



## ***AvAr Bulletin: 017***

**Subject:** *Return to Jimmy Camp; AvAr Member Makes Good; Sad News; Punkin Center P-38; Las Animas Airfield; CAHS Hall of Fame Banquet; AvAr '08 Planning Session*

**Date:** *October 21, 2007*

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### ***Return to Jimmy Camp: Update***

As reported in *AvAr* Bulletin #016... there has been an unforeseen delay in our return to Jimmy Camp Creek. Although the crash site rests on city (Colorado Springs) land, we have to access it via the Banning-Lewis Ranch (BLR). Even though the city is excited to have us working this site, they too are limited in their access to this property at present.

The cultural resource manager for the Parks and Recreation Department in the City of Colorado Springs, Matthew Mayberry, says that their attorneys are nearing completion of a legal document that will soon see *AvAr* returning to this property in order to complete the survey and excavation.

If the late fall/early winter months are mild, we might be scheduling a return trip before year end. Otherwise, plan on an interesting spring and summer season just outside of Colorado Springs. More to come!

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### ***AvAr Member Makes Good***

Also reported in *AvAr* Bulletin #016 was the fact that Dionne Braxton (Class of '06) had recently been hired by Mesa Airlines as a first officer candidate.

We are happy to report that Dionne passed her first phase of intensive training with flying colors and will soon be completing the final stages of jet pilot transition. No small task, fewer than 1% of the human population will ever qualify to fly jet aircraft. (The percentage of women that will accomplish this feat is so extreme, common handheld calculators can't even factor the number!)

After arriving close to mid-night the evening before, Dionne (along with constant companion Capt. Donley Watkins III [Class of '06]), guided by Len Wallace, pretty

### ***AvAr Member Makes Good cont.***

much led our arduous (thousand foot up/one mile distance) ascent to reacquire the Monument Lake B-24 debris field.

Now that she's spent days on end memorizing procedures and charts, Dionne will enter the crucible of simulator evaluation. Just like a real aircraft, these expensive simulators are designed to replicate every possible fault imaginable. Unlike a real airplane, these simulators are controlled by instructors who routinely overload a pilot candidate far in excess of real world situations; only the most apt students will graduate.

We'll report again after Dionne has completed her training and been assigned.

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### ***Sad News***

Two monarchs of the aviation archaeology (**AvAr**) community "**flew west**" this past week: Mr. Robert Jackson of Ft. Collins, Colorado and Mr. Melvin Duncan of Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Bob Jackson joined the **AvAr** team only recently. Legally blind since the age of three, this intrepid individual overcame his handicap to become a recognized aviation historian. With more than 3,000 photographs collected (stored and documented), it was obvious Robert was a serious collector.

Bob employed a number of technical miracles that afforded him the ability to see far beyond the sighted. Having amassed, cataloged and categorized a tremendous number of photographs, Bob spent his life making sure that aviation history – Colorado's in particular – was preserved.

Although never a certificated or experienced airmen, Robert Jackson will long be remembered as a true historian; "***he made sure everyone was accounted for.***"

And... Melvin Duncan, 76, a longtime Wyoming resident and historian passed away in Cheyenne earlier this month.

Among his many talents, Mr. Duncan, was an accomplished writer of history, having devoted a considerable amount of time to researching and memorializing the accident of United Flight 409, which crashed into Medicine Bow Peak in 1955.

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### ***Punkin Center P-38***

On Saturday, October 6, 2007, **AvAr** team members Brian Richardson and Len Wallace traveled to the vicinity of Punkin Center, Colorado, to examine the crash site of a 1943 P-38 training accident. The aircraft, an F-5 photo-recon variant, impacted not far from the

### ***Punkin Center P-38 cont.***

edge of a county road. Gleaned from the initial site survey was the fact this airplane was most probably in a spin when it impacted.

