

# FLIGHT LINES

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"Ace Of Aces"

World War II

Alabama Medal of Honor  
Recipient

David S. McCampbell



PUSH  
LOSURE  
LEASE





# ALABAMA IN WORLD WAR II

Approximately 300,000 Alabamians donned service uniforms during the war, and tens of thousands trained in the state. Many women volunteered for one of the military auxiliaries, such as the Women's Army Corps, Women's Air Service Pilots (WASPs), or the Army Nurse Corps. More than 6,000 Alabamians lost their lives in military service: 4,600 in combat and 1,600 in non-combat situations. Twelve of the 469 recipients of the Medal of Honor in World War II were born in Alabama or entered service there.

From the days of the Wright brothers, Alabama has played a conspicuous role in aviation. During World War II so many aviators trained at Maxwell Field that it came to be said that the "road to Tokyo" led through Montgomery. Gunter Field, Montgomery's airport, became a flight school, and new aviation training facilities were built, including Craig Field outside Selma, Napier Field near Dothan, and Courtland Field in the Tennessee River Valley. One of the most important and pioneering projects was the Tuskegee Army Air Field, where nearly 1,000 African-Americans received their wings as pilots.

A few other notable aviators from Alabama were:

- ♦ **Asa Duncan** who served as chief of staff for Gen. Carl A. Spaatz, commander of the Eighth Air Force
- ♦ The five **Crommelin Brothers** all of whom served in the Pacific Theater. Two lost their lives as pilots during the war, and the eldest, John, served as flight officer on the USS *Enterprise* and later as chief of staff of a carrier task force.
- ♦ **Herbert Carter**, in the first class of African-American pilots to break the race barrier in military aviation, earned his wings at the Tuskegee Army Air Field.
- ♦ **Nancy Batson Crews** from Birmingham, an early member of the Women's Air Service Pilots, ferried military aircraft around the country to modification plants or ports of embarkation.

Besides the *Belle of Birmingham* (piloted by **Col. John M. Donalson**), there were two other aircraft (B-17s) that wore the Birmingham moniker. The first was the *Birmingham Blitzkrieg*, piloted by **Lt. Thomas Borders**, of Birmingham, AL with the 97th Bomb Group. His all-Alabama crew was credited with being the first in the 8th Air Force to down a German plane by ball turret gunner, **Kent West** from West Blocton, AL. The original *Birmingham Blitzkrieg* served with the 97th Bomb Group before becoming a lead assembly aircraft with the 525 Bomb Squadron.

The job of an assembly aircraft was to help get bombers into formations safely. They would then lead the aircraft group as they headed off to their intended target. With that job done, they would then return to base.



*Birmingham Blitzkrieg  
As Assembly Aircraft*

Lt. Borders was transferred to North Africa with the 97thBG and was pilot of the second B-17 named the *Birmingham Blitzkrieg* where it was lost to flak and exploded in mid-air on a mission in December 1942. All on board were killed.



**Kent West**      **Tom Borders**

**Vintage B-17  
"Texas Raiders"  
To Visit  
Birmingham  
and  
The Southern  
Museum of Flight**



**The iconic B-17 Flying Fortress is coming to Birmingham**

**May 14-16, 2021**

with two other vintage warbirds (T-6 & C-45)  
**You want to be there! Check the Museum's website for all the opportunities and particulars to visit and book a ride on historic and rare aircraft of World War 2**

# ALABAMA USAAF AIRFIELDS



## THIRD AIRFORCE

- Demopolis Army Air Field, 8 miles W-SW of Demopolis  
Now: **Demopolis Municipal Airport**
- Camp Sibert Army Air Field, 5 miles W-SW of Gadsden  
Now: **Northeast Alabama Regional Airport**

## USAAF TRAINING COMMAND

- Courtland Army Air Field, 1 mile SW of Courtland  
Now: **Courtland Airport**
- Maxwell Field, 2 miles W of Montgomery  
Now: **Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base**
- Craig Field, 5 miles SE of Selma  
Now: **Craig Field Airport**
- Napier Field, 7 miles NW of Dothan  
Now: Adjacent to **Dothan Regional Airport**
- Gunter Field, 2 miles NE of Montgomery  
Now: **Gunter Annex** (Non-flying USAF facility)
- Tuskegee Army Air Field, 7 miles NW of Tuskegee  
Now: **Sharpe Field** a private airport

