



THE CHINA LAKER

Vol. 11 No. 4

Newsletter of the China Lake Museum Foundation

Fall 2005

The Evolution of Chaparral

By Roland Baker and Frank Knemyer

Chaparral was the adaptation of the Sidewinder air-to-air missile to a surface-to-air missile defense system conceived and implemented by China Lake. The primary tactical application was for short range low altitude area defense. In the early 1960s the Army initiated the development of the Chaparral Weapon System for a close-in air defense requirement, particularly for use in the European theater during the cold war. The system was comprised of Sidewinders launched from a manually operated tracking unit mounted on an Army M-113 track vehicle for rapid mobility

The system was operationally deployed by the Army over a period of three decades to the 1990s. Chaparral survived three follow-on replacement program attempts by the Army which never completed development - Mauler by General Dynamics, conversion of the French Roland system, attempted by Hughes, and DIVADS the latest system. Though the U.S. forces never had to fire a missile in combat, the system had been successfully used in combat by some of our allies.

The evolution of Chaparral began in the late 1950s when China Lake proposed the application of a ground round launched Sidewinder for a short range surface to air defense role. The project was dubbed "Hamburger" derived from "ground round". In 1959, analysis showed that the current Sidewinder motor did not have sufficient energy to provide the ground launched version with adequate effectiveness. A new motor

was proposed utilizing a case bonded composite propellant that would provide 40% more energy in the same size and weight. The Sidewinder program was also considering need for a higher performance motor. Consequently, the new motor was developed for Sidewinder with its application for Chaparral in mind.

In the early 1960s, CDR Bob Wertheim, USN, was assigned to the Weapons Development Department as its military technical officer. Being assigned responsibility for the surface launch project, he suggested the system be named "Chaparral" after the New Mexico State Bird (his home state). (This is our 'Road Runner'). Cdr Wertheim eventually became Adm. Wertheim and the Director of the Special Projects Office - Fleet Ballistic Missile System for the Navy.



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



NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
RIDGECREST, CA
PERMIT NO. 48

The Evolution of Chaparral (continued from page 1)

Early in the effort, tests were conducted to determine the feasibility of acquisition and tracking of the Chaparral concept against A 7E aircraft during a series of attack training sorties on realistic targets at the north range. The A 7E aircraft group became very concerned at how easy it was to target their aircraft.

During this time period, the Air Force and Army initiated a joint combat exercise at Fort Irwin, CA. China Lake was able to get permission to evaluate the Chaparral concept for acquisition and tracking of low flying aircraft - which was the preferred attack doctrine of the Air Force at that time. The demonstrated ability to acquire and track the aircraft initiated a serious argument between the commanding Air Force and Army Generals. This led to China Lake receiving a call from Fort Irwin more or less directing that our Chaparral team with their hardware depart and return home.

China Lake was selected as the site for demonstration of the Navy's Fleet Air Power to President John F. Kennedy in May 1963. During the demonstration, the Base became an instant community of Admirals, DOD Navy Secretaries and other military dignitaries. Among the various static displays for the President, the Chaparral concept was included. The intent was to interest the Commanders of both the East and West Coast Amphibian Forces in considering Chaparral for short range air defense as part of their amphibian landing capability. Though the Navy didn't show any real interest, the Army became very interested.

In September 1963, the Army Materiel Command (AMC) directed the Army Missile Command (MICOM) to conduct studies and tests on the feasibility of adapting Navy's Sidewinder AIM-9D air-to-air missile for surface-to-air tactical use. This led to China Lake becoming re-

sponsible for the Chaparral missile and also to the Aeronutronic Division of Ford Aerospace in Newport Beach, CA. being the system integrator and ground support system contractor for the Army.

In December 1964 the Secretary of Defense approved the Chaparral weapon System for further study and potential feasibility tests. On 27 January 1965 MICOM forwarded the Sidewinder AIM9D/Chaparral study and test results to AMC. The results indicated that the proposed system was feasible, but recommended that limited firing tests should be conducted to verify the predicted performance.

In August 1965 a MICOM report concluded that the Chaparral weapon system concept was feasible and could be fielded within the required time frame. The basic system was comprised of a manually operated tracking unit incorporating four missile launchers all mounted on an Army M113 tracked vehicle. The vehicle had two storage compartments for eight additional missiles.

