Volume 11, Issue 2 April 2010

WARBIRD FLYER

★★★EAA Warbirds Squadron 2 Newsletter★★★

The SO-4 Caper at Hon Gay

By Walt Spangenberg

It was a dark and stormy night... at Point Yankee in the Tonkin Gulf (16.00N. 110.00E) early in 1966 when RIO Dick Plues and I banged off from USS Ranger (CVA-61) in a strangely loaded F-4 for an adventure that turned out to be even stranger than our ordnance load (Sparrows and Sidewinders as usual, plus flares and a 2.75" Rocket Pod). Actually, the night was dark, but just overcast with a fairly smooth sea, and it got bright with starlight even without a moon, when we climbed through the overcast. Some weeks earlier the Intelligence analysts at CincPacFlt in Hawaii had identified an SO-4 missile armed patrol boat of Russian origin operating from the NVN naval base at Hon Gay, but the SO-4 came out only at night and could not be located for destruction in a daylight strike, apparently. The boat became a priority target, both because the missiles could be a threat to our ships in the Tonkin Gulf and also just because it was an attractive target when there were not many attractive targets that we were allowed to attack.

It was decided that two Phantoms (one each from VF-142 and VF-143) would be assigned to the effort and, because no one could figure out what would be most effective under the circumstances, I suppose, the VF-142 plane would be loaded with bombs and the VF-143 plane with 2.75" rockets. I was the senior participant so I led the strike. We briefed several times for this mission, but each time it seemed that first came the word that the boat was at sea and then came word that the weather was too bad with low ceilings in the target area, and the mission was scrubbed. A primary absolute requirement was that the boat must be identified visually (hence the flares) before we could attack it.

F-4B preparing to launch (U.S. Navy Photo)

Finally, we completed our briefing one evening with no cancellation, even though the reported target weather was again overcast with low ceilings. My approach was to put the VF-142 plane several miles behind me in trail and let him work the problem as he desired, based on the radio tips I gave him after each pass I made at the target. We went down through the overcast to 1,000 feet or so and Dick picked up what we assumed to be the boat on the radar; then a pass over the contact with a flare drop at the appropriate moment. Then straight out, 90-270 and back in for the ID. The ceiling turned out to be about 700 feet with ragged bottoms, and working near that flare was disorienting to say the least, but I did get a "recognition drill" glimpse of the boat, almost straight down, and it was indeed an SO-4, just as we had seen in the briefing pictures. We then went out about three miles, 90-270 again and climbed to about 5,000 feet with Dick keeping the target on his scope as we set up a shallow dive and fired a Sparrow. The first Sparrow I had fired in darkness lit up the inside of the clouds like hell itself, it seemed. It was not a 'fire and forget" weapon, of course, so we had to stay in our dive long enough for the Sparrow to impact, and then pull out before we hit the water.

VF-142 then made a pass at the target, firing a Sparrow. I don't remember whether they actually saw the boat on that pass or not, but it really didn't matter since we already had a positive ID. We then alternately made two (I think) passes at the target to do what we could with the rockets and bombs. I never could see the target in time to set up and fire the rockets, so they wound up jettisoned in deep water on the retum flight. VF-142 thought they had gotten a hit with their bombs, but could not be sure.

We took 1,000 pounds of fuel from an A-3 tanker on the return flight, landed aboard and got debriefed. One of the air intelligence debriefers seemed upset with the report that I had jettisonned the high-drag rocket pod rather than expending all of my ordnance at the target. I thought, gee, I should have just fired the damned things blind on the last pass, and then he could have checked off the correct box on his debriefing form. What with IFR-VFR, the milkbowl created by the flares, darkness and working that close to the water, I think this was by all odds the most difficult and dangerous mission that I flew in either Korea or Vietnam, and this AI type was upset because I dumped the rockets! We heard no more about SO-4 patrol boats at Hon Gay until Fred Palmer came aboard a couple of months later to relieve Tom Russell as CAG. Fred had talked to someone at CinCPacFlt, and said that we had not sunk the boat, but it was reported dead in the water the next day with the weather deck "cleaned off." We had observed no flak or return fire of any sort, so maybe the Sparrows did indeed clean off the weather deck at least. ✪

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★★★Cascade Warbirds★★★
EAA Squadron 2 Newsletter

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EAA Cascade Warbirds Squadron 2 is a tax-exempt charitable organization as described in section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code.

Annual Newsletter Value: $2.00
Published Quarterly

Reflections on "The SO-4 Caper at Hon Gay"

By Walt Spangenberg

The situation in Viet Nam in early 1966 was pretty much a stalemate, at least from the point of view of the naval forces in the Gulf of Tonkin. The ground forces were holding their own, but not much more, and the Communists continued their infiltration into the South in spite of the air interdiction campaign being waged by USAF and Naval air efforts. The popular mindset was that the war was being run from the East Wing of the White House in Washington, with Secretary McNamara and President Johnson both wanting nothing more than to win and get out, but scared to death that if we did something really effective, like mining Haiphong harbor for instance, that the Chinese would enter the conflict as they did in Korea and the U.S. would then have a much bigger war on its hands. The result was that the air interdiction campaign spent most of the effort attacking useless non-targets while the really attractive targets went unaddressed, and the air commanders each trying to outdo the last one in number of missions flown and tonnage of bombs dropped.

