

# COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

## → → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

Topeka Regional Airport Topeka, Kansas

April / May 2014 • Vol. 30, No. 2

## Our 21st Celebrity Pancake Feed is coming up Volunteers, we need your assistance

The **21st Annual Celebrity Pancake Feed** is **Saturday, April 26, 2014**. The Feed is held in Hangar 602. It begins at 7 am and runs until 12 pm. The admission is \$6 per person, and this provides all the pancakes you can eat, with an initial serving of sausage and coffee and orange juice to drink. The admission fee also covers admission to the Museum. Advance tickets can be purchased from our members and in the Gift Shop. For members who want to sell advance tickets, please call **Deloris Zink** or **Gene Howerter** at 862-3303 to reserve them. You can use cash, check, VISA or MasterCard.

**Bob Carmichael** of **Perkins Restaurant** will have his grills and will provide pancake mix, sausage, butter and syrup. Bob is also the head pancake flipper, quality control officer, and coach for our celebrity flippers. Venues of entertainment scheduled so far include the "Soul-full Singers" from Countryside Methodist Church, the Blumont Singers Revival, The Capitol City Barbershop Chorus, and Beverly Bernardi Post Conservatory of Dance and Pop. Gene has requested a KC-135 Stratotanker from the 190th Air Refueling Wing, Kansas Air National Guard. There may yet be more participants by the time the Feed takes place.

Gene sent letters and made phone calls to celebrity flippers in late February and early March. As in the past, he goes for a mix of flippers, including elected officials in our local, state and federal governments, local television and radio personalities, local business and corporate personalities, military personnel, faculty and sports representatives from Washburn University, members of the Topeka's Road Runners hockey team, and other public folks known around Topeka.

We are not doing a silent auction this year. We are holding a **"Fly-In" Market Sale**. Items will be priced, tagged and sold directly to the buyer. There is no bidding involved. The set up of tables displaying sale

items will be the same. **Marlene Urban** is in charge of the Market Sale.

All items may be brought in anytime before April 24. Large items may be brought in on April 25 (Friday) when the tables will be set up. Please do not bring in



items on the day of the Pancake Feed. Items brought in before April 24 will be stored in the Gift Shop store-room. If you plan to bring in a large item(s) before the 25th, please contact **Dick Trupp** at 862-3303 to arrange storage.

If your donation does not sell, and you want it returned, please indicate this on a note and attach it to the applicable item(s) with your name and phone number.

**Questions?** Please contact Marlene at 379-5306 or by email at [urban.marlene@att.net](mailto:urban.marlene@att.net).

**"Pancake Feed," con't. on Page 7**

---

### Inside This Issue

---

<i>From the Chairman's Desk</i>	2
<i>Scuba diving the WWII Ghost Fleet of Truk Lagoon</i>	3
<i>Volunteers have lots of projects in the works at CAM</i>	4
<i>Instructions from the War Department</i>	10

## Combat Air Museum

Topeka Regional Airport

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: office@combatairmuseum.com

### *Museum Curator*

Danny San Romani

### *Office Manager*

Deloris Zink

### *Board of Directors*

Gene Howerter - *Chairman*

Dave Murray - *Vice Chairman*

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*

### *Layout & 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

*Gene Howerter, Chairman, BOD*

It's hard to believe that one fourth of the year 2014 is history. The first three months of this year did not produce the nice weather that we can, at times, experience in Kansas. The National Weather Service is saying this is going to be recorded as one of the coldest and snowiest winters in Topeka's history. As our museum's hangar bays are not heated, a more difficult environment for attracting visitors usually plays out when we have these kinds of winters. Because our museum is dependent at this time of the year on visiting guests and Gift Shop sales, it follows that the first quarter attendance and revenue from sales were down. As the old saying goes, "When the going gets tough, the tough need to get going."

**So this will be our plan of action.** Let me present a few ideas for your consideration. By the way, for all who have experienced a rather harsh winter, the National Weather Service is predicting El Niño is setting up for a return next winter, so keep your spirits up. It may be warmer in 2015.

Action One would be to have the biggest and best Annual Celebrity Pancake Feed the Museum has ever had. What you can do: First of all buy a ticket for not only yourself but bring your entire family. Next, you can ask friends or members of your church, Lyons Club, or other social organizations to join you for good food, wonderful entertainment, and a great tag sale of donated items at this event. The more who attend, the merrier, and that really helps the Museum. Please support this event, and I want to thank you in advance. I hope to see you April 26.

Action Two is for you to write this date down: **June 3, 2014**. This will be the date for the second annual **Topeka Gives a Fun Day of Giving**, sponsored by the Topeka Community Foundation. The Com-

bat Air Museum will be one of many not-for-profit organizations set up at Fairlawn Mall in Topeka for this event. What you can do: The entire community is invited to walk the Mall and visit over one hundred not-for-profit organizations including the Combat Air Museum's booth, starting at 7 am. For those who are moved to contribute, go to the Community Foundation's central booth and donate to our museum. The good news is the Topeka Community Foundation will (in part) match the total of all donations given to our museum. This year they have about \$40,000 set aside for this purpose. What a great way to support the Combat Air Museum as your donation will help create additional revenue, with interest, on the spot. Remember, all donations to CAM are tax deductible.

