

# THE FLYER

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Chapter Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at the Sport Aviation Center, 3600 Wildwood Ave, Jackson, Michigan 49202-1811 unless otherwise published....

This month's Meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:30PM.

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## CHAPTER NOTES

### Fly-In Breakfast 2007

The Fly-In Breakfast is scheduled for Sunday, June 10<sup>th</sup> and Set-up is scheduled for Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup>. More insight will be given about this event at the meeting.

### Pacer Project

In last month's newsletter I was a little premature about the progress on the Pacer wing... Little did I know that Poly-Fiber sent the wrong wing envelope...

There are some very important considerations in using the Poly-Fiber System and preparation is one key ingredient. This means there are no shortcuts to thorough, meticulous preparation. The directions must be followed to the letter or you may be in danger voiding the STC (Supplemental Type Certificate) and that's not a good thing.... That will bring a frown to the face of any AI worth his salt...

As many of you know, many an hour was spent in the surface preparation of this first wing... Yet, last week the wing was

ready to prime, just after the March Chapter Meeting...

Prior to the meeting we were really concerned about applying the primer because using the Poly-Fibers system requires two-part epoxy primer. The familiar one-part zinc chromate primer can't be used because the fabric cements and dopes used in covering will wrinkle and lift... (*We had been down that road before when we restored the Taylorcraft 15A*)...

Now, *John Eiler* volunteered to spray the two-part primer. But we had our doubts because the only spraying experience John had was spraying deodorant under his arms...

But when we found him reading the Spanish Directions on the two-part primer can instead of the English Instructions and scratching his head, we really knew we had a problem (*as you know the labeling is now bi-lingual and Poly-Fiber is no exception*). We were positive that the only Spanish word John could grasp was "Taco."

So we reached down and rotated the can ninety degrees to the English side, but I'm sorry to say that it didn't help *John* that much... As far as he was concerned the whole can was written in "*Pig Latin*"....

*But things have a way of working out.* At the March meeting, a new member, *Dan Stanton* was standing in the restoration shop and happened to remark that spraying two-part epoxy primer was just like a brisk walk in the park...

As you know the Chapter "*never looks a gift horse in the mouth,*" so to speak. And the next Monday morning *Dan* was in the paint booth, wearing the fresh-air mask with spray gun in hand applying two-part epoxy primer like a conductor directing the *Boston Philharmonic Orchestra*...

The wing tip bow was varnished and now it was time to weave the inter-rib bracing. This bracing keeps the ribs straight up and down when the fabric is heat tightened over them. It is nothing more than twill tape to provide stability for the ribs while covering and is looped around the tip of the rib halfway between the front and rear spars. Then it loops around the bottom of the next rib, then is looped over the top of the next rib and so on from the tip of the wing to the root in a cross hatch pattern until the whole wing is braced...

Normally, this is a very simple process until you get Earl and John involved in the procedure... They un-wrapped the old inter-rib bracing without noting the loop pattern, because both of them knew the course of action... They measured the old twill tape and added a couple of feet just to make sure they wouldn't end up short at the wing root...

But as each began to weave the new tape, each began to criticize the other. Earl was a proponent that the *"Loop should go over the top of the rib then under then over."* While John was resolute that the *"Loop should go under the top of the rib then over then under."* ... Well, this was a real *"Mexican Standoff..."*

Well, Earl grabbed the three-step-ladder, climbed up to the top and began to give a forty-five minute oratory on the benefits of his loop theory... Knowing what to expect all but John left the shop, preferring to stand in the rain than listen to the oratory...

While Earl expounded, John had to sit there and listen... I asked John how he could sit there so calmly and he said that he let his mind wander back to a more pleasant time...

A pleasanter time when snow flakes fell and as a small child, he had gotten his wet tongue stuck to a frozen swing set post...

I said, *"That sounded painful..."* But John said, *"Not as painful as having to listen to Earl expound his loop theory...."*

Well, I stopped back in later in the day, and John had un-wrapped the twill tape and was getting ready to rewrap the ribs...

Late that night, I noticed Earl's car was parked at the Sport Aviation Center and the Restoration Shop lights were a glow...

Peeking in the window I saw that the twill tape had been un-wrapped, again, and Earl was in the process of rewrapping the ribs...

