



SHOWCASE of LI's role in naval history

New museum features early flight simulator

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Inside the cramped cockpit of the first-ever flight simulator, generations of pilots from the 1930s through the 1950s honed their skills and learned how to navigate adverse conditions safely from the ground.

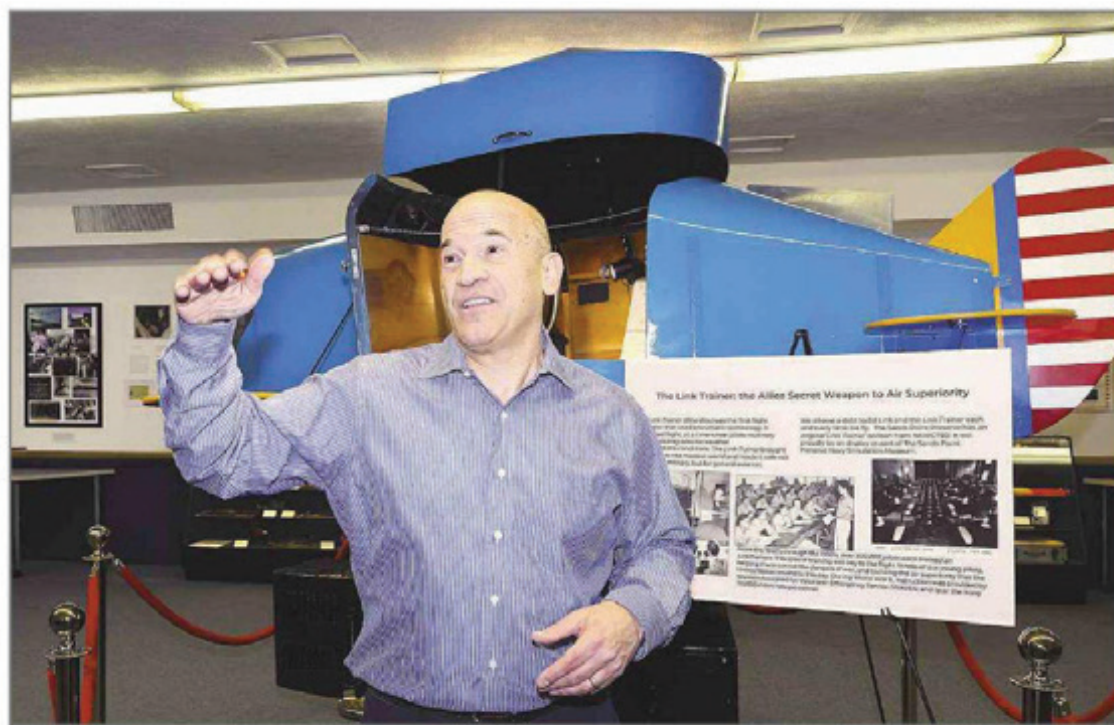
Just in time for Veterans Day, one of the simulators, which were invented by the late Edwin Albert Link, a leader in early aeronautics technology, will serve as the centerpiece of a new museum opening Monday at Sands Point Preserve.

The Navy Simulation Museum recounts the largely forgotten history of the Navy's Special Devices Division, which operated at what is now known as Sands Point Preserve from 1946 until 1967.

"A lot of people don't know about the military history here," said Jeremiah Bosgang, executive director of the Sands Point Preserve Conservancy, during a preview tour of the museum Sunday.

"That's the purpose of this museum," Bosgang added, "hoping to build an awareness."

A key museum attraction for military history buffs is Link's invention, the Link Trainer, which ushered in a new era of technology that helped save lives by training American pilots to fly in bad weather or



Above, Jeremiah Bosgang, executive director of the Sands Point Preserve Conservancy, stands with the Link Trainer, which aided World War II pilots. At right, a display at the new Navy Simulation Museum, open at the Sands Point Preserve.



The museum is on the second floor of the preserve's Castle Gould mansion, in a room that once served as a classroom for Navy personnel.

Large black-and-white photographs from the division's heyday greet visitors as they climb the stairs to the museum. In one image from the early



Bosgang with a modern simulator at the museum, which preserves LI's naval history. Video: newsday.tv

1950s, onlookers at Hempstead House Garden, another mansion on the property, watch a helicopter practice a rescue mission above Long Island Sound.

At one point, as many as 800 enlisted service members and civilians worked at the division, located on what was then known as the Guggenheim Estate, according to Bosgang.

Part of the museum's mission is to inspire the next gen-

eration of aviators by raising interest in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), he said, adding that the museum will be open only on weekends but plans to partner with Long Island schools for weekday field trips.

Scientist rallied for museum

The museum's entrance features a framed dedication to Henry "Hank" Okraski for his

role in bringing the museum to Sands Point. Okraski, now 88, joined the training center in 1962 and eventually climbed the ranks to chief scientist.

He has lived in Florida since the training center relocated there in the late 1960s. In a Friday phone interview with Newsday, Okraski said he noticed a few years ago the conservancy's website lacked any detailed information on the area's naval his-

tory. Okraski first reached out to the former executive director, and then to Bosgang when he took over, setting in motion a multiyear effort that eventually led to the museum.

Bosgang said the conservancy received a \$10,000 grant from the Navy to purchase the modern flight simulator and for STEM educational material. He said the conservancy used money from its yearly budget to purchase some of the items on display. He estimated the total investment to be about \$65,000.

Okraski helped procure a Link Trainer that had previously been on display at the Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems Division headquarters in Florida. The training center lent it to the museum along with other artifacts and photos.

The museum "tells a story that I think needs to be taught of what happened there, what the men and women, the talented people, were able to put together," Okraski said.

Brian Roscoe, public affairs officer for the Orlando, Florida-based training center, said the organization continues to carry on the mission it first set out to accomplish on Long Island.

Of the on-loan Link Trainer, Roscoe said, employees at the center were "happy to know it's going back home, so to speak, to our roots where we can share the story of what we did there and still do today."

After Monday, the museum will be open from noon to 5 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Admission on Monday is free. Going forward, admission will be \$5, but free for military veterans and children under 10.