

AirshowStuff

Magazine



Inside:

*Discovery's Final Flight
Doolittle Raider Reunion
Plane Crazy Saturday
Firefighting DC-10s
USS Lexington
Blackbird Airpark
Reports from the Field
and more!*

May 2012

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Cover Photo

Space Shuttle Discovery rides atop NASA's 747 Shuttle Carrier Aircraft as it approaches Dulles Int'l Airport near Washington DC for Discovery's delivery to the Smithsonian.

Photo by Andrew DeMartini. For more, see page 58.

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Mark Hrutkay

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If you are an airshow enthusiast, we want your help! Everything you see in this magazine is created and submitted by people like you. All it takes is a simple e-mail each month with photos or articles you would like to submit. We may even be able to help you get a media pass if you cover a show for us! If you would like to join our team, please drop us an e-mail at RS@AirshowStuff.com

We'd love to talk with you!

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'LINDY' FLIES AMERICA

Article by Alan Radecki

The decade after World War I saw the industry and the institution of aviation blossom and come into its own. In the decade before that war, aeronautics was a stumbling technological development, a little more than a distant curiosity to most of the general public, with only a handful of very daring men participating. The national com-

petition of combat during the war propelled both rapid development of the technology and, for the first time, widespread training of pilots. With victory at hand, these pilots returned home, many smitten with the flying bug. At the same time, the "market" for aircraft was flooded with thousands of surplus machines, available for next to nothing.

The pilots saw opportunity and barnstorming exploded in popular-

ity. Thousands of ordinary Americans suddenly had the opportunity to take a ride in an "aeroplane" from some nearby farmer's field. One such young man was 20-year-old Charles Lindbergh, who in 1922 took his first ride in a biplane flown by Otto Timm (some accounts say it was a Curtiss JN-4 Jenny, others have the airplane as a modified Standard J-1 advertised as a Lincoln Standard Tourabout; either way,

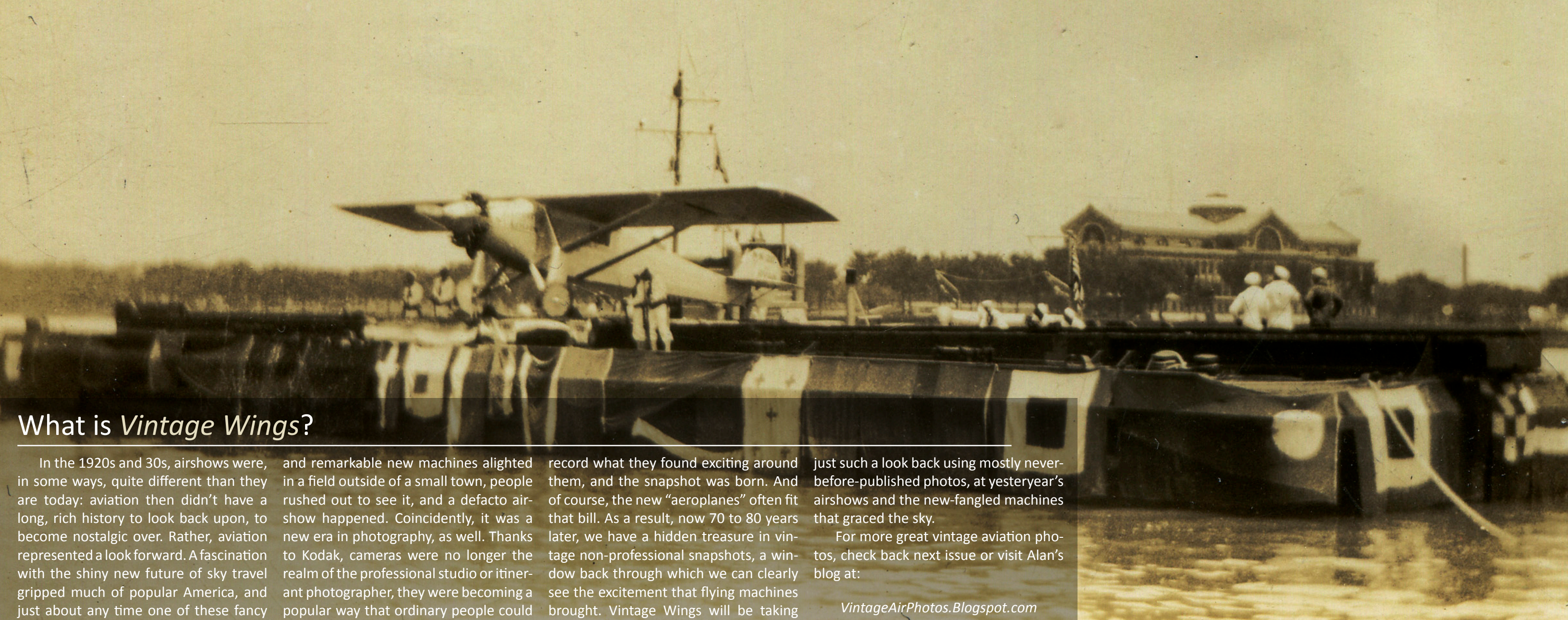
it was a surplus WWI trainer being used to give public rides). Five years later (and 85 years ago this month), Lindbergh became the first man to fly solo across the Atlantic at the controls of the specially-built Ryan Airlines NYP, which he named the Spirit of St. Louis in honor of his hometown.

Flying, which to the average American had been a county-fair type of attraction, suddenly was big,

international, front page news. It was that flight that is generally credited as the starting point for what became later known as the "Golden Age of Aviation". But it wasn't just that record-setting flight itself that accomplished this; it is what was done after the flight that had such an impact on the public as aviation, in the person of the hero and the plane - and by virtue of them, the viability of aviation - was brought to

the doorsteps of much of America.

After landing in Paris at the end of his historic flight, Lindbergh went on to fly the Ryan NYP to Belgium and then England. There, it was loaded onto the Navy cruiser USS Memphis, dispatched by President Coolidge for this purpose, for the return trip to the U.S. On June 11, 1927, the ship and its cargo arrived in Washington, and was triumphantly escorted up the Potomac by



What is Vintage Wings?

In the 1920s and 30s, airshows were, in some ways, quite different than they are today: aviation then didn't have a long, rich history to look back upon, to become nostalgic over. Rather, aviation represented a look forward. A fascination with the shiny new future of sky travel gripped much of popular America, and just about any time one of these fancy

and remarkable new machines alighted in a field outside of a small town, people rushed out to see it, and a defacto airshow happened. Coincidentally, it was a new era in photography, as well. Thanks to Kodak, cameras were no longer the realm of the professional studio or itinerant photographer, they were becoming a popular way that ordinary people could

record what they found exciting around them, and the snapshot was born. And of course, the new "aeroplanes" often fit that bill. As a result, now 70 to 80 years later, we have a hidden treasure in vintage non-professional snapshots, a window back through which we can clearly see the excitement that flying machines brought. Vintage Wings will be taking

just such a look back using mostly never-before-published photos, at yesteryear's airshows and the new-fangled machines that graced the sky.

For more great vintage aviation photos, check back next issue or visit Alan's blog at:

VintageAirPhotos.Blogspot.com



a fleet of Navy ships and, overhead, squadrons of military aircraft and the airship USS Los Angeles.

Over the subsequent ten months, from July 20 to October 23, 1927, Lindbergh and the Spirit of St. Louis went on a national goodwill tour, known as the "Guggenheim Tour" because it was sponsored by Guggenheim Fund for the Promotion of Aeronautics, established by Chicago multimillionaire Harry Guggenheim and his father Daniel. Lindbergh made a grand counter-clockwise tour around the continent, making 92 stops and visiting all 48 states. The tour also reached down into Latin America, with Lindbergh and the Spirit making the first non-stop flight between Washington D.C. and Mexico City.

It was money wisely invested by the Guggenheims, as it turned Lindbergh and the Spirit from impersonal newspaper headlines into

a real man and a real airplane that people could go down to their local airport and see in person. It was on this tour that some excited amateur photographer snapped one of the photographs being featured in this month's edition of Vintage Wings. (And, for any airshow photographer who realized later that their prize shot was slightly out of focus, take heart...this was happening back in the beginning, as well!)

After the completion of the tour, Lindbergh spent a month at the Guggenheim mansion writing the autobiography *WE*. Meanwhile, the Spirit of St. Louis was retired in April of 1928 and donated to the Smithsonian Institution. Lindbergh took off in the plane one last time on April 30, flying from Lambert Field in St. Louis to Bolling Field in Washington D.C. It was a year and two days since the NYP had taken its first flight from Ryan's Dutch Flats air-

port in San Diego. When he landed, the Spirit had logged 489.28 hours of flight time and 174 landings.

To get the plane to its new home, it once again took to the waters of the Potomac, this time on a barge, the scene depicted in the other photo. Hand-written on the back of it is the inscription, "Lindberg's 'Spirit of St. Louis' on the barge at 'Hains Point', Washington D.C." Hains Point is just across the Potomac from Bolling Field, and the point separates the main channel of the river from a smaller branch which leads to the area just to the west of the Capitol Mall, where the plane was then unloaded.

The Spirit originally hung in the "Castle", the old Smithsonian building, before the Air and Space Museum was opened in 1976, at which point it was moved and hung in the new museum's main gallery, where it remains today.

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Smoke Squadron to Soar Over U.S. in 2012

Heads up Midwest airshow fans: The Brazilian Smoke Squadron, AKA the Esquadrilha da Fumaça will be returning to the US airshow circuit this summer. The team's calendar so far includes three US shows, all in July. The first is Dayton, OH on July 7th and 8th, followed by the small Gathering of Eagles show in Willoughby, OH (near Cleveland) on July 14th and 15th, and then EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh, WI from July 22nd to the 29th. At press time the team's August schedule has not yet been posted, so the possibility remains that additional North American shows will be added.

The team, also known as the Esquadrão de Demonstração Aérea (EDA) of the Força Aérea Brazil (FAB), has made several visits to North America in recent years, to the delight of many. The team performs with seven T-27 Tucano turboprop aircraft, built by Brazil's indigenous manufacturer Embraer. The team's signature is its inverted formations, including the "big mirror" pass where a three ship wedge flies directly underneath another, inverted, three ship wedge, as well as a pass in which all of the aircraft are inverted. In fact, the team holds the world record for the largest inverted formation at twelve aircraft! As one would expect, their show is quite entertaining and will keep you on your toes!

