

# COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

## → → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

Forbes Field Topeka, Kansas

August / September 2010 • Vol. 26, No. 4

## Get ready for the Sixth Annual CAM Winged Foot Fast 5K Run/Walk

Join us for the Sixth Annual CAM Winged Foot Fast 5K Run/Walk on Saturday, September 25, 2010.

The run/walk starts at 8 A.M. Registration opens at 6:45 A.M. on the north side of Hangar 602 of the Museum. The Museum is located on south J Street, Forbes Field (two streets south of the Forbes Field terminal). The CAM Winged Foot Fast 5K Run/Walk is a Charity Benefit for the Combat Air Museum, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, dedicated to the preservation of military aircraft and artifacts by showing their relevance in the world today.

We would like to have as many participants pre register as possible. Registration forms are available on the Internet on the Combat Air Museum website at <http://combatairmuseum.org>. Select the Winged Foot 5K Registration Form link to download the blank registration form. Forms have also been placed at local Fitness Centers and YMCA/YWCA facilities in Topeka, as well as at the Combat Air Museum.

The registration fee, completed before September 25, is \$20.00. The day of the race is \$22.00. Sunflower Striders members are entitled to a \$2.00 discount with the early entry fee.

All event participants will receive a race T-shirt and free admission to the Museum, plus a \$1.00 discount coupon, good for up to four regular admissions on a single visit to the Museum.

Medals will be earned by the top three female and male participants in each five year age classification.

The CAM-designed medals depict a 2-inch sneaker with an aircraft wing attached. The ribbon has a red, white, and blue flag design.

### Stephanie

**Ramos** is our Honorary Sponsor for the Run/Walk this year. She is a news anchor and reporter for WIBW-TV Channel 13. She is also a Captain in the US Army Reserve who returned to Topeka early this year after a year of duty in Iraq.

CAM members can support this benefit by getting sponsors for the event and/or becoming a sponsor. A sponsorship is \$100 and all sponsors will be listed on the back of the race T-shirt. Please contact the Museum at (785) 862-3303 or [email office@combatairmuseum.com](mailto:office@combatairmuseum.com) to become a sponsor.

We also need a crew of volunteers to run the event. Areas needing attention include the registration tent, being on the course as monitors/course marshals

**See "Winged Foot" con't. on pg. 7**

**Come join us as a runner or a volunteer  
Saturday, September 25, 2010**

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## Combat Air Museum

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### *Museum Hours*

January 2 - February 28/29

Mon. - Sun. Noon - 4:30 P.M.

Last Entry Every Day is 3:30 P.M.

March 1 - December 31

Mon. - Sat. 9 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

Last Entry Every Day is 3:30 P.M.

Closed New Year's Day, Easter,

Thanksgiving, Christmas Day

### *Newsletter*

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of Combat Air Museum

of Topeka, Kansas,

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Your comments are welcomed.



*Jerry L. Hester, our guest speaker*

## Luncheon speaker helped gain recognition for aviation event in WWI

We reported in our last newsletter that **Lieutenant Colonel Doug Jacobs, USA, (Ret.)** would be our guest speaker at the June Membership Luncheon. As it occurred, Doug tossed us a nice curve and introduced a gentleman who was much more closely involved with the scheduled topic. In fact, were it not for this gentleman, the topic would undoubtedly never have happened.

Doug introduced **Mr. Jerry L. Hester** of Winston Salem, North Carolina. Mr. Hester is a member of the League of World War I Aviation Historians. He has been to France several times to visit World War I sites, and came away with a realization that the aviation aspect of World War I is not recognized and memorialized like the land battles. One sight and event in particular caught Mr. Hester's interest. This involved the "Lost Battalion," units of the US 77th Infantry Division that became surrounded by German Forces in the Argonne Forest in October 1918. The US Army Air Services was very much involved

with locating the Lost Battalion, but there was no local commemoration nor monuments to reflect that fact. As Mr. Hester would tell us, two Medals of Honor were awarded two US airmen who gave their lives trying to locate the battalion. .

