





DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

18 SEP 1985

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: AF/XOXID (Project WARRIOR Coordinator)

SUBJECT: Project Warrior

TO: All Air Force Members

1. Today's Air Force has a proud and distinguished heritage gained through combat and preparation for combat during peace. Today the latter is termed "deterrence." Project WARRIOR was created to remind us of this heritage and to reinforce our commitment to defend our nation.

2. This chronology of events in the history of US Air Power, entitled simply Project Warrior, was conceived and compiled by TSgt Gerald K. Patton, Jr., with the support of the entire 3300th Technical Training Wing at Keesler AFB as part of their WARRIOR program. We have elected to reprint and distribute the chronology Air Force-wide because it offers all Air Force members a very effective way to learn about our very special past. Most importantly, it allows us to know the men and women who built--often with their lives--the proud traditions we now are charged to uphold.

3. I urge each of you to use this booklet to help implant the professional values that distinguished America's warriors of the past and to help renew our sense of duty, honor, country.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Harley A. Hughes".

HARLEY A. HUGHES, Lt Gen, USAF
Deputy Chief of Staff
Plans and Operations



PROJECT WARRIOR
an ATC Student Awareness
Program

by

G. K. PATTON, JR.

INTRODUCTION

On 1 September 1982, General Lew Allen, Jr., initiated PROJECT WARRIOR as an attempt to resolve two of the Air Force's people-related shortcomings. The first problem was one of attitude and identity. The other was a lack of war-fighting knowledge. General Allen summed up PROJECT WARRIOR when he said,

I believe that a continuing study of military history, combat leadership, the principles of war, and particularly the application of airpower is necessary for us to meet the challenges ahead.

In December 1982, SSgt James Marburger and I sat down to discuss what we could do as ATC Training Instructors to support a student awareness of the PROJECT WARRIOR Program. We came up with the idea of a daily briefing for our students that would fit inside the framework of General Allen's goals for PROJECT WARRIOR. The following day I approached Lt Colonel Joseph C. Ramsey, the Commander of the 3380th Technical Training Group, with our idea. Colonel Ramsey's enthusiastic support soon had the idea transformed into a full-fledged program in the 3380th TCHTG. In time the idea spread to the entire 3300th Technical Training Wing, Keesler AFB, MS.

I strongly believe that the Air Force is America's first line of defense. We, as members of the US Air Force, are here to fight our country's Battles if need be. As ATC instructors, we play a major role in developing the attitudes and outlook of the young men and women who pass through our classrooms. These daily briefings are intended to help implant the professional values that distinguished America's warriors of the past--to renew devotion to duty, honor, and country. The few moments spent each day with these briefings may be just the catalyst needed to create a more dedicated and capable airman.

This briefing book you hold is the end result of a year's labor upon the part of many people here at Keesler AFB. Each of them deserves credit and special thanks. The list of their names is far too long to place here; however, several people deserve special credit, for without them this work would have never been completed:

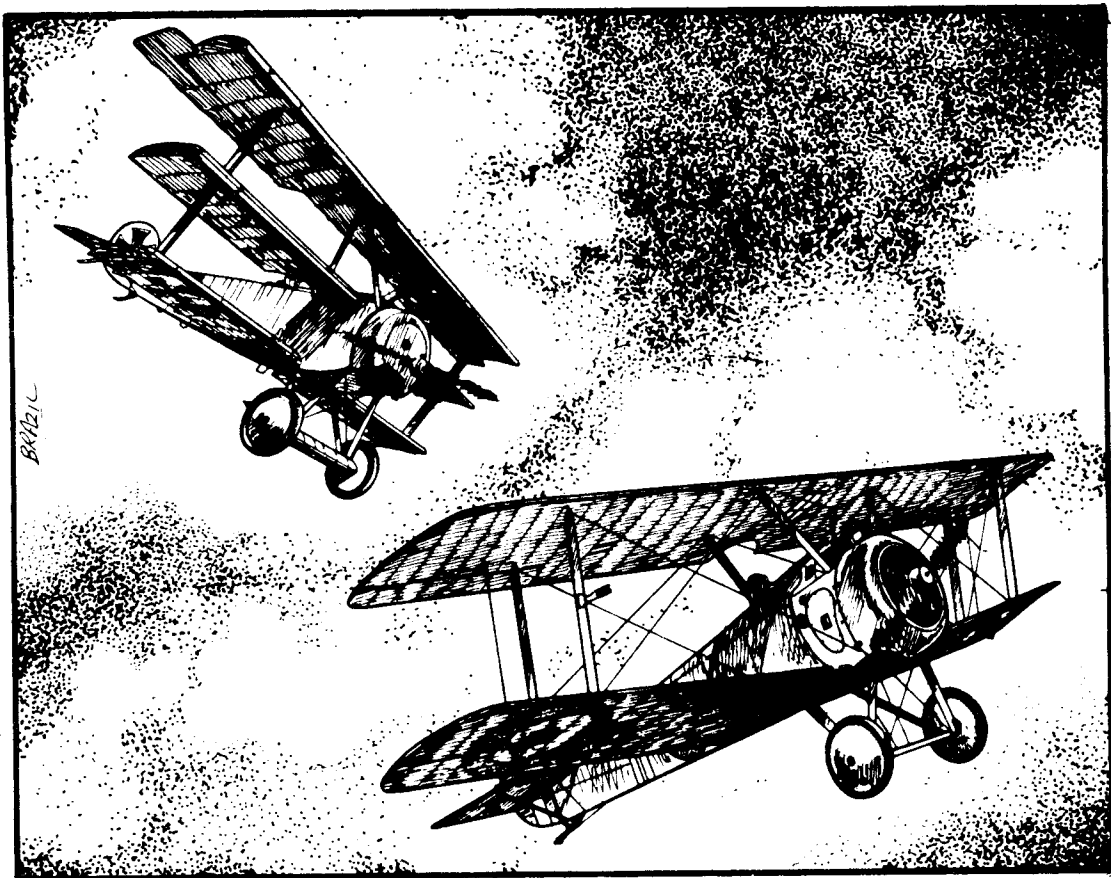
Major General Thomas C. Richards
Colonel Henry W. Boardman, Commander, 3300 TCHTW
Lt Colonel Harry E. Bennett, Jr., 3305 Student Group
Lt Colonel Joseph C. Ramsey, Jr., Commander, 3380 TCHTG
SMSgt Mace A. Card, 3400 TCHTG
MSgt Charles E. Taylor, 3380 TCHTG
TSgt Richard E. Helmick, 3390 TCHTG
TSgt James A. Yanke, 3410 TCHTG
SSgt James H. Marburger, 3380 TCHTG
SSgt James E. Stanmore, 3380 TCHTG
Mr Marty Brazil, 3300 TCHTW
Ms Sally A. Wagner, 3380 TCHTG

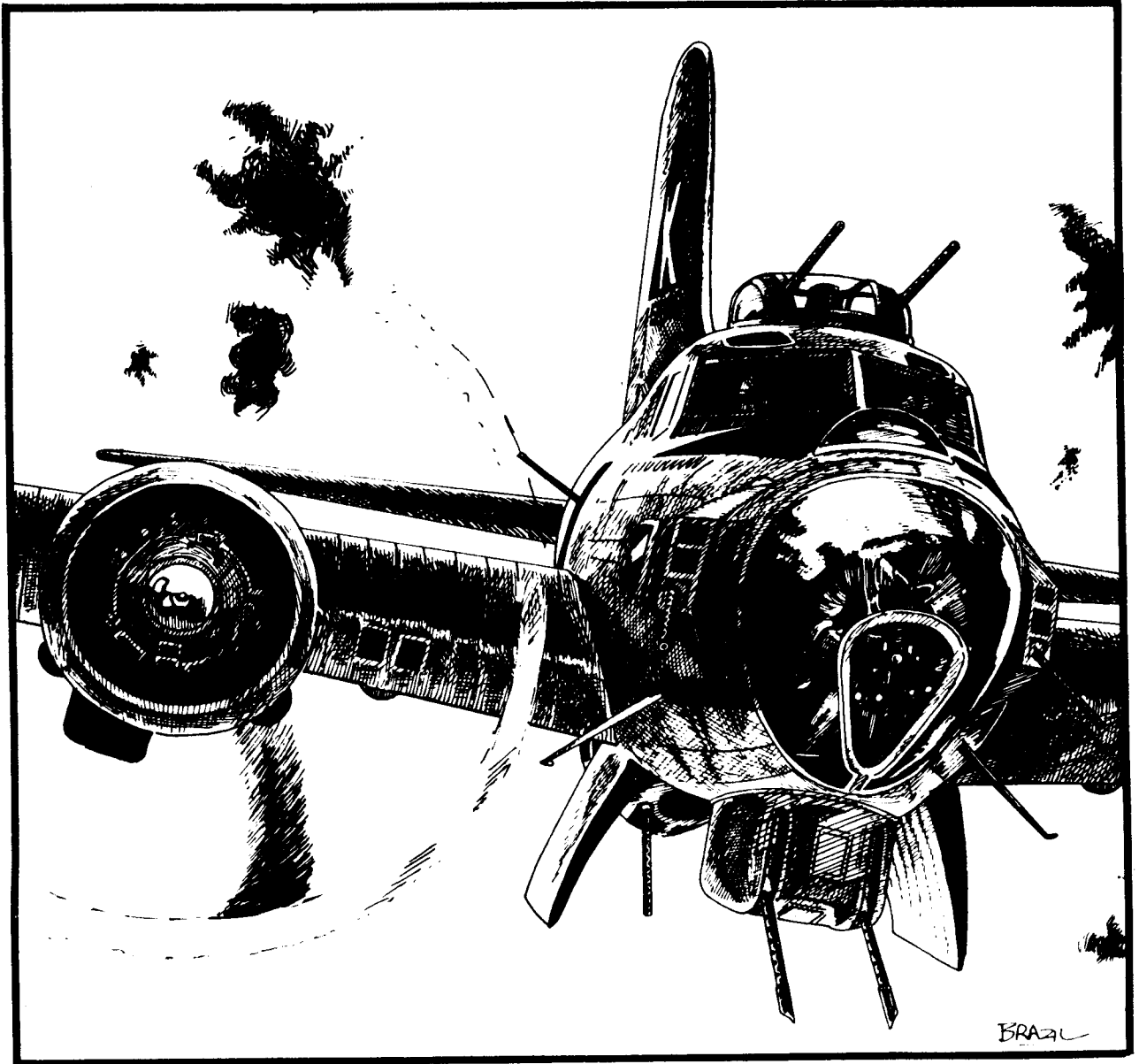
Their hard work has given you a tool to help improve the fighting spirit of the next generation of American warriors.

GERALD K. PATTON, JR., TSgt, USAF
3380 TCHTG, Keesler AFB, MS
1983

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JAN

January 1

On January 1, 1776, General George Washington raised the first American national flag at Cambridge, Massachusetts. One hundred and sixty-eight years later a major supporter of a separate Air Force, General Carl Spaatz, would take command of the United States Strategic Air Force in Europe. From a small force of civilian militia to a world power, the American military has followed the path mapped by leaders of vision such as Washington and Spaatz.

History of the Second World War

January 2

When control of the air is lost, defeat on the ground usually follows. On January 2, 1942, Imperial Japanese forces, operating with total air superiority, captured the city of Manila in the Philippines, despite the heroic efforts of American military forces. It would not be until 1945 that American forces could recapture Manila from the Japanese.

History of the Second World War

January 3

In December 1944, the German Army had attempted to drive the Allies back into the sea during the Battle of the Bulge. However, on January 3, 1945, under the protective wings of American air power, American and British forces began their counter-attack against the Germans in the Ardennes Salient. When the battle ended, over twenty German divisions were destroyed by American ground and air units. It had been American control of the air that spelled defeat for the Germans.

History of the Second World War

January 4

The Medal of Honor is the highest award for valor the United States can bestow upon a member of America's fighting forces. It is not given for the sheer performance of duty, no matter how hazardous that duty may be, but for some voluntary act of valor, beyond the bounds of mere obedience to orders. January 1943, over Raboul, New Britain, Brigadier General Kenneth Walker died in an action attempting to neutralize the Japanese airfield at Raboul. January 1944, over Oscherseben, Germany, Lt Col James Howard fought against the Luftwaffe. January 1945, over Luzon in the Philippines, Major William Shomo engaged Japanese forces that were attempting to stop Americans from landing on Luzon. The sacrifice and courage of these three men won for them the right to join the ranks of those American airmen from the grade of Airman First Class to Brigadier General who have been awarded the Medal of Honor.

History of the Second World War

January 5

In January 1943 the Pentagon, a five-sided building in Washington D.C., first opened its doors. The Pentagon became the U.S. Military headquarters complex. The construction of the Pentagon was commanded by Major General Leslie Groves, who later headed the Manhattan Project. Today, the Pentagon still serves as the nerve-center for America's Armed Services.

World War II Facts

January 6

In modern war, control of the skies is often the difference between victory or defeat. By the end of January 1942, Japan gained control of Lae, the capital of New Guinea. From that moment, Allied shipping was placed in a precarious position because of Japanese air attacks. This situation would continue until January 6, 1943, when American and Allied aircraft attacked a Japanese convoy heading for Lae. This attack would be the first act in the struggle for control of the skies over Lae. By month's end the Allies controlled the air and before year's end Lae would again be in Allied hands.

History of the Second World War

January 7

Americans have been flying for a long time. On January 7, 1785, an American doctor named John Jeffries became the first American to fly. He and Francois Blanchard drifted across the English Channel from Dover to Calais in a balloon. Jeffries became the first of many Americans who would make aviation history.

Encyclopedia Britannica

January 8

In January 1942, Japan was involved in work on Project A. Project A was the code name of Japan's atomic energy research program which was the equivalent to the United States Manhattan Project. The Japanese abandoned the project a year later because of the lack of uranium needed to build an atomic bomb.

World War II Facts

January 9

The Eagle Squadron was the name given to Royal Air Force units in World War II that were made up of Americans. The first unit established was Number 71 Squadron. Number 71 was organized and commanded by Colonel Charles Sweeney, an American soldier of fortune. Sweeney had been a private in the U.S. Army during the Spanish-American War. In 1900, he was admitted as a cadet to West Point but dropped out prior to graduation. He soon joined the French Foreign Legion, rejoining the American Army as a major in World War I. After the First World War, he served in the Turkish Army and the Polish Army as a general. After that, Sweeney went back to the French Foreign Legion and eventually reached the rank of major general. When World War II broke out, he organized 30 American pilots into a French Air Force unit. Upon France's defeat by Germany, Sweeney joined the Royal Air Force and was appointed the commander of the Eagle Squadron.

World War II Facts

January 10

In January 1968, the Battle for Khe Sanh began. American ground forces at Khe Sanh, Republic of Vietnam, were surrounded by communist forces. It was impossible to support the marines at Khe Sanh by land so the U.S. Air Force set about to supply and support the hard pressed marines by air. From January until battle's end in March, SAC B-52's flew some 2,700 sorties and dropped 110,000 tons of ordnance. During the height of the battle, a three-plane B-52 cell would arrive every 90 minutes over the battlefield. At one point, a single B-52 strike killed over 1,000 men in one North Vietnamese infantry regiment. The B-52's of SAC played a major role in the American victory at Khe Sanh.

The Air War Over Vietnam

January 11

January 11, 1945, Captain William A. Shomo, U.S. Army Air Force, took off for his first combat mission. He and his wingman, Lieutenant Paul M. Liscombs, attacked a flight of Japanese aircraft. Shomo shot down seven of the enemy aircraft and Liscombs downed an additional three Japanese aircraft. For this action Shomo was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and Liscombs was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

World War II Facts

January 12

In an effort to counter the Luftwaffe, President Roosevelt, in his message to congress on January 12, 1939, called for an expansion of the Army Air Corps from the "utterly inadequate" 1,700 tactical and training planes, 1,600 officers and 18,000 enlisted men to a force of 5,500 planes, 3,203 officers and 45,000 men. To obtain this expanded force, Roosevelt urged Congress to appropriate \$300,000,000. Approved by Congress, this "expanded force" would enable America to carry the war to the enemy long before American ground forces would be able to attack the enemy.

History of the Second World War

January 13

On January 13, 1943, Major General Nathan F. Twining became the first commander of the newly formed 13th Air Force in New Caledonia. Twining's command was conceived as a "guerilla-style" force to combat the cancerous spread of Japanese forces in the South Pacific. Nine days later the new commander of the "Jungle Air Force" was forced to ditch his B-17 in the Pacific. Twining and his crew spent five days in an open raft before they were rescued. Twining would go on to become the first commander of the Fifteenth Army Air Force in Italy and later was sent to the Pacific to command the Twentieth Air Force

History of the Second World War

January 14

On January 14, 1945, the Rotary Wing School at Keesler AFB, Mississippi, began training students. At that time, it was the only military school for helicopter maintenance personnel in the world.

Keesler Retrospect

January 15

Airfields can be established in days instead of weeks because of perforated-steel planks called "Marston Mat." Used during World War II enough "Marston Mat" to cover a 3,000-foot runway, 150 feet wide, could be installed by 100 unskilled men in 90 hours. The matting got its name from the 1941 Army maneuvers near Marston, North Carolina, where it was first used.

World War II Facts

January 16

In 1937 the prevailing military thought was that enemy bombers would always get through. That year the U.S. Army Air Corps ordered a high-performance bomber interceptor to be designed. The P-38, "Lightning" was the product of that design. The P-38 was a heavily armed, twin-engined fighter with tricycle landing gear. It would become the first American aircraft to shoot down a German aircraft after the U.S. entered World War II. In the war against Japan, the P-38 would shoot down more Japanese aircraft than any other fighter of World War II. The P-38 was an outstanding example of American "know how" at work.

World War II Facts

January 17

In January 1958, the United States Air Force accepted delivery of the North American F-100, "Super-Saber." The F-100s of the Tactical Air Command first saw combat action in Vietnam when they flew the first American bombing strikes against North Vietnam. The F-100 would be the first aircraft to be modified for the "Wild Weasel" role in Vietnam. Using the APR-25 Vector Radar Homing and Warning (RHAW) receiver the F-100s would first detect, then attack enemy ground radar units. The F-100 would pave the way for the more advanced aircraft used today by the U.S. Air Force.

The Air War Over Vietnam

January 18

On January 18, 1957, three B-52s from the 93rd Bomb Wing landed at March AFB, California, after making a non-stop, round-the-world flight in 45 hours and 19 minutes. The trip covered 24,325 miles and the B-52s were required to make three inflight refuelings. The Commander of SAC, General Le May, was on hand to personally congratulate the three crews and to present each man with the Distinguished Flying Cross. Le May said the flight was a "...demonstration of SAC's capabilities to strike any target on the face of the earth." Soon afterwards the National Aeronautics Association recognized the round-the-world flight as the outstanding flight of 1957 and named the 93rd Bomb Wing as the recipient of the Mackay Trophy.

The Development of Strategic Air Command: 1946-1981

January 19

By January 1945, the Imperial Japanese Army had cut off Allied troops stationed in China from needed supplies of food, equipment and ordnance. The United States Fourteenth Air Force set about supplying Allied forces in China by air. By herculean effort the American airmen managed to fly 46,000 tons of supplies over the highest mountains in the world. Flying the "Hump" the Fourteenth Air Force kept alive the Allied war effort in China.

History of the Second World War

January 20

By January 1944, the "Luftwaffe Stomp" had become a popular combat maneuver for U.S. fighter pilots to evade pursuers. It involved stalling the aircraft and turning it at the same time. This maneuver was very effective in allowing the pilot to come out on the tail of a German fighter, thus giving the Americans a good chance of shooting the Germans down.

World War II Facts

January 21

On January 21, 1916, the Escadrille Americaine, Number 124 of the French Air Corps was formed. This unit was soon to be known as the "Lafayette Escadrille." The Americans of the "Lafayette Escadrille" would become the core of America's trained fighting airmen when America entered World War II.

The United States Air Force

January 22

Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., whose father was the only black general in the American Army during World War II, became the U.S. Air Force's first black general in 1954. The younger Davis was the fourth black to graduate from West Point since 1802. In World War II he founded the 99th Pursuit Squadron at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, and commanded it in Tunisia, Sicily, and Italy. He later commanded the all-black 332nd Fighter Group and flew over sixty missions, winning the Distinguished Flying Cross, Silver Star, three Legion of Merit Medals and an Air Medal with four oak-leaf clusters.

World War II Facts

January 23

When America entered World War I, American airpower was a small and weak force. On January 23, 1918, the first U.S. Army combat air unit took to the skies of Europe. While only an observation balloon, it foretold the day when American air power would fill the skies of Europe.

The United States Air Force

January 24

On January 24, 1944, American Army units under the protective wings of the U.S. 12th Air Force occupied the Italian City of Anzio. American control of the air would play a major role in defending the beachhead in the long weeks to follow. The hard fought Battle of Anzio would become a shining page in American Military history.

History of the Second World War

January 25

In 1942, Imperial Japanese forces captured the important American Air Base at Clark Field in the Philippines. On January 25, 1945, American Forces reclaimed Clark Field from the Japanese. Since that day, Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines has played a major role in fulfilling America's world-wide military commitments.

History of the Second World War

January 26

On January 26, 1942, the first United States troops arrived in Northern Ireland. These forces would help establish part of the "air bridge" that would soon link the United States with England. This chain of airfields would not only support the flow of supplies and troops to the war zone in Europe, but would also be used in conducting attacks on German "U-boats" operating in the Atlantic Ocean.

History of the Second World War

January 27

The Second Bomb Wing, now stationed at Barksdale Air Force Base, led the way in the war against Hitler's Germany. On January 27, 1943, the Second Bomb Wing made the first American bombing mission on the German homeland. Fifty-three B-17's and B-24's of the First and Second Bomb Wings attacked the German Naval docks at Wilhelmshaven, Germany and then returned to their home bases in the United Kingdom.

History of the Second World War

January 28

On January 28, 1942, the United States Eighth Air Force was activated at Savannah, Georgia. The Eighth would be America's main strike force in the skies over Hitler's Germany in World War II. Today the Eighth Air Force, headquartered at Barksdale AFB LA, is one of America's front-lines of defense.

History of the Second World War

January 29

In January 1953, Wolfe and Allee Halls at Keesler AFB, MS, were dedicated. Allee Hall was named after Colonel Edward M. Allee who was a pioneer in radar training. Wolfe Hall was named in honor of Lieutenant Leroy M. Wolfe, one of the first pilots to advocate, then utilize airborne radio.

Keesler Retrospect

January 30

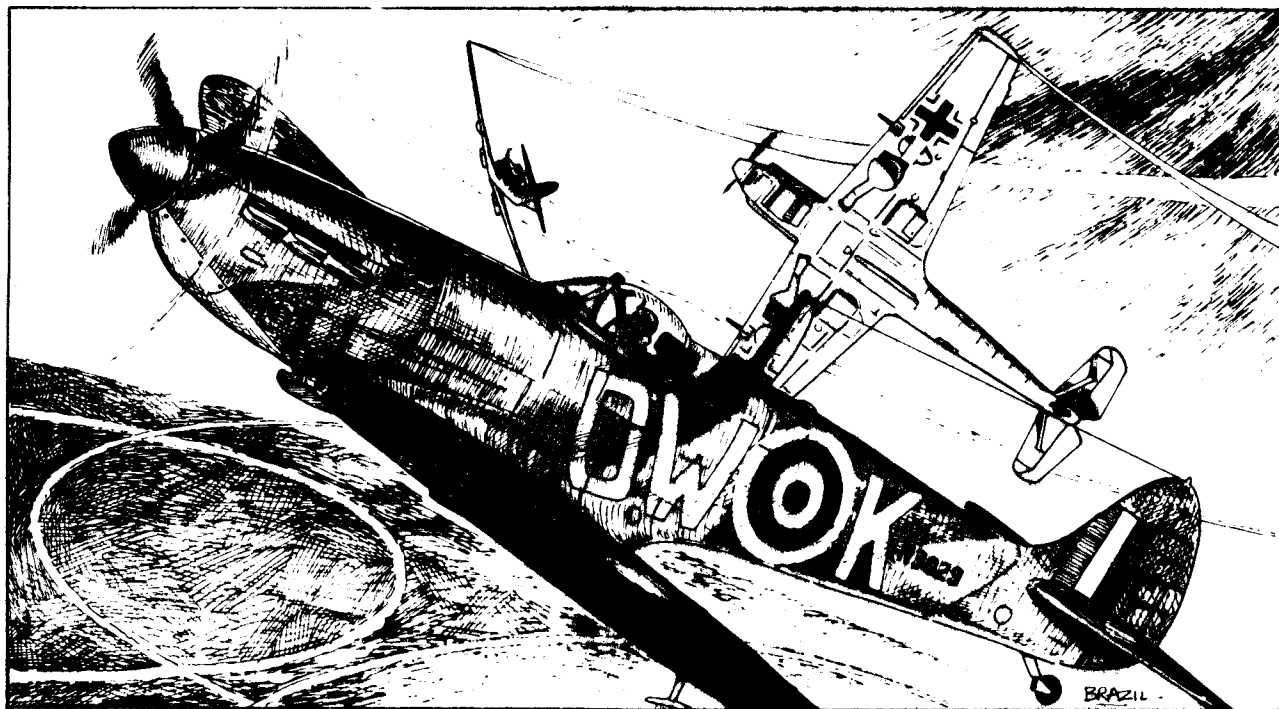
In January 1945, the final act of the Battle of the Bulge took place with the destruction of the German Luftwaffe by the U.S. Eighth and Ninth Air Forces. American airmen destroyed 1,392 German aircraft, probably destroyed 129 aircraft and damaged an additional 418 aircraft. For the rest of the war in Europe, American warplanes ruled the skies over Europe.