Spending approximately two hours on site our intrepid team members, battling winds in excess of 15 mph, managed to identify the initial impact site and several surface deposits of glass, hardware and metallic artifacts. Additionally, sub-surface anomalies located with a metal detector were too numerous to count.

Identified as a unique possibility for future training classes, the Punkin Center P-38 site at least warrants a technical excavation to determine what artifacts lie beneath the surface.

More to come on this important find.

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### ***Las Animas Auxiliary Airfield #2***

Shortly after the outbreak of WWII, the Army Air Corps undertook an incredible and ambitious expansion plan to bolster its pilot training program. The targeted goal was to train 50,000 pilots a year. Spread across the nation, military airfields literally sprang up over night.

The Second Air Force, headquartered in Colorado Springs, realized that it needed some reliever fields to handle the overflow of B-24, B-25 and P-38 crews being trained in Colorado. To meet this need, three large auxiliary fields were constructed in a loose triangle about 70 miles due east of Pueblo. These were: Arlington (Aux.#4); La Junta (Aux.#3); Las Animas (Aux.#2); and Rocky Ford (Aux.#1). La Junta, due to its close proximity to a relatively large town, became an active training center in its own right which, at its peak, held over 100 multi-engine aircraft and medium (B-25) bombers for training pilots from five different nations. Truly, little is known today about the ghostly remnants of these once magnificent prairie airbases.

After rendezvousing at Wings Over the Rockies Museum (WORM) early on Saturday, October 20, 2007, three *AvAr* team members traveled 458 miles roundtrip to perform a preliminary site survey of the Las Animas Auxiliary Airfield #2. The team, led by *AvAr* imagery analyst Larry Liebrecht, also included Brian Richardson and Alan Sparks.

During the two hours and fifty-five minutes spent on location all three runways were perfunctorily surveyed. In addition, the foundation of the original base operations/control tower/crash rescue facility was examined and recorded in detail. Numerous period artifacts (flattened C-Ration cans, barrel hoops, guy-wire cables, stove bricks, glass fragments, etc.) were located and photographed. Larry Liebrecht managed to find the only rattlesnake encountered on this trip – both are fine and probably still talking about it.

***Las Animas Auxiliary Airfield #2 cont.***

Although not immediately planned, future returns to this airfield are expected to see a number of **AvAr** field agents conducting extensive walking sweeps of its 3,500 acre perimeter, along with specific area examinations utilizing metal detecting equipment.

Today, there are fewer than 75 public use airports in operation throughout Colorado, yet more than 250 air fields have – at one time or another – been recorded in this state since 1910. If you are interested in investigating any of Colorado’s many historic civil and military airfields, please contact **AvAr**’s airfield projects manager (APM), Larry Liebrecht, at [larry.Liebrecht@comcast.net](mailto:larry.Liebrecht@comcast.net).

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***CAHS HOF Banquet***

The CAHS Hall of Fame (HOF) Banquet is slated for Saturday, November 3, 2007 at the Lakewood Country Club in Lakewood, Colorado. This is the Society’s annual nosh and, if you’ve never been to one, it’s generally a pretty good party and an opportunity to rub elbows with some exclusively historic Colorado airmen.

If you have not yet received a formal invitation to the 2007 HOF Banquet, I urge you to contact Ms. Bea Wilhite, CAHS president, at [beakhanwilhite@comcast.net](mailto:beakhanwilhite@comcast.net).

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***AvAr 2008 Planning Session***

Your **AvAr** staff will be conducting a planning session for FY 2008 on November 17, 2007. We welcome any comments or suggestions you might have concerning management, routine operations or training of the **AvAr** team.

Since you are one of the few truly accredited aviation archaeologists in the country, your input will make a significant difference. Please address all correspondence to [aviator\\_b@msn.com](mailto:aviator_b@msn.com) Any and all correspondence will be held confidential at the submitter’s request.

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**Send comments, corrections or submissions to [aviator\\_b@msn.com](mailto:aviator_b@msn.com)**