

SOME FLYING
EXPERIENCES

1943 - 1973

by: Vernon w. Garner, Lt Col USAF (retired)



ENROUTE TO N. KOREA TARGET - 1951 (B-29)

Jan, 2013

FOREWORD

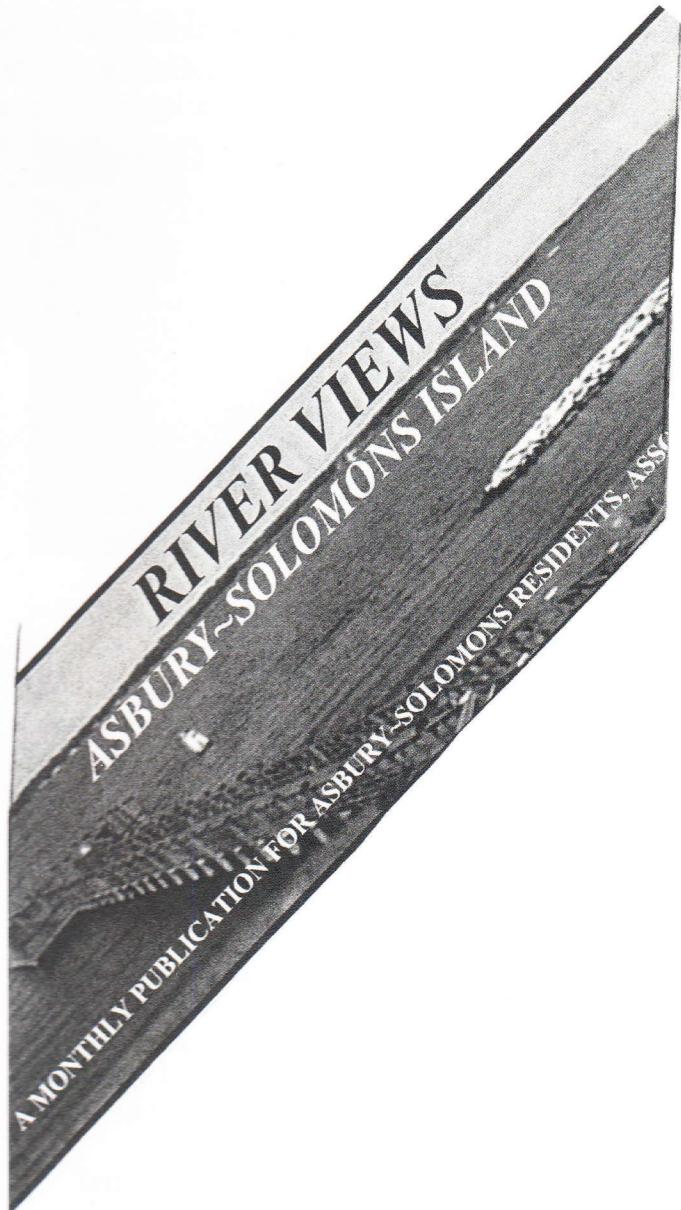
My wife, Doris Anne, and I moved from our home on nearby Swaggers Point Road to Asbury-Solomons Retirement Community in October, 2002. In early 2012, I was asked by the 'local resident editor' of our monthly publication, *River View*, if I would write a series of articles on some flying experiences during my thirty year Air Force career. I agreed, in fact was honored, to do it.

Using some notes that I had previously compiled, Google for some technical data, and my fractured memory of long ago events, I was able to put together some reasonably interesting stories.

My motive for putting together this booklet is primarily for the education and entertainment of our grandkids, g'kids, g'g'kids, etc.

Vern Garner

Vernon Garner



SOME FLYING EXPERIENCES

By Vern Garner, Lt. Col USAF (Ret.)

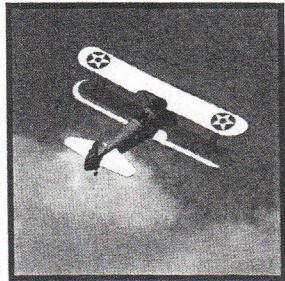
During my thirty years as an Army Air Corps/Air Force pilot I was qualified in and flew 20 different types of aircraft from the initial PT-17 trainer to the eight jet-engine B-52 bomber. Along the way, I experienced some interesting situations. This is the first in a series of articles (similar to the *Farm* articles by Jack Williams) that I will be sharing with you.

THE STEARMAN PT-17, PRIMARY TRAINER

I volunteered in November, 1942, to become a pilot in the Army Air Corps. After a brief basic

training period in Miami Beach, I was sent to West Va. University for a five month period of academic training while awaiting an opening for pilot training. We had six Piper Cubs at WVU where we received a few hours of basic flying, but my serious flying training began at Decatur, Ala., where I reported for primary training in the PT-17 in Sept., 1943. This was an open cockpit, two seat biplane used extensively at that time for initial training for thousands of 'would be' pilots throughout the United States.

