

COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

→ → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

February / March 2005 • Vol. 21, No. 2

Serving in Patton's Army Luncheon speaker shares his experiences

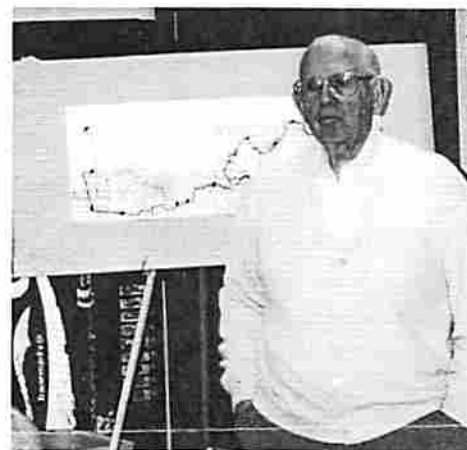
Mr. Carl K. Nall of Topeka spoke at our December Membership Luncheon about his experiences with General George Patton's Third Army in its battles across France and into Germany. Mr. Nall served as a Private with the 3255th Signal Service Company attached to the XII Corps of the 3rd Army.

He began by saying most of his personal belongings, including items of his World War II experiences, were deposited in Iowa by the devastating June 1966 tornado that traveled across Topeka. But his memories of that time served quite well for his presentation, including many amusing anecdotes from his training and service during World War II.

Mr. Nall graduated high school in 1938 from Stanton Community High School in Johnson City, Kansas. He began college at Kansas State University where he was a member of the Pershing Rifles silent drill team. He then attended a year of college at Emporia, Kansas. During his junior year of college he drew plans for power lines for defense-related plants in Nebraska. This took about 11 months. Mr. Nall's father told him he would be drafted at the end of his deferment, and seeing how his father was a member of the draft board, he was in the know.

Mr. Nall saw an ad for the Signal Service and took the entry test. He passed and was sworn into the Signal Corps Reserve at McCook, Nebraska. He received his basic training and 11 months of specialized training at Camp Crowder. Upon completion of this training, he and others boarded a troop train in Kansas City and headed east to Camp Miles Standish, New York. From New York, Mr. Nall and his company crossed the Atlantic in a converted passenger liner. A large number of troops of the 82nd Airborne Division were also aboard. During

see Patton's Army, cont. on page 2 & 3



Mr. Carl Nall, our December Membership Luncheon speaker

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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.

Patton's Army, con't. from page 1

the voyage, Mr. Nall got to know the members of his company. He said they included an outspoken advocate of labor leader John L. Lewis, a German-born member, a Chinese-born member, a Russian coal miner, one fellow who had connections with President Roosevelt, one who had Mafia connections, and two guys from Macy's. The Company included some 125 men total. Most all were Signal Corps Enlisted Reserve personnel.

The troopship arrived at Liverpool, England. From there, his company took trains and trucks into farm country, to a place called Camp Easy Farms. While they were under certain restrictions at the camp, Mr. Nall was able to get around and do a bit more than others because he carried an FBI identity card. He acquired the card during his work in Nebraska, while lunching with a couple of ladies who had connections with the agency. Apparently, the card was used more than a few times during his overseas stay for various reasons.

From Camp Easy Farms, the 3255th Signal Service Company was transferred to Southampton, England for further transfer to France. Prior to leaving for France, Mr. Nall was trained as a sniper.

The Company went ashore in France over Utah Beach, Normandy, in September 1944. Mr. Nall explained the role of Signal Service Companies was to listen to enemy communications. Some operated Sig Alpha and Sig Gamma code machines. Other companies repaired radios. His Company was a Top Secret outfit, a German Radio Combat Signal Intelligence Unit. When

they entered France, Mr. Nall had a German code book with German combat unit frequencies. They listened for and to radio signals from German combat units from inside huts mounted in the back of Army trucks. They could determine what the German units were planning or doing, and using radio direction finder equipment, they could determine where German transmitters were located.

For a period of time, the 3255th was in Nancy, France. They operated out of a chateau there. Mr. Nall remembered them having warm French bread and warm baths at Nancy. He also remembered the many aircraft ferrying in fuel for Patton's 3rd Army.