(continued on page 3)



Message from the Director by Debbie Rios

Well the Naval Museum of Armament and Technology (NMAT) Team has been together three quarters now and we are moving right along. We have made a few changes in the old bar area to reflect on the community of China Lake. We have some big plans for exhibiting our community and how we did things different here. We also have some plans for a new exhibit on the China Lake history of Aircraft Testing starting with Armitage and carried all the way through to VX-31 today.

The NMAT team is working with a couple new volunteers to restore aircraft. Tom DiDomenico has graciously agreed to head up a team who will be restoring a YF-4J. Connie Fairchild has also signed on to help us out. This is a real coup for the aircraft restoration team because both of these guys have spent a number of years in the military and as civilians working on aircraft. Tom told us he actually worked with the last upgrade of this specific plane. We will be moving the YF-4J from Pt. Mugu and bringing it back to China Lake. We will probably be spending every weekend of November at Pt. Mugu taking the YF-4J apart. After that we will be putting the YF-4J back together here at China Lake. We could use all the help we can get on this task so if you would like to volunteer please give me a call at 760-939-0414.

We also have a number of other aircraft that is in need of cleaning and restoration and there has been recent pressure to complete these aircraft so they can be put on display. We are looking for volunteers to work on our current projects, or to develop new projects with our aircraft. If you have any proposals, suggestions, or a special love for aircraft and would like to volunteer please call me at 760-939-0414.

Since June 4th we have had the Museum open on Saturdays, and we have had quite a few visitors. The CLMF is currently looking for volunteers to work in the museum during the week and on Saturdays. If you have any suggestions, ideas, or would like to volunteer please call me at 760-939-0414 or Dotsy Cronin, the Foundation Volunteer Coordinator, at 760-371-7527.

I look forward to meeting all of our Foundation members either here, at the museum or by email or phone, my email address is debra.rios@navy.mil. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, suggestions, or we can always use a new volunteer!

Notice to All Members:

Recycling Can Earn Money for the China Lake Museum Foundation's Building Fund!

The China Lake Museum Foundation needs your help and all it takes is your used cans and bottles to help build a new museum. Please take your recycling to Dave Pearson Recycling Center, located at 1536-A N. Mahan, Ridgecrest (off Inyokern Road), and state that you want the funds donated to the China Lake Museum Foundation's account. Every month Pearson's Recycling Center will issue a check to the Foundation for all the funds designated during a given month. Dave Pearson Recycling Center accepts Aluminum Cans, Glass, Plastic, Ferrous & Non-Ferrous Metals. All donated funds will go the Building Fund.

The First Civilian Member of the China Lake Memorial Wall

Compiled from the Rocketeer, Volume IV, No. 28, September 15, 1948

Most of the seventy-three members of the China Lake Memorial Wall are military which reflects the danger of the work they do here. However, eighteen are civilian; indicating their work also has danger although perhaps not so obvious. Nevertheless, sometimes, in the case of both the military and civilians, accidents occur that are not necessarily associated with the dangerous part of their work. Ordinary tasks and supposedly safe activities can result in unexpected fatalities. These people also serve their country and are honored members of the Memorial Wall.

Such a case is the first civilian fatality at China Lake which happened on September 6, 1948. Harvey Wallace Baldwin was a physicist in the Applied Physics Section and had come to NOTS, China Lake, in 1946 from Seattle where he worked for the Navy at a Degaussing Station. He held a BA degree from Reed College, Portland, Oregon, and had several years towards a doctorate in physics at the University of Washington.

Mr. Baldwin was on his way to visit Dr. John Simpson of the Institute of Nuclear Studies at the University of Chicago. He was to work with Dr. Simpson on the high altitude cosmic ray program sponsored by the Office of Naval Research. He managed to find a ride on a B-29 that was on the way to Washington, DC, via Atlanta, Georgia.

When the B-29 was about 90 miles from Atlanta, a fire broke out due to an overheated hydraulic pump. The airplane filled with flames and smoke. Communication between the cockpit and the passengers in the rear was in danger of disruption. In order to avoid further problems as the fire progressed, the pilot, Major Richard Baker, an Army pilot stationed at NOTS, ordered the passengers in back to bail out. The three civilians and one military followed orders. One person sustained a broken ankle upon landing and two others were not injured. Harvey Baldwin's chute failed to open. The pilot, co-pilot, crew chief, engineer and radio operator in the front stayed with the airplane and landed at Maxwell Field in Montgomery, Alabama.

