

COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

→ → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

April / May 2005 • Vol. 21, No. 3



Iwo Jima mural is dedicated at CAM and named a world war memorial

A ceremony honoring the 60th Anniversary of the raising of the United States flag atop Mount Suribachi during the battle for Iwo Jima and a rededication of a large mural of the flag raising mounted on the west wall of Hangar 602 was held on February 23 in Hangar 602. **Colonel Robert F. Tindall, Jr., AUS (Ret.)** and survivor of the battle, was the primary mover in making this ceremony happen. He is also a member of the Topeka Chapter of **The Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW)**. He organized the ceremony and was key in having repairs made to the wall mural.

The mural of the flag raising was once part of a square-sided tower that greeted visitors to the Kansas Free Fair, located where the Topeka Expocentre now stands today. The tower was erected in the summer of 1948 along Topeka Boulevard. It stood over 65 feet tall, was about 12 feet wide on each side. Its outer covering was all porcelain-coated steel plates. They were all yellow with the exception of the

Iwo Jima mural and had red letters Kansas Free Fair on the sides. Below the mural was a large bronze plaque dedicated to the men and women who served the US in World War II. One of CAM's members, **Marjorie Roy**, was present at the 1948 dedication of the tower and took photographs of this event. She provided these to curator **Danny San Romani** a few years ago for reproduction and enlargement.

After the fairgrounds closed, the tower was dismantled sometime in the mid-1970's. Its panels apparently were stored in a farm shed or barn in Osage County, Kansas. **Mr. Gerald D. Curtis** donated the mural panels and bronze plaque to CAM in September 1993 on behalf of the Curtis family.

see Iwo Jima, con't. on page 2

Inside This Issue

<i>2005 Calendar of Events</i>	3
<i>In Memoriam</i>	4
<i>April Membership Luncheon</i>	4
<i>Volunteers needed for Armed Forces Appreciation Day</i>	4
<i>Adult Aviation Education Class</i>	5
<i>April / May Calendar</i>	5
<i>Supporters</i>	5
<i>Battle of Verdun</i>	6-7
<i>Letter and mission logs from Korea</i>	8-9
<i>Check out radio controlled flight</i>	9
<i>Celebrity Pancake Feed</i>	10
<i>Visitors</i>	10

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 Noon - 4:30 P.M.
 Last Admission 3:30 P.M.

Plane Talk, the official newsletter
 of Combat Air Museum
 of Topeka, Kansas,
 is published bi-monthly.
 Your questions and comments
 are welcomed.
 Any information for **Plane Talk**
 should be submitted to CAM office.

**Iwo Jima,
 con't. from page 1**

Nick Nickerson and **Martin Moyer** constructed a framework and installed the mural panels. A sloped footing was built at the base of the mural and the bronze plaque installed there. **Gene Howerter** covered the sloped base with artificial grass, and **Joe Higgins** installed lighting for the mural. There were several spots of damage to the porcelain covering on the panels, apparently from dismantling the tower, and these were left unrepaired until this year. The porcelain is textured, with as many as four contoured layers of different colors in some places.



*The dedication ceremony on
 February 23, 2005*

Detail of the finished repair



Colonel Tindall had a few sign companies come out last fall and winter to see if they could repair the damaged panels. He settled on **Mike Weinbrecht** of **Creative Signs, Inc.**, Topeka, to do the work. Mike, his son, and other employees of Creative Signs, began their preliminary repairs in January. They rigged a scaffold and plastic drop cloth over the mural so they could run a heater inside the makeshift tent. Mike did the majority of the repairs, especially the necessary sculpting of the textured layers. The work continued until the morning of the event, when final touch-ups and polishing took place. The change in the mural's appearance was just short of amazing. Mike's texturing, and matching of 57 year old colors were right on the mark.



