for good airmanship and excellent combat results.

Col Tokaz originally stood up the 340th Bomb Group at Columbia Army Air Base in August 1942 at age 30. He became Operations Officer after Colonel William C. Mills a more experienced officer transferred in from the historic 17th Bomb Group as the new Group Commander. Col Mills was KIA on May 6, 1943 when leading a combat mission. Col Tokaz resumed command of the group for the next seven months until he was promoted to Operations Officer of the newly formed 57th Bomb Wing initially headquartered in Italy and then Corsica led by General Robert Knapp who stood up the original Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Columbia Army Air Base about February, 1942 with the arrival of the 17th Bomb Group. This was for purposes of initially training a group of 17th crews who would become known later as the Doolittle Raiders for about two weeks mostly using

the bombing range at Lake Murray and the air gunnery range at Myrtle Beach Army Airfield plus some low-level flying. It was during these two weeks that Lt Colonel Jimmy Doolittle would fly in from the Pentagon checking on their initial short takeoff practices before going on to more intensive Navy carrier type short takeoff training in Florida. Working on the air base was Bob Hennies, an Eau Claire resident back then and close friend of SCHAF member Alton Blanks. He worked as a newly hired 17 year old civilian worker in a base engineering department performing street and runway surveying. This led him to be involved with Lt Colonel Doolittle in measuring precisely certain key points on the runways with markers where Doolittle wanted his B-25 pilots to be wheels up on their short takeoff practices in a B-25 with 3000 lb bomb loads in about 450 feet or less.



Capt Tokaz had just finished the New York Maneuvers in 1939 and had arrived in South Carolina in the early winter of 1940 at Owens Field. The photo on the left are New York National Guard troops walking to take the train home. Captain Tokaz had completed his flying assignment in these Maneuvers in August 1939. This is his story where he flew an OA-9 Grumman Goose as mail courier flying US mail from the troops in the maneuver area in upstate New York near Watertown and then flying to New York City. He did not get checked out in the OA-9 until he got there. The checkout maybe was provided by a pilot from the

97th Observation Squadron at Mitchel Field on Long Island from which it is thought the OA-9 was borrowed for the Maneuvers. This must have been awkward because the early model OA-9s had a single pilot cockpit. Captain Tokaz had previously gone through some instruction with the US Coast Guard at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn on amphibian flight technique and operation in flying the Hudson River Flight Corridor along with landing procedures in New York Harbor. He was now settled in at Watertown when President Roosevelt came for a visit with the troops and trooped the line. He told his driver to stop in front of the OA-9 with Capt Tokaz standing at attention who promptly saluted. He overheard Roosevelt say "That is a funny looking thing." His day would begin by picking up the mail at the Watertown post office and take off. He made an intermediate stop which required a water landing in the Hudson River first though at West Point to pick up mail from the US Military Academy. There were some small rapids he had to avoid and the river current was tricky in this stretch of the river when making his landing. It was a long walk up the steep riverbank to the academy mail center and back down to his amphibian plane. He said it was a really heavy lift and he was "pooped" when he got back to his aircraft. A roundtrip took about 3 1/2 to 4 hours so maybe he did two trips a day. He would follow the route down the Hudson River and enter the New York area in what is called today the Hudson River Exclusion Zone (SFRA). In those days they might not have had the zone but surely operated under some sort of flight restrictions. The only municipal airfield was Floyd Bennett Field. LaGuardia Airport did not open until December 1939. So, he came down flying under VFR rules south on the gorgeous Hudson River Corridor. I would guess when he got to the George Washington Bridge he would call the Floyd Bennett tower identifying himself as "Air Corps Goose", 1200 feet at "GWB" southbound using radio frequency 123.05 for Hudson River and then fly out past the Statue of Liberty into the Atlantic making a turn to line up on the East River so he could make his landing approach. It was more sheltered and easier to land on for its smoother water. The Hudson River was rather rough water. He would switch to frequency 123.075 used for this purpose, call the Floyd Bennett tower for clearance to land and come on in and make his water landing. This then required him to water taxi quite a distance going by the very busy ferry docks where the large Staten Ferry came in and docked about every 30 minutes. There were smaller ferries but a very busy dock area which presented other traffic problems for him. His taxi speed was slow. The below gives you the feeling of the space he was operating in. The plane is probably a USCG amphibian JRF-2 similar to OA-9 that may have taken off from Floyd Bennett Field. Those docks in the background could be the Brooklyn Navy Yard on the East River.



Good Reads-

Are any of you like me and always have books on your Christmas wish list? My “to read” stack is always longer than my “finished reading” stack. If any of you get some great books for Christmas, pass the title along to us so we can include them in future newsletters.

With the recent 100th Anniversary of WWI, I have become interested in reading about American aviators especially those who flew with the RAF. On my list is the book “The First Eagles: The Fearless American Aces Who Flew with the RAF in World War I” by Gavin Mortimer. I look forward to reading this one!

One book passed along by Dave McIntosh is “Aces Wild” by Lt Robert A Winston. The author served as an aviator in the Navy from 1935 – 1950. He is the author of many books regarding his experiences in the Navy before and during WWII. This book is about his time as a test pilot flying for the Brewster aircraft company.

Odds and Ends-

It's a true classic that has become a tradition of the Christmas season, *It's a Wonderful Life* starring Jimmy Stewart. Before acting in the much beloved movie though Jimmy Stewart was serving his country in the skies over Europe: <https://www.warhistoryonline.com/world-war-ii/daylights-nazi-germany.html>

A couple of items about the holiday season and helicopters. First is about what has been a tradition in the U.S. Coast Guard since 1929 through a group called the [Friends of Flying Santa](#) .

Here's the story of delivering Christmas present to the children of U.S.C.G. personnel by helicopter: <https://www.verticalmag.com/news/delivering-toys-helicopter-uscg-children-time-christmas/> .

And, here's the story of how helicopters play an important role in the harvesting of Christmas trees: <https://www.verticalmag.com/news/helicopters-complete-oregon-christmas-tree-harvest/> .

In Closing-

We would like to thank those of you who sent in your renewals this month. We were happy with the response. We will send one more renewal reminder to those of you who have not renewed then we will clean up our membership roll in January. If you would like to renew you can [Go to the SCHAF membership page on the foundation's website.](#)

If you have something you would like to share in a future newsletter, please send an email directly to SCHAF at info.schaf@gmail.com.

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