July 2024

Corey J Beitler's

"Distelfink Airlines"

An Online Aviation Newsletter

Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend

Douglas C-54D Skymaster

Corgi 1/72 Sikorsky SH-3D Sea King 1969 Apollo Recovery

John Jenkins Designs 1/30 Scale SPAD S.XIII

McDonnell Douglas F-4S Phantom II

Boeing C-40B/C

A Photo Shoot In The Black Widow's Web

The WWII Airborne Demonstration Team's Douglas C-49 Skytrooper "Wild Kat" in flight during the 2024 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. This was the first year that the WWII Airborne Demonstration Team brought their C-49 to fly in the event, the organization flew "Wild Kat" to Reading, Pennsylvania, from their home base in Frederick, Oklahoma.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

WWII Weekend, Douglas C-54, Boeing C-40B/C , P-61 Black Widow Photo Shoot

Greetings Everyone:

Welcome to the July edition of "Distelfink Airlines" The summer is here in Pennsylvania and the surrounding region and with it the height of the airshow season for me and my aviation photojournalism efforts. There are a lot of great aviation events upcoming and I also just covered the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend, which was held for the 33rd year this year. It was great to see so many friends and aviation colleagues at this event and shoot with them throughout the weekend.

The featured content for this edition of "Distelfink Airlines" is a photo feature about the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Once again, this event had a great selection of aircraft in attendance, and the photo opportunities at this event are endless. For this newsletter, the coverage in this photo feature is focused on the airshow and flying portions of the event. This is to keep the content manageable on my end and to keep the newsletter an acceptable length for reading. Some more content from the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend may run in a future edition of this newsletter. Once again, this year's edition of World War II Weekend featured a Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot as a premium event for photographers. I wrote an article about this portion of the event for the online aviation magazine Photorecon.net. If you would like to read this article, you can access it at this link: https://photorecon.net/mid-atlantic-air-museum-night-engine-run-photo-shoot/. I want to thank the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum and the World War II Media Coordinators Dave and Christina Brown for allowing me to cover World War II Weekend as credentialed media. It is truly an honor to cover such a unique event that honors our Greatest Generation.

The "Aviation Sightings" section of the newsletter has the Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation's Douglas C-54D Skymaster "Spirit of Freedom" featured for this month. This BAHF and their C-54 have been longtime attendees of the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. This year, I stayed late on Sunday afternoon and had the opportunity to see this rare aircraft depart for home and take several photos of it. It seemed like an opportune time to feature it in the newsletter.

The "Aircraft of Special Interest" section for this month features the Boeing C-40B/C. The C-40B/C is a special VIP transport version of the Boeing 737 used by the U.S. Air Force as a high-priority personnel transport for top U.S. military commanders and government personnel. The C-40 pictured in this section was a recent visitor to the Lehigh Valley International Airport in Allentown, Pennsylvania for some pattern work.

Finally, the "One Last Thing" section has some special photographs. At the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend, the museum had its rare Northrop P-61B Black Widow on display to show the public the progress of the aircraft's restoration. On Saturday at the event, I was able to do a photo shoot with the America's Sweetheart girl group members posing with the P-61B. This was a fun and unique shoot and the highlight of the weekend for me. I want to thank the America's Sweethearts girl group members Joyah Love, Katie Anderson White, and Shaina Vencel for agreeing to do the shoot, and Russ Strine, President of the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum, for giving his approval to allow the shoot to take place.

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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One Last Thing:

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At the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend, the museum's Northrop P-61B Black Widow was joined by the women of the America's Sweethearts girl group for a fun photo shoot.

Douglas C-54D Skymaster

The restored Douglas C-54D Skymaster "Spirit of Freedom" departs the Reading Regional Airport in Reading, Pennsylvania, on Sunday, June 9, following the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Operated by the Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation, this C-54D serves as a flying museum, the main cabin featuring exhibits detailing the history of the Berlin Airlift. The "Spirit of Freedom" visits airshows and aviation events throughout the United States, where the museum inside the aircraft is open for tours.

The Douglas C-54 Skymaster is a four-engine military transport aircraft used by the U.S. Army Air Forces (later the U.S. Air Force) in World War II and the Korean War. The C-54 Skymaster was derived from the Douglas DC-4 commercial airliner. The Douglas C-54 Skymaster was built in several variants for use in a variety of non-combat roles, including air-sea rescue, military research, and the transportation of world leaders and military staff. The C-54 played a pivotal role in the success of the Berlin Airlift, hauling coal and food to West Berlin. A rugged and reliable transport aircraft, the C-54 was used by over 30 military and civilian operators worldwide.

Design of the C-54 Skymaster began in June 1941, when the War Department took over provisional orders for the Douglas DC-4 airliner and allocated the aircraft to the U.S. Army Air Forces, which designated them the C-54 Skymaster. Four auxiliary fuel tanks were installed in the main cabin of these C-54s to meet military requirements for range, reducing passenger capacity to 26. The C-54B variant, introduced in 1944, had integral fuel tanks in the wings, allowing two of the fuel tanks in the cabin to be removed and increasing passenger capacity to 49. The most common variant of the Skymaster was the C-54D, which was fitted with more powerful Pratt & Whitney R-2000-11 engines. Aircraft transferred to the U.S. Navy were designated the R5D.

The C-54 was one of the most commonly used long-range transport aircraft used by the United States during World War II. In 1948-1949, over 300 C-54s and R5Ds formed the backbone of the U.S. contribution to the Berlin Airlift. The C-54 was also the primary airlift aircraft used during the Korean War. The last C-54s in service with the U.S. Air Force were retired in 1972 and the U.S. Navy in 1974. Large numbers of surplus C-54s were sold in the late 1940s, with many converted as airline or air cargo aircraft. Other C-54s were converted for use in civilian firefighting or air tanker roles. Some C-54s operated in these aerial firefighting roles until the 1990s.

The Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation operates this restored C-54D Skymaster, nicknamed "*Spirit of Freedom*". The aircraft serves as a flying museum, with its interior fitted with exhibits chronicling the history of the Berlin Airlift, and visits airshows and other aviation events throughout the United States each year.


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Corgi 1/72 Sikorsky SH-3D Sea King 1969 Apollo Recovery

The die-cast toy and model manufacturer Corgi produced this 1/72 scale diorama set in 2002 as part of their Aviation Archive produce range of die-cast model aircraft. The set features the Sikorsky SH-3D Sea King "Helicopter 66", which served as a primary or secondary recovery vehicle for five Apollo missions. The helicopter model included a diorama display depicting the recovery of Apollo 11, the first mission of the Apollo space program to land on the Moon, during its splashdown in the Pacific Ocean in July 1969.

Initially designated the HSS-2, the Sikorsky SH-3 Sea King was a revolutionary design in the development of helicopters. Designed as an anti-submarine warfare (ASW) helicopter for the U.S. Navy, the Sea King was one of the first helicopters powered by turboshaft engines. The rotorcraft also featured a watertight hull enabling it to perform water landings, foldable rotor blades for compact storage on the decks of naval vessels, and twin engines for added safety. Entering service in 1961, the Sea King became one of the U.S. Navy's most important assets, capable of operating in all weather conditions to perform ASW and search and rescue (SAR) missions. In addition to the U.S. Navy, military and civilian versions of the Sea King were used by operators worldwide for ASW, SAR, medical evacuation, and transport roles. Although many military operators have retired the Sea King from service, the type remains operational with the air arms and navies of smaller nations and civilian operators.

One of the most notable roles the Sea King was utilized for in U.S. Navy service was the water recovery of American astronauts from the command modules after they landed during the Apollo space program. One of these Sea Kings, *Helicopter 66,* an SH-3D belonging to Helicopter Squadron 4 (HS-4), became one of the most famous helicopters in aviation history. *Helicopter 66* served as the primary recovery vehicle for the Apollo 8, 10, and 11 missions and the secondary recovery vehicle for the Apollo 12 and 13 missions. During these missions, *Helicopter 66* was featured prominently in television news coverage and still photography. Sadly, *Helicopter 66,* now repainted as *Helicopter 740*, was lost in a training accident off the coast of San Diego in 1975. Although the crew of four was rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard, pilot Leo Rolek was critically injured and later died of his injuries.

