

COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

→ → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

Forbes Field Topeka, Kansas

April / May 2013 • Vol. 29, No. 2

CAM's Annual Celebrity Pancake Feed is April 27th Pancakes, celebrity flippers and lots of fun

Our 2013 Annual Pancake Feed marks the 20th Anniversary of this major fund raising event for Combat Air Museum. In the early days, we called it our annual Spring Fling, and it became the Celebrity Pancake Feed as we invited more and more elected officials and local celebrities from city, county, state and federal government, from local law enforcement and military, television and radio personalities, corporate personalities, faculty and sports members from Washburn University, and other people known to area residents. Our list of guest flippers has definitely grown over the last two decades.

This year's event is **Saturday, April 27th** from 7 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. in Hangar 602. Entry and ticket sales will be through our Education Conference Room. Invitations to celebrity flippers have gone out, and the list of positive responses continues to grow.

The admission is \$6 per person and includes "All you can eat pancakes" plus a serving of sausage and a drink. The ticket also allows you to tour the Museum at your leisure. Attendees can also participate in our Silent Auction. There will be several venues of entertainment during the morning. **Bob Carmichael of Perkins Restaurant** will be bringing his grills, pancake mix, sausage, and syrup. He will also provide his expertise to our celebrity flippers to ensure quality pancakes and sausage come off the grills.

Marlene Urban is heading the Silent Auction. We will accept new and almost new (clean) items, gift cards and gift certificates. All items may be brought in anytime before April 26. Large items may be brought in on the morning of the 26th, and it will be helpful if you tell us about any large items beforehand. Please do not bring items in the day of the auction. Small items can be placed in the Gift Shop offices. If your donation does not sell and you would like it back, please indicate this on a note and attach it to your item with your name and phone number.

The following lists may be helpful in what we would like to have for the Silent Auction.

Desired items:

theme baskets or items that can be used in theme baskets

collectibles

new or like new kitchen items

unique gift items

antiques

plants sports memorabilia

gift cards/gift certificates

new or like new bicycles

large lawn or garden items

new or like new camping gear

new or like new sports items

new or like new tools

some automotive

new electronics, tech items

new pet items

new or like new children's toys

new baby items

Not desired:

clothing

pictures or prints

left-over garage sale items

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Museum Hours

January 2 - February 28/29

Mon. - Sun. Noon - 4:30 P.M.

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

March 1 - December 31

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

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

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

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Your comments are welcomed.

From the Chairman's Desk

Gene Howerter, Chairman, BOD

During the week of Spring Break for most Kansas schools attendance at the Museum started off with a "bang". Many parents kicked the winter doldrums, loading their kids in the car, and heading out to the Combat Air Museum; good choice. The Museum has already scheduled numerous group tours that will be arriving over the next couple of months, and we expect to schedule many more in days to come. This time of year is a very busy time for our tour guides who do a marvelous job of directing tour groups that consist of both youth and adult guests to the Museum. I would invite any member of the Museum to join our tour guide pool of volunteers, both male and female. Training for being a tour guide is provided and is something almost anyone can learn if they have an interest. The training is fairly simple for beginners, and guides usually add a lot to their repertoire as they gain experience and learn more from veteran guides. I think most tour guides would say their time is well spent as they educate the public concerning information the Museum has to offer. No matter what age of the tour group, each tour guide learns how to dialog with the listener and speak to the questions presented. For the most part this can be a very satisfying experience even though, rarely, a concern must be addressed. Please give us a call and say you would like to join in on this opportunity. I think you will be pleased you did.

As most of you know, the last Saturday in April each year the Museum holds its Annual Celebrity Pancake Feed. Some of you may not know that the week leading up to this event is used annually for spring house cleaning. This is a great opportunity for those who say they would like to lend a hand but don't know what they can do. This year, for various reasons, there is a lot of

dusting, sweeping, and cleaning that needs to be done. If you live in the Topeka area and feel like you would be interested in lending a hand, please call the Museum and plan on volunteering a few hours for this task.

We have already had guests tour the Museum this year from 31 states in the USA and 10 foreign countries. Most visitors give us raving reviews, but I will be the first to admit that dusty exhibits and aircraft don't look as good as sparkling aircraft and facilities. As the pancake feed is always on a Saturday, the best time for doing this work will be on the weekdays prior to the event. Don't be shy, give us a call and join in on the fun. A little spring exercise will make you feel better all spring and summer long. I hope to see you and your friends and neighbors at this year's Celebrity Pancake Feed April 27, 2013. I will see you at the Museum.

