

AFEHRI File 19-10

**Research Materials/Source Documents
ENLISTED FIRSTS**

FILE TITLE: MSgt Cecil E. Curtis: -1st Enlisted Man to Reenlist while Airborne.

Reviewed by:

AFEHRI Representative *J.R. Akin* date 6 Dec 97

EPC Representative *John A. De...* date 19 Dec 97

Scanner Operator *Scary Justice* date 19 Dec 97

APPROVED BY: *Gary R. Akin*

GARY R. AKIN, CMSgt, USAF
Director
Air Force Enlisted Heritage Research Institute

File
13-10
8

28 October, 1993

TO: Senior NCO Academy/MS
Gunter AFB, AL 36115-5003

I am an Air Force widow. My husband was Master Sergeant Cecil E. Curtis, [REDACTED]. He retired 28 February, 1963. He died in May, 1988. However, all through our years in the Air Force, I planned to write a book about our lives as an Air Force family. I, also, worked for the Air Force, as a civilian employee, for twenty-eight years. During our active service years, I had no time for writing. Three years after I retired, my husband died. It was then I purchased a computer and began writing my book in earnest. The title of the book is, "Until Death Do Us Part - a True Love Story." I have used diaries that I had kept, my civilian records, and my husband's military records to glean facts and dates.

One of the stories I have included was an event which was one of the highlights of his military career. He was chosen, from a line of prospective reenlistees, after World War II, to be the first man ever to be sworn into the Air Force while flying. Since he was already a well trained aircraft mechanic, it seemed appropriate that he was chosen. It was a ceremony that was one of the first to take place after the Army Air Corps became the Air Force. I am including newspaper articles to verify my statements. Naturally, I have used this story in my book.

Recently, a young man who was formerly an aircraft technician in the Air Force, was in my home doing repair work for our cable TV company. He saw the news articles, which I included in a case with the flag from my husband's funeral. He told me that he had had a question from his PME manual concerning that event. I was thrilled to think it had been included. However, several friends who are retired Air Force personnel, have researched for me but have found no evidence that the manual exists. The young man was very certain that he remembered the event in his questions on his test.

The purpose of this letter is to ask if you can help me find that manual. I would consider it an important fact to include in my book. I have included the newspaper clippings in the picture section of the book. The young man indicated that it was in a PME manual he was using in some of his aircraft mechanic training. He said the question was about the fact that my husband was indeed the first man sworn in while flying. I know he was the first, but I would like to know what training material it is included in so that I can

mention it in my book, if the Air Force does not object to my mentioning the material. Also, if it were at all possible, I would be thrilled to have a copy of the manual.

Can you please help me? If someone else is listed in the training manual as first, then the manual is in error. I know Cecil was the first!

Thank you very much for your help. I would like to have this information as soon as possible, since I have just finished the manuscript and am ready to go to the publisher with it. I have been five years in the writing, so I am anxious to get it published.

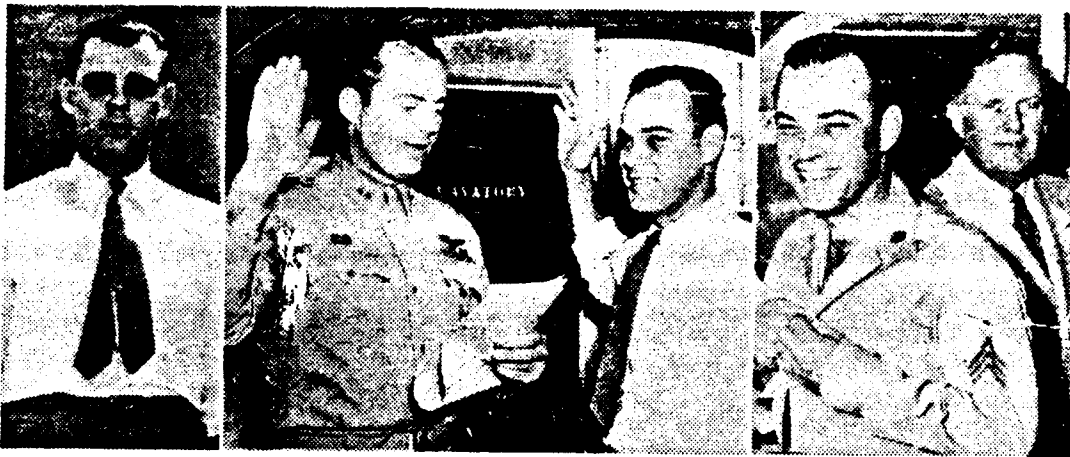
Lena B Curtis

LENA B CURTIS
A Proud Air Force Wife

- 2 Atch: 1. Austin, TX paper,
1 Aug '47, articles,
(3 pages)
2. Air Force Times,
"Stake Your Claim"

I will hold my manuscript until I hear from you. I can easily insert the facts about the manual.

