

# The Aero Historian



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June 2019



**Eduard 1/48 scale F6F Hellcat**  
by Mark L. Rossmann

## **Hellcat Ace of Aces** by Mark L. Rossmann

### **History:**

CO of VF-3, Lt Cdr. John Thach, wrote a very critical report of the performance of the F4F-4 Wildcat vs. the A6M2 Zero that had just occurred at the Battle of Midway, and the need to provide its pilots a better fighter. Just 22 days later, the "Hellcat" rolled off the Bethpage Long Island Grumman factory. In February

1943 only 35 Hellcats came off this line, by December 458 examples were churned out in 1 month.

The Zero was the premier naval fighter dominating the skies of the Pacific and Asia in the first year of war. It had premiered in the China skies in 1940, and within the first few months it notched 59 victories without a loss. Following the attack on Pearl, it outperformed most allied fighters. Only when allied pilots adopted new tactics,

did they have better success that cancelled out the Zero's superior maneuverability. Only when the Corsair arrived in early 1943, did the Zero start losing its dominance, however, the Fast Carriers equipped with the Hellcat placed the Zero on the defensive. A series of heavy clashes in 1943 and 1944 wrested air superiority from the Japanese, a reflection of the American aviation industry production superiority and technological advances,

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**TCAH Officers**

**President**, Bernie Kugel  
**Vice-President**, John R. Ross  
**Secretary**, Bob Ferreria  
**Treasurer**, Dennis Strand  
**Historian**, Merrill Anderson

**Newsletter Info**

*Article Submission Deadline: 22nd of each month*

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**TCAH This Month**

The monthly meeting will be held June 8, at Fleming Field, South St. Paul, beginning at 1:00 pm. Come early.

**President's Report**  
*by Bernie Kugel*

At our May meeting, we had our annual DiVanni's pizza luncheon and our auction. Everything went smoothly and we all had a good time. I would like to thank John R Ross for helping with getting soda and ice. I want to thank Axel, Larry, and Merrill for doing their awesome auctioneer duties. And I want to thank everyone who donated and/or purchased items for our auction.

At this month's meeting. Hopefully I will have our club awards to hand out.

In July, I would like to change up our display case. If you would like to put some models in, please bring them to the meeting,

Not much this month, Weather's too nice.

Model on



**Treasurer's Report**  
*by Dennis Strand*

This has been an exciting month! We finally had our auction and we hit it big time. Everyone seemed in good spirits, they were full of pizza and exhibited an aggressive attitude in the bidding wars. The club took in \$1623.00. This is as high as I can recall, at least in recent history. We had 2 new members join the club. Welcome aboard to Mark Opdahl and Bill Read. Don Stauffer also renewed his membership. This gives us an additional \$45.00 in revenue. TCAH now has 69 members including the "lifers".

Pizza and pop cost \$334.77 and \$11.94 respectively, bringing the current club bank account to \$5950.81. For comparison, last year in May we had \$5918.12. So, it appears the club is stable financially.

Enjoy the summer weather and I'll see you at the June meeting.



**CAF Update**  
*by Dennis Strand*

As mentioned previously, our neighbors at the CAF requested that TCAH do something with the wall space above and behind our display case in their hangar. Fortunately, Steve Erickson donated many aviation themed art works to our club. Several of these were presented to me at our recent auction with the idea of using them for the CAF project.

This was ideal timing and I want to give a big "thank you" to Steve. However, to display these works properly and be proud of our efforts, they need a little work. They all need frames,

some need glass, matting or foam board backing to look as elegant as they deserve. There are 9 oil paintings, water colors or prints to be displayed. I did some research and was told that the cost for each piece would run between \$25.00 and \$75.00. I plan to make a request to the club for \$300.00 to cover this expense.

I believe this is a benefit to the club for several reasons. First of all the CAF is a valid organization for us to make a donation. Second, we do receive some publicity and notoriety from such an effort. Third, we illustrate

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**TCAH History (continued)**  
*by Frank Cuden*

**1971**

"The hunt began anew for another meeting place. The March meeting was held at the Anoka Country Library. April's was at the Bloomington Library. From May on, they were held in the North Central's training rooms in their new corporate headquarters on 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue

The Science Museum display was taken down in May after a run of 18 months. The three part exhibit featured nearly 600 models in total.

