

COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

→ → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

Forbes Field Topeka, Kansas

August / September 2013 • Vol. 29, No. 4

Author of *The Last Zero Fighter* talks about his interviews of World War II Imperial Japanese Navy pilots and other aviators

Mr. Dan King, author of *The Last Zero Fighter*, gave a very informative presentation about his book at our June 10 Membership Luncheon. We literally had an overflow crowd, and for the first time had to set a table just outside the double doors of the Conference Room. Mr. King's wife, Spencer, a native of Taipei, Taiwan, accompanied him.

The Last Zero Fighter features firsthand accounts from five World War II Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) pilots as well as references and anecdotes from a number of other Japanese aviators. Mr. King said he interviewed some 97 army and navy Japanese veterans of World War II while doing research for the book. Interviews with US pilots were also done. He told us he gathered enough material from his interviews that more books of the Pacific War will be forthcoming.

Mr. King worked and lived in Japan for 10 years and is fluent in Japanese. He can read, write, and speak the language. He attributed his access to many of the veterans because of his fluency in their language. They were more willing to meet and talk with him because of this. He also said that by being able to converse with them directly, there was no loss of information or meaning through an interpreter.

Aside from his research for writing, Mr. King has been a consultant for movies, documentaries, and History Channel projects. The movies include *Windtalkers*,

"Last Zero Fighter," con't. on page 6



Mr. Dan King speaking about his book,
The Last Zero Fighter,
at the June Membership Luncheon

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Combat Air Museum

Forbes Field • Hangars 602 & 604

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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***Newsletter******Layout & Design***

Toni Dixon

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Plane Talk, the official newsletter

of Combat Air Museum

of Topeka, Kansas,

is published bi-monthly.

Your comments are welcomed.

From the Chairman's Desk

Gene Howerter, Chairman, BOD

It has been a busy summer at the Museum, and the season is passing quickly. However, we usually have a steady stream of visitors through late fall. Each of these visitors helps us keep our doors open year around, and we appreciate each and every one of them. Please invite your friends and neighbors to come and visit the Combat Air Museum ASAP.

A few weeks back as I sat in my back yard watching the neighbor's fireworks going off high in the air, I found myself reflecting on the day. One thought that crosses my mind was, "I wonder if others are reflecting on what the celebration of the 4th of July is all about, or do they just celebrate the day for the fun of it?" Another reflection that passed my thoughts was from my reading of a wonderful book describing the Lewis and Clark expedition as they explored the newly purchased Louisiana Territory. Clark wrote, "As we passed by [what was later to become Northwest Kansas Territory around Atchison, Kansas, on the Missouri River] we fired our big cannon and drank extra rations of whiskey in celebration of the 4th of July." Now, that sounds like a real celebration of the 4th of July to me. Then I thought, "What do I do that honors the intended purpose for which the 4th of July is celebrated in this country?" I don't shoot cannons, nor do I drink whiskey! I guess I could profoundly say it is for those who have fought and put on a uniform for our country and preserved our freedom both past and present, that we open our doors at the Combat Air Museum each day, and that is good enough for me. As you know, freedom is not free, and every generation has to earn it again. We thank you all for your service.

The first annual Warbirds and Legends Air Show was held recently. It was not a CAM-managed event, but it will always be a big event for our museum as it takes place a short dis-

tance from our flight line boundary. We spent considerable time preparing our volunteers for this endeavor and making preparations to display three of our Grumman aircraft on the air show line. Thank you to all who stepped up in support of the Museum over this long and grueling three day weekend. The promoters of this event tell us they will have it again next year and that should be good for our museum. (Google Warbirds and Legends for full details.)

We have been preparing for our Ninth Annual Winged Foot Fun Run. It will take place again at Hangar 602 and around Forbes Field on Saturday, September 28. Let me say emphatically, this event is one that continues keeping the Museum out of the red. We need your support, and there are many ways that you can help besides entering as a walker/runner, if possible. First, as always, we need volunteers for various duties. Call the Museum if you are interested. Secondly, a minimum suggested monetary sponsorship for this fund raiser starts at \$100. Sponsors names are printed on the back of the race T-shirts and in our newsletter. They may also receive one of our beautifully designed race T-Shirts if they request one. This year's shirt has a fantastic photo of our Panther jet at sunrise on the front. Consider becoming a sponsor. This year we are searching for nine new sponsors in honor of our Ninth Annual event. Please give this some consideration and contact the Museum office soon. Sponsors need to be signed up by September 6th to be on the T-shirt. Finally, we have race brochures for distribution. Pick up some for friends who will run or walk with you or consider sponsoring a child, grandchild, neighbor, or acquaintance if you do not plan to participate. We want to have a record number of participants in this year's event.

