

FLIGHT LINES

DECEMBER
2021



A PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTHERN MUSEUM OF FLIGHT
BIRMINGHAM, AL

WWW.SOUTHERNMUSEUMOFFLIGHT.ORG

*Happy
Holidays !*

Wright Flyer Monument
At Maxwell AFB





MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



As the Holiday Season approaches, allow me to take this opportunity to reflect on all of the successes that have contributed to 2021 being such a banner year for our organization. Of course, this begins with the steadfast dedication and unwavering support of the entire Southern Museum of Flight family to include our board, staff, corps of volunteers, patrons, and visitors. In the wake of so many challenges, especially those associated with the COVID-19

Pandemic and all of the associated response and mitigation efforts, the museum continues to move forward with our education-oriented mission – fueled by our Core Values of **Education, Preservation, & Dedication.**

We've made huge strides in 2021 with our Aviation Workforce Initiative (AWI), the workforce development wing of the Southern Museum of Flight. Construction is well underway on our new workforce development training center, which will include three new classrooms, an interactive computer lab, and a dozen student workspaces to facilitate a hands-on training environment to support the student experience at the Southern Museum of Flight's East Lake Campus. Construction will continue throughout the winter, so stay tuned! In addition, we have partnered with the Birmingham Flight Center to bring a new FAA testing center to the East Lake Campus, thus allowing for greater access to industry examinations. Furthermore, site preparation and groundwork continue on the museum's expansion site at our Grand River Campus. We couldn't be more excited about the future of the Southern Museum of Flight and our ability to expand our educational offerings!

It was great to see the return of several programs and events in 2021, as well. In the spring, we collaborated again with the Commemorative Air Force to bring a "Warbird Weekend" to Birmingham, which included the B-17 - Texas Raiders! Throughout the spring and fall, we witnessed the return of our traditional K-12 tours and programming, which will continue throughout the fall and winter. In November, we commemorated Veterans Day through our second collaboration with Opera Birmingham, which featured an emotional tribute to the 100th Anniversary of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We also partnered with Birmingham Aero Club to offer An Evening with Keith Dunnavant, author of a number of books including *Speed* and *Spy Pilot*.

As we wrap up our 55th year at the Southern Museum of Flight, I remain encouraged that the growth and expansion over the next 55 years will serve as a testament to our organization's mission, grounded in education, and driven by the entire museum family! If you haven't had the opportunity to visit the museum in a while, stop by and check out the exciting new happenings, or if you need to renew your membership, visit us online at southernmuseumofflight.org. I look forward to seeing you down the road!

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Flight Lines

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Comments are welcome and should be addressed to:

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Birmingham, AL 35206

BIRMINGHAM'S ANNIVERSARY!



Wright Brothers Day

Wright Brothers Day is a United States national observance that was established in 1959 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. It is observed on December 17.

Wright Brothers Day commemorates the first successful flight of the Wright Flyer I, heavier-than-air powered aircraft built by Orville and Wilbur Wright. It took place on December 17, 1903, near Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina.

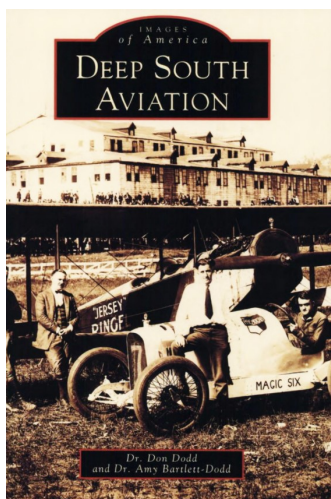


As Birmingham celebrates its 150th Anniversary on December 19, 2021, its history has shown that change has come to Birmingham over the years, and change continues to take place for the Magic City.

History has also shown that Birmingham has long been a center of aviation in the South, which is documented in the holdings of the Southern Museum of Flight. Airplanes have been built or repaired here - from Glenn Messer's "Air Boss" of the '20s, through Bechtel-McCone of World War II, Hayes Aircraft and PEMCO.

The Air Squadron of the Alabama National Guard was founded here following World War I and Naval Air Station-Birmingham was located here following World War II.

A detailed photographic account of Birmingham's aviation history is documented in the book, "Deep South Aviation". Authors Dr. Donald Dodd (1940-2021) was a former Assistant Director of the museum and his wife, Dr. Amy Dodd, was a former Curator of the museum.



Birmingham has been a center of Alabama and southern aviation from the 1920s to the present. The Southern Museum of Flight is proud and honored to have been trusted with the preservation of this aviation history while looking forward to boundless opportunities for expanding its mission and educational initiatives in new and exciting ways.

