The Mighty Mouse in History
By Harold H. Patton

In histories of China Lake NAWC, (or NOTS as I remember it), there is a chapter often forgotten, or lightly passed over. Prior to the triumph of Sidewinder, to this day the airmen's choice in air-to-air combat, and the massive firing of the 2.75 rockets modified for air-to-ground deployment from helicopters in Viet Nam lies a relatively brief period of about five years when the 2.75-in. FFAR, the Mighty Mouse stood alone as our defense against the Atomic bomb.

When in March 1949 the Soviets detonated their surprise atomic test, our confidence in our isolation was shattered by the recognition that long-range strategic bombers could, or would soon, be able to blast our country at will. True, WW II experience showed terrible attrition of our bombers, but if only ONE of an attacking wave reached our shores ONE American city would become the next Nagasaki! We needed an aerial weapon system that could promise an early and sure kill!

At this remove my stomach still churns to realize that three hastily developed interceptor aircraft armed solely with our early-production 2.75s and a trouble-prone fire control system became that barrier! That none were ever fired in anger, that the crucial confidence of our nation was never tested, can only be credited to their deterrence, less than to their effectiveness. Any ordnance engineer will tell you that no weapon can ever achieve a 100% kill!

The involvement of my psyche evolves from the fact the I, with a devoted group in my Division, later Department (Code 40) took the 2.75 from early experiments with folding fins and with internal burning rockets to the mass-produced 2.75 FFAR, ably abetted by the Pilot Plant's propellant grain and the Nation's production capabilities. From its inception the Mouse had one dedicated mission - to provide a sure kill of hostile bombers. We controlled the dispersion of individual rockets to accomplish a "shot gun" pattern assuring at least one hit in a salvo of twelve rockets. Navy friends will recognize the amazing confidence displayed by the US Air Force in accepting a US Navy weapon to arm their interceptors! We can only give thanks that that confidence was never tested except in less than conclusive gunnery competition at 29 Palms.

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President's Report
By Paul Homer

A note of thanks to all - donors, sponsors, Foundation members, and volunteers for the great success of the annual Museum Dinner & Auction. The gross funds raised were almost double that of the 2003 event. The details can be read on page 15 of this Newsletter.

Thanks are due also to Harold Patton, the author of the Mighty Mouse lead article in this issue. Patton had suggested writing such an article a few months ago, and the report is an excellent example of historical articles of interest to the Museum and the Foundation, and we encourage readers to recommend similar articles covering events in the rich history of China Lake.

We were all very saddened to learn of Leroy Riggs death in March, and our condolences to Marilyn and all of the Riggs family. He will be greatly missed.

Former China Lake Technical Director Leroy Riggs Passes Away
By Liz Babcock, Director

Leroy Riggs, a pioneering China Lake employee who rose all the way from junior professional to technical director during his 26-year career here, died on March 21, 2004, at Scripp's Green Hospital in San Diego. He was 77. “Leroy can be proud and rest in peace knowing that he made a significant contribution to the security of the country in providing the services with critical weapons systems and helping to establish the national reputation of China Lake”, said Franklin Knemeyer, a former department head and deputy technical director at the Naval Weapons Center.

“He was a true friend and gentleman”, added Bill Davis. I considered it a privilege to work with him. Davis worked with Riggs in several capacities at China Lake, most recently when Davis became the executive secretary for China Lake’s 50th Anniversary Steering Committee.

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Leroy was a major player in the work of the committee, Davis said. He helped tremendously in making the celebration a success. During the course of his career here, Riggs worked on some of the Organization's most significant programs, as well as helping nurture new China Lake programs during a tour in Washington, D.C. He held responsible positions at all levels, up to and including the top civilian position at China Lake.

His success resulted in numerous awards, including the L.T.E. Thompson Award in 1972, and the Navy's Distinguished Service Award — the highest award that can be bestowed on a civilian by the secretary of the Navy in 1974.

