

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, September 5th at 7:30PM.

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CHAPTER NOTES

August Chapter Meeting Minutes (8/1/07)

The Members present were informed that the June 10th 2007 Fly-In-Breakfast was successful for the Chapter... It had to be, out of 240 pounds of sausage there was only 10 pounds left...

The IAC Competition in July fielded around thirty competitive aircraft, for this three-day assemblage again; the Chapter was successful in feeding lunch to the multitude of competitors at an exorbitant fee...

Our President advised the chapter members that he was obtaining a couple of bids to seal coat the ramp. The last time the ramp was coated was at least four to five years ago and is showing significant wear with large cracks. Hopefully, the repair and coating will have

been completed before this September meeting....

The Membership was advised that the Chapter has never been healthier; with a herculean membership, and a great chapter project sitting in the restoration shop, who could ask for more....

The Chapter Membership was prompted that the Election of Chapter Officers will be taking place at the November Chapter Meeting.

With the resignation of the Vice-President in April that position will have to be filled...

Also, the Chapter Treasurer, after serving for eleven years, has decided to hang up his spurs. He announced that he was retiring as Treasurer and Chapter Officer as of August 1, 2007...

But remember all positions will be open for you to elect the candidates of your choice... So, it's never too early to start contemplating about who you would like to lead the Chapter over the next two years...

The official meeting was adjourned to scoff down the free sloppy joe's, bake beans, chips and beverages... I've heard of "stampeding to the table" but this was surreal....

Presentation - "Salute To Freedom"

At the August Meeting, Kate Keersmeakers requested a few minutes of our members' time to discuss a community event to pay tribute to our Military down at the Michigan Theater on November 11, 2007. The honored would be the community military personnel; veterans, those currently active, reserve, national guard, and military families....

The event is still in the proposal stage and would include a military fly over, a proposed pancake breakfast, an essay contest for elementary, middle and high school students which would culminate in a community celebration at the Michigan Theater.

I think where Chapter 304 enters the picture is the proposed pancake breakfast... I guess this request should be presented at this meeting for discussion. Possibly, Steve Matthews might be able to discuss Kate's August presentation and have a better handle on all the proposals.

Oshkosh 2007

From what we have heard, thus far, not one 304 Chapter Member that attended Air Venture 2007 got into trouble... and that's a good thing...

The bad thing is that Ken Millard did have a problem with his Aerocomp CA4 on the flight home...

As I understand it Ken was just over Traverse City when that big six-cylinder Subaru engine, that hangs on the nose of his Aerocomp CA4, started to act up...

At first Ken thought that "Subaru Sally" was just having a "PMS" encounter but things got worse and he landed and after inspecting the aircraft found that the timing belt jumped time and damaged the valves... In retrospect the belt-tensioner seemed to be the culprit in causing the problem...

Ken had no choice but to park the aircraft at Traverse City and begin disassembling the aircraft for transport back to Jackson.

Now, this homebuilt aircraft isn't one that you can disassemble, strap the wings on the top of your SUV and shove the fuselage in the back and be on your way. This is one "Big Daddy" of an aircraft...

Ken retrieved his trailer and drove back to Traverse City and in no time had the wings off and the plane loaded. He did say that it took about a hour and a half to drain the fuel from the wing tanks... Also, he pointed out that the personnel and pilots at Traverse were more than gracious in providing any assistance he needed during the dismantling and loading process...

On the Friday after Air Venture 2007, Ken pulled into Chapter 304, with aircraft in tow,

and several of the members helped with the unloading. The Aerocomp CA4 is now resting peacefully in its' hangar...

Big Black Crosses

By

Robert McCampbell, Lt. Colonel,
USAF(Ret.)

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I was truly an ordinary guy in extraordinary times. My childhood dream of flying was realized as I flew over 80 missions during World War II piloting both "Spitfires" and "Mustangs." Operating out of Italy, we fought the war over France, Germany, the Balkans and the Soviet Union. In our Spits we made strafing and dive-bombing raids on enemy ships, rolling stock and shore installations. When we got our Mustangs in 1944, we primarily protected long-range, heavy bombers on their runs through Europe...

Join me in the cockpit as I lead a flight of four Mustangs on my sixtieth and most challenging airplane versus airplane combat mission....

Most of our missions had proven less stressful than our previous Vienna run. But, on the very next dawning, we were unceremoniously roused from the sack to escort heavies to the Ploesti Oil Fields... This would constitute a deep-reach, and we anticipated that a formidable enemy reception would arise to protect its vital black gold... We guessed right.

