

# Flight Line

*The Official Publication of the CAF*

Southern California Wing

455 Aviation Drive, Camarillo, CA 93010

(805) 482-0064



July, 2021

Vol. XL No. 7

COMMEMORATIVE  
AIR FORCE

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**FLY YOUR FLAG PROUDLY!**



© Photo by Frank Mormillo

**“For once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward. For there you have been, and there you will always long to return.”**

**Leonardo da Vinci – 1452 - 1519**

**To Educate, Inspire and Honor Through Flight and Living History Experiences**

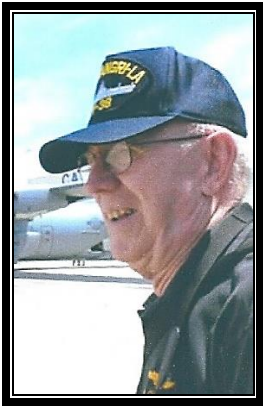
# JULY 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>MUSEUM OPERATES LIMITED HOURS DUE TO COVID 19 FRI &amp; SAT 10:10 - 4:00, SUN 12:00 - 2:00</b>				1 Work Day	2 Museum Open	3 Work Day Museum Open
				8 Work Day	9 Museum Open	10 Work Day Museum Open
4 Independence Day Museum Open	5	6 Work Day	7	15 Work Day	16 Museum Open	17 Work Day
11 Museum Open	12	13 Work Day	14	22 Work Day	23 Museum Open	24 Work Day Museum Open
18 Museum Open	19	20 Work Day	21	29 Work Day	30 Museum Open	31 Work Day Museum Open
25 Museum Open	26	27 Work Day	28			

STAFF AND APPOINTED POSITIONS				IN THIS ISSUE	
Wing Leader	* Jason Somes	(818) 292-4646	wingleader@cafsocal.com	Wing Calendar	2
Executive Officer	* Chris Liguori	(310) 430-2779	exo@cafsocal.com	Staff and Appointed Positions	2
Adjutant	* Roland Fogel	(805) 428-6806	adjutant@cafsocal.com	Editor's Page	3
Finance Officer	* Paul Willett	(818) 469-8480	finance@cafsocal.com	SoCalWing July Birthdays	4
Operations Officer	* Mike Hohls	(805) 410-2498	ops@cafsocal.com	SoCalWing Hall of Fame	5
Maintenance Officer	* Trace Eubanks	(805) 325-1513	maintenance@cafsocal.com	Nonagenarians Who Went West	6
Safety Officer	* Tom Newhard	(805) 797-0446	safety@cafsocal.com	Memory Photo Page 1	12
Development Officer	* Randy Sherman	(310) 740-2128	development@cafsocal.com	Nicole Carner Navy Pilot in Training	13
Education Officer	* Rob Hertberg	(702) 810-6193	education@cafsocal.com	PBJ <i>Semper Fi</i>	14
Gift Shop Manager	Berthany Smith	(805) 482-0064	giftshop@cafsocal.com	SoCal's PBJ Flies After 25 Years	16
Friends Coordinator	Ceci Stratford	(805) 630-3696	cecipilot@sbcglobal.net	Reflections of a PBJ Crew Member	16
Air Show Officer	Jason Somes	(818) 292-4646	ops@cafsocal.com	Memory Photo Page 2	17
Museum Director	Kathy Newhard	(805) 482-0064	museum@cafsocal.com	Memory Photo Page 3	18
Personnel Officer	Will Cunningham	(805) 570-3515	membership@cafsocal.com	Memory Photo Page 4	19
Film/Events Manager				Downed Pilot's Son Rebuilds Plane	20
Public Info Officer	Pat Brown	(805) 479-2221	pio@cafsocal.com	Memory Photo Page 5	21
Public Info Officer	Lucien Pillai	(805) 300-4580	col.luc.cafsocal@gmail.com	In Memoriam: Frank Doerfler	21
Historian	Ron Fleishman	(805) 586-4119	oldplanec46@aol.com	2021 Photo Page	22
Rides Coordinator	Mike Hodson	(805) 279-2252	rides@cafsocal.com		
Wing Photographer	Arash Afshari	(805) 279-1599	acafshari@gmail.com		
Librarian	Bill O'Neill	(805) 300-0212	scwairshow@aol.com		
Newsletter Editor	Dave Flood	(805) 402-8356	dmpflood31@gmail.com		
Newsletter Production	Casey de Bree	(805) 205-0494	scdebree@aol.com		
Webmaster	Will Cunningham	(805) 570-3515	col.will.cafsocal@gmail.com		
Procurement Officer	Mike Hodson	(805) 279-2252	aitechpm@gmail.com		
Displays/Artifacts Mgr.	Charlie Carr	(805) 200-7220	education@cafsocal.com		
HANGAR PHONE (805) 482-0064 WEBSITE www.cafsocal.com E-MAIL admin.cafsocal.com				<b>Submittal Deadline - 15th of the month</b>  Southern California Wing 455 Aviation Drive Camarillo, CA 93010-9501	

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## Editor's Page



**Dave Flood**

On Saturday, June 19, 2021, the CAF-So Cal Wing held its first General Meeting since Covid-19 shut us down.

A good attendance of members assembled in the Museum Hangar to hear reports from Wing Leader Jason Somes; Maintenance Officer Trace Eubanks; Finance Officer Paul Willett; Education Officer Rob Hertberg; Safety Officer Tom Newhard; Operations Officer Mike Hohls; and Museum Director Kathy Newhard.



**Mike Hohls, our Wing's Operations Officer, with Jason Somes, Wing Leader in back.**

The complete renovation of our F8F Bearcat was a main topic – and the progress on that project is looking good. The future of the AN-2 "Big Panda" biplane which was acquired from the now defunct CAF – Third Pursuit Squadron is questionable. It is a

high-maintenance, costly airplane to fly, and, because it was built in a foreign country, we cannot sell rides in it – per FAA regulations.

The other two aircraft acquired from Third Pursuit Squadron, the BF-108 and Fieseler F-156 "Storch" are easier to maintain and less costly to fly (once the "Storch" is put together, that is).

Several representatives from the CAF Headquarters were at the meeting.

Paul Willett, our CFO, assured all that we have a good financial reserve fund intact, even though our revenues have pretty well been non-existent due to the Covid-19 shutdown.

