

COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

→ → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

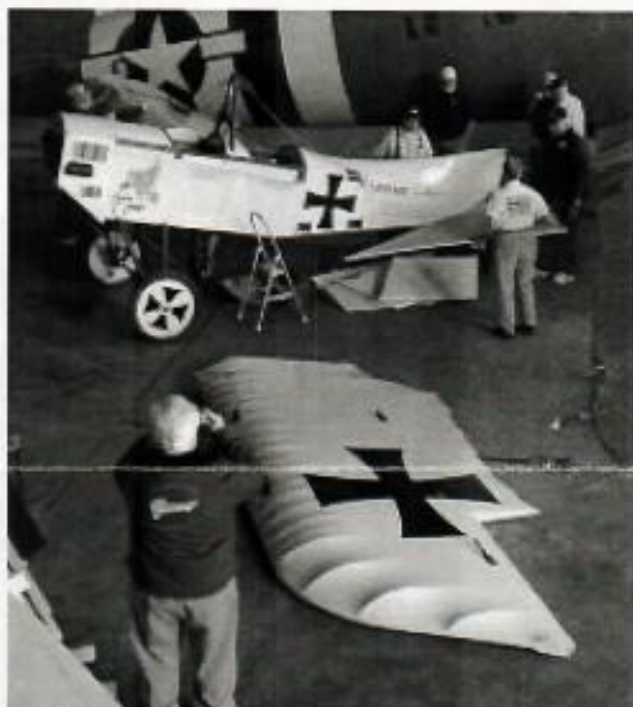
June / July 2006 • Vol. 22, No. 4

Replica of a German World War I Taube is added to the Museum collection

The Combat Air Museum received a welcome addition to our collection of aircraft Saturday, May 12, when **Mr. Dick Starks** of Parkville, Missouri donated his homebuilt, 52% scale replica of a German World War I Taube ("dove") to the Museum. Mr. Starks sent an e-mail to CAM during the first week of April, asking if we would be interested in accepting the Taube as a donation. **Gene Howerter** took it from there, answered in the positive, and kept up a continued e-mail contact with Dick over the next five weeks working out details of date, time, place of delivery and level of support we could give him in re-assembling the aircraft. Dick and his wife, **Sharon**, would trailer the aircraft to Topeka.

Dick had flown the aircraft in numerous airshows over the past couple of years, but told us it would be donated to us as a static display, which was fine with us. He is a member of a group known as the "Dawn Patrol" that fly scaled, replica World War I aircraft out of an airport on the west side of Gardner, Kansas. Several members of the Dawn Patrol came to Topeka to assist with the re-assembly and take part in the transfer of the aircraft to CAM. Locally, **Kevin Drewelow**, a long-time friend of CAM and a good friend of Dick's, also came out to help re-assemble the Taube.

"Taube," continued on page 10



Aircraft components are laid out for assembly

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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.

Welcome

With this issue we welcome **Lois Ecord** to our Museum staff as Office Manager. Lois started her introduction to the job during the last week of April and started solo on May 1. Besides all the tasks associated with Office Manager, Lois has also been learning who the folks are who volunteer at the Museum. So, please come up to the office and introduce yourself so Lois can better associate faces to names, and names to what you do at the Museum as a volunteer.

We also say good-bye to **Jane Weinmann**, whose last workday was April 28. Jane remains in Topeka and has started in a new job. As her new schedule allows, Jane has been in a few times covering more aspects of the Office Manager's job with Lois. Also, and again as her new work schedule allows, Jane may be back on occasion working as a volunteer.

We wish Lois and Jane our best in their new positions. ➔

Visitors

During **March**
the Museum had
965 visitors
from **31 states**
and Puerto Rico
and
Brazil
Canada
France
Russia
Scotland

During **April**
we had
821 visitors
from **36 states**
and
Austria
Canada
Mexico

➔ ➔ ➔

2006 Events Calendar

*Event dates subject
to change*

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

➔ ➔ ➔

Freedom Family LC offers \$10,000 grant to CAM

Combat Air Museum received a \$10,000 grant for capital improvements in mid-April from **Ms. Ruth Fink** and the **Freedom Family LC**. Early this year, **Mr. Terry Wages** contacted **Dick Trupp** on behalf of Ms. Fink and asked if we had some projects to do that the Freedom Family LC might possibly fund. As most of you readers know, we always have projects to do at the Museum, so for us it was just a matter of selecting a few of those and assigning priorities to them.

Four projects were selected for grant submittal. These included installing skylights in Hangar 604, replacing the overhead lights in both hangars, repairing/replacing the sidewalk between 602 and 604 and

repairing the entrance apron on the west side of 604, and funding for restoring the Hiller helicopter. We had local contractors come out to the Museum to bid on the skylights, lighting, and sidewalk projects.

