

Across the Continent and Back Again!

The "Spokane Sun-God" Completes America's
First Non-Stop Transcontenintal Round Trip Flight and
Flies Into Refueling History

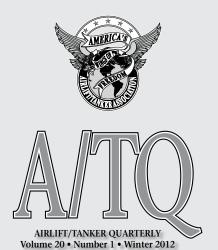


An Interview with Lt Gen Mark Ramsay, 18th AF/CC Pages 14-17

A/TA Convention 2011 in Photos

Pages 18-21





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ON THE COVER: Art Walker, co-pilot on the historic flight of the "Spokane Sun-God," pokes his head through the refueling hole cut into the top of the aircraft. Felts Field 1929. (Photo by Libby Studio. Courtesy Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture).

Has It Been That Long?

Can you believe that Air Mobility Command will celebrate its 20th anniversary this year? That's right, 1 June 2012 will mark exactly two decades – an entire *score* – of years since AMC was activated on 1 June 1992. That means that, beginning later this year, airmen will begin retiring who will have served their entire career in AMC. Amazing. But then again, when you think about it, 1992 was a fairly long time ago –

In 1992, the President of United States, George H. W. Bush, who early in the year got sick all over the Japanese prime minister's lap, went down in defeat (along with Ross Perot) to William Jefferson Clinton; but not before Hurricane "Andrew" would slam into Florida and go on to cause an estimated \$20 billion in damage. 1992 also saw riots in Los Angeles after police were acquitted in the Rodney King case, and the world's seven wealthiest nations agree to extend \$24 billion in aid to the former USSR.

Also in 1992, Tiger Woods, at the age of 16, became the youngest PGA golfer in 35 years; Singer Miley Cyrus was born; John Majors was elected Prime Misister of England; Manuel Noriega was convicted on drug and racketeering charges; and, oddly, in the same year that saw the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in the Netherlands, which essentially established the European Union, an earthquake rocked Germany on the day that Euro Disney opened in Marne-la-Vallee, France – followed by an earthquake a day later in the Neterlands. Unfortunately, there were other crises and natural disasters in 1992, several of which required assistance from America's air mobility forces.

The following is just a sampling of 1992 humanitarian missions in which air mobility played a role –

Operation Provide Comfort: U.S. and coalition forces protected the Kurds and provided aid following the Coalition and Iraqi Cease Fire ending the first Gulf War the previous year.

Operation Provide Hope: Medical equipment delivered to the former Soviet Republics during their transition from communism to democracy and free-market economies.

Operation Provide Promise: The joint Air Force and Navy humanitarian relief effort in Bosnia and Herzegovina following the Yugoslav civil war.

Operation Provide Relief: The United Nations effort to provide humanitarian relief following a famine and civil war in Somalia.

Operation Phoenix Uffo: The humanitarian relief effort to repatriate refugees from the island nation of Haiti to their homeland from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Plus, Hurricane Andrew Relief to Florida; Hurricane Iniki Relief to Hawaii, and Typhoon Omar Relief to Guam. And, this list doesn't even address other contingency ops.

So, 1992, all-in-all, was a pretty typical year for air mobility folks: busy, busy, busy!

Collin R. Bakse, editor

Chairman's COMMENTS



Gen Walter Kross USAF, Ret

That noted but fictional American Philosopher, formerly of Saturday Night Live, Roseanna Roseannadanna, would constantly remind us that, in life, "It's Always Something." How right she was.

Things continue to go wrong on our planet, be it tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, famines, or the events precipitated by the serial effects of Humankind's despotic hand. Indeed, "it's always something." Somewhere, good people will need help—help with no strings attached. They need the kind of help that emanates from the deepest, most basic of needs. Help that starts with basic Hope.

It is in these instances that my thoughts turn to America's Air Mobility forces. I can't help but recall our theme for last November's Symposium and Convention in Nashville—"Air Mobility: Hope's Global Reach." Okay, I know—Another Convention; another theme—to be sure. But it's also so much more than that. In our

terms, that theme is so precisely to the point of "Why We Serve."

We in A/TA are so proud to serve you, the men and women of Air Mobility, as we move into 2012. This year is a true cardinal number anniversary for Air Mobility, both as a mission and as a concept. The year 2012 marks the 20th anniversary of Air Mobility as we know it today—the fusion of legacy missions that went before it for 75 years.

Being long in tooth, I remember back to the First Gulf War, 1990-91. That war is only a distant memory for many today, especially given the events of the last decade. But that Persian Gulf War, as it was called, proved to be the forcing function that propelled us forward into today's Air Mobility mission capabilities.

Known also as Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the Persian Gulf War levied the first real massive requirement placed upon our DoD military forces since Vietnam, a full 20-25 years earlier. True, we had had short duration military operations in the interim (Grenada, Panama), as well as a fistful of natural and humanitarian disasters, but up to 1990 we had experienced nothing approaching the massive, broad, deep, time-constrained stress that the First Gulf War placed upon all of DoD. Sure, we had formed US Transcom, but the fledgling command remained untested up to then.

They say no organization really knows about itself until it is truly stressed. DoD, Transcom, and Air Force Mobility Forces in particular, were stressed fully. Transportation-wise, we got the job done, but it wasn't pretty. Said another way, we were effective, but grossly inefficient. Airlift in one command; tankers in another. Cold War-era command lash ups—complete with stovepiped processes. Aeromed forces following Vietnam-era procedures. No central control of airlift. Tanker forces parsed out piecemeal to whoever asked for them. Access to other air mobility assets denied with no rationale. Intransit visibility of customer assets and forces was inaccurate at best, and nonexistent at worst. Throughput velocity was no yet born. Total Force had good intent; but operated nowhere near its full potential. Yet, we muddled through and prevailed.

But "Muddle Through" just wouldn't cut it in today's demanding world. Fortunately, the First Gulf War proved the catalyst we needed to re-define and re-invent many of our national defense capabilities—not the least among them were our Air Mobility assets and capabilities.

On June 1, 1992 USAF established Air Mobility Command, its mission to serve as USAF Lead Command for the Air Mobility mission. First came the Tanker Airlift Control Center, a huge and necessary step as AMC pulled together the disparate airlift, tanker, aero-medical evacuation, and air mobility support forces under one umbrella command and control structure.

There would still be significant fits and starts, but the process of transformation and the relentless continuous improvement of the overarching concept of Global Reach had begun—and we never looked back. We had started down the road to the elevated performance levels we see today from Mobility Airmen worldwide.

Air Mobility Command has chosen its theme for this year's 20th anniversary of the command and, of course, Air Mobility as a mission. General Johns has approved it. "Someone, Somewhere Needs Something: AMC – Answering the Call, 20 Years and Counting." I've moved a few words around, but the message is still the same.

So all the best to Mobility Airmen and their families around the world, as you continue to Deliver Hope worldwide to those who need it so much.

President's MESSAGE



CMSgt Mike Reynolds USAF, Ret

Happy New Year to all! I hope that each of you had a safe and enjoyable holiday season spent with friends and loved ones. As the New Year begins so does work for the A/TA Board and our wonderful volunteers. We recently had our initial "hot wash," covering our 43rd Convention & Symposium, which revealed some minor adjustments we will incorporate to make next year's convention even better. What a great convention our 43rd was, which included great professional briefings, and one of the best banquets I have attended. After leaving Nashville with such fond memories, I am really excited about our 44th Convention & Symposium in Anaheim for 2012. BTW: your Board of Officers appreciates your thoughts on your convention experience, and to quote our former Secretary, Col Barry Creighton (ret), "there are some things we need to change (just to

keep you guessing) - and we will."

I would like to congratulate our most recent A/TA Hall of Fame inductee, General Tom Ryan and his lovely wife Penny. What great Americans! Both are such a great pleasure to be around that it is very easy to see why A/TA inducted the General into our HOF. I like to say Penny and the General were inducted. I am certain that the General would agree; Penny was crucial to his success in the military. Also, I would like to congratulate all of our Award Winners. All of our award winner's professionalism and contributions to Air Mobility and the USAF are unbelievable.

A convention is never successful without a lot of behind the scene work from many people, and we are very fortunate to have such a great group of volunteers. Honestly, we have too many volunteers to mention in this article, but I can assure you that General Kross and I, as well as the entire board, recognize and appreciate each and every one of you. THANKS SO MUCH for what you do to support Air Mobility and A/TA.

I made it through my first year as your President and am looking forward to my next year. I truly appreciate all the support provided to me by the board members and it is truly a pleasure working with General Kross. It certainly makes life easy when you have Past Presidents Mark Smith, Bill Cannon, and Dave Pelletier available 24/7 to answer questions and provide welcomed advice. Thank you all for your support and mentorship.

I would like to extend a personal thanks to General Johns and Chief Kaiser for their support. Both have made their respective staffs available, and believe me, I take full advantage. I could never give enough praise for what Darcy Lilly, MSgt Laurie Boros and SSgt Mitch Sullivan do to support me and A/TA, but hopefully huge THANKS will work.

As we begin the New Year, let's not forget those that are serving our country and protecting our freedom; many who were not with friends and loved ones during the holidays. We salute each and every one of you. Our prayers and support are with you always!

When did you last update your membership info? It's Easy!

Simply go to www.atalink.org –
Click "Membership" and scroll down to near the bottom of the page –
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Why is this important?

Because when you use On-Line Registration (the preferred method) for the 2011 A/TAConvention & Symposium, having your membership info up to date will get you through the process without a hassle! And, it's just as important for those of you who wish to register the old-fashioned way using the form on page 28, because rates are impacted by your membership status.

UPDATE YOUR MEMBERSHIP INFO TODAY!

Secretary's Notes

WoW! What a terrific Convention & Symposium in Nashville, TN. We listened to your comments from last year and made some changes we think improved the Association's most important annual event. We were challenged to "move the flagpole" to

see if anyone noticed, and I think all of you noticed. The biggest change/ addition to our A/TA family and the Hall of Fame (HOF) banquet was an appearance by country Radney artist Foster. Radney entertained us



Col. Dan Penny USAF, Ret

with four of his songs and brought down the house with "Angel Flight." Radney and his songs were an inspiration to us all.

