



# Hangar Digest

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## From the Editor

In 1948, the Military Air Transport Service began operations with three divisions: the Pacific, Continental and the Atlantic. In a 1958 reorganization, the Continental Division was transferred from Kelly AFB to Travis AFB where it joined the Pacific Division to become Headquarters, Western Transport Air Force, or WESTAF. The Atlantic Division at McGuire AFB became Headquarters Eastern Transport Air Force, or EASTAF. In this issue, I offer a short insight into the mission of the Atlantic Division.



An optional requirement for the award of the Boy Scout Aviation Merit Badge is a visit to an aviation museum. Scout leaders are now bringing their troops to the AMC Museum for instruction on aircraft terminology, the function of various instruments and the principals of flight. For virtual flight instruction, we now have a flight simulator with interactive cockpits equipped with tunable radios, operable aircraft controls and weather themes. Its program is Microsoft's Flight Simulator 2004 with many added airlift and tanker aircraft including the C-124, C-133, C-9 and the KC-97.

**A BIG THANKS** to those of you who have donated to the "Old Shaky" Project. We are now approaching the \$37,000 mark; every cent of which has been dedicated to the restoration of the Museum's C-124.

This year we celebrate our 20th anniversary. We are planning several special programs which will run monthly from March through November. More information will appear through the local media, on the Museum's website and in this newsletter.

Until the April issue, when we fly with the Women Air Force Service Pilots, enjoy your AMC Museum.

*Harry E. Heist, Editor*

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## LOOKING BACK

A new world's record for weight dropped by parachute was set recently by the Air Force's 6511th Test Group (Parachute). Using six 130-foot nylon chutes, a 50,450 pound bundle was released from a C-130 at 2,500 feet — and successfully recovered. The drop, certified by the U.S. Parachute Association, beat the former record of 40,000 pounds set by the RAF in the early 1960s.

Source: MAC Aircrew Newsletter, September 1970.

## From the Director

I am happy to report that our museum was selected to participate in a new test program funded by the Air Force Recruiting Service. As a result of our solid volunteer program, led by our volunteer coordinator Jan Caldwell and supported by our docent leader Bruce Kinner, we were asked to send five volunteers to Lackland AFB, Texas for an intensive one-day training session. We are not in the recruiting business, however, our young museum visitors not only witness yesterday's Air Force but also are exposed to the many great opportunities the Air Force now offers. As most of our volunteers are retired, having left the service years ago, they must be prepared to offer accurate information about today's Air Force careers.

Recently, we received a surprise visit from Lt. Gen. Bill Welser. General Welser was Dover's wing commander when in 1994 he informed us we were going to have to relocate to the far south end of the base from our old facility situated within the active C-5 maintenance complex. Frankly, we thought it might be the end of the museum but like good troops we set about to make it happen. It turned out that this was the best move that we could have made. Now with our own entrance, the public is not restricted as would have been the case if we were still located within the confines of the main base. What good is a museum if people cannot visit? General Welser recently retired and we wish him all the best and our thanks!

As I mentioned in the last issue, we have some special events planned for this year in celebration of our 20th anniversary. Dates and times are in the works for the visits of best selling authors/historians Walter J. Boyne (*Beyond the Wild Blue*, *The Two O'clock War*, *The Smithsonian Book of Flight*) and Robert F. Dorr (*Air Force One*, *Korean War Aces and Chopper*). Both authors will present an interesting perspective on aviation history as will our local aviation author Ken Robertson, author of *Operation Nickel Grass*, the story of the C-5 during the Yom Kippur War.

Confirmed is our 4th annual "Collectors Day", scheduled for March 4th. Come out and see what folks from around the area collect. This is the day that you can bring out your five hundred NASCAR models, your miniature airplane collection or perhaps that collection of mint condition Barbie Dolls that you have been accumulating over the past 30 years. And, it's all free! So, if you want to show off your collections go to our website and fill out a table reservation.

Speaking of events, Dover AFB's **2006 Airshow** will have major flying acts and dozens of static display aircraft as well as some new attractions. Our C-121 and C-124 will be on display to show their restoration progress. The dates are **13-14 May**. Entrance will be through the museum's Route 9 gate.

Until next time, keep in touch with your visits and through our website at [www.amcmuseum.org](http://www.amcmuseum.org).

*Mike*

## Cruisin' with the Curator

It's that time again and I'm pleased to report that the museum has received funding from Headquarters for some urgent aircraft corrosion control work and for other projects that needed to be put on the front burner.

