

Southern California Wing 455 Aviation Drive, Camarillo, CA 93010 (805) 482-0064



July, 2020 Vol. XXXIX No. 7

COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE



July 4, 2020 – Independence Day (see pages 3-5) Visit us online at www.cafsocal.com.



Photo by Scott Slocum Joe Clark's Grumman F7F-3N Tigercat flown by Jason Somes, accompanied by our Grumman F8F Bearcat, piloted by Ken Gottschall. (see pages 17-20)

To Educate, Inspire and Honor Through Flight and Living History Experiences

July 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Museum Open 10am to 4pm Tuesday - Saturday 12pm to 4pm Sundays Closed Monday and Major Holidays			1	2 Work Day	3	4 Work Day Independence Day
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STAFF AND APPOINTED POSITIONS							IN THIS ISSUE
Wing Leader	*	Jason Somes	(818	3) 292-4646	wingleader@cafsoc	al.com	Wing Calendar 2
Executive Officer	*	Chris Liguori	(310) 430-2779	exo@ cafsoc	al.com	Staff and Appointed Positions 2
Adjutant	*	Roland Fogel	(805	6) 428-6806	adjutant@cafsoc	al.com	The Star Spangled Banner
Finance Officer	*	Paul Willett	(818	8) 469-8480	finance@cafsoc	al.com	Shot Heard 'Round the World 4
Operations Officer	*	Mike Hohls	(805	6) 410-2498	ops@cafsoc	al.com	The Declaration of Independence 5
Maintenance Officer	*	Trace Eubanks	(805)	325-1513 m	aintenance@cafsoc	cal.com	How July 4 Became a National Holiday. 5
Safety Officer	*	Al Kepler	(818	399-2006 (safety@cafsoc	cal.com	"Hat in the Ring" 94 th Aero Squadron 6
Development Officer	*	Kathy Newhard	(805	6) 857-2881	development@cafso	cal.com	Early Days of the CAF 9
Education Officer	*	Charlie Carr	(805	5) 200-7220	education@cafsoc	cal.com	CAF's Canadian Caper
Gift Shop Manager		Berthany Smith	(805	5) 482 0064	museum@cafsoc	cal.com	Restoring CAF's Boeing B-29 Fifi 14
Friends Coordinator		Ceci Stratford	(805	630-3696	cecipilot@sbcglo	bal.net	Dedicating Van Stein's Mural 16
Air Show Officer		Jason Somes	(818	8) 292-4646	ops@cafsoc	cal.com	Grumman F7F <i>Tigercat</i> 17
Facility Officer							The Code, and Victory at Midway 20
Personnel Officer		Yvonne Anderson membership@ca		membership@cafso	cal.com	Camarillo's Black Sheep Connection 21	
Film/Events Manager		LaTanya Barber	(805	5) 302-8136	barber.latanya@gm	nail.com	The Hubble Space Telescope 22
Public Info Officer		Pat Brown	(805	5) 479-2221	pio@cafsoc	al.com	Wing Photo Page I
Public Info Officer Lucien Pillai (8		305) 30	05) 300-4580 col.luc.cafsocal@gmail.com			College Park, MD Airport	
Historian		Ron Fleishman	(805	5) 586-4119	oldplanec46@a	ol.com	Losing a Part of History 25
Training Officer							Flyovers of Honor
Wing Photographer		Arash Afshari	(805	5) 279-1599	acafshari@gma	ail.com	Update: Sam Sachs 105th 28
Collections Manager							
Newsletter Editor		Dave Flood	(805	6) 402-8356	dmpflood31@gm	ail.com	
Newsletter Production		Casey de Bree	(805	6) 205-0494	scdebree@a	aol.com	
Webmaster		Will Cunninghan	n (805	5) 570-3515	col.will.cafsocal@gn	nail.com	
Librarian							
Displays/Artifacts Mgr.		Charlie Carr	(80	5) 200-7220	education@cafsoc	al.com	
	_						Submittal Deadline - 15th of the month
HANGAR PHONE				(805) 482-0064			
HANGAR FAX				(805) 482-0348			Southern California Wing
WEBSITE				www.cafsocal.com			455 Aviation Drive
E-MAIL admin.cafsocal.com Camarillo, CA 93010-9501							

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The Star-Spangled Banner

Thanks to Wikipedia

It was the garrison flag that flew over Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor during the naval portion of the Battle of Baltimore during the War of 1812. It is on exhibit at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. Seeing the flag flying over Ft. McHenry on the morning of 14 September, 1814, after the battle ended, Francis Scott Key was inspired to write the poem "Defence of Fort M'Henry". These words were written by Key and set to the tune of "To Anacreon in Heaven" by John Stafford Smith, a popular song at the time. It was not until 1931 that the song became the national anthem of the United States. With fifteen stripes, the Star-Spangled Banner remains the only official American flag to bear more than thirteen stripes.

History

In Baltimore's preparation for an expected attack on the city, Fort McHenry was made ready to defend the city's harbor. When Major George Armistead expressed the desire for a very large flag to fly over the fort, General John S. Stricker and Commodore Joshua Barney placed an order with a prominent Baltimorean flagmaker for two oversized American Flags. The larger of the two flags would be the Great Garrison Flag, the largest battle flag ever flown at the time. The smaller of the two flags would be the Storm Flag, to be more durable and less prone to fouling in inclement weather.

Available documentation shows that this flag was sewn by local flagmaker Mary Young Pickersgill under a government commission in 1813 at a cost of \$405.90 (equivalent to \$5,377 in 2019). George Armistead, the commander of Fort McHenry, specified "a flag so large that the British would have no difficulty seeing it from a distance".

Design

Mary Pickersgill stitched the flag from a combination of cotton and dyed English wool bunting, assisted by her daughter, two nieces, and an African American indentured servant, Grace Wisher. The flag has fifteen horizontal red and white stripes, as well as fifteen white stars in the blue field. The two additional stars and stripes, approved by the United States Congress's Flag Act of 1794, represent Vermont and Kentucky's entrance into the Union. The stars are arranged in vertical rows, with five horizontal rows of stars, offset, each containing three stars. At the time, the practice of adding stripes (in addition to stars) with the induction of a new state had not yet been discontinued.

The flag originally measured 30 by 42 feet (9.1 by 12.8 m). Each of the fifteen stripes is 2 feet (0.61 m) wide, and each of the stars measures about 2 feet (0.61 m) in diameter. After the battle, the Armistead family occasionally gave away pieces of the flag as souvenirs and gifts. This cutting, along with deterioration from continued use, removed several feet of fabric from the flag's fly end, and it now measures 30 by 34 feet (9.1 by 10.4 m). The flag currently has only fourteen stars—the fifteenth star was similarly given as a gift, but its recipient and current whereabouts are unknown.

Battle

The Flag was flown over the fort when 5,000 soldiers and a fleet of 19 ships attacked Baltimore on September 12, 1814. The bombardment turned to Fort McHenry on the evening of September 13, and continuous shelling occurred for 25 hours under heavy rain. When the British ships were unable to pass the fort and penetrate the harbor, the attack was ended, and on the morning of September 14, when the battered flag still flew above the ramparts, it was clear that Fort McHenry remained in American hands. This revelation was famously captured in poetry by Key, an American lawyer, and amateur poet, being held by the British on a truce ship in the Patapsco River.



Ft. McHenry's garrison flag, which, on Sept. 14, 1814, became our Star Spangled Banner.

Shot Heard 'Round the World

Thanks to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

"The shot heard round the world" is a phrase that refers to the opening shot of the Battle of Concord on April 19th, 1775, which began the American Revolutionary War and led to the creation of the United States of America.

Skirmish at the North Bridge



The famous statue of the Minuteman at Concord, Massachusetts

The opening stanza of "Concord Hymn" is inscribed at the base of *The Minute Man* statue by Daniel Chester French, located at the North Bridge in Concord, Massachusetts. *By the rude bridge that arched the flood, Their flag to April's breeze unfurled, Here once the embattled farmers stood, And fired the shot heard round the world.*

- Emerson, "Concord Hymn"

The phrase comes from the opening stanza of Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Concord Hymn" (1837) and refers to the first shot of the American Revolution at the Old North Bridge in Concord, Massachusetts, where the first British soldiers fell in the battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. Historically, no single shot can be cited as the first shot of the battle or the war. Shots were fired earlier that day at Lexington, Massachusetts, where eight Americans were killed and a British soldier was slightly wounded, but accounts of that event are confused and contradictory.

The North Bridge skirmish did see the first shots by Americans acting under orders, the first organized volley by Americans, the first British fatalities, and the first British retreat.

The towns of Lexington and Concord have debated over the point of origin for the Revolutionary War since 1824, when the Marquis de Lafayette visited the towns. He was welcomed to Lexington hearing it described as the "birthplace of American liberty", but he was then informed in Concord that the "first forcible resistance" was made there.

President Ulysses S. Grant considered not attending the 1875 centennial celebrations in the area to evade the issue.

In 1894, Lexington petitioned the Massachusetts state legislature to proclaim April 19 as "Lexington Day", to which Concord objected. The current name for the holiday is Patriots' Day. The Boston Marathon is run at this time, in honor of Patriots' Day.