In the meantime, Dick invited Ms. Fink and Mr. Wages to tour the Museum and see the areas of attention. They accepted and spent over two hours with Dick and never left 602. After their visit, Mr. Wages called and told us to submit our request package.

The grant we received, as chosen by the donor, is to fund the installation of skylights in Hangar 604. The work began the week of May 22.

Ruth Fink has been a supporter of Combat Air Museum for a number of years, contributing \$500 annually to CAM through the Fink Foundation. This \$10,000 grant will make a major improvement to the lighting situation in Hangar 604. It is good for the Museum, and it is good for our landlord, Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority, as we are making a major improvement to one of its properties.

The remaining projects will be pursued as we

look into other grant opportunities. Forty per cent of the overhead lights in each hangar do not work. This project (\$19,655) calls for replacement of the existing overhead lights with single-bulb metal halide fixtures and changes the voltage from 120 volts to 208 volts to improve efficiency. In Hangar 602, we would go from 52 overhead lights, 21 per cent of which do not currently work, down to 18 state-of-the-art lights that

would provide sufficient lighting in the hangar. The numbers are similar for Hangar 604, and these will reduce even further once the skylights are installed. The "improve efficiency" part of the project going from 120 to 208 volts means lower

electrical bills – a big plus for the Museum.

The sidewalk repair/replacement (\$5,335) is also high on the project list, as it becomes a safety issue for visitors and volunteers alike. We are okay for right now, but the concrete continues to deteriorate with use and especially with the harsh effects of winter. The same goes for the concrete outside the member's entrance to 604.

The Hiller is going to take funds to restore, as any restoration does. Following closely on the Hiller are the painting of the F-84F, and the restoration work and painting of the F-86H. Last fall we acquired a bid for painting the F-84F. It was \$19,000. Restoring/painting/preparing these warbirds for exhibit is not an inexpensive process. That is why grants such as this one from Ruth Fink and Freedom Family LC are so important to our mission.



This \$10,000 grant will make a major improvement to the lighting situation in Hangar 604.

Pancake Feed, entertainment and lots of coffee

We had one of the most successful Pancake Feeds in the past several years on Saturday, April 29. We collected 435 tickets for the day and had nearly 30 celebrity flippers. The event raised over \$1700 for the Museum. Based on the weather of the previous day, we thought we had inherited the KU Relays' curse of bad weather on the day of the event. But we did not. It was cloudy, cool and a bit rainy, but nothing like the rains of the day before. In fact, it was a great day for a pancake feed. It was too wet for yard work or good golfing or other outdoors activities, so people came out to eat pancakes.

It was a good, fun, hectic day with the ever present "We are running out of coffee" comments taking place as the line of people snaked from the grill to behind the tail

of the F9F-5 Panther and on past the tail of the MiG-15 (about 65 feet). Although we came close, we did not run out of coffee. Two inches in a pot is still two inches of coffee.

Martin Moyer strategically placed himself and a large number of woodshop projects by the spiral staircase leading up to the Art Gallery deck. As folks waited in line, they could not help but see the scooter planes, wooden airplane wind catchers, and bluebird and wren hangars (houses) all for sale at our Gift Shop.

Jim Leighton loaned us his sound system, and we used it to play swing era music and for **Dick Trupp** and **Gene Howerter** to make announcements and introductions of our guest flippers. Fifth Grade musicians from **Williams Science and Fine Arts Magnet** and **Scott**

Computer Technology Magnet schools, under the direction of **Dan Pulliam**, played several selections for the crowd.



Left: Don Mathers with a lineup of visitors at the Blue Angel.

Below: Dan Pulliam directs students from Williams and Scott Magnet Schools



bring in over \$1700 for CAM

The cockpit of the Grumman F11F-1 Tiger, Blue Angel #5, was open for visitors to get into, and soon **Don Mathers** and **Bob Crapser** were assisting visitors young and old into and out of the fighter. Don also explained the inner workings of the cockpit to many aspiring fighter pilots.

Bob Carmichael of **Perkins Restaurant** was once again running the grill and provided the pancake mix, sausage, syrup and butter. It would be hard to find someone with Bob's temperament to work the grill. He is constantly in motion and always taking time to talk with the visitors and the celebrity flippers. He is a big part of the success of our Pancake Feeds.

An entertaining feature this year was the flip off among four local TV Weathermen. Steve Beylon of KSNT Channel 27, Roger Schwartz of WIBW Channel 13, and Blake Smith and Matt Miller of KTKA Channel 49 took part in the friendly contest. Now, we must say that Steve Beylon had an edge. He has been on the receiving end of Bob Carmichael's flipping for at least two or three years running. The other three were "newbies". The weathermen stationed themselves away

"Pancake Feed," continued on page 6



Jim Cates (left) and Dr. Jerry Farley behind the grill.

