

OS Winter Meeting In Tucson

Martha Prince and Richard Davis - Meeting Co-Chairpersons

The 2013 Oughtred Society Winter Meeting convened at the Pima Air and Space Museum in Tucson, Arizona on Saturday, February 16. On Friday night we met in a private room at a fine gourmet Mexican restaurant called the Old Pueblo Grille and enjoyed some wonderful food and conversation.



Figure 1. Dinner at the OldPueblo Grill

Bright and early, on Saturday morning, twenty four slide rule enthusiasts filed into a large conference room at the Pima Air and Space Museum. The meeting opened with self-introduction and was followed with everyone circulating and viewing the displays, meeting other collectors, exchanging ideas, and evaluating items for sale.

After sampling various tasty pastries and coffee provided by Martha Prince, the presentation started. Bill Robinson gave a wonderful talk about his experience as a “Computer” [note: “computers” originally defined (pre ~1950) as human calculators, e.g. savants] and finally as an Engineer in the wing design/analysis group at Boeing Aircraft in Seattle, Washington, starting in 1947. Bill’s job was to use his trusty K&E slide rule to solve flutter equations for the design of the B-47 bomber wing. This was the first large jet aircraft with swept back wings and was the forerunner for all of today’s modern aircraft wings. The flutter equations were

very complex and included several matrices and required months to solve. After the B-47, Bill's next assignment was to do the analysis of the B-52 wing design.



Figure 2. Bill Robinson Presenting

The B-52 is still flying today. Later we were able to see a B-47 and three B-52 bombers on display at the museum.



Figure 3. A B-47 at Pima as Discussed in Bill's Presentation



Figure 4. A B-52 at Pima as Discussed in Bill's Presentation

Following Bill's talk everyone inspected the tables with many unusual slide rules and displays. Dick Rose brought many rare slide rules for sale. Martha had several tables loaded with slide rules, calculating instruments, and drafting tools. Carl Schwent brought many NIB (New-In-Box) Pickett slide rules and a display of antique math teaching devices.



Figure 5. An Example of a Math Teaching/Learning Tool (courtesy Carl)

Several other attendees brought old, rare, and unusual slide rules for display only, but most were for sale at reasonable prices through the auction. Bob Koppany, our auctioneer, managed the bidding with authority and good humor. Following the auction, many un-auctioned items were also rapidly sold through direct price negotiation.



Figure 6. The Display Area (note the open space for ease of movement)



Figure 7. Sampling of Items for Sale in the Auction

Mike Konshak showed a wonderful museum quality display requiring several tables. He showed the transition from early computing devices like the slide rule and abacus to the modern electronic slide rule, namely the calculator. This was a really a magnificent display and included several hundred calculators!



Figure 8. A Portion of Mike's Display Along the Wall



Figure 9. Some more of Mike's Display Along the Wall



Figure 10. Some Abaci from Mike's Display



Figure 11. Examples of the Many Calculators in Mike's Display

After the auction a tram took us on a special tour of the museum grounds where over 300 aircraft are displayed. This was a great opportunity to see aircraft like the B-29, B-36, B-47, B-52 and B-58, all up close. In addition hundreds of various fighter aircraft were on display. An extensive collection of helicopters was also present. The Pima museum is the third largest aircraft museum in the United States.

After the meeting on Saturday, a dinner was held at another historic Tucson restaurant called El Corral, where we enjoyed a variety of western dishes and meats along with some great conversations.

Once again, the Oughtred Society provided a great opportunity to further our collections and enrich our knowledge of math and science, and to socialize with a wonderful group of like-minded people. Many thanks should go to Martha Prince for doing the onsite meeting preparation. This was a most enjoyable and rewarding meeting!