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In Memoriam**Duane Putnam, 86**

#3925

May 13, 2013

1926 – 2013

Hoyt, Kansas

Seven Year Member

Gil F. Marick, Jr., 76

#4022

July 6, 2013

1937 – 2013

Burlington, Kansas

Six Year Member

Colonel John W.**Hatcher,****USMCR (Ret), 83**

#3696

July 17, 2013

1929 – 2013

Hastings, Nebraska

Twelve Year Member

Ruth Houser, 81

#2401

July 17, 2013

1931 – 2013

Topeka, Kansas

Twenty-three Year Member

→ → →

Winged Foot 5K/10K Run and 5K Walk is set for Sept. 28th

Saturday, September 28, 2013, is the date set for our ninth edition of the Winged Foot 5K/10K Run and 5K Walk. Race time is 8 a.m., and race day registration takes place from 6:45 a.m. to 7:50 a.m. This is the second year we have offered the 10K course and hope to see an increase in the numbers of runners wanting to go that distance.

There are different ways you, as a Museum member, can support the race. Sponsorships for the race are very important, so please solicit sponsors from businesses or individuals, and/or become a sponsor yourself. A minimum sponsorship is \$100, and sponsors are listed on the back of the race T-shirt and will be listed in our newsletter. The Fun Run is the last major fund raiser of the year for Combat Air Museum, and the monies brought in by the race go a long way for winter operations of the Museum. The winter months, particularly January and February, are our months of lowest attendance and highest operating costs because of heating bills. We strive for energy conservation, but the continued rising cost of gas offsets much of our conservation efforts. This fund raiser is important. Contact Gene Howerter at chairman@combatairmuseum.com or 785-862-3303 for further sponsorship information.

Volunteers are needed on race day for the registration tables, setting up mile posts on the course and cones for turns and the turn around point at the south end, acting as course monitors/marshals, manning the water stations, and several volunteers are needed to operate the finish line. If you volunteer to work the registration tables, please be at the Museum by 6:30 a.m. Other volunteers should be at the Museum by 7:15 a.m.

Of course, our museum members and volunteers are invited to participate in one of the runs or the walk. A few of our members currently hold their age group record.

Pre-registration is available by sending in the registration form on the race brochure or you can register by going to the Museum's website at www.combatairmuseum.org. Only pre-registered entrants are guaranteed a T-shirt.

The pre-registration race fee is \$20. If you want a T-shirt the fee is \$26. Registration the day of the race is \$22. Sunflower Strider members are entitled to a \$2 discount. All registration fees include free admission to the Museum. Pre-registered race packets will be available for pick-up at the Museum on Friday, September 27, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

To receive a T-shirt, entrants must be pre-registered and paid by September 6. There are no guarantees of shirts after this date.

The racecourse is on Forbes Field. The start and finish will be on J Street immediately to the west of Hangar 602 of the Museum. The 5K run and walk make one loop of the course. Runners in the 10K make two loops of the 5K course.

Jamie Slack from 580AM WIBW Radio in Topeka is our honorary chairperson for this edition of the Winged Foot run/walk. Jamie is co-host of the "Kansas Live" talk show with Roger Heaton. She is a 5K runner and is a big advocate for charity run events in the Topeka area.

For further information contact Gene Howerter as indicated above or Deloris Zink at office@combatairmuseum.com or 785-862-3303.

Come out and be a part of this great fall fund raiser. We had 101 registrants and 95 finishers last year. →

**Volunteer
and join the fun
at the 9th annual
Winged Foot
5K Run/10K Run
and 5K Walk
September 28th**

New street names honor Kansas aviators as thirteen streets are given new identification

Combat Air Museum will soon have a new address. Not to worry though, the Museum has not moved to a new location. We will still be in Hangars 602 and 604, but they will be on Forbes Avenue instead of J Street.

Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority (MTAA) recently renamed 13 streets on the airport property. All are named after Kansans who were military aviators. We assisted MTAA with this project by providing names of Kansas military aviators. As soon as new street signs are erected Hangar 602's new address will be 7016 SE Forbes Avenue, and Hangar 604's will be 7022 SE Forbes Avenue.

The current streets' identification is a holdover from when Forbes Air Force Base was still active. North-south streets are alphabetical, with just a letter designation. From the former main entrance of the Base, east-west streets are numbered in a mirrored effect. Those north of the entrance are 1 North, 2 North, etc. Those south of the entrance are 1 South, 2 South, etc. For folks not familiar with this system, things can be confusing when trying to locate a business on the airport. This is particularly true for commercial deliveries. The Gift Shop often provides directory assistance to drivers trying to find a particular business. Building numbers are not of much help, as they are not sequential.

Using the Internet often adds to the confusion. An address of 6700 SW Topeka Boulevard is the result of an Internet search. The problem is, that address covers the entire airport, and you will not find a mailbox or building located at 6700 SW Topeka Blvd. It is a phantom address.

For now, our mailing address remains Combat Air Museum, PO Box 19142, Topeka, KS 66619. Once all the new signage is erected, MTAA will seek approval from the US Postal Service to begin mail delivery to businesses located in the business center of the airport. We have not decided, yet, if we will ask for mail delivery to Hangar 602 or keep our post office box.

The new street names are part of the latest changes to the airport and play into a larger effort to attract a commercial airlines carrier to Topeka and to attract more businesses to locate on the airport. In June 2012 the Board of Directors of MTAA voted and approved a name change to Forbes Field airport and its adjoining industrial park. It is now Topeka Regional Airport and Business Center, Topeka Regional Airport for short.

From discussions with airline industry representatives, the name change was made to help attract a commercial carrier to Topeka. Topeka Regional Airport provides a much better geographic reference than Forbes Field and shows this is an airport associated with the capital city. The airfield itself, the runways and taxiways, remain named

Forbes Field. About the time of this name change, MTAA introduced a new logo for itself.

The airport terminal has recently undergone a face lift to modernize its interior and also to complete needed repairs to the roof. The existing interior was much the same as when the terminal opened in the 1970s. The new look is also part of the master plan to attract a commercial carrier.

About 17 years ago, then Museum Curator, Brian Meredith, and Museum volunteers constructed two large display cases and painted their exteriors in the colors of MTAA used at that time. MTAA funded the cost of building the display cases, and they were placed inside the terminal. Brian then put together an exhibit for each case. One was for Major Daniel Forbes, a native of Carbondale, Kansas, who died in a test flight of the Northrop YB-49 Flying Wing in 1948. Topeka Air Force Base was renamed Forbes Air Force Base in 1949. The second exhibit was a display of model airplanes that represented aircraft predominantly associated with Topeka Army Air Field, Topeka Air Force Base, Forbes Air Force Base, and current Kansas National Guard units based at Forbes Field.

As part of the terminal renovation, these two exhibits will be temporarily removed. The display cases will be donated to the Museum. A large, commercially designed and built display case will be installed in the terminal. Then part or all of the contents of the two exhibits will go into the new case. We will work with MTAA in helping erect the new exhibit.

Discussions between MTAA and potential commercial carriers continue. MTAA is not looking for a puddle jumper commercial service between Topeka and Kansas City International Airport. That has been done before and did not survive. MTAA is looking for regularly scheduled, daily service to and from a major hub elsewhere. In the meantime, a charter airline named Sun Country Airlines recently made an inaugural flight to a resort and casino in Nevada. Another flight is currently planned in October. This service indicates people in the area do have the disposable income for airline travel.

Topeka Regional Airport has the facilities for handling commercial service. For several years and more, we have seen numbers of wide body, commercial jets arrive and depart the airport, either transporting troops from the Big Red One at Fort Riley overseas or bringing them back home.

Be on the watch for some changes in our stationery letterhead. If we change from a post office box to local mail delivery, we will also get that word out to everyone.

