

Oregon Aviation Historical Society

Newsletter

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OREGON UNDER SIEGE

By Ron Bartley

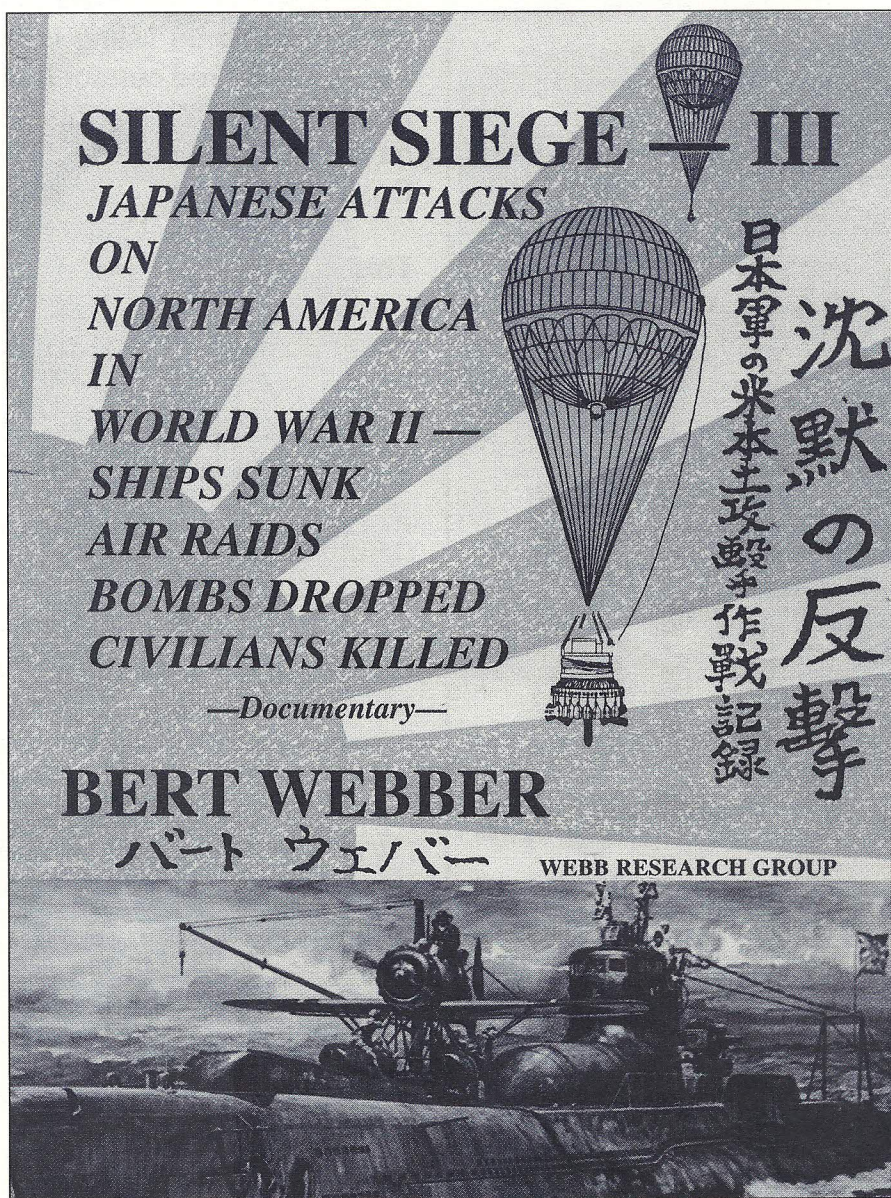
Nearly 60 years have passed since the people of Western Oregon were suddenly faced with the prospect of being attacked by Japan. So seldom is this segment of history reported upon, it is almost as if it had never happened.

Hopefully this brief review of World War II events will provide some insight into the widespread concern, uncertainty, and fear present in the region during the early days of WWII.

Within three weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941, Japanese submarines had sunk several U.S. merchant ships off the coast of California. Two months later, a Japanese I-class sub fired a shell into a California oil field. This attack caused much excitement but did very little damage. (Webber 1992).

In May, 1942, Japan carried out a two-day air raid on Army and Navy facilities at Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian area. The raid resulted in considerable damage and loss of life. Ironically, a Japanese Zero fighter plane was shot down during this raid and recovered by the U.S. Only slightly damaged in its force-landing, it was repaired and flown and proved

(Continued on Page 4)



A Yokusuka E14Y "Glen," like the one used by Nobuo Fujita to bomb Oregon in September 1942, prepares to catapult off the bow of an I-class submarine in this image from Bert Webber's Silent Siege III. Balloon bombs float overhead.
(Reprinted with permission.)