What followed in Mr. Hester's presentation was how he took it upon himself to take action to ensure an important part of US history in World War I would not forever fade from memory in the locale where these events took place. His presentation was a remarkable story of how one person set in motion and coordinated events to honor the US 50th Aero Squadron and particularly the actions of Lieutenants Harold Goettler and Erwin Bleckley. His efforts earned each man the Medal of Honor.

**What follows is the transcript of Mr. Hester's story, as provided.**

"One of the best World War I historical accounts for the British and American efforts was authored by the late Rose Combs, Imperial War Museum, London, entitled "Before Endeavors Fade". The same applies to the U.S. Air Service Remicourt Aerodrome project which was inspired by several visits to the airfield sites and actions that took place 91 years ago in the September-October, 1918, period by the 50th Aero Squadron stationed in Remicourt about 60 km south of the Meuse-Argonne battle sector.

"It was apparent to this Author that there were no historical site markers, memorials or recognition of any sort for the American Aviators of the 1st Observation Group composed of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 88<sup>th</sup> Squadrons who occupied the Remicourt Aerodrome. Why was this group of aviators so important? They were the eyes and ears of the main American & French offensive thrust into the battle sector where over 1 million US troops were actively engaged in a desperate battle to end the War.

"During the conduct of operations, the 50th Aero Squadron repeat-

edly flew in adverse conditions to accomplish their assigned missions. On October 6, 1918, one of these missions was assigned to Lt. Harold Goettler, pilot, and Lt. Erwin Bleckley, observer, flying aircraft No. 2 to locate and re-supply the 77<sup>th</sup> Division "Lost Battalion" that was deep in the Argonne Forest ahead of their flanking units, surrounded by agitated German troops. They were not successful, and though aircraft No. 2 was badly shot up, asked for aircraft no. 6, which was assigned to Lt. Floyd Pickrell. Risking the known consequences of a second mission, again took off toward dusk to locate the coordinates of the men trapped and getting desperate for relief. They, Goettler & Bleckley, were shot down by ground fire near Binarville and crashed with both crew members perishing. For this they were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the first for the U.S. Air Service in World War I. The first for the State of Kansas, as Lt. Bleckley was a native of Wichita, Kansas. Aircraft No.16, Lts. Anderson & Rogers, then on October 7, 1918, finally located the proper coordinates to effect relief by American ground forces.

"This, to the Author, seem the ultimate sacrifices that needed to be properly researched, documented, verified and then permanently memorialized for posterity where the places and actions took place so long ago before they are forgotten or memories fade away. Only by coincidence, did the deep voice within saying it is your responsibility and you can do it with the resources at your disposal at this time. No one else is in possession of the tools required to get the Remicourt Aerodrome project done in the near future. Thus the challenge was made and accepted to start the Aviation Historical Process, known to many by my high sounding title, "Methodology, Field Investigative Analysis & Verification to Develop Archival History in the International Arena".

"How do you find the lost relatives of Goettler & Bleckley & access their family archives? How do you verify the Remicourt Aerodrome location? How do you access the archives of the local French population and records? How do you write & speak French properly? How do you establish your credentials at the right levels in both the US and abroad? How do you finance such a project? How do you plan an international series of activities in a proper time frame? How do you get proper and timely media coverage in both US and in France? How are the logistics of a memorial handled that is designed, manufactured and shipped to France in a timely manner? These and many more are all questions that had to be answered.

Phase I was to establish what was to be accomplished and get started at the right level. A major sponsor, Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), member of the Senate Armed Ser-

vices Committee, was first obtained. A military liaison in his office, LTC Brooks Tucker, was assigned and assisted greatly in asking for the US Embassy Paris Air Attache's office to assist us. Col. Robert C. Dooley, was fortunately a WW I admirer of Maj. Raoul Lufberry. He supported us immediately. Since it was a private initiative, we could move more quickly and with assertiveness to act, then inform. Act, then ask advice & approval. Act, then coordinate. Act, then document. Communication with all parties as they were involved in every phase was very important. The wonderful support of the American Battle Monuments Commission, Mr. Phil Rivers, Superintendent, American Meuse-Argonne Cemetery was vital. On previous trips into the region with Steve Ruffin, Editor of OTF, and my son and son-in-law, Stuart and John, we were able to make the proper contacts with the French Mayor through his son, Alain Deketele, who spoke English and was a key person in moving his side and we, ours. Once we passed Phase I, obtain local permission to proceed in France, we knew we were on our way.

