

# COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

## → → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

February 2003 • Vol. 19, No. 2



*Looking along the balcony's north wall*

## Preparations for opening the new gallery

Last August, volunteers began a project to redo the art gallery in Hangar 602, located on the balcony area above the Jean Wanner Educational Conference Center. Some 18 works of aviation art were on the north and west walls of the balcony at the start of the project. A few were original artwork; most were lithograph prints. All were removed from the walls, which were then repaired and repainted.

One of the largest tasks associated with the project was accessioning each of the paintings/prints held by the Museum. Only a handful of the aviation art acquired over the years was accessioned. That soon changed, thanks to volunteers **Tom Witty** and **Tom Barr**. Tom and Tom had already accessioned a number of artifacts for the Everett Fager and ICBMs in Kansas cases, so curator **Danny San Romani** started them in on the aviation art. Danny pulled prints from the storerooms and the curator's office and took them to the library for the accessioning process. This process includes completing an accession form describing each piece of art and assigning each a respective accession number. The respective accession numbers are then affixed to the artwork.

**Gallery, con't. on page 3**



*Tom Witty (left) and Tom Barr do artifacts accessioning in the library*

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## Combat Air Museum

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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.

## Work continues on Hiller helicopter

Left to right: *Bob Crapser, Don Dawson and Ralph Knehans position the rotor assembly on the Hiller*



A fall/winter project headed up by **Bob Crapser** has been the initial assembly of the Hiller UH-12 helicopter donated to the Museum by member **Bill Novak** in August 2001. We acquired copies of the Maintenance Instructions and Illustrated Parts Breakdown for the Hiller. Then volunteers assisted Bob in assembling the major components of the helicopter, so we could see what parts we still need to complete the static restoration. At different times, **Dick Trupp, Don Dawson, Jack Vaughn, Ralph Knehans, Stu Entz**, and probably a few other folks we have missed assisted in assembling the helo. Happily, we seem to have most of what we need for the restoration. Bob has generated a list of needed parts and components, and has researched possible suppliers of these parts.

To make the skid-mounted helicopter mobile, Bob worked with Don, **Martin Moyer**, and **Amos Page** to fabricate a base with casters that could go underneath the Hiller. Using 2 x 12" and 2 x 4" lumber, carriage bolts, and four large casters, the team built a super-size furniture dolly. After setting the helo's main fuselage on the dolly, its skids were secured to the dolly with U-bolts. The design works quite well, and one

person can roll the helicopter around.

Presently, the Hiller is in the north-east corner of 604 and looks very much like a complete helicopter. The last major component put on the Hiller was the rotor head and stub blades. We needed a good lift device to raise the rotor head/blade assembly onto the rotor shaft. Bob and Don found a suitable chain fall for this purpose, but we needed to attach it to a ceiling beam. Volunteer **Ted Nolde**, an architectural engineer, came out and looked at the ceiling beams above the Hiller. He determined the best place to attach the chain fall. Dick Trupp then contacted Million Air-Topeka, a fixed-base-operator (FBO) at Forbes Field and asked if they had a bucket truck they could bring down to lift the chain fall to a ceiling beam. Even better than that, Million Air had a large hydraulic lift. They drove it down to 604 one morning, and in less than half an hour the chain fall was attached to a beam above the Hiller.

As the hangars have gotten colder, less work is taking place on the Hiller. Bob has the instrument panel in the 604 workshop and is currently rebuilding it and working on his parts list. When things warm up again, individual components will be removed from the helicopter for restoration. →



*A sampling of the gallery's artwork*

### Gallery, con't. from page 1

Accessioning artifacts (artwork or otherwise) is a learning experience. To properly identify the artifact, you have to do some research to specifically describe what it is and/or represents. And another thing accessioning can be is tedious, with a capital T. Fortunately, Tom and Tom worked as a team to go through all the artwork Danny was bringing in. Not only did they do all the paperwork and marking, they started grouping the art into chronological periods of aviation history. When visitors enter the balcony from the spiral staircase, they first see artwork depicting World War I. They progress through that war, then to between World Wars I and II, and then into World War II. The Toms also selected and recommended which prints to put in the gallery. In some cases we had several prints of the same type of aircraft, and with a finite wall space, not everything could go up on the walls.

While Tom and Tom were accessioning artwork in the library, Danny was also accessioning artwork in the curator's office, only on a smaller scale. To date, all three have accessioned 118 pieces of artwork with a fair number to go. Danny spent most of his time matting and framing artwork after it was accessioned. A little over half of the prints were already in frames, but the rest were just the bare prints. Matting and framing these added time to the project.

As clusters of artwork were finished with the accessioning, matting and framing, Danny and Tom Witty toted them to the gallery area and hung them on the wall.

On Friday, January 17, they hung the 52<sup>nd</sup> piece of artwork, using the last of the available wall space around the balcony. A 53<sup>rd</sup> piece is hanging on the hangar floor

level above the sign pointing the way to the gallery. Three others hang in the new exhibit rooms.

