

# Hangar Digest



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*The 436th Airlift Wing's first C-17 "Spirit of the Constitution". From 1973 to 2007, Dover AFB had been the only all-C-5 equipped wing in the active Air Force. The C-5s now teamed with the C-17s increases Dover's global airlift capability.*

Well, what do we have here? Thanks to Museum Lifetime member Mike Frebert, president of Dover Litho, your Hangar Digest is now printed in full color! Mike is the son of the late George Frebert, the founder of Dover Litho and the author of the acclaimed hardcover "Delaware Aviation History". The Museum is extremely grateful to Mike in affording us the opportunity to deliver this new and improved Hangar Digest to your mailbox.

Starting with this issue, I will take a look at some of those destinations that are no longer a part of the Air Mobility Command's enroute system but played a huge role in helping to establish the foundation of AMC and for the successes of its predecessors MATS and MAC. So, look for "We Were There, Once" on page 8.

During the Vietnam War, thirty-seven Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service crewmembers were awarded the Air Force Cross for rescue missions in Southeast Asia. One of those that received the award posthumously, was A1C William H. Pitsenbarger. Read his story on page 6.

In the next issue we take a look at the most "diversified division" in the Military Air Transport Service—the Continental Division.

Again, thank you for supporting your AMC Museum!

*Harry E. Helst, Editor*

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## 40 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

Following North Korea's seizure of the USS *Pueblo*, airlifters transported Air Force and Army units from the United States, the Pacific and Southeast Asia to South Korea and Japan in Operation *Combat Fox*. During the first weeks of the crisis, over 800 missions moved 7,996 passengers and almost 13,683 tons of cargo into the region.

Source: *Toward the Air mobility Command: A Chronology of Tanker and Airlift Events.*



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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[C-17 cover photo and AMC Museum Aircraft Profile by: Mike Boyd.](#)

### From the Museum Store:

We now have in stock the 1/164 scale hand-carved mahogany C-17 Desktop model and Dover's C-17 "Spirit of the Constitution" limited edition 1/400 scale diecast model by Gemini. Also, just in is Ken Robertson's 3rd edition of Operation Nickel Grass, the story of the US Air Force's airlift to Israel during the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

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). Members, be sure to ask for your 10% discount when ordering. Not yet a Friend of the Museum? Join now by filling out the Membership Application on page 11.

## From the Director

For the first time in many years we did not receive any “end-of-year” funding from AMC Headquarters in order to maintain our aircraft, build exhibits or improve our facilities. Changes in the budget process and an overall shortage of funding will affect us in 2008. As an example, a small single exhibit, produced by an outside exhibit firm, would cost more than half our annual budget. A large 30’x30’ exhibit can cost as much as a 10 year’s total budget. Our in-house staff does great work but we just don’t have enough time or resources to produce the kinds of flashy exhibits that today’s visiting public expects. Thus, we will be exploring new ways to meet our goals, to maintain our artifacts and continue to create the quality exhibits that are within our budget.

Recently, we received a visit from retired General and Mrs. Walter Kross. I had spoken to General Kross at the Airlift Tanker Association Convention in Nashville and invited him to stop by. Colonel Kross was Dover’s Wing Commander; who in 1986 asked a pilot, a navigator and me what it would take to start a museum at Dover AFB. The pilot and navigator were serious aviation history buffs. I had put together the original B-17G Shoo Shoo Baby restoration project while a member of the 512<sup>th</sup> MAW (Reserve). The pilot and navigator would soon move on to other assignments, but I remained and was allowed to bring MSgt. Jim Leech into the fledgling “Historical Center” full time which was more than a fair trade. What started out as an “additional duty” has turned into a very rewarding career. Thanks to General Kross and to all of our great volunteers and our supporters, I have the best job in the Air Force!

We are a regular participant at the Airlift Tanker Association Convention but we’ve never had a catchy slogan or tag line on our traveling display. The National Museum of the USAF uses “We are the Keepers of Their Stories”, which is great! If it would not infringe on their trademark, perhaps we should say “We are the Keepers of our Airlift and Tanker Stories”. If you have a suggestion for a catchy phrase that could be used on a bumper sticker and other advertising material, please send it to us. I’ll see that you get the first bumper sticker if we use your idea.

