



THE DISPATCH



AIRBASE GEORGIA, COMMEMORATIVE AIRFORCE, PEACHTREE CITY, GA
WWW.AIRBASEGEORGIA.ORG WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/CAFAIRBASEGEORGIA

July-August 2026

Educate, Inspire, Honor

Keep 'em flying

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Delta Airlines: Title Sponsor for Moonlight Swing
- SBD and OPETATION LEADER
- Casting Call for Moonlight Swing

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Rides, rides, and more rides
- Safety Report
- Education Report
- On the Horizon

From the left Seat

Col Mark Richards

Airshows and Rides Success

June and July were busy months for the Airbase Georgia Team as our aircraft were readied for the annual June 2026 Reading, PA and the July 2026 Oshkosh, WI Airshow events. Our airshow and rides programs to date have been nothing short of exceptional. Thanks to the dedication and countless hours of work, our maintenance team continues to prepare our aircraft to the highest standards of reliability and safety. They ensure our ability to bring ABG aircraft to these shows for display and for the rides program.

Our rides team continues to deliver well prepared event plans for each event, and our pilots and event crews



continue to bring those plans to fruition for the public to take part in.

I cannot thank all of those involved enough for their dedication of time, talents and treasures, which makes these events possible.

One of our missions in bringing these warbirds to airshows and ride events is to inspire others not only to celebrate the men and women who built and flew these aircraft, but to inspire our younger generations to consider a career in aviation and to join our efforts to keep these warbirds flying.

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MEETING INFORMATION

September 5, 2026

Staff Meeting 0930 hrs.

Membership 1300 hrs,

Staff Officers

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Col Bill Brown
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One such young lady joined us at Fond du Lac this year and purchased a ride on our SBD Dauntless. Zofia Sielaff was so inspired by our team and her ride, that she joined the CAF and the Wisconsin Wing.



ZOFIA SIELAFF ONE OF OUR NEWEST CAF MEMBERS

The Georgia Barnstorming Tour

As we ramp up our airshow and rides events for the second half of the year, I want to remind you that ABG will be commencing "The Georgia Barnstorming Tour" which began on August 15th at Toccoa and will continue each month for the rest of the year. In addition to Toccoa, there will be stops at Augusta, Atlanta, Macon, Athens and Gainesville. The Georgia Barnstorming Tour will conclude with a two-day event here at Falcon Field on November 21 and 22 during the 2nd annual GA Gun Show. The statewide events

are great for any Airbase Georgia member to get involved as a Docent, as a member of the PX Team, or to learn more about becoming a member of the rides team.

We also have a rides day planned for August 22 with the Music City Wing in Gallatin, TN and a rides day planned for August 29 with the Birmingham Squadron in Birmingham, AL. If you are interested in volunteering for any of these events, please reach out to me or any member of the rides team. We will help you get in touch with the right people and get you signed up.

Where one door closes, another door opens

As many of you are aware, Airbase Georgia was recently offered a rare opportunity to purchase the Hess Building. The Staff members voted in favor to pursue the potential purchase with the unanimous support from the CAF HQ Staff. Members of our CAF Foundations also voted unanimously to financially support our efforts. When one of the other contenders made a higher offer, it was obvious that a bidding war was about to take place which was not financially in the best interests of Airbase Georgia. We walked away

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without any financial obligation to Airbase Georgia, knowing it was the best move at this time.

We immediately pivoted back to Plan A, which was pursuing the development of our facility. Recent renderings from our architect show us that we can accomplish a phenomenal expansion at our location, and it can be done in several phases spreading the financial obligation out over a longer period of time. The expansion of our facility will yield more square footage for aircraft restoration, aircraft maintenance, as well as yielding space for more classrooms / meeting rooms, additional catering kitchen facilities, more event space for rental, new office space and a planned welcome center, company store and museum area.

Preliminary plans are to complete the expansion in three-phases;

- Phase 1 - Hangar Expansion which will house the
 - Restoration area
 - Aircraft maintenance area
 - Mezzanine office and classrooms
 - Welcome Center and Museum infrastructure
- Phase 2 – Welcome Center & Museum
 - ABG Entry moved to new hangar expansion
 - Entry will include a welcome center and company store
 - New Museum will be developed and housed under a portion of the mezzanine
- Phase 3 – Demolition and Reconstruction of current meeting room and office areas
 - Demolition of current structure from the meeting room to the shop wall

- Construct 2-story building, housing classrooms, meeting rooms, interactive displays and a high end second story rental venue overlooking the airport with catering kitchen

Moonlight Swing

Originally conceived as a fundraising event celebrating America's 250th Anniversary, Moonlight Swing will serve as the public launch of Airbase Georgia's Capital Campaign to expand its hangar and education facilities, creating new opportunities to preserve military aviation history, educate future generations, and inspire tomorrow's aviation workforce. Moonlight Swing is more than a gala, every guest and every sponsor becomes part of the mission.

Delta Air Lines who recently celebrated their 100TH anniversary is the title sponsor of CAF Airbase Georgia's Moonlight Swing. Delta's sponsorship reflects a partnership rooted in a shared commitment to aviation, service and remembrance. As Delta celebrates a century of leadership, we're honored to have them supporting Airbase Georgia's mission of preserving history, expanding education, and inspiring future generations.

