

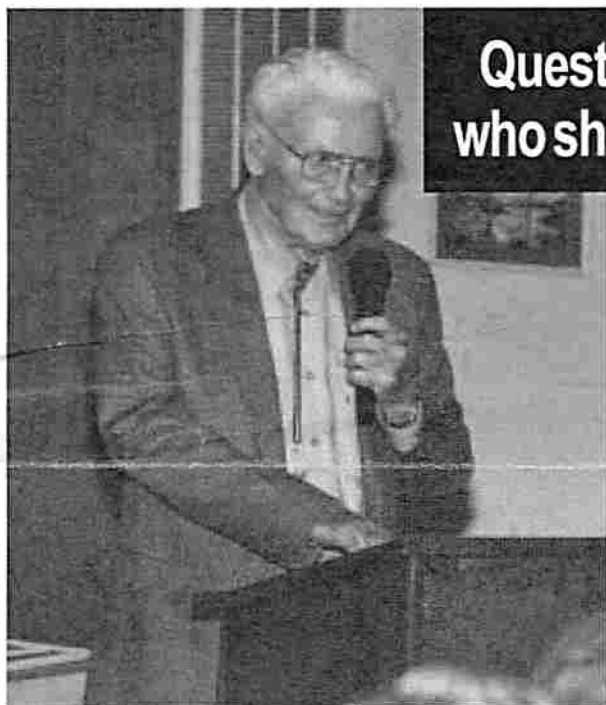
COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

→ → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

Forbes Field Topeka, Kansas

April / May 2007 • Vol. 23, No. 2



Questions remain about who shot down Yamamoto

assigned to the 8th FS, 49th FG, Fifth AF at Port Moresby, New Guinea. In April 1943, he was transferred to the 339th FS, 347th FG, 13th AF at Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, where he flew Lockheed P-38 Lightnings. While the P-38 was his primary mount and the aircraft in which he achieved five aerial victories over Japanese Zero fighters, George also had some time in Bell P-39 Airacobras.

In all, George flew 101 combat missions in the Solomon Islands until February 1944 when he returned

"Yamamoto," con't. on page 8

Another large group, over 55 people, filled the Jean Wanner Education and Conference Center on February 12 to hear World War II fighter ace **George Chandler** talk about the "Second Yamamoto Mission." George is a native of Wichita, Kansas. Prior to World War II he attended Ottawa (Kansas) University, Wichita State University and the California Institute of Technology.

George enlisted as an Army Aviation Cadet in November 1941 and completed his training as a fighter pilot in July 1942 at Luke Field, Arizona. His initial assignment was to Hawaii where he flew Curtiss P-40 Warhawks in the 47th Fighter Squadron (FS), 15th Fighter Group (FG), Seventh Air Force (AF) until December 1942. From Hawaii, George was

photo by Don Mathers

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Combat Air Museum

Forbes Field • Hangars 602 & 604
 P.O. Box 19142
 Topeka, KS 66619-0142
 Telephone (785) 862-3303
 FAX (785) 862-3304
 www.combatairmuseum.org

Provided by
 Rossini Management Systems, Inc.
 Email: combatairmuseum@aol.com

Museum Curator

Danny San Romani

Office Manager

Lois Ecord

Board of Directors

- Wing Commander

Gene Howerter - Vice Wing Commander

Stu Entz - Secretary

Don Dawson

Don Mathers

Martin Moyer

Dave Murray

Tedd Nolde

Tad Pritchett

Dick Trupp

**Newsletter Editing
& Design**

Toni Dixon

Dixon Communications

(785)865-4221

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. Submit information for

Plane Talk to CAM office.

**High school students will present
 History Day Projects at April Luncheon**

Our guest speakers for the April Membership Luncheon will be students from **Seaman High School**. The Juniors, under the tutelage of **Susan Sittenauer**, will present two topics. One will be President Harry Truman's decision to use atomic bombs against Japan. The second will be the Battle for Pointe du Hoc during the D-Day landings on Normandy, France, June 6, 1944.

Susan requires her high school Juniors to prepare topics for the annual nationwide History Day competition. The students have been through at least one level of competition before our April luncheon. If they have finished in the top two at their most recent contest, they qualify for the State contest. The top two finishers at State qualify for Nationals, held in Washington, DC.

This is the sixth year we have asked Susan to bring students to the April luncheon. To give an indication of the success of her Juniors, Susan has traveled annually to Washington, DC for the last eight or nine years.

The Membership Luncheon is April 9 at 11:30 A.M.

→ → →

**2007 Events
 Calendar**

Event dates subject to change

April

28 Celebrity Pancake Feed

May

19 Armed Forces Day
 at Topeka's Heartland Park

June

4-7 Aviation Education Class

July

9-12 Aviation Education Class

August

6-9 Aviation Education Class

September

29 Winged Foot 5K Run/Walk

→ → →

In Memoriam

Irene Mohney
 November 20, 1921 –
 February 12, 2007
 #58
 23 year member

In Memoriam

John W. "Bill" Briery



His name was John, but everyone at the Museum called him "Bill." A member and volunteer for nearly 20 years, **Bill Briery** passed away at age 82 on February 27, 2007. When we mention Bill, though, it is hard not to say "Bill and Marcella," for this was a duo of volunteer members. Bill and Marcella joined the Museum together in 1987 and over the next two decades worked events together, attended events together, and just came out to the Museum together. For this one time, we will mostly remember Bill with the following words from charter member and Vice Wing Commander Gene Howerter.

"When I think of Bill Briery, I think of a friend of the Combat Air Museum who had many dreams, visions, and ideas which he felt would benefit the organization. I see a man working our popcorn machine at an USO Show, or it could be one of our Museum Swing Dances. One could also always find Bill working at our annual Pancake Feed.



*Left: Bill and Marcella Briery
Above: The Popcorn Man*

More often than not, he would be engaging others, both Celebrities and Museum Members in some conversation, talking up the Museum or asking questions or making suggestions to make the event run more smoothly. The Museum also knew that we could always count on both Bill and Marcella to help whenever there was an event to be held. They would always be on hand to work at the Air Shows the Combat Air Museum would have, lending assistance wherever they could serve and enjoying each other's company.

"More recently the Museum was in desperate need of a new copying machine. When Bill found out that we had this need, he went right to work doing everything he needed to do to secure one for the Museum. It was only a short time later that our organization was ec-

**May 31, 1924 –
February 27, 2007
#1088
20 year member**

static as we had a new copier in place, thanks to Bill.

