



THE CHINA LAKER

Special points of interest:

- Who was: William “Deak” Parsons?
- CLMF 15th Annual Dinner and Auction
- Blaze Baseball Game

Who was: William “Deak” Parsons?

As you enter the main entrance to the Naval Air Station China Lake, go halfway around the traffic circle and continue on East Inyokern Road. You pass McLean Laboratory on the left and then you come to the Training Center. The north-south cross-road there is Parsons Road. Parsons Road continues south through the now-cleared Old Duplex housing area, then, as the road turns to the east it suddenly becomes Groves Street, which ends at North Richmond Road.



Parsons? Groves? Who were they? Most people might recall that LtGen. Leslie R. Groves, Jr. was the leader of the Manhattan Project, the Atomic Bomb program. Some might know that USN RADM. William Sterling “Deak”

(1901-1953) was the leader of the Manhattan Project responsible for the production of an atomic bomb into a deliverable weapon. Parsons was born in November 1901 in Illinois. He was a bright kid, who completed 12 years of schooling in eight years. He was admitted to the Naval Academy at age 16, two years younger than most cadets. His classmates gave him the nickname “Deak”, for deacon (playing on his last name). He graduated from Annapolis in the class of 1922.

Parsons’ first sea assignment was on the Battleship *USS Idaho*. Deak was in charge of the *Idaho*’s main battery of 14-inch guns. Deak stood out because he was not just interested in his

gunnery job, he wanted to understand everything about naval gunnery. He became an expert in all factors that influenced naval gunfire. After his tour on the *Idaho*, Deak attended the Naval Postgraduate School at Annapolis in 1927 with an emphasis on ordnance. Then he was assigned to the Navy’s proving ground for naval guns at Dahlgren, VA. Here Lt. Parsons met Dr. L.T.E “Tommy” Thompson, a ballistics chief scientist at Dahlgren. Thompson was later to become the first Technical Director at NOTS, Inyokern. Thompson immediately recognized Parsons’ uncanny scientific abilities. Parsons and Thompson developed a lifetime friendship and collaborated closely throughout their careers.

Parsons’ subsequent sea tour increased his awareness of

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President’s Message

Progress on our plan for the future is solidifying. We were not able to raise sufficient funds to buy the Marriott Office Building but have worked together with Jim Suver, CEO of the Hospital, who had the up-front money we did not have, and needs the whole building for the long term. He is working with us to finish and then lease to us the downstairs for our

Museum for 5 years. We now are looking at this move as an interim step to establish our presence in Ridgecrest, to determine our business cash flow with our Gift Shop and some key displays, with paid admission. We are completing a business plan which shows we will be able to pay our daily operations bills and save donations for a simple core of

the final China Lake Museum which we will simultaneously work toward building on the Kern Park land adjacent to Maturango Museum, with several phases of growth. Upon close of escrow, we will notify members of our Founders Campaign to enable them to express their wishes now that plans have changed again. We would appreciate your support

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Who was: William “Deak” Parsons? (continued from page 1)

defending ships from aircraft, which were becoming credible weapons of warfare. Deak felt that not much more improvement in gunfire accuracy was possible without some revolutionary new technology. In his spare time Parsons read *Reviews of Modern Physics*, a publication Dr. Thompson recommended. In 1933 he was assigned to the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) as liaison officer between NRL and the Navy’s Bureau of Ordnance (BuOrd). In his first week, as he was familiarizing himself with NRL’s work, he was on the trail of a technological solution to his two most important problems: how to improve naval gunfire and how to defend the battleship against an airplane.

Parsons and Radar. NRL was working on using high-frequency radio waves to detect an aircraft. Parsons immediately grasped that a radio echo device that could detect aircraft beyond the limitation of human sight could protect ships and harbors from surprise attacks. Deak pushed a reluctant BuOrd to pursue this technology; however, he was unable to overcome the resistance to the idea by the time he was assigned as an ordnance instructor at the Naval Postgraduate School. But he had succeeded in making the NRL scientists more aware of the tremendous potential of the radio wave discoveries. Deak regretted the U.S. Navy’s failure to recognize radar’s unique opportunity. But he kept at it and he helped open the way for eventual BuOrd support for radar, now an indispensable part of naval warfare.

