War Eagles Air Museum
Doña Ana County Airport
Santa Teresa, NM

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Plane Talk

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The Newsletter of the War Eagles Air Museum

Editorial

What can you, the reader, expect to get from each issue of *Plane Talk*? When we resurrected the moribund War Eagles newsletter at the beginning of 2003, we decided to try to make *Plane Talk* more than just a folksy, superficial, read-once-and-discard "gossip rag." The Museum is home to more than 30 historic aircraft, as well as an extensive library of books, technical manuals and periodicals. As such, we are rightly an important primary resource for researching aviation and military history. We committed early on to use our internal resources, and others as needed, to craft articles that are as accurate, factual and historically and technically correct as possible.

One of the many major downsides of today's Internet-crazed world is the questionable pedigree of on-line information. Such information is *never* guaranteed to be correct. The serious researcher will *never* trust Internet-sourced material in the absence of independent verification. This is a simple but extremely important principal of scholarly endeavor. Sadly, once bad information gets on-line, it can spread with viral velocity, and often becomes accepted as "truth" despite being utterly, completely and demonstrably false. Worse, it seems many people today lack the basic analytical skills required to apply a critical "GO/NO GO" test to information that they see on-line. How else to explain, for example, the recent, wide-

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▲ ***The Museum's latest acquisition is a 1942 Stinson L-5* Sentinel, *one of the most important observation aircraft of World War II and the Korean War. El Pasoan "Doc" Nelson (left) was its former owner and restorer. Waldo Cavender (r.) delivered it to the Museum from El Paso International Airport.***

Featured Aircraft

Edward A. "Eddie" Stinson was born on July 11, 1894, in Fort Payne, Alabama. He was always fascinated by aviation. The Wright brothers taught him to fly in 1911, and he soon gained fame as a barnstormer, stunt pilot and record-setting aviator. In 1915, Eddie and his brother Jack, along with sisters Marjorie and Katherine, opened the Stinson School for Aviation in San Antonio, Texas. The school was a major training facility for U.S. and Canadian pilots during World War I. After his plan to open a flying school in his home state failed, the

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ly believed Internet hoax saying that the planet Mars was going to appear "as big as the full moon" in the night sky. Or consider the burgeoning hype about "the end of the world" allegedly occurring on December 21, 2012, because the ancient Mayan long-count calendar ends on that date. A few moments of critical, logical evaluation will easily and authoritatively refute these bizarre beliefs. But, unfortunately, their utter absurdity does not stop them, and thousands of others like them, from spreading through cyberspace like wildfire. And that doesn't even touch the issue of on-line political information...

So what is the point of this diatribe, you may well ask? Simply this—it would be easy to click on a few Internet pages, download some unverified information, copy-and-paste it into a *Plane Talk* template and e-mail it off to the printer. But that's not how we do it. Every person involved in *Plane Talk*—and there are a lot more than the names listed in the masthead—works hard at it, and is committed to the highest standards of accuracy. It takes at least six weeks to put an issue together, and we hope you think the effort is worth it. We try to craft a newsletter that you will find interesting, informative, meaningful and, hopefully, educational. As we said a while back, we hope you think to yourself "Wow, I did not know that!" at least once while reading each issue. With untrue "facts" assaulting us from all sides, we strive to make *Plane Talk* a reliable source of aviation-related information that you can count on to be the truth as best we know it. ✪

Plane Talk

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peripatetic Eddie founded the Stinson Airplane Company in Dayton, Ohio, in 1920. In 1925, lured by $25,000 from the Detroit Board of Commerce Aviation Committee, he moved to Detroit, Michigan, which had a better business climate at the time. His Detroit operation was named the Stinson Aircraft Syndicate.

Stinson's first aircraft, the six-seat SM-1 *Detroiter* (progenitor of more than 13,000 Stinson aircraft built over the next 30 years) first flew on January 25, 1926. With a heated, soundproof cabin, an electric starter and wheel brakes, it soon became very popular in the burgeoning civil aviation market, and was even chosen by Ruth Elder and Elsie Mackay in their (unsuccessful) trans-Atlantic flight attempts in 1927 and 1928.

