

# COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

## → → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

Forbes Field Topeka, Kansas

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### Telling the fateful tale of the crew of *Stormy Weather*

The topic of October's Membership Luncheon presentation dealt with an ill-fated mission of an Eighth Air Force B-17 bomber over Germany in May 1944 and how the people of southern Denmark commemorated the crew of that bomber. **Paul Pullen**, son of member **Joe Pullen**, gave the presentation. Both men were quite familiar with the story as Joe's brother, Marshall, was navigator aboard the B-17.

Paul began his presentation by saying that four Pullen brothers went to war during World War II. One went into the US Army ground forces, one to the US Army Air Force, one to the Marine Corps, and one to the Navy. He said his talk would be about a B-17G bomber named *STORMY WEATHER*, assigned to the 509th Bombardment Squadron, 351st Bombardment Group, Eighth Air Force, based at Polebrook Airfield, Northamptonshire, United Kingdom. He said the B-17, serial number 42-38005, was one of over 12,000 B-17s built. He also said screen actor Clark Gable flew on combat missions with the 351st.

Paul used a PowerPoint program during his presentation, showing both video and still photography of Eighth Air Force bombers and crew photos and clips from a reunion ceremony. One photo was dated 1/10/43 of Crew 44. It was the first crew of then Lieutenant Robert B. Clay, plane commander, and included Marshall Pullen, a navigator. This crew originally flew a B-17 named *CLAY PIGEON* with 509th Squadron, named after the pilot.

Paul said that at the time his uncle was in England, crews needed 25 missions before they could rotate back home. The crew stayed with Clay when he flew other B-17s as a squadron or group leader to build up their missions. May 24, 1944, was mission 367 for the Eighth Air Force and number 17 for Robert Clay. The target Clay and his crew flew against that day was Berlin, Germany, and he was the mission leader. For this mission, three men who were not normal members of the crew flew with Clay. All were officers and included a 509th Squadron pilot from another bomber,

1st Lieutenant Frank Hatten, who flew this mission as copilot; the bombardier, and 1st Lieutenant James H. Wimmer, who flew as tail gunner. The tail gunner crew position was normally an enlisted man, but mission leaders would sometimes carry an officer in that slot to watch over the formation of trail bombers. James Wimmer also had another reason for going. This was mission number 25 for him.

**"Stormy Weather," con't. on page 8**



Joe Pullen listens as his son Paul talks about the Stormy Weather.

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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*

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Your comments are welcomed.

## From the Chairman's Desk

*Gene Howerter, Chairman, BOD*

At this time of year, I wish all of you a wonderful blessed holiday season with your families and loved ones. We have been truly blessed in so many ways this year at the Combat Air Museum, in part, because of wonderful members, volunteers, and people like you. I would like to say "thank you" to each and every one of you. It is my prayer that you will hang in there with us again for the 2013 calendar year. As the famous military poster once said, "We Need You."

The past few days have been very action-packed for some of us at the Museum. November 15, **Steven Craig** was at the Museum running up his P-51 Mustang along with his friend **Matt Jackson**. Matt flew the plane to Lawrence for inspection and on to California for some additional modification. It was really great seeing this fantastic machine flying on a perfect, fall day. We owe a big thank you to Steve for his unselfish and wonderful friendship. (see related story)

On November 16 several CAM members traveled to Fort Riley at the invitation of Colonel Mike Morgan and the Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) of the Big Red One for a very special day of activities. (See related story) This was one of the most enjoyable days I have had as a member of the Museum in a long time. Demonstrations and activities designed around the home and away life of the CAB were most interesting. This is truly a self-contained unit of our modern Army. Besides being able to have hands on with several modern day military heli-copters and operation specialty units, we watched as one of their new unmanned aerial vehicles (Gray Eagle) launched and landed. What a day!

November 17 several CAM members took a day trip to Gardner, Kansas for a viewing of our upcoming aircraft carrier

model display of the USS ORISKANY. This exhibit will be in the Museum by the time we welcome the 2014 ORISKANY Reunion. **Larry Todd** is a master modeler ship builder, and you are in for a treat when it is completed. It is nine feet long. The detail is more than museum quality, and Larry currently has some 2300 man hours in the project.