The die-cast toy and model manufacturer Corgi produced this 1/72 scale replica of Sikorsky SH-3D Sea King *Helicopter 66* in 2002 as part of its Aviation Archive product range of die-cast aircraft models. The Sea King model features interchangeable landing gear pieces, moving rotors, an opening cargo door, and detailed pilot figures. In a nod to this helicopter's important place in the history of aviation and space flight, as well as American history, Corgi included a diorama display with this model, which features a 1/72 scale replica of the Apollo 11 Command Module and an ocean display base. The result is an impressive diorama in which the Sea King looks as if it's hovering in position to pick up the astronauts. Although this set did not sell well when it was initially released, it now commands impressive value on the secondary market, with mint examples selling for over $200.

The Sea King model features an opening cargo door and rotating main rotor and tail rotor blades. The model also comes with interchangeable landing gear parts to display the helicopter as if it were flying, and an extra set of drooping rotor blades to simulate the helicopter's appearance as if it were parked.

Although an impressive display piece, Corgi's 1969 Apollo Recovery set did not sell well when initially released. Many Corgi dealers offered deep discounts on this set to clear their inventory of it. The value of this set has skyrocketed in recent years, driven by increased interest in the Apollo space program and its history.

John Jenkins Designs 1/30 Scale SPAD S.XIII

John Jenkins Designs has created an exceptional model of the SPAD S.XIII in 1/30 scale. The model has been released in the color schemes of several World War I pilots, including examples of X.IIIs flown by Georges Guynemer and Eddie Rickenbacker. This model of the S.XIII is painted in a special patriotic color scheme that decorated the aircraft flown by seven-victory ace Lt. Reed Chambers when he was assigned to occupation duty with the 94th Aero Squadron at Neuwied, Germany, in 1919.

The SPAD S.XIII is a single-seat, single-engine French biplane fighter aircraft used during World War I. The fighter was designed and developed by Louis Béchereau and *Société Pour L' Aviation et ses Dérivés* (SPAD) as a successor to their earlier and highly successful S.VII fighter. The S.XIII was one of the most capable Allied fighter aircraft of the war, with over 8,000 being built by the Armistice in November 1918.

The development of the S.XIII began in early 1917 when its predecessor, the S.VII, started to be surpassed in performance by newer and increasingly capable German fighter aircraft. French pilots immediately requested a superior fighter to be developed and produced. An interim solution was to fit a Hispano-Suiza engine to the S.VII with an increased compression ratio. The increased compression ratio boosted the horsepower of this engine from 150 to 180 and provided significantly improved aircraft performance. This change to the S.VII allowed the fighter to remain competitive against the newer German aircraft and bought time for SPAD to develop an improved version of the fighter. At the same time, Hispano-Suiza was developing a more powerful, geared version of their 8A water-cooled V-8 engine that powered the S.VII. This new engine was chosen by Béchereau and SPAD to power the new fighter they were designing.

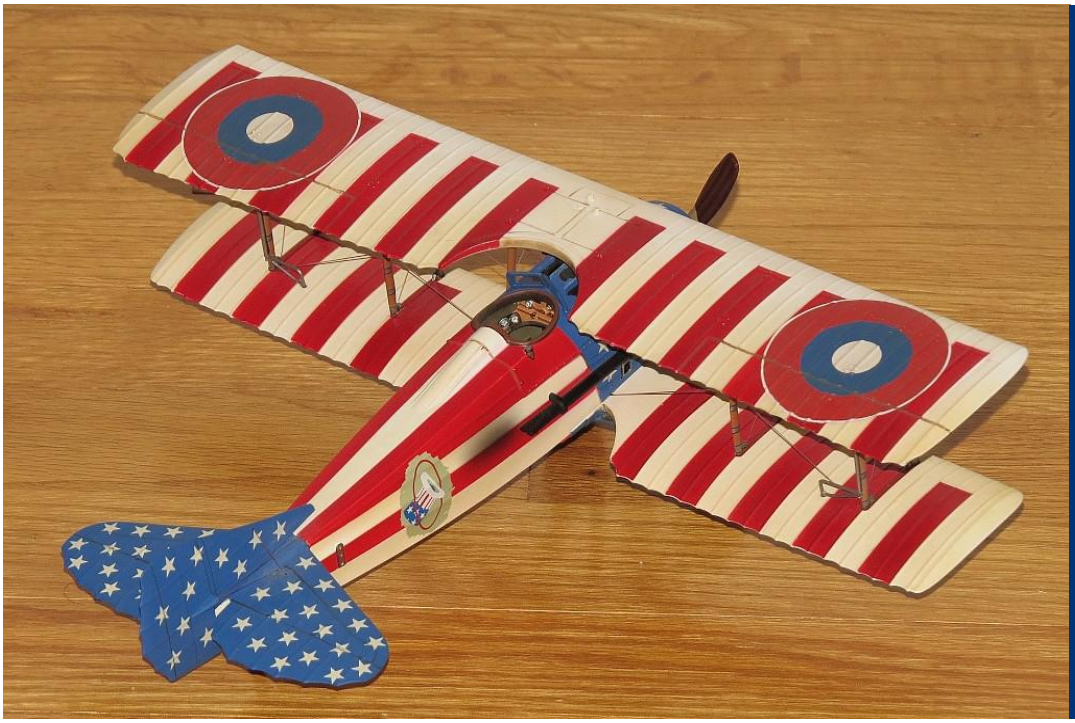
The new S.XIII shared a similar layout to the S.VII but was larger and heavier. Other changes to the design included the tapered chord of its ailerons, rounded tips on the tailplanes, and an enlarged fin and rudder. The S.XIII was armed with a pair of forward-firing Vickers machine guns, which replaced the single forward-firing Vickers machine gun on the S.VII. To meet a requirement of two hours of endurance, the S.XIII was fitted with several fuel tanks in the fuselage and a fuel tank in the top wing. Construction of the S.XIII was conventional for the time as the aircraft had a wooden structure with fabric covering throughout and wire bracing. The new fighter was powered by the water-cooled, geared Hispano-Suiza 8B engine that generated 200 horsepower. Later versions of this engine used a high compression ratio and generated 220 horsepower.

The first flight of the S.XIII took place on April 4, 1917. The improvements to the aircraft and the new engine produced a notable increase in flight performance. The new S.XIII was blessed with a high rate of climb and was faster than the British Sopwith Camel and the German Fokker D.VII. The S.XIII was renowned for its speed and strength in a dive. Test flights revealed that the S.XIII had poor low-speed maneuverability, but the gains in speed and rate of climb were felt to be an acceptable tradeoff. The S.XIII was such a success that efforts to ramp up production and get the aircraft into service began immediately after the prototype's first flight.