"The historical facts along with appropriate 50<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron aircraft data, markings and scale were given to International Bronze, Albertson, NY, to provide a proposal, design and schedule for the large bronze plaque that included both English and French text. Numerous changes were made to finally arrive at an acceptable end product that displayed facts, homage, respect and honor to the Remicourt American Aviators. The plaque weighed over 180 lbs. when finished. The engineering to then attach to the Remicourt Mairie was done long distance to insure a safe and permanent mounting.

"Phase II was to establish the persons of most importance, the relatives of Goettler and Bleckley, if possible. The composition of the list of dignitaries, military and guests who would be participants and who wanted to be involved was started with zeal. First, locating the survivors of Goettler & Bleckley. Contacts with the Wichita Eagle newspaper, Ms. Becca Tanner, History Editor, produced the Bleckley contact with first, Ms. Dorothy Reichart, Topeka, KS, who then directed the Author to her sister, Ms. Nancy Erwin, Shreveport, LA, also a niece of Lt. Erwin Bleckley. Then, Ms. Joan Starr, Wilton, CT was located by Steve Ruffin from a previous trip to the "Lost Battalion" area along with Robert Laplander, both of whom were in the Argonne in October 2008 at ceremonies for the "Lost Battalion" memorial.

"The Illinois and Kansas National Guard were contacted, briefed and responded with major support for our effort to honor their native sons. Goettler was a native of Chicago, IL. Bleckley was a Wichita, KS native.

"The USAF Europe was contacted and agreed to send their 86th Air Wing Honor Color Guard.

## "Aviation in WWI," con't. from pg. 3

"The VFW District I, Internationale, Department of Europe, Ramstein AB, Germany was contacted, and their Commander, MSSGT Amber Putnam, would attend along with their Past Commander, Paris Post, John Davis, to represent all the VFW in both US and abroad.

"Phase II was rolling and now to Phase III, Public Relations. Contacts were made 90 days prior to the October 7<sup>th</sup> date with Press Releases to both the US Kansas, Illinois & French papers, the French Consulate, Atlanta, GA as well as the French Embassies in US and Paris. French TV was alerted to something important about to happen in the little town of Remicourt. A second Press Release was made 30 days prior to the October 7<sup>th</sup> date. Local Wichita, KS, Shreveport, LA and Wilton, CT reporters interviewed Ms. Erwin and Ms. Starr prior to their travel to France.

"A full set of travel plans for the Kansas, Illinois & Germany based military, Goettler & Erwin families was made for an on-site arrival of October 5<sup>th</sup>

"The Mayors of Remicourt & Givry conducted local planning meetings, task assignments, invitation lists and receptions beginning 3 months prior for over 200 persons on October 7<sup>th</sup> and a Mayor's dinner for 50 persons on October 6<sup>th</sup> with exceptional flair and details.

"A Floral Plan was implemented to insure the proper organizations were represented at the various ceremonies in several locations.

"Phase IV was the Implementation Phase, which after all the careful planning and details is described below.

"In the small towns of Binarville & Remicourt, France, October 6 & 7, 2009, over 200 persons including many dignitaries, guests, and military attended the ceremonies from as far away as Germany, Louisiana, Kansas, Illinois, Maryland, Connecticut, North Carolina & New Hampshire to memorialize the first U.S. Air Service airmen of the 50th Aero Squadron to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor in World War I, Lts. Harold Goettler & Erwin Bleckley.

