

**Fall
2022**



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War Eagles Air Museum

Vanessa Martinez
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Contributing this Month - Eric Norway, Lisa Kay Tate, Rick Tate

Fall at War Eagles

Hello, WEAM Team! Thank you for tuning into the Fall 2022 newsletter. Summer is officially over, and a lot has happened since the last edition. It was a productive summer filled with new events, new partnerships, many adventures, and as always...loads of fun. In case you missed it, we celebrated the museum's 33rd anniversary throughout the month of September; thank you to everyone who attended the festivities and joined in as we celebrated another successful year. Let's make the 34th year GREAT!



The Autumn season has officially begun, and we are so excited to share a few of the upcoming happenings with you all. We just had the 2022 Flight to Fight Event this past Saturday, October 29th. In partnership with Francis Aviation and The Flight to Fight Organization, it was a pleasure to help host the 4th Annual Flight to Fight event and fly-in. Thank you to all the Pilots, Vendors, Food Trucks, Car Owners, and Patrons who came out and joined in on the fun. Overall, it was a successful event and we can't wait to help make next year's event an even bigger success.

While marking your social calendar for the season, don't forget that we have the long-awaited and highly anticipated Veterans Park Dedication Gala on Friday, November 11th (see page 10 for details). The newly constructed Veterans Memorial Park in Santa Teresa, NM, right across from the War Eagles Air Museum, is undoubtedly a labor of love and proves to be a thriving community acquisition. There are still a few more finishing touches for the park, but for those who haven't seen it recently, check out the beautiful progress in the photo above. The park's construction has been made possible solely on private donations alone. If you want to do your part and contribute to this history-making project, please use the QR code on page 10. Seats filled up rather quickly, and the event is officially SOLD OUT! If you missed the opportunity to purchase a ticket to the Gala, the park dedication portion of the evening is free to anyone who would like to attend. The new Veterans Memorial Park, right across from the War Eagles Air Museum will be dedicated at 1700. We'll see you there.

A few more highlights include an upcoming December Nerd Night, where we will partner with Insights to bring you a never-before-seen, aviation-centered, exploratory event. Stay tuned for more info. Also on the agenda – you can look forward to the annual WEAM Christmas party happening mid-December; more details to come. For now, we have a jam-packed season, and we can't wait to share it with you.

Thank you, WEAM Team!

For now - over and out.

Russian Mi-2 “Hoplite” now on display

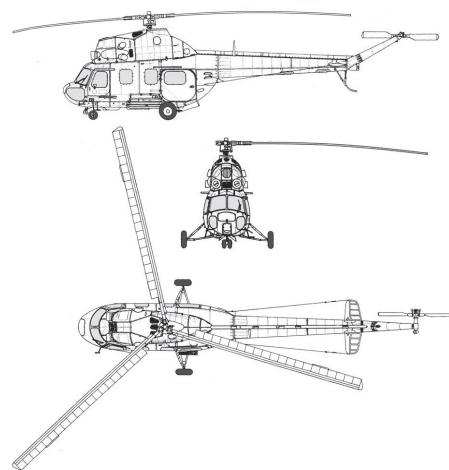
Story by Eric Norway

The Mil Mi-2 (NATO designation “Hoplite”) is a small, lightly armed turbine-powered transport helicopter designed by the Russian Mil Moscow Helicopter Plant (founded by designer Mikhail Mil). A three-blade main rotor and heavy transmission is mounted on top of the fuselage midsection, powered by two turboshaft engines mounted forward and side-by-side. The overhead engine design was possibly inspired by the introduction of the US Bell Helicopter’s UH-1 Huey. The compact twin-engine and transmission package directly over the flight deck became a Mil standard arrangement that was adopted by other designers world-wide. A clever innovation is that the engine inlets are also the oil tanks, so that inlet air cools the oil while the oil prewarms the incoming air for combustion. Based on the Mi-1, the first Soviet production helicopter, the twin shaft-turbine engines used in the Mi-2 developed 40% more power than the Mi-1’s piston engines, for about half the engine weight, that resulted in more than double the payload.