We still see the PT-17 in the skies at air shows, crop dusting, etc.



Most of the Primary Training Schools were civilian schools with civilian instructor pilots. My school was the Southern Flying School and my instructor was a Mr. Becker. We received sixty hours of flight training there, plus academic and physical training. The main base had a concrete runway, and we also had several nearby auxiliary fields with grass runways.

Our air training included the basic needle, ball and airspeed maneuvers, plus stalls, spins, loops and other 'fun' stuff. One day Mr. Becker had me fly to one of the auxiliary fields where we did some take offs and landings. Then he had me stop the airplane where he got out and told me I was on my own. With fear and trembling, I eased the throttle forward, worked the rudder to keep the plane headed straight, pulled back on the stick when I reached the proper airspeed and *whoopee!*, I was airborne on my first *solo* flight. After three take-offs and landings Mr. Becker apparently decided I had the potential to be a pilot.

We flew back to home base where I was greeted by fellow cadets with a traditional dunk in the swimming pool for cadets when they soloed. I have two vivid memories of my two months there; first, the food was excellent southern cooking and second, my punishment for coming in late one night after curfew was marching for six hours with a rifle on my shoulder--on my off time.

THE VULTEE VALIANT BT-13 BASIC TRAINER

By Vern Garner, Lt Col USAF (Ret)

After completing Primary Flight Training at Decatur, AL, we were transferred to Courtland, AL, for Basic Flight Training in the BT-13. This was a quantum leap from the Stearman for us young 'wanta be' pilot cadets.

The Valiant had twice the horsepower, airspeed and altitude capability. More importantly, it had a closed cockpit with a heating system...and it had an electrical system, flight instruments, and two-way radio communications. These upgrades now made it possible for us to be trained in all-weather and night flying conditions.

I'll digress here a bit to mention that some of the cadets did not make it through Primary Training. In fact, only about 20% of the 60 fellows that left Union Station, D.C., when I did on 3 Feb. 1943, completed all five of the stressful/rigorous phases of classification, pre-flight, and flight training. Some did not possess the required 'motor' skills. Others could not handle the physical stress, while still others became airsick or disoriented in the air. Most of these "washouts" were diverted to other types of training. I suppose my growing up on a farm prepared me well for all the required physical tests. I could run, do push-ups, sit ups, and pull-ups with the best of them. Now back to the BT-13. During our two months at Courtland, we had to learn to fly at night and in bad weather (and if bad weather did not exist, the instructor would place a black hood over us to prevent us from seeing outside of the cockpit). We were required to fly a total of sixty hours during this basic training phase; twenty hours at night and twenty hours in weather conditions. We had to make a certain number of take-offs and landings, and last, but not least, we had to become proficient in numerous emergency procedures. Incidentally, we referred to the BT-13 as the "Vultee Vibrator" because when approaching stall speed the plane did a lot of vibrating.

I well remember one flight when I took off alone on a navigational training mission. The sky was overcast with rain coming toward the base. At approximately 2000 ft, I flew into the overcast and was immediately consumed by darkness, rough air, and

Rain.



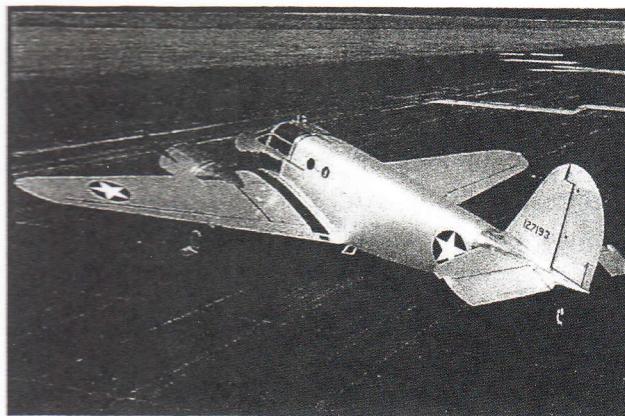
Why? Oh Why?, I thought to myself, did I ever leave the farm and my Mom and Dad to place myself in this position where surely I was about to perish?

But, my training kept me 'steady at the helm' and at 5000 ft altitude I broke out of the clouds into a calm, clear, sunlit sky. With a layer of flat white clouds below me stretching as far as I could see, it was the most beautiful sight I had ever seen. It seemed that I had entered the pearly gates of Heaven and I continued on my mission with calm and confidence. Next month, I'll share with you my two months of Advanced Training at Seymour, IN.

