July 2023

Corey J Beitler's

"Distelfink Airlines"

An Online Aviation Newsletter

★ Celebrating 10 Years Of Publication! ★

Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend

Brunner-Winkle Bird CK

Hobbymaster 1/72 Scale Northrop Grumman E-2D Hawkeye

Curtiss JN-4D "Jenny"

Lockheed SR-71A Blackbird

Douglas C-47 Skytrain

Lovely Ladies, Vintage Fashion, And A Wildcat

The Tunison Foundation's restored Douglas C-47 Skytrain "Placid Lassie" prepares to land at the Reading Regional Airport during the 2023 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Unlike most restored World War II aircraft flying at airshows today, "Placid Lassie" is a war veteran, having documented combat service during the Invasion of Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

WWII Weekend, C-47 "Placid Lassie", SR-71 Blackbird, E-2D Hawkeye Model

Greetings Everyone:

Welcome to the July edition of "Distelfink Airlines". This newsletter comes to you as I come off a long stretch of covering airshows and aviation events in May and June. Now, there is a bit of a break in the airshow schedule until later in the summer and I am glad for this lull in the action. It gives me the opportunity to take care of some personal things and some things at home as well as catch up on editing pictures from the events in May and June. It has been great to attend so many events, been blessed by generally good weather, and see so many of my fellow aviation photojournalists at the events.

Featured in the July edition of the newsletter is a photo review of the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. This event continues to be one of the largest airshows featuring World War II aircraft and one of the largest World War II living history events held in the United States. This event is a wonderful tribute to our "Greatest Generation" and its one of the events I look most forward to attending each year. The photo review features many of the aircraft in attendance at the event and highlights from the airshows held on Saturday and Sunday of the event. For the third consecutive year, the Mid-Atlantic World War II Weekend held a Night-Engine-Run Photo Shoot. I recently did an exclusive story about that portion of the event for the online aviation magazine Photorecom.net. You can read that article and see pictures of the night photo shoot at the following link: https://photorecon.net/2023-mid-atlantic-air-museums-world-war-ii-weekend-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 an incredible honor to cover an event I grew up attending with my grandfather and that is so important to the local community. Please check out this feature and please visit the article about the night shoot on Photorecon.net as well.

Also featured in this edition of the newsletter is a look at the Douglas C-47 Skytrain "Placid Lassie". Operated by the Tunison Foundation, this C-47 has an impressive combat history that saw it fly missions during the Invasion of Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge. "Placid Lassie" was one of the star aircraft appearances this year at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend.

The fastest aircraft ever built propelled by air-breathing engines is featured in the "Aircraft of the National Air and Space Museum" section, the SR-71 Blackbird. The SR-71 featured is on display in the main gallery of the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center. This SR-71 also set a record when it flew its final flight to the museum in 1990, flying from Los Angeles to Washington D.C. in a little over an hour.

This edition of the newsletter also features Hobbymaster's new 1/72 scale Northrop Grumman E-2D Hawkeye. This die-cast model is a great replica of the aircraft that serves in the airborne early warning role for the U.S. Navy and often gets overlooked for the importance of its role compared to fighter and strike aircraft. The E-2D is the latest variant of the Hawkeye and is expected to serve in its role with the U.S. Navy until at least 2040.

There is also lots of other great stuff in this edition. Please check everything out, and as always, feel free to share the newsletter with whomever you wish. If you haven't already, please consider joining the newsletter's social media groups on Instagram and Facebook. The links are listed below. As always, thank you for reading and supporting my aviation photojournalism efforts.

Regards,
-Corey

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What's Inside:

Brunner-Winkle Bird CK

A restored 1932 Brunner-Winkle Bird CK biplane in flight during a fly-in held at the Golden Age Air Museum in Bethel, Pennsylvania in June. The Brunner-Winkle Bird biplanes were noted for their excellent handling qualities, which made them easy and safe to fly. The Bird CK is powered by a Kinner K-5 five-cylinder radial engine. This engine is well-known for its distinctive popping sound when the aircraft is in flight.

The Brunner-Winkle Bird was a three-seat air taxi and joy-riding biplane built in the United States from 1928 to 1931. The aircraft was built by the Brunner-Winkle Aircraft Corporation, which was established in Glendale, Queens, New York in 1928.

The first aircraft built by the company was the Model A. It was designed specifically to use the Curtiss OX-5 engine. The engine was a water-cooled, inline, V-8 engine that produced about 90 horsepower and was used to power the Curtiss JN-4 "Jenny" World War I training aircraft. When the Bird Model A was introduced in 1928, the OX-5 engines were available and inexpensive. At the end of 1929, Brunner-Winkle introduced the Model BK. The new model was powered by a Kinner B-5 five-cylinder radial engine that also produced 90 horsepower. After the Great Crash of 1929, the Brunner-Winkle Aircraft Corporation was reorganized as the Bird Aircraft Company. The last model of the Bird built in quantity was the CK, introduced in 1931. The CK was powered by a larger Kinner B-5 engine that produced 125 horsepower. The front cockpit of the CK was also enlarged to hold three passengers. During the Great Depression, many startup aircraft and aircraft engine manufacturers failed. The Bird Aircraft Company shared a similar fate, going into receivership and ending operations in 1932 when the Perth Amboy Title Company took over the assets of the company and eventually liquidated it.

The Bird biplanes were known for their sesquiplane design, in which the top wing is twice the area of the lower wing. This makes the biplane a gentle, honest, and stable aircraft to fly. The Bird biplanes were also easy to take off and land, doing both at about 40 miles per hour. The flying qualities of the Bird biplanes were so admired that Charles Lindbergh bought one for his wife to teach her to fly. About 240 Bird biplanes were built, with approximately 70 surviving today either in airworthy condition or on static display in museums. The Bird biplanes that remain airworthy are beloved by their owners for their excellent craftsmanship and flying qualities.

This beautifully restored example is a privately owned 1932 Brunner-Winkle Bird CK. It made an appearance at a recent fly-in event at the Golden Age Air Museum in Bethel, Pennsylvania.

Hobbymaster 1/72 Scale Northrop Grumman E-2D Hawkeye

Hobbymaster's recent release of a 1/72 scale Northrop Grumman E-2D Hawkeye is the first time the company has released a D variant of their excellent Hawkeye model. Although the D variant of the Hawkeye looks outwardly similar to earlier variants, the new D model features all-new avionics and communications suites. Hobbymaster's excellent model of the Hawkeye captures the aircraft's distinctive shape and details, such as its eight-bladed propellers, large radar dome, and unique tail structure.

The Northrop Grumman E-2 Hawkeye is a twin-turboprop, all-weather, carrier-capable tactical airborne early warning (AEW) aircraft. The Hawkeye was designed in the 1950s and 1960s by Grumman Aircraft Company for the U.S. Navy. Unlike other aircraft which were adapted to the role, the E-2 was the first aircraft specifically designed for AEW missions. In addition to airborne early warning capabilities, the E-2 and its crew of five has the ability to provide command and control to an aircraft carrier battle group, directing fighter aircraft on strike and defense missions and even controlling search and rescue missions at sea.

The E-2 is powered by a pair of Allison/Rolls-Royce T56A turboprop engines. As the E-2 is designed for operations off aircraft carrier flight decks, the Hawkeye is equipped with folding wings. One of the E-2 Hawkeye's distinctive features is its large rotating radar dome (rotodome), which houses the E-2's primary antennas for its long-range radar and IFF systems. No other carrier-based aircraft in the world possesses a radar dome.

