

# FORWARD in FLIGHT

Volume 18, Issue 3

Quarterly Magazine of the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame

Fall 2020



John Dodds on Major Michelle "Mace" Curran,  
Lead solo pilot of the Thunderbirds

Tom Thomas on Pink Seagulls and the Door  
County Airport

WI Men in the Doolittle Raid

Retrospective on EAA's  
Oshkosh AirVenture,  
and Some Aerial Shots



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*Editorial assistant: Carolyn A. Eisele*

*Pat Weeden and Dr. Reid Sousek will return with their regular columns in the Winter 2020-2021 issue.*



From EAA's 50th consecutive AirVenture in Oshkosh in 2019:

Davis Kramer took this photo of an A-10 Thunderbolt II ("Warthog"); an F-35 Lightning II; an F-22 Raptor; and a P-51D Mustang (bottom to top). [© 2020 Davis Kramer]

In this Fall 2020 issue, we explore on pages 10-15, some of the history of EAA's Fly-in Convention, now called "AirVenture Oshkosh," and on pages 2-5, we have selected a variety of photographs from past EAA AirVenture aerial shows for your enjoyment.

We all look forward to getting the actual event back in 2021.

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# President's Message

## By Tom Thomas

July 2020 has been a transition month for the Board. Our summer quarterly meeting was hosted by Board member Pat Weeden at Brodhead Airport on July 16. This turned out to be one of the most significant Board Meetings since the meetings began in 1985, thirty-five years ago.

Our first challenge was to continue with our planning for our October 10<sup>th</sup> Induction Ceremony at the EAA Museum. AirVenture 2020 had been cancelled because of the coronavirus. Work has been ongoing for the development of a vaccine. That process takes time and, unfortunately, a vaccine won't be available in time to allow our October induction gathering to take place.

After discussing options, the Board decided to reschedule the fall date and plan for next spring. After Easter, in early April, 2021, is the date that we are working on. We anticipate that, by then, the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine will allow people to travel without restrictions.

Our second challenge (which has been ongoing for years), is our need for a permanent home.

The WAHF Board has been looking for a location to store our materials that were accumulated starting with Carl Guell's data that he had collected over the years. Carl was one of the initial employees of the Wisconsin Aeronautics Commission hired by Tom Jordan after WWII. Carl's data and materials were passed on to Duane Esse, then to Mike Goc, and eventually to Rose and John Dorcey.

The Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame finally has a home — the Kelch Aviation Museum of Brodhead. We are working with the Kelch Aviation Museum to establish our base of operations. Watch for further news, as we "are now on final approach!"

This Fall 2020 issue includes photos from past AirVentures. I have attended and worked at EAA's airshows for many years, going back to the late 1970s partnering with Tourism. WisDOT's Division of Aeronautics helped guide people around the EAA grounds on an as-needed basis. We were familiar with the airport's construction and operations activities, and we worked primarily with Pete Chapman, helping to transport visitors.



Learning about airplanes at EAA's KidVenture

[© 2020 Jack Fleetwood]

Over the years, more and more attention has been given to young people coming with their parents to the EAA AirVentures. Many of "those kids" are the parents and grandparents today, who now are bringing their families to EAA.

Early on, Paul Poberezny's strong commitment to young people coming to the Fly-in, and increasing their participation, grew steadily over the years. It eventually evolved into a separate area being dedicated as "KidVenture." One could say that it became an "Aviation Disneyland" for young people and their parents. How right Paul was. These young people will become tomorrow's aviation leaders.

I am still involved in giving tours to individuals and groups at AirVenture. One very important place to visit, especially for first-time visitors, is KidVenture.

To the individual, everyone is impressed with what the young people do hands-on within KidVenture. The excitement and positive energy of young people participating in KidVenture are electric. Their enthusiasm and excitement are contagious; they take us back to our youth.

Visit KidVenture next year, you'll be impressed!



October, 2020 WAHF Induction Ceremony RE-SCHEDED to Spring, 2021, due to COVID-19

**Forward in Flight**  
the only magazine dedicated exclusively to  
Wisconsin aviation history and today's aviation events.

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**The Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame is a non-profit membership organization** with a mission to collect and preserve the history of aviation in Wisconsin, recognize those who made that history, inform others of it, and promote aviation education for future generations.

**On the cover:**

**A 6-plane formation of the U.S.A.F. Thunderbirds**

[photo from air show at Traverse City, Michigan in June, 2019]

[cover inset:  
**Major Michelle Curran, lead solo pilot**]



## Selection of some EAA AirVenture Aerial photos

Notes by Tom Eisele, with ID expertise and photos from Tom Thomas  
[all photos © 2020 Tom Thomas]



ABOVE: B-17G Flying Fortress

BELOW: Navy's Blue Angels





ABOVE: Formation of Beechcraft T-34s [we believe]

BELOW: Navy version of the North American T-6





ABOVE: B-29 Super Fortress

BELOW: B-2 Spirit Stealth Bomber [thanks to Pat Weeden for improving photo quality]





ABOVE: Navy F-18 Hornet reaching for the sky

## Major Michelle “Mace” Curran Fighter Pilot from Medford, Wisconsin

By John Dodds

In May 2005, about 175 seniors, including Michelle Curran, graduated from Medford Area Senior High School (known as “MASH”). Their class song was the 2004 hit “Breakaway” by Kelly Clarkson, the first *American Idol* winner in 2002. The song is about a girl who “grew up in a small town” and moved on in life. The lyrics include:

*I'll spread my wings, and I'll learn how to fly  
I'll do what it takes till I touch the sky*

In September 2019, *The Kelly Clarkson Show* premiered on NBC, and Clarkson herself won a Daytime Emmy Award in June 2020 for “Outstanding Entertainment Talk Show Host.” As we shall see later, among the featured guests on the show in its first season was none other than the same Michelle Curran: now a fighter pilot, call sign “Mace,” and the lead solo pilot for the U.S.A.F. Thunderbirds flying demonstration team.

### Background

Michelle was born and grew up in Medford, Wisconsin. At times she describes it as a “small town, population 4,000.” But she does point out that she actually lived several miles from town “in the country.”

A high achiever, she took advance placement classes at MASH and graduated with a 4.0 grade point average (GPA). She was on the track team, participating in the shot put and discus. Outside of school, she was a figure skater from the age of six until graduating from high school.

College was a possibility, provided that she could obtain financial assistance. At her father’s suggestion, she applied for and was awarded a 4-year Air Force R.O.T.C. scholarship. As a result, she soon received a letter out of the blue from St. Thomas University in St. Paul, Minnesota, a school she had never heard of. In addition to the Air Force scholarship, which paid tuition and other academic expenses, St. Thomas University offered her a scholarship for her remaining college expenses, such as room and board. Apart from this financial assistance, she chose to attend St. Thomas for several reasons: gorgeous campus, right size (about 5,000 students), a reasonable drive from home (about three hours), and most importantly, it offered a major in her area of interest—criminal justice.

She chose the R.O.T.C. program for several reasons other than financial assistance. There was a family military connection, as her grandfather had been in the Navy in World War II. He had traveled the world, and she used to dress up in his uniform and look through his mementos. Being from a “small town,” she too wanted to travel. While she had not done any flying apart from commercial planes, she had been drawn to flying.

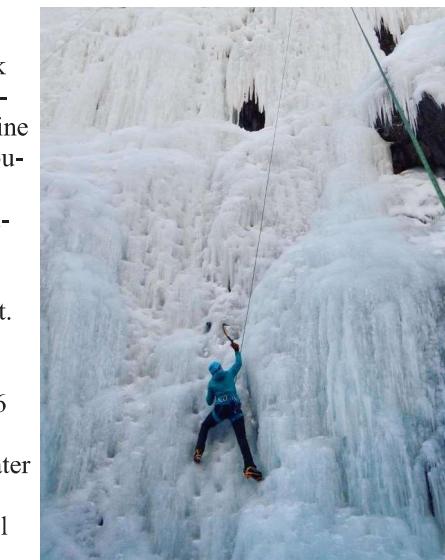
### A Sense of Wonder

Self-described as a “thrill seeker,” Michelle says she has the same personality as her father. For example, they used to ride roller coasters all day long at theme parks. She also names him as her biggest role model growing up. He is a “big outdoorsman,” and all her hobbies are “outdoor stuff”: mountain-eering, rock climbing, trekking (including a 17-day trek in 2016 at Mt. Everest, up to 19,000 feet of the 29,000-foot mountain), rappelling, white water rafting, skydiving, and running marathons, and even an ultra-marathon.

