

June 2026



*Corey J Beitler's*

# *"Distelfink Airlines"*

*An Online Aviation Newsletter*

## **World War II Weekend "Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot"**



*Boeing 737-800*

*Commemorative Air Force Aircraft Trading Card Set*

*Hobby Master 1:48 Scale BAE Systems Hawk T.1A*

*Aviation Specialties Unlimited Challenger III*

*Boeing P-26A Peashooter*

*An Allegiant Air Special Livery A320 Visits Allentown*

*The Bell P-63 Kingcobra "TEST/Miss Betty" operated by the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia has its engine run during the annual "Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot" held as part of the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend event on the evening of Saturday, June 6th.*

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

### WWII Weekend Night Shoot, CAF Trading Cards, Tucker's Biplane, P-26 Peashooter

Greetings Everyone:

Welcome to the June edition of "Distelfink Airlines"! Now that June is here, the summer airshow season is in full swing in the region of the United States where I live. There will be several airshows and aviation events coming up in the weeks ahead that I plan to cover and feature in the newsletter. Keep checking out "Distelfink Airlines" throughout the summer for coverage of many regional airshows and aviation events.

The featured content for the June edition is a hot-off-the-press article and photos about the sixth annual "Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot" held recently at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. This special photo shoot, part of the Photo Experience Package offered by the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum for World War II Weekend, provides a limited number of professional photographers the opportunity to photograph three aircraft with their engines running at night and under professional lighting. The event was a complete success, and the photographers in attendance captured many stunning images of the aircraft at night. Additional coverage of World War II Weekend will be featured in the July edition of "Distelfink Airlines" as well.

Also in this edition is a look at a set of trading cards currently being sent out in a fundraising packet by the Commemorative Air Force. The set of trading cards is featured in the "Aviation Memorabilia" section of the newsletter. The Commemorative Air Force (CAF) is a nonprofit organization that preserves and shows historical aircraft at airshows in the United States and Canada. Some of the organization's aircraft also tour the country each year, visiting various cities so more people get to see them and have the opportunity to purchase rides in them. This fun set of trading cards features five of the most famous aircraft in the CAF fleet that make appearances on nationwide tours and at airshows throughout the country.

The "Museum Aircraft Spotlight" section this month features the Aviation Specialties Unlimited Challenger III. Airshow fans know this aircraft as the machine flown by aerobatic pilot and airshow performer Sean D. Tucker during the final years of his airshow career. Tucker was one of the most popular performers in the United States, and his Challenger III biplane, with its bright orange paint scheme and Oracle sponsorship, was one of the most well-known aircraft on the airshow circuit. After Tucker retired from airshows in 2018, he donated the Challenger III to the National Air and Space Museum. Today it hangs on display in the museum's flagship location in Washington, D.C.

The "Aircraft of Special Interest" section features a classic Inter-War fighter, the Boeing P-26 Peashooter. The Peashooter was a blend of new and old design features, with modern elements such as a monoplane configuration, but also featuring more conservative elements such as braced wings and an open cockpit. The P-26 Peashooter remains one of the most iconic American fighter aircraft of the 1930s, and remains a popular subject for aviation artists and modelers.

Thank you again for supporting my aviation photojournalism efforts and "Distelfink Airlines" this year. Please feel free to share the newsletter with whoever you wish and invite them to join the newsletter's official social media pages listed below.

Regards,

-Corey

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### **An Allegiant Air Special Livery A320 Visits Allentown**

*This Airbus A320, one of only six in the Allegiant Air fleet that wears a special livery, has made several recent visits to the Lehigh Valley International Airport in Allentown, Pennsylvania.*

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# Boeing 737-800



*A Boeing 737-800 operated by Sun Country Airlines arrives at the Lehigh Valley International Airport after a charter flight from the Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport in Louisville, Kentucky. Based at the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport, Sun Country Airlines is an ultra-low-cost airline that flies to 140 destinations in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Allegiant Travel Company recently acquired the airline and plans to fold all operations into the Allegiant Air brand.*

The Boeing 737-800 is a variant of the Boeing 737 Next Generation, commonly abbreviated as 737NG or 737 Next Gen, a twin-engine narrow-body airliner produced by Boeing Commercial Airplanes. Launched in 1993, the Boeing 737 Next Generation is the third-generation derivative of the Boeing 737 and an upgrade from the 737 Classic (-300/-400/-500) series. In production since 1997, the Boeing 737 Next Generation includes four civilian variants (-600/-700/-800/-900) and several specialized variants for military operators. Production of the civilian variants of the Boeing 737 Next Generation ended in 2020 in favor of the fourth-generation 737 MAX.

In the 1990s, United Airlines, a regular Boeing customer, stunned the airline industry by signing a lease deal for Airbus A320 aircraft with fly-by-wire controls. The decision prompted Boeing to update the slower, shorter-range 737 Classic series into more efficient, longer-range variants. Boeing began updating the 737 Classic design in 1991 and, after collaborating with potential customers, launched the 737 Next Generation program in 1993. Compared to the previous 737 Classic series, the 737 Next Generation introduced several design changes. The redesigned wing featured a thinner airfoil section, a greater chord, and increased span. Winglets were also available on most variants. The 737 Next Generation also introduced more fuel-efficient and quieter CFM International CFM56-7B turbofan engines. The 737 Next Generation also featured an updated flight deck with improved avionics and a glass cockpit. Lastly, the passenger cabin was redesigned and received interior updates, including larger overhead bins, more curved surfaces, and LED mood lighting on later-built 737 Next Generation aircraft. The first Boeing 737 Next Generation series aircraft entered service in 1997. As of March 2026, over 7,100 Boeing 737 Next Generation aircraft have been built and delivered to customers worldwide. The 737-800 is the best-selling variant of the Next Generation series, with over 5,200 examples sold by Boeing to civilian, military, and corporate operators.

The 737-800 typically seats 160 passengers in a two-class layout or 175 passengers in a single-class layout and is powered by two CFM56-7B turbofan engines. In typical operations, the 737-800 cruises at a ceiling of 41,000 feet (12,497 m), at a cruising speed of 520 miles per hour (837 km/h; 452 kn). The aircraft has a range of 3,368 miles (2,927 nmi; 5,421 km), and a maximum takeoff weight (MTOW) of 174,200 pounds (79,016 kg).





