

THE FLYER

1

Published By Jackson Chapter 304 Of The Experimental Aircraft Association January 2008

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, January 2nd at 7:30PM.

CONTENTS:

1 – CHAPTER NOTES

1 – DIARY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

CHAPTER NOTES

Meeting Presentation

Fellow Member, George Race will give a presentation on Instrument Panels. Since George is an electronics and computer nut, his address should be quite informative...

Christmas Party

It has been reported that the Christmas Meeting was so successful no formal meeting was held, due to the fact that the Officers mouths were so filled with food, no one could comprehend what they were trying to say....

The 100MPH Club

The Chili Fly-In held at Jackson Chapter 304's Sport Aviation Center on Saturday, December 8, 2007 was extremely successful. For further details contact the Clubs' Grand "PuBa" Nihl Storey or turn to our Chapter Web at www.eaa304.com

2008 Dues

The Chapter 2008 Dues Statement with a return envelope was mailed with the December Newsletter... If you haven't mailed in your payment please do it today, along with any changes you might

have as far as your address, telephone number, or e-mail address... This will help the Chapter keep its' records current....

DIARY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

By

Jeff Carroum

Publish by Foundation Magazine, NMNA, Fall 2007

In October and November 1943, I was a dive bomber pilot with Bombing Squadron 10. Our squadron was stationed on USS Enterprise (CV-6) and in combat action off Guadalcanal. On the morning of 14 November our combat sortie took us so far from the ship that we had to land at Henderson Field on Guadalcanal...

After lunch, we refueled and reloaded our planes with 1,000 pound demolition bombs destined to hit some transports about 100 miles to the north. There was a large enemy force coming in of about 12 transports and 25 more cruisers and destroyers. No air opposition from the Japanese had been reported so we were having a field day sending in flight after flight to bomb the transports...

Our flight took off at about 1700 and consisted of seven planes from Bombing 10. After climbing to 10,000 feet, we neared the objective and started in for the attack. Five miles away from the force, eight Zeros came at us directly out of the sun. Our skipper, lieutenant Commander Thomas, with his wingman, swung us slightly to the left, but Lieutenant Welch and I stayed in tight formation and let our rear seat gunners keep the Japanese occupied. Welch fired his guns once when a Zero made a head-on pass at us and I pulled out of formation firing a burst at a Zero approaching from our left...

We went directly over the largest transport, which was right in the middle of a large protective screen of cruisers and destroyers. Lieutenant Welch pushed over straight down and since I was behind him, it took me a little longer getting over so that by the time my diving flaps were popped open I was on my

back going down about 95-100 degrees. I immediately kicked her over so that my course was exactly 180 degrees, opposite to what I had pushed over. I saw Welch's bomb go off just before I released mine. His hit was directly amidships, right in the center of the Japanese soldiers who were packed in so tightly they could hardly move. I saw the sides of the ship swell out and give way under force of the 1,000-pound bomb. Due to the difficulty of my dive and the eagerness to make a hit, I did not release it until I was at 1,500 feet and dead-sure of my target. My bomb hit about 25 feet off of Welch's so I'm sure this transport sunk since they went down much easier than a warship. Together I estimate we killed at least 1,500 soldiers...

Pulling out of my dive, I was worried that my bomb's concussion was going to get me, but I came out as quickly as possible, coming out at 900 feet, retiring low over the water. Up until this time we had encountered not anti-aircraft fire at all. But while I was taking evasive action, being the only plane pulling out in this direction, they opened up on me with all they had from two destroyers and a light cruiser. At the same time, there was heavy firing going on just in front of me, but I was skidding left and right in an attempt to throw the gunners off in their deflection. I zoomed upward and then down and sideways. It seemed that I was kicking that plane in about three directions at once, just holding my breathe waiting for their shells to go through my body. I forced myself to look directly at their guns and to watch the bullets coming at me so I could dodge them, but it seemed there were tracers everywhere...

I was successful for about 30 seconds, but eventually a shot hit my engine cowling, causing the engine to miss, smoke heavily and throw oil. By this time I was almost out of range so I eased my throttle back and lowered the rpms to try and keep the engine going. Simultaneously, a Zero appeared to my right and above me. I went forward on the throttle and zoomed up at him just as he opened fire. We each got a good burst in, but I doubt if either of us was hit...

