

# COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

## → → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

Forbes Field Topeka, Kansas

October / November 2006 • Vol. 22, No. 6



*Randy Thies ponders a question from the audience, perhaps about his tattoo.*

### Forensic archeologist tells of his experiences in Iraq investigating mass graves

**Randy Thies** of the **Kansas Museum of History** was our guest speaker for the July Membership Luncheon. His talk, however, was not about his work with the History Museum. It was about a four and one-half month tour in Iraq as a "DOD [Department of Defense] Civilian."

Randy had seen a request on the Internet for archeologists to do work with mass grave sites in Iraq, and he said it took him less than 10 minutes to make the decision to respond to the request. He also said that his wife Karla gave

her "OK." His acceptance for the project took him out of Topeka for some five months, with most of those in Iraq.

Prior to going overseas, Randy and other selected archeologists had to gather at the Parsons Corporation in Pasadena, California. Parsons has been given over two billion dollars in contracts to rebuild Iraq. The contracts include rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure, constructing military facilities, destroying enemy munitions, and repairing oil fields. They were let through the Army Corps of Engineers. Parsons also got the contract to do the mass graves locations around Iraq. The evidence gathered from the graves would be used in the investigations into Saddam Hussein's

**"Archeologist," continued on page 14**

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## Combat Air Museum

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Monday - Saturday

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

Last Admission 3:30 P.M.

Sunday Noon - 4:30 P.M.

Last Admission 3:30 P.M.

**Plane Talk**, the official newsletter of Combat Air Museum of Topeka, Kansas, is published bi-monthly. Your questions and comments are welcomed.

Any information for **Plane Talk** should be submitted to CAM office.

## A Vietnam vet dedicates the new Vietnam Marine exhibit

A dedication of the Vietnam Marine Exhibit was held Monday, August 14 at 11 a.m. Family and friends of **Tad Pritchett** and Museum members gathered at the cargo ramp of the NCH-53A Sea Stallion helicopter for the ceremony. **Gene Howerter** was Master of Ceremonies and Tad was the keynote speaker. WIBW-TV Channel 13 covered the dedication.

Gene welcomed the guests and told them that this was a unique exhibit in that the Sea Stallion served as the exhibit "case." He told the audience he would leave it to Tad to explain that significance and then told them a little about the NCH-53A in our collection. Gene related that the NCH-53A was on loan to CAM from the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, Florida and that we acquired the helo from Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst, New Jersey in July 1999. The helo was partially dismantled and trucked to Topeka by Worldwide Aircraft Recovery of Bellvue, Nebraska, and volunteers spent the rest of the summer putting it back together.

Gene then gave some dimensions of the Sea Stallion as it is exhibited, and told the audience the helo had served with the Navy, Marine Corps, NASA, FAA, and back to the Navy during its 20 years of service. He

thanked Tad for choosing CAM as a place to exhibit the Vietnam Marine and for being a member of the Museum. Gene then turned the podium over to Tad.

Before Tad began his comments, a curtain hanging over the cargo ramp to the Sea Stallion was removed, allowing the audience to look into the helicopter's cargo bay and see the exhibit.

The following are Tad's comments about the exhibit, Vietnam, and Vietnam veterans.

"Thank you friends and family for attending the opening



of our Vietnam Marine Exhibit. Through it, I hope to convey to you what it was like to ride a Sea Stallion into combat. First, I want to thank **Danny [San Romani, CAM Curator]** for his help in getting Gomer set up and my friend **Dee Hulsing** for lending her time and perspective in designing and building the exhibit.

“Vietnam was an individual experience. There are 3.5 million Vietnam Veterans and each of us has our own story and perspective. Except for the initial deployment, Americans went to Vietnam by themselves, joined units that had not trained together and then returned home alone on “Freedom Birds.” During their tour, they faced an ever-present, competent enemy equipped by China and Russia. Additionally, they experienced the same social issues that you dealt with here such as drugs, racial tensions and war protests.

“By the end of 1968, leadership in Vietnam was largely junior officers who, only months before, might have been college students. In spite of this, they never lost a large battle and maintained morale and discipline in the face of shrinking Stateside support. At the end of their tour, they returned to a country that held them accountable for a mismanaged strategy. In the movie and literary world they are seldom portrayed as competent.

“This is why I chose a Second Lieutenant for this exhibit.

“Imagine for a moment that you have been sitting for hours on a dusty runway waiting for this helicopter. The temperature is 105 degrees; humidity is 85%. You have sent the platoon guide for ammunition and C-Ration. Before the C-Rat cases hit the deck, they are stripped and the trading begins. ‘Who wants beans and franks for spaghetti and meat balls? Throw those away, they’re bad luck.’ Ham and limas and ham and eggs lay unclaimed in the C-ration boxes.

“The armorer has checked all the weapons. The squads collect their machine gun ammunition, hand grenades and Claymores. C-4 plastic explosives, mortar rounds, and spare radio batteries are placed into their packs. Everyone shares the load. Soon it is all packed and before you board you will have gained more than 75 lbs. in equipment.

“Some Marines are playing music, reading, talking, playing Back Alley Bridge or writing letters home. Some are napping and others are snacking but nobody is happy. Idle time for 18 and 19 year olds is not a good thing. They fill it one way or another, usually in innovative ways that lead to trouble. You review your map, your coordinates, code names, call signs, radio frequencies, orders, rosters, prearranged artillery coordinates and equipment. You hope and pray you don’t do anything stupid.

**Vietnam Marine exhibit, con't. on page 17**



*Far Left: Gene Howerter as Master of Ceremonies.*

*Left: Tad Pritchett was the exhibit builder and keynote speaker*

## Film crew for the History Channel visits Combat Air Museum

On August 8 a film crew from **Actuality Productions** visited CAM. They were under contract with the **History Channel** to produce a new series called "The States," that will cover each of the fifty states. The intent of the series is to be a history lesson highlighting the origins, history and places to visit in each state.

