

HQ PENNSYLVANIA AIR NATIONAL GUARD



LINEAGE

STATIONS

Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville, PA

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

**THE FOLLOWING HAS NOT BEEN FARMED OUT TO INDIVIDUAL AFOBS D2
UNCERTAIN LINEAGE OF THE 171ST AND 112TH GROUPS AND WINGS.**

**FIRST FIGURE OUT THE LINEAGE OF THE GROUPS AND WINGS THEN THE
FOLLOWING CAN BE DISEMINATED.**

The birth of the 112th Fighter Group began during World War II with the organization of the Hq 350th Fighter Group and attached squadrons: the 345th, 346th and 347th Fighter Squadrons on 1 July 1942. The 350th commanded by Major Richard P. Kocko was activated on 1 October 1942 and was assigned to the 12th Fighter Command which was located in Bushey Hall, England. Squadron Commanders were 345th Fighter Squadron Capt Kelly W. Mitchim; 346th Squadron Capt John C. Robertson and 347th Squadron Capt James G. Thorsen. On Dec 12, 1942 the 350th was transferred from the United Kingdom to North Africa. For the next 28 months, the unit distinguished itself in battle campaigns in North Africa, Sardinia, Corsica and Italy. Upon cessation of hostilities, the 350th was returned to Seymour-Johnson Field, North Carolina, and was inactivated on 7 November 1945.

During the beginning of 1946, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania received authorization to organize a number of units, both flying and non-flying, with missions to support the U.S. Army Air Force. The allotment to Pennsylvania included the following units:

Hq, 53rd Fighter Wing 112th Fighter Group 146th Fighter Squadron 147th Fighter Squadron 148th Fighter Squadron 212th Air Service Group 111 th Bomb Group (Light) 103rd Bomb Group (Light) 117th Bomb Squadron (Light) 211th Air Service Group 103rd Communications Squadron (Wing) 603rd Light Signal Construction Company 1902nd Aviation Engineering Battalion 553rd Air Force Band

The Pennsylvania Air National Guard began actual operations with the activation of the 103rd AAF Communications Squadron (Wing) at Harrisburg State Airport on 1 June 1946. Within the next six months, the HQ 53rd Fighter wing and eight units were activated as follows:

PITTSBURGH

146th Fighter Squadron
17Jun46 Utility Flight, 146th Fighter Sq
17Jun46 146th Weather station
26 Nov 46 Det A, 212th Air Service Group (Ftr)

READING

26 Nov 46 148th Fighter Sq (SE)
26 Nov 46 Utility Flight, 148th Fighter Sq
26 Nov 46 Det C, 212th Air Service Group (Ftr)
26 Nov 46 148th Weather Station

Federal recognition was first extended to the Hq. 53rd Fighter Wing and the 103rd AAF Communications Squadron (Wing) located at the Harrisburg State Airport on 17 Jan 1947. Colonel John W. Weltman, Army Air Forces Air Instructor, was assigned as the acting Wing Commander.

The following month, February 1947, Federal recognition was also extended to the 148th Fighter Sq, Utility Flight, 148th Fighter Sq, Det C, 212th Air Service Group (Ftr) and the 148th Weather Station. These units were located at the Reading Airport, Reading, Pennsylvania.

On 24 May 1946, the 350th Fighter Group, which was inactivated on 7 November 1945, was redesignated the 112th Fighter Group and was assigned to the 53rd Fighter Wing, Harrisburg State Airport, Pennsylvania. The Army Air Force Plan for the Air National Guard, approved by the War Department, assigned the 11th Air Force *n*re* responsibility for administration and supervision of the training of the 112th Fighter Group.

Although authority had been received to organize units in the Pittsburgh area effective 17 June 1947, the primary prerequisite for federal recognition, in addition to manpower, was adequate facilities to conduct training and to maintain and store equipment. Pittsburgh was not able to satisfy the Chief, National Guard Bureau with adequate facilities until 1948.

With the organization of the 146th Fighter Squadron, Lt Col William A. Shomo was appointed Commander. In September, Lt Col George J. Ola was assigned Air Instructor for all Pittsburgh units. With the assistance of Col Ola and Mr. Clifford Ball, President of the Aero Club of Pittsburgh, Col Shomo conducted an intensive recruiting campaign during the years '46 and '47. As officers and airmen signed on, regular training meetings were conducted at the Air Force Reserve facilities.

With no facilities at the Coraopolis Airport, it became necessary for the State of Pennsylvania with the assistance of the Aero Club of Pittsburgh and Mr. Clifford Ball, to negotiate a twenty-five year lease with the County of Allegheny for the construction of permanent facilities. A lease for 70 acres on the southeast portion of the Greater Pittsburgh Airport was completed in 1948.

On 1 April 1949, the first Federal Recognition Inspection was conducted at Pittsburgh. The 146th Fighter Squadron, with an assigned strength of ten officers and twelve airmen, had been participating in non-pay drills since 1946. Under the command of Major Albert B. Starr, the 146th Fighter Squadron was granted federal recognition retroactive to 18 June 1948.

Federal recognition was also extended to the Utility Flight, 146th Fighter Squadron and Detachment A, 212th Air Service Group on 22 April 1949. The remaining Pittsburgh units organized on 21 February 1949: Hq 112th Fighter Group, Hq 212th Air Service Group; 147th Fighter Squadron; 147th Weather Station; Detachment B, 212th Air Service Group and the 146th Weather Flight all were also extended federal recognition. With the inactivation of 11th Air Force, all administrative and training responsibilities were assigned to 1st Air Force. With federal recognition, the following commanders were assigned:

Hq 112th Ftr Gp Maj George F. Swearingen
147th Ftr Sq Maj Richard E. Grant
147th Wea Station Capt Frederick Sohoenweis
Hq 212 Air SvcGp Col Albert F. Heineman
Det B Capt Robert G. Sheets

Construction of a home to house the 112th Fighter Group and assigned units began in early 1949 prior to federal recognition. Top priority was given to the completion of the 146th hangar. Construction was also started on the Administration Building, Base Supply

Warehouse and Motor Vehicle Building. It was a first for the National Guard Bureau to construct a total installation at a cost of 2.5 million dollars with Guard Bureau funds.

The first UE aircraft, F-47N began to arrive. With the arrival of aircraft, the only activities conducted at the base were flying and maintenance. In the beginning, parking ramp and taxiways were the grassy areas surrounding the 70 acres. Tents, wooden shacks and truck units served as operations/ maintenance offices, storage areas, lunch rooms etc. Aircraft maintenance was accomplished under many handicaps imposed by the lack of facilities and equipment. With no hangars, most aircraft maintenance was done out in the open air in grassy parking areas which became mud puddles with every rain. When hangar space was available, aircraft maintenance was performed using the Air Force Reserve facilities.

During the early phases of operation, Unit Training Assemblies were held at the National Guard Armory at Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, which proved inadequate for efficient training of an organization the size of the Fighter Group and supporting units. Unit Training in those days consisted of two hours of "drill each Wednesday evening at the Armory in Coraopolis.

The first annual training for the Group and assigned units was conducted on 13-28 August 1949 at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. The fighter squadron arrived at Dover with twelve F-47N's, two T-6's, one C-47 and one B-26 aircraft. A Wing total of 1799 officers and airmen attended annual training. Of this total, 51 percent were World War II veterans. The highlight of the first encampment occurred on 25 August. On that day, the Honorable James H. Duff, Governor of Pennsylvania, visited the air base and inspected the troops and facilities. During the afternoon, before a mass formation on the flightline, Governor Duff presented the colors to the Pennsylvania units while F-47's and B-26's roared overhead in precise formation. Throughout the encampment, primary emphasis was placed on aircrew training and qualification. Flying was done from sunrise to sunset in order to permit the fullest possible use of available aircraft. Flying included air-to-air gunnery, air-to-ground dive bombing, rocketry, night and formation flying. All training was considered satisfactory for the units' first deployment.

The period between summer encampments was utilized to bring the units to full strength and to increase the proficiency of its members. Flying and ground training progressed as rapidly as possible with all personnel making the best of limited facilities even to the point of mechanics bringing their own tools from home to effect the maintenance of the aircraft. Flying hours steadily increased and various types of flying training were introduced.

In February 1950, the Pittsburgh units underwent their first Annual Federal Inspection resulting in an overall Satisfactory rating.

During the period 12-26 August, all Pittsburgh units returned to Dover AFB, Delaware, for their second annual encampment. In addition, all Pennsylvania units of the 53rd Fighter Wing also were in attendance. The total strength of 1891 officers and airmen completed another successful annual training period.

On November 1950, the 53rd Fighter Wing was redesignated the 112th Fighter Wing. Hq

112th Maintenance and Support Group was extended federal recognition and commanded by Col Maurice V. Salada. The 112th Medical Group was extended federal recognition and commanded by Major James B. Medlock.

147th ANG Hangars at Greater Pittsburgh Airport with F-51H aircraft parked on ramp.

146th hangar was completed and occupied to a limited degree for office, training and storage space, along with maintenance facilities. - was at this time that all training which was being conducted at the Coraopolis Armory would be relocated to Greater Pittsburgh Airport. This allowed all the personnel of the 112th Fighter Group to meet at the same time. This in itself, was a marked improvement in training. With personnel now working around aircraft, whether mechanics, clerks, cooks or supply personnel, all now had a sense of belonging to an air unit and all could feel a sense of pride every time the aircraft would taxi out to complete a mission.

During the Fall of 1950, the 148th Fighter Squadron converted to the F-51 Mustang fighter. This was the Wing's first change in mission aircraft. The second annual Federal Inspection was conducted and all units again received a "Satisfactory."

On 1 February 1951, the 148th Fighter Squadron was relieved from assignment to the 112th

Fighter Group, and was reassigned to the 113th Fighter Group and ordered into active federal service. The unit, although stationed at Dover AFB, Delaware, throughout its active duty, had many assigned pilots and other personnel who saw action in Korea. With the loss of the 148th, the Group gained the 104th Fighter Squadron, Maryland ANG. In addition, three units: 112th Maintenance, 112th Supply and 112th Motor Vehicle Squadrons, were activated and granted federal recognition.

In June 1951 the 146th and 147th Fighter Squadron converted Unit Equipped aircraft from the F-47N to the sleek F-51H Mustang. The unit mission, defense of eastern US, remained the same. The new aircraft was considered one of the swiftest of all World War II aircraft.

With the third annual field training encampment scheduled for 11-25 August, much work was necessary to prepare both pilots and maintenance personnel to satisfactorily perform with the newly-assigned aircraft. The Pittsburgh based units arrived at a new permanent training site, Spaatz Field, Reading, Pa., with their new F-51's, T-6's, and C-47's. All training during this period was scheduled to conform to Continental Air Command (CONAC) Training Directives. Flying training was concentrated on aerial gunnery being fired at the Ocean City Range, and Ground Controlled Interceptor missions. A total of 44 aircraft were stationed at Spaatz Field — thirty-three F-51H's; four C-47's and seven T-6G's. With the newly assigned F-51's, the 146th flew 370 hours and the 147th flew 395 hours.

This encampment was the first opportunity for the units to function with other elements of the 112th Fighter Wing under the new Wing Base Plan. Due to non-availability of cargo aircraft, all supplies and equipment had to be transported to the field training site by organic motor vehicles

In order to prepare the training site for the arrival of the main body, it was necessary for an advanced detachment to depart home station on 8 August. All necessary equipment, ground communications, organizational supplies, spare parts and even kitchen equipment, was transported by military convoy.

Key personnel were flown in by C-47 early on the first day of field training. This included crew chiefs to handle and park aircraft on arrival, air police, fire fighters and food service personnel. Attendance was excellent with 93 percent of assigned personnel present.

Transition flying was given high priority throughout the encampment, as a large number of pilots in both squadrons had not completed the prescribed checkout course for the F-51.

An Instrument School was also conducted and the T-6G's of both squadrons were pooled together, with both 146th and 147th furnishing experienced instructor pilots. This course completion was necessary for all new pilots prior to advancing onto further training in the F-51.

No flying accidents were encountered during the training encampment and all concerned were well-pleased with the quality and quantity of flying training accomplished.

During the month of December, three buildings and access roads were made available. The Supply Warehouse was being prepared for occupancy by both base and unit supply activities. Unit supply also began moving from its location at the Coraopolis Armory. All transfer of property and equipment was completed within thirty days.

The inflammable Storage Warehouse and the Motor Vehicle Repair Building were released and in use. The christening of the motor pool was celebrated by the tearing down of the wooden shack which was called home for three years.

Construction of the second hangar and the additional aircraft ramp parking space, which was now underway, would eliminate the space problem.

Once again, it was time to be thinking about the units' fourth annual encampment scheduled to be held at Spaatz Field, Reading, PA during the period 16-30 August. The unit was able to satisfactorily accomplish the training required by CONAC. This encampment marked the first time that all units of the wing operated with the same type aircraft, the F-51H. This encampment also proved to be the most productive. The 146th and 147th flew a total of 1069 flying hours and consumed 65,548 gallons of aviation fuel. Units fired a total of 15,700 rounds of ammunition.

On 1 October, the 112th Fighter Group and attached squadrons, the 146th and 147th, was redesignated Fighter Interceptor Group and Squadrons, with no change in mission. This action was premature and was brought about by a mix-up in signals. On 1 December, all units were again redesignated Fighter-Bomber. The 104th Fighter Squadron was also redesignated Fighter-Bomber and was relieved from assignment to the 112th Fighter Bomber Group effective 1 January 1953.

Before the close of the year, the second hangar had been completed and was in use. At the same time, a section for an aircraft wash ramp had been completed adding an additional 20,000 feet of paved ramp space.

