

DAKOTA TERRITORY AIR MUSEUM

Fall 2018

Vol. 32

Lope's Hope

Education News

Wings and Wheels

Leon Frankel

Amazon

MCDC



photo by Scott Slocum

GRAND CHAMPION WARBIRD

Warren Pietsch

The Dakota Territory Air Museum (DTAM) was well represented at EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh, WI, this year. The annual EAA convention is the largest of its kind in the world and is also the busiest airport in the world during that week. Every type of aviation activity is involved and it becomes the place to gather and judge aircraft of all types along with celebrating history and educating all ages about aviation.

Notable anniversaries this year were the 100th anniversary of the Royal

Air Force (RAF) and the 80th anniversary of the venerable WWII trainer the North American AT-6 Texan/SNJ/Harvard. To help recognize those events DTAM flew the Supermarine Spitfire and the Harvard to Oshkosh. The Spitfire, a 74 mission veteran, was decorated with a commemorative **RAF 100** decal and the Harvard with an **80 Years of Making Pilots** decal. Both aircraft were featured in *Warbirds in Review* and were parked in special parking areas because of their authenticity and excellent condition.

The highlight for DTAM was being able to take the P-51C, Lope's Hope 3rd, and display it for the week. It was also entered in the judging of the finest warbird restorations in the world. It came out with top honors, Grand Champion Warbird restoration and Gold Wrench awards. Congratulations to Bruce Eames, Lope's Hope 3rd's owner and backer of the project and to DTAM being able to display these wonderful aircraft. Also, huge accolades to AirCorps Aviation of Bemidji, MN, the shop that restored both Lope's Hope 3rd and the Harvard.

These aircraft are on display in the TFL Hangar at the Air Museum and will be there for the remainder of the season.

The display for Lope's Hope is an incredible showcase of material relative to Don Lopez and his Mustangs as well as Bruce Eames and his making this all possible. -30-

Pictured on the right are Josh Griffin who works in aircraft maintenance in Minot, and Bernie Vasquez of California working on the Spitfire. We doubt these two young men are ever seen not showing their pleasant attitudes. Bernie has been written about recently no fewer than two times in *Air and Space* magazine as his talents for air racing expand. Not only a racing pilot and participant, but he is also one who made possible for the world's fastest piston powered airplane to be the world's fastest piston powered airplane. See *AIR SPACE August 2018*.

Photo credits for the front page and the at the top go to Scott Slocum.





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58702

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Tours anytime with prior
Arrangements

Open April - October

M T W Th F S 10-5

Sunday 1-5

Admission \$10.00

Family \$20

Active military half price

From Shawn and Samantha, DTAM Education Coordinators

We are excited to have the opportunity to take over as the education coordinators for the

museum. Michelle and Melessa have put together a wonderful program. We will be offering our Aviation Camp Experience (ACE) class for 3rd and



4th graders this winter as well as our Passport Aviation Camp Experience (PACE) class for 5th and 6th graders next summer.



JJ Jones

Unless you read old car magazines and stuff like that you may never have heard of John James Jones. He was a car salesman and then a car builder. When he settled in Wichita he was busy hauling in cars from Chicago and Detroit areas to sell, and sell he did. He probably peddled a thousand Fords or more. And, this was before 1910.

To him, Wichita was the center of modern transportation, or so he wanted it to become. This pushed him to build cars of his own which he began to do by 1915. "The Jones Six, a Western Car for Western people," later corrected to "Mid-Continent." He bought the old Burton Stock Car Company on 73 acres in north Wichita. Used for build railroad cars; plenty of long buildings just right for an assembly line of sorts. In fact,

The museum has held these same camps for the past 5 years. We are looking to expand and evolve the education department in the future to be able to include some day camps and aviation related activities. We are planning on expanding our program to include drone work, robotics, hot air balloons, making paper airplanes, arts and crafts, etc. We look forward to offering activities to all ages and interests of our community!



If a teacher is enthusiastic about a topic, the students follow right along.



there was more than enough room.

About this time Clyde Cessna, tired of the farm, was running a thriving Overland Car dealership in Enid, OK. Airplanes were more to his liking and so he taught himself how to fly. He and his brother built a monoplane in 1916 and did lots of exhibition flying.

