



# CORBEN COURIER

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The Chapter 93 monthly meeting will be held at **7:00, Thursday, February 21, 2008**, at the Chapter clubroom, Blackhawk Field, Cottage Grove, WI. **Bill Rewey** will speak to us about his life experiences in an autobiographical way. He's done lots of things in his life, and your editor wants to finally find out if he can still sing his high school pep song

## IKE AT D-DAY

From the December 2007 issue of  
*The Smithsonian*

*We pick up this story from the December Courier at the point where landings are occurring in higher wind and waves than were expected*

All these things were on Eisenhower's mind on the morning of June 4. Although Southwick House, the Operations Center at naval headquarters, had been until recently a luxurious mansion, the supreme commander had elected to set up his battle headquarters - consisting of his own trailer, a cluster of tents for conferences,

and trailers for his personal staff - in a park a few miles away. The comparative solitude gave Eisenhower a chance to take long walks and think. But he was by no means isolated. The white and gold walls of Southwick House were now covered with big maps, on which Wrens (members of the Women's Royal Navy Service) plotted the position of each unit of the invasion fleet to the sound ringing telephones and clattering teletypes. A red telephone in the spare, cramped bedroom of his trailer linked Eisenhower to a secure, scrambled line to Washington; a green telephone to 10 Downing Street; a black one to his chief of staff, Maj General W. Bedell Smith.

Despite all this, Eisenhower was under no obligation consult with anyone. His orders read simply, "You will enter the continent of Europe and, in conjunction with the other Unit Nations, undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces." The decision to invade, to postpone, even to call off the invasion if need be was his and his alone.

Perhaps the only sign of Ike's nervous tension was the increasingly rapid rate of his chain-smoking. Every ashtray in the trailer was full to overflowing with smoldering ashes, one of his staff noticed, as the general restlessly lit one Camel cigarette from another without stubbing out the first, pausing only to take another gulp of black coffee. From time to time, he stood up, put his hands on his hips and stared out the window of the trailer at the rain, or stood at the door of the trailer and looked up at the sky.

He knew that by the end of the day, he would have to make the decision about whether to go on June 6. Through most of the day, Eisenhower stayed in his trailer, occasionally leaving to take a walk, waiting restlessly for the weather to change. It was still windy and pouring rain that evening when he left for Southwick House.

Waiting for him in the library were his senior commanders and their chiefs of staff - 12 uniformed men in all, though Montgomery wore his trademark baggy corduroy trousers and roll-neck pullover. The big library had once been an elegant room, but the bookshelves were empty now, and most of the furniture had been removed. A large table covered with green baize cloth was placed in the center of the room. Heavy blackout curtains covered the windows but did little to keep out the noise and rain.

Promptly at 9:30, Eisenhower entered the room and asked the others to sit down. There was no small talk. They all knew why they were there and shared the same concerns. There was a haze of tobacco smoke in the room - it was an age when almost everybody smoked, except Montgomery, who rarely allowed anybody to smoke in his presence except King George VI, Churchill and Eisenhower. The door opened and the three senior meteorologists came in, led by their chief, RAF Group Captain J. M. Stagg.

Stagg began on a note of cautious optimism: Weather aircraft far out over the Atlantic had detected a high-pressure front moving rapidly east. Tomorrow, June 5, would see periods of gradual clearing over southern England and the invasion beaches, with dropping winds. These conditions would improve through the night of June 5, enabling bombers to



operate and airborne operations to take place, and would continue through the morning of June 6; but later in the day, conditions would begin to deteriorate. In short, there would be a window of 24 hours or less.

Once Stagg and his staff had been dismissed, Eisenhower asked his commanders to give him their opinions. Predictably, the air commander, Trafford Leigh-Mallory, was pessimistic about the airborne operations, having already expressed his fear that they would result in a disastrous blood bath. Leigh-Mallory had been a pessimist about the airborne operations from the start, even if weather conditions were perfect - to the great annoyance of the British and American airborne commanders, who were impatient for an opportunity to demonstrate that large-scale parachute and glider operations were feasible at night. Failure to play a major - and successful - role in the coming invasion would very likely lead to the airborne units' being broken up to provide replacements for regular infantry units, so not just honor but survival was at stake. Montgomery was succinct as usual. "I would say go," he said simply.

