

Flight of the Phoenix Escadrille: Honoring the 47th Fighter Squadron. Upholding An Air Force Tradition



Carl Best from Dallas and Steve Dean from Gilmer, TX campaign their North American Aviation T-6 Texan's as Flight of the Phoenix Escadrille, honoring the 47th Pursuit Sq from WW II, which was deployed to Haleiwa Field, Hawaii on December 7, 1941.

Escadrille pays tribute to 47th Fighter Squadron pilots Lts. Ken Taylor and George 'Wheaties' Welch. In a two-ship combat formation of P-40's out numbered "200 to 1" they took to the skies from Haleiwa Field on December 7, 1941 to strike the attacking enemy armada head on.

Taylor got two Jap planes before he was wounded. Welch shot down 4 Japanese planes. For their courage and heroism, the young aviators were cited for the Medal of Honor, and were each awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for 'valor and extreme heroism': The Distinguished Service Cross being just one notch below the Medal of Honor.

The joint Army/Navy Awards Review Board ruled that **because the two pilots mobilized, armed, and launched their Curtiss Aviation P-40's without orders**, they were **not authorized** to receive the MOH. They were glamorized as the 'larger than life' characters Rafe and Danny in the 2001 Hollywood movie "Pearl Harbor".

Today, the 47th Fighter Squadron fulfills a global combat and training role in the war against terror in the Fairchild/Republic A-10 Warthog. The 47th home base is Barksdale AFB, LA. They proudly fly the single seat Fairchild/ Republic Aviation A-10 attack fighter in the Air Force Reserve Command.

Flight of the Phoenix Escadrille leader is USAF Capt. Steve Dean (ret), a veteran 47th Fighter Squadron pilot who flew the A-37 "Dragonfly" in Special Ops/Air Commandos. Deputy Leader Carl Best first flew his T-6 from the lap of his flight-instructor Mom at the tender age of two.

Flight of the Phoenix Aviation Museum
Fox Stephens Field (KJXI) Gilmer, TX
www.flightofthephoenix.org





Steve Dean's South African Air Force T-6G Harvard served on active military duty as a member of the SAAF Display Team, flown in the #3 position by SAAF Maj. Lionel Sawyer, based at Langbaanweg AFB, near Cape Town, South Africa. Her final active duty flight for the South African demo team was March 26, 1994 at *Fidae '94*, in Santiago de Chile.



During WW II Carl Best's USAAF T-6G Texan served as an advanced fighter trainer at Perrin AFB in Sherman, TX. In 1958 it transferred to France under the 'Lend Lease' program. It was fitted with rockets and gun pods and served with the French Air Force as a ground attack fighter in Casablanca.

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**Hangar One/Flight of the Phoenix Aviation Museum/Fox Stephens Field
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