

Hangar Digest

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 3

JULY 2005

From the Editor:

It's that time again to elect five members to the AMC Museum Foundation's Board of Directors. The five nominees can be those who are currently serving on the board and whose terms are due to expire, other nominations appearing on the ballot, write-ins and/or persons nominated from the floor. Details on this year's election and an absentee ballot can be found on page 13.



On May 26th, the museum was pleased to welcome back former Dover AFB and AMC Commander retired General Walter Kross. In 1986, he was responsible for establishing the Dover AFB Historical Center and in 1997 renaming it The Air Mobility Command Museum. General Kross is now Vice Chairman of the National Defense Transportation Association and President/CEO of Flight Explorer, the internet-based, real time, global flight tracking software platform.

Deborah Sellars' "Artifact Facts" has been replaced by "Name the Artifact". Deborah wants to test your knowledge of the more unusual items in the museum's collection. (Sorry, there are no prizes)! The answers will appear elsewhere in the issue.

I conclude my five-part series on the evolution of the Air Mobility Command. Starting with the July 2004 issue we have covered strategic airlift with the Air Corps Ferrying Command, Air Transport Command, MATS, MAC and finally AMC. And, changed course a bit with a look at tactical airlift in Southeast Asia. I hope you have found it of interest. In the next issue we cross the Atlantic in a KC-97 tanker.

Mark your calendars for the AMC Museum's Golf Tournament, to be held at Dover AFB's Eagle Creek Golf Course on Thursday, July 28, 2005. For further details, contact Dick Bundy at (302) 741-0235: 9 E. Lockerman St., Ste. 2B, Dover DE 19901.

Have a great summer!

Harry E. Heist, Editor

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LOOKING BACK

Hurricane hunting will become more scientific in 1956 and 57. In a joint effort, the U.S. Weather Bureau and MATS Air Weather Service will use specially fitted aircraft for the job. Two B-50s will be used for low and medium level observations and a B-47 will make high altitude checks. In each aircraft, automatic devices will record data on punch cards for later compilation and analysis by tabulating machines.

Source: The MATS Flyer, May 1956.

From the Director

A wise person once said, the only thing constant is change. Well, we certainly have had some changes this quarter.

We have added an additional 27,000 square feet to our aircraft parking ramp to accommodate our “new” aircraft as they come out of restoration. At the same time, the base civil engineers completed a project sealing the doors on the east side of our hangar in order to stop the rain from flowing into the hangar whenever we have a Nor’easter. Neither project is that glamorous but both were necessary.

We have said a fond farewell to the 436th Airlift Wing Historian, TSgt. Theresa Lashley. Theresa has worked wonderfully with and at the museum for four years. The Air Force is phasing out its enlisted historians and replacing them with civilians. The new historian will have his/her office on base. With Theresa’s loss and with the historian’s move, this has set even more changes in motion.

The construction of our new hallway and the additional administrative office is complete. John Taylor, our operations manager and computer guru, moved into the historian’s office and I moved into the new office next to John’s. The curator and archivist remain as they were but now we are all connected by the new hallway. With this move, an office for the volunteer docents has been set up in John’s old office at the museum’s entrance. This will eliminate the frequent bottlenecks encountered with hosting large tour groups.

If you look across the face of the mezzanine, you will notice a new parade of pictures featuring some of the great airlift and air refueling planes from our history. The Base Skills Center did a super-professional job at a very reasonable price. I highly recommend their work and their service.

We just received two outstanding pieces of original artwork. Paul Rendel created a painting of our own C-54 flying into Templehoff Airport during the Berlin Airlift. Steve Alpert created a painting based on a photo of the Dover AFB Honor Guard. Both of these highly accomplished artists visited the museum in May and donated their work to the museum.

Also in May, we opened a new exhibit entitled “Rations: It’s What’s for Dinner”. It traces the history of military rations from the Civil War’s hardtack to the current MREs (Meals-Ready-To-Eat). It even includes the ubiquitous P-38 can opener that generations of GIs used to open canned rations but which are now fading from memory due to the vermin proof plastic pouches that everything comes in now.

Not all changes are progressive. I am sorry to report that Bernie Feierstein has passed away. Thirty years ago Bernie was a C-5 loadmaster when I was a shiny new Lead-the-Force flying crew chief. Bernie took me on my first trip to the Far East and more importantly made sure I returned home in good shape. As a museum volunteer, he was my “Saturday Guy”. Bernie was always there to help and I’ll miss him.

I’ve run out of room but we’ve only scratched the surface. You’ll have to come visit and see all of the changes for yourself.

Mike

Cruisin’ with the Curator

Here we go again. It’s Cruisin’ with the Curator and I’ll be your pilot for today’s trip.