"Bill was an amazing person. I think one of the most amazing things we will remember about Bill will be his participation in our first ever 5K Run/Walk. He not only entered the event, but he won the first place gold medal for his age group. But the memory that really stands out of Bill and this race is an 80 year old man walking the last thousand yards of the race backwards, crossing the finish line in less than 60 minutes. Bill was a winner. He also participated in our second annual Run/Walk this past September, finishing again in less than 60 minutes. Most of his family members were at that race, also, lending their support in honor of him.

"We will all miss Bill and what he would bring to the Combat Air Museum. He was always busy securing things for the Museum, making nametags, or putting out event posters to help raise money for the good of the organization. Thank you, Bill."

Join the Combat Air Museum!

Your membership and support are important to us.

Armed Forces Day Celebration

Saturday, May 19, 2007

Combat Air Museum will take part in the **Armed Forces Day Celebration** at the Park on **Saturday, May 19, 2007**. Topeka's Heartland Park, that is. This is the third year we have supported this event put on by Heartland Park owner Ray Irwin and his staff. Major sponsor for this year's celebration is AT&T. The *Topeka Capital Journal* and Topeka Parks and Recreation are associate sponsors.

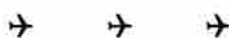
We support the event with a display of military vehicles. The event provides CAM a lot of exposure to the folks who come out to look at the military exhibits, car show and other activities. All branches of the military are scheduled to have hardware on display.

Set up time for the military displays is 9 A.M. We will muster volunteers for the event at Hangar 604 about 7:30 - 8 A.M. and drive our vehicles over to the display grounds. All displays will move out of Heartland Park by 5 P.M.

The tentative schedule of events is:

- 7 A.M. Gates open for racing competitors to check in
- 9 A.M. Gates open for Armed Forces displays and equipment set up
- Noon Racing lunch and break
- 1 P.M. Aircraft arrival
- 1:30 P.M. All displays in place and ready to open
- 2 P.M. GATES OPEN for all Armed Forces Day Activities
All displays active – Car show entrants arrive and park
- 3 P.M. Car show continues – Display activity continues
- 3:30 P.M. Car show judging
- 4 P.M. Car show awards ceremony at eating pavilion
- 4:15 P.M. Section 8 band on stage at the eating pavilion
- 5 P.M. Break – End of day for racing – Display move out
- 5:15 P.M. Santa Fe Band on stage in eating pavilion
- 5:45 P.M. Break – Aircraft departure
- 6 P.M. COMBO SHOW on stage in eating pavilion
USO and Kings of Swing show and dance
- 7:30 P.M. Break – move to main grandstands for evening shows
- 8 P.M. Fly over
Balloon Salute
Introduction of Guests and Sponsors
Keep America Beautiful awards
- 8:20 P.M. 35th Infantry Band show at main stage
- 9:15 P.M. 1812 Overture – Cannon salutes
- 9:25 P.M. Fireworks
- 10 P.M. End of show day
- 11 P.M. Facility secure

As you can see, this will be a full day of activities. Please keep up with your local media to stay current with the schedule of events. If you can, spend an hour or two, or more, with CAM's displays or just come out to enjoy the tribute to our members of the Armed Forces and their families.



CAM volunteer's work brings double benefits through Westar's Community Partner program

Combat Air Museum was a fortunate recipient of a \$500 donation from **Westar Energy** in February. The gift was a result of volunteer time made to the Museum by **Bob Crapser**. Westar has a Community Partners program through which employees, former employees and/or their spouse can do volunteer work and are eligible for cash donations to the not-for-profit organization of their choice. Bob's wife, **Judy**, is an employee of Westar.

Volunteers are eligible for a \$100 donation after their first 100 hours of volunteer work. For each additional 100 hours, the volunteer's name goes into a pool to be drawn for larger amounts of money. The pool drawings are for \$500, \$750, and \$1000 gift levels. Bob's name was drawn for one of the \$500 dollar gifts.

Bob and **Danny San Romani** attended a recognition luncheon at the Capitol Plaza Hotel where the gifts were awarded. Westar gave out \$15,000 in donations to not-for-profit organizations from around the state of Kansas during the awards ceremony. On behalf of Combat Air Museum we extend our thank you and appreciation to Bob and Judy Crapser for their continued support of the Museum, and especially to Westar Energy and its Community Partners program.

Visitors

During **January** the Museum had **301** visitors from **19** states and Germany Ireland Japan

During **February** we had **479** visitors from **16** states and Canada

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→ → →

New Supporters

Marshall & Katrina Clark
Christie Eidson
The Fager Family
John, Cheryl, Gabriella, Amelia & Greyson
Major General (Ret) Greg Gardner
Tom & Diane Gorrell
Craig Linn
Hendrik, Joanna, Casper, & Flynn Mieger
Gage Weibel

Renewing Supporters

Oscar Albrecht
Joe, Julie, & Zak Amos
Gale Beal
Jim & Mary Braun
Marty, Terry, Andrew, & Katherine Braun
Bill & Marcella Briery
Anderson Chandler
Bill Clawson
Ron & Linda Coash
Charles Cutler
Len Faulconer
Eldon Geffert
Harold Jameson
Richard Long
Ted Nolde
Harlan Sweeten
Lloyd Thomas
Merton Wilch
James & Anita Young

→ → →



New exhibits go up at a furious pace thanks to our busy volunteers

The McCulloch O-15-3 McCulloch Drone Engine of World War II.

Five new exhibits went up since our last issue of *Plane Talk*. **Gene Howerter** completed two more of the drone engine exhibits, and now all three engines are clustered in the northwest corner of Hangar 604. As with the first drone exhibit, Gene did a lot of Internet research on the engines and the types of drones they propelled. Several photographs showing the drones and engines appear in the exhibits.

McCulloch, a name familiar to owners of chain saws, built both of the engines in these newest displays. The smaller of the two is the Army Air Force Model O-15-3. The larger has the Air Force designation O-100-1. The former was used during World War II; the latter flew drones from 1946 into the late 1950's. The O-100-1-powered drones not only served as targets for traditional gunners, they were also fired upon by Nike-Ajax surface to air missile batteries.

Gene's research on the engines also provided much material on the types of drones they powered. Radioplane Company built virtually all of them. And his research came up with an interesting side story involving a Radioplane employee.

In the Spring of 1945, the US Army 1st Motion Picture Unit sent photographer David Conover on assignment to take photos of Women in War Work. His assignment took him to Radioplane Corporation. Among the women he photographed was a pretty, smiling brunette with long curly hair, wearing blue coveralls with her ID photo badge on her waist. Gene put two of her photos in the O-100-1 exhibit.

