

MINNESOTA AIR NATIONAL GUARD HISTORICAL FOUNDATION  
**MINNESOTA ANG MUSEUM NEWS**

*Minnesota Aviation History - Learn of the Past  
Fall 2020*



## The Centennial Celebration

*by Greg Haase, retired Brig. Gen. and Centennial Steering Committee Chair*

The Centennial Steering Committee committed to a number of different activities to celebrate a “Century in the Sky.” The committee is working with a virtual display company, Pathfinder, to create exhibits for the Mall of America. The exhibits are scheduled to go live from 4 to 8 June, 2021. The exhibits will then be taken to the Wing for the Air Expo on 17 and 18 July. To make this possible we are engaged in a corporate sponsorship effort that will touch over 100 different companies and businesses. We anticipate that we will need around a million dollars for the event. That is a lofty goal considering the circumstances; however, I believe that the same imagination and grit that drove our forefathers to journey on a seven-day flight to Bolling Field in 1920 is the same imagination and grit it will take to make this happen. I also believe that we can be an example to greater Minnesota in ways that combat the adversity of a pandemic and the social unrest.

Many members of the committee are working on different aspects to make this a grand event. Lowell Ueland put together the beginnings of a book called the “Century in the Sky.” Mark Moss is working on a media presentation that will be shown at various venues to include our exhibit at the Minneapolis-St. Paul IAP from June to December 2021. The MSP airport provided all five display cases on concourse C to display artifacts and a timeline of our 100-year history. We are also updating the museum website to Square-Space, which is a very interactive website, and will house the schedule of events for the various venue celebrations. The website is a product of Anja Drescher, one of our committee members.

This is an historic event and you contributed to this celebration through numerous historical firsts and irrevocable service. Please let us know if you would like to be involved in any of the centennial events.

## Curtiss Field Opening Ceremony

*story and photos by Ray Pittman*



Speakers and guests at the Sept. 26, 2020 ceremony included Maj. Gen. Shawn Manke, Adjutant General of Minnesota, (left) Jill Renslow, Executive Vice President, Mall of America. and Roy Fuhrmann, Chief Operating Officer for the Metropolitan Airport Commission.

September 26, 2020 was the beginning of a series of events that will take place over the next several months to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the beginning of the Air National Guard. The first event took place right here in Minnesota where it all originated -- at a small neighborhood playground called Curtiss Field. The field is just East of the State Fair grounds and what was then, in September 1920, a mostly rural area now surrounded by single family homes, a four-lane highway, and several shopping centers. In 1919 one of Minnesota’s first aviation centers, named Curtiss Northwest Airport, was opened at the Southeast corner of Larpenter and Snelling and operated until 1930. It was here that the famous flight

*Ceremony story continues on page 6*



### **Also inside:**

- Curtiss “Oriole,” the first aircraft
- Historic donation for the museum
- Many projects competed

## Our volunteers: Tom Evans story and photo by Terry Morris

Tom Evans comes to our volunteer family with a unique diplomatic background. Born in Swansea Wales to a Welsh father who served as a WWII RAF Spitfire pilot and an American mother, Tom technically enjoys dual citizenship. With the end of the war, Tom's father became a metallurgical engineer and the family moved to the northeastern USA where Tom grew up. Tom joined the Air Force in 1967 after graduating from Penn State with a degree in personnel management. Upon completion of Air Force OTS and a tech school, he was assigned to Hill AFB as a personnel officer for two+ years. The remainder of his service was with a USAF detachment at the Bagotville Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) base in Quebec, Canada. There he served as a nuclear weapons officer in the QRA (Quick Reaction area) and attained the rank of Captain. At the time, Canada supported NORAD's air defense alert mission with F-101B "Voodoo" interceptors armed with USAF controlled AIR-2 "Genie" nuclear rockets. In March 1972 Tom left the Air Force to begin his civilian career in management positions with the IDS Corporation in Minnesota.

After deciding to retire at 55, Tom remained active selling cars for Saturn, working in security for Graco and eventually volunteering at the Wings of the North as a docent. Two years ago he discovered the Minnesota Air Guard Museum. After a tour, he decided the opportunities would be more fulfilling at the Air Guard Museum and thus became a volunteer tour guide. He was especially intrigued by the museum's



F-101B and its former service with the Royal Canadian Air Force. Since joining the Air Guard Museum, Tom has contributed significantly to a number of projects including: refinishing the F-102 nosecone, repairing the large hanging and flag pole aircraft models, renovation of the museum's jeep and restoration of the MiG-15. Recently Tom agreed to become the museum's main docent, which is an endeavor that he finds especially rewarding.

When asked what he likes best about being a volunteer, Tom responded, "The degree of freedom and autonomy that he is given to work on projects." This is something that he was not afforded in previous volunteer organizations. When asked what his favorite airplane is, he responded that it is a tossup between the F-101B that he supported on active duty and the MiG-15 he is helping to restore.

