



FLIGHT-WATCH



VOLUME 126

By: Alan Armstrong, Esq.

NOVEMBER 2002

COLUMBIA SOUTH CAROLINA PUTS ON A GREAT FLY-IN, THE CELEBRATE FREEDOM FESTIVAL/AIR SHOW

I.

THE GENESIS OF THE TRIP

While attending a meeting of Silver Wings, I heard about a fly-in that was to take place at the Columbia Owens Downtown Airport [CUB] on the weekend of Saturday, November 9, 2002. The information I heard was that the fly-in would feature some of the survivors of the Doolittle Raiders who bombed Tokyo, and quite a number of World War II aircraft were to be on display.

The day before the trip, I made a quick call to the Flight Service Station, and the only NOTAM was for parachute jumping in the next afternoon. Also, there was a temporary flight restriction forbidding any flights over the University of South Carolina football stadium within three nautical miles laterally and 3,000 feet vertically. The Columbia Owens Downtown Airport would have a temporary control tower, and landings would be made to the northwest and takeoffs would be made to the southeast. The reason for the altered traffic pattern was because the football stadium was immediately northwest of the airport.



II.

THE TRIP TO COLUMBIA

After inviting a buddy of mine, Bill Bell, to accompany me on the trip, we departed PDK at around 11:00 a.m. and touched down at CUB shortly after 12:30 p.m. I prevailed upon Bill to act as my safety pilot, so I could log some simulated instrument time. The frequency of Columbia Approach was fairly quiet, and the controller was very cooperative in giving me a localizer approach for practice purposes. We landed on Runway 31 with a left quartering tailwind, and we were directed to a grassy area for parking, since the tarmac on the airport was saturated with airplanes.

III.

THE ACTIVITIES AND DISPLAYS AT THE COLUMBIA AIRPORT

After we had parked the Bonanza, we were treated to a low-pass by two Navy or Marine FA-18 fighters that came right down the centerline of Runway 31. After making their low-pass, the aircraft applied after-burner power, made left turns, and headed



for the football stadium. As we walked toward the flight line, it became apparent that this was more than a fly-in. It was a celebration in appreciation of the sacrifices made by American veterans over the years. There were men dressed in period costumes of the American Civil War complete with horses and a cannon gun carriage. Many World War II tents were set up including a hospital tent with a Red Cross emblem. At least five World War II Jeeps were on display along with a military staff car, a Piper L-5 Grasshopper and a Cessna UC-78 Twin Engine Trainer.



After making our way through the display of tents and vehicles, we came upon a flight line filled with World War II airplanes. There was a B-17 Flying Fortress and a B-24 Liberator, both of these aircraft being flown during the course of the afternoon. There was a B-25 Mitchell that also flew, and there was a PB-5A Catalina that also flew. The crowd was very excited as these monstrous bombers conducted their engine starts and taxies. The noise from the take-offs was quite pronounced, and the aircraft were allowed to conduct passes over the runway.

In addition to the B-25 Mitchell that flew, there was an early model B-25 painted to resemble or depict the B-25 flown by Gen. James Doolittle. This Mitchell had a short fuselage, early war paint scheme and insignia, and the names of members of Doolittle's crew were painted on the side of the fuselage. It had



olive drab upper surfaces, grey under surfaces, and yellow rings on the leading edges of the engine cowlings.

There were at least six or seven SNJ/AT-6 Texans on the field, and most of them were brightly painted in paint schemes of the Navy or Army Air Force during World War II.

There were two AD-1 Skyraiders on the airport, and one is owned and operated by The Fighter Factory in Suffolk, Virginia. One Skyraider had been restored by Dave Forrest, a corporate pilot who now lives in Marietta, Georgia. There was a Yak-11 aircraft on display powered by an Allison V-1710 twelve cylinder engine. The Yak is much smaller than a P-51 Mustang, and the Yak pilot told me that while the critical altitude for the Yak's engine is about 20,000 feet and the Mustang can out perform the Yak at altitude, that with the lighter airframe and lower weight, the Yak could out turn and out fly the Mustang below 20,000 feet.