How do I get involved / Join the Cast of Moonlight Swing

Airbase Georgia members—and their **friends and family members**—are invited to become part of the cast of **Moonlight Swing on Saturday, October 17.**

Moonlight Swing is being designed as an immersive 1945 experience, and our cast will help bring that world to life. We are looking for people interested in portraying military personnel, aircrew, mechanics, home-front civilians, hotel staff, reporters, and other period characters.

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No acting or reenacting experience is required. Whether you have period attire and experience or simply want to participate and help create the atmosphere of the evening, there is a place for you in the cast.

Cast members will interact with guests and help create the feeling that they have stepped into an elegant American hotel near a military airfield in late 1945. Cast members will have access to a dedicated hospitality tent with food and refreshments and, when their production responsibilities permit, are welcome to enjoy the music and join in the dancing.

Please note that dinner and table seating are reserved for sponsors, reserved-table guests, and

individual ticket holders. Cast hospitality will be provided separately.

If you, a spouse, family member, or friend would like to help us **bring 1945 to life at Airbase Georgia**, we would love to have you join the cast. Please contact one of the following members:

- Marybeth Britton who is coordinating cast volunteers. Or one of the other members of the team.
- Bill Brown
- Jane Simpson
- Jeff White
- Mark Richards 🇺🇸



Dear Mr. Mark Richards and the Airbase Georgia Team, I would like to express my gratitude to your CAF team for my SBD Dauntless Flight at EAA this year! It was truly an honor and a dream to share the sky with the legacy of the men who flew those SBDs 84 years ago. Men like Dick Best, Dickinson, Kroeger, and my home town hero, Bruno Gaido, are daily inspirations for me. Thank you for everything you do to honor our men through the gift of flight.

I was deeply moved by the kindness of the CAF team during my experience. My pilot, Jeff, was outstanding and exceptionally kind, knowledgeable, and helpful. It was a great ride! The ground and safety crews, especially Doug, made this experience possible and absolutely memorable. I am very grateful for their help and time.

I am happy to say that this experience led me to join the CAF Wisconsin Wing, in hopes to one day fly these beautiful warbirds.

Thank you again for everything. I will be sure to visit the Georgia Airbase as soon as I can.

KEEP THEM FLYING!

Zofia

Stearman Project

Col Charles Burcher

Cols Roy Handler, Mark Chabot, Robert Karge & Forest Buchanan installing the propeller.



Airbase Georgia to Launch 2026 Barnstorming Tour

Stops in Toccoa, Augusta, Atlanta, Athens, Macon and Gainesville

Col Steve Forsyth, PIO

PEACHTREE CITY, GA. (Aug. 5, 2026) – Opportunities to fly in restored WWII aircraft will be offered at seven Georgia airports August through November when Commemorative Air Force (CAF) Airbase Georgia launches its 2026 Georgia Barnstorming Tour. Several aircraft in the Airbase Georgia fleet will travel to Toccoa, Augusta, Atlanta, Macon, Athens and Gainesville, wrapping up the tour at home in Peachtree City, to offer aviation fans an experience of a lifetime. Rides can be scheduled in advance at www.airbasegeorgia.org.

The tour will begin in Toccoa on Aug. 15 at Toccoa Airport - R.G. Letourneau Field, where the Airbase will bring its PT-19 for display and rides to help celebrate the Toccoa Airport Open House.

The next stop is Augusta on Sept. 12 at Augusta Regional Airport, where the Airbase plans to visit with its P-51 Mustang and three trainers: the LT-6 Mosquito, the PT-19 and a T-34.

“We’re happy to bring this historic fleet to Augusta,” said Airbase Leader Mark Richards. “The P-51 was an incredible guardian for American bombers over Germany and our PT-19 helped train the Tuskegee Airmen in Alabama.”

The third stop on the tour will be for Good Neighbor Day, Sept. 20, at Dekalb Peachtree Airport in Atlanta. Airbase Georgia plans to take the same group of exciting planes plus the Dauntless SBD dive bomber, the hero of Midway, to that event for rides on Sunday only.

Macon will be the fourth stop, on Sept. 26, at Middle Georgia Regional Airport. All five aircraft are scheduled to appear there.



CAF Airbase Georgia's P-51 Mustang is a popular aircraft that provides exhilarating rides as part of the Airbase fleet. The Mustang and four additional planes will appear at several stops on the 2026 Georgia Barnstorming Tour.

Two stops are planned for Oct. 24. Gainesville's Pixel Man Airshow at Lee Gilmer Memorial Airport will have the LT-6, PT-19 trainer and T-34 Mentor trainer. Athens-Ben Epps Airport will host Airbase Georgia for a day of rides with the P-51 Mustang, SBD dive bomber and the LT-6.

The final rides event will be during the Atlanta Gun Show Nov. 21-22 at Airbase Georgia's headquarters, adjacent to Atlanta Regional Airport – Falcon Field. All five rides aircraft are scheduled to be available. Additional tour stops may be announced during the summer and fall.

“This tour will offer amazing experiences to people across the state,” Richards said. “It helps fulfill our mission of honoring the Greatest Generation who flew these warbirds, and it helps enable school-age children to connect with the WWII history these planes represent. We also hope this tour will encourage more young people to consider careers in aviation.” 🇺🇸



Development Officer Report

Col Philip Beegle

Good things ahead from the development side of Airbase Georgia!

