

201 TOURIST CENTER DRIVE, PO BOX 368, HAVELOCK, NC 28532



AVIATION CONNECTIONS: NEWSLETTER



Fall 2019

WWW.ECAVIATIONHERITAGE.COM

Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation

November 2019

11th Annual Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation Gala

Please join us for an evening of entertainment and fun.

"Daredevils in the Sky"

Featured Speaker

Aerobatic Pilot

Hubie Tolson



If you are interested in becoming a sponsor for the Gala, the levels are as follows:

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INDIVIDUAL TICKETS

One Ticket

\$60

Two Tickets

\$110

Mark your calendars for February 21, 2020. You don't want to miss this evening with Hubie Tolson at the Havelock Tourist & Event Center. Hope to see you there!

2019 Fall Partnership and Members Appreciation Night

Tuesday, September 17 was a night of fun, fellowship and lots of food. The theme for the evening was "ECAHF: A Taste of the East," and area caterers did not disappoint. Nine local caterers provided tastings of numerous specialty items at no cost to the Foundation. Each caterer displayed their delicious samplings for all to enjoy. Catering staff was on hand to present and prepare the items. The caterers were Class Act Catering from Carteret County, Fat Fellas BBQ & Grill from Newport, Havelock Tourist & Event Center, Jersey Mike's Subs from Havelock, Mucho Bueno Street Food & Tequila from Havelock, Sagebrush Steakhouse from Morehead City, Smithfield Chicken 'N Bar-B-Q from Havelock, The Flame from New Bern, and Thee Catering Company from New Bern. In addition, Shortway Brewing Company from Newport provided samples of three different kinds of beer.

The evening also involved guests experiencing activities from the Summer Engineering Camp. Participants built their own rocket and blasted it off using the Stomp Rocket. Competition was tight, but the Marines and Navy took the top three prizes. Their rockets sailed through the room and out the door. Thanks to our Volunteers from FRC-East and the high school for helping to make the activities run smoothly.

The evening was fun and hopefully everyone enjoyed themselves. If you did not make it this year, please plan to participate next year in September.



Thanks to our Sponsors!



Havelock
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2019 CHILI FESTIVAL

The Foundation participated in the 2019 Chili Festival at Walter B. Jones Park on October 18-19. The ECAHF booth provided information about the foundation and various community activities sponsored by the Foundation. In addition, balsa planes, dragonflies, sunglasses and coloring books were given out. Thanks to the volunteers for helping to spread the word about ECAHF.



Feature Story:

First with the Most

Written by Barry Fetzer
ECAHF Historian

THE CURTISS-COMMANDO
*gets there **FIRST** with the **MOST!***

To turn the tide, to win victory, America must have the means of moving large numbers of troops, supplies, tanks, guns, swiftly to critical and remote theaters of battle. A new and revolutionary factor in this war of distances is the Curtiss-Commando, the world's largest twin-engine transport. These giants of the air now are telescoping weeks into hours, and can perform prodigies in mass movements of men and materiel. Now America can "get there first, with the most!"

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SECOND PRINTING: Send 10¢ for your copy of this fascinating 96-page history of aviation by Alexander Lindbergh, author of "Your Wings," with illustrations of Curtiss fighting planes. Alexander Division, Curtiss-Wright Corp., Buffalo, N. Y.

FIRST
Since the Birth of Aviation

1920 • Curtiss Eagle, first interceptor, 7400 h.p., 12 passengers, 105 m.p.h., 64' wingspan.

1928 • Curtiss B-2 Condor Bomber for the U.S. Army. Greatest weight carrying airplane of its time. Heavy defensive armament. Two Curtiss Conqueror engines.

1929 • Curtiss Condor, 2 pilots and 18 passengers, 129 m.p.h., high speed, two 600 h.p. Curtiss Conqueror engines.

1933 • Curtiss Condor, the first sleeper plane—4 compartments, each with 2 berths, two 720 h.p. Wright Cyclone engines, 167 m.p.h., cruising.