The PBJ "Semper Fi" flew for the first time since our CAF planes were grounded months ago. It took to the air on Friday, June 18, with our Wing Leader, Jason Somes, at the controls. We devote many pages of this issue of "Flight Line" to the history of our PBJ, and to its renovation and first flight. We are very proud of this airplane, and of the many members who helped to renovate it.

A highlight of the General Meeting, at least for me, was the recognition by the assembly of my upcoming 90<sup>th</sup> birthday – on July 4. Birthday cake and ice cream were enjoyed by all attendees, and the traditional "Happy Birthday" song echoed through the hangar. Many thanks to all who made this birthday party for me so memorable. It is one that will be in my memory banks for a long time!



**The 90-year-young guy with his birthday cake**

Some of my family joined me for the celebration. My son Brian and his wife Gina from Arnold, MD; my son Dan from Tuttle, OK; and my daughter Maura who lives with me here in Camarillo.

## Editor's Page, continued...



**Photo by Frank Mormillo**

**Our F-24, an example of exemplary renovation by a dedicated team of volunteer members.**

I thanked the members for their recognition and told them they were all my heroes. They spend innumerable hours devoting their time and talents to putting vintage military aircraft into the air – so future generations can appreciate the aircraft and pilots and mechanics who have helped secure our freedoms throughout much of our nation's history.

I have personally witnessed with awe the highly professional work our many volunteers have done on the PBJ "Semper Fi," the SNJ-4 "Bluebird," and the F-24 Forwarder. Over many years they have resurrected these venerable planes from derelict status and brought them back to life - to top-notch flying status.

I have also watched with pride the skill of the many members who have maintained and flown our C-46 "China Doll," our SNJ-5 #290, our F6F-5 Hellcat, our F8F-2 Bearcat, our PT-19A Cornell, our A6M3 Zero, and the P-51D Mustang "Man O' War" that we previously leased.

It has also been my pleasure to watch and report, along with my partner Casey de Bree, the stellar work of the many volunteers who have served as docents, display and model builders, cadet mentors, ramp coordinators, equipment mechanics, historians, staff officers, gift shop managers, museum directors, coordinator of friends groups, personnel managers, painters, purchasing managers, fabric workers – and the list goes on! All of these Wing volunteers have contributed so many hours of their lives to making our Wing the great organization that it is today!

## CAF – So Cal Wing July Birthdays



**Greg Bauman**

**Neil Blumenkopf**

**Casey de Bree**

**Scott Drosos**

**Dave Flood**

**Don Margolin**

**Frank Mormillo**

**Bob Mucica**

**Kathy Newhard**

**Stephen Partida**

**David Petrovich**

**Hugh Richards**

**Janet Rizzoli**

**Don Sabol**

**Jason Somes**

**Avery Willis**

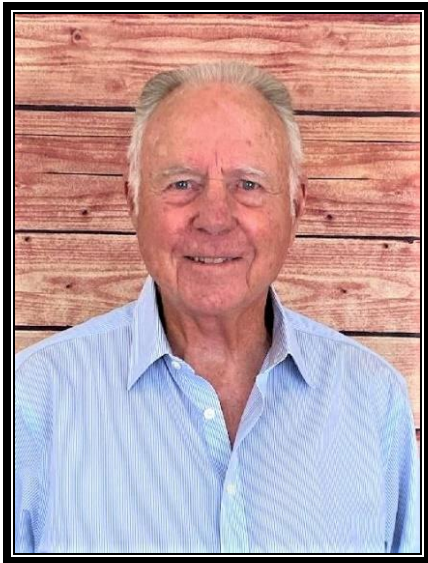




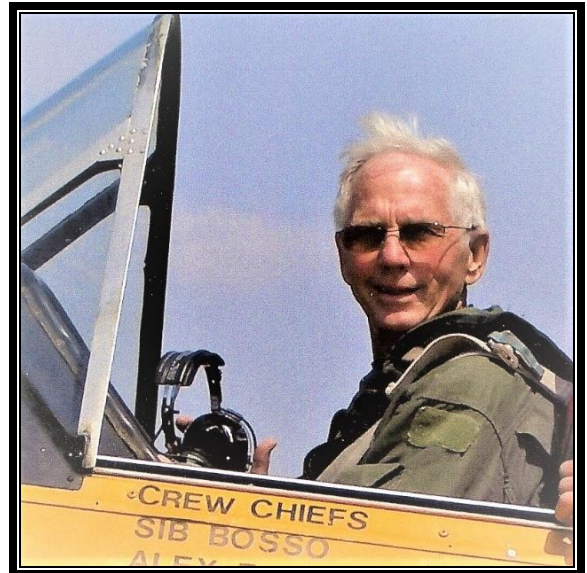


## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WING HALL OF FAME

DEDICATED TO THOSE MEMBERS OF OUR WING WHO HAVE SERVED  
FOR MANY YEARS TO MAKE OUR WING EXEMPLARY !



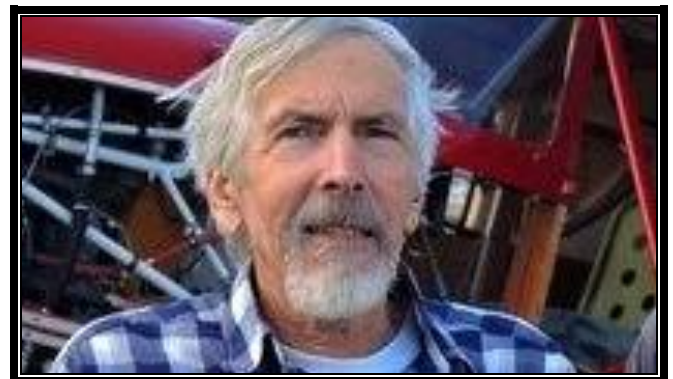
**BOB HEMBORG**  
CAF ID NO. 15442



**TERRY CEDAR**  
CAF ID NO. 21091



**DAVID PRICE**  
CAF ID NO. 20622

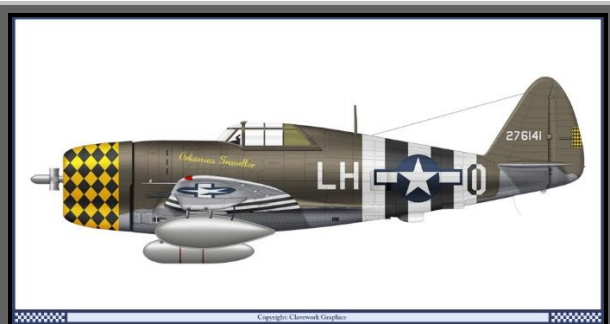


**BARRY ROBERTS**  
CAF ID NO. 21509

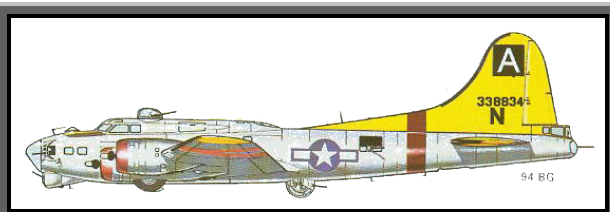
## Our Nonagenarians Who Have “Gone West” – and their airplanes.