Our celebrity flippers

Our celebrity flippers included some "experienced hands" and several new folks. We greatly appreciate all of them for taking time to come out and be a part of this fund raiser, and we hope the new folks become part of our "experienced" celebrities. Our flippers included:

Steve Beylon	Channel 27 Weatherman
Bret Blackburn	Topeka City Councilman
Alexandra Blasi	Miss Capital City
Jim Cates	Radio Talk Host KMAJ AM 1440
Mike Coker	Director, Topeka Zoo
Ted Ensley	Shawnee County Commissioner
Dr. Jerry Farley	President, Washburn University
Richard Forester	President, Topeka Convention and Visitors Bureau (now named Visit Topeka, Inc.)
Ron Harbaugh	Director of Communications USD 501
Richard Harmon	Topeka City Councilman
Ann Mah	State Representative
Jim Menge	Tower Manager, Forbes Field
Matt Miller	Channel 49 Weatherman
John Nave	Topeka City Councilman
Belinda Post	Miss Topeka
Jeff Preisner	Topeka City Councilman
Dr. Tony Sawyer	Superintendent USD 501
Roger Schwartz	Channel 13 Weatherman
Bill Singer	Director of Shawnee County/Topeka Emergency Communications
Blake Smith	Channel 49 Weatherman
Bruce Steinbrock	WIBW AM/FM,
	and several members of the defensive team of the Washburn Ichabods football team.

→ → →

**"Pancake Feed,"
continued from
page 5**

from the grill and Bob would flip a series of pancakes to them. And we are not talking four or five feet away, either. Some of the tosses were 25 and 30 feet straight-line distance. Bob is notably accurate with his tosses, and the receivers dropped maybe a handful of pancakes among them. The crowd heartily applauded their efforts.

Gene Howerter was CAM's chief coordinator for the event, and we thank him for helping make it such a success. And a big Thank You goes to all our volunteers who came out before, during, and after the pancake feed to do the myriad of tasks necessary to run this event smoothly.

For future reference, we cannot perk three 30-cup coffee makers in the kitchen at one time without popping a circuit breaker. Nor can we perk two 30-cup and one 12 cup in the kitchen at the same time without the same result. But we did not run out of coffee. Never mind that we were perking it in the kitchen, the Gift Shop, and the Gift Shop Manager's office. →



Above: Alexandra Blasi, Roger Schwartz, Matt Miller, and Blake Smith serve up pancakes.



Visitors enjoy their pancakes and conversations



Plan to attend the June Membership Luncheon

Why were weather reconnaissance B-29 Superfortresses subject to being shot down by communist nations, and what was the strange boxy apparatus mounted on the top of the fuselage that seemed so out of place on an otherwise streamlined aircraft? These and other questions will be answered by our speaker, **Ralph Knehans**, during our June Membership Luncheon.

Ralph had an association with the WB-29s, their missions, and the continuing after effects for some of the air crewmen some 50 years later. The June luncheon is Monday, June 12 at 11:30 a.m.

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



Summer Aviation Education Classes start soon

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, 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 start June 5-8, with additional sessions July 10-13 and August 7-10. →

June/July Calendar of Events

June

Monday-Thursday, June 5-8

Aviation Education Class

JWECC

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Monday, June 12

Membership Luncheon

Jean Wanner Education Conference

Center

11:30 a.m.

Our guest speaker will be Ralph Knehans talking about Weather Reconnaissance B-29s

July

Monday-Thursday, July 10-13

Aviation Education Class

JWECC

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

There is no Membership Luncheon in July.

The next luncheon is Monday, August 14. Randy Thies will be speaking about his forensic work in Iraq last year.



Join the Combat Air Museum!

Your membership and support are important to us.

Students present their National History Day "Taking a Stand"



(L - R) Seaman High School juniors Leslie Carlson, Melinda Kahmeyer, and Dray Carlton were our guest speakers.

Three students from **Seaman High School** were our guest speakers for the April Membership Luncheon. Their presentations were from their projects for the National History Day competition. The theme for this year's contest was "Taking a Stand in History."

Their history instructor, **Mrs. Susan Sittenauer**, introduced the three juniors, **Leslie Carlson**, **Melinda Kahmeyer**, and **Dray Carlton**. Leslie is also the granddaughter of our volunteer treasurer, **Les Carlson**.

Once students have chosen a topic for the National History Day competition, they have to do the research and seek out as much as possible what are called "primary sources" or "primary references." The best primary source/reference would be an interview with a person personally involved with the event or topic of research. Personal letters, writings, diaries, notes, etc. of a person directly involved with an event or topic are other examples of primary resources. As part of their projects,

the students have to develop a list of their primary sources used in support of their presentation.