We are not done, though. Last fall, a timely donation of some large wooden panels was made to CAM. These had once been part of a commercial exhibit for Olivetti office equipment. Four of the panels are a little over 7' long X 4' high. One panel is 10' long X 4' high. All five panels are 3" wide. **Martin Moyer** and **Amos Page**

looked them over and came up with a plan where they can be assembled and supported to provide more space for hanging artwork. Once completed, the panels will go on the gallery balcony. They will provide some 78 linear feet and 315 square feet of "new" wall to work with. And we have plenty more artwork to hang once this winter project is done. →

### *February Calendar of Events*

**Monday, February 10<sup>th</sup>**  
Membership Luncheon  
Jean Wanner Education  
Conference Center 11:30 a.m.

This is a potluck luncheon,  
including main dishes.  
Please bring your own  
table settings

The guest speakers  
**Tad Pritchett** and  
**Dave Murray**  
will talk about the siege of  
Bastogne, Belgium  
during the 1944  
Battle of the Bulge.

→ → →

## Luncheon speakers tell of an ill-fated Allied mission during World War II...

The guest speakers at our December luncheon were **Tad Pritchett** and **Dave Murray**. Both have been guest presenters before, and have given excellent presentations on military topics ranging from World War I to the Vietnam War. Their December presentation was on a combined airborne and ground operation of World War II. This was the ambitious and eventually ill-fated attempt by Allied forces to gain a bridgehead across the Rhine River at Arnhem, Holland in September 1944.

The operation was proposed by British Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery and involved a coordinated massive airborne assault behind German lines to open and protect eight vital bridges along a narrow 64-mile long corridor to Arnhem. The British XXX Corps was to concurrently travel up this corridor on what amounted to a single road system to consolidate and hold the bridgeheads all the way to the Rhine.

Tad and Dave used overhead projections of maps and photos during their presentation. They gave a timeline of major events from the D-Day landings in June 1944 until the kickoff of Market-Garden on September 17 in both Europe and the Pacific. The apparent need for Market-Garden was the failure to secure the Schelde River estuary around the port of Antwerp, Belgium and to clear it of German forces. Because of this failure, the Allies

could not safely use Antwerp as a supply port for the land armies moving north and east out of the beachheads in France. Tad and Dave pointed out that the US 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Armies had virtually stalled in their advances as their supply lines were severely strained because of the long overland route from Cherbourg, France. Montgomery felt the Market-Garden operation would allow him to cross the Rhine River, outflank the Siegfried Line and advance into the Ruhr.

Unlike the months-long planning for the Normandy invasion, Tad and Dave said Market-Garden was put together by Montgomery's staff in a week's time. In hindsight, the plans were rushed and provided little study

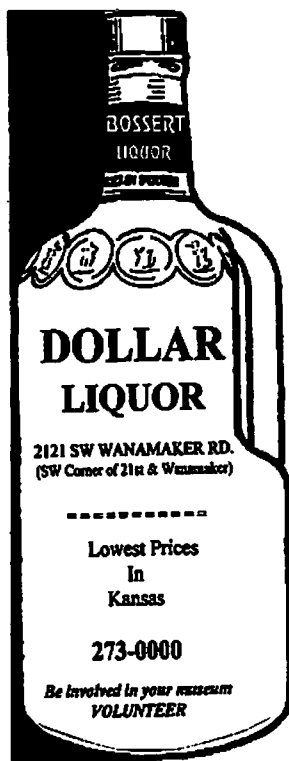
of "worst case" scenarios. Intelligence gathering for the operation was lacking, and that which was gathered was not correctly interpreted. In general, the Allies expected to find a broken down German Army. This proved to be a gross underestimate, and the Dutch underground tried to convince the Allies of this error. They reported that German forces were recouping and had much more armor in the area of the planned assault than Allied intelligence predicted. The Dutch reports were essentially ignored.

Dave and Tad said that the sheer size of the airborne assault was problematic. Over 30,000 airborne troops of the US 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division and British 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, including the 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Brigade were going to parachute in and land in gliders. There were not enough planes to carry these forces in a single drop. Rather than a single day airborne assault, the airborne forces would be dropped over a three-day period, weather permitting. Because there were no suitable drop zones or landing zones near Arnhem and its bridge, the main body of the British 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne was dropped some 8 to 10 miles from its primary objective, losing almost all element of surprise. The troops of the British 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne also soon found they could not communicate among themselves or outside of the Division because their radio crystals were set to wrong frequencies – a critical disadvantage.

The prospects for the British armored division were not much better. Its tanks and armored vehicles had to travel the distance on what amounted to a two-lane road with little or no shoulders. In several areas, the road ran across the tops of dikes with steep embankments along the road. Any vehicle going down over the embankment was virtually unrecoverable. The estimates of this road to handle all the armor and vehicles of XXX Corps were seriously flawed.

The assault began September 17, 1944. The US 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division dropped along a 15-mile stretch from Eindhoven to Veghel, Holland. The US 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division dropped along a 10-mile stretch from Grave to Nijmegen, Holland, and as stated earlier, the British 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne dropped in several miles to the west from the Bridge at Arnhem.