Flush with $150,000 raised from the *Detroiter's* success, Eddie incorporated the Stinson Aircraft Company on May 4, 1926. Sales increased from 10 *Detroiters* that year to 121 *Detroiters* and four-seat SM-2 *Juniors* in 1929, at which point the company attracted the attention of famed automobile mogul Errett Lobban (E.L.) Cord. In September 1929, Cord acquired 60 percent of Stinson's stock, thus providing the means for the young company to ride out the Depression while offering a lineup of six aircraft models, including the *Stinson 6000* tri-motor airliner. Two years later, Cord reorganized Stinson as a division of the Aviation Manufacturing Corporation, a subsidiary of AVCO (the Aviation Corporation). In 1931, 75 percent of all four-seat cabin aircraft and 70 percent of all airliners sold in America were Stinsons—a market dominance that would be the envy of any modern company (except maybe Microsoft). In 1940, Stinson merged with the Vultee Corporation and became part of the Stinson-Vultee Division of AVCO.

Unfortunately, Eddie Stinson did not live to enjoy his company's success. On January 26, 1932, on a sales trip to Chicago in a new Model R, he crashed and was killed while trying to make an emergency landing after he ran out of fuel. At that time, the 38-year-old pioneer aviator had logged over 16,000 hours of flight time—more than any other licensed pilot in the country.

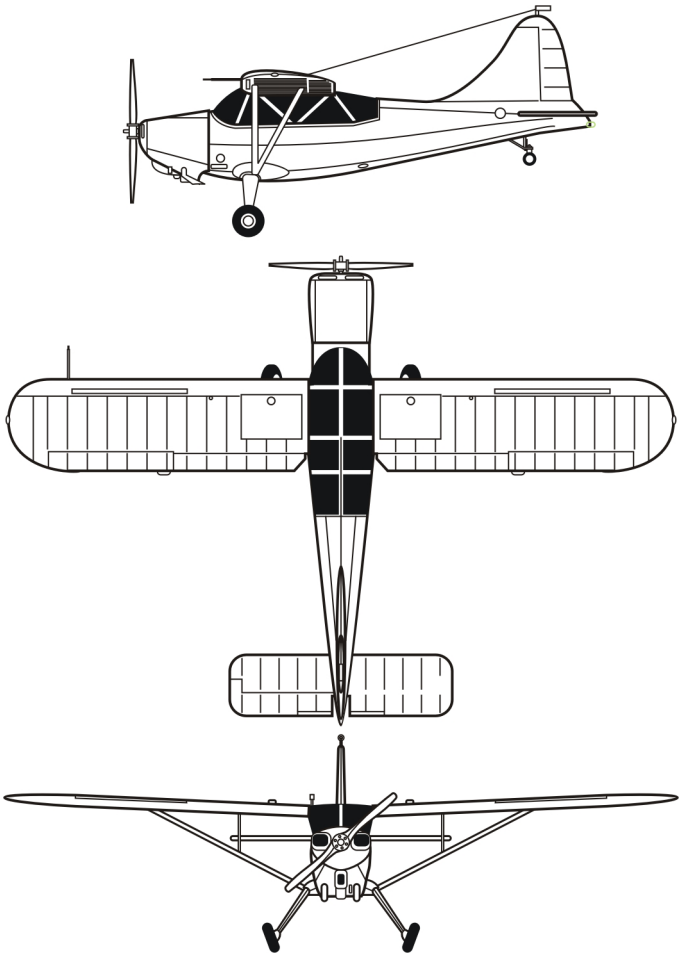
▲ ***Although not of high-quality, this Internet-sourced photo of Eddie Stinson shows the happy-go-lucky pioneer aviator in 1919.***

During the so-called "Golden Age of Aviation," Stinson introduced two new aircraft, the 1931 Model W and the 1932 Model R-2/3, which offered reliability, performance and luxury. These aircraft were the ancestors of the 1933 *Reliant*, perhaps the most famous Stinson of all, which continued in production in at least 10 different versions until 1941, with a total of 1,327 delivered.