One photo of the young woman is of her holding a propeller as though to install it on a drone engine. Another photo is of her with a wrench on a drone engine. The young War Worker is also identified by name:



The McCulloch O-100-1 Drone Engine used 1945-1958.

Norma Jeane. Many of you will recognize that name for her later fame. For those of you who do not, we recommend you do a little research. You may be surprised by what you find.

In this same exhibit are photos taken at the Smokey Hill Air Force Base, Salina, Kansas and the Smokey Hill Gunnery Range southwest of Salina.

To complete the exhibit with the O-15-3 drone engine, Gene had a propeller built for the engine.

Don Dawson finished the repairs and surface preparation of the Little John rocket and painted it overall olive drab with white US ARMY markings. Based on research we did on the Little John, we feel we have one of the XM47 rocket test vehicles. This is based on the tail fin configuration on the rocket and the overall length when compared to the M51 (MGR-3A) tactical rockets deployed in the field. Our Little John has triangular-shaped tail fins and is about 12 feet long. The M51 had rectangular tail fins and was about 14-1/2 feet long.

Built by Emerson Electric Manufacturing Company, the Little John was developed as an air-transportable, unguided artillery rocket for US Army airborne units. The M51 was delivered fully assembled by helicopter or on its towed launcher. Once in position, it was ready to fire.

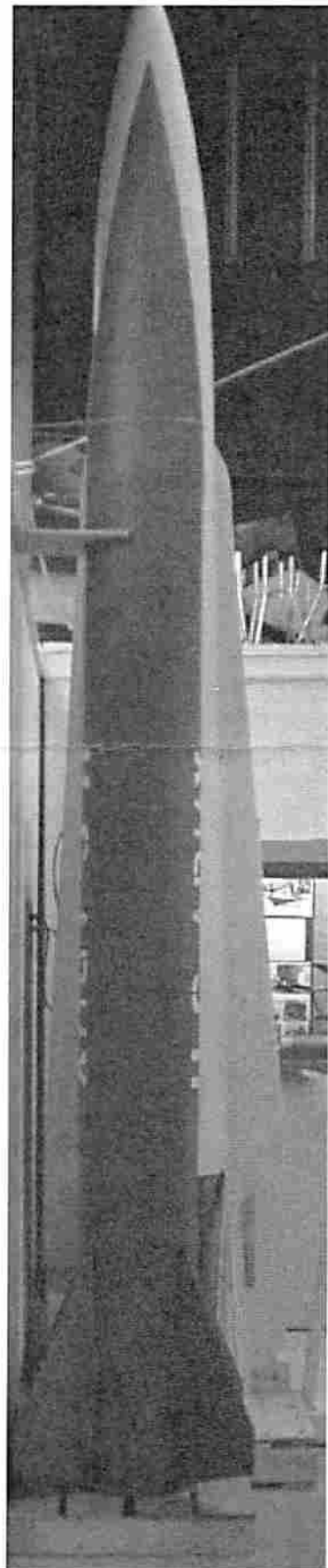
The rocket could carry a conventional warhead or a W-45 nuclear warhead of 1-10 kiloton yield. It flew at a speed of Mach 1.5 with a range of 11.3 miles (seems close for a nuclear warhead). Little Johns were first deployed in 1961 and withdrawn from service in 1969.

CAMacquired its Little John in 1986 from Fort Riley, Kansas through the General Services Administration Surplus Property. It is currently on exhibit in the northwest corner of Hangar 604.

Don is now painting the color coats on the T-33 tip tanks.

Dave Houser covered the wings and control surfaces for our World War II Link Trainer and is currently painting them back to their yellow markings. The rudder is being painted with red and white stripes.

"Exhibits," con't. on page 16



The Little John rocket stands next to the Navy surface to air missile.

"Yamamoto," con't. from page 1

to the United States and was assigned as a flight instructor at Chico Airfield, California, where he taught fighter tactics. He left the service in January 1946 as a Major. His awards include the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Force Medal with 11 Oak Leaf Clusters.

George formed and has been active as President of the Second Yamamoto Mission Association (SYMA), which was the focus of his presentation. This association is devoted to the study of the shoot down of Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto by Rex Barber of the 339th FS on April 18, 1943 over Bougainville Island, Papua New Guinea. Many histories of this secret mission credit 339th pilot Tom Lanphier with shooting down Yamamoto's Mitsubishi GM4 "Betty" bomber. Official records give Lanphier and Barber each ½ credit for the shoot down. The records say Barber set the Betty on fire, then Lanphier knocked it down. Through their research and investigation of the mission, SYMA contends that Rex Barber, and he alone, downed Yamamoto's aircraft over the jungle of Bougainville.

The story of the Yamamoto mission is one that will probably be forever remembered in the annals of military aviation history. Japanese Fleet Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto was Japan's naval Commander-in-Chief and architect of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. After World War I, he studied for two years at Harvard and the US Naval War College. Yamamoto became familiar with the United States and its language, and had keen insight to the mettle of the American people. Eliminating Yamamoto would cripple Japan's naval planning and future strategies.

In 1942, US code breakers had broken the Japanese naval codes and had managed to keep it secret that they had done so. Code breakers intercepted a message about Yamamoto flying on an inspection tour on April 18, 1943 to Kahili airdrome on the southern tip of Bougainville Island. Forces on Guadalcanal were informed of this on April 17, with the orders to plan and execute a mission and destroy Yamamoto's plane at all costs.

Major John Mitchell, commander of the 339th, was charged with executing the mission. It would involve a 432-mile over-water flight that would arrive in the same place and time as Yamamoto's flight. One of the problems Mitchell had up front was a reliable compass for the P-38 aircraft. He requested, and received from the Navy, a compass that was reliable and had it mounted

in his aircraft. The flight itself was made using dead reckoning. Mitchell relied on his compass headings, and used time and speed and a knee computer to determine the lengths of his track lines and when to turn. The flight to Bougainville required four course headings. To further compound the mission, the P-38s flew only 50 feet above the water and away from land to avoid detection. The mission was flown in radio silence. Eighteen P-38s of the 339th took off the early morning of April 18, but two soon turned back, one with a blown tire on take-off, the other with fuel feed problems. The remaining 16 planes successfully completed the intercept.

About 40 miles from Bougainville the P-38s began climbing, and as the intercept time neared one pilot spotted the Yamamoto flight. It consisted of six zero fighters and two Betty bombers. Mitchell arrived where he wanted to be within one minute's times and less than one mile left or right of his intended point over Bougainville.

