

→ → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

Forbes Field Topeka, Kansas

December 2007 / January 2008 • Vol. 23, No. 6

Third Annual Winged Foot 5K is another winner for the Combat Air Museum

A record 102 runners and walkers participated in our Third Annual Winged Foot 5K Run/Walk on September 29. A record 48 sponsors supported the event with \$100 donations or in-kind donations of prizes. This fall fund raiser brought in nearly \$7,500 for the Museum.

Event coordinator **Gene Howerter** had a goal of having over 100 runners participate in the Winged Foot race. Prior to race time we had 122 registrants, but it remained to be seen how many would actually line up at the start. **Lois Ecord** and **Gale Beal** were running the registration table and knew we had passed the 100 runner/



walker goal. Gene saw a lot of folks preparing for the race and kept asking Lois and Gale how many people were there. To which they sweetly replied, "98."

"Winged Foot 5K", con't. on page 10



Upper right: Chuck Urban steps aside as runners charge onto the course.

Above: Peggy Dawson cheers on runners and walkers.

Photos 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

Ted 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.

Tracing the path of Bill Driver, a Kansas farmboy killed in WWII

Tad Pritchett, a CAM member, was our guest presenter at the October Membership Luncheon. Tad has talked to us in the past about his tour as a Marine platoon leader, and with **Dave Murray**, also a member, gave a series of talks about World War I battle sites the pair visited in Europe. Tad's presentation at the October luncheon took us back to Europe, only this time it was to visit World War II battle sites and this visit had a more personal approach.

Tad and a friend, **Deetra Driver**, were planning a trip to Europe in 2006. As Tad told it, Dee said, "While we are in Germany, let's visit where my Uncle Bill was during World War II." What ensued from this one comment was 12 months of planning and research by Tad and Dee to trace the path Dee's uncle followed as the Allies advanced into Germany in 1945. Tad said they went through some 42 resources, including phone calls and correspondence with living veterans, associations, a trip to the US Army personnel records center in St. Louis, Missouri, and use of the Internet online service of the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

Additional resources were used outside the US.

The fruits of their research proved more than just planning a trip. Most of Dee's family did not really know what had happened to her uncle nor where exactly he had



Tad Pritchett told us about Bill Driver's World War II experiences in early 1945 in Germany.

Photo by Don Mathers

gone after arriving in Europe. They knew he died in battle and always thought he was buried in Dresden, Germany. As Dee and Tad found out, he was not, but we will get to that later.

Tad told us he would incorporate three subjects in his talk. One would be "Uncle Bill" Driver. An-

other would be Bill's division, and the third would be a little background of the German General in command of the troops Bill fought.

William F. Driver, "Uncle Bill," was a Kansas farm boy from near Quenemo, Kansas, about 33 miles southwest of Topeka. He was born December 14, 1923. He attended a couple of years of High School at Lyndon, Kansas. After moving to another farm, he transferred and graduated from Quenemo High School. Bill attended Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science (today, Kansas State University) from 1941-1942. He majored in Agriculture and was a member of the Alpha Gamma Rho agriculture fraternity. He was also a member of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), assigned to A Company. Tad pointed out that during his military service, Bill was always assigned to an "A Company". Using a projector, Tad showed photos of Bill during his youth and young adulthood.

Tad then talked briefly about the 1st Infantry Division, the Big Red One. It would later play a major role in Bill's military life. Tad gave a history of the 1st Division's record in World War I and World War II up until Bill joined the Division. The 1st Division entered World War II with the landings in North Africa in November 1942. From North Africa, it fought during the invasion of Sicily. After Sicily, the Division was posted to the United Kingdom to prepare for the eventual cross channel invasion of France. The Big Red One came ashore on Omaha Beach in Normandy on June 6, 1944. It

drove across France, reaching the German border at Aachen in September. It took Aachen in October then took part in the bitter fighting in the Hurtgen Forest, suffering many casualties.

The 1st Division was in a rear area when the Battle of the Bulge began and was rushed to the front where it remained in continuous fighting from December 17 to January 28 1945. It then returned to battle along the Siegfried Line. Tad told us that the total battle casualties of the 1st Division, including killed, wounded, missing in action, and prisoners, as a percentage of authorized strength was 139 percent.

Tad then gave a short military biography of the German commander whose forces Bill fought. His name was Fritz Bayerlein. Bayerlein was a veteran of World War I and remained with the German Army after that war. During World War II he was the First General Staff Officer under General Heinz Guderian and participated in the invasions of Poland, France, and Russia. He then served in Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps. He was in Italy in May 1943, and was fighting Russians on the Eastern Front that fall. In October 1943, he successfully broke his forces out through a Russian encirclement at Kirovograd, Russia. From January 1944 to March 1945 Bayerlein commanded the elite Panzerlehrdivision (Panzer Lehr Division), an armored division. The Division fought in Normandy during and after the D-Day invasion and was later decimated by Allied carpet bombing near St. Lo, France. The division refitted and fought at the

Battle of the Bulge, where it again suffered heavily. When assigned command of the 53rd Corps of the Fifteenth Army, General Bayerlein still had Panzerlehrdivision under his mantle of forces.

Returning to his talk about "Uncle Bill," Tad told us he did not graduate from Kansas State. His father wanted him back on the farm, and in 1942, he left school. His younger brother, John, was sent to Kansas State. Bill's father was a pacifist and apparently objected to the war on religious grounds. Yet four brothers in the family served in the military, three in World War II and one in Korea. Bill remained on the farm until being drafted in July 1944.