Only a few months later, on February 3, 1949, five civilians along with three military lost their lives in the crash of an airplane on the way to a business meeting in Alameda (see Winter 2005 issue of China Laker). Flash floods claimed the life of another civilian on August 17, 1983, driving back to China Lake from Los Angeles returning from official travel. Thus, activities not associated with the dangerous part of the work at China Lake can result in fatalities we do not anticipate. We honor these people who also serve but are unplanned and often unsung contributors of their lives to our country's goals.



B-29 Over England, August, 1948
Photo by Col F.J. Ryan, USAF

The Evolution of Chaparral (continued from page 2)

Several minor modifications were required to make the Sidewinder missile compatible with zero velocity launch condition. A slow enable circuit was incorporated in guidance unit to prevent over-shoot in the lead pursuit trajectory.



Without this modification, the missile would determine that it had to fly a divergent path immediately after launch causing an unacceptable trajectory excursion. The launch hangers on the motor were reduced in size to minimize aerodynamic drag and to accommodate the launch rail on the tracking mount. The rollerons on one pair of opposite wings were removed to further reduce drag and were replaced by flat plate wings. These two rollerons were not required because of the low altitude flight of the missile. Other minor changes were made to be compatible with battlefield operation, including painting the missile olive drab.

By August 1967, five Chaparral system engineering models had been delivered to the Army. The weapon system had completed a full test program to validate the launch envelope and to assure that it would stand up under battlefield conditions. Tropic tests were conducted in Panama during the summer, and Arctic tests were at Ft. Greely, Alaska in the winter. Other testing was conducted at the Yuma Proving Grounds

and White Sands Missile Range. On a terrain road the test M 113 vehicle failed, but the missile unit system per se survived successfully. Some special tests were conducted at China Lake, including firings against helicopters. The weapon system test was highly successful.

In August 1967, the Army released the Chaparral Weapon System to full production with the first unit delivered in October 1967. In May 1969 the first Chaparral tactical battalion was activated. On 8 September 1969 the Department of the Army (DA) approved the extension of limited production type classification for the FY 70 quantities of the Chaparral fire units, missiles and test equipment. During the third quarter of FY 71, the Chaparral Weapon system was classified Standard A - fully operational.

Contract for the missile guidance unit was awarded to General Electric (GE) in New York. As was China Lake's policy, the contractor was to produce the missile in accordance with China Lake documentation package. Though small problems were likely to occur in setting up the production line, China Lake felt confident, since the first production of the Sidewinder AIM9-D had been awarded to the Raytheon Company by the Navy Bureau of Weapons more than a year before.

Since the Chaparral guidance unit was more than 95% the same as the Raytheon unit, any production problems could be corrected and feed into the GE line for Chaparral. Raytheon, however, did not establish adequate quality control, which caused more than a year's delay in getting satisfactory production initiated. By this time GE had produced their first units, which didn't work satisfactorily. Since they were supposed to build the missile in strict accordance with the documentation package, the situation immediately became China Lake's problem to correct.

(continued on page 4)

The Evolution of Chaparral (continued from page 3)

The China Lake team found the primary problem to be inadequate quality control in specifying the procurement and acceptance inspection of electric components. With the problem resolved, GE produced quality Chaparral missiles.

China Lake continued to support Chaparral until 1975, including support for annual service practice for all Battalions both deployed and in CONUS.

China Lake had also directed significant effort toward getting an evaluation of the Chaparral System aboard the smaller Navy surface ships. The opportunity arose when the Navy established the "HIP POCKET" program for early ship board evaluation of various experimental systems. A discussion of China Lake's participation with Chaparral in this program was printed in the *China Laker* Vol. 10, No.3, Summer 2004, written by Roland Baker.