A quick trip around the pad here at Hangar1301 will show a few changes since my last article. A new aircraft parking ramp has been completed just across from Commemoration Park. Before all the blacktop, it was the grassy area with the small evergreens just outside our “old” entrance to the museum. Current plans are to move the C-133 to this location alongside the C-54. This will eliminate the necessity of first moving the C-133 in order to get the other planes off the ramp. Hey, it’s just like at home guys..... move the couch
(Continued on the following page)

Cruisin' with the Curator (Cont.)

over here..... no wait a minute..... move it over there. Was confusing? You bet!

Okay, let's head over to restoration and see what's cooking there. Driving down our access road you can see that our landscaper Chester "Smitty" Smith is busy creating raised flower beds to enhance our Route 9 entrance. Once the flowers are in bloom they'll be a nice addition since that area is somewhat bare. Everyone appreciates Smitty's efforts in keeping our grounds in excellent shape.

Arriving at 789, aka the restoration hangar, the C-121 and the C-124 crews are still at it. It's really hard to describe the amount of work that goes into restoring an aircraft. One can only appreciate the finished product if he were privy to see the before and the during views. Believe me folks, never underestimate what goes into this type of task. It's knuckle bustin' work and I'm proud of every member of our restoration teams.

We're waiting for Ben Nattrass' arrival to reassemble the C-124. Bill Hardie and his C-124 crew are working the pieces and preparing them for reattachment. Meanwhile back on the C-121, work continues on both the interior and exterior of the plane and just maybe we'll crank up our stripper and attempt to remove some of the exterior paint. Hopefully, by the next issue of this newsletter, I'll be able to report that the plane is ready for painting.

The Sopwith Pup, that we've had in storage in 789 for far too many years, has finally been shipped to Wright-Patterson for disposition. While on the subject of aircraft leaving our hold, the T-6 was transferred to the Air Education and Training Command. Load em up and head em out...back to 1301.

The work on the Enlisted Heritage/Dover Team exhibit continues and should be completed within the next month. Yes folks, good things do take time! Speaking of exhibits Rick Veller, our resident active duty chief of restoration and other neat things, has been busy with numerous exhibit construction tasks. His craftsmanship is leaving a mark throughout the museum and we will continue to abuse him on a regular basis. Or is that use him? In his spare time (as if we provide him with any), he is preparing a KC-135 refueling boom for exhibit. The plan is to suspend it from the ceiling beams above the mezzanine near the refueling exhibit. That's the plan. Film at 11.

Let's park this beast until next time. Thanks for riding along. See you all on the next trip. Have a safe summer.

Jim

In Memoriam

Bernard 'Bernie' Feierstein

1944-2005



Bernie, a dedicated museum volunteer, passed away on April 19, 2005.

He had a great love for his country and for the Air Force. Although holding the full-time position as an assistant manager at the Smyrna Rest Area for the Delaware Department of Transportation, he was one of the museum's regular volunteers. He also was a key member of the C-133 Association's reunion committee.

Bernie logged time as a loadmaster in the C-133, C-130 and the C-5. In 1987, he ended his active duty military career as a C-5 flight examiner loadmaster at Altus AFB, Oklahoma. Returning to Dover, he served with the Air Force Reserves until 1992, having participated in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Bernie will be truly missed by his family, his co-workers and his many friends here at the museum.

Rapid Global Mobility —The Air Mobility Command

A new era in air power history began on 1 June 1992 when the Military Airlift Command (MAC) and the Strategic Air Command (SAC) were inactivated and the Air Mobility Command (AMC) was formed from elements of these two organizations. AMC melded a worldwide airlift system with a tanker force that had been freed from its commitments by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

AMC has undergone considerable change since its establishment. Focusing on the core mission of strategic air mobility, the command divested itself of infrastructure and forces not directly related to Global Reach. The Air Rescue Service, intratheater aeromedical airlift forces based overseas and much of the operational support airlift fleet were transferred to other commands. However, KC-10 and most KC-135 air refueling aircraft initially assigned to the Air Combat Command were transferred to AMC, along with Grand Forks AFB, North Dakota; McConnell AFB, Kansas; and Fairchild AFB, Washington.

On October 1, 2003, AMC underwent a major restructuring, bringing a warfighting role to its numbered air force. AMC reactivated the 18th Air Force and redesignated its two former numbered air forces as the 15th Expeditionary Mobility Task Force (EMTF) at Travis AFB, California and the 21st EMTF, with headquarters at McGuire AFB, New Jersey. Both EMTFs report to the 18th AF. The Tanker Airlift Control Center (TACC), located at Scott AFB, also reports to the 18th AF along with AMC's wings and groups located inside the Continental United States. AMC's Air Mobility Operations Groups at Travis AFB and Hickam AFB, Hawaii, report to the 18th AF through the 15th EMTF; those groups at McGuire AFB and Ramstein AFB, Germany, report to the 18th AF through the 21st EMTF.