SOME FLYING EXPERIENCES

AT-10 TWIN ENGINE ADVANCED TRAINER

By Vern Garner, Lt Col USAF (Ret)



After completing Basic Training in Courtland, AL, in February, 1944, I was transferred to Freeman Field, Seymour, IN, for twin engine Advanced Flight training in the Beech AT-10 aircraft. Due to a shortage of aluminum at the time, the AT-10 fuselage was built of wood and we referred to it as the Bamboo Bomber. It had been a long eleven-month training process so far, but I had reached my final phase of training. If I could complete this final phase, I would receive a 2nd Lt. Commission and pilot wings. The two months of training went well and I did receive those gold bars and silver wings. It was a thrill to have my dad, mom, an aunt, a sister, and girlfriend (now wife Doris Anne) drive out from Maryland for my graduation on 15 April, 1944 (Class 44-D).

Instead of moving on to B-17 bomber training, I was assigned to stay on at Freeman as an instructor pilot for other incoming cadets. This turned out to be a neat six-month experience. I recall one easy "laid back" instructional navigation flight with cadet Bob Brady, where I fell asleep during the flight. He woke me up on the final approach with "Lt. Garner, we're coming in for the landing." We later served in the same B-29 squadron in the Pacific and he delighted in telling the story of that flight. The training at Freeman Field included intensive instrument flying. One of my students was determined to fly by "his" rules rather than the established USAAF rules. I recommended him for a check ride with Maj. Poe, our operations officer. One check ride and he was gone. Occasionally, some of us would fly over to nearby Bloomington, IN, and buzz the campus of the University of Indiana. Other times we would fly low

over some of the farmland and buzz the farmers working their crops. Not a good idea, really, but it was fun at the time. A-S resident Frank Brooks was a flight instructor during the time I was there.

Freeman Field was built in 1942, replacing twenty-seven farms. A total of 4200 Army Air Corps cadets trained there between Apr. 1942 and Feb. 1945. Twenty-three of them lost their lives in training accidents during that period. Astronaut Gus Grissom trained there in early 1944 and the first U.S. helicopter training program started there in Sept. 1944. The Tuskegee Airmen were assigned there in March, 1945. A national scandal erupted when those black pilots were denied access to the base officers' club.

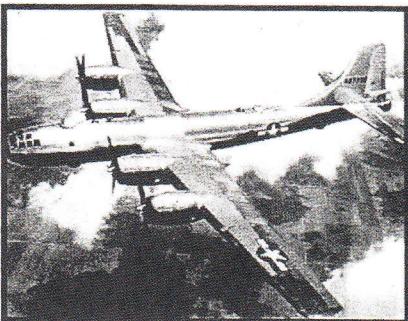
I returned to Seymour in August 2003, along with 28 other "aging" graduates from Freeman Field, for a 3-day reunion sponsored by the town mayor. I returned for another reunion in 2011 when only seven former cadets attended. We were "wined and dined" royally on both occasions, including a parade and airplane rides.

SOME FLYING EXPERIENCES

By Vern Garner

THE BOEING B-29 SUPERFORTRESS

In October, 1944, I was transferred from Seymour, IN, to Columbus, OH, to begin transition training in the B-17 bomber. The war in Europe was winding down while the fighting in the Pacific was at its peak, including B-29 raids over Japan. A number of B-17 and B-24 4-engine pilots around the country were transferred to the B-29 training programs. I ended up at Montgomery, AL, and Tampa, FL, for transition and combat training (a total of 5 months), then ultimately on to Tinian, one of the Mariana Islands in the Pacific. There were approximately 3000 B-29s stationed on Guam, Tinian and Saipan, constantly flying day and night bombing missions over Japan.



The Boeing B-29 was, at the time, the latest in Bomber aircraft technology. In addition to carrying a greater bomb load over a longer distance at higher altitudes and faster airspeed, it had a cabin pressurization system similar to current commercial aircraft. This system not only provided heat and cooling, but permitted the crew to fly without the heavy wool-lined clothing and without wearing oxygen masks - quite a luxury. The B-29 also had a sophisticated computerized gun control system for the four gun turrets, each turret containing four .50 caliber machine guns.

There were 11 crew members— five officers and six enlisted. Each had a specific duty to perform and we had been trained as a team to smoothly carry out every phase of flight. The bombing missions were long, each lasting from 16 to 18 hours. When the briefing, pre-flight and debriefing was included, this meant approximately 24 hours without sleep or rest.

My first mission was at night over Tokyo. The flak was moderate, but very frightening for this 21-year old farm boy. Enemy fighters were not a problem on night missions, but made their presence known during day time raids. We had to make two

emergency landings on Iwo Jima; one due to low fuel and the other because of an engine failure. Our crew thankfully survived 12 missions before the war ended on 15 August, 1945.

I was recalled to active duty in July, 1950, for the Korean War and was re-trained in the B-29 for combat over N. Korea. Our crew was stationed on Okinawa where we flew 50 missions, the minimum requirement for return to the states. This was a 'better' war than WWII; our missions averaged only 9 hours, enemy opposition was less tense, had better living quarters, better food, and an Officers' Club. I even purchased an old Buick from a departing pilot to get around the Island. Again, we had to make two emergency landings— one at Seoul, S. Korea, and the other at FuKuoKa, Japan. In spite of the advanced technology in the B-29, the Wright-2200 engines had chronic problems, i.e. overheating, frequent fires, leaking oil, etc.

