

# Flight Line

**The Official Publication of the CAF**

Southern California Wing  
455 Aviation Drive, Camarillo, CA 93010  
(805) 482-0064



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© Photo by Dick Benchley

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HAPPY NEW YEAR



© Photo courtesy of Clayton Rutkowski

Lorrie Rutkowski and her son Clayton, who have worked diligently in improving the landscaping in front of our hangars. Clayton is a Boy Scout in Troop #225 – sponsored by the United Methodist Church of Camarillo. Our landscaping improvement is Clayton's project toward earning an Eagle Scout Award. He will be honored at our Wing Staff meeting on January 16, 2010. See page 3 for more on the landscaping project.

**Wing Staff Meeting, Saturday, January 16, 2010 at 9:30 a.m. at the  
CAF Museum Hangar, 455 Aviation Drive, Camarillo Airport**

**Our CAF Mission: To Honor American Military Aviation Through Flight, Exhibition and Remembrance.**

# January 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Museum Open</b> 10am to 4pm Every Day Except Monday and major holidays					1 New Year's Day Museum Closed	2 Work Day
3	4 Museum Closed	5 Work Day	6	7 Work Day	8	9 Work Day
10	11 Museum Closed	12 Work Day	13	14 Work Day	15	16 Wing Staff Meeting 9:30
17	18 Museum Closed	19 Work Day	20	21 Work Day	22	23 Work Day
24	25 Museum Closed	26 Work Day	27	28 Work Day	29	30 Work Day
31	<b>Museum Open</b> 10am to 4pm Every Day Except Monday and major holidays					

<b>STAFF AND APPOINTED POSITIONS</b>				<b>IN THIS ISSUE</b>
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* Denotes Staff Position				

## Wing Leader's Report

by Shirley Murphy



Happy New Year to the "troops" of the So. Cal. Wing. As you know, the year 2009 was a difficult one. Our country is trying to regain a solid financial base. Our Wing is no different. We are facing challenges that will take hard work from all of us to put our Wing in a positive flight plan.

The early history of our Wing reads like an Indiana Jones novel. Our members who stepped forward to gain what we have now, did it in a barnstorming, open cockpit style. Goggles in place, and their silk scarf streaming back over their shoulder. Through the years, our Wing has progressed in size, both in the number of aircraft and in structures.

Thanks to the efforts of our members, we have progressed from the small wooden "nose" hangar to the current two-hangar complex. We have evolved into a major operation that must now be run in a business-like manner in order to survive. The "barnstorming days" are over, and, as we begin a new year, we must make a commitment to recognize the importance of working as a cohesive unit.

As your Wing Leader, I hereby make the commitment, not to micro-manage, but rather to work to make your assignments run smoothly. As we progress, it is even more important to recognize and honor the regulations and procedures in order to avoid the covert actions that have happened in the past. The "hidden agendas", even though well-intentioned, have contributed to our severe financial situation with which we now have to deal.

It is time for more members to come forward to be active in the Wing operations, as well as to recruit new members. As your Wing Leader, I stand ready to help find a place in the Wing operations that will meet your skills and available time. Let your friends and business associates know the importance of our program.

Remember, we form the bridge between the veterans of the past to their children (the adults of today), and on to the youth who represent our country's future. And so, my friends, stand tall and help us make this a successful year ahead.

Wishing you and yours a great 2010!

## Clayton's Eagle Scout Project



© Photo by Russ Drosendahl

**Clayton (center) with his mom Lorrie and his grandpa Michael Merewether. This was the project beginning.**

Clayton Rutkowski, a freshman at Ventura College, and a member of Boy Scout Troop #225, Camarillo, has completed a project to qualify him for the highest award in scouting – the Eagle Scout Award.

And our Wing is the beneficiary of that project. When you visit our hangars, notice the wonderful plants, shrubs and trees that now adorn the south side of our facilities. These were all planted by Clayton and his family and friends from the Boy Scout Troop #225, which is sponsored by the United Methodist Church of Camarillo.

