

MILITARY SEA SERVICES MUSEUM, INC.



SEA SERVICES SCUTTLEBUTT

August 2016



John Cecil

A message from the President

Greetings,

Kids are everywhere!!! School is back in session. I urge everyone to pay close attention to their surroundings when driving. A young child can quickly dart out from anywhere and drivers must be sufficiently aware to be able to react safely.

Improvement projects at the Museum are moving along. As reported in the June "Scuttlebutt," the front entrance has been completed. Within the past couple of days, Sebring Public Works started installing four new side doors and our Contractor started demolishing an old bathroom and rebuilding it as an Americans with Disabilities Act compliant bathroom. The new doors and bathroom should be completed by mid-September.

The Sebring City Council has generously agreed to fund around \$4,500.00, about half the cost of the bathroom project. The remainder of the cost will come from the funds the Museum saved over the years, and from donations from Museum Members and Friends. A donation in any amount from anyone will be greatly appreciated and dedicated to this remodel project. Any donations received will help preserve some of the Museum's limited savings for emergency repairs and future improvements and expansion. One of our looming "emergency" repairs is replacement of one or both of the two central heating/air conditioning units (heat pumps). Both units were installed following the 2004 hurricanes. One unit has recently required two repairs, fortunately not replacement. Properly functioning heating and air conditioning units are essential for the preservation of the Museum's artifacts. One of our many hoped for future projects is to upgrade the Museum's lighting to Museum quality. Of course, our undying wish is that we will one day have the funds to expand the building to accommodate an ever increasing number of historical artifacts. Donations may be sent to Military Sea Services Museum, 1402, Roseland Avenue, Sebring, FL 33870.

Watch out for the School Kids! Please stay safe!

John

Military Sea Services Museum
1402 Roseland Avenue, Sebring,
Florida, 33870 Phone: (863) 385-0992
E-Mail: navmargrd@gmail.com

Hours of Operation
Open: Wednesday through Saturday
Noon to 4:00 p.m.
Web site: <http://milseasvcmuseum.org/>

Welcome Aboard New Members

On 1 July 2016 Robert and Peggy Brooks signed up for an annual membership. Robert is a retired U.S. Air Force Colonel and a Pharmacist. Robert is also a member of the local Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). Robert and Peggy live in Sebring, FL.

Also on 1 July, Robert Fowler signed up for an annual membership. Robert is a U.S. Air Force veteran who worked in administration at the University of Massachusetts. Robert lives in Lake Placid, FL.

On 29 July, Theodore (Ted) and Chieko Antone signed up for the five year membership plan. Ted is U.S. Marine Corps Vietnam vet. Ted and Chieko are retired and live in Clermont, FL.

On 3 August, Edward Laudium Gadbois signed up for an annual membership. Ed is a U.S. Army veteran who worked as a counselor, instructor, over the road truck driver, and a variety of other occupations. Ed is now retired and a member of the local MOAA Chapter. Ed lives in Sebring.

A very hearty welcome aboard to our newest members! A sincere thank you to all our members for their continued support. Without member support, the Museum would not be able to pay its bills and would have to close the doors.

Story of "Bad Angel"

The Story of "Bad Angel": Pima Air and Space Museum...

On the Saturday following Thanksgiving 2013, Ms. Karen, my 94-year-old father, Bill Gressinger, and I were visiting Pima Air and Space Museum. We were in Hanger #4 to view the beautifully restored B-29, when I happened to take notice of a P-51 Mustang near the big bomber. Its name? "Bad Angel".

P-51 Mustang "Bad Angel" in Hanger #4 at Pima Air and Space Museum. I was admiring its aerodynamic lines and recalled enough history to know that until the Mustangs came into service, the skies over the Pacific Ocean were dominated by Japanese Zeros.

Then something very strange caught my eye. Proudly displayed on the fuselage of 'Bad Angel' were the markings of the pilot's kills: seven Nazis; one Italian; one Japanese AND ONE AMERICAN. Huh? "Bad Angel" shot down an American airplane?

