

COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

→ → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

Forbes Field Topeka, Kansas

December 2011 / January 2012 • Vol. 27, No. 6

Radio controlled drones are part of the practice at Fort Riley

Our speaker had an opportunity to participate

We had two recognitions at the start of the October Membership Luncheon. One was to the management and staff of **BRB Contractors, Inc.** of Topeka for their contribution of machinery, material, and people in erecting the Weather Radar Tower. **Gene Howerter** and **Mike Welch** presented a plaque to **Mike Laird, Darryl Shupe, Dan Welch,** and **Nick Neukirch** of BRB Contractors. **Danny San Romani** then presented a plaque to **Toni Dixon** in recognition and appreciation for editing our *Plane Talk* newsletter over the past 14 years. Toni was key in the newsletter winning an Honorable Mention award in the 2010 Marketing and Communications (MarCom) international awards competition recognizing creative achievement by marketing and communication professionals.

Our guest presenter for the luncheon was **Mr. Phil Kovar**. Mr. Kovar is an avid radio control (R/C) aircraft modeler and flier and has over 45 years experience. He also manufactured model airplane propellers known as "PK Props." He is a member of a radio control club in Junction City, Kansas. Through this club, his background and experience allowed him to take part in a unique experience flying target drones for the US Army at Fort Riley, Kansas.

Mr. Kovar met Sergeant Kenny Desern, US Army, at an R/C club meeting. Sergeant Desern wanted to learn how to fly radio control drones. After talking with the Sergeant, Mr. Kovar was invited to visit the shop at Fort Riley where he saw the types of drones being used in their training. They had small, styrofoam drones used for laser tracking training, and they had large, fiberglass drones designed to fly once and then be shot down. Mr.



Mr. Phil Kovar

Kovar brought an example of a large drone and, it sat just outside the conference room. It is several feet long with a comparable wingspan. The propeller driven drone has dull camouflage markings and, at first glance, looks somewhat like a Russian MiG-23 or MiG-27 *Flogger*. It appears to be of robust construction. Mr. Kovar pointed out there are no "R/C drones," *con't. on page 6*

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Combat Air Museum

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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

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of Topeka, Kansas,

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Your comments are welcomed.

Projects, projects and more projects

A variety of projects have been going on over the past several months.

Ie Shima exhibit

Jim Braun and Dick Trupp finished building the interior of the case and repairing/coating its exterior. **Danny San Romani** trimmed, fitted and applied two nautical charts to the rear panel of the case

Tom and Mary Ann Witty drove down from Lincoln, Nebraska, on two occasions, spending five days in Topeka, and Tom put the exhibit together. He built four model aircraft for the exhibit and we used a fifth from our stockpile of models. He installed shelves to the back of the case for the models. He put up copies of images of the Japanese surrender delegation flying into Ie Shima, meeting with US military officials, then boarding and departing on a US C-54 transport to meet with General Douglas MacArthur's staff in Manila, Philippines, to receive the terms of Japan's surrender to Allied forces. Tom installed the images on the side and bottom panels of the exhibit case.

With four exceptions, the images in the case came from a collection of photographs left anonymously and literally by the front door of the Museum in October 2010. We have not yet found who left this collection.

Tom also put up signage to explain the events and aircraft. A string was laid out over the charts showing the flight path of the two Japanese surrender aircraft from Tokyo Bay to Ie Shima and then on to Manila. Tom and Mary had to leave before the final assembly of gluing down the models and installing the back panel to the case. **Danny San Romani** and **Don Dawson** did this the following day. The exhibit is in the Education Conference Room.

National Insignia Signs

Gary and Tom Naylor re-mounted five large signboards of national insignia carried on US aircraft over the past century. These had originally been mounted on the west ends of both hangars. Those on Hangar 602 were removed in the spring of 2009 when the sheathing was replaced on the west end of that hangar. A windstorm brought down the two largest signboards from Hangar 604, causing damage to both. Gary was able to save one of these and work the creases out, but the other was torn and damaged beyond repair. Gary built new wooden frames for all the signs and devised a stronger mounting system. One day in mid-August he and his brother Tom mounted the signboards to the northwest end of Hangar 604.