Listening to her talk about her father, I was reminded of a 1956 magazine article I came across a couple years ago by Rachel Carson, whose later influential 1962 book *Silent Spring* helped spawn the environmental movement. The 1956 article “Help Your Child to Wonder” appeared in the July 1956 issue of *Woman’s Home Companion* (published later that year as a book titled *Sense of Wonder*). Rachel Carson pointed out that

small children are born with an innate sense of wonder of nature,

Major Michelle “Mace” Curran



ABOVE: Rock climbing, Ouray, Colorado

but that as they grow, they need a mentor to nurture that sense of wonder, so that it carries through to their adult life:

If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life as an unfailing antidote against the bore-



ABOVE: R.O.T.C. class

dom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength.

If a child is to keep his inborn sense of wonder without any such gift from the fairies, he needs the companionship of at least one adult, who can share it, rediscover within him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.

Michelle's father would also read hunting stories to her as he was an avid hunter. And there also were the summer road trips to Idaho, Disney World, and, yes, NASCAR races -- since he is a NASCAR fan. She did not really like those races back then, but she now has a better appreciation and different "view" (literally), since she has flown over the Daytona 500 International Speedway as part of the Thunderbirds. One might imagine a proud father in the stands turning to the stranger next to him, saying, "That's my daughter up there!"

### Decision to Become a Fighter Pilot

Her R.O.T.C. class one year went to Tyndall A.F.B. in Panama City, Florida. There she saw an F-15, heard the afterburners, and decided she wanted to be a fighter pilot. Also, her first time flying an airplane, albeit for a short period, was in a flight with the Civil Air Patrol over St. Paul, Minnesota. The pilot complimented her flying, which gave her a boost of confidence in becoming a pilot. Prior to graduation, she applied for and was selected for pilot training. [I mentioned to her that Count von Zeppelin of dirigible fame had his first flight over St. Paul (1863), although he was merely a passenger in a tethered balloon. However, Zeppelin did say the flight in St. Paul inspired his later work with dirigibles.]

### Becoming a Fighter Pilot

Michelle followed the normal training time to become a fighter pilot, which takes three years in five phases.

The first phase was Initial Flight Screening (IFS), which lasts one month with a private contractor in Pueblo, Colorado. The plane is the DA-20, where the instructor and student sit side by side. Michelle joked that the seating was so tight that the Velcro on the shoulders of their uniforms stuck them together. Not having a mechanical background or civil aviation experience, she had a steep learning curve with a lot of late-night studying. The DA-20 was the plane she first soloed in.

The second phase was Primary Flying Training in the T-6 Texan at Columbus,



A.F.B., Mississippi. At the end of this phase, students apply for and are selected for one of three tracks: tanker/cargo, fighter/bomber, or helicopters.

Selected for the fighter/bomber track, she stayed at Columbus A.F.B. and flew the T-38 Talon, a two-engine jet, for her third phase of training.

A month before graduation, the students

find out what airframe they will fly, and for Michelle it was the F-16, officially known as the "Fighting Falcon," but among pilots it is referred to as "Viper." For her fourth phase of training, she remained at Columbus A.F.B. for another month for the Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals (IFF) course, again flying the T-38.

The fifth and final phase of her training was actually learning to fly the F-16 at Luke A.F.B., Arizona.

With her one-year training complete in Arizona, she was finally ready for her first operational assignment. From a list of available assignments, the commander of the class allowed the pilots themselves to determine who would go where. Their chosen method? Rolling dice.

As a result, Michelle was off to Misawa A.F.B., Japan.

### Misawa A.F.B., Japan: YGBSM (2012-2015)

Misawa A.F.B. is at the northern tip of the main Japanese island of Honshu, roughly 400 miles from Tokyo. Michelle was assigned to the 13<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron (the "Panthers") of the 35<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing. The wing's mission is SEAD: suppression of enemy air defenses, a challenging and dangerous mission. According to a Misawa A.F.B. Fact Sheet: "The 35<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing is the Air Force's premier Wild Weasel organization and specializes in the suppression and destruction of enemy air defense including surface-to-air missiles." The tails of the wing's aircraft are marked with the letters "WW" and with a red stripe. Tactics of Wild Weasels were first developed in the Vietnam War.

The unofficial acronym of the Wild Weasels is "YGBSM." The acronym stems from the response of a B-52 electronic warfare officer (EWO) (Jack Donovan) during the Vietnam War. When the SEAD mission was explained to him, Donovan responded: "You want me to fly in the back of a little tiny fighter aircraft with a crazy fighter pilot who thinks he's invincible, home in on a SAM [surface-to-air missile] site in North Vietnam, and shoot it before it shoots me, you gotta be sh-tting me." [Today, the SEAD mission is carried out in airplanes, such as the F-16, without an EWO.]



Ft. Worth, Texas



MIDDLE ABOVE: Daytona flyover.

IMMEDIATELY ABOVE: DA-20.

As typically happens at first operational assignments, Michelle was given her call sign: "Mace." That is how she will be known from here on.

### **Fort Worth, Texas (2015-2018)**

Mace's second assignment was with the 355<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base, Fort Worth, Texas. It is an active-duty squadron that is "associated" with an Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) F-16 squadron—355<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron (the "Spads"). The planes are "owned" by AFRC and flown by both AFRC and Air Force active-duty pilots. Even though they are in a separate unit, the active-duty pilots do refer to themselves as "Spads." [Active-duty squadrons can also associate with Air National Guard units. A good example is the 378<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron that is associated with the Air National Guard F-16 unit (115<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing) at Truax Field in Madison, Wisconsin.]

While at Fort Worth (the old Carswell A.F.B.), Mace was an instructor pilot and a flight commander.

She also deployed to Afghanistan for three months in 2016, "dropping bombs and shooting rockets." After all, actual combat is what she trained for all those years, and she flew just over 160 combat hours.

### **Thunderbird Inspiration -- LIMA**

There is an airshow on the island of Langkawi in Malaysia every two years known as the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exposition (LIMA).

In 2015, the PACAF (Pacific Air Forces) Viper demonstration team performed at LIMA. The team is actually just one F-16 jet that demonstrates the capabilities of the jet during the show. The team is part of the 35<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing at Misawa, and the photo below is that jet at the 2015 show.



Another jet from the 35<sup>th</sup> accompanied the demonstration jet; it was flown by Mace, who served as the safety observer. Her experience attending the show, especially the crowd's reaction, made a great impression on her:



This was such a great additional duty to have at my first assignment and my inspiration to eventually apply for the Thunderbirds. I got to interact with the crowd and could see the amazement in some of their eyes...especially the women. This left a lasting mark on me that I would reflect on several years later.

### **Thunderbirds (2018 – present)**

The process to become a Thunderbird is very involved. The application process requires over 40 pages of documents, to include such items as the pilot's performance reports. Several rounds of interviews winnow the number of applicants.

Mace was eventually selected to be a solo pilot. In her first season (2019) she would be the opposing solo, and in the second year (2020) she would be the lead solo. She was the fifth female pilot and second lead solo female pilot in the history of the Thunderbirds.

Last year, as the opposing solo, Mace flew the #6 jet. This year, she is the current lead solo and flies the #5 jet. The #5 is placed on her jet upside down so that it can be seen upright when she flies inverted. To further that tradition, the #5 on her helmet and uniform is also upside down.

The solo pilots perform a number of maneuvers, some with interesting names like "Calypso Pass," "Knife-edge Pass," and "Cross-over Break." Not surprising, Mace's favorite maneuver is a series of vertical rolls, pulling 9 Gs. Another 9-G maneuver is the "Sneak Pass/Afterburner On" that is a maximum turn with the wings 90 degrees to the ground.

While generally and appropriately referred to as a "team," the Thunderbirds is a military unit: its designation is "U.S.A.F. Air Demonstration Squadron." It is part of the 57<sup>th</sup> Wing at Nellis A.F.B., Las Vegas, Nevada.

