The triumphant return

The triumphant return

of Zero-One-One-Four
The AMC Museum 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. Viewpoints in this publication 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.

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Photos are by Jeff Brown, unless otherwise noted.

Cover photo: C-5A, Tail Number 69-0014, makes a triumphant return to Dover AFB, with its crew banking wide to bring the famous aircraft past the crowds waiting at the AMC Museum. In October 1974, Zero-One-Four was the first aircraft to deploy and fire a Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missile from its cargo deck. The plane, which was stationed at Dover until 1977, returned on Aug. 7, 2013, and in November will become the first C-5 ever retired to a museum.

**Air Mobility Command Museum Mission Statement**

The mission of the Air Mobility Command Museum is twofold:

- To present the history and development of military airlift and tanker operations.
- In a goal closely aligned with the first, to portray the rich history of Dover Air Force Base and its predecessor, Dover Army Airfield.

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- Deputy Director: John Taylor
- Archivist: Lt. Col. Harry E. Heist, USAF (Ret.)
- Collections Manager: Deborah Sellars
- Educator: Dick Caldwell
- Museum Store Manager: Jim Stewart
- Volunteer Coordinator: Janice Caldwell
- Librarian: MSgt. Bob Wikso, USAF (Ret.)
- Membership Manager: Deborah Sellars
- Website (www.amcmuseum.org): Hal Sellars
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**What is the Air Mobility Command Museum?**

Located in Hangar 1301 on Dover Air Force Base, Kent County, Delaware, the AMC Museum is part of the National Museum of the United States Air Force’s field museum system. Hangar 1301 was built in 1944 and used in World War II by the 4146 Base Unit as a secret rocket development site at what was known as the Dover Army Airfield. During the 1950s through 1970s, the area was home to various fighter squadrons serving the base. Following several years of inactivity, the facility was renovated to house the AMC Museum. The Museum consists of the former hangar, administrative offices, shop and heating plant, and now counts more than 30 planes as part of its inventory.

Hangar 1301 was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994. Although located on Dover AFB proper, entrance to the Museum may be made from Delaware Route 9, south of the base. Admission to and parking at the Museum is free and military identification is not required. The Air Mobility Command Museum is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday. It is closed on Mondays, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

For more information, call 302-677-5939.
From the Director

The AMCM just keeps on getting better!

This has been a very busy and productive summer.

Our restoration crews are still building fixtures and work tables for the new restoration hangar and we are still unpacking the last few boxes. Now that they have access to their shop tools, work has picked up on several aircraft that have needed some “nitpick” repairs.

This summer volunteers from the Aero Club came over and polished the spinners on the U-3. That plane used to fly as an Aero Club rental plane after its military career was over. It seems the Aero Club folks still like to take care of their graceful light twin from an earlier era. We’re grateful.

Thankfully the 436/512 Airlift Wing’s sheet metal shop provided some advanced assistance to repair damage to the rudder of our KC-135 caused by some straight-line winds. In addition, our volunteers have built a movable cradle for the refueling boom so we can now display the aircraft with the boom in its refueling configuration. As far as I am aware this is the only place to have any tanker displayed in this manner. We only have it displayed this way during our open cockpit Saturdays and other very special events but it’s great to be able to show our tanker to visitors without having to use a lot of hand gestures to explain how the boom works.

If you missed the BIG news, our very own C-5A, number 69-0014, has landed and is slowly being configured for museum display. Sometime in late October it will stay on the active aircraft ramp, not at the museum. We cannot make any major changes until after the aircraft is officially retired but we are working with aircraft maintenance and the Aerial Port to put 80,000 pounds of concrete onboard to keep the plane earthbound in high winds once all the fuel is removed. For many years it was standard practice to load more than 100,000 pounds of fuel onto any C-5 sitting on the ramp just because those broad wings like to fly. Once in position on our ramp we also will chain the plane to six large in-ground tie-down blocks.

One of the major challenges with an aircraft the size of the C-5 will be to close up all the holes that would be perfect for little birds to use for nest building. Most holes will have to be closed with half-inch mesh screen wire called “hardware cloth,” a daunting job all by itself. But when it comes to the 8 1/2-foot-diameter engine inlets, we will have to get more creative. Our intention is to install red canvas intake and exhaust covers on three of the engines but number four engine will be left uncovered or covered with a clear Lexan intake plug so visitors can see the TF-39 engine in its more natural state.

For the next few years the plane will, most likely, stay in its overall medium gray paint scheme. Eventually we plan to repaint 014 in the white-over-gray markings it carried when it became the only aircraft ever to launch an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile while in flight. That can’t happen until it actually needs repainting for preservation purposes.