The Wright brothers became interested in flying in early childhood, when their father bought them a toy helicopter. They liked the toy so much that when it broke, they built their own. In the late 19th century they came up with the idea of three-axis control which made it possible for the pilot to maintain the aircraft's equilibrium and to steer it effectively.

Orville and Wilbur Wright used this principle to design and build a series of manned gliders. Their experience testing gliders helped them create the Flyer (which is now referred to as the Wright Flyer, Flyer I or 1903 Flyer). It was made from spruce, a strong and lightweight wood.

They made their first attempt at powered flight on December 14, 1903, but it was unsuccessful. Repairs took three days. On December 17, the brothers made another attempt with Orville piloting the Flyer. The brothers made another three flights that day, taking turns.

This event is an important milestone in the development of aeronautics. No wonder its anniversary is celebrated as a national observance.

HAPPY
ANNIVERSARY



NAVY'S CONNECTION TO BIRMINGHAM

The Third USS Birmingham - SSN 695



Earlier newsletters had featured the original USS Birmingham as being the first U.S. Navy warship to launch an aircraft and making history as the Navy's first "aircraft carrier". During the 150th Anniversary of the City of Birmingham, it now seems appropriate to feature the last warship of the U.S. Navy to be named for the City of Birmingham, even though it has little relation to aviation.

The USS Birmingham (SSN-695), a Los Angeles class nuclear submarine, was the third ship of the U.S. Navy to be named for Birmingham, Alabama. The contract to build her was awarded to Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Co. in Newport News, Virginia on January 24, 1972 and her keel was laid down on April 26, 1975.

She was launched on October 29, 1977, sponsored by Mrs. Maryon Pittman Allen, wife of Senator James Pittman, and was commissioned on December 16, 1978. The Birmingham made its home port at Pearl Harbor, HI shortly after being commissioned. With a crew of 19 officers and 98 enlisted men, the USS Birmingham would spend the next 19 years serving with distinction with both the Atlantic and Pacific fleets. She would be part of numerous exercises and missions in the Western Pacific, Indian Ocean, North Atlantic and Indian Oceans during this time.

The USS Birmingham can be said to be one of the more recognizable submarines in U.S. naval history because of its appearance in the film, *The Hunt for Red October*. The submarine's hull number (SSN-695) is recognized in the film from footage that was taken during commissioning trials. These hull numbers would be removed from the Birmingham before she was placed into active service in 1978.

Birmingham was an integral part of the Arabian Gulf deployment, serving with the Nimitz Battle Group. For its achievements during this surge, she was awarded the 1992 COMSUSBPAC Golden Anchor Award.



During her inactivation ceremony on March 27, 1997, she received many accolades. She was awarded four Battle "E" awards, Navy Expeditionary Medals in six different theatres, and a Navy Unit Commendation. In 1996 the ship was also recognized as the Seventh fleet's Top Anti-Surface Warship, which was a fitting honor.

After her inactivation, the USS Birmingham was decommissioned on December 22, 1997 and struck from the Navy list that very same day. The ship was placed at Pearl Harbor where her service had begun to await inclusion into the submarine recycling program in Bremerton, WA.

Birmingham's sail was placed on static display at Mission Park, Defense Supply Center, Columbus, Ohio.

Former crewmen stand next to the her sail with RADM John King, the Commander of Defense Logistics Agency Land and Maritime, after the ribbon cutting ceremony to open Mission Park on September 23, 2015.



A YEAR OF TRANSFORMATION



The second anniversary of the COVID impacts will occur next month. Early in 2020, the museum's normal activities, normal education programs, normal event scheduling and all other museum protocols began operating in an abnormal and modified mode.

It has been a different and difficult two years but the Southern Museum of Flight did manage to accomplish many of their objectives associated with the new AWI program, and efforts continued on the planned expansion of the museum at Technology Park. The transformation of the reimagined museum managed to stay the course.

2021 Restoration Progress: New COVID protocols were implemented for the dedicated restoration force that did impact work habits. But progress on the Tuskegee B-25, fuselage, engine, props, etc., is producing an excellent display exhibit that will bring new significance and attention to the current Tuskegee Airman diorama.



Work continued in the total restoration of the Fairchild 24C-8B, which is the only 1932 model of this aircraft in existence. This restoration will certainly be a tremendous "feather in the cap" for our talented and dedicated restoration team.

The expansion of the Southern Museum of Flight to the Grand River Technology Park still showed major progress during the pandemic. Site preparation is complete and the plans to begin the fundraising for the next phase is in the planning stages.