Six of our aircraft are now contracted to be painted. They are the C-119, both of the C-141s, the KC-97,

**(Continued on the following page)**

## **Cruisin' with the Curator (Cont.)**

C-121 and the T-33. The T-33 will be painted in the old MATS colors and will be placed on a newly constructed raised 44 foot diameter concrete circle in Commemoration Park. The letters "Welcome to the Air Mobility Command Museum", that were located on our original entrance, will be added to the face of the circle facing the entrance off of Route 9. Our thanks to Mitten Construction Co. for a job well done. Also, on the agenda is the paving of the grass area on the south end of our aircraft parking ramp just behind the C-7 and C-123. This project will increase our "hard" area by approximately 24,000 square feet.

This month, our hangar floor will be getting a safety and appearance makeover. With the exception of the C-47 and the B-17, everything will be moved out and put into temporary storage. All the floor's pimples and wrinkles will be removed, the nasty looking cracks and grooves will be repaired and finally a bright coat of paint will be applied. Hopefully by the middle of February, weather permitting; all the displays will be back in place. So, if you're planning a visit, the hangar will be closed to all visitors from 10 January to 6 February. However, the museum store will be open for business and the outside exhibits will be accessible.

Ever since we took possession of this facility in 1996 the hangar roof has leaked. It is scheduled to be replaced starting in March. The roofing contractor is looking at about a two month's project. It will be nice not to have anymore leaks. The roofing will not interfere with the museum's normal operating hours.

And finally, we have purchased a 40x60 foot metal storage building to hold our vehicles and larger support equipment. Speaking of vehicles, part of the funding from Headquarters was used to buy a tractor with a front bucket. Somewhere situated on the lower end of the base's snow removal priority list meant that it sometimes took several days before the snow was cleared from our access road leading from Route 9. Our small walk behind snow blower was sufficient enough for creating small paths around the hangar but now with our new tractor we can clear all of our area, including our access road and it can now be done in a timelier manner. Now we're ready for some significant snowfall!

So let me sum it up like this: Air Mobility Command Headquarters looked kindly on our requests to maintain this museum as a tribute to the men, women and machines that have made aviation history. As a result we're getting additions, replacements and upgrades that were badly needed.

So, until my next Cruisin' with the Curator, have a great 2006!

## **Meet Museum Volunteer Ed Barnes**

Ed, a member of the C-133 Cargomaster restoration team and the crew leader of the C-121 Constellation restoration team, has been with the museum since January 2000.

He entered the Air Force in 1948 and was stationed in Korea as a heavy equipment operator. From Korea, he then went on to serve at Westover AFB, Massachusetts. Following another assignment in Korea, he was reassigned to Luke AFB, Arizona as an air-to-ground gunnery range chief.

Ed changed his career field to an aircraft engine mechanic assigned to KB-50 tankers at Langley AFB, Virginia. From there he was reassigned to Hawaii working on aircraft assigned to the Military Air Transport Service. He then came to Dover AFB as the engine shop chief for the C-133. He retired from active duty in 1968.



When Ed is not working on the C-121, he enjoys restoring old cars and farm tractors. He and his wife Eleanor reside in Felton, Delaware.

## MATS' Atlantic Division

If the control tower operator answered in a heavy Arabic accent... If you looked down and saw icebergs... And if the navigator said, "Nonstop; Minimum Flight Plan!", you knew... you were in the Atlantic Division!

These and many other situations arose daily along the diversified routes of the Military Air Transport Service's Atlantic Division. Take the problem of being understood by ground personnel in various countries—Atlantic Division crew members learned to understand English as spoken by ground station operators with British, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Arabic accents. It wasn't easy even though English was accepted as one of the standard languages in international air traffic control. Pilots also had to make numerous contacts on a number of different frequencies that added to the problem. A similar task was that of route familiarization by the pilots and navigators going into European, Mediterranean and Arctic bases including: Prestwick, Scotland; Burtonwood, England; Orly Field, France; Furstenfeldbruck and Rhein Main, Germany; Wheelus Field, Libya; Nouasseur, French Morocco and Thule AB, Greenland.

In carrying out its mission of 1954, the Atlantic Division operated a 175-airplane fleet over its routes for more than 25,000,000 miles, logging 218,000 flying hours. More than 4,000 ocean crossings were made carrying over 220,000 passengers and 55,000 tons of cargo to and from Air Force bases in Europe, Africa, Greenland and island bases in the Atlantic Ocean. In addition to its normal operations, the Atlantic Division underwent an expansion program that more than doubled the number of transport squadrons and hours flown by these squadrons. In addition, most of the units changed over to newer and heavier type aircraft.

