

59 AAF FLYING TRAINING DETACHMENT (PRIMARY)

MISSION

LINEAGE

59 AAF Flying Training Detachment (Primary)

STATIONS

Thompson-Robbins Field, Helena, Arkansas

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

COMMANDERS

Capt John F. Miller

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Helena Aero Tech

Transformation such as only a tremendous, united effort could accomplish is strongly evidenced in the site now known as Thompson-Robbins Field, at Helena, Arkansas, home of the 59th AAF Flying Training Detachment.

Presenting a typical Southern rural picture of acres of blooming cotton fields in August, 1941, the scene along the giant Mississippi rapidly changed to one of whirring propellers, soaring planes and intense activity.

Covering a square mile of ground, Thompson-Robbins Field today represents a gratifying result of what the government and men of these United States can do when the standards for which they stand are threatened by foreign powers.

It stands also as a forceful, fitting tribute to those two daring young men of Helena, who made the supreme sacrifice in the service of the United States Air Forces and for whom the field was named for Lieutenants Jerome Pillow Thompson and Jack Stuart Robbins. The field was unofficially dedicated in their honor on December 6, 1941.

Lieutenant Thompson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Thompson, was born in Helena, February 20, 1909. He was the first Helena native to meet death as a member of the Air Forces of the United States Army. After attending Helena High School and Woodbury Forest, Virginia, Lieutenant Thompson entered the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, and graduated in 1931. For a brief time, he was active in the insurance business in Memphis, Tennessee, but the desire to fly finally dominated and he joined the Air Forces at Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1932.

Lieutenant Thompson trained at Randolph Field, San Antonio, TX and graduated from Kelly Field in February, 1933. He was then transferred to a Pursuit Squadron at Selfridge Field, Michigan, where he was fatally injured in a crash on June 17, 1933.

Lieutenant Robbins was born July 22, 1912, a son of Mr. and Mrs. A. Robbins, of Helena. He graduated from Helena High School in 1930 and continued through the University of Arkansas, Class of 1935. Always an enthusiastic follower of flying, his participation in an average routine life terminated after four years with his enlistment on June 28, 1939, in the United States Air Forces, at Hot Springs, Arkansas. It was his answer to the government's call for men having at least two years of college training for Air Forces service.

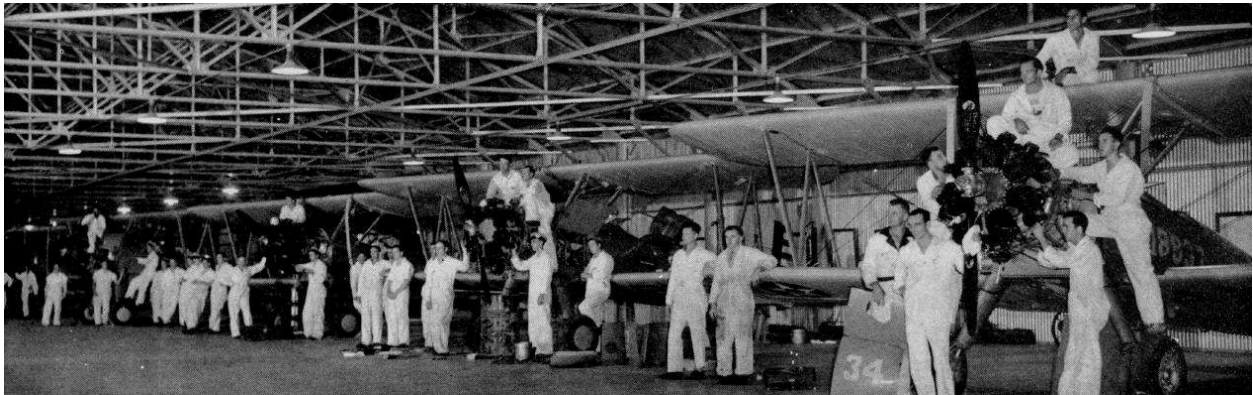
In March, 1940, Lieutenant Robbins graduated from Kelly Field, San Antonio. A short time later he was transferred to the Third Transport Squadron at Duncan Field, Texas. When a call was made for volunteers from among the higher qualified pilots for test flying, he again answered his country's call and entered this hazardous branch of the service.

On the morning of November 8, 1940, at 11 o'clock, Lieutenant Robbins met his death while flying a plane under experimental conditions.

Carrying the names of these two pilots, the 59th Army Air Forces Flying Training Detachment of

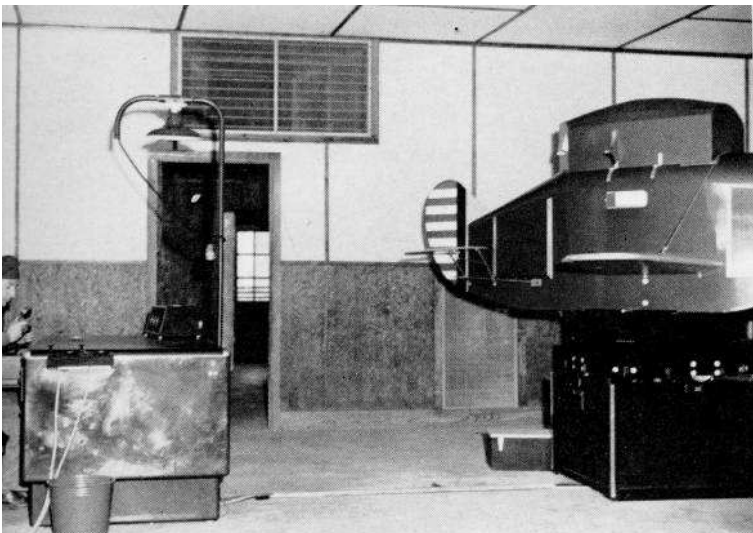
Thompson Robbins Field is really living the tradition of "Keep 'Em Flying." Primary flight training is the main function of the Post's staff of officers and enlisted men.

Activated on August 23, 1941, the first cadet class entered training on October 5, 1941, and since then one continuous stream of eager, well-trained cadets has been sent into the skies to prepare for actual combat with the enemy powers.



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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

Created: 19 Feb 2025

Updated:

Sources

Unit yearbook. *59th AAFFTD, Southeast Army Air Forces Training Center Yearbook,* Helena, AR, 1942.