History of the Second World War

January 31

On January 31, 1958, the United States entered the "Space Age" with the successful launch of Explorer I. The U.S. satellite remained in orbit until March 31, 1970. During that time it circled the Earth 58,408 times and traveled 2.67 billion miles.

Reader's Digest Almanac and Yearbook: 1983





FEB

February 1

The first two months of World War II was a time of defeat after defeat for America. A ray of hope was seen on February 1, 1942 by the American public when the Navy Department reported the results of American air raids on Japanese forces in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands in the Pacific. Sixteen Japanese ships, 41 aircraft, and a number of hangars, munition dumps, fuel storage tanks and other shore establishments were destroyed. For the first time America was striking back and it was American air power that was delivering the blows.

History of the Second World War

February 2

Early in 1944 the American daylight bombing campaign against Hitler's Germany ran into difficulty. To be effective, American heavy bombers had to be able to reach German industrial targets anywhere in Germany, however, the Americans, their bombers stationed in England and North Africa, could not reach Nazi targets in Eastern Germany. Bases were needed in the USSR that American bombers could fly to, rearm and refuel, then return to their home bases. On February 2, 1944, Stalin agreed to provide the U.S. Army Air Force those needed bases in the Soviet Union.

History of the Second World War

February 3

On February 3, 1945, over 1,200 American Army Air Force Bombers and about 900 fighters made the most concentrated bombing raid ever made on the German city of Berlin. The American airmen dropped 2,266 tons of bombs on the Nazi city.

History of the Second World War

February 4

On February 4, 1948, Defense Secretary, James Forrestal, consolidated the Navy and Air Force air transport systems into the Military Air Transport Service under the command of Air Force General L. Kuter. This force, commanded by Kuter, would one day develop into today's Military Airlift Command (MAC).

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

February 5

On February 5, 1942, the survivors of the American Far Eastern Air Force were regrouped and formed into the American Fifth Air Force. The Fifth's first task was to stop the Japanese drive from the Phillippines through Java. If unchecked, the Japanese would be able to invade Northern Australia. This task was completed when the Fifth Air Force and the U.S. Navy engaged and checked the enemy in the Battle of the Coral Sea.

History of the Second World War

February 6

On February 6, 1948, the Army announced the first successful use of an electronic guidance system to determine the course of a missile. The test was conducted at White Sands, New Mexico and the missile tracked was a V-2 rocket.

The U.S. Air Force: A Turbulent History

February 7

On February 7, 1965, Viet Cong forces attacked the U.S. military support installation near Pleiku Air Base, South Vietnam. In response to this attack, President Johnson ordered American Air Force units to retaliate against military targets in North Vietnam. President Johnson also ordered additional U.S. ground troops into Vietnam to provide security for U.S. Air Force installations already there.

The Air War Over Vietnam

February 8

On February 8, 1965, in response to the Viet Cong attack on Pleiku the day before, the United States began the air war against North Vietnam. U.S. air units attacked the North Vietnamese base located at Dong Hoi. Dong Hoi, a city located just north of the DMZ, became the first North Vietnamese target in the expanding war in South East Asia.

The Air War Over Vietnam

February 9

On February 9, 1946, the Russian leader, Stalin, announced a new "Five Year Plan" that would place the USSR on a war footing. Stalin stated the reason for the new plan was to be ready for the future conflict with America and the west.

History of the Second World War

February 10

On February 10, 1952, Major George Davis, an American Ace with 12 victories, led 18 F-86's to cover U.S. fighter-bomber attacks near Kunni-ri in Korea. During that mission Major Davis and his wingman engaged with a flight of North Korean MIG fighters at 32,000 feet. Even though he and his wingman were outnumbered by the enemy, Davis engaged the enemy to prevent them from disrupting the fighter-bomber attacks. Davis was killed in the action, but not before he had downed two of the enemy aircraft. Davis was subsequently awarded the Medal of Honor for that action.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

February 11

In February 1942, a Japanese submarine fired about 25 shells at the Bankline Oil Refinery located 12 miles west of Santa Barbara, California. The lack of American air power had enabled the Japanese Navy to strike at the American mainland.

History of the Second World War

February 12

On February 12, 1944, German ground forces attacked the U.S. Army troops at Anzio. The onrush of German tanks and men drove the Americans back to their final defense lines near the beaches. There, the Americans managed to stop the German assault. Once stopped by the Americans on the ground, the Germans lost any chance of driving the Allied forces at Anzio into the sea. With the American and British control of the sea and air, the Germans could only delay the advance on Rome.

History of the Second World War

February 13

For almost a decade Americans had served in Vietnam fighting communist aggression. On February 13, 1973 American participation in that war ended when Captain Jeremiah Denton stepped off a C-141 at Clark AFB. Denton became the first POW of the Vietnam War to return from captivity.

Reader's Digest Almanac and Yearbook

February 14

On February 14, 1945, one of the most destructive bombardments in history took the lives of over 100,000 people in the German city of Dresden. The U.S. Army Air Force's daylight raid, combined with the British Royal Air Force's night raid of the thirteenth, destroyed the city and served notice to the world the power given those who control the skies.

History of the Second World War

February 15

On February 15, 1898 the American battleship USS Maine blew up and then sank in the Havana harbor. Even though Spain denied any wrong doing, the United States blamed Spain for the destruction of the Maine. Soon Spain and the United States were at war. The American victory in the Spanish-American War placed the United States front and center on the world political stage.

Pocket History of the United States

February 16

In February 1946, a joint Army-Navy report revealed the facts that bomb carrying balloons released by the Japanese in World War II from their home islands caused six deaths in Oregon and started a few small forest fires in the American western states.

History of the Second World War

February 17

During 1944 B-29 bombers were bombing Japan around the clock. Many of these bombers were damaged in combat over Japan and several were lost because they could not reach friendly territory. In late 1944 it was decided to capture the island of Iwo Jima and use it as an emergency landing field for the B-29's. On February 17, 1945, one hundred and seventy U.S. Navy frogmen were killed on the beaches of Iwo Jima while attempting to clear the beach defenses so the marines could land.

History of the Second World War

February 18

On February 18, 1918, the 103rd Aero Squadron of the American Army, made up of former members of the "Lafayette Escadrille," began air operations in France. The "Lafayette Escadrille," made up of Americans, had been one of the finest units in the French Air Corps. Once America entered World War I the unit was transferred to American service. The members of the 103rd Aero Squadron would continue to perform in an outstanding manner.

The United States Air Force

February 19

On February 19, 1936, General Billy Mitchell died of a heart attack. It was Mitchell who proved the ability of air units to attack and destroy heavy naval units such as battleships. On July 20, 1921, bombers under Mitchell's command would sink the Ostfriesland. The Ostfriesland had four separate skins of steel and every sort of "unbreakable" bulkhead. The Ostfriesland had withstood naval gunfire at the battle of Jutland and had even made port after a mine had exploded directly beneath her. By sinking the Ostfriesland, Mitchell proved the striking power of an airplane in war.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

February 20

On February 20, 1944, over Leipzig, Germany, Sgt Archibald Mathies, a flight engineer, was on board an Eighth Air Force bomber. During the raid the bomber was severely damaged. The pilot was wounded and the co-pilot killed. Mathies took the flight controls, and, with the aid of the navigator, managed to fly the aircraft back to England. There Mathies attempted to land the plane in order to save the life of the pilot. On the third attempt at landing, the plane crashed and all on board were killed. For his courage, Mathies was awarded the Medal of Honor.

MTS/PFE DTD 1 Aug 80

February 21

In February 1947, an Army Air Force C-54 transport, piloted by Lt Bobbie Covnar, landed at Westover Field, Massachusetts after rescuing the eleven-man crew of a photo-reconnaissance plane which crashed in Northern Greenland four days before. Covnar and his crew received Air Medals for a daring landing and take-off in a frozen lake which had enabled them to rescue the downed airmen.

The United States Air Force

February 22

On February 22, 1945, ten thousand American and Allied aircraft began operation "Clarion" which was a massive attack on the central German road and rail communication lines. By operation's end over 200 German roads and railroads had been destroyed by the airmen.

History of the Second World War

February 23

On February 23, 1943, B-17's of the American Fifth Air Force flew the first bombing mission against the Japanese base at Rabaul. Flying out of Townsville, the American bombers suffered massive mechanical troubles and ran into bad weather. Only one American bomber managed to bomb the target.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

February 24

On February 24, 1969, at Long Binh, South Vietnam, A1C John L. Levitow was serving as a loadmaster. Levitow's aircraft came under mortar attack. Levitow was hit by enemy fire. Suffering from more than 40 shrapnel wounds in the back and legs, Levitow observed a magnesium flare, thrown by the mortar blast, amid a jumble of spilled ammunition canisters. In spite of loss of blood and partial loss of feeling in his right leg, Levitow threw himself on the flare. Hugging it close he dragged himself to the cargo door where he hurled the flare through the open door. The flare ignited in the air in almost the same instant. His selfless act saved the aircraft and crew from almost certain death and destruction. For this act of courage Levitow received the Medal of Honor.

MTS/PFE DTD 1 Aug 80

February 25

In 1942 the U.S. 10th Air Force was formed by its commander, Major General Lewis H. Brgseton. He began with one LB-30, five old B-17's and \$250,000 wrapped in a blanket. The ten P-40's of the 51st fighter group (the Flying Tigers) were added in February. On February 25, 1942 the 10th Air Force went into action and managed to break the back of Japan's land campaign in Burma.

History of the Second World War

February 26

On February 26, 1918, the Second Balloon Company, U.S. Army Signal Corps became the first U.S. Air Service Unit to serve with the American forces at the front. Until that time the American troops had been dependent upon the English and French Air Services for support.

The United States Air Force

February 27

On February 27, 1967, the United States Air Force dropped the first mines in North Vietnam's rivers. This ability to mine shipping routes gave the U.S. forces in Vietnam the flexibility of operation needed to apply pressure on the enemies supply lines.

The Air War Over Vietnam

February 28

On February 28, 1947, a Army Air Force P-82 named Betty Jo, piloted by Colonel Robert Thacker, landed in New York City to complete a record non-stop 4,798 mile flight from Honolulu in 14 hours and 33 minutes.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

February 29

In the end of February 1946 the Army revealed that it had been experimenting with radar detection equipment to develop a defense against possible atomic bomb attacks on the United States.

The U.S. Air Force: A Turbulent History



MAR

March 1

On March 1, 1942, Brigadier General Ira Eaker wrote to General Carl Spaatz complaining that he had found "a complete inflexibility of mind on the subject of air organization in the Army staff...They are unalterably opposed to an Army Air Force in Britain...." Opposed to the idea of a separate Air Force, Army commanders in Britain had informed General Eaker that there would be no Air Force HQ in Europe nor would General Spaatz direct strategic operations against Germany. Luckily for the Allied war effort Spaatz would overcome the opposition of the American Generals for a separate Air Force and establish the Eighth Air Force in Britain. From Britain he would direct the "Eighth" with devastating effectiveness.

The U.S. Air Force: A Turbulent History

March 2

On March 2, 1949, at Carswell AFB, Texas, the first non-stop, around-the-world flight was completed. Captain James Gallagher and his Air Force crew of 14 in the Lucky Lady II, a B-50 bomber, made the 23,452 mile trip in 94 hours and 1 minute.

The United States Air Force

March 3

On March 3, 1943, B-25's of the Fifth Air Force under the command of Lieutenant General George C. Kenny attacked a Japanese convoy of seven transports and eight destroyers. Before the attack General Kenny had ordered the modification of the B-25's by having the plexiglas nose removed and eight .50 caliber heavy machine guns installed in its place. The pilots of these aircraft had been trained in skip-bombing techniques in which bombs would be released at low altitudes to either impact against the sides of ships, or slam into them after bouncing against the water. Using the special attack abilities of the modified B-25's and skip-bombing techniques the American Airmen sank every Japanese ship in the convoy. Fifteen enemy ships and an entire regiment of Japanese infantry were wiped out without loss of a single American life.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

March 4

During the Vietnam War there was a serious shortage of ordnance brought about by Defense budget restrictions. There were periods when no 750 pound general-purpose bombs were available and 20mm shells for the rapid-firing Gatling gun were rationed. Phantom F-4C's, able to carry six tons of ordnance, were sent out carrying only 10 percent of their possible bomb load.

The Air War Over Vietnam

March 5

In March 1944, General Spaatz sent the Eighth Air Force against Berlin in an effort to destroy the Luftwaffe. Spaatz knew that the Germans would defend Berlin to the death so he elected to send bombers over the city and as the Germans rose to meet them, American Mustang fighters were turned loose on them. General Galland of the Luftwaffe stated that "Whenever our fighters appeared, the Americans hurled themselves at them. Nowhere were we safe from them; we had to skulk on our own bases. During takeoff, assembly, climbing, approaching the bombers, once in contact with the bombers, on our way back, during landing, and even after that the American fighters attacked with an overwhelming superiority."

History of the Second World War

March 6

On March 6, 1944, clear weather allowed the first mission of Spaatz's plan to destroy the Luftwaffe. Six hundred and sixty Flying Fortresses drove deeply into Germany. They were met by heavy anti-aircraft fire and swarms of German fighters. Sixty-nine B-17's went down as well as eleven P-51's, but the Americans claimed 179 German fighters shot down, half of them by the P-51's. Because of the success of this mission and the five that would follow in the month of March, the German Air Force, which could have had a fateful influence on the invasion of Normandy in June, was almost nonexistent.

History of the Second World War

March 7

On March 7, 1945, the United States First Army began to cross the Rhine River over the railroad bridge at Remagen. The damaged bridge was the only passage across the mighty Rhine and the Germans, desperate to destroy the bridge, and unable to strike by air because of the American Air Force, launched V-2 rockets at Remagen in an attempt to destroy the bridge. Unable to destroy the bridge, the Germans were unable to check the flow of American troops into Germany.

History of the Second World War

March 8

On March 8, 1944, the U.S. Army Air Force made the first bombing raid on Berlin escorted by long-range American fighter aircraft. Protected by fighters, the American bombers were able to press home the Allied Heavy Bombing Campaign without fear of German fighter attacks turning back the Allied bombers.

History of the Second World War

March 9

Late in the afternoon of March 9, 1945, three hundred and twenty-five American B-29 bombers took off from bases on Saipan, Tinian, and Guam for a six-hour flight to Tokyo, Japan. Two "super fortresses" led the attack and acted as pathfinders by crisscrossing the city and laying down timed incendiaries. The other B-29's used the big, fiery "X" as an aiming point and dropped 2,000 tons of incendiaries on Tokyo. With temperatures reaching nearly 2,000°F the fire consumed 16 square miles of Tokyo, completely killing approximately 130,000 people and destroying over 261,000 buildings.

History of the Second World War

March 10

On March 10, 1966, Major Bernard F. Fisher, an A-1E pilot of the First Air Commando Squadron, saw one of his fellow airmen make an emergency landing on the A Shau airstrip as the North Vietnamese were overrunning the camp. Major Fisher landed his prop-driven fighter-bomber, maneuvered it in broken-field fashion down the debris-littered runway, braked to a halt, turned, picked up his comrade, and took off through enemy fire. For this incredible rescue Major Fisher received the Medal of Honor.

The Air War Over Vietnam

March 11

On March 11, 1918, Lieutenant Paul Baer of the 103rd Aero Squadron became the first Airman to be awarded the American Air Service Distinguished Service Cross.

The United States Air Force

March 12

Surrounded by the enemy who controlled the air and sea, General MacArthur, his family, and staff set out from Corregidor on PT boats for Australia, "the last bastion between Japan and the west coast of America." Upon "Mac's arrival in Australia he took command of the United Nations' forces in the Southwest Pacific. A major part of his command was the American troops who had landed in Australia on the 14th of March.

History of the Second World War

March 13

On March 13, 1945, American B-29's struck the Japanese city of Osaka. For three hours 274 bombers would attack and destroy the 8.1 square miles that made up the heart of the city. The bombing would be done from low altitudes of 5,000 to 9,000 feet due to the high and unpredictable winds over the city.

History of the Second World War

March 14

By March 1927, the early transoceanic flights and other aviation feats had so stimulated interest in flying that the Air Corps could raise its entrance requirements so that only those with two years of college or its equivalent could enter flying training. Those who did not have the required college could try to pass a nine-part examination which contained such questions as:

1. Classify in parallel columns the following pronouns as personal, relative, and indefinite: this, each, who, that, what, any, she, all, we, himself, whatever, those, their, who, it.
2. Write five sentences containing the following (underline each required phrase or clause): (a) an adjective clause, (b) a noun clause, (c) an adverb clause, (d) a pronoun clause, (e) a verb clause.
3. Find the fourth power of $1 + \sqrt{-1}$
4. Briefly describe the career of Alexander the Great.

In the years following 1927 roughly 26 percent of the applicants passed the entire examination. In 1942 a new test was finally instituted that measured the applicants aptitude to learn to fly rather than his accumulated knowledge.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

March 15

Built in the late 40's, the A-1, a prop-driven, fighter-bomber, was declared obsolete by 1950. During the mid 60's it was decided to deploy the A-1 to Vietnam as a close-support, attack aircraft. The A-1's were assigned to the American First Air Commando Squadron. In March 1966, the American airmen flying "super-spads" braved bad weather to go to the aid of an American Special Forces camp which was under attack by a force of 2,000 North Vietnamese regulars. In the midst of the battle the American pilots found a hole in the thick overcast that blanketed the camp and then attacked the enemy. The A-1's received credit for killing some 500 of the enemy. General Westmoreland later called the air support on that occasion as one of the most courageous displays of airmanship in aviation history.

The Air War Over Vietnam

March 16

On March 16, 1949, the Ground Controlled Approach School at Keesler AFB, Mississippi, started their first class. Nine years later 21 Communication-Electronics Systems courses would be placed in operation at Keesler and Keesler AFB would become the electronics center of the Air Force.

Keesler Retrospect

March 17

On March 17, 1966, the first space docking experiment was performed by astronauts Neil Armstrong and David R. Scott in Gemini 8. They were able to dock their manned spacecraft with an unmanned Gemini target vehicle and thus paved the way for further experiments which, in turn, would lead to the lunar landing three years later.

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March 18

In March 1941, the United States Army sent out a call for volunteers for the first black unit in the Air Corps. This unit would become the 99th Pursuit Squadron. The 99th would achieve an outstanding war record in Europe. Brave airmen such as Lieutenant Charles B. Hall of Brazil, Ind., who was the first black Army Air Force pilot to down an enemy aircraft in World War II, would leave behind a sense of pride and accomplishment few people can rival.

History of the Second World War

March 19

On March 19, 1918, the 94th (Hat-in-the-Ring) Squadron flew its first operational mission across the front lines in France. The 94th would become America's high scoring fighter squadron in World War I.

The United States Air Force

March 20

American airmen operated under restrictions in Vietnam that would have been unheard of twenty-five years before. A combat leader flying an F-105 out of Takhli, Thailand came off his bombing run and turned for home. Suddenly he found himself in the heaviest flak of his career. He looked down and saw that he was over a Surface-to-Air-Missile (SAM) site very near completion; the guns firing at him were 57mm and 85mm rapid-firing flak cannons installed to protect the SAMs. Knowing that SAM sites were on the "restricted list" and could not be attacked, and recognizing that the other F-105s following him would be flying into the same intense, accurate shelling, he risked court-martial and attacked the SAM site. He blew apart the complicated radar gear, blazed construction equipment and poured it on the guns and gunners who fled for cover. He even ignited some of the SAMs and watched with satisfaction as the deadly missiles "raced about the area like fiery snakes gone wild." This done, he flew back to Thailand followed by the other F-105s who were not bothered by that particular SAM site.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

March 21

On March 21, 1945, a four day massive air assault on the German Luftwaffe began. American and Allied strategic and tactical Air Forces flew a total of 42,000 sorties over German air space. More than 1,200 heavy Eighth Air Force bombers smashed German jet aircraft bases while medium bombers and fighter-bombers struck all of the other Luftwaffe installations. This operation ended further effective German air activities in World War II.

History of the Second World War

March 22

On March 22, 1982, the third space shuttle flight took place. Astronauts Jack Lousma and Gordon A. Fullerton piloted the Columbia for 129 orbits around the Earth. The landing had been delayed one day because of sandstorms at the desert landing site located at Edwards AFB, California. It was decided that the landing site was to be changed to White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico because of the poor conditions at Edwards. On March 30, 1982 Lousma and Fullerton made a perfect landing in the Columbia.

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March 23

On March 23, 1965, the second phase of the United States manned space program began with the three-orbit flight of Gemini 3 by astronauts Virgil L. (Gus) Grissom and John W. Young. They would accomplish the first manual maneuvering of a manned spacecraft in orbit around the Earth.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

March 24

The bombing of the DMZ during the Vietnam War was carried out primarily by the single-seat Republic F-105D. Equipped with fantastic radar and navigational devices for their time, the F-105 was designed to roar in over industrial targets from fifty to a hundred feet off the deck, zoom up and toss-bomb a nuke, then sprint off in afterburner from the impending holocaust. The "Thuds" could do Mach 2.1 above 35,000 feet and were incredibly strong, able to withstand 8 g's. It was the F-105 that carried out 75 percent of the tactical and strategic bombing strikes north of the DMZ. The F-105 was never designed to duel with lightweight MIG's in air-to-air combat but it did and it enjoyed a high kill ratio. The F-105 could get off the ground with a max gross weight of 52,800 pounds more than a fully laden B-17G of WW II fame. To quote Colonel Jack D. Broughton, Vice Commander of the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing based at Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base, "Gradually a startling fact became apparent: the "Thud" was getting to North Vietnam as nothing else could. Nobody could keep up with the "Thud" as it flew at treetop level. Nobody could carry the load and penetrate the defenses except the "Thud." Sure, we lost a bundle of them and oh so many superior people with the machines, but we were the only people doing the job...it was the "Thud" day after day, every day, that lunged into that mess, out duelled the opposition, put the bombs on target and dashed back to strike again. Any other vehicle in anybody's Air Force today simply could not have done the job."

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

March 25

On March 25, 1942, General Douglas MacArthur was awarded the Medal of Honor for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty" in defending the Phillipines against the Japanese. MacArthur's father had won the Medal of Honor during the American Civil War. With the award of Douglas' Medal of Honor they became the only father and son to both be awarded America's highest award for valor.

History of the Second World War

March 26

In March 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued an Executive Order that reorganized the Army into three branches: a ground force, an air force, and a service of supply command. Roosevelt's order heralded the day when there would be a separate Air Force.

The United States Air Force

March 27

In March 1946, General Carl A. Spaatz ordered the reorganization of the Army Air Force into Strategic, Tactical, and Continental Defense commands. Spaatz's order created the Air Force organization that still exists today.

The United States Air Force

March 28

In March 1935, Hitler renounced the Versailles Treaty's ban on German armament and ordered the rearmament of Germany. In March 1938, Germany invaded Austria and annexed that country into a "Greater Germany." In March 1939, Hitler took over the remains of Czechoslovakia. The world powers such as France, England, and the United States, their military forces unprepared, were unable to check Hitler. During the seven years that World War II lasted, millions upon millions of people would die in a war that could have been prevented had the military forces of the "Free World" been ready to check Hitler's aggression in those March days of the 30's.

History of the Second World War

March 29

In 1918 the first official U.S. airmail flights began. The first route was flown between Washington D.C. and New York City. Soon after World War I, airmail flights were expanded to cover the United States, however the difficulty and danger in carrying the mail in the early biwing aircraft of the time soon forced the mail to a standstill. The President and Congress turned to the Army Air Corps and tasked it with transporting the mail. Flying day and night, in all types of weather, regardless of aircraft breakdown or crashes, the Army pilots and their ground crews got the mail through. They layed the air routes, developed the needed technology for all-weather and night-flying, and proved to the nation that airplanes could carry the mail efficiently. The brave airmen of the Army Air Corps who lived, and died, carrying the mail blazed the trail and showed the way so others could follow.

