



P-51 MUSTANG

Unable to keep pace with the rapid rate of attrition during the early days of the World War II, the British called on American industry to aid in fighter production. North American was given 120 days to come up with a new fighter design and the P-51 went from the drawing board to flight with three days to spare.

Early versions were powered by the same Allison V-12 used in the P-40 but, while acceptable, the craft had no high altitude performance. Seeking a way to match the best the Luftwaffe had, and also protect bomber formations on the runs to and from targets, North American fitted the Rolls-Royce Merlin into the P-51. The result: what most agree was the best fighter of the war, and perhaps, the best piston-engine fighter ever built. This aircraft sounded the death knell for the German air force when it began operating with the bomber formations.

But that wasn't the end of this remarkable plane's duty. It played a distinguished role in the Korean Conflict as well.



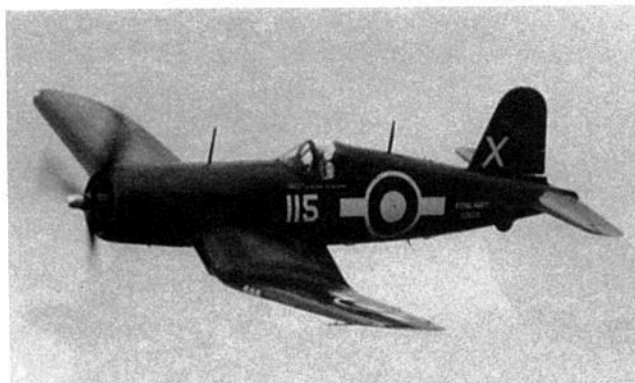
A-26 INVADER

The Douglas A-26 Invader had one of the longest service lines of any American combat plane. It was in design nearly a year before Pearl Harbor and continued in service through the Vietnam War.

Planned as a successor to the A-20 Havoc, the A-26 was first flown in 1942 and was ordered as an attack bomber and night fighter. It entered the war late in 1944 and proved to be a powerful offensive weapon. In Europe alone, the Invader flew 11,000 sorties and dropped 18,000 tons of bombs with a loss of only 67 planes.

A total of 2,446 Invaders were built, but additional production was canceled with the victory over Japan in August 1945. The aircraft was employed with great success in Korea as a night intruder and was flown by the French in Indochina.

As the B-26, it flew night interdiction missions in Vietnam. It was given its redesignation as B-26 in 1958 with the retirement of the B-26 Marauder.



FG-1D

The unusual inverted gull-wing gives the Corsair a very unique look. The wing design was necessary to give the huge propeller ample ground clearance. As a fighter, the Corsair gave U.S. Navy pilots an aircraft that could handle anything that the Japanese put in the air. The U.S. Marine Corps used the Corsair extensively as a ground attack fighter bomber...a role that the Corsair again filled during the Korean conflict. Star of TV's "Black Sheep Squadron," the Corsair also served with the navies of Great Britain, Canada, and New Zealand.



T-28

The T-28 was designed to replace the T-6 and first saw service in 1949. The Trojan was used extensively by both the Air Force and the Navy, and it was the last piston-powered trainer specifically designed for the U.S. military. But more than a trainer, the Trojan was used by the French in Indochina and also extensively by the South Vietnamese in Vietnam as a close-support attack aircraft. The T-28 has a very unique sound as it flies by.



CURTISS P-40E WARHAWK

The P-40 was made famous by the legendary "Flying Tigers" Squadrons based in China at the start of World War II. The "Flying Tigers" started as the American Volunteer Group (A.V.G.), organized to defend China from the Japanese invasion. Although the Flying Tigers saw combat for only six months, the A.V.G. amassed a total of 286 confirmed kills against the loss of only four A.V.G. pilots. The Flying Tigers were replaced by the USAAF's 23rd Fighter Group in July of 1942.



REPUBLIC P-47D

The Republic P-47 Thunderbolt was not only the largest and heaviest single-engine single-seater built during World War II, it was also an outstanding combat plane, which demonstrated its qualities to the full in the roles of bomber escort and ground attack. In 1941, during its evaluation, the Thunderbolt revealed its power to the full, flying at 393 miles per hour and climbing to 15,039 feet in five minutes, despite its great takeoff weight. More than 15,000 P-47s came off the assembly lines during the war. The P-47Ds were the first to serve in the Pacific in the units of the USAAF and, in addition, were also supplied to allies: the Soviet Union, Great Britain, Brazil, Mexico and the Free French units.

