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AVIATION CONNECTIONS: NEWSLETTER

Summer 2022

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Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation

August 2022

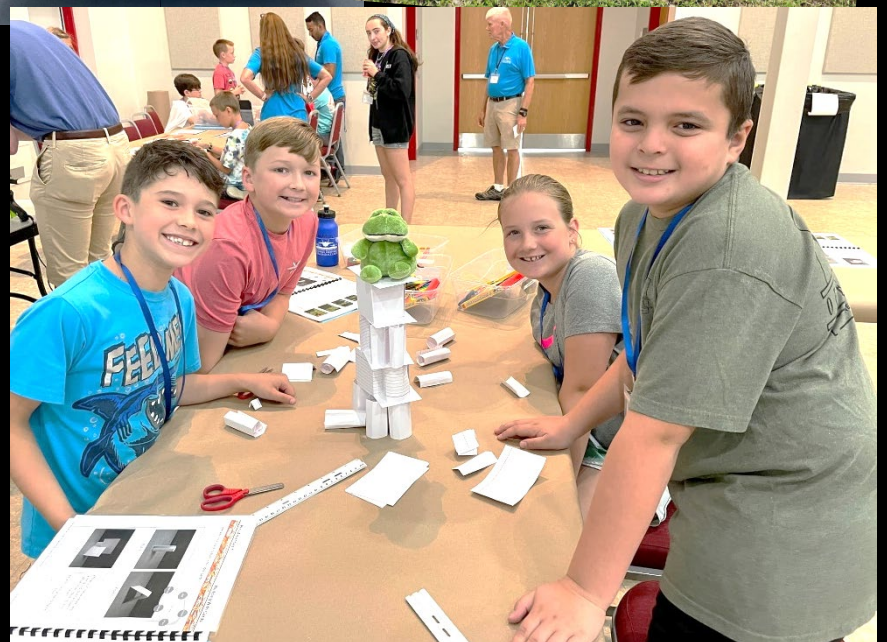
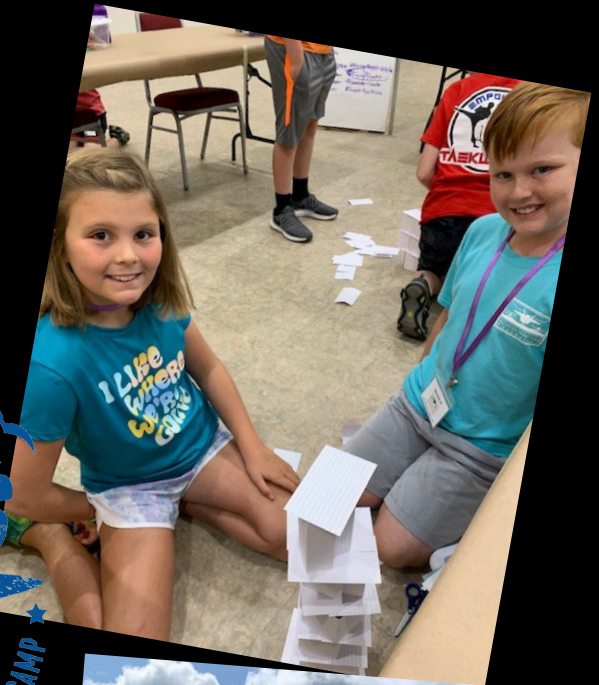


Engineering Camp

July 25-29, 2022

***The Sky's the Limit:
Flying Technologies***





FREE Family Fly-In STEM Night



U.S. Marine Corps Master Sgt. Carlos Villareal, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, explains different types of ordnance to attendees during the 11th Annual Fly-In Family Movie and STEM Night at the Havelock Tourist and Event Center, Havelock, North Carolina, Aug. 12, 2022. ECAHF affords local youth the opportunity to learn more about science, technology, engineering, and math through demonstrations and interactive activities. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Jade Farrington)



Event attendees are photographed with Adam Weems (middle), a firefighter with Havelock Fire and Rescue, while inside a firetruck.

(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Jade Farrington)

Thank you to all our sponsors, donors, STEM presenters, and volunteers which helped make this event possible.



Tom & Susan Braaten
Brenda Wilson
Barry & Arlene Fetzer



*Cherry Point EOD

*USMC 2nd MAW

*FRC-East

*Col Jimmie Green

*Craven Community College

*Coastal Pines Girl Scouts

*USMC MAG-14

*Greg Sabin "Flight Simulators"

*City of Havelock Police Dept

*MGySgt Richard Hazlett

*Havelock Fire & Rescue

*Civil Air Patrol

*WCTI-12 Meteorologist Donnie Cox



Fall Partnership Event

October 11, 2022

2023 Gala

February 24, 2023

Please join us for...