April Luncheon to feature National History Day projects

Our guest speakers for the April 2013 Membership Luncheon will be four students from **Seaman High School**, Topeka. Joey Sodergren, Kara Tanner, Emily Worley, and Alexis Kokenge will present their projects prepared for the National History Day competition.

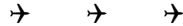
One presentation will be a vid-eodisc prepared by students on President Dwight Eisenhower and the Interstate Highway System. A second presentation will be about a student-created website on American documentary photographer and photojournalist Dorothea Lange, perhaps best remembered for her famed Depression Era photographs.

History teacher Susan Sittenauer will accompany her students. →

CAM Museum and volunteers to be featured in a new Topeka area magazine, *JAAA Senior Magazine*

Combat Air Museum and several of our volunteers should be featured in the inaugural issue of a new Topeka area magazine. It is the *JAAA Senior Magazine* and is in joint publication with the *Topeka Magazine* and Jayhawk Agency on Aging. Sunflower Publishing in Lawrence, Kansas, will print the magazine. The first issue is scheduled for May 1.

A photographer visited CAM in early March and took photographs of the collection and of volunteers in the Gift Shop, tour guides, and others working on projects. We do not know, yet how many photos and of whom will make the final cut. The draft article was about 3-1/2 pages long.



Supporters

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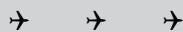
Terry Wages

William Welch

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Steve Wodtke

Deloris Zink



Support the
Combat Air Museum

"Pancakes," con't. from page 1

out-of-date electronics

vases

anything that is chipped, cracked, broken, dirty, or worn.

There are several things you as members can do to ensure the success of this event. If you can, please sell tickets. The more sellers we have, the better. Buy some additional tickets yourselves, and then give them away to relatives, friends, or neighbors. Please call **Deloris** or **Gene** at 862-3303 to reserve your tickets. You can use cash, check, or VISA/MasterCard to purchase the tickets.

We will move three aircraft out of Hangar 602, probably on the Wednesday or Thursday before the event and clean the hangar floor. Aircraft and artifacts in the hangar need a good dusting. We will set up tables and chairs on Friday.

On Saturday we will need early morning volunteers by 6:30 a.m. to fill syrup containers, put butter, juice, and milk on ice at the service table, and do final table top setups. During the Feed we will need volunteers for the following:

greeters to welcome patrons and to escort our guest flippers to the grills

ticket sellers in the Conference Room

a ticket taker at the head of the food line

food and beverage servers

table cleanups, replenish syrup and butter

floor cleanups for spills

folks to move full and empty coffee pots and juice

pitchers to and from the kitchen and the service table

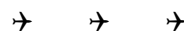
folks to take down tables and chairs

final floor clean-up as needed

folks to reposition aircraft in the hangar

Volunteers wishing to help with the Silent Auction should contact Marlene Urban.

Traditionally, this Spring fund raiser has been fun for everyone. Please help us when and where you can. If you can help, please call Deloris Lois and let her know how and when you would like to volunteer. There will also be a sign up sheet in the Gift Shop for the various jobs and associated time slots.



Howard Hughes was the topic of our Membership Luncheon

The February Membership Luncheon proved to be a capacity crowd who came to hear a researcher talk about what really happened to the late Howard Hughes. The presentation given by Major General (retired) Mark Musick gave a much different story than what mainstream media published about and after Hughes' alleged death in 1976. General Musick contends that Hughes lived out a much different life and died, instead, in 2001. Major General Musick is a native of Blair, Nebraska. He attended Dana College in Blair, then entered the United States Air Force. He received his commission from Officer Training School in 1973. Assignments during his 35-year career included Wing Commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Nebraska Air National Guard, Chief of Staff and later Assistant Adjutant General of the Nebraska Air National Guard, and Mobilization Assistant to the Deputy Commander, Strategic Air Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska.

