



# Hangar Digest

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## From The Editor

The experiences of the Vietnam War helped create the modern Military Airlift Command. When the United States began its military build-up in Southeast Asia, the Military Air Transport Service was predominately a propeller driver force, limited by range and speed. During Vietnam, MATS acquired jet aircraft and gained official acceptance as a combat organization. In this issue we look at the transition of the command from MATS to MAC that more accurately described its function from a supportive to an active combat role.



Those of you that are considering volunteering may be interested in putting your mark on the restoration of our C-124. You don't have to be an aircraft mechanic to apply, just be willing to get your hands dirty. Bill Hardie, the C-124's team chief, would be more than happy to have you join him and his crew. You can get more information by calling (302)677-5938.

We have entered the fast lane as a participant in Monster Racing. See the details on page 10.

Mark your calendars for Dover's "Air Tattoo" to be held at the museum ramp on Friday, May 20th. Featured will be music performed by the Heritage of American Air Force Band and flyover aircraft including a C-54 Skymaster, B-25 Mitchell and a P-51 Mustang. More information will become forthcoming through the local media and at <http://public.dover.amc.af.mil>.

*Harry E. Heist, Editor*

## From the Director

Back in the days when winter was considered the "Off Season", museums took a deep breath, built new exhibits and got ready for the spring rush of visitors. It's not like that now. This winter, except for a few snow days, we rolled right along hosting several scheduled events and drop-in traffic. We're planning some construction, both for exhibits and for the administration. (Continued on the following page)

## LOOKING BACK

The MATS C-135 continues to set world records. Recently a C-135B set an unofficial world's record for the longest nonstop, un-refueled transport aircraft when it flew from Clark Air Base, Philippines to McGuire AFB, New Jersey in 15 hours and 22 minutes.

During the flight of 9,868 miles, the Boeing-built jet posted an average ground speed of 642 miles per hour and at times reached an altitude of 41,000 feet.

Source: The MATS Flyer, May 1963.

## **From the Director (Cont.)**

A hallway and a new office will be constructed in one corner of the hangar which will serve several purposes. It will give John Taylor, our operations manager, a place to work that is out of the main flow of visitor traffic. We love our visitors, but imagine trying to concentrate in the middle of a class of 6th graders on a field trip. It will give him two doors and a hallway between his office and mine, something he will appreciate since I have a magic effect on computers and it's not the same as Bill Gates' magic. My new office will have enough room so the staff can meet to work on new projects without sitting in each others laps. The other benefit will be to give us some usable wall space for exhibits. Our old offices will be used to expand the museum's store, another sorely needed improvement.

This year, we will be losing our P-51, T-6 and Sopwith Pup along with the F-16. It's a long story but basically we were holding all four in display storage for the planned Ceremonial Hall in Washington, DC that was never built. They will be reassigned to other locations. We've had them so long they feel like part of the family, however none of them are part of our primary mission. I would like to take one more opportunity to thank the 512th Airlift Wing for the outstanding restoration work that they did on the P-51 and to the many volunteers who worked on all of these aircraft that made them display worthy.

The good news is that the C-121, C-124 and the CG-4A restorations are all coming along nicely. We are planning to assemble the main portions of the C-124 in June with a big hand from the miracle workers from Worldwide Aircraft Recovery. Until they arrive, Bill Hardie and his crew will continue to repair the damage to the many smaller parts of the airplane. One propeller was bent 90 degrees, however the base's metals technology shop straightened it so well you can't tell the difference from the others.

We will be hosting two major conferences in May; one for all of the historians in the Air Mobility Command and the other for the field museums, airparks and historical property custodians throughout the Air Force. Also in May, as if all of this was not enough, we will be hosting an art auction to benefit the USO on the 13th and on the 20th, Dover AFB will hold an Air Tattoo that is open to the public.

In the last issue, I promised an update on our aircraft want-list but that will just have to wait until —

Next time,

*Mike*

## **Meet Museum Volunteer Larry Phillips**

Larry is a member of the museum's C-121 "Connie" restoration team and was a key member in the restoration of the C-133 Cargomaster. When needed, he also helps out as a docent. He has been a volunteer for almost five years.

He received his commission through the ROTC program and following pilot training, in 1963, his first operational assignment was with the 84th ATS/MAS at Travis AFB, California. From Travis he went on to serve in Vietnam as a UC-123 pilot with "Ranch Hand", a C-133 and C-5 pilot at Dover AFB and as a C-5 instructor pilot at Altus AFB, Oklahoma. While at Altus, he was selected to be one of the first air refueling instructors for the C-5.

In 1975, Larry returned to Dover AFB as the 436th Military Airlift Wing's Chief of Aircrew Standardization/Evaluation and finally as Chief Pilot with the 9th MAS. His final assignment was at Torrejon AB in Spain as Chief of the Airlift Coordination Center. He retired from active duty in 1989 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and went on to serve nine years as a C-141 flight simulator instructor for Flight Safety, Inc. at McGuire AFB, New Jersey.

Larry hails from Mount Vernon, Illinois and he now resides with his family in Dover, Delaware.