The abuse on the engine caused it to go from bad to worse until it stopped completely about 100 feet above the water. I let my tailhook down as I nosed over for the landing. We

landed crosswind, knocking me senseless, leaving a large bump on my forehead, and an even bigger one on top of my head. I remember water coming up in the cockpit until my knees were getting wet....

I yelled at my gunner, Hynson, "Don't inflate the life raft; the Zeros will strafe us!" It seemed something powerful was pulling my gun belt causing me to go under water. The radio antenna must have gotten tangled on my .45-caliber automatic causing me to be pulled under as the plane went down. I took the belt off and then popped the CO2 bottles to inflate my life jacket. That brought me to the surface and kept me afloat until I gained my bearings. The next thing I remember, I was swimming around and talking away to my gunner about killing a million Japanese soldiers. I remember looking at my watch at this time and saw that it was 1805...

After talking to Hyson, I could see that we had some very bad luck... The life raft had caught on the tail of the plane and gone down with it. He had been so shaken up that he did not swim clear of the plane with anything. Without a life raft, we turned and began to swim for the Russell Islands, which were off in the distance, approximately twenty-five miles to the south of us. We estimated we could swim there by noon the next day....

While Hynson and I were in the water, swimming, there were two transports burning brightly behind us. We also observed many dogfights between the Zeros and our F4Fs... One Zero burst into flames at about 10,000 feet, and came straight down into the water. It burned so brightly and so fast that it was almost completely gone, except for the engine when it hit the water...

After swimming two hours, it became so dark that we could only faintly make out the outline of the islands, so we lined ourselves up with the stars over them. The two transports, which burned all night, helped us keep our bearings.

Hynson had discarded all his clothes from the waist down in order to get more freedom for his legs. I kept all my clothes as well as my socks on to protect my body from the water. I worried about sharks but I did not want to say anything about sharks to Hynson about it

because he was already worried and down-hearted enough. He kept telling me that we were not getting any closer to the island. He also wanted to rest about every 10 minutes, and sometimes got as much as 200 feet behind. I called for him making him swim that much harder. At times I had trouble finding him because he would roll over on his back and without realizing it, he would start to go downwind, away from our objective. I swam on my stomach in order to keep track of the stars that oriented me with the islands...

I became exasperated with Hynson and at times seriously thought of leaving him because he was so slow and discouraging to me. About 0300, a rain squall came up blotting out all the stars as well as the outline of the islands. The only way to keep sense of direction then was by the wind, which was at right angles to us from the left. This was all explained to Hynson, but he continually got started downwind, and I often had to swim in his direction calling for him and making him come back to me. Finally, he tried to convince me that the islands were in the opposite direction. This struggle went on all night. The squall lifted about 0500, and I could faintly see the islands, which were exactly where I figured them to be. I told Hynson that I could see them, but he did not believe me. We argued back and forth and wasted about an hour without going anywhere, which did not elevate my spirits. As dawn broke, it was easier to see the islands and Hynson began to swim closer to me. I was still rather peeved and was determined to make him swim in order to make up for lost time. I never once let him catch up with me, and for three hours or more we swam farther and faster than ever before. I had been sleepy, but as daylight came, it seemed to wake me and give me more strength.

At about 0800, I thought I saw a small reef just ahead, possibly a half mile away. Just to make Hynson feel better, I decided to tell him a reef was just 200 yards away. So I yelled – “Hey Hynson, there’s a reef about 200 yards up, I’m going to it and wait for you.” I put on an amazing burst of speed, so happy at seeing a resting-place, and swam for an hour without the reef getting closer. During this time though, I realized my mistake. The “reef” was actually an island about ten miles away. What I had seen as bushes were really

coconut trees perhaps a hundred feet high. Realizing my stupidity, I stopped and waited for about 30 minutes, calling continuously for Hynson but received no answer. Finally, I decided to continue on and see if I could find natives or possibly get to Guadalcanal, then come back and search for Hynson...