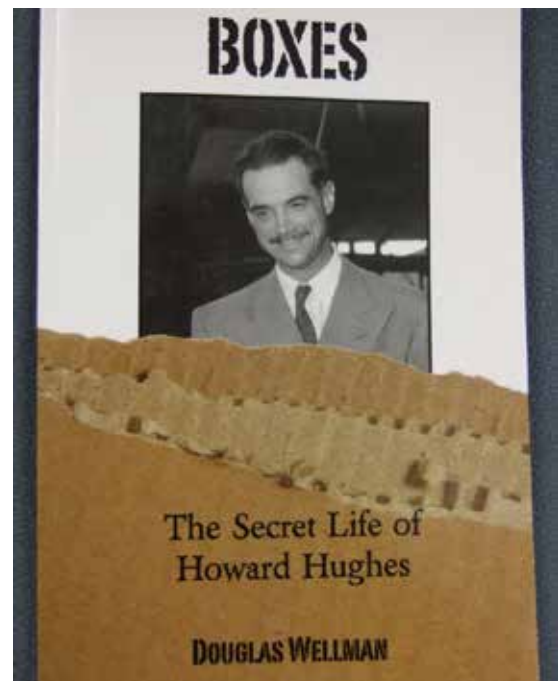
During his introduction, General Musick had an image of Howard Hughes, taken during a 1947 US Senate Hearings, on our big screen TV. He then showed an image of Hughes from Time Magazine in the 1970s. General Musick said Hughes was the richest man in America in the 1960s and 1970s and asked the audience for impressions of the man. He got responses such as "eccentric," "Spruce Goose" and "recluse." He said that Hughes was a very, very reclusive man, but added that he was not the long-haired, long finger-nailed, 100 lb bed-ridden man depicted in the 1972-1973 time frame. The General said he certainly was not the man portrayed on the April 19, 1976, cover of Time, after Hughes' alleged death.

To illustrate his conclusion as to Hughes' mental and physical health, General Musick pointed out that in March 1972 he met with the President of Nicaragua and had a commanding presence with that leader. Six months later, Hughes met with two officials of the wealth management company Merrill Lynch. Three months after that, Hughes was lying on a beach, but by December of that year, media showed him in Miami, Florida, as barely coherent, skin and bones, and long curling fingernails.

In March 1973 Hughes apparently made a remarkable recovery and met in England with the Governor of Nevada. Soon after, he was piloting an aircraft and making touch and go landings. Then, in August 1973, a drug-addled, derelict Hughes fell in London and broke his hip. General Musick said he was declared mentally incompetent and was reportedly again a shrunken man, skin and bones. The General pointed out that other books written about Howard Hughes

never explained this phenomena from 1972-1973. To him, this seemed very much like two men.

General Musick told us that Howard Hughes never graduated from high school. He received a 500 million dollar inheritance at age 19. He lived on a ranch near Irving, Texas, with his grandparents. The General commented that Hughes was poor at movie making and great with aviation things.



He then talked about a man named Verner Nicely, pronounced NICE-ly. Nicely was born in Ohio in 1921. After the US entered World War II, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1942 and eventually served in the Pacific. He met an Australian nurse, and they started a relationship that ended in marriage in 1949 in Canada. Verner and Aileen parented two boys. After a number of physical and emotional problems, Verner left the military in 1955. In 1958 the Nicely family moved to Panama. General Musick said Verner Nicely worked for the CIA in the late 1950s and worked in Colombia counter drug activities.

General Musick then introduced another character in the story, Eva McLelland. Eva was born in 1916. Her life included marriage to a military man that ended in divorce in 1965. In 1967, she moved to the Panama Canal Zone to take a Civil Service job at Howard Air Force Base. The General said Eva liked chocolate, Pepsi, and classical music. He would later come back to the importance of Verner Nicely and Eva McLelland.