**Mr. Robert Rosales** of Actuality Productions called and spoke with curator **Danny San Romani** on July 31 about the production and wanted to set a date and time to visit the Museum while the film crew was in Topeka August 7 and 8. When San Romani learned the date of the visit, he told Mr. Rosales that the Museum would be holding its August Aviation Education Class for young people that week, and perhaps the film crew would want to film part of that. San Romani had a schedule of events for the day of the visit and told Mr. Rosales what was on the day's agenda. It happened to include a segment on weather, to be presented by a meteorologist from KSNT Channel 27 TV. Mr. Rosales was very interested in that as it would give the team a chance to interview someone about Kansas weather. San Romani also recommended that the crew interview **Dick Trupp**, the instructor for the class.

In a follow up e-mail, Mr. Rosales explained more about the new series. He wrote that part of the show would feature informal interviews with local residents from each state. Other parts will include interviews with historians. The crew called the interviews with the local residents their "spirit stories," and they hope to find people who love their state and have a passion for what they do.

Mr. Rosales wrote that they wanted to get a mix of people from all walks of life to represent Kansas, including aviation fans, farmers, tornado "twisters," local personalities and such. They wanted to talk with someone from the Museum because Kansas (actually Wichita) is known as the Aviation Capital of America (the World). They were not looking for an in depth study on aviation,

just some comments from people who had an appreciation for aviation and aviation history. An interview would last about 15-20 minutes.

A three-person film crew arrived about 11 a.m. on August 8 and began filming part of the weather presentation that **Tom Hagen** of Channel 27 was giving to the Aviation Education Class. After the segment was over and class dismissed for the day, the team interviewed Tom. They then did an informal walk around the Museum with Dick, and **Margaret Haddad**, producer, interviewed him. The interview was not just on Combat Air Museum. She asked Dick about aviation in Kansas generally and historically. She asked him about the impact of military bases in the state, and Dick told her about all the airbases and fields in Kansas during World War II, and how today we have one major Air Force Base and two major Army Forts.

The interview was not focused on just one area or topic. Dick said Margaret asked him if Dodge City was still part of the old west (her business card listed a Woodland Hills, California address). Somewhat amused by the question, he replied that the city does present its old west heritage through the Boot Hill Museum and Front Street, but that Dodge City is a 21<sup>st</sup> century city. She also asked Dick his view about the Kansas Flint Hills and their ecology. It so happened that the next scheduled site for the film crew was Ravenwood Lodge and Hunting Preserve, located southwest and just outside the Topeka metropolitan area. The visit to Ravenwood was to include a trip into the Flint Hills.

Dick arranged a visit to the Forbes control tower, which the crew readily accepted, and left with him to visit that site and speak with the tower manager, **Jim Menge**. Then, it was back to the Museum for more filming and talking with Dick.

The crew finished up and departed CAM about 2:30 p.m. and asked Dick to join them for lunch. When they finished, the crew gave their thanks and good-byes

**History Channel's new series,  
"The States,"  
is scheduled to begin  
airing in June 2007.**

## Speakers announced for October and December Membership Luncheons

Our speaker for the October Membership Luncheon is **Robert McKitterick**, Lieutenant Colonel, US Air Force (Retired). He is a close friend of CAM member **Don Mathers**, and they served together in SAC Headquarters during their respective Air Force careers. Colonel McKitterick served 28 years and was a Navigator/Bombardier in some of SAC's best bombers. He flew in the B-47 Stratojet, B-58 Hustler, B-52 Stratofortress, and FB-111 Aardvark. In addition to SAC Headquarters, his duty stations included Operation Linebacker over Vietnam and tours at Schilling, Forbes, Carswell, Little Rock, Beale and Ellsworth Air Force Bases. Colonel McKitterick will share his SAC experiences with us. The October luncheon is Monday, October 9 at 11:30 a.m.

For our December Membership Luncheon, to be held Monday, December 11, members of the **Dawn Patrol** will be our guest speakers. This will include **Mr. Dick Starks** who donated the Taube replica to CAM in May. The Dawn Patrol flies a variety of homebuilt replica aircraft mostly out of the Gardner, Kansas airport. →

### October/November Calendar of Events

#### October

**Monday, October 9**  
**Membership Luncheon**  
**Jean Wanner Education**  
**Conference Center**  
**11:30 a.m.**

Our guest speaker will be LTCOL Robert McKitterick, USAF (Ret), talking about his service in SAC bombers.

**November**  
**Closed Thanksgiving Day**  
**November 23rd**

There is no Membership Luncheon in November.

The next Membership Luncheon is Monday, December 11.

→ → →

## Join the Combat Air Museum!

and about 3:25 p.m. headed for Ravenwood Lodge. Not bad for a 15-20 minute interview.

Margaret Haddad told Dick the series would begin airing in June 2007. She said that once production was finished and the episodes scheduled, someone would contact the Museum to let us know when the Kansas episode would be aired. It will be interesting to see how much of the visit to CAM makes the final cut. →



## Two new exhibits open on early attempts of powered, manned flight and WAVES

During July **Tom Witty** finished a rebuild of the Early Aviation exhibit. His finished product, with the exception of the title, is for all intent and purposes, a new exhibit.

The left panel of the case deals with early attempts of powered, manned flight in the United States including the successful efforts of the Wright brothers and their Wright Flyer at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. It includes information about Octave Chanute, a supporter of the brothers, and Samuel Pierpont Langley, a competitor for the first manned, controlled flight.

The center section is a hand-me-down panel from the Kansas History Museum dealing with early Kansas aviation. The panel includes the work of A.K. Longren and his airplane factories in Topeka from circa 1911 to 1926. Other Kansans of aviation fame are presented, including those whose companies would eventually make Wichita, Kansas the "Air Capital of the World." A few modifications were made to this panel so it would fit into the case, and it looks like it belonged there all along.