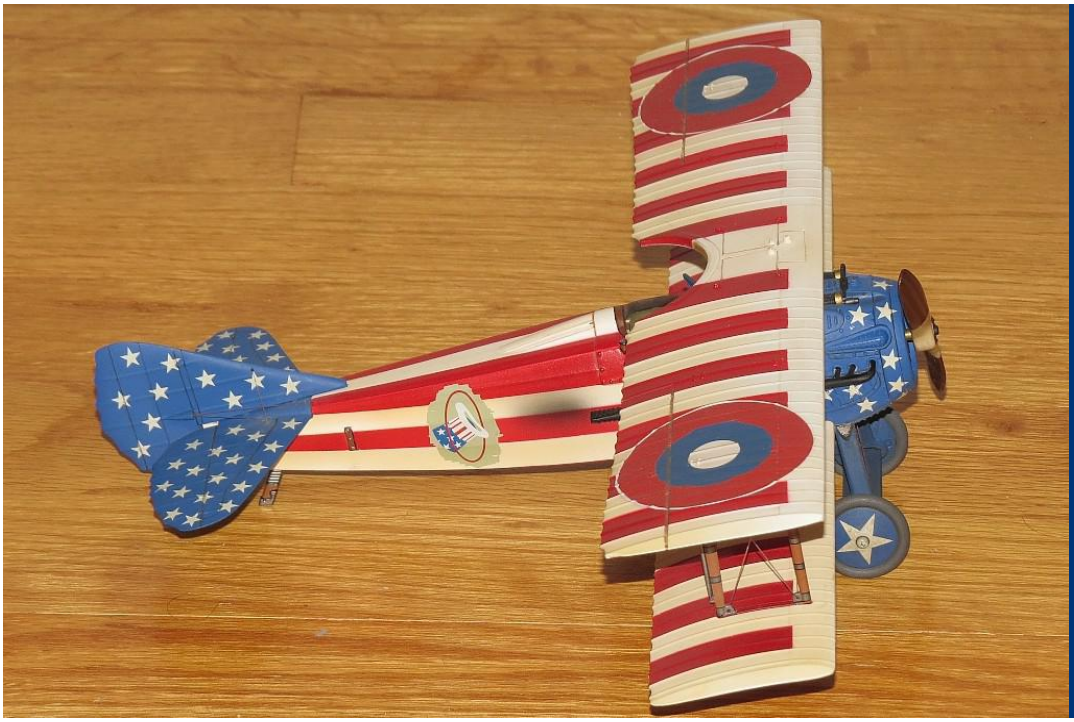
Unfortunately, the geared Hispano-Suiza engines proved to be unreliable and prone to failure. Many of the early examples of these engines suffered from poor lubrication and vibration issues. The combat operations with early examples of the S.XIII were significantly affected due to serviceability issues with their engines. Refinements to the engine's design and improved build quality eventually led to higher serviceability rates.

The S.XIII entered service in May 1917, just one month after the prototype's first flight, with the first production examples going to French squadrons. The new fighter received praise from French pilots, and French officials quickly made plans for the S.XIII to become the primary fighter for its forces, replacing all the S.VIIs in service, as well as the few remaining Nieuport types in service. However, slow production rates created major delays in these plans. By March 1918, only 764 S.XIIs had been delivered compared to a planned 2,230. Eventually, the S.XIII equipped almost every French squadron, 74 escadrilles, during the First World War. In addition to its service in the French armed forces, the S.XIII was used by other Allied nations. The S.XIII equipped 15 of 16 U.S. Army Air Service pursuit squadrons by the signing of the Armistice. The S.XIII was also used in small numbers by Great Britain, Italy, and Belgium. At the end of the war, the S.XIII was exported and served with the air arms of Brazil, Spain, Romania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Japan.

The S.XIII was the favorite fighter of French aces Rene Fonck, Georges Guynemer, and Charles Nungesser. The S.XIII was also flown by leading Italian ace Francesco Baracca and Belgian ace Edmond Theiffry. American aces who flew the S.XIII included Eddie Rickenbacker and Frank Luke Jr. Allied pilots credited the S.XIII's speed, rate of climb, and stability as a gun platform as the key to their success as pilots.



John Jenkins Designs 1/30 scale SPAD S.XIII is an excellent model of the famous French World War I fighter. The model uses photo-etched metal parts to capture notable features of the aircraft, such as the twin Vickers machine guns, cowling vents, and engine exhaust pipes. Subtle weathering, exhaust stains, and simulated color-fading effects on the model give the appearance of an aircraft used on regular operations and add to the model's realism.



John Jenkins Designs did an outstanding job replicating the paint scheme applied to Lt. Reed Chambers SPAD S.XIII in 1919. All elements of the scheme, including the national insignia, and the 94th Aero Squadron insignia, are present on the model. There is some debate about the color of the inner portion of the propeller. Historical sources differ on the opinion of the color as some references have illustrated it as blue, others as white. No photograph exists that would offer concrete evidence, so both colors have been represented in drawings and on models as correct.

This 1/30 model of a SPAD X.III is manufactured by John Jenkins Designs, a toy soldier company known for their excellent replicas of World War I aircraft, vehicles, figures, and diorama accessories. This model is part of their "Inter-War Aviation" product line of aircraft, figures, and diorama accessories. In addition to this model of the SPAD X.III, John Jenkins Designs manufactured this model in several paint schemes as part of its "Knights of the Skies" World War I product range. These paint schemes included X.IIIs representing aircraft flown by Eddie Rickenbacker, Frank Luke Jr., and Georges Guynemer. This X.III model is product-coded IWA-04 and retails for $238 in the United States.

This model represents a SPAD X.III flown by Lt. Reed Chambers of the U.S. Army Air Service in the spring of 1919. During that time, Reed's unit, the 94th Aero Squadron, was on occupation duty at Neuwied, Germany. Reed and other members of his squadron painted their X.IIIs in striking patriotic color schemes, and this American flag stars and stripes color scheme was applied to Chambers aircraft. Unfortunately, it was discovered that these extravagant paint schemes added weight to the S.XIIIs and degraded their performance, so these colorful schemes were short-lived. Chambers was a seven-victory ace during World War I and a recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, the French Legion of Honor, and the Croix de Guerre. Chambers finished his career in the military at the rank of Major. After the war, he founded Florida Airways with fellow 94th Aero Squadron pilot and ace Eddie Rickenbacker and later founded United States Aircraft Insurance Group, the nation's first aviation insurance company. Chambers died in the U.S. Virgin Islands in January 1972.

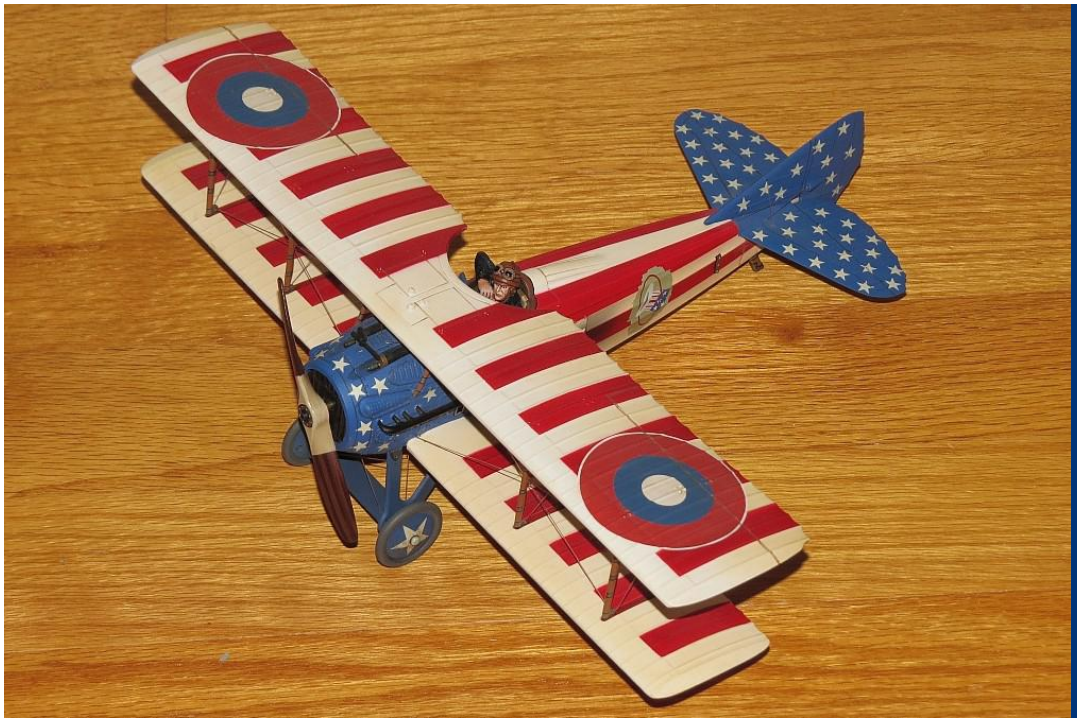
The John Jenkins Designs SPAD X.III is made of resin, with parts of the model, such as the machine guns and engine cowling, made of metal. The model is packaged in the standard plain white John Jenkins Designs cardboard box with foam inserts. These inserts are custom-cut to fit the model and protect it from any damage during shipping. The model arrives fully assembled and ready to display. Similar to most John Jenkins Designs aircraft models, there is a hole in the bottom of the model to allow the John Jenkins Designs acrylic display stands to be fitted to the aircraft to display it as if it were flying. These display stands come in several sizes and are sold separately. Half-bust pilot figures are available from John Jenkins Designs in several sculpts that fit the model's cockpit and are also sold separately.

