

# COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

## → → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

Forbes Field Topeka, Kansas

April / May 2012 • Vol. 28, No. 2

## Are you ready to help CAM with its 19th edition of the Celebrity Pancake Feed, Saturday April 28?

The 19th edition of our Celebrity Pancake Feed is Saturday, April 28 from 7 am until 12 pm. Please help support this major fundraiser for CAM. Tickets are available and are \$6 each. Sign out a block and sell them among family, friends, and anyone you can sell them to. The ticket buys all the pancakes one can eat and includes admission to the museum. **Bob Carmichael of Perkins Restaurant/Bakery** will provide the makings and grills, and **Gene Howerter** is lining up the Celebrity flippers, both veterans and newbies.

Preparation for the Feed will be very busy this year and will start earlier. Because aircraft will be removed from Hangar 602, we will take the time to suspend the *Sopwith Pup* from the ceiling and shuffle the *Pfalz* to a new position. We also plan to repair a couple of faulty ceiling lights.

Floor cleaning should go faster than previous years as we now own a floor scrubber/cleaning machine. We acquired it through Federal Surplus Property last year and **Don Dawson** went through the machine cleaning it and making any necessary repairs. It has new batteries and should make the floor cleaning less labor intensive.

**Marlene Urban** and **Dick Trupp** are coordinating the Silent Auction and will have a number of tables set up. We are asking for donations for the auction. New or gently used items are what we are looking for. Items we do not want include left over garage sales items, clothing, out dated electronic gear, items that are dirty, chipped, cracked or worn. Generally, if it is something you would bid on at a Silent Auction, please bring it out. If you would not bid on it, please take it elsewhere. Auction items can be placed in the Gift Shop Manager office. A folder with instructions is on a table along the north wall.

We need our largest number of volunteers the day of the event.

### Jobs include:

- Greeters to welcome patrons and to escort our guest flippers to the grills
- Ticket sellers in the Conference Room,
- A ticket taker at the head of the food line,
- Servers at the food and beverage tables,
- Coffee makers and runners to move coffee urns back and forth between the kitchen and the serving table,
- People to monitor the eating tables and wipe up spills, replenish syrup and butter as needed'
- A couple of folks to mop up floor spills,
- People to run the silent auction,
- Clean up crew, and
- Folks to re-spot aircraft in the hangar.

The entertainment Gene has lined up includes **Beverly Bernardi Post** dancers, a barbershop quartet, the **Soul-full Singers**, and the **Santa Fe Band**. Then there will be a pancake catching contest of some sort.

Nursing students from Washburn University will be set up in the CH-53 *Sea Stallion* to give free screening for blood pressure and diabetes.

Weather permitting, patrons are welcome to fly in and park on the tarmac in front of Hangar 602.

There are plenty of things on tap for this years Pancake Feed, so please come out and take part. →

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## Combat Air Museum

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Tad Pritchett - *Secretary*

Les Carlson

Don Dawson

Stu Entz

Raymond Irwin

Doug Jacobs

Ted Nolde

Dick Trupp

### *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*

#### *Editing & Design*

Toni Dixon

785-865-4221

**Plane Talk**, the official newsletter

of Combat Air Museum

of Topeka, Kansas,

is published bi-monthly.

Your comments are welcomed.

## From the Chairman's Desk

It has been reported this is the second warmest winter in recorded history in Topeka, KS. As most of us in Topeka are enjoying the warm days with little snow, we at the Combat Air Museum are enjoying having a higher than normal number of patrons visit the museum. It is always great welcoming and visiting with visitors from near and far. Most cannot tell us enough how much they enjoyed their tour of the museum. This past week visitors from both Belgium and Russia were viewing the museum and it is always enjoyable for both the guest and our volunteers to engage in a lot of back and forth conversation. It is also pleasing to know we are appreciated. However the bottom line is the more visitors we entertain the more revenue we take in, which helps ease the pressure in this time of higher costs and a reported down economy. We always love seeing increased numbers of guests tour our museum. Please encourage everyone you can to come and visit the museum.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our members who have been so gracious as to add a few extra dollars when paying their CAM membership annual dues. Let me assure you the extra dollars are used wisely and go a long way in supporting the museum. I also want to thank you for responding to the first mailing when paying annual dues. As you might guess, second and third mailings take up valuable office time and increase the cost of mailing. We do appreciate your support by maintaining museum memberships. We would also be interested in feedback from each of you as to how you would react if in the future we were to convert publishing the CAM *Plane Talk* newsletter on line only. We would like to hear from members on this subject, please let us hear from you.

