Airman's 'field of dreams' sprang from seeds of war

By DAVID LaCHANCE

The air was heavy with the threat of global war on the morning of April 6, 1940, when dignitaries gathered at what had been tobacco fields in Chicopee to dedicate a new airfield built for the defense of the nation.

The Northeast Air Base, later renamed Westover Field and finally Westover Air Force Base, was to shield the East Coast from the Nazi forces that had already laid waste to much of Europe.

Although the propeller-driven, twin-engine bombers that first touched down at Westover seem quaint antiques in comparison with the monstrous C-5A Galaxy cargo jets that now call the runway home, the base's mission has remained unchanged in the passage of 50 years: to keep the nation prepared for war.

From its role as a training station first for fighter then for bomber pilots during World War II, through its involvement in the Berlin airlift of 1948, and its Cold War glory days as a home of the B-52 Stratofortresses ready to carry atomic bombs into the heart of the Soviet Union, Westover has had a lead role to play.

Today, the air base is the home of the 439th Military Airlift Wing of the U.S. Air Force Reserve, and its mission of "strategic airlift" -- the transportation of cargoes ranging from M-60 tanks to food, clothing and equipment for disaster relief operations.

Westover's pre-history begins in the mid-

Continued on Page W-2
In war and peace, Westover always ready

Continued from Page W-1

1920s, with a Polish immigrant named Anthony J. Stonina.

For Stonina, a first-term alderman, the tobacco flats of Chicopee Falls were a field of dreams. Stonina believed that the land would be an ideal spot for an airport, but could not sell his colleagues on the idea.

Twelve years later, war had broken out in Europe, the federal government was looking for a site for a major air base for the Northeast, and Stonina was in the mayor’s office.

The mayor, sickened by the Nazi invasion of his native country, wired the secretary of war, urging that the Chicopee site be considered. On Sept. 15, 1939, the choice was made, and Stonina’s place in Chicopee history as “the father of Westover” was secured.

On Dec. 1, 1939, the base was renamed in honor of the first chief of the Army Air Corps, Maj. Gen. Oscar Westover, who had died the previous year in an airplane crash near the Lockheed aircraft factory in Burbank, Calif.

With the United States’ involvement in the war, Westover became a school for fighter pilots and bomber crews. B-17 Flying Fortresses, B-24 Liberators and B-26 Marauders joined the battle in the Atlantic and Pacific theaters, with pilots and crews assembled and trained in Chicopee.

Westover was also one of the few secure locations where the Norden bombsight, the Allied technological breakthrough that allowed more accurate targeting, was installed in B-17s.

With the ending of World War II and the drawing of the Iron Curtain in Europe, Westover and the newly-formed Military Air Transport Service had a new role to play in breaching the Soviet block of West Berlin.

Cargo planes left the runways of Westover laden with tons of food, fuel and other vital supplies for the two million inhabitants of the blockaded city. In the peak of the effort, planes landed on West Berlin runways every 1½ minutes. In the 327 days of the blockade, the four-engined C-54s assigned to Operation Vittles shuttled nearly 18 million tons of supplies across the Atlantic.

The Korean War came brought prominence to Westover, as cargo aircraft ferried troops and supplies to South East Asia, and returned with thousands of wounded who were treated at Westover’s base hospital or sent on to other medical facilities.

The ground-shaking rumble of the eight jet engines of a B-52 bomber announced a new incarnation for Westover in the mid-1960s, as a Strategic Air Command base and the home of the Eighth Air Force. The main runway was lengthened to 11,600 feet, or more than two miles, to accommodate the free world’s front line bomber.

Stratofortresses of the 99th Bombardment Wing were joined by KC-135 Stratotankers, flying fuel depots that could extend the big bomber’s range. The bombers’ nuclear arsenal was stored at Stony Brook Air Station in subterranean concrete vaults built total within Westover’s approximate 4,500 acres.

A highly classified command post – from which all Eighth AF bombers or, if necessary, all Strategic Air Command planes could be controlled if Westover, or SAC Headquarters in Omaha, Neb., were hit by atomic bombs – was blasted out of the side of the Mount Holyoke range, six miles east of Westover in South Amherst.

With the nation’s growing involvement in the Vietnam War, Westover grew into the largest SAC base in the eastern United States, with more than 10,000 active duty personnel, 30,000 civilian employees, and more than 11,000 dependents.

Westover’s role remained training and preparedness until 1972, when the 35 B-52s of the 99th were assigned for war over South East Asia. Flying from the island of Guam and from Thailand, the bombers made more than 3,000 runs to North Vietnam targets in their six months of duty.

Westover’s B-52s returned to Vietnam in 1972 to take part in the continuous bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong. The formal cease fire that ended the war was reached less than a month after the bombing was halted.

The end of the war in Vietnam brought with it an end to Westover’s service as an active duty base. The 99th Bombardment Wing was deactivated in 1974, and SAC turned the base over to the Air Force Reserve.

The 439th Tactical Airlift Wing brought with it 16 C-130 Hercules turbogear transport planes, each capable of delivering 35,000 pounds of cargo. But the C-130 was designed to take off and land on as little as 2,000 feet of runway, and Westover’s 11,600-foot ribbon of Tarmac seemed to point toward a bigger future.

That future arrived three years ago, on the wings of the C-5A Galaxy. Sixteen of the behemoths, the western world’s largest aircraft, were assigned to the 439th, which was rechristened as a Military Airlift Wing to reflect its new role as a global transport hub.

Describing the giant C-5A requires a vocabulary of superlatives. Each can carry oversized loads no other craft could swallow, such as two M-60 tanks, or three CH-47 Chinook helicopters. The C-5A’s cavernous hold is large enough to carry six Greyhound buses, 48 Cadillacs, 100 Volkswagen Beetles, or 25,000 ping pong balls.

It has been calculated that all of the supplies ferried to West Berlin during Operation Vittles could have fit in two C-5As.

A single C-5A can carry a maximum load of 240,000 pounds, or 120 tons, at a speed of 520 miles per hour. The craft carries 45,000 gallons of fuel, allowing a range of 3,250 miles fully loaded, or 6,500 miles empty. With inflight refueling, the Air Force notes, the range is limited only by the endurance of the crew.

The Galaxies are real bread-and-butter for being here,” said wing commander, Brig. Gen. Frederick D. Walker.

Westover’s reservists took part in the U.S. invasion of Panama in December, ferrying 350 troops and 350 tons of supplies in the mission that ousted Gen. Manuel Noriega. But weapons and troops are not the C-5A’s only cargo. The 439th carried supplies and evacuated survivors after Hurricane Hugo struck the Virgin Islands and the southeastern United States last September, and brought 15 utility line crews and two tons of medical supplies to Jamaica after Hurricane Gilbert struck in October.