The quality of the paint application on this model is simply stunning, with the striking stars and stripes patriotic color scheme matching profile illustrations in several respected literary sources that depict the actual aircraft. The model also features all the correct insignia and unit markings. John Jenkins Designs is one of the best model manufacturers at creating weathering effects on their miniatures. This SPAD X.III is no exception. The model has simulated exhaust, oil, and dirt stains throughout, creating the appearance of an aircraft that's been flown regularly. One element of the paint application that could be debated on the model is the color of the propeller. Some profile illustrations depict the propeller as being painted blue, others depict it as being painted white. The photographs that exist of the actual aircraft do not offer clear evidence. John Jenkins Designs has depicted the propeller as white on the model, but an excellent case could be made that it was also blue.

The details on this model are also excellent. Photo-etched metal parts are used to replicate the machine guns, gunsight, radiator, and cooling vents on the engine cowling. The cockpit is also well-detailed with gauges, a seat with seat belts, and a control stick. The detail of the rigging is also excellent. The rigging wires are tight, and the wire chosen is tinted and the right thickness, giving it an authentic appearance. The rigging does make the model, like all of the John Jenkins Designs World War I aircraft, fragile. Care must be taken when handling and cleaning the model so as not to break one of these wires.

Finally, the price point of this model is excellent. Although $238 may seem pricey for a model, building a model kit of the SPAD X.III with this level of detail would undoubtedly cost more when factoring in paint, glue, photo-etched detail sets, decals, and other supplies. With a John Jenkins Designs model, the model is ready to display immediately out of the box. The availability of these World War I aircraft models in the larger 1/30 scale saves headaches for people who are unable to build kits of these airplanes for various reasons.

The John Jenkins Designs SPAD X.III model is an excellent representation of one of the famous fighter aircraft of World War I and the early 1920s. The model is well-researched and makes excellent use of plastic and photo-etched metal parts to capture the iconic details of this fighter aircraft. The well-researched and historically accurate paint scheme is striking, and although not everyone's cup of tea, will be a conversation starter in any collection of model airplanes.



With one of the previously released half-bust pilot figures in the cockpit, the John Jenkins Designs SPAD S.XIII is ready for its next patrol mission. The lack of an included pilot figure for the cockpit is the only minor shortcoming of this excellent model. The large size of this model also showcases incredible details, such as realistic rigging, photo-etched metal parts, and a detailed cockpit. This SPAD S.XIII model, with its splendid patriotic color scheme, stands out in any model airplane collection.

Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend

The 33rd edition of one the nation's largest living history events and air-shows dedicated to the World War II era drew record crowds to the museum located at the Reading Regional Air-port near Reading, Pennsylvania.

The Commemorative Air Force's restored Boeing B-29 Superfortress "Fifi" during one of its flight demonstrations at the 2024 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. "Fifi's" flight demonstration in the airshow portion of the event is always a crowd favorite. There were also several opportunities for enthusiasts to take a warbird experience flight on "Fifi" throughout the weekend.

One of the things to check out at the 2024 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend was the progress made on their Northrop P-61B Black Widow night fighter restoration project. Museum volunteers have been slowly restoring this aircraft since it was recovered from Indonesia in 1989. This year, the P-61B had a fresh coat of black paint, indicating the restoration continues on a path toward completion.

For the 33rd year, the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum, based at the Reading Regional Airport in Reading, Pennsylvania, held its annual World War II Weekend living history event and airshow on June 7, 8, and 9. World War II Weekend captures the essence of these pivotal years in world history with an event that has grown into one of the top 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 time period, special guest speakers, and World War II veterans as distinguished honored guests. The event has become a wonderful 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. For the first time, the WWII Airborne Demonstration Team's Douglas C-49 "Wild Kat" attended the event, traveling from the organization's home base in Oklahoma. Another new aircraft to participate in the event this year was the Prescott Foundation's General Motors TBM-3E Avenger "Ida Red". Also attending the event were returning airshow favorites such as the Commemorative Air Force's Boeing B-29 Superfortress "Fifi" and the North American P-51 Mustang "Red Nose" from CAF Airbase Georgia. Unfortunately, mechanical problems prevented some aircraft scheduled to attend from appearing at the event this year. Warbird experience flights were available for enthusiasts in several historic aircraft at the event. For the fourth consecutive year, a special night-engine-run photo shoot for photographers featuring three aircraft that were part of the airshow roster.

World War II Weekend was again well-attended by aviation, military, and history enthusiasts of all ages, with record crowds attending the event on Saturday. The event was also blessed by excellent weather the entire weekend. The following photographs showcase some airshow highlights of the 2024 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend.

Some of the aircraft participating in the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend arrive on Thursday, with the remainder showing up on Friday, the first official day of the event. Some of the aircraft arriving on Thursday begin warbird experience flight on Thursday afternoon. These flights bring additional revenue to the museums and organizations that operate the aircraft. Here, the CAF Airbase Georgia's North American P-51D Mustang "Red Nose" departs on one of these ride flights.

Another aircraft arriving early on Thursday and offering Thursday afternoon warbird experience flights was the Commemorative Air Force's Douglas SBD-5 Dauntless dive bomber. This restored SBD Dauntless is one of less than ten airworthy examples that remain in existence. The SBD played an important the Pacific campaign during the early years of World War II. The SBD played a crucial role in defeating the Japanese during the Battle of Midway when SBD pilots sank four Japanese aircraft carriers.

Friday is the first day of the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend and some flight demonstrations are flown on Friday afternoon as a preview of sorts for the larger airshow on Saturday and Sunday. The CAF Airbase Georgia's restored Goodyear FG-1D Corsair fighter flew an aerobatic demonstration to start things off on Friday afternoon. Unfortunately, the Corsair was plagued by mechanical issues during the weekend and did not fly during the Saturday or Sunday airshow programs

The Jersey Jerks Airshow Team also took to the skies on Friday at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend to perform a flight demonstration. The windy conditions all weekend made formation flying challenging for the pilots. The Jersey Jerks Airshow Team all fly examples of the North American Texan/SNJ advanced training aircraft from World War II. Over 15,000 of these advanced training aircraft were manufactured during World War II, with about 5,000 examples remaining airworthy.

CAF Airbase Georgia has been a dedicated supporter of the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend for many years, and sends several of their aircraft to the event. This year was no exception, as six of the aircraft in the CAF Airbase Georgia collection made the journey to Reading, Pennsylvania for the event. One of CAF Airbase Georgia's rarest aircraft in their collection is this Bell P-63A Kingcobra. The P-63 was an unusual design for a fighter aircraft, with its engine located behind the pilot.

Returning to the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend in 2024 was Thom Richard with his Curtiss TP-40N Warhawk "American Dream", a rare two-seat training variant of the famous Curtiss P-40 Warhawk fighter. Richard was a late addition to the performer lineup at World War II Weekend this year to fill in for some of the scratches in the original lineup. Richard's airshow performances in his TP-40N did not disappoint, and low-level, high-speed passes thrilled the crowds daily.

Thom Richard was the star of the show at World War II Weekend, flying his rare two-seat Curtiss TP-40N Warhawk "American Dream" fighter trainer and the CAF Airbase Georgia's North American P-51D Mustang "Red Nose" in flight demonstrations. Introduced in 1938, the P-40 Warhawk was one of the most advanced fighter aircraft available to the Allies at the start of World War II and was used throughout the conflict. When production ceased in 1944, over 13,000 P-40s had been built.