Tyler (Captain Tim Tyler – Squadron Commander) led out squadron, but this time he was assigned group leader in command of all three of the 52nd Group's squadrons. I led "Tackle Yellow Flight" with Burns on my wing and Bullock and Grewe rounding out our foursome. Primarily due to the wear and tear of back-to-back missions, we of the 4th Squadron lofted only twelve planes, and by the designated time of rendezvous, two had returned due to mechanical troubles. Our bombers were late, and we had to circle Budapest for a time. Tyler finally decided to hook up with a large group of B-17s whose fighter escorts were nowhere in sight....

Our 4th Squadron was flying mid-level cover. All was quiet for a spell, but when the *B-17s* were not more than forty miles front the target, we were shocked by a spectacular greeting. The garbled shouts in my earphones confirmed that the specter jarred almost everyone at once. A later official report stated that some 69 to 74 enemy fighter planes had approached us head on. Some were at our level. Some were slightly below, between us, and the lower level 5th Squadron. Most of us had never seen a close-up display of enemy force of this size in one gaggle. The first and most memorable communication blurted was, "*Jesus! Big Black Crosses! The sky is full of them!*"

In a flash, it was pandemonium... Orderliness of communications was the first to go with pilots shouting things like,

"Break! Blue Two!" with no squadron identifier. Multiple emotion-charged shouts cluttered the air in a cacophony... "Watch your starboard Nick!" "Get the bastard, Red three!"

The planes from the 2nd Squadron were diving through us. The guys from the 5th were climbing up between us. An unseen power had stirred a seething maelstrom of both the enemy's and our airplanes....

I was bending the flight in a tight downward turn and heading for a couple of *Focke-Wulf 190s* that momentarily seemed unmolested. An even closer *Messerschmitt 109* popped up ahead of us. I flicked a right climbing turn and the guy was just sitting there waiting to be had. ...Just a little closer, steady, thumb on the trigger button and whaaa?... before I fired he popped the canopy and hit the silk. I nearly collided with him as he and his opening chute grazed by. I was in disbelief. Either his plane had already been hit, or he was declaring his own private armistice. But no time for that, *Bullock* had called out, three *Macchi 205s* moving toward us at 4 o'clock...

The *Macchi 202* and the later *Macchi 205* were both excellent fighters. They were designed and built by the *Italians* and were flown by the *Germans* or possibly *Balkan* fellow travelers... they didn't perform quite as well at high altitude as our *P-52s* or the latest *German Fighters*... they were extremely maneuverable, however, and certainly tough

at lower levels. The *Macchis* spotted us and turned away in a shallow dive. With *Burns* in tow, I pursued and was closing from about 7 o'clock on the lead plane while *Bullock* and *Grewe* scissored on the starboard *Macchi 205*. I got some strikes on the wings and *Grewe* got some fuselage hits on the other guy. All three of the enemy rolled over and split-S'ed vertically. We rolled over and down and kept close behind them...

Burns had been dancing around behind me. This behavior let me know he was chomping at the bit. I guessed he felt that if he were in my place he would have finished the job sooner. On the other hand, it was my flight and I knew I must do it my way. Also, he was distracting me with his flying... like his bladder was full. Then it happened. The *Macchis* pulled out briefly, and with us closing once more, they rolled over for a second time and dove straight for the deck called, "*Yellow Flight. Don't split-S. We can catch 'em.*"

I had glanced at my altimeter and airspeed and estimated that as we passed below 4,000 feet altitude, we might not have enough room to pull out of another vertical dive.... The *Macchis* with their lower wing loading might make it...

I led a steep turning dive. *Burns* broke away from me, split-S'ed and closed on the tail of one of the *Macchis*. As the *Macchi* pulled out, skimming the deck, it appeared *Burns* was getting strikes on him. Tragically, *Burns* was unable to pull up and hit the ground in a fireball. *Bullock* peppered the 205 ahead of him while it exploded in the trees. My adversary went into a tight turn just above the trees as I was closing. I followed and at this point, five or six other enemy fighters joined the melee...

I wound up in a circle as tight as I could pull it with at least two other *Macchis* behind me and the one ahead. *Bullock* and *Grewe* found themselves in the same position in a max tight turn with several other enemy planes. The enemy behind me was firing intermittent bursts at me and I was doing the same at the *Macchi* ahead of me in the circle. I realized I had made a big mistake getting into a low level turning contest with these *Macchis*. Also, I never expected to be dealing with this many fighters in the game. Somehow though

I was holding my own in the seemingly endless, unforgiving Lufbery (circle).