Action Three would be for all **who have not been** a sponsor of our **Annual Winged Foot 10K 5K Run/5K Walk** to consider this invitation. Many members of CAM have been sponsors each year, and we are very thankful for their support. Sponsorships usually start at \$100, and sponsors are listed on our beautifully designed race T-shirt that is given to each sponsor. This event has been our largest fund-raiser the past several years. If you are not able to join us as a sponsor, please consider registering in the event as a participant. If that is not possible, consider sending a family member, children, grandchildren, or a neighbor or their children. This event is always the last Saturday of September, and we must have sponsors' names in August or no later than Labor Day so we can print the names on the T-shirts. For those who register after Labor Day, we cannot guarantee a T-shirt will be available. We will be reminding you of this event in a future newsletter, so please consider supporting this event. As the old war poster says, "We need You." Consider this your

## Scuba diving the WWII Ghost Fleet of Truk Lagoon

The topic of the presentation at the February Membership Luncheon had an air of south seas adventure to it. **Tom Gorrell**, our guest speaker and a CAM member, told us of his scuba diving trip to Chuuk Lagoon in the eastern end of the Caroline Islands, Pacific Ocean. While at Chuuk, Tom dove on a number of Japanese shipwrecks from World War II, known today as the Ghost Fleet. During the war, Chuuk was known as Truk Lagoon. It was Japan's main naval base in the Pacific Ocean outside of the home islands. Tom gave a most interesting and informative presentation of the history and importance of Truk to Japan, the devastating attacks in February 1944 by US warplanes against Truk, and the subsequent consequences. His presentation was a week shy of the 70th anniversary of the US attacks on the Japanese installation. Tom used both still images and video he had taken at Chuuk during his presentation.

Chuuk lies about 450 miles north of the Equator. The center of the island group is about 7 degrees 23 minutes north latitude and 151 degrees 30 minutes east longitude. It is a State within the Federated States of Micronesia. The lagoon has a reef some 140 miles long around it and encloses a natural harbor of some 870 square miles. This feature is what made Truk so prized by Japan.

There are 11 major islands and 46 smaller ones inside the lagoon, plus 41 smaller islands on the reef. The current population is about 48,000 people.

Japan acquired Truk from Germany under a mandate from the League of Nations after Germany's defeat in World War I. For the next 20 years, Westerners knew

---

invitation to help CAM keep the doors open when you support this activity.

Finally, the Museum will be buzzing this year with various happenings such as World War I displays and speakers (see February/March *Plane Talk*) and the much awaited ORISKANY reunion in September where we will unveil the world class museum model of the aircraft carrier for the first time. You won't want to miss this event. Keep in mind we have three Youth Aviation classes coming up this summer. Consider enrolling your children or grandkids, friends' children, or just bring them for a day at the Museum. For more information call our office. Please join us at our bi-monthly membership covered dish lunch/speaker meetings, visit the Museum and exhibits, or fly the new flight simulator. We need each and every one of you if we are going to be successful in the future.

"We are family." Thank you for your support.

→ → →



*Tom Gorrell spoke about the Ghost Fleet of Truk Lagoon.*

little of Japan's buildup of Truk into a major naval base with airstrips.

Tom has been scuba diving for the last 20 years. It is a hobby that has offered opportunities to travel and explore. He said he can go into space and be weightless and enjoy the beautiful oceanscape. Tom developed a priority list of places to dive some 13-14 years ago, and Truk was at the top of the list. He finally made it there two years ago.

To get to Chuuk Tom traveled from Topeka to Denver to Honolulu to Guam, then southeast some 600 miles from Guam to his destination. He stayed for 10 days and made 21 dives during that time. He said the lagoon waters were 82 degrees. He also said Chuuk was pronounced "chook."

Tom said the Federated States of Micronesia is an island nation including the states of Chuuk, Pohnpei, Yap, and Kosrae, encompassing some 700 islands. Each state is set up similar to the United States, and the nation became a member of the UN in 1991.

Tom showed a map of the lagoon with its reef and islands and pointed out some of its features. He also showed a cross section of the lagoon that showed the natural shape of the harbor. The lagoon is a volcanic isle. Tom said the reef and its islands made a natural boundary, provided good placement for anti-aircraft artillery and surface artillery, and provided a safe harbor.

After World War I, not only did Japan get Truk, it was given a mandate by the League of Nations for all of the Caroline, Marshall, and Gilbert Islands and Saipan. Japan wanted everyone out of these islands, especially the United States. Over time, the United States felt Truk was becoming a stronghold but lacked hard proof of this.

