

THE AIRSHIP



Navy Lakehurst Historical Society P.O. Box 328 Lakehurst, NJ 08733 <http://www.nlhs.com> March-April 2010

COL. Gina Grosso, USAF, Guest Speaker at NLHS Wednesday, March 10, 2010 Meeting

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

So far the months of January & February 2010 have been filled with snow and cold weather. As a result, our tours and gift shop operations were suspended due to the bad weather on several occasions. Hopefully the weather will improve and we will be able to get back

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NLHS Society Photographer

Max Frei

* Emeritus

on schedule. Our tour director, Don Adams, reports that we are receiving many tour requests for March, April, May and even into September and October 2010.

Our next general membership meeting will be on Wednesday, March 10, 2010 at 7 PM. I'm pleased that Col. Gina Grosso USAF, Joint Base CO for McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst will be our guest speaker. Please mark your calendar and join us for this meeting as we welcome Col. Grosso to meet our NLHS members.

Meeting Notice

Wednesday, March 10, 2010

Our 2nd meeting for 2010 will be held on Wednesday March 10, 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 Col. Gina Grosso, USAF, CO Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. This will be Col. Grosso's first meeting with NLHS members. Please make every effort to attend this meeting and welcome Col. Grosso to NLHS.

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.**

Cancellation Notice

In the event of snow, sleet, freezing rain or ice occurring on a NLHS meeting day, a decision whether to hold or cancel the meeting will be made by your President by 12 noon of the meeting date. If in doubt members can call 732-244-8861 or 732-600-8055 after 12 noon for a recorded advisory. Thank you.

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Officers Meeting

Our next Officers & Trustees meeting will be held on Saturday March 20, 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.

How True

When the President calls 911, the aircraft carriers answer!

When the aircraft carriers call 911, Lakehurst answers!

Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours for January & February 2010 for the NLIC and Ready Room, tours, work projects and outside speaking engagements totaled over 500 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, Jane & John Niedzwiecki, Pete Lovering, "Mac" McConnell, Pete Murphy, Kevin Mulligan, Howie Sjursen and Carl Jablonski.

Taps

The following was received via e-mail:

I regret to advise that Ralph Russell, my father, passed away on July 21, 2009. He spent the best years of his career as a civilian aeronautical engineer for the Navy at LNAS from about 1947 to 1960. After they "retired" the blimps from military service, he completed his government career as an aero engineer in aircraft safety for the FAA at NAFEC/Atlantic City. He designed the tri-cycle landing gear for the Blimps and just loved the work he did on everything related to airships. I recall that he worked for the most part in the sheds next to Hanger 1. I have some great memories of him taking me to work and being in awe of what was going on in and around Hanger 1. I remember one night when I was 10 or 11 years old he took me up to the roof of Hanger 1 to help him take pictures of a new lighting system on a mooring mast he was working on. I guess he was one of the last of a dying breed. By the way, a rare coincidence is that my son, Richard, Jr., was Alex's roommate at NYU back around 2000. Our regards to him as I believe he is still active in NLHS, and anyone else who might remember my dad.

Richard A. Russell, Esq.

Tours

Our tours continue to be a very popular attraction. Schools, Senior groups, Cub, Boy & Girl Scout organizations, Red Hat Members and individuals from 2 to 92 are enjoying our tours. Don Adams, Nick Rakoncza, Frank Dennis, Carl Larsen, Ron Montgomery, Carl Jablonski, Kevin Mulligan and Rick Zitarosa continue to serve as tour guides.

New Members

Please welcome the following new members to NLHS:

Ansel Burhman Babson Park, FL
John R Daly Lusby, MD
Frederick D Lewis Los Angeles CA

Congratulations

Best wishes to Nick Rakoncza on his recent election to a 2 year term as a NLHS Trustee. Nick has served admirably during the past year and NLHS is grateful for his many contributions.

Challenge Coins

After a long wait, our newly minted Challenge Coins have arrived. Our coin honors the beginning of Naval Air Station Lakehurst 1919 to a new beginning of Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, Oct. 2009. Price is \$10.00.

To order call 732-244-8861 or 732-657-6547 or 732-581-1209

Letters Received in the Mail

In addition to "thank you" letters, we receive many other letters for information and special requests. Here are a couple that have been received recently:

Dear Sir,

My name is Freddie Ridley-Rundle. I am 84 yrs old and I am doing a personal project on the Hindenburg. I am learning about how some of the passengers escaped. I would be very grateful to receive some information.

Yours Faithfully,
 Fred
 Devon, England

Dear Sir

Would you please send me a brochure or rack card on your Navy Lakehurst Historical Museum. Very interested in the Hindenburg.

Thank you very much for your time and assistance.

Sincerely, Randy Chase

Movie Night

Our January 14, 2010 movie night was enjoyed by all. Wallace Beery in "This Man's Navy" still wows them. Thanks to all who came out on this very cold night and to Rick for the DVD.