The E-2 entered service in 1964. The aircraft was soon upgraded with more powerful engines, more efficient eight-bladed propellers, improved radar systems, and improved combat and control capabilities. The latest variant is the E-2D Hawkeye or the "Advanced Hawkeye", which entered service in 2007. The E-2D has an all-new avionics and communications suite, more powerful Allison T56A engines, a glass cockpit, and aerial refueling capability. In addition to the U.S. Navy, the E-2 has been operated by Japan, Israel, France, Mexico, Singapore, and Taiwan. In continuous production since 1960, the Hawkeye has the longest production run of any carrier-based aircraft. Currently, the U.S. Navy is upgrading its entire Hawkeye fleet to the E-2D standard and plans to keep the aircraft in service until at least 2040.

The E-2 Hawkeye has served with distinction in many U.S. military conflicts since its introduction during the Vietnam War, including Operation Desert Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The E-2s have also provided assistance to the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Customs Service on counter-narcotics and maritime interdiction missions.

Hobbymaster's latest release of its excellent 1/72 scale E-2 Hawkeye model represents an E-2D variant of the aircraft for the first time after doing several models representing E-2C Hawkeyes from various squadrons. The aircraft depicted represents an E-2D Hawkeye assigned to U.S. Navy Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron VAW-121 "Blue Tails" based at Naval Air Station Norfolk. VAW-121 flew the E-2C Hawkeye for 37 years before converting to the E-2D in 2014, being the first U.S. Navy Hawkeye squadron to do so.

Hobbymaster's 1/72 E-2 Hawkeye is an excellent model of an aircraft known in the U.S. Navy as the "Hummer" for the distinctive sound of its turboprop engines. The model is made of die-cast metal with plastic parts. Similar to other Hobbymaster models, the model comes with a display stand and optional landing gear parts to display the aircraft with its landing gear extended or retracted. The front canopy is removable so two pilot figures included with the model can be placed in the cockpit. A new part is included with this model, replicating a blister found on the underside of the fuselage that's only found on the E-2D variant of the Hawkeye.

Hobbymaster's model of the Hawkeye captures the distinctive features of the real aircraft well, including the Hawkeye's large radar dome and unique tail structure. The overall shape of the model and the detail of the eight-bladed propellers and engine nacelles is outstanding. Although not the most vibrant Hawkeye paint scheme, Hobbymaster painted this model correctly with all appropriate stenciling and the distinctive colors of VAW-121 on the tail surfaces.

There is some room for improvement with Hobbymaster's new E-2D Hawkeye with regards to the display stand and parts fit. The label on the display stand erroneously lists the model as an E-2C variant when this Hawkeye is a D variant. The design of the stand is also poor as it does not hold this larger 1/72 scale model very securely. The landing gear parts also fit tightly into the engine nacelles and require considerable patience to position properly without breaking them.

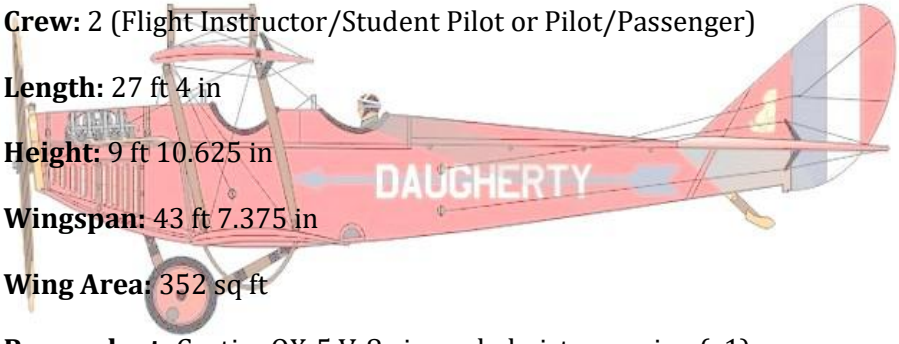
Hobbymaster's 1/72 scale die-cast E-2D Hawkeye is an excellent model of an aircraft that is an important part of U.S. Navy aircraft carrier battle groups but rarely gets the recognition it deserves. The E-2D Hawkeye is essentially the "eyes of the fleet" and will have that role for many years to come. Hobbymaster's 1/72 die-cast E-2D Hawkeye is a great addition to any collection of die-cast naval aircraft.

The fine qualities of Hobbymaster's excellent new 1/72 scale Northrop Grumman E-2D Hawkeye model are somewhat dampened by the disappointment of the display stand. In what is a significant error and oversight for a manufacturer like Hobbymaster, the company incorrectly identified this aircraft as an E-2C variant of the Hawkeye when it in fact represents a new E-2D variant. This error probably occurred because all of Hobbymaster's previous 1/72 Hawkeye models have been replicas of C variant aircraft.

Curtiss JN-4D “Jenny” (1918)

The Curtiss JN-4D “Jenny” was a variant of the Curtiss JN series of biplanes built by the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company. The “Jenny” was produced as a training aircraft for the U.S. Army Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps, who used the JN-4 in Canada and called it the “Canuck”. The “Jennys” twin-seat arrangement, low landing speed, tractor propeller, and maneuverability made it an excellent training aircraft. The structure of the “Jenny” was also robust and easily adaptable to modifications, such as a ski undercarriage, so the aircraft could be flown on snow-covered runways and removing the turtle deck behind the cockpits to allow carrying a stretcher as an air ambulance. Over 6,000 Curtiss “Jennys” were built during World War I, and the type today is remembered as being one of America’s most successful early airplanes.

Curtiss JN-4D “Jenny”



Crew: 2 (Flight Instructor/Student Pilot or Pilot/Passenger)

Length: 27 ft 4 in

Height: 9 ft 10.625 in

Wingspan: 43 ft 7.375 in

Wing Area: 352 sq ft

Powerplant: Curtiss OX-5 V-8 air-cooled piston engine (x1)

Propeller: Wooden two-blade fixed-pitch

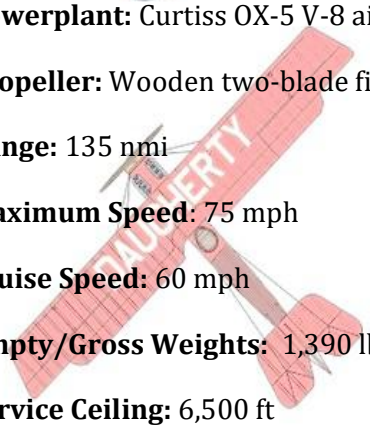
Range: 135 nmi

Maximum Speed: 75 mph

Cruise Speed: 60 mph

Empty/Gross Weights: 1,390 lb/1,920 lb

Service Ceiling: 6,500 ft



1918 Curtiss JN-4D "Jenny", MSN 8047, Golden Age Air Museum, Grimes Airport, Bethel, Pennsylvania, June 2023

The Curtiss JN-4 "Jenny" was one of the most famous World War I aircraft built in North America. Designed for pilot training, over 6,000 JN-4 "Jennys" were built to train American and Canadian pilots. It is estimated that 95% of all American and Canadian pilot trainees completed their flight training in Curtiss JN-4 "Jennys" or "Canucks" as they were called in Canada.

Although the "Jenny" was important as a pilot training aircraft, it is arguably the impact the "Jenny" had on aviation in the years following World War I that made it famous. After the war ended, thousands of the "Jennys" were sold as surplus to pilots returning home from the war. The surplus "Jennys" and their pilots introduced many Americans to aviation in the 1920s by barnstorming across the country, giving rides, and performing acts such as wing walking, automobile-to-aircraft transfers, and parachute jumps at airshows. Surplus "Jennys" were also used to begin the first airmail service in the United States. For many Americans in the 1920s in rural parts of the country, a pilot delivering mail in a Curtiss "Jenny" or showing up at their town to give rides was their first time seeing an airplane. Unfortunately, the barnstorming pilots used the surplus JN-4 "Jennys" hard, and many of the were wrecked in accidents and crashes. As a result, by the beginning of the 1930s, very few Curtiss "Jennys" remained in airworthy condition.

