



# AAHS FLIGHTLINE

No. 211, 1st Quarter 2024

American Aviation Historical Society

Established 1956



(USAF Photo)



The year just past brought a lot of changes to AAHS, the big one being the move from Huntington Beach to Flabob airport. The new year will no doubt bring other challenges—and new opportunities.

It is no exaggeration to say that without the volunteers who handle the day-to-day tasks in and around the office,

there could be no AAHS. (More about that elsewhere in this issue.)

But there is another equally pressing need, one that goes to the very essence of the Society. In the very first edition of the *AAHS Journal* Bill Larkins, one of America's great aviation historians, put it this way: "Our aim is to provide the stimulation for a greater degree of interest on the part of all the membership, as well as attract new members who have not before realized the vast amount of historical information concerning our own aircraft and aviation activities that needs to be digested, documented, and preserved before it is lost forever." Meaningful words still!

Bill envisioned an organization that would "provide a means of contacting other persons with similar interests, in addition to providing the type of quality information about old aircraft, aviation history, etc." in a way not offered by any other publication.

Larkins recognized that AAHS would attract diverse aviation interests.

"Each has something that the other lacks and can use; each can contribute something of value for the benefit of all." The *Journal* would "directly reflect the degree of participation of the membership."

In 1956 there was no Internet, no blogs or forums, and no way to access books or historical documents other than to actually hold them or perhaps view microfilm imagery at a large library.

Today, any subject imaginable can be viewed and studied with the click of a mouse. But we have no staff of writers at AAHS, cranking out content for the next issue. We, the membership, must collectively generate that. So please, make that New Year's resolution to share your research, photos, or experiences.

***Let's make 2024 a great AAHS Year!***

Click [here](#) to discuss a *Journal* article, or you can send other ideas to me at [FlightLine@aahs-online.org](mailto:FlightLine@aahs-online.org).

Joe Martin  
*FlightLine* Editor

[www.aahs-online.org](http://www.aahs-online.org)

## What's Inside

- Aviation's GOAT ?
- Veterans Day 2023 at Flabob
- Restorations and Reproductions
- CEO's Message
- Salute to AAHS Volunteers
- Photo ID - For aircraft
- Postflight: Notes & News
- Wants & Disposals
- Pacific Air Show Photos
- Just one more thing . . . .



## Is the SR-71 Aviation's GOAT ?

For those not attuned to American sports, a word of explanation is in order. For decades, “goat” was a sort of shorthand for scapegoat, meaning someone whose error or bonehead play cost his team the game.

But a few years ago some wise guy came up with a catchy, if somewhat (deliberately?) ironic acronym. GOAT was suddenly proclaimed to mean the Greatest of All Time. There have even been attempts to trademark the phrase.

There's another sports angle to our story, which will become apparent shortly. Meanwhile, some background. On December 15, 2003, the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center opened to the public. To celebrate the 20th anniversary of that auspicious event, the center staged what it called an Artifact Showdown.

The “showdown” was actually a clever adaptation of college basketball's “March Madness” tournament. Sixteen “teams” (artifacts), one half aviation related, the other half space related, were selected by vote of the museum staff. These were then seeded 1-8, with a couple of wild cards added to each bracket.

The wild cards and the 7th and 8th seeds in each bracket faced off in a “play in” round, just like the college tournament. The winners were determined by votes cast through the museum's website or via social media.

The rounds proceeded accordingly: the “Sweet Sixteen,” whittled to the “Elite Eight,” and then down to the “Final Four.” In the aviation bracket, the Blackbird beat the Boeing 307 Stratoliner, while the Air France Concorde edged out the B-26 “Flak Bait.”

On the space side, the space shuttle Discovery knocked off Jim Irvin's Apollo 15 space suit, and the Apollo 11 Mobile Quarantine Facility (MQF) fell to the Manned Maneuvering Unit (MMU) astronaut Bruce McCandless wore to make the first untethered spacewalk in 1984.

In the bracket championships, the top-seeded SR-71 showed why it deserved that ranking by besting the Concorde, while Discovery won the space race against McCandless's MMU. Two iconic artifacts, the Lockheed SR-71 and Space Shuttle Discovery, faced each other for the championship. The winner would be announced December 15, the 20th anniversary of the center's opening.

