

# Hangar Digest

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

From the Director	3
Cruisin' with Jim	3
Meet the Volunteer	4
First Air Commandos	5
Hall of Heroes	7
Name the Plane	8
Around the Bases	9



*Jeff Townsend of Townsend Brothers Chevrolet passing on the Chevrolet S-10 title to Foundation Board President Mike Quarnaccio. Also pictured (l to r) are Rich Hamburg, Townsend Brothers Chevrolet; Director, Mike Leister and Foundation Board Member, Don Adams. (2nd row) Curator, Jim Leech and Operations Manager, John Taylor.*

**P**robably the most innovative and most colorful Army Air Force units of World War II were the Air Commando groups, particularly the 1st Air Commandos. Denigrated by the more traditionally-minded air leaders of the time, the 1st Air Commandos, nevertheless, performed outstandingly and their heritage lives on in the Air Force today. In this issue we look at those "first" First Air Commandos.

Through the generosity of Jeff Townsend, the Museum now has a reliable pickup truck. Recently celebrating 75 years with Chevrolet, Townsend Brothers' full service dealership is located in Dover.

During the past several months I've attempted to improve the quality of this newsletter. So, with the help of John Taylor, operations manager, and a new printing service I think you will notice an improvement in the photo reproductions and a more vivid script.

In the next issue we look at Dover AFB "The Earlier Years" - the editor's personal account.

Enjoy your AMC Museum!

Harry E. Helst, Editor

## LOOKING BACK

In August of 1942, the Douglas C-54 Skymaster began military service in the Air Transport Command. The four-engine transport was a DC-4A built to commercial specifications. The C-54A was the military version structurally redesigned for heavy cargo by strengthening the floor and installing a large door and a boom hoist and winch. Seats could be added to carry passengers. With a range of 3,900 miles, it had trans-oceanic reach.

*Toward the Air Mobility Command  
1994 Revised.*



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.

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

**Subscriptions** are free and are mailed via nonprofit standard mail to paid-up members of the AMC Museum Foundation, Inc.

**Contributions.** Reader's comments, articles and ideas are solicited for future issues. Mail to: Harry E. Heist c/o The Hangar Digest, P.O. Box 02050, Dover AFB DE 19902-2050; FAX (302) 677-5940 and email: [harry.heist@dover.af.mil](mailto:harry.heist@dover.af.mil).

## Air Mobility Command Museum Mission Statement

The mission of the Air Mobility Command Museum is twofold:

- The primary mission is to present the history and development of military airlift and tanker operations.
- The second closely aligned mission is to portray the rich history of Dover Air Force Base and Dover Army Airfield, its predecessor .

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Rear Cover C-124 Aircraft Profile by Mike Boyd, Museum Researcher and Membership Manager

### From the Museum Store:

It's time to prepare for the summer! The store offers a variety of Air Force theme T-shirts, kites, BBQ cooking attire, bottle and can cozies, coasters, books and airplane models for all ages.

Contact store manager Jon Rehm by phone at (302) 677-5992, or by FAX at (302) 677-5949 and email: [jon.rehm@dover.af.mil](mailto:jon.rehm@dover.af.mil). Want an additional 10% off of your purchase? Join the museum by using the membership application on page 11.

## From the Director

As I mentioned in the January issue, we are scheduled to receive an A-26 *Invader* that will anchor our Dover Army Airfield WWII Rocket Test Center's story line. The aircraft is located near Fargo, North Dakota. Due to this year's tight budget, we will have to disassemble the aircraft ourselves. It's been a while since we have gone out into the field to do a recovery. However, with Jim Leech and his team, I'm confident that it will be a smooth operation and we will add another historic aircraft to our collection.

At least once a week our exhibits are checked for security, wear and tear and bug infestation. In addition, once every two years we go through our entire inventory of artifacts and examine them for condition, check to see that the numbers match the records and make sure they are located where they are supposed to be. Since we have over 3,000 items in the collection that takes some time, so, if you recently saw someone around the hangar with a computer printout, a set of keys and a harried look on his face, you might have seen our semi-annual inventory in progress.

Those of you that are familiar with the C-133 may have noticed that our aircraft is missing about six feet from the aft fuselage. The fairing or tail cone, where the data recorder was located, was missing when it was shipped here from Offutt AFB, Nebraska. We have contracted a local fiberglass fabricating company that specializes in museum work to make a replica for us. On-Target fabricating out of Bear, Delaware has taken on the job and the Museum Foundation has funded this last major part of the restoration of our *Cargomaster*.