During the Vietnam conflict an incident occurred that caused the Navy destroyer fleet to become interested in the Chaparral Weapon System. A Shrike anti-radar missile was inadvertently fired against a Navy destroyer in the Tonkin Gulf. There were no personnel injuries; however, China Lake was able to obtain some very valuable damage assessment data. China Lake suggested installing a Chaparral system aboard the ships for short range air defense. The Navy accepted the idea and requested the rapid installation of the capability. The Navy, however, didn't own any such systems. So to expedite the effort, John Lamb, the China Lake program manager not to be deterred by bureaucracy, directly called the appropriate Under Secretary of the Army in the Pentagon (since he had contacts through the Army with Chaparral) and was able to broker a deal where by the Army would bail so many systems to the Navy with the stipulation that they would be returned to Army in same condition after con-

clusion of the Vietnam conflict. The transaction was accepted by the Navy.

The installation was a slimmed down version of the Sea Chaparral system evaluated in HIP POCKET. Basically it was the complete weapon system removed from the Army M113 vehicle to ship board. The unit was mounted on a steel box base that was welded to the ship's deck. There was no tie-in to the ships' fire control system. The launcher was manned and operated by sailors in the ship's crew. The system was designed by China Lake, and fabricated by Aeronutronics Division, Ford Motor Company, Newport Beach, CA, the Army's system integrator. With the able help of a Destroyer Tender, the first system was installed on the USS Floyd B. Parks destroyer, at the Naval Station, San Diego. The system was tested off the coast of San Diego and at Barking Sands, Hawaii, and then deployed to South East Asia. Additional systems were installed in the Philippines as various destroyers rotated offline. Fortunately, none of the ships encountered hostile aircraft during the conflict.



The evolution of Sea Chaparral had a rather remarkable conclusion. At the end of the Vietnam conflict, the China Lake team was able to retrieve all of the Sea Chaparral systems, restore them to their original operational condition, and return them intact to the Army as agreed by the Navy.

A Friendly Volunteer Greeter

When you visit your museum, the first person you will see is a volunteer. Come on a Thursday afternoon and you will receive a genuinely friendly greeting from a very interesting person – Lela Herigstad.

Lela met her husband Don in Oregon where they were married in 1959. They worked as a team to complete Don's College. With some concern about desert living, they accepted a position with the Navy at China Lake in 1962. But, as with so many of us, the desert soon grew on them and they found it a great place to make a home and raise their two children, David and Debbie. They have been here ever since except for a year in Utah as Don earned his masters degree.

While her children were growing, Lela was active in PTA and as a Campfire leader. Later, she went to work for the Hallmark Store and soon became assistant manager and then manager. After 27 years, it was time to take a year off from the responsibilities and time constraints and think about her future activities. She and her husband joined the museum foundation as life members number 62 – appropriate since they had come to China Lake in 1962. Lela missed the contact with people. Thus, when her friends encouraged her to volunteer, she became a greeter -- an ideal position for her.

She and her husband have traveled to Norway (where her husband has relatives) and England as well as around North America. They are both avid bowlers and gun enthusiasts and she has won recognition in both sports. Her main goal, however, is to have a good time.

Most interesting of her hobbies is knitting. She first learned the basics in 4H as a child and later honed her skills with additional training. After making all sorts of knitted gifts for family and friends, she found another outlet for her tal-

ents. She now knits baby hats for the Red Cross, about ten a month. The Pink Ladies at the hospital present one to every newborn baby – up to 430 a year! Lela makes a hat in about three hours, time taken in the midst of other tasks and while she volunteers at the museum. In addition, at Christmas time, the Chapel has a "giving tree" and she makes items for that worthwhile purpose. Recently, a lady told her about the knitted hat her new baby had received two years ago which she saved because it was such an appreciated gift.

Lela finds it a nice respite to come to the museum on Thursday afternoons – a time to reflect, knit and meet interesting people from all over the world. She also enjoys the other dedicated people who serve the museum. The museum is grateful to Lela and all the volunteers like her who add so much to the quality of the museum and enjoyment of the visitors.



Coso Village and its Environs (continued from page 11)

With the increase in mining activity in the mid and late 1870s many new roads and routes for both stage and freight were developed. A new route from the north came through Darwin, by-passing Coso. The heavy freight into Madoc, Minnietta and Panamint City came from the south, with Remi Nadeau blazing roads across the Indian Wells Valley, into the Argus via Mountain Springs Canyon then north to Darwin, as well as a route easterly down Poison Canyon into Searles, then north over the Slate Range Crossing into Panamint Valley and Eastern Argus. So by the end of the 1870s, Coso had long been out of the headlines. While there were occasional prospectors working the diggings over the

years, the settlement slumbered and evolved into the Coso Village of today.