Jack Mitsch and Gil Dunn, B-

17 crewmen in World War II were guest speakers in April. Northwest Airlines Captain Waiters spoke to us in June.

Jeff Fries donated a large display case and set it up at the Medical Center Cycle and Hobby in Crystal as a club display.

Vice President Dave Zimmerman complained that he had no "symbol of office" such as a gavel or the treasurer's checkbook, so President Jim Smith presented him with a red, white and blue candle that spelled "SPIRO."

The Schroeder family bought a hobby shop on 35<sup>th</sup> Street, just east of Cedar Avenue, and

named it Custom Model. It became a favorite hangout for TCAH'ers on meeting days.

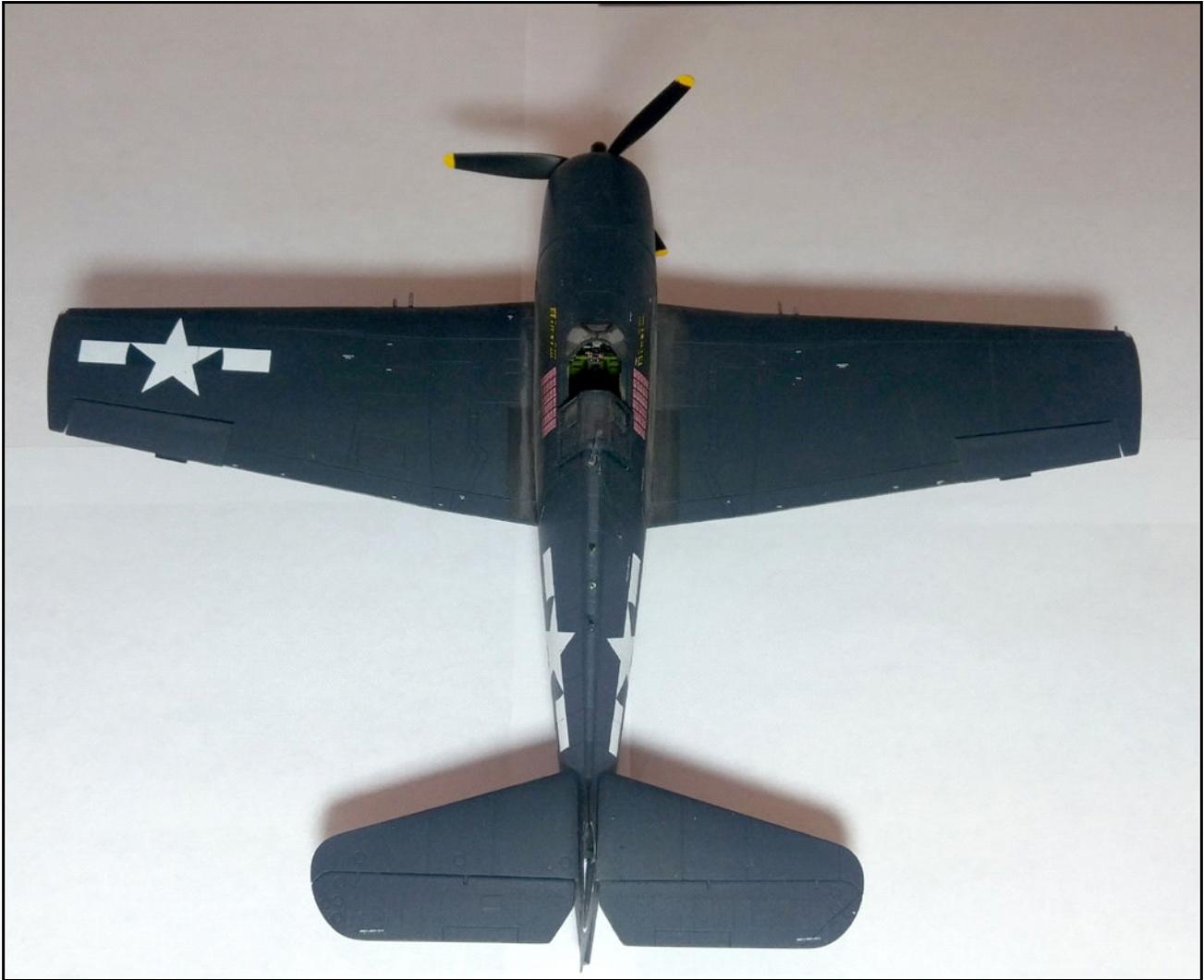
Membership cards featuring the Spitfire and flaming Stuka were presented to members upon payment of their dues.

