



THE READY ROOM



DECEMBER 2023

Heart Of America Wing Est. 1982

Vol.3, Issue 12

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 year is over and it was a great. Next year will be even better. Our year-end celebration/Christmas party was a great success. Great food and great friends along with some wonderful entertainment. Thank you to everyone who made it such a fun evening. Staff elections were announced: Brian VonBevern will take over for Bob Robinson as Operations Officer, John Wittenborn will continue as Executive Officer, and I will remain as your Wing Leader. We will need help to make the year a success. I gave 'Colonel of the Year' awards to Jim Neese and Rick Schubert. It is hard to pick people out for this award, but both of them deserved to be recognized. They were both instrumental in keeping the lights on this year.

Several of us participated in Wreaths Across America at the National Cemetery in Leavenworth. About 10,000 wreaths were placed among the 45,000 grave sites at the cemetery. It is a small token of appreciation for our veterans who gave it all to make our country the greatest country in the world. If you haven't seen the cemetery with 10,000 wreaths, it is worth the trip to Leavenworth. I hope we can get more volunteers next year.

Our next meeting in January will be the Chili Cookoff. I hope to see you there.



EDUCATE – INSPIRE – HONOR

-- Steve Zimmerman

NEXT MEETING:

20 JAN, 10:00



Colonel of the Year

At the Heart of America Wing, we have a tradition of awarding "Colonel of the Year" to the Wing member who's work and dedication has most obviously benefitted the unit in the preceding 12 months. The Wing Leader usually announces the award at the Wing holiday party. While selecting the winner is always a difficult task, this year's choice was especially hard.



Development Officer Jim Neese has done a phenomenal job booking event rentals for the hangar, which is in large part responsible for our great financial position. Jim works tirelessly showing the hangar to potential wedding or event renters, and then he and his crew work hard setting up for the events and cleaning up afterwards, sometimes late into the night.



No less dedicated is the Wing member who's become our resident handyman, Rick Schubert. Whenever something breaks around the hangar, Rick is always there to help with everything from electrical problems to restroom tiling. Almost as often as Rick is there, his daughter Jodie is by his side to help out.

With such deserving CAFers, Wing Leader Zimmerman couldn't choose between them, so he didn't! Steve announced two "Colonel of the Year" awards for 2023; both Jim Neese and Rick Schubert. Since she's at the hangar almost as much as her

Dad, daughter Jodee was awarded a "Colonel's Assistant of the Year" trophy. Congratulations to all three!

Wing Staff Meeting

4 Jan, 7 PM

FINANCE REPORT

Hello HOA members and friends,

As we close out 2023, we can be thankful for the efforts of all of our officers, members, and volunteers for another successful year. We continue to be solvent, with revenue from multiple sources. So far in 2023, we have received donations for sixty PT-13 rides, and our pilots have provided fifty-four flights. Some of these rides were purchased through auctions at fundraising events around our community.

It is also that time of year to pay our 2024 HOA Wing annual dues. We have been able to hold the line at \$50 in this inflationary economy. You can pay with cash, check, or using the QR code on our website or from the email sent out by Brian. (Note: the cost using the QR code is \$52.00, with the extra \$2.00 offsetting the processing fee.) Your membership dues are an important source of revenue for our Wing and help to pay the costs of keeping our hangar open.



Scan with your phone to pay

We continue to see interest in airplane sponsorships for both the PT-19 and the PT-13. Three HOA members have purchased sponsorships in the recent past. Sponsorships for the PT-19 really help to offset the current restoration costs of this airplane. Let me or one of the other officers know if you are interested in becoming a sponsor.

Also, please continue to bring guests to our monthly general meetings, and invite them to become members! Let me know if you have any questions.

Merry Christmas! -- Mark Schlicht



**“To be killed in war is not the worst that can happen. To be lost is not the worst that can happen... to be forgotten is the worst.”
— Pierre Claeysens (1909-2003)**

Click on the link below to read the mission and history of Wreaths Across America. It is a true ‘feel good’ story that will renew your

faith in the American spirit. They run several programs year-around, not just the wreaths for Christmas.

