



# NEWS

A publication of the Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation

Vol. XXIV, No. 2, 2007

P O Box 1565 • Travis AFB, CA 94535 • (707) 424-5605 • www.jimmydoolittlemuseum.org

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*Maj. Jay Wahleithner speaks Saturday at a ceremony for the Travis Air & Space Museum's new F-105 Thunderchief. The F-105 was dedicated to his father, Maj. Gen. James Wahleithner. (Photo by Zachary Kaufman)*

## General's beloved plane dedicated to his memory

By Ian Thompson

*Daily Republic*, Sunday, October 21, 2007

**T**RAVIS AIR FORCE BASE —The late Maj. Gen. James Wahleithner flew a lot of aircraft in his career, but it was the powerful F-105 Thunderchief he loved the most.

"He loved the rush of flying it," said son Jay Wahleithner, commander of the 70th Air Refueling Squadron at Travis Air Force Base. "It was a powerful plane."



The very same fighter-bomber the general loved so much and flew out of Hill Air Force Base, Utah, so long ago was dedicated to his memory Saturday as his family and friends applauded.

Gen. Wahleithner once commanded the 349th Air Mobility Wing and died in a plane crash in Humboldt

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*Fairfield Air Station's main gate, 1940's.*

## Army air base doubles Solano's population

—Four war years, 1940 to 1944 see huge growth

By Sabine Goerke-Shrode

"SOLANO: THE WAY IT WAS"

*Reporter*, Sunday, September 9, 2007

**T**he mid-1940's saw an unprecedented population growth in the Vacaville and Fairfield areas, due to the incoming personnel for the new Fairfield-Suisun Air base.

For several years, both cities struggled to accommodate their new residents. Federal Housing Public Authority projects such as Waterman Park in Fairfield and Vaca Valley Acres in Vacaville were built quickly. Waterman Park was one of two projects constructed in Fairfield, in the process changing how a small town felt about itself.

On October 12, 1943, the Solano Republican's headline said: "Forest Of New Buildings Nearing Completion In Waterman Addition"

"The new Waterman Addition adjacent to the north city limit of Fairfield is fast

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The Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum NEWS is a publication of the Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation. The NEWS is published three times a year. Subscriptions are free to paid members of the Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation.

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Comments and questions about the NEWS may be addressed to Editor, Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation NEWS, PO Box 1565, Travis AFB, CA 94535

## ABOUT Us



**T**he Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum Foundation, with its Education Museum Foundation, is registered as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. It brings together historical, educational and technological resources to create programs which preserve our aviation heritage in building an air and space museum for all ages that embraces California aviation, Travis Air Force Base, the U. S. Air Force and the history of the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders.



*It took teamwork to complete the restoration of the Museum's F-105. This complex coordination is a perfect example of what the Foundation facilitates: bringing together people and resources to preserve our aviation heritage.*

### JIMMY DOOLITTLE AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

The Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum will be the name of the new, off-base museum that is being created by the Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum Education Foundation. This will be a major tourist destination in northern California that will embrace the history of the Jimmy Doolittle Raid, the history of Travis Air Force Base, and the history of the US Air Force.

### TRAVIS AIR MUSEUM

The Travis Air Museum is presently located on Travis Air Force Base. It presents the history of that base and the history of airlift in the Pacific. The Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum Foundation formerly the Travis AFB Historical Society is the designated non-profit arm of the museum.

## DEDICATION CONTINUED

County in July 2002. Wahleithner logged more than 10,000 hours in the air during his career, 460 of these in the F-105.

He flew the F-105 when he commanded the 508th Tactical Fighter Group at Hill and “he had to be literally torn from the cockpit” when he got a new assignment taking him away from the Thunderchief, his son said.

His son described his father as a modest man who separated his Air Force time from his family time.

“Only after he retired did he start talking about his career. I wish I had asked him more questions,” Maj. Wahleithner said.

He did pass on his love of the Air Force. At least half of the general’s 11 children following their father into the Air Force and three have been stationed at Travis during their military careers.

The Vietnam-era F-105 Thunderchief fighter-bomber was put on display at the Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum on Travis Air Force Base after it was moved here from Hill almost two decades ago.

Nicknamed “the Thud” by its pilots, the museum’s Thunderchief recently underwent several months of renovation and was repainted in its Vietnam-era brown and forest green camouflage.

Much of the restoration was undertaken by Master Sgt. Terry Juran and the Wahleithner family helped out at one time by sanding down the airplane to prepare it for repainting.

The Thunderchief, which entered service in 1958, was the largest single-engine fighter in the Air Force. It bore the brunt of much of the Air Force’s early bombing campaigns over North Vietnam, logging more than 20,000 sorties. The last Thunderchief was retired in 1984.

The general’s two daughters, Janice Nygard and June Loveless, put the final touches on the aircraft at the ceremony by putting Gen. Wahleithner’s name on the plane just below the cockpit.

Another of the general’s sons, Master Sgt. Joseph Wahleithner, actually maintained the F-105 when it was stationed at Hill just before it was brought to the museum.

Juran noted it was a tradition to have the name of an aircraft’s crew chief put on the lower portion of one side of the aircraft. Juran said he plans to put Master Sgt. Wahleithner’s name on the F-105 “to truly make it a Wahleithner aircraft.”

