

COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

Plane Talk



The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

April 2003 • Vol. 19, No. 4

Re-dedication and ceremony for Forbes exhibit

On February 21 a ceremony for the re-dedication of the **Major Daniel Forbes, Jr.** exhibit was held in the Jean Wanner Education Conference Center. The re-dedication was held because new artifacts and a memorial plaque were recently added to the case. The new artifacts include a ring gemstone and wristwatch once worn by Major Forbes and a wedding photo of him and his wife, the former **Hazel Moog**. The memorial plaque is dedicated to the test crew of a Northrop YB-49 Flying Wing, who died when it crashed on June 5, 1948. Major Forbes was pilot-in-command of that test flight.

The gemstone story was the lead article for our December 2002 issue of *Plane Talk*. A trio of men researching the YB-49 crash site in October 1997 found a star sapphire in a shovelful of earth they were about to sift through. One of them, **Chris Sanders**, began researching the original owner of the gemstone. His efforts lead him to the 190th Air Refueling Wing (ARW), Kansas Air National Guard and **Senior Master Sergeant Keith Fulton** and **Colonel Michael O'Toole**. Sergeant Fulton told Sanders that Major Forbes' widow, **Hazel Bartron**, lived in Topeka and that he and Colonel O'Toole would act as liaison between Sanders and Mrs. Bartron.

See Forbes, con't. on page 2



Mrs. Hazel Bartron and Sgt. Fulton at the re-dedication ceremony

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Forbes re-dedication photographs provided by Kansas Adjutant General's Department

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Museum Hours

Monday - Saturday

9 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

Last Admission 3:30 P.M.

Sunday 10 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

Last Admission 3:30 P.M.

Plane Talk, the official newsletter of Combat Air Museum of Topeka, Kansas, is published monthly.

Your questions and comments are welcomed.

Any information for **Plane Talk** should be submitted to CAM office.



*Mrs. Bartron, widow of
Major Daniel Forbes*

Forbes, con't. from page 1

Colonel O'Toole and Sergeant Fulton visited Mrs. Bartron and asked her about the star sapphire, showing her a photograph of the recovered gemstone. Mrs. Bartron left the room for a moment, and when she returned, she had a lady's ring with a matching star sapphire. She and Major Forbes wore rings with matching star sapphires prior to their marriage.

The gemstone was formally presented to Mrs. Bartron in a ceremony during the **Wings Over Topeka Family Freedom Day** held at Forbes Field, September 28, 2002. The ceremony also recognized the entire crew who died in the 1948 crash of the YB-49. Prior to the ceremony, Mrs. Bartron said she planned to give the star sapphire to a museum and mentioned Combat Air Museum. Not long after the Wings Over Topeka event, Sergeant Fulton contacted CAM curator **Danny San Romani** and said he had the gemstone to bring to the Museum. When he brought it to CAM, he talked with Danny about doing a memorial plaque for the entire YB-49 crew that could go into the Forbes exhibit with the gemstone. Sergeant Fulton also talked about the idea of doing a small ceremony after the new items were put in the case.

Sergeant Fulton later came to CAM with a piece of rough-cut walnut lumber. CAM volunteer **Joe Higgins** took the lumber and cut and planed a section from it. He then routed, sanded and finished a large plaque from the section. While Joe did his work, Sergeant Fulton and Danny worked together on the inscription to go on the plaque. Sergeant Fulton also brought in **Staff Sergeant Cliff Mitchell** of the Kansas Army National Guard to look at the plaque. As part of his work with the Army Guard, Sergeant Mitchell inscribes many ceremonial plaques, using a computerized laser engraver.

Once Joe finished the plaque, it went back to Sergeant Fulton and then to Sergeant Mitchell. After the first of the year, Sergeant Fulton brought the finished plaque back to CAM. It included a color photograph of a YB-49 at its top. The finished product is beautiful. When he delivered the plaque, Sergeant Fulton said he might have another artifact that was recovered from the crash site in 1948, Major Forbes' wristwatch, and he had the Forbes' wedding photo.