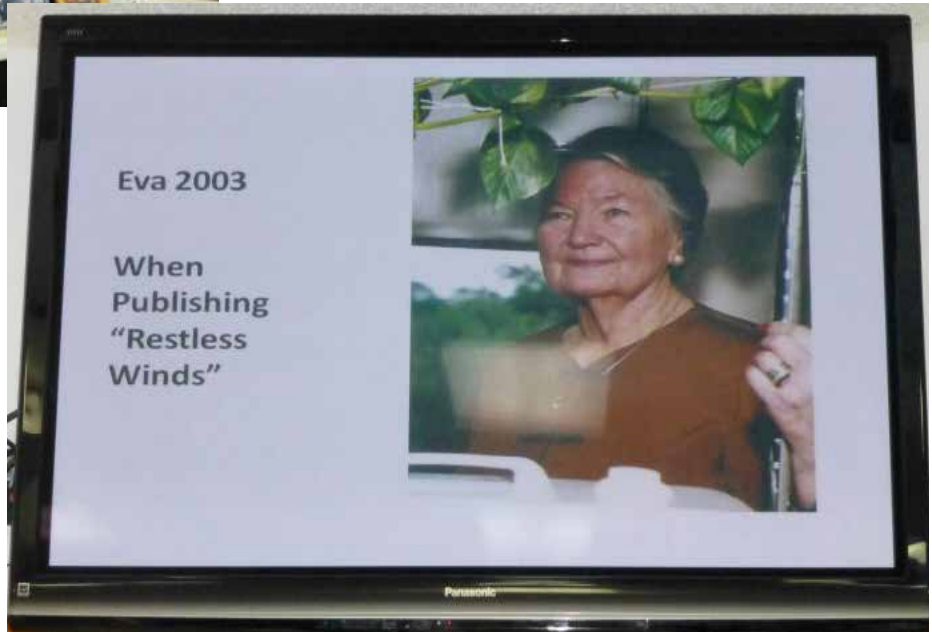
Far left: The book, Boxes, for which Mark Musick was the primary researcher.

Left: Major General (retired) Mark Musick talks about the secret life of Howard Hughes.

Below: Eva McLelland

Major General Musick's first contact with Eva McLelland was through a telephone call in 1999. He was working as a fund raiser for the Arbor Day Foundation in Lincoln, Nebraska, and Eva had bequeathed several acres of wooded land in Alabama to the Foundation. General Musick called to thank her for this, and she told him her husband was disabled and wanted to see if the Veterans Administration (VA) would fund building a wheelchair ramp for him. General Musick said he would contact the VA and inquire about the matter. The VA did build a ramp and General Musick and Eva McLelland visited many times over the phone for the next few years. After her husband died in 2001 Eva asked the General if he would help in the spreading of her husband's ashes. General Musick consented, and he and Eva met for the first time in 2002. Officially, the deceased was Verner "Nik" Nicely (pronounced Nick-e-ly), and he and Eva had been married 31 years. General Musick drove Eva from Dothan Alabama, to Navarre Beach, Florida, where she and Nik wintered in 1975. While she watched from a beach, General Musick waded into the Gulf of Mexico and spread the ashes. During the drive back to Dothan, Eva said she had a confession to make. The ashes were not those of Verner Nicley, but in fact were those of Howard Hughes. General Musick asked if she meant "the" Howard Hughes, and she said she did. When he replied that Howard Hughes died over 25 years ago, she responded that was what everyone thought and were supposed to think. A very awkward moment ensued for the General, and he finally told her that it was very hard to believe. She replied that she understood, but it was the truth, and she could explain.

General Musick told us Eva began telling her



story and he listened to it for three years. Something he noted in her telling the story was that nothing ever changed in what she told. It was a wild story, but events began to come together.

Eva was still in Panama in November 1969 when she saw a tall, handsome man at her workplace. About three weeks later, she and the man start talking with each other. Initially, she only knew of him as "Nik," then he eventually introduced himself as Verner Nicely, only he pronounced it NICK-e-ly. To Eva, he was known as Nik.

General Musick said that by November 1969, Verner NICE-ly had been missing from his family for two years, and yet a Verner NICK-e-ly appeared before Eva McLelland in Panama. Then for nearly two months, December 1969 and January 1970, Nik NICK-e-ly disappeared from Eva's life. He showed up again in late January. Eva told him that while he was gone she felt like she was being followed. Nik told her she was.

General Musick showed a couple of military records for Verner NICE-ly and a photo identification card for Nik NICK-e-ly on the big screen. The infor-

"Howard Hughes," con't. on page 10

A donation brings a Pratt & Whitney engine and other items to the CAM collection

On March 7, **Stu Entz**, **Dick Trupp**, **Ted Nolde**, and **Tom Gorrell** made an early morning departure for Oakley, Kansas, some 288 miles west, to pick up a new acquisition for CAM. They returned to Topeka about 8:15 pm that night with a Pratt & Whitney R-4360 *Wasp Major* radial engine and its disassembled four-blade propeller on Stu's trailer.