While at Nancy, Mr. Nall was involved in locating a German artillery weapon. This was a large caliber naval gun mounted on a railroad car. The gun fired onto XII Corps Headquarters from some 25 miles away. The problem was trying to figure out how and from where the gun received its firing commands. The 3255th and its signal intelligence solved the problem. Mr. Nall passed around an information sheet and a diagram showing how the gun, its controller, and two spotter locations were found.

Two members of the 3255th had stumbled upon a German frequency that was not in the code book. They figured out that orders were being transmitted on this frequency every time the gun fired. An analysis showed that the gun, its controller, and two spotters all were communicating on the frequency. Mr. Nall drew up the plan (the attached diagram) used to locate the positions. He told us several

things had to happen in an eight-minute time frame to locate the enemy positions. The 3255th had two radio direction finders in truck huts tuned to the German frequency, with four persons listening for the German signals. A phone was open to XII Corps headquarters for immediate relay of information, and a phone was open to a headquarters unit for four medium bomber aircraft on alert status, loaded with bombs. At the initial notice of a signal reception, the bomber pilots were to start their engines. Once airborne they would receive the coordinates for the control and spotter locations.

Mr. Nall notified XII headquarters when the first shell was fired. After what he described as "time standing still," he heard cussing over the radio and that the building across the street from HQ had been hit. He also heard the engines of the bombers as they flew over and waited for the signals to start again. Then he heard the signals, as the gun readied to fire a second shell. But the signals suddenly went quiet. As he learned later, the gun had moved into its railroad tunnel, but the bombers had destroyed the control location and both spotters. Mr. Nall told us he also learned later that when his plan for locating the control and two spotters was shown to General Patton, he asked who had prepared the plan. When he was told a Private in the 3255th Signal Service Company, Patton's response went something like, "It better work or we will have a very special conversation."

Mr. Nall said because his Company was Top Secret, they were very limited in their actions and movement. They were not to shoot at the enemy unless they were shot at first – so as not to draw attention to their

location, and they were confined to their company area to avoid capture.

Mr. Nall told the audience that it took his company about one month to travel from Utah Beach to Nancy, then took over three months to go through the Battle of the Bulge and its aftermath. He said that on December 23, 1944, Patton was able to move elements of the Third Army into Luxembourg from France in a 24-hour period because of the Signal Intelligence performed by the 3255th, locating various German combat units. He also said that Patton could not wait to get into Germany and wanted Third Army to maintain radio silence. The radio silence did not entirely happen. The 3255th began picking up radio transmissions from US tanks with their radio direction finder (RDF) gear. By listening to the radio transmissions and triangulating their positions, his company learned how far ahead of everyone else the tanks were. US L-5 and L-7 spotter aircraft confirmed the RDF locations.

As the 3255th moved deeper into Germany, they began receiving surrendering German troops. About

70 to 80 troops in a German village for wounded men surrendered to the company after the village Burgermeister told them to. Mr. Nall told about a surrender made to the 1303rd Engineers, known as the "Mighty Midgets," who had built a pontoon bridge across a river. A couple of the engineers crossed the river to barter for food and came back with an German SS Colonel. Six or seven more SS troops came in, but the engineers apparently had empty weapons, and they all took off.

Mr. Nall said on May 3, 1945 many personnel of the German 9th Panzer Division started to surrender and a number of other units surrendered with them. On VE Day, May 8, 1945, Mr. Nall said he was in the Neudorf area, Germany. He came home earlier than most in his company because he had walking pneumonia. His trip back across the Atlantic was on the Queen Mary. →

Join the Combat Air Museum!

ADULT AVIATION EDUCATION CLASS

In response to numerous requests we will host an Adult Aviation Education class on May 7, 2005 from 9 AM to 4 PM. The class will cover the history of aviation, theory of flight and control systems. Tours of other aviation tenants at Forbes Field are also planned. The fee for the class is \$15.00. Reservations are required and class size is limited. Call Jane at 862-3303 to register for the class. →

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2004 year end wrap-up

The Museum ended 2004 with a total of 10,993 visitors. Our tour guides conducted 72 scheduled tours for 1,532 visitors and an unknown number of impromptu tours for visitors on the weekends.

On our sign-in sheets, we ask visitors to tell us how they learned about the Museum. The number one response—as it has been for the past four years—was signs/billboards with 734 responses. The next highest, with 447 responses, was live or once lived in Topeka. The next eight responses, in descending order, were repeat visitor, from a relative, from a friend, the Internet, drove by, brochures, word of mouth, and just knew about us.