Born in Riverside, Calif., on Feb. 25, 1927, Riggs attended schools in Riverside, completing high school and a year of college before joining the Navy's flight training program in 1944.

The Navy sent him to Texas, where he attended the University of Texas at Austin and the Chase Naval Auxiliary Air Station near Beeville. After completing training at St. Mary's Preflight School in California, he was released from active duty in 1946, but remained in the Naval Reserves until he retired as a commander in 1967.

In fall 1946, he returned to Texas, this time with his wife, Marilyn (Ditty). He graduated from the University of Texas, El Paso, in January 1948 with a B.A. in mathematics and physics. He then studied statistics as a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley. One day, he met Dr. Edward Crow, a statistician from China Lake, and after Crow finished describing the Navy's desert lab, Riggs said, "I'd like to work there". He wrote to the then-Naval Ordnance Test Station and was hired in the junior professional program, with his first tour in the Exterior Ballistics Branch of the Ballistics Division. He liked that work so much that he convinced his supervisor to let him stay there for his entire junior-professional year.

During that era he and Ditty acquired a lifelong group of friends. Leroy and his family were very close and cherished friends from the early days of NOTS when China Lake was essentially a self-contained community, said Kneiemeier.

Because of Riggs work as a civilian scientist on the development of weapons for the Korean war, he was considered too valuable where he was to be recalled as a naval officer. In the mid 1950s, he became the aeroballistic program director on a nuclear weapon.

After the Soviets launched Sputnik, he spent a year in Washington, D.C., where he was the first technical director of the Bureau of Ordnance Astronautics Office. In that position, he was able to argue convincingly for support of China Lake's satellite program, NOTSNIK, as well as for the antiradiation weapon, Shrike. Returning to China Lake, he headed the Aeromechanics Division for the next nine years. During this period, he served as the program manager for Shrike, then was in charge of all antiradiation-missile development for both the Navy and the Air Force.

During the Vietnam conflict, he again served as a civilian rather than in uniform, but he still spent time under combat conditions planning missions and training pilots on several aircraft carriers, including USS Midway, USS Ranger, USS Enterprise, USS Constellation and USS Hancock. From 1968 to 1975, he served in several senior management positions at NWC, including as head of the Missile Systems and Electronic Systems Departments, as deputy technical director and as technical director. In 1975 he retired from government service.

He then spent two years as vice president of defense contractor Farnsworth-Cannon, Inc. From 1977-89, he was president of the Aerodyne Corp., which performed studies for the government and major aerospace contractors.

After 1989, he continued to consult occasionally until 1994, when he retired completely and devoted his time to computers,

(continued on page 12)
The Sidewinder-Budweiser Connection

By Steve Benson, Director

Project S.O.S. (Speed of Sound) was conceived and launched in 1976 by Hal Needham, former stunt man and Hollywood film director (“Smokey and the Bandit,” “Hooper,” “The Cannonball Run”) with the goal of building the first car to exceed the speed of sound, regardless of whether official land speed record sanctioning bodies recognized the achievement. After the project was under way, the Budweiser Brewing Company agreed to sponsor the project, and the car was renamed the “Budweiser Rocket Car”. The Navy connection to the project included steam and oxygen resulting in high pressure and temperature gases within the combustion chamber:

\[ \text{H}_2\text{O}_2 \text{----Catalyst-----> H}_2\text{O} \text{(Steam) + 1/2 O}_2 + \text{Heat} \]

Without the added fuel rings, the rocket engine produced roughly 9,000 pounds thrust for about 18 seconds. Many of the early test runs were done with the monopropellant engine alone.

China Lake technical consultation and the use of a Sidewinder Mk 36 Mod 7 solid propellant rocket motor as part of the car’s propulsion system.