Exciting developments are underway at Airbase Georgia. Our team is preparing to submit the Corsair and P-47 to the 12 Planes of Christmas program, which last year generated over \$740,000 for CAF aircraft projects nationwide, including \$110,200 for our P-47 restoration.

We are also moving forward with plans to expand our

hangar and museum to support our growing education program and aircraft fleet. Working closely with the Advisory Committee, airport leadership, and architects, we have identified a potential expansion and will begin fundraising efforts in the coming months.

Interested in supporting the Development Office? We welcome all volunteers and would appreciate your help. 🇺🇸



Forties Makeover

Col Jane Simpson

In anticipation of the Moonlight Swing dance in October, the ladies of Airbase Georgia decided that their restroom could use a makeover. The old version was nice, but we had some ideas to create a warmer Forties look, on a budget.



It was agreed that an Art Deco black for the countertop and bench, and pink walls would be an easy fix. Cols Robin O'Reilly and Jane Simpson bravely kicked off the project, and Jane's husband Richard volunteered his time (and skills!) to quickly paint the walls. Col Mike Lamble helped to switch out the mirror on our dresser, and Cathy Richards finished off the look with a new mirror over the sinks, and curtains and cushion for the bench with matching fabric. Cols Lorraine DeLoach

and Carla Reid offered advice for rearranging our existing photos. Even Col Paul Areson found an electrician to give us more light! Now we just need a PA system to pipe in some 1940s music... 🇺🇸



Top left: Cols Robin O'Reilly and Jane Simpson. Top right: Richard Simpson;
Bottom: Cols Malcolm Lelliott and Dave Mason.

Celebrate the N2S Stearman Restoration – September 17th

Col Chris Madrid

Airbase Georgia members, friends, and community partners are invited to join us on **Thursday, September 17**, for a special Fayette Chamber of Commerce ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the restoration of our N2S Stearman.

The completion of the Stearman represents much more than the return of a historic aircraft. It reflects the dedication, craftsmanship, and thousands of volunteer hours that make the work of Airbase Georgia possible. Through projects like this, we help fulfill the Commemorative Air Force mission of preserving our aviation heritage, educating future generations, and keeping the stories of the men and women who shaped that history alive.

The ribbon cutting will provide an opportunity to recognize the volunteers and supporters who contributed to the restoration, celebrate this important milestone, and share the work of Airbase Georgia with our community.

The celebration also comes just one month before **Moonlight Swing** on **October 17**, Airbase Georgia's signature fall event. Moonlight Swing will bring the sights, sounds, and spirit of the 1940s to the hangar for an immersive evening of live big-band music, dancing, dining, historic aircraft, and period characters.

Together, the Stearman restoration and Moonlight Swing showcase two sides of the same mission: **preserving history and bringing it to life.**



Save the date: September 17 and join us as we celebrate another chapter in Airbase Georgia's continuing mission to preserve, educate, and inspire. 🇺🇸



Safety Report

Col Dave Riesselmann

A quick review of ladder safety:

- Stand the ladder on a flat, solid surface
- Maintain 3 points of contact: preferably 2 feet and a hand
- Dave's rule: Keep your belt buckle within the ladder's frame to avoid overextending
- Check that your shoes have not picked up any spilled oil from the hangar floor to avoid slipping
- Avoid carrying objects up the ladder. Use a tool belt or have them handed to you by someone else

Lastly, return the ladder to the storage area after you're finished with it. At the very least fold it underneath an airplane if you

plan to use it again soon. Do not leave a ladder standing upright to get caught by inadvertent propwash or a stray gust. 🇺🇸



CAF Airbase Georgia Took Flight for Community July Fourth Parades

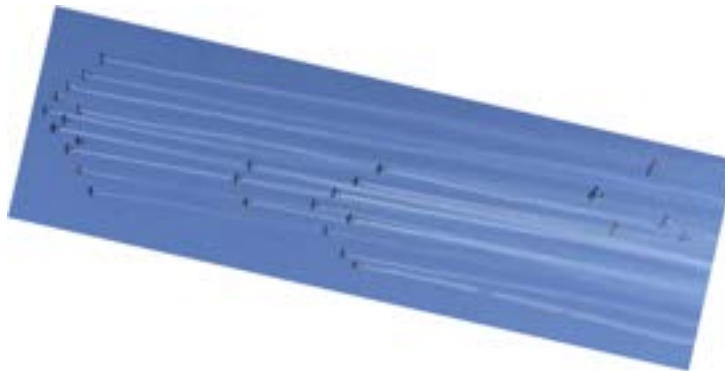
Col Steve Forsyth

Airbase Georgia took to the skies with its restored WWII aircraft on July 4 to join local communities celebrating the nation's 250th birthday. Parade watchers in Peachtree City, Newnan and Tyrone looked up to see Airbase Georgia's vintage SBD Dive Bomber, PT-19 trainer, LT-6 Trainer and a T-34 trainer in formation, along with other restored WWII planes that had been invited to join in. The flights were part of a nationwide commitment by the Commemorative Air Force to fly as many planes as possible for this historic July Fourth celebration. "There could be as many as 100 WWII aircraft participating across the country," said Airbase Leader Mark Richards. Airbase Georgia member, Maj. Gen (Ret.) George Harrison, also has the honor of serving as Grand Marshal for the Peachtree City parade. Harrison is an active pilot and volunteer for Airbase Georgia. The Airbase also is preparing for another

250th anniversary celebration Oct. 17, a special "Moonlight Swing" dance and dinner. The night promises to be a festive occasion commemorating the 1940s era, an historic part of United States history.