Tom mentioned Amelia Earhart's 1937 attempt to fly around the world and her and Fred Noonan's disappearance on the leg from Lae, New Guinea, to Howland Island. He also mentioned one of the theories regarding the disappearance - that Earhart was supposedly on a mission to fly over Truk. This theory was discounted by the United States government. Tom went on to say there

**"Ghost Fleet," con't. on Page 8**



## Volunteers have lots of projects in the works that will expand and add to our exhibits at the Museum

Our volunteers have been busy over the winter months. Here is an update on the projects at CAM.

### Curtiss-Wright J65 Turbojet Engine

**Don Dawson** recently completed his 2013/2014 winter project that actually began in August. It is now on exhibit behind the TA-4J Skyhawk in Hangar 604.

Several years ago, CAM acquired a Curtiss-Wright J65-W-5F turbojet engine on loan from the National Museum of the United States Air Force. The engine was physically located at the 190th Air Refueling Wing, Kansas Air National Guard at the north end of Topeka Regional Airport. Members of the 190th were preparing a Martin EB-57B Canberra for display at the Museum of the Kansas National Guard and two J-65 engines were pulled from this aircraft. 190th personnel had obviously done a lot of cleaning and cosmetic work on the J65 before its delivery to CAM and the engine was in excellent condition. They had partially disassembled the engine and a pallet held the upper compressor housing and a few boxes of parts, assemblies, and fasteners.

We placed the engine on a military surplus, four-wheel, flatbed trailer and blocked it and strapped it in position to keep it from moving. Because of its excellent condition, we decided to not reinstall the upper compressor housing, leaving the compressor section with its rows of blades open for viewing. Don got a sheet of clear plastic, cut it to fit, and mounted it over the compressor section. Primarily this protects people's hands and fingers from the many, many sharp-edged blades, yet allows them to see the section. The plastic also keeps out dirt and debris. We initially exhibited the engine by the T-33 in Hangar 604, and later moved it behind the TA-4J Skyhawk.



*Above: The J65 and Housing Cover on their new stands.*

*Below Left: The J65 compressor section.*

Our initial plan was to modify the trailer and permanently mount the J65 to it, but CAM member **Bob Schneider** said he could come up with an engine stand built to hold a J65. Bob delivered the stand last August, and it certainly proved to be a better showpiece than modifying the trailer.

Don and **Danny San Romani** rolled the new stand into the workshop where Don added some angle iron for truss support and changed out the existing casters with more heavy duty units. With that done, Don began taking measurements from the J65 as mounted on the trailer to prepare the supports on the new stand for mounting the engine. After he completed those modifications, the new stand was ready to receive the engine. One afternoon, Don, **Mitchell Grainger** and Danny rolled the new stand to the front of the hangar, then went back and rolled the trailer and engine to the front, also. They opened the hangar door in front of the two units, and Don drove the forklift over to lift the J65 from the trailer onto the new stand. It took a little coaxing, but the three successfully accomplished the transfer. The measurements on the rear supports were off a bit, and the engine did not set level, with the exhaust end down. The engine had also rolled just a bit to one side but was securely on the new stand. Don, Mitchell and Danny rolled the engine and stand back and into the shop for further work.

With the J65 in the shop, Don's first work was to modify the rear supports so the engine sat level, and at the same time roll it level along its longitudinal axis. Using a floor jack and bottle jacks, Don repositioned the engine so it

was level and raised the rear supports. He and Danny worked with the bottle jacks and pry bars and rolled the engine level along its longitudinal axis. The trunnions on the engine lined up with Don's modified supports, and he bolted the engine to the stand.

The next order of business was bringing the pallet with all the parts, assemblies, and hardware into the shop so the reassembly process could begin. This included bringing in the upper compressor housing, and it was placed on a set of sawhorses. The winter months were spent putting the puzzle back together.

Danny printed off some Internet photos of J65 engines on display at other museums, and we hold a NAVWEPS manual for a Navy Model J65 in our technical library. Danny gave these materials to Don to help in putting things back onto the engine. During this process the question came up about what to do with the upper compressor housing. As Don sorted and identified parts and assemblies, he found at least several of them attached to the top of the housing, and there were over a dozen stator vane assemblies that mounted inside grooves on the underside of the housing. He proposed that once he was done putting things on the engine, he build a new stand, specifically fitted to the housing, and reassemble the housing to place beside the engine.

As he sorted through parts, Don found a number of them had been taped and there were notes on the tape giving the part's relative position on the engine. So, working with those notes, looking at the Internet images, looking through the NAVWEPS manual, and often just matching up bolt hole patterns between a part and the engine, Don accomplished the reassembly. At times he had assists from other members, and a lot of sidewalk supervision, and engine came back together over the winter.

When he'd had enough of matching parts to the engine, Don switched his attention to the compressor housing. He installed 14 rows of stator blades to the underside of the housing. Then he flipped it right side up and installed other parts and assemblies as he found them in the boxes.