ECAHF Partners and Members

Appreciation Night

"The Sky's the Limit with ECAHF"

Tuesday, October 11, 2022

6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

at the Havelock Tourist & Event Center

**Experience a sampling of delicious foods
and participate in STEM activities from
this year's Summer Camp.**

It's going to be a night of fun, food, and networking!

RSVP at 252-444-4348 or pholder@havelocknc.us by October 4, 2022

The Tangled Web We Weave: Part 2

By Barry R. Fetzner, ECAHF Historian

This column continues the story of Helene and Dick Cook started in the spring 2022 edition of the Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation Newsletter. Last we heard, newlyweds Dick and Helene left New Bern on a troop train, met in San Clemente, California for a short while and then Dick shipped off to war to battle the Japanese in the Pacific as a Marine engineer officer. Helene returned to central Ohio awaiting hopefully for her husband to return from war and was employed, perhaps “Rosie the Riveter-like” in a Curtis Wright *Helldiver* factory.

Helene received no news about Dick while he was overseas. There was no instant communication back then. Helene really didn’t know if Dick was dead or alive.

But one letter did make it home, ultimately finding its way into Helene’s hands. Another sorrow for Helene whose life knew many sorrows. This letter still carries a somber and frightening message even 80 years later. A ***For Victory Buy United States War Bonds and Stamps*** advertising logo is positioned in the upper righthand corner of the official Marine Corps letterhead.

Dated 3 November, 1944 and addressed to Helene’s in-laws (not to Helene, Dick’s wife, another clue that maybe the Marines didn’t know Dick was married) it reads, “My dear Mr. and Mrs. Cook: I regret to inform you of the report just received that your son, First Lieutenant Richard G. Cook, United States Marine Corps Reserve, sustained a gunshot wound of the left shoulder in action against the enemy in the Palau Islands. The report further states that he was admitted to a hospital on 11 October, 1944 for medical treatment.”

“Because of the great volume of communications now required for essential military operations, the report received was necessarily brief and did not disclose the extent of his injuries. Past experience indicates that details are seldom forwarded if progress is favorable. It is hoped that your son will communicate with you at his earliest opportunity informing you of his welfare.”

“Your anxiety is realized and any additional information received will be promptly furnished you. It is not necessary that you address inquiries to this Headquarters except to report a change of address. The handling of additional correspondence may tend to delay rather than expedite the forwarding of information. Sincerely yours, D. Routh, Major, US Marine Corps.”

In speaking years later with Helene, I got the rest of the story regarding the extent of Dick’s combat injuries.

Laying together, pressed as close to the ground as two humans on their shoulders can possibly get, Lieutenant Cook’s Corpsman rolled up a paper cone, tore open a packet of sulfa powder with his teeth, shook the powder into the cone and inserted the sharp end into the entry hole in Cook’s back. The Corpsman then pressed his mouth against the wide end of the cone, blowing the powder into the wound.

Lieutenant Cook remembered a whitish plume of sulfa powder hang like a cloud in the humid, jungle air as the powder exited the front of his shoulder in a puff.

He was evacuated to a military hospital in New Caledonia, he was treated, recuperated, and ultimately released, later rejoining his combat engineer unit for more combat.

Wounded once again, he was transferred this time to a hospital ship where the doctors picked out most of the shrapnel lacing his body. He had a long, metal splinter in his head that was never removed because of its proximity to one of his eye's optic nerve. Years later, though needed medically, he could not receive an MRI because of the possibility that the strong magnetism of the procedure might cause the splinter to move, severing his optic nerve.

Helene wrote, "Dick saw action on Guadalcanal, Peleliu, Palau, and Okinawa and other places, none of which I can spell. He was lucky to make it home physically whole...to make it home at all. So many men didn't."

"Still, Dick had little pieces of metal throughout his body at various places and sometimes they would migrate close to the surface forming a little lump I would lance with a razor blade and help him pick them out with a needle."



1st Lt. Dick Cook (r), arm in a sling, recuperating in New Caledonia, circa 1944 (Fetzer family photo)

Helene admitted in one of her letters to me that, "When Dick left the US for the Pacific, he was at the peak of his health, strength and vitality. When he returned, he was a ghost of his former self. He progressed toward recovery but the war took a terrible toll. It's a very risky business but I know someone has to take the risks."

