

By KENT DINNEBIER

Spectators at the Fly Iowa 2005 air show in Clarinda on Sept. 10-11 will be exposed to an explosive performance as members of the Commemorative Air Force recreate an authentic World War II battle.



“When it is time for the World War II fighters and bomber to fly their display, we will add a touch of Hollywood to support their performance. Members of the CAF Tora Bomb Squad will be providing special effects to add realism to the marvelous aircraft being displayed,” Fly Iowa Air Show Coordinator Steve Mowery explained.

The members of the Tora Bomb Squad will arrive at the air show site and take delivery of a supply of high explosives and will utilize techniques developed in air shows over the past 40 years to simulate the strafing and bombing runs made by aircraft of the World War II era, as well as modern military aircraft.

Similar special effects have been used such motion pictures as “Tora, Tora, Tora”; “Pearl Harbor”; “Final Countdown”; and the television series “Baa Baa Black Sheep.”

“They take the dynamite, explosive detonating cords, non-electric blasting caps of various delays, electric blasting caps and containers of jet fuel and in grand Hollywood style make it look as if the aircraft are actually shooting their guns and dropping bombs. You will feel the concussion, feel the heat, and experience what our brave troops have experienced all to often in the many conflicts over the years. All of this will take place 200 feet away from the crowd,” Mowery explained.

One of the more popular segments of the simulation is the recreation of a dogfight involving three P-51 Mustang Fighters and a Japanese Zero Fighter.



The P-51 Mustang was the excellent long range fighter aircraft which since late 1943 was the first to provide heavy bombers from the United States with the type of escort they needed in order to efficiently destroy Nazi Germany's war production.

A total of 15,586 Mustangs were produced, and almost 8,000 of them were of the most popular D type, which had a teardrop shaped cockpit canopy. This plane had a high altitude speed of 437 miles per hours and was armed with six 0.5-inch machine guns.

Although this was not a heavy armament compared with other fighters, it was definitely enough against enemy fighters, the main target of Mustangs, and for strafing unarmored ground targets. For ground attack missions P-51 Mustangs could also carry two 1,000 pound bombs instead of the external fuel tanks, or six five-inch rockets.

Meanwhile, the Japanese Zero Fighter was a nimble and hard-hitting long-range carrier fighter used by the Japanese Navy in the Pacific Theater in World War II.

Beginning in the 1920's the Japanese Army and Navy used aircraft designations based upon the last two digits of the Japanese national era calendar system, which began with the year 660 BC, the founding year of the Japanese Empire. When the Japanese Navy adopted it in the year 2600 of the Japanese Empire, or 1940, the Mitsubishi Type Zero Carrier-Based Fighter received the

designation Rei (Zero) Sen (Fighter).



The first prototype A6M Type Zero Carrier-Based Fighter flew in April of 1939. On the eve of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese Navy had a total of 521 carrier fighters, of which 328 were A6M2s.

The long-range capabilities of the Japanese Zero gave the Japanese Navy a great strategic advantage, but that range was bought at the expense of lightness of construction and lack of armor protection or self-sealing fuel tanks. When the Japanese were forced onto the defensive, the shortcomings of the Zeros were shown up by a new generation of Allied carrier aircraft.

Although the performance presented during the air show in Clarinda will be depicting aerial warfare, Mowery said spectators should remember the true objective of the demonstration is to provide the audience with a safe and entertaining glimpse of the capabilities of these historic planes.

“These people participate not to celebrate the acts of war, but to remind us that history does repeat itself and we should always be prepared to prevent further wars. Their motto is ‘Lest We Forget,’” Mowery explained.

To assist with the expense of hosting an air show of this magnitude, the local Fly Iowa Committee is seeking various corporate and private sponsors, as well as recruiting volunteers to assist with organizing the festivities and working during the event.

Volunteers wishing to assist with Fly Iowa 2005 may contact Clarinda City Manager Gary Walter at 712-542-2136. People may also make tax-deductible donations by contacting Walter or the Clarinda Foundation located at 213 E. Washington St.