

DAKOTA TERRITORY AIR MUSEUM

Winter 2018 - 2019

Volume 32

C-47 Gets a makeover

An addition to Leon Frankel story

Noble Peterson memories

What's been happening at the museum

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...a winter scene from last year taken from the Alfred Pietsch Memorial Loft





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IN THE CLASSROOM

A year ago was a story here about the Aviation Class held at Magic City High School in Minot. Since then we've learned that the Boredom Fighter has been returned to the Air Museum given that space became an issue at Magic

City. The high school needed more room to re-establish their body shop projects.

Beginning in March of 2019, students will have the opportunity to do job shadowing at Minot Aero Center as well as at the Magic City control tower. Also coming is student leadership and participation in Skills USA Aviation Competition.

This past year students toured the control tower in Minot as well as Minot Aero Center FBO. On May 6th each was granted airplane rides through the Young Eagles Program. Some students have also built and flown radio controlled model airplanes and quad-copters. One student from last year's class after graduation earned his private pilot license and instrument rating. By the time you've read this he will also have finished work toward his commercial certificate. He has also passed his flight instructor written exam. In addition three of the students are working at Pietsch Flying.

This is the fourth year for the Aviation Class program. In

with 18 students each. In Aviation II there are 16 students, and two are engaged in taking flying lessons. Active in this endeavor are the scholarships made possible through the Farstad Foundation.

The enthusiasm of this program is readily seen walking into the classroom. Instructor Meric Murphy has made it pretty obvious that his work deals with airplanes what with the models suspended from the ceiling, the artwork, the posters; plus the flight simulators for the students. On October 24th, for over an hour, eleven members of an advisory board attended the semi-annual updates meeting held there. Two of them were his students.



Student Nicholas Burkart with instructor Meric Murphy at the October 24th meeting



Aviation I, the two classes are full

A portion of the Advisory Committee that meets twice a year in the Aviation Classroom at Magic City Campus – Bill Kay, Civil Air Patrol; Jan Hartle, Air Traffic Control; Mike Hauf, Young Eagles; Jerald Burtman, retired; Michelle Saari, DTAM; Deanna Stoddard, airport manager; Meric Murphy, instructor; not pictured, Nick Burkart,, Warren Pietsch, Austen Greenheck, and Pam Strokland from administration

HISTORY plus a little trivia....

For those born of a generation when television was decent entertainment, you will likely remember one of the early prime time game shows *To Tell the Truth*, hosted by Bud Collyer and first aired in 1956. Four well known panelists would ask questions of three contestants to decide which one was really telling the truth about themselves. Greg Boyington was once one of those contestants.

In a 1962 airing, the show opened as usual, and each contestant stated, "My name is ...John Steele." Bud Collyer then read the essay. "I, John Steele, was a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne that parachuted into Sainte-Mere-Eglise the early morning hours of D-Day 1944." It went on to say how they were dropped in error over the village and that his parachute was caught in one of the pinnacles of the church tower where wounded, he hung limp for two hours pretending to be dead. He was eventually taken prisoner and later escaped to rejoin his division.

Soon to be released would be the epic war film, *The Longest Day*. In it, the character of Pvt. John Steele was played by the well-known actor Red Buttons. The panelists did ask questions about his involvement in the movie and whether he had met with Red Buttons.

At the end of the segment each panelist voted on which one they thought was the real Private John Steele. Tom Poston, remember him as handyman George Utley from the *Newhart* show and real life husband of Suzanne



Pleshette, was the first of the four panelists to vote and tell as to why he chose that one. He was, in fact, the only one of the four who chose the

correct John Steele, but after the others made their decisions he came back and said, "You know, I was sitting here thinking while the others were giving their answers, I was a C47 pilot in that first wave on D-Day, and you could have been on my plane."

These were times when Hollywood had American heroes. Paul Anka, from many HØstfest performances,

played a U.S. Army Ranger in the movie and also wrote the theme score for it.

So much do the people of Sainte-Mere-Eglise honor those soldiers that a parachute hangs from that steeple, and a stained glass window was created as well.