The bottom panel of the case includes a diorama Tom built showing the first manned, powered, controlled flight by the Wright brothers on December 17, 1903. Tom built the diorama to comply with his research on that

flight. It shows the Wright Flyer just at the point of lift-off from the launch rail. The bottom panel also includes information on Glenn Curtiss, another well known early aviator; Brazilian-born Alberto Santos-Dumont who made the first powered flight in Europe in 1906; and French pilot Louis Bleriot, who in 1907 became the first to fly across the English Channel. Completing the bottom panel is a period leather flying helmet and flying goggles provided by **Ray Miller**.

The right panel includes several colorful copies of air race and air exposition posters from 1909-1912 and photos of other early aircraft. The bottom of this panel touches on the military use of the new flying machines and how their use would soon change the face of warfare. This provides a good lead in to the next case in line, which is World War I.

During the week of August 7, Tom completed an exhibit on WAVES where he assisted **Marlene Urban** and **Jane Weinmann**. Artifacts in the exhibit include three WAVES uniforms we acquired from Old Olathe Naval Air Museum in February 2004 after OONAM closed. The uniforms include a winter blues of a Petty Officer Third Class Specialist Transport Airman, a Service Dress Blue uniform of a Lieutenant Commander,

## CAM participates in the 190th ARW's Friends and Family Day

Several volunteers and three vehicles from our collection traveled to the north end of Forbes Field August 5 to take part in the 190<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing (ARW) Kansas Air National Guard **Friends and Family Day**.

**Martin Moyer, Don Dawson, Gene Howerter, and Zak Amos** took the 1941 Dodge Ambulance, 1952 Willys jeep, and 1965 Pacer 1002 three-wheel scooter to the 190<sup>th</sup> for exhibit. **Stu Entz** met the group there with one of his jeeps, and **Bob Crapser**, retired 190<sup>th</sup> member, also joined the group at the event.

As the names implies, the Friends and Family Day is an open house for friends and family of the men and women of the 190<sup>th</sup> ARW. This annual event is popular with friends, family, and members alike, and it has become more important with the increased operational tempo and overseas deployments of detachments and elements of the 190<sup>th</sup>. Friends and family can see what members of the 190<sup>th</sup> go through to prepare for and return from a deployment and see what their everyday work entails.

CAM has a long and excellent relationship with the 190<sup>th</sup>, and we have benefited from their support many times over the years. We enjoy the opportunities to support their events and functions and also showcase a little of your Museum.



*Upper Left: The Early Aviation exhibit completed by Tom Witty.*

*Right: The new WAVES exhibit at the rear of the Gift Shop.*

and a gray striped summer uniform of a Petty Officer Third Class Specialist Teacher. Included in the exhibit are period photographs and other artifacts of the WAVES who wore the uniforms. →



## Hangar 604 drains get more attention

Work continued on the door rail drains in Hangar 604 during July and August. **Martin Moyer, Amos Page, and Zak Amos** finished cleaning out the 18 individual drains. Initially they used a garden hose, shop vacuum, and power washer, and combinations thereof, but some of the sediment and other debris in the drains

proved too solid for those devices. The crew experimented with a couple of homemade power wash nozzles but met with limited success. Martin figured they needed a made-to-order auger to penetrate and break up these sediments and set out to find one. A couple of days later he brought in just what he needed, once it was modified to suit our purposes.

Martin found a heavy duty, steel tie down stake that anchors into the ground with an auger tip. It was about three feet long. The drains the crew had been cleaning were about 31 inches deep, and the crew preferred to not work on their knees, so they cut the stake in half. They took a used section of electrical conduit with just the right inside diameter for the stake halves to slip into, drilled through these, and then bolted the pieces together. Their homemade auger was now about five feet long.

The “special” tool worked quite well, and soon the crew had all 18 drains clear of sediment and debris. Amos found chunks of asphalt and old rags in some of the drains, and at least several had multi-strands of safety wire in them.

Earlier, Zak and **Danny San Romani** located and uncovered the clean out plug outside the north end of Hangar 604. Getting the plug to unscrew from its standpipe was another matter. Over a period of a week or so, Danny, Zak, Martin, Amos and **Don Dawson** tried various wrenches and sockets and penetrant to loosen the plug while trying not to damage it. We did not want to apply heat to the plug, as we did not know what kind



*Martin Moyer on the handheld air chipper.*

## as repairs continue



*Top: Martin, again,  
on the 90 pound  
jack hammer.*

of gases might have accumulated in the standpipe over the years. Finally, Don took a chisel to the plug while someone else pulled on a breaker bar and socket, and this combination broke the plug free. Danny and Zak cleaned it and the threads in the standpipe and coated these with an anti-seize compound.

The next step was to flush the manifold pipe the other 18 drains go into. This pipe is eight inches in diameter. It is some 332 feet long from the north side of Hangar 604 to the south side where it emptied into a former drainage ditch. Filling the manifold drain would

take some 867 gallons of water. While we did not necessarily want to do that, it was evident our little  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch garden hose was not going to flush much sediment and debris from the pipe, either. Earlier, Martin and Amos installed new flexible and rigid pipe to the newly installed clean out tee on the south end of the manifold. The new piping would direct the flow of drain water into an existing culvert system. All we needed was something with some respectable pressure and volume to flush out the line.

**Drains, con't. on page 10**

## Drains, con't. from page 9

San Romani wrote a letter to Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority asking for their assistance after speaking with maintenance and fire department personnel. We got permission to have one of MTAA's fire trucks flush the manifold pipe. On the morning of August 4<sup>th</sup>, a fire truck with two MTAA firemen arrived outside Hangar 604, ran a 1-1/2 inch fire hose into the clean out plug opening, and opened the valve. At first nothing seemed to be happening, but the water was going somewhere. The doors drains were not backing up, but we were not getting any flow at the opposite end of the pipe, either. Eventually, water backed up and out of the clean out plug opening about the same time Martin started to see it come out of the south end. We had flow, but something in the pipe seemed to be blocking it. We looked to see if solid matter was flushing through the line, but did not see anything. The hose was put back into the opening and this time about 100 pounds per square inch pressure was put on the hose.