Your Board of Officers is already working hard to put together another great effort in Anaheim, CA in 2012. The exact dates are on the A/TA web site.

Also on the web site by the time this is published will be the new HOF nominating process for candidates. Included on the site will be three examples of top nominees from the past. Please pay special attention to the submission format because it has changed. Submissions received in the incorrect format will be returned to the sender for resubmission in the updated format.

New Hall of Fame Nominating Process goes into effect this year. See website: www.atalink.org for submission details.

Speaking of updates, if your local chapter has had elections during the last six months, please send the officers roster electronically to ata@atalink.org, so Bud Traynor can update the website and A/TA records. While you are on the computer and on the web site, please check your mailing address and update it if you've PCS'd during the last year and check the expiration date on your membership.

And last and certainly most important is to give a shout out to all our volunteers who once again went over and above at the Registration booth, as escorts for our guest speakers and symposium hosts, as transportation coordinators, as security, and all those volunteers I've not mentioned who made the 43rd Convention & Symposium such a great success. The reputation the Airlift/Tanker Association has earned is directly attributable to all of you – the volunteer. THANK YOU!



Halvorsen Still Dropping Candy

Retired air force colonel Gail Halvorsen, now 92, affectionately known as Uncle Wiggly Wings and the Berlin Candy Bomber for initiating "Operation Little Vittles" during the Berlin Airlift, took part in a couple



Gail Halvorsen (Center) addresses the crowd from the stairs of the "Spirit of Freedom," a C-54 Skymaster operated as a flying museum. (Courtesy Photo).

of candy drops to the kids gathered at Dare County Airport, Manteo, NC, on 18 December 2011 in celebration of the anniversary of the first powered flight. He was there helping the crew of the "Spirit of Freedom," a C-54 Skymaster operating as a flying museum dedicated to the post WWII Berlin Airlift, participate in the event. The event was just one of many appearances Halvorsen made in 2011 to help preserve the legacy of the Berlin Airlift and promote America's Air Mobility capabilities. Col Halvorsen was inducted into the A/TA Hall of Fame in 1999.

"Bagger" Talks Air Mobility With USAF Test Pilot School Students

Students from the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School enjoyed a special evening presentation, 20 January, introducing them to the world of airlift – the first of many such events specifically designed to help the students better understand how their test mission impacts the warfighter.

Students learned about the history of airlift from retired Maj. Gen. James I. Baginski. The retired command pilot took students on a historical journey from the Berlin Airlift, to Korea, Haiti, and even Hurricane Katrina; circumnavigating the globe and discussing an array of aircraft from the C-47 to C-17.

Baginski highlighted the crucial role of air mobility not only to the Air Force, but to the country and international community as well.

"Airlift is absolutely a critical capability of the Air Force, and yet it so often gets overlooked," said Baginski.

"Whether mobilizing units for combat, or providing humanitarian aid I want people to think about how air mobility helps make us

A/TA Hall of Fame Inductees Staying Active in the Air Mobility Community

the great Air Force that we are."

Throughout his presentation, Baginski detailed challenges that have been addressed throughout the years. He has more than 50 years of experience improving airlift, cargo, and refueling. He served in the Air Force from 1954 until 1984. Today, he continues working to expand the capabilities of air mobility through organizations like the Airlift/Tanker Association.

"We have certainly come a long way by challenging the status-quo. I challenge each and every one of you to push the limits of the aircraft and see what they're really capable of," said Baginski.

"Many of the basic challenges we face in the military and on the battlefield remain unchanged, but the solutions evolve as technology advances. Learning how those challenges were overcome in the past is critical for directing future efforts as the Air Force strives to integrate cutting edge science to maximize capability," said Clifton Janney, commander, 418th Flight Test Squadron.

Baginski's contribution to air mobility began in 1954 when he was commissioned as a second lieutenant through the Reserve Officers Training Corps. He began his Air Force career piloting the C-119 and C-130 aircraft.

Additionally, he earned his Army parachutist wings at Fort Benning, Ga. and served as a Tactical Airlift Liaison officer with the 1st Cavalry Division in An Khe, Republic of Vietnam.

The diverse background of knowledge gained from his early years in the Air Force catapulted him into an array of positions at the wing, command, and Air Force levels, where he influenced policy, advocated for personnel, and played key role in historic airlift efforts.

He played a major role in establishing policy that made air mobility the global force recognized today, and as its role continued to increase, Baginski recognized the importance of improving technology to maximize airlift capabilities.

To meet the need of testing and developing the latest technologies, he fought for and established the U.S. Air Force Airlift Center at Pope AFB, North Carolina.

Throughout his career, he was instrumental in directing several of the Military Airlift Command's airlift operations and as such was a key player in the disaster relief responses to earthquakes in Guatemala, Indonesia, Turkey, and Romania; typhoons in Guam; and the operation Snow Blow airlift response to Buffalo, New York; delivering supplies to an under-siege Zaire; and providing aeromedical evacuation of Americans for the Tenerife jet collision incident. Baginski was also involved in removing human remains of American service members from Hanoi.

"People have always and will always come first to him," said Master Sgt. Daniel Halverstadt, superintendent, U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School.

"Not only is his impact on air mobility tremendous, but what he's done to improve the quality of life of officers and enlisted alike is fantastic. Each and every one of us benefits from him looking out for people," said Halverstadt.



Col. Noel Zamot, commandont, USAF Test Pilot School, (R) presented Brig. Gen. James I. Baginski Ret., with a commander's coin after his presentation to TPS students about the critical role of air mobility and it's unique history. (U.S. Air Force Photo by Laura Mowry)

Honored by enlisted personnel for his contributions that boosted morale and quality of life for servicemembers; in 1974, General Baginski was inducted into the "Order of the Sword."

Both members of the Airlift/Tanker Association, Baginski and Halverstadt met back in 2009 when they served together on the National Board of Advisors for the A/TA.

"He's so knowledgeable and always happy. That's why I thought he would be a perfect choice to talk with the TPS community about the history of air mobility," said Halverstadt.

"It's easy to become compartmentalized and become too focused on your one area of expertise. You can ask him the questions that you might hesitate to ask someone else. He really provides a great learning environment and you can't beat the historical perspective he brings to the table."

In addition to speaking Friday evening at Scobee Auditorium, the retired general toured Edwards. He received mission briefings from the 445th Flight Test Squadron and 418th Flight Test Squadron, and visited the original C-17 and a C-119 aircraft.

Baginski is a command pilot with more than 5,000 flying hours, with approximately one-fifth of those acquired at the controls of a C-119. He was inducted into the A/TA Hall of Fame in 2005.



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- ★ Current Membership in the Airlift/Tanker Association
 - ★ Enlisted Member in Grades of E-1 through E-9
 - ★ Commander's Recommendation
- ★ Assigned in an air mobility operational and/or support function (an augmentee on a mobility or maintenance support team, for example), OR, anyone directly or indirectly supporting the USAF Airlift or Air Refueling mission.
- ★ Must be a current member of Airlift/Tanker Association during the course which you are using to apply for the grant.
- ★ Checks will be issued upon completion of a course with proof of a grade of C or better in an accredited degree program
 - \star Application must be postmarked within three (3) months of course completion.
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Working to Improve America's Air Moblity Force.



Across the Continent and Back Again!

The "Spokane Sun-God" Completes America's First Non-Stop Transcontental Round Trip Flight and Flies Into Refueling History

Compiled by Collin R. Bakse, editor

Aviation buffs and historians often refer to the two decades between World War I and World War II as the "Golden Age of Aviation." Ironically, this "Golden Age" is often overlooked by the general public – understandably overshadowed by the amazing aircraft and heroic action of the two wars that framed the era. When the period is remembered, it is often with only a general recollection that Charles Lindbergh made a solo flight across the Atlantic or that Amelia Earhart disappeared somewhere over the Pacific. Yet, the Golden Age of Aviation was a period of extremely significant advancements in all things aviation including aircraft, fuels, infrastructure and the public acceptance of air transportation.

The year 1929 was noted for at least 40 attempts to set new records for remaining airborne for long periods of time—so called "Endurance" flights. The first 1929 endurance record flight began on the first day of the year – the flight of the famous "Question Mark." Using the relatively new technique of in-flight refueling* from another airplane, the flight lasted 6 days, 15 hours and 40 minutes. As a consequence of this success, many flights, both military and civilian, were made to try to set new records. There were many failures, and those who succeeded enjoyed only short-lived fame as others bested previous records.

One of these often overlooked "Golden Age" record breaking attempts resulted in the record for the first non-stop transcontinental round trip flight, with a couple of other records thrown in for good measure – the August 1929 flight of the "Spokane Sun-God..."



"Congratulations on the successful completion of your nonstop refueling flight across the continent and return. It is a further demonstration of the ever-widening scope of the practical utility of aircraft."

-President Herbert Hoover. Telegram sent to the crew of the Spokane Sun-God, 1929.

*Although a crude form of in-flight refueling had first been accomplished in 1921 by a wing walker, Wesley May, using a can of gasoline strapped to his back while he climbed from one airplane to another, the first "practical" transfer using a hose from the tanker to the receiver airplane was not accomplished until 1923 by the U.S. Army.

At 10:35 on the windy winter morning of 17 December 1903, at Kill Devil Hills just south of Kitty Hawk, NC, Orville Wright made the world's first powered, controlled and sustained flight in a heavier-

than-air machine with a pilot aboard. The 12 second, 120 foot flight (10+feet shorter than the wingspan of a KC-135) marked the beginning of the "Age of Aviation."

