



# THE READY ROOM



JUNE 2023

Heart Of America Wing Est. 1982

Vol.3, Issue 6

A **ready room** is the room on a Navy aircraft carrier where air crews hold their pre-flight and post-flight briefs. Crews serving during WWII considered the ready room to be a clubroom.

“The funny thing about a ready room is that you get attached to the hole. As much as you are attached to the ship. It's more than sentiment. It's an urge for protection. The loneliest feeling in the whole of a carrier pilot's world is when he's at sea with the gas running low, and he can't see his carrier. You think of the ready room then, and the noisy guys who make it the most desirable place in the world. It's your office, you live in it, it is the big thing in your life. [...] You sweat and worry in it, and grouse and argue, and you get mad at it when you can't hear yourself speak because everyone is yelling at once, but you're deeply attached to the place.

— Tommy Booth

*"Wildcats" Over Casablanca*

## Wing Leader's Report

The summer is flying by and we are busy at the Heart of America Wing. The big news is that we are making progress on the PT-19. On June 8<sup>th</sup>, the parts were delivered to Raven Aero in Junction City, Kansas, which is operated by a father and his two sons. They have had several award winning airplanes at Oshkosh. It is not a big shop, but they do excellent work and they are excited to work on the PT. Thanks to the crew who delivered the parts: Ken Tyler, Jim Neese, Ron Wright, Fred Wicke, Bob Robinson, Dan McFarland, Joe Stubler, and Crew Chief Dan Hauser. Meanwhile, we still need to get the wings picked up from Pennsylvania. We are working through several options to do it as safely and economically as possible. One wing is basically finished and needs to be protected. It will most likely be a road trip for a couple of members in July.

On July 5-9<sup>th</sup>, we are taking the Stearman to Wichita for Wichita Warbird Weekend, hosted by B-29 "DOC" at their hangar. Bob Robinson has all the info. If you would like to go please let him know. We will be staying at Hotel Old Town, a refurbished turn of the century factory. On July 15<sup>th</sup>, we will host a Hangar/Dinner dance. It isn't going to be the typical USO type of dance, but a smaller band and limited to 100 guests. Rick Schubert is running point on this and it will be a fun evening. Call John Wittenborn if you would like to purchase tickets. I hope you can come out and support the Wing. The KC Airshow is the same weekend as our August Meeting so we won't be able to use our hangar. We are inside the aerobatic box and must vacate the premises. For that reason, staff has elected to not have a meeting in August. We hope members will help us man the booth at the Airshow that weekend. We will have more information as we get closer to August.

There are plenty of opportunities to get involved. Sometimes it is hard to become part of the group, and sometimes we don't make it easy. KEEP TRYING. We really do want you to become active in our Wing and once you do, you will be richly rewarded. We have a great group and I'm proud to be a member.

**EDUCATE – INSPIRE – HONOR**

-- Steve Zimmerman

**NEXT MEETING:**

**15 JUL, 10:00**

## OPERATIONS REPORT

Warmer weather and calm winds have finally arrived so we have been able to honor some previously sold gift certificates and given some other rides. If you are a member and have not gone for a Stearman ride, please check the calendar. If you are available when the ride is scheduled let us know and we'll try to get you airborne. There were three rides given on our last Open Hangar Day.



The 33<sup>rd</sup> annual "Run for the Wall" went through



Kansas City on Monday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>. John Wittenborn (PT-13), Brian Von Bevern (PT-26), and Steve Zimmerman (L-19) graciously flew their aircraft to Concordia, MO to honor the efforts of veterans on this ride. It begins in California and ends in Washington, DC at the Vietnam Memorial. The Heart of America Wing and these three pilots were recognized at this lunch/rest/fuel stop for their fly over. I drove over to meet with the organizers. The city of Concordia did this up right. They rolled out the Red, White and Blue carpets for these veterans.