All the work in designing, digging, planting and watering was donated by Clayton, his mom Lorrie, and their friends and family. Nurseries and other establishments that donated plants and materials to the project included:

Agromin, B&B Hardware, Baron's Nursery, Camarillo Plumbing & Paint, Dobson's, Griselda's, Hartley's, Home Depot, Performance Growers, Plant Warehouse, and U-Rent. Thanks to these generous folks for their donations!

Our Wing will honor Clayton, his mom, and his troop #225 at our next Staff Meeting on January 16, 2010.



© Photo by Dave Flood

**Some of the landscaping installed by Clayton, including Cassia & Robina trees, sage & lantana.**

## Wine & Wings Special Event by Dave Flood

On November 14, 2009, our Wing held a very special event, the Wine & Wings Wine Tasting Event in our Museum Hangar.

The members involved in creating and staging the very successful event were Steve Barber, Jr., Mark Storer, Vern Olson, Sarah de Bree, Ceci Stratford and Pat Brown, along with Ron Fleishman, Gary Barber, Shirley Murphy, Lloyd McAfee and others who helped immeasurably in setting up the Museum Hangar and cleaning up and taking the planes back into the hangar after the event.

Six local wineries were featured at the tasting event, each having a table where they displayed their wines and provided tastings. The wineries included: *Old Creek Ranch Winery* of Ojai; *Bella Victorian Vineyard and Winery* of Camarillo; *Cantara Cellars* of Camarillo; *Stafford Premium Wines* of Camarillo; and *Martha's Vineyard West* of Santa Paula. Those attending were impressed with the quality of our local wines, and the wineries felt they had excellent exposure to potential customers with this event.

Approximately 150 people attended the event, and enjoyed the delectable hors d'oeuvres provided by Chef Tim Kilcoyne of the Sidecar Restaurant of Ventura.

Our vintage airplanes provided a perfect backdrop to the vintage wine tasting gathering, and many people attending remarked on what a wonderful display of aircraft we have in our WWII Aviation Museum.

Steve, Jr., Mark and Vern plan to make this event an annual happening at our Museum Hangar, and look forward to much bigger attendances in the future. Keep watching, as we will be making the announcement of our next Wine & Wings event in our *Flight Line*.



© Photo by Ron Fleishman

**Sarah de Bree, our Museum Director, along with her husband Casey, our Finance Officer, talking with Stephanie Russell, wife of our PBJ Crew Chief Marc.**



© Photo by Ron Fleishman

**One of the local wineries, Bella Victorian Vineyard, displaying their wares at the Wine & Wings event.**



© Photo by Ron Fleishman

**Here's a cook from the Sidecar Restaurant giving out goodies as the attendees tasted the local wines.**



© Photo by Ron Fleishman

**Wing Leader Shirley Murphy, along with Lloyd McAfee, Gary and Nancy Barber, enjoying good conversation with their wines and appetizers. The Wine & Wings event was a real money-maker for the Wing, and everyone involved is to be commended for their effort.**

## Wing Photo Page I: Christmas Party



© Photo by Dave Flood

**Wing Leader Shirley Murphy welcoming everyone to our annual Christmas Party – held at the Wedgewood Banquet Center, Ventura on December 3.**



© Photo by Dave Flood

**Some of the members enjoying the festive atmosphere at our Christmas Party. About 65 people attended.**



© Photo by Dave Flood

**Jim Tierney presenting a CAF award to Ken Gottschall**



© Photo by Dave Flood

**Ceci Stratord receiving an award for selling the most tickets to our Wine & Wings event. Steve Barber, Jr. is presenting the award to Ceci.**



© Photo by Dave Flood

**David Baker, our resident auctioneer, doing his usual wonderful repartee in selling off the "white elephants" to the willing donors – making money for our Wing.**



© Photo by Dave Flood

**Sue Evans, Charlie Valentine's daughter, receiving a memorial in honor of Charlie from Shirley Murphy.**

## The Reluctant Extra-Vehicular Activity, EVA - (in 1952!)

*Thanks to Gary Graham and the Spokane Spokesman-Review*

On a bone-chilling, miserably windy day in 1952, Capt. Fred C. Seals, Jr. fell out of his airplane – right out the side door of his C-46 Commando. He was four hundred feet over the snow-covered ground – during the Korean War.