Another popular Stinson aircraft of that period was the 1939 Model 105 *Voyager*, also called the HW-75 (the designation stood for High Wing, 75 horsepower engine). This easy-to-fly little $2,995 (in then-year dollars) welded-steel-tube-and-fabric tandem two-seater offered such innovations as slotted trailing-edge flaps and fixed leading-edge slots on its wooden wing for better low-speed handling. By late 1939, the Stinson plant in Wayne, Michigan, was turning out three *Voyagers* per day. Hollywood actor James Stewart, air racer Roscoe Turner and eccentric industrialist/aviator Howard Hughes were among the more notable *Voyager* owners. Stinson sold 535 of the nimble little tail-draggers before the U.S. entry into World War II changed the focus of the nation's entire aircraft industry.

▲ ***This photo of a Model 105* Voyager *was taken on March 19, 1940 (NASA Langley Research Center photo EL-2000-00195).***

In September 1938, German test pilot Emil Kropf demonstrated the amazing short-takeoff-and-landing (STOL) capabilities of the *Luftwaffe's* new Fieseler Fi-156A-1 *Storch* at the National Air Races in Cleveland, Ohio. The *Storch* could take off in 213 feet, land in 61 feet and hover in a 25 mph headwind (or even fly "backwards" in a stronger wind). The U.S. Army Air Corps had nothing like it. Some attending military officers and aircraft company representatives saw the potential value of such an aircraft ("I gotta get me one of these," as Will Smith enthused while flying an alien flying saucer in *Independence Day*). The Army issued a Request for Proposals for a two-seat light observation STOL aircraft later that year. In 1940, of 12 proposals submitted, the Army picked designs from Bellanca Aircraft, Ryan Aeronautical and Stinson for prototype testing. After evaluations at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio, the Army chose Stinson's entry for production, and awarded the company a $1.5-million contract for 142 O-49 *Vigilants*. First flight took place on July 15, 1940. *Vigilants* served throughout World War II in a variety of observation, transport, liaison and medical roles, but the Army concluded soon after it entered service that it was too complicated, too expensive and required too much maintenance. The Army, still looking for a cheap *Storch* clone, ordered 275 substantially modified Model 105s from Stinson in 1941 (actually, the company Eddie founded became the Stinson Division of the Consolidated Vultee Corporation after a 1940 takeover). Initially called the O-62 and later renamed L-5 (the "L" stood for "Liaison"), this versatile little aircraft was called *Sentinel*.



***Stinson L-5 (O-62)* Sentinel General Characteristics**	
Powerplant	One 185-horsepower Lycoming O-435-1 six-cylinder, air-cooled, horizontally opposed piston engine
Cruise Speed	100 miles per hour
Max. Speed	129 miles per hour
Service Ceiling	15,800 feet
Length	24 feet 1 inch
Wingspan	34 feet
Range	450 miles
Weight (empty)	1,475 pounds
Weight (max.)	2,160 pounds

Though appearing similar, the L-5 was actually quite different from the *Voyager*. It had a far more powerful 185-horsepower Lycoming O-435-1 engine, a longer fuselage, reinforced and stiffened plywood wings, new "greenhouse" windows for improved visibility and an enlarged vertical stabilizer and rudder. Taller "springy" main landing gear and a telescoping tailwheel gave it great rough-field capabilities, allowing it to operate from unprepared forward-area airstrips. The number of parts made from strategically important aluminum was greatly reduced, military radio equipment was installed and many other minor improvements were incorporated. The result was a significantly upgraded design that Stinson's Wayne factory could build quickly with only minor changes to production tooling and assembly procedures. Although the total production numbers vary from source to source, all agree that Stinson made almost 4,000 *Sentinels* from November 1942 to September 1945. During World War II, they served with the U.S. Army Air Corps, the U.S. Marines and the U.S. Navy in Europe, the Pacific and the Far East. Great Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF) operated 100 of them in the hostile mountain terrain of the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater, where British troops called them *Jungle Angels* for delivering ammunition, food, personnel, medicine and mail to areas too rough for other aircraft to operate. *Sentinel* roles included observation, forward air control, reconnaissance, resupply, medical evacuation and personnel transport.

