

# WESTOVER'S 50<sup>th</sup>



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

By DAVID LaCHANCE

**T**he 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-

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# In war and peace, Westover always ready

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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. P-47 Thunderbolts, 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 breaking the Soviet blockade 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; at 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 again brought



ANTHONY J. STONINA

prominence to Westover, as cargo aircraft ferried troops and supplies to Southeast 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-1950s, 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 totally 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, 7,000 civilian employees, and more than 11,000 dependents.

Westover's role remained training and preparedness until 1967, when the 35 B-52s of the 99th were assigned for war over Southeast Asia. Flying from the island of Guam and from Thailand, the bombers made more than 3,600 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 ceasefire 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.



BEARS NAME — On Dec. 1, 1939, the Northeast Air Base in Chicopee was renamed in honor of the first chief of the Army Air Corps, Maj. Gen. Oscar Westover, shown here in 1936.

The 439th Tactical Airlift Wing brought with it 16 C-130 Hercules turboprop 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 25,844,746 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 49,000 gallons of fuel, allowing a range of 3,250 miles fully loaded, or 6,940 miles empty. With inflight refueling, the Air Force notes, the range is limited only by the endurance of the crew.

The Galaxies "are our 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 300 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 1988.

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 the staffing 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 60 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.



A C-5A cargo plane flies over downtown Springfield en route to Westover Air Force Base, which is home to 16 of the jumbo aircraft.

# 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 missile 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

film taken over Cuba was developed in a special projects production facility located at Westover. But they did not want to disclose any details about the work, and they did not want their names mentioned in this article.

An attempt to clear up the matter by consulting Air Force historians failed.



ADDRESSES NATION — President John F. Kennedy tells Americans about the danger of Soviet missile bases in Cuba on national television Oct. 22, 1962.



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 439th Military Airlift Wing stationed at Westover today.

It seems impossible to determine the exact role of Westover in the Cuban Missile Crisis because of oaths of silence made by 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 film that arrived in Westover in October 1962.

Wolfe was a navigator attached with the Eighth Reconnaissance Technical Squadron, generally referred to as "Eighth Rekkie 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 couple of guys with security badges came on board and began taking the cartons off," said Paul. When he 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 the importance of the film his plane had carried.

Within a few days, he was flying U.S. Air Corps 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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# 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, \$1,040 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 in Steiger's.

Henry J. Toepfert, 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 \$1,480 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're tired.'"

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 a lot."

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 Maguire 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.



Staff photo by Don Trivette

**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 commander, 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 commander 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 900 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 Hadley, who spent four years researching Westover's history to produce a 53-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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## 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 careful-

ly. An impressive battle between raw power and the laws of physics for the novice observer, for the controllers, it was just another takeoff, the latest in perhaps thousands they have helped happen.

"There aren't too many surprises left for us," said Michael Tippto, a 28-year veteran controller.

Tippto, and his 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 Tippto on why he is not a flying nut.

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

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**MANNING THE TOWER** — The five air traffic controllers at Westover Air Force Base bring about 100 years of experience to the job.

## Air show will reunite units who served 50 years ago

By MARIO G. ORTIZ

**WESTOVER AIR FORCE BASE** — When the 26th Air Base Group arrives here July 28, 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 384th Air Refueling Squadron will also reunite the weekend of the Air Show at the Quality Inn in Chicopee.

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

Shorrock expects about 40 members and their wives for a 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 28, 1940, 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 446th Subdepot Repair Squadron in England.

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

"All you saw was the eternal earthmovers," he said.

In the two years he spent at the base, Shorrock said the unit practiced guard duty and studied subjects like math and English taught at Holyoke High School.

Sgt. Robert Adams, a reservist who is collecting historical artifacts, said most of the 26th were culled from New England.

Shorrock said he believes most of the members live within 100 miles of Westover.

Adams said he suspects war-time units have reunited more often because of the more vivid

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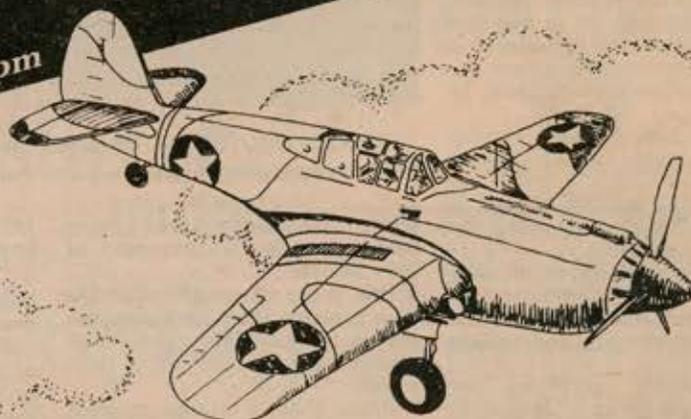
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# Demonstrators are no strangers at air base

By WILLIAM FREEBAIRN

From anti-war demonstrators to critics of the noise generated by aircraft, protesters have always come with the territory at Westover Air Force Base.

In the early 1970s, as opposition to the war in Vietnam increased, Westover was the site of mass protests and arrests. Chicopee Police Capt. Arthur Peloquin was the arresting officer in literally thousands of cases connected to the base, which was then home to B-52 bombers of the Strategic Air Command.

"Because of Vietnam, there was a lot of really hyper feelings about it both pro and con. We were getting protesters every day for a while," Peloquin recalled.

In the spring of 1972, 750 protesters were arrested in one day, Peloquin said. But relations between police and protesters remained amicable even then, he said.

"These people were not anti-police, they were anti-war," Peloquin said. The anti-war group was often met by smaller groups of counter-protesters supporting the government's actions.

Among those arrested in those days were former Amherst College President John W. Ward, and numerous clergymen and college faculty.

But students comprised the largest single group of protesters during that period, Peloquin said.

The atmosphere at the main (Fairview) gate to the base was festival-like, although more so for demonstrators than for the police working extra details.

"It was almost like a holiday, like a picnic for them. With us it wore a little thin," Peloquin said.