The next step was the ceremony. Sergeant Fulton gave Danny a suggested list of invitees and said he would also work on press releases once we set a date. Office Manager **Tina Lannan** wrote and addressed the invitations. Volunteers **Tom Witty** and **Gene Howerter** helped Danny rearrange and clean up the Forbes' case. Sergeant Fulton acquired the wristwatch from Mrs. Bartron, and this was added to the case. He also forwarded Danny an e-mail dated February 18, 2003 that told about how the watch was found. The e-mail was sent to Sergeant Fulton from retired **Air Force General Robert Cardenas**, a third YB-49 test pilot and a good friend of Daniel Forbes. General Cardenas' words tell the story best.

But to answer your question, to the best of my recollection after 54 years I cannot give you the exact date that Danny's mother and father visited the crash site. The site had been combed thoroughly [sic] by the accident investigation team. I advised against visiting the site because:

1. *There was nothing to see except blackened sand and sage bush and some small pieces*
2. *The location of that lonely site might create visions of a terrible death finale.*

She was adamant so we drove to the site in a jeep and as we were walking toward the west with the sun at our back there was a glint in the sand from the sun's rays. She went over and picked up Danny's watch partially buried in the sand. She cried and I felt a cold shiver at the sight because I had no explanation of how it could possibly be there. As we drove away she had a faint smile below her tears. I remember that vividly but I cannot tell you the date other than it was approximately one or two months after the crash since I had to be recalled from school to continue the test with the remaining B-49. That would make it July/Aug time frame of 1948.

Warm Regards

Bob

With the case prepared, we set the date for February 21. Sergeant Fulton sent out press releases, as did CAM board member **Stu Entz**. Vice Board Chairman Gene Howerter was the Master of Ceremonies, and Mrs. Hazel Bartron and Sergeant Fulton were our special guests. Mrs. Bartron's son from a subsequent marriage and his family were present as were other friends of the family. Members of the 190th ARW and the Kansas Adjutant General's Office attended as well as a number of CAM volunteers. We had press coverage from all three of Topeka's television stations and the *Topeka Capital Journal*.

Sergeant Fulton took part in the ceremony with Gene and told the story of how the watch was found. He and Mrs. Bartron then removed a cloth cover from the front of the Forbes case, unveiling the exhibit with the new artifacts and plaque. It was a very nice ceremony and Mrs. Bartron was quite pleased with how we incorporated the new items in the case. After the ceremony, she visited with the media and others in attendance. She was wearing her ring with the matching star sapphire and showed it to the media. As we were taking down the chairs from the ceremony, **Mr. Jerry Sand**, one of Major Forbes's relatives, came in to see the case. He and his family had not been able to attend the ceremony, but he wanted to come in and see what we had added to the exhibit. →

The plaque installed in the case lists the following crew members of YB-49 Serial Number 42-102368:

Major Daniel H. Forbes, Jr.	Test Pilot
Captain Glenn W. Edwards	Test Pilot/Aeronautical Engineer
Lieutenant Edward L. Swindell	Flight Engineer
Mr. Clare C. Leser	Civilian Aeronautical Engineer
Mr. Charles H. LaFountain	Civilian Aeronautical Engineer

The trio who found the gemstone 48 years after the loss of the YB-49 is also listed:

Tony Moore	Public Relations, NASA Dryden Facility, Edwards AFB, CA
Chris Sanders	Director, Walt Disney Feature Animation Burbank, CA
David Perry	Flight Engineer, DreamWorks Burbank, CA

Visitors

During February
the Museum had
426 visitors
from 23 states
and
Canada
France
Germany
Scotland



April Calendar of Events

Monday, April 14
Membership Luncheon
11:30 a.m.

This is a potluck luncheon.
Students from
Seaman High School
will present
History Day
contest projects.

Saturday, April 26
Celebrity Pancake Feed
Hangar 602
7:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.



The continuation of Tad and Dave's presentation on "The Battle of the Bulge"

This is the second half of an article (begun in Plane Talk March issue) about the Battle of the Bulge presentation by Tad Pritchett and Dave Murray at the February Membership Luncheon.

A town considered key to the German advance was St. Vith, Belgium with its junction of six paved roads. Here, elements of the US 7th Armored Division put up stiff resistance to the German 6th Panzer Army for three days beginning December 17, seriously throwing off the German timetable and causing the main focus of the counteroffensive to move south toward Bastogne, Belgium.