The squadron includes eight pilots, six of whom are the demonstration pilots. Four pilots fly in the diamond formation that "demonstrates the training and precision of Air Force pilots," and the two solo pilots "highlight the maximum capabilities of modern jet fighter aircraft."

In addition, there are four Air Force support officers, three civilians, and about 130 enlisted personnel covering 28 career fields.

The typical show, including ground and air time, lasts one hour and fifteen minutes. The pilots perform about 80 maneuvers during the show, and there are about 75 shows per season (from March to November).





ABOVE: Calypso Pass Maneuver

The tour of duty for the pilots covers two show seasons. However, with the 2020 show season largely cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, the pilots have been extended for another year. Mace is the current lead solo pilot and will be the lead solo pilot next year as well. If the 2021 show season remains intact, she will be performing at the Milwaukee Air & Water Show on July 24-25, 2021.

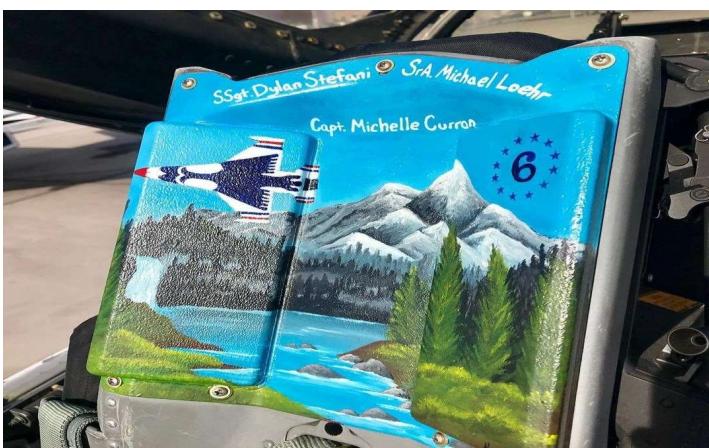
#### The Little Things

While the jets in flight are the main part of the “show,” it is on the ground where you can see the “showmanship” of individuals, namely, the crew chiefs. Their choreographed and crisp movements on the “show-line” getting the jets ready for takeoff are fascinating to watch.

As an example, as the pilots taxi for takeoff, they roll by the lined-up crew chiefs and exchange hand signs. The pilots have their own hand signs they have formed with their particular crew chiefs. These hand signs are a symbol of the bond between the pilot and his or her crew chiefs. But here is the little thing that is unnoticed (until Mace pointed it out to me): the crew chiefs for a pilot know the hand signs for all the other pilots as well and exchange the particular hand sign for the pilot who rolls by.

These exchanges are an indication of the close relationship among all team members.

Another little thing that shows the bond between a pilot and crew chiefs is the personalized headrest that Mace’s crew chiefs



LOWER LEFT: Mace's headrest by her crew chiefs

RIGHT: Mace and Amelia on the *Kelly Clarkson Show*

made for her when she was the opposing solo. It reveals not only their understanding of Mace’s love of mountains, but also their time and effort in creating a customized headrest for her jet.

#### Role Model

On the *Kelly Clarkson Show* in March 2020, Mace was asked what the best part of her job was. She said that while the flying was amazing, the best part of the job was inspiring kids, especially little girls.

One such girl was 7-year old Amelia.

While Mace was off stage, Amelia was asked if there were any female pilots she looked up to and might imitate their careers. She quickly answered that it was the #5 pilot who flew upside down and was the lead solo pilot for the Thunderbirds—her name was Michelle. At that point, Mace made her surprise appearance, and Amelia was, needless to say, ecstatic. Amelia later went to Nellis A.F.B. to be a Thunderbird-for-a-Day.



Apart from flying, team members regular give interviews to national and local media. They also engage in other community relations activities, such as speaking at schools and hospitals and working with kids with special needs or terminally-ill children.

#### When Birds Collide – Miracle in Colombia

Birds hitting planes, often called “bird strikes,” can be devastating. We all remember the “Miracle on the Hudson” in 2009. The co-pilot of the Airbus A320 that day was Jeff Skiles, who was inducted into the WAHF in 2019 (*Forward in Flight*, Summer 2019).

Mace was more fortunate when her plane was struck by a bird that left two fist-size holes in the fuselage. It happened during practice for an airshow in Colombia, and she landed immediately and safely. With sheet metal provided by the Colombian Air Force, the Thunderbirds team repaired the holes. Discovery of

**Curran article continued on page 22**

# Brief History of EAA AirVenture/Oshkosh and Some Photos

## In the Light of this Year's Cancellation, a Retrospective

Notes by Tom Eisele, with ID expertise from Doug Tomas; photos by Doug Tomas [all photos © 2020 Doug Tomas]

Soon after the founding of the Experimental Aircraft Association, members began discussing and planning for a “Fly-in Convention.” This unique event became known as the “EAA AirVenture Oshkosh.” Its evolution took place over roughly six different periods.

### IN MILWAUKEE (1953-1959):

The first fly-in occurred in September, 1953. It was not an independent event, but rather was a small part of the Milwaukee Air Pageant. That event was held at Wright-Curtiss Field, now called Timmerman Field.

The initial event was fun but not indicative of the later full-bore fly-ins. There were recreational, homebuilt, and some modified aircraft in 1953, with fewer than 150 registered visitors.

But the idea took root and rapidly grew. While the Milwaukee Air Pageant itself faded, the Fly-in became a hit. In fact, the EAA Fly-in grew so quickly as a destination event that it outgrew the confines of the Milwaukee airport.

Seeking more generous room for the fly-in event, the EAA turned its attention to Rockford, Illinois.

### IN ROCKFORD, IL (1959-1969):

The 10 years in Rockford were crucial growing years for EAA and its Fly-in Convention.

According to Dick Knapinski in the EAA Communications department, these years “were where the EAA Fly-in Convention established both its prominence as a homebuilders’ event and its friendly feeling that is retained to this day. During these years, such diverse aviation interests as Warbirds, antiques and aerobatic performers became part of the EAA event.”

### THE OSHKOSH YEARS (1st portion—1970s—1980s):

By 1969, even the more spacious area available in Rockford could not accommodate the needs of EAA enthusiasts. Other sites for the fly-in event were sought.

Steve Wittman, an EAA member since its inception in 1953, recommended the airport in Oshkosh as a viable site. It had ample acreage for the annual influx of visitors; there were two long runways which did not cross; and Oshkosh city officials were excited to host such an annual event.

Infrastructure was a problem, however. Yet EAA’s enthusiastic volunteer network proved equal to the challenge. Within six months, an adequate site was prepared for hosting the Fly-in Convention and all of its associated events and activities.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, the Convention exploded into national prominence, as attendance annually ran into six figures.

### THE OSHKOSH YEARS (2nd portion—1990s):

In the 1990s, EAA’s Fly-in Convention became one of sport aviation’s top gatherings. Hundreds of thousands of people were attending annually, and top sport aviation attractions were available throughout the week of activities.

In addition, top government officials and corporate leaders were regularly in attendance. The aviation enthusiasts who attended during this decade boosted the Wisconsin economy by more than \$110-million each year.

In 1998, the new name of the EAA Fly-in Convention became, officially, “EAA AirVenture Oshkosh.”

### THE OSHKOSH YEARS (3rd portion—1998—2008):

As exciting as ever, this stretch of 10 years saw the resources of the AirVenture site becoming stretched beyond their limits. It became obvious that re-fitting and other revisions needed to be made to the fly-in site and its associated services.

Visitors and exhibitors equally looked forward to the enhancements soon to be made.

### THE OSHKOSH YEARS (4th portion—2008-2019):

In this ten-year period, enhancements were made and revisions were finished, improving and expanding what could be seen and experienced on-site at Oshkosh.

As this period drew to a close, it is appropriate that the 2019 AirVenture Oshkosh event marked the 50th consecutive year that the Fly-in Convention has been held in Oshkosh.



Happy EAA visitors view a Douglas AD-5W Skyrider



**RIGHT:** Late model of the B-25 Mitchell medium bomber. An earlier version of this bomber took off from the deck of the *U.S.S. Hornet* on the mission to bomb Japan in April, 1942 [see pages 18-21].



