JIMMY DOOLITTLE AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM
REACHING FOR THE STARS

NEWS

A publication of the Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation Vol. XXI, No. 3, 2003
P O Box 1565 • Travis AFB, CA 94533 • (707) 424–5605 • www.travis.af.mil/museum/

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President Truman's "Secret" Trip to Fairfield-Suisun AFB

By Gary Leiser

On October 11, 1950 President Harry Truman departed Washington on the presidential aircraft "Independence" and headed west on a flight to an undisclosed destination. His first stop was St. Louis, where he visited family members and participated in his sister's installation as Grand Matron of the Easter Star. The next day his plane was followed by another, a Constellation that had been readied for Governor Thomas E. Dewey, had he been successful in his run for president in 1948. Aboard this aircraft were such distinguished persons as General of the Army Omar N. Bradly, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Ambassador W. Averell Harriman, Special Assistant to the President; and Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs.

Meanwhile, also on October 12, President Truman's aircraft had departed St. Louis and six hours and forty-five minutes later, at 7:15 pm, landed at Fairfield-Suisun AFB. While his aircraft was being refueled, the President visited casualties of the Korean War at the base hospital. A day earlier Harpo Marx had entertained them. Still, despite the visit to the hospital, no specific information had been given to the press about the true nature of the President's trip. Even the "X" destination of the correspondents' tickets was not identified. The newspapermen were frantic. One eager reporter from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, trying to pick up the slightest crumb of information, finally broke through the ring of Secret Service men around the President and asked, "How was the morale of the men in the hospital?" The President replied, "Perfect! Much better than yours or mine." Lacking real news, the press focused on the President's activities at Fairfield-Suisun and his wardrobe.

On Friday the 13th, at 12:30 am, President Truman's aircraft departed the base for Hickam AFB, Hawaii, followed by General Bradley's plane. Upon reaching Hawaii, the President's true destination was revealed to the press—Wake Island. As he wrote at the time "I've a whale of a job before me. Have to talk to God's right-hand man tomorrow, make a policy speech in San Francisco Tuesday night and … then tell the UN where to head in on the 24th. Too much for a farm boy."

At about the same time, on the other side of the Pacific, across the International Dateline, the American Ambassador to Korea, John Muccio, received an enigmatic message from the State Department that simply stated, "If invited, take the trip." About two hours later he received a message directly from General Douglas MacArthur saying, "I have been instructed to invite you, and if at Haneda before 11:00 in the morning, should be glad to have your company." Baffled, Muccio was then provided transportation to Haneda by CINCFEAF.

At the appointed time, General MacArthur met Muccio aboard his aircraft. A few minutes after the plane took off, MacArthur sat beside Muccio and clearly expressed his disgust at "being summoned to Wake Island for political reasons" when the war in Korea demanded all of his attention. Only at that moment did Muccio realize that a meeting was to be held on Wake between President Truman and General MacArthur. As we know, it proved to be a fateful meeting for General MacArthur.

The Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum NEWS is a publication of the Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation. The NEWS is published four times a year. Subscriptions are free to paid members of the Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation.

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Comments and questions about the NEWS may be addressed to Editor, Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation NEWS, PO Box 1565, Travis AFB, CA 94535

Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum
Mission Statement

The purpose of the Museum is to portray the history of Travis Air Force Base's contribution to the development of airlift in the Pacific.

It's primary objectives are:

- To provide and maintain an aviation and aerospace, educational, scientific, cultural, historical and inspirational facility for the general public.
- To provide to youth, students and scholars historical research facilities and inspirational exhibits.
- To serve as a meeting place and forum for aerospace oriented organizations and individuals for the benefit of all Northern California.

* In accordance with AFPD 64-1,
Air Force History and Museum Program.

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Present this coupon, for a

10% discount

on all Doolittle Raider 61st Reunion memorabilia.

Curator's Corner

By Gary Leiser

Museum Operations Highlights: Since the Reunion of the Doolittle Raiders, the museum has been occupied with fairly mundane tasks such as checking the inventory, preparing for environmental compliance, and disposing of old equipment and accumulated flotsam and jetsam. We have also worked hard to arrange for repainting several aircraft. Perhaps, most important, the Museum owes a great debt of thanks to **Ross Overby of URS Corporation** in San Francisco for doing the paperwork for the next phase of the environmental study of the proposed site for the new museum. Meanwhile, the museum continued to provide the venue for various events, such as a picnic sponsored by the **Car Club of Marin** County, which also made a generous donation to the foundation.

