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The SMF’s Diorama Of Kimpo AB
With so many exciting museum projects on the horizon, visitors will often ask about our museum’s roots. Hence, I wanted to take this opportunity to share some information about the museum’s identity.

With the approach of the centennial celebration of the city of Birmingham in the mid 1960s, a civic committee began working on projects that would tell the story of the first 100 years of the City of Birmingham. Mrs. Mary Alice Beatty, who, with her husband Donald Beatty, had been pioneers in the establishment of the first airline routes and bases in Central and South America, felt that the Aviation History of Birmingham should be included in these projects.

The Committee’s goal was to establish a regional air museum, to be called the Southeastern Museum of Aviation, and Mrs. Beatty was placed in charge of the project with $400 appropriated for expenses. Using the Beatty’s own collection of memorabilia as a basis, in 1966 she established the first displays in six display cases. Samford University offered space for the displays, which, by that time, was called the Birmingham Museum of Aviation. The displays remained at Samford for three years, during which time Mrs. Beatty was the curator. Mrs. Beatty then moved the displays to a location closer to the airport, using the main lobby of the Birmingham Airport Motel, which stood at the location of the present short-term parking deck across the street from the old terminal.

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held in 1978 at the museum’s current location, and the Southern Museum of Flight was officially opened to the public in the fall of 1983. After fifty years of growth and expansion, the Southern Museum of Flight is dedicated to investigating, preserving, and promoting the rich stories of Southern Aviation and to providing enjoyable, experiential educational programming for people of all ages. Through collaborative partnerships within the community, the Southern Museum of Flight provides a continuum of exhibitions, displays and educational services with a sincere devotion to cultural and historical literacy. The Southern Museum of Flight prepares and supports skillful, reflective professionals who improve the quality of aviation education in a museum setting.

The Southern Museum of Flight continues to present civilian, military and experimental aircraft and memorabilia from the earliest history of powered flight. The museum houses over 100 aircraft, as well as engines, models, artifacts, and paintings. In addition, the Southern Museum of Flight is home to the Alabama Aviation Hall of Fame with over 70 biographical plaques presenting Alabama Aviation History through collective biography.

I hope to see you soon!

Brian J. Barsanti, Ph.D
During June and July, the beginning and the end of the Korean War (1950-1953) is remembered at the Southern Museum of Flight. On exhibit in the South Wing Hangar are two popular fighters of the war, the F-86 “Sabrejet” and the MiG-15 “Fagot”. The planes are displayed in a historical diorama setting. The setting depicts Kimpo Air Base, in South Korea, at the exact time a North Korean pilot defected in his MiG-15.

In 2004, the museum was paid a visit by Capt. Dolphin “Dolph” D. Overton (1926-2013). Dolph Overton, in his conversations with friends and staff, told the story of his friend Capt. Joseph C. McConnell and his F-86 Sabrejet. In the story, a MiG-15 was “smoking” McConnell’s Sabrejet, after which he did a roll and shot down the MiG-15 before ditching at sea himself. In effect, the two pilots shot each other down. Overton commented, “I was in the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing with McConnell and we were close friends.” He proceeded to give a most insightful rendition of F-86 fighter tactics against the MiG-15 and related how forty US pilots (including himself) became Aces. The museum’s F-86 is “marked” as Capt. McConnell’s Sabrejet.

Born in Andrews, SC, Dolph soloed at age 16, attended the Citadel and served as a seaman in WW II. After the war, he graduated from West Point in 1949, and flew the F-84 “Thunderjet” in a 102-mission Korean War tour flying close air support. In his second Korean War tour, he flew the F-86 “Sabrejet” and shot down five MiGs in four days to become a jet ace in record time.

By the Armistice, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, four Silver Stars, six Distinguished Flying Crosses, and nine Air Medals. Since his Korean War service, Overton had accumulated 10,000 books on aviation and restored 90 vintage airplanes and at one time owned the Museum’s Fokker D.VII. Dolph Overton was a remarkable man and was intent on finding more folks like himself in the Alabama area whose exploits during the Korean War would keep the war from being the “forgotten war.”

Overton (right) is embraced by Air Force Chief of Staff General Norton Schwartz after being presented the Distinguished Service Cross in September 2009

The Korean War Veterans Memorial consists of multiple structures that honor those who sacrificed during the three-year conflict that was the Korean War (1950-1953). The memorial’s mural is 164 feet long and 8 inches thick, and from a bird’s eye view, the wall appears as an isosceles triangle, with the tip intersecting a circle over the Pool of Remembrance. The Memorial resides on the National Mall, south-east of the Lincoln Memorial and just south of the Reflecting Pool. All of its components, including its walls, stainless steel statues and Pool of Remembrance, are dedicated to the U.S. Armed Forces that served and sacrificed during the Korean War. Engraved on granite blocks near the water pool at the east end of the monument are the casualty statistics for the soldiers who fought in the war.