A number of years ago this writer was on an inspection trip in the Coles Flat area of the North Ranges. It was in late December. We stopped briefly in Coso Village. A winter storm had set in. Wind was blowing with sleet and freezing temperatures. Several stone houses in various stages of decay remain. All had chimneys at this 6,000 ft. location. But as I stood in the driving sleet I thought: "What good is a fireplace when 90% of the heat goes up the chimney and the stone walls leak? Was the silver and gold worth it?" Must have been!



ATTENTION MEMBERS!

We would like to invite you all to join us for a holiday potluck.

When: Friday, December 23, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

Where: Museum Conference Room

If you have any questions, please call Jill at (760) 939-3105. The gift shop will be open for your last minute gift needs, and all members receive a 20% discount for the month of December.

We hope to see you there!

China Lake Museum Foundation

P.O. Box 217 · Ridgecrest, CA 93556-0217
760-939-3530 · clmf@ridgenet.net • 760-939-0564 (FAX)

- | | |
|---|--|
| Paul Homer, President | Wayne Doucette, Treasurer |
| Tex Hoppus, Secretary | Jack Russell, Director Emeritus |
| John DiPol, Director Emeritus | Bill Porter, Director Emeritus |
| ADM Wesley McDonald, USN (ret.), Trustee | LaV McLean, Trustee |
| <i>Vice Presidents</i> | |
| Pat Doucette, Membership | Charles White, Facilities |
| Jim Simmons, Public Relations | Bob Campbell, Fundraising |
| Burrell Hays, Operations | |
| <i>Directors</i> | |
| Skip Bennett | Henry Blecha |
| Dotsy Cronin | Dale Gates |
| Jack Latimer | Gary Parsons |
| Jim Serpanos | Frank St. George |
| Paul Valovich | |
| | Alice Campbell |
| | Ruth Hornbrook |
| | Bob Peoples |
| | Beth Sumners |
| | Bill Webster |

Dotsy Cronin *Volunteer Coordinator*
760-371-7527/legachic@aol.com

Debbie Rios, NAWCWD Museum Director

Leroy Doig III, NAWCWD Museum Curator

Eric Bengston, NAWCWD Exhibits Manager

President's Report by Paul Homer

The China Lake Museum Foundation held the annual Members Meeting on 18 October 2005. The meeting was held at the U. S. Naval Museum of Armament and Technology, China Lake. The purposes of the Members Meeting included the announcement of the results of the election of the Board of Directors, the ratification by the members of updated CLMF By-Laws, and to hear the status of the Foundation. In addition, accounts of the rich legacy of China Lake were presented. The results of the meeting were that the Foundation By-Laws were ratified by the members of the CLMF, and all Board of Directors candidates were elected to their terms of office. A brief history of the Foundation and the Museum was presented along with Foundation plans for the next year. Major Foundation donors were recognized, as were the many volunteers who do most of the effort to keep the Museum and gift shop functioning and running smoothly. Bob Campbell then read a description of a special report from WW-II, which was sent to us a few years ago by Lucien Bieberman. Bieberman worked on Project Coso Junior during the latter stages of the war. The project was aimed at countering Japanese Kamikaze attacks in the Pacific theater, and consisted of a radar fire control director tied to a rack launcher using China Lake spinner rockets. One of the earliest known movies (in color!) ever done at China Lake of the tests was shown. Following Bob, R. G. S. (Bud) Sewell talked about several of his early experiences while working at China Lake, and told the Membership several delightful stories of the many characters and events over the years.