Emerson lived in a house known as the Old Manse at the time when he was composing the "Concord Hymn", from which his grandfather and father (then a young child) had witnessed the skirmish. The house is located approximately 300 feet from the North Bridge.



Artist's conception of the Battle of Concord/Lexington, Massachusetts, April 19, 1975.

The Declaration of Independence Thanks to ConstitutionFacts.com

We celebrate American Independence Day on the Fourth of July every year. We think of July 4, 1776, as a day that represents the Declaration of Independence and the birth of the United States of America as an independent nation.

But July 4, 1776 wasn't the day that the Continental Congress decided to declare independence (they did that on July 2, 1776). It wasn't the day we started the American Revolution either (that had happened back in April 1775). And it wasn't the day Thomas Jefferson wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence (that was in June 1776). Or the date on which the Declaration was delivered to Great Britain (that didn't happen until November 1776). Or the date it was signed (that was August 2, 1776).

So what did happen on July 4, 1776? The Continental Congress approved the final wording of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. They'd been working on it for a couple of days after the draft was submitted on July 2nd, and finally agreed on all of the edits and changes.

July 4, 1776, became the date that was included on the Declaration of Independence, and the fancy handwritten copy that was signed in August (the copy now displayed at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.)

It's also the date that was printed on the Dunlap Broadsides, the original printed copies of the Declaration that were circulated throughout the new nation. So when people thought of the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776 was the date they remembered.

In contrast, we celebrate Constitution Day on September 17th of each year, the anniversary of the date the Constitution was signed, not the anniversary of the date it was approved. If we'd followed this same approach for the Declaration of Independence we'd being celebrating Independence Day on August 2nd of each year, the day the Declaration of Independence was signed!



Signing of the Declaration of Independence (Trumbull)

How did the Fourth of July become a national holiday?

For the first 15 or 20 years after the Declaration was written, people didn't celebrate it much on any date. It was too new and too much else was happening in the young nation. By the 1790s, a time of bitter partisan conflicts, the Declaration had become controversial. One party, the Democratic-Republicans, admired Jefferson and the Declaration. But the other party, the Federalists, thought the Declaration was too French and too anti-British, which went against their current policies.

By 1817, John Adams complained in a letter that America seemed uninterested in its past. But that would soon change.

After the War of 1812, the Federalist party began to come apart and the new parties of the 1820s and 1830s all considered themselves inheritors of Jefferson and the Democratic-Republicans. Printed copies of the Declaration began to circulate again, all with the date July 4, 1776, listed at the top. The deaths of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams on July 4, 1826, may even have helped to promote the idea of July 4 as an important date to be celebrated.

Celebrations of the Fourth of July became more common as the years went on and in 1870, almost a hundred years after the Declaration was written, Congress first declared July 4 to be a national holiday as part of a bill to officially recognize several holidays, including Christmas. Further legislation about national holidays, including July 4, was passed in 1939 and 1941.

"Hat-In-The-Ring" – 94th Aero Squadron

Thanks to Wikipedia

"Surely now we would be the first American squadron to go into action against the enemy."

The honor deserved a distinctive insignia. One of the pilots, Lieutenant Johnny Wentworth, was an architect, and he was asked to design it. We all threw out ideas. Major Huffer, the CO, suggested Uncle Sam's stovepipe hat with the stars and stripes for a hatband. Our flight surgeon, Lieutenant Walters from Pittsburgh, mentioned the old American custom of throwing a hat into the ring as an invitation to battle. And thus one of the world's most famous military insignia, the Hat-in-the-Ring, which became a part of my entire life from then on, was born."

Edward V. Rickenbacker

From "Success Four Flights Thursday"



The **94th Aero Squadron** was the <u>Air Service, United</u> <u>States Army</u> designation for the current <u>94th Fighter</u> <u>Squadron</u> that fought on the <u>Western Front</u> during <u>World War I</u>.

The squadron was assigned as a Day Pursuit (Fighter) Squadron as part of the <u>1st Pursuit Group</u>, <u>First United</u> <u>States Army</u>. Its mission was to engage and clear enemy aircraft from the skies and provide escort to reconnaissance and bombardment squadrons over enemy territory. It also attacked enemy observation balloons, and perform close air support and tactical bombing attacks of enemy forces along the front lines.

The squadron was one of the first American pursuit squadrons to reach the <u>Western Front</u> and see combat, becoming one of the most famous. The 94th was highly publicized in the American print media of the time, and its exploits "over there" were widely reported on the

home front. Its squadron emblem, the "Hat in the Ring" became a symbol in the minds of the American Public of the American Air Service of World War I. Three notable <u>air aces</u> served with the squadron, <u>Eddie</u> <u>Rickenbacker</u>, who was awarded almost every decoration attainable, including the <u>Medal of Honor</u> and the <u>Distinguished Service Cross</u>. <u>Douglas Campbell</u> was the first American trained pilot to become an air ace. He shared the honor of having the first official victory over an enemy aircraft with Alan Winslow. Another squadron member, <u>Raoul Lufbery</u>, attained 17 aerial victories before leaping to his death from a fiery <u>Nieuport 28</u> aircraft in May 1918.

After the <u>1918 Armistice with Germany</u>, the squadron returned to the United States in June 1919 and became part of the permanent <u>United States Army Air Service</u> in 1921. The current <u>United States Air Force</u> unit which holds its lineage and history is the <u>94th Fighter</u> <u>Squadron</u>, assigned to the <u>1st Operations Group</u>, <u>Joint</u> <u>Base Langley–Eustis</u>, Virginia.

Origins

The 94th Aero Squadron was formed at <u>Kelly Field</u>, Texas on 20 August 1917. The original cadre of men was composed entirely of volunteers recruited from all parts of the United States. With the exception of two men, none had any previous military training. The men were indoctrinated into military service with drill and other basic training. On 30 September 1917, the 94th was ordered to the Aviation Concentration Center at <u>Mineola Field</u>, Long Island for overseas service.^[3]

The squadron entrained at Kelly Field for New York, consisting of 160 men and two officers, arriving on 5 October. At the Concentration Center, the squadron received additional equipment and was further instructed in drills and in military traditions.

Training in France



Eddie Rickenbacker, Douglas Campbell, and Kenneth Marr of the 94th Aero Squadron pose next to a Nieuport 28 fighter, 1918.

On 27 October, the squadron boarded <u>RMS Adriatic</u>, and after an uneventful crossing of the Atlantic, the squadron disembarked at <u>Liverpool</u> on 10 November 1917. The squadron moved by train to <u>Southampton</u> on the southern coast, reaching it at midnight that same day. The next morning it boarded the steamship *Huntscroft* for <u>Le Havre</u>, France, and took up residence at British Rest Camp No. 2. The 94th remained at Le Havre until 18 November when it boarded a troop train and arrived in Paris, France that evening. The squadron was billeted at Reuilly Barracks upon arrival.^[3]

After a brief rest period, the 94th Aero Squadron was divided up into seven flights, each flight being sent to a separate airplane or engine factory for technical training. These were Breguet, Brasler, Renault, Nieuport, Bleriot, and Hispano-Suiza. For the next two and a half months, the men underwent training at these factories. Upon completion of the training, the squadron was sent to the 3d Instructional Center, AEF, at <u>Issoudun Aerodrome</u> on 24 January 1918 for additional training. At Issoudun, the squadron was equipped with <u>Nieuport 28</u> aircraft and was designated as a pursuit (fighter) squadron.^[3]



French-built Nieuport 28 fighter plane

However, the necessities of war meant the squadron was needed in the "Zone of Advance" (the Western Front), for combat duties as soon as possible. On 5 March, it arrived at the 1st Pursuit Organization and Training Center, Villeneuve-les-Vertus Aerodrome, 9 for advanced training, and on 30 March, the 94th was ordered to proceed to the Epiez Aerodrome to replace a French squadron which had moved to another part of the front. However, a fire broke out in one of the hangars that delayed the squadron for a day; consequently, it was not until 1 April that the 94th arrived at Epiez. A continual rain meant that flying was impossible upon arrival, however, the aircraft were hangared and readied for combat patrols. Some familiarization flights were flown from Epiez, before the 94th Aero Squadron was ordered to proceed to Croix de Metz Aerodrome, near Toul in the new American Sector of the line on 7 April. The squadron was assigned to work with the Eighth French Army. It was the first American trained and organized pursuit squadron to be stationed at the front and see active combat service.

Combat on the Western Front



94th Aero Squadron – SPAD XIII

At Toul, active combat patrols and alerts immediately commenced, over the sector from <u>Saint-Mihiel</u> to <u>Pont a</u> <u>Mousson</u>. On a cloudy Sunday morning, 14 April, an alert was given and Lieutenants Douglas Campbell and Alan F. Winslow took off. A few minutes later, two enemy aircraft were seen moving through some clouds, and after a brief combat, Lt Campbell shot down one of the enemy and Lt Winslow forced the other down out of control. Both crashed on the ground. These were the first American air combat victories of World War I.

On 29 April, Captain Hall and Lt. Rickenbacker responded to an alert and shot down an enemy aircraft just over the lines. Air combats began to become more frequent and by 3 May, the squadron had four aerial victories. However, on that day, the squadron suffered its first casualty, when Lt. Charles W. Chapman was shot down in flames by a biplane, which Captain Peterson later shot down.^[3]

On 5 May, the 94th was organized, along with the <u>95th</u> <u>Aero Squadron</u> into the <u>1st Pursuit Group</u>. In combat, the squadron was succeeding in defeating the enemy, and in a few weeks, the 94th gained the first American air aces. On 31 May, Lieutenant Campbell gained his fifth victory; on 17 June, Lieutenant Rickenbacker also became an ace.