**Col. Joe Peppito**



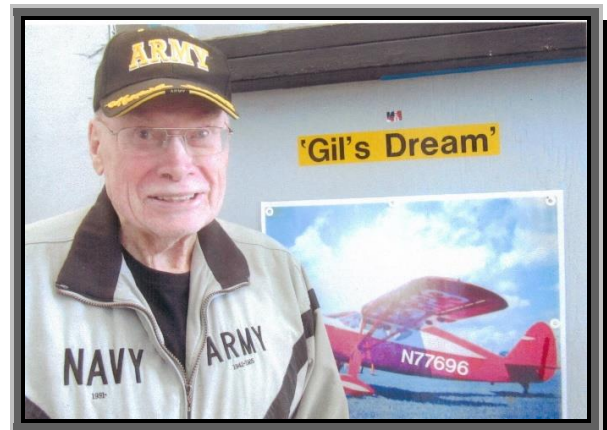
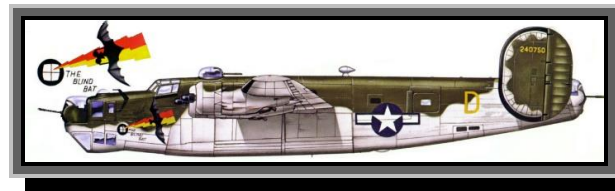
**Col. Bill Main**



**This series is from our “Flight Line” of July, 2014. The text on this page has been updated to reflect the present time.**



**Col. Russ Drosendahl**



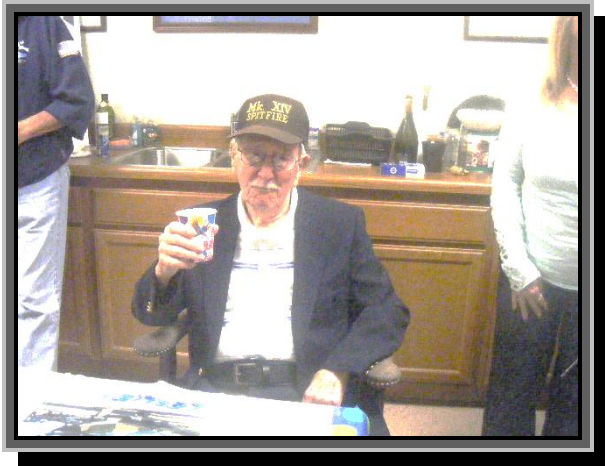
**Col. Jim Hinckley**



On the following pages, we will feature our late nonagenarians: Joe Peppito, Bill Main, Russ Drosendahl, Jim Hinckley, and Les Bedding. We are so very proud of having served with these gentlemen, and wish to honor them with this small recognition. They honored us by their character, commitment and contributions to our Wing. They were truly role models for all of our CAF-SoCalWing members. May they rest in eternal peace, and may their memory be a blessing.



## Our Late Nonagenarians, continued...



**Col. Les Bedding**



**Les as a 20-year-old RAF airman**



## Les Bedding

Les was born in 1920 in an area in the south of London. In 1939, at the age of 19, he volunteered for the Royal Air Force just before the start of World War II. Before he enlisted, he had worked at a firm reconditioning cars and engines, but the RAF wanted him to work on airframes.

Les went to Wales for airframe training of six months. In January, 1941, he boarded a train for Liverpool – then a boat (Empress of Australia) for Bombay, India. He was stationed at RAF Ambala for four years, first working on U.S.-built North American AT-6 Harvards, and then on Hawker Hurricanes. During his stint with the RAF, he also worked on Westland Lysanders, used in covert operations.

Les was married in 1945, and he and his wife had three children. His son Colin has been an active member of our Wing for many years, and did much work on the restoration of our Spitfire Mk XIV.

After his RAF service, Les worked for awhile as a mechanic for the British Ministry of Works; then on airplanes at Croydon Airport; and eventually in the U.S. as a quality manager. He lived in Oxnard when he heard about our Wing – and spent 6 years restoring our Spitfire. Les now lives at Belmont Village in Thousand Oaks.



**Les was the Crew Chief on our Spitfire Mk XIV during the six-year period of its restoration. It is one of the gems of our aircraft inventory – representing one of the aircraft types that helped to win the Battle of Britain.**



**Here is Les, on the right, with his Spitfire crew. They became more like a family over the years together.**

## Our Late Nonagenarians, continued...

### Joe Peppito



Joe Peppito was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. He graduated from the Manhattan High School of Aviation, and worked for the War Department at Wright-Patterson Field & Topeka AFB – 1941-1943. Joe joined the USAAF, and served from 1943-1946 – at Eglin Field Proving Ground Command in Florida, where he worked on what was to become his favorite aircraft, the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt. He also served at Maxwell Field, going to B-29 Flight Engineer School.

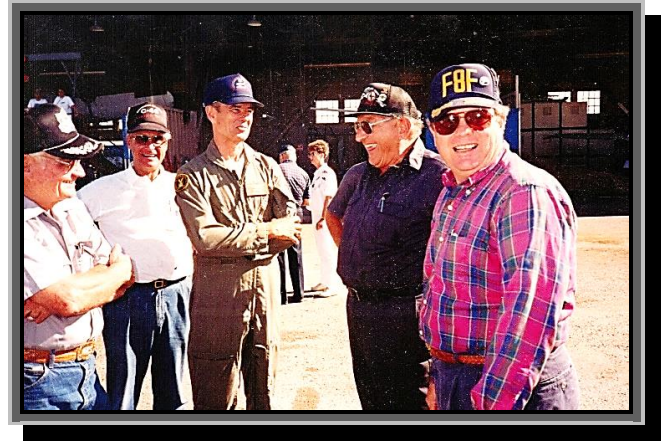
After his stint in the Air Force, Joe went to the Roosevelt Aviation School and earned an A&E License. He worked for TWA – Chicago's Midway Airport; John Wilson Cessna Dealer – Northbrook, IL; American Airlines – Chicago Midway Airport & L.A. Airport; North American Rockwell (F-86, F-100) in logistics & documentation; Rocketdyne – rocket engine documentation for the Mercury, Atlas, Thor and Saturn Programs, and was Logistics Manager for the Saturn SII Stage, Apollo, and Shuttle Vehicle.