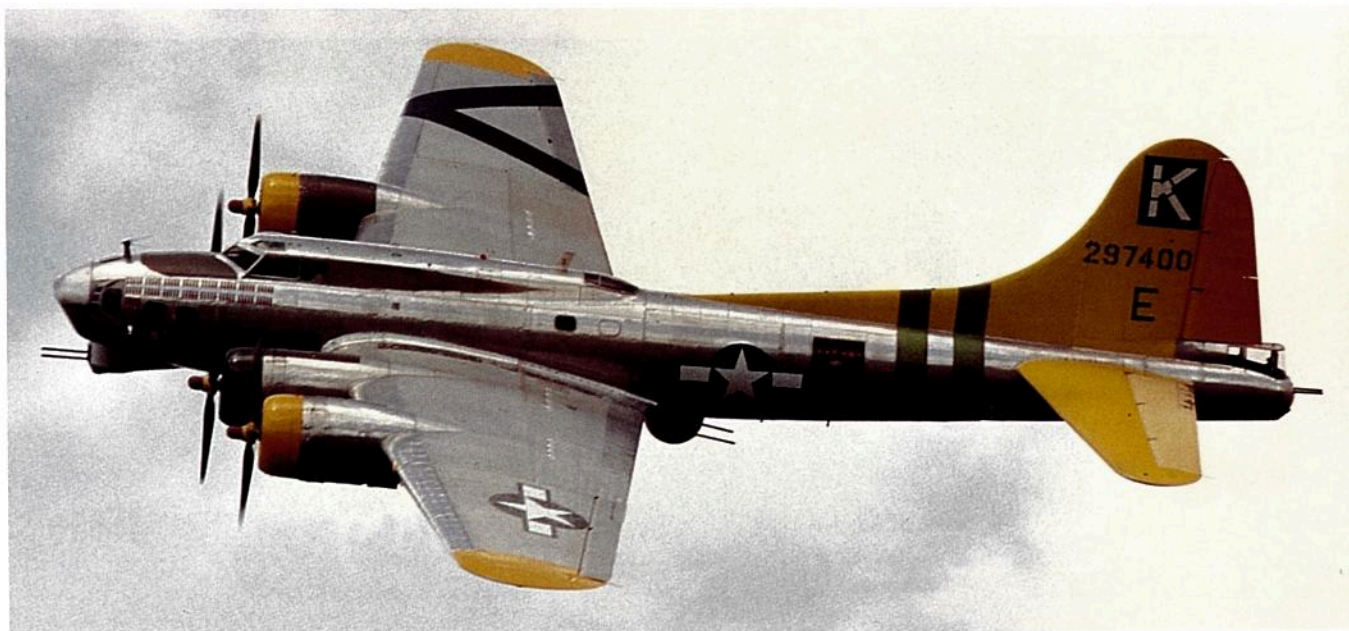


PBY CATALINA

Consolidated's XP3Y Flying Boat first became airborne on March 21, 1935 and on entering active service was designated the PBY. Until the middle of the -5 series, it flew only from water and was ashore with removable beaching wheels. The addition of retractable landing gear greatly expanded the plane's effectiveness and versatility.

Early PBY's flew submarine patrol and long-range reconnaissance for the British, who dubbed it the Catalina because the California manufacturing plant was near the island of that name.

The "Cat" first saw combat in defense of the Philippines right after Pearl Harbor. Flown by Naval aviators, it went on to fly nearly every type of combat mission. It was flown by the Army with the designation OA-10A. Some, outfitted with bomb racks and machine guns, were painted black and dubbed "Black Cats."



B-17 FLYING FORTRESS

During World War II, the B-17 Flying Fortress was widely recognized for its high altitude strategic bombing effectiveness and its ability to absorb tremendous punishment and bring its crews back alive.

The champion of this durability and strength was the 91st Bomb Group, 323rd Squadron plane "Nine-O-Nine," with 140 missions without aborting a flight or losing a crewmember.

Assigned to combat duty on February 25, 1945 "Nine-O-Nine" had made 18 trips to Berlin, dropped 562,000 pounds of bombs, flown 1129 hours, had 21 engine changes, 4 wing panel changes, 15 main gas tanks and 18 Tokyo tanks changed aside from considerable flak damage.

After European hostilities ceased, "Nine-O-Nine" with its 600 holes flew back to the States. While the rigors of war never could stop the historic "Nine-O-Nine" she succumbed at last to the scrapper's guillotine along with thousands of other proud aircraft.



NORTH AMERICAN B-25H

Created back in 1938, more than 11,000 North American B-25 Mitchells were built during 1940 and 1945. The aircraft had a long and intensive career that lasted well beyond World War II. This occurred due to continuous modernization and strengthening which exploited to the full this two-engine aircraft's great potential. The Mitchell went down in history as one of the best bombers of the war. Its impressive firing power, which could be integrated with a maximum of eight rockets installed in racks beneath the wings, together with the "normal" bomb load contained in the hold, made the Mitchell a formidable weapon. The first B-25Hs arrived on the Pacific front in February 1944 and soon went into action with great success against Japanese land and sea traffic.



B-24 LIBERATOR

The B-24 Liberator was first flown in December 1939. This B-24 was built in August 1944 at Consolidated Aircraft and was turned over to the RAF in October 1944. It served in the Pacific until the war ended when it was abandoned in India. From 1948 until 1968 this B-24 served as a patrol bomber for India.

During WWII the B-24 flew more missions and dropped more bombs than any other aircraft. It served the USAAC in every theater of the war, and it flew for 15 Allied Nations.

The All American was named after a 461st Bomb Group, 15th Air Force plane which on a July 25, 1944, mission shot down 14 enemy fighters. On October 4, 1944, the original All American was lost over Yugoslavia. All of the crew survived.

The cost to reconstruct this aircraft from the graveyard condition to fully restored, prize winning status (Grand Champion at Oshkosh 1990) was over \$1,300,000. This amount would have been much greater had there not been thousands of volunteer hours and substantial donation of parts and materials.

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PT-17



SPRINGFIELD'S OWN

THE GEE BEE RACER

Aircraft buffs can trace the roots of the Gee Bee Racer to Springfield, Mass., where it was first manufactured by the Granville Brothers Aircraft Company.

The snub-nosed racer was built entirely for recreation and in 1932, George Doolittle set the world speed record for the time at 296 m.p.h. He said "The Gee Bee was designed for one purpose and one purpose only — to go fast."

The design of Gee Bee was influenced by the competitive racing spirit of the 1920s. The stubby 1932 Gee Bee R-2, which is appearing at the Great New England Airshow, has a fat fuselage and short vertical tail which made the racer distinctive from aircraft of the era. The cockpit is located in the back of the plane near the tail. The aircraft has a wingspan of 25 feet, a 550 horsepower Pratt and Whitney Wasp JR.985 engine and a maximum level speed of 257 miles per hour.

