

The



Angle

**2017 Kickoff Issue**

*Established 1991*  
*The official Newsletter of the*  
*Venice Aviation Society, Inc.*  
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## Calendar of Events 2017

- January 18-----7:00 PM VASI Membership Meeting, All Welcome, Venice City Hall, Community Room: [Flying to Cuba-Sarasota 99s & Skydiving Safety For Pilots at the Venice Airport](#)
- January 21-----11:00 AM VASI Cookout Under the Trees, Venice Airport Main Gate
- February 15-----7:00 PM VASI Membership Meeting, All Welcome, Venice City Hall, Community Room: Paul Bertorelli, Editor Aviation Consumer Magazine & John Bakos, J. Bakos Marketing & Sales, ACF-50
- February 16 – 19-----Collings Foundation, War Birds, Venice Airport Suncoast Aircenter.
- February 17 – 19 ----- Arcadia Fly-In
- March 15-----7:00 PM VASI Membership Meeting, All Welcome, Venice City Hall Community Room: Mark Cervasio, Venice Municipal Airport Director & Mystery Guest Presentation
- March 18-----11:30 AM VASI Cookout Under the Trees, Venice Airport Main Gate
- March 18-----11:00 AM – 12:00 PM VASI Spot Landing Contest, Venice Airport\*

\*Details to follow, registration required.

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***President's Letter.***

**Greetings from the Venice Aviation Society, Incorporated.**

Welcome to 2017.

VASI is successful because of you our loyal members who benefit from VASI's efforts on behalf of your airport. Membership runs on a yearly basis so dues are, as they say due. Please see the renewal form at the end of this letter and send in your check. Dues are low and the money supports our efforts in strengthening the airport community and getting our message out. Our voice is heard and has credibility because we stick to the facts, don't engage in personal attacks and seek to maintain the utility of the airport and encourage the airport to be a good neighbor. VASI is non-partisan. We need your renewals send em in. It's important. Thank you.

We can look back on 2016 as another good year for the Venice Municipal Airport in which improvements continued, such as EMAS on Runway 13. VASI started our fall 2016 meeting schedule with our new Airport Director Mark Cervasio talking about what is going on and what is planned at the airport, a lot. We also saw a presentation on Skydiving which began at the Airport in December. Both Mark's presentation and a copy of the Joint Automated Capital Improvements Program are on the VASI website, [veniceaviationsociety.com](http://veniceaviationsociety.com). Mark will be back at our March meeting to bring us up to date on projects and actions at the airport.

That September meeting was followed by an excellent October Venice City Council Election Candidates Forum Moderated by John Ryan President and CEO of the Venice Chamber of Commerce. Thanks to John for taking time to support our forum. Two of the three candidates up for reelection, Council Member Jeanette Gates, and Council Member Bob Daniels were unopposed to return to the Council. Mayor Holic was reelected overwhelmingly. All three recognize the great value of the Venice Airport. They along with the other Members of the Council deserve our appreciation and thanks for our excellent General Aviation Airport.

A special November meeting: we concluded 2016 meetings in November with an extraordinary presentation by a member of the Greatest Generation, World War II Hero and Tuskegee Airman, LTC George Hardy. What an honor for VASI to hear Col Hardy. Thoroughly enjoyable.

Something that has been on the minds of many pilots lately will be the subject of our first meeting in January, Flying to Cuba. On Wednesday, January 18, our first meeting of the year, we are privileged to hear the first hand experiences of two pilots who flew to Cuba. You do not want to miss that presentation. Several

organizations are facilitating GA flights to Cuba and these two Ladybug Pilots, members of the Sarasota Chapter of the 99s, can tell you what you need to know.

Additionally we will show the excellent Skydiving Pilots Safety Power Point (a copy of which is on the VASI Website) and Christian Schoemig the owner of the Skydiving Operation will also be present to answer questions. An excellent agenda for January. We will also have a VASI cookout picnic on Saturday January 21 at the Airport Main Gate. VASI Cookouts are a great way to renew friendships and meet new tenants and operators at the airport.

