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- * *Future military medical structure*
- * *WHMC converts ER to urgent care center*
- * *Ft. Sam New Braunfels gate limited opening*
- * *USAFSAM begins a new chapter*
- * *Brooks City-Base historical feature*
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Leaders cut ribbon on BHT Research Institute

San Antonio Joint Program Office, Randolph Air Force Base, TEXAS - The Battlefield Health and Trauma Research Institute was officially recognized as open for business March 4.

Maj. Gen. James K. Gilman, commanding general, U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command, hosted a ribbon-cutting that was originally scheduled for February 4, but was cancelled due to inclement weather and road closures.

As a result of Base Realignment and Closure 2005, the BHT was established at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. It co-locates all Department of Defense (DoD) Combat Casualty Care Research (less neuroprotection) in one location. To accomplish this action, a 150,000 square foot building was constructed adjacent to the existing Institute of Surgical Research facility. Collectively, these two building comprise the BHT.

In co-locating all combat casualty care research activities at Fort Sam Houston, BRAC 2005 recognized that BAMC is the only level 1 Trauma Center within the DoD, the US Army Institute of Surgical Research Burn Center is the only burn center within the DoD, and the Medical Education and Training Campus (METC), where virtually all DoD enlisted medical personnel will be trained is also being established at Fort

Sam Houston. This co-location is intended to foster the rapid application of research findings to health care delivery, and provide synergistic opportunities to bring clinical insight into bench research. Units moving to the BHT came from Great Lakes, Ill., Bethesda, Md. and Brooks - City Base, Texas.

The units located in the BHT are: US Army Institute of Surgical Research, Naval Medical Research Unit – San Antonio, US Air Force Dental Evaluation and Consultation Service, and the US Army Dental and Trauma Research Detachment.



March 15 marks six months to the BRAC deadline of September 15, 2011. So far, all major projects are on track and BRAC leaders say BRAC Law will be met on time in San Antonio.



The BHT was an integrated design, bid, build (IDBB) project. This meant that construction actually started before the building design was completed. In fact, the Corps of Engineers awarded the construction contract to Gilbane Building Company when the facility design was only about 20% complete. The IDBB was necessary in order to complete the project before the mandated BRAC deadline.

Leaders sign agreement for military medical structure

by Linda Frost, 59th Medical Wing Public Affairs - A year of positive transition is ahead as a new era of military medical care is established in the San Antonio area, as mandated by the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Law.

Air Force and Army Chiefs of Staff have signed an agreement that establishes the San Antonio Military Health System, or SAMHS, which activates Sep. 15, 2011.

SAMHS will serve as the office that provides oversight for clinical, educational, and business operations for all military treatment facilities in the San Antonio region and will be led by Air Force and Army general officers.

Air Force Maj. Gen. Byron Hepburn, commander of the 59th Medical Wing, has been named the first director of SAMHS and Army Brig. Gen. Joseph Carvalho, Jr., com-

manding general of Brooke Army Medical Center, will serve as deputy director. The positions will rotate Services every two years.

"SAMHS will be dedicated to high quality, patient-centered care with a clear focus on safety and customer service, while providing first-rate graduate medical education and training, state-of-the-art research and maintaining a first-class global readiness mission," said Maj. Gen. Hepburn, who will oversee the healthcare for 227,000 beneficiaries in the San Antonio metropolitan area.

Within this system, the current facility known as BAMC will be renamed the San Antonio Military Medical Center, or SAMMC, providing inpatient services, while Wilford Hall Medical Center will be renamed the Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center,

or WHASC, and emerge as one of the Department of Defense's largest ambulatory surgical centers providing outpatient services.

While both military treatment facilities will be staffed with Air Force and Army personnel, SAMMC and WHASC will continue to be commanded by an Army and Air Force general officer, respectively.

"Our expectation for SAMHS is a higher level of functioning. By working collaboratively across Service component lines, we can achieve tremendous educational, staffing, and resourcing efficiencies. These, in turn, will enhance our already world class healthcare services both at home and during deployments," said General Hepburn.