As of 31 December, a total of 34 of the 63 authorized aircraft had been received for Pittsburgh units. Composition was twenty-five F-51H's, two C-46's and three C-47's and four T-6G's. The beginning of 1953 saw the Pittsburgh-based fighter units depart for a warmer climate and better flying weather. The redesignation of the 146th and 147th from Interceptor to Bomber required all aircrew members to now become proficient in use of bombs. The training conducted at Eglin AFB, Florida, in February 1953, included the use of bombs, rockets and .50 calibre ammunition for both air-to-air and air-to-ground firing. Upon completion of training, both units returned to Pittsburgh. A fourth Annual Federal Inspection was conducted and again yielded an overall "Sat."

With a satisfactory inspection completed the units prepared for another important event. All buildings and grounds completed and accepted, the Group readied itself for the official dedication of its facilities. The facilities consisted of two hangars capable of housing 32 aircraft, with additional space for 62 shops, offices and classrooms. Surrounding the hangars were 500,000 square feet of aircraft parking area. Also set to be dedicated was the new Administration Building containing 16,000 square feet and capable of housing four groups: the 112th Fighter Group, 112th Air Base Group, 112th Maintenance and Supply Group and the 112th Medical Group. Base Supply Warehouse with 16,700 square feet of floor area, loading dock and office space; and the Motor Maintenance Building consisting of three repair bays: paint, service, and greasing bay; a battery room, parts room and offices were all finally in readiness.

Conversion to the jet age began in November, 1953, with the arrival of one T-33A for each unit. Since none of the assigned pilots or mechanics had any previous jet fighter experience, everyone started from ground zero, but with great enthusiasm.

A Mobile Training Detachment (MTD) provided the specified ground school. A C-11A procedures trainer was utilized for pilot introduction to the T-33. Each unit had one Air Advisor assigned who was hastily qualified as an Instructor Pilot. He, in turn, checked out several of the unit's most experienced pilots. Four additional T-33s were assigned and were fully utilized by this small cadre of future instructors to gain the necessary skills.

In the spring of 1954, unit personnel were overjoyed upon the arrival of the first eight F-86A's, which were to have replaced the F-51. The F-86's were flown for only a four month period, after which the unit aircraft assignment was changed again.

The sixth annual field training deployment was to Spaatz Field in August, 1954. Due to the short runways, the T-33's and F-86's were not utilized for training during the encampment. However, these aircraft were flown into Reading to take part in the Governor's Day Fly-By. The intrepid pilots did put on a dazzling display of short runway landing techniques. Maximum braking was the order of the day. Fortunately, when the smoke dissipated, all the tires were still

intact.

All tactical flying training was concentrated on air-to-air gunnery qualification. All three squadrons attained the highest scores recorded to date. Several pilots fired 80 percent scores at low altitude and as high as 65 percent on highs, a most remarkable accomplishment. In the end, the 146th Fighter Squadron was awarded the Adjutants General Trophy. Captain Nick Bereschak, 148th, First Lieutenant Ed Reybein, 147th and First Lieutenant Jack Love, 147th, were awarded first, second and third place Top Guns. The 147th was the recipient of the Year Round Flying Safety Award.

Upon completion of the summer camp, both units continued their jet trainer upgrade program. It was at this time that the unit was officially informed of the impending assignment of the F-84F. In September, the first F-84F arrived.

Again, ground training commenced for both pilots and maintenance personnel. Additional aircraft were flown in from SAC bases and several from the Republic Plant in Long Island, NY. The 84's were the early model F, with flying characteristics completely foreign to conventional fighter pilots. Thus there was much to learn, usually the hard way.

By the spring of 1955, good progress had been made. Most pilots had completed the initial checkout and were into upgrade training. It must be remembered that, in this time period, the pilots were not being paid for flying, only for UTA's. It was also during this era when the ANG started to receive pilot training spaces from the Air Force. Both units took advantage of this source of young pilots being trained in a total jet flying environment.

In July 1955, the unit mission was officially changed to Fighter Interceptor and placed under the 26th Air Division, Air Defense Command, for operational control of training. Operating with the ADC Ground Control Stations and air-to-air gunnery training was primary.

That summer, the unit moved to Hancock Field, NY, for fifteen days of field training with attendance at 94 percent. The goal of completing F-84F transition for all assigned aircrews was achieved. Aerial gunnery training was also conducted for those who had accumulated sufficient flying experience to participate. The scores were not earth-shaking, but we were learning to operate under new conditions.

During September, 1955, the unit entered a four-man team into the ANG Gunnery Meet at Boise, Idaho. The team did manage to outscore trie F-84F opponents, but attracted little attention with the scores. It was a good learning experience for all team members. An Annual Federal Inspection was conducted by CONAC with satisfactory results.

In 1956 the 112th Wing Headquarters was moved from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh in order to function more effectively, being located with its mission and support units.

The 1956 annual training at Syracuse, NY, was conducted with 95 percent of assigned personnel present for duty. Aerial gunnery qualification was the center of attraction. Bad weather

cancelled the firing range 40 percent of the scheduled time. Despite these conditions, a high percentage of the pilots did requalify in lows and highs. Maintenance pulled out all the stops with an 89 percent in-commission rate.

unit training office conducted a very successful basic training course during the camp. Ho Air Force basic training spaces were available, so the unit was required to provide in--oose basic training, including small arms ouaJification. They were the first up in the morning and the last to get off duty. Again, the unit successfully passed CONAC's Annual Federal inspection.

The pilot trainees were now arriving back from Air Force flying schools, but had not received any tactical training due to budget limitations. This now presented a training program of unusual proportions, for which the unit was not prepared. Winter weather and runway conditions with only 7000 feet of runway did not compare to the flying school's environment of warm weather and dry runways 10,000 feet long. The unit did manage to check these young pilots out, but not completely without mishap.

December 1957, the Base activity increased ove its normal pace preparing for the pending dual conversion. The 146's transition the F-86L was of even greater proportions an its teething experience into jet aircraft. The ilots were being introduced into the all-weather eration with an afterburning engine, con-oiled by the magic of an Integrated Electronic uel Control (IEC) system, and radar-equipped re control system, capable of releasing twenty-ur rockets at an unseen target. To accomplish of that on instruments was mind-boggling to e day fighter pilot. There was an immediate noticeable interest in instrument flying procedures.

There were mixed feelings among the pilots concerning the move from the F-84F to the F-86L. The F-86, being equipped with leading edge slats, was a very stable instrument aircraft with lower takeoff and landing speeds: a welcome safety factor after operating the 84 at higher pattern speeds. The F-86's fuel consumption rate was significantly higher with the afterburner, and required the pilot to be constantly aware of his navigation position and fuel state. The mechanics and specialists were quick to recognize that they, too, had a long row to hoe. The most glaring challenge in the maintenance field was the fire control system and the rather complicated engine fuel control.

The overall conversion was well supported by higher headquarters. An Air Force Field Training Detachment (FTD) was provided in a timely manner. Well-qualified technical representatives of the manufacturer were in place early on to assist in engine and radar training for ground and aircrews. Additional operating space was sorely needed to accommodate new functions; however, funding was not available. Self-help projects effectively modified the existing facilities, even though some areas were extremely confined. The ADC 42nd Fighter Group stationed on base was inactivated concurrent with our conversion. Most of their aircraft and support equipment was merely moved across the runways to the ANG area. The Air Force Reserve moved into the 42nd area with cargo aircraft and had no requirements for several buildings which were made available to the ANG. By

lease arrangement, the Guard had the sole use of the simulator, rocket storage and test building, and the four alert hangars. Daily commuting around the airport perimeter was an inconvenience; however, all unit functions could now properly support the mission.

Two highly experienced F-86L Instructor Pilots were detached from the 42nd for a ninety-day period. Initial maintenance cross-training was also provided by 42nd maintenance personnel. The 146th pilot transition was in progress by mid-December. The maintenance guys were going full bore in their learning process. However, special note must be made of two specific areas, i.e. radar and engine. The total base experience with electronics at that time would barely fill a thimble. It consisted of some civilian night courses, and the experience gained by the rather simple radar ranging device for the F-84F gun-sight. Sgt Matthew Blatnik, currently a member of the 171st, was then the chief of the FTD radar section. Off-base courses were not available, so he conducted a class of Guardsmen interested in cross-training to the electronics field. Even though this was very time-consuming, they all persevered, with most of the personnel who completed the course forming the backbone of the radar section.

The engine specialists, and especially the IEC troops, followed a similar routine. An engine test stand was required to run and trim the engine, but funding was not in sight. Undeterred, the engine guys designed and constructed a portable engine test stand by locally fabricating and mounting an engine stand with an enclosed control cab on a forty-foot flat-bed trailer. Their device had all the capabilities of a fixed Air Force test stand, with the additional dimension of being portable, to support annual training deployments. This was a first. One more noteworthy item which illustrated individual initiative was the modification of the newly acquired F-86D simulator to that of the L model cockpit configuration. ADC had recently completed an extensive cockpit modification of all D models. This mod had rearranged the instrumentation, as well as added several new gauges and controls. To have pilots practice in an obsolete cockpit configuration, under simulated conditions designed to improve pilot familiarization, defeated the original purpose of simulator training and was counterproductive. Funding for upgrading the equipment was out of the question. Therefore, the ANG simulator troops, assisted by the civilian tech rep, designed a rewiring scheme, and, with thirty dollars for electronic parts, modified the simulator to the L configuration exactly duplicating factory-modified equipment.

Meanwhile, the 147th was busy ferrying the original F-84's to the Arizona storage area, and enjoying a more simple checkout program in their newer F-84F's. The appearance of the later model was similar to the "split tail"; however, there the similarities ended. Increased engine

Normally, two vital radio calls remain: one at twenty seconds, and one at ten seconds before the rockets are released. On the attacker's twenty second call, the target pilot automatically responds with a "Stand By," carefully determining if the F-86L is locked onto the proper target. On the ten second call, the target pilot confirms a good pass by giving the "Clear to Fire," or, if a questionable pass, the target pilot calls "Heads Up," meaning fly through on a dry pass.

In this instance, the target pilot felt the F-86L was going to fire on the Delmar, and gave

the "Clear to Fire" call. The target pilot had misjudged. Two of the six rockets fired hit the T-33, one passing through a tip tank setting it on fire, and the other passing through the engine compartment. Fast reaction on the part of the target pilot by releasing the tip tank, removed the immediate threat of fire. The rocket passing through the engine compartment had severed an oil line. Ingested oil in the engine introduced heavy dark smoke into the cockpit. Again, the target pilot reacted properly by blowing his canopy away from the aircraft and descending to a lower altitude. All aircraft safely returned to Hancock Field. The Group Commander now had one day to sort out all the facts and report same to the Commander of Air Defense Command. There is no bigger loser.

In the Fall of 1960, the 146th was overwhelmed with the good news that the F-102 Delta Dagger was to be the next aircraft. After working in the ADC mission area for three years, the unit was ready, and certainly capable of, taking on the Deuce. It was indeed heart-warming to know that this new equipment would allow the unit to finally play the game with the same rules as others.

Unfortunately, the 147th was destined for other things not yet revealed. The 147th continued the alert commitment until 1 May 1961.

Seven ANG squadrons converted to the F-102 in 1960. In October, four pilots and sixteen maintenance personnel were hosted by the Texas ANG's 149th Fighter Group at Kelly Field to commence familiarization training in the Deuce. The 149th had been selected by the National Guard Bureau to assist three converting units in their initial training. Selected maintenance supervisors worked with their Texas counterparts for six weeks. The pilots completed the Field Training Detachment (FTD) Course requirements as well as F-102 simulator training, followed by eight instructional flights in the F and TF-102. In November, with twelve hours of F-102 time under their belts, the four pilots flew four Deuces back to home station. This was the meager beginning of fourteen very successful years with this fine aircraft.

An Air Force FTD was in place and operating during December. Aircraft, engine, fire control and missile factory representatives were assigned and remained with the unit until all training was completed.

To our amazement, three new buildings were funded for immediate construction. A Jet Engine Shop, Missile Calibration and a Missile Maintenance Building were completed within a year's time. These welcome additions, plus several self-help construction projects, adequately supported the mission.

The 146th, being the last of the ANG units to enter the conversion, was found wanting in both aircraft and its support equipment. A severe shortage of support equipment was generated when seven ANG units were equipped with the assets of five Air Force squadrons. Several years passed before all critical equipment shortages were satisfied. The aircraft received were in need of extensive modifications and alterations to the fire control systems before they could become fully operational.

In spite of these handicaps, unit personnel were just pleased to be equipped with a weapons system that was capable of performing the mission and operationally compatible with the SAGE system. Collectively, we set out to prove the ANG worthy of the ADC mission.

The first full year operating the aircraft was 1961, and was largely devoted to upgrade training and establishing operating procedures tailored to ADC standards. The last aircraft arrived in March. The NGB funded numerous depot level aircraft modifications including a paint program greatly enhancing the appearance of the fleet. No F-102 simulator was available and therefore all pilots were required to complete their initial and refresher training at Air Force simulators in Wisconsin and North Carolina, a time-consuming and expensive exercise. This was also the first year of annual training being conducted at home station.

On 15 May 1961, all ANG units disengaged from all official activities with Continental Air Command and now were gained by specific major commands. This was a progressive and positive step. Air Defense Command (ADC) now was responsible for supervising the training of the 112th and also for inspecting the unit for proper compliance with their standards. We now had a sponsor with a genuine interest in the welfare of the unit's operational status.

In August, the first inspection by ADC was satisfactorily completed and the 146th again started the runway alert program armed only with the 2.75 inch rockets. Suitable missile storage space, plus late arrival of missile checkout equipment, delayed the unit missile training phase; therefore, live missile loading was temporarily postponed. The unit was reported operationally ready on 1 September 1961.

