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AVIATION CONNECTIONS: NEWSLETTER

Spring 2021

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Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation

April 2021

Sponsorship and Membership Drive

ECAHF has been working hard to continue to share the history of aviation in eastern NC. The Fly-In and Summer Engineering Camp were both canceled due to the Pandemic. ECAHF developed STEM activities and challenges for students and posted those on the website.

The 2021 Gala also had to be canceled due to COVID-19, but to thank our sponsors and members a video about the Foundation was produced. Each supporter received a thumbdrive with the ECAHF logo, which contained the video.

We are hoping to resume our STEM events during the year 2021.

In order to carry on this vital work, we need our volunteers, sponsors and members.

Membership and sponsorship forms were also included with the thumbdrive. All new and renewing members and sponsors will have an opportunity to win an airplane ride along the NC coast. Adam Persky has graciously offered a ride for two in his private plane. Drawing will be held on April 30, 2021.

Please see page 12 of this publication for membership information.

Photo Courtesy of: publicradioeast.org

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RF-4B "Phantom" II

The RF-4B Phantom II was introduced on March 12, 1965 with a total of 46 planes produced. All of these planes were assigned to the Marine Corps in El Toro, Iwakuni, Japan and Cherry Point.

The role of the aircraft was basically to serve as a fighter, but its mission was modified when necessary to serve in photographic reconnaissance and survey. This two-engine aircraft was capable of reaching a top speed of Mach 2+ and had an initial climb rate of over 41,000 feet per minute with 10,800 lbs of thrust per engine. It had a flight range of 1,610 miles.

The Phantom set 16 world records, including an absolute speed record of 1,606.342 miles per hour and an absolute altitude record of 98,557 feet.

The aircraft on display was transferred to NADEP Cherry Point in late 1990 with a total of 6,101 flight hours. It was placed on display in December 2002.

Richard Tresemer, B-26 *Marauder* Pilot

By Barry R. Fetzner
ECAHF Historian

This column continues a series in the Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation (ECAHF) newsletter about my relatives who were associated with aviation during their lives. So far, I've written about my Uncle Bill Hay (WWII USMC Master Technical Sergeant and PBJ bomber aircrewman), my Dad Robert Fetzner (WWII US Army Air Forces (USAAF) Weather Forecaster and SFERICS operator), and my Great Uncle Ray Hill (early aviator and WWII Air Transport Command pilot).

Richard Tresemer was my Dad's first cousin, making him my first cousin, once removed. His mother, Ruth Leonard Tresemer, was my paternal grandmother's sister and sister to my Great Aunt Luella Hill, Ray Hill's wife, who I wrote about in the last edition of this newsletter. Like Great Aunt Luella, Richard's Mom—who was also my Great Aunt Ruth—was my Dad's aunt.

I wish I had, but I never had the pleasure of meeting Richard Tresemer. By the time I was born eight years after the end of WWII, he had moved west to make his fortune and our paths—me being raised on the shores of Lake Erie in Ohio—never crossed. My Dad wasn't as close to his first cousin Richard as he was to several other first cousins who live east and with whom—even though I was “once removed”—I did have a close relationship. I only learned of Richard's WWII flying duties as an adult and after I, too, had been trained as a military aviator.

And other than a few old photographs I came across after my Dad passed away, there were no details regarding Richard or his service at least partly because the world was “further apart” after WWII compared to now. After WWII, Richard had moved a long way from his Ohio home. Long distance telephone rates were expensive and out of reach of many budgets. I remember only a few, rare phone calls between my Dad and his first cousin Richard.

As a consequence, I know less about Richard's flying than I know about any of my other relatives' aviation careers. Even after finally finding one of Richard's sons (I have an interesting story of a bit of genealogical detective work I've included herein), they have very little information about their Dad save for a few stories Richard's youngest son shared with me that I will share in this three-column series. There are no military or veteran's records, only a few wartime anecdotes, no military insignia or uniforms, and only a few photos, the originals of which I gave to Richard's sons. They had never seen the photos of their father I have included in this column.