<https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/About/OurMission>



How Americans Celebrated the Holidays During World War II

Americans adjusted amid the war, and found different, often leaner ways to mark the holidays.

BY: ELIZABETH YUKO

PUBLISHED: DECEMBER 9, 2022



Less than three weeks after the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans celebrated their first Christmas of World War II. On the surface, it didn't look much different than it had in previous years, as the bulk of the men and women who would serve overseas had not yet been deployed. But no amount of tinsel could alleviate the fear and uncertainty that came with the United States entering another world war.

As the war ground on, U.S. men and women were shipped overseas, food rationing began and Americans were forced to adjust.

"For those still in the United States, it was very difficult to celebrate," says Pam Frese, professor of sociology and anthropology at the College of Wooster. "No matter where [people were located] during World War II, they were in survival mode."

This was particularly true for women, she explains. Many women not only found themselves in the position of being the head of their household, but also being called upon to contribute to war effort by taking on production jobs in factories and other roles previously reserved for men.

"While their husbands were gone, women took care of their kids, they worked, they kept things going here," says Frese, an expert in the celebration of holidays and cultural rituals in the United States. "They also, in their minds, took over the role of their husband and themselves at home."

Meanwhile, those serving in the war faced Christmas in unfamiliar locations, surrounded by their fellow soldiers instead of their families. Back stateside, Japanese Americans who had been forced to move into prison camps, used the holiday as a way to retain a semblance of normalcy.

Here are a few examples of how Americans found ways to celebrate Christmas during World War II.

Women Step in to Play Santa



MINISTRY OF INFORMATION PHOTO DIVISION
PHOTOGRAPHER/ IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS VIA
GETTY IMAGES

SANTA LIFTS A YOUNG GIRL UP TO LOOK AT
A TOY SOLDIER ON A CHRISTMAS TREE AT AN
AMERICAN-SPONSORED CELEBRATION AT A
HOME FOR EVACUEES IN HENLEY-ON-
THAMES, OXFORDSHIRE, 1941. THE SANTA IS
BEING PLAYED BY A WOMAN.

Artificial Christmas Trees Go Up, Lights Stay Off

With a large portion of the workforce off fighting in the war, women took on a variety of both civilian and military roles that were typically filled by men, including playing Santa. There is evidence of this taking place even earlier—including a 1935 report that a woman “impersonating Santa Claus” had a heart attack and died while distributing presents at a New York City community center—but the practice became more common during the war.

That said, female Kris Kringles were still novel enough to make the news. For example, in 1942, the Brooklyn Daily Eagle reported that a woman was hired to play Santa at a New Jersey F.W. Woolworth store in 1942 after management was “unable to find a man suitable for the job,” while an Associated Press photo featured a “lady Santa Claus” listening to children’s Christmas wishes in a Chicago department store. Outside of retail, some women donned the red suit for a good cause, like a Boston law student who helped the Volunteers of America “overcome the manpower shortage in their annual Christmas collection” in 1944.

Not everyone was on board with women portraying the Jolly Old Elf. This included a columnist for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, who, in 1942, described seeing a woman Santa in a department store—complete with “cut-down gray whiskers” and a pillow serving as her round belly—as “the shock of [his] life,” adding that he “[felt] sorry for the kids” of the day.

Women weren’t the only ones changing the public face of Santa Claus. In 1943, Blumstein’s department store in Harlem hired a Black Santa, reportedly making it the first retailer in the country to do so. It’s unclear whether the decision was related to the war, but by 1946, at least one other department store, located in Chicago’s South Side neighborhood, followed suit.

Beginning in 1942, real Christmas trees were in short supply, because many of the men who typically chopped them down were either in the military or working in the armament industry, the Chicago Daily Tribune reported. At the same time, labor costs and fees paid to landowners for tree-cutting rights both soared, driving up the retail price of live Christmas trees, and contributing to the popularity of artificial versions.

Though artificial Christmas trees had been both imported to and manufactured in the United States for decades at that point, this was when the faux firs really gained traction. Prior to the war, artificial Christmas trees made from goose feathers were the most popular variety. But after the U.S. stopped importing goods from Germany—including the feather trees—they were no longer available (or desirable). Instead, people opted for artificial Christmas trees made in America using visca (a type of artificial straw), or those from the UK-based Addis Housewares Company, which used their machinery for making toilet brushes to produce faux trees with similarly stiff bristles.