"At a graveside ceremony on October 6<sup>th</sup> at the burial site of Lt. Bleckley in the American Military Cemetery, Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, members of the Kansas & Illinois National Guard, headed by Deputy Adjutant General Deborah Rose and LTC James McCabe, respectively, Mrs. Nancy Erwin, niece of Lt. Bleckley alongside Mrs. Joan Starr, niece of Lt. Goettler, respects were given.

"After the ceremony, the families visited the Cemetery Chapel. Mrs. Starr was accompanied by her two sons, David and Jeffrey, and Mrs. Erwin by her husband, M/Gen. Ralph Dean Erwin (USAF Ret.).

"The entire traveling delegation of some 25 persons,

afterward, visited the site of the "Lost Battalion", 77th Division, AEF, in the Argonne Forest and were hosted by the Town of Binarville for a ceremony at the site with honors being given by both the Town and the respective families. A Town reception attended by 75 persons was held at the Town Hall with champagne and refreshments prepared by the local French citizens.

"In company of Gilles Lagin, the person who single-handedly finally located last year the crash site of the 50th Aero Squadron plane #6, in which Goettler & Bleckley were killed, just outside the Town of Binarville, a memorial wreath and flags were placed by the Kansas Guard and the families.

"The Mayor of Remicourt and the League of WWI Aviation Historians hosted an invitation dinner for the local Town Councils, dignitaries, and guests in the petite Remicourt restaurant, Grain-de-Sel with more of the local Epernay famous champagne served. Fifty persons attended.

"On October 7<sup>th</sup> in the bright sunshine, the formal ceremony was held in Remicourt, some 60 km south of the crash site, at the Town Hall at 11 AM. The American and French National Anthems were played to start the ceremony. Col. Robert Dooley, U.S. Air Attache, Paris; Serge Barcellini, Director of the History Council, Department of the Meuse; Ms. Francoise Duchein, Council General, Department of the Marne; Mayor Ghislain Deketele; Jerry L. Hester, Event Organizer, WWI Aviation Historians; and Alain Deketele, French Event Assistant Organizer were on the podium introducing guests, reciting in both French & English from a letter by Senator Richard Burr (R-NC), introducing dignitaries and guests as well as presenting a gift to the Town of a scale model of the DH-4 Liberty aircraft #16, 50th Aero Squadron, that was crewed by Lts. Rogers and Andersson to finally locate the "Lost Battalion" on October 8, 1918. Also presented were the History of the 50th Squadron, archives and ceremony memorabilia for the Town records.

"A permanent bronze plaque describing the exploits of the aviators was placed on the Town Hall wall as a memorial with wreaths laid by Kansas Guard, Illinois Guard, the families, the WWI Aviation Historians and the Town. USAF Europe 86th Air Wing Honor Color Guard along with French bugle corps and colors were present. A release of 50 memorial flight pigeons was made in memory of all the aviators who gave their lives in WWI.

"In conclusion, a SE5.a vintage aircraft, flown by top French aerial pilot, Jack Krine, flew from the exact Remicourt Aerodrome airfield site used by the 50th Aero Squadron. It was thrilling and added much realism to the entire event.

"Immediately following, the towns of Remicourt & nearby Givry hosted an elaborate champagne reception for 200 persons. The Consul General of the Marne, Ms. Francoise

Duchain, presented gifts to Kansas Guard, Illinois Guard, Jerry Hester, and other guests.

“The American Battle Monument Commission, European Area, was involved in all the events and has listed Remicourt Aerodrome as part of the American WWI sites in the Meuse-Argonne region. As a result of the extensive research over 2 years, the importance of the site in the U.S. Air Service history as being the first awarded Medals of Honor to American Aviators in WWI, the first Medal of Honor to a Kansas National Guard, Lt. Bleckley, Wichita, KS, airman and the permanent memorialization done, Remicourt Aerodrome is being considered by the French Government as a World Heritage Site for the 100th Anniversary of WWI. It has also been cited as the standard to which future events and memorials of this type should be done. Some 75 U.S. and French citizens worked on this international effort and made the history come alive in a way heretofore not even imagined when it first became evident that there was no memorial to these brave aviators.