The problem in hitting an opponent in the circle is that the shooter, in order to score, must aim well ahead of his target. The only way to do that, of course, is for the shooter to turn tighter than, or inside his opponent. So far no one in the circle had managed to do that. Every time I tried to tighten the turn my P-51 would shutter and almost stall. That close to the ground a stall would be my last flying exhibition...

An irony of the Lufbery is that he who finches and turns out of the circle with an opponent behind him can be a fish in a barrel. In desperation, I pulled into so tight of a turn that while I fired, my plane half stalled and the wing flicked. I thought I'd lost it. As I eased off to regain control, the *Macchi* ahead in the Lufbery abruptly snapped on his back, and smacked the brush in a violent explosive disintegration...

I'll never know if I hit him or he made a low-level mistake of some kind. But finally I had a victory in the P-51, albeit, not an easy one. *Bullock* witnessed the saga as our two circles of angry airplanes were intersecting. He and I had been trading terse comments on our predicaments throughout the ordeal. When my target splashed, the one nibbling at my tail and a third in the circle had for some reason turned and fled in opposite directions. I shouted something like, "*Bullock! Let's hit the weeds! Wide open... West!*" With that, the three of us poked our noses down, regrouped and tickled the meadows for a minute or so, I made a climbing 180-degree turn for better position to re-engage whatever still lurked around. None of us could spot any airplanes...

Years later I would come across *Bullock's* diary of this encounter. He had written, "*Boy, what a day this was. Had a mission to Ploesti. As we neared the target we encountered more enemy aircraft than I've ever seen before. All types...109s, 190s, Macchi 205s, and Macchi 200s. Really a sight. Dogfights all over hell, fires, parachutes, and what not. I was in McCampbells flight. We got into a hell of a scrap with some Macchi 205s. Mac got one; spun him in. I took a couple of 90-degree deflection shots. I didn't see anything, but Mac*

confirmed one for me when we got back. Said he blew all to hell. Tribbett got two, Tyler two, George one also. We lost Burns somewhere in the deal. The 2nd got five; 5th none, and lost one each."

Our fight with the *Macchis* had carried us a distance to the east of *Ploesti*. No doubt we were too far from home with too little fuel for further chase. I felt thankful we had "*Pied-Pipered*" such a bunch of enemy fighters away from the bomber mission and destroyed at least two. The rest of the *Macchis* would have to refuel, re-climb to bomber altitude and find them. The bombers by then would be well on their way home and unlikely be intercepted...

With *Grewe* on my port side and *Bullock* on starboard, we began our climb back to altitude. For better coverage, we were flying line abreast with about 100 yards separation. Luckily, we had turn on drop tanks fuel until we jettisoned them back at the onset of the enemy engagement. But I was devastated about *Burns*...

But the first order of business was to get busy with maps and begin looking for major landmarks. I had made enough trips over southern *Europe* and the *Balkans* at high altitudes that I was familiar with major cities and rivers and their juxtapositions. Just give me some altitude and a reasonably clear day. Find *Belgrade*, for example, and home base is a shoo-in. My plan was for us to climb to about 28,000 feet and try to find some bombers heading home. I hadn't much hope of finding *Tyler* or any of the rest of the scattered squadron. I thought we could give maybe fifteen or twenty minutes more protection time over some lonesome heavies before we leaned back our engines and made for the barn. I was ready for the haystack and a day off after my overdraft of adrenaline during these back-to-back workouts. But such plans and thoughts were grossly premature.

With my lap full of map, eyes scanning for landmarks and nearing 15,000 feet, *Grewe* blew my train of thought.

"*Tackle Red One! Bandit 5 o'clock high! He's coming in!*"

I cocked my head and saw what looked like an *Me 109* heading for *Bullock*. *Grewe* and I con-

tested the airway with shouts for *Bullock* to get ready to break. No response!
"Bullock, bandit Five o'clock!"

"He's coming in ... Fast!"

We both called and I waggled my wings and started a sharp climbing turn toward the intruder. *"Break Right! Bullock! Break Right!"* He didn't receive, but he did start a turn as he saw us jerking right. It helped mess up the guy's aim on his first burst. But he was staying on *Bullock's* tail as he frantically turned inside-out trying to shake the enemy. This was one gutsy, hot-shot, *Me 109* cowboy with an initial advantage... but seemingly alone...

By this time *Bullock* was finally audible and plaintively shouting *"God, Mac! Get this bastard off my ass!"* Over and over these exact words still echo through the years. I would never in my lifetime get a more compelling call. Here was my old flying school buddy and longtime sidekick, confidant and squadron mate, a guy who would do anything for me, and at this moment reaching for me to save his life...