The Mi-2 was produced exclusively in Poland, in the WSK “PZL-Świdnik” factory in Świdnik, after the first Mil-built prototype flew in the Soviet Union in September 1961. The first Świdnik-production model flew in November 1965 (the only Soviet-designed helicopter to be built solely outside the Soviet Union). Until production ended in 1985, PZL-Świdnik built 5,497 Mi-2 helicopters, about a third going to military users. Typical role-change kits included four stretchers for air ambulance usage or agricultural spray (cropdusting) applications. In Poland, several specialized military variants were also developed for support or reconnaissance roles, with 23 mm autocannon, machine guns and/or two 57 mm rocket pods, four 9K11 Malyutka anti-tank missiles or Stre-



War Eagle’s Mil Mi-2 is now on display next to the Tupolev TU-2. The museum received two Hoplite’s from the US Army’s MacGregor Range Control and were able to make one good display helicopter.



**Mil Mi-2 Hoplite
General Characteristics**

Powerplant	2 X PLZ GTD-350P Turboshaft Engines, 400 shp each
Crew/Capacity	1 with 8 passengers
Maximum Speed	120 mph
Service Ceiling	13,000 ft
Length	37 ft 5 in
Rotor Diameter	47 ft 7 in
Range	270 mi
Weight (empty)	5,229 lb
Weight (maximum)	8,157 lb

Mi-2 continued on page 3

Mi-2 (Continued from page 2)



War Eagle's Mi-2 was delivered in 2020. The helicopter is still painted in its U.S. Army aggressor aircraft paint job. At right, the control panel before it was renovated by volunteer Gus Hebrock.

la-2 AA missiles.

The Mi-2 was first introduced into the Soviet Air Force in 1965, and used mostly by Soviet and Eastern Bloc countries, although ultimately found its way into Asian and Latin-American countries. Users include Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Cuba, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Latvia, Libya, Lithuania, Mexico, Myanmar, North Korea, Peru, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Syria, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, and the United States of America. Most armed Mi-2 variants were used by Poland and former East Germany. North Korea still maintains a large active fleet of Mi-2s.

The War Eagles Air Museum's Mi-2 on display was made possible by the US Army's MacGregor Range Control, attached to Fort Bliss, Texas. The Range had two decommissioned Mi-2 heli-

copters slated for eventual target practice. Indeed, one had already attracted a number of lead mosquito bites. Working on a shoestring budget, in 2020 the museum was able to take possession of both and bring them to Santa Teresa. Several months later, museum volunteers led by Gus Hebrock were able to make one good display helicopter from the two. The museum plans to use the remaining helicopter's power train for its own display among our other engines. Much thanks to Mr. Anderson and his Range Control crew for their largess and infinite patience during the process, to Little Bird LLC for transportation and repair, and McGuire Aviation for storage and volunteer maintenance, and Gus Hebrock's painstaking attention to detail. The Mi-2 project is a perfect example of teamwork over a long period of time, and the War Eagles Air Museum is grateful to everyone involved. 🇺🇸



Virtual Tour QR Code

Scan this QR Code with your phone camera to access a virtual tour of
**WAR EAGLES
AIR MUSEUM**



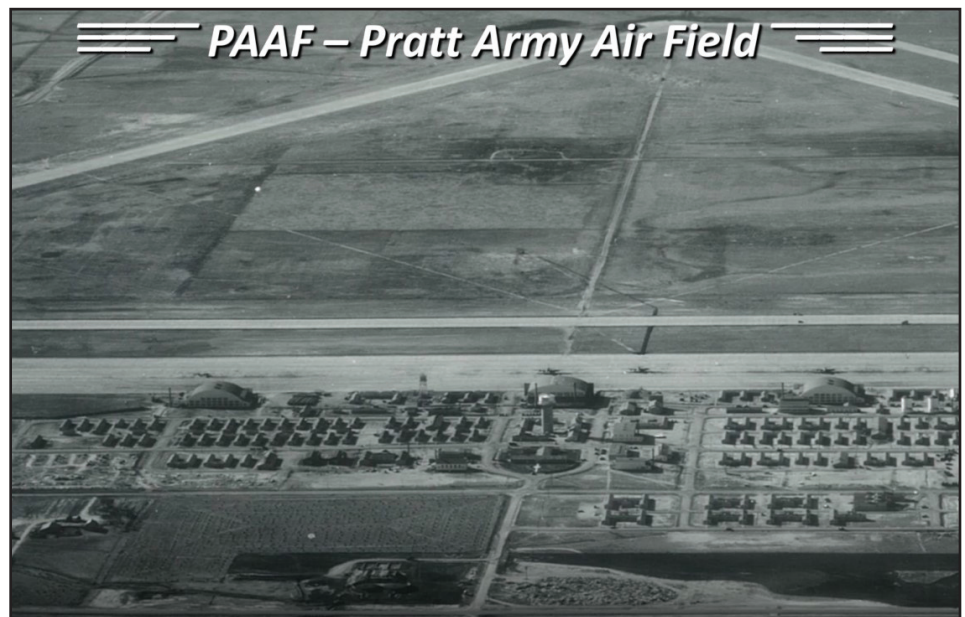
B-29 Museum offers insight into world-changing aircraft