As there is no permanent site memorial for the airfield location just south of the town of Remicourt, Alain Deketele is planning the memorial marker and it’s placement in the near future.”

Mr. Hester told us there was interest in locating the remains of Goettler’s and Bleckley’s aircraft. People felt the engine and other parts of the airframe are in the ground. They want to excavate the crash site and eventually erect a monument at the site.

If you would like to read more information and see images of the events related above, go to <http://www.usawwI.com/50th-Aero-Squadron-Harold-Goettler-Erwin-Bleckley/> or enter 50th Aero Squadron Harold Goettler & Erwin Bleckley as a search topic. ➔

## August Luncheon Speaker

Our speakers for the August Membership Luncheon will be three military officers from the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. We anticipate having officers from the US Army, US Navy and US Air Force speak to us on current events and their course of curricula at the College. ➔

## Visitors

During **May** the Museum had **1,154 visitors** from **41** states, and  
 Belgium  
 Bulgaria  
 Canada  
 China  
 France  
 Germany  
 Great Britain  
 Mexico  
 Saudi Arabia

During **June** we had **1,014 visitors** from **32** states, and  
 Brazil  
 Canada  
 France  
 Germany  
 New Zealand  
 Scotland

➔ ➔ ➔

## 2010 Events Calendar

*Dates subject to change*

**August**  
 2 - 5 Aviation Education Class  
**September**  
 25 *Winged Foot* Fast 5K Run/  
 Walk

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## August/September Calendar of Events

### August

**Monday - Thursday, August 2-5**

### Aviation Education Class

Jean Wanner Education Conference Room  
 9 A.M. - P.M.

**Monday August 9**

### Membership Luncheon

Jean Wanner Education Conference Room  
 11:30 A.M.

Our speakers will be three military officers from the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

### September

**Saturday, September 25**

### Winged Foot 5K Run & Walk

J Street, by Hangar 602  
 8 A.M.

There is no Membership Luncheon in September

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## Welcome Deloris

We want to welcome **Deloris Zink** to the Combat Air Museum as our new Office Manager. Deloris is a retiree who formerly worked at Washburn University where she scheduled facilities for various functions and events. She is currently working 9 A.M. to noon. Her email address is [office@combatairmuseum.com](mailto:office@combatairmuseum.com).

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## Project update

### Waterline

Between June 2 and June 8, a handful of volunteers took part in a project to put in over 340 feet of waterline for Hangar 602. This was to replace an existing, 60-plus year old line we stopped using several years ago because of repeated leaks in the iron pipe and mounting repair costs.

The new line includes a new spigot on the south, exterior side of Hangar 602 that can provide water between this hangar and Hangar 604, or with a jumper line, provide water to the hangar bay of 602.

Last fall, **Mr. Mike Welch**, CEO of **BRB Contractors of Topeka**, looked at the job and said he would work on the project. When we started the project on June 2, Mike had retired from BRB but donated his labor to do the work. He also made arrangements for a backhoe and skid loader and rented a trencher for the work and operated this equipment for the entire project. We paid for the materials for the new waterline, spigot, and associated fittings.

The intent was to run the new, plastic pipe through the inside of existing iron pipe. We were able to do this along one stretch of about 81 feet and another of about 25 feet but kept finding 90 degree turns in the existing pipe run. So Mike went to work on the south side of 602 trenching with the backhoe, and the trenching machine was used along part of the west side and the north side of the hangar.

All this digging was not without incident. While using the trencher, we hit a phone cable (located 16 inches to one side from the Dig Safe paint and flags) and later cut into the top of a plastic sewer pipe. The sewer pipe was an easy fix, using a made for the purpose splice. AT&T had to repair the phone cable, and the matter is currently with our insurance company. To digress a bit, if any of you need to do some digging, Dig Safe markings can apparently be up to 24 inches off on either side from the actual location of a pipe or cable, without liability. On the plus side, the gas line was exactly where the Dig Safe markings said it was, and we successfully avoided it and a second phone cable.