## MATS to MAC — Changing the Name and the Mission

As early as 1960, South Carolina Representative and Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, L. Mendel Rivers, suggested renaming the Military Air Transport Service to more accurately reflect its function as it changed from a supportive to an active combat role. In 1961, MATS Commander Lieutenant General Joe W. Kelly suggested unifying all strategic USAF airlift forces within the command and eliminating the differences in numbers of crews per aircraft, numbers of aircraft per unit and daily aircraft utilization hours between troop carrier and air transport airlift. General Kelly's suggestion was approved initially but the USAF later decided that the cost and the inconvenience of the changes outweighed the advantages.

In June 1962, Congressman Rivers proposed a bill which would redesignate MATS as the Military Airlift Command (MAC); establish MAC as a Specified Command<sup>1</sup> of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and consolidate all strategic airlift resources within MAC. Rivers' measure and three similar ones that followed all failed to gain Congressional approval. But, Rivers and several supporters persisted and Congress finally passed a bill, in 1965, changing the Military Air Transport Service to the Military Airlift Command effective 1 January 1966. The new law, however, did not mention specified command status.

After the 1965 measure passed, Headquarters USAF gave MATS permission to change the name of the command and to rename its subordinate units to better reflect their mission. Units of the Air Force Reserve received the same functional designations as the equivalent active duty units. The basic mission responsibilities of the command remained the same: airlift, weather, rescue and photographic and charting service for the Department of Defense. Subtle changes in attitude toward airlift were slowly evolving and the August 1964 edition of the United States Air Force's basic doctrine discussed airlift as a distinct Air Force mission for the first time. Further, each major commander was allowed to produce a supplement that described its specific mission. General Howell M. Estes, Jr., MATS Commander, summed up the command's airlift philosophy in a letter accompanying the MATS' draft supplement as, "the current mission statement for the Military Air Transport Service directs the maintenance of a military airlift system necessary to perform all airlift tasks." He continued, "MATS activities include operating across the entire spectrum of airlift from airdrop missions to intercontinental logistic support. Its daily tasks go far beyond the strategic and tactical roles."

The MATS' draft suggested the consolidation of all airlift to include a centralized operational command that would insure an orderly application of airlift resources in all methods of deployment. It considered certain elements of airlift to be essential, including: airlift aircraft with long-range as well as intermediate range capabilities with the ability to perform airland/airdrop operations in a forward zone and in restricted landing and take-off areas. It also described an aerial port function with handling equipment capable of operating as a mobile element even in remote areas. However, this dramatic language was far too bold for that time and Air Force planners asked MATS to resubmit and entitle it "Strategic Airlift." The Tactical Air Command worked on a separate document, addressing assault airlift.

Finally, the new Air Force basic doctrine focused on MATS' role in intertheater airlift, specifically logistical support, deployment/redeployment and aeromedical evacuation. Control of tactical and strategic airlift would remain separate for the time being. Even though in September 1964 Headquarters USAF designated MATS the single Air Force agency to exercise control over all airlift force movements in deployment and redeployment operations, other major commands with airlift capacity still did not completely accept the decision.

After MATS became MAC in 1966, the Air Force asked MAC to draft a new charter that would outline MAC's relationship to each agency of the Department of Defense. As a result, when the Air Force issued its new mission statement, it stated that the Secretary of the Air Force and the MAC Commander could deal directly with all Defense Department and other government agencies on airlift matters. It noted that "MAC was the single Air Force Agency to provide movement control for airlift forces engaged in the deployment and redeployment operations." Later that year, MAC also assumed two new functions: the operation of a

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## **MATS to MAC (Cont.)**

worldwide passenger reservation system and aerial port management which controlled the volume and rate of flow into the military airlift system. The 1960s set the stage for the consolidation of all airlift resources within a specified command that followed in the mid 1970s.

<sup>1</sup>Specified Command: *A command that has a broad, continuing mission and is normally made-up of forces from a single military department.*

Source: MAC History Office, *Anything, Anywhere, Anytime: An Illustrated History of the Military Airlift Command 1941-1991*. [http:// usmilitary.about.com/library](http://usmilitary.about.com/library).

## **Tactical Airlift in Southeast Asia**

The Military Airlift Command's primary responsibility during the Vietnam War was the strategic delivery of personnel and cargo to the major ports, but the command also flew some intratheater missions. The war severely strained the Pacific Air Forces' (PACAF) ability to operate an intratheater airlift system while also meeting tactical airlift requirements in South Vietnam. The Air Force decided, therefore, that MAC should assume a greater portion of the intratheater airlift workload. The command's "tactical" cargo flights varied from delivering ammunition between Kadena Air Base, Okinawa and Danang Air Base, South Vietnam, to moving troops and equipment within Vietnam. Although PACAF's tactical airlifters flew the bulk of the intratheater missions in Southeast Asia, it is appropriate to include an account of MAC's activity since the tactical airlift mission was consolidated into MAC in 1974-75.

Tactical airlift had proven its worth in World War II, especially in Western Europe and in Burma when hundreds of C-46s and C-47s supported Allied ground operations. During the Korean War, tactical airlift was again an invaluable asset for the UN's forces. Following the conflict, military planners called upon airlift to support short-notice transoceanic deployments of the United States-based tactical air forces.

The first USAF tactical transports, four C-47s, arrived in Vietnam in November 1961 as part of the combat crew training detachment known as Farm Gate . The aircraft executed several missions, including support flights for Farm Gate, airdrops of Vietnamese paratroopers and night flareship operations. Throughout the conflict, the airlifter's most important and difficult missions involved resupplying the US Army's Special Forces at remote sites throughout South Vietnam. Often Farm Gate or Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) fighter escorts accompanied the C-47s as they airdropped supplies to the Army's Green Berets.