## Recent Museum Projects

by Mike Drews

Even though the museum has been closed to the public due to the corona virus, volunteers have stepped up by taking home the projects that need to be completed for the Guard's 100th anniversary celebration. Several of the projects have been completed including the engine and body work on the museum's early 1960s Jeep. The large model of the P-51 has been restored after being damaged by the wind and a new mounting base was made for the display. Two late 1930s/early



1940s aerial cameras and lenses have been cleaned and painted. A new display shows a fighter pilot survival vest and the equipment that was stored in the vest pockets. We are also finishing up a revamped display of all model aircraft the Air Guard flew during the century they have been in existence. The largest project is completing the painting of the MiG-15 now that some of the volunteers are able to come back to the museum.

## 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

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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](mailto:toursmnangmuseum@gmail.com). Special events, such as a birthday party, can be arranged through Nancy Wilson ([nanc.mn.ang.museum@gmail.com](mailto: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.)

*You can help support the Minnesota Air National Guard Museum through the AmazonSmile website: [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com). The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate .05% of your eligible purchases to the museum when you choose the Minnesota Air National Guard Historical Foundation as the charity you wish to support, at no additional cost to you. Thank you for your support.*

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## Comments from the Board Chair

As detailed on other pages of this newsletter, we are underway with the events to commemorate the Centennial of the 109th Aero Observation Squadron. It is fitting to note not only these extraordinary contemporary efforts but also the many years of the MNANGHF to preserve the history of these founding events and all that followed. This past May 18th marked 40 years since the MNANGHF was established. Arriving at the scene 60 years after the first 109th flight, and 32 years after the first 179th Fighter Interceptor Squadron flight, the MNANGHF had an initial and ongoing challenge of catching up, and keeping up, with the story. With resources of the original "Miller Collection," many other donated artifacts, the generosity of financial donors, and the time and efforts of so many volunteers through the years, we have been able to share much of the story. As the story continues, so will our mission and our effort.

On that note of continuity, I want to express my appreciation to the membership and the board for allowing me the opportunity to volunteer as a board member. At the end of this calendar year my board term ends, and I will transition to other volunteer duties. The MNANGHF presently has 11 directors who serve for three-year terms. Elections are typically held at our "annual" meeting in January. There should be an election every year for about one-third of the board positions. Board work consists primarily of reviewing committee reports, working on strategic direction, forming policy, and monitoring the integrity of operations and our non-profit status. The board meets every other month. We have also discussed recruiting "ex-officio" board member status for those still with active/reserve military status. If you are interested in pursuing this line of volunteer work, please contact any board member to discuss.

As always, please accept my sincere thanks to our volunteers.

Sincerely – your Foundation Board Chair  
Brian Wyneken



# Still Needing Your Help

by Karen Wolf

The Centennial Committee of the MNANG Historical Foundation continues its work of fundraising for the 100th anniversary of the 109th AS/MNANG. As part of that effort, in August we sent out donor request letters to 1400 individuals, mostly to the Life members of the museum and the list of retirees maintained by Bruce Graham. We are delighted to report that we have received around \$24,000 so far!

These donations are being specifically solicited for the publication of a centennial history book “A Century in the Sky: The First One Hundred Years of the Minnesota Air National Guard and the 133rd Airlift Wing,” as well as a media presentation highlighting major events of the Wing featuring imagery from all eras. This media presentation will be used at a variety of venues including the Mall of America and MSP IAP Concourse C.

If you are able, please consider donating to these causes or to the centennial in general. Giving, as our members always have always done, is most important in these challenging times in today’s economic environment. Your donation is, of course, tax deductible. Please send your check to the Minnesota Air Guard Museum, P.O. Box 11598, St. Paul, MN 55111-0598. You can also send your donation through PayPal. Go to our website, [mnangmuseum.org](http://mnangmuseum.org) for instructions.

A donation of historical importance has been given to the museum. CMSgt Richard Schumacher (Ret.) and his son CMSgt Rick Schumacher were friends with General Miller and his wife Eva. After General Miller passed, Richard would help Eva and take her to appointments. As time went by, Eva gave Richard General Miller’s 1920s leather flight suit and flight cap. The flight suit is in pristine condition. Along with the leather flight suit was a cloth 1930s style flight suit used by Miller and a cold weather jacket used in open cockpit aircraft. The final items were four military ceremonial swords and one dagger. Many thanks to the Schumacher family for donating these important artifacts that represent the early history of the Minnesota Air National Guard.