After his induction, Bill reported to Camp Joseph T. Robinson, North Little Rock, Arkansas for basic training. Ironically, Camp Robinson was also used to house German Prisoners of War. There, Bill was assigned to A Company. He also met and became good friends with a Clyde Van Pelt. Van Pelt was able to give Tad and Dee information about life at Camp Robinson.

On December 21, 1945, Bill and others were given a final personnel inspection, then they packed up their gear, loaded up, and shipped out of Camp Robinson. Tad showed some period images of soldiers boarding a ship in San Francisco as a typical example of how troops embarked to go overseas. But Bill started his journey overseas by train.

**"Tracing Bill Driver",
con't. on page 14**

CAM member and volunteer receives prestigious award

Tom Witty is recognized with a Distinguished Service Award at the Plains Anthropological Conference

Tom Witty, CAM member and volunteer exhibit builder, recently received a prestigious award we would like to share. Most of our readers probably do not know that prior to his association with CAM, Tom's vocation was as an archeologist, and not just any archeologist. Tom was State Archeologist for Kansas from 1960 – 1994.

In October, Tom and **Mary Anne**, his wife, traveled to the 65th Annual Plains Anthropological Conference, held in Rapid City, South Dakota. There, Tom was honored by his peers, and awarded the "Distinguished Service Award" for "his many contributions to Plains archeology."

Tom's award included a beautifully engraved plaque. At the top of the plaque is an engraved petroglyph of a Native American warrior on horseback. Tom and his team discovered this and other petroglyphs in rocks at the Wilson Reservoir in Kansas. The Plains Anthropological Conference encompasses 11 states and Saskatchewan Province, Canada.

When Tom became State Archeologist in 1960, he had to create an archeology department and program within the Kansas State Historical Society nearly from scratch. One of the things he always strove to do was present and explain archeology and archeological exhibits in a way that would be meaningful and interesting to a layperson who may not understand the details of archeology. This goal is well represented in the Pawnee Indian Village Museum in Republic County, Kansas. Tom designed and implemented this museum that opened in 1967. Tom was also instrumental in establishing the Kansas Anthropological Training Program.

Tom and his eventual staff of archeologists (there were three full and one half-time employees in the department in 1966) became involved in the archeological impact of reservoirs being built around Kansas, conducting digs and mapping out and recording evidence of past human habitation at a site, particularly Native American. Tom became much involved with Native Americans, ancient and present, through his work.

In the 1980s Native American movements and protests were growing across the US in regard to archeologists' excavation and

treatment of their ancestor's remains. In Kansas, there was a privately owned venture near Salina that was a tourist attraction of an ancient Native American burial pit. Tom was instrumental in getting a statute passed to deal with unmarked human burial sites and directed the study and eventual closing of the Indian burial pit near Salina in 1990. He was personally involved with the work done at the site in preparation for its closing, including working with various Native American tribal members who conducted burial ceremonies before the entire site was entombed.

Tom held top offices in the Plains Anthropological Society and is a past President of the National Association of State Archeologists. He was an adjunct professor of anthropology and archeology at Washburn University. In 1994 Tom received a Certificate of Recognition from the State of Kansas, signed by Governor Joan Finney.

And then Tom came to CAM as a volunteer, and we have had the good fortune of his work for several years, now. He has prepared over 20 exhibits and helped put up the Art Gallery. As of this writing, Tom is putting together a great exhibit on the Battle of Midway. We will report on his newest work in the next issue of *Plane Talk*.

We extend our congratulations to Tom for his recent award and recognition of his contributions to anthropology and archeology. ➔

In Memoriam

Marjorie Mae Baker

July 10, 1925 –

October 8, 2007

#3260

11 years member

2008 Events Calendar

Event dates subject to change

March

17 – 21 Aviation Education Class

April

5 - Kansas Air Tour 80th Anniversary Flight
CAM provides lunch to the fliers

25 – Celebrity Pancake Feed

June

8 – 11 Aviation Education Class

July

13 – 16 Aviation Education Class

August

3 – 6 Aviation Education Class

September

26 – Winged Foot 5K Run/Walk

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December 2007/January 2008 Calendar of Events

December

Monday, December 10

Membership Luncheon
Jean Wanner Education Conference Center
11:30 A.M.

Our Guest Speaker will be
Lieutenant Colonel Richard Faulkner
from the Command and
General Staff College,
Fort Leavenworth

Tuesday, December 25

Museum is Closed

January

There is no
Membership Luncheon
in January.
The next luncheon is
Monday, February 9, 2008.

→ → →

Fighting on the Eastern Front is the topic of our December Luncheon Meeting

Lieutenant Colonel Richard S. Faulkner, US Army (Ret.), is our scheduled speaker for the December Membership Luncheon. LTCOL Faulkner is an assistant professor in the Department of Military History, Command and General Staff College, Fort

Leavenworth, Kansas. He is well versed in Soviet military history and will be speak to us about fighting on the Eastern Front during World War II. LTCOL Faulkner also attends World War reenactments dressed as a Russian soldier. →

Join the Combat Air Museum!

