

# COMBAT

## AIR MUSEUM PLANE TALK

July-September 2026  
Vol. 42, No. 3



## *Recall, Return to Base* Past Editions of Plane Talk

Much like 2025's April – June edition, we are dedicating this edition to stories gleaned from past versions of CAM's newsletter. We received many favorable responses from members to stories of how some of our aircraft were acquired and to happenings at CAM of past years that we decided to dedicate one newsletter every year, to "blasts from the past."

In this edition we revisit a presentation made by our old friend **Dick Starks** in December 2006 about building replica aircraft and the happy times that he and his co-conspirator and wife, **Sharon Starks** shared, flying these experimental aircraft at Liberty Landing "International" Airport in Kansas City.

We also dug up a story – not from our newsletter – but published in TOPEKA magazine – as written by the first Wing Commander (**James Young**) of CAM's predecessor organization, Yesterday's Air Force, Kansas Wing, in September 1977.

Then the main body of this newsletter concentrates on the year 1981 and the anticipated, and eventual arrival of our EC-121 Warning Star (Constellation) from the Davis-Monthan AFB boneyard. The notes, gleaned from the mimeographed 1981 newsletters, includes mention of a few other planes in our collection at that time. Interesting to find out we had 17 aircraft by 1981, including several that are still in our collection today.

Any number of names of members and volunteers from 1981 are included for those of our members who have fond memories of these Museum pioneers. We've left in a few amusing anecdotes from 1981, including the comment that one of our pilots ran out of fuel while flying (yes, in those days we were a flying museum) and he managed to keep this fact out of the newspaper! We'd like to find out what that was all about.

Some of the images included may not be as crisp as we have come to expect, as we have had to dig through old photo albums for images of what condition some of our aircraft arrived in. Some are so treasured that we had ChatGPT freshen up the image and sky behind the planes.

Lastly, and because this is a current quarterly, we have included up to date Museum Notes of events; In Remembrance of some recently departed friends of the Museum and a short calendar of events for the second half of 2026.

Enjoy! Dave Murray



Forbes Field (CAM website photo)

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**PLANE TALK**, the official newsletter of the Combat Air Museum of Topeka, Kansas, is published quarterly.

*We welcome your comments!*

Newsletter Layout by Megan Garner

## MUSEUM HOURS

**January 2 - February 28/29**

Mon.-Sun. Noon - 4:30

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

**March 1 - December 31**

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

Sun. Noon - 4:30 P.M.

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

### **Closed**

New Year's Day, Easter,  
Thanksgiving, Christmas Day

Your membership is important to us! Join the  
**COMBAT AIR MUSEUM**

# Yesterday's Air Force, Kansas Wing

*By James Young, Wing Commander*

When the United States Air Force ceased operations at Forbes Air Force Base, it ended an era for the Topeka community. The base, now known as Forbes Field, is still mainly unoccupied and when one strolls around the empty buildings and hangars on the field, the spirits of the men and aircraft that once flew out of the Army Air Force Base come alive. This is even more true now since one can sometimes observe a B-24 Liberator bomber being run up on the ramp. The deep roar of the big radial engines and the unique silhouette of the aircraft remind us all of the time when air power came of age.

The time 1939-1945 was an era unto itself. World War II set in motion the most monstrous and worldwide conflict ever to be witnessed in human existence. This war affected all peoples throughout the world. The strength and unity of the American people during this period of time perhaps will never be seen again. This was also the time in which air power, which only twelve years before had managed to send **Charles Lindbergh** across the Atlantic Ocean, developed into an effective weapon of war. Aircraft went from open cockpit bi-planes to monsters of the air such as the B-29 Superfortress. This era challenged men and machine far beyond what anyone thought was possible. These were the days when many people thought of pilots as men without regard for their lives, of aces and silk scarves and of people that would go up in aircraft never to be heard of again. It was an era when flying was man and machine against weather and the enemy and not against today's unmanned missiles and computers. This is the time when pilots flew by the seat of their pants, where gunners faced the enemy's Me 109 squarely, and not from behind a radar screen, and, most of all, this was a time that should be remembered.

There is a group now operating in the Topeka community that is fighting for the restoration, preservation and acquisition of planes and memorabilia of the period 1939-1945. This group is known as Yesterday's Air Force of Kansas, Inc. Yesterday's Air Force was founded five years ago in Long Beach, California by **Mr. David Tallichet, Jr.** Until December of 1976 it was a privately owned collection of World War II aircraft of both the allied and the enemy's air forces. Since many of the aircraft were scattered throughout the desert of California, they were not available for public display. **Mr. Robert Schneider**, who recently moved back to Topeka, worked with Mr. Tallichet in bringing these aircraft to Topeka and Forbes Field for the opening of a permanent museum. The reasoning for this move was because of the closing of Forbes AFB, and the fact that there was a wealth of knowledge and experience in the Topeka community for dealing with these old aircraft. With the slow movement of many aircraft to Topeka, Yesterday's Air Force of Kansas, Inc. was formed. The Wing Commander, Mr. James Young, and a large crew of volunteers have worked hard on establishing the museum and beginning to restore and repair the aircraft we now have. Since its inception here in Kansas, Yesterday's Air Force has run up against numerous difficulties. The response to the organization was tremendous at first, but then many members backed away because of the difficult fight. The organization has had to move two different times from its hangars because of the development of the Topeka Air Industrial Park. The difficulty in funding is also a problem that continues to plague the organization. Aviation industry tools are expensive and parts are extremely difficult to locate and very costly and the members realized quickly that a





B-24 Liberator First YAF Aircraft (photo by Gene Howerter, enhanced by AI)

complex machine such as the P-47 Thunderbolt could not be put together with chewing gum and bailing wire. Even with these hardships, however a core group of members have faithfully dedicated a great amount of time to this organization, have helped to raise money slowly to the point where the future looks much brighter.