Curtiss Field in the beginning (above) and how it looks now (right). *submitted photos*



(left) A C-97 “Stratofreighter” in flight. The Minnesota Air National Guard flew C-97s from 1960 to 1971, providing airlift around the world supporting state and Department of Defense missions. The museum is restoring a C-97G to be featured during the summer of 2021, celebrating 100 years of Minnesota military aviation. *submitted photo*

# Curtiss “Oriole” (Curtiss Model 17)

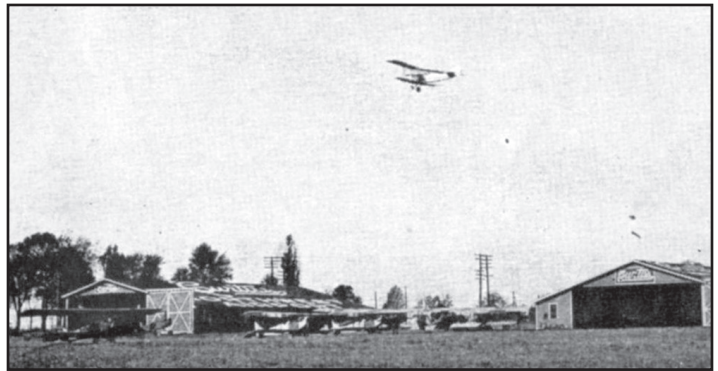
by Greg Bastyr

The Curtiss “Oriole” (Curtiss Model 17) was an American built, three-seat general purpose biplane. The Oriole fuselage was constructed using laminated wood and was powered by either the Curtiss OX-5 or the Curtiss K-6 engine.

On Sept. 26, 1920, encouraged by Minnesota Governor J. A. A. Burnquist, Brig. Gen. Walter Rhinow, Lt. Col. William Garis and Capt. Ray Miller set out in a rented Curtiss “Oriole” from the Curtiss Company located at Curtiss Field at the corner of Snelling and Larpenster in St Paul, Minn. They flew from St. Paul to Washington D. C. to lobby the Militia Bureau and the Army Air Service to create an aviation arm of the National Guard. The trip took eight days, landing on Oct. 2, 1920.



<b>Manufacturer:</b>	<b>Curtiss Aircraft</b>
<b>First Flight:</b>	<b>1919</b>
<b>Cost New:</b>	<b>\$7,500 in 1919</b>
<b>Length:</b>	<b>25 Feet</b>
<b>Wingspan:</b>	<b>36 Feet</b>
<b>Maximum Speed:</b>	<b>86 MPH</b>
<b>Service Ceiling:</b>	<b>8,000 Feet</b>



The 1920s photos of the planes, the people, and the places on this page and the cover are all from the archives of the Minnesota Air National Guard Museum.

In meetings with various military officials, including Brig. Gen. Billy Mitchell, they evoked interest and support for Minnesota National Guard aviation. As a result, on Jan. 17, 1921 the 109th Squadron was federally recognized, the first National Guard flying unit to achieve such status.

An interesting fact is that a group of volunteers with the Minnesota Air Guard Museum built a non-flying, full scale, Curtiss “Oriole” replica that now hangs from the ceiling in the 133rd Airlift Wing Base Operations building. The completed replica was unveiled at the 133rd Airlift Wing’s 75th Anniversary Celebration on Sept. 23, 1995.



A replica of a Curtiss “Oriole” hangs in the Operations Building of the 133rd Airlift Wing, reminding visitors, like the family members of Airmen deploying to combat on Oct. 22, 2008 of their proud heritage. USAF official photo by Senior Master Sgt. Mark Moss

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*Ceremony story continued from page 1*



*A C-130 “Hercules” from the 133rd Airlift Wing flies over a ceremony in Falcon Heights, Minn., Sept. 26, 2020. The 133rd Airlift Wing hosted an anniversary ceremony to commemorate the historic flight that resulted in the 109th Observation Squadron’s birth being the first federally recognized unit in the Air National Guard in 1921. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Amy M. Lovgren)*

in a Curtiss “Oriole” made by U.S. Army General Walter Rhinow, Lt. Col. William C. Garis, and Capt. Ray S. Miller originated from. The seven-day trip was made to Washington, DC to lobby for the formation of a flying squadron. As a result of this brave and often dangerous flight, the first federally-recognized Air Guard Unit, the 109th, was formed on January 17th, 1921. The 133rd Airlift Wing is home to the 109th and they are based at the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport.

Distinguished speakers at the ceremony were Maj. Gen. Shawn Manke, Adjutant General of Minnesota; U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Daniel Gabrielli, Chief of Staff, M.A.N.G.; keynote speaker Roy Fuhrmann, Chief Operating Officer for the Metropolitan Airport Commission; and Jill Renslow, Exec. Vice President, Mall of America. Master of Ceremonies was Maj. Ben Daw.

Snacks and refreshments were served, and to highlight the ceremonies, a fly-over was performed by a Minnesota Air National Guard C-130 “Hercules,” piloted by the 109th Airlift Squadron’s first female squadron commander, Lt. Col. Dana Novinski.

Attendance was good and all precautions were taken to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.