Nuts and Bolts: Since the reunion our volunteers have been especially busy. **Joe Tattersall** and **Bob Zirzow** resurfaced the control surfaces of the C-45. Using a spare rudder, Joe also fabricated an excellent cut-away exhibit of a wing and did considerable interior work on the SA-16. Joe also did a superb job of building a fiberglass hull for the *USS Hornet* in the Doolittle exhibit. In addition he and **Charlie White** straightened the cannons in the B-52. Bob also removed and reconditioned the control panels in the cockpit of the C-7. **Eric Schmidt, Bill Santee** and **Ben Reed** repaired wind damage to the right elevator of the B-52. Bill and Charles White worked on the crew entry door of the B-52 as well. Furthermore, Bill cleaned the interior of the C-131 and C-124. Indeed, Bill, Bob Jenkins, and Charles White put a lot of work into preparing the C-131 for a special 15 AF function making its departure from Travis. Joe Tattersall and Ben Reed also worked on the blades of the H-21. **Charlie Maran** worked on the interior of the C-118, among other things reinstalling the crew bunks in the front of the aircraft. Bob Jenkins made a new windshield for the F-100 trainer. His work on rehabilitating the trainer is now finished. See the story in the NEWS on page 10. He also repositioned the MD-3 unit inside the C-123 and changed its tiedowns. Ben Reed continued to work in the library, adding new materials as they arrived. He also built a display case for the C-133 and did touch-up painting on the B-29. Bill Lancaster built a special stand for the *USS Hornet* as part of our new Doolittle exhibit and installed the wiring for the new air compressor purchased by the foundation. **Jim Martin**, Joe Tattersall, Ben Reed and **Fred Dohnke** worked on, or replaced, the gust locks on the C-119. Jim Martin made many small repairs to various aircraft outdoors. Gary Vostry kept the 02 in shape. **Jim Holtz** was busy making plastic cases for B-25s. And **Bob Jenkins**, Bill Santee, Charlie White, **Bob Zirzow**, Ben Reed sweated bullets cleaning out the tire room, woodshop, and several trailers. **Earl Johnson, Gerry Propp,** and **Arnold Wiese** kept the gift shop working and Eric Schmidt continues to give tours to rave reviews. **Nabor Valle** comes in almost every day as all-around volunteer.

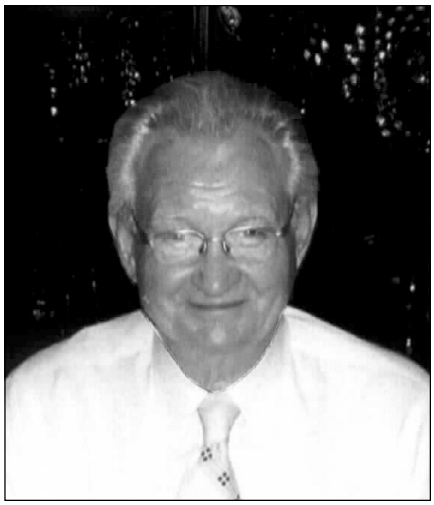
Joe Tattersall diligently working on the USS "Hornet" on the Doolittle exhibit.

Bob Jenkins restored the F-100 trainer.

Monetary donations: Finally, I am pleased to report that the museum has received an increasing number of donations. Until a few years ago the museum received $20K each year from the Wing to cover normal operating expenses, from light bulbs to building new exhibits. But like other agencies, we have had our budget cut. We now receive about $5K each year. Consequently, private donations are essential to our daily operations. We greatly appreciate, therefore, donations from **Homer Helter**, and, in the name of **Kay Stork**, from **Curt and Margaret Francis, Steven and Helen Clarke, Edna Hill, Jennifer Tai, Dick and Irene Hamada, R.E. and L.M. Cole, Rosina Stoner, Grace Ellerbrock and John and Priscilla Doolittle.** Others will be acknowledged in future issues of the newsletter. Finally, a special thanks to **Duncan Miller** for generously hosting a "Thank You BBQ" at his hangar for all the volunteers who worked on the Reunion. See photos on page 10.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY DUNCAN . . . GREETINGS FROM THE PAST!