World War II also brought about changes to how Christmas trees were decorated. “The tradition of lighting a tree at this time of year has been around for a very long time,” Frese explains. “But you couldn’t have done that in parts of the United States during the war—especially on the coasts—because [there were times when] you had to blackout your windows.”

Though some cities, like Seattle, started blackout drills several months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, they became far more widespread in December 1941. During these drills, area residents practiced turning their lights off in order to make the town less visible to enemy planes from above, should an aerial invasion occur.

Different Menus at Dinner



*ARCHIVE PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES
U.S. SOLDIERS OF THE 3RD DIVISION HAVING
CHRISTMAS DINNER ON THE HOOD OF A JEEP
ON THE FRONT LINES, WORLD WAR II,
FRANCE.*

For many people, sharing a special meal with family and friends is an integral part of celebrating the holidays. So, when the U.S. government began rationing various foods in 1942, households across the country had to rethink what they would serve for the occasion.

“A lot of the country gave up turkey so that they could ship more turkeys to service people overseas, or even at bases within the U.S.,” says Michael Green, associate professor of history at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. “Some still were able to get their turkeys, or scrimped to make sure they had enough ration points and the like to get what they wanted.”

Sugar was the first food to be rationed during World War II, with butter added to the list the following year. For the most part, that didn’t stop people from baking Christmas desserts. Instead, home economists working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as various food manufacturers, developed new wartime recipes using ingredients that were cheap and widely available. Victory cakes, which used very little sugar (if any) were a popular option, as were gelatin-based desserts.

Letters, Packages to Troops Abroad



*CRABTREE/NATIONAL ARCHIVES
MEMBERS OF THE 6888TH HANDLING
MAIL AT THE CENTRAL POSTAL
DIRECTORY BATTALION IN PARIS,
FRANCE, 1945.*

Most Americans serving overseas during World War II were appreciative of any mail they received from their loved ones—especially during the holidays. Understanding how much this boosted the troops’ morale, the United States Army and Navy Postal Services collected gifts, cards and other mail in September and October to ensure delivery by Christmas. In 1942, Hallmark reinforced this idea with a new advertising slogan: “keep ‘em happy with mail.”

When those on the homefront sent packages to their relatives and friends away at war, they often included clothing and “photos of [their] families, landmarks from their hometowns, and holiday celebrations,” Green explains. Even simple cards, letters, or other messages could be deeply meaningful for members of the military, the U.S. Postmaster General reported in 1942, noting that communication with their loved ones “strengthens fortitude, enlivens patriotism, [and] makes loneliness endurable.”

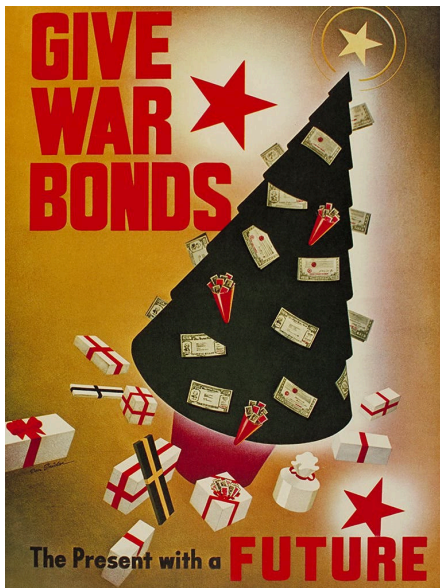
This sentiment was also reflected in the motto of the 6888th Central Postal Battalion: “No mail, low morale.” Nicknamed the “Six Triple-Eight,” the battalion was the only all-Black unit of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) to be deployed overseas during World War II, and was responsible for millions of pieces of mail getting in the hands of U.S. soldiers for Christmas, as well throughout the rest of the year.

