

# Flight Line

***The Official Publication of the CAF***

Southern California Wing  
455 Aviation Drive, Camarillo, CA 93010  
(805) 482-0064

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**Our “WWII Aerial Dogfight Team!” The Mitsubishi A6M3 Zero piloted by Jason Somes and the Grumman F6F-5 Hellcat “Minsi III” piloted by Chris Rushing at a recent air show.**

**Wing Staff Meeting, Saturday, July 14, 2007 at 9:30 a.m. at the CAF Museum Hangar, 455 Aviation Drive, Camarillo Airport**

THE CAF IS A PATRIOTIC ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMBAT AIRCRAFT

# July 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 Work Day	4 Independence Day	5 Work Day	6	7 Work Day
8	9	10 Work Day	11	12 Work Day	13	14 Work Day  Staff Meeting 9:30 AM
15	16	17 Work Day	18	19 Work Day	20	21 Work Day
22	23	24 Work Day	25	26 Work Day	27	28 Work Day
29	30	31 Work Day				

<b>STAFF AND APPOINTED POSITIONS</b>				<b>IN THIS ISSUE</b>
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Adjutant	* Bob Albee	(805) 583-4872	loll@earthlink.net	Another Saturday at CMA . . . . . 3
Finance Officer	* Casey de Bree	(805) 389-9185	scdebree@aol.com	A Silly Little Song . . . . . 4
Operations Officer	* Gary Barber	(805) 659-4319	bearcat69@pacbell.net	My Fathers's Place . . . . . 4
Maint Officer	* Joe Peppito	(805) 498-4187	jocafpeppo@msn.com	Remembering Shangri-La . . . . . 5
Safety Officer	* Marc Russell	(805) 955-9404	captmarcr@aol.com	Museum Update . . . . . 5
Facility Officer	Bob Albee	(805) 583-4872	loll@earthlink.net	TLC from TSA . . . . . 6
Training Officer	(vacant)			Hangar Improvements . . . . . 6
Public Info Officer	Pat Brown	(805) 479-2221	(no e-mail)	CAF Confirms Airplane Accident . . . . . 6
Personnel Officer	Norm Swagler	(805) 482-6994	pswagler@hotmail.com	Wing Photo Page I . . . . . 7
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Gift Shop Manager	Sarah de Bree	(805) 389-9185	scdebree@aol.com	Wing Photo Page III . . . . . 11
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HANGAR PHONE (805) 482-0064 HANGAR FAX (805) 482-0348 WEBSITE <a href="http://www.orgsites.com/ca/caf-socal">www.orgsites.com/ca/caf-socal</a>				<b>Submittal Deadline - 15th of the month</b> Commemorative Air Force Southern California Wing 455 Aviation Drive Camarillo, CA 93010-9501
* Denotes Staff Position				

## Another Saturday At CMA

by Ken Barger

The day started off with breakfast at Cronies - like all Saturdays do.

We had a big crowd at the hangars because we were to have our monthly staff meeting. It was decided to postpone the meeting so everyone could try and get the Bearcat ready for the fly-over for Jim Basso's funeral.

Some of you may know Jim, he is the man that was instrumental in bringing the Bearcat to the SO CAL wing.

After breakfast, we drove to the hangars. It was a beautiful day. While a few last details were being worked out, David Baker began cleaning the windshield and canopy of the Bearcat. I think it was Gary that said "You don't have to do that now." David said, "I want the pilot to be able to see the flames come out of the engine compartment and over the canopy." HA! HA!

The Bearcat was pulled out onto the ramp, with tail facing the taxi way. Gary jumped into the cockpit, but without a parachute or seat cushion he could barely see out of the windshield. He looked like a little kid in there Steve had taken the battery out of "290" for the start up. They have a new battery for the 'cat, but it had not been filled or charged up.

After Gary checked out all the switches and gauges, he called out "clear" to make sure the people were all clear of the prop. He hit the start button, then the prime button. The engine turned over but nothing happened... the engine did not start. What looked like a couple of gallons of fuel ran out and onto the ramp, but it was really only a pint or so. The minute the throttle was pulled back and the mixture placed in auto lean, the engine died.

Meantime, the time for the fly over at the Ventura cemetery was fast approaching and it was apparent the big cat would not make it. It's too bad, as the Bearcat would have just right for the fly-over. What a bummer!

