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Living History

Carl Panhorst, Itasca Helmsman

In June 2005, a documentary program on our Earhart project aired on the Travel Channel. After seeing that program, Rose Pierson contacted Nauticos about her father Rufus and her Uncle Carl Panhorst being crew members of the Coast Guard Cutter *Itasca* during Amelia Earhart's flight July 2, 1937. A few days later Tom Vinson and I placed a call to Carl.

Carl started the interview by emphatically stating "Well, let me tell you boys something - I'm 91 years old and still have all my marbles." I looked at Tom and we both knew this was going to be good.

Carl related how he was a crewman on *Itasca* that fateful day when Amelia Earhart disappeared somewhere near Howland Island. He had galley duty that morning and had to stay behind on the ship while all his mates went ashore to assist with Earhart's anticipated landing on Howland. So when Carl finished in the galley, he went up and stood on deck outside the open hatch to the radio room and listened to Earhart's radio transmissions.

We were incredulous at this tale unfolding over the phone for we realized we were most likely speaking to the last person alive to have heard those radio transmissions. Tom asked Carl a few more questions. Then, as Carl was describing the search activities of the *Itasca*, he said "I've got pictures too!"

"You do?!" I asked.

"Yep"

At this point I knew we had to visit Carl, so I asked "Can we come out and see you?"

"Sure I'm not going any place" was Carl's response.

About 10-days later, I'm in Minneapolis attending my youngest son's second college graduation ceremony when Tom called and said he has a business trip to Arizona in two days. Quickly he changed his ticket to leave a day early with a stop in Salt Lake City, Utah. I commandeered one of the college computers and quickly booked a ticket. After the graduation, it was a fast trip home to pack



a bag and run to the airport.

On the way home, I stopped long enough to buy a video camera and a portable scanner to take along. I arrived at Salt Lake City on time, collected my bag and met Tom. We caught the shuttle bus to the hotel.

It's *deja vu* all over again: the hotel is on Amelia Earhart Drive. In fact, we eat supper in the Amelia Grill at the nearby Holiday Inn.

"Well, let me tell you boys something: I'm 91 years old and still have all my marbles." — Carl Panhorst

The next morning, Carl's niece Rose Pierson with her mother Marie, picked us up and we drove an hour to Carl's house in Provo. We were welcomed by Carl and Wanda, his wife of 65 years, their two sons, Dan and Chuck and Dan's wife Hilda. Lee Benson, a reporter from the Desert News was also there. It was an atmosphere of high anticipation. Tom and I explained a just bit about our project but withheld details until after we interviewed Carl as we wanted his recollections untainted by what we think. Carl re-iterated what he told us on the telephone earlier: He's over 90, has all his marbles, doesn't wear hearing aids, nor does he wear glasses (never did). I also observed he didn't need a cane to get around the house. This was even more remarkable after

Plan of the Day March 5, 2017

- 1000 Daily Progress Meeting: Ops Ctr.
- 1100 Bar-b-cue, aft deck.
- 1200 ALL HANDS MEETING, sea porch.
- 1300 First Central Pacific B-Ball Challenge.
- 1445 ET REMUS recovery.

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Pam "Doc" Geddis

Expedition Doctor

Today we feature the extraordinary Pam "Doc" Geddis. Stolen from sunny San Diego, she joins us as a safety measure we hope we never need. Doc Pam was born in Okinawa, Japan. She lived in Hong Kong and Singapore and had visited the pyramids, the Serengeti, and Calcutta all before the age of 12. It made for quite the culture shock when the family settled in San Diego and she was faced with the task of writing the famous essay "what I did last summer." Somehow giraffe and rhino sightings weren't exactly what her peers considered normal.

Pam never quit being unusual in all the best ways. She got her medical

degree from Tulane University in New Orleans and completed her residency in a combination of orthopedics and neurology at Baylor in Houston, Texas. She sees patients in private practice and also started a research company testing new medications and devices to treat cardiovascular diseases. In addition, she's on an Independent Review Board to make sure clinical studies are being done safely. Since the 2006 expedition, on Oct. 20th, 2013 to be exact, Pam brought her son Dylan into the world. Talk about a full plate! But never fear; her adventurous spirit wouldn't let her pass up an opportunity to be stuck at sea with all of us for weeks on end – again! You see, before she decided on

med school, young Pam once considered a career as a marine biologist. So getting a taste of salt air is right up her alley. Pam also scuba dives, loves oreos, two stepping, and the manatees in Florida.

—Marika Lorraine



... continued from page 1.

we learned what happened to him in WWII.

We videotaped the interview with Carl for nearly 2 hours then took a break for juice and muffins. During the break and with my video tape recorder off (unfortunately), I



casually asked Carl if he stayed in the Coast Guard or what he did in the years afterward. His reply was "No, I got out and got a job with the US Postal Service in Los Angeles." "But then the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor and I got drafted."

This grabbed my attention and I asked "So where did you serve - In the Pacific?"

"No, I was in the Army Infantry and was sent to Europe"

"And where in Europe?" I asked

"Oh, I was all over..... I was in the battle of the Hurtgen Forest and was wounded there." I asked how it happened.

Carl very nonchalantly replied "Well we were dug-in and the Germans were shelling us for two days. At one point a shell landed near a fellow in a nearby foxhole and severely wounded him. We could hear him screaming in pain so I says to my buddy 'We're probably going to get it next. We might just as well be doing something useful when it happens, so let's go get him'!

"So we jump out of our hole, run over and pick him up and we're carrying him back to the medics when a shell burst behind us. The next thing I remember is lying on the ground with a blanket over my face. I started yelling 'I'm alive.... I'm alive!' A medic came over and pulled the blanket off me. I had shrapnel wounds in my shoulders and back and spent the next 9 months in hospitals."

I thought to myself "What a tough guy (and lucky) to be wounded so badly in his youth and yet walk around at age 91 without even the use of a cane." Meeting people like Carl Panhorst and hearing their remarkable stories is one of the

most fascinating aspects of the Earhart Project. Carl passed away on Jan. 6, 2008 at age 93. It was both an honor and privilege to have known this great man.

— Rod Blocksome

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UNCLAIMED: Safety goggles, trimmed in sporty orange, with pouch. Sue will trade for 1 doz. styrofoam cups OBO. Sue 3344.

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Place New Ads by Friday – ed.