The VNAF used C-47s also. A shortage of Vietnamese pilots in early 1962 caused the USAF to assign American pilots to the VNAF airlift squadrons. As a result, 30 American officers arrived in April 1962 to serve as copilots on otherwise all-Vietnamese C-47 crews. This was followed by a second contingent of American pilots who replaced the original 30 in the spring of 1963 and stayed until later that year when Vietnam began using its own copilots.

The small Farm Gate detachment and the VNAF airlift squadrons, however, were insufficient to handle the growing requirements for airmobility within the Southeast Asian Theater. Air Force Chief of Staff General Curtis LeMay concluded that the lack of aerial port facilities, poor command, control and communications prevented the operation of an effective airlift system. By the end of 1962, two C-123 *Provider* units, the 315th Troop Carrier Group (redesignated the 315th Air Commando Group, 8 March 1965) and the 8th Aerial Port Squadron were in place at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon. A third C-123 squadron was stationed at Da Nang Air Base in 1963 and a fourth at Tan Son Nhut in October 1964 following the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August. The C-123's ability to land on short, unimproved fields proved invaluable and the four units served in Vietnam until the end of the war.

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## **Tactical Airlift in Southeast Asia (Cont.)**

The C-130 *Hercules* flew the bulk of the tactical airlift missions during the Vietnam War with the C-7 *Caribous*, the C-123 *Providers* and the Australian *Wallabies* (*Caribous*) contributing substantially. When President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered American ground units into South Vietnam, the C-130s airlifted the initial Marine battalion from Okinawa to DaNang in March 1965. Two months later, these same C-130s airlifted the first regular Army troops, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, from Okinawa to South Vietnam.

By the end of 1965, the 315th Air Division had 32 C-130s stationed at Tan Son Nhut, Vung Tau, Nha Trang and Cam Ranh Bay Air Bases. The C-130, unlike the C-7 or the C-123, had a high-load capacity, on-board navigational radar and a 24-hour-a-day capability. At first, the 315th restricted the C-130s to airfields with runways of more than 3,500 feet. The C-123 carried cargo to the marginal forward airstrips. The Tactical Air Command and Headquarters USAF, however, pressured the air division to exploit the C-130's proven assault capabilities. The 315th relented and in 1965 directed that all C-130s would operate to all airfields within the aircraft's performance characteristics. The expanded role of the C-130 fit with General William Westmoreland's (Commander of U.S. Forces in Vietnam) offensive and mobile tactics against the Communists in South Vietnam.

The C-7A *Caribous* had been flying tactical airlift missions in Vietnam since 1962. The U.S. Army had purchased these twin engine transports to support its mobile forces. In April 1966, the Army and the Air Force agreed to transfer the *Caribous* to the Air Force and in January 1967 these units officially became Air Force squadrons assigned to the 483rd Tactical Airlift Wing at Cam Ranh Bay Air Base.

Back in October 1966, the new 834th Air Division at Tan Son Nhut absorbed the 315th Air Commando Group's Airlift Control Center, C-123 squadrons, aerial port group and was soon to assume ownership of the C-7s from the Army. The 834th also exercised operational control over the C-130s that had arrived in Vietnam the previous year.

The creation of the new division paralleled the reorganization of the aerial port structure, a revision forced by the increase in tonnage. Between early 1965 and mid-1966, the cargo passing through the system grew from 30,000 to 140,000 tons per month. This increase nearly overwhelmed the system with the aerial port units struggling with inadequate equipment and facilities and personnel chronically overworked. The seven aerial port detachments in Vietnam at the start of 1965 expanded to thirty-five by year's end.

The 834th Air Division's and its predecessor the 315th Air Commando Group's Airlift Control Center (ALCC) managed the tactical airlift force in the Southeast Asian Theater. Requests from the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), Vietnam's combat operations center, unit movement and special mission requests all filtered into the airlift control center. The center's staff scheduled missions, wrote movement frag (fragmentation) orders, monitored and directed airlift movement, cancellations and recalls and coordinated emergency requests. In short, the airlift control center was the "tactical airlift resource in Vietnam."

After 1968, President Richard M. Nixon's strategy of "Vietnamization" of the war along with American troop withdrawal led to a decrease in tactical airlift activity. When MACV deactivated in March 1973, the parent of intratheater airlift in Vietnam, the Seventh Air Force, moved to Nakhon Phanom Air Base, Thailand. The airlift control center also merged with the control center at U-Tapao Air Base, Thailand, to control and schedule all C-130s in Southeast Asia.

### **AN ACCOUNT BY THE EDITOR:**

Despite the increase of personnel, the United States advisory mission failed to end the insurgency from North Vietnam into South Vietnam and Laos. The decision early in 1965 to replace advisors with combat troops recognized two facts that had come clear in 1964: infiltration from North to South Vietnam was

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## Tactical Airlift in Southeast Asia (Cont.)

growing rather than tapering off and the government of South Vietnam could not cope with the situation. Thus, 1964 would bring an end to the "advisory period" in Vietnam and the USAF units already in place would form the nucleus for the buildup of the U.S. forces.