# Commemorative Air Force Aircraft Trading Card Set



*The Commemorative Air Force (CAF) has recently sent this set of trading cards to select households as part of a mail fundraising campaign. The cards feature five well-known restored World War II aircraft from the organization's fleet. These aircraft frequently make appearances at airshows and aviation events throughout the United States, connecting thousands of people with World War II aviation each year.*

The Commemorative Air Force (CAF), formerly called the Confederate Air Force, is an American nonprofit organization based in Dallas, Texas. The organization preserves and shows historical aircraft at airshows, primarily in the United States and Canada, and has the world's largest collection of airworthy World War II aircraft. The CAF has about 13,000 members, more than 70 regional chapters in 27 states and five countries, and operates more than 170 aircraft. The CAF is an all-volunteer organization and consists of members from all backgrounds. Several hundred members of the CAF actively serve the organization as pilots and flight and/or maintenance crews. These members fly the CAF aircraft at airshows and keep them maintained in airworthy condition.

As a nonprofit organization, the CAF is constantly raising funds to help fund the substantial costs of flying and maintaining its World War II aircraft collection. The organization raises funds for these efforts by selling merchandise at airshows and aviation events, and offering experience flights in some of its aircraft. Aviation industry partners sometimes donate supplies or their services, such as aircraft painting, to the CAF to help them keep their aircraft flying. In addition to these efforts, the CAF regularly conducts fundraising campaigns to help maintain its aircraft fleet. Some of these fundraising programs focus on developing partnerships with corporate and wealthy donors, while others encourage monetary donations from the general public.

Recently, the organization sent a fundraising campaign to selected households through the mail. The fundraising package included a letter detailing the CAF's important mission, free address labels, and a set of five trading cards featuring well-known aircraft from the CAF fleet. The CAF aircraft featured on the trading cards include the Boeing B-29 Superfortress "Fifi", the Goodyear FG-1D Corsair, the Consolidated B-24 Liberator "Diamond Lil", the Douglas C-47 Skytrain "That's All Brother", and the North American P-51D Mustang "Gunfighter". The colorful cards each feature a picture of the airplane and its name on the front, and information about the airplane on the back. These trading cards complement others that the CAF has offered in the past, featuring different aircraft.

These fun cards are an excellent way to educate the general public about the CAF's important mission and are a fun piece of aviation memorabilia. Hopefully, this trading card set will convince people to contribute to the organization and help fund its substantial costs in flying and maintaining its historical fleet of World War II aircraft.





The back of each card features the name of the aircraft pictured and a brief paragraph that chronicles notable missions the type flew during World War II. Specifications of each aircraft, such as its dimensions, performance, and armament, are also included on the back of each card.



The new trading cards complement previous ones released by the CAF, which featured other aircraft in its fleet. In addition to being mailed as part of fundraising campaigns, these trading cards are sometimes handed out by CAF members when the organization's aircraft appear at airshows and aviation events.



# Hobby Master 1:48 Scale BAE Systems Hawk T.1A



*This excellent, highly detailed die-cast model of a BAE Systems Hawk T.1A is a new release from Hobby Master as part of their 1:48 scale Air Power Series die-cast military aircraft models. The model replicates a Hawk T.1A assigned to the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, the “Red Arrows”, during the 2025 airshow season.*

The BAE Systems Hawk is a British single-engine, subsonic, jet-powered advanced training aircraft. It was first known as the Hawker Siddeley Hawk and subsequently produced by its successor companies British Aerospace and BAE Systems. It has been used as a training aircraft and as a low-cost combat aircraft by the Royal Air Force (RAF), Royal Navy, and several foreign military operators. A strengthened carrier-capable variant of the Hawk, the T-45 Goshawk, is used by the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps for aircraft carrier training. Notably, the Hawk is the aircraft flown by the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, the “Red Arrows”, as their demonstration aircraft since 1979.

The Hawk’s design origins began in 1964 when the RAF issued a requirement for a new fast jet training aircraft to replace the Folland Gnat. Initially, it was planned to use the SEPECAT Jaguar in this role, but it quickly became apparent that the Jaguar was too complex for this purpose, and only small numbers of two-seat Jaguars were ordered. In 1968, Hawker Siddeley began studies to design a simpler aircraft to fill the requirement. The

project began as a private venture with the anticipation that the RAF would eventually be interested in such an aircraft and place a production order. From the initial planning studies, the Hawk was designed as an advanced two-seat trainer with a tandem cockpit, a low-mounted cantilever wing, and powered by a single turbofan engine. Ralph Hooper led the team of Hawker Siddeley personnel that designed the Hawk.

The Hawk’s design featured an aluminum alloy fuselage of conventional string-frame construction. The fuselage design included a height differential between the two cockpit seats. This layout was chosen to provide the instructor with generous visibility from the rear cockpit. Each cockpit was fitted with a Martin-Baker Mk 10B zero-zero rocket-assisted ejection seat. The rear of the fuselage featured the Hawk’s Rolls-Royce Turbomeca Adour turbofan engine, which drew air from two intakes on each of the forward wing roots. Hawker Siddeley worked closely with Rolls-Royce while designing the Hawk to maximize the engine’s fuel consumption and reliability.



During its development, a variant of the Hawk was designed as a single-seat light fighter and attack aircraft. Hawker Siddeley felt a combat-capable variant of the Hawk would increase export interest in the aircraft. On the single-seat models, the front cockpit is replaced with an electronics bay for avionics and onboard systems, such as a fire control system, multi-mode radar, laser rangefinder, and forward-looking infrared (FLIR). The Hawk was designed with a centerline hardpoint to carry a gun pod, such as the 30 mm ADEN cannon, and two weapons hardpoints under the wings for missiles, bombs, or other external weapons stores.

The Hawk received praise for maneuverability, particularly its roll rate and turning radius. The airframe is strong and stressed for +9 G. A dual hydraulic system powers the Hawk's flaps, airbrakes, landing gear, and flight controls. A ram air turbine was fitted to the front of the single tail fin to provide backup hydraulic power in the event of an engine failure. The Hawk can reach speeds of Mach 0.84 (639 mph; 1,028 km/h; 555 kn) in level flight and Mach 1.15 (882 mph; 1,420 km/h; 767 kn) in a dive, allowing student pilots to experience transonic flight before moving into supersonic aircraft.

Throughout the Hawk's development, the program re-

mained on time and on budget. The prototype Hawk flew for the first time on August 21, 1974. The prototype of the Hawk 50, the first variant of the Hawk designed for export, flew on May 17, 1976. The Hawk entered service with the RAF in 1976, replacing the Hawker Hunter and Folland Gnat in the advanced training and weapons training roles. The T.1 was the first variant of the Hawk used by the RAF. In 1979, the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, the "Red Arrows", transitioned to the Hawk as their demonstration aircraft after previously flying the Folland Gnat.