Yesterday's Air Force, Kansas Inc. is now located at hangars 602 and 604 on Forbes Field and includes a museum and display of aircraft. To be included in the museum is a World War II Stalag POW room, built to the exact specifications of the original room, right down to the burlap straw-filled mattress and cooking stove. The museum contains memorabilia such as uniforms, armaments, maps and all manner of items from that era in history. Yesterday's Air Force is also looking forward to the possibility of obtaining more museum items from the Kansas State Historical Society, the Air Force Museum located at Wright Patterson Air Force Base and from the Smithsonian Institute.

Airplanes currently on display include the last flying B-24 Liberator bomber in the world. A Topeka crew recently flew our "Doris" to Washington state where she was used in the filming of an ABC Television fall movie of the week, "The Lost Prince." It is the tragic story of **Joseph Kennedy, Jr.**, who was lost in World War II. **Peter Strauss** from "Rich Man, Poor Man" played the part of Kennedy and our B-24 played a major role in the movie. It was a B-24 Liberator in which Joe Kennedy met his untimely death.

Other aircraft include a B-25 Mitchell, which was the first to carry the war to the Japanese homeland with the Doolittle Raid from the aircraft carrier Hornet. This very aircraft was used in the filming of the movie, "Catch 22." Yesterday's Air Force has one of the two British Mosquito bombers left flying in the world today and this aircraft is a movie star too, having appeared in "Mosquito Squadron" and in "633 Squadron". Also on display is a P-47 Thunderbolt, which has been painted in the colors and markings of the machine **Col. David Schilling**, for whom Schilling A.F.B. in Salina was named, flew in the European theater. Other planes include a Douglas B-26 Invader light bomber, a T-28 Air Force trainer, and a German Me 109 fiberglass mockup. In addition to the above, Yesterday's Air Force has two restoration projects now going on. One is a Martin B-26 Marauder, that crashed in Alaska in 1942, and a British Fairey Swordfish, that sat in a farmer's field in Canada from 1946 to 1969.

The museum, besides having aircraft, also has a number of World War II vintage vehicles and, as an added treat, the Topeka Fire Department has loaned us three antique fire engines from those restored by their volunteers.

In addition to the museum, Yesterday's Air Force plans to bring one of the nation's most exciting air shows to Forbes Field on October 1 and 2, 1977. Numerous fighters and bombers will again take to the skies and thrill those in attendance. Featuring world champion aerobatic competitor **Art Scholl** performing with his Super Chipmunk; one of the world's best known flyers **Bob Hoover**, who with his P-51, will

Continued on Page 14



Yesterday's Air Force  
(photo by James Young, enhanced by ChatGPT AI)

## *You Want to Build and Fly a What?* Replica Aircraft and the Dawn Patrol of Liberty Landing International Airport, MO

By **Danny San Romani** (Plane Talk Feb/March 2007)

A record crowd of 57 people turned out for the December 2006 Membership Luncheon to hear **Mr. Richard "Dick" Starks** talk about building and flying World War I replica aircraft and his association with a group known as the Dawn Patrol. As you may recall Dick donated the replica Taube to the Museum last May. Accompanying him to the luncheon was his wife **Sharon** and several members of the Dawn Patrol who fly replica World War I aircraft.

Dick started his talk by saying his interest in aircraft went back to his childhood when he built model aircraft, including radio control planes. As an adult he began building experimental aircraft. One of his childhood friends who had the same passion for airplanes as a youngster also carried that passion into adulthood. Dick and his friend met others who wanted to build their own planes and eventually the Dawn Patrol was formed. Everyone brought a particular talent to the group. A couple owned a machine shop. One was, as Dick put it, a "cover Guru" meaning he knew how to do the fabric covering over the metal and wood frameworks of aircraft.

The Dawn Patrol located its organization at a small grass airstrip near Missouri City, Missouri on the banks of the Missouri River. Dick and other members refer to the strip as Liberty Landing International Airport. It is actually about seven miles west and a little south as the crow flies from Liberty, MO. The proximity to the Missouri River proved nearly catastrophic to the Dawn Patrol during the 1993 flood. Four aircraft had to be rebuilt after that event. Dick said the planes had some two feet of mud in them and all the engines were ruined. But the planes were rebuilt, in a home basement and all flew again.

Dick used a PowerPoint presentation during his talk and showed still photographs and video of the planes and Liberty Landing International. The airstrip is literally located in cropland with corn and soybeans, and Dick had more to say about the corn later.

In 1985, Dick built a Nieuport 11 replica. Others of the Dawn Patrol had also built this type. The 7/8th scale replica aircraft fly at 60 miles per hour. Dick said the aircraft are taken to airshows and flying events by trailer and are mostly flown during summer. He said it takes about 80 minutes to assemble the aircraft. In 1985-1986, the cost of building the replica was about \$2,900. Today it would cost about \$10,000. The first replicas used Rotax engines and were started with a pull rope mounted in the cockpit. Today the aircraft fly with Volkswagen engines.

One of the flyers, **Dick Lemons**, mounted a camera to his plane, and Dick ran a short video of a flight from takeoff to landing. Music was put to the video and Dick pointed out during the landing that the plane bounced three times to the beat of the music.

The replica Nieuport aircraft are not aerobatic capable. They are stressed for 4 to 5 positive G's, but the flyers do not try to approach that limit. Dick said the Dawn Patrol has flown Nieuports at the Columbia Memorial Day Air Show for nine years and showed some footage from one of those shows. It was rather humorous. One of the Nieuports ground-looped. It looked like the aircraft recovered with minimal damage, and the pilot of a second Nieuport got out of his plane to see if the pilot in the first aircraft was all right. Now without its pilot, the second Nieuport started to slowly taxi off on its own. The pilot quickly returned to the plane and stopped it. Dick and others of the Dawn Patrol have also flown the Nieuports at the National Museum of the United States Air Force in Dayton, Ohio.