A-6 unfolding its wings as it moves to the cat. (U.S. Navy Photo)

My guess now is that the SO-4 missile boat discovered at Hon Gay immediately appealed to the higher-ups as a target that would get the attention of the NVN high command and impress them with our capability, but would not be important enough to bring the Chinese into the war. The boat with its surface to surface missiles could indeed be a threat to our naval forces in the Gulf, so I suppose the idea was seized as at last an opportunity to "do something." Problems arose when the February weather at Hon Gay at night was characteristically foggy with low overcast, and the White House again got in the act with a requirement that they must approve the specific mission. So we briefed over and over again for the same mission, with no one finally believing that it would really go.

Mission planning was a bit flakey from the start. It was a job for an A-6 Intruder, but we had no A-6 aircraft on either of the carriers then at Yankee Station. The F-4 with its Sparrow missile system was the nearest thing anyone could think of, I guess, but the Sparrow had an expanding rod warhead designed to tear up aircraft structures, and would be unlikely to sink a boat, even a small one. The assignment of one aircraft from VF-142 and one from VF-143 was presumably conceived to "spread the wealth around," but did not contribute to the confidence among the flight crews that each would do what the other expected according to individual squadron doctrine. And the ordnance load of bombs on one aircraft and 2.75" rockets on the other could have been nothing but a wild guess at what might be useful.

When we finally did get clearance to go, the weather at Hon Gay was no better than it had been for a month, but I can imagine that with White House approval at last in hand someone said in frustration, let's just give it a try! So we went, but with two aircraft to manage in the clag and at the very extreme of our range capability with the tanking fuel that an A-3 could give us on the way home, we were limited in the time and number of runs we could make on the target. I have thought afterwards that with the fuel that the tanker could provide, it would have perhaps been better to use just one aircraft and let that one get all of the fuel available on the way home. Fighter people normally think of a section of two aircraft, but on a night all-weather mission like this, the A-6 would normally have gone alone.

Monday morning quarterbacking is a great hobby!

Walt ✪

CO Cockpit

By Greg Anders

Once again it is Spring and we look forward to another flying season in the Cascade Warbird territory. And while we had a "mild" winter this year, I don't know if I was just out of step with mother nature, or just out of town on the sunny days, but I really had limited flying this winter with many of my intended flying days lost to weather. So, while I had enough flying time to make me current per the FARs, I did not have enough flying time to keep me proficient for performing at air shows. Sure, I maintained basic handling proficiency by jumping out on days with "low" VFR ceilings and getting in some landings. But I did not maintain that level of proficiency that allows me to fly smoothly in the distraction laden world of air show flying.

John Clark captures The Proud American departing Kelso

Proficiency isn't something you can track on a calendar like currency. And currency per the FARs does not equal proficiency. The legal definition of "currency" and the practical definition of "proficiency" are two very different things. And while proficiency will usually keep you legally current, being legally current falls VERY short of being proficient. And there is no FAR that really tells you when you are proficient. Only you can tell you when you are proficient, and to what levels you are proficient.

Fortunately, I have already started my season with an air show in Tucson so I have had some good sorties now and feel I have gained my first blush of robust proficiency. But preparing for Tucson was a very focused event before moving the A-1 south. This focus was limited in time by weather (again!) and maintenance work on the A-1 so regaining my proficiency went from a plan whereby I had air show proficiency before I left Bellingham, to a plan whereby I acquired proficiency on the cross country south. But instead of focusing on practice, the un-forecast fog that covered Oregon and had me diverting into the Dalles, forced execution to be different than planning. A fully armed A-1 unexpectedly showing up in the Dalles was a spot of grand entertainment in and of itself! But even in getting delayed by the weather, proficiency remained critical in my mind so a quick bit of practice on departure from the Dalles left the airport crowd, and school kids off the end of the runway, pleased that I take proficiency so seriously. But now being behind schedule had me focused on getting the plane south by my intended time.

Yet even with all of that focus and good intent, I still got to Tucson, with the rust knocked off of flying the A-1, but I still didn't feel polished for the air show performance. I simply had circumstances interfere with my good intentions. So I was very focused on my first sorties out of the gate, keeping them as basic as possible, and making sure I did not allow the distraction to detrimentally impact my flying.

You too can have circumstances detract from your plan to regain proficiency. The generator goes bad and takes a week to fix. But that was the week that you intended to do your Spring flying refresher work. Once the generator is fixed, now it's raining again so we won't even try to knock the winter rust off. Oh yeah, it's Spring Break and we're headed off for a week and in preparing for that week away, and in recovering from that week away, heading out to the airport for some flying is hard to justify. The main point being is that we all start off with the intent of "taking it slow" to start the season, but circumstances sometimes short circuit intent.

My challenge to you this Spring is to commit to being your own "hard ##s" check pilot and know what it takes to get yourself back up to speed after the winter flying lull. You know you aren't as proficient as you were last Fall so don't get caught in the trap of signing yourself off as proficient because you intended to spend five hours flying this week and circumstances allowed only one. Only you know when you are proficient. And being honest with yourself is absolutely critical.

Sic Tempus Ad Fugit!! ✪

Squadron News

RENO AIR RACES

The races are 15 – 19 Sept this year and the squadron still has room in its reserved-seat boxes. For only $320 per seat you, too, can attend and watch the world's fastest motor sport. Contact Fred at fred@fcsmyth.com to get in on the action. You're sure to enjoy yourself. And if you want to be sure to have a seat for next year, now is the time to speak up. Our front-row box is already full for 2011 and it takes a deposit of only $100 per seat to reserve for next year. Don't miss out.