We got good flow on the other end this time.

The waterway at the end of the new pipe needed to be dug a little deeper for proper runoff, and an MTAA employee ran a backhoe to do this. He then back filled the trench holding the new piping. The operation was a success, and we figured that was the first flushing of the manifold pipe since Forbes Air Force Base closed in 1973.

Martin and the crew still have minor maintenance and improvements to make around the door drains. They are cutting wire mesh screens to go over these openings to help keep debris and matter out of the individual drainpipes. They will add some additional piping on the south end, and shape up the new waterway. The new clean out plug on the south end of the manifold also needs to be finished, and that should complete the drain part of this project.



*One stretch of removed concrete.*

The team, altered somewhat in its makeup, is now into some major concrete work just outside the doors to the hangar. There is a strip of concrete about 17 inches wide running the length of the hangar, starting at the outermost door rail. This concrete is just rotten and has been crumbling and breaking out over the past few years. In the worst areas, this makes it difficult to move aircraft out and back into the hangar, especially back in. The tires have to roll over the door rails, and we have specially built rail ramps to take care of this. But where the concrete has broken out makes the outermost door rail an even higher obstacle to roll over. Going out is not so bad, but coming back in is where a tail wheel or nose gear really takes the stress. A lot of pressure is put against a tail wheel to get it out of the hole and over the outermost rail as a tail dragger is backed into the hangar. For tricycle gear, the nose wheel takes the stress as that is where the tow bar is attached, and we are trying to get the main wheels up and over the door rail. In the worst areas, we have used boards to fill in the voids where the concrete was gone to help alleviate the problems with moving aircraft.

Martin, Amos and Zak started on the south end of the hangar, breaking out the rotten concrete. They used the water blaster and a small air chipper. The latter tool required a lot of time on one's knees, and even with a foam rubber pad, their kneecaps were complaining. Martin soon began looking for a larger air hammer.

Zak had to drop out of the work saying something about starting his freshman year in High School, but **Jack Vaughn** was recruited into the team and went right to work breaking out the old concrete. Initially, the areas broken out were filled with new concrete as they went along, but a concentrated use of the water blaster one morning cleared out a few long stretches of rotten concrete.

Martin brought in a larger air hammer, but its chisel and keeper spring were missing, and attempts to adapt another chisel to the hammer did not work. Jack, however, got a three-day donation of a 90 pound electric-powered jack hammer from **White Star Machinery and Supply Company of Topeka**, and the team soon had the targeted areas clear of the rotten concrete. We broke out about 190 feet, averaging about 3 inches deep, and in a few places over four inches deep. More needs to be done, but we have hit the worst areas, and this will probably be enough work to finish up the warm season. Martin bought a 19 pound air hammer to dress up the broken-out areas in preparation for new concrete. **Dale Allen** returned, and he, Martin, Amos and Jack completed pouring the new concrete. Eighty-eight bags of mix were used. →



*A new pour of concrete.*

## Fixing up a movie mock-up creates a complex plot

In our last issue we wrote about putting the wings back on the Bf-109G movie mockup and that some of the seams Dave Houser had repaired were opening up again. We also wrote that while this was a set back, we hoped it was a minor one. This proved to be a bit of an understatement.

The short story is, the mockup was trying to fold up on itself. The wings, their box frame, and the landing gear were trying to break away from the fuselage. The long story is as follows.

Picture, if you will, a box-shaped skeletal framework made out of angle iron. The box frame is about 31 inches long X 45-1/4 inches wide X 8 inches tall. The wings are bolted to the 31-inch long sides of the box. The landing gear struts are bolted to the forward corners of the framework. Pairs of vertical angle iron supports are bolted to the front and rear of the box to support a horizontal piece of pipe. Sections of angle iron run along the topsides of the framework. These sections have several short lengths of vertical angle iron bolted to them. For whatever reason, the mockup was built with three of these vertical lengths on the left side of the box frame and four on the right side. Two holes are drilled through each of the vertical lengths of angle iron near their tops. These are the attachment points for the fuselage.

Inside the cockpit, on each side of the fuselage, are eight vertical ribs. The ribs are made of 3/4-inch plywood, about 23 inches long and 2 to 2-1/4 inches wide. They are covered with fiberglass. Seven of the ribs match up with the vertical lengths of angle iron described above, three on the left and four on the right. Two holes are drilled through the bottom four inches of each of these seven ribs and their fiberglass covering. The fuselage is bolted to the vertical angle iron lengths on the top of the box frame through these holes, and by this means, the fuselage is bolted to the wings and landing gear assembly. A total of 14 bolts hold the fuselage and wing assemblies together.

Our "minor" set back became a major problem one afternoon when Dave started to do some repair work on the opened seams. He removed a fiberglass panel about 67 inches long X 37 inches high from the right nose of the mockup. As soon as he got it free of the fuselage, a lot of stress relief took place in different areas. Dave said the crack sounded like a rifle shot. Where we had cracked

seams before, we now had large gaps. Looking inside the cockpit area showed us how bad things were.

A horizontal piece of pipe was mentioned earlier. It is bolted in place eight inches above the top of the box frame. The pipe is 127 inches long and runs from inside the cockpit to about 14 inches outside the nose of the mockup. The propeller spinner and propeller mount to the section outside the nose. The pipe is 3-1/2 inches diameter with a wall thickness of 3/16-inch. It is heavy.

There was a floor section in the cockpit. It was a piece of 1/2-inch thick plywood sheet 27 inches long X 36-1/2 inches wide. A length of 2-inch X 2-inch lumber supported the front edge of this floor section. In its normal position, the pipe should clear the top of this flooring by at least 3-1/2 inches. What we found was the end of the pipe was pressing into the top of the flooring with enough pressure to bow the plywood and break the supporting 2 X 2 lumber in half. At that point, the only thing keeping the nose and wings attached to the rest of the fuselage was that piece of plywood sheet.