Mitchell ordered the flight to break into their elements. Four aircraft were designated the killer flight with their sole purpose of shooting down Yamamoto. The remaining P-38s were to fly cover against the Japanese fighters.

Tom Lanphier, Rex Barber, Besby Holmes and Ray Hine made up the killer flight. But Holmes could not get his wing tanks to drop, and Hine and he turned away from the bombers. Lanphier turned left into the Zero fighters and Barber turned right into the bombers. And from here is where the conflict begins as to who shot down whom. Lanphier reported he fired into a Betty bomber from the three o'clock (right side) position, blew its right wing off, and it crashed into the jungle. Barber reported he fired into a Betty from the six o'clock (rear) position, moving from side to side and seeing hits on its left and right fuselage, engines and tail section. He then had to abruptly maneuver to avoid a collision and attacking Japanese fighters. He got over water, looked back, and saw a pillar of smoke rising from the jungle.

Besby Holmes, now with his wing tanks jettisoned, initiated an attack on a second Betty. Barber then attacked it, and the bomber blew up and crashed into the sea. Pieces of the aircraft hit Barber's plane. Amazingly, three people survived the crash of this Betty, including its pilot.

Other P-38s battled the Japanese escort fighters, but soon all broke away and made a direct flight back to Guadalcanal. One P-38, that of Ray Hine, did not return. Others had battle damage. Barber's P-38 had over 100 bullet holes in it.

Almost as soon as he climbed out of his plane, Tom Lanphier claimed credit for shooting down Yamamoto, something that Rex Barber questioned. Later, John Mitchell said there was no way of knowing which Betty Yamamoto was on.

Normally, the claims of a pilot's air combat could be verified with gun camera footage. But the hot, humid climate of the Solomons ruined gun camera film so none of the P-38s had functional gun cameras. To add more to the confusion and debate over who shot down Yamamoto, claims were made that a third Betty bomber was shot down.

After the war ended Tom Lanphier was permitted to talk about and publish accounts of the Yamamoto Mission. In newspapers, magazines, speeches and books, he claimed he was the one who shot down Yamamoto, always claiming that he shot the right wing off the bomber. When Lanphier first made his claims, Barber called him and refuted some of the things Lanphier had written.

In the 1950's US Air Force investigators reviewing Japanese records found that there were only two Betty bombers in Yamamoto's flight, not three as had been claimed by P-38 pilots. These investigators awarded ½ credit each to Lanphier and Barber for the plane that crashed in the jungle, and awarded Holmes and Barber ½ credit each for the Betty that crashed in the sea.

In 1985 Lanphier insisted that the Office of Air Force History give him full credit for downing Yamamoto's plane. A Victory Credit Review Board was convened to review the matter. The Board concluded that Barber attacked the plane first severely damaging it and Lanphier then finished it off by attacking from the three o'clock position and shooting the right wing off. The board further concluded that the ½ credit to each pilot was appropriate.

In 1988 it was learned that the wreckage of Yamamoto's Betty was accessible in the Bougainville jungle and had been visited by curiosity seekers. Soon, those seriously seeking a final conclusion to the controversy joined the curious. What people found seemed to put a question to Lanphier's claim and supported Barber's account of his attack on a Betty bomber 45 years earlier.

The right wing Lanphier claimed to have shot off

was lying adjacent to the fuselage. The left wing appeared to have separated from the plane when it hit a large tree during the crash. Although the fuselage had burned, investigators found where the fuselage had been struck by machine gun fire from the rear – as Barber reported in his attack on a Betty. There was no identifiable evidence the Betty in the jungle had been hit by machine gun fire from three o'clock.

Based on these findings, George Chandler challenged Mr. Cargill Hall, Chief of Research, Office of Air Force History to investigate these findings. When Cargill seemed less than enthusiastic about convening another Victory Credit Board of review, George and other pilots organized SYMA in an effort to set the record straight.

SYMA contacted the private owner of a restored P-38 fighter and asked that he put the plane through the maneuvers Lanphier claimed to have made. Based on time and speed and the fact the Betty did not appear to alter its course, SYMA investigators concluded Lanphier could not have caught up to the Betty prior to its crash into the jungle.

SYMA presented this and other information to Dr.

Richard Kohn, Chief, Office of Air Force History. As part of his review, Dr. Kohn had Air Force representatives contact the pilot of the Betty that crashed into the sea. In what George called an interview that included very

leading questions, the pilot said several P-38s attacked Yamamoto's plane and said one that attacked from the left side finished shooting down the plane.

Before leaving office in 1990, Dr. Kohn told SYMA he felt their information was not credible and would not convene a Victory Credit Board of Review. SYMA and Rex Barber then put a formal request to the Secretary of the Air Force for a Formal Air Force Board of the Correction of Military Records. A five-member board reviewed the evidence and when the final vote was made in 1992, two members voted to award Barber full credit for the shoot down, two others voted status quo, and the board chairman abstained. The chairman did write a review of the evidence that in part questioned Lanphier's claims. The Secretary of the Air Force, Donald B. Rice reviewed the findings, and as he left office in January

SYMA investigators concluded Lanphier could not have caught up to the Betty prior to its crash into the jungle.

"Yamamoto," con't. on page 10

photo by Don Mathers



George Chandler (right) presents Vice Board Chairman Gene Howerter with a model of his P-38 Lightning, Barbara Ann IV.

"Yamamoto," con't. from page9

1993 decided to go status quo, ½ credit to each Lanphier and Barber.

SYMA and Barber then filed a Lawsuit in the Portland, Oregon District Court in 1993 asking the judge to make a finding that the Secretary of the Air Force had not considered the evidence and that his finding was improper. The judge refused to make this finding. In December of the same year SYMA and Barber appealed this ruling in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco. The Ninth Circuit Court sided with the lower court.

George told the audience he had come to the conclusion there was a conspiracy in higher echelons of the Air Force to not tarnish Tom Lanphier's name by awarding Rex Barber full credit for shooting down Yamamoto. George felt much of this went back to World War II.

Lanphier's father was on General Henry H. Arnold's staff. Arnold was Commanding General of the US Army Air Forces during World War II. Lanphier's brother, a Marine Corps pilot, was shot down, tortured, and died in a Japanese POW camp on Bougainville. George also said that Lanphier's Godfather was General James Doolittle. George also pointed out inconsistencies in video interviews with Lanphier. He did not tell the same story all of the time.

Attempts to bring the matter before the Office of Air Force History were refused. SYMA was told if the

Office received another letter from them, it would be returned unopened. They were through with the investigation.