The stationing of the giant transports at Westover brought $56 million in improvements to the base, including an $18 million hangar that allows crews to work on the monster aircraft indoors for the first time. The investment, Walker said, is just one indication that the Galaxies will have a long stay in Chicopee.

The changing world political climate, and the military budget-cutting that is following the easing of relations between the superpowers, also weighs in favor of reserve bases like Westover, Walker said.

Although some military jobs, such as that of the staffs of nuclear missile sites, must be done by active duty personnel, the 439th MAW and other reserve units can perform vital jobs at a fraction of the cost of regular forces, he said.

The entire Air Force Reserve, whose 57,000 reservists carry out 69 percent of the military’s strategic airlift needs among their duties, is funded at $1.8 billion, or just 1.5 percent of the total Air Force budget, Walker said.
Westover was link in chain of events in '62 missile crisis

By FORD TURNER

In the precarious chain of events that riveted the world's attention on Cuba in October, 1962, Westover Air Force Base was a major link.

Reconnaissance photographs that revealed the presence of Soviet-made missiles bases on Cuba, and precipitated a showdown between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, came from film that was handled at the airbase in Chicopee.

Some former military men say the film merely passed through Westover on its way to a processing facility in Rochester, N.Y. Others say privately that at least some of the film was developed in a "special projects" facility at

that would be carrying a special cargo to Rochester. Hearing the tone of conversations about the flight and given the fact that a general officer was assigned to accompany the "special cargo," Wolfe suspected that it was film taken by a U-2 spy plane over Cuba.

When he returned to Westover, he learned that his guess had been correct. After being removed from the plane in Rochester, the film apparently had been taken to a private facility for processing.

The pilot on that Westover-to-Rochester flight, Sidney Paul of Chicopee, recalled that the trip was arranged in a matter of hours. He did not know the nature of the contents of his cargo, but he

As far as I am concerned, everything that took place in that outfit was top secret at the time and still is today.

Gordon Newell
Public affairs officer

Westover.

"I've heard it both ways," said Gordon Newell, public affairs officer for the 697th Military Airlift Wing stationed at Westover today.

It seems impossible to determine the exact role of Westover in the Cuban Missile Crisis because of the absence of evidence. Military officers years ago. As one local man who worked in the facility in 1962 put it, "As far as I am concerned, everything that took place in that outfit was top secret at the time and still is today."

Another former officer, Pittsfield native Harry Wolfe, remembers well the excitement and tension caused by a certain batch of movie film that arrived in Westover in October 1962.

Wolfe was a navigator attached with the Eighth Reconnaissance Technical Squadron, generally referred to as "Eighth Reckie Tech," at Westover.

On very short notice, Wolfe was instructed to prepare for a flight clearly remembers the unloading in Rochester.

"When we landed, a group of us with security badges taken on board and began taking the cartons off," said Wolfe. "When we asked the men about the contents of the cartons, they said, with some amount of surprise, "You mean you don't know what these are?"

Paul, who was a major assigned with the 814th Combat Support Group at Westover, learned later of the importance of the film his plane had carried.

Within a few days, he was flying U.S. Air Force inspectors from Westover to civilian airports up and down the East Coast. The inspectors were to make sure the airports were fit to handle the bombers that had been assigned to them.

Two retired military men said at least some portion of the U-2

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The Very Best...Just Got Better!
O'Connell gave heart, soul in 39 years as base worker

By TOM SHEA

It was April 1942. Betty O'Connell was making $20 a week, $1,940 a year, as a secretary and clerk with the Holyoke Board of Public Works. She took a part-time job working Thursday nights and Saturdays for 29 cents an hour at Storger's, a grocery store in Holyoke. Henry J. Toepfer, Holyoke's mayor at the time, didn't think that was such a good idea.

So O'Connell, who had already taken the Civil Service exam, decided to take a supply-clerk job at Westover Air Force Base. She got a raise — to $1,400 a year — and what amounted to a lifetime job.

"I loved it," O'Connell said. "There wasn't a day I didn't get up that I didn't want to go to work." That was 39 years worth of love.

She first worked as a supply clerk, moved to bookkeeping, and ended up in public affairs. "Betty was a mainstay at the base, invaluable, really," said John Wallace Spencer, the Air Reserve's 439th Military Airlift Wing's first sergeant. "She was a wealth of information. She wasn't there when they drove the first peg into the ground, but she knew all about it.

"Even after she retired she'd show up once a week and work on files, until one day the new public affairs officer called her into his office and told her, 'Betty, you retire.'"

O'Connell, 72, did retire in 1981, but to this day if there is a question the public affairs office can't answer, the solution is, "Call Betty O'Connell."

Rick Dyer, a Manchester, Conn., attorney and a major in the Air Force Reserve, said O'Connell's reputation for knowing everything there is to know about Westover is simple. "Her love of the place and the Air Force, along with a corporate mind like a computer," he said. "On top of that, she's really a neat person, a beautiful lady who likes sharing what she knows and she knows it all."

O'Connell is tall with bright blue eyes and a husky voice. Growing up in Holyoke, she wanted to be a journalist.

"I guess I was nosy," she said with a laugh. "I always wanted to know what was going on."

She worked on the Holyoke High School newspaper on the editorial and business side before attending Bay Path Institute in Springfield (now Bay Path College in Longmeadow).

"I enjoyed my work in Holyoke and I had an opportunity to get my job back later, but the lure of Westover was too much," she said. "It was too exciting. Too much to do. I'm not a flag-waver, but I felt like I was doing something for my country."

She was promoted to chief of publishing for the Atlantic Division, moving to McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey from 1955 to 1965, her only time away from Westover since World War II.

Since her retirement, O'Connell has been active in the Chicopee Chamber of Commerce.

A PIECE OF HER HEART — Betty O'Connell, a longtime Westover Air Force Base employee, retired in 1981, but if there is a question the Public Affairs Office can't answer, the solution is "Call Betty O'Connell."

Buried deep, bunker awaited worst

By SUE YOUNG WILSON

AMHERST — A driver headed toward South Hadley on Route 116 would find it easy to pass by the former Air Force site known as the "Notch," among the wooded slopes of the Holyoke Range. Little of the site lies above ground.

The four-story, underground bunker, lying 400 feet below the peak of the range was built for security and secrecy.

From it, the Eighth Air Force of the Strategic Air Command could direct its B-52 bombers world-wide in the event of war, its communications equipment and commanders relatively safe from bombs or missiles.

The Strategic Air Command built the Notch command post in 1958 as auxiliary headquarters for the Eighth Air Force, whose 99th Bomb Wing was stationed at nearby Westover Air Force Base, according to Westover commandant Col. Thomas Hargis.