To give you a taste of what the Smoke Squadron will be bringing north this summer, here is a short video from Christiano Pessôa in honor of the 60th anniversary of the team. Enjoy!



A **BIG** ADDITION

THE FIRST C-17 RETIRES TO THE NMUSAF

Article by Alan Radecki

The McDonnell Douglas/Boeing C-17 Globemaster III program has reached yet another significant milestone, the first induction of a C-17 into a museum. The US Air Force has just retired the one and only pre-production flight test aircraft (serial 87-0025), known as "T-1".

The C-17 had its genesis in the 1970s with the Advanced Medium STOL Transport program intended

to develop a replacement for the C-130 Hercules (before, of course, the powers-that-be realized that the Herc is destined for immortality). At the time, Boeing proposed their YC-14 and McDonnell Douglas entered their YC-15. The competition was cancelled when the Air Force came to their senses and realized that the best C-130 replacement was a newer C-130.

Then the Pentagon planners needed to start dealing with the aging of their strategic airlifter fleet, and the C-X competition was

launched in November 1979. Lockheed proposed either a stretched, improved version of the C-141 (after all, that strategy had worked for the C-130) or a new plane based on the giant C-5. Boeing offered a three-engined version of the YC-14, and MD put up an enlarged version of their YC-15 design. On August 28, 1981, it was announced that MD had won.

The program was plagued with technical and political problems from the start, and detailing those issues could fill a book. The proto-



T-1 stands tall at her official retirement ceremony at Wright-Patterson AFB on April 25, 2012. Photo by Raymond L. Robb.

type for the newly designated C-17A was essentially a hand-built plane, and was intended to be a dedicated flight test aircraft - hence the air vehicle designation of T-1 - with an expected lifespan of just five years.

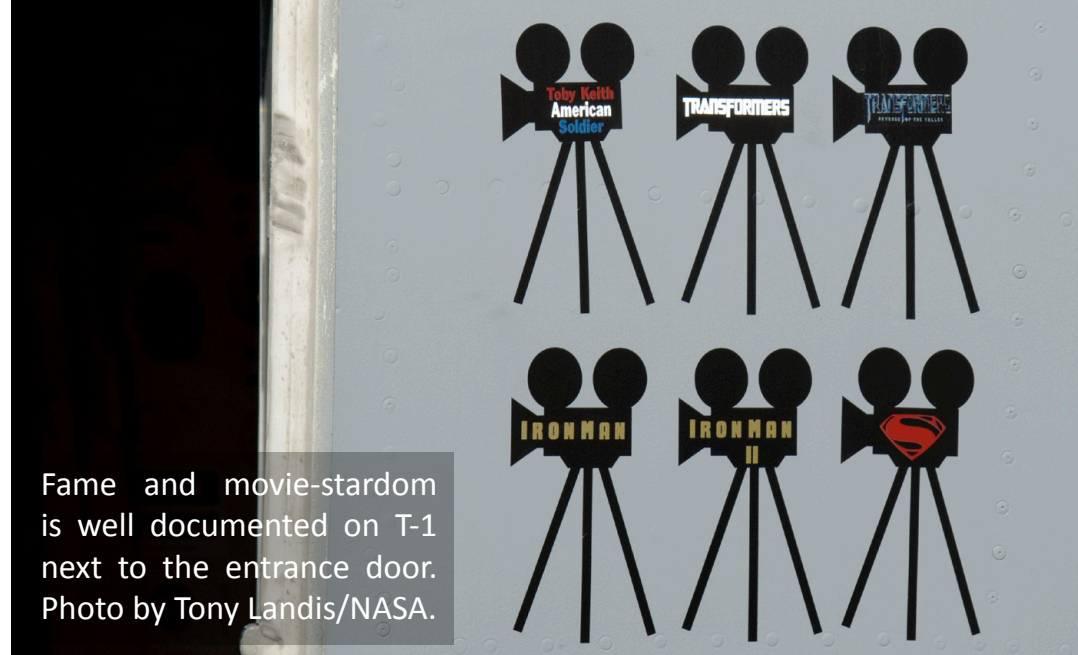
More than a year behind schedule, T-1 made her two hour twenty minute maiden flight from the McDonnell Douglas Long Beach final assembly plant to Edwards Air Force Base on Sunday, September 15, 1991. Troubles continued to plague the program, though, which required a longer developmental and systems flight test program, and so T-1 was refurbished several times, and kept working away out at Edwards. In fact, at one point the demand for testbed aircraft was so high that in March 1997 the YC-15 demonstrator aircraft was resurrected, as well (it has since been retired to the Air Force Flight Test Center Museum and sits on public display outside the base's west gate).

Over the years, T-1 also flew a number of test programs for NASA, most recently for the Vehicle Integrated Propulsion Research, or VIPR program, in which the aircraft and its engines were used to test equipment and techniques for improving aircraft engine health monitoring methods. During her career at Edwards, T-1 also had the opportunity to become a movie star, being featured in two of the Transformers movies, two of the Iron Man pictures and the upcoming Superman: Man of Steel.

On September 15, 2011, T-1 celebrated her 20th anniversary by flying from Edwards to Long Beach for a low pass, then re-creating the route of her original flight, landing at Edwards where a party was held and the original flight crew reunited.



An original first-landing print signed by three of the four first-flight crew. (USAF photo, MojaveWest collection)



Fame and movie-stardom is well documented on T-1 next to the entrance door. Photo by Tony Landis/NASA.

ed. It was also announced that the old gal would finally be retiring. Then, on Monday, April 23, 2012, T-1 lifted off one last time from Edwards. One of the pilots for the final flight was NASA/Dryden Flight Research Center test pilot Frank Batteas, who had flown chase for T-1's maiden flight back in 2001. Joining Batteas onboard T-1 were two other pilots, Maj. Eric Bippert (aircraft commander) and Maj. Charles Cain, as well as loadmaster MSgt Paul Varnish and Boeing loadmaster Gary Briscoe. T-1 made a low pass over her Long Beach birthplace before head-

ing east for Wright-Patterson AFB, where she was quietly parked for two days before making an 11-minute "delivery flight" on April 25th, ending with a museum reception ceremony held on the taxiway. T-1 had finally arrived at her new home as part of the permanent collection at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force in Dayton, Ohio, where, in the words of Winging It Online's Antelope Valley aerospace news blog, the giant airlifter will "be preserved as yet another valuable contribution that the Antelope Valley has made to the aerospace world and the security of this nation."

NASA Dryden Chief Pilot Frank Batteas preflights T-1 prior to departing Edwards. Photo by Tony Landis/NASA.



The iconic Edwards tower shot as T-1 departs. Photo by Tony Landis/NASA.



A Swift Over San Diego

Article and Photos by Eric A Rosen

Earlier this year I had the opportunity to try my hand at air-to-air photography, my first attempt at this challenge. I have been told this is one of the most demanding tasks in aviation photography, and I certainly learned a few things that I had not anticipated.

The subject aircraft was a 1946 Globe Swift. This aircraft is similar to its big brother, the P-40 Tomahawk, because they were developed by the same designer. The Globe Swift was designed after World War II as a light two seat monoplane for the returning pilot who wanted a high performance personal aircraft. It was in production from 1946 to 1951. This particular model was fully restored to flying condition in 2002 and upgraded in 2005 with a larger fuel tank and more powerful engine. The photo platform was a 1946 Luscombe.

The shoot took place over San Diego and there were some lovely backgrounds to offset the aircraft. Our initial flight plan was to fly over a local reservoir and use that as our backdrop. Unfortunately, due to technicalities this location was scrapped. We decided to

head out over San Diego Bay and Harbor. As a photo shoot location it worked very nicely.

Now, back to some of the things I learned on this shoot. First of all, you need to have aircraft (subject and photo ship) that are well matched in speed. The Swift was a bit faster than the Luscombe, which created some difficulties in keeping the two aircraft in formation. Secondly, I also think a low wing aircraft would be better for this type of shoot or a high wing that does not have the support struts. The reason for this is with a high wing and support struts there is a small window of space to shoot through. Lastly, photographically speaking, the time of day makes a world of difference. We were shooting around 1pm, but I would have liked to have shot later in the day for the low angle warm light. The other option is to photograph at different times of day to see what would work best. While it was challenging, this time I did come away with a few shots I thought were quite nice. Hopefully, with all those factors to consider on my next attempt I will get that perfect shot.







10 TANKER

FIREFIGHTING DC-10S

Article and Photos by Matt Shinavar

When it comes to wild fires, the cavalry coming over the hill happen to be the DC-10s of 10 Tanker, saved from the scrapper and converted into massive firefighting air tankers carrying 11,600 gallons of fire retardant each. When the phone rings at 10 Tanker, they can be off the runway in less than 30 minutes headed to a fire.

It's a long road from the airlines to firefighting - 10 Tanker can tell you that. Other than the physical airframe modifications, there were three major steps to certify the aircraft: FAA airworthiness approval, FAR (Federal Aviation Regulation) Part 137 certification, and IATB (Interagency Air Tanker Board) approval. 10 Tanker had to demon-

strate that carrying 100,000 pounds of liquid beneath the fuselage did not place dangerously high stress on the fuselage, and also that the flight handling qualities were not impaired during drop operations. After successful demonstrations, 10 Tanker was granted a standard airworthiness certificate rather than an experimental certificate. A FAR



Part 137 air operator's certificate allows an aircraft to drop material, usually used by agricultural operators to drop fertilizer and pesticides from their aircraft. A Part 137 AOC was issued in March of 2006. The last step, perhaps the most important, was IATB approval, signifying to firefighting agencies that the tanker is effective in fighting fires. The testing to gain IATB approval required lots of little plastic cups and tons of patience. Eight football fields of plastic cups were laid out and Tanker 910 set its sights on them from 500 feet up and at 150 knots. The end result was IATB approval of coverage levels 2-8; the number of gallons dropped per 10'x10' square.

and can be started and stopped on command. The tanks are up-scaled versions of the tanks used on Erickson Air-Crane's firefighting helitankers. How much is 11,600 gallons? It works out to be a line that is three quarters of a mile long and 50 feet wide when dropped from 200-500 feet at 150 knots. 11,600 gallons weighs nearly 100,000 pounds, which might be viewed as a hazard to firefighters on the ground. 10 Tanker commissioned some unofficial testing regarding the matter; a pop-up shade tent and lawn chairs were placed out in a field and Tanker 910 did its worst – just knocking over the lawn chairs.

