



HERITAGE FLIGHT MUSEUM

Where History Flies in Skagit County

Volunteer/Member Newsletter

Summer 2023

The Pearl : A Second Opinion

By Greg Anders, Executive Director

The theme for our August fly day is “V-J Day” in reference to the Allied victory over Japan that ended WWII. Our featured aircraft will be Interstate Cadet NC37266, affectionately known to us as “The Pearl.” She is the only survivor out of seven or eight civilian aircraft that were flying over Oahu on December 7, 1941. I consider The Pearl to be one of the most historically significant flying aircraft in the world, and as we approach the August Fly Day, I find myself revisiting a major development in the life cycle of The Pearl’s provenance. To get a sense of the significance of this development, let’s review my history with this special Interstate Cadet.

My relationship with The Pearl started in 2014 at the Shutter Bar at the ICAS convention. Some of my favorite moments are marked with cocktails in hand, enjoying the company of my fellow aviators, shooting our watches, and/or retelling (again!) our comic exploits. I was sitting with my good friend Kent Pietsch, who shared his frustration over his latest Interstate Cadet project that seemed to be getting no traction or interest.

In a pile of parts, Kent had rescued Interstate Cadet airframe number 109. As local legend had it, this was the aircraft purportedly flown by aviatrix Cornelia Fort over Pearl Harbor on the fateful Sunday morning of the Japanese attack that awakened the “sleeping giant.” The attack compelled the United States to abandon its isolationist role and engage its formidable resources against the world-dominating intent of Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany.

Kent had owned Interstate Airframe 109 for several years and had gotten the plane restored by legendary Interstate

guru Tim Tallen. The year prior to our moment in the Shutter Bar, Kent and his brother, Warren, had put a lot of effort into staging a reenactment, “attacking” the restored Pearl with a real flying Zero. Almost no one made the trip from the convention to North Las Vegas Airport that morning to see their mini airshow, including myself (sorry, Kent!).

At the time of our talk in Shutter Bar, I was looking for a small tail dragger to continue my trek “backward” from Air

Force heavy iron, through tail draggin’ warbirds, and now to the “real” tail draggers with less than 100 horsepower motors. I had seen The Pearl and found myself captivated by her provenance and history.

Fortunately for me, Kent was under pressure to lighten his load, as his lovely bride was a little short on patience with his excess of airframes. As we sipped our beers, he lamented the prospect of selling this prized plane to

someone who did not appreciate the history. The Pearl had to go to someone who cared enough to continue his journey and do the research necessary to overcome the skeptics. I vehemently agreed with him. It HAD to go to someone who cared! We were one beer away from a deal and two beers away from “charming” ...

Long story short, I bought The Pearl and stepped out of my fighter-pilot comfort zone. I began conducting academic research on the clouded history of N37266. The first step of my research looked at Interstate NC37345, the aircraft Cornelia Fort identifies in her logbook as the plane in question. End of story? Not necessarily...FAA records made it clear that NC37345 was never in Hawaii. That gateway opened an



Digging Beneath the Surface

avenue of research that eventually led me to claim beyond a reasonable doubt that Cornelia was flying NC37266, the Interstate I now owned, in the middle of the confrontation that propelled our nation into WWII. (For the long story, see the August 2016 issue of *EAA Sport Aviation*.)

At AirVenture 2016, I was met with the greatest reception and enthusiasm for the provenance of The Pearl. However, I was left with a lingering cloud of controversy still hanging over the story, as several groups continued to declaim The Pearl's provenance. But I also left AirVenture with a business card in my pocket. A business card that led me toward a professionally-curated second opinion confirming that airframe 109 was, in fact, airborne over Pearl Harbor at 7:30 AM, flown by Cornelia Fort and her pre-solo student, Ernest Suomala, at the time Japan attacked.

Immediately after I and my daughter, Alison, concluded a *Warbirds In Review* interview with David Hartman, I was approached by David Burroughs. In his leather flight jacket, showing appropriate wear in all the right places to denote "aviator," David introduced himself and the company he runs: Prove It. David admitted that his primary business model was proving the provenance of automobiles, but he had ventured out before into aircraft and other collectible items whose value was based primarily on their provenance. He thought his formula could be applied to The Pearl.

Prove It uses a very vigorous academic approach to research claims of historically significant items. That research work is directed by David,

with the assistance of several talented historians. Once the evidence is assembled, a draft report lays out what he discovered. This draft is heavily critiqued by several of David's associates. After the report has been through a couple rounds of critique and revision, it is deemed "final" and sent to an unpaid, independent jury of individuals, also with strong credentials. Each juror separately judges the likelihood of the claimed provenance based on the information presented in the report and scores the likelihood of the provenance on a scale of one to five.

It took me a while to get back to The Pearl after Oshkosh, but eventually I put David on the case. After five years

on December 7, 2021, eighty years to the date after the Pearl Harbor attack. David's professionally chosen jury of six individuals collectively determined that, based on the evidence presented, it was "highly probable" that Interstate Cadet NC37266, Airframe 109 was the plane piloted over Oahu by Cornelia Fort and Suomala on December 7, 1941.

