

Gundy offers aid for school security

OSU coach says he'd foot bill to hire more guards at Stillwater Public Schools

By Bill Halsten
Tulsa World

STILLWATER — Whether it involves a mullet hairstyle discussion, having a SportsCenter segment, the wearing of a wrestling singlet to promote an important Oklahoma State match or pretending to play a saxophone in an effort to sell Cowboy basketball tickets, Mike Gundy is the master of the publicly stunt.

What he did on Wednesday night, however, was no stunt. It was a gesture.

A potentially impactful gesture that centers on school safety.

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First, there was a question: "For the safety of our schools, our kids and our teachers and our administrators, . . . do we have a plan, and are our schools safe?" the OSU football coach asked.

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TULSA-BUILT BOMBER • Divers recover items from World War II crash in Europe



Tulsa County Assistant District Attorney Kevin Gray, standing near memorabilia in his office, talks about The Tulsamerican, a B-24 bomber made in Tulsa near the end of World War II. Gray led the effort to find the plane's wreckage off the coast of Croatia, resulting in divers recovering the remains of pilot Eugene Ford. STEPHEN PINGRY/Tulsa World file

Pilot's remains ID'd

It took 73 years, but an Army pilot who was missing in action is finally coming home.

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Then, there was a reference to the Feb. 14 massacre of 17 Florida high school students and adults and a proposal: Gundy offered to underwrite a process that would result in the hiring of additional security personnel at each of Stillwater's 10 public schools.

Gundy offered to take care of the expenses "for the rest of the school year, if we can protect our kids."

School board policy states that board members are prohibited

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Among the items were a wedding ring and a silver wings pin from a pilot or co-pilot uniform.



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Tulsa County Assistant District Attorney Kevin Gray, who has

researched the Tulsamerican for more than 16 years and led the effort to find the crash site, said the ring and information about the remains were recently given to Ford's daughter in Indiana.

"She's very private," said Gray. "It's been a long time coming. It's nice to have a positive ID so that he can be finally brought home."

"There was quite a bit of remains



Kevin Gray points to images of divers recovering the wreckage of The Tulsamerican. STEPHEN PINKERTON/Tulsa World file

and artifacts from the cockpit area of the crash."

Gray said there are plans for Ford to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery sometime later this year.

However, he is unsure whether there are plans to bring any of the artifacts — or other pieces of the wreckage that could be recovered during future dives — for display at the Tulsa Air and Space Museum.

"There are still a lot of steps to go through," said Gray.

The Tulsamerican was the last B-24 Liberator bomber built at the Douglas aircraft plant in Tulsa near the end of World War II.

Three members of the 10-man Tulsamerican crew were killed in the crash. The last of seven survivors of the

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Board pulls school name, but holds off on 'Lee School'

Expressing concern about the level of security at Stillwater Public Schools, OSU football coach Mike Gundy has offered to pay for the hiring of additional security personnel.

MATT BARNARD/Tulsa World file

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Bixby: Board hires new superintendent

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after a student alleged that he had been raped with a pool cue twice during high school football team events at the superintendents house. The 16-year-old told law enforcement officers that he was attacked twice with a pool cue, once in September 2015 and once in 2016, by his Spartans teammates during dinners at Wink's home.

School officials apparently became aware Oct. 26 of the alleged assault but waited several days to notify police.

The four former football players now charged with second-degree rape by instrumentation. A defense attorney has described what happened as "roughhousing, and literally playful acts."

The resignation agreement called for Wood to receive his full salary and benefits through Oct. 31.

Lydia Wilson, principal of Bixby Central Elementary School, had been serving as interim superintendent.

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Pilot: Army gives wedding ring to family

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wreck, Val R. Miller of Oklahoma, died in 2017.

It is believed 962 B-24s were built at the Douglas plant in Tulsa, though some think the number is 952.

The parts of the aircraft were built at a Ford Motor plant in Michigan and shipped to Tulsa for assembly.

Names of Tulsans who built that final plane were painted onto the aircraft and were on a scroll under the captain's seat. Employees at Douglas helped pay for the plane through the purchase of bonds, named it, painted its nose art, sold raffles to ride on test flights and then signed their names.

The scroll is among the items that already have a home at a small Tusamerican exhibit at the Tulsa Air and Space Museum.

"Regardless of what we may get or perhaps be recovered in the future, it's time to update the Tusamerican exhibit," said Gray. "We've found the wreckage. We've dived on it and recovered items."

That is significant progress since Gray started searching for a piece of Tulsa's history from World War II. His research began in 2001, and he called it "looking for a needle in a haystack."

The inspiration for the search started when Gray saw a photo of the plane in the Tulsa World. Gray is a history buff, especially things about his lifelong home of Tulsa.

In 2003, he started emailing Croatian divers who were diving on American aircraft wreckage in the



An old photo shows The Tusamerican, the last B-24 Liberator bomber built at the Douglas plant in Tulsa near the end of World War II. STEPHEN PINNEY/Tulsa World file

Adriatic Sea.

Seven years later, the Tusamerican wreckage was confirmed.

For the past eight years, numerous efforts have been made to do more research, recover some of the wreckage artifacts and bring them back to the United States.

The wreckage was mapped in high-resolution 3-D by a Texas A&M researcher.

It is near Vis, Croatia, in about 120 feet of water. The plane came to rest upside down on the ocean floor, and it is in two pieces. The cockpit broke apart.

Still, during the recovery effort, much of the intact cockpit was vacuumed up and examined by researchers.

"We had a good map of the wreckage, so we did a series of

dives targeting the area around the cockpit," said Gray. "A lot was brought up from the cockpit."

It included some remains that were identified as Ford. "So they have moved him from MIA to KIA (killed in action) on the official list," said Gray.

Army officials have met with Ford's daughter, who was given the wedding ring.

Among other items recovered were a headset and the wiring to the plane's radio. Gray is hopeful that a long-term loan can be arranged to display the headset at a renovated Tusamerican exhibit at the Tulsa Air and Space Museum. "We're working with Croatia officials for more recovery at the wreckage," said Gray. "We'll see what happens."

Cowdery: School board open to coach's offer