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AVIATION CONNECTIONS: NEWSLETTER

Fall 2021

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Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation

October 2021

What a fun night for all who attended the Fly-In! Approximately 300 people enjoyed exploring the ten different STEM stations. The Havelock Police Department was on hand to distribute backpacks with school supplies and held a raffle for several bicycles.





Thank you to all the STEM Presenters and Sponsors!

- Cherry Point EOD, Ordnance Equipment and Demonstration
- Cherry Point MAG-14, Flight Physiology
- 2nd MAW DSS, Flight Gear
- Greg Sabin, Flight Simulator
- FRC-East, Robots
- City of Havelock Planning Department, Storm Water
- Havelock Police
- Col Jimmie Green, Ejection Seats
- MGySgt Richard Hazlett, HH-46D
- Craven Community College (Bill Franchi)
- Havelock Fire & Rescue
- Coastal Pines Girl Scouts, STEM Activities
- Will Sherrill, Drone Demonstration
- Donnie Cox WCTI-12, Meteorology



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Richard Tresemer's B-26 *Marauder*-Part 2

By Barry R. Fetzer
ECAHF Historian

This is the second of a three-column series writing about my Dad's first cousin (my first cousin, once-removed) Richard Tresemer who flew the B-26 Marauder bomber during WWII. In the last column I wrote about Richard (the spring 2021 edition) of this newsletter I focused on Richard himself and the US Army Air Forces (USAAF) effort to train massive numbers of men, like Richard, to fly in combat in record numbers and in record time. In this fall 2021 edition of the ECHAF newsletter, I will focus on the B-26 Marauder itself and then complete this three-column series with more on the Marauder in the winter 2022 edition of this newsletter.

Richard's sister, Helene Tresemer Cook (who is a future subject of this newsletter), wrote about her brother's service during WWII. I just discovered this piece of writing that answered several questions for which I did not have answers in my previous research on Richard Tresemer: where he attended Army officer's training and that he did, in fact, fly in combat. Helene wrote in April, 2002 recalling conversations with her brother about his WWII experiences, "The roar from the engines of the B-26 always caused the adrenaline to peak. Every muscle in Richard's body was tense. It was another mission over Germany. 'How many more till the end of the War? But this has got to be better than the Army engineers,' Richard thought, his mind wandering back to that day he received notice he could transfer from the Army to the Army Air Corps. He had been in the R.O.T.C at Ohio State University and upon graduating and getting his degree in engineering, he was also given notice to report to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania for engineer officer's school.



Lt. Richard Tresemer sporting his newly-earned wings, circa 1943 (Tresemer Family photo)

He wasn't especially impressed with what he saw there, and began immediately working on a transfer to the Air Corps. All that work getting the transfer and going through Air Corps pilot training was worth it. Instead of some dirty foxhole, he at least had clean living quarters, good food, and was in the driver's seat of this sweetheart of an airplane. His dream had come true though he admitted to himself that war wasn't as 'gung-ho' as he'd thought it would be at first. Sure, there was plenty of excitement. In fact, quite a bit more

than he wanted to contend with. Those anti-aircraft guns firing at you were pure hell. There was no quick escape, knowing you had a target and you had to get this baby in the right place at the right time and dodge all that flak. No time to think about anything down there except the target. Just get you and your crew in and out the best way possible. That takes a lot of cooperation and teamwork and Richard thought he might have done better in a fighter plane with fewer crew. He did like all the guys, though. All were good men and the B-26 was his kind of aircraft. But it did have drawbacks. In fact, some designers said the wings were too short and it has a number of flaws that make it a very dangerous vehicle for pilots.

Still, Richard always had a lot of confidence in his ability to get through tough situations. But his sickening migraines were the worst. They came sometimes in the middle of a mission but he knew his plane so well he was able to fly it half blind. He also knew he could depend on his copilot, Allen. Allen was from Maine and Richard thought, 'like granite, rock solid.' And what a coincidence that Huntsberger, his bombardier-navigator, was actually from Ohio, from somewhere near Westerville just few miles from Richard's hometown of Gahanna. The gunners could be counted on to do their part too. One of them, an expert shot, could almost match him drink for drink with that vile French beer with which he was getting acquainted...although he was still not sure of his body's acceptance of some of that foreign brew."

One editorial note about the Marauder before I continue. The B-26 was predominately employed by the USAAF but also flew in US Navy and USMC service during WWII. While this column is about my cousin Richard Tresemer's USAAF service, for those interested to learn more about the Marauder, an overview of the Marauder's employment by the Sea Services may be found here: http://www.b26.com/page/the_b-26_marauder_in_us_navy_and_marine_corps_service.htm

Now about the Marauder. The following is derived from Wikipedia and several other sources. "The Martin B-26 Marauder was a twin-engined medium bomber that saw extensive service during WWII. The B-26 was built at two locations: Baltimore, Maryland, and Omaha, Nebraska, by the Glenn L. Martin Company. A total of 5,288 were produced between February 1941 and March 1945."