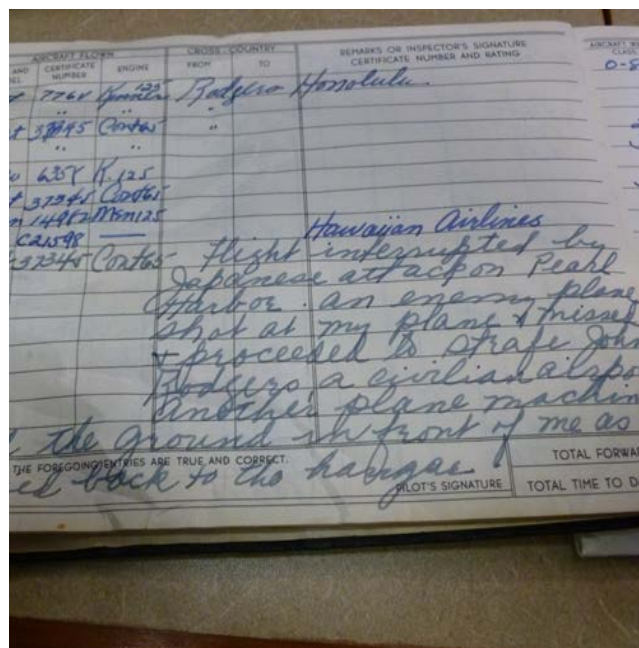
Given that there are no pictures of Cornelia landing that airplane with Japanese aircraft in the background, and due to the issues of Cornelia identifying in her logbook an aircraft that was never in Hawaii, I believe this level of confidence is the best we can ever achieve.

And so a simple 85-horsepower Interstate Cadet can be recognized as "The Pearl." She carries a rare and compelling provenance and can help us relive a small facet of the Date Which Will Live in Infamy.

I am proud that our museum is able to fly The Pearl and tell the story of a civilian turned combat veteran simply because she was flying early that Sunday morning. It is a fabulous story, and a privilege to fly the artifact that was there in that moment. The Heritage Flight Museum looks to Honor Veterans and Keep History Alive. While all of our aircraft do that in their own special way, none has the

direct provenance of being a part of a moment as significant as this one.

Artifacts bring life to a story. We can stand at the Pearl Harbor memorial and experience the drama of the Tears of the Arizona, honoring all those



Cornelia Fort's logbook contains her eyewitness account of the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor.

of dedicated work and collaboration between David's team, HFM archivist Tiffany Hamilton, Tim Talen, Kent Pietsch, and many others, Prove It at last sent me their final report. Fittingly, the 143-page report arrived

Keeping History Alive

Veterans who were a part of that story. Or we can stand at the Pearl Harbor display at HFM and reflect on that seminal moment in our World's history. But at HFM, we can go one step further and watch The Pearl fly, while being "attacked" by our Zero. Experiencing this moment "live" has a special quality that transcends most WWII artifacts and really does Keep History Alive.



Peering into the process; excerpts from the Prove It report

"Fort apparently never realized that her Cadet was likely hit in flight, as well as on the ramp...

Since this was the only Cadet airborne on December 7, the deduction can be made that Fort's cadet may have suffered detectable damage unrealized by Fort during the excitement of flying through the attack and upon escaping the airplane while running for cover on the ramp. Although Fort wrote the 'shots missed', it will be revealed by a fact witness (Betty Guild Blake) that Fort's Cadet was indeed damaged by Japanese bullets during the attack.

The specific testimony of Blake's description related to holes in the floor on either side of the (flight control) stick suggests that those bullets came from Japanese strafing instead of while in flight. Otherwise, the trajectory of the bullets would have penetrated the bodies of one or both Fort and Suomala. No injuries occurred. Therefore, it can be affirmed that no one was on board and that Cadet was strafed while parked on the ramp between the hangars as described by Blake.

Secondly, the fact that "holes were scattered randomly the length of the plane" and on the wings suggests that repairs to the fabric covering on the fuselage, wings, and tail would be necessary to return the Cadet to air-worthy condition. Third, it would also be expected that if holes were scattered the length of the plane that the engine and or components would also need repair, as well as the wings and fuselage.

In accordance with this December 7, 2020 email, author Rob Simbeck confirmed his first-person interview with fact witness Betty Guild Blake, who became a distin-

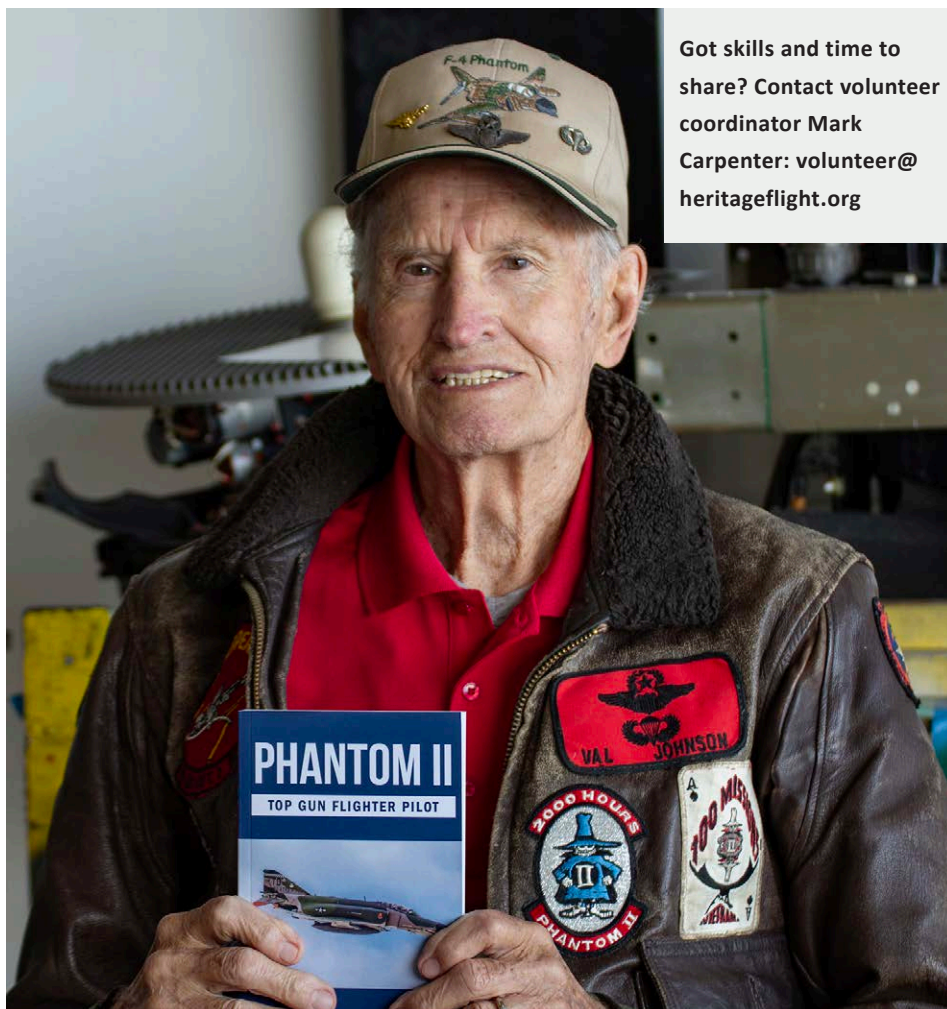
guished WWII pilot. On Monday, December 8, Blake and Cornelia Fort personally examined the extent and locations of damage to the Cadet Fort personally identified to Blake as the one Fort flew the day before.