The Notch was also designated as a backup command center for the entire Strategic Air Command in the event SAC's main headquarters in Omaha, Neb., were destroyed, Hargis said.

The Notch is eight miles from Westover, and the Eighth Air Force command normally stationed at the base could reach the Notch in under five minutes by helicopter, Hargis said.

The site was reported to be able to accommodate an operating staff of 300 during its peak years of operation in the mid-1960s, and was staffed 24 hours a day, according to Chicopee telecommunications teacher John Gordon of Holyoke, who spent four years researching Westover's history to produce a 50-minute videotape.

But few people, aside from those who built it or worked there, know what the Notch looks like on the inside.

"People who worked there were sworn to secrecy about it, and they keep to that," Gordon said.

The site now belongs to the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, which bought it in 1973 when the Strategic Air Command ceased its operations at Westover.

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The Business Community of the City of Chicopee, Serving Westover these past 50 years, Salutes Westover on its 50th Anniversary
Westover's air traffic controllers are old hands at handling big job

By MARIO G. ORTIZ

WESTOVER AIR FORCE BASE — The world's largest cargo plane swiveled on massive wheels, slowly curving into the center of the runway.

Gradually gathering speed like a muscle-bound linebacker, the camouflaged C-5A zoomed by, punching upwards through the air.

One hundred feet away and 10 stories up, two air traffic controllers watched casually, but carefully.

"An impressive battle between raw power and the laws of physics," said Tippett, the 26-year veteran controller.

"There aren't too many surprises left for us," said Tippett, the 26-year veteran controller.

Tippe's four fellow controllers, bring to the tower about 100 years of combined experience in the field. It's probably this experience that creates a thoroughly calm, unhurried and almost peaceful atmosphere.

Yet despite the serene mood, the seriousness of the task lies just below the easy surface.

"I've seen all that can go wrong," said Tippe. "I've seen why he is not a flying nut."

None of the controllers are pilots. Tippe said he wouldn't much.

Continued on Page W-5

Air show will reunite units who served 50 years ago

By MARIO G. ORTIZ

WESTOVER AIR FORCE BASE — When the 24th Air Base Group arrives here July 23, it will be for the first time in nearly 50 years.

While some of its members have reunited since then under the flags of different units, this first, peace-time group to arrive at the fledgling base in 1940 will finally meet collectively.

The 34th Air Refueling Squadron will also reunite the weekend of the Air Show at the Quality Inn in Chicopee.

John Sherrock of Manchester, Conn., a former aircraft mechanic on B-17 bombers, said the 26th simply never made an effort to reunite until now.

Sherrock expects about 40 members and their wives for dinner on the base. The red carpet will be rolled out for the unit, with VIP tents and reserved parking among the perks, he said.

For William R. Kilpatrick of Stapleton, Ala., the reunion will complete a circle started in July 29, 1919, the day he arrived at the base.

"I want to see what the base looks like and as many of my friends as I can," Kilpatrick said.

When he first arrived, after a long, bumpy car ride from Alabama, Kilpatrick said, the base was a dusty, empty wasteland.

After serving as a cook for two years, Kilpatrick, like most from the 26th, joined the 464th Sub-depot Repair Squadron in England.

Sherrock said members of the 26th old about every first at Westover, from driving the first truck onto the base, operating the first portable photo lab, and building the first barracks.

Continued on Page W-22

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Demonstrators are no strangers at air base

By WILLIAM FREEMAN

New England's largest anti-war demonstration was held here yesterday, according to a number of witnesses.

The demonstration was held at Westover Air Force Base, where the government is currently conducting large-scale training exercises.

The anti-war group, which comprised around 500 people, gathered at the base entrance and marched towards the command center, chanting slogans against the war in Vietnam.

The atmosphere at the base was tense, with security personnel standing guard and monitoring the demonstration closely.

One of the demonstrators, John Smith, said: "This is our way of saying no to the war. We believe in peace and justice, and we want to send a clear message to the government that the war is wrong.

The response from the base was mixed. Some personnel tried to contain the crowd, while others remained passive, allowing the demonstration to proceed without major disturbances.

At the same time, the government maintained a strong stance, stating that the exercises were necessary for national security.

Despite the tension, the demonstration showed that anti-war sentiments are still prevalent and that many people are concerned about the impact of the war on the country.

In conclusion, while the demonstration was peaceful, it highlighted the continued resistance against the war and the need for a peaceful resolution.

END
Westover kept busy by Air Force Reserve

By TED LabORDE

WESTOVER AIR FORCE BASE — In 1974 Westover became the largest Air Force Reserve facility in the country. Since then it has also become home for reserve units from the other military branches.

Naval, Army and Marine Corps reservists, as well as the Army National Guard, have been training at Westover since 1977. The units occupy the former Strategic Air Command Service Center, which was renovated and reopened as the U.S. Armed Forces Reserve Center in November 1977.

Air Force reservists, 2,500 of them, are assigned to the 439th Military Airlift Wing or its subordinate units, all of which fall under the jurisdiction of the 414th Air Force Headquarters at Dobbins Air Force Base in Georgia.

While the mission of the 439th MAW and its subordinate units, with a presence in training and recruiting, the unit is called on weekly for air cargo transports overseas, and periodically for humanitarian cargo and personnel transports.

In the event of military action and activation of the reserve units, Westover, the 439th will be responsible for the mobilization of the 811th Tactical Airlift Wing stationed at Pittsburgh, and the 614th Tactical Airlift Wing based in Niagara Falls, N.Y., as well as the 337th Military Airlift Group at Westover.

The 439th's primary function will be to transport troops, equipment and medical supplies wherever needed.

Subordinate units supporting the 439th Military Airlift Wing are the 439th Avionics Squadron, 439th Field Maintenance Squadron, 439th Organizational Maintenance Squadron, the 837th Military Airlift Squadron, the 42nd Aerial Port Squadron and the 84th Aerial Port Squadron.

Air show will reunite 26th Air Base Group

Continued from Page W-5

and emotional experiences they shared. He said the air show will provide an ideal opportunity to gather memorabilia spanning Westover's 50 years.

In his correspondence efforts with veterans across the country, Adams said he has been sent many valuable photographs and strangely, menus.

Memories from special base dinners at Thanksgiving and Christmas have poured in, he said.

Sorerox said he, too, has been writing vigorously to find lost members from the 26th and 446th.

"I don't know how many hundred letters I've written in 38 years," he said, adding that word of mouth ultimately is the most effective method of finding vets.

Hopefully, next weekend, his efforts will pay off.