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The OAHS Newsletter is published by the Society
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welcome but should relate to Oregon aviation history.
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RANDOM FLIGHT

BY ROGER STARR

My personal thanks go out to all our members and supporters for your monetary and artifact donations, personal efforts and kind words this past year. We are a very small organization that performs all of its functions with volunteers. Therefore, every hour of volunteer activity is extremely valuable in helping achieve our goals.

Members will remember the mention of some of the events and activities undertaken during 2001 in the membership renewal letter. One of those activities involves the inventorying and cataloging of our collection. Over the past several years, a great variety of artifacts have been collected by OAHS. Such a collection is of little use until an accurate listing is available. Under the direction of Dale Archibald, retired curator from Oregon Historical Society, our volunteers started this task this past summer. We are most fortunate to have Yvonne Buermann, Catherine Heath, Carol Skinner and Jack Coshow working on this project.

This is a long-term project due to the number of artifacts on hand. Once they are cataloged, we will have to continue the process for future donations. We could therefore use more help. Do not hesitate to contact myself or any of the other directors should you have some spare time. This is a great opportunity to see first hand some of the interesting artifacts in the collection!

ERRATA

Unfortunately our printer made an error on Page 4 of the November issue, changing the Eyerly "Acroplane" to the "Aeroplane." We regret the inaccuracy.

Join the OAHS!

If you're reading this, you have an interest in Oregon's rich aviation past. If you're not yet a member, please join the Society in its efforts to preserve and celebrate Oregon Aviation History. Fill in the blocks below and return to: Oregon Aviation Historical Society, PO Box 553, Cottage Grove, OR 97424.



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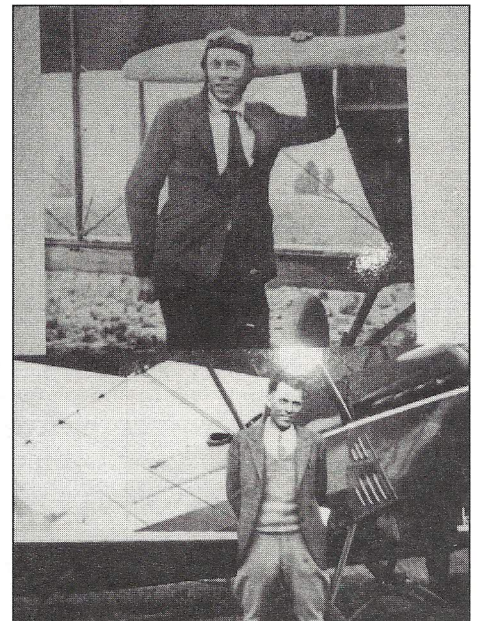
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Down at the Fair



The **2001 Oregon Air Fair** at Albany in September was a great success as suggested by these photos. *Top:* Jack Eyerly Jr. joins Board members in welcoming guests to the **Linn County Expo Center**. *Above Left:* Jack Eyerly Jr. was on hand to celebrate the induction of his grandfather into the **Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame®**. He is seen next to the frame of the Fly-O-Plane ride car. *Above Center:* The Air Fair had a very colorful poster this year. *Above Right:* part of the Society's interpretive exhibit honoring **Lee Eyerly**.

Thanks are due to the following, with a very special appreciation to Jack Eyerly Jr. for all of his help with the proceedings, and his loan of Eyerly family artifacts.

AIR FAIR 2001 - OAHS TEAM

**BILL AUSTIN - TOM BEDELL -
ROYCE BEATTY - JACK COSHOW -
RAY COSTELLO - AL GRELL -
JAN HEDBERG - DOUG KINDRED -
ROGER STARR**

And special thanks to Tim Talen for inducting
Lee Eyerly into the Hall of Fame®.



SEE YOU IN 2002!



Goodyear K-Class airship of the US Navy on patrol off the Oregon Coast, World War II. These blimps flew antisub missions out of NAS Tillamook during the war. (Bartley photo)

SIEGE *(Continued from Page 1)*

an invaluable aid for American pilots learning how to defend against it in combat.

On June 7, 1942, Japan invaded the Aleutian islands of Attu and Kiska. This same day, a Japanese submarine sank an American merchant ship off the Washington coast. Five days later, another I-class boat fired 17 shells into Oregon's Fort Stevens at the mouth of the Columbia River.