Improbably, Seals lived through the experience. Exactly how he survived led to the story's retelling on *Ripley's Believe It Or Not*. To this day, old men stop him and ask him if it was really true.

Seals lived for one very simple reason – he fell right back into the door of the C-46 Commando.

Seals, then the Executive Officer of a squadron in Seoul, became a bit of a reluctant celebrity, thrown into the role by the vagaries of the wind, and an open 6-foot-wide door in the side of a cargo plane.

"It became like hearing about some other guy," Seals said, "it didn't even seem like it was about me." Seals is 83 years old now, a retired colonel and wing commander who lives in Norman, Oklahoma.

A 1944 graduate of Texas A&M University, he saw three wars from the "front row" – as a B-17 pilot over Germany during WWII; as a recalled pilot for the Korean War; and as a cargo pilot flying out of Da Nang during the Vietnam War. He even flew B-29 Superfortresses over Germany during the Berlin Airlift in 1948 and '49 – just in case the Russians invaded West Berlin.

But Seals will always be known for a mission in March, 1952 in South Korea to resupply troops manning radar sites near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.

The wind, howling at 50 m.p.h., and dropping the temperature below zero, pitched the twin-engine airplane up and down, back and forth, and kept blowing the pallets thrown out the side door of the plane way off course.

The crew in the back of the plane got so sick they could not keep working. Seals, the pilot, unstrapped his seat belt, told the co-pilot, the late Walt Dyer, a former Dallas police detective, to take over – and walked to the back of the plane to kick the cargo out himself.

"The plane was bouncing 15, 20 feet at a time and fishtailing," Seals said. "I'm trying to hang on. Before the co-pilot could give the green light to drop the cargo, the plane dropped and fishtailed again and it went right out from under me."

Seals remembered two thoughts he had very clearly as he looked down and saw only ground below: "Watch out for the horizontal stabilizer," and "which way is North Korea?"

"Then all of a sudden I'm back in the plane on my hands and knees," he said. "Now I really am disoriented!"

With Seals safe for the moment, the plane plummeted again and a pallet of fuel oil dropped on his left foot, breaking it. To this day, Seals is unsure how long he hung in the air outside the plane – obviously just a few seconds, but "long enough for me to orient myself."

He also isn't sure exactly what happened, except to guess that the airplane dropped and fishtailed again and "scooped me back in."

As the amazed Air Force crew members watched, Seals stumbled back into the cockpit and scared Dyer, who had been told over the intercom that his commander had fallen out of the plane.

"After the news got out, I got cards and letters from people all over the world. Men I'd served with who wondered if I was the same Fred C. Seals that they knew." He was able to answer them, "Yes, that's me!"

*Editor's Note: Thanks to Ron Fleishman for finding this story in his never-ending quest to find interesting historical anecdotes about WWII airplanes – and about the C-46 in particular.*



**The C-46 Commando - much like Capt. Fred Seals's plane that dropped him out and then pulled him back into its fuselage through the cargo door – except the photo above is in much calmer weather.**

**Our own Curtiss C-46 Commando – *China Doll* – is a restored version of this famous aircraft that was used in so many ways during World War II and the Korean War – as well by various airlines after WWII. C-46s are still used daily by Everts Aviation in flying all kinds of cargo between remote airfields in Alaska, in all kinds of weather and into and out of all kinds of airfields, large and small.**

**We plan to do a future story about C-46s and other planes which flew with the clandestine *Air America* in Southeast Asia after WWII.**