Based on CAA Repair Form, Cadet NC37266 appears to have had more documented repair reported in the first post-1941 inspections than the other six subject Cadets. It was the only Cadet requiring fabric repairs to the airframe (fuselage, tail and control surfaces) and a major engine overhaul. Although it had logged only 250 flight hours since new, NC37266 was the only Cadet that required major repair to both the engine and airframe."

A photograph of a "REPAIR AND ALTERATION FORM" for aircraft NC37266, dated April 22, 1945. The form is from the United States of America, Department of Commerce, Civil Aeronautics Administration. It includes fields for aircraft identification, repair agency, and a detailed description of repairs. The repairs listed include: "Engine as per AND MAGNIFLUXED", "Wing fabric tacked & ribs satisfactorily", "Wing refinished", "New covers on fuselage, stabilizer, rudder and left elevator", and "As per and finished". The form is signed by "YALE E. SMITH" and "MORRIS VOO, SCHOOL, HONOLULU T.H.". The aircraft identification mark is NC37266.

Volunteer Spotlight (and Book Report)

Val Johnson



Got skills and time to share? Contact volunteer coordinator Mark Carpenter: volunteer@heritageflight.org

Since Val Johnson joined HFM's Volunteer Corps last year, everyone from the staff and docents up to the executive director have enjoyed getting to know him. Val has some impressive experiences to draw on while engaging in the volunteer's favorite pastime: swapping stories. Those who attended our June Fly Day might have seen him at a table selling his book, *Phantom II: Top Gun Fighter Pilot*.

That title is a strong clue to the caliber of story Val has to tell. A graduate of Top Gun in 1969, he spent 17 years as a pilot in the Air Force and Navy. He has over 2500 flight hours in the Phantom II as a Flight Commander and instructor pilot, with 165 combat hours flying low-level missions over Vietnam in 1966. He completed day

and night carrier landing qualifications on the USS *John F. Kennedy*.

When asked to elaborate on his exploits, Val modestly referred me to the book, which he says just about covers it all. At a mere \$10 per copy, it was an easy sale. I immediately bought one, which he kindly signed for me. It became clear thirty minutes into the event that he should have brought a lot more books.

His memoir lays out some interesting technical considerations to flying the notoriously tricky F-4. He describes the checklists and procedures for startup through landing. He also fills in such details as how squadrons were briefed, how ordnance was used and what the living conditions were like on a Vietnam air base (sketchy).

Val felt ill-prepared by his training for the reality of combat over Vietnam and Laos. He quickly made adjustments after each dicey mission. In this way, and with credit to a higher power for preserving his life, Val managed to survive 100 day and night missions during Operation Rolling Thunder, including a hairs-breadth escape from tracer fire and a nearby lightning strike. Val was unimpressed with the many restrictions placed on combat during the Vietnam War, which he felt hampered success and ultimately scuttled a US victory. His fonder recollections center on the maintenance and ordnance crews, whom he considered excellent.

After his return to the States, he served as both an instructor and test pilot. He strove to offer his students the critical information missing from his own training. The tips he passed on highlight everything that was particularly challenging about fighting in Southeast Asia, from the absence of (allowable) targets to the difficulty identifying anti-aircraft gun sites on the ground.

In 1968, Val was selected for a Navy Exchange assignment at Virginia Beach, where he instructed replacement aircrews in conventional weapons delivery, tactical formations and aerial refueling in the (Navy designated) B/J Phantom II. He observed trainee flights from his own aircraft above the formations as they fired rockets at an old defunct ship and practiced refueling from an A-6. He was nominated in 1969 to attend the exclusive "Top Gun" Fighter Weapons Course and became the first USAF pilot to graduate.

The carrier qualifications chapter left me short of breath. Before I give away all the exciting parts, I recommend buying Val's book for yourself at one of our remaining Fly Days.

Get Grumpy in August



HFM's August Fly Day will include a special guest from the eastern half of the state. Historic Flight Foundation's B-25D Mitchell "Grumpy," a WWII-era twin bomber wearing D-Day stripes, will join the lineup at our V-J Day commemoration on Saturday the 19th.