With *Grewe* in tow I was frantically squirming to get inside the *109's* arc while he was firing from inside *Bullock's*. I finally managed to get awkwardly behind the bastard and in the turn I was squirting short bursts at him, but again, couldn't get enough lead. If only this airplane would bend in the middle! I'm sure, however, I was making that *109 Jockey* damned nervous as he looked over his shoulder...

Can't say I didn't have enough practice that day on deflection shots. As it was with the *Macchis*, I kicked the rudder mercilessly, I pulled the stick in tighter than felt good. I squeezed out a long burst with more than one ring-sight lead. My airplane completely shielded my view of the adversary while I fired. I could see *Bullock* ahead and prayerfully un-hit... then remarkably, as I relaxed slightly from the stalling turn, the enemy fighter broke away from the fight... inverted and nosed into heavy clouds. I had seen no strikes, but *Grewe* said, *"Hell, I think you hit him bad, Mac! He broke off flying crazy and smokin' like a chimney!"* *Grewe* and I, with *Bullock* moving up fast, had only a moment's cloudy chase as the *Me 109* disappeared...

Fuel was becoming too much of a concern for continued pursuit. *Bullock* had mentioned that he'd gathered some *Me 109*- sponsored holes in his wings as souvenirs. So with some incidental recap chatter, we three reformed and headed directly for home without further incident.

The unexpected anti-climax to all this, for me, came a couple of days later during the viewing of gun camera film from the mission with the assembled 52nd Group pilots. This was a regular and exciting ritual following film development of the most recent action. My film of the duel with the *Me 109* which had attacked *Bullock* included a surprise. It was unanimously agreed that my film clearly showed fatal hits on the *Me 109* cockpit. The gun camera had captured a view I could only see on film. Gun cameras were triggered to roll with the fighter's gunfire and had an automatic overrun of a few seconds after the gun trigger was released...

The cockpit obviously had been peppered and emblazoned while hidden from my observation. The rule was that since no one had witnessed the plane crash or explode, I could only claim a probable. Today a film clip print of that *Me 109* certain fate hangs in our den with a collection of my *World War II* photos, including those of *Bullock, Mc Cauley et al.*

The loss of *Burns* was an especially tragic one for me. I agonized over the possibility that I could have done a better job of training him. On the positive side I must add that our 4th Squadron of ten participating pilots on this mission chalked up seven confirmed victories plus one probably destroyed and four damaged. *Tyler* had downed two. Damned if *Tribbett* hadn't bagged two. *Goettleman* one and, of course, *Bullock* and I one confirmed each. Naturally I always insist that total number of enemy destroyed was clearly eight. I could possibly stretch it to nine. No one ever claimed the additional enemy loss of the fighter whose pilot deserted it in midair.

Postscript: The above is a chapter from the book "An Ordinary Guy in Extraordinary Times" written by Robert McCampbell, Lt. Colonel, USAF (Ret.). This book is available in the air Force museum Foundation Bookstore at Wright-Patterson AFB.

WW I RENDEZVOUS (TRIP)

Every other year the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio host the “*WW I Rendezvous.*” The Aerodrome is the lawn in front of the Museum with Vintage WW I and other Aircraft of that era, actually flying...

As I understand it the participants are in period costume along with exhibits and different displays... It’s a sight to behold... Of course, the Museum will be open, along with its’ cafeteria for your enjoyment...

Fellow Member Jack McCourtie is organizing a Bus Trip to view the “*WW I Rendezvous*” on Saturday, September 22nd, and has a sign-up sheet (please put your name and telephone number) at the Chapter or you may call Jack at 517-750-3639.

Our first goal is to get at least 48 people singed-up, that’s one bus load... Now the trip is not limited to members, so if you wife, children, friends would like to go, sign them up... We think that the cost will be around \$35.00 per person and that the Bus will probably leave from the Sport Aviation Center early morning and return late evening... on Saturday, September 22nd...

I’m sure more solid details will be given at this meeting...

WORD OF WISDOM

“If at first you don’t succeed, skydiving is not for you” – *Kamikaze Joe*

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**Please note that due the amount of “Hate Mail” I receive from my newsletter subscribers monthly, Yahoo has had to upgrade their storage capacity which had forced me to change my E-mail address as follows: kamikazejoe1940@yahoo.com*

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– “Never let the truth get in the way of good fiction”- Kamikaze Joe -