Birthday Girl!

FIFI turns 75 on July 31, 2020
Summer 2020
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# B-29/B-24 Squadron
## Officer & Staff Listing

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*Its FUN to Volunteer*
Squadron Report

One would think, with our tour operations on hold, our officers would have all kinds of time on their hands. This is certainly not the case. Everyone has remained quite busy...especially Don Boccaccio. Don has been working with a team of people on a number of creative programs to help increase donations to the Squadron. His team includes, Toni Rabroker, Kon Kelley, Jacques Robitaille, Al Benzing and, of course, none of our efforts would come together without Andrea Hanson in the Squadron office pulling everything together. Their efforts have been so important because they have directly helped the Squadron generate much needed income. And, they have more very interesting things coming that I know you will want in your own collection.

We do have a couple of flying events coming up this year. On September 5th, FIFI and our Stearman will be flying rides at Meacham Airport in Fort Worth. Those rides are now up online for sale. FIFI is also participating in the Arsenal of Democracy flyover of the Mall in Washington DC on September 25th. FIFI will be making at least two stops on the way home, where we will sell rides at each location. These will not be tour stops nor will we be able to open the ramp to the public, however, we feel we can successfully provide a few rides on our transition home to Fort Worth. Watch our tour website www.airpowertour.org for details.

And finally, the squadron couldn't function without your participation as a member. It takes all of us as members to keep these magnificent airplanes flying. I miss seeing you on tour and I hope we can connect in person very soon.

Jonathan Oliver
B-29/B-24 Squadron Leader
Tour Manager

FIFI about to launch on her birthday.
Photo by Al Benzing.
Executive Officer
Report

My last published officer report was in the Winter 2019 issue of the Flyer and had some predictions for things that would/might happen in 2020. Boy, was I wrong. Anything I mentioned that had to do with aircraft acquisition and touring just did not happen—and won’t happen in the near term.

Instead, what did happen was the complete cancellation of our 2020 tour schedule—this was not an easy decision for staff to make. A few other large CAF units have attempted to sustain a summer tour, some have had to shut down and come home while others attempt to continue even facing sometimes insurmountable obstacles. With at least a bit of time behind us I believe cancelling our summer tour was the right choice for a wide variety of reasons.

Our new unit focus, which has had the full attention of your staff for months, must be to survive in a financial state that will allow us to begin a tour when that again becomes a possibility. After all that has happened in the first seven months of 2020 no one can predict when touring may again be a real possibility.

Although the Squadron has plans in place and is hoping to begin a tour early in 2021, to bring in much needed revenue as soon as possible, we must plan for no touring for an extended period of time. How long a period of time—who knows, I certainly do not know but planning for the worst and hoping for the best can assure our survival.

Your staff has already made cuts to our monthly expenses and attempts to generate additional income via donations and other sources, still at this moment we are in deficit spending mode and since we don’t have a printing press, long term this is unsustainable.

Al Herum
Executive Officer
This week on August 6, 2020, 75 years ago, the B-29 the Enola Gay took to the sky. Three days later on August 9, the B-29 Bockscar did the same. The world changed forever. We do what we do to educate, inspire, and honor through flight and living history experiences. Freedom isn’t free, let’s not forget the sacrifices so many Americans have made in the past.

Ten years ago on August 6, 2010, the B-29 FIFI took to the air for her first flight after being re-engined. We owe our thanks to the team that accomplished this feat led by the project manager John Agather. Each time those engines run (Ingrid, Mitzi, Rita and Betty) I get phone calls from wherever FIFI is in the country reporting how great those engines sound. This is a testament to our crew chiefs and maintenance teams that make it happen.

Even though we are somewhat sidelined this year, we look forward to getting back out on the road to do what we do best, “educate, inspire and honor.”

Everybody stay safe.

Archie Taylor
Flight Operations Officer
Maintenance Report

Due to the obvious restrictions and difficulties caused by the pandemic and accomplishment of an extremely complex avionics upgrade installation, this year’s winter maintenance program was challenging to say the least. Once again, thanks to the talent and dedication of our Crew Chiefs Rick Garvis and Ben Powers and Squadron volunteers FIFI was the Star of the Show for the 4th of July Washington DC flyover. Our participation was truly an honor. FIFI and her new Avionics suite performed flawlessly.

For those of you not directly involved in the avionics upgrade it is impossible to describe the real scope of the project. Upgrade is a misnomer. All existing avionics, intercom systems, attitude and heading instrumentation and wiring were first removed. A new pedestal mount was constructed by Tom Ferraro. Al Herum installed G5’s and G3x’s in the instrument panels.

Under the direction of Don Boccaccio, Bud “Doc” Calley along with his team of volunteers including Al Herum, Rudy Vander Upwich and Tom Ferraro worked tirelessly to complete the installation of components and wiring harnesses donated by Gulf Coast Avionics and PS Engineering. Special thanks to Trevor Smith, owner of Tech Aero Avionics. Trevor volunteered countless hours assisting with the installation and providing technical support to Doc and his team. Trevor also performed all of the final systems configuration. We could not be more pleased with the equipment and the installation.

Many of you already know, as part of our engine top overhaul and inspection program, number four engine was sent to Anderson Airmotive for top overhaul and inspection and our spare engine was installed. During final run up, prior to the first maintenance flight, the newly installed number four engine developed a cylinder issue. This occurred just two days before our planned departure for the DC flyover, forcing us to change the faulty cylinder. Upon inspection after return from DC we discovered a similar condition developing with another cylinder on number four engine. Our only option was to install our freshly top overhauled spare engine and return the removed engine to Anderson for root cause analysis, repairs and significant run time in their test cell. The replacement engine has performed perfectly on a number of maintenance and training flights.