10 Tanker has since flown 420+ missions on 70+ fires in six states and three countries. They have been called "highly effective in sup-

pressing [fire] movement." 10 Tanker's internal record is nearly 900,000 pounds of retardant dropped in 4.5 flight hours – one day's work. 10 Tanker has received approval to hot refuel and hot refill the aircraft, shutting down only the left engine to keep the crew safe when the hoses are attached to the tanks, which reduces the amount of time the aircraft has to be on the ground not fighting fires. When the aircraft was temporarily based at McClellan Airport near Sacramento, the aircraft served four different states in 19 missions, taking advantage of the speed and payload capabilities of the DC-10 compared to other air tankers.

One fire that 10 Tanker responded to was a small brush fire located on a nature preserve. 10 Tanker

was directed to drop a line to prevent the fire from spreading deeper into the preserve. After the line was dropped, the incident commander told them to return to base, reload, and return to the fire. However, the aircrew responded they had nearly 70% of their payload left. The incident commander, thinking on his feet, requested two more lines with the remaining load to completely surround the fire in a triangle shape. The fire burnt itself out. If there is a brush fire that is 10-15 acres, the DC-10 can put it out with one load by itself. Tanker 910 and Tanker 911 have proven to be very helpful assets when fires need to be put down quickly or they are raging out of control.

After spending a couple hours going through the brief of 10 Tank-

er's capabilities and track record, Rick Hatton – owner of 10 Tanker – asked if we wanted to watch a water drop, go for a ride, or both. Hopefully at that point I didn't make too embarrassing of a sound or face. Of course I would like to go for a ride on the DC-10, a once in a lifetime experience. Vicki, the nickname given to Tanker 911 when performing firefighting activities in Australia, was going to take us for a ride.

Since the tanker is stripped down to the insulation in the back, I had to sit in the cockpit – the FAA insists. No problem, that's the most interesting area of the plane during the flight anyways! Vicki took on 11,000 gallons and worked the runway and pattern like a supermodel. Despite carrying all that weight, the aircraft was really nimble and seemed high-

er performance than my last commercial flight. The plan was to do one dry run then two drops, each half loads. As we dropped 50,000 pounds of water in three seconds, then did it again, there was no abnormal sounds heard, no radical change in attitude, and really no signal that we were now 25 tons lighter. Had I not heard the pilot give the drop command and seen the flight engineer push the drop button, I wouldn't have been able to tell the aircraft even dropped water at all! Flying through the pattern and dropping water was an awesome and unique experience – Thanks Rick!

After landing, there was an opportunity to take sunset pictures of Tanker 910 which I of course took advantage of. After the sun had







set, I roamed through 10 Tanker's facilities – one of their buildings being a former hush house where F-4 engines were run up. Tucked into the corner of the hush house is Rick's Lancair Legacy. Rick is an airplane guy to the core; he talked about his Legacy like an excited kid – from the engine he sourced, the weight watching, the minor changes he made throughout the aircraft to make his Legacy unique, and even talking through the aileron balancing procedure. As a whole, the crew at 10 Tanker is dedicated to their mission and really seems to take pride in the service they provide. I cannot thank the people at 10 Tanker enough for the hospitality and generosity I was shown while visiting.





★ WINGS OF ★ FREEDOM

History On Tour With The Collings Foundation

Article and Photos by Christopher Roberts

Since 1989, the Collings Foundation has been organizing the “Wings of Freedom Tour” across America, making close to 2,400 stops. The tour, this year consisting of a B-24J Liberator, B-17G Flying Fortress, and a P-51C Mustang, rolled into San Diego County on April 25 and included stops at Gillespie Field, McClellan-Palomar Airport, and Ramona Airport.

The B-24J Liberator is the only flying example of its type left in the world, and is one of only three airworthy B-24s left out of the 18,482 built. This B-24, serial # 44-44052, is painted as the aircraft “Witchcraft”, which flew 130 combat missions without a single injury to any crew member. The trip to San Diego is a homecoming of sorts for the B-24. Although this specific aircraft was manufactured at Consolidated’s Fort Worth, Texas plant, the Liberator was originally designed and built (along with thousands more during the war) at the San Diego plant where San Diego International Air-

port resides today.

The B-17G Flying Fortress, serial # 44-83575, was built right up the road in Long Beach, California in 1945, and was too late to see combat in WWII. It instead served a unique role as a test subject during three atomic bomb tests in 1952. After a 13 year “cool down” period, the B-17 was extensively restored to flying condition. The aircraft suffered severe damage during a landing in the late 1980s, but # 44-83575 again rose from the ashes and was repaired to fly again. Currently # 44-83575 is painted as the B-17 “Nine-O-Nine”. The original “Nine-O-Nine” was assigned to combat on February 25, 1944. By April 1945, she had made eighteen trips to Berlin, dropped 562,000 pounds of bombs, and flown 1,129 hours. She had twenty-one engine changes, four wing panel changes, fifteen main gas tank changes, and 18 Tokyo tank changes (long-range fuel tanks). She also suffered from considerable flak damage.



Lastly, the P-51C Mustang, serial # 42-103293, was built in 1942 in Dallas, Texas. It was meticulously restored between 2000 and 2004, and built as a two seat, dual control P-51. Currently it is the only dual control P-51 flying in the world (others are TF-51s). The Collings Foundation's P-51C is painted up as "Betty Jane" to honor Col. Charles M. McCorkle, P-51 pilot and Commander of the 31st Fighter Group based in Algeria, Tunisia, Sicily and Italy. C.M. McCorkle was a double ace, with 11 confirmed kills under his belt – 6 of them in Betty Jane.

During all tour stops the public is welcome to come out and tour the aircraft for a small fee. Guests can actually climb into the nose of the B-17, walk through the bomb bay, over the ball turret, past the waist guns, and out the aft door. Get-

ting to walk inside these bombers gives you an idea of what it must have been like to fight in these machines. As large as these bombers look when they are flying overhead, they are very cramped inside, making you appreciate what those airmen had to endure. Guests can also take rides in the B-17 and B-24, and

flight train in the dual control Mustang. The tour continues through the state of California until the end of June before heading north to Oregon and Washington. Visit the tour's website for more information.

www.CollingsFoundation.org



Sara Roberts







GATHERING OF MITCHELLS

THE 70TH DOOLITTLE RAIDERS REUNION

Article by Ryan Sundheimer

It may come as a surprise that the largest gathering of B-25 Mitchell bombers in many years - twenty of them, to be exact - occurred not at an airshow, but rather at a tribute to the surviving Doolittle Raiders. For almost a week, Central Ohio was the B-25 capital of the world as Mitchell after Mitchell arrived at Grimes Field in Urbana, not far from Dayton. Grimes, home to the Champaign Aviation Museum, was the staging point for most of the action.

The ramp at Grimes was open to the public as the B-25s came in over several days. Myself and fellow contributor Patrick Barron

came down from Michigan on that Sunday. The turnout was far more than I had expected, probably partly fueled by dreary weather Saturday. The roped off hot ramp was a scene of constant action. Multiple aircraft were selling rides and as one taxied in, another was on its way out with a load of happy passengers. Those not giving rides had been towed into the grass nearby to give visitors an opportunity to get up close.

The layout was wonderfully planned. One entered straight onto the ramp for a small \$5 donation, then headed for a large grass field where the parked bombers waited.

Along the way there were several awnings set up selling food and tables where the various museums and foundations who had brought their aircraft sold souvenirs and accepted donations. The static area was about all I had expected access wise, but the organizers had wisely placed a large fenced off section far into the field, right next to the main taxiway. Everyone was free to walk out there as they pleased - an excellent bit of planning! The pit provided a superb vantage point, and almost all of the bombers stopped and revved the engines for the crowd on their way back into the ramp.





Ryan Sundheimer
Mark Hrutkay



Ryan Sundheimer



Mark Hrutkay



Patrick Barron





Barbie III



Pacific Princess



Yankee Warrior



Old Glory



Devil Dog



Maid in the Shade



Panchito



Miss Mitchell



Tondelayo



Axis Nightmare



Show Me!



Yellow Rose



Miss Hap



Executive Sweet

Ryan Sundheimer



Ryan Sundheimer



Ryan Sundheimer



Ryan Sundheimer



Mark Hrutkay



Ryan Sundheimer



Ryan Sundheimer



Ryan Sundheimer



Mark Hrutkay





Patrick Barron

Ryan Sundheimer



Ryan Sundheimer

Ryan Sundheimer



Soon after arriving, Patrick and I learned we had the privilege of tagging along on a photo flight planned for that afternoon. As we gathered with crew members and other photographers, the scope of the flight became clear; no less than five B-25s and a P-51 would be forming up - with us along for the ride! Patrick and I split up; he would ride in "Barbie III", the lone snub-nosed Mitchell housing a 75mm cannon, and I would be aboard "Tondelayo", owned by the Collings Foundation. I soon found out that I would be sharing the skies with a guest of honor; Red Ketcham. Red shipped out to England as the ball turret gunner in a B-17 just a month before the war in Europe ended. He never saw combat and took his last flight in a warbird in 1946. This hero was as humble as could be, and a true gen-

tleman to talk to. It was an honor just to meet him, let alone ride next to him!
The plan for the flight was to takeoff and form up in an upward stacked echelon while orbiting the field several times, then come in for a flyover and break to land. Unfortunately, it was not so simple. Not only were the strong and gusty winds an issue, but keeping the aircraft steady and in position proved to be quite challenging. If you aren't familiar with formation flying, think of a 'crack the whip' type of situation. Any small correction by the inner most wingman becomes a slightly larger correction by the next wingman, and so forth. This meant things were pretty violent in my spot at fourth in line, and even more so for Patrick riding at the tail end (except for the Mustang). Someone on

his flight couldn't take it, and made use of 'the bag'.
While waiting on the ramp to board, each plane's photographers were having strategy meetings discussing how to trade off spots at the lone escape hatch and get everyone some good shots. Once in the air, however, all of those plans went out the window. With so much motion, it was nearly impossible to even leave the seat, let alone try to stand at the hatch to shoot! Nonetheless, it was a thrilling experience to see that B-25 and P-51 ("Petie 2nd") pull up on our wing, and to see three other B-25s ("Axis Nightmare" as the photo ship, followed by "Panchito" and Grimes-based "Champaign Gal") through the window on the other side. The flight passed quickly, and soon we were pulling into a break over the field.





