

Flight Line

The Official Publication of the CAF

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

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© Photo by Anthony Darryl Taylor
Eric Van Gilder – Aviation Photographer
See pages 6 & 7

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© Photo by Dave Flood

If Jim Hinkelman were a member of an Indian tribe, his chief would name him "Man Of Many Hats." See why on page 4. We're certainly glad he's a member of our tribe at CAF-SoCAWing!

**Wing Staff Meeting, Saturday, October 15, 2011 at 9:30 a.m. at the
CAF Museum Hangar, 455 Aviation Drive, Camarillo Airport**

Our CAF Mission: To Honor American Military Aviation Through Flight, Exhibition and Remembrance.

October 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Museum Open 10am to 4pm Every Day Except Monday and major holidays						1 Work Day
2	3 Museum Closed	4 Work Day Air Show Tucumcari NM	5 Air Show Tucumcari NM	6 Work Day Airsho 2011 Midland TX	7 Airsho 2011 Midland TX	8 Work Day Airsho 2011 Midland TX
9 Airsho 2011 Midland TX	10 Museum Closed	11 Work Day	12	13 Work Day Air Show Lemore NAS	14 Docent Meeting 3:30 Air Show Lemore NAS	15 Work Day Wing Staff Meeting 9:30 Lemore NAS
16 Air Show Lemore NAS	17 Museum Closed	18 Work Day	19	20 Work Day	21	22 Work Day
23	24 Museum Closed	25 Work Day	26	27 Work Day	28	29 Work Day
30	31 Museum Closed Halloween	Museum Open 10am to 4pm Every Day Except Monday and major holidays				

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* Denotes Staff Position

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Submittal Deadline - 15th of the month

Commemorative Air Force
Southern California Wing
455 Aviation Drive
Camarillo, CA 93010-9501

Museum Update

by John Woolley

The Museum would like to recognize the wonderful work of Dodie Wilhite, the keeper of our archives, and Charlie Carr, master modeler, both of whom work in our Display and Artifacts Museum unit.

Over the years our Museum has collected, and been the recipient of, many pieces of donated memorabilia and treasures of past military history. It has been Dodie's responsibility to record and maintain these artifacts, utilizing a specialized museum software, PastPerfect, on a dedicated computer for this purpose located in the "caverns" of the artifacts area adjacent to Shirley Murphy's desk. Dodie's data-entry work is very specialized, and provides a valuable service to the Museum and our Wing.



©Photo by John Woolley

Dodie at work on recording museum artifacts

Over the years she has worked for local government, served as a docent at the Camarillo Ranch House, and is currently donating her time between the Santa Barbara Zoo and our Wing. She is meticulous with all projects and a highly skilled and valued addition to our Museum staff.

Charlie Carr came to us this past year wanting to volunteer to be a docent based upon on his love of country and military aviation history - especially the WW II era. We came to find out quickly that Charlie expressed interest in repairing some of our scale model aircraft and in volunteering to help Shirley and the Display and Artifacts Unit Committee - Ron Fleishman, Jin Hinkelman and John Woolley - in re-arranging various displays and creating new displays.

One of Charlie's notable efforts was the reconstruction, repair and painting of a B-29 that he reprised into "FiFi", the signature CAF B-29 that was recently seen by many of us at Oshkosh this past July. Our Wing's "FiFi" is displayed over the gift shop and admissions area.

Charlie's latest effort is the building of the four (4) fighter aircraft flown by the Tuskegee Fighter Group in WW II - the P-39, P-40, P-47 and P-51 - the only fighter group that flew all four (4) fighters in combat during WW II. These models are being incorporated into a Tuskegee display being developed by Shirley Murphy and the other members of the Display and Artifacts Committee.



©Photo by John Woolley

Charlie Carr with his models of Tuskegee Airmen's airplanes – P-40 Warhawk, P-39 Airacobra, P-47 Thunderbolt, and P-51 Mustang.

The CAF: A Look Back

by Dave Flood



"On September 10, 1961, Col. Lefty Gardner arrived at Rebel Field (*Harlingen, TX*) on a dismal, rainy day in the new Lockheed P-38 *Lightning*, following an 1,800-mile trip from Sacramento, CA. Cost of the P-38: \$4,000. Sponsors: Cols. Gardner and Nolen.

On September 17, CAF Officers flew five fighters to Midland, TX to help dedicate the new airport. During these festivities, Col Henry Gardner arrived from Oakland, CA in the newly-acquired Grumman F6F *Hellcat*. Cost: \$2,000. Sponsors: Cols. Henry Gardner & Tom O'Connor".
From: "The Ghost Squadron of the Confederate Air Force."

Wing Staff Election News

by Dave Flood

We so far have two people who are willing and able to run for the three positions open on the Wing Staff for the 2012/2013 period.

Jason Somes has given the Nominating Committee his assurance that he will run for re-election to the position of **Operations Officer**.

Norm Swagler, who has been Interim **Adjutant** in Terry Cedar's place, will run for that office.

The Nominating Committee is still looking for a qualified member to run for **Finance Officer**. Casey de Bree, who has done a stellar job in fulfilling the responsibilities of that office for five years, has decided to step down and not run for re-election. He has offered, however, to help out the new Finance Officer by doing bookkeeping tasks.

If you feel that you could step into Casey's shoes and handle the Finance Officer position, please call: **Bill O'Neill at 805-300-0212 ASAP**. Remember – Casey will be there to help, and will be glad to enumerate the responsibilities of the office to anyone interested.