Story by Eric Norway

The B-29 Museum in Pratt, Kansas, also known as “Bombers on the Prairie B-29 Museum”, honors men and women who worked at and supported the Pratt Army Air Field (PAAF) from 1942-1945. Pratt is located about 70 miles west of Wichita, Kansas. The airbase was established there in WWII to receive newly built Boeing B-29s from the Boeing factory in Wichita and match them with new bomber crews to train and send into the war effort worldwide. As the B-29 evolved in complexity, the Army Air Corps set up heavy maintenance facilities to complete ultimately more than 50 different modifications to the bombers. Five giant wooden hangars, each large enough to house two B-29s and accompanying maintenance equipment, were built along the flightline. Today only one hangar is left, and the B-29 Museum is housed in the adjoining restored parachute building; a long white wooden building for stretching and packing parachutes with a tall wooden tower used to hang, dry and store the chutes. The parachute building has been placed on the official Register of Historic Kansas Places.

The Pratt Army Airfield was opened in 1943 north of Pratt on open prairie and became the first training facility in the world for the new B-29s as they rolled off the assembly line in Wichita. Over 23,000 Army Air Corp flight and ground crew members trained at the airbase from 1943 until the airfield was closed in 1946. Among those who trained at Pratt were Col. Paul Tibbets who piloted the “Enola Gay” that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and Maj. Charles Sweeney who piloted the B-29 Superfortress “Bockscar” that dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

The museum does not house any full-size aircraft, but is filled with fascinating displays, many interactive, containing artifacts from B-29s, the squadrons based there and items from the base



itself. Part of the tower has been converted into a 30-seat theater which features several documentary films about the base and B-29 operations during WWII. The museum has numerous artifacts including the complete historical records of the 29th Bomb Group, one of four bomb groups that trained at Pratt including the 29th Bomb Group, the 40th Bomb Group, the 346th Bomb Group and the 497th Bomb Group. The museum has also received historical records for the 73rd Bomb Wing and the 444th and 505th Bomb Groups. Some of these records are in temporary storage but, like the rest of the records, they will eventually be on permanent display. The museum maintains a large

digital collection and has a library of over 400 books.

A portion of the museum is the “Pratt Aviators Wall of Fame” that features the history of several Pratt area aviators. Each display has a portrait of the pilot, other related photos, extensive history and memorabilia for each pilot. Currently on the wall display are 1st Lt. Dwayne Adams, of Cullison; Lt. Col. Jack Graber, of Wilmore; Lowry “Dean” Gallaway, Howard Curran and Arthur “Gene” Aenchbacher who had a 30-year career in the Air Force. Display cases also honor airmen Joseph Chovelak, Robert Rainey, Donald Fraizer, and Ernest Beck who all have

B-29 Museum continued on page 5

B-29 Museum (Continued from page 4)

strong connections to Pratt.

Other displays include the role women played in the war effort, the over 50-plus modifications that were made to the bombers at PAAF, a Wright R-3350 Duplex-Cyclone radial from the recently restored B-29 “Doc”, and a unique hard fabric reserve fuel tank that was used to extend the B-29s range. The fuel tank was designed to fit right on top of the bomb bay door. When the fuel was used up, the tank was simply dropped out the bomb bay. This tank is the only known tank to survive so far. Each of these displays feature QR codes that provide more detailed information.