Patrick Barron
Ryan Sundheimer



Patrick Barron



Patrick Barron



Ryan Sundheimer



Patrick Barron



Ryan Sundheimer



Ryan Sundheimer
Patrick Barron





After the flight, we headed back to the photo area to watch the flying for the rest of the day. Unfortunately, the clear and sunny skies in the morning had started to cloud over right as we were taking off on the flight, meaning many of the photos had a very bright white background. Challenging conditions for us photographers!

During the late afternoon, a second P-51 made some low passes before coming in. Soon after, both Mustangs and a B-25 took off and joined up for several formation passes over the field. On our way out, we saw a five ship formation of undetermined composition in the distance. We came to find out later that the flight in

question was the B-25 “Betty’s Dream” arriving to the gathering from the Texas Flying Legends Museum. Not wanting the bomber to fly the distance alone, the museum sent four fighters as an escort; a P-51 Mustang, an F4U Corsair, a P-40 Warhawk, and an A6M2 Zero. We missed it by less than five minutes!



The action continued at Grimes through Tuesday morning, when all of the B-25s fired up and departed for the National Museum of the United States Air Force in nearby Dayton. They landed on the old runway next to the museum and were lined up for public display. The museum held several ceremonies and a banquet in honor of the anniversary and reunion. All started four of the five surviving Raiders, as well as other guests of honor. The banquet included an important and emotional tradition of the reunion; the silver goblets.

After the war, the citizens of the city of Tucson, AZ presented the Raiders with a set of 80 silver goblets, each inscribed with the name of a Raider. The goblets are kept in a special trophy case which resides at the US Air Force Academy when not at a reunion. Goblets of deceased Raiders are placed in the case upside down; the name on each goblet is actually engraved in both directions so it can be read in either case.

Along with the goblets is an unopened bottle of 1896 Hennessy brandy. The intention was that once only two Raiders remain, they will unseal the bottle and make a toast to their fallen comrades. However, at every reunion rumors abound that the remaining Raiders will choose to unseal the bottle early in case no more reunions are possible. The same rumors were being spread this year, but the bottle remained sealed as intended – a clear sign that these men plan to return in the future.

On Wednesday, April 18, 2012, 70 years to the day after a group of brave airmen launched from the USS Hornet and struck the first American blow against the Japa-



Jake Peterson



Jake Peterson

nese Home Islands, 20 B-25s roared into the skies over Dayton. They soon returned in formation for several passes over the heads of the large crowd gathered outside the museum; the largest flight of B-25s since WWII, and four more aircraft than took part in the actual raid. After the always emotional missing man flyover, all of the B-25s continued back to Grimes. From there they dispersed back to their home airfields in all corners of the coun-

try; Delaware, California, New York, Texas, Washington, Michigan, Ohio, Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Minnesota, Missouri, and Arizona. Will we ever see another B-25 gathering of this scale again? Only time will tell. If we do, it will be only because of the pilots, crews, and volunteers who have given their time to keep these pieces of history flying, and who organized a tremendous event to honor some real American heroes.



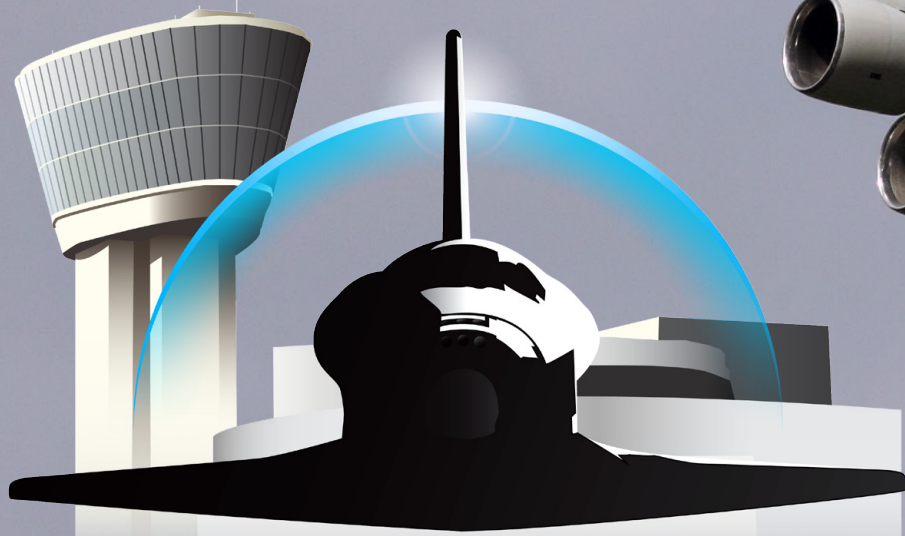
Jake Peterson
Jake Peterson



Jake Peterson
Jake Peterson







LAST VOYAGE OF THE DISCOVERY

Article by Jonathan Loveless

It is not every day that we get to experience something that has great significance to a huge number of people. For many, NASA's Space Shuttle program was something they grew up with and something they considered as American as apple pie, baseball and P-51 Mustangs. Yet the time has come for the sun to set on the Shuttle program and the retirement of the fleet is in full swing at NASA, who has begun moving the orbiters to their respective display locations. These moves are giving the public their last chances to see the Shuttles airborne and many are seizing this true once in a lifetime opportunity.

On April 17th, 2012, the Shuttle Discovery lifted off atop the NASA Shuttle Carrier Aircraft 747. Departing at sunrise from the Shuttle Landing Facility at Cape Canaveral, Discovery began its last flight toward its final resting place at the Steven F Udvar-Hazy Center of the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum at Dulles Airport, just west of Washington DC. It was the opportunity to see the arrival of Discovery that drove many people to call in sick, pull the kids from school, and climb atop their office buildings to get a glimpse of the pride of the Shuttle fleet taking its last bow.

I arrived at my usual spotting location, a service road adjacent to the runway, off the approach end of 19R about 10 minutes before the first flyby was expected. It was at this moment that I realized that I was in the same boat as most of the people waiting to see the Shuttle land; this would be the first and last time I would ever see a Space Shuttle flying. Looking around, there were

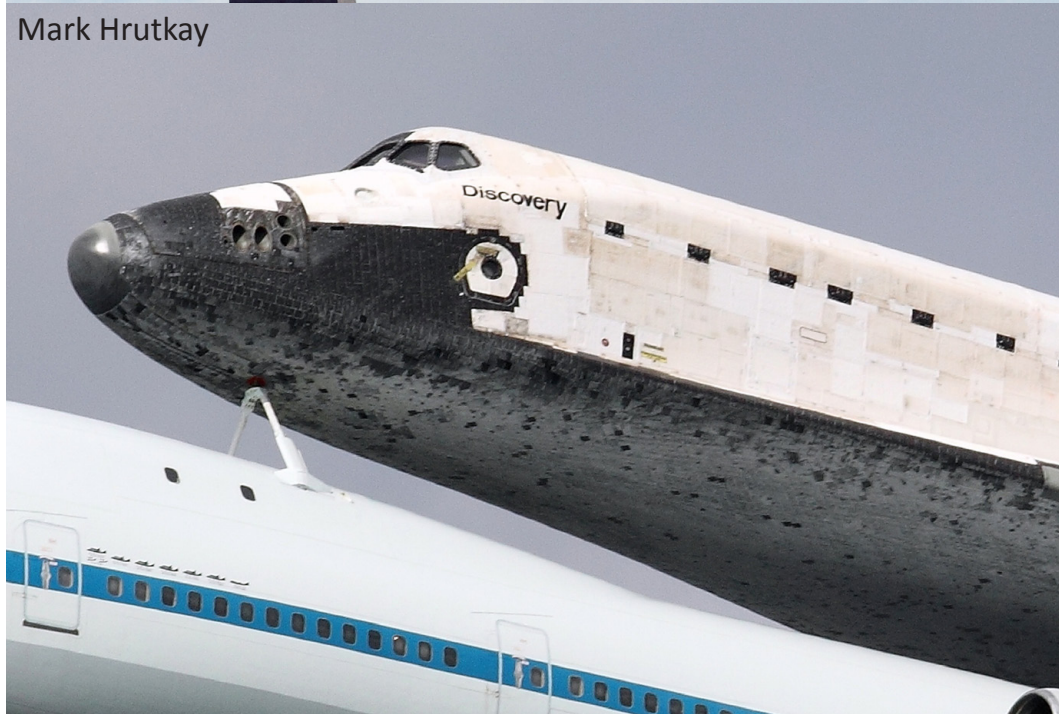
Jonathan Loveless



Mark Hrutkay



Mark Hrutkay



Darren Fulton



Mark Hrutkay





people talking about past launches, the tragedies of Challenger and Columbia, and even the Apollo program. However, these conversations were soon interrupted by the first glimpse of the SCA with Discovery on its back.

In the distance, the unmistakable shape of this flying behemoth came into view. Most people still didn't have it in their sights yet but the few with scanners or a high vantage point could see the Shuttle Carrier making its right base to final for the first low

approach along runway 19R. As the SCA got closer, the commotion on the ground grew more intense with every second. Finally, it happened; the SCA soared over head and down the runway with Discovery atop its back and thousands of cheering people witnessing this historic occasion. This was only the beginning of Discovery's last bow; after the low approach, the SCA tuned to Potomac Approach and began heading towards National Mall.

Within the borders of Washing-

ton DC and in the surrounding suburbs, thousands more turned out to catch a sight of the SCA flying over the nation's capital. To many of these people, the Shuttle program not only represents a great time period of American history, but also their lively hood at a time. Some of these people actually worked in the Shuttle program as employees of NASA, the military, or various government contractors. This was something that they poured their blood, sweat and tears into. They were not only

doing something great for the country, but the Shuttle program itself was putting food on the table for so many of these hard working people.