Some of aviation's greatest advancements, as with so many technological innovations, followed hot on the heels of the Wright Brothers' early successful experiments – flights became smoother, lasted longer, flew higher and became relatively more safe. New aircraft types were invented and new aircraft manufacturers came on to the scene. Aeroplanes were almost immediately drafted into military service.

While the concept of using aeroplanes as weapons, per se, was generally considered laughable at the beginning to World War I, the idea of using them for photo reconnaissance was immediately apparent. All of the major forces in Europe used aeroplanes, typically derived from pre-war

sporting designs, for this purpose. But it wasn't long before pilots were shooting at each other. By the middle of 1915 aeroplanes, with synchronized machine guns blazing, had turned military aviators into modern day knights, doing one-on-one air-to-air combat with their enemies.

When the surviving pilots returned home following the war (thousands of aircraft and pilots were lost during the war), they championed aviation by becoming barnstomers, finding ways to fly as civilians in service to the nation, performing in aerial demonstrations and races, and starting aviation-centric businesses. A few, like

Nicholas Bernard "Nick" Mamer, did all four.

Nick Mamer, "Mr. Spokane Aviation"

Nicholas Bernard Mamer, known as "Nick," was a famous aviation pioneer in Spokane, Washington. Mamer, who was born in Hastings, Minnesota, arrived in Spokane in 1920 following his courageous service with the American Expeditionary Forces in France during World War I.

Following his wartime service his commanding officer would write: "It is my pleasure to certify that Lt. N. B. Mamer was attached to the 187th Aero Squadron, A.E.F., on active duty as a pursuit pilot from July 14, 1918 to December 1, 1918.

"He contributed to the valor of the squadron by being awarded the French Croix de Guerre with Palms,

in addition to three citations. Lieutenant Mamer is officially credited with the destruction of three enemy planes.

"His plane was shot down in flames in combat with three enemy Fokker planes near Dun sur Meuse, France, November 2, 1918, during the Argonne battle. By skillful judgment and superb cool-headedness, he managed his plane in such a way so to protect himself, during the descent, from the flames.

"The plane being demolished upon landing, his presence of mind enabled him to extricate himself from the wreckage, there-

by saving his life and escaping with minor injuries."

Shortly after the end of World War I, the U.S. Forest Service, spurred on by the help of the head of the Western Department of the U.S. Air Service, Col. Hap Arnold, who would later become head of the U.S. Army Air Force during WWII, began providing aerial fire detection flights over some the forests of the Western States. Following initial successes of this revolutionary method of fire detection, in June of 1925, Mamer received an appointment as a forest fire patrol pilot for easterm Washington, norhtern Idaho and western Montana.

During this time he was also running the Mamer Flying Service, providing flying instruction and charter flying. In the spring of 1928, Mamer started offering scheduled passenger service between Spokane and Portland, Oregon, doing business as Mamer Air Transport (MAT). There

was daily round-trip service among Spokane, Yakima and Portland on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, with service to Spokane, Walla Walla and Portland on Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday. The fare was \$30 one way or \$50 round trip.

Nick's fame began in 1927 however, when he entered and won third place in the Class A division from New York to Spokane at the National Air Races sponsored by the city of Spokane.

Then, in August of 1929, Nick won even greater fame, when he and copilot Art Walker flew a transcontinental endurance flight with air refueling, from Spokane to San Francisco to New York and back to

Spokane. Beginning on 15 August, the flight lasted five days and nights, and the Buhl Sesquiplane propelled by a 300-HP Wright engine, returned safely to Spokane Felts Field on 20 August 1929. She had been in the air for 120 hours, one minute and 40 seconds, flown 10,000 air miles and had set a world's distance record for a non-stop flight of 7,200 lineal miles. Other firsts were: first transcontinental refueling flight, first night refueling and first refueling at an altitude of 8,000 feet.



Nicholas Bernard Mamer, known as "Nick," circa 1928,

approximately one year prior to the flight of the Spo-

kane Sun-God. Having finished 3rd in a national air

derby the year berfore, he was already on his way to

being dubbed "Mr. Spokane Aviation" by the Spokane

community. (Photo by Libby Studio. Courtesy Northwest

Museum of Arts and Culture).

Above: Co-pilot Art Walker (L) and pilot Nick Mamer (R) in front of a Buhl CA-6 Airsedan named the "Spokane Sun-God" prior to their historical, record-setting flight. Opposite: Art Walker pokes his head through the refueling hole cut into the top of the aircraft. Felts Field 1929. (Photos by Libby Studio. Courtesy Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture).

Plans and Preparations

In early 1929 an official from the Department of Commerce approached Mamer with the concept of his undertaking a coast-to-coast aerial refueling flight. Thinking that the flight was a good idea, Mamer began making plans and started prepara-

tions. Mamer chose Art Walker, a colleague at Mamer Air Transport, to be his co-pilot on the proposed record-seeking enduance flight. A veteran pilot and motor expert, Walker, formerly a national guard flyer in the 41st Air Service Squadron, a military unit located at Spokane's Felts Field, where Mamer Air Transport was located, had the necessary flying expertise, experience with the Wright motor that

would power the Buhl Sesquiplane used for the transcontental round trip and the slender build necessary to handle the refueling equipment during the flight.

Plans for refueling planes to fly up along the route to refuel the Sun-God in flight were made in advance. A special hole in the top

of the Sun-God allowed Walker or Mamer to crawl half out of the hole to grab the refueling hose, gas cans or supplies. This wasn't the first time in-flight refueling took place, but in 1929 it was a long way from being sophisticated. A garden hose or a heavy rubber hose or a gas can was lowered from one plane to the other.

The flight plan was not to fly directly from Spokane to New York and back, but instead to fly from Spokane over Portland, Eugene and Medford, Oregon, continue on to San Francisco-Oakland, California, where the first refueling was scheduled to take place, and then turn east and fly over Reno, Salt Lake City, Rock Springs, Cheyenne, Omaha, Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Chicago, Cleveland and New York. The Sun-God would not land in New York but return to Spokane by a northern route flying over Cleveland, Chicago, Madison, St. Paul, Aberdeen, Miles City, Billings, Butte, Missoula and on to Spokane.

Then, if all went well, Mamer and Walker planned not to land in Spokane but to fly the route again, possibly to beat the endurance record of 151 hours established in January 1929 by the Army Air Corps's Fokker Tri-motor know as the Question Mark. (The Question Mark flew in a closed course over southern California – basically flying in a circle for 151 hours).

and Culture).

The Aircraft and Flight Sponsors

Buhl Aircraft Company agreed to supply an aircraft for the endurance flight, probably because Mamer's air service used many of

their aircraft and the flight could prove to be an advertising bonanza (the company was only a few years old at the time). The company chose to donate a 1929 Buhl CA-6 Airsedan biplane, called a "Sesquiplane," which had a full upper wing and a short tapered lower wing. It was powered by a Wright J6, 300 horsepower Whirlwind engine. The



Participants in the Spokane Sun-God's attempt to gar-

ner an aviation endurance record pose in front of the

legendary airplane on 14 August 1929, the day before

the flight. Left to right are: refueling aircraft pilot Bob

Wilson; Neal O'Connell, hoseman; Sun-God co-pilot Art

Walker; Sun-God pilot Nick Mamer; refueling aircraft pi-

lot Verne Brookwalter; and Al Coppula hoseman. (Photo

by Libby Studio. Courtesy Northwest Museum of Arts

Art Walker, Nick Mamer and Texaco representative Jack Allenberg pose with the Sun-God and 7 barrels of Texaco gasoline (350 gallons) and 20 gallons of Texaco lubricating oil, all of which was put aboard prior to take-off. (Photo by Libby Studio. Courtesy Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture).

idea of the short lower wing was to give the plane more lift without slowing airspeed the way a full lower wing did. It also helped strengthen the main wing and support the heavy landing gear. Buhl built this style of plane to carry six (pilot and five passengers), but Buhl modified her with gas tanks and storage room for oil, food, a bed and other supplies needed for the endurance flight.

The general characteristics of the Buhl CA-6 Airsedan meant that Mamer and Walker needed to consider the planes maximum range of 720 miles at a speed of no more than 145 mph during their flight preparations.

In 1929 Spokane, located in the Inland Northwest area of Washington State, was a bustling aviation center – a strategic link along America's northern air route. The city's name means "Children of the Sun" to the Native Americans of the area, and it was in consideration of thier tribal history that the airplane was christened the *Spokane Sun-God*.

It was in consideration of the Texas Oil Company, a major sponsor of the endurance attempt, that the airplane was painted bright red and emblazoned with the familiar Texaco Star – the company agreed to supply the fuel for the trip.

Other sponsors included the National Air Derby Association and many local businesses and citizens. An admission and parking fee charged at Spokane Air Port (Felts Field) for those who came to watch the Sun-God takeoff also helped finance the trip. The fees were 50¢ for adults, 25¢ children and 25¢ parking.

A Flight Frought with Peril

Many ceremonies, including a Native American ceremony with Chief Gary of Tekoa and six tribesmen, preceded the takeoff of the Spokane Sun-God on 15 August 1929. Mamer and Walker were absent from most of the pre-flight hullabaloo, preferring instead to rest in anticipation of the long flight.

A fear that Mamer's being distracted trying to takeoff at 800 pounds overweight due to extra gas tanks and supplies on board, could spell disaster led to the clearing of Felts Field. No other aircraft

or anything else was allowed on the field. It was also believed, due to the aircraft's excessive weight, the plane would need the full length of the field to get airborne. However, at 6:00 pm the Spokane Sun-God lifted off in a shorter distance than expected with what many observers, including pilots, claimed to be the best takeoff they had ever seen.

The flight went well from Spokane to San Francisco. The 6:00 pm takeoff time from Spokane put the Sun-God at her first refueling point over Mills Field, San Francisco early the next morning. The Sun-God did not have a two-way radio so notes had to be tied to weights and dropped to the ground (or tied to the end of the

refueling hose and taken into the refueling plane) in order to communicate. The Sun-God did have a radio receiver on board, but it has stopped working shortly after takeoff.