Japanese Americans in Prison Camps Keep Traditions

Star Trek actor George Takei was five years old when his family was incarcerated in a prison camp in 1942. Despite his parents' reassurance that Santa would still pay him a visit, he was concerned that Mr. Claus wouldn't be able to "make it through the barbed-wire fence," he told WNYC in a 2012 interview. But Takei's parents were right: a Japanese-American Santa came bearing gifts.

Between 1942 and 1945, roughly 125,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated by the U.S. government into isolated prison camps; half were children like Takei and his siblings. Participating in holiday traditions, including those for Christmas, was one way that people tried to maintain a sense of normalcy in their lives. For example, Japanese Americans decorated their mess halls using scrap materials, designed their own Christmas cards, and went caroling through the barracks.

Gift-Giving Centers on Simplicity and Sacrifice



*PIERCE ARCHIVE LLC/BUYENLARGE VIA
GETTY IMAGES
A 1943 POSTER BY ARTIST DON SNIDER
ADVERTISING WAR BONDS AS
CHRISTMAS GIFTS.*

The war also impacted the types of presents placed under the tree. "Families often exchanged fewer gifts among the adults to make sure the kids got their toys and other fun things," says Green. But thanks to wartime rationing of commodities like metal, rubber, and rayon, many manufactured children's toys and gifts were made of wood or paper.

Regardless of the age of the recipient, Frese says that it was common to both give and receive handmade presents during World War II.

"Knitting and crocheting really took off, and so did painting and all kinds of crafts," she explains, noting that they were often created using repurposed materials and supplies. "If that's all you have, that's what you do."

Gift-giving was also about sacrifice. "Some women would give up their own food rations so they could gift them to a friend," says Frese. Meanwhile, the U.S. government encouraged Americans to make a patriotic sacrifice for the common good, and purchase war bonds for loved ones in lieu of traditional presents.

Holiday Songs Become Heavy on Nostalgia

Christmases during World War II had an underlying feeling of melancholy for both the Americans serving overseas, as well as those on the homefront with empty places at the dinner table. Some of the most somber holiday standards were released during this period: "White Christmas" (1941), "I'll Be Home for Christmas" (1943), and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" (1944).

This trio of now-classic songs resonated with soldiers longing for home, and their loved ones who dreamt of Christmases like the ones they used to know. As Green says, "Referring to [being home for Christmas] 'if only in my dreams' captured a lot of what was happening."

<https://www.history.com/news/holidays-christmas-world-war-ii-homefront>



What in the World is THAT?

THAT is a Beechcraft XA-38 Grizzly. In March 1942, the Beech Aircraft Company began design work on a two-seat heavy fighter to destroy enemy bombers. Since the Curtiss XP-71 had already been delegated this task, the Beech developed the design into an attack aircraft to replace the Douglas A-20 Havoc. Beech gave this aircraft the in-house designation Model 28 and submitted its proposal to the US Army Air Force on 23 September 1942. On 2 December 1942, the AAF ordered two prototypes and designated the aircraft XA-38; this was Beech's first combat aircraft. Beech originally called the aircraft Destroyer, but the AAF changed the name to Grizzly. The XA-38 was similar in appearance to the Beech 18, but it was an all-new aircraft. The project was led by Bill Cassidy, and the aircraft was to be strong, maneuverable, and well-armed. Its mission was to destroy fortified gun emplacements, armored vehicles, tanks, submarines, and coastal surface vessels. The XA-38 was a two-place, mid-wing aircraft with a slim fuselage and twin tails. The gunner sat in the rear of the fuselage and operated remote upper and lower turrets, each fitted with two Browning .50 cal guns. The ventral turret could be locked in the forward position and fired by the pilot in strafing attacks. In the nose of the aircraft were another two Browning .50 cal guns and a T15E1 (M10) 75 mm cannon. The nose swung open to service the guns and was even removable so that different armament could be used. The .50 cal guns each had 500 rounds, and the 75 mm cannon had 20 rounds. Each wing supported two hard points that could carry a combined total of 2,650 lb (1,200 kg) of ordinance or 600 gal (2,270 L) of fuel. The T15E1 75 mm cannon had an 84 in

