



Silent WINGS

In 1971, former glider pilots banded together to form a veterans organization largely for social reasons. Sixty-five glider pilots attended the first reunion in Dallas, Texas. Every year since 1971, the National World War II Glider Pilots Association has held an annual reunion. One project of the Association was to restore a CG-4A glider. This project was completed and the glider was unveiled at the 1979 reunion also held in Dallas to a record attendance of 844 people. The completed restoration project along with the desire to preserve the history and mission of the glider pilots of WWII led to the establishment of the Silent Wings Museum.

The Silent Wings Museum was originally opened in 1984 inside a metal building at the Terrell Municipal Airport east of Dallas. Members of the National World War II Glider Pilots Association formed a separate non-profit organization, the Military Glider Pilots Association to oversee the funds and operations of the Museum. The Museum was an outgrowth of the glider pilot reunion activities started in the early 1970s, which included the restoration of a glider which the pilots flew in training and in combat during World War II.

As the 1990s drew to a close, the glider pilots knew that they needed to make more permanent arrangements for the Silent Wings Museum. Financial support

to keep the Terrell Museum was derived largely from funds raised within the glider pilots group. Proposals were reviewed from a number of communities, including Lubbock, Texas. There was support among the membership to keep the Museum in Texas. There was also voice to keep the Silent Wings Museum autonomous - not to have it incorporated into a large military or aviation museum. There was some trepidation that Lubbock was too isolated compared to other locations. In the end, the membership voted to select Lubbock and bring the Museum back to the site of the former South Plains Army Air Field.

The City of Lubbock, under Mayor Wendy Sitton,

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proposed making the old airport terminal building into the home of the Silent Wings Museum. This building served as the Lubbock terminal from 1950-1976, until the new terminal was completed. Local support from the Texas Aviation Heritage Foundation under the leadership of Dr. John Buessler helped raise additional funds for the project. An additional sum was transferred to the City of Lubbock with the dissolution of the non-profit organization operating the museum in Terrell. The Terrell Museum was closed in January 2001 to reopen in Lubbock in October 2002.

The Silent Wings Museum is housed in one of the original terminal buildings of Lubbock International Airport- former site of the South Plains Army Air Field. Extensive remodeling has transformed the site into a 40,000 square foot museum featuring three galleries, a theater, research library, collections storage, museum store, and offices.

The Silent Wings Museum is the only museum in the world dedicated to telling the story of the military glider program. The mission of the Silent Wings Museum is as follows: The Silent Wings Museum, a public institution, preserves and promotes the history of the World War II military glider program by creating an environment for collecting,

documenting, interpreting and exhibiting artifacts and information for public education and enjoyment.

The Museum continues to grow its collection and wealth of knowledge on the WWII glider program through gifts from private donors and its cooperation with like organizations, including several glider restoration projects through the United States and the United Kingdom.

Over the past six years, the Silent Wings Museum has developed a reputation for providing unparalleled exhibits



and programming in the community of Lubbock, Texas. The Museum provides a visual and sensory historic experience of the WWII American military glider program unmatched anywhere in the world. The Silent Wings Museum continues to break new ground combining educational programming, exhibits and lectures to tell the story of the World War II glider program.

The Silent Wings Museum is currently working towards complementing permanent exhibits in its three main

galleries with a rotating exhibit area that would feature new acquisitions, temporary/changing exhibits relating to WWII history, aviation history, aviation science and the military glider program. The rotating exhibit area, along with increased special events and educational programming in the Museum will provide patrons with a new experience upon their return visits.

Visitors to the Silent Wings Museum are greeted by a Douglas C-47 static display on the grounds in front of the Museum. The C-47, known as the Skytrain was the primary tow plane for U.S. gliders. Inside the Museum, visitors check in at the Post Exchange (PX)/Museum Store before going to the Theatre for a 14 minute orientation film. Small arms of the Allied and Axis powers are exhibited in the hallway entering into the Timeline Gallery. The Timeline Gallery features more than 150 photographic images about key aviation events and WWII glider history. The Combat Gallery contains interactive oral histories, exhibits with artifacts from each of the eight major glider operations and examples of weapons and equipment carried into combat by gliders. In the large Hangar Gallery are the restored TG-4A sailplane and the mainstay of the U.S. glider force, the restored CG-4A cargo glider.

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