

Hangar Digest

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The AMC Museum was the jumping off point for the 436th Security Forces annual Ruck March, held Feb. 26. The event honors soldiers who fought Communist forces at the Chosin Reservoir during the Korean War.

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LOOKING BACK

When I made my first visit to the Museum years ago, I noticed our aircraft were tied to the tarmac with some very heavy chains. I honestly didn't think they were there to keep someone from snatching away our C-124, but still couldn't fathom what they were for.

It's simple, a volunteer told me (I don't recall who it was). Airplanes are designed to go up into the air, something even parked birds tend to do under the right wind conditions. The chains make sure our precious Museum aircraft stay grounded.

That explanation was brought home recently during all the windstorms we had pass through. I was visiting our C-141B during a particularly nasty day and even though the Starlifter was tied to the ground, when inside I felt the aircraft shake and shimmy just like it did while in flight.

It was a pretty strange experience.

— Jeff Brown, editor

Who says there's nothing to do in Delaware?

The AMC Museum has received a number of good shout-outs recently via the Internet.

We've garnered 16 very positive reviews over on TripAdvisor.com, which advertises itself as a means of helping people plan trips and vacations to get the best experience from both. The website claims to have been visited more than 45 million times.

One writer said they went to the Museum expecting a "hodge-podge, rinky-dink collection of old, beat-up aircraft."

"How wrong we could have been!" they added. The welcome by the Museum's staff was, "the first sign of a special and memorable experience."

The Museum gets a notable mention at GoInonFaith.com, a site for faith-based travelers, which calls our collection of "some of the most amazing aircraft of the 20th century."

A most enjoyable aspect of the Museum experience is the 120-plus volunteers who guide visitors through some of the "first, last or only ones of their kind left in the world" aircraft, the site adds.

A comment on Yelp.com made note of the Museum's Medal of Honor hallway and its collection of "impressively preserved" aircraft. Another, posted in November 2010, called attention to the Museum's accessibility by not having to go onto Dover AFB itself, photograph-friendly atmosphere and the selection in the Museum store.

That the writer took the time to make note of the Museum while waiting for a flight out of Dover's passenger terminal makes it even more special.

Encourage anyone you know who has visited the Museum to give their thoughts on any of the numerous vacation or trip-centered websites out there.

It's hard to believe, but the Air Mobility Command Museum is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2011. It's pretty much a low-key affair though, as we focus on expanding and improving our exhibits and displays.

One thing that will be evident in celebrations this year is our anniversary logo, shown in the upper right. It's designed by Hal Sellars of Dunrovin Design and Copy. Hal is the son of Foundation Collections Manager Deborah Sellars.

We've already incorporated the anniversary design into a challenge coin, which is available at the Museum store.

— Jeff Brown, editor



The [Hangar Digest](#) is published quarterly and is dedicated to the preservation of our airlift and tanker heritage. All articles, unless otherwise noted, are written by the editor.

Viewpoints in this publication are those of the contributing authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the AMC Museum Foundation or of the Museum's staff.

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Contributions. Reader comments, articles and ideas are solicited for future issues. Mail to The Hangar Digest, P.O. Box 02050, Dover AFB DE 19902-2050; fax 302-677-5940; or email amcmuseum@us.af.mil.

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Photos are by Jeff Brown, except as noted.

Air Mobility Command Museum Mission Statement

The mission of the Air Mobility Command Museum is twofold:

- To present the history and development of military airlift and tanker operations.
- In a goal closely aligned with the first, to portray the rich history of Dover Air Force Base and its predecessor, Dover Army Airfield.

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From the Museum Store:

The renovation and expansion of the AMC Museum store has begun, but we're not closing our doors! The Museum store is a vital part of your Museum and a big point of interest for visitors, many of who see it as a way of finding hard-to-get merchandise. Profits from the store help maintain our valuable collection of vintage aircraft, artifacts, books and other memorabilia and help us present new and more interesting events and programs for all visitors.

In addition to sales, the Museum also will accept donations toward the renovations. Those interested in providing a financial gift on behalf of the Museum store should visit www.amcmuseum.org/new_store; donations are tax deductible and now may be made online by using PayPal.

Contact store manager Jim Stewart by phone at 302-677-5992; by fax at 302-677-5949; or email at storemanageramcm@comcast.net. Members receive a 10% discount. Not yet a Friend of the Museum? Join now by filling out the membership application on page 15.

Page 2 photo: U.S. Army airborne infantry troopers jump from an Air Force C-17. U.S. DoD photo.

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From the Director

Some projects seem to take forever to get moving and some seem to blossom overnight.

Take the case of relocating our volunteers' break room: our team went from zero to finished product in about a week. Up until recently, the break room had been conveniently situated near the main entrance where guides could greet incoming visitors and offer them free narrated museum tours. Because the Museum store is undergoing a much needed expansion, the space for the break room will be absorbed into the new store. We knew we needed to provide a new area for our hard-working guides but had not been able to decide on where the best place would be. Finally, when inspiration struck as to the location, we considered hiring a general contractor to construct our new break room.