In addition to distance, my own failure as a self-absorbed young person to ask questions about Richard and my other relatives' lives is another reason for the mystery. And, as mentioned in my previous columns, most WWII veterans just didn't talk about their service very much...if at all...anyway. They did their duty, came home (if they were lucky) and got on with their lives. If they had “combat fatigue” or the “jitters” from their experiences, most kept it to themselves. That typical secrecy of WWII veterans may have been the *coup de grâce* of our lack of knowledge of the details of Richard Tresemer's military service.

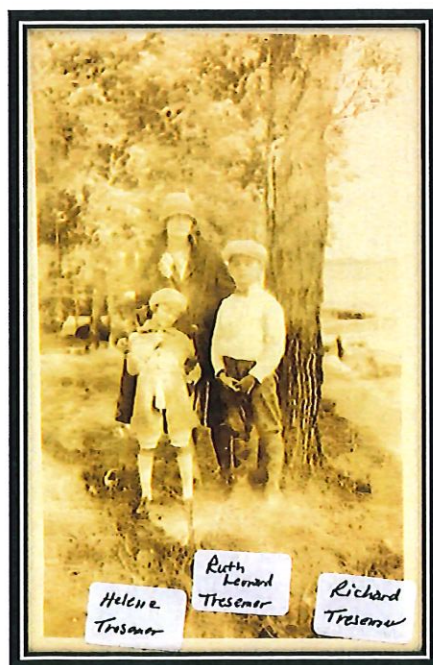
My second cousin, Richard's youngest son, is my contact into the Tresemer family. The story of how I finally reached him is, as mentioned above, an interesting

bit of genealogical detective work.

But before I tell that story, allow me to mention again as I have in previous columns that preserving family history needs to have someone in the family care about family history enough to pursue leads through photographic evidence, veteran's records, other written records (e.g., letters written home), contacting long-lost cousins, etc. This is especially true of WWII veterans who are dying at a rate (according to Statistica.com) "...of 245 every day (calculated by the VA before the COVID-19 Pandemic) with the US Department of Veterans Affairs reporting that approximately 325,000 remain alive today."

While I don't have much history on Richard Tresemer's aviation career, I am conserving the little I do have of his legacy of flying during WWII through this newsletter. Every little bit of preserved history helps. Perhaps flight log books or veteran's records will come to light later and, together with the little I have compiled here, more of his history might be discovered and honored.

But back to the story of how I found Richard's son. I knew of Richard but had no knowledge of his sons. I found his youngest son by knowing his name from the back of a photo his sister, my Great Aunt Ruth's daughter Helene (a once removed first cousin with whom my sister and I had a close relationship) gave to my sister. My sister gave the photo to me knowing I was interested in family history and genealogy. The picture was of Richard's four sons together and had the name of all of them labeled on the back of the photo. I picked one of the names and Googled it and a website came up with a local news report about a chief fire fighter with the chief's photo and the name of his fire district. Comparing the photo I had from my sister with the photo of the chief on that website, I knew I had my man! Googling the name of the fire district, I found the telephone number of the district, called it, asked to speak to the chief. My second cousin answered the phone. There we have it: connected to a long-lost cousin!



Great Aunt Ruth, Helene, and Richard Tresemer, circa 1930, likely just a few months before the next picture of the cousins together. (Tresemer Family photo)

Richard grew up with his sister, Helene (who will be a subject of a future column in this newsletter), in Gahanna, Ohio outside of Columbus, not straying too far from his mother's birthplace in Cleveland. Occasional forays from central Ohio to northern Ohio to visit his first cousins and his Aunt Mary (my paternal grandmother) and Aunt Luella led to photographs like the one below at a family reunion in Bedford, Ohio where Richard's two aunts, Mary and Luella lived next door to each other.