The Budweiser rocket car was designed and built by Bill Frederick, a rocket power consultant to the Aerospace industry and movie special effects consultant in the use of rockets for movie stunts. His streamlined, three-wheeled car, measuring slightly over 39 feet in length and 2 feet wide, was in essence a pressurized fuel tank with two rocket engines (one hybrid and the other solid) strapped to its tail end. It even looked like a missile.

A small cockpit for the driver was located in front of the 9-foot-high tail fin. The car’s main propulsion was a hybrid rocket engine using hydrogen peroxide monopropellant augmented with rubber fuel rings. Liquid hydrogen peroxide was fed under high pressure (nitrogen gas) from the fuel tank into a reaction chamber which contained a decomposition catalyst screen. The catalyst causes the hydrogen peroxide to rapidly decompose into

To further improve the main engine’s performance, polybutadiene fuel rings were installed to line the combustion chamber. The high-temperature oxygen from the peroxide reactant decomposes the polybutadiene fuel, which autoignites to produce additional combustion gases. These extremely hot, high-pressure gases are expelled through the nozzle to produce thrust. This hybrid engine configuration doubled the thrust level to about 18,000 pounds — unfortunately still not enough impulse to accelerate the car to supersonic velocities. The solution was to install a standard Sidewinder rocket motor, which was obtained with the help of the Air Force from the Bermite Division of Whittaker Corporation, above the main engine for more thrust.

The Sidewinder motor was to be ignited a few seconds before the main engine shut down, and the experimenters hoped the additional thrust (~3,000 pounds) would be enough to “kick” the car through the sound barrier.

(continued on 12)
It was July 10, 1952. A group of 200 members of the Aviation Writers Association had gathered to observe a rocket firing demonstration. LCDR John E. Darden, Jr., age 30, was flying an F2H-2 Banshee.

He fired a salvo of 14 Mighty Mouse 2.75-inch rockets at a ground target. After he released the rockets, the airplane continued in a dive over the target area, smashed into the earth and exploded in a huge ball of flame. LCDR Darden died instantly.

Later, sequence camera photographs of the fatal flight, taken as the jet passed over the dust cloud kicked up by the exploding rockets, showed that the wing folded and the airplane spun crazily into the ground where it exploded.

LCDR Darden, one of the Navy’s most experienced jet pilots, had been at China Lake only six months at the time of the accident. He served as engineering officer at the Naval Air Facility where he was in charge of Banshee operations. LCDR Darden joined the Navy in February 1942 when he began flight training at Pensacola. After receiving his wings in November 1942, he served as gunnery officer aboard an aircraft carrier until June 1944 when he returned to the United States as a flight instructor. Later assignments were at Corpus Christi, TX, Milton, FL, Atlantic City, NJ, and the Navy General Line School at Monterey, CA.

He left behind a wife and 4-month-old son as well as his parents, two married sisters and a brother.

LCDR Darden is one of approximately 72 men and women who have given their lives in support of the China Lake mission since 1944. The United States Naval Museum of Armament and Technology will soon honor them officially with a display containing all their names. This display will have a permanent location at the site of the new museum building near the main gate where all who visit the museum will be able to remember and honor these brave men and women who served China Lake, their country and all of us.

Additional information about the cause of the accident described above is available from oral history S-203 of Dr. Emory Ellis conducted by Leroy Doig, Mark Pahuta and Liz Babcock in 1992:

"A wing broke. It just broke at the base. Of course, the plane immediately went in and killed the pilot, and there was always this question: did that plane hit a ricochet and clip the wing off? We had that happen once before. The pilot followed the shot in, and as he pulled up, the head ricocheted up and hit the wing of his Corsair and broke the hinge on the wing where it folded.