However, the squadron had also suffered several losses. Captain Hall had been brought down and became a prisoner. Major Lufbery attacked a German plane flying over Toul and was shot down in flames. In combat over Maiseraes, Lieutenant Davis was killed in action and Lieutenant Hill was seriously wounded in the leg while in combat on 27 May over <u>Montsec</u>.

By the end of June, the 94th Aero Squadron was the leading pursuit squadron in the AEF, having seventeen official victories with four casualties.



British-built Spad XIII Fighter Plane

On 29 June, the 1st Pursuit Group moved to the Chateau Thierry sector and to Touquin Aerodrome. There, the 94th began receiving SPAD XIIIs, replacing the unpopular Nieuport 28s. On 1 July, Lieutenant Coolage shot down his first enemy aircraft, he would later become a flying ace. On 9 July, the squadron moved again, this time to Saints Aerodrome, which was nearer the front lines. However, unlike the Toul Sector, this sector was not as active with German aircraft and only a few enemy aircraft were shot down during the months of July and August. During the latter part of August, the front line had receded to such a distance that the Coincy Aerodrome, built by the French "Aeronautique Militaire" earlier in 1918 and lost to the German offensive, was used as an auxiliary landing field. However, with the Germans retreating, the 1st Pursuit Group was given a short period of repose until arrangements could be made to move to a new sector. The squadron engaged in target practice and formation flying for new pilots and the senior pilots were given a much needed and well-deserved rest.^[3]



94th Aero Squadron, Rembercourt Aerodrome, France, November 1918.

On 30 August, the 94th was ordered moved to <u>Rembercourt Aerodrome</u> in preparation for the <u>St.</u> <u>Mihiel Offensive</u>. However, little flying was done in the new sector initially in order not to let the enemy know of the American build-up of forces. On 12 September the American offensive was begun. The squadron employed a new tactic of low-level patrols, below 600m flying from dawn until dusk. The 94th was given the mission of attacking enemy observation balloons as spotted and to machine-gun enemy infantry and other targets as observed in order to aid First Army in its advance. During the period from 12 September until the Armistice on 11 November, the 94th Aero Squadron shot down 47 enemy aircraft. Several pilots became aces. Pilots also brought back invaluable intelligence concerning information about enemy rear areas.

It was during the St. Mihiel and later the <u>Meuse-Argonne Offensive</u> that Captain Rickenbacker shot down over twenty enemy aircraft. On 25 September, he brought down two enemy planes within a few minutes of each other. Four of his victories were balloons, which he attacked at dusk while they were lying on the ground. While Captain Rickenbacker was adding to his number of combat victories, Captain <u>Hamilton</u> <u>Coolidge</u> was also successfully defeating the enemy. During the period from October 2d to the 13th, he shot down seven enemy aircraft and two balloons. However, on 27 October, while leading his flight along the lines, he was hit by an enemy anti-aircraft shell and crashed in flames.^[3]

Lieutenant <u>Harvey Cook</u> also became one of the leading aces of the squadron. During October he shot down seven enemy aircraft, and five balloons. He had the distinction of being chosen for the dangerous and difficult work of balloon strafing in the early morning and just before dusk. In one attack, he attacked an enemy balloon that lay on the ground between two tall trees. It was necessary that he dived between the trees three times before the balloon went up in flames.^[3]

During the closing days of the war, reports indicated that enemy activity had dwindled to a great extent. Only a few biplanes and an occasional enemy formation of aircraft were seen. Hostilities ended on 10 November, as unfavorable weather caused the squadron to be grounded on the morning of 11 November.



Major Reed Chambers, AEF 94th Pursuit Squadron, Coblenz, Germany, 1919 next to a SPAD XIII.

Early Days of the CAF

Excerpted from the book "Ragwings and Heavy Iron," by Martin Caidin

What's A Warbird?

By John Silberman

But first, everything must have a beginning, and the warbird movement – specifically the resur-rection and flying of warbirds under the aegis and finances of an organization – began 'way down south, in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas.

Once upon a time 'way back in 1951, a lone P-40 descended from the skies over the sleepy, remote, little town of Mercedes. Few people paid the Warhawk much attention. Remote though it might be, unheard of though it might be, Mercedes was no stranger to the roar of aircraft engines. Military bases in the area, especially during the war that ended only six years before, had masses of iron rushing about the skies in al directions.

And Mercedes itself hosted its own airstrip something less than an intenational aerodrome, with a runway of 2,900 feet, but more than enough for the crop dusters and business planes that made Mercedes their home.

The P-40 swung about the town, beat up the field, climbed out, and dumped gear and flaps, and Lloyd Nolen landed I what had been a longtime dream – his own fighter plane.



Curtiss P-40 Warhawk Fighter, Lloyd Nolen's first fighter

Not that he was new to flying military machines. He had started flying at fifteen years old, and when the Big War busted out, the Army tapped Nolen on the shoulder. They needed professional pilots as instructors in the Air Corps and he was one of the chosen few. Nolen pulled every trick in the book to get posted overseas, but one Lloyd Nolen meant dozens and even hundreds of trained pilots leaving his tutelage. He remained where he was in Training Command. The war ended, and Lloyd Nolen still wanted to fly fighters. No way. The U.S. Army Air Force didn't need instructors any more. Nolen went home. But the good dreams stay alive, perhaps buried, but always with their spark.

Six years later, Nolen went to Phoenix, Arizona, plunked down fifteen hundred clams and took the title papers to one Curtiss P-40 Warhawk fighter. He did some repair work, changed hoses, tapped this and tightened that, studied the manual, and he was off and winging his way home. It was a moment of particular satisfaction. They won't let you fly a fighter? So...you buy your own.

Rumors erupted in the Rio Grande Valley that the government was about to release a flood of North American P-51 Mustangs, mostly D models, for surplus sales to the public. And they were going to sell for a flat fee of \$1,000 each. Nolen thought of more than 1,500 horsepower and that huge fourbladed propeller and the laminar flow wing, and he wasted no time in selling the P-40 to add to the kitty for buying some of those Mustangs.

Wrong! By 1951, the Korean War was going full blast and we weren't doing all that well, and the cry went out fo ground-attack fighters. Not only did the Air Force cancel the sale of the Mustang it was about to dump on the market, but it also recalled almost every P-51D that had already reached civil-ian hands.

What would have been the beginning of the future Confederate Air Force went into a holding pattern for five years. The Korean War went into the history books and the Mustangs began to trickle into the civilian market – with the price tag boosted to \$2,500. Lloyd Nolen and four friends each plunked down \$500 and had themselves a pony with 1,520 horsepower. It says something for this group that they all checked out in the Mustang and flew it regularly from the 2,900-foot strip at Mercedes. I've flown that strip, and for a high-performance airplane it's just this side of ghastly. Those guys were tremendous pilots. That Mustang, by the way, is still flying!

Early Days of the CAF, page 2



Confederate Air Force's first plane, the still-flying North American P-51D Mustang "Red Nose"

Emotions running the way they do south of the Mason-Dixon Line a few months after the Mustang was home at Mercedes, the pilots went to the airport to find a minor change to their iron bird. Someone (never to this day identified) had carefully painted words beneath the stabilizer that read "CONFEDERATE AIR FORCE." They all looked at the words, then looked at one another, shrugged, looked again, and got to like it more and more with each passing moment. On an impulse, the pilots saluted one another and made the decision that the name world stay.



It was quite a beginning on a lonely dusty strip at the bottom of the country – for what would become the largest and most dominant warbird organization in the world. At first it was a pleasant joke among the pilots. It was fun, and, what the hell, the South had always needed its own air force. They all gave themselves the rank of Colonel, so that no one could ever outrank anyone else; printed up ID cards; and considered themselves members of the Confederate Air Force, an organization consisting of one airplane, a few pilots, and a wide-open future.

By late 1958 the Confederate Air Force had doubled in size when the pilots bought a Grumman F8F Bearcat fighter. Two years later the entire air force of two planes flew off to fly their first air show at the U.S. Naval Air Station, Kingsville, Texas. Soon after that successful appearance, requests began to pour in for more aerial demon-strations of the Mustang and the Bearcat. The pilots assembled for an unofficial staff meeting. They made their decision to obtain every American wartime fighter plane they could find and were stunned to discover that the only "official policy" of the U.S. government toward these priceless machines was to melt them down into scrap. As one indication, there wasn't a single Republic P-47 Thunderbolt, of any model, to be found in the entire country. Republic had built more than fifteen thousand of these great airplanes - and they were all gone!

The smelters were destroying almost every last historic aircraft of the United States.



Confederate Air Force planes lined up at Rebel Field, Mercedes, Texas

What had been essentially fun and games became a mission of urgent, almost desperate, searching for the swiftly-vanishing great aircraft of American history. Nolen and his troops began gathering other pilots to the fold. They had obtained a second Bearcat for a total of three fighters, but the purchase of other military aircraft had become a race against time. The year 1961 marked the beginning of the warbird movement in the United States. The rapidly expanding ranks of the organization sent a team to Canada to bring back eight North American AT-6 Texan trainers....