We recently received a C-141 Cockpit Procedures Trainer (CPT) from the Museum of Aviation at Robins AFB, Georgia and by the time you read this, two more flight simulators should be up and running. We are rebuilding the trainer to operate two separate flight simulators at one time. The pilot and co-pilot positions will be able to fly individual missions and if our wizards can work their magic, they may even share a mission. It will take a lot of work to convert from the old CPT but a crew of specialists lead by Dave Doyle and John Taylor are determined to make it happen.

The museum staff is hard at work preparing for our inspection necessary to become a certified Air Force Field Museum. This is a new program and every field museum will be required to meet stringent requirements in order to stay in business. Thanks to our world class volunteers and paid staff members, I am confident we will do well. The big challenge is, due to budget cuts, that we will be required to inspect ourselves and report to the National Museum of the Air Force on our successes and shortfalls. At first that may sound easy, inspect yourself, pass, and throw a party. It's not that easy, in fact since we know about the good, the bad and the ugly we will be harder on ourselves than any outside team.

This is shaping up to be a great year at the museum. Be sure to stop by on 31 March for our 5<sup>th</sup> annual Collector's Day. We will have more exhibitors than ever, so come on out and remember we are now open on Sunday.

*Mike*

## Cruisin' with the Curator

The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly. Movie title or status quo here at the museum? Yepper folks, there's a million stories in the AMC Museum. Here's a few more:

The Good.....sometime in the near future, I'll be taking a team out to West Fargo, North Dakota to the Bonanzaville Museum (that's near Ponderosatown isn't it) to disassemble an A-26 for transport, reassembly, and restoration for our museum. The 26s were here in the mid 40s as part of the rocket project (that was secret so I can't say much more) and that's our tie-in, allowing us to accept the aircraft. It's been a long time since we've had an opportunity for a road trip and I'm looking forward to this one. Not sure yet who's going but rest assured I'll work the team hard and get the job done. Restoration will be decided once we get the plane here and see what it needs before placing it on display.

**(Continued on the following page)**

## Cruisin' with the Curator (Cont.)

Our recently installed vehicle counter tallied 1689 vehicles for the month of January. Industry standards allow for 2.4 people per "hit" so that means that we had 4,053.6 visitors. If you are the .6 please see any of the museum staff for assistance.

The Bad.....once again Ma Nature flexed her might this past February and rained down on Delaware. And guess what got caught in her path? The Viet Nam exhibit room ceiling once again dripped profusely. The entire ceiling insulation that was part of the display construction had to be removed and most of it disposed of due to mold. So, we're back to square one on the status of the exhibit, still in-work. Along with that, the winter weather has put a hold on the aircraft mooring points that were being installed in the ramp to secure our planes in event of high winds. Hopefully by press time the job will be complete and the planes lashed to the ramp.

The Ugly.....we'll, that's kind of harsh but it's the only way I could tie it into this article's opening. The C-121 interior work is nearing a milestone. 1/4th of the plane's inside is done and if you're as good at math as I am, 3/4th remains. Don't our guys do good? The outside still needs attention and hopefully the contractor will be stripping years of paint off of the exterior as you read. Over on the Shaky, interior work also continues and it's starting to look even better than when it rolled off the assembly line a few years back. Ev Sahrbeck's work on the interior of the C-130 is coming along and he's just about finished painting the interior. John Demory has upgraded the interior of the KC-97 with the installation of a TV/DVD setup that allows visitors to view an aerial refueling, courtesy of actor Jimmy Stewart. You'll just have to get inside the plane and see for yourself what I'm talking about.

There's always more work to be done and with Spring just around the calendar, I'll be looking for help in the landscaping department. Avoid the rush and stop by to sign up early. That's it for now. Thanks again for all who pitch in and make a difference here. Without your help, I wouldn't have much to write about.

*Jim*

## Meet Museum Volunteer Gene Williams

Gene, a member of the C-133 Cargomaster and C-124 Globemaster restoration teams, has been a volunteer with the AMC Museum since 2001.

He entered the Air Force in 1959 and retired in 1979 as a Master Sergeant. His Air Force career was spent in the aircraft maintenance field working on C-124, C-130, C-133, C-141 and C-5 aircraft. His duty stations included Dover AFB; Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico; Travis AFB, CA and Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam. For his service in Vietnam, he received the bronze star. Of his 20 years in the Air Force 15 of them were spent at Dover AFB.

