



Odd aviation stories – starting with Kamikazes

Long Island Early Fliers Club, Inc.

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Editor: Fred Coste Volume 4, Issue 5

Editor's Note:

Most people like a good aviation story. The Internet provides many; some true, some not, some funny, some just plain interesting. Most people have read quips between Air Traffic Controllers and pilots; calls for ground speed checks as though comparing their masculinity, others just smart-ass comments that break the rapid-fire sterility of ATC jargon with quick witted plays on words that evoke a smirk moments after the remark sinks in.

While I don't know how long the expression has been around, I believe that most student pilots have been told that a good landing is one in which everyone walks away unscathed; a great landing is one in which you get to use the airplane again... Perhaps that's why the idea of a Kamikaze seemed so shocking during WWII. It was hard to imagine pilot after pilot being willing to perform a suicide mission on behalf of the Emperor...and taking the plane with him!

Perhaps you did not know that a Kamikaze pilot was instructed to fly the mission and if he did not find a suitable target to destroy, he was free to return to base to fly another day. There was one pilot who returned to base 9 times after having his ritual drink of sake and a somber take off. When he returned after the 9th mission, they shot him. No more sake, Charlie!

The United States would not dream of having a Kamikaze pilot.... or would we? Lt. Heather Penney, was ordered into the air in her F-16 fighter jet alongside Marc H. Sasseville's aircraft at Andrews Air Force Base as the terrorist attacks were unfolding on September 11, 2001. They were ordered to down United Flight 93 before it reached Washington, DC's airspace, but



Heather and her dad

because of the urgency, there was not enough time to outfit their aircraft with live ammunition. The mission could only have been accomplished by ramming United Flight 93 with their F-16s.

As if that were not enough, Heather's dad, a United pilot was flying that day. She was well aware of the potential of taking out her dad's plane that morning. Fortunately, Flight 93 was not piloted by her dad, but crashed as heroic passengers fought to take control of the aircraft.

When asked why she was ready to fly a kamikaze mission, Lt. Penney responded: "Because there are things in this world that are more important than ourselves. Freedom. The Constitution of the United States. Our way of life. Mom, baseball, apple pie; these things and so many more that make us uniquely American. We belong to something greater than ourselves. As complex and diverse and discordant as it is, this thing, this idea called America, binds us together in

citizenship and community and brotherhood."



Captain Mike Gongel

At some time in the life of a student pilot, there is often a fantasy about saving an airline flight from some disaster and becoming a hero. In 2014, USAF Captain Mike Gongel was a passenger aboard a United Airlines flight when the pilot suffered a serious heart attack. Over the PA came an announcement asking if there were any non-revenue pilots aboard. Mike stepped up and helped land the plane saving 160 lives that day.



Bob Barker, host of *The Price is Right*, was a Navy fighter pilot in WWII. However, by the time he deployed, the war was ending. He said: "I was ready to go, but when the enemy heard I was headed for the Pacific, they surrendered!"

Many will remember when disgruntled FedEx employee Auburn Calloway attempted to down a cargo DC-10 by beating the flight crew with a hammer and using a spear gun. Despite serious injuries, the crew rolled inverted to pin the hijacker



to the ceiling of the plane. The maneuvers were well beyond the aircraft's known capabilities...and yes, they were able to use the plane again.



Do you remember the Southwest flight in 2005 that went off the end of a runway at Chicago's Midway airport one snowy evening, coming to a stop on one of the airport perimeter roads? The pilot had been joking around during the approach, reciting a line from the movie "Airplane." The famous line: "I picked a bad day to stop sniffing glue."Damn..the cockpit voice recorder heard that!

While testing his F-11 Tiger, pilot Thomas Attridge, Jr. accidentally shot himself down. After firing a short burst at 13,000 feet, he dove to 7,000 feet to level off and fire another short burst. Unfortunately, the first burst caught up to him and struck his airplane.

Then there is the one about the fighter that landed itself in a Montana corn field – sans pilot. The pilot, finding himself in a flat spin, had punched out of the airplane.



It seems the change in weight and balance enabled the plane to stabilize itself, allowing it to fly until it ran out of fuel and landed itself in the field.





Meet Hazel Ying Lee. Hazel was a Chinese-American pilot during WWII. Hazel made two forced landings while repositioning airplanes as a WASP. After one such landing in a Kansas wheat field, a farmer started chasing her with his pitchfork, while shouting to his neighbors that we were under attack by the Japanese. Evading his attack, Lee told the farmer who she was and demanded he stop, which he did.