By doing some measurements and old fashioned head scratching we found we could give the guides a larger office right inside the main hangar without sacrificing either exhibit area or seating in the event area. It was an as-close-to-perfect solution as could be imagined, but still we had to go through the process of finding a builder.

Instead, early one morning John Taylor and I piled into the old Dodge pickup, a long ago gift to the museum from retired Lt. Col. Steve Welde, and drove to the lumberyard to buy supplies. By that afternoon we had the walls up and by the end of the second day the outside of the office was completed. By this time several of our dedicated volunteers had picked up the challenge and took over finishing the inside of their new office. I can't overstate the value of the many great ideas that come from



*AMC Museum Director
Mike Leister*

our team; everyone adds something to the mix.

I'd really like to thank John Taylor for his "let's do it" attitude; he makes many challenges disappear, not only in administration but when he picks up a hammer he is equally as dangerous. John Demory and Paul George did wonderful work, as did several volunteers that wanted to pitch in. Paul was in here already working one day at 6:30 a.m.; now that's dedication.

I mentioned the old pickup above. She's been good to us, and Gene Mears has kept her running well, but it is time to look for a newer truck that's capable of towing our 25-foot aircraft trailer. If you know of anyone willing to donate a heavy-duty three-quarter-ton pickup in usable condition, please let us know about it. The need is there, but the funding isn't.

The new control tower is moving along at a good pace. As I finish this article the steel frame is up, the steel steps and hand-rails have been installed and all have been welded into place. One day recently a huge (120-ton crane came lumbering up the driveway and after some false starts it took 10 minutes to go from having the tower cab sitting on the ground to being perched on top of the framework.

Next the framing for the drywall and siding will be installed. Weather has kept us behind schedule but by the end of May we should have it open to visitors. Control tower personnel from Dover Air Force Base are ready and willing to help it get configured and once we are finished visitors will be able to listen to real time chatter over the airwaves plus some "vintage" radio calls as well. I can't overstate the value of this tower as an educational tool. People will be able to see the equipment used in a tower environment and as a bonus several of our volunteers have experience as air traffic controllers.

The next phase after opening will be to install a camera in the cab and a flat screen at ground level so visitors who don't want to climb the 40 steps still can get a bird's-eye view.

Enjoy the spring, we sure will!

Mike

Meet Museum Volunteer of the Quarter Terry Anderson

Terry Anderson has volunteered at the AMCM as a tour guide, working two days per week, since June 2008. He also volunteers at the USO lounge Monday mornings and offers his services as a computer tutor to seniors at the Camden Harvest Years Senior Center.

Born 63 years ago in Chicago, but raised in Tucson, Ariz. and Las Vegas, he entered the Air Force through the Air Force Academy, graduating in 1969. After pilot training, he was stationed at Dover Air Force Base as a C-141 pilot for two years, then transferred to the C-5 in 1972. After assignments to Gunter Air Force Station, Ala., back to Dover and then to Howard AFB, Panama, he retired from the Air Force while assigned to the 7th Communication Group at the Pentagon working for the Office of the Secretary of Defense in computer security. After serving 15 years with the Delaware Department of Education as a computer database manager, he retired again and turned to volunteering.

Anderson and his wife, Ann, a retired school teacher, now

live in Dover.

Anderson knew he wanted to be a pilot after he saw B-36s and B-47s flying around Davis-Monthan AFB near Tucson, and also was influenced by the sight of the nearby "boneyard" storage facility.

At the Museum, Anderson is an instructor in the two flight simulators, drawing on his experience as a C-5 aircraft commander.

"I particularly like the C-141 simulator because it brings



Terry Anderson, on duty in his "office" the AMC Museum's C-141 aircraft simulator.

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Helen Kniss: 100 years and counting

Going strong at the century mark, she still wows 'em with her get up and go attitude

It can be easily said Helen Kniss likes being around airplanes. After all, she lived in a town where the biggest employer was the Piper Aircraft company, and her husband, a daughter, and a son-in-law all worked in the trade.

But it's the length of time Mrs. Kniss has been around flying machines that raises eyebrows. She was born almost exactly seven years after Wilbur and Orville Wright demonstrated the feasibility of powered flight, and at the age of 100 is a regular volunteer at the Air Mobility Command Museum.

In fact, she's thought to be the oldest volunteer in the Air Force's museum system.

Mrs. Kniss doesn't dwell on being a centenarian, though she attributes her long life to her faith, never having smoked, a diet that always includes chocolate and daily use of Oil of Olay skin care products.

"I don't think about it much," she said. "I don't feel a bit different."

Mrs. Kniss has been in Delaware only three years, having left Pennsylvania at the age of 97 to live with daughter Janice Caldwell, the Museum's volunteer coordinator and her husband Dick, the Museum's education specialist. The three now live in Milford, whose city fathers presented her with the key to the city in honor of her birthday.