The initial steps to acquire the engine began late last summer when former member **Hector Camacho** of Andover, Kansas, contacted **Gene Howerter**. **Mr. Ludwig "Mike" Hammer**, owner of the engine, had passed away and his estate was being sold off. This included aircraft, engines, components, and other aviation related equipment, parts, and materials. Hector wanted to know if we had an interest in the R-4360, and if we did, he would campaign on behalf of the Museum to try and get it donated. He also told Gene that a **Mr. Dick Boldt**, also of Oakley, was the administrator of Mr. Hammer's estate.

CAM has a cutaway R-4360 in the collection, on loan from the National Museum of the United States Air Force since the 1980s. The Oakley R-4360 was complete and in a QEC (Quick Engine Change) configuration, and it was already mounted on a mobile stand. After further phone calls by Gene and Dick Trupp to Hector and then to Dick Boldt, we learned there was also a disassembled, four blade propeller that went with the engine. Board members discussed the offer, and although it meant a duplication to the collection, the two engines would actually complement each other as one is a cutaway and the other would be complete. Gene contacted Mr. Boldt, and the process for donating the engine and propeller to CAM was placed in motion.

A day prior to the scheduled pick-up, Stu, Gene, Dick, and Tom had a call with Mr. Boldt to make sure the engine could be loaded successfully to Stu's trailer and what extra materials may be needed for the loading and transport. With that call complete, the four volunteers readied themselves for the next day departure.

The loading of the engine went off smoothly in Oakley. While the engine was being secured to Stu's trailer, Mr. Boldt came up to Stu and asked if we would like an additional item to bring back to Topeka. The additional item turned out to be a sighting head for a Norden bombsight. A surprised Stu immediately and gratefully took up Mr. Boldt's offer and loaded the bombsight into the vehicle. A good day for CAM all around.

We offloaded the R-4360, propeller blade assembly, and bombsight the day following the crew's return to Topeka. Currently, the R-4360 is in Hangar 604, by the Harvard. The prop assembly is also stored in the hangar until we determine how and where we want to exhibit it. The bombsight is securely stowed in Hangar 602.

The data plate on the R-4360 shows it to be an R-4360-20WD. This version of the engine was flown on the US Air Force C-124A *Globemaster II*, the US Air Force C-119C *Flying Boxcar*, and the US Marines R4Q-1, also a *Flying Boxcar*.

A small box of checkoff sheets, instructions, pages from manuals and an Erection and Maintenance manual, all for a **Lockheed RX60-1 Constitution** aircraft were included with the donation. There is also a collage of pages from an article that appeared in the *Journal, American Aviation Historical Society*, Summer 1998, titled **Lockheed XR60-1 Constitution**. The Constitution was a large, double-decker, four-engine US Navy transport aircraft. Initially designated XR60-1, it became the R60, then R6V. Its engines were R-4360 *Wasp Majors*, using the R-4360-22W in their final configurations. The planes operated from 1949 until 1955, then were flown to Litchfield Park.

The magazine article was authored by Mr. Hammer and was about his participation in 1958 to prepare the only two of the big Lockheed transports built for ferry flights out of Naval Air Station (NAS) Litchfield Park, Arizona, to other locales. In those days, Litchfield Park was the



Navy's version of the Air Force boneyard at Tucson, Arizona. Mr. Hammer was a trained aviation mechanic and also a pilot with experience in Twin Beech aircraft. He wrote about the preparation of the aircraft for the flight and took part in ferrying both aircraft. One ended up in Sebring Florida, and this flight is what most of the article entails. He was also part of the ferry crew for the second plane, and it went to Los Vegas, Nevada. An interesting comment made in the article is that when the first ferry flight taxied out, the Navy tower told them that they could only return to NAS Litchfield if they were on fire.

Another interesting part of the article was that when engine problems came up during the flight, Mr. Hammer could crawl out into the leading edge of the wings and check the engines for the problem and fix it if he could.

Apparently, neither aircraft flew for their new owners and both were eventually scrapped. →



Far left: The Pratt & Whitney R-4360 Wasp Major retrieved from Oakley, Kansas, with propeller blades underneath.

Above: A nose view of the 3,500 h.p. engine.

Left: The Norden bombsight sighthead, an unexpected donation.

