

World War Two Weekend – Mid-Atlantic Air Museum
Reading, PA
June 2009

On 5-7 June 2009, Fort Mott State Park (Pennsville, NJ), supported by Army Ground Forces Association (AGFA), attended the Reading Air Show (<http://www.maam.org/maamwwii.html>). To see a musical slide show of the event, visit <http://www.photodex.com/sharing/viewshow?fl=3110908&alb=0>. This is one of the largest events of its type in the nation. It involved over 1,000 historical interpreters and many unique and rare aircraft, military vehicles and pieces of equipment. On Saturday and Sunday the event was visited by thousands of people.

The members of AGFA participating were: Andy Grant (Fort Mott State Park Historian), Bob Grant, Doug Houck, Mike Murray, Anne Lutkenhouse, Tom Minton, Paul Taylor, Curtis Saunders, Vince Turner Sr., Vince Turner, Jr., Stephen Turner, Gary Weaver, Shawn Welch, Eric Meiselman. The focus of AGFA participation was to provide an overview of the Coast Artillery Corps and its two main missions in the WWII era, seacoast and anti-aircraft artillery. To support this objective, the group demonstrated a seacoast fire control station with an M1910A1 azimuth instrument, a plotting board, an Anti-Aircraft Battery Commander's instrument, inert munitions, a functioning telephone network and other items. Also showcased were Fort Mott State Park's recently acquired 1942 Sperry 60-inch 800 million candlepower searchlight and matching generator. AGFA member Jonathan Prostack's Ford Jeep provided historically accurate mobility. A photograph of the entire group is shown below posed at the organizational entrance with a sign and reproduction 16-inch 2,240 pound AP shell.



The entire site for the contingent is shown below. From left to right are the seacoast artillery fire control station with M1910A1 azimuth instrument, cooking station, main tent, small storage tent and the 1942 Sperry Searchlight and generator from Fort Mott State Park. As you can see in the photo, the Friday this was taken it was a very wet and rainy day.



Throughout the event, various historic interpreters and reenactors were experiencing the rain. Below the Soviet contingent is getting a good dousing as they pass a German encampment.



During the rain on Friday, we found our new setup for the M1910 Azimuth instrument was quite useful. Not only was it covered, by placing the instrument on such a high elevation we were able to see much of what was occurring on the airfield in a very detailed way thanks to the 15-power magnification of the fire control instrument. In this photo 1st Sgt Murray is equipped for the rain in his reproduction rain jacket.



One of AGFA's members, Chad Philips, as one of the leaders of the 33rd Signal Construction Battalion, shows off the interior of that organization's building in the "French Village" at Reading. Notice the large amount of signal corps equipment to include a large switchboard and headquarters clock. AGFA member 2nd LT Lutkenhouse observes from the left of the photo.



Below is a view of the full switchboard and the terminal box on the right. This is a very rare assembly and is fully functional.



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One of the most impressive parts of the 33rd Signal Construction Battalion's site is the fully functional field kitchen. Here Chad Philips demonstrates the "mess kit dunk" setup with immersion heaters and 1940's vintage steel trashcans.



All during the day Friday it rained...and instead of driving on the airfield where a B-25 was parked, vehicles drove into our bivouac site. Below a German truck is passing in front of our sign and 16-inch projectile.



Below is a good view nose on of the B-25 parked in front of our bivouac site on Friday.



The bomb bay of this bomber was loaded with inert bombs as shown below.



There were many other unique sights to see at Reading. The tent below is a fully functioning Harley Davidson motorcycle repair facility.



The WWII vintage generator below provides power to the Harley repair shop pictured above..



Some of the most impressive vehicles to be seen were the Half-Tracks. There were at least two at this event.



During the rain on Friday, Abbot and Costello performed for the crowd.



Beginning early Friday morning, the B-17 began taking people on flights. These flights lasted approximately 30 minutes and cost about \$450 (donation) to keep the aircraft flying.



One of the rarer aircraft at the event was this SBD Douglas Dauntless Dive Bomber.



Other sites included a field medical station, which was an irresistible draw to 2LT Lutkenhouse.



A view inside the medical aid station tent.



Below a soldier is treated by one of the nurses.



A group of medical professionals simulate a battlefield operation with period correct battlefield medical equipment in a field hospital set-up.



Below is a 1939 vintage field X-Ray machine.



During day on Friday, members of our contingent visited the “French Village”. In the photo below 1st Sgt Murray, 1LT Grant and SSG Grant are “walking the town”.



On the back porch of the 33rd Signal Construction Battalion's building in the “French Village”, PFC Turner and LTC Welch discuss the field kitchen with Chad Philips.