At first I calculated that I would make land by 1500. Later, I changed it to 1700, then to 1900, then finally to midnight. I swam very hard because I wanted to get help and come back for Hynson. Finally, at about 0530 on the second day in the water, I realized I was swimming against the current and not making a bit of progress. I altered my course to the right in order to head for a different island in the chain, swimming cross-wise, letting the current drift me at the same time. I was reaching the point of exhaustion and I knew it for I was very drowsy and my eyes were closing. Soon I began to duck my head under the cold water, then shake my head vigorously and open my eyes as wide as I could...

I began to hallucinate from exhaustion and soon imagined that our whole squadron was based in those islands with small fields hidden on each one of them. At times, I thought I could hear some of the fellows talking about their flights for the next day. I was very sleepy, and began to doze off for a minute or two at a time then I would wake up, duck my head in the water and open my eyes. This system made the exhaustion and the hallucinations worse until I thought I could talk myself into making land. I spoke aloud saying, “You’d better get on in there now or you will drift back out to sea.” Later I said, “It’s a matter of life and death and you are almost a goner and if you ever go to sleep that’s the end, for you will never wake up.” This kept me going at least an hour, but I sure did suffer...

I struggled all that day to stay awake and fight the currents. At about 0300 on the third day, I finally passed out. The next morning I awoke having a nightmare and shivering all over with my teeth chattering as hard as they could. The water was very cold and I ached all over. I was dreaming that I was in a large pool of cold water with glass partitions running at different angles from one side to the other. This had me puzzled so that I soon gave up and began calling on the squadron

members to get me out because I could see them out drying off and laughing at my predicament. One of my fellow pilots, who remains my best friend, was trying to help me but he couldn't figure out the puzzle either.... When I awoke I was yelling... This hallucination went on for about 5 minutes after I awoke, and twice I put my head under water trying to clear my head... Once I even stood up and stretched my legs as far as I could, trying to touch bottom...

Using the currents to my advantage, I once again changed course and headed toward an island where I could see native huts. I was worried, thinking that there might possibly be Japanese soldiers on the islands. The native huts looked good, and I trusted intelligence reports that the natives in this area were likely to be friendly to Americans...

At 1300 on the third day, my face was so blistered and eyes so swollen that I could barely see the island right in front of me... My face had no feeling in it at all and when I touched it with my fingers, it seemed as if I were touching leather. It was painful, but I forced my eyes open so that I could see. I would alternate my sight by holding one eye open until it grew tired and then switch to the other. At about 1700, my right eye swelled completely shut. I could see only by holding my left eye open with my fingers...

There were less than two miles to go, but it took a long time to get there, especially since the last two hundred yards was no more than waist deep and solidly covered by coral rock...

When I got to the shallow water I tried to walk, but my shoulders would not come out of the water. I was so weak that they seemed to weigh a ton when I tried to stand but my legs seemed to knot up under my weight. I made the final few feet of the trip on my hands and feet, despite the sharp coral rock scratching them up badly... I tried to keep as much of me submerged as possible so that the buoyancy of my life jacket could help me move....

Finally, getting ashore I tried to straighten up, but my neck was so cramped from the position it had been in for three days that I could not hold up my head. I slumped to the ground, unable to protect myself from the fall.

I lay there about five minutes, then rolled over to eat a bar of chocolate candy I had in my jungle kit. The kit, worn on my belt contained quinine, iodine, sulfanilamide, sulfathiazole, a compass, fish-hook and a bar of chocolate. I took about three bites of chocolate but I could not swallow it...

Needing water, I forced myself to get up. It was extremely fortunate for me that a pool of fresh rain-water was only about 100yards away.... The water was in a hole about 10 square feet with a coral rock bottom. I thought I would drink it slowly but being very thirsty, I drank about a quart without slowing down. I picked up one of the many coconuts lying about on the ground and managed to open it with my knife and after eating about half of it, I fell asleep completely exhausted...