EC-121 Nose Tires

Over the past few years, the tread on the nose wheels of the EC-121T *Super Constellation* had been deteriorating. We had spare tires in Hangar 604 and Don Dawson was prepared to change them out. Then we found that the rims for the nose gear are not split rims, making it more difficult to remove the old tires from the rims and install replacements. We started looking for someone to assist us in with this problem. Don made some calls and Gary Naylor started looking, also. As it turned out, we found help from a long-time Museum supporter in Baldwin City, Kansas.

Gary contacted **Hey Machinery Company Inc.**, a company that recycles aircraft tires for use on custom built wheels and rims for agricultural and off road use. The company started in 1929, and it was in 1935 that they put the first aircraft tire on agricultural equipment. It has been a going business ever since.

Over the years, CAM has gone to Hey Machinery for aircraft tires for aircraft in our collection. They have been most supportive of the Museum in that they have donated

these tires, and tubes, to the Museum. Gary called them, told them what we had, and asked if they could change the tires for us. Folks at Hey Machinery felt they could, and when Gary asked how long they thought it would take, they figured about 20 minutes. It was a matter of us getting the nose wheels off the *Connie* and working out a good time to bring them to Baldwin City.

Gary and Don had to come up with a little creative thinking on how to jack up the nose gear on the *Connie* in order to remove the nose wheels. They came up with a successful rig that used a four foot section of railroad rail and two large floor jacks. They removed both wheels on August 23 and Gary drove to Baldwin City the following day with the wheels and replacement tires. As it turned out, it took a bit longer than 20 minutes, but Hey Machinery got it done and had better facilities for the work than us.

Prior to removing the *Connie's* nose wheels, Gary was in further contact with Hey Machinery asking if they had tires they could spare that would fit the nose wheels of the F-4D *Phantom* and others for the main gear for the F-86H *Sabre*. They did, and when Gary came back to Topeka, he had nose tires and tubes for the F-4D and tires for the F-86H. Gary and Danny San Romani remounted the nose wheels to the *Connie*.

Hangar 602

Gary, Patricia, and Rachel Naylor and Danny San Romani spent one Thursday in July cleaning up debris behind and on top of the second story offices in the hangar. Some of the affected areas are used for storage. The debris was from the work done in 2009 to install new exterior sheathing on the west end of the hangar. During the process of removing the existing sheathing, knocking out old drywall, and installing the new insulation and sheathing, a lot of debris was knocked down along the interior of the west end. Bits, pieces, and chunks of drywall had come down, and sections of an old, fiberboard insulation were broken and knocked down. The four workers filled several 50 gallon bags with debris and Patricia and Rachel ran a vacuum and used brooms to pick up the smaller debris. The work cleared trash out of the storage areas, off lighting fixtures for the entrance hallway, and off the storage area on top of the offices. Everyone lost a little weight in the 100+ degree heat that day.

NAS Olathe Exhibit

Danny San Romani asked Don Dawson to help him out in adding a few items to the NAS Olathe exhibit. We have four large insignia for the former Naval Air Station, and Danny asked Don to build stands for them so they could be placed atop the exhibit case. Don did this and they have been put up. One is a triangle insignia for NAS Olathe that came into being circa 1966. One is a round insignia for the Naval Reserve Center that came after the Air Station closed in 1970. It shows a wagon wheel and scroll that reads NARCEN OLATHE, KANSAS

and PRAIRIE NAVY. One insignia is square and made of metal. It shows a Native American astride a Lockheed P2V *Neptune* patrol bomber. The Native American comes from the Air Station's first insignia in 1942. The *Neptune* was flown from NAS Olathe by Reservists. VP48K1, VP42K2, VP60K3 and MIDWEST WARRIORS are on the insignia. The first three represent Reserve Patrol Squadrons based at Olathe. The fourth insignia is round and represents Patrol Squadron VP 48K-1. It shows a bird of prey flying over ocean waves with a crushed submarine in its talons.

Don next took on some decorative naval ordnance rounds to display at the front corners of the Olathe exhibit case. These included two chrome-plated brass, 5-inch diameter powder casings, and two brass 5-inch training projectiles, each weighing some 55 pounds. In actual use with a 5-inch, 38 caliber gun; the projectiles and powder casings are loaded separately. But for display, we joined projectiles and powder casings together.