When the final score was tallied, the SR-71 came away the 55-45% winner. Not exactly a blowout, but certainly a convincing win. (Click [here](#) for the whole story.) Does that make the SR-71 the Greatest of All Time? Depends on who you ask, but until some other airplane proves it can beat the Blackbird, I'm not going to argue otherwise! ➔

*Article by Joe Martin*



# AAHS Celebrates Veterans Day 2023

The 2023 Veterans Day Celebration at Flabob Airport, sponsored by the Tom Wathen Center, gave folks a chance to honor our veterans, see vintage aircraft up close, go for biplane rides, and pick up a good book at the AAHS booth, among other attractions.

Howard Butcher, AAHS director, got the chance to meet Stephen Wright, great-grand nephew of Wilbur and Orville. (There were two other Wright brothers. Stephen is a descendant of Lorin Wright, second oldest of the four brothers. Sister Katherine was the youngest of the Wright siblings.) Stephen was on hand to commemorate the newly refurbished hangar that houses the **Wright Flyer project**.

Reenactors from the Historical Unit of Southern California staged events throughout the day, while local car clubs showed

off their rides at the other end of the field.

Jolene Brown, Bianca Garfinkle, Charles Shaw, Jerri Bergen and Brendan Tang all helped visitors peruse the many aviation books AAHS had to sell, and signed up two new AAHS members, Eric Waltzer and Tom Dombeck. Both live nearby (Tom in Corona, Eric in Riverside). We're hoping that Tom will fly his beautiful Cessna 172M over o to Flabob and let us take a peek!

The AAHS building was closed for the day, and good thing too—the building is still getting re-organized after the consolidation of Huntington Beach materials. The office remains open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays for volunteer work, drop-ins, and membership management. ➔

*Article by Jerri Bergen*



*The newly refurbished AAHS Headquarters at Flabob.*



*AAHS reference library and conference room.*



*(Above) Howard Butcher chats with a group of reenactors portraying Vietnam War LRP's from the 101st Airborne Div.*



*(Right) Visitors look through AAHS's book sale booth, which netted several hundred dollars on the day. In the background is the home field DC-3, **Flabob Express**.*





Photo by "Moose" Peterson  
<https://www.moosepeterson.com/>

# Restorations and Reproductions

## Tommy Too — Another S-4C takes to the skies

In No. 203 (1st Qtr 2022), we featured a pair of restored Thomas-Morse Scouts, Signal Corps serial number 4366, an S-4B belonging to the Aviation Heritage Foundation of Ithica, N.Y., and S-4C s/n 38944, at the Air Force Museum.

After a long layoff, another "Tommy" has recently taken flight. This one, a C model s/n 38898 (N3307T) has been returned to flying status as part of Walt Bowe's fleet of vintage aircraft based at Ala Doble airport, about 30 miles west of Sacramento.

In 1918, s/n 38898 was based at Rockwell Field, on San Diego's North Island. Post-war, the surplus Tommy went to Hollywood with Paul Mantz, likely appearing in films like *Dawn Patrol* and *Hell's Angels*. In a 1952 swap, Ed D. "Skeeter" Carlson got the airplane from Mantz. Re-engined with a Ken-Royce (LeBlond) radial, which was later replaced by an original 80hp Le Rhone 9C rotary, the Tommy still flew occasionally into the 1980s.

In the April 1993 issue of the EAA's *Vintage Airplane*, Carlson recounted the story of a photo which he'd been given by a friend showing Lt. Lawrence Dell Harthorn in the cockpit of 38898. The photo originally came from Harthorn's



son, whom Carlson met much later. He was thrilled to sit in the cockpit of an airplane his father had flown years before.

A 1918 newspaper clipping states that Harthorn, serving with "the Canadian flying forces" in France, suffered four broken ribs and a dislocated shoulder when the motor vehicle in which he was a passenger overturned. He was repatriated to the U.S. and sworn into the Air Service in July 1918. He left the service the following January.

According to Carlson, Harthorn went on to work as a pilot for the motion picture industry. Who knows, he might've encountered 38898 again. When Carlson died, the Tommy was acquired by the Eagles Mere (Pa.) Air Museum, where it was displayed until Walt Bowe acquired it in 2023.

The old bird was trucked out to California where it was put back into flying shape. Chief engineer-turned-test-pilot Andrew King took it for a test hop, the results of which were adjustments to elevator trim and aileron rigging.