The year 1962 was one of several extremely busy years for unit activities and recognized accomplishments. In April, the 146th was one of two ANG units to receive the USAF Flying Safety Award for operating over two years without an aircraft accident. Prime factors considered were runway length, lack of runway overruns, lack of runway barriers, high density air traffic and adverse winter operating conditions. In May, the ADC Tactical Evaluation Team, composed of highly experienced operation and maintenance personnel, performed a three-day flying evaluation. This team of experts worked directly for the Commander, ADC, personally reporting the results of each visit upon its return to Headquarters. The team was concerned only with the unit's ability to perform its wartime mission, i.e. are the aircraft properly prepared, and can the pilots deliver the armament? No nonsense and no gimmies. Every hack had to be earned. We entered into the contest with some apprehension and for good reason. The team's reputation for pass/fail rate was well known; low on the pass and high on the fail. After all the scores were recorded, we had passed by a comfortable margin and, in fact, were on record as the first

11 September, a twenty-six man team deployed to Tyndall AFB, Florida, to compete in the Ricks Trophy Event. The 1962 Ricks, a five day event, pitted the seven ANG F-102 units in a mini-William Tell competition designed and controlled by ADC. The first competitive event required all entrants to depart Mobile, Alabama, and fly an established navigation course monitored by GCI radars with assigned approach times at Tyndall. Points were deducted for each second early or late as determined by the radar controllers. Three missile-firing missions and weapons loading exercises rounded out the activity. Even though high scores were achieved, no drones were destroyed.

At this stage, the unit had not, as yet, developed some of the finer points put to good use in the William Tell shoot-off. The 112th was declared the 1962 Ricks winner with a final score of 88 percent, five percentage points ahead of number two.

October brought another high honor to the 112th. Air Defense Command had, over the

asked to research the possibility of modifying the L simulator to an F-102 configuration. After much research and hand-wringing, a feasible plan was drawn up. Not only was the cockpit entirely different, but flying characteristics, systems operation and fire control all differed considerably. A wrecked Deuce was located in a Navy salvage yard. Unit personnel separated the cockpit from the fuselage and returned it to Pittsburgh.

After a year's labor by one tech rep and three simulator personnel, the trainer was being used to complete emergency procedures and navigational problems. Six months later, the fire control system was modified to conform to the F-102 system. The simulator was now being fully utilized to fulfill pilot training requirements at home station. Total expenditure for material was \$7400, compared with the cost of an F-102 simulator of \$456,500. Favorable cost figures were certainly welcome. However, the total contribution to the unit's operational readiness and safety by the outstanding ingenuity and hard work of a handful of electronic wizards, will never be forgotten by those fortunate enough to fly their final product. It flew more like an aircraft than a simulator.

During 1963, a significant portion of the unit's resources and efforts were devoted toward preparation for the USAF Weapons Meet: William Tell '63. In spite of this additional workload, normal flying training, ground training and the alert commitment continued. Annual field training was conducted at home station. > long-term fire control system evaluation was implemented early in the year. It was designed to improve radar lock-on ranges and system reliability with a concurrent increase in the missile rail program. Each of the aircraft's six missile rails was required by Air Force standards to be successfully tested every 45-day period in order for the aircraft to be reported operationally ready. Locally, the time period was reduced to 30 days in an attempt to improve reliability. This could only be sustained by close scheduling and full cooperation between operations and maintenance.

Missile evaluators were loaded on all training sorties, and it was the pilot's responsibility to find a suitable target to make a dry run. Boats on Lake Erie were prime targets in the event scheduled airborne targets aborted. A noticeable improvement in range and reliability was achieved after the six month evaluation. Lessons learned from this experience remained with the unit throughout the next decade in the Deuce. After aceing the weapons meet, the unit ended the year by successfully completing the inevitable annual inspection by ADC.

The competition featured the tactical air-to-ground mission and the air defense air-to-air environment on alternate years. William Tell 1963, conducted at Tyndall AFB, Florida from 3-14 October, consisted of fourteen air defense teams, thirteen Air Force units and one Air National Guard unit flying F-101, F-102, and F-106 aircraft. Each flying unit present had earned the right to compete in William Tell by scoring highest in regional events.

In March 1963, the 112th was selected to represent the Air National Guard on the basis of winning the 1962 Ricks Trophy Event, outscoring all other ANG F-102 units in a live firing exercise closely resembling William Tell.

In the Spring of 1964, the 112th Air Defense Wing and the 112th Air Defense Group received notification that the Secretary of the Air Force had approved the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for exceptionally meritorious service in support of military operations from March 1962 to October 1963. The awards were presented by Lt General John Ryan to a group of sharp-looking and very proud Pennsylvania Guardsmen. The ceremony was well attended by Air Force, ADC, NGB and State Headquarters representatives, as well as local dignitaries. With the fine musical support of the 553rd ANG Band, and the experience of recent practice sessions, the troops marched by the reviewing stand with eyes right and dressed down like West Pointers. It was another super effort. Again, this was the first time an Air National Guard unit, based upon its own merits, had won the award.

Ironically, the day immediately following the AFOUA ceremony was faced with mixed emotions and even sadness. Because there was a decrease in the number of air defense units, the 112th ADW Headquarters was deactivated. Again, because of an increase in air transport requirements, the 171st Air Transport Wing was activated the day after. All air defense-oriented troops now were tasked with a mission and attitudinal change; the latter being the most challenging. The 112th Air Defense Group, was reassigned to an out-of-state wing headquarters.

The ADC ORI Inspection Team descended upon the 112th Group in September, performing its normal testing of the unit. The unit sustained the test with a Satisfactory rating. Although the results were strong, the final score was evidence that higher ratings were difficult to achieve.

The next year, 1965, was an active flying year beginning with the two backup alert aircraft on 15 minute status. Night flying was in progress every night except Sunday. In fact, documented unit flying records indicate that the 112th had exceeded all other ANG F-102 units' average monthly flying hours from 1962 through 1967. An annual compliance inspection was satisfactorily completed to end the year's activities.

During 1966, the 112th had to feel wanted if the number of inspections and evaluations was the criterion thereof. The annual general inspection was completed in late May. One week later, the Air Defense Command initiated the Standardization/Evaluation inspections designed to take a deep look at how well Operations, Maintenance, Air Munitions and Supply functioned in support

Evaluations in 1967 consisted of a General Inspection, Weapons Inspections and another ORI, all Satisfactory. A two-week missile firing deployment was now becoming an annual migration. The year was closed out by a second ADC "A" Award presentation in December. Lt General Arthur C. Agan, Jr., Commander, ADC, and a fine fighter pilot as well, presented the award to Col Edward J. Bollen, 112th Fighter Group Commander. The

award ceremonies, conducted inside the 112th hangar, were indeed impressive. The reviewing stand was filled with military and civilian dignitaries. The troops were especially appreciative of the inside arrangements since this negated the requirement of passing in review.

After six years of performing its fifteen-day annual training at home station, the 112th was scheduled to deploy the aircraft and the entire unit to Otis AFB, Massachusetts, for camp in 1968. Being able to work as a unit temporarily away from the family influence, was a definite plus in rebuilding the camaraderie previously enjoyed during summer encampments. The move to Otis also provided an excellent opportunity to practice low altitude interceptor training out over the ocean at altitudes impossible to safely fly over the hilly terrain around home station. The physical moves to and from camp were costly. However, the new training environment produced such positive results that they outweighed the additional moving expense. The 112th was allowed to return to Otis for five more encampments.

The year was rounded out by a Tyndall shoot competition lasting two weeks, plus three major ADC inspections including an ORI. The 112th did well throughout, but had to be satisfied without the highest rating for a change with two exceptions. Both radar and munitions sections did manage Outstandings for their specific functions.

For a change of pace, and to get away from flying around the flag pole, several 112th pilots volunteered and flew four F-102's (after extensive maintenance) from an Air Force depot to Turkey via the North Atlantic route. This "Turkey Trot" whetted the 112th appetite for more diversified flying, and therefore, during the summer of 1969, the unit ferried twenty-one F-102's from Holland to the States.

During the Spring of 1970, the 112th supported an ADC Test Project of the F-102 fire control system. Many test modifications to the system were made by the radar people, all over and above their normal workload. More than 1000 missile rail evaluations were conducted in a ninety-day period. To give this effort better perspective, a unit normally is required to evaluate this same number in the span of one year. The overall result was improved reliability of an aging system.

Coronet East 80 was the official title for a mission developed by the 112th Fighter Group's commander, Colonel Edward J. Bollen, and his staff, to assist the United States Air Force in the ferrying of nineteen F-102's and two TF-102's from the 32nd Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Soesterberg AB, Netherlands, to Maine's 101st Fighter Group located at Bangor, Maine.

The 112th Fighter Group proposed and accepted complete operational responsibility for the Trans-Atlantic mission under the control of the 4440th Aircraft Delivery Group (ADG). The 112th Fighter Group's proposal was approved by Headquarters in early June 1969.

Under the agreement, the 112th Fighter Group provided qualified aircrews, assisted by Florida, Washington, Montana, Minnesota and Vermont ANG units. It also provided enroute maintenance personnel, parts, and overall mission coordination. The 171st Aeromedical

Airlift Group provided two C-121 crews to airlift all personnel and equipment.

The 4440th ADG personnel provided the necessary flight planning, weather support and liaison at each enroute base. This Group also coordinated for ADC EC-121 aircraft to be on station at specific points on each overwater leg to provide airborne radar control for navigation purposes. Air Sea Rescue Service C-130 "Duckbutts" were also positioned along the route to provide timely rescue in the frigid water areas. The 4440th maintained operational control throughout with the ultimate authority to call the 'go' or 'no go' for each flight.

After staging at Greater Pitt, the Deuce aircrews, support personnel and equipment departed via the 171st AAG C-121 on 29 June 1969. Following one Remain Overnight (RON) at Goose Bay AB, Labrador, and fourteen hours of flying, the personnel arrived at Soesterberg on 30 June 1969.

The next day, while the aircrews received briefings on USAF and Trans-Atlantic procedures, the support personnel departed by C-121 to their enroute support bases — Lossiemouth, Scotland, and Keflavik, Iceland.

On 2 July, the first group of twelve F-102's departed Soesterberg. The first leg was to Lossiemouth, Scotland, where they were met by 112th maintenance personnel. After refueling and donning anti-exposure suits, the pilots departed for Keflavik, Iceland, for their first RON.

A second C-121 departed Greater Pittsburgh on 2 July with eight maintenance personnel and additional parts. Four men were positioned at Goose Bay and the remaining four were positioned at Sondrestrom, Greenland, to await the arrival of the F-102's on the second leg of their journey.

Once the enroute support teams were in place, eleven of the original F-102's departed Keflavik for Sondrestrom, Greenland, on 3 July. Upon arrival at Sondrestrom, all aircraft were immediately serviced and the flight continued on the longest leg of the trip to Goose Bay, arriving that afternoon for their second RON.

Bangor ANG received delivery of their first F-102's on 4 July 1969. The final group of seven F-102's and two TF's departed Europe on 3 July. Six aircraft continued to Keflavik from Lossiemouth, while three remained for repairs. The second wave of six, plus one aircraft of the initial group, arrived at Goose Bay on 4 July. Four were delivered to Bangor the following day, while three aircraft assigned to other ANG units continued to their new bases at Duluth, Minnesota; Great Falls, Montana; and Spokane, Washington. Repairs and weather delayed the delivery of the last three aircraft.

Coronet East 80 was completed on 9 July with the final three aircraft delivered to the 101st Fighter Group at Bangor, Maine.

Otis annual training was devoted to over-water low altitude intercepts and off-duty sorties

reconnoitering the summer resort area. Both reported good hack rates.

It was business as usual regarding inspection visits. A solid ORI was completed, as well as the two-week missile deployment to Tyndall AFB.

In early 1971, the 112th was informed of the approval for the awarding of the second Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the period of July 1968 to June 1970. Six major accomplishments were enumerated as the basis for the award: one for having completed over seven years of accident-free operations involving more than 41,000 flying hours in single-engine jet fighter aircraft. This was the best F-102 safety record to date.

During May, the 112th deployed five aircraft and thirty-three personnel to San Juan, Puerto Rico, to perform a temporary runway alert commitment. Thirty-five sorties and 266 intercepts were completed.

In rapid succession, the unit deployed to Otis for two weeks, returning in September to face the ever-present ORI Team, followed by missile firing at Tyndall, with barely enough time in-between to cycle their laundry.

Even the 112th Civil Engineering Flight ventured out by deploying forty-one "Prime Beef" personnel to McClellan AFB. While there, they constructed an addition to the flight line fire station.

One additional, and most deserved citation, was presented to the 112th. Air Defense Command presented a special Flight Safety Award to recognize the achievement of operating single-engine jet aircraft accident-free for a period of eight years while flying 52,254 hours. This surpassed all other active and ANG units in ADC. The citation noted: "This outstanding flying record was achieved while operating under unusually inclement weather and at night; in high density traffic areas, and without the usual airfield safety facilities afforded regular Air Force units."

For the unit, 1972 was a relatively quiet year. Personnel were disappointed at having to perform their fifteen days annual training at home station due to the closure of Otis for training. However, those with wanderlust had the chance to participate in several deployments to Langley AFB, Virginia, and Tyndall AFB, Florida. As usual, the IG team did not disappoint anyone: they arrived on time and did their thing. So did the 112th.

The next year, 1973, was a repeat of the previous year. The sole exception was that the unit's two week training at Otis was again a reality.

The last year with the F-102 and the ADC mission was 1974. It was one of turmoil and uncertainty. On 4 Feb 1974, the Secretary of Defense announced a planned reduction in Air Defense Command fighter units. The 112th was one of twenty-seven regular and ANG units scheduled

for inactivation in the summer of the year. Fortunately, Congress reversed the decision to inactivate, and supported the alternative: re-equipping and re-training the unit in a Tactical

Air Command mission. The final outcome was not known until later in the year.

