

**World War Two Weekend – Mid-Atlantic Air Museum
Reading, PA
June 2008**

On 6-8 June 2007, Fort Mott State Park (Pennsville, NJ), supported by Army Ground Forces Association (AGFA), attended the Reading Air Show (<http://www.maam.org/maamwwii.html>). To see a musical slide show of the event, visit <http://www.photodex.com/sharing/viewshow.html?fl=2989558&alb=0> . This is one of the largest events of its type in the nation. It involved over 1,000 historical interpreters and many unique and rare aircraft, military vehicles and pieces of equipment. On Saturday and Sunday the event was visited by thousands of people.

The members of AGFA participating were: Andy Grant, (also Ft. Mott State Park Historian) Bob Grant, Doug Houck, Mike Murray, Larry Winchell, Tom Minton, Paul Taylor, Curtis Saunders, Vince Turner, Vince Turner II, Stephen Turner, Gary Weaver, Shawn Welch. The focus of AGFA participation was to provide an overview of the Coast Artillery Corps and it's two main missions in the WWII era, seacoast and anti-aircraft artillery. To support this objective, the group demonstrated a seacoast fire control station complete with plotting board, an Anti-Aircraft Battery Commander's instrument, and an M1910A1 azimuth instrument. Also showcased were Fort Mott State Park's recently acquired 1942 Sperry 60-inch 800 million candlepower searchlight and matching generator. AGFA member Jonathan Prostack's Ford Jeep provided historically accurate mobility. A photograph of the entire group is shown below posed at the seacoast artillery M1910A1 azimuth instrument station.



The entire site for the contingent is shown below. From left to right are the 1945 Ford Jeep, generator, searchlight, tent, guidon and 10-inch shell, AA Battery Commander's instrument and the seacoast artillery fire control station with the M1910A1 azimuth instrument.



Within the tent were several displays. The centerpiece was the replica M1904 plotting board designed and built by CPL Larry Winchell.



Situated next to the board was our communications station that included a BD-72 12-line field switchboard. The switchboard operated all of our communications equipment.



The AA Battery Commander's instrument saw much use when the aircraft were flying. In this photo, SGT Turner and 1LT Grant operate the instrument as 1st Sgt Murray observes. With skill, the two-man crew of the instrument can even track close in fast moving aircraft.



The M1910A1 azimuth instrument station was a strong draw. In this photo, SSG Houck is posted as primary instructor. The station was a raised platform. This provided enough height for the instrument to permit observing much of the event. Also on the platform was the electrical system for the instrument and two EE-91 seacoast artillery telephones. These were connected to the BD-72 switchboard. The board also mounted a time interval bell, which was connected to the TI device in the tent.



As seen in the photo below, SSG Houck prepares to instruct visitors on operation of the M1910A1 azimuth instrument with 1st Sgt Murray.



During the event there were many demonstrations. In the photo below, Japanese infantry overrun the American defenses on the side of the taxiway opposite from the Ft. Mott site.



During the day a large flea market was set up near the "French Village" at the airfield. The Ford Jeep came in very handy in transporting AGFA members on excursions to add to member's "kit." In the photo below LTC Welch and 1SG Murray prepare to purchase five breech covers for the M1900 6-inch seacoast rifle at Fort Hancock's Battery Gunnison.



While securing the covers, we ran into a contingent of Italian soldiers. We wondered how good they would eat in the evening!



Dinner was catered for the event. We obtained our meal and ate in the tent in preparation for the evening's operations of the 60inch searchlight.



During the evening we were visited by the Japanese Forces Commander – his name is Tan. He was a real gentleman who was fascinated by Fort Mott's searchlight.



Just before sundown we moved the searchlight and generator to the parking apron. In this photo PFC Saunders, SSG Houck, PVT Turner and 1st SGT Murray prepare to move the searchlight.



The beam of the light was stunning as can be seen below.