The S-4 was notoriously tail heavy, which King quickly confirmed. The Tommy, he said, was "a thrill to fly, but it also flies horribly, especially being so tail heavy – and that also causes it to be unstable in pitch, and the ailerons are slow and unresponsive."

But practiced application of forward stick force, augmented by some bungee cord, overcame that obstacle and King put 38898 through a beautiful flying display at the 2023 Ala Doble invitational fly-in. (cont. next page) →



A pair of classics! Nigel Hitchman took this absolutely magnificent shot of Walt Bowe's Tommy along with his JN-4H. (N3223) Visit [Vintage Aviation News](http://VintageAviationNews.com) for news, stories, and videos covering vintage aircraft from around the world.



(L) Tommy 38898 at Ala Doble, again by Nigel Hitchman. (R) As it appeared at Eagles Mere. (Museum photo)



With another classic: Bowe's Waco GXE (NC6974)

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# CEO's Message

The 2023 year has swept past, with both highs and lows for the Society. Our Endowment Fund didn't provide the expected returns (as experienced by many Americans, certainly!) but the Society has been named the recipient of two different bequeathments, to be received in 2024. In consolidating our offices to Flabob HQ (closing the Huntington Beach office) we lost the support of several dedicated local volunteers, but operating costs have been reduced by 40%.

Volunteers have finished the cataloging and entering all our 5,600-plus aviation books into our "Book Connect" library software – a first! This is a huge win, as we can now search for a title, author or subject on behalf of members or researchers needing specific information. We still have 60 or more boxes of aviation magazines to log in, however, and do not (yet) have a method to enter more than the magazine title, volume, date, and subject key words (versus each article title).

Due to excessive delays in city permitting and approvals, Flabob Airport authorities have delayed planning of the long-discussed aviation library building, where the AAHS aviation books will eventually reside. We may not see this project begin for another 3-4 years. Flabob manager Beth Larick provided some on-site storage space so we can use our office areas for the book collection. We have also successfully connected with the Flabob Aviation Preparatory Academy (FAPA) who are planning to allow students to utilize the AAHS library via a dedicated computer station, donated by AAHS, to view our "Book Connect" and check out books of interest.

Through the sales of the Larry Klingberg model collection, AAHS now has \$16,500 in the Aviation Scholarship Fund. With the loss of volunteers, a scholarship award program has yet to be finalized, but we look forward to setting up the process and providing more news on this soon.

The AAHS Journal has been published nearly on schedule in 2023, and the *FlightLine* newsletter has made all its publication deadlines. We struggle mightily, however, with the collection of material for our members to enjoy. This deficit however, CAN be addressed by you, our members! Your experiences, stories, and photos are what we *MOST* need to publish the quality publications you receive in your mailbox and inbox.

Make it a point this year to collect those papers, recollections, stories and photos and forward them to the AAHS office. We can help organize and write up your thoughts with our available resources. 2024 will bring new opportunities and new challenges, certainly. We continue to work for you to make sure there are more "highs" than "lows."



Jerri Bergen  
AAHS CEO

## Changing of the Guard

Back around 1980, AAHS rented office space in the Huntington Beach area. Addresses changed from time to time but for forty-some years, volunteers at those Orange County locations made AAHS tick.

Unfortunately, distance—and LA traffic!—create just too much of a logistical obstacle for these folks to continue their work at Flabob. The last group of Huntington Beach volunteers are highlighted on the following page. Those folks will be sorely missed, but please welcome the new crew members at the controls of the new Flabob headquarters.

**Charles Shaw**, office manager of AAHS's Flabob operation, was born and raised in Riverside. Charlie came aboard as a volunteer in January 2021 before taking on his current part-time employee role a few months later.

As a kid, he lived right down the street from March AFB, where his grandfather would frequently take him to see the museum and air shows. He is currently working towards his private pilot's license, and plans to join the Air Force.

**Bianca Garfinkel** joined AAHS in June of 2022 as a volunteer at the new headquarters office at Flabob Airport. She lives in Riverside, Calif., and earned a Master's in Library Science from PennWest Clarion University.

In the Flabob office, Bianca assists with cataloging the AAHS Library and enters metadata into *PlaneSpotter*, AAHS's aircraft identification database. She also assists new members with their account set-up, and responds to inquiries about membership benefits. If there's an AAHS booth at an airshow, chances are Bianca will be helping with book sales.