SYMA did get support from other organizations, though. In 1997 the American Fighter Aces Association Board of Directors voted unanimously to commit the association to the position that Rex Barber alone shot down Yamamoto. In 1998, the then Confederate Air Force took a similar position. And in 2003, whether at the bequest of SYMA or not is not known, the Governor and State Legislature of Oregon voted that their native son, Rex Barber, was the sole pilot who shot down Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto.

In 1995 SYMA undertook another matter they felt needed correction. In their research and investigation of the Rex Barber/Tom Lanphier controversy, they uncovered evidence that a decision to not award John Mitchell the Medal of Honor for leading the Yamamoto Mission included errors submitted to the chain of command. Mitchell instead was awarded the Navy Cross. SYMA's efforts were approved all the way through Navy channels but were disapproved at the State Department. In 1995 US Marines on Okinawa strained US relations with Japan over the assault and rape of a Japanese girl. SYMA felt that the State Department apparently did not want to further strain relations by awarding the Medal of Honor to the man who led the mission to shoot down their still-beloved Admiral Yamamoto. The Navy did not pursue the matter further.

Tom Lanphier died in 1987. John Mitchell died in 1995. Rex Barber died in 2001. But the efforts of SYMA have not ended with their deaths. The Second Yamamoto Mission Association continues to lobby to have the records corrected in regards to who really shot down Admiral Yamamoto and to have John Mitchell awarded the Medal of Honor.

After his presentation, George and his brother, **Anderson Chandler**, presented three framed art prints of P-38s of the 339th Fighter Squadron to the Museum. All have signatures of pilots of the 339th including some who flew on the Yamamoto mission. George also gave us an unframed art print of World War I American pilot Raoul Lufbery getting his fifth aerial victory in 1916, becoming the United State's first fighter ace.

George then gave us a 1/32 scale plastic model of P-38 Lightning, #125, named Barbara Ann IV. This was George's last P-38 flown with the 339th FS. →

Letters from a war

The families of missing airmen exchange letters

This is the second and final installment of family letters written by the next of kin of crewmen aboard a B-24 Liberator bomber to the mother and sister of CAM member Joe Higgins after the bomber was shot down on a mission to Toulon, France on July 5, 1943. Joe was a member of the bomber's crew.

These letters present a unique view of the war on the home front as the next of kin correspond and learn the fate and status of the ten men who made up the crew of the "Free Delivery." They were written to his mother, Anna, and to his sister, Margaret.

The letters have been edited for format only. All spelling, punctuation, and grammar have been left unedited.

(Handwritten)

Kearney, Nebr.
10/13/44

Dear Miss Higgins;

I can't tell you how happy I was this morning, when I rec'd your nice letter. I have thought of writing you folks several times

I had heard of your brother's being a prisoner sometime ago from Mrs Porter. I hear from several of the boys' folks.

I suppose you have heard that all the boys have ben accounted for accept the 3 from Ala. This seems very odd.

I am so glad that you have heard from your brother. As, Yet we haven't heard from Kenneth or the War Dep't as to where he is interned. I have great hopes of hearing soon now as you have! It encourages us to know that someone has heard. I, like you, wonder if they will have enough clothes & food. The weather must get pretty cold up that far.

Kenneth never mentioned any of his friends overseas by name, but he sent me some snap-shots of he & and group. I have learned through Mrs Iva Underwood (sister of Ory Creswell) that your brother is one of the group. Maybe You have the snapshot also. If not, and you would like one I would be glad to get a negative for you. It is a plain picture & they all look so well. He sent it from the rest Camp at Capri.

If, I hear from Kenneth soon, as I feel I surely will, I will write You. I know you are like myself interested in all the crew & their wherabouts.

What position did Joe hold on the plane? Ken. was Radio-man & a waist-gunner. We have another son who is finishing his training as a turret-gunner, and will be sent overseas about the last of the yr.

I hope & pray this war will some end and our boys Can Come home and live & enjoy themselves once more.

Thanking you for your very sweet letter, I am

Yours sincerely

(signed) Mrs Ruth Allen

Mrs. Allen's son was Technical Sergeant Kenneth F. Allen, radioman and waist gunner on the plane.

* * * * *

(Handwritten)

Oct 16/1944
Eire, Pa.

Dear Mrs. Higgins.

Received Your letter dated Oct. 10th and was glad to hear from You

I am so glad for You and Your Family that You have heard from Joe, even if it was a card, but still it made You feel good to see and read His hand writing.

Lets Hope and Pray that the War will be over so that Your second Brother wont have to go through with what Joe did.

I only have one Brother in the Army and the Family is always worried for His safty, and here You Have two, so it must be twice as hard.

You asked about my Brother Walter. Well We havent heard from Him since Aug 25th When He said that I should not write till He wires me. because He is coming Home on furlogh from 21 to 30 days So being to anxious I did have to write and all mail came back It was marked, enrote to U.S.A. forward to my address, so we are still waiting and wondering what held Him up and where. So when He does come I'll have Him write You.

Very Sincerrelly

(signed) Mrs. Bertha Wasinlewski

continued on page 12

Bertha Wasinlewski's brother was Staff Sergeant Walter Lubiejewski. He was nose gunner on the plane. He evaded capture after landing in German occupied France, hooked up with members of the Free French and successfully returned to England. On October 27, 1944 Staff Sergeant Lubiejewski wired Mrs. Anna Higgins that he was stateside on leave and that he would write her soon.

* * * * *

(Typewritten)

2041 Wightman St.
Pittsburgh, (17) Pa.
October 18, 1944

Dear Miss Higgins:

Up to the present writing I have not heard directly from my son. The other day a girl friend of his called me on the phone and told me she received a card from him from prison camp. She then mailed same to me and I have begun trying to find out why I have personally not heard from him. Through the Red Cross we may be able to get some word from him directly to us. It may be that he had written and letter or card destroyed or lost. Anyway this is all I really know so far.

The name of the camp where my son is being held is Stalag Luft 9C. It is in the heart of Germany and from we understand it is the biggest hospital for war prisoners. We are praying he is not hurt.

I join you in sharing your happiness in learning of the whereabouts of your Brother and should I in the meantime hear anymore news I will be glad to relate same to you.

Sincerely Yours,
(typed) Mrs. Gussie Rosenfeld

Mrs. Rosenfeld's son was Private Abraham Rosenfeld, tail gunner on the plane.

* * * * *

(Typewritten)

October 20th, 1944

Dearest Margaret,

Havent heard from you in quite some time, so I will just peck out a word to you. I still have no news regarding "CRES". Am still hoping, however.

