

COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

→ → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

April / May 2006 • Vol. 22, No. 3

Sharing the experiences of going Mach 3

Speaker tells CAM members about flying in
one of the world's greatest aircraft

Donald Mathers, Lieutenant Colonel, US Air Force (Retired), Topeka, was our first guest speaker for the New Year when he spoke during our February Membership Luncheon. His topic, the Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird and its predecessors, was especially interesting, as he had flown in this world famous, records setting Strategic Reconnaissance aircraft.

Colonel Mathers attended navigator training in Harlingen, Texas and flew in KC-97 and KC-135 tanker aircraft, including tours at Forbes Air Force Base (AFB) and Schilling AFB in Salina, Kansas. He commented that upon assignment to Schilling, he bought a home. That was on a Friday. On the following Monday, it was announced the base would be closed.

Other duty assignments had Colonel Mathers in Hawaii, McConnell AFB, Wichita, and at Offutt, AFB, Omaha (not necessarily in that order). His assignment to Beale AFB, California and the 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SRW) was to be a unique tour of duty. Colonel Mathers became a part of the initial group of Air Force personnel who put the SR-71 Blackbird into operational status. Beale AFB became home of all the Blackbirds and also the 903rd Air Refueling Squadron (ARS) with its KC-135Q tankers. The KC-135Qs were specially outfitted to refuel the SR-71 and

"Speaker," continued on page 9



*Donald Mathers
talks about
his association
with
the SR-71
Blackbird*

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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.

Armed Forces Day May 20

**CAM will be involved in the activities
We welcome your assistance**

Heartland Park raceway, immediately to the south of Forbes Field, will host its second **Armed Forces Day** recognition on **Saturday, May 20**. Gates open to the public at 2 p.m., and activities will run through the evening. *The Topeka Capital Journal*, Topeka Parks and Recreation, and AT&T are other major sponsors of this year's event.

As this *Plane Talk* goes to press, we do not yet have the schedule of activities, but **Mr. Bill Griffin** from Heartland Park was in the Museum March 7, and there will be a full schedule of things to do and see. Military and privately owned military static displays and a car show will take place during the day. A number of the new raceway buildings will be open to the public. The evening's events will be in the grandstands area.

CAM supported last year's event with several military vehicles, the Hiller helicopter, and a booth of Gift Shop items. We plan to support this year's event, too, and will have items for the static area. We will need volunteers to be with our displays, and we are making a schedule and numbers of volunteers needed to help with this.

Read, watch, and listen to the local news media in coming weeks for more information about the scheduled activities at Heartland Park on May 20 or call the Combat Air Museum to learn how you can help. ➔

Reunion of the Air Force Photo Mapping Association

Sheraton Hotel

Omaha, Nebraska

September 27 - October 1, 2006

Contact: Dale Kingsbury

(314) 961-0519

e-mail: Photomapper@charter.net

Dick Trupp steps down from Wing Commander/ Board Chairman and Volunteer Director

After a nine-year run as Wing Commander/Board Chairman and a seven-year run as Volunteer Director of Combat Air Museum, **Dick Trupp** has retired from these positions. Dick served as Wing Commander from 1997 – 2006 and Volunteer Director 1999-2006. He remains as an active volunteer and active member of the Board of Directors. To the best of our knowledge, his recent announcement constitutes his third retirement. One was from the US Naval Reserves; one was from IBM, and now his reduced role at CAM. We are also pretty sure his tenures as Wing Commander and Volunteer Director probably brought him the most headaches for no retirement benefits.

Dick was recognized for his service as Wing Commander and Volunteer Director during the last Membership Luncheon. On behalf of the Museum and its members, **Gene Howerter** presented Dick with an engraved plaque giving his positions and year-span of service in each. So, the sad news is Dick has stepped down from two key positions. At present, these two positions are vacant.

The good news is Dick is still on the Board of Directors, still does volunteer work at the Museum, will continue teaching the Aviation Education Classes, will still be CAM's representative on the Topeka Tourism Alliance, and will remain a CAM ambassador-at-large. In virtually all his endeavors with CAM, Dick has been a voice, and a very important voice, for the Museum. We thank him with deep appreciation for all the time and service he has given CAM as Wing Commander and Volunteer Director. ➔



*Former Wing Commander and Volunteer
Director Dick Trupp*

Join the Combat Air Museum!
Your membership
and support are important to us.