Hazel was a favorite with her fellow pilots, known for a great sense of humor and being mischievous. She used her lipstick to inscribe Chinese characters on the tail of her plane and the planes of others. One of those pilots, who happened to be a bit on the chubby side, had his plane dubbed (unknown to him) "Fat Ass," by Hazel.



James Robinson Risner

On September 15, 1952, Risner was in his F-86 flight escorting F-84 Thunderjet

fighter-bombers attacking a chemical plant on the Yalu River near the East China Sea. During their defense of the bombers, Risner's flight overflowed the MiG base at Antung Airfield. Fighting one MiG at nearly supersonic speeds at ground level, Risner pursued it down a dry riverbed and across low hills to an airfield 35 miles inside China. Scoring numerous hits on the MiG, shooting off its canopy, and setting it on fire, Risner chased it between hangars of the Communist airbase, where he shot it down into parked fighters.

On the return flight, Risner's wingman, 1st Lt. Joseph Logan, was struck in his fuel tanks by anti-aircraft fire over Antung. In an effort to help him reach Kimpo, Risner attempted to push Logan's aircraft by having him shut down his engine and inserting the nose of his own jet into the tailpipe of Logan's, an unprecedented and untried maneuver. The object of the maneuver was to push Logan's aircraft to the island of Cho Do off the North Korean coast, where the Air Force maintained a helicopter rescue detachment. Jet fuel and hydraulic fluid spewed out from the damaged Sabre onto Risner's canopy, obscuring his vision, and turbulence kept separating the two jets. Risner was able to re-establish contact and guide the powerless plane out until "feet wet." Near Cho Do, Logan bailed out after calling to Risner, "I'll see you at the base tonight." Although Logan came down close to shore and was a strong swimmer, he became entangled in his parachute shrouds and drowned. Risner's own engine eventually flamed out and he glided to a deadstick landing at Kimpo.



Franz Stigler & Charlie Brown

Before his B-17 released its bomb load, accurate flak shattered the Plexiglas nose, of "Ye Olde Pub," knocked out the #2 engine and further damaged the #4 engine, which was already in questionable condition and had to be throttled back to prevent overspeeding. The damage slowed the bomber, and Brown was unable to remain with his formation and fell back as a straggler—a position from which he came under sustained enemy attacks.

Brown's straggling B-17 was now attacked by over a dozen enemy fighters. Further damage was sustained, including damage to the #3 engine, which would produce only half power (meaning the aircraft had at best 40% of its total rated power available). The bomber's internal oxygen, hydraulic and electrical systems were also damaged, and the bomber lost half of its rudder and its port (left side) elevator, as well as its nose cone. Many of the gunners' weapons then jammed, probably as a result of loss of the on-board systems leading to frozen mechanisms, leaving the bomber with only two dorsal turret guns and one of three forward-firing nose guns (from 11 available) for defense. Most of the crew were wounded: the tail gunner, had been decapitated by a direct hit from a cannon shell. Brown was wounded in his right shoulder. The morphine syrettes onboard froze, complicating first-aid

efforts by the crew, while the radio was destroyed and the bomber's exterior heavily damaged. Miraculously, all but the tail gunner survived.



Brown's damaged bomber was spotted by Germans on the ground, including Franz Stigler (then an ace with 27 victories), who was refueling and rearming at an airfield. He soon took off in his Messerschmitt 109 G-6 (which had a .50-cal. Browning machine gun bullet embedded in the radiator, which risked the engine overheating) and he quickly caught up with Brown's plane. Through the damaged bomber's airframe Stigler was able to see the injured and incapacitated crew. To the American pilot's surprise, Stigler did not open fire on the crippled bomber. He recalled the words of one of his commanding officers from Jagdgeschwader 27, Gustav Rödel, during his time fighting in North Africa: "If I ever see or hear of you shooting at a man in a parachute, I will shoot you myself." Stigler later commented, "To me, it was just like they were in a parachute. I saw them and I couldn't shoot them down."

Stigler tried to get Brown to land his plane at a German airfield and surrender, or divert to nearby neutral Sweden, where he and his crew would receive medical treatment and be interned the remainder

of the war. Brown and the crew of the B-17 didn't understand what Stigler was trying to mouth and gesture to them and so flew on. Stigler later told Brown he was trying to get them to fly to Sweden. He then flew near Brown's plane in a formation on the bomber's port side wing, so German anti-aircraft units would not target it; he then escorted the damaged B-17 over the coast until they reached open water. Brown, unsure of Stigler's intentions at the time, ordered his dorsal turret gunner to point at Stigler but not open fire in order to warn him off. Understanding the message and certain that the bomber was out of German airspace, Stigler departed with a salute.

