Minnesota Air National Guard Museum welcomed Tuskegee Airman Lt. Col. Hiram Mann and civil rights marcher Col. Nathan Thomas in February

On February 14, 2013, the museum was privileged to be visited by Lt. Col. Hiram Mann and Col. Nathan Thomas. Col. Mann is an original Tuskegee airman who flew 48 combat missions with the 332nd Fighter Group during WWII, retiring from the USAF after 21 years of service. Col. Thomas, a participant in the 1965 Selma/Montgomery, Ala. freedom march, retired from the Minnesota Army National Guard after 39 years of distinguished service.

The two history-making guests were present to participate in an event co-sponsored with the 133rd Airlift Wing celebrating Black History Month. In addition to touring the museum and a Wing C-130 “Hercules”, the guests were given a general overview by 133rd AW commander Col. Greg Haase on the Wing’s mission and capabilities. The day ended with inspirational presentations being made by Lt. Col. Mann and Col. Thomas to children invited from the Minneapolis inner city school system on their personal background and how the power of education can overcome adversity.

Inside:
- Passing of two pioneer aviators
- Aeromeds dedication
- Corvette clubs’ contribution
- Focus on the Spitfire
Richard W. Wiessner passed away June 7, 2013 at age 89. He was born Dec. 31, 1923 in St. Paul to Martin G. (Casey) and Mary Angeline (Angie) Wiessner, the second of five sons. Lifelong resident of St. Paul. Survived by wife, Ruth (Welsh); sons, Brian (Heidi), Bruce (Julia), Todd (Nancy), and Kurt (Ann); 10 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren, and 9 extended family grandchildren, all of whom were important to him. Preceded in death by his first wife, Norma. He was a veteran of WWII who flew 80 missions in Italy, France and Germany in a P-47 flying against ground-based targets while not expecting to survive. Late in the war, he was part of the small echelon of aircraft that sighted, attacked, and severely damaged the top-secret revetments and newly minted ME-262 jet-fighters hiding along the autobahn that Hitler hoped would help forestall an allied invasion. For the past 12 years he worked tirelessly and instrumentally on the Minnesota Air National Guard Historical Foundation towards the building of a new museum educational complex at Ft. Snelling.

Published in Minneapolis Star Tribune on June 11, 2013

Joseph Philip Gomer, Minnesota’s last surviving member of the famed Tuskegee Airmen, died Oct. 10, 2013. He was 93.

“RIP Joseph Phillip Gomer. Father and one of the last remaining Tuskegee Airmen. I love you!” his daughter, Phyllis Douglass, posted on her Facebook page Friday. She said her father was suffering from cancer and was in hospice at Ecumen Lakeshore in Duluth.

Born in Iowa Falls, Iowa, on June 20, 1920, Gomer was fascinated by model airplanes as a child. After graduating from high school, he completed the preengineering program at Ellsworth Community College before undergoing training designed to prepare pilots for the military. In July 1942, at age 22, he enlisted in the Army and was sent to Tuskegee, Ala., for flight training in the experimental all-black outfit that would become known as the Tuskegee Airmen.

After the war, Gomer remained in the Army Air Forces, which became the U.S. Air Force in 1947. Gomer married Elizabeth Caperton on March 12, 1949. The couple raised two daughters, and moved to Duluth in 1963.

Published in Duluth News Tribune Oct. 12, 2013

Retired Maj. Joe Gomer, a Tuskegee Airman and Duluth native, looks at the statue dedicated to his service in World War II during a ceremony at the Commemorative Air Force hangar, Duluth, Minn. June 23, 2012. (Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Don L. Acton.)
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.

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

Board members:
Chairman: Kurt Wiessner
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Wing Advisor: Col. Brian Wyneken

Membership Dues:
Annual: $28.00

Museum Hours:
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on days when museum is open to the public, otherwise by appointment

Phone: (612)713-2523
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Check out the museum website:
http://mnangmuseum.org
and “like” us on Facebook

Chairman’s comments
The Minnesota Air National Guard Historical Foundation, and all who work to preserve and promote Minnesota’s rich aviation and military heritage, lost a very dear friend when Dick Wiessner died in June.