When J.J. Jones came along, things were about to change. JJ made Clyde an offer that he could use one of his buildings on the car company grounds to build airplanes, and he offered it rent free with one condition. He would need to paint in large letters under the wings promotions for the Jones Six Automobile Company and continue to fly at exhibitions.

Thus was the beginning of Wichita's first airplane company. The Jones Six lasted until '21, Clyde Cessna left and then returned in '25, lured back by Lloyd S. and Walter B.

Wings and Wheels

was open to the public and many friends showed up July 18th when the Dakota Cruisers and the local HOG Chapter came to the Air Museum.



Colby Beek, active Airman from MAFB with his new Harley and Craig Gunning's near original '57 Chevrolet Bel Air in the background



From an Estevan build-it shop was a collection of parts powered by a turbo-charged Cummins Diesel.

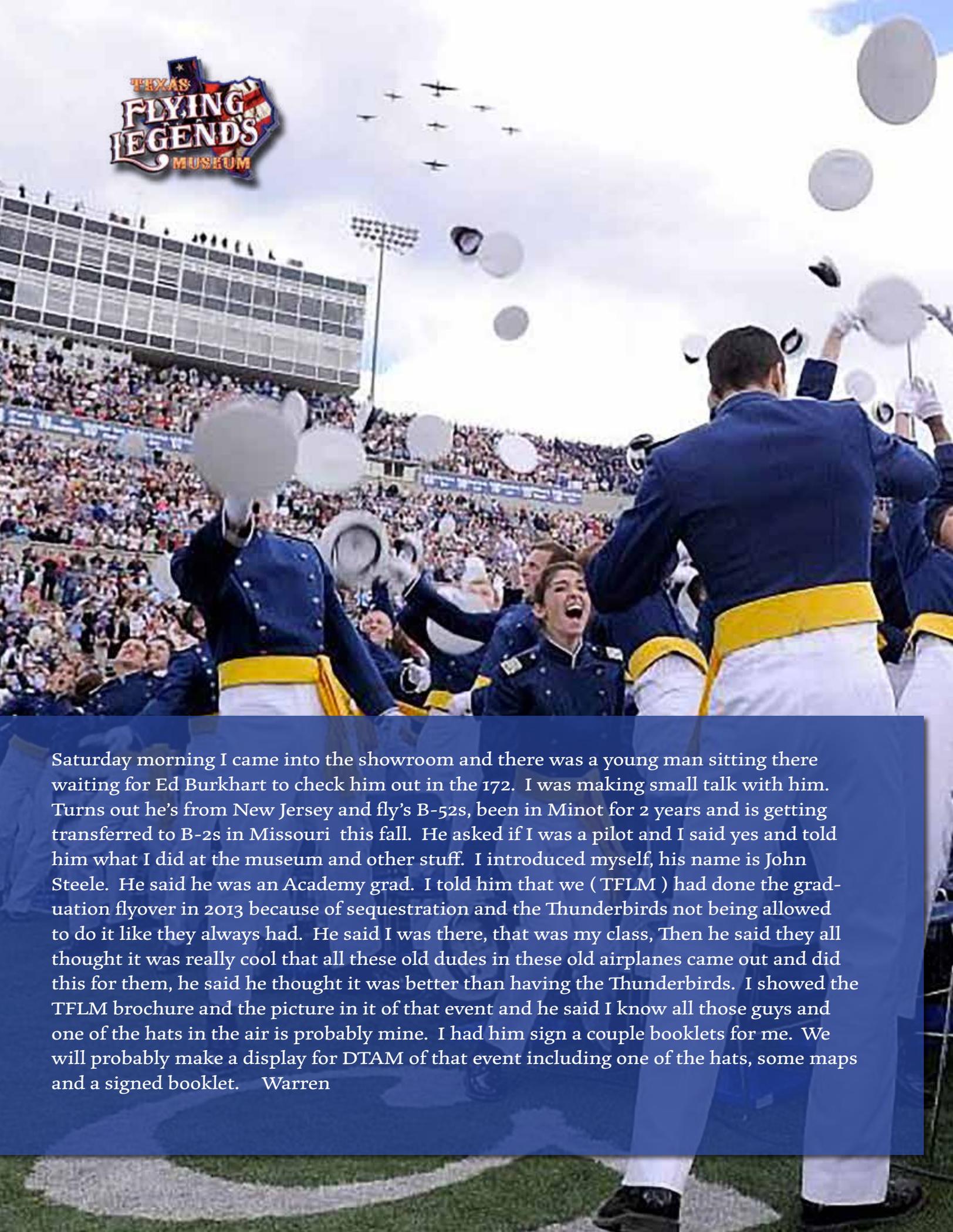


Corra Parkinson brought her dad along and poses at the step of the F106. Dave Smith and Arvid Pomeroy opened the fighter for everyone to see and share in pictures.