Some time ago, rather a few days days ago, I had a letter from Mrs. Allen of Kearney, Nebraska, enclos-

ing a snap shot of four of the boys taken on Capri. She said that she did not know any of the crew, but wondered if either of the boys happened to be My Brother. Luck would have it that he was among the group, the tallest boy of all standing. Her son is the boy standing by the side of Brother, and Miriam says that she thinks the boy in front of Kenneth Allen is Higgins. I am enclosing a picture I had made from the small one, and you can return it if it is not Joe, and I will send it to another member's family. My Mother and Dad are so happy to get one that I am sure the rest of you will be, as it was made possibly in June. My Bud looked so well that we feel that he could take it if he is a Prisoner. I judge none of the other families have heard anything, as I havent heard lately, other than from Mrs. Porter, and she got it on the 5th of October. He gave the name of the camp, but off hand I have forgotten the name. Said he had met two boys from his home town in the camp. Was doing fairly well, food was not too bad, but that he couldent write very often.

I hope by this time you have heard from your Brother. Let me know if you have. I would like to keep up with the boys as best I can. It does help to know what is happening to the other fellows, even though we don't know what is happening to our Alabama Boys. I think we have not been living right here to have all of them still on the missing list.

Must go now, as my patients are now coming in for the evening work, which will be a session.

Please excuse my messy letter, but it is between phones, patients, and me, which is the worst of all.

Good Luck to you and all concerned. Hope you have good news,

Sincerely,
(typed) Iva Underwood

Iva Underwood's brother was Technical Sergeant Ory E. Creswell, flight engineer and top turret gunner on the plane.

* * * * *

(Handwritten)

20 Kingsbury Street
Framingham, Mass.
October 24, 1944

Dear Miss Higgins

Received your letter a couple of weeks ago, and meant to answer at once but these couple of weeks seemed to be exceptionally busy.

We had a letter from John on October 5th, written on July 26th. He is at Stalag Luft 1. He said very little except that he was well and eating well due to American Red Cross parcels. Give the families of the missing flyers some hope. He said he felt that he had been lucky and that he had met two fellows from town.

Lt Grunewald is at Stalag Luft 3 that is very near Stalag Luft 4. If you want a very complete picture of life in a prison camp, get the Nov. issue of Flying it tells everything from the time of capture. if you can't get it let me know and I will try to get one for you.

Let us hope that their health and spirits will keep up and that we will soon have them home. I hope Mrs Allen has heard from her son by now.

Sincerely yours
(signed) Helene B. Porter

Helene Porter's son, Second Lieutenant John D. Porter, was navigator on the plane.

* * * * *

(Handwritten)

Phenix City, Ala.
November 7, 1944

Dear Margaret:-

I have just been notified by the War Dept., stating that my husband, Lt Wm T. Newborg, was killed in action last July 5th. I am so disturbed, just can't believe it yet. I wanted to have written to you before this time, but until a few weeks ago, I was away in the Waves. I was discharged when I requested to come home when the worry of all this uncertainty was at its height.

I do hope you have heard from Joe, that he is alright in the prison camp.

Please write to me when you hear anything further from the crew.

Sincerely,
(signed) Mary Newborg

Second Lieutenant William T. Newborg was co-pilot on the plane. Joe remembers this mission as being Lt. Newborg's first with this crew.

* * * * *

(Handwritten)

Nov. 9, '44

My Dear Margaret—

Your very sweet letter came yesterday, and I was so happy to hear from you again, and to get the information you included. It really gave me something to work on.

Today I received a letter from Mary Newborg, which bore the sad news of the death of Lt Wm T Newborg. She was notified November 5th that was her husband was killed in action on July 5th. She was so upset, but being brave. We still have no news, and Saturday I had a letter from Eva Mae Holcombe, saying they still no news.

Well it only leaves Cres and Holcombe now. I am trying to prepare myself for any news, but honest I don't know how I can take it if it is bad. Of course I know I can as people do it every day.

Miriam, Cres' wife, is just sick from suspense, and waiting.

I havent seen Mother and Dad in almost two months, but am going home tomorrow night to spend Saturday with. Judging from their letters, they have held up fine, but I am most grey headed. Really I have gotten so grey in the last six months. My boss teases me daily, but I tell him I have caught them. It really couldnt be age. I had a letter from Jane G a few days ago, but she did not tell me which Camp Eddie was in, in fact, I had had no information regarding where any of the boys were. Jane is so happy about the baby. She says she keeps her so busy that she dosent have time to think too much, that which she is very grateful for.

Oh yes, I am so proud of My Bud, and I have always thought him the Most important guy around the country.

I do hope Al has better luck than Joe had, however, Joe's is good Compared to others. You still have lots to be thankful for. Am still hoping for the best, and will let you know, when I do get some information. The best to you and your family, and especially to Al. Let me hear from you again. I like to know how the boys are. "Cres" always spoke of Higgins when he was home the few days. And I feel that I know him. It will be a year Thanksgiving since he was home last. The day will be a bit sad for us, as we all had Thanksgiving dinner with Mother and Dad up in the country. He had to leave on Monday without either Miriam or I seeing him off, as he

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thought he would be here until Tuesday, and after checking his schedule he had only an hour to pack dress, and get to the train. It seemed such an abrupt way to leave, but couldn't be helped, but I guess it was better, since I just can't say "good by".

Will go - so Good Night.

Sincerely

(signed) Iva Underwood

* * * * *

(Handwritten)

November 12, '44

Dearest Margaret-

Just a note tonight to give you the latest reports. Mary Newborg may have informed you, but if not I will.

She had a telegram from the government November 2nd, stating her husband Lt Wm T Newborg was killed in action July 5th. I have written her, but it is so hard to find the right words to say. I feel so sorry for her, and know, judging from her letter, she feels so lost and empty. I have asked her to come up to see me if she can.

We have not had any further information about "Cres", nor have we heard from Walter L.

Good night for now

Love

(signed) Iva

* * * * *

(Handwritten)

Florence, Ala.

Dec. 3, 1944

Dear Margaret,

Just thought I'd write you a few words. We had a telegram from the War Dep't Sat., Dec. 2, that Foy L. was killed on July 5. Of course, we are very much distressed. We had hopes of his being a prisoner or safe somewhere but now I suppose all hope is gone. I can hardly bear to think of his never coming home again. It seems unbearable but things happen to everybody like that. There are many homes sad from the same news.

Have you heard anything from your brother? I hope he continues to be safe and gets home OK.