A closer look at Mike's work

About 40 people turned out on a chilly February 23rd to attend the ceremony. Colonel Tindall presided over the proceedings. As people arrived, they viewed a videotape on the battle of Iwo Jima in the Jean Wanner Education Conference Center. Cadets of Topeka High School's Marine Corps Junior ROTC provided the color guard. The ceremony began at 2:30 p.m., about the same time the famous flag raising occurred on Mount Suribachi. Those who fought at the Battle of Iwo Jima were honored as were those who raised the US flag.

The ceremony also included the presentation of a plaque to CAM stating that the mural is now on inventory with The Military Order of the World Wars as a world war memorial. **Dick Trupp** accepted the plaque and a letter of thanks from **Colonel Percival Pascua** of the Topeka Chapter 86, MOWW. This plaque will be installed next to the mural. ➔



Mike Weinbrecht repairs the damaged porcelain area

2005 Events Calendar

April

16 – *Model Contest*
30 – *Celebrity Pancake Feed*

May

7 – *Adult Aviation Education Class*
21 – *Heartland Park's Armed Forces Day Salute*

June

6-9 *Aviation Education Class*

July

11-14 *Aviation Education Class*

August

1-4 *Aviation Education Class*

➔ ➔ ➔

In Memoriam

Nancy Olson
 October 24, 1935 – February 5, 2005
 Topeka, Kansas
 #2579

Gerald K. Barker
 April 20, 1914 - March 15, 2005
 Topeka, Kansas
 #3498

April Luncheon will feature "Communication in History"

Speakers scheduled for the April 11 luncheon are students from Seaman High School who will be presenting their topics for the annual National History Day contest. This year's theme is "Communication in History".

We will hear about Navajo Code Talkers in World War II and Radio Propaganda during World War II. →

Volunteers needed for Armed Forces Appreciation Day

On Saturday, May 21, Heartland Park Topeka raceway is holding an Armed Forces Appreciation Day. Combat Air Museum is taking part in this celebration by placing several static exhibits and a couple of Gift Shop merchandise tables at Heartland Park.

We need volunteers to help set up the exhibits and Gift Shop merchandise tables, to watch over the exhibits, to help run the Gift Shop tables, and to bring things back to the Museum.

The planned static exhibits include an M37 vehicle owned by Dick Trupp, a jeep owned by Stu Entz, a

jeep owned by Beattie Dickson, CAM's "Follow Me" jeep, an ex-USAF motorized three-wheeled scooter being restored by Gene Howerter, Beattie, and others, and our Hiller helicopter on a trailer. There will also be a number of current military vehicles and armor and helicopters on exhibit.

The grounds open at 7 a.m. for exhibit set-up, then open at 10 a.m. to the public. Admission is free. The open house lasts until 5 p.m., then later that night, fireworks are scheduled.

We will be generating volunteer sign-up sheets and schedules for the various tasks and ask for your help in volunteering that day. →

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ADULT AVIATION EDUCATION CLASS

An Adult Aviation Education Class is being held Saturday, May 7, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in The Jean Wanner Education Conference Room. The class will cover the history of aviation, theory of flight, aircraft engines, and aircraft control systems. Tours of other aviation tenants at Forbes Field are also planned. Weather permitting, class will adjourn from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. for lunch and the flying of remote controlled airplanes. Since this will be a "working" lunch, be sure to bring a brown bag lunch. The fee for the class is \$15 per person.

Class size is limited so sign up today. Call Jane at 862-3303 to register. →

New Supporters

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Donald L. Jesse
Scotty Larimer
Richard & Nancy Olson
Loyd Dean Thomas
William Welch
Steve Wodtke
Anita & James Young, Jr.

→ → →

April/May Calendar of Events

April

Monday, April 11

Membership Potluck Luncheon
Jean Wanner Education Conference Center
11:30 a.m.

Guest presenters are students from Seaman High School with History Day projects

Saturday, April 16

Model Contest

Hangar 602
9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 30

Annual Celebrity Pancake Feed

Hangar 602
7 a.m. – 12 p.m.

May

There is no Membership Luncheon in May. The next luncheon is Monday, June 13.