Joe has been the Wing Leader of the SoCAWing (1999-2002) and was the Wing Maintenance Officer

(1983-1998 and 2007-2010). He has been the Crew Chief of our SNJ-4 #N6411D and the Wing Stock Room Manager. Joe is currently our Wing's Training Officer, and has done great work with our cadre of Wing Cadets for several years.

All told, Joe has amassed seventy years of aircraft and aerospace experience on his resume. He has been invaluable to our Wing since almost its beginnings.

He has been married to Marge for 68 years, and they have had four children, ten grandchildren, and fifteen great grandchildren.



Joe, 2<sup>nd</sup> from right, in the early days of our Wing – on the day our Bearcat arrived at CMA. Lefty Gardner is at left, and Steve Barber, Sr. at right.



Joe was the guiding force in the complete restoration of SNJ-4 over a seven year period.



Joe has taken a number of our Cadets under his wing, and has inspired some of them to go further with a career in aviation. Here Jennifer Bauman and her sister Jessica are intently watching as Joe makes a point in a class on riveting.



## Our Late Nonagenarians, continued...

### Russ Drosendahl



Russ was born in 1922 on a farm in Wyoming County New York, about thirty miles from Buffalo. After high school, he worked for Bell Aircraft, and had 45-50 hours toward his private pilot's license (in a Porterfield airplane). He joined the Army Air Corps at the age of 19, and was sent to the Nashville, TN classification center, where he classified as a pilot.

He spent most of the war at Maxwell Field AFB in Alabama, first as a B-24 Liberator pilot/ instructor, and later as a qualified B-29 pilot – when the war ended.

After the war, Russ flew for a small airline that went from Newark, NJ to Miami, FL and then to Puerto Rico. He joined TWA in 1947, and was with that airline for 34 ½ years – flying as a captain in various types of aircraft.

Russ has been with our CAF So Ca Wing now for over 30 years. He has been a pilot on the C-46 “China Doll,” our Wing Leader for a term, and a Docent in the Aviation Museum for many years. He has also been a major donor.

Russell Drosendahl has been our Mensch for many years. He is our Mentor, someone we all look up to – someone who treats everyone with respect and dignity. A true gentle man.

On Saturday, May 7, 2011, many of us gathered in the Museum Hangar to say a heartfelt “thank you” and “Godspeed” to Russ, who had decided to “retire” as a Docent after many years, and to just be a regular member who comes in and, with his buddy Bill Main, harasses their compatriot Joe Peppito.

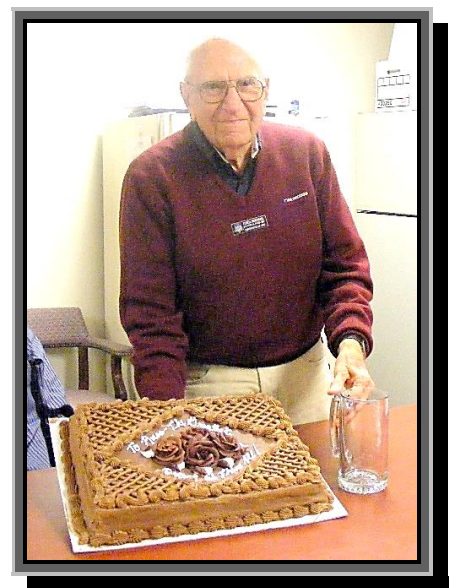
*In addition to a B-24 model, the Wing presented Russ with a special plaque with the CAF-SoCAWing logo, and an inscription noting our affection for Russ, and thanking him for all his years of service to our Wing.*



*Russ as a captain with Trans World Airways*



*Russ receiving a plaque from Gary Barber in recognition for his stint as our Wing Leader.*

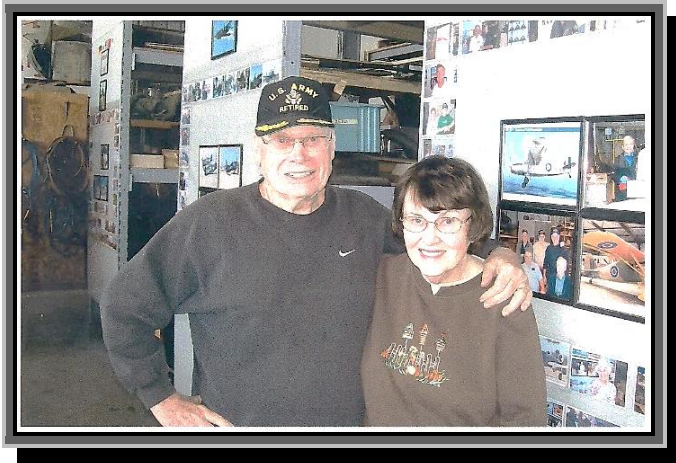


*Russ with his cake, celebrating his 90<sup>th</sup>*



## Our Late Nonagenarians, continued...

### Jim Hinckley



**Jim Hinckley and his wife Katie, who helped him with all the wall hangings of photos in the Maintenance Hanger honoring our plane crews.**

Jim Hinckley was born in Binghamton, New York at an early age (1922). He joined the U.S. Army in 1943, and was sent to Officer Training school at Sea Girt, NJ. As a Signal Corps officer, he was assigned to the NY State National Guard – 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. They landed on Saipan, the first Japanese island to be taken by the Americans, in June of 1944. His division eventually went with the troops which took over Okinawa.

After the war, he stayed in as a Captain, but then decided to get discharged. When he decided to re-enlist, he did so as a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. He moved up through the ranks, and eventually became a Colonel – retiring in 1965.