Many obstacles presented themselves in the mid-1950s as the Continental United States terminals were relocated: Charleston AFB in South Carolina, the newest member of MATS was located on a major airways intersection; Dover AFB, Delaware, the new stateside cargo terminal, was situated on a primary north-south airway and McGuire AFB, New Jersey, the home of the Atlantic Division headquarters and with the largest military passenger-freight terminal in the world, was located in the most dense air traffic area in the world—New York City.

Severe weather proved to be the only factor that prevented the Division from operating on a never-failing schedule. New concepts of minimal flight planning, flexible routing and aircraft loading/unloading largely overcame the problem of weather.

Pick almost any kind of weather and you would find Atlantic Division aircraft operating in it throughout all seasons of the year. If you wanted to see a hurricane you went to Kindley AFB, Bermuda and watched the hurricane hunters polishing up their gear to track them down. Blowing sand at Dhahran Air Base, Saudi Arabia would do a nice job of sand blasting your airplane anytime during the year. If you really liked low temperatures, Thule Air Base, Greenland was your base of choice. Thule is about 900 miles from the North Pole with temperatures of minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit not uncommon. Further north was Nord, a Danish weather station within throwing distance of the Pole. Then there was Ice Island T-3<sup>2</sup>, a chunk of ice about twenty square miles that wandered around the North Pole crewed by either American Air Weather Service personnel or the Russians depending upon the island's location.

All of this was accomplished with a flying safety record never before equaled even during normal operations. The Atlantic Division's motto might well be likened to, "You Call, We Haul—Anytime, Anyplace."

<sup>1</sup>*Minimal Flight Plan—in using this system, the navigator followed atmospheric pressure patterns to choose a flight plan which crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the least time by taking advantage of the maximum tail wind or minimum head wind component.*

<sup>2</sup>*Ice Island T-3 was reported to have broken up around 1980 and then to have reappeared in 1983 only to melt into obscurity.*

*Atlantic Division's 1954 statistics taken from an article appearing in the MATS Flyer, dated, May 1955.*

## **Airlift Legends: Lieutenant General Joseph Smith**

A native of Scranton, Pennsylvania, Joseph Smith was born on 31 October 1901. He graduated from the United States Military Academy on 12 June 1923 as a second lieutenant in the Cavalry and served at Fort Bliss, Texas.

In November 1927, he entered the Air Corps Primary Flying School at Brooks Field, Texas. He formally transferred to the Army Air Corps in January 1929 while assigned to the 66th Service Squadron at Camp Nichols in the Philippine Islands.

His career subsequently included such assignments as a pilot with the Army Air Corps' mail operations in 1934; Senior Air Force Member of the Joint War Plans Committee, Joint Chiefs of Staff, in 1943; Chief of Staff of both the Third Air Force in Tampa, Florida (1944) and the 20th Bomber Command in India which became the Eighth Air Force when it moved to Okinawa. He returned to the United States in January 1946 as Chief of Staff of the Air University at Maxwell Field, Alabama. In August, he reactivated the Air Tactical School when it moved to Tyndall Field, Florida and served as its first commandant.



In 1947, General Smith assumed command of Wiesbaden Military Post in Germany. While serving in this capacity, he was named Project Commander to organize the 1948 Berlin Airlift operation and set up the basic traffic pattern and mode of operation.

A year later, in January 1949, he returned to Washington, DC to serve on the Air Staff in several capacities, including Director of Plans during the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's early development for the air defense of Europe.

In November 1951, General Smith assumed command of the Military Air Transport Service headquartered at Andrews AFB, Maryland. Under his leadership, MATS became the Single Manager operating Agency for Airlift Services. During his tenure, having served as MATS' commander longer than any other individual, he was responsible for several developments of lasting significance to military airlift. He expanded and defined the MATS route structure, extending it throughout the world as never before. He added aerial ports and organic airlift capability at key installations: McGuire AFB, New Jersey; Dover AFB, Delaware and Charleston AFB, South Carolina. He was also instrumental in modernizing and using more efficiently the MATS system of terminals. He directed MATS during several critical operational activities: airlift operations for the Korean Conflict, including the return of American prisoners of war; the Suez Canal crisis, the airlift of United Nation forces; Operation Safe Haven, the transportation of Hungarian refugees to the United States, following a Soviet invasion in 1956-57 and the medical evacuation of French legionnaires from Saigon, South Vietnam. MATS also acquired the C-133 Cargomaster during his tenure.