Saturday, May 7

Adult Aviation Education Class
Jean Wanner Education Conference Center
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Saturday, May 21

Armed Forces Day at Heartland Park
Gift Shop tables at Heartland Park
a.m. – a.m.
→ → →

**Your membership and
support are
important to us.**

Visit our website at
www.combatairmuseum.org

Speakers tell about one of the greatest, lengthiest and most brutal battles in human history: the Battle of Verdun

Our guest presenters at the February Membership Luncheon were members **Dave Murray** and **Tad Pritchett**. Over the past few years Dave and Tad have given us excellent presentations on World War I and II battles and battlefields. One thing that has made their talks so interesting is they visited the all the sites they have talked about. The February luncheon was par excellence as they spoke about the World War I **Battle of Verdun**, France, February 21 – December 19, 1916. This battle is considered one of the greatest, lengthiest, and most brutal battles in human history.

Dave and Tad began their presentation with Dave presenting the German army situation and Tad presenting the French army situation. Each had some original artifacts that would have been carried by men in the opposing armies. These included helmets, cartridge belts and bayonets.

They gave a brief history of Verdun including the facts it had been part of France since 1648, but had a strong Germanic culture. The terrain around Verdun consisted of ridges, gullies, and forest. After 10 months of battle, this landscape was much changed. The city of Verdun had a population of about 15,000 people in 1916. It straddled the Meuse River providing a control point for the river, and its location also provided control on roads in the area. But for the city itself, there was only one major road and one narrow gauge railway, which later played significantly in the French trying to get large amounts of men and material into the battle. By comparison, the Germans had some 14 rail lines going into the area.

Verdun also had a religious significance in the region. A series of forts were built around the city over the years to hold out invaders, and the French felt the city and area were impregnable. It was more important to the French psyche than actually being a strategic geographical point. Verdun was about 26 miles south of the border with Belgium and about 27 miles west of the then border with Germany – which included the former French province of Lorraine. By 1915, the French had stripped the surrounding forts of most of their guns and troops. In February 1916, Germany chose to mass troops north and east of Verdun for an assault.

Going into the battle, the French forces were outgunned, outmanned, and outmaterialled by the German forces. The Germans had 72 infantry battalions to the French's 34. German equipment included some 800 machine guns.

The battle started with a German artillery barrage along a six-mile front that lasted nine hours. The French lost 11 battalions in that initial barrage, with some 800 to 900 men per battalion. The barrage also turned the countryside into a barren landscape.

After lifting the barrage, German infantry advanced into the area from the north and northeast of Verdun, thinking they would only need to occupy former French positions, not engage in battle. At this time the German advance was all on the east side of the Meuse River. But enough French troops in the two front-line divisions survived the artillery barrage to counter the German forces. By the end of the second day of the battle, the French relieved these two divisions with fresh troops. The new troops were brought in mostly at night, and being unfamiliar with the positions in open country were quickly annihilated by five attacking German divisions.

It was more important to the French psyche than actually being a strategic geographical point.

On February 25, German forces took Fort Douaumont northeast of Verdun during a snowstorm. Its detachment of French artillerymen and engineers were caught by surprise. In the storm, they thought the advancing Germans were French troops falling back. Also, on the 25th of February, Verdun came under constant artillery bombardments requiring the evacuation of remaining residents. But one bright spot for the French came on the 25th. French Marshal Joseph Joffre ordered French General Henri Petain to take command of the Verdun defenses. Although the German offensive would go on another four months, the leadership of Petain greatly limited what the Germans would accom-

plish. By February 29, with more fresh French troops into the battle, the initial German advance was halted. They had failed to gain their main objective, Verdun.

General Petain soon realized the logistics nightmare of Verdun with its single main road and single, narrow gauge railway. It was almost impossible to move massive amounts of men and material over these accesses. So Petain had the road from Bar-le-Duc to Verdun rebuilt during something of a pause in the battle. The fighting did not totally stop, but both sides had nearly exhausted their ammunitions.

