

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 July 2015



Greetings to members & friends of the AMHF,

Happy Independence Day to everyone
239 years have gone by since July 1776

“You have to love a nation that celebrates its independence every July 4, not with a parade of guns, tanks, and soldiers who file by the White House in a show of strength and muscle, but with family picnics where kids throw Frisbees, the potato salad gets iffy, and the flies die from happiness. You may think you have overeaten, but it is patriotism.” *Erma Bombeck*

I am making the assumption that most of you have heard some quote from Erma Bombeck before. She seems to have the knack for getting it down to the basics. However, I believe we must remember that Freedom is not free! A big thank you goes out to all of the men and women of the armed forces, past and present serving to protect our Freedom.

Well we have moved into July and things are progressing, maybe not as fast as we would like, and we are moving forward. We will just do a little walk through of the happenings since our last newsletter.

The inboard fuel bays have all been cleaned and painted. We have the chafe pads cut for all but one and we have one tank up in place and some of its plumbing installed.

We have purchased new fuel hose for the entire fuel system and have a good portion of it already replaced. I might mention not without some #@! \$#!, along with I don't know if I will be able to move in the morning. Normal Harpoon work day, correct?

The four main gear tires have been shipped and two tail wheel tires are off to be recapped. We hope to have them back by the time we need to do the wheel and brake inspection.

Will continue the Wednesday/Saturday work days rain or shine until further notice. Wednesday will start at one O'clock and Saturday will start at 10:30. If something changes we will send out an e-mail or you can call me on my cell phone 317-512 -5020 or the shop at 317-398-9296 if you have doubt if we will be there.

We would like to thank Robert and Arlene Solimine, Intercontinental Avionic & Instrument, located in Tyler Hill, Pa., for the donation of various instruments and other items for our museum. Two of our members made a road trip to pick it all up. It was a fast trip starting about noon Sunday and back and unloaded at eight Tuesday evening, 1,420 miles.

I would also like to welcome three new members to our organization David Stucker, Corey Lucas, and Tomas Lapinski.

On June 29 we had another meeting with our consultants in regards to a hanger and funding. I have attached two drawings of the proposed hanger. To help you orient yourself the current proposal is for the hanger doors facing East and the entrance to the museum would be on the north side with a canopy over the walk and doors. The interior of the hanger itself is large enough to house the Harpoon and one more plane the size of a P-51. There will be two side areas one for the museum and conference room and the other for shop work area such as sheet metal fabrication and cleaning and repairing parts when necessary or maybe replacing a few dozen cowling fasteners. Naturally this would all take place inside and out of the weather. What a concept!

We currently have two more meetings scheduled with our consultants, one with the Airport Authority, to sign off on the design and the other with the Board, to develop plans for moving forward. Our consultants are already working on several ideas for moving the project forward including fund raising and publicity.

I hope all of our members find this exciting and will participate in bring this to completion. Hot Stuff is a rare plane and we need to try to protect her for future generations.