John Moore was saluted as the "Father of TCAH" upon the club's 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

New names in 1971:

Ken Ring, Mike Fitzmaurice, John Eian, Dan Fletcher, Tom Ready, Dave Galbraith, Leo Braun, John Kueffler, John Broderick, John Halley, Frank Cuden, Jim Linneberg, Al Ricks."









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especially in aircraft engines. The second-generation Corsairs and Hellcats were placed in combat way ahead of any IJNAF replacements to the Zero, and Japan had to rely on the Zero up to the end.

VF-9 was the first unit to use the F6F-3 in combat. The first Zero kill was by Ens. James Warren, of VF-33, based on Guadalcanal on September 6, 1943. The first aircraft carrier born combat between Hellcats and Zeros occurred on October 5<sup>th</sup> 1943.

In April of 1944, Grumman moved to building the dash 5 version after completing 4,402 of the dash 3's. No prototype for the -5 existed, they just shifted to the -5, with its first coming off the line on April 4<sup>th</sup> and the last -3 coming off the line April 21st 1944. After pilots reported some issues with the -3, the -5's came off the line with the new PW R-2800-10W water-methanol injected engine, allowing an emergency power rating of 2,200 H.P. Other changes included; a change to wind screen giving better visibility and an armored flat front plate; spring tabs on the ailerons to improve rate of roll above 200 mph; and 20mm cannon which was used on many F6F-5N night-fighters; able to carry a heavier bomb load with the MK 51 bomb rack inboard of the wing stub and three MK 5 zero length rocket launchers on each wing. Red lighting for the instrument panel for better night vision, flat bullet resistant glass windscreen, larger armour plating behind pilot. Still the rearward visibility was still an issue, a blown canopy was tried but disintegrated in flight testing when exceeding 200 MPH.

In October of 1944 an A6M5

Model 52 was captured and tested, the Zero had a better rate of climb up to 9000 ft, at 14,000 ft the Hellcat had the advantage. In the end the flight test report said; "DO NOT DOGFIGHT WITH A ZEKE 52".

#### David McCampbell – 34 Kills

McCampbell was the Navy's ace of aces, outdistancing Lt. Eugene Valencia by 11 kills. Surviving the sinking of the USS Wasp, he went on to be an instructor of pilots at the operational Training Command. McCampbell was the first commander of the newly commissioned VF-15, promoted to commander in January 1944, he took over command of CVG 15 and led the group from April to November aboard the USS Essex (CV-9).

Claiming his first victory, a Zero, on a mission over Saipan on June 11. The Mariana's Turkey shoot saw him splash five (5) Judy dive bombers in the morning and two(2) Zero's in the afternoon mission on June 19<sup>th</sup>. Leading into the Philippines, three(3) Zeros and a single Jack and Dinah were added.

His most famous mission, earning him the Medal of Honor, was on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1944, while accompanied by his wingman Lt. (jg) Roy Rushing they came across a flight of 60 plus Japanese aircraft returning to Manila, that had launched an attack against Task Force 58, which included dive-bombers, torpedo-bombers and fighters. After a 1 hour long running battle McCampbell had shot down five (5) Zero's, two(2) Hamps and two(2) Oscars, all fighters, while Rushing shot down six, these 15 aircraft were nearly one quarter of the strike force. McCampbell's last kill was on November 5,

1944, a Zero, this brought his total to 14.5 Zeros, the highest of any of the Navy aces.