*Thank you -
Lena*



OVER THE CAPITOL DOME—Cecil E. Curtis, the first man ever to be sworn into the AAF while airborne, smiles confidently in the picture at left as he stands ready to board a Braniff DC3 to take his oath of enlistment. Center, Captain Lloyd L. Withers, on the left,

—Neal Douglass Photo.

administers the oath while Curtis holds his hand aloft and confirms the questions asked him. Right, Curtis is shown buttoning his sergeant's shirt while Governor Beauford Jester stands by. (See story on Page 16.)

GOVERNOR PRESENT ON FLIGHT AS CENTEX MAN REJOINS AAF

Flying at 1,500 feet above the State Capitol, 27-year-old Cecil E. Curtis Friday morning became the first man ever to be sworn into the AAF while airborne.

Wearing neat blue trousers and a white shirt, the shy and serious Central Texan was helped aboard a Braniff DC3 at Municipal Airport

by Governor Beauford H. Jester. A few minutes later the plane landed at Bergstrom Field, where Curtis stepped out, dressed in Army khaki, a sergeant in the US Army Air Force.

The more than one-quarter-mile-high ceremony highlighted Army

Air Forces Day here while outside Austin the whole nation was celebrating the 40th anniversary of the AAF.

Standing neatly erect, Curtis was administered his oath of enlistment by Captain Lloyd L. Withers, commander of the Austin recruiting district.

Near-by was the Governor, Secretary of State Paul H. Brown, Major General K. L. Berry, adjutant general of Texas, General Edwin W. Fiburn, commanding officer of the Texas Military District, Colonel R. Baez Jr., commanding officer of Bergstrom Field, and other prominent state and Army officials.

Braniff Pilot J. E. Douglas, who flew from San Antonio Friday morning especially for the occasion, lifted the plane into the air shortly after 10 a. m.

Rising slowly, the four-engine craft circled sprawling Austin twice. Approaching the Capitol, Douglas dipped the plane wings, and attractive hostess Lou Humphries announced the altitude.

Gathered somewhat tensely in the rear of the passenger section were Curtis, Withers, the Governor and several radio technicians who made a wire recording of the event.

Without faltering, Curtis answered questions asked by Withers and with a final "I do" became a three-stripe sergeant.

Quickly, while the plane banked sharply for Bergstrom Field, Sergeant Curtis stepped into a small compartment to dress into the uniform in which he was discharged from the AAF some 20 months ago.

Stepping from the plane at the field, he was greeted with music from the post band, and the Governor's congratulation.

A tire salesman here for the past year, he said he re-enlisted because he desired "financial security for his family." Married to a Taylor girl, he is the father of two children.

In congratulating Curtis, Jester said, "He's not only giving security to himself, but he's helping to give security to our nation."

The 450th recruit enlisted by the Army recruiting service here, Curtis with his wife will be given a room by the Austin Hotel where he will spend Friday night. Meals will be furnished by the Tally-Ho Restaurant.

Others to make the enlistment flight as an honor to Curtis were: Colonel John T. Murray, senior ground instructor of Texas National Guard; Colonel L. B. Miller, San Antonio recruiting district; Dr. A. L. Chapman, head of the Bureau of Research and Education at the University of Texas; J. P. Wheeler, district traffic manager of Braniff at Austin; and Dr. Tom Rishworth, director of the University Radio House.

*Page 16
article*

Atch 1, Page 1

N Centex Man Will Reenlist Over Capitol

Man-of-the-hour in Austin on Army Air Force Day Friday will be a shy, 30-year-old Central Texan.

Cecil E. Curtis, of Taylor and Austin will be the first man ever sworn into the AAF while airborne.

With Governor Benford H. Jester and military and civilian officials, Curtis will step aboard a Braniff DC3 at Municipal Airport at 10 a. m. Friday.

Curtis will be a civilian, dressed in civilian clothes. When he deplanes at Bergstrom Field about 45 minutes later, he will be a sergeant in the AAF, wearing an Army uniform.