From 1983 to 1986, some Hawks were equipped as short-range interceptor aircraft. The RAF modified 88 Hawk T.1s to carry a pair of AIM-9 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles on underwing pylons and a 30 mm ADEN cannon in a centerline pod. These Hawks were designated T.1As. In a wartime scenario, these Hawks would have worked with the RAF's Panavia Tornado F.3 interceptors, which would have used their advanced radar and navigation systems to vector Hawks to attack enemy targets. In later years, the RAF began using the T.1 and T.1A Hawks as target towing aircraft in addition to training roles. The Royal Navy also operated some Hawk T.1As in a support role.



*The 1:48 scale BAE Systems Hawk T.1A model is another example of Hobby Master's outstanding quality. The model features an accurate paint scheme and markings. The Hawk T.1A model also features interchangeable landing gear parts, allowing the model to be displayed with its landing gear extended or retracted. Figures for the cockpit painted in the colors of the flight suits worn by the "Red Arrows" pilots and maintenance personnel are a nice additional detail on the model.*





*Hobby Master's 1:48 scale BAE Systems Hawk T.1A comes with a plastic stand. This stand can be used to display the model on a bookshelf or desk. This display stand consists of three separate pieces that snap together before the model can be displayed on the stand. Unfortunately, this plastic display stand is one of the model's few shortcomings. The display stand does not support the model's weight effectively, and the top piece can flex forward when the model is on it.*

In addition to the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy, numerous other air arms operated the Hawk as advanced training or low-cost combat aircraft. The Hawk was one of the huge success stories of the British military aviation industry. Current foreign operators of the Hawk include Australia, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Finland, India, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Indonesia, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, and Zimbabwe. A strengthened, carrier-capable derivative of the Hawk, the T-45 Goshawk, is operated by the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps for aircraft carrier flight training.

Over 1,000 Hawks have been built since production began in 1974. Licensed production of the Hawk continues in India by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited for the Indian Air Force. During its production run, numerous upgraded variants of the Hawk have been built, primarily for export. These variants featured upgraded avionics and weapons systems, more powerful engines, updated glass cockpits, and new wings, front and center fuselage sections, and tail structures. These newer Hawk variants are more combat-capable and structurally stronger than earlier production variants. The T.2 is an updated variant of the Hawk operated by the RAF, and is based on the Hawk 128 export variant.

Unfortunately, structural fatigue and lack of spare engines and parts led the RAF to retire all T.1 and T.1A aircraft from its inventory in 2022. The only exception is the T.1As Hawk fleet operated by the “Red Arrows”, which will remain in service until 2030. The RAF and the “Red Arrows” are currently searching for a replacement for the team once the Hawks are retired. Canada retired its fleet of Hawk 115s, designated CT-155s, in 2024. Finland has also retired over half of its Hawk fleet due to structural fatigue problems. Most foreign air arms operate newer variants of the Hawk, which have improved structures designed for a fatigue life four times longer than that of the earlier variants. It is expected these newer Hawks will remain in service for the foreseeable future.

This 1:48-scale, die-cast model of a BAE Systems Hawk T.1A is manufactured by Hobby Master and is part of their 1:48-scale Air Power Series of ready-made, die-cast military model aircraft. This model represents a T.1A Hawk operated by the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, the “Red Arrows”, during the 2025 airshow season. Similar to other Hobby Master 1:48-scale die-cast model aircraft, the Hawk features a high-quality paint finish, accurate markings, and a display stand.



Hobby Master's excellent model of the Hawk T.1A flown by the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, the "Red Arrows", has several positive attributes. The model features interchangeable landing gear parts, allowing collectors to display the model with the landing gear retracted or extended. The model also features interchangeable canopy parts, and it can be displayed with the canopy open or closed. Finally, the model includes cockpit figures. Hobby Master made the figures accurate by painting one of the cockpit figures as one of the team's chief maintenance officers. The maintenance personnel wear blue suits and travel with the team's pilots and aircraft in the rear seats of the Hawks to airshow and display sites. The second figure replicates a pilot wearing one of the team's traditional red flight suits.

Another excellent aspect of this model is its box. Most of Hobby Master's models come in standard blue boxes. For the Red Arrows Hawk T.1A, Hobby Master printed the box and its text in the team's red and white colors. The front of the box also features a profile illustration of the Hawk T.1A aircraft imposed on an RAF roundel. This box adds premium value to this high-quality, limited edition die-cast model.

Although an excellent model, the Hobby Master Hawk

T.1A does have a few shortcomings. The display stand is a disappointment as it is made of plastic, consists of three snap-together pieces, and does not support the model's weight. When displaying the model on its display stand, great care must be taken so that the model does not fall off the stand and break. A one-piece, metal display stand would have been a much sturdier option for this model, which, due to its size, is quite heavy. The interchangeable landing gear parts fit well, but tend to fall off the model if it is being moved or handled.

Hobby Master's new 1:48 scale BAE Systems Hawk T.1A in the colors of the "Red Arrows" is an excellent tribute to the team and its history in these advanced training aircraft. The model is a perfect size for a bookshelf or desk, and its stunning red paint scheme will brighten up any die-cast model airplane collection. The model also features excellent details, including authentic markings, pilot figures for the cockpit, and interchangeable landing gear and cockpit canopy parts to display the model in multiple configurations. With the "Red Arrows" scheduled to transition to a new display aircraft in the near future, this model is a perfect way to honor the airshow team's time in an aircraft that is one of the true success stories of the British aviation industry.



*Hobby Master's 1:48 scale BAE Systems Hawk T.1A looks excellent displayed on a ramp display base. As the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, the "Red Arrows" prepares to transition to a new display aircraft in the next few years, this model is an excellent addition to any airshow enthusiast who follows the team. The model has an authentic paint scheme, excellent details such as interchangeable landing gear and canopy parts, and is the perfect size for display on any desk or bookshelf.*



# ***World War II Weekend "Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot"***



*Offered as part of the Photo Experience Package at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend, this exclusive photography opportunity featured three historic World War II aircraft with their engines running in a night setting that allowed photographers to capture effects such as water reflections, prop blur, and exhaust flames.*

*David W. Brown's 1941 Boeing PT-17 Stearman during the 2026 "Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot" held as part of the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend airshow and living history event. This Stearman has won numerous awards for the quality of its restoration.*





*The Douglas A-26B Invader "Silver Dragon", owned by Vincent Quadrani, was new to the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend this year. As an aircraft visiting the event for the first time, it was only fitting that it was part of the "Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot" opportunity available as part of the Photo Experience Package at the event.*

The Mid-Atlantic Air Museum, based at the Reading Regional Airport in Reading, Pennsylvania, held its 35th annual World War II Weekend living history event and airshow on June 5, 6, and 7. Attended by over 20,000 spectators annually, World War II Weekend captures the essence of these pivotal years in world history with an event that has grown into one of the most popular airshows in the United States, showcasing restored World War II aircraft. The event is also one of the largest living history reenactments in the nation, featuring hundreds of restored military vehicles and over 1,500 reenactors portraying all aspects of life during the war. World War II Weekend also features live entertainment appropriate to the era, special guest speakers, information booths for organizations and museums dedicated to preserving World War II history and veterans records, a military collectors flea market, and World War II veterans as distinguished honored guests. Over its history, the World War II Weekend has become known as a living history tribute to the men and women of the "Greatest Generation".