Finally, what I consider to be one of our most special covered dish Membership Luncheon meetings each year is the December meeting and program. I hope to see as many of you as can make it attending this meeting. The holidays are a wonderful time to reflect on all of the blessings we have experienced this past year. Please feel free to drop by the Museum any time you can and share with us your experiences and joys from this year. Better yet, consider coming out and volunteering, and I know there will be plenty of time for reflection. We already have started planning activities for the next year at the Museum. If you are not at present volunteering, come out and join the fun. The year 2013 should usher in some new additions to the Museum before the year ends.

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## Join the Combat Air Museum!

Your membership and  
support are  
important to us.

## In Memoriam

### Jean Wanner

1927 – 2012  
 September 19, 2012  
 Topeka, Kansas  
 Member Number 2197  
 22 year Lifetime member



Jean and Bernie Wanner.

Jean Wanner and her husband, Bernie, who passed away in November 2011, held lifetime memberships in Combat Air Museum. The couple were ambassadors at large and benefactors for the Museum. They often manned booths and tables with our storyboards at different venues, including the Experimental Aircraft

Association AirVenture annual gatherings at Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Jean was also a Gift Shop operator, and Bernie always accompa-

nied her on the days she volunteered. She and Bernie also prepared and delivered our newsletters for mailing. For those who remember our sometimes cantankerous Gift Shop and hangar cat, Cammy, Jean and Bernie ensured she was always taken to annual check-ups, provided her food and treats, and her sleeping basket. They also took her to the veterinarian when it came time to put Cammy to sleep.

For several years, the couple donated funds to CAM for specific projects or for various uses as needed. They owned a Cessna 150M *Commuter II* private aircraft and provided the aircraft with a pilot to give introductory flights for students in our Aviation Education classes.

In recognition of Jean's service and support of

CAM, during a Membership Luncheon on November 9, 1999, we renamed the Combat Air Museum Educational Center the Jean Wanner Educational Conference Center. Health complications from diabetes forced Jean to stop working in the Gift Shop, but we would still see her and Bernie at our annual pancake feeds. Over the past couple of years, until her passing, Jean was in care facility. →

## Visitors

During **September** the Museum had **1073 visitors** from **32** states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and  
 Australia  
 Canada  
 Columbia  
 Ecuador  
 Finland  
 Great Britain  
 Japan  
 Mexico  
 Norway  
 Peru

During **October** we had **648 visitors** from **30** states, Washington D.C. and  
 Australia  
 Brazil  
 Canada  
 Great Britain  
 Honduras  
 New Zealand  
 Scotland  
 Switzerland

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## Calendar of Events for December & January

### December

#### Monday, December 10

Membership Luncheon  
 Jean Wanner Education Conference Room  
 11:30 am

CAM member Sue Ann Seel will be our guest speaker. She will talk about the late Carl Fyler D.D.S., his World War II shoot down over Germany, the present day efforts to find one of his crewman's remains, and getting the Medal of Honor for a second crewman killed on that mission.

#### Tuesday, December 25

Christmas Day  
 The Museum is closed

### January

#### Tuesday, January 1

New Year's Day  
 The Museum is closed

There is no Membership Luncheon in January. The next luncheon will be Monday, February 11.

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## CAM members visit First Combat Aviation Brigade's Community Day at Ft. Riley

Over 30 Museum members had the pleasure and privilege of spending a morning with some outstanding Americans when we took part in a Community Day held by the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB), 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, Kansas. We visited with many US Army enlisted and officer personnel of the "Demon" Brigade as a part of a larger group of community leaders and supporters from the Junction City, Ogden, and Manhattan areas. Everyone gathered about 9 am at one of the Brigade's hangars on the south side of Marshall Field for a greeting, introduction and briefing. As people came into the hangar they were told the tables at which they seated themselves determined what group they would be in for observing the various demonstrations and displays set up for the visit.