General Smith served for 35 years as an officer of the Army, the Army Air Forces and the United States Air Force. He held the rating of a command pilot, combat observer, aircraft observer and technical observer. He had been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal and various other service decorations. He retired from the position as commander of MATS and the Air Force on 29 June 1958 and passed away on May 19, 1993.

Lieutenant General Smith was the Airlift/Tanker Associations "Hall of Fame" inductee for 1995.

Sources: MAC History Office, *Anything, Anywhere, Anytime: An Illustrated History of the Military Airlift Command 1941-1991*; Airlift/Tanker Association.

**Remember — if you are planning a move to let us know of your new address. The post office will not forward nonprofit standard mail that is sent bulk rate.**

## **Airlifts Remembered: Safe Haven (Hungarian Refugee Airlift)**

**The Background:** In October 1956, thousands of Hungarians rebelled against Hungarian Communist Party leader Erno Gero in support of Imre Nagy, a former premier who advocated multiple political parties, free elections, removal of Soviet troops and the withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. Gero, a Stalinist, asked the Soviet Union to intervene on his behalf but he was forced to step down on October 25 in favor of another Soviet supporter. Nagy won the support of the Hungarian Army. By November 1st, the revolt appeared to be successful and the Soviet Union agreed to remove its troops from Budapest, the capital.

The rebels' success was short-lived. On November 4th, about 200,000 Soviet troops and 2,500 tanks and armored cars attacked Budapest and drove Nagy from power. Thousands of Hungarians fled to Austria, Switzerland and West Germany. Responding to a U.S. State Department request, the United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) prepared to airlift Red Cross food and medical supplies to the refugees.

**The USAFE Airlift:** During November and December, the 322nd Air Division employed 25 C-119 Flying Boxcars of the 60th Troop Carrier Wing (TCW) at Dreux Air Base, France; the 317th TCW at Neubibery Air Base, West Germany and the 465th TCW at Evreux Air Base, France, to airlift 190 tons of Red Cross medical supplies, food, blankets and cots. The cargo was airlifted from various locations in the United Kingdom, Switzerland, France and West Germany, to Hungarian refugee centers in Austria, Switzerland and West Germany. Most of the relief cargo went to Vienna, where most refugees fled.

Then on 6 December, President Eisenhower offered asylum in the United States to 15,000 of the refugees who were in Vienna. They traveled by train and bus to Munich, where they were processed for flights to the United States.

**The MATS Airlift:** The Pentagon directed MATS to prepare an airlift. Between December 11, 1956 and June 30, 1957, the Atlantic Division of MATS conducted two operations, Safe Haven I and II.

Lasting from December 11th to January 3rd, Safe Haven I involved C-118 and R6D aircraft from the 1611th Air Transport Wing (ATW) at McGuire AFB, New Jersey; C-121 Super Constellation aircraft from the 1608th ATW at Charleston AFB, South Carolina and commercial contract aircraft. President Eisenhower's own airplane, Columbine III, participated in the airlift.

On December 22nd, Vice President Richard Nixon, accompanied by the commander of USAFE, Lt. Gen. William H. Tunner, observed Safe Haven I operations at Munich Riem Airport. On the busiest day of the operation, December 24th, Atlantic Division planes moved 984 refugees from Munich to McGuire AFB. During Safe Haven I, a total of 107 flights transported 6,393 passengers to the United States.

In Safe Haven II, which lasted from January 6th through June 30th, the 1611th ATW airlifted an additional 3,791 refugees from Neubiberg AB near Munich to McGuire AFB on 66 transatlantic flights.

During Safe Haven I and II, MATS planes airlifted 10,184 Hungarian refugees on 173 flights from West Germany to New Jersey. Commercial contract airliners flew 4,170 refugees on 58 flights. After landing at McGuire AFB, the Hungarians moved to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, where they were processed for settlement in the United States. Safe Haven was the most significant European humanitarian airlift operation since the Berlin Airlift, transporting more refugees than ever before. In nearly seven months of almost continuous operations, the 1608th and the 1611th Air Transport Wings experienced no major accidents and transported all passengers safely.

Source: Haulman, Daniel, *Humanitarian Airlift Operations*.



