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Max Sarazin during the Korean War.



Sarazin's friends of Cape Area Pilots Association share joke at Fairway Restaurant in Eastham.

Photo by Craig P. Walker, Boston Globe

Former Ammunition Depot Marine Featured in the Boston Globe

By Jim Rose, FOW News Editor and Historian

As Veterans Day approaches, it is time to share some news on former Marine guard Max Sarazin who was stationed at the Hingham Naval Ammunition Depot in the 1950s.

Sarazin was recently featured with his veteran friends in a Boston Globe article on October 20th. The story covers his activities as a member of the Cape Area Pilots Association. Sarazin is a pilot and lives in Eastham, Massachusetts.



Sarazin today.

Sarazin saw action during the Korean War in 1953. He was stationed at the ammunition depot the following year.

"I was assigned to the depot in March 1954," said Sarazin. "I had guard duty then. Many a time my duty post was walking the area around the new concrete pier.

"We had guard duty four on and eight

off for twelve days, then every other weekend off. I'd go home to see my girlfriend, now my wife.

"I started flying after the war ended. I also studied mechanical engineering and graduated with highest honors at Northeastern University. From there, I worked for Raytheon and I'm now retired living in Cape Cod.

"I never had any close calls as a pilot but as a passenger I have. During the Korean War, the C-54 transport plane I was flying on lost two of its four engines and made an emergency landing. Plus, I almost fell out of a helicopter 80 feet up."



Sarazin's plane, Aeronca Champion 7-AC.

Sarazin is also a member of the VFW and Korean War Veteran Association. He is the founder of "Seadog Pound, MODD," a Marine Corps honor society for active and former Marines. The Commandant of the Marines at Hingham Naval Ammunition Depot, the late John Murdoch, was a member of Seadogs.

At Bare Cove Park's 35th Anniversary on October 25th, 2009, Sarazin was honored with other veterans who served at the Hingham depot.

The Boston Globe story about Sarazin and the Cape Area Pilot Association continues on page 2.



Sarazin enjoying a coffee break in Korea.



Sarazin's friend and former Hingham USMC Commandant, John Murdoch, with Marines.



U.S. Marine Corps barracks at the Hingham Naval Ammunition Depot during the 1950s.

For flyboys, the banter always takes off

Veterans' weekly breakfast on the Cape features hot coffee, good camaraderie, and a curse word or two.

By Brian MacQuarrie

EASTHAM — Huddled in a busy restaurant every Thursday is a breakfast group of a certain age. Hang around for a few minutes, and stories will surface of Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, old aircraft carriers, and the “beautiful noise” of Rolls-Royce aircraft engines.

Formally, this is a weekly gathering from the Cape Area Pilots Association. But informally, this is a chance for older aviators — nearly all veterans, average age 81 — to get together and bust each other’s chops.

“You were a B-29 pilot?” Army veteran Roger Putnam asked George Kelley, a former Air Force pilot. “Was that because you weren’t smart enough to fly anything else?”

“What a bunch of [barnyard expletive],” Kelley shot back. That word will pinball around the table for the next 90 minutes, a refrain of good-natured protest and eye-rolling dismissal.

The jokes are typical mess hall banter, but those mess halls were long ago and far away. Putnam is 95, Kelley is 90, and when they talk about flying, their clear eyes sparkle at vivid memories of an exhilarating time.

The conversation is lively, jumping from topic to topic. Which aviation pioneers were better: the Wright brothers or Glenn Curtiss, a founder of the US aircraft industry. Which training planes were best. And there is talk of being launched by steam catapult from the deck of a pitching aircraft carrier.

“You’ll notice that all of the Navy pilots have bad backs,” Kelley, a Dennis resident, said with a grin.

The group once attracted nearly 40 members to breakfast, but that number has dropped significantly as World War II veterans pass away. “We’re getting younger,” Putnam said in rueful acknowledgment.

On this morning, a dozen men are gathered in the Fairway Restaurant at three tables pulled tight together. Their bald or graying heads are tilted toward French toast

and eggs over easy.

“They’re quiet when they eat,” Putnam said, chuckling at a rare lull in the chatter.

Putnam, who flew Army bombers in the Pacific during World War II, gave up his pilot’s license only a year and a half ago. “My eyes went bad, and that was that,” he explained.

A native of Petersham in central Massachusetts, Putnam served on hard-won Guadalcanal and later on Iwo Jima during missions over the Japanese mainland. He received his pilot’s license in 1938, the same day as his license to drive a car.

It’s a legacy that few living veterans can claim. But it’s not enough to spare him from the chirping. When Putnam casually mentions serving in World War II, a gibe shoots across the table.

“I was going to say World War I,” another pilot quipped. “Or was it the Spanish-American War?”

Putnam laughed. All in a morning’s fun.

At the other end of the room sat Ernie McNeill of Eastham, another 95-year-old veteran of World War II. McNeill mostly listened to the back and forth, smiling throughout, even when the conversation veered off-topic.

“It’s supposed to be all about flying,” McNeill said of the weekly agenda. A few seats away, Korean War veteran Max Sarazin quickly set the record straight. “But we talk about girls all the time,” he said.

Tanya Hurley is one woman who holds a place of prominence. She’s the waitress who

carries all the plates and mugs and refills to the hungry pilots. Midway through breakfast, Hurley walked past Putnam’s seat with a steaming pot of coffee.

“Can you warm it up?” Putnam asked, stopping her short.

“With coffee?” Hurley joked, leaning playfully toward him.

“This is the training spot for new waitresses,” Kelley said with a laugh before patting the shoulder of 83-year-old John Shea, a former Navy fighter pilot from Eastham. “And this is my boy. I started young.”

Shea said he joined the breakfasts after hearing about them from a friend. Now a regular, he joked that Kelley is old enough to have taught the Wright brothers to fly, and he listened to each and every story that crossed the table.

“I just like flying,” Shea said.

So does everyone else here, including civilian pilots such as Gary Derman, a 77-year-old from Eastham.

“You get up in the air and see the world in perspective, and it helps put you in perspective,” Derman said. “It’s a kind of freedom.”

Derman remains fascinated by the war tales he has heard at these tables. Flying for recreation is one thing; flying and surviving in combat is something else. “The stories have been unbelievable,” Derman said.

Hurley, the waitress, has heard many of them, told and re-told over breakfast orders she now knows by heart.

“They’re creatures of habit,” Hurley said with a smile. “They’re also amazing. They seem to have a really good thing going on.”

Sarazin, the club’s self-styled moderator, is driven to keep the tradition going. Pilots will pass away, the stories will change. But Sarazin is confident that the ranks will be replenished through passion for flying and pride in the military service.

“After I’m gone,” said Sarazin, 84, “I think they’ll always meet. ■



Sarazin posing in front of a Piper in 1954.