While several other light military aircraft (collectively known as "Grasshoppers") served in World War II, such

Featured Aircraft (Continued on page 4)

▲ ***How's this for a nostalgia-invoking picture? It's found on the cover of a glossy, high-quality post-World-War-II catalogue of Stinson aircraft, Googled from an Internet auction site.***

Featured Aircraft (Continued from page 3)

as the Taylorcraft L-2, the Aeronca L-3 and the Piper L-4, the L-5 was the most versatile of the bunch. A true workhorse that could be maintained in the most primitive field conditions, it flew a wider variety of missions than any other type of liaison aircraft. According to the Stinson Owners and Pilots Association, *Sentinels* were "never far from the action." They "participated in most theaters of the war and became a familiar sight to friendly and enemy troops alike. American soldiers commonly used the nickname "Flying Jeep" when referring to the L-5 because it was rugged, versatile and could be relied upon to accomplish nearly anything asked of it." In Burma, some *Sentinels* even reportedly took off and landed from platforms built in the treetops, because the dense jungle below was impossible to clear to make conventional airstrips.

▲ ***This very nice in-flight view of Stinson L-5* Sentinel *serial number 42-14803, the fifth L-5 off the production line, is from the website*** www.stinsonflyer.com ***and presumably shows the aircraft during a shakedown flight near the Michigan factory in the winter.***

After World War II, most *Sentinels* remained in the military inventory. Many went to combat again in the Korean War, and some were in active service with the newly independent United States Air Force for years afterwards. In 1962, the Air Force reclassified their remaining L-5Gs as U-19Bs, while the Army at the same time renamed theirs U-19As, thus marking the demise of liaison aircraft.

War Eagles Air Museum's L-5, serial number 42-15017, was delivered to the U.S. Army Air Force on May 10, 1943, at Wayne, Michigan. Part of the Army's very first order for 275 aircraft originally designated O-62s, it was the 220th L-5 off of the assembly line. Its cost of $7,660 did not include Government Furnished Equipment such as its engine, propeller and radios, which drove the total cost up to about $10,000. Two days later, it was one of a flight of four L-5s ferried from Wayne to Camp Beauregard, Louisiana. It never saw combat service, but spent the war years in training and field maneuvers at air bases in Georgia, Florida, Ohio, Texas and Oklahoma. On December 13, 1945, it was transferred to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, a Hoover-era agency responsible for disposing of surplus Government property. For the next 50 years, it had at least 14 (perhaps more) civilian owners in Michigan, Colorado, Montana, Wyoming and South Dakota. It finally ended up in El Paso, Texas, sometime after 1994—we don't know the exact date—and was acquired by Dr. Joseph Nelson. On August 13, 2009, this meticulously restored example of a very significant World War II aircraft arrived from El Paso International Airport to join the Museum's collection.

As a postscript to the history of one of the oldest, best-known aircraft manufacturers in the U.S., the company that Eddie Stinson founded in 1920 finally vanished completely in 1950 when the Piper Aircraft Corporation took over the remaining Stinson lineup. The proud Stinson name thus joined those of other aviation luminaries such as Larry Bell, Glenn Curtiss, Donald Douglas, James McDonnell, Claude Ryan and, indeed, the Wright brothers themselves, in utterly disappearing from the American corporate scene. Sadly, in large part they have also vanished from the national psyche. These founding fathers of the world's premier aviation/aerospace industry deserve to be widely celebrated and remembered. Doing so is one of the goals of War Eagles Air Museum. ✪

The Story Behind the Picture

In the Second Quarter 2009 issue of *Plane Talk* was an in-flight photo of a formation of American Volunteer Group (AVG) Curtiss P-40s. We got the photo from the Internet with no information about where and when it was taken. Now, thanks to Brad Smith, son of R.T. Smith, the pilot who took the picture, we know much more about it.