(continued on page 6)

President's Report (continued from page 5)

The Foundation was formed in 1992, with the first eight years devoted to the establishment of the Museum, based on the initial Exhibit Center placed in the Officer's Club after the Club was closed. While initially the Naval Air Warfare Center – Weapons Division provided operations support to the Exhibit Center, by the time of approval for the Museum the Navy reassigned those personnel because of budget considerations. The Foundation agreed to take on the additional role of the operation of the Museum to ensure it remained open. Bob Campbell served as the Navy Museum Director (on a part-time basis) for four years, and Bob did an outstanding job in this capacity. The Foundation contracted with a local-area service provider for a Museum Manager and an assistant to primarily help operate the gift shop. Debbie Rios assumed the position of Museum Director for the Navy during the past year, and brings with her Eric Bengston (Exhibits Manager) and Leroy Doig III (Curator). They remain as NAWC/WD employees, and thus the Navy has assumed many of the responsibilities previously done by the Foundation, particularly in the Museum operations, maintenance, artifact management, and display development. Navy personnel now do much of the original duties of the Foundation's Museum Manager, and therefore the Foundation's staff needed to be adjusted, so the Museum Manager position has been disestablished. Barry Lowry served in this position for four years. Barry left the position in early October, and we wish him the best in the future.

The commitment by the Navy allows the Foundation to focus its resources on the primary purpose for which it was formed, and that is fund raising for a new building. We will continue, of course, to operate the Gift Shop, recruiting and organizing volunteers, tour guides, docents, and providing support to the Museum Director as needed.

Christmas is right around the corner!

Be sure to visit the museum store this holiday season and check out our selection of great gifts, for Christmas or any other occasion.

- * Leather bomber jackets are a steal at just \$99.95 for adult sizes, \$39.95 for child sizes
- * Etched crystals are a great gift for anyone, from the casual collector to the connoisseur. Prices range from \$14.98 to \$19.98
- * Functional and stylish NAWC sweatshirts will keep your loved ones warm for just \$24.98

And don't forget to check out these fantastic sales:

- * Only for the month of November, all models are an extra 20% off (with the exception of In-Air EZ Build and Auto Model kits ; no other discounts apply)

AND

- * For the entire month of December, all members will receive a 20% discount off total purchases! That's double the discount! Call it our Christmas gift to you in appreciation of your support.

Coso Village and its Environs (continued from page 10)

With the attendant publicity by the newspapers of San Francisco and Visalia, miners in large numbers swarmed into the region. A settlement consisting of a number of stone habitations was ultimately established in the center of the Coso District. It was later called Old Coso. (It was "Old" Coso since the later discovered deposits in the Darwin Canyon region were organized as the New Coso Mining District.) Gold-bearing ore was also found in the district and a small quartz mill was brought in to supplement the arrastres. The area was, and still is, pockmarked with numerous prospects, the principal mine being the *Mariposa*. Activities in the Cosos continued for several years, but by the mid-late 1860s the richer deposits were diminishing. The American miners were moving out, being replaced by Mexicans from Sonora. By 1867, the area was referred to as "the Spanish Mines". A passage in the book *THE STORY OF INYO* reads as follows:

"A record book of Coso District, now in the county museum, contains the minutes of a reorganization meeting held March 23, 1868. It is written in Spanish and signed by eighteen Mexican names, with no other nationality represented." Apparently Mexicans continued on to work for several years, possibly augmented by other miners.

Old Coso, however, was a live camp through the early 1870s and became better known as a gold camp than a silver camp. Other discoveries were being made nearby. Rich silver-lead deposits were found in 1874 near Darwin Canyon several miles north of Old Coso. By the end of the year, the townsite of Darwin had sprung up, named for the same explorer/miner of the Coso District. In the Argus Mountains, on their east side overlooking Panamint Valley, two rich silver deposits were discovered in 1875 on Lookout Mt.: the Modoc Mine, a part owner of which was George Hearst, the father of the news-

paper baron, William Randolph Hearst, and the Minnetta Mine, founded by Jack Gunn of the Owens Valley. Across the valley in the Panamint Mountains, the famous silver deposits of Panamint City up in Surprise Canyon were discovered in 1873.

These later camps were of importance to Old Coso (or, vice-versa!), which lay astride the natural road route from the Owens Valley to the Argus and Panamints. A stage line ran from Lone Pine up into the Cosos via Lower Centennial Flats into Old Coso, which was a major way-station, thence across Coles Flats to Junction Flat (2 miles south of the present-day Junction Ranch), turning eastward into the Argus, then down Shepherd Canyon into Panamint Valley. The early day title of "Old Coso" had evolved into simply "Coso". The settlement is shown by that name on the USGS topographical map "COSO PEAK QUADRANGLE", 15 minute series. Also shown are some of the old roads referred to herein.