Reach Ian Thompson at 427-6976 or [ithompson@dailyrepublic.net](mailto:ithompson@dailyrepublic.net).

## ARMY AIR BASE CONTINUED

shaping into “boom town” – an area of completed residences – and soon will be a teeming city of nearly 160 families and twice that many single men and women. The 18 four-family units, 114 by 20 feet each, to house four families of four or five people, will be the first completed, furnished and ready for occupancy by the numerous applicants already listed with the Federal Housing Public Authority, builders of the project. The five dormitory units, three for single women and two for men, are being rushed also.”

Despite the construction speed, the houses were built to high standards and included modern amenities and communal facilities.

“The family units, like the dormitories, all have composition floors, gas heaters, electric lights, gas ranges, ice boxes, gas water heaters and modern showers and all will be modernly furnished. The units are much roomier than the outside of the structures would indicate, and by the time the dormitories are finished, the modern cafeteria, barber shop, hospital, library, recreation room and superintendent’s quarters will be ready.”

More than 100 carpenters, 14 plumbers, nine utility men and four laborers worked on the project. R. F. Carlson acted as the government inspector and architect’s representative.

Providing water for so many new residents needed some thoughts and the latest in technology.

“One of the unusual features of the project is the new “Transite” water mains,” remarked the Solano Republican on October 12, “a new composition of asbestos, with a tinsel strength greater than iron, and with the new “Teigle” joint, making it possible to install the water system in a third the time necessary for the old time water mains ...

“The project will use Suisun water from the big reservoir high up on Twin Sisters mountain.”

By November 18, company representatives expected that the first new residents would be able to move in by Thanksgiving, “with nothing remaining on that number but to clean up the floors, and do a little finishing work. The first units to be occupied are those situated just north of Webster street, where the sidewalks and curbs have been installed and all utilities placed.”

A new administration building was part of the complex, “a huge structure, 247 by 200 feet in dimensions, and which will house the management and maintenance offices, tenant and morale department, games room, day nursery, commu-

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## ARMY AIR BASE CONTINUED



**Travis Air  
Museum's  
Consairway Exhibit**

*Editor's Note:  
Sabine Goerke-Shrode  
is a local historian and  
free-lance writer. She  
alternates the Reporter's  
(Vacaville, CA) history  
column every other  
week with Jerry Bowen  
of the Vacaville  
Historical Society.*

community hall, lounge, cafeteria, kitchen, play rooms, rest rooms, with the modern clinic on the west end.”

The Solano Republican offered further information on who would occupy the new housing on December 9.

“What only a few months ago was a pasture area, with naught but wild grass and ground squirrels is today a teeming city – or will be as soon as all of the 50 or more Federal Public Housing units are completed. Many men of the Consolidated and Vultee Aircraft Corporation, with their families, are moving into the units daily, more than a dozen of the four-family units being already occupied.

“Supervisor Kincaid, in charge of the rentals for the FPHA [Federal Public Housing Authority] stated today that 80 percent of the more than 40 dwelling units will be taken by the Aircraft people, as well as two

each of the six dormitories for single men and women. A like proportion of the FPHA units at Vacaville will also house the plane transport people, he stated.

“Mr. and Mrs. Kincaid now occupy the first unit at the north end of Webster street, while next to them will be Edward Piersol, head of the Consolidated-Vultee men here. ....”

A week later, on December 16, the newspaper let readers now that new families of the Consairway Division of the Consolidated-Vultee Aircraft Corporation were arriving daily from San Diego, the former base of Consairways. At the same time, the newspaper provided an interesting summary of the early development stages of the future United States Air Force.

“Consairway is one division of the Consolidated-Vultee Aircraft Corporation,” explained [public relations manager] Mr. Piersol, there being 13 other divisions of the company throughout the country, all engaged in the aircraft industry. Consairway is the transport division of the military air transport line, transporting personnel and freight to all parts of the world. The company has long years of service to its credit, and is meeting the gigantic task of transportation, with all civilian personnel, with the utmost efficiency and dispatch, the records of the company show. The entire Consairway division is moving from San Diego to this locality, dividing the personnel between Fairfield and Vacaville.”

With that many new residents, the January 1944 population figures for the County reached 110,000 residents. In only four years, based on the 1940 census figures, the County had more than doubled its population, with most of that growth occurring in Fairfield and Vacaville.

Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum Foundation

## GIFT SHOP

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## FOUNDATION TEAM

**F**oundation Team: Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum Foundation’s Board of Directors, membership and volunteers. Travis Air Museum staff are employees of the U. S. Government.

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Mrs. Iris Taggart ..... (916) 455-4412  
MGen. James Taylor ..... j.taylor@travisairmuseum.org

### Membership

Since 1982, members of the Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum Foundation (previously the Travis AFB Historical Society) played an important role in meeting the mission of bringing together historical, educational and technological resources to help create programs which preserve our aviation heritage and build an air and space museum for all ages, embracing California aviation, Travis Air Force Base, the U. S. Air Force and the history of the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders. Join Up! The Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum Foundation, with its Education Museum Foundation, is registered as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

### Travis Air Museum Staff

The staff of the Travis Air Museum are employees of the U S government. The Travis Air Museum is a part of the National Museum of the United States Air Force field program.