In the interim, ORI time rolled around. In spite of its handicap of uncertainty about its status, the unit tore into the exercise as always. This time the sun was not shining on the 112th. After the first wave of aircraft had landed, in the middle of the maintenance turnaround, a severe and unrelenting rainstorm forced water into the armament bays and cockpits causing a maintenance nightmare. Valiant efforts were made by maintenance guys to dry out the components and ready the aircraft for the pilots to meet specified scramble times. Not all were successful. Several aircraft were scrambled but forced to abort because of inoperative systems. The minimum required number of successful intercepts was missed by one, which, according to the rules, automatically caused the rating to slip below Satisfactory. It was a very sad day for all. Even the ORI Team members were dejected, almost sympathetic, but powerless to change the final count.

Time is the best remedy for adversity. The 112th continued on with the mission by deploying to Otis for the last time. They rebounded quickly with an invitation to compete one more time in William Tell 1974. The last and best shot in the arm was the confirmation of a mission change to the A-7D Corsair.

Preparations for William Tell 1974 were not as elaborate as in 1963. The time available from notification as a participant to the actual shoot-off was relatively short. Lessons learned in earlier competitions were incorporated in the planning and preparation stage. A two-week practice exercise was conducted off the base at Atlantic City to take advantage of the over-water range. One week later, five aircraft, supported by a thirty-man maintenance team, arrived at Tyn-dall. Two drones were destroyed by the team with several high-scoring near-misses. The team finished a respectable second place in the F-102 category.

On 31 December 1974, after sixteen years, the 112th ended the 24-hour alert commitment to ADC.

In retrospect, every individual who has had the privilege of serving with the 112th during its service in the Air Defense Command mission, can have a deep, satisfying pride in himself and his peers. It is safe to say, without any equivocation, that no other ANG unit enjoyed as many extraordinary unit achievements in the same time span.

The 147th FIS continued operating the F-86L with some apprehension as to its future while the 146th was converting to the F-102. Shocking news filtered on to the base in the Spring of 1961. The 147th was scheduled to move to an aeromedical transport mission and to be equipped with the C-119J "Flying Boxcar."

The initial reaction by many of the interceptor pilots was one of gloom and doom. Several requested transfers to the 146th and continued in the ADC mission. A number of pilots actually terminated their affiliation with the unit on the basis that the added time required to qualify as a multi-engine pilot would excessively conflict with their civilian careers. Certainly a most difficult decision. However, after a period of reflection, the majority of the pilots cinched up the saddle and attacked this new challenge with the same zeal exhibited entering the jet age.

The conversion training program was rather simple and straightforward. Mobile Training Detachments for the C-119 were non-existent. The initial cadre of three pilots and three aircraft mechanics, now designated Flight Mechanics, attended ground training and simulator courses with the ANG's 167th ATS at Martinsburg, W VA. Aircrew checkout instruction was provided by the 140th ATS at Olmsted AFB, PA. The aircraft maintenance personnel were provided three weeks of familiarization training working with 140th maintenance people. Upon completion of eight transition flights at Olmsted, this handful of aircrews ferried the original eight aircraft to Pittsburgh. In the meantime, the ADC runway alert commitment was terminated on 1 May and the 86 drivers were having their last fling ferrying the 86L's to the aircraft storage site in Arizona.

On 1 May 1961, the 147th reorganized as an Aeromedical Transport Squadron with the Military Air Transport Service designated as its gaining command. Specifically, the First Aeromedical Transport Group, Brooks AFB, Texas, the only active Air Force Aeromed unit, was assigned the advisory responsibility for the 147th. The First Aeromed played a key role during the initial training phase of the aeromed mission, especially so in the newly formed Aeromedical Flight, consisting of Flight Nurses and Medical Technicians. By July, three Air Force Advisor personnel were in place: a C-119 Instructor Pilot, a Flight Nurse and Medical Technician.

Conversion training for the C-119 started in earnest when the initial cadre upgraded to Instructor status by early June. The basic aircrew consisted of a Pilot, Co-Pilot and Flight Mechanic. Ten aircrews were authorized. The Flight Mechanic, the first enlisted position on flight status, was a welcome addition to assist the pilots in managing this vibrating monstrosity. He assisted with aircraft pre-flight inspections, monitoring engine and system instruments from engine start to engine shut down, and operating heaters for wing and tail surfaces and cabin heat. He was responsible to assure proper weight and balance calculations and safety of the cargo compartment. He was the master mechanic and resident expert on all crosscountry flights: the last to leave the aircraft upon arrival and the first arriving at the aircraft prior to departure. The success of on-time departures from other than home base was directly proportional to the skill of the Flight Mechanic.

By early 1962, the basic aircrews had completed the check-out program and were enjoying week-end cross-country flights, one of the more pleasing aspects of the conversion.

The other half of the aircrew, the Aeromedical crew, consisted of one Flight Nurse assisted by two Medical Technicians. Nine aeromed aircrews were authorized. Since this was a new mission, the initial requirement was to recruit these personnel, which turned out to be the greatest challenge of all. To attain Flight Nurse status, a registered nurse was required to receive three weeks of Basic Officer School instruction, followed by nine weeks of specialized Flight Nurse training at the School of Aerospace Medicine, Brooks AFB, Texas. Upon completion, she was designated a Flight Nurse on flight status and started upgrade training in the C-119 to fully qualified status.

The Medical Technician was required to attend thirty-one weeks of Medical School Training, followed by four weeks specialized training at Brooks. The Med Techs then returned to home

station for their upgrade training in the aircraft. Because of the long period of time involved in the initial training, it was difficult to find prospective applicants whose careers allowed the time interference.

By January, 1962, six qualified Med Techs were on-board, with one Flight nurse and three nurses awaiting school spaces. The medical crew members slowly increased. In March 1963, nine Flight Nurses graduated and swelled the crew force to fourteen nurses and twenty-five Medical Technicians.

All up-grade and continuation flying training was in a purely simulated mode. No actual patients were ever airlifted in the C-119 since it was not considered suitable for peacetime aeromedical airlift purposes. Therefore, the aeromed crews were required to take turns acting as the patient load for 'training purposes. This procedure definitely removed some of the realism from the mission, but it did allow training to a fully qualified status.

During the two years of C-119 operations, all was not just training, qualification and upgrading of aircrews. The unit was frequently called upon to support passenger and cargo airlift for deploying tactical fighter units, especially Air Defense units. These flights provided a respite from the not-too-exciting local training flights, and became especially popular with the pilots and flight mechanics.

Airlifting a fighter unit proved to be a rather testy affair. Fighter unit personnel became rather infamous for their own brand of loading procedures. Weight of their cargo was disregarded. Their only concern was space. By their criteria, a transport aircraft was not efficiently loaded until they ran out of space. The 147th, being composed of former fighter pilots, was aware of such questionable practices and dealt with the issue with dispatch. They became overnight experts with the weight and balance slip sticks.

The unit also provided scheduled week-end basic airmen airlift missions from home station to Lackland AFB, Texas, at a substantial savings to ANG units in four states.

The C-119 also proved to be stimulating to the maintenance troops. Everything seemed to vibrate excessively. The landing gear struts and the propellers were constant maintenance headaches. Because of their length, the gear struts would chatter and vibrate on take-off if the strut linkages were less than perfect, and it was almost impossible to maintain them in perfect condition. Control of the propeller required constant monitoring in flight. The prop control unit was an habitual leaker of oil, and would do this in the most insidious ways. Since the propeller blade angle was actuated to the feathered position by oil pressure, it was important to be aware of an oil leak in time to feather the propeller, and prevent an unsafe engine overspeed condition with an uncontrollable prop. One could always identify well-trained crewmembers by their keen sense toward prop noise changes followed by fast prop feathering procedures. The aircraft did undergo a refurbishing of the cargo compartment through installation of additional acoustical paneling to reduce the noise level for aeromed missions. Passenger seats were added, as well as a Flight Nurse station. These mods did improve the cargo environment, however, the vibration remained for the life of the aircraft.

Two annual General Inspections, conducted by MATS, were successfully completed while equipped with the C-119. Annual field training was conducted at home station on a year-round basis.

Even though the C-119 was not suitable for airlifting actual patients, it did prove to be an excellent training aircraft for a fighter unit phasing into multi-engine operation and the Aeromed mission. This training would not be lost, as the near future would place these trained crews into a very rewarding and productive role.

The year 1963 saw the introduction of yet another aircraft, the sleek and exciting C-121G Super Constellation. Designed by Howard Hughes, the Super Connie was 116 feet long, weighed up to 145,000 pounds, and had a range of well over 2000 miles with speeds exceeding 300 MPH. Seventy-two passengers could be carried in airline comfort, or, in the aeromedical configuration, 18 litters plus 37 ambulatory patients. Although difficult to load and unload because of its high stance, the Connie could carry over 20,000 pounds of cargo more efficiently than any other propeller-driven aircraft in the Air Force inventory. The most exciting features to aircrew members accustomed to the spartan C-119's were air-conditioning, pressurization, a galley, and flush toilets.

In the normal configuration, the Connie aircrew consisted of two pilots, two flight engineers, a navigator, a loadmaster and an air passenger specialist. In the air evacuation configuration, two flight nurses and three medical technicians were added.

The Connie was powered by four Wright R-3350 turbocompounded engines which developed a combined 14,000 horsepower and spun huge three-bladed Hamilton Standard hydromatic propellers. This combination produced a powerful, satisfying roar greater than Niagara Falls and as sweet as a choir of angels.

At last, the 147th Aeromedical Transport Squadron was to have an aircraft capable of intercontinental missions. The silver, and later, grey and white Constellations from Pittsburgh were destined to be seen in almost every part of the world. There were few sad faces as the last of the ungainly C-119 "Flying Boxcars" tucked up their spindly landing gear and disappeared into the western quadrant of the Pittsburgh control area. The C-119's were bound for the aircraft graveyard at Davis Monthan AFB in Arizona, but many were still to see service in Europe before the final melting pot.

Now came the task of preparing for the much larger and more complicated Super Constellation. A new inventory of parts and supplies was required, revised aircraft parking and security plans were needed, and specialized equipment had to be acquired. The most immediate requirement was for an intensive training program for aircrew and support personnel.

It was with high hopes that the initial cadre of four pilots, four flight engineers, and 15 maintenance specialists packed their B-4 bags and headed for Moffett Naval Air Station, California. It was from Moffett NAS that the eight Super Connies were to be acquired and also at Moffett that the initial training would be received. The Super Connies had been used by the Navy to support their portion of the MATS airlift passenger and cargo system. The Super

Connies had been flown approximately 10,000 hours each and, although they looked presentable, there were hidden problems. The Navy was to receive the then-new C-130 "Hercules" and crews themselves. If a serious problem developed while away from home station, the home station either sent help or requested it from the closest Air Guard unit. In later years, as propeller aircraft were being phased out of the Air Force, enroute support was no longer available, and the MAC trip number became a very rare commodity.

Training for the aeromedical evacuation mission began as early as 1961 with the arrival of the C-119 aircraft. Aeromedical training was conducted mainly at home station, with simulated aeromedical missions. Periodically however, the aeromedical crews performed tours of duty with the active forces, flying actual aeromedical mission in the CONUS and overseas.

Effective 15 February 1964, the 147th was redesignated the 171st Air Transport Group with the primary mission of passenger and cargo airlift. The aeromedical remained its secondary mission, but the authorized aeromedical crew complement was increased to two flight nurses and three medical technicians.

In 1965, the tempo of the Vietnam conflict increased rapidly and the active forces were straining to handle the increased casualty rate. Selected Air National Guard units with aeromedical capability were called upon for help. The 171st was one of the units selected, and the first of many missions was flown in August 1965. The controlling agency for the aeromedical missions was the 375th AAWG located at Scott AFB, Illinois. From Scott, feeder and trunk mission routes of one to three days flying time were assigned. These mission routes provided service to the central, southwest and eastern United States. All military installations were provided service, with Scott, McGuire, Andrews, Maxwell and Kelly Air Force Bases being the focal points. Offshore missions were gradually added to provide service to Labrador, Newfoundland, Cuba, Bermuda, Puerto Rico and Panama.

On 6 December 1965, the unexpected and shocking announcement was made that the 171st Air Transport Group was to be inactivated by October 1966. The reason given for the inactivation was an economy measure in the face of the rising cost of the Vietnam conflict. The specific explanation given for the inactivation of the 171st was that the combination of the 171st and 112th had saturated the Air National Guard facility. To increase the size of the Air Guard facility in order to accommodate a possible C-124 transport acquisition by the 171st would require further real estate purchase and construction money.

The inactivation notice set into action a determined effort at many levels to save the 171st. These efforts resulted in a one year postponement of the inactivation, followed one year later by another one year postponement. The value of the 171st soon became apparent and the Department of Defense quietly dropped all notions of an inactivation. In 1965, Congress passed a law mandating the number of Air National Guard units. Thus, inactivation of Air Guard units was no longer an immediate concern.

The unit's contribution to the Vietnam effort began in late 1965 with Operation "Christmas Star." This was an Air National Guard-wide mission taking cookies and other Christmas treats from local organizations and citizens, to the fighting troops in Vietnam. The airlift was so successful that it became the model for many more cargo airlift missions to

Southeast Asia by transport units of the Air National Guard.

The 171st participated in these missions for a period of approximately one year, carrying high priority war material to various airfields in Southeast Asia. These missions were very demanding on the part of both aircrews and aircraft. The aircrews were airborne from 90 to 100 hours, and were absent from their civilian jobs for up to ten days. These missions were the first in history in which citizen-airmen, though not mobilized, served in a combat zone during time-off from their civilian jobs.

In September 1966, the requirement for domestic aeromedical evacuation was reduced to such a point that Air National Guard assistance was no longer required. The unit continued to fly the offshore aeromedical missions and stepped up the pace of aeromedical training, military passengers, and cargo missions. The constant inter-changing of these various type missions caused maintenance and aircrew personnel many hours of work configuring the aircraft for the mission at hand to be flown. Passenger seats had to be installed or disassembled, cargo handling equipment properly positioned, or delicate aeromedical equipment added or removed.

On 15 February 1967, the unit was redesignated as the 171st Military Airlift Group. One year later, on 19 February 1968, it was again redesignated, this time as the 171st Aeromedical Airlift Group.