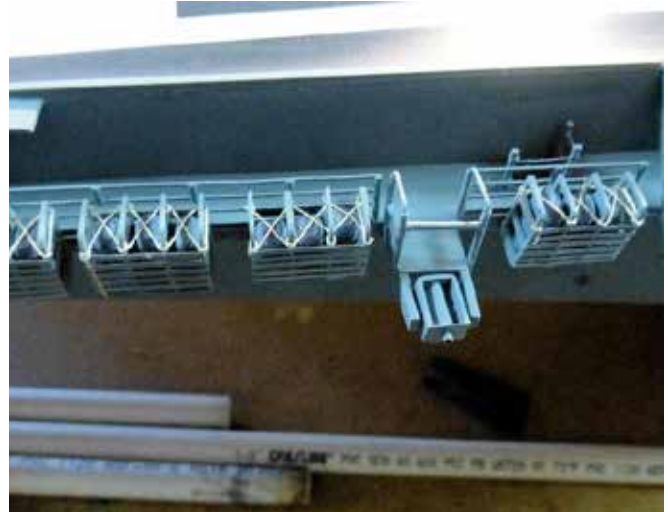
Once the J65 was done, Don and Danny rolled it out of the shop and placed it behind the left wing of the Skyhawk. Then they moved things around in the shop so Don could continue work on the compressor housing. He moved the engine hoist into the shop and lifted the housing on one side to get measurements for constructing a stand. He gathered his materials from our steel racks outside the south end of Hangar 604. All the fasteners he needed were in the shop. Materials in hand, he began building the truss framework to hold the housing.

When the construction was done, Don primed and painted the new stand. He lowered the housing back onto

**"CAM Projects" con't. on Page 6**



*Top: Nine feet of model aircraft carrier.  
Above: Jet blast deflectors built and being installed behind the A-4 Skyhawk.  
Below: Scratch built life raft containers in their stowage bins.*





## "CAM Projects," con't. from Page 5

the sawhorses and took the engine hoist out of the shop. He and Danny rigged a chain hoist inside the shop and scooted the housing underneath it. They lifted the housing high enough to roll the stand into position, lowered the housing, and bolted it to the stand. Don made some adjustments and touch ups to the stand, and the next day, he and Danny rolled it out of the shop and next to the J65.

Two aircraft in our collection have Curtiss-Wright J65 engines, only different versions from the J65-W-5F. The Grumman F11F Tiger Blue Angel has a J65-W-18, and the Republic F-84F Thunderstreak has a J65-W-3. Historically, the J65 was a license-built version of the British Armstrong Siddeley Sapphire turbojet engine. For a period of time, Curtiss-Wright subcontracted the manufacture of J65s to Buick. Other US aircraft that flew with J65 engines included the early versions of the Douglas A-4 Skyhawk, North American FJ-3 and FJ-4 Fury and two XF-104 Starfighter prototypes.

### **Exhibit Cases**

Several years ago Simon Malls/Simon Property Group, owner of Topeka's West Ridge Mall, began a face lift of display cases and other corporate items in the mall. This meant a number of products became surplus and available for acquisition by other businesses and organizations. **Gene Howerter** and the late **Martin Moyer** visited the mall and saw the large number of various products available. Before long, they and **Amos Page** transported six large, glass-enclosed display cases and over twenty plastic mannequin torsos to the Museum. Five of the six cases now have exhibits in them, and the sixth is marked for an exhibit **Ted Nolde** is building. The cases are mounted on casters and are lighted. They are 4 feet X 4 feet square and just under 8 feet tall. They have glass on four sides. The amount of display space varies with the height of the base of each case.

Fast forward to 2014, and Gene found that West Ridge still had a number of these display cases available. He formed a group of volunteers including **Gary Naylor, Stu Entz, Jim Braun, Dick Trupp, Les Carlson** and **Ted Nolde**, and they met at West Ridge to load up several cases. Gene rented a truck with a tommy lift to load and transport the cases. Once there, the volunteers found the cases were just a couple of inches too tall to clear the opening

*The VMF-215 insignia  
by Bob Crapser.*



of the truck. Gary volunteered use of his trailer and left to get it. Gene decided to keep the truck so they could use the tommy lift to load the cases on and off of Gary's trailer. The crew eventually loaded six display cases and two sets of metal shelving, and a small caravan of vehicles headed for the Museum.

All the cases were successfully offloaded with the tommy lift. Three went into storage in Hangar 604. Three others came into Hangar 602. Stu put his claim on one of these for an World War I commemorative exhibit that will be placed by the JN-4D Jenny.

Four of the six cases are the same size as the ones acquired several years ago. The remaining two are 3 feet X 3 feet X 6 feet tall. The two sets of metal shelving are all metal and mounted on casters. They are double sided, 26 inches wide X 24 inches deep overall, and 66 inches tall. The adjustable shelving is 24 inches wide and 11 inches deep. These were immediately put to use in the Gift Shop.