Was it a terrible mistake? Couldn't be. If it had been an unfortunate misjudgment, certainly the pilot would not have displayed the American flag. I knew there had to be a good story here. Fortunately for us, one of the Museum's many fine docents was on hand to tell it.



Lt. Louis Curdes.



Kill marks on "Bad Angel"

In 1942, the United States needed pilots for its war planes lots of war planes; lots of pilots. Lt. Louis Curdes was one. When he was 22 years old, he graduated flight training school and was shipped off to the Mediterranean to fight Nazis in the air over Southern Europe.

He arrived at his 82nd Fighter Group, 95th Fighter Squadron in April 1943 and was assigned a P-38 Lightning. Ten days later he shot down three German Messerschmitt Bf-109 fighters. A few weeks later, he downed two more German Bf -109's. In less than a month of combat, Louis was an Ace.

During the next three months, Louis shot down an Italian Mc.202 fighter and two more Messerschmitts before his luck ran out. A German fighter shot down his plane on August 27, 1943 over Salerno, Italy. Captured by the Italians, he was sent to a POW camp near Rome. No doubt this is where he thought he would spend the remaining years of the war. It wasn't to be. A few days later, the Italians surrendered. Louis and a few other pilots escaped before the Nazis could take control of the camp.

One might think that such harrowing experiences would have taken the fight out of Louis, yet he volunteered for another combat tour. This time, Uncle Sam sent him to the Philippines where he flew P-51 Mustangs. Soon after arriving in the Pacific Theater, Louis downed a Mitsubishi reconnaissance plane near Formosa. Now he was one of only three Americans to have kills against all three Axis Powers: Germany, Italy, and Japan.

Up until this point, young Lt. Curdes combat career had been stellar. His story was about to take a twist so bizarre that it seems like the fictional creation of a Hollywood screenwriter.

While attacking the Japanese-held island of Bataan, one of Louis' wingmen was shot down. The pilot ditched in the ocean. Circling overhead, Louis could see that his wingman had survived, so he stayed in the area to guide a rescue plane and protect the downed pilot.



Pilot Lt. Louis Curdes in his P-51 Mustang "Bad Angel".

It wasn't long before he noticed another, larger airplane, wheels down, preparing to land at the Japanese-held airfield on Bataan. He moved in to investigate. Much to his surprise the approaching plane was a Douglas C-47 transport with American markings. He tried to make radio contact, but without success. He maneuvered his Mustang in front of the big transport several times trying to wave it off. The C-47 kept head to its landing target. Apparently the C-47 crew didn't realize they were about to land on a Japanese held island, and soon would be captives.



One of "Bad Angel's" .50 caliber machine guns built into its wings.

Lt. Curdes read the daily newspaper accounts of the war, including the viciousness of the Japanese soldiers toward their captives. He knew that whoever was in that American C-47 would be, upon landing, either dead or wish they were. But what could he do? Audaciously, he lined up his P-51 directly behind the transport, carefully sighted one of his .50 caliber machine guns and knocked out one of its two engines. Still the C-47

continued on toward the Bataan airfield. Curdes shifted his aim slightly and knocked out the remaining engine, leaving the baffled pilot no choice but to ditch in the ocean.

The big plane came down to hit the water in one piece about 50 yards from his bobbing wingman. At this point, nightfall and low fuel forced Louis to return to base. The next morning, Louis flew cover for a rescuing PBY that picked up the downed Mustang pilot and 12 passengers and crew, including two female nurses, from the C-47. All survived, and later, Lt. Curdes would end up marrying one of these nurses.



.50 caliber ammo for P-51 Mustangs.

For shooting down an unarmed American transport plane, Lt. Louis Curdes was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Thereafter, on the fuselage of his P-51 "Bad Angel", he proudly displayed the symbols of his kills: seven German, one Italian, one Japanese **and one American flag.**

Contributed by CDR Eugene "Doc" Savage, USN (Ret).

Thank You Doc for this great story and little known piece of aviation history.