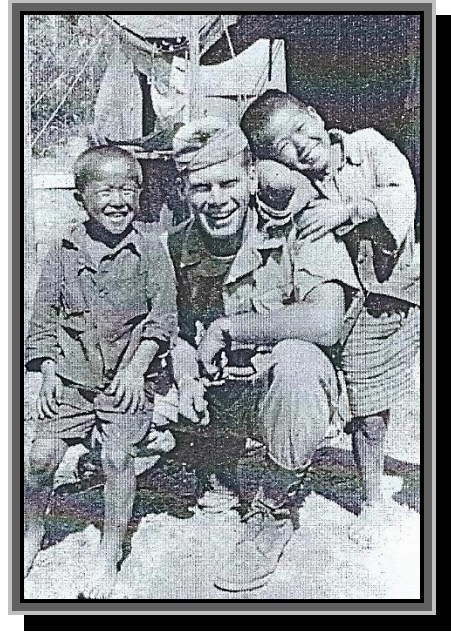
Jim went to work for ITT – where he worked on the Pershing Missile Program and in satellite navigation programs for ITT. He retired in 1984.

Since retirement, Jim has been active with non-profit organizations in Ventura County, including the Reagan Library, the Seabee Museum and our own CAF So Ca Wing Aviation Museum. After being a Docent in our Museum for years, Jim moved over to the other hangar to work with Norm Swagler and his team on the Fairchild F-24. He and his wife Catie also mounted numerous photo montages on the Maintenance Hangar walls honoring our plane crews.

Jim and Katie have been married for 61 years. They have three sons, twelve grandchildren, and ten great-grandchildren (all boys!).

Over the years, Jim has worn many hats – and we are honored that he decided to throw his hat into our ring!

He has been one of our largest and most dependable donors over the years – and we are proud to call him friend and colleague!



**Jim as a young soldier on Saipan with two orphaned boys who lived with Jim's outfit.**



**Jim gave well-researched, illustrated and informative talks on historical WWII events, such as Pearl Harbor, D-Day, and the Battle of Midway.**



**Jim in the rear seat of our North American SNJ-5 Texan, ready to take a ride. Jim was a stalwart supporter of all our aircraft, but had a soft spot for his favorite – the Fairchild F-24 Argus.**



## Our Late Nonagenarians, continued...

### Bill Main



Orville "Bill" Main was born in 1924 in Colfax, Iowa. After high school, Bill worked at the Maytag company, which was making parts for tanks as part of the war effort. After getting the go-ahead from both parents, he signed on with the Army Air Corps and went to Jefferson Barracks, MO for basic training. After that, he went to Santa Ana, CA for preflight training – and was classified as a pilot.

Bill flew Stearmans in primary training at Blythe, CA – 75 hours in the heat of the desert. He travelled over to Merced, CA for advanced training – in the Vultee "Vibrator." Here he chose to go into multi-engine flying, and was assigned to Pecos, TX for training in the twin-engine Cessna UC78, the "Bamboo Bomber." His final stint of training was in the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress – at Roswell, NM, where he graduated in the Class 44-D.

On to Lincoln, Nebraska, where he formed a new crew. They went to Ardmore, OK for formation flying (75 hours) – then back to Lincoln for the flight overseas to Wales. Bill was in the 94<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force – stationed at Rougham Field in Bury-St.-Edmunds, England – from where he flew an eventual 35 missions over Nazi territory in B-17s. By that time, he and his crew saw little of the Me-109s and FW-190s, but did have to contend with the newer Me-262 German jet fighters.

After the war, Bill went to work as a pilot, and eventually a captain, for American Airlines in 1950. He flew Convair 240s, Lockheed Electras, Douglas DC-10s, and Boeing 707s and 747s for American.

When he first joined the Confederate Air Force, he flew the B-17 "Sentimental Journey" for the Arizona Wing on tour. He later flew our Wing's C-46, was a co-owner of the SNJ-5 Texan – which was later donated to our Wing. Bill became a Docent for a number of years, and now spends time cataloguing aviation magazines for our library. We are so fortunate to have Bill as a member. He has been a role model for all of us. He turns 90 this month.



Here's Bill, in the right seat of our C-131 (gone but not forgotten). Bill has had many hours in the cockpits of our CAF airplanes over the years.



Bill posing with his old waist-gunner on their B-17, John Doyle, who was visiting Bill.



Bill, with a head-lock on Joe Peppito. These two have been friends and office-mates for many years, and constantly "kibbitz" over which aircraft was most valuable during WWII – the B-17 Flying Fortress or the P-47 Thunderbolt.



## Memory Photo Page I – July, 2015



© Photos by Ron Fleishman

Verne Horton, his wife Marlyn, and his granddaughter at a 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party sponsored for Verne by the PBJ Renovation Team recently.



Verne, with one of his great-grandchildren, holding the photo of our PBJ-1J "Semper Fi" given him by the PBJ Restoration Team.



A beautiful cake, brought by Verne's wife Marlyn and daughter Deby, to commemorate his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Since our PBJ Restoration Team befriended Verne, he has become a member of our Wing. He served in WWII in the Marine Corps in the Pacific Theater as a crewman on PBJs just like ours.



© Photo courtesy of the Ventura County Star

Art Fiedler, P-51 ace in WWII. He is shown here at his home in Oxnard, where he lives with his wife. He was just awarded the Congressional Gold Medal for his exploits as a pilot in the 325<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Our scissors lift getting a much-needed face-lift from three of our Cadets: Riley Serra, Jimmy Alvarez and Nicole Carner – under the direction of Lloyd McAfee.

**Note: see next page for update on Nicole Carner**



© Photo by Dave Flood

On Fathers' Day, 2015, our Wing had a special sale of aviation items – the proceeds going to the PBJ-1J restoration. Col. Bill O'Neill mans the rides booth.



## ENS Nicole Carner, Wing Cadet Alumna U.S. Navy Pilot in Training

By ENS Nicole Carner, USN



**Nicole's "tie-cutting" ceremony with her onwing instructor.**

Upon graduating Aviation Preflight Indoctrination (API), I received orders for Primary Training at Training Air Wing 4 and moved to Corpus Christi, TX at the end of October.

Had a few months of downtime and studying before I started ground school at the beginning of January. Ground school consisted of two weeks of intensive T-6B Texan II systems, contacts and course rules classes. From there I completed several blocks of simulator events focused on check-lists and emergency procedures before moving on to the majority of primary, known as contacts.

The contact simulator events went by fast, however, due to the lovely Gulf Coast weather. The visual contact flights portion took much longer. After being constantly weather- canceled for weeks at a time, I got the opportunity to go on a two-week long training detachment to Roswell, New Mexico.

There I was able to fly consistently and complete my initial check ride and solo...didn't see any aliens though.