This year, World War II Weekend featured over 30 restored World War II-era fighters, bombers, trainers, and transports. Two aircraft that visited the event for the first time included the Douglas A-26B Invader "Silver Dragon" owned by Vincent Quadrani and the Douglas R4D "Ready 4 Duty" from the Dallas/Fort Worth Wing of the Commemorative Air Force. Returning to the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum for the first time in several years to attend the event was the Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress "Sentimental Journey" from the Commemorative Air Force's Airbase Arizona. "Sentimental Journey" traveled to the event with "Maid in the Shade", a North American B-25J Mitchell also operated by the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Arizona. A crowd favorite, the North American P-51 Mustang "Red Nose" from the Commemorative Air Force's Airbase Georgia, made its annual trip to the event to fly in the daily airshow and give rides to paying aviation enthusiasts. In addition to the daily airshow, World War II Weekend once again featured live entertainment, encampments, battle reenactments, warbird flights, and a military vehicle parade.



For the sixth consecutive year, an exclusive “Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot” was offered on Saturday evening of World War II weekend as part of the Photo Experience package available to professional photographers. The Photo Experience package at World War II Weekend includes the “Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot” on Saturday evening, a sunset photo shoot of aircraft on the airshow hot ramp on Friday evening, a Saturday sunrise photo shoot featuring living history reenactors posing with one of the historic warbirds in attendance, and access to a “Photo Pit” on the other side of the airport property where lighting conditions are better to photograph the afternoon airshow each day. The Photo Experience Package sells out early each year. The funds raised from the sale of the Photo Experience Packages go directly to the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum, helping the museum cover the costs of holding World War II Weekend and supporting its daily operations and aircraft restoration efforts.

The “Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot” is held under

the guidance of World War II Weekend Media Coordinator Nick Chismar. Chismar is assisted in his Media Coordinator roles by Dave and Christina Brown, Jason Smith, and Jeff Hunt, who help by escorting the photographer on the airshow hot ramp, manning the media gate during the event, and staffing the photo pit on the other side of the airport grounds.

Peter Lerro from Lerro Photography provides the lighting equipment for the “Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot”. Lerro Photography offers several photography workshops and photo shoots throughout the year where photographers can learn new techniques while photographing interesting subjects. Themes that are the focus of Lerro Photography workshop and photo shoot events include locomotives, lighthouses, landscapes, aviation museums, and living history events. Lerro Photography has attended World War II Weekend for many years, and Pete Lerro and his fellow photographers can often be seen throughout the weekend staging photo opportunities with reenactors and historic vehicles around the event grounds.



*On the way out to the hot ramp for the “Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot”, photographers had the opportunity to walk past the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress “Sentimental Journey”. This year marked the first time in many years that a B-17 Flying Fortress has visited the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum’s World War II Weekend.*



*“Sentimental Journey” is operated by the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Arizona. Each year, the B-17 tours the United States, visiting numerous cities. These tour stops offer visitors with the opportunity to tour the aircraft on the ground and purchase a ride aboard the B-17 Flying Fortress. The visit to the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum’s World War II Weekend was “Sentimental Journey’s” first visit to the museum in several years.*



For this year’s “Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot” event, the three aircraft selected to participate were the Boeing PT-17 Stearman owned by David W. Brown, the Bell P-63 Kingcobra “TEST/Miss Betty” operated by the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia, and the Douglas A-26B Invader “Silver Dragon” owned by Vincent Quadrani. Also supporting the event were the flight line and ramp crew from the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum, who were responsible for moving the aircraft into position for the photo shoot, and Muhlenberg Township Fire & Rescue, which was responsible for wetting down the ramp for light reflection purposes.

Photographers participating in this year’s “Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot” gathered near the museum’s media entrance around sunset. Despite a severe thunderstorm moving through the World War II Weekend event grounds a few hours earlier, conditions cleared, and the photo shoot went on as planned. Once everyone arrived and checked in, the group began moving under escort to the north end

of the airshow hot ramp. Along the way, there was an opportunity to photograph the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress “Sentimental Journey” on the ramp, as the wet ramp from the thunderstorm provided a nice light reflection on “Sentimental Journey’s” natural metal finish. As the group arrived on the ramp, the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum’s flight line and ramp crew began moving each aircraft into position for the photo shoot.

As the event’s starting time drew closer, Pete Lerro and his assistants began setting up the lighting equipment for the shoot. Lerro also handed out some literature promoting his business and upcoming photo shoots and workshops he has scheduled. Lerro also took time to explain the procedures for the photo shoot, stating that each aircraft would have its engine run approximately 10 minutes for photography purposes. Finally, Lerro provided some helpful suggestions to beginner photographers regarding shutter speed, exposure, and ISO settings, ensuring everyone had the opportunity to take quality photographs during the event.





*David W. Brown's beautifully restored 1941 Boeing PT-17 Stearman Kaydet biplane casts a reflection on the wet ramp as it is run during the "Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot" on Saturday evening at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Brown flew warbird rides in the Stearman the entire weekend of the event, taking passengers on a scenic tour of the nearby Berks County area for their rides.*

The first aircraft run during the 2026 "Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot" was the Boeing PT-17 Stearman Kaydet owned by David W. Brown. This aircraft, along with a North American T-6 Texan, are available for rides and scenic tours of Virginia through a company owned by Brown. In addition to flying scenic tours, Brown and his aircraft are available to fly at airshows. Brown has over 48 years of flight experience and 4000 flight hours in Stearman biplanes.