Early Days of the CAF, Page 3

Marvin L. (Lefty) Gardner, one of the most extraordinary pilots in this country, along with Joe Jones, decided to put up a bundle of cash for the group to buy every fighter they could find until they had at least one copy of each type. In May, Lefty Gardner roared into Rebel Field (they *had* to rename the Mercedes strip) with their first Vought F4U Corsair.



Confederate Air Force's first Vought F4U Corsair

Ten days later, Lloyd Nolen brought in their first North American B-25 Mitchell bomber. A few weeks later, John Wells went to Florida to bring back a General Motors FM-2 Wildcat. Early in June, Lefty departed Ocala, Florida with a Curtiss P-40 Warhawk.

The Confederate Air Force was humming in more ways than one. Not only were they accepting enthusiastic, capable and hardworking new members, but they also had become an incorporated entity. They had members who were putting up hard cash to meet the goals of the CAF, and their purpose had become something more than laughs. A CAF report of their search stated that some of their pilots

"went out to see what was left at the surplus disposal depots in the Arizona territory. What they saw first made these men sad, and then made them angry. They were chopping up and smelting down good airplanes by the hundreds! older types had long since been completely

destroyed...it was found that in the future no combat-type aircraft would be used for flying or display purposes. They were to be destroyed before leaving the base." By 1962 the CAF colonels were learning to "dig in and to consolidate" what they had accomplished so far, and to begin to appreciate the staggering cost and complexity of maintenance. There were some memorable moments for the year, including the adoption of the first CAF constitution and bylaws, and the election of the first CAF General Staff. There was also the memory of a fine race among fighters at a Naval Air Station, where the Hellcat in the race "*turned in the wrong direction* around the first pylon, creating one of the most exciting air races in CAF history."

The CAF also counted 57 dues-paying members. They were on their way. They also had on hand a P-51, F8F, F6F, FM-2, P-38, P-40, F4U and a bunch of AT-6 trainers to keep the pilots on their toes.



One of the CAF's North American AT-6 Texans

During the following year the CAF flew its First Annual CAF Air Show, in which they could show to the world the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt found and bought in South America, and, at the air show, in a triumphant display, they took delivery of a longsought Bell P-63 King Cobra.

Something new had been added. CAF members in the far reaches of the country began flying their personally-owned warbirds down to Texas for what would become a tremendous annual air bash. The year 1963 went into the record books for a most significant reason. By July of that year, the CAF was operating twelve aircraft. That had less meaning than did the fact that sixteen CAF colonels had banded together to sponsor those aircraft by putting up hard cash to the tune of over \$100,000.

Early Days of the CAF, Page 4



Bell P-63 King Cobra

There was the key. Rather than place intolerable burdens upon one man for an aircraft, or just a few men, the CAF was leaning heavily on different sources to provide the funds to attend to its aircraft, hangars, and other facilities. *The organi-zation was the key.* Sponsorships, due-paying members, air shows that could turn a profit that went back into aircraft purchase and maintenance, and, to no small extent, donations by those who could afford it. Add to the total a growing and meaningful dedication on the part of the members, an increasing level of cooperation from military and other organizations, and the Confederate Air Force was off and running!

And they were the only outfit in the country who had put their name, money, time and effort on the line. Without the CAF, it seems doubtful that the warbird movement – the preservation and flying of so many warbird types, would ever have achieved the nationwide success that was to come in future years on the part of all organizations.

From this point on, the Confederate Air Force was no longer merely a club. They had obtained so many aircraft, so many donations, built major facilities, and were so well known throughout the country and the world – that they had become a major force in the restoration of aircraft. But you can't run an organization without rules, and at Harlingen, Texas, where the CAF now flew its flag, the order of the day was increasing control of the many by the few.

The New Kids On The Block by Scott Smith

In 1969, at Confederate Air Force headquarters in Harlingen, Texas, the CAF put on an Annual Seminar on the Preservation of World War II Aircraft. The man who started it all, Lloyd Nolen, laid it on the line to the seminar attendees:

We have fulfilled the goal we had set: to collect one each of the major warplanes representing the war years, 1939 to 1945. Although it would always be desirable to obtain duplicates, this is not our primary goal. Most important now is to put our planes in top-notch mechanical condition and to display them in the manner they deserve.





Lloyd Nolen (top) & Lefty Gardner

Lefty Gardner told the seminar: *They told us it would be impossible to keep a fleet of planes this size in the air. Well, so far they've been wrong. We've had our problems – the sheer number of planes would dictate that – and it should be understood that in terms of maintenance we've been hanging on by our fingertips. We need to get ahead, to think ahead to the times when there are no cheap engines left in the surplus yards. If we are to continue our work in keeping these planes alive, we must now put as much effort into restoration and preparation for future maintenance as we have into acquisition.*

CAF's Canadian Caper

From "Ghosts-A Time Remembered" by Philip Makanna,

The story by Lefty Gardner of how the CAF, himself and others, acquired six Harvard Mk II's (Texan AT-6) from the RCAF in March 1961.

"Lefty Gardner met Lloyd Nolen in 1960. Gardner was living up north of Laredo and was in the market for radial motors for his Stearmans. They were very scarce at the time but he located several and to check on them called Nolen, who suggested that he forget about the ones he had found and instead fly with him to Canada "to get the same engines with airplanes attached".

"The next thing I knew" Gardner remembers "Lloyd was flying up to Crystal City (Texas) through lightning and thunderclouds blacker'n the inside of a cow. Of course, I should have known that there was something fishy about a guy who would fly through weather like that just to pick me up to take me to Canada to get a good deal on a couple of engines. When Lloyd came, he brought all the pilots he had, so I rounded up all the pilots I had and we flew to Canada. We landed at Lethbridge, Alberta at an abandoned air base and when we flung open the door of the hangar there was a bunch of T-6's scattered all over the floor. They didn't have engines on em' or radios in em'. They didn't even have wings on em'. But I knew that we had found some low-time airplanes and if we could get' em back to Texas we'd be able to fly the heck out of em'-and then sell em' for a fortune.

"For two or three days we talked to a lawyer and Lloyd talked to me about the CAF. He told me about the thrill of flying a Mustang and a Bearcat and about how much more fun fighters were to fly than a Stearman. We finally got our T-6's put together and spun 'em back to Texas."

Here is a brief status update for each of the six Harvard IIs brought back:

N9789Z/RCAF AJ 731; Crashed and destroyed November 1983

N9788Z/RCAF 2692; Tommy Thomas, OKC; 2013 registration cancelled (FAA model listed as SNJ-2)

N9785Z/RCAF 2780; Twin Lakes Aviation; OKC; registration changed to N88RT (Race #88)

N9787Z/RCAF 2832; David Kenney Van Nuys, CA; under restoration to SNJ-2 configuration

N9791Z/RCAF 3014; Joe E. Jones Rio Hondo TX; 1989 registration cancelled

N9790Z/RCAF 3048; Commemorative Air Force; Houston TX; current airworthy condition



One of the AT-6s acquired by the CAF from Canada. It was used in air races as #88.



North American AT-6 Texan (RCAF 3048 Harvard Mk II), now flown by the CAF's Houston Wing.



This AT-6 is N9789Z/RCAF AJ 731. It crashed and was destroyed in November, 1983.

Restoring CAF's Boeing B-29 FIFI Thanks to Wikipedia

FIFI is a surviving Boeing B-29 Superfortress, and one of two that are currently flying, the other being *Doc.* It is owned by the Commemorative Air Force, currently based at the Vintage Flying Museum located at Meacham International Airport, Fort Worth, Texas. *FIFI* tours the U.S. and Canada, taking part in air shows and offering flight experiences.

History

Built by Boeing at the Renton factory in Washington, B-29A serial number 44-62070 was delivered to the USAAF in Kansas in 1945. Modified to a TB-29A standard, it served as an administrative aircraft before being placed in "desert storage". It was returned to active duty in 1953.

The airplane was retired in 1958 and placed at the U.S. Navy Naval Weapons Center and bombing range at China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station in California as part of a group of 36 B-29s. The Commemorative Air Force, then known as the Confederate Air Force, acquired it in 1971 and registered it as a civilian aircraft. It was flown to CAF headquarters at Harlingen, Texas on 3 August 1971 and re-registered as N529B in August 1981.

Confederate Air Force / Commemorative Air Force



B-29 "*FIFI*" in flight at the World War II Weekend Reading, Pennsylvania, 4 June 2011.

The CAF had been actively searching for a B-29 for their use. Through Vic Agather they had an agreement that should one be found that was owned by the government but not in use, it would be turned over to the CAF.

In 1971, a CAF pilot in the National Guard reported sighting a number of what might be B-29s on the California desert near China Lake. The CAF learned the aircraft were indeed Superfortresses that had been parked at a US Navy weapons center for 17 years. The aircraft had been used for gunnery targets and abused by heat, sand and vandals. After much negotiation (the US Air Force owned the aircraft; the Navy had to agree to release one), much paperwork and a painstaking search for the best survivor, the CAF became the owner of s/n 44-62070, officially acquired title on 23 March 1971, registering it as N4249.



FIFI from the DC Flyover, 5/8/2015.