Before the formalities began, everyone was asked to go to the flight line as Brigade personnel were about to launch one of their *Gray Eagle* unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to fly to an operating area on the Fort. The MQ-1C *Gray Eagle* UAV is a new addition to the Brigade, and they currently have four at Marshall Field. The aircraft is designated an UAS for Unmanned Aircraft System. We saw three of the four aircraft. They also told us operating this UAV required new procedures to interact with civil air traffic controllers, as the aircraft will often fly in civil air space. Many of us CAM types were particularly interested in the *Gray Eagle* as one of our members, Gary Naylor, is currently in California undergoing schooling and training to conduct maintenance on this particular UAV. Upon completion of his training, Gary expects to work on the *Gray Eagles* based at Marshall Field. At the time we visited Fort Riley, his class had yet to tear down and rebuild one of the UAVs, so several of us ensured we took photos, some touching a *Gray Eagle*, to send to Gary.

After watching the launch, we returned to the hangar where **Colonel John Morgan**, commander of the 1st CAB, gave his welcome comments and briefing about the Brigade. It has some 2,800 members and flies four different helicopters and the new UAS. The helicopters include the CH-47F *Chinook* assault transport, the AH-64 *Apache* Block III Longbow attack helicopter, the UH-60M *Blackhawk* utility helicopter, and the OH-58D *Kiowa* observation helicopter. With the exception of the OH-58 *Kiowa*, all the versions of helicopters flown by the 1st CAB are the latest versions in the Army inventory. The CH-47F we toured was delivered in June 2012 and had a new car smell to it. During his



An MQ-1C Gray Eagle unmanned aerial system on the flight line.

comments, Colonel Morgan expressed his appreciation for the support citizens and civic leaders of Kansas give the Brigade.

After the briefing, the three groups were told where they would begin their rotations of the various venues set up for us to see. Because of the size of the Combat Air Museum contingent, we became our own group. **Captain Erin Fox**, a *Blackhawk* pilot with 12 years of service, was our designated herder to get us from one venue to another. We started inside the hangar and visited with a number of Brigade personnel at various stations set up around the interior. Several dealt with the maintenance and inspection of the helicopters. Test and inspection equipment was set on tables, and a CH-47 *Chinook* was behind a roped off area undergoing overhaul and repair. Examples of the aircraft engines were on stands, as were examples of the various armaments carried by the helicopters. We found all the personnel very willing to share their knowledge and experiences with us.

Another area of the hangar had examples of the personnel weapons used in ground combat, from sidearms to machine guns. Night vision goggles worn on helmets and weapons sighting scopes were displayed as well as headgear and types of backpacks worn in the field. Body armor was on exhibit, and personnel explained the ballistic vest. It consists of soft Kevlar panels and has pockets behind the panels where ballistic plate inserts are placed. With all plates inserted, the vest can weigh from 30 to 35 pounds. Captain Fox said when she flew in hostile environments, she wore a plate in the front of her vest, but not in the back as the seat was armored.

Computer target systems were available for those who wanted to test their marksmanship skills with weapons and several visitors tried their skills as well as some of the Brigade personnel.

"Community Day," con't. on page 6

COMBAT AIR MUSEUM



Clockwise from top left:  
Visitors gather for the 1st CAB Community Day  
Colonel John M. "Mike" Morgan welcomes visitors to the 1st  
Combat Aviation Brigade.  
Gene Howerter found a Sasquatch - actually an Army sniper.  
A CH-47Chinook undergoing overhaul and repair.  
The battle aid station demonstration.  
Paul Frantz armed and in body armor.  
A second Gray Eagle takes off.

"Community Day," con't. from page 5

Our next station took us outside to a large tent. This was set up to demonstrate a first aid field station. An Army Captain, who was a doctor, and enlisted medics demonstrated how they would handle a casualty as first responders. They used very realistic medical moulage - simulated injuries - in their demonstration. A "wounded" soldier was brought into the tent on a stretcher with a severe wound to his upper right leg, and a severe stomach wound with the lower intestine protruding. He and the stretcher were placed on a couple of sawhorses. As the medics attended to the injuries, the doctor explained the what and why of their procedures. They spoke to the soldier to find out what he felt and where he hurt. They applied a tourniquet to his leg to stop the bleeding. The doctor said the leg could survive the cutoff of blood flow for up to eight hours, and all soldiers carry tourniquets in the field. The Captain went on to say that leg wounds were some of the most common wounds seen in Iraq and Afghanistan because of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). As the soldier's wounds were ascertained, the Captain directed a medic with a hand radio to call for medical evacuation. The other medics cut away the soldier's clothing and removed his boots to look for other wounds. They placed him in a neck brace. The medic with the radio reported to the Captain what was available to transport the casualty. In this case, it would be via vehicle.