Hungarian refugees deplaning from Columbine III at McGuire AFB, NJ

## Hall of Heroes

A group of twenty P-38s flew into Tacloban Air Field on Leyte. Suddenly a Japanese fighter appeared. One of the P-38s opened up full throttle, hit the gear and flap levers, sounded a warning to other pilots and swung around to face the enemy. In full view of the Tacloban air strip, the P-38 pilot attacked and shot down the intruder with one short burst. The Japanese plane crashed in flames just outside the field. Finding no other enemy aircraft, the P-38 pilot circled and landed. Major Thomas B. McGuire of the 475th Fighter Group climbed down from his *Pudgy V* and smiled. He had just shot down his twenty-fifth Japanese aircraft.



Thomas McGuire was born in Ridgeway, New Jersey on August 1, 1920. His parents divorced when he was a child and he spent most of his youth living with his mother in Sebring, Florida. Having completed high school in Sebring, he attended Georgia School of Technology. He enlisted at MacDill Field in Florida on July 12, 1941 and received his pilot training as an aviation cadet at Randolph and Kelly Fields, Texas, receiving his wings and commission in February 1942.

Following a tour in Alaska as a P-39 pilot he was transferred to Louisiana and then on to California where he began flying the P-38 in which he would score 38 aerial victories. In March 1943 he was assigned to Australia where he met Richard Bong, already the hottest P-38 pilot who would chalk up 40 aerial victories.

McGuire ran up his long score flying all types of fighter missions including bomber escort, fighter bomber sweeps and aerial combat starting with his first mission at Port Moresby on August 17, 1943. The next day, he would face the Japanese in combat for the first time. He made the most of it by claiming three victories and being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. He was promoted to first lieutenant in September and to captain in December 1943 and to major the following May.

On Christmas Day 1944, Major McGuire volunteered to lead a squadron of 15 planes as protection for B-24 bombers attacking the Mabalacat Airdrome near Manila. As the formation crossed over Luzon, they were attacked by 20 Japanese fighters. In the ensuing action, he repeatedly flew to the aid of his fellow pilots, driving off enemy assaults, while himself under attack and at times outnumbered three to one. Even after his guns jammed, he continued the fight by forcing an enemy airplane into his wingman's line of fire. Before he had started back to his base he had shot down three *Zeros*. The next day, he again volunteered to lead escort fighters on a mission to the strongly defended Clark Field. During the resultant engagement, he again exposed himself to attacks so that he might rescue a crippled bomber. In rapid succession he shot down one aircraft, parried the attack of four enemy fighters, one of which he shot down, single-handedly engaged three more Japanese, destroying one and then shot down still another, his 38 and final victory in aerial combat.

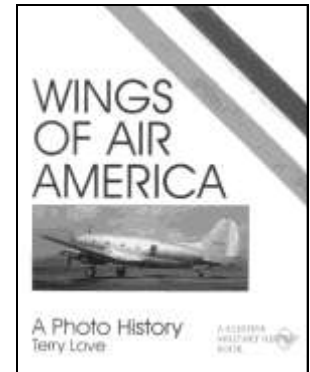
Major McGuire lost his life on January 7, 1945, while leading four P-38s over the Japanese-held airstrip on Los Negros Island. As a single Japanese *Oscar* jumped them, McGuire led his flight into a tight circle snaring the enemy inside. The *Oscar* made a sharp turn to get out of the trap but the P-38s stayed with him down to 200 feet from the ground. There the formation scattered and the enemy plane maneuvered into position on the tail of one of the P-38s. The pilot called for help and Major McGuire responded. However, his wing tanks had not been released and in this tight maneuver McGuire's plane stalled at low altitude and crashed. He was killed on impact.

Major McGuire was awarded the Medal of Honor, posthumously, for this mission and for his missions flown on December 25-26, 1944. His other decorations included the Distinguished Service Cross with three devices, two Silver Stars, six Distinguished Flying Crosses, three Purple Hearts and fifteen Air Medals—all before he was 25. McGuire AFB, New Jersey was named in his honor on January 13, 1948.

Sources: *305th Air Mobility Wing (AMC)*; [www.airforcehistory.com](http://www.airforcehistory.com); [www.wpaafb.af.mil](http://www.wpaafb.af.mil); [www.acepilots.com](http://www.acepilots.com).

