

Concho Valley Aviator

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111 South Washington Street, San Angelo, Texas 76901

May 2001

April Meeting

President George Spinks called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He welcomed all present. The President introduced speaker Arb Rylant, airport director, San Angelo Regional Airport.

Arb via dialogue, video, and slides vividly impressed members with the skill required by pilots to land an airplane on a ship, an ever moving runway. Arb served as air boss, the one responsible for all aircraft handling, on the aircraft carrier USS RANGER in the Arabian Gulf during Operation Desert Storm. Arb gave a brief overview of life aboard ship then focused on pilots and aircraft operation. Arb described catapult take-offs for various types of aircraft. The runway with catapult and landing areas on the ship were clearly shown in pictures and graphics. Arb gave procedures for holding patterns for VFR, VFR-IFR and IFR weather conditions. Arb said the most exciting landings were those made in IFR conditions at night!

President Spinks thanked Arb for giving members some insight into the aircraft operations aboard ship.

The President invited members to enjoy the sweets and soft drinks brought by Barbara and Bill Yeates.

President Spinks began the business portion of the meeting by telling members of The Story Begins by Paul Poberezny, a book given to all EAA chapters by Jack Mark and Rudy Frasca. The book may be checked out by members.

The President offered the sympathy of all chapter members to Leon York in the loss of his brother and to Arb Rylant in the loss of his father.

President Spinks mentioned the recent surgery of Joyce York.

The president presented a certificate of appreciation to Bob Heiser, webmaster, and a certificate of appreciation to Donald Treadwell, editor, newsletter.

The president announced several fly-ins in the area. He reminded members of the air show to be given by the Thunderbirds, July 15, 2001. He expressed his desire to have a great static display of general aviation aircraft that day.

Lawrence Wright mentioned that Gerry Hatch is looking forward to returning to Ducote and having numerous flying activities.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Mitzi O'Hara
Secretary



Wayne Cutrell photographed J. D. Daniel and his Stearman at the Coleman, Texas Airshow.

The next meeting is **Tuesday, May 15, 2001, at 7:00 P.M.** at the Mathis Field Conference Room. Some members come early to have supper at the Airport Restaurant. **Ted Conrad** will provide the refreshments. The program this time will be a video called "Personal Minimums."

Coming Attractions

May 12, 2001 10 AM. Come help fly Boy Scouts that want to be Young Eagles. Meet at the old Southwest Aircraft location next to the terminal at Mathis Field. There will be about 30 kids wanting a ride in an airplane, not counting me.

May 12, 2001 8 AM - 10 AM Fly-In Breakfast Levelland, Texas Municipal Airport (Q24) All You Can Eat Adults - \$5.00 Under 12 - \$3.00. For more information call Rick Liles (806) 794-7336.

May 12, 2001 Mt. Vernon Fly-In, Franklin County Airport. EAA Chapter 834.

May 19, 2001 South Plains Airshow at Slaton Municipal Airport, Slaton, Texas \$3.00 Adult admission; \$1.00 for kids age 5 to 16. Gates open at 9:00 AM. The Confederate Air Force will be reenacting WWII & Korean War battles. Also, aerial demonstrations by aircraft of the United States Air Force, including an F-117 Stealth Fighter, F-16 Fighting Falcon, and other airplanes and military helicopters. For more information call: (806) 828-4664

The Airfair at the Old Kingsbury Aerodrome is rescheduled for May 26, 2001.

June 16, 2001 1st Annual Fly-in Breakfast at Winston Field, Snyder, Texas. 8:00 AM to 10:30 AM. Free breakfast for fly-ins; \$3.00 to others for all you can eat, sausage, eggs, pancakes, coffee and juice. Fuel \$1.60/gal. to fly-ins.

AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE CHINA RESCUE MISSION

April 12, 2001

By Captain Guy Greider, Continental Airlines

Since the midair collision on April 1, 2001 between a U.S. Navy EP-3 surveillance aircraft and a Chinese jet fighter, I had watched the news with mild interest. This was mostly due to the proximity of Guam to China. I never dreamed that I would play a role in this intensely watched international drama. Somewhere in the negotiations between the United States and the Chinese Governments, it was decided that a civilian aircraft should be sent to retrieve the 24 crewmembers being detained on Hainan Island, China. A call was made to Continental Airlines headquarters in Houston, Texas. Continental was chosen because of its Guam base and its ability to launch this kind of operation at a moment's notice. From there, the operation took shape through the tireless efforts of many people working behind the scenes in a coordinated effort between the airline, the military, and the State Department. On Saturday, April 7, 2001, I received a call at home from Captain Ralph Freeman, Continental Micronesia Director of Flight Operations. Ralph told me that the military wanted to Charter one of our jets to conduct a rescue mission and asked if I would be one of the crew members. I said yes without hesitation.