"But this pilot went in at the air show, so I got all of the film (a lot of the film) of the firing, and we followed all of the rockets to see if we had a ricochet and counted them to see if we had any hang-ups or any blowups of the rockets in front of the aeroplane or anything like that and couldn’t see anything. And I had the physics or the photo section (I don’t know who they used to do the work) measure the accelerations on that aeroplane. They knew enough about the positions on the cameras and so on that so well, you could use the aeroplane as a scale and measure the change in position of the aeroplane over time to see what happened. And again as he crossed the taxiway (there was a taxiway), and it was a hot day, and there must have been quite a bit of thermal air rising there, and when he hit that, he had something like 15 or 18 g, and the wing broke. Well, they were only stressed for 10, I think, and he was well over the limit, so that certainly justified the conclusion that what had happened was just that local turbulence that he hit while he was already pulling out that gave him the extra kick that broke the wing. These are things that kind of make you feel bad. I played those tapes or those pictures back and forth and back and forth, and I’d go home feeling like I’d been in the plane."
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Grace L. Ellings, Palos Verdes Estates CA
Shirley Ellis, Santa Maria CA
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John "Skip" & Denise Gorman, Ridgecrest CA
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Jim & Vonnie Goss, Roswell NM
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Gordon & Dorothy Greene, Ridgecrest CA
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Mark & Skye Hoppus, Rancho Santa Fe CA
Ruth Hoppus, Corona CA
Sue Hoppus, Ridgecrest CA
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Mitch & Geri Kanowski, DeBary FL
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John King, Ridgecrest CA
Michael & Jean Marie King, Woodland WA
Reuben & Doris Klammer, Palos Verdes Estates CA
Patricia Kleinschmidt, Ridgecrest CA
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Terry & Jane Kuhlman, Ridgecrest CA
William & Doris Lator, Ridgecrest CA
William C. & Sara Jane Leone, Palos Verdes Estates CA
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"The Mighty Mouse in History

[Note: Nearly all the following text in quotations is a condensation or direct quote of material from the Internet attributed to Joe Baugher, an aviation historian. I have requested and received his concurrence for this use.]

"In the late 1940s, faced for the first time with the possibility of a strategic bombing attack, the US government began a massive effort to develop an effective defense of US airspace. The Northrop F-89 Scorpion was the interceptor of choice (until the supersonic Convair F-102/F-106 could be ready). However, problems with the XF-89 prototype led the Air Force to consider alternatives. These included a modified Lockheed TF-80C which evolved into the F-94C Starfire, and a highly modified version of the North American F-86 Sabre."

"The major production version of the Scorpion was the F-89D. The F-89D differed from the C in having the armament of six 20-mm nose cannon replaced by an all-rocket armament. "Rocket launching pods for fifty-two 2.75-inch FFARs were housed in the forward third of each wing-tip fuel tank. The nose section was redesigned to house the Hughes E-4/E-6 fire control systems. These systems allowed the F-89D (as well as the F-86D and the F-94C) to make firing passes from a "beam" position which meant that the attacker would be in the target aircraft's defensive zone for only a brief period." It also afforded a larger target. A visual sighting system backed up these electronics which proved to be difficult to maintain."

"In March 1949 North American Aviation began design of an all-weather interceptor version of the F-86 fighter. This was the first attempt to build a single-seat all-weather interceptor. An on-board radar-guided intercept system, an automated power plant control system and an after-burning jet engine would provide (the essential features) required. "Plans were for a battery of twenty-four 2.75-inch Mighty Mouse rockets in a retractable tray in the aircraft's belly. A more conventional 20-mm cannon arrangement was studied and abandoned by early 1950. First trials of the twenty-four FFAR's in the belly packet were carried out at China Lake in February of 1951. The pressure of the Korean War led to fears that a Soviet attack on the US mainland could come at any time and orders for the F-86D were dramatically stepped up. By July 1951 a total of 79 were on order, the first production model was delivered in March of 1951."