2013 Events

April

- 8 - Membership Luncheon
- 27 - Celebrity Pancake Feed

June

- 3 - 6 Aviation Education Class
- 10 - Membership Luncheon

July

- 8 - 11 Aviation Education Class

August

- 5 - 8 Aviation Education Class
- 12 - Membership Luncheon

September

- 28 - Winged Foot 5K Run/10K Run and 5K Walk

October

- 14 - Membership Luncheon

November

- 28 - Museum Closed, Thanksgiving Day

December

- 9 - Membership Luncheon
- 25 - Museum Closed, Christmas Day

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Calendar of Events - April & May

April

Monday, April 8

Membership Luncheon
Jean Wanner Education Conference Room
11:30 am

Four students from Seaman High School, Topeka, will present two projects for the National History Day competition.

Saturday, April 27

20th Annual Celebrity Pancake Feed
Hangar 602
7 am - 12 pm

May

No events

There is no Membership Luncheon in May. The next luncheon will be Monday, June 10.

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Volunteers work on Computer Flight Simulator and other projects around the Museum



Computer Flight Simulator

CAM recently acquired the hardware and software to construct a computer flight simulator for the Museum. Hardware includes the computer, four monitor screens, a control stick with associated throttle quadrant, a control yoke with its own associated throttle quadrant, and rudder pedals. The software is Microsoft Flight Simulator X, Gold Edition.

Funding for the simulator, software, and other materials came from the Chris Jensen Memorial Fund and grants from the Topeka Community Foundation and the Ford and Catherine Ross Fund - Topeka Community Foundation. The new acquisition will be used for our Youth Aviation Education classes, replacing the 1960s vintage electro-mechanical trainer used for at least a decade.

We removed the Field Kitchen exhibit in the rear of the Gift Shop exhibit area,

and volunteers are currently refurbishing that space for the simulator. **Russ Wiedle** and **Randy Hemm** are the principal volunteers converting the space and installing the simulator. They get an occasional sidewalk supervisor assist from **Don Dawson** and **Danny San Romani**. So far, Russ and Randy installed a new electrical supply to the space, installed Masonite paneling over the existing floor boards, and installed plywood wall panels. Russ then laid down carpeting over the Masonite. Russ and Danny ran Ethernet cable from a router in the Office Manager's office to the simulator space. As work progresses on the space, Russ and Randy will install Masonite paneling so that it gives the appearance of entering an aircraft cockpit.

Russ and Randy also unboxed and set up components of the simulator to ensure the computer hardware and software worked. Initially, it was the control stick, its throttle quadrant, and one monitor screen. Then two more screens were added. Most recently, the control yoke, its



Above: Randy Hemm (left) and Russ Wiedle installing Masonite paneling on the floor.

Top: The carpet is down and the first wall panels are up.

Right: A test set up of the simulator.



throttle, and the rudder pedals were set up for testing. Randy has a flight simulator set up at his home, and he has been training **Jack Vaughn** on it as Jack will be working with students of our Youth Aviation Education classes on the new simulator. We plan to have the space conversion and simulator installation complete by the June Aviation Education Class.

R-2800

During the first week of March, Don Dawson and Danny San Romani rolled the Pratt & Whitney R-2800 Double Wasp cutaway engine out of the workshop and placed it back on exhibit behind the F-14 Tomcat. Don put over 200 man-hours cleaning, de-rusting, prepping, treating, and painting the engine and stand during the winter months. What a difference his work has made to the appearance

and preservation of this exhibit.

Soon after the engine was in place, Don rolled his next project into the workshop. He is currently rebuilding one of our large, wood-platform wagons for hauling equipment, parts and materials around the hangars.

Fokker DVIII Model

A 1/3 scale RC model of a World War I Fokker DVIII German fighter was donated to CAM last year. **Dick Trupp** received the model on behalf of CAM and placed it on the floor inside the rope line for the Curtiss Jenny aircraft in Hangar 602. A couple of months ago, Dick and **Ted Nolde** came up with a plan to install the model on the Art Gallery balcony. As part of this plane, Dick contacted **Larry Mann** and asked if he could construct two machine guns to mount on the model. Larry brought



the completed, kit-built guns to a membership luncheon, and they were installed to the model.

