

# SELFRIDGE FLYER

Volume 7, Issue 3

*"127<sup>th</sup> Wing — Your Hometown Air Force"*

May 2024



## FROM THE COMMANDER

# Welcome to the 2024 Open House and Air Show

**By Brig. Gen. Matthew Brancato**  
127th Wing

Once again, we are delighted to open our gates to the public, free of charge, for the 2024 Selfridge Open House and Air Show on June 8-9, 2024. This year our show's theme is "Innovation Focused, STEAM Driven," emphasizing the importance of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics as they relate to the aerospace fields.

The headlining performer is the Air Force's flight demonstration team, the Thunderbirds. You will also see numerous aerial performances including historic warbirds, aerobatic demonstrations, parachute teams and more. The flight line will be filled with a variety of static display aircraft, military vehicles and educational enrichment for the entire family to enjoy. The latter includes our first "STEAM Expo" area, with interactive exhibits and displays from NASA and the Air Force Research Lab sure to engage children of all ages.

While you are here, you may notice a lot is changing at Selfridge Air National Guard Base. After more than 100 years of continuous military service, Selfridge is evolving, yet again, to meet the nation's ever-changing military mission requirements.

In January, the Air Force

officially announced it had selected Selfridge as the preferred location to host the next KC-46A Pegasus aircraft, the newest aerial refueling mission. Pending the outcome of an environmental impact study, the KC-46 is projected to start arriving at Selfridge in 2029.

In May 2023, we broke ground on the Hangar 4 project located in "Hangar Row" on historic Wilbur Wright Blvd. The Hangar 4 project will replace a structure built in 1934 with a high-tech maintenance facility that will bolster our capabilities and prepare us for a variety of future missions.

Next month, we are scheduled to begin major upgrades to the existing Selfridge flight line. During this project, our tanker aircraft will relocate to alternate locations where they will carry on flight missions for our nation.

Thanks to our supporters and the dedication and tenacity of Michigan's elected officials, Selfridge Air National Guard Base will continue to thrive for years to come. I especially want to thank everyone who has worked so hard to make our Open House and Air Show possible.

We are grateful to host you as our guests and hope you enjoy the performances, good food and great people at the Selfridge 2024 Open House and Airshow.

See you at the show!

**The headlining performer is the Air Force's flight demonstration team, the Thunderbirds. You will also see numerous aerial performances including historic warbirds, aerobatic demonstrations, parachute teams and more.**



Brig. Gen. Matthew Brancato, 127th Wing

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### SELFRIDGE BASE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

#### President

Jonathan Vandenbossche

The Selfridge Base Community Council's mission is to continue improving outstanding relationships between both the civilian and military-service communities centered at Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

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**On the cover:** The Thunderbirds, the Air Force's aerial demonstration team, perform at the "Sun N' Fun Fly-In" event at Lakeland, Florida, April 14, 2024. The Thunderbirds are the headlining act at the 2024 Selfridge Open House and Air Show.

.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY STAFF  
SGT. BREANNA KLEMM



THEN AND NOW

# IN PHOTOS AIR SHOW HAS GROWN OVER THE YEARS



**Above:** Spectators observe aerial demonstrations during an “aero circus” at Selfridge Field, Sep. 14, 1924. The Detroit Free Press reported that an audience of 50,000 attended the seven-act program, including a 30-minute performance of 25 Curtiss pursuit planes and three bomber aircraft demonstrating combat maneuvers.

COURTESY PHOTO

**Left:** Spectators kept their eyes on the sky through the 2011 Selfridge Air Show and Open House at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Aug. 20, 2011.

PHOTO BY JOHN S. SWANSON

## 50,000 Thrilled as U.S. Aviators Defy Death

**Selfridge Daredevils Play at War in Spectacular Aero Circus.**

*Special to The Free Press.*  
Mt. Clemens, Sept. 14.—Selfridge field aviators today in playful vein, nose-dived, looped, banked, stalled and spun their machines over the heads of 50,000 thrilled spectators from Detroit and surrounding district, in one of the most spectacular air circuses ever witnessed here. Trained army wizards twirled and whirled their huge masses of wire and canvas with such skill that at times it seemed almost as if the tearing and snorting engines were endowed with human intelligence. The program was varied, demonstrating nearly every trick and war tactic known, and the work of the officers, individually and as a unit, won high praise.