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Base continues to play a key role in nation's history



The dream of having an international airfield in Chicopee to serve Western Massachusetts emerged in 1926, during the "roaring Twenties" and only 23 years after the Wright brothers' first flight. The vision of a major Greater Springfield airport here was promoted by Anthony J. Stonina, a young Polish immigrant and first-term Chicopee alderman.

In 1934, Congressional leaders spied the gathering war clouds in Europe and passed the Army Air Base Bill, better known as the "Wilcox Act," calling for construction of several air fields deemed vital to the security of the nation. One major military airfield was to be located in the Northeast.

In late 1938, General Henry "Hap" Arnold became Air Corps chief of staff after his friend, Major General Oscar Westover, died in a plane crash. As one of his first acts, Arnold recommended the War Department appoint a board of officers to select sites for the modern airfields authorized by the Wilcox Act.

In July 1939, a small contingent of officers visited the Pioneer Valley to tour the Springfield Airport, where the GeeBee air racers were born, to examine Bowles Airport in Agawam and to survey the flat Chicopee tobacco plains which extended into Ludlow.

Within only two months, Chicopee was to garner more interest from the War Department. On September 1, 1939, Nazi forces smashed into Poland and the European War was ignited.

Stonina was angered by the Nazi invasion of his native land and rushed to Washington, D.C. to meet with Arnold and to push for construction of the Northeast Air Base.

Within only two weeks—on September 15, 1939—the Secretary of War announced that Chicopee would "become an important link in the chain of East Coast defense" because the city had been selected as the site for the Northeast Air Base.

On April 6, 1940—which was designated "Army Day"—Air Corps officers, state and city dignitaries and thousands of Greater Springfield residents gathered for the official dedication ceremonies. In keeping with the American military tradition of naming ships, tanks, forts and airfields to honor departed heroes, the Northeast Air Base approved by the Wilcox Act was named in honor of Arnold's pal, Maj. Gen. Oscar "Tubby" Westover, the former Army private who had learned to fly.

In his first 20 years of service, General Westover—the musketry soldier/professor/planner—had witnessed a dramatic change in the needs of America in the Twentieth Century. He had traveled widely and had seen how modern technology was revamping tactics and defenses. He was determined to learn all he could about aviation.

At age 38, then a major, Westover enrolled in the Balloon School at Omaha, Nebraska. After graduation, he enrolled in the Airship School at Langley Field, Virginia, graduating in April 1922. Eight months later, he entered the Air Corps Primary Flying School at Brooks Field, Texas, graduating in June. By 1923 he had graduated from Advanced Flying School and was made commander of Langley Field.

In 1930, he was finally promoted to lieutenant colonel, the temporary rank he had held a dozen years earlier during the war.

By 1932, Westover was a brigadier general and assistant

chief of the Air Corps. He was promoted to major general on Christmas Eve 1936 and designated Chief of the Air Corps.

On September 21, 1938, Westover and his crew chief, Sgt. Sam Hymes, were killed after their plane backfired and exploded while landing at the Lockheed Aircraft Corp. field in Burbank, California.

Fifteen months later, Westover's former assistant, "Hap" Arnold, announced that the modern super-airbase under construction in Massachusetts would be named in honor of the visionary pilot who had guided the concept of long-range airpower.

First unit assigned

Construction of Westover Field began quickly and the building pace soon became hectic. The field was dedicated April 6, 1940, and 18 B-18A Bolo bombers from Mitchell Field, N.Y., and Selfridge Field, Mich., flew over the tobacco plains in salute.

The first unit assigned to the base was the 10th Signal Detachment. Soldiers from Alabama and Fort Devens were assigned to the base and the 26th Air Base Group. Within a year there were more than a hundred buildings on the base, nearly 3,000 troops, dozen miles of roadway.

The base was officially accepted by the Army Air Corps in June 1941 and on June 10 five B-17s flew over Springfield and landed at Westover Field. One of the B-17 crew members was Maj. Curtis E. LeMay, who later moved his family to Holyoke.

Thousands of young men arrived at Westover from the many technical school turning out fresh pilots, navigators, bombardiers, radio operators and aerial gunners. Westover's mess halls stayed open 24 hours a day to accommodate the new trainees. At Westover Field, more than 7,000 aircrews were molded. From Westover, then the 10-man crews deployed — mostly to England — to be part of the war against Germany. Fighter pilots also trained at Westover before being assigned to Europe.

The Berlin Airlift

The next major mission of Westover was as the East Coast hub for the Air Transport Service, which later became the Military Air Transport Service and eventually the Military Airlift Command. During the next nine years, more than 900,000 passengers departed Westover for Europe.

The major event of the MATS era was the Berlin Airlift in 1948. Westover became the U.S. hub for the whole airlift operation. "Operation Vittles" began after the Soviets blockaded the Allied portion of Berlin on June 24, 1948. General Curtis LeMay was the head of U.S. Air Forces Europe and he initiated the airlift on June 27, 1948.

Greater Springfield communities soon became involved after a Westover pilot, Capt. Gail S. Halvorsen began dropping candy to children outside Templehof airfield in West Berlin. School children in Chicopee and Springfield began tying tiny parachutes to candy bars and rolls of sweets to be carried from Westover to Berlin.

When the blockade was finally over, and the airlift ended officially on September 1, 1949, the mission statistics were staggering. In 432 days, the Allies had spent more than \$300 million, lost 72 people, including 35 Americans, to make the 276,962 flights into Berlin to deliver 2,323,067 tons of coal, food, and supplies. During the Korean War, Westover AFB became a major center for many of the 118,000 individual Air Force

Reserve members recalled to active duty and a major medical center for casualties.

The first of the Korean War wounded arrived at Westover in the summer of 1950. After the Peoples Republic of China entered the war, Westover's hospital treated more than 2,500 casualties in December 1950.