**LEFT:** This is a DC-2, the immediate predecessor of the DC-3, which was the airplane that made commercial and recreational air travel possible and affordable in the United States. Very few DC-2s remain in existence; this one was a part of the gathering of DC-3s at EAA in 2010. It also should be noted that the DC-3 made air transport of cargo affordable in the 1930s and 1940s, and proved to be a still reliable workhorse well into the 1950s. Its military variant was the C-47 Skytrain, which took our paratroopers in the 82nd Airborne and the 101st Airborne into Normandy for D-Day, and into Holland for Operation Market-Garden in September, 1944.

**RIGHT:** Don't forget lighter-than-air flight. For a substantial period of time, balloons were the only way for humans to take to the air. Now, they are a fun-filled alternative form of flight.



**LEFT:** After the Wright brothers, and after the intense development of airplanes in World War I, it was primarily the U.S. mail service that made flying an efficient and affordable way of connecting one area of the U.S. with other areas. Charles Lindbergh, among others, learned his flight craft as an airmail pilot in the central U.S.

## EAA AIRVENTURE MEMORIES

**TOP RIGHT:** A tight formation flown as an honor during the EAA Memorial Wall dedication, on Sunday, August 04, 2013. Led by Matt Younkin in a Beechcraft 18 (“Twin Beech”), the remaining 5 planes are North American T-6’s (four of the 5 are the AeroShell T-6 Team). Group became “Missing Man” formation shortly after photo was taken.



**ABOVE:** The justly famous Ford Tri-motor, here in an Eastern Air Lines guise. (That's probably Indiana Jones waving to us from the window.)



**RIGHT:** Red-white-and-blue acrobatics performed by Julie Clark in her Beechcraft T-34 in an evening airshow.



**BELOW:** A Howard DGA-15 on floats on a quiet afternoon at the EAA Seaplane base.





ABOVE: An early version of the B-24 "Liberator" heavy bomber, of the kind flown by the brave airmen who took part in the Ploesti Raid (August 01, 1943), including Wisconsin native Major John Jerstad, who earned the Congressional Medal of Honor on that Raid. (This specific plane is "Diamond Lil" of the Commemorative Air Force. It started life as a B-24A, the 25th such plane built, serial number 18. Never in combat, it transitioned to a transport version of the B-24, for cargo and

passengers, styled the C-87 "Liberator Express." Any way you look at it, and however it is styled, it is one handy airframe.)



LEFT (top to bottom): Navy Heritage Flight, celebrating the Centennial of Naval Aviation. Reading top to bottom, the formation includes a Navy FJ-4B "Fury," a British Hawker Sea Fury, a Navy jet trainer T-2 "Buckeye," and an F-18 Hornet.

RIGHT: Plane similar to the Lockheed Electra flown by Amelia Earhart, lost in the South-Central Pacific Ocean in July, 1937, as she and Navigator Fred Noonan were trying to find Howland Island. Numerous theories abound as to their disappearance, and countless expeditions have been undertaken to find evidence of their remains and the remains of their plane. It is a compelling mystery of 20th century aviation.



**RIGHT:** This oddity is Virgin Galactic's mother-ship: WhiteKnightTwo, named "Eve." This aircraft carries the Virgin Galactic SpaceShipTwo up to altitude for launch, taking passengers into space.

**IMMEDIATELY BELOW:** The F-86 Super Sabre, which turned the tide against communist MiGs during the Korean War.



**BELOW:** The B-17 "Flying Fortress," a stable and strong flying platform during WWII. This is the model B-17G with its chin-strap turret added, as intended, to dissuade enemy fighters from attacking from the front of the bomber.





ABOVE: Acrobatic team "Iron Eagles" flying Christian Eagles in the afternoon airshow.

BELOW: Early morning in the EAA Antique/Classic parking area. This line includes (left to right): a Stearman PT-17, a Waco UPF-7, and two Beechcraft Model 17 Staggerwings.



## Door County's Pink Seagull Anomaly

### The Door County Cherryland Airport and the FAA

By Tom Thomas

In 1972, the Wisconsin Division of Aeronautics was approved to hire two Airport Operations Consultants. In the fall of 1972, they hired Pete Drahm. In the spring of 1973, they interviewed me for their second position and I was hired in March of 1973. Right away, the Division had both Pete and I going out to visit the public airports across the state.

This was the beginning of my long and interesting aviation career working in the airport operation side of Wisconsin's air transportation system. My job gave me many opportunities to be involved in helping airports to resolve various issues or to solve problems as they arose. It also included holding public hearings on behalf of the State, where we learned about the problems, challenges, and needs faced by state airports. When asked, we would help and assist with many operational issues, as the airports continued to grow and expand over time.

During this period, I also served as a pilot in Wisconsin's Air National Guard, first in Milwaukee, then in Madison. Flying was my primary responsibility in the Air Guard, and it also was a major part of working for the State. With the state airplanes, Pete and I were able to visit airports and see first-hand what our "customers" were dealing with.

One of the common aviation ties between military and civilian flying was with wildlife hazards around airports. Birds near airports topped the list. On the military side, I had experienced several bird strikes, either individual birds or in large flocks. With the exception of one airstrike – which occurred while I was flying an A-10 at low level in the Hardwood Range area – all of the bird-strikes occurred in the vicinity of, or on, airports proper.

So, when the issue of birds and landfills around airports came up, it was an important operational safety issue. In particular, we often were tasked to work with airports in resolving landfill/seagull conflicts across the state.

Door County's landfill was my first experience with a municipal solid waste balefill operation (instead of a conventional landfill). It was quite impressive. The refuse from around the county was delivered to a site in Sturgeon Bay. There it was compacted into dense bales at their transfer station. The bales were then loaded onto enclosed semi-trailers, hauled to the landfill/balefill site, and stacked in rows on top of one another in the fill area. The bales were always capped daily with an earthen cover. Because the waste is baled and stacked, instead of loosely spread and compacted, there is considerably less surface area available for seagulls on which to feed.

The Door County Cherryland Airport that we know of today, was originally built in the 1930s adjacent to Potawatomi State Park, as a private field open to the public with two turf runways. In 1943, the County Board voted to purchase the already functioning airport. They bought it and proceeded to maintain and develop it as the County Airport. It had grass runways at the time; over the years, both runways were paved,

which increased its utility to a year-round air transportation link.

Next came the need for a county landfill. The site had to have a clay base so that the chemicals from the landfill could not enter the county's water system. The site selected was the only place in the county that had the appropriate clay properties.

When the site was selected, its proximity to the airport was not an issue. Reportedly, the DNR gave the county a waiver allowing the landfill and airport to be 7,800-feet from each other. Due to the orientation of the runways, the flight paths of aircraft approaching and departing the airport did not pass over the landfill. So, when initially built, the FAA did not object to the landfill being within 10,000-feet from the closest runway at Door County's Cherryland Airport. The FAA indicated that, if gulls were not attracted to the area in numbers greater than before the landfill opened, then no increase in hazard occurred.

The airport and landfill went on operating safely (with a spacing of 7,800-feet) for over 10 years. Eventually, however, Door County needed to expand the landfill site. To this expansion, the FAA was opposed. The FAA now became concerned that the airport was inside the FAA's 10,000-feet spacing criterion for the separation from landfills.

On January 23, 1993, I flew with Keith Gerard in one of the State's Cessna 182s (N5921E) to Door County. The purpose of the visit was to attend an Airport Commission Meeting where the status of the County's balefill/landfill would be discussed, given that the FAA was now opposed to its expansion.

Even though the FAA had provided over \$1.5 million in federal aviation funds some eight years after the landfill had been in place, they played their 10,000-feet criterion card. The FAA wanted the County either to close the landfill or to move the airport because of the bird hazard. None of the approach or departure paths to any of the runways took aircraft over the landfill. Also, since the landfill was opened, there had been no incidents of reported bird strikes with seagulls, and no complaints from pilots using the airport.

Part of the frustration with the seagull issue was the knowledge the Door County government possessed, which the FAA would not accept. According to Keith Kasbom, the seagulls that did frequent the landfill, did not fly over the airport.



