

THE AIRSHIP



Navy Lakehurst Historical Society P.O. Box 328 Lakehurst, NJ 08733

<http://www.nlhs.com>

June-July 2010

Battle of Midway Observance – Friday June 4, 2010

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

On Friday, June 4, 2010, the 2nd Annual Battle of Midway Observance will take place at 10 AM at Joint Base Lakehurst Gymnasium. NLHS and Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst will co-sponsor this event. COL Gina Grosso, USAF, CO of Joint Base M-D-L will host this event. Featured guest speakers will

be Admiral Select (CAPT) Marr, USN and COL Gina Grosso, USAF. NLHS will provide displays depicting the Battle of Midway at the gymnasium and our 3 display areas in Hangar One will be open to all visitors. A traditional Frocking ceremony for Petty Officers will take place as well. A cook out to raise funds for the Navy Ball will follow. Live music will be provided by the Toms River South Marching Band. All members and guests are cordially invited to attend. If you are, or know of, a Battle of Midway survivor, please call 732-323-2858 or 732-244-8861 so that you can be included as part of the program. All NLHS members should plan to attend this event.

Please note: This newsletter is your late Spring & early Summer 2010 issue. Your next AIRSHIP will be mailed in late August 2010.

Meeting Notice

Our next monthly general membership meeting will be June 9, 2010 in our usual location. Start time 7PM in the Galley Conference Room Bldg 484 (our usual location). All members and guests are cordially invited to attend.

Our featured guest speaker will be LCDR Scott Rae, USCG, CO of the Sturgeon Bay.

If you plan to attend and don't have the proper pass or military ID, you must fill out the attendance coupon included in this newsletter. **Remember your NLHS membership card is not a base pass.**

Officers Meeting

Our next Officers & Trustees meeting will be held on Saturday, June 19, 2010 at 9:30 AM in **Hangar One in the CNATT Hall of Fame Meeting Room next to our gift shop.** All officers and trustees are asked to attend.

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How True

When the President calls 911, the aircraft carriers answer!

When the aircraft carriers call 911, Lakehurst answers!

Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours for April & May 2010 for the NLHC and Ready Room, tours, work projects and outside speaking engagements totaled over 650 hours. Many thanks to all our volunteers for your support: Don Adams, Carl Larsen, Rick Zitarosa, Frank Dennis, Nick Rakoncza, Stephanie Phillips, Ron Montgomery, Charlie Bish, Ron Stryshak, Frank Smith, Chris Corapi, Kevin Pace, Pete Lovering, "Mac" McConnell, Pete Murphy, Kevin Mulligan, Howie Sjursen, Elizabeth Rossell and Carl Jablonski.

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Tours

Our tours continue to be a very popular attraction. With the bad weather during Jan, Feb and March, some tours had to be cancelled but we still managed to show over 650 visitors around the base. Don Adams, Nick Rakoncza, Frank Dennis, Carl Larsen, Ron Montgomery, Carl Jablonski, Kevin Mulligan and Rick Zitarosa continue to serve as tour guides.

Hindenburg Remembered



All Service Color Guard

Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst hosted the commemoration of the 73rd anniversary of the Hindenburg disaster of May 6, 1937, when 36 people were killed as the hydrogen-filled airship burst into flames at landing. Base commander COL Gina Grosso noted the Hindenburg was "still to this day the largest aircraft to ever fly," and said the legacy of innovation continues at Lakehurst where the Navy is developing a future generation of electromagnetic aircraft catapults.



Carl Jablonski, COL Grosso and Rick Zitarosa flanked by COs of all representative services

Thank You COL Grosso

NLHS is very thankful to COL Gina Grosso, USAF, CO of Joint Base M-D-L for her outstanding help in making this years event the very special one it was. Thanks to COL Grosso's having the ceremony open to the public, we had our largest attendance in many years.

Don't Forget

Monday, May 31, 2010, is Memorial Day. Please reflect and remember the true meaning of this special day. Take a moment and remember our Service Men & Women who gave their lives for the freedom we enjoy today.