"SAMHS will be dedicated to high quality, patient-centered care with a clear focus on safety and customer service."

*Maj. Gen. Byron Hepburn,
Cdr., 59th Medical Wing*

Wilford Hall converts ER to urgent care center

by Sue Campbell, 59th Medical Wing Public Affairs - Changes are fast approaching in how Wilford Hall Medical Center will provide urgent and emergency care to eligible military medical beneficiaries in the San Antonio area. Beginning July 1, 2011, Wilford Hall Medical Center will close its emergency department and re-designate the area as an urgent care center, or UCC.

"Since last summer, we have been working with our Army counterparts to consolidate inpatient services, including trauma care, at Brooke Army Medical Center at Ft. Sam Houston," said Col. (Dr.) James King, 59th Medical Wing emergency medicine chairman.

"We plan to close the emergency department this summer as the migration of all our inpatient services to BAMC is nearly complete," he said. "Without missing a beat, be-

ginning 1 July 2011, we will stand up the UCC in place of the emergency department here at Lackland AFB."

This will be one of the final changes in services as Wilford Hall Medical Center becomes the Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center in accordance with the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure law. In the fall of 2011, BAMC will become the San Antonio Military Medical Center, or SAMMC, providing all military medical inpatient care in San Antonio.

"Approximately half of the patients who currently come to the Wilford Hall Emergency Department will be able to be treated in our new UCC which will provide acute and non-emergency care to eligible Department of Defense beneficiaries 24 hours a day, 7 days a week," said Colonel King.

The UCC will be staffed by both military and civilian family practice physicians, physician

assistants, nurses and medical technicians. The UCC will initially operate in the location of the former emergency department until construction is completed on the new Wilford Hall ASC, scheduled for 2015.

Urgent care centers are an option for common medical problems when an individual cannot obtain an appointment with a primary care provider or a clinic is closed. UCCs treat minor illnesses and injuries, such as flu, fever, earaches, nausea, rashes, animal and insect bites, minor bone fractures and minor cuts that require stitches.

"A UCC can be more convenient, but it is not a substitute for an emergency department," said Colonel King. "Personnel staffing the UCC will not have the same level of expertise in treating emergencies compared to our emergency medicine-trained staff (continued next page)



Dr. Annette Williams, staff physician (left), examines Mr. Tarzo Lucares' ears Jan. 27, 2011, in the Wilford Hall Medical Center Emergency Department, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. Beginning July 1, 2011, the hospital will close the department and re-designate the area as an urgent care center. (U.S. Air Force photo/Mr. Harold China)

Wilford Hall converts ER to urgent care center

(continued from pg. 2)

at the SAMMC Emergency Department, nor will the UCC have the same equipment as an emergency department."

There will be no need to make an appointment to be seen in the Wilford Hall UCC. Patients arriving at the new UCC will be seen as expeditiously as possible based on their condition and the number of other patients also presenting for care.

Unlike UCCs, emergency departments are prepared for every kind of medical emergency, including heart attacks, stroke, motor vehicle crashes, psychiatric emergencies and other life-threatening conditions.

"Individuals who suffer a serious illness or injury should

go to the closest emergency department. If they go to an urgent care center with a serious illness or injury, they will be sent or transported by ambulance to a hospital emergency department, and this could delay their care," stressed Colonel King.

"However, if an individual has a less serious condition, our new UCC will provide open access care for all eligible DoD beneficiaries."

"Until July 1, 2011, patients can continue to expect to receive the highest level of care in our emergency department at Lackland AFB," said Colonel King. "However, beginning 1 July, our Air Force Emergency Medicine professionals will be working alongside their Army counterparts in the only

remaining military emergency department in San Antonio, the SAMMC Emergency Department at Fort Sam Houston."

The combined Army and Air Force staff at the SAMMC Emergency Department will provide round-the-clock care and have special equipment and highly-qualified personnel to respond to every kind of adult or childhood medical and surgical emergency, including serious trauma.

