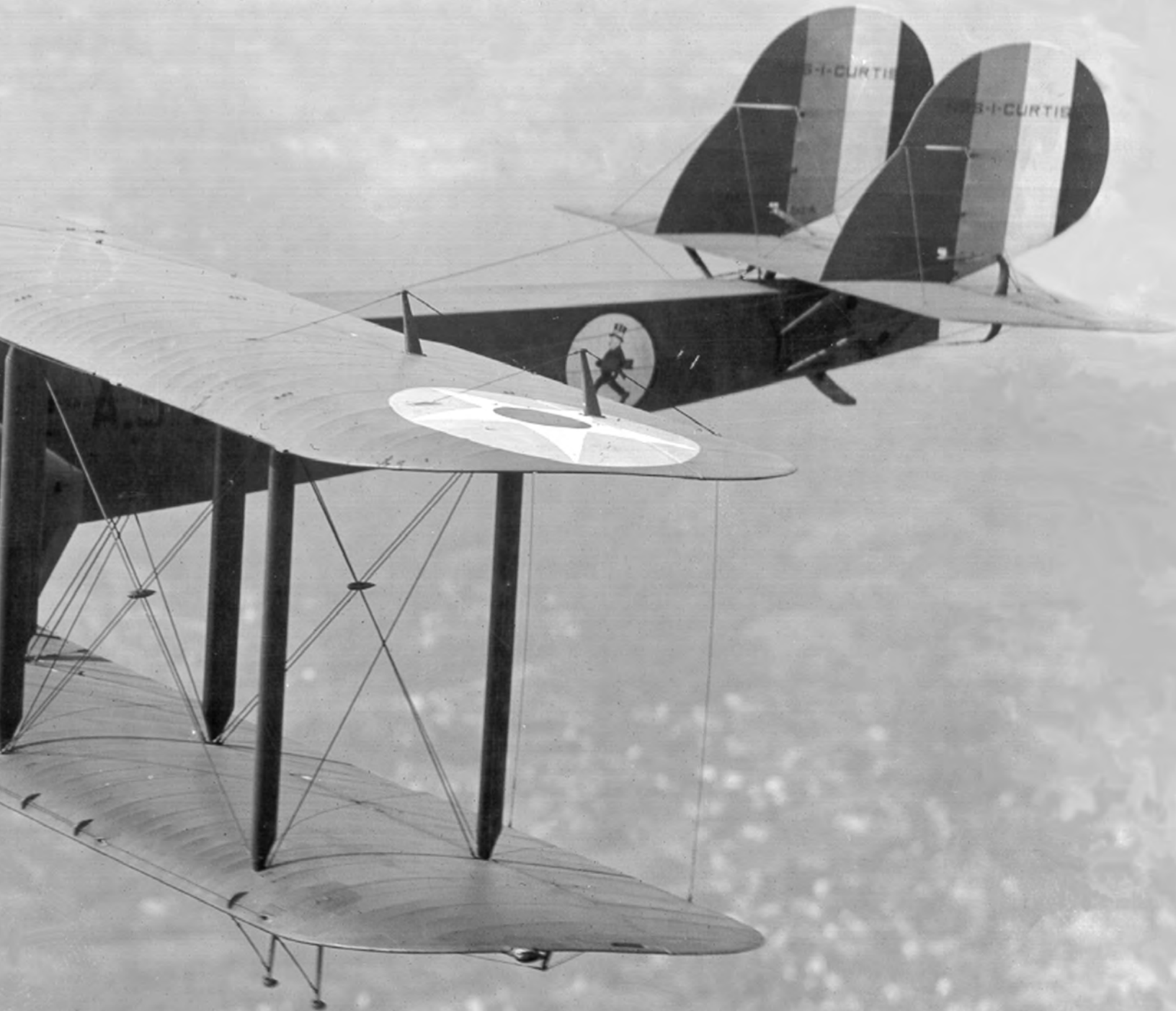


Keith Ferris Life, Flight and Art

Seventy-five Years of Air Force History



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As an Air Corps, Army Air Force and U. S. Air Force brat, born in Honolulu in the then Territory of Hawaii in May of 1929, I was to grow up through the 1930s and 1940s as eyewitness to the tremendous growth of air power and, you will see, because of my subsequent career, I have been able to closely observe Air Force history for seventy-five years.



My dad flew in the Air Force from September 1925 to September 1955. Think about this!

Imagine a flying career spanning aircraft from the World War I Curtiss Jenny and De Havilland DH-4, right up to the second generation of Air Force jets! My Dad's was the generation that built and led the force that won World War II and fought to create today's separate United States Air Force.

It has been a remarkable privilege to live at the center of all of this.

Let's look at some of the tremendous changes we've seen in my own lifetime.

My dad was a young lieutenant assigned to Luke Field which, prior to 1934, was located on the western side of Ford Island, opposite Battleship Row in the middle of Pearl Harbor.



Luke was Dad's first assignment following his September 1926 graduation from the Air Corps Advanced Flying School at Kelly Field, Texas.

Our quarters bordered the landing ground to the north of the hangars, so that aircraft were flown from grass only yards from our front steps.

Due to budget considerations, graduating flying cadets were given the option of being commissioned as second lieutenants in the Army Reserve and leaving the service, or staying in as rated flying cadets and continuing flying operations on private's pay plus flying pay at 50 percent of base pay.