So every thing was dropped, and they began to bring out the other toys... the Zero and the Hellcat were towed out to the ramp and made ready for the fly-over. By this time Chris Rushing had arrived in his T-6. Chris's plane, along with Jason's T-6 made the line up for the fly-over. Jason would be flying the Zero, Gary would fly the Hellcat and Chris would fly his T-6 and Steve, last but not least, would be flying Jason's T-6.

The gang took off a little after 2:00 p.m. and headed for the fly-over area - about a 20 minute flight. While they were gone, Ken Kramer and Ken Gottschall put their heads together and, along with some other heads, came up with the plan that maybe the idle control rod was not set up correctly for the Bearcat.

So a change was made, along with a few other adjustments. Now all they had to do was wait for the gang to return from their flight.

After a little while, the gang returned and entered the landing pattern. The T-6's entered first and made a safe landing. The Zero and the Hellcat were apparently directed to make a long down-wind approach. A Beechcraft Staggerwing was cleared before them. The

Staggerwing made what looked like a very rough landing and tried to make the bravo taxi way and apparently braked too hard and ended up on its nose. Well, that closed down the CMA field, and the Zero and the Bearcat diverted to Oxnard and landed while the CMA crew, including many pieces of fire equipment, cleaned up the mess.

The owner of the Staggerwing was lucky he didn't have too much damage, but will still have to get a new prop and have the engine checked.

Meanwhile, back to the ramp and the Bearcat. After Steve shut down Jason's T-6 he walked over to the Bearcat to see what had been done while he was gone and he jumped into the cockpit. He looked even smaller than Gary did. After he checked everything out he called "clear." Steve hit the start button, and, after a few revs, the engine started and ran without the primer. Everyone was very happy.



© Photo by Dave Flood

### Finally...the Bearcat engine turns over and purrs !

The runway was finally cleared, our tug pulled the Staggerwing back to its hangar, and the Zero and Hellcat returned home, After that I don't know what happened. I was tired and went home. It was a very long day for me.

How was your day? SEMPER FI !



© Photo by Dave Flood

**Staggerwing being towed back to its hangar at CMA.**

## A Silly Little Song

by Clifford Brown

The World War II years gave us the best, and most easy listening music of the century. For the most part, it was somber, sentimental and sometimes romantic. Whether it is Richard Addinsell's "Warsaw Concerto;" Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony;" Dot-Dot-Dot-Dash "V for Victory;" Vera Lynn singing "Till We Meet Again;" Glenn Miller's "Sentimental Journey;" "As Time Goes By" from "Casablanca;" "I'll Be Seeing You" or "White Christmas" – One cannot help being moved. It's a very long list.

"Warsaw Concerto" was the theme music for an early 1941 war movie *Suicide Squadron* about a shell-shocked Polish pianist who flew for the RAF and was critical to the movies. Sergei Rachmaninoff declined to write the theme concerto.

Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, spelling out the Morse code letter "V" for victory, became the rallying cry for the Allied world. And, of course, Bing Crosby singing "White Christmas" transcended the war and is now a Christmas season classic. Pretty heavy stuff, but there was a song for children of all ages: "Three Little Fishes." It's silliness and nonsense.

Phil Harris, a leading band leader of the 30's and 40's, was married to blond Alice Faye, a leading movie star of the era. Phil wrote and sang "Down in the meadow in an itty bitty pool, swam three little fishes and a mama fishy too." This ditty has endured as a nursery rhyme that teaches some social values – that there are risks and dangers in not listening to your parents, whether you are three little fishes or a human child. Every top performer of the day sang this song.

Here is my usual hook. Just prior to WWII, my father's company, The Brown Contractors, built the foundation for Phil Harris' new home on a steep hillside in then posh Encino, California. Dad would often take me to work with him. I particularly remember the Phil Harris job. At the bottom of the hillside was a little stream complete with minnows and pollywogs that I would take home in a jar. They never grew to be frogs. But this little stream was the inspiration for Phil Harris' "Three Little Fishes." I was thrilled to have been able to play where the "the three little fishes swam all over the dam." Big deal for a six-year old.

Unfortunately, the reality is that Phil Harris didn't write the "Three Little Fishes," even though he performed it. The composer was another band leader named Saxie Dowell. He was drafted into the Navy, formed a service orchestra that was assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Franklin, which was heavily damaged and almost sank while the band was on board. Saxie and his band helped save the ship.

But if you ever get really down, try singing it (under your breath or people will think you are nuts): "Down in the meadow in an itty bitty pool, swam three little fishes and a mama fishy too. 'Swim,' said the mama fishie, swim if you can. And they swam, and they swam, all over the dam."