LIL remains stranded on jacks. AirCorps Aviation stands ready to produce the parts needed to put her back in service, however we must make certain we fulfill our Squadron’s financial responsibilities before asking them to move forward. Cancellation of the 2020 tour season has forced obvious and drastic measures. The Squadron has a number of fundraising campaigns in place as you will see in this issue of the Flyer. Anything our members can do to assist is greatly appreciated.

Thanks to all our Squadron members for your dedication and support.

Phil Pedron
Maintenance Officer
Training & Safety Report

STRANGE……Here it is the first of August, 2020 when FIFI and Lil would normally be in another part of the country, not parked in the hangar at Vintage Flying Museum in Fort Worth. But again, these are not normal times. Hopefully, not the “New Normal”!

With the cancellation of this year’s tour, it was a welcome opportunity for FIFI to participate in the Flyover of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. on July 4th, 2020. If you saw it live on TV or caught it on YouTube, it was a proud moment for the Squadron. She looked fantastic and the crew performed flawlessly!

There is a book out now about the B-29, being promoted as a fundraiser for the Squadron called “Rain of Fire”. I’ve read it and it’s a very good read. In one of the chapters, the aircraft commander, who is the author, talks of an experience his crew encountered during a mission over Japan. On August 6, 1945, on their way back to Saipan, about 50 miles off-shore with the island just coming into sight, they ran out of fuel and had to ditch in the ocean. They had briefed over and over about what they would have to do if this situation arose. They ditched the aircraft successfully and all crew members survived with only one injury. To me, this reflects on the importance of crew training. I know every crew member in every position realizes the importance of emergency training. We’ll continue to focus on our training when we get back together next year. Check out the link for this book and the B24 book, Ted’s Traveling Circus on page 15 of this Flyer.

If you have any questions about touring or anything else I can help you with, please email me at: rabroker@hotmail.com

Always remember: “IF THE JOB IS DONE RIGHT, IT IS SAFE.”

Steve Rabroker
Safety Officer
469/387-6439
As you all know by now, our 2020 tour was canceled due to Covid-19. Once that decision was made, the fundraising committee went into “full afterburner.” It was essential for the Squadron to replace the funds that previously were generated from touring. This work started immediately, is in full force as of this writing and will continue well into the fall.

Scores of ideas were floated. Nothing was off the table. Soon a strategy started to form and the “Sustaining Flight” campaign was born. We started with FIFI sneakers along with other incentives and just recently launched phase 2 (no, not the touring phase 2 😃) which includes our new webinars. Yes, there will be more than one.

Another exciting addition is the exclusive 75th anniversary publication of the book Rain of Fire. This edition was printed exclusively for us to celebrate FIFI’s birthday, with a well-written forward by Al Benzing. It is a great book for those who enjoy B-29 war stories written by the pilot himself. Heck, who doesn’t like that? Al worked very hard putting this all together and should be commended.

There are additional incentives on the horizon. All are really neat, and some are incredible, so keep on the lookout for them.

These are trying times and I know our members are there to help at a moment’s notice. I encourage you to review the incentives, pick out something that fits your fancy, and donate. Start planning for your Christmas and holiday giving! Remember, we are all in this together.

Don Boccaccio
Development Officer

Pics of the completed install of a new avionics system for FIFI. See Don Boccaccio’s feature story. Well done all!
I suppose by now you’ve all heard the 2020 AirPower History Tour was cancelled. If not, what rock have you been hiding under? I had been well underway reaching out to our friends on the ground at the many tour stops we had planned. I like to get to them early, just to make contact, remind them that we’re coming and when, and make sure I’m talking with the right folks as we begin planning for promotion and publicity for the upcoming stop.

It is what it is. I worked my way back around and let everyone know that we weren’t coming this year. To say I could feel their disappointment over the phone is an understatement. But all were understanding that the health and safety of our crew and our customers came first. Many were in process of deciding whether or not we would even be allowed to come, given local shut down and crowd restriction directives. Needless to say all wanted us to know that they wanted us back when the time was right.

So now we’ve switched gears to provide support to the “Sustaining Flight Campaign,” assisting to put together copy and ads to promote our fundraising effort to help get the squadron through this unparalleled time. Don Boccaccio has been doing a great job as lead on this and will have much more on these efforts.

Last year we had a team from the History Channel come out and film FIFI for an appearance in their show “Drain the Oceans”. That episode, “The Last Wrecks of WWII” aired June 16. You can find it on YouTube. We also have plans for the Smithsonian Channel to come out this month to film FIFI and interview our own Al Benzing for an episode on B-29’s for their show “AirWarriors”. And just recently announced, a “Warbirds & Wheels” event is being planned at the Vintage Flying Museum in Fort Worth for Sept 5. FIFI and the Stearman will be offering rides.

So things are still happening! If you have a chance, come out and see us. I’ll be posting more about that on Facebook shortly.

Be safe and be careful out there!

Jacques Robitaille
Public Information Officer
Webinars, webinars, webinars
As an administrator for Dallas College and with our operations almost completely online, I have been on most of the video conferencing platforms including Zoom, WebX, MSTeams, Go-to-Meeting, Hopin, MarketScale, Skype and Blue Jeans. Some of the platforms are pretty good. In fact, one bright spot during this pandemic has been my family faithfully Zooming with each other every Sunday night. We’ve also played some great tricks on my Dad. For example, we once tried to convince him he had his Spanish setting on while we all spoke in Spanish. You can do great virtual backgrounds in Zoom, too.

These days, aviation museums and organizations like the CAF are doing live webinars, including the CAF’s entries about FIFI and Diamond Lil. Below are links to the recorded events:

FIFI Rises
https://youtu.be/9-KzHR84n7I

The Life and Times of Diamond Lil
https://youtu.be/OvzytFdxNZY

At our last Officers Meeting, we discussed developing webinars and the potential of a virtual Squadron meeting. Thanks to some initiative from Squadron member, Al Benzing, we collaborated on a Squadron webinar to celebrate FIFI’s 75th birthday on July 31, 2020. After discussing platforms, we fell back on the ever popular Zoom and chose to record the webinar and premiere it on FIFI’s birthday. Early attempts to be in separate locations and record were a challenge due to an unstable internet connection. So, I went to Al’s place and we recorded it sitting side-by-side. If you have not seen the webinar, the link is below.