Wing Air Show Schedule: 2011

Oct 1	Mark Matye Memorial FlyOver	F6F, F8F
Oct 4, 5	Tucumcari, NM Air Show	F6F, F8F
Oct 6-9	AIRSHO, 2011, Midland, TX	F6F, F8F
Oct 13-16	NAS, Lemoore, CA	All A/C
Nov 6-7	Thermal, CA Air Show	TBD
Nov 12-13	Nellis AFB, Las Vegas, NV	TBD

If you plan on attending one or more of these air shows, please contact us first at 482-0064, as air show schedules sometimes change.

Wing Christmas Party – Heads-Up

Our annual Christmas Party will be held on Thursday, December 1, 2011 at the Wedgewood Banquet Center, 5880 Olivias Park Drive, Ventura, CA. We expect the cost per person to again be \$35. More details next month.

Jim Hinkelman: “Man of Many Hats”



© Photo by Dave Flood

Here's Jim – doing one of his myriad of jobs that he continually does around our hangars. Here he's cleaning up the ramp in anticipation of a wedding party renting our Museum Hangar.

Jim Hinkelman was born in Toledo, Ohio, where he went to Woodward High School with Jamie Farr, who was to become a regular on “Mash.”

This start to Jim's life helped somewhat to mold him into the irrepressible character that he is today – a man of many and varied interests, anxious to and capable of carrying out many jobs that seem insurmountable to others.

Jim has done the following: renovated the Fokker Tri-Plane model – custom building the cockpit and fitting the plane with a movable carriage for ease in moving it to locations where it can be used for photo ops; built a movable cart for the large, round tables used for special events in our Museum Hangar; built portable carriers for the oil trays used under the airplanes; built the float that we used in the Camarillo Christmas Parade several years ago – that won a special award; installed lighting in display cabinets in the museum; completely renovated the CAF-SoCAWing's jeep at his own expense – putting it in running shape and making it a key display item in our museum; installed two emergency doors to the hangars per fire department requirements; and.. “the beat goes on!”

To top it all off, he is the Wing's Librarian.

Jim earned his BA at Toledo University, and his MA in Theatre at the University of Delaware. He worked in Hollywood as a prop-maker for 30 years. He has owned two airplanes, a Cessna 205 and a Cessna 206 STOL. He has both Float and Glider ratings. Jim was also a Seabee reservist for one and one-half years.

We're very glad he has “retired” to our CAF-SoCAWing. When something has to be done with equipment, facilities, cleaning, vehicles, you name it – Jim's the “Go-To Guy.”

Wing Photo Page I



© Photo by Dave Flood

Misa Nishimura giving TLC to our Zero. She hopes her husband Ken will sometime soon be its pilot. We believe he would be the first Japanese citizen to fly the Zero since WWII.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Joe Nassi's beauty of a P-47A model, done for none other than Joe Peppito. [Joe's Aircraft Engine Class starts Oct. 15. See him to enroll.](#)



© Photo by Dave Flood

Joe Nassi, Master Model Builder, also did a B-17G in Bill Main's 94th Bomb Group colors. Joe's wife Dana contributed her hair for the aerals. Great work, Joe!



© Photo by Sheryl O'Neil

A T-34 Memorial Flight to commemorate "9/11" flew up to Santa Barbara from CMA. Included were pilots Marc Russell (far plane), Michael Maloco (near plane), and Darren Moore (photo plane). Also along taking photos were Sheryl O'Neil and Eric Van Gilder.



© Photo by Dave Flood

The PBJ Restoration Crew, including Marc Russell (foreground), John Syrdahl and Ken Barger – after installing one of the wing tanks in the aircraft. If you would like to be a donor of one of the tanks, please call Marc at 818-259-8248.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Junction box & meticulous wiring in the PBJ.

Eric Van Gilder: Aviation Photographer Extraordinaire

by Dave Flood



© Photo by Jim Muman

Eric Van Gilder, doing what he does well, at one of our Camarillo Air Shows.

Eric Van Gilder was born in 1966 in Indiana. During his early years, his grandfather was always taking snapshots with his Polaroid camera. Besides capturing some interesting photos, he was great at writing witty captions in the white border areas around the photos.

At about the age of 10 or 12, Eric got a Polaroid camera. He took photos of the family around the house, much like his grandfather. From the Polaroid, he moved to Kodak 110 cameras, taking photos on vacations and places he went to.

While he was with the USAF at Keesler AFB, Eric purchased his first SLR camera, a Minolta X-370, with a 28 mm wide-angle lens. This ate up his budget, but he received a 70-200 mm zoom lens for Christmas, to which he added a 2X multiplier.

Eric had always had an interest in aviation. His father took him to see the final landing of the North American XB-70 *Valkyrie* at Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio. That hooked him on aviation, and he watched the skies for anything interesting. He spent some of his growing-up years in Ohio, where he spent many hours at the National Museum of the Air Force. In later years, in Wisconsin, he got to experience the EAA and the annual Oshkosh Fly-In.

Naturally, while later being in the Air Force, he had opportunities to photograph aircraft around the base. He shot

static displays and active aircraft from the flight line. At Keesler AFB, he photographed C-130s used by the hurricane hunters and T-37 trainers, along with any other aircraft that happened to take off or land there.

Eric's permanent duty assignment was in England, at RAF Lakenheath, where there were F-111F Aardvarks. There were many other aircraft that came to that base over the years that he was able to photograph. He also traveled to airshows in Europe like the RAF Mildenhall Air Fete, which was a real treat.