In early December 2006, The Dawn Patrol took part in the opening of the National World War One Museum in Kansas City, MO designated by Congress as the nation's official World War I museum. The museum is located in the restored Liberty Memorial buildings and the opening featured some of the Dawn Patrol aircraft. Some members had donated their replicas to the museum. Dicks indicated that the Dawn Patrol received excellent news coverage by WDAF Channel 4 (FOX 4) Television of Kansas City, MO.

Dick then spoke about the Taube replica that he donated to CAM. He said he had built a plastic model of the aircraft as a youngster, and it had always impressed him. It took him a year to draw the plans for the 52% scale replica. He built the plane for his wife Sharon to fly.

But as it turned out, the Taube was a tough plane to fly. Dick said the first flight was terribly out of balance, and this was corrected. But it always took a lot of strength for the ailerons. He and Sharon both flew in the Taube (it is a two-seater), and Dick flew it at airshows for a few years before donating it to CAM.

Remember the cornfield mentioned earlier in this article? Dick and the Taube had a close-up and personal experience with the field one summer day. Dick said the day was about 99 degrees Fahrenheit with 100% humidity, and the corn was very tall. There just was not a lot of lift that day, and the wheels of the Taube hit the corn. Dick said the plane settled into the field like a mattress and finally got down into the corn far enough that the plane flipped over. Dick got out of the plane but could not see out of the corn and the others could not see in, to know what happened. They finally hooked up with each other. The Taube had to be taken apart to get it out of the field. Now that CAM has the Taube, Dick is building a replica of a 1915 French Morane-Saulnier "L" Parasol fighter for Sharon to fly. He also told us another member of the Dawn Patrol, **Ron Werner**, is building a full-scale replica of a 1915 German Fokker E.IV fighter. *[Editor's note: Both of these replicas were donated in later years to CAM and*





**Dick & Sharon Starks by Sharon's Morane-Saulnier**  
(unknown photographer)



**Dick flying Sharon's Taube over the Missouri River**  
(unknown photographer)

*both are on display in the Museum – see end of this article for an inventory of WWI aircraft at CAM]*

Dick talked a bit about the cinema movie “Flyboys” that came out in the fall of 2006. Dick had very high praise for the movie and its attention to accuracy, and those of us who have seen the movie will probably agree. Dick said he worked some with the director, **Tony Bill**. His comments about the movie led into some comments about actual aircraft of World War I. He briefly talked about the use of machine guns on the aircraft. Originally, the guns were mounted such that they fired over the arc of the propeller so as not to shoot off the blades. Then French ace **Roland Garros** put metal sheathing over the backs of his wooden blades and fired through the arc of the propeller. Of course, many of his shots hit the blades as well as passing between them. The big problem was he had no real idea where the ricocheting bullets would go. When word reached the Germans of this primitive method of firing through the propeller arc, aircraft designer **Anthony Fokker** went to work and in about a week's time developed a machine gun synchronizer mechanically linking the gun's trigger mechanism to the engine's camshaft. A cam, rotating with the propeller, temporarily blocked the firing pin whenever a blade was in the line of fire, allowing bullets to pass only during the safe gaps. Such was some of the advanced aviation technology developed during the First World War.

Dick also commented on the construction of the real Nieuports. He said there was a problem with the wing construction such that during extreme maneuvering and high G loads the planes shed their wings. In regard to pilots, Dick said that World War I pilots lasted only an average 10 hours in aerial combat because of the number of air battles with the enemy and the rudimentary construction of early allied WWI aircraft.

At the end of his teaching career his students gave him a blue-ball cap with big yellow FAA letters on it. Dick said he has enjoyed wearing that hat on occasion around various airports. It is a definite attention getter and either sends people scurrying off in all directions or brings others to him wanting to know how they can help him.

Dick is also an author. He wrote “You Want to Build and Fly a What? Or... How I Learned to Fly, Built a WWI Replica and

Stayed Married”. He told us the original transcript included a chapter the publisher would not print. It dealt with an airsick passenger, and the publisher felt it was too graphic. This was both a delightful and informative talk and just made it a great luncheon. After a question-and-answer period with Dick, a number of door prizes were given out to attendees.

*[Editor's note: CAM now has twelve WWI scale replicas in its collection, nine of which were donated by members of The Dawn Patrol, four of the ten built and flown by Sharon & the late Dick Starks. We are expecting another WWI scale replica from the Dawn Patrol this year. The Aircraft in our collection include:*

- *de Havilland Airco DH.2 (80% scale)*  
Dawn Patrol – Dick & Sharon Starks
- *Morane-Saulnier Type “L” (88% scale)*  
Dawn Patrol – Dick & Sharon Starks
- *Nieuport 11 Bebe (88% scale)*  
Dawn Patrol – Dick & Sharon Starks
- *Rumpler Taube (52% scale)*  
Dawn Patrol – Dick & Sharon Starks
- *Fokker Dr.1 Triplane (75% scale)*  
Dawn Patrol – Dick Lemons
- *Fokker E.IV (full scale)*  
Dawn Patrol – Jan & Ron Werner
- *Nieuport 27 (88% scale)*  
Dawn Patrol – **Lanny Turner**
- *Pfalz E1 (75% scale)*  
Dawn Patrol – **Robert Baslee**
- *Siemens-Schuckert D.I (88% scale)*  
Dawn Patrol – **Marvin & Nancy Story**
- *Sopwith Pup (full scale)*  
Dawn Patrol – Robert Baslee
- *Royal Aircraft Factory S.E.5 (full scale) – John Troth*
- *Rowley-Curtiss “Jenny” JN-4D2 (full scale) – Elton Rowley*

*With twelve of these aircraft, CAM has the largest collection of WWI scale replicas in the whole of the Mid-West USA] ♦*

# Museum Notes

By Kevin Drewelow

**Pancake Feed/Hamburger Feast/50th Anniversary Celebration...**The Combat Air Museum celebrated our 50th anniversary on April 25th with a day-long round of activities. We kicked off with the annual Pancake Feed, ably supervised by the two Perkins Restaurant and Bakery veterans, **Bob Carmichael** and **Domingo Gallardo**. Multiple celebrities from around Topeka and Kansas pitched in to learn the intricacies of expert pancake making. Overall, 575 visitors happily consumed the “all-you-can-eat” pancakes, a recent record for the event.

