A.M.H.F.

Dedicated to preserving, in flying condition, a vintage PV-2 Harpoon in memory of all who fought in the air on behalf of the United States of America

News Letter December 2016

Greetings to members & friends of the AMHF,

Season's Greetings,

We have now arrived into the last 31 days of 2016. There is absolutely nothing we can do about the days that have passed by this year; tomorrow isn't here yet, so the only real thing we have to deal with is today so let us try to make the best out of each today we are given.

So how are things going in the world of Hot Stuff? Well one might say terrible, not good, just about normal, or really great. If you would look at all of those adjectives you could probably find something that would fit under each one so depending on your view point at the time anybody could be correct.

We were able to remove the left rudder and get it in the shop where we will have some heat and we will be able to make the needed repair, paint and balance then it will be ready to go back on the plane. The right one also needs to be removed and painted when weather and time permits.

There are a couple of small sheet metal jobs to do inside the plane when the weather co-operates with us; also, some door seals still need attention. All in all I believe we are in pretty

good shape for a spring sign off, start engines and do a shakedown flight followed by crew training. However, back to the original statement all we really have to work with is today.

We will still be having some work days during the winter. Naturally we will watch the weather and try to pick some good days. However, we still have many things we can do inside the building and Rich was able to get the heat going for us. Therefore, it really shouldn't be too bad to do some much needed inventorying, straightening out hardware, and creating a list of what we already have for the museum.

This is the last newsletter for 2016. I hope all of you have a great Christmas and a prosperous New Year. I am closing out his year with another interview. However, this one is going to be just a bit different. I have known this individual for many years and it has only been recently that I have learned what all he had been involved with. No we are not in WWII, or the Korean conflict, this is the cold war. Some of you will know about that, others of you will ask what the cold war was. This was sort of a standoff between the United States and Russia and covered a period roughly from the late forties through the early nineties. As students we got to practice hiding under our desk in case of a nuclear attack rather than a tornado. During this time the first two satellites were put in orbit, Russia first, United States second, then the Cuban missile crises. My friend was in service during that time so here is his story and I hope you enjoy it.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,

Gaylon

Meredith on Right Meredith with the air compressor for missile

Meredith Zech
United States Army
From January 07, 1957 to December 20, 1959

You remember a few months ago I mentioned the fact not to judge people around you because you never know what they may have accomplished or did in their life that you had no idea about. I have such a friend. I have known him for over fifty years and during the course of our conversations and talking about life experiences I kept thinking there was something that I was missing. Then over the years I kept picking up on little bits and pieces in conversations. One day we had been out doing some serious shooting and talking about various things and the subject of medals came up and about various people who had won certain medals. He looked at me and said "Well, I have a medal." He then reached in a drawer and pulled out a small box and handed it to me. It contained the Soldiers Medal. This is the highest medal that can be awarded during peace time. End of conversation and just this past year is the first time he agreed to sit down and talk about his military experience. So here is his story. Note this takes place during what is known as the Cold War, which is generally accepted as 1947 through 1991 Meredith graduated from high school in 1954 and like many of us found a job and went to work. He worked on the farm for a year then enlisted in the Army for three years and headed to Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo. for basic training. He had wanted to be a gunsmith. However, that didn't quite work out. After basic he was sent off to school to become an armament repairman. He had schooling on everything from the 45 through the 280 MM atomic cannon. After all of this, there was another 8 weeks schooling on anti-aircraft weapons. All of this took place at Aberdeen Proving Grounds.

After completing school he was sent to Ft. Bliss, Texas where he worked as a repairman on the 40mm bofors. Two months later he was called to main post. Now those of us who have been in the military know that could be good or bad. He was asked if he would like to go to school. They didn't know what school or anything else about it. His conclusion, it couldn't be any worse than where he was. So orders were cut and he was off to Redstone Arsenal.

He arrived in Huntsville, Al. Redstone Arsenal and met up with the rest of the people who had been chosen for this unit. One individual said he didn't know anything about rockets other than he had been blown out of bed one night in London by a German V2. He spent approximately three months at Redstone Arsenal learning the workings of the Redstone missile. The engines were built in California and run once. They then arrived at Huntsville, were test run once more. Then sent to Cape Canaveral, now Kennedy Space Center, where they would run a third and final time.
Redstone Arsenal was the 40 th Artillery Group, Mules to Missiles. They got rid of their last pack mule in 1957.
Redstone Missile:
Range 200 miles
Payload 2000 lbs., Weight 12,500 lbs. empty, total weight at launch 56,000 lbs.
3,000 gal. Alcohol and 3,000 gal. Liquid O2
0 to 5,500mph in 118 seconds, flight time 6 min 30 seconds, 78,000 lbs. of thrust.