The Wing will be heading to Wichita, KS to help the B-29 "DOC" with their 2<sup>nd</sup> "Wings over Wichita" event. We plan to leave on Thursday the 6<sup>th</sup>, returning on Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup>. Only two planes going this year but several of us will be driving. More info at our next General Meeting on June 17<sup>th</sup>.

Looking ahead to the big KC Air Show on August 18-20, we will be needing a bunch of volunteers to help staff our display. Again, more to follow.

-- Bob Robinson

## PT-19 Restoration Update

A huge thanks to everyone who showed up to help sort parts, prep the airframe and parts, and drive the project to Junction City to the restoration shop. We are getting closer to finally having this project done and flyable again!



## Safety Update

Saturday, May 20th, after the Wing's general meeting and lunch concluded, we welcomed 3 firemen from the New Century Fire Department. They stopped by to conduct Hands Only CPR orientation training and AED orientation. Sessions were not for certification purposes. We had 9 people stick around to attend the sessions. There were some great CPR related discussions and practice scenarios. We also received a briefing on our AED and a demonstration with training equipment.

I am hoping to schedule another session for each training in the fall. Hopefully, we'll also get fire extinguisher training done too.

-- Bill England



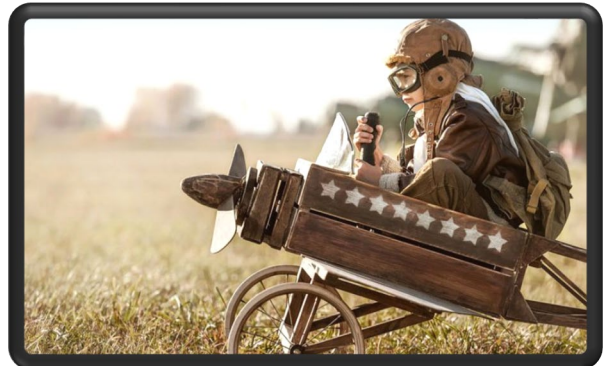
The AED is hanging in the kitchen at the end of the counter.



**Wing Staff Meeting**  
**6 Jul, 7 PM**

### Wing Notables

Also we congratulate Brian Von Bevern for passing his CFI check ride. This is no small task. Now, all three of our PT-13 pilots are CFI's. Brian hoping to specialized in tail wheel endorsements. Keep him busy!



# Gone West...



Stearman.net



On a more somber note, one of the driving forces in the formation of the Heart of America Squadron (originally under the MO Wing) has passed away. JoAnne Kemper of Clinton, MO, left us on Wednesday, Jun 14th. She was married to CW Kemper, the original owner of our PT-19 and one of the original HOA members. JoAnne was a kind, gracious, and wonderful lady from Manhattan, KS. She was the only person I know who could keep CW, and later Ray Gentile (see photo with John Helms) in line. If you knew these two, you know what I mean. She got to visit our hangar many times with Ray and she commented to me how proud



CW would be, knowing and seeing our growth and success. She was 84. Services will be in Clinton, MO on Saturday, June 24.

-- Bob Robinson



## MONEY MATTERS

Hello HOA members and friends.

We have some good financial results so far this year. For the first five months, our revenue is up substantially over the same period last year. This is primarily due to more PT-13 donations for rides, and more rental income from our hangar, including four weddings and special events. The Wing is in good shape on a cash basis, with more funds in our checking account as of May 31st than at this time last year. As far as upcoming expenses, we are beginning a new, two-year maintenance program for our elevator.

We had a successful “Open Hangar Day” on June 3th, the second of this year, with a total of over \$500 in revenue. Thanks to all who participated!

Thank you to those who have paid your 2023 HOA dues. If you have not yet paid, please submit your 2023 annual dues to both our Heart of America Wing, and to CAF National in Dallas. As of today, our Wing has received dues payments from about 86% of a total of 111 members who were active last year.

