



# In Search of El dorado

A daily journal of my travels and adventures in my.....Search for Eldorado

Hello to Family & Friends

Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup> 2021 Day 21



It was another weird night. The boat ramp is only a hundred yards from the road which has a 65 MPH speed limit. Granted, the traffic slows down in the wee hours, but the road noise is extensive as they approach, pass, and fade into the distance. Of course, this is the only boat ramp that allows fishing all night long. It's Friday night. Naturally there were some, not many, who were staying late or arriving early. I awoke at 4 a.m., tried to return to sleep, but ended up driving into Port Isabel and parking at the H.E.B. until eight.

After a couple wrong turns while listening to the wrong GPS, I finally found myself driving down an old runway to visit the RGV Wing of the Commemorative Air Force.



Over 300,000 planes were built for, and flown in, WWII. After the war those planes became scrap. Two years ago in Tucson, Arizona I took some photos of the AMARG Airplane Boneyard, where many of these planes made their final landing. A group of flyers from Texas started to buy and refurbish planes for their own use, and started a new revolution, a revival revolution. Today there are hundreds of Wings throughout the country of the Commemorative Air Force. Most of us are familiar with the EAA up in Oshkosh (did you know it used to be in Hales Corners?).



Wrong turns. Tom Tom took me to the Port Isabel Detention Center. Signage was poor and I passed it by and had to turn around. Then as you can see above, I had to drive down an old runway to a chain link fence, call the number, and have someone drive over in a golf cart, open the gate, and lead me to the hanger. On a normal Saturday they will get planes in the air, weather permitting. Today the weather was not permitting. In fact several of the photos in here have terrible lighting. Sorry for that.



**Boeing PT-17 "Kadet" Stearman**





All of those with yellow wings are 'trainers'. Many of these Stearman Bi-planes are still in use as crop dusters.  
Left is the cockpit view.



**1941  
CESSNA T-50 BOBCAT**

AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN AS  
**“THE BAMBOO BOMBER”**

- ✓ 2 PILOTS - 3 PASSENGERS
- ✓ GROSS WEIGHT - 5,700 LBS
- ✓ WING SPAN - 41' 11"
- ✓ LENGTH - 32' 9"
- ✓ HEIGHT - 9' 4"
- ✓ ENGINES - (2) 245 HP JACOB RADIALS
- ✓ AIRSPEED - 157 MPH
- ✓ FUEL - 120 GALLON CAPACITY/25 GPH

FUSELAGE IS MADE OF STEEL AND FABRIC  
WINGS ARE MADE OF WOOD AND FABRIC

“... A DATE THAT WILL LIVE IN INFAMY”

December 7, 1941

I guess Gpops is probably the only one out there who could actually remember reading a local newspaper with a similar headline.



AMERICA STRIKES BACK

April 18, 1942

AMERICA STRIKES BACK  
DOOLITTLE'S B-25s BOMB  
JAPAN

Known as **The Doolittle Raid**, it was an air raid on 18 April 1942 by the U.S. on Tokyo. It was the first air operation to strike the Japanese archipelago. It demonstrated that the Japanese mainland was vulnerable to American air attack, served as retaliation for the attack on Pearl Harbor, and provided an important boost to American morale. The raid was planned, led by, and named after Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle, later a Lieutenant General in the U.S. Army Air Forces. He was later promoted to the 4-star rank of General in the United States Air Force Reserve.

Sixteen B-25B Mitchell medium bombers were launched without fighter escort from the U.S. Navy's aircraft carrier USS *Hornet* deep in the Western Pacific Ocean, each with a crew of five men. The plan called for them to bomb military targets in Japan and to continue westward to land in China. The bombing raid killed about 50 people, including civilians, and injured 400. Fifteen aircraft reached China but all crashed, while the 16th landed at Vladivostok in the Soviet Union. Of the 80 crew members, 77 survived the mission. Eight airmen were captured by Imperial Japanese Army troops in Eastern China; three were later executed.

