

# THE CLIPPINGS

## MERRY CHRISTMAS!

DECEMBER, 2014



GRASSFIELD RC CLUB, INC. • BROOKLYN PARK, MN • www.grassfieldrc.org • AMA CHARTER #1405

### **SURPRISE CHRISTMAS**

#### **A Christmas Story by Phil Zuidema**

*This story is based partly on true events.*

Grace picked up the wrench and placed it over the spark plug. She tightened it carefully, to make sure it was torqued just right. Sweat dribbled down her forehead. She wiped quickly before it could run into her eyes. That was a constant problem in this ridiculous jungle. Since she became a WAAC, she felt like she stopped being a woman. The South Pacific was a hot, sticky place all the time.

“Get that bird ready ASAP!” shouted Pappy. “The Japs ain’t gonna wait for you to fix that thing, and I don’t want to be stuck on the ground when they decide to pay us a visit.”

Grace shot him a sideways glance. “Geez, doesn’t he know we don’t have parts or the time to get these things ready?” Grace thought.

Everyone was doing the best they could. The WAACs were trying to keep these planes flying. This new R-2800 radial was a beast of an engine, the most powerful engine put in a fighter at that time. When the F4U Corsair was designed around this engine, the engine hadn’t even been built yet. Grace attended a thrown-together training course to get ready for the Corsairs to be integrated into the service. She was trained stateside and was one of the few who knew how to service the R-2800. So, she got shipped to Guadalcanal to teach the other mechanics how to maintain them.

“I want that ready by the end of the day. We’ll probably get hit again tomorrow, and I need that ship in the air.” Pappy growled. He thought to himself, “Why do they send us women?” He was not fond of the WAACs.

Greg Boyington was affectionately known as “Pappy”, since he was older than most of the other pilots. He started his career in 1937 with the Marines, and then spent time with the AVG, the American Volunteer Group in China. He flew under Claire Chenault with the Flying Tigers, before he got assigned here. There is no doubt that he had earned his flying credentials. Now he was trying to lead his unit to beat back the Japanese in this sweaty swamp.

“I can’t go any faster if you want this thing to fly. It will be ready when it’s ready.” Grace barked back at Pappy. She wasn’t intimidated by anyone, but you’d never know it. In training, her friends shortened her name to Gay, a nickname that stuck with her the rest of her life.

“Well then, have the plane armed now, so it’s ready when we need it.”

“O.K., Pappy, I will get them started on it.” Gay replied.

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### **Our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Potluck Buffet**

**PLUS, this year:  
we’re having a SWAP MEET!**  
so come ready to buy, sell, or trade

**Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup> - 7 pm**  
(Doors open at 6:00 pm)

**Osseo Community Center  
415 Central Avenue, Osseo, Mn**

**Bring some food to share  
and get 2 free raffle tickets!**

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**“Merry Christmas and  
Happy New Year!”**  
from Pres. Ron Gage

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While Gay continued to get the R-2800 ready, the armament crew began putting the belts of .50 cal in the gun magazines and loading the shells for the 20 mm cannon.

Gay thought about Christmas at home in Minnesota, where she grew up. It was at the end of northeast Minneapolis, a place called Columbia Heights, founded as Columbia Heights township in 1898. Her mother, Nellie, loved to make fruitcake at Christmas. With eight kids at home, homemade fruitcake was a real treat. She really missed the fun with her sisters and brothers, all joking around and helping Mom and Dad get the tree up. Mom would sit down at the piano, and play Christmas carols, and all the kids and Dad would sing along. They knew them by heart. Gay's personal favorite was *Up On The Rooftop*. It reminded her of when her brothers and her dad were building their two-story home in the Heights, and her brother Dave fell off the roof, hitting the ground below. As he lay there, Andy, her dad, leaned over the edge of the roof and yelled, "Are you all right?" It was almost rhetorical. "Okay, yep, then get back up here."



