

President's Message



Restored Grand Central Air Terminal west side. (Photo by Hayden Hamilton)

A single day is just too short to become re-acquainted with long-distance AAHS friends, or to strike up new conversations with like-minded historians, while also taking in the program, food and amazing surroundings, such as we enjoyed at the 60th Anniversary of AAHS meeting at the Grand Central Air Terminal (GCAT) on February 12.



The new GCAT visitor center that is available for public viewing by appointment. (Photo by Hayden Hamilton)

And what a program! Walt Disney assembled a wealth of artifacts, photos and documents (many from archives of AAHS members like John Underwood, Gary Hyatt and Phil Dockter) to present the history of GCAT in a specially built Visitor Center that will be available for public viewing by appointment. One item of interest for many of us was the original GCAT Airport Log (this one had copied pages), showing the landings and takeoffs of aircraft out of GCAT from 1933 to 1935. We discovered that the practice of the time by the GCAT tower included recording off-field aircraft landings and takeoffs only; local aircraft based at GCAT were not entered into the airport log. The Disney Co. did a stellar job of bringing the feel of the original Grand Central Air Terminal of 1929

back to life with their meticulous renovation. Architect John Bereley noted that The Disney Co., although owner of the building had a real responsibility to the public to preserve this icon of aviation history, as well as make the space useful for modern business activities of Walt Disney Imagineering employees.

There wasn't nearly enough time to admire the detailed tiles, ironworks and glasswork of GCAT's interior, and visit with the large group of 1930s re-enactors outside (orchestrated by '30s enthusiasts Steve Cocham and Clark Crump), and their assortment of original 1930-1939 Fords, Buicks and Chevrolets that parked on the terminal apron, ready to whisk off passengers to downtown Los Angeles.

We also wished we had time to visit Disney presenter and GCAT restoration team member Dan Beaumont, who, with his fiancée, Audrey,



Period re-enactors that added to the ambiance of the event. (Photo by Robert Littlefield)



Left to Right: Jerri Bergen, AAHS president; Carl Scholl, AAHS board member; John D. Lyons, AAHS board member; Dan Beaumont, Walt Disney Co.; Tom Butz, AAHS treasurer and board member; Les Whittlesey, AAHS board member; and Bob Gurr, Walt Disney Co. The group is standing on the landing to stairs to the second floor in front of the Curtiss-Wright Technical Institute of Aeronautics sign that was uncovered and preserved in location during the restoration.

spent the day with us, and provided many fascinating aspects to the building's journey from dereliction to new life. Dan introduced us to a very special Disney Mouseketeer, Bob Gurr, the designer of many of the original Disneyland rides, including the Monorail and the Autotopia, who grew up at GCAT. We didn't have nearly enough time to hear of his experiences of growing up at GCAT in the late 1930s, watching GCAT transform into a temporary air corps base, a raceway, and finally a Disney owned business park - all of which he was an active participant. You can read Bob Gurr's account of our day at his blog at www.bobgurr.com.

And there is never enough time for John Underwood, AAHS member #38, and his wife Mary, to get around to all the well wishers in attendance who wanted to congratulate him on his *Lifetime Achievement Award*, given by the AAHS Board of Directors in a presentation following the lunch program, or to discuss his long personal history with GCAT and aviation in Glendale, or to see how his next publication is coming along. Gia Koontz, long time aviation historian of Burbank, Calif., now supporting aviation history in Prescott, Ariz.,

handed off the award to John and Mary, voicing her appreciation for John's longtime support of aviation history.

Our upcoming *FLIGHTLINE* Newsletter will have more anecdotes and happenings of the Annual Meeting and the presentation by Bob Kirk; suffice to say here that by the end of the day we were all wishing we'd had more time to wander around the famous old building and enjoy the unique aviation history presented.

Jerri Bergen
President

Restored Grand Central Air Terminal north side.
(Photo by Hayden Hamilton)