In preparation for moving the casualty, the doctor and medics placed him on a backboard, just in case there was some type of spinal injury. This also allowed them to look at his backsides for possible injuries there. Once on the backboard, a thermal blanket was placed on the injured soldier. The doctor pointed out where the blanket was slit to allow for continued observation and monitoring of the leg and stomach wounds.

The transportation was a "Humvee" outfitted to carry four casualties. "Humvee" is the common nickname for the HMMWV or High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle. The patient and paperwork with his vitals and injuries all went into the back of the "Humvee" and this ended the demonstration. It was a very professional and informative demonstration of first aid near a battlefield. The Captain, medics, and soldier who was injured then took part in a question and answer period. One thing discussed was the tent. It was nothing like the canvas cloth and wood poles variety seen in the cinema and television series MASH. This was a synthetic cloth material, double layered, with a lightweight metal support structure that was along the walls and across the overhead of the tent. There was nothing in the center to obstruct personnel inside the tent. One medic said that usually they would set up in an existing building or



structure in the battle area that could be used as an aid station.

Our next demonstration in this venue was a double tent set up as a field command post. A Sergeant Major gave this presentation. There were several computers on tables and a few large video screens streaming various maps and information. The Sergeant Major said the commander and command staff could access real time information about the airborne situation, where his assets were and what they were doing. He pointed out that because the equipment, software, and its uses were classified, we were looking at unclassified, simulated presentations. In response to a question about a map shown on screen that showed where friendly aircraft were flying, the Sergeant Major said they could produce such maps for anywhere in the world.

Again, the construction of this tent setup was discussed. The walls were synthetic, and double layered to offer an insulating effect in the air space between the walls. However, the support structure was not visible with this tent. The framework was between the fabric layers. The Sergeant Major said it folded up like an accordion when taken down. In this particular setup, two tents were zippered together. He also pointed out that the tent was lighted, and it could be air conditioned or heated. We could hear the gasoline-operated machinery outside the tent. When asked what happened if the generating equipment failed, the Sergeant Major responded that the electronics equipment had adequate battery backup to continue use until a backup generator came on line or the primary was repaired. When asked what kind of fuel the generators used, he replied the same as the aircraft.

Our next stop in the area was another tent. This one was similar in construction to the command post, only its floor area and height were larger. Its interior held at least a dozen folding cots, and its purpose was a sleeping tent for troops coming out of the field. There was nothing lavish about the interior at all, but the Sergeant giving the presentation said troops who had been sleeping on the ground greatly appreciated a cot in a climate-controlled environment. He pointed out

various loops along the walls of the tent where personnel could hang gear. He also said that many times, instead of just going to sleep, troops played card games. The Sergeant said this was one way they got to know each other and develop as a team unit. We saw what appeared to be several panels in the walls of the tent. The Sergeant said if the climate control equipment failed, these could be rolled up to allow airflow through the tent.

Our last station to visit was the flight line. An example of each type of helicopter flown by the Brigade and a *Gray Eagle* were available for us to see. Enlisted and officer personnel were by each aircraft to tell us about them, answer questions, visit with us and share their experiences. The aircraft were open to tour and visitors were allowed to get into the cockpits and personnel and cargo areas. At the end of the row of aircraft were several "Humvees" and a fuel truck. Again, personnel, many outfitted in their helmets and vests, told us about the vehicles, opened up hoods and interiors and demonstrated some of their respective equipment. During the flight line visit, several *Chinooks* conducted flight operations, and we saw a *Gray Eagle* fly by, again

The flight line tour ended our schedule, and we did a large group photo on the flight line with Colonel Morgan and some of his personnel, then another with just CAM members. During the morning briefing we were invited to eat lunch at the Demon Diner located elsewhere on Fort Riley, and a number of the CAM group did come to the dining facility after visiting more with Brigade personnel and/or spending more time on the flight line or inside the hangar bay. **Dave Murray** and **Dick Trupp** invited Captain Fox to lunch and she was able to attend. All in all it was a great morning spent with a great group of members of our US Army.