"We remain dedicated to continue providing all of our eligible DoD beneficiaries the best possible urgent and emergency care," said Colonel King.

Operating Room Annex extends BAMC's daily care



One of the four operating rooms in the BAMC OR Annex stands ready to receive a surgical patient. (photo/Susan Merkner)

by Susan Merkner, San Antonio Medical BRAC Integration Office Public Affairs - The Operating Room Annex has opened at Brooke Army Medical Center, offering the same high standards of care as traditional hospital surgical suites.

The OR Annex was planned for use during the remaining Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) construction and renovation work to help meet the need for additional operating rooms.

The first surgery in the new unit was performed Feb. 16, said Air Force Col. (Dr.) W. Brian Perry, chief of the Department of Anesthesia and OR Services.

As more inpatient services are moved from Wilford Hall Medical Center to BAMC in accordance with BRAC law, additional operating rooms will be needed.

There are currently 12 ORs at BAMC, excluding the one in the burn center, and all are

fully utilized. A minimum of 16 ORs were identified as the number needed when all inpatients move to BAMC from Wilford Hall this year. When BRAC construction is completed, the re-named San Antonio Military Medical Center will have 28 ORs, excluding the burn center and new labor/delivery surgical suites.

The structures used for the OR Annex are known as Deployable Medical Systems, or DEPMEDS. The enclosed, climate-controlled, solid units include four operating rooms and a four-bed unit for preoperative procedures and post-anesthesia care. The new structures are connected to each other and attached to the hospital building by new enclosed walkways.

In accordance with DoD policy, the Joint Committee on Tactical Shelters (JOCOTAS) approves a standard family of tactical shelters, which are mobile, transportable structures designed to meet certain

functional requirements. JOCOTAS has approved 21 shelter types for use by the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines.

Included on that list are the rigid aluminum structures used at BAMC, which meet International Organization for Standardization standards and commonly are referred to as ISO shelters. DEPMEDS can include various types of standard shelters used as field hospitals, command posts, dental facilities, and battalion aid stations.

The shelters were selected because there was no space in BAMC to renovate into additional operating rooms within the required timeframe and costs.

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Operating Room Annex extends BAMC's daily care

(continued from pg. 3)

BAMC's OR Annex provides the same standard of superior patient care as that provided in the main BAMC ORs with the same hospital personnel. Environmental controls, infection control standards, types of equipment used, indoor plumbing, housekeeping services and access control are comparable.

General surgery, urology, gynecology and pain surgeries will be performed in the OR Annex units initially.

"These services were chosen primarily on their logistical footprint," Perry said. "Both inpatient and outpatient cases will be done."

Other services will be added as necessary. No bariatric surgeries, no known isolation patients and no ventilated patients from the ICU will be treated in the OR Annex. The restrictions are based on the weight load supported by the structures' floors, the size of the ORs and supply storage capabilities.

Ambulatory surgical patients will report to Same-Day Surgery (SDS) on the hospital's second floor, where they will be assessed. Patients will change clothes and have their personal items secured, and then be escorted to the OR Annex by wheelchair or stretcher. Family members will remain in the hospital's waiting area until the patient is released or admitted.

New Braunfels gate opens for outbound traffic Feb. 15



(photos courtesy Fort Sam Houston Visual Information Services)

by Steve Elliott, Fort Sam Houston Public Affairs - Construction on and around Fort Sam Houston will lead to road closures, detours and likely some traffic congestion in the near future.