The Stearman is one of the most recognizable classic biplanes and is an icon of American aviation history. One of the most important training aircraft of World War II, the Stearman was used by the U.S. Army Air Corps (later U.S. Army Air Forces), U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Coast Guard. The Royal Canadian Air Force and several other Allied nations operated Stearmans as trainers throughout the war. Although the Stearman was largely retired by the U.S. Armed Forces after World War II, the biplane remained in service in small numbers with many other countries for several years after World War II. The

last military user of the Stearman was the Mexican Air Force, which retired the 35 examples that it operated as training aircraft in 1994.

After World War II, thousands of Stearmans were sold as surplus on the civilian market. Due to the availability of spare parts and engines, many Stearmans were used for a variety of civilian roles, including banner towing, crop dusting, and as sport aircraft. Many Stearmans were modified with more powerful engines to improve their performance and reliability. Engine cowlings and spatted landing gear were also popular modifications for Stearmans, especially those used for airshow work.

Today, the Stearman remains a popular vintage warbird. Many restored examples remain airworthy in private ownership and museum collections, and several are still actively flown as crop dusters and for banner towing duties. A small number are used for aerobatic and wing walking acts at airshows. Brown's Stearman is a beautifully restored example and was a nice addition to the photo shoot.



The second aircraft run for the 2026 “Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot” was the Bell P-63 Kingcobra operated by the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia. The P-63 is just one of several restored aircraft in the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia fleet. Other notable aircraft flown by Airbase Georgia at airshows and aviation events nationwide include the North American P-51 Mustang “Red Nose”, the Douglas SBD-5 Dauntless “Lady In Blue”, and the Goodyear FG-1D Corsair “530”.

The P-63 Kingcobra was a fighter aircraft built by Bell Aircraft during World War II and was a significant redesign of the company’s earlier and flawed Bell P-39 Airacobra. Similar to the P-39, the P-63 had a mid-engine layout, with the engine located behind the pilot. The P-39 and P-63 were also distinctive for having cockpits that the pilot entered through doors similar in design to those found on an automobile.

Despite having a similar look to the P-39 that preceded it, the P-63 was a vastly different and im-

proved aircraft, with a redesigned rear fuselage, a redesigned laminar-flow wing, and a more powerful Allison V-1710 inline engine.

By the time the P-63 Kingcobra was introduced in 1943, the U.S. Army Air Forces considered it surplus to their needs and inferior to the North American P-51 Mustang and Republic P-47 Thunderbolt. As a result, very few P-63s were used operationally in the United States. Those that were saw service as test and evaluation airframes, with some, designated as RP-63A and RP-63C Pinballs, being fitted with special instruments and armor plating and used as manned aerial targets for gunners.

Most of the over 3,300 P-63s built were passed to the Soviet Union under Lend-Lease. The Soviet Union sent personnel over to the United States to help Bell Aircraft improve the P-63 and make it a more capable aircraft. The French Air Force and Honduran Air Force also operated small numbers of P-63 Kingcobras. After World War II, several P-63s were purchased as surplus for use in postwar air races.

*The Bell P-63 Kingcobra “TEST/Miss Betty” has its engine run during the “Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot” on Saturday evening at the 2026 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum’s World War II Weekend. Operated by the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia, this P-63 is one of the few remaining airworthy examples of this type of aircraft in the world. The P-63 is a regular visitor to World War II Weekend and is always a crowd favorite at the event.*



The third and final aircraft run for the “Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot” was the Douglas A-26B Invader “Silver Dragon” owned by Vincent Quadrani. Unlike most restored A-26s, “Silver Dragon” retains most of its original military configuration and equipment.

The A-26 Invader was an American light attack aircraft and bomber built by Douglas Aircraft during World War II. It was designed to replace the A-20 Havoc and entered service in 1944. The A-26 was built in two main production variants: the A-26B, which featured a solid nose fitted with armament combinations of cannons and machine guns, or the A-26C, which featured a glass nose, a bombsight, and was designed for altitude precision bombing.

The A-26 Invader’s combat debut was in the Pacific theater of operations, where it had limited success and was disliked by its crews. For its second combat test, the A-26 was sent to Europe, where it entered service in September 1944. The A-26 was operated alongside the A-20 Havoc until deliveries of the glass-nosed A-26C could meet demand. In the European

theater, the A-26 was operated successfully on strafing and bombing, tactical reconnaissance, and night interdiction missions. The A-26 developed a positive reputation for being fast and capable of carrying a large bomb load. The A-26 played a significant role in the final Allied campaigns in Italy.

Redesignated the B-26 in 1948, the Invader saw service in the Korean War as a bomber, reconnaissance, weather reconnaissance, and night interdiction aircraft. B-26 Invaders are credited with the destruction of 38,500 vehicles, 406 locomotives, and 3,700 railway trucks during the war. A highly modified version of the Invader was operated covertly in Southeast Asia as a counterinsurgency aircraft until 1969.

Invaders sold as surplus in the United States were converted to executive transports and tankers for aerial firefighting. Surplus Invaders were also sold to the air arms of other countries after World War II, including France, Indonesia, Portugal, Brazil, Nicaragua, and Honduras.



*Vincent Quadrani’s Douglas A-26B Invader “Silver Dragon” during the “Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot” held on Saturday evening during the 2026 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum’s World War II Weekend. Unlike most World War II aircraft, the Invader had a long postwar career, serving in the Korean War and as a covert counterinsurgency aircraft in Southeast Asia during the early 1960s.*



*The Douglas A-26B Invader "Silver Dragon" is run during the "Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot" event held on Saturday evening at the 2026 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Although another excellent photo shoot, this photograph highlights one of the minor issues with this year's event. A full ramp meant space for the night photo shoot was limited, and aircraft parked on the ramp were visible behind those being photographed.*



There were a few challenges with this year's "Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot". A common frustration expressed by photographers during the photo shoot is the amount of background lighting from the runway, taxiways, and building lights at this location. In the past, this photo shoot was held at a different location on the grounds, where the background lighting was not as pronounced. Unfortunately, that location was lost due to the construction of a nearby warehouse, which is now lit up at night. Although the new location on the North Ramp is not ideal, it is better than the old location would be now for shooting purposes and is also more secure. Unfortunately, it can be time-consuming for photographers to edit out all of the background lights if they desire to do so.

Another issue this year was that the ramp space for this photo shoot was smaller than in the past due to several large aircraft parked on the hot ramp because they operate ride flights during the daytime portion of WWII Weekend. In some photographs taken during the photo shoot, these aircraft that

were not a part of the photo shoot are visible in the background because of their location on the hot ramp. These parked aircraft made photography during the night shoot challenging for photographers who prefer clean backgrounds in their shots.