Since those days, there have been people protesting nuclear war, U.S. foreign policy, and other issues, he said. "As long as we are



VIETNAM PROTEST — Westover Air Force Base was the site of mass protests and arrests in the early 1970s as opposition to the Vietnam War increased.

free in this country, there's going to be protests. It's our way of life," he said.

One group of neighbors of the base is angry about the noise generated by the giant C-5A cargo planes as they fly over their homes.

Bruno Pula, a Granby resident with a house near the end of Westover's main runway, is one of several people who have filed a suit against the government seeking damages.

Pula, who is a Vietnam veteran, said the noise from the planes as they fly just 200 feet overhead, frightens children and makes study impossible for them. He is upset because when he moved to his home in 1973, the base was being deactivated — as a regular

Air Force base with the departure of the Strategic Air Command.

"You don't bring the world's biggest plane in after a base has been deactivated," he said.

He is bitter about the attitude of base personnel and authorities to his case, and plans to continue the lawsuit. "A lot of people say you can't fight the government... but we are the government," Pula said.

The neighbors' case is pending in U.S. Claims Court in Washington, D.C.

Col. Thomas G. Hargis, Westover base commander, said that, over the years, most of the community has supported the base in

its missions. The base was never closed in the 1970s. Its mission was changed to an Air Force Reserve base, he said.

Even when they disagreed, there was room for discussion between base officials and protesters, Hargis said.

When he arrived as base commander in 1986, there was a program between Westover and Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley which brought together anti-military activists and AF reservists from the base, Hargis said.

Other protesters met with base officials to make sure they were not preventing people from get-

ting to work. "They were really very nice people; they just had their opinions," Hargis said.

Westover is the most visible evidence of the military in the area, Hargis said, and serves as "a lightning rod" for opinions about the government. And he expects there will be protests at the base in the future.

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# 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 Club, which was renovated and reopened as the U.S. Armed Forces Reserve Center in November 1977.

Air Force reservists, 2,300 of them, are assigned to the 439th Military Airlift Wing or to its subordinate units, all of which fall under the jurisdiction of the 14th Air Force Headquarters at Dobbins Air Force Base in Georgia.

While the mission of the 439th MAW and its subordinate units, during peacetime, is 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 at Westover, the 439th will be responsible for the mobilization of the 911th Tactical Airlift Group stationed at Pittsburgh, and the and the 914th 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 where-where needed.

Subordinate units supporting the 439th Military Airlift Wing are, the 439th Avionics Squadron, 439th Field Maintenance Squadron, 439th Organizational Maintenance Squadron; the 337th Military Airlift Squadron; the 42nd Aerial Port Squadron and the 58th 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.

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

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

"I don't know how many hundreds of letters I've written in 30 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.

Others are the 74th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, 439th USAF Clinic, 439th Airlift Control Flight, 439th Air Base Group, 439th Civil Engineering Squadron, 439th Communications Squadron, 439th Mobility Support Flight, 439th Security Police Squadron, 639th Security Police Flight and the Q1-A DET 5 15th Weather Squadron.

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

The 1094th Army Reserve Forces School conducts training for enlisted personnel and provides advancement, promotion and retention courses for officers, according to Unit Administrator Donald Desrosiers.

The 1094th conducts four, four-hour drills per 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 drawn from throughout Western Massachusetts," Desrosiers 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 80 reservists.

The 173rd supports medical regulating services in cooperation with the Air Force. Its wartime mission would involve medical evacuations, 1st Sgt. Gerald Dolloff said.

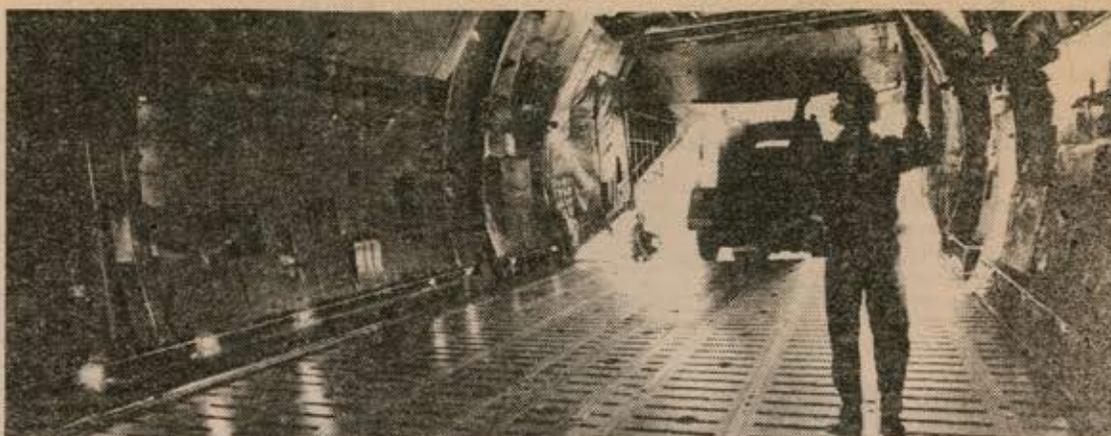
The Marine Corps operates infantry training for 65 reservists through the supervisory capabilities of 11 active duty Marines. The Army National Guard unit, which is assigned to the Air Cavalry, 1st Squadron, of the 26th Division, also conducts training for its personnel.

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

Lt.Cmdr. David Costa said that in addition to recruiting and training duties, the Naval Reserve unit provides support to Westover with assistance in billeting, base galley, security, supply, in medical services and at the base recreational training area.

Naval Reserve units stationed here are the Mobile Construction Battalion 27 Det. 0527 Seebies; Naval Communication Area Master Station Mediterranean Det. 201; Security Group 501; 4th Fleet Supply Service Medical Regiment, and Det. B of the Fleet Hospital 250 Combat Zone.

Costa said Naval Reservists here also provide logistical and supply support for the Norfolk, Va., 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.

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# Unknown to many, Westover was home to German POWs

By TOM SHEA

Steven R. Jendrysik 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, no one tried to escape, but as many as 500 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 know of the German POWs were farmers in Hatfield,

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 "PW" 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 Par-

sons, 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.

Betty 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 blond, 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 668 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.