Curtis, a civilian for 26 months who previously served for nearly five years in the AAF, will take his oath of enlistment while flying over the State Capitol at about 10:15 a. m. The plane, flown especially from San Antonio for the enlistment, will dip its wings immediately before and after the oath is administered by Capt. Lloyd L. Withers, commander of the Austin recruiting district.

A wire recording, made in the air at the time of the ceremony, will be broadcast over KVET at 1:30 p. m. Friday.

Curtis, who has been employed as a tire salesman here for the past year, said he was reenlisting because he desires "financial security for his family." Married to a Taylor girl, he is the father of two young children.

As a man whose reenlistment highlights Army Air Force Day here, Curtis, with his wife, will be given a room by the Austin Hotel Friday night. Their meals will be provided by the Tally-Ho Restaurant.

Witnessing the ceremony in the plane will be the Governor, Secretary of State Paul H. Brown; Major General K. L. Berry, adjutant general of Texas; General Edwin W. Piburn, commanding officer of the Texas Military District; Colonel R. Baer Jr., commanding officer at Bergstrom Field; Colonel John T. Murray, senior ground instructor of Texas National Guard; Dr. A. L. Chapman, head of the Bureau of Research and Education at the University of Texas; J. P. Wheeler, district traffic manager for Braniff at Austin; Dr. Tom Hishworth, director of the University Radio House; and Withers.

Traffic Death Toll Lowered

Thursday, July 31, 1947

THE AUSTIN STA

FATHER WINS COTTON RACE

TAYLOR, July 31.—(UP)—A Taylor farmer had won the county Thursday over his son on which would win the first bale of cotton in the area.

R. A. Mueller edged his son, Walter, Mueller of Noack, in winning a 510-pound bale, which he sold for \$212 at auction. The elder Mueller was presented with a \$100 bond.

MAN MADE

'Meteorite' Is Likely Part Of Old Stove

Miss Arlee Rylander of Burnet undoubtedly thinks someone has been playing crude tricks with the windshield of her car.

All that is left of a "meteorite" that showered glass inside the vehicle and landed between her feet, is a piece of metal about 3 1/4 inches long and about 1 1/2 inches wide, "possibly from an old stove."

Dr. J. T. Lonsdale of the Bureau of Economic Geology Thursday said he had "no doubt in the world but what the piece of metal is man made."

"I wouldn't venture a guess as to how it crashed into Miss Rylander's car, but I would say the object is from some old stove or other manmade object."

The object struck the Burnet school teacher's car as she was enroute to Austin, about three miles southeast of Bertram Monday afternoon.

Cotton Market Still Uncertain

With the lowest Aug. 1 carryover in 10 years, the uncertainty of supply—always a major factor in the mid-summer cotton situation—is more important this year, Dr. A. E. Cox, University of Texas cotton marketing expert, declared Thursday.

"Because of the importance of weather at this crucial time in determination of yield per acre, the market is aptly described as a weather market," he added in his summary of the cotton situation. "Cotton belt weather, especially in the Gulf Southwest, is fickle, and any wide changes which may be interpreted as favorable or unfavorable will cause wide swings in the market price."

The low 7,322,000 bale Aug. 1

Showers Due In Austin Area Today

The weatherman promised Austin residents Thursday that showers should fall during the afternoon and Friday, to cool the local temperatures. Showers between Austin and Houston Tuesday afternoon, the US weather bureau stated, and although clouds were visible here, no precipitation fell in this vicinity.

The highest temperature Tuesday was a recording of 98 degrees at 5 p. m., and the lowest during the night was 74 degrees in early morning hours Thursday. Clouds are due over the Capital City soon, and there should breezes to stir the air, the weather bureau stated.

The overnight minimum reading in Texas ranged from a low of 60 at Lubbock to a blistering 90 at Dallas, where the mercury soared to 104 Wednesday afternoon to hottest reading in the state, with a 104 at Childress. The east spot was Guadalupe Pass.

A few scattered thunderstorms fell in the Rio Grande Valley Tuesday, with Brownsville recording 1.13 inches for the heaviest.

The summer's first real heat was broken in most sections of the nation Thursday, and relief promised within 24 hours for still sweating it out—except for somewhat too sunny South.

Near the Ohio River temperatures remained high, but the Weather Bureau said cooler weather would move in to the area later in the week. Temperatures already were considerably cooler in Northern Illinois, Indiana and Missouri as of Iowa, but from those states a word of heat relief was in air.