My dad chose the rated flying cadet route and became the lowest ranking pilot at Luke until earning his Regular Army commission as a 2d lieutenant, effective January 23, 1927.



At Luke we had the large American-built single-engined 400-horse Liberty powered de Havilland DH-4M observation and close support aircraft.



Dad flew both the DHs and the single-engine Loening OA-1 amphibian (seen above). The Loening was flown in the air-sea rescue role throughout the Hawaiian Islands. Dad had many interesting adventures in this one.

We also had the twin-engine NBS-1 bomber (as seen on the opening spread of this article). It was the Curtiss-built version of the Martin MB-2 made famous only a few years earlier by Billy Mitchell, when he demonstrated the vulnerability of naval ships to air power off of Hampton Roads.



Not only were most of our airplanes of World War I vintage, but so were our vehicles, complete with their hard rubber tires as seen here in our motor pool.

With the low budgets of those days we were to see some of these vehicles well into the thirties.

**YOU COULD
LAND
AIRPLANES
JUST ABOUT
ANYWHERE
IN THOSE
DAYS**



You could land airplanes about anywhere in those days. They hauled all sorts of things in those airplanes....



Some horseshoes for a little recreation. You can see that they camped right out there amongst their airplanes.



...even set up headquarters in the field. Could the orderly be already asleep on the cot to the right?



My dad, Lt. C. I. Ferris, seen at his tent, shaving in the field with his parachute by his side.



The mess tent. Notice the boot pants, socks and all the strange combinations of clothing in the chow line.



The DH-4Ms served alongside their crews in the field.



The Officer's Club

These World War I-era DHs were remanufactured by Boeing with metal fuselage structures while still using the 400-hp Liberty engine. The last of the DHs were not retired until 1932.

When I was six months old, we moved from Honolulu to Kelly Field, Texas, to a wonderful life for six years on this grass flying field typical of the 1920s and early 1930's.



Those are Curtiss P-1s of the Pursuit Section of the Air Corps Advanced Flying School, while in the distance are Douglas O-2Hs of the Observation Section, Curtiss A-3s of the Attack Section and, at the far end, Keystone B-3s and B-5As of the Bombardment Section. Today's Lackland AFB sits atop that ridge in the background.



Our quarters were in the line seen to the right just opposite the pursuit section hangars with this Curtiss P-1B.

We lived in a bright, dusty, noisy world of aircraft engines, airplane dope and gasoline.



My dad was an instructor in the 43d School Squadron which made up the Pursuit Section of the school. All Air Corps flight training culminated in cadet introduction to combat type aircraft of one model or another at Kelly.

When we first arrived in 1929, the Pursuit Section flew the wonderful Curtiss P-1 Hawk. This was true until they were replaced by Boeing P-12Bs beginning in 1932. That flight line was a very enticing (and tightly supervised) playground for us dependent kids.

In April 1932, we began to receive the Boeing P-12, which was to gradually replace the P-1 in pursuit training. Behind the flight line, the base was only one block deep. Between the hangars you can see the cadet barracks beyond the newly arrived P-12B.



The P-12B was a wonderful aircraft, loved by all who flew her. It became one of my all time favorite aircraft and remains so today. This P-12B, seen in May 1932, flown by Curley Lawson, one of my dad's fellow instructors. The 43d Squadron insignia has yet to be completed. The bold stripe behind the cockpit appeared on P-12s flown by instructor pilots.



Living right across the street from the flight line, I was able to meet visiting aircraft as they parked in front of the "Visiting Ship" hangar, just west of the last pursuit section hangar across the street from our quarters. I would quiz the crews, learning type of aircraft and where it was based.

ONE DAY MY DAD CAME HOME FROM THE FLIGHT LINE ACROSS THE STREET, BLEEDING FROM HIS LEFT HAND AND FACE



The young Ferris at age four, pictured with a visiting Douglas Y1B-7 belonging to the 31st BS of the 7th BG., en route to its base at March Field, Riverside, California, from the 1933 exercises held at Fort Knox, Kentucky.



Dad leads formation of instructors and students in 1933.



He debriefs the formation flight with his students.



“Farmer’s Nightmare” is my 1990 painting of my dad in his P-12 #2 with two students in a farmer’s field in 1932. It depicts a day remembered from my childhood at Kelly.

On this day my dad came home for lunch from the flight line across the street. He was bleeding from his left hand and face. An understanding of the Pursuit Section curriculum will be helpful here.



New students had arrived at Kelly from primary flight training at Brooks Field, having flown two seat PT-1 trainers, powered by the 180-horsepower Wright-built Hispano.

If assigned to the pursuit section, students were faced with transitioning to the single-seat Boeing P-12 fighter, powered by a 450-horsepower Pratt & Whitney Wasp engine.

The first week of the training syllabus was spent learning to take off and land this much more powerful aircraft solo on the wing of an instructor in a second P-12.

The second week of the syllabus included formation flying and strange field landing practice. This would involve three-ship flights of one instructor and two students in P-12s, fanning out in all directions from Kelly.

On this particular day, my dad, the instructor had spotted a likely area for safe emergency landing, wagged his wings and gave his students the cut signal. The students chopped the power, selected a suitable farmer’s field, and landed into the wind, followed closely behind by the instructor.

Having taxied back to the approach end of the field, and out of the student’s way in a corner of the fenced field, my dad began to notice daylight through the fabric at the side of the cockpit and that his hand was bleeding. Over the noise of those individually exhaust-stacked Wasp engines, he had failed to hear the sound of the angry farmer firing at him with his shot gun!