## In My Father's Place

by Dave fish

WHAT AN EXPERIENCE! Today (May 3) I had the privilege of my first flight in a B-25 bomber (Better known to me as a PBJ). The Collings Foundation trio of warbirds – B-17 *Nine O Nine*, B-24 *Witchcraft*, and B-25 *Tondelayo* visited Camarillo Airport as part of their *Wings of Freedom Tour 2007*. I had previously flown in their B-24 when it was the *Dragon and his Tail*, but today it was the B-25

The *Tondelayo* flies two passengers forward of the bomb bay behind the flight deck and three passengers aft of the bomb bay. I was forward and enjoyed most of the flight in the bombardier's nose position. We flew over the mountains of Ventura County, over a local lake, and returned to Camarillo along the coastline.

For my first time, I was able to "experience" my father's routine of pre-flight checks, starting and run-up of the twin engines, taxiing, and takeoff. We flew at about 1,500 feet at 180 knots. As we flew over the mountains, I could imagine PBJs flying over the jungles of Mindanao, striking targets with low-level (500-1,000 ft.) bombing, rocket, and strafing attacks, and then returning over water to Zamboanga. I could also imagine a safe return to base as we approached Camarillo Airport, touched down with the nose gear making a slow and gentle glide contact with the runway and finally taxiing with that sound that only the B-25 engines make.

What a day! I just had to share it with those that would understand my feelings of the event and understand what it means to me to experience in my mind a few moments with my father. Dad, today I became another part of your life, Semper Fi.

*Dave Fish*

*Son of Capt Doit L Fish, USMCR*

*VMB-611 PBJ Pilot*

*MIA May 30, 1945*

*Mindanao, Philippine Islands*

*Remains Recovered November 1956*

*Group Burial July 15, 1957*

*Ft Logan National Cemetery*

*Denver, CO*



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## Remembering Shangri-La by Dan Newcomb

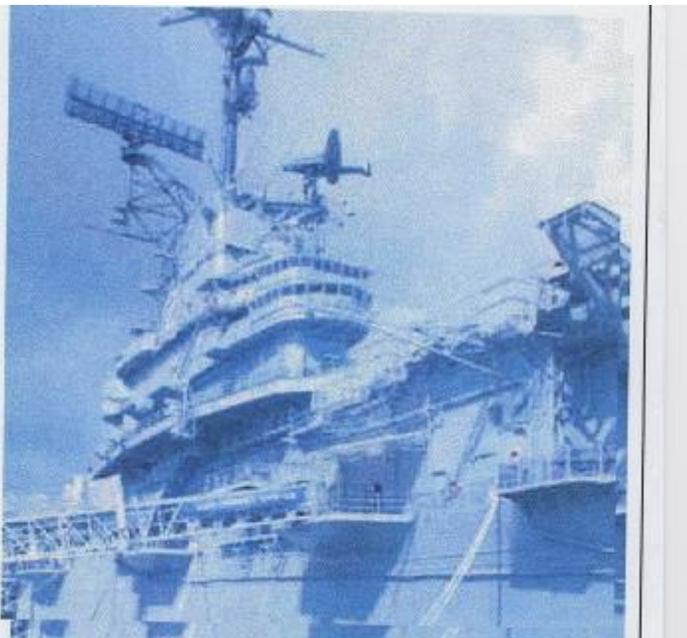
Recently I had the opportunity to visit the Hornet Museum in Alameda, CA. This aircraft carrier served in WWII and Vietnam. It replaced the original Hornet, CV-8, of Doolittle Raider fame. When I mentioned the fact that I was a member of the CAF, they gave me a special guided tour with an emphasis on aircraft restoration. I spent four hours aboard. The rain and 40-degree weather kept the tourists away, and I pretty much had the ship to myself.

After my guided tour, I was left to roam the ship at will. My favorite place was up on the flight deck. As I walked along in the light rain, with the wind moaning as it blew over the masts and rigging of the neighboring ships, I thought of another day over sixty years ago, when, in weather much like this, a squadron of B-25s were launched from a carrier deck bound for Tokyo.

As I left the ship, which is docked at Pier 3, I walked past Pier 2. There are no markers or monuments to tell passers-by what happened at Pier 2. But I knew.

I knew that on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1942 at Pier 2, sixteen Mitchells were loaded aboard the old Hornet CV-8. Sixty-five years ago, Captain Ted Lawson, the author of *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* and pilot of the "Ruptured Duck," stood there and watched in awe as his B-25 was hoisted to the deck above.