Mamer dropped a note over Mills Field requesting 250 gallons of fuel and food supplies. The plane "Californian," piloted by Donald Templeman, flew up and refueled the Sun-God. Then it flew up with food supplies, but before the Sun-God took on more fuel, she flew east heading for Salt Lake City with only 180 gallons taken aboard. It is believed Mamer and Walker had decided that they didn't want the extra strain on the motor as they flew over the Sierra Nevada mountains.

From here on out things would be dicey. Mamer had planned to

refuel at Cheyenne but over Elko, Nevada, he dropped a note asking for an emergency refueling at Rock Springs, Wyoming. Out of San Francisco the Sun-God didn't get the anticipated tail wind; she had instead fought a gusty head wind. The refueling plane waiting in Chevenne, piloted by R. M. Wilson with Alphonse Cappula as hoseman, flew to Rock Springs. This meant the transfer would have to be made after dark. A nighttime refueling had never been done before. Nor had a refueling ever taken place at 8,000 feet. Rock



The Spokane Sun God, with Nick Mamer and Art Walker as pilots, is refueled over Mills Field in San Francisco in August 1929 during the first nonstop transcontinental flight. The refueling plane is the "Californian" piloted by Donald Templeman. (Courtesy Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture).

Springs is 6,270 feet above sea level and the Sun-God flew about 2,000 feet above that. This high altitude meant the refueling plane was limited in the amount of fuel it could take up due to the thin air.

Another fear spread on the ground after Mamer dropped a note requesting 310 gallons of fuel. The Sun-God fuel capacity was 320 gallons. This left only 10 gallons of fuel, or about 22 minutes of flying time! One of the gas lines on the Sun-God had broken, too, and had to be repaired in flight. Walker and Mamer got the line repaired before refueling took place.

Cappula tied a flashlight to the end of the refueling hose so it could be spotted, but Walker had a hard time distinguishing the flashlight from the stars. He used the flames from the exhaust of the refueling plane to help locate the flashlight. Walker reached the hose, got it in a tank and opened the nozzle. Then disaster. The refueling hose caught in the Sun-God's propeller, ripping it apart. Gas sprayed over the Sun-God. One spark and not only would the flight be over but Mamer's and Walker's lives would be in jeopardy. Luckily, the plane didn't catch fire.

Cappula pulled the hose into the refueling plane and repaired it. But the repair left the hose so short the two planes had to fly close, really close. So close in fact that Walker had to push up on the belly of the refueling plane to keep it from smashing down on the Sun-God!

Wilson, the pilot of the refueling plane, didn't have an easy task either. He had to keep the overweighed plane steady in rough, gusty air while Cappula guided him by tapping him on the shoulder with

a gas measuring stick. But the refueling was successfully completed. Mamer and Walker flew over Rock Springs for 11 1/2 hours. They feared bad weather between Rock Springs and Cheyenne. The Sun-God flew east to Cheyenne at daybreak where refueling during daylight was successful. Vern Bookwalter piloted the refueling plane with Neil O'Connell handling the hose. Then both the refueling plane and the Sun-God headed to North Platte.

Over North Platte, Mamer dropped a note stating it was impossible for them to get anywhere else for refueling before dark so he wanted to "camp around awhile." Bookwalter and O'Connell flew up and refueled the Sun-God in 20 minutes. The Sun-God took on three more refuelings, a total of 100 gallons, before she

headed east, again. Mamer and Walker wanted to make Cleveland in one hop flying over Omaha and Chicago. And they did.

The Sun-God took on 200 gallons of gas over Cleveland flown up by the Robbins brothers but Mamer and Walker were disappointed they didn't get any food before heading east again. Rough air over Pennsylvania lasted for four hours, leaving Mamer and Walker exhausted as they flew into New York where about 100 planes flew up to greet them. This delayed their ar-

rival at Roosevelt Field by over an hour.

The Sun-God reached the airfield at 3:47 pm on 18 August. She had been in the air 66 hours and 47 minutes and had covered 3,600 miles. Pilots C. Ray Wassall and P. V. Chaffes flew up in the refueling plane and refueled the Sun-God over New York. There was no problem taking on fuel and food. Frank Hawks flew up and guided the Sun-God out of New York at 5:45 pm and on to Bellefonte, Pennsylvania. Mamer also dropped a report in New York he wrote for the North American Newspaper Alliance. In his report he stated the engine still ran great. He also stated he thought the worst of the flight was over. It wasn't.

Over Bellefonte Mamer dropped a note asking for weather conditions between Bellefonte and Cleveland. He asked the airfield to flash it's lights once for good weather, twice if questionable and three times if bad. The lights flashed three times. A short time later a storm hit. The Sun-God flew over Bellefonte for 30 minutes until the storm turned so fierce Mamer and Walker decided to head west. They fought squall after squall. Twice they feared the Buhl plane would breakdown due to the violent storm. But after an hour they pulled out of the storm and headed into Cleveland.

The Sun-God refueled over Cleveland, again by the Robbins brothers, then flew to St. Paul. The only problem in St. Paul was the refueling plane, which refueled the Sun-God over Cheyenne and North Platte, piloted by Bookwalter, broke a brake cable when it landed after the first refueling took place. It was repaired, refueling finished and the Sun-God flew on to Aberdeen with Bookwalter following.

Bookwalter and O'Connell refueled the Sun-God again without complications over Aberdeen.

The flight from Aberdeen to Miles City turned ugly. Smoke from forest fires nearly blinded Mamer and Walker. Then one of the magnetos on the Wright motor quit working. Mamer dropped a note over Miles City saying he and Walker were about to give up and asked the airfield be lit up so he could see to land. Then the note asked if any-

one could figure out a way to refuel the Sun-God in flight.

The people on the ground decided they could come up with something. They broke into groups to take on different tasks. One group went to the creamery and got five-gallon cream cans. Another group made detachable rope slings. Wives and others prepared food for everyone including Mamer and Walker. Everything was ready to go at 3:30 am on 20 August. At daybreak Frank Wiley flew up with Tommy Matthews tied in the cockpit in a telephone lineman's belt and met the Sun-God. She didn't look good. The once new shiny red Sun-God had a rag shoved in a hole in the windshield and streaks of oil all over her. But Matthews went to work. He hung half out of the cockpit and lowered cream cans down one at a time. He set them on the fuselage behind the hole

on top of the Sun-God. Walker disconnected the cans and one by one lowered them into the Sun-God.

After a can was disconnected, Matthews pulled the rope up and lowered another can down. Mamer then flew over Yellowstone River and Walker tossed the empty cans out so they would land in the river. A boy in a rowboat waited at the bridge in Miles City to fetch the

cans out of the river to return them to the refueling crew. Wiley and Matthews took up 120 gallons of Standard Oil gasoline in three trips when Mamer signalled it was enough. Mamer had also asked, in one of his dropped notes that Wilson and Cappula, waiting at Missoula, fly to Belgrade to await the Sun-God's arrival there. The Sun-God flew on to Belgrade and, although the smoke was still thick, the refueling went off without any problems. Then Mamer and Walker flew on to Missoula. Just west of Missoula, still in thick smoke, the Sun-God was refueled, taking on 50 gallons of gas and some oil. This would get them into Spokane. So the Sun-God flew west out of Montana over Mullan Pass in northern Idaho and arrived at Spokane at 2:00 pm. on August 20, 1929.

Ten thousand people turned out to see the Sun-God come home. Admission and parking fees were taken for the event to help pay for the trip. They were $25\mathfrak{c}$ for adults, $25\mathfrak{c}$ for parking and children got in free.

Over Felts Field Mamer dropped a note mark "confidential" addressed to Vic Dessert, the Chairman of the National Air Derby committee. In the note Mamer told Dessert one of the magnetos and the special oiling system for the rocker arms on three of the cylinders had quit. (This is probably what caused the streaks of oil noticed over

Mills City.) Mamer also stated it was impossible for them to make another transcontinental trip but they could fly to the coast and back or anyplace that wouldn't require them to fly over rough terrain after dark. The Air Derby committee met and sent a note to Mamer with a refueling plane ordering Mamer to continue circling Felts Field until 6:00 pm. Then they were to land. Clean clothes, wash water and food was sent up so Mamer and Walker could prepare for the hero's wel-

come that awaited them when they landed. During the four-hour delay, planes filled with sightseers flew up to watch the Sun-God. Mamer later complained that he couldn't even change his clothes without people watching.

The Sun-God landed at 6:01. She

The Sun-God landed at 6:01. She had been in the air for 120 hours, one minute and 40 seconds, flown 10,000 air miles and a world's distance record for a non-stop flight of 7,200 lineal miles. Other firsts were: first transcontinental refueling flight, first night refueling and first refueling at an altitude of 8,000 feet. Following the completion of the flight, President Hoover sent Mamer and Walker a telegraph reading: "Congratulations on the successful completion of your nonstop, refueling flight across the continent and return. This is a further demonstration of the ever-widening scope and practical utility of aircraft."

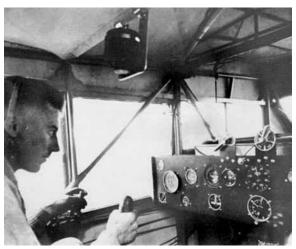
The Buhl plane was taken back to the factory, the Wright engine removed and sent to the Wright factory to be analyzed. The Buhl company then examined the plane, presumbalby to assess the wear and tear caused by the long, continuous flight. The Sun-God later flew in the 1931 Ford Tour piloted by Jack Story who related the saga of the Sun-God's flight at every landing. It is not

known what happened to the Spokane Sun-God after that.

Papers from the Buhl company show it was sold oversees shortly after the transcontinental flight. How it ended up back in the United States for the 1931 Ford Tour is unknown. It is known that many Buhl planes that were sold oversees were used by smugglers because of the plane's agility and many were confiscated by the United States Customs. However, it does not appear the Sun-God was among these planes. One man claimed, in the late 90s, to have seen the Sun-God hanging in a barn in California.

