

## 75 Years Later: A Confidential Photograph Yields New Information

**W**orld War II drove advancement in technology that was unparalleled. One of the most significant innovations was known as Radio Detection and Ranging – RADAR. Even before the war, this technology was being developed simultaneously and in secret by several countries. Progress accelerated once the United States entered the conflict and realized the potential for both land- and ship-based systems.

In 1943, the Naval Air Station (NAS) on St. Simons Island was selected to be the Radar Training School for Fighter Direction Officers, who were assigned to Combat Information Centers (CICs) on board aircraft carriers and other ships. Candidates for the school were carefully chosen for their ability to function as human computers. They were trained to plot and quickly analyze complex radar information about incoming aircraft, then send fighter squadrons to intercept enemy planes before they could attack Allied ships.

When Society researchers were gathering information for the World War II Home Front Museum, they went back to a series of photographs of NAS St. Simons training facilities that had been donated to the Coastal Georgia Historical Society in the 1980s. They discovered



that these images were originally used in the January 1945 issue of a confidential Navy publication entitled *CIC*. The issue contained a feature article on the St. Simons Radar Training School which described the courses and facilities on the island. Illustrations included “Demonstration CICs” built at the airport and the King and Prince Hotel to simulate the spaces devoted to fighter direction on board ships.

The Society’s photograph of a “Demonstration CIC” shown here was included in the *CIC* article and was enlarged for display in the Home Front Museum. Due to the confidential nature of the photographs at the time, very little is known of the men pictured and they have been left unidentified since 1945. However, sometimes fate intervenes.

Recently, Jeff Bragg of Marietta, Georgia, visited the Museum and identified one of the

young officers as his father, Alfred Bragg (far right, leaning over the plotting screen). While training as a fighter director on St. Simons, Alfred met a Brunswick resident, Martha Nelson Peddicord, on a blind date, fell in love, and married her six weeks later. Upon completion of his training as a fighter director, he was sent to the Pacific and served on an aircraft carrier until the war ended in September 1945. He was then assigned to Hiroshima before returning home. His final rank was Lieutenant Commander. Alfred and Martha were married for over 40 years, residing most of that time in Columbus, Georgia. He died in 1987 and she in 2016. Both are buried in Palmetto Cemetery in Brunswick.

Take some time to visit the World War II Home Front Museum and look at the photos and listen to the stories, you never know how these pieces of our past may touch home for you.