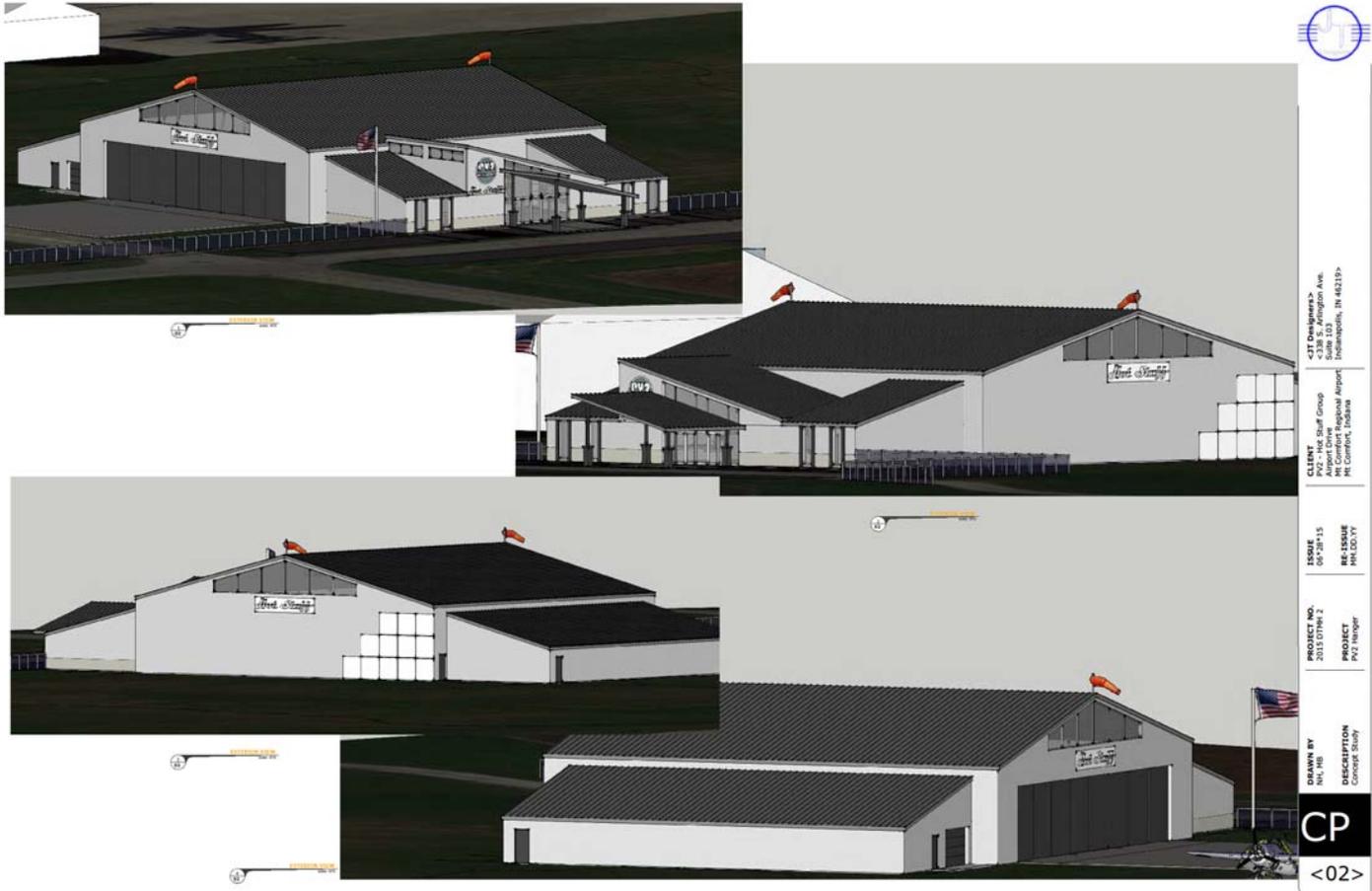
PV2 Architects, Inc.
 2115 S. Armpian Ave.
 Suite 103
 Indianapolis, IN 46219

PROJECT NO.
 2015.0719A.2

DRAWN BY
 SH, MB

DESCRIPTION
 Concept Study

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Each month when it comes time to work on the newsletter I try to find something different and interesting that I think the membership might find interesting. This time I came across an article in the local newspaper that I found interesting and I thought it had some relevance to our original fight for independence as well as some of the things we go through at the AMHF.

Each person in this couple was ready for the relationship to progress, but neither was sure the other was ready.

After a wonderful dinner one night, the couple sauntered onto the deck of the restaurant. The moon, music and mood were ideal. If there was ever a time to express romantic feelings, this was it.

The young man turned to his partner and said, "Honey, if I had a thousand arms they would all embrace you. If I had a thousand eyes they would all gaze at your beauty, if I had a thousand lips, they would...."

At that point she interrupted him and said, "Quit complaining about what you don't have and use what you have."

Now I am sure none of us would ever fall into this type of situation, right? Where would we be today if George Washington had started complaining the he didn't have enough men, enough cannons, and the list could go on. How many times have we got down on ourselves at AMHF because we didn't have this or that and someone else had something better? Just remember complaining about what we don't have is nonproductive. Using what we do have produces positive results.