The United States Air Force

March 30

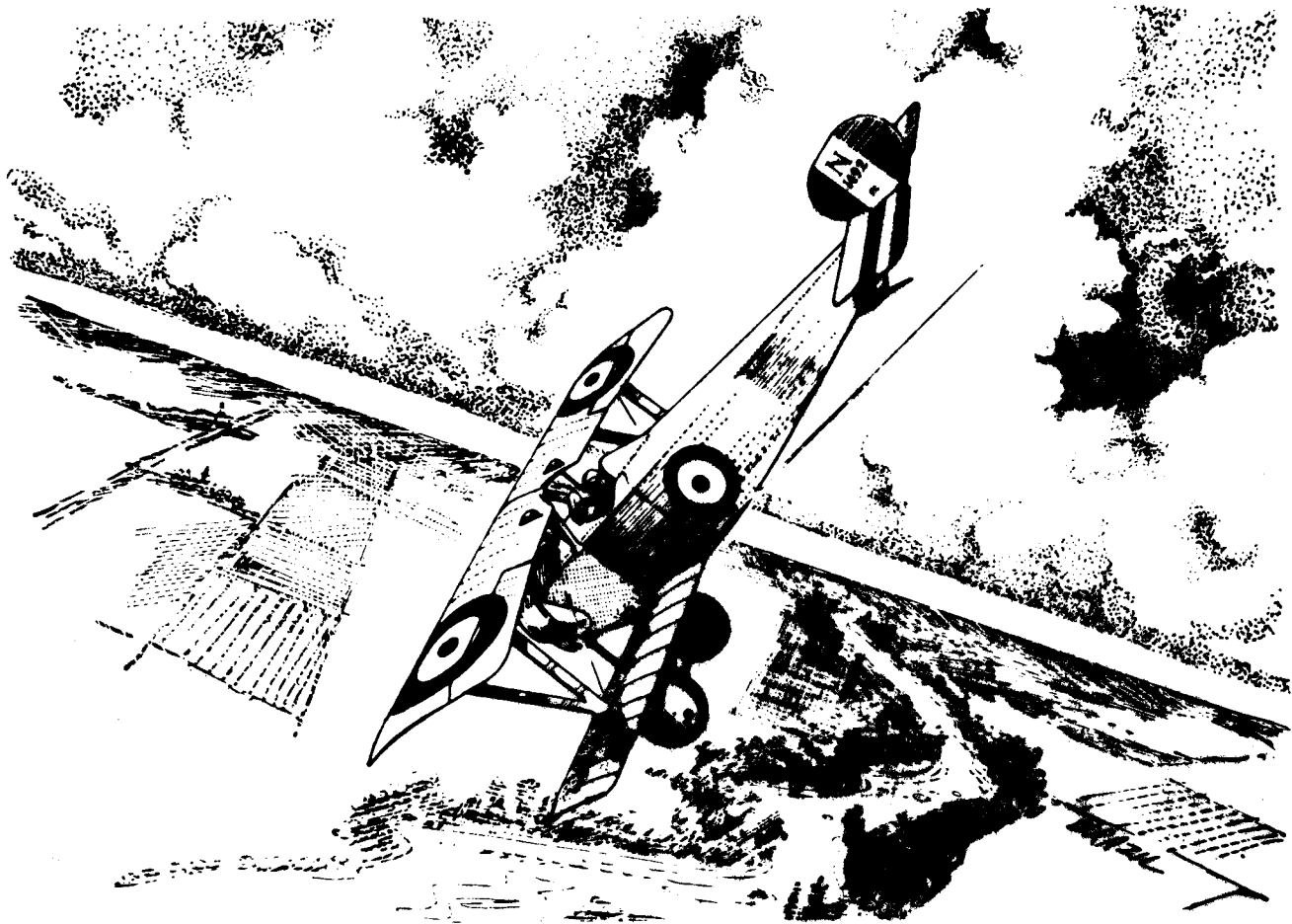
On March 30, 1972, the communists in North Vietnam launched a massive attack across the DMZ. This action prompted President Nixon to order the bombing of North Vietnam resumed. The bombing had been halted four years earlier in an effort to reinforce peace negotiations. The goodwill intentions obviously had little effect as the American airmen found themselves pitted against more anti-aircraft guns, improved SAMs, and more MIG-21 interceptors. Experienced American fighter pilots agreed that if they were flying MIG-21's for the other side they could have wrought massacre against the pilots committed to fly the heavy F-105's and the big Phantoms; yet such was the superiority of the American's training that the kill ratio in air-to-air combat ran 3-1 in favor of the Americans.

The Air War Over Vietnam

March 31

At the end of March 1966, the Electronic Principles Department at Keesler AFB, Mississippi, began instruction through closed circuit television. Colonel John C. Evers initiated the first program televised to 97 classrooms in Allee Hall.

Keesler Retrospect





APR

April 1

World War II was the first war in which air power played a decisive role. The Eighth Air Force, in conjunction with the Royal Air Force, set about on an air invasion of Nazi-controlled Europe a year and a half before D-Day in France. The master plan, called "the Combined Bomber Offensive," required the RAF to attack at night and the "Eighth" to strike by precision bombing by day. By denying the enemy use of air, and destroying industries and war supplies, the airmen opened great pathways through the Nazi's defenses. On April 1, 1944, the Combined Bomber Offensive ended and the Eighth then turned and attacked oil and transportation facilities to prepare for the invasion of Continental Europe by Allied ground forces.

History of the Second World War

April 2

On April 2, 1923, the first flight of an all-metal pursuit monoplane took place. The Wright H-3, equipped with a 400 horsepower engine, lifted off at Curtiss Field, Garden City, Long Island. Thirty-five years later on April 2, 1958, President Eisenhower proposed the establishment of what would become the National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA). From the Wright Brothers, to the Wright flyer, to the Eagles landing on the moon, Americans--civilian and military -- have led the way in aerospace development.

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April 3

On April 3, 1965, the United States launched the first nuclear reactor power supply into orbit around the earth. Launched from Vandenberg AFB, California, this nuclear reactor power supply produced over 500 watts of electricity for forty-three days.

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April 4

On April 4, 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Treaty was signed. NATO was established to provide for the military defense of Western Europe against Russian aggression. Today NATO stands as a shield defending the free nations of Europe from communist aggression. The American Air Force plays a major role in NATO and, in doing so, plays a major role in not only defending against aggression, but also insuring world peace.

The United States Air Force

April 5

On April 5, 1944, American heavy bombers began raids on the oil fields at Ploesti in Romania. Ploesti was a major production area for oil powering the Nazi war machine. To defend it the Germans had stationed over 150 fighters at Ploesti and established a ring of 250 heavy anti-aircraft guns around the oil fields. Ploesti had become one of the best coordinated and equipped anti-aircraft defense regions in Europe. Over fifty-nine thousand American airmen attacked Ploesti in 5,287 sorties and dropped 12,980 tons of bombs. Their five-month attack reduced oil production at Ploesti by about 62%, but the cost was heavy. Over 2,400 Americans were lost. In April 1954, Ploesti Drive at Keesler AFB, Mississippi, was named in honor of those brave Americans who fought and died in the skies over Ploesti.

History of the Second World War

April 6

On April 6, 1924, four U.S. Army Douglas biplanes took off from Seattle, Washington, for the first around-the-world flight. Two broke down during the flight, but on September 28th, the other two aircraft arrived at Seattle after flying 26,345 miles in 351 hours and 11 minutes of flying time.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

April 7

On April 7, 1945, American P-47's and P-51's flying from Iwo Jima escorted American B-29's, for the first time, as the bombers made their raids on Japan. The American fighters soon established clear air superiority over the heart of Japan allowing the big bombers to raid at will.

History of the Second World War

April 8

On April 8, 1944, Captain Ira I. Bong, a P-38 pilot, surpassed Eddie Rickenbacker's World War II record by shooting down his twenty-seventh enemy plane. Captain Bong went on to shoot down a total of 40 aircraft by war's end, earning him the title of "ace-of-aces." No other American pilot has ever equalled Captain Bong's record.

History of the Second World War

April 9

In April 1941, the City of Biloxi, Mississippi, gave Senator Pat Harrison \$17,852 to acquire land they planned to donate to the Army Air Corps. That land, given by the City of Biloxi, is today Oak Park family housing at Keesler AFB, Mississippi. The patriotic citizens of similar towns and cities throughout the United States have always given much needed support to the Air Force throughout its history.

Keesler Retrospect

April 10

In April 1953, as a result of a Soviet military build-up and communist aggression, such as the takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1948, the Air Defense Command established a radar warning net called the "Permanent System." This system was made up of 75 radar stations and 10 control centers. The radar sets were obsolete, but usable, and were pressed into service until funds and development could produce a more updated system. Completion of the permanent system was delayed because of strikes and demands of the Korean War. When it finally became operational, it was linked with a Ground Observer Corps whose primary function was to warn of low-level aircraft which the radar sets could not detect.

A History of the United States
Air Force 1907-1957

April 11

On April 11, 1970, astronauts James A. Lovell, John L. Swigert, Jr., and Fred W. Haise, Jr., in Apollo 13 set out for the third attempt to land men on the moon. Everything went well until the 13th of April when an oxygen tank ruptured on board the spacecraft. Faced with a shortage of oxygen, the crew was forced to take emergency action and turn their ship toward earth. For the next four days, the Nation and the world held their breath as the three astronauts endeavored to bring Apollo 13 home. On the 17th of April Apollo 13 landed and all three men were home safe and sound.

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April 12

On April 12, 1981, the space shuttle Columbia took off on the first successful flight of a reusable space shuttle. Piloted by astronauts John W. Young and Robert L. Crippan, Columbia orbited the earth 36.5 times, then returned for a picture perfect landing at Edwards AFB, California, on April 14, 1981.

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April 13

In April 1945, the 7th Air Force began an all out fighter-bomber offense on the Japanese home islands. Having been almost wiped out in 1941, the year 1945 brought the 7th its revenge. Some of the problems they had in bombing Japan were summed up by the Commander of the 7th, General Hale: "There was no such thing as area bombing in this theater. We had to pin-point our targets for the simple reason that the targets were small and had to be hit squarely. A single pin-point in the European theater might have been a factory; here it covered an entire island. For us each installation of an island was an objective and had to be carefully knocked out. Therefore, each plane made its own run with each bombardier doing his own bombing. The target had to be directly hit. The difference, one way or another, meant that bombs would land either in the lagoon on one side of an island or the ocean on the other. And we didn't fly 2,000 miles to kill fish!"

Compact History of the United States Air Force

April 14

On April 14, 1918, Lieutenant Douglas Campbell of the 94th Aero Squadron became the first trained American pilot to score an aerial victory in combat.

The United States Air Force

April 15

On April 15, 1952, the experimental model YB-52, an all-jet heavy bomber powered by eight Pratt and Whitney J-57 engines, made its first flight. Production orders for the B-52 had been placed by the Air Force before the experimental model ever flew. Neither the Air Force or Boeing could guess that the B-52 would become the main strategic bomber used by the Air Force for the next 35 years.

The Air War Over Vietnam

April 16

On April 16, 1946, the first flight test of an American-assembled V-2 rocket took place at White Sands Proving Ground, New Mexico. Twenty-six years later to the day Apollo 16 lifted off for a lunar landing. On board were John Young, Tom Mattingly and the lunar module pilot, Charles Duke, a U.S. Air Force Officer.

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April 17

In 1943, during World War II, the Allies defeated the Germans at Tunisia. A major reason for the German defeat was the American Northwest Army Air Force (NAAF). Flying as many as 2,000 sorties a day, the NAAF drove the Germans from their fortifications and helped force the surrender of over 270,000 Axis troops. The "Palm Sunday Massacre" of April 1943 shows the difficulty the NAAF put Rommel in. The Germans had been forced to airlift all their supplies from Sicily to Africa. They would fill JU-52's (a version of the Ford Tri-motor) with everything from food to fuel then fly them in big convoys low over the water with no escort. In the "Palm Sunday Massacre," the Americans of the NAAF discovered one of these convoys and attacked it. The American fighter pilots shot down 79 planes from a convoy of one hundred with no American losses. The Americans would have shot down more, but they ran out of ammunition. Faced with Allied control of the air, Rommel's troops were doomed.

Compact History of the United States Air Force

April 18

On April 18, 1942, American airmen from the 17th Bomb Group and the 89th Recon Squadron manned sixteen Army Air Force B-25's. Under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle they took off from the U.S. carrier Hornet and flew 800 miles to bomb Tokyo and several other Japanese cities. All of the American aircraft were lost or forced to crash land in China with the exception of one B-25 which landed in Russia. Most of the American airmen survived, although two who fell into Japanese hands were beheaded by the Japanese. The gallant Americans of Doolittle's group had managed to carry the war to Japan's homeland. Soon after the raid, Doolittle was awarded the Medal of Honor for his role in the raid which carries his name - The Doolittle Raid. The American attack did little physical damage, but had great psychological value. The Japanese high command, shocked by the American ability to hit their homeland so soon after Pearl Harbor, stationed four Army Fighter Groups in Japan that were badly needed at the front. This action relieved some of the pressure on the Allies in the Pacific and aided in the Allies regaining control of the air.

History of the Second World War

April 19

On April 19, 1932, the first flight of a Goddard rocket equipped with gyroscopically controlled vanes for automatically stabilized flight took place near Roswell, New Mexico. Thirty years later on April 19, 1962, Skybolt, the first U.S. air-to-ground missile, was tested by the Air Force at Cape Canaveral, Florida.

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April 20

On April 20, 1923, Army Air Corps airmen, under the command of Henry (Hap) Arnold, set out from Rockwell Field in San Diego, California, to prove to the world inflight refueling was possible. While in flight, and using two DH-4B aircraft, Arnold and his men managed to run a hose between the two aircraft and run fuel from one aircraft to another. From this first inflight refueling, American airmen developed the techniques required to give today's Air Force its worldwide strike ability.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

April 21

On April 21, 1961, Major Robert White of the U.S. Air Force established a new speed record during the first full throttle flight of the X-15. At an altitude of 79,000 feet he reached a speed of 3,074 mph before coasting upward to an altitude of 105,000 feet above sea level. White and American airmen like him have paved the way for aerospace progress since the very first days of manned flight in 1785.

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April 22

On April 22, 1778, Capt John Paul Jones led the first American combat forces to see action in Europe. Jones and his men raided the town of Whitehaven in England and set fire to the dock area. That raid brought home to the English public the realities of the American Revolutionary War. Jones showed that American sea power could play an important role influencing world affairs. Today, air power has been added to that ability to influence world events.

Pocket History of the United States

April 23

In April 1951, the U.S. Air Force attempted to destroy the main supply lines used by North Korean forces. In three highly effective attacks against the international bridges spanning the Yalu River, old prop-driven B-29 bombers managed to disrupt the flow of supplies to the enemy overrunning South Korea. These B-29 raids were costly for the American airmen because of enemy jet fighters. Four of the B-29's were shot down during the three raids even though the B-29 enlisted gunners had managed to destroy several MIGs. Had it not been for the Saber and Thunderjet escorts, bomber losses would have been much heavier. It became apparent to the Air Force that new and better jet bombers would have to be developed and put into service or the USAF would not be able to carry out its mission of strategic bombing. One year later, the first B-52 lifted off from its runway and spelled the end to the need for the old B-29's.

The United States Air Force

April 24

April was a key month in the development of aerospace power. In April 1783, the first flight of a hot-air balloon capable of lifting a man took place. In April 1863, the Federal Army used manned balloons during the battle of Chancellorsville. In April 1916, the French first used air-to-air rockets in aerial combat. In April 1919, an American, Leslie Irving, made the first parachute jump from an airplane using the now standard backpack parachute. In April 1924, American Army Air Corps pilots made the first round-the-world flights, the first transpacific flight, and the first westbound crossing of North America. In April 1959, the first Project Mercury Astronauts were selected. In April 1962, an American pilot, Joe Walker, in the X-15 reached 246,700 feet, a record for a piloted flight. In April 1970, Americans landed once more on the moon, and in April 1981, the Columbia made the first controlled landing of a space shuttle from orbit around the earth.

A History of Flight

April 25

On April 25, 1962, the N-156, a supersonic fighter, was chosen by the Department of Defense for use by selected countries under the Military Assistance Program. The twin jet was called the F-5A and is similar to the T-38 Talon. It can exceed Mach 1.4 and carry 5000 pounds of ordnance. Dubbed "Freedom Fighter" 1040 would be built for foreign sale and for use by the U.S. Tactical Fighter Training Aggressor units.

The Air War Over Vietnam

April 26

In April 1945, fighters from the American Eighth Air Force attacked over 40 German Luftwaffe installations in Czechoslovakia and Germany. The Americans claimed a record 747 German fighters destroyed on the ground during one day's operations. Thirty-four American fighters were lost due to German antiaircraft fire during the raids.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

April 27

On April 27, 1972, Apollo 16 returned to earth. The crew of Apollo 16, astronauts John W. Young, Thomas K. Mattingly II, and Charles M. Duke, Jr., USAF, had just completed the fifth lunar landing. Young and Duke had remained on the moon for 71 hours before returning to their Apollo spacecraft.

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April 28

In April 1964, the Department of Defense renamed the A-11 the YF-12A. The YF-12A never entered the Air Force inventory as a fighter interceptor for several reasons, but the reconnaissance version was accepted for service by the Air Force. Known as the SR-71 Blackbird, these strategic reconnaissance aircraft can travel faster than Mach 3 and at an altitude greater than 15 miles above the earth's surface.

The Air War Over Vietnam

April 29

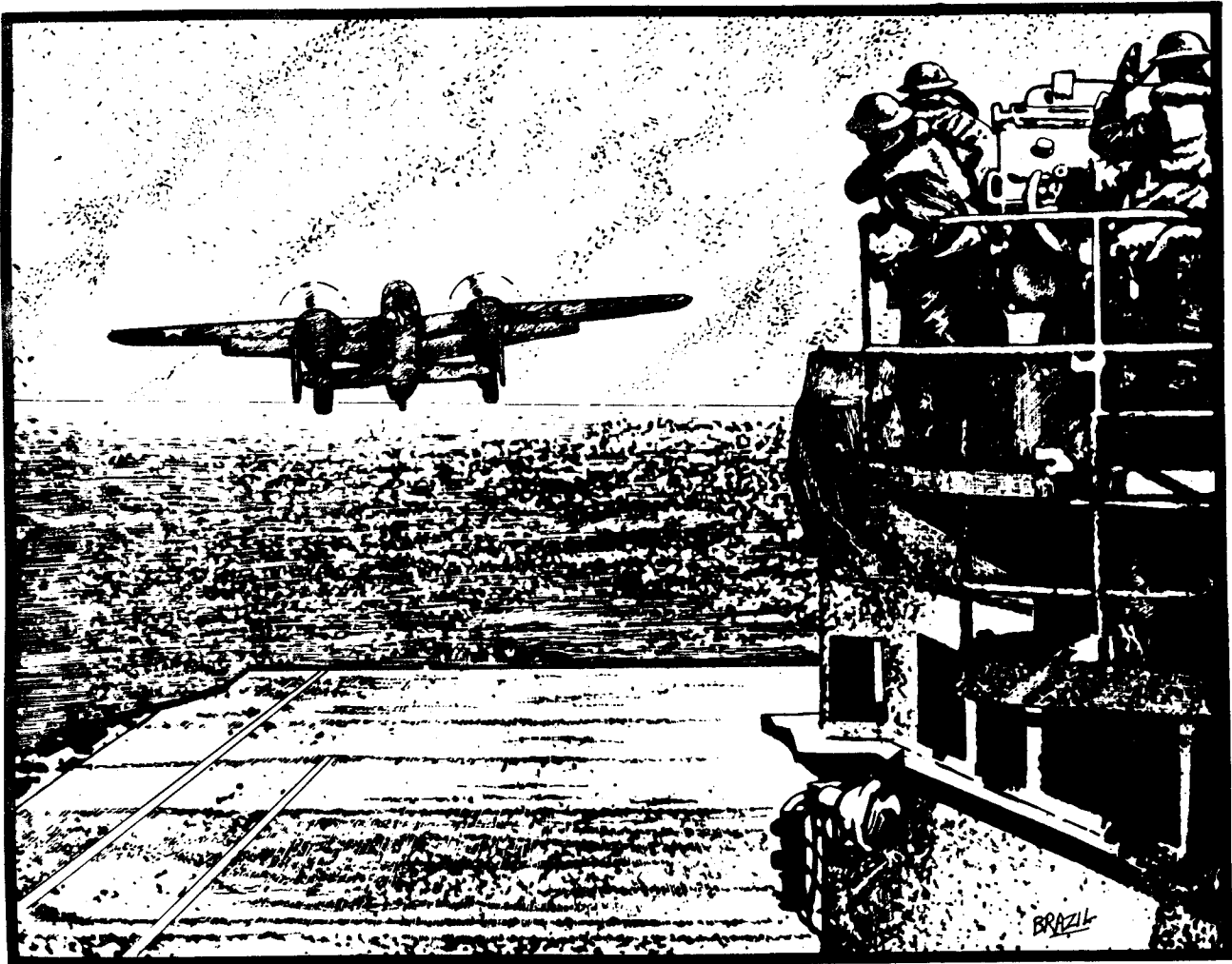
On April 29, 1918, Lieutenant Edward Rickenbacker shot down the first of his twenty-six aerial kills. Rickenbacker went on shooting down enemy planes until he became America's top Ace of World War I and proud winner of the Medal of Honor.

Fighter Aces

April 30

On April 30, 1975, the sixteen year old Vietnam War ended when Saigon was captured by North Vietnamese troops. South Vietnam's President, Duong Van Minh, announced the unconditional surrender of his nation and Vietnam was united under communist control. Over 56,000 Americans had died in the Vietnam War and even as late as 1982 the fate of some 2,500 American military personnel listed as missing was still unknown.

The Air War Over Vietnam





MAY

May 1

On May 1, 1943, SSgt Maynard H. Smith, a gunner, set off on a bombing mission over enemy territory. Near St. Nazaire, France, SSgt Smith's bomber was hit by enemy fire and set ablaze. Smith set about throwing exploding ammunition overboard and manning workable guns until he had driven off the German fighters. Stopping only long enough to administer first aid to a wounded comrade, Smith set about fighting the fire that was enveloping the bomber. Wrapping himself in protective cloth, Smith completely extinguished the fire by hand. For his courage, SSgt Maynard H. Smith was awarded the Medal of Honor.

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May 2

On May 2, 1923, Lieutenants Oakley Kelly and John MacReady left Roosevelt Field, New York in a converted T-2 Fokker monoplane. Loaded with 780 gallons of fuel, the plane barely cleared the hangar at the end of the runway. Over New Jersey, MacReady made the first in-flight aircraft engine repair in air service history when he replaced a defective voltage regulator switch. Twenty-six hours and 50 minutes later, the crew landed their aircraft at Rockwell Field, California. They had traveled 2,520 miles and averaged 94 miles an hour during their trip.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

May 3

In May 1967, two U.S. Air Force HH-3E Jolly Green Giant helicopters made the first non-stop transatlantic flights by helicopter from New York to Paris. Each aircraft made nine mid-air refuelings during the flight.

The Air War Over Vietnam

May 4

On May 4, 1801, the Pasha of Tripoli declared war on the United States of America because the American Government had refused his demands for protection money to keep his navy from attacking U.S. merchantmen. The Pasha felt this act would force the Americans to pay. He was mistaken. The idea of "Freedom of the Seas" was too dear to the young nation and thus, America set forth on her second war. The war would end with America establishing her right to sail the world's waterways.

History of the United States

May 5

On May 5, 1961, U.S. Navy Commander Alan B. Shepard became the first American in space. Launched from Cape Canaveral, his space capsule, named "Freedom 7," completed the 302-mile sub-orbital flight in 14.8 minutes.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

May 6

On May 6, 1896, Professor Samuel P. Langley, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute, launched an unmanned airplane. The aircraft was 16 feet long with a wing-span of 13 feet and was powered by a small steam engine. It managed to fly for a half mile over the Potomac River before coming to earth.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

May 7

On May 7, 1945, the German General Staff signed the Instrument of Unconditional Surrender putting an end to the fighting in Europe. American airmen flying missions around the clock throughout the war had played a major role in the German defeat.

History of the Second World War

May 8

In May 1966, the United States made its first unmanned space landing on the moon. Named Surveyor I, the spacecraft landed on the moon's "Ocean of Storms" and sent back to earth 11,327 photos of the moon's surface.

Reader's Digest Almanac and Yearbook: 1983

May 9

In May 1942, the Radio Operator's school opened at Keesler Field, Mississippi, under the command of the Fourth Comm Squadron, Army Airways Communications System (now AFCC), HQ Maxwell Field, Alabama. The chief instructor was SSgt William K. Thomas, who was previously an engineer with station KDKA of Pittsburg when it pioneered broadcasting election returns in 1920.

Keesler Retrospect

May 10

During the night of May 10, 1941, London saw the last heavy German bombing raid in the Battle of Britain. The German night bombers started more than two thousand fires throughout the city and the House of Commons was severely damaged. One thousand, two hundred and twelve people were killed and another 1,800 were wounded by the bombs.

United States Air Force

May 11

On May 11, 1942, the first contingent of U.S. Army troops arrived in the British Isle under independent American command. These men were 39 officers and 384 enlisted men assigned to the American Eighth Air Force.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

May 12

On May 12, 1945, the Russians lifted the Berlin Blockade. The Russian political action had been defeated by American air power. At the peak of the Berlin Blockade, 1,938 American and British aircraft were engaged in transporting supplies to the city.

The United States Air Force

May 13

In May 1968, the Special Forces Camp at Kham Duc, South Vietnam, was overrun by enemy forces. The very first step in the enemy's plan to deny the base to the Americans was to establish gun positions on the airstrip there at Kham Duc.