And even more BIG news, on a smaller scale, the museum has recently acquired a Soviet era AN-2 transport. It has always been our plan to acquire a Soviet-era and a World-War II German cargo plane because both countries made major contributions to the progress of airlift but in vastly different ways. The AN-2 was a 1940s contemporary to our C-47/DC-3 but designed to operate based on Soviet doctrine and manufacturing capabilities. Both AN-2s and DC-3s are still earning a living flying over 65 years since they debuted. The AN-2 is an enclosed cockpit, single engine bi-plane, capable of carrying 12-plus passengers or two and a half tons of cargo. There will be lots more on the AN-2 as we learn what it’s like to restore an aircraft “in a foreign language.”

— Mike
Zero-One-Four makes a memorable return
Dover-based C-5A made history in 1974 by launching an ICBM from its cargo deck

“A lump in my throat, and tears in my eyes.”

That reaction, voiced by retired C-5 loadmaster Chief Master Sgt. Jon Andrews, no doubt was shared by many the afternoon of Aug. 7, 2013, at the Air Mobility Command Museum.

The occasion was the arrival of C-5A Tail No. 69-0014 – aka Zero-One-Four – one of the oldest of the giant airplanes in the U.S. Air Force inventory. The plane is scheduled to be formally retired and added to the museum’s collection in November.

It was an event that had been delayed for months, but one whose arrival was heralded by the ghostly image of the plane as it appeared out of low, overhanging clouds at 2:42 p.m., just 10 minutes behind schedule.

It was a majestic entrance for a majestic bird, one that made history almost four decades ago when it was used in a test project to drop and launch an intercontinental ballistic missile.

The program was a show of American ingenuity and technological superiority in that it proved the United States could counter Soviet aggression by quickly shifting nuclear weapons anywhere, at will.

The Air Force tapped Zero-One-Four, which was stationed at Dover AFB at the time, for the job.

Smoke billows behind Zero-One-Four as the Galaxy makes its last landing following more than 40 years of service to the United States Air Force.

Controlled anxiety
The mood in the museum before Zero-One-Four’s arrival was one of anxiety and anticipation. Museum Director Mike Leister and Deputy Director John Taylor spent much of the morning coordinating the event while the all-volunteer Museum guides showed visitors around and explained what would be happening. Reports from the tower kept everyone informed as to the plane’s progress.

Zero-One-Four had left its home base at Memphis, Tenn. at 12:45 p.m., bearing the call sign “Elvis 1,” in honor of the city’s most famous resident.

The crew took its time making the trip to Dover: the aged Galaxy had not flown for nine months, and they were treating it gently.

By 2:10, Taylor announced Zero-One-Four was just west of Baltimore, headed out across the Chesapeake Bay. A little more than 30 minutes later, the Galaxy punched through the cloudbank overhanging the base, its landing lights ablaze in the distant haze.

The 190-ton craft first touched down on one of the base’s more distant runways, tossing up curls of smoke as its tires hit the runway at approximately 120 mph. Zero-One-Four then revved up its engines and took off without stopping, thrilling the crowd with an exhibition of touch-and-go flying.

It’s a standard training maneuver, but for this occasion it was a salute from the plane’s crew to those watching. The four-man crew brought the plane around

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again, repeating the maneuver, then brought it around one last time.

Heading in from the east, the crew first put it into a left turn and then banked right.

Shutters clicked furiously as the plane made a stately pass past the museum, its 26 wheels only 120 feet above the ground. The move was a delicate balancing act of slowing the aircraft almost to a standstill while still moving just fast enough to keep it in the air.

Zero-One-Four then circled back to the more distant runway and touched down, its final, final flight complete – almost. Safely on the ground, the crew taxied the aircraft past the museum, where the crowds waved and some jumped up and down.

One crewman sat in the plane’s upper hatch as he returned the greetings. Inside the cockpit, the pilot and co-pilot also waved at the crowds.

And then it was over. Zero-One-Four moved to its parking spot on the other side of the base, where it was to be drained of fuel and fluids and stripped of vital equipment. Over the Veteran’s Day weekend, it will be towed back to the Museum, where it will become not only the Air Mobility Command Museum’s largest exhibit, but the only C-5 on display at any museum in the world.

Museum volunteer Dick Spawn said the time had come for the AMC Museum to add a C-5 to its collection.

“This completes the history of Dover Air Force Base,” he said. “It’s a sin we didn’t have one before.”

Fellow volunteer Bruce Moran agreed.

“People would come to the museum, and they’d ask, ‘Where’s the C-5?’” Moran said. “All we could do was point out over the fence at the all planes lined up on the flightline.”