The Golden Age Air Museum's 1918 Curtiss JN-4D "Jenny" is one of the few surviving airworthy examples of a Curtiss "Jenny" in the world. The "Jenny" was acquired by the Golden Age Air Museum in the late 1990s and restored by the dedicated work of the volunteer staff to original condition over the course of several years. The JN-4D "Jenny" flew for the first time following restoration in 2009. The "Jenny" is painted in the bright red color scheme of an aircraft flown by Earl S. Daugherty, a barnstorming and Hollywood stunt pilot from Long Beach, California, during the 1920s. The restored JN-4D "Jenny" is airworthy and is flown regularly during special events and flying circus airshows at the Golden Age Air Museum.

Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend

One of the nation's largest living history events and airshows dedicated to the World War II era once again drew thousands to the museum located at the Reading Regional Airport near Reading, Pennsylvania.

The Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia's restored North American P-51D Mustang "Red Nose" is always a favorite at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Warbird experience flights in the Mustang sell out quickly at the event. Here, the P-51D departs the airport on another one of those flights, an experience of a lifetime for many enthusiasts that buy them.

I take a break from my media duties at the event to pose for a picture with the Commemorative Air Force Air Base Georgia's Douglas SBD-5 Dauntless. Seeing the SBD up close and having my photo taken with it was a special moment for me, as my great-uncle was a mechanic for this type during World War II. Thanks to fellow photographer John Osciak for taking this photo for me.

For the 32nd 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 2, 3, and 4. 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 ever, the Tunison Foundation's D-Day and Battle of the Bulge veteran Douglas C-47 Skytrain "Placid Lassie" attended the event. Also attending the event were returning favorites such as the Commemorative Air Force's restored Boeing B-29 Superfortress "Fifi" and North American P-51 Mustang "Red Nose". The Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's newly-acquired Aichi D3A1 "Val" replica was also on static display on the ramp during the event. Unfortunately, mechanical problems prevented some aircraft scheduled to attend from appearing at the event this year. Rides were available in several historic aircraft at the event. For the third consecutive year, World War II Weekend featured a special night-engine-run photo shoot for photographers featuring three aircraft that were part of the airshow roster.

Although some aircraft scheduled to attend were forced to cancel due to mechanical problems and some rain fell on Friday and Saturday, World War II Weekend was once again well-attended by aviation, military, and history enthusiasts of all ages. The following photographs showcase some airshow highlights of the 2023 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend.

Early arrivals to the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend often get to see many of the aircraft participating as static displays or in the daily airshows arrive for the event on Thursday afternoon. In addition to the aircraft, many reenactors arrive on Thursday to begin to set up their encampments and move their restored military vehicles into display areas. In this photo, the Commemorative Air Force's Boeing B-29 Superfortress "Fifi" has just landed at Reading Regional Airport.

Thursday at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend is also the day the warbird experience flights begin. Rides on some aircraft, such as the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia's North American P-51D Mustang "Red Nose" seen here, sell out for the weekend quickly. Operators that can bring their aircraft in on Thursday and book some ride flights make more revenue over the weekend. It also gives aviation enthusiasts spotting at the airport an extra chance to see the aircraft in flight.

The west side of Reading Regional Airport is great for spotting arrivals and flight operations for the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. The light only gets better for photographs as the hours draw into the late afternoon. There were several aircraft that arrived for the event late on Thursday afternoon. This restored Boeing VN2S-4 Stearman Kaydet, owned by Christian and Jack Kappler, is a beautiful example of the classic biplane that is one of the most famous training aircraft ever built.

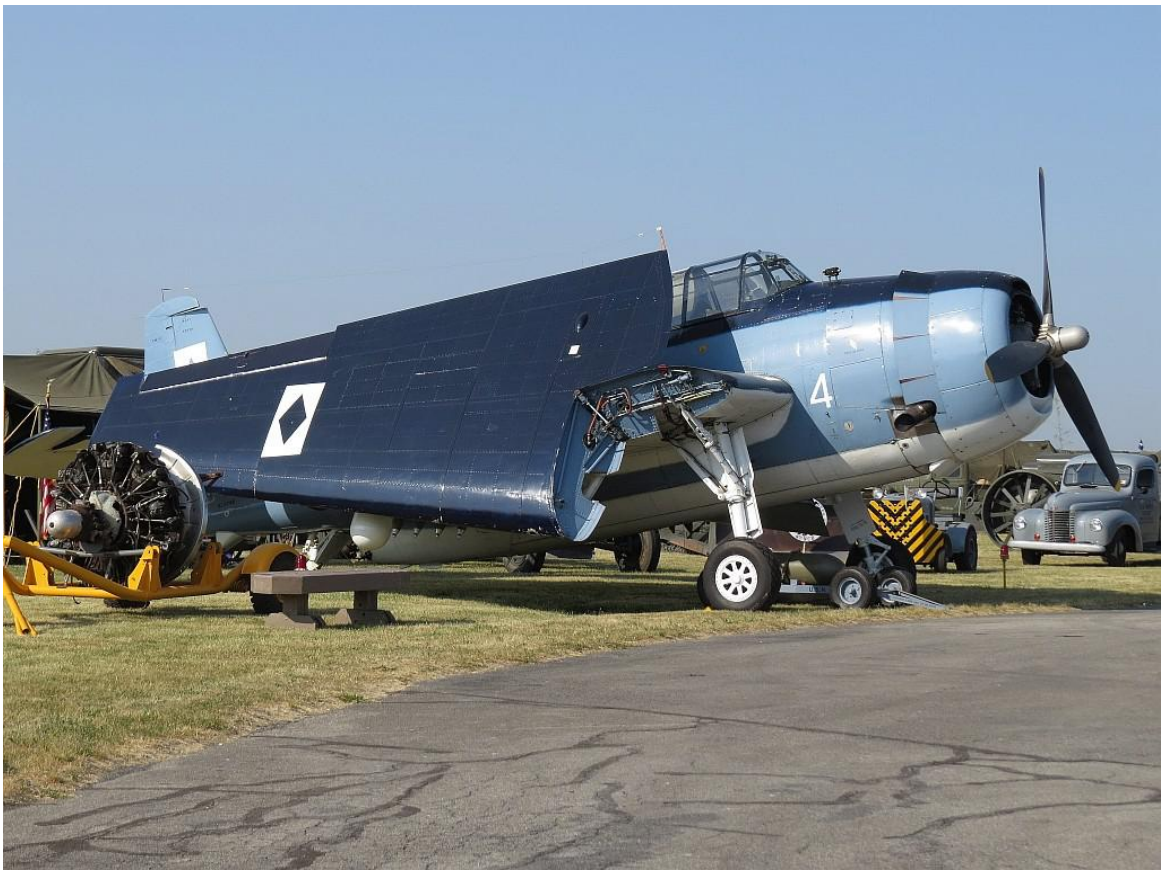
The Yankee Air Museum in Ypsilanti, Michigan, has always been a dedicated supporter of the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. The museum always sends one or more of their aircraft to the event for static display and flying. Although their beautiful B-17 Flying Fortress, "Yankee Lady", could not make the trip to Reading this year, the museum sent their Douglas C-47 Skytrain "Hairless Joe" to participate. This is "Hairless Joe" just a few seconds from landing on Thursday afternoon.