At the time of our luncheon, the students had gone through two levels of competition, local and District. The next level is State, held at the Eisenhower Center in Abilene, Kansas, then Nationals held at Washington, D.C. The top two District finishers in each presentation category go to State, and likewise, the top two finishers at State go to Nationals. Susan Sittenauer has taken students to Nationals for eight years running. There are several categories of presentation. Storyboards, audio-visual productions, readings, and first person/re-enactment are some of the categories.

Leslie and Melinda chose the Declaration of Independence as their topic for "Taking a Stand in History." That meant they had to rely heavily on finding written works by those who signed the Declaration of Independence. They gave their presentation in the form of

projects for CAM's April Membership Luncheon in History"

storyboards and in competition have to be by their exhibit to answer questions from the judges.

Through their research Leslie and Melinda found that while Thomas Jefferson authored the Declaration, he borrowed freely from others' ideas. There were 56 signers of the final document, and many of them lost their homes, property, and livelihoods as a result.

The United Kingdom was taxing the colonies because it was at war and needed to fund it. The powers in England considered the actions taken by colonists to oppose the taxation as traitorous, and those involved as automatic traitors to the King. Many of the colonists who took part in the opposition, and especially those whose signed the Declaration, had to flee for the safety of their lives, often breaking up their families in the process. The majority of people in the colonies at the time seemed loyal to the Crown, and those involved with the opposition and Declaration were viewed as extremists. One research source estimated about 20 percent of the colonists were Loyalists, another 20 percent were Revolutionists, and about 60 per cent appeared apathetic to it all. The Crown favored the Loyalists, and they had the most to lose should the Revolutionists be successful.

When asked how difficult they found their research for primary sources, Leslie and Melinda said that they found many reprinted papers and letters of the Declaration's signers at a library at The University of Kansas. They continued on to the State competition. And if they so chose, they could make changes to their presentation.

There were 56 signers of the final document, and many of them lost their homes, property, and livelihoods as a result.

Dray Carlton chose the June 6, 1944 D-Day landings at Normandy, France as his topic. He method of presentation was through a Digital VideoDisc (DVD) that he produced and narrated. The disc included a number of images of people, places and maps involved with the Normandy landings. He used a technique of fading the images in and out to indicate different periods associated with the planning, preparations, and execution

of the landings. Dray did an excellent job in producing his presentation. The material and his narration were informative and the presentation flowed smoothly. Some of the images were familiar to most of the audience, but Dray also found at least several that are not commonly seen

in history books or other published works on D-Day.

Dray had hoped to find a local veteran who had participated in the June 6, 1944 invasion, but was not successful. He finished third in the District competition, so did not advance to State. If anything, his not being selected gave us an idea as to how tough the competition is as Dray had a really excellent presentation.

This is the fifth time in the past six years we have been able to schedule students from Seaman High School for our April luncheon. It is one of our partnerships with education and young people. It is good for the Museum, and apparently Susan Sittenauer feels the same way, as she gladly accepts our invitation to bring a new group of students each year. ➔



"Taube," continued from page 1

The Taube and Dawn Patrol members arrived about 10 a.m. and were soon offloading the plane from its trailer. Once the components were laid out in Hangar 604, assembly went quickly and smoothly. Dick said it normally took about 1-1/2 hours to assemble all the parts into an airplane. It took a bit longer this day, as the workers took time to tell onlookers about the plane and what they were doing, but it all went together without a hitch. Soon we had a new addition sitting on the floor between Kilroy and the F-14A Tomcat. It is a classy looking aircraft.

The original Taube of World War I had a wingspan of 59 feet and was some 30 feet long. The replica has a span of 30 feet and length of 17 feet, and the kingpost supporting all the wire bracing on the top of the wing is about 8 feet off the floor. The wing shape is definitely based on the shape of a bird's wing.

A Taube would often fly over Paris for an hour at a time, dropping six-pound bombs and message containers or leaflets, demanding the city's surrender.

The original Taube could be called a fighter, a bomber, and an observation plane, and at some point in time during World War I, all would have been correct, although it was least successful as a fighter. Its niche was

more in observation and bombing. It was one of the first German aircraft introduced in 1914, but was already obsolete by the end of that year. At the beginning of the war, Taubes made up about half of Germany's air strength, and over 54 different variants flew throughout the war.

Dick brought a good deal of signage with the Taube covering its World War I history and information on the replica.