By the late 1930s Mamer was employed by Northwest Airlines, working as a pilot on that carrier's Seattle-Minneapolis route. On January 10, 1938, Mamer was at the controls of

Northwest Airlines Flight 2, a Lockheed Model 14 Super Electra when the plane crashed. Parts of the tail section were torn from the aircraft as it flew over the Bridger Range northeast of Bozeman, Montana and the plane went into a dive. Mamer, copilot Fred West and eight passengers died instantly. Later, an investigation revealed that the tail structure had failed on the new design from what is known as "natural resonance, or period of vibration." Within 24 hours of the accident, the United States Department of Commerce (the governing authority of the CAA) ordered that all Lockheed Super Electras be



Nick Mamer inside the cockpit of the Sun-God. The top of a large fuel tank is visible just beyond the back of the instrument panel. (Photo by Libby Studio. Courtesy Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture).



The Spokane Sun-God spent 4 hours circling Felts Field at the end of the transcontinental journey, during which time planes filled with sightseers flew up to see the plane in the air. (Photo by Libby Studio. Courtesy Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture).

immediately grounded and that tests be performed to confirm that the figures obtained in the aircraft's original vibration tests were accurate. It was discovered that the machine used by Lockheed (and authorized by the Department of Commerce) to measure the natural vibration periods of the component parts of the aircraft had given Lockheed engineers misleading results. The Department ordered that the rudders of all Super Electras be modified so as to eliminate

the possibility that flutter would cause an in-flight break-up.

An Enduring "Refueling" Legacy

Since 1942, Spokane's Fairchild Air Force Base/Station has been a key part of the United States' defense strategy-from World War II repair depot, to Strategic Air Command bomber wing during the Cold War, to Air Mobility Command air refueling wing during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Today, Fairchild's aircraft and personnel make up the backbone of the Air Force's tanker fleet on the west coast. Two refueling wings are located at Fairchild, one active, the 92d Air Refueling Wing, and one Air National Guard, the 141st Air Refueling Wing, both flying the Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker. Other units on the base include the Air Force Survival, Evasion,

Resistance and Escape school, medical detachments, a weapons squadron and the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency.

The 92d ARW employs over 2,200 active-duty military, as well as over 700 civilian employees. It supports Air Mobility Command's mission, providing global reach air power and deploying expeditionary combat support forces in support of worldwide contingency requirements.

Fairchild's location, 12 miles (19 km) west of Spokane, resulted from a competition with the cities of Seattle and Everett in western Washington. The War Department chose Spokane for several reasons: better weather conditions, the location 300 miles (480 km) from the coast, and the Cascades Mountain range providing a natural barrier against possible Japanese attack.

As an added incentive to the War Department, many Spokane businesses and public-minded citizens donated money to purchase land for the base. At a cost of more than \$125,000, these people bought 1,400 acres (6 km2) and presented the title to the War Department in January 1942. That year, the government designated \$14 million to purchase more land and begin construction of a new Spokane Army Air Depot.

From 1942 until 1946, the base served as a repair depot for damaged aircraft returning from the Pacific Theater. In the summer of 1946, the base was transferred to the Strategic Air Command (SAC) and assigned to the 15th Air Force (15 AF). Beginning in the summer of 1947, the 92nd and 98th Bomb Groups arrived. Both of the units flew the most advanced bomber of the day, the B-29 Superfortress. In January 1948, the base received the second of its three official

names: Spokane Air Force Base.

With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, both groups deployed to Japan and Guam. After only a few months, General MacArthur released the 92nd to return to the states while the 98th remained in the Far East. The 98th was then reassigned to Nebraska. Upon its return to Fairchild, the 92nd was re-designated the 92d Bombardment Wing (Heavy). In November 1950, the base took its

current name in memory of Air Force Vice Chief of Staff, General Muir S. Fairchild, a native of Bellingham, Washington. The general entered service as a sergeant with the Washington National Guard in June 1916 and died while on duty in the Pentagon in March 1950. The formal dedication ceremony was held July 20, 1951, to coincide with the arrival of the wing's first B-36 Peacemaker.

As military operations in Vietnam escalated in the mid-1960s, the demand for air refueling increased. Fairchild tanker crews became actively involved in Operation YOUNG TIGER, refueling combat aircraft in Southeast Asia. The wing's B-52s were not far behind, deploying to Andersen AFB, Guam for Operation ARC LIGHT and the bombing campaign against

Ten thousand people turned out to see the Sun-God come home. Admission and parking fees were taken for the event to help pay for the trip. They were 25¢ for adults, 25¢ for parking and children got in free. (Photo by Libby Studio. Courtesy Northwest Museum of Art and Culture).

enemy strongholds in Vietnam.

In late 1974, the Air Force announced plans to convert the 141st Fighter Interceptor Group of the Washington Air National Guard, an F-101 Voodoo unit at Geiger Field, to an air refueling mission with KC-135 aircraft. The unit would then be renamed the 141st Air Refueling Wing (141 ARW) and move to Fairchild. Work began soon thereafter and by 1976 eight KC-135E aircraft transferred to the new

141 ARW. Today, the 141 ARW continues its air mobility mission, flying the KC-135R model.

On January 23, 1987, following the inactivation of the 47th Air Division at Fairchild, the 92nd Bombardment Wing was reassigned to the 57th Air Division at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota.

On March 13, 1987, a KC-135A crashed into a field adjacent to the 92nd Bomb Wing headquarters and the taxiway during a practice flight for an In-Flight Refueling Demonstration planned for later in that month. Seven were killed in the crash, six aboard the aircraft and one on the ground.

Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, a total of 560 base personnel deployed to DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM from

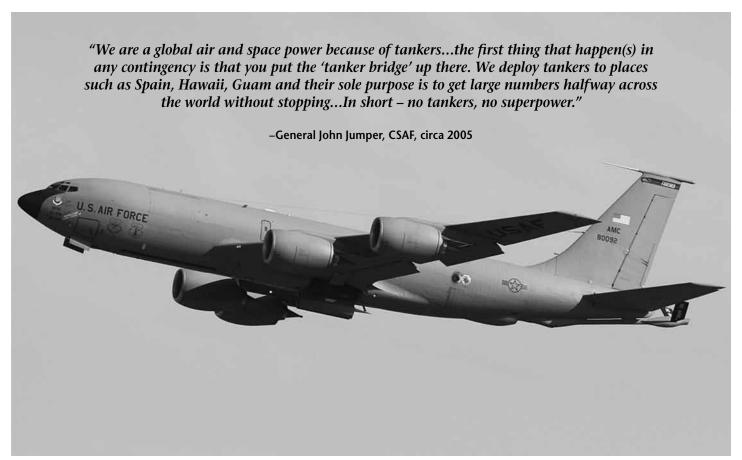
August 1990 to March 1991. The 43d and 92d Air Refueling Squadrons flew a combined total of 4,004 hours, 721 sorties, and off-loaded a total of 22.5 million pounds of fuel to coalition aircraft.

On September 1, 1991, under Air Force reorganization, the 92d Bombardment Wing (Heavy) was re-designated the 92d Wing, emphasizing a dual bombing and refueling role.

December 7, 1993 marked the beginning of a significant change in the mission of Fairchild when the B-52s were transferred to another



Following the flight, Nick Mamer is all smiles as he interacts with the throng of avaition enthusiasts on hand for the Sun-God's return. (Photo by Libby Studio. Courtesy Northwest Museum of Art and Culture).



In 2009 a KC-135 Stratotanker named the Spokane Sun-God II took off from Fairchild AFB, Washington, in a recreation of original Sun-God's take off from Felts Field 80 years earlier. (USAF Photo).

ACC base while the KC-135s, now assigned to the newly established Air Mobility Command (AMC) would remain. This was the first step in Fairchild's transition to an air refueling wing. The departure of B-52s continued throughout the spring of 1994, with most of the bombers gone by May 25, 1994.

On July 1, 1994, the 92d Bomb Wing was re-designated the 92d Air Refueling Wing (92 ARW), and Fairchild AFB was transferred from ACC to Air Mobility Command (AMC) in a ceremony marking the creation of the largest air refueling wing in the Air Force. Dubbed as the new "tanker hub of the Northwest," the wing was capable of maintaining an air bridge across the nation and the world in support of U.S., and allied forces.

Since 1994, the 92 ARW has been involved in virtually every contingency mission around the world. Whether it has been combat operations or humanitarian relief missions, Fairchild tankers have been force extenders, enabling U.S. and Allied aircraft to successfully complete their missions. In addition, 92 ARW KC-135s have routinely supported special airlift missions in response to world events or international treaty compliance requirements.

In 1995 aircraft from Fairchild flew to Travis AFB, California in support of its first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) mission, transporting Russian inspectors to sites in the Western U.S. The wing has flown START missions in the U.S. every year since. And in May 2000, the wing became the first active duty KC-135 unit to transport U.S. inspectors on a START mission into Ulan Ude, Russia.

Throughout much of the decade of the 1990s, the wing was actively involved in missions to suppress the aggression of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Wing personnel answered the call for operations such as DESERT STRIKE and PHOENIX SCORPION and routinely deployed in support of Operation Southern Watch (OSW) and Operation Northern Watch (ONW). OSW and ONW required a constant presence of tankers and associated support personnel to help enforce

the UN-sanctioned no-fly zones in Iraq. Southwest Asia, however, was not the only trouble spot, as the wing also had to deploy aircraft and personnel in 1999 to support Operation ALLIED FORCE, the mission to stop Serb aggression in Kosovo.