*Then I stopped back in the next morning and both Earl and John were, again, un-wrapping the twill tape and rewrapping the ribs... go figure!...*

Can you imagine the dissertation that will take place between these two Characters once the rib stitching begins... I bet we'll have to search out *Martha Stewart* to act as a mediator...

At the time of this writing the cable control wire, strobe wire, pulleys, etc have been installed. Then a pre-covering inspection, by *Joe Phelan*, should take place shortly...

After the pre-covering inspection, the Poly-Fiber polyester padding (*a special thick "Cloth" that hides minor dents and glitches on the wing leading edge and is sandwiched between the leading edge and the Poly-Fiber fabric itself*) will be applied.

Then we're ready for the wing envelope. Hopefully, we'll be well into shrinking, and rib stitching by the this meeting...

The left wing is now in the Shop and some chapter members have been diligently working on it, along with preparing the fuel tanks for prime and paint...

*(Editor's note: Dan Stanton (our painter) is building a Zenith 801 and is presently waiting for an IO- 360 Engine to be delivered along with his Engine Mount...)*

## Jackson Tower

On March 15, 2007 the Jackson County Airport (Reynolds Field) Tower Frequency changed to 128.475.

If you tried to use the old frequency you might had been amazed when air traffic controller cleared you to a runway foreign to JXN and ended his sentence with “have a good day ya’ll...”

Well, that’s because you were talking to some Airport Controller in Kentucky...

## Newsletter Contributor(s)

Your Newsletter Editor would like to thank Lynn Matteson for his contribution to this month’s newsletter. And, who can’t forget the letter from Australia, that George Race shared with us in the March newsletter...

Fellow Members, many would like to read about your projects. It doesn’t make any difference what stage of construction you’re at the membership would like to follow your progress. Now, it doesn’t make a difference how long or short the article is, then to include a photograph(s) would be a real plus...

I’m sure all of us are looking forward to Nihl Storey’s article on his Amphibian; and project and restoration progress reports by John Eiler, Earl Scott, George Race, Curt Chapin, Bill Meadowcroft, and Scott Preuninger. Each will be a feature article in future publications of the “The Flyer.”

Both the newsletter editor and website director geek look forward to your submissions... Remember your project is of interest to all of us...

*EAA Skiplane Fly-In*  
by  
*Lynn Matteson*

*Preface: Fellow Chapter Member Lynn Matteson built a Kitfox and is our first LSA Pilot. But the road to obtaining this certification wasn’t without its’ pitfalls. ..*

*Before building the Kitfox the only air time Lynn had was flying in business class on United Airlines... But he was determined to master the art of flight. When he first began taking flight lessons the only maneuver he could master was the “ground loop” until Brian Van Wagen agreed to instruct this uncoordinated ground pound’er...*

*Under Brian’s tillage Lynn’s mind was reduced to “silly putty” then rebuild into the mindset of a pilot. Brian’s methodology could be considered on a par with your normal D.I. at Paris Island... to build self-confidence in oneself and never compliment a recruit for doing something he should have done right the first time.*

*Well, Lynn survived Brian and was certified and ended up with so much self-confidence he was determined not to let a little inclement winter weather stop him from flying. He set upon building a set of wheel penetration skis for his Kitfox. And then with only thirteen landings and takeoff’s with his new skis, this low time pilot took off for the EAA Skiplane Fly-In in Oshkosh, Wisconsin....*

*Now this junket was based on a weather report of sever clear. This report was dispensed by a Weatherman that probably never had flown, Sat in a warm office while looking at a computer, and munching on a Baby Ruth... And probably couldn’t forecast what he was going to have for lunch, let alone what the weather was going to be for the next three days...*

## On My Way To Oshkosh

I left my home strip in Jackson at about 8:30 AM, after having fueled up and headed west for Oshkosh. I had attached a length of heater hose to the right-side heater outlet secured by a tie-wrap, I didn’t bother securing it with a hose clamp as this wasn’t going to be a permanent installation. Three minutes into the flight, I felt good heat coming from this hose, and decided to snake it over my console and under my right leg so as to provide heat for my left foot which had always become cold in previous flights. In playing with the hose it became detached from the heater outlet and there was no way to reattach in flight, I just knew I should have secured it with a hose clamp... so I pulled it free and laid it on the seat...