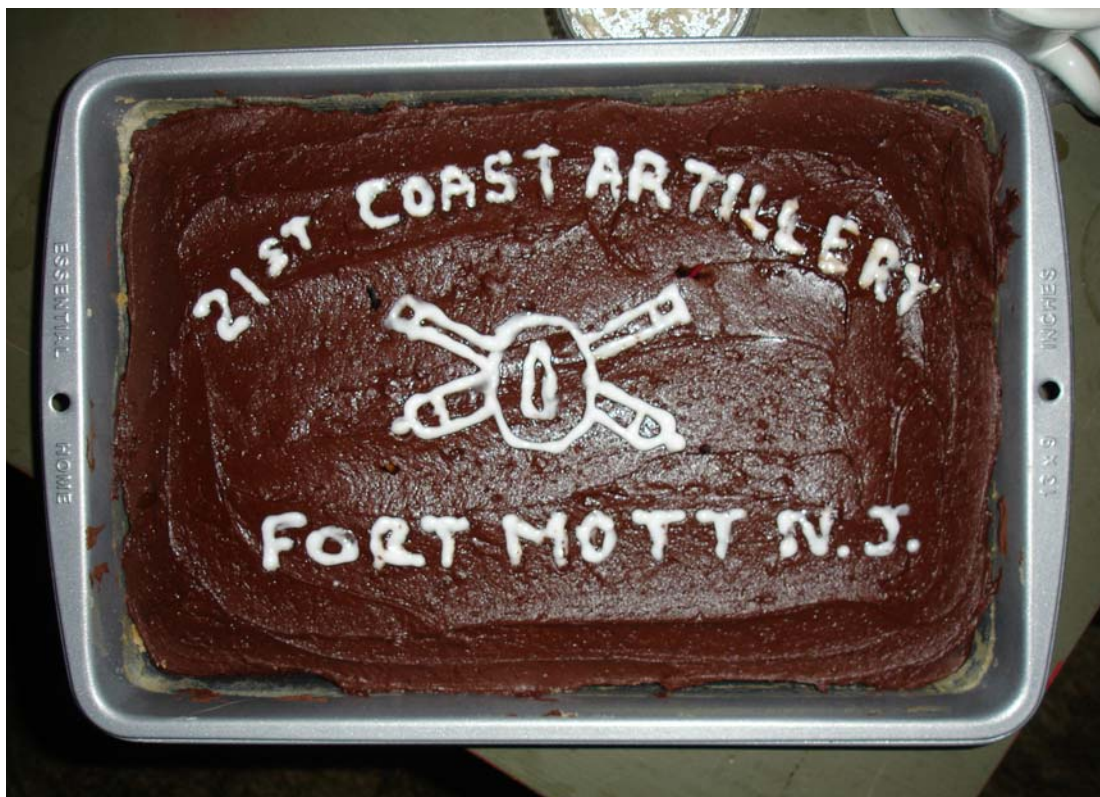
We also noted that within the beam were many bugs. And soon the bats came to eat the bugs. It was an awesome sight to see them all zipping in and out of the light beam!



While event attendees danced, the searchlight put a beam over the hanger. When the beam hit the front part of the hanger, light flooded the dance floor to the cheers of the dancers. It was an incredible sight!



Once we returned to the bivouac site, we ate a special 21st Coast Artillery Cake baked by CPL Minton's mother using a WWII era recipe.



We were soon full, and CPL Minton leans back and enjoys a long smoke on his cigar.



By midnight, we are all in the sack. In this photo, the cosmoliars (coast artillery soldiers) are sound asleep.



During the event we saw many excellent portrayals of soldiers of our past. In this photo is a group of European Theater US infantry soldiers. How they were able to wear wool in 100 degree weather was puzzling – we were in cotton khaki and still very hot!



Many excellent examples of US combat vehicles greeted our eyes such as this outstanding 2-1/2 ton truck.



There was also a German tank destroyer. In the photo below 1st Sgt Murray stands next to a custom built (modified) Sturmgeschutz III.



There were many WWII veterans present, to include several members of the famous “Band of Brothers”.



The highlight of the weekend was the aircraft. Many of these aircraft staged and taxied from right in front of the AGFA bivouac site. The P-40E pictured below was less than 200 feet from the AGFA bivouac site. The **Curtiss P-40** was a **US** single-engine, single-seat, low-wing, all-metal **fighter** and **ground attack** aircraft which first flew in 1938, and was used in great numbers in **World War II**. It was a direct adaptation of the existing **P-36** airframe to enable mass production of frontline fighters without significant development time. With six **.50 caliber machine guns** it was a fearsome aircraft. When production ceased in November 1944, 13,738 P-40s had been produced; they were used by the air forces of 28 nations and remained operational throughout the war. (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P40>)



Another historic aircraft was a B-25 –there were actually five B25 aircraft at the show!



Another historic aircraft was a P-47. This fighter's distinctive sound reverberated through the air show like a great pounding giant.



Of course the B-17 stole the show. For only \$600 you could ride the great bomber for approximately 20 minutes!



Along with the P-40 was a P-51. A father-son team flew both aircraft from “War birds over Long Island”. They were a tremendous sight. While speaking with the pilots in the evening we learned that all of these historic fighters were only flying on about 2/3 of their potential power. The reason is the limitation of the gasoline they are able to obtain. During WWII, the gasoline averaged 130 octane. Today they can only buy 100-octane gasoline at best. This requires that the aircraft be tuned to operate at less than maximum design power. This limits the aircraft speed to between 2/3 and 3/4 of their maximum top speed. This was an interesting fact of which we were all unaware.



The event was a major success for Fort Mott State Park (New Jersey) and AGFA. We all look forward to attending again in 2009.

For more information, visit the Army Ground Forces Association website at <http://www.armygroundforces.org>