Winter Hours for the Museum

Just a reminder to everyone that effective December 1, we went into our wintertime hours of operation. Between December 1 and March 1, 2008, we are open seven days a week, 12 P.M. – 4:30 P.M. Last entry to the Museum is 3:30 P.M. daily. Office Hours remain 9 A.M. – 4:30 P.M. Monday through Friday, and Lois' hours remain 9 A.M. – 2 P.M. for the same period. →



The MiG-21 arrives and is reassembled at CAM

In a follow-up to our story on the MiG-21 printed in the last issue of *Plane Talk*, we are happy to report the fighter arrived at the Museum about 8:45 A.M., Thursday, November 8. As you can see in the photos, the aircraft was basically in five major pieces, the fuselage with vertical fin, the wings, and the horizontal stabilizers. There were also a number of small panels and fairing pieces.

Marty Batura and **Bill Lemieux**, of Worldwide Aircraft Recovery, began offloading the wings and preparing them for attachment to the fuselage. When it came time to remove the fuselage from the trailer, **JB Turner and Sons**, a local roofing contractor, provided a truck crane to help. Between their truck crane and Worldwide Aircraft's cab crane, the fuselage was easily lifted from the trailer and Marty and Bill began putting on the wings. By 5:15 P.M. the MiG was sitting on its own landing gear.

Marty and Bill were back the next morning and began putting on the horizontal stabilizers. Then came the belly drop tank, which everyone noticed sits very close to the ground. This was followed by installation of fairing pieces, fillets, and other miscellaneous plates. By mid afternoon Marty and Bill were cleaning up

*Above: The Czechoslovakian MiG-21 arrived November 8.
Right: Two cranes coordinate the fuselage lift.*



Photos by Gene Howerter



*Above: Marty Batura and Bill Lemieux fit a wheel to a landing gear strut.
Left: Less than 48 hours later, a freshly washed MiG-21 sits in front of 604.*

and getting ready to head home to Bellevue, Nebraska. **Gene Howerter** and **Dick Trupp** rigged up a garden hose and power washer and gave the MiG a good wash down. With that done, it was hooked up to a tug, and **Don Dawson** towed it over in front of Hangar 602. For the immediate future, the MiG-21 will stay outside while the painting continues on the F-84F. Once that is done, we can shuffle planes around and get the Czechoslovakian fighter inside.

While the fighter was coming together Museum volunteers walked around the aircraft to look at the stenciling on the plane. We found two distinct languages. All the painted stenciling is either in a Czech or Slovak language. We were able to understand what several of them meant. The permanent metal tags and data plates are in Russian which was a totally different matter for us to try to understand. We had some idea, just because of where the plates were, but not because of the language. We found the same situation of mixed labels and data plates in the cockpit, which, by the way, is in beautiful condition. We saw only one hole in the instrument panel and we are betting it was the clock. Gene Howerter suggested it would be nice to have a platform from which people could look inside the cockpit, and within a week **Martin Moyer** and **Amos Page** constructed one.

This MiG-21 is in great shape and well worth a trip to the Museum to check it out. ➔



Come and shop for unique holiday gifts at the Museum's Gift Shop

Wayne Dodson, Gift Shop Manager, and **Gene Howerter**, Board Vice Chairman, want you all to know that we have a fully stocked Gift Shop ready for this season's shoppers. Gene wants to highlight the propeller blade clocks that are a new item to the Gift Shop this year. Wayne has airplanes of all shapes and sizes and skill levels on the shelves, as well as books and many other aviation and military related items, as well as museum souvenirs. Some will make great stocking stuffers. Others will make fine gifts.

Looking for a great gift for a toddler? We have a number of wooden scooter planes to choose from. A few are in the Gift Shop and there is a book with photos of the others that we have in storage in 604.

You need to come out and look over the Gift Shop. You may find that perfect gift you have been looking for. ➔

CAM member interviewed about PBS series

During the third week of September, the Public Broadcasting System began airing Ken Burns' latest documentary series, "The War," about World War II. The series dealt with people who fought in the war and those who were on the home front. After the first couple of episodes, Mike Hall, a reporter with *The Topeka Capital-Journal*, interviewed several local veterans about their take on the series. One of those interviewed was **Dave Houser**, a long time CAM Member. Hall interviewed Dave at the Museum. Although Dave did not serve in World War II, he gave the home front view of the war. Dave later served as an artillery officer during the Korean War period.

When the article was published in the paper, the lead in below the headline was a large photo of Dave working on the Museum's mock up of the Messerschmitt Bf-109.

New Supporters

Dale Anderson
Bruce Baker
Tom Cunningham
Gretchen Hanson
Jerry Holley
Gil Marick
Merrill Sheldon

Renewing Supporters

Kevin Zvilna
Jack & Nelda Janway
Corey, Tricia, Katie, Reagan &
Grant Dehn
Charles Gorges
Sharon Rosenow
Merrill & Barbara Ross
Eric, Lyn & Michele Walther
Chuck & Marlene Urban
Kevin Drewelow

➔ ➔ ➔

Our museum and our volunteers garner praise from visitors

The Museum recently received the following letter and Vice Chairman Gene Howerter felt it should be shared with our membership.

Monday Oct. 22nd, 2007

Dear Sirs,

*My wife and I visited Combat Air Museum on Saturday, Oct 20th. It was our first visit. We arrived at about 11:30 and it was our good fortune to have **Ralph** guide us through the exhibits. We were spellbound by his stories about each of the exhibits and aviation in general. He really made our visit memorable. In what seemed like a blink of an eye, 4 ½ hours had gone by!*

I'm writing this note to express our appreciation for him sharing his knowledge and passion for aviation with us. We are the richer for it.

