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June 2<sup>nd</sup> – Commander Kenny Fields, United States Navy Retired &  
Colonel George Marrett, United States Air Force Retired  
present

## "The Rescue of Streetcar 304"

at 6:00 PM at a pot luck at Suzanne and Mel's Hanger

This is a war story. It's about a young Navy carrier pilot shot down on his first combat mission and subsequently rescued by a team of Air Force pilots who pulled him out of a Laotian jungle in the midst of a strong force of Pathet Lao guerillas and a division of North Vietnamese regulars. We have the pilot who was shot down and a significant member of the rescue team giving a combined narrative. It was one of a handful of remarkable air combat rescues in the Vietnam War. Don't miss it!

"Nail 66 was stunned. A Navy A-7 jet, call sign Streetcar 304, had just dropped four 500 pound bombs on top of Nail's designated target and was now climbing to clear the target area. Suddenly, Nail saw a large section of one of the A-7's wings blown off by enemy AAA, and now the A-7 was falling downward at a high rate of speed tumbling end over end. Nail 66 shouted over his radio 'You're hit, you're hit. Eject, eject'."

With those riveting words, the saga of Streetcar 304 began. It was to last forty hours...

On 31 May 1968, Lt. **Kenny Fields** catapulted off USS *America* on his very first combat mission. His target was two hundred miles away along the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos. What the planners did not know was that Kenny was en route to a massive concentration of AAA gun sites amidst a full North Vietnamese division.

*The Rescue of Streetcar 304* is Kenny's exhilarating narrative of his forty hours on the run in Laos and what turned out to be one of the largest and most spine-tingling air rescues of the Vietnam war.



In two combat tours, Kenny flew 139 combat missions, was awarded the Bronze Star, Purple Heart and many other

medals. He retired from the Navy with 22 years of service in 1984, 3350 flight hours and 475 carrier landings. Today he lives with his wife, Shirley, in Mooresville, North Carolina.

**Captain George Marrett** was a major participant in Kenny's rescue effort. He flew multiple sorties in his A-1 Skyraider *Sock it to 'em* during the effort to get Kenny out. The "Sandies", as his squadron, the 602<sup>nd</sup>, was called, had a superb reputation. They were past masters at close air support and air combat rescue. Before it was over, the Air Force had flown 189 sorties to rescue Kenny, and in the process four pilots had ejected, seven planes were lost or heavily damaged, and one pilot became a POW.



George flew 188 missions in the war and logged over 600 combat hours. He was awarded the DFC with two Oak Leaf Clusters and eight Air Medals.

George was an Air Force test pilot before the war at Edwards Air Force Base and retired to become a civilian test pilot for Hughes Aircraft after the war. He has authored four books. He describes Kenny's rescue in his book *Cheating Death: Air Combat Rescues in Vietnam and Laos*. George now lives in Atascadero, CA.

## *The President's Corner*

*Marle Hewett*

June's speaker program, the Rescue of Streetcar 304, is special to me because I was there. Kenny and I were squadron mates. The story begins with our first day in combat flying off the USS America in support of Operation Rolling Thunder: the air war over North Vietnam.

For both Kenny and I, it was our first combat experience. The America was an Atlantic Fleet carrier out of Norfolk, Virginia. She was the first carrier from the Atlantic Fleet to deploy to the war zone. All prior assets had come from the Pacific Fleet. So we had few pilots in our air wing with combat experience. I had flown with the Pacific Fleet in a prior tour on the USS Oriskany, but that was before the war.

By mid afternoon on 31 May, 1968, our first day in combat, we were doing well: no losses, no one hit. Then Kenny was shot down on an air support mission in Laos while under the control of an Air Force forward air controller – *Nail 66*. We heard precious little on his status for the next 40 hours.

Kenny's wingman, Lt. Freddie Lentz, stayed too long overhead Kenny after he was shot down and ran out of fuel on his way back to the ship just as he was plugging into an A-3 tanker at night over the gulf: now we had another A-7 down. Freddie ejected and was eventually pulled out of the water by an Air Force Jolly Green near Tiger Island: hell of a day.

We got Kenny back thirty days later, after an extended stay in an infirmary at Nakhon Phanom air base (NKP) in Thailand. He had taken a hit from a CBU released from an F-105 providing close (a little too close) support during the rescue. We had quite a party on the ship the night Kenny was returned to us thanks to liberal prescriptions of stress relief fluids from the flight surgeon. I'll never forget it.

One night aboard ship, our squadron CO sat Kenny down and told him about a Navy instruction that directed that if a downed pilot's name was divulged to the enemy, the pilot would not be required to fly further combat with the same enemy. Did Kenny wish to continue? Kenny flew 138 more missions.