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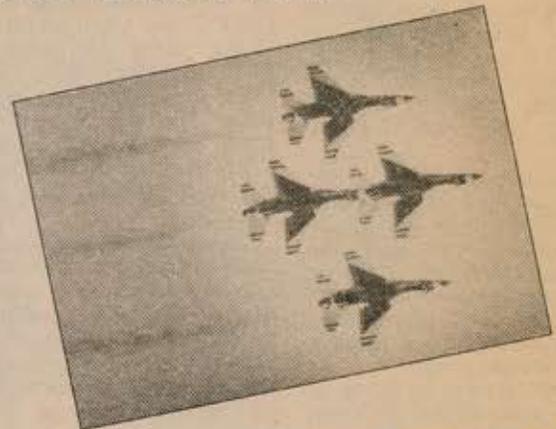
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BACK  
IN A



# 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 cables.

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 Tuohey, 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."

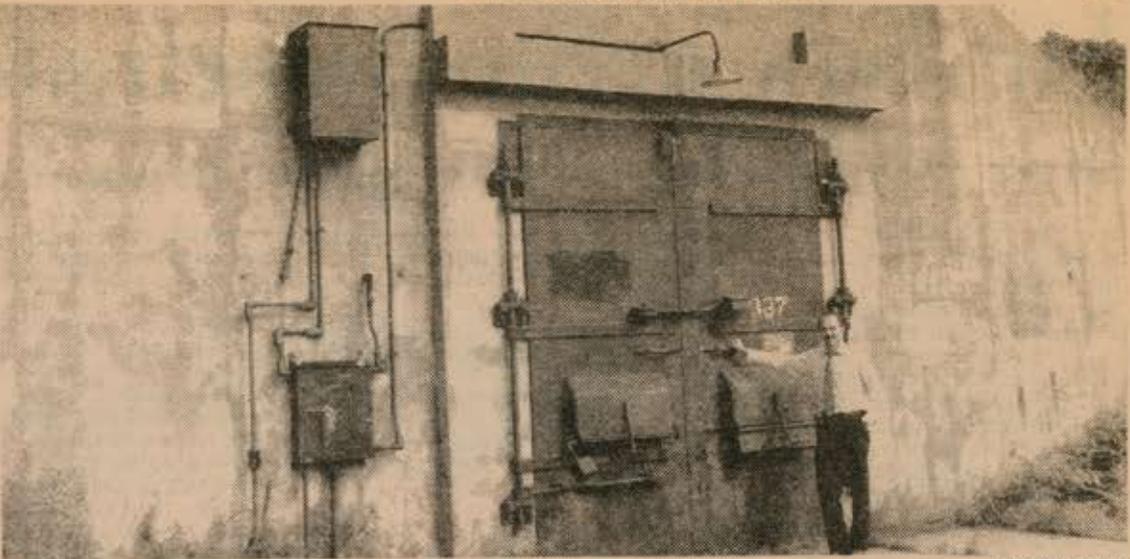
The three rows of barbed-wire fence continue to enclose the 471-acre site, but the power company now uses the bunkers to store maintenance equipment for the power plant, completed in 1981, Tuohey said.

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

Chicopee telecommunications teacher John Gordon, who recently completed a 53-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 fuses were stored in separate bunkers and reunited in a special area just prior to being moved, Gordon said.

Stony Brook was dismantled in the early 1970s when the Strategic



Staff photo by Don Fontaine

**SECURE FACILITY** — David Tuohey 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 511-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-5

care to learn.

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

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

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

"Rod zero four, off nine o'clock three miles and descending ..."

Tipppo spits into a handset.

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

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

Because it is surrounded by airports — in Westfield, Northampton, Palmer and Bradley International in Winsor Locks, Conn. — Tipppo 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.

Tipppo, who has handled these

type of shows before, said the scope and diversity of traffic will test the controllers' mettle.

With jet fighters, parachutists, stunt planes and World War II bombers expected, Tipppo 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 C-5A training sessions, and paperwork.

Al Suchcicki, 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.

"Squak five five seven ... you can now cross gulf taxiway ..."

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

About one-twentieth the size of the 230-foot long C-5A, the private planes and their civilian pilots are vulnerable to turbulence caused by the massive cargo planes.

Tipppo said controllers must always be aware not only of the location of C-5As but of the dis-

tance 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, Tipppo said.

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# Air show invites imagination to take flight

*More than a million persons expected to watch*

By JUNE GREIG

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

The Canadian Snowbirds, the U.S. Army's Golden Knights, and the Air Force Reserves' C-5As 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 B-52 Stratofortress, KC-135 air-refueling tanker, C-130 Hercules 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 to show the community what the base looks like. We have a tremendous lineup of display aircraft, almost one mile of those, wingtip to wingtip."

Base officials, however, would not release the times of any performances, saying they were doing that 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 in the afternoons, and the Golden Knights in the mornings and afternoons.

Flying demonstrations will be held all day. And Army tanks and armored cars will be displayed.

Also planned is a children's area to include rides, clowns and music.

\*\*\*

Arrangements have been made for 60 concession stands offering food, 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 431st 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 nine red-white-and-blue Tutor jets.

The Snowbirds' demonstrations begin with the appearance of twinkling lights in the distance and conclude with spectacular downward bomb bursts that leave ribbons of smoke in the sky, according to a spokesman for the team.

Their planes, two seat 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 Maj. Natalie Iryshe. Members carry M-1 rifles with fixed bayonets, and their 10-minute drill with precise handling of the rifles is done without verbal commands.

\*\*\*

Other flight demonstrations will include the A-10 anti-tank fighters flown by pilots of the Air National Guard's 104th Tactical Fighter Group at Barnes Airport, Westfield.

The USAF's F-15 supersonic jet

Continued on Page W-11



U.S. Army photo

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 been 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-4 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.

## 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; rappelling 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 airdrop 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 dem-

onstrations by a B-1B, the newest strategic bomber; a C-5A, the free 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 larger crowds on Saturday and Sunday. Bicycles 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.

"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 26, 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



File photo

IT'S BACK — A B-52, the mainstay at Westover Air Force Base when it was a Strategic Air Command base, will make a return to Chicopee for the weekend airshow.