The search for a nose for our C-121 has been a fruitless one. Initially, Hank Baker tried to locate one by contacting all of the Connie organizations. That resulted in some leads but no luck. Then Ralph Peterson wrote a great article that was published in “Warbirds” magazine that highlighted our quest for the proper nose for the airplane. That brought a few responses but no good leads. In October, “Airshow Traveler” magazine ran a great six page article on our museum including the need for a nose. Still no luck! Our next step will be to measure an existing C-121 long nose and see if we can have a fiberglass one made for us. We were very successful in getting a company from Bear, Delaware to make the tail fairing for the C-133. Perhaps the Connie’s nose will be their next challenge. The good news is that a donor has stepped up and funded the cabin floor covering for the Connie with enough left over for the nose.

Thanks to some great support from base civil engineering we have doubled the size of the research library. They built us a 12’ x 20’ addition near the mezzanine staircase. The Museum’s Foundation funded additional bookcases so now Bob Wikso and his helpers are doing a complete overhaul of the library including converting it to the Dewey Decimal System and cataloging all the books and resource material on a computer database .

In the next issue I’ll have some exciting news about the donation of a great collection from one of our airlift pioneers and plans for a new exhibit.

Have a great 2008,

*Mike*

## Cruisin' with the Curator

Hey, Happy New Year to you all! My, doesn't time fly.

You may have wondered how this amazing piece of reading pleasure gets put together. Well, it's sort of like restoring an aircraft. The editor kind of gets a sense as to "how" the issue will evolve and requests (or is it more of a demand) that the frequent contributors dust off their keyboards and create an interesting article on some aspect of the Museum that you the reader will find captivating. So, Cruisin' with the Curator finds that writing his part, once cleaned and assembled and hopefully appealing to the eye, will give you a better understanding of what we go through on a daily basis.

So now we take a ride down memory lane and take a look at the year that just passed:

- Five of our planes were painted and interior work is still ongoing on four.
- Our program to get the aircraft tires filled with a solid rubber compound is still in the works and will be almost finished in the next month or so.
- The upper deck flooring of the C-124 is being painted and the crew has completed the installation of the "new" cargo flooring. Our sights will be set on preparing the flight controls for reinstallation once they are re-skinned.
- The C-47 habitat exhibit was completed and continues to receive good comments from our visitors. We're in the thinking stages for our next habitat exhibit.
- Hal Sellars, from our graphics department, reworked the Berlin Airlift exhibit and now is working on redoing the Dover AFB timeline. He had been called upon quite a bit last year to support decal and signage requests from the staff and volunteers.
- The high reach that we acquired has more than paid for itself. How nice it is to aim high and not have to worry about signing out equipment from the industrial side of the base when elevated work is necessary.
- We moved the C-131 over to the restoration hangar for the winter. Rick Veller, our restoration chief, Hal Sellars our C-131 crew chief (and graphics guru) and myself will be painting the aircraft. While it's in the hangar we'll also restore the cockpit and clean the interior. If all goes well with this project, we'll paint the F-101 and F-106.
- A maintenance team from Pope AFB was sent up in December to do some cosmetic work on the Hercules.

As the year ended, we looked into the crystal ball and saw a 2008 filled with things to do. So as this year wears on, we'll be filling you in on all of our accomplishments. And remember, you too can be a part of the Museum. All you have to do is step forward and volunteer. Give me a call, or better yet, stop by and we'll get the process going right away. That's all for now folks. Be safe!

Jim

## Meet Museum Volunteer Dave Miller

Dave has been with the Museum for more than twelve years and is a volunteer in the gift shop. He was the recipient of the Volunteer of the Quarter Award in December 2006.

When Dave is not volunteering in the Museum, he is an active member of the Moose Lodge in Camden/Wyoming, Delaware and has held various officer positions in other lodges throughout the State. He also volunteers his time as a member of the Citizen Auxiliary Patrol in Smyrna, Delaware.

When a volunteer is needed to man the store after hours, Dave can be counted on to do just that! He can also be spotted in a red suit with a shiny red nose and a twinkle in his eye at the Museum's Christmas Party.