## CONTRACT FLYING SCHOOLS

- Bates Field, 10 miles W of Mobile—Contract Pilot School, Glider  
Now: **Mobile Regional Airport**
- Roberts Field Airport, 4 miles W of Birmingham  
Now: Industrial site
- Hargrove Van de Graaff Airport, 3 miles NW of Tuscaloosa  
Now: **Tuscaloosa National Airport**
- Decatur Field, 3 miles NW of Decatur  
Now: **Pryor Field Regional Airport**
- Moton Field, 4 miles NW of Tuskegee  
Now: **Moton Field Municipal Airport**

## AIR TECHNICAL SERVICE COMMAND

- Birmingham Army Air Field, 5 miles NE of Birmingham  
Now: **Sumpter Smith Air National Guard Base at Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport**
- Brookley Field, 4 miles S of Mobile  
Now: **Mobile Downtown Airport**

## MINOR AIRFIELDS

- Fort McClellan Army Air Field, 6 miles NE Anniston  
Now: **Abandoned**
- Chilton CAA Intermediate Field, 1 mile NE of Clanton  
Now: **Chilton County Airport**
- Huntsville Arsenal Army Air Field, 6 miles SW of Huntsville  
Now: **Redstone Army Airfield**
- Thomas C. Russell Field, 2 miles S-SW of Alexander  
Now: **Undetermined USAF Use**
- Weedon Field, 4 miles N-NE of Eufaula  
Now: **Undetermined USAF Use**



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# HALL OF FAME MEMBER

## David S. McCampbell

(1910-1996)

**Hometown:** Bessemer, AL  
**Commander:** The "Fabled Fifteen"  
**Years of Service:** 1933 to 1964  
**Confirmed Kills:** 34  
**Medal of Honor Action Date:** October 24 - 25, 1944

The most notable fighter ace in Navy history was the late Captain David S. McCampbell. He and Lt. Commander Edward "Butch" O'Hare were among the few pilots awarded Medals of Honor for aerial combat. McCampbell's came as the result of shooting down nine aircraft during one mission in the October 1944 Battle of Leyte Gulf.



David McCampbell attended the U.S. Naval Academy and began his 31 years of service in 1933. He received his "**Wings of Gold**" in 1938. After that he joined Fighting Squadron 4 (VF-4), followed by a three-year tour as a Landing Service Officer (LSO) aboard the USS Wasp. In the spring of 1944, McCampbell commanded Carrier Air Group 15, also known as the "**Fabled Fifteen**" and personally accrued 34 victories. The group as a whole earned 318 victories.



McCampbell's 34 aerial victories during his World War II missions made him the Navy's Ace of Aces. He was the only American airman to achieve "*ace in a day*" twice, shooting down seven Japanese bombers in a single afternoon. To add to his accomplishments, he shot down nine enemy aircraft in another mission, which was a new world record. He was the highest scoring American ace to survive the war. In recognition of his service and contributions, he was presented the Medal of Honor by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Capt. McCampbell is enshrined in the Naval Aviation Hall of Honor (1988), the National Aviation Hall of Fame (1996), and the Alabama Aviation Hall of Fame (1999).

## Medal of Honor

David S. McCampbell

### CITATION:

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Commander David S. McCampbell (NSN: 0-72487), United States Navy, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as Commander, Air Group FIFTEEN (AG-15), attached to the U.S.S. ESSEX (CV-9), during combat against enemy Japanese aerial forces in the first and second battles of the Philippine Sea. An inspiring leader, fighting boldly in the face of terrific odds, Commander McCampbell led his fighter planes against a force of 80 Japanese carrier-based aircraft bearing down on our fleet on 19 June 1944. Striking fiercely in valiant defense of our surface force, he personally destroyed seven hostile planes during this single engagement in which the outnumbering attack force was utterly routed and virtually annihilated. During a major fleet engagement with the enemy on 24 October, Commander McCampbell, assisted by but one plane, intercepted and daringly attacked a formation of 60 hostile land based craft approaching our forces. Fighting desperately but with superb skill against such overwhelming airpower, he shot down nine Japanese planes and, completely disorganizing the enemy group, forced the remainder to abandon the attack before a single aircraft could reach the fleet. His great personal valor and indomitable spirit of aggression under extremely perilous combat conditions reflect the highest credit upon Commander McCampbell and the United States Naval Service.

Shown below are pictures from the premier showing of the World War II documentary, **WWII: Alabama Remembers**

Ken Burns (*below*) is interviewed during his visit to the Museum. Burns produced and directed this documentary that places a face on the Greatest Generation. Many World War II veterans, along with 500 other invited guests, attended the premier showing in November 2007. It was a touching and memorable event honoring Alabama's heroes of this world war.



This excellent documentary can be found today on:  
<https://www.pbs.org/video/alabama-public-television-documentaries-wwii-alabama-remembers/>