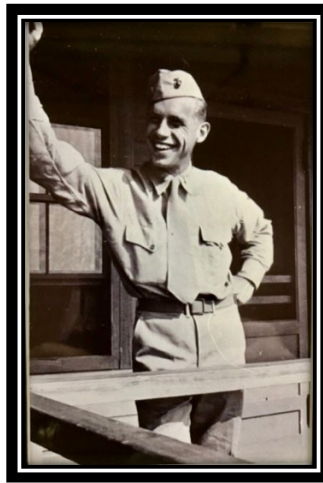
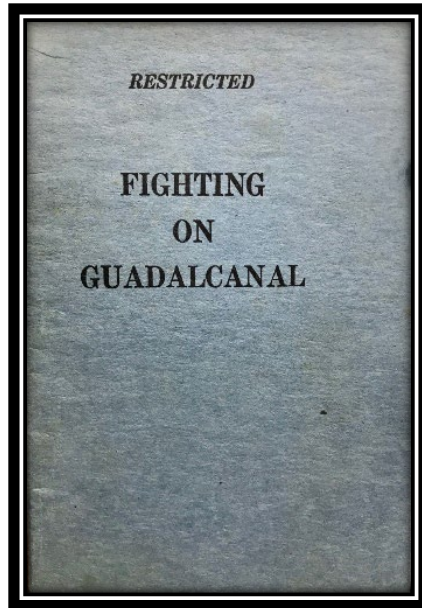


Photo of Richard Cook, smiling yet wearing some of the accelerated age he accumulated in combat as compared to the pictures of him (above and below) just a few years earlier in New Bern and Camp Pendleton. Photo likely taken at Camp Pendleton after WWII and prior to being discharged, circa 1946 (Fetzer family photo)



**A USMC pamphlet dated 1943 on the experiences of fighting the Japanese
(Fetzer family photo)**

Helene, knowing I, too, was US Marine and that I was interested in my brother Marine and cousin Dick Cook and his record in the Marines, sent me a few of his things after he passed away...by the way gone too young in his mid-60's...another of Helene's many sorrows. Helene was left a widow who lived another generation...plus...absent the love of her life. She had followed him everywhere in life and looked forward to following him to the *Great Beyond* too.

Helene sent me the above-pictured pamphlet from Dick's wartime service in the Marines entitled, "Fighting on Guadalcanal", a booklet that contained direct combat information sped back to the States and rush-printed and used by Marines and soldiers preparing to participate in vicious battle with the Japanese in a war still two years from being won. Dick undoubtedly read the personal experiences of Marines described in this pamphlet before being engaged in combat there.

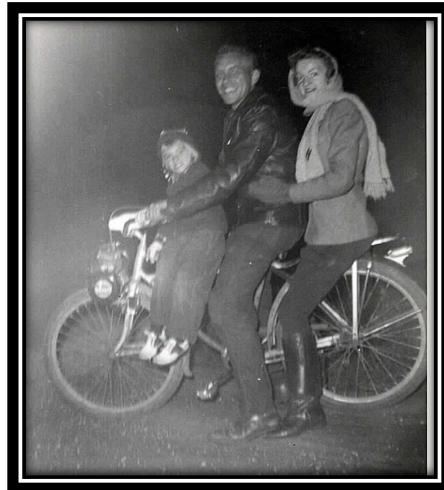
The booklet is classified as "Restricted", a no-longer-used classification intended during WWII to limit our enemies knowledge of what we knew about them. We didn't want the Japanese to change their tactics based on knowing what we had learned about them in combat.

Chief of Staff and US Army General George C. Marshall wrote in the forward of this booklet, "Soldiers and officers alike should read these notes and seek to apply their lessons. We **must** cash-in on the experience which these and other brave men have paid for in blood."

Maybe "cashing-in" on his fellow Marines experiences outlined in that booklet helped Dick survive. But not before his blood was spilled multiple times in combat.

Dick did return home to central Ohio, discharged from Camp Pendleton, and he and Helene resumed their lives together in post-war Gahanna. While not completely whole as Helene had written—"a ghost of his former self"—he continued his honorable life helping Helene raise a daughter, caring for his family, working as a civil engineer. He was one of those tens of thousands of unsung heroes from WWII who did their duty, placed ugly memories of war and their Purple Hearts in a box, went on with life and, like

Helene, never complained. He just got to work, lived his life, paid his taxes, took care of his family, and then died too young shortly after I was commissioned a Marine myself. I never had the chance to know Dick Cook in the way, now, with age and hopefully more wisdom, I would like to have known him.