The reputedly disgruntled aircraft was built in 1943 at the North American plant in Kansas City. She flew over 1500 hours with the USAAF, then joined both the RAF and RCAF via lend-lease. After that, she travelled up to Fairbanks and was purchased by one of HFM's founding members, the late Merrill Wien, who was using surplus

bombers and helicopters to support state firefighting efforts.

Later, she found her way "across the pond" to perform for 17 years at European airshows after a restoration in Duxbury, England. Paul Allen bought her in 2002, and in due time, she passed into the keeping of HFF. John Sessions brought her to our ramp last year and thrilled both Fly Day audiences and HFM volunteers.

The B-25 gained fame as the aircraft flown by Doolittle's Raiders off the USS *Hornet* in their daring bombing run over Tokyo. It was also the first Army plane to see action on every WWII front, the

first to sink a sub and the first medium bomber to take off from a carrier. At 35,500 lbs fully loaded, the B-25 runs two 1700 HP Wright Cyclone engines at a top speed of 340 mph, and it is quite asight to see.

The number of B-25s still flying worldwide would average less than one per U.S. state. Now that you know where to find one of these iconic aircraft on August 19, don't miss your chance to see "Grumpy" at Heritage Flight Museum.

For more information about Historic Flight Foundation, visit <https://historicflight.org/>

The Final Days of War: B-25 Pilot Comes Home



**Transcribed from a 2019 HFM interview with
1st Lt. Grant Nelson**

In Luzon [Philippines], it took about three months to finish [destroying] all the refineries. By that time, things were really getting wound down, and our next trip was to Okinawa. I flew with the CO for some reason. We had a houseboy, he had given me a wonderful chicken, a barbecued chicken full of herbs and things and it just smelled so good, but the CO sat and ate that and watched me fly. And he said, "Mister, watch your heading. Do you realize there are 60 airplanes flying on your wing and if you go five degrees off course, *they* have to go five degrees off course?"

When we got to Okinawa, the whole Air Force, it seemed, was parked on and around this one strip. They had built the strip quite wide so you could take two airplanes off side by side and be reasonably safe. But when you had ten or twelve groups up there all wanting to get out and hit Southern Japan, each one with 20 or 30 airplanes in it, why, it got crowded.

When we were at our base and we had a mission, the tower would call us and say, "38th group, thirty minutes," which meant that we had thirty minutes to get our engines warmed up and get ready to taxi. At 15 minutes, they'd say, "Start moving." At

ten minutes, we were travelling along because we were about two miles from the airstrip because it was so crowded. We were checking the mags and doing the feathering and so forth as we were driving along.

Finally, the tower said, "38th, you're on!" and we came tearing out of the strip. You were going so fast that the rudders were working, so we'd just push the rudder and off we go, and we could get the whole group off in maybe five minutes— just bang bang bang — because it was close to the water so there's a crosswind that took the prop wash away.

When we got over Japan at the end, it was so crowded that we had an official plane, a 17 flying above, and he would radio in to keep planes from piling up on each other. He said, "All right, 38th group, you're on," and that meant that our way was clear to where we were going. We were bombing factories up there.

I was an element leader. I had two wingmen and lost one of them coming back, and it was just almost at the end of the war, and he'd been hit right in the engine nacelle—the only weak spot on the 25, and he passed under me and I looked down and saw him and it was a real shakeup.

Anyhow, I had finished my missions and was waiting [for orders] to go home, and they dropped the bomb [on Hiroshima]. Well, this got Tokyo Rose upset and she said, "Because of your inhuman nature, we are going to resort to gas." We had gas masks and everybody started cleaning them. We'd see guys going to the shower with a towel and a gas mask, because we had an open shower.

Finally, my orders were cancelled because they needed "experienced" pilots (I was 20 years old) to drop gas. We had been schooled on how to do

low-level gas work, and we were the only ones that were schooled and had the equipment.

So the poison gas people were loading their tanks into our bomb bays and they were 500 gallon tanks and they had a pipe sticking down about a yard and going back about a yard. It had a nozzle that tipped down so the gas would tend to go down below the tail gunner. We were ready to go when they dropped the second [atomic bomb].

The Japanese had decided they'd had enough. They sued for peace, at which point there were a million GIs there, and infantry and Air Corps. There were 150 ships in the harbor at Naha and every damn fool got out and started shooting their gun up in the air. Any guy who could elevate high enough, he shot. I ran up and there was a cave where the Okinawans had little shrines, they were porcelain shrines inside, and I went up with a couple buddies and we sat under there and it rained bullets for almost 45 minutes afterward.

My orders finally came through and I was flown down to Manila and had a miserable time in a revetment center until the ship came in. We were on a cruise ship, a Matson liner cruise ship that went from Los Angeles to Hawaii for 30 or 40 years. It had been reconditioned, and they put 6000 of us on that ship going back to the States. We had a stateroom built for two and there were twelve officers in it. The hold had the enlisted men and they were stacked like cordwood, maybe 10 or 15 bunks sideways and they had to be monkeys to climb up into these bunks. If you fell out, you'd be killed.

Well, the first time we were ready for dinner, we got out of our rooms and we went into the dining room and here were white table cloths, silver, goblets and a menu and a waiter with

a towel over his arm. We sat down and we looked at this menu. It had three entrees on it and there was wine...well, we went crazy and everybody ordered steak.

Of course, living on SPAM for three years, our stomachs weren't prepared for this. Plus, the ship left Manila Harbor and it got out in the ocean and we began to go a little back and forth with the waves and everybody got sick. I mean it was one awful mess. Hopefully most of them made it to the deck, but... It took me almost ten days before I could tolerate a really good meal and I'm sorry I missed 'em all.