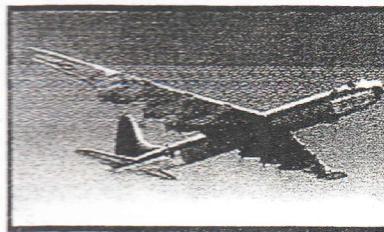
There were 4000 B-29s built between 1942 and 1945 of which 528 were lost in combat and training, with a loss of approximately 5000 crew members. After 70 years, there is one B-29 still flying - the "Fifi", owned and operated by the Confederate Air Force of Midland, TX. I am so thankful for the four years, 2000 hours, and 62 combat missions that I flew and survived in the B-29.

SOME FLYING EXPERIENCES

THE B-36 PEACEMAKER

By Vern Garner

When I returned from the Pacific and the Korean War in 1952, I was assigned to the 6th Bomb Wing at Walker AFB, Roswell, NM. The 6th BW



was in the process of converting from B-29s to B-36s being built by Convair in Fort Worth, TX. The B-36 was designed specifically to carry

the new hydrogen bombs, which at that time were 25 feet long, 6 feet in diameter, and weighed 20 tons. The B-36 was **huge** with a wing span of 230' and length of 162', ten engines (6 prop/4 jet), and a crew of 15. It was the largest bomber *ever* in USAF service. Still a 1st Lt. and too young and inexperienced to become an aircraft commander on this mammoth, I was trained as a co-pilot.

Flying the B-36 has been compared to sitting in your living room and flying your house. The wings were thick enough to stand upright inside the wing and walk the 'catwalk' out to the engines for minor repairs while in flight. Picture the aircraft commander in the left seat ready for take off with his right hand gripping the six prop engine throttles and the co-pilot in the right seat with his left hand holding the four jet engine throttles. As the throttles were advanced and the power increased, the monstrous B-36 began to lumber down the runway -- eventually becoming airborne.

Each B-36 crew in the Strategic Air Command (SAC) at bases throughout the U.S. had a designated target in unfriendly countries during the Cold War. Underground minuteman missiles and Navy nuclear submarines also had designated targets. One of the emergency landing bases for the B-36 was at Thule, Greenland, inside the Arctic Circle. On one memorable occasion, we deployed 10 planes to Thule to test the aircraft and maintenance and aircrew personnel in the extreme (-60F) temperatures. After 8 days of bitter cold, strong winds and blowing snow, we attempted to return to Roswell. Only one of the 10 aircraft made the take off. Problems included leaking oil and fuel lines, frozen brakes and inoperable valves/switches.

Another emergency landing base was Upper Heyford, England. Our crew was one of three 'lucky' crews to deploy there for a week on a trial mission where we had the opportunity to spend two days in London. Towards the end of my assignment at Roswell, we deployed the entire 6th BW (20 B-36s) to Guam for training in the Pacific area.

Several crews, including ours, stopped en route at Fairchild AFB, WA, to pick up hydrogen bombs. During my 2nd week on Guam, I broke a bone in my right foot playing volleyball and was off flying status during most of the 3-month period we were there. Our return flight from Guam to Roswell was non-stop, 38 hours...not a problem since we had two extra pilots, a galley for cooking and bunks to sleep in. After an interesting four years at Walker AFB, I was transferred to 15th AF Headquarters, Riverside, CA.

SOME FLYING EXPERIENCES

By Vern Garner

THE BOEING KC-135 STRATOTANKER

In early 1958, I was transferred from 15th AF Hdqtrs at March AFB, Riverside, CA, to Mather AFB, Sacramento, CA, another Strategic Air Command (SAC) base with B-52 bombers and KC-135 tankers. I was one of five officers assigned



to the Command Center that was manned 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week. This was during the 'Cold War' period when we had aircraft on constant alert, which were armed with nuclear weapons ready to launch within 7 minutes of receiving authenticated coded instructions. Our chain of command for receiving instructions to launch was from the White House; to the Pentagon; to SAC Hdqtrs; to 15th AF Hdqtrs; and to our Command Center at Mather AFB.

In addition to our 8-hour shifts in the Command Center, we controllers were required to train and become qualified in one of our mission aircraft. Four of the team members opted for the B-52 while I choose the KC-135. This turned out to be a good choice for several reasons: the missions were shorter; the cockpit had more room; the crew was smaller; and we had four jet engines versus eight engines on the B-52. The basic airframe and engines of the KC-135 was the same as the 707 commercial airliners and was a real joy to fly. Some pilots referred to it as the Cadillac of Air Force aircraft. The KC-135 had an airspeed of 540 MPH, a ceiling of 50,000 ft., a range of 5000 miles and could carry a fuel load of 31,000 gals. A total of 803 KC-135s were built at a cost of \$39M each and, after 55 years, 540 are still in service.