The primary missions of the military reserve units of sister services occupying the U.S. Armed Forces Reserve Center are training and recruiting.

The 1049th Army Reserve Forces School conducts training for enlisted personnel and provides advancement, promotion and retention courses for officers, according to Unit Administrator Donald Desrochers.

The 1049th conducts four, four-hour drills a month. About 35 members attend each drill. The Army has assigned 52 personnel to the schools, 23 of whom are officers and 29 enlisted personnel. Also assigned at the center are two Army regulars.

"Geographically, we train members of both the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard from throughout Western Massachusetts," Desrochers said. The school provides noncommissioned officer courses as well as numerous courses in various job classifications.

The Army assigned the 173rd Medical Group to Westover in 1973. The group serves as home for five full-time military and three civilian personnel, and 50 reservists.

The 173rd supports medical regulatory services in cooperation with the Air Force. Its reserve mission would involve medical evacuations, 1st Sgt. Gerard Doffi said.

The Marine Corps operates infantry training for 65 reservists through the supervisory capabilities of the active duty Marines. The Army National Guard unit, which is assigned to the Air National Guard, 1st Squadron, of the 26th Division, also conducts training for its personnel.

The Navy Reserve unit lists 350 personnel. The unit relocated here from its older training center on Cason Street near Mercy Hospital in Springfield in 1978.

Lt. Col. David Costa said that the Navy Reserve provides support to Westover with assistance in baling, base police, security, supplies and medical services and at the base recreational training area.

Navy Reserve units stationed here are the Mobile Construction Battalion 27 Det. 1227 Seabees; Naval Communication Area Muster Station; Mediterranean Det. 201; Security Group 501; 44th Fleet Supply Service Medical Regiment and Det. B of the Fleet Hospital 260 Combat Zone.

Costa said Naval Reservists here also provide logistical and support support for the Norfolk Naval Base.

GUIDING FORCE — A member of the 439th Military Airlift Wing directs an army truck into the cargo bay of a C-5A during a training exercise at Westover Air Force Base.
Unknown to many, Westover was home to German POWs

By TOM SHEA

Steven R. Jendryszak was just a boy when he heard the rumor that German prisoners of war had escaped from Westover Air Force Base.

His father worked at the Springfield Armory during the war and knew Germans were being held at the base.

"I was scared," the Chicopee High School history teacher recalled. "I had visions of Nazis marching down Granby Road."

The rumor was false, but one tried to escape, and as many as 199 German prisoners were held in the Stony Brook area of the base, now part of Ludlow, "and very few people knew about it at the time," said local historian James M. Parsons.

"As a matter of fact, outside of personnel at Westover, the only people who knew of the German POWs were farmers in Hadley, North Amherst and Hadley." Parsons said. "They hired the prisoners to harvest potatoes and tobacco."

Parsons said the prisoners were a benefit to the community.

"They worked on farms where there was a labor shortage, and on the base they worked as mechanics, gardeners and cooks," Parsons said.

According to research by John Gordon, a Chicopee teacher, who has made a documentary of Westfield, German prisoners were held in such high regard at Westover they requested more POWs to help with work detail.

German prisoners who wore black uniforms with "POW" on their shirts and pants in the field were permitted to wear their military uniforms on the base.

They could use the Nazi "Heil Hitler" salute and were fed top quality meals, according to Parsons, the past president of the Northampton Historical Society and a teacher at Hampshire Regional High School in Westhampton.

"The prisoners at Westover weren't rabid Nazis," Parsons said. "The rabid Nazis were held at bases in the Southwest. Westover POWs were young guys who didn't want to fight, but had to fight."

In 1944, an edict by the U.S. government allowed prisoners to take courses at American universities and receive credit from their German and Austrian schools, Parsons said.

"The government also tried to re-educate the prisoners on the greatness of democracy through courses, films and books," Parsons said.

Betsy O'Connell, a longtime employee at Westover, now with the Chicopee Chamber of Commerce, said she and her friends used to sneak the POWs cigarettes.

"I didn't have much contact with them, but they seemed nice, so young and bland, boys, really, and I wanted to be nice in the hopes that people in Europe would be nice to our boys," she said.

Parsons and many of the farmers he talked to in Hadley, North Amherst and Hatfield who had employed German soldiers, were universal in their praise of the POWs.

Farmers would get up at dawn and take a truck down to Westover to collect 15 to 20 prisoners and a guard with a submachine gun.

There were no escapes or attempted escapes from Westover, Parsons said.

Of the hundreds of thousands of German and Italian soldiers kept in 600 camps in 44 of the 48 states during World War II, only 1,073 tried to escape, Parsons said.

Prisoners were released from Westover sometime in 1946, according to Parsons.

They were shipped to Europe where they labored on reconstruction projects.
Stony Brook: A-bomb depot

BY SUE YOUNG WILSON

LUDLOW — Thirty-two concrete bunkers dot the grounds of the Stony Brook electrical power plant on Westover Air Force Base's eastern border.

The bunkers, shaped like truncated pyramids with grass growing on their tops and sides, look out of place among the power plant's gleaming transformers and cubicles.

They are what remains of Stony Brook Air Force Station, once a heavily guarded storage facility for weapons that included the nuclear bombs carried by the B-52 Stratofortresses flying out of Westover Air Force Base, adjacent to which Stony Brook was located.

"It was really guarded over here," said David Tuohy, a spokesman for the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC), which runs the power plant. "There was triple barbed wire around the perimeter, dogs running loose, and lights all over."

The three rows of barbed-wire fences continue to enclose the 471-acre site, but the power company now uses the bunkers to store maintenance equipment for the power plant, completed in 1981, Tuohy said.

Stony Brook, built in 1957, was operated as a separate facility from Westover, under heavy security, according to Col. Thomas Hurgis, Westover base commander.

Chicopee telecommunications teacher John Gordon, who recently completed a 54-minute videotape on the history of Westover, said that massive convoys of armored trucks regularly left the station to carry nuclear bombs to the waiting B-52s.

Normally, the bombs and their fuel were stored in separate bunkers and remained in a special area just prior to being moved, Gordon said.

Stony Brook was dismantled in the early 1970s when the Strategic SECURE FACILITY — David Tuohy of Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Co., stands outside a bunker that once was a storage facility for nuclear bombs carried by B-52 bombers flying out of Westover Air Force Base.

Air Command withdrew its operations from Westover.

MMWEC bought the surplus land for $1.1 million and built the $11-megawatt power plant.

The power company chose the site because the Air Force station was served by a railroad and fuel supply lines and remains isolated from the nearest residents, he said.

Air traffic controllers experienced at tough job

Continued from Page W-3

care to learn.

"When you're young and dumb, that's when you fly," growled Charlie Leach, a 30-year veteran, who is months away from retiring.