“We always were told we’d get one, sometime in the future,” Spawn said. “Now,” he added with a pleased grin, “the future is here.”

For retired Air Force crew chief Rod Moore, who flew many times aboard Zero-One-Four, it was an amazing day.

“It was just incredible,” he said. “I haven’t seen that aircraft in 30 years.”

With so much history behind this particular plane, it’s appropriate that it find its way to a museum instead of suffering the fate of so many C-5s: being sent to an Arizona storage area and eventually sold as scrap.

“It’s just knowing that this C-5 won’t end up in the Boneyard,” Moore said. “I’m glad Zero-One-Four will be here, on permanent display. That just makes my day.”
FOUNDATION NOTES  By
Don Sloan

Meet the Board! September is election month for The AMC Museum Foundation Board members. Every year five members are elected who serve for three years. Information about this year’s “five” follows.

David Bever was re-elected to our Foundation Board this year. As a Dover attorney, we continue to be able to make significant use of his talents as a counselor. A long-time World War II aviation enthusiast, David earned his private pilot rating in 2012 and is close to finishing up his instrument rating. As a budding thespian, he’s involved with some other local attorneys doing comedy musical theater, raising money for various charities. David, his wife, Megan, and daughter, Alexis, live in the Dover area and stay actively involved in local events.

We (wisely) re-elected retired U.S. Air Force Reserve Chief Master Sgt. Ed Perkowski to the Board. He’s done a great job at stepping up to help coordinate and plan several functions and has taken the lead in establishing our annual Veterans Day Ceremony.

Ed spent 6500-plus hours flying as a loadmaster in C-124s, C-141As, C-130As, C-130Es and C-5s during his first 19 years of service, where personal accomplishments included the Distinguished Flying Cross and three Air Medals. After leaving his first career as a loadmaster, he cross-trained to become and air transportation specialist within the aerial port community here at Dover Air Force Base. He gained expertise in all aspects of logistics and transportation, including warehouse, distribution, shipping, receiving and inventory management, computer tracking systems, hazardous material handling and documentation. He managed mobile terminal operations in support of airlift forces that included terminal services, ground handling and storage of cargo, maintenance of traffic records, documentation of cargo, aerial delivery, mobility plans, training of employees and administrative functions.

Ed retired with a total of 38 years, eight months of continuous dedicated service. Chief has a Bachelor of Business Administration/Aviation Management from Wilmington College and is an in-resident graduate of the United States Air Force Senior NCO Academy. We’ve been fortunate to be able to use his talents as a Board member and look forward to even more. He and his wife, Pat, live in Dover.

We’d like to welcome our newest Board member, retired Senior Master Sgt. Larry E. Koewing. Larry served in the US Air Force and Air Force Reserve from 1963 until 1993. He had four years of Southeast Asia service, and participated in Grenada and Desert Shield/Desert Storm operations.

An aircraft electrician turned admin support tech/supervisor, he finally settled on becoming a C-5 flight engineer here at Dover AFB. Additional duties in aircrew contract training, as a first sergeant and as Wing Director of Ops Exec filled up his “spare time.”

He retired as chief flight engineer for the 3rd Airlift Squadron, went back to school at Wilmington College and then joined the ranks of FlightSafety International from 1996 thru 2010. As a ground school systems instructor, he taught corporate pilots from around the globe systems for the Hawker-series aircraft and the Gulfstream G-IV.

Besides being a Museum volunteer, his hobbies include reading, history, photography, astronomy, and of course, aviation. Larry’s authored aviation articles for both civilian and military publications. We’re happy to have him aboard.
Also re-elected was Mr. Gerry Wright. Gerry has served as the director of Marketing and Public Relations for Monster Racing Excitement since joining the team in 2004. He’s been responsible for corporate sales and non-profit group fundraising, media relations and community outreach and is currently a Monster Racing Ride Instructor. As a community liaison, Gerry’s assisted many groups and organizations on behalf of Monster Racing, to provide insight on the sciences and history of stock car racing at Dover, and continues to work with local learning institutions by visiting locations throughout the state, speaking on a variety of subjects with regard to racing, and important public safety messages.

An active member of NASCAR and the Public Relations Society of America; he has also served on the board of Kent County Delaware Tourism, The Delaware Alcohol Awareness Task Force, The Arthritis Foundation of Delaware, The American Heart Association Delaware Walk Board and lends his time to other community and tourism projects. Prior to Monster Racing, he worked with MBNA America in the sports and motorsports marketing sectors. He has also provided his services and held positions with NASCAR Sprint Cup, Nationwide, Camping World Truck and Camping World Series race teams. His marketing and public relations experience has allowed him to assist racing teams with sponsorship procurement, marketing and community service projects as well as media relations.