In-flight refueling is a tricky operation (particularly at night) requiring maximum skill and intense coordination between the tanker and receiver crews. A predestined point and time, plus radar and radio contact, then precise speeds and maneuvers, are critical. When the receiving aircraft is aligned behind the tanker, it's imperative that the tanker pilots maintain a level flight and constant airspeed during hookup and refueling. The average refueling takes about 30 minutes.

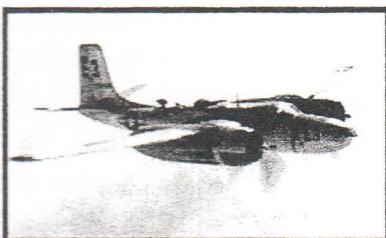
Most of my flying in the KC-135 were routine flights in the northwest USA and out over the Pacific ocean refueling the B-52s and fighter aircraft. But I recall three missions where our crew participated in exercises outside the continental USA. One was to Calgary, Canada, for a joint U.S./Canadian training exercise; and later, a three-day trip to Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, to refuel some fighter aircraft; and the third, a 10-day trip to Hickam AFB, Hawaii, to refuel fighter aircraft returning from Japan to the U.S. When I arrived at Hickam and was getting off the plane with my luggage and *golf clubs*, the Colonel in charge of the project looked up from the ramp at me and said, "No point bringing those clubs down, you won't have time to use them." He was right as we had a very busy 10 days, but I did enjoy the balmy weather and fresh pineapple.

Our four children, ages 4 to 10 when we arrived at Mather, still remember the times that we would jump in the car, drive out to the airfield, park just beyond the runway and watch the B-52s and the KC-135s take off just over our heads. The black smoke from the water injection take-off assist and the thunderous noise made quite an impression on them. It was at Mather AFB in 1960 that I played my first game of golf. Even now when I'm on the golf course and see a KC-135 fly over, my thoughts go back to Mather and my time in the cockpit of that "Cadillac."

SOME FLYING EXPERIENCES THE DOUGLAS A/B-26 TWIN ENGINE LIGHT BOMBER (INVADER)

By Vern Garner

The Douglas A-26 bomber was redesignated the B-26 after the retirement of the Martin B-26 in 1948. It was the only U.S. aircraft used during combat in three wars (WWII, Korea and Vietnam). I did not fly the B-26 in combat, but flew it as an administrative aircraft while stationed at Walker AFB, Roswell, NM, during the period



1952 - 1956. With two conventional (prop) engines, a cruising speed of 285 and a crew of pilot, co-pilot (optional) and flight engineer, it was a real delight to

fly. The 2000 HP engines provided ample power to lose an engine during takeoff and still become safely airborne.

After three instructional flights in the B-26, I was signed off/qualified as pilot. My primary jobs during those four years at Roswell were as a 3rd pilot on a B-36 crew and a staff job as assistant war plans officer, but I flew the B-26 whenever I had the opportunity. One of my first flights was to Helena, Montana, to take a Lt. Col. whose mother had passed away. Before any flight of this type, it's necessary to plot the course, check the runway length and facilities at the destination airport, plus check the enroute and arrival weather. The flight to Helena and return to Roswell over some beautiful landscape was uneventful - just me (no co-pilot), the flight engineer, and that smooth running B-26.

Another flight in the B-26 that I well remember was to Bolling AFB, Wash. D.C. to take a Colonel for a 3-week management course at George Washington Univ. It was my first flight into the D.C. area and it didn't help matters that it was nighttime when I arrived. The sky seemed to be filled with aircraft arriving and departing Reagan National, Andrews AFB, and Bolling. I had to make 3 or 4 radio frequency changes while switching to and from various flight control agencies. It wasn't a matter of flipping a button, as pilots now do, but there was a little crank on the overhead panel that had to be tuned to the proper

frequency. With no co-pilot along to assist me, I was one busy, and slightly frightened, fly-boy looking out for other traffic, changing frequencies, and maintaining control of the aircraft while making an approach to an unfamiliar base.

A truly hair raising flight that still haunts me was to Reno, NV, to pick up some aircraft parts. I checked the weather carefully before departing Reno and decided to file a VFR (visual flight rules) flight plan. This meant that I would not have en-route radar monitoring during my flight; I was on my own to avoid mountains, thunderstorms and other air traffic. Shortly after takeoff, I found myself trapped in a mountain range 'socked in' by clouds all around and above me. With no room to turn around, my only choice was to apply full power and pull the nose up to gain altitude - and pray. Well, I'm here to write about it, for which I'm eternally grateful.