Born Helen Margaret Crider on Dec. 11, 1910, in a tiny coal mining hamlet in Clinton County, Pa., Mrs. Kniss loved being outdoors, usually swimming in the summer and skating in the winter. She went to school in nearby Lock Haven and during her two marriages worked in Lock Haven while living in nearby Dunnstown.

Mrs. Kniss grew up with the chance to see the barnstormers — former military aviators from World War I — perform at nearby airfields, and saw planes using long hooks snatch mailbags into the air.

Lock Haven itself became synonymous with the industry in the late 1930s when Piper bought an unused silk mill and soon became the leader in the light, privately owned aircraft industry.

Mrs. Kniss and her family were friends with several Piper executives, engineers and test pilots, to include the irredoubtable "Scorchy" Monroe, who sometimes flew planes under a bridge spanning the Susquehanna River.

"I thought he was nuts," she said of Monroe's stunts.

Despite having left the town, Mrs. Kniss maintains strong ties with Lock Haven. She still belongs to the local Methodist church and has the local newspaper delivered to her new home in Milford.

She's adjusted well to life in Delaware, where she enjoys dining out and going to church every Sunday. And she also fits in with volunteer life at the Museum. Known to many simply as "Mom," she still gets around on her own, although other volunteers will help with a wheelchair, if needed, while she checks them in and out at the volunteer office.

"I just like the people here," Mrs. Kniss said.



Museum volunteer Helen Kniss turned 100 years old in December 2010.

ANDERSON

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

back a lot of fond memories, being surrounded by the same aircraft controls this simulator offers," he said.

Anderson also created a Microsoft Access database program that helps the Museum's volunteer coordinator track and report the volunteer time for the more than 140 active volunteers, day by day.

"The Museum Foundation rewards volunteers with museum hats, shirts, memorial bricks, etc. for various milestones in total time volunteered over the years. This effort deserves to be credited accurately," he said.

Anderson provides guided tours of the Museum and assists Dover units holding airmen's retirement ceremonies in the Museum.

It was these activities that earned him the Volunteer of the Quarter honors for the fourth quarter of 2010.

"I love spending time with the other retired aviators that span generations of aircraft and missions," he said. "We have a great time reminiscing about missions, situations, and solving the world's problems."

VOLUNTEERS



Ev Sahrbeck photo

NEW VOLUNTEERS BREAK ROOM: *It took only about a week to plan and build the new volunteer break room at the AMC Museum. And who did all the work? Our volunteers, of course!*

Bob Dorr returns for 'Hangar Flying'

Historian to examine massive February 1945 Eighth Air Force 'Mission to Berlin'

On Feb. 3, 1945, Eighth Air Force launched 1,003 B-17 bombers targeting the German capital of Berlin and 434 additional B-24s against nearby Magdeburg. It was a mission that pitted the aircrews against hours of time flying deep into hostile territory, the city's formidable anti-aircraft defenses and a depleted, though still aggressive Luftwaffe, both determined to protect the city.

When it was over, the Eighth had lost less than 40 aircraft and about 400 crewmen; German casualties numbered in the thousands, with extensive damage caused to the city's center and its vital rail lines.

Noted Air Force historian Bob Dorr will talk about the raid, the largest such airborne operation against a single target up to that time, during the Air Mobility Command Museum's next Hangar Flying event.

It will be Dorr's third appearance at the Museum, coinciding with the publication of his most recent book, "Mission to Berlin."

This book is a personalized account of that day, thanks to Dorr's work in not only researching official accounts of the raid, but through extensive interviews with Eighth Air Force veterans.

"For many, many years, I was more interested in technical things; I'm an airplane nut who knows serial numbers and block numbers and all," Dorr said. "But recently I've become more interested in the stories of the men who fought."

Much like "Hell Hawks," Dorr's 2008 book that looked at an American fighter group as it leapfrogged across Europe following D-Day, "Mission to Berlin" will focus less on the men on the flight deck and more on the rest of the crew. He'll also look at those who waited, sometimes in vain, for aircraft to return from their missions.

Dorr wants today's generation to know more about those on the ground — the administrators, mechanics and other support personnel — who planned the mission, got the planes into the air and who kept things running during and between missions.

"I strongly believe in dispelling the notion that aviation is just about pilots," he said.

It was the work in talking to former P-51 fighter pilots for "Hell Hawks" that gave Dorr the idea for the Berlin book.

"In my contacts with veterans, family members and other aviation buffs, I seemed to come across people who knew someone who had flown on a B-17," Dorr said. The bombers flew with crews of nine or 10

instead of the single-seated fighters, making more people available for him to interview and to capture, perhaps for the last time, the experiences of World War II.

"There are just a lot more veterans and family members who knew about it."

In doing his research, Dorr noticed many children and grandchildren of B-17 and B-24 veterans didn't know much about their parents' war-time experiences.

"What sticks in my mind is that whenever we'd talk to the second or third generation, they'd all say, 'Dad doesn't like to talk about the war.' But when I'd interview the vets, I couldn't get them to stop talking.