After loitering over the monuments and various related government facilities, it was time for the inevitable; Discovery's last landing ever. It was at this point that the SCA again turned toward Dulles and the thousands waiting to witness the last landing of the pride of NASA. Once again, the radios went active as the SCA neared the Class

Bravo airspace around Dulles. Over the radio we heard "Pluto 98, Dulles Tower, cleared to land runway 1R. Winds 320 at 12."

The plume of smoke from the 747's main gear touching down filled the air and the shriek from the straining tires broke the whine of the engines; Discovery had arrived. People cheered, hugged complete strangers, and even cried while trying to convey to their young children the significance of what they had just seen.

With that, it was over. The SCA taxied slowly to the crane that would lift Discovery off and set it gently on the ground. The Shuttle Enterprise, having served as placeholder for Discovery for several years, would later be lifted onto the same SCA for transport to its final resting place at the USS Intrepid Museum in New York City. This June, when the Endeavor is flown to the California Science Center in Los Angeles, will be the final time a Shuttle ever leaves the ground.

Jonathan Loveless



Jonathan Loveless



Jonathan Loveless



Darren Fulton

Darren Fulton

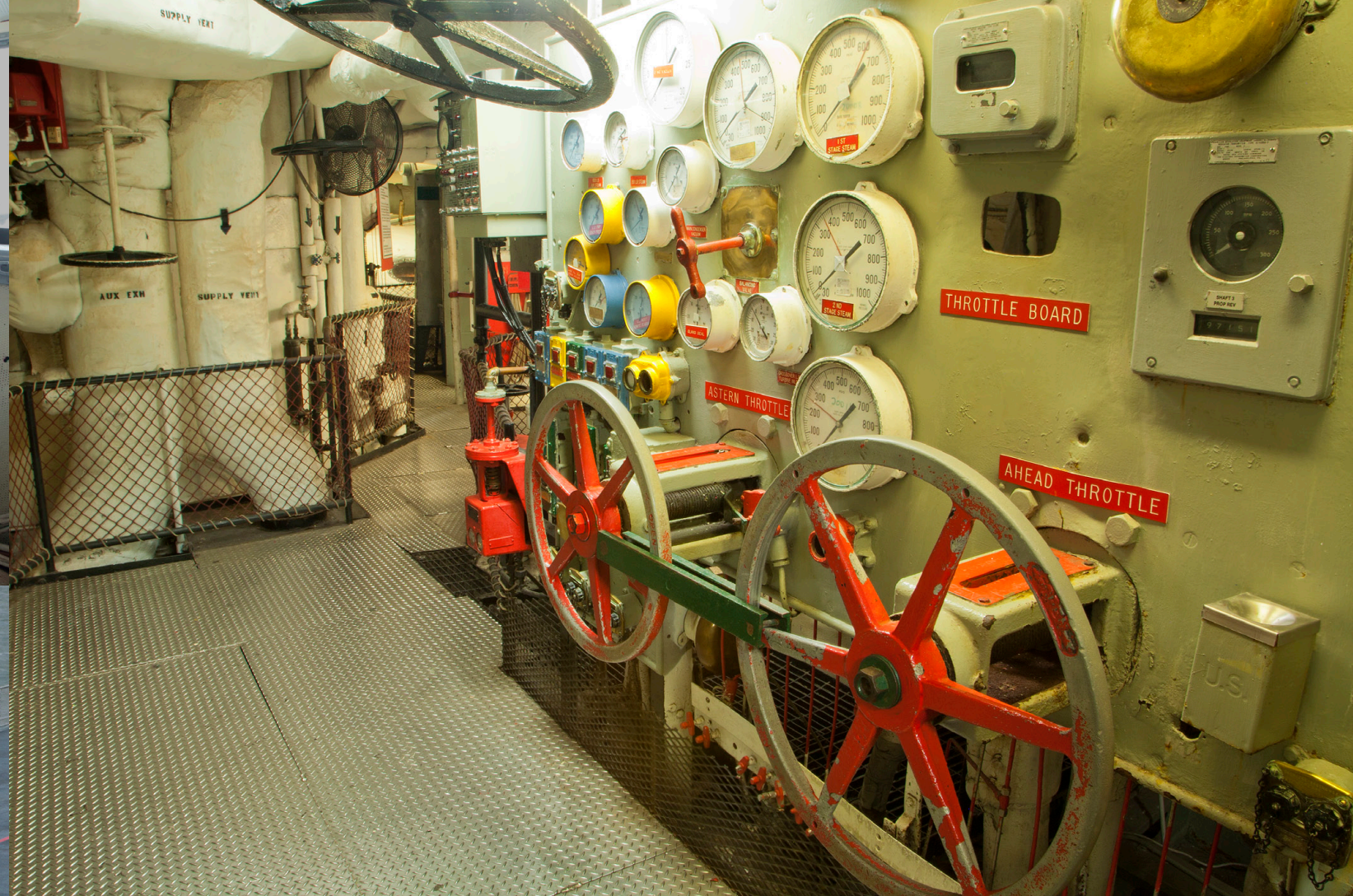


The USS Lexington Museum on the Bay in Corpus Christi, TX most certainly lives up to their slogan, “Real. Big. Fun.” Real, as this eighth of twenty-four Essex-class carriers is packed from stem to stern with authentic historic artifacts. Big, as in nineteen stories tall, 910 feet in length (flight deck), and 42,000 tons of displacement. Fun, as there is so much to see and do for all ages and levels of interest, all at a relaxed pace.

Entering the ship through the starboard elevator platform, you will receive a “Welcome Aboard” map. This single-page introduction lists the five self-guided tours, which are all easy to follow. The average visitor spends between two and three hours on the ship, though there would be plenty to see over a multi-day visit. The USS Lexington and her artifacts, including twenty aircraft, are in excellent shape, making for some great photo opportunities as well.

The flight deck is the first of the five clearly marked tours. There are fifteen vintage aircraft located on this 120,000 square foot surface, including an F/A-18 that actually flew with the Blue Angels. There are 5” anti-aircraft gun turrets that visitors can climb in and operate various controls at. Parts of the island, such as the chart room and navigation bridge are accessible, with much of the original equipment still intact. Starting at the bow, one can walk down the portside “bridle catcher,” which assisted in catapult launch operations. It’s an interesting experience, which conjures up thoughts of “walking the plank”.

A beautiful yellow North American T-6/SNJ Texan (BuNo 52020) sits alone on the bow. This type was used as an advanced carrier trainer



in the 1930s and 40s, then later as a primary trainer in the 1950s.

Behind the Texan rests the F/A-18A Hornet (BuNo 161967) formerly assigned to Blue Angels’ Flight Leader/Commanding Officer, Kevin Mannix. The Hornet still sports the colors of Blue Angel One. Across from the F/A-18 is another well-known fighter, the F-14A Tomcat (BuNo 160694). Although this type did not operate from Essex-class carriers, it is an important part of Naval Aviation history.

There are eleven more airplanes located on the aft portion of the flight deck; an A-6E Intruder (BuNo 158532), A-7B Corsair II (BuNo 154548), F2H-2 Banshee (BuNo 125052), F-4A Phantom II (BuNo 145315), F9F-8T Cougar (BuNo 147276), TA-4J Skyhawk (BuNo 158722), A-4B

Skyhawk (BuNo 142929), T-34B Mentor (BuNo 140936), T-28B Trojan (BuNo 138271), T-2C Buckeye (BuNo 158898), and a Douglas KA-3B Skywarrior (BuNo 138944). A US Army AH-1S Cobra attack helicopter is also on the port aft corner of the flight deck, having formerly served with the 101st Airborne Division in Panama.

All of the aircraft aboard USS Lexington have signs which provide various details about the mission, history, performance, and dimensions of each type. There is also information posted near the LSO platform. Be sure to check out the arresting gear display before concluding the topside tour.

A now-stationary escalator leads back down to the hangar deck. Round signs painted along each wall list eighteen fascinating “Did You

Know” facts about the USS Lexington (see inset, next page).

The second tour, beginning on the hangar deck, visits the fore-castle (pronounced “foc’sle”). This area passes through a comprehensive exhibit showcasing “The Lady Lex,” CV-2, which was scuttled after extensive damage in the Battle of Coral Sea in May 1942. She was the fourth ship of the U.S. Navy to be christened “USS Lexington”; CV-16 (the museum) was the fifth.

There is a detailed exhibit of the attack on Pearl Harbor near the ship’s two anchors, “Bertha” and “Brutus”. This location was also used in the filming of the movie “Pearl Harbor”.

Every step through the ship leads to countless exhibits of naval history. The passageways are in their near original condition, with minor

Fun CV-12 Facts

The USS Lexington...

- Can produce enough electric power to supply a city of 150,000.
- Was the first carrier to hold the CVT (Navy Training Carrier) and the AVT (Auxiliary Training Carrier) designations.
- Was the first carrier to establish a seagoing high school.
- Has more sleeping space than Caesar's Palace, The Mirage, and Treasure Island (3,500 beds).
- Carries enough fuel to sail a distance of 30,000 miles nonstop.
- Has sailed a total of 209,000 miles, equivalent to 8 times around the world.
- Was the first carrier to deploy air to surface missiles.
- Has crossed the equator 13 times and the International Date Line 6 times.
- Has more telephones than a city of 5,000.
- Was the first foreign carrier to enter Tokyo Bay.
- Has a flight deck equal to more than two acres of land, on which you could grow a crop of 100 bushels of corn.
- Was the first carrier to conduct flight operations in the area of Cape Horn.
- Steamed more miles and served longer than any other carrier in the world, 40 Years (1943-1947, 1955-1991).
- Has enough room to play 3 football games or 14 basketball games at the same time on her flight deck.
- Is as tall as a 19-story building and as long as three New York City blocks.
- Has space to park more than 1,000 automobiles on the flight deck.
- Was the first ship in U.S. Naval history to have women stationed aboard as crew members (18 Aug. 1980).
- Carries enough gasoline to drive your car around the world 132 times.





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modifications made for visitor access and safety.