A three-man U.S. Air Force Combat control team was trapped there at Kham Duc with no way to escape. Colonel Joe M. Jackson volunteered to attempt a rescue of the surrounded Americans. Arriving over the camp in his C-123, Colonel Jackson noticed that the runway was littered with debris from eight destroyed aircraft. He elected to land his plane and attempt the rescue. Once on the ground his C-123 was the target of intense hostile fire. He taxied the aircraft to the point where the three Americans were reported to be. Luck was with the Americans--all three members of the combat control team made it to the aircraft. With the three Americans on board, Colonel Jackson taxied his aircraft through hostile fire directed across the runway at him and managed to get airborne.

For his courage and daring act, Colonel Jackson was awarded the Medal of Honor.

USAF Southeast Asia Monograph Series 9, Volume III

May 14

On May 14, 1975, the last American chapter in Southeast Asia began. United States Marines, supported by American Air Force Units, landed in Cambodia to rescue American Seamen captured by the Cambodians after the Cambodians had boarded the S.S. Mayagues on the high seas. By the 15th of May, the fighting was over and the Mayagues and crew were safely in American hands.

Reader's Digest Almanac and Yearbook: 1983

May 15

On May 15, 1963, Major L. Gordon Cooper, Jr., the United States Air Force's first astronaut, completed twenty-two orbits around the earth. His flight was the last of the Project Mercury series.

Reader's Digest Almanac and Yearbook: 1983

May 16

On May 16, 1913, Bill H. R., 5304, was introduced to Congress. The bill provided for removing aviation from the Signal Corps and establishing it as a separate organization. During the following year, the modified bill passed, creating an Aviation Section within the Signal Corps. This Aviation Section was to have a strength of sixty officers and two hundred and sixty enlisted men. It would not be until May 20, 1918, that the Aviation Section, Signal Corps would become the U.S. Army Air Service.

The United States Air Force

May 17

On May 17, 1918, the first American built DH-4, powered by the American Liberty engine, made its first flight in France. The DH-4 was a British designed De Havilland two seater reconnaissance bomber. From this aircraft sprang the technology and experience required for Americans to develop more advanced designs.

The United States Air Force

May 18

On May 18, 1969, the second manned moon-orbiting mission took place. Apollo 10, crewed by Astronauts Eugene A. Cernan, John W. Young, and Thomas P. Stafford, circled the moon 31 times. They flew the Lunar Module within 47,000 feet of the moon's surface and sent the first live color TV pictures from space back to earth.

Reader's Digest Almanac and Yearbook: 1983

May 19

On May 19, 1919, MSgt Ralph W. Bottriell became the first member of the American Army to jump using a manually operated backpack parachute. For this deed, MSgt Bottriell became the first American to win the Distinguished Flying Cross.

AFP 50-34

May 20

In 1942, James Jabara enlisted in the Army Air Force. During World War II, Jabara flew 108 missions as a fighter pilot with the Eighth and Ninth Army Air Forces. The outbreak of the Korean War found Jabara a captain in the U.S. Air Force. On May 20, 1951, Captain Jabara became the first American "Ace" of that war when he downed his fifth enemy aircraft over Korea. Jabara would end the war with 15 enemy aircraft to his credit.

The United States Air Force

May 21

On May 21, 1927, Charles Lindbergh landed at Le Boures Field in France, thirty-three hours and 39 minutes after he had lifted off from Roosevelt Field in New York. Lindbergh became the first person to complete the first non-stop solo flight from New York to Paris.

Reader's Digest Almanac and Yearbook: 1983

May 22

On May 22, 1906, the U.S. Patent Office issued patent number 821393 for the Wright brothers' airplane. That same year, the Aero Club of America published a bulletin on the Wright's flights of 1904-1905. These flights were brought to the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt. The President instructed Secretary of War, Taft, to investigate the military use of the airplane. This led to the award of a contract for a Wright aircraft to be delivered to the Army, at Ft Myer, Virginia.

The United States Air Force

May 23

In May 1966, the Daedalian's General Curtis E. LeMay trophy, for the top personnel services in the Air Force, was awarded for the first time. It was won by Keesler Air Force Base's Personnel Services.

Keesler Retrospect

May 24

On the afternoon of May 24, 1969, a powerfully armed AC-130 gunship took off to fly a night mission against North Vietnamese supply lines. On board the aircraft was Sgt Edward Marrero whose mission was to track the action on film. While over enemy territory, one of the gunship's spotters called out a warning of enemy anti-aircraft fire. The hollow sound of two explosions tore through the belly of the aircraft and a chunk of searing shrapnel tore into Sgt Marrero's leg just below the knee. One of the exploding shells had kicked one of the flight crew members half way out of the gunship. Shrapnel had slashed the hydraulic lines and the ramp was covered with the slippery fluid. Sgt Marrero clawed his way up the ramp and pulled the crewman back into the aircraft.

As the aircraft neared base, all nonessential crew members were ordered to jump. Before jumping, Sgt Marrero returned to his camera and removed the film. Upon landing, Sgt Marrero broke his uninjured leg. Sgt Marrero was picked up by a rescue chopper and taken to his home base. Before allowing the medics to take him to the hospital, Sgt Marrero insisted on giving his film to his commander.

In the hospital, Sgt Marrero learned that the gunship crashed while landing. For his actions that night, Sgt Marrero was honored by the VFW and given the "Armed Forces Award" for outstanding contribution to national defense.

AFP 50-34

May 25

Placed in orbit 268.7 miles above the earth's surface, Skylab became America's first space station. On May 25, 1973, Astronauts Charles Conrad, Jr., Joseph P. Kerwin and Paul J. Weitz arrived at Skylab. For the next 28 days, the crew conducted important experiments on board Skylab.

Reader's Digest Almanac and Yearbook: 1983

May 26

On May 26, 1961, a U.S. Air Force supersonic B-58 bomber flew from New York to Paris in three hours and 19 minutes. American airmen were indeed making the world "smaller."

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May 27

On May 27, 1963, the first flight of the F-4C took place. Adopted by the U.S. Air Force, the F-4 was used extensively in Vietnam where F-4's scored their first MG-17 kills in 1965. The F-4 became the backbone of America's Aerospace defense line in the late sixties and seventies. Today, the F-4 still serves an important role in the mission of the United States Air Force.

The Air War over Vietnam

May 28

On May 28, 1945, Air and Naval units shot down over 100 Japanese aircraft, including numerous Kamikazes, that were attacking U.S. ships at Okinawa. Without American air cover, countless American lives would have been lost.

History of the Second World War

May 29

On May 29, 1941, the Air Corps Ferrying Command was formed. In time it was to be renamed the Air Transport Command and given the responsibility for the worldwide transport of cargo and personnel.

The United States Air Force

May 30

On May 30, 1918, Eddie Rickenbacker shot down his fifth enemy aircraft, thus becoming an "Ace." The following day, Douglas Campbell became the first American pilot completely trained in American flying schools to become an "Ace."

The United States Air Force

May 31

Airpower played a part in the Spanish-American War of 1898. On May 31, 1898, two newly formed Army Balloon companies, under the direction of Lt Colonel Joseph H. Maxfield, were sent to Tampa, Florida. After their arrival, one company was sent to the battlefield at Santiago, Cuba.

The United States Air Force



JUNE

June 1

On June 1, 1912, Lieutenant "Hap" Arnold established a new Army aircraft altitude record when he reached an altitude of 6,450 feet. Arnold went on to command the American Army Air Force in World War II as a five star general.

The United States Air Force

June 2

On June 2, 1917, the American Army Aviation Section was redesignated as the Airplane Division, Signal Corps. From June until the end of World War I the Airplane Division would grow in size until it would become the Army Air Corps.

The United States Air Force

June 3

On June 3, 1942, the Battle of Midway began. The Seventh Air Force's B-17's and torpedo carrying B-26's flew 1,110 miles out from the Hawaiian Islands and joined with the U.S. Naval Forces in attempting to repulse the Japanese Fleet heading for Midway Island. The 7th Air Force bombers scored 22 direct hits and 6 probable hits on the Japanese invasion fleet. The American victory at Midway was the turning point of the war in the Pacific during World War II.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

June 4

On June 4, 1920, Congress passed the National Security Act. This Act authorized the Air Services a strength of 1,516 officers and 16,000 enlisted men, including a maximum of 2,500 cadets. This Act also established the Air Service as a combatant arm of the Army, but made no attempt to define its mission.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

June 5

On June 5, 1918, Lieutenant David Putnam of Massachusetts found himself alone in the skies over France. Suddenly, Putnam was attacked by ten German Albatross fighters. Outnumbered ten to one, Putnam turned his fighter towards the enemy and counterattacked. When the dogfight ended, Putnam had downed five of the German aircraft and had managed to escape from the rest. Putnam returned to his airfield unharmed by the action.

Fighter Aces of World War One

June 6

Tinker Air Force Base was named in honor of Major General Clarence Tinker. On June 6, 1942, General Tinker, Commander of the Seventh Air Force, took four B-24 bombers and attempted to raid the Japanese held island of Wake. It was his hope that the raid would act as a diversion and relieve pressure on the American units fighting in the Battle of Midway. General Tinker died in the raid. In a sense his death was the result of the weakness of American air power. Two years later, the American Air Force was no longer forced to send out a handful of planes to support American forces engaged in combat. On June 6, 1944, Allied airmen flew more than 7,500 sorties against German forces during the Normandy Invasion in France.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

June 7

On June 7, 1942, Japanese forces invaded Alaska. The Japanese landed on the Aleutian Islands and established bases on American soil. From these bases the Japanese planned to check American movements in the North Pacific. It would take almost two years of hard fighting before the Aleutian Islands held by the Japanese would return to American control.

History of the Second World War

June 8

By June 1941, the first graduates of the Technical School at Keesler Field, Mississippi, were in the thick of the fighting. Many of these graduates never returned home. In those first days of June 1942, Corporal Edgar L. Rogers, a bomber crew chief, went down with his B-17 after sinking a Japanese warship. Rogers became the first graduate of Keesler's Airplane Mechanic School to be reported missing in action.

Keesler Retrospect

June 9

During the early days of the American Civil War, James Allen and his friend, Dr William H. Helme (a dentist), offered their skills and experience in operating balloons, to the Federal Government. Both men were members of the First Rhode Island Regiment and were instructed to report to Washington DC. On June 9, 1861, the two men inflated one balloon at a gas main in downtown Washington. They towed it to a farm located one mile north of the Capital. There, the two men made the first official U.S. Army captive balloon ascent.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

June 10

In June 1965, the first United States space walk took place during the Gemini 4 Mission. Major Edward H. White of the U.S. Air Force became the first American to "walk in space." White's efforts were a major milestone in America's Space Program.

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June 11

For twelve relentless days, American aircraft of the 9th and 12th Air Forces attacked the 32 square mile Italian island of Pantelleria. On June 11, 1943, the 10,000 Italians on Pantelleria surrendered. This was history's first example of a territorial conquest by air action alone.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

June 12

On June 12, 1918, the 96th Aero Squadron, flying in eight French built Breguet 14's, accomplished the first American combat bombing raid. Commanded by Major Harry M. Brown, the Americans dropped 80 bombs on the railroad junction at Baroncourt, located northwest of Metz.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

June 13

On June 13, 1944, the first of 2,754 German V-1 rockets landed in Great Britain. By July 6, 1944, the V-1's had killed 2,752 people in Britain. At that point, Americans and Allied air units were tasked with the mission of knocking out the German V-1 sites.

History of the Second World War

June 14

The Battle for Guadalcanal raged on the sea, on the land and in the air. On June 14, 1943, the Japanese sent 120 planes to attack the American airfield at Guadalcanal. Thirteenth Air Force fighters, together with Navy, Marine, and Royal New Zealand fighters, intercepted the Japanese before they could reach Guadalcanal. The Allied airmen brought down 94 of the enemy planes in a free-wheeling dogfight. Japanese air power in the Solomons area never recovered from the lethal blow on the 14th.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

June 15

On June 15, 1775, the United States Army was born with George Washington elected as Commander in Chief. One hundred and seventy-one years later, on June 15, 1946, President Truman submitted to Congress a specific plan for the merger of the Army, Navy, and a separate Air Force into a Department of National Defense. The long struggle to achieve a separate Air Force, begun after World War I, was beginning to pay off.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

June 16

The American nation and its people stand for the principles of freedom and democracy. In defense of these principles, countless Americans have taken up arms to fight the forces of tyranny, sometimes even before America has "officially" entered the fight. In June 1916, H. Clyde Balsley of the "Lafayette Escadrille" was shot down in a dogfight against the German Air Force. He became the first American airman to fall in aerial combat. Balsley died fighting tyranny almost a year before America entered World War I. Men such as Balsley have been willing to risk their lives so that freedom and democracy could flourish to the generations of Americans that would follow.

The United States Air Force

June 17

In June 1861, Major Hartman Bache, Acting Chief of the American Army Topographic Engineers, contacted John Wise for an estimate of cost and time needed to produce America's first military balloon. Wise responded that a 20,000 cubic foot balloon constructed of raw silk would cost \$850 and take two weeks to deliver.

The United States Air Force

June 18

Thaddeus S. C. Lowe was the most successful civilian balloonist serving the Union Army during the Civil War. On June 18, 1861, Lowe, in his balloon named "Enterprise," transmitted the first telegraphic message from a balloon to a station on the ground. Sitting in his office at the White House, President Lincoln received Lowe's telegraphic report. Later that year, Lowe became the head of the Balloon Corps, Army of the Potomac. For the first time in its history, American armed forces had an air arm.

The United States Air Force

June 19

On June 19, 1944, the Marianas Turkey Shoot took place. Part of the larger Battle of the Philippine Sea, this engagement virtually destroyed Japanese naval sea and air power for the rest of the war. The Japanese lost 328 carrier-based aircraft and another fifty land-based aircraft. In return, the Americans lost twenty-three aircraft, plus six more so damaged that they were junked.

Alex Vraciu was the fourth-ranked Navy fighter ace of World War II. During the Marianas Turkey Shoot, Vraciu's Hellcat fighter developed an oil leak that sprayed oil all over his windscreen. Despite this he managed to down six Japanese fighters in eight minutes. For that action Vraciu was awarded the Navy Cross.

History of the Second World War

June 20

On June 20, 1930, the American Army Air Corps opened its showcase installation - Randolph Field, Texas. Randolph, soon to be known as the "Westpoint of the Air," served as the headquarters of the newly established Army Air Corps Training Center.

The United States Air Force

June 21

On June 21, 1944, one thousand bombers and 1,200 fighters of the U.S. Army Air Force made a massive raid on Berlin. From Berlin, the American airmen flew on to land in Russia.

History of the Second World War

June 22

On June 22, 1861, Union artillery fire was directed from a balloon for the first time. Lowe and the men of the Union Army Balloon Corps became America's first forward air controllers.

The United States Air Force

June 23

In June 1943, tinfoil strips (chaff), code named "Window," was used to confuse German radar so that American bombers could strike at German targets.

History of the Second World War

June 24

What was to be called "The Race with the Sun" began at 2:59 a.m. on June 24, 1924. Lt Russell Maughan climbed into a PW-8 aircraft to race the sun from Mitchel Field, Long Island, to San Francisco, California. At 9:47 p.m., just as the late summer sun disappeared in the Pacific, Maughan climbed out of his cockpit in San Francisco. Looking pale and tired, Maughan had been in the air for 18 hours and 20 minutes with only three hours and 20 minutes spent on the ground. Impressed by the PW-8, Curtis aircraft's reliability and speed (Maughan had averaged just above 156 mph during the trip), the Army ordered twenty-five of the aircraft for the Air Service.

The U.S. Air Force: A Turbulent History

June 25

In June 1942, thirteen American B-24 "Liberators" set out from Egypt to make a 2,600 mile trip to bomb the Astra-Romana Oil Refinery in Rumania. Even though all 13 of the bombers arrived on target, only four returned to their home base. The rest were forced to divert to other bases or crashed due to mechanical failures or because of navigational errors caused by the almost total lack of ground Nav-aids to assist them in finding their way home.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

June 26

On June 26, 1950, President Truman, in response to North Korea's attack on South Korea, ordered General Douglas MacArthur to use all the naval and air forces at his command to support the forces of the South Koreans. Truman forbade any air or naval operations north of the 38th Parallel, except under emergency conditions. The following day, 1Lt William G. Hudson became the first American to score an aerial victory in Korea.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

June 27

On June 27, 1944, U.S. Army Air Force bombers lifted off from Russian bases. Escorted by American P-51 "Mustangs" and Russian "Yak" fighters, the American bombers attacked oil production plants in Poland and then flew on to American bases in Italy.

History of the Second World War

June 28

On June 28, 1965, President Johnson authorized the American ground forces in South Vietnam to engage the enemy forces in ground combat. Until that time the 74,000 Americans in Vietnam had been limited to only performing "air operations" and "airfield defense."

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June 29

On June 29, 1972, Captain Steve Bennett, USAF, and Captain Mike Brown, USMC, set out from Da Nang in an OV-10 aircraft for a FAC mission over Quang Tri, South Vietnam. Shortly before it was time for Bennett to turn his "Bronco" for home, he was informed that his relief had been delayed on the ground at Da Nang. Knowing he had only enough gas to remain on station for another hour, Bennett elected to stay. With darkness approaching, Bennett directed two flights of Navy A-6 "Intruders" in support of South Vietnamese ground forces.

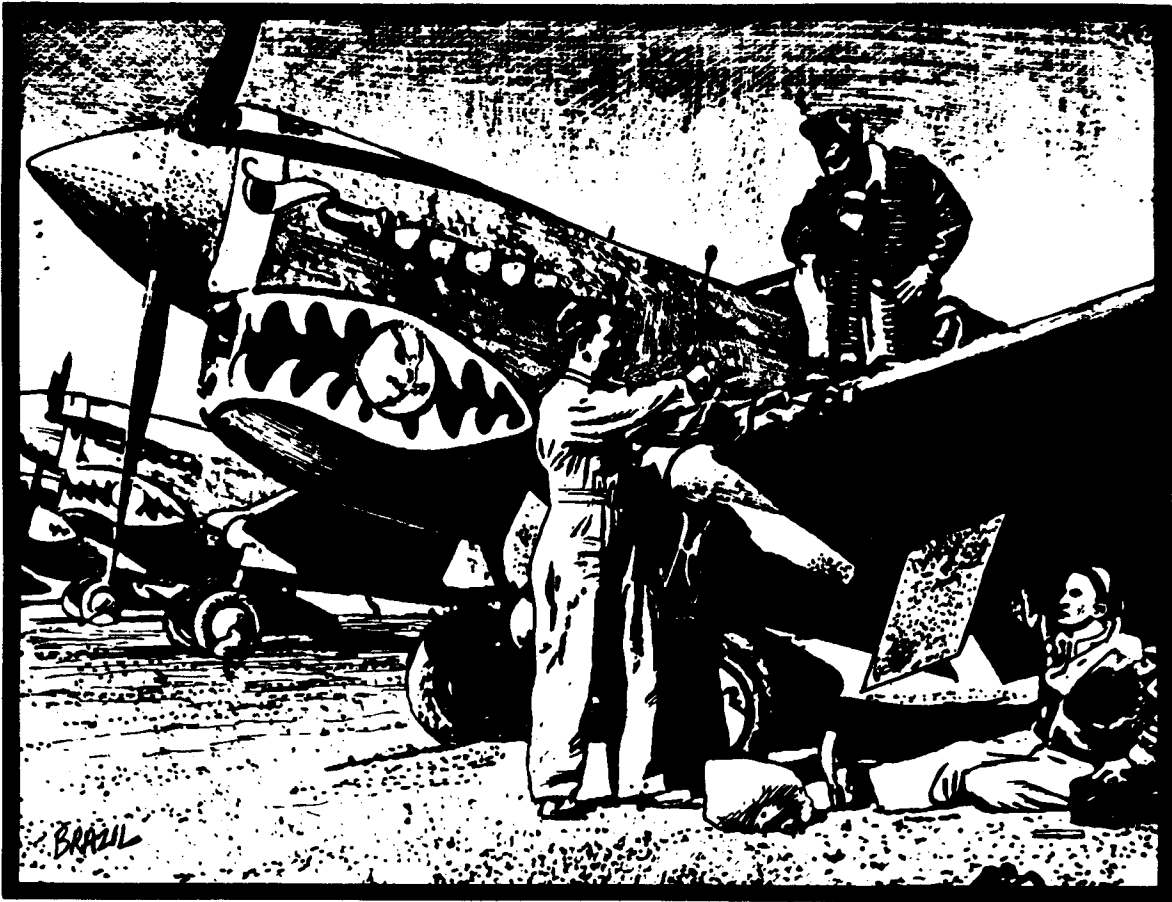
A mile south of Bennett and Brown, a South Vietnamese platoon had been pinned down by several hundred North Vietnamese regulars. Responding to the South Vietnamese's call for help, Bennett started making strafing passes at the enemy troops. His OV-10 was struck by an SA-7 SAM in the aircraft's left engine. Captain Bennett flew the OV-10 out over the water and ordered a bail out. However, Captain Brown was unable to jump out because his parachute was damaged. Since Brown could not jump, Bennett elected to attempt a crash landing in the water. Captain Brown survived the crash but Bennett was killed. Captain Bennett was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his extraordinary heroism on that day.

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June 30

On June 30, 1968, the Lockheed C-5 "Galaxy" made its first flight. Design studies for the "Galaxy" had begun in 1963 when Lockheed engineers and Air Force program managers began to develop an airplane capable of carrying such "oversized" cargo as tanks or trucks. The airplane had to be able to take off fully loaded from an 8000 foot runway and be able to land on a forward airstrip as short as 4000 feet. Under normal conditions, the C-5 was able to carry well over 300 personnel, or a pair of main battle tanks, or even 16 small trucks. The "Galaxy" was especially valuable in rushing armor, helicopters and artillery to South Vietnam in the hectic days after the North Vietnamese invasion of the South in 1972.

The Air War Over Vietnam



JULY

July 1

On July 1, 1927, the first aircraft equipped with a radio crossed the Atlantic from America to France. Soon most American military aircraft would be equipped with radio equipment. A short time later, the U.S. Army would establish a training department to train the repairmen who would maintain the new equipment. On July 1, 1946, the U.S. Army Air Force Command, which was responsible for training in the Air Force, was renamed the U.S. Air Force Training Command.

Famous First Facts

July 2

On July 2, 1917, the first radio telephone communication between the ground and an aircraft took place at Langley Field, Virginia.

Famous First Facts

July 3

In July 1942, Gene Autry (the "Singing Cowboy") enlisted in the Army Air Corps. Autry entered flight training and became a pilot. He spent most of the war flying C-47's in the China-Burma-India theater for the Air Transport Command.

World War II Facts

July 4

On July 4, 1942, six American bomber crews "borrowed" six A-20 Boston Bombers of the Royal Air Force. They then proceeded to fly a daylight bombing raid against Nazi airfields in the Netherlands.

Famous First Facts

July 5

Until July 1942, the American Volunteer Group (the "Flying Tigers") served as part of the Chinese Army. The AVG's commander, General Claire Chennault, had named the "Flying Tigers" after his favorite football team (the LSU Tigers). While part of the Chinese Army, the AVG, from December 1941 to July 1942, shot down 286 Japanese planes with only 15 of the "Flying Tigers" personnel killed in air or ground combat against the enemy. In July 1942, the AVG was transferred to the U.S. Fourteenth Army Air Force.

World War II Facts

July 6

Deception is a valid weapon in war, but sometimes it is a two-edged sword. In the summer of 1943, U.S. Army Air Force First Lieutenant Harold Fisher was the pilot of a B-17 named Bonnie Sue. Fisher lost two engines on a bombing run over the Italian island of Pantelleria. As he was returning to his base in North Africa, he was attacked and shot down by a P-38 that had been captured by the Italians and used to shoot down unsuspecting U.S. bombers. The P-38 was flown by Italian pilot Guido Rossi who had a number of bombers to his credit. Fisher was the only survivor of the crash. In retaliation, Fisher acquired a specially armed B-17 and had the name and picture of Rossi's wife (who was an Allied prisoner) painted on it. Soon Rossi in his P-38 encountered Fisher in his B-17. When Rossi saw the picture and name of his wife he asked via radio who the B-17 was named for. Fisher replied it was named after the woman he was living with. This so incensed Rossi that he attempted a head-on-attack. Rossi was promptly shot down by the B-17's crew. Fisher was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for the feat and members of the crew were given Air Medals.

World War II Facts

July 7

Jimmy Stewart, the Hollywood actor and winner of the Academy Award for best actor in 1940, enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1941. Stewart, the first American film star to enlist, had been deferred from the draft because of being underweight, but had managed to gain the 10 pounds necessary for him to join up. Finishing basic training during the summer of 1941, Stewart was accepted for bombardier training. For a time, he taught as a bombardier instructor at Moffet Field, California. In 1943, he was transferred to England to the 445th Bomb Group of the Eighth Air Force. Stewart completed twenty-five combat missions in a B-17 named Four Yanks and a Jerk. During his combat tour, Stewart won the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal and the Croix de Guevve. After the war, Stewart remained in the Air Force Reserve where he rose to the rank of general officer.

World War II Facts

July 8

In 1946, the 509th Composite Bomb Group was the only Group in SAC capable of delivering atomic weapons. In July of that year, the "Dave Dream," a B-29 piloted by Major Woodrow P. Swancutt of the 509th, dropped a Nagasaki-type A-bomb at Bikini in the Pacific Ocean.