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.

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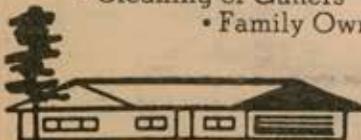
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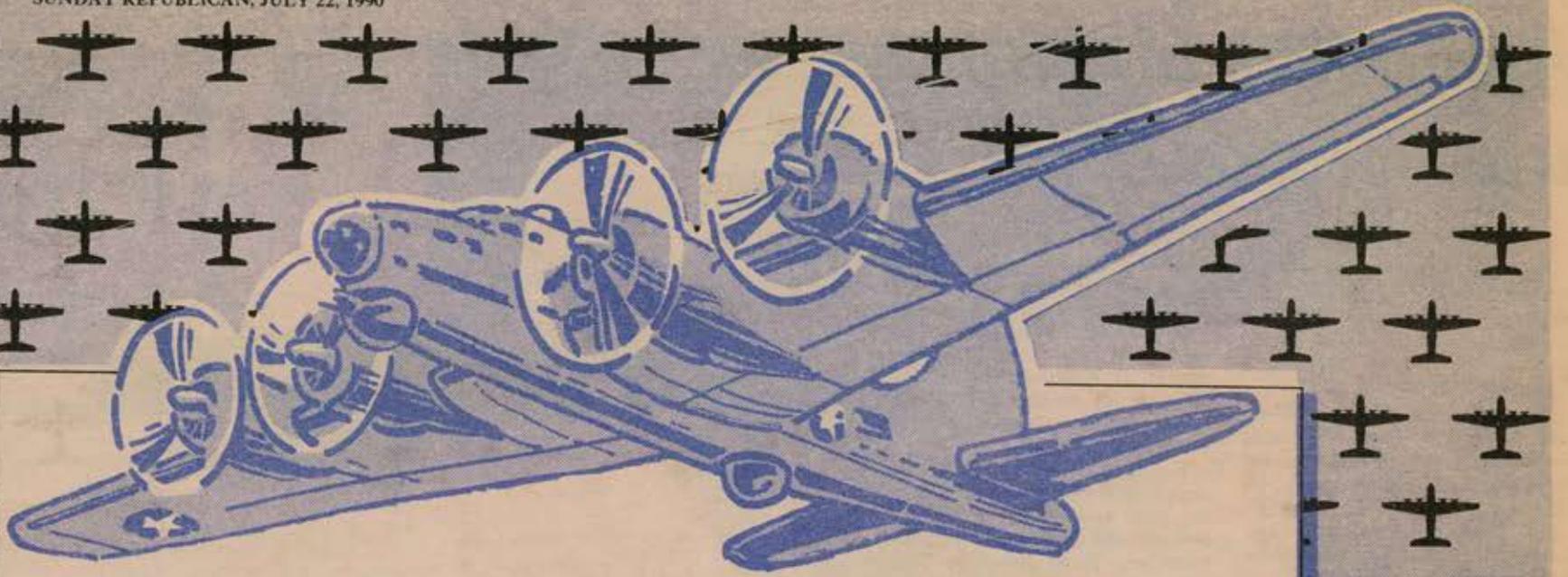
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 B-26 bomber  
 F-15 fighter  
 FB-111 fighter  
 P-40 fighter  
 P-51 fighter  
 C-5 Galaxy jet cargo plane  
 C-47 cargo plane  
 T-34 Navy trainer  
 Cobra gunship helicopter  
 Golden Knights, U.S. Army parachute team

### 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:

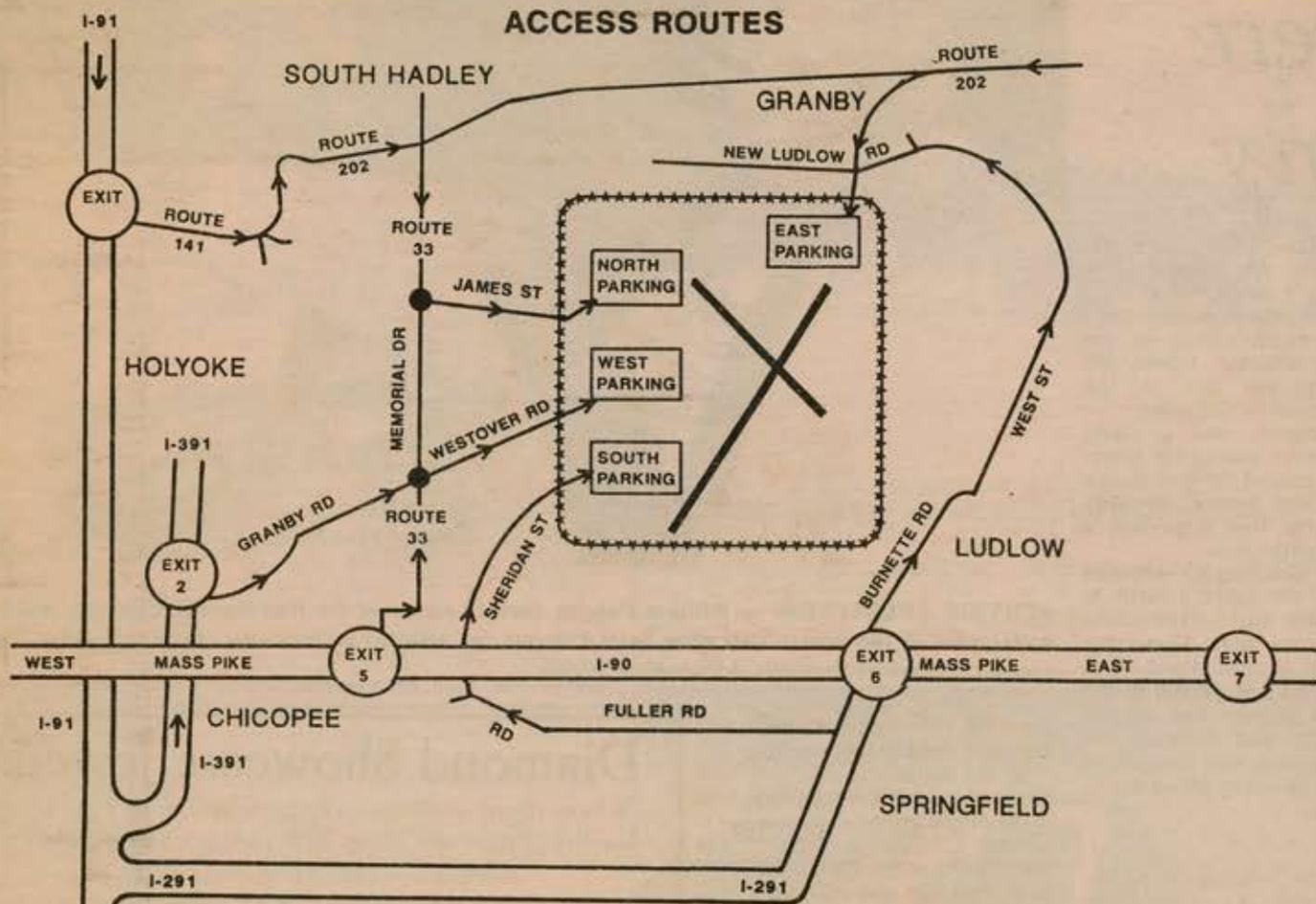
M-1 tank, World War II tanks, other military vehicles  
 60-foot half-scale mockup of the XB-30 supersonic passenger plane  
 Technical exhibits in hangars; Kiddyland amusement area  
 100 display aircraft of all types