At the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend, the warbird experience flights continue well into the evening hours on Friday and Saturday. After the temperatures go down and the winds calm down in the early evening, these flights can be a nice way to enjoy an evening at the event and take in the sunset. This person is taking a ride aboard a restored Fairchild PT-19 Cornell. The PT -19 was used by the U.S. Army Air Forces as a primary training aircraft during World War II, more than 7,000 were built.

The airshow portion of World War II Weekend started early on Saturday afternoon. Unfortunately, high winds and some mechanical issues with some of the aircraft in attendance did cause some changes to the airshow schedule and flying displays. Thom Richard was a busy pilot during the event, in addition to flying his own TP-40 Warhawk "American Dream" in the airshow program, he also flew the CAF Airbase Georgia's P-51 Mustang "Red Nose", seen here on a photo pass for the airshow crowd.

The Boeing Stearman is one of America's iconic airplanes. The Stearman was built as a primary trainer before and during World War II. During the war, the Stearman was used as a primary trainer by the U.S. Navy, U.S. Army Air Forces, U.S. Marine Corps, and the U.S. Coast Guard. The Stearman was also used by the Royal Canadian Air Force. Today, the Stearman is still a popular aircraft for crop dusting and as sport planes. This restored Stearman is painted in late-war U.S. Army Air Corps colors.

In U.S. Navy service, the Stearman was nicknamed "Yellow Peril" in reference to its yellow paint scheme. The Stearman could be difficult to handle for student pilots, who had a tendency to ground loop the biplane during landings. Fortunately, the Stearman was a rugged and reliable aircraft and well-suited to take the abuses of flight training incidents of student pilots. Today, a considerable number of Stearmans survive in airworthy condition and are common sights at fly-ins and airshows.

One of the highlights of the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend each year is the Pacific aircraft demonstration. These aircraft fly while on the ground, and a reenactment takes place of the U.S. Marines placing the flag atop Mt. Suribachi during the Battle of Iwo Jima. This aircraft is a replica of a Japanese Nakajima B5N2 "Kate" torpedo bomber operated by CAF Airbase Georgia. This "Kate" was built in 1969 for use in the film "Tora! Tora! Tora!" by combining a SNJ-4 and BT-13 airframe.

The Warbird Factory/Prescott Foundation's Mitsubishi A6M "Zero" replica also flew in the Pacific aircraft flight. This "Zero" was also built for use in the movie "Tora! Tora! Tora!". This aircraft began life as a North American Harvard Mk. IV advanced trainer and was built in Canada. Extensive modifications were made to the landing gear, engine cowling, cockpit, and tail section to give it the appearance of the "Zero". This "Zero" replica became part of The Warbird Factory's collection in 2018.

The CAF Airbase Georgia's Douglas SBD-5 Dauntless gets airborne at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend on Saturday to be part of the Pacific theater aircraft flight sequence. Obsolete when World War II began, the SBD Dauntless was forced to soldier on in the dive and scout bomber roles until more capable aircraft could be developed. The SBD would remain in service throughout World War II and played an important role in the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway.

The CAF Airbase Georgia's Douglas SBD-5 Dauntless lines up for a photo pass during the Saturday airshow. The perforated dive flaps on the SBD's wings were designed to prevent buffeting and keep the airplane stable in a dive. Although the SBD was slow, the dive bomber had excellent maneuverability and formidable forward-firing and rear defensive armament. SBD pilots and their rear gunners scored several kills against Japanese fighter aircraft in the Pacific theater.

The Warbird Factory/Prescott Foundation's Mitsubishi A6M "Zero" replica in flight during the Saturday airshow at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. The "Zero" was a surprise to American and British pilots when World War II began. The Japanese fighter had excellent maneuverability and outstanding range but lacked armored protection for its cockpit and fuel tanks. These weaknesses would be exploited by Allied pilots later in the war, flying improved fighter aircraft.

Bombers are always a favorite during the airshow portion of the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. The North American B-25 Mitchell was one of the most widely used medium bombers of World War II. The B-25 was used in every theater of World War II and used by many of the Allied air forces. Produced in numerous variants, nearly 10,000 B-25s were built during World War II. "Take-Off Time" is a restored B-25J owned by Tom Duffy, a longtime supporter of the World War II Weekend event.

One of the highlights at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum World War II Weekend is the flight demonstration of the B-29 Superfortress "Fifi" in the airshow each day. The Commemorative Air Force flight crew does an excellent job highlighting the speed and maneuverability of the B-29 during the demonstration. The B-29 Superfortress was the largest bomber to see service in World War II and also saw service in the Korean War. "Fifi" is one of only two remaining airworthy examples of the B-29.

Saturday evening is a great time at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend to go on a warbird experience flight. These flights offered by CAF Airbase Georgia and other aviation museums help the organizations fund aircraft maintenance, the purchase and refurbishment of rare parts, as well as the insurance costs to operate them. These warbird experience flights help ensure these rare aircraft remain flying for years to come. This is the SBD Dauntless taking a rider up for a flight.

For many aviation enthusiasts, the North American P-51D Mustang needs no introduction. Entering service in mid-1944, the P-51D variant finally provided the U.S. Army Air Forces with a fighter capable of escorting bomber formations all the way to Germany and back. In addition to its role as a long-range escort fighter, the P-51 was also used for ground attack and photo reconnaissance missions. The P-51, designated the F-51, also saw service in the Korean War in the ground-attack role.

It was too windy for the liaison aircraft to fly during the air-show portion of World War II Weekend on Saturday, but the pilots of these two Taylorcraft L-2 Grasshoppers took advantage of calmer conditions in the evening to do some flying. The L-2 was one of several small light aircraft employed by the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II for liaison roles, such as artillery spotting and short-range reconnaissance. The L-2 was primarily used for training in this role within the United States.

Another aircraft making its first appearance at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend was the CAF Airbase Georgia's North American LT-6 Mosquito. A version of the North American AT-6 single-engine, two-seat, advanced training aircraft, the LT-6 was used as a forward air controller during the Korean War. In this role, the LT-6 was named the Mosquito. This example started life as a U.S. Navy SNJ-4 but was restored by CAF Airbase Georgia as an LT-6D over a six-year period.

One of the featured aircraft at this year's World War II Weekend was the WWII Airborne Demonstration Team's Douglas C-49 Skytrooper "Wild Kat". The C-49 Skytrooper was the designation given to Douglas DC-3s operated by commercial airlines that were "drafted" into U.S. military service at the start of World War II. Unlike the military C-47 Skytrain, the C-49s were powered by single-row Wright R-1820 radial engines instead of the double-row Pratt & Whitney R-1830s found on the C-47 Skytrain.

The Douglas C-49 "Wild Kat" operated by the WWII Airborne Demonstration Team flew during the Sunday afternoon airshow at the event. In addition to the engines, there were some other distinct differences between the C-49 and the C-47 Skytrain. The C-49s all had passenger doors rather than the large cargo door found on the C-47. The C-49s also had airline interiors and seating configurations. The C-49s were used mostly in secondary theaters of operation throughout World War II.

There were only a few aircraft attending the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend wearing markings of other Allied countries, but this replica of a Stampe-Vertongen SV.4C is wearing French markings. The SV.4 was a two-seat biplane designed in Belgium and used as a touring and training aircraft. The SV.4C was a version of the aircraft license-built in France. Over 900 examples of the SV.4C were built in France and used as a primary training aircraft during and after World War II.

The Stearman is a popular vintage aircraft in the United States, and because of the large numbers that have been restored and remain airworthy, it is a certainty that at least one will show up at any fly-in or airshow being held if the weather is favorable. This Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend had several Stearmans on the field this year representing U.S. Army Air Corps, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Marine Corps aircraft. This beautiful example is wearing World War II U.S. Navy colors.