One other contestant on another episode of *To Tell the Truth* was Jerrie Mock, the first woman to fly solo around the world. She completed the flight on April 17, 1964. The game show aired shortly after. Two panelists guessed the right person, Tom Poston was not one of them. The summer of 1965 she was invited to Minot and flew her Cessna 180 from Columbus, Ohio, to speak to the Ninety-Nines. A few of our members were there. We know at least one of our members who has her autograph.

It's interesting to note that Jerrie Mock did this trip because as she said, "I was bored." Nor was there much notoriety from it either which is unusual as she did what Amelia Earhart had set out to do, be the first woman to fly around the world.

John Steele, 1912-1969 Jerrie Mock, 1925-2014

...Just some things of interest though not directly involved with the Air Museum.

OVER IN THE WARBIRD HANGAR

When we reopen next spring the DTAM Warbird fleet will be the P40E, FM2 Wildcat, P51C, P51D, Spitfire, Harvard, C53 SkyTrooper, and the L6. The Zero has been sold and likely will be the Corsair and the B25.

On the incoming side will be the Grumman Bearcat. It has been test flown but had some engine issues. The Bearcat, thus, may not be finished by opening date next spring, but it will be close.



The Grumman Bearcat still holds records for performance in training aircraft. Pictured is the prototype.



A CORPORATE JET COMES TO THE AIR MUSEUM

Late this summer, the Don Bessette Family donated their Lear Jet model 24B to the Air Museum. November One Nine Five Delta Bravo represents the finest in luxury travel from the late 60s and on into the 21st century. These private jets became an identity that **so** many people recognized in general aviation. To them it seems, airplanes were either a Piper Cub, a Boeing 707, or a Lear Jet.

We will give you a tour of this pristine example of corporate travel in an upcoming issue. In the meantime, it should be noted that the designer, William Lear, was a genius of invention. Consider who began Motorola. There was the perfection of the auto pilot. Many may even remember the eight track tape player in their favorite car. The Lear logo was represented as a standard of quality.

Bill Lear was an adventurous businessman. He bought an air base outside of Reno much against his financial council. He made it a real estate magnet and now it's where the Reno Air Races are held annually. He liked to go fast, too. One time in his Mercedes Roadster he was pulled over for speeding. Showed his driver's license, "Mr. Lear, your license has expired."

"I guess I never had time to get it renewed. How long?"

"Years! You!" As the officer pointed to his passenger, "Do you have a license?"

"Yes." He showed it to him.

"Good! Now, you get over on this side and drive! And you, Mr. Lear! Get your driver's license renewed!"

The Lear Jet was not a large airplane. But, it went high, went fast, burned a lot of gas, and made a lot of noise. Not that those were its signature, the early models did, compliments to those CJ610 Turbojet engines.

The program for the Lear Jet continued when it was bought out by Gates Tire and Rubber. From there its success continued making the name LearJet very well respected.

Looking through the array of airplanes in the Air Museum, those of the corporate design, we could begin with the '29 WACO GXE, then to the '40 WACO UPF-7, the Cessna 195, a '34 Stinson SR-5A Reliant, the Beech 18, the Beech Staggerwing, and now the first full jet for display, the '69 Lear Jet.



Business aircraft have long been the consummate projection for expanding technology. Each was developed in its own category of time and placement, the engineering for an affordable need. Bill Lear's jet was not the first corporate jet but was the first that was most cost effective selling initially for \$599,000.

When you view up close this machine, note the smoothness of the surfaces as well as the over-all shape. Performance is one thing, but let's face it, good looks also sell. The Lear is no exception.

Thank you, Don Bessette and family. Your addition complements the displays of private and corporate travel from its earliest stages.

THE C47 GETS SOME UPDATES



The outdoor C47 display has over the years been subject to deterioration to the point where attention was seriously needed. Under the guidance of Darrel Kerzmann, Dave Smith, Arvid Pomeroy, and more, a new direction is taking place.

The interior has been cleaned which in itself was a major doing. Quite a bit of debris had accumulated inside. Once that was removed the inside was pressure washed. The idea then was to make the display more accessible and worth visiting. With that in mind the volunteers went with installing plywood flooring and eventually some seating.

Making the C47 open to visitors this coming season a set of steps will be handy once the door to the cabin is opened. Visitors may then climb aboard. Eventually the cockpit will also be open and made ready.