We opened the canopy of the Blue Angel F-11F Tiger aircraft and **Ryan Workman** invited visitors to have their photographs taken, sitting inside the cockpit. Local recording artist **Michael Eichten** entertained guests with his with his songs written and performed by veteran music artists, such as **Johnny Cash** and **Kris Kristofferson**, among others, while pancake feed guests perused the annual Fly-In Market; this year ably organized and run, with an emphasis on plant and flower sale, and outdoor tools garden accessories and outdoor furniture.

At noon, the celebration turned over to free hamburgers, expertly grilled by the **Mike Welch** family members. A ‘fair offering’ donation case stood near the hungry diners and 280 enjoyed a first-class burger with all the “fixins.” While this feast was going on, youngsters inside the hangar were able to make and fly paper airplanes and take part in throwing plastic hatchets at a target, both activities at different stations.

The “moving” crew had moved five aircraft outdoors for the event and in addition, our neighbors at the Kansas Army National Guard towed a medevac Black Hawk helicopter to our ramp for tours. Several small aircraft from the American Flight Museum joined us on the ramp outside as well as some private planes whose owners flew in for the event.

**Frito-Lay** provided generous donations in the form of delicious chips, **Reser's** donated salads, **Sam's Club** gave us a voucher and **Million Air** kindly allowed us to keep the burger buns, patties and salads for several days in their freezers at the **Jet-A-Way Café**. Our friends at Million Air also provided hangar space to protect the historic aircraft we towed out to make room for this event during the week.

All told this day was a great success and with over 855 visitors attending and close to \$5,000 raised for the Museum's coffers. You can be sure that we were all tired, but satisfied, by 5 pm that evening. The number of volunteers



**Pancake Feed (photo by Klio Hobbs)**

was too numerous to mention here by name, but we have thanked them all separately for making the big CAM Day one to remember.

**GSA transferred the Chinook title to CAM...**The Kansas Federal Surplus Property Office notified CAM on April 8 that the title to our Boeing CH-47D Chinook, serial number 85-24346, had transferred to the Museum. We were pleased to hear this, but more good news came later in the day. **Deb Lamere**, who was the crew chief on 346 for a year in Iraq and is now leading its restoration, told us that our Chinook began life as a CH-47C model and originally delivered to the Army on April 8, 1968, as 67-18504. It was later modified to the D-model standard and gained its current serial number. So, our Chinook became Museum property on its 58th birthday!

**CAM hosts KDOT Aviation youth art contest winners...**The Combat Air Museum had the privilege of hosting an awards event for the Kansas winners of the National Association of State Aviation Officials Youth Aviation Art Contest on April 27. State Aviation Director **Ray Seif** and his staff recognized the winners and their families, **Ken Mischler**, president of the local Experimental Aviation Association Chapter 1693, told the youngsters about the Young Eagles program, which provides youth with a free airplane ride and his plans to connect them with the local program. The children and their families enjoyed a tour of the Museum after the event concluded. This was the second year CAM hosted the event, and we look forward to doing it again next year!





**Victory** (photo by Klio Hobbs)

**CAM/Ad Astra Modeling Club Mid-Year Model Contest...** Saturday May 23rd saw the return of a model contest to CAM. In conjunction with Topeka's Ad Astra Modeling Club, we staged a modeling competition on Saturday May 23rd in hangar #602. 115 different models were entered for the day allowing visitors, for a nominal \$5 admission fee, to marvel at the intricacies of miniaturized aircraft, cars, trucks, spacecraft, action and fantastical figures and one magnificent model of the USS Victory. 135 visitors came to see the show and the 3 top models in each category won prizes for their creators. Our very own **Larry Todd** won 1st prize in the model aircraft category for his WWI model of a German Gotha bomber.

The show proved to both organizations that modeling holds an interest to the public in this part of the state and we have decided to repeat the contest next year, only with more advertising and putting the contest date on other model clubs' calendars to attract more models and visitors.

**KU AFROTC students volunteer at CAM...** 15 University of Kansas Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets from Detachment 280, "The Flying Jayhawks," spent several hours on April 11 dusting airplanes, cleaning glass and improving the appearance in both of our hangars. **Chuck Watson** began their day with a tour of the Museum. We greatly appreciated their assistance only two weeks before our 50th anniversary event!



**La Padula Wall** (photo by Kevin Drewelow)



**Taps** (photo by Klio Hobbs)

**Taps Across America...** Over 125 people attended this year's Taps Across America event at the Combat Air Museum on Memorial Day, May 25. The color guard from Washburn Rural High School's Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFJROTC) began the event by posting the colors. Retired Air Force Captain **Herschel Stroud** spoke about the origin of Memorial Day and the significance of the 24 notes of the bugle call "Taps." The honor guard from American Legion Post 400 provided a 21-gun salute followed by Captain Stroud playing "Taps" on his 121-year-old bugle. Post 400 members then conducted a flag-folding ceremony, and the AFJROTC color guard retired the colors, concluding the ceremony. CBS correspondent **Steve Hartman** and retired Air Force bugler **Jari Villeneuve** created Taps Across America in 2020 as a way for Americans to commemorate Memorial Day safely during the COVID epidemic. CAM has hosted a Taps Across America event ever since 2023. Both KSNT and WIBW covered the event and their reports are on the Combat Air Museum Facebook page.