Following C-123 *Provider* aircrew training and two survival schools, I arrived in Saigon on Christmas Eve, 1964 to witness what would bring the United States to the verge of direct all-out action. A 300 pound charge exploded in the lobby of the Brink Hotel (billets for U.S. advisors), killing two and injuring sixty-four Americans and forty-three Vietnamese. So would begin my year in Vietnam.

My quarters were located in Saigon's Chinese District of Cholon. My job took me on a daily commute to Tan Son Nhut Air Base, assigned to the 315th Group's Airlift Control Center working twelve hour days, two weeks on and three days off, two of which I would fly in order to maintain my proficiency as a C-123 navigator. I along with a C-130 pilot, an operations duty officer (all of us captains) and several enlisted personnel were responsible for the day-to-day scheduling, controlling and supervising all of the 315th's tactical airlift capability throughout Vietnam and the Southeast Asian Theater.

Normally airlift requirements were received from MACV, however, many requests necessitated our immediate response. Two examples follow:

On the evening of 30 June 1965, South Vietnamese paratroopers were heavily engaged with North Vietnam forces at Cheo Reo southeast of Pleiku. We were tasked to launch or divert every available C-123 aircraft. In the initial four hours, a C-123 landed every eight minutes at Cheo Reo and the C-123 fleet delivered sixteen hundred troops along with their equipment and ammunition. Another one thousand men were airlifted over the next two days along with 290 tons of cargo. The C-130s assisted in the operation and hauled in 105mm artillery and ammunition from Pleiku. The transports landed by night using flareship illumination and makeshift runway lighting. On July 4th and 5th, the troops were then airlifted to Pleiku and Kontum by the C-123s. Immediately following the Cheo Reo operation, we began another airlift into Dak To under similar conditions. These combined efforts, including resupply and extractions, within a ten-day period, required over six hundred C-123 sorties and included the movement of over ten thousand troops.

Not all operations were to prove as successful as that of the Cheo Reo and Dak To airlifts. In order to root out Viet Cong and North Vietnamese factions, formations of transports also were used to burn out forested areas used as cover. On 31 March 1965, we scheduled an airdrop with twenty four C-123s, each carrying twenty-four fifty-five-gallon drums of fuel with flares attached, to burn part of the Boi Loi woods northwest of Saigon. Fighter aircraft fed the blaze with napalm and the smoke reached 10,000 feet. The heat was so intense that clouds formed over the area generating a huge thunderhead causing torrential rains that eventually put out the fires.

Since the C-123s had no navigational radar and were used frequently for deliveries in the highlands, they were especially vulnerable while flying in poor visibility near mountainous terrain. Such was the case on  
(Continued on the following page)



## Tactical Airlift in Southeast Asia (Cont.)

11 June 1965 when a crew from the 310th Air Commando Squadron, stationed at Nha Trang, flew into a mountain while attempting an airdrop in marginal weather south of Pleiku. None of the nine crewmen survived. The crew's navigator was my roommate when the 310th was stationed at Tan Son Nhut before it's relocation to Nha Trang in April 1965.

During my two flying days away from ALCC, I scheduled my missions that would take me to a variety of destinations in order to become more familiar with the airfields and drop zones to where we were sending the aircrews. Some of these locations were the U.S. Army Special Forces outposts along the South Vietnam-Cambodian-Laotian border. These small primitive camps included a small detachment of Green Berets in command of several South Vietnamese members of their strike force.

A few days before Thanksgiving, I was able to requisition some frozen turkeys from the Navy. In turn, I fragged a mission that would take us along the South Vietnam-Cambodian border to airdrop and airland the turkeys to the Special Forces camps along the way.

So, on our C-123, we loaded up the turkeys, Playboy magazines, a few pilot chutes (a small chute used to pull the larger chute from it's package but large enough to drop a turkey), a chaplain and off we went hoping to hit as many outposts that daylight and our fuel load would allow.

I recall landing at one of the camps and meeting a young lieutenant along with his group of Vietnamese combatants. After giving him the turkey and the chaplain saying a few good words, the chaplain asked if there was anything more he could do for him. The lieutenant's reply: "Chaplain, you can take your turkey and 'stick it', just get me out of here." We left him with his Vietnamese charges, several turkeys and took-off headed to the next camp. I've often thought about him in the hopes that he got out of there OK.

Unlike the lieutenant stationed in hell, my Thanksgiving Day was spent at the Brink Hotel, the same place that I witnessed being blown up eleven months before.

During my year in Vietnam, the United States military forces grew from 23,000 advisors to 180,000 troops including the 173rd Airborne Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division. In January 1965, the C-123 tactical airlift force in Vietnam was averaging 300 tons of cargo per day. At the end of my tour, December 1965, we were scheduling 1,400 tons per day using the C-123s, C-130s and the Wallabies. The peak occurred during the period of January-June 1968 when the daily airlift was 2,700 tons flown by the C-123s, C-130s and the C-7s which were acquired from the Army in 1967.

Between 1962 and 1973, Military Air Transport Service/Military Airlift Command and Tactical Air Command transports airlifted more than 7 million tons — passengers and cargo — within the theater area. By comparison, Allied aircraft carried about 2 million tons during the Berlin Airlift and ¾ million tons during the Korean War. As in World War II and the Korean Conflict, tactical airlifters again proved in Vietnam that they could deliver the goods. Their success cost dearly, however, as 53 C-130s, 50 C-123s and 20 C-7s were lost along with 269 crewmembers either killed or missing in action.