We were lucky, very lucky. I am not sure Dave, standing on a set of metal steps with a 67 inches X 37 inches piece of fiberglass in his hands, would have gotten clear of the nose and wings if they had broken away. If that plywood section had not been in the cockpit, nothing would have stopped the pipe, box frame, wings, and nose section from breaking off. The rear of the pipe would have continued down until it hit the floor and the nose would have been high in the air.

We had a real bummer on our hands, and it was not immediately apparent why this happened. Once we got past the discouragement of what was cracked, broken, and twisted, we began looking for the cause of the failure. **Martin Moyer and Danny San Romani** found the failure points in the bottom ends of the plywood ribs inside the cockpit. They appeared to have dry rot. The bolts running through the bottom of the ribs and their fiberglass covering had broken out through the bottoms of the ribs and torn through the fiberglass. The rear ribs failed first. Of the seven attachment ribs, the right front was the only one that did not show some type of damage. We picked dry rotted wood out from the other ribs with our fingers.

**Martin and Don Dawson** slid a set of metal steps

under the rear edge of the box frame to temporarily support the mockup's frame, fuselage and wings, and we began discussing a fix. We came up with one, and it seems to be working.

First, Don jacked up the box frame. He placed jacks on the bottom, trailing edge of the frame and jacked the assembly back to its as-built position. The change in the fuselage was immediately apparent, and gaps all around the fuselage closed up. Don then blocked and supported the box frame in place so he could begin repairs.

Dan installed reinforcement bars on each side of the seven attachment ribs inside the cockpit. We had a supply of aluminum bar stock, 1/2-inch thick by 1-1/2 inches wide. Don cut lengths of this stock and custom fitted them to the individual ribs. He installed solid blocks of wood where the plywood broke out of the bottom of the ribs. Each plywood rib is now sandwiched between two aluminum bars. Three additional holes have been drilled along the length of the plywood ribs and the aluminum bars. Where the seven attachment ribs originally had two bolts each to support the box frame, wings, and landing gear, that load is now distributed with five bolts per reinforced rib.

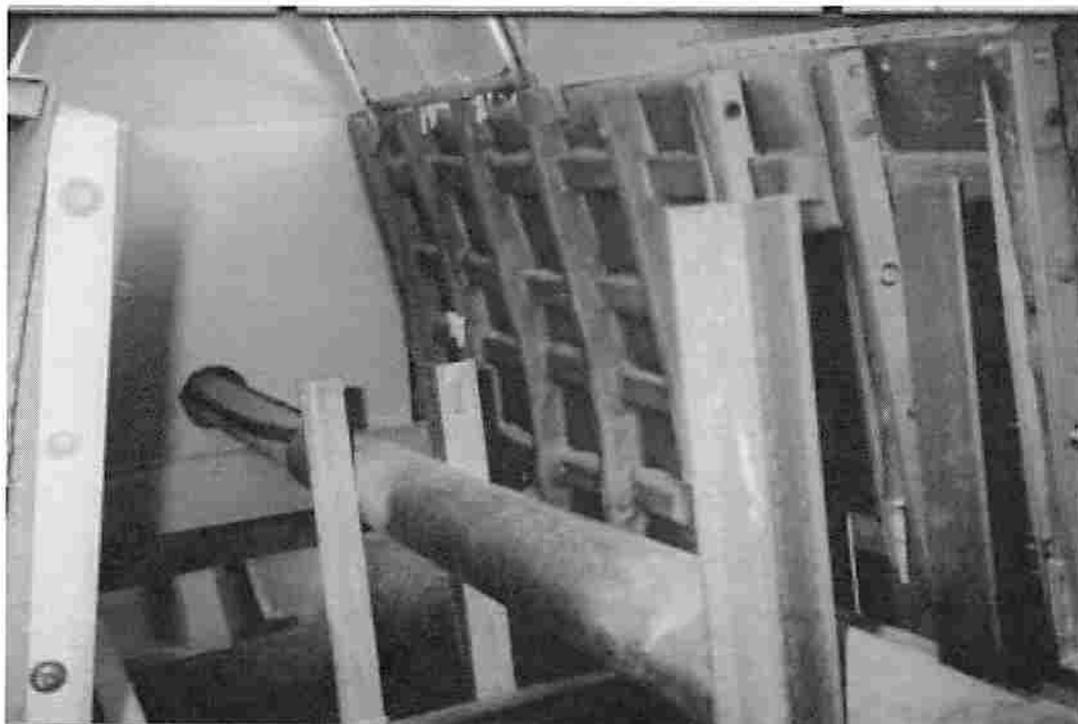
Once Don finished the rib reinforcement, he inserted a section of pipe in the rear end of the existing 3-1/2 inch diameter pipe. The pipe insert extends rearward

through an existing plywood bulkhead in the back of the cockpit. Don installed a wooden saddle under the insert for additional support.

During the repairs, Danny looked through photo albums and loose photographs of the Bf-109 mockup and made an interesting find. There is one photo of the fuselage without wings taken in September 2003. Knowing what we now know about how the box frame attaches to the fuselage, and by looking at paint lines in this photo, we could see that the two rear angle iron supports on the right side of the fuselage were already breaking through the plywood ribs in 2003. The indicators were there; we just did not recognize them for what they were telling us.

In the "Things could have been worse" view, Martin made this observation. We could have had the mockup all back together, then the first time we rolled it out of the hangar and across the door rails everything would have broken loose. Don also commented that whoever built the mockup probably would not expect to still see it around some 37 years later.

Although we feel these repairs are sound, the Board of Directors voted to not pursue suspending the Bf-109 in Hangar 602. It will remain earthbound. However, the Taube replica looks like a great candidate to take the 109's place. →



*The reinforcement work done to the interior of the Bf-109.*

Archeologist, con't . from page 1

and the then ruling Baath Party's roles in a genocide-type approach to eliminating opposition parties and peoples.