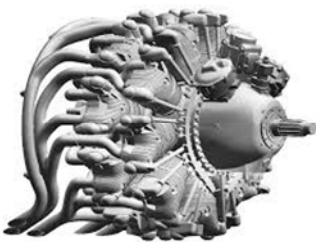
Pappy had been on pins and needles the last month. We were getting hit regularly by the Japanese, who were fighting relentlessly. When attacked, everyone would take cover immediately, keeping the camouflage over the planes so they couldn't be readily seen from the air. The planes were moved to different places in the jungle on different days.

Grace had just finished with the last spark plug, thirty-six in all. This was a great engine, and the newest and best fighter available, but it required a lot of maintenance. Grace smiled as she realized how special it was that she was one of the few that could maintain this complex engine.

Now it was time to take this bird up and check it out. All the WAACs were pilots in addition to the other skills they had. Grace personally test-flew all her own repairs, so the guys couldn't give her any guff that something didn't work right after she worked on it. Some of the guys were defensive that a woman was maintaining their aircraft and knew more about how it worked than they did.

Grace hailed one of the flight techs and told him to get ready to pull the wheel chocks. "I'm taking her up."

As she hit the starter, and the big radial began to cough and spit smoke, she smiled, having no doubt it would fire up. It did. As she checked both mags, the huge prop kicked up a lot of jungle. When it was warmed up, she let off the brakes.



**Pratte & Whitney's  
R-2800 engine**

She taxied out, began to feed in throttle and stood on the rudder. The R-2800 had a ton of torque, and it took all of her 120-pound body to push, stand on, and hold the rudder during takeoff. Like a gladiator, the big war machine went straight down the runway.

"I can do this; I just need to stay on top of it," she thought.

The takeoff was longer than she was used to. The weight of all the armament did make a difference. She was used to flying unloaded airplanes. Pulling the nose up, the sky was so blue and pure it hurt her eyes. "Ah, this is how the South Pacific



**An early F4U Corsair in flight**

looked in those postcards I've seen." The sun shimmered on the sea like it did on a fresh Minnesota snowfall. Serene and brilliant. Mesmerizing.

Gay put the plane through its paces, testing the water injection at full power. This engine was making all of its 2,100 horsepower as advertised, pulling the big fighter around like a dog with a new-found bone. It was time to get it down and go to work on the next one.

As she pointed the nose down, she could see two squadrons flying low toward the airfield. "Holy crap, those are meatballs! The Japanese are attacking!"

Gay didn't flinch. She felt like she was having an out-of-body experience, watching another seasoned pilot in action. She was no longer IN a machine. She WAS the machine.

Immediately she flipped all the gun switches, arming the .50 caliber machine guns and the 20 mm cannon. "If I step up the throttle just a little more, I'll catch them before they make their second pass."

Gay settled in behind one of the light bombers unseen. These were Franks. Great airplanes, but not a match for a Corsair.

She was so close, the big Corsair started shivering from his propwash. Chukka, chukka, chukka bellowed the cannon. Sawdust was all she saw as it raced past her canopy. Instinctively she ducked, then felt silly, like ducking would have made a difference if something had hit the canopy.

As fast as she could pull the big fighter around, she was on the tail of another. This pilot hadn't seen what just happened, he was so focused on making another pass over the field. Grace pulled up behind him. Chukka, chukka, chukka. The 20 mm dragon roared again. Second verse, same as the first.

Now her gift of surprise was gone. Used up. The enemy saw her, and it was her turn to run. The Corsair, more nimble than their Franks, could also out-climb them. Gay had no desire to become the next ace at the field. She just wanted to survive and get away. As she played the rabbit to their fox, she drew off the attackers long enough for some of her fellow pilots to get their Corsairs up.

She saw Pappy get up. Because the pilots grabbed the first plane they came upon, she couldn't identify him by the markings, but by his flying style. His gear was always up first, and he was always the first to turn toward a fight.

Gay had her hands full now. There were enough of the Franks to make her think this might be her last fight. As she

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## GRASSFIELD'S NOVEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup> MEETING

The November 14<sup>th</sup> meeting was held at the Osseo Community Center. Al Schwartz brought some video tapes from his personal archives, which were shown at the meeting. Roy Maynard talked about his new JETI transmitter and the Heinkle He 162 model that he is building (see next page).