The students, being unaware of this, took their time in take-off preparations as the farmer continued to shoot at dad’s trapped P-12. Dad followed the students as they climbed out of range of the farmer while above, he saw instructor George Price give the cut signal for three more P-12s to land in this farmers field. These routine practice landings were soon halted as more and more farmers were reimbursed for damage to crops.

Air Force folks know that families are part of squadrons. Our families were part of the 43d School Squadron.

We had the same vested interest in the success and safety of the squadron then as Air Force families do today.



This is my kindergarten class. You will note the 43d School Squadron patch on our little airplane. I am the student behind the tail with the boots and sweater. The little blonde girls are my two sisters, identical twins, joining us from the nursery school

**THE LIST OF
FACULTY
AND STUDENTS IN
THE 1935-
1936 CLASS
OF THE AIR
CORPS TACTICAL
SCHOOL
READS LIKE
A WHO'S
WHO OF AIR
FORCE HISTORY**



About thirty years later I created this painting for the Air Force art collection. The Air Force thinks this is titled "Pursuit Section Instructors, Kelly Field, 1932." (Those are actually the 43d Pursuit Squadron Kindergarten Fathers!)

After six years on that flight line at Kelly, we left for Maxwell and the 1935-36 class of the Air Corps Tactical School.

The list of students and instructors was made up of a virtual Who's Who in Air Force history. I know that in our childhood we were yet to understand the importance of Maxwell, the Air Corps Tactical School, and those around us who would make that history.

The list of instructors includes names such as future Flying Tiger leader Maj. Claire Chennault, Maj. Emil Kiel and Byron "Hungry" Gates, Capt. Odas Moon and Gordon Saville, Lt. Laurence Kuter, and Haywood "Possum" Hansell.

Among the seventy students were Maj. Ira Eaker, William Kepner, Edgar Sorenson, Capt. K. B. Wolfe, Harry Halverson, Nathan Twining, Homer Ferguson, Dale Gaffney, K.B. Wolfe, Benjamin Chidlaw and Ralph Snavely. Lt. Elwood "Pete" Quesada and my father Carlisle I. Ferris were also ACTS students.

The Ferris children grew up in the middle of the controversy over future Air Corps doctrine. Advocates of strategic bombardment were arrayed against those supporting the traditional pursuit, attack and observation missions. We kids listened to this historic discussion almost every night as parents and friends reviewed the day's subject matter.

In June 1936, the ACTS class moved almost en masse from Montgomery to the United States Army Command & General Staff School (C&GSS) located at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

The Eakers, Georges, Sorensons, Kepners, Fergusons, Halversons, Kiels and Quesadas were with us. We also had Col. Lewis Brereton and family, Maj. Joe Cannon and Maj. Dale Gaffney. Our next door neighbors in the "Beehive," the student family apartment building, were future Air Force Chief of Staff, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Capt. Nathan Twining and his wife, Maud.

My dad and Pete Quesada were now captains. These two shared back-to-back regular army serial numbers 0-16730 and 0-16731. Announcement of their subsequent assignments appeared next to

one another in the Army-Navy Journal until the advent of the United States Air Force.

Field exercises at C&GSS included reconnaissance on horseback. To the Air Corps contingent, accustomed to aerial observation, this seemed archaic.

Airmen did not take well to horseback riding, nor the time and discomfort this involved.

The obsolescence of cavalry reconnaissance was all the more evident as the airmen maintained their flight proficiency, using aircraft flown off of the grass airfield just beyond the Cavalry horse barns.

The Air Corps officers, in the class of 1937, revolted against wearing the required Cavalry-era boots and boot pants uniform, ordering straight legged trousers of proper material from local tailors to replace lower part of the uniform.

On graduation from C&GSS in June 1937, the Ferris's moved on to March Field, California, where dad was assigned as operations officer and deputy commander of the 30th Bombardment Squadron, 19th Bomb Group and later, post adjutant.



The 19th Bomb Group was equipped with the Douglas B-18 which was a player in the politics of the ongoing strategic bombing controversy.

The twin-engine B-18 was less expensive than its four-engine B-17 competitor and, with its shorter range, was considered less threatening to the Navy in the argument over Army-Navy roles and missions.

We did have the Norden bombsight, which was evident to us kids by the conspicuous inclusion of armed guards when it was being moved to and from the aircraft.

My first flight ever was on my tenth birthday at March Field in the newer B-18A.

Memory tells me that at this time the entire Army Air Corps consisted of little more than 1,600 officers and 16,000 enlisted men.

The war came and Air Corps officers of the 1920s and 1930s moved on to build and lead the massive aerial force which was to overwhelm our World War II enemies.

Many of these experienced leaders were to be engaged in building the huge flying and technical training effort which provided the trained manpower for that force.

In 1942, my dad built and commanded the BT-13 equipped basic flying school at Coffeyville, Kansas, before moving on in 1943 to Fort Worth, Texas, where he commanded Tarrant Field, later known as Carswell AFB. Tarrant was a B-24 transition school with seventy B-24s assigned.



IN THOSE DAYS IT WAS THE COMMANDER'S WIFE AND THE CHAPLAIN WHO BROKE THE NEWS TO THE SURVIVORS OF THE DECEASED

The commander's family, my mom, myself, two sisters and our younger brother, were the only dependents on the base, so those B-24s, personnel and daily operations became the center of our lives for that year.