She spends her free time with her family, including two adorable cats. She loves animals, and volunteers at an animal shelter. She enjoys reading, visiting museums, attending live music events, and going to airshows. Bianca says her volunteer service at AAHS as an adventure that has introduced her to new interests and hobbies.

**Brendan Tang** is new to the Flabob team. (See See Jerri Bergen's Veterans Day article on [p.3](#)) →

# We'll miss our volunteers!

**Bob Palazzola**, like a most of us in AAHS, has always had an interest in aircraft. Bob served in the U.S. Air Force, then went on to a career in the aerospace/defense industry. He came aboard as a volunteer in 2013, initially working to organize and relabel the Society's book collection. Later, as Archive Manager at Huntington Beach, he oversaw the cataloging and preservation of items donated to the Society.

**Robert Littlefield** worked as a lithographer before retiring in 2008. One of the companies he worked for printed the AAHS Journal, so he was a natural when he started at Huntington Beach in 2013. He came in every week to sort donated books, determined into which category they fit, then entered the data in Book Connect. A long-time glider pilot, Robert holds an FAA Designated Pilot Examiner cert.

**Alex Dudas**, a recent addition to the Huntington Beach staff, held various positions in several industries, including stints with Hughes Aircraft (1966-1978) and BA Aerospace, Ltd. (2010-2013) His knowledge of all types of aircraft matched well with the need to review documents and correspondence received from members over the years, then write up a brief description of the folder contents as part of AAHS's Research Documents (RD) projects.

**John Nativio**, a retired physical therapist, volunteered in March 2022. John initially helped with books and slides, but eventually did scanning of the numerous aviation prints that were donated to AAHS. He could also be counted on to help out wherever he was needed. He was extremely helpful in moving items to AAHS headquarters at Flabob Airport as the Huntington Beach office was being closed down,



**Don Converse** has a life-long interest in aviation inherited, so he says, from his dad, an AAHS member of long standing. He still has lots of model plans and projects. Don joined the AAHS team in 2017. A Coast Guard veteran, he owns a Rutan Long-EZ and is restoring a 1940 Porterfield Collegiate. ➔



*The key players at Huntington Beach (L o R): John Nativio, Syndy Resler, Bob Palazzola, Joe Rando, Don Converse, Bob Brockmeier, Alex Dudas. Inset: Robert Littlefield. These folks contributed thousands of hours to AAHS. Thanks to you all!*



# Photo ID, continued . . . .

As we discussed in our last issue, identifying an aircraft based solely on photographic evidence can be tricky business. But that's often all the aviation historian has go on. Once in a while, though, there's an exception, like the Tomas-Morse scout pictured below.

This S-4B (USN s/n A3243) is of no particular historical significance, but it provides a nice segue to a valuable resource for the historian researching early USN aircraft.

Some years ago, the Naval History and Heritage Command scanned and posted the Aircraft Record cards for the first

of military aircraft in that era; three of the 10 Tommys were written off by June. The description of A3243's condition was repeated almost verbatim on several other cards.

The caption accompanying the photo indicates that it was received by the Marine Corps Recruiting Publicity Bureau on June 25, 1918, but it could've been taken weeks or months previously. The insignia design, the first for U.S. military aircraft, was approved in May 1917, just after America's entry into World War I. Prior to that, there had been no official national insignia.

But officers in Europe quickly recommended a change

(Photo: NARA 165-WW-20C-1)



3,000-plus "A" series USN serial numbers. These and microfilm images of subsequent serial number series cards are now held by the National Museum of Naval Aviation at Pensacola.

A3243 was one of a batch of 10 Army-contracted S-4B aircraft furnished to the Marines. Between March 23-29, 1918, all ten shipped from the factory to the Marine Flying Field at Miami, Fla., on the grounds of what had been the prewar Curtiss flying school.

The flip side of the Record Card, labeled Trouble Reports, gives a brief history of the service life of each airplane. A3243 was in sad shape: "Longerons soaked with oil – warped and cracked; fuselage out of alignment; landing gear fittings worn out; wires crystalized and slipping where soldered to fitting. Long usage. Recommend that this plane be stricken from the Navy list."