Though produced in numbers that gave it fifth place in the WWII multi-engine bomber production sweepstakes (behind the B-24, B-17, B-25, and A-20), it was a difficult aircraft to fly. The aviation adage (attributed to WWII Pilot Officer Edward Thompson of 433 RCAF Squadron), "Never fly the 'A' model of anything" is certainly apropos to the Marauder. Aviationhistory.com writes, "In 1939, the Martin B-26 Marauder was built in parallel with North American B-25 Mitchell, however while the B-25 was a docile handling airplane, the B-26 was nothing of the kind. It was built for speed and was a highly strung, unforgiving airplane, that needed to be tamed by the most experienced pilots."

Again, from Wikipedia, "After entering service with United States Army aviation units, the aircraft quickly received the reputation of a 'widow maker' due to the early models' high accident rate during takeoffs and landings. B-26 crews gave the aircraft other colorful nicknames including 'Martin Murderer', 'Flying Coffin', 'B-Dash-Crash', 'Flying Prostitute' (so-named because it was so fast and had 'no visible means of support,' referring to its small wings) and 'Baltimore Whore' (a reference to the city where Martin was based)."

"The Marauder's reputation was earned because the aircraft had to be flown at precise airspeeds, particularly on final runway approach or when one engine was out. The unusually high, near 150 mph, airspeed required on short final approach was intimidating to many pilots who were used to much slower approach speeds, and whenever they slowed to speeds below those stipulated in the manual, the aircraft would often stall and crash."

“According to an article in the April 2009 edition of *AOPA Pilot* on Kermit Weeks’ ‘Fantasy of Flight’, the Marauder had a tendency to ‘hunt’ in yaw, an instability similar to ‘Dutch roll’. This would make for a very uncomfortable ride, especially for the tail gunner.”

It would have been advisable for B-26 pilots to heed Aviator William Kershner, the only person inducted into both the International Aerobatic Club Hall of Fame and the Flight Instructor’s Hall of Fame, who advised, “Keep thy airspeed up, lest the earth come from below and smite thee.”

Wikipedia continued, “Still, the B-26 became a safer aircraft once crews were re-trained, and after aerodynamics modifications (an increase of wingspan and wing angle-of-incidence to give better takeoff performance, and a larger vertical stabilizer and rudder). The Marauder ended World War II with the lowest loss rate of any USAAF bomber.”



Closeup view of a Martin B-26B Marauder in flight (Courtesy of Wikipedia)

“The B-26 was a shoulder-winged monoplane of all-metal construction, fitted with a tricycle landing gear. It had a streamlined, circular section fuselage housing the crew, consisting of a bombardier in the nose, armed with a .30 in (7.62 mm) machine gun, a pilot and co-pilot sitting side by side, with positions for the radio operator and navigator behind the pilots. A gunner manned a dorsal turret armed with two .50 in machine guns (the first powered dorsal turret to be fitted to a US bomber), and an additional .30 in machine gun was fitted in the tail.”

“Two bomb bays were fitted mid-fuselage, capable of carrying 5,800 lbs of bombs, although in practice such a bomb load reduced range too much, and the aft bomb bay was usually fitted with additional fuel tanks instead of bombs. The aircraft was powered by two Pratt & Whitney R-2800 Double Wasp radial engines in nacelles slung under the wing, driving four-bladed propellers. The wings were of low aspect ratio and relatively small in area for an aircraft of its weight, giving the required high performance, but also resulting in a wing loading of 53 lb/sq ft for the initial versions (resulting in the required high landing speeds), which at the time was the highest of any aircraft accepted for service by the Army Air Corps.”

“As pilots were trained quickly for the war, relatively inexperienced pilots entered the cockpit and the accident rate increased. This occurred at the same time as more experienced B-26 pilots of the 22nd, 38th and 42nd Bombardment Groups were proving the merits of the bomber.”

“For a time in 1942, pilots in training believed that the B-26 could not be flown on one engine. This was disproved by several experienced pilots, including Colonel Jimmy Doolittle, who flew demonstration flights at MacDill Army Air Field, which featured take offs and landings with only one engine. Also, seventeen Women Air Force Service Pilots were trained to demonstrate the B-26, allegedly in an attempt to ‘shame’ male pilots into the air.”

“Indeed, the regularity of crashes by pilots training at MacDill Field — up to 15 in one 30-day period — led to the exaggerated catchphrase, ‘One a day in Tampa Bay.’ Apart from

accidents occurring over land, 13 Marauders ditched in Tampa Bay in the 14 months between 5 August 1942 and 8 October 1943.”

Richard’s son remembers when he was a kid his Dad quipping, “One a day in Tampa Bay”. So maybe the “exaggerated catch phrase” was not so exaggerated after all.

“The B-26 is stated by the 9th Air Force to have had the lowest combat loss rate of any US aircraft used during the war. Nevertheless, it remained a challenging aircraft to fly and continued to be unpopular with some pilots throughout its military career. In 1944, in answer to many pilots complaining to the press and their relatives back home, the USAAF and Martin took the unusual step during war, of commissioning large articles to be placed in various popular publications, ‘educating’ and defending the so-called flying/accident record of the B-26 against ‘slanders’.”