During our year at Fort Worth, I believe we lost eleven B-24s in training accidents. We were personally very much affected by these accidents, especially the three or four that occurred right on the base. I remember my dad's shoes being perpetually stained by oil and aviation fuel.

Most accidents involved the loss of two student officers, an instructor and a flight engineer, many of them had spouses or family living in the local area.



In those days it was the commander's wife and the Chaplain who broke the news to the local survivors.

This took a terrible toll on my mother, the commander's wife, Virginia Brecht Ferris whose hair began to turn to gray at thirty-eight years of age.

I doubt that the general public realizes or appreciates the integral and very important part played by military wives in support of military units and in the defense of our country.

Many interesting and distinguished visitors passed through Fort Worth in those days. Navy Admiral "Bull" Halsey, of World War II fame, made a refueling stop at Tarrant Field on his way from the Pacific to Washington. The admiral and a

marine general arrived on short notice and were greeted by my dad, seen on the right in the photo above right. The admiral announced that he was very interested in B-24 combat crew training that many of the pilots who had conducted the recent

attack on the oil refineries at Ploesti, Rumania, had received right here at Fort Worth.



Admiral Halsey was most impressed as dad was able to introduce Ploesti veteran instructor pilots who provided first hand information on B-24 combat operations.



The three Ploesti veteran instructors did a superb job of demonstrating B-24 low level tactics, while at Fort Worth.

Afterwards, the admiral responded to his visit with a very complimentary handwritten thank you note. About a month later, dad received orders to the Army-Navy Staff College, followed by assignment to the Pacific where he served on Admiral Nimitz's staff as an air force planning officer in Honolulu and then forward as Admiral Nimitz's headquarters moved to Guam for the remainder of the war.

A lot of people ask why, growing up in the middle of all of this, did I not pursue a career in the United States Air Force. I had never considered anything else.

I entered Texas A&M in 1946 with the goal of earning an Air Force commission on graduation, after which I hoped to go to pilot training.

Assigned first to B Troop Cavalry, I moved over to the first of the Air Force ROTC units as it was established at the beginning of the second semester at the beginning of 1947.

Between my freshman and sophomore years in 1947, my home was Randolph Field, in San Antonio, where my dad was assigned as Deputy

**I HAD BEEN
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AIRPLANES
SINCE I WAS
FIVE YEARS
OLD**

Chief of Staff for Personnel for Flying Division, Air Training Command. This was a very tough time to be in the personnel business. It proved difficult to keep required slots filled at a time when personnel could depart the service almost at will.



Randolph's Taj Mahal seen in all its glory in 1947.

For a summer job, I became a civil service apprentice artist with the Air Force Training Publications unit, at Randolph.

I had been drawing airplanes since I was five years old at Kelly. I had found it was easier to draw those visiting airplanes than to verbally report their details to my dad, who had been in the air during their visits.

This summer job was to prove a valuable opportunity for me. I was able to begin learning graphic arts, creating line drawings and diagrams for publication, even silk screening the basic flying manual cover by hand.



My drawing board was located in the art department upstairs in one of those two story World War II barracks right on the flight line at the south end of Randolph's East Stage

When the United States Air Force became a separate service in 1947, an open house was planned for Friday, August 1st to celebrate "Air Force Day."

As A-26s, B-25s, P-51s, P-47s, and B-29s began to arrive, we didn't pay much attention, since we were so used to these. But as I was sitting there at my drawing table, suddenly the barracks shook with a "whump-whump," followed by a sound we had not heard before. I ran out on the little balcony and arcing up into the sky were two magnificent gray fighters carrying fuel tanks mounted at their wingtips. After landing, they taxied those airplanes in and parked them right out in front of our barracks.



I nearly jumped out of my skin! Those brand new mouse gray Lockheed P-80s were absolutely beautiful. By comparison with the piston-engined fighters we were used to, these appeared to fly, climb and maneuver without effort.

Asking myself if I really wanted to wait three more years to fly airplanes, I immediately visited the School of Aviation Medicine and a flight surgeon who had served with the Ferris's for years. I wanted to know if I would physically qualify for flight training as an aviation cadet.

The flight surgeon reminded me that I had an extreme allergy to egg protein and tetanus antitoxin and that this would prevent me from receiving many of the shots required by the military. He informed me that that I would never be able to serve in the Air Force! I had suddenly been "drafted" into life as a civilian!

I finished that summer with the publications unit, returning to A&M for another semester of aeronautical engineering while continuing to dream of flight. Using brush, lampblack and water I found I could live my dreams through art.



Continuing to dream of flying jets, I returned to Randolph's Training Publications unit to remain close to the Air Force. I subsequently moved on for some art schooling .

I was later to serve for five years with a St. Louis art studio, which competed for Air Force Publications contracts. When it was found that I was the only person in the studio who understood and could speak the Air Force "language," I was put in charge of the studio's Air Force contracts and acted as studio liaison with the Air Force. I was the art director selecting artists, and relaying instructions and details to the artists. I was also the technical advisor responsible for the accuracy and artistic integrity of all art created by the studio for the Air Force.



Typical work was this Instrument Flying Manual.