It was, on December 5, 1918. But she was the last to go, having survived far longer than any of the others. Collectively, their Record Cards illustrate the extremely short lifespan typical

to the tricolored roundels carried by French and British aircraft, differentiated by the sequencing of the colors. This new insignia was adopted in January 1918. Although A3243 was delivered in May, the wings may have been fabricated and painted before the change took effect. Aircraft operating in the Zone of the Interior (i.e., the U.S.), could be seen with the original star insignia well into 1918. (cont. below)

AIRCRAFT RECORD									
Des. No. A-	3243	Req.	CR 286	S. E.	653	Bu-	18	Des. No. A-	
Contract No.		Contractor	Thomas - Morse Air. Corp.	Type	Speed Scout, Airplane,	Address	Ithaca, S.C.	Order	20047.
Model	S4-B	Motor	Gnome	H. P.	100	Inspector	Richardson.		
PRODUCTION RECORD									
10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	65%	70%	75%	80%
85%	90%	95%	100%	F. O. B.					
Op. Air	Date	Wire	S. Order	Shipped	5/26/18	Miami			
Accessories Lacking at Shipment				Bureau Advised	Accessories Supplied				
Total Flying Time				Hours	Minutes	Stricken from Navy List			
				12/5/18					





(USN NH-60989)

**The Navy's S-5.** With the U.S. entrance into the World War, the armed services looked for airplanes where they could be found, and the handful of American manufactures looked to land a share of the sudden onslaught of procurements.

In late 1917 Thomas-Morse had demonstrated the S-4 to both the Army and Navy, including a version of the S-4B equipped with floats called the S-5. Catapulted from battleships or cruisers, they would serve as scouts for the fleet.

The Navy ordered a batch of six, serials A-757 to 762, for evaluation. Taken from an Army order, five of these were delivered to NAS Miami in April 1918, but the Aircraft Record card for A-758 shows a date of December 20, 1917.

The Navy birds apparently performed well, but with the decision not to proceed with the float scout program, they were

bequeathed to the Marines. The card for A-758 told the story:

"This plane was transferred from the Naval Air Station to this post and was remodeled into a land plane and plane was in very bad condition when received, and was used for several hours on this post, and is considered unsafe for further use."

Five of the six are shown as being transferred on June 15, 1918, A-761 having been reduced to a "total wreck" when the pilot "failed to get out of a tail spin." The pilot's fate was not noted.

A-757 and 759 were written off in October, which probably spelled the end of USMC operations with the Tommy, at least in Miami. With the signing of the armistice of November 11, 1918, the Marines hastened to scrap these worn out machines. By mid-December they were gone. ➔



(NARA 165-WW-20C-1)