"The Lockheed F-94A/B all-weather interceptor was considered an interim until more advanced aircraft could be available. In July 1948 Lockheed proposed a more advanced version of the F-94A concept. This aircraft would feature a new wing, improved fuel capacity, an after-burning more powerful engine and all-rocket armament mounted in the nose surrounding a new fire control system. Undeterred by USAF lukewarm response, Lockheed went ahead with construction of a company-funded demonstrator. The Air Force was sufficiently impressed that in February 1950 they purchased the demonstrator and ordered 180 production models of a fully militarized version. In September 1950 the aircraft was designated F-94C and named Starfire by publicists. The first production F-94C was delivered in July of 1951. The all-rocket armament consisted of 24 2.75 FFARs in four groups surrounding a radome in the nose. "Beginning with the 100th production aircraft a twelve-rocket pod was mounted on each wing leading edge, doubling the armament. These were later retrofitted to all prior aircraft." An interesting aside: Despairing of giving up space for a complex exhaust system behind the launchers in the nose, Lockheed insisted, over our strong advice, to simply close the rear of the nose tubes. In spite of aerial photos showing some closed-breech launched Mice flying nearly sideways, the F-94C won a "gunnery" competition at 29 Palms.

"In the late 1950s the F-86D, F-89D and F-94C interceptors served as the main air defense against Soviet bomber attacks. In retrospect, the threat was proven grossly exaggerated, but it cannot be denied that the presence of these aircraft was an important deterrent.

Mighty Mouse as it is most often seen today, mounted on an attack helicopter.
The Mighty Mouse in History

"At one time the Air Defense Command (ADC) had 20 F-86D wings, totaling 1405 aircraft. F-86D squadrons served under ADC, the US Air Forces in Europe, and the Far East Air Force, plus later, two squadrons under the Strategic Air Command.

387 F-94C aircraft were delivered between July of '51 and May of '54. Most of these served in continental bases; the 39th Squadron served for a time in Japan. The first F-89D Scorpions, after extensive factory rework, became operational with the 18th Fighter Interceptor Squadron in January 1954. A total of 682 F-89Ds were accepted, but 350 were modified to F-89Js. 30 of 39 squadrons were based in US or Canada. F-89D squadrons also served in Labrador and the 57th Squadron in Iceland." Many installations featured car-port-like hangers aligned with a runway with flight-ready aircraft, and attached-flight-crew quarters ready for instant response to an early warning.

China Lake can be proud that our concept, making an advantage of the natural dispersion of unguided rockets in the "shotgun" principle which employed a rapidly fired cluster of rockets, any one of which had been demonstrated to be capable of disabling a strategic bomber. It is a tribute to our reputation for analysis, design, test and evaluation that the defense establishment accepted the US Navy's 2.75-inch FFAR Mighty Mouse for this crucial mission.

Former China Lake Technical Director Leroy Riggs Passes Away

travel, family and genealogy. He was a founding member of the China Lake Museum Foundation. After Leroy moved to San Diego in his retirement, we would usually call each other once or twice every week usually to solve my computer problems or discuss the complexities of the Washington relationship, Kemeier recalled.

Riggs is survived by his wife of 57 years, Marilyn (Ditty) Riggs of San Diego; daughters and sons-in-law Fran and Bill Fenical of Solana Beach, and Cindy and Dick Craig of Bend, Ore.; and grandchildren Scott Fenical, Rebekah Gutman and husband Rick, Rachel Young and Christopher Young. An inurnment and private family memorial service were held Tuesday, March 30, at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in Point Loma, San Diego. The family suggests that in lieu of flowers donations be made to the China Lake Museum Foundation, P.O. Box 217, Ridgecrest, CA 93556. Arrangements were by El Camino Memorial Encinitas Chapel in Encinitas.

The Sidewinder-Budweiser Connection

Several China Lake employees participated in the project. Ray Van Aken, China Lake aeronautical engineer and rocket specialist, served as consultant to the program from its inception and participated in the design and analysis of the vehicle. Additionally, retired China Lake computer specialist Gene Breitenstein performed computer performance calculations for the car. Shortly before the final test runs at Edwards AFB, Tom Hampton of the Sidewinder Program Office and the author (Sidewinder motor engineer) were asked to advise the project on operational details of the Sidewinder rocket motor.