R.T. Smith was a P-40 pilot in the 3rd Squadron, *Hell's Angels*. Brad Smith describes the photo this way: "The photograph was taken by Dad, probably from aircraft #47, on May 28, 1942, near the Salween River Gorge. The shot includes: #68, flown by Arvid Olson; #46, flown by Bob Prescott; #49, flown by Tom Hayward; #24, flown by Ken Jernstedt; and #74, flown by Link Laughlin ..."

R.T. himself had previously told of how he took the picture in a letter to Terrill Clements, author of *American Volunteer Group Colours and Markings*. R.T. seldom carried his camera into combat, he explained, because "… there was no place to stow it in the cramped space of a cockpit, which meant having to carry it on my lap secured only by a leather strap around my neck. Obviously the last thing a fighter pilot needs while frantically maneuvering in a combat situation is a camera flying around in the cockpit ...

"It was a beautiful spring day, with a layer of stratocumulus above the mountain tops at about 10,000 feet off to our right. We were headed northeast near the Salween River, which marked the China-Burma border … although the air was relatively smooth I soon learned that taking a picture of this type was not an easy task. It required … flying my plane on a steady course by holding the control stick between my knees, twisting back to my right while holding the camera with both hands, and waiting … for the guys to … get into proper echelon formation. There was the added requirement, most important of all, of scanning the … sky every few seconds to make sure no Jap fighters were about to ambush us. The resulting exposure, as I recall, was [taken] at about f8 and 1/200th of a second."

Brad Smith visited War Eagles Air Museum recently, and we thank him for kindly sending us a beautiful large print of the photo his dad took. It is so much better than the version we found on the Internet that we are printing it again in this issue, along with the story about how one of the most widely recognized aircraft photos in history came about. ✪

Nuclear Weapons Acquisition

Thanks to retired Air Force technician Roy Aldridge, War Eagles Air Museum is one of very few places in the U.S. to display real nuclear weapons. Roy helped us acquire four Cold-War-era atomic bombs from Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque. The weapons we got—a B57, two B43s and a B61—are the types carried by two of the aircraft in our collection, the Air Force Republic F-84F *Thunderjet* and the Navy Vought A-7D *Corsair II*. These weapons are not training dummies; they are the real thing. They actually were an operational part of America's nuclear deterrent. After workers at the PANTEX facility near Amarillo, Texas, removed the nuclear material and classified parts, the weapon casings became available to selected museums as a way to educate the public about their decades-long role in maintaining the peace. We are now restoring these weapons and preparing interpretive signs before putting them on display. Look for a much more detailed article on the history of these weapons in a future edition of *Plane Talk*. ⚛

▲ ***Terry Sunday secures the load of four nuclear weapons casings on one of War Eagles Air Museum's car trailers for the grueling 250-mile road trip from Albuquerque.***

Plane Talk on the Web

Archives of *Plane Talk* from the current issue back to the first quarter of 2003 are now available in full color on our website.

Historical Perspectives

by Robert Haynes

Although the first Soviet-built Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-21 arrived in Vietnam in 1965, a few years passed before the Vietnamese Peoples Air Force (VPAF) figured out how to use the modern Mach-2 fighter well enough to seriously threaten U.S. operations. The VPAF adapted their tactics superbly to local conditions, mainly by tightly coordinating their aircraft operations with other elements of the North Vietnamese air defense network. Taking advantage of the U.S. Air Force's use of non-secure radios and tendency to fly predictable attack paths, VPAF radar controllers and radio scanners vectored MiG-21s to their targets. The MiG-21 pilots executed fast, "slicing" attacks on the U.S. bomber formations, and then used their high performance capabilities to escape the U.S. fighter escorts. MiG-21s also sometimes "baited" U.S. pilots, enticing them into "low and slow" pursuits where they were vulnerable to MiG-17s, surface-to-air-missiles (SAMs) and anti-aircraft guns.