2001 will be remembered most for 9/11 and America's response – the Global War on Terrorism. Following the terrorist attacks on our nation, the wing began providing around-the-clock air refueling of Combat Air Patrol fighter aircraft and initiated 24-hour ground alert operations in support of Operation NOBLE EAGLE, the defense of the American homeland. Preparations also began for what would become a series of extended Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) deployments for aircrews and maintainers as well as combat support and medical personnel. These deployments continue today.

In 2009, in celebration of the 80th Anniversary of the Sun-God's famous flight, the historical flight was relaunched on 21 August as the Flight of the Sun-God II, featuring a KC-135 renamed the "Spokane Sun-God II." Many dignitaries were on hand for the event including Cathy McMorris-Rodgers, U.S. Repdresentative from the 5th District and her husband, retired Commander Brian Rodgers; Mary Verner, Mayor of Spokane; (then) AMC commander Gen. Arthur Lichte and his wife Chris; Lieutenant Gen. Robert Allardice, 18th Air Force commander; Brigadier Gen. Gary Magonigle, assistant adjutant general also serving as Washington Air National Guard Commander, and his wife Kathy Magonigle; and Staff Sgt. Ronnie Paxson, Vietnam War Purple Heart Recipient; along with former 92nd Air Refueling Wing and 92nd Bomb Wing commanders, vice wing commanders and group commanders; Command Chief Master Sergeants within the Air Mobility command; local mayors, state representatives, and councilmen. All there to pay homage to the Air Force, the Air National Guard, air refueling excellence and the historic flight made 80 years prior. A fitting salute to an almost forgotten step in the evolution of modern-day air-to-air refueling.

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An Interview with Lt Gen Mark Ramsay, 18AF/CC

By Colonel Greg Cook, USAF (Ret)

Shortly after taking command of the 18th Air Force in September of last year, Lt. Gen. Mark F. Ramsay's office contacted A/TQ with an offer for the general to sit down with the magazine for an in-depth interview. The offer was quickly accepted and arrangements were made for Col. Greg Cook, USAF ret, the magazines Public Relations Coordinator, to meet with General Ramsay during the 2011 Airlift/Tanker Association Convention & Symposium in Nashville last November. The following is Part I of the interview —

A/TQ: This is your opportunity to say anything to the command. Tell us, who is Mark Ramsay and how did you get here? Can you provide a snapshot of your journey?

Lt Gen Ramsay: I'll just start off by saying I am extremely lucky. If you look at my career path, it's not a pyramid. It's a journey of sorts. If you were to go back and talk to the personnel folks, I did everything wrong from a tactical proficiency standpoint. I didn't fly major weapon systems until I was a lieutenant colonel.

A/TQ: So, there is no specific pattern or a path that says you're going to get to your level of command?

Lt Gen Ramsay: No. It's about taking advantage of the opportunities available. It's about busting your tail. Here's the most important thing: when I say lucky, it's being lucky enough to have leaders who showed me a path and gave me opportunities, some of which were way outside of my comfort zone. In my case, they were even way outside of the Air Force or the country. So, being taught early the importance of depth and breadth proved to be pivotal as I progressed through my career.

A/TQ: What are your initial thoughts about

coming into the position? When was the last time you were in AMC?

Lt Gen Ramsay: I was a wing commander when 18th Air Force was reborn in 2003. I left the command in March of 2005 at the end of my wing command tour. So I have walked back into the global mobility enterprise after being out of AMC for six and a half years. Nothing has surprised me coming back into it - and I say that in a good way. We were busy, we are busy, and we will continue to be busy. We're the first out the door. We're there for the duration. We're the last ones home. That has been the case and will always be the case. It's quite simple - nothing happens until something moves and that's what we bring to the nation.

A/TQ: Can you explain how, in your present position, you are considered to be "triple-hatted?"

Lt Gen Ramsay: First, as the 18th Air Force Commander, I have the responsibility to look out for the Airmen and missions over which I have operational control. Second, the Air Forces Transportation Commander (AFTRANS), Gen. Johns, delegates day-today execution of global mobility operations to me. In that role I work as the Air Force component to USTRANSCOM, presenting forces and conducting operations for the



global reach mission. Finally, my third hat is Commander of Task Force 294, providing tanker forces for U.S. Strategic Command.

A/TQ: What is the new steady state of AMC operations? Is there such a thing?

Lt Gen Ramsay: I think we've seen it in the last 10 years. We are going to be as busy as the joint forces and the nation need us to be. We answer the call so others may prevail. If the events of the last few years have taught us anything, it is that the insatiable hunger for mobility is a constant. That means that our focus will remain on scanning our global AOR, anticipating and shaping requirements, and then working collaboratively across the enterprise to balance capacity against them.

Last spring was a perfect example. We were flying missions into Central Command, as we've been doing for the last decade, supporting airlift, aeromedical evacuation, and airdrop requirements with C-17s as well as other military and civilian aircraft. In addition to that enduring requirement, we had to provide no-fail support for the President's travel to South America, which drove us to stand up an enterprise in the SOUTHCOM AOR in support. Then the Middle East lit up. We sent planners to AFRICOM and looked at the enterprise to determine what we would need in order



to support operations over Libya. When it became obvious we were going to have to conduct air refueling operations, we put tankers in Europe and asked the ARC to generate capacity to support. In the wake of the Japan earthquake, we did essentially the same thing. We sent planners and liaisons into the system and when the tsunami and reactor issues complicated the picture, we leveraged those planners to determine how we needed to adjust our capacity to meet emerging requirements.

The reality is that there will be no shortage of demand for global reach in the future – but our success will continue to rest on finding ways to effectively anticipate and shape requirements while managing our capacity effectively.

A/TQ: You were in NATO during the Libyan operation. Tell our readers what you experienced there and how air mobility forces were engaged from that perspective.

Lt Gen Ramsay: Libya is a prime example of how things are changing. I think the big lesson learned from Libya is that Coalition led operations are pivotal to current and future global engagements and that we, the U.S. military, must be prepared to play a pivotal role in their success. While this does not mean leading the effort, we must be ready to support it. For example, in Libya, we provided almost all of the ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance). We provided all the people that did ISR and exploited it. As far as gas passed on the air refueling side, at least 80% of all the fuel came out of U.S. tankers.

A/TQ: I would presume that we also supported forces that were staging and getting into the area?

Lt Gen Ramsay: This is where having the enterprise perspective pays us huge dividends. With Libya, at the high water mark we deployed 32 KC-135 equivalents to Southern Europe to meet NATO requirements. However, OPCON belonged to AFTRANS, which day-to-day is the 18th Air Force, which gave us the flexibility to redirect excess capacity. The first job, priority number one, was to fulfill the ATO (Air Tasking Order). But if any other air refueling requirements occurred in the area, we just used what we already had in place. It was much more efficient and we got everything done.

A/TQ: You didn't have to go to the NATO to ask permission in order to do that?

Lt Gen Ramsay: I was in NATO and acting on its behalf. There was excess capacity and it was used to support other missions,

because AFTRANS had the global picture. We're having a discussion about that across the Air Force now and we've been having it for years. This is a very, very tactical issue, but we've been talking about this for decades: who owns assets in execution?

A/TQ: Was this the first time that this

has been set up that way during an operational contingency or is it just a continuing evolution?

Lt Gen Ramsay: It's a continuing evolution, but this was a watershed event and a very interesting discussion from the onset because it was a war in the AFRICOM AOR, yet it was a NATO operation. This is what made it unique: a NATOled operation where the U.S. was not the lead nation. The French and British took the lead. So, that was an anomaly. Now, where it gets really interesting is when you look further into it. In terms of the ISR assets and the fighters initially involved, do we as an Air Force present those forces to AFRICOM or EUCOM? It's in the AFRI-COM AOR, but EUCOM has the aircraft and all the bases used to support operations.

A/TQ: All the airplanes were in Europe?

Lt Gen Ramsay: Right. As the J3 of NATO, I got a TOA (transfer of authority) message that said those tankers were in my

ATO. In the end they chopped them to EUCOM, because EUCOM had the bases, the logistics footprint, the munitions, and the air operations center at Ramstein.

A/TQ: How do programmed flying hours for the fleet compare to actual operations?

Lt Gen Ramsay: Over the last few years we've averaged about 120% or so above programmed flying hours, with consistent growth. This year is looking to be more of the same. There are obvious implications for

spare parts and the air frame itself, but in a broader sense I think this demonstrates how successful we've been. Our customers, the combatant commanders, place a great value on the capability we provide – as evidenced by the demand. Our challenge is to efficiently and effectively manage requirements as well as capacity across the enterprise – and it is something we are very good at. The

Lt. Gen. Mark F. Ramsay



Lt. Gen. Mark F. Ramsay is the Commander, 18th Air Force, Scott Air Force Base, Ill. As Air Mobility Command's sole warfighting numbered air force, 18th Air Force is responsible for the command's worldwide operational mission. With more than 43,000 active-duty Airmen and 1,300 airlift and air refueling aircraft, 18th Air Force manages a streamlined organization that focus-

es the air mobility warfighting capability through the 618th Air and Space Operations Center (Tanker Airlift Control Center) two expeditionary mobility task forces, 15 wings and one stand-alone group.

General Ramsay entered the Air Force in 1982 as a distinguished graduate of Officer Training School. He has commanded an air refueling squadron and wing (KC-135s), and an airlift group comprising six different fixed and rotary-winged aircraft transporting our nation's most senior leaders. He has also commanded two expeditionary air refueling squadrons supporting operations Provide Comfort and Southern Watch. The general was the U.S. Central Command Air Forces Deputy Director of Mobility Forces from fall 2004 through spring 2005, ensuring airlift and air refueling missions supported the combat, humanitarian, convoy casualty mitigation, and national democratic election operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa.

General Ramsay has served as Chief of the Programs and Mobility Division at Headquarters U.S. European Command; Chief of the Global Mobility and Program Integration divisions and Director of Strategic Planning on the Air Staff; and Deputy Director for Politico-Military Affairs for Europe, NATO, Russia and Africa on the Joint Staff. Prior to his current assignment, he was Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations and Intelligence, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, NATO, Casteau, Belgium.

other big takeaway here is that we are rapidly building the experience base of our crews; "seasoning" them at a faster rate. The end result is you have men and women who are doing amazing things for air mobility that ten years ago we wouldn't have imagined.