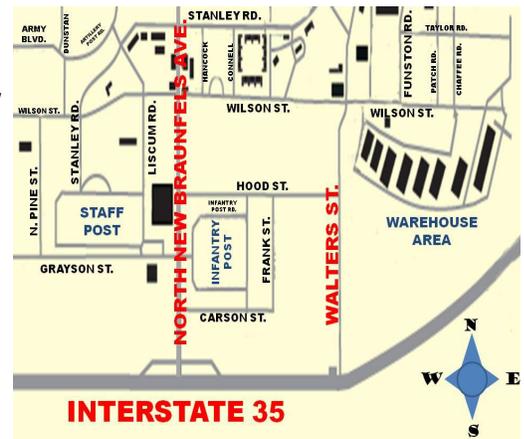
On the bright side, however, a long-closed gate will open Feb. 15 for outbound traffic during rush hour on weekdays. Also, starting March 15, approximately 3,500 fewer vehicles a day will be coming in the Walters Street gate.

According to Ray Acuna, operations officer for the 502nd Security Forces Squadron, the North New Braunfels Avenue gate at Grayson Street, next to U.S. Army North headquarters, will be opened for outbound traffic only from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays starting Feb. 15.

"Use caution when exiting Fort Sam Houston, as there is a traffic light that will be controlling the exiting traffic, as well as the turning movements from North New Braun-

fels Avenue to Grayson Street and from Grayson Street to North New Braunfels Avenue," Acuna said.

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New Braunfels gate opens for outbound traffic Feb. 15

(continued from pg. 4) - This is a temporary gate opening while construction is going on for the Walters Street entry control point."

This is being done in an effort to divert some traffic away from the construction area on Walters Street between that gate and Interstate 35.

As reported in the Oct. 28, 2010 edition of the Fort Sam Houston News Leader, this area is receiving a \$4,185,031.75 facelift, thanks to a contract awarded to Yantis Company by the San Antonio City Council, which approved an ordinance Aug. 5 for the project.

The project will widen Walters Street from four to six lanes, with a raised median including curbs, sidewalks, driveway approaches, bike lanes, turn lanes at major intersections and necessary drainage improvements.

This project is funded through the City's 2007-2012 Bond Program, Local Agency Managed (LAM) funds and the Metropolitan Planning Organization. Funding partners include the Texas Department of Transportation, San Antonio Water System, and CPS Energy.

CPS Energy will replace gas piping for a section of the project. SAWS will upgrade sewer and water lines for a section.

"Fort Sam Houston at Joint Base San Antonio continues to experience challenges with traffic congestion on and off the installation roadways," 502nd Air Base Wing commander Brig. Gen. Leonard Patrick wrote in a letter dated Jan. 12, which was sent to San Antonio District 2 Councilwoman Ivy R. Taylor. Her district encompasses the eastern area around Fort Sam Houston. "There are two construction projects currently under-

way that are impacting our ability to circulate traffic in a timely manner.

"These projects are the Walters Street reconstruction, which began in October 2010, and the replacement of the Scott Road entry control point, which began in November 2010," the letter continued. "As the projects are scheduled to be completed in May 2012, I expect congestion issues to continue for the next 18 months.

"The 502nd Mission Support Group has developed this solution requiring a temporary opening of our North New Braunfels Avenue gate, which should divert traffic from Walters Street and provide another avenue for motorists," Patrick said, outlining the plan for the North New Braunfels Avenue gate.

"Joint Base San Antonio will work closely with the (San Antonio) city engineering staff to ensure all community concerns are addressed."

Col. Mary Garr, 502nd MSG commander, met with Taylor Jan. 25 and talked about the proposed temporary gate opening.

"She understands our position," Garr said. "We also talked about congestion at all the Fort Sam Houston gates, including George Beach and Binz Engleman and also what we are discussing with City Public Works to mitigate both short term and long term. City engineers and Public Works have assured us that they can support it as well."

"In light of the anticipated traffic pattern changes as a result of construction, it was a wise decision to provide limited access from the New Braunfels Street gate," Taylor said. "I know many residents and business owners in the area are hopeful that this can help re-start the dialogue about options related to the

New Braunfels Street gate.

"The gate closure in 2001 had a negative impact on the commercial corridor and the East Side as a result of the difficulty in accessing areas on the northern end of the base," the councilwoman added. "As conditions continue to change, we are glad the military officials are flexible in trying to meet the needs of both the personnel on the base and the surrounding community."