**CAM volunteers at work...** Museum volunteers continued their excellent work over the last few months. **Joe Wulfkhle** has been collaborating with his friend **Tom Keyes** to create 3D-printed rockets for the pods on our Bell UH-1M Huey gunship. Shortly after the dedication of our new display about Doolittle Raider **Harold Spatz**, **Mike Madden** added lights that dramatically enhance the appearance of the exhibition. Art curator Chuck Watson has devoted much time and energy to improving the display space for the return of the collection of 80 paintings by **Tom La Padula** depicting the World War I aerial victories of **Manfred von Richthofen**. Chuck has painted and detailed the exhibition space and added new photos of Richthofen and his dog, Moritz, to the display. The collection will return from the Mid-American Air Museum in Liberal, Kansas in November. **Mike Welch** and the rest of the Fix-It Friday crew repainted floors in both hangars to improve the appearance for visitors. ♦



## 1981 Newsletters and the Arrival of the EC-121

### Aircraft News: Newsletter #22: January 1981 by Winifred Surritt

In the last Newsletter it was intimated there could be good news concerning aircraft. GOOD NEWS it is!

One aircraft, and possibly three, are in the future of our Museum. For certain an EC-121 Constellation will be flying into Forbes AFB where it will be making its new home. This is a fantastic display craft, as it still contains some of the radar early warning equipment. Of course, all classified items have been removed.

The plane is coming from Davis-Monthan AFB Air Defense Storage Depot. The plane is now being readied for ferrying. Date and time of its arrival are not known. It all depends on the amount of work to be done and paperwork involved.

The aircraft is being acquired through the Kansas Surplus Property Section and is allocated to the Museum by General Services Administration in San Francisco.

A committee has been appointed by Commander **Ervin Surritt**. Those serving on it are **Bob Fowks**, **Harlan Price** and **Gene Howerter**. They will be working in the community to solicit funding to bring the EC-121 to Forbes. Moving these planes is an expensive business. The preparation and ferrying of this one aircraft will cost nearly \$7,000, so you see, we need all the help we can muster from anyone and everybody.

It might be added here that, once these aircraft are made available to organizations such as ours, they are on their last phase of preservation. Their next step is the salvage yard and destruction. It is important that posterity be able to have such aircraft available.

A series of gun-camera pictures of the Israeli F-15 shooting down a Syrian MiG was received by our Curator this past month. Those pictures were of the first encounter of these two planes during the conflict. They were sent to us by **Major General Piotowski** of the Air Defense Tactical Command. You may remember from a previous Newsletter that General Piotowski had visited our Museum. The pictures and gracious letter of appreciation for courtesies shown him during his visit, are a welcome addition to our display material.

#### Air Show News:

Plans are moving forward. September 12 & 13, 1981 have officially been selected for the show. The Air Force "Thunderbirds" will be one of the major attractions.

### Aircraft News: Newsletter #23: February 1981

Permission has been granted **Aero-Services** of Tucson, Arizona to ferry the EC-121 Constellation to Topeka. They are accomplishing the preparation and flight. It's the first time the Museum has used a package proposal from an outside firm to move an aircraft. The feeling about this one was that the aircraft needed more capabilities than we were able to furnish from our personnel and resources at this time. Word has been received that Aero-Services will be bringing the EC-121 on March 14, providing all goes well with preparation and weather is favorable. We are hoping for much publicity and viewing audience when this exciting event occurs.

Both hangars are buzzing with activity as everyone anxiously anticipates the arrival of the new aircraft. It is a big decision trying to decide just where to put what. Of course, nothing we have is going to be big enough to accommodate all of the EC-121. Either its tail or front is going to be hanging outdoors, so it will probably be outdoors most of the time.

Plans are now that the B-25J "Fairfax Ghost" will arrive the weekend of March 7 and 8. This is tentative. This aircraft is coming in from Kansas City. It belongs to a group of individuals who are willing to place it on display in our Museum. We are pleased to have it as one of our collection.

**Dean Stranberg** is progressing on the F-84. There is much work to be done. A request has been submitted to the National Guard for permission to salvage some material from one of their target planes.

Another exciting aircraft project is the BT-13. This would be a project for several people to work on and complete. It would be nice to have it done by Air Show time as it would for all the other aircraft under renovation. **Gene Howerter** and **Lee Parks** have all the parts sorted and laid out. It is now a matter of building it back. The tail wheel and strut and main gear strut are two items which will have to be acquired. Other missing items have been found and just need to be picked up and brought in.

Since the big load of parts and accessories came in from Douglas, Arizona, the CAM C-47 could now be put back into a presentable condition. Maintenance and fabric men are needed. Let's get this one in shape for the Air Show too.



## Aircraft News: Newsletter #24: March 1981

The arrival of Spring didn't bring in our aircraft. But they are still coming. First in line was the B-25J. Repair work goes on. The carburetor problems are proving difficult to conquer. Also, there is some propellor trouble on one of the engines.

The EC-121 has also been having a difficult time making its arrival. In the land of Perpetual Sunshine, namely Arizona, it supposedly seldom rains, but somehow this year there has been rain upon rain, and the aircraft could not be moved to the work area. Then the air force was moving one of their aircraft and pulled the landing gear from under it when it was mired in the mud. This left that plane sitting in the EC-121's travel path and prevented our aircraft from being moved.

Donations are still needed to help defray the flight of the EC-121. Any amount will be welcome.