PEGGY AND I DECIDED THAT IF WE WERE TO USE MY AVIATION BACKGROUND TO THE FULLEST, WE WERE GOING TO HAVE TO LEAVE HER LIFELONG HOME TOWN, ST. LOUIS

I was “home” again, working with and for the Air Force.

In addition to my Air Force contract duties, I was production manager of the studio, handling such solid accounts as Brown Shoe Company, Anheuser Busch, Monsanto Chemical, and Ralston Purina.

Of course I still wanted to fly. So, soon after our 1953 marriage, my wife Peggy and I were both taking flying lessons at a club flying “tail draggers”; a Piper J-3 Cub, a Luscombe 8E Silivair, and a Cessna 140.



The painting depicts my first solo in the J-3. I had amassed the grand total of 11.5 hours with two solo flights, when the Air Force decided to close its central publications unit in St. Louis to let the various commands create their own training publications. The studio’s Air Force contracts were gone and without them my ties to the service had vanished once again.

Even though I was still gainfully employed as the studio production manager, Peggy and I decided that, if I were going to be able to use my aviation background and knowledge to its fullest, we were going to have to leave St. Louis.

A study of the aerospace industry indicated that its manufacturing facilities were located mostly on the west coast, some were in the east, and we knew that there was one right there in St. Louis.

However, I had no intention of becoming an internal corporate artist working with a single company’s products.

I preferred to work for them all on a freelance basis.

We noted the number of aerospace industry headquarters concentrated in and around Rockefeller Center in New York, and also noted the fact that their advertising agencies were located close by on Madison Avenue.

The decision to drop everything and start over in a new city was a difficult and frightening one, especially for Peggy whose only home had been in St. Louis. But it was obvious that the move was necessary for our success.

So we sold our little house, put our furniture in storage and, with a one-year-old baby, no job and only one acquaintance in the New York area to call upon for advice, we started our drive east to find our future.

We had to locate a place to live, retrieve our furniture, and begin to put bread on the table. I began calling on advertising agencies with aerospace accounts, and soon received freelance assignments from Curtiss Wright, Sperry, and Aircraft Radio Corporation.



This *Aviation Week* montage is typical of Ferris line drawings of the period. These were special issue space sales ads and sales pieces used by the magazines space salesmen.



These are typical Ferris two-color advertising illustrations of the period. They were created using both blue and black for Sperry Phoenix advertising.



This is a Paris Air Show space sales ad for *Aviation Week* which was an early client and remains so to this day.

Although almost all assignments were aviation oriented, every so often I found myself required to depict things far from aviation to help art directors working next to my aerospace account art directors.

About this time I received a phone call from someone at the Society of Illustrators in New York informing me that I had been nominated to become a member of this famous art organization. The Society of Illustrators is the premier, professional organization for illustrators, now over 100 years old.

Members have included such great artists as Charles Dana Gibson, of “Gibson Girl” fame, James Montgomery Flagg, creator of the World War I Uncle Sam “I Want You!” poster, and Norman Rockwell, who was still living and a member when I joined this august group in May 1960.

I was unaware at the time, but coinciding with my becoming an SI member, the May 1960 issue of *National Geographic* magazine featured an article by General Curtis LeMay, then Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, entitled: “Artists Roam the World of the U. S. Air Force.” The article featured the artistic results of a program that began over fifty years ago, under which the Air Force has teamed with the Society of Illustrators in New York. Professional illustrators were invited to travel and fly with the Air Force in order to document the service’s mission world-wide, through art.

The most famous names in American illustration were to be found traveling with the Air Force to all parts of the world, donating time and paintings to the Air Force Art Collection, which today has grown to over, 8,500 works of art. This collection contains spectacular art depicting all aspects and periods of Air Force life as viewed by professional artists.

Over the years, the program has expanded to include members of the Societies of Illustrators of Los Angeles and San Francisco, and later the Midwest,

Southwest, and Northwest Air Force Artist groups. Artists selected by the chairmen of the Air Force Art societies, travel as guests of the Secretary of the Air Force. They are paid only per diem and travel expenses. The artist’s income usually stops when the artist leaves the drawing board. The artist then donates the time for travel and the creation of the art, as well as the original art itself to the Air Force, along with specific reproduction rights for government purposes only.

One could easily wonder why an artist would do this? I had no idea this program existed when, out of the blue, in May 1961, I received a phone call from the renowned aerospace artist Bob McCall, then Air Force Art chairman of the Society of Illustrators. He asked if I would participate in a 7.5 hour B-52 training mission from Westover Air Force Base, Massachusetts.

You can imagine my reaction and immediate response!

I flew that mission, followed by a four-hour KC-135 ride refueling B-52s and was absolutely thrilled! Most important, of course, was that I was “home” once more!

I had been around orders all my life. As I studied those orders, I recognized that orders like these were going to allow me to fly after all!



In May 1963, I was invited to visit Randolph AFB to cover the T-38 Instructor Pilot School as an artist. The Instructor Pilot, Capt. John Lynch, greeted me by handing me the T-38 Dash-1 Flight Handbook. My reaction was: “Wait a minute, you’re flying this airplane!” “No,” he replied, “How many hours have you got?”



When I admitted to eleven and a half hours of tail dragger light plane time, He said, “You’re fully qualified!”

So we discussed the upcoming mission in earnest, he checked me out in the airplane and I found myself fly-

I RECEIVED A PHONE CALL FROM SOMEONE AT THE SOCIETY OF ILLUSTRATORS ... I HAD BEEN NOMINATED TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THIS FAMOUS ART ORGANIZATION

ing the first ride in the T-38 Instructor Pilot School syllabus! John made the formation take off so I could take pictures during the first portion of the flight.