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Supporters

New Supporters

Wes, Sheryl, & Jenny Barricklow
 Chad, Jessica, & Garrett Colgan
 Michael, Nicholas, Alec, Ashlyn & Cheryl
 Fewell
 Phil Lange
 Morris Mahon
 Kirk, Lisa, Ryan, & Micah Zirbel
 Renewing Supporters
 William Bunten
 George Catt
 Michael & Tammie DeBarnardin
 Adam Fast
 Raymond & Cheryl Kulp
 Larry Madden
 Don & Becky Mathers
 Larry Morgan
 Dave & Judy Murray
 Richard Novak 07/16/13
 Dan Pulliam
 Danny San Romani
 Gerry Sibley
 Herschel & Jaqueline Stroud
 Vic & Marjorie Van Camp
 Eric, Mitchell, & Lyn Walther
 Mike & Carla Welch
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Visit our website at
www.combatairmuseum.org

Calendar of Events

August

Monday August 5 - Thursday August 8
 Aviation Education Class
 Jean Wanner Education Conference Room
 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Monday, August 12

Membership Luncheon
 Jean Wanner Education Conference Room
 11:30 a.m.
 Major Eric Megerdoodmian, US Army,
 and Major Zach Manning, US Air Force,
 from the Command and General Staff College,
 Fort Leavenworth, KS,
 are our guest speakers.

September

Saturday, September 28
 Annual Winged Foot 5K and 10K run and 5K walk.
 8 a.m. start on South J Street/Forbes Avenue

There is no luncheon in September.
 The next Membership Luncheon
 will be Monday, October 14.
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August Membership Luncheon features officers from Ft. Leavenworth

Major Eric Megerdoodmian, US Army, and Major Zachary D. "EAST" Manning, US Air Force will be our guest speakers for the August 12 Membership Luncheon. Both officers are currently students at the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. They will use a Power Point presentation to discuss why they entered into the military, their respective career paths thus far, and their future plans. Major Megerdoodmian first enlisted in the Army National Guard in 1998, and Major Manning graduated from Air Force ROTC and was commissioned in 2000. Both have twice deployed to Iraq. Major Megerdoodmian also completed one tour in Afghanistan, and Major Manning has one tour with US Central Command deploying to various locations.

We have had students from the Command and General Staff College speak at luncheons for several years, now, and they always provide a professional and candid presentation and discussion.

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Program Schedule

The remaining program speakers
 lined up for our
 2013 Membership Luncheons include:

October 14, 2013

Deb Goodrich Bisel
 will discuss
 The Civil War In Kansas

December 9, 2013

Major Roger Locher, USAF (Retired)
 Will discuss his 23 days of evasion
 and escape after being shot down
 behind enemy lines
 during the Vietnam War.

→ → →

Join the Combat Air Museum!

"Last Zero Fighter," con't. from page 1

The Last Samurai, *Flags of Our Fathers*, and *Only the Brave*. He was a consultant for the HBO series *The Pacific* and appeared in historical documentaries on the battles of Wake Island and Peleliu.

Mr. King showed an introductory video that included clips of World War II footage of the naval war in the Pacific and clips of him interviewing some of the veterans. There were also clips of 3 dimensional recreations of air battles and aircraft.

He told us he had been doing research for his book some 20 years. He said that interviewing the Japanese pilots was very similar to interviewing American pilots. They talked about their training, their friends, their experiences. They talked about flying, and talked about the war and the battles they took part in.