Sources: Office of Air Force History, *USAF in Southeast Asia "Tactical Airlift"*; Office of Air Force History, *The Advisory Years to 1965*; Office of Air Force History, *USAF in Southeast Asia "The Years of the Offensive 1965-1968"*; MAC History Office, *Anything, Anywhere, Anytime: An Illustrated History of the Military Airlift Command 1941-1991*;

Heist, Harry, *memoirs*.

The C-130 *Hercules*, C-123 *Provider* and the C-7 *Caribou* can be seen at the AMC Museum.

Photo: C-123s ready for takeoff at Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Air Base.



Photo by: Harry Heist

## From the Curator

The date, 1969. The place, Cam Ranh Bay, Republic of Viet Nam. My mission, maintenance on the C-7A Caribou. After attending the two week crash course on Caribou maintenance at Sewart AFB, Tennessee in the fall of 1968, I bid goodbye to Dover AFB and the C-124s that launched my career and I headed west. Way west! As I disembarked from the Stretch 8 “cattle coach” at the terminal at Cam Ranh, my first impression was, geez this place is HOT. Processing completed, I boarded a bus for the trip to the “other side”. Signed in, quarters assigned, quick trip to the flight line, equipment issue, chow and then back to THE HOOTCH. I thought the barracks at Dover was the low rent district of the Air Force! Next morning, I reported to the line chief and after a brief indoctrination, I was introduced to the wonderful world of Caribou maintenance. My first stint was in the phase dock where I learned the plane inside and out. After a few weeks there, I moved out to the flight line (about 40 feet away) and began maintenance standing on the PSP (pierced steel planking) ramp. As if the air itself was not hot enough, I was well done at the end of the shift from the reflective heat coming off of the PSP. The work on the plane was as interesting as it gets. The plane was small enough that I got to know it really well and it was definitely a far cry from the C-124 I left behind at Dover. If it coughed, I knew why. If it sang a sweet tune in the sky, I did my job.

There were specialists for specific areas of the plane such as hydraulics, navigation and others and as crew chief, I planned on being a part of every repair to learn my plane even better. One of the “bennies” of being a crew chief was flying with the plane on its mission, flight crew allowing. This gave me the additional experience of maintaining my plane away from home station. Some of the maintenance during these missions was certainly not written in the books but non-the-less effective enough to keep the plane in the air.

One of my most memorable off-station repairs was an engine change at Cu Chi, a pin prick on the map. Number 1 engine had enough and on engine start, it coughed so bad that it ruptured its spleen and shot a kidney stone out the cowling. After diagnosing the problem, a call back to Can Ranh got the ball rolling for a replacement engine. The day started early enough as this was the third stop on a five stop day and now I was looking at several hours of prep work before the engine could be dropped. The first course of action was to befriend several US Army troops because that’s who we had to deal with there and I knew I’d be needing them for something. That need arrived quickly. I knew that home base would send an over-the-wing engine hoist to drop the engine and that would take time to assemble and use. So as the sun set on a busy day, I enlisted the assistance of an Army troop and together we “confiscated” an all terrain forklift that was just ripe for the taking. Never drove one before but hey, how hard could it be. Once I got it started, it didn’t take long to figure out the controls and make this huge thing do what I needed it to do. I suppose I could have asked for its use but the troop that led me to it said, if we just “borrowed” it, nobody would care and it would save a lot of questions. Yeah, right. Somebody cared. As I maneuvered along the road, I heard someone shouting, “SHIRT, SHIRT”. I was wearing one so I didn’t see any problem continuing on. I got to my plane and proceeded to hook the forklift to the prop, removed it to the ground and then attached the forks to the chains that I positioned on the engine’s hoist points. Once secured, I disconnected the engine and lowered it to the ground. Where’s my Army troop? SHIRT found me! Now I knew what/who SHIRT was. Wow what a butt chewing I got. Let’s see, I was read the riot act, told the penalty for stealing an Army vehicle, what the Army would do to a young Air Force “puke” and a diatribe about how my mother didn’t teach me right from wrong! When he finished his lecture, I offered to return the forklift after the engine was up and the prop back on. He didn’t like my offer but agreed after noting my name and unit. Was he going to send me a card or something? It was the something that I’d find out about later at home base.

The replacement engine arrived the next morning along with two maintenance personnel and we returned the plane to flight status in three hours. Oh, the forklift. I left a note on it indicating that since I wasn’t licensed to drive it, I’d leave it there for a qualified operator to return it to the yard. The SHIRT, he did send a note to my commander but by that time I had already submitted my story and got a smile in return.

There were a million stories from Southeast Asia and this is just one of them.



## Airlift Legends: General Howell M. Estes, Jr.

Howell M. Estes, Jr., was born on 18 September 1914 in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, graduating from the United States Military Academy in 1936. Initially appointed as platoon and troop commanding officer of the 7th Cavalry, he later served as aide to the commanding general at Headquarters, 1st Cavalry Division. He entered pilot training in June 1939 and upon graduating in April 1940, he transferred to the Army Air Corps and subsequently was assigned as a flight instructor at Brooks Field, Texas. In August he was appointed commandant of cadets at Brooks and became director of flying for the school in July 1942.