The C-46 Commando (Image Credit: Getty Images)

Read more at: <http://curtisscommando.e-monsite.com/pages/art/curtiss-color-advertisement-for-the-commando.html#tL1zYeF5ddb5oAqq.99>

A WWII-era Curtiss Wright Corporation advertisement that pictures an action drawing of a C-46 twin engine cargo airplane unloading troops in China (the Navy-Marine Corps designation of this aircraft was R5C-1) is accompanied by the slogan, "**The Curtis Commando gets there first with the most!**" The C-46 *Commando* actually lived up to that slogan. It was one of the largest and heaviest payload cargo aircraft of its time, boasting a capacity of 40 troops or 30 stretcher patients or 15,000 pounds of cargo, and a max gross weight of almost 50,000 pounds. It had a range of over 3,000 miles and a maximum speed of 230 knots. Those specifications were amazing for their time when you consider that the Wright Brothers' first sustained flight at Kitty Hawk was only 40 years earlier.

The *Commando* was a fine aircraft with the right slogan—and capabilities—for Marines. And on the exact date of the fortieth anniversary of the Wright Brother's epic flight, my Uncle Bill Hay, my Mom's brother, was a Marine aviation supplyman supporting Marine Corps transport aircraft, including the C-46 *Commando*, while assigned to MAG-15 and Marine Utility Squadron (VMJ)-953, Marine Corps Air Depot, Camp Kearny in San Diego in 1943. Camp Kearny was collocated with NAS Miramar in 1943, which after a few iterations of flipping between Navy and Marine Corps ownership, became the MCAS Miramar we know today.



The Camp Kearny Flight Line, 1942 (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

While my Uncle Bill may have been on the C-46 *Commando* “first with the most” team, his nephew—that’s me—was “last with the least”, at least as far as my initiative went to learn as much as I could about his World War II Marine Corps aviation career when he was alive. Today, me being older and hopefully a little wiser but my Uncle Bill sadly passed on to the “great aviation depot in the sky”, I’m struggling to discover details about his time in the Marines so I, a fellow Marine, can pass that information along to my cousins and my children. Much of what I could have learned, had I had more interest and initiative at the time, is unfortunately lost to the “dustbin of history”.

What I do know from a letter he wrote me and from his veteran records is this: Uncle Bill, while growing up in Cleveland, OH far closer to eastern NC than to San Diego, spent most of his Marine Corps years on the west coast and fighting in the Pacific. But eastern NC’s aviation tentacles reach far and wide, and while there is no indication from his veteran records that Uncle Bill ever set foot in NC during his Marine Corps service, he ultimately served with Marines who trained in eastern NC flying B-25’s.

Yes, the Marines actually operated North American Corporation, *Billy Mitchell* medium bomber B-25’s (the Navy-Marine Corps designation for this aircraft was PBJ) during WWII. And for all the men who flew these aircraft, their training began in squadrons commissioned in eastern NC.

During wars, things move very fast: Aviation technology grows by leaps and bounds. Technologies that led Orville Wright to the first powered and controlled flight on December 17, 1903 of 120 feet at a speed of 6.8 miles per hour **leapt** a mere 40 years later to the capabilities of the C-46 *Commando* mentioned above. Mission Creep is an oxymoron during war. Missions don’t creep...they leap! Marines flying and operating US Army Air Forces medium bombers in combat? Preposterous! But Marines did! Many modern Marines with aviation military occupational specialties...even those serving in eastern NC...even those with a love of history...don’t know about the ghosts of USMC PBJ Mitchell medium bombers flying here and the footprints they’re following of B-25 bomber pilots and air crewmen that trained in eastern NC during WWII.