New Members

Please welcome the following new members to NLHS:

Birute Pagano Bricktown, NJ
Vicki J Baron Toms River, NJ
Frank Carlson Manchester, NJ

NLHS Salutes George Watson

Lakewood veteran, a Tuskegee Airman, awarded Purple Heart for WWII injuries.



Former Tuskegee Airman George Watson Sr, Lakewood, stands with Congressman Christopher Smith and Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst Commander Colonel Gina M. Grosso after he was awarded a Purple Heart at the base Monday afternoon. 5/10/10

George Watson Sr. was standing guard duty on the airfield perimeter when the Germans came one night looking for the Tuskegee Airmen, aiming to nail the American fighters before they could fly missions in support of Allied troops battling their way through Italy in World War II.

"A heavy air raid. We had P-39s on the ground and they were trying to destroy them," recalled Watson's friend, Wildred DeFour, who saw Watson in the encampment that night, pumped with combat adrenaline and oblivious to the blood soaking into his fatigues. "A 500-pound bomb 1,000 feet away causes a lot of damage."

Sixty-six years after the attack near Naples, Watson received a Purple Heart for his wounds — a late honor for the 89-year-old Lakewood man, a well-known veteran of the first all African-American Air Force unit that paved the way for ending racial segregation in the armed forces.

Watson and other Tuskegee volunteers showed "a love of our country at a time when that love was not reciprocated," said Col. Gina Grosso, commanding officer of Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst at a ceremony jammed with several hundred young active-duty airmen. "Integrating the armed forces was the first step, and I would argue the decisive one, in ending segregation in the United States."

"That's why Obama says if it wasn't for the Tuskegee Airmen, he wouldn't be president," Watson remarked as he shook hands and posed for photographs with well-wishers, including airmen Watson mentored during his 26-year Air Force career, and into his later years as an emissary and historian for the Tuskegee veterans.

Named for their training ground at Tuskegee, Ala., the all-black units got their start in 1941 when the War Department announced its intent to create a "Negro pursuit squadron," opening military aviation to African-Americans. Watson, a former Lakewood High School football player, volunteered in February 1942 and was trained to work in technical support, finding spares and supplies to keep the 332nd Fighter Group flying.

A loquacious storyteller with command of the Tuskegee Airmen's detailed history, Watson is a frequent speaker to school and civic groups. But his wounding was one personal detail he had not shared widely, and Watson only began seeking documentation toward a Purple Heart in 1999.

"When he got wounded, he wanted to get back with his friends," said Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., who helped Watson

submit documents for his application to Department of Defense boards on service and medical records. "It was a matter of getting the right evidence."



"George returned to our area limping and bleeding," said DeFour, who submitted a witness affidavit in support of Watson. "He knew if he went to the field hospital he might be detained," with the danger of being left behind if his unit was suddenly ordered to move again, DeFour said.

Watson's official medical history fell into error too, with records that indicated a later automobile accident was a primary cause of his knee injury, said Louis Wright Jr., a veterans' activist who helped Watson make his application. In fact the accident had aggravated the old shrapnel wounds, Wright said.

Unreported combat injuries are not uncommon among veterans — and correcting their records can be critical for their health care late in life, Wright and Smith said. When old wounds cause problems, a finding they are service-connected is critical to qualify for help from the Veterans Administration, they said.

Watson said the knee has been bothering him during his travels, like the last flight in a C-5 transport back from trip to visit today's generation of troops.

"I met him 24 years ago as a second lieutenant on the flight line here at McGuire," said retired Lt. Col. Will Davis, who recalled how Watson later made a 10-day trip to Okinawa to talk to airmen and their children on a base there. As for the old wounds, "that was something he'd been holding all these years I knew him," Davis added.

Watson bantered with his audience, admitting he was restraining his usual anecdotes for contractual reasons — he's consulting with producer George Lucas on the latter's forthcoming Tuskegee Airmen movie, "Red Tails."

But he returned to one story that is savored by Tuskegee Airmen, about the

time Watson and others seized a shipment of 110-gallon drop tanks from a freight train to make sure the Red Tails could escort bombers on a big March 1945 raid over Berlin.