Dick Wiessner believed that the history and heritage of the Minnesota Air National Guard is more important and more connected than the general public understands. He believed in the civic lessons that our noble past, including our most recent past, should pass on. He believed that young people should learn about things and learn to do things outside the classroom. For the last decade of his life, Dick worked tirelessly to convert these beliefs into a community treasure on 26 incredible acres on the Upper Bluff of Fort Snelling.

Just over a year ago, the Minnesota Air National Guard Historical Foundation created a new entity. AirSpace Minnesota (http://airspacemn.org/) was established as the brand name and primary mechanism to build an exciting new educational and heritage campus on the Upper Bluff of Fort Snelling. This new campus will be the home to a world-class Air and Space museum, Aviation Learning Center, and Challenger Learning Center.

Hundreds of people are now working to make this vision become a reality. None of us would be, except for the vision and efforts of Dick Wiessner and many others who supported his vision.

Our efforts today go beyond honoring these past achievements to giving our community a richer and hopefully brighter future. If you value your own history with the Air Guard, or with our organization’s mission, we’d like to invite you to join us in making a stronger commitment to our expanded mission.

I once asked my father how he felt about what he’d accomplished. His answer was, “let’s just get going, and get this thing done.”

We would like to invite all of you to make a decision to help “get this thing done”. We need your talents, your ideas, your time, and a little bit of your money. Let’s all honor our own past and make a small commitment to the future. You can do this by renewing your membership, writing a little bigger check, or by volunteering your time and talents.

I hope to hear from many of you, and we thank you for your past support of our mission.

Kurt Wiessner
Board Chair
612-618-5699
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AIRCRAFT AND EQUIPMENT PRESERVATION WORK BY MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS

A great deal of activity goes on daily at our museum as volunteers work hard to preserve our historical aircraft and equipment. Recent accomplishments include re-skinning a large portion of the fuselage of the F-102 “Delta Dagger”. Eighteen skin panels have been replaced that will further enhance and refresh the view of an historical aircraft dating to the mid-1950’s. Also, An MJ-1 bomb lift was recently returned to operational status, the result of extensive work performed to recondition major systems.

Future projects will include interior passenger compartment reconditioning on our C-131 “Samaritan”, floorboard replacement to improve viewing of the cockpit of our C-97 “Stratofreighter” and cockpit window replacement on our C-130 “Hercules” which has suffered damage from the harsh winter and bright sun over the years.

Additional projects of this type to further improve the visitor experience will be reported in future newsletters.

SUPERMARINE Mk V SPITFIRE

The spitfire was flown by the 109th Reconnaissance Squadron in Europe from 1942 to 1943. The version flown by the 109th was a photo reconnaissance aircraft. The Supermarine Spitfire is a British single seat fighter that was used by the Royal Air Force and many other allied countries throughout WWII. The Spitfire was designed as a short range, high performance interceptor aircraft. The first flight took place on March 5, 1936 and was produced until 1948. There were a total of 20,351 aircraft built. The last operational Spitfire was retired in 1961.

CREW: 1
LENGTH: 29 FEET, 11 INCHES
WINGSPAN: 36 FEET, 10 INCHES
HEIGHT: 11 FEET, 5 INCHES
ENGINE: 1 ROLLS-ROYCE MERLIN 45 SUPER-CHARGED V12, 1,470 HP AT 9,250 FEET
MAXIMUM SPEED: 378 MPH
FERRY RANGE: 991 MILES
SERVICE CEILING: 35,000 FEET
ARMAMENT: TWO 20MM HISPANO MK II CANNONS, 60 ROUNDS PER GUN, FOUR BROWNING MACHINE GUNS, 350 ROUNDS PER GUN AND TWO 250 POUND BOMBS.

Interesting facts: The museum Spitfire pictured above is a ¾ scale homebuilt replica given to the museum as a donation. Although the Spitfire is no longer an operational aircraft, examples regularly attend and can be seen flying at airshows like the one pictured below.