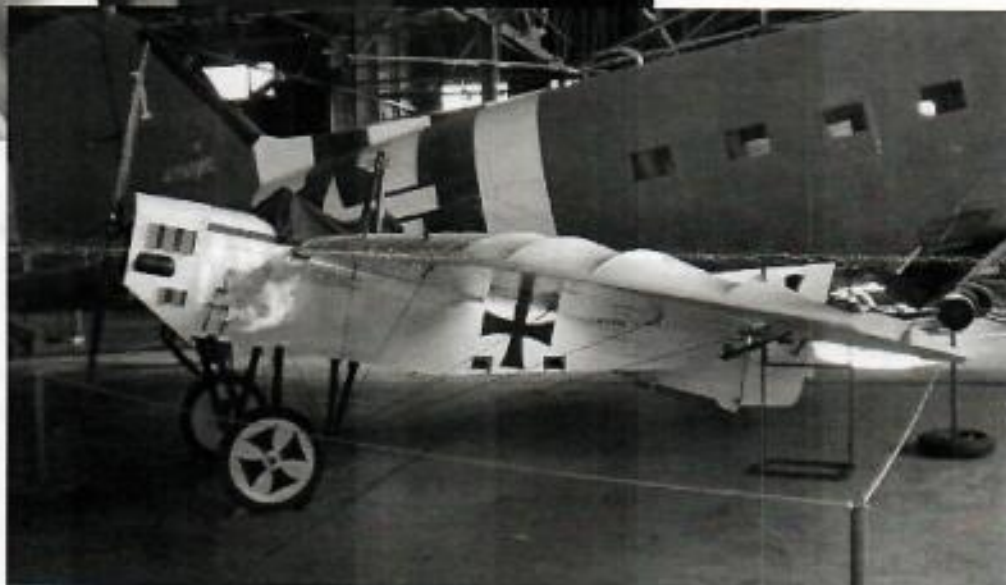
A role that seemed well suited for Taubes of World War I was as nuisance bombers. They had good range and loiter time. In August 1914, one Taube would often fly over Paris for an hour at a time, dropping six-pound bombs and message containers or leaflets, demanding



Opposite page: The aircraft is assembled

Above: Dick Starks talks with media

Right: The completed Taube sits between Kilroy and the F-14 Tomcat



the city's surrender. They were the first aircraft to bomb Paris, and later, London. The aircraft was a two-seater, with a pilot and an observer.

Taubes also flew escort for Zeppelin airship raids over England. When painted with a clear nitrate dope over linen, the Taube was almost impossible to see on a clear sunny day at altitudes of 6,000 feet and higher. Prior to the war, in 1913, one set an altitude record of 23,000 feet.

The replica represents a very historical aircraft of the First World War, now 90 years distant. We are very fortunate that Dick Stark chose us as a repository for something he obviously put a great deal of time and effort in to create. The aircraft is just pristine looking and

makes a wonderful addition to our collection.

Gene Howerter had contacted the media, and we had representatives of the *Topeka Capital-Journal* and TV Channels 49 and 13 out to observe the Taube take shape and interview Dick and Gene. Members of the media also got to sit in the small cockpit of the aircraft.

To Dick and Sharon Starks, we thank you, thank you, and thank you for this donation. And we extend our thank yous to the members of the Dawn Patrol, Kevin Drewelow, especially to Gene Howerter for coordinating the transfer of the plane, and to several of our volunteers who assisted in the preparation for receiving the aircraft, its re-assembly, and for putting things in Hangar 604 back as they were once the crowd had gone. →

The Battle for Leyte Gulf

An eyewitness account of KITKUN BAY's part in the Battle of Leyte Gulf off Samar Island, Philippines on October 25, 1944

Last Installment

This is the last installment of a written eyewitness account by LT(jg) Charles F. Spalding of the US escort aircraft carrier KITKUN BAY's part in the Battle of Leyte Gulf off Samar Island, Philippines on October 25, 1944. A force of six US escort carriers and their seven escorts of destroyers and destroyer escorts were surprised by the appearance of a superior Japanese force with four battleships, eight cruisers and eleven destroyers. LT(jg) Spalding describes the running surface and air battle between these forces.

The second installment ended with a Japanese fighter plane making a suicide dive at KITKUN BAY and the announcement of a fire in the carrier's hangar bay.

"...The plane skims the bridge, crosses the deck, plunges through the catwalk, forward on the port side, into the sea. There is a loud explosion.

"Fire! Fire on the hangar deck," the public address announces listlessly.

The fire is quickly controlled. On deck the wounded are attended. La Rue, Lock, Wortheimer and Lyons bring stretchers to the island where Dr. Hennessey treats them. Two men at the gun stand where the plane crashed have gone out of their minds. One runs off shrieking [sic], "Where is my right leg? Where is my right leg?"

Later they return shaking their heads.