Music by the Peachtree Jazz Edition will rock the Airbase Georgia hangar with popular 1940s tunes, surrounded by the ambiance of WWII aircraft. Guests will enjoy a catered dinner

in 1940s style, with a unique silent auction featuring valuable warbird artwork. Proceeds from the event will support the expanding education programs provided by Airbase Georgia, ranging from elementary through high school, with additional opportunities for aviation career events. "We couldn't think of a better opportunity to celebrate our nation's history and ensure that it will be carried forward for the youth of today and tomorrow," said Richards. 🇺🇸



Scud Runner



Paulie enforced the speakeasy entry



Gerhard used his German experience in moving the beer barrel props



Delta Air Lines Named Title Sponsor for CAF Airbase Georgia's Moonlight Swing Supporting Education Expansion

Col Steve Forsyth

PEACHTREE CITY, Ga. (Aug. 15, 2026) – Delta Air Lines, which recently celebrated its 100th anniversary, is the title sponsor of CAF Airbase Georgia's Moonlight Swing, a 1940s-themed gala celebrating America's 250th Anniversary. The inaugural event will be Saturday, Oct. 17, 2026, in Airbase Georgia's hangar at Atlanta Regional Airport–Falcon Field.

Moonlight Swing will serve as the public launch of Airbase Georgia's campaign to expand its hangar and education facilities, creating new opportunities to preserve military aviation history, educate future generations, and inspire tomorrow's aviation workforce. The project will increase space for educational programming, museum exhibits, historic aircraft restoration and community events, while serving as a regional destination for military aviation history, tourism and aviation education.

"Moonlight Swing is more than a gala," said Airbase Leader Mark Richards. "It is an investment in preserving our nation's history while inspiring tomorrow's innovators, aviators, and leaders. Every guest and every sponsor becomes part of that mission."

Delta's sponsorship reflects a partnership rooted in a shared commitment to aviation, service, and remembrance. During World War II, Delta answered the nation's call by modifying 916 military aircraft, overhauling more than 1,000 aircraft engines and instruments, training Army Air Forces pilots and mechanics, and operating military cargo routes supporting the Allied war effort. Today, the airline continues that tradition of service through its nationally recognized Normandy Legacy Flight program, transporting World War II veterans to France each year to commemorate the anniversary of D-Day.

through commemorative events and educational programs and connecting thousands of students each year with the history, technology, and leadership lessons of World War II. Airbase Georgia also participates in Delta's annual Veterans Day program honoring military veterans and Delta employees.

"Delta Air Lines and Airbase Georgia share more than a love of aviation – we share a commitment to preserving the legacy of those who built our nation and our industry," Richards said. "As Delta embarks on its next century of flight, we're honored to have them supporting Airbase Georgia's mission of preserving history, expanding education, and inspiring future generations."

Expanded facilities will strengthen Airbase Georgia's growing education initiatives. Aviation career awareness includes an upcoming Aviation Futures Day, a new regional initiative in November designed to connect high school students with aviation employers, educational institutions and industry professionals.

Community organizations and local businesses also have joined Delta in supporting Moonlight Swing through in-kind sponsorships. Current supporting sponsors include Visit Peachtree City, Timeless Occasions, Food Dude, Audio Visual Production Group International, 3 Guys Golf Carts, Invisible Man Pictures, and The Citizen.

Guests attending Moonlight Swing will enjoy an elegant evening beneath the wings of authentic World War II aircraft, with dinner, dancing to the music of Peachtree Jazz Edition and a silent auction featuring military aviation artwork.

Tickets, reserved tables and sponsorship opportunities remain available. For information, visit airbasegeorgia.org. 🇺🇸

Toccoa Rides Day



Photos courtesy Col Chris Madrid



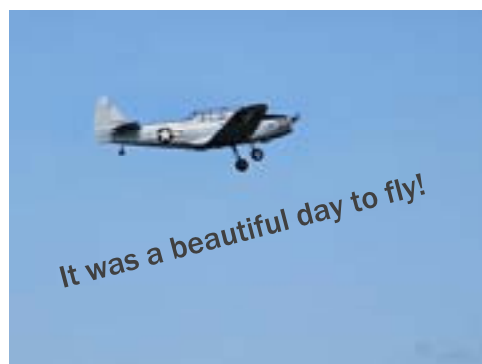
Col Bill Brown signs a visitor up for a ride in the PT-19.



Pilot Col George Harrison and backseat rider Doug Maxwell



Col Harrison discussing the fine points of the PT-19.



It was a beautiful day to fly!

Photo left and above courtesy Col Mike Daly

Thanks to the volunteers that made the day a success: Col George Harrison, Jim Stearns, Jeff White, Bill Brown, and Clint Cottrell

Making memories at Oshkosh

Col Mark Richards



Cols Heather Johnson, Bill Brown and Mark Richards



Education Report

Col Chris Madrid

Education Takes Flight at Airbase Georgia

As we move into one of Airbase Georgia's busiest seasons, our education and outreach programs continue to expand across Georgia. From aviation workforce development and World War II history to community partnerships and fundraising, there are more opportunities than ever for members to become involved. The Education Office welcomes volunteers of all experience levels—whether your interests are aviation history, mentoring students, public speaking, serving as a docent, or representing Airbase Georgia at community events. **Members are needed, and we encourage you to join us as we continue expanding our educational mission.**

This fall's calendar reflects the growing impact of Airbase Georgia's education and community outreach efforts.