Another incident occurred on December 17th that had an electrifying effect on defending US forces. German SS troopers under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Jochen Peiper captured some 120 US troops during the day's fighting. The prisoners were rounded up and taken into a field near Malmedy, Belgium, where they were gunned down. Eighty-one US troops were killed, but 43 others survived to escape to US lines and tell the story. News of the killing spread rapidly through frontline US units, giving them a resolve to defeat the Germans.

As the battle moved toward Bastogne, the strategic importance of this Belgian town became clear to the opposing sides. Dave and Tad put up an overhead projection showing a map of the area around Bastogne. It showed no less than seven primary roads meeting in the town, with five more secondary roads also meeting in or passing nearby it. US General Dwight Eisenhower and his commanders alerted the 10th Armored, and the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions for movement to the area on December 17. Between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m. on December 18th, some 11,000 men of the 101st Airborne "Screaming Eagles" were loaded into trucks for a hard, eight-hour drive to Bastogne from a rest camp in France. Not long after their arrival, the Germans surrounded the 101st and elements of other divisions, beginning an eight-day siege of the town.

General Eisenhower sought out forces to come to the aid of Bastogne. French General Charles De Gaulle and his French forces remained at the Alsatian city of Strasbourg to the south. British General Bernard Montgomery started moving down from the north with US General Omar Bradley's Twelfth Army. But the one who made the difference was US General George Patton. Patton's Third Army was fighting eastward some 100 miles south of the Bastogne area. Patton turned his Army left 90 degrees and covered the 100 miles to get into the fighting in less than 72 hours. After five days of hard fighting, elements of

Patton's 4th Armored Division finally broke through the perimeter of Bastogne on December 26.

While the Third Army moved north, the Germans approached the defenders of Bastogne on December 22 under a flag of truce and demanded their surrender. General Anthony McAuliffe of the 101st Airborne gave his famous, matter of fact reply, "Nuts." Another idiom that came from the 101st during the siege of Bastogne was, "They [the Germans] got us surrounded, the poor bastards."

The fighting at St. Vith and Bastogne and other key road and river crossings did in the German timetable. They were running out of fuel and supplies, and the foul weather finally broke on December 23rd, allowing the allied air forces to fly. Over 240 C-47 cargo planes dropped supplies to the defenders of Bastogne that day. Fighters, fighter-bombers, and bombers began flying against German forces and flew bombing and strafing missions against their supply convoys and routes.

By December 27 the Germans had reached their high-water marks in the Battle of the Bulge, their furthest advance to the west was near Celles and Dinant, Belgium. This was a 55-mile penetration into Belgium but still some 70 miles distant from Antwerp. To the north the high-water mark was near Grandmenil, Belgium, some 85 miles from Antwerp. The Bulge refers to the German penetration into Belgium and Luxembourg. It looked something like a tall, somewhat melted triangle lying on one side.

Although the high-water marks were reached by December 27, the battle was far from over. The Germans began a costly and intensely fought withdrawal from Belgium and Luxembourg back to the Ardennes. On January 1, Hitler ordered a massive air strike called the "Great Blow" against numerous allied air bases. Some 206 allied planes were destroyed on the ground, but the cost to the German Luftwaffe was crippling. Some 300 planes and 253 trained fighter pilots were lost. It took from January 17–28 for German forces to finally withdraw from the Ardennes.

Hitler gambled with his Ardennes counteroffensive and lost. He did hurt the Allies, but the battle broke the back of the German army in the process. Tad and Dave pointed out that the Russians launched an attack on the Eastern front on January 12, and Hitler could not respond because forces had been moved to the Ardennes. In his last ditch effort to win the war, Hitler pitted some 600,000 German troops against 550,000 US and 55,000 British troops. The US suffered some 81,000 casualties, with over 19,000 killed in action. The British suffered some 1,400 deaths. The Germans lost 80,000–100,000 killed in action. The

Ardennes battle cost Germany the majority of its remaining troops and air power, leaving relatively few forces to defend the homeland. Tad and Dave felt that by stripping the eastern front of troops, Hitler guaranteed the eventual enslavement of Eastern Europe by the Soviet Union.