Brown managed to fly the 250 miles across the North Sea and land his plane at RAF Seething, home of the 448th Bomb Group.



Stigler said nothing of the incident to his commanding officers, knowing that a German pilot who spared the enemy while in combat risked execution.

In 1986 the then-retired Lt. Col. Brown was asked to speak at a combat pilot reunion event called a "Gathering of the Eagles" at the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. Someone asked him if he had any memorable missions during World War II; he thought for a minute and recalled the story of Stigler's

escort and salute. Afterwards, Brown decided he should try to find the unknown German pilot.

After four years of searching vainly for U.S. Army Air Forces, U.S. Air Force and West German Air Force records that might shed some light on who the other pilot was, Brown hadn't come up with much. He then wrote a letter to a combat pilot association newsletter. A few months later he received a letter from Stigler, who was now living in Canada. "I was the one", it said. When they spoke on the phone, Stigler described his plane, the escort and salute, confirming everything Brown needed to hear to know he was the German fighter pilot involved in the incident.

Between 1990 and 2008, Charlie Brown and Franz Stigler became close friends and remained so until their deaths within several months of each other in 2008.



Sidney Cohen was the one who "captured" Lampedusa Island from the Italians and has papers to prove it. After running out of fuel, Sgt. Sidney Cohen, a 22-year old R.A.F. pilot performed an emergency landing on the island. Soon after, the Italian garrison protecting the island surrendered to him.

With two friends, Sgt. Peter Cates, and Sgt. Leslie Wrights, he was flying a Swordfish plane on a sea rescue mission when the

compass “had a fit of the gremlins.” His gasoline was running low as Cohen spotted Lampedusa and set his plane down.

“Burnt-out aircraft were everywhere,” he said. “There were big holes in the field. We saw some people waving white sheets, and two Italian officers approaching.” The leader wore a Tyrolean hat with long plumed feathers, a leather jacket, khaki shorts, and high boots.

“He burst into Italian, and we discovered he wanted to surrender the island. I told him I would have to see ‘Number One man’, and he took us to the highest ranking naval officer.

“Other officers and civilians entered the room, and I was just about to receive the official surrender when ‘swish’... everybody suddenly ran out of that room and left me alone.

“They must have thought another air raid was just beginning, but there was no sound of gunfire or bomb explosions at the moment, and I thought the nerves of my hosts must be getting a little ragged.” But in a few moments, I understood what was happening. About 12 P-38 Lightnings came over and hit the harbor. We fell flat.

“As soon as that was over me and my mates went out to our plane and began cranking her. Just then four fighter-bombers zoomed over at zero feet, and we dropped in our tracks again. But they saw the markings on our wing and swerved away.”



In 1978 Australian pilot Fredrick Valentich and his plane disappeared during a UFO encounter. His last communication was: “Melbourne, that strange aircraft is hovering on top of me again.” after a few seconds.....”It’s hovering and it’s not an aircraft....” No remains or wreckage were ever found.



In July of 1959, Lt. Col. William Rankin was flying from Naval Air Station South Weymouth, Massachusetts to Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort in South Carolina. He climbed over a thunderhead that peaked at 45,000 feet, then—at 47,000 feet and at mach 0.82—he heard a loud bump and rumble from the engine. The engine stopped, and a fire warning light flashed. He pulled the lever to deploy auxiliary power, and it broke off in his hand. Though not wearing a pressure suit, he ejected into the -58 °F air. He suffered immediate frostbite, and decompression caused his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth to bleed. His abdomen swelled severely. He

did, however, manage to make use of his emergency oxygen supply. Five minutes after he abandoned the plane, his parachute hadn't opened. While in the upper regions of the thunderstorm, with near-zero visibility, the parachute opened prematurely instead of at 10,000 feet due to the storm affecting the barometric parachute switch and causing it to open. After ten minutes, Rankin was still aloft, carried by updrafts and getting hit by hailstones. Violent spinning and pounding caused him to vomit. Lightning appeared, which he described as blue blades several feet thick, and thunder that he could feel. The rain forced him to hold his breath to keep from drowning. One lightning bolt lit up the parachute, making Rankin believe he had died. Conditions calmed, and he descended into a forest. His watch read 6:40 pm. It had been 40 minutes since he had ejected. He searched for help and eventually was admitted into a hospital at Ahoskie, North Carolina. He suffered from frostbite, welts, bruises, and severe decompression.

Do you have an aviation story to tell? If you do, please share it with us!

*******LIEFC News*******

Stardom in our midst?

When former LIEFC Financial Secretary Valerie King fell ill recently, she was taken to North Shore University Hospital's emergency room with severe chest pains. Within a few hours, Val was sporting 5 stents and a new Aortic valve!