Parsons and the Proximity Fuze. Parsons’ reputation as a naval officer, who understood the importance of the application of science to warfare, went on to play key roles in two of the most remarkable weapons of World War II, the proximity fuze and the atomic bomb. Parsons had been aware of early work on a proximity fuze that would detonate a projectile if it came close enough to detect the presence of an aircraft. Testing with early designs of the developmental proximity-fuzed projectiles showed that they worked about 10 percent of the time. This was discouraging to the scientists working on the project, but Parsons pointed out that existing anti-aircraft

artillery shells with timed fuzes were only effective one-tenth of one percent of the time. In other words only one in one thousand shells would bring down an aircraft. Shells that worked 10 percent of the time would be an enormous improvement. In time, the fuzes tested with a 62% success rate. Parsons took some of the new weapons aboard the *USS Helena*, where they achieved the first confirmed kill of a Japanese dive-bomber using the new fuze. By April of 1943 tens of thousands of the proximity fuzes were being produced and shipped to the Pacific Fleet. By the last year of the war, 87 companies were producing ninety different types of proximity fuzes and the nation’s first mass-produced smart weapon had proved itself in battle and changed the history of warfare.

Parsons and the Atomic Bomb. In May 1943 BGEN Groves expressed his doubts to Dr. Vannevar Bush that the scientists working on the project could turn the theoretical work into a deliverable weapon. He needed a military officer well versed in theoretical and practical ordnance. He wanted someone who would set up ballistic tests of experimental bombs and plan for the combat use of the weapon. Dr. Bush suggested Parsons, who had recently briefed him on his work with the proximity fuze.

Thus Parsons joined the Manhattan Project just as his promotion to Captain came through. Parsons, in discussing the project with LtGen Groves, stated the objective was a perfectly delivered, perfectly functioning atomic bomb that could end the war.

He also stated that if he, as chief engineer, also served as weaponeer on the first combat mission, he would take a deep personal interest in getting every detail exactly right. Groves agreed, and Parsons was weaponeer on the *Enola Gay* as it delivered the first bomb on Hiroshima.

In January 1945 CalTech and NOTS, Inyokern became involved in the Manhattan Project. By the summer of 1945 aerial testing of “Little Boy” and the “Fat

Man” implosion-type bomb expanded to NOTS Inyokern. NOTS’ entry into the atomic bomb project stemmed from the difficulty in finding a reliable high explosive detonator for the Fat Man to be used to initiate an atomic reaction in a nuclear core. Through the efforts of Dr. C. C. Lauritsen and his CalTech staff working on the Navy’s rocket program at NOTS Inyokern appropriate detonators were designed. Lauritsen’s close association with NOTS paid off as equipment, facilities, and security were available at Inyokern for the development and testing of these detonators. Another problem with the detonators was how to manufacture them. The explosive was cast to a uniform density and then the cast blocks had to be carefully machined into the required shapes. Machining of explosives was virtually a new technique and the machinists had to teach themselves how to do it. Parsons suggested that such a processing plant could be built at NOTS Inyokern. Groves and Parsons went to CalTech and met with Lauritsen and Dr. Bruce Sage who operated the Propulsion Pilot Plant at NOTS. NOTS was tasked with building a pilot plant and later operating the pilot plant for producing nonnuclear explosive components of atomic bombs.

Parsons did accompany the *Enola Gay* as a weaponeer, crawling into the bomb bay while in flight to Hiroshima to personally arm the weapon. Parsons received the Distinguished Service Medal for his role in the atomic bomb project.

Parsons visited NOTS after the successful atomic test at Alamogordo, NM, while on his way to Tinian Island to prepare to deliver the first Little Boy bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. Parsons did accompany the *Enola Gay* as weaponeer, crawling into the bomb bay while in flight to Hiroshima to

personally arm the weapon. Parsons received the Distinguished Service Medal for his role in the atomic bomb project. He was subsequently promoted to Commodore (one-star Admiral) and went on to help organize the postwar operations at Los Alamos, helped with further atomic testing, advocated nuclear power for naval ships, and became the Navy’s chief nuclear adviser. In 1946 he was promoted to Rear Admiral. He

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CLMF 15th ANNUAL DINNER & AUCTION

IT IS ALL HANDS ON DECK TIME!!!

The Auction is just around the corner. We are asking all members to consider volunteering for some part of the program.

The theme this year is: China Lake's Firsts. With all that has been accomplished on the Base since 1942 you know there are a lot of firsts to explore. You may be surprised by some of the firsts that have been developed on-site.



The "Offspring" of China Lake First

Auction and Raffle items are needed. Please ask for items from friends or business owners you know.

As a first year member (see, a first) I am looking forward to being your Auction Chair. Teri is busily whipping me into shape so that we can have a successful program. Flyers are out and invitations have been sent. IF you have not received yours, please give Teri a call. She will gladly get one to you.