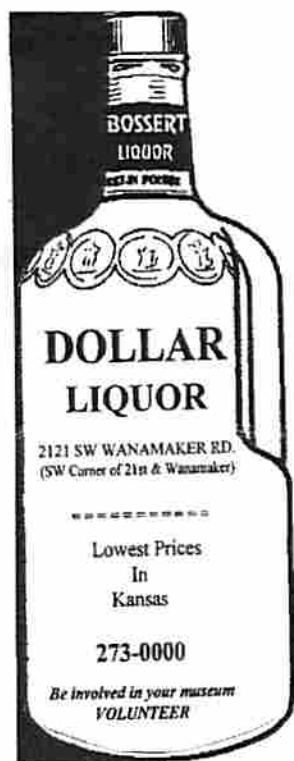
In their closing, Tad and Dave showed photographs of modern day monuments to the US 101st Airborne and a photograph of General George Patton's grave in the American Cemetery at Hamm, Luxembourg. Patton died from the complications of a broken neck suffered in an automobile accident in December 1945. He was laid to rest with some 6,000 men of his Third Army.

This presentation was the last in a series of talks by Dave

and Tad that began in January 2001. They have spoken about Tad's experiences in Vietnam and major European land battles in Europe during World Wars I and II. Our audiences have thoroughly enjoyed these presentations, and some of our members told Dave and Tad that they now need to travel in the Pacific to study and report on battles and battlefields of that theater during World War II. →

Other References: The Battle of the Bulge by William K. Gollrick, Ogden Tanner, and the Editors of Time-Life Books, Alexandria, VA 1979.

Patton: Ordeal and Triumph by Ladislav Farago, Ivan Oholensky, New York, NY, 1964.



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New exhibit of Vietnam-era uniform now open to the public

We placed our newest exhibit on public view the first week of March after **Gene Howerter** put on the finishing touches. This exhibit is a mannequin dressed in the Vietnam-era uniform of a First Air Cavalry Division trooper. We acquired the mannequin last October from **Gene Savoy** of Derby, Kansas. Gene Howerter donated the cost of having a clear Plexiglas case made to go over the mannequin. **Danny San Romani**, **Tom Witty**, and Gene determined the size needed for a mobile base to support the mannequin, then **Martin Moyer** and **Amos Page** built it.

One minor problem we had with the mannequin was its posture. It was already fixed with a rod to an oval metal base, but it tended to lean back unnaturally. When some of us tried to imitate the stance, it was rather uncomfortable. We cured the lean by raising the rear of the metal base about three inches off the floor. The mannequin looked a lot better, but then we did not like the appearance of the raised metal base. Gene Howerter studied the problem a bit and decided he could camouflage the raised plate with some plastic vegetation. He and Tom discussed the vegetation idea and Tom mentioned that maybe some type of basic cover could be found at a nursery. It could, and Gene came in one day with a bunch of peat moss. He used this as a base cover and then put in various sizes and shapes of plastic vegetation. The end result worked out quite well and looks very realistic. The appearance of a raised platform is not noticeable.

The 1st Air Cav mannequin is on exhibit in the small exhibit room along with our Vietnam-era pilot acquired earlier from Gene Savoy. →



Volunteers needed for the Annual Pancake Feed

Our first fund raiser of the year is soon approaching. The **Annual Celebrity Pancake Feed** will be Saturday, April 26th from 7:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. **Bob Carmichael** of **Perkins Restaurant and Bakery** will be providing the pancakes and grill.

We need a good showing of volunteers to work ticket sales, sausage, juice, milk and coffee servers, and table cleaning during the event, as well as take-down and clean-up crews after the feed is over. Sign-up lists for work schedules are posted in the Gift Shop and Hangar 604 workshop.

Advance ticket sales are available. The cost per ticket is \$4.00. The ticket includes all you can eat pancakes, the first serving of sausage and drink, and admission to the Museum. ➔

In Memoriam

Mildred V. Lundry
1923-2003
January 24, 2003
Wakarusa, Kansas
#619

Renewing Supporters

Bill Clawson
Phil Hotzel
Martin Moyer
Amos Page
Jack & Carlene Vaughn
➔ ➔ ➔

2003 Events Calendar

*Additions

April

12-13 – Girl Scouts Conference
26 – Celebrity Pancake Feed

May

10 & 11 – Wings Over Topeka
30 - 31 – USO Shows

June

7 – Swing Dance
16-19 – Aviation Education Class
*26-30 – Fireworks Stand

July

*1-4 – Fireworks Stand
7-10 – Aviation Education Class

August

4-7 – Aviation Education Class

September

20 – Swing Dance

October

25 – Model Contest

➔ ➔ ➔



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