Seaman High students will present their History Day projects at the April 10th Membership Luncheon

Our speakers for the April Membership Luncheon will be students from Seaman High School in north Topeka. These high school juniors in Mrs. Susan Sittenauer's History class will be giving presentations of their respective entries for the national History Day contest.

This is the fifth year Susan's students have visited CAM with their presentations. Usually, they have faced the local and perhaps the district level of competition before coming to our luncheons. The next step is State competition for those who qualify, and our Membership Luncheons give the students an opportunity to fine-tune their projects before that level.

The top two finishers in each category at State qualify for Nationals in Washington, D.C. Susan has become rather familiar with our Nation's capital as she has taken Seaman students to Nationals for several years running. The April luncheon is Monday, April 10 at 11:30 a.m.

As *Plane Talk* goes to press, we do not have a June speaker lined up, but we will report on that in the next issue.

We do have a speaker lined up for the August Membership Luncheon. Randy Theis will be talking to us about his tour and work in Iraq last year that had him involved in forensic-related work with items recovered from mass gravesites. The August luncheon is Monday, August 14 at 11:30 a.m.

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Visit our website at
www.combatairmuseum.org

Volunteer hours net a donation to CAM from Westar's Community Partners program

Bob Crapser's volunteer work with the Museum provided an extra bonus in March. Because of his hours spent at CAM, our name was drawn by Westar Energy to receive a \$750 donation. Bob's wife, Judy, is an employee of Westar, and the company has a Community Partners program. Judy's spouse Bob is eligible to record his volunteer time at CAM with Westar.

After the first 100 hours, the volunteer is eligible to receive \$100 for the activity for which he or she volunteers. For each additional 100 hours, the volunteer's name goes into a pool for drawings. The drawings are for \$500, \$750, and \$1000 gift donations. During 2005, Bob put in between 600 and 700 hours of volunteer time, so his name went into the pool six times. When the drawings took place, Bob's name was in the \$750 category.

The recognition/awards luncheon was held at Topeka's downtown Ramada Inn on March 8. Danny San Romani attended the luncheon with Bob. So, on behalf of Combat Air Museum, thank you, Bob, and thank you, Judy, very much for making this gift donation possible for the Museum. →

In Memoriam

Joseph W. "Joe" Walker, Jr.
February 21, 1928 –
March 5, 2006
SNB-5 and BT-13
Restoration Crews
#3031

Get young people interested in science and math with enrollment in CAM's Aviation Education Class

Combat Air Museum is making a special effort to join in the promotion of science and math to young people. Using the theme of aviation and the excitement of computer flight simulators, classes on the Principles of Flight, and hands-on studies of actual aircraft, we hope to be a part of this national endeavor. The Museum will work with the local school districts and particularly those engaged in the teaching of physical sciences, physics and math to offer what we can to attract the interest of young people in these vital subjects. We wish to give students experiences that might lead to careers in engineering, flying, aerospace and beyond.

Over the last several years Combat Air Museum has conducted classes for students between the ages of 7 and 15 in its Aviation Education Class, focusing on the history of aviation, principles of flight, parts of an airplane and how they work, weather and weather forecasting, aviation communications and flight control. These four-day long classes are conducted over schools' spring break and three times in the summer.

The cost of the class is \$35.00 per student. For an additional \$40.00, a student can take a real airplane flight and experience much of what is covered in the class curriculum, including communicating with a control tower and handling the flight controls. This is the kind of experience that hopefully might encourage a young person to pursue a related career in a physical science, physics or mathematics.

If you would like to have a child, a grandchild, and/or a young friend enroll in the Museum's Aviation Education Class, call the Museum at 862-3303. The next Aviation Education Classes will be offered June 5-8, July 10-13 and August 7-10.

Stu Entz
Board Secretary

April/May Calendar of Events

April

Monday, April 10

Membership Luncheon

**Jean Wanner Education Conference
Center**

11:30 a.m.