Upon his retirement from the Air Force, Gene immediately became affiliated with Penn Mutual Insurance Company of West Chester, Pennsylvania, beginning as an insurance claims adjuster and retiring from the firm in 1999 as a field marketing representative representing the states of Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey. During his tenure with Penn Mutual, he was active with organizations of the insurance industry as a past president of the SPARKS Club and a past president of the Insurance Field Representatives of Delaware.

Gene and his wife Sally reside near Magnolia, Delaware.



## The “first” First Air Commandos

*“The beards had to come off!”*

The colonel’s orders were explicit. No equivocation. They were posted on the bulletin board.

*“Not that I give a damn,”* the final paragraph read, *“but they look like hell to the visiting brass.”*

These orders were not directed at any modern GIs who may relish the development of chin foliage. Instead, they were the directions of the commander of the “first” First Air Commandos—more than 60 years ago in the jungles of India’s Assam Valley. Located just west of the Burmese border, the commandos were preparing to invade Japanese occupied Burma.

Late in 1943, these 523 original air commandos—all volunteers—left the United States for this nation’s first venture into air commando operations.

At the Quebec Conference of 1943, General Hap Arnold, commander of all US Air Forces in World War II, had been considerably impressed by Major General Orde Wingate, the brilliant British jungle fighter. Wingate’s Chindit Raiders<sup>1</sup>, or Long Range Penetration Groups (LRPG) as they were officially named, had shown limited success one year earlier in Burma guerrilla operations. However, severe morale problems, due to long or non-existent communications and supply lines and a total lack of medical evacuation, limited and almost invalidated Wingate’s success.

Wingate wanted another shot at the Japanese in Burma. His eye was on an offensive planned for early 1944, but conservative military forces tried to brush him off entirely as a long-shot risk. Arnold, however, an early believer in a coordinated war, proposed at Quebec to support Wingate’s idea of airlifting raiders relatively close to the 1944 ground objectives. Such an airlift would save hardships of a long walk in. Arnold would provide gliders and Air Force people to handle the airlift and airdrop supplies during the operation. The airmen seeing some combat was a virtual certainty and no doubt aircraft would be lost! The operation was given the name “Project Nine” and a memorandum by Arnold declared the activation of the 1st Air Commandos.

The commander of the new 1st Air Commandos was Colonel Philip G. Cochran, the man cartoonist Milton Caniff made famous as “Flip Corkin.” Cochran’s job? Make an area called *Broadway*, a strip of bright lights in the jungle.

Cochran’s commandos trained in the scant seven months before the airlift. With little help, knowing they would face jungle fighting, they instinctively buddied up two by two in their training—one to move ahead and one to cover in the self-imposed drills. The Burma-bound troops had 30-caliber, air-cooled infantry machineguns modified with home-built A-frames to hold the barrels four inches from the ground, much like the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR). And their aircraft reflected the diversity of missions of the commandos.

Their inventory consisted of 25 transports, 225 gliders, 100 L-1 and L-5 aircraft, 30 P-51 fighters and 25 B-25s. One of their helicopters subsequently became the first rotary aircraft to see action in combat.

By February 3, 1944, the stage was set. The air commandos first went into action in the air over Burma. In the crucial few days before the landing at *Broadway*, their P-51s and B-25s destroyed more than 100 Japanese aircraft on the ground. With air superiority established, they hacked the enemy transportation and supply routes. And, on March 5th, the commando’s first big combined action began.

From sod strips at Hailakandi and Lalaghat, India, the initial 400-man force of air commandos, Army

**(Continued on the following page)**



Col. John Allison, Maj. Gen. Orde Wingate, Col. Philip Cochran (l to r).

## The “first” First Air Commandos (Cont.)

engineers and Chindits headed 170 miles deep into Burma.

Over 8,000-foot mountains and miles of jungle, the double-tow glider force flew by moonlight only. Gliders carried miniature bulldozers and mules. The men were to seize the area called *Broadway* and carve out a leveled dirt strip capable of handling the powered aircraft that would bring in the main strike force.

A near catastrophe turned out to be a blessing in disguise on the trip in. The ropes broke on two glider tows and the gliders force landed in strategic positions along the flanks of a strong Japanese force. The airmen and ground troops in those gliders fought, slashed and hacked at the Japanese, all the time retreating toward India. Their actions misled Japanese intelligence into thinking that they were the primary adversaries in the area—a misconception that kept the Japanese diverted from *Broadway* for eight long days. That was long enough for Wingate’s main force to establish a strong foothold in northern Burma.