Returning to Navy Corpus, I was able to complete the aerobatic block, check ride and solo within a few weeks. Aero has been by far my favorite and the best flights I've had yet.

I was then opted for instruments ground school and am now preparing for the instrument block of simulators and flights. Should be another few weeks before I complete the instruments block and move onto formation flying which should only take a week.

And then I'm done! Won't be long before I am selected for my fleet platform and move onto advanced training. I am still confident and hopeful that I have the grades for jets, and am looking forward to the next stage.

Looking forward to giving you another update when I finish training here! Until then, I hope everything at the CAF is going well and look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,  
Nicole

**ENS Nicole Carner**  
**Phone: (805) 559-0185**  
**[nicolecarner23@gmail.com](mailto:nicolecarner23@gmail.com)**



**Nicole after her solo in the T-6B Texan II at Roswell, NM**

## B-25J-30-NC SN 44-30988 -PBJ-1J "Semper Fi"

### History



**PBJ-1J "Big Ole Brew 'n' Little Ole You" at air show in 1984.**

The B-25J-30-NC SN 44-30988 flying as "Semper Fi" was delivered on March 21, 1945. She was transferred to the U.S. Navy as PBJ-1J BuNo 35857. She was delivered to the USN modification center at Elizabeth City with modifications completed on May 24, 1945. Her first assignment was to 81 Service Squadron as a storage replacement pool during the war.

On November 15, 1945, she was assigned to a flight testing program with the Navy Special Weapons Unit. The testing involved a new rocket launcher delivery system. After a year of testing, she was assigned to a Naval Pool Squadron in January of 1947 and declared surplus in March of that year. The following summary of assignments are listed on her record card:

#### Base Assignments

Date	Location
03/21/1945	Elizabeth City, NJ
05/24/1945	Elizabeth City, NJ
11/15/1945	Johnstown, PA
12/15/1945	Johnstown, PA
01/28/1947	Johnstown, PA
03/08/1947	Johnstown, PA

On July 1, 1947, she was sold to the St. Louis Flying Service at Krats Airport in St. Louis, Missouri. Her civil registration was assigned as N5865V. She was converted for corporate use with an executive interior.

This conversion included a floor over the bomb bay, soundproofing, additional seats, windows and new engines as well as other alterations for corporate use. In January of 1948, she was sold to Continental Airlines. She was sold to the Oilfield Aviation Corporation of Houston, Texas in April of 1950. She underwent an extensive executive conversion including an airstair door and chrome plating. She was damaged in a wheels-up landing in mid-1951. She was repaired and returned to service.

In April of 1960, she was sold to the Atlantic Aviation Corporation of Wilmington Delaware. She was sold again in April of 1961 to Silvio J. Adano of South Merrimack, New Hampshire. In August of the same year, she was sold to Graubart Aviation, Inc. at Porter City Airport, Valparaiso, Indiana. Again, in May of 1962, she was sold to Aero Enterprises of Elkhart, Indiana. By August of 1962, she was sold to Robert Gore of Chicago, Illinois. She was sold back to Aero Enterprises in July of 1963. They immediately sold her to Air Services Inc. of Addison, Texas.

She was used to test electronics including Doppler navigation radar and side-looking radar. She was sold in 1971 to Robert A. Mathews of Jacksonville North Carolina. The next owner used her as a cargo aircraft between Central America and southern Florida. She was sold at a Public Sale in January 1976 after an unsuccessful search for the owner in Panama. She was then transferred to Tom Reilly, of Orlando, Florida in 1979.

After restoration, she was then sold to Craig Tims of Roanoke, Texas. She was flown as "Big Ole Brew 'n Little Ole You". She was transferred to the CAF in February 1988 and by 1994 restoration was started by the Southern California Wing. They replaced a wing due to corrosion issues. The starboard waist window, which had been replaced with an air stair, was restored with the waist window section of 44-28765. On May 15, 2016, after a 23 year restoration, she became the only known flying PBJ-1J.

Pool Service Sadr

- **Model:** B-25J-30-NC
- **Serial Number:** 44-30988
- **NAA Mfg. Number:** 108-34263
- **FAA Registration:** N5865V
- **Mfg. Plant:** Fairfax - Kansas City, Kansas



## History of PBJ-1J "Semper Fi" – continued



**PBJ-1J "Big Ole Brew 'n' Little Ole You" flying into Camarillo Airport with CAF-So Cal Wing's C-46 Commando "China Doll" February, 1988.**

- **Completion Date:** March 20, 1945
- **Delivery Date:** March 21, 1945
- **Status:** Flying
- **Owner:** Commemorative Air Force, Southern California Wing – 805-482-0064.
- **Location:** Camarillo, California
- **Website:** <https://www.cafsocal.com/>
- **Notable info:** The only known surviving PBJ-1J. Aircraft design honors Capt. Doit L. Fish, father of our late CAF – So Cal Wing member David Fish, who was flying PBJ-1J "MB 11" (BuNo 35243) when he and crew went MIA on May 30, 1945 over Mindanao, Philippine Islands.

The plane was found in 1956, and the crew was buried together in the National Cemetery, Denver Colorado.

"Semper Fi," once Covid-19 restrictions are lifted, will be taking people for rides again. To take a memorable flight in this historical Marine twin-engine bomber from WWII, please call 805-482-0064 for information and to possibly put your name on a list for a future flight on "Semper Fi."

# "Semper Fi"



**PBJ-1J "Semper Fi" under renovation by a superb team headed by Marc Russell.**



**It took 23 years of hard work by skilled members to transform "Big Ole Brew" to "Semper Fi!"**



**Here's our beautiful North American PBJ-1J Mitchell bomber "Semper Fi" on her maiden flight on May 15, 2016, after countless hours put in by so many devoted volunteer members who created an almost-new airplane out of the bomber that flew in to Camarillo from Midland, Texas in 1988. Kudos to all those who labored so diligently to bring this venerable warbird back to life!**

## SoCal's PBJ Flies After 23 Years

From "On The Fly" – CAF, May, 2016

On Sunday May 15, 2016, just before 2 p.m. local time, the world's last known surviving PBJ-1J Mitchell took to the skies over Camarillo, California. The return to flight followed a decades-long, down-to-the-last-rivet restoration by the CAF's [Southern California \(SoCal\) Wing](#).

The flight went smoothly and many supporters were on hand to see her soar again and cheer her home.