THANKS FOR RENEWING

Membership renewals are running just a bit ahead of last year's pace and for that we thank you for your help as we "Keep 'Em Flying." For those of you who have not yet done so, have a look at the mailing label on this newsletter; if the date beside your name is "2009", then you are not yet counted as having renewed and now is the time to send your $20 to CWB, 1066 Yates Road, Oak Harbor, WA 98277. We even have a budget plan for those who wonder: a single $20 payment up front and zero payment after that. Take advantage of the benefits we offer and renew today.

CAN YOU HEAR US?

We do 99% of our squadron communication via email. If you're reading this newsletter, but not receiving emails from the squadron brass, then we apparently do not have your current email address (J. F. Vallee!). The master database is maintained by Fred, so send him an email at fred@fcsmyth.com and let the squadron be heard. It just might be something interesting.

ALUMINUM OVERCAST

This year's tour stop runs 26 – 31 May at Boeing Field in Seattle. Not only is this our biggest fundraiser of the year, but we meet a lot of nice people, learn more and more WWII veterans' stories, and manage to have a good time while doing so. Plus, EAA loves the Seattle stop (we continue to be #1 or #2 in the nation each year), so they put their best people on the schedule. Our squadron tour stop coordinator is Warren Nadeau and he says he still has a few slots open for volunteers. Send him a missive at wsbluemoon@comcast.net and get on the roster. Remember, if there's ever an empty seat on the airplane - it goes first to the hardest-working volunteer!

WASP HONORED

After more than six decades, the Women Airforce Service Pilots were finally honored for their wartime service with a Congressional Gold Medal at a recent ceremony in Washington D. C. Some 175 of the surviving 250+ women attended the 10 March event at the Capitol and family members and other well-wishers swelled the crowd to over 2,000. Details of this event are available online at several sites, but the squadron thanks these intrepid women for their service.

AIRCRAFT ON THE MOVE

It's always interesting to know a little bit about what our members are doing with their airplanes. The last several weeks have seen these movements. "Chipmunk Bob" Hill wanted a little more speed and capacity, so he went all the way to Maine to buy a Romanian IAR-823; then he flew it home in the middle of the winter. Why he wanted this armament trainer is anybody's guess, but the hard points under the wings may be a clue. However, to make the deal work, he needed to sell his DHC-1 Chipmunk that he's had for ten years. Enter John Geyman; he's wanted a Chipmunk since he can remember and Bob's airplane gives him the opportunity to be involved in the recovering and repainting. They strike a deal - John will take the airplane to Friday Harbor - but only if John can get rid of his HE-1 (Piper J5C Cub). That's the hospital medevac ship that John bought from Jim Unger two years ago. Well, nothing's ever easy. John's wife says "Two airplanes, maximum", so the HE-1 has to go. It does, but unfortunately it doesn't stay in the area. John is able to sell it to a collector in France, which turns out to be historically significant - Piper L-birds served in Normandy during the invasion and are still sought after today. It pays to pay attention to history.

NEW MEMBERS

We say "Hello" to several new members this quarter and welcome them into our midst. They'll all be wearing name tags when you see them at our events, so take the time to introduce yourself and make them feel a part of our squadron. Plus, if you have an empty seat going somewhere, think about offering it to a newbie.

Sam Bovington	Oak Harbor, WA
John Dawson	Everett, WA
Hank Hendrickson	Auburn, WA

We are honored to have Hank join our squadron; he is a WWII B-17 pilot with stories to tell!

Tim Jacobson	Gig Harbor, WA
Lisa Lance	Gig Harbor, WA
Keith McPake	Pocatello, ID
Ric Tatman	Woodenville, WA
Rich Zurinsky	Olalla, WA

SQUADRON COMMITTEE UPDATE

At the start of the year we set a goal of focusing additional attention on the squadron in the newsletter. Moving forward we intend to have regular updates from the various committees operating within the squadron printed here in the squadron news. This quarter we'd like to start by introducing several of the committees and their missions. Of course there is always room for more help, so if you find a committee that you are interested in, or something that you think is missing, drop the editor a line at editor@cascadewarbirds.org and you will be directed to the proper leader.

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

The mission of the Scholarship Committee is to act as a conduit between the youth of our area and the aviation community. As caretakers of aviation past and present, it is our responsibility to inspire and mentor youth to continue the rich aviation spirit that we love.

Currently the squadron's scholarship program is attracting a lot of attention and there is still time to get involved. Applicants have a choice of attending EAA's Air Academy during AirVenture in Oshkosh or attending a Wings Aloft Private Pilot Ground School and taking a couple introductory flights. Full details of the program and the application form are available online at www.cascadewarbirds.org. Children (and other relatives) of squadron members are encouraged to apply.

MARSHALLERS UNIT

The committee with the longest tenure are the Marshallers. The mission of the Marshaller Unit of the Cascade Warbirds is to recruit, train and equip any members who are willing to help direct and park warbirds safely at events where our presence has been requested. In addition to safely parking aircraft, we will also act as crowd control in the interest of safety for the spectators and operators.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The mission of the personnel committee is to develop a framework of activities by which greater numbers of our membership can be engaged, and allow them an avenue to contribute to the squadron in areas that are aligned with their passion. The committee will ensure that these activities contribute to furthering the overall vision of the squadron.