Tour three travels through the gallery deck which includes the Combat Information Center (CIC), library, Captain's cabin, pilot ready rooms, and an exhibit dedicated to Escort- and Independence-class aircraft carriers.

The fourth tour leads below decks to the Kamikaze Exhibit, the engine room, sick bay, dental clinic, post office, and other facilities. Again, the corridors are filled with original equipment along with other relevant exhibits.

Finally, tour five is the hangar deck itself. Here, you will find a TBM-3 Avenger (BuNo 538040), SBD Dauntless (currently undergoing restoration), N3N-3 Yellow Peril

(BuNo 2959), and many other aviation-related displays. USS Lexington has many aircraft engines displayed as cut-aways, allowing for a look at their inner-workings. The hangar deck also includes a state of the art digital 3D theater.

The Mess Deck Café is open during museum hours and offers both breakfast and lunch items cooked-to-order. There are tables on the nearby fantail, available for dining. These picnic-bench tables were salvaged from the USS Saratoga (CV-60).

The gift shop offers many Lexington-related items for sale. I recommend purchasing *The Official Self-Guiding Souvenir TOUR GUIDE BOOK For the USS Lexington Museum on the Bay*, by Roger Arnhart

and Annette Zayac. Although some information has changed since the book was published, it is a great source for details about the tours.

The museum offers many special programs including sleepovers and facility rentals. There is a movie theater located in the forward elevator well. Flight simulators are available, as are virtual reality anti-aircraft gun exhibits. Check out their detailed website for the latest information.

If you are fortunate enough to be able to hang around until sunset, the ship is lit up in blue, adding to the mystique of "The Blue Ghost," her nickname. Enjoy your time aboard the USS Lexington; you will be glad you made the journey to Coastal Texas!

www.USSLexington.com



Plane CRAZY at MOJAVE

Article by Alan Radecki

The April edition of Mojave's monthly Plane Crazy Saturday open house and fly-in was, by all accounts, the "craziest one yet." Usually, the event features a special airplane or aviator, but for April, the attendance swelled due to the combination of a large fly-in by the Vintage Mooney Association and the first-ever Scaled Composites public open house and job fair.

On display at Scaled was both WhiteKnightOne (in the hangar) and WhiteKnightTwo, Burt Rutan's electric flying car concept, the innovative BiPod, as well as Northrop Grum-

man's new Firebird. The morning was topped off with the arrival of Bob Scherer's rare Beechcraft Starship. Looming over the Scaled lineup was a retired Boeing 747-400, one of two that Scaled has purchased in order to harvest engines and system components for the Stratolaunch rocket-launching mothership project.

Almost 200 aircraft of all types filled Mojave's entire main flightline, and over 2,000 people (including over 300 hopeful aerospace engineers with resumes in-hand) came to the free event. Plane Crazy is sponsored by the Mojave Transportation Museum and is held on the third Saturday of every month.





Eric A Rosen
Alan Radecki



Eric A Rosen
Eric A Rosen



From inception, Firebird was designed to be flown as a manned or unmanned aircraft and can be quickly modified for either option. Either configuration offers a large internal payload bay and an ability to operate multiple intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) and communications payloads simultaneously through a universal interface.

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- Endurance up to 40 hr
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- Crewed/manned

Firebird

SCALED TECHNOLOGIES



Eric A Rosen



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Alan Radecki

Eric A Rosen



Eric A Rosen



Eric A Rosen



BLACKBIRD AIRPARK

OPENS COCKPITS FOR SR-71 ANNIVERSARY

Article and Photos
by Alan Radecki



While there are a few SR-71s and U-2s scattered around the country in museums, it's a rare day indeed that the general public get to peer into the front offices of these veteran spyplanes, so the April 21st event at Palmdale, California's Blackbird Airpark (BBAP) was a special treat.

In order to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first flight of a Blackbird (the A-12, on April 26, 1962), as well as the 50th anniversary later this year of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Airpark opened the cockpits of both a U-2 and an SR-71 for visitors to see. While the museum has, on rare occasions, had such events for the Blackbird, this was a first for the U-2, a vin-

tage aircraft which still has its original "round dial" instrumentation.

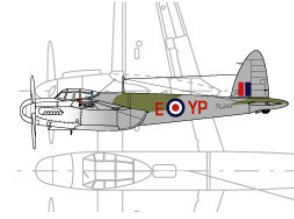
The Air Force doesn't take such events lightly, said museum volunteer and Lockheed SR-71 veteran Mike Relja, and it took a lot of approvals from the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson to open the cockpits. Years ago, at some of the first Blackbird open cockpit events, visitors were allowed to sit in the plane, but no longer can. "The Air Force said that since it's an 'artifact', we had to quit doing that," said Relja. "That's why we always put a volunteer in there to describe what you're looking at." This event's in-cockpit volunteers included well-known SR-71 pilot Bill "Flaps" Flannigan.

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THE PEOPLE'S MOSQUITO

Together, we'll get her flying again

Article by Rob Cotter

Graphics Courtesy of The People's Mosquito

The People's Mosquito project has been the subject of much discussion amongst aviation enthusiasts since it officially launched. With much still to do and an ever-increasing presence, I approached The People's Mosquito (TPM) to discuss this highly ambitious project. The aim was to see where the project stands and find out what the future holds. To get this information, I interviewed the man who is responsible for leading the project, John Lilley.

ASM: For those of us who may not be aware. Could you give us an idea of the project? In addition, how you want to achieve returning a Mosquito to flight?

John: The People's Mosquito project has as its main aim the restoration of a de Havilland D.H.98 Mosquito, the world's first true multi-role combat aircraft, to flight status. We aim to do this by going back in time and resurrecting a fundraising technique used by the public in WWII that was known as 'presentation aircraft'. This was where aircraft, mainly fighters, were donated to the RAF via fundraising by either a city, a town, a community, a dominion of Great Britain & Commonwealth or even a company. This is where the 'People' part comes in: we want people to believe in our project and donate and/or contribute their skills to help us.

Our next aim is to make this a 'living' history project: to capture the experiences of the aircrews and ground personnel of both WWII and

the following Cold War. The Mosquito operated as a successful night-fighter from WWII to the mid 1950s. Using this testimony and also many facts, we aim to tell future generations of the contribution our ancestors made.

Short term we have two immediate objectives:

1. To establish an excellent working relationship with the CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) and develop a sound engineering plan.

2. To establish our project as a recognized charity. This is a not-for-profit organization.

Our medium-term aims include having our engineering plan fully approved and active, for fundraising activities to start and to set various fundraising targets to achieve our goals. As this project was born of modern social networking, we also wish to establish many points of interaction via the internet; including web cams in the restoration hanger and on-line updates / newsletters to download.

Long term is to operate and maintain RL249, on an ongoing basis, as a charitable organization.

ASM: This is clearly a highly ambitious project. How confident are you of seeing it through to its conclusion?

John: Clearly, this is a high risk project. CAA regulations are strict and for very good reason, SAFETY! We aim to carry out this project to the highest safest standards. Therefore, restoring and construction has to be delivered to those CAA stan-

dards at every turn. However, as each week goes by we are gaining the support and advice of many experienced heads from the historic aviation scene.

Another risk is getting people to donate in these harsh economic times. Every penny counts for every household. Again, as we gather more and more momentum and word is getting out we have had many positive responses from the public. Achieving our two short term aims will give the public 100% confidence in our project for the mid and long term aims. When the public has confidence, I will be confident. So to answer your original question: I am quietly confident as we are speaking and engaging with the right people to achieve those two short-term aims.

ASM: 'Speaking an engaging with the right people'; Bill Ramsey is one of them. How valuable is it to have someone like Bill on the team?

John: Having Bill join the team is fantastic. He came forward with a passion for this project from the start and he is proving valuable to us in two ways. First, his professional career achievements are outstanding: so we are benefitting from his experience and great contacts in the aviation industry and RAF. Secondly, people like Bill who have come forward, assessed our project and joined, give us credibility and help build that public confidence. More of the same please!

ASM: This all sounds very positive. What has the response been since The People's Mosquito launched? For our readers, how can they help support the project?

John: The response overall can be summed up in a sentence we are hearing more and more. "A Mossie?

Great, about time someone got one of those back in the air! How can I help?"

We have had some negative press, which is to be expected when you announce you want to restore an aircraft using the public's money and start with nothing. But compared to the positive comments and the number of established museums, aviation figures and restorers on our 'Affiliates Program' this has motivated us to listen to their criticism and learn from it.

Your readers can help at this stage by going to our website and giving us moral support at this stage. Well, unless they have a spare Merlin engine or two in the shed! When we launch the charity, start fundraising, and announce our engineering plan then they can judge us to decide if they would like to donate to The People's Mosquito.

ASM: In addition, are you hoping the project will gain support worldwide, and not just the UK?

John: The Mosquito was also built in Canada and Australia. It was operated in many countries from the UK, USA, Canada, Australia to Yugoslavia, China and Israel to name some. So yes, I see the potential for the 'wooden wonder' worldwide.

ASM: Finally, I cannot help but wonder about your own feelings on the aircraft and the project.

John: Ever since I attended a 'Battle of Britain At Home' air show at RAF Finningley, UK (now the home of the Vulcan) as a young lad I have been motivated to be involved with RAF aircraft. Air shows have a way of capturing the public's attention and can really make everyone feel proud of their country. It's the same today as it was when I was 8 years old! As I watch the pilots throw a 16-ton Chinook, for example, around the sky



“YOUR MOSSIE NEEDS YOU”

today and know of their exploits in Afghanistan it makes me feel proud.

Fast forward several decades and I had the chance to become a volunteer restorer at the Imperial War Museum at Duxford. During my 'hands on' time on iconic aircraft like the Lancaster, Sunderland and yes, the Mosquito, I saw that these aircraft still capture the public's imagination. It is fantastic to talk to old and young about the story of their operational life and what the men and women's experiences were and of their contribution to our history.

My motivation for this is also the success of public fundraising the

Vulcan project has achieved. It demonstrated to me it can be done, but I am pleased to say we don't need the same big budget; just a fraction. It proved the public can get behind a great aviation project and put it in the air once again; we need around £5m Sterling in approvals from the public!