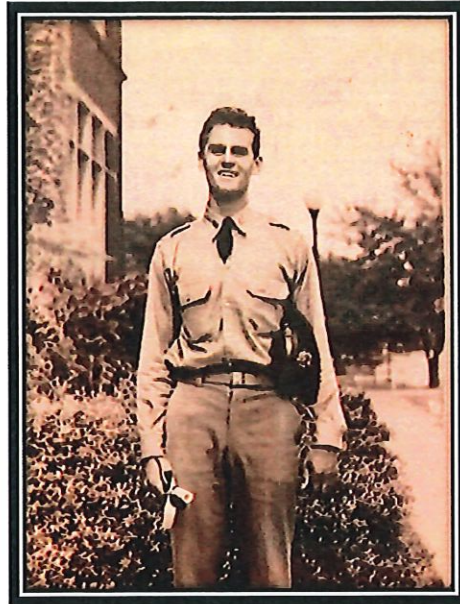


Richard Tresemer (top row, second from right with all his cousins at Eastertime 1931 in Bedford, Ohio) already carrying himself like a military officer, standing at attention, “stomach in, chest out, chin down” as my Dad used to instruct us. My Dad, the subject of an earlier column in this newsletter about his service as a USAAF weather forecaster, is pictured in the front row, right. My Dad’s elder brother, my Uncle Norman, pictured back row third from right next to Richard, will be the subject of a future column in this newsletter. All of the boys in this photo (save for the youngest one looking left at his female cousin Helene in the front row) served in WWII, three of them in aviation. All five survived WWII physically unscathed. (Fetzer Family photo)

The next time any information comes up about Richard Tresemer to which I presently have access is his attendance at Ohio State University, where he was pictured on campus, circa June, 1940, holding what appears to be his diploma. The photograph was undated but was labeled “Richard Tresemer, Ohio State” and I surmised the date of the photo from my knowledge of Richard’s approximate age, the beginnings of America’s preparatory efforts to ramp up for what ultimately would become its participation in WWII, and my Dad’s graduation from Bedford High School (1940). A year and a half after this photo was taken, the Japanese would attack Pearl Harbor, launching the US—and Richard Tresemer and most of his male cousins—into WWII.

Speaking of THE Ohio State University, we have quite a family legacy there. My great Aunt Ruth—Richard’s Mom—was a trailblazer and one of only three women in the Ohio State graduating class (three women and seven men) of 1916. Twenty-four years later her son, Richard, would graduate from Ohio State along with his future brother-in-law (his sister Helene’s future husband Richard Cook). Nine years after the below photograph of Richard was taken at Ohio State, my Dad finished his college education at OSU too, graduating in 1949 after serving in WWII. And then 26 years later, following in

my Dad's footsteps, I would also graduate from Ohio State. And then so would my daughter (26 years after me) and my son (five years after his sister) and then several of my nieces a few years after that. We're blessed to have a real family legacy of Go Buckeyes!



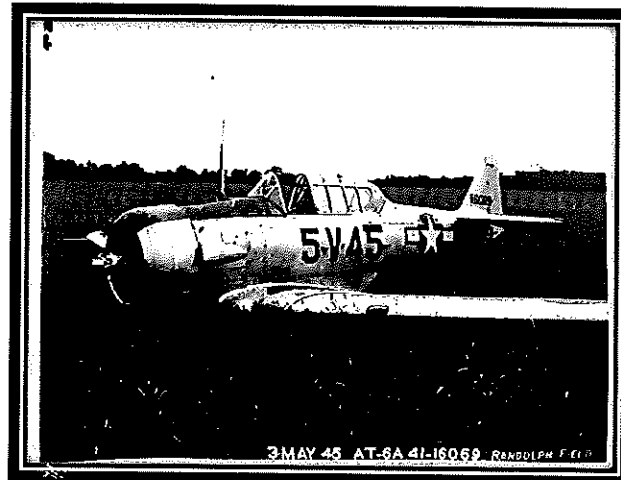
Twenty-year-old 2d Lt. Richard Tresemer at Ohio State University sporting what appears to be the US Army Engineer "castle insignia" on his collars, circa 1940. From here, he attended US Army Air Corps flight training. (Tresemer Family photo)

We don't know yet where Richard Tresemer completed his USAAF flight training. But we can deduce some things from the photograph below of him standing with his B-26 crew in 1941 at Barksdale Field, Louisiana. For those who might not have known how America produced, prior to and during WWII, enough pilots to fight—and help win—a global war, it is interesting to review how we did it. It is also instructive to ask the following question: "Could we ever do it again given all the rules, regulations, policies, oversight, bureaucracy, micro-management, and risk aversion we presently possess?" America always finds a way. So, I think the answer is yes. But we should celebrate the difficult process that led to being able to get men like Richard Tresemer rapidly and successfully trained to win the air war prior to and during WWII a mere 38 years after the Wright Brothers' first flight at Kitty Hawk.

