

AFEHRI File 19-10

**Research Materials/Source Documents
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FILE TITLE: 1st Person to Fly over 15,000 hours in a C-141 Aircraft-CMSgt Lewis H. Fountain

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NEIGHBORS IN THE NEWS



Inquirer Correspondent / MARTY O'GRADY

Lewis Fountain of Maple Shade set a record for the number of flying hours — 15,000 — in a C-141 StarLifter.

A record in the sky that is likely to last: 15,000 hours of flying

By Yana Ginburg
INQUIRER CORRESPONDENT

The skies were so friendly for Lewis Fountain of Maple Shade that he rarely came down.

Fountain, whose military flying career spanned 31 years, is no average airman.

Just before ending his military career as a master sergeant at McGuire Air Force Base, Fountain set a record sure to make him part of military aviation history.

In 1991, Fountain, a flight engineer, became the first man to complete 15,000 flying hours in a C-141 StarLifter cockpit.

"They never had anyone fly 15,000 hours in that aircraft. The probability of anyone doing it again is next to impossible," Fountain, 56, said.

Fountain earned most of his 15,000 hours in the Air Force Reserve, after his retirement from active duty in

1973.

"It's an awesome feeling. I never thought I would achieve this amount of flying time," he said.

"This [the record] is really a team effort. It is possible because of all the people, crews I have flown with," he said. "One is not an island. You don't achieve these things by yourself."

Fountain dropped out of high school in 11th grade in 1953 and joined the Air Force. He began his flying career in 1961 as a flight mechanic while serving in Turkey. After his return to the United States, Fountain went to flight-engineer school.

Fountain said he requested training for the C-141 because he knew those were the planes that needed flight engineers at McGuire, where he requested to be stationed.

"The two [interests] just married

together," he said.

Fountain also has another distinction — logging more than 15,000 safety flying hours.

"Safety hours are all the hours in all of the planes a guy has flown in and never had an accident," he explained. Of those hours, Fountain said he flew 843 in a C-47 in Europe, 30 in a C-7 in Vietnam and the rest in the C-141.

"The best part of flying is the serenity, the beauty of flight. You get in touch with a different world, different bodily senses associated with being airborne," Fountain said.

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(CMS97)