A graduate of the University of Florida with a degree in Business Marketing, Gerry has also participated in the MBNA Leadership and Management Excellence Programs, holding numerous awards and commendations with regard to marketing and sports marketing. He lives in Odessa, Del., with his wife, Joelle, and his son, Will.

Earlier this summer, the Board elected retired Senior Master Sgt. Jon Andrews to finish out the term of our friend, Jim Douglass, who recently went “West.” Already a valuable, contributing member, we’re happy to announce Jon has been elected to his own full three-year term.

Jon spent 24 years as a loadmaster, flying on C-141As, C-130Es, C-5As and C-5Bs. He was combat air drop and special ops qualified, instructor/examiner qualified and was a unit chief loadmaster. A Vietnam, Panama and Desert Shield/Storm veteran, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak leaf cluster), the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal and the Air Medal with eight oak leaf clusters). Jon was an honor graduate at the NCO Leadership School, a distinguished graduate at the NCO Academy, the first Air Force distinguished graduate at the Navy Senior Enlisted Academy, the senior Air Force enlisted advisor and command loadmaster at U.S. Central Command, the chief loadmaster functional manager at the Air Force Military Personnel Center and the first loadmaster to serve on the Pentagon Enlisted Rated Distribution Management committee.

He earned his Associate in Applied Sciences degree in Transportation and Traffic Management at the Community College of the Air Force and a Bachelor of Science in Business Management at Wilmington University. Jon worked as the marketing director at Pegasus Management (Dover), plant manager of Hanover Foods (Clayton, Del.), and senior human resources manager at Allen Foods (Seaford, Del.). He serves as a board member of Jobs for Delaware Graduates and is a volunteer, tour guide mentor and member of The AMC Museum Foundation. We’re looking forward to Jon’s contributions to the AMC Museum as a Foundation Board member.

Foundation Board Officer elections also took place at the September meeting, as per our Constitution and Bylaws. The serving officers were nominated with no challenges to the sitting officers, and elected unanimously.

For the most part, the Foundation Board members aren’t the “hands-on” volunteer workers who work on airplanes, give tours, work in the store or do the myriad other chores that keep the Museum thriving. (Note that Paul Gillis is the most notable exception, since he is almost everywhere, doing almost everything at one time or another.) The purpose of Foundation is to support the AMC Museum in its mission as an aviation and aerospace, education, scientific, cultural, historical and inspirational facility for the general public and the Air Force community. In short, we try hard to keep the dollars coming so those folks can do their jobs so each of you can enjoy a great aviation historical museum.

Fly safe! — Don
Our volunteers

The hands and the voices of the AMCM

Look up “volunteer” in any good lexicon, and you’ll find a variety of definitions: helper, assistant, supporter, aide, and so on.

But when it comes to the AMC Museum’s cadre of volunteers, one must add another definition: invaluable resource.

That’s true, because without its volunteers, everything at the AMCM would come to a standstill.

They are the hands and the voices — some might say the heart and soul — of the Air Mobility Command Museum.

Most visitors get to know the volunteers while looking through the exhibits on the main floor, out in the Engine Barn or on the hardstand, where most of the Museum’s more than 30 aircraft are on static display.

They’re the men – and women – who guide visitors through the displays, whether it be in the C-47 Turf and Sport Special or the reconstructed air traffic control tower.

But they also work behind the scenes. A number are former aircraft maintenance folks who spend countless hours restoring and rebuilding the airplanes and other associated equipment on display. Others are carpenters or structural specialists who design and build the many displays depicting the various eras of powered flight in keeping with the AMC Museum’s focus on airlift and aerial refueling. Still more volunteer to help with building and grounds maintenance or research activities.

The most recent example of all of those skills coming together is the CG-4A Waco glider, which was reconstructed from little more than a metal skeleton and some scraps of wood.

There’s no way of calculating the exact figure, but the Museum’s more than 150 volunteers probably would tally more than one thousand years of combined experience with airplanes, either working on them, flying them or just having a healthy interest in aviation.

Everyone is welcome

Jan Caldwell, a retired elementary school teacher with more than 41 years experience in the classroom, serves as the AMC Museum’s volunteer coordinator. She’s been on the job for almost 15 years.

Jan came to the Museum when she learned Director Mike Leister was searching for someone to manage record keeping on the volunteer force. She joined her husband, Dick Caldwell, who now serves as Museum Education Coordinator.

“I said I’d give it a try,” Jan said, wondering why she’d been made the offer. “I didn’t know what they’d want with a retired school teacher.”