Despite minor issues, the sixth "Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot" was a success. Despite a large number of photographers participating, the photo shoot went smoothly. Stunning photographs taken of all three aircraft during the photo shoot have already been published on social media. This event would not have been possible without the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum and the WWII Weekend Media Coordinator, Nick Chismar, setting it up. Special thanks also go to the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum flight line and ramp crew, Pete Lerro from Lerro Photography for all the lighting equipment and execution of the event, Muhlenberg Township Fire & Rescue for providing their services for the water, and David W. Brown, the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia, and Vincent Quadrani for agreeing to participate with their historic warbirds in the event.



# Aviation Specialties Unlimited Challenger III



*The Unlimited Aviation Specialties Challenger III biplane, sometimes known as the Oracle Challenger, hangs on display inside the National Air and Space Museum's flagship location on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. This advanced aerobatic biplane was custom-built for and flown by well-known aerobatic pilot and airshow performer Sean D. Tucker. Tucker flew this aircraft at airshows in the United States from 2010 until his retirement as a performer in 2018.*

From 1976 to 2018, Sean D. Tucker was one of America's most well-known and respected aerobatic pilots and airshow performers. For the last 10 years of his airshow career, Tucker flew the unique Unlimited Aviation Specialties Challenger III, a one-of-a-kind custom biplane built for him by Steve Wolf of Specialty Aero and modified by Tucker's own Aviation Specialties Unlimited team. The Challenger III is considered one of the most advanced aerobatic biplanes ever built.

Sean D. Tucker started his flying career as a crop duster in Central California. Learning aerobatics helped him feel more comfortable in the cockpit. Tucker studied aerobatics with seven-time U.S. and World Aerobatic Champion Leo Loudenslager. He also studied with the legendary World War II, test, and airshow pilot R.A. "Bob" Hoover and airshow pilot Debby Gary. After Tucker won the 1988 Advanced National Aerobatic Championship, he devoted his flying career exclusively to the airshow circuit. Tucker's passion for aviation and flying carried over into efforts to bring young people into the aerospace community. Tucker founded the Tu-

tima Academy aerobatic flight school and co-founded the Bob Hoover Academy, which engaged at-risk teens in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education programs. The legendary aerobatic pilot also chaired the Experimental Aircraft Association's Young Eagles first flight children's program.

A Pitts Special S-1A biplane was Tucker's first airshow aircraft. He later switched to the improved S-1B model. Designed by Curtis Pitts, these small and maneuverable aerobatic biplanes were built around the light, horizontally opposed engines of the 1940s. Earlier aerobatic biplanes were built with heavier radial engines and were much larger and heavier. The S-1A and S-2B were followed by the S-1S, which featured four ailerons and other improvements. In the 1972 World Aerobatic Championships, American pilots swept the event flying the Pitts S-1S. After this event, the Pitts Special S-1S became the aerobatic aircraft of choice for many pilots flying in aerobatic competitions. Today, mastering variants of the Pitts Special is still considered a required part of advanced aerobatic flight training for pilots.



After mastering the Pitts S-1A and S-2B, Tucker wanted an aircraft that was capable of performing even more advanced aerobatic maneuvers for his airshow performances. His next aircraft was a modified Christen Eagle biplane, which he nicknamed the Challenger.

In 2006, Tucker's Pitts S-2S, nicknamed the Challenger II, was destroyed in an accident. While in Louisiana on his way to an airshow in Florida, Tucker took the opportunity to practice his aerobatic routine over an open area. While practicing his routine, Tucker experienced a catastrophic control failure with the aircraft. Tucker was able to maneuver his crippled aircraft over an unpopulated area before bailing out and parachuting to safety. The airplane itself crashed into a farmer's field in Red River Parish near Coushatta, Louisiana.

The loss of the Challenger II forced Sean D. Tucker to fly a backup aircraft, another Pitts Special S-2S, on the airshow circuit for a few seasons. During this time, a new opportunity arose for Tucker's team to build a new aerobatic biplane. This opportunity came from Tucker's mastery of his previous aerobatic aircraft and the

team's desire to build a data-driven biplane design. Renowned aerobatic aircraft builder Steve Wolf was commissioned to build the biplane.

Based on the extensive analysis and testing done by by Tucker's team, the new biplane design would incorporate several major changes. It would feature an improved profile view to present better in competition aerobatic flying. The cockpit was designed to incorporate a reclined seat for G-force tolerance, comfort, and visibility. The new design would also feature an improved fuel system with a removable travel tank.

The new design would also feature some significant structural changes. The biplane would incorporate an airfoil "flying tail" rather than a flat stab style. Several other aerodynamic changes were incorporated into the design to reduce drag. Lastly, the fuselage of the biplane was to be constructed from interconnected steel tubing. Interconnected tubing would allow Tucker's maintenance team to check for fatigue cracks by pressurizing the tubing with nitrogen, rather than looking at every weld with a flashlight.





The new aerobatic biplane, the Wolf Pitts Pro, was delivered to Tucker's friend and fellow aerobatic pilot Wyche Coleman in 2007. Coleman and Tucker had an aerial "drag race" to test the new Wolf Pitts Pro against Tucker's S-2S. The new Wolf Pitts Pro's performance convinced Tucker to commission Steve Wolf to complete a second Wolf Pitts Pro already under construction. This new aircraft would become the Challenger III.

Sean D. Tucker took delivery of the Challenger III in 2010. At the time of its delivery, the Challenger III was the most advanced aerobatic biplane built. The biplane's design drew on modern engineering and real-world experience, and provided a one-of-a-kind single-seat biplane designed for "unlimited" aerobatic flight.

The heart of every aerobatic aircraft is its engine. The Challenger III was equipped with a Lycoming engine that was custom-built for Tucker. This engine was capable of producing over 400 horsepower and featured polished pistons, drag racing pistons, and a cold-air induction system. The engine was enclosed in a streamlined cowling and equipped with a smoke-generating system.

This engine drove a three-blade Hartzell "The Claw" propeller. This propeller is constructed from carbon fiber and Kevlar with an electroformed nickel leading edge and stainless steel shank. The powerful engine and propeller combination of the Challenger III allowed Tucker to perform advanced aerobatic maneuvers with the aircraft, such as "hanging" it on its propeller and "tail sliding" backwards during airshow performances.