As I stood there, in a chill wind, with the cold rain in my face, that knowledge and the fact that Pier 2 was the last piece of America that several of the fliers would ever touch struck me. It must have been the proximity to the ocean, but I noticed an odd sensation. The rain drops running down my cheeks tasted salty.



© Photo by Dan Newcomb  
Squint...and it's the old Hornet ready to load sixteen B-25s on board and head for history in the Pacific.

## Museum Update by Sarah de Bree

The airplanes residing in our WWII Aviation Museum Hangar seem to have a problem inherent to the "round engine species." They want to "mark" their turf, like certain birds, by dropping oil in order to keep out their neighbor planes.

Chris Rushing and Jim Hinkelman have tried their best to calm the "birds" and solve their dropping habit – but as many times as they empty their "bed pans," the pans continue to fill and spill over. Some others have taken to using "kitty litter" to soak up the oil spills. That creates another problem – as the oil cannot be saved into the waste oil drums.

So...we need a concerted effort on behalf of all bird (...er, plane) tamers. Do your best to keep the museum floor clean and pristine by consistently keeping the oil pans emptied into the proper oil drums. We deputize anyone working in both hangars to help in this "roundup."

As we solve the problem of the oil pans, we also should deputize ourselves as a posse to keep our rest-rooms clean (as you wash your hands, take some extra paper towels and clean up around the sinks); and our desks, floors and displays free of bird (the real kind) "effusive gifts."

A special THANKS! to Pat Brown for cleaning all the museum chairs and covering them with plastic. Those using the chairs, please remember to cover them after use. Also, if you use the BBQ – kindly clean it up after use and return it to the "O" Club. Remember what Dear Old Dad used to say: "If you use my tools, always remember to put them back in the same place you found them!"

We want our customers and visitors to come into our facility when it looks cared for and spiffy clean. You want to buy your food in a supermarket that has spotlessly clean floors. We want to create an atmosphere of cleanliness and order that will bring folks back – again and again.

To assist our Wing with the current cash-flow problems, we encourage everyone to visit our Gift Shop and make a purchase. We have new sweat-shirts and polo shirts.

Remember, shop early and shop often!

Until next time...



© Photo by Dave Flood  
**Our Wing's "Gone West" memorial board has been updated. Gil Brice made the new board and Ron Fleishman mounted the names.**

## TLC from TSA

by Scott Drosos

It was still almost broad daylight in Anchorage at 11:00 p.m. as we drove to the airport to get a "redeploy" flight back to Los Angeles.

As usual, I wore my uniform to avoid security hassles, then changed before I got on the airplane. They had to run my bag back through the scanner a second time because they weren't sure if they liked what they saw.

As I stood there grumbling to myself, I noticed a man in a camouflaged military uniform just in front of me, standing with what appeared to be great difficulty and struggling to get his belt back on. The TSA hadn't cut him any slack, either. What a shame, I thought. Here he is, out there protecting this country, and they're treating him like a criminal!

I fumed for a minute, and, as I waited for my bag to come out of the machine for the second time, I couldn't help but overhear the conversation he was having with a young, attractive TSA lady, who, mercifully, was being very kind to him.

She told him that her husband was in the military, too, and that in twelve months of marriage she had only seen him for three months. "Yeah, that's the military these days," he replied. She asked him something else that didn't hear, but his response instantly got my attention.

"The only reason I still have my legs," he said, "is because most of the force of the shape charge went in the other direction." That hit me like a ton of bricks. Suddenly I was drawn into his life. He was no longer just some anonymous guy in a military uniform. He had been badly injured in a bomb explosion in Iraq, and I now viewed him as a hero. I turned and looked at him. He was now leaning on a cane, obviously in a great deal of pain. I suddenly realized that whatever problems I thought I had were absolutely insignificant compared to what he had been through.

The TSA lady asked him something about his family. "Yeah, they sure hated to get that call," he said. "To hear that their son was in the hospital in critical condition. And I couldn't even talk to them." She asked him how he was doing now, and he said, "I take a lot of pain pills, but otherwise I'm getting along all right."

Then she asked him if he thought he'd go back to Iraq. "I'm trying, ma'am," he said, "but so far they won't let me because of my brain injuries."

Holy cow! He'd been through all that – horribly wounded, barely escaping with his life, and now he wanted to go back? I was overwhelmed with admiration for him.

I felt driven to say something, but I didn't know what to say, or even if it would be cool to butt in and reveal that I had been eavesdropping on their conversation. I only had a few short minutes to think about it, or the moment would be lost.