Another early arrival to the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend on Thursday was the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia's Douglas SBD-5 Dauntless. The SBD was flying throughout the day on Thursday on a few warbird experience flights. Outdated when World War II began, the SBD ended up playing a key role in the Battle of Midway, when U.S. Navy SBDs and their crews destroyed four Japanese aircraft carriers and turned the tide of the war in the Pacific theatre in favor of the Allies.

On Friday morning, the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend officially opens to the public. Friday is typically the slowest day of the event in terms of attendance, and Friday morning is a great time to take photos of reenactors and aircraft on display with no people around them. This aircraft is the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's rare Northrop P-61 Black Widow night fighter. Once this long term restoration project is completed, this P-61 Black Widow will be the only flying example in the world.

The Mid-Atlantic Air Museum has an extensive collection of aircraft, and most of them are on display on the grounds during World War II Weekend. This is the museum's North American B-25 Mitchell "Briefing Time". The B-25 Mitchell was one of the most versatile twin-engine bombers of World War II with over 11,000 being built. In addition to being used as a medium bomber, the B-25 was used for several other roles, including VIP transport, gunship, anti-shipping, and maritime patrol.

Also on display on the museum grounds during World War II Weekend was the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's General Motors TBM Avenger. Designed by Grumman as a torpedo bomber, most Avengers were built under license by General Motors. Used as a torpedo bomber during World War II, some Avengers were modified for use in the anti-submarine warfare role and served well into the 1950s. A large number of surplus Avengers were also converted into tankers for aerial firefighting in Canada.



Last year, a big hit among aviation enthusiasts at World War II Weekend was the public debut airshow for Jason Capra's Vintage Wings Inc.'s Douglas C-53 Skytrooper "Beach City Baby". "Beach City Baby" returned to World War II Weekend this year as a static display aircraft. This beautiful aircraft is a rare C-53, a Douglas DC-3 built for the U.S. Army Air Corps. Lacking the large cargo door featured on the C-47, the C-53s were used mainly for the transport of personnel instead of cargo.

Another yearly fixture at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend is the Delaware Aviation Museum's restored North American B-25J Mitchell "Panchito". "Panchito" is also a fixture at airshows throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions of the United States. "Panchito's" owner Larry Kelly enjoys sharing this classic warbird with aviation enthusiasts. The Delaware Aviation Museum also sells warbird experience flights in this aircraft.

Most of the flying on Friday at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend is aircraft arriving at the event, and the warbird experience flights. The warbird experience flights remain popular with aviation enthusiasts despite their increasing cost due to aircraft operating costs and insurance. The Mid-Atlantic Air Museum sells flights in their restored North American SNJ-4 seen here throughout the weekend. The museum also gives its members rides in this aircraft during special events.

The warbird experience flights continued well into the evening on Friday, with the last flights taking place just before sunset. The Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia's SBD-5 Dauntless was busy all day on Friday with ride flights. Because of the aircraft's blue color scheme, the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia has affectionately nicknamed their SBD "The Lady In Blue". The SBD also wears the rare red-bordered U.S. insignia used on aircraft for only a short time in 1943.

Saturday is typically the busiest day for attendance at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. For the aviation photojournalists covering the event, the day starts bright and early with a sunrise photo tour of the aircraft on the airport ramp. After the rain on Friday during the overnight hours, the sun did appear at sunrise to offer some sunlight. In this photo, the Commemorative Air Force's B-29 Superfortress "Fifi" sits on the ramp that remains damp from the overnight rainfall as the sun rises.

For the last few years at World War II Weekend, the sunrise photo walk has also included a living history photo shoot with reenactors. These reenactors are courtesy of Pete Lerro from Lerro Photography. This year, the reenacting scene featured a Chaplain blessing a flight crew about to go on a mission deep into enemy territory. This scene is a recreation of several similar scenes found in old photographs from the World War II period and brings a human element to the aircraft on display.

The reenactors also posed for a few photos that were similar to the pictures many flight crews took together during the war. "Fifi" made the perfect backdrop for these historical-style pictures. Theses pictures were often taken with the aircraft's nose art in the background, as each crew, or sometimes just the pilot, chose the name and illustration to put on the aircraft. Sadly, some of these crew photos were the last photo a spouse or family would receive of their loved one if they were killed in a combat mission.

One of the benefits of the sunrise photo walk for credentialed media and photographers is the ability to see many of the aircraft participating in World War II Weekend up close. Because of ramp space and the fact that they give rides throughout the weekend, some of the aircraft are parked on the active ramp, which is off–limits to the general public during the event. In this picture, the Yankee Air Museum's Douglas C-47 Skytrain "Hairless Joe" sits basking in the early morning sunlight.

The Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia's Bell P-63 Kingcobra was also visited during the sunrise photo walk. Pete Lerro also brought some reenactors to this aircraft for additional photo opportunities for the credentialed media and the photographers on the photo walk. Several of Pete Lerro's reenactors dressed as fighter pilots in full flight gear to pose with the P-63 for photographs. In this picture, Greg Decker is enjoying posing next to the P-63 with his fiancée Aleah Augustine.

On Saturday and Sunday afternoons, a full airshow is held at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend, with many of the aircraft attending the event flying for the attendees. The airshow program is arranged by type of aircraft, with liaison, training, bomber and transport aircraft, and fighters flying together. There are also some special demonstrations of the fighter aircraft. This is the Tunison Foundation's Douglas C-47 Skytrain "Placid Lassie" flying during the Saturday airshow.

On Saturday, approaching thunderstorms and rain generated cloud cover that increased as the afternoon airshow took place. Fortunately, the thunderstorms held off until after the airshow was completed. One aircraft that was busy flying throughout the weekend was the Delaware Aviation Museum's B-25J Mitchell "Panchito". "Panchito" flew several warbird experience flights throughout the weekend and also flew as part of the bomber and transport presentation in Saturday's airshow.

Perhaps the shiniest aircraft in attendance at the 2023 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend was this Beechcraft Model 18. Over 9,000 of these twin-engine light aircraft were built between 1937 and 1969. During World War II, more than 4,500 Beech 18s were used in military service. One of the most important roles of the Beech 18 in military service was as a trainer for bombardiers and navigators. Over 90% of U.S. Army Air Corps bombardiers and navigators trained in these aircraft.

The Commemorative Air Force's Boeing B-29 Superfortress "Fifi" is always a star in the airshows at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Introduced in the later years of World War II for operations in the Pacific theatre, the B-29 Superfortress was one of the most advanced heavy bombers built during World War II. Some of the technological advancements incorporated into the B-29's streamlined design included a pressurized cabin and remote-controlled gun turrets.

Unfortunately, the weather arrived on Saturday just as the fighter aircraft were flying, creating fully overcast conditions. Despite the weather, all the fighter aircraft flew in the airshow. Another new visitor to World War II Weekend this year was the Military Aviation Museum's General Motors FM-2 Wildcat. The FM-2 Wildcat was a license-built version of the Grumman F4F Wildcat that was manufactured by General Motors. Flying the Wildcat was the Military Aviation Museum's chief pilot Mike Spalding.

The Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia's North American P-51D Mustang "Red Nose" might be the most flown aircraft each year at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Warbird experience flights are offered throughout the event in the P-51, and the airplane is flown in the Saturday and Sunday airshows as well. In this picture, "Red Nose" is setting up for landing following a flying display in the Saturday airshow in gray and overcast skies signaling rain is on the way.