A CAF maintenance team arrived at China Lake on 31 March 1971 and in only nine weeks, with the help of more CAF volunteers, they restored all systems and replaced fuel, oil and hydraulic hoses. The restoration process involved cannibalizing parts from other B-29s at China Lake, installing instruments, having new window bubbles made and restoring controls to working order. After the CAF technicians ran the engines, tested propellers and landing gear, N4249 was made ready to fly again by 3 August 1971. They had a permit to make a single ferry flight out of China Lake -although once it landed, the B-29 would be grounded.



The CAF B-29 Recovery Crew after landing in Harlingen, Texas – with the only flyable Boeing B-29 Superfortress in the world. From right: Randy Sohn, "Lefty" Gardner, Rodger Baker, Darrell Skurich, Jack Kern, and J.A. McCafferty.

The ferry crew took on enough fuel to fly non-stop 1,250 miles to CAF Headquarters, then in Harlingen, Texas. They lifted off at 7:48 a.m., and in a six-hour, 38-minute flight, brought home the last flying B-29 Superfortress without incident. The complete restoration to CAF standards of airworthiness was a long and expensive project involving more than three years of fund-raising and hard work. Late in 1974, the CAF's B-29 was christened *FIFI* and joined the other World War II fighters and bombers to continue the CAF mandate "to preserve the memories and teach of lessons of mankind's greatest war."

Besides air displays, *FIFI* appears in several films, including *Enola Gay: The Men, The Mission, and the Atomic Bomb* (1980), *Roswell* (1994), and *The Right Stuff* (1983), standing in for the Bell X-1's "mothership".^[8] *FIFI* appears in and is the title of an an episode AMC's *Better Call Saul* Season 2, Episode 8.

Air show career



In the 2011 air show season, *FIFI* spent a few days in the NASA Langley hangar, avoiding storms.



The flyable B-29 *FIFI* undergoing maintenance at the Vintage Flying Museum at Fort Worth Meacham International Airport in October of 2015.

Throughout the years of air displays across the country, the CAF and the many volunteers kept *FIFI* in the air. In 2006, however, following a series of engine problems, including engine failure occurring during an airshow, the B-29/B-24 Squadron made the difficult decision to ground the aircraft until more reliable engines could be fitted. In a joint press release, dated 21 January 2008, the Commemorative Air Force and the Cavanaugh Flight

Museum announced a pledge of \$1.2 million to reengine *FIFI*.

Over the next three plus years, the original Wright R-3350-57AM engines were exchanged for new engines built using parts from later model engines that powered the Douglas A-1 Skyraider and Fairchild C-119 Flying Boxcar during the Vietnam War, a custombuilt combination of the Wright R-3350-95W and Wright R-3350-26WD engines.

After the \$3-million restoration project was completed, *FIFI* was flown for the first time in several years, on 5 August 2010. In 2010, "FIFI" was pronounced once again ready to perform at airshows, and "act" in feature films and documentaries throughout the Western Hemisphere. *FIFI* was based in Addison, Texas at the Cavanaugh Flight Museum. Since 2013, *FIFI* has been relocated to the Vintage Flying Museum, Meacham International Airport, Fort Worth, Texas.





Photos by Scott Slocum

CAF's Boeing B-29 Superfortress "FIFI" has been a tremendous ambassador to the world for the Commemorative Air Force. Dedication of Thomas Van Stein's Mural Of the Flying Tigers in China



(Top to bottom): Steve Barber in the Zero; Ron Hack-worth in the Warhawk; Chris Rushing in the Hellcat; and David Price in the Mustang.

A special attraction during our May 5 unveiling of Thomas Van Stein's "Tigers Over Kweilin" was to be the flybys of the Planes of Fame's Curtiss P-40 Warhawk and our Mitsubishi A6M3 Zero. We decided to add the Grumman F6F-5 Hellcat to the mix. As the planes were lining up to take off, one of our Wing's benefactors, David Price, happened by in his North American P-51D Mustang "Cottonmouth" – so he also joined the formation.

This brought the large assembled crowd to their feet. What a heart-throbbing, pulse-quickening happening – maybe a once-in-a-lifetime for many in attendance.

To make the day even more exciting, we also had a commercial shoot going on right next to our gathering. This event was all day and didn't conclude until 3:00 am.

It involved laying down some artificial snow around an airplane...so we had January Aspen weather in May Camarillo!

Thank you Dick Burrer, your grandson and his friend, for sticking with this event until the wee hours.



Photo by Eric Van Gilderwww.vg-photo.comDavid Price showed up at our hangars on May 5 in hisMustang just in time to join our Zero and Hellcat, andPlanes of Fame's Warhawk in a spectacular formationflyby. Good to have you with us, David!



Photo by Eric Van Gilder

Some of the "boys" enjoying the Special Events Day. Front: Joe Peppito and Ed Foster. Rear: Jack Broome and Bill Main. They are definitely from the "Greatest Generation!" Thanks, guys, from all of us!



Photo by Eric Van Gilder

What a beautiful warbird! Many thanks from our Wing to the Planes of Fame Museum in Chino for sending this magnificent machine to participate in our Special Unveiling Event Day. And thanks to pilot Ron Hackworth for flying her to Camarillo. What a treat!

Reprinted from "Flight Line," June, 2007

Grumman F7F Tigercat

Thanks to Wikipedia



The **Grumman F7F Tigercat** is a <u>heavy fighter</u> aircraft that served with the <u>United States Navy</u> (USN) and <u>United States Marine Corps</u> (USMC) from late in <u>World War II</u> until 1954. It was the first twin-engine <u>fighter</u> to be deployed by the USN. While the Tigercat was delivered too late to see combat in World War II, it saw action as a <u>night fighter</u> and <u>attack aircraft</u> during the <u>Korean War</u>.

Designed initially for service on <u>Midway-class</u> <u>aircraft carriers</u>, early production F7Fs were land-based variants. The type was too large to operate from older and smaller carriers, and only a late variant (F7F-4N) was certified for carrier service.

Design & development

Based on the earlier <u>Grumman XP-50</u> that was eventually canceled, the company developed the **XP-65** (**Model 51**) further for a future "convoy fighter" concept. In 1943, work on the XP-65 was terminated in favor of the design that would eventually become the F7F. The contract for the prototype **XF7F-1** was signed on 30 June 1941. Grumman's aim was to produce a fighter that outperformed and outgunned all existing fighter aircraft, and that had an auxiliary ground attack capability.



An F7F-3N of VMF(N)-513 at Wonsan, Korea, in 1952. Performance of the prototype and initial production aircraft met expectations; the F7F was one of the fastest piston-engine fighters, with a top speed significantly greater than single-engine USN aircraft – 71 mph faster than a Grumman F6F Hellcat at sea level. Captain Fred Trapnell, one of the premier USN test pilots of the era, stated: "It's the best damn fighter I've ever flown." The F7F was to be heavilyarmed: four 20 mm cannon and four 50 caliber (0.50 in; 12.7 mm) machine guns, as well as underwing and under-fuselage hardpoints for bombs and torpedoes. This speed and firepower was bought at the cost of heavy weight and a high landing speed, but what caused the aircraft to fail carrier suitability trials was poor directional stability with only one engine operational, as well as problems with the tailhook design. The initial production series was, therefore, used only from land bases by the USMC, as night fighters with APS-6 radar.

While the F7F was initially also known as the Grumman Tomcat, this name was abandoned, because it was considered at the time to have excessively sexual overtones. (From the 1970s, the name Tomcat became commonly associated with another Grumman design, the <u>F-14</u>.) The first production variant was the single-seat **F7F-1N** aircraft; after the 34th production aircraft, a second seat for a radar operator was added and these aircraft were designated **F7F-2N**.

A second production version, the **F7F-3**, was modified to correct the issues that caused the aircraft to fail carrier acceptance and this version was again trialled on the <u>USS *Shangri-La*</u>. A wing failure on a heavy landing caused the failure of this carrier qualification, too. F7F-3 aircraft were produced in day fighter, night fighter, and photo-reconnaissance versions.

Grumman F7F Tigercat, page 2

The final production version, the **F7F-4N**, was extensively rebuilt for additional strength and stability, and did pass carrier qualification, but only 12 were built.

Operational history

Marine Corps night fighter squadron VMF(N)-513 flying F7F-3N Tigercats saw action in the early stages of the Korean War, flying night interdiction and fighter missions and shooting down two Polikarpov Po-2 biplanes. This was the only combat use of the aircraft. Most F7F-2Ns were modified to control drones for combat training, and these gained <u>bubble</u> <u>canopies</u> over the rear cockpit for the drone controller. An F7F-2D used for pilot transitioning also had a rear sliding, bubble canopy. In 1945, two Tigercats, <u>serial numbers</u> *TT346* and *TT349*, were evaluated, but rejected by the British Royal Navy, who preferred a naval version of the <u>de Havilland Hornet</u>.



The second XF7F-1 in 1946.



An F7F-2D drone controller with an additional F8F windshield.



An F7F-3N night fighter of VMF(N)-513 in April 1950.

Variants

XP-65

Proposed <u>United States Army Air Forces</u> pursuit fighter.

XF7F-1

Prototype aircraft, two built.

F7F-1 Tigercat

Twin-engine fighter-bomber aircraft, powered by two Pratt & Whitney R-2800-22W radial piston engines. First production version, 34 built.