About two minutes after I had screwed around with the hose the engine began to sputter... I pulled on carb heat and gave a twist to the throttle, thinking of carburetor ice but that didn't help... for some reason I glanced at my main fuel shut-off valve and then looked again, it was in the closed position. My gyrations with the heater hose had caught the fuel lever and pulled it closed. I opened it and the engine caught and I was flying under full power again... I thought about tossing the hose out the door... but then again, I didn't need some kind of door opening incident at that particular time.... On top of fuel starvation...

I had obtained the Chicago Terminal Area VFR Chart, and would use it to follow the suggested route around the eastside of Chicago keeping Lake Michigan on my right side. The ceiling was about 2,500' when I had left, and got down to about 2,000' the further west I went. When I got near Michigan City Class D airspace, I radioed for permission to cross their space at 1900' which they granted after first asking me to "ident" on my transponder. By the time they gave me permission, I was at 1600' because of the lower ceiling but I made it through okay and shortly after I saw what was left of Meigs Field...what a sad looking mess. I was going to take some pictures but my camera was in the wrong place.

Flying along the Lake Michigan shore was really captivating, ice flows on one side and downtown Chicago on the other. *Did I mention that the people in the Sears Tower waved down at me.* But now what was of paramount importance to me was landing to fuel, and then I saw Westosha and figured that would do... the fuel symbol being the key issue...

I landed and taking what I thought was the right taxiway, found myself on a dead-end street... I took a right turn when the light turned green across a snowy patch of grass and parked near the pumps. There was no one manning the pumps, so I headed for the pilots lounge. But no one was inside, so I hung around for a few minutes and a guy walked in and told me that the fuel was for the local flying club's use only and for the hangar renters... therefore, I was S.O.L. In no uncertain terms I was told to go up to Burlington, just up the road. So, "thank you

*very much,"* but upon taxiing out of Westosha, I saw that they had a turf strip covered in snow, and thought I'd use that, since the wind was a toss-up. Turning to back taxi down this strip, I got hung up on a ridge of snow left by a snowplow. Power wouldn't get me off the ridge, so I got out and pulled the plane back onto the main runway. *After first apologizing via radio to the guy who was sitting at the end of the runway patiently waiting for this stupid rookie to get his plane the hell off his field... He was laughing so hard he could acknowledge my apology...* He was nice and offered to help, but I got it going again and taxied down to where he was and eventually followed him out...

I got to Burlington, which was just up the road, and fueled (after a fashion) up and made my required phone call to Pioneer Field to obtain the runway in use and last minute instructions for landing there... When I said that I fueled up 'after a fashion' it was due to me not being familiar with the operation of the pump, and it timed-out on me... My next attempt went smoother and I got my fuel and all was well.. Except for the worry that this pump was going to "dun" my credit card for two shots at the \$300 that they hit your card with if you select "fill up" as the option. They apparently, immediately charge you \$300 if you select fill up, then reimburse you a few days later if you don't use up \$300 worth of fuel... *"Hey Mr. Machine I'm flying a Kitfox not a 'Lear Jet' for Gosh Sake!"* Oh well, I'd sort that out later. I left Burlington and headed north, only to run into a ton of snow about a mile out. So I promptly returned to Burlington and waited for about 20 minutes, then headed out again...

When I had made my requisite call to Pioneer Field, I told them I was about an hour away, which ended up being more like two hours... but I figured a little advance notice is nice... I followed the emailed diagrams and printed word descriptions about dealing with the landing at Pioneer Field to the letter (a bit more about that later on) and landed at the Mecca of Homebuilts without incident. *I was as "proud as a peacock" and stepped out of my Kitfox trying to act nonchalant, when I promptly slipped and fell on my butt... The field had been pretty much beat down and the snow was now a hard pack.* I picked myself up and went in and had some soup and proceeded to relax.

A Guy came up to me and asked if I was from Michigan, and I asked how he knew! He said he met me back at the Napoleon Field when he flew his Funk in there one time. He said that was when my plane was brand new and I had just gotten soloed, like that was only a few months ago and my plane was still brand new not an eternity. He said that he was in Chicago on business and decided to drive up rather than fly... because he wouldn't be caught dead flying in this weather. I thought his choice of words, specifically the word "dead" was a poor superlative...

Someone mentioned that if I was going to spend the night, that I'd better get an engine heater, or a heating service for the next morning as it was going to be in the single digits overnight... I was really thinking of getting some of those, electric socks for my feet, over at the Outlet Mall. But I was told that I could get this service at Basler or Orion on Wittman Field and that I would need to contact the tower prior to leaving Pioneer Field for instructions on landing at Wittman.

