Bill and Alan have designed the interior of the WestPac hangar to facilitate the smooth flow of aircraft restoration while also incorporating state-of-the-art systems that allow for the finest possible restorations.

One of the projects undergoing restoration at WestPac is an F4U-4 Corsair for Jim Tobul, the rear fuselage of which is seen here in its jig.

Entering WestPac is like entering the offices of a very modern corporation.

Freshly overhauled P&W R-2800 for the Corsair.

The center section of the Corsair placed on a raised jig to facilitate workers' access to the unit.

for airplanes, especially old ones. Growing up in New Jersey, there really wasn't a lot of vintage aviation going on. However, during a 1976 vacation to California, my uncle took me to Tallmantz Aviation at Orange Country Airport. I got to crawl over some of the planes and that was pretty neat, but then I got to see a Duck and Corsair startup and takeoff — this was when Tallmantz was doing the flying for the *Baa Baa Blacksheep* television series and seeing those two airplanes in action really got me hooked.

"In 1978, we moved to California and one of the first things I did was pay my admission and enter the doors of The Air Museum at Chino Airport. One of my high school friends was interested in

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WORLD WAR II AVIATION

"This will certainly not be a wax museum," states Bill Klaers. "The National Museum of WWII Aviation will not be about a collection of static aircraft," said Bill as he gestured to an interconnected series of hangars/buildings adjacent to the WestPac facility. "We want this museum to be a fully interactive experience where the visitor can tailor their visiting experience to their own specific requirements. The museum will offer layers of information that can be adapted to all enquires — from school children to serious scholars."

The idea for the museum started several years ago during a brainstorming session. "We came up with a vision that would utilize the very latest in computer science combined with rapidly expanding access to information. For example, a teacher can bring a group of elementary children to the museum and we can tailor each portion of the museum to that specific group. We can then change the experience again for a group of women, a group of pilots, a group of veterans… "

Extensive groundwork has been completed and the museum is currently in the fund-raising mode. "Not particularly easy in today's economic environment, but we are making steady, significant progress and have a highly-regarded board of directors.

"Static aviation museums are killing themselves," said Klaers. "We will not be overburdened by a collection of non-flying airplanes that are difficult to maintain, preserve, and cumbersome to present." This flexible aviation educational experience is a new concept and one not currently functioning in any American museum. Visitors will also have the option of touring the WestPac restoration facility where they will be introduced to all aspects of WWII aircraft restoration.

Advanced planning has the museum separated into six distinct sections: Prelude, America's isolationist period immediately before the war; Mobilizing American Air Power, the explosion of American production might after Pearl Harbor; Weathering the Storm 1941-1943, Japanese control of the Pacific and Germany's control of the Atlantic; Striking Back 1942-1943, the Allied bombing campaign and the slow push to aerial dominance; Controlling the Skies, destruction of the Japanese Naval fleet and the coordinated invasion of Europe; Legacy, evolution of WWII airpower into today's modern air force.

With the strong aviation heritage of the area (Colorado Springs is home to the USAF Academy), many professionals have volunteered for duty at the museum. With the concept completed and buildings erected, initial fund raising is now putting all the various components together for a truly unique WWII aviation experience. For more information, go to *www.worldwariiaviation.org.*

aviation and he was going to Chino to work on a PT-19. I decided to volunteer at the museum and the first person I met was Jim Maloney. I told Jim I was getting ready to go to A&P School and he took me right in.

"I went from volunteer to full-time employee," said Alan. "This was during the 1980s and there was all sorts of stuff going on — building the Super Corsair, restoring two Indonesian P-51Ds, getting the museum's P-51A back into flying condition, getting the P-40N restoration completed, etc. At the time, I was in a partnership on a Luscombe, and then started flying a Citabria, and a Stearman. My Luscombe was purchased from Dale Clark. He and I along with Dennis Firestone built an NAA NA-50 replica and I got a few hundred hours in that plane. One day, Steve Hinton took me up in the museum's T-6 and on 31 March 1987 he gave me the 'keys' to his P-51D and said 'go do.' What a great opportunity! I was absolutely thrilled soloing the Mustang. At the time, a lot of people wanted to fly the Mustang, but the P-40N was just sort of parked so I started taking it to airshows and other events for the museum and really started building up the hours."

During this period, Bill and Alan met and became friends. Both were flying Stearmans and started visiting airshows together. With their common interest, the pair started taking on various projects. Bill decided to give up construction to devote himself full-time to avia-

Volunteer workers have been busy restoring the turrets from Lockheed P2V Neptunes.