Over the rebuilt road, a system of convoys developed, increasing to some 3,500 vehicles. Trucks were coming and going much like conveyor belts and eventually delivered 66 French divisions to the battle. At its height, the convoys moved at a rate of one vehicle every five seconds. The road became known as *La Voie Sacree* (the Sacred Way).

By early March, the German High Command saw Verdun as a way to draw French forces from the Battle of the Somme and help disorganize an imminent Allied attack on German forces there. Verdun was still the main objective, but now the German forces crossed the Meuse River and spread westward toward Avocourt. Already extended on the east side of the river, they now planned to attack the French forces flanking Verdun. Known as the Battle of the Flanks, the attack began on March 6. The German forces slowly advanced over the next month, capturing the town of Vaux on March 31. By April 9th, they had almost eliminated the initial French line but also lost some of their gains for lack of reserves to hold the new lines.

The Germans slowly ground out their offensive through May and June gaining more ground along both sides of the Meuse River. The offensive gained in urgency, again because of the Allied buildup for an offensive on the Somme about 135 miles to the northwest. The Germans still hoped to draw French forces from the Somme, to help thwart the Allied offensive, and then gain a decisive victory at Verdun. In the meantime, by May 30, the French Army occupied extensive defensive positions along the south side of the front lines. Heavy and bitter fighting took place west of Verdun at Le Mort Homme and Hill 304. Any concentrated infantry attacks along the front lines required massive artillery barrages before the attack.



Tad Pritchett (left) and Dave Murray show some of their World War I artifacts.

Tad and Dave then spoke briefly about the Trench of Bayonets and showed a photo of a memorial at the Trench. It is located in the Douaumont battle area. Two companies of the French 137th Infantry Regiment occupied the trench with fixed bayonets in anticipation of a German charge. The Germans put heavy artillery fire onto the French trenches, and this one section, weakened by previous barrages, caved in onto the French troops, burying them alive. The only things left visible of the troops were their bayonets. The photo shown by Tad and Dave showed a long line of bayonets protruding from the soil.

On June 9, the Germans captured Fort de Vaux after a massive artillery barrage, infantry attack, and use of gas. But it still took some eight days before the final French resistance in the fort was silenced. On June 21st the Germans opened a barrage of enormous proportions onto their next objective, an area called Souville. They fired 380mm (15-inch) and 420mm (16.5-inch) "beer barrel" mortar shells, and nearly 200,000 gas shells into the area. The French countered with a continuous barrage of 75mm (3-inch) artillery. The German infantry gained the ground in bitter hand-to-hand fighting with the French. By June 23, the French situation around Verdun was grim, but the Germans had still not gained their main objective. Meanwhile, French and British forces began their preliminary attacks along the Somme, and on July 1, launched their full-scale offensive.

Not only had the Germans failed to take Verdun;

Battle of Verdun, con't. on page 8

Battle of Verdun, con't. from page 7

they failed to disrupt the Allied offensive.

The farthest penetrations of the German advances to Verdun came on July 12, 1916. While the battle continued for another five months, the forward attack virtually stopped. By August 9, the Germans had made their furthest advance south anywhere along the front lines. Trench warfare became the norm, with continued artillery barrages and infantry attacks of little consequence. But this time of immobility allowed the French to build their forces and plan for their eventual offensive.

The French began their offensive in earnest during the third week of October 1916. After a three-day artillery barrage, French forces advanced in the area northeast of Verdun and recaptured Fort Douaumont.

In early November, Fort Vaux was recaptured. The French offensive continued until December 18, regaining much of the lost ground northwest of Verdun. On December 19, the Battle of Verdun was over.

No exact numbers or statistics are possible for the Battle of Verdun due to the battle's confusions, but it was immensely costly for both sides. During the 10 month battle total casualties, killed, wounded, and missing totaled over 900,000. Upward to 280,000 Germans died at Verdun, 18 per cent of all their World War I losses. The French lost some 317,000 troops in the battle, 23 per cent of all their World War I losses. Both sides fired approximately 40 million artillery rounds during the battle.