Before the end of last year, we also acquired two large exhibit cases from the Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority (MTAA). In 1996, MTAA paid CAM to build two exhibit cases for the airline terminal and to install exhibits on Daniel Forbes and the types of military aircraft that flew from Topeka Army Air Field, Topeka Air Force Base, Forbes Air Force Base and Forbes Field. As part of the refurbishment and remodeling done to the terminal over the past year, MTAA decided to build new cases for these exhibits and donated the ones built 18 years ago back to CAM. These two cases are the same size and design as ones currently in the Education Conference Room. **Gene Howerter, Dave Murray, Gary Naylor**, and a crew of MTAA maintenance personnel relocated the two cases from the terminal to Hangar 604. Once MTAA has its new cases finished, the exhibits of Daniel Forbes and the aircraft will be put up again.

### **More Exhibit Cases**

**Jim Braun** is currently modifying two existing exhibit cases for upcoming exhibits. One involves the stand with cover for the USS ORISKANY model. Jim replaced the trim on the stand, and once the hull and flight deck arrive, will raise the platform for the model so visitors can look inside a section of the hangar deck.

Jim also modified three rear panels in another

**"Pancake Feed," con't. from Page 1**

There will be a sign-up sheet in the Gift Shop, primarily for jobs and time slots for the day of the Pancake Feed. Hangar preparation for the Feed begins Wednesday, April 23. Starting about 9 am we will tow four aircraft out of the hangar. Of course, it is never just a matter of moving the planes. Sign boards, at least one engine, a set of viewing steps, and other odds and ends will have to move, also. On Thursday, the main focus will be cleaning the hangar floor. Dusting of aircraft and exhibits will also be needed. Friday is set up day for the Pancake Feed tables and chairs, serving line and the Fly-In Market tables with the sale items.

Saturday requires a number of volunteers. The early morning volunteers need to be at the Museum by 6:30

**"CAM Projects," con't. from Page 6**

case so they can be used to display items. This is a case Dave Murray and Dick Trupp are working on for the commemoration of World War I. The existing panels were painted glass. Jim removed each panel, removed the glass from the frames, and installed Masonite in their place.

**ORISKANY Model**

Speaking of ORISKANY, **Larry Todd** now has over 3,600 hours in the rebuild of the hull, flight deck and a section of hangar deck. The plan is to transport the model from Gardner, Kansas, to Topeka on August 10. Larry and **Diane Todd** will be coming to Topeka and staying over to put all the pieces together to complete the model. The island superstructure built by Ted Nolde will be installed. The model aircraft built by **Darrin Roberts** will be spotted on the flight deck. Any other work needed will be done, then we will install the cover.

**VMF-215 Insignia**

**Bob Crapser** recently completed a home project in Eureka, Kansas, and brought it to CAM for the Naval Air Station Olathe exhibit. As a young Marine Corps Corporal, Bob was stationed at NAS Olathe with Marine Corps Fighter Squadron VMF-215. The squadron was activated and fought during World War II and flew the Vought F4U Corsair fighter. It took the name Fighting Corsairs. When Bob served with VMF-215 they flew the supersonic Vought F-8 Crusader fighter.

Using the pattern of other insignia mounted on top of the NAS Olathe exhibit case, Bob fabricate and hand painted the squadron insignia. After bringing it to Topeka, he built a stand for it, and he and Danny San Romani placed it on top of the Olathe case. Another former Marine who served at Olathe is **Jim Braun**.

→ → →

am. Syrup bottles will need filling and put on the tables. Butter patties also need to be put out. The beverage station needs to be set up. Once the Feed, and somewhat organized chaos, starts we need volunteers to:

- greet and welcome patrons and escort our guest flippers to the grills
- sell tickets in the Conference Room
- one volunteer to take tickets at the head of the food line
- serve food and beverages
- clean-up tables, replenish syrup bottles and butter patties
- clean-up floor spills
- change out trash bags in the trash barrels
- transfer coffee pots and orange juice pitchers to and from the kitchen.

At the end of the Feed we need volunteers for clean-up. All the tables and chairs are taken down and put away. Floor clean-ups are done where needed; we bring the aircraft back inside the hangar; and we put other things back in their respective places.

We ask our members to help us where and when you can. Please call Deloris and let her know what you would like to do, or swing by the Gift Shop and sign up on the jobs sheet.

→ → →

<p><b>DESIRED ITEMS</b></p> <p>Theme Baskets                      or items that can be used in Theme Baskets                      Collectibles Unique gift items                      Gardening items                      Potted plants                      Sports memorabilia                      Gift cards                      Gift certificates                      New or like-new bicycles                      Large lawn or garden items                      New or like-new camping gear                      New or like-new sports items                      New or like-new tools                      New electronic and technical items                      New pet items                      New or like-new children's toys                      New baby items</p> <p><b>NOT DESIRED</b></p> <p>Clothing                      Pictures or Prints                      Vases                      Left over garage sale items                      Out-of-date electronics                      Anything chipped, broken, dirty or worn</p> <p>→ → →</p>
---

### "Ghost Fleet," con't. from Page 3

have been other conspiracy theories and stories about the disappearance, and none have been confirmed. He said some theories created a lot of mystery about Truk and Amelia's disappearance.