SAC comes to Westover

The Korean War and detection of the Soviet capability for nuclear and hydrogen weapons increased "Cold War" tensions in the Fifties. President Dwight D. Eisenhower decided on a "New Look" strategy of massive nuclear retaliation if the Soviet Union used nuclear weapons. He turned to Gen. Curtis LeMay and the Strategic Air Command to provide the response to any Soviet threat.

Westover AFB was released from MATS and turned over to LeMay's SAC in the mid-fifties. The first B-52 of the 99th Bombardment Wing arrived at Westover AFB in September 1956.

An Air Force regional hospital was opened on base and also provided trauma treatment services for local hospitals.

In 1957 when the U-2 spy plan was super-secret, Westover became the home of the 8th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron. Its photographic laboratory developed reconnaissance film which went directly to the Pentagon and the White House.

The first U-2 film of Russian missiles in Cuba passed through Westover on the way to Kodak laboratories in Rochester, N.Y. Subsequently, while the world held its breath during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, Soviet ships approaching Cuba were tracked in "the Notch" as SAC's B-52s were put in the highest state of alert in the command's history.

Westover's B-52s finally went to war in Vietnam during the late Sixties and early Seventies. Used as tactical bombers with conventional "iron bombs," the B-52s of the 99th Bomb Wing were sent to Southeast Asian bases on six-month tours.





The war in Vietnam also brought thousands of protesters to the gates of Westover. After the invasion of Cambodia in 1970 the protests escalated as the majority of Americans turned against the war. In one day, more than 700 protesters were arrested in Chicopee by city police.

As the war in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos was winding down, the Defense Department made major cuts at many bases. Westover was one of the hardest hit. Eighth Air Force headquarters had left Westover and soon the 57th Air Division and 99th Bomb Wing were gone.

AFRES takes over

The base was turned over to the Air Force Reserve on April 1, 1974. Following the departure of the last active-duty unit, the 439th Tactical Airlift Wing was reactivated and assigned to Westover.

The 439th Tactical Airlift Wing, descended from the 439th Troop Carrier Wing of World War II fame, turned Westover into a C-123 and C-130 base in 1974. The 439th Troop Carrier Wing had won battle laurels resupplying the besieged but defiant 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne in late 1944 during Battle of the Bulge.

For 13 years the C-130 Hercules, the four-turboprop tactical cargo-hauling workhorse of the 439th MAW flew out of Westover. By the early 1980s Westover was exclusively a Hercules base with the deactivation of the C-123 Providers and C-124 Globemasters.

The Hercules became a familiar sight in New England skies as the Reserve air crews trained in low-level flying, medical evacuation, aerial supply of ground forces, troop drops and other tasks.

The era of the C-5 Galaxy, the largest aircraft in the Air Force inventory, began at Westover in 1987 with the

arrival of the first of 16 massive planes.

In 1988, Westover crews transported U.N. peace-keeping forces to Turkey to supervise the Iran-Iraq cease fire and carried Navy supplies to the Persian Gulf. Westover Galaxies were on duty for missions of mercy when an earthquake devastated Armenia, and also transported firefighting equipment during the summer blaze at Yellowstone National Park.

A Westover C-5A flew electrical repair crews and equipment to Jamaica in October, 1988 in the wake of Hurricane Gilbert. When Hurricane Hugo struck the Caribbean and southeastern U.S. in September, 1989, the 439th MAW had three Galaxies winging to the hardest hit areas with 36 hours. Westover crews flew relief supplies to Charleston, S.C., Puerto Rico and St. Croix evacuated 61 refugees to MacDill AFB in Florida. Operation Just Cause, the December, 1989 military action that overthrew Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega, was a textbook example of the Reserve and active duty "Total Force" team concept.

Westover's Air Force Reserve aircrews and support units responded on short notice, flying eight missions to Howard Air Base, Panama. Between Dec. 20 and Jan. 2, Westover crews transported a total of 647 tons of cargo to the Central American country. This included the transportation of 82nd Airborne and 7th Infantry Division troops and Marine Corps armored vehicles to the combat zone.

Westover AFB celebrated fifty years of flying in July, 1990 attracting close to 750,000 visitors to the 50th Anniversary Airshow. A few days later, Iraq invaded Kuwait, and a new chapter of Westover history began. ☼



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Westover answers the call to duty



Reminiscent of Hitler's conquests leading up to World War II, the unprovoked Iraqi invasion of tiny Kuwait on Aug. 2, 1990 stunned the world with its speed and ferocity. With the possibility of an Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia in the near future, a United States-led coalition reacted swiftly to prevent Saddam Hussein from making any further aggressive moves.

To defend her ally Saudi Arabia, the United States began what would become the largest military airlift in history, bringing the troops and equipment to the gulf necessary to defend Saudi Arabia and eventually, to liberate Kuwait.

Westover's contribution to Desert Shield/Desert Storm began immediately after the Iraqi invasion when the base became the northeast staging area for the Desert Shield airlift. At the same time, Westover's aircrews, members of the 337th Military Airlift Squadron, volunteered to help the cause by bringing desperately needed troops and supplies to Saudi Arabia aboard the base's C-5A Galaxies.

Even before the activation, approximately 80 airmen from the 337th and 13 of Westover's 16 C-5As were participating in Desert Shield, flying vital troops and supplies to the Persian Gulf.

The official call to active duty came on Aug. 22, when President Bush signed an executive order authorizing the mobilization of 40,000 U.S. reservists to serve in Operation Desert Shield.

Responding to the call to active duty, the word went out from Brig. Gen. Frederick "Mike" Walker, 439th Military Airlift commander, "President Bush: You call, we haul," stating the General's confidence in Westover's ability to fulfill it's crucial mission in the gulf.

