

WINGS



THINGS

GREAT PLAINS WING - COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE

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1st Quarter 2022

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Soldiers returning home on the USS General Harry Taylor in August 1945.

Operation Magic Carpet

Coming home, 1945 (from the web, Ed.)

In 1939, there were 334,000 servicemen, not counting the Coast Guard. In 1945, there were over 16 million, including the Coast Guard. At the end of the war, over 8 million of these men and women were scattered overseas in Europe, the Pacific and Asia. Shipping them out wasn't a particular problem but getting them home was a massive logistical headache. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall had already established committees to address the issue in 1943.

"Lest We Forget"

When Germany fell in May 1945, the US Navy was still busy fighting in the Pacific and couldn't assist. The job of transporting 3 million men home fell to the Army and the Merchant Marine.



Hammocks crammed into available spaces aboard the USS Intrepid.

300 Victory and Liberty cargo ships were converted to troop transports for the task. During the war, 148,000 troops crossed the Atlantic west to east each month; the rush home ramped this up to 435,000 a month over 14 months.



Overjoyed troops returning home on the battleship USS Texas.

In October 1945, with the war in Asia also over, the Navy started chipping in, converting all available vessels to transport duty. On smaller ships like destroyers, capable of carrying perhaps 300 men, soldiers were told to hang their hammocks in whatever nook and cranny they could find.

Carriers were particularly useful, as their large open hangar decks could house 3,000 or more troops in relative comfort, with bunks, sometimes in stacks of five welded or bolted in place.

The Navy wasn't picky, though: cruisers, battleships, hospital ships, even LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank) were packed full of men yearning for home. Two British ocean liners under American control, the RMS Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth, had already served as troop transports before and continued to do so during the operation, each capable of carrying up to 15,000 people at a time, though their normal, peacetime capacity was less than 2,200. Twenty-nine ships were dedicated to transporting war brides: women married to American soldiers during the war.

The Japanese surrender in August 1945 came none too soon, but it put an extra burden on Operation Magic Carpet. The war in Asia had been expected to go well into 1946 and the Navy and the War Shipping Administration were hard-pressed to bring home all the soldiers who now had to get home earlier than anticipated. The transports carrying them also had to collect numerous POWs from recently liberated Japanese camps, many of whom suffered from malnutrition and illness.



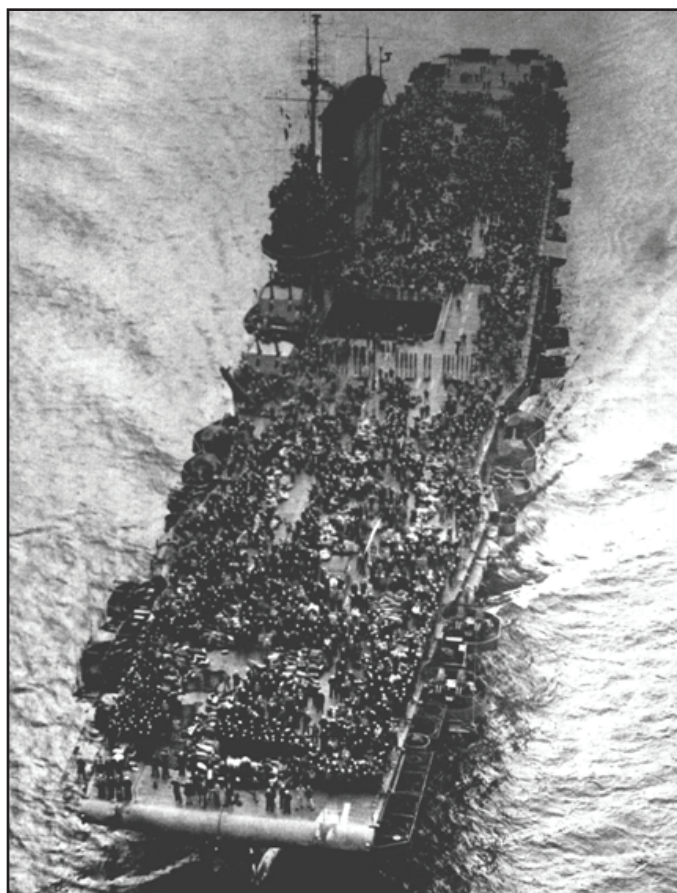
U.S. soldiers recently liberated from Japanese POW camps.

The time to get home depended a lot on the circumstances. USS Lake Champlain, a brand new Essex-class carrier that arrived too late for the war, could cross the Atlantic and take 3,300 troops home a little under 4 days and 8 hours. Meanwhile, troops going home from Australia or India would sometimes spend months on slower vessels.

There was enormous pressure on the operation to bring home as many men as possible by Christmas 1945. Therefore, a sub-operation, Operation Santa Claus, was dedicated to the purpose. Due to storms at sea and an overabundance of soldiers eligible for return home, however, Santa Claus could only return a fraction

in time and still not quite home but at least to American soil. The nation's transportation network was overloaded, trains heading west from the East Coast were on average 6 hours behind schedule and trains heading east from the West Coast were twice that late.