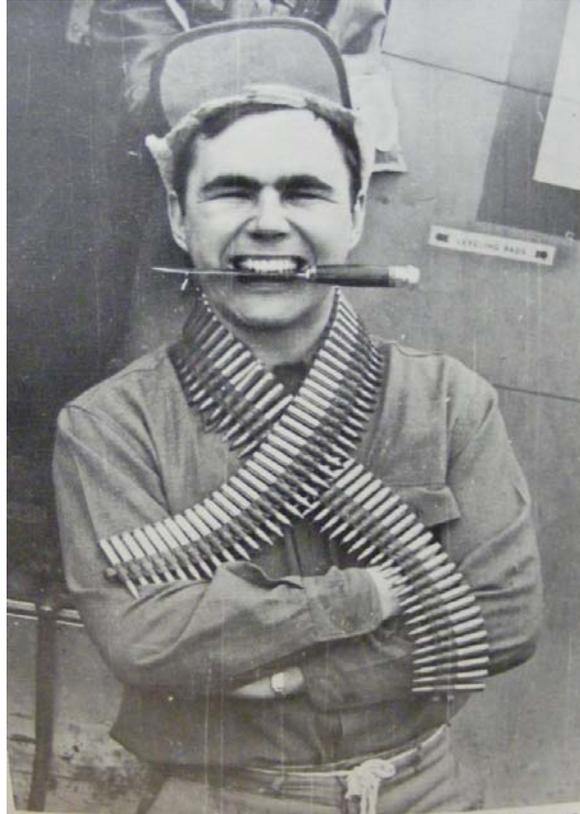
One of the things that is most interesting about being a volunteer with the AMHF is you never know from one day till the next what may take place. In March of 2014 an e-mail came to Rich from a Mr. David Feiten from Berkeley, Ca. His father is Navy Captain Robert Feiten of Denver Co. First we would like to thank Captain Feiten for his service to our country and helping to keep us a free nation.

The following is what his two sons David and Joe had to say about their Dad. Captain Feiten is 92 years old and still hanging in there. He flew both the PV-1 and PV-2 in the Navy during WWII. He flew to the very end of the war and retired from the Navy 20 years later. He flew in South America looking for German subs then in Attu flying into Japanese's Kuriles Islands. He lost an engine during one of the missions but was able to make it back to Alaska on one.

"The Empire Express" by Charles Scrivener talks about several of the squadrons. Captain Feiten was in VPB 131. He related many of his stories to his sons indicating that they lost about half of the squadron due to accidents.

David related to me that he went with his father many years ago to South America to see his old Naval Air Base located in the jungle. Joe also asked that I pass along that one of his Dads buddies, Stafford Mantz, is still alive and lives in the small town of Jamaica, Vermont. The picture is from page 10 of the "Empire Express" by Charles Scrivener. If you are having trouble figuring out which Stafford is, he is the one with the knife in his mouth and a string of ammunition around his neck. The other picture from the same book shows Captain Feiten and his crew.

If you get a chance to read "The Empire Express" there is a chapter on the history of VPB-131. The stories that are shared in the one chapter are amazing and causes one to stop and consider how fortunate we are that we had people like Captain Feiten when they were needed.



Lt.(j.g.) Stafford B. Mantz clowns at the plight he lived with almost daily. The laundry tie-lines (rope) belt was non-regulation.

John Dawson



VPB-131 crew, Lt. Robert Feiten PPC. Back row, l. to r.: Feiten, Sturgess, Lapham. Front row: Dunn, Keys, Nichols. Below, Lt. John Dawes and crew, back row, l. to r.: Mantz, Dawson, Suddarth. Front row: Santowski, Jones, Foster.

Here are some other fun facts about my father flying the PV-1 and PV-2.

It was in South America (Suriname) that Robert lost half his flight crews to accidents.

Two of the PV-1 Ventura crews were lost on the same day, when one crew took off with the head mechanic to test an engine that was just repaired. That engine caught fire shortly after takeoff. The first PV-1 crashed in the jungle past the end of the runway. A second PV-1 took off in search of the first crew and stalled when circling overhead the first crash site, crashing along the bank of the river. Both crews were lost. My father said, "he made to sharp a turn when circling and stalled it."

From the ground it was very hard for the rescue crew to see which way to go because the jungle was so thick. Robert Feiten took off in a small one engine Piper plane and found both of the crash sites but had no radio on board to call back. He tossed several notes out the plane window but they failed to land near the rescue crew. He finally tossed a note out the window using his belt as a weight to the rescue crew on the ground, directing them which direction to go.