In 2000, Eric began volunteering with the Commemorative Air Force, Southern California Wing as a docent and museum worker. He was around aircraft again, and after a lapse of a few years, he was back to photography. His shots in the earlier years at the CAF-SoCAWing's Aviation Museum were taken with the Sony Mavica, and can best be described as snapshots.

In 2005, he began selling photographic prints and calendars. He officially started a business for photography in November, 2005. In 2006, he found that the "point-and-shoot" technology of the Canon PowerShot was limiting the photos that he was able to take.

To be able to take aerial photos of aircraft in flight, he bought a Nikon D50 DSLR, with a 28-80 mm lens and then added a 70—300 mm lens. His first air show with the new camera was at Riverside on March 1, 2006.

Eric's first official air-to-air shoot was June 6, 2006 at Chino, CA. He photographed the "Silver Wings," an aerial air-walking duo that used a Stearman biplane. He photographed Margi Stivers as she went through her wing-walking routine, and then went up with her pilot, Hartley Folstad, in the Stearman to photograph Jimi New flying the Fokker DR.1 replica triplane.

One of the photos from the Fokker shoot won Eric awards and accolades, and eventually became his signature.

Eric closed out the year 2006 flying in the rear seat of Chris Rushing's T-6 Texan to photograph another T-6 and a Beech T-34 on a cloudy December day.



© Photo by Sheryl O'Neil

Eric in the rear seat of Marc Russell's T-34 Mentor, flying back from a "9-11" memorial in Santa Barbara.

Also in 2006, Eric had numerous photos published in the CAF-SoCAWing's newsletter, "Flight Line." In November, the magazine *Aviation History* published his photo of the nose close-up of a B-25. It was his first photograph published in a national publication.

During the years following, Eric has been published in the "Flight Line" numerous time, and has also been published in a variety of other national and international publications. He flew in ten of the twelve months of 2008, capturing all kinds of photographs of aircraft, from trainers to fighters.

He was a photographic contributor to four children's books about aircraft in 2008, and published his own children's book, *That Little Yellow Airplane*, about the legendary air show performer, Rob Harrison and his airplane. At the end of 2008, Eric published his second book of aviation photography, *Chasing The Dream*.

The years 2009 and 2010 brought more eventful opportunities at air shows to capture some great aircraft in flight. He also spent 3 ½ hours in the rear seat of the CAF's SNJ-5 #290 Texan, flown by Alan Gaynor, in June, 2010 for the final Quiet Birdmen get-together and air show at Jack Broome's ranch in Camarillo.

The year 2011 has been developing nicely, with plenty of air shows to work at, and some wonderful opportunities to fly and get some unique photographs. As he has looked back on the past five years, Eric realizes that he has "caught" some really neat memories. One of his favorite things to photograph is an air show premiere. It is really something for pilots to be able to fly their first air show. He loves to be able to catch their excitement and reactions. He realized earlier this year in his conversations with Chuck Aaron that he had photographed his very first air show as well.

With each photo shoot, Eric has the new opportunity to photograph historic aircraft and preserve the history of the men and women who flew them. He tries to capture something different and inspiring on each photo flight and to learn something new every time he takes to the air to do an air-to-air photo shoot.

Eric says, "If my photographs elicit a great memory, or an emotion, then I feel that I have done my job."

Editor's Note: Thanks to Eric, our "Flight Line" has had his memorable aircraft photos on our pages for many years.

He has been most generous in letting us use his great photos of our planes in brochures and in our advertising.

We are blessed to have such an outstanding young photographer as a friend.

Thanks for all you do, Eric!
Check out his website: <http://www.vg-photo.com>



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

Here are Eric's daughter Kayleigh (5) and son Jacob (10) at Santa Paula Airport in front of a Mignet "Pou du Ciel" (Flying Flea). They obviously share their dad's enthusiasm for airplanes.



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

One of our favorites, taken earlier in his career by Eric, of our Hellcat and Zero at the Riverside Air Show. Since then, Eric has taken thousands of photos of our planes.



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

Another favorite photo of one our aircraft, the Vickers/Supermarine Spitfire Mk XIV – at the recent "Wings Over Camarillo" Air Show.

The Pilot-Maker and More By Clifford Brown

North American Aviation's public relations releases touted the AT-6 or SNJ as the "Pilot Maker." Every allied military pilot from the 40s and well into the 50s trained in this type aircraft. Thousands were built, and because they were used in training in the United States, a lot of them survived and are around today.

In 1950 the United States entered the United Nations Police Action in Korea. It had a lot of war surplus stuff left over from WWII. There were huge stocks of M1 carbines, jeeps and Iife jackets in some warehouse in Kansas.

The US Army went to war in Korea as an extension of the kind of war it had waged in WWII in rural Germany. Except the Army Air Corps., which had morphed into the U.S. Air Force, had gotten rid of its old-fashioned stuff in favor of the new and modern jets. Early jet fighter aircraft were not very fuel-efficient. The P-80, F-86 and the F9F gobbled kerosene like there was no tomorrow. You went very fast, but not very far.

In Korea, direct support fighters had to fly either from bases in Japan or from carriers off-shore. The aircraft had to fly to some mountain-top in Korea and hit a Volkswagen-size target nested among a whole bunch of Volkswagen-size non-targets. There was no GPS or laser-guided smart bombs. Korea was all mountain-tops, and they all looked alike.