Duncan Miller, Director
Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space
Museum Foundation



Earl Wassom
Bowling Green, Kentucky

July 15, 2003

Dear Mr. Miller:

To be proper in addressing you 60 years ago, it was always MR MILLER since you were my flight instructor, mentor, and my sole hope of becoming a successful aviation cadet and eventually a pilot!!!!!

My old 43-K aviation cadet classmate buddy, George Weddell made a special call to me informing me that he had run across one of the instructors at Victory Field. Upon further questioning, he learned that you were at Vernon, Texas at the same time he was and further questioning identified you as my flight instructor. I couldn't believe my good luck in finding out about you. It has been 60 years since you gave your 4 fledging cadets your final blessings and words of encouragement. I shall never forget it. We were off to Basic Flight Training. Greenville, Texas, Majors field was our next assignment. It was in July 1943 and now it is July 2003, 60 years later!

George informed me that it is your 82nd birthday, July 19. Congratulations. What would be appropriate as a gift for a man who contributed so much to my life? I looked through my primary flight scrapbook and came up with the enclosed items. Pictured are your trainees of the Class of 43-K. An interesting bunch they were! Stewart. Trier. Ticen and Wassom. They didn't wash out of primary flight or anything else. We all survived, graduated from cadets, won our wings and went ahead to be useful USAAF pilots. Three of us became B-24 command pilots and one a P–51 fighter jock. We all went to combat, survived all of the attacks of the enemy, completed our tour of duty, and I know of three of us that are still living. Stewart may still be around but I haven't heard from him. I am proud to have been a part of that group and thankful for your patience towards all of us. You made pilots out of all of us and each is an honorable (senior citizen). I am enclosing a couple of photos of me in my "more mature years".

May this day in the year 2003 be a blessed time for you.

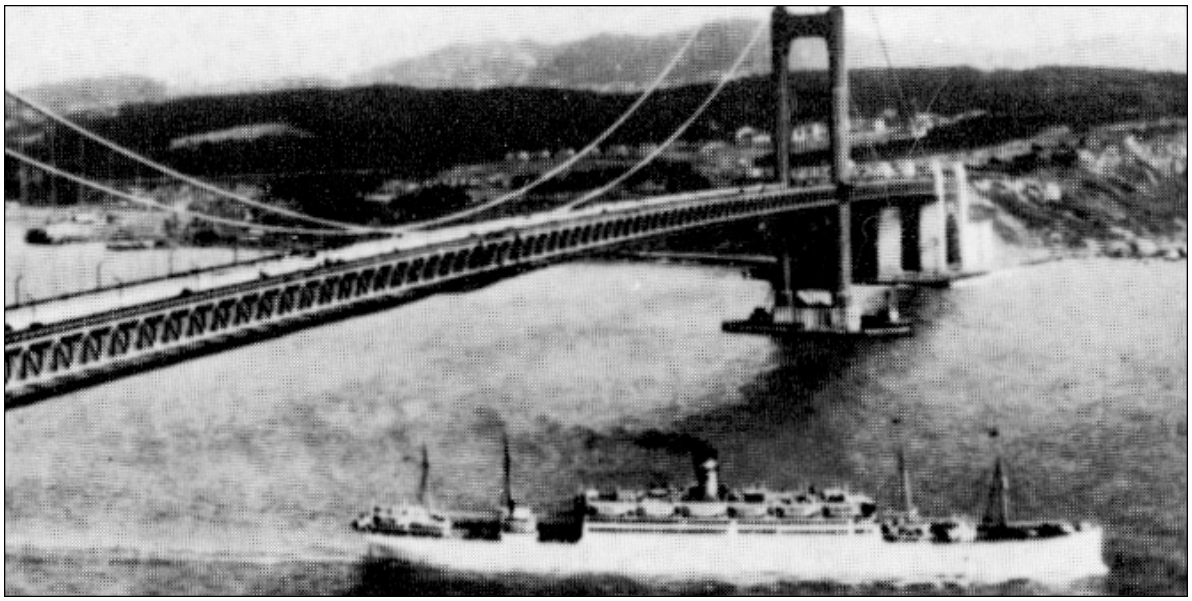
Sincerely,

Earl Wassom

Enclosures

My First Cruise at Government Expense

San Francisco to Melbourne, November 20-December 23, 1941



The USAT "Republic" sailing under the Golden Gate Bridge at San Francisco with 7th Group and 88th Squadron troops aboard. It was headed for the Philippines, but ended up in Australia instead. (1941) (William Shelley)

By Marvin Riehl

In the fall of 1940, the 7th Bomb Group moved to Salt Lake City, Utah from Hamilton Field near San Rafael, California. I was a member of the 88th Recon Squadron in that group and on October 5, 1941 I had completed two years of service. In November, we were dispatched to Angel Island in San Francisco Bay on secret orders with final destination "PLUMB."