The raid caused negligible material damage to Japan, but it had major psychological effects. In the United States, it raised morale. In Japan, it raised doubt about the ability of military leaders to defend the home islands, but the bombing and strafing of civilians also steeled Japanese resolve to gain retribution, and this was exploited for propaganda purposes. It also pushed forward Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto's plans to attack Midway Island in the Central Pacific, an attack that turned into a decisive defeat of the Imperial Japanese Navy by the U.S. Navy in the Battle of Midway.

Doolittle initially believed that the loss of all his aircraft would lead to his court-martial, but he instead received the Medal of Honor and was promoted two ranks to brigadier general.

If interested, the movie *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo* is about The Doolittle Raid. And of course *Midway*, is about the battle of Midway. Thanks in part to Wikipedia



# FLYING TIGERS

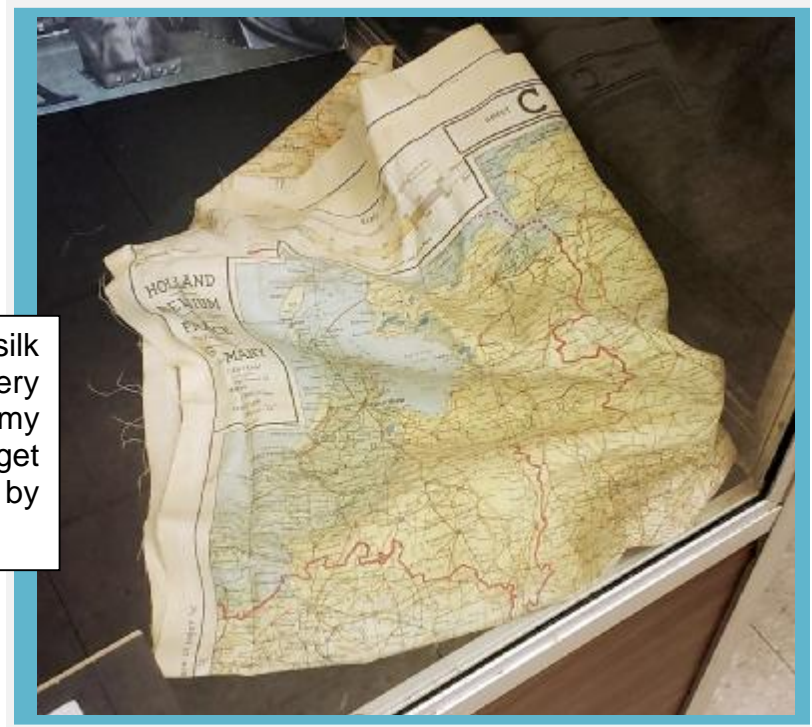
## American Volunteer Group

The Flying Tigers were prior to WWII. Comprised of volunteer U.S. flyers loaned to China in an attempt to halt the Japanese takeover.

Below is the emblem on the flight suit. I found almost the identical emblem in my search, but never one with a black tiger. I'm not sure what that signifies.



All American flyers were provided with a silk map of central Europe. It could be folded very small and if they were shot down behind enemy lines, hopefully it would come in handy to get them someplace safe. This is the real thing by the way.



# THE HOME FRONT

## America Goes to War



# The WASP'S

## Women Airforce Service Pilots





# “Fifinella” WASP Mascot & Patch

Designed by Walt Disney.

“Fifinella”, a female gremlin, was adopted by the WW II Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) as their emblem. “Discovered” early in WW II, gremlins were invisible beings endowed with potent magical powers. According to their victims, these mischievous imaginary (?), elf-like creatures were responsible for all kinds of mechanical failures and other problems. At first, gremlins were suspected of being enemy agents, but investigators found that they played terrible pranks anywhere, anytime, on anyone -- regardless of nationality. ( Although gremlins predated Murphy’s famous law, “that whatever can go wrong will”, they were obviously motivated by the same principles.)



WASPs UNIT PATCH

Is it a coincidence? The other day I finished reading a fictional story, that the author bases on factual events, in which one of the characters is the RAF pilot who first sketches the ‘Gremlins’ and then sells the idea to Walt Disney. In reality, the pilot is Roald Dahl, he did write a book titled *Gremlins*, and he did sell it to Disney. Dahl went on to write *Matilda*, *The BFG*, *James and the Giant Peach*, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* and a few others as well as the screenplays for *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *You Only Live Twice*.





