

Woodlawn man reflects on World War II during Veterans Salute

BY DAVID BELCHER

MT. VERNON LIFESTYLES EDITOR

MT. VERNON — For a few moments on Saturday it was 1945 to Lyle Endicott of Woodlawn, and he was a U.S. Navy pilot climbing aboard a FM-2 Wildcat to take on the Japanese in World War II.

The Wildcat was featured at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport during the Salute to Veterans held in conjunction with Balloons Over Mt. Vernon & Fly-In.

"Great," Endicott reflected as he climbed into the cockpit of the plane.

"I loved it. It brought back a lot of memories. That was an exciting time," he said.

Endicott then autographed an inspection panel of the plane, co-owned by David Frasca.

"In the early years of World War II this plane was on the frontline," according to Chris Collins, airport manager. "By the time it [the war] was over it was relegated to number three."

Following Mt. Vernon Township High School graduation in 1940, Endicott enlisted in the Navy in World War II and was assigned to pilot training. "It would make a man out of you if you survived it," he said.

He said flight training was very intense. "You are talking taking a 20-year-old kid and putting him in a very powerful machine," Endicott said. "There are an awful lot of things you had to know. The [aircraft] carriers are 475-feet long, but you only had about 100, 150 feet landing space. You need all that training to make the machine do what you wanted it to do."

Landings and take-offs were smooth during calm seas. However, stormy seas "could make the deck go up and down 20 feet."

"We had some fun. We also had some scary times," Endicott reflected.

He said he was assigned to the carrier USS Steamer Bay. "There were 48 pilots on it and I am the last one surviving," he said.

Endicott, who will turn 94 in December, said he had to be wary not only of the Japanese but of American forces. He said the Japanese military were launching kamikaze attacks at Ameri-



Sentinel Photo/DAVID BELCHER

IN THE COCKPIT — Lyle Endicott sits in the cockpit of an FM-2 Wildcat on Saturday during the Balloons Over Mt. Vernon & Fly-In at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport. The Woodlawn man flew the Wildcat during World War II.



Sentinel Photo/DAVID BELCHER

BACK IN TIME — World War II FM-2 Wildcat pilot Lyle Endicott took a step back in time Saturday when he went into the cockpit of the airplane during Salute to Veterans at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

can carriers and "anything that flew under 4,000 feet got shot at." He said he saw several kamikaze crashes. "The kamikaze pilots had no armaments. They had no way to land," he said.

"I never soloed," he said. "I always flew with the good Lord's help."

After the war he began his business, Endicott Interiors, in Woodlawn and served as Woodlawn mayor. He and his wife, Ann Endicott, celebrated their 70th anniversary on July 7.

Frasca said the FM-2 was

one of the planes featured in the movie "Midway" starring Henry Fonda and Charlton Heston.

The FM-2 was not the only World War II airplane at the airport Saturday.

A P-51 Mustang "Red Nose" was available and people could take rides in it and in a WACO, an open cockpit U.S. Navy plane.

"This is really significant because it honors the Greatest Generation, the World War II generation," Collins said.

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