One of the highlights of the weekend was the weather conditions. Seasonal temperatures and no precipitation helped make the weekend perfect for the event participants and attendees. Although breezy conditions did limit some of the airshow performances, large clouds made for some stunning backdrops for aviation photographers to capture the aircraft in flight. This is the Delaware Aviation Museum's restored North American B-25J Mitchell "Panchito" flying in the airshow on Sunday afternoon.

Another highlight of the 2024 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend was Vintage Wings Inc.'s Douglas C-53 Skytrooper "Beach City Baby" flying in the daily airshow for the first time. The C-53 Skytrooper was a Douglas DC-3 specifically designed for military service. The C-53 did not have the large cargo doors, reinforced floor, or strengthened landing gear of the C-47 Skytrain designed specifically for military service. "Beach City Baby" is based in Franklin, Pennsylvania.

The Douglas C-53 Skytrooper "Beach City Baby" with an impressive cloud backdrop as it flies in the airshow on Sunday. Even without the military equipment found on the C-47 Skytrain, the C-53s were still used in combat operations and performed missions such as personnel transport, paratrooper drops, towing gliders, and medical evacuation. General Dwight Eisenhower credited the C-47/C-53 as being one of the four most important weapons that helped the U.S. and its Allies win World War II.

As Sunday's airshow drew to a close, the Commemorative Air Force flew "Fifi" for its flight demonstration. The B-29 Superfortress was one of the most advanced bombers in the world when it was introduced into service. Some of the design advancements included a computerized fire control system, a pressurized cabin, and a separate crew station for the flight engineer to monitor the aircraft systems. The B-29 Superfortress holds the distinction of being the only aircraft to drop nuclear weapons in combat.

A nice formation flight of the CAF Airbase Georgia's North American P-51D Mustang and Bell P-63A Kingcobra near the end of the Sunday airshow. The P-51 is one of the most famous fighter aircraft of World War II and of all time. The P-63 was not accepted for service with the U.S. Army Air Force, and almost all the examples built went to the Soviet Union under Lend-Lease. In service with the Soviet Air Force, the P-63 Kingcobra was used as a ground-attack aircraft against enemy tanks and armor.

As soon as the Sunday airshow ended, aircraft began to head home from the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Some of the pilots have far to travel and others like to make it home before darkness with their vintage aircraft. This is a Piper L-4 Grasshopper starting the journey home. The L-4 was the military version of the civilian Piper J-3 Cub light aircraft. During World War II, the L-4 Grasshopper was used for liaison duties, such as artillery spotting, reconnaissance, and medical evacuation.

Tom Duffy's North American B-25J Mitchell "Take-Off Time" departs for home after the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend on Sunday. The B-25 is one of the most famous bombers of World War II, thanks to it being the type of bomber used by the Doolittle Raiders to bomb Japan in early 1942. In addition to its role as a medium bomber, the B-25 was used in VIP/staff transport, utility transport, anti-shipping, gunship, reconnaissance, and maritime patrol roles.

With its landing gear retracting, the CAF Airbase Georgia's Bell P-63 Kingcobra climbs out of the Reading Regional Airport on its way home after being a part of the 2024 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Although most P-63s built were sent to the Soviet Union, several stayed in the United States for testing and evaluation purposes. The CAF Airbase Georgia's P-63 is one that was used for this purpose and wears the "TEST" markings it wore when evaluated by NACA in 1945.

The Fairchild PT-26 Cornell was a variant of the PT-19 Cornell built for the Royal Canadian Air Force. The major difference between the two variants was the PT-26 had an enclosed cockpit, to make flying more comfortable for the student pilots and instructors in the colder Canadian climate. The Royal Canadian Air Force ordered over 650 PT-26s for training in Canada under the British Commonwealth Training Plan. In Royal Canadian Air Force service, the PT-26 was designated by its name, Cornell.

One of the benefits of staying late on Sunday at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend is seeing some aircraft depart for home that were only on static display at the event. "Bamboo Betty" is a Cessna UC-78 Bobcat. The Bobcat was used by the U.S. Army Air Forces as a trainer, light transport, and utility aircraft. In Royal Canadian Air Force service, the type was known as the Crane. This restored example is operated by the Wings of War Museum in Palmyra, Pennsylvania.

Due to high demand, warbird experience flights continued well after the official end of the airshow on Sunday at World War II Weekend. Spectators watching aircraft departures from the event were treated to additional flights by the CAF Airbase Georgia's Douglas SBD Dauntless, North American LT-6 Mosquito, and North American P-51D Mustang "Red Nose". In this photo, "Red Nose" departs on another warbird experience flight with another lucky rider and a beautiful cloud backdrop behind the Mustang.

The Warbird Factory/Prescott Foundation's General Motos TBM-3E Avenger "Ida Red" departs for the organization's home base in New York on Sunday afternoon. This was the first appearance of "Ida Red" at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. The Avenger was one of the finest torpedo bombers built during World War II, serving with distinction in the last years of the war. Because of its large size and ungainly appearance, the Avenger was nicknamed "Turkey" by its crews.

After a long weekend battling maintenance headaches with the number two engine, the North American B-25J Mitchell "Panchito" and its crew head home following the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend on Sunday afternoon. The Delaware Aviation Museum has been a longtime supporter of World War II Weekend and many other airshows in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions of the United States. "Panchito" is a common sight at these events throughout the summer months.

One of the last aircraft to leave on Sunday afternoon following the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend was the Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation's Douglas C-54D Skymaster "Spirit of Freedom". The inside of "Spirit of Freedom" is a museum with exhibits that tell the story of the Berlin Airlift. Visitors to airshows and aviation events that the "Spirit of Freedom" attends can tour the museum exhibits inside the C-54 for a donation to the Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation.

McDonnell Douglas F-4S Phantom II

A McDonnell Douglas F-4S Phantom II on display in the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia. Initially built as an F-4J variant for the U.S. Navy, this aircraft saw action during the Vietnam War and has a MiG-21 kill to its credit. With over 5,000 examples built between 1958 and 1981 and an integral part of the air arms of many U.S. allies worldwide, the F-4 Phantom II was one of the signature combat aircraft of the Cold War.

Some aircraft types represented in the National Air and Space Museum collection are remembered for the large number that were produced, others for their length of time in service, and others for the ability to perform their mission. The McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II was a standout in all three categories. Initially designed as a fleet defense fighter, the F-4 evolved into a multi-role aircraft with variants capable of performing ground attack, suppression of enemy air defenses, and aerial reconnaissance missions. The F-4 Phantom II was operated by the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Air Force, and the air forces of 12 other nations. Today, the F-4 Phantom II remains in limited service with the air forces of Greece, Turkey, and Iran.

Preliminary design work on what was to become the Phantom II began in 1953 as a single-seat, twin-engine, long-range, attack aircraft. McDonnell Douglas financed, at company expense, the mock-up of this project, designated the F3H-G. Working closely with the U.S. Navy, McDonnell Douglas engineers attempted to design the F3H-G to what it expected would be the Navy's requirements for such an aircraft. Unfortunately, there was no requirement for such an aircraft, but the Navy did explain to McDonnell Douglas what it desired for the fleet air mission. After learning this information, McDonnell Douglas redesigned their mock-up.

The final design was designated the F4H-1. The F4H-1 was the first U.S. Navy carrier-based fighter aircraft capable of Mach 2 and equipped to carry missiles. The F4H-1 was designed as a one or two-seat aircraft, and its primary mission was as an all-weather fleet defense fighter with a secondary attack capability. The F4H-1 flew for the first time in May 1958. In December of that year, McDonnell Douglas was awarded a limited production contract for the new aircraft, with the Navy choosing the two-seat version for production. One year later, the F-4B Phantom II entered operational service with Fighting Squadron 121. The Phantom II was qualified for land and sea operations, and in 1963, a production version, the F-4C, was authorized for the U.S. Air Force. During the period from 1959 to 1969, the F4H-1 and its derivatives set 15 different speed and altitude records.

