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News Release

Leroy D. Baca, Sheriff

Antelope Valley Press

By: Rich Breault, Front page 3/2/11

QUARTZ HILL - "I think they enjoyed my birthday more than I did," said Len Hobbs, who celebrated his 90th birthday Thursday evening with family and friends.

Hobbs had a great time, but some of his fellow Volunteers on Patrol members had an even better time feting the Valley's oldest VOP member with dinner, a colorful birthday cake and party favors, including a toy Boeing 747.

Flanked at the table by his granddaughter, Felicia Ross, and his great-grandson, Andrew Dehne, Hobbs was in good spirits. "I'm as happy as a newborn baby," Hobbs said. "No teeth, no hair "

"He's still full of life," Ross said. "I kind of wanted to get him some belly dancers."

Hobbs has probably seen his share of belly dancers during his world travels. Serving in the Royal Air Force in World War II's Pacific theater, Hobbs flew B-24 Liberators; he and his late wife, Clara, lived aboard their 44-foot yacht in Cyprus, touring the Turkish coast and Greek islands; they lived in the Middle East when he flew as an airline pilot for Royal Jordanian Airlines and IranAir.

After retiring from RAF as a squadron leader in 1956, Hobbs became an engineering test pilot with Avro in Canada, and as a co-pilot flew the only seven-engine jet bomber in the world as part of the Avro Arrow CF105 program.

"That one was a unique aircraft," Hobbs said. "How many people can say they flew with seven engines? Three on each wing and one on the tail.

"That tail engine was more powerful than all the rest of them put together."

The Avro Arrow was Canada's delta-winged fighter jet to be fitted with two new, large Iroquois engines once testing was completed. The seven-engine jet was actually a B-47 six-engine jet with an Iroquois engine fitted on the underside of the tail section.

The Iroquois was a powerful jet engine and a bit temperamental.

In the story, "The Day the Iroquois Flew," by June Callwood, originally published Feb. 1, 1958, it was revealed that during a test fire in a test cell, the engine partially blew - sending shrapnel flying into the walls of the room.

Asked how he felt testing the engine in flight, Hobbs said, "What's there to worry about? The worst thing that can happen is an explosion that blows off the tail. Right?"

"Well, we've got ejection seats and we'll have plenty of altitude. Just a bit chilly on the way down, that's all."

For Additional Information Contact:

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