The Germans failed to take Verdun, to defeat the French, and to break the French spirit. The French

saw the outcome of Verdun as a prestigious and crowning victory.

But the fact can not be ignored that Verdun basically carried the term "war of attrition" to essentially "war of annihilation;" nine hundred thousand casualties for an objective of some 10 square miles.

**There were nine
hundred thousand
casualties for an
objective of some
10 square miles.**

Once again, Dave and Tad gave an excellent presentation. We look forward to their future talks about battles of World War I and World War II. ➔

Letters and mission logs from Korea

Excerpts from letters and combat mission logs written from South Korea in 1952 by USMC Second Lieutenant John Walker Hatcher, who flew Corsair fighter-bombers. Times are based on a 24-hour, military clock. USS BATAAN (CVL-29) was a light aircraft carrier. The text appears as originally written.

**Mission #36 [USS Bataan] 17 July
CAP (Rike)**

Armament 1ADSK-1, 6 x .50's

TO - 0530 Land-0730

Average CAP. Weather was very poor, flight was used as a weather reconnaissance. NBR pass.

**Mission #37 [USS Bataan] 17 July
TARCAP (Persons)**

Armament 1 x NAPALM, 8 x 100#, 6 x .50's

TO - 1510 BL - 1530 Land-1710

Prebriefed target on Ugin-do Island, off Wolsari peninsula. Reportedly a company of enemy troops

on the island. We napalmed, bombed and strafed almost every dugout and position on the island, giving it good coverage. NDA. No outstanding incidents.

Mission #38 [USS Bataan] 19 July

RECCO (Hall, Kiser, Vill) Haeju-W.

Armament 1 x 1000#VT, 4 x 100#, 4 x .20mm

Good recco with good results. Weather was poor, limiting our recco to a bare minimum. Hall got Road Cut with his bomb, Kiser hit same bridge. Villareal hit a RR-bypass direct with his bomb. And I got a direct hit with my 1000# bomb on a Large Highway Bridge. We then hit and

damaged several smaller highway bridges, and strafed a few villages, etc. No outstanding incidents.

**Mission #39 [USS Bataan] 20 July
CAP (Detmering)**

A cap and weather reconnaissance. I got a few good pictures of Det close-up, and clouds using a yellow filter with the Bolsey 35. We had 4 intercepts. No outstanding incidents.

**Excerpts from Letter No. 20 [K-6]
Wednesday, 23 July**

Dear Folks,

We are settled down at K-6 now,

after our many trials and tribulations that accompany a move of any size in the military. We off-loaded from the Bataan at Inchon (the same place where we staged an amphibious landing 2 years ago) yesterday morning in the sizzling heat and at low tide. About 4 hours later, just as we were pulling out by train for Pyong-Taek, the tide was high, and you could really see the difference (they have 20' tides at Inchon). During the ride, it rained a little, and our gear was on flat-cars and in coal-cars, and got sopping wet.

Now, we come to K-6. There have been a few changes since I was last here. They have moved to Officer's Mess Hall, enlarged the Enlisted Men's Mess about twice its size, erected a small PX and issued Ration Cards, and gotten very chicken about uniforms here. Even in this humid heat (it was 113 yesterday, and 108 today), we have to wear khaki shirts and dungaree pants. It's very uncomfortable, and I've never sweated so much or been so "wet" as I am here. Everyone else is the same (in varying degrees), but I guess we'll get used to it (?).

As I told you before, we will be here until 2 Sept., and then fly aboard the Sicily. We will start flying tomorrow and say after, and will continue to do the same job we did on the carrier, such as the TarCap area, the Reco's, etc., and Special Strikes with the other squadrons here. So it should be "everything as usual" in flying...