As the rest of the gliders hit the ground at *Broadway*, three and one-half hours after leaving India, the air commandos and the Chindits secured the area. Work started immediately on clearing the strip. Before the week was out, 9,052 troops, 1,359 pack animals and 254 tons of supplies had been off-loaded at *Broadway* and Chouwinghee. Thanks to the air commandos and the Troop Carrier Command, a fresh division had been placed at the rear of the Japanese forces.

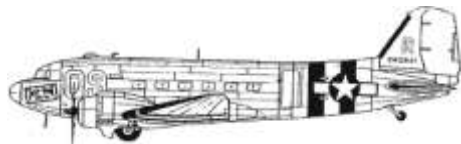
Wingate’s operations are history now. Though he met an untimely death soon after the *Broadway* landing, his forces, along with the other Allied forces pressing attacks from other fronts, drove the Japanese from Burma. And, the air commandos continued contributing to the successful fighting throughout Burma with communications, medical evacuation, airdrops and interdiction.

Sixty years is only a small drop in the bucket of history. But Cochran’s air commandos made a big impression then and their success and knowledge have been handed down to today’s 1st Special Operations Wing, located at Hurlburt AFB, Florida, - a direct descendant—of Colonel Philip G. Cochran’s fighting organization.

<sup>1</sup>*Chindit—a corruption of the Burmese word for winged stone lion—the guardian of the Buddhist temples.*

*Sources: Airman Magazine, Feb 1970; 1st Special Operations Wing; air commando history.*

### 2007 Annual Members Mixer



**Save the Date Friday 14 Sept 07**

Hors D’oeuvres, Door Prizes, Special Tours

**Open to all members**

**FREE to Sq. Com. members and above**

Details in the July issue of the Hangar Digest

### **Membership Recognition**

*The AMC Museum Foundation expresses its gratitude for the generosity of the following who have contributed \$100.00 or more in support of the AMC Museum through new and/or re-newed memberships:*

**Colonel Hampton Green and James R. White.**

## Hall of Heroes

On December 20, 1943, the Eighth Air Force continued its assault on Bremen, Germany. On that day, Staff Sergeant Forrest L. Vosler was serving as a radio operator/gunner aboard *Jersey Bounce, Jr.*, a B-17 assigned to the 303rd Bomb Group.

After bombing the target the aircraft was severely damaged by antiaircraft fire, forced out of formation and immediately subjected to repeated vicious attacks by enemy fighters.

Early in the engagement, a 20mm cannon shell exploded in the radio compartment, wounding Sgt. Vosler in both his legs and thighs. At about the same time, a direct hit in the tail of the airplane seriously wounded the tail gunner and rendered the tail guns inoperative. Realizing the need for firepower in protecting the vulnerable tail of the aircraft, Sgt. Vosler, with grim determination, kept up a steady stream of deadly fire. Shortly thereafter, another 20mm enemy shell exploded wounding Sgt. Vosler in the chest and about his face. Pieces of metal lodged in both of his eyes, impairing his vision to such an extent that he could only distinguish blurred shapes. Displaying remarkable tenacity and courage, he kept firing his guns and declined first-aid treatment. The radio equipment had been rendered inoperative during the battle and when the pilot announced that he would have to ditch, although unable to see and working entirely by touch, Sgt. Vosler finally got the set operating and sent out distress signals despite several lapses into unconsciousness. When the ship ditched in the North Sea off the coast of England, Sgt. Vosler managed to get out on the wing by himself and hold the wounded tail gunner, preventing him from slipping off into the water. With the help of the other crew members the two were helped into the dingy. They were subsequently taken aboard a Norwegian ship and later transferred to England.

On his return to the United States, Sgt. Vosler was presented the Medal of Honor by President Roosevelt at a White House ceremony. Sgt. Vosler was one of three Eighth Air Force enlisted men that received the nation's highest award during World War II.

Sgt. Vosler continued to receive treatment at various hospitals until he was discharged from the service in October 1944. He went on to earn a college degree and spent a 30-year career as a counselor with the Veterans Administration. When the Air Force became a separate branch of the service, he was instrumental in helping to form the Air Force Association.

Forrest Vosler passed away in Titusville, Florida on February 17, 1992 and is interred at Arlington National Cemetery. His widow donated all of his medals including his Medal of Honor to the U.S. Air Force Enlisted Heritage Research Institute at Maxwell AFB, Gunter Annex, in Montgomery, Alabama.