FIFI 75th Birthday webinar
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwyBf7Mb7l0&feature=youtu.be

This, along with the CAF webinars, are a good way for you to brush up on B-24 and B-29 history, in addition to the colorful backgrounds of FIFI and Lil.

Now that we have a webinar under our belt, we are open to ideas and other collaborators to tell stories online. I also responded to a community plea from my college for online content. Below is the link if you are interested in my webinar on 3D modeling and WWII/aviation history.

Modeling History in 3D
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84kgk_TXRtA&list=FL2ZteLyTloAEgLbrFpykRA

More Squadron webinars are being planned! Please contact me if you are interested in working on a webinar or contributing to The Flyer. Stay safe.

Konley Kelley
Education Officer
The Squadron welcomes new members added Summer 2020.

Nicholas Kupferle, Fort Worth, TX  
Lannette Jordan, Catoosa, OK  
Les Gholson, Bowie, TX  
Robert Rodin, Pasadena, CA  
Jean Allan, Indianapolis, IN  
Steven Weiser, Philadelphia, PA  
Michael Noe, Austin, TX  
Mike Noe, Georgetown, TX  
Christopher Hess, Grand Prairie, TX

Membership Info  
Toni Rabroker, Adjutant & Membership Coordinator

Check the Squadron website under the Members Only section for your Squadron membership status. You can also see dates for future meetings and events. If you have membership questions or there is anything I can do to help you get involved, please let me know.  
- Toni Rabroker

If you have any membership questions, please feel free to contact me at rabroker@hotmail.com  
Dues and new member apps can be mailed to:  
CAF B-29/B-24 Squadron  
PO Box 763577  
Dallas, TX 75376

There is no better time to get connected than now. We’d like to know more about our Squadron members. Be watching for an e-mail with a questionnaire so we can learn more about you and help members meet each other with common interests and backgrounds. We also want to know why you joined up. We’ll create a directory and make it available to all of our members.

Ultimately, it will also help us plan for events, virtual meetings and to engage all of you. Thank you and keep safe!

Make sure you visit the Squadron Px for all your Squadron clothing and bling  
Px Captains, Alma and Rocky Smith will take care of you.

Whether we are on tour or home, we can fill your order. Short or long sleeve uniform shirts, performance polos, quarter zip fleece, as well as hats and t-shirts (as found on www.B-29B24PX.org). We will even do name drops on the shirts. Email alma@B-29b24px.org with size, quantity, your phone and email information.
Sustaining Flight

2020 Fundraising Campaign

YOUR HELP HAS NEVER BEEN MORE URGENT OR IMPORTANT!

The Sustaining Flight 2020 Fundraising Campaign will ensure funding for care and maintenance of our aircraft until the spring of 2021 when the AirPower History Tour can hit the skies across the country again.

ANY DONATION IS GREATLY APPRECIATED

Special Edition B-29 FIFI sneakers with a unique FIFI 2020 logo are available for a limited time through the Sustaining Flight 2020 Campaign ONLY!

Get a pair today for yourself or as a special gift! Be sure to check out our other incentive offers as well at www.cafb29b24.org

Fundraiser ends on August 31, 2020

Your support is vital to the future of the B-29/B-24 Squadron. Thank you
This fundraising program is all about preserving our B-29 *FIFI* and B-24 *Diamond Lil* as flying, touring WWII aircraft that the public can see, touch and ride. Our B-29/B-24 Squadron is predominately staffed by Volunteers. Each summer they spend many weeks on Tour, providing the public with aircraft tours and rides. Because COVID-19 forced the cancellation of our 2020 Air Power History Tour, our main source of income, our financial resources are seriously impacted, making your contribution so important to our viability. It is about the Bombers! But we think these wonderful books will serve as an incentive, since they are so relevant to the WWII Mission of these historic aircraft.

Please donate what you can. For amounts of $129 or more, the Rain of Fire book may be selected and for $124 or more Ted’s Travelling Circus.

Please consider a larger donation – it will matter a great deal to us. THANK YOU for your support!

FOR A DONATION OF AT LEAST $129:

Receive *Rain of Fire 75th Birthday Edition*, which includes a Special 75th Birthday tribute to our B-29 Superfortress *FIFI*. This is an exclusive edition printed for *FIFI*'s 75th Birthday that includes a forward written by one of *FIFI*'s present day Aircraft Commanders. The book is an impressive memoir of a B-29 Pilot that offers the reader a great deal of insight into the missions and the men who undertook the bombing of Japan. This Collector's Edition is only available here!

FOR A DONATION OF AT LEAST $124:

Receive *Ted’s Travelling Circus* – an incredible history of the 93rd Bomb Group – with over 100 pages on the Ploesti Raid – and the story of the *Hot Stuff* Crew – the 1st Heavy Bomber crew to fly 25 missions. Each book will be signed by a present day pilot of our B-24 *Diamond Lil*.

www.cafb29b24.org
Book Review
Rain of Fire
B-29s Over Japan, 1945
by Al Benzing

Rain of Fire – B-29s Over Japan, 1945 – 75th Anniversary Edition
By Charles L. Phillips, Jr. Colonel USAF (Ret.)
Review by Allen Benzing (B-29 FIFI pilot)

I reviewed a previous edition of Rain of Fire in 2017. The main body of the book has not changed, and comments made then still ring true, but I have updated and added information for this review.

General Curtis LeMay read the book and he liked it. “His is an accurate bona fide account – I commend it to you.” And, in a phone call: “I really want the American people to be able to read what you have written!”