The exterior is also getting some upgrading. The control surfaces have been removed with the exception of the rudder which has already been finished. The ailerons and elevators will be recovered but in metal. The restoration shop in the Hangar One will be busy this winter.

Once this is finished the C47 will get a new coat of paint.



*Above, a damaged aileron that will be reskinned in aluminum as the rest of the control surfaces
Below, Arvid Pomeroy and Dave Smith work at making the interior accessible.*



Interior stripped of all the rotted insulation, pressure washed, and being fitted with plywood.

At left: four other volunteers helping with the C47 progress: Darrel Kerzmann, Armond Cornin MSgt, Megan Littlefield A1C, and Tim Lett TSgt ret. These volunteers are also integral in the P40 project.

A NOTE FROM ONE OF OUR LEAD VOLUNTEERS WHO IS ALSO ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This is the team dedicated to the C-47 make-over. They are Air Force active duty members assigned to the **5th Maintenance Squadron, Minot AFB**. Their hard work and dedication is greatly appreciated! Also listed are Dave Smith, Arvid Pomeroy, and Tim Lett. The museum is very fortunate to have these GENTLEMEN on point as they continue to share their previous Air Force leadership and maintenance prowess. So far, the aircraft interior insulation has been removed and exposed spars and ribs pressure washed. Also, they have started to lay plywood for the new floor. The ailerons and elevators were removed and will be recovered this winter. The rudder was repaired in 2017. Next spring/summer/fall the interior and exterior will be painted, windows replaced, and jump seats installed. Eventually, the crew compartment will be restored with gauges, indicators, knobs, etc.

Matthew Campbell A1C

Joshua Sacerio SRA

Justin Perez A1C

Cameron Rivera A1C

Johnathon Dixon A1C

Megan Littlefield A1C

Joseph Mchenna A1C

Armond Cornin MSgt

Tim Lett, TSgt ret.

Dave Smith, MSgt ret.

Arvid Pomeroy, MSgt ret.

Thanks, Darrel

One more volunteer who drives in from Velva and helps where needed around the Air Museum is Ron Davis. Your editor apologizes for not having his name listed in an earlier roster.

IF YOU WANT A RIDE

This beautifully restored WACO VPF-7 on display in the Elker Memorial Hangar Three is available for rides. Arrangements for time and price can be made through the front desk by calling 852-8500.



1937 WACO VPF-7 restored by Mike Winblad in 2002

While you browse through the Air Museum there is also this display that invites anyone who would like to climb aboard to do so. It's a non-flying scaled down version of the famous Piper Cub and was a popular part of the Children's Museum.



As the
sign
says....

DAKOTA KID II

Scott Nelson

Noble Peterson served with the 358th Squadron of the 355th Fighter Group based at Steeple Morden in Cambridgeshire, England. Noble flew two tours, the first in a P-51B, (Dakota Kid) and the second in a D model, (Dakota Kid II). Known as the *Morden Strafers*, the 355th became renowned for their low-level attacks on German targets after being released from escort duties.

On one such mission while beating up a German aerodrome, Noble caught sight of a multi cannon anti-aircraft emplacement nestled in among some hay stacks. They were four barreled 20mm Flakveirling with an eight man crew. What gave them away was the tell-tail puff, puff, puff smoke signatures of the cannons as they fired. He noted the location of the gun emplacement as the group withdrew to the west. He led his flight in the withdrawal at several thousand feet, all the time noting landmarks over which they were passing. When they were some five miles from the aerodrome, he signaled he was taking another run, alone, reversed direction and got down on the deck following the landmarks back to the aerodrome, hugging the ground, rising to go over trees and buildings. When he was less than a half mile from the hay stacks, he pulled up until he could clearly see the site, and then roared toward it in a power glide, unleashing his six .50 calibers into the target. Dust and debris erupted from the haystacks and gun emplacement where the rounds hit. As he passed over the site he took a quick glance down over his shoulder and caught a fleeting snapshot of what his hundreds of half inch bullets had done to the gun crew. That single terrible image was seared into his memory the rest of his life.

Some of Noble's most precious memories was using his war plane to save lives. He always flew his machine very carefully, never slamming the throttle open and closed. Other pilots were constantly opening and closing their throttles to keep in formation. Noble made throttle changes slowly, by degrees, and leaned his mixture on cruise. He always got back to base with much more fuel than the others in his flight, even though they had flown virtually the same distance. It was because of this that many times he could remain airborne much longer if the need arose.