Love, Johnny

Mission #40 (K-6) 25 July

TARCAP (Dickerman) Pungchon-Songwha

Armament 1 x NAPALM, 6 x 100#, 6 x .50's

First mission after returning to K-6. We flew up by way of the sea route over Pt. "A". Got target from Sitting Duck – a training area for Chinese Troops. We dropped Napalm on a town and double-

warehouse, destroying both. Then "Dick" dropped his wing load on Songwha, and I salvoed on a town south of there. Weather was poor (marginal). No outstanding incidents.

Excerpts from Letter No. 21 [K-6] Sunday 27 July

Dear Folks (Carolyn included),

We are pretty well settled down into the routine here, and getting acclimated to the weather. Today was a welcome relief though (except for the mud): it started raining last night, and has rained most of the day. It has really cooled things off, and "wetted down the dust".

We are taking on a total of 20 new pilots here, and the last five are in the process of checking in now. That means that about 15 of the older pilots will be taken for desk jobs. They will want to keep some experienced pilots for a long length of time now – I might be one of those kept. In fact, I hope that I am.

Well that's about all for now, except for two afterthoughts. I now have only 40 missions, but am still going strong. Also, I have gotten my first roll of color

from the Bolsey, and the pictures are very good. I might use (almost all) color from now on. Will write in a few days.

Love, Johnny

Mission #41 (K-6) 3 Aug

TARCAP (Kiser) Pungchon

**Armament 1 x NAP, 6 x 100#, 6 x .50's
TO – 0515 BL – 0610 Land - 0815**

One of the most outstanding hops I've had. We went out to attack gun positions that had shot down one of our planes yesterday. We found about a dozen (at least, certain 8) double-mounted 20 mm guns firing at us. Kiser dropped his 1000# VT (went off instantaneous) and destroyed or damaged one position. I made my Napalm run about 20 feet above the trees (these guns were in two orchards), and could even hear the 20's firing, as well as see them (close!). Also saw a 50 cal firing down at me from small knoll. Then we made runs, picking particular positions and hitting them with 1003er's. We made 8 runs apiece. Fire was intense first 4 runs, then tapered off to meager to none. I destroyed 3 positions, damaged 1; Kiser dest. 1, damaged 1.



Check out radio controlled flight

The **Foundation for Aeronautical Education (FAE)**, Inc. invites you to give the gift of radio controlled flight to your kids, grandkids, or even yourself. Radio controlled flight has changed. It is now a relatively inexpensive venture using well-built, ready-to-fly airplanes; buddy box instruction (like drivers ed); and gas or electric-powered aircraft. Interested? For a free gas-powered flight lesson (you fly the airplane) or more information, call Greg Inkmann at 272-4722.

FAE is a community-based organization, not just a flying club. It provides education in aviation science and math, an insured flying site, Humpty Dumpty classes (aircraft repair sessions), flight training, aircraft buy-back, trash pick-ups, and other functions as the community and FAE members require. →

Save the date: Celebrity Pancake Feed Saturday, April 30th

Be sure to come out for our annual Celebrity Pancake Feed on Saturday, April 30th. We will be serving you all-you-can-eat pancakes plus sausage, juice, milk and coffee from 7 a.m. to noon.

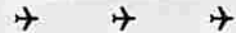
Ticket price is just \$4 per person and includes entrance to the Museum. Extra sausage may be purchased for 50 cents for two links. **Bob Carmichael of Perkins Restaurant** will be providing the pancakes and sausage and running the grill with the celebrity flippers. Bring your friends and relatives. Tickets are available in the Gift Shop.

We need your help to make this fund raiser a rousing success. If you are able to help, we are in need of volunteers to work the event. We will move out aircraft and set up tables one or two days before the event. We also need ticket takers and ticket sellers, drink station attendants, table clean up and syrup and butter re-fillers, and then a clean-up crew after noon. Volunteer sign-up sheets are in the Gift Shop and 604 Workshop. Call Jane at 862-3303 to sign up for an hour-and-a-half shift. →

Visitors

During **January**
the Museum had
255 visitors
from **20** states
and
Columbia

During **February**
we had
558 visitors
from **20** states
and
Australia
Germany
Japan
Netherlands



Join the Combat Air Museum!



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