A date that will always be remembered by 672 members of the 171st Aeromedical Airlift Group is 11 April 1968. They were among 24,000 Reserve Forces personnel called up by the President of the United States. The specific reason for the call-up of the 171st AAGP was the increase in casualties in the Vietnam fighting and the forthcoming conversion of some of the regular Air Force units to the C-9 "Nightingale" aeromedical aircraft.

Events moved swiftly after the call-up order was given, and on 12 April, personnel processing began. By 13 May, the first call-up day, the unit was fully manned. One hundred and seven officers and 565 enlisted personnel were facing a possible two-year tour of active duty. The active duty tour was to be performed at home station with a few exceptions. Ten airmen were given Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders to Korea, one legal officer was reassigned to Hq 21st AF, McGuire AFB, New Jersey, and five navigators were assigned thirty-day rotation TOY tours to the 375th AAWg for flight planning.

The first live aeromedical missions began on 14 May under the direction of the 375th AAWg,

Scott AFB, Illinois. The 171st gained responsibility for airevac missions in the eastern United States and portions of Texas. In addition, the pace of the continuing offshore aeromedical mission was accelerated. The frequency of the missions increased to the point where the unit was operating 28 percent of all the 375th AAWg missions and moving 35 percent of the domestic patient load. The unit was also required to maintain an aircraft and keep a complete aircrew available at home station for short-notice emergencies. The "Alert Bird" handled an average of six special missions a month. The typical aeromedical mission required a sixteen-hour workday for the aircrew, eight hours of which was flying time. There could be

over six enroute stops to load and unload patients and passengers. After fifteen hours of rest, the crew would be back in the air on another similar mission. This routine went on for months. The outstanding results achieved by the flying squadron would not have been possible without the skilled devotion of the various maintenance sections. The unit went into the mobilization very short of critical spare parts, especially engines.

The unit was demobilized on 12 December 1968 after serving a seven-month tour of active duty. The final results of the call-up were very impressive, with a total of 510 missions flown amounting to 4735 accident-free flying hours. A total of 11,947 patients and over 2000 space-available passengers were airlifted.

The unit now reverted to precall-up type operations. The only aeromedical missions that were flown were the offshore CONUS runs and a few missions to Europe. As the regular Air Force Aeromedical Evacuation units became more proficient in their new C-9 aircraft, they took over all aeromedical missions. The last aeromedical missions flown by the 171st occurred in early 1969, although aeromedical training continued.

The results of Operation "Creek Guardlift" were impressive. Twenty-five thousand passengers and 700,000 pounds of cargo were transported with a reliability rate of over 95 percent. Approximately 2800 accident/incident-free flying hours were flown over the route structure. This does not include the flying time involved deploying to and from Torrejon. The record is even more impressive considering most participants were Air Guardsmen on a part-time status. All six flying units received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for their excellent performance in Operation "Creek Guardlift."

In 1972, the unit anticipated yet another aircraft conversion. This was a good time to look back over nine years of interesting and productive flying operations, and the record was impressive.

During the nine years flying the Connie, seven meaningful awards were conferred upon the 171st. In 1959, the National Guard Bureau Flight Safety Citation was presented and earned again every year thereafter. In 1960, the Military Airlift Command Safety Plaque was presented and, again, earned every year until leaving the Command. In 1966, the unit achieved the MAC Five Year Safety Award. The National Guard Bureau Citation of Merit for Southeast Asia Support was awarded in 1967. In 1968, the 375th AAWg Flying Safety Plaque was received for accident-free flying for a ten-year period. The unit's second Air Force Outstanding Unit award was presented for the period of January 1968 to December 1969 for the heavy involvement in aeromedical airlift missions. The third Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for "Creek Guardlift" efforts was bestowed in 1972.

Perhaps even more important than the official awards given to the unit were the many personal letters which had been received. These letters gave heartfelt thanks for the outstanding treatment and service which the unit had provided to those who had been entrusted to its care. There was also much pride in the unit that every Higher Headquarters inspection had been passed with flying colors. The story of the Constellation and the Air National Guard at Tsburgh ended much as it had begun. There were sad faces, this time as the eight beautiful Constellations, now with 20,000

flying hours on each airframe, departed Pittsburgh for Davis Monthan never again to grace the skies. Designated since 4 October 1972 as the 171st Air Refueling Wing, the unit was now ready to accept the challenge of a new mission and aircraft: the KC-97L Stratocruiser.

During the spring of 1972, confirmation was received of yet another mission and aircraft change. Modernization of the Military Airlift Command (MAC) aircraft fleet to C-9's and C-141's satisfied the aeromed airlift requirements; therefore, the ANG's C-121 fleet was now considered excess to MAC needs. The new mission was air refueling, with the unit to be equipped with the Boeing KC-97L and redesignated with Tactical Air Command (TAG) as the gaining command.

Collectively, these factors resulted in dramatic changes to the unit's normal day-to-day operation. After spending nine years working the MAC aeromed airlift system and the worldwide airlift system, the unit efforts would suddenly change from a support role to a tactical role restricted to specific geographical areas of operation. Initially, this change was not universally accepted by the aircrews as one of great progress. There was much to be said for the off-duty sightseeing and shopping benefits afforded by flying within the MAC route structure. The most significant mission change was brought about by unit deployments requiring unit support personnel to accompany the aircraft to the operating bases. This new involvement by all unit support functions finally allowed non-aircrew personnel the opportunity to prove the skills they had been training for at home station for many years.

Even though the official unit redesignation as the 171st Air Refueling Wing was established in October 1972, initial conversion actions were implemented during the summer months.

The first and foremost obstacle to overcome was to satisfy the total lack of base operating space for the KC-97. The base facilities, originally designed to support two single-engine fighter squadrons, were bursting at the seams. The Base Supply Warehouse was filled to the rafters with many items in outside storage. The Facility deficiencies had been identified to the NGB on a yearly basis but without funding action. Due to the previous threat of reduction of ANG units, the Bureau took the position that new construction at those bases would be a misuse of scarce construction money. One could hardly fuss with that logic; however, a strong case could now be made that mission success could only be attained by additional facilities. The Bureau did authorize construction authority for a large Nosedock and an Aerospace Ground Equipment Building to be completed as early as possible, which was still two years hence.

At this point in time, all KC-97's were assigned only to Air Guard units. The 171st aircrew and maintenance conversion training requirements were satisfied by other ANG tanker units. The initial cadre of pilots, flight engineers and load-masters, now to be cross-trained as Boom Operators, spent one month in ground school with the Utah Air Guard. These same crews then Navigator upgrade training from the C-121 to the KC-97 was less demanding. Two navigators underwent a checkout on refueling rendezvous procedures with the 160th and, in turn, trained the remaining navigators at home base.

Thirty maintenance troops also received several weeks of familiarization training at Rickenbacker.

The first KC-97 arrived in August, providing the future aircrew instructors with additional flying hours needed for official instructor status.

The ANG's KC-97 FTD was in place in September for six weeks to provide ground training to the bulk of the aircrews and maintenance personnel. The last C-121 departed the base in October, while the last KC-97 was on board in December. The conversion was off and running.

With winter approaching, the maintenance guys were not looking forward to performing all maintenance tasks outdoors for the next two years. A portable engine stand was constructed by them which would provide protection from the elements but was without any provisions for heat.

Meanwhile, discussions centered around the subject of somehow fitting the 97 into the hangar. Removal of each wing tip was a possibility, but was disregarded because of the many manhours required to remove and properly replace them since they were not designed for such maintenance practices and could cause safety-related complications later on. Finally, one or more (the actual number cannot be verified) of these deep-thinkers developed a scheme to literally rotate the aircraft into the hangar. Fortunately, the 97 was designed with a hinged vertical stabilizer which could easily be lowered to the horizontal position in a short time, allowing the high tail to enter the hangar opening. The theory called for the aircraft to be moved into a position facing into the hangar door opening, slightly off-set to the left of center. The next move was for the tug operator to slowly turn the aircraft to the left, backing the right wing and most of the aircraft inside the hangar. By repositioning the tug and executing several precise moves, the aircraft was fully inside the hangar, facing forward. Removal of the aircraft was accomplished by reversing the entry cycle. After the brainstorm was proven by this local research and development effort, lines were painted to assist in maintaining the proper track.

Only the most qualified airplane-movers took part in this ritual, which was performed with utmost concern for safety. The minimum distance standards for towing operations could not be met. Neither could the aircraft be quickly removed from the hangar in case of an emergency. On balance, it was determined that the added quality of maintenance performed indoors, as compared to outside winter conditions, would more than offset the accident potential related to the unofficial moves. This activity was duplicated many times without incident until the new nosedock was completed. It is also a fair statement to say that the procedure never failed to draw a crowd.

Maintaining the KC-97 airframe and system was not particularly difficult for our highly-experienced aircraft mechanics and specialists. However, the four R-4360 engines required constant adjustments and parts replacement. In fact, the engine shop troops seldom reached the point where they felt caught up with their engine build-up workload. The age, long service-life, and lack of adequate replacement parts all added up to a power plant barely meeting its design capability. Only the skill and cunning of the engine specialists brought the operational reliability to ANG standards. The two J-47 jet engines, being of the same

vintage, were plagued with similar problems but to a lesser degree.

During the four and one-half years of 97 operation, many engine changes were required and every single engine change was made outdoors in all kinds of weather. The engine guys became quite skilled in this duty. On a cold, blustery day, a two-hour change was not uncommon. In fact, the engine shop guys must be set aside as having had the most demanding job within the maintenance complex. They met the challenge head-on and won. The aircrews are deeply indebted to this group for outstanding services rendered.

The first full year of tanker operation, 1973, was busy and productive. Each functional area became intimately involved in meeting established milestones for unit combat readiness. Mobility became the center of activity. This new wrinkle required the unit to develop a mobility plan which would spell out in great detail procedures for processing personnel and material as a package to support a 90-day deployment to any theater of operations. To meet critical time-frames imposed by TAG mobility standards, each individual assigned to a mobility position

In September, the unit confronted its last conversion milestone: being declared operationally ready. This meant the TAG Operational Readiness Inspection team was gearing up for its first visit to evaluate all the hard work performed by the 171st over the past year. They arrived en masse during the October UTA and laid it on us. Two days of refueling missions followed, flying all aircraft each day, while simultaneously demonstrating our skill in executing the mobility phase, which was interspersed with numerous "Mickey Mouse" inspection team problems. The unit combat readiness status was subsequently verified by a Satisfactory rating. Complimentary remarks in the report raised our spirits and translated all the hard work into a satisfying experience. By successfully passing the TAG ORI standards, the unit was now allowed to participate in tactical deployments world-wide.

The Spring of 1974 saw the 171st in its first participation in Operation Creek Party. Creek Party got its start in 1967. United States Air Force Europe (USAFE) was in need of air refueling support of its fighter aircraft operating on the conti-

on the Nosedock and the Aerospace Ground Equipment building. The maintenance move into these facilities was the highlight of the year. After operating out of confined quarters for so long, they were like kids with new toys. Renovation of the former hangar to a base engine shop was immediately undertaken.

Activities in 1975 consisted of four Creek Party deployments, a Solid Shield exercise out of home base, and Stan Eval and MEI/ORI Inspections. All were positive.

The old hangar renovation was completed and the Base Engine Shop was in operation, further relieving the space crunch. Another sign of construction progress was evidenced by construction contract awards for the new Base Supply Warehouse and an Avionics Shop for the 112TFG. During a beautiful day in September, another Open House was conducted with even greater success than the previous year, yielding higher attendance. Nine different aircraft were on display in addition to numerous shop displays. Traffic on the

Parkway slowed to a crawl for three miles in both directions, resulting in a no-notice ORI for the Pennsylvania State Police in untangling unannounced traffic jams.

March 1976 was a time of celebration for the Supply troops. The new warehouse was accepted from the contractor and the move of supplies and equipment was on. Several months were devoted to re-warehousing. After twenty-seven years, the Supply function was finally operating under satisfactory warehousing standards. Months went by before they wiped the smiles off their faces.

In May, the last TAG Stan Eval inspection took place. Effective 1 July 1976, all ANG air refueling units were transferred from Tactical Air Command to Strategic Air Command. We continued on through the year with Creek Party deployments and another Solid Shield exercise away from home station. Another important construction/renovation project was started. An addition to the headquarters building to house an expanded kitchen, and renovation of the auditorium for dining hall purposes, were both under contract. Box lunches were to become standard UTA fare for the next six months.

Little contact was had with our new gaining command. To prove that they had not forgotten about the 171st, a SAC Eval Team spent one week in November flying with our aircrews. During the December UTA, the SAC IG visited with their checklists. It was an excellent opportunity for 171st personnel to start their indoctrination into the SAC way of doing business. Things were not going to be the same. We could feel the heavy hand approaching. Another important high-cost construction project was underway in January, 1977. A Jet Fuel Storage and Pressurized Dispensing System, with six underground refueling pits located on the aircraft parking ramp, was designed to support the heavy fuel loads of the KG-135. Also in this time-frame, the 171st was alerted of the impending aircraft change. After the official conversion announcement, planning actions quickly assumed full power settings. The 171st was relieved of all KC-97 wartime tasking in April, which then allowed all unit efforts to be devoted to the changeover. Two KC-97's were transferred out in April, and the first KG-135 arrived in June.

In July 1977, the Commander 171AREW, was afforded the high privilege of accepting the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with the other ANG tanker commanders for Creek Party services rendered to USAFE. With the fourth AFOUA, the 171st now had been so honored more times than any other ANG unit.

Another mission phase came to a close for the 171st in the company of a rugged old bird, the KC-97. Between the two of us, the unit cut its teeth in the refueling mission, learning its lessons well, forming a solid foundation to build on in the days ahead with SAC and the KC-135.

On a clear, crisp Saturday morning in February 1975, the men and women of the 112th FIG settled into their accustomed drill duties.