“But these guys adopted me, they took me in and treated me really well. It was an easy transition, but I found out there was a lot to learn.”

(See VOLUNTEERS on page 9)

By the numbers

156 – number of active volunteers at the AMC Museum
27,224 – number of volunteer hours worked from January through August 2013
20,000-plus – number of volunteer hours worked by Archivist Harry Heist
336,224 – total number of volunteer hours worked at the Museum

It’s a rare occasion when the Air Mobility Command Museum’s volunteer force can get together all at one time, but most managed the feat for the Volunteer’s Luncheon, held April 22, 2013. The volunteer group runs the gamut from retired U.S. Air Force colonels to civilians with no military experience at all. They’re all united by a love of aviation and a love of airplanes.
Volunteers

(Continued from page 8)

Even though none of the volunteers receive any compensation for the hours they work, that doesn’t mean they just come and go as they please, Jan said.

There always has to be someone out on the main floor to guide tourists and to ensure visitors are safe, she said. Hours spent on large projects, such as the CG-4A restoration, need to be accounted for, and there must always be someone on hand to set up special events.

It’s up to Jan to make sure the volunteers receive proper credit for their work, no matter where, when or for what it’s done.

When she first broke into the volunteer coordinator’s job, everything was done by pen and paper, and she’d spend hours figuring out who had worked when. She also took on the job of unraveling other volunteer records dating back to the Museum’s early days, when it operated out of an aircraft hangar near the flightline.

Museum volunteer and computer whiz Terry Anderson came to Jan’s rescue with a program he designed from scratch to simplify her record-keeping work.

Wanted: enthusiasm

The volunteers work the hours they can fit into their schedules. Most are retired and spend three or more days a week at the Museum. Some still have fulltime jobs, and so come in only a few hours a month. It doesn’t matter, Jan said, because everyone’s assistance is welcome.

Only about half the volunteer corps has prior military experience, she said, while some still are on active duty, stationed at Dover AFB.

“People come in to visit, and they come away feeling this place is awesome,” Jan said. “I get emails from people asking about how they can volunteer. Sometimes people just walk in the door.”

It takes a special person to volunteer at the Museum, she said.

“We look for people who are really interested,” she said. “They have to love history, they have to love airplanes and they have to love military history.”

But what if someone wants to sign up, but doesn’t particularly like public speaking or working with tour groups?

“Some come in and say they’re not really good with people, and they just want to do restoration work,” Jan said. “That’s not a problem. Some just want to work in the Museum store. That’s not a problem.

“But a lot of people are outgoing and they’ve got the personality to go out and meet tours and guide people around.”

Regardless of how eager a volunteer might be, one can’t just sign up and start working. Each candidate must pass a background check and agree to the Museum’s ethics and standards agreement.

Prospective volunteers are given a 120-page training guide and reference manual chock full of information about every aircraft, display, simulator and building in the Museum complex. Although they’re not expected to be able to recite every bit of information word-for-word, volunteer tour guides use the manual so they’re familiar with the Museum and can answer general questions.

Tour guides also are expected to know the history of the Museum building, Hangar 1301, which was a top secret rocket research facility during World War II.

Once accepted into the program, fledgling guides tag along with experienced guides and mentors, learning how to handle tour groups and their questions.

Jan loves her job, the fulfillment she gets from helping the Museum, and most of all, the camaraderie of the volunteers.

“It’s an honor to be part of this Museum,” she said. “My responsibilities help reward our volunteers for their time and dedication to this wonderful complex.”

“Many museums and public service endeavors depend on volunteers but I’ve never seen a group of people who put so much into their ‘job,’” said Museum Director Mike Leister.

“We get comments all the time from visitors who really connect with our tour guides want to thank them for the experience. It may sound like a cliché but this is a family and everyone works together because they believe in this place.”

Anyone interested in becoming an AMC Museum volunteer should contact Jan Caldwell at 302-677-5994.
148th FIS credited with reopening DAFB

Reading, Pa., ANG unit called Hangar 1301 home for 21 months in 1951-1952

Hangar 1301 has been used by many Air Force units since the 1940s, but none more significant than the 148th FIS. The unit’s aircraft maintainers worked there between February 1951 and November 1952, and the 148th served as the main unit at Dover when the Air Force decided to reactivate the mothballed base.

Now in their 80s and 90s, veterans shared some memories with the Hangar Digest.

It was January 1951, and war in Korea had everyone concerned about Communist aggression, even against the United States eastern seaboard.

To ramp up American defenses, the Pennsylvania Air National Guard’s 148th Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Reading Airport was ordered to active duty to guard America’s Atlantic coast.