**Our guest speakers will be students
from Seaman High School giving
their History Day presentations.**

Saturday, April 29

Celebrity Pancake Feed

Hangar 602

7 a.m. – 12 p.m.

May

Saturday, May 20

Armed Forces Day

Heartland Park

2 p.m. – To be announced

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2006 Events Calendar

*Event dates subject
to change*

April

29 Celebrity Pancake Feed

May

**20 – Armed Forces Day at
Heartland Park**

June

**5-8 Aviation
Education Class**

July

**10-13 Aviation
Education Class**

August

**7-10 Aviation
Education Class**

September

**30 - Winged Foot 5K
Run/Walk**

→ → →

General Frederick Funston revisited

an e-mail from one of our readers

Life Member **Pat Marriott** of Wilmington, North Carolina sent us the following e-mail in response to our *Plane Talk* article on **Jack Vaughn** and his Membership Luncheon presentation about **General Frederick Funston**.

"Thanks to *Plane Talk* and to Jack Vaughn for the wonderful article about General Frederick Funston in the February/March 2006 issue.

"The concluding paragraph, however, needs some elaboration. It is true in general, as Jack says, that 'Frederick Funston was a famous person of his time, yet he seems to be not that well known today.' But there is one place where he is certainly well known: San Francisco. I spent most of my life in the San Francisco Bay Area, so please allow me to add to Jack's comments.



**General
Frederick
Funston**

Funston took charge of firefighting, relief, and law enforcement. He set up camps for the 300,000 homeless and was instrumental in setting up sanitation, medical, and communication facilities. Yes, 'he was later criticized for his methods and lack of authority,' but because of his leadership, order was quickly restored to a city that had largely been destroyed.

A comparison to recent events in New Orleans could be made, but is hardly necessary.

The San Francisco Board of Trade recommended to the President in 1913 that General Funston be promoted to Major General, and this was accomplished in 1916.

When General Funston died in 1917, his body was moved from San Antonio to San Francisco, where it lay in state in the City Hall rotunda. (He was the first person ever to [lie] in state in City Hall.) The cannon of the San Francisco Presidio fired a thirteen-gun salute, and the city was respectfully silent for two minutes. He was buried in full dress uniform in the Presidio cemetery.

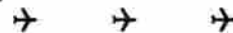
The Presidio is now part of the National Park Service's Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and I believe his gravesite is still accessible to the public. General Funston is remembered in San Francisco not only by historians but by visitors to Fort Funston, also a part of the GGNRA, and strollers on Funston Avenue.

For much more, visit the website of The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco and the National Park Service biography of Funston at:

<http://www.nps.gov/prs/history/bios/funston.htm>.

Thanks again for the great piece about this early 20th century hero."

And we thank Pat very much for taking the time to provide us with this information and give us a San Francisco perspective on General Funston.



*Funston photo courtesy of Major General Frederick Funston
Boyhood Home and Museum website and
The Kansas State Historical Society*

**A hundred years later,
General Funston
is still regarded as
"The Man Who
Saved San Francisco"
after the 1906
earthquake and fire.**

A hundred years later, General Funston is still regarded as 'The Man Who Saved San Francisco' after the 1906 earthquake and fire. Jack's article contains a paragraph about this, but to San Franciscans it deserves an entire volume.

Acting entirely on his own authority (his commanding officer was at his daughter's wedding in Chicago and communications in 1906 were primitive), General

Volunteers are creating unique gifts in Hangar 604

The guys wearing a layer of sawdust in Hangar 604 continue producing items for sale through our Gift Shop. The recent production lines include Wren and Bluebird "Hangars" at \$8 and \$10 dollars respectively. A line of airplane wind vanes is also in production. The scooter planes are still being built—and sold. We plan to have examples of each product set out for sale at the Celebrity Pancake Feed. →

Making progress in the restoration of the 1941 Dodge Ambulance

For the first time in about 23 years, the engine of the 1941 Dodge Ambulance was fired up, and **Don Dawson** drove the vehicle a little ways up and down the flight line. The initial outing was a success for the engine and steering, and it also revealed the need to rebuild a leaking brake cylinder. The success was due to the work Don and **Beattie Dickson** did on the ambulance over the past year and it is a major step in the vehicle's restoration.