"They seem to like the questions I ask, such as 'How did you start the engines?' or 'How did you get out to the aircraft?' They're usually very happy to talk about those kinds of details."

And it is those elements Dorr writes about in "Mission to Berlin," he said. Not just how uncomfortable crews were in the unpressurized B-17s or the apprehension of the bomb run, but how they felt when learning of each day's mission, or of getting packages and letters from home.

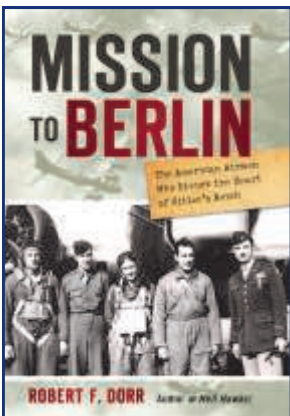
"And I don't think they want to hear how they're the 'Greatest Generation' or that they're heroes," Dorr added. "They just want to hear from people who are interested in who they are and what they did."

With "Mission to Berlin" due to be released soon, Dorr already is working on his next project, a book about the B-29 mission of March 9-10, 1945, that resulted in a firestorm that virtually burned the Japanese capital of Tokyo to the ground.

As of press time, a firm date for Dorr's Hangar Flying talk on "Mission to Berlin" had not been established however Museum officials expect to schedule the event for mid-spring. Autographed copies of the book will be available for sale at the event and afterward in the Museum store.



Historian Bob Dorr is backed by the Museum's B-17, Sleepytime Gal during an earlier Hangar Flying talk.



Graphic courtesy Bob Dorr

SNAFU

While we strive to get everything right in each issue of the *Hangar Digest*, it doesn't always work out that way.

In the "Looking Back" column of January, I discussed Dover's former "Mole Hole" facility where alert crews stood by to fly KC-97s to refuel Strategic Air Command bombers and fighters.

Unfortunately my reference to the KC-97L model apparently was incorrect, and I was called on the carpet — good naturedly — by two Museum members.

One of those was John Bessette, who pointed out Dover's Strato-tankers would have been G-models or earlier. John's the historian for the Tactical Tanker Association.

Dave Menard wrote, "Sorry to inform you that the regular AF did not fly the L-model, only the ANG units did!"

Touché, Dave. He's a former USAF Museum employee who worked on the KC-97 in 1958 and 1959. Dave notes plans to update active duty KC-97s with jet engines would have hampered SAC CINC Gen. Curtis LeMay's plans for the new KC-135, so the idea was dropped "like a hot potato."

— Jeff Brown, ed.



FOUNDATION NOTES by Don Sloan

We had a full house (hangar?) on Feb. 13 for **Bill Ayrey's Hangar Flying** presentation on the history of ILC Dover and the tremendous impact its spacesuit work has had on NASA and our country's space program. This was Bill's third appearance and the word must be getting out -- we had about 130 enthusiasts show up for the event. Phil White, David Bever and Ed Perkowski were among several Foundation board members who helped Bill get ready for the evening. A special "thank you" needs to go out to Bill for another great show, to Paul and Carol Gillis for heading up the "snack department" and to Ed for providing the necessary planning to make it happen.



We're still planning for another session of **Hangar Flying** with noted author **Bob Dorr**, who also has been a frequent visitor. Our goal is to coordinate his talk with the release of latest book, "Mission to Berlin," which now is due to be released by this summer.

The book and Bob's talk will give us a special insight into the 8th Air Force raid of 3 Feb. 1945, over what was left of Hitler's Third Reich. While we still don't have a confirmed date, you can watch our website, www.amcmuseum.org, for updates. If you're on our email list, we'll also send it out in an eNewsletter. If you're *not* get-

ting our eNewsletter, go to the website and sign up today!

The **AMC Museum Summer Camp** will be here before you know it. Once again, the Museum will hold an educational summer camp for children interested in aeronautics and/or the United States Air Force. Kids will learn the history and science of flight, get to fly a simulator, preflight an actual airplane, and have the option of a flight around the Dover Air Force Base flight pattern. The three-hour classes run from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. for ages 9 to 11 and 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. for ages 12 to 15. The starting dates are June 20, July 11, July 25



and Aug. 8. This year, we're also holding **advanced classes** from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. for ages 15 to 16, beginning Aug. 1, with Aug. 15 as overflow if we need it. Students in the advanced classes will learn about museum restoration, aircraft engine mechanics and aircraft design. The ever-popular Cessna 172 flight with Dover's Aero Club will be on Thursdays, with Fridays as the weather day. The cost for all four days is only \$100 for the basic classes and \$125 for the advanced classes. There is an additional fee of \$25 for the *optional* flight. **The class sizes are limited**, so be sure to sign up quickly at www.amcmuseum.org. We're also happy to accommodate repeat summer campers.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Please join us Friday, June 10, at Jonathan’s Landing for our seventh annual **AMC Museum Foundation Fundraiser Golf Tournament**. Registration is from 11:00 a.m. to noon. The four-person scramble tournament will begin with a shotgun start at noon. **You may make up your own team.** Tournament prizes will be awarded at dinner following the round. Join us for fun, food and prizes! The cost is \$85/person, \$75/military officer and \$55/enlisted. That includes the driving range before the start, green fees, golf with cart, snacks and beverages on the course, hole-in-one prizes, door prizes, a silent auction and a buffet dinner after the tournament.