On **October 17**, the **Moonlight Swing Gala** will serve as the public launch of Airbase Georgia's Hangar Expansion Capital Campaign. Delta Air Lines has committed as the event's Title Sponsor, joined by several community partners, and preparations continue for media outreach, sponsorship development, and ticket sales. The gala represents an important milestone in expanding the facilities needed to support our growing educational programs.

In **November**, Airbase Georgia has been invited to participate in the **Andersonville Historic Site & National POW Museum World War I & World War II Weekend**. Planning is underway for a possible aircraft display featuring the PT-19, N2S, and LT-6, with additional discussions exploring aircraft ride

opportunities. This event will strengthen our partnership with the National Park Service while bringing Airbase Georgia's living history mission to audiences from across Georgia and beyond.

Planning also continues for our inaugural **Aviation Futures Day on November 14**, designed to connect high school juniors and seniors with aviation employers, educators, and career opportunities. Organizations already committed include the Federal Aviation Administration, Georgia College & Career Academies, Georgia Business Aviation Association, Women in Aviation, JetAire, US Aviation Academy, and Aventure Aviation. Airbase Georgia is also seeking funding to bring the **Rise Above Traveling Exhibit** to Peachtree City during Aviation Futures Week, creating an even greater educational experience for students throughout metro Atlanta.

Looking ahead to early 2027, Airbase Georgia will once again partner with Fayette County Public Schools to present World War II history programs for the county's fifth-grade students during January and February. This long-standing program introduces hundreds of students each year to the people, aircraft, and events that shaped the Second World War through engaging presentations by Airbase Georgia volunteers. Members who enjoy working with students or sharing history are encouraged to participate. **Those interested in joining the 5th Grade WWII Education Team should contact Col Bill Brown for more information.**



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Airbase Georgia's educational outreach extends well beyond our hangar. This September, members are planning **Ride Days in Toccoa (August 15), Augusta (September 12), and Macon (September 26)** with invitations being extended to local history teachers to experience Airbase Georgia firsthand and learn more about our educational programs. Airbase Georgia has also been invited to participate in the **Georgia Business Aviation Association (GBAA) Static Display on September 16** at Cobb County International Airport and **Women in Aviation Girls in Aviation Day on September 26** in Covington. Each of these events provides an opportunity to engage students, educators, aviation enthusiasts, and the general public while sharing Airbase Georgia's mission to **educate, inspire, and honor** through living history.

Our statewide partnerships continue to grow as well. The **Georgia World War II Heritage Trail**, now in its sixth year, has expanded to thirteen Partner sites and seven Affiliate Partners. Website traffic has grown dramatically over the past two years, social media engagement continues to increase, and the Executive Committee is exploring a statewide digital passport that will encourage visitors to discover Georgia's World War II sites while providing valuable visitation data. Airbase Georgia's participation continues to strengthen our visibility within Georgia's heritage tourism community.

We Need Your Help

The coming months represent one of Airbase Georgia's busiest periods of the year, and **we need members to become involved**. Whether your interests

include teaching students, serving as a docent, helping with aircraft displays, supporting community events, or sharing Airbase Georgia's story with visitors, there is a meaningful role for you.

Our mission is to **educate, inspire, and honor** by preserving military aviation history and inspiring future generations. If you've been looking for an opportunity to become more active in the organization, now is an excellent time to join the Education Team. Together, we can continue building Airbase Georgia into one of Georgia's premier aviation education organizations.

National WWII Museum Tour – December 6–8

Airbase Georgia members and friends who enjoy World War II history may be interested in a **Kelly Tours** motorcoach trip to the **National WWII Museum in New Orleans, December 6–8, 2026**. Highlights include two nights at the Higgins Hotel, a private guided tour of the National WWII Museum, the acclaimed **Beyond All Boundaries 4-D** experience narrated by Tom Hanks, a luncheon performance by the Victory Belles, an exclusive behind-the-scenes dinner at the Museum's Kushner Restoration Pavilion, and a narrated tour of historic New Orleans, including the French Quarter and Garden District. Transportation, lodging, admissions, and most meals are included.

To make a reservation or obtain additional information, contact **Kelly Tours** at (800) **442-6152** or (912) **964-2010**, or visit **KellyTours.com**. Payment is due by October 15th. Be sure to reference **Trip #21426 – From Peachtree City to New Orleans** when making your reservation. 🇺🇸



Articles and photos for publication in the Dispatch are welcomed and encouraged. Submissions must be received by the 10th of the month. For questions and submissions, email marsha.daly@airbaegeorgia.org

AIRBASE GEORGIA SENT FIVE VINTAGE WARBIRODS TO EAA AIRVENTURE

Col Steve Forsyth

Five restored WWII-era aircraft from Commemorative Air Force (CAF) Airbase Georgia flew cross-country to the annual EAA AirVenture Oshkosh Fly-In and Convention in Oshkosh, Wis., July 20-26, 2026. The Airbase offered rides to the public on four of the aircraft at Fond du Lac County Airport, near the EAA AirVenture site.