If you have not been out to the museum for a while, I would encourage you to stop by and view exhibits and changes made over the past year. We have several things in the planning stages for this spring and we will keep you informed when you read the *Plane Talk* newsletter. Don't forget to bring yourself and others to the 19th annual Celebrity Pancake Feed, April 28 at the museum. This is going to be a great event with good food and entertainment and a great line-up of celebrities along with a silent auction. If you have "like new" items you want to donate for the silent auction, please call the museum office. Tell everyone you know and plan to attend.

*Gene Howerter*

Chairman, Board of Directors

### *Visitors*

During **January**  
the Museum had

**423 visitors**

from **18** states,

and

Australia

Finland

Israel

Malaysia

During **February**

we had

**627 visitors**

from **22** states,

and

Australia

Great Britain

Philippines

→ → →

Join the  
Combat Air  
Museum!



## General George S. Patton, Jr. inspects the troops at CAM Luncheon

As members and guests assembled in the Conference

Room for the February Membership Luncheon, **Russ Wiedle** had video images on the big screen TV showing CG-10 Snow Goose launches and flying, plus a computer-generated short on possible shipboard use. After the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer by **Ralph Knehans**, folks lined up to the pot luck buffet.

**Mr. Roger Aeschliman**, our guest speaker, was not able to join us for the meal portion of our luncheon, so **Gene Howerter** used some time as people were finishing their meals to conduct some general business about the Museum. Our first fundraiser of 2012 is the Celebrity Pancake Feed, to be held on the last Saturday in April. **Dick Trupp** and **Marlene Urban** both spoke briefly that they were ready to start collecting items for the silent auction that takes place during the Pancake Feed.

Gene then began the program by reading a biographical sketch of US Army General George S. Patton, Jr. As Gene read the sketch, Russ called up the theme music from the 1970 academy award winning movie *Patton*.

At one point while Gene was reading the biography, he completely changed the tense of his reading from past tense to present tense, saying, in part, "*As he speaks today it is Fall 1945 and the General is the commander of occupational forces in Southern Germany.*" Gene then gave the command, "*Troops ATTENTION!*" Commensurate with that command, the personage of **General George S. Patton, Jr.** entered the Conference Room.

The first reactions by the audience were smiles and chuckles as our guest speaker arrived in the guise of the General. However, as those seated in the front of the room soon found out, our guest was in full form as General Patton and got right into people's faces about not coming to attention. After dressing down the audience, complete with Pattonesque profanities, the General asked who was the leader of the outfit, and those in the front quickly pointed to Gene. Then giving Gene a dressing down about the demeanor of his "troops," the command *ATTENHUT!* was again given, and the audience complied. Again directing his attention to those in the front of the room, the General bawled out individuals and ordered fines for improper haircut, lack of a tie, and not being clean shaven. For the next 20 minutes, we

were addressed by General George S. Patton, Jr. replete with his mannerisms, emotions, and language.

Patton's presentation began with his recounting the two slapping incidents that cost him command of the US Seventh Army. He slapped two soldiers during separate visits to evacuation hospitals. Patton said he did not believe in battle fatigue, and that soldiers claiming such a malady did not belong in hospitals with brave, wounded men. They should be held at the front lines and not in hospital tents.

Patton said that evacuating battle fatigue cases to hospitals weakened their respective units on the front lines. Remove enough of those men from the front lines, and a platoon, a company, a brigade, a division and a corps would lose its fighting effectiveness and more men would be killed by the enemy.

The General described the carnage of the battle scene as he came to the evacuation hospital involved with the first incident. He told of a pile of amputated limbs outside the surgery tent. He added that it was a general's job to visit hospitals and visit his men.

Patton told us he took the time to thank all the doctors, nurses, and medics at the hospital. He described the injured men in the tents, including dying soldiers. He told of a soldier who died in his arms and then, on the next cot, was a coward. Seeing no physical injuries, Patton said he asked the soldier what his problem was. The soldier replied that he had a bad case of nerves. Patton said he was enraged that this coward was among all the other brave men and not at the front where he belonged. He said he slapped the soldier with his gloves, and doctors took the man out of the tent.