After two days of somewhat unsettled weather, the skies finally cleared, and the humidity lessened for the final day of the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Seen here on Sunday morning parked on display is the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia's Bell P-63 Kingcobra. The P-63 was not accepted for service in the U.S. Army Air Corps, only a few being kept for evaluation and testing purposes. Most P-63s built were sent to the Soviet Union under the Lend-Lease Program.

Unlike most fighter aircraft, the P-63 Kingcobra had a mid-engine layout, similar to the P-39 Airacobra that preceded it. The P-63 was powered by an Allison V1710 V-12 liquid-cooled engine that developed 1,800 horsepower. Because of the P-63 Kingcobra's mid-engine configuration, the drive shaft traveled from the engine to under the pilot's seat and between his legs. Finally, the drive shaft traveled through the nose of the aircraft to reach the propeller hub and the four-bladed propeller.

In this photo, the cockpit door and nose access panel are opened on the P-63 Kingcobra, showing off the cockpit and the 37mm cannon. Instead of using a sliding or opening canopy, Bell opted to use doors that were similar in many respects to the doors of an automobile. The cockpit could be entered from either side. One drawback of these doors was it could be difficult for a larger pilot to bail out of the aircraft in an emergency. The nose of the P-63 carried a 37mm cannon that fired through the propeller hub.

Sunday afternoon the weather turned out excellent for the airshow portion of the final day of the 2023 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. First up to fly were the liaison aircraft. Commonly called "l-birds", these aircraft were used in several roles during World War II, including as an air ambulance and artillery spotter. The liaison aircraft were adopted from the designs of several light civilian aircraft. This "l-bird" is a Piper L-4 Grasshopper, the military version of the civilian Piper J-3 Cub.

One of the most well-known U.S. primary training aircraft of World War II is the Boeing Stearman-Kaydet. The Stearman was used by the U.S. Army Air Corps, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and even the U.S. Coast Guard for primary pilot training. The biplane was tough and reliable, and could take considerable punishment from student pilots. Over 10,000 Stearmans were built, and over 200 remain in airworthy condition today. This restored example is painted in late-war U.S. Army Air Corps training colors.

The next portion of the airshow on Sunday featured the primary training aircraft. These aircraft types were the first airplanes student military pilots would learn to fly in their flight training. This aircraft is a Fairchild PT-26 Cornell. The PT -26 Cornell was a variant of the PT-19 Cornell that had an enclosed canopy. The enclosed canopy was beneficial for flying in colder weather climates. Most of the PT-26s built were operated by the Royal Canadian Air Force in Canada as part of their flight training program.

After the primary trainers flew in the airshow, the advanced training aircraft were next on the schedule. For the advanced trainer portion of the program, six North American SNJ/AT-6 flew several formation passes, demonstrating the formation flying skills the pilots would learn in flight training. The SNJ/AT-6 was one of the most successful advanced training aircraft ever built, with over 10,000 examples produced. In this photo, two of the SNJs at the event have joined in formation together.

One of the highlights of the Sunday airshow was an aerobatic demonstration of the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia's Goodyear FG-1D Corsair. The Corsair was one of the finest naval fighter aircraft of World War II, being fast and exceptionally well-armed. In addition to its role as a fighter, the Corsair could also be employed as a fighter-bomber or ground-attack aircraft. Later variants of the Corsair saw action in the Korean War and with the French Navy during the Suez Crisis in the 1950s.

Initially, the Corsair had some teething problems that prevented its use on aircraft carriers. Oil and hydraulic leaks were frequent problems, and the Corsair tended to bounce on landing. Eventually, these problems were solved and the Corsair became one of the most important aircraft on an aircraft carrier deck later in World War II. Although designed by Chance-Vought, many Corsairs were built under license by Goodyear. Here, the Corsair performs a flyby with its landing gear and flaps extended.

After the Corsair's aerobatic demonstration, the other naval aircraft in attendance at World War II Weekend joined together in the air for a Pacific theatre tribute. All of these aircraft played an important role in the Pacific theatre during the war. One of the aircraft joining the Corsair was the Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber from the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia. The SBD Dauntless was used as carrier and land-based dive bomber and scout aircraft throughout World War II.

When the Wildcat was introduced into service, the naval fighter was not really an equal match to the Japanese Mitsubishi A6M "Zero". However, the extensive training of U.S. Navy pilots allowed them to cope against the "Zero" quite successfully until the F6F Hellcat and the F4U Corsair could be built in large numbers. This Wildcat is a license-built General Motors FM-2 variant. The FM-2 had a taller tail and a more powerful engine and was designed for use on smaller escort aircraft carriers.

Warbird collector and enthusiast Tom Duffy has been a longtime supporter of the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Duffy usually brings one or more of the aircraft in his collection to the event for static display and to fly in the airshow. For 2023, Duffy brought two aircraft, his P-51D Mustang "Kwitcherbitchin" and his B-25J Mitchell "Take-Off Time", pictured here. Unlike the Delaware Aviation Museum's B-25J "Panchito", "Take-Off Time" wears a more weathered paint finish.

One of the stars of the airshow portion of the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend this year certainly was the Tunison Foundation's Douglas C-47 Skytrain "Placid Lassie". "Placid Lassie" was supposed to attend World War II Weekend in 2022 but was forced to cancel. Unlike most restored warbirds, "Placid Lassie" has a fascinating history and took part in combat operations during World War II. "Placid Lassie" was in operation during both the Invasion of Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge.

It was great to see this beautiful Beech 18 fly as part of the transport and bomber aircraft flight at World War II Weekend this year. The Beech 18, widely known as the Twin Beech, has been used as a twin-engine utility, cargo, and passenger aircraft throughout its history. During World War II, some Beech 18s were used as light cargo and VIP transport aircraft, being designated the C-45 Expeditor. Some Beech 18s are still in use in remote parts of the world as small airliners and cargo aircraft.

As the Sunday airshow drew to a close at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend, the Commemorative Air Force flew their Boeing B-29 Superfortress "Fifi" one last time for the gathered crowd. The B-29 was flying all weekend in airshow performances and on warbird experience flights, but the event attendees never get tired of seeing the rare surviving B-29 in the skies. In this photo, "Fifi" has just taken off from the airport, and the main landing gear are retracting into the engine nacelles.

"Fifi" banks during the Sunday airshow at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Event spectators are always astonished at how well "Fifi's" flight crew can muscle the large B-29 Superfortress around in the skies. The B-29 was plagued with developmental delays, including engine problems, and only began full combat operations late in the war. The B-29s were used for bombing missions against the Japanese mainland, destroying several Japanese cities on their bombing raids.

The Sunday airshow wrapped up, and the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend concluded for 2023 with a demonstration of the fighter aircraft in attendance at the event. One of the aircraft in the fighter flight was the North American P-51D Mustang "Kwitcherbitchin" owned by warbird collector Tom Duffy. "Kwitcherbitchin" has several appearances at World War II Weekend over the years, and the P-51's unique name always turns some heads and generates some chuckles.

Also flying as part of the fighter flight on Sunday was the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia's Bell P-63 Kingcobra "Miss Betty". Unlike the other fighter aircraft that were in attendance, the P-63 has a very distinctive sound because of its mid-engine layout. Since most P-63s ended up going to the Soviet Union during World War II, very few P-63s have survived in comparison to the P-51D Mustang. It is a pleasure to see this rare P-63 fly at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum World War II Weekend each year.

The Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia's P-51D Mustang "Red Nose" on one final flyby at the end of the airshow on Sunday afternoon. The P-51 was an excellent fighter aircraft and is arguably one of the best fighters built during World War II. The P-51 had superb range and speed, attributes that allowed it to excel escorting bombers deep into enemy territory. Late in the war, the P-51 also established itself as a formidable ground-attack aircraft, taking out enemy targets of opportunity.

After the airshow ended at World War II Weekend on Sunday, a large number of aircraft departed Reading Regional Airport for their home airports. As these aircraft are older and lack modern navigation equipment and lighting, most operators prefer to fly these rare machines during daylight hours and in good weather. One of the first aircraft to depart was the Yankee Air Museum's C-47 Skytrain "Hairless Joe". The C-47 and its crew had one of the longer trips home, a flight back to Ypsilanti, Michigan.

One of the several North American SNJ advanced trainers that was in attendance at the 2023 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend heads for home following the Sunday airshow. The large number of aircraft departures on Sunday afternoon following the end of the event almost became an airshow in itself. Thanks to their extensive use as training aircraft in the armed forces of other countries, large numbers of SNJ/AT-6 aircraft survive today as privately owned warbirds.

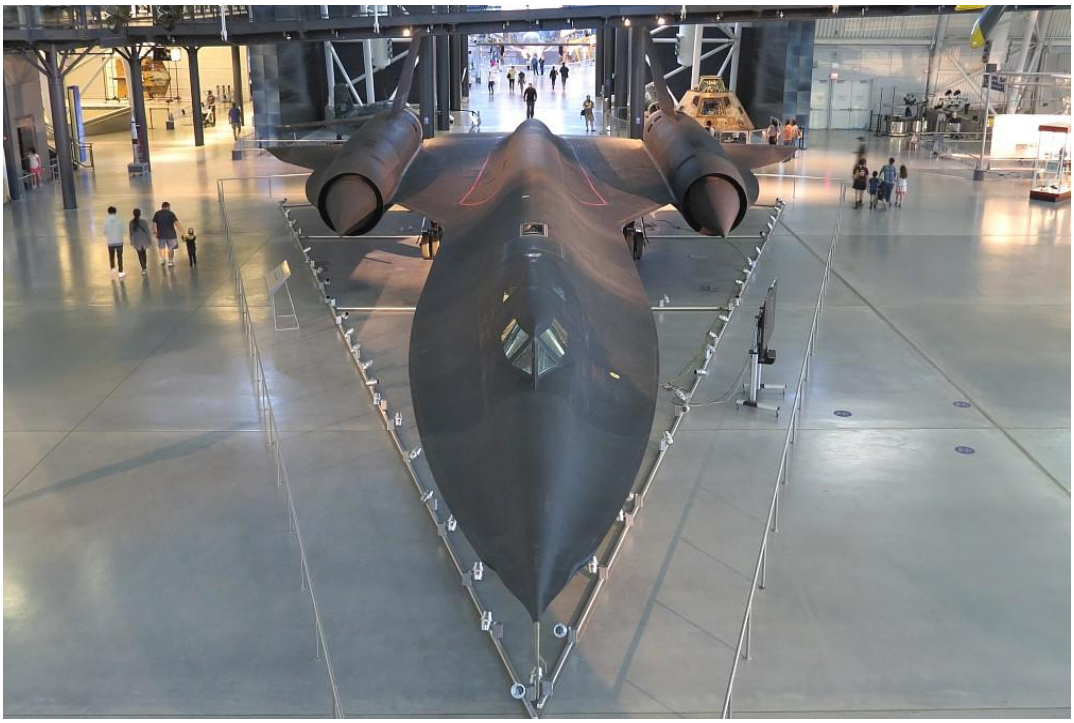
A Taylorcraft L-2 Grasshopper departs the Reading Regional Airport to head home following the 2023 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. The Taylorcraft L-2 was used by the U.S. Army Air Corps as a liaison aircraft during World War II. The L-2 was used for roles such as artillery spotting and short-range reconnaissance. Almost 2,000 L-2s were built during World War II. After the war, many L-2s were converted for civilian use and operated by private pilots as light sport aircraft.

The owner of this restored Fairchild PT-19 Cornell was offering rides in this aircraft throughout the 2023 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend. Since it is a smaller aircraft and burns less fuel, flights in the PT-19 were an affordable option for a warbird experience flight at the event. The PT-19 was used as a primary trainer throughout World War II. In addition to the U.S. Army Air Corps, PT-19s were also used in small numbers by the air forces of several South American nations.

Air Heritage Inc.'s Douglas C-47B Skytrain "Luck of the Irish" heads for home following the conclusion of the airshow Sunday at World War II Weekend after being on static display throughout the weekend at the event. Similar to the C-47 "Placid Lassie", "Luck of the Irish" is also a combat veteran of World War II. The C-47B flew combat missions during the Battle of the Bulge, dropping supplies by parachute to the surrounded American forces in the town of Bastogne.

Long after many of the aircraft that attended World War II Weekend began their trips home late Sunday afternoon, the Commemorative Air Force Airbase Georgia's P-51D Mustang "Red Nose" was still operating warbird experience flights. The flights continuing to operate after the event concluded Sunday indicates the enthusiasm people have for learning about World War II and its history. It is a good indication that World War II Weekend will continue to be a successful event for years to come.

Lockheed SR-71A Blackbird



The Lockheed SR-71A Blackbird on display at the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia. The Blackbird is one of the most famous reconnaissance aircraft in aviation history, thanks to the performance objectives it achieved in speed and operating altitude. The SR-71A on display in the museum served with the U.S. Air Force's 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Kadena Air Base in Japan for 24 years before its retirement in 1990.

The fastest aircraft ever built propelled by air-breathing engines and named the "Blackbird" for its special black radar-absorbing paint, the Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird's performance and operational accomplishments placed it at the forefront of aviation technology during the Cold War. The SR-71 was conceived during the 1950s when Cold War tensions were at the level of a full-blown crisis, and U.S. military commanders needed accurate assessments of Soviet military deployments. The rapid development of advanced surface-to-air missiles and interceptor aircraft meant that a reconnaissance aircraft was needed that flew faster and higher than anything previously developed.

Initially, Lockheed's proposal for a new high-speed, high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft centered on a design powered by hydrogen. This concept proved to be impractical because of the considerable fuel consumption, so Lockheed redesigned the aircraft to use engines powered by conventional fuels. The CIA issued a production contract for an aircraft designated the A-12. Lockheed's "Skunk Works" design team, led by the gifted engineer Clarence L. "Kelly" Johnson designed the A-12 to cruise at Mach 3.3 at altitudes above 60,000 feet. To protect the internal airframe from the heat of flying at such high speeds, the outer skin of the A-12 was made of titanium alloy. The A-12 was also designed to exhibit a low-radar profile by careful shaping of the airframe. The A-12 was first flown in 1962 and after lots of refinement, began being operated by the CIA in 1967. Fifteen A-12s were built and were used operationally by the CIA from 1967 to 1968.

As the A-12 was being refined, U.S. Air Force officials became interested in an interceptor version of the aircraft, designated the YF-12A. Lockheed's "Skunk Works" proposed a specific version of the aircraft designed to conduct post-nuclear-strike reconnaissance. This aircraft would become the SR-71 Blackbird. Experience gained from operating the YF-12 led the U.S. Air Force to have a two-man crew for the SR-71, a pilot, and a RSO (Reconnaissance Systems Officer). The RSO operated an array of defensive systems on the SR-71, including an Electronic Countermeasures System (ECM).