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

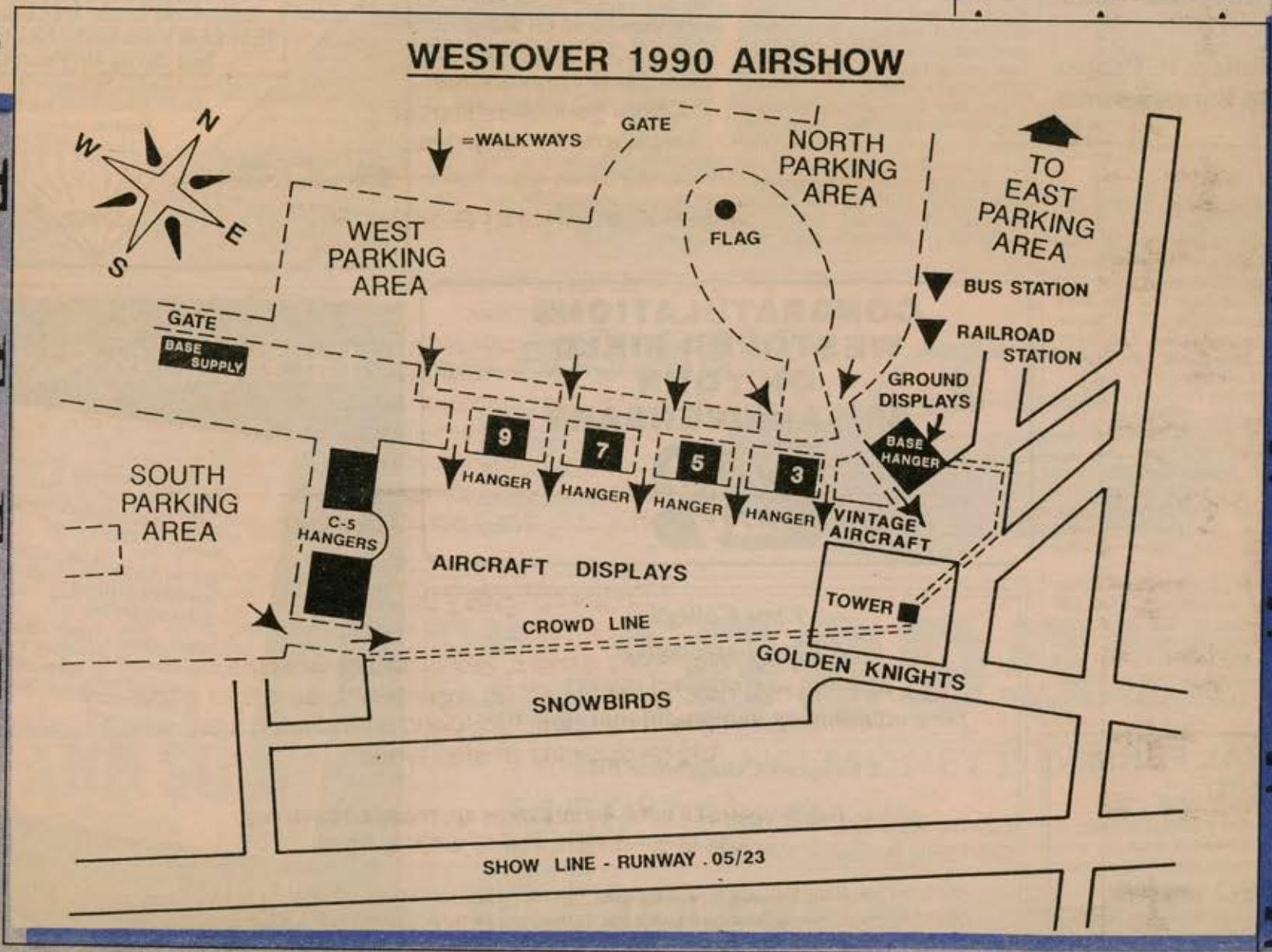
Editor's note: Citing the need to reduce traffic congestion, Westover officials did not provide specific times for aerial demonstrations. The events will be continuous and will be announced over a public address system.

# WESTOVER 1990 AIRSHOW

## ACCESS ROUTES



# WESTOVER 1990 AIRSHOW



# 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 world-

The Red Barn, which was demolished in 1970, 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 is 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 66 stools, along with a dining room that could sit 550.

Big-time entertainment was



Staff photo by John Suchecki

**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.

provided five nights a week, plus entertainment in the bar.

In the summers, old-time New England clambakes 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."



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



wide reputation for their ambience.

"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," said William P. Pappas, the last owner of the Red Barn. "Both are long gone, but live on with people all around the world."