F7F-1N Tigercat

Single-seat night fighter aircraft, fitted with an APS-6 radar.

XF7F-2N

Night-fighter prototype, one built.

F7F-2N Tigercat

Two-seat night fighter, 65 built.

F7F-2D

Small numbers of F7F-2Ns converted into drone control aircraft. The aircraft were fitted with a <u>Grumman F8F Bearcat</u> windshield behind the cockpit.

F7F-3 Tigercat

Single-seat fighter-bomber aircraft, powered by two Pratt & Whitney R-2800-34W radial piston engines and featuring an enlarged tailfin for improved stability at high altitudes, 189 built.

F7F-3N Tigercat

Two-seat night fighter aircraft, 60 built.

F7F-3E Tigercat

Small numbers of F7F-3s were converted into electronic warfare aircraft.

F7F-3P Tigercat

Small numbers of F7F-3s were converted into photo-reconnaissance aircraft.

F7F-4N Tigercat

Two-seat night-fighter aircraft, fitted with a tailhook and other naval equipment, 13 built.



Photo by Bob Cardin Steve Hinton flies Rod Lewis's new Tigercat to its new home in San Antonio, Texas.

Grumman F7F Tigercat, page 3 Surviving aircraft – Grumman F7F



The Tigercat was designed to have a very small frontal



F7F-3N Tigercat in use with belly tank in the fire-fighting role in 1988



F7F Tigercat N747MX La Patrona at 2014 Reno Air Races

Beginning in 1949, F7Fs were flown to the then-U.S. Navy storage facility at Naval Air Station Litchfield Park, Arizona.^[12] Although the vast majority of the airframes were eventually scrapped, a number of examples were purchased as surplus. The surviving Tigercats were primarily used as water bombers to fight wildfires in the 1960s and 1970s and Sis-Q Flying Services of Santa Rosa, California, operated an F7F-3N tanker in this role until retirement in the late 1980s.

Airworthy

F7F-3

- 80374: privately owned in Wilmington, Delaware.
- 80375: privately owned in Bellevue, Washington.
- 80390: based at Lewis Air Legends in San Antonio, Texas.

- 80411: based at Palm Springs Air Museum in Palm Springs, California.
- 80425: privately owned in Seattle, Washington.
- 80483: privately owned in Houston, Texas.
- 80503: based at Lewis Air Legends in San Antonio, Texas.
- 80532: privately owned in Bentonville, Arkansas.

On display

F7F-3

- 80373: National Naval Aviation Museum in Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida.
- 80382: Planes of Fame Air Museum in Chino, California.
- 80410: Pima Air & Space Museum, adjacent to Davis–Monthan Air Force Base, in Tucson, Arizona.^[26]

Under restoration

F7F-3

• 80404: in storage at the Fantasy of Flight in Polk City, Florida.



Drawing of an F7F-3N. *Data from* Jane's Fighting Aircraft of World War II

Grumman F7F Tigercat, page 4

General characteristics – Grumman F7F-3

- **Crew:** 2
- Length: 45 ft 4 in (13.82 m)
- Wingspan: 51 ft 6 in (15.70 m)
- Height: 16 ft 7 in (5.05 m)
- Wing area: 455 sq ft (42.3 m²)
- Airfoil: root: NACA 23015; tip: NACA 23012[29]
- Empty weight: 16,270 lb (7,380 kg)
- Max takeoff weight: 25,720 lb (11,666 kg)
- **Powerplant:** 2 × Pratt & Whitney R-2800-34W Double Wasp 18-cylinder air-cooled radial piston engines, 2,100 hp (1,600 kW) each
- **Propellers:** 3-bladed constant-speed fullyfeathering propellers

Performance

- Maximum speed: 460 mph (740 km/h, 400 kn)
- Range: 1,200 mi (1,900 km, 1,000 nmi)
- Service ceiling: 40,400 ft (12,300 m)
- Rate of climb: 4,530 ft/min (23.0 m/s)

Armament

- Guns:
 - \circ 4 × 20 mm (0.79 in) AN/M3 cannon (200 rpg, wing roots)
 - 4 x 0.50 in (12.7 mm) M2 Browning machine gun (400 rpg, in nose) (normal fighter versions only; replaced by radar unit in the -3N nightfighter)
- Bombs:
 - o 2 × 1,000 lb (454 kg) bombs, or
 - o 8 x 127mm unguided rockets under wings and
 - 1 x 150 gallon fuel or napalm tank under fuselage, or
 - 1 × torpedo under fuselage (day fighter only)

Avionics

AN/APS-19 radar



Three of flying Tigercats at a recent Reno Air Races

The Code, and Victory at Midway by

Thomas Floyd, The Washington Times

It was during the spring of 1942 that the tide of the Pacific War began to shift – not in a battle at sea, it turned out, but in the depths of "the dungeon."

That was the nickname for the cramped basement space in the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, conceived as a storage room before being converted to an office for Capt. Joseph Rochefort's "Station Hypo" code-breaking team during World War II.

While the shadow of Japan's control over the Pacific grew, the American code-breakers worked day and night in their dark, dank accommodations, desperately hoping to find an advantage against a force of naval precision unlike any they had seen before.

And that's exactly what they did. Late that April, they cracked the Japanese empire's naval code. On June 4, 1942, a Japanese fleet featuring four aircraft carriers set its sights on Midway, a small coral outpost used by U.S. forces in Hawaii. When they arrived, the forewarned Americans were ready.

"We sank all four carriers the first day of the battle," said 92-year-old Donald "Mac" Showers, the last surviving member of Rochefort's code-breaking unit. "We were able to do that because we knew where they were, what they were up to, and what the schedule was."

The Battle of Midway, which marked it 70th anniversary on June 4, 2012, would be the turning point in the Pacific in WWII. The U.S. sustained some 300 casualties while the Japanese suffered more than 3,000, and the imperial navy's aura of invincibility was irrevocably shattered.

"That morning (June 4, 1942) the Japanese were winning the war," said Craig L. Symonds, professor of naval heritage at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis. "By that evening, the Americans were winning the war. It's seldom in history that a battle is so decisive."



Retired Rear Admiral Donald "Mac" Showers, 93, of Arlington, VA, helped lead the effort to break the Japanese naval code – resulting in victory at Midway. Reprinted from "Flight Line," July, 2012

Camarillo's "Black Sheep" Squadron Connection by Bruce Gamble, "Swashbucklers & Black Sheep", Zenith Press, 2012.

"After just a few days as an inactive squadron, VMF-214, the 'Black Sheep' Squadron, was reformed at Marine Corps Air Station, Santa Barbara, CA on February 9, 1944.

Flight training in the squadron's Goodyear-built FG-1As started with a series of crashes, but thereafter VMF-214 enjoyed a long spell of accident-free training that included gunnery, formation flying, navigation and bombing practice. The concept of close ground-air support was constantly being developed, and the Corsair proved highly capable as a dive-bomber as well as a strafing aircraft.

The 'Black Sheep' pilots practiced carrier approaches on the MCAS Santa Barbara runway with 'touch-and-go" landings, but the air station was usually too busy for adequate 'bounce drills.' The solution was to move the squadron to a little-used Army air strip surrounded by bean fields near Oxnard, CA. (Note: voila – this is the precursor to Oxnard Air Force Base and eventually Camarillo Airport.) Not surprisingly, the combination of the unforgiving Corsair, lack of pilot experience, and steep approach profile led to a rash of mishaps.



Stan Free, a VMF-214 pilot, crash-landed at Camarillo doing 'bounce drills' at the small Army airstrip.

Gradually, the 'Black Sheep' pilots accumulated enough hours to become proficient. They trained continuously, and, as the months rolled by, they became skilled. By the time Squadron VMF-214 pilots completed their syllabus of field carrier landing practice, gunnery, navigation, bombing and even night fighting – they had accumulated far more flight time than their predecessors had possessed when the Black Sheep Squadron was created in the Solomons in July, 1942.

Because Japanese kamikaze attacks had damaged several of our Essex-class carriers – and the Navy could not accommodate full Marine fighter squadrons on its carriers – the Marines split their fighter squadrons into "forward" and "rear" echelons, with the more experienced pilots deploying in the "forward" echelons.

VMF-214 Squadron was equipped with the newest variant of the Corsair – the F4U-1D, and training began at MCAS

El Centro and later at MCAS Mojave to train pilots in firing the high-velocity aircraft rockets (HVARs).



"Black Sheep" Squadron Corsair made hard landing at Camarillo airstrip and was destroyed by fire. Note the familiar hills in the distance.

The 'Black Sheep' Squadron returned to MCAS Santa Barbara for the holidays, and thirteen pilots flew their Corsairs in the formation of a cross over the City of Santa Barbara on Christmas Day as a salute to the people of their host city. (Note: a great example of government employees displaying their constitutional right of free expression.)



Corsairs of VMF-214 over Santa Barbara's Court House

The following day they flew to NAS Santa Rosa (north of San Francisco) to prepare for deployment. Their fighters were hoisted aboard the USS Ranger at NAS Alameda and proceeded with carrier landing qualification training. The long hours of 'bounce drills' at Camarillo paid off, as all pilots qualified.