While in Pasadena, Randy learned that he would not be an archeologist in Iraq but would work in a lab. While archeology is Randy's forte, working in the lab was fine with him. He also learned that he would be using a tool for which he has little fondness – computers. But that was not going to prevent him from joining the team and on he went.

After the group's organization and training at Pasadena, they traveled to Europe en route to Kuwait City, Kuwait. Randy said they stayed at a top-of-the-line hotel while in Kuwait City, a far cry from their quarters once they reached Iraq. The flight from Kuwait City to Baghdad, Iraq was in a British Lockheed C-130J Hercules transport. Everyone in the group had to wear a flak jacket and helmet on the flight. Throughout his presentation Randy used a powerpoint projector to illustrate his comments, and he showed us a photo of himself dressed in the flak vest and helmet. They were undoubtedly of a different style and color, but not something Randy, a Vietnam veteran 1965-1967, had never worn before. The team landed at Baghdad International Airport on February 24, 2005.

After arriving at the airport, the team waited six hours for transportation to their job site/quarters at a place called Camp Slater, named after a US Soldier killed early in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The airport was near the southwest edge of the Baghdad Sector. Camp Slater was located southeast of the airport, on the southern edge of the Sector.

Upon arrival at Camp Slater, the team was taken to their new homes for the next four and one half months, what Randy called, "big tin sheds." They were trailer-type units. Each unit had four doors and adjoining rooms had two people per room with a bunk bed setup. Later, as more of these units became available, at least some members of the teams were able to get their own rooms. The team of archeologists worked as part of the RCLO (Regime Crimes Liaison Office).

Camp Slater and its environs may have been a culture shock to many folks on the team. It was a controlled setting and required IDs and passes in order to use many of its facilities. Randy said personnel had to have a card authorizing their use of the DFAC, or Dining Facility. The Recreation [Rec] Hall was named the

Lion's Den. The two main events in the Rec Hall were on Tuesday and Friday nights. Tuesday nights were Karaoke Night and Friday nights were dance nights. Randy said that a Puerto Rican unit ran the Slater compound, and there was a lot of Spanish dancing in the Lion's Den. Usually, lessons were given before the dancing started, and then those who really knew how got onto the floor. Randy said he and Karla have done ballroom dancing, and he really enjoyed the opportunity to learn something of Latin dancing.

A gymnasium was set up in one of Hussein's old palaces – there were four or five inside Camp Slater. Randy made use of the facilities and began workouts on

**Randy said they felt almost all of the 322 remains they processed were Kurdish. All the documents they found were. The victims were killed around 1988-1989.**

a machine called the ellipse. This soon became a part of his evening routine.

There was an Internet Café where people could use the Internet for one-half hour periods. As much as he did not care for computers, Randy made almost daily use of the Internet Café. He had set up a blog (information site) on the Internet, and kept a diary of his work posted for Internet readers to see. Randy said that the lady who ran the Café was from Hays, Kansas so they had something in common to talk about. He also said she ran the Café firmly, but fairly, and did not hesitate to tell folks when their thirty minutes were up.

Camp Slater's MWR {Morale, Recreation, and Welfare} operated a movie theater and library, but Randy said few people went to the theater. Most had personal lap top computers and watched DVD movies on these in their quarters rather than go to the theater. The library became Randy's favorite place, and he read a number of selections during his time in Camp Slater.

Randy showed photos of the various palaces inside Camp Slater. One was called the Perfume Palace. Another, used as a Baath party headquarters building,

had been shot up and bombed out. Randy did have a couple of images looking into the ruins, and told us this building was known for having one of the longest chandeliers in the world, now destroyed.

Perhaps the most odd looking palace was one known as the Flintstones Palace, after the long running, popular children's TV cartoon show. Hussein's two sons loved the Flintstones as children, so the palace was built on that theme, including its exterior. Randy showed a couple of photos of the palace, and it looked like something right out of the Flintstones.

Hussein called the complex of palaces that contained Camp Slater "Victory Over America." Randy said that while the palaces showed a lot of opulence, closer examination revealed that much of the furnishings were not actually that great. While they were certainly richer than the furnishings found in most Iraqis' homes, they were not top of the line craftsmanship.

One area that Randy and other archeologists visited was a materials dumpsite. The site included materials and debris taken from bombed out areas and buildings in the complex. Randy and others looked through the rubble and could see what types of materials once decorated the palace interiors and other compound buildings.

The next series of photos showed us the work facility for the RCLO team. These were tented Quonset huts. They were insulated and air conditioned, but Randy pointed out that one person who worked in the lab tent with him seemed to think air conditioning was a luxury they did not need. Before he left Iraq, Randy said daytime temperatures regularly reached 122°. Even though the heat was dry, it was hot. The photos showed the tents were olive drab, and although they were insulated, that color did little to reflect the sunlight. He had a couple of photos of his workstation inside the tent and pointed out that he placed himself near the air conditioner.

The tents did not have toilet facilities. For that, there were four port-a-potties lined up a little ways outside the tent. There was nothing special about them. They looked like the same portable outdoor privies seen at places all over the US. Randy said that it was not too long before one of the port-a-potties was designated "Ladies Only" in four different languages. He could remember English, Arabic, and Filipino (Tagalog) as three of the four languages. The Tagalog was used because a large contingent of folks from the Philippines was contracted

to maintain the buildings and grounds of the area, adding to the international flair of Camp Slater.

Randy worked in the Cultural Objects tent and lab. The archeologists found the human remains at the dig sites. From the sites it appeared that bulldozers were used to dig trenches. People were then lined up along the trenches and shot.

Individual remains were placed in a body bag and transported to Camp Slater. They were initially taken to what was called the Intake Tent. There the bones were separated from clothing and everything else. The bones then went to the Osteology Tent. Everything else went to Randy's tent.

Randy's team was the second wave of archeologists to work with the mass graves. A person named Diane was with the first wave, and she developed the initial reports for documenting the recovered cultural objects. She overlapped with Randy for a period of time and was the person who seemed to not like air conditioning. Although Randy said she gave the appearance of running the cultural objects lab and documentation, the real boss was a Jim Barnes of the Army Corps of Engineers.