Two F-102 Delta Daggers had already taken off with the long-familiar roar of afterburners. Crew chiefs tinkered with vacuum tubes and cranky hydraulics of the remaining

interceptors. Support personnel fiddled with new manning documents and supply inventories.

Shortly after 10 o'clock, they set aside pencils, stowed wrenches, drifted to the flight line. And beyond the stately row of black-tailed Deuces, above the now empty alert hangars, with the hard whine of a new turbofan engine, Pittsburgh's first A-7D light attack bomber appeared, escorted by two F-102 interceptors.

As the formation thundered overhead, it looked for all the world like a stubby young workhorse, flanked by proud aging thoroughbreds. A new officially redesignating the 112th FIG as the 112th Tactical Fighter Group and assigning it to the Rickenbacker wing with three Ohio fighter squadrons.

Pittsburgh's second A-7D also arrived that April. These two Corsairs provided 112th maintenance personnel with their first hands-on training with the new aircraft. Guided by Field Training Detachment supervisors, they immediately began stripping down the new planes, studying the Rolls-Royce-designed TF-41 engines, examining the munitions and weapons systems, learning the cold weather idiosyncrasies of the three hydraulic systems, and digging into the solid-state technology of the computers and advanced avionics.

Squadron pilots had also begun conversion training. A few were already flying the A-7, having entered a three-month course at Myrtle Beach AFB, SC, at the end of January, with one slated to remain for Instructor Pilot training. But most pilots went to England AFB, Louisiana, for a new Air Force advisor and two active duty IPs were in place and home station training began in earnest. Thirteen pilots were selected for accelerated checkouts, so the unit could achieve Limited Combat Capability as quickly as possible.

At ranges as far as New Jersey, New York, Michigan and Indiana, they were introduced to bombing and strafing, both with the old manual "iron sight" and the new computer. And along the way they learned air-to-air "dogfight" maneuvering and the even more terrifying art of aerial refueling with the Pittsburgh tankers.

How quickly did they learn? Most of the unit's 20 A-7s were transferred to Pittsburgh around June. In August the 112th deployed to Phelps-Collins Field, the ANG training site near Alpena, Michigan, for two weeks of summer camp. There the 146th TFS swept a "Turkey Shoot" bombing and strafing competition hosted by the 121TFW for its A-7 and F-100 squadrons.

The difficult conversion process continued throughout the fall and winter, hampered by distant ranges, engine problems, icy weather and associated hydraulic failures in aircraft which had never before faced northeastern cold. Remaining rough spots in the transition were highlighted in an early initial Management Effectiveness Inspection (MEI) conducted 26 February-2 March 1976. A comprehensive plan was quickly developed to complete the integration of the 112TFG into the Tactical Air Command.

The squadron returned to England AFB on 4 April 1976 for weapons training, both ground school and the first airborne deliveries of heavyweight munitions, in this case concrete-filled

500-pound Mark-82 bombs.

The pace toward full combat capability accelerated through the summer. Members of the unit's active duty "parent advisory" unit, the 23rd TFW at England AFB, conducted a Staff Advisory Visit to Pittsburgh on 8-11 September 1976 and remarked that the unit "has worked hard to convert to a new weapons system and The fun came when the 146TFS pilots were tasked to simulate Soviet MiG-17 fighters attacking American armored battalions maneuvering in the snow of Fort Drum. Tank drivers tracking along well-defined country roads often waved and waited in fascination as the roaring A70s popped up over the horizon, only to duck and veer at the last moment as they suddenly realized that those little fighters were hot and fast and VERY LOW and aimed straight for them.

As it happened, the 146TFS was engaged a new program prompted by the evolution of modern air warfare. Since Viet Nam, low level tactical ingress had meant flying into enemy territory at around 1000 feet, finding the target and then attacking it. New anti-aircraft defenses — missiles, guns and interceptors — had dictated new tactics.

TAC now expected its pilots to be able to streak toward targets far inside enemy lines at very low altitudes, below and around radar detection. The program called for aircrews to "step down" from 500 feet above the ground to 300 feet to 100 feet, all the while navigating from mountain to hill to crossroads to bush to target, maintaining mutual support ("checking six" — scanning the area directly behind them for fighters and missiles), at well over 500 miles-an-hour, in order to properly identify targets from an upside-down position and get bombs on-target on time. The test came at the Gila Bend desert ranges during the Snowbird deployment to Tucson on 17 February-4 March 1978. As the new 112TFG commander, Col Richard Prave, pointed out in a pre-deployment letter, "Both pilots and aircraft have been shortchanged in flying from the severe weather experienced this winter ... The first few days at Snowbird will be oriented to playing catch-up while flying in as realistic an environment as possible in preparation for the ORI."

Seventeen aircraft, pilots, maintenance and support troops flew to Davis Monthan AFB on 17 February. Full-scale practice missions filled the next five days, until the IG inspectors, still accustomed to weekend ORIs, arrived on Wednesday, 22 February.

The next day the squadron demonstrated its bombing proficiency and for the following three days, through the Sunday of 26 February, the unit conducted intense "surge" operations, with over 200 sorties flown overall.

The results of TAC's first deployed ORI: Satisfactory. As Col Prave remarked, "This was an outstanding deployment ... providing the best 'training for dollars spent' the unit has ever received."

Having once again proved its combat capability, the 112TFG participated in a series of wing-initiated "Saber-SLUF" exercise hosted by the Springfield, Ohio unit, beginning 8 April 1978 and integrating fighters, tankers, FACs, forward radar control squadrons, Army National Guard helicopters and ground forces. 146TFS pilots also participated in close air

support exercises with active Army units at Fort Campbell and Fort Knox in May and December of 1978.

In July of 1978, most of the unit again deployed to Alpena for summer camp. At the same time, four pilots, three A-7s and six crew chiefs augmented South Carolina's 169th Tactical Fighter Group on another overseas trip, Operation Coronet Teal to Wittering Royal Air Force Base, United Kingdom.

Fourteen SLUFs, 31 officers and 120 enlisted troops left the bitter cold of a Pittsburgh winter on 20 January 1979, headed for another two weeks of Snowbird. This time they were greeted by snow and rain in the usually sunny southwest Arizona.

The weather cleared and an especially ambitious mix of training programs followed. In the mountains and open desert of the Gila Bend ranges, pilots accelerated their Low Level Awareness Training, but now with a difference. In addition to trying to decide whether the dot on the foreground was a tumbleweed or tall tree, the pilots knew that a tiny dot could suddenly appear behind them, quickly blossoming into a lethal interceptor. For this exercise also included A-4s. Many fighter jock "buzz words" peppered pilots' discussions of these demanding missions. "Head on a swivel" was the only printable phrase.

The intense air-to-air activity reflected yet another TAG emphasis on realistic training. Squadron pilots always enjoyed testing their flying skills one-on-one. However, the planes they would encounter in combat would not be other SLUFs, but small high-speed interceptors deployed in formation. So the Dissimilar Air Combat Training (DACT) program was developed.

Most US pilots received their initial DACT training from instructors of the 57th "Aggressor Squadron" based at Nellis AFB and flying F-5s. However, the 146th decided to go for the most dissimilar training they could find, and invited IPs of the Navy aggressor squadron, VA-127, to bring their A-4s from LeMoore MAS, California, to Tucson. The tiny, "gray ghost" camouflaged aircraft proved quite a challenge.

Attack and bombing training continued, both at Gila Bend and at the Red Rio ranges at White Sands, New Mexico. A larger contingency of Battle Creek FACs (10 O-2 aircraft and 15 pilots) directed close air support practice. For the first time, electronic warfare threat simulators and communications jamming were used.

The unit was back at home station just long enough to gear up for a new mission: Operation Coronet Cove. Late in 1978 ANG had picked up the active duty commitment for a detachment of fighters at the Panama Canal Zone. The 112th TFG deployed four A-7s, six aircrews and maintenance personnel to Howard AFB from 7 February to 29 March 1979 to support the USAF Southern Command's responsibility to defend the canal. Missions included practice helicopter escort and close air support; the 112TFG was the first unit to drop practice bombs on the Rio Hato Range in 15 years.

The spring also brought the perennial inspection, this time a 9th Air Force MEI conducted 18-22 May with another Satisfactory rating. Many areas were "significantly improved."

Although the 112th continued to participate in the Ohio Saber-SLUF exercises throughout 1979, on 1 July the unit was reassigned to the newly-created 127th Tactical Fighter Wing, with headquarters at Selfridge ANGB, Michigan. The 169th "Swamp Fox" group at McEntire ANGB, South Carolina, was once again Pittsburgh's sister unit.

The diverse combat skills the 112th pilots were developing began to merge in the unit's first Red Flag exercise in the summer of 1979. Studies of air war losses since World War II had shown that the first 10 missions were crucial, due to lack of experience in a combat environment. A pilot's chances of survival improved dramatically after those first 10 "counters." Red Flag exercises are designed to expose aircrews to the closest simulation of combat operations possible.

Fourteen pilots, 97 support troops and 12 aircraft deployed to Nellis AFB, near Las Vegas, on 7 July. There they found out what "full-scale operations" really meant. Red Flag put together strike packages that included Air Force, Navy and ANG A-7, Navy A-6 and F-4J, USAF F-4D, F-4E, F-111 and B-52 bombers. F-4G and F-105G aircraft were used as Wild Weasels against enemy missile and AAA defenses, while EA-3, EA-6B, EF-111 and EC-130 crews fought the electronic war. Mission support was provided by RF-4 reconnaissance, OV-10 FACs, KC-135 tankers, C-130 transports and numerous helicopters.

Maintenance troops struggled as best they could in heavy jet fumes and a blistering sun which raised the temperature on the flight line to more than 130°. Maintaining the aircraft in this harsh environment was a real challenge.

The Nevada ranges were superb, studded with tactical targets and realistic enemy defenses. Pittsburgh crews not only learned that an A-7 fully loaded with live 500-pound bombs could make it off the ground with at least a few feet of runway to spare and then dash to the target without begging for gas like its heavier brethren, they also discovered that the SLUF could fly even faster on the deck with an interceptor on its tail. Squadron pilots fired live TV-guided Maverick missiles for the first time at Red Flag. In all, over 380 intense combat-oriented hours had been flown.

After the adrenalin of Red Flag, the pace slowed a bit as the 112th pulled its second Coronet Cove tour of 1979 from 27 October to 25 November. Although the US Canal Zone had ceased to exist as a result of a treaty three weeks earlier, no problems occurred.

1980 began with "Snowbird East," a winter deployment to Patrick AFB, Florida, near Cape Canaveral. Fourteen A-7s, 25 officers and 102 enlisted personnel flew south on 19 January for two weeks of exercises supporting the fledging FACs of the 549 TASTS. As Lt Col Lawrence F. Santerini, then 112th Director of Operations, noted, "Face-to-face briefings with the FACs provided a good exchange on tactics, weapons and the capabilities of each other's aircraft."

The 112th had its second deployed ORI from 2 to 16 August 1980. This inspection was even more comprehensive, including actual mobility and deployment to Alpena under simulated combat conditions. Targets ranged as far as Arkansas and Canada.

The unit again flew south to Patrick AFB for Snowbird East in January 1981. Since this deployment included a follow-up ORI by the 9AF Inspector General, while the host FAC squadron was also undergoing an MEI, there were more than enough higher headquarters troops looking over Pittsburghers' shoulders.

The first of four Project Season pilots joined the squadron in mid-1981. Project Season offered active duty pilots fresh out of flight school the opportunity to serve three-year controlled tours with ANG fighter units. Since the Air Force currently had more pilots than cockpits, the program gave young officers a chance to build up experience in frontline fighters and helped the unit build up its fulltime staff. After three years associating with weekend warriors, Project Season pilots are sent to Squadron Officers School for retraining.

Coronet Cove rolled round once more, as the squadron deployed to Panama 14 March-12 April 1981. This time Pittsburgh pilots were augmented by three 127TFW crews from Selfridge ANGB and supported by 11 tons of cargo. Annual training was conducted at now-familiar Alpena from 8 to 21 August. Exercises during the year included Sentry Castle 81, a joint services maneuver 11-22 July which featured close air support at Fort Drum, plus aerial refueling and DACT over Lake Ontario, and an October Turkey Shoot, hosted by the Rickenbacker wing for all A-7 squadrons.

By the summer of 1981, however, flying had been cut back considerably as a consequence of a strike by FAA controllers. Night flying ended and weekday flights were slashed in half. Fewer restrictions were placed on weekend sorties, which were increased to 20 a day to take up the slack. Long delays were common, as aircraft lined up for the few take-off slots available. Gradually, the situation would improve, until normal operations were possible many months later.

The lightly traveled skies of Arizona offered some relief, as the 112th finally returned to Tucson for Operation Snowbird 14-27 February 1982. Low altitude training and DACT again had high priority.

Three weeks later the IG team struck once more, this time with an MEI. The group was rated Satisfactory, with the squadron rated Excellent, and for the first time in memory, flight suit appearance leaped from Marginal to Excellent! Intel earned its third Outstanding in a row and was named best in 9th Air Force.

Still in an inspection mood, the 112th devoted its annual training on 12-26 June 1982 to a practice ORI at the Savannah, Georgia, field training site. Three A-7s and four pilots returned to Savannah in September to perform close air support with the OA-37 FACs from Willow Grove during their ORI. Several weeks of practice at the 112th's bombing range at Fort Indiantown Gap had preceded the deployment, in order to help fellow Pennsylvanians ace the inspection.

Long frustrated by the long flights needed to reach available bombing ranges, the 112th

began as early as 1977 to search for a closer target. In 1978 a fulltime technician position was established to develop an air-to-surface range on the Army National Guard reservation at Indiantown Gap. The first practice bomb was air delivered two years later. Coupled with a low level training route much wider than most, over terrain similar to central Europe, the new facility quickly became invaluable.