Airbase Georgia, based in Peachtree City, Ga., and one of the largest units of the CAF, flew in with its popular P-51 Mustang, "Red Nose", its venerable Douglas

SBD-5 Dauntless dive bomber; an LT-6 Mosquito, and a T-34 Mentor. Rides on these four aircraft were available to the public at Fond du Lac County Airport July 21-25. The Airbase also sent its rare P-63 KingCobra fighter for public display at EAA AirVenture.

"EAA AirVenture Oshkosh is a highlight of our flying season," said Airbase Leader Mark Richards. "We join with thousands of aviation enthusiasts to celebrate our restored warbirds and offer rides that give people an experience of a lifetime." 🇺🇸



Photos courtesy of Col Angela Decker



AirVenture 2026

Col Wanda Roberts



Cols Jim Prendergast and Mark Chabot getting a ride in one of Bob Pretiss's cars in his collection. Bob Prentiss has a hangar at Fond du Lac which houses both aircraft and cars. Bob is a great supporter of ABG, buying rides in the SBD for his employees.



The SBD and PBY (Catalina) flying in formation during the airshow. Col Rob Harris was the SBD pilot. (photo courtesy Col Phillip Beegle)



Col Colton Gray pre-flighting the T-34. Colton and Col Riley Lorenz were a huge asset to the flying operation at Fond du Lac. They did **EVERYTHING!** Talked to the crowds, sold rides....the public LOVED them!



Photo of the SBD taken from the P-51. Cols Robert Harris & Tom Walsh in the SBD. (photo courtesy Col Wanda Roberts)



L-R: Cols Mark Chabot, Tom Walsh, and Jim Pendergast after dinner at Salty's.



Photo of the P-51 taken from the SBD. Cols John Currenti & Wanda Roberts in the P-51. (photo courtesy Col Tom Walsh)

The SBD Dauntless and OPERATION LEADER

Col Jonathan Lace

"LEADER was definitely an excellent training exercise for CAG-4. We went in as many boys and came out as many men." - CDR. Joseph A. Ruddy, Commander Carrier Air Group (CAG) 4.



Photo: An SBD Dauntless of VB-4 from USS Ranger preparing to attack shipping targets as part of OPERATION LEADER near Bodo, Norway on 4 October 1943.

The Scout-Bomber Douglas (SBD) Dauntless was the most successful U.S Navy dive bomber of World War II and a beloved airplane of many World War II enthusiasts and pilots all over the world. Historically, the Dauntless is most famous for its victories in the Pacific theater (especially at the Battle of Midway) and with OPERATION TORCH in the Atlantic theater in November of 1942. A lesser-known operation of the SBD's service is its role in the only carrier-based strike against the European mainland in World War II; OPERATION LEADER.

The Germans attacked and occupied Norway in 1940. The coastal town of Bodo quickly became a vital shipping hub through which strategic quantities of iron ore were shipped back to Germany. The Norwegian Secret Intelligence Service agents helped to identify this town as a prime candidate for an air raid. By

October of 1943, USS *Ranger* CV-4 (the first purpose-built U.S. aircraft carrier) was operating with the British Home Fleet at Scapa Flow under the command of Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser. Under his command, an air strike was planned against German shipping in and around Bodo. The strike force would be comprised of Northern and Southern Attack Groups from *Ranger*.

On the morning of 4 October, USS *Ranger* was steaming 140 miles east of Norway, above the arctic circle. Twenty SBD Dauntless dive bombers, 10 TBF Devastator torpedo planes, and 14 F4F Wildcat fighters launched just before dawn and headed east, flying as low as 50 feet above the surface of the Atlantic. The SBDs of Bombing 4 were led by LCDR George "Otto" Klinsmann and were the 5th generation model. This is the same model SBD stationed at Airbase Georgia. 60% of the aircrew from *Ranger* had never seen combat, so this was their first introduction to aerial warfare, as indicated in the above quote by CDR Ruddy. By 1000, both Northern and Southern Attack Groups had returned to *Ranger*, with 4 casualties and 3 POWs taken when their airplanes were attacked and crashed.

The combat after-action report of battle damage provides interesting details:

"4-B-11 received one hit on the starboard wing just outboard of the auxiliary gasoline tank by a small caliber explosive shell resulting in a four-inch hole in the top of the skin and many small fragments in the lower skin. No adverse effect on controls."

"4-B-23 was hit, apparently by explosive 40mm on right stabilizer resulting in holes in fin and rudder, one hit on left wing, apparently the same type of shell, fragments nicked the gasoline tank but did not

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puncture it, fragments also pierced upper skin of wing. No adverse effect on controls.”

“4-B-13 received three hits on the starboard wing by what appeared to be 20mm; several hits on the port elevator and horizontal stabilizer and one hit on starboard horizontal stabilizer. Controls not affected.”

Reports such as this testify to the ruggedness and reliability of the SBD Dauntless.

In addition to the disruption to German shipping, the irony of OPERATION LEADER was that it was carried out by aircraft from the USS *Ranger*, the very aircraft carrier the Germans erroneously claimed to have sunk 6 months previously.

The results of the strike were: 2 steamships sunk, 5 steamships heavily damaged (1 beached), 1 freight barge heavily damaged and beached, 1 troop transport beached, 1 tanker disabled, and 1 destroyer heavily strafed. This operation resulted in a significant setback for German shipments of iron ore through Bodo.