Dressed casually in dock shoes and slacks, Tippo is pleasant and talkative.

"Everyday I come in, I never know what's going to happen. It's a real game," he said, pausing at the crackle of static on the radio.

"Red zero four: off nine o'clock three miles and descending."

Tippo splits into a handset.

"It's been called three dimensional chess," he adds.

After working at other Air Force bases and commercial airports, Tippo said, Westover has been enjoyable.

Because it is surrounded by airports in Westfield, Northampton, Palmer and Bradley International in Windsor Locks, Conn., Tippo said controllers here usually have to keep an eye on traffic rather than direct it.

For three days this month, however, that will all change as over 750 aircraft are expected to descend on the base for an International Air Show.

Tippo, who has handled these type of shows before, said the scope and diversity of traffic will test the controllers' mettle.

With jet fighters, parachutists and plans and World War II bombers expected, Tippo said keeping them apart and in order will be one of the many challenges the tower crew will face.

But air shows are rare events. A typical day in the tower may mean a handful of take-offs, long CS-A training sessions, and paperwork.

Al Suchicki, tower manager for five years, said an unpredictable element is always present despite the sophisticated and accurate equipment, both in the tower and in the planes.

"You're dealing with man and machines, which when you put them together, occasionally, there will be accidents," he said.

"Squawk five five seven ... you can now cross golf taxiway."

Tippo said to a private, four-seat plane readying for take-off.

About one-twentieth the size of the 230-foot long CS-A, the private planes and their passengers are vulnerable to turbulence caused by the massive cargo planes.

Tippo said controllers must always be aware not only of the location of CS-A but of the disturbance behind them, or what is called their wake turbulence.

Keeping these and many other details straight in his head is what makes the job, after all these years, still interesting, Tippo said.

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Air show invites imagination to take flight

More than a million persons expected to watch

By JUNE GREG
WESTOVER AIR FORCE BASE
The B-52 will be back.

The Canadian Snowbirds, the
U.S. Army's Golden Knights, and the
Air Force Reserve's C-130s
will be there, along with continuing
flight demonstrations and an
almost one-mile-long exhibit of 75
vintage and modern aircraft.

Westover is celebrating its 50th
anniversary with a three-day
international airshow that is
expected to be the largest
community and tourist event in New
England this year, according to
Gordon Newell, public affairs officer for
the Air Force Reserve's 439th
Military Airlift Wing.

More than a million people are
expected to attend the show which
will feature flight demonstrations
by the Canadian Snowbirds, the
Army's Golden Knights parachute
team, and World War II
vintage aircraft.

On display will be a mock-up of an
X-30A, a futuristic space
airplane designed to take off from a
runway to fly into space. It is
being developed by NASA at
Kennedy Space Center at Cape
Canaveral.

Among aircraft in the show that
have been assigned at Westover
during its 50 year history will be the
F-16 Stratofighter, KC-135
air-refueling tanker, C-130
Heracles cargo plane, the World War II
B-17 and B-24 bombers, and P-47
Thunderbolt and P-51 Mustang fighters.

Also on display will be the
monster C-5A Galaxy transports
currently flown at Westover by
Air Force Reserve crews.

It's the biggest airshow ever at
the base, Newell said.

The free show will be from 9
a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Gates
will open at 8 a.m. Aerial
demonstrations may be canceled in
the event of severe weather.

Col. Thomas G. Hargis, base
commander, said, "It's our chance
for the community to show the
aviation base what the base
looks like. We have a
tremendous lineup of display aircraft,
framing much of the
runway.

Base officials, however, would
not release the times of any
performances, saying they were
deluged with more than 300
requests to avoid traffic jams at
particular times, as occurred during
the airshow featuring the
Thunderbirds three years ago. They
did, however, say that the Snowbirds
will perform at least once an
afternoon, and the Golden Knights in
the mornings and afternoons.

Flying demonstrations will be
held by the base. Among the
demonstrations will be rides, clowns,
and food vendors.

Arrangements have been made
for 60 concession stands offering
toilet, beverages, hats, T-shirts and
other souvenirs, Hargis said.

A three-car railroad train will
transport visitors from one
parking area to the flight line.

Canada's 451st Air
Demonstration Squadron, the Snowbirds,
will present an arrival perfor-

mance on opening day, Friday, and
one show on Saturday and on
Sunday with their nose red-white-
and-blue Tutors jets.

The Snowbirds' demonstrations
begin with the appearance of twin-
engined fighters at the show,
concluding with a spiraling
formation of smoke and pyrotechnics
around the base.

Their planes, two sort trainers,
are much quieter than the F-16
fighters flown by the USAF's
Thunderbirds, and are less likely to
frighten young children, Newell
said.

The Golden Knights, from Fort
Bragg, N.C., last appeared here in
1987. They will perform precision
parachute jumping
demonstrations twice daily on each
day of the show.

The U.S. Marine Corps Silent
Drill Team will perform twice on
Saturday and once on Sunday,
tentatively in front of Hangar 3.

"Spectacular is an understatement" in
describing the performance
of the 22-member drill
team, according to Air Force
Chief Warrant Officer
Natalie Iryski. Members carry M-1
rifles with fixed bayonets, and
their 13-minute drill with precise
handling of the rifles is done with
out verbal commands.

Other flight demonstrations will
include the A-10 anti-tank fighters
flown by pilots of the Air National
Guard's 194th Tactical Fighter
Group at Barnes Airport, West-
field.

The USAF's F-15 supersonic jet
Continued on Page W-11

HIGH FLYING — The Army's Golden Knights will perform during
this weekend's airshow at Westover Air Force Base.

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Arranging air show was a labor of love

By FORD TURNER

Planning for maximum interaction between more than 100 aircraft and an anticipated one million people over three days would seem guaranteed to produce a massive headache.

Not so, say the officers at Westover Air Force Base who have coordinated preparations for Westover's 50th anniversary air show.

Col. Thomas Hargis, base commander, said the feeling is more that "it's a labor of love."

Planning meetings began about a year ago. Lt. Col. Gale French was named to coordinate the event, and Maj. Dan Nichols was charged with lining up two of its most important segments: the approximately 80 aircraft that will be on display on the ground, and the dozens that will be flying overhead.

"We've got them coming from all over the world," French said.

A C-130 Hercules aircraft will fly from Australia to participate, while the West German Air Force is sending an F-14 fighter jet.

U.S. Air Force bases around the world began receiving letters and calls from Westover in January seeking support for the air show, according to Nichols. The thousands of communications have been boiled down into a rough schedule.