Patton said the next incident happened a week later, and it also involved a bad case of nerves. This time, the General referred to the doctors as "pinkos," but he voiced his greatest wrath on Drew Pearson who broke the news of the first incident on a radio program in the US. Referring to the columnist as a "commie homosexual," Patton was outraged that Pearson compared him to Adolf Hitler. He went on to say that [General Omar] Bradley understood combat fatigue. He said that most reporters understood it and did not write about it — except Drew Pearson.

Patton said [General Dwight D.] Eisenhower ordered him to personally apologize to the men he slapped, to the doctors and hospital staff at the two evacuation hospitals, and to all troops under his command. This he did, but he spoke of one instance where a division of troops was scattered along a hillside, and as he started to give his apology, one soldier stood up and said, "No, General, no." Other soldiers joined in, and Patton said soon the whole division was chanting, "No, General, no."

Patton went on to again curse doctors who took men out of the lines with combat fatigue, then went on

**"Patton," con't. on page 4**

"Patton," con't. from page 3

to say some things about the two soldiers he slapped. The first actually had malaria and dysentery, but the doctors had not diagnosed this at the time of the incident.

The second soldier was known as a "bug out." As soon as the fighting started, he dropped his rifle and ran. His leaders and fellow soldiers wanted him out, and some considered his actions treasonous. But he did go back to the front lines, and Patton understood he went on to fight bravely. Patton said that because of Pearson's story in the United States and the ensuing uproar, he was relieved of command of the Seventh Army and placed on light duties. He said he had some minor involvement in planning the Normandy landings. Then, after D-Day, came command of the Third Army.

At this point, Gene introduced **Mr. Roger T. Aeschliman** as our guest speaker. Mr. Aeschliman is a Vice President and Trust Officer at CoreFirst Bank and Trust in Topeka, where he personally manages customer assets of more than \$100 million. He is quite involved with civic affairs, including Rotary, Boy Scouts, and numerous military efforts. He is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Kansas Army National Guard and has, among other honors, been named the Kansas Officer of the Year. He served a combat tour in Iraq.

Mr. Aeschliman holds undergraduate degrees from Kansas State University and a master's degree from University of Kansas. He and his wife Robyn have two teenage children.

The floor was then open for questions, with the stipulation that audience members indicate if they were asking their question of General Patton or Roger Aeschliman. We have seen this type of question and answer process before, at museum presentations with Dr. Ann Birney as Amelia Earhart. As questions were asked and answered it became quite clear Colonel Aeschliman is a knowledgeable student of General George S. Patton, Jr. When Roger Aeschliman took a question, the helmet came off. When General Patton took a question, the helmet was on.

As almost everyone in the audience had seen the movie *Patton*, more than a few questions were in reference to that movie. **Stu Entz** started the questioning by asking the General about his "pearl-handled" revolver, full well knowing the response he would probably get. Patton did not disappoint, giving a very colorful response about his "ivory-handled" revolver and questioning Stu's intelligence.

Roger Aeschliman took the next comment and question. An audience member said his father served in Patton's Third Army and talked about a time when



*Gene Howerter presents  
Mr. Roger Aeschliman with a  
Certificate of Appreciation  
made out to  
General George S. Patton, Jr.*

*Images by Don Thun*

Patton was personally directing traffic, something also shown in the movie. Colonel Aeschliman said, in fact, he did, but usually in minor circumstances. Patton wanted to be visible to his troops, and this was a way of doing that. It also included his jeep with the siren, and his standing up in the jeep when going by troops. Patton always wanted to be visible going forward. When he left to go to rear areas, he flew so the troops would

not see him.

**Tad Pritchett** brought up the fact that a 93 year old gentleman in Corning, Kansas, was once a driver for Patton and had a lot of remembrances of that time. Colonel Aeschliman said he knew of the gentleman and said he needed to talk with him.

Roger Aeschliman fielded a question about Patton's duty at Fort Riley, Kansas. Patton served three tours at the post. During one tour he ran the saber school, when cavalry saber fencing techniques were still part of the US Cavalry. In 1913 he was the youngest Master of the Sword, and that same year helped design a new saber for the US Cavalry. Colonel Aeschliman said Patton was also involved in liberating some Negro soldiers from Ogden, Kansas, saving them from a lynching for an alleged rape.