After the outbreak of war with Japan, Allied forces soon learned the strength and importance of Truk. It was a heavily fortified base and was the Empire of Japan's main base in the South Pacific theater, serving as the forward anchorage for the Japanese Imperial Fleet. Japanese combatants staged out of the lagoon to support operations against Allied forces in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, particularly the Battle of Guadalcanal, among others. Cargo ships also staged out of Truk, resupplying various island installations and outposts.

Between the end of World War I and the start of World War II Japanese Army and Navy forces built roads, trenches, bunkers and caves on the islands. They also built five airstrips, seaplane bases, a torpedo boat station, submarine repair shops, a communications center and a radar station. Nearly 44,600 Imperial Japanese Navy and Army men were based at Truk.

The reef itself offered a natural barrier to invading ships, making naval gunfire impractical. Due to its fortifications, Truk became known among Allied forces as the "Gibraltar of the Pacific." Due to it being a forward anchorage for the Imperial Japanese Navy, it was also described as Japan's version of Pearl Harbor.

Tom said that two weeks before the February 17-18, 1944, raids against Truk, two US Navy PB4Y patrol bombers were flown to the base for reconnaissance. At that time, there was a large concentration of Japanese Navy combatants.

Task Force (TF) 50 and Task Force 58 made up Operation Hailstone, the US attack force. Admiral Raymond Spruance of TF50 was overall commander of the operation. His Task Force consisted of seven battleships, six cruisers and twenty-seven destroyers. Rear Admiral Marc Mitscher commanded TF58, consisting of nine aircraft carriers and some 500 aircraft.

The attack on Truk took place February 17-18, 1944. The major Imperial Japanese Navy combatants left Truk a week before attack. There were several combatants still in the lagoon and many auxiliary vessels were still at anchorage when carrier planes arrived over Truk. Tom said most everything sunk over the two-day attack were merchantships and some destroyers. The attack force also caught many Japanese aircraft on the ground. Tom said the fighters and bombers hit one island full of aircraft, but the pilots were on another island named Etin.

The two-day and one night attack destroyed nearly 400 Japanese aircraft, the vast majority caught on the ground. Some 200,000 tons of shipping and some 50 ships and craft were sunk in and around the lagoon. Oil storage and ammunition dumps were the main targets on the

second day of the attack. Task Force battle action away from Truk included the submarine USS SKATE sinking a light cruiser and the battleships USS NEW JERSEY and IOWA sinking another light cruiser and a destroyer. The successful attack on Truk was indeed a severe blow suffered by Japan. The Imperial Japanese Navy would not return to the lagoon, and Palau became the new headquarters for the combined fleet, some 1,100 miles to the west. Although the fleet would not return, Truk could still replenish and stage aircraft from its airstrips.

Tom said Truk was attacked again in late April 1944, then basically became target practice for Army Air Force B-17s. During a five day period from June 19-23, 1944, Army Air Force B-24s from Kwajalein flew high altitude missions against Truk.

The US did not land on Truk. Tom said we bypassed it and starved it out. He went on to say that is why not much is written about it; we did not invade. The concept of island hopping across the Pacific was exchanged for island leap frogging in 1943. It became clear that island hopping would be too costly in men and material and take too long. Certain islands would be leap frogged, sealed off by air and sea. Given that it was the Gibraltar of the Pacific, Truk was leap frogged. Cut off, the Japanese forces on Truk ran low on food and faced starvation before Japan surrendered in August 1945.

Tom mentioned that Marine Corps fighter pilot and top Marine ace "Pappy" Boyington was a Prisoner of War (POW) temporarily at Truk. He was there during the February raids. Boyington was shot down in January 1944 near Rabaul, captured by a submarine, and held prisoner on Rabaul for a while, then transferred to Truk. From Truk he eventually spent the rest of the war in a POW camp near Tokyo. Tom added that other US aviators shot down over Truk were executed.

Tom told us his dive buddy was named Gordon. At Chuuk, they found all the islands in the lagoon have been renamed. The year round temperature is about 80 degrees F. They stayed at a very comfortable hotel that Tom described as similar to a 1960s-70s Holiday Inn. The locals live a subsistence living. The islands had rebounded well from the war. Tom said some Japanese gun emplacements were still visible.

Diving on the wrecks is Chuuk's big industry. Tom said that while swimming along aisles, passageways, up and down ladders, he found himself imagining the battle. There has been no organized salvage attempts of the wrecks. Things have been left the way they were. He said locals have pulled up bombs and mines from ships to get the gunpowder. They use it to build explosives to kill fish as part of their subsistence.

Tom showed a photo of a decompression chamber. He said that when diving, you must not dive for too long or too deep. Don't "get bent," meaning get the bends or decompression sickness. Most wrecks were in a 100-200



foot range dive. The San Francisco Maru was at 170 feet. They would stay at a wreck about 20 minutes and decompress on the way back up. They used a hang tank, staged at the decompression stop on the way back up with a decompression mix of gases.