Those weren't the only Chicopee landmarks for Westover personnel. Just as well known to the dining crowd was Ted Gayda's Restaurant, which was not much to look at from the outside, but served some great dinners. Features were "bellybuster" roast beef plates and baked stuffed lobsters.

Located in an old wooden structure at the corner of Grove and Main streets in the heart of Chicopee Falls, Gayda's fell to an urban renewal wrecker's ball that swung through the Falls' "downtown" district in the mid-1960s.

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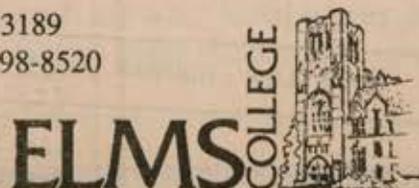
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Fifty years after its creation, Westover Air Force Base continues to impact the world... thanks to one of Chicopee's leading visionaries!

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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 'Dizzie' Gillispie, the man expected to be the next leader of the Navy's Blue Angels aerial demonstration team, according to Col. Gale French, air show coordinator.

Gillispie will perform in a Navy F-18 supersonic fighter, the aircraft assigned to the Blue Angels.

French also announced that an Air Force F-15 Eagle, only one of two that performs 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



AERIAL MANEUVERS — Canada's Snowbirds will appear for the first time at Westover Air Force Base this weekend.

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 12-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 shows, the Snowbirds will feature red and white colored smoke for the first time.

The U.S. Army's Golden Knights have performed more than 6,000

Continued on Page W-16

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**COMMANDER** — Col. Thomas G. Hargis, commander of Westover Air Force Base, expects a smooth operation at the International Air Show this weekend.

## Snowbirds join air show

Continued from Page W15

parachute demonstrations in all 50 states, and in 42 foreign countries since the unit was established in 1959. The team has grown from a 13-member all-male team in 1959 to the present unit consisting of 84 men and women who make up six sections of the group.

While one unit is performing here at Westover, another will be performing in Sioux City, Iowa.

Each member of the Golden Knights serves an average of three years on the team before returning to regular Army duty. While on tour, each member of the team acts at all times as goodwill ambassadors for the Army.

Originally known as the Strategic Army Corps Sport Parachute Team formed in September 1959, at Fort Bragg, N.C., the group received official recognition by the Department of the Army in 1962 and was redesignated as the U.S. Army Parachute Team.

The Golden Knights name, and yellow and black colors, came from a vote of the 1962 team members.

The team, in more than 30 years of parachute competitions, has won 11 world championships, and produced 100 national and 22 world champions.

Twenty-two members of the Marine Corps Silent Drill Team will head the ground performances with 10-minute precision drills with their M-1 rifles with fixed bayonets.

Members perform calculated drill movements and precise handling of their weapons without any verbal commands whatever.

New team members acquire a working knowledge of the drill routine in 12 hours of instruction

and spend about 25 hours of practice per week for two to three months before they reach the unit's required level of proficiency.

# 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 350,000 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 was 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 prob-

lem," 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 space has 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 52,900 parking spaces.

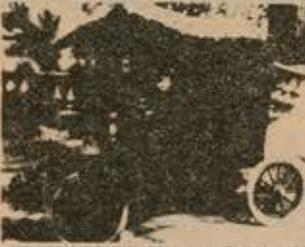
Patterns for the flow of vehicles into those parking spaces already have been determined, he said. Another 25,000 spaces are within walking distance of the base.

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.

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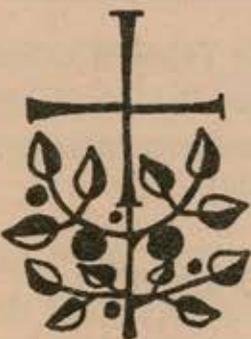
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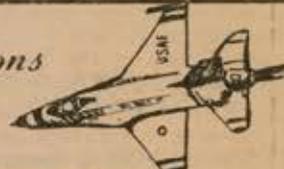
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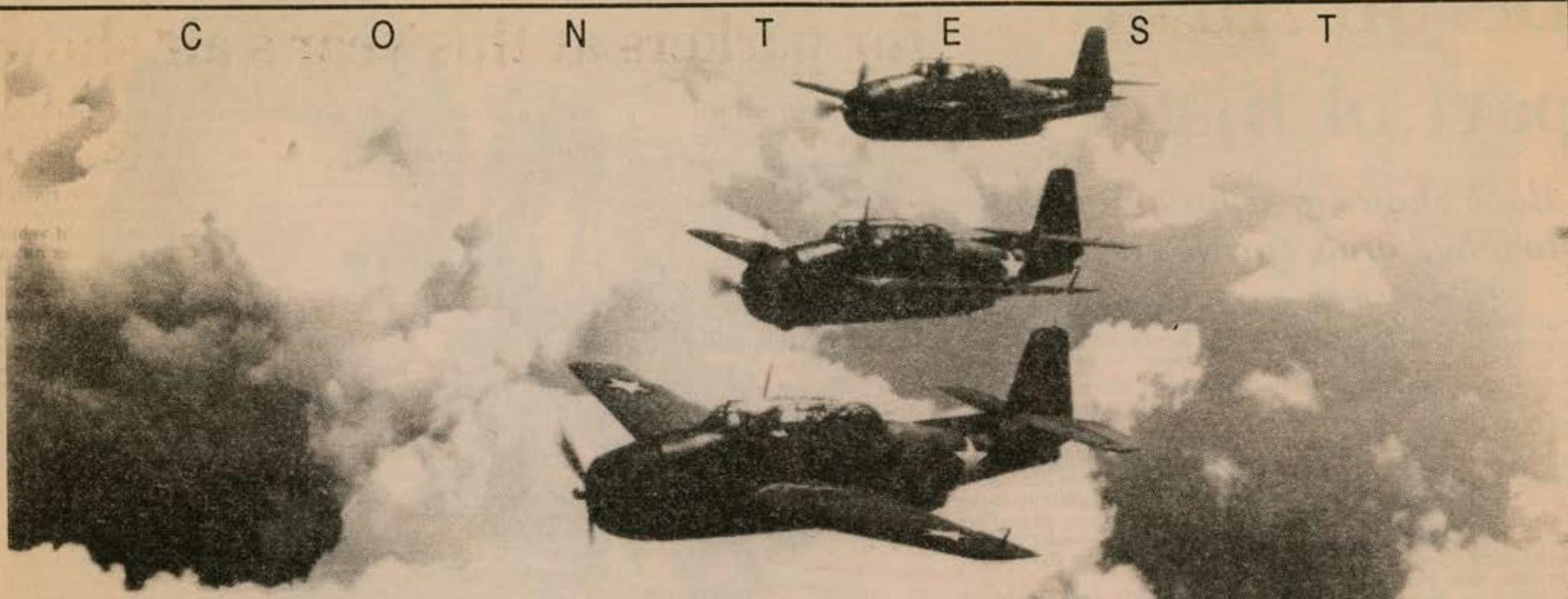
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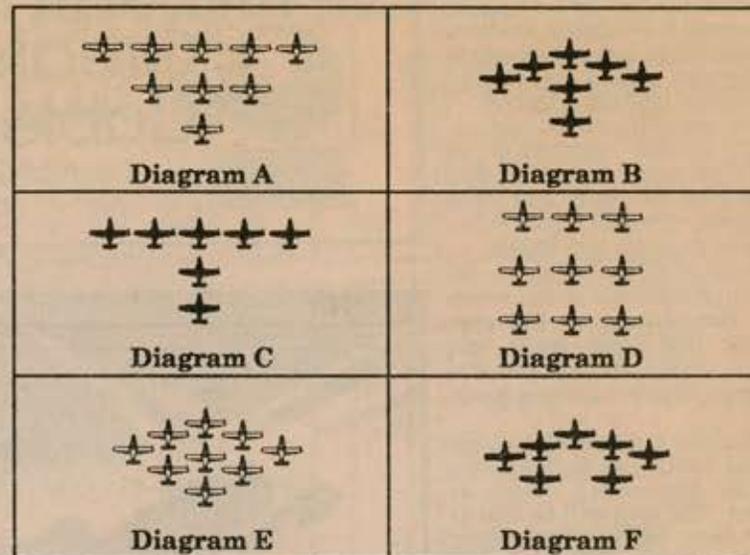
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# Berlin Airlift part of history