Work has finally been accomplished, and it appears the plane will arrive at Topeka on April 11.

It is now final! We will be getting the T-33. This plane is coming through the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB. It is now located at Fulton, Kentucky. Ervin drove down to Fulton and checked the plane to see if it would be a feasible project. He believes it would be. There will be a considerable amount of work involved in making it an attractive display, but it can be done if there is the right amount of enthusiasm and volunteerism. This airplane will be trucked to Topeka.

Right now, help is needed with the BT-13, the F-84 and the CAM C-47. Don't fail to be a part of one or all of these projects.

## Aircraft News: Newsletter #25: April 1981

It is hard to believe we are still looking westward, waiting for our EC-121 to come flying into its new home. Every week brings a new problem. One week there were gas leaks in the transfer and dump valves. Then a hydraulic leak in the aileron boost control system.

**Jack Kern**, our mechanic on this project, is quite astonished that so many leaks are showing up. The planes have been in storage for such a short time that he feels this type of problem should be a rarity. He is preparing two of the EC-121s for flight, ours and one for a school in Montana. The gas leaks on the one for Montana were so bad they filled the bottom radar dome half full of gasoline before they realized what was happening.

There is no definite time at present. Just keep checking with the Museum, Ervin or Gene Howerter.

GOOD NEWS! The B-25J "Fairfax Ghost" has arrived. It was flown in from Kansas City by **David Render** and **Eliot Potter**. The aircraft belongs to a group called "**Kansas City Warbirds, Inc.**" who have agreed to place it in our Museum for safe-keeping and display. It is a very nice plane, and we are most fortunate to have it as part of our material. The flight over from Kansas City was quite an experience for the crew. There were serious mechanical problems which the pilots fought mightily all the way.

When the Museum changed its name and began its struggle to make a new beginning, we began to try to gain back all the friends which had been lost in the transition. What better way to do this than via a newsletter. The writer also noted that in our info concerning the Museum, a monthly newsletter is promised to every membership. I searched but could find none. I was told at some time or other. YAP-Topeka Wing, had published one, but could find no copies.

Special Thanks:

The Museum wishes to express its appreciation to **Mr. Mark Mohan** of **Costelow Company**. Mark has given **Ralph Knehans** permission to use the company truck to pick up the various aircraft, from time to time, when Ralph, on his travels across the Plains, finds an item that will be of interest for our collection.



B-25 "Fairfax Ghost"

(photo published with permission from Don Hewins)



Newsletter May 1981 – not produced as Winifred Surritt had resigned as editor.

**Aircraft News:** June 1981:

*by* **Dennis Lambert**

*(Newsletters were hereafter no longer numbered)*

May 31, 1981, was the day the long-awaited EC-121 finally put in her appearance. She arrived at 1330 hours after her last long flight. She would have been here sooner, but the crew became somewhat disoriented by our many reservoirs. But as has been the case with many others, Kansas City ASR (radar) led them to Forbes and a very impressive fly-by down runway 03 for benefit of our cameras.

She's long, lean and very impressive. Her interior is typical USAF; there are a few items missing from her interior and with her bunks, lounge, stove, refrigerator, radar, radio and other assorted gear, she is going to be a crowd pleaser. With a clean-up and putting some of her systems back to functional status, she will make us an attraction worthy of note anywhere. We still owe a considerable amount of money, really more a case of replenishing the funds we used to get her here. I feel that by giving tours on weekends and at the airshow, she may well pay for herself a few times over. That would make her unique for us.

**Dr. Ed Counselman's** crew should be commended for the fine job they did on the acquisition of the B-25 and the T-6. They have spent several weekend leisure hours in preparing these aircraft for travel to our facility. Thanks go to **Terry Stafford, L. C. Hinthner, Al Wilson, Eliot Potter, Doc Counselman**, and, of course, **Dave Render**, who along with Eliot Potter, flew the B-25 to Forbes. Neither rain, nor storm, nor scud, nor smoke, nor hydraulic leaks, nor fuel starvation kept them from the appointed destination, followed up shortly by trucking the T-6 from Kansas City, too. Not a bad month's work by any standard.

Congratulations to one of our own nameless pilots – who ran out of fuel and managed to keep it out of the newspaper. That is skill.

I'd like to publicly congratulate **Lloyd Baine** – he is now a commercially licensed, instrument rated pilot. Last winter the Board voted to provide 10 hours of free C-47 flying time to **Gene Smith, Eliot Potter**, and **Ed Counselman** who were chosen because they were multi-rated and current.

**Gene Howerter** received two atta-boys at the recent Board meeting. One "boy" and "atta" for getting our brochure for virtually nothing and the other for Museum growth. We explained that 20 atta-boys got your name in the newsletter and one can of soda. One "boy, that was stupid" removes all compliments and future rewards.

This newsletter is a little later than originally planned because Board meetings are now held on the first Wednesday of the month, giving only 6 days lead time before our general membership meeting. But the Board always does something newsworthy – maybe not constructive, but newsworthy.

Members, volunteer now and help the airshow committee plan for September. Remember, these people also brought us the Edsel and the Hindenburg....

I hope this newsletter hasn't offended anyone. If it has let me know – after the airshow!





**EC-121 Flyby**  
(photo by G. Howerter, enhanced by K. Hobbs & AI)



**EC-121 Taxiing on Ramp**  
(photo by G. Howerter, enhanced by K. Hobbs & AI)



**EC-121 Parked at CAM**  
(photo by G. Howerter, enhanced by K. Hobbs & AI)

## Aircraft News: July 1981

Please note: Our manpower situation does not allow any of our regulars to become sick or disabled.