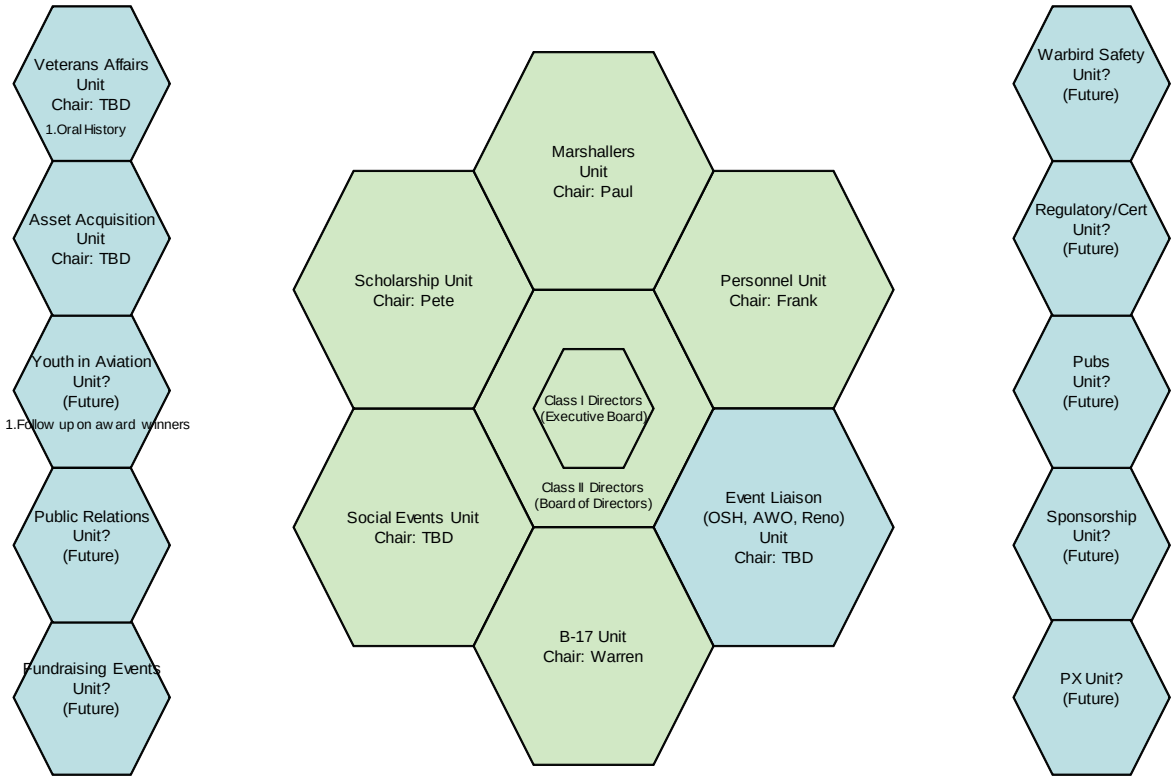


Diagram of current teams and future team concepts.

No Reason to be Grumpy

By Chris Zimmer

This is not your FBO's twin. This is not a big lazy airplane, it is a screaming, supercharged, twenty eight cylinder Man of War. Words like ergonomic, comfort, and economy, are not uttered on the ramp when describing this massive fire belching machine. It is a refinement of weapons grade engineering, unostentatious, menacing, and purposeful. Under fire, it took no quarter and made no excuses. Today, it sits dormant, just waiting for the right crew. Then, inconspicuously, electronics begin to purr as three 76" inch blades begin to slowly creep. After three blades pass, Grumpy begins to clear its throat, and the power plant gallops. Moments later, the tarmac is a symphony of short stacks bellowing a ghastly surround sound harmony, as twin Cyclones devour all of the dead dinosaur a Stromberg can feed them. The deafening roar emasculates every luxury car for miles, as their alarms begin to whimper in fear. What are we talking about? We are discussing the newest Warbird to grace the Pacific Northwest skies, the B-25D "Grumpy" out of Kansas City, MO (c/n 100-23644 43-3318).

Some of our members have had the great opportunity to view Grumpy resting on the Kilo-Six ramp at Historic Flight. Thanks to the collaboration between Cascade Warbirds and Historic Flight, CWB members had the unique and rare opportunity to learn more about this endangered bird of prey. On February 27 & 28th, Historic Flight Museum hosted a B-25 ground school briefed by Tim Jackson. This two day opportunity had several components; a review of B-25 Mitchell systems, operation, and emergency procedures.

Tim Jackson is a highly experienced Warbird operator with time in legendary big iron like the B-25 and B-17. Tim has piloted the B-25 Miss Mitchell of the Minnesota CAF, and is the author of *The Anatomy of a "Warbird" type Rating – Part1*. The opportunity to participate in a clinic with Tim proved not only informative regarding B-25 operation, but an excellent discussion on general operational safety of all Warbirds. A crew member will read a manual, study a diagram, and review a checklist, but to obtain knowledge from a individual with countless hours of hands on experience is priceless. Priceless, in the sense, that the opportunity accelerates both the learning and safety curves. The alternative is gaining first hand knowledge the "hard way". The "hard way" can be simultaneously physically, financially, and ego bruising.