We arrived back in San Francisco as the first ship coming home after the war. There was a barge coming out with an orchestra on it and fifty girls waving their neckerchiefs and screaming and hollering and there were signs all over San Francisco harbor saying well done, welcome home and so forth.

We were in the dining room when this Colonel came up, and he was the embarkation officer and he was going to give us directions and I kept looking at him and he kept looking at me. I said, "Bob, what are you doing here?" and he says "What are *you* doing here?" His name was Bob Bethke and he was a senior when I was in a boy scout troop. He was the nicest guy, his father was our family physician.

Anyhow, he offloaded us and I was about the third one to get off. I walked up and this Red Cross lady looked at me and said, "Sonny did you get off this ship?" (to a hardened combat veteran) and I said, "Yes, ma'am I did." She handed me a coffee and a donut and she said, "You ought to be home with your mother." I said, "That's where I'm going as fast as I can."

We were sent on a ferry boat up to a railroad port at the end of San Francisco Bay. Little kids were running along beside us, "Souvenirs! Souvenirs!" They wanted what they called a "short snorter." Wherever we went, we had

money from various countries, signed by all your buddies and pasted together, for some reason that was important to do.

The enlisted men got all new uniforms. We didn't have any, we just got new suntans and put our insignia on it—they didn't have any officers uniform and what we did have was all mildewed anyhow. And we got on a troop train and as we were going home, we had a mess hall that was in the boxcar ahead of us, but it was Army food.

We pulled off on a siding to [make way for] the cars carrying freight to San Francisco and they were all Army stuff, tanks and things still going overseas. I said to the porter, "How long are we gonna be here?" He said forty five minutes. I tear off into town and I ran into the grocery store and said, "I want a quart of milk, a head of lettuce, a couple of tomatoes, a couple of onions and some salad oil."

I chuck it in a box and I tear back to the train and sit on the step as the train moved out and in my mess kit I chop up the lettuce and make a salad and chop up the tomatoes and the onions and pour on the dressing. I was so starved for fresh food, which I hadn't had in three years.

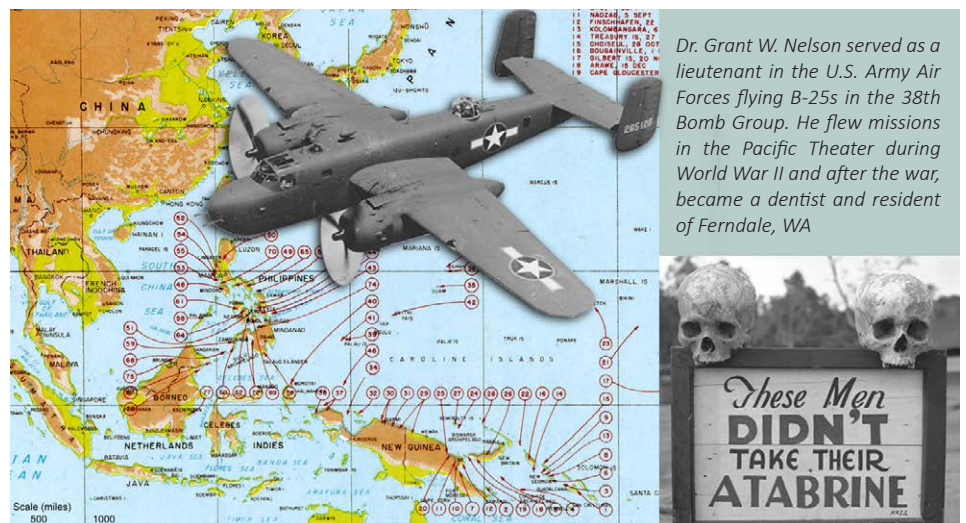
We went from Sacramento by train to Chicago. I practically went right by my place, but no, they wouldn't stop and we went out to Fort Sheridan. Got discharged—or got our papers signed

as completing our missions and our discharge papers, but in order to get formally discharged, we had to go back out to California down south near San Diego. But I was able to go home for a while.

We had to go to school by train when I was in high school, and of course the station agent knew us as kids. We came back and I had a B-4 bag and a big duffel bag. She said, "You can leave 'em here if you want and I'll watch 'em for you." And I got home and my mother was gone but there was a note—I called her from San Francisco, said I was coming home. I knew where the housekey was and I got in, the car was there and I drove it to pick her up.

She looked at me and she almost cried, "What have they done to you?" I weighed about 125 and I was this horrible zombie green, green eyeballs. I really looked emaciated, I guess. I took my atabrine all the way home, so I didn't have any problem, but guys on the boat had stopped taking it, and bingo—two days later they were down with malaria. And that's not a fun disease, I mean it's really bad.

And then I got a train back to Southern California to get discharged. No—I drove back, I met a guy, a Boy Scout that I knew, and we drove back in his car. It only had third gear, it was kind of a wreck and we drove back and stopped in Kansas City to see my aunt. Anyway, that's what we did.



Dr. Grant W. Nelson served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Forces flying B-25s in the 38th Bomb Group. He flew missions in the Pacific Theater during World War II and after the war, became a dentist and resident of Ferndale, WA

Thanks for Your Support



A big “shout out” goes to the following supporters from the local community and beyond, who have donated their time and/or expertise to benefit the museum:

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HERITAGE FLIGHT MUSEUM

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Where History Flies in Skagit County

www.heritageflight.org

Announcing FLY DAYS 2023



Magnificent! Breathtaking! Spectacular!