If you pay the HOA dues with cash or a check, the cost is \$50, the same as last year. However, if you pay on-line, the cost is \$52. If you want to pay on-line, here is the link: <https://square.link/u/PZ0y5yh8>

Let me know if you have any questions!

Mark Schlicht



© IWM (NYP 69366)  
Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers at Bomber Command base in the Marianas  
Philip Sawford and Katharine Alston



U.S. Department of Defense

## 5 Things You May Not Know About D-Day

June 3, 2022 | By [Katie Lange](#) , DOD News



D-Day. The Invasion of Normandy. Operation Overlord. It goes by various names, but we've all heard about it through history class, grandparents, the news or shows like "Band of Brothers."

June 6, 1944, is the day when more than 160,000 Allied forces landed in Nazi-occupied France as part of the biggest air, land and sea invasion ever executed. It ended with heavy casualties — more

than 9,000 Allied soldiers were killed or wounded in those first 24 hours — but D-Day is largely considered the successful beginning of the end of Hitler's tyrannical regime.

The bravery by the paratroopers and soldiers who stormed Normandy that day is well-known, but there are a lot of things you may not know about D-Day. Here are a few of those nuggets.



### **Why It's Called D-Day**

Do you actually know what D-Day stands for? Apparently it's the most frequently asked question at the National World War II Museum, but the answer isn't overly simple. Many experts have varying opinions, including that the D simply stood for "day," a code used for any important military operation. Others have said it's just alliteration, like "H-Hour," when a military assault begins.

### **D-Day Was Initially Set for 1 Day Earlier**

A lot of weather-related requirements were necessary to pull D-Day off. The days needed to be long for maximum air power usage; a near-full moon was needed to help guide ships and airborne troops; and the tides had to be strong enough to expose beach obstacles at low tide and float supply-filled landing vehicles far onto the beach during high tide. H-Hour was also crucial in that it relied on those tides to be rising at that time. There

While the true meaning remains up for debate, we'll go with what U.S. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower said about it through his executive assistant, Brig. Gen. Robert Schultz: "Be advised that any amphibious operation has a 'departed date;' therefore the shortened term 'D-Day' is used." He said there were actually several other D-Days during the war — Normandy was just the biggest and most well-known.

also had to be an hour of daylight just beforehand for bombardment accuracy.

Only nine days in May and June seemed to fit those requirements, so commanders eventually settled on June 5; however, thanks to forecasts that showed a short window of good weather that day, Gen. Eisenhower decided last-minute to switch D-Day to the early hours of June 6.



### **We Only Stormed 2 of the 5 Beaches**

Stories of how U.S. troops stormed the beaches of Normandy have been legendary for years, with the names Omaha Beach and Utah beach standing out

in people's minds. But the invasion stretched out over 50 miles of land, so we couldn't do it alone. Three other beach invasions by Allied troops happened simultaneously: Great Britain and some smaller forces stormed Gold and Sword beaches, while the Canadians took Juno Beach.



## It Was Almost a Failure

While the ultimate goal of liberating France and ousting the Germans did happen, a lot went wrong on D-Day — especially for the Americans, who were the first to launch the invasion.

Thousands of U.S. paratroopers died during their drop behind enemy lines at Utah Beach, having been shot out of the sky by enemy fire or weighed down and drowned in flooded marshlands. Many also missed their landing spots, as did the seaborne forces, which landed more than a mile from their intended destination, thanks to strong currents.

The Omaha offensive turned out to be the bloodiest of the day, largely in part because Army intelligence underestimated the German stronghold there. Rough surf caused huge problems for the amphibious tanks launched at sea; only two of 29 made it to shore, while many of the infantrymen who stormed off the boats were gunned down by Germans. Gen. Omar Bradley, who led the Omaha forces, nearly considered abandoning the operation.

Somehow, though, both sectors of U.S. troops managed to advance their positions for overall success.



## Decoding 'Enigma' Helped Us Win

Decoding the great German code machine known as Enigma, then keeping that decoding device a secret, is one of the most brilliant strategies that came out of World War II.