The Development of Strategic Air Command 1946-1981

July 9

In July 1971, SAC's last C-47 was transferred to the U.S.S. Alabama Monument Commission. This aircraft, a VC-47D (Serial Number 44-76236), had been assigned to the 97th Bomb Wing, Blytheville AFB, Arkansas. Until 1971, SAC had continuously used C-47's or "Gooney Birds" as they were affectionately called, for support and administrative purposes.

The Development of Strategic Air Command 1946-1981

July 10

In July 1974 Secretary of Defense, James R. Schlesinger, directed SAC to transfer 128 KC-135 tankers to the Air Force Reserves and Air National Guard. By July 1975, the 160th Air Refueling Group at Rickenbacker AFB, Ohio became the first unit equipped with KC-135's to become operational.

The Development of Strategic Air Command 1946-1981

July 11

On July 11, 1955 the U.S. Air Force Academy opened its doors for the first time. With temporary quarters at Lowry AFB, Denver, Colorado, the first class consisted of 300 cadets. In 1959, the Academy was moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The United States Air Force

July 12

On July 12, 1957, the first flight of the McDonnell RF-101 "Voodoo" took place. The RF-101 tactical reconnaissance aircraft first saw action in Southeast Asia in 1961. These unarmed aircraft flew photo recon missions over the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos and Vietnam until 1965. In 1965, RF-101's accompanied the first U.S. Air Force strike against North Vietnam. Instead of taking pictures, however, the "Voodoos" navigated for an attack force made up of F-100D's. Their career as pathfinder proved brief and the "Voodoos" soon reverted to their normal photographic mission. On one such flight, two MIG-17s pounced on a pair of "Voodoos;" one of the reconnaissance pilots continued his run, while the other offered himself as a decoy, drew the attention of the MIGs, and out-ran them, allowing the other aircraft to complete its mission. Beginning in 1967, the "Voodoos" were withdrawn from the combat area and replaced by RF-4C's.

The Air War Over Vietnam

July 13

In the later part of June 1950, North Korean troops invaded South Korea. The Nineteenth Bomb Group (now stationed at Robins AFB GA) was the only heavy bomb group in the area. They were soon joined by the 22nd and 92nd Bomb Groups from the United States. On July 13, 1950, 50 B-29's from the three bomb groups attacked the important North Korean port of Wonsan.

The Development of Strategic Air Command 1946-1981

July 14

In July 1943, Comiso Airfield in Sicily became the first airfield captured after the invasion of that island. The first plane to land at Comiso was a German JU-88 that U.S. flak units shot at as it approached. The German pilot landed, climbed out, shook his fist at the flak battery, and much to his surprise, was promptly taken prisoner by the Americans. Shortly afterward, two German ME-109's also landed, believing that the field was still in German hands. They were also taken prisoner by the delighted Americans.

World War II Facts

July 15

Kurt J. Hermann, a U.S. Army Air Force Technical Sergeant, was the first person to take part in bombing missions on all three Axis capitals and the first person to fly 108 combat missions. He began the war in the Merchant Marine and was torpedoed, spending twenty-six days on a life raft. After being rescued, he enlisted in the Army Air Force and was sent to North Africa as a waist gunner on a B-17. On his first mission, he shot down an ME-109. While flying in B-26's he downed three more enemy aircraft. In July 1943, he was in the raid on Rome. After flying 50 missions, he requested duty with the Eighth Air Force in England. He completed 25 missions by April 1944, including a mission over Berlin. He then requested transfer to the Pacific. He was posted to a B-29 unit on Saipan from which he flew over Tokyo. He was listed as missing in action when his B-29 failed to return from a bombing mission toward the end of the war.

World War II Facts

July 16

On July 16, 1945, the first atomic bomb was exploded over the desert in Alamogordo, New Mexico. On the same day, 500 B-29's staged a massive air raid over the Japanese home islands of Honshu and Kyushu. A month later, a single B-29, carrying the A-bomb, would bring the war to an end.

History of the Second World War

July 17

On July 17, 1918, Lieutenant Quentin Roosevelt, the youngest son of President Theodore Roosevelt, was killed in a dogfight near Chateau Thierry in France.

Fighter Aces of the First World War

July 18

On July 18, 1914, Congress gave statutory recognition to Army aviation as a permanent organization. Congress authorized a strength for Army aviation of 60 officers and 260 enlisted men. At the same time, Congress also provided for flight pay for air crew members.

The United States Air Force

July 19

In July 1975, the first international rendezvous and docking in space took place. U.S. astronauts Thomas P. Stafford, Vance D. Bland and Donald K. Slayton docked their Apollo spacecraft with the Soviet Soyuz 19 spacecraft. Cosmonauts Aleksei Leonov and Valeri Kubasov exchanged visits with the Americans and both crews held a joint news conference in space.

Reader's Digest Almanac and Yearbook: 1983

July 20

On July 20, 1969, Apollo 11 astronauts Colonel Edwin Aldrin, Jr., USAF, and Neil Armstrong became the first men to set foot on the surface of the moon. The astronauts remained on the moon for more than 21 hours before returning to earth.

The Sun Newspaper Almanac

July 21

On July 21, 1961, Air Force Captain Virgil "Gus" Grissom rode "Liberty Bell 7" 118 miles up into space. Grissom became the world's third man in space. Grissom would later be killed in an Apollo accident. Today, Grissom AFB, Indiana, stands as a tribute to this brave airman.

Reader's Digest Almanac and Yearbook: 1983

July 22

On July 22, 1942, the Japanese Forces landed in New Guinea at Buna and attempted to march over land to capture Port Moresby. Warned by American codebreakers, who had broken the Japanese code, MacArthur dispatched American and Australian troops to stop the Japanese. Three thousand Americans and Australians died in the battle, but the Japanese drive on Port Moresby was stopped.

World War II Facts

July 23

In July 1948, three B-29's of the 43rd Bomb Group departed Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, on a round-the-world flight attempt. One of the B-29's crashed in the Arabian Sea; however, the other two completed the 20,000 mile flight in 103 hours and 50 minutes of actual flight time.

The Development of Strategic Air Command 1946-1981

July 24

Major General David Grant, U.S. Army Air Force, was the first surgeon general of the Army Air Force (1941-1946) and, as such, was the first to use helicopters equipped with litters to evacuate wounded from the front. Grant was also the first to use transport aircraft for medical evacuations. By the end of World War II, he was responsible for evacuating over 4,000 casualties a month from Europe back to the United States.

World War II Facts

July 25

On July 25, 1944, operation "Cobra" (the breakout of U.S. Forces from Normandy) began. The breakout was heralded by air attacks on German positions from 3,000 American and Allied warplanes.

History of the Second World War

July 26

Shortly after noon, July 26, 1947, President Truman signed the National Security Act of 1947, establishing the Department of Defense and a separate Air Force. James Forrestal was appointed the first Secretary of Defense.

The United States Air Force

July 27

During the last days of July 1971 Apollo 15, the fourth lunar landing mission, took place. The mission was manned by astronauts David R. Scott, James B. Irwin and Alfred M. Worden. Scott and Irwin became the first men to use the Lunar Roving Vehicle (LRV) to explore the surface of the moon. Scott and Irwin on the LRV traveled over 17 miles during their stay on the moon.

Reader's Digest Almanac and Yearbook: 1983

July 28

On July 28, 1973, the second manned Skylab mission took place. Astronauts Alan L. Bean, Jack R. Lousma and Owen K. Garriott spent over 59 days in space conducting experiments in Skylab.

Reader's Digest Almanac and Yearbook: 1983

July 29

In the last days of July 1976, three crews of the Ninth Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, Beale AFB, California, set seven speed and altitude records with their SR-71 aircraft. Among the records established by the men of the Ninth Strategic Recon Wing were the (1) world absolute speed record, (2) world jet speed without payload, and (3) world altitude record for horizontal flight.

The Development of Strategic Air Command 1946-1981

July 30

On July 30, 1916, almost a full year before America entered World War I, German saboteurs blew up a munitions plant near Jersey City, New Jersey.

The Sun Newspaper Almanac

July 31

On July 31, 1952, U.S. Air Force pilots Captain V. McGovern and Lieutenant H. Moore made the first transatlantic helicopter flight in two Sikorsky H-19's. Both men took off from Westover AFB, Massachusetts and landed at Prestwick, Scotland.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force





AUG

August 1

On August 1, 1943, 178 B-24 bombers of the American Eighth and Ninth Air Forces took off from their North African bases to attack the German controlled oil fields at Ploesti in Rumania. The American airmen made the 1,000-mile flight (the longest bombing raid attempted to that date) without fighter escort. The American airmen went into the battle knowing full well they could expect to lose 50 percent of their force. During the course of the air battle over Ploesti, the Americans lost 54 B-24's to German fighters and antiaircraft fire, but the Americans managed to hit the target and hit it hard.

In that one action, five American airmen won the Medal of Honor for their courage. Three of the Americans were killed in the action: Lt Colonel Addison Baker, Major John Jerstad and Second Lieutenant Lloyd Hughes. The two other winners of America's highest award for valor, Colonel Leon Johnson and Colonel John Kane, survived the Ploesti Raid.

History of the Second World War

August 2

In a period spanning only 36 years, American airpower grew from its humble beginnings to a mighty force.

On August 2, 1909, the United States Army accepted the "Wright Flyer" for military service. That aircraft became the World's first military aircraft. On August 2, 1919, 18 American-built DH-4's powered by Liberty engines flew their first combat mission during World War I. On August 2, 1945, World War II was in full swing. Several hundred B-29 "Super Fortresses" dropped 6,600 tons of bombs on Japanese cities in an attempt to destroy Japan's war machine.

Today, the American Air Force is one of the most powerful striking forces on this planet.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

August 3

In 1967 a KC-135A from the 902nd Air Refueling Squadron was involved in a complex and spectacular air refueling operation over the Gulf of Tonkin in Southeast Asia. The mission began as a routine inflight refueling of two F-104's, but before it was over it involved saving six fuel-starved, carrier-based U.S. Navy aircraft (two A-3 tankers, two F-4 fighters and two F-8 fighters). The Navy tankers, while loaded with some fuel for the fighters, could not transfer that fuel to their own fuel tanks. At one point in the intricate refueling operation, the KC-135 was refueling an A-3 tanker which, in turn, was refueling an F-8. After satisfying everybody's fuel requirements, the KC-135's own fuel supply was so low that it had to land at an alternate base. For this life-saving mission, the crew of the KC-135, commanded by Major John H. Casteel, were awarded the Mackay Trophy for 1967 as the most meritorious flight of that year.

The Development of Strategic Air Command 1946-1961

August 4

In 1942 Clark Gable's wife, Carole Lombard, was killed in a TWA plane crash. Soon afterwards, Gable retired from the movies and joined the Army Air Force as a private. Gable was soon given a commission and put in charge of making Air Force training films. Gable flew with the B-17's of the Eighth Air Force on several missions over Germany to film footage for an aerial gunner's training film. The head of the Luftwaffe, Goering, heard of this and put a bounty on Gable's head of \$5,000 to any Luftwaffe pilot who could shoot him down. The lucky pilot would also receive an automatic promotion and a leave of absence. Needless to say the Luftwaffe failed to collect, and Gable went on to reach the rank of Major and win the Distinguished Flying Cross for his work over Germany.

Gable was discharged from the Army Air Force at Culver City, California in June 1944. His discharge papers were signed by an Air Force Captain named Ronald Reagan who would later go on to become President of the United States.

World War II Facts

August 5

On August 5, 1950, a B-29 of the Ninth Bomb Group crashed and burned after attempting to take off from Fairfield-Suisun Air Force Base, California. Included among the 19 casualties were Brigadier General Robert F. Travis, commanding General of the Ninth Bomb Wing, and Sergeant Paul P. Ramoneda, a member of the Ninth Food Service Squadron. Upon hearing the crash, Sergeant Ramoneda and some fellow workers rushed from the base bake shop to the scene and began pulling people from the wreckage. Although ordered to stop rescue efforts because of the imminent explosion, Sergeant Ramoneda reentered the burning plane to rescue others and died when the plane exploded. Sergeant Ramoneda was posthumously awarded the Solider's Medal and the Cheney Award, which was given annually for an "act of valor, extreme fortitude, or self-sacrifice in a humanitarian interest performed in connection with aircraft." In April 1951, Fairfield-Suisun was renamed Travis Air Force Base in honor of General Travis.

The Development of Strategic Air Command 1946-1981

August 6

In August 1942, the United States began work on the top secret Manhattan Project. The Manhattan Project was the code name for the program to develop an atomic bomb. In December 1942, Enrico Fermi, at the University of Chicago, achieved the first nuclear chain reaction. By 1945, the "Bomb" was ready. On August 6, 1945, a B-29 named the Enola Gay piloted by Colonel Paul Tibbets released an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Named "Little Boy," the Uranium 235 bomb weighed 9,000 pounds and had an explosive yield of 20,000 tons of TNT. After Japan still refused to surrender, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki on August 9. On August 14, 1945, Japan agreed to surrender to the United Nations.

History of the Second World War

August 7

On August 7, 1942, Captain Harl Pease of the Army Air Corps and a native of New Hampshire was killed pressing home an attack on Japanese forces at Rabul, New Britain. For his courage, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

In 1956 Portsmouth AFB was renamed Pease AFB in honor of Captain Pease. Today, Pease AFB is the home of the 509th Bomb Wing of Pacific fame. It was the 509th which dropped the first A-Bomb on Hiroshima.

History of the Second World War

August 8

During the early days of August 1964, North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked the United States destroyers USS Maddox and USS Turner Joy in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin. President Johnson ordered U.S. Naval air units to make retaliatory attacks on the torpedo boats, their bases and supporting installations. Shortly afterwards, Congress gave the President approval for such actions as he deemed necessary to safeguard American national interests in dealing with future acts of aggression. The joint congressional resolution came to be known as the "Tonkin Resolution," thus the Vietnam War began for America.

The Air War in Vietnam

August 9

In August 1918, the most important job of the American Air Service Observation Squadron was conducting the preliminary reconnaissance work for the World War I St Mihiel operation. The 88th Aero Squadron suffered heavy casualties along the Vesle River in France doing this important task. On August 9, 1918, Lieutenants Richard C. M. Page and John I. Rancourt were conducting an unescorted reconnaissance over Fismes, France. They were attacked by six German fighters and Rancourt was hit three times in the leg by the first burst of enemy machine gun fire. By skilled maneuvering, the Americans shot down one of the German fighters and escaped the rest. For their courage, both airmen were given the Distinguished Service Cross.

Hostile Skies

August 10

During World War II the B-17 "Flying Fortress" became famous for its durability and its ability to bring crews home after taking massive damage from the enemy. Kenneth Bragg's B-17 named All American is a case in point. While over Europe with the 97th Bomb Group of the Eighth Army Air Force, the All American collided with a crippled German fighter. The German plane hit just forward of the B-17's tail section and nearly sliced through the entire fuselage. The aircraft held together for the long flight back with a major section of the fuselage destroyed. The B-17 landed and rolled to a stop, then immediately broke in two when a crew member opened one of the exit hatches. The All American had brought her crew home safe and sound.

World War II Facts

August 11

Flight testing new aircraft has never been a safe business to be in. The men who fly these new aircraft risk their lives to expand the limits of flight knowledge. Lieutenant Eugene H. Barksdale in World War I received credit for destroying three German aircraft in combat and participating in the destruction of five others. He stayed in the Army after World War I and in 1926 was assigned to help flight test a new observation-type aircraft. On August 11, 1926, Barksdale was flight testing the plane when it went into a fast spin. Barksdale was forced to bail out, but his parachute failed to open fully and he was killed. In 1930 Barksdale Field was named in his honor.

The United States Air Force

August 12

Joseph P. Kennedy was the older brother of President John F. Kennedy. During World War II, Joseph Kennedy was a U.S. Navy lieutenant stationed on anti-submarine patrols out of England. Kennedy volunteered for Operation Aphrodite after his second combat tour. The plan for Aphrodite was for Kennedy to fly an explosive-laden B-24 bomber to the French coast and then bail out. A second B-24 would then control the first aircraft and guide it via remote control to a German submarine pen. On August 12, 1944 Kennedy took off from England. Nearing France he armed the bombs on board the B-24, then attempted to bail out, but the aircraft blew up, killing Kennedy. For his courage Kennedy was awarded posthumously the Navy Cross.

History of the Second World War

August 13

The First Aero Squadron, which had existed off and on in some form since early 1913, underwent reorganization at San Diego in 1914 on a more official basis in accordance with War Department directives. At that time, the Squadron had 16 officers, 77 enlisted men and 8 airplanes. In the years immediately preceding World War I this single squadron represented the total tactical air strength of the U.S. Army. In 1916, the First Aero Squadron flew into Mexico as part of the punitive expedition against Pancho Villa. On August 13, 1917, the First Aero Squadron departed for France to join the American Army. They became the first combat flying unit to reach the front. Soon afterward the "First" would take to the skies of Europe to do battle with the German Air Force.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

August 14

On August 14, 1942, Lieutenant Elza Shahn of the U.S. Army Air Force was a P-38 fighter pilot of the 27th Fighter Squadron. While ferrying his aircraft to England, Shahn spotted a German FW200 "Condor" flying near Iceland. These long-range German reconnaissance aircraft collected weather data and shipping information for the German Navy. This information would then be sent to U-boats to aid them in attacking American and Allied ships in the Atlantic. Shahn quickly turned toward the "Condor" and shot it down, thus becoming the first active duty American Army pilot to shoot down a German aircraft in World War II.

World War II Facts

August 15

On August 15, 1918, Lieutenant John Lambert and his new observer were flying their airplane over German lines. As members of the American 91st Aero Squadron, it was their job to bring back information on German troop placements - information the Germans did not want the Allies to know. The day before, Lambert had been attacked by four German fighters, his observer, Howard T. Baker, had been hit in the stomach by machine gun fire. Lambert managed to break off the fight and raced with full throttle for home and medical attention for Baker. However, Baker died before Lambert could land. Now, with a new observer, Lambert again took off in search of vital information. Flying over Metz at 16,000 feet, the engine "died" and the two men found themselves without power. Lambert turned his plane toward home and began to glide to earth. Suddenly they were attacked by six German aircraft. In spite of this vigorous attack on the part of the Germans, the Americans escaped and managed to glide the 15 miles to Allied territory where Lambert landed his aircraft and brought back information he and his observer had learned about enemy troop movements.

Hostile Skies

August 16

Donald Blakeslee was an American ace who served with the Fourth Fighter Group of the Eighth Army Air Force. He had been a member of the 133rd Eagle Squadron of the British Royal Air Force prior to the U.S. entry into the War, but transferred to the U.S. Air Force after December 7. During the course of World War II, Blakeslee was credited with shooting down 15 enemy aircraft, but refused to paint kill marks on his P-47 fighter like other aces. He even refused to give his aircraft a name, apparently believing this would bring him bad luck. Perhaps he was right, for Blakeslee survived the war and is still living today.

World War II Facts

August 17

Curtis LeMay was an Army Air Force General in World War II who commanded American bomber forces in Europe and the Pacific. In Europe he concluded that too many bombers were missing their targets because they were avoiding enemy flak, so he led the next mission over St Nazaire. LeMay held his aircraft in a straight line through the flak, which he simply ignored. The next day he ordered his planes to no longer take evasive action on the final bomb run. Losses increased, but so did bombing accuracy. LeMay led the first shuttle bombing mission from England to North Africa bombing Regensburg while enroute on August 17, 1943. In the Pacific, he ordered the removal of the B-29's defensive guns and gunners and overloaded the bombers with fire bombs to be dropped from extremely low altitudes. This order was very unpopular with the crews, but highly effective against the Japanese. After World War II, LeMay went on to command SAC and then became the Air Force Chief of Staff.

History of the Second World War

August 18

The morning of August 18, 1969, the citizens of the Mississippi Gulf Coast began to dig out from under the rubble left behind in the wake of Hurricane Camille. Biloxi looked as if she had been in the middle of a war. The night before, Camille had hit the Biloxi area with winds of over 200 mph. In the coastal area alone there were 145 deaths, 8,931 people injured and 5,662 homes destroyed. The personnel of Keesler AFB set about to aid the people of the Gulf Coast. Keesler became a life line for the area. C-130 cargo aircraft brought in food, medical help and supplies for area residents. The airmen of Keesler set out to help the area civilians dig out. In the two weeks that followed, the airmen of Keesler showed the entire country the meaning of the word "service."

Keesler Retrospect

August 19

In August 1942 Canadian and American ground forces made a large scale raid on Dieppe in France. To support that operation, American and British airmen provided the Allied air cover over Dieppe. On August 19, 1942, Sam F. Junkin of the U.S. Army Air Force became the first American military pilot to shoot down a German FW190 fighter aircraft. In the action against the FW190, Junkin was wounded and forced to bail out over the English Channel. Junkin was picked-up by the Navy and returned to England.

World War II Facts

August 20

John Glenn, in 1963, was the first American to orbit the Earth. During World War II, he was a Marine F-4U fighter pilot who logged 59 combat missions against the Japanese. Glenn won two Distinguished Flying Crosses and ten Air Medals. He again fought in the Korean War where he won two more Distinguished Flying Crosses and eight Air Medals in 90 combat missions.

History of the Second World War

August 21

Charles A. Lindbergh was the first person to fly the Atlantic solo in 1927. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Lindbergh became a civilian employee of the United Aircraft Corporation and a technical representative to the U.S. Army Air Force. As such, he flew over 50 missions in the Pacific and shot down several Japanese aircraft. On one flight while teaching Air Force pilots the techniques of fuel conservation for long flights, Lindbergh downed a Japanese fighter with his P-38. Lindbergh is the only person in history to win both the Medal of Honor and the Pulitzer Prize. In 1954, Lindbergh was made a Brigadier General in the U.S. Air Force Reserve.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

August 22

George F. Preddy was a U.S. Army Air Force officer who became an "ace" in World War II. In August 1944, Preddy was flying over Hamburg, Germany, when he engaged with a flight of German fighters. Within six minutes, he managed to shoot down six German planes. Several missions later, Preddy was killed when American antiaircraft gunners shot down his plane by mistake as he pursued a German fighter. When Preddy died, he had downed 26 enemy aircraft in combat.

World War II Facts

August 23

The airplanes that Air Force people work on and fly in become more than "just" machines. Lives depend on the performance of these aircraft and sometimes these complex weapon systems seem to take on personalities of their own. They become more than just "it" or "the plane." In August 1942, Alabama Exterminator, Baby Doll, Berlin Sleeper, Big Stuff, Birmingham Blitzkrieg, Butcher Shop, Johnny Reb, Peggy D and Yankee Doodle, along with three other B-17's of the Eighth Air Force, leaped skyward to strike at the German controlled railroad net in France. Leading the way was the Yankee Doodle, at her controls was Major General Ira C. Eaker. The Americans, supported by 75 British spitfires, struck at the locomotive repair depot at Roven, France. Protected by the gallant British airmen, the Americans hit their target and returned home without the loss of a single aircraft. These twelve B-17's had just completed the first "official" bombing mission of the Eighth Air Force in World War II.

History of the Second World War

August 24

The World's first black pilot was a man born in Columbus, Georgia, named Eugene Bullard. When World War I broke out in Europe, Bullard traveled to France to join the French Army in its battle against aggression. Bullard first was assigned to the French Foreign Legion, but was soon transferred to the French 170th Infantry Regiment, nicknamed "The Swallows of Death" for their daring bayonet attacks. He was wounded twice at the Battle of Verdun. At Verdun one of the members of his unit bet him that Bullard could not learn to fly. Bullard took him up on the bet and applied for pilot training. Bullard was soon airborne, thus becoming the only black flier in World War I. Bullard was transferred to the Lafayette Flying Corps. As a fighter pilot, he was aggressive to the point of recklessness and would often take on several adversaries at once. For his courage, he was awarded the Croix de Guerre. When the United States entered World War I, Bullard was transferred to the United States Air Service.

No Man's Land

August 25

Perhaps the outstanding American contribution to the air war effort in World War I was the development and mass production of the Liberty engine - a truly fine high horsepower aircraft power plant. The Liberty engine was developed out of need for an aircraft engine which would lend itself to rapid mass production and enough power to remain serviceable for at least two years.

Lieutenant Colonels E. J. Hall and J. E. Vincent of the U.S. Army locked themselves in a suite in the Willard Hotel in Washington D.C. to design the new engine. With information and inputs from other engineers of several motor companies and the U.S. Bureau of Standards, Hall and Vincent designed the Liberty engine in less than 48 hours. On August 25, 1917, the first 12-cylinder model of the Liberty engine was tested. Soon the 440 horsepower Liberty engine was being produced by the Packard, Ford, Lincoln, Nordyke and Marmon, Willys-Overland, Olds and General Motors companies for the U.S. and her allies.

Hostile Skies

August 26

More American airmen have won the Medal of Honor in the month of August than any other month of the year. Men such as Baker, Cheli, Hughes, Jerstad, Johnson, Kane, Lindsey, Pease and Sebille, not only performed their duty but their valor in combat went far beyond the bounds of mere obedience to orders. Any airmen who wears the blue ribbon with white stars adorning it knows the true meaning of "duty, honor, country."