I was thinking about it as I put my laptop away, when suddenly he said to me, "Sir, you dropped something." I turned to thank him, and reached down to pick up what I had dropped. That broke the ice, and I now felt safe to say something to him. I stood up and looked him in the eyes. "I

just want to thank you for your service," was all I could come up with. It was lame, but at least it was something.

"Thank you, sir," he said, holding his head as erect as he could. It was the second time he called me sir. I had to walk away. I didn't want him to see the tears welling up in my eyes.

Later, I passed him and the TSA girl, sitting together at a table in front of a coffee stand. She had apparently taken a break to spend a few minutes with him. She seemed very sweet, always smiling and talking kindly to him. I was glad she had taken an interest. Whoever her husband is, I wish him the best. He's got a great lady there.

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## Hangar Improvements

by Casey de Bree

We have been put on notice by the Ventura County Department of Building and Safety that we must upgrade the museum area in our museum hangar to class "A" standards in order to continue to operate our museum.

We are currently researching what we must do to comply with this requirement. As we now understand it, a class "A" area must be isolated from other areas by a 1-hour fire barrier in much the same way as the garage in your house must be separated from the house by a 1-hour fire barrier. This is why the garage walls and ceiling that are common with your house are finished with sheetrock, and the door between your house and garage is a fire-rated door. Achieving the required 1-hour fire barrier is not in itself difficult.

To comply with this requirement quickly, we are exploring the feasibility of enclosing the area now occupied by the museum gift shop, museum artifact display area, and the library to comply with class "A" requirements. In addition to walls, it must also have a ceiling that provides 1-hour fire protection, and the fire sprinkler system must be expanded to the enclosed museum area. Additional items that will be required are air conditioning and heating, fire alarms, and a greatly expanded electrical system.

We are uncertain as to what the cost of complying with this directive will be and we are working with the builder of our hangars and his architect to arrive at the cost figures. It is our hope that we will be able to fund the project without too much difficulty, but we may need your help.

Completing this project will have a major upside. Besides bringing us into full compliance with the requirements of the Ventura County Department of Building and Safety and Fire Department, our museum will at last be safe from the dirt that sifts into the hangar and covers everything, and the bird dropping that have plagued our exhibits and gift shop for all these years. It will also be possible to lock up the museum area when the museum is closed, something which is not now possible and has been problematic.

We will keep everyone posted as we learn more.

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## CAF Confirms Airplane Accident

A CAF aircraft, a Grumman US-2B Tracker, crashed during approach at MCAS, Cherry Point, N.C. on May 3, 2007. Of the five people aboard, two were taken to local hospitals, and one was scheduled for surgery, at last report. The plane was donated to the CAF in 2002.

## Wing Photo Page I



© Photo by Gordon Twa  
Eric Lange at the Chino Air Show in front of a P-51 in the colors of the RAF squadron known as the "Blue-Nosed Bastards of Bodney." That's another story!



© Photo by Dave Flood  
Tim Kutzbach, on loan from the PBJ Restoration Crew, with his painting job "well done" on the SNJ-4 wing.



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder  
Superbly restored Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress at Chino Air Show. Our guys came back with glowing reports of the show, and we made some money, too.



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder  
The only current flying Zeros in the world – both at the Chino Air Show. Our Mitsubishi A6M3 "X-133" on left, and Planes of Fame's Mitsubishi A6M5 on the right.



© Photo by Gordon Twa  
Our old reliable *China Doll* basking in her element at Chino, surrounded by a horde of interested friends.



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder  
Spitfire and Hurricane in a nostalgic fly-by at Chino. We still remember the Hawker Hurricane we had for awhile here at Camarillo. These two aircraft exemplified the spirit of the British people during the Battle of Britain, after which Winston Churchill said: "Never in the history of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." The "so few," those valiant RAF pilots, live forever in British history..

# Wing Bids Farewell To Jim Basso

By Dave Flood

James Louis "Jim" Basso

Feb. 4, 1932 – May 31, 2007



Jim Basso, 75, beloved husband, father, grandfather and friend, passed away May 31, 2007, after a long and courageous battle with cancer.

Jim was born on February 4, 1932 in Los Angeles. He moved to Ventura at the age of 5, and graduated from Santa Clara High School in Oxnard. It was there that he met the love of his life, Genevieve (Genny) Laubacher. They graduated together in the Class of 1949, and married in 1953, when Jim had a 24-hour pass from the Army.