This is an impressive memoir of a B-29 Pilot that offers the reader a great deal of insight into the missions and the men who undertook the bombing of Japan. It is expansive in that there are ties to the Orient from his parents and early years, and that his missions extended from the high altitude bombing, through an array of low altitude and special missions, including minelaying and POW supply drops, and even a record non-stop flight from Iwo Jima to the US at the end of the war. There were many changes in the man, the aircraft, mission strategy and the Homefront during 1945, which are presented in a very readable and interesting way.

Charles Phillips parents were long-time Missionaries in Korea, who were forced out by the Japanese – which affects this story in interesting ways. The harsh reality of commanding a bomber, and later an entire Squadron, inflicting massive destruction and great loss of life, is a dilemma for anyone and in spite of, or perhaps because of his upbringing, he understood the necessity of these missions to end the war.

I learned new things about the B-29 – how engine life was extended from 250 to 750 hours, as improvements were made. How different types of missions determined when fighter attacks, flak and phosphorous bombs were employed. High altitude missions were failing, low altitude night missions were better for hitting the targets, but also dangerous, with extreme turbulence and hundreds of B-29s nearby.

There were also large daylight formation flights flown at mid-teen altitudes – improving bombing accuracy, but increasing the risk of enemy fighters and flak. I was surprised to learn that minelaying was forced on General LeMay by the Navy, but was highly effective in shutting down shipping. Mines weighed 2,000 lbs!

There are a number of ‘goosebumps on the arms’ moments from reading his accounts of the missions, but also of after the war of happenstance meetings with men who had a direct hand in his survival. Some seemingly minor occurrences that later loomed large – a childhood experience on a seaplane, and talking with the pilot of another B-29 that had a successful ditching – then deducing what made the difference in survival – when he was forced to ditch on Aug 6th! Meeting pilots of two different B-29s who flew overhead to direct a rescue boat to his ditched aircraft, and meeting a man who was aboard that LSM and helped bring the life rafts aboard. And, there is the account of a respectful meeting with Zero Aces after the war.

The 75th Anniversary Edition, with additional historical information, includes my letter to Gayle Phillips Stafford (daughter of the author). While touring with FIFI, the Commemorative Air Force’s B-29, we strive to accurately describe the aircraft, it’s crew and missions, so when I read this edition, I took many notes, with an eye toward using the book as a resource to help me ‘tell the story’.

There are many interesting and rare items, such as a table of various B-29 bomb loads, along with fuel and flight planning. And the flight plan for the record-breaking non-stop from Iwo Jima to Spokane, WA.

There are a number of relevant side-notes, such as a wrenching account of a close friend’s mistreatment as a POW and postwar nightmares, finally relieved by ‘meeting the enemy’. And, the story from a young Japanese girl who was on the edge of the firestorms. She later married an American G.I., now living in the US and is close friends with the Phillips family.

There are so many ‘goodies’ in this book, that would take me pages to relate. So, I highly recommend you read the book! Colonel Charles L. Phillips is among our nation’s real heroes.
This book is a magnificent history of the 93rd Bombardment Group (H) USAAF 1942-45. It’s a massive hardcover book with over 500 pages in 8.5 x 11” format which interweaves crew stories and numerous photos with their significant missions. General Ted Timberlake is the central figure and a ‘fast mover’ in the 8th Air Force, but there are many others highlighted for their bravery, challenges, many accomplishments, and sacrifices.

For those who are not familiar with the many Bomb Groups and other Military designations, it can be difficult to identify with a particular unit. In this case, it’s perhaps easiest to relate to the 93rd as the first B-24 Bomb Group to arrive in East Anglia, England in September 1942.

They were soon flying missions over occupied France. Then, in December 1942, the 93rd BG with 24 aircraft was ordered to immediately fly to North Africa – for a 10-day deployment. The crews did not even have a change of clothing. These 10 days turned into months, with the bedraggled survivors returning in late August. The desert was harsh - no crew quarters, or anything else at these remote airstrips – only sandstorms to plague them.

The August 1, 1943 Ploesti Raid – the preeminent B-24 story is integral to the 93rd BG, and over 100 pages are dedicated to its inception, planning, execution, and significant criticism. There were 5 Medals of Honor awarded – 3 Posthumously – and numerous other Awards. This low-level mission was audacious and heroic, but many would judge it as disastrous with the loss of so many B-24 crews. The Romanian Oil Refinery was significantly damaged, but soon repaired.

There is a chapter on Hot Stuff - a B-24 and crew that completed 31 missions before the Memphis Belle completed her famous 25. Captain Shine Shannon was selected to fly General Frank Andrews to Washington – ostensibly to be named Supreme Commander of Allied Forces Europe.

Tragically, Hot Stuff crashed along a mountainside in Iceland during bad weather, killing all but the tail gunner. Hot Stuff and her crew would have undertaken the War Bond tour and been the toast of American, instead they were mostly unknown, due to wartime security. Only recently has this story, and that of General Andrews been told. Jim Lux, a friend and advocate of preserving the memory of this iconic crew has given numerous presentations which inspired an excellent book - Before the Belle.

There are so many stories within the story of the 93rd. Ben Kuroki, a Nebraska born Japanese-American faced near constant racial prejudice in the Military yet completed 30 missions in Europe and another 28 against Japan. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal.

These and so many other stories of B-24 missions and crews make this book a priceless history of the 93rd Bombardment Group (H) USAAF 8th Air Force.
WARBIRDS & WHEELS

Warbird Rides! Car & Bike Show!

Saturday September 5, 2020
9 am – 4 pm

ADMISSION:
Adult: $10
Senior Citizens: $8
Teens: $8
Children 6-12: $5
Children under 6: Free
Parking: Free

Car & Bike Show Registration:
$15
(Includes 2 Adult Admission Wristbands)

Photo Pit Passes Available!

Food Truck!