## Then

The sturdy lighthouse at Point Isabel has survived war, coastal storms, and abandonment. Built in 1852 on the grounds of a Mexican-American War military depot, the lighthouse was a strategic prize for Confederate and Federal troops during the American Civil War. During its operation in the last half of the 19th century, its light projected 15 miles out to sea to help safely guide ships through the Brazos Santiago Pass and into the Laguna Madre.

## Now

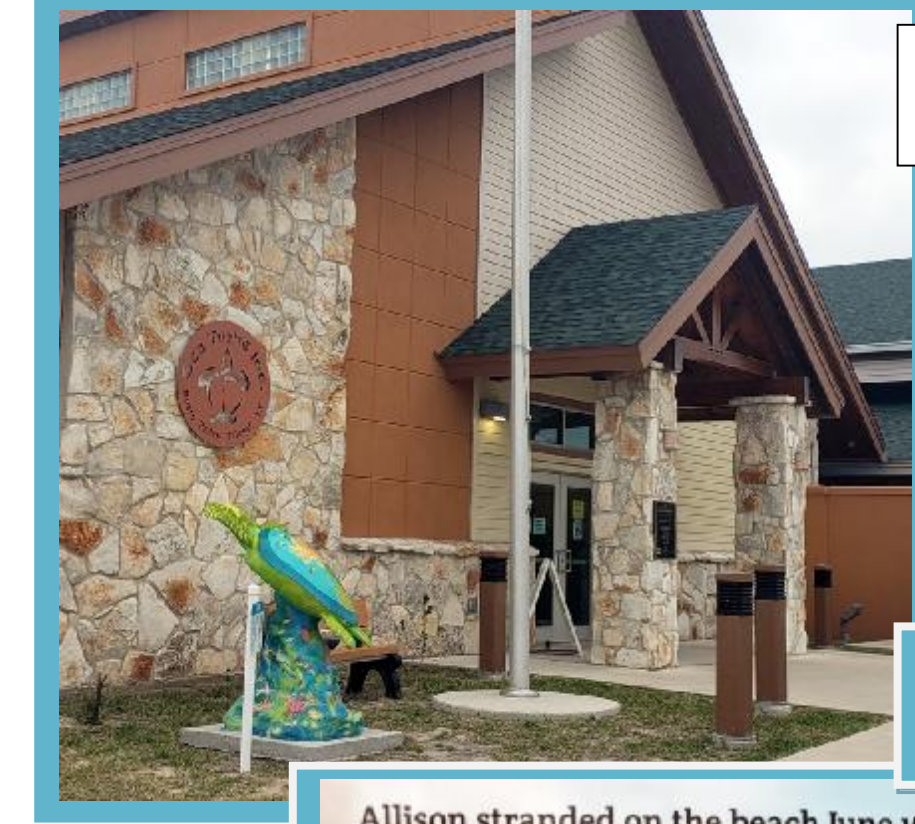
Since 1952 the lighthouse has been the centerpiece of a State Park and in 2000 Texas Parks and Wildlife restored it to its 1880 appearance. Today the lighthouse stands as a well-known landmark, but time is unkind on the coast, so in 2016 much needed maintenance began to repair the effects of coastal weather and salt air.

Why can't these places just update their website that they are temporarily closed? Why is that so difficult? The lighthouse is in the same location as three other museums. The museums, on their websites, tell you they are closed. The lighthouse says they are open 12-4. No they are not.



With nothing else open in Port Isabel, I might as well head across to South Padre Island. Above is the Queen Isabella Causeway






Sea Turtles Inc. Basically a hospital and rescue facility for, you guessed it, Sea Turtles.

## Allison the Atlantic Green

Allison stranded on the beach June 16, 2005 missing three out of four flippers due to a predator attack. She was given a low chance for survival but miraculously recovered from her injuries. Sea turtles missing three flippers are typically euthanized but the staff at Sea Turtle, Inc. had a plan.