The men – there were no women in the unit – wrapped up their civilian jobs, packed their gear, and bid goodbye to their girlfriends, wives and children.

When all was said and done, the squadron hit the road, a massive convoy of vehicles headed south to Dover Air Force Base, Delaware.

As the trucks rumbled away from Reading, the men of the 148th had no way of knowing they’d be making history. They knew they’d be gone for almost two years, but their efforts, particularly over their first three months, began the process of turning a rundown, mosquito-ridden backwater of an airfield into one of the busiest military bases in the world.

‘Just a lot of old buildings’

The 148th was organized in 1946 with a core group of World War II veterans under command of Maj. Richard B. Posey.

More than one of its annual summer field training sessions was spent at Dover AFB, so the area was not unfamiliar to the men who arrived there on Feb. 17, 1951.

“We walked into a bare base,” recalled Col. George Spuhler, 91. “They had a holding detachment there, run by a second lieutenant with about 13 enlisted men.

“They were there pretty much there just to keep the base warm, so to speak.”

Like many military posts at the end of World War II, what then was known as Dover Army Air Field had been inactivated, supposedly on a temporary basis.

By 1949, however, the base was downgraded to caretaker status, with only a baker’s dozen of men on hand to maintain the buildings. One of those buildings was Hangar 1301.

The officer in charge was 2nd Lt. Francis A. “Pat” Humphreys Jr., whose widow remembers Dover as a general collection of motley wooden and concrete block structures.

“Everything that was there had been left over from World War II. There were just a lot of old buildings,” she said.

The base, which had been cobbled together out of farmland during the war, was located two miles south of the Dover city limits.

“There really wasn’t much to Dover back then at all,” Mrs. Humphreys said.

Housing jitters

Even before the 148th arrived, talk about the base’s future was swirling in the local media, with newspapers reporting Dover was to be “reactivated on a scale much greater than in World War II.”

Dover’s City Council passed a resolution beseeching landlords to practice “restraint and moderation” when setting property rental prices.

But when it came to the 148th, city officials need not have worried much. The bulk of the squadron’s married men had left their families in Reading since it was relatively easy effort to visit them on weekends. Unit records show except for alert personnel, most of the men had Saturday afternoon and all day Sunday off, leaving them plenty of time to make a trip back home.

“A lot of us commuted,” Spuhler said. “We were close enough we could drive home. A lot of times we had to stay over the weekend, but it was mostly a five-day-a-week job.”

Some blunt words

The 148th made its move to Dover in three stages: an advance detachment that left on Feb. 14, the main echelon on the 17th, and a rear detachment that reported in a week afterward.

Arriving at Dover, the 148th had a combined strength of 382 men and was in the process of receiving the F-51 Mustang to replace its aging cadre of P-47s.

Working under the leadership of 27-year-old World War II vet Maj. Russell G. Ogan, they quickly set up shop.

That first month, officers and enlisted men alike underwent hours of ground training. Pilots flew as often as the winter weather permitted, but found time in the training simulator limited by a lack of heat in the training building. Training also suffered because of a lack of spares for the Mustangs, meaning only 72 percent were considered airworthy.

An F-94B undergoes repair work inside Hangar 1301. This spot is in the southwest corner of the hangar, where the Museum’s restored CG-4A glider now is displayed.

(Continued on page 11)
One of the first obstacles the men had to overcome was getting familiar with Air Force customs and courtesies.

In March, the unit received a visit from Lt. Col. Thaddeus Harris, provost marshal for the Eastern Air Defense Force who lectured the men on their apparent lack of professionalism.

Harris deplored the “buddy-buddy” atmosphere of the 148th, noting many NCOs and airmen called each other by their first names, a practice he abhorred. As blunt as they were, however, Harris’ words soon had the desired effect.

But it wasn’t easy: the 148th was a unit whose members knew each other well in their civilian careers.

“Everyone came from the same area,” Spuhler said. “Some of us had known each other all our lives. We had a lot of camaraderie. All of these people were home-grown and had grown up as a unit.

“There was respect for each other, but it was a different ball game than the folks on active duty.

Harris, Spuhler said, wasn’t wrong. “But that’s just the way it was.”

“The guys went with it, though,” he added. “They started to learn. After [Harris] talked with us, a lot of us took it to heart.”

Grass in the barracks

Additional men joined the 148th through March 1951, bringing its strength up to 490 personnel. A number were recent basic training graduates who had to learn their skills through on-the-job training.

Enlisted personnel and officers lived only a short distance from Hangar 1301, said Master Sgt. John S. Brown Jr., 84.