## **Recommended Reading: Wings of Air America**

Air America was one of the world's most extraordinary airlines. It was run by the CIA, operated secret missions, flew scheduled routes and at its peak, had the largest commercial fleet in the world! The airline emerged from China after World War II, had close ties to the famous Flying Tigers, other airlines and foreign governments and operated a wide variety of helicopters and aircraft. They "invented" aerial supply—even before the Berlin Airlift. But was it really an airline or just a military cargo division? They did maintenance for foreign military, other competing airlines, the American military and had the largest facilities in Asia—in fact, the American government denied that they even existed. But they did exist! Revealed for the first time, author Terry Love presents a pictorial history of some of their flight equipment that they used on many of their secret missions. Unsung, unheralded, always brave, they lived up to and often died with their motto: "Anything, Anywhere, Anytime—Professionally."



This book is available from the museum's gift shop and can be purchased for \$25.00 including shipping and handling, payable by check, VISA, MasterCard, Discover or American Express.

Please call (302) 677-5992 or e-mail: [jay.schmukler@dover.af.mil](mailto:jay.schmukler@dover.af.mil) to place your order.

## **Museum Aircraft of the Quarter: Vultee BT-13A "Valiant"**

The "Valiant" was the basic trainer most widely used by the United States Army Air Force during World War II. It represented the second of the three stages of pilot training — primary, basic and advanced. Compared with the primary trainers in use at the time, it was considerably more complex. The BT-13 not only had a more powerful engine, it was also faster and heavier. In addition, it required the student pilot to use two-way radio communications with the ground, operate landing flaps and a two-position variable pitch propeller.



Named the "Vibrator" by the pilots who flew it, the BT-13 was powered by a Pratt & Whitney R-985 engine. But to counter the shortage of these engines early in the BT-13 production program, 1,693 Valiants were produced in 1941-42 with the Wright R-975 engine and were designated as BT-15s. By the end of World War II, over 10,000 BT-13s and BT-15s had been accepted by the Army Air Force.

The museum's BT-13A, SN 42-01639, was received by the Army Air Force on 13 January 1943 and was assigned to Merced Army Air Field (later Castle AFB), California. It was then transferred to Las Vegas Army Air Field in January 1945 and from there to Phoenix where it was declared surplus on 7 April 1945.

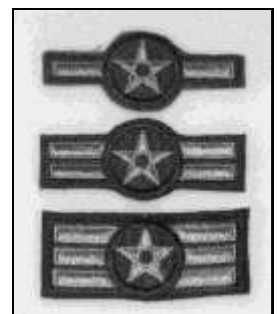
The aircraft was received by the AMC Museum in April 1993 from Aero Trader of Chino, California and the only aircraft of World War II, in our collection, that required no restoration.

## **Name the Artifact by: Deborah Sellars**

The chevrons look familiar, don't they? Look again!

Do you know why these chevrons for Airman Third Class, Airman Second Class and Airman First Class are different?

See page 11 for the answer.



## “Name the Plane”

The airplane that I asked you to identify in October’s issue of the Hangar Digest is the McDonnell Douglas YC-15, one of two entrants in the Advanced Medium STOL Transport (AMST) program. The other model in the program was the Boeing YC-14. Both aircraft models were designed to provide a large cargo aircraft with the capability of flying in and out of extremely short, semi-prepared fields.



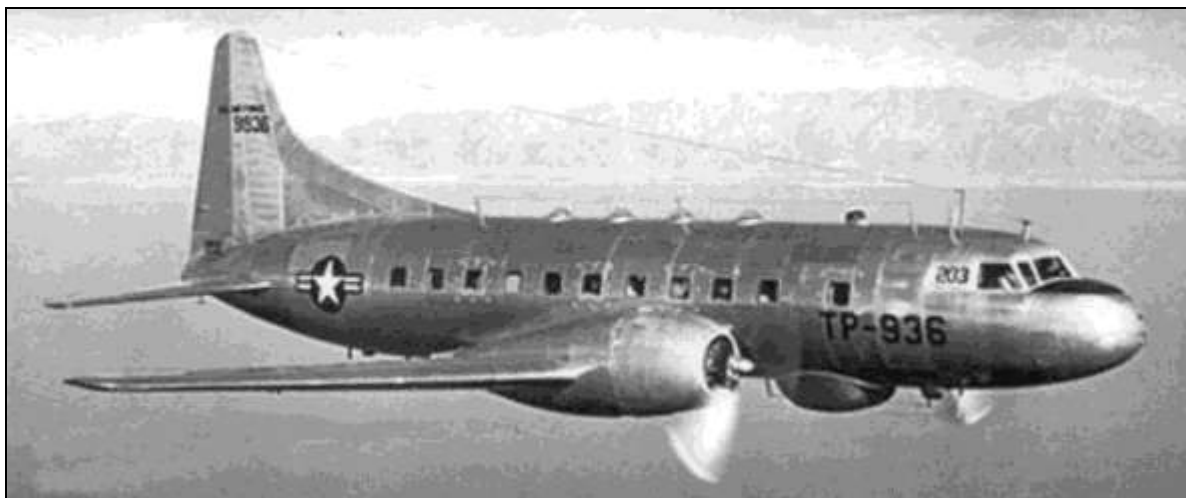
Two YC-15 prototypes were built, but the program did not continue beyond the prototype stage. However, the technology developed in the program would not go unused, being eventually funneled into the C-17 advanced transport program of the 1990s. The YC-15 basically served as the basis for the company’s winning C-17 proposal.

