

SCHAF Press Release - January 20, 2011

February 5th announcement

**B-25 pilot returns to set ditching record straight
Doolittle recruited in Columbia early February 1942**

South Carolina Historic Aviation Foundation (SCHAF), stewards of a legendary B-25 that ditched into Lake Greenwood more than six decades ago, is bringing back to Columbia the plane's surviving pilot to re-introduce the Mitchell bomber to its public – the people of South Carolina.

In a series of short, informal tours Saturday, Feb. 5 – at 11 a.m., noon, and 1 p.m. – Col. Dan Rossman, Ret., will set straight the record regarding the plane and its D-Day fate. The iconic aircraft will be on view at Eagle Aviation's maintenance hangar, Hamilton-Owens Airport.

The date SCHAF chose for this new and prospective members' orientation is reminiscent of the plane's place in history.

"Early in February 1942, Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle appeared unannounced at Columbia Army Air Base (now Columbia Metropolitan Airport) to recruit volunteers for a highly secret mission," said Cantzon Foster, SCHAF president.

"Doolittle held accountable for the mission's secrecy all the volunteers he signed up at CAAB, but our mission today is no secret. We must preserve this piece of our shared history!" Foster said this first annual meeting of SCHAF will refresh the public's memory regarding what is at stake.

The raid Doolittle led that April became Chapter One of the B-25's enduring legacy. The plane became synonymous with Allied victory in all theatres of war in which it served. And CAAB became one of the largest B-25 training centers in the world. The B-25C now under SCHAF's protection began its service record at CAAB and is believed the last remaining in-tact aircraft from that training fleet.

"The foundation is holding this open meeting to let citizens see the plane, and comprehend why we stepped forward to secure it for what we foresee as its future – as an ambassador for the state's aviation legacy," said Foster, a Columbia attorney in general practice.

"To have Col. Rossman as the plane's spokesman Feb. 5 will give guests an opportunity not only to see the plane but also to meet the pilot tied most closely with its history." Foster called Rossman "uniquely qualified to set the record straight."

Rossman's long-time friend Ron Shelton explained: "On D-Day – June 6, 1944 – Dan was the student pilot occupying the left seat as the plane dipped low above the surface of Lake Greenwood. But it was the instructor pilot who had the controls when the props touched the water, instantly disabling the aircraft."

According to a long-disputed urban legend, the crew was flying low to check out sunbathers on the banks of Lake Greenwood. Shelton, SCHAF vice president for educational outreach and science curator emeritus of the South Carolina State Museum, said the crew's assignment that day was to practice low-level passes. Participants in the Feb. 5 event will be able to meet Rossman in person and ask the decorated pilot what really happened.

Chapter 242, Experimental Aircraft Association – Palmetto Sports Aviation, will be grilling hamburgers; donations will be welcome. The event is free; however, participants are being asked to register for their preferred tour time – 11 a.m., noon, or 1 p.m., by emailing SCHAFmemberorientationfeb.5@gmail.com, by calling 803-731-0662, or visiting www.SCHistoricAviation.org