Dave's hobby is reading about and collecting memorabilia of the Civil War.





Replicating the photo below of “Turf and Sport Special” taken at Poix, France in 1945, our exhibit crew: Jim Leech, Deborah Sellars, Hal Sellars and Rick Veller constructed the diorama pictured above. During World War II not all crews enjoyed the convenience of an enclosed facility for major aircraft maintenance.



### 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 renewed memberships: Thomas F. Bayard IV, LtCol Teresa Connor, Dover Rent All, Col Hampton Green, LtCol Ed Levine, Col William McCabe, Joel Rutenberg, LtCol Steve Welde, James R. White.*

### An Artifact fact by:

#### Deborah Sellars

**This is the Ike jacket worn by TSgt. Winfield “Bing” Wood, the first aerial engineer on “Turf and Sport Special.”**

**The rank, Airborne Troop Carrier and 9th Air Force shoulder patches, engineer sleeve patch, and overseas bars are all outlined with unusual white herringbone stitching.**

**Learn more about Bing from his diary excerpts included in our new C-47 diorama.**



## Hall of Heroes



On April 11, 1966, 21-year-old A1C William H. Pitsenbarger, "Pits" as he was known to his friends, was nearing his 300th combat mission when on that fateful day some men of the U.S. Army's 1st Division were ambushed and pinned down in an area about 45 miles east of Saigon. Two HH-43 Huskie helicopters of the USAF's 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron were rushed to the scene to lift out the wounded. Pits was a pararescueman (PJ) on one of them.

Upon reaching the site of the ambush, Pits was lowered through the trees to the ground where he attended to the wounded before having them lifted to the helicopter by cable. After six wounded men had been flown to an aid station, the two USAF helicopters returned for their second loads. As one of them lowered its litter basket to Pits, who had remained on the ground with the 20 infantrymen still alive, it was hit by a burst of enemy small-arms fire. When its engine began to lose power, the pilot realized he had to get the Huskie away from the area as soon as possible. Instead of climbing into the litter basket so he could leave with the helicopter, Pits elected to remain with the Army troops under enemy attack and he gave a "wave-off" to the helicopter, which flew away to safety.



Pits continued to treat the wounded, and when the others began running low on ammunition, he gathered ammo clips from the dead and distributed them to those still alive. Then, he joined the others with a rifle to hold off the Viet Cong. That evening, Pits was killed by Viet Cong snipers while defending some of his wounded comrades. When his body was recovered the next day, one hand still held a rifle and the other his medical kit.

For his bravery and sacrifice, he was posthumously awarded the nation's second highest military decoration, the Air Force Cross. Then on December 8, 2000, A1C William H. Pitsenbarger was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor in a ceremony at the National Museum of the United States Air Force. After a case review and additional eyewitness testimony was taken in to account, he was also posthumously promoted to Staff Sergeant.

Source: *National Museum of the United States Air Force*

## Museum Aircraft of the Quarter: Kaman HH-43B "Huskie"

The "Huskie" was used primarily for crash rescue and aircraft fire fighting. It was already in use by the U.S. Navy when delivery of the H-43A, to the USAF Tactical Air Command, began in 1958. Delivery of the "B" series began in June 1959.

In mid 1962, the USAF changed the H-43 designation to HH-43 to reflect the aircraft's rescue role. The final USAF version was the HH-43F with engine modifications for improved performance. Some "Fs" were used in Southeast Asia as "aerial fire trucks" and for rescuing downed airmen in North and South Vietnam. Huskies were also flown by other nations including Iran, Colombia and Morocco.



A Huskie on rescue alert could be airborne in approximately one minute. It carried two rescue men/firefighters and a fire suppression kit hanging beneath it. It often reached crashed airplanes before ground vehicles arrived. Foam from the kit plus the powerful downwash from the rotors were used to open a pathway to trapped crash victims to permit their rescue.

The museum's HH-43B, S/N 62-4532, was first assigned to the 58th Air Rescue Squadron (ARS), Military Air Transport Service, stationed at Wheelus Air Base in Libya on 2 October 1964. It was retired at Hill AFB, Utah on 1 April 1973 and acquired by the AMC Museum in September 1998.