✓ April 15
✓ May 13

✓ June 17
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10 am to 4 pm

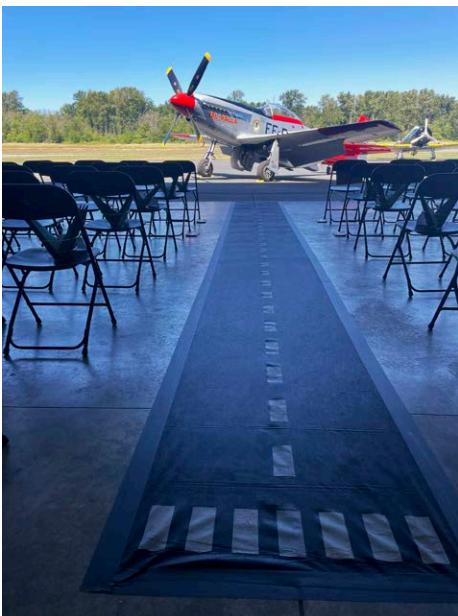
August 19
Sept 2

Check our website for updates; flying subject to last-minute change/cancellation

Events Corner

Hello from the Heritage Flight Museum Events Center! We are a museum first and foremost, yet we also have the opportunity to provide a unique and special space for customers to hold events. We have been busy booking weddings, memorials, fundraising events and group tours.

Brides and grooms have found that the Heritage Flight Museum is the perfect setting for their special day. Clients can request certain aircraft to be placed in the hangar and the most popular requested plane is P-51 Mustang "Val-Halla." Although we can't guarantee the availability of requested aircraft, we do our best to accommodate.



The word is out! Heritage Flight Museum tours are educational and fun! Public and private schools and organizations have been contacting the



events center to arrange group tours. The Heritage Flight Museum's skilled and friendly docents volunteer their time to educate students and highlight all that the museum has to offer.

Recently, two AVID (Advancement Via Individual Education) classes from Anacortes Middle School experienced more than just a tour. They were also greeted by the Executive Director, Greg Anders, who spent time interacting and teaching the students. Our chief mechanic, Grace Stephens, talked to them about her career and fielded their questions. The biggest surprise of the day for the students was seeing a few flybys while Greg warmed up T-6 Texan "Hog Wild Gunner" for the approaching Fly Day. It was a rare and special tour day!

A future pilot and his family from Ukraine were treated to a special tour and provided a precious photo moment. The youngest of the family had an authentic pilot's helmet that he wore the entire visit. He and his brother happened to be in the right place and the right time and were offered a seat in Hog Wild Gunner with assistance from Grace Stephens.

It was such a treat and honor to have them visit the Heritage Flight Museum. (Please note that special moments like these are not regularly included in our tours, but happen by chance as time and circumstance allow.)

Mariah Samora and I consider it an honor to meet and work with the customers who visit and with those who book events at the Heritage Flight Museum through us. Please contact Lynn Wade or Mariah Samora at events@heritageflight.org. Or, call 360-424-5151, ext 107 or 110.



Who's Who at Heritage Flight Museum

Bill and Valerie Anders - Founders
Greg Anders - Executive Director
Alan Anders - Maintenance/Operations Director

Julie Shelby - Executive Administrator
Lynn Wade - Events Manager
Mariah Samora - Events Coordinator
Mark Carpenter - Volunteer Coordinator

Grace Stephens - Chief Mechanic
Tiffany Hamilton - Collections/Exhibits
Marne Cohen-Vance - Visual Media
Neal Padbury - Building Maintenance

Welcome to the Attic

Der Kriegsgefangenen

Artifacts donated by Judy Lockwood tell the Story of her father, 1st Lt. Perlemon Bateman McCallister, a POW at Stalag Luft III prison camp

By Tiffany Hamilton

Perlemon McCallister, born April 20, 1916, in Marlow, OK, was 24 years old when he enlisted in the US military on August 26th, 1940. He enlisted in the US Army Air Corps as a mechanic but later found himself in the pilot seat of B-17s at Horham airfield, England.

The citizens of Ventura, CA kept up with 1st Lt. McCallister's WWII exploits by reading the *Ventura County Star*. In a letter home published by the newspaper, McCallister said this about his B-17 crew: "My flying is combat... Have a very good crew and feel that it is one of the main reasons I've gotten on so well."

According to the newspapers, McCallister was counting down the missions; once he had completed 25, he would be eligible to return home for rest and relaxation (R&R). At first, he reported that he had four more missions to fly, then only three left, then two...

FOUR MORE MISSIONS FOR McCALLISTER

First Lt. P. B. McCallister, who recently added an oak leaf cluster to his Air Medal, has just four more missions to go before finishing his "tour," he told a Ventura friend in a letter from England, where he is serving as a Flying Fortress pilot.

Completion of his assigned missions will mean a furlough and home, according to the lieutenant, who is the son of Mrs. Decie McCallister, 278 S. California street.

Mission & Capture: On the morning of March 16, 1944, 1st Lt. Perlemon McCallister would have awakened early to prepare for the day's mission. It would be his 24th, the second to last before he could return to the United States and to his family for some R&R. Between 0700 hours and 0740, his group, the 95th Bomb Group, 336th Bomb Squadron, assembled in the skies. They rendezvoused with planes from the 390th Bomb group and the 100th Bomb group. The target was Gablingen AFB, Augsburg, Germany.