From Wikipedia: "During World War II civilian flying schools, under government contract, provided a considerable part of the flying training effort undertaken by the USAAF. With the consolidation of pilot training by the United States Army Air Corps in 1931, nearly all flying training had taken place at Randolph Field, near San Antonio, Texas. During the 1930s, Randolph had produced about 500 new pilots per year, which was adequate for the peacetime air corps. With war clouds gathering in Europe, especially after the 1938 Munich Agreement, General Henry H. Arnold, the Chief of Staff of the Air Corps, realized that the Army was going to have to increase the number of its pilots in case of a general war breaking out again. As a result, Arnold and his command staff developed a plan to supplement the training at Randolph with military pilot training conducted by the civil flight schools in the United States."

“When a prang seems inevitable, endeavor to strike the softest, cheapest object in the vicinity, as slowly and gently as possible.”

- Advice given to RAF pilots during WWII -



Cornfields are generally level, soft emergency landing sites, especially when the corn is “knee high by the 4th of July”. This AT-6 Texan trainer was crash-landed in a cornfield near Randolph Field, Texas. While not “blood kin” the pilot of this particular aircraft was my brother-in-law’s father. Both the student pilot and pilot-in-command George White—the flight instructor—walked away from this crash but because it was only five days before Victory in Europe (VE) Day (May 8, 1945) and a few months before the end of WWII itself, White never flew a military aircraft again. Another reason White had his “wings clipped”? Fuel starvation—sufficient fuel being the responsibility of the instructor—was the cause of the crash. (White Family photo)

“In late 1938, eleven flight schools were contracted by the United States Army Air Corps by Arnold without any funding or Congressional authorization. Arnold asked if they would, at their own expense, set up facilities to house, feed and train Army pilots. He promised that the Army would pay the schools \$1,170 for each pilot that completed a primary flight training course and \$18 per flight hour for each student that washed out. Arnold received a commitment from eight flying schools, accepting his proposal.”

“In April 1939, Congress authorized \$300 million for the Air Corps to procure and maintain 6,000 aircraft. In the authorization, the Air Corps was authorized to enroll Army Flight Cadets in civilian training schools. Moving forward, in June 1939, the War Department approved Arnold’s request to organize nine civilian flight schools to train Army pilots. Flight training would begin at most of these schools in July 1939. After the spring offensive by Nazi Germany and the Fall of France in May, 1940, Arnold increased the rate of pilot training from 4,500 to 7,000 pilots per year. Each of the nine Contract Pilot Schools (CPS) was requested to open an additional school to accommodate this increase. In August 1940, the rate of pilot training was ordered increased to 12,000 per year.”

“All civil flying instructors had to be certified by the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA), as well as the ground school instructors and aircraft mechanics. Also flying instructors had to undergo a two-week Army refresher program. In order to exempt the instructors and mechanics from the wartime draft, all were enlisted into the Army as privates in the Army Reserve. Each CPS was commanded by an Army officer

(mostly, but not all, West Point graduates), who supervised all aspects of the program as well as insuring that military discipline was maintained. Also, a few Air Corps pilots conducted all check rides."

"In the strictest sense, these schools were not owned or leased by the USAAF and for the most part they were not designated or activated as Army Air Fields. In official Army directories, they were listed by the name of the civilian flying school, the name of the airport on which it operated, or sometimes just by the city name."

"After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany's declaration of war against the United States in December 1941, plans were made by the Army to increase the training rate to 50,000, then 70,000 and finally 102,000 pilots per year."