Last month, Dick built and painted a T-shape platform for the model. Recently, he and Ted mounted the platform and model to the west end balcony of the Art Gallery. They will also build and install a protective barrier for the exhibit.

→ → →



*Top left: The Pratt & Whitney R-2800 Double Wasp cutaway back on exhibit.
Top right: The machine guns built by Larry Mann from kits.
Left: The Fokker DVIII model mounted in the Art Gallery.*

"Howard Hughes," con't. from page 5

mation in the physical description blocks of Verner's records did not match the information nor the photograph on Nik's photo ID. General Musick said that Verner's son, Gary Nicely, looked at this photo ID and told him he did not know who the man was in the photograph. This was some of the evidence General Musick began building to show that Nik Nicely was, in fact, Howard Hughes.

In March 1970 Nik took Eva to a jewelry store and bought her a \$5,000, two carat, diamond ring, and they got engaged. General Musick said he has the ring. He described it as platinum, hardened with iridium. After the engagement, Nik asked Eva to sign everything for the both of them. They married in May 1970, and General Musick noted a few things about the wedding. No pictures were taken. Nik's name is spelled wrong on the wedding certificate, his parents were not listed, and Eva's age is wrong.

The General described some things about Nik that Eva passed on to him. She said he always did his work at night. He was on over-the-counter drugs in massive quantities. He kept a separate apartment in Panama to do business. Eva went to this apartment in November 1970 and while there found a letter from a "Dorothy" in Ohio. General Musick said that Jean Peters was from Ohio and married Howard Hughes in 1957. Peters last saw Hughes in 1966 and the two were divorced in 1971. General Musick said "Dorothy" and Jean Peters were one in the same.

Eva told General Musick that over time Nik went from a charming personality to being verbally vicious. She went to Flagstaff, Arizona, in June 1972 to leave him, and six months later, he showed up. The General said that the Watergate break in also occurred in June 1972. Bob Bennett was a man associated with at least one of the Watergate "burglars." He had once had Howard Hughes as a client and in 1974 worked in Hughes' Summa Corporation. General Musick said the 17-1/2 minute gap in the Nixon tapes supposedly dealt with Howard Hughes. The General went on to say Hughes did in Richard Nixon with Watergate. He said it had to do with an argument between the two over atomic bomb tests in Nevada. Hughes' implications with Watergate and his apparent damage control kept him from arriving in Flagstaff for those six months. Also, in June 1972, the world was seeing Howard Hughes as a feeble, decrepit recluse.

Eva told General Musick that in 1973 she knew what was going on and that Nik Nicely was really Howard Hughes. She said that he always had aides around him.

In June 1974 Nik and Eva moved to Troy, Alabama. She said the aides were there, too. General Musick showed an image of their home and said they lived there about one year.

The couple was in Florida in the winter of 1974-1975, and Eva said that is when Nik revealed to her that he was Howard Hughes. In February 1975, he showed Eva an image of himself from *True* magazine, and she said he told her everything.



Gene Howerter presenting MG Musick with a Certificate of Appreciation

In April 1976 the reclusive stand in for Howard Hughes died. Eva said they learned about it on the radio. She said they never had a television as Hughes said they were worthless. Twenty-five people showed up to Howard Hughes' memorial service. General Musick said 24 were "cousins" who had never met Hughes. One, he said, was from the CIA. The body of the stand in was buried 48 hours after death.

General Musick then went back in time several years to 1969 when a Soviet submarine sank in the Pacific Ocean. He said the CIA contacted Howard Hughes to help raise the submarine. Hughes said he would raise it, but the CIA had to get him a new identity.

General Musick said Hughes used CIA satellites for phoning, so they could not be traced. He commented on Howard Hughes being severely injured in a plane crash [test flying his XF-11 military reconnaissance design]. He went on to say that Nik Nicely always wore gloves, and he was sensitive to burns. He was also a germaphobe and had no fingerprints.

Eva and Hughes moved to four different places after the Hughes stand in died. They eventually moved to a 20 acre "ranch" near Troy, Alabama. General Musick said it was a trailer way back in the woods. Eva and Hughes lived in the travel trailer for 11 years. She said he kept clothes in barrels and they had to be able to leave quickly. The title of the book, "Boxes," came from this lifestyle. Eva

said Hughes would never let her unpack their boxes. She also said they stayed away from people.