## Wing Photo Page II

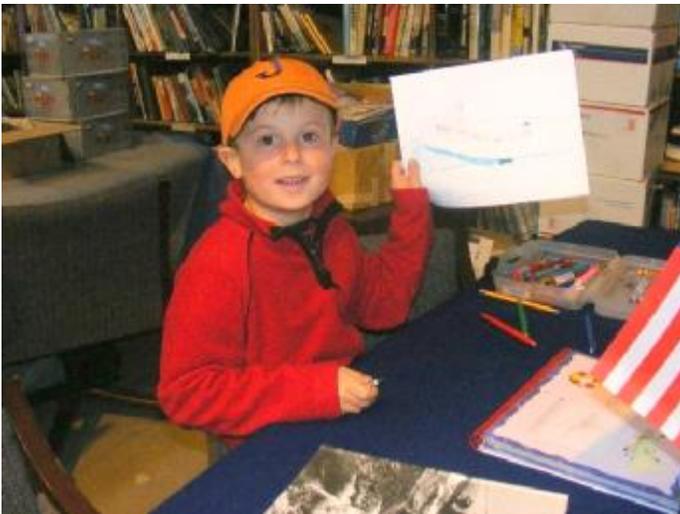


© Photo by Dave Flood

The painting now hanging over the Docent Desk is called "Legends of Combat," and is by Ron Grinnell. It celebrates the sixth annual American Combat Airman Hall of Fame banquet of the Commemorative Air Force on October 4, 2002.

The main aircraft in the painting is our F6F-5 Hellcat, and is shown being flown by Lt. CDR. James E. Duffy, USN (Ret.) Other inductees to the Airman Hall of Fame and their planes included:

Lt. Col. John F. Bolt, USMC (Ret.) – F86F  
Brig. Gen. Frank L. Gailer, Jr., USAF (Ret.) – P-51D  
AVCM Glenn H. Lane, USN (Ret.) – OS2U Kingfisher  
Lt. Col. Donald S. Lopez, USAF (Ret.) – P-40N  
1<sup>st</sup> Lt. James F. Luma, USAAF, RCAF (Ret.) – Mosquito  
Brig. Gen. Robert L. Scott, USAF (Ret.) – P-40F  
Brig. Gen. William W. Spruance, USAF (Ret.) – C-46



© Photo by Dave Flood

Introducing Douglas Joys, a six-year-old first grader who is one of our "Artists in Residence." Here he is showing his drawing of a missile cruiser. Great job, Douglas! He and his dad Bill are frequent visitors to our WWII Aviation Museum.



© Photo courtesy of Gloria Troy

Our C-46 Crew at the Edwards AFB Show: (from left) Dick Updegraff, Bill O'Neill, Terry Cedar, Gloria Troy, Dick Troy, Gene O'Neal and Ken Gottschall. We're hopeful that *China Doll* will remain a Wing fixture.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Let's see, the square peg goes into the round hole? Scott Drosos doing his thing with riveting on one of the PBJ's wings. Progress is slow but sure.

## Now Hear This ! Security Breaches!

by Shirley Murphy

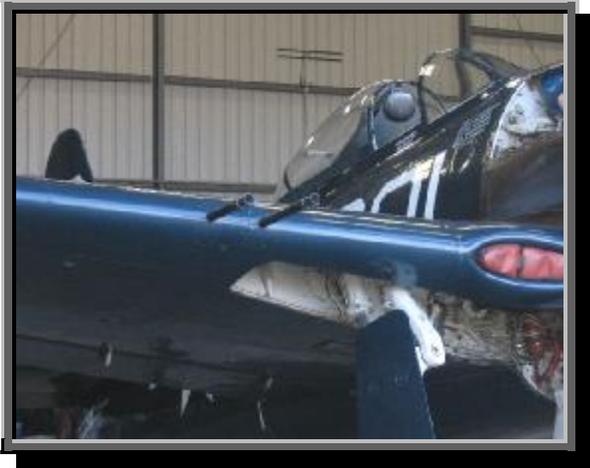
A recent incident in which our hangars were left wide open during a Monday while the several members who had been working on planes went for lunch serves to bring to our attention the damage and theft that could have been wreaked upon our Wing as a result.