SEMPER FI (I think)

1967:

By the time Constellation had been relieved on Yankee Station and departed for Subic Bay her Air Wing had lost sixteen aircraft and twenty aircrew either killed in action or captured. The ship had finished her third eight month combat tour in as many years and both the Air Wing men and ships company crew were looking forward to the Christmas holiday at home with family and loved ones. Being someone who was always looking to see what is on the other side of the mountain, I was itching to carry out my orders and pick up the patrol gunboat Gallup in Vietnam in early 1968. I was a short-timer aboard Connie and when we arrived at Subic I was detached to temporary duty with the Shore Patrol in Olongapo City for the entire in port period. Reporting in to Shore Patrol Headquarters in town I quickly learned that the sailors attached for temporary duty always were assigned to the crappiest beats which often meant riding herd on a semi-trailer - more commonly known as "Cattle Cars" - full of drunken sailors heading back from liberty to their ships. Armed with only a Billy Club, two Shore Patrol would ride in the Cattle Car, one all the way forward and one riding on the step up platform at the back of the trailer used for ingress and egress by the riders. Usually about halfway through the route some drunk would begin chanting "kill the Shore Patrol," a mantra readily embraced by the other mass of drunks in the vehicle.

SEMPER FI (I think) cont'd

While I never personally witnessed anyone get thrown from the truck, there was an episode of a shore patrolman being thrown over the side and into Subic Bay by a bunch of drunken sailors in a Mike boat returning from the Grande Island recreation beach late one night. That episode remained central in my thoughts throughout my temporary shore patrol assignment.

After a few nights of cattle car duty, the Chief at headquarters decided to give me a break from herding truckloads of drunks. He said that seeing as I was a first class petty officer I'd be given a less hectic assignment. My new assignment was to return drunken Marines who had run afoul of the law back to their staging camp in the mountains of Cubi Point.

These Marines weren't just station Marines, they were part of a replacement battalion heading for Vietnam and front line combat and while most of them managed to stay out of trouble every so often one or two would be hauled in and after being booked and written up would be placed in a mini bus to be taken back to battalion headquarters in the mountains and turned over to the duty Staff NCO who always took a dim view of the offender's activity

Hoo boy! Did he ever!

One such evening I was tasked to ride back with two young Marines who had had too much to drink and was to turn them over to the Duty NCO along with the arrest reports. Arriving at the HQ tent I exited the bus and turned over the paperwork to the gunny sergeant who was the Duty NCO. We both left the tent to get the two Marines who were being sent back. They exited the bus with a sort of hang dog look about them. The gunny handed the reports back to me.

"You sorry @\$%&*#!!"

The Gunny went ballistic.

"You two clowns let a SAILOR bring you back?"

With that he hauled off and smacked the Marine closest to him, then turned and cold cocked the second one. They both hit the deck and stayed there. The Gunny looked at me, smiled and said, "No offense sailor," and took back the arrest reports.

None taken. Believe me.

Excerpted from 'Listening To Ghosts: Second Edition, ' by Bob Stockton
(Dog Ear Publishing, Indianapolis)..

Contributed by: Robert (Bob) Stockton, M.S., Chief Operations Specialist, U.S. Navy, Retired
Thank you Bob for this interesting and entertaining story.

Anniversaries

7 Aug 1782. Inception of the Purple Heart. Purple Heart Day is celebrated annually on the anniversary of the inception of the Purple Heart.

4 Aug 1790. Congress created the U.S. Revenue Marine Service, later became the U.S. Coast Guard.

19 Aug 1812. USS Constitution defeated HMS Guerriere off the coast of Nova Scotia.

29 Aug 1916. United States Marine Corps Reserves (USMCR) established. The USMCR has played a critical role in the Marine Corps total force by augmenting, reinforcing and supporting active duty Marines during military operations since World War I. Happy 100th Birthday!!!