By the time the U.S. got involved, North Vietnam had, with Soviet and Chinese aid, built one of the best air defense networks in the world. One would think the U.S. would develop countermeasures to this deadly threat; that this largely did not happen was because of several factors. First, Presidents Johnson and Nixon did not want to antagonize the Chinese or the Soviets, both of whom had supplied military equipment and financial support to North Vietnam, and had advisors and technicians stationed there. If a U.S. attack accidentally killed any of them, either or both communist superpowers could have directly entered the war, an escalation that would have been Washington's worst nightmare come true. So U.S. planners severely restricted U.S. forces' freedom to operate, and imposed onerous rules of engagement on them. For example, Haiphong, the major seaport through which North Vietnam got MiG-21s and other military shipments, remained off limits to U.S. attack for most of the war. An uninterrupted flow of critical materiel and supplies was thus assured.

There was also a lack of imagination at the highest levels of the Air Force. A bloated bureaucracy and outdated tactics led to heavy combat losses, which in turn stifled initiative and depressed unit morale. There were exceptions, of course. Then-Colonel Robin Olds, Commander of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) at Ubon Air Base in Thailand, was a maverick warrior who defied the bureaucracy. The ingenious tactics that he developed surprised the enemy, increased the effectiveness of his pilots and invigorated his unit. A natural leader, he shot down two MiG-21s while he was the 8th TFW Commander. He conducted Operation Bolo on January 2, 1967, a brilliant deception in which McDonnell F-4 *Phantoms* mimicked bombers attacking North Vietnamese targets. When VPAF ground controllers discovered the deception as they vectored in the MiG-21s, they froze at their scopes. The MiG pilots, not trained to fly in combat without ground instructions, did not know what to do. Despite (or perhaps because of) such successes, the Air Force did not extend Colonel Olds' command after his first tour. The "brass" instead sent this seasoned warrior to the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. By the time he returned to Southeast Asia in 1972, it was too late for him to make a difference. Sidelining an officer who had proven he could successfully fight the VPAF was but one indication of an Air Force that had become so bureaucratic that it put more effort into "body counts," and into defining camouflage patterns for every aircraft in Southeast Asia, than into decisively fighting the communist foe.

▲ ***Colonel Robin Olds developed successful tactics against the North Vietnamese, but Air Force brass sent him to the Air Force Academy just when he could have been most useful in the war. NASM Image SI99-42649h.***

This mentality is one of the factors that led America into the Vietnam Wars in the first place. Note the term "Wars." There were several of them. Western interventions in Southeast Asia date to the 18th century, and three separate Vietnam Wars took place in the 20th century. From 1900 to 1942, the French fought several indigenous rebel groups over the length of the country. In 1942, the Japanese occupied Vietnam, but the French colonial administration ran it. During the occupation, a small resistance force called the Việt Minh, trained by American OSS[1] officers and led by the emaciated, ascetic Hồ Chí Minh, battled the invaders. After World War II ended, the same Việt Minh forces fought the French, who had reoccupied the country. The U.S. failed to understand Hồ and his intense nationalism, and agreed to help France regain control of the embattled nation. With Western aid for his war of independence thus cut off, Hồ had no choice but to seek assistance from communist-bloc nations.

Hồ still had a source of U.S. military supplies, however, and he used them very effectively in his successful war against France. During World War II, the U.S.

[1] The wartime OSS (Office of Strategic Services), under William "Wild Bill" Donovan, was the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Membership Application
War Eagles Air Museum

War Eagles Air Museum memberships are available in six categories. All memberships include the following privileges:

- ✈ Free admission to the Museum and all exhibits.
- ✈ Free admission to all special events.
- ✈ 10% general admission discounts for all guests of a current Member.
- ✈ 10% discount on all Member purchases in the Gift Shop.

To become a Member of the War Eagles Air Museum, please fill in the information requested below and note the category of membership you desire. Mail this form, along with a check payable to "War Eagles Air Museum" for the annual fee shown, to:

War Eagles Air Museum
8012 Airport Road
Santa Teresa, NM 88008

NAME (Please print)_____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____—_____

TELEPHONE (Optional) _____—_____—_____

E-MAIL ADDRESS (Optional) _____
Will be kept private and used *only* for War Eagles Air Museum mailings.