I called and got the tower to lead me by the hand to a right-hander onto 27 at Wittman and taxi instructions to the Hilton. When I arrived at the Hilton I called Orion, and they didn't have a warm-up service, but they did have a nice warm hangar for \$50 for the night and my Kitfox would be safely parked under a Citation or some other big bird... so I took it. I went out to the 'fox and taxied back down the entire length of taxiway "Alpha" the little 'shopping cart' wheels on my skis revving up way beyond their red lines, and my plane was soon safe from the ravages of a Wisconsin night...

A day at the EAA Skiplane Fly-In had been enjoyable. About 25 planes had come in to Pioneer Field, but as I recall I was the only homebuilt on skis... The others were just big sissy aircraft like Piper J-3s, and Cessna 140s and 170s and alike...

### The Long Way Home

I got up Sunday morning to the view of a little more snow on the ground at Oshkosh, and enough mist or blowing snow to keep the tower obscured for a couple of hours. I got the hangar and sure enough the Kitfox was

parked under some big jet... *It looked like the Jet had just given birth to a guppy.* I pulled the 'fox out of the hangar. Fueled up and got a new Airport Directory and a Green Bay sectional... I fired it up, got clearance to taxi, and took off on 31north. The directory says that 31 is full of cracks and vegetation, but the Kitfox must have picked a good section (snow covered) and the wind helped get it up quick. I flew northward, missing all the towered airports, and set my sights for the edge of Lake Michigan all the way around to the Bridge. About the time I had got as far as Menominee, Michigan and was flying at 5,500', I finally saw that 'elusive; zero' reading on my outside air temperature gauge. I say elusive, because in previous attempts to climb up high enough to witness zero or lower, I" always run into a temperature inversion, and the higher I climbed, the warmer it got. There would be no temperature inversion this day it was getting cold and colder. The clouds were becoming thicker, and I was climbing to get over them and have clear skies in which to fly.

I still had the required (for my Sport Pilot License) view of the earth below me, but down there was snow and who knows what, so I stayed up high, and enjoyed the sun.

As I flew further north the outside temperature hit the minus sign and I got really excited which lasted about 20 seconds but then the pain of cold set in and my feet felt like they were stuck in a bucket of ice water. I was getting chilly all over by then, and started to think of getting down and getting warm in a nice airport somewhere, or just anywhere... The next stopping point was at Escanaba, Michigan. I made a radio call and flew the pattern and landed there. I went into the pilot's lounge and warmed up a bit and some guy came in and was checking out the weather for me and we got talking about Kitfox's and he said there was one on the field. So we took a look at it and shot the breeze with its' owner. By then my feet had thawed enough that they seemed to be able to move without pain so I got back in my plane and departed just a head of a turboprop that was loading up passengers that had lined up on the tarmac waiting to board...

During the climb out, I noticed low clouds and what looked like snow in the direction that I

wanted to go, which was right over a bay with freighters seemingly frozen in port... I took a picture or two, and diverted north, aiming for large openings in the clouds. To do this I had to head slightly west, and climb and finally I climbed over the layer of clouds, and then I reverted to my original compass heading...

I knew that I was now in line with the runway that I had just left, and possibly in the path of that passenger jet that was boarding at Escanaba. I made a report of my position, just in case he was coming...

*I kept glancing over my shoulder, and thinking of the opening sequence of the 1980 movie 'Airplane'. That opening shot shows a view above the clouds, plays the music from the movie 'Jaws', and you see a fin zig-zagging just above the clouds, when finally the fin and attached aircraft emerges from the clouds. This is what I was thinking was going to happen any second now... and that jet would emerge with me in its jaws... I and my Kitfox, would be a meal for him... and devastation for me...*

That moment passed, and I was flying over some pretty sparsely populated area now, with nothing but trees and probably bears under me. But I wasn't too worried, because I couldn't see all the trees because of the clouds. I could see enough to beep within the letter of the laws of the FAA, but not enough to make me worry about the stupidity of taking this direction back home. There wasn't much of a possibility of finding a good landing area, should I get in trouble... hindsight is a great educator...