A/TQ: How have ten years of war affected TACC's operations? What kinds of C2 changes have taken place in that time?

Lt Gen Ramsay: Over the last ten years, The Air Force has been very focused on refining

doctrine and policy relating to C2 enabling concepts. However, not all of the changes completely and accurately took into consideration the unique requirements and capabilities of Global Reach. In fact, they sometimes required some slight adjustments to support a specific theater. In a lot of ways, this really came to a head during the Haiti earthquake. There was a realization of the need for an operational-level integration of our planning and execution efforts. As a result, over the past year, we put a lot work into developing the AFTRANS staff and refining our crisis response processes. The result is that now you have an AFTRANS staff that can dynamically plan and oversee the execution of operational-level activities on a daily basis.

Our staff consists of a small 18 AF/A3 and 18 AF/A5 team, a handful of A2, A4, A6, and A7 subject matter experts, plus the deputies or representatives from each of the AMC directorates, and special staff as required. They convene to review planning, monitor progress, and ensure the integration of our efforts across the entire global mobility enterprise. Through an adaptive, collaborative architecture, we have synchronized the Global Reach mission all the way from strategic level down to the tactical-level of detailed planning and execution. What this means is that the enterprise is able to respond in a much more integrated and synchronized manner than in the past, which in turn produces more effective and efficient results for the war fighter.

If you want to take that down to the TACC level you can also see changes in the way they operate in response to their increasing operations tempo and workload as well as the historical shift from primarily C2 training or exercise missions to C2 missions supporting combat forces. These changes haven't been so much about changing the size of the workforce as they have been about how the work is done. Instead of using a regionally-focused execution process that divides the workload and oversight geographically, TACC turned to a missionoriented process (i.e. based on the mission type: airlift, air refueling, aeromedical evacuation, etc.). Lastly, operations in the TACC - and across the enterprise - have steadily continued to rely more and more heavily on the total force enterprise.

A/TQ: Is your span of control a physical challenge?

Lt Gen Ramsay: That has been an issue in the past, and something we've addressed in an organizational sense by recently restructuring and realigning the responsibilities of the US Air Force Expeditionary Center and 18th Air Force. This has been an evolutionary process: we constantly re-evaluate the best approach that allows both organizations to focus on core missions. We've also addressed it through the use of a highly adaptive and collaborative information architecture that synchronizes the entire enterprise. In practice, it allows us to simultaneously assess capacity and make adjustments in real-time. If TACC sees a shortage at a specific location, they bring it up within that forum. If a location has issues with Airmen, infrastructure, equipment, or C 2 they can bring it up there as well. And it is in this forum that we get the intel and mission analysis that allows us to forecast requirements. Essentially, it allows us to turn the enterprise on a dime by flowing resources where they're needed and better matching requirements to capacity.

A/TQ: Tell us about AMC's relationship with the Combatant Commanders. How has the role of 18th AF evolved?

Lt Gen Ramsay: I have been able to step back and look at this thing strategically. Many of the thoughts I had as a wing commander about what the 18th Air Force should do as the only numbered air force in the global mobility enterprise have come to pass. It's like I'm starting to read a book at chapter 12 after leaving at chapter 2 – and I'm looking at the 10 chapters in between and I can see how they were written by the people who came before me.

If you go back and look at the Combatant Commands and their air components, AMC was TRANSCOM's component from the beginning. AMC is an AFFOR headquarters - they're an organizing, training and equipping headquarters. TACC was seen as the fulfillment of AFTRANS for a couple of decades, but in many ways it really wasn't. That always bothered me. TRANSCOM has a strategic perspective. They do operational and contingency planning and horizon scanning. TACC does tactical planning and execution. The AFFOR staff in AMC is largely organizing, training, equipping, and providing policy. What used to be missing was the operational planning piece; someone to work with USTRANSCOM and scan the horizon from an air equity standpoint.

So, that operational aspect was finally realized over the last two to three years. Now, we have an AFTRANS staff at 18th Air Force that fills in that void at the operational-level of war for Air Mobility Command. So day to day, I carry out those duties for General Johns. My first commitment is day-to-day execution. Sometimes General Johns has to step back in, which he did in March when we had simultaneous contingencies kick off. At that time, the President was in South America, a 9.0 earthquake and tsunami hit Japan, Libya kicked off, and AMC was going

overseas within hours of the order to go, so General Johns stepped in. As things became normalized, the new normal if you will, he could step back again.

The second aspect of the change is that we have now done a much better job of defining and refining AFFOR-AFTRANS integration. In the fall of 2003, when 18th Air Force was born, the headquarters was comprised of a commander and a command section. General Welser had a small staff comprised principally of JA and administrative personnel to lead and manage the largest Numbered Air Force in the Air Force. As we continued to evolved the single AMC NAF concept over the past decade, we now have an 18th Air Force Headquarters with a day-to-day A3 crisis and A5 horizon scanning staff. They are in constant contact through what's called an SDCO (Secure Defense Connect Online) and many other tools that make sure we're connected with TRANSCOM, which in turn connects us to the other CCMDs, especially USCENTCOM and USSTRATCOM. We have long since gotten through the issue of who works for whom. We had now pulled everyone together in this SDCO construct so that we're just flat and transparent.

A/TQ: How does the declining DoD budget affect the 18th AF? Can you address the organizational changes just announced?

Lt Gen Ramsay: It's really about gaining the greatest value from the taxpayers' investment. This means that leaders at all levels have to be focused on shaping our organizations and operations to be as effective as possible within limited resources. For the 18th Air Force, it goes back to those "hats" we discussed earlier. First, you take care of the people. When you do that, it has a direct impact on how we implement efficiencies, which in turns drives us to make the best choices for the operational missions. I'd argue that we consistently take hard looks at our processes and seek opportunities to transform and streamline our operations. The way we synchronize the global mobility enterprise is just one example. I think that for us the future really lays in recognizing the operational realities we face and leveraging the innovation of our Airmen to find more effective and efficient ways to operate. The true heart of our enterprise and the key to our continued success is our total force Airmen, civilians, and industry and community partners.

So, to continue the discussion on efficiencies, this was the big role of the civilian cuts and restructuring announced in November. There were already discussions about the span of control issue and the question of, "Do we have the global mobility enterprise structure about right?" That was really the

overarching question. There's also a forcing function from D.C. which is the budget.

A/TQ: So, you sort of have to look at the organization and the manpower and say, "We know we have to cut. This is an opportunity to make some changes and be more efficient?"

Lt Gen Ramsay: And more effective. This is not about doing more with less; it's about being as lean as we can be while maintaining our effectiveness - and even trying to get better. So, a small group of really smart people recommended the changes we implemented to restructure the 18th Air Force and Expeditionary Center. They looked at a lot of different constructs, literally hundreds of them. They asked, "What is the key to our enterprise?" The U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center (USAF EC) concept worked. They literally make the ground support structure of this enterprise run. But today, as we sit here, they don't own much of it. They teach it, they train it, they do testing for parts of it, but they don't own much of it.

So that was one model. The team also looked at what the EMTFs bring to the fight. One of the things that General Allardice had previously worked with General Johns was the span of control issue in 18th Air Force. They looked at the USAF EC and took the five airbase wings or groups, the "generate the force" type of bases that don't have iron on the ramp, and put those under General Bender (the USAF EC Commander). That was more of a span of control issue than anything else. And we have one-star generals who were and will continue to be geographic CCMD focused.

A/TQ: So are they really super DIRMOB-FORs (Director of Mobility Forces). Is that what you're kind of referring to?

Lt Gen Ramsay: For large operations, yes. And we want to keep it that way. We think that's a critical ingredient to the enterprise. We also have a pool of colonels trained as DIRMOBFORs. But in the CENTCOM AOR, they go there as deputies to the 1-star. We scaled the DIRMOBFOR based on the size and scope of the operation. The rotational DIRMOBFOR is a total force one-star. They report back to AFTRANS and AMC.

We looked at those two people and said, "If they're going to be the guys that are never

home, which is kind of what they do, why do we have forces ADCON under them?" So, now the one on the West Coast remains in place with their staff to work as the vice for the EC commander. On the East Coast, the 21st EMTF goes away and that person becomes the commandant of the EC School.

So there are these two roles but really their main deployment function is to be regionally focused "super DIRMOBFORS." The efficiency piece comes when we realign the CRW at Travis. When we pull the trigger this summer the Expeditionary Center will have one CRW – the 621st - and both the West and the East Coast groups and squadrons. It will be one CRW commander reporting to one two-star general – much more efficient, much more effective.

A/TQ: With the six groups and all the squadrons at his disposal? Regionally speaking?

Lt Gen Ramsay: Exactly - all of that....So, that's the contingency piece and it makes total sense because the USAF EC trains and exercises them today. Now, they've got AD-CON over them. The vice and the commandant - the two one-stars - report directly to General Bender. The last piece of the change is the fixed day-to-day infrastructure represented by the two AMOWs (Air Mobility Operations Wings) headquartered at Hickam and Ramstein. Those will be the last two DRUs (Direct Reporting Units) to General Bender. So, he's going to have three newly-assigned wings under him: the two AMOWs and the one CRW. It's quite simple: if it flies, it's 18th Air Force. If it involves day to day or contingency operations or training and education related to the mobility enterprise, then it belongs to the Expeditionary Center.

A/TQ: So you have simplified the organizational structure?

Lt Gen Ramsay: In the end, we have streamlined ourselves and shifted a little bit more of the administrative enterprise span of control from 18th AF to the USAF EC.