Two hundred and two members of the 337th, including C-5 pilots, flight engineers, loadmasters, intelligence specialists and other personnel were among the first 1,002 Air Force reservists to be mobilized.

By early September, Saudi-bound aircraft carrying troops and equipment were landing at Westover around-the-clock as the base became a strategic link in the United States' massive airbridge to the gulf region.

Since the beginning of Desert Shield, the massive influx of aircraft created some major changes at the base.

Westover's dining facility, previously open only on training weekends, began around-the-clock operations. The base created a passenger terminal to service desert-bound soldiers and airmen while the big transport planes refueled and received maintenance.





In addition, key operations such as the control tower, fuel service, maintenance, and billeting began 24-hour a day status.

With only the 337th MAS called to active duty, base officials relied on reservists who served voluntarily active duty hours, and civilian workers on overtime, to meet the dramatically increased work loads.

As the buildup in the gulf continued, 337th aircrews averaged more Desert Shield flying hours per aircrew than any other Air Force C-5 unit. According to Col. James Gallin, 337th MAS commander during the war, Westover's 20 eight-member crews spent an average of five to 11 days "on the road" before returning to Westover.

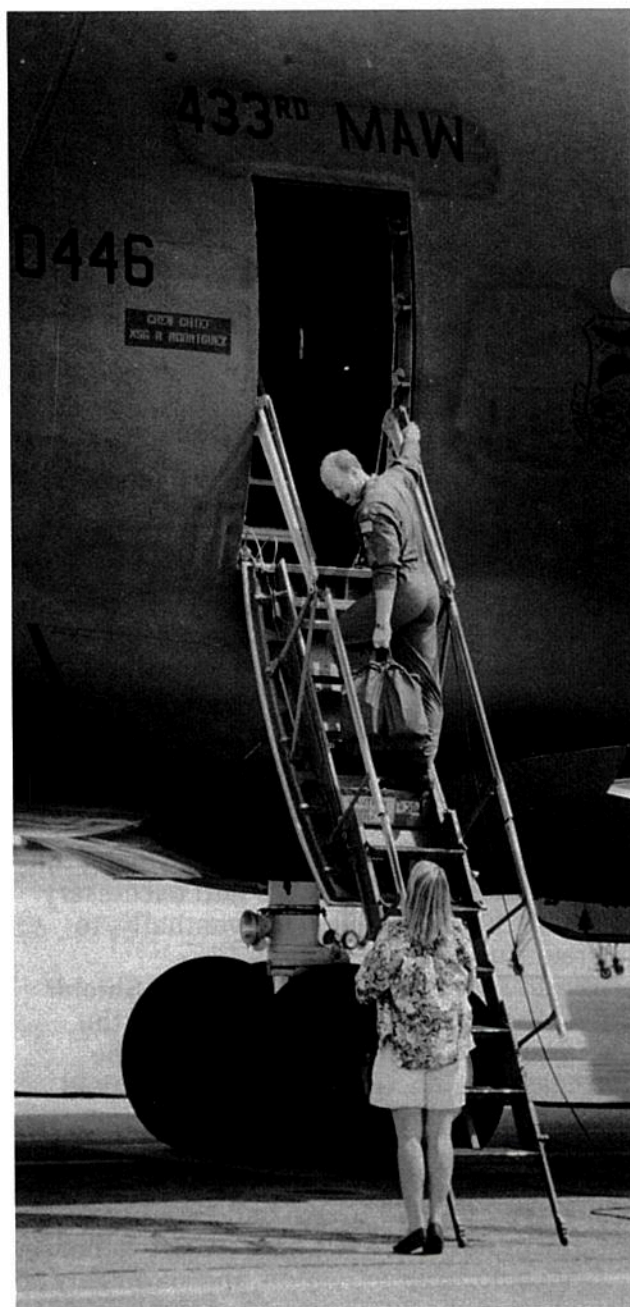
At Westover, the 439th fuels management branch pumped record amounts of JP-4 fuel to meet the ever-growing influx of aircraft. Before Desert Shield, the fuels branch pumped an average of 650,000 gallons of aviation fuel a month. During August and September alone, they pumped two million gallons and 4.2 million gallons respectively.

The 439th Combat Support Group took its place alongside the operations and maintenance people as an integral function of Westover by operating 24-hours-a-day. "The people did whatever it took to get the job done," said Col. Thomas G. Hargis, 439th CSG commander. The 18 units that made up the Combat Support Group issued orders, fed troops, ran the switchboard, provided supplies, transported people around the base, aircraft services, security, and maintained the airfields.

While most of the local public supported U.S. involvement and the around-the-clock operations at Westover, 38 people were arrested during a Persian Gulf involvement protest outside the base's two primary gates on Dec. 1. More than 600 protesters had threatened to completely shut down access to the base. Fortunately, base operations were not interrupted and no injuries occurred, thanks to the successful intervention by Air Force security personnel and state and local police.

With the base expecting up to 20 flights a day during December and January, Air Force officials decided to call up 841 members of the 439th Military Airlift Wing to support the Desert Shield operation on Dec. 3. "This legitimized our role here," said General Walker. "We were no longer able to continue running the base with the volunteer services of our reservists."

When the United States and its allies unleashed a blistering aerial assault to free Kuwait on Jan. 16, a dozen 337th crews were "in the system"—flying troops, supplies and heavy



equipment to the Middle East in support of Desert Storm. In addition, six cooks from the 439th Civil Engineering Squadron were in the combat zone operating a field kitchen.

Back at Westover, 110 members of the 74th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, 36 reservists from the 639th Security Police Flight and 310 maintenance technicians from the 439th's three maintenance squadrons and the DCM staff were activated on Jan. 25.