Note how early in the T-38's career this was. The aircraft on Randolph's East Stage beyond are all still T-33s.

I was to fly the airplane for the rest of the flight.

Activities included talking me through the shutting down of one engine in flight, cycling the gear, and restarting the engine. I practiced supersonic climb and investigated control in slow speed and high-G flight. John was a terrific instructor for I was able perform all he asked. I positioned our T-38 for the break and, on my first ride, made three touch-and-go landings and the full stop landing.

As I taxied that T-38 back to our parking spot, I could not help but remember those old barracks at the south end of the flightline, the arrival of those beautiful mouse gray P-80s for that 1947 Air Force Day.

As we unzipped our G-suits, I asked John for a copy of the IP School syllabus, for I was scheduled to have a look at Undergraduate Pilot Training operations the following week at Webb AFB in Midland, Texas.

Preparing for my Webb T-38 flight, I asked the T-38 instructor pilot, Capt. Jerry Welch, to keep his G-suit on because I would like to fly the number two Randolph IP School syllabus ride, the aerobatic ride! This was greeted with a huge grin. We found a G-suit and I did well on the aerobatic flight. I have not been the same since!

I also had an opportunity to fly the T-37 at Webb. I was particularly impressed with its spin characteristics! I decided that it was important to capture in a painting that most important moment in the life of the student.



The T-37 is featured in "Solo Student over the Numbers".



T-38 training was impressive and Webb T-38s are featured in my Air Force Art painting "Texas Talons Turning Final."



In November 1963, I found myself airborne in an F-100F on another Air Force Art assignment. I was in the back seat of Thunderbird 8 with Lt. Col. Bill Alden, the Thunderbird commander. Having met the Thunderbirds at Craig AFB, Selma, Alabama, I was returning at the end of a show tour with the team to their home base at Nellis AFB.

I spent a week documenting the Thunderbirds after the cross-country flight, flying a training mission in the slot after having helped replace the J57 engine and afterburner on the F-100F over our arrival weekend.

Flying with slot pilot Maj. Paul Kauttu in the F-100F was a real thrill. I found that he nearly dragged his left wingtip on the runway as we moved across underneath to place my head right between the wingtips of two wingmen in the diamond on take-off.



I found that most of the show is flown looking right up the tailpipe of the lead as seen in my Air Force painting, "View From The Slot." Paul's vertical stabilizer was black with soot right down to the top of the fuselage.

AS I TAXIED THAT T-38 BACK TO OUR PARKING SPOT, I COULD NOT HELP BUT REMEMBER THE ARRIVAL OF THOSE BEAUTIFUL MOUSE GRAY P-80S FOR THAT 1947 AIR FORCE DAY.



The photo was taken during the changeover from Trail to Diamond formation, while returning to the practice show line on “Thunderbird” Dry Lake, their then training area north of Las Vegas.



“Thunderbird Take Off” is my two-foot by eight-foot Air Force Art painting, attempting to convey the feeling of that thundering four-ship takeoff at Nellis in 1963.

I traveled to Europe with the Thunderbirds for their 1965 tour and have remained close to the Thunderbirds ever since. It did not take long before I found myself returning to Nellis regularly for Thunderbird reunions.

I turned these reunion visits into Air Force Art assignments with the concurrence of Tactical Air Command headquarters. I would arrive at Nellis a week early with mission numbers to fly with each of the weapons schools.



By this time I had my own helmet and had painted my visor cover with each aircraft type I had flown myself and had depicted in a Ferris painting already in the Air Force Collection.

My 1967 visit to the F-4 Weapons School found me flying with FWS Instructor Pilot, Maj. Duke John-

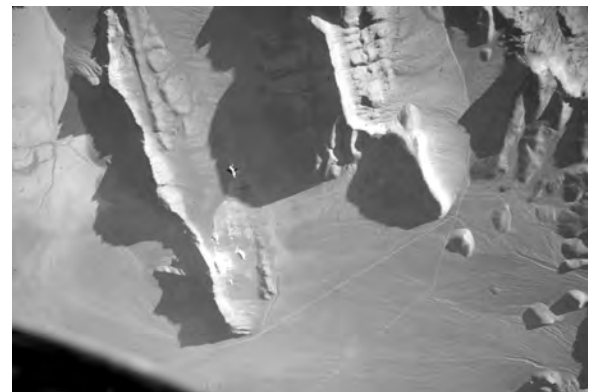
ston against his opponent and fellow instructor, Maj. Al Logan.



Duke and I are climbing out on Al Logan’s wing en route to the air-to-air ranges for a bit of two-ship ACM over the high desert north of Las Vegas.



The “killer” himself, would-be fighter pilot “Walter Mitty” Ferris!



We were descending on the backside of a vertical rolling scissors. Those of you who have tried this will remember that the absolute deadline in this maneuver is the ground. The first adversary to break it off gets shot.!

WITH THE CONCURRENT OF TACTICAL AIR COMMAND HEAD-QUARTERS. I WOULD ARRIVE AT NELLIS A WEEK EARLY WITH MISSION NUMBERS TO FLY WITH EACH OF THE WEAPONS SCHOOLS



Al reluctantly played the "loser" in this canned engagement.