The author would like to thank The People's Mosquito - in particular Nick Horrox and John Lilley for their assistance with this article. Please visit TPM's website for more information on the project.

www.PeoplesMosquito.org.uk

Planes of Fame 2012 Preview

While we will have plenty of coverage of the always massive Planes of Fame Airshow in Chino, CA in the next issue, we couldn't help but bring you this amazing shot by ASM Contributor Matt Shinavar as a preview of what's to come. Check back in mid June for more!



The Phantoms and Skyhawks of Wittmund

Article and Photos by Pieter Stroobach



It won't be long now before a significant era in military aviation will come to an end. If everything goes as currently planned, Jagdgeschwader 71 Richthoven (JG 71 – Fighter Wing) will end its operations with the very famous McDonnell Douglas F-4F ICE Phantom II somewhere in the middle of 2013. JG 71 is the last of the German fighter units to use the Phantom; only 10 of them are still currently active.

Currently based at Wittmund Air Base in Northern Germany, JG 71 is a unit full of German aviation history. The unit was the first all jet fighter unit of the West German Luftwaffe in 1959. The first aircraft to serve with JG 71 was the Canadair CL-13 Sabre Mk.6, a Canadian-built derivative of the famous F-86. The Mk.6 is considered by many to be the best Sabre version ever built. In all, 225 examples of this type were used by the Luftwaffe. The last Sa-

bre Mk.6 was withdrawn from the Luftwaffe in 1983.

The first commander of JG 71 was Erich Hartmann, a German WWII Ace with no less than 352 victories. This astonishing tally makes him the highest scoring ace of all time. On the 21st of April, 1961, JG 71 was given the honorary title "Richthoven" after Rittmeister Manfred Freiherr von Richthoven, better known as the "Red Baron". The Red Baron was the top German ace in WWI, having scored 80 victories. The unit was transferred to Wittmund Air Base that same year.

Later in the 60s, the unit was equipped with the (in)famous Lockheed F-104G Starfighter, followed by the McDonnell Douglas F-4F Phantom in 1974. At the time the wing had both a fighter and a fighter-bomber mission, but the former mission was dropped once sufficient PANAIA Tornado IDSs

became available to the Luftwaffe in 1988. Beginning in 1992, the F-4Fs underwent upgrades and renovations under the Improved Combat Efficiency (ICE) program. This was meant as an interim solution to keep the Phantom up to date with more modern fighters until the Eurofighter arrived. Indeed, JG 71 will be converting to the Eurofighter EF-2000 beginning in the second half of 2013. However, the Phantoms still have plenty of work to do as the unit is busy with air policing missions. JG 71 was recently deployed to Iceland for the NATO Icelandic Air Policing mission, and earlier this year the unit was busy at Siauliai Air Base in Lithuania for the Baltic Air Policing mission. There is also the ongoing 24/7 Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) mission; two aircraft from JG 71 must be ready to scramble within 15 minutes to intercept any intruder over Northern Germany. If





that weren't enough, JG 71 is also part of NATO's Immediate Reaction Force (IRF), which means that JG 71 must be ready to deploy 12 aircraft with five day's notice.

The McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom is a well-known design that celebrated the 50th anniversary of its first flight in May of 2008. The F-4F is a simplified version of the F-4E that is cheaper and also 3,300 pounds lighter. It was developed specifically for a Luftwaffe order with heavy involvement of the German industry, most notably MBB and VFW-Fokker. The first prototype flew on May 18, 1973 and deliveries took place from late 1973 until April 1976 under the "Peace Rhine" program. The aircraft also served with JG 74, JBG 35 and JBG 36. A number of aircraft were stationed in the USA with the 49th TFW for training purposes. These were operated in USAF colors and sometimes known

as TF-4F.

The type has been continuously updated; the first major program started in the early 80s and gave it the capacity to use the AIM-9L Sidewinder, the AIM-7 Sparrow, and the AGM-65 Maverick missile, as well as in-flight refueling capability. The aforementioned ICE program, starting in 1983, gave the F-4 a new radar system and the capability to use the AIM-120 AMRAAM missile. The project was split into two phases, and deliveries of the final updated aircraft started in 1992 after a range of problems with the AIM-120 were solved. At the time, it was expected that the F-4F would be replaced by the Eurofighter at the end of the 90s.

Apart from the Luftwaffe, BAe Flight Systems also uses Wittmund as a base from which it provides aerial target services for several NATO air forces. For this mission

they use another piece of aviation history, the Douglas A-4N Skyhawk. The A-4, also known as the Scooter, is a carrier-capable ground-attack aircraft designed by Ed Heineman. Unofficially, the BAe unit is known as the "Dartstaffel 713 Richthoven" and has a patch to match it. BAe has provided target tug operations with six A-4Ns since 2001, but with the current contract ending in the near future, it is not clear how long the unit will last.

As you can see, Wittmund Air Base has become a bastion for these legendary types, but it will not last for long. Within the next year or two these aircraft will vanish from the skies. Wittmund will host a spotter's day on June 5, 2012 for those who were lucky enough to get an invitation. However, there are many great spotting locations around the base so do your best to get there very soon.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

We have some of the best airshow photographers helping us bring you amazing photographs and informative reviews from airshows all over North America and even the world. The following pages are stuffed with this outstanding coverage of recent airshows and aviation events.

If you would like to see your own photos and reviews here, just contact us and ask how to contribute. The only requirement is a passion for aviation!

Tuscaloosa Regional Airshow - Tuscaloosa, AL

Article and Photos by John Nyren

Tuscaloosa, home of the Alabama Crimson Tide football team, hosted spectacular air shows on Saturday, March 31 and Sunday, April 1. Alabama's fifth largest city, voted first place in livability by last year's U.S. Conference of Mayors, is quite accustomed to handling large events. Bryant-Denny Stadium consistently seats over 102,000 during University of Alabama games, a figure which approximates the city's entire population. Tuscaloosa's familiarity with organizing big gatherings was clearly evident during the air show weekend.

Thursday's arrival of the United States Navy Blue Angels demonstration team brought much excitement to the area. The following day's scheduled practice did not go

as planned, due to persistent rain showers. There was, however, a three-hour reception on Friday evening, where guests could interact with performers and key officials. This option was available to the public for \$50.

The 2012 Tuscaloosa Regional Air Show did not charge for general admission. This was the city's way of saying "Thank you" to everyone in the community for helping with the aftermath of the deadly tornadoes that wiped out much of the area on April 27 of last year. Parking was also complimentary, with shuttles available from four locations around the airport. There were many upgrade options, from various chalets to preferred seating closer to the active runway.

This year's show attracted over 150,000 people, with estimates of 75,000 plus attending on each day. McAlister's Deli, a popular chain in the region, was the key sponsor; their famous sweet tea was available throughout each day. David Schultz Airshows conducted the event, with the company's name-sake as Air Boss and veteran announcer Mike McFarland as emcee. Mike has a wealth of knowledge about air shows and a great style of presenting commentary to an audience.

Gates opened to the public at 9:00 am. The US Army Golden Knights parachute demonstration team provided the official start to each day, with their first jumper flying the American Flag to show cen-





ter. Eight minutes later, the remaining parachutists aboard the Gold Team's C-31 performed their mass exit show, freefalling from 12,500 feet for one minute, then going under canopy for a two-minute descent to the field. The teamed performed twice each day.

There were two daily helicopter demonstrations; a rescue operation by the Alabama State Police's Bell 407 crew, and a medical flight by Air Evac EMS' Bell 206 team, complete with a mock ambulance transfer.

Joey "Gordo" Sanders performed early each day in his 1943 T-6 Texan racer, "Big Red." This Alabama-themed airplane was a real crowd-pleaser, especially when the words "Roll Tide," painted under the wings were visible.

Four additional World War II aircraft took flight each day during the noon hour; a Corsair followed by

three P-51D Mustangs. Each made several passes down runway 22, before two of the Mustangs landed.

Chris Avery of the Commemorative Air Force's Dixie Wing then demonstrated the aerobatic capabilities of the 1945 Goodyear FG-1D Corsair. This aircraft represents the checkerboard livery of the VMF-312 F4U-1D, Number 530, principally flown by then 1st Lt. Merritt O. Chance of the U.S. Marine Corps. Chance was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement while engaging enemy Japanese aircraft during World War II.

The final warbird in this series was the P-51 "Charlotte's Chariot II," which performed numerous aerobatic maneuvers. The World War II aircraft taxied by show center, allowing for another photo opportunity.

Tuscaloosa Regional Airport is the former headquarters of the Ala-

bama Institute of Aeronautics. This facility trained both U.S. and British fighter pilots in the period surrounding the Second World War. Today, Abe Alibrahim operates the General Aviation Center, constructed on the same site that the Alabama Institute of Aeronautics' hangar stood seventy years ago. The new center performs aircraft maintenance tasks in addition to training pilots. Abe Alibrahim's services were much appreciated by many of the show's aircraft operators.

Kirk Wicker flew a Boeing PT-17 Stearman, one aircraft type used for primary training at the former Alabama Institute, on each of the air show days. His first act consisted of a solo aerobatics demonstration. Later in the show, his wing-walking ex-wife Jane Wicker joined him for an incredible display of highly unique moves that required amaz-

ing athleticism. Fast-paced piston-engine aerobatics continued with Mike Wiskus in the Lucas Oil Pitts. Rob Holland in the MX-2 and Jack Knutson in the Extra 300S teamed up as the "Firebirds," performing breathtaking opposing passes along with other maneuvers.

On Saturday, Matt Younkin flew his full daytime act in the Twin Beech 18. Sunday's performance appeared to be cut short. However, Matt returned to join the Firebirds in a first-ever loop with all three aircraft. With Rob Holland on the twin's left wing and Jack Knutson on the right, the crowd cheered as they reached the top of the loop.

Each day concluded with a performance by the United States Navy's Blue Angels. Alabama native Lt. Dave Tickle drew much applause as he climbed into Blue Angel number

six. Excellent weather on each day allowed for full high show routines. With the official flying concluded, attendees still had much to see. There were around 35 aircraft on static display, representing a diverse range of aviation, both military and civilian. Helicopter rides were available for \$50 aboard one of two UH-1 Hueys that took passengers around the airport on a seven to ten minute flight. They appeared to have no shortage of customers throughout the day.