"We know who is coming and when, but there are daily changes when some people have maintenance problems or schedule conflicts," Nichols said. If a unit cannot meet its commitment to appear at Westover, Nichols said he looks for another unit that operates similar aircraft to fill in the hole in the show.

The majority of the planes will arrive at Westover on July 28, one day prior to the start of the show. French said their pilots purposely have been given directions to approach the base on a route that will take them over Springfield, Holyoke, and other population centers in Western Massachusetts.

"We want to show the people in the area what they are going to have a chance to see," French said.

More than 50 military and civilian personnel have been organized into committees that have been dealing with specific portions of the air show for months. Nichols was transferred to Westover in June and plunged headlong into the planning process.

"At the first meetings I went to, I was amazed at the details they had gone into," he said.

The details include setting up a play area for children, possible installation of outdoor showers for those patrons who want to cool off; arranging for installation of several banks of telephones for patrons; planning for the daily removal of massive amounts of garbage; and, of course, making sure there are enough portable toilets to serve the crowds.

"It's not a pain in the neck. It's really a challenge, and it's interesting. It's going to be a good air show," Nichols said.

B-52s of a different sort expected to draw million

Continued from Page W10

will perform its sensational climb to out-of-sight altitude immediately after takeoff.

There also will be flight demonstrations by the AH-1S Cobra gunship helicopter; rapping demonstration by the Army from a helicopter to the ground; and by CH-54 Skycrane helicopter from Connecticut Air National Guard at Bradley Airport. The C-130 Hercules will demonstrate an air drop and assault takeoff and landing.

There will be flyovers by an FB-111 fighter-bomber, the type used in the bombing of Libya several years ago; and by F-16 Fighting Falcons, the plane used by the Thunderbirds and regarded by many as the world's No. 1 fighter. There also will be flyover demonstrations by a B-1B, the newest strategic bomber; a C-5A, the world's largest jet cargo transport; a B-52 bomber; an OH-6A small observation helicopter; and a UH-1H, a multipurpose Army helicopter.

Visitors can inspect and photograph all aircraft on display on the flight line. Among the aircraft on ground display will be the B-1B bomber; C-5A; F-15; F-16, and the Navy's F-14.

Hargis said the local populace is encouraged to come to the show Friday, July 27, to avoid anticipated large crowds on Saturday and Sunday. Bicycle and pets will be prohibited from the flight line. There will be 53,000 parking spaces on the base and about 30,000 to 40,000 more at off-base sites, he said.

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- P-40 fighter
- P-51 fighter
- C-5 Galaxy jet cargo plane
- C-47 cargo plane
- T-34 Navy trainer
- Cobra gunship helicopter
- Golden Knights, U.S. Army parachute team

Afternoon flying displays:

- Snowbirds, Canadian aerial demonstration team
- B-1 bomber
- F-15 fighter demonstration team
- F-18 fighter demonstration team
- F-16 fighter demonstration team
- C-130 cargo drop demonstration
- A-10 fighter demonstration team
- OH-6 helicopter rappelling demonstration
- Golden Knights, U.S. Army parachute team

Static displays:

- M-1 tank, World War II tanks, other military vehicles
- 60-foot half-scale mockup of the XB-30 supersonic passenger plane
- Technical exhibits in hangars; Kiddyland amusement area
- 100 display aircraft of all types

Gates open at 8 a.m. Aerial events are repeated each day.
Shows begin at 9 a.m. and continue to 5 p.m.

Editor's note: Citing the need to reduce traffic congestion, Westover officials did not provide specific times for aerial demonstrations. The events will be continuous and will be announced over a public address system.
Ma Manning's, Red Barn were home to many

By TOM SHEA

The Red Barn was for the officers. Ma Manning's was for the non-coms and enlisted men. The Red Barn featured big bands and big-name entertainers. Ma Manning's featured softball as a blood sport.

No one left either place thirsty. Both were a home away from home for those stationed at Westover Air Force Base through the years, and they earned a worldwide reputation for their ambiance.

I've been to Europe a number of times and each time I manage to run into someone who asks about the Red Barn and Ma Manning's.

William P. Pappas
Red Barn ex-owner

The Red Barn, which was demolished in 1976, was located adjacent to Exit 6 of the Massachusetts Turnpike, while Ma Manning's, which closed in the 1960s, was situated where the Chateau Provost sits in the Fairview section of Chicopee.

Tommy Dorsey and a young Tom Jones were among the entertainers who graced the Red Barn's stage. Then-SEN. John F. Kennedy made sure the Red Barn was a regular campaign stop.

At Ma Manning's, softball games under the lights, a rarity in the 1950s, are still talked about almost 40 years later. There was nothing 'soft' or 'slo' about it. It was softball as it's played in the Midwest, its players had all the athletic skills and reflexes required in hardball, and many fans believe it to be every bit as exciting to watch.

* * *

Operated by Josephine Ross, Ma Manning's was a comfortable place day and night for swapping stories and having a taste of the hard and the soft stuff. The structure sort of rambled along the side of Montcalm Street.

The Red Barn sat on 50 acres and once was used as a stable. But when it expanded to a restaurant, it featured a large horseshoe bar that could accommodate six stools, along with a dining room that could seat 50.

Big-time entertainment was provided five nights a week, plus entertainment in the bar.

In the summers, old-time New England clam bakes would be held in the picnic grove.

John L. Sullivan founded the Barn. In its early days, it featured Irish dancing and entertainment. He died earlier this year in Lebanon, Tenn., at the age of 78.

"It was a place where a single guy could meet women and a couple could have a nice dinner and a nice night out," Pappas said. "It had it all.

Mary Parkas, 81, a long-time waitress at the Barn, agreed.

"Serving the boys from Westover was a pleasure," she said. "They were all so polite, so nice, so friendly."

SERVICE ATTRACTION — William Pappas, former owner of the Red Barn in Chicopee, holds a 1955 watercolor of the lounge that once hosted events for officers at Westover Air Force Base. Pappas is treasurer-clerk of Springfield Plumbing Supply.

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Aerobatic artistry promises to rain thrills

Snowbirds from Canada will appear

By TED LABORDE

WESTOVER AIR FORCE BASE — The International Air Show will feature aerial maneuvers in close formation, precision parachute jumping, and silent drill team performances.

Canada's Snowbirds, the 431st Air Demonstration Squadron, will appear for the first time at Westover while the Army's official parachute demonstration team, the Golden Knights, will make a repeat performance.

The Golden Knights last performed here during the air show in 1987. Also making its first appearance here will be the famed Marine Corps Silent Drill Team. The team performs its spectacular routine, in which its members whirl rifles with bayonets fixed, without a single order being given.

Spectators will also get a look at Navy Commander D'izzle Gillespie, the man expected to be the next leader of the Navy's Blue Angels aerobatic demonstration team, according to Col. Gale French, air show coordinator.