I had to come back to school this week - we are having some final exams. It will be an awful task for me to do I guess. Study for them. I can't get my mind on books.

I'll say So Long Now. Write if you hear from your brother. Foy Lee did think so much of him and talked a lot about him.

Bye - & Best Regards,

(signed) Eva Mae Holcombe

Eva Holcombe's brother, Staff Sergeant Foy Lee Holcombe, was the ball turret gunner on the plane.

* * * * *

(Handwritten)

Dec 3, 1944

Dear Margaret -

With a very sad heart I write you this note. We received a telegram Friday Dec 1, saying that "Cres" was killed in action July 5th. We had hoped so very hard but it just wasn't in our cards. I now feel so lost, as I have no brother. I spent the week end up with My Mother and Dad, whom I feel so sorry for, as I can't be with them like I would like to be, but life just doesn't plan things our way all the time. They are suffering so much. I could take it better if I didn't worry about them so much. They are all I have now of our family. Will say by for now.

Love

(signed) Iva

* * * * *

(Handwritten)

20 Kingsbury Street
Framingham, Mass.

Jan 1, 1945.

Dear Miss Higgins.

Thank you very much for your nice Christmas card, and may I wish you a Happy New year. I hope that it will not be too far advanced when our boys will come home.

Have you heard from your brother lately? My last from John is still the one written on July 26th and received Oct. 5th. I must say that the war not ending was a severe disappointment to me, and the news was so bad at Christmas time. Not that I ever doubt for one minute that we will win but every extra minute seems an age. However I have friends whose boys have been prisoners for over a year some two years, so I am ashamed to say anything in the face of their disappointment.

Then too the news was so bad about (for) two of the boys on the plane, that I try to be cheerful. I am

just getting my third box ready for John.

If I hear anything of interest I will let you know at once.

Yours sincerely,
(signed) Helene B. Porter

* * * * *

(Handwritten)

Kearney, Nebr.
Jan. 16, 1945.

Dear Margaret;

I have a little good news to write you. As yet we haven't had a word from Kenneth but his girl-friend had a card from him a week ago. He said he was well then. It sure was grand to see his handwriting again.

I don't know if I wrote you after I got his address the 20th of Nov. or not. They told me he had been transferred to Stalag 9C then. On his card he was at Stalag Luft III and yesterday I got a letter from the war dep't. saying he was transferred to Stalag Luft 4. That was where your brother Joe was, wasn't it? Is he there yet? And have you heard from him anymore. I know Kenneth has been writing us whenever he could and we just don't get them.

Our brother who is on a B-17 Bomber has just gone overseas. He was home for Xmas day. As he was processing at Lincoln Nebr. not so far away. I also went to Lincoln & visited him from Thur. until Sat. It seems so hard to see him go. I live in dread that he may have to go through what Kenneth has or maybe worse.

I guess you heard that Ory Creswell and Newborg were reported killed in Action July 5th. Have you ever heard whether Mr. Holcombe ever heard of his son? I haven't.

Kenneth Card to Buelah was written Sept. 4th, so he may never get any of my letters I write as he is moved too often.

Write me soon.

Yours sincerely
(signed) Mrs Ruth Allen

* * * * *

(Handwritten)

June 24th '45

Dearest Margaret -

Am wondering tonight if Joe has gotten home yet. I had a wonderful letter from Eddie Grunewald, regarding "Cres", and my family feels so much better to know something definite. If Joe feels like writing I should like to hear from him. Telling me how Brother was before the fatal flight, and if his health was alright.

Along at the last we thought something must be wrong as he seemed so depressed in his letters. I think he had a feeling things were not working out for him. We wondered if the boys might have known if his health was not too good. However if Joe doesn't want to talk about it I will understand, as I know he has been through Hell.

We have four living with us Now, who were prisoners of the Japs for three years, and the things they went through is Almost unbelievable but they are doing fine And gaining daily.

How was Joe health? I guess I am right when I call him Joe. I have almost forgotten the boys first names.

Lt Grunewald said he saw Higgins in France after the liberation.

As yet I haven't heard from any of the boys other than the Pilot.

Will say so long for now. Write me when you feel like it.

Sincerely
(signed) Iva Underwood

* * * * *

(Handwritten)

3529 Midland Ave.
July 1, 1945.

Dear Margaret,

I suppose you get tired of my writing and always asking questions. But since it is so near to the date of Foy's death last year It is about all that is on my mind. Today a year ago was the last letter he wrote anyone. He wrote his girl friend then. We are having so much bad luck it seems everything must be against us. My sister lost her baby this week. It was born dead and I'm wondering what will happen to us next. My brother in the Navy is sailing again after almost 4 yrs. sea duty and I'm worried about him. We couldn't take it if anything should happen to him. It seems we couldn't.

continued on page 16

"Letters," con't. from page 15

I'm working here in Memphis. Foy's girl friend is here with me. No doubt co remembers his mentioning her several times. Mazie is a sweet kid too. She heard Foy Lee talk a lot about Joe too. Has he got home yet? I won't ask him to tell us what he doesn't want to. I'd like to know – if he knows though – whether he was killed instantly or had to suffer and wait for the explosion to kill him.

I had a letter from Iva Underwood and she said Lt. Grunwald wrote her that "Cres" was killed instantly and didn't know what happened. He told her how the plane was hit. I believe Foy was killed instantly too. He said they received a direct hit in the bombay and one in the windshield which burst the fuel tanks. Well, I guess you know more about that than I do.

I'll go now. And if Joe can and will let us know that one thing we would appreciate it. I hope I'm not asking too much. But I'd do the same for you – or anything – if the case was reversed. But Foy was so dear to us. That is all now I guess to you so I'll say so long til later.

Write when you can.

Love

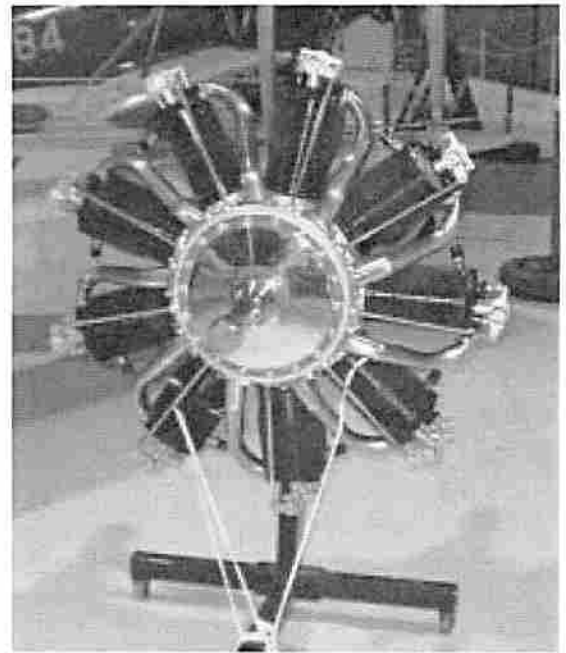
(signed) Eva Mae H.