One such time was the late fall of 1944. Noble was returning with his flight over the English Channel when they heard a mayday call of two planes running out of fuel somewhere north of them. Noble looked down at the cold, cold Channel and thought how miserable it would be to be in that water. He checked his fuel supply and, like usual, he had enough to stay airborne for awhile longer. Flying north he reached where the planes had been and caught sight of two parachutes descending about a half mile apart. He followed them down and anxiously watched as they were able to get in their small

rafts in the rough seas. While keeping an eye on both rafts, which was hard to do in the heavy swells, he called Air Sea Rescue and was informed a launch was on its way. Noble checked his fuel supply. His two wing tanks had fuel left as he began flying a figure eight course between the two and called Air Sea Rescue again. The launch was still 20 miles out. He leaned the mixture as much as possible and stayed on station. At the altitude he was flying, if he ran out of fuel in one tank and the engine quit, he would be in the drink before he could recover, so every 15 minutes he would gain some altitude and switch tanks to keep from running one tank dry. He continued his vigil. Another call to ASR; still ten miles out. Grab some altitude, switch tanks again. Finally, in the distance, he saw the launch bucking the waves but was on a course that would miss the pilots. "ASR, are you in contact with the Launch?"

"Yes!"

"Have them correct their course!"

The launch turned toward the rafts. Noble stayed until the pilots were safely in the boat. One last pass resulted in exuberant waves from all on board.

He got back to Steeple Morden several hours after the others and missed out on the debriefing. Hungry and tired, he caught a bite and hit the sack. Just another day in the Eighth Air Force.

Many years later Noble started reminiscing about his time in the service and the men with whom he served. His memory also drifted back to those two pilots he had last seen after they were pulled from the Channel. He wondered, "Did they survive the war? Where are they now? If it could be possible, it would be great if he could visit with one or both of them." He had forgotten the date the incident happened, and he hadn't written it in his log. Having gotten back after debriefing it wouldn't be recorded in Squadron records, either.

Noble made some phone calls and inquiries and finally was directed to a lady in Hawaii who had the records of all the Air Sea Rescues conducted from the English Isles. (This was before the internet) Calling the lady, Noble related the incident but couldn't nail down a specific date. The lady explained that thousands of flyers had been rescued during the war and to find one particular event without a date or names of the individuals involved would be very difficult. Noble offered to pay the lady for her time to search the records. The lady declined, it would be just too hard to accomplish. Disappointed, Noble realized it was not to be.

...And his crew chief.....

When Noble first met his crew chief, he didn't know what to expect of this young 19 year old, Robert Coleman. Would this kid be able to keep his P-51 flying? Robert Coleman proved himself admirably. His

P51 was always excellently serviced and ready to go when called.

One day he went to Noble and asked if it would be all right to paint *Long Island Kid* below the exhausts on Dakota Kid II. Robert Coleman was from New York. "What could I say?" Noble flew the plane but Robert kept it flying. It was just as much his plane as Noble's. And so, *Long Island Kid* was also added to the cowling. This is the only time known that a crew chief was acknowledged on the plane's name or artwork.



One thing Noble didn't find out until many years after the war was at a Group Reunion. Robert Coleman told him that every morning he would check the board to see if Captain Peterson would be flying that day. If not, he would go out and pull the cowling to make it look like it was being serviced. Sometimes when readying for a mission a plane might have a sudden mechanical problem. In such cases the pilot could grab any other plane that was ready but not going on that mission. He didn't want anyone flying his plane but Peterson! He knew that many pilots were rough with their airplanes, and Robert didn't want them near his *Dakota Kid*.

Babies.....

One of the innovations that enabled fighter range deep into Germany was the wing drop tanks, or "Babies" as they were popularly known. Metal tanks were first used, but in a war economy where metal was in limited supply and the tanks were commonly jettisoned after use, pressed paper tanks were developed instead. Filling these tanks took place immediately before the mission. If they were filled too long beforehand, the pressed paper would absorb the fuel and would begin to get soggy and droop over an extended period of time.