On November 20, we were transported to Pier 7 on the San Francisco waterfront where we boarded the US Army Transport *USS Republic*. This ship had been built in 1907. It was originally a German-American passenger ship but was taken from the Germans as part of reparations in 1918. At that time it was the 15th largest ship afloat. It had just been worked over in dry dock and was modernized to include better air conditioning. More on that later.

Our first task aboard was to throw overboard to the dock below 3,000 standard-size GI mattresses. Crew hammocks were installed on all decks. These beds were about two feet wide and four beds high. Also, the rows were two feet apart and folded up when not in use. Our deck was six decks below the main deck, two decks below the water line. There was no place to sit when the bunks were folded. We were given one blanket for bedding, which was rarely used once we were in a tropical climate. I'm not aware of the exact number of troops on board, but a reasonable estimate is 2,380. They included a Texas National Guard Field Artillery Group that had recently been Federalized. Their equipment included cannons. As for the 7th Bomb Group, we were the ground echelon. The flight crews were to depart later.

We sailed out of San Francisco at noon on November 21, 1941. I have no recollection of that departure because I was on KP in the mess hall. PFCs (one stripers) in the 88th Recon Squadron had been on this duty since morning. (Most PFCs held Spc. Ratings. Spc 1st class equaled Staff Sergeant pay, 1st Class equaled Technical Sergeant pay.) Consequently, we missed the view of the Golden Gate Bridge, which had been recently completed in 1937.

As the day progressed, numerous KPs would get sea sick and be released from duty. Some time after dark, I realized that my cousin and I were the only two PFCs still working. I was feeling woozy, so I excused myself and went to quarters to lie down. Soon my cousin showed up. The head cook had released him.

I had no idea of the magnitude of the seasickness among the GIs until I went to the latrine to relieve my bladder. As I started

to step over the threshold, I realized that the entire room—consisting of washbasins, showers and commodes—was awash with vomit about two inches deep. At the age of 24 and a half, I was able to hold my water and returned after daylight after the crew had washed it away.

Some of the troops were sick several days. On the main deck, you would frequently see a man with a panicked look make a mad dash for the side rail. If we were lucky, he would make it in time. For those below, they would make it to a stair rail and the result would bounce down the stairs.

We were issued two meal tickets a day and given a designated time to eat. The meals had no relation to the fine chow we were used to in our squadron mess halls. Powdered eggs and powdered milk on cornmeal mush are still imprinted on my memory. Evidently, it was sufficient for troops who had little or no exercise each day. The dinning tables were several inches higher than standard because there were no chairs so you stood up to eat. If the sea was a bit rough, you held your tray with one hand to keep it from sliding off the table.

Activities were limited, so most of the trip was quite boring. At night there were skits on a stage built on the fantail. Anyone with talent was invited to participate. Sometimes a movie was shown. Below deck, especially on ours, the air became stagnant and smelled like a sweat-filled gym. It was hot and muggy. Nearly all the troops slept without anything on and many would go topside and sleep on the open deck. Naturally, there was always a wise guy or two in the group who found it a simple trick to loosen a rope on the hammock of the upper beds, so the poor guy in the bottom one would wake up to find the weight of the upper pushing on his stomach.

Our ship was supposed to cruise at about fifteen knots, but shortly into the trip, one of the propeller shafts vibrated radically and we slowed down. The result was that the 2,098 miles to Honolulu was traveled at an average speed of 10 mph!

I was awakened at daybreak November 30. We were in the Hawaiian Islands and the ground swells were rocking the ship, so one would smack the hammock rail on one side and then the other. I was topside when we docked in Honolulu at 10 am on November 30.