*Sources: Air Force Association, [www.homeofheroes.com](http://www.homeofheroes.com); <http://afehri.maxwell.af.mil>*



The radio compartment of the Museum's B-17 *Sleep Time Gal* - like that of Sgt Vosler's on *Jersey Bounce, Jr.*



## ***"Name the Plane"***

The airplane that I asked you to identify in January's issue of the Hangar Digest is the North American O-47.

The O-47 was developed as a replacement for the O-19 and O-38 observation biplanes. It was larger and heavier than most preceding observation aircraft and its crew of three sat in tandem under the long canopy. Windows in the deep belly overcame the obstacle that the wings presented to downward observation and photography. The design for the XO-47 prototype originated in 1934 with General Aviation, a subsidiary of North American Aviation, as the GA-15. The Air Corps ordered 174 O-47s in 1937-38, 93 of which were assigned to National Guard units. In 1938, the Army ordered 74 O-47Bs with a redesigned cowling for better cooling, a more powerful engine and improved radio equipment.



Training maneuvers in 1941 demonstrated the shortcomings of the O-47. Light airplanes proved more capable of operating with ground troops, while fighters and twin-engine bombers showed greater ability to perform recon and photo duties. Thus, during World War II, O-47s were relegated to such duties as towing targets, coastal patrol and antisubmarine patrol.

The O-47s of the 112th Observation Squadron of the Ohio National Guard (Federalized) were the first aircraft assigned to Dover immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor. With its coming, flying antisubmarine patrols had begun. The unit would remain at Dover for less than one year before being replaced by the more versatile B-25 bomber.

Of the readers submitting an entry, all identified the aircraft as the O-47. Our randomly selected winner of ***"Name the Plane"*** contest is John S. Olenik of Dover, Delaware and he will received an aviation related selection from the Museum's store. 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 page 2. I will designate each correct answer with a number ID from which one winner will be selected. Please send you entry as soon as possible and please include a return address. The winner will receive an aviation related selection from the Museum's gift shop. Good luck and thank you for your participation.

(Museum staff and volunteers are not eligible)





## Around the Bases: Osan Air Base, Korea

Located 5 miles southwest of the town of Osan, for which it is named, and 40 miles south of Seoul, the capital city of South Korea, Osan Air Base is the home of the 51st Fighter Wing, the 7th Air Force and 24 tenant units including the **731st Air Mobility Squadron (Air Mobility Command)**.

Prior to the invasion of the Republic of Korea (ROK) by the North Korean communists in 1950, the area known as Osan consisted of several tiny farming villages and a large number of rice paddies. The base, established in November 1951 and situated within this area, was originally named Osan-ni Air Base (but more often referred to by its “K-55” airfield designation). The first base commander chose “Osan-ni” for practical reasons as it was the only village shown on military maps in the region and it was easy to pronounce.

In 1952, the ROK government allowed the U.S. to acquire 1,250 acres for the air base. Flooding in June and July 1952 impeded the initial construction, which began in earnest in August involving elements of the 839th, 841st and the 417th Engineer Aviation Battalions. Three months later a 9,000-foot runway was finished. Osan-ni’s first operational units arrived in December 1952, including advanced elements of the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing. The wing conducted air operations from Osan-ni Air Base in support of the United Nations ground forces throughout the remainder of the Korean War.

In 1953, with the arrival of an advanced echelon of Headquarters, 5th Air Force, heralded the air base’s new and enduring role as the center of American air power in Korea. After the 27 July 1953 signing of the armistice, the United States Air Force’s activities declined and in November 1954, the 314th Air Division replaced the 5th Air Force’s headquarters at Osan-ni. Redesignated Osan Air Base in September 1956, Osan transitioned to standby status and hosted only temporary duty or transient units involved in the Pacific Air Forces tactical operations. The base became a permanent peacetime installation in 1958. Some restoration and innovations occurred in the late 1950s and 1960s but during that time most facilities fell into disrepair.

North Korea’s attack on the USS Pueblo on 23 January 1968 and the seizure of its crew precipitated an increase in forces at Osan that included the arrival of an additional 1,000 personnel. The crisis underscored the importance of the installation and led to some growth and improvements with a new base operations building and the rehabilitation of the main runway. This era also saw the end to a series of host units (five in all) since the end of the Korean War. In November 1971, the 51st Air Base Wing moved from Naha Air Base, Okinawa to Osan and assumed the host responsibilities.