Noble related that take off was always done using fuel from the fuselage tank right behind the pilot's seat and continued until that tank was about half empty. Fuel would then be taken from the drop tanks. The reason for this was the Mustang handled much better if the fuselage

tank was not full. Thus, it was advantageous to run fuel out of that tank first.

One day a new young pilot was assigned to Noble's flight. This was his first official mission, a deep penetration escort into Germany. Take off, as usual, was from the fuselage tank, and when they got over the Channel Noble reminded his flight to switch to drop tanks. When the tanks were empty or nearly empty far into the Reichland, Noble ordered his flight to drop their "babies." They did and the new guy's plane jumped! He had released 2 full drop tanks! In all the excitement of his first mission he had forgotten to switch to the drop tanks. Now what! Here he was, that far into Germany, with very little fuel left. There was a good possibility of having to bail out and becoming a POW. "OK," Noble radioed, "turn around and reduce power, start gliding back toward England. When you get down to a thousand feet, just apply enough power to stay airborne. I'll escort you and try to take on any German planes we may encounter."

They took care to avoid populated areas or known flak sites. Noble advised the new pilot to keep his speed just above a stall. It was slow going! Amazingly, the trip was uneventful, and they were not even shot at as far as they knew. They did get shocked stares from some German soldiers that were marching down a road, but no one even bothered to shoulder their weapon. They even received friendly waves from German farmers working in the fields. It was a good way to get a beautiful tour of the German countryside.

Finally they reached the Netherlands and breathed a little easier, but by no means yet were they out of the woods as Holland was still occupied. Still, there was an active resistance that would help you if you dropped in providing the Germans didn't get to you first. The fuel situation was holding, and Noble started to think they might even be able to reach the Channel. "How's your fuel?"

"I'm still showing a few gallons."

"We've crossed the Dutch coast," Noble radioed his Newbie. "Shoot for England?"

"OK. Not much left, but... give it a try."

When they crossed the English coast, Noble and his charge breathed a relieved sigh. "Hell, we've gone this far, let's try for home base."

They made it. The ground crew said there was nothing more than a few gallons left in the Newbie's tanks.

This showed how fuel efficient the Mustang was if you knew how to manage it. If the same thing had happened to a P-47, they probably would not have gotten out of Germany.

After the war, Noble went home, started ranching, and raised a wonderful family.

...Some added notes:

I want to mention that these few stories are just the tip of the iceberg concerning Noble. He had such a sharp memory, and there are many more stories that he told me. There are several hours of interviews I did with him which are archived at the Heritage Center in Bismarck and are available to anyone who would like to listen to them. - *Scott*



Don Lopez also flew the C Model P51 Mustang which looks very similar to the B model

LEON FRANKEL - A LITTLE MORE

After some more research I found that Leon Frankel's squadron mate, Rudy Augarten, did not become an ace in WW II. Rudy downed two 109s while flying P47s in Europe. He didn't become an ace until he shot down three Egyptian planes while flying a BF109L. I was also going to mention that Leon cleared up a mystery for me on the configuration of the torpedoes used to sink the Yahagi.

Before Leon climbed in his Avenger that day he looked at the torpedo and it had plywood nose and tail additions that would stabilize it and enable a high speed, high altitude release. The plywood sheared off on contact with the water. You can see these plywood additions in the painting. - *Scott*



Note the plywood stabilizing box on the end of the torpedo in this Scott Nelson painting



A life size Don Lopez standing with his Lope's Hope III on display in the Warbird Hangar Five at DTAM



An Airplane Mobile - children's artwork

PAGE ELEVEN

Well, we've covered quite a few topics for this winter issue of 2018 and going on into 2019. Your next should be along sometime in April next spring. There will be the annual meeting notices for sometime late that month, and then comes the opening for Season 33 in early May. Maybe we can even find some more about which to write. Maybe some of you would like to send in stories and suggestions.

There are many to thank, all of whom have interest in the functions of the Dakota Territory Air Museum. One such is the Farstad Foundation. Their financial support makes possible aviation scholarships and the ability to continue with the ACE and PACE programs. We also find invaluable the help from KLJ, an engineering firm in Bismarck. Their association provides the finest opportunity to keep this communication available.

A third at this point would be The Minot Daily News. We try to provide newsworthy events. They always respond. Maybe it's someone getting that special ride in a P51 or someone awarded recognitions in their building skills or maybe it's even a donation of a private jet. The Minot Daily happens along.