(2.13 m) barrel that extended about 2 ft (.61 m) beyond the aircraft's nose. The cannon was self-loading, 144 in (3.66 m) long, and originally weighed 1,800 lb (816 kg). However, through further development, the weight was reduced to 1,138 lb (516 kg). It fired a 26 in (.66 m) shell with a 15 lb (6.8 kg) projectile. The cannon consisted of a 75 mm gun (T9E2), 75 mm feed mechanism (T13), and the 75 mm gun mount (T15E1). The Grizzly's aluminum skin was entirely flush riveted, and the fully retractable gear, including tailwheel, was engineered for operations out of unimproved airstrips. The aircraft was powered by two Wright R-3350-43 engines producing 2,300 hp (1,715 kW) each. Each engine turned a 14.2 ft (4.32 m), three-blade Hamilton Standard propeller. The XA-38 could carry 640 gal (2,423 L) of fuel in its wings and an additional 185 gal (700 L) in the fuselage behind the pilot. The aircraft had a wingspan of 67.3 ft (20.5 m) and was 51.8 ft (15.8 m) long. It weighed 22,480 lb (10,197 kg) empty and had a maximum takeoff weight of 35,265 lb (15,995 kg). The XA-38's climb rate was 2,170 fpm (661 m/m), and it had a service ceiling of 27,800 ft (8,475 m). Maximum speed at 3,100 ft (945 m) was 376 mph (605 km/h), and cruise speed at 16,000 ft (4,877 m) was 344 mph (554 km/h). The 45-degree flaps allowed the aircraft to land at 97 mph and operate out of a 2,500 ft (762 m) runway. The aircraft program was met with long delays due to the unavailability of the R-3350 engines, remote turrets, and the 75 mm cannon. The Boeing B-29 had engine priority; the Douglas A-26 had the turrets; and the cannon was still being developed. The first XA-38 (serial no 43-14406) took to the air on 7 May 1944 with Vern Carstens at the controls. The turrets were still not available, so dummy turrets

were substituted. In July 1944, the aircraft was flown to Tulsa, Oklahoma, where the 75 mm cannon was fitted and ground fired. Later in July, the Grizzly fired the cannon in-flight over Great Bend,

Kansas. Flight tests continued and minor issues were worked out. The aircraft performed very well, and during one early, low-level test flight, the XA-38 was able to pull away from the P-51B chase plane. Capt. Jack Williams evaluated the aircraft for the AAF and made 38 flights in the XA-38 between 13-24 October 1944. The aircraft was reported to be very maneuverable for an aircraft of its size and easy to fly through most aerobatic maneuvers. The aircraft was transferred to Dayton, Ohio for further evaluation on 7 July 1945. At some point, at least a mockup of the upper turret was added to the aircraft. The second aircraft (serial no 43-11407) took to the air on 22 September 1945; Carstens was again at the controls. This aircraft had the correct

turrets installed, and all weapons were operational. After initial flight tests, the XA-38 was transferred to Eglin Field, Florida for armament trials. Here, it amassed an additional 38 hours of flight tests, but there was little interest since the war was over. The Grizzly's main problem was that its engines were needed elsewhere. B-29 production left no spare R-3350s available for any type of A-38 production until mid-1945. By that time, the war was winding down, and there was no foreseeable need for the A-38. One of the XA-38s reportedly went to Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona, but its ultimate fate is not recorded. The other aircraft was believed to be scrapped. The only remnant of the XA-38 Grizzly is the T15E1 cannon on display at the United States Air Force Armament Museum in Eglin AFB, Florida.

By William Pearce

-- Darren Roberts



HQ CAF Volunteer Award

Heart of America Wing member Jarrett Bertoincin has been volunteering at the CAF's "Wings over Dallas" airshow for many years. This fall he was recognized by CAF President Hank Coates as one of the four recipients for the CAF's distinguished "Award of the Silver Magnolia Blossom" for his work on the airshow. Congratulations, Jarrett!



Hank Coates (left), Jarrett Bertoincin (2nd from right)



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 Von Bevern

Open Hangar Day Operations: Jesse
Plous

Facility Rentals: Jim Neese

Wing Newsletter: Anita Mack

Museum & Library Curator: Darren
Roberts

Photographer: John English