The outside diameter of the projectiles is smaller than the inside of the powder casings, so it took a lot of shop work, with some help from **Jim Braun** to complete the assemblies. When it was done, Don transported them to 602 and set them on the forward corners of the Olathe exhibit case.

Don had one more project to do with the NAS Olathe exhibit. The former Old Olathe Naval Air Museum had an attractive, metal sign outside of its building. Rather than see it destroyed, it was removed from the ground, and Jim Braun became its caretaker. We talked about how we could use it, and figured out we could make a spot for it near the NAS Olathe exhibit. Jim brought the sign in and he and **Dick Trupp** moved some empty exhibit cases out of the way. Don cleaned up the bottom of the stand that had been in concrete and repainted that area. A suitable location was found for the sign, and Don made a bracket to install on the sign's top so it could be secured in place. When the shop work was done, Don and Danny San Romani brought the sign to 602 and installed it to the south wall of the hangar just to the west of the NAS Olathe exhibit.

F-4D Nose Tires

At the end of August Don Dawson took two of the nose wheel tires Gary Naylor brought back from Baldwin City and mounted them on the F-4D *Phantom* to replace the two existing tires that were showing a lot of ply wear.

Engine Aircraft Models

Don Dawson and Danny San Romani mounted three aircraft models on respective engines along the south wall of Hangar 602. Danny purchased cases for showing models, and Don built supporting mounts on the engines. Don attached the showcase bases to the engine mounts, and Danny mounted the models and

"Projects," con't. from page 3

attached the clear plastic tops. The Ford-built R-43560-59B now has a Boeing KC-97 *Stratotanker*. The Packard-built V-1650-1 has a Curtiss P-40L *Warhawk*, and the Allison V-1710-89 has a Lockheed P-38J *Lightning*. **Michele Borgarelli** built the P-40 and P-38 models. He is currently building two Soviet WWII attack aircraft for the Soviet Air Forces exhibit.

UH-1 Huey Seat

Dick Trupp took a spare armored pilot seat for a UH-1 Huey, outfitted it with appropriate seat harnesses, and placed it on exhibit beside the UH-1H in Hangar 602.

Oil Paintings

In August CAM received a dozen original oil paintings on loan from the Museum of the Kansas National Guard, also located on Forbes Field. **Mr. James W. Mirick** is the artist and had donated a large collection of his works to the Guard Museum. All 12 paintings are of military aircraft and events. They are accurate in their details and markings and depict aircraft of the Army Air Force and Navy in the European and Pacific theaters, China-Burma-India, and Battle of the Atlantic. They were painted between 1992 and 1996. Dick Trupp and **Dave Murray** hung the paintings in the entrance hall to the Gift Shop, in the Gift Shop, in the Conference Room, and in the Exhibits Room by the Library. They were able to hang a few of the paintings with or near existing exhibits. Two paintings of the Battle of the Atlantic U-boat war were hung by our exhibit. One painting is of a C-47 towing a WACO glider and hangs by other artwork and models in the Conference Room that deal with the D-Day airborne assault. One painting of a trio of Martin B-26 *Marauder* medium bombers hangs above the Norden bombsight on exhibit.

Hangar 604

During the last week of July Gary Naylor and **Scotty Larimer** removed a large sliding door from the north end of the 604 Workshop. At one time, this was the shop door and was used to bring large items in and out of the shop. Several years ago, a set of double doors was installed for the shop, and the sliding door was shoved off to one side. We planned to paint the exterior of the shop this summer, and the sliding door was in the way and no longer needed. Gary and Scotty had it and its rails and hardware down in short order, and we stored it and its components elsewhere in the hangar. A week later Don Dawson and Danny San Romani painted the exterior of the workshop.

Several parts bins were along the exterior east wall of the workshop. **Jim Braun**, Danny, and Gary moved items from their drawers to other storage bins to remove them. About two weeks after painting the shop, the bins were empty and moved to storage, greatly improving the appearance along that wall.