To take my mind off what fate might have in store for me I took out my camera and got some great shots of the beautiful patterns of frozen lake, and drifting snow, and ice flows. I passed the last airport for the next 40 to 50 miles and set my sights on the Mackinac/Mackinaw Bridge. When the bridge came into view I took several pictures, got up some courage, and cut across the Lake and headed for the Lower Peninsula. At the point that I crossed the Lake I had to cover about 20 miles of open water. This was also a less-than-brilliant move on my part, because I misjudged how far it really was. I could see the bridge, and knew that it was about 5 miles long, and just misjudged how far I would have to glide if engine problems occurred at that point...

The 'damn the torpedoes and full speed ahead' mentality had clouded my thinking at that point... But I made it, and was glad to finally be heading straight south and towards home. It was 3:08 PM when I was finally over the Lower Peninsula of Michigan and I set my sights on one more hour of flying and then about one hour to find a suitable stay-over spot for the night. I had, of course, been watching my fuel supply and all looked well at that point, with only an hour left to fly and about two hours worth of fuel in which to do it... I set my sights on Clare County Airport, mainly because it showed in the Airport Facility Directory that lodging was 'adjacent' to the field. But later I was to find out that this insert was in error...

As I made my descent from about 5,000' I witnessed the first of two low fuel warnings that I encountered during this trip. I leveled off during the descent with the runway in sight, and the light did not go off, so I continued my descent, knowing that I had about 15 minutes of fuel remaining in my header tank. When I reached pattern altitude, and leveled off the light went out and I landed on the snow-covered runway. I taxied to a small restaurant and got some coffee and inquired about the possibility of lodging, and got the bad news... 'No room at the Inn because there was no Inn.' So I decided to head for Mt. Pleasant, Michigan just 30 minutes down the road as the Kitfox flies...

My thought was that the fuel would equalize in both tanks by the time I departed and that if I didn't dawdle, I would have enough light to depart and get into Mt. Pleasant before the "civil evening twilight" rule made me stop for the night. When I checked the plane, I really couldn't see any fuel in the sight gauges at all. I then went back into the restaurant about getting some auto gas (*the Jabiru engine can run on it, but I prefer avgas. My thought is that if I wished to use auto gas I'd drive a car*). A kindly, but slow moving gentleman, offered to drive me to get a can and some fuel. Let me tell you when a pilot gets into "we better get moving along" mode it seems like everything starts moving in slow motion...

Well, that's where we were that late, sun going down, times-a-wasting Sunday afternoon/early evening. This guy seemed to poke along without a care, getting the can from his shed, putting it in the car, brooming the snow

off his boots, and the sun was going down. Well, we got going again, down a long road, slowly coming up on a hill with a stop sign, him telling me "ya gotta watch out for d'em Snowmobiles here," then over the hill down the road and finally at the gas station with the sun going down. Back at the field, he told me to just put the can in the back of his car when I was done, he wouldn't accept any money for his troubles..."just help somebody else out sometime"... and headed back to the restaurant. I borrowed a step stool from the restaurant and hoisted the can above the wing. That's when I discovered how well the guy maintained his gas can. There apparently was no gasket on the filler spout; as the gas was going into the tank, and all over the wing at about a 3:2 ratio... 3 parts into the tank and 2 parts all over and under the wing, flap-eron, and onto the fuselage... And, the sun was going down!

Well, I got the fuel carefully wiped up with some snow, and then a rag I slowly dragged over the surface so as to not cause a spark, and proceeded to get on my way... I tucked the rag under one of the braces of my skis, not wanting to bring it into the plane, and knowing that it wouldn't stay there long enough to cause any problems for me, at least.

I left Clare county Airport without incident and headed for Mt. Pleasant and got there just as the sun blinked out... I had made my first solo cross-country flight to this airport and was glad to see 'Old Bob' an airport worker who remembered me from my first visit. "Old Bob" sure liked my Kitfox with the Dale Earnhardt theme of it's paint job and had taken a few photographs of it on my first visit... Bob called the Holiday Inn to get a shuttle ride for me and we set out to tie the plane down. But he couldn't find the tie-down locations in the snow, so he motioned me to taxi behind him in the plane and to follow him to a 120 X 120 hangar. I guess that since Bob was a big Earnhardt fan and the Kitfox was painted in a Earnhardt theme we were like brother's and nothing was too good for the Kitfox... This time the cost was much more reasonable, \$15/night as opposed to \$50/night at Oshkosh...