B Moody
Editor

Date: 30 May 2015

Place: Kerr McGee Center
Ridgecrest, CA

Time: 5:00PM

Price: \$35 per Ticket

\$60 per Couple

\$250 Reserved Seating for 2

\$1,000 Family Table for 8

\$1,500 Corporate Table for 8

Call (760) 939-3530 to purchase tickets or visit Red Rock Books.

Spotlight: Business Members of CLMF

Alta One Federal Credit Union
Ashley Furniture Homestore
The Boeing Company
C. Martin Company
Coldwell Banker Best Realty
Cosner-Neipp Corporation
Daily Independent
Desert Valleys Federal Credit Union
Electric Motor Works, Inc.

IWV Insurance Agency
Jacobs Naval Systems Group
Daniel T. Kus, DDS
Lone Star Aerospace
McDonald's
Neely Accountancy Corp.
Raytheon Company
Ridgecrest Area Convention & Visitor Bureau
Ridgecrest Automotive, LLC

SpringHill Suites and Hampton Inn
The Swap Sheet
Tax Time Services, Inc.
Toss & Service Master
Vincent Avalos, Edward Jones Investments
Warren's Automotive



Member Agency 13086

Combined Federal Campaign

The newsletter may be sent electronically. You can email us at chinalakemuseum@mediacombb.net. Please put in the subject line "Electronic Newsletter."

If you would like to receive it via USPS, please let us know, (760) 939-3530.

Trustees

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MAJGEN Jon Gallinetti, USMC (Ret)
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VADM David Nichols, USN (Ret)
VADM Mark Skinner, USN (Ret)
CAPT Glenn Tierney, USN (Ret)
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Who was: William “Deak” Parsons? (continued from page 2)

went on to help shape the nations' national strategy of nuclear deterrence.

Parsons and Sidewinder. In this final assignment as Deputy Chief of the Navy's BuOrd, he promoted management of the Navy's ordnance laboratories by military-civilian partnerships wherein the commanding officer provided overall administrative control and the civilian director provided technical leadership.

Parsons helped China Lake in the development of the Sidewinder missile, when there was a threat to cancel the project. Through influence and bootleg funding he helped keep Sidewinder alive until it could prove itself. Parsons passed away after a heart attack in December 1953.

By Jack Latimer

References

- 1) *Target Hiroshima: Deak Parsons and the Creation of the Atomic Bomb*; by Al Christman; Naval Institute Press.
- 2) *The Grand Experiment at Inyokern, History of the Naval Weapons Center, China Lake, California, Vol 3, Chapter 6.* Naval History Division
- 3) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Sterling_Parsons

Presidents Message (continued from page 1)

with our new plan and look forward to your input. A similar case study has happened with the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History in Albuquerque NM, which also had to be relocated due to their Base security. We are taking a similar approach to theirs, and theirs has been very successful. We are hearing that we will have lots of volunteer support since nearly everyone is looking forward to our move into Ridgecrest. A special thanks to those of you who have been benevolent with your

finances in this process, especially our Founders and Benefactors, since it's because of you that we are able to move forward, and please be aware that you are the ones making a difference for the future of the China Lake Museum.

Be sure not to miss attending the upcoming 15th Annual Dinner Auction fundraiser May 30, which keeps the doors open to the China Lake Museum on Base and provides us with additional funds for educational programs, exhibits, and the new

building. We still need auction items and donations, and look forward as always to a wonderful evening getting back in touch with you all. God's Blessings to you and your families this Summer, and please keep us in your prayers!

Alice E Campbell

Alice Campbell
CLMF President

15th Annual Dinner & Auction

Auction and Raffle Donations Needed!

Antiques, collectibles, new items, unique items, etc.

\$35 Per Ticket

\$60 Per Couple

\$250 Reserved Seating for 2

\$1,000 Family Table for 8

\$1,500 Corporate Table for 8

Tickets sold at the Museum and Red Rock Books

Call (760) 939-3530

www.chinalakemuseum.org



The China Lake Museum Foundation 15th Annual Dinner & Auction

Auction items are coming in for the upcoming event.

One of our featured artists is Mr. Charles Bechtel. If you have not seen his work before, you are in for a treat this year. Plus, it has history tied to China Lake. He used the wood from one of the downed trees near the White House. "It is a Greene and Greene style sofa table," as described by Charles.



Charles designed and made the drawer pull. "The grain is spectacular. The shape echoes the arched 'cloud lift' of the apron and lower stretchers. The drawer is really wide and it's important to pull it from the center, otherwise, it will 'rack'." So - how much do you bid on this fabulous one-of-a-kind sofa table?!

And what are some of the other fun, interesting items up for auction:

A world class Marksmanship Dinner donated by Bruce Auld and his son-in-law.