Sick Bay

Best wishes for a speedy recovery to Marion Kuchler as she recovers from recent foot surgery at home. If you can, drop a card to Marion at 67 E Fleming Pike, Hammonton, NJ 08037

Happy Birthday

NLHS extends Birthday Greetings to fellow members Don Adams and George Smith who celebrated their birthdays on Sunday, February 14, 2010. Best wishes for a year of Health and Prosperity.

Special Stamp Issued

Pearl Harbor Hero Among Sailors on Stamps

Three officers are among the four US Navy "Distinguished Sailors" honored on new 44-cent commemorative stamps.

But perhaps the most inspirational story belongs to the enlisted man in the quartet.

The stamp dedicated to Doris Miller also would qualify as a Black History Month issue.

As a 22 year old mess attendant – the only job blacks were then allowed on a Navy ship – he was one of the earliest American heroes of World War II.

He was aboard the battleship West Virginia in Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, when the base in Hawaii was attacked by Japan.

"Dorie" Miller rescued scores of his fellow sailors who were wounded or trapped in the wreckage of the ship, then helped move the mortally wounded captain from the bridge before taking charge of a machine gun - on which he had not been trained – and firing on enemy planes.

He received the Navy Cross and was later promoted to officer's cook third class aboard the escort aircraft carrier Liscome Bay.

He was killed with more than 600 of his shipmates on Nov. 24, 1943, when the Liscome Bay was torpedoed and sunk during the Invasion of the Gilbert Islands. His body was never recovered.

Actor Cuba Gooding Jr. portrayed Miller in the 2001 movie "Pearl Harbor:"



The portraits on Miller's stamp and the other three are taken from photos in the Navy Archives. Phil Jordan of Falls Church, VA, designed the stamps, including on each the insignia of a ship named after the sailor depicted.

The other "Distinguished Sailors" are William S. Sims (1858-1936), commander of US naval forces in European waters during World War I and an outspoken reformer and innovator; Arleigh A. Burke (1901-96), one of the top destroyer squadron commanders of World War II and later chief of naval operations for an unprecedented three terms, during which nuclear-powered submarines were introduced and the Polaris ballistic missile program was started; and John McCloy (1876-1945), who earned two Medals of Honor for a rescue mission during the Boxer Rebellion and for exposing his boat to enemy fire during the 1914 Mexican revolt to force the enemy to reveal its positions.

He was wounded in both battles and then received a Navy Cross as commander of a mine sweeper during World War I.

The first day ceremony took place Feb. 4 at the Navy Memorial in Washington, DC. The stamps are being issued in sheets of 20.

For more information, visit usps.com or call 800-782-6724.

Change of Command

On Thursday, Feb 18, 2010, NLHS was invited to attend a Change of Command Ceremony at NWS Earle, Colts Neck, NJ. CAPT Gary A Maynard,

USN, was relieved by CAPT David Harrison, USN.

CAPT Maynard spent 3 years and 4 months at Erle. His next assignment will be at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. NLHS is grateful to CAPT Maynard for his support of NLHS. Representing NLHS were Nick Rakoncza and Carl Jablonski.

Black History Program

A special program honoring Black History Month was held at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst on Feb 18, 2010 from 4 to 7 PM. NLHS presented a display and the guest speaker was fellow member and Tuskegee Airman, George Watson. George and his stories really were a highlight. Representing NLHS were Nick Rakoncza and Carl Jablonski.

Questions & Answers

Q: Is America running out of HELIUM?

A: Not really. It's more like the story with GASOLINE supply and demand.. Over the past decade, much of the issue of "shortages" and spikes in the cost of helium has been more or less directly attributable to how much refined gaseous helium is *available* rather than how much actually can be made to *exist.*

In the case of the original Bureau of Mines helium plant at Petrolia Field, Fort Worth TX the pioneering experimental plant managed produce some 46 million cubic feet between 1918 and 1929 with an average cost of \$90-\$120 per thousand cubic feet. This was originally split in monthly allotments between the Navy and the Army airship programs, each service getting a few hundred thousand cubic feet per month on (a good month) via cylinders and tank cars. When funding

got "tight", particularly after the SHENANDOAH disaster, the LOS ANGELES had to make do with re-tailored spare SHENANDOAH cells as well as her heavily-reworked original German-made gas cells. As these got increasingly-leakier, the LOS ANGELES was sometimes losing more than 25,000 cubic feet per day just sitting in the hangar! This resulted in the ship

being laid up on a couple of occasions during the 1026-1927 period until the situation improved.

The larger, more modern Bureau of Mines facilities at Cliffside Field near Amaraillo TX (which also had a greater helium content in the well gas) brought the price down to about \$40 per thousand cubic feet by the mid-1930's (just as the Navy's needs for large amounts of helium came to an end, with the loss of the MACON.) By mid-World War II (when the U.S. Navy had an average of 120 airships in commission, most of them averaging about 425,000 cubic feet apiece and each requiring roughly 150%-200% annual replenishment) the price was halved again.