We’re looking for individuals and local enterprises to be Hole Sponsors and/or to donate prizes. For a minimum donation of \$100, you’ll have a 36-by-24-inch sign on the golf course noting you as a sponsor. All sponsors are recognized in our handout brochure and also at the buffet dinner after the round. Sponsors’ names will be highlighted in our Museum eNewsletter (which goes out on the Internet to *more than a thousand people*), will be listed in our next *Hangar Digest* and finally, on the Museum website under “Latest News” following the tournament. As you can see, being a sponsor not only helps the AMC Museum, but it provides you with considerable recognition and advertising -- and did we mention that it’s tax-deductible?



George Bailey and Cornell Randolph presented Phil White and Rich Harper a \$500 check just prior to last year’s annual golf tournament. The Dover Sam’s Club has been a consistent supporter of the Air Mobility Command Museum Foundation. If you plan to play in the tournament, be a Hole Sponsor, or both, please make checks payable to AMC MUSEUM FOUNDATION and forward to our tournament chairman, Phil White, at 98 Jackson Ct., Smyrna, DE 19977. You can call Phil at 302-653-6825 to reserve a spot or email him at white.arthur@mailcity.com. You also may pay on the day of the tournament. The AMC Museum Foundation is a 501(c)(3) corporation, EIN 51- 0355891. The proceeds from this tournament help us fulfill the mission of the AMC Museum as an aviation and aerospace, education, scientific, cultural, historical, and inspirational facility for the general public and the Air Force community.

Mike Leister welcomed retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Bill Welser back to the Museum last month. A former Dover AFB wing commander, Lt. Gen. Welser was the driving force in getting the museum moved to our current site. It was an honor to present him with our new **25th Anniversary Challenge Coin** as we discussed the ongoing renovation of our Museum Store.

This year’s annual Lewes Polar Bear Plunge, held Feb. 6 at Rehoboth Beach, attracted 3,094 swimmers into 36-degree Atlantic Ocean waters to raise money for Special Olympics Delaware. Those hardy souls included yours truly, Museum Director Mike Leister and his wife, Claudia, plus my buddy, Diego “Doc” Alvarez. Altogether, a record \$550,000 was raised for SODE.



Photo credits: Bob Dorr (public domain); all others, Don Sloan



Knees in the breeze, boots on the ground

With roots in airborne assaults dating to World War II, AMC aircraft deliver more than just cargo

Sometimes travelers on Air Mobility Command aircraft leave the plane long before it reaches its destination.

For them, the old saw – Why would someone want to jump out of a perfectly good airplane – has a real answer: because they want to. Highly trained airborne infantry specialists and combat experts, their mission is to parachute into enemy held territory and establish a beachhead for ground infantry units.

Be it the fields of Normandy or the deserts of Iraq, U.S. Army paratroopers have jumped from Air Force aircraft, to include the C-47, C-130 and C-141 – all on display at the Museum – and the more recent C-5 and C-17, both of which fly out of Dover Air Force Base. Army units, including the All-American 82nd Airborne Division and the Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division have long histories concurrent with AMC and its predecessors, stretching back to the Troop Carrier Command of World War II.

Most recently, more than 1,000 Sky Soldiers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade parachuted into Kurdish-controlled areas of northern Iraq. The March 2003 operation was the first combat insertion of paratroopers using the C-17.

Not a popular idea at first

Formed during the Second World War, the Troop Carrier Command was tasked with flying paratroopers and gliders into combat. One of these, the 436th Troop Carrier Group, is a direct ancestor of the 436th Operations Group at Dover Air Force Base.

But while paratroopers have been used successfully in hundreds of military operations over the last six decades, the idea of putting American soldiers on the ground via aircraft was slow to gain acceptance. With the scheme encountering considerable resistance in the U.S. war department during the period before World War II, other nations, including some not so friendly to the United States at that time, found merit in the idea. In one of the first assaults of its kind, German paratroopers took part in the April 1940 invasion of Denmark. Perhaps seeing the writing on the wall, the U.S. Army, under pressure from Maj. Gen. William C. Lee, finally acquiesced to the idea of forming a test platoon of two officers and 48 enlisted volunteer paratroopers in June of that year.

Lee, who became known as the Father of U.S. Airborne, had closely studied German airborne preparations while stationed in France after World War I. He picked 1st Lt. William T. Ryder to head the test platoon, which quickly set up at Fort Benning, Ga. Relying on Lee's knowledge of German operations and logistics, Ryder laid out a complete training program, later "borrowing" a 259-foot tower from the 1939 World's Fair to simulate jumps with full equipment. The training culminated

jump from a plane. Private William N. King followed, becoming the first enlisted man to parachute from an aircraft.