History of the U.S. Air Force

August 27

On August 27, 1941, William Robert Dunn shot down his fifth enemy aircraft and thus became the first American "ace" in World War II. When war broke out in 1939, Dunn joined a Canadian army unit and fought in France. After the British defeat in France in 1940, Dunn transferred to the Royal Air Force's Number 71 Eagle Squadron. When America entered the war, he transferred to the U.S. Army Air Force and served in Europe, Burma, and China, ending the war with a total of 15 enemy planes shot down and twelve destroyed on the ground to his credit.

World War II Facts

August 28

The evolution of the U.S. Air Force from part of the U.S. Army Signal Corps to a separate Air Force was 40 years in the making. In August 1907, the Aeronautical Division, U.S. Army Signal Corps came into being with a strength of three men. In July 1914, the Aeronautical Division became the Aviation Section, U.S. Army Signal Corps with a strength of 122 men. In May 1918, the Army Air Service was established with a strength of 195,023 men. By July 1926, the Air Service became the Army Air Corps with a strength of only 9,674 men. On June 20, 1941, the Air Corps became the Army Air Force with 152,125 men on its rolls. It was not until September 1947 that the U.S. Air Force became fully equal with the Army and Navy. That year 305,827 proudly wore the new Air Force uniform. Today, over a half million American men and women wear the Air Force blue.

The Air Force Almanac: 1983

August 29

By August 1953, Allee Hall at Keesler AFB, Mississippi, was fully operational. Allee Hall was named after Colonel Edward Allee who was born in Natchez, Mississippi. Allee was the first American Sergeant to become a pilot. Later, he received his commission and became a pioneer in the radar field. The principles developed by Allee covering training of personnel to work on radar laid the foundation for today's Air Training Command electronics courses.

Keesler Retrospect

August 30

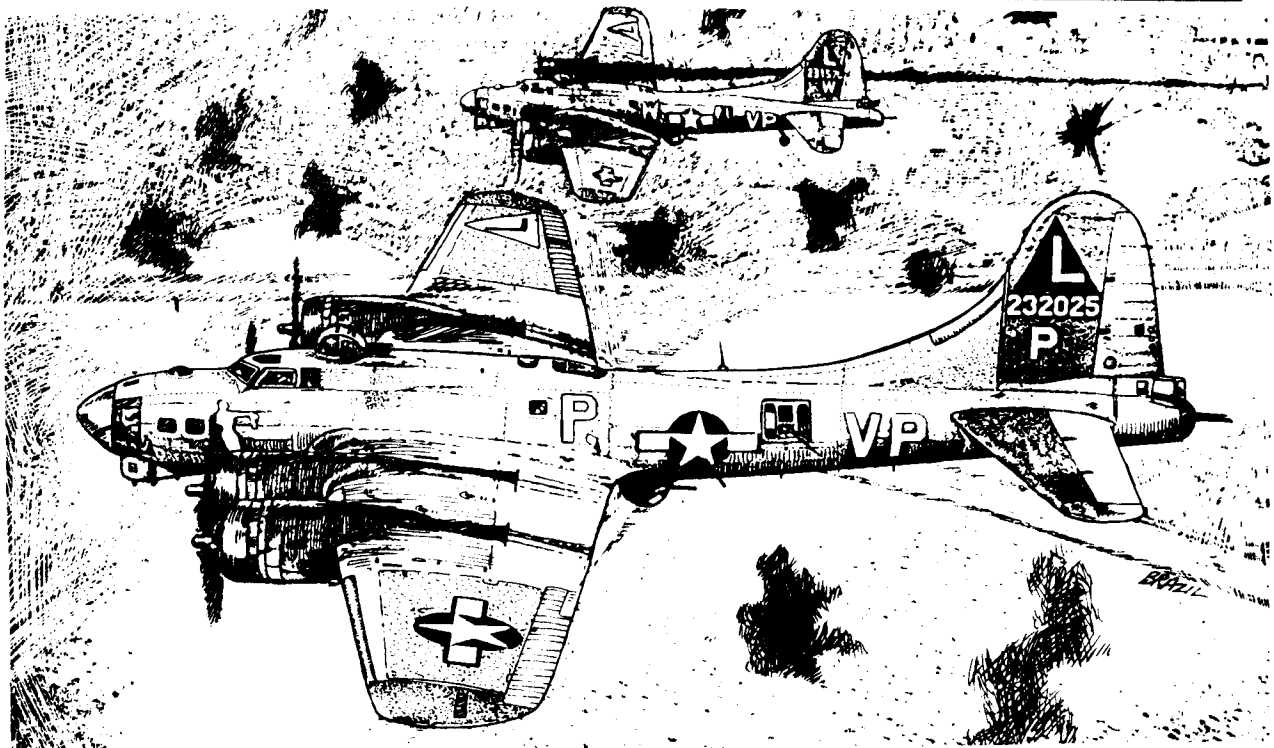
In August 1955, the U.S. Air Force proved to the world the speed in which fighter aircraft could be deployed from one point to any other point on the globe. A flight commander in the U.S. Air Force ate breakfast at Sturgate, near London, England. After breakfast, he and his flight of 12 F-84F's took off from an English airstrip and flew nonstop to Austin, Texas, in 10 hours and 48 minutes - just in time for him to have lunch with his family there at Austin.

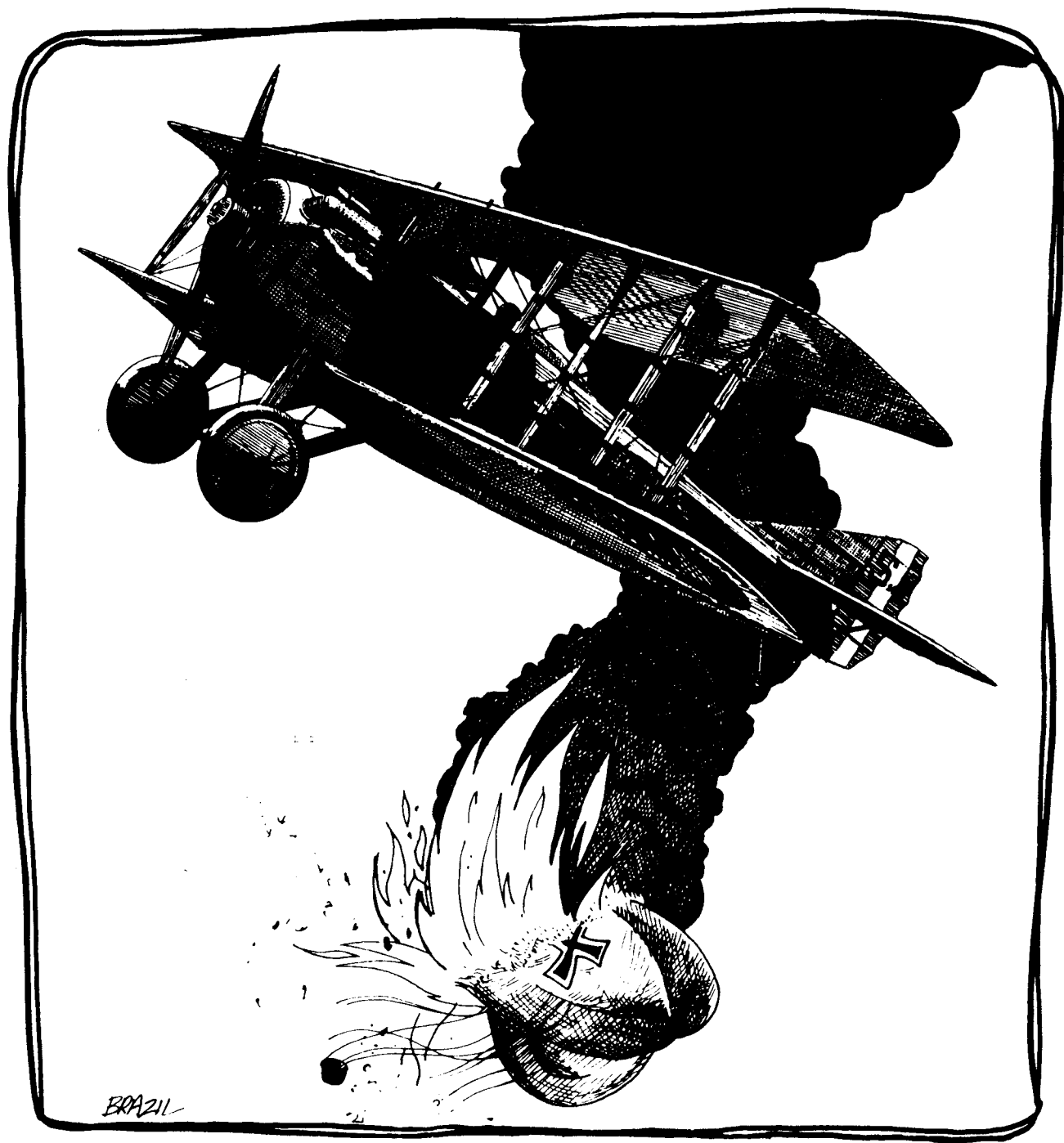
Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

August 31

On August 31, 1956, the KC-135A made its first flight. The KC-135A, fitted with internal tanks and an extendable boom for transferring fuel while in flight, evolved from the Boeing 367-80 jet transport prototype first flown in July 1954. The "Stratotanker" carries a total of 31,200 gallons of fuel for both consumption in its own engines and transfers to other aircraft at a rate as rapid as 1,000 gallons per minute. During refueling, a boom operator at the rear of the tanker steers the nozzle into a receptacle on the other aircraft, which maintains a position below and behind the tanker. During the Vietnam War, KC-135A's flew almost 200,000 sorties and conducted more than 800,000 refuelings, transferring almost nine billion pounds of fuel. The success of air operations in Southeast Asia was due in a large part to the air and ground crews of KC-135 units in SEA. Without them, air operations would have ground to a halt.

The Air War Over Vietnam





SEPT

September 1

On September 1, 1951, Dolan Hall at Keesler AFB, Mississippi, was dedicated in honor of Colonel William C. Dolan. Colonel Dolan, Commander of the First Sea Search Attack Group, developed the techniques which ultimately led to the defeat of German U-boats which were taking a huge toll of Allied shipping. Col Dolan was, however, not satisfied to develop theories for others to prove. As a skilled pilot, he participated in the ceaseless radar hunts for submarines in the shipping lines of the Atlantic from New England to the West Indies. In Europe, he flew many combat missions seeking solutions to the problems of adapting the new radar techniques for high altitude bombing. His efforts to improve radar and the use of it was tragically cut short in 1945 when he and his plane disappeared in a storm over Newfoundland. Dolan's pioneering spirit blazed the way for others to follow.

Keesler Retrospect

September 2

On September 2, 1945, hostilities with Japan ended officially with the signing of the Instrument of Surrender aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay. American Air Power played a key role in the defeat of the Axis powers in World War II.

History of the Second World War

September 3

On September 3, 1942, a lone B-25 of the American Tenth Air Force dropped bombs and pamphlets on Hanoi in the first U.S. raid against Japanese forces in that city. A Japanese supply dump and several parked aircraft were destroyed or damaged. Nine Japanese interceptors pursued the bomber but the Americans managed to escape. For the next thirty years Hanoi would be prominently featured in the history of the U.S. Air Force.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

September 4

Control of the air means control of the sea also. Rear Admiral Morrison of the American Navy summed up what control of the air - or the lack of control - meant at Guadalcanal in September 1942, by saying: "A curious tactical situation had developed at Guadalcanal that involved a virtual exchange of sea mastery every twelve hours. The Americans ruled the waves (due to their air power) from sunup to sundown. Big ships discharged their cargoes, smaller ships dashed through the Sound, and Yippies and landing craft ran errands between Lunga Point and Tulagi. But as the tropical twilight performed its quick fade out and the fall of night fell on Ironbottom Sound, American air power was grounded. Allied ships cleared out like frightened children running home from a graveyard; transport and combat types steamed through Seahawk Channel while small craft holed up in Tulagi Harbor or behind Gauutu. Then the Japanese took over. The Tokyo Express of troop destroyers and light cruisers dashed in to discharge soldiers or freight and, departing, tossed a few shells in the Marines' direction."

The Cactus Air Force

September 5

In September 1960, the first class of SCUBA qualified pararescuemen graduated from training school. Pararescue operations had first been conducted in the China-Burma-India theater during World War II. In 1947 trained pararescuemen were formally organized as part of the Air Rescue Service, but no thought was given to SCUBA training. Toward the end of the '50s, the Project Mercury Program began to take shape. In response to the recovery requirements of the first U.S. manned space-flight program, it was decided to train pararescue personnel in SCUBA operations. Since that time, the U.S. Air Force pararescue personnel have not only been trained in pararescue, but water rescue also.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

September 6

On September 6, 1942, Second Lieutenant Richard Amerine, who had been reported missing on August 31, reported in for duty at Henderson Field, Guadalcanal. After Amerine had bailed out of his fighter, he found himself behind Japanese lines. Starting back toward the American lines, he ran into Japanese troops. Amerine found one of them asleep beside a trail. He killed him by beating the Japanese soldier's head in with a rock, then took the soldier's pistol and shoes. Pilot flight shoes were not made for jungle wear. In the next few days Amerine killed two more soldiers with the butt of his pistol and shot a fourth. A one time student of entomology, Amerine kept himself alive by eating nonpoisonous red ants and snails. It took him seven days to get back to his outfit. Soon Amerine was back in the air in his new fighter aircraft.

The Cactus Air Force

September 7

In September 1952 the first production contract was awarded for Lockheed's model 383 transport aircraft. It was certainly well named, for it proved itself able to perform more diverse labors than the twelve attributed to the mighty Hercules. For over 30 years Model 383, better known as the C-130 "Hercules," has performed its mission better and longer than any other cargo aircraft in its class.

The Air War Over Vietnam

September 8

On September 8, 1944 the "Joint British American Directives on Day Bomber Operations involving Fighter Cooperation" was issued. This blueprint for air operations set down the plan for the round-the-clock bombing of Germany by the U.S. and Great Britain. Worked out between General Spaatz and the RAF, the resulting bomber offense would play a key role in defeating Germany during World War II.

The Army Air Force in World War II

September 9

The mission of the U.S. Air Force is to protect the United States from attack. Since the first airplane took to the air, the U.S. continent has only been bombed once by enemy aircraft. On September 9, 1942, Nobuo Fujita took off from the Japanese submarine I-25 and dropped incendiary bombs on a forest on Mount Emily near Brookings, Oregon. Fujita had hoped to start a massive forest fire that would disrupt part of the American timber industry. Fujita managed to make his one-plane raid, in part because of the total lack of an American radar detection net.

World War II Facts

September 10

On September 10, 1944, the American Eighth Air Force launched a major attack on targets in Germany. Over 1,000 heavy bombers escorted by several hundred fighters attacked aircraft factories, mortar transport parks, engine plants, a jet propulsion unit plant and German airfields during the day long battle. All the targets were hit by the Americans with only 12 bombers and 20 fighters lost. In return, the American bomber and fighter crews destroyed 109 German aircraft during the air battle.

The Army Air Force in World War II

September 11

On September 11, 1944, the Eighth Air Force again struck deep in Germany. Eight hundred and fifty heavy bombers escorted by 14 fighter groups attacked the synthetic oil production areas in northwest Germany. An estimated 525 German fighters rose to meet the Americans. The Eighth lost 52 heavy bombers and 32 fighters that day, but in return, 175 German aircraft were destroyed.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

September 12

On September 12, 1944, the men of the Eighth Air Force once more struck deep into Germany. Eight hundred bombers escorted by American long-range fighters again hit the German oil works in northwest Germany. Between 400 to 450 German fighters attempted to stop the Americans. The Germans managed to shoot down 58 American aircraft, but the Americans downed over 90 German aircraft, along with 26 more German planes destroyed on the ground.

In three days of battle, American airmen destroyed about 500 German aircraft. Day after day the air battles raged until victory was won.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

September 13

On September 13, 1923, a lone Army Air Service Martin NBS-1 bomber, commanded by John Whiteley, began the first cross-continental bomber flight. Flying from Langley Field, VA to San Diego, CA and then back to Langley, Whiteley and his crew pushed the technology of the time to its limits. Flying at speeds as low as 70 miles an hour, Whiteley's bomber cleared the Rocky Mountains by only 50 feet. The brave airmen proved that large aircraft could cross the United States, a fact not lost to those who saw the feat as a preview of the future of military and commercial aviation.

Compact History of the U.S. Air Force

September 14

On September 14, 1918, three American bombers of the 96th Aero Squadron, commanded by Lieutenant David H. Young, attacked the railroad yard at Conflans in France. Flying DH-4's, Young and his men found their target concealed by several layers of fleecy clouds, which the Americans ducked under to make their bomb runs. As soon as they came out of the cloud cover they were attacked by German fighters. Battling the fighters, the Americans managed to score direct hits on the target. Once they had released their bombs and gotten their pictures of the enemy supply dump, the three American planes pulled into a tight formation and began a game of hide and seek in the broken clouds with some 20 enemy fighters that were in pursuit of them. The observers kept up a constant fire with their rear guns while the pilots dodged in and out of the cloud formations. Forty-five minutes later, the little formation landed at their base without casualties. Courage, such as Young's men displayed, is the trademark of the professional American airmen who attempt to complete their jobs and do their duty regardless of the danger.

Hostile Skies

September 15

On September 15, 1918, Lieutenant Joseph Wehner, wingman of the great World War I ace, Frank Luke, came across eight German fighters attacking a lone American observation plane. Without hesitating a moment, Wehner dove on the Germans, destroying one enemy fighter and forcing another to land. The remaining Germans turned and ran for home and Wehner escorted the observation plane to safety. Three days later, Wehner was killed when he attacked six German fighters so that his friend, Luke, could escape.

Fighter Aces

September 16

In September 1918, Major Carl Spaatz, a tough American regular Army officer, destined to be Chief of Staff of the yet unborn U.S. Air Force, was the commander of the American flying school in France. Spaatz had just received orders to return to the United States to oversee fighter pilot training there when he took a three-week leave. On the first day of his leave, Spaatz appeared at the headquarters of the U.S. 13th Aero Squadron and requested that he be attached to the squadron "as a lieutenant." During his brief stay with the squadron, he destroyed two enemy aircraft and won the deep respect of the younger fighter pilots of the 13th, many of whom had served under him while in flight training. Spaatz' leadership would mold the Air Force into today's mighty striking force.

Hostile Skies

September 17

On September 17, 1908, Lt Selfridge of the U.S. Army became the first person killed in an airplane when the airplane he was flying in crashed. Selfridge and Orville Wright had been giving a demonstration of the aircraft for the U.S. Army when Orville lost control of the plane. Selfridge was thrown from the plane and killed when his head struck the ground.

History of Flight

September 18

In September 1918, American Lieutenants A. F. Seavers and John Y. Stokes set off in their 20th Aero Squadron bomber with five other aircraft. One-by-one the bombers were forced to turn back because of mechanical trouble until Seavers and Stokes were alone. For a time Seavers, the pilot, attached himself to a formation from another American squadron, but as the second formation neared the target, their plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire and thrown out of control. By the time they had regained control of the plane, Seavers and Stokes had fallen away from the protection of the other planes. With a crippled plane and a damaged and sputtering engine, the two Americans continued to their target. Just before they reached the target the engine quit running entirely. Only after gliding on over the target and dropping their bombs did the pair turn back toward Allied lines, some seven miles away. To complicate matters even more, they were then attacked by an enemy fighter. While Stokes kept up a fierce defensive fire, Seavers struggled to bring the plane in for a landing behind Allied lines. After a long glide, the DH-4 crashed in a forest just inside the Allied lines. Seavers and Stokes miraculously escaped injury. For their courage both men were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Hostile Skies

September 19

Sam Logan was an American fighter pilot during World War II. While engaged in a dogfight with the Japanese over Guadalcanal, Logan was forced to bail out when his fighter was badly shot up. As Logan hung in his parachute, a Japanese pilot attempted to shoot him. When the Japanese pilot finally ran out of ammunition, he tried to ram the helpless Logan. As a result of the wounds Logan received, his foot had to be amputated. A lesser man would have given up, but not Logan. Fitted with an artificial leg, Logan became the first American who had lost a limb to get reinstated to flight duty.

World War II Facts

September 20

Commander Wade McCluskey entered the U.S. Naval Academy in 1922 and graduated in 1926. During the battle of Midway, he commanded Air Group Six from the carrier U.S.S. Enterprise. McCluskey is credited by many historians with winning World War II because he continued to search for the Japanese carriers past his estimated fuel allotment, finally sighting them. His flight attacked the Kaga and sank it. When he returned to the Enterprise, it was discovered that he had only two gallons of gas left in his fuel tanks. For his courage that day, McCluskey was awarded the Navy Cross.

World War II Facts

September 21

The first American to shoot down a German aircraft after World War I was a black pilot named James Lincoln Peck. Serving with the Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War, Peck became an ace with two German and three Italian aircraft to his credit.

World War II Facts

September 22

Robert Scott entered West Point in 1928 and graduated in 1932. After graduation, he entered the Army Air Corps. When World War II broke out, Scott became a member of Chennault's Flying Tigers. Flying a P-40 named Old Exterminator, Scott shot down 12 Japanese planes and terrorized Japanese troop movements on the Burma Road. From Macon, Georgia, Scott later wrote a book about his Flying Tigers' experiences called God is My Co-pilot. Toward the end of the war, Scott tested rockets fired from aircraft on Japanese shipping off Okinawa.

World War II Facts

September 23

In 1945, Captain Archibald B. Thomson of the U.S. Army Air Force was killed in an ambush on Okinawa while he was supervising the installation of Aircraft Control and Warning equipment. Nine years later, Thomson Hall at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, was named in honor of his memory.

Keesler Retrospect

September 24

James H. Doolittle is best known as the commander of the "Doolittle Raid," the first bombing strike on Japan in World War II. However, few realize Doolittle was one of America's greatest aviation pioneers. He was the first person to fly across the United States in a single day and the first Army pilot to do an outside loop. On September 24, 1929, Doolittle made the first total "blind" instrument take off and landing in the history of flight. Americans such as Doolittle, great in war and peace, have played a key role in forming today's Air Force.

The History of Flight

September 25

On September 25, 1918, Captain Edward V. Rickenbacker, Commander of the 94th (Hat-in-the-Ring) Squadron, attacked a flight of seven enemy planes and shot down two of them. His courage in disregarding heavy odds won for him the Medal of Honor that day. Rickenbacker would go on to become America's leading ace in World War I.

Air Force Combat Units of World War II

September 26

In September 1941, an anonymous private, stationed at Chanute Field, wrote President Roosevelt advocating Army life. In his letter he stated: "Forty dollars a month, no food to pay for, no clothing to buy, and no board to pay. Heck, you can't beat it."

Keesler Retrospect

September 27

On Friday, September 27, 1918, a young U.S. Army Lieutenant from Arkansas named Field Kindley climbed into his British made fighter and flew off into history. Already an "ace" with ten kills to his credit, Kindley soon spotted a heavy concentration of German rail cars. Although they were well protected by German anti-aircraft fire, Kindley dove in and bombed the rail cars setting more than a dozen on fire. Climbing away from the burning rail cars, he spotted an enemy observation balloon and forced it to earth. Moments later, he shot up a German troop formation marching along a highway. Seconds later, he silenced a machine gun nest which had been holding up a British infantry advance. Five minutes later, he noticed a second machine gun nest. As he turned to attack it, he suddenly spotted a German aircraft on his tail. With German bullets flying all over the place, Kindley slammed his fighter over into a vicious right turn and rolled out directly behind the Germans. Moments later, the German airplane burst into flames and Kindley had scored his eleventh victory. But the day was not over for him. In spite of heavy ground fire, Kindley continued to press home his attack against the retreating German infantry until his ammunition was exhausted. On his way home, he spotted two German fighters attacking a lone American aircraft. Disregarding his empty guns, he dived into the middle of the dog-fight, hoping to frighten the Germans off. The bluff worked, for the Germans ran for their base. Twenty-five minutes later, the exhausted Kindley made a safe landing at his home field. For his actions that day, he was awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster for his Distinguished Service Cross and the British Distinguished Flying Cross.

Hostile Skies

September 28

On September 28, 1967, an AC-130 gunship flew the first combat mission for "Spectre." It came to the aid of a firebase in South Vietnam that was under enemy attack. The AC-130 gunship, or "Fabulous Four Engined Fighter" as she's known to F-4 pilots, was not conceived as the heavily armed, highly sophisticated bird she became. "Spectre" was initially conceived as a much larger brother to the AC-47's and outfitted with a few additional night observation devices to solve some of the night target identification problems. Later on "Spectre" would evolve into the most heavily armed aircraft in history mounting a 105mm cannon along with its 20mm and 40mm guns. By the end of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, AC-130's would be performing more types of missions than any other aircraft - night armed reconnaissance, night close air support, night FAC, day FAC, flareship, laser illuminator, night interdiction, tank killer, sensor relay station, and so on. The "Spectre" was not just an aircraft, it and its crew were a phenomenon!