The Coronet Cove deployment of 25 September to 24 October 1982 held a few surprises. The initial take-off of the usual four A-7s came very early on Saturday morning, with landings at Howard AFB scheduled for before sunrise. However, after several hours of night formation flying, the tanker and fighters encountered heavy Caribbean thunderstorms and were forced to spend what little was left of the night in Florida, finally arriving in Panama the next day. Then the Army ordered two weeks of dawn to dusk alert scrambles for local close air support exercises!

The squadron had continued to evolve, with a new generation of pilots coming onboard. The fall of 1982 saw a major local checkout and upgrade program for new flight leads and instructor pilots. DACT checkouts began with F-4 units from Fort Wayne and Wright-Patterson AFB.

Low level stepdown training and additional DACT clicked into high gear again during the next Snowbird deployment, this time 5-19 February 1983 in yet another location — Kirtland AFB, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Over 200 sorties were flown, several more than scheduled since weather forced two pilots to find their way to Albuquerque via MacDill AFB, Florida.

In the spring of 1983, word came that the 112th would be among the first to receive the new two-seat version of the SLUF — the A-7K. The "K" was designed to increase training efficiency, but retained full combat capability.

During the next two weeks, Pittsburgh and New Mexico pilots flew throughout the United Kingdom and Europe, attacking ranges in Scotland, hassling with British Lightnings over the Channel, performing DACT and turnaround training with an F-15 squadron based at Bittsburg, Germany, visiting Baron von Richthoffen's squadron at Jevier, near Peenemunde, after close air support missions in central Europe.

Coronet Mail was an outstanding success, as pilots, maintenance and support personnel far surpassed required sortie tasking. A highlight of the deployment was the presentation of a proclamation from the city of Pittsburgh to the city of Peterborough, a similar industrial town near Wittering.

A short rest, then on to Snowbird on 19 February to 3 March 1984. This deployment, once again to Davis Monthan AFB, was also conducted as a practice ORI, in preparation for the real thing scheduled for Savannah a few months later.

The most recent ORI was undoubtedly the most complex the 112th has ever faced. Interdiction, close air support and counter-air missions began at dawn and ended after dusk. Enemy at-

tacks, chemical warfare exercises and sabotage attempts began at dawn and ended after dusk. Mission planning, maintenance preparation and support activity began long, long before dawn and ended long, long after dusk.

And it worked. After a rocky transition to the demands of tactical missions, after years of fighting for the most realistic training possible, after growth and change and evolution, the weekend warriors of the 112th Tactical Fighter Group of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, were once again recognized combat ready. The ORI rating was highly successful with many sections far exceeding requirements.

Throughout the A-7 years, many changes had taken place. Even the aircraft itself evolved to improve performance and capability.

Upgraded computer programs told the pilot where bombs would hit at all times, so he didn't have to come roaring straight down the chute into enemy defenses. Now he only had to roll out at the very last second or he could release his bombs in a high-G turn close to the target. A laser detector for automatic target identification became one more bulge below the SLUF's intake.

Improved Radar Warning Receivers provided better notice that enemy missiles and guns were locked on. Internally mounted chaff and flare dispensers offered last minute defenses. New radios helped maintain communications when jammers opened up. Automatic Maneuvering Flaps extended the flight envelope in close-in dogfights. Low altitude warning systems alerted pilots navigating on the deck.

In exercises, aggressor pilots had noted that the green camouflaged A-7s were tough to find from above, but when they were cranked into high bank turns for ridgeline crossing or mutual support, the SLUF's white belly highlighted its position. Over the years the paint job went to "wraparound lizard" and then to a non-glossy mottled design to reduce sun-sparkle.

Pilots' personal equipment underwent the same evolution. Anti-G suits, not used in ADC, were standard in TAG. International orange flight suits gave way to green Nomex suits. Bright patches were replaced with "subdued" ones, attached with Velcro and stripped off during "sanitization" before combat missions. Helmets, originally covered with fluorescent stars, slashes and A-7 silhouettes, were camouflaged. Bulky pads were replaced by foam liners, individually molded to each pilot's head. covered with glove leather and worn over a "skull cap" to keep sweat out of the aircrew's eyes. Finally came lightweight helmets, now non-glossy gray, designed to provide better visibility and make it easier to keep the "head on a swivel." and after decades pilots were back to wearing gogglelike visors held on by an elastic strap.

The physical surroundings too reflected this change and evolution. Older buildings were remodeled into modern facilities, new buildings were constructed to facilitate the avionics test equipment, the TF-41 engine and more.

Increased manning in support of the A-7D brought many new faces and talents to the unit — all helping to build for the future upon a decades-long tradition of vigilance and strength.

Readiness is not only the 112th's mission. It's our heritage. From its inception, the Air National Guard had been assigned to numerous mission areas and, later on, had been operating under the gaining command concept within all major air commands with one exception: Strategic Air Command (SAC). In the mid '70's, the Secretary of Defense determined that Air Reserve Forces units would be assigned the air refueling mission as SAC-gained units and be equipped with KC-135 aircraft. Needless to say, this was an extremely controversial decision and not fully accepted in all quarters within the Air Force and SAC. Within Air Guard circles, the opposite reaction held sway, but certainly not without some concern about the unit's future working relationship operating in the SAC system. It is not hard to understand why the SAC planners and operators had difficulty fully appreciating the plan since it would result in the loss of SAC assets without replacements in sight.

However, any and all apprehensions were soon to be allayed by the strong leadership and convincing personality of the Commander-in-Chief of SAC. The word filtered throughout the command stressing the importance of good soldiers accepting higher echelon directives at face value and disregarding any personal views on the subject. Those few individuals having trouble with that sort of arrangement had the privilege of exercising the option of finding more suitable assignments. Having been presented the big picture, anyone's disagreement to the change in policy never materialized. We in the Guard can thank our lucky stars for the foresight and timely action by CINCSAC which paved the way for a smooth conversion to the SAC mission.

With all that behind us and all then operating on the same frequency, everyone made a determined effort to bring this massive conversion to fruition. One hundred twenty-eight KC-135's were to be reassigned to sixteen units, thirteen of which were Air Guard and three Air Force Reserve, to be phased in over a four year period ending 1 July 1979. SAC led the way by orchestrating the overall planning efforts with the National Guard Bureau and all Air Force agencies tasked to support the conversion. The unit conversion and readiness objectives established by the SAC planners were more demanding on the units than any plan previously experienced in Air Guard history. As it turned out, the conversion to the KC-135 was unequivocally the best planned and best supported aircraft conversion experienced to date by the 171st. Similar sentiments have been expressed by the other converting units.

The 171st was ninth of thirteen Air Guard units scheduled to convert. Being in the rear of the pack had with it the advantage of evading the soft spots encountered by the earlier converting units, and allowed time to avoid similar mistakes. Even though the official conversion date was 1 July 1977, our first aircrew departed for Combat Crew Training School (CCTS) at Castle AFB, California, as early as September, 1976, with others to follow in the months ahead.

In December, 1976, a large contingent of the SAC staff visited the base and conducted a detailed pre-conversion conference. In attendance were representatives of 8th Air Force, 45th Air Division, 416th Bomb Wing and the National Guard Bureau. Their help, so generously provided, was overwhelming. Not only did they outnumber us, but the information imparted was more like a two-week ration absorbed in a two-day visit. Fortunately for us, adequate written advisories were provided to fill in most areas of concern. At this point in time, the 171st planning commenced in earnest.

SAC also introduced a novel and very effective management tool by designating a SAC Bom Wing as an advisory unit to each converting A Guard unit. The 416th Bomb Wing, Griffiss AFB NY, was our overseer. Colonel George Tynai 416th Commander, took a personal interest in our conversion efforts. His positive, helpful attitude permeated his unit and resulted in outstanding support by the 416th, which materially assisted us in becoming established in the SAC mission. It was only the beginning of a long and rewarding relationship.

The Field Training Detachment for the maintenance function arrived in early April for a ninety-day period. An RC-135 was flown in for maintenance familiarization and training. The unit was relieved of all KC-97 tasking, declared non-combat-ready, then five KC-97's were transferred out. Also, the second aircrew returned from CCTS qualified in the KC-135.

The remaining KC-97's were transferred out in late May.

Planning pieces started to fall neatly into place during June. The 171st Conversion Plan, previously submitted to SAC for their blessing, was returned approved and all was set for implementation on the all-important start date of 1 July 1977.

The four week long KC-135 aircrew ground school required for checkout was normally conducted at the CCTS school at Castle. Because only a small number of the unit's aircrews could arrange to be away from their civilian employment for that extended period of time, the course was streamlined to a fifteen-day period, and conducted at home station by six CCTS instructors. This was indeed a fine gesture on the part of SAC, greatly reducing the overall transition time required of each of the aircrews. It should be understood that, even though the course time was reduced, none of the subject material was removed. Also, the testing for course completion remained unchanged. The crews simply had to apply themselves more diligently.

The KC-135 aircrew simulator moved into place on a railroad siding on Neville Island with two qualified instructor pilots on-board. SAC designed some of its simulators to be mobile, mounted on two standard railroad cars, and moved from base to base to meet training requirements. Instructor and maintenance crew quarters were one for each KC-135 crew position, and nine aircraft maintenance specialists assisted us with hands-on training. They provided the link between the technical manuals and actual performance of the job during the early familiarization period. Many techniques were passed on which could not be found in the books, saving us from reinventing the wheel. They remained for approximately two years and performed an important service during the early days.

With all this high-powered help being so graciously bestowed by SAC and the NGB, the KC-135 transition might have taken on the trappings of a cake walk. Not so when one becomes conversant with the time-phased objectives which were carved in stone. We were given twelve months to restore the unit to a fully-qualified combat-ready status as a SAC refueling unit, with definite steps of progression at the sixth, ninth and twelfth-month intervals. The first and most aggressive milestone, 31 December 1977, required us to have eight trained

mission-ready aircrews, be capable of mustering eight operationally-ready aircraft on short notice, and have developed detailed operating procedures that would assure an orderly preparation and launch of the entire fleet. There was a valid reason driving this aggressive schedule. Each of the eight aircraft assigned to the unit had been part of SAC's strategic strike force but lost from that important mission until the 171st could train itself to assume a SAC alert posture.

By September, the last KC-135 was on-board. The maintenance crews had completed all required FTD training and had quickly increased knowledge and proficiency with 135 maintenance procedures. The majority of the aircrews had completed ground school and the simulator and were standing in line eagerly awaiting their turn for checkout. SAC provided three CCTS instructor aircrews that remained with us for a six-month period. All flight instruction was provided by these personnel, and supplemented by the air advisor folks. This was the first in the unit's history of seven previous aircraft conversions, that all aircrews were instructed by someone other than our own people. It was an excellent way of doing business. The first milestone could not possibly have been attained without this support.

Unit aircraft conversion periods are always the most time-demanding on all functional areas. Training our personnel to achieve full readiness in such a compressed time period demanded everyone's best foot forward to maintain secure, and fly the aircraft at SAC-directed standards. However, one additional detailed and complex function, Emergency War Order (EWO) especially had to be learned from the ground up. Without it, the best KC-135 aircraft and crew would be of little use in a wartime situation. The EWO spells out exactly why, when, where, and how the unit's total resources would be employed in "The Big One."

The Operations Plans section was responsible for: first, becoming expert in all EWO functions and then secondly, to establish the unit training program and train all aircrews in EWO. This lengthy process was started in March 1977 several months before the first KC-135 arrived and was not completed until December 1977.

While the aircrews were driving their way through the aircraft checkout, they were also required to enter into EWO training. Even in a spoon-fed mode, the EWO portion had to be a steady, on-going diet over a period of time in order to effectively digest all required procedures.

The OPS staff guys also had the job of familiarizing other unit personnel involved in EWO preparations and aircraft launch activities. Endless unit operating procedures had to be developed and practiced to assure a smooth safe and effective operation when the whistle blew.

Up to this point, only the ground phase of the ORI has been reviewed. The flying phase, which is accomplished throughout the year, has a direct impact on the aforementioned ratings. The unit receives notification from SAC stipulating dates, times, routes etc., for each ORI sortie. Crews are selected and aircraft configured for the flight. A typical ORI sortie closely resembles a wartime situation, but of shorter duration. Timing, aircrew and aircraft performance is crucial. Two hours prior to the established takeoff time, the specific aircraft tail number must be declared to SAC. No substitutes allowed. For the

sortie to be rated effective, the aircraft and all its systems must be fully operative, the aircraft must take-off on its scheduled time, rendezvous with the bomber at the specified time and place, offload the required fuel, continue on a specified route and finally return to home base. Any deviations are cause for sortie downgrading. To date, the 171st has not lost a sortie, nor had a single ORI sortie declared ineffective. High tribute must be paid to both aircrew and maintenance personnel for attaining this fine record.

As previously noted, shortage of administrative, operations, maintenance and storage facilities was being addressed by the NGB. A thorough base facilities requirements study had been completed in-house. The study results were hand-carried to the Bureau for review. The dire base construction needs were confirmed, followed by a base construction plan commencing in 1972 and continuing into 1981. During that period, sixteen major construction projects were funded and completed at a cost of \$10 million. Each additional piece of construction made life easier. However, two projects stand out as being the most helpful by improving overall working conditions and efficiency: the additions and renovation of both hangars, and the Fuel Storage/Dispensing System.

However, during construction, the projects were most disruptive to the day-to-day operation of both the 171st and 112th for over two years while each unit was in its respective aircraft conversion. But as each portion of the hangars was completed and re-inhabited, the contractor's noise and dust were quickly forgotten.

The highlight of 1978, after the ORI, and after the CEVG, was dispensing JP-4 from our first and very own fuel storage facility. For twenty-nine years, each gallon of aviation fuel had been transported by the refueling troops from the Air Force Reserve fuel dump, a total of 11.6 miles round-trip on the Parkway. The most remarkable aspect is that an incalculable number of trips were made on the dangerous Parkway system with loaded fuel trucks, yet without a single accident. In addition to a good driver training program, someone surely was looking over us. By mid-1980, all units were finally bedded down and operating in a normal manner, not giving any thought to facilities of the past.