In no case will the hangars be left open and doors unlocked when no one is present to maintain security – even for a few minutes.

We cannot, and will not, tolerate security lapses at our facilities. Everyone has to cooperate with these security measures. Our planes, our museum displays, our equipment, our library, our tools, our gift shop inventory are all too valuable to place them in jeopardy of theft or damage.

## Quentin Hall's Aero Pictography

Every year kids at my school might want to enter a contest (2009 - 2010 National PTA Reflections Program) which has poetry, writing, picture drawing, photography, music and choreography. I chose photography. I took a picture of two planes and I wrote two articles to go with the pictures. I have included both below. I went out to the WWII museum at the Camarillo Airport. I took a tour around the airport with the veteran host. I took pictures of propellers and the inside of a C-46 Commando "China Doll" cockpit. I also got to sit in the pilot's seat. It made me feel like I was carrying lots of men in a cargo plane. When the tour was over I got a free poster and my mom bought me a toy.



© Photo by Quentin Hall

### BEAUTY IS:

*Wing: The wing helps the plane to tilt or go up.*



© Photo by Quentin Hall

### BEAUTY IS:

*Power: Beauty is making the plane go. Power makes the plane go so it can fight for freedom during flight.*

Quentin Stewart Hall  
Six years old – Second Grade  
Santa Rosa Technology Magnet School  
Camarillo, CA

## From Dentistry To Detail

Thanks to: [www.craftsmanshipmuseum.com/park.htm](http://www.craftsmanshipmuseum.com/park.htm)



© Photo by Craftsmanship Museum

**Young C. Park of Honolulu, Hawaii is a retired dentist. Here at work in his shop, he holds the partially-completed fuselage of an F4U Corsair.**

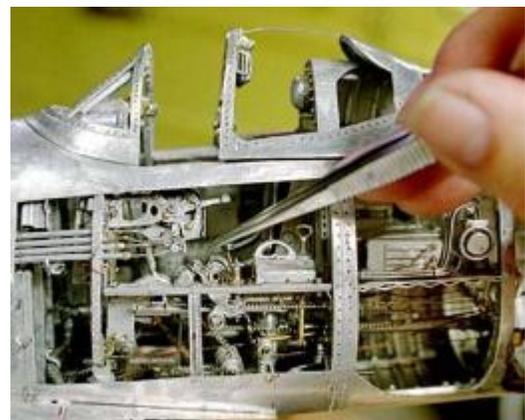
Park has been an aircraft modeler since childhood, He is now fulfilling a lifetime dream of making an airplane model all out of aluminum.

He says it is less important that his parts be technically perfect than it is that they "look and fit right." In fact, it is in the fit of all the complicated parts where his art really comes to light.



© Photo by Craftsmanship Museum/Young Park photo

**Young Park's P-51, like the first Corsair, is paneled on the right side and cut away on the left side to show all the internal workings. The details are extraordinary.**



© Photo by George F. Lee, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*

Using tweezers, the controls can be moved. All cables and linkages can work the wing control surfaces.

## Wing Photo Page III: Riders In The Sky



© Photo by Dan Newcomb

**Scott Drosos, the 747-400 captain who finally gets to ride back-seat in a North American P-51D Mustang. He went up on December 16 with Gary Barber as the pilot. The piece below is by Dan Newcomb.**

It was getting late and the sun would soon be down. Darkness comes quickly this time of the year and as I stood out on the ramp getting colder by the minute I was starting to get a little frustrated. It seemed like with all of the slow movers in the pattern the Mustang would never get takeoff clearance. Scott might never get this chance again.

Finally, as the last rays were fading, they launched and left the pattern. After heaving a sigh of relief, I noticed that the delay in taking off actually was going to be of great benefit. If they timed it right, their return to the pattern with the sun below the high cloud deck would make for a spectacular sunset! It did not disappoint!