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Opposite page: CAM members by an UH-60M Blackhawk utility helicopter.

Top to bottom: An AH-64 Apache Block III Longbow attack helicopter.

A five-month old CH-47F Chinook assault transport.

Jack Vaughn by an OH-58D Kiowa observation helicopter.

Some of the CAM contingent with 1st CAB personnel.

"Stormy Weather," con't. from page 1

Paul said that Hatten's regular B-17, *MY GAL SAL*, was initially assigned for Clay and his crew to fly that day. The aircraft recently had its nose cone replaced, and apparently for that reason, Clay said no to flying the B-17. The crew switched to B-17G *STORMY WEATHER*, a plane that was due for maintenance, and this was its 22nd mission. During the change between these two aircraft, Clay's parachute was left behind.

Captain Clay, his nine crew members, and *STORMY WEATHER* lead the mission to Berlin, but not without incident. Paul told us the left, inboard (number 2) engine lost oil pressure a few minutes from "bombs away" and Clay feathered it. Clay continued to the target, dropped the bomb load, then peeled away from the formation and headed directly for home instead of the designated rendezvous area. While they had enjoyed a strong tailwind going into the target, the crew now faced that same wind as a headwind. Before reaching the coast, the right, outboard (number 4) engine ran away and would not feather, and *STORMY WEATHER* was not going to make it back to England. Clay flew along the East Frisian Islands, parallel to the German coastline. The crew had earlier decided they would rather be captured than risk ditching in the North Sea. Clay decided to go for neutral Sweden and made a sweeping right turn over the North Sea and flew northeast toward that country. This turn brought back a helpful tailwind.

A problem Marshall Pullen saw in Clay's heading was it would carry *STORMY WEATHER* over the German archipelago of Helgoland. The archipelago included a major German naval base and was heavily fortified with anti-aircraft artillery, so much so it was included in a danger area marked on aeronautical charts. Pullen said he warned Clay not to overfly the archipelago; Clay said he never heard it. Problems grew shortly after crossing Helgoland when the right, inboard (number 3) engine lost oil pressure and was feathered, apparently damaged by flak. Now three engines down, making landfall over Sweden, still some 215 miles distant, was not going to happen.

*STORMY WEATHER*'s track carried it over the north central arm of Germany and over southern Denmark. Constantly losing altitude, Clay ordered the crew to bailout, and eight of them did. Copilot Frank Hatten elected to stay with Clay who perhaps by now realized he did not have a parachute. Paul showed us a map of the drop zone and gave names of people who helped the bomber's crew as they landed. The bailouts came down in and near the villages of Svenstrup and Klingbjerg, on the Danish island, Als.

Clay and Hatten were battling to keep a barely flying *STORMY WEATHER* in the air long enough for a wheels up landing. The rapid descent through clouds and weather caused the windshield to fog over and the two had to put

their heads out their respective side windows to see where the plane was flying. They saw an open field alongside a roadway and steered the bomber toward that for a belly landing. The aircraft clipped a power pole, cartwheeled, and came to rest in the field about five miles southeast of where the rest of the crew parachuted down. The fuselage broke in half behind the trailing edge of the wing, twisted, and came to rest almost upside down over the remains of the right wing. The nose forward of the cockpit was destroyed, too. Hatten suffered a gash on his head, but otherwise, he and Clay suffered no major injuries. The eight men who bailed out also got to the ground safely.

Locals either heard or witnessed the crash. After Clay and Hatten exited the plane, Clay tried unsuccessfully to set it on fire with a flare pistol which caused some onlookers to scatter. Eventually, the aircrew approached the locals for assistance. There was some hesitation at first because Denmark, including Als Island, was occupied by German forces, and there was some fear of reprisal if the locals helped the Americans. But they did provide the airmen food and shelter. There was apparently no serious thought given to escape and evasion from the Germans. A few parachutes were gathered and hidden away. German soldiers found one, but the others were kept for their cloth. Paul showed photos of two wedding dresses, one baptism gown, and a flag with a white cross and logo on it that were made from the silk of the parachutes. Paul also told us that 19 Allied planes went down over Denmark, and the *STORMY WEATHER* was the only plane where all the crew survived.