Thanks again, Ralph. Men like you make me proud to be an American.

Respectfully,

(signed) Dr. Brad Astleford

Dr. and Mrs. Astleford hail from Dodge City, Kansas where he is a dentist. Ralph, of course, is our long time member and tour guide volunteer **Ralph Knehans**. Kudos to Ralph for leaving such a positive impression of himself and the Museum on these visitors.



Museum members **Bob and Mary Ann Kelly** attended a salute to Veterans community concert at White Concert Hall, Washburn University on November 12. The Harry James Orchestra gave the performance. Bob wrote us the following note and included a concert program.

*“At Monday evening’s Community Concert of the Harry James Orchestra, **Director Fred Radke** made a strong point in his opening remarks that he had thoroughly enjoyed his visit to the Combat Air Museum earlier on Monday. He was very complimentary and hoped that the audience appreciated what a fine museum we had in Topeka. This was greeted with warm applause. Radke is an aviation/military enthusiast and is involved with various veteran organizations.”*

Bob Kelly

Lois Ecord got to visit with Fred Radke when he visited the Museum. She said he told her of the various stars, singers and performers he had met from the Big Band era. He has also worked with more contemporary composers/artists such as Burt Bacharach and Johnny Mathis and has been lead trumpeter for Leslie Uggams, Phil Harris, Johnny Ray, The Lennon Sisters, Connie Stevens, Pat Boone and others.



**"Winged Foot 5K",
con't. from page 1**



Gene led contestants in the Air Force scooter while Don Dawson followed in the '41 Dodge Ambulance.

An unseasonably strong south breeze, especially for 8 A.M., challenged runners and walkers alike. Before the day was over wind advisories were posted in five counties to the west of Topeka, including one adjacent to Shawnee County. The wind was especially wearing to runners as they spent much of the first half of the last mile facing directly into the wind. Fortunately, they had it square on their backs over the last 700 yards.

Mark Manroe of Shawnee, Kansas and **Leslie Curley** of Topeka were the overall men's and ladies' winners. Neither broke the respective course records set last year, but both did establish new age

group records. Surprisingly, eight age group records were set this year, five in the men's competition and three in the ladies. The first three ladies across the finish line each set a new record in their respective age groups.

A number of immediate and extended family members of long-time CAM members **Bill and Marcella Briery** ran and walked the course in memory of Bill, who passed away in February.

Bill participated in the first two Winged Foot events in the 80-and-over age group, and holds the course record for that group. The family members and Museum volunteers working the event wore commemorative buttons with Bill's photo on them.

Thirty-two runners came from outside of Topeka, and 12 of these were from out of state. We had entrants from South Dakota, Missouri, Colorado, Nebraska, Washington, and Iowa, most of whom were in Topeka visiting family or friends and chose to run in our event while here. CAM had a good representation of partici-

pants, too. Fourteen members participated and collected 11 age group medals, including six First Place finishes.

Emma Judge, Barrie Judge, Jim Leighton, Marlene Urban, Don Mathers, and Mary Naylor were First Place medalists. **Corey Dehn, Jack Vaughn** and **Chuck Urban** collected Silver medals. **Tricia Dehn** and **Bob Kelly** collected Bronze, and **Greg Judge, Isabella Judge** and **Kevin Zvilna** rounded out CAM's participants.

The wind molecules seemed to conspire with the electrons of the timer recording and printing to add another little problem for participants. The recorded times stopped printing after participant number 35,



Bob Kelly won a Road Atlas as final place finisher.

and the place finishers stopped printing after participant number 43. Fortunately, the digital clock kept running throughout. But we were not expecting a computer glitch, and the manual recording of remaining finishers was a little hectic in the beginning. Four CAM members conducted a post race review of everything that was computer-printed, hand-printed, and the race number pull-tabs collected at the finish line. We got the results sorted out, and folks who did not get their medals on race day received them in the mail with a letter of explanation. Next year we will be standing by with the old Number 2 pencil as a back up in case gremlins show up again.

A lot of people, businesses and other groups made this fun run/walk a success. Names of sponsors were printed on the back of the race T-shirt, and this year the shirt filled up nicely. Sunflower Striders provided the timing equipment and people to operate it, plus other valuable suggestions for running a successful event. **Zona (Briery) Hudkins**, owner of Engraved Creations, Inc. printed the T-shirts and participated in the event in honor of her Father, Bill. Air Force Junior ROTC cadets from Highland Park High School of Topeka were race course marshals. Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority, on whose property we ran the event, provided security to monitor traffic on the Forbes Field streets. **Eric Johnson**,



Gene Howerter with the top men's and ladies' finishers, Mark Manroe and Leslie Curley.

Director of Operations at Forbes and Billard Airports, and his daughter **Joyce**, also ran in the event. Then we had our own cadre of volunteers who put this all together. Several were responsible for getting all the race sponsors. Others were sponsors. And some did it all. They got sponsors, were sponsors, participated in the event, or helped set it up, run it, and take it down.