* * * * *

This was the last letter in the collection Joe gave the Museum. Seven crewman on Free Delivery parachuted safely to earth. Six of them were captured by the Germans and interned for the rest of the war. All six returned to the United States. One evaded capture and about six weeks later was back in England. Three died from either the flak hit or the explosion of the bomber. They were the "Alabama" boys.

Joe's mother and sister received at least one letter from next-of-kin of eight of the plane's crew. The next-of-kin of the pilot, Second Lieutenant Edward A. Grunewald, did not send any correspondence, but Joe's family learned of his capture through other letters. After his return to the United States, Joe visited the family of Foy Lee Holcombe and the widow of Ory Cresswell.

→ → →



The LeRhône 80 horsepower rotary engine of World War I.

"Exhibits," con't. from page 7

On February 27, a crate from the National Museum of Naval Aviation (NMNA), Pensacola, Florida arrived. It contained a World War I era 80 horsepower LeRhône Rotary Engine. As the name implies, a rotary engine was an engine that rotated about a fixed crankshaft. Compared to our radial engines on exhibit, this engine is small, but it powered World War fighters such as the Sopwith Pup and Nieuport 11. The LeRhône 80 displaced 667 cubic inches and weighed 268 pounds.

We acquired the LeRhône on loan from NMNA through the efforts of **Dick Trupp**, who worked with **Helen Watson** and **Doug Kirby** of NMNA to get the engine to Topeka. It is truly a spit-and-polish engine with shined brass and chrome components. It is exhibited by the Jenny in Hangar 602.

On March 7, Dick, **Stu Entz**, and **Martin Moyer** traveled to the Strategic Air and Space Museum (SASM) near Ashland, Nebraska to retrieve an exhibit we placed on loan to them in the fall of 1998. The exhibit is the top rear, remote gun turret for a Boeing B-29 Superfortress. After accepting the turret on loan, the folks at SASM built a stand to exhibit it and manufactured two false 50 caliber machine gun barrels to put in the turret. For the transfer back to Topeka, they left the gun turret complete as they had it displayed, so we now have the stand and replica gun barrels on loan from SASM. The gun turret is currently displayed by the Fairchild UC-61K in Hangar 602.



The remote twin 50-caliber gun turret from a B-29 Superfortress.

Dale Allen continues work on the TANK engine in the workshop. This is a partial rebuild, as we do not have all the parts and pieces to build up a complete engine. It does look good, though and will work as a cutaway-type exhibit. Doing some research, we found that the TANK engine was a conversion engine made by the Milwaukee Tank Company beginning in 1928. The company converted liquid-cooled Curtiss OX-5 engines to the air-cooled TANK. When comparing a photo of the OX-5 to the TANK, we can definitely see the OX-5's lower half in the conversion.

The onset of the Great Depression in 1929 hurt Milwaukee Tank Company's venture with the TANK engines and by 1932, they were out of the market. Some aircraft that flew with TANK conversions included the Curtiss Robin, American Eagle 110-T, and Travel Air 2000-T. The Rowley-Curtiss JN-4D2 Jenny replica in our collection has a TANK engine in it, and we have used that as a reference for the one in the shop.

Martin Moyer and **Amos Page** have been busy producing wooden scooter planes. After having zero sales during the Christmas season, we sold eight of the scooters over a three-week period in January-February. Two were sold out of the Gift Shop and Martin made six individual sales. He was getting special requests that resulted in a *University of Nebraska* scooter, one in *Texas University* colors, and one in the *New England Patriots* colors.

Martin has scooters placed in a couple of antique/flea market shops, and we always have three or four in our Gift Shop. Others are stored in Hangar 604.

The large model aircraft carrier that will eventually be the USS ORISKANY exhibit left for Gardner, Kansas where professional model builder **Larry Todd** is going to rebuild the hull and flight deck to ORISKANY's 1966 configuration.

Robert Johnston is working in Derby, Kansas on the vertical fin and horizontal stabilizer of our F-86H Sabre, while new member **Mike Madden** has been doing corrosion control and surface preparation work on the landing gear struts of the F-84 Thunderstreak in Hangar 604.

It has been a busy winter with no signs of letting up as we head into spring. →

April / May Calendar of Events

April

Monday, April 9

Membership Luncheon

Jean Wanner Education

Conference Center

11:30 A.M.

Our guest speakers will be students from Seaman High School with their History Day contest entries

Saturday, April 28

Annual Celebrity

Pancake Feed

Hangar 602

7 A.M. - 12 P.M.

May

Saturday, May 19

Armed Forces Day at Heartland Park

Heartland Park Raceway

9 A.M. - 5 P.M.

There is no Membership Luncheon in May.

The next luncheon is Monday, June 11.

→ → →

Calling all Volunteers

Get ready for the Annual Pancake Feed

This is a call for all volunteers to block out **Saturday, April 28** on your calendars for Combat Air Museum. That is the date for our annual **Celebrity Pancake Feed**. The Feed runs from 7 A.M. – 12 Noon. Final preparations for the feed begin about 6 A.M. that morning.

We need plenty of volunteers to help run this event successfully. We move aircraft, clean the hangar floor, and set up tables and chairs on the Thursday or Friday before the Feed. On the day of the event we will need volunteers at the following stations:

Pre-Event

Start coffee pots,
Fill syrup containers, and
Put butter, juice, milk on ice at service table

During Event

Ticket sellers,
Sausage cookers/servers (often with a
Celebrity)

Drink servers,
Table cleanups,
Kitchen Police duty – making pots of coffee,
refilling juice pitchers,
Runners for moving full and empty coffee pots to
and from the serving table, and
Cleanup Crew after the event is over.

This is a major fund-raiser for CAM, and a fun one for our volunteers, celebrity participants, and patrons. Member **Dan Pulliam** plans to have some of his band students play for us again this year.

Please help us where you can. If it can not be as a working volunteer, perhaps you can do pre-event ticket sales. At any rate come on out and have some pancakes with the celebrities.



Combat Air Museum
P.O. Box 19142
Topeka, KS 66619-0142

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