Randy also worked in the Holding Tent. Here, chain of custody was especially important for the handling of boxes of documented bones and cultural objects. Randy said the remains of 322 men, women, and children were processed through the Holding Tent. The chain of custody was so important because these were the items to be used as evidence in future trial proceedings.

Only a handful of documents were found during the sorting of remains from cultural objects. Randy said all the documents were found on women's remains. He said that working in the lab and handling the cultural objects was not bad. It was about what he expected. He said it was not always pleasant because of the odors and the fact that sometimes the clothing was stiff from the bodily fluids of the deceased. But he felt the work was very important and never regretted taking the assignment. Randy departed Iraq on June 20, 2005.

During a question and answer period, Randy said they felt almost all of the 322 remains they processed were Kurdish. All the documents they found were. The victims were killed around 1988-1989.

In response to a question about the likelihood people would be prosecuted over the mass killings,

**"Archeologist," continued on page 16**

Archeologist, con't . from page 15

Randy felt that there was an excellent chance that they would. While the focus has been on Hussein's trial, the evidence gathered by RCLO will also be used against other members of the Baath Party and/or military leaders. Randy said that crimes committed by the former regime were well documented, by the former regime itself. Apparently, those who carried out the executions received "points and kudos" for doing so, and they made sure their numbers were properly recorded.

**Randy said that crimes committed by the former regime were well documented, by the former regime itself. Apparently, those who carried out the executions received "points and kudos" for doing so, and they made sure their numbers were properly recorded.**

Randy said he had to get three or four shots before going overseas.

In response to a question about seeing Iraqis, Randy answered that to the best of his knowledge he never saw Iraqis in Camp Slater, primarily because of security concerns both militarily and because of the work being done with the mass graves. He said there were Arabs in the camp, but not Iraqis. He also said there were troops all over. Randy commented that they had a good attitude, and he remarked on the number of uniformed women at the Camp. He also felt they had much better uniforms than what he remembered from Vietnam. He said most of the US military he saw were Army and Air Force.

One other thing Randy showed us was something he got after returning to the US. It was a tattoo on the bottom of his forearm. It is in Arabic, and Randy said it reads "I survived Iraq", to which someone in the audience asked, "Are you sure that's what it really says?"

We thank Randy very much for sharing his journey and time in Iraq with us. This was a real behind the scene look at what years of rule by Saddam Hussein and his regime have done to many of Iraq's people. For those of you who might want to gain some more information about the mass graves, the January 2006 issue of National Geographic has "Genocide Unearthed" as its second article. →

**Visitors**

During **July**  
the Museum had  
**1,276** visitors  
from **40** states  
and  
Canada  
Germany  
Great Britain  
Mexico  
New Zealand  
South Africa  
Sweden

During **August**  
we had  
**1,062** visitors  
from **37** states  
and  
Canada  
China  
Columbia  
Czech Republic  
France  
Germany  
Great Britain  
Japan  
New Zealand  
Sweden  
Taiwan  
Thailand

→ → →

### **Vietnam Marine exhibit, con't. from page 3**

“As other helicopters lift off and land, you are blasted with the heat of their engines, the smell of burning fuel and sand blown by their rotors. Any letters or loose paperback books are indiscriminately blown up and away as Marines and supplies are carried to the mountainous jungles.

“The helicopters deliver food, water, ammunition, letters, packages from home, and more Marines. They carry out letters to home, wounded Marines and Marines going home. They provide fire support and observation in ways that are your only lifeline to the world. When the birds fly you have supplies. When the weather is bad, as it is during the Monsoons, you make food stretch and drink rainwater collected in ponchos or drawn from rivers.

“Helicopters changed the face of war for the infantryman. In Vietnam, they flew 500,000 Medevac missions. These missions dropped the percent of those killed by wounds from 4.5% in WWII to 2.6% in Vietnam. The extra mobility made it possible to operate with one third the number of troops by taking the troops to the enemy. As a result, the average infantryman spent 240 days in combat compared to 40 days in the South Pacific in WWII.

“Behind you is a 175 mm artillery piece pounding your landing zone and clearing off the dense jungle foliage. It sounds like it is pointed at your head as the concussion makes you pucker. You imagine the huge rounds tearing up the jungle mountain top and anticipate the snarl of trees and dirt that you will soon be dumped into. You hope that it also clears out any sign of life.

“Finally, you receive the word to saddle up and move to the staging area to board. You struggle into your flack jacket and strap on your cartridge belt complete with first aid pouch, compass, two canteens, and K-bar knife. You throw your pack over your flight jacket and shrug it into a comfort zone on your back. You pick up your Claymores, LAAW rocket launcher, gas mask, ammo bandoliers, and helmet, rifle and mortar rounds.

“The men curl in an arc in squads and head for the dropped ramp door trying to avoid the dust, sand and exhaust. Equipment clatters together as they shuffle along. They continually run into each other as each man steps onto the ramp and the weight of the equipment resists slowing down. As you step on board your knees signal their impending demise and you head for a jump

seat, the last man on. Your radioman is the next to last on. You buckle your seatbelt and slouch down hoping to make a smaller target.

“Goggle eyed crewmen direct traffic as though we are cars in a traffic jam and we obediently sit where assigned. There is a desperate feeling of resignation and helplessness as you sink into the jump seat and the craft ascends. The windows are a panorama and you are entranced with the ferocious beauty of the landscape, the brightness of the sun and your own mortality.

“As you approach the landing zone, you imagine all of the things that might go wrong and you plan for the worst. You worry about your location, deployment after landing and your kids. When the ramp goes down you are entering the unknown. You gulp down your fear and jump across the ramp, radio handset in hand, hoping that this chopper is actually on the ground and the pilot can read a map. It would not be the first time that the ramp opened before the helicopter landed, or you were dropped in the wrong place.