It is definitely not just a group of people showing up and running five kilometers around a marked course. This event takes a lot of

planning, leg work, and execution to make it successful. And we are successful. People have come back to this race three years in a row and look forward to doing it again next year. We have learned a lot about doing an event like this and will continue to make it better. If you have not had the opportunity to help with this fall fund raiser, please come out next year and take part. Mark your calendar for **Saturday, September 27, 2008** for the fourth edition of the Winged Foot 5K Run/Walk. ➔

David Tallichet, whose aircraft started CAM, passes away

David Tallichet, the man whose aircraft started our Museum, died October 31, 2007 at age 84. The Museum started with his B-24J Liberator bomber named Delectable Doris in 1977, and the fledgling museum was named Yesterday's Air Force, Kansas Wing. Tallichet's Wing Headquarters was in California. For the next 18 years a veritable

potpourri of World War II aircraft including trainers, fighters and bombers, all belonging to David Tallichet, passed through our hangars at Forbes Field.

The association was not without it bumps and bruises. In fact, Tallichet rejected the first draft of a Memorandum of Agreement as being too one-sided in favor of the Kansas Wing. An important part of the agreement was that Tallichet would bring aircraft to Topeka in return for the Kansas Wing to restore certain of these aircraft. The Kansas Wing was to also put up a percentage of the cost of restoration for each aircraft based on its value. Initially, that seemed like it would work. The rub came when Tallichet provided his own assessment of an aircraft's worth, and suddenly the percentage the Kansas Wing had to put up became a rather large sum of money.

This relationship lasted for two years, then the Kansas Wing bowed out and formed its own, separate corporation and became Combat Air Museum. Even then, though, David Tallichet continued to bring his aircraft to and through the Museum. At the time he held the largest collection of privately owned flyable World War II aircraft in the world.

Tallichet's Yesterday's Air Force eventually merged with his Military Aircraft Restoration Corporation, commonly known as MARC, that still exists today. He also ran the Specialty Restaurants Corporation out of California. This

corporation became the reason for his aircraft leaving CAM in 1995. Specialty Restaurants Corporation went into bankruptcy in the mid-1990s. To pay off the corporation's debts, Tallichet began selling his collection. Within about a year's time the B-24J Liberator that started this Museum, a Spanish CASA-2.111 (Heinkel He 111), C-46 Commando, and F7F Tigercat left Topeka to new owners. The last aircraft remaining at CAM of David Tallichet's is the Polish-built MiG-17. Several months ago, **Gene Howerter** approached MARC about donating the MiG-17 to CAM. **Bob Schneider** also joined with Gene to work out the details to get the aircraft donated. Everything verbally indicated David Tallichet was going to donate the aircraft to us, and we have been waiting for the "paperwork" to go through for a few months, now. What affect Mr. Tallichet's passing has on the transfer of the MiG-17 remains to be seen.

David Tallichet was a World War II veteran. He flew B-17 Flying Fortresses with the 350th Bombardment Squadron, 100th Bombardment Group, Eighth Air Force. **Merton Wilch**, who has been a CAM member since it was Yesterday's Air Force, was also a member of the 100th bomb group. Tallichet completed 23 combat missions before the War's end. His wife **Carol**, daughter, **Catherine**, and sons **William**, **John**, and **James** survive him. ➔

Visitors

During September
the Museum had
767 visitors
from 33 states,
Washington D.C.

and
Belgium
Canada
China
Denmark
Germany
Great Britain

During October
we had
741 visitors
from 38 states,
Washington, D.C.,

and
Australia
Austria
Canada
Great Britain
Mexico
Netherlands
South Korea
Spain
Sweden

➔ ➔ ➔



The model USS TOPEKA (SSN 754) in its new exhibit case.

Submarine model gets a protective case

The 12-foot model of USS TOPEKA (SSN 754) is now under protective cover. **Larry Mann**, member of the USS TOPEKA committee, built the 1/30 scale model of the nuclear attack submarine named after our capital city several years ago. It has been on exhibit in Hangar 602 since about 2001. Earlier this year **Dick Trupp** started the process to get the model in a protective case, and approached Larry about this.

The USS TOPEKA committee funded the materials for an exhibit case, and **Martin Moyer** and **Amos Page** did the primary construction. They first built a large, roll-around, table as the base, then made a wood framed, clear plastic case to set over the model. Dick and **Gene Howarter** assisted with

the work, particularly the painting. The project was completed a few weeks ago, and we rolled the submarine from 604 back into 602 where

is it on display as shown above. Dick placed signage with the exhibit, and will add other details later. ➔

Ruth Fink was a long-time CAM supporter

Ruth Fink, long time benefactor, friend, and life member of Combat Air Museum, died September 18, 2007 at age 90. Ms. Fink was a noted Topeka businesswoman and philanthropist. For the past 20 years, she donated \$200,000 to \$300,000 annually to numerous organizations, including Washburn University, Stormont-Vail HealthCare, and the Topeka Community Foundation, just to name a few. For over a decade Combat Air Museum has received an annual donation of \$500 from the Fink Foundation. In 2006 her Family Freedom Foundation funded the installation of skylights in Hangar 604, and this year the Fink Foundation funded part of the cost for trans-

porting the MiG-21 from Mesa, Arizona to Topeka.

In a 2003 interview Ms. Fink said, "Philanthropy is not just money, its giving." She supported organizations that taught "...entrepreneurship, enterprise, and democracy." She was a Kansas native, born in Colby in 1917. Her funeral was held at the White Concert Hall on the campus of Washburn University on September 22, 2007.