The tanks just barely fit on the aircraft, and Watson remembered his men used friction tape to keep them from rattling in the shackles. But the raid was a big success — the Red Tails even shot down three of the German's new Me-262 jet fighters. They brought the bombers back safely, without the expected help from another fighter squadron that never showed up, Watson said. When he told that story recently, Watson said, a student came up with a theory he had never thought of. "He said, 'I know why those white guys didn't show up. . . . You stole their tanks!' " Watson laughed. "I said, 'Give that kid an A.' "

Annual Car Show

NLHS will sponsor a table at the Annual July 4th, 2010 Borough of Lakehurst Antique Car Show and parade. Volunteers are need from 9AM to 2 PM. If you can help call 732-244-8861.

Joint Base Lakehurst Duathlon

Joint Base M-D-L MWR will sponsor a Duathlon on Sunday Aug 1, 2010 at Joint Base Lakehurst. The event starts at 8 AM. NLHS will sponsor a table and volunteers are needed —call 732-244-8861.

NLHS Annual Picnic

This year's picnic will be on Saturday, Sept 4, 2010 from 12 noon to 5 PM at Joint Base Lakehurst Freedom Park. all members and spouses are invited. NLHS will provide chicken, hot dogs, burgers, etc.... As usual covered dishes and desserts are welcome. More details in the late August newsletter.

Change of Command

On Tuesday, July 6, 2010 at 10 AM, LCDR Scott Rae, USCG, CO of our sponsored ship the USCGC Sturgeon Bay, will be relieved by LT Daniel Everett. LCDR Scott Rae and his crew have

been a very important part of NLHS and strongly supported our activities. All members and guests are invited to attend the ceremony at 10 AM July 6, 2010 at Pierside Bayonne. For info call 732-244-8861.

MZ-3A Airship Update

We wish to report with great pride and satisfaction that the Navy's MZ-3A airship is in her second month of deployment on a research project in Arizona and that this is the first time a Navy airship has so deployed since 1961.

A lot of the credit goes to the Navy's ADPO (Advanced Development Project Office) for LTA Vehicles and to civilian contractor ISSI, Inc. which consistently pushed for missions and opportunities for the airship even when the situation seemed hopeless and deflation seemed inevitable. And a good measure of the credit goes to the Navy Lakehurst Historical Society and its membership which helped support and nurture this important project from its inception. When the Navy found itself back at "Square One" in the airship business back in late 2005, NLHS was among the first groups they contacted.

It was indeed NLHS that helped bridge the "knowledge gap" of 44 years through impeccable preservation of key documents, manuals and technical information, as well as providing key personnel to actually assist the contractor and the Navy with "hands on" assistance in the endeavor. NLHS (and this very publication) also "talked up" the positives and the importance of the airship and its mission. The ship (Lakehurst's airship!) is now proving the worth of Lighter Than Air for various applications and proving it well!

In the tradition of the great Naval Aviators and Aeronauts whose history and stories we have preserved, NLHS NEVER GAVE UP! Bravo Zulu to all!

Help Wanted

NLHS needs volunteers for a Saturday work party to paint our spaces on Saturday June 26, 2010 from 12 Noon to 3 PM. Call 732-244-8861.

NLHS Hosts Manchester Naval ROTC Graduates

On Wednesday, June 2, 2010 at 12 Noon, NLHS will host a Graduation party barbeque for the Manchester Township High School Naval ROTC unit. NLHS is a proud sponsor of this fine unit commanded by LCDR Zenon Zac, USN. Hot dogs, burgers, soda and chips will be provided by NLHS. Ron Montgomery, NLHS VP, will be our host for this event.

Reading Day

NLHS members Hank Applegate and Carl Jablonski represented NLHS at the Annual Lakehurst Elementary School Reading Day on April 23. We enjoyed our time with the students and being able to share the rich history of Navy Lakehurst with them. This was Hank's 30th year of doing this event.

House Committee OKs Range Funds for McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst

A proposed \$10.1 million appropriation to build a new, automated machine-gun training range at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst would correct a long-standing deficiency in the National Guard and Reserve infantry training facilities there, two New Jersey congressmen said Friday after the spending authorization had passed the House Armed Services Committee.