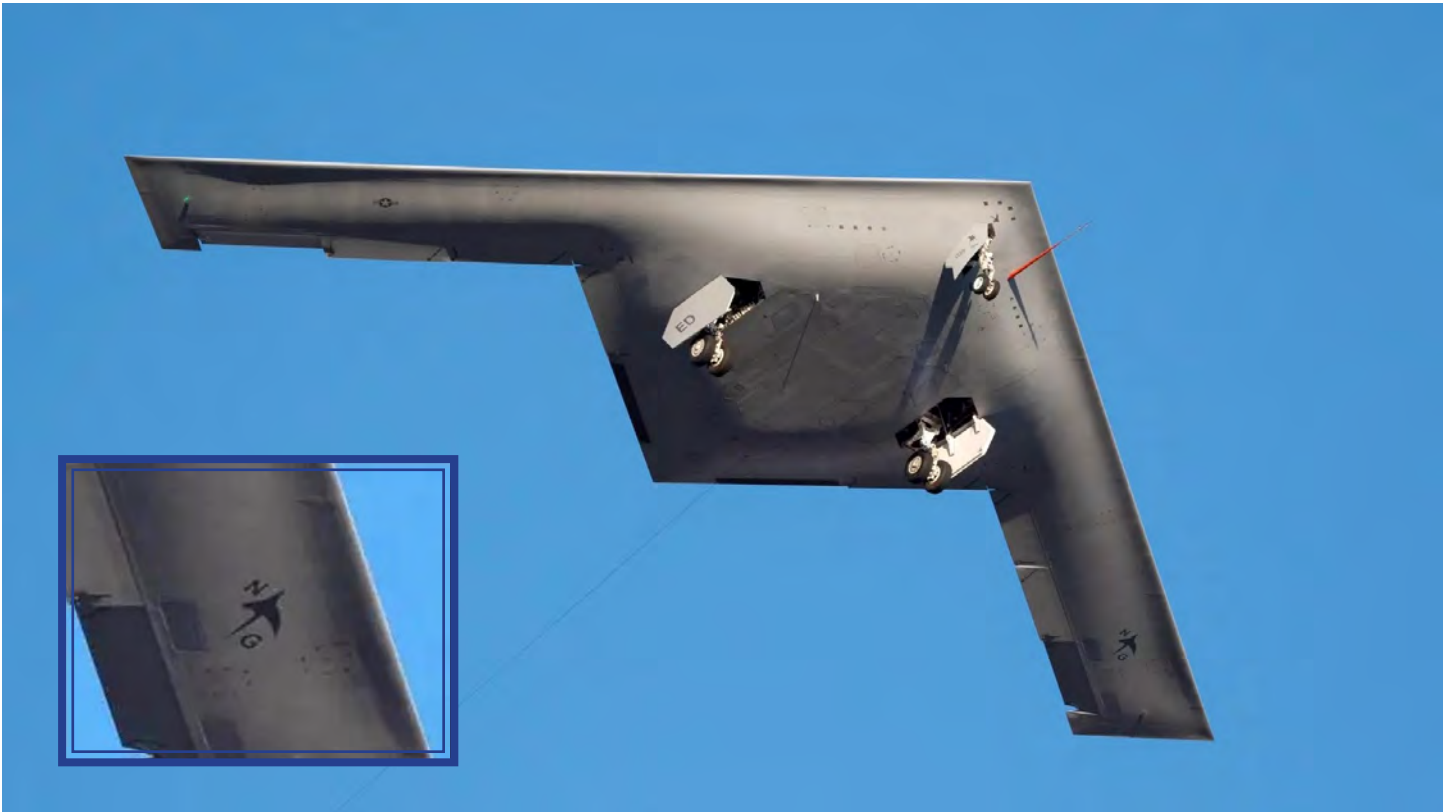
(NARA 165-WW-20C-2)

*Two-gun Tommy. These photos, undated but probably taken moments apart some time in 1918, show an S-4C fitted with a pair of .30 caliber Marlin machine guns. Insignia is visible on both upper and lower wings, but no serial number.*

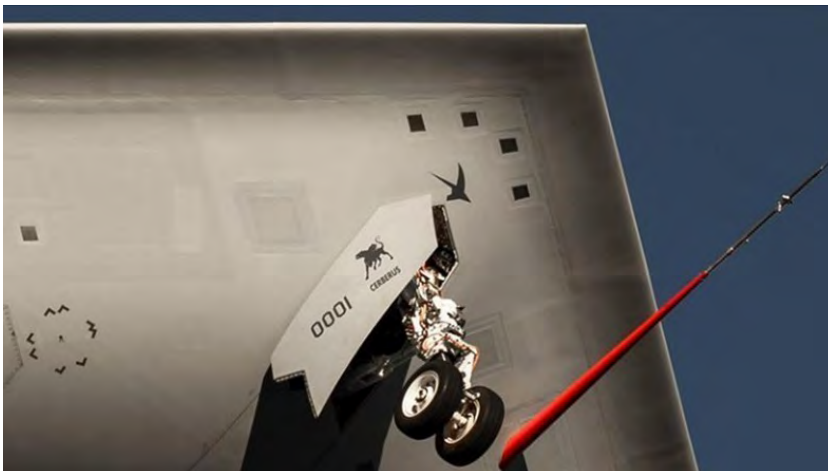
## USAF Begins B-21 Flight Testing

On November 10, Northrop Grumman's B-21 Raider, named in honor of the Doolittle raiders of WWII fame, took off from Air Force Plant 42 at Palmdale, Calif., 34 years after its predecessor, the B-2 Spirit, made its inaugural flight from the same runway.

The B-21 flight, lasting about an hour and 40 minutes, ended at Edwards AFB, where flight testing will commence under the management of the Air Force Test Center and the 412th Test Wing's B-21 Combined Test Force.