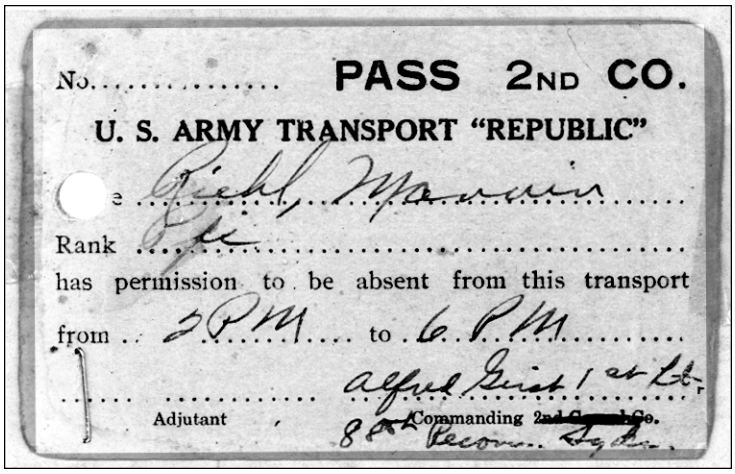
While the ship was taking on supplies, the troops were given permission to go ashore in groups, four hours per group. A couple of buddies and I went window shopping. We were startled when we came upon a barber shop with women barbers. Naturally, we had to get a haircut immediately. It was quite a novelty. I purchased a couple of items to mail to my girlfriend. This was at a nearby shop. They also had postcards including pictures of the *USS Republic*. Some were standard postcard size and some were huge. Because we were traveling on secret orders, we refrained from purchasing them. We discovered later that not all the troops were this careful and lived to regret it. More on that later.

December 1, 1941, we sailed out of Honolulu and were joined by six or seven other ships to create a convoy. Two of these ships were for our protection. One was the Navy cruiser *Pensacola* with three operational search planes. They were launched by catapult and then picked up by the ship's crane after landing in the water beside the cruiser. The other was a high speed yacht formerly owned by a multi-millionaire and leased to the Navy at one dollar a year. It was converted to a sub chaser and was armed with depth charges. Its job was to cruise outboard some distance from the convoy. It would move from one side of the convoy to the other after disappearing from the horizon. I imagine it was equipped with the latest submarine detection devices.

The trip continued on its boring way, the slow pace being maintained by our transport. We had all been briefed about "no sunbathing even if fog prevailed." The reason for this was proven on a later date when an airman climbed up into a huge life raft, stripped down to a bathing suit and read a book. He fell asleep and when he awoke and climbed down to the deck someone saw how serious his burn was and rushed him to the medics where his temperature continued to drop and eventually he died. His body was put ashore many days later when we anchored at Suva to take on supplies.

Now is a good time to cover the shower situation. We were allowed to shower only in salt water. I took my soap and got

continued on the next page


No..... PASS 2ND CO.
U. S. ARMY TRANSPORT "REPUBLIC"
Name Richard Marvin
Rank Pfc
has permission to be absent from this transport
from 2 PM to 6 PM
Adjutant
Commanding 2nd Co.

The pass above was used to go ashore in Honolulu.

My First Cruise at Government Expense continued

On 6 December 1941 (the day before the attack on Pearl Harbor) personnel of the 7th Group and 88th Squadron were converted from "pollywogs" to "shellbacks" by King Neptune's Court aboard the USAT "Republic" south west of Hawaii (Keith McJunkins)

with it. Soon, I discovered that all my hair became gooey and it was impossible to wash it out with the salt water. Someone said to get salt-water soap. I went to the ship's store and was told they had sold out on the first day out of port. I have yet to find anybody that had or knows about it. Needless to say, I took few showers and they were without soap. Even the washbasins used salt water and shaving was torture. Electric razors were unheard of in those days.

For amusement, we began getting some card games going while sitting on deck. We didn't play for money, but got into the game of "hearts." After a few days, when one individual only played for himself, tempers began to flare and we drifted away from the cards.

On December 6, 1941, we crossed the equator and were treated to an exciting procedure. We were initiated into the "Solemn mysteries of the ancient order of the deep, domain of Neptune Rex." The ship's crew had rigged up several devices on the deck to run us through after we had been tried and convicted on some trumped-up charge. Mine was for being a California prune picker. It was a good diversion from the everyday monotony of the trip.

December 7. Surprise! Pearl Harbor attacked!