But train here in eastern NC they did. “All (PBJ bomber) squadrons were commissioned at Cherry Point, North Carolina between March and October, 1943. VMB-413 was the first of eight operating squadrons to receive a commission, on March 1, 1943. MAG-61 Headquarters & Service Squadron was commissioned on

July 13, 1943, with the assigned functions of administering, servicing and maintaining the previously commissioned 413 as well as all future squadrons. The remaining “400” squadrons (VMB 423, 433, 443) received commissions on September 15th. The “600” squadrons (VMB 611, 612, 613, 614) followed on October. 1st.



VMB-612 aircrew patch, circa 1943. Note the groups of 6, 1, and 2 bullets under the wings forming the squadron's numerical designation (Image credit: usmilitariaform.com)

Pilots that were to be assigned to the newly formed medium bomber squadrons received an eight-week training course in Operational Training Squadron (OTS)-8 at Cherry Point and Edenton, NC.

As squadrons became operational, further training was conducted at Cherry Point, Edenton, and Peterfield Point, NC (now MCAS New River in Jacksonville, NC), Page Field, SC, and North Island, CA.” (from the MAG-61 website <http://mag61.org/>)

And talk about moving fast! Military rank and responsibilities zoomed during WWII. Marines today would be amazed to learn that my Uncle Bill went from Private E-1 to Master Technical Sergeant E-8 in two years. TWO YEARS! Those who step up to the plate...with apologies to the C-46 *Commando* motto...those “firstest with the mostest” in leadership abilities, initiative, and technical skills...are rewarded, especially during war.

If I had taken more initiative to learn more about my Uncle Bill's service (instead of being focused too intently on my own career in the Marines)...if I had been like the C-46 *Commando* and “first with the most” in regards to my interest in my Uncle's career, I might have learned what it took for him to make rank so quickly and details about his combat experiences.

So, the lesson in this column for others who may have relatives or friends with stories to tell is this: get the details of the stories while you can. Record those stories for posterity. Never forget that, “The Clock of Life is wound but once, and no man has the power to tell just when the hands will stop at late or early hour. Now is the only time you own. Live, love, toil with a will. Place no faith in time. For the Clock of Life may soon be still.” (Poet Robert A. Smith) Uncle Bill's Clock of Life was stopped before I made the effort to fully understand his career in the Marines.

Of course, like many WWII vets, he was not that interested in talking about his service. He got home and went on with his life. But still. I should have tried harder to pry some details from him.

While there are missing pieces...there will always be missing pieces...even without them there is more to the story of my Uncle Bill, including his transfer to carrier duty for the Aleutians Campaign, his wedding while serving at Marine Corps Air Facility Corvallis, Oregon, his refusal of a commission to 2nd Lieutenant, and his service in the Bismarck Archipelago with MAG-61 and with those atypical (atypical in the Marine's aviation inventory and mission sets at least) PBJ Mitchell bombers and men who trained in eastern NC and fought in WWII's Pacific campaign using the lumbering PBJ medium bombers like they were nimble close air support aircraft for which Marines are so famous. In the next issue of the Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation newsletter, there will be more to tell about my Uncle Bill and, with further apologies this time to radio personality Paul Harvey, “the rest of the story”.



Group photo of PBJ VMB unit at MCAS Cherry Point, circa 1943
(Photo Credit: unknown)



Upcoming Events

Save The Date:

- 2020 GALA – February 21, 2020
- Family Fly-In and Movie Night – May 29, 2020
- Summer Engineering Camp – July 20-24, 2020
- Fall Partnership and Member Appreciation Night - TBD
- STEM Group Tours Available by Request

➤ Call 252-444-4348 or email us at
events@havelocknc.us



Please Join ECAHF Each Year

ECAHF needs your support to share the story of the advancement of military aircraft and those who have made it possible in eastern North Carolina. Your membership helps to provide resources to encourage students to acquire science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills through interactive exhibits and programs.

Together, our joint forces will recognize our neighbors' roles in advancing military aviation since 1942 when MCAS-Cherry Point was commissioned. In addition, your membership will help influence a new generation of aviation enthusiasts and skilled workers for the future. Be a part of this challenging and exciting mission.

Annual Membership

- Co-Pilot (Student) \$25.00
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