And the exciting and important development of the Aviation Workforce Initiative (AWI) effort is moving forward. Our volunteer force has moved all the General Aviation Hangar aircraft to make room for this hangar to be a central training area with offices and "classrooms".

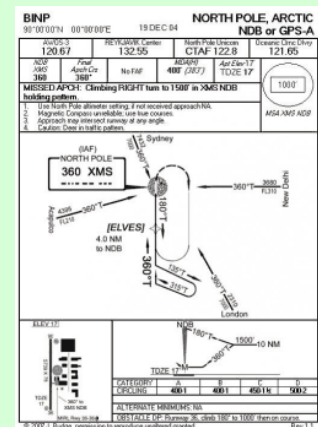


The pandemic certainly had a big impact on the early planning that was in place, but classes are scheduled to begin soon while the program continues to receive a great deal of attention and interest.

As the environment begins to its return to a new 'normal', the museum will adjust its planning process and progress in line with current protocols and will continue on course. The SMF never had such an exciting and reinvented mission - not only to be a 'curator' of aviation artifacts but to become an expanded educational center. The campus is chartered to train and develop qualified aviation personnel that will address the immediate and future need the industry requires, and also aid the social need of producing a vocational-trained and proud aviation workforce that this country is in dire need of.

NOTAM

24 DECEMBER 2021
(BINP - North Pole)



Refueling the HCAV's (Hypersonic Christmas Air Vehicle) propulsion unit comprised of an eight-pack +1 of tiny reindeer will complete and be attached to the HCAV. The lead reindeer will show a red navigation light. The HCAV will taxi to the North end of the NPA (North Pole Aerodrome) runway and will be positioned for takeoff. The identity of the portly gentlemen with the white beard and the red flight-suit will be identified as Mr. S. Claus of North Pole, Earth.

At precisely 23:59:00 Zulu, the HCAV will start a 60 second take-off run and will disappear into a blinding hypersonic flash at exactly 24:00:00 Zulu. Final communications from Mr. Claus aboard the HCAV will no doubt be reported as ...

**"Merry Christmas to all,
and to all a good night!"**

U.S. Military forces around the world may have to go to SANTACON5!





RARE ARTIFACTS ON DISPLAY

The print shown opposite is displayed on the walls of the museum's Shadow Gallery.

This particular print is titled, "*Ambush in Manchuria*", by artist Dru Blair. It depicts a C-47 aircraft belonging to the CIA attempting a "*swoop and snatch*" extraction technique of a Chinese agent who was reported to have important documents. This risky procedure for aerial pick-up involved flying at low altitude and low speed, while hooking a line stretched between two poles. The line was connected to a harness in which the agent was strapped.



On November 29, 1952, Norman Schwartz and Robert Snoddy, both CIA contract pilots, were flying a C-47 aircraft. Two other CIA officers, John Downey & Richard Fecteau, were on board the plane to hoist the agent into the aircraft. But unbeknownst to the team, they were about to fly into a trap. The agent on the ground had been turned by the Communist Chinese. As the plane came in low and slow for the extraction attempt, three Browning 50 cal. heavy machine guns and small arms fire targeted the cockpit. Engines were hit, cut out and the C-47 glided to a controlled crash. Both Schwartz and Snoddy died at the scene. Downey & Fecteau survived and were captured, tried, and imprisoned by the Chinese. Families were unaware of their CIA connections and were told the plane crashed into the sea during a routine flight over the Sea of Japan. Fecteau was not released until December 1971; Downey was freed in March 1973. Upon their release, both officers retired from the CIA. John Downey attended Harvard law school and became a Superior Court Judge, and Richard Fecteau became the assistant athletic director at his alma mater, Boston University.

In 2004, the Chinese government allowed a US search and recovery team to visit the crash site to evaluate any recovery opportunities. One item that was recovered is on loan and displayed in the Shadow Gallery, thanks to the generosity of Erik Kirsinger, who is Norman Schwartz's nephew. It is the infamous 1947 Rolex Watch.

You can gain additional specifics of this mission and recovery efforts including the story of the Rolex, with photos, at:

<https://www.hodinkee.com/magazine/the-watch-that-came-in-from-the-cold>

or

https://journalnow.com/watch-linked-to-1952-spy-plane-crash-no-longer-tells-time-but-it-tells-quite-article_374939e5-8bfc-56ac-aacc-ef248ebcbb23.html

Origins of the CIA Paintings

At a CIA ceremony in 2000, vivid images filled Erik Kirzinger's mind as he learned how covert operatives had sacrificed their lives for the country.

Years before, Kirzinger had embarked on a personal quest to learn what happened to his uncle, Norman Schwartz, a CIA contract pilot killed during a 1952 mission in Manchuria.