The 74th AES members, primarily nurses and medical technicians, were to deploy overseas to provide in-flight patient care aboard C-130, C-141 and C-9 aircraft. Other members activated on Jan. 25 were to remain at Westover to support the 24-hour-a-day airlift effort.



Following a massive aerial pounding of enemy forces in Kuwait and Iraq which began Jan. 16, the U.S.-led coalition launched a swift and fierce ground offensive on Feb. 24. After just 100 hours, Saddam Hussein's troops were destroyed and Kuwait—which Hussein invaded on Aug. 4—was free.

Yet even with the defeat of Hussein, Westover's role in the Persian Gulf continued. Aircrews from the 337th continued to haul tons of cargo to the war zone. On Feb. 5, 115 members of the 74th AES were sent to locations in Saudi Arabia, Germany and Turkey.

To begin the gulf redeployment, Lt. Col. Robert McMillan led nine members of Westover's 439th Airlift Control Flight to Saudi Arabia on March 31 to coordinate the massive airlift of Desert Storm troops and cargo returning to the United States.

Though Westover's contribution in the Persian Gulf would continue through "Operation Provide Comfort," the huge airlift to supply food and humanitarian goods for the impoverished Kurds, July 15 would mark the end of the Desert Storm activation for most of the Patriot Wing's 1,550 activated reservists.

Westover's last activated reservist returned home from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on Nov. 5. Technical Sergeant James Plushner, an air cargo specialist with the 58th APS, had been stationed in Riyadh since July 19 where he served as the NCOIC of special handling and air freight services, 4409th Transportation Sq., CENTAF Air Command.

In total, 1,533 of the 19,500 Air Force Reservists activated (or more than 15 percent) were stationed at Westover. While most of the citizen-airmen who were activated remained at Westover, no other Air Force Reserve wing had more reservists called to active duty. Furthermore, Westover was the only staging base in the world which was operated exclusively by reservists.

Throughout the Desert Shield/Storm operations, Westover C-5s airlifted more than 110,000 tons of cargo to and from the gulf without any mishap. During the same period, the base pumped more than 57 million gallons of JP-4 jet fuel.

The base handled more than 3,300 military aircraft and transported 32,987 troops to the gulf to take part in the Desert Shield/Storm operations. The icing on the cake for Westover's war effort was probably the 27,266 troops who passed through the base on their way home. ★





OPERATION: PATRIOT HOME

After bidding a somber farewell to nearly 32,000 troops hurriedly airlifted from Westover to the Persian Gulf, Westover quickly shifted gears to provide a joyous hero's welcome for the returning Desert Storm troops.

Planning for the celebration—dubbed by Westover officials Operation Patriot Home—began as soon as the cease fire with Iraq was announced.

A committee, led by Capt. Denny Jobes, began converting the Base Hangar into a giant party zone for the homeward-bound heroes. Included in the hangar would be a red carpet, a stage and sound system, two huge American flags suspended from the rafters, and a replica of the bar made famous on the television comedy "Cheers."

On March 4, during a speech at the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, General Walker predicted that Westover—which was still a C-5 stage base with a circular flow of Galaxies to and from the Gulf—would soon be hosting returning troops. "No one will return from the sand without a hero's welcome," the general said. No sooner had the general completed his speech that he received word that 20 soldiers returning from Saudi Arabia on emergency leave were due to land at Westover in 20 minutes.

Base personnel and Red Cross volunteers from the passenger terminal scurried to prepare an impromptu "welcome home" party



for the unexpected guests. CMSgt. Charlie Fusco, 439th MAW senior enlisted advisor, purloined a propane grill and began cooking hot dogs and hamburgers. When the Desert Storm veterans filed through the Base Hangar door, they were greeted with hugs, hot dogs, cheers, tears and beers by a crowd of more than 150 people.

Westover had taken on the herculean task of ensuring that Persian Gulf veterans got the welcome home they deserved when they stepped back on American soil after months of difficult service in the hot and desolate desert. Here, too, with no government funds available to bankroll the celebrations, Westover personnel had to "wing it." And, like many times before, the people of Western Massachusetts and other New England areas responded.

Almost immediately, businesses, civic organizations, and thousands of area citizens began contacting the base with offers of help. The Pioneer Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross, which had already performed yeoman service coordinating volunteers for the pax terminal and accepting tons of donated items for the troops, was besieged with calls from people volunteering to staff the 24-hour operation at the reception center.





When the homecomings began, area citizens again responded with a tremendous outpouring of generosity, just as they had done before when service members were deploying to the desert. According to Col. Joseph Curley, who worked closely with donors during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, more than \$100,000 was contributed to the local United Services Organization (USO) Chapter to help the homecomings.

Early on, General Walker demonstrated his personal commitment to the pledge that Westover would provide a hero's welcome to every service member returning from Desert Storm. When Army Spec.4 Arthena Wheeler of Hillsdale, N.Y., landed at the base at 3 a.m. on March 5, she was the only passenger on her C-5 flight home from the desert. The wing commander and members of his senior staff were standing on the tarmac to greet her. "When I saw the star on his hat, at first I thought something had gone wrong," the soldier said. When she realized that this was Westover's way of welcoming her home, Specialist Wheeler added, "I never expected anything like this."

On March 8, just eight days after the ceasefire, Westover welcomed a considerably larger number of Desert Storm troops. A C-141 carrying 104 members of the Army's 2nd Battalion, 5th Special Forces, landed at the base enroute to their home station at Fort Campbell, Ky. The soldiers, many of whom had seen combat during the 100-hour ground war with Iraq, were diverted to Westover when a snowstorm closed Loring AFB, their scheduled destination.