French also announced that an Air Force F-15 Eagle, only one of two that perform at air shows throughout the country, will be here.

The Snowbirds, Canada's answer to the Thunderbirds and Blue Angels, were first organized in 1971 and established as a permanent squadron on April 1, 1978.

Predecessors of the Snowbirds were the Siskins in the 1930s, and later the Golden Hawks and Golden Centennaires, formed in 1967 for Canada's 100th birthday celebration.

The Snowbirds were established in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, as an unofficial, non-aerobatic formation team in 1971. The group was made up of volunteer instructor pilots and groundcrews.

The team was named the Snowbirds as a result of a contest held at Canada's elementary schools, and first flew under that name at the 1971 Saskatchewan Homecoming Air Show. In 1976, the Snowbirds were invited to perform over Philadelphia as part of the American Bicentennial Fourth of July celebration. Later that summer, the team performed at the Summer Olympics in Montreal.

The team consists of 11 pilots, one administrative officer, and a 13-member groundcrew. Members of the Snowbirds serve for two years, with half of the team replaced each year.

The team flies the CT-114 Tutor Canadian-built jet trainer, which has a top speed of 412 knots or about 470 mph. The only modifications to the aircraft for the Snowbirds are the addition of a smoke-generating system, a unique paint scheme, and a highly tuned engine.

The team performs 36 different maneuvers in formations ranging from two to 11 aircraft. Earlier this year, the team performed its 1,000th official air demonstration.

As part of their 20th anniversary show, the Snowbirds will feature red and white colored smoke for the first time.

The U.S. Army's Golden Knights have performed more than 6,900 shows.

Continued on Page W-16
Westover sets sophisticated plans for parkers at this year's air show

By FORD TURNER

In terms of air shows, Westover Air Force Base has learned from its mistakes.

After a 1987 show that drew about 150,000 people on one day, base officials heard a slew of complaints about the handling of traffic and parking in and around the show, so Col. Thomas Hargis, base commander, said things will be different this time around.

"Total integration" is the phrase Hargis applies to this year's sophisticated planning, which includes a traffic command headquarters, participation by seven police agencies, a scholarly study of parking, and a police helicopter for monitoring traffic flow.

Hargis and the show organizers have a plan for people to follow from the time their vehicles approach the Chicopee area until they are parked for the air show.

In 1987, the crowd arriving for the show slowed by the fact that the base only had two entrances, according to Hargis. This year, traffic will be channeled into four base access points.

Maps showing the routes to these points will be distributed at exits from major highways, Hargis said, and overhead, a state police helicopter will be monitoring the flow of traffic into the base.

"If there is a traffic flow problem," Hargis said, "we will know where to shut off the traffic in one direction and channel it into another direction."

In 1987, he said, there was no coordination of traffic control with local police. This year, six meetings have been held to map out traffic strategies for the air show with local police.

Members of the Springfield, Chicopee, Holyoke, Granby, South Hadley and Ludlow police departments will join state police and base personnel in operating a "traffic command post" on the base during the show, Hargis said.

In 1987, "we didn't do a good job of planning to park people in precise places," he said. "This time, all of the parking spaces have been surveyed. We know precisely how many cars we can park and where they are going to park."

Nine hundred of the base's 2,300 acres have been devoted to parking for the show. After officials walked and inspected every portion of that area, Hargis noted, they calculated there is room for 52,000 parking spaces.

Patterns for the flow of vehicles into those parking spaces already have been determined, he said. Another 25,000 spaces are within walking distance of the base.

During the show, 130 military police from Fort Devens in Ayer, and about 75 Civil Air Patrol personnel "will be doing nothing but park cars," Hargis said.

The parking contingent, he promised, will be working "totally in tune" with the traffic regulators.

Some of the more remote parking areas on the base are over two miles from where the "show line" of aircraft will be located, he said, so several base vehicles will serve as a shuttle service to and from the more distant parking areas.
Name That Formation

Can you guess which air show formation is which?
The answers are listed below the diagrams of the formations. Just match the right answer to the right formation and you could win one of five $100 gift certificates to any of the retail advertisers in this section.

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2. All entries become the property of the Union-News and must be received by Wednesday, August 1. The Union-News is not responsible for late, lost or misdirected mail.
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Berlin Airlift
part of history

Book shows mission of air base
 touched area, corners of world

By BRIAN MELLEY

CHICOPEE — In 1948, while
American planes landed around
the clock to deliver essential sup-
ples in blockaded West Berlin,
one Westover pilot was also drop-
ping candy to kids.

The pilot's brainchild sparked
the "essence of the Berlin Airlift"
contends Dr. Frank Faulkner, au-
thor of "Westover: Man, Base and
Mission."

While Douglas C-54s landed in the
city every three minutes to de-
liver coal, food, and medicine to
the people of West Berlin, the
pilot, Lt. Gail S. Halverson, decid-
ed the German children outside
Templehof Airport needed some
sweetness.

Halverson tied small bags of
candy to parachutes he made
from handkerchiefs. He revealed
his identity by rocking his wings
back and forth and soon became
known as "Uncle Wiggly Wings," and the "Candy Bomber."

Halverson's initiative received
great publicity in the States, and
the city of Chicopee, under Mayor
Edward Bombas, became the U.S.
headquarters for the "little
vittles" program.

Candy for parachutes, handker-
chiefs, ribbons and Life Savers
poured into the city with donations
from around the country. Students
at Elms College and at Springfield
and Chicopee schools volunteered
time to make the "candychutes."

By the end of the airlift, approxi-
mately 100,000 parachutes loaded
with candy were prepared in Chicopee,
and 16 tons of candy had been
 flown from Westover Air Force
Base to be dropped over Berlin.

"Operation Little Vittles" is de-
tailed in Faulkner's book, which
 traces the history of Westover
from the 1926 seeds of its con-
s truction to the present and ties
the base's significance to world
events.

The Galaxy Community Council
is selling Faulkner's book to raise
funds for anniversary events at
Westover. The book will be sold at
the air show, at local bookstores,
and at branches of Ludlow Savings
Bank.

* * *

Faulkner, the civilian executive
officer at Westover AFB, says he
was inspired to write the book
after seeing the size of crowds that
turned out for the two-day Westov-
er air show in 1987.

That show, which attracted 350,-
000 people, was called by local his-
torians and associate publisher of
the Springfield Newspapers, Rich-
ard C. Garvey, "the largest public
event in the history of Western Mass." Faulkner terms that event
the "Woodstock of Western Mass."

The size of the crowd showed
Faulkner there "was a tremendous
outpouring of public support" for
Westover and gave him the oppor-
tunity to meet some of the people
who had served as soldiers or as
civilian employees at the base.