The Midwest was promised a continuation of the cool spell at least another day.

HOURLY TEMPERATURE READINGS			
July 30		July 31	
1 p.m.	94	1 a.m.	74
2 p.m.	96	2 a.m.	76
3 p.m.	97	3 a.m.	78
4 p.m.	98	4 a.m.	79
5 p.m.	98	5 a.m.	81
6 p.m.	96	6 a.m.	82
7 p.m.	91	7 a.m.	83
8 p.m.	88	8 a.m.	84
9 p.m.	86	9 a.m.	85
10 p.m.	84	10 a.m.	86
11 p.m.	82	11 a.m.	87
12 Mid.	81	12 Noon	88

WEATHER IN OTHER CITIES		
	High	Low
Abilene	100	74
Amarillo	98	68
Atlanta	94	70
Austin	98	74
Bismarck, N. D.	79	61
Brownsville	93	75
Chicago	87	70
Corpus Christi	91	75
Del Rio	93	74
Denver	88	66
El Paso	95	71
Fort Worth	103	79
Fredericksburg	99	68

Microfiche Copy from the newspaper

Atch 1, Page 2

General Motors Increases

The Weather

Austin Showers, With Cloudiness
And Cooler Weather by Saturday
High Here Thursday: 99 Degrees at 4 P. M.
Total Rainfall Since Jan. 1: 16.41 Inches

The Austin Statesman

VOL 77—NO. 7

AP—Associated Press UP—United Press
INS—International News Service

AUSTIN, TEXAS, FRIDAY, AUGUST 1, 1947



OVER THE CAPITOL DOME—Cecl E. Curtis, the first man ever to be sworn into the AAF while airborne, smiles confidently in the picture at left as he stands ready to board a Braniff DC3 to take his oath of enlistment. Center, Captain Lloyd E. Withers, on the left,

administers the oath while Curtis holds his hand aloft and confirms the questions asked him. Right, Curtis is shown buttoning his sergeant's shirt while Governor Beauford Jester stands by. (See story on Page 16.)

—Neal Douglas Photo.

2 REVISIONS PLANNED BEFORE INVENTORY ORDINANCE PASSES

Attorney Edward Clark, representing several

B29s Smashed

Elliott Overruled Experts, Air Corps Chief Testifies

WASHINGTON, Aug. 1.—(AP)—Major General Oliver P. Echols testified Friday that Elliott Roosevelt picked a Howard Hughes plane as the best for wartime photo-reconnaissance work after the Air Force high command turned it down in 1943.

Echols, wartime chief of the Air Corps Material Command told the Senate war investigating subcommittee that the son of the late President Roosevelt in effect reversed the decision of the Air Corps' best experts.

The general agreed that if the plane could do a claimed 445 miles an hour it then would have been the Air Corps' fastest plane of the type.

Chairman Ferguson (R-Mich) commented that the committee has been unable to find any Air Corps records dealing with the experimental plane between July 1942 and

ed Hughes as announcing he will ask the Justice Department investigation of Brewster and Pan-American.

"The basis of my demand will be substantially on charges I have already made," Hughes was quoted.

Earlier this week, Hughes de-

(Continued on Page 7, Col. 4)



BILL HARDIN

Austin Ex-Sub Sailor

STAKE YOUR CLAIM

1945 Jet Kill Listed; More on Downing of MIG by a B-29.

By TONY POLOZZOLO

WHO was the first U.S. pilot to shoot down a jet? If you believe he came from the Korean pilot ranks you're wrong. Word from Itazuke AB, Japan, reveals that on April 4, 1945 Capt. (then Lt.) Raymond A. Dyer shot down a jet ME-262.

No claim is made as to this being the first jet kill but, until we hear differently, it will stand as such.

The action took place over Germany at 26,000 feet. Dyer was piloting a P-51 as a member of the Eighth AF. He is now with the 35th Fighter Bomber Sq. at Itazuke.

We've done some research on the subject and haven't been able to come up with much. It appears at least three other pilots got 262s in the late days of the war during aerial battles. Numerous 262s were shot up on the ground.

It seems that although Germany had the jet 262 for many years, some German authorities say it was developed in 1938, production was held up when Hitler demanded it be used as a bomber—a job for it was highly unsuitable. Best estimate is that more than 1000 were produced but only about 100 got into the air.