"That's where we started," said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Robert Contratto, a senior master trainer with the 1st Battalion, 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment at Fort Benning. One of a select group of instructors known as "Black Hats," Contratto is an 18-year veteran with more than 130 parachute jumps to his credit.

"The concept of jumping out of airplanes wasn't new, but what was new was jumping out of airplanes to fight," he said. Parachute riggers and packers, each of who was required to learn to jump themselves to prove the efficiency of their training, belonged to what then was known as the Army Air Corps. They went on to become some of the original jump instructors.

"So, in the scheme of things, the first instructors were actually Air Force guys," Contratto said.

Seeing an opportunity for a new type of warfare, the Army established the 501st Parachute Battalion exactly one month after Ryder and King's history-making jumps, authorizing a 10-fold increase in the number of paratroopers. The 501st's commander, Maj. William M. Miley, was tasked with taking the group beyond merely jumping out of airplanes to creating a cohesive combat force.

In the meantime, the German High Command had conducted a successful large-scale air assault against British forces holding the Mediterranean island of Crete. The ensuing victory was a hollow one however, as determined British resistance ensured almost half the assaulting forces either were killed, wounded or declared missing, and approximately one-third of their aircraft were destroyed.

Impressed with the seeming quickness of the German victory – and not knowing of the huge losses – Army officials picked up the pace of their own airborne efforts. New battalions were created from the core of the 501st, with parachute regiments forming soon after the Pearl Harbor attack. These later expanded to include the 82nd and soon thereafter the 101st, which had been deactivated after World War I.

But the paratroopers still needed aircraft, and to get them, senior leaders turned to the recently formed Troop Carrier Command of the U.S. Army Air Forces.

Some "think about it too much"

Equipped with the C-47 Skytrain, the military version of the highly regarded Douglas DC-3, the Troop Carrier Command was the back-



This World War II recruiting poster urged soldiers to "jump into the fight." Enlisted paratroopers received an extra \$50 pay monthly.



Gen. Dwight Eisenhower talks with Lt. Wallace Strobel and members of the 101st Airborne on June 5, 1944.

Aug. 16, 1940, when Ryder became the first paratroop officer to

SEE PARATROOPERS, NEXT PAGE

Paratroopers

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

bone of American airborne operations during World War II. Formed in 1942, by May 1944 TCC included three wings and 15 groups, to include approximately 1,300 aircraft. These planes were spread out over at least 14 Allied airfields in the United Kingdom and were serviced and flown by approximately 21,000 airmen.

Today, the Air Mobility Command – the direct descendant of the TCC – has a global reach, with 136,000 active duty and reserve airmen assigned to bases throughout the United States and the rest of the world, flying five types of aircraft, including Dover's own C-17 and C-5.



An instructor at the U.S. Army's 1st Battalion, 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment checks a harness for a trainee at Fort Benning, Ga.

One of AMC's vital missions includes delivering U.S. Army paratroopers to wherever they're needed, much as its predecessors did in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War and present day operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, not to mention other strategic and humanitarian missions efforts over the past 70 years.

Now, as they did in World War II, soldiers train to become paratroopers at Fort Benning, following in the footsteps of Ryder, King and thousands of others. Military personnel from all branches of the service train year-round in three week courses designed to take a raw "ground pounder" and turn him – or her – into a qualified paratrooper.

During their first week, most of the trainees' work is on the ground, learning how to safely exit a flying airplane both individually and as a group, Contratto said. This includes leaping with a safety line from a 34-foot tower, where trainees practice how to hit the ground without getting injured.

"That's where you first assess the level of your apprehension," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 William R. Couch, who has more than 100 jumps to his credit.

"At 34 feet, you still have a relationship with the ground," he said. "But when you're up in an airplane, your mind can't comprehend how high you're at. Some struggle with it, but that's because they think about it too much."

Crouch admits to being nervous on his first aerial jump, but when the time came ended up simply following everyone else out the door.

The second week of training gets a little more harrowing as the focus shifts to moving around inside an aircraft crowded with other soldiers in full gear and higher jumps. Trainees work on jumping in one-second intervals, controlling the chute on the way down and

how to avoid being dragged over the landscape once they're down. They also learn about possible malfunctions, dealing with emergencies and how to recover their chutes after landing.

The week includes jumps from the same towers used by Ryder, King and the others from the test platoon back in 1940.

The third week is the *pièce de résistance*, one jump a day for five days from an Air Force aircraft, usually a C-130 or a C-17. The last jump is made at night, although a standard joke among trainees is that all jumps are made in the dark: everyone closes their eyes once they leave the safety of the airplane.

"We train Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, allied forces, and cadets, about 18,000 a year," Contratto said. "Everyone gets the same training, whether they're a private or a Marine recon guy."

