

## The Ruptured Duck

When it comes to lucky number **7** there are no coincidences, only destiny.

The Doolittle Raider's B-25 "Ruptured Duck" was made famous by its pilot Ted Lawson in his book and subsequent movie relating to the Raid: "Thirty Seconds of Tokyo".

The Ruptured Duck was ship Number **7** out of 16 B-25's used in the raid.

At the **75<sup>th</sup>** anniversary of the Doolittle Raid in Dayton, Ohio at the National Museum of the United States Air Force Chinese historian Zheng Weiyong gave a presentation relating to his more than 20 years of research on the Doolittle Raiders. This included visiting all 15 crash sites in China where the Doolittle Raiders B-25's had come down.

Later that evening, and to everyone's surprise, Mr. Weiyong produced an exhaust stack that he had found off an engine at the crash site of ship **#7**, the Ruptured Duck!

This presentation happened to be on the **17<sup>th</sup>** day of the **17<sup>th</sup>** year of this century (April 17, 2017)

In Chinese culture **7** represents Yin, Yang and the five elements (Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth). It also represents the **7** Treasures.

There are also **7** Maltese crosses on the Doolittle Emblem signifying the **17<sup>th</sup>** Bomber Squadron.

A private function was held later that same evening at the Holiday Inn with family members of ship **#7**, the Ruptured Duck's gunner David Thatcher in attendance.

The crew of the B-25 "Georgie's Gal" from the Liberty Aviation Museum was also in attendance and randomly sat down at the same table the Thatcher family was seated.

During conversations with the Thatcher family it was brought up that Georgie's Gal had been assigned to be ship **#7** in the flights both from Urbana to Wright Field on the **17<sup>th</sup>**, and later the next day Georgie's Gal would again be flying the **#7** position during the **75<sup>th</sup>** anniversary flyover- in essence, representing the Ruptured Duck.

It was also noted that Georgie's Gal' has "**777**" in succession in its tail numbers. Dave Ross, the co-pilot for Georgie's Gal then related he owns and flies a Van's RV-**7** airplane!

Behind the table there hung a banner with photos of all 80 Doolittle Raider crewmen. This included a photo of Ship #15's gunner and flight surgeon Thomas White. It was noticed that Captain White had an uncanny resemblance to Ed. Patrick from the Georgie's Gal crew -right down to both wearing eyeglasses! It also turns out that even though Captain White was taken on the mission because he was a doctor, he also trained as a gunner to qualify as a functioning crewman, and was rated second among the Doolittle crew in his marksmanship skills often referred to as being a "hot-shot" and a "**deadeye**". Ed Patrick from the Georgie's Gal crew also holds the distinction of being a skilled marksman and his flight suit nameplate bears the name: "**deadeye**".

Captain White was also credited with saving Ted Lawsons life when he later had to amputate Lawson's **left leg** after it had been severely injured during the crash of the Ruptured Duck. Coincidentally Georgie's Gal crewman and mechanic Tyler Farmer had earlier in the day on the 17th re-injured his **left leg** and had sought out treatment by paramedics at Wright Field!

During a ceremony held on the 17<sup>th</sup>, The United States Air Force's 34<sup>th</sup> & 37<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron's re-christened a B-1 "Raider" bomber as ship #7 the "Ruptured Duck" with new nose-art unveiled by Becky Thatcher, while David Thatcher's wife Dawn and daughter Sandy christened the aircraft with Hennessy Cognac.

The very next day on the 18<sup>th</sup>, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Doolittle Raid Zheng Weiyong the historian that had brought the engine part from the Ruptured Duck all the way to the States from China visited Georgie's Gal. We were amazed that he had never been inside of a B-25. He was immediately given the cooks tour of the aircraft. It was soon decided that Zheng would accompany us as an honorary crewman onboard Georgie's Gal during the formation flyover for the wreath laying ceremony to represent the Ruptured Duck, complete with crew cap, shirt, and jacket! As it turns out, adding Zheng to our crew list brought up our total crew compliment for the day to **7**!

When the moment finally arrived at @ 1330 Hours (1+3+3+0 = **7** by the way!) for all B-25's to begin engine startup, one by one all B-25's got their engines fired up and running. All but one that is- the left engine of Georgie's Gal simply would not start. After numerous engine turnover attempts, and at least 60 blades of turning the frustration level could be seen on everyone's faces inside the cockpit that the engine might not start. But eventually there was puff of smoke and start she did. One by one all of the B-25's got airborne and took part in the final Doolittle mission by flying over the Raider wreath laying ceremony.

It was only after the flyover was completed did we realize that – just like 75 years ago, Ted Lawson and the Crew of the Ruptured Duck experienced the same occurrence – they too could not get their left engine started – but through the sheer stubbornness of Ted Lawson, rather than being pushed into the sea from the deck of the aircraft carrier Hornet to make room for the remaining B-25's to takeoff – they eventually got the left engine started- and the rest as they say is history. Unlike Ted however we did remember to at least set our flaps!

There is no doubt in the minds of the Georgie's Gal crew that the spirit of the original crew of the Ruptured Duck was indeed looking over our shoulder during the entire event!

It was a great and humble honor indeed for the Liberty Aviation Museum's B-25 Georgie's Gal and crew to be invited to participate in the Doolittle Raiders 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ceremony by the Doolittle Raiders Association, the National Museum of the United States Air Force, Champaign Air Museum, Grimes Field-Urbana Municipal Airport, and all of the fine sponsors contributing to make this event happen. Lastly, the participation of all of the B-25's would not have happened without the hard work of Larry Kelly and crew of the B-25 Panchito. It was a huge undertaking to make this happen!

I am sure all would agree that for all those that participated it was the least we could do to honor the legacy and memory of all the 80 Doolittle Raider crew, all of the Raider support personnel, and especially the 250,000 Chinese that died as a result of the raid at the hands of the Japanese for helping to protect the surviving Raiders.

We plan to have Goergie's Gal ready for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Raid!

Only 24 years and 364 days to go!

**Toujours au Danger!**