The first step is for crew members to familiarize themselves with the subject aircraft. The recommended reading list for B-25 operation is provided here:

Warbird Notes, R. L. Sohn
T*he Anatomy of a "Warbird" type Rating – Part1*, Tim Jackson
Things that may or may not happen when you push the feather button, Tim Jackson
available: http://www.warbirddepot.com/links_library.asp

T.O. 1-60GE-1
available: rapidshare.com/files/368060648/T.O._1-60GE-1.pdf.html

T.O. 1B-25(T)L-1
available: rapidshare.com/files/368055493/1_of_2_B25.pdf.html
available: rapidshare.com/files/368055546/2_of_2_B25.pdf.html

B-25 Systems Highlights:

At a MTOW of 34,000 lbs, the B-25 is powered off the ground by two Wright R-2600 Cyclone engines rated at 1700 BHP and displacing 2603 cubic inches with 14 cylinders. The engines are fueled by Bendix Stromberg carburetors making them the R-2600-35. To maintain diminishing horsepower at altitude, the radials are equipped with single stage two-speed superchargers. The engines turn Hamilton Standard 23E50 3 bladed constant speed propeller assemblies, at a prop drive ratio of 16:9. The propellers are each equipped with an electric feather system. Operation of the feather system can have its own unexpected and thrilling challenges as briefed in the reference material. Each Cyclone powers an individual hydraulic pump. The hydraulic power operates the landing gear, brakes, and flaps of the B-25. The system has a 13.5 gallon capacity, operating at 900-1100 psi. Utilizing the reservoir sight glass, adequate fluid must be verified at preflight. Failure to verify hydraulic fluid levels can result in extreme anxiety during landing checklist.

B-25 Operation Highlights:

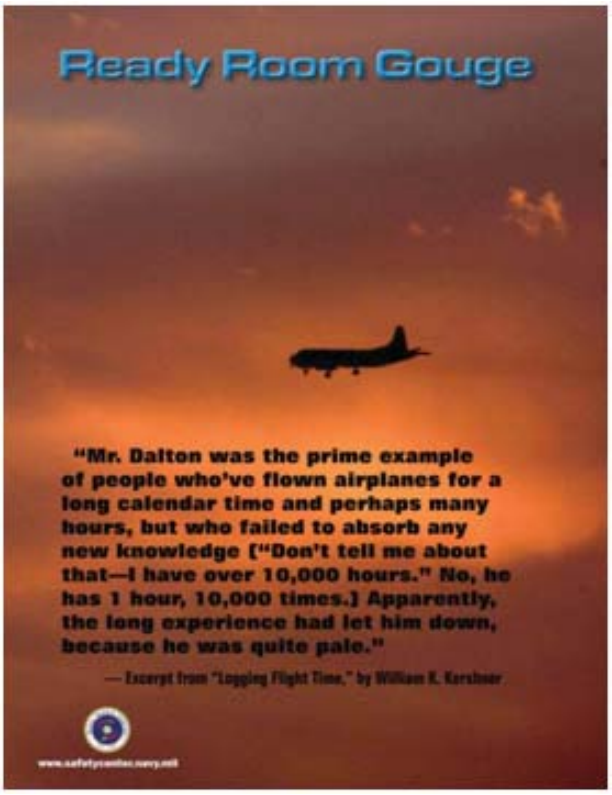
Operating the B-25 has a few intriguing characteristics. Let us briefly discuss a handful of items to be aware of during operations. The B-25 engines are susceptible to hydraulic lock. To prevent potential damage to the engine, the blades should be pulled through prior to start. If the hydraulic lock is detected the lower cylinders should be drained of the oil. It is recommended to keep cowl and oil cooler flaps open during warm-up and ground operations. Do not rush engine warm up. At this stage, it may be necessary to use carb heat to prevent engines from cutting out due to carburetor ice. Wait for oil temperature to reach operational range before applying power. Engine oil is thick at cold temperatures and difficult to move through engine lines and coolers. The B-25 engine intakes are equipped with a choice of filtered or unfiltered air. When encountering dusty condition, during ground operations, utilize filtered air with cockpit switch. The B-25 is equipped with a castering nose wheel and is taxied with differential braking. This can make the B-25 cumbersome on the ground, especially at low speeds. During take-off roll, ease or rock throttles to specified power settings, taking care not to over-boost the engines. Reduced power take-offs are not recommended. After lift-off, prior to gear retraction, do NOT attempt to stop the tires with toe brakes. This technique can result in the large tires slipping on the rim and shearing the valve stem. This will be followed by an unnecessarily exciting and expensive landing.

When I was a little ankle-biter, my grandfather enjoyed schlepping me along to a small diner downtown. We would grab a pair of seats, surrounded by his buddies, with my feet dangling off a huge chair. They would sip coffee, sharing war stories of Europe and flying, for what seemed like hours. To study B-25 operations and then have the opportunity to climb into an active cockpit, provides an enthusiast with a wealth of understanding and gratitude for the young 19 year old Airmen that flew these aircraft in combat. On behalf of the Cascade Warbirds, I would like to personally thank John Sessions for his hospitality and enthusiasm for local aviation. One of the many benefits of being a Cascade Warbird member is the unique opportunities to volunteer and share in some of our nation's greatest historical treasures. This was the type of opportunity that makes the 10 year kid in all of us grin ear to ear. ✪
(John Clark Photos)

Sleeping Single in a Double Bed

By Ed Rombauer

OK, now that I have your attention (and no, we're not talking personal problems here), have you ever noticed that most of the aircraft we fly have two sets of controls? I'm sure that you have. However, have you wondered why there are two sets of controls installed? After all, some very large aircraft are built with only one set of controls and the F.A.A. has classified them as single piloted aircraft, whereas the same aircraft built with two pilot stations must be flown with two pilots. It does seem reasonable to have an extra set of controls available to get the aircraft back on the ground, in case the pilot becomes incapacitated. However, this is not the only reason for dual controls, dual being the operative word here.



Years ago in the early days of modern aviation, airplanes had either no autopilot or at best a primitive and unreliable one. As the control forces were high on older aircraft, a second pilot with an extra set of controls was a necessity on long flights to prevent either boredom or exhaustion. These co-pilots were in reality nothing more than human autopilots. The primary pilot was generally a product of wartime flying where there were few check rides—if you returned alive from a mission, you passed. Consequently, it was easy for these pilots to develop a personal myopia when it came to their flying abilities. I can remember several Captains whose total flight briefing was: "sit down, don't touch anything unless I tell you to, and get the gear up when I call for it." These pilots had stopped learning a long time back.

The other type of pilot is one that flies airplanes with only one seat—this does make it difficult to have someone ride with you to grade or critique your flying. This is the type of flying that I was familiar with. After several years of single seat flying it was easy to overlook the small errors and believe that if I avoided major screw-ups, I was not only good but invincible. Upon entering the world of dual control aircraft my pride underwent a readjustment as I learned to fly new aircraft while accepting "helpful" criticism from someone sitting next to me, watching and commenting on my every move.

Hal was an OK pilot. A product of the bomber command in Europe during WW2, he had survived all of his missions against the Germans during the last part of the war. After the war he went to work for an airline, which is where, years later I met him. An affable fellow with a fifty mission crush in his uniform cap and a nervous disposition, he was the quintessential airline captain of the time. I always liked flying with him as he believed in the "don't comment on my flying and I won't comment on yours" style of management. Off and on over the course of a few years I would fly with Hal which gave me an insight into the limitations of his flying ability. On one occasion Hal was getting a check ride from a company pilot he knew who sat in the jump seat behind him. As it was a nice sunny day and nothing remarkable was happening, the time was spent discussing various subjects of interest to the two. It was when the subject turned to politics that Captain Hal, an avowed F.D.R. New Deal Democrat, became quite animated. He launched into a lengthy diatribe about the government, politics and life in general. The check pilot, being of another political persuasion, tried to calm the situation by changing the discussion back to the flight check. He then made the fatal mistake of asking Hal a question about the airplane, a practice that would be forbidden in the years ahead but at that time was allowed. I could see that Hal was trying to shift mental gears from politics to airplanes without much success—he was starting to unravel. Hal's invective now turned on the check pilot as we started our landing approach. The lack of crew coordination was not so obvious when everything was going well, but now there were two solo performers in the cockpit and only one of them was at the controls. They were by choice, "sleeping single." As we neared the runway, even though Hal had his hands firmly on the wheel, I could picture Captain Queeg rolling metal balls in his hand as he explained why everyone else was out of step.

I was maintaining a quiet, low profile as Hal flew the last part of the approach while unsuccessfully trying to keep his emotions under control. As the airplane neared the end of the runway my attention was on Hal as he tried to fly and rant at the same time. Suddenly, the check pilot jumped up, yelled "watch out!" and reached over Hal, grabbed the wheel and pulled back, narrowly avoiding driving the nose wheel into the concrete. The landing while quite firm was not as bad as some that I would experience in the years ahead. Interestingly, the check pilot quickly signed the check ride form and then disappeared without mentioning the landing.

In my flying experience, pilots convince themselves that they are much better than they are when there is no one to observe and comment on their performance. So the next time you go flying, look at that other set of controls and know that flying alone is no more fun than "sleeping single in a double bed." ✪

Operations Report

By Curt Kinchen

Air show season is almost here! And it's never too early to start laying out your summer flying season plans. We've got a number of great events on the horizon some of which will require you signing up in advance. That is, if you want all the hospitality that these venues provide. Get on the list now as there's a limited number of hotel rooms at these shows. The beer, however, regardless of how hard we try always seems to be in sufficient supply.

Here are the dates and points of contact for more details. More info for each of these will be coming out via email in the coming weeks.

Paine Field GA Day (May 15th) and the Historic Flight Foundation Grand Opening immediately afterwards (3-7 PM). Contact Carter Teeters or Frank Almstead (editor@cascadewarbirds.org)

EAA B-17 at the Museum of Flight (May 26-31) and Cascade Warbird Day at the Museum of Flight (May 29).

Olympic Airshow, Olympia, WA (June 19-20)
Contact Dave Desmon 360-710-9504 (david.l.desmon@boeing.com)

Inland Skyfest 2010, Fairchild AFB, Spoke, WA (July 24-25)
Contact Curt Kinchen 425-533-7545 (ptcurt@gmail.com)

Vintage Aircraft Weekend, Paine Field, Everett, WA (September 3-5)
Contact Dave Desmon 360-710-9504 (david.l.desmon@boeing.com)

Airshow of the Cascades at Madras,OR (August 27-28)

Lastly, the Operations Officers are building a list of flyers. So anyone and everyone that is planning on, or wants to, participate in the flying portion of the airshows we attend needs to contact Curt Kinchen or Ron Morrell. Please notify them that you want to be placed on the list of flyers. ✪

The Scorpion's Tale - Part II

By Lyle Jansma

Tuesday

We arrived on site to another cold morning but today it was more foreboding with a dark, overcast. It was decided that the best way to extract the stubborn bolt was to drill it out. To facilitate this, the head was ground down by Einar who provided some early morning fireworks care of the grinder and his colorful Icelandic swearing. I have to admit, hearing someone cuss up a blue streak in Icelandic is quite amusing. After an hour and half and half a dozen dead drill bits, the bolt was extracted from the rudder horn. The problem turned out to be a corroded steel bushing. The bushing was between the rudder horn's flukes and had rusted to the bolt. No amount of pounding would have broken its grip. With the rudder off, Hal focused his attention on the horizontal stabilizer.

Steve and I moved to the weapons pylons. These were of particular interest as they once held the famous Douglas AIR-2 Genie air-to-air nuclear missiles. There was one weapon's pylon on each wing and each had a small outline of a Genie missile stenciled on it. According to tradition, this denotes at least one firing from each pylon. Any AIR-2 Genies fired would have not been live but, worth mentioning is the fact that our Scorpion most likely was flown beside the F-89J that fired the only live test of a AIR-2 Genie. Both aircraft flew with the Montana Air National Guard and the one that was used in the live fire test is now on display at the Montana Air National Guard base in Great Falls. The pylons were difficult to break free from the wings as well. After some 50 years you'd expect that. Here again, after a little heat with the torch and a few tugs from a rope that we attached to the bumper of Einar's 4x4, we were able break them free and move them into the U-Haul.

The Scorpion being readied for hoisting (Lyle Jansma Photo)

As Hal continued with the horizontal stabilizer, Einar and I moved onto possibly the most tedious job next to the wing attachment bolts; removing wing spar bolts from inside the wheel wells. Having never actually worked on an airplane, or even disassembled one for that matter, this task impressed upon me what Hal and J.R. go through to keep the Heritage Flight Museum's planes in the air. Einar and I probably spent 10 hours each in and around those wheel wells working to remove nearly 50 additional bolts and fasteners to release the wings from the fuselage. First step was to remove the bolts holding the access covers. Then we removed the wiring and the fuel lines that obstructed access to the bolts in the spars. We then had to figure out the right combination of Allen wrenches, sockets, swivels and extensions to reach the bolts. It was soon apparent that access by human hands, let alone arms, was probably not a prominent design factor. We decided that perfect airframe mechanic would be 6'9" with 4' long arms, 12" fingers, two thumbs on each hand and set of eyeballs right behind the knuckles!

By the afternoon, the skies had cleared and the horizontal stabilizer was almost ready to be removed. Here again, several bolts conspired to make this task more difficult than originally anticipated. While both J.R. and Hal had pored over the F-89 maintenance manual and had a firm grasp on what need to be done to remove most items, the parts list and exploded views didn't always seen to coincide. After a little deductive reasoning, the stabilizer was finally removed.

The last task of the day was the removal of the tip tanks. Needless to say those also presented a challenge. The tanks were held in place by two bolts on the forward side of the wing and pin in the rear. It seemed simple enough, but by the time the Sawzall was broke out, we all knew that we were about to turn a corner. Jokingly, comments were made to just cut this or that, but we didn't actually think it would happen. After almost an hour, and some selective surgery, the right tank was removed, but by applying the experience curve effect, we greatly reduced the time it took to remove the left tip tank. The experience curve effect would be applied several more time through out the remainder of project.

Wednesday

The main focus of this day was activating the hydraulic system. This was necessary because the flaps were hydraulically powered and interlinked via a torque tube between the wings. In order to remove the wings the interlink had to be disconnected and the only access to the linkage is when the flaps are in the down position. After a little research, Hal, JR and Erica carefully tapped into the hydraulic system using a portable battery powered hydraulic pump. The first combination of connections didn't seem to find the right path to the appropriate systems. A second combination yielded movement but still not enough to lower the flaps or raise the gear. We noticed hydraulic fluid leaking from the tail. The decades old lines and fittings were not holding up to the thousands of pounds of hydraulic pressure that was being applied. The next move was to tap directly into left flap's hydraulic lines. This was completed but, it took most of the day and was extremely time consuming. Late in the day, the flaps were lowered and the interlink was disconnected. With the interlink disconnected there was no easy way to retract the right flap so it was removed and the left flap would be raised before we detached the wings. At this point we were about a 6 hours behind schedule, but the end was in sight. If all went as planned, the crane to lift the Scorpion would arrive tomorrow afternoon. By tomorrow night, the wings would be removed and the fuselage would be sitting on a trailer ready for shipment to Bellingham.

Thursday

The fifth day was scheduled to be our last full one on site. The mobile crane would be arriving mid-morning and everything was a go for removing the wing. We spent the morning rechecking that all but only the critical bolts had been removed and all the wiring and hoses between the wings and the fuselage had been disconnected. That afternoon we were all treated to a visit from a distinguished guest. Cliff Higgins, a former pilot with the Montana Air National Guard, stopped by to give us a little background on the Scorpion. As it turns out, this was his airplane and, needless to say, we were all very excited to meet him. During lunch, Cliff described his experiences flying the F-89. He confided that when he first saw us working on his plane days earlier, he was worried that the Scorpion might be heading to the scrap yard. After lunch we took Cliff over to his plane for a quick look. With the agility of a young man, he climbed up to the cockpit and climbed inside. You could see in his eyes the satisfaction of sitting behind the controls one last time and the thankfulness that his bird was going to be restored. With a small tear in his eye, Cliff climbed out of the cockpit, back down to the ground and thanked us for our efforts. That was truly rewarding!