"The CPS's were assigned to the various Flying Training Commands, and each had a designated USAAF Flying Training Detachment assigned for supervision and liaison with the command. According to the contract, the government supplied students with training aircraft, flying clothes, textbooks, and equipment. Schools furnished instructors, training sites and facilities, aircraft maintenance, quarters, and mess halls. To the flying cadets, the CPS's were just another training assignment—although the flight instructors were civilian contractors, the cadets still experienced the discipline and drudgery of military life."

"Due to the wartime pressure to produce pilots rapidly the USAAF paid scant attention to their military training. The atmosphere of the civilian-operated primary schools was not conducive to the development of rigid discipline, and too little time was available for military instruction at all the stages of pilot training. What instruction there was, over and above the regimen of Army life, was restricted largely to marching, ceremonies, inspections, and military customs and courtesies. The vigorous physical conditioning, however, continued and intensified during flying training."

"Trainers used were primarily Fairchild PT-19s, PT-17 Stearmans and Ryan PT-22s, although a wide variety of other types could be found at the airfields. The primary training syllabus was initially twelve weeks in length including 60 hours of flight time and 225 hours of ground training. However, this was changed by the Army as the situation required. Although the number of flight hours remained at 60 throughout the War, the demands of the increasing pilot training rate resulted in the primary training to be reduced to ten weeks in 1940, then again reduced to nine weeks in 1942."

"The instruction given at the CPS's was an adaptation of the primary phase formerly taught at Randolph Field. Each student in primary was required to make at least 175 landings. As given at the height of the effort, primary flying training was divided into four standard phases. In the pre-solo phase students became familiar with the general operation of a light aircraft. In the second, or intermediate phase, pre-solo work was reviewed, and precision of control was developed. The third, or accuracy, phase demanded high proficiency in various types of landing approaches and landings, and the fourth, or acrobatic, phase required ability to perform loops, Immelmann turns, slow rolls, half-rolls, and snap rolls. In 1944, after the training demand had peaked, the course length was increased back to ten weeks."

"The Army Air Forces never reached the 102,000-pilot training rate. The goal was reduced to a more realistic rate of 93,600 in June 1943. The peak of AAF flying training was reached in November 1943 when the CPS's graduated 11,411 cadets. After that AAF flight training began a gradual reduction that resulted in the closing of most of the CPS's

in the fall of 1944. Ten CPS's remained in operation in 1945, which were closed at the end of World War II and the Army Air Forces returned to in-house primary pilot training."

One of the CPS's in the Eastern Flying Training Command, according to Wikipedia, was the 70th Flying Training Detachment, Lafayette School of Aeronautics located at [Lafayette Airport](#), Lafayette, Louisiana. Given the below photograph of Richard, perhaps having just completed his B-26 Marauder flight training and being checked out in the aircraft (note the ubiquitous diploma in his right hand and the fact they're all in their dress Army uniforms vice flight gear) at Barksdale Field, Louisiana, he very likely could have completed his basic training at Lafayette Airport and then his advanced B-26 training at Barksdale Field.

Some students from the CPS's were retained or "plowed back" to be instructors and/or check pilots after they graduated from flight school. Since the date annotated on the below photograph (1944) doesn't match well with Richard's graduation from Ohio State (1940) and his completion of basic, intermediate and advanced flight training (about 12 weeks) and his need as a replacement pilot in Europe, it's possible Richard was plowed back to be an instructor and after enough cajoling and pleading, he ultimately made it to "operational" combat flying.

Richard did tell his sons he towed targets for a while before being assigned to combat duties. This is a clue that Richard was plowed back to be a part of the training program. As Richard's son suggested to me, "The extra flight time might have made the difference later on".

The need for additional bomber crews (given their horrific casualty rate in Europe) might have been a factor in Richard's ultimately being assigned to B-26's as well. Again, according to Wikipedia, "The USAAF incurred 12% of the Army's 936,000 battle casualties in WWII. 88,119 airmen died in service. 52,173 were battle casualty deaths: 45,520 killed in action, 1,140 died of wounds, 3603 were missing in action and declared dead, and 1910 were non-hostile battle deaths. Of the US military and naval services, only the Army Ground Forces suffered more battle deaths."