All this leads back to my favorite discussion, which you have to have: C2. It means different things to different people. If I go to TACC and say command and control, they're thinking HF radios and computer flight planning. At my level in AFTRANS, it's about OPCON, TACON, and ADCON. General Bender

is going to have ADCON over his new structure. He does OPRs, EPRs, disciplinary matters, day-to-day stuff: those are his people. OPCON remains with 18th Air Force, with AFTRANS and General Johns.

What this leads to is that we are going to go from 43,000 personnel in 18th Air Force to about 38,000. This will still be the largest NAF in the USAF when it is all done. And we are going to keep looking at this. We're not done yet. We're not only seeking effectiveness but we have to think how best to operate as resources become more constrained.

Ultimately, we want everybody to succeed. I wake every morning thinking to myself, what do we have to do today to make sure that three or six months or even two years from now we're postured across the enterprise to get the mission done.

A/TQ: Do you have any specific goals for the 18th AF?

Lt Gen Ramsay: This organization has worked hard to develop an AFTRANS battle staff construct that allows us to set the entire global mobility enterprise up for success. My mandate is simple: to ensure that staff can continue to effectively conduct operational level planning and execution and to continue to find ways to enhance its operational effectiveness. Success requires that we be both transparent and flat. What does this mean? It goes back to what I've been saying - creating an environment in which we can share our challenges and work together to solve them by leveraging the innovation and expertise present throughout the entire enterprise.

A/TQ: Anything you'd like to add?

Lt Gen Ramsay: The foreseeable future is one in which there will continue to be significant demand for global reach. Our success in meeting that demand is underwritten by our Airmen.

It is so wonderful to come into the command and see how innovative and fired up our people are. They are running harder, but they understand the importance of what we're doing and they love it because they know they are contributing to our nation's security. They get it. I am proud to serve with them and I am honored for the opportunity to lead the world's finest mobility team.

Part II of this interview is scheduled to appear in the Spring 2012 edition of A/TQ.

A/TA Convention 2011 in Photos

(Photos Displayed in No Particular Order)









INDUSTRY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

GE Aviation, an operating unit of General Electric Company, is one of the world's leading manufacturers of jet engines, integrated digital systems, electrical power and mechanical systems for civil and military aircraft. GE Aviation has a global presence and is proud to deliver world-class maintenance and support services for all of its customers. Visit GE - Aviation at www.ge.com/aviation/. CFM International is a joint company of General Electric Company, U.S.A and Snecma Moteurs, France. For more information visit CFM International at www.cfm56.com.

A World Leader

GE Aviation is the world's leading producer of large and small jet engines for commercial and military aircraft. The company also supplies aircraft-derived engines for marine applications and provides

aviation services. GE Aviation's technological excellence, supported by continuing substantial investments in research and development, has been the foundation of growth, and helps to ensure quality products for customers.

A History of Firsts

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, the U.S. government searched for a company to develop the first airplane engine "booster" for the fledgling U.S. aviation industry. This booster, or turbosupercharger, installed on a piston engine, used the engine's exhaust gases to drive an air compressor to boost power at higher altitude.

GE accepted the challenge first, but another team also requested the chance to develop the turbosuper-charger. Contracts were awarded in what was the first military aircraft engine competition in the U.S. Under wartime secrecy, both companies tested and developed various designs until the Army called for a test demonstration.

In the bitter atmosphere of Pikes Peak, 14,000 feet above sea level, GE demonstrated a 350-horsepower, turbosupercharged Liberty aircraft engine and entered the business of making airplanes fly higher, faster and with more efficiency than ever before. That mountaintop test of the first turbosupercharger landed GE's first aviation-related government contract and paved the way for GE to become a world leader in jet engines.

For more than two decades, GE produced turbosuperchargers that enabled aircraft, including many in service during World War II, to fly higher, with heavier payloads. The company's expertise in turbines and turbosuperchargers figured into the U.S. Army Air Force's decision to select GE to develop the nation's first jet engine.

Since then, the aircraft engines division of GE Aviation has scored many firsts. Among them: America's first jet engine, the first turbojet engines to power flights at two and three times the speed of sound, and the world's first high bypass turbofan engine to enter service.

Today, GE Aviation is a global provider of engines, systems, and services, with revenues of \$17.6 billion in 2010. As a leader in aviation technology, GE Aviation continues to design, develop and manufacture jet engines, components and integrated systems for military, commercial and business and general aircraft as well as aero-derivative gas turbines for marine applications. In addition, GE Aviation is the world's leading integrated engine maintenance resource.

Military Engines - A Galaxy of Power for Air Mobility

From fighters, helicopters and transports to the next generation



engine, has been selected to power one of the largest air transports ever made, the C-5 Galaxy.

In addition to providing topflight power for 12 commercial aircraft, GE's CF6 engines (military designation: F103) earn their military decorations every day.

The CF6 has been selected to power the C-5 RERP based on its ability to provide an affordable, commercially-based solution that enables the venerable Super Galaxy to meet or beat every operational requirement well into the next millennium. A 58% faster time-to-climb capability, 20% increase in cargo loads and 34% improvement in cost per flying hour are just three of the important elements that power the Super Galaxy to unmatched mission superiority.

The F103/CF6 has also powered the KC-10 through two and a half decades of recognized mission accomplishment, fueling it with one of the best dispatch reliability rates and lowest support costs of any major weapon system in the Air Mobility Command.

CF6 engines also serve as the power of choice for Air Force One, the E-4B, 767 AWACS and Airborne Laser

The CFM56-2 engine (U.S. military designation: F108) truly proves there is power in teamwork. A 50/50 joint company of Snecma and General Electric Company, CFM engines provide a vital link in Tanker-Transport fleet commonality by providing the proven source of power for Air Mobility Command, Air Combat Command, Air National Guard and Reserve missions.

Buytas) Following the success of the CFM56-2 in the reengining of DC-8 jetliners, the U.S. Air Force chose the same engine to re-engine the existing Boeing KC-135 tanker.

F108/CFM56-2-powered KC-135R four-engined tankers are serving in a variety of capacities around the globe.

CFM engines provide reduced takeoff roll, added thrust and increased fuel efficiency. CFM56 power also provides lower fuel burn for extended range, as well as increased time-on-station, payload and tanker offload capability.

KC-10 Extenders, like the one shown here preparing to refuel a C-5 Galaxy, have been powered by GE F103/CF6 engines for over two and half decades, and the engine has been selected to power the C-5 RERP, turning that aircraft into the "Super" Galaxy. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Mike Buytas)

Ready to Power Tomorrow

Building on the strong foundation of success, GE Aviation engines stand ready to power future critical missions well into the 21st century. And, GE Aviaition's Systems business is equipping militaries with the solutions needed to succeed. As a leading supplier of integrated systems and technologies for combat aircraft, military transport, helicopters, land vehicles and unmanned aerial vehicles, GE is enabling armed forces around the world to improve reliability and enhance operational performance. Using a legacy as a world-class leader in the industry, GE is making the future of military air and land procedures safer, stronger and more dynamic than ever before.

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Industry Partner HIGHLIGHTS

Many of our attendees were amazed at the condition of the Gaylord Opryland Hotel considering the devastation from the flood in 2010. The Gaylord Corporation was up to the challenge and rebuilt the Opryland Resort (in record time) to a showplace that is better than before, and in plenty of time to support us. As is often the case, where there is a challenge, there are also opportunities to make improvements and try new things. Gaylord turned a potential disaster into a positive by making their hotel better than before the flood. By all major measurements, our 2011 A/TA convention was another success, but not without its challenges.

The 2011 A/TA convention was a difficult one on several fronts for the Convention Committee as we faced external challenges (mostly beyond our control) that threatened the success of the convention. Because of our large event, A/TA conventions must be contracted several years in advance (five years or more) and there is no option for last-minute rescheduling. Unfortunately, the toughest challenge was that we found ourselves in direct conflict with the Fall Corona meeting (major policy meeting of Air Force senior leaders that is traditionally held at the Air Force Academy on Homecoming weekend). The Corona dates are set by the football schedule that is developed well inside our planning cycle - so there was no way to de-conflict the schedules. This conflict has occurred in the past, but this year it had a larger than normal impact - again, outside circumstances. We also faced the prospect of reduced attendance due to tight funding (which we experienced) and an unexpected challenge caused by an Air Force financial policy change from the use of credit cards for travel to debit cards - this could have been a disaster, but we were given a temporary reprieve. Fortunately, both of these became manageable problems for 2011, but may be problematic in the future.

We had plans in place for Nashville to address an earlier problem identified at the 2010 convention – insufficient general officer participation in the GO tour of the exhibit hall. Again, outside factors negated the planned fixes – we had reduced overall attendance by general officers this year because of schedule conflicts. We will apply those fixes along with additional changes to our plans for 2012 to address this problem – we will work it until we fix it. We are planning to make other changes that should improve other aspects of the Air Mobility Technology Exposition. These changes include: expanded exhibit hours to allow more interaction with attendees and we are considering a few new additional sponsorship opportunities. A/TA remains committed to providing value to participants for the tight marketing dollars. These are, and will likely continue to be, challenging economic times, but together we can make sure A/TA remains the premier event that it has become.

Much of this article has been about the problems we faced in 2011, but there is also some very good news I want to share. In spite of all the economic pressures, we actually had a few more exhibitors in 2011 and the revenues generated by the AMT Exposition actually posted a slight increase – Wow! That is amazing in these tough times. Thanks to the loyal support of our Industry Partners, Industry/Government Supporters and new exhibitors, we continue to grow and just keep on getting better. It is an honor to be associated with all of you from industry and government who make our program a success year after year. 2012 will surely present new challenges, but together we can turn those challenges into opportunities. I look forward to seeing all of you at the Anaheim Marriott, November 1-4, 2012 for our 44th Annual Airlift/Tanker Association Convention.

Bob Dawson, Industry Vice President

Association & Chapter

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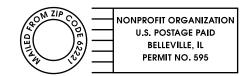




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