

The PIMA Update

By Natalie Hill

In the last issue we covered the background of the PIMA project and in this report we will update you on some of the correspondence that has occurred between the Executive Director, Ed Harrow and TAC Tanker President Dan Weber and member Bob Cleckler.

In December 2000, Mr. Harrow answered a letter from Dan in regards to accepting a TAC Tanker donation for the upkeep of the KB-50 in Tucson. Here is some of the content:

"We would be honored to accept a donation..... That aircraft is truly one of the prizes in our collection and the restoration crew and volunteers would love to see it restored to its glory.

"A designated fund for the upkeep and restoration of the KB-50, was set up with a generous contribution from the TAC Tanker Assn.. This fund currently has balance of \$4,100.

"In response to your question regarding our plans for the upkeep of this aircraft, I spoke to our Operations Director and was given the following breakdown of restoration goals.

(Approx). Replacement Windows/ fabricate new blisters	\$2,000
Remove current exterior graphics	\$1,200
Repainting	\$3,800
Two nose tires	\$ 800
Refurbish propeller	\$ 400
Remove/dismantle propellers reassemble/repaint/reinstall	(\$1,000 per) \$4,000
Complete Restoration.....	\$12,200

"In addition, as part of our Master Plan, we would like to install a future interior exhibit as well as create a new hangar for the larger aircraft. We are collecting numerous archival materials for this future exhibit, and we would not only encourage your members, but welcome your archival materials. We are currently the home of the B-26 Marauder Historical Society and have on staff, an archivist designated specifically for this collection. With professional staff dedicated to the care of materials we are entrusted with, we have taken up the mantle to preserve and present the history of many of our veteran association and individuals."

The next letter in our possession came from Bob Cleckler, who had received a letter from the Arizona Aerospace Foundation (PIMA) requesting donations during the summer of 2001. He in return asked for a status report on the KB-50 and this is the response he got from Kirsten Tedesco, Deputy Director/Curator of Collections in October 2001:

"Your letter regarding the KB-50 Project has been passed to me. My then-colleague Elissa Lines, Deputy Director of Development and myself attended your Association's Tucson reunion. When we solicited your organization, we were hoping to raise enough money to restore the aircraft. Currently, the estimated restoration cost is \$12,000 as the aircraft has a host of problems including cracked blisters and other structural concerns. The \$5000 figure you cite was our estimate at the time (April 2000) for an exterior restoration only. As stated to J.C. Bessette, Historian of the TAC Tanker Assn., in my email to him on April 14, 2000, the \$5000 would cover the following exterior work: corrosion control and mitigation, re-resin of the antennas



Boeing KB-50 refuels two F-104C
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and prop cups and painting (including props and graphics). Also in that email, I told Mr. Bessette that the aircraft would soon need new tires at a cost of \$1000 each.

"As for putting the aircraft inside, inasmuch as we would like to do that, it would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to construct such a hangar. We will put the KB-50 into our restoration pipeline in the very near future and will complete as much of the preservation/restoration work as we can with the \$5000. We are committed to the preservation of the KB-50 and TAC Tanker history and we thank you again for your support."

The third letter was again sent to Dan Weber from Ed Harrow in January 2002 with almost the same format. It stated his appreciation for the inquiry and apologized for "not getting back to you sooner." This time he was "honored to accept a donation" (in reference to the picture with Chuck Monka in the last issue.) "a designated fund.....TAC Tanker Assn. As of November 11, 2001, the fund balance was \$7,450.

"In response....., I reviewed the KB-50 progress with Bob Hanson, our Operations Director and was given the following breakdown of restoration goals. Bob did note that this list has not changed from the last report...Bob would like to complete the work all at one time, rather than in smaller projects. (the figures to the left are repeated again in this letter.)

The last paragraph again is verbatim except for the comments on the hangar. "Hangers are a major investment for a non-profit institution, and we would be looking at a fundraising campaign for this hangar alone in the neighborhood of \$1 million to 1.5 million."

The questions at this point: Does the KB-50 have to wait until the new money is raised for the "hangar?" Will it have more expensive repairs to be done on it by that time? How does the TAC Tanker Association feel about the progress being made on our plane in Tucson? Bob Cleckler is a member who is very concerned at this point and felt those of you in the reading audience might like to see some action. If so, you may write to Mr. Harrow, c/o Pima Air and Space Museum, 6000 East Valencia Road, Tucson, AZ 85706. Phone (520) 574-0462.