By late afternoon the rain slacked up and visitors began to arrive at our site. Below 1LT Grant and 1st Sgt Murray greet visitors.



Below PVT Meiselman explains the use of the M1903 Springfield rifle to visitors.



During the air show SSG Houck and PVT Meiselman man the Fire Control station.



In the photo below 1st Sgt Murray mans the Anti-Aircraft Battery Commander's instrument.



Each day PFC Turner and SSG Grant prepared meals for the organization. Here PFC Turner prepares fried SPAM sandwiches for the membership as 2LT Taylor helps organize the serving tray.



All during the day various units marched past our bivouac site including these German SS infantrymen. It is not difficult to imagine the concern such a unit would have had for ordnance like the 16-inch shell to the left!



Just prior to her take off in the B-17, 2LT Lutkenhouse ponders her flight as she eats a fried SPAM sandwich. She wears a nurses "off duty" uniform from 1943.



Next to our site was bivouacked a group of German SS interpreters. Here they prepare for dinner with authentic Nazi dinner wear and other materials.



Below PFC Saunders, CPL Minton and SGT Turner prepare to head to the “Flea Market” and search for equipment and other collectable items.



Later in the day, we ate dinner at the open mess provided by the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum. The food was excellent and it was an outstanding opportunity to mingle with fellow participants. Lead by SSG Grant, from right to left are 1st Sgt Murray, 2LT Lutkenhouse, PVT Meiselman, PFC Turner, 2LT Taylor and SSG Houck.



Another view of our contingent in the mess line with SSG Houck and 2LT Taylor bringing up the rear of the line.



A very rare aircraft is the SB2C Curtiss "Hell Diver" dive-bomber. The twin .30 caliber machineguns demonstrated an excellent level of realism.



In the photo below the German site next to ours is in the middle of dinner.



In the evening we covered the M1910A1 azimuth instrument against the moisture and dew of the night.



Below is the “hangar dance” that occurred on both Friday and Saturday night. Here both Axis and Allies mingled and “cut a rug”.



The photo below shows CPL Minton returning from the Friday Night dance. PVT Meiselman is on the left.



The photo below shows our contingent getting dressed early on Sunday morning. On Friday and Saturday the unit wore the khaki uniform. On Sunday we wore the 1st Pattern herringbone twill (HBT) uniform. In the forefront of the photo SGT Turner is just getting focused for the morning.



Below 1st Sgt Murray is preparing for Sunday morning.



Breakfast on Saturday begins with SSG Grant and PFC Turner hard at work.



Below, members begin to line up for breakfast on Sunday.



On Sunday we were visited by GEN Douglas MacArthur (below).



CPL Minton provides an explanation of seacoast fire control to GEN MacArthur.



There were many outstanding historic aircraft at Reading. "Old Crow" - a rare early P-51 Mustang provides an eye opening close view from our bivouac site.



SGT Turner stands by the 60-inch Sperry Searchlight from Fort Mott State Park.



In the photo below, 2LT Lutkenhouse prepares to board the B-17 for her flight.



In this photo she sits at the Navigator's station preparing for takeoff.



This photo is from the right waist gunner's position. Notice the .50 caliber machinegun.



During the flight, 2LT Lutkenhouse spent some time in the nose of the B-17 with the photo below showing the Norden Bomb Sight and forward view of the aircraft's flight.



Another view from the nose of the aircraft.



Below is the cockpit of the aircraft showing the two pilots and the control panel.



A view of two of the engines on the B-17.



The photo below shows the big bomber coming in for its landing. The Norden Bombsight is prominent in this view.



Seconds before touchdown landing.



Within the main tent of the bivouac site were several displays to include this field desk with manuals, TIME and News Week magazines, and other materials such as vintage Coleman 242B lanterns.



Below, SSG Houck, 1st Sgt Murray, LTC Welch, 2LT Grant, PFC Turner and SGT Turner prepare for Saturday evening operations.



Below PFC Turner and SSG Grant prepare the evening meal.



Below 1LT Grant and SSG Weaver pause for a photo.



A most unique sight, Victor Verano stands in his Philippine Army uniform, Circa 1941/42. This is a rare uniform and it was actually made in the Philippines to the original pattern.



Sunday evening breakdown took us more than a few hours. Here we take the main tent down and disassemble all the displays.



In the photo below, LTC Welch poses at the Ford Jeep with the broken down bivouac site and a B-25 Mitchell medium bomber in the background.



Fort Mott State Park and AGFA will participate in these events on an annual basis. The sights to be seen are most impressive and there is always something new around the corner just waiting to be discovered! For more information, visit the Army Ground Forces Association website at <http://www.armygroundforces.org>