(Above) The needle-like shadow near the nose is cast by the red air data probe. Barely visible here but shown quite clearly at full resolution is the trailing wire attached to another instrumentation module. Edwards AFB's "ED" code is evident on the main gear doors. The image beneath the left wing [inset] and just forward of the nose gear well appears to be the old Northrop Corp. Speedbird with a B-21 wing tacked on to the opposite side. (Photo: [www.thedrive/the-war-zone.com](http://www.thedrive/the-war-zone.com))



(Above) The numbers 0001 likely represent aircraft No. 1 rather than a legitimate USAF serial number. The name Ceberus, mythological "hound of hades," can be seen, accompanied by an image of the multi-headed guardian of the gates of the underworld.

The Northrop familial resemblance to the B-2 is unmistakable, and while most details remain classified, a recent analysis by *Aviation Week and Space Technology* suggests a number of differences.

The B-21 appears to be significantly smaller, with a wingspan about 40 feet shorter than that of the B-2, with only a single "notch" in the trailing edge. Serpentine inlet/exhaust ducting for the two Pratt & Whitney PW9000 engines (vs. 4 engines in the B-2) is another stealth-enhancing feature. Empty weight is estimated to be about half that of the older bomber.

Designed to operate in either manned or unmanned mode, the B-21 will of course be nuclear capable and "be able to employ a broad mix of stand-off and direct-attack munitions." These will presumably include hypersonic vehicles once they become available. ➔



Meanwhile, Edwards welcomes another tenant, Boeing's T-7A Red Hawk trainer, slated to replace the 1950s era Northrop T-38 Talon as the Air Force's next generation advanced trainer. The Red Hawk moniker honors the "red tail" P-51 Mustangs flown by the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II fame.



*Maj. Bryce Turner compares a WWII AAF emblem with the 416th Flight Test Squadron's A-7A patch*

There's a deeper Tuskegee connection. Maj. Bryce Turner, a test pilot with the 416th Flight Test Squadron, became the first USAF pilot to fly the T-7 with a test hop at Boeing's St. Louis, Mo., plant. Turner follows in the footsteps of his grandfather, Lt. Col. (Ret.) Alexander Parker Turner, one of the first African American jet pilots in 1956, and his father, Col. (Ret.) Bryan Turner, the first African American F-22 pilot.



*T-7A marked 21-7002 over Edwards AFB*

According to the Air Force program manager, "the T-7A Red Hawk is a game changer, providing advanced mission systems, a glass touchscreen cockpit, stadium seating, and embedded training capability." Despite much ballyhooed advances in digital design, the program has fallen behind schedule. Deliveries likely won't begin for two more years. ➔

Airlines and airliners don't get much play in *FlightLine*, mainly because your editor, aside from being a fairly frequent flyer over the past 40 years or so, doesn't know much about either. (But if *you* know, by all means share with us!)



*John Proctor snapped this shot of N563PE at Phoenix Sky Harbor (PHX) back in 1984.*

Historically, Southwest Airlines has gone all-in with a 737 fleet, so the image above raised an eyebrow. A Southwest 727 was rare, but it was there—briefly. Simple Flying's article tells the whole story. Access it [here](#).



As CEO Jerri notes in her message, AAHS banked some bucks thanks to the sale of several exquisitely crafted large-scale models donated by the estate of the late Larry Klingberg.

You really need to view these gems up close and personal to appreciate the skill and workmanship that went into each one. No. 205 contains an article on Larry and his models, but the pix don't do justice to the real deal. ➔



*One of Larry's models has a new home at California Baptist University. We can't identify the aircraft type. Can you?*



Questions ?

Comments ?

Squawks ?



[Flightline@aahs-online.org](mailto:Flightline@aahs-online.org)



## Wants & Disposals

Doug Slowiak, long time aviation photographer and AAHS member (#7025) has a couple of requests. Let's go with this one first: Lockheed T-33A, USAF Serial number 52-9367.

### *Where is this jet?*

Official records show it "dropped from the air force inventory for transfer to museum status, Feb 1963." Last service was with the 801st Air Division, Lockbourne AFB, Ohio (later renamed Rickenbacker ANGB.) Two color slides taken in the summer of 1963 show 367 in place at an American Legion Post 31X (last digit not visible), assumed to be near Lockbourne AFB. So, where was (or is) the Legion Post and what happened to the T-bird?