The aircraft operated at the limits of their range, so they didn't have much time to dally around the target area looking for something to blow up. Existing radios did not allow for direct communication with the ground (forward observers) for help in finding their target. The solution was to use pathfinders as they did in Europe to lead attack aircraft to the target. Initially, Army liaison aircraft were used - but they were not much more than Piper Cubs in olive drab. L-birds were quickly replaced with AT-6s, which had been given to the Korean and Japanese post-WWII military. The 6147th Tactical Air Command was formed and they were called "Mosquitoes."



North American AT-6 Texans – used as spotter planes in the Korean Conflict – known as "Mosquitoes."

An Army forward observer sitting on a mountain top would call an artillery unit like mine to mark a target with a white,

red or green colored smoke shell. The AT-6 that was orbiting overhead would see the colored smoke that ID'd the target. Just as the fighters arrived the AT-6 would lead them to the target and re-mark it by firing another colored smoke rocket. The fighters would then unload their more lethal ordinance. The fighters would then scurry back to base to a warm, dry bed.

Radio equipment in the AT-6s could communicate with the jet fighters, but not with the Army boots on the ground. The fix was to mount aircraft radios in jeeps and send them off to front-line Army units with Air Force radio operators and an Air Force officer. And what better than to use the glut of WWII pilots the new Air Force still had left over from WWII. But the aircraft radios in the jeeps could talk to airplanes but still could not talk to Army radios. So the Air Force lieutenant would verbally, person-to-person, face-to-face, talk to an Army radio operator who was using another radio to talk to an Army forward observer on the front line who was actually watching the air strike.

The Army forward observer would confirm to the Field Artillery contact that Army Field Artillery shells and the AT-6's smoke rocket had hit the target. Then the Field Artillery contact would face-to-face tell the Air Force lieutenant; who would, in turn, radio the AT-6; who, in turn, would radio the leader of the fighters.

On a couple of occasions, I was the forward observer. But most of the time I sat in a bunker with the Air Force guy on one side and my unit's radio operator on the other side. I was sort of a referee, and made sure that what the Air Force was saying made sense to the Army. To help - I had a full set of 8 1/2" x 11" photographs taken from every outpost across the battle front. While I was not often on the front line, I had pictures of what the guy on the front line was seeing. Sounds complicated, and it was, but we didn't know any better, so we just did it.



An Air Force forward observer – Korea, early 1950s

Just in case, if I ever have to go back to Korea, I liberated a complete set of those photographs from my unit when I rotated home and I still have them. It would be interesting to see if anything has changed in the almost 60 years that have transpired since then.

Wing Photo Page II



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

A huge "Wings Over Camarillo" treat – two Lightnings flying together. The 474th Fighter Group were thrilled.



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

Al Kepler did yeoman pilot duty giving rides in our SNJ-5 #290 during the WOC Air Show.



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

The "Wings Over Camarillo" Ramp Boss was our own Tim Kutzbach, who, along with a crack crew, did a marvelous job of moving aircraft during the show.



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

Jason Somes did a terrific aerobatic demonstration in our Grumman F8F-2 Bearcat. He wowed the crowd!



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

Here Eric caught the Legacy Flight just as the Bearcat and the Hornet were peeling off from the formation. Mark "Mutha" Hubbard and Steve Barber, Sr. were piloting the Hellcat & the Bearcat respectively, and the FA-18 pilot was Lt. Alexander "Stranger" Wright of Pt. Mugu's VX-30 Squadron.



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

Our Spitfire Mk XIV, with Steve Barber in the pilot's seat. This is just the most beautiful aircraft ever built.

Mustang Memories for a Canadian Boy

This is a great little story about a vivid memory of a P-51 and its pilot, by a fellow who was 12 years old at a small airfield in Canada in 1967.

The Mustang was ready to take to the air. They said it had flown in during the night from some U.S. airport. The pilot had been tired. I marveled at the size of the plane - dwarfing the Pipers and Canucks tied down by her. She was much larger than in the movies. She glistened in the sun like a bulwark of security from days gone by.

The pilot arrived by cab, paid the driver, and then stepped into the pilot's lounge. He was an older man; his wavy hair was gray and tossed. It looked like it might have been combed, say, around the turn of the century. His flight jacket was checked, creased and worn - it smelled old and genuine. Old Glory was prominently sewn to its shoulders. He projected a quiet air of proficiency and pride devoid of arrogance. He filed a quick flight plan to Montreal (Expo-67, Air Show) - then walked across the tarmac.

After taking several minutes to perform his walk-around check the pilot returned to the flight lounge to ask if anyone would be available to stand by with fire extinguishers while he "flashed the old bird up, just to be safe."

Though only 12 at the time, I was allowed to stand by with an extinguisher after brief instruction on its use -- "If you see a fire, point, then pull this lever!" I later became a firefighter, but that's another story. The air around the exhaust manifolds shimmered like a mirror from fuel fumes as the huge prop started to rotate. One manifold, then another, and yet another barked -- I stepped back with the others.

In moments, the Packard-built Merlin engine came to life with a thunderous roar, blue flames knifed from her manifolds. I looked at the others' faces, there was no concern. I lowered the bell of my extinguisher. One of the guys signaled to walk back to the lounge. We did.

Several minutes later we could hear the pilot doing his pre-flight run-up. He'd taxied to the end of runway 19, out of sight. All went quiet for several seconds; we raced from the lounge to the second story deck to see if we could catch a glimpse of the P-51 as she started down the runway. We could not. There we stood, eyes fixed to a spot half way down Runway 19. Then a roar ripped across the field, much louder than before, like a furious hell-spawn set loose---something mighty this way was coming. "Listen to that thing!" said the controller. In seconds the Mustang burst into our line of sight. Its tail was already off and it was moving faster than anything I'd ever seen by that point on Runway 19.