The Commander of Air Group 4, (CAG4), CDR Joseph A. Ruddy received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his “superb flying skill” demonstrated in OPERATION LEADER. The full citation is given below.

Bureau of Naval Personnel Information Bulletin No. 326 (May 1944)

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross to Commander Joseph Aloysius Ruddy, Jr., United States Navy, for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight while leading a flight of bombers from the U.S.S. RANGER (CV-4) during the attack on shipping off Bodo, Norway, 4 October 1944. Commander Ruddy scored direct hits on two merchant vessels, leaving them burning furiously, and inflicted severe damage on three other merchant vessels, one oil carrier and a torpedo boat. His superb flying skill contributed greatly to disruption of enemy supply lines. 🇺🇸



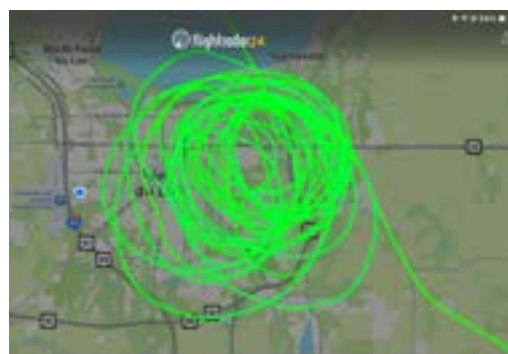
Longest Hold Time EVER For OSH Approach Cols Tom Walsh and Wanda Roberts

Col Colton Grey is new to the T-34. He and Col Riley Lorenz volunteered to cover the T-34's expenses (fuel) for the trip to Oshkosh. Colton flew the 34 to OSH while Riley flew it back to GA.

Due to traffic going into OSH, Colton was told by Air Traffic Controllers to “hold over Fon du Lac”.

Colton did exactly that! He held for ONE HOUR AND FORTY-FIVE MINUTES!!! Until low on fuel when he declared “min fuel” and was cleared to land.

When finally on the ground, Colton thought he was in trouble when an official approached him as he



Screenshot of Colton's hold pattern courtesy Col Tom Walsh

was buttoning up the airplane. Turns out, the official wanted to present him with a makeshift award for the longest hold time EVER for OSH approach.

Just another distinguished flying honor for ABG thanks to one very determined pilot! 🇺🇸

Join the Cast of Moonlight Swing

Col Chris Madrid

Airbase Georgia members—and their friends and family members—are invited to become part of the cast of **Moonlight Swing** on **Saturday, October 17**.

Moonlight Swing is being designed as an immersive 1945 experience, and our cast will help bring that world to life. We are looking for people interested in portraying military personnel, aircrew, mechanics, home-front civilians, hotel staff, reporters, and other period characters.

No acting or reenacting experience is required. Whether you have period attire and experience or simply want to participate and help create the atmosphere of the evening, there is a place for you in the cast.

Cast members will interact with guests and help create the feeling that they have stepped into an

elegant American hotel near a military airfield in late 1945. Cast members will have access to a dedicated hospitality tent with food and refreshments and, when their production responsibilities permit, are welcome to enjoy the music and join in the dancing.

Please note that dinner and table seating are reserved for sponsors, reserved-table guests, and individual ticket holders. Cast hospitality will be provided separately.

If you, a spouse, family member, or friend would like to help us **bring 1945 to life at Airbase Georgia**, we would love to have you join the cast.

Interested in joining the cast and making this event an outstanding evening? Please contact Col Marybeth Britton at marybeth.britton@airbasegeorgia.org. 🇺🇸



Our friends from Airbase Arizona generously donated their old PX trailer to ABG. Cols Mark Richards and Gerhard Franz work on arranging the interior to meet our needs. 🇺🇸



Photo courtesy Col Mike Daly



Photo courtesy Col Gerhard Frenz



Photo courtesy Col Charles Burcher

Fond du Lac Rides

Col Tom Walsh

Here are a few pictures of the ABG set up at the Fond du Lac airport, where we actually do the rides.

The picture of the decal of Craig Hutain is thanks to the air traffic controllers at Fond du Lac as they let us put the decal on the tower side that faces the runway and overlooks the area we do the rides from. This way, Craig is always watching over us. We have done the same at Reading, as he's also watching over us there. 🇺🇸



A Determined Young Man

Col Marybeth Britton

Ollie Young wanted to ride in one of our planes so much that he went out and did pressure-washing jobs to earn the money. He was overjoyed by his flight in the PT-19 with Col George Harrison. 🇺🇸



When the Warbird Movement Was Young

Air Classics, 1963

Today, seeing a restored P-51 Mustang, B-17 Flying Fortress, or Stearman at an air show can make it easy to assume that preserving historic military aircraft has always been an organized movement. In 1963, however, the movement we now call the **warbird community was still young**.

Many warbird enthusiasts trace the beginning of the modern movement to 1957 and the founding of the organization that became the Commemorative Air Force. Just six years later, the first issue of *Air Classics* offered a fascinating window into the aviation culture surrounding that emerging movement.

Its cover is immediately recognizable to aviation enthusiasts: a Stearman in flight, with a wing walker standing atop the upper wing. Inside, however, the magazine reflects an aviation history culture quite different from today's. World War I aircraft and aviators received significant attention. Historical photographs shared space with hand-drawn aircraft illustrations, profiles, and detailed three-view drawings—the tools enthusiasts used to understand aircraft in an era long before digital archives and online image collections.