Another step was made on March 3, when the Ambulance was loaded on **Stu Entz's** trailer and hauled to the Kaw Area Technical School in Topeka. **Gene Howerter**, a retired Kaw Area teacher, made arrangements with the school for students in the Auto Repairs Course to use the Dodge as hands on experience in painting automobiles. CAM supplied the paint, Kaw Valley will provide the labor. If the school's schedule allows, we hope to have the Ambulance back in time for the May 20 Armed Force Day event at Heartland Park. (See article on page 2.) The painting does not complete the restoration, but it is another major step in the process.

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Join the
Combat Air
Museum!

New Supporters

Dr. Douglas Anderson & Family
Steve Butsen
Charles Cutler
Ray Irwin
Donald & Becky Mathers

Renewing Supporters

The Amos Family
Joe, Julie, & Zak
Larry & Connie Arensman
Gale Beal
Chuck & Connie Bradshaw
Bill Clawson
Ron & Linda Coash
Bill Davis
Guy Homoly
Phil Hotzel
James & Mary Hunt
Harold Jameson
Donald Jesse
Bonnie Kreuter
Scotty Larimer
Roger & Linda Lovett
Richard Long & Sharon McDorman
Bill & Irene Mohney
Martin Moyer
Carl Nall
Don & Nancy Nisbett
Rebecca Norburg-Carter
Richard Olson
Amos Page
Lloyd Thomas
Vic & Marjorie Van Camp
James & Anita Young
Kevin Zvilna

→ → →

We'd like to have you volunteer

To paraphrase the old US Army recruiting poster with Uncle Sam, "We Need You" to consider volunteering at Combat Air Museum. It is an enjoyable place to volunteer, and the Museum could use your help in the following ways:

Working in our Gift Shop It's a great opportunity to meet visitors to our museum. They come from all over the country and many foreign nations. Between visitors you can read, listen to music or the radio, watch TV, etc. Whether you could help one day a week or one day a month, it would be greatly appreciated.

Carpentry Volunteers in the Museum's woodwork shop build exhibit cases and accessories for exhibits, perform hangar maintenance and repairs, and even build items for sale in the Gift Shop. In our two large hangars, there seem to always be several tasks for those with carpentry skills.

Shop Work The Workshop in Hangar 604 is a busy place and can use anyone who likes to work with their hands. Restoring aircraft can be a very enjoyable way to spend half a day a week.

Hangar and Exhibit Appearance This seems to be a never-ending task – cleaning the hangar floors and the exhibited aircraft, engines, and many other artifacts in the hangar bays. It is a very important task and will keep folks busy all the time.

Educational Programming The Museum seeks to promote young people's interest in the physical sciences, physics, math, and history using aviation as an interesting theme for creating excitement in learning. We have helped students develop oral histories that have gained them national recognition and college scholarships.

Community Activities The Museum is a major Topeka attraction and is a major participant in the development of tourism and economic development in the community. It would be most helpful if you could serve as the Museum's representative in these activities.

Project Assistant The Museum has numerous special events such as the annual Celebrity Pancake Feed, participating in patriotic events in the community, the Winged Foot 5K Fun Run and Walk, guest speakers, mobile exhibits, and providing hangar space for receptions and dinners.

Graphics Museum publications, special events announcements, exhibits texts, and photography is a major part of providing our visitors with a quality, educational experience. Artwork, computer graphics, signage, newsletter and brochure development are skills badly needed by the Museum.

Exhibit Development This includes research, design and development of exhibits. Working with our Curator Danny San Romani and our Archivist Tome Witty, our carpentry shop and machine shop, you can have the experience of putting together a museum exhibit - anything from a full-sized airplane to a small historic aviation artifact.

Accessioning Artifacts This is a time consuming, often tedious task, but all-important in any museum's care and accountability of its collection. There are literally thousands of items in the collection from lapel pins to uniforms to artwork and all manner of things in between that need to be identified, cataloged and marked.

Tour Guides The Museum conducts many group tours, some often requiring more than one guide. We schedule a minimum of 10 people for a tour, and have had as many as 100 in a group. A guide can be most helpful in making a tour a worthwhile experience for our visitors.