In early February, 1945, VMF-214 was on the refurbished USS Franklin - steaming westward under the Golden Gate Bridge – heading toward war experiences that would prove fateful for the 'Black Sheep' Squadron."

Note: Thanks to Bob Cheveres for spotting this article. Reprinted from "Flight Line," July, 2013

The Hubble Space Telescope From Paul Willett's Blog "We Love The Stars Too Fondly" April, 2020

Thirty years ago today the space shuttle Discovery launched with the Hubble Space Telescope onboard. It was placed into low Earth orbit the next day. Despite the problems that were discovered when the first pictures came down, Hubble became an astonishing success. Not only has it given us over 1,400,000 observations which have revolutionized astronomy, the crewed space shuttle missions to repair and later repeatedly upgrade the instruments on Hubble have been a truly amazing example of what a trained crew can accomplish in space.

In honor of that 30-year anniversary, NASA, ESA, and STSci have released this image of "the Cosmic Reef." In it we see NGC 2020 (the large, red nebula) and NGC 2014 (the smaller, blue nebula).



(Image from NASA, ESA, and STSci)

These star-forming regions are part of the Large Magellanic Cloud, a satellite galaxy of ours that is 163,000 light years away.

In addition, a video about the image has been released by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center.

This means a lot to me, for so many reasons. Among them is the fact that for the 25th anniversary of Hubble's launch, I attended my fifth NASA Social, this one in Washington, D.C. For that event, NASA released this image of Westerlund 2.



(NASA, ESA, the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA), A. Nota (ESA/STScI), and the Westerlund 2 Science Team)

That afternoon was spent at Goddard where, among other über cool activities, I got to hold and play with one of the actual tools that was used in space to perform one of the instrument upgrades.



Paul Willett, holding a tool that had been used in space to upgrade the Hubble Telescope.

Oh, and we got to see the Hubble's successor, the Webb Space Telescope, which should launch next year.

Yeah. That was a pretty great day.

So, Happy Birthday, Hubble! Here's to a few more years of service, and maybe even more if us clever little apes can figure out a way to service you again even without the Space Shuttle!

Editor's Note: Paul is our Wing's Finance Officer. He maintains this blog which contains interesting comments and photos on a plethora of subjects. We thank Paul for allowing us to reprint his musings from time to time.

Wing Photo Page I



Photo by Dave Flood

Sib Bosso and Alex Ferrasci checking out the old P&W R-1340 engine just pulled off the SNJ-5 #290. A newly-overhauled engine was procured with the help of Col. Jack Rogers, and will be installed soon.



Photo by Russ Drosendahl

Here's Col. Eric Van Gilder, one of our favorite photo-graphers, with his able assistant, son Jacob.



Photo by Jim Hinckley

Children from the Rose Avenue School in Oxnard recently visited our WWII Aviation Museum, and took a tour of our facilities. Here's part of the group, along with their teacher and our Docent, Norm Swagler.



Photo by Eric Van Gilder

Steve Barber piloting our Hellcat at Chino, just lifting off before a crowd-pleasing fly-by.



Photo by Dan Newcomb

Scott Drosos (left) and Marc Russell checking the fit of a rubber-bladder oil tank in the PBJ's right wing.



Photo by Eric Van Gilder

Our Mitsubishi A6M3 Zero trailing smoke after being "hit" by the F6F. Jason Somes was able to bring her back to Camarillo still intact. In a recent article in the *Air & Space* magazine, our Wing Leader, Steve Barber, is quoted extensively by the author, Roger Mola, concerning our Zero and the F6F Hellcat. We feature the two in our airshow dogfights.

College Park, MD Airport

"Eighty Years at College Park" [written in 1990] By C. V. Glines

A trivia question for the aviation history buff: What airport has been in continuous operation longer than any other in the world?

The answer: College Park Airport, Md., 3.5 miles northeast of the city limits of Washington, D. C.

One of the specifications in the contract for the purchase of the Army's first airplane was that the Wright brothers would teach two officers how to fly it. The commander at Fort Myer, Va., where Orville Wright had successfully demonstrated the Flyer on the post's small parade ground in 1909, asked the Wrights to take their "aeroplane" and fly it elsewhere. They were glad to do so.

Lieutenant Frank P. Lahm and Lt. Frederic E. Humphreys, an engineer, were the two officers selected for flight training. Without extra cost, the Wrights included Lt. Benjamin D. Foulois, the only one of the trio assigned to the Signal Corps. He had been the passenger on the required cross-country demonstration flight in 1909.

Wilbur Wright made the first dual-instruction flights at College Park with Lieutenants Lahm and Humphreys on October 8, 1909. The next day, Wilbur flashed around a closed circuit 500-meter course at a dazzling forty-six mph for a new world speed record.

Lieutenants Lahm and Humphreys both soloed on October 26, with Lieutenant Humphreys having the honor of being the first Army officer to do so. The Flyer crashed on November 3, 1909, during the first flight they made together. Lieutenant Foulois, who had not yet soloed, was ordered by the Chief Signal Officer to take the wreckage to San Antonio "and teach yourself to fly."

The airport boasts several other aviation "firsts." Mrs. Ralph H. Van Deman became the first woman airplane passenger in the US when she flew there with Orville Wright on October 27, 1909. The field became the first military air base in this country when the Signal Corps Aviation School was officially opened in 1911. The first use of field lights took place there on November 17, 1911, when Lt. Thomas DeWitt Milling made several night landings on an area illuminated by two acetylene searchlights. The first "mass cross-country flight" of three planes originated there on May 6, 1912, as did the first "long distance flight" (forty-two miles).

The airport is also the site where the first bombs were dropped from an aircraft using a bombsight. Riley E. Scott, a former officer in the Coast Artillery Corps, had invented a sixty-four-pound bombsight in 1911. Mr. Scott, lying prone on the lower wing of a Wright Type B airplane piloted by Lieutenant Milling, dropped two eighteen-pound bombs from 400 feet. They landed within ten feet of a four-foot by five-foot target. Lt. Henry H. "Hap" Arnold flew to 4,764 feet at College Park on January 25, 1912; it took him fifty-nine minutes to complete the climb. He passed the one-mile height on June 1, 1912, and soared to a new world record of 6,540 feet.

On June 7, 1912, Col. Isaac N. Lewis, inventor of the famous Lewis machine gun, fired the first aerial shots at a strip of cheesecloth six feet square and scored five hits in the short time he was over the target. His handheld weapon had no gunsights and fired at 500 rounds a minute. Early aircraft radio experiments were also carried out at College Park in 1912.

Rex Smith, a local inventor and attorney, flew airplanes of his own design there from 1910 until 1916. His first successful flight took place on November 20, 1910. The airport has been open to civilian aviators ever since.

On August 12, 1918, after Army Air Service pilots had proven the feasibility of scheduled airmail while operating from the polo field in Washington during the previous three months, College Park Airport became the Washington terminus for the Washington-Philadelphia-New York airmail route operated by the Post Office Department [see "The Day the Airmail Started," December 1989 issue, p. 98].

In 1920, College Park was the site of experimental helicopter flights by Emile Berliner. On February 23, 1924, his son Henry made what locals claim to be the "first successful controlled flight by a helicopter."

Now a general-aviation airport occupying forty acres of its original 160, the airport was purchased by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission in 1973.

In 1977, the airport was added to the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of its significance and continuous use as an airport "from the dawn of motor-powered flight to the modern era.".

The list of aviation "firsts" for College Park Airport might include one more: The top four management-level supervisors on the twenty-one-person staff are women.



Wright aeroplane, College Park, MD Airport, Oct. 1909

We Lose A Part of History Each Time Virus Takes a WWII Vet By Marco della Cava, Excerpted from USA Today, May 18, 2020

With the coronavirus disproportionately claiming the elderly, especially nursing home residents, some worry it could accelerate the passing of World War II veterans, those 16 million American servicemen and women heralded for their heroic exploits and selfless sacrifice in a conflict that killed 407,317. Today, only about 300,000 WWII vets remain.

What the virus is taking away, veterans group officials and historians say, is a priceless chapter of the American story, one marked by the defeat of a Nazi Germany regime that claimed 11 million Jewish and non-Jewish victims during its attempt to take over Europe.

That history never leaves us. On May 8, 2020, the world marked the 75th anniversary of V-E Day, or Victory in Europe, the day Nazi Germany surrendered. Also special dates are Memorial Day, which honors the death of all U.S. military personnel, and June 6, the anniversary of D-Day, when Allied forces successfully attacked German troops in France in a victory that ultimately turned the tide of WWII.

"The tragedy of COVID-19 speeding up our loss of these great people is that when they go, we lose a part of history," says Keith Huxen, senior director of research and history at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. "What they went through in their lives is unimaginable to us today," he says. "Living through the Great Depression for one, and then going to war. The value of having them around is that they are inspirational. They are the true children of democracy."

Where WWII saw Americans bond together against a common military foe, today divergent state – and even county-level approaches to lifting stay-at-home orders speak to a yawning divide about the best way to reopen the nation.

WWII veteran Paul Grassey, 97, of Savannah, Georgia, says the nation should and can find that sense of common purpose again. "We fought a war and won it in 3 ¹/₂ years after a great national effort, and that's the only thing we can do today with this virus, come together to beat it," says Grassey, a B-24 bomber pilot who received France's Legion of Honor medal for helping liberate that country from the Nazis.