Dauntless Gunner's Seat

A model of a Douglas SBD-1 Dauntless dive bomber done in US Marine Corps markings is now in the exhibit case. **Larry Mann** built the model. As a stroke of luck, we also received a donation in July that will go well with the exhibit. **Mr. Robert Boggs** of Topeka donated several items of the late **William B. Purcell** from his World War II service in Marine Corps aviation. Purcell just happened to have been a gunner on Dauntless dive bombers and served in the Pacific theater. The donation included Purcell's flight helmet, complete with headphones and goggles and a aviator's white silk scarf. There was also a reproduction insignia patch of the 1st Marine Air Wing. We found out that Purcell flew with Marine Scout Bomber Squadron VMSB-244, the "Bombing Banshees," under Marine Air Group 24. We will acquire patches for VMSB-244 and MAG 24 and include these with the helmet and goggles in the exhibit.

Bf-109G Messerschmitt mock-up

Dick Trupp and **Ted Nolde** applied several decals to the Messerschmitt mock-up to complete its markings as an aircraft flown by leading German ace Eric Hartmann, credited with 352 aerial victories, all flown in Bf-109s. The decals include a red heart outlined in white below the canopy. Usch is in white on the heart. A yellow triangle outlined in white with a black 87 is on each side of the rear fuselage, and there is a work number on the vertical stabilizer.

Naval Aircraft ID exhibit

Darren Roberts and Dick Trupp set up a small exhibit with 13 models of US Navy aircraft by the right side of the F-14A *Tomcat*. The models cover a time period from the 1930s through the early 1990s. The purpose of the exhibit is to show US Navy aircraft colors and markings over the 60 year period.

F-86H

Danny San Romani finished spot blasting corroded steel screws and rivets in the Sabre's rear fuselage. He is now cleaning and doing corrosion control in the area of rear fuselage where the empennage attaches.

Donation Records

Keith Fulton has come in a few Saturday mornings to work on Donation Records for items donated to CAM. After Keith completes a record, Danny San Romani photographs or scans the item(s), then writes a thank you letter to the donor and mails it with the Donation Records. The donor is asked to sign one record and return it to CAM and keep a second copy for their records. Keith has thus far processed several donations, reducing the number of items in Danny's office.

F-84F

Don Dawson changed the tire for the right main gear on the *Thunderstreak*. He and Danny San Romani removed the wheel, Don replaced the tire, and Joe Wahl helped them put the wheel back on the fighter.

UH-1M Huey

Joe Wahl is a new volunteer who is working on the UH-1M in Hangar 604. A Southwest airlines pilot, Joe is former Army National Guard and was a mechanic on *Hueys* before going to Warrant Officer school. He qualified to fly the UH-60 *Blackhawk* helicopter and the C-12 *Huron* twin turboprop fixed wing aircraft, and flew the latter for the Army Guard. We found that the UH-1M served in Vietnam with several different units, and we have chosen to restore it to its configuration when flown with Troop B, the "Diamondheads," 25th Aviation Battalion, 25th Infantry Division.

Radar Tower

Gary Naylor, Don Dawson, and Danny San Romani salvaged fencing, hardware, and posts from an unused fenced enclosure between two buildings north of the Museum to reuse as fencing around the radar tower. Gary noticed the enclosure while driving on J Street one day, and noted about half of the fencing was down.

Danny San Romani had earlier contacted Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority (MTAA) maintenance branch and asked if they had any salvaged fencing material we could get for the project. They did not. Then after Gary saw the enclosure, Danny went back to MTAA about that fencing. MTAA got back to us and said **Mr. Robert Zubell** leased the enclosure. Gene Howerter knows Mr. Zubell and called him and asked him if he would allow us to salvage all the fencing materials at the enclosure. Mr. Zubell agreed, said he would donate the material, and asked that we clean up in and around the area. Gene agreed to that, and Gary, Don, and Danny had the fence down, area cleaned up, and materials back to the Museum by lunch time.

Dog Tag Machine

Dick Trupp and Gene Howerter recently placed a World War II era dog tag printing machine on exhibit. The **Graphotype** machine had been with the Museum for a number of years, then Danny San Romani loaned it to the Navy Junior ROTC unit at Shawnee Heights High School, where it was used for several years. The machine came back to CAM this fall, and plans were made to exhibit it.