A. W. Tedder, Eisenhower's deputy, for once agreed with his fellow air marshal Leigh-Mallory. This must have dismayed Eisenhower, who placed a good deal of confidence in Tedder's judgment. Leigh-Mallory's opinion would not have surprised him - indeed, Eisenhower had already had a long and painful conversation with Leigh-Mallory, during which he had warned him that while he was entitled to his opinion, he must not let it affect the troops' morale - but Tedder's doubts were something Eisenhower could have to take more seriously.

It was left to Admiral Ramsay to give the group the naval facts of life. If the invasion was postponed again, he pointed out, it would be necessary to bring many ships back to refuel. A naval operation of that size, spread across ports all over southern England, might easily be picked up by the Germans. In any case, it would take far more than 24 hours to refuel the ships and get them back in place again. If the invasion did not go forward on June 6, he saw no practical likelihood that it could do so on June 7 - it would have to be postponed until late in June or sometime in July.

Postponing the invasion by another 24 hours was bad enough, but postponing it until the end of June or the first week of July would be catastrophic. Politically, it would reawaken Joseph Stalin's not altogether dormant suspicion that the invasion would never take place; both President Franklin Roosevelt and Churchill were anxious to avoid such a reaction. Militarily, the risks were worse. Could 170,000 men be brought back to England without being noticed by a German spy or without starting rumors? And what would be the effect on morale? Most of the men had already been briefed about the invasion beaches, which meant they would have to be held virtually incommunicado on their airfields, in their barracks or on their ships. Postponement until July, Ike thought, was simply "too bitter to contemplate" and probably impossible.

There was a long silence, broken only by the spatter of rain against the windows, the noise of the wind and the ticking of a clock. Eisenhower sat at the baize-covered table, his hands clasped in front of him, while the others waited for him to speak. It was Eisenhower's decision now and even Montgomery, usually keen to press his own case, sat silently, looking at him.

*(Final installment, next month.)*

## **JERRY'S REVIEW**

Did you see **Rob Tweed's** presentation at the December Chapter meeting? Wasn't it great? You missed it? Well then, let me tell you about it.

Rob was working in California designing components for the Space Shuttle engine when he decided to build a plane of his own. That was in 1988. He chose a fast plane in which he could take long trips. The early Lancair he chose was a low-wing, fiberglass speedster with a 235 hp engine. He showed slides of the nearly finished tail surfaces that required extensive sanding. The fuselage was next... much more sanding of the much larger fiberglass surface.

As the presentation continued, Rob revealed that his reason for building a cross-country plane was so he could "connect" with friends and family across the nation. He knows many people enjoy flying slowly, over familiar territory. That's great, but for Rob, the allure was the "connections" he could make by getting to distant places to visit people in a hurry.

A move to Madison, Wisconsin, came at a time when the wings and control surfaces were built. These needed much more surface preparation. Did I mention sanding? Rob got help from some friends and chapter members who were included in his slide presentation along with family members who helped, like his wife Jill and daughter Chelsea, a student at University of Minnesota-Duluth.

More great slides showed visits to family out West, a trip to Florida to see the Shuttle launch and connect with some friends and co-workers, as well as a visit to Duluth to see his daughter.

Rob even had a video of the Lancair's first flight, observed by a few hearty chapter members. This was an exciting time for Rob as we saw the plane speed by overhead... just barely overhead! The presentation ended and Rob thanked chapter members for encouraging him and giving him support during times when the building process seemed to be overwhelming, especially all the sanding. He is now able to "connect" with anyone, anywhere, anytime he wants and he has met his goal. Thanks, Rob, for a stimulating, interesting and informative presentation on how and why people build airplanes.