Finally, and this was pleasant flight, was the trip to Kelly AFB, San Antonio, to get some magnolia blossoms. It was just a few days before Christmas, 1954, and the officers' wives were busy decorating the officers' club. The base commander's wife was head of the decorating committee and she had a mother living in the heart of San Antonio with several large magnolia trees in her yard. I was 'requested' to fly down, climb a tree, gather some blossoms, and fly them back to the committee. In retrospect, this is not a good use of taxpayers' money.

SOME FLYING EXPERIENCES

By Vern Garner

THE CESSNA- 310 TWIN ENGINE UTILITY PLANE

The Cessna-310 was, without a doubt, the easiest and most enjoyable airplane to fly of the twenty different planes I flew during my 30-year career. Nicknamed *The Blue Canoe*, it was a twin engine, low wing, six seat aircraft with a 35 foot wingspan and a cruising speed of 290 MPH. A total of 6321 were built between 1951 and 1988, of which 196 were for the U.S. military. The Air Force had several of these *Blue Canoes* at many of their bases throughout the United States. Four were stationed at Andrews AFB and used primarily for administrative flights and for staff pilots at Andrews and the Pentagon to log their required minimum flying time each month.



It was at Andrews that I first flew the 310 while assigned to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon from 1962 to 1966. I recall one flight to Maxwell field, AL, to take two colonels down to attend the Air War College. I was a major at the time and my younger brother (by 20 years) was a one stripe marine home on leave. He jumped at the opportunity to fly down and back with me and still remembers that I had him sit in the co-pilot's seat and take over flying the airplane for a while.

Another flight that I remember was to Wright Patterson AFB, OH, to take two civilians to the Aeronautical Engineering School there. My co-pilot on that flight was another major from the Pentagon. The billeting office assigned us both to the same room for the night. His snoring was so loud and continuous that I was unable to sleep, so I dragged my single, folding cot out into the hallway and spent the night there. A few months later, while on a proficiency check flight, he and the instructor pilot crashed into the Chesapeake Bay and were killed. It was later determined that while executing a stall, the plane went out of control from which

they were unable to recover.

I'm sure most military pilots can recall a fatal aircraft accident that was a result of poor actions by the pilot (pilot error). One such unfortunate event occurred at Andrews in a 310 when a brigadier general from the Pentagon was taking off on a routine flight. He lost his right engine shortly after takeoff; not a critical situation if the established emergency engine-shut-down procedure is followed. Unfortunately, he turned the fuel valve off on the left (good) engine instead of the right (failed) engine. With both engines dead, a crash was inevitable; all four on board were killed. This tragedy could, and should, have been avoided.

Major Dick Gaudsmith, a co-worker in the Pentagon, and I flew to MacDill AFB, FL, on a clear winter day in 1964 to log some required flying time. We arrived in time to spend several hours at the Officer's Club swimming pool basking in the warm Florida sun and trying to out do each other on the diving board. Occasional flights like this were a welcome relief from the long, challenging hours spent in the Pentagon during the critical 'Cold War' years.

after 77 years, some are still in use.

Affectionately referred to as the "Gooney Bird", it was not, for me, a 'fun' airplane to fly. AS resident Frank Brooks shared with me that he enjoyed flying it. Although very reliable, it was underpowered, slow and tricky to land. The propeller and wing deicing systems were unreliable, it was unstable in rough weather, and in several cases I had water leak into the cockpit while flying through a rain cloud. But I guess I had a soft spot in my heart for the 'old bird' and always felt safe while flying in it.

In Athens there was a VIP configured C-47 assigned to the Commanding General for his official and (yes) recreational use. On weekends when the plane was not being used, the staff was permitted to take family members on short trips to Istanbul, Heraclius, Italy, etc. There were frequent challenges to some of my flights during that two-year period such as the day we flew into a bad storm at the boot of Italy and had to return to Athens; or the day I flew some Army Nike missile soldiers to Solonika and had to buzz the runway (corrugated steel planking) to chase the grass-eating sheep aside so we could land; or the flight to Tripoli to take M/G Eaton to the hospital for a throat operation. The crosswind coming off the Mediterranean Sea was at the maximum allowable speed for landing and I made a difficult, rough landing. After landing, Gen. Eaton came to the cockpit and said "Remind me never to fly with you again, Garner." I think he was just kidding me. Three weeks later, I flew him to Germany for a Boy Scout convention.

My last experience flying the C-47 was while stationed in Thailand for a year. Although my primary job was as a controller in the Jolly Green Giant rescue command center, I made frequent trips during my 'off' time to Bangkok, Korat, Chiang Mai and Ton Son Nut, S. Vietnam, where the Viet Cong would take occasional rifle shots at us while on final approach.