There was a Mig-15 in Korean War colors on the ramp. Also, there was an F-86 Super Saber on display painted in the colors of Sen. John Glenn with the inscription on the nose in red and yellow letters: "Mig-Mad Marine." Three victory marks appeared below the left side of the cockpit.

The Fighter Factory also had on display a TBM Avenger and there was an F4U Corsair. Both aircraft were painted in Navy colors and appeared to be in very good condition. We had a chance to visit with one of the mechanics of the aircraft maintained by The Fighter

Factory, his name being Les. Les told us that Gerald Yagen has acquired a number of aircraft for his collection, and these aircraft are on display at The Fighter Factory Museum in Suffolk, Virginia.



We were told that Gerald Yagen has acquired a Polikarpov I-15 biplane fighter like the kind flown by the Russian pilots who flew in defense of China sometime between 1937 and 1940. Also, Mr. Yagen has acquired a Polikarpov I-16 ("Rata") monoplane fighter which was also flown by Russian pilots in China against Japanese fighters and bombers sometime between 1937 and 1940. The Rata looks like an airplane with a very small airframe built around a large, radial engine. I believe the Rata was the world's first retractable landing gear monoplane fighter with a constant speed propeller flying sometime around 1933. It must be a real monster to handle on the ground because of its large radial engine and short stubby wings and short fuselage. Finally, we heard that Gerald Yagen is having a P-40E restored in New Zealand, and the plans are to have the aircraft painted in the colors of Tex Hill's "White 108" flown by the Flying Tigers during the Battle of Salween Gorge.

There were at least three UH-1 Hueys and one Cobra Gunship as well as an Army Apache Attack helicopter and an Army Blackhawk helicopter.

There was a British jet trainer called the Provost, and there was an anti-aircraft

gun emplacement that had been removed from the U.S.S. Downs that had been in Pearl Harbor during the fateful morning of December 7, 1941.

IV.

CONCLUSION AND IMPRESSIONS ABOUT THE FLY-IN IN COLUMBIA

The fly-in in Columbia was very well conducted. Traffic operations were smooth and efficient. There were quite a number of very rare aircraft on display, since it is rare to go to an airshow where both a B-17 and B-24 are flying. The crowd was allowed to get close to the aircraft, but during engine starts, safety precautions were taken to minimize danger while also allowing the crowd to experience the joy and exhilaration of engine starts of these old warbirds.

Although I did not attend any lectures, one could hear in the background old pilots telling younger people what it was like to train and fly in combat during World War II. The young people were also allowed to get into the act by displaying remote controlled model airplanes including a Stuka dive bomber that made a series of attacks on the runway. The attacks were accompanied by explosions on the ground to simulate bomb explosions.



I neglected to mention that partway through our adventure, a couple of Air Force or Air National Guard F-16s came down the runway and also made a low pass over the stadium, this apparently being part of the half-time performance at the University of South Carolina football game.

V.

EPILOGUE

I was told that this fly-in in Columbia marked the end of the airshow season for the displays of The Fighter Factory's airplanes. With the approaching holidays, we may have to wait until next year to report on more airshows and fly-ins. Until then, happy landings.

All photographs used in this issue of Flightwatch were taken at the Celebrate Freedom Festival/Airshow in Columbia, South Carolina.

We regret to inform the readers of Flightwatch that Korean War veteran, Joe Tobul, the owner/pilot of the dark blue Chance-Vought F4U-4 Corsair, named "Korean War Hero," died when his plane crashed on the third and final day of the Celebrate Freedom Festival/Airshow.



Alan Armstrong is engaged in the general practice of law with an emphasis in the following areas:

Aviation Matters, Personal Injury, Professional Negligence (Malpractice),
Products Liability

Phone: (770) 451-0313 Fax: (770) 451-0317
Email: alan@alanarmstronglaw.com

Please contact us at flightwatch@alanarmstronglaw.com with any questions, comments, or if you no longer wish to receive Flightwatch via email.

All previous volumes of Flightwatch can be found at our website:
www.alanarmstronglaw.com

© 2002, Alan Armstrong.
All rights reserved.