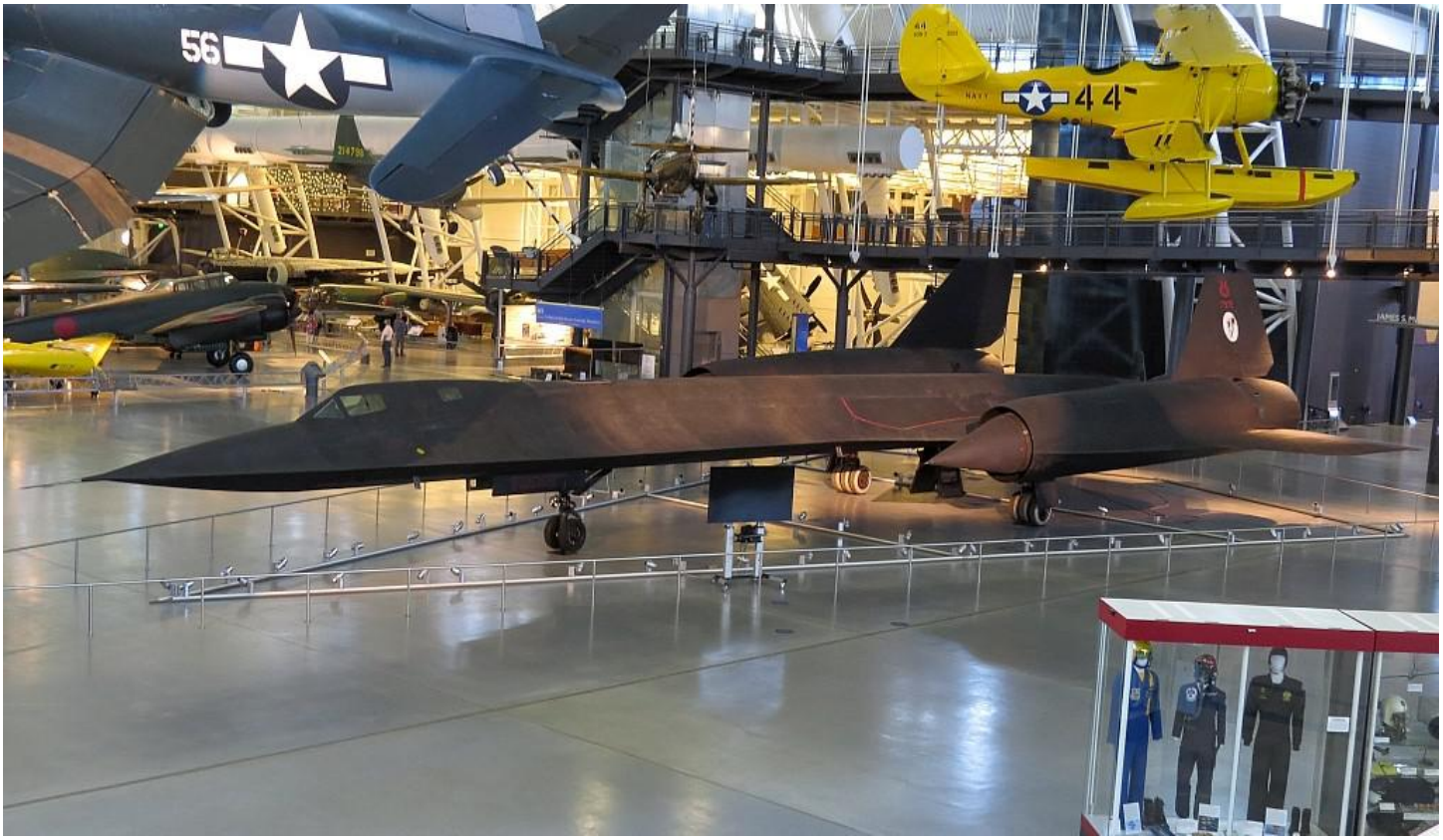
The SR-71 was designed to fly deep into enemy territory, avoiding interception by flying at high speeds and high altitudes. The SR-71's Pratt & Whitney J58 engines were designed to operate in afterburner almost continuously. Because the Blackbird could operate at altitudes of up to 85,000 feet, the crew members were required to wear pressure suits similar to those worn by astronauts. Lockheed built 32 SR-71 Blackbirds, two being specialized SR-71B training variants.

The U.S. Air Force's 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SRW) operated the SR-71, flying it from Kadena Air Base in Japan throughout the SR-71's career. On a few occasions, SR-71 reconnaissance missions were flown from Royal Air Force Base Mildenhall in England and Beale Air Force Base in California.

Although satellites began replacing manned aircraft to gather intelligence when the SR-71 became operational, the Blackbird remained a vital tool for high-altitude intelligence missions. U.S. Air Force SR-71 Blackbirds conducted vital intelligence-gathering missions during the 1973 Yom Kippur War and after the 1986 American raid conducted by American aircraft in Libya. In 1987, Kadena-based SR-71 crews flying missions over the Persian Gulf detected the Iranian Silkworm missile batteries that threatened commercial shipping in the region.

As the performance of surveillance satellites improved, the U.S. Air Force lost enthusiasm for operating the SR-71, which was a very expensive aircraft to operate and maintain. The 9th SRW ceased operations in 1990. Although the SR-71 program was briefly revived in 1995, continued arguing over its cost soon led to its final retirement. NASA flew two SR-71As and a two-seat SR-71B for high-speed research projects until 1999.

The SR-71A in the National Air and Space Museum collection ended its career on March 6, 1990, in record-setting fashion. Lt. Col. Ed Yeilding and his RSO, Lt. Col. Joseph Vida, flew this SR-71 from Los Angeles to Washington D.C., landing at the Washington Dulles International Airport in 1 hour, 4 minutes and 20 seconds and flying at an average speed of 2,124 miles per hour. At the conclusion of the flight, the SR-71 was officially transferred to the National Air and Space Museum.



Douglas C-47 Skytrain (1941)

The Douglas C-47 Skytrain or Dakota (RAF designation) is a military transport aircraft that was developed from the DC-3 civilian airliner. The C-47 differed from the DC-3 by having numerous modifications, such as a large cargo door, hoist attachment, strengthened floor, a shortened tail cone to accommodate the installation of glider towing shackles and an astrodome in the cabin roof. The C-47 was used extensively by the Allies during World War II for the transportation of cargo and personnel. Later in the war, the C-47 was used to drop paratroopers and tow gliders carrying equipment or airborne forces. During World War II, over 10,000 C-47s were built in more than 60 variants. The C-47 remained in military service for many years after World War II, with some still in use today as airliners or cargo aircraft in remote areas of the world.