AMC's mission encompasses more than 141,000 active-duty and Reserve Component military and civilian personnel. AMC's mobility aircraft include the C-5 Galaxy, KC-10 Extender, C-17 Globemaster III, C-130 Hercules and the KC-135 Stratotanker. Operational support aircraft are the VC-25 (Air Force One), C-9, C-20, C-21, C-32, C-37, C-40 and the UH-1 helicopter.

Airlifters provide the capability to deploy our armed forces anywhere in the world and help sustain them in conflict. Air refuelers are the lifeline of Global Reach, increasing range, payloads and flexibility. Since Air Force tankers can also refuel Navy, Marine and many allied aircraft, they leverage all service capabilities on land, sea and in the air. Refuelers also have an inherent cargo-carrying capability—maximizing AMC's air-lift options.

AMC's ability to provide global reach is tested daily. From providing fuel, supplies and aeromedical support to troops on the frontline of the Global War on Terrorism, to providing humanitarian supplies to hurricane, flood and earthquake victims both at home and abroad. AMC has been engaged in almost nonstop operations since its inception. Command tankers and airlifters have supported peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, Cambodia, Somalia, Rwanda and Haiti and continue to play a vital role in the ongoing Global War on Terrorism. These examples of the effective application of non-lethal air power indicate that air mobility is a national asset of growing importance for responding to emergencies and protecting national interests around the globe.

Source: Air Mobility Command, Office of Public Affairs.

The Air Mobility Command Insignia...

is a silver shield on which a blue globe is rotated counterclockwise through 27 degrees, grid lines white, charged with a pair of wings fesswise conjoined, surmounted by an arrow palewise and by two arrows saltire, all gold and all within a diminished border of the last.

The globe signifies the command's worldwide reach in sustaining global power and melds the airlift and aerial refueling tradition of the MAC and SAC. The wings are indicative of victorious air operations. The three crossed arrows, taken from the seal of the Department of Defense, represent the three armed forces served by AMC. Source: *CPD/HO Maxwell AFB, AL*



Airlift Legends: Lieutenant General William H. Tunner

William Henry Tunner, born 14 July 1906 in Elizabeth, New Jersey, graduated from the United States Military Academy in June 1928 and from advanced flying school at Kelly Field, Texas, one year later.

During the 1930s, he served with various tactical and training units of the Army Air Corps and in 1939 was assigned to the Military Personnel Division, Chief of the Air Corps. When Major General Robert Olds was given the job of organizing the Ferrying Command, General Tunner, then a major, joined the staff as a personnel officer.

In 1942, he was appointed Commander of the Ferrying Division of the Air Transport Command, where he supervised the monthly delivery of 10,000 airplanes from the factories to the Allied forces. Later, in 1944, he commanded the Indo-China Division of the Air Transport Command, which supplied China by air across the Himalayas. This operation was more commonly known as the “Hump” Airlift. The operation got its name from the 16,000 foot gap in the Himalayas through which all traffic had to be channeled. After the war, he assumed command of the Air Transport Command’s Atlantic Division and in 1948 served initially as the Deputy Commander for Air Transport of the newly organized Military Air Transport Service.

Later in 1948, he received orders to go to Wiesbaden, Germany to direct the Allied Berlin Airlift operation where he initiated a new “straight-in approach” landing technique that enabled aircraft to land in Berlin at three-minute intervals. Under his leadership, the Berlin Airlift set new records for mass airlift and flying safety. After the Russians lifted the blockade, more than two million tons of food and coal had been delivered by airlift and after General Tunner had firmly announced, “We can keep pouring it in for another 20 years if we have to.”

During the Korean War, General Tunner headed the Combat Cargo Command, Far East Air Forces, providing airlift for the initial Inchon invasion, subsequent paratroop operations and the advance of the 8th Army to the Yalu River. After Korea, he became Deputy Commander of the Air Material Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio and in 1953 he returned to Wiesbaden as Commander of the United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE). He held this post for four years during the buildup of the Air Forces of NATO.

In 1957, he was reassigned to Headquarters United States Air Force as Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations. Then on 1 July 1958, he returned to strategic airlift as Commander of the Military Air Transport Service, headquartered at Scott AFB, Illinois where he directed the command’s participation in such actions as the Lebanon and Taiwan Crises and the BIG SLAM/PUERTO PINE exercises.

Lt. Gen Tunner retired from active duty on 1 May 1960 and died on 6 April 1983. In 1989, he was the first inductee into the Airlift/Tanker Association’s “Hall of Fame”.

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

Of Interest: The museum’s C-54M and the C-47A both served in the Berlin Airlift. The C-54M served as a coal hauler (the only “M” model remaining today) and the C-47A was one of the first airlifters on the scene.