Soon after *STORMY WEATHER* and its crew arrived on Als, they became prisoners of war. Paul showed us images of pages from a War Department Missing Air Crew Report. One page described what happened to *STORMY WEATHER* over the target area as reported by other B-17s. The second page listed the aircrew as captured. The crew initially went to a Dulag Luft, a transit POW camp, where they underwent interrogations. Paul said the Germans already had a lot of intelligence about the aircrew's Squadron and Group, about Polebrook, and their chain of command. He added they also knew information about individual crew members that surprised the men. Because there were five officers aboard *STORMY WEATHER* instead of the normal four, they seemed to draw special interest from the interrogators. Was *STORMY WEATHER* a special B-17 and/or on a special mission?

The Germans reported the POW nature of the crew earlier than official US Military channels. Report of Marshall Pullen's capture came from the Swedish Red Cross on June 22, 1944, just about a month after his capture. Two months later, a similar notification arrived from the US Government. Paul said that document exchanges regarding the captives were generally good.

Remains of the *STORMY WEATHER* were salvaged,



loaded onto trucks and, as was the case with hundreds of wrecked aircraft in Germany and German-occupied countries, eventually smelted down into aluminum ingots and used to build Germany's war machines.

The aircrew was first interned in Stalag Luft III, near Sagan, Poland. Paul showed an image of a Red Cross document that showed locations of the various German POW camps. He also showed us a copy of a Prisoner of War log kept by Lt. Hardy A. Mitchener. Mitchener was not a crew member of *STORMY WEATHER*, but he was in Stalag Luft III and his POW log is a meticulous record of the camp and his stay there. The log includes prose and poetry printed and written in beautiful handwriting, and includes many detailed sketches of the buildings and life in Stalag Luft III, plus a number of other sketches dealing with home and freedom.

On January 30, 1945, as Soviet troops advanced towards Sagan, the occupants of Stalag Luft III began an arduous move to other POW camps. Many made the move by foot. Others, such as those sent to Stalag Luft VII-A, started by foot then were jammed into railway cars like cattle. Several pages of Lt. Mitchener's POW log include drawings and notes involved with this evacuation from Stalag Luft III. Paul said that most of the guards moving with the POWs were old men. Sometimes, POWs would carry the guards' weapons. The POWs did not want to run away, they just wanted to get somewhere warm.

Marshall Pullen was one of the POWs transferred to Stalag Luft VII-A near Moosburg, Germany. This camp was built to hold 14,000 prisoners. By April 1945, Paul said it held some 80,000 prisoners on 80 acres of land. The prisoner population grew to 130,000 before it was liberated. He then showed some images of the camp. The US 14th Armored Division liberated Stalag VII-A on April 29, 1945.

Paul talked briefly about the POWs being processed and returning home at the end of the war in Europe. He said they could not wait to get home and start new lives. He also said that Captain Robert Clay became bitter about his POW experiences and remained that way for some 50 years.

About 1985 Marshall Pullen became involved with the Stalag III reunion committee and kept in constant contact with former POWs, including some members of the *STORMY WEATHER* crew. He also learned that Danes on Als Island held an annual reunion at the crash site out of respect for the American crew. A few years later, in 1989, a Dane began research on the crash of *STORMY WEATHER*, got a photo of the crashed airplane, and started researching the plane's crew. The photo was published in the March 1999 issue of the 351st Bombardment Group newsletter *The Polebrook Post* with an article that people of Denmark wanted to find out about the plane's crew. A month later, during a reunion of Stalag III former POWs, Daniel Surprise, left waist gunner on

*STORMY WEATHER*, showed Robert Clay *The Polebrook Post* photo and article. Neither man knew the Danes held an annual observance for their crew.