“Our barracks was right near the hangar,” Brown said. “You could walk there to work from the barracks.”

“We had a bunch of concrete block buildings with tarpaper roofs we used for barracks,” Spuhler recalled. Like the men, the officers lived in open bays with a pot-bellied stove at one end.

“That stove was there, supposedly to heat the whole barracks,” Spuhler said, “but it didn’t really do the job.”

At least one building had a crack in the wall wide enough to look through, Brown said, and there was only one latrine and shower facility for every four barracks.

“When we were called up and sent to Dover, the place was a mess,” said Master Sgt. Robert Yeakley, 89. “The grass was growing up through the barracks and the latrines had no water. It was terrible.”

Spuhler, Brown and Yeakley and the other veterans took the hardships in stride.

“We were all young and eager, and things like that didn’t really matter much,” Spuhler said.

Eggs, butter — and staff cars

Administrative and command offices of the 148th, as well as the base dispensary, were off to the right of what is now Dover’s main entrance, approximately three miles from the Hangar 1301 maintenance facilities.

Spuhler worked directly for Ogan as unit adjutant: “I took care of anything the commander wanted done.”

“We were awfully busy when we were there,” he said. “We were new, and we had to write up base regulations and get things organized.

“When you move into a bare base like that, just getting things working was not the best arrangement in the world.”

But while the men of the 148th worked to keep their aircraft flying and to upgrade their living and working facilities, procuring some military necessities lagged behind.

This came to the notice of Lt. Gen. Ennis C. Whitehead, then commander of the Air Force Continental Air Command during a base inspection in April 1951.

According to the unit history, on the whole, “the general was highly pleased at what he saw and was high in his praise of the administration of this base.”

But Whitehead noticed Dover lacked an important piece of military equipment.

“When Gen. Whitehead came through, we had all our civilian cars lined up on the ramp to pick him up,” Spuhler recalled. “The first thing he asked us was, ‘Where are your staff cars?’

“When we had arrived at Dover, we didn’t have a single staff car,” he said. “But it wasn’t long after that we got our staff cars.”

The move to Delaware was somewhat jarring to the men of the 148th. Although Dover was the state capital, the city was a languid little town with a population of about 6,000 souls. The area was flat, totally unlike the rolling hills around Reading, which was a bustling town of more than 100,000.

Like most men in the 148th, Spuhler’s family had remained behind in Pennsylvania. Some, however, had brought their families to Dover, and were living in the community.

Yeakley was one of the few whose family accompanied him to Delaware. He eventually located a home in the tiny railroad town of Wyoming, about five miles from the base.

“There was no housing at the base at that time and there was hardly anything close to the base,” he said. “That’s how I ended up out in Wyoming.”

Dover was “very laid back,” Yeakley recalled. Other than the American Legion hall just north of the base, there was little else but farmland between the base and the city.”

The author of the 148th unit history agreed: “Dover hasn’t too much to offer the airman in the way of relaxation and good food.”

The first social event at the new NCO Club was a dance on March 29, 1951. The club charged $1 a month for membership, and

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148th FIS

(Continued from page 11)

featured pinball machines, pool tables and “the latest records, played on the 100-record playing machine.”

The base theater opened on March 17, with a showing of “Lightning Strikes Twice.” Movies were shown four nights a week, with an admission price of 25 cents.

Dover soon had its own base exchange, but it was stocked only with what the exchange officer could find at retail prices in off-base stores.

Rations for the mess hall came from Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland, about 75 miles from Dover. Each week, the men at Dover consumed 3,500 pounds of meat, more than a ton of potatoes, nine cases of vegetables, 8,400 half-pint bottles of milk, more than 3,300 eggs, 315 pounds of butter, up to 105 pounds of coffee and more than 1,300 loaves of bread.

Alerts – and accidents

Given the fact many of the 148th’s maintenance personnel were young airmen just learning their jobs, it’s no surprise there were accidents during the squadron’s first three months.

But the first took place just as the 148th was leaving for Dover, on Feb. 15, 1951, when a P-47 piloted by 1st Lt. David H. Morris overshot the end of the runway at Reading and plowed into a farmer’s field. Damage to the aircraft was severe enough to classify the incident as a major accident.

The second occurred on March 14, when 1st Lt. Nicholas Bereschak, flying a unit F-51, made a wheels-up landing in a wheat field four minutes after takeoff. A local newspaper account placed the Mustang at only 500 feet in the air when the engine quit. Spuhler, one of the first to arrive at the crash site, found Bereschak waiting for his rescuers.

“There wasn’t any fire,” Spuhler recalled. “He was just sitting by the airplane when I got there. He was fine. I took him up to the hospital, but he was OK.”

