

MINNESOTA AIR NATIONAL GUARD HISTORICAL FOUNDATION
MINNESOTA ANG MUSEUM NEWS

Minnesota Aviation History - Learn of the Past
Spring 2019



Flying the F-89 “Scorpion” with the Air Defense Command

by Russ Jensen



An F-89 “Scorpion” in flight.
submitted photo

Canada and the U.S. set up DEW lines of radar sites across our northern states and Canada.

During the cold war, Russia was threatening to invade America through Canada for a long time and when the threats intensified, both countries built up their defenses in the Canadian provinces. We were ready, but as many wars go, they

The F-89 was up to its task of intercepting. It was roomy and comfortable, but with all of the electronics it was quite heavy and not very maneuverable. We flew in formation, but we were not permitted to do acrobatics. The basic training for the R.O. was navigation. The navigator’s job was to direct the plane with its airborne radar to a point in the sky. The Ground Control Intercept (GCI) site guided him to the target and he took over from there, lined the plane up for a side pass and turned the plane over to the pilot who used his precision radar to line up on the target. The pilot is set up for a 90 degree pass at the target. The pass was to be a surprise, and it usually was except when we announced ourselves, which we did to other military aircraft. The pilot would fire rockets or missiles and the GCI site reported his scores to the base.

The aircraft had two kinds of ammunition: three radar guided missiles and 21 Mighty Mouse rockets in each wing tank. Rarely were the missiles fired during training because they have their own radar and were not guided, and they were too expensive for training. Normally we didn’t carry any ammunition at all. So the main mission of the 109th was to provide interception services for the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line, but the first time we would fire in a real situation was when the missiles were armed and alerted. The DEW line was established to provide protection from attacks by Russians from over the north pole. Both

remained only threats. Everything subsided and the threat went away.

The alert hangars on the Air Guard base were constructed specifically for the Russian threat and when that threat lessened considerably, maintaining those defenses was relaxed. The radar sites were closed and we went in a different direction. The bases were left with no business, and everyone scrambled to put the facilities to good use. You can see the results of those special buildings all around the base. The alert buildings are a good example.

Scorpion story continues on page 4

Also inside:

- 2019 schedule
- 100 Year Anniversary update
- F-94 feature



Our volunteers: Russ Jensen *story and photo by Terry Morris*

Lt. Col. Russell ‘Russ’ Jensen has been a major force at the Minnesota Air National Guard Museum since its start in 1980 and is a lifetime member.

Russ joined the U. S. Air Force in 1953 after graduating from St. Thomas College and being commissioned as a Second Lieutenant under the Air Force ROTC program. He served two years in Korea as a GCI radar operator controlling F-86D fighters. After completing his two year obligation, he was honorably discharged and went back to school to obtain a law degree from William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul. He would eventually establish his own practice in business law.

Still, Russ always wanted to fly. In 1957, Russ decided to join the Minnesota Air National Guard (MNANG) and was accepted into flight school. After completing basic and advanced flight training in Texas, he returned to Minneapolis to begin flying with the MNANG’s 109th fighter squadron.

His first assignment was as an F-89 “Scorpion” pilot. The 109th had inherited the 24/7 intercept mission from the Air Force. Air crew lived in the four-bay alert facilities (now the current museum location) for up to 10 days. When the alert bell rang, air crews ‘scrambled’ like firefighters and were airborne in three to five minutes. They literally slid down fire poles! Once in the air they would receive directions from ground controllers to the intercept of their target. Missions could be up to one and one-half hours long and require flying into Canada.

In 1960, he cross-trained to the C-97 “Stratofreighter” after the 109th was reassigned to support the Air Force’s global transport mission. This mission required them to transport everything from parcels to livestock around the world and could last up to 20



hours. In 1971 he cross-trained again to the C-130A Hercules after the 109th was reassigned to the tactical airlift mission and for a time was its squadron commander. He flew the C-130A and later the C130E until his retirement in 1981.