As some of you know by now, the trip to Kentucky was not filled with a treasure of happy moments. Upon arrival, our intrepid crew found our long-awaited T-33 in numerous pieces. Some well-intentioned people had removed the wings for us – with a cutting torch. They removed the aircraft from the muck by catching the underside of the wing with a backhoe and pulling.

Not to be done in completely by the forces of ignorance, Howerter, Surritt, Stranberg, Ralph Knehans and **Bill Morgan** recouped part of our expenses by picking up a BT-13 center section from the Younkin brothers in Fayetteville, Ark. **Bob Younkin** is the man who brings in the FM-2 Wildcat to our airshow every year. Our members were very impressed with the operation the Younkins have. It is quality workmanship all the way.

B-25J "Fairfax Ghost" crew are determined to make it to Oshkosh this year. Need to replace trying jugs.

EC-121 is proving very popular – many people are donating to the fund for moving it here. Ervin has done a very nice job of enclosing the cockpit area with plexiglass.

Guns – we are to receive the 75mm canon now residing in the park to which we will need to do some cosmetic work.

Airshow – **Tim Merle** has now taken over the leadership of our airshow. Eliot Potter (yes, **Tom Dittmer** there are two "t's" in Potter) has taken the preliminary work of organization.

Warbirds are coming, some have even agreed to supply their own fuel. Dittmer (yes Eliot, there are two "t's" in Dittmer) who is heading up the Warbirds has provided us with quite a selection, and for a change we may know which warbird to expect before Sunday morning of the airshow. Military Statics: Too numerous to mention. Render (no Gene, there are no "t's" in Render) is providing our biggest display of military power ever. Although not confirmed on paper, the possibility looms large that we may have the Blackbird and the Vulcan here, and also an F-15 flying display.

## Airshow News: August 1981

Dave Render is getting us some very good co-operation from the various branches of the military, including the R.A.F. Our military aircraft are numerous and impressive. Considering what happened in the Mediterranean last month, the F-14 Tomcat should be a real attraction. If you see a couple of wet Libyans walking about during the Tomcat demo, please get hold of security.

## Airshow and Aircraft News: September 1981

The time is now! We feel we have developed an airshow which is going to be the finest that will be seen in the entire country. To compete, we have spent additional money for additional attractions – different warbirds, more exciting military statics, and, of course, a wing walker who is famous throughout airshow circles. Anyone who can top entertainment like we are providing for \$5 is probably doing it illegally!

The recent addition of an RCAF Harvard is certainly a welcome addition to the Museum. The aircraft is owned by **John Bootsma** of Paola, Kansas. It is an authentic Harvard used by our Canadian allies during WWII and later. Also, three “atta-boys” to **Lynn Faulkner**, Ervin and Gene Howerter. Lynn for the initial contact and Ervin and Gene for following up and getting the aircraft for the Museum. I think our membership also owes Ervin, Al Wilson, Dave Render, Dean Stranberg and **Everett Worley** a big hand for filling in at the Museum during Charlie Larimer’s hospitalization. Before he was hospitalized, a special thanks to **Charlie Larimer** for all the hours he has devoted to the Museum.

Our newest addition, the T-33 trainer, is a jet familiar to anyone who served in the USAF in the 50s and 60s, as they were used extensively during this period. Ours comes from South Dakota through the Air Force Museum facility at Wright Patterson AFB. Ervin, Dean and Everett brought it home on the Bluebird and Everett’s pickup. It’s in basic sub-assemblies and looks to have very good possibilities as a display aircraft. Ervin wants everyone to check with him prior to working on it so that he can explain exactly how to put it back together.



The T-33 Parts being trucked in  
(G. Howerter photo, enhanced by AI)

## News: October 1981

Superbatics '81 is over – yes, we did make money. No, we didn't net as much as we did last year. Present estimates are a gross of \$70,000 to \$75,000. So, for the fifth year we won't have to pack our tents and head for foreign soil. The loss of the Thunderbirds as the main attraction certainly cost us dearly. A two-day moratorium in some of our advertising was also a contributing factor.

There were several benefits we did derive besides money. We acquired 50 new members – our largest single gain since we began our own organization. Several of the Warbird crews have asked for membership applications. Two of the B-25 crews want to join – and raved on about how great they thought the airshow was and how well they were treated. One of the military crew sent us one of the nicest letters we have ever received, thanking us and hoping they will be asked again. Ninety percent of the Vulcan crew said they would like to come back (one of them was not committing himself).



## News: November 1981

The Shriners have received permission from the MTAA to put on an airshow next May which will compete with and possibly drain our own Superbatics Air Show next September. It is sad that two public service organizations must compete, such as we are preparing to do. Both their cause and our cause are worthy endeavors taken up by people who care and are willing to sacrifice their time and money for ideals. Our contention is that we can't survive without money from the airshow – they can. If in fact we are “plowed under”, the city loses a museum that isn't costing them a dime, 17 aircraft go to the four winds, 4,800 tourists will not be required to come to Topeka and three years of hard work on airshows will go up in smoke.

We must be doing something right as we have brought in six aircraft since May and that doesn't include the Me109 mockup. With three more possibilities waiting in the wings, we have less and less space. **Doc Stafford** and Howerter could end up tearing up their contracts if we overload the display rooms and the hangar. We have enough unfinished projects to last us another three years! One of the aircraft we have sought over the past two years has just met its end. We begged some people up in Iowa for years, which they seemed to have no use for. Ralph Knehans and I wrote and phoned on numerous occasions to get the aircraft for the Museum. They just got tired of the aircraft and cut it up to get it out of the way. Being investigated now – but investigated does not bring back the aircraft!

We still need some help with Kilroy (our Warbird C-47) if we are to go to Hutchinson for the regional skydiving event. **Sky Sports** has given us a lot of good press.