*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 supplies in blockaded West Berlin, one Westover pilot was also dropping candy to kids.

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

While Douglas C-54s landed in the city every three minutes to deliver coal, food, and medicine to the people of West Berlin, the pilot, Lt. Gail S. Halvorsen, decided the German children outside Tempelhof Airport needed some sweets.

Halvorsen 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."

\*\*\*

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

Cloth for parachutes, handkerchiefs, ribbon 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, approximately 100,000 parachutes of candy were prepared in Chicopee, and 18 tons of candy had been flown from Westover Air Force Base to be dropped over Berlin.

"Operation Little Vittles" is detailed in Faulkner's book, which traces the history of Westover from the 1926 seeds of its construction 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 Westover air show in 1987.

That show, which attracted 350,000 people, was called by local historian and associate publisher of the Springfield Newspapers, Richard 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 opportunity 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 is 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 newspaper, Faulkner worked toward earning his bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees at the University of Massachusetts. He made



Staff photo by Norm Roy

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

it through all three programs in 10 years, and took time off from his newspaper work only when he was working on his doctoral dissertation.

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

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# Mission touched corners of world

Continued from Page W-18

Westover Air Force Base originates from a childhood in the Six Corners neighborhood in Springfield watching C-54s, 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 . . . turned the night into a bright red sunset."

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 resigned 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, 1958, 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 the all-metal fighters and strategic bombers that proved instrumental in winning World War II.

Because Gen. Westover was killed in a crash in 1938, 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 — or "field" as air bases were then called — for Westover, his former superior officer, mentor and close friend.

General Westover's greatest contribution, Faulkner says, was pushing for the development and then buying the now-legendary 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 Templehof Airport in West Germany.