The entire convoy went on complete radio silence. Double sets of doors appeared on all passages to the outside, so light could not be seen outside at night. The deck shows were cancelled. No smoking was allowed on deck. Communications between ships were accomplished by the use of signal flags. The convoy began a zigzag pattern. Our attempts to find out where we were going by taking an occasional look at the compass were useless. The morning "wake-up call" came before daylight and all troops proceeded topside to designated life boat stations. We stayed there until the sun came up and was high enough that enemy submarines could not be hiding behind it as it came up over the horizon. This procedure was continued for the rest of the voyage.

As the days passed, we received news from the ship's staff. One day they announced that the Japanese knew we were out there and reported that they had sunk the *USS Republic*. At that point, the troops that sent the postcard pictures home from Honolulu regretted their action. Some asked if the authorities could call in so folks would know the Japanese were giving false information. But this would allow the Japanese to get a fix on us and probably sink the entire convoy. The request was denied!

The *Pensacola* would launch the search planes and they would fly out ahead and search for Japanese ships or submarines. One day when they returned, they dropped a hand-written note to the crew atop our ship. "Ranking officer was aboard." The flag men got busy and the entire convoy shut down engines and came to a standstill. Several hours later, we headed out again with the zigzag procedure. Scuttlebutt had it that three subs were on a

crossing path ahead, periscopes only out of the water. Word was they might, or might not, be friendly. At the same time, we were skirting some Japanese held islands.

Because we were now on an extended cruise, there occurred an acute shortage of fresh water. It was discovered that many troops were filling their canteens at the drinking fountains and also trying to wash the soap scum off after showering. Guards were put at the fountains and no more canteen filling was allowed.

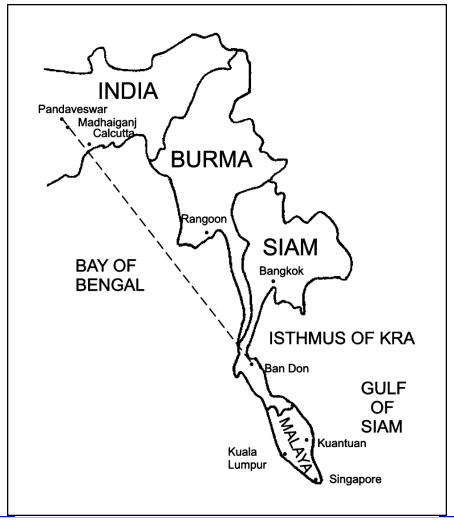
On December 13, we crossed the International Dateline. Another initiation took place. We now became members of the "Imperial Domain of the Golden Dragon." We also lost a day from our calendar lives. I remember going to bed late on a Saturday night and awaking a few hours later to discover it was Monday.

Pandavesware Air Base (L to R): Standing – William Berkeley (P), Clyde Cannon (CP), Richard Weiss (N), Corrie (B). Kneeling – Marvin Riehl (E), James Fisher (RO), John McNeil (G), Robert Fletcher (G), Alfred Stank (G). (1942) (William Shelley)

Eventually, we pulled into the bay of Suva in the Fiji Islands. A few of the authorities went ashore while we took on supplies including the much needed fresh water. Before this, on December 14, the ship's printing press had typed up postcards with printed messages, one of which covered your particular health. You put an "x" after the description that pertained to your condition. You then signed your name and you signed your name only. The address of your home was printed on the other side. These cards and the body of the sunburned victim were offloaded in Suva and we were informed that a PBY amphibian plane would take them to Hawaii where they would be forwarded.

I don't remember the date we arrived in Suva, but as soon as refueling and the like were completed, we continued our cruise toward an unknown destination. One day when we went topside, we discovered a bevy of PT boats riding shotgun on our convoy. We were informed that they were Australian. On December 23, we pulled in and offloaded at Brisbane, Australia. We marched to tent city on the Ascot Racetrack grounds.

We learned later that we were originally supposed to unload at Delmonte on the lower large island of the Philippine chain, but were forced to detour because the Japanese had attacked the islands. The 5th Air Base Group of the 7th Bomb Group had preceded us there. Most lost their lives. That's another story. These events broke up the 7th Bomb Group. Some of our flying crews got in lots of fighting in the islands, but our ground echelon spent a month and a half in Australia. It then went by ship to Karachi, India, where we reorganized. The crews that flew into the Philippines bravely did all they could to stem the advance of the enemy. They remained under another group. A few did get to India. Incidentally, one of the crews of my original squadron, 88th Recon Squadron, flew General McArthur and his family from Delmonte to Australia.