- Dead: US: 54,246 UN: 628,833
- Wounded: US: 103,284 UN: 1,064,453
- Captured: US: 7,140 UN: 92,970
- Missing: US: 8,177 UN: 470,267
The Republic F-84 Thunderjet was an American turbojet fighter-bomber aircraft. Originating as a 1944 USAAF proposal, the F-84 first flew in 1946. Although it entered service in 1947, the Thunderjet was plagued by so many structural and engine problems that a 1948 USAF review considered canceling the program. The aircraft was not considered operational until the 1949 F-84D model, and the design matured only with the definitive F-84G introduced in 1951.

The Thunderjet became the USAF’s primary strike aircraft during the Korean War. It flew 86,408 sorties, dropped 55,586 tons of bombs, 6,129 tons of napalm, and destroyed 60% of all ground targets in the war as well as 8 Soviet-built MiG fighters, even though the Thunderjet was initially tasked with escorting B-29 bombers. The first Thunderjet air-to-air victory was scored on 21 January 1951. The F-84 was a generation behind the swept-wing MiG-15 and was outmatched when MiGs were flown by more experienced pilots.

While an evolutionary development of the straight-wing F-84 Thunderjet, the swept-wing F-84F Thunderstreak was a new design. The F-84F was retired from active service with the USAF in 1964, and replaced by the North American F-100 Super Sabre.

Below is the operational history of the F-84F on display at the SMF. This aircraft was manufactured by General Motors Corp., Kansas City, KS and delivered to the USAF on 21 September 1954. (S/N 51-9404)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assigned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 1954</td>
<td>506th Strategic Fighter Wing (SAC), Dow AFB, ME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1955</td>
<td>Tinker AFB, OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1955</td>
<td>Ogden Air Material Area, Hill AFB, UT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1955</td>
<td>12th Strategic Fighter Wing (SAC), Bergstrom AFB, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1957</td>
<td>Republic Aviation, Farmingdale, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1957</td>
<td>141st Fighter-Interceptor Sqn (ANG), McGuire AFB, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1961</td>
<td>141st Tactical Fighter Sqn (TAC), McGuire AFB, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1961</td>
<td>USAF-Europe, Chaumont AB, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1962</td>
<td>366th Tactical Fighter Wing (USAF-E), Chaumont AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1963</td>
<td>TAC, Holloman AFB, NM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1963</td>
<td>178th Tactical Fighter Group (ANG), Springfield IAP, IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1970</td>
<td>106th Tactical Fighter Group (ANG), Otis AFB, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1971</td>
<td>Dropped From Inventory By Transfer To Museum Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1999</td>
<td>SMF from Bevill State Community College, Hamilton, AL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Korean War also inaugurated what became the U.S. policy of containment – the idea that communism could not be allowed to spread beyond a certain geographical point. Because the war was fought for political rather than military objectives, it quickly degenerated into a stalemate as both sides used the battlefield to jockey for political advantage at the negotiating table. Despite heavy casualties, the war resolved nothing. After the first shots were fired, Korean remains what it was in 1950—divided, militarized and volatile.
Roberts Field was the center of Birmingham aviation activity in the 1920s. The field was named in honor of Lt. Arthur M. Roberts of Birmingham, killed in France in 1918. The 106th Observation Squadron was headquartered there and airmail and passenger service used the field until the Municipal Airport opened in 1931. As one of the early passenger providers, Delta Airlines would claim that "Our route to success started in Birmingham".

In 1928, Southern Transcontinental and Davis Air Service provided temporary competition for Delta Air Service as well as the start of the state's first regularly scheduled airport service. The state's first regularly scheduled flights on Roberts Field occurred when St. Tammany Gulf Coast Airways added Birmingham to its New Orleans-Atlanta route. Delta Air Service began regularly using the field in late 1929 for their service from Dallas to Birmingham, and on March 24, 1925, pilots Glenn Messer and Jack Turner flew the city's first air mail flight from Roberts Field to Marr Field in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