ABOVE: The airport

BELOW: The culprit?



His letter to the Door County Highway Department, which dealt with the airport, stated "I have received no complaints regarding bird hazards resulting from the Door County Landfill. My predecessor, Mr. McQueen, expressed no problem with gulls as a result of the landfill."

Keith went on to say: "We do, however, attract gulls and other species of birds in large numbers at the airport after the first couple of spring rains, as they come to feed on the worms on the runways."

He went on to discuss his correspondence with and advice from the US Fish & Wildlife Service. He concluded by pointing out that the airport is located near two large bodies of water, and that it was apparent that the seagulls were there to stay.

The FAA would not budge in their requirement to impose the 10,000-feet of separation required by the "bird strike safety hazard" criterion. They were convinced that keeping airports and landfills apart outside that distance would eliminate the potential of a bird strike that otherwise could result in a loss of life from inflight collisions.

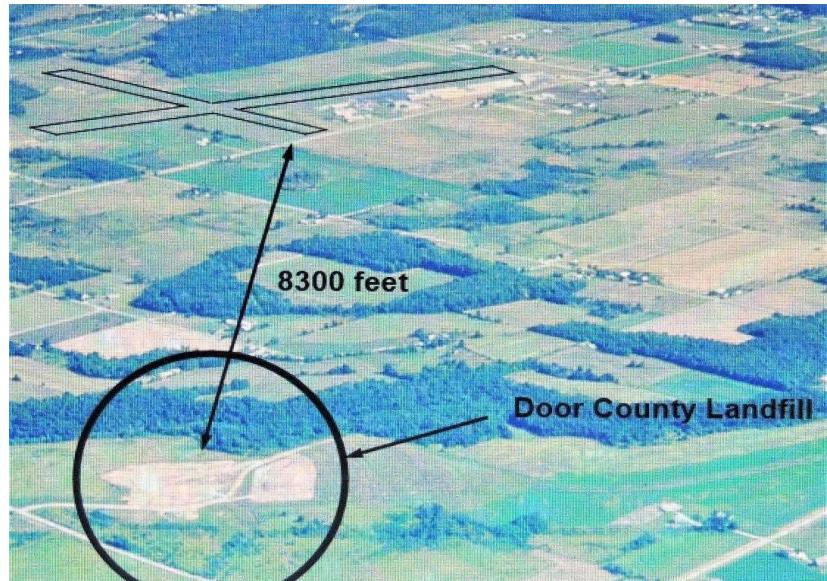
In view of the FAA's hard-and-fast position, the County took the initiative to prove to the FAA that seagulls at the landfill did not fly to the airport. The County hired a private company to conduct a study which ultimately cost \$23,000.

What they did was to use a system of cannons and nets shot over the landfill to "humanely capture" 500 seagulls. They then used a non-toxic dye and dyed them pink. At a prearranged time, they positioned people around the Door County Cherryland Airport, ready to document the sighting of any pink seagulls and record their location and time. At the pre-set time, they released all 500 pink seagulls. The pink seagulls flew out of the landfill and took off. As Keith had mentioned, they all headed toward the water. No one stationed around the airport saw a single seagull.

As a follow-up, several college students were hired to be at the airport during the day for the next two weeks. No pink seagulls were sighted.

The results of the complete study clearly demonstrated that seagulls from the landfill did not fly to the airport, and therefore posed no hazard to aircraft landing or taking off from the Door County Cherryland Airport. The County then forwarded the report and its results to the FAA. The FAA read the report and thanked the County. They then said their position remained: Either close the landfill, or move the airport. Either change was required before the FAA would expend any further federal monies to improve the Door County airport.

Discussions continued and on April 30, 1998, two FAA representatives from Washington were scheduled to observe both the airport and landfill. The County passed the word on to the Division of Aeronautics. We then scheduled one of our Cessna 182s (N4723N) to attend the meeting with the FAA staff. The weather in Madison was IFR when we departed, but it was clear and sunny in Door County. Our Bureau engineer assigned the airport was not able to attend with me, but things went pretty smoothly. We first drove out to the landfill, the FAA in their car, and I drove with Keith. The landfill was well-maintained and we took photos.



Landfill/balefill area is sand-color mound in foreground, airport is in the center toward the background, as shown by the diagram.

On completing the landfill visit, we returned to the airport, where the FAA staffers requested a tour of the airport. Keith had been called "down-town," so I escorted them around the airport, which included visiting each runway end. We didn't see any seagulls during the tour, pink or white!

After the tour I offered to give them an aerial tour over the airport and landfill where they could see the proximity to both Green Bay, the Sturgeon Bay channel, and Lake Michigan, all from the airport's traffic pattern. They thanked me for the offer but declined. When we returned to the terminal, we said our goodbyes and exchanged business cards. They climbed into their rented car and departed.

They returned and submitted their report. The decision remained unchanged; the airport and landfill did not meet their 10,000-feet separation criterion. No more federal money would be given to Door County until the County moved on the FAA's demands.

While this all was transpiring, the County continued looking into other options. Several years had passed since they were first told by the FAA that they had to close the landfill, or move the airport. Originally, it had been concluded that, if the county closed the landfill, they didn't have any viable site options within the county. And trucking the trash to another county was too expensive.

When they had received the FAA's final verdict, however, the county re-evaluated the option of trucking the refuse to either Brown or Keweenaw County. It turned out that the costs and other circumstances had changed. In view of the new situation, Door County was able to drive its refuse to a Keweenaw County landfill location for less than it was costing the county to maintain the existing Sturgeon Bay balefill facility.

After all the fuss and wrangling over who was right, the situation resolved itself. And the pink dye eventually washed off the 500 "winged volunteers," as the world moved on.

The Door County Cherryland Airport is a true gem within the Wisconsin Air Transportation System.



## The Doolittle Raid

### Three Airmen Came from Wisconsin

By Tom Eisele

On April 18, 1942, some 650 miles off the northern coast of Japan, out in the cold waters of the North Pacific Ocean, sixteen B-25 twin-engine bombers took off from the carrier *U.S.S. Hornet*. The planes did not join up in formation after take-off, but rather, having taken off individually, they continued to fly strung out in a rough line between the U.S. carrier and the Japanese mainland. The men inside those bombers were intent on bombing targets in Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe.

Each B-25 bomber carried a crew of five: pilot, co-pilot, bombardier, navigator, and top turret gunner. Each plane carried "dummy" sticks to simulate rear guns to protect the back of the plane, and the ball turret in the belly of each plane had been eliminated, because the bombers were hugging the waves and no pursuit plane or defending Japanese fighter could possibly get beneath the bombers. No, their vulnerable spots were from the front, the two sides, and from above. The rest of their defense consisted of surprise, speed, and pure bluster.

No one on the Japanese mainland expected such an audacious attack. And, when you think about it, why should the Japanese expect an American attack? The mission was literally impossible. It could not be done.

B-25 bombers were fast and strong, but they were designed to take off from land-based runways. Carriers had at most 800 feet with which to work. Single-engine fighters and dive bombers could, with practice and luck and good weather conditions, take off from the plunging deck of a carrier; but not twin-engine bombers.

Moreover, the U.S. armed forces were in disarray.

December, 1941, had seen the disastrous attack on Pearl Harbor, which destroyed the bulk of the U.S. surface fleet component of battleships, and some cruisers and support ships as well. True, U.S. carriers had been spared at Pearl Harbor, but we had only four of them for the entire expanse of the Pacific Ocean, and that was a lot of water for four carriers to patrol and protect. In addition, the U.S. army and marines on the Philippines were in retreat in early 1942, and no American forces stood in closer proximity to the Japanese home islands.

Everywhere else in the western or southern Pacific, we were on the defensive – no offensive operations could be imagined or contemplated in 1942, much less planned, thank you very much.

Still, we did plan this raid, and we did execute it.

Here, in brief detail, is some more information about the three Wisconsin flyers who were among the 80 airmen who pulled off a remarkable feat of daring, when World War II looked dark indeed.