The experience of a lifetime! The Ferris dream come true!

I WAS TO SPEND ABOUT EIGHT WEEKS OVER A TWENTY-FIVE YEAR PERIOD COVERING THE TACTICAL EMPLOYMENT OF FIGHTER AIRCRAFT FROM THE F-100 TO THE F-15 AND F-16



And back to happy hour! Duke was embarrassed to open the formation enough for me to take this one!

I was to spend about eight weeks over a 25-year period covering the tactical employment of Nellis based aircraft including the F-100, the F-4, the F-105, the F-111, the Aggressor T-38, the F-5B, the Wild Weasel F-105 and have spent time with both the F-15 and F-16 Weapons Schools.

My flying experience over the years has proved a key element in my career. It has driven my approach to art and has been a most valuable asset in all of my work.



I call this one "the view from the best restaurant in the world!"



In 1967, I volunteered for and graduated from Tactical Air Command's Deep Sea Survival School conducted at Homestead AFB and Turkey Point, Florida. After a bit more F-4 time, I had filled enough squares to deploy across the Pacific. In November 1968 I deployed as a civilian back seater with the 40th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Eglin's F-4E operational test and evaluation unit. We were to replace veteran F-105s with new F-4Es in the 469th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Korat, Thailand.



You can't buy this kind of flying time!



For my painting "Bad News For Uncle Ho" I had decided to record the impression of just hanging out there hour after hour in the high altitude sun, drifting up and down over the vast Pacific, while other members of our cell, tankers, and F-4Es were spread out across the skyscape.

THERE ARE 40 GUYS OVER THE PACIFIC TODAY AND NOT ONE OF US HAS EVER BEEN SHOT AT. THOSE THUD DRIVERS WE ARE REPLACING IN THE 469TH TFS HAVE OVER 40,000 HOURS OVER NORTH VIETNAM.

FROM UNDER MY WING CAME THIS GENTLEMAN IN A WHITE VEST MARKED WITH A CROSS AND WORDS WHICH READ VATICAN TECH REP II

There again you see the artist in the back seat. The pilot is fellow Texas Aggie, and dear friend, Maj. Paul Lemming, who somehow drew this civilian as his GIB, (“Guy-In-Back”), for the Hickam-to-Anderson, and Anderson-to-Korat legs of the trip.

Was it coincidence they had put the two Texas Aggies in the same airplane?

As we were over the South China Sea, I asked Paul what his thoughts were at that point.

He answered: “Well, you know there are 40 guys here over the Pacific today and not one of us has ever been shot at before.” And he continued: “When we land at Korat, we will be replacing the F-105’s of the 469th Tac Fighter Squadron. Those Thud drivers have flown 40,000 hours over North Vietnam. I’m just wondering what kind of reception we’re going to get from them when we arrive with these F-4Es.”

The Korat reception was a beauty! Beginning with the parade of vehicles forming at the end of the runway (which prevented the exit onto the taxi way for all twenty F-4Es). We were subjected to a flat-bed trailer base tour lined with water buckets and fire hoses. At the Korat Officer’s Open Mess, it was even wetter! First, refreshments, and then it was everyone in the pool. The 105 folks apparently had forgotten that there are two F-4 guys for every F-105 pilot. They joined us in the pool.



It took less than twenty-four hours to get the combat markings onto the airplanes and weapons loaded and the arming crews were pulling the down-lock pins and arming those M117s.



Out from under my wing came this gentleman in a white vest with black cross and words which read “Vatican Tech Rep II.” He was a chaplain, Capt. Gene Gasparovic of Paterson, New Jersey. I was told that Korat never launched a strike without one of the chaplains in the arming area. Father Gasparovic was later to serve as the Air Force’s chief Catholic chaplain recruiter.



They look a bit more lethal when armed up and going to war.



I also flew with the Wild Weasels of the 44th Tactical Fighter squadron at Korat. Getting to know and flying with these folks was a rewarding experience all of its own!



Wild Weasels John Revak and Stan Goldstein return from their 100th mission over North Vietnam.

These new friends were on their way home to the States where we have remained in touch ever since.

I was to fly with Capt. George Connolly on the last day of my stay at Korat.



The happy artist after F-105 mission, exclaiming “Sierra Hotel Korat!”



My Wild Weasel painting is entitled “Big Brass Ones” and depicts pilot, Maj. John Revak and electronic warfare officer Maj. Stan Goldstein, in their F-105F “Crown Seven.” The painting honors John and Stan for their 100 missions over North Vietnam, the Wild Weasel mission, and the service of the F-105F and G Wild Weasel aircraft. The painting is part of the Air Force Art Collection.



“Linebacker in the Buff”) is my Air Force Art painting honoring B-52D 55-094 in which I came out of Southeast Asia via U Tapao on a bombing mission on November 27, 1968. We dropped 108 MK 82 500-pound bombs on North Vietnam’s Mu Gia Pass, recovering 7 hours and 40 minutes later on Guam for one North Vietnam combat “counter.” I was privileged to spend several hours manually flying 094 from the right seat en route to Anderson.

I CAME OUT OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA ON A B-52 BOMBING MISSION, RECOVERING ON GUAM ON NOVEMBER 27, 1968

I proceeded home from Guam on a KC-135 “Young Tiger” returning to the states in early December. I had been away from my drawing board for over a month.