The next morning I checked the tanks and both showed over 5 gallons... more than enough for the 1-hour 15 minute flight home.

As I descended to my home strip from about 4,000', the low-fuel light came on again and went out as soon as I leveled off at pattern altitude. The next time I go to the hangar I'll fill the tanks and see just how low I was... From what I could tell from the limited fill-ups of fuel, either putting on the skis, taking off the wheel pants, flying into the wind for the most part, or just plain flying faster, the fuel economy had fallen from several reading of about 3.4gph to about 4.5 pgh. Granted, this trip is a small cross section of information from which to get any real data, but it just might point out what ski drag can do to fuel economy....

After returning home I had to face my flight instructor and tell him about my pilgrimage.

At first he just stood there in a state of shock then his words picked up momentum and were very expressive, especially when he reached the part about a stupid low-time pilot, etc, etc... Then he finished with something about the "Grim Reaper" must have been on vacation...

But as I walked away he yelled out, "Hey Lynn, Great Job"... and it didn't take much more than that to put a smile on my face....

In retrospect the EAA Skiplane Fly-In, although exhilarating, it seemed that the organizations focus was a little skewed toward the factory built aircraft on skis, rather than homebuilt aircraft on skis...

This was disappointing since homebuilt aircraft represent the essence of EAA... But this was the only frustration that I detected...

### *A Witness To The End Of The War*

*By*

*Rex Lane and Jeff Patrick*

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If you asked him to name the most exciting event in his Army Air Force career, *Gerald Rex Lane* would probably tell you about three particular days, in 1945. "This is a part of history that you never hear much about," *Rex*

says, referring to his encounter with the official Japanese surrender delegation on the little Pacific island of *Ie Shima*. *Ie Shima* is an island just off *Okinawa*, about 340 miles south of *Japan*, and about 750 miles north of *Manila*...

As a member of the 100<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron, *Rex* had arrived on *Ie Shima* at the end of April 1945. The 100<sup>th</sup> was a specialty outfit, with machinists, welders, sheet metal men, electricians, mechanics, and the like. The unit primarily worked on *P-51 Fighters*, so when a plane was seriously damaged it would be brought to the service squadron for repairs.

But in August 1945, *Rex* was one of a small group of Americans assigned to maintain, not American aircraft, but the Japanese planes used by those arranging the final details of the end of the war...

On the morning of August 19, 1945, *Lt. General Torashiro Kawabe*, Vice-Chief of the Japanese Imperial General Staff, left *Tokyo* with 15 other representatives to fly to *Manila* and meet with *General Douglas MacArthur*. They were to discuss the formal surrender of *Japanese Military Forces*, and the subsequent entry of *American Forces* into *Japan*...

The delegation flew first to *Ie Shima* in two "Betty" Bombers, Painted white with large green crosses on the sides for easy identification. There waited American planes that would take them on to *Manila*...

*Rex Lane*, a young staff sergeant from *Windsor, Pettis County, Missouri*, was first told of the *Japanese* visit the afternoon before they arrived. As he remembers: "Our CO called us in and told us that two *Betty Bombers* would land on *Ie Shima* tomorrow on a peace mission. We would take the diplomats on to *Manila*." The CO said, "You seven guys will be in charge of these two airplanes while they're here. They'll probably need work on them. Whatever they need, we'll take care of them." The line chief had something to do with picking us. He told the CO which of us to pick. Three of us were mechanics, plus a machinist, and a sheet metal man, a little diversification, so if we needed something done by the machine shop guy was available...

The Japs came in the next day August 19<sup>th</sup>, about ten o'clock in the morning. We had some fighters go out and meet them...

*One of the Betty's brakes were out, and it was a miracle the plane didn't run off into the ocean.* The runway ran almost the full length of the island. He got down pretty far, and he gunned one engine and kind of made a ground loop to stop...