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505 NW 38th Street Fort Worth, TX 76106
Stearman aircraft are two-seat biplanes first built in the mid-1930s and popularized by their use as a primary trainer for military pilots. Thousands of these aircraft rolled off assembly lines and introduced American pilots to the fundamentals of being a pilot. When the war ended, thousands of surplus trainers went on to do every civilian job from crop dusting to barn-storming aerobatics. Ease of maintenance and great handling made them popular wherever they went.

**PT-13 Stearman Specifications**
- Length = 25'
- Wingspan = 32' 2"
- Height = 9' 5"
- Max Weight = 2950 lbs.
- Engine = Lycoming R680, 220HP
- Normal Cruise Speed = 95 mph
- Maximum Speed = 186 mph
- Range = 300 miles

**Squadron Stearman History**
- PT-13D constructed by Boeing in Wichita, KS
- US Army Air Corps (1944-1949)
- Yakima Crop Dusting (1950-1968)
- Bought by one of their pilots (1968-1970)
- Bought and restored by Mike Walton in Phoenix, AZ (1970-2014) *purchased by his wife as an anniversary present. 7/17 is their anniversary, explaining the #17
- CAF bought it freshly restored in 2014

www.AirPowerTour.org
As with everyone else, I was so very disappointed when we got the news that the 2020 AirPower History Tour had been cancelled. I was already going out to the hangar pretty regularly to help with the winter maintenance, and was starting the process of reaching out to our “friends on the ground” at the early tour stops we were planning to visit. Then the “shelter at home” directive came down, and the volunteers were told not to bother coming out to the hangar for a while. My work with the Squadron pretty much came to a standstill.

Image my surprise when I heard that a flyover of warbirds over the National Mall in DC was being planned as part of the Independence Day celebration. The real story behind this is not the trip to DC, or the flyover itself. It’s about the what it took to get her there.

With the cancelling of the tour season, and the pandemic shutdown keeping volunteers away, the annual maintenance inspection had lost some of its momentum. In addition, a significant project was also being undertaken to update FIFI’s avionics and intercom system. The tedious amount of work required for that defied imagination, and was not without its own problems and delays. The announcement that the DC flyover was a “go” now meant that a lot of ground needed to be covered in a short time. The maintenance inspection needed to be wrapped up and completed, and the avionics and intercom systems upgrades had to be completed and tested. On time, no excuses.

As in other years, and as has always come to be expected, the maintenance team rose to occasion.

But it doesn’t end there. Just a week to go before she needs to fly to DC, FIFI was buttoned up and ready to go. She was rolled out to do engine runs and prop balancing. All good. The maintenance flight was scheduled for the next day. She taxis out to the end of the runway, and starts the full engine run up process. And that’s when things go wrong. Something’s not right with the #4 engine. No maintenance flight today. Back to the ramp.

What happens next is the real story. It’s late. It’s hot. But, the team gets works trying to figure out what’s wrong. The next morning the culprit is found. No compression in one of the cylinders. Back into the hanger she goes. Working tirelessly and under a tight deadline, the maintenance team goes to work. Failure is not an option. Off comes the propeller, and the cowling. Off comes the bad cylinder. On goes a spare. The next day back on go the cowling and the prop. Out to the ramp for a test run and prop balancing. The maintenance flight goes off late that same afternoon without a hitch. All this within two days.

And the next day we’re off to DC. The flight there is smooth and uneventful, a testament to the hard work, skill, dedication and dogged determination of Rick Garvis, Ben Powers, Phil Pedron and a cadre of other volunteers.
On the day before the flyover, the pilots went off to their briefings, and the rest of the crew went out to the airport. There was no time to put the exhaust covers on in Dallas, so we carried them with us and went to work putting those on, as well as giving her a good cleaning. By afternoon she was ready for the show.

But the pilots came back with some disappointing news…“No pictures allowed!” Why? You’re guess is as good as mine. But in a way it was a relief. Now we could just focus on the moment, and not miss out on it while trying to get the perfect shot with a camera. I’ve seen that so many times on a ride flight, folks so caught up playing with their cameras and trying to get something posted “real time” that they miss out on most of the experience. But I digress….

On the 4th we didn’t have to be at the airport until mid-afternoon, so we took the opportunity that morning to visit the Manassas National Battlefield Park, just a 5 minute drive from the hotel. A beautiful, serene and quiet place. It gave us a moment to reflect on the carnage that took place there so many years ago, and the reason for the celebration we were there for that day.

Finally, it’s show time and we head out to the airport. Other planes that will be joining us on the flyover await. The A-26 Lady Liberty, the B-17 Yankee Lady, two B-25’s Panchito and Champagne Gal, four C-47’s, six P-51’s, and a Corsair. Quite a line-up.

We take off and we’re in the air, formed up and circling awaiting our turn to join the procession. I was Aft Scanner and had crawled back to tail gunner’s position in the rear of the airplane. Never easy but well worth the effort. The excitement builds as we circle over Quantico and the Potomac River, looking for and calling out the position of the DC-3’s, B-25’s and others circling with us. As I stood back there it was fascinating to listen to our pilots Bill Goeken and Archie Taylor communicating with the AirBoss and calling out our position and time to the Insertion Point. Oops! A minor glitch! The President’s remarks are running 10 minutes late. Need to make some adjustments to get our timing right! We get the go ahead and bam! We hit the IP right on the money! Great job by the flight crew!

What a thrill! We fly over the Lincoln Memorial! Suddenly the Washington monument passes on aircraft right. I look over to the left and there’s the White House right below us. And just like that, we’re banking off to the left and heading back to airport. Thirty seconds over Washington….

When we got back the cellphones were lighting up with video clips folks had taken as they watched us on TV. FIFI was front and center to a nationwide audience and looked AWESOME! In case you missed it here is a link to one of the videos.

https://dougreeses.smugmug.com/MISC-2020/i-BKcZ3tM
The next day we were headed home. As the runway at Manassas is short, we couldn’t take off with a full fuel load, so we had to stop in Memphis to top off. A fill up, some lunch, a quick adjustment to one of the cowl flaps, and we were back in the air. Just in time as there were pop up storms approaching. But once again, the flight home was smooth and uneventful. Just the way you want it to be.