Dick and Gene recycled the top and bottom sections of another exhibit case and purchased custom cut plexiglass panels for the sides. Gene bought and installed caster wheels to the bottom section and Dick repainted it. With that done, the machine was placed on the base section. Once the plexiglass panels were done, Gene picked them up, and he and **Jack Vaughn** installed them to the base section. Then the top section was installed. Signage remains to be done.

B-36 Photographs and Model

Dick Trupp and Jim Braun installed a wall exhibit that includes framed and matted color photos of Convair B-36 *Peacemaker* bombers and suspending a 1/72 scale model of a B-36 above the photos. This is on the

wall of the stairwell leading up to our offices. Because the B-36 photos were part of a six-photo collection, there are also photos of a Stearman PT-17 *Kaydet*, a Boeing B-52 *Stratofortress*, a Boeing KC-135 *Stratotanker* conducting in-flight refueling with a B-52, and a Boeing B-29 *Superfortress*. A large cutaway line drawing of a B-36 is currently being framed, and will be added to the wall. →

Kansas, a poem

The close of 2011 ends the Sesquicentennial Celebration of Kansas Statehood. Here is a poem by **Peggy Dawson's** daughter, **Linda (Williams) McGurn**, written when she attended school in Germany.

KANSAS

Do you know
that where I'm from
the southwest wind
bends saplings
'til they grow bowed
like great, tired monuments
paying homage
to the prairie?
The land, broad bands
of brown, gold, green
on a canvas
stretching, stretching.
Do you know
that where I'm from
the sky will sometimes
darken
weighted with thunderheads
and wispy, whirling fingers
that reach to the earth
awesome in their power?
And the people
where I'm from
once built stoic, solid shelters
from the stones of the land
making their peace
with the expanse
around them.
Sometimes
in my thoughts
I return to this place
and walk familiar roads
my eyes making horizontal sweeps
remembering this land. →

Visitors

During **September**
the Museum had
795 visitors
from **37** states,
and
Belgium
Canada
Finland
France
Germany
Great Britain
New Zealand
Sri Lanka

During **October**
we had
664 visitors
from **34** states,
Washington, D.C.,
and
Chile
Great Britain
Russia

→ → →

"R/C drones," con't. from page 1

manufacturer's markings on either the engine or drone body.

Sergeant Desern asked Mr. Kovar if he could fly one of the drones, and Kovar demonstrated that he could, flying one of the laser tracking, styrofoam units. Mr. Kovar left a favorable impression with his demonstration and he was asked to come back to Fort Riley and test fly other drones, which he did.

Mr. Kovar was next invited to go to the live fire range and watch the larger drones being flown as aerial targets. During his first visit, he met the drone contractors. He told us they did not know the horsepower of the engine, its manufacturer or its propeller size. They were in an observation/control tower and listened in on the communications with the armored vehicles on the firing range.

They watched the large drones being flown against Bradley Fighting Vehicles. These armored vehicles have a tank-type appearance. Their primary armament is a 25 millimeter cannon, and they can fire TOW anti-tank missiles. Their secondary armament is a 7.62 millimeter machine gun.

Mr. Kovar said the first drone was hit on its first pass. It took three tries before the second drone was shot down, and they saw a third shot down. The drones cost about \$3,500 apiece. During the observation, Sergeant Desern asked Mr. Kovar if he would like to fly a big drone against the Bradleys, and Kovar answered in the affirmative. He also told us that when he did, he did not use binoculars, the tower, or a skid launch.

His first drone flight on the firing range took place one December morning with a temperature of 5° Fahrenheit. He said they were told to use visual flight rules. At the end of the day's training, Mr. Kovar was asked to come back the next day. He did, and he said the conditions were better. It was 8° the second day.

The flights against the Bradleys were in a back and forth pattern. If the drone was not hit in this pattern, it was flown straight at the vehicles. Then he was to crash the drone. Mr. Kovar said that the drone flown on the straight in approach had only two shots against it as the Bradley ran out of ammunition.

Mr. Kovar told us that Sergeant Desern then deployed, and he (Kovar) did not see that group of people again. He acquired the drone he brought to the Museum and said it still belongs to the US Army.