Two-thirds the way down 19, the Mustang was airborne with her gear going up. The prop tips were supersonic; we

clapped our ears as the Mustang climbed hellish fast into the circuit to be eaten up by the dog-day haze.

We stood for a few moments in stunned silence trying to digest what we'd just seen. The radio controller rushed by me to the radio. "Kingston tower calling Mustang?" He looked back to us as he waited for an acknowledgment.

The radio crackled, "Go ahead Kingston ." "Roger Mustang. Kingston tower would like to advise the circuit is clear for a low level pass." I stood in shock because the controller had, more or less, just asked the pilot to return for an impromptu air show!

The controller looked at us. "What?" He asked. "I can't let that guy go without asking. I couldn't forgive myself!" The radio crackled once again, Kingston , do I have permission for a low level pass, east to west, across the field?" "Roger Mustang, the circuit is clear for an east to west pass." "Roger, Kingston , I'm coming out of 3000 feet, stand by."

We rushed back onto the second-story deck, eyes fixed toward the eastern haze. The sound was subtle at first, a high-pitched whine, a muffled screech, a distant scream. Moments later the P-51 burst through the haze. Her airframe straining against positive Gs and gravity, wing tips spilling contrails of condensed air, prop-tips again supersonic as the burnished bird blasted across the eastern margin of the field shredding and tearing the air.

At about 500 mph and 150 yards from where we stood she passed, with the old American pilot saluting. Imagine. A salute! I felt like laughing. I felt like crying. She glistened, she screamed, the building shook, my heart pounded. Then the old pilot pulled her up and rolled, and rolled, and rolled out of sight into the broken clouds - and indelibly into my memory.

I've never wanted to be an American more than on that day. It was a time when many nations in the world looked to America as their big brother, a steady and even-handed beacon of security who navigated difficult political water with grace and style; not unlike the pilot who'd just flown into my memory. He was proud, not arrogant, humble, not a braggart, old and honest, projecting an aura of America at its best.

That America will return one day, I know it will. Until that time, I'll just send off this story; call it a reciprocal salute, to the old American pilot who wove a memory for a young Canadian that's lasted a lifetime.



Wing Photo Page III



© Photo by Dave Flood

Jo & Jack Brinckerhoff, a very welcome couple who visited recently. They are dear friends of our Wing, and we were fortunate to see them as they continue to travel worldwide.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Jack & Jo with Bill Main & Joe Peppito, no doubt trading "war stories."



© Photo by Dave Flood

Bob Smith and Don Katz dropped by to see us at the hangars. They have both been "under the weather," so it was real good to see them both. Keep the faith, guys!



© Photos by Janet Rizzoli

Our very stylish new T-Shirts featuring the Bearcat and the Hellcat. You can load up on them now at our Gift Shop (great member discounts!). Kudos to Janet Rizzoli and Tom Ridderbush for their work on designing and getting the shirts onto the shelves!



© Photo by Dave Flood

Two of our newest CAF-SoCAWing Cadets, Shan and Kenny, taking a break from working on aircraft parts. Welcome to you both!

The Ravens: Bird Dog FACs of Laos

From "Talking Proud"

The Ravens FACs – recipients of the CAF's American Combat Airman Hall of Fame award for 2011

The Ravens: No discussion about Bird Dog FACs in the Vietnam-Laos Wars is complete without addressing the Raven FACs of Laos. This was a covert, clandestine operation. The aircraft were American O-1s, the pilots were USAF pilots, and together they lived in and flew out of and over Laos supporting Royal Laotian military and indigenous militia forces against the North Vietnamese invaders and their Pathet Lao militia.



This handsome dude is [Larry Williams](#), an Air Force officer, Raven 72. You cannot see his outfit, but it is not a USAF uniform. He is not carrying a USAF ID; there is nothing with him to indicate he is in the USAF.

The aircraft were American O-1s, the pilots were USAF pilots, and together they lived in and flew out of and over Laos supporting Royal Laotian military and indigenous militia forces against the North Vietnamese invaders and their Pathet Lao militia. On occasion some Army O-1 pilots would go into Laos on temporary duty to fly with the Ravens for a couple of months.



We would prefer not to go into details about why this all had to be so covert. It has something to do with the Geneva Accords of 1962 and the Government of Laos declaring itself neutral in the Vietnam War. The Laotian government was by no means neutral, and was fighting against North Vietnamese invaders and a Pathet Lao communist insurgency. The history is absorbing. Some will argue it was complex and sensitive. Editorially, we disagree; politicians made it that way, but that's a debate for another day.

In 1965, Air Commandos, mostly enlisted men, flew with CIA contracted aircrews to provide control of tactical airpower being brought to bear against enemy forces in Laos. US airpower by this time was mightily engaged in

both Laos and Vietnam. These enlisted crews were known as the [Butterfly FACs](#).