Unlike the competing YC-14, the YC-15 used four engines—16,000 pound thrust Pratt & Whitney turbofans—instead of the YC-14’s pair of larger engines. The engines were mounted on the wings by means of pylons that pushed the engines far forward of the wing’s leading edge. The engine locations allowed the thrust to exhaust on the underside of the wing, directly into the large two-segment flaps. The engines were fitted with special nozzles to mix the hot exhaust with cool air so that no special flap material was required. Inboard spoilers provided for the plane’s lateral control and also aided in landing the aircraft.

Our randomly selected winner of the “Name the Plane” contest is Lt. Col. Kenneth Smith, USAF (Ret) of Dover, Delaware and he will receive the book “Wings of Air America” and an Air Force theme computer mouse pad. Congratulations!

This time I ask that you identify the airplane depicted below including the manufacturer, mission, design and series (if applicable); i.e., Boeing B-17G. Please send your entry by letter, e-mail, FAX or post card to any of the addresses listed on the last page. **Please do not leave your entry by phone.** I will designate each correct answer with a number ID from which I will randomly select one winner. Please send you entry as soon as possible and please include a return address. The winner will receive a book selection from the museum’s gift shop. Good luck and thank you for your participation!

(Museum staff and volunteers are not eligible)



## **Around the Bases: Ramstein Air Base, Germany**

Located adjacent to the City of Ramstein, Ramstein Air Base is the home of the **721st Air Mobility Operations Group and the 723rd Air Mobility Squadron (Air Mobility Command)**.

Ramstein AB is the largest North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-controlled air base on the European Continent. Designed by French engineers, built by Germans and operated by Americans, Ramstein maintains a long-standing tradition of international collaboration.

The history of Ramstein Air Base officially began in 1951 with the base's construction under the Franco-American reciprocal agreement. The area was under French postwar occupational control. Sited near the base of the Palatinate highlands' northern slopes, construction of the 3,000-acre base began in April 1951. The building of a major airfield came as no surprise to the local inhabitants who were no strangers to airpower: the Luftwaffe had converted a section of the local autobahn into an airstrip at the beginning of World War II. The airstrip was also used by the advancing U.S. Army during the final months of the conflict.

When construction was completed in 1953, the U.S. Air Force initially opened two installations separated by a central dividing road. Landstuhl Air Base on the south side began airfield operations in August 1952 and about a year later, June 1953, Ramstein Exempt Air Force Installation opened to the north. Although called an air base, the north side had and still has no hangars or runway. The runway, hangars, control tower, ramps and other flight-related facilities were located at Landstuhl. In an interesting but somewhat unorthodox arrangement, Landstuhl contained the control tower, flightline and aircraft hangars while Ramstein housed the headquarters, administration and support facilities. Finally, in December 1957, the two bases were consolidated into a single entity known as Ramstein-Lanstuhl Air Base, the largest controlled NATO air base on the continent. Common usage eventually shortened it to Ramstein AB, its present name. Since its opening, the northern part of the base historically has been the location of various higher echelon headquarters, family housing, dependent's schools and certain support functions, while the southern area has always been the site of the aerodrome and its various flying units.

When it opened in 1952, the base served as the home of the 86th Fighter-Bomber Wing with its fleet of F-84F Thunderstreaks. Three months later, however, the wing began receiving all-weather F-86D Sabre Jets to replace the aging F-84s. In August 1954, the name of the wing was changed to reflect a new mission and became the 86th Fighter Interceptor Wing. Then in 1959, Headquarters Seventeenth Air Force moved from Wheelus Air Base in Libya to Ramstein.