**Dr Gary Leiser** ..... Gary.Leiser@travis.af.mil  
Curator (707) 424-5598

*Gary Leiser has been the director of the Travis Air Museum since 1996. Prior to that he was the historian for 15th AF headquartered at Travis. A Middle East specialist, he received a doctorate in Middle Eastern history from the University of Pennsylvania in 1976. He spent 10 years in the Middle East in various capacities and is fluent in Arabic and Turkish. He has published nine books on Middle Eastern history as well as numerous articles for scholarly journals and encyclopedias.*

**TSgt Robert Perry**, Superintendent ..... (707) 424-5605  
**MSgt Terry Juran** ..... (707) 424-5605

### Volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the Foundation and the Museum. Day in and day out, they provide a myriad of services for the Foundation and the Museum.

#### How to Become a Volunteer:

Volunteers at the Museum enjoy a real sense of camaraderie, in a flexible environment that appreciates the value of their time and commitment. We use their particular skills or areas of interest to fulfill the needs of the Museum.

We encourage you to become a museum volunteer—give the gift of time. Even a small commitment of time can make a real difference. It’s a great opportunity to share your excitement and enthusiasm about aviation, while making a positive impact in the community.

If you’re interested, please call the Museum office at (707) 424-5606. We look forward to hearing from you. From docents to artisans, mechanics to shop keepers, we appreciate the gift of time and talent.

#### Crew Chiefs:

We at the “Air Museum” are proud of the work our volunteers accomplish on a daily basis. We currently have a need for “volunteers” or “organizations” to adopt one of our aircraft displayed outside of the museum building. As a “crew chief” assigned to one of our aircraft you would be responsible for maintaining the overall appearance.



*W. Stuart Symington, former Assistant Secretary of War for Air, takes the oath of office as Secretary of the Air Force from Chief Justice Fred Vincent. Left to right are: Secretary Symington, Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall, Secretary of National Defense James N. Forrestal, Chief Justice Vincent and Secretary of the Navy John Sullivan. (U.S. Air Force photo illustration/Mike Carabajal)*

*This section is dedicated to the men and women who made the U.S. Air Force what it is today. The people, events and equipment of the past are integral to understanding the future. For more in depth coverage of Air Force history go <http://www.af.mil/history/overview.asp>.*

From the Official Site of the United States Air Force

## United States Air Force History Overview

### Early Years

**O**n Aug. 1, 1907, the U.S. Army Signal Corps established a small Aeronautical Division to take "charge of all matters pertaining to military ballooning, air machines and all kindred subjects."

From the close of the Civil War until 1907, the Signal Corps had acquired eight balloons, though two more were procured in 1907. A year later the Signal Corps purchased a small dirigible, used at Fort Omaha, Neb., for the instruction of servicemen. But not until May 26, 1909, did Lts Frank P. Lahm and Benjamin D. Foulois make their first ascent and qualify as the airship's first Army pilots.

The Signal Corps began testing its first airplane at Fort Myer, Va., on Aug. 20, 1908, and on Sept. 9, Lt. Thomas E. Selfridge, flying with Orville Wright, was killed when the plane crashed. He was the first military aviation casualty. After more testing with an improved Wright Flyer, the Army formally accepted this airplane, identified as "Airplane No. 1," on Aug. 2, 1909.

Four years after the Signal Corps took charge of air matters, Congress appropriated funds for Army aeronautics: \$125,000 for fiscal 1912. By the close of October 1912, the Signal Corps had acquired 11 aircraft, but possessed only nine. "Airplane No. 1" had been given to the Smithsonian Institution, and one other had been demolished in an accident.

In early 1913, the Army ordered its aviators who were training in Augusta, Ga., and Palm Beach, Fla., to Texas to take part in 2d Division maneuvers. In Galveston on March 3, the Chief Signal Officer designated the assembled men and equipment the "1st Provisional Aero Squadron," with Capt Charles DeF. Chandler as squadron commander.

*continued on next page*

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE HISTORY OVERVIEW CONTINUED

The 1st Provisional Aero Squadron began flying activities a few days later. On Dec. 4, general orders redesignated the unit as the 1st Aero Squadron, effective Dec. 8, 1913. This first military unit of the U.S. Army devoted exclusively to aviation, today designated the 1st Reconnaissance Squadron, has remained continuously active since its creation. Assigned a role in the Punitive Expedition of the Mexican border in 1916, this squadron became the first air combat unit of the U.S. Army.

Meanwhile, Congress created in the Signal Corps an Aviation Section to replace the Aeronautical Division. Signed by the President, this bill became law on July 18, 1914. It directed the Aviation Section to operate and supervise "all military [U.S. Army] aircraft, including balloons and aeroplanes, all appliances pertaining to said craft, and signaling apparatus of any kind when installed on said craft."

\* The section would also train "officers and enlisted men in matters pertaining to military aviation," and thus embraced all facets of the Army's air organization and operation.

\* The old Aeronautical Division continued to exist, but operated as the Washington office of the new section.