Operation Market-Garden (A Personal Account by Ed Levine)

On D +1, we were to drop additional members of the British Red Devil Brigade at Arnhem. As this was my first combat drop, I flew as co-pilot with one of the old heads. Our northern route would have us flying over 80 miles of enemy territory, a comforting thought. We were in and out of the weather until we got close to our IP (Initial Point) when the clouds cleared for the most part and visibility was good all the way to the drop area. What an awesome sight to see hundreds of C-47s in Vee of Vee formation. The plan was to approach and drop at 1,500 feet, drop down to 500 feet after the drop and then climb to 3,000 feet on the return in order to stay clear of the incoming traffic.

Well, the German guns were waiting for us and the flak was very heavy. In addition, all kinds of smaller weapons found us. As the old saying goes—flak sounded like hail on a tin roof. I was very concerned about possible damage to the fuel tanks and kept checking the fuel gauges. I remember seeing one British Typhoon fighter-bomber going under our formation to attack some German gun emplacements. Never did see an enemy fighter plane, so we must have had good fighter coverage.

We were in the first element behind our squadron commander and he received a direct hit in the outer left wing area, luckily it missed anything vital. Shortly after that a single bullet came through the floor behind my seat and grazed the right elbow of the radio operator who was standing on a steel plate with his forearms resting on our seats. Needless to say he was a bit shook up and went back to his seat and put his head down on his arms. We made it to the drop zone OK, dropped our troops and then made a steep diving turn back to the way we came. The crew chief came forward and told us that all the static lines were in but we had three paratroopers remaining on board and informed us that he had some small stomach wounds from the shrapnel that came in between the two-piece flak vest that we all had worn. He also told us that we had a lot of shell holes in the cabin and was sure that many of the paratroopers were wounded before they jumped out.

When we were clear I went into the cabin. All hell must have broken out in there as two of the paratroopers were lying on the floor wounded. One man had a shoulder wound that was pumping blood on the floor and the other had numerous leg wounds. The third must have been the last man in line as he couldn't get by the wounded men in order to exit the airplane. (The British airborne troops were much slower getting out of the planes because, in addition to their backpacks, they had heavy bags strapped between their legs so they would have to hop down the aisle to the door). I went back and told the pilot I would be doing a little first aid. I think I used every first aid kit in the aircraft.

When we approached England, we headed for this huge emergency airport that was used by the bombers and fighters. I had never seen such a huge runway in width and in length. The ambulances met us and we headed to the flight surgeon for medicinal alcohol. Later that evening some B-24 crews joined us in the open bay barracks. They had been low-level dropping supplies to the troops and got shot up pretty bad. One of them did a wheels-up landing and the crew took off in all directions when the ammo on board started going off. It was the next afternoon before our plane was ready to return to home base, all the holes were patched and the dried blood was cleaned from the floor. We dropped by the clinic before we left to see our wounded crew chief and the two paratroopers. They seemed to be doing well.

We were scheduled to drop some of the Polish Brigade on D +4. The first mission had gone as scheduled but bad weather kept delaying our other departures. It was either England that was socked in or the continent or both. We did get airborne on one occasion but we were recalled enroute. There was a lot of controversy over this particular recall but all we could do was to follow the leader. We assumed it was due to weather conditions at the drop area. The Polish Brigade was eventually transferred to a base south of our location and airlifted to a drop zone near the American airborne troops. Shortly thereafter we resumed our normal supply and air-evac flights to the continent.

A year after the 82nd Airborne liberated Eindhoven, I had the honor to fly their commander, General James Gavin, his immediate staff and some of his paratroopers to a parade and celebration. The general was a

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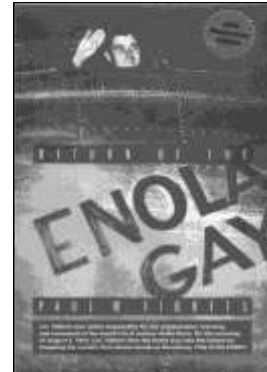
Recommended Reading: Return of the Enola Gay (2004 Restoration Edition)

On July 26, 1945, the Allies issued the Potsdam Declarations calling for Japan's surrender. Two days later the Japanese Premier announced to the Japanese press that his government would ignore the ultimatum. Based on the apparent rejection of peace efforts and the desire to avoid the need to invade Japan, President Truman gave the order to employ a new weapon of mass destruction, the atomic bomb.

"Return of the Enola Gay" is Brig. Gen. Paul W. Tibbets' gripping story, told in his own words, of dropping the world's first atomic weapon.

This book is available from the museum's gift shop and can be purchased for \$26.00 including shipping and handling, payable by check, VISA, MasterCard or American Express.

Please call (302) 677-5992 or email: jay.schmukler@dover.af.mil to place your order.