Long story short, since radio was the standard communication of the time, the Allies and the Axis powers both needed machines to turn military plans

into secret codes. The Germans had Enigma, which was thought to be unbreakable — until it wasn't. Early in the war, a team of Polish and British experts — led by Alan Turing, whose life and work are depicted in the Oscar-winning movie "The Imitation Game" — cracked that code through what became the foundation for the modern computer.

Instead of telling the world about it, though, leaders thought the device would be more useful if kept secret. So for years, German plans were hindered by the decrypted messages, including on D-Day. Officials said the German codes intercepted before D-Day precisely pinpointed nearly all of the German fighting units in the Normandy area. On D-Day itself, it also helped Allied commanders get word of their troops' progress quicker than through their own communication channels.

Breaking Germany's codes, and later those of the Japanese, proved to be a huge advantage for the Allies. While controversial for its secrecy, the decoding process has been widely credited with saving hundreds of thousands of lives and shortening the war by nearly two years.

Oh, and by the way, the U.S. military developed its own superior code machine — SIGABA — before entering the war. No one was able to break that one.

If you didn't know any of those things before today, now you do! But either way, make sure to remember those who gave their lives that day to help ensure a better future for all of us.

*(Editor's Note: This item was originally published June 3, 2016.)*

## MECHANICS WORKED THROUGH THE NIGHT....

by  
Robert A. Mann

A lot of words have been written, and rightly so, about the men who flew the B-29s in World War II and in Korea. But outside of the standard: "Ground crews worked through the night to get a maximum number of planes in the air," little mention has been made of the mechanics who kept the aircraft flying.

To all of us who worked on it, the Curtis-Wright R-3350 radial engine was an object of consuming hatred. Basically, it was two nine-cylinder engines mounted on a double-throw crankshaft. Voila! Instant eighteen cylinder engine.

There is a law that permits only those cylinders on the bottom of the engine to fail. This is so that the oil can run out of the engine housing and drip ceaselessly into the

mechanic's hair, ears, and nose, and down the back of his neck.

So! You have pulled the cylinder, gotten your oil bath for the day, and torqued the bolts, all twenty-four of them. Are we done yet? Hell, no! You still have to safety wire those twenty-four bolts.

Picture the rough-cast, quarter-inch thick aluminum cooling fins projecting from the bodies of each cylinder. Picture the cylinder mounting bolts only a couple of inches away from the cylinders in the other bank. Picture the safety wire that had to be strung and pulled tight through each bolt head. Picture the bloody mess where your knuckles used to be after those ragged cooling fins got done with them.

A B-29 mechanic lived soaked in engine oil. It was a way of life, and most of us simply opened up a wing tank drain at the end of the day and took a 130 octane shower to get it off. Draining the rear oil sump was a

prime example of the fun and games with engine oil we routinely enjoyed. Placing a short work stand under the nacelle, the first step was to remove a series of three access doors. The first was a trapezoid-shaped panel located just aft of the removable section of the air inlet, or 'the tub.' This allowed



"A B-29 mechanic lived soaked in engine oil." (Photo: Mann)

you to get into the bottom of the engine accessory compartment. *Correction:* It allowed access to the accessory compartment. You got there by putting your right arm, clutching the inevitable 3/4 inch box-end wrench and a pair of cutters for the plug safety wire, above your head and into the hole you had just opened. You climbed the workstand until your hips were level with the bottom of the nacelle and your head and arm were in the accessory compartment. Removing the safety wire, one-handed pressure was applied to the wrench until the plug loosened. It was then backed off until held in by only a

**When hot oil pours on  
one's body, one tends  
to jerk in a reflex  
action.**

couple of threads.