When World War I broke out in Europe in August 1914, the 1st Aero Squadron represented the entire tactical air strength of the U.S. Army. It counted 12 officers, 54 enlisted men and six aircraft. In December 1915 the Aviation Section consisted of 44 officers, 224 enlisted men and 23 airplanes--still a tiny force when compared to the fledgling air forces of the European powers.

But the war in Europe focused more attention on aviation.

By this time the Aviation Section consisted of the Aeronautical Division, the Signal Corps Aviation School at San Diego, the 1st Aero Squadron (then on duty with the expeditionary force in Mexico), and the 1st Company, 2d Aero Squadron, on duty in the Philippines. In October 1916, Aviation Section plans called for two dozen squadrons--seven for the Regular Army, 12 for the National Guard divisions, and five for coastal defense -- plus balloon units for the field and coast artillery. In December 1916 the seven Regular Army squadrons either had been or were being organized. All 24 squadrons had been formed by early 1917,



*The Gonzalez brothers' biplane, built in San Francisco and flown at Winters, CA in 1911 is an excellent example of early aircraft. It is owned by the Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum Education Foundation and is on loan to the Hiller Museum.*

but the 1st Aero Squadron remained the only one fully organized and equipped. Plans for still greater expansion of the Aviation Section were incomplete when the United States entered World War I on April 6, 1917.

### World War I

On May 20, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson issued an executive order transferring aviation from the Signal Corps to two agencies under the Secretary of War: the Bureau of Aircraft Production, headed by Mr. John D. Ryan, and the Division of Military Aeronautics, directed by Maj. Gen. William L. Kenly.

On May 24 the War Department officially recognized these two Army agencies as the Air Service of the U.S. Army. Three months later, on Aug. 27, the President appointed Mr. Ryan Director of the Air Service and Second Assistant Secretary of War.

Despite a combat record of only nine months (February to November 1918), the Air Service made a respectable showing during World War I. The 740 American aircraft assigned to squadrons at the front on Nov. 11, 1918, Armistice Day, represented little more than 10 percent of the total aircraft strength of Allied nations. But the Air Service had conducted 150 separate bombing attacks. Penetrating as far as 160

miles behind German lines, its aircraft had dropped about 138 tons of bombs. In all, the Air Service downed 756 enemy aircraft and 76 enemy balloons, while losing 289 airplanes and 48 balloons.

The dispersal of aero squadrons among various Army organizations during the war made it difficult to coordinate aerial activities, which led to the creation of higher echelon organizations. At the front, squadrons with similar functions were formed into groups, the first organized in April 1918 as I Corps Observation Group. The following month the 1st Pursuit Group was formed, and in July 1918 the American Expeditionary Forces organized its first aircraft unit higher than a group--the 1st Pursuit Wing--made up of the 2d and 3d Pursuit Groups and, later, the 1st Day Bombardment Group. In November 1918 the AEF possessed 14 groups (seven observation, five pursuit and two bombardment).

Following the armistice, demobilization of the Air Service was rapid and thorough.

At war's end the Air Service possessed 185 aero squadrons; 44 aero construction; 114 aero supply, 11 aero replacement, and 15 spruce production squadrons; 86 balloon companies; six balloon group headquarters; 15 construction companies; 55 photographic sections; and a few miscellaneous units.

By Nov. 22, 1919, all had been demobilized except one aero construction, one aero replacement, and 22 aero squadrons, 32 balloon companies, 15 photographic sections, and a few miscellaneous units. Between Nov. 11, 1918 and June 30, 1920, officer strength plummeted from 19,189 to 1,168, and enlisted strength dropped from 178,149 to 8,428.

Following World War I, the strength of the Air Service matched what Congress considered satisfactory for peacetime.

## Between Wars

The Army Reorganization Act of 1920 made the Air Service a combatant arm of the Army and gave the Chief of the Air Service the rank of major general and his assistant chief the rank of brigadier general. Tactical air units in the United States were placed under the nine U.S. Army corps area commanders where they continued to be employed primarily in support of the ground forces. The Chief of the Air Service retained command of various training schools, depots and other activities exempted from Army corps control.

During most of the 1920s, the total offensive strength of the Air Service in the United States consisted of one pursuit, one attack and one bombardment group. Overseas, the Canal Zone

and the Philippines each had assigned one pursuit and one bombardment squadron with two squadrons of each type stationed in the Hawaiian Islands. The Air Service focused initially on observation and pursuit aviation, with major aeronautical development efforts concentrated in the Engineering Division at McCook Field, Dayton, Ohio.

The formal training establishment took shape during the 1920s. The Air Service concentrated flying training in Texas. Technical schools for officers and enlisted men were at Chanute Field, Ill. The Air Service (later, Air Corps) Tactical School trained officers to command higher units and taught the employment of military aviation. First located at Langley Field, Va., this school moved to Maxwell Field, Ala. in 1931.

The Air Corps Act of 1926 changed the name of the Air Service to Air Corps, but left unaltered its status as a combatant arm of the U.S. Army.

The act also established the Office of Assistant Secretary of War for Air. The Air Corps had at this time 919 officers and 8,725 enlisted men, and its "modern aeronautical equipment" consisted of 60 pursuit planes and 169 observation planes; total serviceable aircraft of all types numbered less than 1,000.