Membership Categories	
☐ Individual	$15
☐ Family	$25
☐ Participating	$50
☐ Supporting	$100
☐ Benefactor	$1,000
☐ Life	$5,000

shipped huge amounts of equipment to the Nationalist forces in China. After the War, the Nationalists used these weapons and supplies in their continuing civil war with Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communists. When the Communists expelled the Nationalists in 1949, most of this materiel remained on the mainland. The victorious Chinese Communists captured it and eventually passed much of it down to Hồ. Ironically, the U.S. was also supplying the French at the time. When the Việt Minh defeated the French in 1954, Hồ added abandoned French equipment to his stock of Chinese-supplied American equipment. With this arsenal, he consolidated his hold over the part of Vietnam granted to him by the 1954 Geneva Accords, even as China and the Soviet Union consolidated their hold over Hồ.

The U.S. refused to recognize now-communist North Vietnam. As part of its worldwide anti-communism crusade and greatly fearing that Southeast Asian nations would fall to communism one after the other like so many gameboard tiles in the (now-discredited) "domino theory," Washington instead chose to support the corrupt, dictatorial, nepotistic South Vietnamese regime of Ngo Dinh Diem. This course of action guaranteed ever-increasing U.S. involvement in a frustrating, expensive and ultimately futile war halfway around the world. The amphibious landing of U.S. Marines on the beaches near Da Nang in March 1965 was a harbinger of the painful years to come—years that saw the nation torn apart by disputes over the purpose, justification and tactics of the war, and that resulted in the deaths of more than 58,000 Americans and more than two million Vietnamese.

This was neither the first nor the last time that America felt obligated to "bail out" France. Over the years, the U.S. has typically disregarded French experiences and advice, thinking France a weak nation and that the French resented America's wealth and power. It is true that *la belle France* is not as strong as she once was, and the French do feel some resentment about this (not just toward Americans). But this state of affairs came about due to strong historical forces that most Americans today do not fully understand. As I have often lamented in previous columns, I believe many Americans lack a deep and broad historical perspective that might give them a more "global" view of politics, diplomacy, foreign relations and the use of military force. I hope my modest efforts in these columns help, in some small way, to provide such a perspective.

The source of today's Franco-American friction lies in World War II, and will be the subject of my next column. But for now, I end this discussion of the MiG-21 and the Vietnam Wars by inviting readers to visit the War Eagles Air Museum and see our beautifully restored MiG-21PFM. Perhaps, while examining this outstanding example of one of the Soviet Union's finest fighters, the visitor will reflect on the inexorable historical forces that compelled young American aviators to wage furious, life-and-death battles with communist pilots flying this type of aircraft in the skies over Vietnam. ✪

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From the Director

Has it really been twenty years already? It seems like just a few weeks ago that War Eagles Air Museum was just getting started at quiet, dusty Doña Ana County Airport. Most of the road to the Museum, except for a few hundred feet in what is now a thriving industrial park, was rutted dirt. Only one other building was on the field. Days often passed with no signs of aircraft traffic in the vicinity. In the new Museum hangar, our original staff and volunteers put in long hours to make the Museum a going concern. Guy Dority kept the books; Jack Bell, Tom Blackwell and John MacGuire swept the hangar floor; Dario Toffenetti waited for lunch; Frank Harrison roamed around looking for anything out of place; and I sat behind the counter in the Gift Shop to greet the few people willing to brave the hardships of the desert to visit.

From that humble start came one of the finest aviation museums in the country (and that's not just *my* opinion). On September 16, our 20th Anniversary, we gathered to honor the many people who were so important to our success. Nine of the volunteers who attended our 1st Anniversary party were on hand again this year. We'd like to thank them, all of the others, and those who could not be here, for 20 years of dedication and hard work. We couldn't have done it without you!

Skip Trammell ✪

◀ ***Bill Gardner, former World War II B-24 pilot and member of the Museum Board of Directors, and his wife Mamie, a volunteer in the Museum library, enjoy the festivities.***

▶ ***Contributing author Robert Haynes (l.) and Museum Director Skip Trammell share a laugh as they reminisce about the good old days. Photos by Chuck Crepas.***