The Challenger III also featured advanced control surfaces for an aerobatic biplane. The aircraft featured a "flying tail", consisting of a carbon graphite vertical fin and an aluminum rudder. These robust control surfaces allowed Tucker to perform maneuvers such as sustained knife-edge flight and even fly the Challenger III backwards. The wings of the Challenger III featured eight ailerons and curved wingtips, which provided the aircraft with unprecedented maneuverability. These ailerons gave the Challenger III an impressive roll rate of 400° per second, allowing Tucker to perform his signature maneuver, the "centrifuge", to the delight of airshow crowds throughout the United States.



The Challenger III featured a fuselage constructed of steel tubing with wings made from wooden spars. The fuselage and wings were covered in fabric. A sleek windshield covered the cockpit. The Challenger III was painted bright red and decorated with sponsorship decals, including its main sponsor, Oracle, and smaller associate sponsors. Due to Sean D. Tucker's long relationship with sponsor Oracle, the Challenger III was often called the Oracle Challenger on the airshow circuit.

After the Challenger III debuted on the airshow circuit in 2010, Steve Wolf and Tony Horvath continued their work on the aircraft to improve its performance to meet Tucker's expectations. Aviation Specialties Unlimited team members Tom Dygert, Brian Norris, and Clyde Green disassembled and then rebuilt the Challenger during each airshow off-season. This process ensured proper maintenance, and the aircraft continuously met Tucker's high standards for performance and safety.

Sean D. Tucker flew the Challenger III on the airshow circuit until his retirement in 2018. Tucker was an annual performer at many large airshows in the United

States and a fan favorite among airshow and aviation enthusiasts. At the time of his retirement, Sean D. Tucker had flown in airshows for over 40 years and had performed for more than 125 million people at 800 different airshows nationwide. Tucker had amassed over 26,000 flight hours at the time of his retirement.

Throughout his career, Tucker won numerous awards, including the R.A. "Bob" Hoover Trophy, and nominations to the National Aviation Hall of Fame and the International Council of Airshows Hall of Fame. Recently, Sean D. Tucker was named one of the National Air and Space Museum's 25 Living Legends of Flight.

The Challenger III was donated to the National Air and Space Museum in 2001 by David Ellison. Ellison and Sean D. Tucker were on hand when the airplane was delivered by truck to the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in May of that year. Currently, the Challenger III hangs at the entrance of the new *Thomas W. Haas We All Fly* gallery in the National Air and Space Museum's National Mall flagship location in Washington, D.C.



# Boeing P-26A Peashooter

(1933)



*The Boeing P-26 Peashooter is a single-seat, single-engine, monoplane fighter aircraft that the U.S. Army Air Corps operated from the early 1930s to the early 1940s. The P-26 holds the distinction of being the first American production all-metal fighter aircraft and the first pursuit monoplane to enter service with the U.S. Army Air Corps. The prototype P-26 first flew in 1932, and the type entered squadron service in 1933. Boeing built a total of 151 P-26s in four production variants from 1933 to 1936. Due to the rapid advances in fighter aircraft technology and design made during the 1930s, the P-26 became obsolete soon after entering service. A small number of P-26s remained in service with the U.S. Army Air Corps as late as 1941 in the Philippines, Latin America, and at Pearl Harbor, where they served as hack aircraft.*

## Boeing P-26A Peashooter

**Crew:** 1 (Pilot)

**Length:** 23 ft 7 in (7.19 m)

**Wingspan:** 28 ft (8.5 m)

**Height:** 10 ft (3.0 m)

**Wing Area:** 250 sq ft (23 m<sup>2</sup>)

**Powerplant:** Pratt & Whitney Wasp R-1340-27 nine-cylinder air-cooled radial engine (x 1)

**Range:** 310 nmi (360 mi) (580 km) (Combat Range); 552 nmi (635 mi) (1,022 km) (Ferry Range)

**Cruise Speed:** 200 mph (322 km/h; 174 kn)

**Maximum Speed:** 234 mph (377 km/h; 203 kn)

**Empty/Gross Weights:** 2,196 lb/3,360 lb (996 kg/1,524 kg)

**Service Ceiling:** 27,400 ft (8,400 m)

**Armament:** .30 in (7.62 mm) M1919 Browning machine guns (x2) or .30 in (7.62 mm) (x1) and .50 in (12.7 mm) (x1) machine guns; 100 lb (45 kg) general-purpose bombs (x2) or 31 lb (14 kg) anti-personnel bombs (x5)



# A Classic Inter-War Fighter

## Radio

The P-26 Peashooter was one of the first U.S. Army Air Corps fighter aircraft fitted with a radio. A new and expensive technology, the limited funds available to the U.S. Army Air Corps during the Great Depression meant that only a few of the P-26s built had radios installed. Most of the P-26s equipped with radios were issued only to squadron leaders. As a result, squadron leaders often had to rely on hand signals to communicate with other P-26s in their squadron since these pilots did not have radios in their aircraft.

## Cockpit

The P-26 Peashooter featured an open cockpit, following the tradition of the wood-and-fabric biplane fighters that came before it. A headrest located behind the pilot included a reinforced internal steel roll bar designed to protect the pilot's head and neck if the P-26 flipped over on landing. Initially lower in height, this headrest was raised and reinforced in service after several landing accidents in which the P-26's flipped over on landing and pilots suffered serious injuries. Pilots accessed the cockpit through a fold-down door on the left side of the fuselage.

## Colors

During the 1930s, the U.S. Army Air Corps units adorned their aircraft in colorful squadron markings, making some of them the most colorful military aircraft of the era. Many U.S. Army Air Corps squadrons visited airshows with their colorful aircraft and performed flying demonstrations, capturing the public's imagination and promoting interest in aviation. The P-26 squadrons were no exception. This P-26 is decorated in the markings of an aircraft that flew with the 17th Pursuit Group, 34th Pursuit Squadron, based at March Field, California, in 1935.



## Powerplant

A Pratt & Whitney Wasp R-1340-27 radial engine driving a two-bladed, fixed-pitch propeller powered the P-26A, the most produced variant of the Peashooter. This nine-cylinder, air-cooled radial engine developed 600 horsepower. Two P-26Bs were built with a fuel-injected R-1340-33 engine. Twenty-three examples of a third variant, the P-26C, were built with a carbureted R-1340-27 engine and a modified fuel system. The P-26C variant served as the basis for the Model 281, an export version of the Peashooter built for the Republic of China Air Force.

## Wings & Landing Gear

Despite it being a radical departure from the wood-and-fabric biplanes it replaced in service, the P-26 Peashooter still retained conservative features such as fixed landing gear and externally braced wings. The P-26's wings were braced with high-strength steel wires instead of rigid struts to save weight. Although not initially fitted with them, the P-26's wings were later modified with flaps to help pilots handle the P-26's high landing speed. Although retractable landing gear was becoming standard at the time of the P-26's introduction, Boeing opted for fixed landing gear in streamlined spats on the Peashooter. The U.S. Army Air Corps was concerned that retractable landing gear would be too complex, add too much weight, and be too expensive to install on such a small aircraft.

