

Children's Museum of Oak Ridge and Sunday Punch

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on August 10, 2010)

Researching the history of the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge has been a great experience. I have met some delightful people who have readily jumped in to help provide any and all information I have requested. On one occasion an expected additional opportunity presented itself.

Margaret Allard came walking into the library where I was working with Mary Anne Dumas and others collecting information. She was accompanied by a man who was obviously bringing something to give the Children's Museum.

This particular model airplane Margaret was holding in her hand is what immediately caught my eye. It was a B-25 bomber, and not any old bomber, it was a model of the *Sunday Punch*! I instinctively knew something was happening that needed to be captured in Historically Speaking!

Actually it was a model of the B-25J bomber that was presented to the U.S. Army Air Force on March 18, 1945, at the Knoxville Municipal Airport. The bomber was purchased by Oak Ridge workers at K-25 who donated their overtime pay from two Sundays. The bomber was dubbed the "*Sunday Punch*."

The Sunday Punch saw service in India Allied forces who were slowing the Japanese army's retreat into India. 1st Lieutenant Tom Evans of Knoxville piloted the *Sunday Punch* for many of its missions.

Evans, was a 22-year-old first lieutenant when he first saw the *Sunday Punch*. He is quoted as saying, "I went straight to my colonel and told him I wanted to be assigned to the *Sunday Punch*, since it was bought and paid for by Oak Ridge workers."

In 1945, Oak Ridge K-25 workers decided to help the war effort even beyond their normal work on the Manhattan Project effort, about which they actually knew very little beyond it was to help win the war, but for which they were being paid good salaries. They determined to pay for the purchase of a bomber at a cost of \$250,000. The workers figured that could be covered with just two Sunday paychecks.

Tom Evans first learned about the Sunday Punch when a friend from Knoxville, Lt. William Ghormley, also stationed in India, gave him a bunch of newspapers from home. When he began to read them, he quickly saw the story of how the Oak Ridge workers had purchased the *Sunday Punch*.

At a web site honoring the *Sunday Punch* is found the following, "Her nose art was hard to miss: Tiger teeth bristled menacingly on the nose. Just to the side of the big teeth a pretty pinup held a champagne glass of punch. The name 'Sunday Punch' was painted on the armor plate of steel beneath the cockpit. Beneath that were the words: 'Purchased by cash donations of workers of West Oak Ridge, Tenn.'"

Imagine my joy at seeing not only this model airplane being brought in to the museum, but having the person representing the organization that was donating the model excitedly following Margaret talking a mile a minute about the model. He had several photographs and magazine articles that detailed the exact specifications of the *Sunday Punch*. He and his group of model builders had used these statistics to assure the accuracy of the model.

Bob Miles was proud to tell me the specifics of this particular model and how it was built. What a joy to listen to such enthusiastic expression of knowledge about the airplane and all the decals and unique identifying marks of this particular model. He had even been in contact with the model plane manufacturer to be sure accuracy of the model was maintained.

Children's Museum of Oak Ridge and Sunday Punch

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on August 10, 2010)

As we talked about the Sunday Punch model, we also discussed the fate of the actual Sunday Punch bomber. I determined to try and see what might have happened to it. I found an article titled *The Sunday Punch – A Warbird from Oak Ridge*, written by Tom Walker in June 2004. In this article the original Sunday Punch is said to have been transferred to the Nationalist Chinese after the war ended.

The article also reported that Tom Evans saw the aircraft in Kunming and the armor plate bearing the name *Sunday Punch* had been removed but the tiger's teeth and pinup girl were still visible. Next the article notes that the official record for the aircraft that was the Sunday Punch lists it as salvaged on March 31, 1946.

Interestingly, I also just learned there is actually a second Sunday Punch! It seems to have begun in 1998 with a restoration effort by a group in California who decided it would rebuild a B-25J as a replica of the original Sunday Punch. More on this effort in another Historically Speaking as I learn its current status.

So, Bob Miles wanted to donate this model of the Sunday Punch to the museum and Margaret was helping him do just that. I just happened to be in the right spot and the right time to overhear their discussion and to meet a most interesting man in Bob.

This is yet another example of the kind of thing that can be done at the Children's Museum. If you have an item to donate that contributes to the goals of the museum, please consider doing it sooner rather than later. Many others have done so over the years.

If you are looking for this particular model of the Sunday Punch, it is now located in the window display across from the Dollhouse. This is a temporary location for the model airplane to keep it safe until a more substantial display can be designed for this historic model.

Children's Museum of Oak Ridge and Sunday Punch

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on August 10, 2010)



Bob Miles brings a model of Sunday Punch to its new home at the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge.



close up of the B-25J Sunday Punch model