The F-89 is loaded on the trailer for the trip home (Lyle Jansma Photo)

Unfortunately, the day went south after that. Although the mobile crane was able to lift the Scorpion enough to enable the landing gear to be raised, the crane did not have the lift capacity to adequately support the fuselage while the wings were removed. Another crane was needed, and until one could be found, there was nothing more that could be done. As a consolation we left the Scorpion resting on the jack stands. This was the first time in nearly 40 years that her landing gear had been retracted. By that evening, J.R. had lined up another crane and we would be back at it the next morning.

Friday

After almost a week in Helena, everyone on the team was ready for the trip home. Knowing everybody was getting anxious, something had to be done to maintain a degree of humor. Dave Lowrance had a plan and decided to give Einar a special breakfast treat. Arriving earlier than the rest of the crew, he gave the waitress a collection of broken drill bits and assorted broken bolts that had passed through Einar's hands. He asked her to serve them to Einar for breakfast, which she did, all stuck in a large bran muffin to help them go down. It really was a beautiful sight and all had a good laugh. So far, I haven't spoke much about Dave Lowrance. Dave was our videographer who, while this whole production was taking place, was filming the team's efforts. Both Dave and I were not only tasked with recording the event, but lending a hand with the disassembly as needed. Well this was going to be an all hands on deck day for sure. We all arrived onsite at 0700 and began the final preparations to remove the wings. The weather was beautiful and, in the span of six days, the daytime temperatures had gone from the teens to 60's. By 0900 the much anticipated larger mobile crane had arrived and the Scorpion was being prepared for the lift. By 1000 the Scorpion was suspended beneath the crane and Hal and Einar worked to separate the left wing. After an hour tugging and prying at the joint between the wing and the fuselage, it was discovered that we had missed three rows of bolts buried inside the wing behind a fuel cell. It seemed that the Scorpion had stung us once again. By 1200 the left wing was off and we were making plans for the right wing. We identified the additional bolts, wiring and tubing that need to be removed, and after a couple fast paced hours once again, everything was disconnected. Just like the second tip tank, the right wing came off in under 30 minutes. It was now about 1630 and I was faced with a dilemma. Dave and I had planned to leave for Bellingham that morning. But in effort to document the final stages of the project, we kept on saying, just one more hour, which eventually lead to an additional eight hours or so. Regardless, we both needed to be back in Bellingham Saturday morning to fulfill prior appointments. What I chose to ignore was a 12 hour drive back to Bellingham. The wings were off, but it was still going to be an hour or so before the fuselage would be lifted onto the low-boy trailer. Dave and I really wanted to get that final shot, but we had run out of time. We had to leave and I felt like I was abandoning the team before the job was completed.

The drive home was a marathon, a non-stop trip except for fuel and coffee. An hour and a half into the trip, I received a text message from Steve that showed a picture of the Scorpion sitting on the low-boy as the sun set. The message read "JUST LOADED" As I drove west and watched the sun set, I reflected on the experience that I had just been a part of. Everyone had their own reasons for being part of the F-89 Recovery project. In the beginning, mine was to produce a documentary film. During that week, I experienced the trials and tribulations of being part of a team that succeeded in retrieving a warbird, as well as the gratitude that was expressed by a veteran for saving his bird. In the end, what I gained from the project was a tremendous sense of accomplishment and ownership. I had taken part in an aircraft retrieval adventure... AND I HAD A HELLUVA GOOD TIME! ✪

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Have Your Dues Expired?
Check The Expiration Date Below.

Cascade Warbirds Quick Look Calendar

April	
17	Heritage Flt Museum Open House at BLI
23-25	West Coast TRARON Castle AFB
May	
15	Heritage Flt Museum Open House at BLI
15*	Paine Field GA Day
24-31	EAA B-17 at Museum of Flight
29*	Cascade Warbird Day at Museum of Flight
29	Manitoba Airshow
June	
4-6*	Heritage Flt Museum Fly-In/Dinner/Dance
4-6	Golden West Fly-In
5-6	Southern Oregon Air Festival at Medford
19-20*	Olympic Airshow Olympia, WA
19	Heritage Flt Museum Open House at BLI
26	Richland
July	
4	Tacoma Freedom Fair and Airshow
4	L-Bird Fly-In at WAAAM, Hood River
3-4	Thunder over MI
7-11	Arlington Fly-In
16-18*	Air Expo 2010 McChord AFB
17	Heritage Flt Museum Open House at BLI
21	Dawson Creek
24-25*	Inland Skyfest 2010 Fairchild AFB
24-25	Concrete
24-25	Baker City Fly-In
26-1Aug	Oshkosh 2010

* Denotes Max Effort Event
See Website for Detailed List

Check Six

John Sessions pulls the P-51B *Impatient Virgin* in on the wing of the B-25D *Grumpy.* It is a beautiful February afternoon and the Cascade Mountains provide a perfect backdrop for this scene. (John Clark Photo)