Gunships

September 29

On September 29, 1918, Frank Luke - the "balloon buster" - engaged several German balloon units. Luke managed to shoot down three balloons before his aircraft was hit by enemy fire. Luke was forced to land his aircraft behind enemy lines. German ground troops then attempted to capture him, but Luke, armed only with his pistol, resisted. Luke was killed in the resulting fight. Frank Luke, American fighter ace and warrior, was awarded the Medal of Honor for his courage that September day in France during World War I.

Air Force Combat Units of World War II

September 30

John Joseph Pershing was born in September 1860 at Laclede, Missouri. While in college in Kirksville, Missouri, Pershing saw a newspaper announcement of a U.S. military academy examination. He took and passed the exam and entered West Point. He graduated in 1886 at the age of 26. After graduation, he served as a military instructor at the University of Nebraska. While there, he earned a law degree. When the Spanish-American War broke out, Pershing was teaching tactics at West Point. When Pershing turned 40, he found himself still a First Lieutenant assigned to the Philippines. Pershing considered resigning from the Army because of the slow promotions, but he made Captain shortly before his tour in the Philippines ended, so he decided to stay in. Shortly afterward, he was assigned as the Military Attache' to the U.S. Embassy in Japan. In 1906, President "Teddy" Roosevelt promoted Pershing to Brigadier General over 862 more senior officers in the Army. In 1916, he commanded the pursuit of Pancho Villa into Mexico. In 1917, Pershing was chosen to command the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). The AEF became the first U.S. Army to ever be sent to Europe. In World War I the AEF took part in 13 major operations. One of those operations - the Battle of Saint Mihiel in September 1918 was the first distinct American offensive of World War I. In that operation, one of Pershing's officers, General Billy Mitchell, directed the war's largest air assault with 1,481 Allied planes striking the Germans. After the war, Pershing was promoted to the highest rank ever held by an American, "General of the Armies of the United States." During World War II, it was decided to establish a five star general rank. It was named "General of the Army" since no American officer could outrank Pershing.

Encyclopedia Britannica



OCT

October 1

October 1, 1942, Robert Stanley took off in the Bell XP-59A from what is now Edwards AFB, California. When Stanley made the first American Jet fighter flight he ushered in a new age. On October 1, 1947, the XF-86 "Saber" jet fighter prototype flew for the time. As the first operational aircraft to exceed MACH One, the F-86 became the Air Force's mainstay during the Korean War. Twelve years after Stanley's flight an all Air Force crew launched the "Snark", America's first ICBM on October 1, 1957. The information gathered from flights such as these helped develop the Aerospace Force of today.

History of Flight

October 2

Dayton, Ohio was one of America's first test centers. On October 2, 1918, American military personnel and scientists launched the world's first guided missile from a field at Dayton. The American "Bug" was a bi-wing flying bomb powered by a prop driven engine. It never saw combat but it laid the foundation for future development of larger and better missiles.

History of Flight

October 3

In October 1982 the U.S. Air Force established the "Space Technology Center" at Albuquerque, New Mexico. As part of the Air Forces's Space Command, the Center has responsibility for developing the basic technologies unique to the support of the Nation's space goals.

The Air Force Almanac: 1983

October 4

In October, 1977, the first squadron equipped with the A-10 "Thunderbolt II's" became operational ready at Myrtle Beach AFB, South Carolina. Designed as a Close Air Support (CAS) aircraft, the A-10 offers a combination of large military load, long loiter time over the battlefield and a wide combat radius. The A-10 can carry up to 16,000 pounds of ordnance at speeds over 400 mph. Armed with its 30-mm GAU-8/A cannon, which can fire over 2,000 rounds per minute, the A-10 has more than enough punch to knock out enemy armor.

The Air Force Almanac: 1983

October 5

In October 1944, Eielson AFB, Alaska was activated. The base was named in honor of the Arctic aviation pioneer, Carl B. Eielson, who died in 1929. Today Eielson AFB is the home of the 343rd Composite Wing of the Alaskan Air Command, SAC's Sixth Strategic Wing and ATC's Arctic Survival School.

The Air Force Almanac: 1983

October 6

October 6, 1918, found the American 77th Infantry Division in real trouble. One of its battalions had been cut off by the Germans. That unit promptly became known as the "Lost Battalion." Commanded by Major Charles Whittlesey, the battalion fought for a week with no food and very little water. When the unit was relieved only 194 men out of 650 survivors did not require hospitalization.

During the seige of the "Lost Battalion," the Army Air Service managed to supply the endangered troops by air. Two of the brave American airmen who flew in supplies, Second Lieutenant Harold E. Goettler and his observer, Second Lieutenant Erwin R. Bleckely, gave their lives in an attempt to get supplies to the "Lost Battalion."

Both airmen were from the 50th Aero Squadron and on the afternoon of October 6, 1918 they left their airdrome for their second trip to drop supplies to the "Lost Battalion." Despite the heavy ground fire from the enemy, the American airmen attempted to fly as low as possible in order to drop the supplies more precisely on the target. In the course of their mission their plane was brought down by enemy rifle and machine gun fire from the ground. Both men were killed in the crash. For their courage they were awarded the Medal of Honor.

Hostile Skies

October 7

In 1945 "North Field" on Guam was opened. In that same year Brigadier General James Roy Anderson was killed while on a flight from Guam to Hawaii. On October 7, 1949, North Field was renamed Anderson Air Force Base in honor of General Anderson.

The Air Force Almanac: 1983

October 8

In October 1918, 2d Lt Samuel Reeves Keesler of the American 24th Aero Squadron set off on a special recon mission over the Verdun Sector. The pilot of the mission was 1st Lt Harold W. Riley. Keesler rode along in the back seat of the aircraft as the aerial observer and gunner. While in flight, Riley and Keesler were attacked by four German fighters. Keesler attempted to drive off the enemy with his machine gun but the aircraft was shot down behind German lines. Keesler died the following day of wounds received in that flight. For his courage, Keesler was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. In June 1941, Air Corps Station Number Eight, Aviation Mechanics School, Biloxi, Mississippi was renamed Keesler Field in honor of Samuel Keesler, a native of Greenwood, Mississippi.

Keesler Field

October 9

On October 9, 1918, American fighter pilot George C. Kenney shot down the German ace, Hermann Goering. Kenney would stay in the Air Corps after World War I and rise to the rank of General Officer. In World War II he would command all Air Force units in the southwest Pacific. He devised such innovations as low-level parachute fragmentation bombs and skip bombing of Japanese shipping. Kenney was responsible for the complete reorganization of Macarthur's air arm into a successful striking force. On his birthday, August 6, 1944, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

October 10

Major Richard I. Bong is America's highest scoring ace. In World War II Bong served as a member of the 49th Fighter Group and by October 1944 he had completed his combat tour. However, instead of sitting at his base awaiting orders home, Bong voluntarily resumed flying combat missions. He soon downed eight more Japanese aircraft. Bong received the Medal of Honor for this act above and beyond the call of duty.

Air Force Combat Units in World War II

October 11

On October 11, 1943, Colonel Neel E. Kearby was leading a flight of four fighters over Wewak in New Guinea. Kearby sighted a Japanese bomber formation escorted by more than 30 enemy fighters. Despite the heavy odds and low fuel supply Kearby ordered an attack, personally destroying six of the enemy planes. For his courage Kearby was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Air Force Combat Units in World War II

October 12

In October 1947, the Bell X-1 research rocket plane broke through the sound barrier at Edwards AFB, California. The X-1 was piloted by an Air Force officer named Charles Yeager. During World War II Yeager flew as a P-51 fighter pilot and was officially credited with shooting down twelve and one-half German aircraft. He shot down five of these aircraft in a single engagement on October 12, 1944. Yeager is also given credit for downing two ME-109's without firing a shot when the German pilots bailed out as he lined up to shoot at them. Yeager was shot down once over France but escaped to Spain, where he made it back to the Allies.

World War II Facts

October 13

On October 13, 1972, Captain Jeff Fernstein shot down his fifth MIG and became the U.S. Air Force's third and final ace in the Vietnam War.

The Air War over Vietnam

October 14

On October 14, 1943, American Eighth Air Force bombers struck the German ball bearing industry at Schweinfurt. Out of 288 American bombers which made the raid, 62 were lost and 138 were damaged by antiaircraft fire and Luftwaffe fighters. American casualties on that one raid amounted to 599 men killed and 40 men wounded. During the Schweinfurt raid the U.S. Air Force lost the highest percentage of aircraft lost on a single mission. From that day on, the Americans would refer to October 14 as "Black Thursday."

History of the Second World War

October 15

On October 15, 1943, fifty P-38's and P-40's of the American Fifth Air Force intercepted around 100 Japanese aircraft which were in route to attack Allied shipping in the Pacific. In the dogfight that followed, the American fighters downed more than 40 enemy planes.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

October 16

On October 16, 1944, Major Horace S. Carswell, Jr., a B-24 pilot during World War II, attacked a convoy of Japanese warships. Even though his B-24 was hit by anti-aircraft fire and severely damaged, Carswell and his crew managed to sink a Japanese cruiser and destroyer. With two engines dead, Carswell attempted to return home but the remaining two engines failed and the plane crashed. Carswell died in the crash. For his courage Carswell was awarded the Medal of Honor. In 1948 Carswell AFB, Texas was named in his honor.

History of the Second World War

October 17

On October 17, 1922, Lt V. C. Griffin of the U.S. Navy made the first successful takeoff from an airplane on a moving aircraft carrier. Griffin took off from the USS Langley in a VE-75f aircraft. His pioneering effort proved to be the critical factor in showing the world that air power could be extended out to sea.

History of Flight

October 18

In October 1918, the air war raged over Europe and no where was it hotter than over the French city of Verdun. It was the mission of the American 13th Pursuit Squadron to sweep the skies over Verdun for German aircraft. On October 18, 1918, the Commander of the 13th Pursuit Squadron, Major Charles Biddle, downed his eighth German fighter in a fierce dogfight over Verdun.

Fighter Aces

October 19

On October 19, 1781, forces under the command of General George Washington forced the British General, Lord Cornwallis, to surrender his troops at Yorktown. The British defeat at Yorktown spelled the end of effective British operations in America and insured American independence.

A Pocket History of the United States

October 20

In October, 1969, Hewes Hall at Keesler AFB, Mississippi, opened its doors for training. Hewes Hall was named in honor of Captain Charles D. Hewes of Gulfport, Mississippi. Hewes had been a pilot in the Army Air Force who had been decorated for heroism in World War II. Captured by the Germans he died on February 13, 1945 while in captivity.

Keesler Retrospect

October 21

On October 21, 1942, several B-24's of the American Tenth Air Force made the first Allied heavy bomber raid in China during World War II when they attacked the Lin-hsi coal mines. The American airmen had planned to blast the nearby power stations and pumping facilities in order to flood the mines. The attack on October 21 failed to flood the mines but the Americans did manage to inflict considerable damage to the target area.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

October 22

In October, 1943, the first German V-2 rocket was successfully launched at Peenemunde. Soon these rockets would be blasting away at England, and Allied airmen would be tasked with knocking out the launch sites.

History of the Second World War

October 23

Joseph O'Callahan of the U.S. Navy was the only chaplain to have been awarded a Medal of Honor since the Civil War. O'Callahan was aboard the carrier U.S.S. Franklin when it was struck by two Japanese bombs. Disregarding any danger to his life, O'Callahan ministered to the wounded, manned fire hoses, and went into oven-hot turrets to cool off ammunition so that it could be thrown overboard. O'Callahan's courage played a major role in saving the Franklin from sinking.

World War II Facts

October 24

During the early days of World War II, the American Marines, Air and Army Air Force units at Henderson Field, Guadalcanal, had inflicted heavy damage on Japanese Naval, ground, and air units. The Japanese were desperate to knock out the air field. On October 24, 1942, Japanese ground units made an aggressive attack on Henderson Field. When the fight was over Henderson Field was still in American hands and the Japanese had been repulsed with heavy losses.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

October 25

In October, 1942, Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas first opened its gates. Named in honor of 1Lt Jack T. Laughlin, a B-17 pilot killed over Java on January 29, 1942, Laughlin AFB today serves as the home of ATC's 47th Flying Training Wing.

Air Force Almanac: 1983

October 26

On October 26, 1942, the momentum of the British attack at El Alamein in North Africa began to slow. In support of the British attack American and Allied airmen flew missions against Axis targets and enemy troop concentrations. B-25's hit several transport, troop concentrations and tank units. The P-40's of the American Army Air Force flew sweeps over the El Daba area and attacked the German forces there. At the same time enemy air action increased and considerable aerial combat action took place. The battle ended with the British rolling westward and the Axis forces in full retreat.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

October 27

In October 1962, SAC reconnaissance aircraft discovered Russian offensive missiles and bombers in Cuba. President John F. Kennedy, in a speech to the American people and the world, announced an arms quarantine against Cuba and demanded the removal of Russian missiles already in Cuba. On October 27, 1962, Major Rudolph Anderson, Jr., a member of the 4080th Strategic Wing, was killed when his U-2 aircraft was shot down by an anti-aircraft missile during a special reconnaissance mission over Cuba. The following day Russia agreed to remove its offensive missiles from Cuba.

The Development of Strategic Air Command 1946-1981

October 28

In October 1942, the Army Air Force opened a base five miles west of Alexandria, Louisiana. During the 1950's it was named England Air Force Base in honor of Colonel John B. England, a World War II P-51 pilot and ace, credited with 17.5 victories. England died in 1954 when the F-86 jet he was flying crashed in France.

Air Force Almanac: 1983

October 29

Just before World War I, public interest in the airplane had decreased to the point where the nations of Europe bypassed the country that invented the airplane. America was so far behind that when she entered the First World War she was dependent upon her Allies for first class designs. On October 29, 1917, the first all American-built DH-4 (a British designed bomber) made its first test flight at Dayton, Ohio.

The U.S. Air Force

October 30

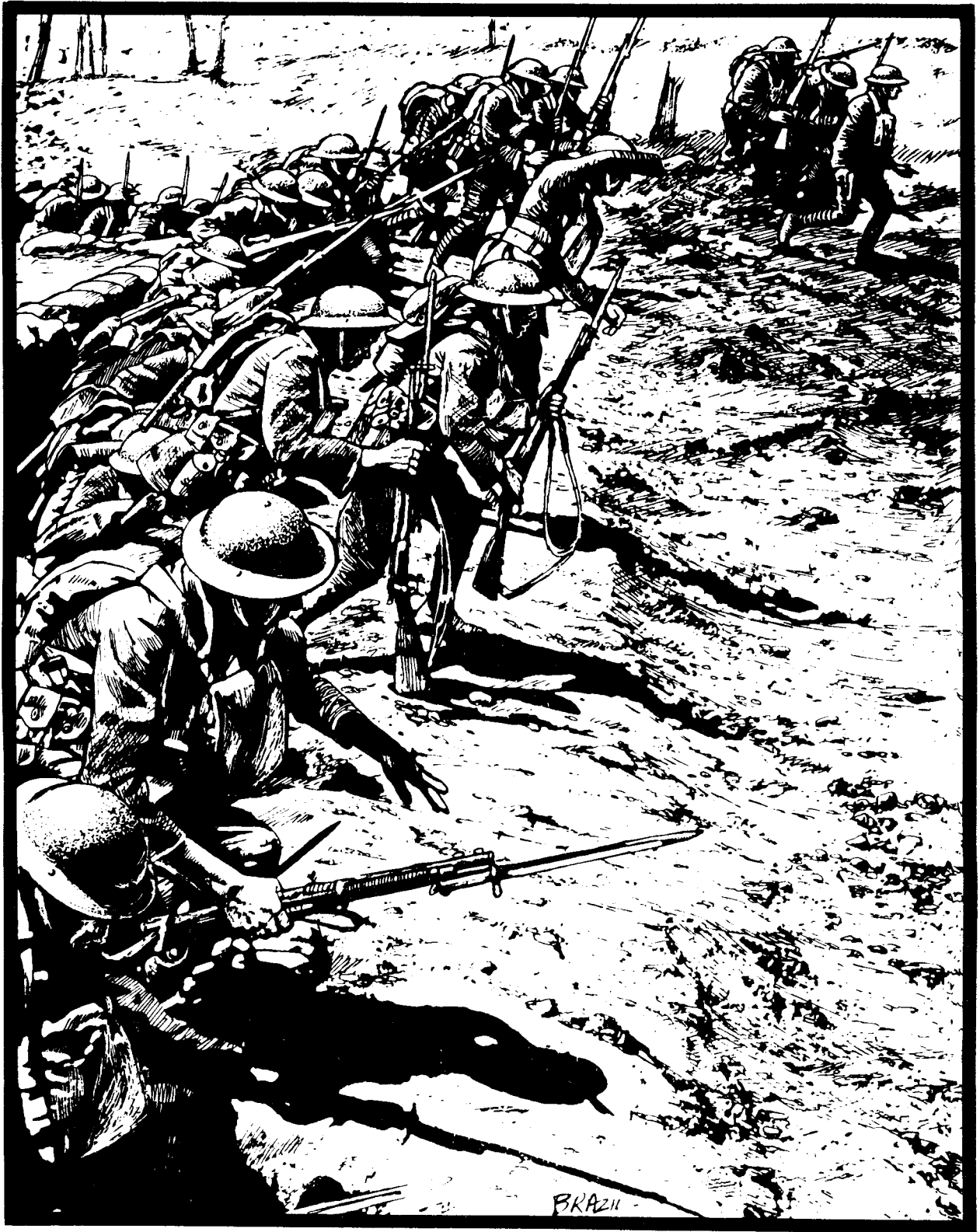
On October 30, 1935, Major Ployer P. Hill was killed while test flying the first B-17. In November 1940, Hill Air Force Base, Utah, was named in his honor. Today Hill AFB is the home of the Air Force's Ogden Air Logistic Center, the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing, and the 6545th Test Group (AFSC).

Air Force Almanac: 1983

October 31

Sometimes to hit the target risks have to be taken. High casualties for a brief time in the long run may save lives. On October 31, 1942, the commander of the American Eighth Air Force, General Spaatz, informed General Arnold that high altitude operations against the German sub pens in France might prove too costly for the results they would obtain. Spaatz then put forth a plan to operate his bombers at altitudes as low as 4,000 feet in order to hit and destroy the sub pens. Spaatz knew this would cause higher casualty rates than high-level raids but in the long run more Allied lives would be saved.

The Army Air Forces in World War II



NOV

November 1

On November 1, 1943, the U.S. Fifteenth Army Air Force was created. Its mission was to strike at Germany and Italy from North Africa. After the capture of southern Italy, the Fifteenth Air Force moved into the former enemy air bases there and began attacks against enemy targets. Their first mission was in November 1943 against the Messerschmitt factory of Wiener Neustadt, Austria. The men of the Fifteenth Air Force called themselves "the Forgotten Air Force" because the Eighth Army Air Force in England received all the publicity. But it was the Fifteenth that developed, on a large scale, the techniques of bombing through cloud covers and conducted many of the shuttle bombing missions of World War II.

World War II Facts

November 2

On November 2, 1944, the biggest air battle of World War II took place over the Giant Leuna Synthetic Oil Refinery at Merseburg, Germany. An American force of more than 1,000 bombers of the Eighth Air Force, escorted by 900 fighters, battled the Luftwaffe. For the first time in many weeks the Germans, who had remained in hiding while Allied bombers were laying waste to whole cities, rose to defend Merseburg. In desperation, the Luftwaffe had launched its carefully husbanded fighters to defend its gasoline supply. In fierce and wreckless attacks, the Germans tried to stop the American airmen. When the battle ended, Merseburg was in flames and 204 Luftwaffe fighters had been shot down by the Americans.

World War II in the Air: Europe

November 3

On November 3, 1909, Lt George C. Sweet, USN, became the first U.S. Navy officer to fly, when he flew as a passenger in the first Army Wright aircraft. Thirty-seven years later, Naval aviation had grown to a mighty force. On November 3, 1946, the U.S. Navy's airship, XMI, landed at Glynco, Georgia, after staying airborne for 170.3 hours without refueling.

History of Flight

November 4

By late 1944, the control of the air was firmly in American hands in the Pacific. The effect of their control was seen on November 4, 1944, when American carrier-based planes blasted Manila Harbor, reportedly destroying almost 200 Japanese planes during the attack.

History of the Second World War

November 5

On November 5, 1943, ninety-seven American Naval and Army Air Force aircraft attacked the major Japanese base at Rabaul, New Britain. The American airmen managed to damage or sink five enemy cruisers and two destroyers during the raid.

History of the Second World War

November 6

In November 1950, 1st Lt Russel Brown, USAF, scored the first Jet-to-Jet victory in history. Flying an F-80 "Shooting Star," Brown brought down a MIG-15 over Korea.

The U.S. Air Force

November 7

On November 7, 1944, an event took place in the United States that, while Americans take for granted, was proof to the world of America's belief and faith in democracy. In 1944, the world was in flames: World War II was in full swing and most of the nations of the world were engaged in fighting that war. Only one nation fighting in World War II conducted elections before Germany's defeat - the United States of America. Franklin Roosevelt defeated Thomas Dewey by 3 1/2 million votes; and, on November 7, 1944, he was again elected to the office of President of the United States.

World War II Facts

November 8

On November 8, 1942, American troops landed on French held territory in North Africa. In an attempt to stop the fighting between American and French forces, Colonel Demas T. Craw of the American XII Tactical Air Command, Army Air Force volunteered to negotiate an armistice. While trying to pass through the lines near Port Lyautey, Craw was killed by machine-gun fire. For his courage, Craw was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Air Force Combat Units in World War II

November 9

On November 9, 1950, Lt Commander W. T. Amen, USN, became the first Navy jet pilot in history to shoot down an enemy jet aircraft in combat.

The U.S. Air Force

November 10

On November 10, 1918, the last combat patrol of World War I was flown by aircraft from the American Third Pursuit Group.

Hostal Skies

November 11

On November 11, 1918, World War I ended. Eddie Rickenbacker, Medal of Honor winner, was the top-scoring U.S. ace of that war. When World War II broke out, Rickenbacker became a special civilian observer for General "Hap" Arnold. In 1942, while on an inspection tour in the Pacific, his B-17 crashed, and he and his companions spent twenty-seven days in life rafts before being rescued on November 11, 1942, twenty-four years to the day after the ending of World War I.

History of the Second World War

November 12

In mid-November 1946, Colonel James C. Selser, Jr., Commander of the 43rd Bomb Group at Davis-Monthan Field, Arizona, led a flight of six B-29's to Rhein-Main Airfield, Germany. Two C-54's of the 1st Air Transport Unit, Roswell Field, New Mexico, accompanied the B-29's with spare parts and supplies. The aircraft remained in Europe for almost two weeks. The "Superfortresses" flew along the border of Soviet-occupied territory, visited capitals of several free-European countries, and surveyed numerous airdromes for possible use by B-29's. This flight, which took place after two U.S. Army C-47's were shot down over Yugoslavia, is regarded as the first instance in which SAC bombers were used as an instrument of international diplomacy. While the flight could not be regarded as a direct threat to Russia, the presence of the B-29's and their reputation as carriers of the A-bomb served notice that the United States was not abandoning Western Europe to the Communists.

The Development of Strategic Air Command 1946-1981

November 13

In November, 1952, the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission exploded the world's first hydrogen bomb in the Pacific.

The U.S. Air Force

November 14

On November 14, 1942, the cruiser U.S.S. Juneau was sunk off Guadalcanal by the Japanese submarine I-26. Of the 687 crew members, only eleven survived. Among the dead were all five sons of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Sullivan of Waterloo, Iowa. Since that tragic day, it has been the policy of the U.S. government not to allow brothers to serve on the same ship, or, if possible, in the same unit.

History of the Second World War

November 15

In November, 1954, the last B-29, "Superfortress", was retired from service. From 1944 until 1954, the B-29 had served as America's main heavy bomber. Its replacement, the B-52, is still flying today.

The U.S. Air Force

November 16

On November 16, 1944, the largest air and ground cooperative effort to that date took place. Over 4,000 Allied planes dropped more than 10,000 tons of bombs in front of the American Armies advancing into Germany. In the attack, two German divisions were severely hurt and forced to be pulled back.

History of the Second World War

November 17

On November 17, 1961, the United States Air Force successfully launched the first Minuteman missile from an underground silo at Cape Canaveral. The missile flew some 3,000 miles down the Atlantic missile range before coming to earth.

The U.S. Air Force

November 18

On November 18, 1943, U.S. Navy Captain John P. Cromwell was on board a U.S. submarine that was forced to the surface by Japanese destroyers north of Truk. Cromwell was privy to top secret information about future submarine operations, as well as tactics and equipment. Rather than be captured and possibly forced to reveal this knowledge under torture, he deliberately sank his submarine and sacrificed his life. For his courage, Cromwell was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously.

World War II Facts

November 19

On November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln spoke at the battlefield at Gettysburg. In ten short sentences, Lincoln honored the brave soldiers who died at Gettysburg defending the Union. At the same time, he defined the meaning of the American government with the simple but lasting words "...by the people, for the people..." Today the United States Air Force stands ready to defend those very same ideas that countless other American military personnel have lived and died for.