Operation Market-Garden (Cont.)

dynamic speaker and the Dutch people were just wonderful. One family invited us to their home for refreshments and homemade bread and cakes. I was amazed at how much progress they had made in rebuilding and clearing away the debris of war in such a short time.

About the author:

Ed Levine was assigned to the 61st Troop Carrier Squadron (Q9), 314th Troop Carrier Group, 52nd Troop Carrier Wing stationed at Saltby, England. His squadron, as well as three others assigned to his group: the 32nd (S2), 50th (2R) and the 62nd (E5) participated in dropping the British Red Devil and the Polish Parachute Brigades at Arnhem, Holland in World War II.

He further writes — "you have to realize that the C-47 was not really equipped for combat. Looking back at those years makes me wonder what the command people were thinking. No weapons of course, no self-sealing fuel tanks and no armor except what our people did with steel plates. One piece for each pilot seat, one on the floor between the pilot's seats and one at the rear door for the crew chief to stand on during the troop drop. It was amazing that overall our combat losses were relatively light."

Photo: The museum's C-47 "Turf & Sport" was assigned to the 61st (Q9) and participated in Operation Market Garden.



Name the Artifact by: Deborah Sellars

This handy gadget fits comfortably in the palm of your hand. What does it "do" and who would be the most likely to use it? Answer appears on page 14.



“Name the Plane”

The airplane that I asked you to identify in April’s issue of the Hangar Digest is the Douglas C-1.

In 1925, the US Army adopted a new mission designation system for cargo/transport aircraft. Between 1919 and 1924, cargo aircraft used a “T” (Transport) designation and in 1925 the mission designation was changed to “C” (Cargo).

The Douglas C-1 was the first aircraft to receive the new “C” designation. The airplane’s design was based on several earlier and similar designs developed by Douglas in the early 1920s (including the Douglas World Cruisers used in the 1924 first round-the-world flight). The C-1 featured an enclosed passenger compartment capable of carrying six passengers or about 2,500 pounds of cargo. A trap door was placed in the lower fuselage to allow large and/or heavy cargo (including aircraft engines) to be lifted directly into the cargo compartment. An auxiliary door for passengers and light cargo was located on the right side of the center fuselage.

Although the C-1 was the first aircraft to receive the “C” designation, there were other factors that gave this airplane extra prominence. It had a dual first, being not only the first cargo aircraft but also the first personnel aircraft. And, although not designed for a third mission, it served as the tanker for the first ever air-to-air refueling mission which took place in 1928 using a modified Fokker C-2A tri-motor monoplane receiver aircraft coined the “Question Mark”.

Of the readers submitting an entry, all identified the aircraft as the Douglas C-1. Our randomly selected winner of the **“Name the Plane”** contest is Steven Daskal of Burke, Virginia and he will receive the book “Return of the Enola Gay”. 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 either 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 response with a number ID from which I will randomly select one winner. Please send your entry as soon as possible and 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)



The Hall of Heroes

On March 10, 1967, a flight of F-105 Thunderchiefs took off from Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand. Captain Merlyn Hans Dethlefsen eased his number three “Thud” into position as the four-ship formation headed north. This was his 78th combat mission.

Over 500 miles away, in the North Vietnamese heartland, lay the Thai Nguyen steel mill and industrial complex. Nestled in a valley 40 miles north of Hanoi and 70 miles from the Red Chinese border, the heavily defended complex was a vital cog in Ho Chi Minh’s war machine. It had only recently been approved as a target for US fighter-bombers.

Four Thunderchiefs, with the call sign “Lincoln”, were scheduled to be the first flight on target that day. Their mission was to knock out the lethal defenses that ringed the target: surface to air missiles (SAMs), antiaircraft artillery (AAA) and automatic weapons. There was also a good possibility that the Thuds would be greeted by Soviet and Chinese-built MIG interceptors.

The flight leader and Captain Dethlefsen each piloted two-seat Thunderchiefs for the wild weasel mission. As they neared hostile territory, the backseater would be busy scanning his gear for the telltale signals that could pinpoint North Vietnamese defenses.

Following the rendezvous with a tanker and refueling, Lincoln guided his formation to the north of Thai Nguyen. About two miles from the target, they rolled into a steep diving attack on an active SAM site. Merl and his wingman were nearly a mile behind the first element when they lost sight of the leader in the most intense flak imaginable. Merl broke hard to the right and a moment later, the parachute beeper signal on the emergency radio channel confirmed that the lead crew had ejected from their crippled aircraft. Then number two reported that his Thud had been badly damaged.

Merl took command of the flight. He remembered, “We were still ahead of the strike force and they (the strike force) were still vulnerable. We had fuel and missiles, guns and bombs and the job wasn’t done yet. Lincoln lead had seen the target and launched a missile but it had missed. I decided we would stay. Coming around, I studied the flak pattern. It wasn’t a matter of being able to avoid the flak but of finding the least-intense areas.”