The PBJ was the Navy version of the B-25 and served almost exclusively with the US Marine Corps during WWII. **WarbirdsNews** published an extensive article [HERE](#) on the lengthy restoration, featuring dozens of photographs by contributor (and So Cal Wing member / PBJ Restoration Team member) Dan Newcomb.

This PBJ came off the North American's Kansas City production line as B-25J, 44-30988, in early 1945. Following conversion and acceptance by the Navy, the newly-minted naval patrol bomber became Bu.No.35857. The aircraft never saw combat, and is one of a handful of PBJs to make it onto the civilian registry.



The SoCal Wing painted the airplane to represent PBJ-1J, Bu.No. 35243. Marked as MB 11, the aircraft flew with Marine Bombing Squadron VMB-611 in the Pacific Theater. Sadly, 1st. Lt. Doit L. Fish and his seven man crew were lost in MB 11 during a strike on the Kibawe Trail near Davao on May 30, 1945. Lt. Fish's son, David, is a volunteer with the Wing, so it seems more than appropriate that the PBJ serves as a tribute to his father's crew and all the Marines who flew the PBJ.

CAF President Stephan C. Brown said "I am happy for the Southern California Wing's members, this has been an ongoing project for more than two decades and it's great to see their hard work pay off." Brown attended the PBJ's first flight and added, "This is what the CAF mission is about, honoring military aviation and inspiring others to work hard and accomplish their goals."

With the PBJ flying once more, she will undoubtedly become a regular performer on the air show circuit. The CAF Headquarters wishes to offer the SoCal Wing volunteers our heartfelt appreciation for persevering with such dedication on this difficult project and that the aircraft enjoys many years of successful flying ahead!

**To support the CAF Southern California Wing's efforts and contribute to the ongoing operation of the aircraft, donations are appreciated.**

## Reflections of A Long-Time PBJ Crew Member

By Dan Newcomb

Article from Warbird News, 2015

This article came out a little over a year ago. Some of you may not have seen this. It brought back many memories. Most are fond memories.

It has been a long road but with a few rough spots. When I look at the PBJ I see so much more than aluminum. When I started there were only 4 or 5 on the crew. Work was slow. Most only showed up one day a week. I remember fighting with other wing members over space in the hangar. We were stuffed back in a corner and everybody dumped their crap around us.

Few thought we would ever fly. Several thought the wing was wasting time and money on a piece of junk. Crew members came and went. We stopped work for over 10 months to do structural repair to China Doll. During that time Scotty fell and shattered his wrist and the injury damned near ended his flying career.

At least four crew members that I worked with never lived long enough to see the plane fly. I remember the constant struggle for money and how we always seemed to find a way to get by. I remember the first time we pulled the plane out for the August air show. No engines, wings or tail but we were so proud!

I think of a late afternoon years ago when Tim and I put two lawn chairs up in the cockpit and armed with a six pack sat and dreamed. There were weddings, divorces, and births. New friendships and broken relationships. A move from Bakersfield to Simi Valley.

This long road has been one hell of an adventure. I have been dreaming of seeing this bird fly for years....

**Our Wing is so very proud of the PBJ Restoration Team that has worked so hard and long over the past twenty-three years to put back into the sky a truly magnificent airplane. It has been a labor not only of great perseverance, but of aviation expertise, with a great sense of history and a generous dash of love.**

From "Flight Line" of June, 2016



## Memory Photo Page 2: PBJ's First Flight

© Photos by Frank Mormillo



David Fish, whose father, Doit Fish, was the pilot of MB11 of the VMB-11 Marine Squadron based in the Philippines in WWII. MB11 was MIA in 1945 after a mission over Mindanao – later found in 1956. All crew members are buried in the Denver National Cemetery.

With David is Verne Horton, one of the last survivors of VMB-11 – a Marine aerial gunner in a PBJ much like our “Semper Fi.” Verne has been a frequent visitor. “Semper Fi” is dedicated to the crew of MB11.



The crew of “Semper Fi” on her first flight, including “Semper Fi’s” Crew Chief Marc Russell, our CAF President Steve Brown, and Dick Troy.



Taxiing out to the runway.



From “Flight Line” of June, 2016

## Memory Photo Page 3: PBJ's First Flight

Photos by Frank Mormillo



From "Flight Line" of June, 2016



## Memory Photo Page 4: PBJ's First Flight

© CBS, Channel 2 News



Col. Marc Russell, Crew Chief of PBJ-1J Mitchell bomber "Semper Fi," being interviewed by CBS Channel 2 on the event of the first flight.



II



III



From "Flight Line" of June, 2016



## Downed Pilot's Son Rebuilds Plane

Aircraft is similar to one missing in World War II

By John Mitchell, [jmitchell@VenturaCountyStar.com](mailto:jmitchell@VenturaCountyStar.com)  
September 26, 2006 (Reprinted with permission)

One of the photographs that Dave Fish treasures shows his father holding him in his arms in Decatur, Ill., on Sept. 8, 1944. Actually, you can't see the infant because a baby blanket was covering his face from the sun. However, Fish, now 62, a 34-year resident of Camarillo, takes comfort from looking at the photo, knowing that for a few brief moments, he was close to his father.

Less than a month later, on Sept. 26, Capt. Doit Fish, a U.S. Marine Corps pilot, stepped aboard the SS Zoella Lykes, a freighter-turned-troopship, at Port Hueneme. Then, he and other members of VMB 611, a bomber squadron, sailed off to do combat with the Japanese. Some of the men came back. Doit Fish did not.

He was the pilot of a PBJ-1, the Navy's version of a B-25 Mitchell bomber. He flew 25 combat missions, the last one against Japanese targets on the large island of Mindanao in the Philippines to support ground assaults.

His aircraft did not return to Moret Field in Zamboanga, Mindanao. It just disappeared. No amount of searching could find it. Doit Fish and his seven crew mates were declared missing in action. The date was May 30, 1945. Eleven years later, on Nov. 16, 1956, the aircraft wreckage and crew's skeletal remains were found.

Although individual identification was impossible, it was confirmed that the remains were of Fish and his crew. On July 15, 1957, a group burial with full military honors was held at Fort Logan National Cemetery in Denver. Dave Fish was not there. He said his mother, Dorothy, and stepfather had decided not to attend.

Nearly 50 years later, Dave Fish and members of the Commemorative Air Force Southern California Wing at Camarillo Airport are rebuilding a PBJ-1J, similar to the one flown by Capt. Doit Fish and his crew. The Southern California Wing acquired the plane from Midland, Texas, in April 1993. After inspection, it was put into a long restoration process. According to the Southern California Wing's Web site, the plane will be painted the colors of a Marine Corps PBJ-1J, and its name will be Semper Fi.