In August 1926 the Army established the Air Corps Training Center in San Antonio, Texas. A few weeks later, on Oct. 15, the logistical organization was placed on firmer footing with the establishment of the Materiel Division, Air Corps, at Dayton, Ohio. A year later this division moved to nearby Wright Field, thereafter the primary base for air logistics.

In Texas, Randolph Field, the "West Point of the Air," was dedicated on June 20, 1930, and became the headquarters of the Air Corps Training Center and the site of the primary flying school in 1931. By June 30, 1932, the Air Corps had grown to 1,305 officers and 13,400 enlisted men, including cadets, and possessed 1,709 aircraft. The Corps also possessed at this time two airship and two balloon squadrons.

On March 1, 1935, the General Headquarters Air Force, which had existed in gestation since Oct. 1, 1933, became operational and assumed command and control over Air Corps tactical units. Tactical units, less some observation squadrons scattered throughout the nine Army corps areas, transferred to this initial air force.

The three GHQAF wings were located at Langley Field, Va.; Barksdale Field, La.; and March Field, Calif. The Office of the Chief of the Air Corps and GHQAF existed on the same command echelon, each reporting separately to the Army Chief of Staff. The GHQAF Commander directed tactical training

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## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE HISTORY OVERVIEW CONTINUED



***Capt. Marc A. Mitscher, skipper of the Hornet aircraft carrier, presents Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle, leader of the Tokyo Raid, with a medal once given to a U.S. Navy officer by Japan. This medal was wired to a 500-pound bomb for return to Japan "with interest." (U.S. Air Force photo)***

and operations, while the Chief of the Air Corps maintained control over procurement, supply, training schools and doctrine development. On March 1, 1939, the Chief of the Air Corps assumed control over the GHQAF, centralizing command of the entire air arm.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt acknowledged the growing importance of airpower, recognized that the United States might be drawn into a European war. Assured of a favorable reception in the White House, the Air Corps prepared plans in October 1938 for a force of some 7,000 aircraft.

Soon afterwards, President Roosevelt asked the War Department to prepare a program for an Air Corps composed of 10,000 airplanes, of which 7,500 would be combat aircraft.

In a special message to Congress on January 12, 1939, the President formally requested this program. Congress responded on April 3, authorizing \$300 million for an Air Corps "not to exceed 6,000 serviceable airplanes."

### World War II

Beginning in September 1939, the German army and the Ger-

man air force rapidly conquered Poland, Norway, Holland, Belgium, France and within one year had driven the British off the continent. Leaders of the Air Corps now found themselves in the novel position of receiving practically anything they requested. Plans soon called for 54 combat groups. This program was hardly underway before revised plans called for 84 combat groups equipped with 7,800 aircraft and manned by 400,000 troops by June 30, 1942. All told, U.S. Army air forces strength in World War II would swell from 26,500 men and 2,200 aircraft in 1939 to 2,253,000 men and women and 63,715 aircraft in 1945.

With this enormous expansion underway, the War Department began in 1939 to establish new bases and air organizations in rapid succession overseas and in the continental United States. At the same time air leaders worked to create an independent institutional structure for air within the U.S. Army.

Both necessity and desire thus caused a blitz of organizational changes from 1940 through 1942. On November 19, 1940, the

General Headquarters Air Force was removed from the jurisdiction of the Chief of the Air Corps and given separate status under the commander of the Army Field Forces. Seven months later, these air combat forces returned to the command of air leaders as Gen. George C. Marshall, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, established the Army Air Forces on June 20, 1941, to control both the Air Corps and the Air Force Combat Command.

Early in 1941, the War Department instituted a series of actions to create a hierarchy for noncombat activities. It set up a command eventually designated Flying Training Command to direct new programs for training ground crews and technicians. The next year, the new command assumed responsibility for pilot and aircrew training. In mid-1942 the War Department established the Air Corps Ferrying Command to fly aircraft overseas for delivery to the British and other Allies. As the functions of the Ferrying Command expanded, it was redesignated as the Air Transport Command.

To control supply and maintenance, the War Department established the Air Corps Maintenance Command under the Air Corps Materiel Division. The Materiel Division then concentrated on procurement and research development.



*Utah native, retired Col. Gail Halvorsen, recently, displaying the newly authorized Berlin Airlift streamer presented to him Oct. 29 at the Airlift Tanker Association convention in Nashville, TN. Units that participated in the 1948-1949 humanitarian airlift can include the streamer on their units' guidons. Colonel Halvorsen is known as the "Candy Bomber" for dropping candy from his aircraft to German children during the airlift. (U.S. Air Force photo)*

The War Department reorganization on March 9, 1942, created three autonomous U.S. Army Commands: Army Ground Forces, Services of Supply (later, in 1943, Army Service Forces), and Army Air Forces. This administrative reorganization did not affect the status of the Air Corps as a combatant arm of the US Army.

All of these actions affecting the air forces and commands that comprised the AAF emphasized the surge towards an independent service and the expansion of combat forces that took place during World War II.

Before 1939 the Army's air arm was a fledgling organization; by the end of the war the Army Air Forces had become a major military organization comprised of many air forces, commands, divisions, wings, groups, and squadrons, plus an assortment of other organizations.