Jim was called to serve in the U.S. Army's 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division during the Korean conflict – interrupting his stay at the USC Dental School. After his stint in Korea, he resumed his studies at San Fernando Valley State College (now CSU – Northridge) – from which he graduated.

Jim enjoyed a successful career in the insurance industry before joining his family's wholesale beverage business, Basso Distributing Co., Inc. In 1989, Jim and Genny purchased the family business where, as president and CEO, Jim's dynamic personality and keen decision-making led the company to flourish. Jim continued to actively manage the business until the progression of his illness.

Jim was a member of the Knights of Columbus and a 50-year member of the Ventura Elks Lodge No. 1430. Other organizations to which he belonged included USC Cardinal and Gold; Ventura County Trojan Club; Ventura College Pirate Bench Club; Southern California Wing of the Commemorative Air Force; Saticoy Country Club; Ventura County Golf Association; The Quiet Birdmen; and the

parishes of Our Lady of the Assumption and Mission San Buenaventura. In 2006, Jim was inducted into the St. Bonaventure High School Hall of Fame, as well as the Ventura College Hall of Fame.

Jim had a love of aviation, which included vintage military aircraft, particularly World War II-era fighter planes, as well as flying his Cessna.

He was preceded in death by his parents, and a brother, Michael Basso. He is survived by his wife of more than 54 years, Genevieve; son, Steve Basso of Camarillo; daughter Michelle Hagemann (husband Ken) of Ventura; grandchildren: Nicole Hagemann, Steven Hagemann and Andrea Hagemann, all of Ventura; grand-cat, Lucy; and numerous nieces, nephews and friends.

All of us at the Southern California Wing of the Commemorative Air Force offer our sincere condolences to Jim's wife Genny and to all her family. We will always keep Jim in our hearts, and his spirit will be with us as we continue to fly our WWII-vintage aircraft in our ongoing quest to commemorate the memories of all the men and women, who, like Jim, served their country in times of peril.

Our Wing was represented at Jim's funeral on Saturday, June 9, 2007 by four planes, including our F6F-5 Hellcat, piloted by Gary Barber; our A6M3 Zero, piloted by Jason Somes; and two AT-6s, piloted by Chris Rushing and Steve Barber. The planes performed a "Missing Man" formation over Ivy Lawn Cemetery, where Jim was buried. This signified that we are missing a good and treasured member of our Wing, and that we will hold him in our memory for as long as we shall live.

May you rest in peace, dear friend!

Note: thanks to the *Ventura County Star* for excerpts from Jim's obituary printed in the *Star*.

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## Museum Freeway Signs

by Dave Flood

Brand new signs on the 101 Freeway will soon be erected north and south of the Las Posas Road exits. They will replace old signs directing drivers to the Camarillo Airport.

The new signs will feature both Camarillo Airport and our WWII Aviation Museum!

Thanks to Don Katz and Pat Brown for this amazing new development! Don made arrangements for Pat to speak before the Ventura County Transportation Commission. She made a three-minute talk which convinced the commission to include our museum's name with the airport's on the new signs.

Our Wing will incur an expense of \$5,000 to pay for the new signs. Donors to help defray the cost will be welcome!

Please make your check to: CAF, SoCAWing, and send to: Pat Brown – Freeway Sign Fund, CAF, 455 Aviation Drive, Camarillo, CA 93010. Thanks for helping us to "Keep 'Em Flying!"

## Wing Photo Page II



Ceci Stratford, Marion McNiff and Shirley Murphy enjoying the Special Events Day on May 5. Marion is a new member, and, like Ceci, a member of the 99's. How can we go wrong with these lovely ladies in our midst?



© Photo by Dave Flood

No, he doesn't do windows. But Cliff Brown was operating the cleaning machine in the Museum Hangar.



© Photo by Dan Newcomb

Marc Russell giving Katelyn a ride. She looks amazed at all the work the PBJ Restoration Team has done since the last time she was at the hangars.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Ron Fleishman observing Lowell C. Steward, one of the original Tuskegee Airmen, signing the page with his photo in our museum's book *Lone Eagles*, by Robert A. Rose, which is in our special display. Mr. Steward was a special guest of David Price during David's semi-annual visit to speak to the history class students from Oaks Christian School of Westlake Village. Lowell Steward was in the 100<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron of the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group, 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force during WWII. He flew P-40s, P-39s, P47s, and his favorite, the P-51. The high school students got a real taste of "living history" while listening to Lowell speak, and then several of the students got to fly in the rear seat of David Price's P-51D Mustang "Cottonmouth."