After voicing our opinion that the Budweiser team must be crazy for using a Sidewinder motor in this manner and pointing out that the forward end of the motor was positioned only inches behind the driver's head, we went ahead and advised them of motor operational details that were important. First, the forward closure had to be secured so it couldn't move when the motor was ignited; second, the motor did not have a mechanical safe and arm system so extreme care needed to be taken to insure firing voltage was not applied until the motor was wanted; and third, upon ignition, the thrust built up very rapidly and the driver would experience quite a physical shock! We were also concerned that, unlike the car's main engine, the Sidewinder motor could not be turned off once it was ignited.

To qualify a run as an official land speed record, the International Hot Rod Association requires two runs in the opposite direction within one hour over a measured mile or kilometer — activities that were impossible for the Budweiser car. First the car did not have enough power to maintain supersonic speed over the measured kilometer, and second.
the car could not be refueled within the required one-hour limit. As a result, the team opted for a single direction speed being measured over a much shorter drag racing "top speed trap" of 132 feet, a distance that was later reduced even further to 52.8 feet. Remember, the officially sanctioned record was not the team's objective.

The much bigger problem they faced was determining where to start the run so that the peak speed was reached in the timing trap. Computer analysis predicted that the rocket fuel would be exhausted 10,800 feet from the start point, and since that was the point of maximum speed, it was chosen for the official run.

Another member of the Budweiser team, retired General Chuck Yeager, had helped obtain permission to use Rogers Dry Lake and the Air Force ground speed radar tracking system.

At 7:25 a.m. on December 17, 1979, stuntman Stan Barrett, squeezed into the 20-inch-wide cockpit and started the official speed run 10,800 feet from the timing trap. The temperature on the lakebed that morning was 20 degrees Fahrenheit which meant the speed of sound was 731.9 mph at the time of the run (the speed of sound varies with temperature and altitude). Barrett ignited the 18,000-pound-thrust hybrid rocket engine, and the car accelerated down the track.

The fully fueled weight of the car at the start of the run was 5,320 pounds resulting in an initial acceleration of over 3 gs. About 4 seconds before the hybrid engine ran out of fuel (about 14 seconds into the run), the Mk 36 Mod 7 Sidewinder motor was ignited. With the additional thrust and the reduced weight of the car, the acceleration was reportedly about 6gs after Sidewinder ignition. When both rocket engines were exhausted, the car's weight had been reduced to 3,190 pounds (2,130 pounds of rocket fuel over a ton) had been burned during the approximate 18 second run.

Unfortunately, the car ran out of fuel (maximum speed point) some 900 feet short of the timing trap. In the 1.5 seconds it took to cover that final 900 feet, the speed of the car had dropped to 666 mph. Fortunately, the Air Force ground tracking radar had monitored the run, although it was not an official measurement. After 7 hours of analyzing the data, the Air Force announced: "... within the accuracy of the speed measuring devices used, and it is our [Air Force] judgment that the Budweiser car reached a peak speed of 739.666 mp." Since the speed of sound that morning was 731.9 mph, the peak Mach number was computed to be 1.0106, one percent above the speed of sound! Celebrations followed!

Controversy over the success or failure of the Budweiser Rocket Car to break the sound barrier has flourished ever since. Details of the controversy can be found on several websites, in particular:


Regardless whether you believe the Budweiser Rocket Car did, or did not, break the sound barrier that day, it is clear the car would have come nowhere near the sound barrier if it had not been for a boost from the Sidewinder rocket motor!
The Museum's Youngest Member
By Tex Hoppus, Director

Mitchell Thomas Baker of Long Beach, California is the Museum's youngest active member. He is seven years old and in the second grade, and has a fascination for airplanes, missiles, and rockets. Mitchell was exposed to the museum through his father, who works for a small engineering company (M4 Engineering, Inc.) in Long Beach that provides support to various China Lake programs. During a recent trip to the museum, Mitchell and his family and friends marveled at the wide range of weapons on display (and he thanks his tour guide – the world-famous Mr. Tex Hoppus!). Mitchell was most interested in the Tomahawk cruise missiles, after hearing stories of the development and testing of the Tomahawk from his grandfather, T. M. Sammon, the Director of Test and Evaluations at General Dynamics during Tomahawk development.