A plane captain has been killed. There is a frightful gash across his chest as if he had been opened up by a plow. He lies exposed like a visceral diagram. Men look, then look away, dumb, pathetic, helpless, sick. The sweet cloying smell of dead flesh hangs in the catwalks.

The guns begin again. Dr. Hennessey and Dr. Schaffer work intently in the middle of wreckage and noise. Later they will do surgery, some delicate work. They don't lose a man though several are badly hit. The hand of a man shot in the

head begins to shiver violently. I have seen a squirrel's paw in identical throes. The doctor gives him plasma there on deck.

I looked behind at the Midway [actually renamed as the STLO]. The planes that passed us are now attacking her. There is a tremendous explosion that arrests everybody on our deck in rigid, horrified stances. Flames burst out of the ship and engulf it. The bridge is blown off and the elevator must rise a thousand feet in the air. A lookout with glasses trained on the fiery ship cries, "Guys are flying through the air!"

Another plane attacks us from the stern. The guns hack at it and tear it up. A wing comes off, the engine falls off. The plane spins dizzily into the sea ahead of the ship while the five hundred pound bomb it carried lobs over the radar screen, tears away a support of link chain forward by the starboard 40 millimeter and then explodes in the water below. The bridge is inundated. Water gushes down the voice tubes into the pilot house but there is no damage and for the time being there is a lull. I looked at my watch. It is twelve o'clock already!

Sandwiches and pails of coffee

appear on deck. In the ready room through bursts of excited talk I learn of the squadron's attack. The Skipper has made the most of his opportunity! The day turned on his leadership. On the way to the target he gave encouragement and final instructions. "I think we can do it," he said. Then, he put the squadron in perfect position for a coordinated attack, and together they swung the tide of battle.

The fighters went in and strafed. White, Davis, Stockard, Gallagher, McLachlin, Steece, Pollard, Krouse, Snyder. Lt. Garrison made twenty runs on a cruiser, ten times in bluff, without any ammunition. Lt. Sullivan attacked a destroyer that had pulled up within 500 yards of the Gambier Bay. The Gambier sustained twenty direct hits from six heavy cruisers at point blank range, but continued to limp along at two knots answering the enemy with her light anti-aircraft guns, until the very end.

The big damage was accomplished by our torpedo planes. Comdr. Fowler put his own bomb into a cruiser. Behind him came Globokar, Turner, and Issitt. Globokar bombed the same cruiser amidships. Turner and Issitt got more hits and then the vessel exploded and sank. Lee

hit a battleship.

Later in the morning Lt. Andrews led a torpedo attack. He and Buttle, Kalb, Curtis, and McDermitt attacked another cruiser from both sides. The cruiser turned to parallel Kalb and Curtis and then Buttle and Andrews and McDermitt each hit it amidships. They left the ship dead in the water and listing badly to port.

In the evening four ensigns, all new to the squadron, made an attack by themselves. Marchant, Kummerlin, King and Fulton chased the retreating fleet up into San Bernadino [sic] Straits and dropped on it without even fighter support. They did no great damage, but their attack has a special value. Marchant led them down on a battleship. Kumerlin believes he hit one cruiser amidships.

"Nice work," the Admiral said later.

"I'd have given a million dollars to see that thing go up, sir," Marchant exclaimed.

"Nice work," said the Admiral.

When the score is totaled, VC-5 is credited with two cruisers, hits on a battleship and damage to several ships. It is a record for a Composite Squadron.

We land planes all afternoon and then after dark, Lt. Lock manages without a single mistake although one TBM almost lands on top of him, knocking down the wind screen and forcing him to jump into the net for safety. The Negro gun crew finds huge amusement in the incident.

"What he do that for, Mr. Lock?" shouts one.

"What's he got against me?" Lock shouts back.

The mess boys howl with laughter.

Conversation is loud at dinner. Talk is all of certain defeat turned to victory by the ungainly, hastily built, expendable CVEs and their miniature squadrons. Tonight the jeeps are king.

My nerves are raw. A chain scratch-

ing over the deck sounds like a rocket and any sudden noise startles me. When the G.Q. bell clangs again at 2150 I almost leap through the overhead. Gathered in the ready room are many unfamiliar faces. Pilots from other carriers, separated in the action have landed aboard us.

"Bogeys at nine miles. Skunk dead ahead," C.I.C. reports.

A submarine has spied us and is giving bearings to enemy bombers flying in the moonlight above us.

"For Christ's sake!" mutters somebody disgustedly.

Slowly quiet settles over the ready room. If four battleships, six cruisers and fifteen destroyers cannot sink us in the daytime, a few planes and a submarine won't do any harm this night!

The pilots stretch out. Just the battle lights are left on. They diffuse a dim red light through the room. Laughter bubbles in the back row and subsides.