Mr. Terry Wages, a long time friend and business associate, said the Fink Foundation will continue to distribute remaining assets over the next several years. ➔

"Tracing Bill Driver", con't. from page 3

From Camp Robinson, Bill traveled to Fort George G. Meade near Laurel, Maryland. The troop train made a stop at Fort Scott, Kansas. Bill was hoping to see his family there, but they did not have enough gas to make the trip down from Quenemo. The train went on to Kansas City, then east to Maryland. Bill's overseas journey started from a Maryland port, down the Chesapeake Bay, and across the Atlantic.

Bill entered the European war zone at the end of January 1945 as a replacement assigned to the A Company of the 26th Infantry Regiment (the Blue Spaders). The 26th was part of the 1st Infantry Division (26th/1st). At the time, the 1st Division was a unit of XVIII (Abn) Corps. That Corps was part of Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges' First Army and Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley's Twelfth Army Group. During Bill's time with the 26th/1st, the Big Red One was subsequently assigned to III Corps and VII Corps.

Bill was placed into the lines with A Company at Weywertz, Belgium, near the German border. Weywertz was several kilometers east of Malmedy, Belgium. Six weeks earlier, during the Battle of the Bulge, German SS troops executed US prisoners in a field near that town.

Bill arrived on the west side of the Siegfried Line in time for the big push to go back through the Line, regain ground lost during the Battle of the Bulge, and continue driving to the Rhine. Tad had a copy of a Daily Action Report that showed A Company had lost 55 men in four days

attacking the Siegfried Line. Bill was a replacement for one of these men. Tad explained the purpose of the Daily Action Report and showed us the information it contained, including the location of the unit.

Tad took a moment to tell us about how tactics had changed between World War I and II. World War II was much more mobile. Once Allied forces got into Germany, the mobility issue became more apparent. Hitler built the Autobahn and US mobile forces made the most out of this highway system to advance through Germany. The tanks of World War II were a huge change from those introduced during the First World War. Attacks took place in the dark during World War II, both nighttime and early morning. Amphibious warfare was much improved and used more during World War II, including mass movements across rivers. Tad also said the US seldom used reserve divisions while the British usually operated with the concept of two divisions forward, and one back.

US forces were breaking through the Siegfried Line, also known as the West Wall, for the second time in three months. With the exception of a forty-mile segment around Aachen, Germany, the advance on the West Wall had stopped because of the Battle of the Bulge. The Wall extended some 400 miles from Switzerland to south of the Dutch frontier. Its fortifications were anywhere from three to 20 miles deep. The 26th/1st faced nearly 1,500 bunkers and pillboxes. There were also entrenchments, minefields, anti-tank ditches, and anti-tank concrete pyramids called

"dragon's teeth all along the line."

To the east of the Wall was the Allies' coveted prize. This was the Rhine (Rhein) River, itself a natural barrier. Crossing this major European river would then mean virtually open field running to the heart of Germany. But for the First Army and Lieutenant General William H. Simpson's Ninth Army to the north, there was an additional barrier to cross between the Siegfried Line and the Rhine. This additional barrier was the Roer (Rur) River. It ran some 70 miles south-southeast from the southeast corner of the Netherlands through the Rhineland. The river had seven dams on it. Six were comparatively small, but the Schwammenauel dam was large, with a capacity of nearly 111 million cubic yards. It was key to the Allies crossing the Roer that the Germans not blow the Schwammenauel and flood the Roer valley. The Ninth and First Armies were scheduled to launch Operation Grenade, the crossing of the Roer, on February 10, 1945.

The First Army's 78th Division was assigned to capture the Schwammenauel dam and moved out on February 5 to accomplish this. The Division soon ran into stiff opposition, and the fighting only worsened as it approached the dam. Between February 6 and 8, the 78th's advance was almost to a standstill. With help from elements of the 9th Division, US forces finally took the Schwammenauel around midnight February 9, but it was too late. The Germans had breached the spillway, opened the discharge valves, and destroyed the operating machinery to close them. As water

rushed through the breach, it widened, and in a few hours the level of the Roer River rose some five feet.

The flooding and rapid current of the Roer postponed Operation Grenade for two weeks. Engineers predicted the river would drop about February 24, so General Simpson scheduled the river crossing for the pre-dawn hours of February 23. The risk was great, but Simpson wanted the element of surprise and a full day to gain a foothold on the opposite bank. Four divisions of the Ninth Army and two divisions of the First Army would make a simultaneous crossing. the Big Red One, including Bill Driver's 26th Infantry Regiment, was one of the two First Army divisions chosen to make the crossing.

Bill first saw combat near Untermaubach, Germany near the west bank of the Roer River. The 26th's movements to Untermaubach took them through part of the Hurtgen Forest, where the 1st Division had suffered many casualties the previous October fighting in the almost impenetrable forest. By February 23, the 26th Regiment had moved a couple of kilometers further east to Winden, on the west bank of the Roer, to support the river crossing. The German forces facing the 1st Division included Bayerlein's 53rd Corps with tanks and infantry. Later, the 1st would face the Panzerlerdivision. The central position of Bayerlein's forces was Cologne (Koln), Germany.

The pre-dawn jump-off to cross the Roer was preceded by a 45 minute artillery barrage by some 2,000 guns of the First and Ninth Armies. In spite of this firepower,

the Germans were still able to put up counter fire against the crossing troops. Tad said that smoke generators were used to hide the cross-river movement and German mortar and artillery fire fell continuously in the water and on the banks. The river was still running high and assault boats were carried down river past their intended landing points. The opposite bank was heavily mined. Combat engineers initially had problems building pontoon bridges across the river due more to the swift current than enemy fire. They eventually succeeded and by nightfall of February 23, some 25,000 US troops of the Ninth and First Armies were across the Roer. The river dropped the next day and more bridges were built. The Americans were on their way to the Rhine.