Their stories are not buried in the newspaper somewhere but often make front page. We thank them for their loyal partnership and friendships.

With these entities in mind we wish to make a day their day here at the Air Museum. Saturday, May 11, 2019, will be opening day for our 33rd season. We also wish to make it Farstad Foundation Day, KLJ Day, and The Minot Daily News Day. Any who are involved, employees or family, are invited to be our guests. It is a deserved time and a chance for us to meet you.

Museum Attendance ... *Glenn Blackaby*

Our first and fourth quarters don't have a lot in numbers because we are closed during much of that time. Our 2nd and 3rd quarters are where we pick up the bulk of our attendance.

The first quarter was 31, the second was 1885, the third was 2605 and the fourth quarter, so far, has had 262 which equals 4783. We lose about 10 to 20% of our attendance record from those who fail to sign in even after being requested to do so. Accounting for that loss would mean that perhaps we could approximate an

attendance of anywhere from 5261 to 5740, not counting events. As to trends in attendance, our 2nd quarter this year was up 14% over last year's. Our 3rd quarter was up 15.8 % over last year's 3rd quarter.

As to international visitors, almost all are from Canada with a much smaller percentage from other countries. Our second quarter this year was up 57.14% over the same period last year. Our third quarter was up 4.9 %.

We do not keep track of how many are military. Perhaps we need to come up with a good way to do that.

School Groups etc ...

There were 30 school/daycare/day camp field trips this year from 25 different locations. When we do have more than one field trip from a particular school, it will be different classes with different students for each field trip from the same school. The 30 field trips just mentioned do not include the two outreach events we had this year that connected with more students.

Not counting the outreach events and programs, I personally guided 982 students on field trips this year, and that includes the guided tours with the ACE and PACE programs. When we include Keith and Denise Johnson's tour of the Sunnyside Elementary of 20 children, we then had 1002 visitors from field trip tours. The numbers of students on field trips this year is well over what we have done in the past.

With the outreach events and programs, we reached 94 students along with 110 adults when we had The Paper Airplane Guy event. We reached 70 children with the Washington School Career Day event and three at the MCDC *Up, Up & Away Tours*.

Fifty-five students participated in the ACE Camps with 28 of them at the Rugby Pioneer Village camp *on the Go*. There were 32 in PACE, each coming back for five days of aviation camp sessions.

When we include all the field trips and the outreach events programs, we worked with 1,194 students. The teacher who set up the most recent field trip this year told me that they plan to bring 58 more students – either this November or next April. It's been a good year connecting these young people with aviation.

Field trips came from the following places: Sunnyside Elementary, Surrey High School, Velva Public School, Washington Elementary, Burke Central #5, Bowbells Public School, MLS School, Perkett Elementary, Washburn Elementary, Stanley Elementary, Belcourt School District, Lewis & Clark School District, Drake-Anamoose Public School, Kenmare Public School, Bottineau Public School, Turtle Mountain Elementary School, St. Ann's Central School, Dakota Memorial School, YMCA Day Camp, Wolford Public School, Minot High School JROTC, Dunseith Public School, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, ABC Child Care and ... Marked With Joy Daycare.

I think it's important to point out that many of the field trips came from quite a distance. Here are some approximations of their distance from the museum (as the crow flies): Lignite, a little over 70 miles; Bowbells at around 60, Washburn Elementary at around 70 miles, Stanley at 55 miles, Belcourt at 80 plus, Drake at almost 50, Kenmare at around 46, Bottineau at 60, Dunseith at 70 and Wolford at 75. We didn't get any field trips from Williston this year, but we do from time to time. We have gotten trips from Canadian schools although none this year.

Last December's First Western Bank visit ...

I do not remember all that happened with last year's First Western Bank event other than to say that Vicky Campbell was my contact person for the event and there were 72 people attending.

New Displays ...

I am still trying to complete the WW I and Korean War displays. Every attempt to do so has been met with the day to day interruptions of the open season activities and events. Now that we're closed I hope to finish the cases. The Vietnam War display is practically done – except that it needs a Huey helicopter – and that is very important because the Huey is the icon of the Vietnam War. I hope to have this display finished soon.