In 1980, Russ and other visionaries saw the need for the establishment of an organization that would work to preserve the history of the Minnesota Air National Guard and decided to make it a reality. He served as its chairman in the late 1990’s and directly participated in or supported a number of major projects. These included the two Curtiss “Orioles,” the Curtiss “Jenny,” the acquisition of the C-123, and the acquisition of the C-97. He is most proud of the C-123 acquisition which was the first airplane to be actually owned by the museum. This airplane was later used to obtain the C-97 in an even trade with Hawkins and Powers.

When asked what he likes best about being a volunteer, he said the other volunteers because of their enthusiasm to get things done. When asked about his favorite plane he said there are two: 1) the T-33 because it was a pure airplane to fly and 2) the Ercoupe because it makes you feel like you are flying a T-33.

2019 Off-Base Event Schedule:

May 18

Civil Air Patrol Exposé – Private Event
Saint Paul Downtown Airport, Minn.

June 9

Rush City Airport Fly-In
Rush City Regional Airport, Minn.

June 30

Red Bull Military Appreciation Day
Central Park, North Branch, Minn.

July 13-14

Wings of the North AirExpo
Flying Cloud Airport, Eden Prairie, Minn.

July 20

Gandy Dancer Fly-In / Drive-In
Burnett County Airport, Siren, Wis.

July 27

VetsFest 2019
Richard Walton Park, Oakdale, Minn.

Sept. 7

Osceola Wheels & Wings
L.O. Simenstad Municipal Airport,
Osceola, Wis.

Comments from the Board Chair

Last year's Spring newsletter found us at a pivotal point in terms of planning for the future. We needed to begin work on the Centennial celebration, and we had learned that the AirSpace Minnesota effort was closing. The comments from that newsletter focused on the basic board functions of oversight and direction. It's fitting to revisit this past year and to comment on our progress.

The most significant change from a year ago was the establishment of and the planning work of the

Mission Statement

The mission of the Minnesota Air National Guard Historical Foundation is to preserve the heritage and traditions of the Minnesota Air National Guard.

Board Members

Chairman: Brian Wyneken

Vice Chairman: Karen Wolf

Secretary: Terry Morris

Executive Dir./Dir. of Operations: Mike Drews

Operations Assistant: Anja Drescher

Treasurer: Tom Simonet

Members: Rick Dow, Mike Drews, Brig. Gen. Greg Haase, Rick Heinecke, Herb Ketcham, Ray Pittman, Lowell Ueland

Wing Advisor: Col. Dan Gabrielli

Legal Counsel: Kelly & Lemmons, P.A., Joe Kelly and Kevin Beck

Newsletter Editor: Pete Backlund

Assistant editors: Sharon Drews and Mark Moss

Past Newsletters can be accessed on the museum website at: <http://mnangmuseum.org>

Museum Hours and Access

Tours can be arranged by sending an email request to toursmnangmuseum@gmail.com. Special events, such as a birthday party, can be arranged through Nancy Wilson (nanc.mn.ang.museum@gmail.com) or call 612-458-8012.

**Address all correspondence to:
Minnesota Air Guard Museum
P.O. Box 11598
St. Paul, MN 55111-0598**

(The Minnesota Air National Guard Historical Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization and not affiliated with the Dept. of Defense, Minnesota Air National Guard, or the 133rd Airlift Wing.)

Centennial Committee. As the year has progressed, the focus has narrowed to the selection of events and activities that the committee believes we can support. We will soon find ourselves moving into the implementation phases.

The committee has very effectively kept the board apprised of progress and has provided structure and guidance. I have no hesitation in speaking for the board – we have been very impressed and pleased with their work. The vision is taking definite shape.

Some other significant changes in this past year worth noting were the departure of Jim Atwell as Museum Director and the return of Mike Drews to that position (both ably assisted by the talented service of assistant director Anja Drescher). Jim had moved to upstate New York to be closer to family, and Mike stepped up once again. Also, Merton 'Pete' Backlund stepped in to run the newsletter operation and has done an impressive job of planning and communicating.