"Bogeys at seven miles."

Nobody pays much attention.

"Play the phonograph, Charlie," calls Issitt drowsily. "Play her softly."

I lay down on the floor and rest my head on a back pack.

"Bogeys now at six miles."

The phonograph is playing lowly.

"Hello fellows, this is Gladys Swarhout. I do want to thank you all wherever you are for your kind notes and wish each one of you a safe, speedy return home.

"Cut the crap, Gladys. Just sing," Growls Turner.

I turn uneasily to get comfortable, the room is almost dark, Gladys Swarhout is singing "Make Believe."

"Bogeys still at six miles."

The ship creaks. All around men are sleeping like children.

With victory in his grasp, why did Japanese Vice Admiral Kurita and CEN-

TER FORCE disengage from the battle?

The most prominent reason is that Kurita did not know where US Admiral "Bull" Halsey and his fleet carriers were. Kurita did not know that the Japanese NORTHERN FORCE of ships had successfully decoyed Halsey and his fleet out of the battle area. As far as Kurita knew, Halsey may have been just over the horizon within easy striking distance of US carrier aircraft. Kurita had no aircraft carriers and no air protection with his CENTER FORCE, and he had felt the effect of Halsey's planes the previous day. In fact, Kurita had been in battle with American forces for three days running.

On October 23, two days before the battle with TAFFY 3, US submarines DACE and DARTER picked up Kurita's CENTER FORCE as it steamed eastward in the Sibuyan Sea toward San Bernardino Strait. The submarines radioed the Japanese position, course and speed, and then attacked with torpedoes. Two cruisers were sunk and another was so badly damaged, it returned to safer waters.

The following day, aircraft from Halsey's SIXTH FLEET carriers found Kurita's Force and executed at least five separate attacks on the Japanese ships. The super battleship MUSASHI was sunk and a cruiser crippled. Loss of MUSASHI was no small thing. Japan had two of these super battleships, considered invincible with their 18-inch guns. MUSASHI did not die easily, but its loss was stunning to the Japanese. Its sister ship YAMATO was damaged during the attacks but not so much that it affected the battleship's operations. The pounding by the US carrier aircraft was such that

"Battle," continued on page 14

"Battle," continued from page 13

Kurita ordered CENTER FORCE to reverse course and head west. Only after cover of darkness did he reverse course once again and head east into the San Bernardino Strait

By October 25, Kurita was very wary of further air attacks, and he had no idea where Halsey and the SIXTH FLEET. As written in the first installment, two of the three Japanese naval forces (SOUTHERN and CENTER) were to move against US landing forces and ships on the east shore of Leyte Island in a two-pronged attack. The third force (NORTHERN) was to decoy the SIXTH FLEET away from Leyte. Kurita had no radio contact with NORTHERN FORCE, did not know their decoy was successful, and did not know Halsey's planes had virtually destroyed it.

Kurita did, however, learn that the lead element of SOUTHERN FORCE was defeated in a pre-dawn ambush by a US task force under Vice Admiral Jesse Oldendorf. This task force had been supporting the US invasion troops on the Leyte beaches. Ironically, five of Oldendorf's battleships were Pearl Harbor survivors. Three had been damaged and two sunk on December 7, 1941, then raised and repaired. When the second element of SOUTHERN FORCE arrived at the battle scene, it found crippled and sinking Japanese ships. The element commander, Vice Admiral Shima, reported the losses to Vice Admiral Kurita, then reversed course and steamed out of harm's way.

The inability to contact NORTHERN FORCE and the defeat of SOUTHERN FORCE left Kurita alone to face an

unknown enemy. The confusion during his running battle with TAFFY 3 had him thinking he was engaged with at least some of Halsey's fleet carriers. The smokescreens put out by TAFFY 3 and the fact the ships were moving from rain squall to rain squall had Center Force lookouts and at least some of the Admiral's aides believing they were fighting against fleet carriers and cruisers rather than escort carriers, destroyers and destroyer escorts.

The tenacity of the Americans' defense also effected Kurita's decisions. Aircraft attacks against CENTER FORCE were for the most part uncoordinated, but this also created the effect that there were more aircraft flying against the Japanese ships than really were. Their repeated attacks, real and feigned, caused Japanese ships to maneuver and otherwise be distracted by the Wildcat fighters and Avenger torpedo bombers. As the battle moved in a southerly direction, aircraft from Taffy 2 also joined in the air attacks.

The charging attack by TAFFY 3's destroyers and destroyer escorts against the Japanese cruisers and battleships greatly aided in its survival. Although vastly outgunned, the torpedoes loosed by the US ships could not be ignored, and Japanese ships maneuvered to avoid the spreads of torpedoes running at them. In fact, two battleships and their escorts were removed from the battle by their choice of maneuver to avoid torpedoes.