A Pocket History of the United States

November 20

On November 20, 1943, the U.S. marines invaded Tarawa in the Pacific so it could be used as an Air Force Base for bombing missions against Tokyo. Commanded by Colonel David Shoup, USMC, Operation Longsuit cost the marines three times as many American lives as had the landings in North Africa a year before. Of 5,000 Japanese defenders on Tarawa, only three were taken prisoner - the rest died resisting the Americans.

History of the Second World War

November 21

On November 21, 1950, U.S. ground forces, supported by the American Air Force, reached the Yalu River in Korea. Soon the United Nation forces in Korea would push out of Korea the North Korean forces that had invaded South Korea during the summer of 1950.

A Pocket History of the United States

November 22

On November 22, 1952, Major Charles J. Loring, Jr., was leading a flight of four F-80's against enemy artillery units at Sniper Ridge in Korea. In the attack, Loring's plane was hit and badly crippled. Loring then deliberately dived his jet fighter into the Red gun emplacements. For his courage, he was awarded the Medal of Honor. Today Loring AFB, Maine, stands as a tribute to Loring's courage.

Air Force Combat Units in World War II

November 23

On November 23, 1943, the U.S. High Command announced the capture of Makin Island in the Gilbert Islands from the Japanese. In the short but deadly fight, 5,500 American fighting men had been killed by the Japanese defenders.

History of the Second World War

November 24

In October, 1944, American troops returned to the Philippine Islands. The battle for the Philippines raged for several months. By November 24, 1944, the U.S. had gained total control of the air. On that day, U.S. aircraft sunk 24 Japanese transports and warships at Leyte and Luzon.

History of the Second World War

November 25

In November, 1943, Japan suffered her worst naval defeat when American bombers struck the Japanese naval base at Rabaul. Nearly every Japanese ship in the harbor was either hit or sunk. Almost 94,000 tons of Japanese shipping was lost in the raid.

History of the Second World War

November 26

Maurice V. Henry was a Technical Sergeant in the Army Air Force during World War II. On November 26, 1943, Henry was serving as a gunner on a B-17 bomber. While approaching its target in Germany, Henry's plane suffered engine failure in two outboard engines and began to fall behind the formation. The crew jettisoned the bombs to lighten the load, but one fully armed bomb hung up in the racks. Despite the attacks by German aircraft, the bomber's evasive actions and the extreme cold, Henry entered the open bomb bay and released the bomb. At this time, Number Three engine was set on fire. Henry returned to his guns and destroyed one enemy aircraft and damaged another. As the enemy fighter attacks increased in intensity, an incendiary shell struck the left side of the cockpit, slightly wounding the pilot and setting the cockpit afire. Henry extinguished the fire although ill and vomiting from the acrid smoke. Once the intercom system failed, Henry made repeated trips through the plane to carry the pilot's instructions to the rest of the crew.

When the bomber crashed in the English Channel, Henry assisted the other members of the crew in exiting the sinking plane. His utter disregard for his own personal safety made possible the rescue of his crew. When Henry was last seen, he was still grasping the emergency radio, calling for rescue. For his courage, Henry was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Heritage of Valor

November 27

On November 27, 1942, ten B-25's and more than twenty P-40's of the American 10th Air Force hit the shipping and harbor installations at Hong Kong. The Americans managed to sink two freighters, destroy 100 barges and set several fires in the warehouse area. On the return trip to their home base, the Americans were intercepted by a large force of Japanese fighters. The Americans downed 23 of the enemy fighters and drove the Japanese off. The Americans returned home with minor losses.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

November 28

On November 28, 1943, the Tehran Conference began in Tehran, Iran. Roosevelt of America, Churchill of the United Kingdom, and Stalin of the USSR discussed their plans to defeat the Axis in World War II. At Tehran, Stalin agreed to commit Soviet forces against Japan after Germany had been defeated.

History of the Second World War

November 29

On November 29, 1951, the United States Air Force announced their plans to build the first all-jet heavy bomber, the eight-engined XB-52. Unknown to the planners, the B-52 would serve as America's major bomber for over thirty years.

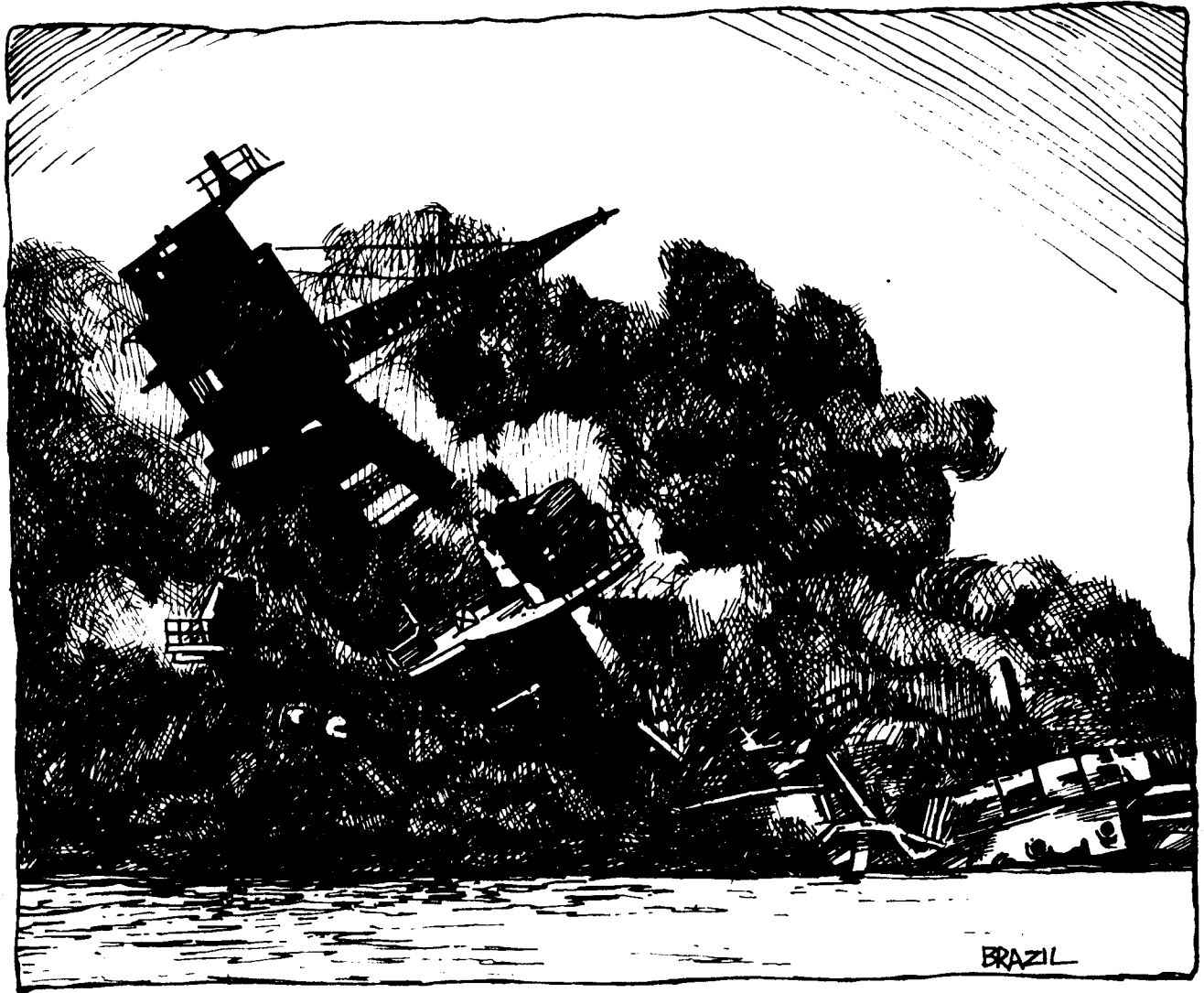
The U.S. Air Force

November 30

On November 30, 1944, about 1,200 heavy bombers of the American Eighth Air Force attacked four synthetic oil plants in Germany. Forty American bombers were lost in the attack.

The Army Air Forces in World War II





DEC

December 1

On December 1, 1941, the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) was formed by Congress. When World War II broke out for America, the U.S. Army Air Corps did not have the aircraft available to patrol the East Coast of the United States for German U-boats. For the first 18 months of World War II, the civilian pilots of the CAP flew these important patrols. Receiving no pay, the CAP pilots assisted in sinking over 170 German U-boats and managed to sink two U-boats on their own. Fifty-two CAP members were lost in action during this period.

Today the Civil Air Patrol, the official Auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, still serves the nation by conducting over 70 percent of the Search and Rescue Missions in the United States.

Air Force Almanac: 1983

December 2

Major A. J. "Ajax" Baumler of the U.S. Army Air Force was the first American to become an ace in two wars. He is credited with shooting down eight aircraft during the Spanish Civil War and five Japanese aircraft during World War II as a pilot with the American Fourteenth Army Air Force in the China-Burma-India Theater.

World War II Facts

December 3

The first woman to receive the Air Medal was Second Lieutenant Elsie S. Ott of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps in 1943. Ott won the medal for her part in a medical evacuation flight from India to Washington, D.C. that lasted 6 days.

World War II Facts

December 4

On December 4, 1942, bombers from the American Ninth Air Force made the first U.S. air strike on Italy in World War II. The B-24's hit Italian naval units and the dock area at Naples. They scored several hits on the harbor installations, a railroad yard and several ships, including an Italian battleship.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

December 5

On December 5, 1945, over 500 heavy bombers of the American Eighth Air Force attacked the munitions and tank works at Berlin in Germany. The Americans encountered an estimated 275-300 German fighters. Ninety German fighters were shot down by the bombers and their escorting Allied fighters.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

December 6

Chesley Gordon Peterson was the American who commanded the Royal Air Force Number 71 Squadron, the first Eagle Squadron, for nearly a year. After being thrown out of the U.S. Army Air Corps because he was too young, Peterson enlisted in the RAF as a fighter pilot a year and four months prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor. After the U.S. entered World War II, the 22-year-old Peterson became the executive officer of the Fourth U.S. Fighter Group.

World War II Facts

December 7

On December 7, 1941, Imperial Japanese Naval Air units attacked American forces at Pearl Harbor. The American military was caught sleeping. Believing that no nation would dare attack "mighty" America, they failed to take the steps needed to prevent a surprise attack. On that Sunday morning Japan inflicted the greatest military defeat America has suffered in her history. In the "Battle of Pearl Harbor" Japan's total losses were 32 aircraft; in battleships alone the U.S. had five sunk, three damaged and one beached.

One ray of hope at Pearl Harbor for America was the courage of the American warriors stationed there, such as U.S. Army Air Force pilot George C. Welch. Seeing Japanese aircraft attacking U.S. units, Welch rushed to his fighter and rose to meet the enemy. In the ensuing dogfight, Welch downed four Japanese aircraft. For his courage, Welch was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. He finished the war as an ace with a score of 18 enemy aircraft shot down.

History of the Second World War

December 8

On December 8, 1941, Japanese aircraft attacked American units in the Philippines. Three days later, Japanese troops landed on Luzon. America's meager air power in the Philippines was soon destroyed. Unable to obtain reinforcements and supplies, the Americans could do nothing more than fight a delaying action. By December 18, the few remaining bombers were evacuated, by their crews, to Australia, where U.S. air power in the Far East was to be concentrated. Other members of the air units took up arms and fought as infantrymen in the battle that ended, at Bataan and Corregidor, with the loss of the Philippines in May 1942.

Air Force Combat Units of World War II

December 9

On December 9, 1941, America found herself at war for the second day. On that day, America had to face certain facts of life. The first was that the U.S. surface forces could give little immediate assistance to the Allies. To begin with, the U.S. Navy had been so severely mauled at Pearl Harbor that at least a year would be required for repairs alone. The U.S. Army was woefully unprepared to conduct large-scale operations, to say nothing of the problems involved in transporting the troops to the battle zones. The U.S. War industries had yet been created to provide many of the necessities of a modern ground force. It was apparent at once that the American air arm, with its inherent organic mobility, was the only force with the capability of early action against the enemy.

December 10

On December 10, 1941, the first American heavy bomber mission of World War II took place. Five B-17's of the 93rd Bomb Squadron of the 19th Bomb Group (today the 19th Bomb Group is stationed at Robins AFB, GA) led by Major Cecil Combs, attacked a Japanese convoy near Viganjn the Philippines. The American attack sank the first enemy vessel by American aerial combat bombing in the history of the United States Air Corps.

History of the Second World War

December 11

On December 11, 1941, Captain Colin P. Kelly, Jr., Army Air Force, became America's first war hero and the first West Point graduate to be killed in action in World War II. Kelly was piloting a B-17 that attacked the Japanese battleship Haruna. His aircraft was so shot up that it had to be abandoned. Kelly held the bomber level so his crew could bail out. After the last crew-member had left, Kelly turned his bomber on the Haruna and crashed it into the battleship. Kelly was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his courage.

History of the Second World War

December 12

Boyd D. Wagner won the Distinguished Service Cross when, on December 12, 1941, he shot down two Japanese aircraft in combat and destroyed 12 more on the ground. He later fought in New Guinea and Guadalcanal as a Lieutenant Colonel. He flew P-39's and was officially credited with shooting down eight aircraft. Wagner was killed in a flying accident at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida in 1942.

World War II Facts

December 13

Robert Fautot was a U.S. Army Air Force captain who is credited with the first Japanese Zero kill by a P-38, although it did not occur in any usual way. While carrying two 500-pound bombs over the Japanese air base at Lae in December 1942, Fautot saw a Zero begin its takeoff roll. Fautot then dove down to attack it. He descended to an altitude of 2,000 feet before he remembered the bombs and their hindrance to aerial combat, so he released them and pulled up to escape the blast. The bombs landed in the water at the end of the airfield and the resulting water column knocked the Zero down. General George C. Kenney had promised an Air Medal to the first P-38 pilot to get a Zero and razzed Fautot about not having actually shot down the Zero. Nevertheless, Kenney awarded Fautot the medal. Fautot was killed during the Battle of the Bismark Sea while trying to prevent a Japanese aircraft from strafing an American bomber crew in parachutes.

World War II Facts

December 14

In December 1916, Langley Field, Virginia, first opened its gates for active duty. Named for the aviation pioneer and scientist, Samuel Pierpont Langley, who died in 1906, Langley AFB is the oldest continuously active Air Force base in the United States.

Air Force Almanac: 1983

December 15

On December 15, 1944, Major Glenn Miller was lost on a flight from England to Paris. Before America's entry into World War II, Miller had been a popular "big band" leader. When the War broke out, Miller joined the Army Air Force and soon became the Director of the U.S. Army Air Force Band. Miller was lost while crossing the English Channel in route to Paris for a Christmas show for U.S. personnel fighting in France.

History of the Second World War

December 16

On December 16, 1944, the Battle of the Bulge began. German forces, under the cover of bad weather, attacked the American units in the Ardennes Forest. Not hampered by Allied airpower, the Germans inflicted a heavy toll on U.S. troops. The German forces would be checked eight days later when good weather would bring 6,500 Allied planes into the attack against the advancing Germans.

History of the Second World War

December 17

On December 17, 1903, the Wright brothers made the first sustained flight in a motor-driven aircraft at Kitty Hawk. The flight lasted only 12 seconds and the aircraft covered a mere 120 feet. Nevertheless, this short flight would open the door to the Aerospace Age.

A History of Flight

December 18

On December 18, 1972, "Linebacker II" began. SAC B-52's, supported by U.S. fighter aircraft, began an 11-day air battle in the hope that they could force the North Vietnamese to resume peace talks and force the release of American POWs held in North Vietnam. Seven hundred and forty B-52 sorties were launched against the best defended city in the world. One thousand surface-to-air missiles, a devastating barrage of anti-aircraft fire and MIG-21 fighters were used in an attempt to stop the B-52's.

During the first attack, Staff Sergeant Samuel O. Turner, a tail gunner on a B-52D, picked up an enemy fighter on his radar scope. Turner squeezed off a short burst from his guns and shot down an MIG-21.

Fifteen B-52's would be lost during the 11-day battle, but by battle's end Hanoi had agreed to resume peace talks and on January 23, 1973, signed an agreement for the release of all American POWs.

The Air War over Vietnam

December 19

In December 1941, General MacArthur elected to have American forces in the Philippines fall back on Bataan. One of the Americans at Bataan was Captain Arthur Wermuth of the U.S. Army. He became one of the first American heroes of World War II by killing over 100 Japanese soldiers in combat. Known as "the One-Man Army of Bataan," Wermuth was captured by the Japanese when they discovered him laying unconscious in an American hospital. Wermuth was sent to Bilibid Prison in Manila and in December 1944 he was sent to Manchuria via a Japanese prison ship. In 1945, he was liberated by Russian troops when they over ran the Japanese forces holding Manchuria.

World War II Facts

December 20

TSgt Forrest L. Vosler served as a radio operator and gunner in World War II. While flying over Bremen, Germany, on December 20, 1943, Sergeant Vosler's aircraft was severely damaged by anti-aircraft fire and Vosler was painfully wounded in the legs, thighs and face. He asked to be thrown out of the bomber to lighten the plane, a request his fellow crew members refused to honor. When the aircraft ditched in the English Channel, Vosler, who was nearly blinded by his wounds, managed to operate the radio to send out distress signals. Vosler then managed to save the wounded tail gunner before the bomber sank below the waves. For his courage Vosler was awarded the Medal of Honor.

AFP 50-34

December 21

On December 21, 1941, the American Volunteer Group (the Flying Tigers) began their second day of operations against Japanese forces in China. Led by Major General Claire Chennault, the members of the AVG were civilians hired by China to fight the Japanese. Their first aircraft were P-40's that had been built for Sweden but rejected by the Swedish Royal Air Force as being obsolete. The AVG P-40's were marked by the now famous shark's mouth devised by Erikson E. Schilling.

History of the Second World War

December 22

When Pearl Harbor came, Lt Colonel William Dyess was the 25-year-old commander of the 21st Pursuit Squadron stationed in the Philippines. Out numbered by the Japanese Air Force, Dyess led his beleaguered squadron against the enemy. Suffering constant attrition of both men and planes, Dyess and his men found themselves penned up on Bataan with neither the planes or facilities required for carrying on the war in the air. Colonel Dyess took up the role of infantry commander and led his men in determined ground assaults against the Japanese. When American forces surrendered at Bataan, Dyess was captured and was part of the "Bataan Death March." Dyess managed to escape from the Japanese prison camp where he was being held and joined the guerilla forces fighting in the jungle against the Japanese. Dyess was so hated and feared by the Japanese that they named him "the One-Man Scourge."

In time Dyess made his way to Australia and then back to the United States. On December 22, 1943, he was flying on a training mission in a P-38 over Burbank, California. His aircraft caught fire while he was over the heavily populated area. Though he had ample opportunity to bail out, Colonel Dyess chose to sacrifice his own life rather than risk the lives of others. He remained with the blazing P-38 and died after guiding its descent into a vacant lot. Colonel Dyess did not lose his life--he gave it so others could live. In 1956, Dyess AFB, Texas was named in his honor.

History of the Second World War

December 23

On December 23, 1974, the B-1 bomber made its first flight. The B-1 program was canceled by the Carter Administration in 1977. By the 1980's, changing world conditions and growing Soviet military power would bring about the resurrection of the B-1 and produce the world's most advanced manned bomber, the B-1B.

Air Force Almanac: 1983

December 24

Sometimes you have to hit the enemy with all that you have. On December 24, 1943, B-24's of the American Fifth Air Force harassed Japanese forces with everything the Americans could lay their hands on. Besides bombs, the U.S. airmen tossed out hand grenades and beer bottles at enemy targets.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

December 25

On Christmas day, 1944, Major Thomas McGuire, Jr., America's second-highest-scoring ace with 38 kills, won the Medal of Honor in an action over Luzon. Twelve days later, McGuire was killed by Japan's number two ace, Shoichi Sugita, over Los Negros in the Philippines.

McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey was named for this brave American fighter pilot.

Fighter Aces

December 26

Duke Hedman, an American pilot with the Third Pursuit Group of the "Flying Tigers" became the first ace of the "Flying Tigers" when he shot down his fifth Japanese aircraft over Rangoon in December 1941. "Pappy" Boyington claimed that Hedman was the first American ace of World War II, but "Buzz" Wagner, stationed in the Philippines, actually was the first when he downed his fifth Japanese aircraft 13 days before Hedman.

World War II Facts

December 27

On December 27, 1944, the "Azon Bomb" was first used on a railway bridge in Burma. The "Azon Bomb" was an American guided bomb that could be guided from the bomber that released it. Designated the VB-1 or "Vertical Bomb," the bombardier could only make corrections left or right of the designated course of the bomb--thus the name Azimuth Only.

World War II Facts

December 28

On December 28, 1943, the American VIII Bomber Command was tasked with forming a "Radio Countermeasure Unit" that would use radio countermeasures against German defenses. The unit would consist of 24 specially equipped heavy bombers from both the U.S. and British air forces to operate in support of day and night bombing missions.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

December 29

On the afternoon of December 29, 1942, a B-17 named Boomtown set off for the German submarine pens at Lorient. The pilot was Captain Clyde B. Walker; Lt Reed, the copilot; Lt Bentinck, the bombardier; Lt Smith, the navigator; and the gunners were Sergeants Green, Krucher, Stroud, Frisholz and Berring. Moments after the Boomtown released her bombs she was struck by enemy aircraft fire. Lt Bentinck was killed and Lt Smith was hit by flak in the arm. Seconds later, the plane was hit again, Sergeant Green was almost blinded by the hot oil and his oxygen system was destroyed, but he kept to his guns. Sgt Krucher in the tail was badly hit, but despite his painful wounds, he also stayed at his guns and managed to shoot down an attacking German fighter. Simultaneously, Sgt Stroud in the aircraft waist destroyed a second fighter. With one engine gone, Walker and Reed struggled to keep Boomtown airborne. Walker was about to give the order to bail out when he discovered that Reed's parachute was destroyed--none of the crew would leave Reed behind--all thoughts of abandoning the battered airplane were thrust aside--they would come home together or not at all!

Sgt Frisholz downed a third fighter from his top turret as Stroud was hit by a .50-caliber bullet. Suddenly the elevator control cable came off its pulley and the plane began to plunge earthward. Stroud painfully moved to the pulley and slipped the cable back in place then returned to his gun. As Frisholz put out a fire in the radio compartment, Stroud and Berring managed to drive off two more German fighters. The wounded Stroud relieved the almost unconscious Krucher and Lt Smith administered first aid to the badly wounded sergeant. Boomtown by now was over the English Channel. Several times the ball turret bounced on the waters of the Channel despite Walker's and Reed's best efforts. The crew heaved out everything that wasn't bolted down. Slowly Boomtown gained in altitude. With extraordinary skill, Walker managed to bring her home to a British base.

Boomtown was home with her crew. No one man did more than another, it was a team effort. It was men such as the Boomtown's crew that built the traditions that today's Air Force rest on.

The Incredible 305th

December 30

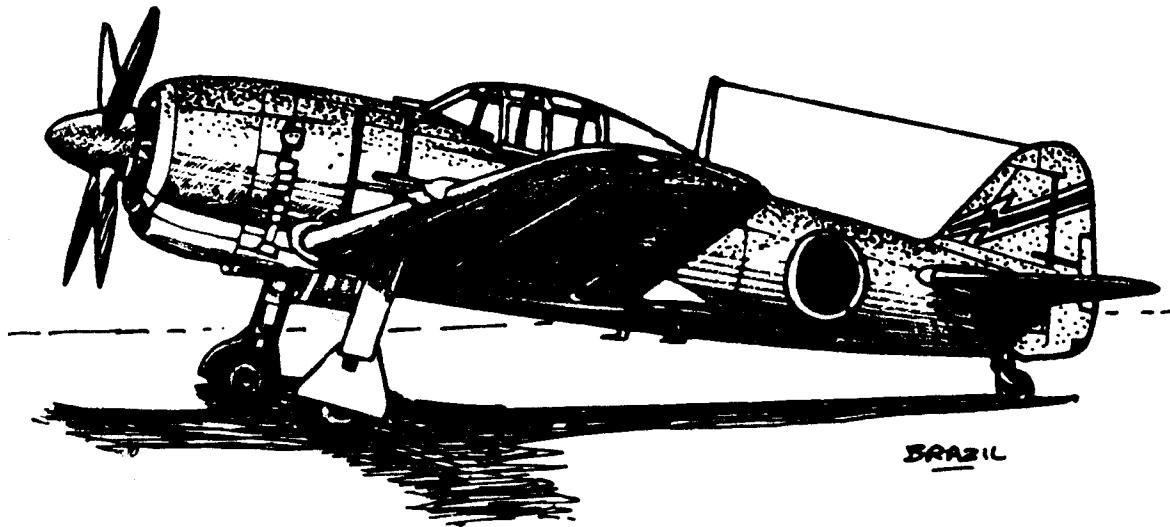
In December, 1943, the preinvasion bombing of Cape Gloucester in New Britain so completely destroyed the Japanese defenses that the U.S. Fifth Air Force adopted the term "Gloucesterizing" to describe the complete destruction of a target.

The Army Air Forces in World War II

December 31

On December 31, 1970, Colonel Jeanne M. Holm, the Director of Women in the Air Force, was nominated by President Nixon for promotion to Brigadier General. Holm became the first woman in the Air Force to attain the rank of general officer.

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