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The WWII 325th Fighter Group “Checkertail Clan” Announces the Release of Part 2 of British Photojournalist and Filmmaker Neil Pugh’s Acclaimed Documentary “The Legend of the 325th Fighter Group”

Neil Pugh premiered Part 1 of his highly acclaimed Checkertails documentary at the 65th Annual Checkertails Reunion in 2010 in Washington DC to the 9 attending Checkertail veterans and 80 Checkertail family and friends. Part 1, which covers the outfit’s P-40 Warhawk and P-47 Thunderbolt eras and includes many recent live interviews with Checkertail pilots and crew members providing first hand recollections of their wartime service, original photos and film footage as well as state-of-the-art computer-generated aerial combat scenes, has been available for free online viewing and DVD download since late 2010. To date, over half a million people from all over the world have viewed it online while Pugh has received high accolades from film critics and Checkertail fans for the technical brilliance, historical accuracy and gripping footage and interviews with 325th FG veterans of his rendering of the outstanding WWII service of the Checkertails.

Pugh, who worked with a contributing technical staff of many WWII warbird and Checkertail fans across the globe and across the Internet, has stated that not one penny will ever be charged for anyone anywhere to view or to download copies of his Checkertails Documentary. *“The only investment I have made creating this feature is my time. Lots of those who fought for the Legendary Checkertail Clan paid a much higher price and this, I hope, will be an enduring tribute to their memory and those who have passed and those who have yet to take their final flight.”*

Aligned with the mission of the Checkertails Organization to honor, preserve and promote for posterity the history and outstanding WWII service record of the legendary Checkertail Clan, Pugh's 2-part documentary is a jewel beyond price for the organization's quest to foster contact and communication with every living Checkertail and the families of deceased Checkertails to gather the stories of their individual war service and bring them together at the Annual Checkertail Reunions. The 68th Annual Reunion will be held in Boston, MA August 8-11, 2013. All interested parties are invited to attend. Registration information will be posted to the Checkertails website at www.checkertails.org as planning is finalized next year.

Premiere of Part 2 – The P-51 era

At this year's 67th Annual Reunion, held in conjunction with the "Wings Over Camarillo" Air Show in Camarillo, CA, an outstanding annual air show with hundreds of aircraft on display and whose resident Southern California Wing of the Commemorative Air Force honored the legendary Checkertails by a rare display of all three of the Checkertails' wartime mounts, Pugh premiered Part 2 to the 8 attending Checkertail veterans, 3 Checkertail widows and some 90 Checkertail family and friends. As with Part 1, Pugh included many additional live interviews with living Checkertail pilots and crew, never before seen photos and wartime film footage, and was likewise busy with his camera during the entire Reunion. After having selected salient parts of August's Reunion footage to include in his final edit, Pugh has announced that Part 2 is now available for free viewing and DVD download on the Internet.

Complete 2-Part Checkertail Documentary Online Links to View/Download to DVD

Part 1 and Part 2 are both full length film features.

Part 1 can be viewed for free online at <http://vimeo.com/38294301>.

Part 2 can be viewed for free online at <http://vimeo.com/54052096>.

Brief History of the 325th Fighter Group "Checkertail Clan"

The 325th Fighter Group was activated on August 3, 1942 with the 317th, 318th and 319th Fighter Squadrons transported and taking off from the deck of the USS Ranger on January 19, 1943 for Casas Airfield in Casablanca. The Checkertail Clan (named by Axis Sally for its signature yellow and black checkerboard markings on their aircraft tail wings) had more air victories and fewer losses than any other fighter group in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations where they served in North Africa and Italy until the unit's inactivation on October 28, 1945. Twenty-seven of its pilots achieved Ace status, with the unit flying 550 missions with 500 air victories. The Checkertails earned two Distinguished Unit Citations and was the first USAAF fighter unit to fly into Russia, on the first "shuttle mission" of the war, in 1944.

The 325th FG went through a series of changes, activations and deactivations until July 1, 1981 when it was permanently activated as the 325th Fighter Wing, proud inheritors of the Checkertail insignia and history, assigned to Tyndall Air Force Base in Panama City, FL where today it is the only command wing to train F-22 Raptor pilots in the Air Force today - <http://www.tyndall.af.mil>. An excellent and in-depth history of the Checkertails, their pilots, crews, mission logs, photos, etc. can be found at www.325thfg.org compiled by preeminent Checkertail historian Carol Cathcart and her husband Ralph Cathcart.

Checkertails Organization, a 501 (c)(3) Non-Profit Veterans Corporation

The Checkertails Organization is comprised of original veterans, their spouses, children and family, the 325th Fighter Wing, Warbird enthusiasts, and fans of the heroes who served in WWII in the 325th Fighter Group. Acting as a link between the original members, surviving families, friends, enthusiasts, and the original Checkertail Clan, it maintains interactive electronic media to share photos, stories, memorabilia and ideas to preserve and promote the legendary Checkertail war service. Historic photo montages of individual air battles signed by the pilots as well as Checkertail merchandise and collectables will become available on the Checkertail Organization website at www.checkertails.org.

Donations to the Checkertail Organization are tax-deductable and are used to further promote and preserve the service of the Checkertail Clan. To donate or to become an official Checkertail Organization Sponsor, please contact the Board President Kathy Cluff at (302) 764-1002 or K.Cluff@Checkertails.org.

For interviews with Checkertail veterans and Neil Pugh, and detailed information on Checkertail service and memorabilia, please contact Press Officer John Mier.



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