The infamous Mr. Scott O'Neil is once again donating one of his famous bowls. And we know what those have been going for over the last few years! Do you have the mental fortitude to challenge others for this year's bowl?!

Whale Watching - are you ready for the waves to watch the frolicking wildlife?



Have you ever wanted to view the Valley from a higher altitude? Well you will have the opportunity with the 'Scenic Flight Tour' by Shel Simonovich!

Bring out the kid in you by trying for four Disneyland Park Hopper Tickets.



How about going back to nature? Is hiking your thing? Listening to crickets chirp at night? Gazing at the stars? Well here is your opportunity. The Campbell's Cabin has been added to the list. Do not miss this opportunity!

White wine? Red Wine? Which one do you prefer? Both? Well, the solution satisfy we have perfect for you to the most finicky of palettes. The following wineries are here for you to try:



- Michael David Winery
- Delicato Family Winery
- Santa Cruz Mountains Winery

How about sports?!



We have you covered there. You have your choice of baseball or hockey tickets. Or, maybe you prefer both since the two sports do overlap part of the season.



This is just a small sampling of all the wonderful items that will be available for auction.

There are even more wonderful items up for raffle.

If you do not see your item of choice here, how about **donating something that you enjoy** bidding on and think **others would enjoy** as well. You may contact any of the committee members or Teri at the Museum. We would welcome the chance to place your item on the list of items we have available.

Please help us make this happen! Think hard and provide items that will be the 'punch' in our Auction.

The more we raise, the sooner we can achieve our goal of moving...

Raffle tickets for a \$1,200 Betty Spindler ceramic bowl of peppers. Now for sale at the Marriott Hotel. \$100 each.

Raffle tickets for a \$6,300 patriotic Diamond bracelet with Rubies and Sapphires. For sale at Jewelry to Go. \$50 each.

Build Yourself a Legacy!



Benefactors

Vincent and Gloria Avalos
 Bob and Alice Campbell
 Jim and Joy Colvard
 John and Dee DiPol
 RADM Bill and Jean Harris, USN (Ret)
 Bob and Lu Hillyer
 Jack and Joanne Latimer
 John and Judith Ward
 Jim Weimholt
 Anonymous (1)

Join the China Lake Family!
 Help The China Lake Museum
 Foundation move into this building in
 front of the Marriott and begin
 building our Museum in Kern Park as
 originally planned!

Become a Founder today for \$5,000!
 Or a Benefactor for more than \$5,000
 with naming rights!

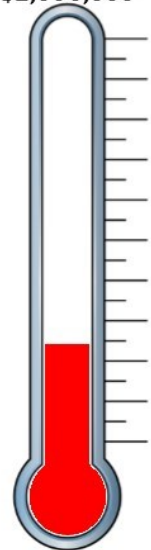
Founders, Benefactors, and Business
 Partners will help our community
 realize "The Dream".

Help move the "Secret City's" Museum
 into the City of Ridgecrest, where it
 won't be such a secret anymore.

Questions?

Call John Freeman (760) 382-7776,
 Bob Campbell (760) 377-7085 or
 Wayne Doucette (760) 447-1484

"First Phase"
GOAL!
 \$2,000,000



Founders

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 JD and Phyllis Williams
 Anonymous (2)

Blaze

China Lake Museum Foundation Day At The Ballpark

Blaze

What: A day of family and fun!

Where: Sam Lynn Ballpark — 4009 Chester Ave
(Bakersfield, CA)

When: Sunday, June 14 @ 12pm (Kids Run Bases Post Game)

How: Type in **CLMF** as the promo code on the Blaze website for the fundraiser date listed above.

Fundraiser...

Proceeds Benefiting China Lake Museum Foundation



Questions? Contact MCandela@BakersfieldBlaze.com or call 716-4487

For Information on the game please contact 661-716-4487

CHINA LAKE MUSEUM FOUNDATION
P.O. BOX 217, RIDGECREST, CA 93556-0217



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The China Lake Museum Foundation

From the Desert to the Fleet

I want to help support the Museum!

Preserving the Legacy of Naval Armament and Technology

CLMF
P.O. Box 217
Ridgecrest, CA 93556

Please accept my donation of:

YES!

- \$10 \$200 \$500
- \$1,000 \$5,000 _____

Your gift is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law for a 501(C)(3) organization. Tax ID #77-0340083.

For checks intended for the new building "Founders Program", please so note. Otherwise, the other monies will be used where most needed.

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Address: _____

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Enclosed is my Check Visa MasterCard Other _____

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Or call (760) 939-3530 to make your credit card donation.