Our shift of focus towards the centennial has likely slowed our progress on the ongoing artifact inventory-cataloging-storage, but that work will continue at the pace our resources allow. I am confident that the museum staff and volunteers will not lose ground on this work.

Finally, the end of the AirSpace Minnesota endeavor meant a suspension of the effort towards the vision of a big collaborative museum and education center. It also posed the challenge of new direction. In response, we held a follow-on special purpose board meeting in June of 2018. This led to the board creating the Centennial Committee as also an interim planning body.

As we move into the centennial year events in 2020 and 2021, our hope for the board is to fulfill its function of developing and defining a vision for the Foundation and the Museum post-centennial. On that point I sincerely encourage members of this foundation to consider seeking board membership and/or to convey their thoughts and ideas to the existing board members.

I'll close with my best wishes and gratitude to the volunteers – good luck for a successful 2019 season!

Sincerely - your Foundation Board Chair,
Brian Wyneken

Wheels Up - Getting Ready for a BIG Celebration!

by Anja Drescher

The Minnesota Air National Guard is proud to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2021. January 17, 1921 marks the day the 109th Observation Squadron received federal recognition as the first federally recognized flying unit in the United States.

Capt. Ray S. Miller flew Brig. Gen. Walter F. Rhinow and Lt. Col. William Garis on September 26, 1920, in a Curtiss Oriole biplane on a 1600 mile, eight-day-long journey from Saint Paul to Washington, D.C. This journey played a critical role in convincing the Militia Bureau (today the National Guard Bureau) of the need to form an Air National Guard. The 109th has since grown into today's highly-recognized 133rd Airlift Wing at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

With Minnesota's incredible history and leadership in civil, commercial, aero-medical and aerospace technology and innovation, there are countless stories to tell. The Minnesota Air National Guard Historical Foundation is bringing out its largest collection ever to tell our centennial story. We are working in close collaboration with the 133rd Airlift Wing to prepare a comprehensive plan to celebrate this major historical milestone. We want to honor members of all ages, gender, ranks, responsibilities and duties.

If you have served or are serving on the MN Air National Guard and would like to share your stories and experiences, please reach out to us at <http://mnangmuseum.org/contact/email-us/>. A committee, led by members of the MNANGHF Board, volunteers and the 133rd Airlift Wing is working on numerous celebratory activities including exhibits, educational outreach and events.

September 23, 2020 signals the kick-off of our centennial festivities. Look for more information and connect with us on the MNANG museum website, <http://mnangmuseum.org>.

Scorpion story continued from page 1



A row of USAF F-89 "Scorpions" stands ready on the flightline at the Minneapolis - St. Paul International airport in the late 1950s.
archive photo

Having lost our mission, the Air Force had to find us a new one. They selected transports and assigned us eight C-97 "Stratocruisers." We became part of the Military Airlift Command and began flying International routes. The C-97s were old and were retired by the Air Force. We were assigned to the Tactical Airlift Command and received the C-130 cargo carriers. One of its missions was to operate out of unprepared fields and drop cargo where directed. We used C-130 "Her-

cules" to deliver supplies to units around the world. We have come a long way since the fighter outfit, but the C-130s are a good fit for our mission. We are currently meeting the transportation needs of many agencies so the Air Guard is kept busy.

The alert hangars became valuable with the new mission. Two huge boilers filled most of the first floor of the offices at the alert hangars. The hangars were kept at a comfortable 45 degrees during the winter.

After the fighter mission was gone, the Base refurbished the building and cleared out the boilers. Now it houses the museum. The Base hooked the heat up so we still enjoy full use of the space. The first and second floors of the offices are now dedicated to the museum, its artifacts, a library, and a nice conference room with a panoramic view of the airfield. It houses the history of the 109th and the 133rd Airlift Wing from their start with General Ray Miller in 1920. His wife, Eve Miller, provided financing for the start of the museum and Don Ericson, a fighter pilot and long-time guardsman, negotiated the lease of the hangar for the museum. Eve donated all of her husband's memorabilia, which forms the backbone of the museum's collection.