“The Marauder, designed for high performance and for low level bombing, was employed mostly in Europe, but also saw action in the Mediterranean and the Pacific. In early combat, the aircraft took heavy losses, but was still one of the most successful medium-range bombers used by the USAAF. By the end of WWII, it had flown more than 110,000 sorties, dropped 150,000 tons of bombs and had been used in combat by British, Free French and South African forces in addition to US units.”



Martin B-26B-1-MA Marauder, “Earthquake McGoon” of the 37th BS, 17th BG, with extensive flak damage over Europe, September 1943. (Courtesy of Wikipedia)

“The B-26 entered service with the Eighth Air Force in England in early 1943, with the 322nd Bombardment Group flying its first missions in May 1943. Operations were similar to those flown in North Africa with B-26s flying at low level and were unsuccessful. The second mission, an unescorted attack on a power station at IJmuiden, Netherlands, resulted in the loss of the entire attacking force of 11 B-26s to anti-aircraft fire and *Luftwaffe* Focke-Wulf 190 fighters. Following this disaster, the UK-based B-26 force was switched to medium altitude operations, and transferred to the Ninth Air Force, set up to support the planned invasion of France.”

“Bombing from medium altitudes of 10,000 to 15,000 feet and with appropriate fighter escort, the Marauder proved far more successful, striking against a variety of targets, including bridges and V-1 Rocket launching sites in the buildup to D-Day, and moving to bases in France as they became available. The Marauder, operating from medium altitude, proved to be a highly accurate aircraft, with the 9th Air Force rating it the most accurate bomber available in the final month of the war in Europe. Loss rates were far lower than in the early, low-level days, with the B-26 stated by the 9th Air Force as having the lowest loss rate in the European Theater of Operations at less than 0.5%.”

Next time in the winter 2022 edition of the ECAHF Newsletter: perhaps the Marauder’s greatest mission on D-Day and Richard’s wartime story.

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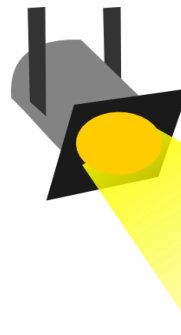
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Spotlight an Exhibit



A-4M

"Sky Hawk"

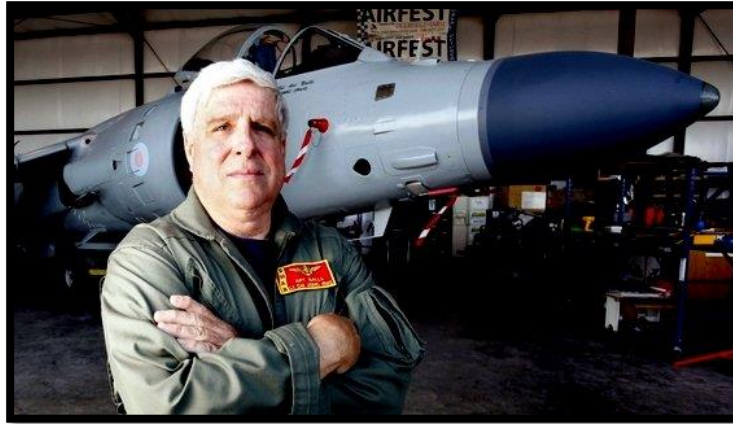
The A-4 was introduced by Douglas Aircraft Company in response to a 1952 Navy request for a carrier based attack aircraft. Designer Ed Heinemann exceeded the Navy's expectation when he responded with this turbojet powered aircraft weighing less than half of the requested weight, but capable of carrying four times the weapons payload. The prototype A4D-1 was first flown in 1954. The A-4 enjoyed a production run of 24 years with a total of 160 A-4M's built. The last A-4 was retired on June 22, 1994.

The feats of the "Sky Hawk" in combat are legendary. In Vietnam, the A-4 proved a reputation for survivability, dependability, and the ability to carry a huge weapons load and delivering with extreme accuracy. This one-engine aircraft was flown by a single pilot to top speeds of 670 mph.

The exhibit model, A-4M Bureau 160024, was manufactured April 22, 1967. It saw service with VMAT-102 "Sky Hawk," VMA-214 "Black Sheep," and VMA-131 "Diamondbacks." It was retired in June 1994 with a total of 4125.8 flight hours.

2022 ECAHF Gala
February 25, 2022
featuring
Art Nalls, Nalls Aviation

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Inventor

Entrepreneur

Marine

BadA\$\$
Pilot

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**Owner of world's only
Civilian Harrier**



**Nalls Aviation produced this
microjet. This tiny aircraft
weighs only 358.3 lbs.**

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You don't want to miss this!



Please join us for...

**Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation
Partners and Members
Appreciation Night
"To the Rescue"**

Tuesday, October 26, 2021
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
at the Havelock Tourist & Event Center

Experience a sampling of foods,
spirits from a local brewery, and participate in
STEM activities from this year's Summer Camp.
Can you engineer an aid drop? Engineer the package housing a delicate
egg, then watch it drop 20 feet to the ground.
It's going to be a night of fun, food, and networking!

RSVP at 252-444-4348 or pholder@havelocknc.us



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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.

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