In South America (Suriname) the squadron lost another PV-1 flight crew on a night mission that went after a known German sub in the area. They don't know if the plane was lost due to an accident or a fire fight with the sub. They never found the plane or sub wreckage.

Flying missions at night looking for submarines over the water was a very dangerous job. For one, you did not have city lights to guide you. Rain storms were often, so you could not always see the horizon line, you had to rely on your instruments.

The old airport in Suriname, South America is surrounded by jungle. It was built about 2 miles inland from the water so that German U-boats could not fire their guns at the airport at night. The first day on the job, Robert flew to the air base, but could not land because of some large object on the runway. He circled around the airport until the local natives cleared the runway. After he landed, Robert found out that the object was a very large boa constrictor. He took a picture of the snake draped over the shoulders of the natives who killed it. From the picture, it looked to be about 12 feet long.

After his missions in South America, Robert's squadron VP-131 was transferred to Attu, Alaska. While flying a mission to the northern part of Japan, Robert lost one engine right when he reached the Japanese coast. It happened the furthest point away from Attu. His crew turned the plane around and had to toss out the guns and every bit of weight possible to keep it flying. I asked my father if he was scared to death at that point. His reply was; "No, I wasn't scared, but I sure was paying attention to all the instruments every second of the trip back." Robert flew less often in Attu, because the weather was often bad. Most of his missions

were reconnaissance, searching for the Japanese fleet.

Toward the end of the war, the PV-2 was equipped with rockets under the wings. My father showed me a photo of his plane attacking a Japanese radar tower along the northern coast of Japan. The planes flew in groups of 4. After the PV-2's attacked the Japanese mainland, they would group back up close together. They did this so that if a Zero attacked them from behind as they fled; they had more guns shooting at the enemy to kill it. If a PV-2 got singled out in the air, it did not stand much of a chance against a Zero. The PV-2's dropped their bombs or rockets over Japan they would go full throttle. Because of the PV-2's speed and quickness to get away, it took a while for a Zero to catch up with the PV-2's, by the time they did, the Zero would be running low of gasoline and could not fight for very long.

Robert flew both the PV-1 and PV-2 out of Attu. He liked the PV-1 over the PV-2. Robert said, "The PV-1 was lighter, faster and maneuvered better when you had to get away quickly from the enemy. However, the PV-2 was heavier, had a longer wing span and could hold more bombs." My father often said, "those engineers at Lockheed really messed up that plane when they made the PV-2. I would much rather have the speed and control in a PV-1 when chased by a Jap Zero." The PV-2 had problems with the added wing length and weight in its early days.

Robert joined the Navy in the early part of 1941 before the war started. He wanted to join the Navy to learn how to fly. He was busy studying for his final flight exam when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. He was the first one in his class to get his wings. Robert was made a flight instructor on the PBV for the first couple of years, teaching out of Florida. Robert often said, "Given the job as a flight instructor probably saved his life. If he was given missions over Germany or Japan early in the war, he probably would not have survived." One evening when flying a PBV along the coast of the Carolinas, Robert and his students came across two large cargo ships on fire that had just been torpedoed by a German U-Boat.

Around 1943, the Navy had enough crews trained on the PBV, so Robert and his fellow flight instructors were offered a chance to fly missions in the war. They were told by their captain to go to the beach where they could see a demonstration of two different types of planes. They were to choose between the two planes and decide which one they wanted to fly. One was the PV-1 and the other was a large bomber style seaplane (I forget the name), larger than a PBV. The bomber seaplane took off on the water, started to porpoise, and crashed, killing the entire crew, right in front of all the spectators. Robert turned to the captain and said: "We'll take the PV-1, it looks a lot safer."

Captain Feiten was very proud to have flown four different Navy airplanes. They included the PV-1, PV-2, PBV, and the DC-3 during the Korean War.

After retiring from the Navy, Robert went on to fly for United Airlines as a both a flight instructor and pilot on the 737 and 727. David Feiten

I would like to thank David and Joe Feiten for sharing their Dads story with us. It is one of those special moments that we don't get privilege to very often.

Enjoy life to the fullest and do some good along the way,

Gaylon