*The photo was taken at Wheelus while our aircraft was assigned to the 58th ARS.*

## *“Name the Plane”*

The airplane that I asked you to identify in October’s issue of the Hangar Digest is the Northrop YC-125 “Raider”.

The Northrop YC-125 was a military version of the Northrop N-23 "Pioneer" commercial cargo aircraft; however, the YC-125 was far more powerful than the N-23. It was a shoulder-wing aircraft with fixed landing gear and three engines. For the USAF, 23 were built: 13 YC-125A tactical transports, and 10 YC-125B Arctic rescue aircraft. Their operational career was short.



The YC-125 series was intended to satisfy two types of missions for the Air Force: troop and equipment transport to forward combat areas and Arctic rescue. The YC-125 was designed to operate from rough, short airfields and to be easily maintained. The YC-125 was equipped with three Wright R-99 Cyclone radial engines, each with a power of 1200 hp. For takeoff from short airstrips, the plane could be equipped with six rocket boosters (JATO) enabling the aircraft to takeoff in less than 500 feet. It could transport 32 landing force members or 12,000 pounds of cargo.

The first flight of the YC-125A occurred on 1 August 1949 and deliveries to the Air Force began in 1950. The tests found the aircraft to be significantly underpowered for the intended missions. Furthermore, helicopters were recognized as a better solution for moving troops into forward areas and for performing rescue missions. As a result, the YC-125s were sent to Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas, to be used as ground maintenance trainers. They were declared surplus in 1955.

Our randomly selected winner of *“Name the Plane”* contest is Ms. Donna Morris of Bellevue, Nebraska and she will receive 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 my addresses listed on page 2. I will designate each correct answer with a number ID from which one winner will be selected. Please send your 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)



## We Were There, Once: Chateauroux-Deols Air Base, France

**Chateauroux-Deols Air Base** is a former USAF base. It was located about three miles north of Chateauroux and five miles east of Deols in Central France.

During the Cold War, Chateauroux-Deols was a front-line base for the United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE). The USAF base at Chateauroux-Deols actually consisted of two separate facilities about five miles apart, Chateauroux-Deols Air Depot (CHAD) and La Martinerie Air-drome. The base was home to some 8,000 Americans between 1951 and 1967.



*Main Gate-Deols 1956*

### Origins

The airport at Chateauroux started in the late 1920s as a civil transport airfield, providing regional air service within France. In 1935/36 Marcel Dassault built his first aircraft factory there, building Bloch bombers for the French Air Force. After the fall of France, the factory was used by the Luftwaffe for the production of sub-assemblies for various German aircraft.

What would become Chateauroux Air Base was bombed several times by the United States Army Air Force and the RAF during World War II. After the war ended, the factory attempted to restart production for the French Air Force but by 1950 it was closed.

La Martinerie was established in 1916 as a pilot training school for World War I aviators. Many American Army Air Service pilots were trained there. After the war, the facility was used by the French Air Force up until the Battle of France in May 1940. After the German Army retreated in 1944, the Free French Air Force used it as a bomber airfield and after the war as a storage depot.

### NATO Acquisition

In 1950, the facility was offered to NATO to develop a depot and maintenance facility for the United States Air Force for joint use by the French and the Americans to support both civil and military aircraft. The final agreement was signed on 27 February 1951. The Chateauroux-Deols Air Depot (CHAD) became the largest depot in Europe to support USAFE and other NATO air forces.

### USAF Use



*La Martinerie Airdrome 1956*

The Chateauroux-Deols commercial airport and La Martinerie storage site had excellent highway connections to the seaports at Bordeaux and La Rochelle and excellent railroad service. The Marcel Bloch aircraft factory was leased by USAFE for depot level aircraft maintenance. As CHAD was developed as a joint-use NATO facility, its focus was on depot-level maintenance, taking over from Erding Air Depot in West Germany and Burtonwood Air Depot in the United Kingdom. CHAD also provided the flying facilities for Central Air Material Area, Europe (CAMAEE).

La Martinerie was developed into La Martinerie Air Depot, with its primary role being a logistics hub and depot-level supply facility. La Martinerie handled all classes of USAF supplies, controlling six sub-depots dispersed throughout France which specialized in specific supply categories. It also was where the Headquarters and Administrative com-

mand facilities for CAMAEE were located.