Photo by Matthew Stephan Paul Grassey, 97, flew B-24 bombers during WWII

But, Grassey laments, "we're working with half the country. We need to get everyone behind this movement; we can't have one guy saying one thing and another guy saying it's all wrong." Most of his brothers-in-arms are gone, and he's soldiering on, upset only by the current state of the national mood.

"I'm an American," Grassey says. "All I want to see is us get together again,"



Paul Grassey, bottom row second from left, is pictured with his fellow airmen during WWII. He believes the unified effort of America was critical for winning WWII.

America's Aviators and Their Flyovers of Honor

Anne Constantin Birge

What are *flyovers*? Two words answer that question – they're awesome! Growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, in central Oklahoma, my family and I never got to experience flyovers, like the ones we appreciate today. Nooooo! Ours were much better! Back then when those daredevil iet aviators headed south out of Tinker Air Force Base, near Oklahoma City - about 16 miles north of us, they would head right for our house. We never saw 'em coming. We only saw them leave – *after* they blasted us with their calling cards - those wonderful sonic booms (which occur when aircraft exceed 768 mph - or the speed of sound). Their speed-of-sound flyovers were window-rattling, horse-bucking, sheep-scaring, days-long cessations of egg-laying and kid-squealing exhibitions of speed and military might. Although sonic booms probably weren't allowed back then either, those rowdy aviators just had to do it, and probably still do - and doubtless still smirk during their official dressing down.

I always thought those ear-drum-rupturing flyovers were the first flyovers. As it turns out, the first recorded flyover was performed by <u>sixty</u> U.S. Army Air Service biplanes on Thursday, September 5, 1918. Just as America is at war today with a viral pandemic, on that day in 1918 she had alredy spent about 18 months engaged in WWI. After game one of the world series, the attendees who came to see the Boston Red Sox and Chicago Cubs play, probably never cared who won that game – after witnessing the Army biplanes flyover and then being a part of the first time our National Anthem was played at a world series.



1918 DeHavilland DH-4 "Liberty" aircraft

These days, America's military may not be causing sonic booms, but they sure are making lots of beautiful noise. As part of *Operation America Strong*, our Army, Air Force, Navy, National Guard and Coast Guard are flying over our cities to honor our first responders, medical personnel, and essential business employees who put their lives on the line every day during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. These flyovers, at relatively *sedate* speeds, have occurred and will continue over at least 35 U.S. states and the District of Columbia – from New York and Maryland to Oregon and Arizona; from Hawaii and Alaska to Florida and the Carolinas.

Some of the aircraft involved in these flyovers include the B-1 Lancer; B-2 Spirit; B-52 Stratofortress; A-10 Thunderbolt; C-17 Globemaster; C-130 Hercules; LC-130 Hercules (lands on ice); F-15 *Eagle;* F-15 *Strike Eagle;* F-16 *Fighting Falcon;* F-22 Raptor; F-35 Lightning II; KC-46 Pegasus; KC-135 Stratotanker; T-1 Jayhawk; T-6 (SNJ) Texan; and Doc, one of only two airworthy WWII B-29 Superfortresses (the other one is the CAF's FIFI). In No. California, Beale Air Force Base's 9th Reconnaissance Wing formations, led by Capt. Parker "Betty" Dodds and 1st Lt. Kyle Carver, conducted two Salutes to Northern California flyovers from Redding to Placerville & from Nevada City to Vacaville – from the cockpits of their four sleek, gleaming black Northrop T-38 Talons (maximum speed 858 mph).



USAF - Beale Air Force Base - T-38 "Talons"

Delighted citizens all across our country flocked to their driveways, residential streets and side roads along flight paths to witness America's aeronauts as they soared overhead on their journey to the next honorees. Their beautiful formations of polished paint and roaring jet engines not only honor our veterans and frontline workers, but

Flyovers, continued...

also give us gravity-bound earthlings a chance to see what they do and thank them for their aerial prowess.

Since 1957, the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) Ghost Squadron, which was founded in Texas, has purchased, restored and maintained more than 170 vintage aircraft and WWII warbirds. And Texans have big, wonderful and caring attitudes. Multiple Texas CAF members went REALLY BIG in honoring front line personnel, military veterans and residents of their cities.

Some of the 32 Texas Wings and Squadrons included the *Houston Wing, P-63 Sponsor Group, Tora Sponsor Group, Gulf Coast Wing, Centex (Central Texas) Wing, Devil Dog Squadron, High Sky Wing,* and the *Lone Star Flight Museum.* The *Tex Hill Wing* flew the Archbishop of San Antonio, in what was called a *Spirit Flight,* over San Antonio as he blessed her populace.

But Texas wasn't the only *happenin'* place for the CAF. In New Orleans, the *Big Easy Wing* flew the Rabbi from the Gates of Prayer Synagogue and the Archbishop of New Orleans over the city so they could bless the inhabitants. The Waukesha *Wisconsin Wing* and *Airbase Arizona* in Mesa flew over their cities to salute war veterans and to honor the 75th anniversary of VE Day (May 5, 1945- *Victory in Europe Day).*

Don't worry, like researchers did when Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier in 1947. If you're ever lucky enough to *witness* a sonic boom, the pilots *will* emerge unscathed.

Next time you hear the scream of a jet, long after it's disappeared, please remember – that's the sound of freedom.

Lastly, I know firsthand, that although all of us kids on the ground *loved* to hear those Tinker Air Force Base jet pilots break the sound barrier, our Mother did not!

'til next time, signing off:

Rattlesnake Annie

Colonel, CAF So Cal Wing

"Operation Thanks From Above" By Brandon Roth, CNYCentral

Historic WWII planes from The National War Plane Museum in Geneseo, New York flew over western and central New York state to salute Covid-19 first responders.

On Saturday, May 16, 2020, a C-47 Skytrain and a P-51 Mustang took to the skies to show their support for first responders, healthcare workers, and essential workers on the frontline of the battle against the pandemic.

The two planes took off from the Museum's airfield in Geneseo and flew over western and central New York state. The route took them over hospitals, veterans facilities, city centers, and parks.

Leading the mission was "Whiskey 7," a Douglas C-47 that carried paratroopers into battle over Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944.



S-H Photos

"In an era when the museum is closed to the public and where everyone is looking for some good news, there was no better resource to go aloft and pay tribute to first responders than this," said Todd Cameron of the National Warplane Museum.

The National Warplane Museum Geneseo, New York "The Greatest Show on Turf" (grass runway) Website: <u>www.nationalwarplanemuseum.com</u>

Update: Sam Sachs's 105th Birthday By Anne Constantin Birge *Rattlesnake Annie* Colonel, CAF – SoCal Wing

The June 2020 issue of "Flight Line," included an article about Lakewood, CA resident Lt Col Sam Sachs (US Army, Ret.) and his desire to have a REALLY BIG 105th birthday celebration. After the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic put the kibosh on his plans, the D-Day survivor decided he wanted to receive a bunch of birthday cards instead.

As a result of the media airing his request, Sam received more than 6,200 birthday cards. However, the cards were just the beginning of his April 26, 2020 birthday celebration. Banners and hundreds of small US flags adorned the front yard of Sam's residence. There was an hour-long parade of flag and balloon-adorned motorcycles and cars, with the occupants (adults AND children) waving and yelling "Happy Birthday, Sam!"

A fire crew aboard one of the Los Angeles County Fire Dept. trucks, drove past Sam's residence. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department sent a dozen of their finest, and one of their helicopters conducted a flyover to honor Sam. Aside from regular neighbors and residents, a Long Beach vintage car club and military vehicles also drove by to honor him. In tribute to Sam, a man played "Happy Birthday" on his trumpet!

Sam also received a birthday card from US President Donald Trump, who wished him a happy birthday and thanked him for his service to America during WWII. The mayors of Lakewood, CA (where he lives) and Grand Forks, SD (where he was born and raised) sent proclamations honoring him. Poignantly, a dozen members of the Army National Guard, in which Sam spent most of his 32-year Army career, presented him with a framed flag.

Sam's comments about the hour-long parade:

It's a marvelous feeling, yes, really. The emotions are running so high. It just doesn't get any better than this. It's just unbelievable. This is a dream. I just can't believe it. I can't believe all this is happening. Gee whiz! Thank you, folks. Thank you for making my day. I had no idea what to expect. This is magical. During WWII, Sam was assigned to the 82nd Airborne (named The All American Division), 325th Glider Infantry Regiment. On June 6, 1944, Sam's regiment was part of the D-Day invasion on the coast of Normandy, France. He was aboard an unarmed Waco CG-4A Cargo/Troop Transport, often called Flying Coffins, which landed on the beach the Allies codenamed Utah.

Sam is one of the lucky WWII Veterans who made it home and is able to celebrate his 105th birthday. So, next time you read about a Veteran who says he or she would like to receive a birthday card, take time to make or buy one. The price of your time, the card and stamp is a small price to help make a Veteran's special day.

That's nothing, compared to the price our military service personnel paid and continue to pay when fighting for the freedoms we enjoy today.

Photos by Genaro Molina / Los Angeles Times



Lt. Col. Sam Sachs (U.S. Army, Ret.) saluting all the people honoring him on his 105th birthday



Neighbors and friends of Sam watching the hour-long parade that passed by his house.