If anyone can supply the names of other pilots and the dates on which they shot down German jets, we'll be glad to pass along the data.

ANOTHER JET controversy is starting to clear up. We reported the first MIG shot down by a B-29 crewmember occurred Oct. 14, 1950. This was denied by a third party who said a Pvt. Harry Lavene of the 31st Strategic Recon Sq. got one earlier but

two-year total of 173 for other reservists to shoot at. Previously we carried the top navigator who logged 91 hours, 45 minutes in one two-week active duty tour.

AN ADMIRAL is a captain and a Major is an airman at Presque Isle AFB, Me. Owners of the confusing rankings are Chap. (Capt.) Admiral Phillips and A/IC Major Smith.

THREE CHALLENGES have been hurled at our altitude record for light planes which opened at 12,500 feet. The champion, as of the moment, is M/Sgt. Bailey Shrum, now at Osan AB, Korea, but headed for Perrin AFB, Tex., who in 1943 took a Piper L-4 to 16,400 feet. On the same day, he reports, a Lt. Vincent W. Ehmann (now a civilian) took an L-4 to 17,200 feet over Hawaii. Other challenges came from 2d Lt. Paul H. Messinger, Lackland AFB, Tex., who went to 15,300 feet in a Luscombe 85, and CWO V. G. Steele, also of Lackland, who took a Luscombe Silvaire to 14,650 feet. Lieutenant Messinger also enters a "gliding" record. In 1956 he and Lt. M. D. Hall flew a Luscombe 65 for 90 minutes with the engine shut off at altitudes of 10,000-13,000 feet.

IN 14 YEARS and seven months of amphibian operations, Maj. John H. Mork has completed 9750 water landings. He's now with the 41st Air Rescue Sq., Hamilton AFB, Calif., and has been in air rescue work since March 27, 1943 when he made his first water landing at Pensacola NAS, Fla., in a P2Y3.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS—Latest

Philco Tech Representative with the 861st AC&W Sq., Aiken, S. C.

ANOTHER NEW champion in the "youngest" department is S/Sgt. Russell W. Dodds, Selfridge AFB, Mich., who was named First Sergeant at age 20 years, six months—making him six months younger than the ex-champion.

NEW CHAMPION as the squadron with the most Command Pilots assigned is the 73d Bomb Sq., Ramey AFB, P.R. The 73d has five, one more than the previous titleholder. The 73d's CPs are Lt. Col. George C. Player, squadron commander; Maj. Stamy E. Edmisten, Operations Officer; and Maj. Thomas G. Duckworth, Maj. Warren N. Ruddy and Capt. James H. Palmer. Two others, Maj. Theodore Wodzien and Clarence Marcum, are due to receive the rating in November.

HOW MANY airmen have been re-enlisted while up in the air, literally? M/Sgt. Cecil E. Curtis of Amarillo AFB, Tex., writes that he is sure he was the first to sign over while flying (Aug. 1, 1947 at Bergstrom AFB, Tex.) and thinks he may be the only one. We seem to recall at least one other instance

but are unable to provide name or date.

ECI REPORTS that the Montgomery AFS, Ala., is the first AF base or station to have a 100-percent enrollment with ECI. The station is commanded by Maj. Gerald A. Moorhead and is comprised of 81-civilians.

UNTIL WE hear differently, A/2C Norman L. Bush, 77th Fight-

er-Bomber Sq., Wethersfield AB, England, will stand as the first airman to go through the sound barrier. He accomplished the feat July 13, 1957 in an F-100F. That was a month prior to our previous champion.

THIS IS YOUR column. If you wish to stake a claim or challenge one reported, write to: Records Editor, Air Force Times, 2020 M St. N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

EARN 4% - INSURED SAFETY!

CURRENT RATE PER ANNUM

Earn extra dollars with insured safety up to \$10,000. Have your Finance Officer deduct a portion of each pay check and credit your Savings Account. Payments postmarked by the 10th of any month earn from the 1st.

FIDELITY
Federal
SAVINGS & LOAN
ASSOCIATION



225 E. BROADWAY
GLENDALE 5, CALIFORNIA
ASSETS OVER \$100 MILLION

WE PAY POSTAGE BOTH WAYS

Please send me, without obligation, a copy of "Our Town, Glendale" and your latest financial statement...

Name _____
SN _____
Address _____
10-12

The one cigarette proved* significantly superior to all