### ROY MAYNARD'S JETI 16-CHANNEL RADIO CONTROL SYSTEM



Roy Maynard showed his JETI 16-channel transmitter, the latest in RC technology, at the November meeting. Made in Czechoslovakia, the JETI DS-16 is a computer radio control system with full telemetry.

The transmitter has an accelerometer in it. Just tilt the transmitter, and the radio will tell you whatever you have programmed, such as how much voltage is left in the receiver pack, what your air speed is, or how much fuel is left in the fuel cell. You can also program all the switches to talk to you, so voice commands confirm that you have hit the correct switch, such as “landing gear down” or “elevator, low rates”. You can also program safeguards that warn you, such as “turbine failure” and “battery voltage low”. And if you don't like the computer-generated voice, you can even download voices that sound better. The radio has a user-friendly interface. It is not as intuitive as you might expect, but once you learn how to scroll through all the menus, you can do all kinds of things. The JETI reps are very good at talking you through any programming questions you have.

The JETI DS-16 transmitter (shown above) has cutting-edge technology with a full telemetry system. It includes an accelerometer and a pitot tube, and it is a true dual-pack redundant transmitter/receiver system.

This is a true dual-pack redundant transmitter/receiver system. There is a unit called a central box, which has two different receivers coming out of it. If one receiver fails, the radio will tell you “signal lost”, which means you have lost one of the receivers. Knowing you are only flying off one receiver, you can land the plane. Also for redundancy, the transmitter has two transmitter modules in it.

This system has a pitot tube that acts just like the pitot tubes in real aircraft. The pitot tube plugs into the module. You set up the radio to find the device, and it gives you constant air speed readings.

Roy Maynard (below) demonstrated the capabilities of the JETI transmitter at November's meeting.

Flyers who own expensive models are converting to JETI radios, which sell for about half the price of a top-end Futaba.



## ROY MAYNARD'S HEINKLE HE 162 "SALAMANDER"



Roy Maynard brought the Heinkel He 162 that he is building to the November meeting. Several years ago, Roy had received an email of a Heinkel *Salamander* model flying over Germany. The video impressed him; the plane flew great, and you could even hear the cannons firing. A couple of years later, Roy was emailing someone in Europe, and asked him if he knew of the guy who had that Heinkel. He said Peter Maisinger built it and sent Roy his email address.

Roy had the kit imported from Germany. He refers to it as a "garage kit", because Maisinger had made one for himself off molds and then made kits for a few other people, probably no more than half a dozen, including Roy's. The kit is a 1/3.5 scale, so it's a big jet, about 9-feet in length. The kit comes mostly composite, but there are a number of things to fix to get it to come together, because the quality is lacking in many ways. There are lots of parts that Roy has to trim to make them fit, and he will be using a lot of body putty.

One nice thing that came with the plane is the electric retract system. The electric conversion and controllers, made by an Austrian, are really pretty cool. The retracts start at the press of a button. There are also electromagnetic brakes, made by the same builder who made the controller.

Maisinger made all the parts for the full cockpit, floor, and canopy frame. He did an unbelievably nice job! The gear doors for the nose gear and main gear are perfect. The wing is composite. Maisinger uses a carbon graphite laminate, which is very light and strong.

The kit arrived with no manual, no pictures, and no construction photos, so the construction is entirely up to Roy. He needs to figure out what kind of mount he wants for the turbine and is consulting a Czechoslovakian who built one of these planes. The shroud bolts on and covers the turbine.

If you put an ounce of weight in the tail, you need six ounces in the nose to balance it. Roy is trying to find ways to keep the tail light. If the tail rips off in flight, you don't have a jet anymore! This was actually a weak link in the aircraft. Several Luftwaffe pilots were killed in World War II, because

the tail sections tore off. So pilots were told to never use excessive rudder throw.

The Heinkel also had problems with lateral stability. The wing-tip design is attributed to Alexander Lippisch, so the wing-tips were called "Lippisch-ears" as a joke. They helped the stability of the Heinkel in flight.