(continued on page 12)



Coso Village and its Environs

by C. John DiPol, *Director Emeritus*

"Coso Village" is the present day name of an historic mining settlement located in the Coso Mountains area of the China Lake military reservation. This reservation, now referred to as the China Lake North Ranges, was created when NOTS, China Lake was established in 1943. It covers an area of about 600,000 acres, approximately 40 by 23 miles in size, encompassing the Coso Mountains in the north, the Argus Mountains in



the east and the Indian Wells Valley in the south. Most of the area was government land, but there were a number of homesteads in the southern Indian Wells Valley within the military reservation that were purchased outright by the Navy Department. In the northern and eastern reaches there were many mining claims, both patented and assessment, the title or mineral rights to which had to be extinguished or purchased to quiet the title.

The exploration and siting of mining settlements east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains

had started in the 1850s, originally spurred by the California gold rush of 1849, then boosted by the discovery of Nevada's Comstock Lode in 1859. This migration has a very rich and colorful history in which "our" Coso Village, now a bona fide ghost town, had an interesting and important role as described in the following.

A group traveling through the Death Valley country in 1849 discovered a "mountain of silver". Upon reaching the coastal settlements one of the party had a gun sight of pure silver made for his rifle. Efforts to relocate the "mountain of silver" were to no avail, hence the legend of the "Lost Gunsight" mine. But with the discovery of the Comstock, interest in the Lost Gunsight was renewed.

By 1860, Californians were flocking to the Comstock. Erasmus Darwin French, a physician and miner in northern California, had made a desultory and unsuccessful search for the Lost Gunsight several years earlier. But now, fired up again, he organized a party of several men in March, 1860, proceeded south to Visalia (avoiding the rush to the Comstock), re-provisioned, continued south and east over Walkers Pass, then north into the Coso Mountains. There they found silver ore-bearing ledges. The Lost Gunsight? Hmm, who knows; but there was silver and there were mountains. Ore samples taken to San Francisco showed promising results. In the meantime the group had filed many claims in the area and established the Coso Mining District in May, 1860. Their explorations also discovered a canyon and water falls which they named after their leader: Darwin Canyon and Darwin Falls.

(continued on page 11)

High Flight

by

Pilot Officer John Gillespie Magee, Jr.

September 3, 1941

*Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;*

*Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
of sun-split clouds, - and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air....*

*Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark nor even eagle flew -
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand and touched the face of God.*

You all know this poem. Most pilots can recite it from memory. But how many of you know about John Magee, the pilot who composed the words while piloting a Spitfire on a test flight to 30,000 feet over England in September 1941. He sent it to his parents on the back of a letter saying, "I am enclosing a verse I wrote the other day. It started at 30,000 feet, and was finished soon after I landed."

Magee was born in Shanghai, China, of missionary parents - an American father and an English mother. He won a scholarship to Yale, but instead, like so many young men of his time, joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in late 1940, trained in Canada, and was sent to Britain. He lost his life at age 19 on December 11, 1941, after his Spitfire collided with another airplane over England. He is buried, along with other RCAF

colleagues, in the graveyard in Scopwick village, Lincolnshire, 2 miles from RAF Digby.

Magee's parents lived in Washington, D.C., at the time of his death, and the sonnet came to the attention of the Librarian of Congress, Archibald MacLeish. He acclaimed Magee the first poet of the War, and included the poem in an exhibition of poems of "faith and freedom" at the Library of Congress in February 1942. The poem was then widely reprinted, and the RCAF distributed plaques with the words to all airfields and training stations.

The poem has been recited in many memorials to pilots, the most notable of which was when President Ronald Reagan quoted from the first and last lines in a televised address to the nation after the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded, January 28, 1986.