In February the Collings Foundation Warbirds come to Venice February 16 – 19. EAA Chapter 1285 is supporting this event and as always they need eager hands to make the work light. More to follow on this great event at Venice Airport. Speaking of the Warbirds visit we have to again thank Suncoast Air Center for their great support of this event and the Venice Aviation Community. Our VASI meeting in February will feature Paul Bertorelli Editor of Aviation Consumer Magazine and John Bakos of Bakos Marketing with an excellent presentation of ACF 50. Paul is exceptionally knowledgeable and gives candid straight talk answers about aviation products. Paul also has a share for sale in his J3 Cub. As for ACF 50, we live in a corrosive salt bath near the Gulf of Mexico and John's presentation will be valuable to us all. No cookout in February because of the War Bird visit but yes for March.

Our Wednesday, March 15 meeting will feature Mark Cervasio Venice Airport Director. Mark will have been on board almost a year by then and we can look forward to an in-depth presentation. There is a tremendous amount of work planned at the airport, such as rebuilding the main ramp that will affect all airport tenants and users. Stuff you probably need to know. On March 18 we will have a cookout under the trees and an inaugural Spot Landing Contest. Yep, think you're the most skilled pilot then this is the chance to show your skills as a proficient and safe pilot. Trophy's to the winner and the runner-up. More details including the procedures on the inaugural VASI Spot Landing Contest will be forthcoming in February.

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*Sometime back, January of 2010, Brett Stephens did article about another World War II member of the Greatest Generation, Mike Flanigan. Mike was not a pilot but he was deeply involved in aviation and served in Burma with the forces flying the Burma Hump. We recently saw Mike's obituary in the paper and the article we did on Mike came to mind. It is interesting and well worth running again so here it is.*

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## **From Manhattan to the Burma Road By Way of Venice.**

Pouring over the map of the Burma Road on Michael "Mike" Flanagan's dining room table, I immediately got the sense of adventures to come. Born a first generation American on December 28, 1925, Mike would join the ranks of America's Greatest Generation. Swooped up for military service literally moments after his 18th birthday, Mike reported for basic training in Biloxi, Mississippi in January of 1943. He first started in flight training, but some disappointing scores suggested he was better suited as a Navigator or Bombardier. Turning his attention elsewhere, Mike proceeded to advanced training at Lowery Air Base in Denver. There he would train to be a gun turret mechanic for bomber aircraft, a specialty he would never perform. Instead, he spent most of his time as an aircraft and base electrician.

Following training in Denver, Mike was then sent to Stinson Field in San Antonio where the 598 Engineers of the 382nd Service Group were being formed. Once the Service Group was fully formed, Mike made his first trip to Venice, by way of Jacksonville (for some more training), Miami and Naples. "We bummed an airplane ride from Jacksonville to Miami. Then we bummed another ride in a 6x6 to Naples and spent the night in jail," he recalls. There

was no place to stay, so they were “invited” to sleep in the unoccupied cells. Finally, they bummed another ride in another 6x6 bound for Venice. “When we arrived, nobody was there.” Venice Airbase had been evacuated due to an approaching hurricane. So, they were bussed up to Sarasota High School, where they waited the storm out. Mike recalls nothing remarkable about Venice at that time, “Just a main street. That was about it. Life on the base was fine. There were still a lot of people here. We lived in sort of temporary wooden/tent like structures. We visited Sarasota a lot, but not much to do in Venice. There were a few stores. I just remember the trees and the avenue,” he said.

After about a month or so in Venice, the unit was assembled and it was time for overseas deployment. In January 1944 Mike and the 382nd departed Venice, Florida bound for Venice, California. There, the Group boarded the USS General William Mitchell troop ship head for India by way of Tasmania. Mike recalls the uneasy feeling some had sailing without escort. Enemy subs were known to patrol all over the Pacific, even late in the war, especially the open shipping lanes, and their 19 knot cruising speed meant a month-long journey ahead. Shortly after getting underway Mike discovered that his Unit Commander had volunteered the unit for full time guard duty, a revelation that drew moans and groans. “It turned out to be great. We had full run of the ship and could sleep on the deck,” Mike recalls. “We had Red Cross packages, games and cards. The trip was long, but it wasn’t unpleasant. Particularly since we had the run of the ship, unlike others. Food was good. What does an 18 year old know?” First stop after Tasmania: Bombay. Spending all of an hour there, they boarded the train for Calcutta and their final destination, Chittagong (then east India), the western terminus for the Burma Road. Mike and his group would be stationed there for the remainder of the war, “Until they dropped the big one,” as he puts it.