In 1939, Hitler should have realized this plane was five years ahead of anything the Allies had. But he was so confident they would win the war that he didn't authorize its full production. In 1945, when the Germans realized they were losing the war, they decided they needed a plane they could build really fast and that a 17-year-old pilot could learn to fly in 6 hours. Adolf Galland vehemently opposed using the Heinkel 162, but he was overruled. They started building Heinkles, assembling them in the salt mines. They had about 80 of them in flying conditions by the end of the war. They flew some combat missions, but the plane had a limited run, and it was never really successful.

Some of the planes were captured at the end of the war. Eric Brown, a British test pilot, flew every German aircraft they brought back. Brown really liked the plane and said it was good that the war ended when it did, because if the Germans would have had the time to refine the plane, it could have been a dangerous tool.

The full-size aircraft had split rudders, a real problem for a model. The kit came with a one-piece rudder, which Roy sawed in half. The pieces are perfectly hollow. Now he has to figure out how to put a connecting piece through them and hinge them. He also has to decide how to hinge the flaps.

A big issue will be getting the center of gravity right, because the nose gear retracts backward, which will shift the CG back. The CG point on this plane is really critical.

So Roy is faced with a number of challenges with this complicated model, but coming up with solutions to building problems is one of Roy's talents.

Roy plans to use a P140 turbine, which will put out about 30 pounds of thrust. He is excited to be building such a unique airplane. Very few of these models have ever been built.

**A Christmas Story by Phil Zuidema**

*(continued from page 2)*

turned hard, it was like a dog chasing his tail. The last Frank in the line following her, was now in her sights. She couldn't get a perfect bead on him, so she pressed the button on the 50 cal. A warm yellow glow lit up her leading edge. The light created by fifty rounds per second of fearsome 50 caliber death. Eight big guns beating the Corsair's chest. She was a natural at leading that Frank. It was like throwing snowballs at her running brothers. Off came the wing of the Frank, and it spun down quickly into that blue splendor.

Rounds started sailing past her canopy. Not used to being shot at, Gay was rattled. As she turned the bird to the opposite side, a classic error, rounds hit her wing, making it sound like the time her little brother put her in a garbage can and started beating it with a stick. Gong, gong, gong, went the rounds through the Corsair.

"Crap! Now I'm going to get to see that shining sea straight in. I was never trained in combat."

Gay saw a bright flash behind her on her right. The bullets stopped coming. Her pursuer had become the prey. Another Corsair pulled up alongside her. It was Pappy himself. His salute only lasted only a second, but it endured for a lifetime. By now, the other Franks were on the run, and the mighty blue birds again ruled the sky.



So excited, Gay bounced the Corsair on landing. Normally, she would have been embarrassed, but now she was just glad. As she taxied back, she remembered. "Oh heaven's sake, it's Christmas tomorrow." Strangely, she thought about the taste of her mom's Christmas fruitcake. "So, that's what victory must taste like," she thought.

All the ground crew and other pilots pulled her off the wing of her embattled bird and held her over their heads, carrying her about like a trophy. "It's a good thing I'm being carried. I don't think I can walk."

She had saved the airfield from a certain pounding, which would have taken days to fix. One of her fellow WAACs went over to Gay's Corsair, and stuck her small fist into one of the holes left in her wing. "That's gonna keep you busy for a while, fixin' up this Swiss cheese," Betty said with a wry smile.

Pappy looked at her in a way that only he could. He raised his eyebrow, his sign of respect. They were now comrades in arms. There would be no more orders barked at her. Only the cooperative banter of battle buddies.

"I never knew you could fight like that." Pappy beamed.

"Neither did I."

"Someone was watching over you."

"Yes, He was. I think I just got the best Christmas present of my life," Gail mused aloud.

**2015 MEMBERSHIP**

Membership for the 2015 flying season is now available. For information on membership dues and requirements, go to [www.grassfieldrc.org](http://www.grassfieldrc.org) and click on the membership information link in the left-hand column. From there, you can print out the 2015 membership application. Everything you need to know is on the form.

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*Merry Christmas!*