New Members since Summer 2005 Newsletter

Business Contributor Members (\$100.00 Annually)

FireQuick – Inyokern CA

Lifetime Members (\$1,000.00)

Riggs Fenical, Bill & Fran – Del Mar CA

Schneider, Nicholas J. – Ridgecrest CA

Contributor Members (\$100.00 Annually)

Latimer, Jack & Joanne – Inyokern CA

Lowry, Barry – Ridgecrest CA

Sponsor Members (\$33.00 Annually)

Hay, Clark & Pam – Bisbee AZ

Simecka, Dr. William B. & Sue – Henderson NV

Peoples, Bob & Mary – Ridgecrest CA

Enlisted Military Members (Free, from Sponsor Members)

Downie, Justin & Miyuki – China Lake CA

Fehrle, Craig & Michelle – Willow Park TX

Regular Members (\$25.00 Annually)

Ashbrook, Don – Laguna Niguel CA

Babcock, Gary – Ridgecrest CA

Bego, Jim & Linda – Ridgecrest CA

Johnson, Josephine Rose – St. Paul MI

Minthorn, Martin K. – Ridgecrest CA

O’Laughlin, Lee & Kathy – Ridgecrest CA

Sparks, Charles M. – Lancaster CA

Stakes, Waldo & Denise – Apple Valley CA

Valovich, Paul & Trish – Ridgecrest CA

Verver, Gary – Denver CO

Billboards.....and More Billboards

As some of you are undoubtedly aware, the U.S. Naval Museum of Armament and Technology is mentioned in one form or another on several billboards on the approaches to the Indian Wells Valley. Recently we were added yet another of these signs. Through the volunteer efforts of Beth and Jerry Allen of Inyokern we are now represented on the Inyokern billboard N/B SR14 south of the Ridgecrest turnoff. The Allens designed and painted the board and it was installed at the site through a donation of services by Allred Construction.

Other billboards on which the museum is mentioned include the Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce board N/B SR14 at the Lake Isabella turnoff, the Ridgecrest Area Convention and Visitors Bureau board N/B US395 south of the Ridgecrest turnoff south of town, the Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce board S/B 395 about 2 miles north of Brady’s, and the CLMF board S/B US395 at Brady’s which is the result of a Kern Board of Trade Tourism Grant.



Museum Happenings by Barry Lowry, Museum Manager

Many times in the past I have started this column with a recitation of changes at the museum, quite often changes involving personnel. Once again there are new faces around the museum doing the work of the foundation. Deanne Kuppens joined the foundation team in August to take over the bookkeeping from yours truly. Deanne is a skilled QuickBooks operator and has moved easily into foundation operations. Most of you probably will not run across Deanne as she does her bookkeeping work after-hours, but I assure you that she is here daily doing her very important job. Most recently we’ve been joined by Jill Olson who will be working daily in the museum store and foundation office. Jill will be absorbing the administrative duties from your writer and assisting Dotsy Cronin with store operations in consonance with Dotsy’s volunteers.

As always in the Indian Wells Valley, September and October are busy months in the non-profit community with a number of outreach events. This year the foundation participated in the annual Verizon Community Dinner with both ticket sales and informational booth staffed by Paul Homer, Wayne and Pat Doucette and your writer. The foundation also participated in the United Way of the IWV Family Fun Day which is the kickoff event for their annual campaign. This booth was staffed by Dotsy Cronin and, Laureen and Bo Shaw and featured museum store merchandise, give-a-way glider airplanes for the kids and a display on LCDR Ted Faller who lost his life while steering his crippled Navy jet away from an elementary school here in Ridgecrest in the 1970’s.

The first 4 months of Saturday museum operations were reviewed recently by Debbie Rios Navy Museum Director and CAPT Mark Storch, NAWS Commanding Officer. No significant issues were identified and visitor numbers show a definite market for the museum on Saturdays so

the museum will continue to be open on Saturdays for the foreseeable future. With the Saturday issue now settled, it’s time to remind everyone that we always need volunteers to assist with Saturday operations.

Other changes afoot include an upgrade of the museum store cash register operation. The board approved and we have purchased what is known as a “point-of-sale” system which incorporates bar-coding of merchandise for scanning at the cash register, an integrated cash drawer, receipt printer and credit card processing. It will be a while before the system is fully operational as all store merchandise will need to be bar-coded, but the effort will be worthwhile since it eliminates most of the keypunching operations that are now required to complete a sale. This should make it much easier on the volunteers working in the store and will assist staff in creating more accurate records of store activities.



Dotsy Cronin, Laureen and Bo Shaw At the United Way Family Fun Day