My B-52D, 094, continued to fly combat through Linebacker II in December 1972 and retired in the 1980s. Today she sits proudly on display at McConnell AFB, exhibiting much body putty, revealing repaired wounds received from a surface-to-air missile over Hanoi.

In 1980, the Air Force Association published the 1980 Keith Ferris Military Aviation Calendar. One of the images was a Ferris painting of the brand new operational F-16 then flying at Hill Air Force Base.



As soon as that calendar found its way to onto the desk of Tactical Air Command commander Gen. Bill Creech, he asked his executive officer, Lt. Col. Joe Ralston, to give me a call asking when I was going to paint an F-16 painting to go with the Ferris Air Force Art F-15 painting “Air Superiority, Blue” already hanging at TAC headquarters at Langley.

I replied: “Joe, tell your boss...when I’ve had a chance to fly the airplane!”



So, on April 22, 1980, I was the first civilian, outside of the of General Dynamics test force, to fly in the F-16.



The F-16 proved to be quite an airplane! This was our take-off and climb out from Hill en route to our training area beyond the Great Salt Lake.

ON APRIL 22, 1980, I WAS THE FIRST CIVILIAN OUTSIDE OF THE OF GENERAL DYNAMICS TEST FORCE, TO FLY IN THE F-16



Pop-Up delivery



The target seen on roll in from pop-up.



I had survived another one! I flew with Lt. Col. Paul Rost, commander, 34th TFS at Hill AFB, Utah. He had me try my hand at supersonic flight, wing work to area, head-on intercept of our wingman and basic fighter maneuver engagement, confidence maneuvers, slow flight, aerobatics and it took me three tries to get all the way around for my nine-G turn! We participated in a low-level split pop attack on a target west of the great salt lake.

A terrific mission and I learned that flying the F-16 can be an exhausting exercise!

Thanks to the late TAC Commander, General Creech for this opportunity.

The painting resulting from that mission was delivered to General Creech after having been sidetracked for a year as it hung in the office of Secretary of the Air Force Verne Orr.



The resulting painting is "Sunrise Encounter."

Fighter pilots will recognize the F-16's lag roll to position it behind two Aggressor F-5Es down below. Weapons School graduates and Red Flag veterans will recognize the Nellis live ordnance ranges south-east of Tonopah, Nevada, as the setting for the painting.

I was to get quite a bit of F-16 time over the years, flying with fighter wings at Kunsan Air Base, Korea, Torrejon Air Base in Spain, and the F-16 Weapons School at Nellis.



At age 71, long after many Air Force friends with whom I had flown had retired, I found myself in a 4th Fighter Wing F-15E off of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. I was involved in five six-G engagements between two F-15Es representing MiG-29s and two F-15Es defending the coast. I found I could still handle the Gs!



The resulting painting is entitled: "Nowhere to Hide," a tribute to the Strike Eagle's tremendous capabilities. As you might suspect, I've spent many

more hours in airlifters than in fighters over the years, and some of my most rewarding hours included a 1989 trip via Honolulu to Pago Pago, American Samoa, and Christ Church, New Zealand, en route to the U. S. National Science Foundation base on McMurdo Sound in Antarctica.

THE KILLER WHALE CIRCLES UNDERNEATH THE ICE AND IDENTIFYING HIS PREY ABOVE, COMES CRASHING UP THROUGH THE ICE, SNAPPING PENGUINS RIGHT OUT OF THE AIR!



As I was talking to my new friends, the penguins, the locally-based Navy helicopter pilot asked if I knew of the biggest threat the penguin faced in Antarctica. When I told him I did not, he said: "It's the Orca!" The Killer Whale circles underneath the ice and identifying his prey above, comes crashing up through the ice, snapping penguins right out of the air!

He added: "Do you know what you look like right now?"

You just can't tap dance high enough to avoid a problem like that!



The Air Force Art painting documenting that mission is entitled: "Inspection Party." The little party around the nose of our C-141 thought that we were supposed to be the "Inspection Party" but I could not resist portraying the penguins which populate McMurdo.

This is my forty-fourth year of heavy involvement in the Air Force Art program.

I have served all of those years on the Society of Illustrators Air Force Art Committee, serving for sixteen years as its chairman, selecting artists for Air Force art tours and since as honorary chairman, assisting chairmen in their duties as needed.

There are now fifty-five major Ferris paintings in the Air Force Art Collection.



We have certainly come a long way since the retirement of the NBS-1 at my birth. It has been a real privilege to have lived and participated in the history of these years.

Our 1956 decision to relocate and pursue a career as self employed freelance artist concentrating on the advertising, public relations and publications needs of the aerospace industry, publishers, the military and of aviation and space museums was vindicated. My fifty year list of commercial clientele has included almost every major airframe, engine and avionics manufacturer in the United States, with a number of foreign clients as well. Our income has come from the sale of reproduction rights in my art to clients, sale of original art, and from the sale of reproductions of the many Ferris works that have been published in limited and open edition print and poster form.

While I have never found the time to earn my private pilot's license, I have certainly been able to more than fulfill my dream of military flight. I am grateful to the Air Force and the Air Force Art Program for granting me the opportunity to convey flight and Air Force history through art.

I have been able to serve after all!



"Have G-Suit, Will Travel!" The artist with F-4E 67-268

Those interested in further information on the artist and his work, in viewing his studio, and seeing a gallery of his original paintings and prints, may visit the Ferris web site at: www.keithferrisart.com ■