1st Lt. Perlemon B. McCallister

According to the *Report of Operations Officer, Mission of 16 March 1944, Augsburg*; "On the bombing run, the 95th Group leader [1st Lt. Westmyer] attempted to announce that he was aborting, but was cut off by the Combat Wing leader. When the 95th Group leader dropped out of formation his wingman followed him not knowing that he was aborting. This brought about confusion in the lead and low Squadrons and the formation was disrupted momentarily before the

high Squadron leader announced that he was assuming the lead of the Group. Three (3) aircraft of the 95th Group were lost to enemy air-craft before the Group could reassemble. All aircraft in the 95th Group dropped their bombs in the target area..."

The initial cause of the confusion came when 1st Lt. Westmyer's B-17G had its #2 engine feather after its oil pressure plummeted. With one of four engines out of commission, the plane and its crew had no choice but to abort the mission.

1st Lt. McCallister was piloting a B-17G called *Sad Sack* in the low squadron. As the low squadron re-composed itself to complete the mission, *Sad Sack* was hit by enemy fire. A "flock" as he called it, of Messerschmitt 109s had seized the opportunity to strike, and brought three of the 95th Bomb group's planes out of the sky.

McCallister's plane had three of its four engines "knocked out", and all personnel on board *Sad Sack* were forced to bail out over enemy territory. This included 1st Lt. Perlemon McCallister, pilot, 1st Lt. Charles Kelsey, co-pilot, 1st Lt. Stanley Sands, navigator, 2nd Lt. Joseph DeMartino, bombardier, T/Sgt. Theodore Kmiecik, radio operator, T/Sgt. Arthur Sandin, top turret gunner/engineer, S/Sgt. Yale Feingold, ball turret gunner, S/Sgt. Stan Wietrzykowski, waist gunner, S/Sgt. Stuart Rapp, waist gunner, and S/Sgt. Anzie Jones, tail gunner. All 10 men became Prisoners of War, and the plane was declared "lost."

Sunday, April 29, 1944, the *Ventura County Star* would report that "First Lt. P. B. (Dee) McCallister of Ventura is missing in action." An update would come on June 6, 1944; "M'Callister Listed as War Prisoner."

Life in a German POW Camp

Capture & Camp: By his own account, according to his *Statement or Report of Interview of Recovered Personnel*, “On 16 March 44 we were shot down by fighters between Augsburg, and Stittlegart on my 24th mission. Bailed out and was captured immediately by civilians who turned me over to German authorities.”

McCallister recalls “a soft, but wet landing” over the foothills of the Bavarian Alps. After German citizens had turned over the downed airman to German authorities, McCallister was sent to Frankfurt for interrogation. He was then sent to a transient prison in the center of Frankfurt.

Around March 21, 1944, McCallister was loaded onto a train car with 140 other men, all headed for Stalag Luft III. It was a Luftwaffe-run POW camp for captured Air Force servicemen such as McCallister. It was located 100 miles southeast of Berlin in what is now Żagań, Poland, and operated from 1942 until 1945.

Upon arrival, McCallister was deloused and had his official personalkarte (personnel card) for the camp filled out. He was also issued an ID tag with his prisoner number, 3673. This tag, to be worn around his neck, was the POW equivalent of the dog tags US soldiers wear, and identified

him as POW Nr. 3673 in Lager (camp)
Stalag Luft III.

McCallister was assigned to room (space/bunk) 15 in baracke (barrack) 129. He recalls “reading and resting for the first six months. Then prison life became monotonous”. The men entertained themselves with outdoor games when they could, played sports, and even put on plays.

Food for the camp was provided in weekly Red Cross parcels and Reich Rations, and was fairly reliable. Additionally, the camp had its own marketplace where POWs could trade their goods based on a point system. POWs even had their own currency, called Kriegsefangeenen Lagergeld (prisoner of war camp money). POW officers were given a salary of Lagergeld which was pooled amongst the POWs to account for the NCOs (non-commissioned officers) who were not permitted a salary. Lagergeld could be used to purchase goods that the German administration at the camp had available. McCallister was even permitted to write home and receive mail, although anything that went out or came in was heavily censored by the German guards.

Compared to other camps, Stalag Luft III had arguably better conditions. The American Air Museum describes

than the Schutzstaffel (SS) or other branches of the Wehrmacht (German defense force, the precursor to the Bundeswehr, or Federal Defense for Germany). But this does not mean that the POWs didn't suffer while there.

Like many other lager, Stalag Luft III was overcrowded, had poor sanitation, and lacked sufficient medical supplies. Germany provided very few medical supplies to the camp, but the Red Cross shipments contained some of what they needed. In the final few months of Stalag Luft III's operation, food became less reliable; Reich Rations ceased while Germany's infrastructure crumbled.

Despite each new POW being deloused upon arrival, the camp was still plagued by bedbugs, lice, and insects a plenty. The latrines had no plumbing and attracted flies that would swarm a man while “going.” Each POW was permitted one 3-minute hot shower per week – if he was lucky enough to actually get it. All this led to a considerable lack of personal hygiene around the camp.

The March: On January 26, 1945, word arrived at Stalag Luft III that the Russians were only about 30 miles from the camp. McCallister and his fellow men rejoiced; perhaps liberation was near. But it was not to be. "While viewing a theatrical production, the men were given half an hour to pack everything they might need for a possible 10 day march and to evacuate camp". McCallister was advised by a senior American officer that he should take the maximum amount of clothing and food that he could carry. The trek for the POWs of Stalag Luft III began at 11 PM that night. "The sick and wounded were left behind."