#### Overview

The airmen and planes had come from the 17<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group on a volunteer basis. In early 1942, they gathered first in South Carolina and then flew to Eglin Field in Florida. Their training and practice runs were strictly secret and kept as far as possible from



prying eyes and inquisitive ears. The original gathering of 24 planes and crews was reduced by accidents to 22 by late March, 1942. The remaining airmen and planes then flew to Sacramento, California. From there, a final 16 planes, with extra air crew as backup flyers (a total of 134 Air Force personnel), were loaded onto the *U.S.S. Hornet*, which sailed in early April.



TOP: Doolittle's plane taking off

ABOVE: *Hornet* during the launch

The eventual naval task force included 16 surface ships: the carrier, *U.S.S. Enterprise*, as well as the *Hornet*, several cruisers and destroyers, and two oilers. Since the large B-25 bombers could not be stored below the flight deck of the *Hornet*, another carrier was required to fly air patrols over Task Force 16 as it made its way toward Japan. (Three submarines also assisted.)

Until the big twin-engine bombers launched from *Hornet* and freed up its flight deck, that carrier was locked and loaded, but otherwise impotent.

The original plan had been to launch the bombers late on April 18, allowing them to bomb Japanese targets in the dark, hoping to sow panic and confusion, and thereby allowing the bombers to escape in the darkness.

Early on April 18, however, Japanese fishing boats, serving as a picket line, popped up on the horizon, with the U.S. task force still 600-700 miles distant from Japan. Having avoided one picket boat, the carriers *Hornet* and *Enterprise* unfortunately were soon spotted by two other picket boats. Those picket boats were sunk by the escorting U.S. cruisers, but not before their warnings had been radioed back to Japan.

The decision to launch the bombers — even though they were approximately twice as far from Japan as originally planned for the launch — quickly followed.

Of the sixteen bombers, Lt. Col. Doolittle's (co-pilot, Lt. Cole) was the first to leave the *Hornet*. Its mission was to plant incendiary bombs around Tokyo, making it easier for the following planes to find their targets, or at least the correct general urban area. Had the raid taken place at night, as planned, this might have worked to advantage; with the unexpected early take-off, however, it proved less crucial, or useful, since the raid took place during broad daylight on April 18.

After Doolittle's lead plane, there were five gatherings (hardly "formations") of three planes each, assigned different targets or urban areas.

- The **first** gathering, of planes 2-4, led by Lt. Hoover, was assigned targets in northern Tokyo.
- The **second** gathering, of planes 5-7, led by Capt. Jones, was assigned targets in central Tokyo.
- The **third** gathering, of planes 8-10, led by Capt. York, was assigned targets in southern Tokyo and Tokyo Bay.
- The **fourth** gathering, of planes 11-13, led by Capt. Greening, was assigned targets in Kenegawa, Yokohama, and the Yokosuka Navy Yard.
- The **fifth** gathering, of planes 14-16, led by Major Hilger, was to proceed south of Tokyo toward the general vicinity of Nagoya, where the planes would split up to attack targets in Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe.

The 15 planes following Doolittle's lead were essentially stripped-down flying gas cans, each with added fuel tanks and, over and above those, even some special additional gas cans for re-fueling while still in-flight. The gas fumes seeping through those planes must have been intense. For their bomb load, the planes carried three 500-lb. special demolition bombs and an incendiary bomb.

Since the planes launched after the sinking of the picket boats, the pilots assumed the Japanese were alerted by the fishing boats and would have their defenses primed and ready for the incoming bombers. In the actual event, not so.

Either due to poor communications, or (more likely) due to the miscalculation by Japanese authorities that naval planes on a carrier could not be launched successfully from such a far distance away from the Japanese mainland, Japanese defensive measures were surprisingly light and ineffective when the bombers actually arrived. There was sporadic anti-aircraft fire, of course, and a few interceptions by patrolling Japanese flights; but *not* what one would reasonably have anticipated in these circumstances.

#### S/Sgt. Ted Laban, Engineer-Gunner, Plane #8 (born in Kenosha in 1914)

Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle, at 8:20 am (ship time), was the first pilot to take-off. He had only 467-feet of deck space for taking off, even though fully loaded with bombs and extra fuel.

Twenty-six minutes later, at 8:46 am, plane #8 was launched. Capt. Edward York was at the controls, Lt. Robert Emmens was the co-pilot, Lt. Nolan Herndon served as Navigator and Bombardier, Sgt. David Pohl was a gunner, and Staff Sgt. Ted Laban was an engineer-gunner. So far as we know, the run-in to the target was tense but uneventful. We have no reports of defending fire from pursuit planes or anti-aircraft batteries prior to the actual bomb run.

Plane #8 was leading the third section (planes 8-10) toward targets in southern Tokyo and a portion of Tokyo Bay. This may have been something of an unfortunate choice, because plane #8 had a history of high consumption of fuel. That fuel history



**Crew of Plane #8 (left to right):** Lt. Herndon, Capt. York, S/Sgt. Laban, Lt. Emmens, Sgt. Pohl.

played out again during this raid, and the crew was quite concerned about their high rate of fuel usage. They also were plagued with an inoperative top turret, so that they were essentially defenseless against fighters, if they happened to be pursued by any. As far as we know, plane #8 hit its assigned targets as planned.

After they bombed their targets, Capt. York and his crew considered their options. They were supposed to head toward friendly airfields in the interior of China, as far away as possible from the Japanese-held coastal areas. But the men in plane #8 decided that they simply did not have sufficient remaining fuel to make it anywhere near China.

Instead, they opted for Russian Siberia.

Earlier in the planning phase of the Doolittle Raid, the U.S. had sought permission from Stalin's Russia for landings there, if the need arose. The Russians refused. Despite being our ally (supposedly), the Russians at this time during World War II were *not* at war with Japan. The Russians were fighting for their lives, but only against Nazi Germany on the Russian western front. The Russians understandably did not want to provoke the Japanese, and the Russians also understandably wanted to avoid the dilemma that Hitler now faced – a two-front war.

Still and all, looking at their dwindling fuel, Capt. York and his crew chose the closest landing field, and Russian Siberia was only half the distance as far as were friendly Chinese airfields.

Plane #8 went to Russia. The crew landed safely 40 miles north of Vladivostok. They were promptly welcomed to Russia, and then interned for 13 months.



Arrived in Russia and promptly interned for the duration

## DOOLITTLE RAID

Plane #8 was the only one of the sixteen bombers to fly to Russia; the other fifteen planes headed to China, with varying degrees of success.

Eventually, in May of 1943, the crewmen of plane #8 were able to escape from internment in Russia, escaping to Persia (present-day Iran). Many people believe the Russian government was aware of their attempt to escape from internment, and the Russians simply turned a blind eye to it.

### Thomas Griffin, Navigator, Plane #9 ("Whirling Dervish") (born in Green Bay in 1916)

Plane #9, called the "Whirling Dervish," took off four minutes after plane #8 and headed in the same direction, both having targets assigned in the southern area of Tokyo and Tokyo Bay. But plane #9 seems not to have suffered any of the fuel consumption problems experienced by Capt. York's plane #8.

Lt. Harold Watson was flying the "Whirling Dervish," with Lt. James Parker Jr. as co-pilot, Lt. Thomas Griffin as navigator, Sgt. Wayne Bissell as bombardier, and T/Sgt. Eldred Scott as engineer-gunner. In their after-action report, they stated that they bombed the Kawasji tank and truck plant, the Tokyo Gas and Electric Company on the shores of Tokyo Bay, and a congested industrial area near a railroad station.

They then proceeded to China, where they bailed out when their plane began running out of fuel. All of the crew landed safely, but Lt. Watson suffered a dislocated shoulder from his parachute harness. The crewmen were helped to safety by friendly Chinese, and all of them avoided capture.

The Badger aviator, Thomas Griffin, later was involved in the U.S. effort in North Africa, and there his bomber was shot down over Sicily in July, 1943. So, despite avoiding capture by the Japanese in 1942 in China, Thomas Griffin did become a POW – to the Germans in 1943! (It's a strange life in this unpredictable world.) He was released from captivity when the Germans surrendered in May, 1945.

### Richard Knobloch, Co-pilot, Plane #13 (born in Milwaukee in 1918)

In plane #13, piloted by Lt. Edgar McElroy and co-piloted by Lt. Richard Knobloch, the crew took off from the *Hornet* at 9:01 am (ship time), fully forty minutes after Doolittle's take-off. As you can imagine, the bombers were forming a stream of planes, stretching from Japan back to the carrier, each on its own personal mission, as it were, and yet also composing a formidable group of American avengers.