This has been a labor of love by a dedicated group of volunteers, some of whom are not even military. The museum will continue to be successful with your support and donations.

LOCKHEED F-94C “STARFIRE” USAF SERIAL NUMBER 51-13563

by Greg Bastyr

The F-94C “Starfire” was flown by the 109th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron and the 279th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron of the Minnesota Air National Guard from 1954 to 1959. The F-94 was built to a 1948 USAF specification for a radar equipped interceptor specifically designed to counter the threat of the USSR’s new “Tupolev” TU-4 bombers (a reversed engineered Boeing B-29).

The F-94 was derived from the Lockheed T-33A “Shooting Star” which is a two-seat trainer version of the F-80 “Shooting Star.” A lengthened nose area with guns, radar and automatic fire control system were added. The first flight took place on 16 April 1949 with a total of 855 being built. The F-94 was to be the first US production jet with an afterburner. The last F-94s were retired in 1960.

The F-94 was used in combat during the Korean War; it is credited with several air to air victories, including the first jet vs. jet night victory. One F-94 is listed as lost due to enemy action, six more to non-enemy causes on combat missions, two were declared as missing on a combat mission and three were lost in accidents.



Interesting Facts: The museum’s F-94 was rescued from a playground in Marion, South Dakota. Having been derived from the T-33 (example photo, above left) and F-80 (example photo above right) aircraft, the F-94 had a seventy-five percent commonality with parts from those two aircraft.



Above - The museum’s F-94C on display in 2006. USAF official photo by Tech. Sgt. Erik Gudmundson

On the cover - The F-94 C “Starfire.” submitted photo

Cost: \$534,073

Crew: 2

Length: 44 Feet, 6 Inches

Wingspan: 42 Feet, 5 Inches

Height: 14 Feet, 11 Inches

Engine: 1 Pratt & Whitney J48-P-5 turbojet, Thrust with afterburner 8,750 pounds

Maximum Speed: 640 MPH

Range: 805 Miles (combat)

Service Ceiling: 51,400 Feet

Armament: 24 or 48 2.75 Inch MK 4/MK 40 Folding Fin Aerial Rockets

Museum’s New Truck

story and photo by Ray Pittman

This summer you will notice a difference in our Photo Phantom Display as we have acquired a new tow vehicle. During the summer months we transport the Photo Phantom to several aviation events around the Minnesota and Wisconsin area. The much older Ford F-350 Dually we had been using was showing signs of wear and eventually would need extensive repair and refurbishing. In December of last year a decision was made by the museum board to begin a search for a replacement vehicle.

In late December a Tucson, Arizona dealership advertised a 2003 Ford F-350 Dually with only 142K miles, and it was in mint condition. After a few phone calls



and inquiries, a decision was made to purchase the vehicle. Transportation to Minnesota was arranged by Doug’s Elite Auto in North Branch, Minnesota. With this new addition to our traveling display, we can look forward to many years of safe reliable transportation and also leave a good impression wherever we go.

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New Volunteer *by Mike Drews*

Tom Evans has been with the museum since April 2018 and is our newest volunteer. He retired from Ameriprise Financial Services where he was in business management. Tom has brought many different skills to the museum and has helped man the F-4 “Phantom” cockpit at off-base events.



Tom’s father was a pilot in the U.S. Air Force during WWII and flew “Spitfires.” Some of his military service was spent in Canada flying with the NORAD interceptor squadron. We look forward to Tom’s participation in the museum’s many projects and events.

AmazonSmile Donations *by Mike Drews*

There is now another way you can help support the Minnesota Air National Guard Museum through the AmazonSmile website: smile.amazon.com.

The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate .05 % of your eligible purchases to the museum when you choose the museum as the charity you wish to support, at no additional cost to you. On the AmazonSmile website charity list, the museum is listed as the Minnesota Air National Guard Historical Foundation, Inc. You will see eligible products marked “Eligible for AmazonSmile donation” on the product detail pages. Your donations help us to strengthen our programs and develop new, innovative projects to serve the community.

Make an impact this Mother’s Day

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