Our volunteers donated over 8,000 hours between hangars 602 and 604. A hearty “Thank You” to the following volunteers: **Dale Allen; Zak Amos; Larry Arensman; Bill Ballentine; Bill Clawson; Bob Crapser; Don Dawson; Stu Entz; Joe Higgins; Dave Houser; Bob Kelly; Ralph Knehans; Scotty Larimer; Richard Long; Pat Marriott; Ed Marvin; Larry McCormick; Dick Miletic; Ray Miller; Bill Mohney; Martin Moyer; Mary Naylor; Gary, Desiree, Patricia, and Rachel Naylor; Don Nisbett; Amos Page; Dan Pulliam; Marge Roy; Joel Toomay; Dick Trupp; Chuck and Marlene Urban; Jack Vaughn; Jean and Bernie Wanner; Jane Weinmann; Tom Witty; Steve Wodtke; James Young; and Kevin Zvilna. →**

WW I Battle of Verdun is the topic for February's Membership Luncheon

Dave Murray will be our guest speaker for the February Membership Luncheon. Dave has spoken to us before singly and with **Tad Pritchett** about European battlefields of World War I and World War II. His topic for the February luncheon will be the World War I battle of Verdun, France. Come join us on Valentine's Day, February 14th.

We also have speakers scheduled for the April 11 Membership Luncheon. They will be 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 Pathfinders during World War II, Psychological Warfare during World War II, Navajo Code Talkers in World War II, and Radio Propaganda during World War II. →

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Auction items continue to bring in earnings for the Museum

With the end of 2004, we reported earnings of over \$5,800 from auctions of donated items including last March's benefit auction at the Old Mill Auction Center. And the returns continue. **Martin Moyer** brought in a check of over \$115 during the first week of January. **Susan Metzger**, owner, operator, and auctioneer of the Old Mill Auction Center, continues to feed Museum items into her twice-weekly auctions.

Martin and Gene Howerter spent a lot of the summer and early fall last year finding and hauling pickup loads of items donated for the auctions. A number of our other volunteers helped move these items out to a storage area at the Auction Center.

So, for the remainder of this winter when you have periods of cabin fever, and during your spring housecleaning, set aside items you could donate to CAM for these auctions. Bring them out, or call the Museum for pick up.

As we have stated before, no clothes or tires. We will take computers and accessories if they are complete and work. →

Visitors

During November the Museum had **513** visitors from **30** states and
 Australia
 Canada
 Germany
 Japan
 Kenya
 Sri Lanka

During December we had **404** visitors from **27** states and
 Bolivia
 Brazil
 Canada
 Great Britain
 Japan

→ → →

Visit our website at
www.combatairmuseum.org

2005 Events Calendar

Events subject to change

March

21-24 Aviation Education Class

April

23 – 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

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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.

Excerpts from Letter No. 17 [USS Bataan] Monday, 30 June

Dear Folks,

Since the last letter, I have received 3 from home; letters of the 12, 15, and 17 June. Sorry that my letters aren't arriving there as regularly as should be expected.

I have noticed lately there is a steel strike of some sort back there, and especially that Buick has stopped shipment of parts to sub-assembly units of Buick, Oldsmobile, and Chevrolet. Try to hold off as long as you can before accepting a '52 Olds, because I hate to take a '52 this late in the year. As they say, you lose \$700 when you drive the car out of the showroom; well, I want to get a full year's use out of a car if I'm going to theoretically lose that much during the first year. However, I believe that this next car will have to last me for five or six years, at least.

...The weather on this cruise has been pretty bad; we didn't fly for the past 2 days, and the weather today was poor. We only launched 2 events, and I was in the 1st. We had a rough time getting back aboard. There was fog and haze, and on the upwind leg just before break-up (I was tail-end Charlie), I was in the soup completely, but made a standard turn, and soon spotted DD [destroyer] in the screen, and lined myself up accordingly for the 180 [degree] position.

Well, nothing exciting has happened yet, except that we had one plane's hook skip 6 wires, and he hit the barrier and flipped on his back – not hurt.

Will write in a few days.

Love, Johnny

Mission #31 30 June CAP (Reese) (Weather) Armament 4 x 20 mm TO – 1740 Land – 1940

Average CAP. Bad weather. We had 6 interceptions of bogies. (R4D's, TBM's, returning flights).