One of the wrecks in the lagoon is Imperial Japanese Navy submarine I-169. Tom said it was sunk during a later attack. The I-169 was one of Japan's submarines stationed outside of Pearl Harbor during the December 7, 1941, attack.

The submarine dove during the attack at Truk, but the air induction valve was not closed. The forward section flooded, but the aft section was sealed off from flooding and stayed dry. The submarine sank and the surviving crewmen died four to five days later. There were unsuccessful attempts to raise the submarine. To keep the US Navy from salvaging the submarine, the Japan dropped depth charges on it. Years later the remains of the crew were recovered.

Tom said the I-169 was a huge submarine. Divers had been able to get inside the wreck, but after some divers were lost diving on and in the submarine, the access to the interior was closed off. He added that a sister ship, I-168, sank destroyer USS HAMMAN and aircraft carrier USS YORKTOWN at the Battle of Midway.

As stated earlier, most of the wrecks from the February 1944 attack were merchant vessels. Tom told us their names all ended with the word Maru. This word means circle, similar to a moat around a castle for divine protection.

One of the dives at Chuuk was a shark dive. Their guide showed them how rubbing a water bottle against the reef attracted the sharks, including black tip and other reef sharks.

Tom showed a number of images taken during his wreck dives. One showed an image of a log book, the entries still readable, under water, after 70 years. In a cargo hold of one ship were cases and cases of sake and beer. Other images showed workshops with all their equipment and tools. Other views of cargo holds showed tires, aircraft, jeeps, trucks, spare gages and some periscopes. Tom pointed out that gages had been stolen from cockpits of the planes. He also commented about finding many ships' controls with labels/tags printed in English.

More images showed cargo holds with artillery shells and, as Tom said, lots and lots of ammunition. Outside of the holds Tom took photos of deck guns and a combat tank on deck. Some photos were of bridge controls, others of engine room controls. Among the war material pictured were a number of 14 inch shells, such as a battleship would fire. Tom said their guide pulled out an octopus from inside one ship.

Other war wreckage is on the bottom of the lagoon. One Tom saw is the remains of a twin engine Mitsubishi bomber, code named Betty by Allied forces.

Besides all the war material, the ships also hold the

remains of Imperial Japanese Navy sailors and merchantmen. In one ship's operating room there was a skull, skeletons and other bones.

Tom said Chuuk lagoon is an open grave to the Japanese. People come every year to hold a commemorative ceremony. Over the years many remains were removed from the wrecks, but the State of Chuuk has stopped letting the Japanese do this. Officials were concerned the Japanese would stop coming if they recovered all the remains. The lagoon has become a National Memorial for Chuuk. Tom said diving and Japanese tourism are the major money makers for the island state.

The only animals Tom saw while on shore were cats and toads. He said he did not go into the interior of the island. He stayed at the resort and when not there, was diving on the wrecks.

During a period of questions, Tom was asked if he had thought about diving on the wrecks at Bikini lagoon, sunk during atomic bomb tests after the war. He replied yes, but traveling to these Pacific island sites was expensive and involved a lot of travel. For the trip to Chuuk, he had earned enough points on Continental for a round trip ticket. He said the flight coming back took some 35 hours total time. The leg from Honolulu to the US mainland involved having to return to Honolulu to take on more fuel. The trip going over to Chuuk took two days.

Tom said he wanted to dive on the aircraft carrier USS ORISKANY and had made trips to Floria to do this, only to be stopped by weather and other schedules. He said the ORISKANY is a big disappointment to the dive industry as the carrier is too far out for dive boats to take divers out and back for a day's dive and spend any amount of time at the site.

Tom commented that Japan thought we (US and Allies) were going to invade and land on the home islands. Japanese forces had 30 days of food and new uniforms and were waiting for the final battle.

Someone asked why we did not invade Truk and use it as a forward base and anchorage. Tom replied that as we advanced westward across the Pacific, the largest US naval anchorage was at Ulithi atoll about 800 miles west and 200 miles north of Truk. We did not need Truk and did not want it. We wanted to neutralize it.

In comparison, Ulithi has 40 islets totaling 1.7 square miles of land while Chuuk has 49.2 square miles. The Ulithi lagoon is 212 square miles; the Chuuk lagoon is 820 square miles. The main advantages of Ulithi included the facts we did not have to invade the atoll, and it was 800 miles closer to Japan and other islands yet to be invaded.

In response to a question about the diving, Tom replied there were four people in the dive including the dive guide. The dive boat had a nitrox (nitrogen oxygen) mix of 80% nitrogen and 20% oxygen. There was also a 50-50 mix of nitrox and 100% oxygen. Tom said they were diving on

**"Ghost Fleet," con't. on Page 10**

**"Ghost Fleet," con't. from Page 9**

compressed air. He added the deeper you go, the more toxic oxygen becomes. Deeper dives rely on gas mixtures other than nitrox.