Several minutes later I heard that wonderful, unmistakable sound of a Merlin off to the east. Gary made his low pass in the twilight and pulled up into a carnival of color. The reflections of the sky on the fuselage made the airplane look like an impressionist painting.

The orange and pink hues were rapidly changing to deep purples as Gary shut the Merlin down. Darkness was falling but one thing was clearly visible in the twilight.

Scotty's smile.



© Photo by Dan Newcomb



© Photo by Dan Newcomb

**Gary and Scott ready to taxi out to the CMA runway. David Price has generously left his P-51D "Cottonmouth" here with us for awhile, and a number of volunteers have gotten the "rides of their lives."**



© Photo by Dan Newcomb

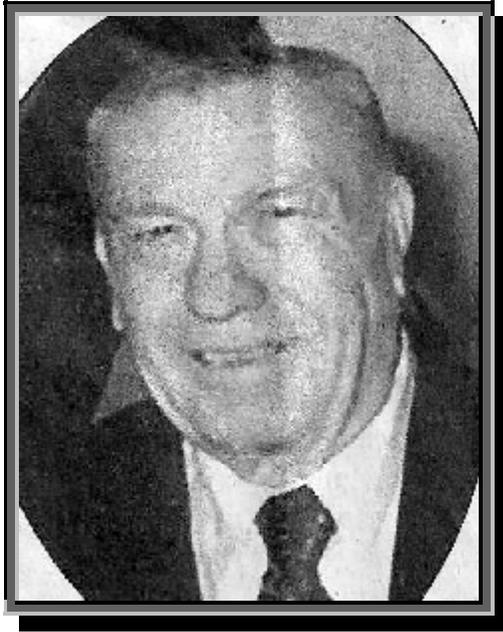
**Gary Barber (left) and Alan Gaynor strap Jim Hinckley in for his memorable ride in the Mustang. Jim has been creating panels of photos dedicated to the Wing's planes and personnel within the Restoration Hangar. They will be the subject of a future story.**



© Photo by Dan Newcomb

**Here Gary and Alan are readying the P-51 for another flight, this time with Jim Hinckley aboard. The Mustang has generated a great degree of interest not only in our members, but in the visiting public. It definitely is a drawing card for our WWII Aviation Museum. Many thanks to David Price for allowing us to have "Cottonmouth" for a little while!**

## In Memoriam: Robert Matye



**Robert Matye  
1923-2009**

Mark Matye's dad Robert passed away recently at the age of 86. Robert was a supremely gifted aviator and a fiercely aggressive fighter pilot in WWII

Only a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, he was recommended by his P-38 Group Commander to an interview process to select pilots for a classified project in 1944. He was selected over hundreds of other applicants to test America's first jet-powered fighter, the Bell XP-59 Airacomet. He also flew the Lockheed XP-80 and the P-80A Shooting Star.



**The Bell XP-59 Airacomet – the U.S.'s first jet fighter**

Robert was selected by Col. David "Tex" Hill, the ace of *Flying Tiger* fame, to be the special fighter group's public flight demonstration pilot. His jaw-dropping, high-speed, low-level aerobatic displays earned him the life-long call sign of "P-80 Matye."

After WWII, Robert was a charter member of the CA Air National Guard, flying P-51Ds out of Van Nuys Airport. He was chosen by the government to fly a secret assignment as a combat fighter pilot for the newly-formed State of Israel. Shortly thereafter, Lockheed asked him to join them as a test pilot on the P-80/T-33 aircraft. This was the start of a 26-year career with Lockheed.



**Lockheed's P-80A Shooting Star**

Projects Robert participated in for Lockheed included the T2V and F-94 Starfire series of aircraft. He was the test pilot for the G.E. M-61 20 mm rotating six-barrel Vulcan aircraft cannon – mounted in the F-94. It is still the standard internal gun on Navy, Marine and Air Force fighters today.



**The Lockheed F-94 Starfire**

Robert also tested the YC-130 Hercules aircraft, and was later involved in the testing of the F-104 Starfighter and the U-2 reconnaissance aircraft. He became one of Kelly Johnson's test pilots for the "Skunk Works."



