

Ding Friends Hao



Meeting Issue

May 1st, 2010

This newsletter is published by and for the Friends of The 3rd Pursuit for their sole enjoyment and entertainment. It is not associated with the Commemorative Air Force and is strictly for the use of the Friends of The 3rd Pursuit

Mayday, Mayday, Mayday 3rd Pursuit Squadron Has Its May Meeting

Saturday, May first, was the most recent meeting of the 3rd Pursuit Squadron, held at the unit headquarters at Cable Airport. Although there were the usual familiar faces, there were a few that were notable by their absence. Mike Polley failed to appear and we were fortunate to have Chris and Jerry Bergen bring in the dinner in his stead.



Also missing was Doug Schuster, seen here beering it up, elsewhere.



The real story is what they missed. We had two excellent speakers who filled us in on aircraft crashes, including one witnessed from the cockpit and the nylon approach plate.



We started out with Chris Le Fave, a wreck hunter from the age of 15 years when he found his first crash site flying with the CAP. As an Aviation Archeologist, Chris has investigated over 70 crash sites, both civilian and military and has a great passion for doing this. As with Pat Macha, they have solved some of the reasons for crashes that were previously a mystery. They have also left memorials for the victims at some sites and have taken family members to the site where their loved ones died. He has visited the sites of many exotic aircraft crash sites, including an X-15 and an SR-71.

Some of the causes include #1 pilot error, weather, mechanical test flights and training. There have been some 47,000+ crashes in the history of flying in our country. The motivation for this passion includes personal experiences, love of the outdoors, adventure, learning closure and to reflect on

(Continued on page 2)

(Meeting Continued from page 1)

the history of those who died for us.

One of the crashes was a C-130 that suffered the then unrecognized wing structure failure and crashed on a 60 degree sloping mountainside. Later a second C-130 suffered the same fate. A flight of P-40s crashed in Kings Canyon in Sequoia National Park and although some were recovered, some are still waiting to be found.

An interesting sidelight to these searches is the repeated discovery of marijuana plantations being grown by the mexican drug trade with illegal immigrant workers. These plants are worth *millions* of dollars and increase the risk of exploration. Of course these were reported to the appropriate authorities.

One very humanitarian mission involved taking the son of a pilot who died in his A-4D-2 while his son was quite young to the crash site so that his now adult son attained closure and was able to memorialize his father with a plaque installed at the site. When possible, they leave memorials but some of the land agencies do not permit this so a small memorial may be left in a plastic bottle unobtrusively left at the site with items of memory and respect inside.

Often the wrecks are scattered or have been scavenged so that the type aircraft is not recognizable. In this case, identification may be achieved by the data plates on some of the scattered components.

An interesting local wreck was that of a C-47D that departed Norton AFB for Long Beach. The crew apparently made a wrong turn in marginal weather and crashed in the mountains to the north. Another site was that of a P--51 that crashed in the vicinity of the Cajon Pass in instrument weather. A cadet pilot flying out of Hemet-Ryan field in a Ryan PT-22 trainer flew up a box canyon and perished.

A B-24J developed an in flight fire. Two members of the crew bailed out and survived, but the three remaining crewmen who rode the plane down perished in the crash. The site has been graded for home construction and there is little visible evidence of the crash. Currently the government is accomplishing sanitization of crash sites, especially with secret designs and toxic materials.

A fascinating adventure took place following the crash of a Cessna 172 below the dam at Big Bear Lake. The crash site was very difficult to reach and during the search, they discovered the second largest marijuana plantation found. The illegals fled as they approached and again, the authorities were notified.

(Continued on page 3)

Events of Interest

Always check with the event coordinator to learn of any changes

May 9 Mother's Day

May 13-14 Chino Airshow

June 5 F-86 at Planes of Fame, Chino

June 5-10 Air Group One air show Gillespie field, El Cajon

June 20 Father's Day

Pipes newsletter: If any of you are not getting Pipes email newsletter and would like to, please send him your email address at:

budsairplanes@msn.com

Ding Hao - Friends of 3rd Pursuit

Ding Hao Friends is the official publication of the Friends of the 3rd Pursuit Squadron. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the written consent of the Friends of 3rd Pursuit Squadron, publisher of **Ding Hao - Friends of The 3rd Pursuit**. This newsletter is not associated in any way with the Commemorative Air Force.

Address correspondence to **Friends of 3rd Pursuit**,
c/o Dick Fields, 1749 W. 13th St., Upland, CA 91786 or
Email: T6Pilot@War-Bird.com

Membership Data Update

3rd Pursuit Colonels: If you wish to make contact with the CAF 3rd Pursuit for membership information or address changes, please contact

Tony Settember, Adjutant, at

909/985-1977

or

A54swift@aol.com

(Continued from page 2)

The Western Museum of Flight is assisting these explorers in the commemorative aspect of these adventures. They are helping with monuments and other memorial objects placed at the crash sites in an operation called "Project Remembrance".

After his presentation, Chris introduced his friend and fellow attendee at the Old Bold Pilots meetings. He is Lt. Sid Yahn, a P-51 pilot who experienced a real adventure in a P-51 in the local area around Indian Springs, Nevada.



Sid was number 3 of a three ship formation out of Indian Springs when he experienced a rough running engine. The oil pressure soon dropped to zero and the engine began to run very rough. Being at 8000 feet over a dry lake bed, his first thought was to dead stick the plane onto the lakebed but that plan was quickly changed as the canopy became covered with oil and gasoline. He could no longer see out so the plan to land gave way to trusting his parachute rigger.

He opened the canopy, was covered with oil himself, hung on to the canopy for a short time, then let go. On the way by, the horizontal stabilizer took his helmet off but he was OK. He grabbed for the "D" ring and yanked so hard that he not only opened the parachute but ripped cloth "D" ring pocket off of the harness. With the prop stopped and the increased drag plus the delay, when he opened his chute he was very close to the ground but landed safely while the P-51 went in nearby.

As per the custom, the lady who had packed his chute was the recipient of a case of fine booze.

When looking over the aircraft it was found that a mechanic had left a large screwdriver in the oil tank that blocked the oil flow resulting in the crankshaft breaking in two places. When Chris explored the wreck site, they found P-51 parts but also found parts from an unlisted F-100.



Sid tells his story



Chris and Sid sign the unit propeller.



The Motley Meeting Crew!



**Missing but
excused**



**P-51 parts from Sid's
airplane**