Later we were told that we would need to get passport pictures taken in case the Chinese Government required visas. We got the required photos and were under the



impression that we would leave immediately. However, the negotiations slowed over the demand from the Chinese that the U.S. issue an apology that the U.S. was unwilling to give. Meanwhile, the Continental crew remained on call 24 hours a day. Our Uniforms were laid out and our bags were packed and waiting by the door. On Wednesday evening April 11, 2001, at about 6:30 PM Ralph called again to say that the two parties were very close to an agreement to release the U.S. crew and to come to the airport. Upon arrival, we were given a briefing sheet listing the information that we would need to conduct the flight.

These pictures were taken by a U.S. Navy crew member on board the EP-3 downed in international waters off Hainan Island, PRC. They were taken two days prior to the mid air collision. She e-mailed these to her husband before the accident.

Note: The Pilot is apparently waving in the picture on the next page. Tough looking Day VFR fighters. Note, also, the high angle of attack of the Chinese fighters in their effort to match speeds with the slow moving EP-3. That could be a contributing factor in the pilot's loss of control when he ran into the U.S. aircraft.

We would carry a Repatriation Team consisting of Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force specialists, 14 people in all. Doctors, Psychologists, and communications people with lots of gear showed up on the ramp near the airplane, ready to board. They were all dressed in casual civilian clothes. The 155-seat jet was fitted with 2 full stretcher kits bolted in over rows of seats complete with Oxygen tanks and I.V. bottles. They did not know the condition of the 24 detained crew members and they were not going to take any chances. They were prepared.

When our crew was fully assembled, it consisted of eleven people. Two pilots to fly the jet and an extra to provide relief because of the extensive flight time involved. They were Captain Tom Pinardo, Captain Pierre Frenay and I. We also carried five very experienced Flight Attendants. They were Debbie Percell, Susanne Hendricks, Jean Tang, Cynthia Iverson, and Beverly Haines. Our two onboard mechanics were Peter Lum and Julius Aguilo. Our load planner was Mike Torres.

At about 930 PM we received a call asking that we arrive in China no earlier than 600 AM, just about sunrise. It was obvious that the entire exchange would be photographed and they wanted daylight conditions. We estimated that a 215 AM departure from Guam would put us on the ground in Haikou precisely at 600 AM local China time. (2 hours earlier than Guam) Some of us just stayed on the plane, others accepted the company's invitation to come to the Continental President's Club, a local VIP lounge at the airport to try to get some rest. It was difficult to get any rest with our much anticipated mission so near. By 100 AM the pilots were back in the briefing room going over the weather, flight plan, fuel requirements and everything else that goes into a flight. Again, we loaded up the airplane and finally departed Guam International at precisely 215 AM. The stretcher kits and medical gear were not the only special additions to the airplane. The company had loaded a special file into the navigation database of the flight management computer (FMC). This allowed us to gain access to navigation data needed to operate



in this part of China, which is not in our normal route structure. The Repatriation Team carried sophisticated equipment to communicate with the military and government officials that would monitor our progress throughout the flight. The route of flight took us straight west from Guam toward the Philippines along the G467 airway. About half way across we turned north directly toward Hong Kong. This routing was designed to avoid flying through Taiwanese airspace, something that the Chinese could consider offensive. Approaching the Chinese coastline, we contacted Hong Kong radar control. After establishing radar contact with us, the controller gave us a short cut to expedite his traffic flow. This was bad because it cut off considerable distance and would result in arriving too early. We compensated by slowing our airspeed until the computer again estimated a 600 AM arrival. The instant we turned across the short cut, the interphone rang from the back of the plane. They wanted to know why we had deviated from the flight plan. We told them it was due to Hong Kong traffic and that we had adjusted our airspeed. We were still on schedule. Now we were approaching our destination, Haikou airport on Hainan Island.

Captain Pierre the controls. was 2000 ft miles visibility out of the east. ILS approach on runway 9. is much the other airports that serve jet aircraft. It has runway with lighting and facilities. We at 607 AM. morning light to illuminate local air traffic



Frenay was at The weather overcast with 5 and light winds Pierre made an to and landed Haikou airport same as many in the world transport an 11,000 ft standard navigational touched down The first early was beginning the sky. The controller

instructed us to follow a vehicle that was beside us on an adjacent taxiway. He led us to a remote part of the airport, away from the main terminal buildings. Once we had parked and shut down the engines, we saw many uniformed Chinese military personnel and vehicles. They did not appear to have weapons.