At another location on Fort Sam Houston, the construction of troop walk crossings near the Medical Education and Training Campus will cause multiple road closures and detours, according to Mark Boenisch of the 502nd Civil Engineering Squadron's Programs Flight.

"Locations that will be affected include Garden Avenue south of McGee Road, between the NCO academy and the unit chapel," Boenisch said. "This construction will be accomplished with one lane closed at all times and will be monitored by temporary traffic signals. One-lane traffic will be maintained 24/7 With these signals."

In addition, Scott Road will have two crosswalks installed between Harney and Hardee Roads, Boenisch added. Southbound traffic will be maintained throughout the construction and northbound traffic will be detoured via Harney east, North on Patch and west on McGee and then back to Scott.

"The construction of these crosswalks will begin Feb. 15 and are expected to take from two to three weeks," Boenisch said. "This is to allow crews to construct one lane at a time and allow for proper curing of the underlying concrete with maintaining traffic flows through the areas."



Construction off Highway 35 near Fort Sam Houston is well underway.



Traffic congestion at Fort Sam Houston late on a weekday afternoon.

USAFSAM closes one chapter and begins another

by E'Lisa Wilcox, 711 HPW/XP - The USAF School of Aerospace Medicine marked the end of an era on Feb. 17 by ceremonially decommissioning the Brooks-based school after 85 years in San Antonio, a final step in its transition to Wright-Patterson AFB, OH. Nearly 600 people including a host of active and retired general officers, MAJCOM Surgeons General, Air Force leadership, current and former students, faculty, and dozens of distinguished alumni, many who shaped the face of American medicine and are part of the school's heritage attended the ceremony in a celebration of the school's long history, the achievements of the students, the lives that were saved because of the training received at the school, and the medical advancements that were possible only because of the experts within USAFSAM.

In his address to the crowd, Colonel Charles Fisher, USAFSAM commander, recounted the 85-year history of the school, noting the school's proud heritage dating back to 1918 during the very beginning of military aviation. He noted the school's first establishment at Brooks in 1926 and cited the nation's space race as a key turning point for the school and its heyday at Brooks.

After nearly two decades at Randolph AFB, the school relocated to a massive new complex at Brooks AFB. "The School of Aerospace Medicine's began teaching in the new Brooks facilities in 1959," Col. Fisher said. "And, in 1963, on his last day of life, President Kennedy dedicated the new Aeromedical center at Brooks launching explosive growth in research and knowledge in space, aviation, environmental medicine, physiol-

ogy, and biosciences over the next four decades. Brooks was the epicenter, where the action was for biomedical research and for Aeromedical training."

Chief Master Sergeant Joel Berry, USAFSAM superintendent, described personal contributions that members of USAFSAM have made to the Air Force and to the nation, thanking the enlisted team members who have been deployed into harm's way. He recounted the valor and integrity shown by team members and he encouraged continued service as the team moves to Wright-Patterson.

"Collectively, it is our duty to insure that USAFSAM's foundation of commitment, dedication, education, and excellence is continued from this day forward, no matter the mission and no matter the location," Chief Berry said.

Major General Tom Travis, Deputy Surgeon General of the Air Force and former school commander, spoke about his personal attachment to USAFSAM and Brooks City-Base as he invoked the school's mission.

"This is an important day and an important move because it is about the mission," Maj. Gen. Travis said. "You have to go where the action is, and as much as I regret to say this, Brooks is no longer where the action is. We have to go where the technology center is, where technology is developed, where knowledge is developed, where new systems are being fielded. That is the right place for the School of Aerospace Medicine, now proudly part of the 711th Human Performance Wing at Wright-Patterson."