Paul then ran a video of a television interview made in 2000 with Robert Clay by KSL-TV Salt Lake City, Utah. It was about the May 24, 1944, mission. A part of the clip showed a 1944 wedding photo of one of the women whose wedding dress was made from one of the crewmen's parachute. The woman was a widow but still lived on Als Island. She corresponded with Clay and sent him a scrap of the parachute, and she still had her wedding dress.

Now that they had located and corresponded with members of *STORMY WEATHER*'s crew, Danes on Als Island planned a special reunion for 2001. At the time, all ten crewmen were still living. Much planning and preparation went into having the reunion, and members of the crew were invited to attend the ceremonies. Four of the crew were able to attend. As much as he wanted to go, Marshall Pullen's health would not allow the trip overseas. Robert Clay, pilot; Frank Hatten, copilot; Daniel Surprise, left waist gunner; and Charles Jilcott, top turret gunner; made the journey to Als. The reunion committee expected 200 to 500 people would attend the ceremony. Some 1,500 people showed up. Paul showed a series of video clips from the filming of the reunion, including comments made by the four crewmen, and comments

"Stormy Weather," con't. on page 11

## Membership Luncheon Speakers

CAM member **Sue Ann Seel** is our guest speaker for the December Membership Luncheon. She and **Karl Webb** co-authored a biography titled 11-11: The Carl Fyler Story, about the late **Carl Fyler**, D.D.S., a long time Topeka dentist and lifetime member of the Museum. Dr. Fyler was pilot of a B-17 *Flying Fortress* bomber, the *Dark Horse*, that was shot down over Bremen, Germany, on November 27, 1943. Dr. Fyler and surviving crewmen became prisoners of war. This was his 25th mission and had it been successful, he would have gone home.

Sue Ann will speak about the biography and also about present efforts to find one crewman of the *Dark Horse* still listed as missing in action (MIA) and the renewed efforts to get a second deceased crewman the Medal of Honor for his actions that day. Sue Ann and Karl were contacted by an US Army officer who is a unit director of one of several groups working to recover the more than 73,000 MIAs from World War II. Through this contact, the two became more involved in MIA issues and in the search for waist gunner **Raymond O'Connell**.

The Medal of Honor efforts are on behalf of tail gunner **Joseph Sawicki** who died with the bomber.

## Oriskany model project helps attract convention

Due to the efforts of a group of Museum volunteers, a Navy ship Reunion Convention will take place in Topeka in 2014

As reported in past issues of *Plane Talk*, CAM has a 1/96<sup>th</sup> scale aircraft carrier training model inherited from the former Old Olathe Naval Air Museum in February 2004 after that museum closed. Over the past several years three volunteers have rebuilt this ESSEX-class training aid into the USS ORISKANY (CV/CVA 34) as it appeared in 1966. To date, these three, **Larry Todd**, **Ted Nolde**, and **Darrin Roberts**, have put in over 3,000 man-hours into the rebuild of this nine-foot long ship. As a training aide, there was not much detail in the carrier's appearance. The same cannot be said today, and the before and after views are exceptional

USS ORISKANY was launched in 1945, but construction stopped on it in 1947. It was finally completed and commissioned in 1950 and served in the Korean War. It later served in the Vietnam War and was decommissioned in 1976. The carrier was sold for scrap in 1995, but the contract was terminated for default and the ship repossessed in 1997. After some three years of environmental preparations, the carrier was sunk as an artificial reef in May 2006 in the Gulf of Mexico, about 22 miles south of Pensacola, Florida.

**Dick Trupp** made the proposal to reconstruct the model as USS ORISKANY as it appeared in 1966 just before a major fire broke out during operations off Vietnam, killing 44 crewmen and pilots. Through Dick's efforts, Larry, Ted and Darrin, all master modelers, agreed to take part in the reconstruction. Ted began work on the island superstructure in January 2005. Starting with a couple of blocks of wood, Ted spent 600 man-hours scratch building the superstructure. Darrin continues to build up an air wing of 49 scale aircraft that will be placed on the flight deck and a portion of the hangar deck. The models are correct in their air wing and squadron markings and carry the correct bureau numbers of the aircraft aboard USS ORISKANY when she had the fire. Larry tackled the hull and flight deck. Rather than rebuild and modify the existing flight deck, he built an entirely new one. He rebuilt the World War II style ESSEX-class hull into the much more modern Vietnam era ORISKANY. So far, Larry has logged 2,300 man-hours on the flight deck and hull since April 2008. He projects completion in the 3rd quarter of 2013.