One of the more recent additions to the museum is the “The Dawn of the Atomic Age” exhibit that tells the story of the development of the atomic bomb, the 509th Composite Bomb Group, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the debate on using the bomb and the impact it had on shortening World War II. The display features graphic panoramic photos of both cities after the bombing, photos of the crews and planes, other related photos, numerous histories covering the path from the discovery of fission, the development of the bomb, the attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the aftermath. An interactive video kiosk shows related videos.

And if that is not enough, the Pratt Army Air Field site has a paved ½ mile historical walk that starts at the B-29 Museum and ends up at the B-29 All Veterans Memorial. Interpretive signs along the path tell you about buildings and facilities long gone but not forgotten. The memorial has many plaques and monuments, and static displays of military aircraft: Bell AH-1F “Cobra” helicopter, McDonnell Douglas F-4C “Phantom” fighter, and Northrup AT-38B “Talon” trainer.

War Eagles Air Museum volunteer Virg Hemphill grew up next to the PAAF and made us aware of the B-29 Museum’s significance. On a recent trip I had a



The Bombers on the Prairie B-29 Museum offers insight into the Pratt Army Air Field that was active from 1943-1945. The museum also features the Pratt Aviators Wall of Fame and “Dawn of the Atomic Age” exhibit that explores the development for the atomic bomb.

chance to stop and visit with Museum Historian Milt Martin, who with his brother Mark and both of their spouses and a small dedicated crew of museum board members restored, maintain and continue to improve their museum. I am so glad I stopped and visited. Any fan of historic aviation and air museums will love it. It’s a full day’s drive away from El Paso but easy to find; Pratt and El Paso share Highway 54, so you can’t get lost!

The B-29 Museum has limited open hours, so it’s best to first contact Museum Historian Milt Martin or Museum President George Stevens by phone (620-672-2444 or 620-672-8321), email b29museum@gmail.com, or via Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/b29museum> to plan your visit. If you want to check it out on Google Maps, the address is 82 Curran Road, Pratt, KS 67124. 

Volunteer Spotlight (Robert Virgil Hemphill)

Story by Eric Norway

Virg Hemphill was born in 1930 in Pratt, Kansas, about 70 miles west of Wichita. Virg went to school in Byers, nine miles northwest of Pratt but lived within earshot of Pratt Army Air Field (PAAF), a World War II era base that received new Boeing B-29 bombers built in Wichita, and completed an ever increasing list of modifications as required. PAAF was also a training base that matched new crews to the bombers before being deployed to war. Virg grew up watching and listening to the heavy bombers' practice runs and guns.

Like many self-sustaining farmers of that time, Virg's father wore many hats to support his family. Originally from Missouri with an 8th grade education, his dad was primarily a farmer with three threshing machines, but also sold insurance, owned a welding shop and a Mobil gas station, and was a private pilot.

Virg graduated in a class of 12 students from Byer High School in 1948. Their class motto was "Look Before You Leap". He attended Pratt Junior College, during which his father gave him 40-acres of farmland to teach him economics and hard work. Fort Hays State University followed two years later, where Virg earned a bachelor's degree in Industrial Arts Education in 1952. Virg also joined the Kansas National Guard to avoid the draft so he could concentrate on becoming a teacher. Life is funny though, and after speaking with a USAF recruiter he found himself in Basic Training at Lackland AFB, Texas, the highlight of which was marching with 600 other trainees in President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Washington, DC inaugural parade in January 1953. After Basic Training was Flight Training which included 50 hours in a Piper PA-18 Cub, 120 hours in a North American T-6G Texan, and another 50 hours in a North American T-28 Trojan before flying jets in the form of the Lockheed T-33 Shooting Star at John



Virg Hemphill at the start of his flying career as a young Air Force Cadet in 1954 and a veteran pilot with Continental who flew 40 years for the airline.