The F-4 Phantom II was used extensively during the Vietnam War. It served as the principal air superiority fighter during the war for the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. Later in the war, the F-4 Phantom II was adapted and used for ground attack and aerial reconnaissance missions. Early variants of the F-4 Phantom II carried no gun, relying entirely on air-to-air missiles as their primary attack weapon. Later variants of the F-4 Phantom II incorporated an M61 rotary cannon as a secondary weapon to complement the air-to-air missiles. A large aircraft, the F-4 Phantom II was capable of Mach 2.2 and could carry over 18,000 pounds of missiles, bombs, and other stores on nine external hardpoints.

The F-4 Phantom II was the only aircraft to be used by both the U.S. Navy "Blue Angels" and the U.S. Air Force "Thunderbirds" flight demonstration teams. In 1964, the F-4 Phantom II found its way onto the international market when examples were delivered to the British Royal Navy. Designated the F-4K, these Phantoms had Rolls-Royce Spey turbofan engines. Later, Australia, Iran, South Korea, Turkey, Spain, Japan, Israel, Greece, and West Germany bought the F-4. The F-4E variant was the variant preferred by overseas air forces. The Japanese Air Self-Defense Force received a specific model, the F-4EJ, which deleted most of the offensive weapons systems and was fitted with advanced tail warning radar and air-to-air guided missiles. Japan also ordered the RF-4EJ, an unarmed version for reconnaissance missions. Because of its large export orders to U.S. allies, the F-4 Phantom II became one of the signature combat aircraft of the Cold War.

The F-4 Phantom II continued to form a major part of U.S. military airpower throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, gradually being replaced by more modern and capable aircraft. The F-4 Phantom II was superseded by the F-15 Eagle and F-16 Fighting Falcon in the U.S. Air Force, the F-14 Tomcat in the U.S. Navy, and the F/A-18 Hornet in the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps. The final combat operations of the F-4 Phantom II in U.S. military service were in the 1991 Gulf War, where it was used in the Wild Weasel (Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses) and aerial reconnaissance roles.

The F-4 Phantom II has also seen extensive combat in the air arms of other nations. Israeli F-4s were used in several Arab-Israeli conflicts, and Iran used its large fleet of F-4s on combat operations during the Iran-Iraq War. More recently, Iranian F-4s have been used to bomb Islamic State targets in Iraq and Syria. The Iranian Air Force is the largest remaining operator of the F-4 Phantom II, with 60 aircraft remaining in service. These F-4s are RF-4D, F-4D, and F-4E variants and have been kept flying despite U.S. embargos on spare parts through reverse-engineering of parts domestically and with technology assistance from China and Russia.

The F-4 Phantom II is the most produced American supersonic military aircraft in history. Several variants were produced for the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps (F-4A, B, G, and J), the U.S. Air Force (F-4C, D, E), and export customers. F-4s were also license-built in Japan for the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force. At one point, F-4 Phantom II production reached a rate of 70 aircraft per month. By the time production of the F-4 Phantom ceased in 1979, 5,195 examples had been built.

The National Air and Space Museum's McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II was built as an F-4J variant and accepted by the U.S. Navy in December 1970. In June 1971, it was assigned to Fighting Squadron 31 (VF-31), stationed at the Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana in Virginia. Early in 1972, VF-31 went aboard the *U.S.S. Saratoga,* and by April, was en route for western Pacific duty in the Vietnam War. In May 1972, the aircraft carrier arrived at Yankee Station off the coast of Vietnam to start combat operations.

On June 21, 1972, the last day the aircraft carrier was on station, this F-4J made its mark in the Vietnam War. The F-4J was on a MIGCAP (MiG Combat Air Patrol) with VF-31's Executive Officer Cdr. S.C. Flynn as the pilot and Lt. W.H. John as the Radar Intercept Officer (RIO). This was not their regularly assigned airplane, but were using it as their own F-4 was down for maintenance. They spotted three MiG fighters while on patrol and after engaging the enemy fighters, shot down a MiG-21 with an AIM -9 Sidewinder air-to-air missile. This action was a first for the *U.S.S. Saratoga* Air Wing.

After this kill, the combat tour in Vietnam for this F-4J Phantom II continued and was expanded to include fighter support for B-52 bombing missions on Hanoi and Haiphong. VF-31 completed its deployment to Vietnam in early 1973 and returned to NAS Oceana.

The F-4J Phantom II remained with VF-31 until 1975 when it was transferred to VF-33. After a series of deployments aboard the *U.S.S. Independence*, the F-4J was assigned to VF-74 in 1977. In September 1979, it was reassigned to VF-103 and later transferred to VF-171 in October 1981. In 1983, the F-4J was sent to the Naval Air Rework Facility at North Island, California, for conversion from a J-variant to an S-variant.

The S-variant was an extensive modernization of the F-4J Phantom II. The S-variant conversion was a service life extension and modernization program for 250 U.S. Navy F-4Js. The modernization program included replacing and upgrading the hydraulics, electronics, and wiring of the aircraft. Additional improvements to the aircraft included installing leading-edge maneuvering slats on the wings, a radar homing and warning antenna, and formation tape lights on the fuselage and tail.

When the conversion process was completed in December 1983, the F-4S was transferred to the U.S. Marine Corps and joined U.S. Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron (VMFAT) 101, stationed at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Yuma, Arizona. In May 1987, the F-4S was transferred to U.S. Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VFMA) 232 based in Honolulu. This assignment would be the last duty station for this F-4S Phantom II.

In November 1988, the U.S. Marine Corps retired the F-4S Phantom II and donated it to the National Air and Space Museum. During its long service career, the aircraft had amassed over 5,000 flight hours, 6,804 landings (1,337 were arrested), and 1,163 catapult shots off an aircraft carrier deck. In late November 1988, the F-4S Phantom arrived at the Washington Dulles International Airport and was placed into storage for future display. The F-4S Phantom II is now on display in the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia. The F-4S is painted in the Vietnam-era colors and markings of Marine Squadron VFMA-232.

Boeing C-40B/C (2002)

The Boeing C-40 B/C is a military transport version of the Boeing 737 Next Generation based on the 737-700 Boeing Business Jet operated by the U.S. Air Force. The C-40B/C combines the fuselage of the 737-700 with the strengthened wings and landing gear of the 737-800. The U.S. Air Force uses two versions of the aircraft, the C-40B, which is a special mission aircraft used to transport top U.S. military commanders and government officials and features an advanced communications suite, and the C-40C, which is not equipped with the advanced communications suite and is used as an operational support and VIP transport aircraft for members of the U.S. Cabinet and Congress. The C -40B/C entered service with the U.S. Air Force in 2002. The U.S. Air Force has 11 C-40s in its active inventory, four C-40Bs, and seven C-40Cs.

Boeing C-40B/C

Crew: Up to 10 including Pilot & Copilot (Depending on Mission & Configuration)

Passenger Capacity: C-40B: 26 to 32 passengers, C-40C: 42 to 111 passengers

Length: 110 ft 4 in

Height: 41 ft 2 in

Wingspan: 117 ft 5 in

Wing Area: 1,344 sq ft

Powerplant: GE CFM International CFM56-7B27 turbofans (x2)