Combat Air Museum is like many community activities in that it relies on volunteers to serve and support its purpose and activities. We want and need you. Please join us for a day or two a month. Call me at 221-2121, and I will meet you at the Museum and show you around.

Stu Entz
Board Secretary

"Speaker," con't. from page 1

its predecessors, the CIA's A-12 and M-21 reconnaissance aircraft, and three USAF program YF-12As interceptor prototypes.

Colonel Mathers was assigned to the navigation training section of the 9th SRW. He first flew in a Blackbird in 1967, going Mach 3.1 (3.1 times faster than the speed of sound) at 81,500 feet altitude. Colonel Mathers said that at that altitude, you see a black horizon.

There were three SR-71 versions. The SR-71A was the most prominent. It was a two seat reconnaissance aircraft with a pilot in the front cockpit and Reconnaissance Systems Operator (RSO) in a second, tandem cockpit. Colonel Mathers was an RSO. Two SR-71Bs were built. They had a stepped cockpit behind the front cockpit and were flown as trainers. There was a singular SR-71C. Colonel Mathers said that, built as a trainer, it was somewhat a composite Blackbird and not flown much.

At this point, Colonel Mathers went briefly into the history behind the SR-71. Many, and perhaps most of us, have heard of Area 51 or Groom Dry Lake, the secret Air Force/Government test location/air base in Nevada. At one time called homeplate, Colonel Mathers referred to this site as "the ranch" during his presentation.

And most of us probably think the SR-71 was the subject of all the sightings of one of the mysterious aircraft developed and secretly flown out of Area 51. Well, maybe. But it is more likely the long black jets flying over the test location were A-12s, or YF-12As, or an M-21 carrying a D-21 drone. The first two flew before the SR-71, the third flew the same day as the first flight of the SR-71. In fact, the SR-71 conducted its test flights from Palmdale, California.

The A-12 was designed as a follow-on to Lockheed's very successful U-2 reconnaissance plane built for the CIA. The need for a follow-on was created shortly after the U-2 began its overflights of communist bloc nations in 1956. Lockheed designers, including Clarence "Kelly" Johnson, and US officials were sur-

prised at the ease in which Soviet radar systems acquired and tracked the U-2s before and after they entered Soviet air space. Johnson and others felt the U-2 could fly with invulnerability for about two years, requiring the study and design of a follow on reconnaissance platform, and soon. As it turned out, the U-2 overflights of the Soviet Union lasted until May 1, 1960 when CIA pilot Gary Francis Powers and his U-2 were downed over the Soviet Union.

The CIA wanted a high speed, high flying, long range reconnaissance aircraft with low or invisible radar cross section. In late 1958 President Eisenhower gave the go ahead for the hardware development for such an aircraft, funded from the CIA's special (secret) Contingency Reserve Fund. In 1959 the Convair Division of General Dynamics and Lockheed responded to a General Operational Requirement for developing and designing the next "spy" plane.

By July 1959, the CIA gave official approval to

Lockheed to proceed with its A-12 design, and in August, Lockheed and its "Skunk Works" was officially awarded the contract to build the next CIA reconnaissance aircraft. Photos of the A-12 look remarkably like the SR-71, only the A-12 was a single seater. Although the SR-71 became a major rework of the A-12, it had so many

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changes it was a significantly different aircraft.

Titanium was used in building the A-12's airframe, a first for the industry. Then there were the special fuel, lubricants and hydraulics. The windows took three years and two million dollars to develop.

In March 1960, folks in the Air Force Program Office in Washington, D.C. asked Lockheed and Kelly Johnson if the A-12 could be configured for an interceptor version as a standby air defense fighter. Johnson said yes, and design work began on the two seat AF-12. The design eventually and officially became the YF-12A. Only three were built.

"Speaker," con't. on page 10

"Speaker," con't. from page 9

The A-12s and YF-12As were built in Burbank, California, then crated in sections and trucked to the "flight test location," all under a heavy cloak of secrecy. They were then reassembled and prepared for flight. The first A-12 flew April 25, 1962, but over five years passed before the plane flew its first operational "hot" mission.