For some reason, super battleship YAMATO turned tail to the torpedoes and increased speed to outrun them. The accepted tactic was to steer toward the torpedoes and maneuver so they would pass down the sides of the ship. Battleship NAGATO and accompanying escorts also turned with YAMATO, and

this element of ships ran at top speed for some ten minutes until fuel in the torpedoes ran out and they sank. When this group of ships again reversed course, they found the battle had steamed away from them, and they were unable to catch up.

The charge of the US escorts was not without cost. Destroyers USS HOEL and USS JOHNSTON and destroyer escort USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS were pounded by Japanese shellfire until they sank with heavy loss of life. The remaining four escorts suffered varying degrees of damage from light to nearly disabling. But they caused the Japanese to divert their attention from the escort carriers, buying them time to try and escape.

Somewhat ironically, ninety years earlier, on October 25, 1854, at the Battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War, the British Light Brigade charged against heavily entrenched Russian guns and was forever immortalized by Alfred, Lord Tennyson in his poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. Due to a miscommunication, the British Light Brigade charged in the wrong direction. The destroyers and destroyer escorts of TAFFY 3 charged knowing full well their probable fate.

When CENTER FORCE disengaged from the battle with TAFFY 3, it left three heavy cruisers sunk and another disabled. TAFFY 3 lost two destroyers, one destroyer escort, and escort carrier USS GAMBIER BAY, but nearly 800 of its 860-man crew survived.

After the later and separate kamikaze attack, some 780 men were also saved from the sinking of the USS ST LO.

USS KITKUN BAY lost one man killed and 16 wounded from its kamikaze

attacks, and the aircrews of two planes were lost in the battle against Kurita's ships.

KITKUN BAY went on to fight other battles, was stuck again by a kamikaze and enemy shellfire in early 1945, was repaired and returned to war. By July 3, 1945, the ship was taking part in supporting operations of US fast carriers attacking the Japanese home islands. After Japan's surrender, KITKUN BAY was first assigned to a task force gathering at Adak, Alaska, then returned to waters around the Japanese islands until late September 1945. She then loaded aboard American troops as part of Operation "Magic Carpet" to return them home. Additional voyages from California to Pearl Harbor and Okinawa continued until January 1946. Three months later, KITKUN BAY was decommissioned. She was sold in November 1946 and scrapped early in 1947.

→ → →

For the escorts of Taffy 3

Cannon to the right of them
Cannon to the left of them
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred. ¹

¹ *The Charge of the Light
Brigade, 3rd stanza.*
Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

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Donations and gifts are a vital source of support for CAM

At the beginning of February, CAM received a gift of \$500 from the **Kansas Aviation Council**. In the accompanying letter, **Ms. Kay Alley**, Acting President, said the gift was unrestricted in its use, but the Board of Directors hoped we might apply the gift to the preparation of a public display of Kansas Aviation.

In our thank you letter, we explained that because of our military aviation history theme, we probably would not do a specific exhibit on Kansas aviation, but that a number of our existing exhibits and planned exhibits included Kansans or reference to aviation, civil and military, in Kansas. We enclosed a list of those exhibits.

Currently, we have 13 exhibits on Kansans, all but one of whom are associated with military aviation. Two exhibits deal with military aviation sites in Kansas. Two more include aircraft, civil and military, built in Kansas, and one exhibit deals with an international event involving an aircrew and aircraft from Kansas.

Tom Witty is currently laying out his plan to re-do the Early Aviation exhibit. When done, it will present a dual topic of early aviation and early aviation in Kansas.

It may be of interest to some of our readers to learn the extent of giving from our membership. During 2005, we received over \$16,900 from our members, above and beyond membership dues. But this was not all

unrestricted cash donations. It included restricted donations used to fund specific projects. It included the value of items donated to the Museum for use, other than artifacts. It included memorial donations made in behalf of deceased members. Last year we received \$5000 from the estate of member **Charlie Yenkey**. Gift Monies also included the numerous times members turned in receipts for a purchases made in the course of doing projects at the museum but declined reimbursement. It all adds up.

Can we count on this \$17,000 every year? No. The level of giving constantly changes. For example, we cannot count on receiving another \$5,000 from a member's estate. Another example is a couple of projects funded last year by a member that totaled about \$3,100. Those projects are now complete, so that funding will not come in again. So, there is over \$8,000 in contributions we will not see again this year. But the point is, the gift giving by our members in whatever manner they choose is so very important to your museum, and it is deeply appreciated. Without this kind of support, it would be very difficult to carry out the various and numerous operations, projects and activities done at CAM. ➔



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