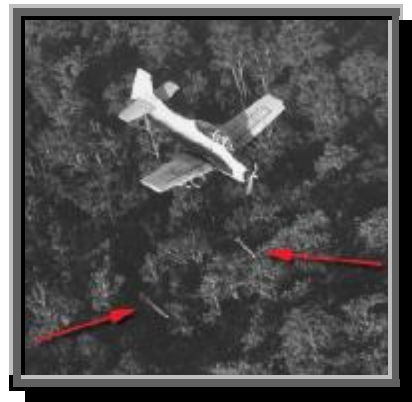
In 1966 the USAF leadership found out that enlisted aircrew were controlling USAF attack aircraft and insisted these be replaced by officers who were themselves pilots, preferably fighter pilots. So began the *Steve Canyon Program* and the covert Raven FACs. The Ravens were all rated pilots who had flown FAC missions in Vietnam. Ravens.org describes them this way:



RLAF U-17B "69-7306" taken by Tom Lum, probably at Udorn in the early seventies. Note the Laotian national markings. It was a USAF aircraft, operated under the control of the US Ambassador Vientiane, Laos, flown by Raven pilot Ed Gunter, Larry Sanborn out of Luang Prabang, Laos, and then by Erik Carlson out of Long Thien, Laos. It was maintained at Udorn, Thailand.

Presented by [The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University](#), with kind permission from Steve Maxner.

The Ravens used three different airplanes to accomplish their mission: the small, light O-1 observation aircraft, armed only with white phosphorous smoke rockets; the heavier, slightly faster U-17 (Cessna 185), with the same armament, but longer range and loiter time. Some Ravens got to check out in the 'Cadillac,' the T-28. This was heaven for a Raven --- bombs, napalm, high explosive rockets, and 50 caliber machine guns for strafe. Now, you didn't have to wait for jets when you had a fast-moving target. The common denominator was that they all flew low, slow, and were highly vulnerable to ground fire.



This is a Raven T-28 dropping two bombs that we can see. This kind of operation was used by FAC aircraft throughout the Vietnam-Laos-Cambodia theater:

The missions were as varied as the personalities of the Ravens. Some carried a 'backseater,' a local who translated, talked to ground troops, and helped locate targets. Others were essentially deep interdiction missions, aimed at stemming the flow of troops and supplies into this neutral country. Some were basic visual reconnaissance looking for targets. Many were 'troops in contact,' providing life-saving tactical air strikes in support of ground troops being fired upon.

Rather than telling war stories, we'd like to show you some of the men, their machines, and the "bases" in Laos from which they operated.



Three Raven Bird Dog FACs flying in formation over Laos. Note they are grey fuselage, small numbers on the tail, no national markings. They are flying over Pakse, a southern base for the Ravens. Larry Ratts, Dunc Duncan and Jim Hix. Photo credit: Frank Kricker. Presented by ACIG.org

Most Ravens were "stationed" at Long Thieng Lima Site 20A in northeastern Laos, known as LS20A or 20-Alternate, on the southern edge of the Plaines des Jars (PDJ). We'll show you several photos of it. Please note the ridge at the end of the runway, it turns out, the northern end. It was about 300 ft high. Raven pilot Charles W. "Buddha" Hines says he and his colleagues called it the "vertical speedbrake." He went on to say:

"Karst formations rose on the right at the south end, making approaches a hair-raising event, especially when the weather was bad."



Long Tieng, Laos, Lima Site 20A (LS20A) taken out the side door of an HH-53. Photo courtesy of The Pararescue Association, presented by The Official A-1 Skyraider Site.



This is a nice shot of the field, 1969. You can see three Raven Dawgs parked, along with a lineup of T-28s, some of which might have been for the FACs, others of which might have been for USAF (with Laotian markings) or Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF) attack missions. A USAF 21st Special Operations Squadron (SOS) CH-3E has just landed on runway. Presented by airwarvietnam.com

There were "Lima Site" airfields all over Laos, and the Ravens would frequently use them when they ran low on gas or experienced aircraft problems. There were four other main bases: Luang Prabang (northwest); Vientiane, the capital; and Pakse (LS11, lower panhandle) and Savannakhet (LS39, upper panhandle) in the south along the Mekong River.



Savannakhet Airfield (LS39) taken from a flight of Sandy A-1s in 1971. Thailand is across the Mekong River.



Major Edward Ernest "Hoss" McBride, USAF, Raven 30, before he went flying. He was known as the "Singing FAC." Major McBride was KIA in Laos by enemy fire November 27, 1968. Photo credit: Thomas E. Lee. Presented by angelfire.com.



Friends of the Museum Newsletter



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Capt. Mark "Mutha" Hubbard, USN – Colonel, CAF-SoCAWing



© Photo by Tyson Rininger www.tvrphotography.com

Capt. Mark "Mutha" Hubbard, USN pilots the CAF-SoCAWing's F6F-5 Hellcat with Navy FA-18s during the 2011 USN Tailhook Legacy Flight Qualifications.

Dear Friends of the Museum,

The "Wings Over Camarillo" Air Show in August was fabulous! This newsletter features one of the CAF pilots, Mark Hubbard, also a Captain with the Navy, and an FA-18 pilot, who flew the Hellcat during the show. The So CA Wing of the CAF had a star role in the air show, with most of our airplanes flying – Spitfire, Bearcat, Hellcat, Mustang, Yak, and two Zeros. Other warbirds included two P-38 Lightnings, a TBM, Tigercat, Stearman, T-6/SNJ, B-25 and more. I overheard MANY positive comments about the warbirds! If you were there, you know what I'm talking about.

Imagine TWO of the four flying Zeros in the world right at Camarillo Airport. And they're both at the CAF's Aviation Museum. The visiting Zero is from Van Nuys and will be with us for awhile, before going to Alaska. Come see them both! Also, come see our new gift shop and museum displays. We think it's more interesting and easier to get around.