The USS Saratoga transported home a total of 29,204 servicemen during Operation Magic Carpet, more than any other ship. Many freshly discharged men found themselves stuck in separation centers but faced an outpouring of love and friendliness from the locals. Many townsfolk took in freshly arrived troops and invited them to Christmas dinner in their homes. Still others gave their train tickets to soldiers and still others organized quick parties at local train stations for men on lay-over. A Los Angeles taxi driver took six soldiers all the way to Chicago; another took another carload of men to Manhattan, the Bronx, Pittsburgh, Long Island, Buffalo and New Hampshire. Neither of the drivers accepted a fare beyond the cost of gas.



The crowded flight deck of the USS Saratoga.

All in all, though, the Christmas deadline proved unattainable. The last 29 troop transports, carrying some 200,000 men from the China-India-Burma theater, arrived in America in April 1946, bringing Operation Magic Carpet to an end, though an additional 127,000 soldiers still took until September to return home and finally lay down the burden of war.

Wing Leader Notes:

Greetings Great Plains CAF members and followers. I hope you had a wonderful Holiday season and look forward to a prosperous new year.

It appears I have been elected to serve as wing leader again for a couple of years as of 1/1/2022. I appreciate the vote of confidence to do so. Those who asked and elected me know that my schedule will require me to call on them to fill in for me during absences. I deeply appreciate that.

The main thrust going on with the wing is the winter maintenance on Gunfighter. Upon inspection during the compression check we found a couple of valve issues on the "B" bank that required removal and repair. Jerry Mason has attacked the hydraulic system this year overhauling about every actuator in the airplane. As always, he will meticulously see that Gunfighter is in great condition for the next flying season.

We had a tremendous record year of ride sales in 2021 with 221 revenue rides given. Most of you know that we currently have four pilots flying the airplane and are about to add another. Currently our 2022 schedule is not quite complete however it should be by the end of January. Once published, you can view it on our website www.p51gunfighter.com We will again be touring with the CAF B29/24 Air Power Tour. We do plan to reduce the flying somewhat compared to last season.

The wing museum has been under somewhat of a rearrangement and clean up by Jim Frieberth under advisement from Chad Bosworth.

The wing is always open to ideas to help grow the group in a way that will constructively pursue the CAF mission. If you have anyone you think might be interested, please contact Greg Jacobsen at gajacobsen@cs.com or any member of the Unit Staff.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the work done by Terran Tidwell and Tony Spitzer on the GPW newsletter. These gentlemen make the newsletter possible for us to publish. Their continued support is very much appreciated.

It is important for us all to remember we are all volunteers and if you see something that needs to be done, don't hesitate to pitch in. If you are not sure what you can do, please ask. If something is being neglected, we are not meeting our obligation to each other.

Until next time, stay healthy!

Col Larry "Lumpy" Lumpkin

Great Plains Wing
 COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE
 Council Bluff Iowa Airport
 16803 McCandless Road
 Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503

2022 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan. 15 Wing Meeting 11:00 AM GPW Hangar
 Feb. 19 Wing Meeting 11:00 AM GPW Hangar
 Feb. 26 GPW Anniversary Banquet
 Oak Hills Country Club - Omaha, NE
 Mar. 19 Wing Meeting 11:00 AM GPW Hangar
 Apr. 5-19 Sun'n Fun Fly-in Lakeland Linder Reg. Airport
 Lakeland, FL
 Apr. 16 Wing Meeting 11:00 AM GPW Hangar
 May 21 Wing Meeting 11:00 AM GPW Hangar
 June 18 Wing Meeting 11:00 AM GPW Hangar
 June 18-19 Nebraska State Fly-in & Airshow
 Grant County Airport - Grant, NE
 July 9 The Greatest Little Airshow - Tarkio Municipal
 Airport - Tarkio, MO
 July 16 Wing Meeting 11:00 AM GPW Hangar
 July 25-31 EAA Airventure - Wittman Regional Airport
 Oshkosh, WI
 Aug. 7 GPW Open House & Fly-in/Walk-in Pancake
 Breakfast GPW Hangar
 8:00-11:00 AM Breakfast
 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM Open House
 Aug. 20 Wing Meeting 11:00 AM GPW Hangar

Sept. 3-4 Kansas City Airshow - New Century Air Center
 Gardner, KS
 Sept. 17 Wing Meeting 11:00 AM GPW Hangar
 Oct. 15 Wing Meeting 11:00 AM GPW Hangar
 Nov. 19 Wing Meeting 11:00 AM GPW Hangar
 Dec. 17 Wing Meeting 11:00 AM GPW Hangar

MONTHLY EVENTS

Council Bluffs Airport - Great Plains Wing hosts a monthly cookout on the 3rd Wednesday of each month from April to October - 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

York, NE Airport: EAA Chapter 1055 hosts a fly-in breakfast on the 1st Saturday of each month from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m.(free-will offering)

Crete, NE Airport: EAA Chapter 569 hosts a fly in breakfast on the 3rd Sat. of every month from 8 to 10 a.m.

If you would like to put a event on this calendar, please send an email with the necessary information to Terry Helphrey at terry.helphrey@outlook.com