While German forces were surprised by the method of the assault, they reacted quickly with counter attacks, and their fighting proved they were far from a broken down Army. Dave and Tad said one stroke of luck for the Allies, and particularly the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne occurred after the crash of a glider that carried a full set of plans for the operation. These plans were forwarded



## ...a bridge too far

to the German High Command, who fortunately discounted them as a set-up.

Fighting was heavy in all areas and the timetables soon went by the by. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne was delayed some 36 hours at Nijmegen and had to build pontoon bridges to replace those blown up by the Germans. The heaviest fighting occurred in the British sector particularly around Oosterbeek and Arnhem. The 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne had essentially landed among two German Panzer Divisions. One battalion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division did reach the Arnhem bridge and tried to attack across it without success. This group did capture the north end of the bridge, but soon became surrounded and suffered terribly from the fighting.

By the third day of the assault, the British XXX Corps reached the bridge at Nijmegen. Montgomery had hoped they would be in Arnhem in two days. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne had to fight across the river Waal in boats before they successfully stormed the Nijmegen bridge. The route to Arnhem finally seemed open. But time had run out for the British paratroop battalion holding the north end of the Arnhem bridge. German tanks were methodically destroying the houses from which the British were fighting. The British had no food, little ammunition, and no reinforcements. The remainder of the British 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne had been unable to break through the German forces and was fighting for its life.

At the end of nine days, the battle was over. Those of the British 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne who were able, either fought their way out or escaped to the south in a nighttime crossing of the Rhine. The 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne dropped in over 10,000 troops. Some 2,400 escaped. The rest were dead, wounded, captured or missing. All gains made by the 101<sup>st</sup> and 82<sup>nd</sup> Divisions and the XXX Corps were also lost. The narrow corridor could not be held against the German forces, and the Allied forces withdrew. The Arnhem bridge was eventually destroyed by Allied bombing, and it would be four more months before Allied forces returned to Holland.

Tad and Dave closed their presentation by saying they felt the Allied effort at Arnhem was a mistake and why. It prolonged the war. Had the war ended earlier perhaps there would not have been a Soviet occupation of east Germany, no Cold War, and perhaps the Soviets would not have captured the German scientists who provided them so much knowledge of rocketry and nuclear arms.

In the book *A Bridge Too Far*, the following exchange between Field Marshall Montgomery and British Lieutenant Browning, Deputy Commander, First Allied Airborne Army is recorded.

Pointing to the Arnhem bridge on the map [Browning] asked, "How long will it take for the armor to reach us?" Field Marshall Montgomery replied briskly, "Two days." Still looking at the map, Browning said, "We can hold it for four." Then he added, "But sir, I think we might be going a bridge too far." →

## New Supporters

John Emmert  
Iris Gonzalez & Mike,  
Evan, & Danny Cluff

## Renewing Supporters

Larry & Connie Arensman  
William Blanton & Ruth Hartness  
Art Buchanan  
Ron & Linda Coash  
Don & Peggy Dawson  
The Gilchrist Family  
Scott, Lisa, & Brent  
Mac & Bonnie Kreuter  
Bill & Irene Mohney  
Robert Morse  
Edward Navone  
The Naylor Family  
Gary, Susan, Desiree,  
Patricia, & Rachel  
Bill & Mary Naylor  
Marlin "Nick" &  
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## CAM sells its halftrack to local collector and restorer

The former US Army halftrack that sat between hangars 602 and 604 was sold in December to a local collector and restorer of military vehicles, **Ed Crocker, Jr.**, Berryton, KS.

CAM acquired the halftrack a number of years ago, exhibiting it in various areas around the Museum grounds. It had been greatly modified from its original configuration. The armor sides had been cut away from all around the vehicle's rear bed, and a large roller had been cut from the front bumper. There was no canvas for the top of the driver/passenger cab, leaving this area always exposed to the weather. The rear bed was void of any former weapons mounts. None of these removed items were with the halftrack when CAM acquired it, and none were ever procured or acquired in the years it was with the Museum.

The halftrack's condition and future prospects of ever being restored to a military configuration were discussed at a Board meeting. It was decided that

Museum funds and resources would be better put to restoring aircraft and aviation artifacts than the halftrack. Board members voted to sell the halftrack with one dissenting vote. Its sale brought in \$3,000 that went into the Museum's restoration fund.

Ed Crocker said this will be a long-term restoration and he would like to exhibit the halftrack at the Museum during future events. ➔

### Visitors

During **December**  
the Museum had  
**359** visitors  
from **29** states  
and  
Australia  
Canada  
France  
Great Britain

➔ ➔ ➔

## 2003 Events Calendar

*\*note changes*

### March

17-21 – Aviation Education Class

### April

12 – Girl Scouts Conference  
26 – Celebrity Pancake Feed

### May

10 & 11 – Wings Over Topeka  
Dance

### June

\*7 – Swing Dance  
16-19 – Aviation Education Class

### July

7-10 – Aviation Education Class

### August

4-7 – Aviation Education Class

### September

\*20 – Swing Dance

### October

25 – Model Contest

➔ ➔ ➔



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