Douglas C-47 Skytrain

Crew: 4 (Pilot, Co-Pilot, Radio Operator, Navigator)

Passenger Capacity: 28 seated or 18-22 fully-equipped paratroopers or 14 stretchers and 3 attendants

Length: 63 ft 9 in

Height: 17 ft

Wingspan: 95 ft 6 in

Wing Area: 987 sq ft

Powerplant: Pratt & Whitney R-1830-90C Twin Wasp 14-cylinder air-cooled radial piston engine (x2)

Range: 1,400 nmi

Cruise Speed: 160 mph

Maximum Speed: 224 mph

Empty/Gross/Maximum Takeoff Weights: 18,136 lb/26,000 lb/31,000 lb

Service Ceiling: 26,400 ft

An Aircraft That Helped Win The War

"Placid Lassie" History

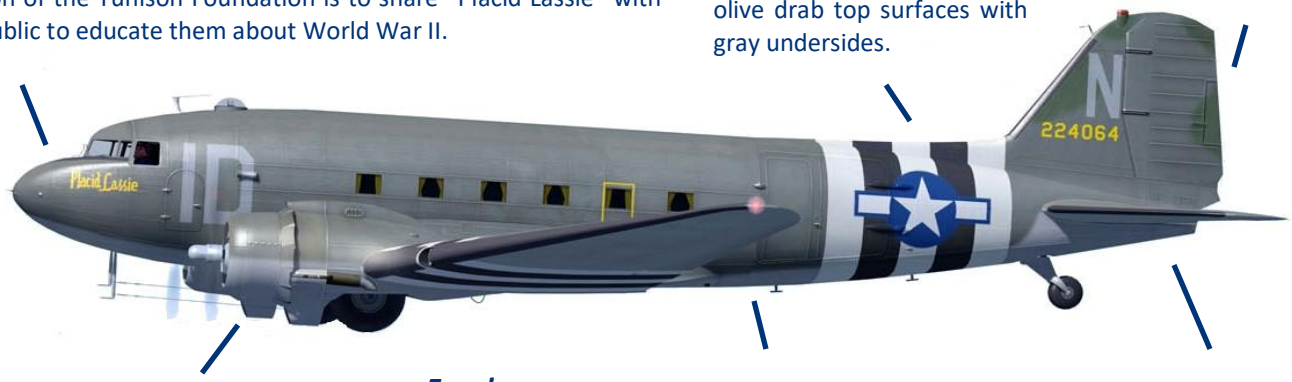
"Placid Lassie" was built by Douglas as a C-47A in July 1943 and assigned military serial number 42-24064. As part of the U.S. Army Air Force in World War II, "Placid Lassie" flew in Operation Neptune (D-Day), Operation Repulse (Relief of Bastogne), and several other Allied operations in Europe in 1944 and 1945. After returning home and passing through several owners, "Placid Lassie" ended up in a field of weeds at Covington Airport in poor condition. In 2010, the aircraft was acquired by Clive Edwards and James Lyle, who wanted to restore a "dead" DC-3 and fly it to Airventure for the type's 75th-anniversary celebration, a goal which they accomplished with lots of work. After Airventure, research revealed the C-47's rich World War II combat history. In 2014, a meeting with a former crew member of the aircraft, Ed Tunison, revealed the C-47 was named "Placid Lassie" and flew with the 74th Transport Troop Squadron. Today, "Placid Lassie" is operated by the Tunison Foundation, named for Ed Tunison, who has since passed away. The mission of the Tunison Foundation is to share "Placid Lassie" with the public to educate them about World War II.

Markings

During the Invasion of Normandy (D-Day), the Allies wanted a quick way to identify friendly aircraft over the invasion zone. All Allied aircraft participating in D-Day received vertical black and white stripes on their fuselages and wings to identify them as Allied aircraft. "Placid Lassie" also wears markings on its nose and tail identifying it as part of the 74th Troop Transport Squadron. The C-47 wears the standard color scheme of olive drab top surfaces with gray undersides.

War Effort

The C-47 played a critical role in the success of the Allies during World War II. The aircraft allowed Allied forces to move personnel and equipment quickly and efficiently in all theatres of operation. After the war, General Dwight D. Eisenhower said the C-47 was one of four weapons that helped the Allies win the war, along with the Jeep, the Bazooka, and the atomic bomb.



Engines & Landing Gear

The C-47 was powered by a pair of Pratt & Whitney R-1830-90C Twin Wasp radial engines. These 14-cylinder engines were rated at 1,200 horsepower each and burned fuel at an average of 95 gallons per hour. Each engine had an oil capacity of 29 gallons. On some variants of the C-47, these engines were equipped with two-speed superchargers for improved high-altitude performance. The main landing gear retracted into the engine nacelles, leaving the tires semi-exposed in the underside of the nacelles. The partially exposed main landing gear tires provided some cushion if the C-47 crash-landed with its landing gear retracted. The landing gear's design also allowed for the quick installation of skis if operations required landings and takeoffs from snow-covered runways.

Fuselage

One of the easiest ways to tell apart a C-47 from a DC-3 was the fuselage. The C-47 was built with a large two-panel cargo door on the port side of the rear fuselage. The forward part of this door could be opened in flight, allowing paratroopers or cargo to be dropped from the air. The rear panel of the door, when opened along with the forward panel, allowed large pieces of cargo to be loaded into the C-47's fuselage. To accommodate heavier cargo loads, the C-47 had a strengthened fuselage floor compared to its civilian DC-3 counterpart and could carry up to 6,000 lb of cargo. If transporting personnel, the C-47 could be equipped with seating to accommodate 28 passengers or carry 14 stretchers and three attendants if transporting wounded. During World War II, the C-47 frequently transported cargo thought to be impossible to move by air. On one occasion, a C-47 transported replacement aircraft wings strapped to the underside of its fuselage because they would not fit through the cargo door on the fuselage. The ability to transport both personnel and cargo made the C-47 a versatile and rugged design.

Tail

The C-47 had a shortened tail cone than its civilian DC-3 counterpart. The shorter tail cone allowed shackles to be installed so the C-47 could tow gliders carrying equipment or additional airborne forces. The C-47 could tow two Waco CG-4 gliders at one time. Unfortunately, glider tow missions were flown low and slow, and this made the C-47s and their crews extremely vulnerable to enemy anti-aircraft fire.

Lovely Ladies, Vintage Fashion, And A Wildcat

Members of The America's Sweethearts girl group Amanda Lea LaVergne, Katie Anderson White, and Shaina Vencel pose for some photos next to the Military Aviation Museum's restored General Motors FM-2 Wildcat at the 2023 Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend.

For many aviation enthusiasts, aviation events and airshows are the perfect places to take photographs of their favorite aircraft. But airshows can make for interesting photo opportunities involving people as well. This is especially true at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend, where reenactors dressed in historical attire are throughout the event grounds portraying all aspects of World War II life.

One of the aircraft appearing at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum's World War II Weekend this year was the Military Aviation Museum's General Motors FM-2 Wildcat. Designed by Grumman and designated the F4F, the Wildcat was a naval fighter used by the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and Royal Navy during World War II. The Wildcat was the first aircraft that when flown well, could at least cope with the excellent Japanese Mitsubishi A6M "Zero" fighter. The Wildcat was also a rugged aircraft and was designed to take a considerable amount of battle damage and remain flying. The FM-2 variant of the Wildcat was license-built by General Motors for use on smaller escort aircraft carriers and had a more powerful engine and taller tail surface. One unique aspect of the Wildcat was its landing gear, which had to be retracted and extended manually using a hand crank in the cockpit.

The America's Sweethearts were one of the entertainment acts performing at the airshow. Based in New York City, the girl group travels to events throughout the country, bringing the sound and style of 1940s swing music to audiences that, in many cases, have never heard the genre of music in a live performance. Musical pieces originally composed and sung by The Andrews Sisters are favorites of the group to perform. The America's Sweethearts have performed their music in theatres, civic centers, and smaller venues. They also perform concerts at museums and special events to honor our veterans. Complimenting the musical performance of the group are their colorful Retro style outfits that honor the history of the vintage musical pieces they perform.

Following a musical performance on Sunday afternoon at World War II Weekend, the members of The America's Sweethearts agreed to a brief photo shoot next to the FM-2 Wildcat. Amanda Lea LaVergne, Katie Anderson White, and Shaina Vencel looked great in their vintage-inspired sailor outfits next to the classic naval fighter. Perhaps these lovely ladies are visiting a Naval Air Station in 1945? Perhaps they are visiting some pilots based in the Pacific? The mind may wander endlessly with these unique and fun photos.


30

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.