In addition to Lts. McElroy and Knobloch, plane #13 carried Lt. Clayton Campbell as navigator, Sgt. Robert Bourgeois as bombardier, and Sgt. Adam Williams as engineer-gunner.

The crew in plane #13 found broken clouds most of the way to Japan, but fifty miles from landfall the skies cleared. Their target was the Yokosuka Naval Station. On their run-in to the specific targets, there was heavy anti-aircraft fire; the ack-ack gunners had their altitude and speed, but luckily no hits were made on the plane. The bombardier released their four bombs on workshops



Crew of Plane #9 (left to right): Lt. Griffin, Lt. Watson, T/Sgt. Scott, Lt. Parker, Sgt. Bissell.

and building slips within the Navy Yard, and reported effective hits on target.

From there, the men flew south and west toward China. Running low on fuel and unable to find any safe airfield, the men of plane #13 bailed out. The next day or so, with the help of friendly Chinese, the crewmen re-united. Eventually, with the help of the Chinese, the men made it to safety.



Crew of Plane #13 (left to right): Lt. Campbell, Lt. McElroy, Sgt. Williams, Lt. Knobloch, Sgt. Bourgeois.



B-25 bombers parked, and packed, on the flight deck of the U.S.S. *Hornet*, preparing for take-off; and China beyond.



Lt. Robert Hite, captured, being escorted back to Japan.

### Some Statistics and Final Facts

All told, the Doolittle Raid on Japan was an Army-Navy mission and a remarkable success. It took 10,000 Navy personnel in the U.S. task force to get 80 Army Air Corps personnel close enough to put 15 tons of bombs on Japanese targets.

Yet the impact on Japanese morale and on Japanese complacency was out of all proportion to the relatively light load of bombs dropped. Japanese authorities expressed great shame and chagrin at the audacity of the American attack, and equally affirmed their loss of face for having allowed the Emperor's safety to have been so threatened. (The Emperor in fact was never a target of this mission; Lt. Col. Doolittle expressly forbade his flyers from bombing the Imperial Palace or its grounds.)

The Japanese withdrew frontline planes and ships, calling them back to the home islands, solely as a measure to beef up their defenses against any such American bombing raids. It would be another 26 months, however, in mid-1944, before America once again came close enough in the Pacific to launch bombing raids against the homeland of Japan. In the meantime, those Japanese flyers and sailors and soldiers tied up with defensive duties at home could not be used in the various offensives prosecuted by the Japanese elsewhere in the Pacific.

American morale, conversely, took a huge boost from the Raid. In addition, this was the beginning of "pay-back" for Pearl Harbor, a searing sore in the American soul.

Beyond these global matters of history and strategy, however, we may return to the most immediate question, namely, "What about the 80 men who carried the bombs and did the flying – what of them?"

- Of the 80 men in the aircrews, none was specifically hurt or wounded during the actual bombing raid.
- One man, Cpl. Leland Faktor, was killed while bailing out over China. [plane #3]
- Two men, Sgt. William Dieter and Sgt. Donald Fitzmaurice, were killed in the crash-landing, or else drowned in the surf, when their plane came down in the sea off the coast of China. [plane #6]
- The survivors in the crews of two planes, planes #6 and #16 — eight flyers total — were eventually captured by the Japanese in China. [Lts. Dean Hallmark, Robert Meder, and Chase Nielsen from plane #6; and Lts. William Farrow, Robert Hite, and George Barr, and Sgts. Jacob DeShazer and Carl Spatz from plane #16.]
- Of the eight captured flyers, three were executed by the Japanese [Hallmark, Farrow, and Spatz], one died in captivity from dysentery and beri-beri [Meder], and the remaining four prisoners survived the remainder of the war, returning to the U.S. after hostilities ended in 1945 [Barr, Hite, Nielsen, and DeShazer].
- All told, then, 69 out of the 80 airmen made it to safety (some of whom suffered severe injuries, to be sure).
- All of the men – safe or otherwise – had contributed, through their heroic efforts and actions, to the Raid's success.
- Capt. Marc Mitscher of the *Hornet*, and countless seamen in Task Force 16, also were Wisconsin service men.

### And what about the three Wisconsin airmen?

All three survived World War II, albeit Thomas Griffin as a POW in German captivity.

Ted Laban retired from the Air Force as a Master Sergeant in 1956, and died in September, 1978.

Richard Knobloch eventually became a Brigadier General and retired from the Air Force in 1970. He was inducted into WAHF in 1997, and he passed away in August, 2001.

Thomas Griffin, the German POW, left the Air Force as a Major, and lived to the ripe old age of 96. He died in February, 2013.

Long may we remember.

## HISTORY HANGAR [continued]



feathers in the engine also required an engine swap. The plane was flown home three days later, and in the meantime Mace flew two shows in a spare jet.

Later, she wrote: "We [pilots] might get all the attention, but the team behind us works miracles to make the shows happen."

### Reflection

One of the maneuvers performed by the two solo pilots is called "Reflection." In this maneuver, the planes fly in the same direction with the lead solo (Mace in the picture below) flying inverted beneath the other plane.



In late 2019, Mace was at the 10-year point in her inspiring career. Consider her reflection at the time:

In that ten years I learned how to fly a jet, how to pick my life up and move across the country or world every few years, how to be confident in the air and on the ground, how to set my priorities and manage my limited time between a demanding profession and my personal life. Most of all I learned that the scary space outside your comfort zone is where the best things happen. It's where you surprise others and yourself with what you can do.

Quite an adventure for a girl from a "small town" in Wisconsin!

**TOP:** Holes from bird strike.

**MIDDLE ABOVE:** Reflection Maneuver

**RIGHT:** The wonder of childhood — and the wonder of flight

### Women Fighter Pilots – the Numbers

The first class of Air Force women to become pilots was in 1977. However, it was not until many years later that the Air Force allowed women to fly combat aircraft. The first woman to do so was 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant (now Major General) Jeannine Leavitt when she entered the training class for the F-15E Strike Eagle in 1993. One of Mace's interviews when applying for the Thunderbirds was with then-Brigadier General Jeannie Leavitt when she was the commander of the 57<sup>th</sup> Wing at Nellis A.F.B.

In response to a question at an airshow about the number of women fighter pilots, Mace diplomatically answered that women fighter pilots were "under represented." That is an understatement. In response to my inquiries to three different Air Force public affairs offices (PAOs), I was given the following numbers of women fighter pilots and total fighter pilots:

- Active-duty: 3% (70 out of 2,435 pilots), Air Force PAO, Pentagon
- Air Force Reserve Command: 1% (5 out of 471 pilots), AFRC PAO, Dobbins A.F.B., Georgia
- Air National Guard: 1% (11 out of 840 pilots), ANG PAO, Andrews A.F.B., Maryland

The Air Force is taking steps to improve this situation, such as reducing the mandatory height requirements for pilots and redesigning flight gear, including flight suits, G-suits, and survival vests.

### Final Thought – Sense of Wonder

It seems that small children have an innate sense of wonder not only of nature but also of airplanes (as shown in the photo to the right).

If we concede that there are no fairies (see Rachel Carson quote above), then children will need an adult—someone like Mace—to carry that sense of wonder of aviation throughout life.



### Acknowledgments

*I would like to thank Major Michelle "Mace" Curran for agreeing to an interview via Zoom. Also, thanks to Captain Remoshay Nelson, Thunderbird #12, the PAO for the Thunderbirds, and Staff Sergeant Cory Bush, photo journalist/media relations, for their assistance in setting up the interview and answering my other inquiries. I should also mention the assistance from the PAOs mentioned above in the representation statistics, as well as the PAO at Air Combat Command, Langley A.F.B., Virginia.*

# GONE WEST

## Two Members have Passed

### Claude Sime:

Claude I. Sime, Jr., 87, of Waunakee, WI, passed away peacefully with his wife, Pat, by his side on July 12, 2020.

Claude, was born May 12, 1933, to Claude and Estelle Sime and graduated from Freeport High School in 1951. He earned his undergraduate degree from University of Illinois. He received his Doctor of Dental Surgery in 1959 from the University of Chicago and his Certificate of Orthodontics in 1967.