When sea turtles swim, their front flippers are used for power and their back flippers are used for steering. With just a right front flipper, Allison could only swim in left circles and had to remain in shallow water. In 2009, an intern developed the first successful model of Allison's prosthesis based on the theory of "drag vs. rotation."

## Did you know?

Prosthetic limbs have been referenced in stories and poems in ancient literature. While prosthetic devices for humans have been around for many years, Allison wears the first successful prosthesis on a sea turtle.



The prosthesis has undergone many changes since the original model, each improving from the last. Allison's prosthetic device is designed to clip onto her shell with the ability to adjust as she grows. The long rudder-like fin provides resistance against the water and allows her to swim, dive, and surface for air.



## Seagrasses

Seagrasses are flowering plants adapted to live fully submerged in saline environments.



Seagrass meadows provide important developmental habitat for numerous species of juvenile fish and invertebrates. Did you know that 60% of fish in the Gulf of Mexico are born right here in the Laguna Madre?

## *The Laguna Madre*

Extending more than 250 miles along the coast from Corpus Christi Bay south to Rio Soto la Marina in Tamaulipas, Mexico lies the longest barrier island system in the world. Nestled between the mainland and the island, the Laguna Madre is the largest hypersaline water body in North America.



Why so salty? With a high evaporation rate, little rainfall, and small movement of water in or out of the lagoon, this body of water has a higher salt concentration than the ocean!

The “Mother Lagoon” is home to a rich variety of wildlife including migratory shorebirds and waterfowl, sea turtles and wildcats like the ocelot, while the waters provide nursery grounds for various species of fish, shrimp, and shellfish.



Blue Herons in the Laguna Madre

Back in December, off the coast of Massachusetts, the water temperature took a steep and fast nosedive. Sea Turtles in the area were caught by surprise and suffered what is called ‘cold stunned’. Over 900 stunned turtles were recovered off the coast. Most were distributed to rescue centers along the east coast, but the last 100 went to centers along the Gulf coast, including twenty here at Sea Turtle Inc. The turtles are recovering and will probably soon be released back into the wild.







Kemp's Ridley / Hawksbill / Loggerhead / Atlantic Green / Leatherback

These are the turtles that call the Gulf home. Note the size chart to the left.