The dashed line denotes the route of "...the longest known attack mission by a formation of heavy bombers in World War II...", which was flown by members of the 7th Group on 19 March 1945. The 37 B-24s flew from Pandaveswar and Madhaiganj Air Bases in India to Ban Don, Siam (near the Isthmus of Kra) to sever road and rail lines between Bangkok, Siam and Singapore, Malaya.

Restoration of Our F-100D Cockpit Trainer

By Gary Leiser

After 165 hours of work spread over several months, **Bob Jenkins**, a volunteer at the Travis Air Museum, has completed the restoration of our F-100D cockpit trainer. This trainer was built in the 1950s by the Refectone Company of Stamford Connecticut, a major flight simulator company. The trainer was poor condition in storage when Bob took on the task of restoration. The rudder control system had been removed and required repair as well as installation. Almost all the instrument lenses were broken and had to be replaced. In addition, both the trainer and control console needed general repair and then had to be repainted. Bob also built a stairway to provide access to the cockpit. The F-100D cockpit trainer now joins the T-37 and T-28 cockpit trainers at the museum as the most popular hands-on exhibits for children. They love nothing more than to jump in the cockpit, buckle up, and take off.

Bob was the right person to carry out this restoration. He spent 23 years in the Air Force in aircraft maintenance, 11 of these years being in Japan and Vietnam. He has worked on almost all cargo planes in the Air Force inventory, from the C-47 to the C-5A. After retiring from the Air Force, he spent fifteen years building and installing large manufacturing equipment. In 2002 he "finally" retired and became a volunteer at the museum. We greatly appreciate his expertise and dedication.

Dateline August 30: "Thank You BBQ" at Duncan Miller's hangar for all the 61st Doolittle Raider's Reunion volunteers.

Thanks for the Memories!

Good Times!

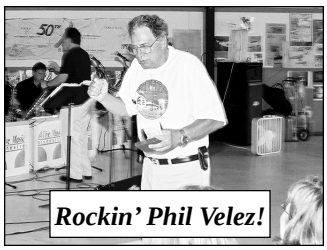
Good Tunes!

Good Food!

Good Folks!

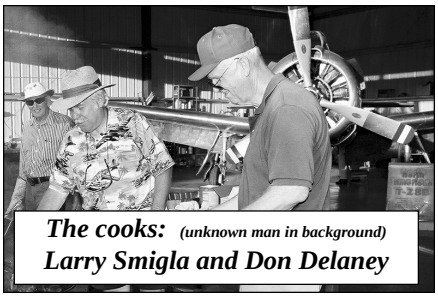
Photos courtesy of Ted Zetah.

Vacaville's Alive Music Band provides great sounds from the "Big Band" era to the tunes of "Rock & Roll!"

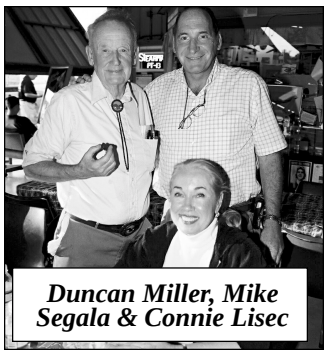


Rockin' Phil Velez!

Counter clockwise: Linda Heber, Carolyn & Warren Frost, Ray Shock, unidentified woman, Audrey Shock, Suzanne Synder & Sean MacIntire.