In January 1946, he became chief of the Plans and Policy Branch, Operations Division, United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) and held a number of other staff positions within the command.

Upon returning to the United States in 1949, he completed courses at the Air War College and was assigned to March Air Force Base, California, where he assumed command of the 1st Air Base Group. He then became commander of the 22nd Bombardment Wing and in January 1951, commander of the 44th Bombardment Wing at March Air Force Base.

From March through July 1951, during the Korean War, he was assigned as vice commander of Far East Air Forces Bomber Command and flew 25 combat missions in the B-29 *Superfortress*. He was then selected to command the 320th Bombardment Wing at March in August 1951 with the additional duty of commander, Air Task Group 7.4, Joint Task Force Seven, for the overseas atomic test, Operation Castle. During the operational phase of Castle in 1954, he spent four months at the Pacific Proving Grounds on Eniwetok Island.

Beginning in July 1954, he served at the Wright Air Development Center at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and became assistant deputy commander for weapons systems. He was then transferred to Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C., as the assistant chief of staff, air defense systems, in August 1957. In April 1961, General Estes became the deputy commander for aerospace systems, Air Force Systems Command and in October 1962, he became vice commander of AFSC at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland.

In July 1964 he assumed command of the Military Air Transport Service, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois and in 1965-66' he would oversee the command's name change and mission. As commander of the new Military Airlift Command, he directed airlift support for numerous operations in Vietnam, the Apollo moon missions and the return of the *USS Pueblo* crew. Under General Estes, the command acquired the first C-141 *Starlifters* and the C-9 *Nightingales*.

In April 1967, General Estes was presented the General H.H. Arnold Trophy, the highest military honor given by the Arnold Air Society. Also, for his significant contributions to the enlisted corps, he would be the recipient of the prestigious "Order of the Sword" in December 1967. General Estes would be succeeded by General Jack Catton as MAC commander on 1 August 1969 and would retire from active duty.

Source: MAC History Office, *Anything, Anywhere, Anytime MAC 1941-1991*; [www.af.mil/bios](http://www.af.mil/bios).

### **The Military Airlift Command Insignia...**

was 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 in saltire, all gold and all within a diminished border of the last.

The wings suggested the mission of MAC; the three crossed arrows, taken from the seal of the Department of National Defense, where they represent the three Armed Forces which were served by MAC and the globe, representing the scope of MAC's activities and operations.

Source: *CPD/HO Maxwell AFB, AL*



## Recommended Reading: Classic Airplanes

Today, aviation technology encompasses a myriad of disciplines, from aerodynamics to weapons systems. And then there are the numberless human factors: the creative urge, political and military dominance, national pride and the economic gambles of the corporations that manufacture combat and civil aircraft. Above all else, though, is that dream of flight — a dream that has only become more urgent over the millennia.

Walter J. Boyne's **Classic Airplanes** is a picture-packed, insider's tribute to nearly 60 of the greatest of the great, from the 1903 Wright Flyer to the B-2 Spirit of the 21st century.

This book is available from the museum's gift shop and can be purchased for \$28.00 including shipping and handling, payable by check, VISA, MasterCard or American Express.

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



## Artifact Facts by: Deborah Sellars

The photo shows a few Vietnam-era artifacts from the museum's small but distinctive collection. The C-123 model was hand carved from balsa wood and painted with aircraft paint by the donor, a C-123K pilot in Phan Rang, Vietnam.

The Vietnamese Air Force navigator wings were awarded to Harry Heist (the editor of the Hangar Digest), in 1965, by Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky, VNAF Commander. The wings were authorized for wear in Vietnam only and on tan 1505 uniforms.

The 33rd Camron Tiger pin—sometimes called a fantasy pin— was made in Vietnam and worn on a bush hat. On the other pin, Snoopy flies his dog house—the letters FAC stand for “forward air controller”.

The 310th Air Commando Squadron patch was worn by the donor while assigned as a C-123 navigator in Saigon and Nha Trang in 1965.

The AMC Museum welcomes additions to its collection of Vietnam artifacts.



## *“Monster” Racing —d*

Monster Racing and the Air Mobility Command Museum have teamed up to showcase two of central Delaware's premier tourist attractions... the museum and NASCAR.

Monster Racing's latest addition to their fleet of former Nextel Cup race cars is the AMC Museum's Chevrolet Monte Carlo, honoring the men and women of Dover Air Force Base and the Air Mobility Command.

Sonny Kruhm, the current AMC Museum's honorary commander and CEO of Monster Racing, is a big supporter of the military and our troops. Last October, Sonny approached the museum with the idea of painting one of his cars with the museum's logo to honor the troops and support the base and tourism at the same time. Well...as you would say the rest is history. The car is nestled under the nose of the B-17 in our hangar and will be on display until May. It will then return to the Monster Racing Team and be available to the public for the ultimate driving experience at the Dover International Speedway “The Monster Mile”.



*John Taylor*

Operations Manager (and the museum's #1 NASCAR fan)

## “Name the Plane”

The airplane that I asked you to identify in January’s issue of the Hangar Digest is the Cessna UC-78 “Bobcat.”

The UC-78 was the military’s version of the commercial Cessna T-50 light transport. Cessna first produced the wood and tubular steel, fabric covered T-50 in 1939 for the civilian market. In 1940, the Air Corps ordered them under the designation AT-8 as multi-engine advanced trainers.