In 1968-1969 French oceanographer Jacques Cousteau, his son Phillippe, and other members of the Cousteau team spent two months diving on and filming a documentary of the Ghost Fleet of Truk Lagoon. This was the first true effort to document and map the many sunken ships.

With the final question Tom was asked if anyone ever told him he resembled Loyd Bridges? The late actor starred in a popular television series Sea Hunt that aired in syndication from 1958-1962. The show was an underwater adventure series.

Gene Howerter then presented Tom with a Certificate of Appreciation.



Gene Howerter presents Tom with a Certificate of Appreciation.

**Visitors**

During **January** the Museum had **277 visitors** from 17 states, and Czech Republic Great Britain Romania

During **February** we had **298 visitors** from 21 states, and Costa Rica Great Britain Poland Russia

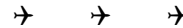


**Instructions from the War Department**

The following is printed on the inside of War Department Technical Manual TM 1-210, Elementary Flying, dated January 9, 1942:

**REMEMBER THAT THE FIRST LAW OF MOTION IS TO LOOK WHERE YOU'RE GOING.**

**A MAN WITH A STIFF NECK HAS NO PLACE IN AN AIRPLANE.**



**Calendar of Events**

**April**

**Monday, April 14**

Membership Luncheon  
Jean Wanner Education Conference Room  
11:30 am  
Students from Shawnee Heights High School will present History Day projects.

**Sunday, April 20**

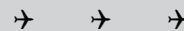
**Easter Sunday**

The Museum is closed

**Saturday, April 26**

21st Annual Celebrity Pancake Feed  
Hangar 602  
7 am - 12 pm

There is no Membership Luncheon in May. The next luncheon will be Monday, June 9.



**Mark your calendar for April 26th for our Annual Celebrity Pancake Feed.**



**Invite your friends and family, and plan to help as a volunteer!**

## Guest speaker for our next Membership Luncheon

Students from **Seaman High School** will be our guest presenters for the April Membership Luncheon, presenting their projects for the National History Day contest.

Teacher **Susan Sittenauer** has brought some of her best and brightest to the Museum for our April luncheons.

Mrs. Sittenauer has taught at Seaman High School since 1985 and instructs at the school in AP History and Civil and Criminal Rights. She took 98 students to a first round, district competition at the Washburn University Memorial Union in late February.

→ → →

### 2014 Events

#### April

- 14 - Membership Luncheon  
History Day Presentations  
with Seaman High School Students
- 20 - Museum closed, Easter Sunday
- 26 - Annual Celebrity  
Pancake Feed

#### June

- 2-5 - Youth Aviation Education Class
- 9 - Membership Luncheon  
Wright Flyer Machine  
with Professor Fredrick J. Schieszer

#### July

- 7-10 - Youth Aviation Education Class

#### August

- 4-7 - Youth Aviation Education Class
- 11 - Membership Luncheon  
*NOTE: Will be held at the Museum  
of the Kansas National Guard*  
with Big. Gen. Ed Gerhardt (Ret) and  
Lt. Col. Doug Jacobs (Ret)

#### September

- 27 - 10th Annual Winged Foot 5K/10K Run

#### October

- 13 - Membership Luncheon  
with Officers of the US Army  
Command and General Staff College

#### November

- 27 - Museum Closed, Thanksgiving Day

#### December

- 8 - History of the Citizen  
Pottawatomie Nation  
with Col. Jon Boursaw (Ret)
- 25 - Museum closed, Christmas Day

→ → →

Your membership is important to us.  
Join the Combat Air Museum

## Supporters

### New Supporters

James Cole  
Jean & Barbara Grande

### Renewing Supporters

Chuck & Connie Bradshaw  
Jim & Mary Braun  
Marty, Terry, Katherine, Matthew  
& Andrew Braun  
Monte, Marli & Kenny Brokate  
Anderson Chandler  
Marshall & Katrina Clark  
Bill Clawson  
Don & Peggy Dawson  
Dennis Donahue  
Norm Edee  
H. Philip, Darlene & Denise  
Elwood  
Randy & Linda Hemm  
Walter Hoeg  
Harold Jameson  
Mark & Kris Johnson  
Mike & Patricia Kozubek  
Dave & Judy Murray  
Don & Nancy Nisbett  
Joe Pullen  
Gerald & Jane Sliter  
Reverend Larry Thomas  
Terry Wages  
Eric, Lyn & Mitchell Walther  
William Welch  
Tom & Mary Anne Witty  
Steve Wodtke  
James & Anita Young

→ → →

Learn more  
about the  
Combat Air Museum  
at  
www.  
combatairmuseum.org





**CAM volunteers are working on a number of projects to add to the exhibits and displays. Read more on page 5.**

*Above: The J65 when exhibited on the trailer.  
Top Right: F-8 Crusader on the port elevator.  
Lower Right: The Kansas National Guard Museum's EB-57B Canberra.*