Dave Fish and his mother had left Illinois and come to Ventura County when Dave was 5. He attended El Rio School and three years at Oxnard High School before moving back to Illinois, where he finished high school.

At the end of his junior year in high school, Dave Fish moved back to Illinois, where his grandparents were. "They discussed my dad all the time, and that piqued a sense of inquiry in me," he said. "I asked questions, and I started learning more about my father. The door had been opened. I got more information from my grandparents." He found himself getting sentimental and emotional on

Memorial Day, because it was on a May 30 when his father disappeared.

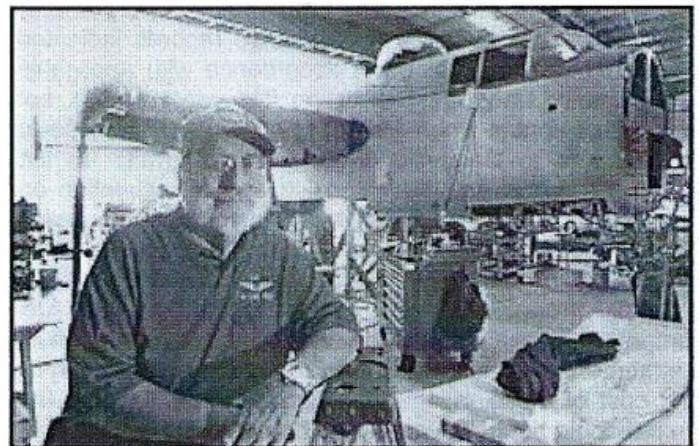
On Nov. 16, 1963, seven years to the day after his father's remains were located, Dave Fish married Mary Waalewyn in Belvedere, Ill. The next day, they began their journey to Oxnard and, on the way, they stopped in Denver. "We stopped to see Dad's grave site for the first time," he said. "That visit had a great impact on me. It was emotional because like other families with MIAs, there had been no closure. On that day, I got a sense of closure. He was there with the crew he trained with, the crew he flew combat missions with, who were shot down together and who are now together for eternity.

Shortly before his wedding, his mother gave him some of his father's personal effects that had been mailed to her. "They included his log book, a boomerang he had bought in Australia, his billfold, watch, ink pen, a \$1 bill, and photos of my mother and me," Dave Fish said.

In 2004, Fish began striking gold with the Internet. He got his dad's military records from the Military Records Center in St. Louis. "I found out that he had left from Port Hueneme; until then I had no idea he had been here," Fish said. "I learned the name Zoella Lykes and was put in touch with a guy who was a Navy armed guard during that voyage, and he remembered Dad and the others."

Fish also learned about the survivors of VMB 611, that they had a reunion each year. He met them and learned that one had driven the jeep that brought his dad from the barracks to the flight line for that ill-fated mission.

He also met his father's wingman on that flight, an old man still suffering from survivor's guilt. "I think this put a finality to everything," said Fish, referring to a book written in 1981 by one of his father's squadron mates. "That was the year he and other surviving squadron members learned my dad's plane had been found." The book ends with these words: "At long last, after 36 years, we can close the book on VMB 611. All planes are in."



© Photo by Rob Varela, *Ventura County Star*

**Col. Dave Fish with PBJ-1J "Semper Fi," to be painted in the colors of Marine Squadron VMB-611.**



## Memory Photo Page 5 – July, 2015



© Photo by Dan Newcomb

Local TV station KTLA visited our hangars recently. Our good friend, Channel 5's Gail Anderson, did a special program at our Wing for Armed Forces Week.



© Photo by Jennifer Bauman

Jennifer Bauman during a glider flight north of Paso Robles. Jennifer is currently an aeronautical engineering major at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.



© Photo by Mike Greywitt

Docent Lois Watts showing our P-51 "Man O' War" to students from Las Posas Elementary School.



© Photo by John Cutright

One of the props being taken off our PBJ-1J for scheduled maintenance. Both props will be checked and back on for our Wings Over Camarillo Air Show.



© Photo by Trace Eubanks

Cols. Ricky Chen and Shari Heitkotter giving TLC to our Mitsubishi A6M3 Zero. All our fighters have to be kept in tip-top shape, especially during the air show season. Much of our revenue comes from our participation in air shows throughout the west.

## In Memoriam: Frank W. Doerfler, Sr. November 7, 1929 – May 15, 2021

Frank was a long-time member of our Wing.

He was married to Marjorie Jean, who died in May, 2010. His last address was Lake Havasu City, Arizona.

Frank served in the Air Force from 1950 to 1957, during the Korean War. He worked for Hughes Aircraft from 1960 – 1986. He was a supervising engineer on the F-106 program; program manager for the Phoenix Missile program; and Business Operations Manager for the FA-18 program.

Frank joined the CAF in 1989, and was awarded the Silver Magnolia Blossom Award by CAF Headquarters. He was active in our Wing for many years.

## July, 2021 Photo Page



North American P-51D "Cottonmouth," owned and flown by David Price, on of this month's honorees on our Wing Hall of Fame.



Photo by Al Seib, *Los Angeles Times*

Ventura County Fire Asst. Chief John McNeil, right, listens as Capt. Jeff Seabrook describes the new Firehawk helicopter at Camarillo Airport. The county's new Firehawks have 1,000 gallon belly tanks, three times more than the old Huey choppers.



Photo by Eric Van Gilder

Remembering our Spitfire Mk-14 flying formation with the P-51D Mustang "Man O' War"



The beautifully-restored Douglas DC-2 that Clay Lacy flew into CMA several years ago. Clay and his restoration group did a marvelous job to bring this vintage airplane to pristine condition. Russ Drosendahl and Ron Fleishman, as ex-TWA employees, enjoyed particularly seeing this bird!



Famous painting hanging in our Museum – by our member Thomas Van Stein. It depicts a Japanese Zero being downed by an AVG P-40 Warhawk.



Rocky Mountain Wing's TBM Avenger flying formation with our F8F Bearcat. We feel very close to this aircraft, as Bob Thompson, now active with the Rocky Mountain Wing, was once a staff officer with our Wing – plus that Don McMillan, late of our Wing, flew Avengers in WWII, and helped to sink the Japanese carrier Zuikaku with a torpedo from his TBM.