It led to Kirzinger's own personal mission: to ensure that families of CIA Cold War contractors killed in action received recognition and closure for their lost loved one. "*The idea came to me that they should have an art collection of the milestone events in the CIA's past,*" he said. And he set in motion a project to commission paintings for the CIA Museum. They would depict missions declassified after decades of secrecy. He recruited donors who would commission artists. He led the research to ensure accurate depictions of each scene.

Our museum's Shadow Gallery exhibits many of these reproduced paintings along with the gripping stories behind them.

During your next visit to the museum, plan to put the **Shadow Gallery** on your "to do" list. You're bound to leave the gallery amazed at the intelligence efforts of the CIA and the sacrifices made by many to protect our country.



NOTES OF CURRENT INTEREST



Veterans Day At The Museum

UNKNOWN is a dramatic song cycle commissioned by UrbanArias that included a coalition of national partners to commemorate the **100th Anniversary** of the founding of the **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier**.

Opera Birmingham was one of those national partners and premiered the video version of this event at the Southern Museum of Flight on Veterans Day 2021. The event was well attended and well received by those patrons attending this significant memorial event.



The weight of commemorating such a revered site as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier would often overburden the creators of such an event. The entire work was conceived, written, edited, cast, and performed in about eight months. The live world premier was presented at Wolf Trap in Virginia on October 5, 2021.

The Southern Museum of Flight was privileged to collaborate with Opera Birmingham on presenting such a relevant production reflecting the ideas of war, honor, and memory through the eyes of soldiers, family members, and Tomb Guards who are connected to each other and the Tomb through their mutual service and sacrifice. The premier of this tribute opera was an impressive and unique commemoration of Veterans Day at the SMF.



It was a great parade in spite of the weather. The Southern Museum of Flight was again honored and proud to participate in the oldest Veterans Day Parade in the country. The museum captured the attention of the crowds with the museum's Bell helicopter "marching" in this historic parade and celebration.



Thanks to our representatives (and equipment) for making such a positive impression for the museum !

Wayne Novy Is Retiring!

Retirement is an exciting time in a person's life - they have worked hard to build their career and now can step back and appreciate and value their accomplishments.



Wayne Novy, Director of Operations and Curator, is retiring from his second career, beginning another and all his friends and colleagues wish him much success on doing the things he enjoys. His impact and contributions to the growth and accomplishments at the Southern Museum of Flight will certainly be a long lasting legacy.

Wayne joined the museum in 2004, after retiring from the United States Air Force. In his 22 year USAF career, he had crewed many versions of the C-135 aircraft and learned four Slavic languages. He is the only USAF enlisted graduate of the Marine Corps Weapons and Tactics Instructor Course. He was also involved at a number of aviation museums, and maintained vintage aircraft. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama at Birmingham, with degrees in History and Anthropology.

Wishing you the best future wherever you decide to direct all your many talents! **Congratulations!!!!**

This Month's Aviation History That Relate To A Few of Our Aircraft

- Dec. 2, 1949** - YF-96D delivered to Muroc AFB, CA
- Dec. 5, 1961** - Navy F4H sets new horizontal flight altitude record of 66,443 ft
- Dec. 12, 1957** - F-101A sets world speed record of 1,207.6 mph
- Dec. 14, 1959** - Altitude record of 103,389 ft set by F-104
- Dec. 17, 1903** - Wright Bros. make first sustained controlled flight in a powered aircraft
- Dec. 20, 1954** - YF-102 makes first flight at Edwards AFB
- Dec. 20, 1960** - F-111 makes first flight
- Dec. 28, 1948** - 12 USAF pilots rescued from Greenland icecap by Douglas C-47 using rocket boosters
- Dec. 22, 1964** - First flight of the Lockheed SR-71, a very close "relative" to the A-12 (shown above) located in our Memorial Airpark





MEMBERSHIP

When It Comes to Southern Aviation History ... Just Ace It !

With a Southern Museum of Flight Membership !

Yes, I would like to become a member of the Southern Museum of Flight

Your membership will help the museum continue its work in preserving southern aviation history, restoring historic aircraft and inspiring students to excel in science and technology

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Aviation Ace \$500.00

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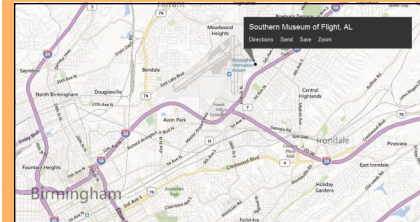
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www.southernmuseumofflight.org
A City of Birmingham Museum



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