"Awesome," said Maj. Kurt McNeeley, executive officer with the 2nd Battalion, after his troops received a rousing Westover welcome from a hangar crowd of Air Force personnel, Red Cross volunteers, and civilians. "For these young guys, coming back and being welcomed like this lets them know the American people really appreciate the job they've done."



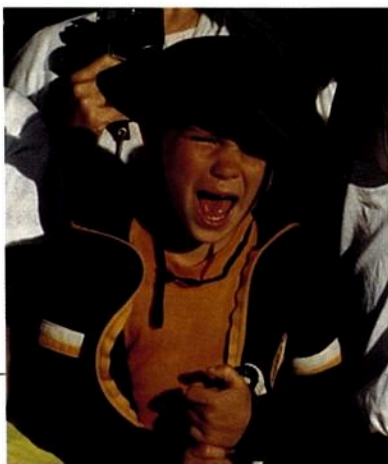
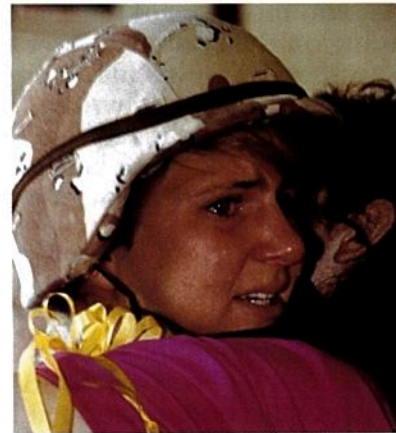
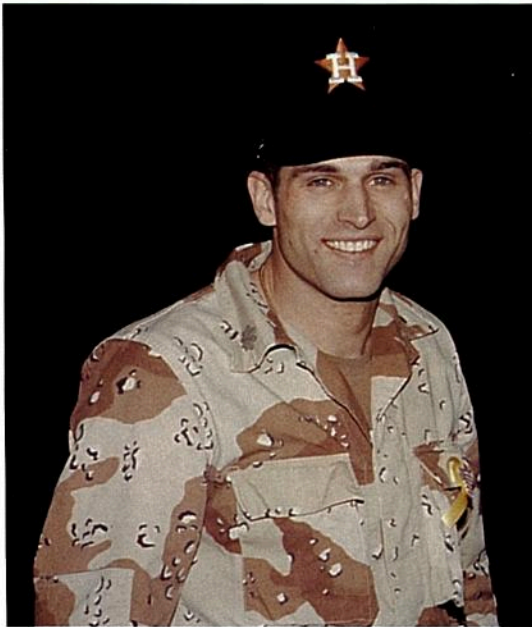
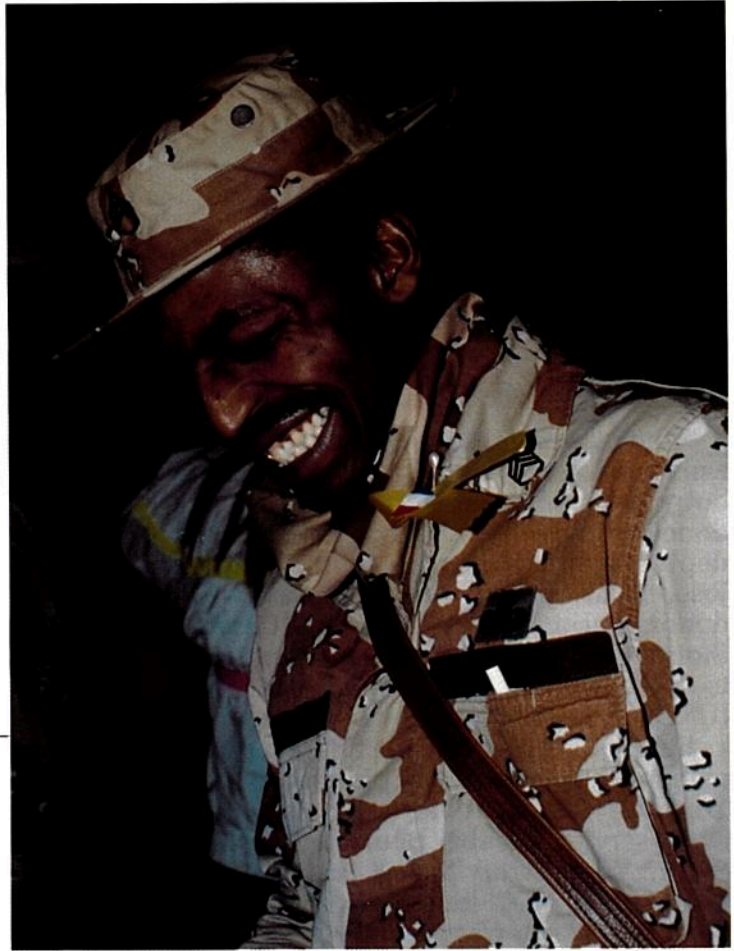
The happy homecomings continued throughout the afternoon and evening of March 8. More 5th Special Forces soldiers arrived, after which 16 C-130 aircraft began landing at Westover. The Hercules cargo transports carried 400 members of the 40th Tactical Airlift Squadron from Pope AFB, N.C. "This is wild and absolutely unimaginable," A1C William Kenna said about the reception he and other members of the unit received after serving in the desert since August. "It's unbelievable."