Bill and A Company advanced east across the Roer to Drove, Germany. From there, they moved northeast about 10 kilometers to Gladbach. From Gladbach, the 26th fought east/northeast through Erp to Bliesheim. Had they continued northeastward about 35 kilometers, they would have been into Cologne. However, other elements of the First Army were assigned that city. The 26th got to Bleisheim on March 4 and engineers built a Bailey Bridge across the Erft River. The crossing was completed March 5, and the 26th initially proceeded northeast to Pingsdorf, less than 10 kilometers from a bend in the Rhine River at Wesseling. Then an event occurred that caused the 1st Division to turn and move southeast.

On March 6, elements of the First Army entered the outskirts of Cologne. Bayerlein's Corps was

withdrawing eastward. By the end of the day Cologne was in US hands, a major prize, as this city sat on the Rhine River. Bridges across the river were destroyed, but controlling the west bank meant temporary bridges could be built across.

The following day, an even more significant catch took place. An infantry-tank task force of the US 9th Armored Division was conducting reconnaissance to the juncture of the Ahr and Rhine Rivers. The force reached some woods above the small town of Remagen, Germany, about 35 miles southeast of Pingsdorf, and was surprised to find a large railway bridge, still intact, spanning the Rhine River. It was the Ludendorff Bridge, some 1,000 feet long. Its two railroad tracks were planked over and there were footpaths on either side.

The advance unit reported its find and General William Hoge, commander of the task force, immediately went to the scene. When he got there, troops and tanks were already advancing on Remagen to capture the bridge. Resistance in the town was light. The infantry and a tank platoon got to the western end of the bridge in time to see a large explosion take place on it. When the dust and smoke cleared, the US troops could see some damage to the tracks, but the bridge still stood. The damage stopped the tank platoon from going further, but not the infantry, and they attacked onto and across the bridge with the tanks firing into German positions.

German engineers had wired the Ludendorff Bridge with enough explosives to drop it all into the

**"Tracing Bill Driver",
con't. on page 16**

"Tracing Bill Driver", con't. from page 15

Rhine. In fact, the German engineer officer responsible for the bridge was on the span and set off the initial blast. Knocked unconscious by an exploding tank shell for about 15 minutes, he then got into a tunnel on the east end and turned a key to set off another explosion. It did not happen. A Sergeant then ran onto the bridge and lit a fuse. This caused 650 pounds of high explosive to detonate, causing more damage, but the bridge still stood. With supporting tank fire, more and more US infantry got across the bridge and began knocking out the German positions and collecting prisoners. By 4 p.m. the Allies had an intact bridge across the Rhine River.

Tad said two towers of the Ludendorff Bridge still stand today with a museum in one of them. He said Germans continually attacked the bridge after it was in US hands, using long range artillery and aircraft. Ten days after it was captured, the main span of the bridge fell into the river. But by that time treadway bridges had been built nearby across the Rhine, and troops, armor, and supplies continued to flow across the river.

Bill and the 1st Division crossed the Rhine at Remagen on March 16 and advanced generally east/northeastward across the German countryside. They advanced through Bruchhausen, a few kilometers north-east of Remagen, on the same day they crossed the Rhine. From there they continued northeasterly reaching Orscheid on March 21, then Stockhausen, and Soven on March 23. Then the 1st Division turned more easterly and picked up the speed of their advance, crossing the

northern end of the Westerwald mountain range of Germany. They reached Luckenbach, about 35 kilometers from Soven, around March 25.

Tad then showed us a copy of the Morning Report for March 26. It showed that 16 men of A Company had been captured near Luckenbach but later escaped. During their research Tad and Dee found a former veteran of the unit living in Indiana. Tad contacted the man's family and learned he has Alzheimer's disease. The man could remember being captured and escaping, but little else of the episode. Tad felt sure Bill was one of the 16 men captured.

Molzahn, several kilometers north of Luckenbach, was next. The 1st Division then took a more northeasterly track to Elsoff, some 55 kilometers from Molzahn, getting there around March 29/30. Bill, the 26th Regiment/1st Division, and other units of the First Army were part of a lower pincer arm led by the 3rd Armored Division to encircle a number of German divisions and one corps of the German Fifteenth Army. Units of the Ninth Army, led by the 2nd Armored Division, formed the upper arm of the pincher. The encirclement was known as the Ruhr Pocket, and included the Ruhr and Lippe Rivers. The single German corps being encircled was the remains of Bayerlein's 53rd Corps and one of the divisions was the Panzerlehrdivision.

Bayerlein's senior commander was Field Marshal Walther Model, Commander of German Army Group B. Model realized the hopelessness of further fighting in the Ruhr,

but he was bound as a soldier to do his duty. He did, however, propose a withdrawal, with a limited counter-attack to protect, it to his senior commander, Field Marshal Albert Kesselring. Kesselring agreed to the counterattack, but said no to the withdrawal.

On March 30, the 26th Regiment moved from Elsoff several kilometers north/northeast to positions around Wunderthausen and Hallenburg, in the Hallenberg Forest. Northeast of Wunderthausen and northwest of Hallenburg is Winterberg. The three towns nearly form an equilateral triangle with legs 9-10 kilometers long. Tad showed a photo of the of the present day countryside along the road from Elsoff to Wunderthausen. There is extremely dense forest on each side of the road. It was in this type of setting that Bill Driver would fight his last battle.