A question to Roger Aeschliman was asked about a movie scene where Patton shoots at German Heinkel bombers with his revolver. He responded that was pure Hollywood, but the scenes before that one were accurate in that Patton did argue for Royal Air Force fighters to handle the Luftwaffe raids, and that a raid did happen during one of those sessions. Another movie-related question referred to the weather prayer during the Battle of the Bulge. Colonel Aeschliman responded that while it was done with an Hollywood approach, the prayer did happen, and Patton had copies of it made and distributed to his commands.

Roger Aeschliman answered a question about Patton's belief in reincarnation. He said that Patton was a devout Presbyterian but believed in reincarnation. The whole family did. At the moment he died, one daughter, Beatrice, said she heard him call out for "Little Bee." At the same time, his other daughter, Ruth, awoke and saw him sitting in a window seat until he faded away.

An audience member talked about flying over the desert near Yuma, Arizona, and seeing remnants of buildings and roads that were once part of the Great Desert Training Center. Colonel Aeschliman said during World War II the Training Center included land in California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and New Mexico. Modern day commands that were borne from the Train-

ing Center include the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at 29 Palms, White Sands missile range, and the National Training Center at Fort Irvine. He said some 300,000 soldiers went through the Training Center in preparation for Operation Torch.

Colonel Aeschliman also said that Patton was a key figure in the 1941 Louisiana maneuvers. He believed in fast warfare, getting around the enemy to attack rather than slugging it out.

Roger Aeschliman was asked what he thought Patton would have done had he survived the vehicle accident. The Colonel responded that had he lived, Patton may have become a Senatorial candidate, but he felt Patton was not mentally stable enough to be Presidential material. He said Patton liked Bradley and Eisenhower, and they all knew each other before World War II. But he also felt they would eventually have a falling out because of their various aspirations. Patton was 65 when he died.

General Patton was asked if he thought that "Limey Field Marshall" would beat him to Messina. The General responded that it was a stupid question as it happened three years ago. Roger Aeschliman went on to say that [British General Bernard] Montgomery's 8th Army slugged its way through rough, mountainous terrain on the east side of Sicily. Patton sent his forces northwest along good roads and relatively light resistance to first capture Palermo. He then used the north coast road to advance to Messina, getting there before Montgomery. Colonel Aeschliman said the movie portrayal of Patton's troops waiting for Montgomery's troops to enter a square in Messina was all Hollywood and false. He added that Patton's dislike for Montgomery was real. He felt the British General was too cautious. Everything had to be in place before advancing. Patton's strategy was more get there "first with the most."

Colonel Aeschliman gave some background to the perceived reluctance of Montgomery and his approach to battle. Great Britain lost some 1,000,000 men during World War I. By the time Messina was taken, Great Britain had been at war over three years and had suffered 500,000 casualties in killed, wounded, and captured. The British were cautious about losing more men.

A question was asked of Roger Aeschliman about the vehicle accident being a part of a plot to kill Patton. He replied that at that point in time, Patton was not special enough for anyone to kill. The war was over. Patton was in charge of occupation forces. He was going pheasant hunting with his chief of staff the day of the accident. His driver was not going fast when a 2-1/2 ton truck turned in front of the staff car. Both drivers and General Gay were uninjured, but Patton was thrown forward, breaking his neck. He died of a pulmonary embolism 12 days later.

Roger Aeschliman took a question regarding

Patton's involvement in saving the famous Lipizzaner Stallions. He replied that Patton gave the order to rescue the horses and ensure their safety. Elements of the US Second Cavalry carried out the orders.

A question was asked about any communications or connections between Patton and General Douglas MacArthur. Colonel Aeschliman answered that there was not much in the way of communications between the two. They did meet in World War I, and one time were together watching a battle from a hilltop. German artillery began advancing to their position, and eventually began falling around them. But for a while both stood their ground, each apparently not wanting to flinch in front of the other. Patton finally hit the dirt first.

Roger Aeschliman was asked if Patton really entertained thoughts of invading Russia. He replied that he personally felt Patton was very serious. There was a two-week period if he could start a war with Russia, he would. Colonel Aeschliman also said that Patton was a racist across many elements. While Patton was horrified by the concentration camps liberated by the Third Army, he did not have a particular empathy towards giving Jewish survivors and other Jewish Displaced Persons special considerations or help in reclaiming their lives.