It also occurred to Faulkner
that no history of Westover — for
public usage — had ever been
written.

* * *

Faulkner has spent the last two
years researching and writing the
book in his spare time. His duties
and growing responsibilities at the
base keep him busy more than
eight hours a day, and his book in
the result of many late night
sessions.

Having been a journalist for 16
years, Faulkner is no stranger to
spending late hours hammering
away at a keyboard. Before taking
his position at Westover he was a
reporter and then city editor for
The Daily News in Springfield,
which has since been merged with
the Morning Union to become the
Union-News.

During his tenure at the newspa-
n, Faulkner worked toward
earning his bachelor's, master's,
and doctoral degrees at the Uni-
versity of Massachusetts. He made
it through all three programs in 10
years, and took time off from his
newspaper work only when he was
working on his doctoral disserta-
tion.

* Faulkner's own fascination with
Continued on Page W-19

BASE HISTORY — Author Frank Faulkner with copy of "Westover: Man, Base and Mission."

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Continued from Page W-18

Westover Air Force Base originates from a childhood in the Six Corners neighborhood in Springfield watching C-47s, B-36s and B-52s almost constantly overhead after their takeoffs and before their landings at Westover, about six miles away.

In the preface to his book Faulkner recalls his attitude growing up in the shadows of the great planes.

One night he and his friends witnessed a “rolling explosion six miles away” that “for nearly five minutes ... took the night into a bright red aura.”

He says he thought it was an atomic bomb explosion and that “life in Springfield would end within minutes. I don’t remember being frightened. We were re-signed to our fate, because we had been raised knowing Westover AFB was one of the most important bases in the world.”

The flames Faulkner saw on June 27, 1953, were a KC-135 fuel tanker jet that struck the Massachusetts Turnpike and crashed into farmland. The 15 crew members and journalists aboard the plane that was on a record-setting non-stop mission to England and return perished.

In the book the crash is described by Kaz Machowski, who at the age of 12 witnessed the flaming wreckage in his back yard.

Many thousands were raised, like Faulkner and Machowski, near the base with the same belief; and the local loyalty to Westover is illustrated by the highly classified secrets kept by those who worked at Westover.

Despite the fact that a portion of the base was built to store and repair nuclear weapons, and two other highly classified projects were related to Westover, “there is no public record of security breaches ... coming out of Westover AFB,” says Faulkner.

Faulkner’s book includes a chapter on the base’s namesake, General Oscar Westover, who Faulkner credits with fighting the War Department during the pre-World War II years, for all-metal fighters and strategic bombers that proved instrumental in winning World War II.

Because Gen. Westover was killed in a crash in 1955, shortly before the start of the war, Faulkner says he is often overlooked in history books, and credit for his initiatives toward building American air power is often given to his successor, Henry “Hap” Arnold.

It was Arnold who decided to name the new base “Westover” after the base’s former superior officer, mentor and close friend. General Westover’s greatest contribution, Faulkner says, was pushing for the development and then buying the new B-17 “Flying Fortress” bomber for the then U.S. Army Air Corps.

The general, Faulkner says, “fought like hell to buy 12. The U.S. bought 12,000, ultimately.”

Faulkner’s book covers a wide variety of issues ranging from how the city of Chicopee was chosen as the site for the base, to

Westover AFB’s role in World War II, the Berlin Airlift, Strategic Air Command during the Cuban missile crisis, and during the Vietnam War, right up to its current status as the nation’s largest Air Force Reserve base.

“Westover: Man, Base, and Mission” covers all bases, even if briefly. It is packed with amusing anecdotes, interesting pictures, and an informative narrative.

Funding for the book, published by Hungry Hill Press of Springfield, was provided by the Galaxy Community Council, which will use any profits to pay for the appearance of some of the vintage aircraft at Westover’s 50th anniversary air show this weekend.

“UNCLE WIGGLY WINGS” — Lt. Gail S. Halvorsen became famous for air drops of candy to children outside Tempelhof Airport in West Germany.
JUST VISITING — Westover Air Force Base was a temporary home for FB-111s while the runway at Pease AFB was resurfaced in June 1985.

MARAUDER — Westover Air Force Base was a school for fighter pilots and bomber crews during World War II, including the B-26 Marauder.

HERCULES — The 439th Tactical Airlift Wing brought C-130 Hercules turboprop transport planes to Westover Air Force Base.

Westover: Planes for all seasons

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Union-News
Sunday Republican
What covers two acres, and has 175 sprinklers?

By TED LABORDE
WESTOVER AIR FORCE BASE
— The arrival three years ago of the giant C-5A Galaxy jet transport spurred more than $145 million in base renovations, including a two-acre $17.5 million hangar.

The hangar, needed to perform de-icing and preventive maintenance on the aircraft, was the largest of the projects.

Other work included installation of a new aircraft fueling system, extension of the runway apron, and refurbishment of several existing hangars and buildings.

The first of 16 C-5As arrived in October 1987, and construction of the massive hangar, large enough to house two aircraft, started in August 1988.

The structure was completed earlier this year and put into full service in April.

The hangar is designed by Blount Construction Group of Montgomery, Ala., and the contract was awarded by the Army Corps of Engineers. Design and construction work was completed by Lewis Zellin Associates of New York City.

Work is continuing at a former hangar adjacent to the new one for partial enclosure of C-5s for maintenance and repairs.

The C-5 has a wing span of 225 feet. It is 248 feet long, and 65 feet tall at the tip of its tail. It weighs 347,000 pounds loaded, and its gross weight, loaded, is 780,000 pounds.

The new hangar can totally contain one aircraft and all the last 20 feet of tail sections of two C-5s.

The building is designed as a pull-through hangar, which allows maintenance crews to tow the craft into the building on one side and out through the other for de-icing operations in winter.

Base Civil Engineer Leroy Clink said the building is heated by the base’s steam plant. The six steel doors, weighing 95 tons each, are operated by electric motors. Approximately 9,000 tons of structural steel comprise the framing system of the metal hangar.

Fire protection in the building includes 175 automatic sprinklers, with three fire pumps each rated at 4,500 gallons per minute. The fire alarm system includes rate compensated heat detectors, combination infra-red/ultra violet detectors, manual pull stations, horns, water flow switches and tamper switches.

The detectors are capable of responding to a JP-4 jet fuel fire at a distance of 150 feet within five seconds.

The water storage tank for the fire protection system contains 499,000 gallons of water, enough to fill 18 average-sized in-ground swimming pools.

A detector system for washing the aircraft can dispense 40 gallons per minute.

Construction of the building took 18 months and involved 100 different types of tradesmen.

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