It was a wonderful opportunity to show off FIFI in front of the nation. She did us proud. But she wouldn’t have been there without the tireless efforts of our maintenance team and the skill of our flight crew.

Hooah!
In response to a request from Konley Kelley for articles for the The Flyer, I’ve cobbled together information from various documents and records of my father, Curtis G. Green, Jr. who was a bomber pilot during World War II. As was the case for probably the majority of WWII vets, he did not discuss his experiences during that time to any notable extent. However, he did keep copies of a good number of his military orders and related documents from that period in his life that my mother gave to me after he passed away. Probably the most valuable of these, at least to me, was his Pilot Log Book that chronicled all his flying experience from the beginning of his military service and also includes his flight records from the early 1950’s when he was a test pilot for Boeing Aircraft in Wichita, flying the B-47. Dad flew his combat missions in 1944 with the 15th Air Force in Italy. He served in the 484th Bomb Group (H) and the 461st Bomb Group (H). In all of his missions, he flew B-24’s, mainly the H and J models. He was also a qualified B-17 pilot prior to transitioning to B-24’s.

Dad’s official military service began with orders to active duty, dated June 27, 1941, with an effective date of 15 July 1941, as issued by Headquarters Fourth Corps Area in Atlanta, GA. The orders directed him to report to the Commanding Officer of the Air Corps Training Detachment in Jackson, MS for duty. From my research it appears that this Detachment was physically located at the Mississippi Institute of Aeronautics. I don’t have specific background information, but somewhere along the line he met and married his first wife while stationed in Jackson. While at Jackson, his pilot log book shows that his flying time was in a Stearman PT-17.

On 19 September 1941, Dad received orders relieving him from duty in Jackson and directing him to report to the Air Corps Advanced Flying School at Maxwell Field, AL. While at this duty station, his pilot log book shows that he again flew Stearman PT-17s and transitioned to the Vultee BT-13A. He also apparently did some local flying in the Greenville, MS area as there are several entries in the log book to that affect. The log book also indicates that he received training in aerobatics, night flying and cross-country flying. It indicates he had 15 hours in a Link trainer. His log book for this period of time was signed by the Commanding Officer of Training Squadron 8, Richard D. McGhee, 1st Lt., Air Corps.

On 10 December 1941, Dad was transferred back to the Mississippi Institute of Aeronautics in Jackson, MS. It’s not clear from his log book or his orders that I have, that indicate his specific time at Greenville Army Flying School. Perhaps he would “shuttle” back and forth as the need arose. In any event, the log book then shows that Dad was stationed at the Columbus Army Flying School in Columbus, MS, effective 6 August 1942, where he received multi-engine training in Cessna AT-17, Beech AT-10, Curtiss AT-9, Lockheed Hudson, and North American AT-6. Dad graduated from the Columbus Army Flying School on 9 October 1942, rated as a pilot of single engine and twin engine aircraft. At this point, Dad had accumulated 24 hours of instrument time, 45 hours Link trainer time for a total of 228 hours.

Dad’s next duty station, per his pilot log book was Gowen Field in Boise, Idaho. He logged his first flight in a Boeing B-17E on 20 October 1942, flying “local” on a “bombing mission” with a payload of 20, 100lb bombs. While at Gowen Field, Dad completed a total of 30 flights in B-17E’s, through 30 November 1942. Some descriptions of the purpose of the flights during this time include instrument beam work, calibration of compass, day landings, gunnery missions and day & night landings.
Lt. Curtis Green, Jr. was next assigned to the 100th Bomb Group, 418th Bomb Squadron flying out of Wendover Air Base, located near Salt Lake City, Utah. His first flight there was on 2 December 1942 in a B-27F. An interesting notation he made in his log book for this flight was “damn near crashed – CG in wrong place?” Dad made 15 flights on B-17F’s between 2 December and 31 December 1942 while flying from Wendover. Some other notations he made on some of these flights include “Engineering hop on Aircraft – 2 supercharger fires – feathered #3,” “Bombing – radio out – followed hiway into field. Ceiling 100ft.,” “25,000 ft, bombing – gunnery – 40 mile x-wind at landing,” “Bombing at 20,000 – gunnery – feathered #4 – broken oil line,” “bombing 40,000ft ind. – 20 bombs – ship climbing 500'/min at 40,000,” and “Instruments – bombing – low altitude – 100′ – good bombing.”

The 100th Bomb Group then was moved to Sioux City, Iowa for approximately one month. There are no entries in Dad's log book for flights while at this location.

The next entries in Dad's log book began on 6 February 1943 with a flight that date from AAB Casper, Wyoming. He made several flights between 6 February and 28 February 1943 while at Casper. An interesting, but un-dated remark in his log book states “am now instructor – instrument check – ferry – test pilot.” His records also indicate that between 1 February and 12 April 1943 he served as the Operations Officer for the 100th Bomb Group. While flying from Casper, Dad made some ferry flights of aircraft and/or crew other locations, including to Oklahoma City, OK, Minneapolis, MN and Mitchell, South Dakota. His notations also indicate several flights wherein he was evaluating, training other pilots (Dad did not enter the names of those pilots/students in his log book). All of his flights at this point were in B-17F’s.

Per the pilot log book for Lt. Curtis Green, Jr., between 7 April 1943 and 28 April 1943, he made several flights originating from, or destinations of Kearney, Nebraska, Ogden, Utah, Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Hamilton Field, California. At some point, based upon copies of his orders available, the 418th Bomb Squadron was reassigned to the 29th Bomb Group (perhaps only temporarily).