Excerpts from Letter No. 18 [Sasebo, Japan] Sunday, 6 July

Dear Folks,

Here we are in Sasebo again, after a very quiet cruise. The weather was poor, and held us up quite a bit. We only averaged 6 missions per pilot, where we usually average at least 9 or 10. Anyway, with 40 pilots, you can see that we do quite a bit of flying in total.

I received your letters of 22 & 24 June; was shocked (pleasantly) to get a letter from old Dad. Sorry to hear that you did not do better at P'burg, [Parkersburg] but perhaps you'll do better next one. You can't win them all, especially with little or no practice. Incidentally, I'm insulted when you say that I "ring the bell" occasionally. My accuracy with bombs and rockets continues to amaze me, compared with my results with SCAR's and practice bombs in the States. The rockets fire more true, and these bombs drop differently. I don't use my sight; I use the nose of the airplane, and, depending upon my dive-angle, speed and altitude (all calculated automatically mentally), I "pickle off" when the target is in a definite position just over the nose. You might say I ring the bell a great majority of the time, but that some of my targets are of less importance for "publicity purposes" than others, and also that they try to put

everyone's name in the paper sooner or later i.e., not concentrate too much on some people. But, strangely enough, I've had mine in 3 times now, and I can think of at least 15 pilots who haven't been "acknowledged" once yet. Hot stuff, eh?

...Speaking of targets again, I hit a viaduct the other day (you see they have an intricate system of dikes canals, and viaducts for the irrigation of their countless, endless rice paddies) with a 500# bomb, and it was the most direct hit I've ever seen. I made one run and didn't feel right, so pulled up and made another. (Viaduct was 15' wide, 100' long, with concrete cover 3 sides, and pumps & machinery inside. Connected 2 canals, looked a little like a bridge). I hit dead center, knocked out 30'; water and concrete flew everywhere. A torrent of water gushed out and flooded the whole area. No more rice there. (No publicity on that one, tho, because they weren't sure that viaducts are "legal" targets).

Well I'll close for now.

Love, Johnny

Mission #32 [USS Bataan] 13 July RECCO (Dickermann, Det. Rike) Chin-Haeju

Armament 1 x NAPALM, 6 x 100#, 20 mm.

TO - 0920 BL – 0940 Land-1120

Primary target 5000 bags of rice south of (near) Chinnampo, but they had been moved. We found an interesting village near Secondary Target (?), where I dropped 1 x 100# on a large red house with a tower (of some sort) in the front. Direct hit – destroyed house and tower.

We found some road bridges to work on,

and I destroyed 1 end of one, damaged another. A good hop, with good results.

Mission #33 [USS Bataan] *WOW 15 July

TARCAP (Dickermann)

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

TO - 0530 LB - 0555 Land - 0735

My most exciting and "hairy" hop thus far, because of heavy 20 mm flak.

Our initial target was a supply dump NE-Chinnampo, but there was nothing there.

We dropped our Napalm on a village nearby, Destroying 5 bldgs, with good fires burning.

I hit both ends of a long warehouse with 2 x 100#, and got a direct hit on one end of a road bridge near there with 1 x 100#. We dropped 1 x 100# (Dick fired 2 x WP) in another Village, destroying 3 bldgs. I was leading the recco of the MSR east of Wolsari down to Pungchon at 1000', and 6 x 20mm double-mounts Opened up on me from a (previously) quiet area.

I barely escaped by "jinxing", then climbed up and spotted several places where gray smoke was hanging on the ground. I strafed 2, and all of them opened up on me again. I made another run, dropped my last 100#, damaging 1 (??) positions. Reported this posit. to Sitting Duck, etc. Very hairy there.

#34 [USS Bataan] 15 July

CAP (Dickermann)

Armament 4 x 20 mm, 1 ADSK-1

TO - 1500 Land - 1700

An average CAP. Dick led first half, I second half. 2 intercepts.

Excerpts from Letter No. 19 [USS Bataan]

***WOW 15 July**

Dear Folks,

We have completed our third day of this last cruise on the Bataan, and we

have had a touch of bad luck already. Day before yesterday, one of our planes torque-rolled or stalled out at the 90° position (as he was coming aboard - landing), and went into the water. The pilot was pretty lucky (water is just as hard as the ground when you hit it in an airplane) - he got out of the plane after it had sunk, with only cuts on his face and a broken collar-bone, and was rescued by the helicopter - our plane guard. Don't worry about me though (here is where I do a little bragging); I'm getting pretty sharp at this carrier work (I'm always careful, though). I have not had a wave-off now for about 15 landings.