There was a continuous drizzle of rain on me all night. When daylight came I was shivering so much that I decided to get up at once and explore the island in search of native huts. I drank more water, then took my clothes off and washed them... After hanging them across a log to dry. I picked up another coconut and began working on it again with my knife... About halfway through this process. I heard a sound behind me. Two canoes had silently glided up, and I found myself facing five curious native boys who were staring at me as if they had never seen a naked white man. They took me to their village chief, whose name was Tom. I was given a clean pair of pajamas, and one of the native boys, named Hopi, dressed all my salt-water sores. Having been comforted, I was put to bed and immediately fell asleep. About two hours later Hopi awoke me and fed me some rice, ham, tea, and pineapple. I slept all the time except for about an hour to talk to Edmond, a native minister from a nearby village. He had a note from a fighter pilot, Staff Sergeant Hurst, who was shot down and swam to one of the other nearby islands. Hurst also sent me some boric acid ointment from his village that helped my sores. He had been spotted by an SBD, when, he was in a canoe being picked up by natives. The SBD had also dropped some clothes, so we were expecting to be picked up by an airplane very shortly...

For five days, I stayed with Hurst in the village of Hi. We stayed in bed under mosquito nets to protect us from flies in the

daytime and mosquitoes at night. The only times we moved were when planes came overhead or to go to church with the natives in the evening. We went to church every night where Church of England services were held. The natives were very reverent and faithful with their services...

On our fifth night there, the natives gave us a party with singing and dancing by the girls and boys. The boy's dancing was much better than the girls' and quite interesting since they put so much work and effort into their mysterious incantations and movements...

The next morning we got the best news we heard in days. A J2F Seaplane had landed in the water at a nearby village and stated he would come back in two days to pick up all who needed rescue... We immediately went over to the village in hopes that it might come back early...

At 1730, a PBY Catalina came over, circled, and landed for us while we waved our shirts madly, jumping up and down to attract attention. We went to Tulagi for the night, then awoke at daylight and departed for Espiritu Santo, the PBY Base... I spent that day in the hospital having my infected sores dressed. The next day I took another PBY down to Noumea, New Caledonia, where I returned to the Enterprise on 28 November, having been gone for two weeks... My deepest regret was that 21-year-old radioman/gunner, Robert C. Hynson, was never seen or heard from again....(end)

Postscript: Commander Jeff Carroum grew up in Smackover, Arkansas. He was sworn into the V-5 aviation cadet program, being minimally qualified on all counts. He had just finished the required two years of college, he turned the minimum age requirement of 20 years on the day he was sworn in and he stood as tall as he could reach the minimum height requirement of 64 inches... In march 1942 he was commissioned and ensign in the United States Navy at ANS Miami and received flight training at NAS North island, California... and reported aboard the USS Enterprise in October 1943, he was all of 128 pounds, and was the youngest and smallest aviator in the group... He and his wife now reside in Gulf Breeze, Florida...

Editor's Note

It is time that Kamikaze Joe melds into antiquity...

Yes my friends, wanderlust has raised its' ugly head and your Newsletter Editor has harked to the call... !

After the Holidays I'll pack my duffel bag and head to Miami to catch an Old C-54 Cargo Flight to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Then it will be on to Sao Paulo to meet an old friend, retired Consular Operations Officer, from the United States Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina...

Then I'll board a Banana Freighter, for a leisurely voyage, destined for Marseille, France. From Marseille, I'll motor to a small farm just outside of Cagnes-sur-Mer for the winter months... Of course, there will be, short day expeditions to Monaco and Nice... And, one would be remiss not to visit the nude beaches of St. Tropez, now that might be more than a day pilgrimage...

Hopefully, in the late winter, a gathering will be organized with my friends from British MI-6, the French Quai d'Orsay, along with my friends from Con-Ops Paris and even one or two former Russian KGB Agents, too celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of our combined destruction of that infamous International Arms Dealer Claude Francois Moreau on the Isles of Crete... Then we'll reminisce about passed achievements along with our utter failures...

Alas! My friends, soon the name Kamikaze Joe will fade from your memory... But, hopefully, not the half-trues, the falsehoods, and the complete fabrications you have read and have just read, in the Chapter Newsletter...

But then again, the truths could have been cloaked in half-truths, falsehoods and fabrications.... One can never be quite sure, can one...

Well my friends, until we meet again, the Chapter Secretary or his Designee will assume all responsibility for this Publication....

Au revoir - Kamikaze Joe