This is my 9th and final Flying Experience article. I trust that you have enjoyed them; I've certainly enjoyed reliving those times as I've attempted to relate them to you. *Yes, I've tripped the surly paths of this earth, and soared where few men have dared trod. And along the way, I've stopped to pray, reached out my hand and touched the face of God. (Magee's High Flight)*

SOME FLYING EXPERIENCES

By Vern Garner

THE DOUGLAS C-47 SKYTRAIN, "GOONEY BIRD"

I flew the C-47 at five different locations during my Air Force career, in this order: Hawaii (just after WWII); Roswell; NM, Andrews AFB, Greece and Thailand (during the SEA war). It was truly a versatile workhorse not only for the Air Force and Navy, but for 97 countries around the world (check Google for countries). Initially built in 1935 as the D.C.-3 for the fledgling airline industry, it was used by the U.S. military as a cargo and troop carrier for dropping paratroopers, tow gliders, Berlin airlift, a gunship during SEA war, air-sea rescue, and reconnaissance. Some were configured for VIP use. A total of 9348 of them were built and

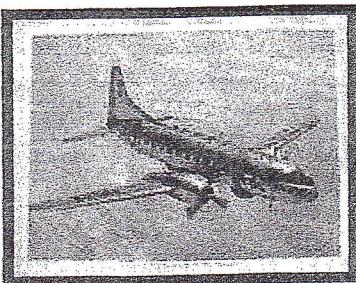


SOME FLYING EXPERIENCES

By Vern Garner

THE CONVAIR T-29 "FLYING CLASSROOM"

I flew the T-29 at Mather AFB, Sacramento, during the 1958-62 years and again at Stuttgart, Germany, in 1968-69. It was built by Convair in San Diego primarily for Air Force training of navigators, bombardiers and Electronic Countermeasure (ECM) operators. Its nickname, "Flying Classroom" was very appropriate. It was also configured and used extensively for executive staff transport during the 1954-74 periods. With two reciprocating engines, tricycle landing gear, pressurized cabin and a cruising speed of 290 MPH, it was a real joy to fly. It was purchased for military purposes by thirteen other countries.



During the four years I was at Mather AFB, my primary job was as a controller in the Strategic Air Command base control center. There was also a Training Command unit at Mather with 15 T-29s for navigational training of new officers. I checked out (qualified) in the "Flying Classroom" and spent many monotonous hours during my "off" time flying students up and down the San Joaquin valley in north central California. Thick, lingering fog was prevalent in that area during the winter months which was perfect for pilots to get their required 'weather' time and for the navigators to get real blind navigational training. I also flew the KC-135 while stationed at Mather, which I wrote about previously.

After four years at Mather, I was transferred to the Pentagon, then to Greece, then to Stuttgart (Hdqts USEURCOM) where we had three T-29s configured for executive staff transport. So once again I had a primary desk job with a secondary duty flying the T-29.

There was a routine daily flight from Stuttgart to Frankfort to Wiesbaden to Mons, Belgium, and return that I would be scheduled to fly every two weeks. Lingering winter fog was a real problem in

the Frankfort and Wiesbaden areas and many times we were unable to land. We would approach the runway in this thick fog guided by GCA radar down to our minimum of 200 ft and if we didn't see the runway yet, we'd pull up and continue to our next en route stop. We usually had a two hour layover in Mons and there was a neat little restaurant in town where we frequently had a pepper steak lunch.

As with the earlier Cessna-310 at Andrews and the C-47 in Athens, we could schedule ourselves for weekend 'training' flights. Of course, we always picked the 'tough' places to fly to like Paris, Madrid, London, Lisbon, Casablanca, etc. We usually stayed overnight on these trips and tried to help the local economy by doing some shopping. We have a beautiful 48" X 28" mirror with a gilded gold ornate wooden frame that I bought in Madrid hanging on our apartment wall. I had been to London, Madrid and Paris in previous years, but Lisbon and Casablanca were new to me. Lisbon would be my choice to spend more time; it was beautiful. Flying the T-29 during my two years in Germany was the most enjoyable of my 30 years of flying.

NOTE: It was my intention that the C-47 article (Page 9) would be my last, so I had this booklet printed and assembled. However, when my flying articles stopped appearing in the River Views, I was encouraged by throngs (make that 'a few') Asbury folks to write more. Thus these last two articles.

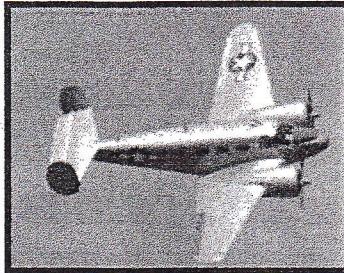
Vern

SOME FLYING EXPERIENCES THE BEECH C-45 EXPEDITOR

By Vern Garner

The C-45 was a twin engine, twin tail, its 6 passenger utility aircraft built by Beech Aircraft of Wichita, KS. The Army Air Corps bought the first one in 1939 and it still remains popular for military use and as a 'feeder' aircraft for airlines in 41 countries such as Tonga, Nigeria and Ecuador. I flew the Expeditor while stationed at Walker AFB, Roswell, NM, and at March AFB, Riverside, CA.

