

A WWII Remembrance from veteran Cameron Figg

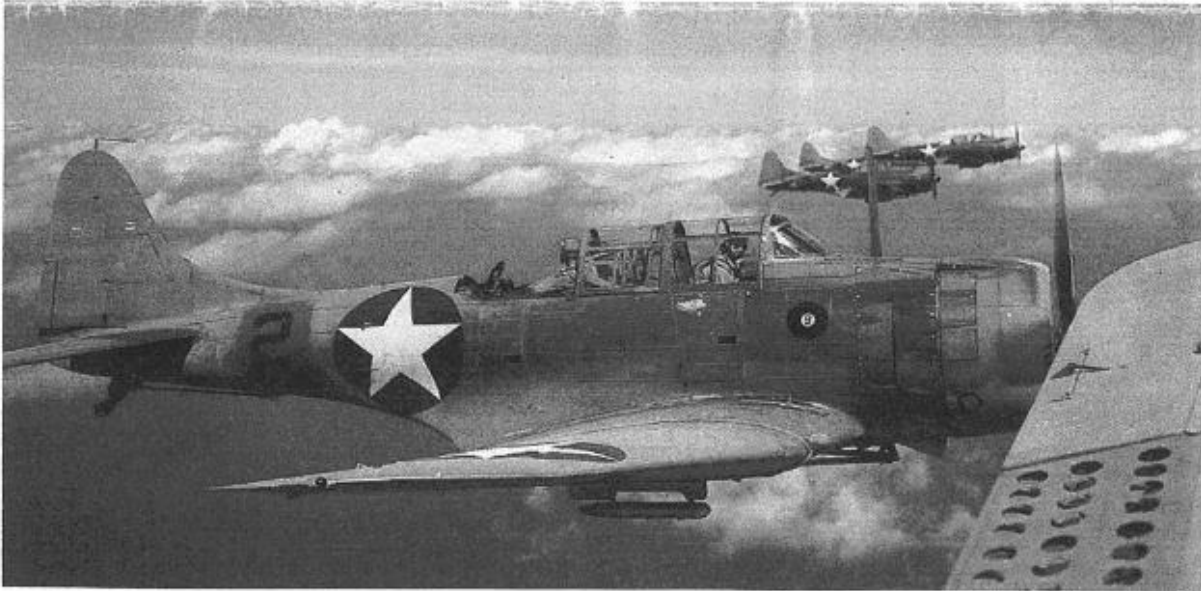
Written by Wade Kellogg

Shared with the Chelsea District Library by Earlyn Figg, June 13, 2014

June 2014

Human Interest Story from Crooked Lake

Cameron served in the Marines in the South Pacific. He enlisted at the age of 18 in November of 1942. Cameron started his training in San Diego, then Corvallis, Oregon and Chicago, Illinois. Cameron started his service as a mechanic with the Marines, and was then chosen to be a pilot. Cameron was flying the Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber in 1944 and 1945. The SBD ("Scout Bomber Douglas") was the U.S. Navy's main carrier-borne scout plane and dive bomber, and was also flown by the US Marine Corp. The SBD is best remembered as the bomber that delivered the fatal blows to the Japanese carriers at the Battle of Midway in June, 1942.



During one of Cameron's scouting missions, he ran into trouble. As he describes it, he pushed the range of the plane too far, and found himself lower on fuel than most missions. So low, that he eventually ran out of gas! The carrier USS Wasp was too far to glide to, so Cameron radioed their position and climbed to 20,000 feet to increase his range. When the engine finally quit, he dead-sticked the plane to a water landing. He said they contemplated the idea of him and his gunner/radio operator to bail out, but felt the dead-stick landing on the water was a safer course of action. When asked how long the plane floated on the surface, he said, "Not as long as you would think!" Both were alive (some injuries) and were able to get into the life rafts prior to the Dauntless sinking. When asked about their survival supplies, Cameron stated, "We each had a jug of water." With regard to food, they only had a sandwich! The ordeal lasted longer than either anticipated, as the carrier didn't turn around for one ditched plane, so they were in the raft for three days! Finally, a destroyer picked up the thirsty crew and transported them to Hawaii. Cameron ended his service with the Marines in February, 1946.

Cameron as a young Marine.

"Shorty" and Cameron on leave in Hawaii.



Cameron also had three brothers who served. Hazen (eldest) served in the Army during WWII in Europe, and Dean served in the Coast Guard, also during WWII. Dennard (youngest) served in the Marines like Cameron in Korea and was killed in action at the age of 20.

Hope you enjoyed the story of one of our own. Many many thanks to Cameron and his brothers for their service to our country! Please say hello to our local hero next time you see Earlyne and Cameron!

Wade Kellogg