One more movie question came up, this one about the tank battle won by Patton's army at El Guettar, where he yells to [German General Erwin] Rommel that he read his book. Colonel Aeschliman said that did not happen, and Rommel's book was on infantry tactics, not tank tactics.

That concluded the question-answer session and Gene presented Colonel Aeschliman with a certificate of appreciation during a round of applause from a very appreciative audience.

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## 2012 Events Calendar

*Dates subject to change*

### 2012 Events Calendar

*Dates subject to change*

#### **April**

28 - Celebrity Pancake Feed

#### **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

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## Projects have proceeded over the winter months

### Mower Shed

**Gary, Tom, Brandon, Patricia Naylor, Larry Lorentzen, and Danny San Romani** made some repairs to the west end of the mower shed (a.k.a. M & A Motor Pool). The plastic sheathing at the upper level of the west end had become quite brittle and was damaged by hail. The crew removed the existing sheathing and replaced it with new. During the process, the fascia wood along the top vertical edge and rooftop edge was found to have rotted out. Gary and Danny got new board, and this was installed.

### Art Gallery Addition

In early December, **Mrs. Mary Dibble** donated a number of photos from an exhibit that had been in the Mulvane Art Museum on the Washburn University campus in 2009. The exhibit was titled "China Before Mao: Through the Lens of a Flying Tigers Photographer" and included memorabilia and prints of photographs by her late husband, **William Dibble**, of the people and cultures of China during 1942-45. She called Gene Howerter about the donation. After going through the donation, Gene put photographs and accompanying signage on exhibit in our art gallery in Hangar 602 above the Education Conference Room.

### Lumber Storage

We have a couple of old school bus passenger compartments on the south side of Hangar 604 that we use to store most of our lumber needs. One unit in particular was in need of better organization of its contents and **Gary and Susan Naylor** and **Larry Lorentzen** took on the project. They constructed shelving inside the bus and re-stacked the contents. It is much more user-friendly, now.

### 75mm Field Gun

**Gary Naylor** and **Mike Welch** installed permanent chocks to the concrete pads supporting the wheels on the 75mm field gun that sits outside hangar 602. They replaced the wood chocks with angle iron chocks that are screwed to the pads. Gary and Mike also leveled out the concrete pads that support the spades on the ends of the gun carriage trails.

### Gift Shop Inventory

**Les Carlson, Dave Murray, Russ Wiedle, Wayne Dodson, and Gene Howerter** spent the good part of a day near the end of December conducting a semi-annual Gift Shop Inventory. The inventory provides us a cost of sales breakdown and also helps tell us what items are hot or not in Gift Shop sales.

### Museum Vehicles

During the last week of November **Don Dawson** winterized the Museum's tugs, fork lift, jeep and ambulance, checking antifreeze and batteries. He drained, flushed and refilled the radiator for the ambulance. Don

also made sure that trickle charge connections were in place on the lawn mower batteries.

### Carpenter Shop

**Jim Braun** made arrangements with a local electrical contractor to improve on our lighting in the carpenter shop. There was one switch to turn on overhead lights, posted by the entrance to the 604 hangar bay. But, most of us enter the shop through its back door, off a storeroom behind the workshop. Then we would fumble our way across the shop to the light switch, hoping there was not a new project going on that we may run in to. After a new run of conduit and wiring and a new switch, we can step into the shop through the back door and immediately flip on the lights.

### Workshop

**Don Dawson** refurbished a 36 inch Bar Folder and its stand in the workshop. This tool is a sheet metal bender of World War II vintage. Don removed the tool from its stand and cleaned that up and repainted it first. He also added castors to its base for mobility. He then disassembled the metal bender to clean all the parts and remove corrosion from unpainted areas. There was a buildup of years of dirt, grease and grime on parts that required some soaking in solvent to loosen up. Don also used a steam cleaner on some areas, and plain scrubbing on others. After cleaning the corrosion off the unpainted parts, we were able to read scales and other stamped printing previously hidden by the rust. Don also repainted parts of the bender before reassembling the unit.

The tool was manufactured by Niagara Machine & Tool Works of Buffalo, New York. It is labeled Niagara #4. We have found some information about this and smaller Niagara benders on the Internet, but have not yet found an operator's manual to see what its full capabilities are. We have used it over the years for making simple bends in sheet metals, but it can make more complex shapes than a simple bend. We have also found a couple of Niagara #4s on eBay with asking prices of \$800+, so this is a tool well worth refurbishing. If our readership has knowledge of where to acquire an operator's manual for the Niagara #4 Bar Folder, please contact us.