We then got them parked. I was working with one plane, motioned them up to a certain place and gave them the signal to cut their engines. Another kid and I put some wheel chocks around the wheels, and I stepped off to the end of the wing and just stood there. They (the Japs) were eyeballing us, and we were eyeballing them. You've got to realize, a few days before we had been shooting at each other. The first guy off the plane was a diplomat of some kind. I was the closest person to him and he just walked up to me and I thought, "What the hell is going on here? What does that SOB have on his mind?" We told ourselves to expect anything; we didn't know. It might have been a suicide attack, or it might have been all fair and square. If there was a moment that I was a little bit scared, it was when that guy started walking toward me. He was carrying something. I thought it might be a concealed hand grenade. It turned out he had Flowers, and he wanted to give them to me, kind of a peace offering. But I just said, "Right over there sir." We had a big C-54 about 50 feet away loading the diplomats up to take them to *Manila*... So he and I had a very short conversation. I didn't pay much attention to it at the time, but a friend of mine who was with me said, "You made history there. You're the first American to talk to the Japanese on terms of peace." I said, "yes, but you'll have to exclude all the prisoners of war up in *Japan*."

There were MPs around; they kept everyone else away. Everybody on the island wanted a souvenir of some kind, but they kept everyone quite a ways back. "Look and take pictures, but you don't touch a thing," they told everyone else...

The *Japanese crew* stayed with the planes. There was a pilot, co-pilot, navigator and engineer on each plane. It's a miracle those things got there at all, since they were leaking

hydraulic fluid, oil, gasoline, and their engines were running rough. One of the *Japanese* told me they were out of gasoline, so for this flight they went to wrecked airplanes and siphoned out maybe two or three gallons, then went to another one for more, and they had to make sure it wasn't contaminated with water. They would pour it through screens. If there was water in it they had to let it settle and siphon the water off...

One, *Japanese* was an interpreter, and I visited with him quite a bit. He said you could look at the planes and see they were in trouble. I got to talking with him and found out he was an *American*. I asked him where he learned to speak English so well, and he said he was born and raised in *Los Angeles*. His parents were born in Japan, and he was over in Japan visiting his grandparents when the war broke out. One of the guys on our crew was from Los Angeles. I told him "*That Jap boy tells me he's from Los Angeles. Why don't you go quiz him a little and find out if he is,*" He did, and the kid knew all the answers. This friend of mine turned to me and said "*He's from Los Angeles.*" The *Japanese* told him what school he went to, where certain buildings were, the name of the buildings, where a certain theater was – different things like that...

We went to work on those airplanes, trying to get them halfway into shape. The pilot on the plane I was working with kept talking, about one engine being in bad shape and running rough. So I had him start it up. He put a little power on it, and the left tachometer would go way over, the other would go back and forth, hit and miss. We put brand new plugs in it, and it worked fine. I remember the plugs didn't fit exactly, screwing them in, they were off just a hair. The machinists did a little something for the plugs and they went right in. Then I had the pilot and co-pilot get in and start them up, and I explained through the interpreter what I was going to do. I foolishly went in behind them, and they were sitting in their seats and I was standing right behind them. They got those engines revved up, looked at each other and grinned. He put those throttles all the way up, those tachometers went way over, and that thing was just shaking, and I thought "*What in the hell am I doing here?*" I tapped him on the shoulder

and said, "*It's okay. Cut 'em off.*" And I got out of there....

We worked on those planes for a total of one full day and two partial days... We got them all fixed up with brakes and all that. When the *Japanese* left, the planes were in much better shape than when they arrived, because we could do most anything in our machine shop. We could put on new hydraulic lines, make attachments, etc. They got back from *Manila* on the morning of the third day and got aboard and left. We said no good-byes or anything like that. It was good to see them go...

The *Betty* was an easy plane to work on since many of the components or systems were similar or copies of American Aircraft components... The engines looked like *Pratt and Whitney Engines*, basically just like our airplanes

The *Japs* we worked with appeared to be very down to earth people – kind of like we were. We got along fine – no problems. We'd ask certain questions through the interpreter, and he was very cordial, very gracious. The interpreter was grateful for the way we treated him...

Working there two and half days' together, being around each other, we never did shake hands or get friendly or anything like that, but the bitterness kind of disappeared. They were caught up in something they didn't have anything to do with, other than they were in the military. They would have probably taken a shot at us just a few days before or maybe even bombed us. Previously we had quite a few raids from *Betty Bombers*. At the time I didn't think much about the whole thing...

The *Japanese* formally surrendered to the Allies on board the *USS Missouri* in *Tokyo Bay* on September 2, 1945... (end)

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*Disclaimer for errors in print: "One who reads everything is a litterateur. One who believes everything he reads is Da-nincompoop. Never let the truth get in the way of good fiction"*

*- Kamikaze Joe -*