The planned range would allow soldiers to practice with heavier automatic weapons on foot or with weapons mounted in vehicles, from the M249 Squad Automatic Weapon to .50 caliber machine guns and the Mark 19 40mm grenade launcher, said Col. Gina Grosso, the base commanding officer, in a telephone news conference with the congressmen, Democratic Reps. John Adler and Robert Andrews.

"Our intention is to be America's premier war-fighting training center," Grosso said. The base is the Northeast center for training Guard and Reserve troops, at a rate of 8,000 to 10,000 every year, and the range would be used by Air Force expeditionary troops and Navy personnel too, she said.

Grosso said the range would be built over the course of a year at the current Mobile Mount training site — amid training areas near the Ocean-Burlington county line that troops colloquially call "Times Square" — and afford "more flexibility and realistic scenarios" for training.

Adler and Andrews credited Adler's predecessor, Republican Jim Saxton, for encouraging them to pursue funding for the range project. Adler's district includes most of the base's 40,000 acres, and Andrews steered the appropriation request as a member of the Armed Services Committee.

During the post-Cold War military downsizings, Saxton led efforts to save central New Jersey military bases from Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) commissions.

Ultimately, base backers convinced Department of Defense planners of the value of the concept of an interservices joint base that combined Air Force, Army Reserve and Navy missions under consolidated management.

While there are no active plans for a new round of base closings, Defense Secretary Robert Gates has stressed his intent to further cut the military's overhead costs, so it's important to keep the base as efficient and modernized as possible, Andrews said.

"This is BRAC insurance," he added.

The funding still has to make its way through both houses of Congress, but its release unscathed in a 59-0 committee vote is a good sign, Andrews said.

Navy's Goal to Keep them flying

LAKEHURST — When Navy maintenance crews sort through the guts of aircraft looking for an electronics problem, suspicion often falls on power supply modules, briefcase-sized boxes that feed measured electricity to a host of onboard devices. But as often as not, the maintainers unknowingly end up replacing

perfectly good power supplies.

Navy engineers call the problem "diagnostic ambiguity." On Tuesday, they formally opened a new \$4.3 million laboratory in a corner of the Naval Air Systems Command engineering campus at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, a small investment that organizers say will pay big dividends.

The new "net-centric" approach pursued at the Integrated Diagnostics and Automated Test Systems lab brings more computer power to side of parked aircraft on carrier hangar decks, so sailors can find and fix problems sooner, said Craig Koepping, technical lead for the staff of 25. The goal, Koepping said, is to "increase readiness and reliability and get the plane up flying faster than before."

The IDATS idea started about six years ago, when "just as we have today, a lot of people working on different aircraft platforms," said Russell Shannon, lead systems engineer for the IDATS group. As a strategic initiative, the program aims to develop advanced diagnostic technologies to help the fleet better test and repair aircraft, and Navy officials say it's now their largest capital investment project in air systems.

On a bench in the main lab, a new Diagnostic Avionics Tester at 26 pounds is one-third the weight of the old machine, making it easier for a single maintainer to set up and connect to an F/A-18 fighter's electronic sensor pod. Linked by ethernet to the maintainer's laptop, the tester's findings can then be shared with intermediate-level analysts at shipboard work stations or transmitted to stateside supply depots or the Lakehurst labs for help with thorny problems.

Another product is the Smart Connector, a cabled system for testing the low-voltage power supplies common to the F/A-18 fighter, helicopters and other NATO aircraft, said Michael Brazinski of the lab.

"We need to get better information to the maintainer before he replaces healthy boxes," Brazinski said. Uncertainty leads to 50 percent of those removals being functioning power supplies, each worth several thousand dollars and embarked on an expensive return trip to the manufacturers, engineers say.

Used with an avionics data bus computer, the Smart Connectors to be fielded later this year will help technicians

accurately test power supplies and reduce unnecessary replacements, Brazinski said.

Across a hallway, a data warehouse has begun to compile results from thousands of testing sessions and repair records. Ultimately the system will record more than just data on individual aircraft, but supplies, aircraft launch and recovery and other fleet operations, said the lab's Gail Edwards.

Engineers will tease out and study the connections using Clementine data-mining software, and a new venture into "text mining" that uses algorithms to discern significant relationships, said computer scientist Matthew Fehskens.

