In 1916, a group of privileged Yale undergrads had it all: money, power and respect. When they set out to start an aeronautics club at their school, they knew nothing about aviation but their interest and love of motorized flying bonded them. A year later, they would end up sacrificing everything to fight on the front lines of World War I.

Award-winning writer and author Marc Wortman will discuss the haunting history of this elite group of men, later dubbed the “Millionaires’ Unit,” during the 2014 George W. Jalonick III and Dorothy Cockrell Jalonick Memorial Distinguished Lecture at 4 p.m., July 12 in the Clark Center Auditorium at UT Dallas. Wortman’s discussion titled, “The Millionaires’ Unit: How the Navy Learned to Fly in World War I,” will be based on his book, The Millionaire’s Unit: The Aristocratic Flyboys Who Fought the Great War and Invented American Air Power. His detailed story of flying, fighting and dying sheds light on their life in war and the legacy they left behind.

Wortman’s lecture is free and open to the public but online registration is required (utdallas.edu/jalonick). There will also be a book signing and reception following the lecture. The annual Jalonick Lecture Series is hosted by McDermott Library’s Special Collections Department.

“Aviation came of age during WWI, so it is appropriate that this year’s lecture cover aviation in The Great War,” said Paul Oelkrug, Coordinator for Special Collections.

The Millionaire’s Unit is also the basis for a documentary in production. It will premiere at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2014 this summer. The book was earlier optioned to be made into a feature film by Working Title Films.

In addition to The Millionaire’s Unit, Wortman is also the author of The Bonfire: The Siege and Burning of Atlanta. Marc is presently at work on a new book detailing the period prior to the US entry into World War II titled Waking to War: A Divided America in a World at War.
The History of Aviation Collection has recently received a unique set of items related to the training of World War II naval aviators. Donated by Dr. Russell David Edmunds, a professor with The University of Texas at Dallas Arts and Humanities Department, the items are a set of View-Master film reels produced by the Naval Aviation Training Division of the United States Navy.

These reels were produced to help naval aviators learn to identify the silhouettes of aircraft from looking through the sights on their aircraft’s guns. Each reel contains images of a different aircraft with a gun sight superimposed over the aircraft. Aircraft identified include those of both the Axis powers, along with those of the Allies of the United States. This helps pilots distinguish between aircraft and prevent friendly fire incidents. The reels also contain information on the aircraft, including lengths of wingspan, fuselage, tail, as well as weak points where the aircraft would be particularly vulnerable.

To facilitate the viewing of the reels, a View-Master stereoscope was donated to the History of Aviation Collection by volunteer, Randy Hinshaw. This World War II era training aid is available in the Special Collections Department.

More than 100 members of the Civil Air Transport and Air America Associations were at UT Dallas this May to visit their archives at McDermott Library. This year, the associations joined together to celebrate the sacrifices of those who have served our country. A weekend of events and meetings started with a trip to the Special Collections Department. Members paused in front of the Memorial Plaque and viewed items donated to the collections.

After visiting the archives, members headed to the Frontiers of Flight Museum at Love Field to view the CAT/Air America exhibit curated by two History of Aviation (HAC) volunteers, Randy Hinshaw and Neil Teitelman. In addition to the numerous images and aircraft models, a topographic map of LS20A Long Tien from 1972 was of special interest to the members. The map shows radio markings and a propaganda flyer from 1954, encouraging people in North Vietnam to move south. Members also enjoyed dinner in the exhibit hall and had a chance to meet with HAC Advisory Council Members.

Throughout the weekend, members also attended the traditional golf tournament, traveled to the Fort Worth Stockyards, enjoyed the traditional CAT dinner at a Chinese restaurant, and a concert at Billy Bob’s Texas.

Both organizations ended the reunion with membership meetings and a gala at the Hilton in Arlington. The groups recognized each other and decided to consider holding future events together. The afternoon featured a speech by Mr. Jim “Mule” Parker, former Customer and Case Officer of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Parker described the Battle of Skyline Ridge in great detail.

The history surrounding both CAT and Air America is extensive. If you’re interested in learning more about each organization, please consult the finding aids and our digital archive, Treasures @ UT Dallas. You can also go to our website (utdallas.edu/library), click on ‘Special Collections’, then click on ‘The History of Aviation Collection’ and then ‘The CAT/Air America Archive.’

Any inquiries regarding donations should be made to Paul Oelkrug, Coordinator for Special Collections.

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