See you soon!

CAF So Cal Wing
Friends of the Museum Coordinator

Ceci Stratford

CAPTAIN MARK A. HUBBARD, USN
Commander
Strike Fighter Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet



© Photo by Dave Flood

Here's Mark with his grandson, "Khai," on the wing of his new "bird," the F6F-5 Hellcat. Mark is Commander of the Navy's Strike Fighter Wing, Pacific. He has approximately 380 FA-18 Hornets under his command, along with all the personnel that comprise the Hornet squadrons. He is based at Lemoore Naval Air Station. We are honored to have him as a member! Here is his bio:

Captain Hubbard is a 1985 graduate of Missouri State University. He was commissioned through the Aviation Officers Candidate Program in April of 1985 and designated a Naval Aviator in September of 1986. Following A-6E Intruder training in Whidbey Island, Washington, he reported to VA-52 where he completed two WESTPAC and one NORPAC deployments on board the *USS CARL VINSON* (CVN-70).

After his tour with the "Knightriders" in June of 1990, Captain Hubbard reported to VMFAT-101 at El Toro, California, for transition to the F/A-18 Hornet and duty as an FRS instructor and Landing Signals Officer (LSO). In October of 1992, he joined the VMFA-314 "Black Knights" as a Navy Exchange pilot and LSO in preparation for their chop to Carrier Air Wing ELEVEN (CVW-11). During the 1993 WESTPAC deployment on board *USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN* (CVN-72), Captain Hubbard accepted a position on the Air Wing staff as "CAG LSO."

In June of 1994, Captain Hubbard retired as "CAG Paddles" and reported to Lemoore, California for duty as the Operations Officer at the Strike Fighter Weapons School. In July of 1996, he reported to VFA-115 as the first Department Head to transition and assist in the homeport change of VA-115, Carrier Air Wing FIVE (CVW-5) from Atsugi, Japan to Carrier Air Wing Fourteen (CVW-14) in Lemoore, California. In May of 1998, he reported

to CSFWPAC as the Assistant Officer in Charge of the Super Hornet Fleet Introduction Team. Here he participated in the Operational Evaluation (OPEVAL) with VX-9, stand-up of VFA-122 as the Navy's first Super Hornet FRS.

Captain Hubbard reported to VFA-151 as the Executive Officer in June of 2002, and assumed command of the Vigilantes in August 2002. During his tour as Commanding Officer, he served as the Strike Warfare Board Chairman for Carrier Air Wing TWO (CVW-2) embarked aboard *USS CONSTELLATION* (CV-64) and led the first coalition strikes of *Operation Iraqi Freedom* into Iraq on March 21, 2003.

After completing his command tour in February 2004, Captain Hubbard attended the United States Naval War College where he received a Masters of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies. In June of 2005, he was assigned to United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) as the Chief of Strategic Plans and Policy (J-52).

Captain Hubbard reported to Commander, Strike Fighter Wing Pacific in flight status October 2008.

His personal awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross (with combat distinguishing device), Meritorious Service Medal, Bronze Star, Strike/Flight Air Medal (four awards with bronze star and combat distinguishing device), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (five awards with combat distinguishing device), and the Navy Achievement Medal as well as various other campaign and unit awards. Captain Hubbard has logged over 4,600 total flight hours, 3,000 in the F/A-18, and 680 arrested landings. He is married to the former Robyn A. Pires of Lemoore, CA and has three adult children, Kendra, Cody, and Katelin.



© Photo Courtesy Capt. Mark Hubbard, USN
Here are Mark's "other airplanes." On the left is his original Navy N253 Stearman trainer, and at right is a restored Navy SNJ (AT-6) trainer..

Transition: Across The Years

Text and Photos by Dan Newcomb

Now over the years I've seen, worked on, flew in and flown some pretty nice airplanes. I've worked and/or attended many an air show. I have seen everything from a B-36 as a very small child, to a B-2 fly. I have seen the Blues fly F-11's, F-4's, A-4's, and FA-18's. I've watched low altitude "disappear in the shock ball" supersonic passes. I've watched AIM-9 missiles crack the sound barrier and shoot out parachute flares. I've watched Tomcats and Warhogs strafe targets in the desert. I once drove by a strawberry field minutes after an A-4 pilot made a safe ejection and observed the still smoking engine to my left and the seat on the ground to my right. I saw Hoover fly when he had hair. I saw Lefty in the P-38. I've seen a lot of amazing and wonderful things over the decades... and Friday afternoon, August 19, 2011, the day before the EAA/CAF "Wings Over Camarillo" Air Show, I witnessed one more.



As CAPT Mark Hubbard, USN, (Col., CAF-SoCAWing), walked across the Wing's ramp from the FA-18 Hornet, one of the U.S. Navy's current supersonic jet strike fighters he had just parked minutes ago, to the F6F-5 Hellcat, the U.S. Navy's main fighter in WWII, that he was about to fly - I realized that I was watching something very special and maybe a little historic.



As an active duty Naval aviator, with combat experience to boot, Mark more than likely is the first of his kind to fly a Hellcat in this century and maybe the first to do so in decades. Most certainly Mark is the only person to fly a

Hornet and a Hellcat in the same afternoon. As I watched "Mutha" taxiing out, I turned to Scott "Bucker Boy" Drosos and expressed my thoughts. Scotty agreed this was a special moment, but also exclaimed, "What amazes me is how easily he transitions from an FA-18 to the Hellcat. In less than an hour he gets his head from supersonic jet engines into round engines and steam gauges." It's also a transition from 2011 back across 67 years - to 1944.