Portable stairs were brought up to the airplane and we opened the main cabin door. The Repatriation Team that we carried had been briefed to close down all of their communications equipment prior to landing and put it away. They were also briefed to remain in their seats in a non-threatening posture in case the Chinese military came aboard. The first and only person to come aboard was an Air China employee. He spoke English and was to act as the translator between our group and the Chinese military. He instructed us to have everyone fill out both arrival and departure documents. He collected all of our passports and left the aircraft. Before he left, he said that only one person at a time would be allowed to deplane. Peter Lum, one of our mechanics went down to supervise the refueling and servicing of the airplane. When that was complete, I went down to do the walk-around inspection. I did this rather slowly because I wanted to have a chance to look around. While I was out on the ramp, a skirmish developed between people who were trying to climb a wall to photograph our aircraft and the Chinese police.

Somehow, CNN managed to carry our arrival and departure live. Once the airplane was serviced and ready to go, we looked anxiously around for any sign of the buses that carried our 24 detainees. Before that could happen however, we had a problem to deal with. A U.S. military general who was on the scene to assist in the transfer came storming up the stairs and demanded to speak with the Captain. Tom Pinardo responded. The general said that the entire mission was now in jeopardy. A document called the general declaration, which is standard on all international flights had listed the destination as Haikou, China R.O.C. The initials ROC stand for Republic of China which is .. Taiwan! The Chinese were very upset over this. Tom quickly crossed out ROC and replaced it with P.R.O.C. the Peoples Republic of China. This seemed to satisfy them. With the airplane ready to go and the paperwork complete, 2 buses pulled up and the 24 U.S. service men and women saluted as they bolted up the stairs and settled into the back of the plane. When the last one was aboard, our passports were returned to us. The stairs were withdrawn, the cabin door closed, and we started the engines and departed. It was my turn at the controls. Once

airborne heading straight south we broke through the clouds into the bright sunshine. Pierre made a PA announcement that we were over international waters and leaving Chinese airspace. A great cheer rose from the back of the airplane. A short while later we received a telephone patch over the HF radio from Mr. Joseph Prueher, U. S. Ambassador to China. He wanted to speak with Lt. Shane Osborne the 26 year old EP-3 Aircraft Commander. Lt. Osborne came to the cockpit and put on a headset. The Ambassador told him that on behalf of the President of the United States and the entire country he wanted to say welcome home. He went on to say how proud he was of everything the crew had done from their airmanship in saving the lives of the crew and aircraft, to their conduct on the ground once they had been detained. They had truly done an excellent job.

After his conversation with the Ambassador, Lt. Osborne stayed in the cockpit for quite a while and told us his story pilot to pilot of what had happened during and immediately after the midair collision with the F-8 Chinese fighter. The fighter came up under their left wing. This pilot made two very close passes previously that day. He apparently misjudged the intercept and his vertical stabilizer struck the outboard left propeller on the EP-3. The U.S. plane was in straight and level flight on autopilot at the time. The fighter broke into two pieces and plunged into the sea. The U.S. plane rolled to the left almost inverted, the pilot lost control and they began to lose altitude. The Chinese fighter had raked back across the fuselage and knocked off the nose cone causing the aircraft to buffet wildly. When the nose cone departed the aircraft it collided with and damaged the number 4 propeller on the right wing. The collision punctured the pressure vessel and the EP-3 depressurized. The collision also knocked off the pitot tubes eliminating airspeed and altitude indications in the cockpit. It also knocked off the forward bracket for the HF radio antenna. The antenna then flew back and wrapped around the tail. We were almost upside down and totally out of control Osborne told us. The dive continued and some crew members donned parachutes. At about 8,000 feet, Osborne regained straight and level flight. They considered ditching the aircraft in the South China Sea but dismissed that option because it was certain to result in loss of life. They headed for the nearest land, Hainan Island. The U.S. crew now faced the most difficult landing of their lives. They made numerous mayday, mayday, mayday radio calls on internationally recognized emergency frequencies. The Chinese did not respond.

Somehow, they managed to get the airplane on the ground. Their next immediate task was to destroy the sensitive electronic surveillance equipment aboard the EP-3. Meanwhile the Chinese military had approached the aircraft in vehicles and were yelling at them through loudspeakers to deplane. The next 11 days would be a very uncertain time for them. When we met them, they told us that they had not been abused or mistreated. Their food was adequate and plentiful. Sort of like eating in a Chinese restaurant every day one of them said. On the fourth day, they got some coffee. On the fifth day, some Cokes were provided. The crew did not know what kind of transport would be provided for their return home. They were pleased and surprised to see a chartered airliner from the United States. The rest of the flight from Haikou to Anderson AFB on Guam was uneventful.