During September, 1942, four incendiary bombs were dropped on Oregon from a Japanese plane to start forest fires. This attack was in retaliation for the Doolittle raid. Two bombs were dropped several miles east of Port Orford on the coast, but no fires were started, presumably due to the forest being unusually wet. The remaining two bombs were dropped east of Brookings, where a small fire was started. Firefighters putting out the blaze noticed Japanese markings on bomb fragments, starting many rumors and causing much excitement when civil defense and military officials were notified.

After a strange aircraft with pontoons was seen in the area, officials ordered the media to keep the incident secret, but the story was already out. The Grants Pass newspaper headlines read: "JAP DROPS BOMB 40 MILES FROM GRANTS PASS." Government authorities, including the military, did not know that Japan had developed an aircraft-carrying submarine.

Coastal defense installations were manned. The Coast Guard patrolled the beaches, often with horses and guard dogs (War-dogs) to detect enemy landings from a submarine.

On the home front, young men and women were leaving home for military duty and work in defense plants. There were blackouts and practice air-raid warnings. Weather reports were suspended for fear they might aid the enemy. Household "Victory Gardens" were the norm. Gasoline, butter, tires and sugar were among

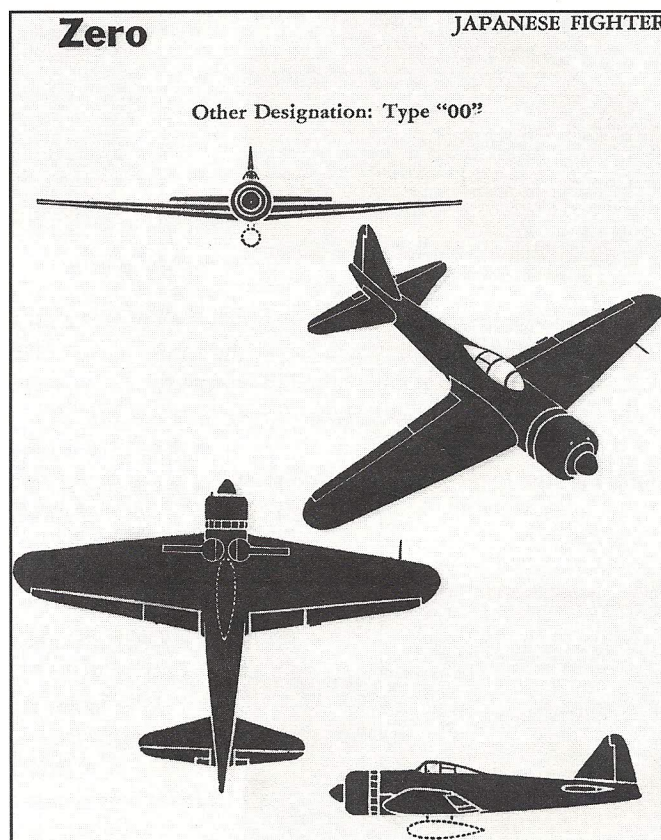
the items rationed. "War drives" were held to collect scrap aluminum and rubber.

Military convoys were common sights on the main highways. Civilians, young and old, were being trained as "aircraft spotters" to identify and report the locations of both U.S. and enemy aircraft. "Sightings" were phoned in to the Army Air Force Information Centers. All civilian-owned aircraft had to be disassembled or flown inland and stored for the duration.

The war in the Pacific Theater during the early months only added to the worry and concern of people in western Oregon. Japan's navy had quickly sunk British warships, leaving southeast Asia practically defenseless.

The U.S.-controlled Philippine Islands were soon conquered, which resulted in the Bataan Death March, a shocking example of inhuman brutality. *(Many POWs from Oregon died in the Philippines, including a number of USAAC pilots, mechanics and clerks. Ed.)* An estimated 22,000 prisoners died during the march. One month later, the 15,000 Americans on the island of Corregidor surrendered. During the Spring of 1942 it had become painfully obvious that Japan's military was a very formidable and ruthless force.

The first ray of hope for the U.S. during the dark days in early 1942 was the Doolittle raid. On April 18 sixteen B-25's were launched from the carrier *Hornet* against



Images such as this one, from a 1942 government identification manual, helped Oregon's network of ground observers tell friend from foe. (Author)

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World War II ration book - a reminder of the home front. (Author)

the Japanese homeland. Several of the crew were from Oregon; many had trained at Pendleton Field. This surprise attack shocked Japan and greatly improved morale in the U.S., especially for the people living near the west coast.