Gene Howerter presents 5K Run T-shirts along with a plaque of appreciation to representatives of BRB Contractors, Inc.

Mr. Kovar was asked how this drone compared in size to R/C aircraft he has built. He replied that he has built models with 12 feet wingspans. Another question was how far away from the Bradleys was he when controlling the target drones. He said they were about 1/2 mile away, and the plane looked like a toothpick. Someone asked if the program of flying drones at Fort Riley was still on. Mr. Kovar replied he thought it probably was, but did not know what type of program it may be today. He was asked if he still manufactured the PKP propellers. He does not, and said he once had a national distribution. He added he may go back into a special order production. A question came up as to where the drones were made and what kind of speed did they have. They were made in California and Mr. Kovar estimated they flew an actual speed of 60 to 80 mile per hour.

Dave Houser told us he was stationed with an RCAT (Radio Control Aerial Target) unit that fired at target drones with quadruple 50 caliber machine guns mounted in a turret. They also fired 90 millimeter anti-aircraft guns at the drones. Some targets were towed by Douglas A-20 aircraft. The towed targets was built to catch fire when hit. Dave said that RCATs were also used to tow target sleeves.

Mr. Kovar said that training with the small styrofoam drones included having a rifle squad fire at it. They were trained to put up a barrage of rifle fire and allow the drone to fly into the barrage. When he found



Curator Danny San Romani with Toni Dixon, Plane Talk editor, after presenting her with a plaque of appreciation.

In Memory of Charles "Charlie" Larimer

December 30, 2011 is the 100th Anniversary of the birth of **Charles "Charlie" Larimer**, a founding member of Combat Air Museum. Charlie held membership number 15. He passed away in 2002.

From 1977-1981, Charlie was the Gift Shop operator, on a daily basis, and opened and closed the Museum. It cannot be overstated how key that was to this Museum's starting up and staying in operation in its early years. Charlie ensured the front door was open for the paying public to come through, and he managed the operation of the Gift Shop and its finances. After hours, he mowed the Museum grounds, and in the winter he cleared snow from the sidewalks.

Charlie was a member of the Greatest Generation. He served in the 896th Military Police Company Aviation, Eighth Air Force, in England during World War II.

Today, Charlie's son, Scotty, is a member-volunteer at CAM.



this was the defense against the drone, Mr. Kovar said all he had to do was alter the drone's altitude and avoid the barrage. Apparently the controllers preferred the drone not maneuver during the live firing.

Gene Howerter mentioned the drone engine exhibits we have in Hangar 604, and that we have two wings from World War II era target drones.

Another question was what kind of fuel the large drone used. Mr. Kovar said it was a gas-oil mixture. Someone asked if the recent arrest of a suspected terrorist who was allegedly plotting to use large scale remote controlled aircraft to fly explosives into the Pentagon would affect R/C flying in the United States. Mr. Kovar replied that the AMA (Academy of Model Aeronautics) has heard that some restrictions are coming, but they (AMA) do not know what.

This concluded the presentation, and Gene presented Mr. Kovar with a certificate of appreciation for speaking at the luncheon.



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Combat Air Museum at
www.combatairmuseum.org**

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**December 2011/January 2012
Calendar of Events**

December

Monday, December 12

Membership Luncheon

Jean Wanner Education Conference Room

11:30 A.M.

Our guest speaker is CAM member
Tad Pritchett.

He will talk about his research and
writing his recent book, *From Farm to Field*.

Sunday, December 25

Christmas Day - Museum Closed

January

Sunday, January 1

New Year's Day - Museum Closed

There is no Membership Luncheon in January.
The next luncheon will be February 13.

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**December
Membership Luncheon**

Tad Pritchett, CAM member and Secretary of our Board of Directors, will be our speaker at the December Membership Luncheon. Tad will be talking about his research and writing of his book, *From Farm to Field*, published earlier this year. The book is a firsthand account of a Kansas veteran's combat experiences in the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944. →

**2012
Events Calendar**

Dates subject to change

2012 Events Calendar

Dates subject to change

March

19-22 Spring Break Aviation
Education Class

April

28 - Celebrity Pancake Feed

September

29 - Winged Foot 5K Run/Walk

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