Model launched his counterattack early on March 30. Bayerlein's Panzerlehrdivision had orders to attack Hallenberg while the 53rd Corps had orders to attack along the line of the 3rd Armored's advance. The fighting around Hallenberg lasted into the night. Tad had copies of Bayerlein's Operation Reports and copies of A Company's Morning Reports for March 30-31. He said he was not able to convert the World War II grid coordinates to modern day coordinates, and, therefore, could not pinpoint exact locations. The Morning Reports for A Company listed two enlisted men killed. One was Bill Driver.

Sometime after the battle, Bill's mother wrote to his squad to ask what happened when her son died.

Tad said the squad wrote a six-page letter back. Bill participated in the morning attack, then the squad and company dug defensive positions on a hill cutting a road. Bill's position was in the woods on the top of the hill. The last German attack took place about 10:30 P.M. Covering fire was put down for the German withdrawal, and Bill was hit in the forehead by the withdrawing fire and died instantly. He was carried down to a road where his body was to be picked up.

Tad and Dee stayed at Hallenberg in a hotel on the main street of the city. He said that there were many ski resorts in the area around Braunshaven, Hesborn, Liesen and Hallenberg. Tad showed photos of the city. He said it was a beautiful German city of about 5,000 residents with its citizens enjoying freedom. He also said it is a very old city. The Chapel of Holy Mary was built in 1000 A.D. He also had photos of the town's archivist and another of Dee and a local artist they met at an evening function.

Tad and Dee visited sites of the fighting in the Hallenberg Forest. They enlisted the help of a local historian and a woman from the hotel. The historian spoke no English, and Tad spoke little German, so the woman from the hotel acted as interpreter. They visited the American positions, then the German positions. Tad said they found some foxholes and other evidence of the fighting, and may have located the hilltop where Bill died, but because of the coordinate conversion problem, they were not positive. But they did come away with a strong feeling of the conditions under which both

sides fought.

On April 1, 1945, the pincer closed on the Ruhr Pocket and US General Omar Bradley assigned 18 divisions to clear out the German forces trapped inside. What was left of the Panzerlehr division surrendered to the 99th Division at Iserlohn, about 70 miles northwest of Hallenberg. On April 13, now completely surrounded, Fritz Bayerlein was finally given permission to withdraw 53rd Corps from the Ruhr Pocket. Bayerlein surrendered the remains of his Corps to the 7th Armored Division on April 15. He was placed in prison at the war's end and released in April 1947. He wrote about military subjects and was involved with historical studies of World War II. He served as a technical advisor to the cinema production of *The Guns of Navarone*. Fritz Bayerlein died in 1970.

The 1st Division did not remain in the Ruhr Pocket. After Hallenburg, the Division moved southeastward some 290 kilometers to Cheb, Czechoslovakia, in the northwest corner of that country. Tad and Dee traveled to Cheb, and saw a monument erected there to the 1st Infantry Division. The tall monument had the names of all 1st Division personnel killed from the Rhine crossing until Victory in Europe (VE) Day. Bill Driver's name was on it. Tad showed a photo of the monument. Trees closely surround it. He told us Russians had done this to hide it—just another little part of the ensuing Cold War.

Tad and Dee had one other place to visit. This was Bill's burial site. As mentioned near the beginning of the article, family members

thought Bill had been buried in Dresden, Germany. In their research, Tad and Dee found he was buried at a cemetery in Margarten, Netherlands. At the cemetery Tad took a small bucket of sand from the Normandy beaches and rubbed it on the headstone to bring Bill's name out before photographing the marker.

Bill's final resting place almost brought him full circle to where he started his service in Europe. Margarten is about 50 kilometers northwest of Weywertz, Belgium where Bill first joined A Company, 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, in late January 1945. Tad and Dee had traveled in about three days the ground Dee's Uncle Bill and his fellow infantrymen fought over during two months in February and March 1945.



Additional information taken from:

Across the Rhine, by Franklin M. Davis, Jr., Time-Life Books, 1980,
National Geographic Atlas of the World, Fourth Edition, Borch and Michelin maps of Germany, and
 Various Internet sites

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 website
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 museum.org**

CAM volunteers join in to honor Veterans

Four CAM members manned an information booth at Washburn University on November 9 as part of Veterans Day commemoration. **Dick Trupp** and **Gene Howerter** set up a collapsible mural honoring the US Eighth Air Force during World War II and our two storyboards about the Museum. Later in the day, **Beattie Dickson** and **Dave Houser** joined Dick and Gene. Beattie flew in the 401st Bombardment Group of the Eighth Air Force during World War II.

A couple of other CAM members were also at Washburn in different capacities. **Stu Entz** was there with the Rolling Thunder chapter of the Military Vehicle Preservation Association. **Ralph Knehans** was there as part of the Vietnam Veterans of America Honor Guard. ➔



Left to right: Dick Trupp, Beattie Dickson and Gene Howerter with the Eighth Air Force mural.



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P.O. Box 19142
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Topeka: The model USS TOPEKA (SSN 754) in its new exhibit case.

Washburn: Left to right: Dick Trupp, Beattie Dickson and Gene Howerter with the Eighth Air Force mural.

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