

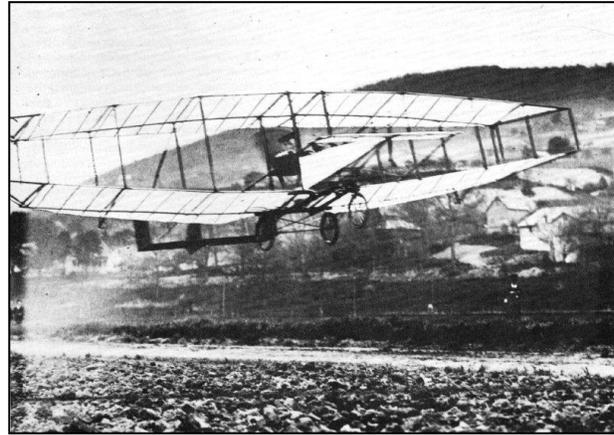


U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 14 – 20 May 2012



19 May 1908 Lt. Thomas E. Selfridge flew an airplane called the *White Wing*, designed by F. W. “Casey” Baldwin, thus becoming the **first Army officer to solo** in an airplane. It was Dr. Alexander Graham Bell's second Aerial Experiment Association plane, and it had hinged ailerons controlled by wires attached to the pilot's harness. When the plane's wings tipped one way, the pilot leaned the other way, pulling the flaps, and leveling the plane. At right, the *White Wing* in flight in 1908.



19 May 1918 **Raoul G. Lufbery**, who earned 17 aerial victories in World War I, lost his life in combat. Born in France, Lufbery (photo at left) became a citizen of the United States, graduated from the Nieuport School in France and was assigned to the Escadrille Americaine on May 24, 1916. Part of Lufbery's success was due to his skill as a mechanic. He hand-loaded his own machine gun rounds into their drums to check for any slight imperfections that might cause his gun to jam. After transferring to the American Expeditionary Forces, he passed much of his knowledge of aerial warfare to fledgling American fighter pilots such as Eddie Rickenbacker.

19 May 1919 Master Sergeant Ralph W. Bottriell became the first member of the Army to jump from an airplane with a backpack-type **parachute**. MSgt Bottriell (right) designed, developed and tested the first free-fall parachute. He later received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his life-saving work.

16 May 1940 In the months leading up to American involvement in World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt asked for the production of **50,000 airplanes a year**.



15 May 1942 Interceptor and pursuit organizations of the AAF were **redesignated as "fighter"** units. The 15th Pursuit Group (Interceptor) was redesignated the 15th Fighter Group.



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 14 – 20 May 2012



20 May 1951 Capt James Jabara, flying an F-86 Sabre from the 334th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, became the **world's first jet ace**. On this date, he shot down his fifth and sixth MiG-15s in the Korean War.

Eleven days later, Capt Jabara reported to USAF Chief of Staff General Hoyt S. Vandenberg in his office, and met with Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, the leading American fighter ace of World War I (photo at left).

18 May 1953 Capt Joseph C. McConnell, Jr. downed three MiGs on his last day of combat flying. These kills brought McConnell's total to 16 victories, making him the first 'triple ace' of the Korean War. On this day, McConnell and his wingman chased a couple MiGs across the Yalu River. When more MiGs showed up, McConnell quickly scored his 14th and 15th kills. With the staff back at home base monitoring their radio conversation, McConnell's wingman told him that "there must be thirty MiGs." McConnell's reply: "Yeah, and we've got 'em all to ourselves." Despite the bravado, the two American pilots were happy to get back south of the Yalu. Later that afternoon, McConnell went back up, and scored his third kill of the day, his 16th victory overall. The photo at right was taken on the same day.



McConnell flew the F-86 jet fighter with the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing. The 51st Fighter Wing at Osan Air Base, Korea traces its lineage to this unit.





U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 14 – 20 May 2012



T-28 in front of an O-1 Bird Dog

17 May 1964 **Operation Water Pump.** In March of 1964, Det 6 of the 1st Air Commando Wing had moved to Udorn Royal Thai AFB with four T-28s. Their mission was to train the Royal Lao Air Force (RLAF) for operations against the Pathet Lao. On 17 May, the RLAF began flying operational missions. On 18 May, the T-28s were painted with Laotian markings and turned over to the RLAF.

16 May 1965 **Tragic accident at Bien Hoa Air Base.**

A bomb on a B-57 accidentally detonated, causing a series of explosions which destroyed ten other B-57s, 13 Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) aircraft and a Navy F-8. Also, 25 VNAF Skyraiders were damaged. At least 28 Americans and Vietnamese were killed; 105 wounded. The accident investigation found that aircraft and ammunition were stored too close together. Air Force engineers initiated a major construction program to build revetments and aircraft shelters to protect valuable assets.



17 May 1977 **Eniwetok Cleanup.** A joint US task group was activated on Eniwetok Atoll for a two-year, \$20-million cleanup and decontamination project. Actual cleanup operations began on 15 November. PACAF served as the executive agent for the USAF.