Thirty-three AT-8s were built for the Air Corps and production continued under the designation AT-17 reflecting a change in equipment and engine types. In 1942, the Army Air Force adopted the Bobcat as a light personnel transport and those delivered after 1 January 1943 were designated UC-78s. By the end of World War II, Cessna had produced more than 4,600 Bobcats for the Army Air Force, 67 of which were transferred to the U.S. Navy as JRC-1s. In addition, 822 Bobcats had been produced for the Royal Canadian Air Force as Crane 1s.

Dubbed the “Bamboo Bomber” by the pilots who flew them, it was one of the aircraft featured in the popular television series “Sky King” of the 1940s and ‘50s.

Our randomly selected winner of the “Name the Plane” contest is Mr. George Mazock of Felton, Delaware and he will receive the book “Classic Airplanes”. 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 your 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)



## The Hall of Heroes

On November 9, 1967, Captain Lance P. Sijan began an ordeal that a fighter pilot can never be entirely prepared for. Secure in the familiar cockpit of his F-4C fighter in one instance, he ejected from the crippled plane in the next heartbeat after an accurate burst of groundfire took its toll. In a brief moment of calm, he was swinging in his parachute above the hostile countryside and after a bone-jarring landing, he was alone in enemy territory near Vinh, North Vietnam. The precise physical skills of the jet pilot were useless now but courage and resourcefulness were needed more than ever.



Captain Sijan evaded his pursuers for six weeks but paid a high price for his freedom. During this time he suffered serious injuries to his left leg and right hand as well as a brain concussion and severe lacerations. Because of shock and weight loss, he was emaciated to a state where every bone showed through his weakened body.

Finally, around Christmas, he was captured by North Vietnamese soldiers and was taken to a holding camp. However, he found an opportunity and despite his crippling injuries he overpowered the guard, knocked him unconscious and escaped. Again a fugitive, he traveled for two kilometers before being recaptured several hours later and taken to another enroute camp.

After solitary confinement, Captain Sijan was subjected to long interrogations while being tortured for information. Somehow he found the strength to resist and he continually distracted his captors refusing to tell them anything except his name, rank and serial number.

On January 6, 1968, the North Vietnamese prepared to move some prisoners and their commander detailed Lieutenant Colonel Robert Craner to care for Captain Sijan. By then, Captain Sijan's physical condition had deteriorated to a point where he could neither stand nor sit erect without help.

The next day the two Americans boarded a truck for the long punishing trip to Hanoi. During the jolting ride, Colonel Craner often feared the Captain Sijan had died but each time he regained consciousness and declared that he was doing alright. Unbelievably, he never complained about the battering and in fact talked about escape several times saying that he was ready for another try.

Captain Sijan was taken to Hoa Lo Prison where he was kept in the section that the American airmen called Vegas. His wounds were not treated and he was able to take only a few spoonfuls of food each day. He grew steadily weaker but requested aid only to put his body in a sitting position so he could exercise his slack muscles in preparation for another escape. Because his broken leg would not support him, he had dragged himself backward on his hips during his flight through the jungle. As a result, both hipbones now jutted through his skin and exercise was excruciatingly painful.

Captain Sijan, whose condition was aggravated by the poor living conditions, inadequate diet and clothing, contracted pneumonia on January 18th. Because the fluid in his air passages would have strangled him, he could not lie down and during the night of January 21st, his captors removed him from his cell. The next day they reported that he had died.

Till the end the indomitable airman had resisted the enemy, never complaining about his physical deterioration and eagerly anticipated another chance to escape.

On March 4, 1976, Captain Sijan was awarded, posthumously, the Medal of Honor which was presented to his parents by President Gerald Ford. Captain Sijan thus became the first graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy to receive this nation's highest decoration.

Sources: *USAF Southeast Asia Monograph Series, Vol. VII, Mono. 9*; <http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum>.

## Around the Bases: McConnell AFB, Kansas

McConnell Air Force Base is located in the southeast corner of Wichita, Kansas and is the home of the **22nd Air Refueling Wing (Air Mobility Command)**.

Located in America's heartland, airmanship in the Wichita area began in the first decade of the 20th Century. In 1916, as the United States prepared to enter World War I, the city began buying up land to build a municipal airport.

In October 1924, Wichita hosted the National Air Congress that attracted over 100,000 people. The event highlighted an air race of 47 military and civilian aircraft including the locally manufactured Swallow. After this nationally recognized event, several aircraft manufacturing companies were begun — Travel Air (Beech Aircraft's predecessor), Boeing and Cessna. With this growth in aviation in Wichita, aviators began pushing for the construction of the proposed municipal airport. Ground was broken in June 1929, however the Great Depression delayed the terminal's completion of almost six years.

Although only one hangar and three small warehouses were available for use, the Army Air Force Material Center (Material Command) established its headquarters at Wichita in March 1942. The command chose this site to take advantage of the airport's five 50 foot-wide runways, each with a 60,000 pound wheel load capacity. In September 1945, the Material Command moved to Oklahoma City eventually becoming the Air Force Logistics Center at what is now Tinker Air Force Base. Meanwhile, the 4156th Army Field Base Unit arrived at Wichita to service and maintain transient and locally based aircraft. One year later this unit disbanded and the Air Force would not return until 1951.

