

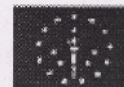
# Experimental Aircraft Association



## Chapter 67



NOBLESVILLE AIRPORT  
14782 PROMISE ROAD  
NOBLESVILLE, INDIANA



Website: [www.eaa67.org](http://www.eaa67.org)

Builders' page: [www.eaa67.org/memberprojectsFP.htm](http://www.eaa67.org/memberprojectsFP.htm)

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### MINUTES OF March 5, 2007 MEETING

Jon Ogle called the meeting to order at 7:30PM.

**CHAPTER STATUS:** Dan Daubenspeck reported that National EAA dues are now paid. Jon Ogle reported that the chapter was reinstated and in good standing with the Secretary of State. The chapter's 501c-3 status is intact. Jon plans to call for a formal board meeting later this year.

**AIR ACADEMY:** Jon suggested that the Chapter consider sponsoring a child to attend the Air Academy this summer. The membership supported the suggestion. Dan Daubenspeck reported that last year the Chapter sponsored two students and paid \$500 for each of them. Tom McNutt has a 16 year old young lady he would like to recommend. Tom will follow up with the student.

**WRIGHT PATTERSON MUSEUM TOUR:** The trip to Wright Patterson is this Saturday, March 10. As only 17 are signed up we will be carpooling. Those interested should meet in the parking lot on the South side of 32 across from the government center in Noblesville at 8:30 A.M. Lunch is available at the large cafeteria located at the Wright Patterson Museum. We plan to leave the museum around 4:30PM

**BUY, SELL OR TRADE:** Don Roberts has a 1990 Geo Tracker for sale for \$2,500. Jon Ogle reported that a nicely restored J-3 Cub would soon be for sale at the Sheridan airport. The owner has purchased a new Legend Cub.

**BUILDER'S REPORTS:** Jon Ogle noted that Bill Carr is progressing nicely on his Sonex. It may be flying this summer.

**FLYING STORIES:** Several members discussed early reports of the plane crash in Bedford, IN. It appears to be a homicide/suicide. Another member reported that the wife of Eric Lytle, had filed suit against Cirrus Aircraft. Mr. Lytle, a National League pitcher and his flight instructor, recently passed away when his Cirrus crashed into an apartment building in New York City.

**GUEST SPEAKER:** Don Roberts introduced Mike Johns. Mr. Johns is 88 years old. Mr. Johns had several careers including 36 years as a supervisor at the Firestone plant in Noblesville, and after that 16 years owning and running a locksmith business in town.

Mr. Johns family emigrated from Hungary. His father was a farmer in Virginia. The family was very poor. Mike joined the army on his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday in December 1936. He was stationed in Hawaii. Mr. Johns became a marksman. He handled a water-cooled 30

caliber machine gun. In December 1939, Mr. Johns and one friend decided to muster out. Two other friends re-enlisted for another three years. Both were killed in the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Mr. Johns went back to Virginia, and spent eleven months as a coal miner, then drove an ice truck. He then reported to his local draft board. He was allowed to join the Army Air Corps rather than the Army.

Mr. Johns was initially trained as an aircraft mechanic. Mr. Johns was stationed at a training base in Courtland, AL. He serviced all of the PT-13 Stearman aircraft for the base. This was the primary training base for the Tuskegee Airmen.

Mr. Johns then went to gunnery school in Tampa, FL. He was assigned to B-17s as a top turret gunner. Mr. Johns was a member of the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force, 99<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, based in Foggia, Italy. At the beginning of each mission the base commander reminded the flyers that 8 or 10 crew members would not survive all of their missions.

Mr. Johns completed all 50 missions without a scratch. He crewed on 15 different aircraft over the 50 missions, and walked away from four crash landings. Mr. Johns shot down a FW-190. He also recalled an ME-262 that shattered his plexiglass turret at 30,000 feet. The German jets were feared by the bombers because of their speed and cannons.

The crew's pilot, a Major and Group commander, had mounted a video camera in the bomb bay doors. Mr. Johns has photos of all 50 targets. Mr. Johns later learned that his crew had accidentally bombed his grandfather's grave in Budapest, Hungary on a mission. On one mission the group bombed German troops in the South of France. After the mission and on the return trip the bomb group observed the remaining German troops surrendering to Marines that had landed and established a beachhead.

Mr. Johns noted that the 50 caliber guns mounted on the B-17 had limited range. The German FW-190 with 20 mm cannon would often line up 500 yards or more behind the bomb formation and shoot at the tails of the bombers. To counter this advantage, the members of Mr. John's crew scrounged a German 20mm gun and mounted in the tail gunner position in their aircraft. The Germans were quite surprised the next time they lined up behind the B-17.

One member asked how the Germans were able to find the proper range for antiaircraft fire on the allied squadrons. Mr. Johns reported (and had photos to support his claim) that the Germans had captured and salvaged 42 allied bombers. The Germans painted swastikas on the tails, but otherwise left the allied markings on the aircraft. The Germans would then infiltrate the bomb groups during missions and report coordinates to their antiaircraft batteries.

Mr. Johns was proudest of his 51<sup>st</sup> mission however. The 99<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group flew into Bucharest Hungary on August 22, 1944, behind enemy lines, and airlifted 1600 American POWs out of a recently abandoned Stalag to safety, prior to the arrival of the Russians. He was awarded a medal for this mission. This was a very interesting presentation.

**NEXT MEETING:** The next regular meeting is Monday, April 2, 2007 at 7:30pm.

Submitted by Richard Hixson



99<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group insignia



FW-190



ME-262