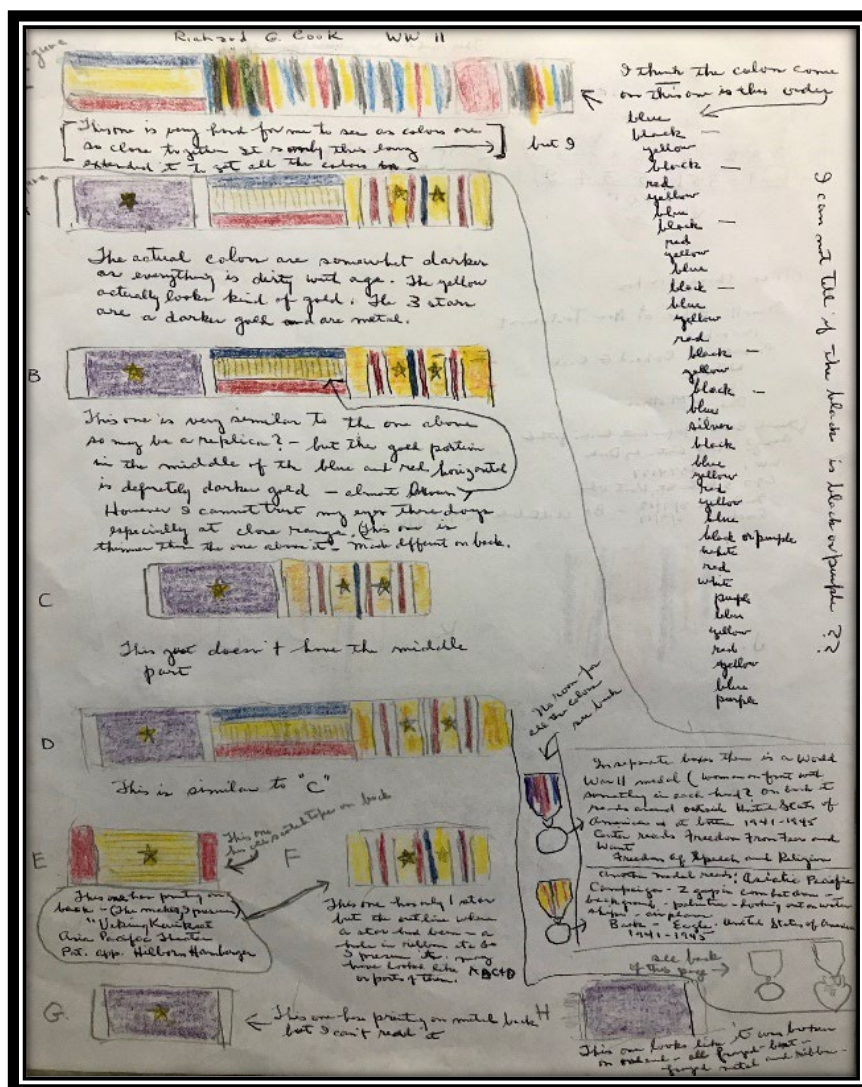


**Kathy, Dick, and Helene during happy times in Ghananna, OH, circa 1960
(Tresemer family photo)**

Helene knew where that box of Purple Hearts was though. Another example of Helene's "beautiful mind" was the effort and time she put in to describe and draw—at 80-some years old—the medals and ribbons that Dick was awarded for his time in the Pacific. I was never able to see the actual awards. Helene wrote that the awards and most of the original paperwork and photographs Helene still had from Dick's service in the Marines belonged, rightfully so, to Dick's grandson to whom she intended to send these items. Still, in her tiny script and using her artistic skills and a host of colored pencils, and displaying her insatiable curiosity, she drew the below description of Dick's awards, the most prominent of which is the Purple Heart with gold star (five awards), awarded for injuries suffered in combat.



Dick Cook, likely at Camp Pendleton, before shipping out to the Pacific to engage in combat against the Japanese, circa 1944 (Fetzer family photo)



Helene's 2000 hand-drawing of her husband's military awards

By the time Helene sent me the letters from which I have gathered much of the information for this column, the "Fighting on Guadalcanal" pamphlet, copies of her husband's papers and photographs, and the above drawing of Dick's medals, Helene was deaf, having slowly lost her hearing for years.

Becoming deaf was just one more of Helene's many sorrows. Yet she didn't complain or lament this travail any more than the others she had endured. She learned to read lips and—again another example of her quest to learn and her curiosity—was an early adopter of hearing-impaired telephone technologies, having a telephone installed in her home in Gahanna, Ohio that actuated flashing lights when it "rang" and possessing a rudimentary digital readout of what was being said by the caller.