New members have requested a list of Warbirds we now have:

- EC-121
- F-11 Tiger
- L-20 Beaver
- L-2M Harvard
- SNJ
- T-6
- A-26
- B-25J “Fairfax Ghost”
- Me-109 (mock-up)
- C-47
- DC-3
- Zero (T-6)
- BT-13 (static restoration)
- Stearman
- T-6 (flying restoration)
- F-84F
- T-33 (the latter two being static restorations)

## News: December 1981

Special thanks to those folk who helped us on our C-47 Kilroy the last couple of weeks. We were barely ready to go to Hutchinson with Kilroy before deadline. Lloyd Ellison, Al Simmons, Gary Naylor, Dave Render, L.C. Hinthier, Al Wilson, Gene Smith, **Hector Camacho** and **Quincy Seymour** all gave up some time over the holidays and weekends to fill a commitment. **Greg Ambler**, Al Simmons and Hector all commuted from Wichita to help us.

This is the second time we've gone in support of Sky Sports for the skydiving get-togethers. They were good enough to provide all our fuel, oil, a place to sleep and a nice donation.

Suggestion has been made to fly over the KU Lawrence football game with Kilroy, and the Board will consider this. We don't know if Kilroy will be ready for the event.

We must be doing something right. I have been asked to set up two airshow packages for other airshows. Maybe our Museum should set up a corporation to produce airshows, then we could have the same kind of excitement we had this year, only several times a year (for those of you lacking the finer virtues of humor, insanity, masochism, etc., you have just been hit with sarcasm).

My wife said I should make it very clear that she didn't type these mimeographed newsletters. As if anyone has to be told! ♦

## 2026 Calendar of Events

### *Yesterday's Air Force* Continued from page 3

appear for the first time in this area; **Joe Hughes** who will perform his death defying wing walk act in the Super Stearman and the U.S. Marine Corps Harrier will demonstrate its vertical take-off and landing characteristics, which are unrivaled by any other aircraft in the world. On static display will be aircraft from the Air Force, Navy, National Guard and the Army. From "Ba, Ba, Black Sheep", **Col. Gregory "Pappy" Boyington** will be on hand to greet everyone to round out the show. This air show is both for the stimulation of people's interest in World War II aircraft and for funding to support the museum here in Topeka.

The future of Yesterday's Air Force of Kansas, Inc, seems bright. The possibility of additional aircraft being brought in such as a B-29 or B-17, TBM, P-38 and P-51 are very strong. Future restoration projects call for a Spanish built version of the German Me 109 fighter and a BT-13 trainer. The members have also begun to explore other old aircraft throughout out the country in hopes of increasing the museum's inventory.

Yesterday's Air Force of Kansas, Inc. has potential to be one of the largest tourist attractions in the state of Kansas but needs interested citizens and the support of the community to remain a viable organization.

*Editor's note 2026: Unfortunately, none of the above WWII aircraft remain in today's Museum collection, except for the German Bf-109G wood & fiberglass mockup. ♦*

#### July

20-24—Young Aviators Class

#### August

10—Membership Luncheon, brown bag

#### September

12—Girls in Aviation Day

#### October

4—CAM "Car Show on the Tarmac"

12—Membership Luncheon, brown bag

#### November

1—Daylight Savings Time ends

26—Thanksgiving, Museum closed

#### December

14—Membership Luncheon, bring a covered dish

25—Christmas, Museum closed



Mosquito (enhanced by AI)



## In Remembrance

### James “Jim” L Braun

1935 – June 12, 2026

CAM #256

Member since September 1979

Longtime Combat Air Museum member and volunteer Jim Braun passed away on June 12. Jim and his wife Mary ran the gift shop for several years before they moved and got involved with the Old Olathe Naval Air Museum. When that museum closed in 1989, Jim helped to facilitate the transfer of many of the artifacts to the Combat Air Museum. Jim and Mary returned to Topeka and continued to volunteer their time and expertise at CAM. Jim quietly looked after the aircraft, constantly cleaning them, especially before each pancake feed. Jim designed and constructed an innovative lightweight signage frame for the Museum’s aircraft. We will all miss “Gentleman” Jim at CAM!



### Richard William Painter

May 18, 1944 – June 17, 2026

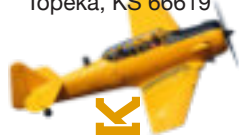
CAM #5278

Member since November 11, 2012

Richard served in the Navy as a fire chief aboard the aircraft carrier USS ORISKANY (CVA-34) during the Vietnam War and was extremely proud of his service. He and fellow crew and CAM member Bill Newman attended many Oriskany reunions over the years, and they were responsible for convincing the Oriskany Association to hold their 2014 convention in Topeka. The convention was held to formally celebrate the dedication and unveiling of CAM’s 9 ft. model exhibit of the epic aircraft carrier. Thereafter Richard would don his original navy dress blue uniform to stand by the model and share his experiences with CAM visitors during fundraisers such as the annual Pancake Feed. We will miss Richard’s cheery personality.



COMBAT AIR MUSEUM  
7016 SE Forbes Avenue  
Topeka, KS 66619



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Permit #181

*Visit the Combat Air Museum for fun, information and an educational experience.*

## Youth in the Skies

*By Herbert Asquith*

COMBAT AIR MUSEUM **16**

These who were children yesterday  
Now move in lovely flight,  
Swift-glancing as the shooting stars  
That cleave the summer night;

A moment flashed, they came and went,  
Horizons rise and fall,  
The speed of valour lifts them up  
And strength obeys their call.

The downs below are breathing peace  
With thyme and butterflies,  
And sheep at pasture in the shade-  
And now from English skies.

These who were children yesterday  
Look down with other eyes:  
Man's desperate folly was not theirs  
But theirs the sacrifice.

Old men may wage a war of words,  
Another race are these,  
Who flash to glory dawn and night  
Above the starry seas.