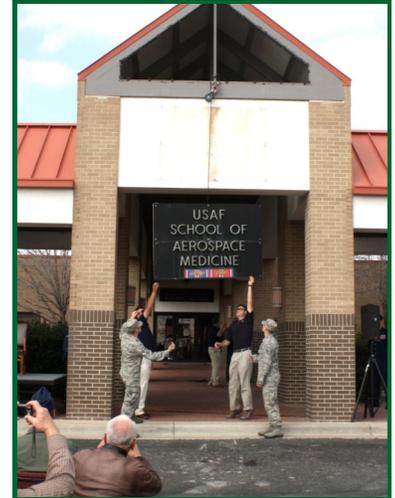
Gen. Travis reflected on the numerous USAFSAM certificates he has seen hanging on the walls of medical leaders on nearly all of his domestic and international trips observing

that "USAFSAM is making an impact around the world and that mission must continue."

The historic ceremony was capped by the removal of the last insignia from the School of Aerospace Medicine at Brooks. As the hundreds of attendees spontaneously stood silently, Maj. Gen. Travis and Dr. Thomas Tredici, one of the pioneers of Aerospace Medicine in the field of ophthalmology, helped lower the last remaining sign from the schoolhouse building. That sign along with other historical memorabilia including a memorial to Lt. Col. Thomas Koritz a graduate lost in combat, an intact time capsule, and the granite markers and logos for the school were then given a send-off and dispatched to their new home in Ohio.

The mission of USAFSAM is to be first-call consultants in aerospace medicine, find solutions to operational needs of today and tomorrow, and prepare new aeromedical experts for future global challenges.

USAFSAM is relocating from Brooks City-Base in San Antonio, Texas, to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base as part of the nation's 2005 base realignment and closure decisions, and will formally activate the new complex in June 2011. The school is part of the Air Force Research Laboratory's 711th Human Performance Wing.



The ceremony closed with the removal of one of the last remaining signs being removed from the schoolhouse building at Brooks City-Base and loaded onto a truck to be shipped to its new location at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. USAFSAM is relocating from Brooks City-Base in San Antonio, Texas, to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base as part of the nation's 2005 base realignment and closure decisions. The school is part of the Air Force Research Laboratory's 711th Human Performance Wing. (photo/E'Lisa Wilcox, 711 HPW/XP)

“Basura Bash” cleaned up Ft. Sam Houston’s Salado Creek

by Steve Elliott, Fort Sam Houston Public Affairs - Volunteers took part in the first “Basura Bash” on Fort Sam Houston, cleaning up trash and debris along the banks and surrounding areas of Salado Creek Feb. 26.

“Basura” – the Spanish word for trash – has been at the heart of these annual single-day cleanup events in Texas and San Antonio for 17 years, thanks to the Basura Bash Planning Organization, a volunteer organization that has been committed to increasing stewardship of San Antonio area waterways.

Trash and other items are carried into waterways by storm drainage, run-off, and human carelessness. Focusing on cleaning the waterways

in the San Antonio area, the Basura Bash is the largest one-day waterway cleanup in Texas and also concentrates on recycling the items found in the waterways.

Each year, approximately 2,825 volunteers, sponsors and partners have been responsible for cleaning up areas which include the San Antonio River Mission Reach, segments of Alazan Creek, Indian Creek, Leon Creek, Olmos Creek, Zarzamora Creek, Salado Creek, Medina River natural area, Brackenridge Park and Woodlawn Lake.

Last year, more than 42 tons of trash, 3.7 tons of recyclable material and 250 tires were collected.



Pfc. Marcel Autry carries out carpet remnants pulled out of Salado Creek at the first “Basura Bash” on Fort Sam Houston Feb. 26. More than 160 volunteers turned out for the event and helped clean up trash and debris along the banks and surrounding areas of the waterway. (photo/Steve Elliott)

“BRAC Chili Meld” wins chili cook-off



59th Medical Wing chiefs serve various chili recipes during the Chief's Chili Cook-off Feb. 10 in the Wilford Hall Medical Center atrium, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. Chief Master Sgt. Patricia Morris, 59th Medical Support Group superintendent, won the best overall award with her "Jerk Chili." Chief Master Sgt. Veronique Nicklas, 59th Clinical Support Group superintendent, won best presentation with her "BRAC Chili Meld," and Chief Master Sgt. Mike Stephenson-Pino, 59th Medical Operations Squadron superintendent, won hottest with his "ONIP." (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Robert Barnett)