**Lockheed's famous C-130 Hercules – still in use today.**

Before the USAF officially established world speed records with the F-104, Robert had already unofficially established

the records in his test flights. After a number of test pilots refused to fly the F-104 because of its reputation as the “1300 mph hearse,” Kelly Johnson selected Robert to be its Chief Test Pilot. Even the current F-35 cannot match the raw performance envelope of the F-104. Robert flew the Starfighter at its global debut at the Paris Air Show. He was given three instructions for the show: (1) try not to go supersonic; (2) do not point the nose at Pres. Charles de Gaulle in the official booth; and (3) do whatever it takes to outfly the French *Mirage* jet.



**The Lockheed F-104 Starfighter**

As a result of Robert’s demonstration flights at the Paris Show, Japan and Canada chose the F-104 as their fighter aircraft, and the type served globally into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

After the F-104 program, Robert was involved in one of the most secret programs ever conducted by the U.S. – matching the secrecy of the famous *Manhattan Project* that developed the atomic bomb.

The CIA and Lockheed conducted secret tests in very remote areas of a plane that could fly higher and farther than any other aircraft had ever flown before. That plane was the famous U-2 reconnaissance aircraft – of which Robert was a key test pilot. He set manned sustained flight altitude records – which never became public. He put himself at risk because – for weight-saving purposes – there was no ejection seat, no survival equipment, and no autopilot. The original pressure suits had no accommodation for bodily elimination functions – and flights could last 12 hours.

The importance of the U-2 in collecting vital information globally was observed by three U.S. presidents, who stated that the U-2 was responsible for averting nuclear war – World War III.

Many of the feats Robert accomplished in the U-2 testing program will never be made public. His family displayed for the first time at his funeral a medal awarded him by the CIA at its headquarters in Langley, VA. It cited his work on behalf of the defense of the United States.

Robert continued to fly classified projects. One such program had him flying against the Pt. Mugu missile range

radars to develop a product that would evolve into pods used by U.S. fighters over Viet Nam.



**The high-flying reconnaissance plane, the U-2 *Dragon Lady*. Robert set many unofficial records in this plane.**

Robert moved his family to Ventura in 1965, and the children grew up in Ventura through high school and college.

Because of inner-ear and physical problems Robert had contracted from his test flying – particularly at the high altitudes in the U-2, he finally accepted medical retirement from Lockheed.

He had flown in over 50 different kinds of aircraft over his career. He was a life member of the Quiet Birdmen, and a charter member and fellow of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots.

He leaves his wife of over 64 years, Jean; his older brother Albert; daughter Laura; sons Mark and Ken; nephew Marshall; and a large and loving extended family.

Our CAF – Southern California Wing extends to Mark and all his family our deepest condolences. Robert was truly an aviation pioneer and a credit to the highly skilled profession of aviation test pilots. May he rest in peace.

*Thanks to Mark Matye for permission to use excerpts from Robert’s obituary in the Ventura County Star.*

## High Flight

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth  
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;  
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth  
Of sun-split clouds - and done a hundred things  
You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and  
swung

High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there  
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung  
My eager craft through footless halls of air.  
Up, up the long delirious, burning blue,  
I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace  
Where never lark, or even eagle flew -  
And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod  
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,  
Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

Pilot Officer John Gillespie Magee – 1922-1941

## Remembering Ed “Too Tall” Freeman

As Ed “Too Tall” Freeman lay ill in a Boise, ID hospital, many came to pay their respects to the 80-year-old national war hero and former helicopter pilot.

One unexpected visitor offered a very personal “thank you” to Freeman, a veteran of three wars and recipient of our country’s highest military award – the Congressional Medal of Honor – for his actions on November 14, 1965 at Landing Zone X-Ray, Ia Drang Valley, Vietnam.