You then climbed down off the stand, put the eight feet of two inch drain line up in the hole and followed it with yourself. The lower end was in a catch bucket and the upper end slipped over the outlet in the bottom of a rectangular metal box. When you pulled the sump plug, the oil was supposed to drain into the metal box and run down the hose into the bucket on the ground. In the real world one of two things *always* happened: the box overflowed or the line came off the outlet. Either way you got drenched from the middle of your chest to your toes with black, slimy, yucky engine oil. If you were not a lucky person, the oil had not had a chance to cool. One usually was not lucky.

When hot oil pours on one's body, one tends to jerk in a reflex action. Unfortunately, you now have your entire body through three sharp-edged doors, Boeing being reluctant to waste production time rounding edges. The swirling patterns to be seen in a mixture of black oil and fresh red blood are truly fascinating.

On later models of the R-3350 engine, the old carburetor system was replaced with direct fuel injection. The two injection pumps, each about fifteen inches long and eight inches in diameter, were mounted on the upper rear sides of the accessory section. It was the hold-down bolts on the forward side of the pump that were bad news. To get them started, you reached around both sides of the pump, rather like putting your arms around a horizontal log, feeling for the holes on the forward side of the pump. With no more than three inches of total clearance back there, you were reduced to the use of fingertips only. Once the bolts were started, it was

ju-u-u-ust possible to get a socket with a universal drive on the bolts. Unfortunately, there was barely enough room to move the ratchet handle. Fingertip it forward one click, back one click, ad nauseum. Finally, with cramps in every finger, the bolts were (hopefully) tight enough to prevent any gasoline leakage.

With the easy part of the job finished, those rotten bolts that couldn't be seen and could barely be touched had to be safety wired. The wire had to be run through each bolt head from the upper left quadrant to the lower right quadrant to prevent the bolts from vibrating loose. The technique generally used was to feel for the appropriate wire hole in the first unseen bolt head with the tip of the wire. When you found it, you pushed a minimum of twelve inches of wire through the hole. This brought the end of the wire below the pump, where it could be grabbed with a pair of pliers and carefully drawn tight without kinking the wire. If it kinked, you ripped everything out and you ripped everything out and started over. If not, the surplus wire was lifted and the whole routine started over on the second bolt. And third. And fourth....You get the idea. All this was going on while the mechanic was bending sideways and the edge of the access hatch was digging into his ribs.

Each nacelle on the B-29 held two turbosuperchargers, driven by engine exhaust gas, with a heat shield between the exhaust manifold and the engine accessory compartment. Several pieces of metal made up the heat shield, and they fit together like a three dimensional jigsaw puzzle. In addition, they were usually badly distorted from the extreme tempera-

tures to which they were subjected. Four pieces overlapped forward and above the turbine bucket wheel. In the overlap, there was a bolt hole that ran through all four pieces. I defy anyone to get that hole lined up on the initial installation. The only way was to loosely install the mounting bolts on all four pieces and then, starting with the bolts farthest away from the overlap, tighten here, loosen there, back and forth, until eventually

the holes in all four pieces lined up and you could run a bolt through them. Attacking the problem from the other direction, putting in the bolt and then trying to install the mounting bolts never seemed to work, although I think every mechanic has wasted a half a day on it.

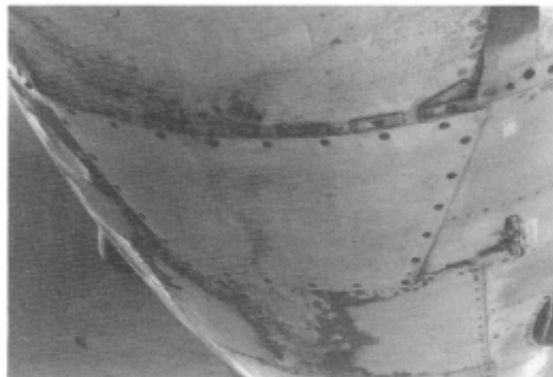
All I've talked about to this point are the problems B-29 mechanics had with the engines. Don't get the idea that the airframe maintenance was any easier; it wasn't.