Rapid demobilization of forces immediately after World War II, although sharply reducing the size of the Army Air Forces, left untouched the nucleus of the postwar United States Air Force (USAF). A War Department letter of March 21, 1946, created two new commands and redesignated an existing one: Continental Air Forces was redesignated Strategic Air Command, and the resources of what had been Continental Air Forces were divided among Strategic Air Command and the two newcomers - Air Defense Command and Tactical Air Command. These three commands and the older Air Trans-

port Command represented respectively the strategic, tactical, defense, and airlift missions that provided the foundation for building the postwar, independent Air Force.

## An Independent Force

The National Security Act of 1947 became law on July 26, 1947. It created the Department of the Air Force, headed by a Secretary of the Air Force.

Under the Department of the Air Force, the act established the United States Air Force, headed by the Chief of Staff, USAF. On Sept. 18, 1947, W. Stuart Symington became Secretary of the Air Force, and on Sept. 26, Gen. Carl A. Spaatz became the USAF's first Chief of Staff.



Happy birthday to us.

9/15/2007 - TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. More than 1,200 Airmen, their families and local community members witnessed an extra special event Friday night as part of the base's Air Force 60th Anniversary Ball. Col. Steve Arquette, 60th Air Mobility Wing commander, Airman Morgan Campbell, 60th Logistics Readiness Squadron, Col. Robert Lucania, 60th Medical Surgical Operations Squadron and Mr. Jay Leno, host of The Tonight Show, cut the Air Force 60th Anniversary cake Friday at Travis Air Force Base, Calif. In keeping with tradition, the most senior and the most junior time-in-service member cut the cake symbolizing the cooperation that exist between ranks. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Matthew McGovern)

## TRANSPORTING SHOW GIRLS ACROSS THE PACIFIC



*Travis Air Force  
Base, 1501st Flight  
Line Maintenance  
Squadron  
March 1958  
“My Office”  
—Bob Wells*

By Bob Wells

### “Off we go into the wild blue yonder . . .”

**T**he United States Air Force . . . Why did we choose to join? In February 1955 at the age of 19, I chose the USAF over the other branches of services primarily because I liked their uniform the best. Oh sure . . . I later made up, or rather adopted, some stories for joining, such as “I wanted to fly.” Or, . . . “I would be at least a mile from the front lines, either higher or farther away.

Well, I’m a bit older now and my reflections of 50 years ago take me to Travis AFB and the 1501<sup>st</sup> Flightline Maintenance Sq as an aircraft and engine mechanic on the MATS C-97 transport.

After sharing some of my Travis adventures today with Gary Leiser, he asked if I could put some of them in writing for others to enjoy.

During Christmas season of 1957, Bob Hope, Jane Mansfield, Les Brown “and his Band of Renown,” Barbara Whiting and a troupe of 22 beautiful show girls entertained “the boys” all cross the Pacific Ocean. This required three C-97s traveling in different directions to cover the military bases stretched across the Pacific.

Guess what! Airman Second Class Robert L. Wells (me) somehow was chosen to go along as a “wrench turner” in case we had trouble on the C-97 on which I flew. Incidentally and airman second class did not “trouble shoot.” The flight engineer did that. He would tell me what to do.

We departed from Burbank with Travis aircraft. The one on which I flew carried Barbara Whiting and the show girls. The closest I got to Bob Hope was about 15 feet at Burbank. We made 16 stops in thirty-one days which included Hawaii, Midway, Guam, Kwajalein, Clark AFB the Philippines, Eniwetok Atoll, Tokyo, Taiwan, to name just a few.

“The boys” were usually expecting us on their particular show day (night) which was indicated by the four front rows of seats having been filled six hours before the show.

On one occasion the show girls themselves were entertained as we landed about 13:00 on Eniwetok Atoll, which was only two miles long and a half mile wide. It was said that the only female to have set foot on that atoll was a collie mascot. Therefore “the boys” were “used to” being totally naked while going from their outdoor showers to their tents or Quonset huts. You should have seen the faces of the



1) the frontal area of number four

show girls as our aircraft taxied into the ramp area.

On our way home to the States, we had a problem on number four engine. It was losing 15 gallons of oil per hour. We were not quite half way home, the point of no return, when we had to shut down number four and feather the prop. We turned around and headed for Hickam AFB, Hawaii.

Since Gary and I had talked by phone about a month ago, he asked me to bring some photos from the 1950s. I do have a few to share with you.

Sorry, I don't have a photo of the show girls laughing at the naked boys on Eniwetok, but what I do have are photos of our harrowing experience after approaching the point of no return when we shut down number four engine. I took the pictures in the following order (shown above): 1) the frontal area of number four, 2) a side view showing oil streaks along the cowling, and 3) my best shot, over the right wing you can see a C-54 rescue squadron aircraft following us.

Today someone at the Travis Museum asked why rescue was called for the failure of only one engine. Well, that is a good question, but it was normal procedure. My first assignment after tech school at Shepherd AFB was the 57<sup>th</sup> Air Rescue Sq, Lajes Field, Azores, as



2) a side view showing oil streaks along the cowling

an aircraft and engine mechanic on C-54s.