About 9:15 P.M. Monday, June 7, Mike connected the waterline to its source, and we turned on the valve. We had

water at the spigot and no leaks in the line. That was great news as we knew rain was moving into the area overnight. Mike was back at O dark thirty the following morning to move dirt back into the large hole on the north side of 602, but the heavy rains halted his effort to completely fill and level the dirt. We took the backhoe back to its owner and would wait about three weeks for the next phase while rains continued to hit us with some regularity. Fortunately, all the other dug up areas on the west and south sides had been filled. The landscaping work was what was left.

**Dave Murray, Jim Braun, Don Dawson, and Danny San Romani** put in 143 man-hours installing the new waterline. **Mike Welch** had at least 66 hours of his own.

During one Thursday morning in mid June, Danny had Air Force Jr. ROTC cadets from Highland Park High School doing volunteer work, and eight cadets and two Master Sergeants worked with Danny to remove dirt from the drive along the south side of Hangar 602 and to level the filled trench line. On July 1 and 2, Mike was back to do landscape work with a skid loader and then rake the landscaping. **Gene Howerter** worked with Mike those two days, and the two put in another 26 man hours. Gene also seeded all the disturbed areas with plenty of grass seed that has since sprouted. So, we have one more capital improvement project completed to the Museum.

### Screen Doors

**Dick Trupp** and **Jim Braun** have one more screen door left to install to complete that improvement to our visitor doorways for the hangars.

### F-105 Thunderchief

**Don Dawson** is installing fiberglass panels around the exhaust pipe of the fighter to replace original panels removed by a contractor with the National Museum of the United States Air Force, due to a radioactive element in the original panels. The contractor left us 13 fiberglass-molded panels to put on the F-105. Don had to do come cutting and shaping on each panel to get them to fit on the plane and adjacent panels.



*Above: The trench and new waterline along the south side of hangar 602.*

*Right: Dave Murray, Don Dawson, and Mike Welch set the new spigot at the terminus of the waterline.*

There are four groupings of three panels each and one large panel to replace the drogue parachute door. Don also prepared and painted the white panels to match the Air Defense Gray color of the Thunderchief. Four panels will be made from aluminum sheet and installed to finish this job.

#### **Paint Booth**

**Bob Crapser** is working on the ventilation ducting. We borrowed a "hazer" smoke-producing machine for stage productions and did a test run of the fan and first section of exhaust duct to see how well the "smoke" was removed from the booth. Subsequent tests were done with 4th of July smoke bombs, and we will do more testing once the ducting is complete.

#### **F-86H**

Danny San Romani removed a panel from the left wing of the Sabre and cleaned out the actuator compartment it covered, finding yet more evidence of bird occupation. He also removed, repaired, and refurbished a panel cover for the right wing fuel port. The fuel cap and several bolts surrounding the cap require replacement.

#### **Plane Washing**

Summertime is when we have the best opportunity to wash aircraft in the collection, especially in Hangar 604. During one Saturday in June, Danny San Romani had a group of about 10 volunteers from the Church of Latter Day Saints in who were doing community service work. The group washed the Beech SNB-5, North American O-47, and Bf-109 Messerschmitt mockup. Also during June and July, Air Force Jr. ROTC cadets from highland Park High School washed aircraft. At the time of this writing they had washed the F-14 Tomcat, C-47 "Kilroy," F-101 Voodoo, F-105 Thunderchief, and the 1941 Dodge ambulance. Six to eight cadets and one or two adult instructors come out on Thursday mornings. →

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## **"Winged Foot Run/Walk" continued from pg. 1**

and to pass out water to the runners and walkers. The finish line requires six to seven people. Volunteers for the registration tent need to be at the Museum by 6:30 A.M. Other volunteers need to be present by 7:30 A.M.

