

Aviation Ordnance 1st Class Robert Tuggles, Jr.



A nephew of Robert Tuggle Jr., Robert Cappella, contacted several of our research volunteers at the Genealogical Library, for assistance in determining the parents, siblings, vital records, etc. for this young man, two years ago.

During that time, we discovered what an unique and outstanding young man this was. Many of you that have read "Confessions of the Willis Creek Gang", by John Clardy, may be familiar with Robert's or "Cotton's escapades with his friends while growing up in Brownwood along Willis Creek before WWII.

Robert graduated Brownwood High School in 1943 and joined the Navy, like many young men. Robert's life was to take a tragic turn as detailed below. . .



On the morning of April 15, 1945, in the closing days of World War II, a Grumman TBF Avenger, assigned to the carrier USS Makassar Strait, was shot down off the costs of Ishigaki Island by the Imperial Japanese Navy. The three aviators parachuted in to the water near Ohama and swam to a coral reef where they were captured by Japanese sailors. After being interrogated and tortured they were executed during the night at the foot of Mount Banna, at the Imperial Navy Headquarters. The torture of prisoners of war was a violation of the Geneva Convention, the rules of war signed by the international community in 1929. Vernon L.Tebo and Robert Tuggle Jr. were beheaded. Warren H.Loyd was beaten and

stabbed with bayonets by numerous numbers of sailors and soldiers. This incident was a tragedy which took place during war.

Lt. Vernon L. Tebo, 28, a Navy pilot of Illinois

Aviation Radioman 1st Class Warren H. Loyd, 24, of Kansas

Aviation Ordnance 1st Class Robert Tuggle Jr., 20, of Texas

To console the spirits of the three fallen American service members and to honor their deaths, we jointly dedicate this monument in the hope that this memorial stone will contribute to the everlasting peace and friendship between Japan and the United States, and that this monument will serve as a cornerstone to convey to future generations our keen desire for eternal peace in the world and our determination to renounce war.



August 15 2001

The Joint Committee of Japanese and American Citizens to Honor the Three Fallen Service Members During World War II.'

Robert Cappella was determined to bring the heroic lives of these three young men to the attention of their homeland and give them the recognition they deserved. Below is an email I received from Mr. Cappella recently detailing the progress to build a memorial to these young men at the National Museum of the Pacific War Museum at Fredericksburg, Texas. . . .

(email recieved March 22, 2011)

"I would also like to announce that we have finished the proof on the Robert Tuggle Jr.'s Memorial Plaque



<<http://www.shipleybay.com/tuggle.htm>> (click this link to view) for the

The National Museum of Pacific War located in Fredericksburg, Texas.

We are starting now on Warren H. Loyd's Plaque and then Vernon L. Tebo. I have been told by the museum officials that it takes about 3 months to score the plaques. The dedication for Tebo, Loyd, and Tuggle will be in one dedication. Once that dedication is complete we will start on Connelly and Waters, then the other five.

Michael W. Nearing will put the final proofs of all the plaques on the USS Shipley Bay (CVE-85) website. Michael has worked extremely hard to complete the VC-97 Air Squadron dedication pages, the pages speak for themselves.

We have a lot more to do since the original VC-97 (Fish Hook) Air Squadron had 52 officers and 50 enlisted men when they embarked on USS Makassar Strait (CVE-91). Here, everyone can get a good look at what has been done and we look forward to your comments.

I would like thank the following people for their help.

Members of the USS Makassar Strait CV-91/ VC-97 Association for helping me keeping the history straight:

Mr. Loren Elliot

Mrs. Patricia (Calvin) Schue...Pat

Mr. & Mrs. Bill Nelson (Helen Loyd)

Mr. JB Kennedy

Mr. Phil Strick

Mr. Noel Tebo

Tuggle family members:

John B. Tuggle for his persistence of always asking " When is something going to be done for these men on American soil?" and the advice "When you search for the truth, you find it, you might not like what you find."

Mrs. Martha Burnett

Ms. Linda (Synatschk) Patrick

Matt Synatschk who help me find a home for Robert Tuggle's USN belongings.

Others:

Michael W. Nearing for his willingness to do what he does in his spare time.

Mrs. Marty Kaderli, coordinator for memorial plaques, for The National Museum of the Pacific War. Who patiently made corrections to the proofs.

Mr. Clay Riley and his team at the Brown County Texas Genealogy, Brownwood Texas. Who help me dig through microfiche files of Brownwood Bulletin Newspapers from 1945 -1948 .

Ishigaki_Japan.com <<http://ishigaki-japan.com/>> for giving Michael Nearing permission to use their pictures of the Bilingual Memorial Monument.

Brad Clardy, son of Ensign John E. Clardy of LSM-395, for helping me identify pictures of "Willis Creek Gang" in their military uniforms.

I am sure the list will get longer as we go. I will personally assure you there is nothing you find at Michael Nearing's USS Shipley Bay CVE-85 website is "collecting dust."

Now at 65 years hence, I would like to leave you with some items from LT. CMDR Whittier's Farewell letter:

"The history books of a hundred years hence will probably not mention VC-97. For that matter they probably won't mentionthe time Barney MacDonald, Slick Trammel, and Marley Jones went chasing rainbows over Mexico.....the night Tom Connolly went in astern of the old "MAK....the night Tom Higgan flamed that Kamikaze expert....Those are the things we will remember ten or twenty years from now when the war is memory....."

The bare facts of history have been duly recorded elsewhere. Anyone who wants facts and figures can go to Washington where Billy's Braden's war diaries are gathering dust in the files of the Bureau of Aeronautics. That isn't what this little book is supposed to do. No, Skipper, this book is meant to be a reminder its aim to touch the high spots of an experience that all of us will remember as long as we live.

There are some of us who are not coming back. Let us not forget their names, for they were good men and their

passing has left gaps in our ranks that will not be filled.

Joseph Peter Casterot

Thomas Jerome Connelly

Valentine Jacob Goehring

Erastus Hustle Lacy

Warren H. Loyd

Vernon Lawrence Tebo

Robert Tuggle Jr.

Stephen Warnick

William Frank Waters

Max Louis Weinberg

They all contributed, each in his own way to the squadron, and each them, in parting has taken with him a part of each of us. We shall not forget these men."

Lt. Commander Mark Twain Whittier

USS Shipely Bay (CVE-85)

VC-97 Air Squadron

30 June 1945

Sincerely yours always,

Robert Cappella