During that five-year period the YF-12A made its first flight in August 1963. Also during this time the M-21/D-21 combo of a jet and drone was conceived as an extension of the original A-12 reconnaissance capability. Two M-21s (M for Mother) were modified from A-12 airframes and modified to carry a D-21 (D for daughter) unmanned reconnaissance drone piggyback. This combo first flew December 22, 1964, and the first launch of a D-21 from (??) and M-21 occurred on March 5, 1966. The SR-71 also made its first flight on December 22, 1964.

A mid-air contact between an M-21 and its D-21 drone during a July 1966 launch destroyed the M-21. Afterwards, the M-21/D-21 combination was dropped in favor of using B-52Hs to air launch the drones.

President Lyndon Johnson made two announcements regarding the SR-71 family in 1964. The first, in February 1964, announced the existence of an experimental jet aircraft, the A-11. He also said the aircraft could fly at 2,000 miles per hour at 70,000 feet altitude. The A-11 existed only as a model and step in Lockheed's design to the A-12. It was never an airplane. Five months later, in July, LBJ announced to the world the existence of Lockheed's Mach 3-capable reconnaissance aircraft for the Strategic Air Command. He called it the SR-71 and said it could fly over 80,000 feet and was powered by J58 engines. He further announced the program was first initiated in 1963 and flight testing would begin in early 1965.

The first SR-71 – an SR-71B trainer – entered the Air Force operational inventory in January 1966 with the 4200 Strategic Reconnaissance Wing. Six months later, this Wing was reorganized into the 9th SRW, and all SR-71s began flying with the 1st and 99th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadrons. All the while, the CIA was still looking for the A-12's first operational mission.

The A-12 finally deployed to Kadena AFB, Okinawa in 1967 and flew its first operational mission May 31, 1967 over North Vietnam. January 1968, in response to the seizure of the USS Pueblo, the A-12 flew a its first mission over North Korea.

In March 1968, the A-12 flew its last of some 30 missions over North Vietnam and two months later flew its last mission over North Korea.

In fact, the May 8, 1968 mission was the last operational mission for the A-12. The first SR-71s began arriving at Kadena in March to take over reconnaissance duties. The A-12s returned to the US, and on June 21, 1968, the A-12 made its last flight. Between 1968 and 1973, the SR-71s flew some 600 missions during Vietnam Operations.

Colonel Mathers then talked more specifics about the SR-71s. Like their predecessors, they were built of titanium and other composite materials.

He said the plane was 93% titanium and the rest was Teflon-like radar absorbing materials. At Mach 3.2, skin temperatures reached 500+ degrees Fahrenheit, and titanium was the best metal to handle the temperatures and the expansion and shrinkage experi-

enced with high speed/high altitude flight.

The cockpit glass was also specially made, as it had to withstand temperatures over 600 degrees F.

Colonel Mathers said there was a lot of roundness in the SR-71's construction. The designers of Lockheed's famous Skunk Works thought this approach was best for producing a lower radar cross section (RCS). Then Colonel Mathers pointed out the shape of Lockheed's F-117 Nighthawk stealth fighter – also a product of the Skunk Works - with all its rakish angles.

Two Pratt & Whitney J58 turbojet engines were used in the SR-71As, specially modified for use in the Blackbird. As stated previously, they burned a JP-7 fuel, which had a high flash point. Air inlets for the engines were spiked and moveable. They shrank or retracted under high speeds to keep a proper airflow into the engines for fuel efficiency and to counter stalls. Colonel Mathers said that you did not want to stall a SR-71. The spiked air inlets were apparently sensitive enough to move in or out as the aircraft turned to compensate for

**Once dressed,
the pilot and RSO
lay down in a recliner
until they arrived
at the airplane.**

differences in inlet air pressures. If an "unstart," or loss of thrust, occurred in an engine, the spike would immediately extend out to restart the engine.

Colonel Mathers spoke of the full pressure altitude suits they wore and that the process of dressing was orchestrated in order to get into the suit, boots, gloves and helmets. Once dressed, the pilot and RSO lay down in a recliner until they arrived at the airplane. He said every new SR-71 member had two flying suits.