Since Wichita Municipal bordered on the Boeing Aircraft plant, the Air Force moved back onto the site in June 1951 and changed the name to Wichita Air Force Base. This time the Air Training Command's 3520th Combat Crew Training Wing (CCTW) began training Boeing B-47 Stratojet bomber crews.

From 1954 to 1956, a \$22 million construction program turned the old airport into one of the Air Force's major bases. The improvements included 490 Capehart housing units, ten miles of paved streets and two hangars. Other improvements included clubs, a theater, commissary, bank, hospital and a base exchange. In 1958 the Strategic Air Command's (SAC) 4547th CCTW replaced the 3520th CCTW.

In April 1954, the base became McConnell Air Force Base in honor of two of the three "Flying McConnell Brothers" of World War II. The brothers, from Wichita, entered the Army Air Corps together during World War II. The trio gained fame as "three-of-a-kind." Second Lieutenant Thomas McConnell perished in July 1943 when his B-24 Liberator crashed into a fog covered mountain while en route to his home base in Guadalcanal after a bombing mission. Captain Fred McConnell died when his private plane crashed in October 1945 near Garden Plains, Kansas. Edwin passed away in August 1997 at the age of 76. During a rededication ceremony in 1999, base officials added Edwin's name to the installation, making McConnell the name-sake of all three brothers.

During the mid 1950s, SAC selected the site for 18 Titan II Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) complexes for the newly activated 381st Strategic Missile Wing (SMW). Using McConnell as a base, the silos formed a ring from the northeast and south to the west 20 to 50 miles from the installation. Construction crews finished the project in the early 1960s at the cost of \$80 million.

In October 1962, the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) activated at McConnell flying the F-100C Super Sabre and later the F-105D Thunderchief. The wing deactivated in 1964. Two years later in 1964, the 388th began operating from Korat Air Base in Thailand.

The 23rd TFW replaced the 388th at McConnell. It trained F-105 crews for combat in Southeast Asia. The 355th TFW transferred from George AFB in July 1964 joining the 23rd at McConnell under the 835th Air

**(Continued on the following page)**



**22nd Air Refueling Wing**

## **Around the Bases: McConnell AFB, Kansas (Cont.)**

Division. Squadrons of both wings saw action in Vietnam.

McConnell received a new mission in April 1971 with the arrival of the 91st Air Refueling Squadron and their KC-135A Stratotankers. In July 1972, the 23rd TFW was reassigned to England AFB, Louisiana establishing the 381st SMW as McConnell's host unit. The 384th Air Refueling Wing arrived in December 1972.

In October 1981, President Reagan announced that the Air Force would phase out the Titan II ICBMs. In Early 1983, the 384th ARW learned that it would be the first wing to receive the "R" model KC-135 tanker and the B-1B Lancer bomber. In August 1986 the 381st SMW deactivated.

The 384th Air Refueling Wing became McConnell's host unit and was redesignated the 384th Bombardment Wing (Heavy) in the summer of 1987. The 91st Air Refueling Squadron deactivated later that same year and the 384th Air Refueling Squadron (ARS) became the sole refueling unit.

On 26 April 1991, a tornado devastated McConnell. It destroyed 102 base housing units and nine major facilities including the base hospital. Despite the property damage, there were 16 reported injuries and no deaths. As a result of the tornado, the base built new facilities and in three years there was new base housing, a bowling alley, officer and enlisted clubs and various other services.

In mid-1992 the Air force restructured its major commands. With the deactivation of the Strategic Air Command, the 384th Bomb Wing transferred its resources to the newly activated Air Combat Command and the 384th Air Refueling Squadron joined the Air Mobility Command and remained at McConnell.

Also in 1992, the Kansas Air National Guard (184th Fighter Group), a long resident of McConnell, would lose their F-16s and gain the B-1B bombers and become the 184th Bomb Group. In January 1994, the **22nd Air Refueling Wing (Air Mobility Command)** assumed the role as host wing. Within eight months, the 344th, 349th and the 350th Air Refueling Squadrons would join the 384th to fly the wing's 48 KC-135s. The 384th Bomb Wing would transfer all of its B-1Bs to the Air Force Reserve before inactivating on 30 December 1994.

In January 1995, the 931st Air Refueling Group (AFRC Assoc.) joined team McConnell. This Air Force Reserve associate unit provides crews while the 22nd ARF furnishes the aircraft and maintenance crews.

Since 1996, McConnell has served as the test site for the PACER CRAG (compass, radar and GPS) avionics modernization program. In 1997, the base became the test center for the multi-point refueling program. In the same year, the Republic of Singapore's Air Force chose McConnell to train their KC-135 aircrews and maintenance personnel.

In 2002, as part of a plan to reduce and consolidate the Air Force's B-1 fleet, the 184th's B-1s were transferred to other bases. In September 2002, the 184th assumed a new mission flying the KC-135 and was officially designated the 184th Air Refueling Wing (Air National Guard).

McConnell AFB has come a long way since the days of landing planes in hayfields to surviving the devastation of the 1991 tornado. The professionals of Team McConnell and the 22nd Air Refueling Wing join other Air Mobility Command leaders in providing expeditionary air refueling which enable global vigilance, reach and power.

Source: <http://mcconnell.af.mil>



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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:

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