Eva and Hughes lived in the woods about 25 years. She said he made contact with people on the outside via post cards. She also said he would disappear at times, but she did not know where or with whom he was meeting.

General Musick said he went to Alabama in 2010 to give a series of talks. He visited people in the Troy area. He found people who knew or knew of Eva, but they did not know Nik. Some said that Eva alluded to knowing a big secret. The General also put an image of Nik from 1990 on the big screen. In summary, General Musick said Eva began telling her story about two months after Nik/Howard Hughes passed away. It took him four years to believe her and eight years to write the book. He said Eva felt the stand in's funeral was disgusting. She wanted people to know the real story. Eva Renee McLelland died in 2009 at the age of 93.

The floor was then open to questions and discussion.

One question was, "Did the General ever interview any of the aides who seemed to always be around?" He replied there was only one aide left, and he was not talking, and finally passed away. General Musick went on to say the aides had to stick to their story. They got paid, and he felt they probably stuck to their story because to do otherwise would cost them their lives.

Howard Hughes' estate was settled among the 24 relatives in September 2010. They had been fighting over the money for 30 years.

General Musick said the Hughes stand in went to Canada, but they found out they had to pay taxes for being there. The stand in then moved to the Bahamas.

In response to a question about his research, General Musick said that over eight years, bits and pieces began to fall into the puzzle, and he admitted there are still big gaps.

A question came up about possible DNA identification of Nik Nicely. General Musick said he worked with DNA for five years and said that it could not be obtained from cremated remains. The General said he spread all but one fourth of the ashes. In 2008 he cleaned out Eva's apartment after she went into a care home and found the remainder of the ashes.

A follow-on question came up about the possibility of exhuming the stand in's body. General Musick said he did not want to go down that path. He seriously doubted the 24 family members who fought over Hughes' fortune for 30 years would want an exhumation because there was a lot of money at stake.

General Musick provided another of his bits and pieces from research. Eva told him that in December 1972, in Prescott, Arizona, Nik/Hughes told her, "You

innocent child, I will spoil you rotten." Also, in December 1972, Howard Hughes was ready to lose 152 million dollars in order to settle a TWA (Trans World Airline) dispute. The court came in and said it was already settled.

A question came up about how Nik/Hughes got away from all the glitz and glamor. How did he feel about leaving all that behind? General Musick said that Hughes did not want money for material things. To him, money was power. In his hiding, he apparently still had power. Eva said they lived off social security, Nicely's military disability (which was real for Verner NICE-ly), and her retired civil service pension.

A question came up about Eva's life before Panama. She was married, had two daughters and a son from whom she had been estranged since 1970.

General Musick said he got nothing from Eva money-wise and may get something from the publisher. He showed an image of her from 2003.

A question came up about children of Howard Hughes. History indicates he had no children, but seven people have said they are his. General Musick said two may be real, two were not, and two others were lunatics. He made no comment about the seventh.

Who was the stand in? General Musick said he felt it was possibly a homeless man who was not missed by anyone, anywhere. The stand in was Howard Hughes' idea to get a crazy recluse, someone mentally ill, in order to cause confusion and allow him to get away from lawsuits.

Hughes likely "disappeared" for a variety of reasons, all linked by the fact someone was after him and his money. He owned seven hotels in Las Vegas and there was reason to believe the mafia was after him.

A question came up about Eva and Nik/Hughes living in the trailer, and how easy was that set up? General Musick said Eva wanted things better than the trailer and actually bought a home in Troy.

A question was asked about the movie *The Aviator* [2004] and its accuracy. General Musick said it was a very good movie. He and Eva saw it together, and she said it was spot on as far as it went.

The book is *BOXES: The Secret Life of Howard Hughes*, by Douglas Wellman. It is published by WriteLife, LLC, 2323 S.171st Street, Suite 202, Omaha, NE 68130. Go to www.writelife.com. It retails for \$20. Major General Mark Musick was the researcher for the book and gives presentations about it to groups around the country. We do not carry the book in our Gift Shop.

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**Read about the Fokker DVIII model
mounted in the Art Gallery**

Visitors

During **January**
the Museum had
378 visitors
from 22 states,
Brazil
Canada
Columbia
Germany
Italy
New Zealand

During **February**
we had
429 visitors
from 20 states,
Canada
Germany
Northern Ireland
→ → →