This was aviation preservation before the modern warbird industry.

By 1963, World War II had ended only 18 years earlier. Thousands of military aircraft built for the war had already disappeared. Most had been scrapped. Others had entered civilian service as transports, agricultural aircraft, fire bombers, racers, or personal airplanes. Still others sat neglected at airports and storage fields.

To many Americans, these were simply obsolete machines.

But pilots, collectors, historians, mechanics, photographers, model builders, and aviation enthusiasts saw something different. They recognized



that these aircraft represented an important chapter of aviation history—and that if someone did not preserve them, they could disappear.

Interestingly, the preservation impulse extended well beyond World War II.

World War I aviation already seemed distant and romantic by the early 1960s. The pilots and aircraft of 1914–1918 represented aviation's pioneering age. Original aircraft were scarce, making grainy photographs, drawings, technical information, models, replicas, and surviving examples particularly valuable to enthusiasts.

The advertising in *Air Classics* reinforces that world. Readers could order books covering World War I fighters, World War II aircraft, military markings, aircraft camouflage, racing airplanes, and virtually every

(continued on page 21)

(continued from page 20)

category of historic aviation. **Information itself was collectible.**

That mattered.

Before internet searches, digitized archives, and enormous online photo collections, enthusiasts depended upon magazines, books, personal photographs, drawings, and one another. Publications such as *Air Classics* did more than entertain their readers. They documented aviation history and helped connect a growing community of people determined to preserve it.

During the decades that followed, organizations acquired aircraft. Individuals rescued airplanes destined for scrap. Volunteers learned forgotten maintenance and restoration skills. Museums expanded their collections. Air shows gave historic aircraft a public stage.

Preservation increasingly evolved from simply keeping old airplanes flying into restoring them accurately and interpreting the people and history surrounding them.

Sixty-three years later, that first issue of *Air Classics* is therefore more than an aviation collectible.

It captures a moment when America's historic military aircraft were transitioning from **obsolete equipment to artifacts worth preserving.**

The remarkable warbirds we see flying today survived because an earlier generation decided they mattered.

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On the horizon....

EVENT DATE	EVENT TIME	EVENT NAME
08/20/26	1700 - 2100	CAP GA-116 August Meeting
08/21 - 08/23/26	All Day	Joint Rides Event W/Music City Wing (P-51 & SBD)
08/29/26	All Day	Birmingham Joint Rides Day - Shelby County Airport (SBD, LT-6, T-34, PT-19)
09/08/26	1730 - 1930	ABG Advisory Committee Meeting
09/05/26	0930 1300	ABG Staff Meeting Membership Meeting
09/11 - 09/13/26	All Day	Show Me State Airshow (SBD)
09/12/26	1800 - 2300	Midwest Food Bank - Casino Night
09/12/26	All Day	Augusta, GA Rides Day (P-51, LT-6, T-34, PT-19)
09/13/26	1100 - 1700	FCDBA - Duplicate Bridge Game
09/17/26	1630 - 1930	PT-17 Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
09/19 - 09/20 /26	All Day	PDK Static & Rides (P-51, SBD, LT-6, T-34, PT-19)
09/25 - 09/27/26	All Day	Troup 201 Campout (Meeting Rm 9/26)
09/26/26	All Day	Macon, GA Rides Day (P-51, SBD, LT-6, T-34, PT-19)
10/01 - 10/05/26	All Day	TRARON FORMATION CLINIC - Carrollton, GA
10/02/26	1700 - 2100	Clothes Less Traveled
10/03/26	0930 1300	ABG Staff Meeting Membership Meeting
10/10/26	1600 - 2200	Christian Wilson Wedding & Reception
10/13/2026	1730 - 1930	ABG Advisory Committee Meeting
10/14 - 10/18/26	All Day	TVR Formation Clinic LT-6, T-34
10/17/26	1700 - 2200	ABG 250th Anniversary Hangar Dance & Auction
10/20/26	1100 - 1430	Daedalian Luncheon
10/24/26	TBD	Nilay Erocak Wedding & Reception
10/24/26	All Day	Pixell Mann Airshow - Gainesville, GA (T-6, T-34, PT-19)
10/24/26	All Day	Athens, GA Rides Day (P-51, SBD, LT-6)
10/29 - 11/01/26	All Day	Atlanta Airshow HQ & Daily Briefing Room
11/02/26	0900 - 1300	Flint Rising Leadership Forum
11/06/26	1800 - 2300	Denim & Diamonds (Shepherd's of the Meek)
11/03/26	0930 1300	ABG Staff Meeting Membership Meeting
11/07/26	All Day	Americus Celebrate America 250 (PT-19)
11/08/26	TBD	Phil's 104th Birthday Celebration
11/10/26	1730 - 1930	ABG Advisory Committee Meeting
11/12/26	1600 - 1900	Fayette Chamber Non-Profit Fair
11/14/26	0900 - 1600	Aviation Futures Day
11/20 - 11/22/26	0900 - 1800	GA Gun Shows LLLP
11/21 - 11/22 /26	All Day	ABG Rides Event - Falcon Field (P-51, SBD, LT-6, T-34, PT-19, Stearman)
12/05/26	0930 1300	ABG Staff Meeting Membership Meeting
12/12/2026	TBA	ABG Christmas Party