BROOKS CITY-BASE HISTORY FEATURE

Ocker pioneered instrument flight at Brooks Field

by Rudy Purificato, 311th Air Base Group Historian -

Flying in bad weather and at night is routine today thanks to the vision and persistence of a bespeckled, bow-legged, diminutive Army officer with a giant imagination who pioneered the development of flight instruments at Brooks Field. While Col. William Ocker's name and accomplishments are not well known by the general public, his contributions to flight safety and navigation are nevertheless considered to be among the greatest in the history of aviation.

Ocker's poor eyesight belied the fact that he clearly saw solutions to the dangers flying in clouds and bad weather posed to military and commercial aviation. Ocker was the first aviator to recognize the relationship between lack of visual cues in flight and pilot disorientation. During the 1920s, pilots primarily relied on their senses to fly. However, Ocker knew the human vestibular system, which regulates balance, was simply unreliable, especially when flying in fog, clouds or rain. His ulti-

mate goal was to solve the persistent and often deadly danger all pilots faced – the loss of flight control in weather. He conceived at Brooks Field the idea of training pilots to rely on flight instruments to navigate through bad weather or under conditions of obscure or low visibility.

Instrument flight, what Ocker called 'blind flying,' however, was considered by aviators as unnecessary. Some planes had fuel and altitude gauges, but none had instruments that displayed aircraft orientation with respect to the ground. As a consequence, many pilots were killed while relying on their natural instincts that they believed were a better guide than instruments. Col. Carl Crane, another Brooks Field aviation pioneer, recalled, "In the early 1920s only a few airplanes were equipped with 'needle and ball' and airspeed meter. This crutch for the compass was an enigma in flight. Actually, the pilot was an enigma – to himself. Our orders were to keep out of weather and land rather than penetrate obscure

weather."

In 1926, Ocker invented a device that forever changed aviation. Initially called the Ocker-Myers Vertigo Stopper Box, the contraption featured a turn indicator, compass, artificial horizon and penlight rigged inside a covered shoebox with a viewing hole cut in one end. The box was mounted to a Barany chair, a single axis spinning device used in early pilot training that demonstrated that the human vestibular system can be fooled. Ocker's box had dramatically shown that vertigo, a disorienting spatial illusion, can be overcome by relying on flight instruments. He further reinforced his case for flight instruments when he also invented in 1926 the hooded cockpit for blind flying. In essence, he put the Ocker box concept to practical use aloft. At Brooks Field, Ocker rigged an open cockpit plane by covering the pilot's seat with canvas to simulate fog or night flying. The instructor pilot's seat was kept uncovered.

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Pilots use the Ocker Box. (photos courtesy Rudy Purificato)



Ocker pioneered instrument flight at Brooks Field

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The hooded cockpit allowed pilots to experience spatial illusions in all three dimensions through which an aircraft moves in flight: horizontal, lateral and vertical.

Despite Ocker's revolutionary inventions most Airmen remained unconvinced, a consequence of official skepticism. Senior Air Corps detractors claimed that flight instruments were not needed, were dangerous and would not be part of any pilot training program. Undeterred, Ocker was obsessed with convincing disbelievers. However, his campaign to educate pilots about instrument flight was met with resistance, ridicule and accusations that Ocker was, in fact, insane. Crane recalls, "His crusade was not without its crucifixions and prior to his death, his crown was one of thorns. Twice he was hospitalized for sanity tests. He later joked that he was the only Air Corps officer who had two letters to prove he was sane."