From Redstone Arsenal he was then sent back to the 333rd Artillery Group at Fort Sill, OK. From Ft Sill he was sent TDY to Eglin AFB, Fl. For the Redstone winterization project, he sort of chuckled and said they didn't even know if it could be prepared for a launch in cold weather.

There they had to assemble the missile in a climate controlled hanger to make sure everything would work at 30 below zero. They can create almost any weather condition you require. Temperature can range from +165 to -65 degrees F. So in this hanger visualize the missile set up in launch mode, the fuel truck with 3,000 gallons of 71% alcohol on board, 3,000 gallons of liquid oxygen, air compressor truck capable of 5,200 psi to pressurize the missile, and an Airforce fire crew. During this training exercise something went wrong. The alcohol tanker blew up. The good thing depends on how you see it, the tanker failed as designed, and blew out the top creating a ball of fire. Now consider they have almost 1,700 gallons pumped onboard the missile which can now run back to the tanker feeding the fire. Meredith now runs back around the tanker, up the ladder, on the side of the missile, to the valve on the missile and closes it preventing the reverse flow of fuel saving several lives and a multi-million dollar hanger. The Airforce fire crew said they would be glad to watch us fuel at any time however, they would use binoculars the next time. Meredith's comment was in retrospect it was probably a dumb thing to do but he did it anyway. For this act he was awarded the Soldiers Medal.

He was then deployed to Germany with the 40th artillery group, the first tactical deployment of a missile group. Now being the first they had more fact finding to do. The missiles were flown to Europe onboard C124 Globe Masters. So with a missile in ground transportation mode and all of the equipment they drove all the way across France and half of Germany at a speed of 19 mph. The purpose was to find out if they could get there by land through all of the narrow streets in the towns. While in Germany they spent a lot of time in the field moving to different areas and practice setting up the missile. Their record from truck to launch status was 55 minutes. Then in 1959 they were given orders to attend the Paris Air Show and set up the missile. They were only to take the necessary equipment to make it look real and that took three C124 Globe masters to move them from Frankfort to Paris.

After discharge from the Army he came back home to Lake Cicott and is now retired and enjoys shooting, working on his antique farm tractors, or just figuring out what new project he might like to start next. During our conversation for this article he was telling me he later read where President Eisenhower was the one who would not let us launch a satellite. He said," if we did the Russians would accuse us of spying so if they went first there was nothing they could say." So Sputnik was launched October 4, 1957, it was 23 inches in diameter and completed 1,440 orbits.

Explorer 1 was launched on January 30, 1958. Its payload was 80 inches long and 6.25 inches in dia. Its last contact was May 23, 1958 and decayed out of orbit March 31, 1970. The interesting thing is we could probably have put this in orbit in 1953.

For all of you that were born in the late 80s other than what you read about you really have no conception of the cold war. Tension was very high, people talked about bomb shelters, and we practiced what to do in case of a nuclear attack. This went right along with the fire drills we had at school.

I would like to thank Meredith for finally letting me tell his story and for his service to our country along with all of the other military personnel who are doing the same thing today only with a different threat.

Russian plane at Paris show 1959

C124 Globe Master to help move missile

Loading part of the missile for transportation

Preparing for VIP show Dec. 04 1958 someplace in Germany

Practice set up someplace in Germany March 1959

Copy of presidential Citation

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 2, 1926, has awarded the Soldier's Medal to

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS MEREDITH W. ZECK, U S A

for heroism:

Private First Class Zeck, Battery A, 4th Missile Battalion (REDSTONE), 333rd Artillery, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, distinguished himself by heroism while attached to the 3206th Test Group for the Redstone Missile System Winterization Project at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, on 31 March 1958. As a member of the fueling crew, Private Zeck was stationed on the fueling ladder near the fuel inlet valve of the REDSTONE missile, where approximately 1,700 gallons of fuel had been transferred to the missile fuel tank, when an explosion and fire occurred in the pumping compartment of the alcohol trailer. Private Zeck dismounted the fueling ladder with the intent of rendering assistance to persons blown about by the explosion, and then, in complete disregard of his own life and personal safety, passed through the flames at the base of the missile, remounted the fueling ladder and closed the inlet valve on the missile. This decisive action stopped the flow of fuel from the missile to the ground and prevented the fire from reaching the missile fuel tank and causing a more serious conflagration and explosion which would undoubtedly have resulted in serious injury or loss of life to approximately 18 men in the immediate vicinity, as well as the loss of the missile and the multimillion dollar climatic test facility in which the tests were being conducted. Private Zeck's prompt and courageous action, presence of mind and devotion to duty demonstrated a high degree of dedication to the service and to his country, and reflect the utmost credit upon himself and the United States Army.