Helene's divorced daughter, Kathy, lived with her for a time, a help to Helene as she aged. They shared together the sorrow of losing Kathy's daughter—Helene's only granddaughter—to a lethal drug overdose. Her grandson committed suicide. If Helene was inclined to finally bend to the accumulated sadness in her life, to lose even a portion of her "beautiful mind", her enduring smile, her curiosity or positiveness...if she tended

toward blaming “life” or “Providence” or “luck” or her upbringing, or her circumstances, or her opportunities (or lack thereof), it was not evident to those of us who knew and loved her.

Not long after I received the letter from Helene with the above drawing of Dick Cook’s medals, Helene—one of her greatest sorrows—lost her last grandchild...her only grandson...to another tragic circumstance. Nevertheless, Helene somehow retained hope...and her smile. She still sent hand-made Christmas and Valentine’s Day cards for a few years. Though advancing age—and dementia—finally caught up with her beautiful mind, it could not completely erase it.

The last photograph we have of my cousin is in the winter of 2013 in Gahanna, taken by local professional photographer Gary Gardiner. Helene was suffering from dementia—perhaps exacerbated by her loss of hearing—and had not communicated with her family for several years prior to this photo. She was dead—to the best of our knowledge—shortly after this photo was taken.

Not long after the below photo of Helene was taken and on my way to visit my sister and Mom and Dad in northern Ohio, I made a side trip to Gahanna to attempt to see Helene. The curtains in her home were drawn. No one answered our insistent knocks at the front or back door. Neighbors claimed Helene was in a memory-care facility but did not know where. If she received them, Kathy never answered our letters.



**Helene Tresemer Cook, circa 2013, approximately 93 years old
(Photo by Gary Gardiner)**

I think, in retrospect, Helene was more a “Rosie the Riveter” than I gave her credit for, regardless of the job she might have had at that Curtis-Wright airplane factory in Columbus. While likely too tiny physically to have wielded a heavy riveting gun, she wielded a strong spirit and was strong (if not physically, she certainly was mentally for most of her life). She was unique. She was positive, unapologetic, a lifelong learner, and not cemented to the expectations of others. She refused to allow her many sorrows to define her. She could muster that inextinguishable smile regardless of her lot in life.

Helene experienced, more than her fair share, trauma in her life. But life also serves up “positive trauma”. According to Dan Cable, professor of Organizational Behavior at the London Business School, “research shows that these types of positive

“jolts” that can reset our lives can [also] lead to improved self-esteem, deeper relationships, enhanced spirituality, and more meaning in life.”

I think Helen’s many sorrows must have provided more meaning in her life. She flew through life, like a butterfly or bird, touching other’s lives with her beautiful mind. While fortune might not have continuously shone its light on her (and yet her feathers never became outwardly ruffled about it), all those who were fortunate to be touched by Helene—from Gahanna to New Bern to San Clemente and back—including me—are better people for the experiences of having known and loved her.

Next issue of the ECAHF Newsletter, the fall 2022 edition: A short history of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH)-366, The Hammerheads.



Get to know Grandpa for
the *Hero* he really is...

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Spotlight an Exhibit A-6E "Intruder"



The mighty A-6 Intruders once formed the very backbone of both Navy and Marine Corps attack aviation for more than 30 years. Between 1963 and 1997, there were 17 Navy squadrons and 7 Marine squadrons of A-6s in existence. Today, having been phased out in favor of newer aircraft, there are none in active service anywhere.

Although all Marine Intruder Squadrons stood up at MCAS Cherry Point, eventually Marine Aviation spread the six tactical squadrons between the east and west coasts, at MCAS Cherry Point and MCAS El Toro.

This two-engine aircraft was manned by a two-person crew consisting of the Pilot and Bombardier-Navigator. It had a flight range of 1,010 miles, flew up to speed of 644 mph, and could climb 7,620 feet per minute with 9,300 lbs. of thrust. Its maximum weight was 60,400 lbs.

The A-6E 164378 on exhibit at the entrance of Tourist Center Drive, retired with 1755 Flight Hours, 526 catapult launches and 529 arrested landings. The names on the canopy rails are Major Val Bascik and Captain Pat Bobbs, the first Maine crew of VMA (AW) 533 to be shot down over North Vietnam and not repatriated. Officially, the aircraft is on loan from the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, Florida.



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, by joining forces as members of ECHAF, we will help honor Marines' vital mission in advancing military aviation, a mission they've accomplished since 1942 when MCAS Cherry Point was commissioned as a USMC airfield. 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
- Pilot (Single) \$35.00
- Squadron (Family Membership) \$50.00
- Wing (Business/Group Membership) \$250.00

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