"We take the nomenclature of equipment and relate them to words," so that plain English terms — radar, for example — can be referenced to technician's notes about "rdr" and the acronym-heavy technical language of naval aviation, he said.

Carriers Still Crucial to Our Strategy

Defense Secretary Robert Gates asked a simple question last week: Do we really need 11 aircraft carrier task groups patrolling the oceans for an additional 30 years?

Boy, did that raise eyebrows in military circles.

Gates spoke before an audience of naval officers and defense contractors, many of whom no doubt viewed his remarks as heresy.

But he made some telling points, namely that as anti-ship weapons have become more sophisticated and precise, our fleet of gigantic floating bases has become increasingly vulnerable. Does it make sense to tie up so many scarce defense dollars in assets that might be overwhelmed by anti-ship missiles or submarines?

In other words, are we headed for a moment like Pearl Harbor, when we suddenly learned that we had invested too much in battleships and relied on them for too long, ignoring their vulnerability to relatively cheap airplanes carrying torpedoes?

Since man began forming armies, a debate has raged. Which is best, heavy and expensive or light and agile? It depends: The two are in perpetual tension. In the Middle Ages, heavy and defensive ruled; some fortresses were effectively impregnable. But at Pearl Harbor, light and agile won the day.

Gates was saying that current conditions tend to favor forces that are widely dispersed and highly maneuverable -- yet lethal, thanks to advances in weaponry. It's time we put fewer eggs in the carrier task force basket and more in dispersed, maneuverable forces of our own -- meaning smaller ships, perhaps with stealth capability, that can work closer to shore.

All of which is fine, as far as it goes. But Gates went much further. How many carrier task forces are enough? He didn't propose a specific number, but he suggested a profoundly troubling measuring stick for deciding: The relative power of other seafaring nations.

"Do we really need 11 carrier strike groups. . . when no other country has more than one?" he asked.

Robert Haddick, a former Marine officer who writes at the Small Wars Journal site, noted that the answer to that question could be found in part on Okinawa, where residents are demanding closure of a major U.S. air base. Once that happens, Haddick wrote, a "big strategic hole" will open up in America's western Pacific defense plans, and we will need our carriers even more to project force and deter aggression.

Okinawa isn't the only problem. It's becoming increasingly difficult to maintain bases in several other countries. Yet we have vital interests in far-flung regions such as the Persian Gulf, the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait.

"The fact that no other country, today at least, operates anything like a (U.S. Navy) carrier strike group says nothing about their utility," Haddick wrote. "I am surprised that Gates said this, especially to an audience of naval officers."

The carrier force has been the primary instrument by which America maintains freedom of the seas. Its powerful fleet of carriers is able to project awesome power virtually anywhere on short notice or help in disaster aid when the need arises.

No one knows the "right" number of carrier task groups.

Gates is surely right to suggest that it's time to throw more money at lighter, cheaper, more maneuverable ships.

But the standard he suggested -- the relative power of other navies -- hints at something other than a measured adjustment. What Gates could have in mind is a radical cut in the carrier force, and that would surely be a big strategic mistake.

PDF Newsletter

If you are interested in receiving the newsletter in PDF electronic format, you can see the current issue by going to the Newsletter link on the NLHS website which is located at: <http://www.nlhs.com> This will also give you an idea of how long it takes to download. Those who would like to receive the pdf newsletter should send an email to: newsletter@nlhs.com with your name, address & phone number to verify you in the database.

Remember, you must have a copy of the Adobe Acrobat viewer on your computer in order to view this newsletter.

You will receive the newsletter faster and help NLHS save on postage.

NLHS June Meeting Attendance Coupon Wednesday, June 9, 2010 7PM
THIS MONTH'S LOCATION - The Galley Conference meeting room located in Bldg. #484

NAME: _____ **PHONE:** _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ **STATE:** _____ **ZIP CODE:** _____

MAIL TO: Navy Lakehurst Historical Society P.O. Box 328 Lakehurst, NJ 08733

ATTN: June Meeting

DEADLINE: Monday – June 7, 2010 by 12 noon

**You must fill out this coupon if you plan on attending the meeting
and don't have a pass for the base.**

NOTE: Your NLHS Membership card IS NOT a base pass.