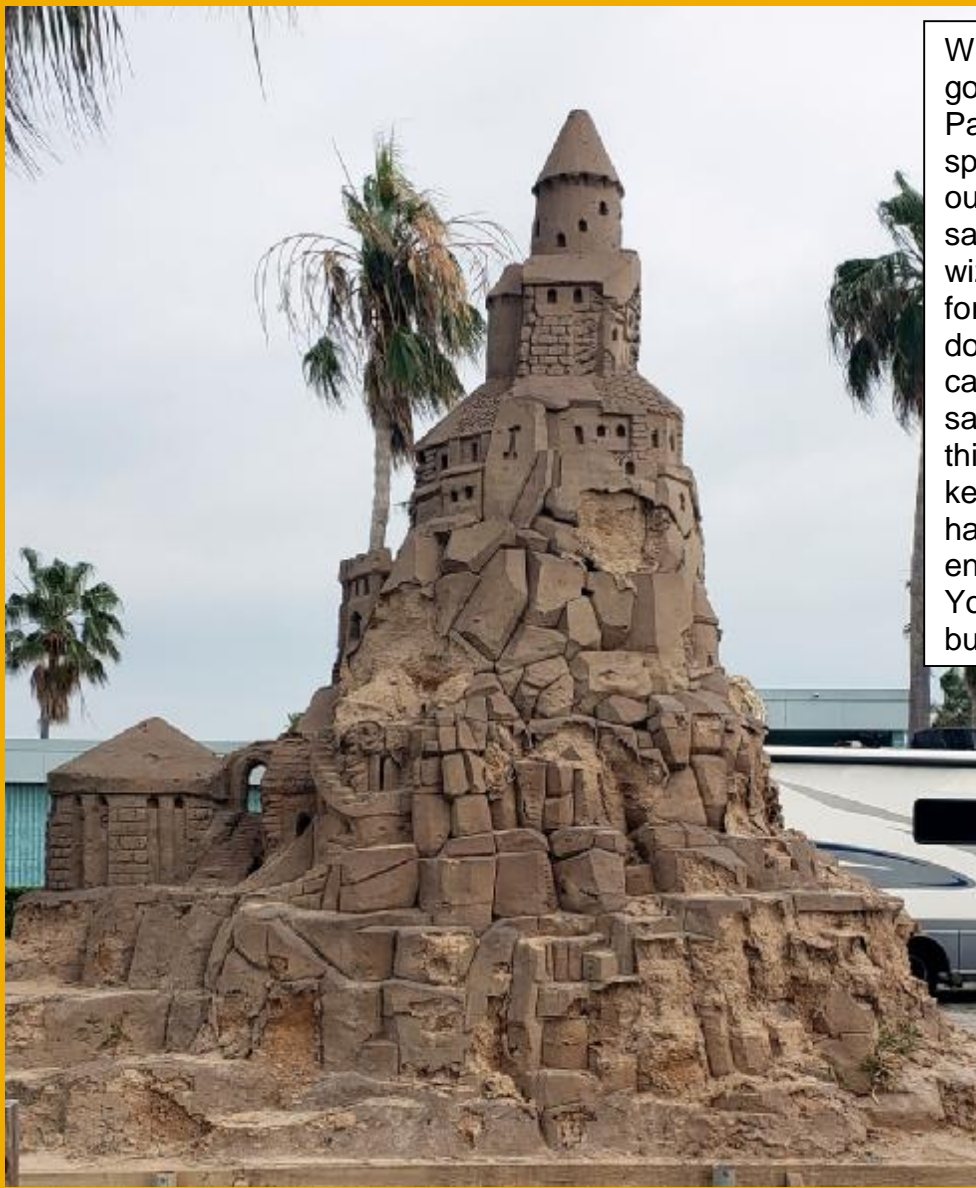
Below – A model of the largest Leatherback ever found, he weighed in at over 2000 pounds.



Interesting place that does good work. The beach, north of Beach Access Road #5 becomes private, but if you pay \$12 you can park there over night. The VC told me there is not always someone there collecting money. I decided to drive by and take a looksee. The sand on the access road appears somewhat soft, and most cars were parked on the street. I bypassed it for now, drove until the road ended (lots of high dunes), and turned around to head back to town.



Wow, quite the sandcastle. It is a good 10-12 feet tall. SPI (South Padre Island. I could have let you spend as much time figuring that one out as I did), is the capital of sandcastle construction. The ultimate wizard of this castle is, are you ready for this one? – Sandy Feet. Yea, I don't think it's real either, but she came here in the 80's to build sandcastles and has never left. I think they must spray something to keep it intact because these both have been here for some time, long enough for foot tall weeds to grow. You can even pay for sandcastle building lessons.







## MEET ROSIE BY CECILIA GARZA

There are twenty-three of these artful sea turtles scattered about town, and I have a map, so you get to meet every one of them.

Seriously, do you think I would have the patience for that? Do you really think I am mean enough to subject you to twenty-three identical sea turtle forms painted differently, their names and what the colors stand for? How long have you known me?

The sand castles are in front of the Chamber of Commerce, which is closed until Monday, but has a decent sized, well hidden parking lot behind the building. I may come back here for the night and sneak in.

But I decided to do some laundry and housekeeping and drove over to the Bluewater Laundromat. A very small parking lot, too small for the RV. I wanted to park with the slide on an upslope so I could open it up. Across the street was angled the wrong way. At Pizza Hut I would take up four spaces, but right next door is an empty lot with a fence across the front, the fence has an opening in it for vehicles, and it looks like it belongs to some kind of commercial office that is closed on the weekends. For the first few hours I could just say 'sorry, just doing my laundry and no place else to park'. But it's now 11:00 p.m. and there has been no movement next door.

The reason for this is that SPI is a stickler for overnight parking. I assume that the many campgrounds make sure the authorities discourage free overnights.

No traffic and no fishermen. That's good because I'm tired after last night's unrest.

Until next time.....