Are you interested in bringing a group to visit the museum? Would you like to have a birthday party, business meeting or other event with us? Birthday parties have been a huge hit with children as well as parents. We set up tables in the hangars and provide the tablecloths, small gifts for the children and the birthday child. In addition the museum provides an educational and entertaining guided tour. No mess, no fuss for parents. We even do the cleanup. Please contact us at (612)210-9839 and Nancy Wilson will give you the information to host your event with us. Her email is: nancyspecialevents@mangmuseum@gmail.com.
Aeromeds dedicate C-131 honoring former chief nurse

by Tech. Sgt. Lynette Olivares
133rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

August 17th, 2013 -- The members of the 109th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron experienced something unique during their August drill. The founding members of this squadron, which started over fifty years ago, met where it all started ... the Air National Guard Base in St. Paul, Minn.

The members of the St. Paul based, Minnesota Air Guard, 109th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron participated in a founders reunion on Aug 17, 2013. The reunion included an unveiling of a Red Cross on the base’s Convair C-131 in honor of Col. Maureen A. Hunt, former Strategic Air Command, Chief Nursing Services and her lasting impact on the 109th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron. (Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt.Lynette Olivares)

The significant and special piece about the nationally recognized 109th AES is that it originated in Minnesota in 1961. The original members needed to find supplies, training and qualified personnel, but persevered through tough times and the growing stages. The members worked hard and now the unit is recognized as a pioneer in many things related to the advancement in aeromedical evacuation.

Even Brig. Gen. Greg Haase, outgoing commander of the 133rd Airlift Wing, made remarks on how vital the mission of the squadron is. He talked about the high demands and deployments of the Aeromeds from Vietnam to the Global War on Terror after 9/11.

"From in-theater to patient delivery back in the United States, there is one point we may have had a ‘Minnesota touch’ on every step of the way in evacuation of our wounded warriors," said Haase.

The weekend reunion ended with a dedication to Col. Maureen A. Hunt, former Strategic Air Command, Chief Nursing Services and former member of the squadron. She had the distinction of being an inventor and co-inventor of two aeromedical equipment items. These items were instrumental for improving inflight patient care.

Many of Hunt’s family, friends and associates filled the museum, as the unveiling of the Red Cross on the tail of Convair C-131 was displayed for the first time. The symbolism honors her and her lasting impact on the 109th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron.

Editor’s note: Special thanks to volunteer Ron Hokenson for his key contributions in getting the markings produced.
Corvette clubs donate new aircraft signs

In 2012 a group of Twin Cities Corvette owners came out to the Air Guard Museum to display their beautiful automobiles. It was great to have these nice folks visit us, but to our surprise they noticed the weathered condition of the blue aircraft signs in the airpark, and decided to do something about them.

We got all the necessary information together and gave it to them, and they had 21 brand new signs made for us, at no cost to the museum. The new signs will dress up the airpark and provide visitors with basic information about all of the aircraft. All of us at the museum are deeply grateful for the generous donation. Contributors from the Suburban Corvette Club (SCCM) are Dave and Judy Juhl, Steve Redlund, Vietnam vet, Wally Grivna Family, Mark Orfield, Greg and Barb Stattman, Roger Green, Sgt, USMC, Dave “Beast” Lindgren, Vietnam Vet. From the Classic Corvette Club: Rick Chaffee. Other contributors: Stan Tomerlin, Maj. (ret) MN ANG (was a C-130 pilot for the Guard), Rellan J. Hastings, USAAC WWII, Gordy and Laquita Erickson, Lakeville Trophy, for Jerome Shiverski, Cpl. USMC. Lakeville Trophy is located at 21017 Heron Way, Ste. 109, Lakeville, MN. The SCCM contributes to several charities, the largest being Spina Bifida for the past 25 years. The club has also done special fundraisers for cancer support, Caring and Sharing Hands, and food shelf drives.

Editor’s note: Special thanks to volunteer Jerry Schultz for his key contributions in getting the signs produced.

OUR WISH LIST FOR THE MUSEUM:

- Paint can shaker for mixing paint
- A new paper shear
- Laminating machine
- A business speaker phone for conference meetings
- Minnesota Air Guard and aviation memorabilia

The Minnesota Air National Guard Museum would like to thank everyone for previous monetary and “Wish List” gifts. We appreciate your support!