The hospital staff has been so pleased with Val's recovery that she has been interviewed and photographed, along with her daughters, for some of the hospital's promotional material soon to be released!

Still working at age 87, it looks like Val is embarking on a new career of stardom!

Congratulations, Val!!!

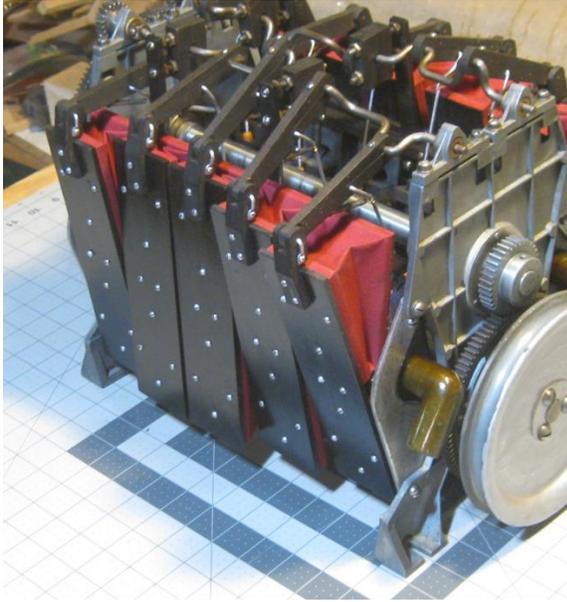
At our last meeting....

At our August meeting, we discussed the restoration of our LINK trainer that has been evolving.



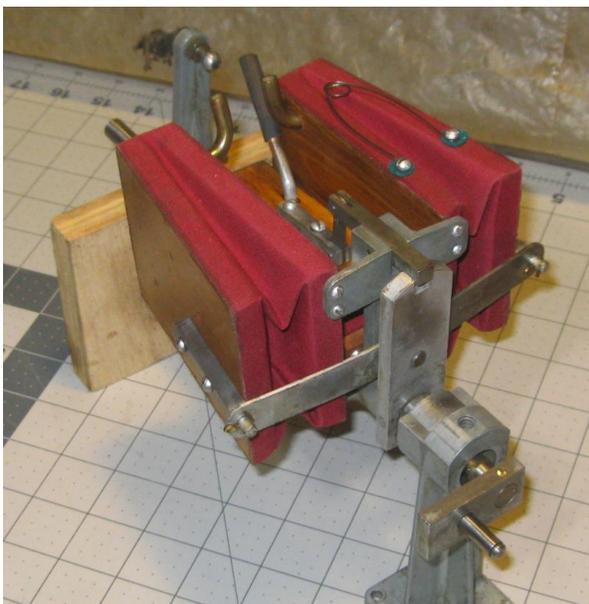
Individual bellows being rebuilt

Long considered an eyesore and an albatross that was taking up valuable space in our hangar, our dedicated Wednesday work crew is realizing that this ugly duckling could be a beautiful swan.



The turn motor operates like an internal combustion engine, but is vacuum driven like a player piano!

Lead by Mark Loiacono, Tom Alferman and Eric Sandberg, the trainer has been stripped of all moving parts for cleanup, repair or replacement. They are polishing almost 100 years of grit and grime from the plumbing that makes the unit move in all three axes.



Through Internet searches we have learned that the ingenuity that drives this machine is derived from a vacuum system that was originally designed for player pianos. We were also lucky to uncover a secret weapon in this quest. His name is Rusty King. Rusty understands the art of rebuilding the bellows that drive the trainer and has rebuilt each of those components for us.

Mark has been photographing the dismantling and categorizing the parts to aid in reassembly. Not only are we planning to have an original working LINK Trainer, but it is going to appear brand new!

New Meeting date and time

LIEFC is changing its meeting day and time! Effective in September, we will no longer meet on the second Sunday of the month. Instead, the new meeting day will be the second Tuesday evening at 7:00 p.m.

There are many reasons for making this change, which include the avoidance of interfering with Mother's Day, Father's Day and messing up the continuity of weekend plans, however there is also the date conflicts with other activities at Bayport Aerodrome.

LIEFC will continue to participate in those other activities with B.A.S. and the Antique

Airplane Society of Greater NY, while not having the disruption of those activities during LIEFC meetings.

Reminder.....

Our Finger Lakes Bus Trip is just two weeks away! If you have signed up for the trip, remember, we are leaving Bayport Aerodrome at 6:00 a.m. on September 12th with our second pick up point at Christopher Morley Park (Nassau County) at 7:00 a.m. Please be on time!

The Widgeon is ready to fly!