“I hope this conveys the spirit of what it was like to be a young Marine Officer in Vietnam leading a helicopter assault in 1968. We have assembled it with infinitely detailed accuracy. Most of the display contains articles that I personally wore, used or recovered during my year in Vietnam. Thank you again for attending and I hope you enjoy the exhibit.”

Tad then asked if the members of the audience had any questions, and he got about a baker's dozen. At the end of the questions and answers, he invited the audience to go inside the Sea Stallion to view the exhibit. While they did that, Channel 13's representative interviewed Tad. A segment on the dedication ran on the 6 p.m. news and a little longer segment and part of Tad's interview ran on the 10 p.m. news. →

**Join the  
Combat Air Museum!**



**Your membership  
and support  
are important to us.**

## Visitors share with us a little more history about one of our aircraft

We received some additional history about our **Beech RU-8D Seminole** on August 15 during a visit to the Museum by **Mr. Delbert Henry Likins** and his son, **Adrian**. They were returning to North Carolina after riding their Harley Davidson motorcycles to the 66<sup>th</sup> Annual Black Hills Motorcycle Rally in Sturgis, South Dakota. They dropped down to Kansas and Topeka specifically to visit the Museum and see the RU-8D. As a young Private First Class (later a Spec 5), Mr. Likins was crew chief on our aircraft in Da Nang, South Vietnam from February 1969 to September 1970.

Mr. Likins brought with him some 25 photographs from his time in Da Nang, including several of 53-1358. Curator **Danny San Romani** told him briefly about how a former pilot of 358, **CWO Bruce Clapham** (now deceased), had acquired the aircraft, restored it to its current condition, and donated it to Combat Air Museum. San Romani also said that Mr. Clapham and his family donated a number of photos taken of aircraft and personnel of the 138<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion at Da Nang.

San Romani got those photos and spread them out for Mr. Likins and his son to look over. Bruce Clapham had been in Vietnam 1966-1967, and Mr. Likins came in two years later. He commented that at the time Bruce Clapham was there personnel of the 138<sup>th</sup> were living in a Da Nang hotel. When he got to the unit, they were all bivouacked at the Da Nang air base. San Romani commented that Bruce Clapham had not been able to put a specific name to 358. His photos were either of names painted on the noses of aircraft, or images of their tail numbers, but never both at the same time. So, he painted the name LONELY RINGER on 358's nose, a radio call sign used much of the time by the 138<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Likins pointed out our RU-8D in his photos, and it carried the name LONER.

He and his son spent the better part of an hour looking over the RU-8D. He pointed out some antennas and other electronic devices that were not on the aircraft when he worked on it. San Romani told him the aircraft

remained in Army service until 1980 and the additions may have been made post-Vietnam. Mr. Likins also talked about what it was like to work on the aircraft, especially its engines, and did not seem to have a lot of fond memories of engine overhauls and repairs. He pointed out in his photos that the propeller spinners were painted yellow when he was with the 138<sup>th</sup>. In Bruce Clapham's photos they were either olive drab or white.

Adrian commented that the cabin did not look very large. Mr. Likins replied that a crew of three normally flew, the pilot, co-pilot, and diddy-bopper (spelling?), his term for the communications specialist. The RU-8D did not broadcast or transmit. Its purpose was to listen and intercept enemy radio traffic. Two planes in the air up to 100-150 miles apart would listen to certain frequencies. If they both got a hit on the same frequency

they could triangulate the position and fix the location of the enemy transmitter. From there, intelligence could be acquired from listening in on the frequency or they could call an air strike or ground troops onto the position.

Mr. Likins was very appreciative that we have "his" plane in our collection and that it was being taken care of. He said he has done quite a bit of Internet searching for RU-8Ds of the 138<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion to find out what happened to them. He has found a handful, including one on exhibit at Fort Meade, Maryland. All in all he and Adrian spent about two hours in the Museum before continuing their trip back to North Carolina.

So, we have a few more bits of information to add to the file of the LONELY RINGER/LONER, 53-1358. It is a pleasure to talk to visitors who have had an association with one of our aircraft. It brings all kinds of memories and stories to the surface, and we gain a better and more personable understanding of the aircraft's history. →

**Mr. Likins pointed out our RU-8D in his photos, and it carried the name LONER.**



*More exterior markings have been applied to this restoration.*

## Looking for help from you to finish the markings on the ambulance

The ambulance is really looking good. Detail work continues since the last issue of *Plane Talk*.

**Don Dawson** applied caduceus emblems and US Army Vehicle to each side of the ambulance and AMBULANCE across the top of the windshield. That leaves the Dodge's War Department Number, which we have, and USA. These go on the top rear. We also need to reapply the "bumper numbers" to the front bumper, but we do not have these. We are pretty sure **Lloyd Ellison** recorded these somewhere before he removed all the paint from the front bumper, but we have not found them.

So, we are asking our readers for help. If any of you have photographs of the ambulance when it first came to the Museum, or from any time before Lloyd began preparing it for repainting, we would really like to look them over to see what bumper numbers may have been on the vehicle.

Interior-wise, Don still has some electrical wiring to work out in order to make the taillights operate. →

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

Thank you to TCJ readers  
who include us in  
"The Best... of Topeka"  
contest

For several years *The Topeka Capital-Journal* has run an annual feature in the paper called the "Best of Topeka and sixty miles." Readers are invited to fill in a form and mail it to the paper with their votes for the "Best . . . ." This year there were 100 categories to vote for. The results were printed in a special section of the paper on August 30<sup>th</sup>. The section listed the top five places for each category.

**Combat Air Museum** placed 2<sup>nd</sup> under the category Museum/Historic Location. The Kansas Museum of History was 1<sup>st</sup>. Following CAM were Old Prairie Town/Ward Meade 3<sup>rd</sup>; Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site 4<sup>th</sup>; and Museum of Natural History at the University of Kansas. 5<sup>th</sup>. The numbers of votes for each site were not listed.

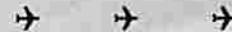


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