Unbeknownst to him, McCallister's camp was just one of the many evacuating. By January 1945, Germany's

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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Personalkarte I: Personelle Angaben

Beschreibung der Erkennungsmarkte
Nr. 3623

Kriegsgefangenen-Stammlager: Stalag Luft 3
Lager. Stalag Luft 3

Name: <u>Mc CALLISTER</u>	Staatsangehörigkeit: <u>USA</u>
Vorname <u>Perlemon Bateman</u>	Dienstgrad: <u>1st.</u>
Geburtsort <u>20.4.16 Marlow, Ohio.</u>	Truppenteil: <u>USAAF</u> Kom. usw:
Religion: <u>Prot.</u>	Zivilberuf: <u>Tankwart</u> Berufs-Gr.:
Vorgänger des Verw. <u>Sgt. M. Callister</u>	Matrikel Nr. (Stammrolle des Heimatstaates): <u>O-447 863</u>
Familienname der Mutter:	Gefangennahme (Ort und Datum): <u>Waldlager 1945</u>
	Ob gesund, krank, verwundet eingetieft:

McCallister's Stalag Luft III Personalkarte

Liberation

military force was on the brink of collapse. As Allied forces approached, Germany began evacuating camps near the front and moving the POWs further away from the advancing Allied powers. In the case of Stalag Luft III, Soviet Russia was in the process of liberating Poland, and Germany had to pull itself and its POWs out of the area. The Germans called these moves "forced evacuations" while the POWs called them "death marches."

Move to Stalag 7-A & Liberation:

McCallister's march took him from Sagan, Lower Silesia in Poland, to a town called Moscow, then to

Spremberg where he boarded a train that sent him to Mossberg. From there he would march into Stalag 7-A. Here, McCallister was deloused once again, given a warm shower, and assigned to a new baracke. Conditions at Stalag 7-A were much worse than they had been in Stalag Luft III.

The kaserne (barracks) were built to accommodate only 200 personnel and instead housed 400. Food was scarce, and each man only received 1/6th of a loaf of bread, tea, and 10 ounces of "poor-grade" soup per day. On February 1st, Hitler declared that it was spring in Germany, this cut off the

coal supply that the POWs used to heat the kaserne, which averaged a daily high temperature of about 43 degrees Fahrenheit.

After 18 months, 1st Lt. McCallister, who had been serving his country behind enemy lines, saw a sight he'd not soon forget. On April 29, 1945, Moosburg was taken by the US, and American troops arrived at the camp. "When a Yank tank at the prison gates heralded the approach of freedom, some of the prisoners were hysterical, and some were dazed... I was one of the dazed," McCallister said. Stalag 7-A was free. He was free.

FORMER MARLOW MAN PRISONER

**Lt. T. B. McCallister Missing Now
Reported Held Prisoner In
German Prison**

Word was received the past week by relatives in Marlow that their nephew, Lt. T. M. McCallister, formerly of Marlow, is a prisoner in Germany. Lt. McCallister is a nephew of Mrs. Maud Thompson, James Bateman and Mrs. H. O. Gentry, all of Marlow. His mother is Mrs. Dee McCallister of Ventura, Calif.

He was piloting a bomber from the Mediterranean war theatre and had written a letter not many weeks ago to his uncle, Mr. Bateman here in Marlow and sent greetings to all former friends here, which was printed in the Review.

Lt. McCallister was reported missing in action a few weeks ago and later the War Department notified his mother that he is a prisoner in Germany.



Photographs taken during McCallister's time in Stalag Luft III POW Camp.



HFM Keeps 'em flyin' at the June Fly Day

HFM pilots Bill Anders, Greg Anders, Alan Anders and Craig Nelson wowed the crowds at the June Fly Day while our trusty chief mechanic, Grace Stephens, and her posse of amazing volunteers keep the flightline on track. A huge thank you to all of the crew that volunteer for Fly Day duty, from the admissions desk to the Future Flyers table to the marshallers, announcers, photographers, coffee brewers, aircraft detailers, docents, chair-and-table gang, gift shop staff, our vendors, CAP table, and the public, for whom we do what we do.



Sworn to Defend

Thoughts on the July Fly Day theme by HFM's Executive Director

All military members take the military oath of office or enlistment upon entering the military. Members commonly restate the oath upon each promotion. Military members are sworn to defend the Constitution of the United States. Part and parcel to that oath is the willingness to defend the Constitution to their death. The military member understands that even with all of the social upheaval, protests, discord, confusion and drama of the United States of America, it is fundamentally about the fact that We the People ventured into political structures that had never succeeded, to form a more perfect union of the people, for the people, and by the people, in hopes that we would bind together as a Nation under the guiding principles that have served to make our Nation great. The military member swears their oath more interested in celebrating the ideal of who we are trying to be than some of the uglier things of who we have been. The military member understands that our Nation is threatened by a tyranny that never sleeps. And they understand that tyr-

anny marches in many forms. Communism, Socialism, despotism, Fascism, racism and globalism are just a few forms of the many tyrannies that roam our planet, always seeking another productive victim on which to feed until that victim is spent and a new victim is needed. Tyranny thrives on discord. It thrives on division. It thrives on confusion. One of its greatest foes is who the Founding Fathers were trying to make our Nation: a Republic of E Pluribus Unum. Most of our citizens understand that our Nation is a rare melting pot of many peoples. And our Nation embraces those individuals who seek to be judged on the content of their character and the quality of their efforts. Our military has a long tradition of doing just that. From the barracks of Tuskegee, to Jeannie Flynn (now MajGen Jeanie Leavitt) in a combat fighter jet. Our military members have always led the way in building our Nation in to One Nation, Under God, Indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.



The entire staff at HFM was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of our dear friend, James "Rev" Allender on Sunday, July 9, 2023. We send our thoughts and prayers to his family as we consider how best to pay tribute to a courageous fighter pilot and beloved associate.

Membership has its privileges!



Photo: Karen Hicks

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