At Hickam a flightline maintenance squadron for transient aircraft repaired our aircraft. They did not need my assistance and, not wishing to get in the way, I spent two days "exercising" on Waikiki. As soon as our aircraft was repaired, we departed and made a safe return to Burbank Airport, Hollywood. After landing, I did coax April Ames, a singer in our show troupe, to pose with me while standing near the empennage (tail section) of our MATS C-97 transport (shown below). Civilian airlines used the same aircraft but it was known as the Boeing Stratocruiser. It had 19



3) my best shot, over the right wing you can see a C-54 rescue squadron aircraft following us.

windows in the nose section. Count them the next time you see one. I was hoping to see one at the Travis Museum. I thought I saw one when I drove up, but later I realized it was a B-29 which had a similar frontal fuselage appearance. OK aircraft buffs, let's find one for the museum. Thanks for listening. The Travis Museum is a great place to visit.

Robert L. Wells, A/2c, AF 13530188, 22 Feb 1955-19 Dec 1958.

PS: What do I do now? "Whatever I wish." I want to do whatever HE wants me to do. You may know who HE is. I hope so.



After landing, Bob Wells coaxed April Ames, a singer in the show troupe, to pose with him while standing near the empennage (tail section) of his MATS C-97 transport.

## CURATOR'S CORNER



*We can't state often enough that volunteers are the life blood of the museum. Thanks to them, we have one of the finest aviation museums on the West Coast.*

In late April **MSgt Mitch Danbury**, the Museum Superintendent, was suddenly reassigned to another position on base. When I came to the museum in 1996, my staff consisted of four NCOs. As of last April I had one. The loss of **MSgt Danbury**, who had done a superb job, often doing the work of two persons responsible for a wide range of tasks, caused turmoil in Museum operations. We have had to cut back on many services. We are now open Tuesday-Saturday instead of Monday-Saturday. Indeed, from time to time the Museum may even have to be closed if I go on leave. I still have the assistance of **MSgt Terry Juran**, a Reservist, half time. Together we were able to keep the museum open during the summer. A full-time replacement for **MSgt Danbury**, **TSgt Robert Perry**, joined us in September. Meanwhile we will continue to try to recruit additional help. Under present conditions, however, commanders are reluctant to loan personnel to the Museum. We ask for patience from visitors and those seeking assistance from the Museum as we try to respond to a continuous barrage of phone calls and requests, arrange several functions a week, especially tours and retirements, make three-four trips to the gate each day to sign in visitors (a requirement that may soon change), and deal with countless issues related to maintaining one of the largest aviation museums on the West Coast.

### MAJOR ARNOLD WIESE

I am saddened to report that **Major Arnold Wiese**, USAF retired, passed away on May 26. Arnold flew B-24s in WWII. Arnold worked as a volunteer in our gift shop for several years. His obituary is included in this issue of the Newsletter. **Earl Johnson**, the gift shop manager, has been indisposed for several weeks undergoing medical treatment. We wish him a speedy recovery. He and **Gerry Propp** are seeking additional assistance in the gift shop. Please contact the museum, if you are interested.

### EXHIBITS

Although **MSgt Danbury** has a new job on base, he drops in on occasion to work on several projects that he has outstanding. Among them, is a new display on Jimmy Doolittle and his famous raid. This display is now about 75% com-

plete. **MSgt Juran** finished painting the F-105. He also assembled a team that is preparing the C-140 for painting. **Allan Jones** completed a display of model aircraft from the Korean War to the present. With the assistance of **TSgt Perry**, who was here briefly on "orientation," I put up a wall display on the C-47 that **Duncan Miller** donated to the Foundation and on its airlift by helicopter to the base.

### KVIE'S "WARRIORS WITH WINGS,"

In other noteworthy activities, the public television station KVIE, Channel 6, in Sacramento, came to the Museum to film part of a documentary on the air bases in the Central Valley during WW II. I put them in contact with several people who served on Travis (then Fairfield-Suisun Army Air Base) at that time and I gave them an interview. **Ben Reed** provided them with many vintage photos from our archives. The documentary, "Warriors with Wings," aired on KVIE on October 3.

### AMC CONDUCTS MUSEUM INVENTORY

I should also report that during the last two weeks of April, **Don Wiggins**, the AMC Command Curator, and a three-woman team from the USAF Museum at Wright-Patterson came to the Museum and completed a wall-to-wall inventory of all items on display on the floor. This project had long been abeyance and went a long way toward bringing our data base up to date. They are expected to return in the fall to finish the job.

### MUSEUM SUFFERS MINOR WIND DAMAGE

In May a tent left in place overnight following a BBQ was blow over in a wind storm. It smashed one of the front windows of the Museum and caused minor damage to one aircraft.

### FOUNDATION RECEIVES LETTER OF INTENT

Finally, on July 18, Col. Steven Arquette, the Commander of 60 AMW at Travis, presented the Doolittle Education Foundation with a letter of intent designating, with certain contingencies, the FAMCAMP and ball field area near the main gate as the site for a future museum. Since then, however, the wing has reconsidered part of this site. Thus a revised letter may be forthcoming. Once the site is determined, the Foundation can show potential donors that it has land on which to build

## IN MEMORIAM

a new facility. More will be said on this in the near future.