Merle and his backseater had located the approximate position of the SAM site on the first pass. As he maneuvered the aircraft to line up on the target, Merl spotted two MIG-21s closing fast from the rear quadrant. He fired his radar-seeking missile at the SAM site and veered sharply away as one of the MIGs triggered a missile toward him.

He described how he shook off his attackers, “I broke to the right and down through the flak. I figured that would give me the best chance of evading both the heat-seeking missile and the MIG’s guns. Didn’t think the MIGs would want to follow me through that stuff. They didn’t”.

It was standard procedure for F-105 pilots, under attack by MIGs, to jettison their ordnance, engage the afterburner and head for the treetops, where the Thud could outrace the interceptors. The heavy fighter bomber was no match for the maneuverable MIG in a dogfight.

As Merl repositioned for another pass he saw two more MIG-21s and evaded them with a tight break. He elected to retain his ordnance but now he had another problem. The AAA had taken its toll. At least one of the 57 millimeter gunners had scored a bulls-eye, jolting the THUD with a direct hit. Miraculously, the flight controls and engine responded normally as he checked his aircraft. Chunks of shrapnel through the bottom of the aircraft’s fuselage and the left wingtip had not damaged any of the vital systems. The two-man crew turned their attention to the SAM site and Merl remembers that the main force was already leaving the

(Continued on the following page)



The Hall of Heroes (Cont.)

industrial complex.

“I could hear the strike force withdrawing. I had permission to stay there after they left. That steel mill with the related industry was a big target—too big to knock out with one strike. I knew those fighter bombers would be back tomorrow. Same route and right over this area. My aircraft was working well enough to be effective. With the weather the way it was that day I knew we would never have a better chance. So I made up my mind to stay until I got that SAM site or they got me.”

Maneuvering around the flak pattern, Merl spotted another SAM site dead ahead. He squeezed off a missile and the SAM radar shut down.

Smoke and dust from the main strike on the complex began to drift over the defensive positions as Merl and his backseater strained to spot the original SAM site. He eased the Thunderchief down on the deck for a better look. Throughout the harrowing sequence of events, Merl’s wingman had stuck to his leader like glue. His aircraft had been hit by both AAA and a MIG. Because of a damaged aileron, he could turn only to the right as he followed Captain Dethlefsen down the chute once more.

At last the weasel delivered the knockout punch. Merl dropped his bombs squarely on the site and followed with a cannon pass, his 20mm gun blazing away. The SAM site burned as the 105s pulled away.

The two battle-weary Thuds sped toward the tanker and to home station. Pilots who would fly over Thai Nguyen on another day were glad that Captain Dethlefsen had stayed.

“All I did was the job I was sent to do,” Merl said. This understatement of his heroic contribution reflected the attitude of the pilots who risked their lives daily over North Vietnam. The destruction of vital targets in the enemy’s stronghold was never a one-man operation.

For his heroism he was presented the Medal of Honor by President Lyndon Johnson on February 1, 1968. He was the third airman to be awarded the nation’s highest decoration for valor during the Vietnam War.

Source: *USAF Southeast Asia Monograph Series, Vol. VII, Mono. 9.*

Editor’s Note: Merl received his commission and navigator rating through the Aviation Cadet Program and was a June 1955 graduate of Harlingen AFB, Texas. His initial assignment was to the 39th Air Transport Squadron, Dover AFB, Delaware. From Dover he went on to pilot training and served as a fighter pilot in Germany before transferring to his F-105 squadron in Thailand. He passed away on December 14, 1987 at the age of 53 and is interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

The F-105 Thunderchief “Thud” got its first combat test in Vietnam. With six tons of ordnance and 1,000 rounds of ammunition for the 20-millimeter cannon, the aircraft proved to be a formidable and reliable machine, carrying many pilots through 100 missions over heavily defended North Vietnam. Launching from bases in Thailand and refueling in the air over Laos, the Thuds would strike deep into North Vietnam’s heartland. With superior speed at low altitude, they could outrace the MIG interceptors and maneuver to evade the SAM missiles.

Though the F-105 fighter wings in Thailand were composed primarily of single-seat aircraft, the two-seaters, manned by the pilot and electronic warfare officer team, were ideal for the wild weasel role.



A KC-135 Stratotanker refueling a flight of F-105s en route to North Vietnam.

Around the Bases: Hickam AFB, Hawaii

Hickam Air Force Base, on the Island of Oahu, is located nine miles west of Honolulu and is the home of the **715th Air Mobility Operations Group and the 735th Air Mobility Squadron (Air Mobility Command)**.