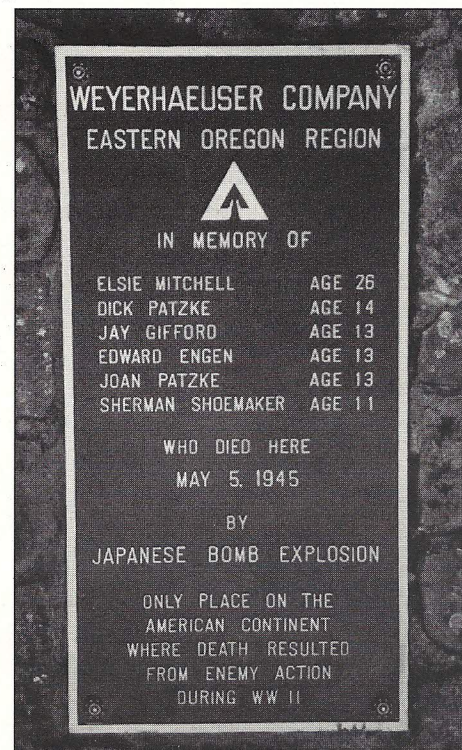
During 1944 and 1945, Japan launched a new type of offensive weapon - balloons. Approximately 9,000 large, hydrogen-filled balloons were launched into the



This monument on Weyerhaeuser property a short distance outside of Bly marks the site of the tragic balloon bomb explosion. (Author)

jet stream, where they would reach 30,000 feet. These balloons crossed the Pacific Ocean in 3 or 4 days, and became randomly scattered over western North America. Their sophisticated timing devices were set to drop incendiary and anti-personnel bombs as they drifted over forests and populated areas. They were expected to start widespread forest fires.

One such balloon landed on Gearhart Mountain northwest of Lakeview, OR. It was found on May 5, 1945 by a group of five children and one adult on a church outing. The bombs detonated and all were killed. The



This plaque, part of the memorial, commemorates those killed on that May church outing. (Author)

Office of War Information had asked the news media not to report balloon landings or sightings. Consequently, the general public was largely unaware of the "balloon attack."

The balloons did not cause widespread forest fires as planned, but they were a nuisance to the military. A short time later, WWII was history - which now is gradually being forgotten.

-v-

This article is based largely on well-documented accounts published in *Silent Siege III* by Bert Webber (1992).

NEW YEAR's WANT LIST

Unfortunately Santa didn't leave everything on the Society's list under the tree last month - perhaps you could help?

(Remember, donations are tax-deductible!)

Small Milling Machine
Shop Cabinets
Golf Cart/Tow Tug
Planer/Joinder - 6"
Toolbox/Rollaway
Portable Tool/Parts Cart
Solvent Spray Gun
Drop Work Lights (2)
Metal Shear
Metal Brake
English Wheel (or kit)
Small Riding Mower
Variable-speed Bandsaw
Infocus-type Projector
Digital Camera
Photocopy Machine

A big Thank-You goes out to **Norlift of Oregon, Inc.**, and **Glen Bean** for the donation of a Clark lift truck.

N315Y Update *By Ron Bartley*

Construction of the Great Lakes wings is continuing. Both lower wings and one upper wing with its 9 degrees of sweepback have now been assembled. We anticipate completion of the remaining upper wing and center section in a few months.



The project has benefited noticeably with new parts made by **Tim Talen** and **Merle Mills**. These are being coated with epoxy primer courtesy of **Steve Green's Aircraft Paint Shop** in Ashland. New certified Great Lakes parts have also been donated by **Eldorado Zeppelin Co.** in Eldorado, KS.

These new parts replace original 1931 parts that didn't survive the 1968 crash.

Addison Pemberton of Spokane has volunteered to supply aluminum sheeting and pre-form it to fit the wings' leading edges. (Readers may recall that Addison already has a major project underway - the restoration of the 1928 Boeing 40-C mailplane that OAHS members salvaged from a mountain near Canyonville several years ago.)

Donations to the Great Lakes Fund are still needed for a timely completion of the "ship" once owned by Dorothy Hester and Tex Rankin.

Tom Holmes of California won the first GL wing rib to be drawn at the Fall OACAC meeting at Lenhardt Airpark. Congratulations Tom!

*Oregon Aviation Historical Society
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