We lost a pilot a couple of hours ago at K-6. He and another fellow had escorted one of our planes in there to land - the plane was shot up and could not land aboard here. Those 2 refueled and got loaded up to go back and provide close support for UN troops on Ch'angindo Island (a small island off the west coast of Haeju) which was under attack by the Communists. This fellow crashed after take-off, but we don't have any of the details yet. He would have been better off not flying - just one of those bad breaks.

I mention this being our last cruise on the Bataan; we are going to be based at K-6 (my old stomping ground) from 22 July - 2 Sept., still carrying on the job as we have been doing here with TF-95-1. Then on 2 Sept. we will come back aboard a carrier - the USS Sicily, and resume our carrier operations

... The lack of publicity (stateside) for the Bataan is one thing that really pees me off. We are doing the same job as the Phil Sea, Valley Forge, Bon Homme Richard, and Princeton on the East Coast, and in fact, we fly more missions per pilot and per plane than any one of those carriers. In fact, I'd go so far as to say we're doing more of a job than they are. They don't need 4 carriers on the east coast. (another

example of waste). The big deal for those carriers is that they have 4 or 5 Navy squadrons aboard - really crowded, too! (who aren't as good as Marine squadrons - but yet they get more publicity). It burns me! Politics.

... The weather has been bad again recently, and we haven't even averaged one hop per day on the pst cruise and this one. So I'm building up missions very slowly; I only have 34 now. I'll probably stop flying about 1-15 Oct., and will have right around 100 missions, I hope. I realize it's a little dangerous, but it's something different. Maybe it gives me a chance to work my meanness out...

Here is a comforting note to you all. The pilot we lost today is the first one we've lost since around 15 February - so you can see it's a pretty lucky squadron. The others (VMF-212, VMF-323, VMA-121, VMF-115, VMF-311) lose quite a bit more than that, and more often, too.

Well, this should prove that I'm not holding much back on you - and truthfully, I'm not in too much danger.

Don't worry about me - I don't want to see any more gray hairs on either of you in Jan.

Love, Johnny

Mission #35 [USS Bataan] 16 July

TARCAP (Munro) Wolsa'ri

Armament 1 x 500#VT, 8 x 100#, 6 x .50's

TO - 0720 BL - 0745 Land-0925

An average TarCap, except that I had no radio. We dropped by signals (strafing, etc). Dropped 500# on Gun Posit. on Amgac peninsula. Dropped 100# on several villages, getting good hits and starting fires. No outstanding incidents.

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CAM member Randy Thies called to Iraq

Combat Air Museum member **Randy Thies** left for Iraq last month to participate in an evidence gathering mission for the US Department of Justice. Randy was selected to go overseas as an evidence technician and archeologist to study the mass graves of people killed during Saddam Hussein's regime.

Randy is a prehistoric/burial archeologist for the Kansas State Historical Society. He was our guest speaker at the October Membership Luncheon when he spoke about the remains and burial sites for Confederate guerilla William Quantrill.

Randy stated that he and other experts going to the burial sites will be looking for the manner of death, personal effects, and trying to determine positive identities of the dead. The evidence gathered from their work will be used in Saddam Hussein's upcoming trial. Randy sees his selection to this mission as "...a personal and professional opportunity for me. It's like a crowning culmination of my career for me."

The group of experts will study at least 10 of some 260 identified mass gravesites for about a six month period before returning home. Randy said he would be based in the Green Zone in Baghdad.

We congratulate Randy on his selection to this investigative group, as it is truly a recognition of his expertise in this field. We also wish Randy a safe stay during his period in Iraq and a safe return.

If you want to keep track of what Randy is doing in Iraq, you can go to <http://thiesblog.blogspot.com>. ➔

February/March Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY

Monday, February 14

Valentine's Day Membership
Potluck Luncheon
Jean Wanner Education
Conference Center
11:30 a.m.

MARCH

There is no Membership
Luncheon in March.
The next luncheon will be
Monday, April 11.

**Monday, March 21 –
Thursday, March 24**

Aviation Education Class
JWECC
9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

➔ ➔ ➔



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