

Eric Blehm wrote the forward to Pat's new book "Historic Aircraft Wrecks of San Bernardino County"

FOREWORD

I first met Pat Macha in the fall of 2007 while researching a certain airplane crash in central California. His name popped up on a Google search when I typed in the words "aircraft wreck expert."

Boy, what an understatement!

I found he lived just up the coast from me, so I cold called him, told him about my project, and he invited me to his home to discuss research. When I entered his garage, the spirit of the place overcame me. It was walled with file cabinets, maps, and pieces of charred or twisted metal, representing literally thousands of detailed files including one he "happened to have" on the topic of my research. Indeed, Macha's data is so organized and expansive, flight museums have vied for him to will the data to them in the event of his death. Macha—who is sometimes called an aircraft archeologist due to his uncanny ability to piece together the history of a long-forgotten or rediscovered crash site from just a few seemingly insignificant pieces of wreckage—will tell you he's just a retired high school history teacher, with a lifelong fascination with aviation; but in the seven years he's guided me to various crash sites in California, I've come to describe him as the Indiana Jones of wreck hunters.

He's also a dedicated husband, father, and grandfather who is emotionally attached to every story you'll read in this book, and every piece of aircraft aluminum he's ever found in the mountains he's traveled to deliver to you this historical treasure of information. Pat has masterfully outlined the important role San Bernardino County had in Aerospace History by weaving together the historical context of both the civilian and military aviation accidents that have occurred there.

Pat's first order of business whenever he visits a military crash site is to place a small American Flag in the ground—a gesture of respect to those who lost their lives in the service of our country. I've stood beside Pat while he described to me with amazing detail why a certain plane went down, and almost every time he has done so, his eyes have welled up with tears. He often has photographs of the pilots, crew, or passengers, which he logs in order to keep on hand in case a relative of one of the deceased ever wants to visit the location where a loved one lost his or her life. Pat, and a tight-knit group of fellow wreck hunters provide this service whenever requested. They call themselves Project Remembrance, and having been to a crash site where Pat guided the son of a pilot who had been killed decades earlier, to his father's final resting place, I can attest it was an emotionally-charged moment of peace and closure when Pat guided him to what remained of the cockpit.

Through these compelling human interest stories, Pat has raised my awareness of the historic importance of veteran and vintage crash sites, and the need to respect and preserve them in not only this county's but our country's rugged wilderness areas.

Because of Pat, I will never drive down a highway and look at the passing scenery—the mountains or deserts or just a brush-swept hillside—the same way. These places hold the remains of aviation history, and without people like Pat we'd just keep on driving and never pause to reflect, and pay our respects.

—Eric Blehm

New York Times bestselling author of *Fearless*, *The Last Season*, and *The Only Thing Worth Dying For*