### NUTS AND BOLTS

**Neil Wood, John Card, and Tom Roberts** cleaned various parts of the Hound Dog missile control system. **Jake Jacobson, John Card, Norm Crombie, Tom Roberts, and Joe Tattersall,** assembled the T-33 belonging to Solano Community College but on loan to the Doolittle Education Foundation. **Bob Jenkins, Bob Zirzow, Norm Crombie, Bill Santee, and Charlie White** repaired some of the damage to the C-47 that it suffered while being airlifted to the base. **Bob Zirzow** cleaned the instruments in the F-104. **Bob Jenkins** and **Bob Zirzow** also tried to keep our "utility" jeep running. We need a new vehicle. Would anyone like to donate one? They also cleaned up leaking oil from the C-124. They, with help from **Charlie White, Tom Roberts, and Ken Cox,** moved the C-56 and A-26 away from the C-124. The wind was blowing the leaking oil on to these aircraft. **Bob Zirzow, Bob Jenkins, Charlie White, John Card, and Ken Cox** moved the U3A, O-2, and C-126 to make way for an outdoor BBQ. **Charlie Moran, Robert Cassero, and Charlie White** are preparing passenger seats for the C-118. **Charlie White** also sewed gun covers for the B-29. **Ben Reed** did touch up paint work on the B-29. Ben also continued to maintain and update the archives. **Bob Adorni** refurbished a display cabinet. **Jimmy Martin** made numerous minor repairs on various aircraft. **Bill Lancaster** helped with various building repairs.

### DONATIONS

The Museum has received generous monetary donations from Hazel Wiese Gibson, Kenneth and Sharon Darrow, Merryle and Marilyn Wiese, and Jay Gentzler in memory of Arnold Wiese. It received similar contributions from Robert Engle, George Bard, Albert Doolittle, and Lois Tuttle in memory of Col. Jack Sims. In addition it received contributions from the Travis OWC and the 3083<sup>rd</sup> Aviation Depot Group, which was assigned to the former Fairfield Air Force Station at Travis. Furthermore, Gary Vostry donated \$300 towards repainting the U3. Finally, Mrs. Walt Scott donated many boxes of books to our library. We greatly appreciate these donations.



**Arnold J. Wiese, Major USAF ret.**  
Nov. 28, 1917 – May 26, 2007

**W**e are sad to report that Arnold Wiese, a long-time volunteer at the Museum gift shop, passed away last May. Arnold was born on his grand parents' farm in Sioux Valley, Minnesota in 1917. He left the farm to pursue his love for flying. Prior to WWII he worked for Douglass Aircraft Corporation in southern California building dive bombers. At the outbreak of the war, he joined the US Army Air Corps. He became a B-24 Liberator pilot and flew missions over Central Europe from Spinazzola, Italy. He was proud to say that he never lost a plane, but he did come back with a many holes. And, only one of his crew was wounded. Upon discharge from the service, he joined the Air Force Reserve, in which he remained for 23 years. Meanwhile he went to work for United Airlines, serving as an inspector. He enjoyed many years of retirement and volunteered first at the Castle AFB Museum and then at the Travis Air Museum. We at Travis are grateful for his help and we will miss him.

## Thank you!



The Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum Foundation  
wishes to thank the Travis Credit Union  
for generously sponsoring the printing of  
Travis Air Museum's newest advertising tray inserts.  
We would also like to recognize [Delta Graphics](#) for their  
cooperation and superior service in completing this project.

# MEMBERSHIP: JIMMY DOOLITTLE AIR & SPACE MUSEUM FOUNDATION

*A membership in the Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation is an excellent gift for birthdays, holidays, thank yous, retirements or memorials. Being a part of history is a gift that keeps on giving!*

Mail this form and check to: Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation  
P.O. Box 1565  
Travis AFB, CA 94535.  
For further information phone: (707) 424-5605.



**Membership Form (Please print)** Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Membership # \_\_\_\_\_

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Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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**ANNUAL DUES AND MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES**

Individual Patron     \$15.00/1 yr.,     \$40.00/3 yrs.,     \$65.00/5 yrs.

Family Patron         \$25.00/1 yr.,     \$70.00/3 yrs.,     \$115.00/5 yrs.

Contributing Patron    \$100.00/1 yr.,    \$295.00/3yrs.,    \$490.00/5yrs.

Sponsor Patron         \$250.00/1 yr.,    \$745.00/3 yrs.

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\*LifePatron             \$1,000.00   \*Life patrons may make this total contribution in any amount over a five consecutive calendar year period. Approved as tax deductible by both United States IRS and California Franchise Tax Board.

*Whether you can give an hour or a day, volunteers are needed in the Gift Shop and office; with the restoration and maintenance crew and as a docent. Please call 424-5605 for more information. Thanks!*

**Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation**  
P. O. Box 1565  
Travis AFB, CA 94535

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### THOUGHTS ON VETERANS DAY

—General Douglas MacArthur

*It is the SOLDIER, not the reporter,  
who has given us freedom of the press.*

*It is the SOLDIER, not the poet,  
who has given us freedom of speech.*

*It is the SOLDIER, not the campus organizers,  
who has given us the freedom to demonstrate.*

*It is the SOLDIER, who salutes the flag,  
who serves the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag,*

*Who allows the protester to burn the flag. AMEN.*