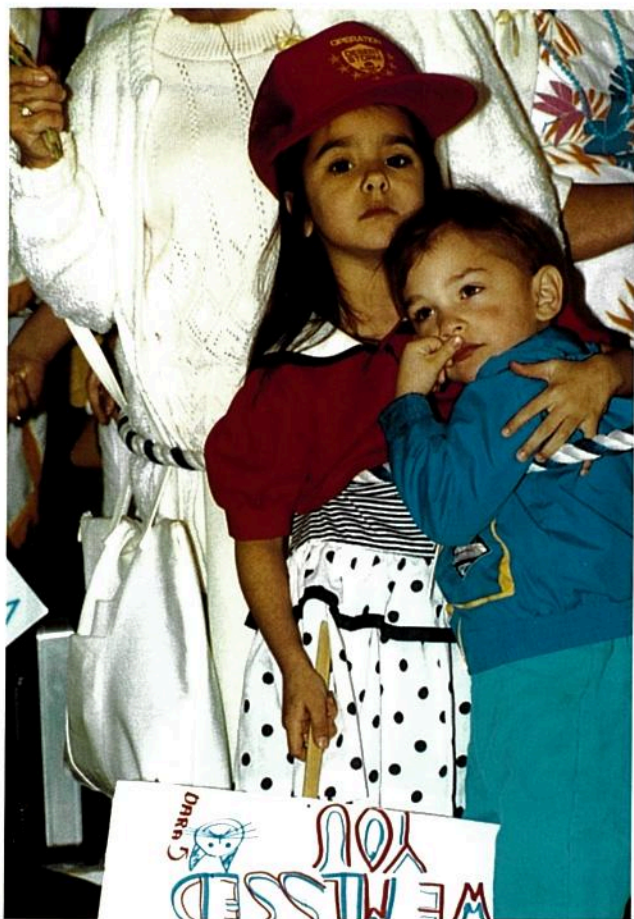


On several days during March, the base greeted more than 1,000 Desert Storm veterans during a 24-hour period. On some weekends it was not unusual to find crowds in excess of 4,000 people jamming the hangar to cheer the arrivals.

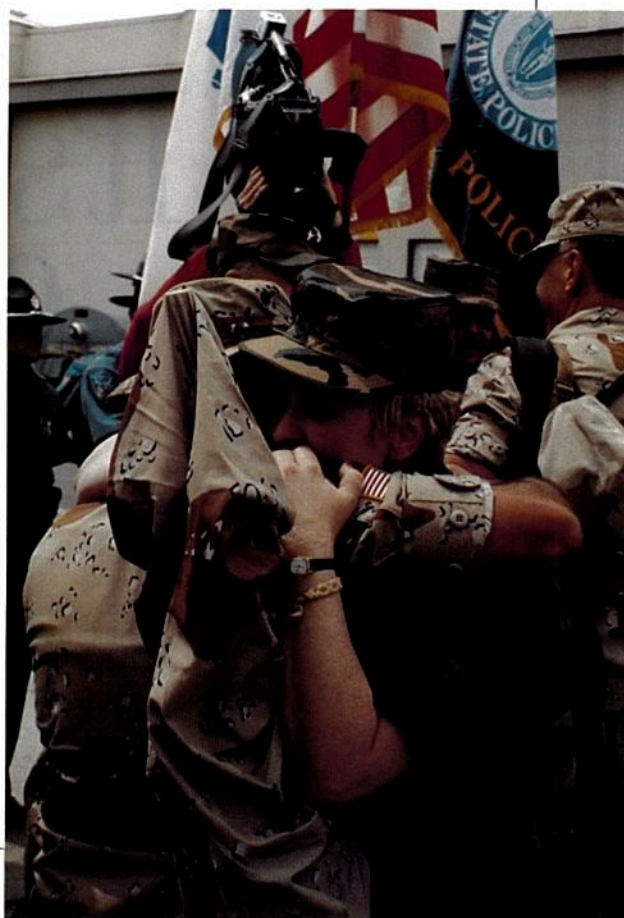
Lt. Col. William Lee, the Patriot Home coordinator, estimated that more than 200,000 people visited Westover between March and June to participate in the homecomings.

By June 12, some 30,504 soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines had experienced the magic of the Westover homecoming. Every single one of them received the hero's welcome that General Walker had promised three months earlier. ☼





Col. Charles "Whitey" Joslin, chronicled the tears and cheers of Westover's 128-day Welcome Home celebration with more than 2,000 photographs. Joslin's gallery has become a staple of base history while gaining fame throughout the Air Force and the country.





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pilots
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our
heads.

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The 727 here today has been dedicated in memory of Judy Carmine who has passed on due to cancer. Carmine was the General Manager of Air Transportation for the Postal Service. She was responsible for establishing the entire air network for our expedited mail service. The network was established in 1987 and is based on a HUB system. The HUB in Indianapolis, Ind., is presently moving 420,000 lbs. of Express and Priority Mail on a daily basis. New routes are added in response to the needs of the business community.

Polaroid All-Stars

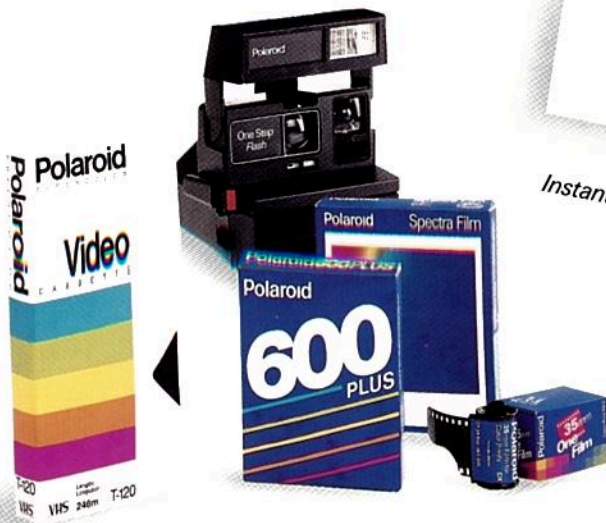
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