The original plan is still unfolding. A temporary funding deficiency delayed several major projects, which now appear to be just around the corner. The addition and renovation of the Headquarters Building will provide adequate operating space for the Combat Support Squadron, Communications Flight and the Dispensary. A Munitions Maintenance and Storage Building will finally allow Rock O'Hara and his troops to move into a brand new facility, rather than an old hand-me-down. And if the NGB funding support will hold on for one more year, a combination 171st Avionics and Fire Station facility will follow. A tip of the hat would be an appropriate gesture to the Civil Engineering troops.

Two improvements in the KC-135 fleet are worthy of mention, the first being modifications made to the basic KC-135A as first received in 1977. The latest state-of-art transistorized UHF Radio and Radar systems were installed, greatly improving system performance and reliability. The navigators were the recipients of an Inertial Navigation System, as well as a Doppler Navigation System, each complementing the other, markedly improving aircraft positioning accuracy on a global basis. A wing re-skin program has increased the life of the airframe into the next

century, a good indication of the planned operational use of the 135. The most significant improvement to its operational capability has been the ANG re-engining program from the J-57 to the more efficient JT3D, with the attendant related systems modernization. The increase in engine thrust with improved fuel efficiency has substantially increased its offload capability. In addition, the old, troublesome water injection system will never be missed.

The second noteworthy improvement was one which takes place after each aircraft conversion, normally referred to as Air Guard maintenance. As the maintainers' knowledge and proficiency increased, the mechanical condition and outward appearance of the fleet improved with each phase inspection. No two aircraft flew the same when first assigned. After being subjected to better inspection, re-rigging the flight controls, repairing slip-shod maintenance performed in years past and applying common sense maintenance practices, assigned aircraft now have a similar feel, fully appreciated by the pilots. However, the most important product of the 171st CAM is the reliability built into the machine by good maintenance. ORI and deployment results are the proof of the pudding. Deployed aircrews derive great satisfaction knowing they are operating reliable equipment, especially on a dark night in the middle of the Atlantic: definitely one of the strengths of the 171st.

Both maintenance and aircrew had a good handle on the peculiarities of this beast and treated it with the respect it deserved.

In May of 1957, each unit deployed to the Savannah, GA field training site for seven days of air-to-air gunnery. Good daytime weather prevailed for gunnery, and southern hospitality at night resulted in an excellent exercise.

Again, in July, the entire 112th FIW deployed to Hancock Field for summer camp.

A dawn-to-dusk flying schedule with fine range weather culminated the deployment with all old heads requalified and several very proud young bucks in the qualified ranks. The basic training flight operated their normal fifteen hour day, completing the training of eighty troops. This was the last big effort, since basic training spaces were again reinstated by the Air Force.

In November 1957, the Annual CONAC Inspection visit was satisfactorily completed. The unit was also alerted to another aircraft change. The 146th was being converted to the F-86L allweather fighter while the 147th was to convert to a later model F-84F. As it turned out, the change in the 84F models was short-lived. In March 1958, the last "Hogs" departed for other ANG fighter units and the 147th was also equipped with the F-86L.

Ironically, the day immediately following the AFOUA ceremony was faced with mixed emotions and even sadness. Because there was a decrease in the number of air defense units, the 112th ADW Headquarters was deactivated. Again, because of an increase in air transport requirements, the 171st Air Transport Wing was activated the day after.

As a result of these actions, the 171st Aeromedical Airlift Wing was redesignated as the 171st Air Refueling Wing (ARW) in October of 1972, transitioning from the C-121G to the KC-97L.

Even though the official unit redesignation as the 171st Air Refueling Wing was established in October 1972, initial conversion actions were implemented during the summer months. At this point in time, all KC-97's were assigned only to Air Guard units. The 171st aircrew and maintenance conversion training requirements were satisfied by other ANG tanker units. The initial cadre of pilots, flight engineers and loadmasters, now to be cross-trained as Boom Operators, spent one month in ground school with the Utah Air Guard. These same crews then Navigator upgrade training from the C-121 to the KC-97 was less demanding. Two navigators underwent a checkout on refueling rendezvous procedures with the 160th and, in turn, trained the remaining navigators at home base. The first KC-97 arrived in August, providing the future aircrew instructors with additional flying hours needed for official instructor status. The ANG's KC-97 FTD was in place in September for six weeks to provide ground training to the bulk of the aircrews and maintenance personnel. The last C-121 departed the base in October, while the last KC-97 was on board in December. The conversion was off and running.

The first full year of tanker operation, 1973, was busy and productive. Each functional area became intimately involved in meeting established milestones for unit combat readiness. Mobility became the center of activity. This new wrinkle required the unit to develop a mobility plan which would spell out in great detail procedures for processing personnel and material as a package to support a 90-day deployment to any theater of operations. To meet critical time-frames imposed by TAG mobility standards, each individual assigned to a mobility position

In September, the unit confronted its last conversion milestone: being declared operationally ready. This meant the TAG Operational Readiness Inspection team was gearing up for its first visit to evaluate all the hard work performed by the 171st over the past year. They arrived en masse during the October UTA and laid it on us. Two days of refueling missions followed, flying all aircraft each day, while simultaneously demonstrating our skill in executing the mobility phase, which was interspersed with numerous "Mickey Mouse" inspection team problems. The unit combat readiness status was subsequently verified by a Satisfactory rating. Complimentary remarks in the report raised our spirits and translated all the hard work into a satisfying experience. By successfully passing the TAG ORI standards, the unit was now allowed to participate in tactical deployments world-wide.

Little contact was had with our new gaining command. To prove that they had not forgotten about the 171st, a SAC Eval Team spent one week in November flying with our aircrews. During the December UTA, the SAC IG visited with their checklists. It was an excellent opportunity for 171st personnel to start their indoctrination into the SAC way of doing business. Things were not going to be the same. We could feel the heavy hand approaching.

Another important high-cost construction project was underway in January, 1977. A Jet Fuel Storage and Pressurized Dispensing System, with six underground refueling pits located on the aircraft parking ramp, was designed to support the heavy fuel loads of the KG-135. Also in this time-frame, the 171st was alerted of the impending aircraft change. After the official conversion announcement, planning actions quickly assumed full power settings. The 171st was relieved of all KC-97 wartime tasking in April, which then allowed all unit

efforts to be devoted to the changeover. Two KC-97's were transferred out in April, and the first KG-135 arrived in June.

The 171st was ninth of thirteen Air Guard units scheduled to convert. Being in the rear of the pack had with it the advantage of evading the soft spots encountered by the earlier converting units, and allowed time to avoid similar mistakes. Even though the official conversion date was 1 July 1977, our first aircrew departed for Combat Crew Training School (CCTS) at Castle AFB, California, as early as September, 1976, with others to follow in the months ahead.

On July 1, 1976, the Wing received notice of reassignment to the Strategic Air Command (SAC). A year later, the Wing transitioned to the KC-135A, a four-engine jet aircraft. This was a significant upgrade, increasing our air refueling capacity and expanding our global mission capability. In 1982, the ANG increased its mission capability through an interim program by retrofitting commercial Boeing 707 engines to their tankers redesignating the aircraft to the KC-135E. Just last year, the wing converted to the KC-135R enabling us even greater global reach and continuity in the Total Force.

In December, 1976, a large contingent of the SAC staff visited the base and conducted a detailed pre-conversion conference. In attendance were representatives of 8th Air Force, 45th Air Division, 416th Bomb Wing and the National Guard Bureau. Their help, so generously provided, was overwhelming. Not only did they outnumber us, but the information imparted was more like a two-week ration absorbed in a two-day visit. Fortunately for us, adequate written advisories were provided to fill in most areas of concern. At this point in time, the 171st planning commenced in earnest.

SAC also introduced a novel and very effective management tool by designating a SAC Bomb Wing as an advisory unit to each converting Air Guard unit. The 416th Bomb Wing, Griffiss AFB NY, was our overseer.

In July 1977, the Commander 171AREW, was afforded the high privilege of accepting the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with the other ANG tanker commanders for Creek Party services rendered to USAFE. The fourth AFOUA.

Members of the 171 ARW volunteered for duty in Saudi Arabia in order to participate in air refueling missions for Operation Desert Shield. These operations were upgraded to a full federal activation in December 1990 through May 1991. During this period over 300 members of the unit were deployed throughout the world in numerous functions supporting both Desert Shield and Desert Storm. During this period the 171st ARW refueled nearly 3,000 allied aircraft while stationed near the Iraqi border in support of Operation Desert Storm. Maintaining a remarkable 100% mission effectiveness rate, the 171st flew 556 combat missions and offloaded 4.6 million gallons of fuel during the Gulf War.

On October 1, 1993, the 112th ARG was deactivated resulting in the loss of 305 military and 65 civilian positions. This resulted in the 146th once again reuniting with the 147th under the

same flag. The 171st presently has 16 aircraft assigned making it one of only three Super Tanker Wings within the Air National Guard. This wing structure provides the resources for the 171st ARW to maintain its Global Air Refueling Mission well into the 21st century. In May 1999, the 171st activated over 500 members and fourteen aircraft to Budapest, Hungary and Frankfurt, Germany, in support of Operation Allied Force deterring ethnic aggressions in Yugoslavia. The 171st became part of the 171st Expeditionary Operations Group that flew 411 sorties and refueled 2,157 receivers. All members returned home by the beginning of July 1999. In November of 2000, the 171st deployed 228 personnel to Istres, France in support of Operation Joint Forge, a NATO-led stabilization mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. During this deployment the crews flew 51 sorties in seven of our KC-135s, and offloaded 1.4 million pounds of fuel.

In February 1964, the 171st Air Transport Group was formed at Greater Pittsburgh Airport flying the C-121 Constellation as a component of the Military Air Transport Service (MATTS). Upon formation, the 147th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron was reassigned from the 112th and redesignated as the 147th Air Transport Squadron.

In 1968, the unit was redesignated as the 171st Aeromedical Airlift Group as part of Military Airlift Command (MAC), the first of its kind in the Air National Guard (ANG) and re-equipped with the C-131 Samaritan. Later that year, the 171st was called to active duty to augment the airlift capability of the 375th Aeromedical Airlift Wing. Their mission was to move patients from casualty staging bases and military installations in South Vietnam to destination treatment hospitals. The Wing flew 35% of these missions, flying 510 sorties and airlifting 11,947 patients. The unit was finally released from active duty in December of 1968.

During this same time frame, the 112th Fighter Interceptor Group flew the F-102A Delta Dagger for Air Defense Command. In 1975 the 112th received its first A-7D Corsair II aircraft and was reassigned to the Tactical Air Command.

Beginning in 1991, the 112th Tactical Fighter Group became the 112th Air Refueling Group (ARG). The Strategic Air Command was deactivated in June of 1992 and the 171st ARW and the 112th ARG became a part of the Air Mobility Command (AMC). On October 1, 1993, the 112th ARG was deactivated resulting in the loss of 305 military and 65 civilian positions. This resulted in the 146th once again reuniting with the 147th under the same flag.

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In addition to participating in numerous deployments and exercises, the 171st found itself among the first units called to duty almost immediately after the terrorist attacks in New York City, Washington D.C. and in our own backyard here in southwestern Pennsylvania on 11 September 2001. The Wing was in a stand-down mode, while nearly all of its assigned aircraft were being converted to with the new Pacer-Crag cockpit and navigation upgrade. Suddenly, all the rules changed.

Within minutes of the first aircraft crashes, the 171st Air Refueling Wing was airborne with its only flyable KC-135E. Its mission was to provide aerial refueling to the fuel-thirsty jet fighter aircraft that were providing Combat Air Patrols (CAPs) over the skies of the eastern United States. On the ground back in Pittsburgh, the maintainers and aircrews of the 171st shifted gears from the learning and conversion mode to what they know and do best; making their aircraft airworthy and then keeping them flying. Almost seamlessly, the 171st went into a wartime footing. Within 24 hours after the first attacks, the 171st was flying round-the-clock CAPs support sorties with eight Fully Mission Capable KC-135s. Before the continuous CAP missions were ended in early 2002, more than 13,000 combat missions were flown over U.S. soil.

Lineage

Established as 171st Air Transport Group and activated, 1 February 1964

Re-designated: 171st Aeromedical Airlift Group, 19 January 1968

Re-designated: 171st Air Refueling Group, 1 October 1972

Re-designated: 171st Air Refueling Wing, 1 June 1992-Present

Assignments

Operationally gained by: Military Air Transport Service , 1 February 1964

Military Airlift Command, 8 January 1966

Strategic Air Command, 1 October 1972

Air Mobility Command , 1 June 1992-Present

Aircraft

C-121G Super Constellation, 1964–1972

KC-97L Stratotanker, 1972–1977

KC-135A Stratotanker (1977–1982)

KC-135E Stratotanker (1982–2004)

KC-135T Stratotanker (2004–Present)

Headquarters, 53rd Fighter Wing

112th Fight Interceptor Group

212th Air Service Group

553rd Air Force Band

These units were to be headquartered at Harrisburg Airport (now the Capitol City Airport) in New Cumberland. The 112th Fighter Group was divided into 3 squadrons to be located in key cities in Pennsylvania. To each fighter squadron was assigned a detachment of the 212th Air Service Group to support the mission aircraft as well as a weather station. The 112th Fighter Group would look like this:

PITTSBURGH, PA

146th Fighter Squadron Detachment A, 212th Air Service Group Utility Flight 146th Weather Station

SCRANTON, PA

147th Fighter Squadron Detachment B, 212th Air Service Group Utility Flight 147th Weather Station

READING, PA

148th Fighter Squadron

Detachment C, 212th Air Service Group

Utility Flight

148th Weather Station

It was the 148th Fighter Squadron that became a part of the history and lineage of our present 193rd Special Operations Group.

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 17 Dec 2010

Updated:

Sources