While at Roswell, I had a two hour flight one day to Pyote, TX, (pop. 115; 2010 census) to pick up some aircraft parts. When I got within radio contact distance, I called the Pyote tower for landing instructions. Pyote tower replied "landing runway 180S, visibility unlimited, wind 5mph from the left." When I arrived at 'the' field, I flew a left hand pattern at 1000 ft and was lined up with the runway on final approach when I noticed the town water tower to my left with MONAHAN, TX painted on it. OOPS! I was about to land at the wrong field. I applied full power, pulled up, and made a hasty, embarrassing retreat to Pyote, 10 miles to my right.



I was transferred in 1956 to March AFB, Riverside, CA, where I was the War Plans officer on the 15th Air Force inspection team. There were several C-45s there for staff pilots to maintain their flying proficiency. One memorable flight was to Mountain Home AFB, Idaho, for a week of temporary duty. Another officer and I flew up in one of the C-45s. We had to stop at Nellis AFB near Las Vegas for fuel and decided to spend the night at the base BOQ. Since the town was only a few miles from the base (yeah!), we decided to take a bus into town where we spent time walking the strip, gawking at the sites and eating some heavy hors d'oeuvres at the clubs. Nat King Cole was performing at one of the clubs, so we bought tickets and watched his show. Whenever I hear the song *Rambling Rose*, I'm reminded of Nat King Cole and that night in Vegas.

One final experience: Shortly after arriving at March AFB, I was designated an instructor pilot in the C-45 based on my previous time in the airplane at Roswell. This entailed training other pilots to become qualified in the Expeditor, plus administering annual proficiency checks. During the final landing of one such check ride, as the student pilot was turning off the runway onto a taxiway, we experienced a mechanical malfunction in the braking system. The student was unable to counter a right turn and we were headed for a possible collision with another aircraft. I got on my brake pedal also and together we dislodged the stuck shuttle valve and literally locked the brakes. Instead of the plane skidding, it simply rotated on its axle and we did an ugly nose-over. No one was injured, but the props and engines had to be replaced; therefore it was classified as a 'major accident' rather than an 'incident.' The base commander was very unhappy and let me know it. The date was 27 August, 1957, my 34th birthday.

That's all folks! Thirty years of flying, 3 wars, 8000 total hrs, command pilot rating; *quite a trip.*

RIVER VIEWS

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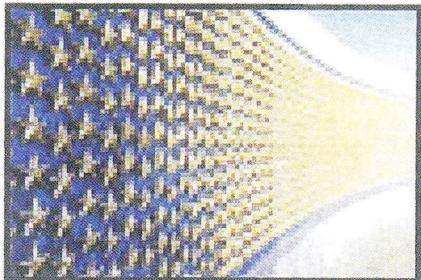
July -August 2004



WORLD WAR II: "The Big One"

By Vernon Garner

The 60th anniversary of the Normandy invasion has just passed and the 59th anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan is coming up – beyond question, the two most horrifying, devastating events of WWII. During the six year period 1939 to 1945, the Allied nations (Britain, U.S., Canada and Russia, plus 46 other countries) suffered 9 million dead and 19 million wounded. The Axis nations (Germany, Italy and Japan, plus four other nations) suffered 6 million dead and 8 million wounded: an astonishing total of 45,000,000 persons KIA, WIA, MIA or POW.



The geographical scope of WWII was colossal. There were intense battles in Europe, Asia, Africa, Mid-East, the Atlantic, Pacific and Mediterranean – global except for North & South America. The monetary cost of the six years of massive warfare was beyond calculation, and the misery, deprivation, and suffering can never be measured.

There were three major factors that precipitated this war: 1) unresolved problems of WW I such as the failure to follow up on the Versailles Treaty; 2) rise of dictators like Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo; and 3) desire for more territory by the Axis countries.

Public opinion in the United States concerning the war prior to Pearl Harbor varied. There were the Isolationists (stay out of the war at all cost); the Interventionist (the U.S. should actively assist the Allies); and the Undecided (wanted the Allies to win, but....) The bombing of Pearl Harbor changed all this – unanimous, all-out support of the war followed. Young men were drafted, but many volunteered. All services had auxiliary women's units. Many were needed on the 'home front' in support roles. All had to sacrifice in many ways. Our men and women in uniform in 1939 numbered 362,000. When the war ended in 1945, that number had increased to 12,454,000; our warships from 760 to 2,500; and our aircraft from 2,500 to 80,000.

Many of us here at Asbury-Solomons were asked by our country to serve and sacrifice – not only in uniforms, but in the factories, offices and on the farms – to preserve the precious freedom we all cherish, then and for future generations. An appropriate WWII memorial has been erected and dedicated in our nation's capitol to honor the 16 million who served in uniform and the millions of others who supported the war effort on the home front. A data-base registry has also been established where one's name can be added by logging on to www.wwiiimemorial.com.