Connally Airport in Waco, Texas. The Korean War ended after a year long wind-down that caused hundreds of aviation cadets to be washed out of training, but Virg hung on through the critical phases of the program and secured himself a position as a fighter pilot in a post-war air force. After six months of additional heavy instrument flight training and transition into the Northrup F-89 Scorpion Interceptor Fighter, Virg was assigned first to Elmendorf AFB in Anchorage, Alaska and then to Grandview AFB, Missouri (later renamed Richards-Gebaur AFB) where he flew the F-89C and D models and the North American F-86D radar intercept jets. The Cold War demanded a frenetic pace in the late-1950s and the interceptor-fighter jets were truly the tips of the spear. While stationed at Grandview AFB Virg cross-trained in the Fairchild C-123 Provider for a neighboring squadron, liked it, and between intercept missions flew more than 1000 hours in the large cargo air-



craft.

In 1959, after seven years of working for Uncle Sam, Virg left the Air Force for an offer from Continental Airlines. A glamorous airline job? Well, later perhaps, but flying right seat in the venerable Douglas DC-3 out of Dallas Love Field was not glamorous in any sense. It got better. 1st Officer on the DC-6 and DC-7 was pretty easy, mostly working the radio, the Johnson Bar for flaps, and eating airline food. Virg made Captain on the British Vickers Viscount turboprop, and then came the heavy Boeing 707 and 720 jets. In the late 1960s Continental Airlines won a DoD contract to haul troops and cargo in and out of Vietnam, so Virg became expert at Loran-C and Doppler navigation across the Pacific and into Saigon and Danang.

The years, aircraft types, and flight hours built up over time, until one of the most convulsive events in airline

Volunteer continued on page 7

Volunteer (Continued from page 6)

history occurred, being the Continental Airlines strike of 1979. There seem to be a hundred different versions of the strike and causes, and most probably have some truth in them. Virg went with the strikers and got a job with Air Micronesia for a year, shoe-horning Boeing 727-100s into short island strips at places like Guam, Truk, Saipan, Palau, Yap and Kwajalein. He also flew Douglas DC-10s out of LAX. The strike continued. Virg found himself at Air Pacific for a year, then went to school to be an FAA licensed airline dispatcher, and got a job doing that with Samoa Airlines before becoming a 1st Officer at Samoa on Boeing 707s. For a while he also flew tropical fish from Pango-Pango to Honolulu.

In 1986 Virg was rehired with Continental Airlines, where he met Jerry Dixon, another fine volunteer at the War Eagles Air Museum. Virg flew 1st Officer on Boeing 747s until 1990, when he turned sixty years old and forced to "retire". He stayed on the crew, however, as a non-flying flight engineer on Douglas DC-10-30s in Europe and the Pacific until he really retired in 1999, forty years after starting with Continental on DC-3s in Dallas.

Virg could not sit still though, so he worked and flew as a Cessna Aircraft salesman in El Paso for another ten years. He was well qualified as he has owned several Cessnas, Pipers and even a Great Lakes Biplane over his lifetime. When Virg completely stopped flying airliners and small aircraft he had amassed more than 30,000 flight hours over 60 years. That's a lot of flying no matter how you look at it.

Virg started volunteering at the War Eagles Air Museum as a docent, and we are certainly glad to have him. He and Jerry Dixon have built two of our displays; one about the early days of Continental Airlines and the other about Air Micronesia. If you haven't seen them lately, please drop by the museum, and if you are lucky maybe Virg or Jerry can show you around. 



Hemphill flew a variety of Air Force aircraft during the instruction phase but after completing his training he was assigned to the Northrup F-89 Scorpion Interceptor fighter stationed at Elmendorf AFB in Anchorage, Alaska



Hemphill started his flying career with Continental in the venerable DC-3 out of Dallas Love Field. Over the course of his career he flew the Boeing 707, 727 and 747 as well as the McDonnell Douglas DC-10.





Our Awesome Docents:



MICHAEL CHANG

Pilot, EAA Technical Counselor,
Built his own aircraft & holder
of a Repairman's Certificate



ELLIOTT WERNER

Vietnam War Veteran, Helicopter
Mechanic, Pilot, Charles Taylor
Master Mechanic award winner,
2021



MARIO CAMPOS

Retired Colonel, U.S. Air Force
(28 years). Over 1700 hours in
the B-52H, B-1B, T-43A, and
other aircraft.