**(Continued on the following page)**

## We Were There, Once (Cont.)

### 73rd Air Depot Wing

Chateauroux was the location of the first USAF unit to move to France. The initial contingent of USAF personnel arrived at Chateauroux on 10 January 1951 to get the facility up and operational as soon as possible. The 73rd Air Depot Wing was moved to Chateauroux from Kelly Air Force Base, Texas in July and began operations immediately as a supply center for the new USAF bases in France.

The Chateauroux Air Depot was established as USAFE's primary depot and was commanded directly by HQ USAFE at Weisbaden, West Germany until 31 December 1955. On 1 January 1956, Chateauroux was transferred to the Air Material Command and was renamed Central Air Material Area, Europe. CAMAE's mission was to procure supplies and parts, contracting services and the maintenance of all USAF equipment.

In addition to the depot supply function for Europe, Chateauroux Air Depot managed the task of equipment maintenance and disposal for Europe. Aircraft depot level maintenance became a huge task, with thousands of American and NATO aircraft assigned to Europe. Originally, the manning was a combination of USAF personnel, American civilians and French employees; however, the scope of the mission soon became apparent that a facility about six times the size of the Chateauroux facility would be needed to accommodate the work involved. The resolution was to contract the workload within Western Europe, using the skilled civilian technicians of various airline workforces such as KLM, SABENA and Air France. Chateauroux would perform contract administration, quality control, test flying and logistical support, while much of the actual work was performed remotely at various NATO civil facilities with CHAD and USAF representatives on-site to monitor performance and coordinate the logistical support needed from Chateauroux.

### Sub Depots

In addition to the main facility at Chateauroux, the 73rd Air Depot Wing operated several Sub-Depot facilities for supplies and equipment. These were located at Bordeaux for clothing and medical supplies; Niort for aircraft ammunition; Metz for vehicles and construction supplies; St. Mihiel for conventional ammunition storage; Moulins for vehicle storage and maintenance, and Villefranche for parts storage.

### 4th Aerial Port Squadron (MATS)

The Military Air Transport Service (MATS) operated a major European aerial port at Chateauroux with air service to and from Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. The 4th Aerial Port Squadron operated this facility 24/7 moving air cargo and personnel throughout Europe and the Middle East.

### USAF Closure

On 7 March 1966, French President Charles De Gaulle announced that France would withdraw from NATO's integrated military structure. The United States was informed that it must remove its military forces from France by 1 April 1967. The 73rd operated the depot until departure of all US forces from France, leaving Chateauroux Air Base on 20 March 1967.

### Current Uses

After the USAF's departure, Chateauroux was developed into a commercial airport, business jet center and an aircraft overhaul facility. Most of the USAF presence has been erased by new construction and expansion of the facility; however, a few old buildings remain and are being used for various non-military activities. Much effort and money has been invested in Chateauroux over the years since the departure of the Americans. The site is currently home to the Chateauroux-Deols "Marcel Dassault" Airport.

*References: Chateauroux-Deols Air Station History & individual acknowledgements to Charles A. Ravenstein & Judy G. Endicott (Office of Air Force History) and Jerome J. McAuliffe.*

Editor's note: During the Congo Airlift (Operation New Tape), crews from Dover's three C-124 squadrons were assigned temporary duty with the 1st Provisional Squadron at Chateauroux. The airlift would last 3½ years from July 1960 to January of 1964. In September 1961, operational control would revert back to MATS and the Provisional Squadron was disbanded. All aircraft were then scheduled from Dover AFB.

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# AMC Museum Aircraft Profile



This illustration shows the AMC Museum's Kaman HH-43B Huskie helicopter, 62-4532, as it appeared as a crash-rescue 'chopper' in service at Wheelus Air Base, Libya in 1965. It was then assigned to the 58<sup>th</sup> Air Rescue Squadron, Military Air Transport Service. At this time, HH-43s had a coat of aluminum paint (for corrosion control) and it carried the standard Air-Sea Rescue markings as well as the MATS emblem on the fuselage. In another year, it would be re-painted in Aircraft Gray and gain the new Military Airlift Command emblem.

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