The Mustang sustained more than $24,000 in damage but was expected to fly again. Farmer Ernest Zimmerman, whose wheat field was damaged in the crash, was told he would be reimbursed once he filed the necessary paperwork.

Another accident occurred April 4, the third in as many months. On this occasion, an F-51 piloted by 1st Lt. Donald G. Gray was damaged, also due to engine failure.

Investigation boards blamed mechanical issues for all three accidents and all three pilots were returned to flying duty.

Because the 148th’s mission was defense of the eastern seaboard, the unit kept two aircraft on runway alert at all times. Pilots stayed with the airplanes while support personnel were stationed nearby.

“We had a little shack out there with two bunks and a stove,” Yeakley recalled. “If we got a call, we’d run out there and help the pilots to take off.”

“You never knew when the alert would sound,” Brown said. “We had five minutes to get the airplanes into the air, although we’d usually do it in three or four minutes. We’d strap the pilots in, they’d start, you’d get the chocks and off they’d go.”

As uncomfortable as conditions were, things got worse as the weather warmed up.

Delaware summers are hot and humid, and it’s not uncommon for late afternoon thunderstorms to dump copious amounts of rain in just a few minutes. Delaware’s low terrain also meant many of the base’s unpaved roads quickly turned into a morass of mud.

“We had to use boardwalks to get between buildings when it rained,” Yeakley said. “But sometimes the boardwalks would wash away and you’d have nothing. You’d just have to walk through the mud.”

Moving on

The 148th continued to build up Dover AFB as the months went by.

In October 1951, Congress approved a $26 million expansion project that marked the beginning of the base’s role as a trans-Atlantic air terminal. The money was earmarked for utilities, storage, road paving and refueling facilities. Barracks, housing for bachelor officers and money for lengthening Dover’s runways also was included.

As time went on, so did the men of the 148th FIS. Some were discharged, some returned to Reading, and others went into the Regular Air Force.

Spuhler received a Regular commission, spending much of his career working on Air National Guard issues. He lives in Reading. Yeakley enlisted in the Regular Air Force and estimates he visited at least 64 countries during his 30-year career. He now lives in Myerstown.

Brown stayed with the Pennsylvania Air National Guard, retiring in 1989. He also lives in Myerstown.

Ogan went on to serve as a Regular Air Force officer in numerous assignments, although the highlight of his career was in planning and organizing Operation Homecoming, the repatriation of American prisoners of war held in Vietnam. He retired in September 1974, and died on Dec. 18, 2012.

“We did a good job’

Its 21-month tour of duty concluded, the 148th FIS was demobilized and returned to Reading in November 1952. It was succeeded by a number of other fighter units, which maintained the base’s round-the-clock intercepter mission until January 1973, when the last unit was deactivated.

The men of the 148th have erected a memorial marker in the Air Mobility Command’s Commemorative Garden, and in June 2013, more than 60 years after they left Dover, returned to visit Hangar 1301.

All are extremely proud of their time at Dover and of their role of turning it into what is now the largest military air terminal in the Air Force.

“My most vivid memory is of turning that base around, that we walked into a bare base and got it up to Air Force standards,” Spuhler said. “We worked a lot of long hours, but we did a good job, taking a bunch of buildings scattered all over the place, modifying them to our needs and turning it into a functioning Air Force base.”
AROUND AND ABOUT YOUR AMC MUSEUM

Ava Jean Corbett gives her prettiest smile as Mom Aubrey Corbett snaps a photo. Brother Jaxon and Dad Justin just seem to be waiting for the photo session to be over.

AMC Museum aircraft restoration experts install part of a port wing on our CG-4A glider. Like the rest of the glider, the wing has been left incomplete to show off its internal structure.

Scoutmaster Fritz Kerr of Troop 76, New Providence, Pa., confers with Scouts Caleb Young and Charles Temple inside of the Museum’s C-47 “Turf and Sport Special.”

Larry Wright gives an enthusiastic demonstration of the workings of a aircraft ailerons to Therese Donovan and Arlynn Hall, of Newark, Del., and Joe and Jared Zaruba of Wilmington, Del.


Members of the Calvary Assembly of God Motorcycle Ministry of Dover, Del., visited Sept. 14; from left, Elaine and David Angstadt, Debbie Everett, Bill Gallant and Carlos Velez.

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The Eagle Firefighters Association of Dover Air Force Base sponsored a Sept. 11, 2001 memorial, which was dedicated in a moving ceremony held Sept. 11, 2013. The memorial is in the Air Mobility Command Museum’s Commemoration Park. The ceremony was covered extensively in local and regional media.