Range: 4,500 nmi to 5,000 nmi

Cruise Speed: 322 mph

Maximum Speed: 615 mph

Empty/Maximum Takeoff Weights: 126,000 lb/171,000 lb

Service Ceiling: 41,000 ft

High-Priority Personnel Transport

Avionics

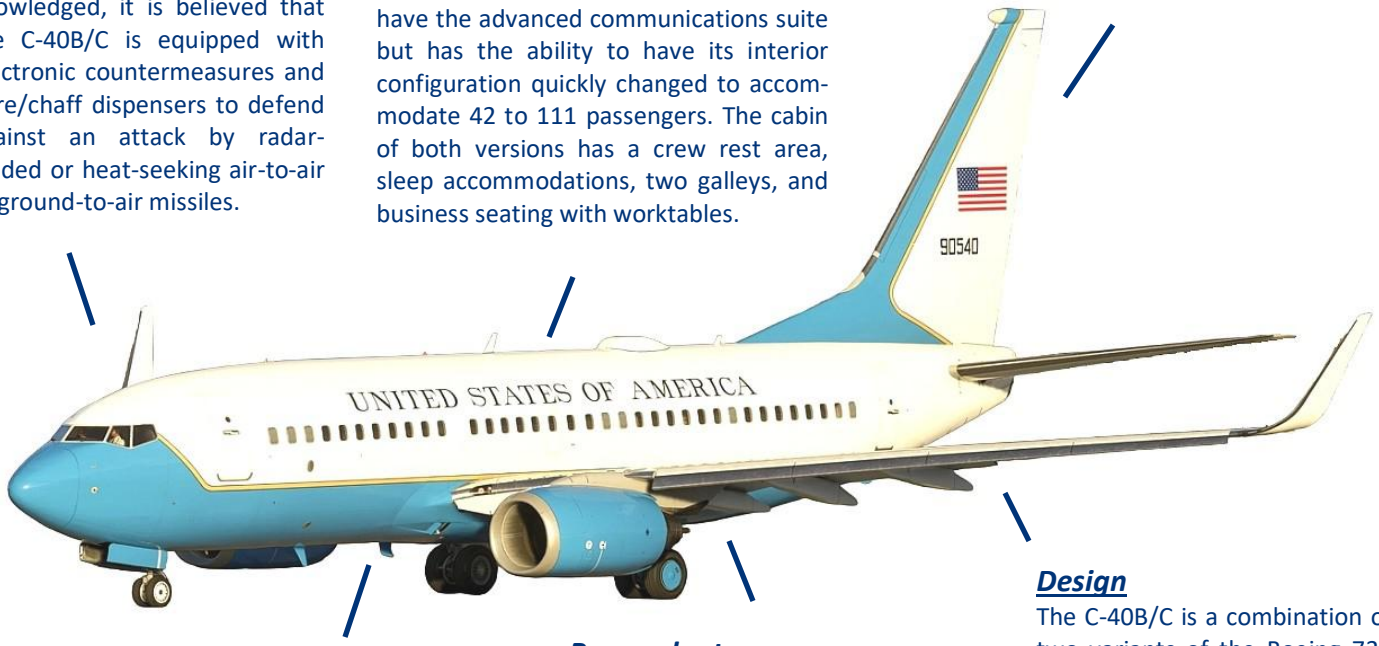
The C-40B/C has state-of-the-art avionics equipment, including integrated GPS, a flight management system, an electronic flight instrument system, and heads-up displays. Safety equipment installed includes an air traffic collision avoidance system and an enhanced weather radar system. Although not publicly acknowledged, it is believed that the C-40B/C is equipped with electronic countermeasures and flare/chaff dispensers to defend against an attack by radar-guided or heat-seeking air-to-air or ground-to-air missiles.

Cabin

The C-40s used by the U.S. Air Force have two different passenger cabins. The C-40B's cabin has advanced communications equipment that allows U.S. military commanders to transmit broadband data and video, and clear and secure voice communications. The C-40B also has telephones, television monitors, copy and fax machines, and a computer-based passenger data system. The C-40C does not have the advanced communications suite but has the ability to have its interior configuration quickly changed to accommodate 42 to 111 passengers. The cabin of both versions has a crew rest area, sleep accommodations, two galleys, and business seating with worktables.

Security

In the past, C-40B/C aircraft have had their serial numbers painted on their tails. In response to recent U.S. Air Force security concerns with the movements of their aircraft being tracked, the C-40B/Cs, along with other U.S. Air Force diplomatic and military transport aircraft, have had their serial numbers and other identifying codes removed from their tail surfaces.



Ground Clearance

When it was designed as a commercial aircraft in the 1960s, Boeing envisioned the 737 being operated from smaller airports that lacked ground infrastructure, such as terminals and ground service vehicles. The 737 was designed to sit lower to the ground than most commercial aircraft so simple stairs could access the passenger doors and baggage compartments, and the aircraft could be refueled and serviced with minimal ground equipment. As a result of its low ground clearance, Boeing designed the 737's engine nacelles to have flat bottoms. The main landing gear also lacks doors for this reason. Instead, the wheels seal tight with the 737's underside when retracted. As the C-40B/C is based directly on the Boeing 737, it has a similar ground clearance height to its commercial/business jet counterpart.

Powerplant

The C-40B/C is powered by a pair of CFM International CFM56-7 turbofan engines. These engines are seven percent more fuel efficient than the CFM56-3 engines used on the earlier 737 Classic series. Designing these engines to fit the 737 was a challenge for CFM International and Boeing, given the aircraft's low ground clearance. The problem was solved by placing the engine ahead of the wing instead of below it and moving engine accessories to the side rather than the bottom of the engine pod. These design changes give the 737 Classic and later generations of the aircraft distinctive non-circular engine intakes.

Design

The C-40B/C is a combination of two variants of the Boeing 737 Next Generation. The fuselage is from the Boeing 737-700, but the strengthened wing with winglets and landing gear is from the improved 737-800. Unlike the commercial/business jet versions of the 737 Next Generation, the C-40B/C is equipped with three auxiliary fuel tanks to increase its operational range. These fuel tanks give the C-40B/C a range of 4,500 to 5,000 nautical miles, giving U.S. top military commanders, as well as members of the Cabinet and Congress, the ability to travel to most locations worldwide nonstop.

A Photo Shoot In The Black Widow's Web

America's Sweethearts girl group members Joyah Love, Katie Anderson White, and Shaina Vencel pose with the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's rare Northrop P-61B Black Widow night fighter during a photo shoot at the museum's World War II Weekend living history event and airshow. The museum has been working to restore the P-61 Black Widow night fighter to flying condition since they recovered it from its 1945 crash site in Indonesia in 1989.

One of the highlights of the 2024 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend was for aviation enthusiasts to check out the progress the museum is making on the restoration of their Northrop P-61B Black Widow night fighter and talk to museum volunteers about the restoration. This aircraft crashed in 1945 in Indonesia and was recovered by museum staff in 1989. Since then, the museum has been slowly restoring the P-61, with the intention of returning it to flying condition. A recent fresh coat of black paint on the airframe year shows that significant progress is being made by museum volunteers on the restoration of this rare World War II aircraft.

The Northrop P-61 Black Widow was the first U.S. operational warplane designated as a night fighter. An unusual-looking and large aircraft for a night fighter due to the technical requirements that the design had to meet, the Black Widow was an all-metal, twin-engine, twin-boom design equipped with radar and armed with four 20mm cannon in the lower fuselage and four .50 in machine guns in a dorsal turret. The Black Widow was crewed by a pilot, radar operator, and gunner. Introduced in 1944, the Black Widow was used successfully by U.S. Army Air Forces crews in the European Theater, Pacific Theater, China Burma India Theater, and the Mediterranean Theater during World War II. A P-61B Black Widow named *"Lady In The Dark"* from the 548th Night Fighter Squadron was credited with the last Allied air victory before VJ Day on August 14, 1945.

The America's Sweethearts were one of the entertainment acts performing at the airshow. Based in New York City, the girl group brings the sound and style of 1940s swing music to audiences at events throughout the United States. Musical pieces originally composed and sung by The Andrews Sisters are favorites of the group to perform. The America's Sweethearts perform in theatres, civic centers, nightclubs, and smaller venues. They also perform concerts at museums and special events to honor our veterans. Complimenting the musical performances of the group are their colorful Retro-style outfits that pay tribute to the history of the musical pieces they perform.

Following a musical set Saturday morning at World War II Weekend, the America's Sweethearts agreed to a brief photo shoot with the P-61 Black Widow with permission from the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum. Joyah Love, Katie Anderson White, and Shaina Vencel looked fantastic in their red dresses next to the Black Widow. Perhaps one day, these photos can be taken again with the fully restored aircraft at a future World War II Weekend.

Distelfink Airlines

Est. 2013

ABOUT DISTELFINK AIRLINES

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.

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.