Have you ever changed a rudder in a fifteen mile an hour crosswind and have a hinge bolt refuse to slip in? Gotten drunk on gas fumes flowing into your face while changing a center wing tank fuel booster pump? Had a main gear wheel dropped on your foot when pulling it for a brake change?

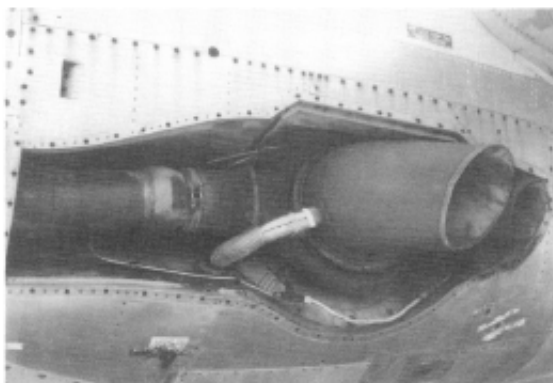
Tried to talk reason, without getting court-martialled, to a know-it-all second lieutenant who insisted that the clutch was slipping on a direct-drive electric flap motor? Passed out from the 120° heat in the tail section the 120° heat in the tail section while installing the cables on a new elevator?

Risked losing a hand every time you reached across the edge of the bomb bay doors to put a down-lock on the actuator? Had to dump the relief can because the flight crew "forgot"? Worked through the night to have the plane ready for an 0800 take-off, only to be told at 0730 that the flight was cancelled?

I don't regret my years as a B-29 mechanic; in fact, I enjoyed them. But it would have been so much nicer if, just once, someone from operations and the CO's office had come out to grease-land and say, "Nice job, guys." FJ



Lower access door, B-29 nacelle. (Photo: Mann)



Outboard No. 1 turbo-supercharger exhaust and manifold. (Photo: Mann)

[https://www.afmuseum.com/images/pdfs/Airmail/615\\_Mann - Mechanics Worked Through Night.pdf?bbeml=tp\\_e\\_FquZ4ZnUSyjl2\\_yoM58Q.inPzSEJ9ykeoapZBPK5D7Q.r6o0OAXZ0tUixMV9JcyCRqQ.lsz0tWL6TFE-j5DIqPE9uwa](https://www.afmuseum.com/images/pdfs/Airmail/615_Mann_-_Mechanics_Worked_Through_Night.pdf?bbeml=tp_e_FquZ4ZnUSyjl2_yoM58Q.inPzSEJ9ykeoapZBPK5D7Q.r6o0OAXZ0tUixMV9JcyCRqQ.lsz0tWL6TFE-j5DIqPE9uwa)

## EVENTS CALENDAR

Jun 3	Open Hangar Day
Jul 1	Open Hangar Day
Jul 6-9	Wings Over Wichita
Jul 14	Hope Kids (at the CAF Hangar)
Jul 15	Dinner/Dance at CAF Hangar
Aug 18-20	Kansas City Air Show at New Century Airfield
Sep 2	Open Hangar Day
Oct 7	Open Hangar Day
Oct 14	Lineman's Rodeo

### Wing Elected Staff Officers:

**Wing Leader:** Steve Zimmerman

**Executive Officer:** John Wittenborn

**Finance Officer:** Mark Schlicht

**Operations Officer:** Bob Robinson

**Maintenance Officer:** Mark  
McMahon

**Safety Officer:** Bill England

**Adjutant:** Debbie Atcheson

**Development Officer:** Jim Neese

**Education Officer:** Jesse Plous

### Wing Appointed Staff Officers:

**Guest Speaker/Veteran Outreach:**  
Dave Dyer

**PIO:** Brian VonBevern

**Open Hangar Day Operations:** Jesse  
Plous

**Facility Rentals:** Jim Neese

**Wing Newsletter:** Anita Mack

**Museum & Library Curator:** Darren  
Roberts

**Photographer:** John English



**COMMEMORATIVE  
AIR FORCE**