

## Atlanta Warbird Weekend

by

Ken Philippart

Images courtesy of Arloe Mayne and Lisa Philippart



The Greater Huntsville Section hit the road to Atlanta, GA the last weekend in September to attend the third annual Atlanta Warbird Weekend. Nine members and guests traveled from Huntsville and Tuscaloosa to participate in the weekend activities. The participants were Dr. Alan and Suzanne Minga, Mike Pessin, Dr. Arloe Mayne, Dr. Sean Wang, Jennifer Shu-Wang, Zoe Wang, and Ken and Lisa Philippart.

After traveling to Atlanta on Friday, the group arrived at Peachtree-Dekalb (PDK) Airport for the Saturday opening ceremonies. Cadets from the Georgia Wing of the Civil Air Patrol posted the colors

and the 1940s-style singing trio *Freedom Belles* delivered a rousing, patriotic rendition of the National Anthem to open the day's activities.

Warbird Weekend commemorates the aircraft and more importantly, the brave men and women, who participated in World War II and liberated the world from tyranny. This year marked the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Volunteer Group (AVG), better known as the Flying Tigers. Almost 40 aircraft lined the ramp with close to 20 World War II veterans attending. Throughout the day, veterans talked about their experiences while historians provided summaries of operations and other perspective on the China-Burma-India (CBI) theater. Two surviving members of the AVG were on hand to discuss their experiences with a backdrop of the Flying Tigers' steeds, five P-40 pursuits.



Warbird rides were available throughout the day and the sight of Mustangs, Texans and other WWII aircraft regularly taking off and landing was a sight to behold. Two AIAA members took to the skies to experience WWII-era aviation firsthand. Arloe Mayne flew in a Fairchild PT-19A trainer and Ken Philippart hopped aboard a DC-3 to see what passenger travel was like



70 years ago. The DC-3 is unpressurized and with the day's 96 degree temperatures, passenger comfort left a lot to be desired. Dr. Mayne commented that his flight was very comfortable; he flew with the canopy pushed back the entire time and the 100 knot wind kept things cool.

A Curtiss C-46 Commando and Douglas C-47 Skytrain were also on static display and open for tours. Re-

enactors in authentic WWII uniforms conducted a simulated mission briefing in front of the aircraft followed by a question and answer session with veterans who had flown the Hump route during the war to make history come alive.

Lt Col Dick Cole, US Air Force (retired), the last surviving member of the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders, was on hand signing autographs and meeting visitors. Despite being 100 years old, Lt Col Cole shared his experiences as Jimmy Doolittle's co-pilot during the 1942 raid and subsequent experiences flying the Hump in the CBI theater. Lisa Philippart discovered a personal connection when she learned that she and Lt Col Cole shared the same home town of Dayton, Ohio.



The *Freedom Belles* entertained the crowd through-out the day with a medley of songs from WWII and vendors hawked a variety of aviation memorabilia, keepsakes and food.

The day concluded with the contingent of five P-40s performing several formation fly-bys in front of the crowd, possibly the last time that such a sight will darken the skies given the age and growing scarcity of that aircraft type.



Exhausted and parched from the day's heat, many in the group retreated for dinner, cold beers and camaraderie at a local restaurant to conclude the day.

On Sunday morning, the group braved Atlanta traffic to head cross town for a tour of the Delta Flight Museum. Ms. Jolie Elder of the Atlanta Section joined Greater Huntsville for the museum tour, tracing Delta Airlines' history from its beginnings as a crop dusting service to the major American carrier that it is today. Interior tours of historic aircraft and interactive displays were highlights. While chatting during the tour, members hatched preliminary ideas for future collaboration between the Atlanta and Greater



Huntsville sections. Ken Philippart presented Ms. Elder with the Greater Huntsville Section coin to thank her for joining the group and to symbolize the new inter-section friendships that were formed.

After the tour, the Greater Huntsville group hit the road for the drives back to Huntsville and Tuscaloosa, stopping for lunch along the way.