As a professional pilot, that quick transition from one world to another seemed to impress Scott more than anything. Now Scott's got something over 12,000 hours, mostly in Boeing 747-400's, and knows a smidgeon about aviating - so I found his comments very interesting. Scott concluded that training and experience, coupled with a hell of a lot of ability, had a lot to do with that seemingly easy transition.

Now as a "know it all" private pilot with a logbook of mostly empty pages, I have a different take on this. It is little known, but Scott also dabbles in magic, and is a member of the exclusive *Magic Castle* in Hollywood - so he should have easily arrived at my conclusion. It's gotta be smoke and mirrors, Scotty. It's gotta be smoke and mirrors.



Editor's Note: In addition to flying the Navy's FA-18 Hornet and the CAF's F6F-5 Hellcat, Mark "Mutha" Hubbard is also the Commander, Strike Fighter Wing, U. S. Pacific Fleet. He is based at the Lemoore Naval Air Station, CA, and has 380 FA-18s, plus pilots and crew members under his command. Mark is a member of our CAF-SoCAWing.

Flying Between Two Eras: Comments

Thanks for the kind words, Dan.

Actually easier than you think.....

In the Hornet, I'm just a voting member that keeps the craft pointed in the right direction (most of the time). Once you master interfacing with the vehicle, the flying is easy - assuming you can keep up with the 8 to 9 miles a minute you're traveling. And flying at night..... I cheat with Night Vision. so it's not really that dark out until you're forced to take them off for the CV landing. Gosh - I'm going to miss that - especially landing on a pitching deck in the dark!..... NOT!

Flying the Hellcat is raw aviation. The airplane is an extension of your hand-eye coordination, and reports immediately of an unrefined input - especially on landing. Thankfully, she was designed to land on carriers and is forgiving of a hard landing now and then - for knucklehead pilots who lack the consistent finesse to roll her on like Steve, Jason, Ken, and Chris all do so well.

I have so much to learn... I'm humbled to be a small part of the SoCal CAF.

Proud to Serve,

Mutha

CAPT Mark A. Hubbard USN
Commander
Strike Fighter Wing Pacific

Hey Dan,

Thanks for building me up to be an expert on all things aviation, but I'm one of those guys Captain Hubbard talks about that is more of a system manager than a true stick-and-rudder guy. As he so aptly points out, that's where the real skills lie. The longer I fly commercial jet transports, the more those "seat of the pants" skills atrophy for me, regardless of how many thousands of hours I accumulate.

What impressed and amazed me so much is that Captain Hubbard is able to go back and forth between two vastly different worlds of aviation with such apparent ease. One thing I do know is how much effort is involved in making something like that look easy. No - no smoke and mirrors there - just hard work and dedication.

While my background doesn't qualify me to be much of a judge of warbird pilots, I'm sure Mark is held in high esteem in that community as well. All I know is that it's great to have him as a member of our wing!

Scott Drosos

Two Hellcat Pilots Get Together

In July, 2010, a former Navy F6F Hellcat night fighter pilot in WWII, and his son visited our CAF-SoCAWing Aviation Museum. We did a story on Steve Popovich in our August, 2010 issue of "Flight Line."



© Photo by Ron Fleishman

Steve Popovich on the wing of his beloved Hellcat

Steve, along with his wife Helen and son Michael, visited with us again during our "Wings Over Camarillo" Air Show.

Here is what Steve wrote of his visit to his friend, Bill O'Neill, a member of our Wing:

Dear Bill,

It was our pleasure to again meet and talk with you at the Air Show. During my lifetime, I have attended many air shows, and during my early years, flew in a few of them. The air show you and your staff (and EAA staff) of the CAF-SoCAWing not only put on an air show, but you put on the Super Bowl of Air Shows! I would like to complement everyone involved for one terrific air show!

We met many very nice people during the show, and they were very interested in my career as a Navy night fighter pilot flying with the 3rd Fleet in a number of engagements in the Pacific.

We particularly enjoyed talking with Capt. Mark Hubbard, who flew the Hellcat, and also Lt. Alexander Wright, who flew the FA-18 Hornet.



© Photo by Richard Witten

Capt. Mark "Mutha" Hubbard (R.) and Lt. Alexander "Stranger" Wright listen intently as Steve tells of his Hellcat experiences in WWII. Mark plans to fly his Vintage Navy Stearman to visit Steve & family.

Wing Photo Page IV



© Photo by Dave Flood

Keith and Terri Bailey celebrated their 50th anniversary at our Museum Hangar along with over 100 of their relatives and friends. Our very best wishes for many more years together!



© Photo by Dave Flood

The gathering of friends & family to celebrate with Keith and Terri on their special day.



© Photo by Dave Flood

What pilots do when they aren't flying. Ken Nishimura cleaning up a PBJ flap. He hopes to be a pilot of the Mitsubishi A6M3 Zero one day.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Shari Heitkotter, our Safety Officer, conducted a successful Marshaling & Fire Guarding Class on Saturday, September 24. About 20 members took advantage of the important ramp safety class.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Here's Shari following up on important points of ramp safety covered in a CAF video on marshaling. We always need to be safe in handling our very valuable aircraft in the hangars and on the ramp.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Shari took the class out of the "O Club" and onto the ramp for some "hands-on" practice in moving aircraft around in the hangars and on the ramp