The Museum has been a unique opportunity for Mitchell to see first-hand some fascinating things that most people may only see on a TV show, if at all. We see here a rendition of our country's use of some of the Navy's weapons on display at the Museum. They were rendered, of course, by Mitch. Thanks, Mitch, for your interest in our mission and for your support!
Museum Happenings

By Barry Lowry, Museum Manager

As you can tell by the "bulk" of this newsletter, there is a lot to be included. One of these items is a report on the fundraising result and good time had at the 4th Annual CLMF Dinner/Auction fundraiser. The CLMF press release on the event is reproduced in its entirety below.

Now on to other news. The museum continues with a staff of one. Some have suggested that I should have roller skates to move about the museum faster but I think I am doing OK as-is. There hasn't been much time lately for special projects, but keeping the museum in good operating condition can be a project itself sometimes. Museum Store sales seem to be on the increase once again after a few slow months. Once the volunteer operation of the store is up to speed the newness of the activity itself should generate some sales interest.

Now that Leroy Doig has been elevated to spending full time on his Museum Curator duties, there are signs of increased activity in terms of exhibit upgrade, rearrangement, and new exhibit planning. As I am writing this there is a group meeting in the conference room to discuss additional outside aircraft displays that could be installed in the near future. Leroy has also conjured up some very good ideas about an exhibit highlighting the unique community life of China Lake that contributed to the successes of the civilian-military technical teams here about for many years.

I'm not sure how many of you are aware of it but the CLMF received an estate donation of nearly 5,000 boxed plastic model aircraft in late 2003. Board member Henry Blecha arranged this donation and has spent months inventoried it to identify what's really there. This collection represents 40 years of effort on the part of the late collector and contains some truly rare and unique items. If any of you are into model aircraft collecting please contact Henry to see if there might be something in the collection to grab your fancy.

I know that there is a lot more that I could tell you about museum happenings but that will just have to wait for the next issue.

Fund-raiser nets $19K for Navy museum

The China Lake Museum Foundation's annual dinner brought 205 people to Ridgecrest's Kerr Mcgee Center Saturday for an evening of fun and fund-raising led by CLMF President Paul Homer and Auctioneer Extraordinaire Wallace Martin. After the last check was signed and the last donated treasure carted proudly home by its new owner, CLMF volunteers under the leadership of Vice President for Membership Alice Campbell performed a preliminary tally showing that the evening netted more than $19,000 to support operation of the U.S. Naval Museum of Armament and Technology. "Our committee had set the goal of making $25,000," Campbell said. "The gross proceeds were nearly that amount." That $19,000 is still not a final figure, she said. "Walmart has promised to match a percentage of our profits." Campbell expressed her gratitude for all the hard work and donations of money, services and auction items that went into making the event a success. "We want to show our appreciation by holding a reception for all the donors at the China Lake museum," she said. The event, which will feature free beverages and hors d'oeuvres, will be held at a date yet to be determined.

After four years of heading up the museum's major fund-raiser, Campbell will turn the leadership of next year's event over to Wayne and Pat Doucette. Plans are to expand the event to make it a weekend-long celebration that will attract more China Lake alumni from out of town, Campbell said. "We're thinking about things like a wildflower tour and a petroglyph tour. We'd also like to get more support from major corporations." In recognition of the time these more ambitious plans will take, she said, the committee is not resting on its laurels, but has already started planning for next year's fund-raiser.

Auctioneer Wallace Martin gets a laugh out of Cecile
Coming this Fall

A Shrike Museum Event

Stay Tuned for Event and Exhibit Details