McCampbell received one of the first -5 models issued to Air Group 15 in October of '44', naming it MINSI II, as he had all his planes named. This plane was flown seldom by McCampbell as it was having engine reliability issues, twice in flight and following combat damage. It was duly  renamed and passed onto another pilot.

Minsi III/BuNo 70143 is his best-known Cat, an early -5 with the windows behind the cockpit. He flew this on nearly every mission and it outlasted either of his previous Minsi's. Losing his log books after the war, it is estimated 20 of his kills was scored in Minsi III. After McCampbell left CVG 15, Minsi III was lost in an accident in December of '44', by his replacement.

McCampbell passed away on June 30, 1996, retiring from the Navy as a Captain in 1964.

#### The Model:

This is an Eduard 1/48 Hellcat that was about 60% built by another modeler, that sold at a club auction. I found the kit to be as good and if not better than the Hasegawa version. It needed the landing gear, prop, canopy, and the smaller exterior parts added. The painting was simply Testors rattle can Dark Sea Blue, providing the gloss finish, the kit provided Minsi III decals. Final touch up was an over spray of Testors Dull Coat and some weathering provided the matt finish. This represents McCampbell's Hellcat-5 of VF-15 after his last kill.

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## Directions to the Club Meeting Location

**Where: South St. Paul Municipal Airport, a.k.a. Fleming Field,** located on the southern extremity of South St. Paul, south of 1-494, west of Concord Street and East of Highway 52.

### If coming from the western Twin Cities going east on 494:

- Exit at the 7th and 5th Avenue exit (Exit No.65)
- Turn right (South) on 7th Ave and go approximately .6 miles to a 4-way Stop sign. This is South Street W. To your left there will be a McDonald's; to your right front there will be a Walgreen's.
- Turn left (East) at the 4-way Stop onto
- South Street W and go approximately .6 miles. Along the way you will encounter three more Stop signs—the third Stop sign (Henry Avenue) will be a "T" intersection. At the "T" intersection on your left will be homes and on your right softball fields.
- Turn right (south) onto Henry Ave. and go approximately .2

- miles toward the Fleming Field airport terminal building.

### If coming from east Twin Cities on westbound 494:

- Exit at the 7th and 5th Avenue exit (Exit No.65)
- Turn left (South) on 7th Ave and go approximately .6 miles to a 4-way Stop sign. This is South Street W. To your left front there will be a small strip mall; to your right there will be an Amoco station.
- Turn left (East) at the 4-way Stop onto
- South Street W and go approximately .4 miles. Along the way you will encounter two more Stop signs—the third Stop sign (Henry Avenue) will be a "T" intersection. At the "T" intersection on your left will be homes and on your right softball fields.
- Turn right (south) onto Henry Ave. and go approximately .2 miles toward the Fleming Field airport terminal building

The terminal is on the right with parking available.



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to ourselves and others that we can deal successfully with challenges and achieve quality results and finally the club can easily afford it at this time.

Let me know what you think.



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Other kit decals include: 1) Lt. Jg Ray Hawkings, VF-31, USS Cabot, Sept 1944; 2) Lt. Carl A. Brown Jr., USS Princeton, Oct 1944 (Paper Doll); 3) VF-7, USS Hancock, 1945

### References:

1. F6F Hellcat vs. A6M Zero-sen Pacific Theater 1943-1944. Osprey Publishing / Edward M. Young.
2. Hellcat Aces of World War 2. Osprey Publishing / Barrett Tillman
3. Walk Around F6F Hellcat #9. Squadron/signal Publications / LCDR Richard S. Dann



The Aero Historian is published monthly by the Twin City Aero Historians, Inc., a joint chapter of the American Aviation Historical Society and International Plastic Modelers Society/USA, for members and readers as part of their annual dues or fees.

The group is open to aviation enthusiasts from teenagers on up who are interested in aviation modeling, photography, collecting, art and writing.

The Twin Cities Aero Historians (TCAH) meet the second Saturday of every month at 1:00pm.

See above for the new meeting locations and directions.

Mail Newsletter material to the editor and address changes to the treasurer.