“A guy came into the hospital room and said, ‘You don’t know me, Ed, but I was one of those people you hauled out of the X-Ray,’ said Mike Freeman, 54, one of Ed’s two sons. “He said, ‘Thanks for my life.’ “

Ed W. “Too Tall” Freeman (November 20, 1927 – August 20, 2008) was a United States Army helicopter pilot who received the U. S. military’s highest decoration, the Medal of Honor, for his actions in the Battle of Ia Drang during the Vietnam War. During the battle, he flew through gunfire numerous times, bringing supplies to a trapped American battalion and flying dozens of wounded soldiers to safety. Freeman was a wingman for Major Bruce Crandall, who also received the Medal of Honor for the same missions.

Freeman was born in Neely, Perry County, Mississippi, the sixth of nine children. He grew up in nearby McLain and graduated from Washington High School. He served in World War II and reached the rank of master sergeant by the time of the Korean War. Although he was in the Corps of Engineers, he fought as an infantry soldier in Korea. He participated in the Battle of Pork Chop Hill and received a battlefield commission. The commission made him eligible to become a pilot, a childhood dream of his. However, when he applied for pilot training, he was told that, at six foot four inches, he was “too tall” for pilot duty. The phrase stuck, and he was known by the nickname of “Too Tall” for the rest of his career.

In 1955, the height limit for pilots was raised and Freeman was accepted into flying school. He first flew airplanes before switching to helicopters. By the time he was sent to Vietnam in 1965, he was an experienced helicopter pilot and was placed second-in-command of his sixteen-craft unit. He served as a captain in Company A, 229<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (Airmobile).

On November 14, 1965, Freeman and his unit transported a battalion of American soldiers to the Ia Drang Valley. Later, after arriving back at base, they learned that the soldiers had come under intense fire and had taken heavy casualties. Enemy fire around the landing zones was so heavy that the medical evacuation helicopters refused to fly in to the landing zone. Freeman and his commander, Major Bruce Crandall, volunteered to fly their unarmed, lightly armored helicopters in support of the embattled troops. Freeman made a total of fourteen trips to the battlefield, bringing in water and ammunition and taking out wounded soldiers.



**Ed “Too Tall” Freeman being congratulated by President George W. Bush after receiving the Medal of Honor – July 16, 2001.**

Freeman’s commanding officer nominated him for the Medal of Honor for his actions in Ia Drang, but not in time to meet a two-year deadline then in place. He was instead awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. The Medal of Honor nomination was disregarded until 1995, when the two-year deadline was removed. He was formally presented with the medal on July 16, 2001, by President George W. Bush.

Freeman was sent home from Vietnam in 1966, and retired from the military the next year. He settled in the Treasure Valley area of Idaho, his wife Barbara’s home state. Ed continued to work as a pilot, using his helicopter to fight wildfires, perform animal censuses, and herd wild horses for the Dept. of the Interior.

Freeman died on August 20, 2008 due to complications from Parkinson’s disease. He was buried in the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery in Boise.

In the 2002 film *We Were Soldiers*, which depicted the Battle of Ia Drang, Freeman was portrayed by Mark McCracken. The post office in Freeman’s hometown of McLain, Mississippi was renamed the “Major Ed W. Freeman Post Office” in March, 2009.

An excerpt from Freeman’s Medal of Honor citation reads:

*“When the infantry commander closed the helicopter landing zone due to intense direct enemy fire, Captain Freeman risked his own life by flying his unarmed helicopter through a gauntlet of enemy fire time after time, delivering critically needed ammunition, water and medical supplies to the besieged battalion. His flights had a direct impact on the battle’s outcome by providing the engaged units with timely supplies of ammunition critical to their survival, without which they would almost surely have gone down, with much greater loss of life. After medical evacuation helicopters refused to fly into the area due to intense enemy fire, Captain Freeman flew 14 separate rescue missions, providing life-saving evacuation of an estimated 30 seriously wounded soldiers – some of whom could not have survived had he not acted. Captain Freeman’s selfless acts of great valor...were far and above the call of duty.”*