If you know, ping us at [FlightLine@aahs-online.org](mailto:FlightLine@aahs-online.org), or contact Doug directly at [vortexphoto@aol.com](mailto:vortexphoto@aol.com). Doug is always looking to diversify his extensive collection of aircraft photos. See the "wants" section in the opposite column. →



✧ ✧ ✧

Need something to complete your aviation history project, or looking to downsize a bit? AAHS can help. Drop us a note describing your needs. We'll post in the next *FlightLine*.

### **Moving, or changing email address?**

Be sure to let us know: [membership@aahs-online.org](mailto:membership@aahs-online.org)

**Wanted:** Color slides and b&w negs of aircraft of all services taken in MASDC, pre-1980. Arrivals, RIT drop area, skeletons . . . Have quality slides and negs to trade.

Douglas E. Slowiak  
PO Box 42133  
Mesa, Arizona 85274-2133  
USA



Top: F-102s, 08 Apr 71. Middle: The rare AMC Gremlin-Hustler, Apr 71. Bottom: A-26A (64-17678), 27 Nov 74. All photos taken at MASDC by Doug Slowiak.



# Pacific Air Show 2023

Huntington Beach, California

Beachfront humidity makes a high speed pass even more spectacular! Vortices are visible everywhere.  
Thanks to John Martin for capturing the F-35 and F-22 solo performers going through their paces.



# “Just one more thing . . . .”



Like detective Columbo from bygone TV days, there are cases that can only be solved by checking just one more detail.

In this issue, we're on a roll with “what's the story behind that airplane photo?” In *FlightLine* No. 206, we ran the second part of an article on researching an historic aviation event, in that instance the 1942 “Doolittle Raid” launched from the USS *Hornet*. For that investigation, we focused on the (U.S.) National Archives website as a research tool.

Every so often we meander around the archives website with no particular objective in mind, just to see what turns up. The undated caption for the photo below, which was evidently taken through a porthole, reads “Daily Calisthenics on Flight Deck of the USS Yorktown.”

But the most obvious objects are a pair of F6F-3 Hellcats, sporting the short-lived (June 28 to Sept. 14, 1943) red-outlined “stars and bars” U.S. national insignia. (See p.8 for a note on the original 1917 insignia.)



(NARA/USN 80-G-K-14754)

The angled line on the vertical stabilizer is a well-known identifier of the Yorktown (CV-10) air group. The Hellcats almost certainly belonged to VF-5, the fighter squadron aboard her in 1943. Exactly when the photo was taken is harder to determine.

We already knew that the Hellcat made its combat debut in the Marcus Island raid of August 31, 1942, carried out by a

carrier task force centered around the *Yorktown*, *Essex*, and the light carrier *Independence*.

Photos of Hellcats taken during the Marcus strike are scarce, but this oft-published shot of Air Group Five's C.O., Lt. Cdr. “Jimmy” Flatley, in his “Double Zero” shows a much more worn aircraft than those two in the deck shot. There is evidence of retouched paint, and the fuselage insignia is much smaller. That leads us to think the color photo was taken at a later date.



(USN Photo)

The change to the all blue insignia became official as of September 15, but it obviously took time to remark the aircraft carrying the red outlined version—if it was done at all.

Another b&w USN photo (80-G-473512, not illustrated), looking from a different angle what must be the same calisthenics drill as our color subject, shows F6F #38 with the same large red-border insignia, “created ca. October 1943.”



(NARA/USN 80-G-471196, Cropped)

A little more investigation found the above view from the USS *Lexington* (CV-16), labeled as being snapped on Nov. 26, 1943. That would've been at the conclusion of Operation GALVANIC, the occupation of the Gilbert Islands (Tarawa, et. al.) The *Lex*, with *Yorktown* (flagship) and *Cowpens* (CVL-25) furnished air support for the operation.

Conclusion: Photographic evidence indicates that the red-outlined insignia was probably carried until early 1944, and perhaps beyond for some non-combat types. We can't pin it down precisely, but the aforementioned October 1943 timeframe is our best guess for the color image. →



In looking forward to 2024, we'd like to recognize a trio of readers who contributed material for *FlightLine* during 2023. For No. 209 Tom Butz shared his adventures with the then-secret M-21 drones. Tom Palshaw furnished the pix and info for the article on the New England Air Museum's Gee Bee clone (No. 209), and Steve Johnston is an ongoing source for Golden Age aircraft and models. **Thanks Guys!**



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