Crane did not believe Ocker was crazy. In fact, he teamed with him in 1929 to develop flight instrument training for wary pilots at Brooks

Field. The training appeared to be the idea of lunatics, because sand and homing pigeons were used to demonstrate Ocker's revolutionary ideas. Ocker and Crane dramatically demonstrated to pilots that their senses were unreliable – even on the ground. They blindfolded pilots and had them try to walk a straight line across an open field. While performing this action, the blindfolded men were also asked to sprinkle white wash from buckets they carried to mark their course. This technique was modified using sand, but produced the same expected results. The white wash and sand provided a visual trail of how far off course the pilots had walked while blindfolded. Homing pigeons were also used to show pilots that birds, too, can be disoriented in flight. Using Bull Durham tobacco pouches to blindfold them, the pigeons were tossed from an airplane. They became disoriented in their spiral nose dive to the ground. Ocker noted to once skeptical pilots that even pigeons refused to fly in fog when they cannot see.

To prove his unwavering belief in blind flying, Ocker took a giant leap of faith in the tech-

nology he had developed after Jimmy Doolittle became the first pilot in history to fly on instruments only in 1929.

Doolittle's feat, which involved flying a circuit around an Ohio airport, paled in comparison to what Ocker planned. On June 24, 1930, Ocker took off in his hooded cockpit plane from Brooks Field, using only instruments for navigation. He flew 900 miles to Scott Field, Illinois, becoming the first aviator in history to make a successful cross-country instrument-only flight.

Ocker never realized his dream of seeing his ideas fully adopted by the Army Air Corps. He died in Washington, D.C. in 1942. The following year, the Army made instrument flight training mandatory for all pilots. Orville Wright paid the ultimate tribute to Ocker when he said, "Except for Ocker's great zeal as a missionary, I doubt whether the course of blind flying would be required in the Army today. I believe that his campaign of education had more influence in bringing about the use of instruments than that of any other person."



Blindfolded pilots at Brooks Field, circa 1929, part of Ocker's flight instrument training to skeptical aviators.



Ocker by his plane at Brooks Field.



Last Month in BRAC News

BRAC NEWS STORIES POSTED ON THE SAJPO PORTAL

2/27/2011 Training command plans big moves
2/26/2011 New England preps for next round of base closings
2/26/2011 Moran commends GAO study on BRAC
2/26/2011 Kerry: Another round of base closings coming in 2015
2/23/2011 Wolff warns of suburban sprawl 'nightmare'
2/23/2011 NNMC prepares to merge with Walter Reed Army Medical
2/22/2011 District 10 sees action on disposal carts, road work
2/21/2011 Economic progress on E. Side is cited
2/19/2011 Solutions sought for BRAC-related traffic
2/18/2011 San Antonio official unveils long-term goals for Harry Wurzbach project
2/17/2011 Traffic projects not enough to ease BRAC problems
2/17/2011 Site near AT&T Center sought for commercial development
2/16/2011 Local BRAC projects called safe from cuts
2/16/2011 Landowners oppose conservation plan
2/16/2011 Massive military move "right on track"
2/15/2011 Defense communities cope with uncertain times
2/15/2011 Temporary gate at Fort Sam opens today
2/15/2011 Obama's budget slashes military building plans
2/14/2011 Medical miracles for wounded warriors
2/14/2011 Counties to fight habitat proposal
2/13/2011 Lackland extends comment period on study
2/13/2011 Snarled traffic on U.S. 281 easing
2/12/2011 Hiring incentives can help employers
2/9/2011 Warrior Group opens Washington D.C. office
2/9/2011 Fort Sam re-opening New Braunfels Ave gate
2/9/2011 AFCEE officials privatizing base housing in Alaska
2/8/2011 Pentagon faulted for BRAC plan
2/7/2011 Report: DoD should pay more to fix BRAC traffic problems

Event	POC	Date
SAJPO Communications Team Meeting	Ron Rogers	3/15/2011
Military Transformation Task Force Meeting	James Henderson	3/18/2011
Executive Integration Oversight Board	Ron Rogers	3/24/2011
San Antonio Community - Military Council Meeting	Col Mona Vollmer	4/19/2011

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