In 1934, the Army Air Corps recognized the need for another airfield in Hawaii and assigned the Quartermaster Corps the job of constructing a modern airdrome from the tangled brush and sugar cane fields adjacent to Pearl Harbor in the Island of Oahu. The site selected consisted of 2,200 acres of ancient coral reef, covered by a thin layer of soil, located between Oahu's Waianae and Koolau mountain ranges, with the Pearl Harbor channel and naval reservation marking its western and northern boundaries, John Rogers Airport to the east and Fort Kamehameha on the south. The new airfield was dedicated on May 31, 1935 and was named in honor of Lt. Col. Horace Meek Hickam, a distinguished aviation pioneer who was killed in an aircraft accident on November 5, 1934 at Fort Crockett in Galveston, Texas.



While construction was still in progress, the first contingent of twelve men and four aircraft moved from Luke Field on Ford Island to Hickam on September 1, 1937. Hickam Field, as it was known then, was completed and officially activated on September 15, 1938. It was the principal Army airfield in Hawaii and the only one large enough to accommodate the B-17 bomber. In connection with defense plans for the Pacific, aircraft were brought to Hawaii throughout 1941 to prepare for potential hostilities.

The first flight of bombers (21 B-17Ds) from Hamilton Field, California, arrived at Hickam on May 14, 1941. By December 1941, the Air Force on Hawaii had been an integrated command for slightly more than one year and consisted of 750 officers and 6,700 enlisted men, with 233 aircraft assigned to its three primary bases (Hickam, Wheeler and Bellows Fields).

When the Japanese attacked Oahu's military installations on December 7, 1941, Hickam suffered extensive property damage, aircraft losses and personnel casualties totaling 139 killed and 303 wounded. The bombing and strafing of Hickam Field was an important objective in that the success of the Japanese attack on the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor was dependent on eliminating air opposition and precluding U.S. planes from following their aircraft back to their carriers and bombing the task force. During the war years, the base played a major role in pilot training and aircraft assembly work. In addition, it was a supply center for both air and ground troops. Hickam served as the hub of the Pacific aerial network, supporting transient aircraft ferrying troops and supplies to and from forward areas, not only during World War II but also during the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Following World War II, the Air Force in Hawaii was primarily comprised of the Air Transport Command and its successor, the Military Air Transport Service which, in July 1955, organized the 1502nd Air Transport Wing (ATW) from the resources of the 1500th Air Transport Group already in place at Hickam. The wing was assigned to the Pacific Division of MATS. The 1502nd had three air transport squadrons: the 47th, flying the C-97; the 48th and the 50th, flying the C-124. The 1500th ATG was redesignated the 6486th Air Base Wing and was relieved of its assignment to MATS and reassigned to the Headquarters Far East Air Forces then located in Japan. In mid 1957, Far East Air Forces relocated to Hawaii and was redesignated the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF).

In June 1958, MATS' Pacific Division was redesignated the Western Transport Air Force (WESTAF), (today, the 15th Expeditionary Mobility Task Force, headquartered at Travis AFB, California). Then in March 1960, the 47th ATS was deactivated and its C-97s went on to serve with the Reserves and the Air National Guard. Also by June 1960, the 48th had transitioned from the C-124 to the C-118 *Liftmaster*.

(Continued on the following page)

Around the Bases: Hickam AFB, Hawaii (Cont.)

When the Military Air Transport Service was redesignated the Military Airlift Command on January 1, 1966, the 1502nd was deactivated and the 61st Military Airlift Wing was activated and assumed the resources and the traditions of the 1502nd.

In 1967, the 61st MAW had three C-124 squadrons, two at Hickam (6th MAS and 50th MAS) and one at Tachikawa Air Base, Japan (22nd MAS). The 22nd MAS, one of the two squadrons remaining assigned to the 61st in 1969, was deactivated in June. Not far behind was the deactivation of the 50th. The squadron, deactivated in December, closed out the wing's flying operations and the wing was redesignated the 61st Military Airlift Support Wing on December 22, 1969. The 61st would deactivate on April 1, 1980.

On October 1, 1970, the 15th Tactical Fighter Wing was deactivated at MacDill AFB in Florida and one year later on October 20, 1971 was redesignated the 15th Air Base Wing and assigned to PACAF. It activated at Hickam AFB on November 1, 1971, assuming the duties previously performed by the 6486th Air Base Wing, which was simultaneously inactivated.

The 15th, redesignated an Airlift Wing in April 2003, is a subordinate command of PACAF and whose responsibility is providing maintenance and refueling of aircraft transiting Hickam as well as housing and feeding transient personnel.

The Air Mobility Command maintains the **735th Air Mobility Squadron** to coordinate AMC flights through Hickam and the **715th Air Mobility Operations Group** as the command and control center for Air Mobility Squadrons located at Yokota AB, Japan; Osan AB, Korea; Elmendorf AFB, Alaska; Andersen AFB, Guam; and the 735th AMS at Hickam. All units provide fixed and deployed maintenance, aerial port, and command and control support to deployed AMC forces.