The crew from Islip Avionics pre-oiling the engines before a successful run-up!

We are awaiting word of when the family is planning a party to commemorate the departure of the Widgeon for its new home.

LIEFC is bringing in a pilot from North Carolina, who owns the same year and model Widgeon for the flight to Bayport.

More details will be forthcoming as the date is settled upon. We can't wait!

A New Addition to the hangar

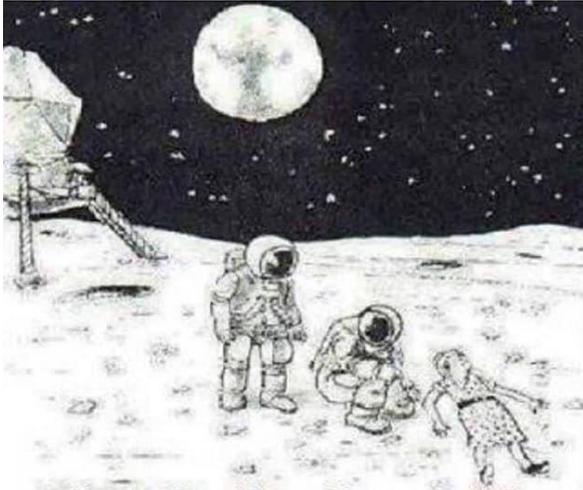
Eric Sandberg and Tom Alferman are busy wiring in a new HD TV antenna for our big screen TV. Tom and Eric were also the driving force behind setting up a radio to monitor Long Island Tower transmissions last year. Inspiration for the project came after a visit to AJ Manfredi's hangar, when they realized that with a small investment, we could know what's going on in the world without having to pay for cable!

Hmmm now if we could only get Internet...

Time to smile.....



AGE TEST
GOTTA BE OLD ENOUGH TO GET THIS ONE ...



"...it's Alice Kramden."

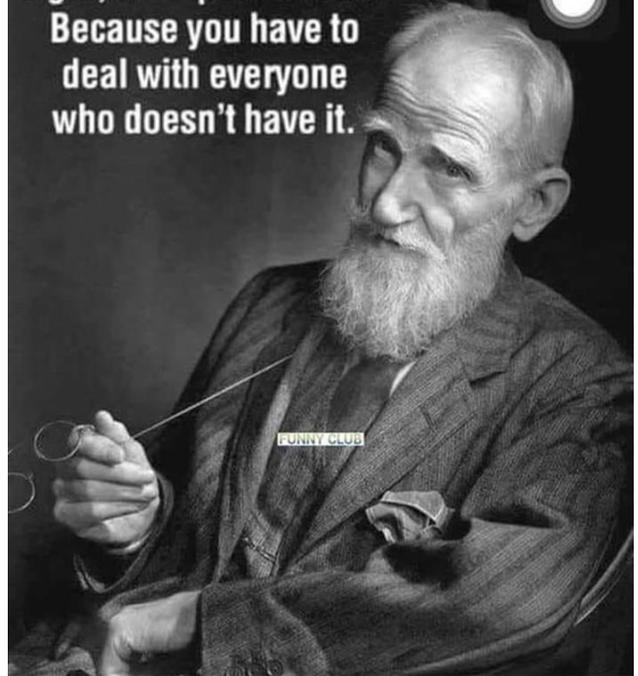
Best florist sign ever...



How to recognize when Jesus has been in your grocery store.



Common sense is not a gift, it's a punishment. Because you have to deal with everyone who doesn't have it.



My girlfriend left a note on the fridge:

"It's not working. I can't take it anymore. I am going to my Mom's place."

I opened the fridge. The light came on. The beer was cold... What the hell is she talking about?

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The **LONG ISLAND**
Early Fliers Club

Long Island Early Fliers Club, Inc. is a non-profit organization founded in 1956 and Chartered by the New York State Education Department. We are dedicated to aviation education and preserving Long Island's aviation heritage. Volunteers who want to help educate and preserve our history are always welcome. Annual Membership in our organization is \$35.00 for individuals; \$50.00 for families.

Donations of aviation memorabilia, aircraft and aircraft parts, aviation clothing, display quality models and items of historic significance are always welcome and greatly appreciated. Cash donations, as well as artifact donations are tax deductible. You may visit our facility at Bayport Aerodrome, Vitamin Drive, Bayport New York most Wednesdays between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Appointments are necessary as airports are secure locations and can also be arranged at other times for your convenience. Contact us at: L.I.E.F.C., P.O. Box 43, Holbrook, NY, 11741 or call (631)-523-5407 (Fred Coste) or fax: 631-588-2147

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