'We love all the air wings'

While he's jumped from just about every aircraft in the inventory, Contratto favors the C-130 Hercules.

"I prefer those any day," he said. "With a C-17, you get a vortex. With the C-130, you can stack up."

But others at Benning disagree, although good naturedly.

The C-17 Globemaster III is the preferred ride for some paratroopers, offering a much smoother trip than other aircraft, especially the giant C-5, said Sgt. 1st Class Paul Hart, a 20-year paratrooper who's also a Black Hat at Fort Benning.

The Globemaster III is the "Cadillac of airplanes" when it comes to jumping, Hart said.

"It's very wide, with lots of maneuvering room inside. It's also got three jump lights instead of two; that gives us an early warning for coming over a jump zone and for leaving the jump zone.

"And there's virtually no wind when you go out the door. We love it."

Crouch admits he prefers the CH-47 Chinook helicopter, where soldiers jump from a seated position.



About to get his "knees in the breeze" during Jump Week, a paratrooper leaps from an Air Force airplane during the third week of parachute training at Fort Benning, Ga. The red and green jump lights are on the left side of the doorframe.

"Your legs already are hanging off the edge," he said. "You just pick yourself up and push yourself out."

For those who wonder what it's like jumping out of an airplane, Contratto offers that leaping from Benning's 34-foot towers is a far more stomach churning experience.

"For me, it's worse to stand on a five-foot ladder than to be in the open door of an airplane," he said. "The towers are probably the

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Paratroopers

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scariest because when you're in an airplane, it's surreal. At 1,250 feet, it just doesn't seem real."

The 507th coordinates its jumps with different Reserve and National Guard units, including active duty squadrons at nearby Little Rock AFB, Ark.

"We love all the air wings," Contratto said. "They take good care of us."

For aircrews, making sure the soldiers get on the ground safely is the result of close teamwork between the command crew, the loadmasters on the cargo deck and the Army jumpmaster.

Retired Lt. Col. Paul Gillis took part in airdrop missions with the 82nd Airborne while a C-5 command pilot. He recalls flying out of Pope AFB, N.C., for low-level drops of weapons, including eight-inch Howitzers, and troops.

"We'd put our flaps fully down to go as slow as we could, sort of like when getting ready to land, except your wheels are up," he said. "We'd be at about 135 mph. The plane also had diverter doors which would help block the wind.

"We'd open up the troop doors and all the paratroopers would start whooping and hollering. They'd get all excited."

Combat jumps and practices would be done at about 700 feet up, meaning the troops would be on the ground in about five seconds.

"That way, you're less subject to getting shot at," Gillis said.

Paratroopers usually make static line jumps, meaning they're attached to the airplane by a strap that automatically deploys their chutes. Because airborne soldiers typically leave the aircraft no

more than 500 feet above the ground, there's little time for looking at the sights on the way down, Contratto said.

And yelling "Geronimo!" as often shown in old movies is frowned upon.

"When you leave the airplane, all you hear is a rush of air," he said. "But then it's all quiet. Once you've done everything, you spend the rest of the time looking 360-degrees around for other jumpers. It's not a time for reflection; it's designed to put 1,000 people on the ground in 30 seconds."

While first-timers may get a severe case of butterflies – or worse – during their training, Contratto likens jumping to walking out a door.

"It's what you've been taught," he said. "I don't notice anything but the toes of my boots. You look that your feet are together, checking to make sure you're in the right position."

The idea of sending troops into combat via aircraft has come a long way since it was first proposed more than 70 years ago. Many things have changed, but many things still are the same.

While today's paratroopers can take advantage of computer navigation, global positioning and other technical wizardry to make pinpoint landings, early jumpers had no such advantage.

That point was brought home in 2009 when Contratto got the chance to recreate the D-Day jump over Normandy during 65th anniversary observances. He and several other troopers parachuted from a World War II C-47 right into the same jump zones used on June 6, 1944.

"We went in at midnight and it was just awesome. Everything was big, open and clear, but they landed in fields and on hedgerows. They had to find the other guys. You could see how confusing it all was."

Photo credits: U.S. Department of Defense

Summer camp features flight around Dover AFB

There's no better place locally for kids to learn about the Air Force and our nation's future in aeronautics than during the Air Mobility Command Museum's annual camp, planned for this summer.

That's the feeling of two alumni, who got a taste of what youngsters will experience this year when they attended the inaugural session of the camp in 2010.

"I thought it would be a good thing to do," said 2010 summer camp grad Kyle Comegys. "They kept us really busy. It wasn't boring and time went by fast because it was really fun."

As in 2010, the first day of the 2011 camp will be conducted on a Monday when the Museum is normally closed to outside visitors. It mostly will feature classroom instruction on the principles of flight, such as what factors allow an aircraft to get into the air.