Claude Sime

Claude practiced orthodontics in the Madison/Waunakee area for 47 years. During his career he was very active in the dental profession, serving as president of the Dane County Dental Society, Wisconsin Dental Association, Wisconsin Society of Orthodontists, Midwest Society of Orthodontics, and Fellow in the American College of Dentists and the Pierre Fauchard Academy. He was also a supporter of the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame, and a member of Rotary Club of West Madison and Trout Unlimited.

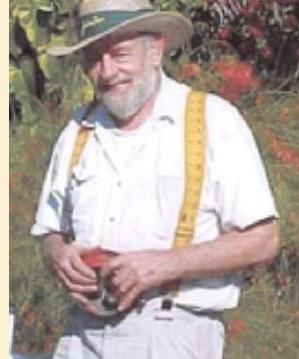
### Charles Moelter:

Charles B. "Charlie" Moelter, 93, of Lake Geneva, died peacefully in his sleep Sunday July 12, 2020, at his home. Charles Bruno Moelter was born in Chicago, Illinois, the son of the late Bruno and Theresia (Kuhn) Moelter.

Charlie is survived by his wife, Joanne Gasperik, three children; Susan, Charles (Suzanne), and Bruno. He was preceded in death by a son, Steven.

He is also survived by his grandchildren; Tim (Letizia) O'Connell, Shane Clayton, Michael (Anne Worley), Bob Moelter, Erica (Ted Ziembba), Kevin (Ashley) Moelter, Kyle Moelter, great-grandchildren Nicholas, Danny, James, Zachary, Sarah Adelaide, Charlie, Dylan, Ahna, William and Lucas.

He was a man of many interests and talents. Flying became his final passion when he got his private pilot certificate at age 65.



Charles Moelter

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Editor, Forward in Flight  
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### Address Changes

Moved recently? Are you a snowbird? Please inform WAHF of your address change so you can continue to receive *Forward in Flight* in a timely manner. Please send a note to the address above.

### WAHF Scholarships

Launched in 2002, WAHF's scholarship program annually awards scholarships to aviation students. The Carl Guell Memorial Scholarship is named in honor of WAHF's founder; the \$1000 award goes to a continuing student who meets the required academic standards and is active in both community and extracurricular activities.

Today, three additional scholarships are offered annually to students from Wisconsin enrolled in an aviation program in a technical college or college/university in Wisconsin or outside our state. WAHF member/supporter Jerome Thiessen began a \$500 scholarship. The EAA Chapter 640/Robert Payzer Memorial Scholarship and the Jeff Baum & Jim Quinn Scholarship began in 2013, for students pursuing a career in aviation management in the amount of \$500; the \$500 Payzer and \$1000 Thiessen awards are for any aviation or aerospace field of study.

Scholarship applications are available online at the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin website ([www.CFONCW.org](http://www.CFONCW.org)). Completed applications must be received by March 1.



## Human Longing, Human Loss

### The End of World War II, and Today

By Tom Eisele

This note will not be about aviation; instead, I write to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ending of World War II in 1945.

The European portion of that war ended May 7-8, 1945; the Asian portion of that war ended on August 15, 1945, with closing ceremonies held on September 2, 1945, on the deck of a U.S. battleship anchored in Tokyo Bay.

All told, the war had run from its inception on September 1, 1939, to its close on September 2, 1945; a run of six years and one day. The United States had formally joined the war effort on December 8, 1941, by Presidential request and Congressional authorization, in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor.

This time frame, May to September in 1945, roughly parallels the time frame we have just run, May to September, in 2020. During this time, we have been fighting a viral pandemic. Not quite a war, perhaps, but still an event with deadly serious consequences for all of us, and for all of the world, similar to the Second World War.

I do not wish to over-state the similarities here. Sixty million people lost their lives in World War II. The world pandemic has cost hundreds of thousands of human lives world-wide. Both numbers are dreadful figures, but they are not on the same scale, speaking quantitatively.

Qualitatively, however, these two events share certain similarities of human longing and human loss.

Today, we have lost whatever sense of security in the world we may have entertained. The world is a fearsome place when a virus comes upon us, suddenly, unbidden, without apparent cure. In addition, of course, the virus is a silent and stealthy foe, which makes it seem almost uncanny in its ability to out-distance our attempts to control it or to avoid it. Our longing for security, for assurance, in the face of this foe, goes unanswered.

Having said this about the COVID virus today, can you imagine what people felt like back in 1945, when the war ended? The relief must have been palpable, and profound. Yet the old feeling of security in the world probably was shattered forever for the men and women of that time.

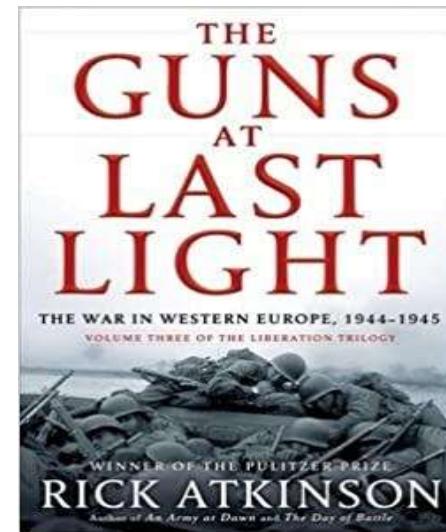
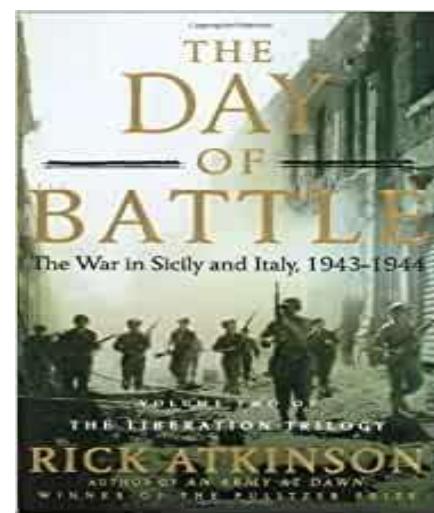
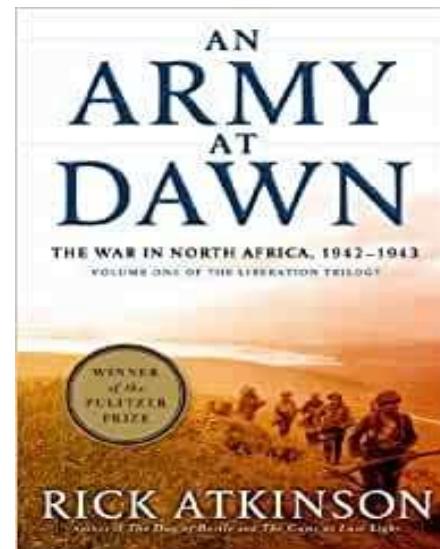
How to put back the pieces after that world-shattering earthquake of human conflict? Then, too, the longing for peace, for some semblance of sanity and normality, must have been overwhelming in 1945.

Do we not share that sense of loss, and that sense of longing, in 2020?

— TDE

\* \* \* \* \*

While staying at home these past several months, I have been reading Rick Atkinson's magnificent trilogy on the war in Western Europe from 1942-1945. It makes the reader relive those days of anguish and agony, when human loss and human longing



were commonplace emotions shared world-wide. If you happen to have any thirst remaining for time alone reading, I can recommend this trilogy for its somber realism and historical grandeur.

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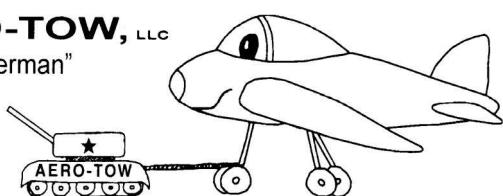
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To all of our members -

Thanks for coming on board. We hope to see you at a WAHF event soon!

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

The WAHF board and directors appreciate your support. Because of you, we are able to continue our efforts of sharing Wisconsin aviation history.

If you renew your membership annually you'll soon be receiving your renewal reminder. We urge you to renew promptly. Thank you!

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