GUS HEBROOK

Retired Luftwaffe, or German Air Force
(38 years). Aircraft Electrician for El
Paso International Airport. Worked on
the War Eagles' MiG-15s, A-7, TU-2 and
UH-1, and the ejection seat display.



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daily, with one of our docents!
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staff for more details.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

575-589-2000 

info@wareaglesairmuseum.com 

www.wareaglesairmuseum.com 

*The museum is open
Wednesday through Sunday 10am - 4pm*

Gear Up with These High-Action Classic War Comics

Story by Lisa Kay Tate

This fall, Sgt. Frank Rock and Easy Company are returning for a new action horror adventure.

This is one of the first comics in a long time that has me excited about a release from a mainstream label, and I am hoping it lives up to my expectations. I am a gal who likes those old-school soldier stories with muscle-bound men fightin' everything from opposing forces to space men.

In the case of DC Horror Presents: Sgt. Rock vs. Army of the Dead written by the endlessly talented Bruce Campbell, with art by Eisner Award winner Eduardo Risso, Sgt. Rock and his men are in Europe during WWII facing off with...Nazi Zombies!

There should be some pretty intense variant cover art for this six-issue series, as well, and if the promos are any indication,

Now, likely because of Campbell's involvement with this project, Sgt. Rock is about the pick up some new fans, but he's been around since 1959 when writer Robert Kanigher and legendary artist Joe Kubert first introduced him in *Our Army at War* #83.

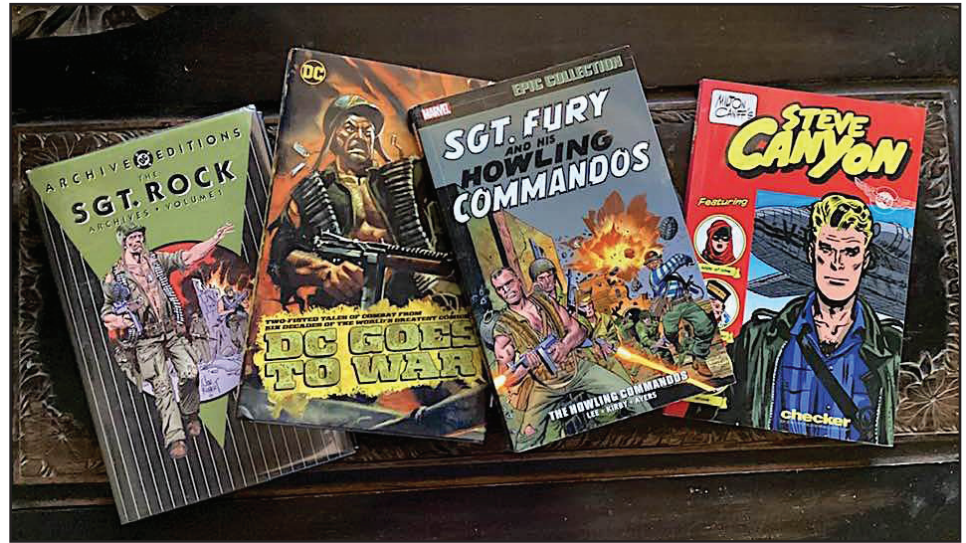
Before you reserve your copies of Rock's latest — and I'm betting one of his most gruesome — adventures, here are a five titles pulled from my own home library to hunt down and read up on:

The Sgt. Rock Archives: Volume 1

There are four volumes worth of Sgt. Rock, comics in DC's Archives collection, and all are worthy reads, but this one has his first appearances, as well as one that came before his official "Sgt. Rock" appearance, in *G.I. Combat* #68 January 1959, (appropriately titled "The Rock"). Forewarning: my husband picked this hardback up before the prices begin going crazy, so I would scour some used bookstores or online comics sites to read this. Volume 1 is fetching some pretty hefty price tags right now. Shame, really, because it's a jewel of a collection with some fantastic early stories.