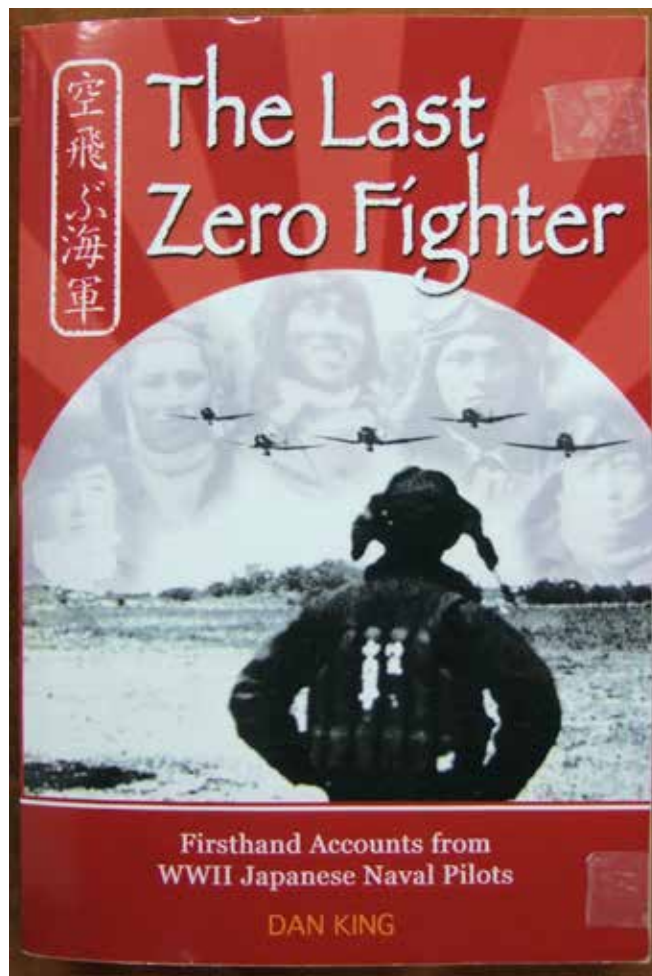
His research for the book and a part of his consultive work included visits to a number of the Pacific battle sites. He told us he was able to get to most of them.

Why interview Japanese pilots? Mr. King said he wanted to get the other side of the story. So much of what he had read and studied of the Pacific War was by American authors and authors of other Allied nations. He felt he could gain more historical data by interviewing the Japanese.

The pages prior to the first chapter are titled **Japanese Naval Aviation 101**. They describe the paths to becoming a naval aviator and how the different schools operated. The pages also include a few paragraphs of IJN aviation organization, much like how books written on the US Army, Navy, and Marine Corps aviation of World War II describes such things as wings, groups, squadrons, and flights. He used the Japanese terms and described what the terms meant. The Japanese terms were used through the rest of the book. Mr. King wrote the core of the Japanese Army/Navy indoctrination was a set of five key principles. He paraphrased the lines considered essential to proper conduct as, The military man is Loyal, Polite, Brave, Trustworthy, and Thrifty. If we change Polite to Courteous, we have five of the twelve Boy Scout Laws.

Mr. King said that the IJN pilots, navigator-observers, and radioman-gunners were all aviators. They came from the Naval Academy, from civilian reserves, enlisted ranks, and youth programs. The latter took 16 year olds and trained them as pilots while they were still high school students prior to World War II. The enlisted pilots flew fighters, dive bombers, and level bombers.

Some of his interviewees were members of Japanese suicide units. Mr. King said many myths, misunderstandings, and misconceptions by westerners regarding the suicide, or Kamikaze, pilots have occurred over the years. Often, these have been written or presented as fact. Some of these myths included that the pilots were locked into their cockpits, or they were on drugs, or their landing gear came off at takeoff so they could not land again. He



The Last Zero Fighter, available in our Gift Shop.

told us the suicide pilots were motivated by courage and duty to their Emperor. They viewed themselves as a last hope, as last responders. Mr. King said they did fly with parachutes, if they wanted.

Mr. King said it was against military regulations to be captured, under Section 2 of Chapter 8. This was to avoid shame, and not dishonor their family.

The Kamikazes were a trained unit. At the point in the war when the units were formed, the pilots were young and inexperienced, not unlike regular air units. Most pilots were enlisted men. They were heavily propagandized against the Allies. White men were demons and dishonorable.

Older pilots flew on suicide missions as observers and note takers. They recorded what happened in the attacks to report successes, and the reports could also be used to change tactics for better results. Mr. King said that observers sometimes falsified successes, trying to honor the young, inexperienced pilots killed on the missions.

Touching again on some of the myths about Kamikaze pilots, Mr. King addressed the daggers the pilots were

given. He said these were gifts to the pilots in recognition of their service and were something to send home to their parents or loved ones. They were not something with which to commit suicide. He did add that pilots carried a pistol for this purpose, rather than be captured alive.

