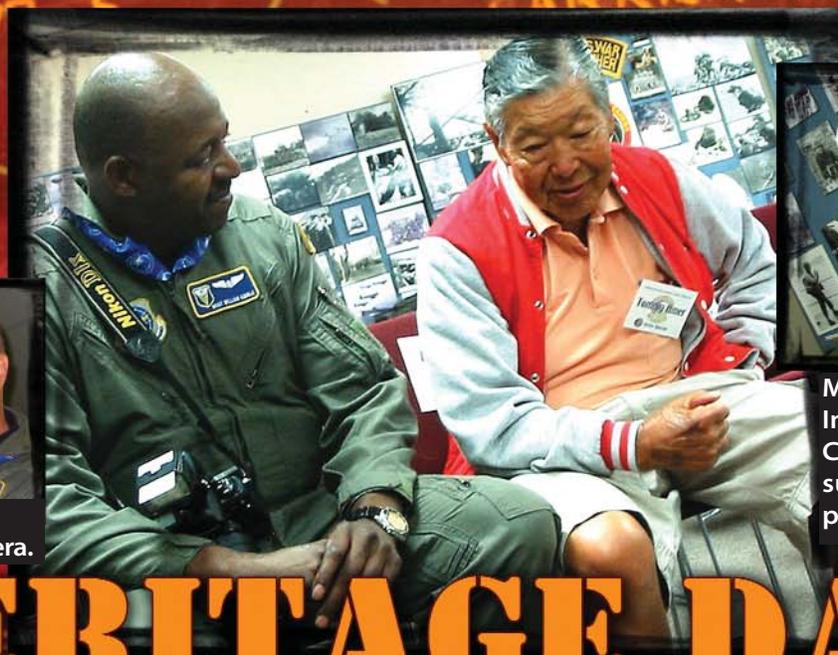


Time  
Machine



Tech. Sgt. Thomas Coffin checks out a vintage camera.



Members of the International Combat Camera Association, such as Tommy Amer (L), pass along a rich legacy.

# HERITAGE DAYS

## Veteran photographers share their war stories

By Maj. Richard Sater [●]

4th Air Force Office of Public Affairs

**MARCH AIR RESERVE BASE, Calif.** – Approximately two-dozen veteran combat cameramen – Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine – attended as special guests to “connect the past with the future” of wartime photography here in June.

This first-ever open house, sponsored by the 4th Combat Camera Squadron (Reserve), was created to celebrate the heritage of combat photography. The guests were members of the International Combat Camera Association, headquartered in Hollywood. Joe Longo, president emeritus and founder of the ICCA, provided opening remarks, recalling his days as a motion-picture cameraman for the Army Air Corps in the Pacific during World War II and for the Air Force during the Korean war.

Other speakers included Bill Rogister, whose early interest in photography earned him a Boy Scout merit badge as a teenager then a military job as a cameraman for the Army Air Corps in World War II. He recalls bribing pilots and aircrews to let him fly with them. “I would take pictures of the crew outside their plane and give them prints,” he said, and he was thus welcome on board so he could get his job done. He also recalled “souping” film – processing the pictures with liquid chemicals – in his mess kit in emergency situations, when he needed to deliver timely images from remote locations.

Tommy Amer, a Chinese-American veteran of World War II, remembered the awkwardness of being mistaken for Japanese, but he determined never to let it get in the way of his job. Capturing an image during a battle required a little luck and skill, he said. “You’d stick your camera up and duck your head.”

Stories like these are exactly what Maj. Bruce Bender wanted his troops to hear. The commander of the 4th CTCS “C” Flight said his goal was to establish the connection of “veteran combat photographers talking with our reservists to share their experiences ... telling what it was like to document the war back in the day.” He also wanted to use the open house as an opportunity to assist the Veterans History Project, sponsored by the Library of Congress, which is undertaking an extensive task of documenting war veterans’ experiences as oral history. During the weekend, interested ICCA members were invited to reminisce about their military service on camera for the project.

“It’s awesome,” said Tech. Sgt. Tom Coffin, an aerial photographer and videographer assigned to 4th CTCS. “There’s a lot of knowledge here. A lot of history.”