Learn more  
about the

Combat Air Museum at  
[www.combatairmuseum.org](http://www.combatairmuseum.org)

## Aviation Education Classes are offered in 2012

Over the summer, CAM will again offer its **Aviation Education Class**.

For the last several years Combat Air Museum has conducted classes for students between the ages of 7 and 12 in its Aviation Education Class, focusing on the history of aviation, principles of flight, parts of an airplane and how they work, weather and weather forecasting, aviation communications and flight control. These four-day long classes are conducted over schools' spring break and three times in the summer.

The cost of the class is \$40.00 per student. Tours of other aviation tenants at Forbes Field are planned as their respective schedules allow. These include the 190th Air Refueling Wing, Kansas Air National Guard, the 108th Aviation Battalion, Kansas Army National Guard, and the Forbes Field control tower.

If you would like to have a child, a grandchild, and/or a young friend enroll in the Museum's Aviation Education Class, call the Museum at 862-3303. See the "2012 Events Calendar" and appropriate "Calendar of Events" for the complete schedule.



## New Supporters

Floyd "Buzz" Dixon  
Dennis & Mary Donahue  
Mark, Elliot, Chelsea, & Kris Johnson  
Mark & Nancy Saylor

## Renewing Supporters

Chuck & Connie Bradshaw  
Monte, Marli, & Kenny Brokate  
Rebecca Norburg Carter  
Anderson Chandler  
Bill Clawson  
Tom Cunningham  
Don & Peggy Dawson  
LC & Neoma Hither  
LCDR Walter Hoeg (RET)  
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Larry Madden  
Richard Long & Sharon McDorman  
Dave & Judy Murray  
Gary, Susan, Desiree, Patricia,  
Rachel Naylor  
Ted Nolde  
Thomas & Carole Rost  
Gerald, Jane, Kurt, & Stephan Sliter  
Terry Wages  
Eric, Lyn, & Mitchell Walther  
Tom & Mary Anne Witty  
Steve Wodtke  
Deloris Zink



## April - May Calendar of Events

### April

**Monday, April 9**

Membership Luncheon  
Jean Wanner Education Conference Room  
11:30 am

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

**Saturday, April 28**

Celebrity Pancake Feed  
Hangar 602  
7 am - 12 pm

### May

There is no Membership Luncheon in May. The next luncheon will be June 11.



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

## Officer Students will be our speakers at the April Membership Luncheon

We will have two or three officer students from the Command and General Staff College (CGSC), Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, as our guest speakers for the April Membership Luncheon. Past visits and presentations by CGSC students have made for very interesting luncheons. Mark down Monday, April 9 as a day to take your lunch at Combat Air Museum.



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## In Memoriam

### Merrill Ross

1919-2012

February 15, 2012

# 176

27 year member

Another member of the Greatest Generation left us when **Merrill Ross** passed away in February. Not only did we lose a friend, supporter, and member of the Museum, we also lost a piece of American history. Merrill was a Tuskegee Airman.

Born in Kentucky, Merrill attended Kentucky State University and then came to Kansas where he attended then Kansas State Teachers College of Pittsburg, Kansas, (now Pittsburg State University.) He earned Bachelor's and Master's at KSTC Pittsburg and began teaching in Fort Scott, Kansas. He moved to Topeka in September 1944 to teach but was

inducted into military service two months later.

Merrill served two years in the Army Air Corps as a Tuskegee Airman and returned to Topeka after the end of World War II to resume his teaching. In the segregated school system of that time, Merrill taught at four black elementary schools and coached the Topeka High School *Ramblers* black basketball team. He became a school principal in 1954 and served as such at four Topeka elementary schools before retiring in 1985. Merrill was inducted into the Kansas Teachers Hall of Fame in 1992 and that same year received the Paul Harris Fellow Award from Rotary International.

In a fitting ceremony indicative of Merrill's and his wife Barbara's devotion to education, Highland Park South Elementary School of Topeka was renamed Ross Elementary School. Merrill married Barbara in 1951. She survives. Merrill was laid to rest in Topeka Cemetery. →

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