During the 5 hour flight the crew was treated to the movie Men of Honor and enjoyed a first class meal. We did not know it at the time but our landing at Anderson AFB was carried live on national television. We taxied to the parking ramp at Anderson where many people had turned out to welcome all of us home. Individuals and families with kids, both military and civilian waved American flags and cheered, showing support for the returning U.S. spy plane crew. Once the 24 U.S. crewmembers and the military Repatriation Team had deplaned at Anderson, they immediately boarded waiting buses and were whisked away. The Continental crew then became the object of intense media attention. CNN, MSNBC, ABC, NBC, Reuters and various print media interviewed us. A dizzying swirl of attention after a very long day. We were happy, tired, and pleased that the mission was so successful as Tom flew the last segment, a 10-minute flight back to Guam International Airport. This time our passengers included Bill Meehan, President of Continental Micronesia, Guam Governor Carl Gutierrez, Lieutenant Governor Bordallo and others. We thought the day was just about over but we had one more surprise in store.

After landing, we were given a hero's welcome of our own. The airport fire department was in place to give us the traditional water cannon salute, a rainbow arch of water for us to taxi under. A reception was held at the gate with food, balloons, commemorative plaques, and more media interviews with the local television station. This was very heady stuff. As I look back on this one of a kind operation. It could not have happened without effort and skills of many people working behind the scenes. Bill Meehan, Mitch Dubner at the SOCC in Houston, Tom Rinow at the CMI SOCC, Captain Ralph Freeman, CMI Director of Flight Operations, and many others had major rolls in coordinating this flight. It was accomplished through teamwork. The fact that it came off without a hitch is testimony to how well all these people did

their jobs. The exposure that Continental Airlines received over this is a marketing manager's dream comes true. We will be remembered by millions of people as the company who conducted the China Rescue Mission. This was a proud day for Continental Airlines and for America.

Flight Level 50

By Donald Treadwell

Nancy and I have flown out to the ranch a few times in the last month. I mowed a strip down the runways in order to let most of the wild flowers go to seed. The bluebonnets were beautiful around the area. I hope you took time to enjoy the flowers. Much of the runways at the ranch are covered with knee high grass and weeds

A couple of weeks ago I flew to the ranch at sunrise to spray the pecan trees with zinc. We have a sprayer that attaches to the back of the tractor and uses a turbine-style propeller to blow the spray to the tops of the biggest trees. Next I attached a tiller to the tractor and rebuilt a section of the caliche driveway. After that I used the mower attachment to cut some strips down the runways and taxiways. It is amazing how much work can be done with a well-equipped tractor. Now I don't get handfuls of grass caught in the landing gear of the Cessna.

We have added to the Cessna. We seats and a fourth jacks if you bring headset. The new welcome addition when Nancy, take a vacation country.



I completed the wings program month by taking instruction at Skyline. Remember VORs? We actually turned on the VOR radio and tracked inbound and outbound on various radials. We spent over an hour under the hood, finishing with unusual attitude recoveries. Brandon really spun my internal gyros. I was burping excess gas the rest of the hour. He was nice enough to say he was impressed how I handled the tailwheel Cessna. After twenty-one years in the same airplane, I should look good. Of course I botched one landing and showed him how to double dribble a Cessna down the runway.

I believe everyone who attended last month's meeting was impressed with Arb Rylant's stories of his participation in Desert Storm. Arb served as the air boss aboard the carrier Ranger during that war.

This month we have a video on personal minimums. Be sure to attend, and then tell your insurance agent that we had another safety meeting at Chapter 493. Continuing education is the way to make general aviation safer for all of us.

It looked like we were going to have an airshow featuring seaplanes last month at Mathis Field. A Grumman Albatross and a PBY were parked at Ranger Aviation. It turned out that the PBY belonged to Connie Edwards. He was having Ranger Aviation work on the radios in his PBY. We sat down in the big seaplane after a tour of the interior and talked airplanes.

One of Connie's claim to fame was working on the movie *The Battle of Britain*. He was in charge of coordinating all of the airplanes used in the movie. After the production had finished filming the aerial sequences, the producers owed Connie a lot of money. Since he was unsure that he would be paid for his work, he asked to be paid with the airplanes used in the production. He crated several Spitfires, ME-109s,

another headset have three quiet set of headset your own headset will be a this summer Matthew, and I around the

first phase of the during the last three hours of



and other aircraft. He has given several away to organizations like the Confederate Air Force, but still has some in crates after all these years.

He also related how he and another PBY reenacted the journey of NC-4 two years ago. When they arrived in Portsmouth, England the other PBY crashed and sank.

It was a real blast talking to Connie and I look forward to our next meeting.



EAA Chapter 493 Newsletter
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Grumman Wildcat photographed
by Wayne Cutrell.