Lifetime member Larry Linrud brought his '48 Mercury convertible. Seeing the detail is to admire his craftsmanship in restoration. That, along with stories of his two and a half year project....





Saturday morning I came into the showroom and there was a young man sitting there waiting for Ed Burkhart to check him out in the 172. I was making small talk with him. Turns out he's from New Jersey and fly's B-52s, been in Minot for 2 years and is getting transferred to B-2s in Missouri this fall. He asked if I was a pilot and I said yes and told him what I did at the museum and other stuff. I introduced myself, his name is John Steele. He said he was an Academy grad. I told him that we (TFLM) had done the graduation flyover in 2013 because of sequestration and the Thunderbirds not being allowed to do it like they always had. He said I was there, that was my class, Then he said they all thought it was really cool that all these old dudes in these old airplanes came out and did this for them, he said he thought it was better than having the Thunderbirds. I showed the TFLM brochure and the picture in it of that event and he said I know all those guys and one of the hats in the air is probably mine. I had him sign a couple booklets for me. We will probably make a display for DTAM of that event including one of the hats, some maps and a signed booklet. Warren



MINOT AND LEON FRANEL

Scott Nelson

As Leon Frankel sat strapped into the Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter plane, wearing a German helmet and a German parachute, he thought to himself, what is a nice Jewish boy from Minot, North Dakota, doing here?

Leon had been in the service during World War II and came back a decorated Navy pilot. After spending some time in Minneapolis following the war, Leon jumped at the opportunity to open a car and truck dealership in Minot called Capital Motors.

After the war everyone wanted to buy a car, and with the booming post war farm economy, the farmers needed trucks. He would order trucks and put grain boxes on them. Red trucks were the most popular, Leon remembered. Business was good, he was making lots of money, had his own place and several girlfriends. Life couldn't be better.

It was then that Leon got "the phone call". The man on the other end said he was Steve Schwartz. Would Leon consider coming to the aid of Israel in their time of need? The new country of Israel was in desperate need of trained combat pilots and was reaching out to the recent veterans of the just ended war. Leon told him he'd have to think about it. After several days, thinking about the holocaust and the death camps that had come to light in Germany, Leon thought if he didn't help, he would never be able to live with himself. Leon asked Mr. Schwartz what kind of plane he would be flying. He said he couldn't tell him, but that they would be just as good as what the enemy had. This, as it turned out, was a big lie!

The US government frowned on its citizens going to Israel to fight. It was in fact highly illegal! A story was concocted that Leon had to get to Italy to stop the marriage of his brother and bring him back home. Once out of the country, Leon diverted to

Czechoslovakia to learn to fly fighters being sold to Israel.

There was an arms embargo against the newly formed state of Israel in an effort to avoid another full-blown war. Israel's Arab neighbors were well equipped with aircraft. The only country Israel could find to sell them fighter aircraft was cash starved Czechoslovakia. They bought them at highly inflated prices.

During World War II, the Germans built a factory in Czechoslovakia to produce the Me-109 fighter, but the war ended before production could be started. The Czechs were left with the factory as a spoil of war and decided to produce the plane as their own and renamed it the Avia S-199. There was a problem however. The warehouse that contained the 109 Daimler-Benz engines was destroyed by fire. Another warehouse contained Junkers Jumo engines plus props destined for the Heinkel HE-111 bomber. The ill-suited Jumo engines and large paddle propellers were fitted into the 109s which was like putting a truck engine into a sports car and resulted in extremely poor handling qualities.