A typical reconnaissance bay payload would include three cameras and electronic, magnetic and radiation sensors. There was also side-looking radar. The SR-71 could photograph 100,000 square miles in one hour. With ASA 8 film, a resolution of 2 inches was possible. The navigation system was a star-tracking system with a 61 stars chart. This system produced an accuracy of one-half mile after 24 hours at Mach 3.2. Colonel Mathers said the Blackbird had a turn radius of 175 miles. This meant maneuvering in and around the area of Beale AFB was somewhat restricted. There were limited exit avenues from the base because of the sonic booms generated by the SR-71. He said phone calls came frequently to the base with the caller complaining of no eggs, no milk, roosters not interested in hens, and at least one house being knocked off its foundation.

Colonel Mathers said training for SR-71 duty consisted of 10 months training to a combat ready status. Twelve simulator missions were flown, then 100 hours minimum flight time in an SR-71 before deployment. The pilot also had to fly three SR-71B check rides.

During its career, the SR-71 set over 25 world records for speed and altitude. Most, if not all, still stand. The aircraft was officially retired in September 1989. Colonel Mathers said a project named AURORA was thought by many at the time to be a follow-on to the SR-71, but actually that project served as a cover for the Northrop B-2 bomber. In 1994 three Blackbirds were placed briefly back into service as Congress felt the US was lacking in its strategic reconnaissance capabilities.

But in 1997, President Clinton signed an order that ended all funding for the SR-71 program.

We recently received the first quarterly issue of *Logbook Aviation History*, published by Aviation Antiquities Service. This issue had an article on the SR-71 and listed the disposition of the 32 aircraft built, including

the SR-71Bs and SR-71C. Twelve of the SR-71s were destroyed during the program's history. Of the remaining aircraft, according to the listing, two SR-71As are operational with the US Air Force out of Edwards AFB, California. One SR-71A and one SR-71B are operational with NASA, and one SR-71A is in Lockheed's Plant 42, Palmdale, California in the Reserve Fleet. All other SR-71s are in museums.

What kind of impression did serving with the SR-71s leave on Colonel Mathers? His car tag reads BN MACH3. Enough said? We truly appreciate Colonel Mathers talking to us about what it was like to be around and fly in one of the world's greatest aircraft of all time. It is still a fascinating plane. ➔

Phone calls came frequently to the base with the caller complaining of no eggs, no milk, roosters not interested in hens, and at least one house being knocked off its foundation.

For more information

For those who would like to read about the SR-71 and its predecessors, try Jay Miller's *Lockheed Martin's Skunk Works*, published by Midland Publishing Company, 1995.

For local readers of *Plane Talk*, there are two SR-71s available for view that are within a day trip drive. One is at the Cosmosphere in Hutchinson, Kansas. The other is at the Strategic Air and Space Museum near Ashland, Nebraska.

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Celebrity Pancake Feed is coming up

We need you to volunteer

CAM starts its fund-raising season with the annual **Celebrity Pancake Feed**. This year's feed will be held on **Saturday, April 29 from 7 a.m. until 12 noon.**

This is a volunteer intensive event, so please block out that date on your calendars and come out to help this major fund-raiser. We will move aircraft and set up tables and chairs and the griddle on the Thursday and/or Friday before the feed. The day of the event, we usually begin our final preparations about 6 a.m. so we are ready to serve at seven.

Areas where we need volunteers the day of the event include:

Ticket sellers

Kitchen Police (KP) duty – make fresh pots of coffee, refill juice pitchers

Runners for transporting empty and full coffee pots to and from the kitchen

Sausage cookers/servers – sometimes with a celebrity

Drinks servers

Table cleanups

Cleanup crew after the event is over.

The Pancake Feed has traditionally been a fun event for everyone involved. Member **Jim Leighton** plans to have a sound system going for us, and member/music teacher **Dan Pulliam** plans to have some of his young folks in to play music.

So, please come out and help us. If you are not able to work the event, come on out and support it by buying a ticket and eating some celebrity pancakes.

See you on the **29th of April.** →

Visitors

During **January**
the Museum had
393 visitors
from **25** states
and
Canada
Great Britain

During **February**
we had
529 visitors
from **30** states,
Washington, D.C.
and
Austria
Brazil
Canada



Combat Air Museum
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