Hickam AFB is a National Historic Landmark, recognized as one of the nation's most significant historic resources associated with World War II in the Pacific. Reminders of the attack on December 7, 1941 are the carefully preserved bullet-scarred walls on the Pacific Air Forces Headquarters building. A constant reminder to never again be caught unprepared.

The AMC Museum's connection with Hickam AFB rests with our C-124A, #49-0258. It was twice assigned to the 1502nd Air Transport Wing in the mid 1960s and saw service throughout the Pacific and in support of the Vietnam War.

Editor's Note: Needless to say, Hickam AFB was a popular crew rest stop: sunbathing on the beach at Waikiki; enjoying Saturday night's "Hawaii Calls" radio show under the banyan tree at the Ala Moana Hotel and Martin Denny's "Forbidden Island" at Don The Beachcombers as well as "Tiny Bubbles" from entertainer Don Ho; sipping "Missionary Downfalls" and our crew once spending an evening socializing with the Kingston Trio at the Queens Surf only added to the pleasure of flying the Pacific routes.

Sources: AFHRA/RS, Maxwell AFB; AMC/ HO Scott AFB; 15AW/HO, Hickam AFB; MATS Flyers, dtd: July 1955, August 1955 and March 1960; Office of Air Force History, *Air Force Combat Wings: Lineage and Honors Histories 1947-1977*; Berlin, Earl, *Douglas C-124 Globemaster II*; www.hickam.af.mil/wingpa; www.globalsecurity.org/military. Heist, Harry, *memoirs*.

Additional Note: Martin Denny died at the age of 93 on March 2, 2005. A long time resident of Hawaii, he continued to perform until shortly before his death.



Photo: MATS C-97 at Hickam - 1950s.
Courtesy of the 15th Airlift Wing (PACAF)

**NOTICE OF THE MEETING OF:
THE AMC MUSEUM'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Members of the Air Mobility Command Museum are cordially invited to attend the Museum's Foundation Meeting for the purpose of electing five (5) members to the Board of Directors. The meeting will be held at the AMC Museum, 1301 Heritage Road, Dover Air Force Base, Delaware at 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, September 7, 2005.

The following persons have been nominated:

- Brig. Gen. Michael J. Quarnaccio, USAFR (Ret)*
- Mrs. Mary Frey-Foss*
- Col. Donald Sloan, USAFR*
- CMSgt. Donald A. "Doc" Adams, USAF (Ret)¹
- Mr. Robert M. Berglund²
-
-

*Denotes Incumbent.

¹ Don "Doc" Adams entered the Air Force in June 1950 and retired from active duty as the maintenance superintendent of the 436th Military Airlift Wing Avionics Maintenance Squadron in 1980. He is an active museum volunteer, a member of our restoration crew and is an "as needed" docent. He has been a volunteer since 1998.

² Bob Berglund currently serves as a board member with the Bayhealth Medical Center. He has been past president of the Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce; is a member and past president of the Galaxy Chapter of the Air Force Association and is a member of the Delaware Vets. He has been the operator of Dover Hardware Company since 1972.

If you desire to write-in your nomination you may do so; however, nominees must be members (Friends) of the AMC Museum. Board members must be available to attend the monthly business meeting and serve on such committees as designated by the Board's President. Those elected will serve a term of three years. **(Select no more than five of the nominees).**

You may cast your vote by: US Postal Service – AMC Museum Foundation, P.O. Box 02050 Dover AFB, DE 19902-2050; e-mail harry.heist@dover.af.mil; FAX (302) 677-5940 or by your presence at the meeting. Absentee votes must be received prior to August 30, 2005. The Board thanks you for your participation.

(signed)

Lt Col Phil White, USAF (Ret.)

Secretary

June 1, 2005

Museum Happenings and Other Things



New Administrative Office Area



Enlisted Heritage/Dover Team Exhibit



April 2005 Volunteer Luncheon



Rations Exhibit



Construction of the ramp addition

Name the Artifact:

The gadget is a flight wrench, made of lightweight aluminum, and is called a "Duz-All" used by aircraft mechanics. The small steel disc at the top quickly opens slotted fasteners (like zeus fasteners) on aircraft panels. The other end fits into the top of an aircraft's refueling cap and twists it open. Do you know of other uses? If you do please let me know!

Deborah Sellers

★The Benefits of Membership★
**Becoming a Member of the Museum is easy and it not only benefits
the Museum's programs and projects, it also benefits you!**

For an updated membership form,
please visit:

<http://amcmuseum.org/support>

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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.

I solicit your comments, articles and ideas for future issues. You may contact me by mail: Harry E. Heist c/o The Hangar Digest, P.O. Box 02050, Dover AFB, DE 19902-2050; FAX (302)677-5940; PH (302)677-5997 and email:

harry.heist@dover.af.mil
Harry E. Heist (Editor)