Many of the static display aircraft departed Sunday afternoon, giving fans a chance to see them in flight. There was a very orderly conclusion to each day, as visitors were allowed to stay longer and participate in a number of activities available, including touring the static display ramp.

Not surprising, based on the

level of organization witnessed, the grounds of the event were spotless on Monday morning. As the remaining tables and chairs were being stacked up and loaded into trucks, volunteers and staff were treated to a final display of departing aircraft.

Royal Canadian Air Force Captain Philippe "Tac" Turcotte departed shortly before 9:30 am, Monday in his CF-188A Hornet, which was flown in for static display. He was kind enough to return for three low passes before continuing home to the 425 Squadron in Bagotville, Quebec. Most of the remaining aircraft departed soon thereafter.

The 2012 Tuscaloosa Regional Air Show was the city's third, with the first two in 2009 and 2010. All have featured the Navy's Blue Angels. Talks are now underway for the possibility of the area's next air show, one I'm sure you'll want to attend!



Riverside Airshow - Riverside, CA

Article by Matt Shinavar

Riverside Municipal Airport is packed into the middle of suburban Riverside, CA; it's no stretch to imagine the pattern is flown with a Thomas Guide rather than an approach plate. The small airport has a main runway which is somehow able to accommodate a C-17, and a crosswind runway which is more than capable as a parking lot during the airshow. There's something nice about local airshows like Riv-

erside; they're close to the city, the crowds seem smaller, and there's just a homey feel to them. The weather this year was much less than ideal; cloudy and drizzly, and the show started about an hour later than planned – no worries, plenty of time to shoot the numerous static displays. The whole flight line was lined with warbirds. Inside the crowd line there were general aviation aircraft as well as police

and military aircraft for the crowd to pour over. The show got off to a little bit of an unannounced start, but once the wing walking and Taylorcraft aerobatics got underway, the show clearly had started even if the clouds were still hanging around. Shortly thereafter, Jon Melby took off in his Pitts biplane for an airframe-stressing performance; the clouds weren't going to keep him on the ground. Doug Jardine fol-



lowed shortly in a Sbach 342, serial number four of a big horsepower carbon fiber monoplane design, and also showed how much punishment a person can take at the controls of today's very capable aerobatic planes. Next, John Collver took to the air in his T-6 "War Dog" performing advanced training maneuvers taught to Marine aviators, well below the recommended minimum altitude.

After John Collver had landed and vacated the taxiway, a Riverside Police MD500 helicopter put on an aerial demonstration before jumping in on a mock police chase around the runway and taxiways. There was a mock shooting exchange between the police officers and suspect and members of the Riverside SWAT team were flown in by helicopter, including a police dog. After all that excitement was over, a seemingly large fire on the other side of the runway was started and another Riverside MD500 with water dropping attachment hurriedly put the fire out.

After the police demonstration was over, five T-6s took to the air to put on a formation flying demonstration. They flew a normal traffic pattern and with each lap came around in a different formation. While the wing walking demonstration was getting in position, an L-39 Albatros made a handful of reasonably high speed banana passes for the crowd before disappearing. There was a promise of an F-16 doing this, but that never came to fruition – more than likely due to the weather-related delays – so the L-39 filled in. Now that the weather had cleared a little, the Just In Time Skydivers took to the air to jump for the crowd. I have a feeling with the low ceiling they didn't put on their

full demonstration. While the skydivers were climbing to altitude, Jon Melby and Doug Jardine went back up to give the crowd another glimpse into the body-straining life of an aerobatic pilot – the performances were equally as impressive as their earlier ones. John Collver again took to the air after Jon Melby and Doug Jardine landed, performing seemingly lazy maneuvers compared to the previous two pilots. However, I would imagine there isn't much that is easy about John's performance.

During John Collver's performance, there was the distinct sound of jet engines a long way down the crowd line, as well as the P-38 "Honey Bunny" being pushed back from the rope. As the P-38 and A-10 taxied down to the end of the runway for the upcoming Heritage Flight, they allowed everyone a close glimpse at the ultra-rare P-38. While the A-10 and P-38 formed up and worked out the details of their flight, Tim Weber went up in his MXS aerobatic plane to give Doug Jardine a run for his money in an aerobatic sense – the performance did not disappoint. The P-38 and A-10 performed their Heritage Flight, with the A-10 doing a little showing off on its own without the Lightning. As they landed and turned off the runway, another group of warbirds started their takeoff roll. The group, a Hellcat, Bearcat, Wildcat, and Mustang, took up evenly spaced orbits around the airport which allowed for amazing photo opportunities and never having to compromise on which aircraft to shoot on the pass. The Mustang, bringing up the rear, hung a little further back from the rest of the group, allowing him to firewall it for a low pass – much like German soldiers must



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have seen as P-51s strafed airfields in World War II; the sound was just amazing from the Merlin engine. Of course, no disrespect to the Gruman cats; each of them also had a terrific radial engine roar majestic in their own right, but there really is something magical about the powerplant of a Mustang.

Depending on how you look at it, the last performer in the show or the first departure of the show was the C-17. It really is astonishing that such a large aircraft can land at such a small airport. So large in fact, the C-17 had to use reverse thrust to back up the taxiway to the runway, then back all the way up the runway since there wasn't adequate taxiway or turn around space. After all



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the small aerobatic planes, it was really interesting to see such a large airplane occupying the space. The C-17 made the takeoff look easy, and pulled a steep ascent followed by a left hand bank. A couple passes later and the C-17 was heading home to March ARB, just a short hop a couple cities over. As is with many smaller airshows, there's a push to get all the airplanes home, so sticking around after the show "ends" allows for additional viewing, including aircraft that were only on static display during the actual show. Sometimes the pilots would come by for another pass or two down the runway before heading home.

Overall the Riverside Airshow was a fun time, even if the weather didn't exactly cooperate. I'll be going next year for sure; there are just too many cool things to see at this show. Thanks are due to all the people who worked to make the Riverside airshow a success!

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Bluebonnet Airshow - Burnet, TX
Photos by Andy Nixon



Wings Over South Texas - NAS Kingsville, TX

Article and Photos by John Nyren

The 2012 Wings Over South Texas Air Show, featuring the US Navy Blue Angels, took place at NAS Kingsville during the weekend of April 14th and 15th. This show was a huge success, with an estimated 120,000 total attendees for both days, in addition to Friday's pre-show events. A pep-rally took place at Texas A&M University's Kingsville campus on Friday morning with the jet-powered school bus on display and a brief flyby. Later on that day, a "Meet the Blues" event, sponsored by Kleberg County and the City of Kingsville, took place.

There were many aircraft on static display, including a wide-range of airborne assets from the US Navy. Five Centennial of Naval Aviation (CONA) schemed aircraft were pres-

ent: A-T-34C Mentor (BuNo 161841), T-44A Pegasus (BuNo 160984), TC-12B Huron (BuNo 161197), P-3C Orion (BuNo 158206), and a T-45C Goshawk (BuNo 163656). Other static display aircraft ranged from Cessna 172s to the Rockwell B-1B Bomber.

The show started off with the US Navy Color Guard making their presentation of the American and Navy flags, promptly at 11:00 am. Appropriately, the first flying act consisted of a four-ship formation of T-45s from NAS Kingsville's own Training Wing Two. LCDR Gabe "Rage" Pincelli, in the aforementioned CONA-scheme Goshawk, led these advanced jet trainers. USMC Maj Brian "Radio" Beck, along with US Navy LCDRs: Mike "Cooter" Billman and

Dave "Gravy" Anderson completed the formation. The demonstration concluded with various simulated carrier-landing scenarios.

World Aerobatic Champion Rob Holland followed with an introductory act, returning later in the day to fly his full demonstration. Paul Fiala of the King Ranch showcased his yellow Great Lakes biplane in between flights by Kent Pietsch. Pietsch did an amazing job of touching down on a pickup truck as it traveled beneath him at speeds of 45 to 55 mph down runway 17R/35L. He was able fly onto the modified truck during each of the three attempts to land on its small platform. While the strength of the gusty breeze prevented Kent from coming to rest atop the vehicle, it was quite impressive to wit-

ness his attempts.

Wings Over South Texas Air Show attendees enjoyed a mid-day concert by country music recording artist Aaron Watson and his Orphans of the Brazos band. This was a well-planned intermission to the day's flying events.

The United States Navy's Tactical Demonstration Team from VFA-122 launched one of two F/A-18E Super Hornets, showing off the high performance characteristics of the twin-engine fighter before the Air Force made their presence known with several passes of a B-1B Bomber. The four-engine, variable-geometry aircraft flew in from and back to Dyess Air Force Base, also in Texas.

The A-10 Thunderbolt East Demonstration Team from Moody AFB

was on hand for a now shortened solo demo in addition to a Heritage Flight with the P-38 Lightning, "Thoughts of Midnight."

Just days before the 70th anniversary of the Doolittle raid on Tokyo (see page 36), the Disabled American Veterans' B-25 Mitchell bomber "Special Delivery" conducted multiple passes before the crowd, complete with pyrotechnic effects in the background. This is the only aircraft authorized to display the "Doolittle Raiders" markings, as the team has made an agreement with the veteran's group to educate the public on the events that took place on April 18, 1942.

There were also vintage jet performances by Randy Ball in his MiG-17, as well as an F-86 Sabre, which

made several passes before the crowd. The Blue Angels concluded each day with their high show routine. The USMC operated a KC-130 borrowed from Ft Worth, while "Fat Albert" undergoes maintenance. "Ernie," the all-gray Hercules standing in for 'Bert, completed a full performance before the jet demonstration team took to the skies. At the conclusion of the day's flying, visitors had the option of hanging around longer to tour static displays which may have been missed earlier.

NAS Kingsville is known for organizational excellence. This was clearly demonstrated as 70,000 spectators departed the field on Saturday without any major traffic problems.











Thunder Over Louisville - Louisville, KY



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Defenders of Liberty Airshow - Barksdale AFB, LA

Photos by Andy Nixon





Robins Airshow - Robins AFB, GA



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Lauderdale Air Show - Fort Lauderdale, FL
Photos by Charlie Lai







Thanks for Reading!