© <http://www.vg-photo.com>

© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

We could not have a photo of the B-17 in this issue without also including one of the B-24. That is to keep both Bill Main (B-17 pilot) and Russ Drosendahl (B-24 pilot) happy. This B-24 visited Camarillo recently. Russ was the happy recipient of a ride in the B-24!

## Join the Friends of the Museum !

Call Ceci Stratford at (805) 482-0064 or (805) 527-3696 to sign up as a Friend of the Museum. We need you !

## Ben Kuroki: The Most Honorable Son

© Courtesy of the Nebraska Printing Center, Lincoln, Nebraska



© Photo by Bill Wolf, Tiger Eye Photography

### Ben Kuroki, after receiving the Distinguished Service Medal, August 12, 2005

"The brief story of the heroic efforts of Ben Kuroki, a Nisei, to serve his nation is an inspiring example of dedication and courage. He was born in 1917 to pre-WWI immigrant parents from Japan.

He performed heroically in combat as an aerial gunner. In order to serve in the WWII bombing missions in Europe, North Africa and later in the Pacific, he and those with whom he trained, whose loyalty to him was steadfast, repeatedly had to convince higher military authorities that he deserved the chance.

It was a time when suspicion of those with any ties to Japan was rampant. Prejudice which young Ben had not experienced as an athlete and scholar in his hometown of Hershey, in western Nebraska, affected public policy. With the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December, 1941, Japanese Americans in California and other areas were interned.

At the urging of their father, Ben and brother Fred soon found the way to enlist. Then, denying the odds, Ben served more than his quota of heavy bomber missions in Europe, and later found a way to overcome War Dept. policy to join the air war against his ancestral homeland.

The annals of military service in America will find no more courageous effort by an American citizen, first simply to join in the defense of freedom and then to serve the hazardous combat missions demanded.

Ben Kuroki's wartime service and his example were deserving of the highest honors. They have come to him late in life because of so many of the individuals who were comrades-in-arms in his military service were joined by

friends he made in his journalistic career in insisting on a more complete review of his record.

Finally, on 12 August, 2005, Ben was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. The ceremony was held in Lincoln, Nebraska. At that same ceremony, he was presented the Nebraska Press Association's highest honor, the President's Award. Next day came the presentation of the Doctorate of Humane Letters from his alma mater, the University of Nebraska. He was a 1950 journalism graduate.

I was honored to have been a mid-Twentieth Century colleague of Ben Kuroki's in the weekly newspaper business in Nebraska."

### Emil Reutzell, Longtime Editor, *Norfolk Daily News*.

Ben Kuroki flew as a gunner in B-24s out of East Anglia, England in bombing strikes against German factories. He also participated in *Operation Tidal Wave*, the low-level attack by 178 non-escorted B-24s on the Romanian oil refineries of Ploesti, Romania. Later, Ben flew as a gunner on B-29 Superfortresses in the Pacific Theater – bombing Japanese cities. His B-29 was named "Sad Saki" in honor of Ben. It had the same hard-stand as "Enola Gay."

Ben flew 30 European missions in B-24s and 28 Pacific missions in B-29s. His 59<sup>th</sup>, and continuing, mission – his fight against prejudice within the ranks.

Ben received a journalism degree from the University of Nebraska in 1950. He worked at and owned several small-town Nebraska newspapers; was a reporter on an Idaho daily; then owned a weekly newspaper in Williamston, Michigan – the *Enterprise*. He sold this paper and moved to California, working for the *Ventura Star Free Press* as a reporter, copy editor, Sunday editor, and news editor. Ben retired in 1984. Ben & Shige live in Camarillo.

Ben's wife Shige assisted Ben in his newspaper endeavors, and, after working as a proof-reader for the Ventura paper, went back to college and earned her B.A.

They have three daughters, graduates of UCLA, UCSD, and UC Berkeley. Ben and Shige have four grandchildren.



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**Ben (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) and Shige (far right) with President and First Lady George and Laura Bush at a White House visit in 2006. At left is Julie Cooney, Ben and Shige's daughter. Between the Bushes is Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.**

Our hats are off to Ben for his service to our country in a time of need, and for prevailing against prejudice!