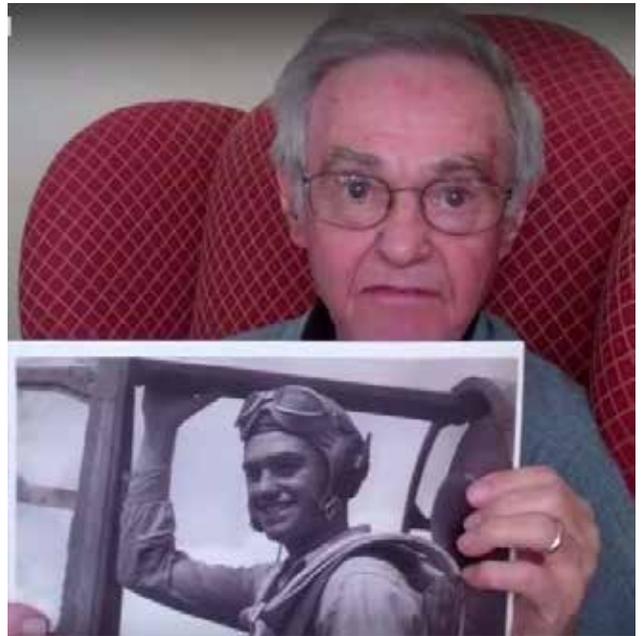
Leon had flown the Avenger Torpedo Bomber in the Navy. Flying the 109 was a whole new ball game! The Czechs nicknamed the 109, Mezik or Mule because it was such a stubborn machine to fly. These planes didn't even have a fuel gage, just a red light that would go on if you were running low. If the light came on you may have 5 to 15 minutes left. They didn't have the right machine guns to go with this plane so they mickey-moused another type under the cowling. Every time you fired them, you prayed you didn't shoot off your own propeller. They also had two 20mm cannons in pods under the wings.

The fighters were dismantled, loaded into C-54 transports, flown to Israel and reassembled just in time.

When Israel declared independence, they were immediately attacked by their Arab neighbors. Egyptian leaders had told its army that Israel had no military aircraft. The Egyptian Army was within miles of overrunning the Israeli capital when the newly arrived 109 fighters strafed the column and so demoralized the Egyptians that they were forced to turn back.

The Egyptians were flying Spitfires bought from the British and the rumor was that some were flown by ex-German pilots. The Irony was not lost on the Israeli pilots. Jews flying German planes against Germans flying Spitfires.

Leon flew against Arab forces, air and ground targets. He also flew very dangerous photo recon missions over enemy fortifications in Egypt and Jordan, all alone, with no escort. On his last mission, over Negev, he saw a 109 after an Egyptian Spitfire. It was Rudy Augarten, former WWII P-47 ace. They were flying toward Leon and Rudy was shooting big junks off the Spitfire. Leon saw another Spit below



Leon Frankel holding the photo of him in the "Mule"

him heading his way. He flipped over and gave chase, but it had gotten too far ahead of him.

At this point the red light came on. Leon was lucky to catch sight of a friendly airfield at Ekron. He landed, and as they were refueling the plane, he noticed some oil dripping from the engine. He pointed it out to one of the

mechanics who tightened some screws and declared “Fixed!” and gave the thumbs up sign. Leon took off and heading back to home base.

After several minutes the engine started to run rough and he noticed the oil gage was zero. He tapped the gauge in case the needle was stuck, but the needle didn’t budge. Soon the cockpit started filling with smoke and Leon looked for a place to put down. Bailing out of these planes was not an option. He hit the ground hard but other than some scrapes and bruises, escaped uninjured.

Leon started walking. He didn’t know if he was in Israel or Jordan. In the distance he saw a truck loaded with soldiers headed his way. Surrender was not an option. Other pilots shot down behind enemy lines had been tortured to death. He had a .38 pistol with 6 shots. He would fire 5 shots and save the last for himself. As the truck got closer, he was much relieved to hear them hollering in Hebrew. He was rescued! When Leon got back to his base, there was a 109 burning on the runway. The pilot, one of Leon’s close friends, was killed in a landing accident.

The next day, at the funeral, Leon lost feeling in his legs and arms and collapsed. He was hospitalized for several days and recovered but decided to pack it in. New pilots were coming in and the crisis was over. It was time to go home. He had flown 25 missions for Israel, ironically the same number of missions he had flown in the US Navy.