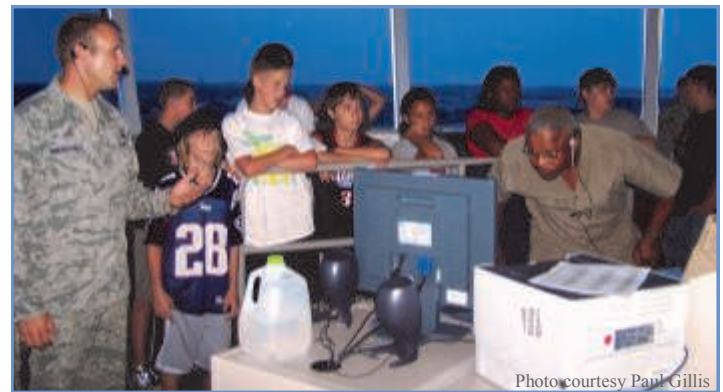
Later days include a scavenger hunt for information on the Museum's different aircraft and instruction on how to do a preflight inspection of an airplane. There also are extended sessions in the Museum's live aircraft simulator.

A highlight is the optional orientation ride aboard an Aeroclub aircraft, which will take the students on a trip through the air space around Dover Air Force Base.

"When you're up in the air, it's hard to know where you are unless you see a landmark like the Mall or the racetrack," said student Jack Heavner. "You can look behind the trees and see a lot of little rivers snaking through. I never knew there were so many streams and rivers."

The Museum has hired a student educator to help teach the courses, which will be facilitated by Museum volunteers. In addition to Museum activities, the camp will include tours of base facilities, including the newly built control tower and the weather and radar centers.

Half-day classes for students ages 9 to 11 run from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., and 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. for ages 12 to 15. There are advanced classes, also from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. for ages 15 and 16. Advanced students will learn museum restoration techniques, aircraft engine mechanics and aircraft design. Cost for each child is \$100 (\$125 for



Students at the 2010 AMC Museum Summer Camp got a close up look at the Dover AFB air traffic control tower.

the advanced classes) and an additional \$25 for the optional flight.

Classes and flights are limited in size, so it's a good idea to sign up as quickly as possible. Sessions are planned the weeks of June 20, July 11, July 25 and Aug. 8. Advanced classes will be held Aug. 1, with Aug. 15 reserved for overflow.

To learn more, go to the Museum website, www.amcmuseum.com.

Around and About the AMC Museum



Kelsey Trumble, 4, tries out the Museum's flight simulator, guided by her dad, Brian, a C-5 pilot. Kelsey is a real flying fanatic, as she owns both a flight suit and flight jacket and loves to play with airplane models. "I like it because my daddy flies in them," she said.

Photos by Jeff Brown, except as noted

Linda Schiding, a member of the Coastal Camera Club of Lewes and Rehoboth, contemplates camera settings while planning a shot of a Museum exhibit. Club members came to the Museum to both see the exhibits and practice photographic techniques in an indoor setting.



Cody Outten and grandfather Pete Karras, both of Harrington, made one of their frequent visits to the AMC Museum Jan. 22, where Cody tried out the T-38 simulator display. Cody, who hopes to go to the Air Force Academy and eventually fly the F-22, also flies computer simulators on his home computer.

Boy Scouts Lee Downes of Lewes and Matthew Zehner of Rehoboth look over the B-17 Sleepy Time Gal's landing gear during a tour of the Museum. "This Museum has a lot of stuff to look at," Lee said. "I like the variety." The two belong to Boy Scout Troop 2540 of Lewes.



Brian Kirk, 14, of Middletown, and his mother, Mary, examine the Museum's diorama of the restoration of the B-17 Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby. Brian, who is considering an Air Force career, often comes to the Museum, explaining, "I enjoy looking at all the military aircraft."

Dr. Katherine C. "Casey" Grier, left, director of museum studies at the University of Delaware was named honorary commander of the AMC Museum during the annual Honorary Commanders installation ceremony, held Jan. 7. With Grier is Museum Director Mike Leister and his wife, Claudia, and Charles H. "Chuck" Fithian, state of Delaware curator of archaeology, the past honorary museum commander.



AMC Museum photo



Aaron LeFort and fiancée Robyn Harper, both of Dover, show off Aaron's AMC Museum 25th Anniversary Challenge Coin.

Work on the Museum's newest exhibit — reconstruction of Dover Air Force Base's former control tower — went on March 14 as the cab section was lifted into place atop a newly-built steel base. Workers were preparing to remove the steel I-beams that supported the cab while it was being moved.



Ev Sahrbeck photo



Bill Ayrey of ILC Dover shows off the different layers of material used in spacesuit production to Timothy Sanderson, 13, of Magnolia. ILC manufactured spacesuits for the Apollo program and continues production for space shuttle and International Space Station missions. Ayrey presented his "Well Dressed Astronaut" Hangar Flying event Feb. 13.

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UP NEXT ...



Car lovers and airplane enthusiasts again will be able to have the best of both worlds Saturday, May 21, at the annual PT Cruiser Car show.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON UPCOMING
EVENTS, VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.AMCMUSEUM.ORG