## Wing Photo Page III



© Photo by Dave Flood

**Sib Bosso and Alex Ferrasci checking out the old P&W R1340 engine just pulled off the SNJ-5 #290. A newly-overhauled engine was procured with the help of Col. Jack Rogers, and will be installed soon.**



© Photo by Russ Drosendahl

**Here's Col. Eric Van Gilder, one of our favorite photographers, with his able assistant, son Jacob.**



© Photo by Jim Hinckley

**Children from the Rose Avenue School in Oxnard recently visited our WWII Aviation Museum, and took a tour of our facilities. Here's part of the group, along with their teacher and our Docent, Norm Swagler.**



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© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

**Steve Barber piloting our Hellcat at Chino, just lifting off before a crowd-pleasing fly-by.**



© Photo by Dan Newcomb

**Scott Drosos (left) and Marc Russell checking the fit of a rubber-bladder oil tank in the PBJ's right wing.**



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© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

**Our Mitsubishi A6M3 Zero trailing smoke after being "hit" by the F6F in a dogfight. Jason Somes was able to bring her back to Camarillo still intact.**

**In a recent article in the *Air & Space* magazine, our Wing Leader, Steve Barber, is quoted extensively by the author, Roger Mola, concerning our Zero and the contrasts between the Zero and its nemesis, the F6F Hellcat. We feature the two in our air show dogfights.**

## The Air Show Circuit

by Bill O'Neill

We recently returned from Chino, where they put on a spectacular air show (of course it was, our Hellcat and Zero were part of the show). It was truly a very good and interesting air show. But I am ahead of myself.

Ten of us climbed aboard the *China Doll* on Friday, May 18<sup>th</sup>. Our pilot was Jeff Whitesell; David Baker was the co-pilot; and Gene O'Neal was the Flight Engineer. We arrived around 11:30 a.m., and immediately cleaned up the Doll and took on the fuel we were allocated. Our placement on the ramp was very good. We had a few aircraft near us that were major attractions to the public. (B-17, B-25, P-51).

We decided that we would rent a couple of vehicles rather than use the transport shuttle Chino was supplying. We drove to the Ontario Hilton, checked in, cleaned up and went for dinner. Since the gates opened at 8:00 a.m., we needed to be there by 7:00 a.m., so we called it a night.

Saturday was a lovely day. Sunny, slight wind and cool for Chino (80 degrees). As usual, the show had a great number of WWII aircraft and the Korean conflict rivals, the MIG-15 and the F-86. From my perspective, the best part of the show was the three (3) P-38's flyby. What a magnificent sight! There are only 5 or 6 flying P-38s in the world, and we saw three of them at the same show! One of them was in our Museum Hangar for a couple of years; one was the *Glacier Girl*; and the third one was *23 Skidoo*! After the show on Saturday, there was the performers party. The food was good, drinks were plentiful and the camaraderie was great!! Sunday was a repeat of Saturday except there was no party after the show.

We did reasonably well at the show. We collected \$3,644 plus 300 gallons of fuel. Our next show is Roseburg, OR (June 30 & July 1). We will include this in next month's article. Until then, take care!



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From left: P-38 #44-23314 "23 Skidoo" (Planes of Fame Museum); P-38 #44-26981 (ex-CAF); P-38 #41-7630 "Glacier Girl" (P-38 Lost Squadron Museum). A very rare sight indeed to see three P-38s flying together in the same air show! Their flyby was the highlight of a very good Chino Air Show.

## Maintenance Officers Report

By Joe Peppito

We have had a busy month of June. We finally got the F8F-2 Bearcat flying, but we still have to have the propeller worked on to have it ready for air shows. Ken Kramer and crew did a really outstanding job of rebuilding the engine and its accessories.

We now have the F6F-5 Hellcat and the A6M3 Zero back in the air, with the Hellcat shooting the Zero down at every air show they are invited to. I don't know how Jason Somes has survived all these aborted flights.

Sib Bosso and crew is hard at work replacing the engine on SNJ-5 "290". We are also having all the engine accessories overhauled while the engine is being installed. That means that we start out with a powerplant with everything at zero time.

Bob Albee's Fairchild 24 is still moving along - slowly at times but moving - as is the SNJ-4. We did get one wing painted on the SNJ-4, and if we can get enough help, hope to install it on the airplane.

The C-46 is now flying and ready to go to its first air show. It is a great pleasure to see this airplane back in the air. It will also be going to the CAF Airsho 2007 at Midland in September.

We still haven't been able to rearrange the Restoration Hangar's rear storage area for the Wing's aircraft due to a lack of support and personnel. The task would greatly improve the condition and appearance of the Restoration Hangar, and it would even provide more space for storing aircraft in the hangar.

"Keep 'Em Flying"



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Legacy flight at Chino Air Show – with Lockheed P-38 Lightning, North American P-51 Mustang and McDonnell Douglas FA-18 Super Hornet.