Getting home was not easy. Fighting for Israel could mean losing his citizenship. Leon was stopped at Passport Control in New York and interrogated all night. Leon claimed he had been going to school in Italy but his suitcase was full of pictures of

him standing beside airplanes in Israel. Finally, by morning, the authorities told him to tell the truth or he was going to jail. Leon replied, “Go ahead, at least I can get some sleep”. With that the authorities told him to get the hell out of there and released him.

Leon Frankel ended up living in Minnesota, married, and had two children. He passed away in 2015, at the age of 92.

A footnote...

For anyone who values the history of American airmen in World War II, we encourage stopping in the *Scott Nelson Gallery* at the Air Museum. The gallery is the corridor between Hangar Two and the Oswin Elker Hangar, number Three. It is a place to enjoy some quiet time reading the panels Glenn has constructed from the stories that Scott researched. Each panel is mounted at eye level for easy viewing.



The original Scott Nelson painting depicting the attack on Yahagi, signed by Leon Frankel and Stew Bass

I had the opportunity to talk to Leon several times on the phone and once in person at the Air Museum in Fargo. He had flown with Stew Bass in the Navy and had come to Fargo to see his friend, Stew, for the first time since the War and to see the painting I had done. Leon flew the Avenger torpedo bomber, and like Stew received the Navy Cross for helping sink the cruiser Yahagi. Leon, along with Stew, signed the painting now hanging in the gallery. Leon also signed a water color picture I painted showing a Czech 109 in Israeli markings.

The relevance of each illustration and story is always the North Dakota connection. We hope you appreciate these accounts published here from time to time, all given by a master storyteller himself. But oddly, Scott doesn’t even like to fly.

The Air Museum closes for the season on October 14th.

Entry Form 2018
Dakota Territory Air Museum
22nd Annual Sweepstakes

Todd Mixell



SWEEPSTAKES 2018 is History

August 17th drew a gathering in the Elker Hangar with hopes that one of them might be the winner of the J-3. Such was not the case when Todd Mixell's name, of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, was drawn.



The turnout was light, but the conversations offered the best in catching up with friends. Note the *Polar Pumpkin* in the background.

HOPS, PROPS, and BRATS

This event on August 1st, brought a gathering to enjoy social time as well. The later afternoon and evening get-together was well attended and m/c Dakota Brekhus lead the group in trivia. Rule #1: all internet capable devices were in the milk pail on each table. Rule #2: repeat.



VETS and JETS

About sixty-five attended a program honoring the veterans of the early jet age came on August 15th. Then, on August 29th...

WOMEN, WINE, and WINGS

August 29th featured author Heather Taylor giving an account of the first Women's Air Race. These events were all partnered with Little Chicago Pub District and Buffalo Wild Wings. It must have been that everyone was having a good time, so much in that no one took pictures.

A NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM OCTOBER 29TH

Mark October 29th for a gala evening. An orchestra for live music is reserved for an evening dance program. Check local news sources for more information, or better, call the Air Museum, 852-8500.

July 17, 2018

Don Larson
Dakota Territory Air Museum
PO Box 195
Minot, ND 58702-0195



Dear Don:

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I would like to thank the Dakota Territory Air Museum Board and staff for your support and partnership with the Magic City Discovery Center! Being able to offer an interim museum over the past four years has proved to be an invaluable experience. We have learned so much by operating a small-scale museum and have also educated the Minot community and surrounding area about the advantages of having this wonderful resource in our community.

Each step we take brings us closer to fulfilling our mission which is to engage children and families in the magic of lifelong learning through discovery, creativity and play. The Magic City Discovery Center will be a magnificent children's museum that will improve the quality of life for families in our area just as the Dakota Territory Air Museum already does.

A sincere thank you for your part in helping to bring the Magic City Discovery Center dream to reality!

Sincerely,

Wendy S. Keller
Interim Executive Director

Five years ago when we were first approached on the possibility housing a Children's Museum the next season, we began to realize the potential and the value of such an adventure for the area. In the ensuing four years with the Magic City Discovery Center housed in the TFL Hangar during our off season, it was evident that Give 360 and other operations were dedicated to their task. Seeing the popularity of this museum by the attendance it generated was a warm and uplifting exposure.

We regret we could not continue housing the program due to our lack of space. Our very best wishes for the Children's Museum and its success in your new area on North Hill. It is a wonderful experience for children which was evident by their enthusiasm.

DTAM Board of Directors

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