## Armament

The P-26 Peashooter was armed with a pair of machine guns mounted inside the engine cowlings. These guns were synchronized to fire through the propeller. The guns were either a pair of .30 in (7.62 mm) machine guns or one .30 in (7.62 mm) machine gun and one .50 in (12.7 mm) machine gun. A gunsight was fitted to some P-26s to assist the pilot with aiming the machine guns, but many Peashooters were not equipped with one, as it was an extra expense. The P-26 could also carry bombs on a rack mounted beneath the fuselage between the main landing gear spats. The rack could hold either two 100-pound (45kg) general-purpose bombs or five 31-pound (14kg) anti-personnel bombs.



## **An Allegiant Air Special Livery A320 Visits Allentown**



*This Allegiant Air Airbus A320 features a special livery celebrating Allegiant Air's partnership with Insomniac Events, a premier live experience creator and organizer of the massive Electric Daisy Carnival (EDC) event in Las Vegas. The livery features vibrant colors, the globally recognized Insomniac and EDC branding on each side of the fuselage, and the Insomniac Events logo on the engine cowlings. The A320 has recently visited Lehigh Valley International Airport in Allentown, Pennsylvania, several times as part of its regularly assigned flight schedule.*

Allegiant Air is an American ultra-low-cost airline headquartered in Las Vegas, Nevada. The airline focuses on serving leisure traffic from small and medium-sized cities, which it considers underserved. The airline offers low base fares and makes most of its profits on add-ons in the form of fees. The airline was founded in 1997 and is wholly owned by Allegiant Travel Company. The airline employs over 5,600 people. In recent years, Allegiant Air has expanded, adding new routes and destinations to its network throughout the United States. The airline has also invested significantly in its fleet, buying and ordering new Boeing 737 MAX 200 and MAX 7 aircraft.

One of the airports Allegiant Air serves is the Lehigh Valley International Airport in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Allegiant Air maintains a crew base at the airport and operates flights to 12 vacation and travel destinations nationwide from the airport either seasonally or year-round. Some of the destinations served by Allegiant Air from Allentown, Pennsylvania, include Orlando, Florida, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and Denver, Colorado.

Allegiant Air's expansion to new cities and the addition of new routes at airports have meant that some aircraft in the airline's fleet are being rotated or scheduled on routes and at airports where they are usually not seen, as was the case for the Airbus A320 shown here, which was photographed at the Lehigh Valley International Airport last month. This A320 wears a special, vibrant, and colorful livery dedicated to Insomniac events and the Electric Daisy Carnival (EDC). The livery, which debuted in 2023, celebrates Allegiant's partnership with Insomniac, the world's premier live experience creator and organizer of the massive EDC event in Las Vegas. This Airbus A320 is one of only six in Allegiant's fleet of over 70 A320 aircraft that wears a special livery.

The Airbus A320 is a member of the A320 family of twin-engine, narrow-body airliners developed and built by Airbus. Introduced into service in 1988, the A320 series is the world's best-selling airliner and pioneered the use of side-stick and fly-by-wire flight controls in commercial aircraft. The A320 typically seats 150 passengers in a two-class layout and up to 186 passengers in a single-class layout and is powered by a pair of CFM56-5B or IAE V2500-A5 turbofan engines. In typical operations, the A320 cruises at a ceiling of 39, 100-41,000 feet (11,900-12,497 m), at a cruising speed of 515 miles per hour (829 km/h; 448 kn). The aircraft has a range of 3,860 miles (3,350 nmi; 6,200 km), and a maximum takeoff weight (MTOW) of 172,000 pounds (78,018 kg).







**Distelfink  
Airlines**

Est.  
2013



*My late grandfather, John Brey, and I at the 2007 Geneseo Airshow. This was one of the few times that we had our photo taken together at an airshow.*

## ABOUT

### DISTELFINK AIRLINES

*The story of "Distelfink Airlines" begins in the early 1990s when my late grandfather, John Brey, began building and flying remote control model aircraft in his retirement. He enjoyed the hobby and quickly amassed a large fleet of model airplanes, which filled his garage and woodworking shop. He gave a name to his fleet of aircraft, "Distelfink Airlines". For the symbol of his fleet, he chose the Pennsylvania Dutch/German hex sign featuring the "Distelfink", a colorful bird that is a symbol of good luck and happiness. This hex sign and symbol is very common on Pennsylvania Dutch/German barns in Eastern Pennsylvania and is an important part of our local culture. He had custom "Distelfink" decals made for all his airplanes and had T-shirts made with "Distelfink Airlines" printed on them. It wasn't long before curious people began asking about "Distelfink Airlines" and what it was. My grandfather told anyone who asked that "Distelfink Airlines" was a new startup airline that was going to be offering service between the Lehigh Valley International Airport and Philadelphia International Airport with more routes to come soon.*

*In addition to flying his model airplanes, my grandfather enjoyed attending airshows and we traveled to airshows together for almost 20 years. He also enjoyed local aviation history and was particularly fascinated by the history of the Consolidated TBY Sea Wolf, a torpedo bomber that was built locally in Allentown, Pennsylvania during World War II. He also remembered when famous aviator Amelia Earhart visited the Lehigh Valley in the early 1930s to raise funds for her failed attempt to become the first woman to fly around the world.*

*Established in 2013 in memory of my grandfather, "Distelfink Airlines" is an online aviation newsletter that carries on a tradition of sharing a love for aviation that my grandfather shared with me. This newsletter features photographs and writings on a variety of aviation topics. The logo that was chosen for "Distelfink Airlines" is the hex sign that my grandfather chose for his fleet of remote control model aircraft many years ago. This proud symbol of local Pennsylvania Dutch/German culture is joined by a pair of Consolidated TBY Sea Wolf torpedo bombers, the aircraft that was built locally in Allentown during World War II and is such an important part of our local aviation history. Thank you for reading "Distelfink Airlines" and sharing in the passion for aviation that my grandfather shared with me.*

*"Distelfink Airlines" is an online newsletter featuring the aviation photography and writings of Corey J. Beitler. Contributions from guest photographers and writers are sometimes featured and are used only with prior permission. Public domain and/or copyright free images are utilized for some articles. All text and images are copyright to the original owners and may not be reproduced or reused without permission.*