On October 5, 1927 trans-Atlantic aviator Charles Lindbergh brought his "Spirit of St Louis" to Roberts Field for a two-day stop on a 22,000-mile promotional tour. He left again on October 7, bound for Jackson, Mississippi. Roberts Field remained open for two or more decades, and was redeveloped for industrial uses in the 1960s and is the current site location of the Consolidated Pipe and Supply.
In 1943, the U.S. Army’s Air Tactical Service Command met with Lockheed Aircraft Corporation to express its dire need for a jet fighter to counter a rapidly growing German jet threat. One month later, an engineer by the name of Clarence “Kelly” L. Johnson and his team of young engineers hand-delivered the XP-80 Shooting Star proposal to the ATSC. It was June of 1943 and this project marked the birth of what would become the Skunk Works® with Kelly Johnson at its helm. Johnson and his team designed and built the XP-80 in a drafty hangar so awash in the fumes from a nearby plastics factory that engineers started calling it the skunk works. The XP-80 was built in only 143 days, and made its maiden flight shortly after. A 2014 article written by Chad Slattery for Air & Space Magazine related the story that when Lockheed Martin’s Skunk Works® celebrated its 70th anniversary, an old suitcase’s contents containing plans and information thought to be long destroyed was opened. Inside was an old model of the A-3, Lockheed’s first try at blending stealth with speed - and a direct predecessor of the triple-sonic A-12 Blackbird. It had been designed by Skunk Works® founder Clarence “Kelly” Johnson, and hidden away for decades, defying management directives to purge company archives.

“I treasure that the people here want to protect our history,” said Lockheed’s Stephen Justice. The A-3 model was recognized as being something special and important to preserve, was the reason given for the non-destruction of this model.

On June 14, 2018, some 4,000 Lockheed workers lined up for a slice of cake in the desert heat at Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale, CA, celebrating the 75th birthday of the founding of their organization, the “Skunk Works®” advanced development unit. Their numbers are about 33 percent higher than just a few years ago. The Skunk Works® team still remains connected to founder Kelly Johnson’s vision of a place where small and empowered teams create powerful solutions.

This vision is currently embodied in NASA’s Kennedy Space Center where a team developed the Swamp Works with the philosophy from Kelly Johnson’s Skunk Works®, including his “14 Rules of Management”, the NASA development shops of Wernher von Braun, and the innovation culture of Silicon Valley.

It was named the Swamp Works for similarity with the Skunk Works® and Boeing’s Phantom Works, but branded by the widespread marshes (swamps) on the Cape Canaveral property of the Kennedy Space Center.

In another SR-71 story, Los Angeles Center reported receiving a request for clearance to FL 600

The incredulous Controller, with some disdain in his voice, asked, “How do you plan to get up to 60,000 feet?”

The pilot, responded, “We don’t plan to go up to it; we plan to come down to it.”

He was cleared!
Located on the parcel of land between the Museum and the Museum’s Memorial Airpark - land that was originally planned for expanding the outdoor displays of the SMF - is a 1960s Cuban Missile Crisis bomb shelter.

Not only was it a fully-functional bomb shelter built by artisan Jake Rumore in his backyard, but it also featured a model of Rumore’s ancestral home in Sicily…. a “miniature in masonry” of the Maria S.S.Del Balzo and the hillside village nearby in the vicinity of Palermo. The complex was called the “world’s most artistic bomb shelter” by a news reporter during a 1964 visit. Church buildings are surrounded by mountain peaks and stone walls, and the replica is in great detail and color. The miniature replica of the church is remembered by Rumore from his boyhood days in Sicily.

Rumore had truck-farmed the land where the hangars and runways of the airport are now located.

Over the years, Rumore’s artistic production had became overgrown with shrubs. Some of the miniature buildings and scenic details on the shelter were taken and preserved by neighbors when rumors led them to believe the bomb shelter would be razed along with the many homes in this area. The houses were, in fact, razed but the bomb shelter remains today as witness to a time when a serious nuclear threat prevailed.
MEMBERSHIP

When It Comes to Southern Aviation History … Just Ace It!

With a Southern Museum of Flight Membership!

Yes, I would like to become a member of the Southern Museum of Flight

Your membership will help the museum continue its work in preserving southern aviation history, restoring historic aircraft and inspiring students to excel in science and technology.

**Family/Grandparents**  $65.00
- Unlimited admission for one year
- Admission to more than 300+ museums across the USA
- Discounts on Birthday Parties & Camps

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- Admission to more than 300+ museums across the USA
- Discounts on Birthday Parties & Camps

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- All Family Benefits above plus 5 Guest Passes

**Aviation Barnstormer**  $200.00
- Unlimited admission for one year
- All Family Benefits above plus 10 Guest Passes
- 5% Discount on a Basic Facilities Rental

**Aviation Ace**  $500.00
- Unlimited admission for one year
- All Family Benefits above plus 15 Guest Passes
- 10% Discount on a Basic Facilities Rental

The Southern Museum of Flight acknowledges the support provided by the Jefferson County Commission through the Jefferson County Community Arts Fund administered by the Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham.