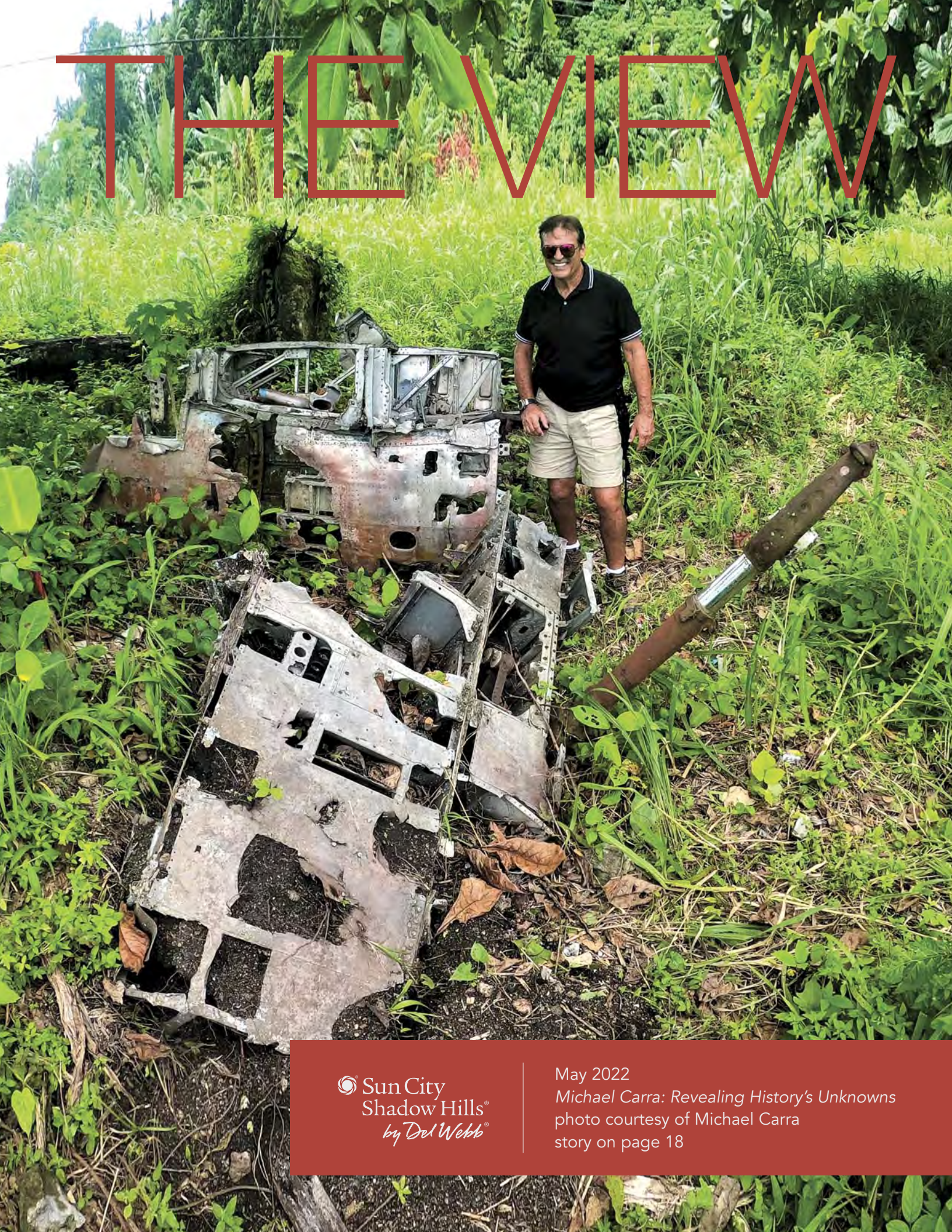


THE VIEW



Sun City
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Michael Carra: Revealing History's Unknowns
photo courtesy of Michael Carra
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MICHAEL CARRA:

Revealing History's Unknowns

STORY BY RALPH OLSON | PHOTOS COURTESY OF MR. CARRA UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED



A professional speaker, Michael Carra visits museums, schools, college organizations, and aviation groups.

When historian and professional speaker Michael Carra steps up to the podium, his audience quickly becomes silent, and then hangs on his every word as he reveals fascinating facts unknown to most of us about historic events, from Japanese blunders during the Pearl Harbor attack, to theories about Amelia Earhart's yet unsolved disappearance. A specialist in aviation and military history, Michael has contributed to Hollywood movies and led expeditions to unravel aviation's many mysteries. Sharing his discoveries through presentations at museums, schools, college organizations, and aviation groups, Michael believes that, if you don't study history, "you will repeat the same mistakes."

Michael was born and grew up in the San Fernando Valley north of Los Angeles. At the age of five, he began building model miniatures of military ships and aircraft as a hobby, one which he still enjoys today. This led to his fascination with history and aviation. Michael served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1972 to 1976, when he returned to Southern California to begin a career in law enforcement that lasted over 30 years. While serving as a police officer, Michael pursued his passion for aviation in his leisure time.

Obtaining a private pilot's license in 1986 was just the beginning. Michael went on to earn his commercial license, was qualified to fly helicopters, and spent time as a fixed-wing and helicopter safety instructor for the Airborne Law Enforcement Association. During the last four and a half years of his law enforcement career, Michael had the unique opportunity to serve as Facilities Administrator and Historian for the City of Beverly Hills. He was responsible for preserving 100 years of artifacts and memorabilia which was especially important to Michael as a legacy to his father who had served 26 years with the City.

In 1989, Michael took his love of aviation to the private sector to serve as a helicopter tour pilot in LA and as a camera ship pilot for local film studios. He also began to fulfill a life-long dream in 1996 to build his own personal airplane. By this time Michael had owned a number of aircraft and logged thousands of hours of flight time in both fixed-wing planes and helicopters. Over the next six years he would spend more than 7,000 hours studying plans and building his personal Rutan Long EZ, a single-engine experimental aircraft. He raced on the amateur circuit for six years, and he maintains and flies his aircraft out of Barnwell Regional Airport, near his primary residence in Aiken, SC. (SCSH is his second home.)



One of Michael's life-long dreams was to build his own personal airplane.



Michael was instrumental as an expert for the movie *Memphis Belle*. He also flew on the movie aircraft (pictured) which is now being restored at the Palm Springs Air Museum. (Photo by Ralph Olson.)

His work with LA film studios plus his passion for aviation history made Michael a natural fit as a historian and technical consultant for Hollywood movies with military themes. He worked as a technical advisor for the Warner Brothers movie *Memphis Belle* from 1989 to 1990, and he had the honor of meeting the eight original surviving crew members of the WW II B-17 bomber's last mission. He also had the opportunity to fly on the aircraft used to film the movie and he performed 20 historical tours for members of the press where the bomber was displayed in Memphis, TN. Michael also worked for three additional years on several other major motion pictures.

Pursuing the hobby he started at a very young age, Michael builds miniature models of military planes, armor, figurines, and ships. He recently completed a project which took two and a half years to construct, a 1/200 scale model of the USS *Arizona* in its configuration the day before it sank during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Michael entered the model in the International Plastic Modelers Society regional competition and won first place in the ship category, best overall diorama, and overall Best of Show.

A certified researcher at the National Archives, Michael's main interest has revolved around the "moment in time" that occurred on December 7, 1941, at Pearl Harbor. His presentation "Pearl Harbor Spies" featured on TV's Smithsonian Channel in 2019 explored how age-old mysteries, new technologies, eyewitness testimonies, and old records have combined to change perceptions of events on that fateful day.

Michael investigated in depth how Japanese mini-sub were to participate in the Pearl Harbor strike. Most never made it to their targets, but the fate of one has remained a mystery for many years. Michael wrote a report for the U.S. Navy about the mini-sub's attack on Battleship Row. The report is based on the sinking of the USS *Oklahoma* by a mini-sub. The Navy agreed with Michael's findings, and he became the first civilian in 80 years to get permission for a dive expedition at Pearl Harbor. TV's Discovery Channel is currently reviewing this research for a future documentary.

This same curiosity prompted Michael to lead a month-long expedition in September 2021 to the South Pacific to try to locate the remains of famed female aviator Amelia Earhart. Michael's hypothesis about Amelia's disappearance contradicts the previous and most current theories. The results of the expedition will be featured as a two-hour documentary this September on the Discovery Channel.



On the cover and above, Michael leading an expedition to find the remains of aviation legend Amelia Earhart

Michael's goal is to share the history of these important events with future generations. His greatest hope is that each person who sees his presentations will identify with a particular story and then choose to pass it along to others.

Until Next Time...keep exploring!

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