19 Aug 1934. Adolf Hitler, already Chancellor, elected president of Germany in an unprecedented consolidation of power.

7 Aug 1942. U.S. Marines (1st Marine Division) conducted the first Allied offensive of WWII at Guadalcanal.

2 Aug 1943. PT-109, commanded by LT John F Kennedy, was rammed by the Japanese destroyer Amagiri and sunk in the Solomon Islands. Two sailors were killed and 11 survived.

6 Aug 1945. First atomic bomb "Little Boy" dropped on Hiroshima, Japan from B-29 named Enola Gay. Enola Gay was piloted by COL Paul Tibbets, U.S. Army Air Corps. Tibbets retired as a U.S. Air Force Brigadier General in 1966.

9 Aug 1945. Second atomic bomb "Fat Man" dropped on Nagasaki, Japan from B-29 named Bockscar. Bockscar was piloted by Major Charles Sweeney, U.S. Army Air Corps. Sweeney retired from the Massachusetts Air National Guard as a U.S. Air Force Major General in 1976.

14 Aug 1945. Japanese agreed to unconditionally surrender. VJ day is declared-Victory over Japan.

4 Aug 1947. U.S. Navy Medical Service Corps established.

23 Sep 1779. CAPT John Paul Jones aboard Bon Homme Richard tells HMS Serapis: "I have not yet begun to fight."

17 Sep 1787. U.S. Constitution approved.

10 Sep 1813. Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry commanding his squadron from the USS NIAGARA defeated and captured the entire British squadron in the Battle of Lake Erie.

14 Sep 1814. "Star Spangled Banner" written by Francis Scott Key.

1 Sep 1939. Germany invaded Poland. World War II began.

9 Sep 1942. The Japanese submarine I-25 launched a single engine floatplane piloted by Warrant Officer Nobuo Fujita near Cape Blanco, Oregon. The floatplane dropped two 168 pound incendiary bombs deep into the Oregon forest about 9 miles from Brookings, Oregon. The Japanese hoped the bombs would start massive forest fires. However they did not take into account earlier heavy rains, consequently the bombs did little damage. The I-25 was sunk almost a year later on 3 Sep 1943 by the USS PATTERSON (DD392) off the New Hebrides Islands.

Anniversaries continued

2 Sep 1945. Japan signed the formal surrender agreement on board the USS MISSOURI in Tokyo Bay. World War II, the most devastating war in human history, was over.

18 Sep 1947. U.S. Air Force established. Happy Birthday to the greatest Air Force on earth.

11 Sep 2001. Nineteen Al-Qaeda Islamic Terrorist flew two hijacked commercial planes into the World Trade Center and one into the Pentagon. The fourth hijacked commercial plane headed to Washington, D.C. crashed into a field near Shanksville, PA while courageous passengers fought to overcome the hijackers. The attacks resulted in nearly 3000 killed and at least 10 Billion dollars in damage to property and infrastructure.

11 Sep 2002. The first Patriot's Day. In the aftermath of the Terrorist attacks on 11 Sep 2001, President George W. Bush designated 14 Sep 2001 as a National Day of Service and Remembrance for the victims of the attacks. On 30 Nov 2001, Congress passed a joint resolution that the President declared 11 Sep of each year as Patriot Day. President Bush signed the resolution into law on 18 Dec 2001. On 2 Sep 2002, President Bush proclaimed 11 Sep 2002 as the first Patriot Day--a Day of Service and Remembrance.

Stories Wanted

We would like to publish in the Scuttlebutt short stories of Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard personal experiences, and/or short stories of sea services historical events. We are sure there are plenty of stories out there that would be of interest to Scuttlebutt readers. Please email your stories to navmargrd@gmail.com or mail to the Museum.

Quotable Quotes

We can accomplish anything provided no one cares who gets the credit.

---CAPT Joseph J. Rochefort, USN (Ret)

Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear - not absence of fear.---Mark Twain

Courage is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm.---Winston Churchill

There is no substitute for experience; however, when experience is not readily available, there is no substitute for training.---Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz

The difficulties and struggles of today are but the price we must pay for the accomplishments and victories of tomorrow.---William J.H. Boetcker