Between 28 April 1943 and 14 July 1943, Lt. Green made numerous flights, some “local” others at more distant locations, including Walla Walla, Washington, Spokane, Washington, Dalhart, Texas, Madras, Oregon and Dyersburg, Tennessee. Of interest is an apparent ferry flight from Kearney, Nebraska to Prestwick, Scotland from 22 July 1943 to 26 July 1973. His route was from Kearney, Nebraska to Syracuse, New York, then on to Bangor, Maine. From Bangor the destination was Gander, Newfoundland. From Gander, the final destination was Prestwick. A notation for that leg of the flight states “instruments all the way – over the overcast & finally landed in Scotland after 3rd letdown approach.” After returning to CONUS, Lt. Green made several other B-17 flights from/to various locations.

The next interesting entries in Dad's pilot log book began on 9 November 1943 at Peterson Field, Colorado, close to Colorado Springs. Dad had mentioned to me that he had been assigned to transition to B-24’s from B-17s but he did not save copies of any of his orders to that affect amongst all the other copies he retained, and I received no copies of such orders from NARA in my requests to them. Between 9 November 1943 and 30 November 1943, Dad made 13 flights in a B-24J for a total of 29 hours, 5 minutes. There are no notations/remarks for these flights in his log book, so I assume they were all “local.” Between 5 December 1943 and 29 December 1943 he made an additional 9 flights in B-24J’s. In January, 1944, Lt. Green made 7 flights in B-24E’s and J’s from Harvard Army Air Base at Harvard, Nebraska.
On 30 December 1943, Lt. Green was transferred to the 484th Bomb Group, 15th Air Force. His pilot log book indicates the following dates, departure and destination locations for transiting to Italy.

21 March 1944 – Lincoln, Nebraska to Macon, Ga – B-24H
24 March 1944 – Macon, Ga to Jacksonville, FL – B-24H
26 March 1944 – Jacksonville, FL to Morrison West Palm Beach, FL – B-24H
28 March 1944 – Morrison West Palm Beach, FL to St. Lucia, British West Indies – B-24H
30 March 1944 – St. Lucia, BWI to Waller, Trinidad – B-24H
31 March 1944 – Waller, Trinidad – returned to Waller for instruments
1 April 1944 – Waller, Trinidad to Belem, Brazil – B-24H
2 April 1944 – Belem, Brazil to Natal, Brazil – B-24H

At this point, Lt. Green came down with appendicitis and had to have his appendix removed before he could continue to Italy. As a result, his original B-24 crew continued on to Italy with Dad following when his medical condition allowed.

Lt. Green’s first combat mission with the 484th BG was on 19 May 1944 and mission was scrubbed due to weather. His next mission was on 22 May 1944 with the target being submarine pens and also carrying anti-personnel bombs. According to his pilot log book, he made a total of at least 17 combat missions, including two over Ploesti, Rumania on 15 July 1944 and 10 August 1944. On 7 July 1944, Lt. Green was transferred from the 484th Bomb Group to the 461st Bomb Group, 764th Bomb Squadron and subsequently to the 765th Bomb Group on 9 August 1944. His combat missions also included targets in France, Hungary Yugoslavia and Austria.

For a specific and expanded history of the 461st Bomb Group of the 15th Air Force during World War II, I heartily recommend the book entitled Al Ataque by Hughes Glantzberg. Mr. Glantzberg is the son of Col. Frederic E. Glantzberg who was the commanding officer of the 461st Bomb Group (Heavy) from October, 1943 to September, 1944. Additional information can be viewed at www.15thaf.org.

On or about 23 September 1944, Lt. Green was transferred from the 461st Bomb Group, 765th Bomb Squadron to the 885th Bomb Squadron (Heavy) (Special) (also designated at some point as the 2641st Special Group). The 885th was a special group of B-24s and crews assigned to assist the OSS with clandestine missions to occupied countries in Europe. This group flew specially modified B-24s, usually painted entirely black (most missions were flown at night) with minimal markings. These aircraft also had the belly turret removed so that that space could be used to drop “Joes” (spies, operatives) by parachute. Other containers of weapons and other supplies were dropped via containers in the bomb bay. There are no entries in Dad's pilot log book for any missions he may have flown while assigned to the 885th but since they were all classified flights he probably could not legally enter such information in his pilot log book.
When Dad was a child, at approximately 9-10 years of age, he contracted malaria. He recovered from that but in October, 1944 the malaria returned which ultimately resulted in his transfer back to the United States for medical care. On 15 July 1945 Lt. Green was ordered for processing and relief from active duty from the US Army Air Force.

Dad continued his flight experiences as a test pilot for Boeing Aircraft in Wichita, Kansas in October, 1951 on the B-47 bomber program. Between October 14, 1951 and September 10, 1952 Dad made over 60 flights of B-47’s in 47 different aircraft.

On occasion, as his work permitted, Dad flew Cessna 172’s on business trips. I got to accompany him on one such trip during summer vacation when I was about 12 years old. He actually let me take the wheel for a few minutes during that trip – my legs wouldn’t reach the rudder pedals (thank goodness!).

Dad developed a serious heart condition in his late 60’s, as well as diabetes, and passed away on 21 April 1987. I will be forever grateful to my mother, Yvonne I. Green for saving his personal military papers and giving them to me after Dad passed away. Those records have told me much more about his military service than he ever did while he was alive, like so many thousands of his peers from that era.

God Bless the United States of America and all its citizens in military service, past and present, that protect our nation.
Special Feature
“State of the Art becomes State of the Art, FIFI’s new Avionics”
by Don Boccaccio

The development of the B-29 cost more than the Manhattan Project, that is, *The Atomic Bomb*. Developed for WWII, it was built with state-of-the-art avionics. It was equipped with the Norden bomb sight, an on-board radar system, auto pilot and computer-aided, remote-control machine guns. One might say it was the space shuttle of the mid-1940s.