Here, after some time at the base Mike would enjoy a great adventure. “They were looking for volunteers to drive a 100-truck convoy to Kunming when the unit moved to China. I had flown the hump a number of times so I volunteered for the month-long road trip. It was the first time we were issued weapons because of ‘bandits’ in the area. But we never ran into any. When the unit was re-formed in Kunming we moved on to Luchow.” Eventually the unit ended up in Shanghai. “A beautiful city,” Mike recalls.

Life was relatively simple and active at his duty post in Chittagong. “We wired the base, tacked bare wires to trees, and maintained the grid,” as well as

servicing the Burma Hump Flights, the C-46s and C-47s delivering supplies to the other end of the line. Mike's job was to sort out and repair aircraft electrical problems.

The Burma Road was actually 717 miles long, built by 200,000 Chinese laborers in 1937-1938. When Japan overran Burma in 1942, the only way the Allies could get supplies to China was to "Fly the Hump" across the Himalayan Mountains. "To keep the pilots company when they flew alone we would fly along on the Hump Flights from time to time, it was a day trip. We would offload cargo at the other end and then return." Mike was pretty blasé about those flights but they could be quite dangerous. Pilots relied on DED or deduced reckoning (fly for so long at such a speed, winds are about from that direction, so we should be about here). The 530 mile flight cost nearly 1,000 servicemen and 600 planes.

Back at the base weekend passes to Calcutta were a staple of off-duty hours. "We must have liked it. We stayed overnight many times there." Even though the war ended, service continued on for Mike. For the last 6 months in Shanghai, "we had little to do but load fuel for distribution around China on the C-46s and 47s. We would also repair their aircraft electrical problems when they returned. We also spent lots of time in Shanghai after the war ended. It was a very nice town," he remembers. Mike made friends with a Portuguese family from Macao who had been run out of that city by the communist. The father was working on the base in Shanghai. The family was able to immigrate to the United States shortly after the war. They remained friends until recently when those of Mike's generation passed away. He recalls that the children spoke excellent Chinese, Portuguese and English, and maybe some other languages. With his service to country over, Mike returned to Los Angeles and mustered out at Ft. Dix. He soon went to school on the new G.I. Bill and got his BSEE from the prestigious Rensselaer Polytech. It was there that he met his soon-to-be wife, Arlene, at an Albany State fraternity party on a blind date. After graduation in 1951, Mike went on to work for Bell Aircraft in New York on their air-to-air missile program. A fantastic program, he recalls.

Bell Aircraft would later go out of business and he turned to MIT's Lincoln Labs later MITRE Corp. and at one point contributed to the development of the first desktop computer. Worked great, ahead of its time he recalls. He stayed with MITRE until his retirement in 1983. It was then that Mike would take on sailing and visited Florida for a month every winter. Liking Venice in 1944 and with

fond memories of the Venice Airport he and Arlene made Venice their full-time residence in 1993, 49 years after his first visit. Sadly, Arlene passed away in September of 2009 and is greatly missed. Michael “Mike” Flanagan is father of six, has 12 grandchildren and one great grandchild, enjoys watercolor painting, tennis and gardening, and is a treasured member of America’s (and Venice’s) Greatest Generation.

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## Airport Waste Oil Tanks

Several VASI members have commented lately to us about the waste oil disposal tanks. Things had been looking up but oil filters and rags and trash have started to show up. These tanks provide a valuable resource to the airport community and we are fortunate to have them. However, those who use them need to be conscientious users. One of our local pilots related a first person account from an airport where he was based for a number of years. The airport had both on airport dumpster trash bins and waste oil tanks. When the trash bins were full some thoughtless users would just pile the trash bags around outside the bins. This resulted in trash bags breaking and blowing around on the airport including FOD. The Airport Manager in numerous correspondence and meetings (as well as the posting of signs on and at the bins) told users if the bins were full dispose of the trash at home or wait until the bins were emptied, which was once a week. If the bad practices continued the bins would have to be removed. Regrettably some did not listen and the problem continued and yes, you guessed it. The bins were gone. Same situation with the waste oil containers and oil filters and yes, you guessed it again. Those were ultimately removed also. A word to the wise.

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Send us your stories, photos, ideas, suggestions, comments, gripes. VASI is YOUR voice for Venice Aviation.

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**Be a VASI Volunteer**

We have lots of upcoming events in the next program year (open houses, cookouts, War Birds, and more) that rely on volunteer support. Email us at [info@veniceaviationsociety.com](mailto:info@veniceaviationsociety.com)



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