The cooks: *(unknown man in background)* ***Larry Smigla and Don Delaney***



Duncan Miller, Mike Segala & Connie Lisec

Behind the Scenes of the Doolittle Raid

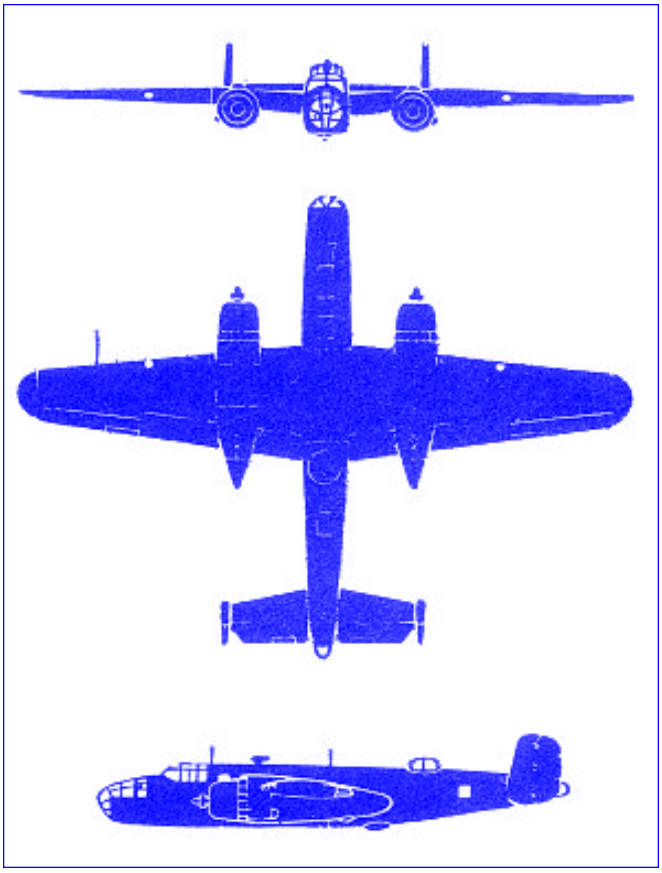
By Fernando Silva

On 2 February, 1942, barely two months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the aircraft carrier *USS Hornet* (CV-8) departed Norfolk, Virginia. On her flight deck were two Army Air Force B-25B bombers. Once at sea, both aircraft were launched into the wind, to the utter surprise and amazement of the entire crew of the *Hornet*. They had no idea why such an experiment was conducted.

On 4 March, the *Hornet* sailed for the West Coast of California via the Panama Canal. After arriving at Alameda NAS on 20 March, she took aboard 16 B-25s, which were placed on her flight deck. Meanwhile, in February, at Long Beach Airport, which had been made a USAAF Air Transport Command Base, my father was part of a full crew who were given unusual orders for a B-25 mission. They were ordered to fly a B-25 configured to carry a dummy bomb load of 2,000 pounds and 1,141 gallons of fuel. The fuel was dispersed throughout the aircraft: 646 gallons in the wings, 225 gallons in the bombay, 160 gallons in the collapsible tank in the crawlway, 60 gallons in the area where the lower turret had been removed, and in 10 five-gallon cans. The total weight of the aircraft on takeoff was 31,000 lbs. From Long Beach, my father's crew was instructed to fly through the Grand Canyon and as close to its walls as possible. Once they cleared the Canyon, they were to fly at tree-top level all the way to the steel mills of Gary, Indiana.

From take off to Gary, they monitored their two 1700 HP, 14 cylinder Wright-Cyclone R-2600 engines every ten minutes, checking the manifold pressure, cylinder head temperature, carb air temperature, hydraulic pressure, throttle settings, fuel mixtures, prop settings, supercharger and oil shutter. In addition, they watched and recorded head winds, tail winds, cross winds, barometric pressure and outside air temperature.

Gasoline weighs about 6 1/2 lb per gallon. Knowing the fuel consumption, they could calibrate the weight of the aircraft as it used up fuel. As the aircraft burned fuel, it became lighter and wanted to fly higher and faster. They were not after speed. Instead, they wanted to determine the maximum range that could be squeezed from every drop of gas by setting the correct throttle, prop pitch and mixing the controls. From Gary they flew back to Long Beach where all the raw data was turned over to North American Aviation's engineers. Their goal has been to reach a range of 2,400 miles. About the same time that my father's crew was carrying out this mission, another flew a B-25 from Long Beach over the Pacific Ocean to Canada and back, again going as low as possible.



And out at China Lake, high performance B-25 takeoffs and their ground positions were being evaluated. Why were the aircraft placed so close together? This was a big field in the middle of nowhere. Why do we have to takeoff in very short ground runs with the engines at full power and with the brakes on, then release the brakes and bolt for the sky? Why are a group of Navy guys telling us Air Force guys how we have to fly our planes?

Shortly thereafter, on 18 April, the whole world knew that the United States had bombed Tokyo. My father had made his contribution to the Doolittle Raid. Later he was told why his crew had to fly through the Grand Canyon. During the raid on Japan, the crews were to fly through downtown Tokyo p between tall buildings!

The B-25 that my father flew on this mission had the Walt Disney character Thumper painted on one side of the fuselage. Later in the war, Thumper was transferred to a B-29 in the air war against Japan.

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