Lt. Richard Tresemer (L) and B-26 crewmembers, November 1944. The large, white lettering on the B-26 fuselage is indicative of a training, vice operational aircraft. Richard was in touch with his bombardier-navigator Lt. Huntsberger for years after the War.
(Tresemer Family photo)

A sobering recollection of what USAAF bomber pilots had to endure over Europe can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/EQIMkJzg-g8> courtesy of YouTube. Suffice it to say, for the purposes of this column at least, a popular saying at the time was that to “fly (bombers) was like holding a ticket to a funeral —your own.”

Lacking flight logs, combat records, or more than just a few stories of his exploits flying the Martin B-26 Marauder passed down to his sons, all we can do at this point is hope more information will be revealed in the future. We can, though, learn some things about the Marauder and its achievements. We do know Richard Tresemer was in Europe prior to and after VE Day through several stories his son remembers his Dad telling him, a story I will recount in the third column in this three-column series. But whether or not Richard saw combat in Europe are facts presently unknown.

Next column in the summer 2021 edition of the ECHAF Newsletter: The B-26 Marauder in World War II.



This photo of a B-26 was found in my parents' belongings after their deaths along with the above photo of Richard Tresemer and his B-26 aircrew (Tresemer Family photo)



Join us and help us celebrate, protect, and promote NC's aviation history!

Gala Celebrations From the Past

January 29, 2010



Aviation Connections: Looking Back and Moving Forward

January 28, 2011



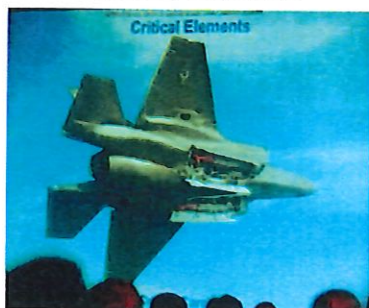
Aviation Heritage: Tradition Spurs Vision

January 27, 2012



Celebrating 100 Years of Marine Aviation Featuring LtGen Terry Roblins, Deputy Commandant for Aviation

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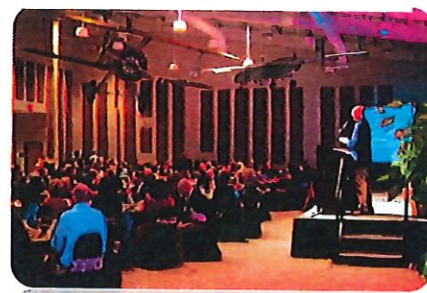
Science and Math Take Flight
Featuring Charles Burbage, Lockheed Martin

January 31, 2014



Featuring Col John Rader, The Boeing Company

February 27, 2015



Unmanned Aviation: Future of Flight?
Featuring Dr. Larry Silverberg, NCSU

February 24, 2017



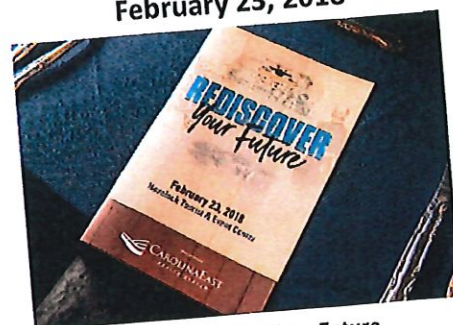
Spirit of St. Louis
Featuring Tim Clark

February 26, 2016



Electronic Warfare: Cherry Point's Role in National Defense
Featuring Col Jimmie Green, LtCol Paul Johnson,
LtCol Rick Johnson, Maj Calvin Smallwood, Danny Walsh

February 23, 2018



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Featuring Eddie Ellis

March 22, 2019



The Wright Stuff
Featuring Bill Hand

Save the Date

2022 Gala

February 25, 2022

February 21, 2020



Daredevils in the Sky
Featuring Hubie Tolson



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Together, our joint forces will recognize our neighbors' roles in advancing military aviation since 1942 when MCAS-Cherry Point was commissioned.

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