The base changed landlords in October 1966 when the 26th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing and its RF-4Cs arrived from France. Later in November 1968, the 86th Fighter Interceptor Wing was inactivated and reactivated a year later as the 86th Tactical Fighter Wing at Zweibrucken Air Base. The 86th returned again to Ramstein, in January 1973, under the 17th Air Force.

Seventeenth Air Force Headquarters moved to Sembach Air Base, Germany, in November 1972 to make way for the United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) that moved to Ramstein from Wiesbaden in March 1973. With USAFE's arrival, Ramstein entered a period of expansion unsurpassed in the base's history as it became the hub of the largest community of Americans outside the United States.

In June 1985, the 316th Air Division was activated, centralizing command authority at Ramstein. The 86th Tactical Fighter Wing became the division's flight operations arm, while the newly formed 377th Combat Support Wing became responsible for the logistical and administrative support on the base.

The 316th Air Division was deactivated in May 1991 and the 86th merged with the 377th to form the 86th Fighter Wing. In July 1994, the 86th's last F-16 departed Ramstein, thereby, completing its transfer of

**(Continued on the following page)**



## **Around the Bases: Ramstein Air Base, Germany (Cont.)**

fighter aircraft. The wing was redesignated the 86th Airlift Wing on 1 October 1994, assigned to USAFE and whose mission is the operation and maintenance of airlift assets including C-130s, C-20s and C-21s operating throughout Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

The host unit at Ramstein Air Base is the 86th Airlift Wing. Also residing at Ramstein is the 435th Air Base Wing and the 38th Combat Support Wing. The 435th focuses on base support responsibilities while the 38th provides support to geographically separated units throughout Europe.

Ramstein's largest flight-line tenant organization is the **Air Mobility Command's 721st Air Mobility Operations Group**, which provides AMC cargo and maintenance support for Ramstein. Other units assigned to the 721st include those located in Turkey, Spain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Its **723rd Air Mobility Squadron** at Ramstein is AMC's largest overseas cargo port, moves incoming and outgoing cargo via C-5, C-130 and C-17 aircraft. It also handles a variety of civilian contract carriers. The squadron has sole responsibility for providing en route, selected home-based aircraft and scheduled and unscheduled maintenance.

Ramstein Air Base's east gate is about ten miles from Kaiserslautern. Other nearby civilian communities include Ramstein-Miesenbach, just outside the base's west gate and Landstuhl about three miles from the west gate. More than 16,400 American service members and more than 5,400 US civilian employees live and work in the Kaiserslautern Military Community (KMC). KMC organizations also employ the services of more than 6,000 German workers. Air Force units in the KMC alone employ almost 10,000 military members, bringing with them nearly 11,000 family members. The 86th AW commander serves as the Kaiserslautern Military Community commander.

Ramstein, host community for Ramstein Air Base, was first mentioned in historical documents in 1215. Surviving several occupations throughout the years, the town was completely destroyed during the Thirty Years' War in the early mid-17th century.

For more than a century the village grew steadily. In 1792, it was occupied by the French during the Napoleonic Wars. When Napoleon was defeated, Ramstein and neighboring villages were annexed by the kingdom of Bavaria in 1816. Gradually the village regained its identity in the late 19th century. Ramstein became a station stop on the Landstuhl-Kusel Railroad in 1868 and by then the village numbered about 1,300 residents. In 1898, the village's first factory, a textile mill near the railroad station, was constructed creating more jobs and increasing the population to more than 2,000.

After World War II, Ramstein entered a period of continuous and accelerated economic growth, accentuated by the construction of Ramstein Air Base. In 1969, the village incorporated neighboring Miesenbach. Additionally in 1973, nine surrounding villages were incorporated into the present "union community", which bears the name Ramstein-Miesenbach. Ramstein received its city status in May 1991. Today, this community has a combined population of more than 18,000. The relationship Americans enjoy with their German hosts continues to generate goodwill, friendship and understanding between the base populace and city residents.

Sources: [www.globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org); [www.ramstein.af.mil](http://www.ramstein.af.mil).

### **Name the Artifact**

The chevrons were experimental only and were never issued for wear. This different chevron design for the lower enlisted ranks was meant to increase the prestige of the new structure of the upper enlisted grades. The design was approved in 1952 by then Air Force Chief of Staff, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg and was to be implemented when the current stock ran out. However, when the design was resubmitted in 1956, the current Chief of Staff, General Nathan F. Twining disapproved the change.

Deborah Sellars

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NCL Concepts

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. All photographs are the courtesy of the Air Mobility Command Museum unless otherwise designated.

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