The five naval pilots Mr. King focused on in his book were Kaname Harada, Isamu Miyazaki, Haruo Yoshino, Toshimisu Imaizumi, and Tomokazu Kasai. Each has his own chapter. All were IJN aviators. During his presentation, Mr. King put up an illustration of the Pacific Theater for each man, highlighting the respective battles in which each participated. Collectively, the men were veterans of battles including Nanking, China; Pearl Harbor; Wake Island; Rabaul; Port Darwin, Australia; Ceylon; Midway; Guadalcanal; the Marshall Islands; Tarawa; battles in and around the Philippine Islands, including Leyte Gulf; Iwo Jima; Okinawa; and defense of Japan's home islands. Two of them witnessed the atomic bomb attack of Nagasaki.

Mr. King included the men's childhoods, where they were from, when they joined the service, and their training before and during the time they became aviators. He then gave the backgrounds and stories of their flying service. Their eye witness accounts of the battles listed above were still vivid and often emotional. Two of the five men are still alive.

It is noteworthy that Kaname Harada flew combat over China in 1937, including the attack on shipping on the Yangtze River outside of Nanking when the US river gunboat USS Panay was bombed and sunk. An important point illustrated by Harada's part in the attack on the shipping is that he was in the fight, if not always direct combat, for eight years, from 1937 until the war ended in 1945.

During his interviews with these aviators, Mr. King found they were very pro-American and all had been to the United States. He said they all dreamed of flight as little kids.

Haruo Yoshino was a navigator/observer on a *Type 97 Kate* torpedo bomber during the attack on Pearl Harbor and released a torpedo that struck the battleship *USS OKLAHOMA*. During their interview, Mr. Yoshino told Mr. King that he was very upset to find out that the Declaration of War had not been delivered by Japanese diplomats in Washington, D.C., prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. This information was not released by the Japanese government at the time, and Mr. Yoshino referred to it as the "cloak of shame."

Mr. King said that as the war progressed and Japan continued to lose its veteran pilots, more and more students were taken into flight training to counter the attrition. He also told us the five aviators were very much impressed and desirous of the US Navy Grumman F6F *Hellcat* fighter. They said the Grumman F4F could be hit and downed, but it was most difficult to flame an F6F. Those who flew the IJN Mitsubishi A6M *Reisen* (allied code name *Zero*), addressed its lack of armor, and they said the guns were

not that good. The fuselage guns were two small a caliber and ran out of ammunition too quickly. The 20mm wing guns were not enough and also ran out of ammunition.

During his interviews, Mr. King always told the interviewees that he would not edit or alter what they told him. He said he had to pay close attention to his own comments and reactions to their stories. If they sensed disapproval from him, they would shut down.

Questions and comments probably could have lasted some time longer as Mr. King brought his presentation to a close, and Gene Howerter presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation. We have Gene to thank for Mr. King coming to Topeka. He did all the leg work to contact Mr. King and invite him and his wife to make the trip to and from California. Gene also arranged for lodging and transportation while the Kings were in Topeka. While in town, Mr. King gave a second presentation at the Topeka and Shawnee County Library that was also well attended.

The book is an excellent read. It is *The Last Zero Fighter*, copyright 2012 by Dan King, ISBN 978-1468178807. We carry the book in our Gift Shop at \$21.95 per copy (do not forget your membership discount.) To contact Mr. King, or to order signed or personalized copies, visit www.historicalconsulting.com or write to: Dan King, c/o Pacifica Press, P.O. Box 14872, Irvine, CA 92623.

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Visitors

During **May**
the Museum had
1009 visitors
from **32** states,
Washington, D.C., and
Australia
Austria
Canada
China
Germany
Great Britain
Jordan
Mexico
Netherlands
Norway
Spain

During **June**
we had
1173 visitors
from **39** states,
Australia
Canada
Colombia
Denmark
Finland
Great Britain
New Zealand
Norway
Scotland
Vietnam

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Mark your calendar for the 9th annual Winged Foot 5K/10K Run and 5K Walk

Saturday, September 28

Race time is 8 a.m. and race day registration is 6:45 a.m. to 7:50 a.m. Pre-registration is available by sending in the registration form on the race brochure or register at www.combatairmuseum.org.

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Read more about it on page 3. →

2013 Events

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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