Former crewmen of the USS ORISKANY have an annual Reunion Convention, and this year we were determined to make a pitch for the 2014 Convention to be held in Topeka for commissioning of the completed model. We are fortunate to have two former ORISKANY sailors as member of CAM, **Bill Newman** and **Richard Painter**. They are quite enthusiastic about the model project and the idea of having an ORISKANY reunion in Topeka and

became involved in the Museum's efforts to bring the Convention here. Dick Trupp, **Dave Murray**, Bill and Richard worked together in contacting the ORISKANY Association and making our case to host the 2014 reunion. Armed to the teeth with a photo album of the ORISKANY model project and local lodging rates and area attractions, Bill and Richard attended this year's reunion in San Antonio, Texas.

They learned upon arrival that Topeka was in the running for the three-day 2014 convention along with the Black Hills/Mount Rushmore and a third entrant in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. After some intense and effective lobbying efforts by Bill and Richard, Topeka won out with 69% of the vote to 23% for Black Hills/Mount Rushmore and 8% for Coeur d'Alene. This was clearly because of the model, which promises to be the most complete and accurate ORISKANY artifact anywhere in the USA

The Convention dates are set for September 21-24, 2014, and we will be having a full tour of the Museum for the conventioners with the commissioning of the USS ORISKANY model and a USO-type show and dinner at the Museum on Tuesday, September 23, 2014. We expect to invite several naval dignitaries to the ceremony.

To see progress on the model, have a look at the photos taken in November 2012 on our webpage: <http://www.combatairmuseum.org/exhibits/ussoriskanyhull.html>. →

## Congrats to Tad Pritchett

CAM Board Secretary **Tad Pritchett** was honored on November 12 with a surprise presentation of a Kansas Vietnam Veteran Medallion. This fall, Tad gave three military history presentations at the Topeka Shawnee County Public Library. The first was on the Battle of the Bulge, the second on the Cold War, then "A Marine in Vietnam: A Battle in the Cold War" on November 12.

State Senator Laura Kelly, accompanied by two Marines, presented Tad his medallion and certificate. He commanded infantry in Vietnam as a captain in the 3rd Marine Division during 1968 and 1969.

Tad commented that he was deeply humbled by the presentation and that it was a beautiful medallion. Memorabilia and artifacts from Tad's service in Vietnam are on exhibit inside the NCH-53A *Sea Stallion* in Hangar 602.

Kansas Vietnam Veterans who served on active duty in US military service at any time beginning February 28, 1961, through May 7, 1975, are eligible to receive the medallion and certificate. Go to <http://1.usa.gov/W4v6BR>.

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## The Mustang is off and flying

After a 17-month stay, the P-51D *Mustang* left CAM for Lawrence, Kansas, for an annual inspection and will eventually be flown to California for some modification work. Owner **Steve Craig** and pilot **Matt Jackson** came to the Museum on November 15 to fly the plane out. Steve is a hospitality industry entrepreneur in Lawrence and lifetime member of CAM. He donated the Polish-built SBLim-2 (MiG-15) to CAM in 1994. Matt operates Classic Airworks in Van Nuys, California, where he specializes in restoration of World War II aircraft. He is a world-renowned pilot, aviation mechanic, and restoration expert with WWII warbirds. He flies unlimited class warbirds at the Reno air races.

After various fluid checks were made and topped off, volunteers assisted Matt and Steve in rolling the plane from inside Hangar 602 to the apron. Matt started and ran the engine up to temperature while checking operating parameters and the engine's running condition. After shutdown, fluid levels were again checked, thief samples of fuel were taken to check for water, and nitrogen gas was put in both main gear struts. With those completed, Matt climbed back into the cockpit with his headphones, started the engine, and prepared for taxi and takeoff. In response to a request, he received permission from the tower to do a low level pass by the Museum, which he did before heading for Lawrence. →