Fast forward to today. *FIFI* is the most famous B-29 in the world and we tour with her every year. After her new paint job, the next upgrade was her avionics. Towards that goal, in April 2019, we had a meeting at Sun ‘n Fun with Rick Garcia, the owner of Gulf Coast Avionics (GCA) and his crew. That’s where we started to formulate the upgrade plan and go over the equipment list. These were the guys who were going to donate this incredible, state-of-the-art, avionics suite.

The installation was slated to start after the completion of our 2019 tour season. With Rick Garvis, *FIFI’s* Senior Crew Chief, dialing in all the harness lengths and forwarding them to GCA, they were then able to fabricate the wiring harness and test the complete system on the bench at their facility. We wanted something as close to “plug and play” as possible and they delivered.

By the beginning of the year, after visiting their shop in Florida, we approved the completion of both the avionics suite and harness and it was shipped to Rick at VFW. [Figure 1]

But the installation was going to be a Herculean effort, especially using mostly volunteers. After our squadron meeting in January of this year, the volunteer team was created. This included Bud (Doc) Calley, Rudy VanderUpwich along with Al Herum. Our local avionics specialist, Trevor Smith, tied up all the loose ends, including all the soldering, troubleshooting and setup of the GMUs, plus the configuration of the system. He did most of the work in his free time on the weekends. We couldn’t have done it without him as well as the contributions of the aforementioned Rick Garvis, and Assistant Crew Chief, Ben Powers. From behind-the-scenes, we appreciate the efforts of Maintenance Officer, Phil Pedron.

The project began immediately at that January meeting and went all the way through to the FCF (Functional Check Flight) that was needed for the July 4th D.C. flyover. We did lose some time due to COVID but because of the tenacious nature of the group, it still was completed in time.

Now that we had the crown jewels installed, they would need protection. Tom Ferraro who fabricated the console, added a cover to protect the avionics from any mishap while parked. This must be put in place after aircraft shutdown and before the loading of passengers in the front, especially the bombardier seat. [Figure 2]
Each new crew member’s headset box has been wired with a LEMO plug, which is used by Bose. This was required, as Bose headsets are our headset of choice. A conventional GA headset configuration was added to each box for back up. We also added a training headset box, which can be used when we train scanners.

Another redundant feature that was installed was for the pilot and copilot. Not only do they have the backup GA headset configuration, but there is a Push-To-Talk (PTT) button added on the box, in case the yoke mounted PTT goes south. [Figure 3]

Not only did Gulf Coast Avionics donate the hardware and labor to fabricate the complete harness, they needed to follow up with FIFI on tour so they could do the magnetometer/GMU test. They arrived at our Hammond Louisiana tour stop on October 4, 2019 and preceded with the test. This test is required to find an ideal location for the GMUs to operate properly, free of any magnetic anomalies. The test involves turning on all electrical accessories in the aircraft. Then a technician, using a sniffer connected to a laptop, goes around the aircraft and watches the screen to see where there is little or no interference. The location ended up being in the front top turret. Bud (Doc) Calley meticulously designed and built the mounts needed for them. [Figure 4]

We needed a state-of-the-art intercom system and PS Engineering stepped up to the plate. They donated the system and Greg Ledbetter from the factory was there for us at every step.

We were concerned that the auto squelch circuit would not be adequate due to the high cabin noise level. In the old system, we had to have a foot operated PTT to overcome the noise at the FE station, especially with the window open. We pondered using it again, but after a discussion, Greg was confident their “off the shelf” squelch circuit would perform without it and it did, magnificently.

The Intellipax 6 place expansion module was added to the rear, which allows six more stations to be added to the intercom. It also allows the lead scanner to isolate the aft crew from the front so they can chat without bothering the front crew. This is helpful during those long trips when conversations do come up. [Figure 5]

It was reported that the avionics, including the intercom, worked flawlessly during the recent flight to and from DC, a total of about 16 hours of flight time.

For those avionics’ geeks, here is the complete equipment list. Everything is Garmin except for the PS Engineering Intercom System.

- 4 G5 Attitude/HSI indicators
- 2 G3X Displays, 7” Portrait
- 2 LRU Kits for Displays1
- 1 GSU 25 AHRS2
- 2 GMU 11 magnetometer
- 1 GTP 59 OAT probe
- 2 GTN 650 GPS/Nav/Com
- 1 GTX345 transponder (ADS-B In/Out)
- 1 PS Engineering PMA 7000B Intercom
- 1 PS Engineering Intellipax 6 place expansion module

Remember that old Quaker Oats cereal commercial line “see if Mikey likes it”? Well, if you get a chance to chat with Archie, ask him how “Archie likes it.”
**Editor’s Corner**

Quaran-Tank

So how many war movies have you watched during the Pandemic? I was blown away when at midnight on July 10, GREYHOUND, Tom Hank’s new movie, started streaming on Apple TV. Thumbs up! If you want my top 10 favorite war movies, e-mail me your list and I will e-mail you mine.

Definitely on my list is SAHARA (1943) starring Humphrey Bogart as “Sgt. Joe Gunn.” I was inspired to make a 1:35 scale and 3D model of Bogey’s M3 Lee tank. Recently, my modeling nerd BF, Mike gave me a 1:35 figure of Brad Pitt as “Sgt. Don ‘WarDaddy’ Collier” from FURY (2014). I would argue that SAHARA and FURY are the quintessential WWII tank warfare movies. The plots are even similar. So, I have “WarDaddy” made and he is waiting on his Sherman®

**THE FLYER WANTS YOU!**

You are welcome to contribute a story, photographs and artwork for this decades-old newsletter. If you are a veteran, please tell us your story. Squadron members continually meet veterans at the hangar, on tour and in everyday life – let us know their stories. We’re also looking for contributors for “This Month in History” and news spotlighting our aircraft and members.

Thank you and
“Keep ‘Em Flying!”

Konley Kelley
THE FLYER editor
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