*Jerry Matzelle*

## BOOK REVIEW

### *The Untold Story of Lindbergh's 1927-1928 Goodwill Tours*

by Ev Cassagneres, 2006, Pictorial Histories Publishing Co. of Missoula, MT, 348 pages, 8-1/2 x 11" soft cover, hundreds of photographs and a good index.

This is an encyclopedic account of the trip Charles Lindbergh took after his New York to Paris flight, sponsored by the Guggenheim Foundation for the purpose of promoting air travel and the improvement of flying fields. He visited 80 cities in all 48 states, plus 15 countries in Central and South America. He was accompanied by Phillip Love in a Fairchild FC-2, carrying mechanics and supplies. The U.S. trip took three months and the south-of-the-border trip took two.

There are two to four pages covering each stop. Typically, those stop pages include a history of the city or country, the crowd control problems, a parade, a dinner, and the housing arrangements, the names of the important people he met, a brief review of the speech he made, and the airport conditions then and today.

The Madison stop was August 22-23, 1927, at then Pennco -later Royal Airport (by the present SouthTowne Mall). The parade route is spelled out street by street, dinner was at the University of Wisconsin Memorial Union, and he stayed at the Lorraine Hotel. The description of today's Madison airfields includes our own Blackhawk, Morey, and Waunakee, with the number of runways and the length of the longest runway.

I was 11 years old at the time. For years, I wondered how I ever missed Lindbergh's visit. It was because my mother gave birth to my brother Donald Charles on August 31. and I had been sent to relatives in Wauwatosa, to be out of the way for that occurrence. His middle name, Charles, was at my urging. They resisted naming him Lindy.

The book is mine, sent to me by my brother. *Fred Leidel*



## AIRCRAFT IDENTIFICATION

This month's aircraft was the only flying boat to go supersonic, and it took off and landed on retractable hydro-skis. One of the remaining examples is mounted vertically on the grounds at the Sun 'n Fun Fly-in in Lakeland, Florida. What's its nickname, numerical designation and who made it?

Last month's airplane was named Buttercup and was designed and built by Steve Wittmann. Fairchild Corporation wanted to manufacture it though they were skeptical of Steve's patented leaf spring landing gear. Shortly after an Air Corps inspection team came through the plant and after seeing the Buttercup project, told Fairchild to build PT-19s.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Thanks for attending this year's banquet. With some 48 in attendance at the January 12, 2008 Chapter Banquet and all the door prizes in the hands of new owners, all those attending were treated to a presentation by our guest speaker, **Mr. David Jensen**, Dane County Regional Airport Deputy Director. Mr. Jensen covered both in word and video past and ongoing "projects" as well as some "green" projects at the airport. Mr. Jensen also touched on the financials of how the airport sustains itself without taxpayers' dollars; very interesting! Thanks, Dave and Sue, for taking the time to speak at our event. Just a few other quick notes:

- The Chapter renewal paperwork has been completed and turned in to the head office (and I've only gotten one call - thanks, Gary, for helping).
- Dues need to be paid for 2008.
- Some positions still open for Chapter 93:  
Young Eagles coordinator to assist **Bill Rewey**;  
newsletter co-editor to assist the **Jerreds**;  
publicity co-chair to assist **Jim Falk**.

On another note: In an attempt to escape the snow shoveling routine, **Scott Nolinske** and I attended the Chapter 252 banquet on February 2<sup>nd</sup> and listened to guest speaker Greg Canyon talk about his years in the Air Force and duty spent as a pilot onboard Air Force One! Through two administrations to boot! The museum takes on a different light during such an event. You need to take one in sometime if you haven't.

See you at the next meeting.

*Don Ripp*

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EAA Chapter 93 publishes *Corben Courier* once a month for and about its members who are interested in all phases of aviation. Articles to be submitted must reach the editor by the first Saturday of the month. Meeting night is the third Thursday of the month unless otherwise stated. Members may advertise items free of charge. Business card size ads are \$5 per month or \$50 per year.

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