As, always, Museum members are encouraged to participate in the run/walk. So, please set aside this day on your calendars and spend a fall morning being a part of this important fund raiser for CAM. →

An audit of our membership records show we have been hit and miss in recognizing all of our members, new and old, this year who support the Museum with their memberships. We hope this catches us up. If you feel we have missed you, please let us know.

### ***Lifetime Member***

Bonnie Kreuter

### ***New Supporters***

Paul & Betty Frantz

William & Donna Gilliland

Klio Hobbs

Robert Nall

Brian, Lauri Jean, Stephen, & Christopher Swett

Mike & Carla Welch

Gene Wunder

### ***Renewing Supporters***

David Banum

George Catt

David Cox

Beattie Dickson

Kevin Drewelow

Richard Gates

Gil Marick & Gretchen Hanson

Doug, Paula, & Douglas Jacobs

Robert Johnston

Raymond & Cheryl Kulp

David & Sharon Lybarger

Larry Madden

Michael Madden

Larry & Nancy Mann

Don & Becky Mathers

Larry Morgan

Gary, Susan, Patricia, & Rachel Naylor

Richard Novak

Richard Olson

Eliot Potter

Kevin, Deborah, Nathaniel, & Spenser Roe

Gerry Sibley

James Slover

Larry & Diane Todd

Vic Van Camp

Gary Zook

→ → →

Visit our website at [www.combatairmuseum.org](http://www.combatairmuseum.org)

# CAM loses a friend in George Chandler

A friend of the Museum who is also the subject of one of our exhibits passed away recently. **Mr. George Chandler** of Pratt, Kansas, died July 13, 2010 at age 89. A native Kansan, George was a World War II fighter ace. He enlisted as an Aviation Cadet in the US Army Air Corps in 1941 and started training in January 1942. He graduated as a pilot in the summer of 1942 and was immediately ordered overseas.

George initially flew Curtiss P-40 Warhawk fighters for several months with the 47th Fighter Squadron, 14th Fighter Group, Seventh Air Force in Hawaii before transferring to the 8th Fighter Squadron, 49th Fighter Group, Fifth Air Force in New Guinea. In April 1943 he transferred again and flew the Lockheed P-38 Lightning in the Solomon Islands. He flew the P-38 with the renowned 339th Fighter Squadron, 347th Fighter Group, Thirteenth Air Force. He flew 101 combat missions, and it was in the P-38 that George became an ace, downing five Japanese fighter aircraft. His awards included the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with 11 Oak Leaf clusters. George's P-38s carried the name of his sweetheart, Barbara Ann. In the spring of 1944 he was ordered stateside to become an instructor pilot, and married Barbara Ann Slothower upon arriving back in the United States.

George left the service in 1946 and entered banking, where he worked for the rest of his life. He was longtime head of the First National Bank of Pratt, Kansas. He was also well known in veteran's organizations and was a past president of the

American Fighter Aces Association. George was well known for his longtime efforts to have the Office of Air Force History correct the aerial victory credits for the shoot down of the airplane carrying Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto over Bougainville Island in the Solomons on April 18, 1943. The pilots and P-38 fighters flown on the Yamamoto mission were from the 339th Fighter Squadron.

The research of George's group, Second Yamamoto Mission Association (SYMA), satisfied the Victory Credit Board of the American Fighter Aces Association and the Confederate Air Force that Rex Barber should be accorded full credit for downing Yamamoto's aircraft rather than a split credit with Thomas Lanphier. However, the Office of Air Force History refuses to consider the new evidence and the aerial victory remains a split credit.

CAM has an exhibit about George Chandler in the L-shaped exhibit room to the rear of the Gift Shop. It includes an art print titled *Two Zeros For Barbara Ann* and depicts George downing a Zero fighter over Empress Augusta Bay, one of two he shot down in one engagement.

George last visited CAM in February 2007, when he was a guest luncheon speaker. He and his brother, **Anderson Chandler**, donated three art prints of P-38s of the 339th Fighter Squadron that were used in a wall exhibit of the Yamamoto Shoot Down. George also donated a scale model of a P-38 Lightning done in the markings of #125, Barbara Ann IV. ➔