

THEY WANTED WINGS: TRAINING WWII PILOTS

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PROPLINER ROUND-UP

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WWII AVIATION

"This will certainly not be a wax museum," states Bill Klaers. "The National Museum of WWII Aviation will not be about a collection of static aircraft," said Bill as he gestured to an interconnected series of hangars/buildings adjacent to the WestPac facility. "We want this museum to be a fully interactive experience where the visitor can tailor their visiting experience to their own specific requirements. The museum will offer layers of information that can be adapted to all enquires — from school children to serious scholars."

The idea for the museum started several years ago during a brainstorming session. "We came up with a vision that would utilize the very latest in computer science combined with rapidly expanding access to information. For example, a teacher can bring a group of elementary children to the museum and we can tailor each portion of the museum to that specific group. We can then change the experience again for a group of women, a group of pilots, a group of veterans..."

Extensive groundwork has been completed and the museum is currently in the fund-raising mode. "Not particularly easy in today's economic environment, but we are making steady, significant progress and have a highly-regarded board of directors."

"Static aviation museums are killing themselves," said Klaers. "We will not be overburdened by a collection of non-flying airplanes that are difficult to maintain, preserve, and cumbersome to present." This flexible aviation educational experience is a new concept and one not currently functioning in any American museum. Visitors will also have the option of touring the WestPac restoration facility where they will be introduced to all aspects of WWII aircraft restoration.

Advanced planning has the museum separated into six distinct sections: Prelude, America's isolationist period immediately before the war; Mobilizing American Air Power, the explosion of American production might after Pearl Harbor; Weathering the Storm 1941-1943, Japanese control of the Pacific and Germany's control of the Atlantic; Striking Back 1942-1943, the Allied bombing campaign and the slow push to aerial dominance; Controlling the Skies, destruction of the Japanese Naval fleet and the coordinated invasion of Europe; Legacy, evolution of WWII airpower into today's modern air force.

With the strong aviation heritage of the area (Colorado Springs is home to the USAF Academy), many professionals have volunteered for duty at the museum. With the concept completed and buildings erected, initial fund raising is now putting all the various components together for a truly unique WWII aviation experience. For more information, go to www.worldwariaviation.org.



Magnificent new restoration of de Havilland Rapide undertaken in New Zealand for Jerry Yagen's Fighter Factory in Virginia. Aircraft is finished in a scheme applied to aircraft operated by Britain's Royal Family. The aircraft was scheduled to be one of the stars of the big Wanaka Warbirds show held over Easter weekend.

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