For forty five years, we never knew the names of any of the Air Force pilots involved in Kenny's rescue. When I called Kenny last fall and asked him to speak to us, he suggested that one of the Sandy pilots involved in the rescue speak concurrently. When he mentioned the name, I had to sit down. George Marrett and I were students at the US Air Force Test Pilot School at Edwards AFB at the same time in 1964, four years prior to Kenny's rescue. ♦

## *Good News*

*Our May meeting* was held at Lee Behel's nicely spacious hangar. Not only did Ken Orloff attract a fascinated audience of local residents, but Lynne had numerous EAA members and Ninety-Nines there to hear Ken's amazing "cases" as well.



### *New Members:*

We are pleased to have among us, new faces:

Beth Stanton

Michael and Sharon Talmadge

Gary and Linda Welch

### *Scholarship Fund:*

Yet another reminder: PMLAA has a scholarship fund for youth in South County who are interested in pursuing any aspect of aviation study.

We're still hoping to hear from members who want to be on the scholarship committee or any of you who have young people to recommend as possible recipients.

### *Memorial Day:*



It is traditional to fly the flag of the United States at half mast from dawn until noon on Memorial Day to honor those who have died defending our country. Many of our PMLAA members are veterans. Let us also honor them for their service. ♦

*From The Airports Manager  
by Jim Thomas*

### Let There Be Light & Gate Gander

On Tuesday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, the fully reconditioned airport beacon was installed. The beacon failed about a month ago when one of the brush holders shorted out against a slip ring. Being an old beacon replacement parts were no longer available. So the Airports completely rebuilt the beacon with new brushes, new bearings, new wiring, new gaskets, and new lamps. As I mentioned, replacement parts were not available, but the manufacturer did sell a lamp upgrade kit which allowed the beacon to be retrofitted with higher efficiency, lower cost lamps. This alone should save the airport approximately \$280 per year in electrical costs. The lamp life is the same as the old lamps which is approximately two years.

When the refurbished beacon was installed on the beacon tower, new shrouds were installed on all four sides to reduce the amount of light seen by the residents on the ground. The shrouds included new pressure treated wood, new hardware, and road sign grade aluminum. If we obtain the same service and reliability out of the reconditioned beacon it should be turning out light for the next 40 years! Of course that assumes the beacon receives regular maintenance, which it will receive.

Almost anything mechanical is going to require regular maintenance. The same is true if it has electrical or electronic components to it. The access gate at the PML Airport has all three so it isn't a big surprise that the gate is one of the highest maintenance items at the airport. So far this fiscal year the gate has broken twice requiring the replacement of the controller card both times. Unfortunately, the controller manufacture has not been able to tell us what might be causing the board to fail, so we don't know if it is a problem with our system or their system. The controller card is what signals the gate to open when it detects an authorized gate card or remote control signal.

When the gate control system failed several years ago, we replaced the system with one that is compatible with the PML Association gates. The big advantage of doing this is that the PML Association gate cards and remotes can be programmed into our system, reducing the number of access cards or remotes a pilot needs to carry. This also benefits the airports because we don't need to issue cards or clickers except to those that are not PML residents. Another benefit of having a compatible system to the PMLA system is that there are experienced technicians available locally that can help us troubleshoot our gate problems. ♦

*Safety Corner  
by Norm Peebles*

### Single Pilot Resource Management

During my past corporate life we spent a lot of time training our management team on improving their communication skills with their employees and among themselves. We even utilized what the Airlines and Military were doing in their cockpits. In the 1970s they started training their crews on the concept of Crew Resource Management (CRM). Many an accident or incident was caused by an overbearing Captain not listening to the other crew members, especially the poor junior co-pilot. CRM keyed on dividing workload among the crew and providing a system of checks and balances on critical decisions and processes in the cockpit. It got the Captain to listen to the crew and open up communications. It helped improve the safety margin of all phases of the flight.

But what about us poor single-pilot aircraft? What can we do to help improve our safety during flight? You can start by openly communicating to yourself during all phases of the flight. Talk to yourself as you would with a crew member. Organize your charts and place them in order of use. Write down frequencies, runways, elevations on a knee board to help reduce heads-down time. Use checklists during the critical phases of flight, before T/O, climb, cruise, descent, before landing. Checklists can be from memory, such as GUMPS, but call them out as you go through each one. I also call out landing gear three times on downwind, base, and final in my aircraft. Use your passengers as a resource. Patty sets the radios, reads the checklists, changes the frequencies, watches for traffic. When we are IFR, she reminds me of our altitude, headings, clearances, and attitude of our aircraft. When she not there, I call out loud to myself each of those items. All this and more is referred as Single Pilot Recourse Management.

As we age, people sometimes look at us funny if they see us talking to ourselves, but remember, it's OK in the cockpit and besides there is no one there to hear you! Have fun and fly safe. ♦





## 2012 Meeting Calendar

<b>Date</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Location</b>
June 2	Kenny Fields, Commander USN Retired George Marrett, Colonel, USAF Retired <i>The Rescue of Streetcar 304</i>	6:00pm – Pot Luck at Suzanne and Mel McGowan's hangar
August 4	Block Party (no speaker)	Randy & Marie Barber's & neighbors' hangars (watch for details in the next newsletter)

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