Use of improved gas-tight materials resulted in significant reductions of weight as well reduced gas loss/ air contamination over the years. The "goldbeater's skin" (cattle gut lining) HH-grade cotton cloth gas cells on the SHENANDOAH and LOS ANGELES gave way to viscose/latex and gelatin/latex coated fabrics that came to be used on the AKRON and MACON (called "filmstiff" by the Germans, who used them as well, first as test/replacement cells on their LZ127 GRAF ZEPPELIN and later with the new LZ129 HINDENBURG and LZ130 GRAF ZEPPELIN airships.) Likewise the rubberized Egyptian cotton envelopes of the World War II K-ships have given way to Dacron and other synthetic materials that today are about ONE FOURTH the weight and FOUR TIMES as strong.

"Specialty" grades of helium for medical and industrial use will naturally continue to bring a premium price, but most airships today use "balloon grade" which is quite satisfactory, if not 99.999% pure. Balloon Grade helium

can be had for around \$220 per thousand cubic feet and \$65/hr for the delivery truck to stand by while you shoot helium or a per diem charge if you have bulk helium left at your site in bundled cylinders or a trailer. Generally speaking, it is prudent to add the helium somewhat SLOWLY to minimize stresses on the ballonets, envelope, etc. so that it might take several hours to add 30,000-40,000 cubic feet of helium in order to "shoot

down" a "high" ballonet. When inflating from the "ground up" it can be a day-long (and a loong-day!) process as it is sometimes necessary to stop gas flow and straighten out the envelope, etc.

While today it's virtually all shipped by bottles and "tube trailers" n the days of the original Navy LTA program most of the helium came from an 8-inch delivery line in the hangar, regulated to 1-inch of water pressure and thus capable of delivering up to 100,000 cubic feet per hour. The original helium delivery lines can still be seen today along the walls of historic Hangar #1 at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst.

NAVY AIRSHIP UPDATE

GOOD NEWS! We are pleased to announce that Navy MZ-3A airship Buno #167811 left her berth in Hangar #6 on the afternoon of Monday 22 February and spent three hours out on Mat #3 conducting various ground tests before being returned to the hangar later in the day. It was the first time in over 2-1/2 years since the airship had left its hangar.

As winter weather allows, the airship will conduct various test and training flights. Civilian contractor Integrated Systems Solutions, Inc. (ISSI) continues to be the prime support contractor on the project, as it has overseen most Navy LTAV activity since 2005.

The story of Navy LTA and LTA Vehicles ("LTAV's as airships are generally referred to these days, though "ADV's" or "Air Displacement Vehicles" is also gaining popularity in some circles) as well as Lakehurst's continued involvement is a truly fascinating one. Suffice to say that had it not been for the concerted efforts of some dedicated individuals and committed "believers" at NAVAIR, ISSI Inc., NAES Lakehurst/Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst and the Navy Lakehurst Historical Society this particular airship would have been hurriedly deflated and stuffed in a box three years ago.

It is an auspicious "rebirth" of a story with deep roots and a connection going

back 90 years in Lakehurst's distinguished history!

USS MACON wreckage now "NRHP" Site

On 12 February 2010 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced that the deep water wreck site of the USS MACON (ZRS-5) had been added to the National Registry Of Historic Places. MACON, the last of the Navy's operating rigid airships, was based at Naval Air Station Lakehurst, NJ from June thru October 1933. Subsequently transferred to Naval Air Station Sunnyvale, CA (later known as Moffett Field) the MACON suffered structural failure in her tail fin attachment area and had to make a controlled-crash-landing in the Pacific off Pt. Sur on 12 February, 1935. Two men were lost out of 83 aboard. The exact location of the wreckage remained largely a mystery for six decades. A combination of detective work regarding a piece of duralumin girder displayed on the wall of a seafood restaurant that had been caught in a fisherman's net, combined with the use of modern DSRV technology led to the discovery of the wreckage in extremely deep waters. MACON and her sister ship USS AKRON (ZRS-4) were the largest aircraft ever operated by the United States.



2010 Calendar of Events

- Mar 10 – Wednesday** – General Membership Meeting 7 PM.
Guest Speaker is Col. Gina Grosso, USAF, CO Joint Base McGuire- Dix-Lakehurst
- Mar 17 – Wednesday** – St Patrick's Day
- Mar 20 – Saturday** – Officers Meeting 9:30 AM Hangar 1 Gift Shop Area
- Mar 28 – Sunday** – Palm Sunday
- Mar 31 – Wednesday** – Passover
- Apr 2 – Friday** – Good Friday
- Apr 4 – Sunday** – Easter Sunday
- Apr 4 – 5** – Major League Baseball begins
- May 6 – Thursday** – 73rd Hindenburg Anniversary – Observance 7:25 PM
- May 9 – Sunday** – Mother's Day
- May 15 – Saturday** – Officers Meeting 9:30 AM, Hangar One

PDF Newsletter

If you are interested in receiving the newsletter in PDF electronic format, you can see a sample version 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 March Meeting Attendance Coupon Wednesday, March 10, 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: March Meeting

DEADLINE: Monday – March 8, 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.