Osan’s importance and combat capability grew steadily from the 1970s to the 1990s. Seventh Air Force replaced the 314th Air Division in 1986 and the 51st went from a base wing to a composite wing and ultimately a fighter wing in 1993. Some construction and renovations accompanied these changes at Osan — adding 26 aircraft shelters and revetments and a tactical air control center—yet much of the base’s infrastructure dated to the 1950s. This changed dramatically entering the 21st century with a multi-year construction effort that included replacing the base-wide water system, a new transportation compound and the largest base exchange in Korea.

Today, the Air Mobility Command maintains the **731st Air Mobility Squadron**, a unit of the 715th Air Mobility Operations Group, based at Hickam AFB, Hawaii.

Prior to being activated as the 731st AMS, the squadron was designated the 631st Air Mobility Support Squadron. The change was enacted to better reflect the role of the unit as more operational than support orientated and became effective on March 15, 2001.

The squadron is part of the Air Mobility Command’s en route system providing maintenance, aerial port and command and control support to Osan and to deployed AMC forces worldwide.

Sources: [www.osan.af.mil](http://www.osan.af.mil), [www.globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org)



**Basic Flying Rules: Try to stay in the middle of the air. Do not go near the edges of it. The edges of the air can be recognized by the appearance of the ground, buildings, sea, trees and interstellar space. It is much more difficult to fly there. Author unknown.**

For an updated Pave a Path to History  
brick form, please visit:

<http://amcmuseum.org/support>

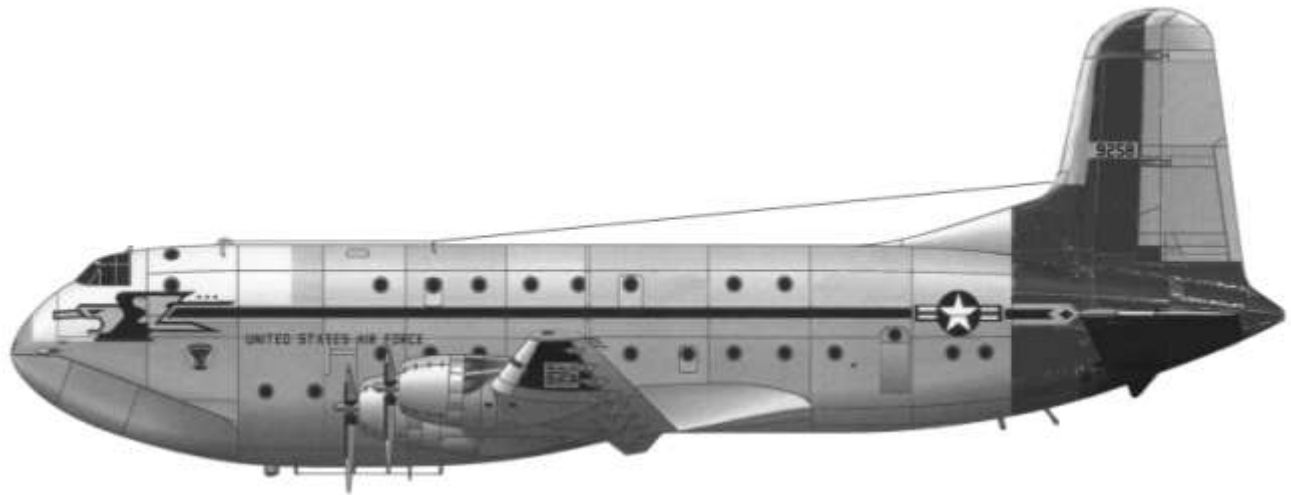
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## **Become a Member - Support the AMC Museum**

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## AMC museum aircraft profile



This illustration shows the AMC Museum's Douglas C-124A Globemaster II, 49-0258, as it appeared in 1954 during service with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Strategic Support Squadron, Strategic Air Command (the Globesters) at Barksdale AFB, LA. It appeared in a scene in the 1955 movie 'Strategic Air Command', filmed at McDill AFB, FL. The Strategic Support Squadrons were tasked with supporting SAC forward deployments and also to transport the huge nuclear bombs (it was the only transport in the USAF inventory capable of carrying a 40,000 pound H-bomb). This aircraft is the only known surviving aircraft from the four Strategic Support Squadrons that served with SAC from 1946 to 1961. It is also the oldest surviving C-124 and the only surviving A-model.

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