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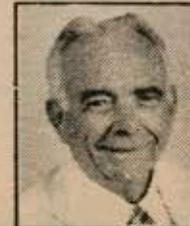
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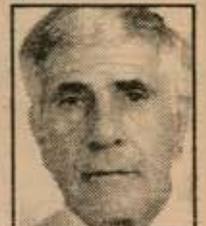
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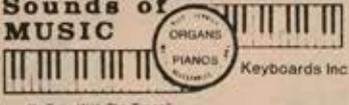
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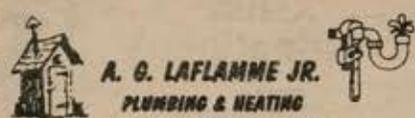
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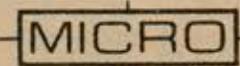
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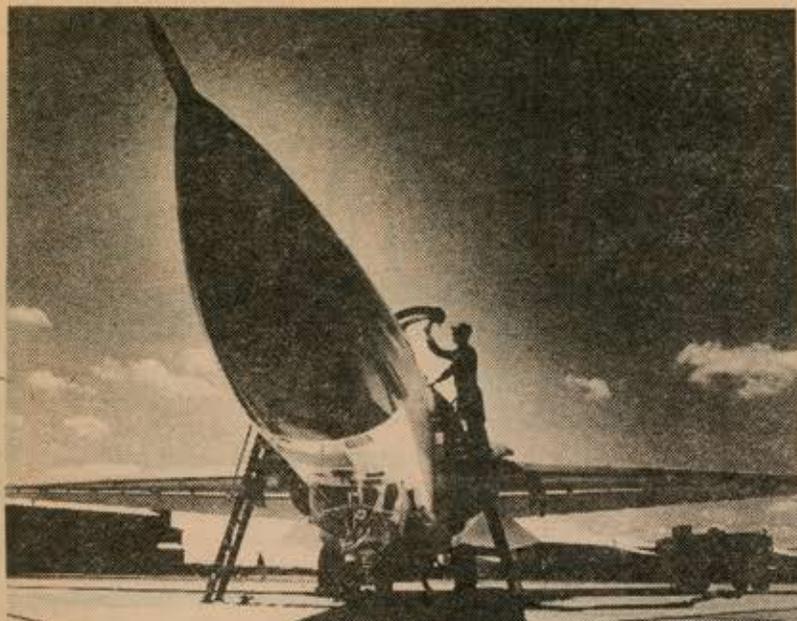
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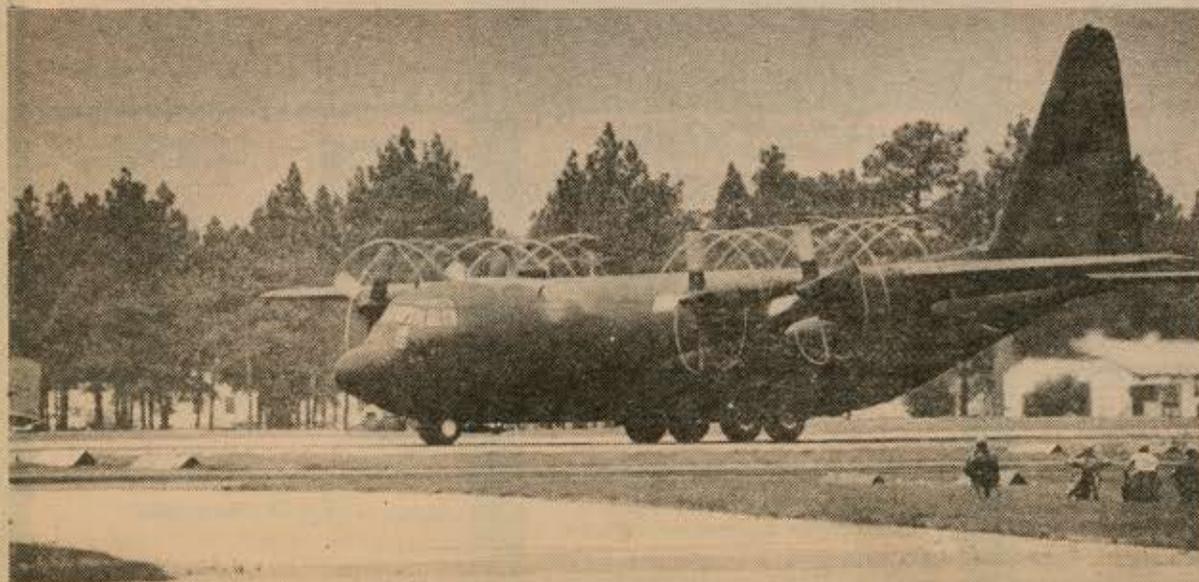
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**JUST VISITING** — Westover Air Force Base was a temporary home for FB-111s while the runway at Pease AFB was resurfaced in June 1985.



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



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

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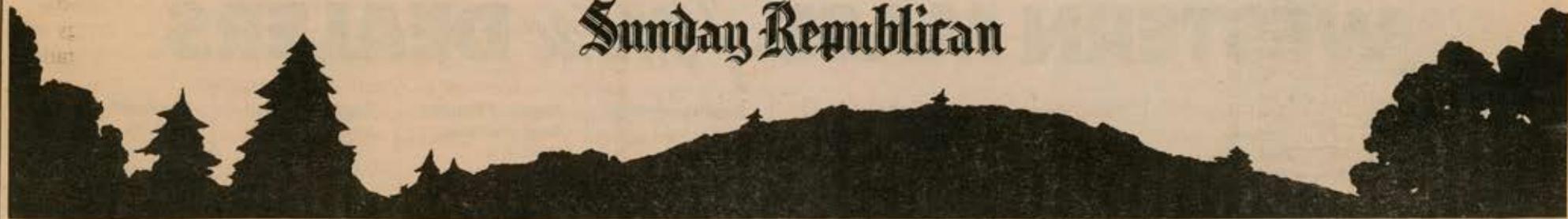
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**Union-News**  

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**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 \$48 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.

Blount Construction Group of Montgomery, Ala., received the contract under the supervision of the Army Corps of Engineers. Design work was completed by Lev Zetlin 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 222 feet. It is 248 feet long, and 65 feet tall at the tip of its tail. It weighs 347,000 pounds unloaded; and its gross weight, loaded, is 780,000 pounds.

The new hangar can totally contain one aircraft and all but 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 45 tons each, are operated by electric motors. Approximately 3,000 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 gallon per minute. The fire alarm system includes rate compensated heat detectors, combination infra-red/ultra violet detectors, manual pull stations,

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

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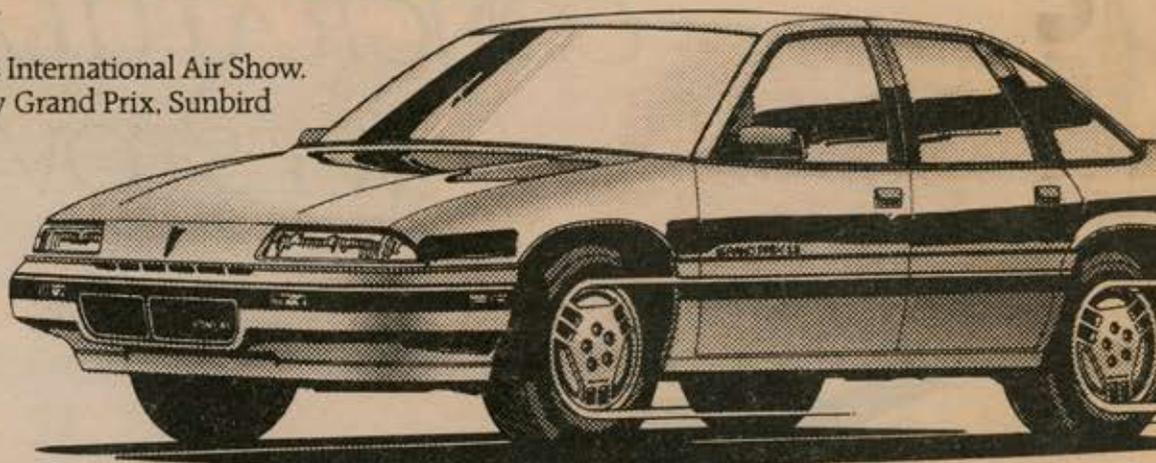
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