DC Goes to War

This 2020 collection of DC war comics spans six decades of rousing tales from 1941 to 2001, starting with "Blackhawk" from *Military Comics* #1 by Will Eisner and Bob Powell. There are stories from *Weird War Tales*, *The Losers*, *Our Army at War* and *Our Fighting Forces* with works by several well known artists, classic and contemporary, including Kanigher and Kubert, Garth



With the release of the new *Sgt. Rock vs. the Army of the Dead* #1, pictured at right, this is a great opportunity to rediscover other classic war tales by some of the biggest names in the industry.

Ennis, Chuck Dixon, Eduardo Barreto, Marv Wolfman and many others.

Of course, one of the best reasons to get this is for another DC "character" introduction — *The Haunted Tank!* from 1961's *G.I. Combat* #87.

Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos, Volume 1

The MCU may be getting a little overplayed today, but at least we got to bring to life the Howling Commandos thanks to Captain America and Agent Carter. Volume 1 of the Marvel Epic Collection of this Marvel fighting force collects the first 19 Silver Age tales of Nick Fury from 1961 to 1965, all by the creative team of writer Stan Lee and artists Jack Kirby and Dick Ayers. This is old school Fury at his finest with fan favorites Dum-Dum Dugan, Gabriel Jones and other Commandos mainstays.

They also show off something that wouldn't fly in many comics today: the various firearms used during wartime, teaching readers about different "chatter guns", rifles and other wartime weapons and gear.

Milton Caniff's Steve Canyon, 1948

This the second volume from Checker Books of the post-War globe-hopping exploits of Major Steve Canyon are right out of the "funny pages." It includes five complete storylines from his daily comics. Sure, he's a bit of a womanizing pretty boy, but



he's dang cool, and the sheer beautifully detailed talent of Caniff's black-and-white illustrations are enough to make this volume worth a read.

Caniff himself was such a stickler for detail, as well as a patriotic American, Canyon received an official "retirement" ceremony in 1989, one year after Caniff's death. I mean, why not? Canyon logged in a lot of mileage in his more than 41 years of syndication.

Garth Ennis Presents: Battle Classics

We have two volumes of this collection from Titan Books is lovingly put together by a man who is no stranger to war stories, Garth Ennis.

Most people know Ennis for his over-the-top graphic — very graphic — series like *Preacher* and *The Boys*, but here he pulls together some of his own influences and favorites of the British comic series *Battle Picture Weekly* that ran from 1975 to 1988. Most of these stories were set in WWII era, and the first takes off with the story of the *HMS Nightshade*. The action starts on the first page and doesn't let up the entire time.

Before you get ready to battle some undead Axis forces, I hope these classics get you ready for adventure...and battle.

Sgt. Rock vs. Army of the Dead #1 hit the racks with a bang Sept. 27. 

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Santa Teresa, NM

11
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UTEP PRESIDENT AND FORMER SECRETARY OF THE USAF



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War Eagles Air Museum members experience an intimate connection with the Museum with in-person and digital access to our new exhibitions and the permanent collection. Join the WEAM TEAM to:

- Help fund educational programs
- Support Outreach activities throughout the region
- Help create exhibits and programs
- Preserve our rich and unique history

Benefits	Student \$40	Individual \$60	Individual Plus \$80	Family \$100	Friends and Family \$150	Patron \$500	Group member \$1,000	Life Member \$5,000+
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Individuals Admitted by Membership	1	1	1+ 1 guest	2+ 2 family	2+ 4 family	2+ 5 guests	2+ 5 guests	2+ 6 guests
Guest Passes annually	0	2	2	4	4	10	15	Unlimited
Free and Discounted Admission to select War Eagles Events	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Early Access to Cockpit Demo Days	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discount on Museum Store Purchases and Dining	5%	5%	5%	10%	10%	10%	10%	15%
Exclusive Member Only Events and Exhibit Previews			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Subscription to Quarterly Digital Newsletter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Free Individual Gift Membership						✓	✓	✓
Free Conference Room Rental							1 Rental	3 Rentals

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• 10% discount on any level is available to Veterans, Active Duty, and Retired Military, First Responders, Educators, and Santa Teresa Residents (Zip Code 88008).

• All previous Life Members are grandfathered in with the previous program they purchased at the time.