The proceeds of the circus and sham battle will be turned over to the war relief fund.

**Bullets Tear Down Blimp.**  
One anchored blimp, or sausage observation balloon shot down by the pilots of the first pursuit group, was the only casualty of the day. The weather was ideal, cool and cloudy, making observation easy from the ground.

Of the seven events on the program the cool dazing of the parachute jumpers, as they leaped into space from the dizzy heights, easily won the crowd. Six men from Wilbur Wright field, Dayton, O., made the leaps, demonstrating the methods of escape from aeroplanes in case of fire, collision or structural failure. Trick firing and stunts performed by graduate aviators were a close second in holding the attention of the throng. In fact the program was varied, demonstrating nearly every trick and war tactic known, and the work of the officers, individually and as a unit, won high praise.

*(Continued on Page Two, Column Five.)*

COURTESY PHOTO

## 50,000 THRILLED AT U. S. AIR CIRCUS

**Continued From Page One.**

entire program, from the time that Pilot Lieutenant W. H. Brookly initiated the skies with letters a half-mile long until the first pursuit group bombarded a dummy fort with shell and rifle shot, was full of thrills.

**28 Machines in Maneuver.**  
Twenty-five pilots with Curtiss pursuit aeroplanes and three big bombers from Selfridge, Chanute and Langley fields, were in the air nearly 30 minutes, demonstrating combined formation maneuvers.

A novel event demonstrating perfect control and co-ordination was the “apron string” event. Two aeroplanes tied together with a flimsy 50-foot cord took off, maneuvered for 10 minutes in the air and landed again without breaking the string.

COURTESY PHOTO



## WHAT CAN I BRING TO THE AIR SHOW?

### DON'TS

- BACKPACKS
- DUFFLE BAGS
- LARGE CAMERA BAGS
- CAMELBACK-TYPE HYDRATION SYSTEMS
- BALLOONS
- DRONES
- ANY PROPELLED ITEM CAPABLE OF BEING AIRBORNE
- WEAPONS AND TOYS RESEMBLING WEAPONS OF ANY TYPE, (CONCEAL CARRY FIREARMS INCLUDED)
- ANY PROJECTILE LAUNCHING DEVICE
- KNIVES OVER 3"
- FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS, EXPLOSIVE MATERIALS OR FIREWORKS OF ANY KIND

- COOLERS
- GLASS CONTAINERS/BOTTLES
- ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES
- ILLEGAL DRUGS\*\*
- SMOKING MATERIALS, VAPING DEVICES
- NON-MILITARY CIVILIANS WEARING MILITARY UNIFORMS
- GANG, MOTORCYCLE CLUB-AFFILIATED COLORS, CLOTHING OR ITEMS
- CANOPIES, TENTS, UMBRELLAS
- WALKIE-TALKIES, HAM RADIOS, SCANNERS
- LASER POINTERS
- ANIMALS/PETS
- BICYCLES, SCOOTERS, WHEELED SHOES, SEGWAYS, SKATEBOARDS, GO-CARTS

Smoking/Vaping is prohibited in the show area

If Security Forces finds prohibited items during gate inspection, you will not be able to enter the show area. You will be given instructions to secure the prohibited items in your vehicle and then return to the gate for inspection and entry. Illegal items will have appropriate law enforcement response.

### DO'S

- CLEAR OR MESH BACKPACKS
- CLEAR OR MESH DUFFLE BAGS
- PORTABLE CHAIRS
- SERVICE ANIMALS
- WAGONS\*
- STROLLERS
- WHEELCHAIRS

- PLASTIC BOTTLES
- METAL BOTTLES
- CELL PHONES, CAMERAS

## PARKING MAP

**LEGEND:**

- A - K GEN ADMISSION PARKING (A-K)
- 1 - 5 VIP PARKING (1-5)
- HC HANDICAP PARKING
- V VOLUNTEER PARKING
- Gate Entrance / Security Checkpoint
- Bus Stop
- 2-WAY BUS ROUTE
- AIRSHOW PERIMETER / VIEWING AREA

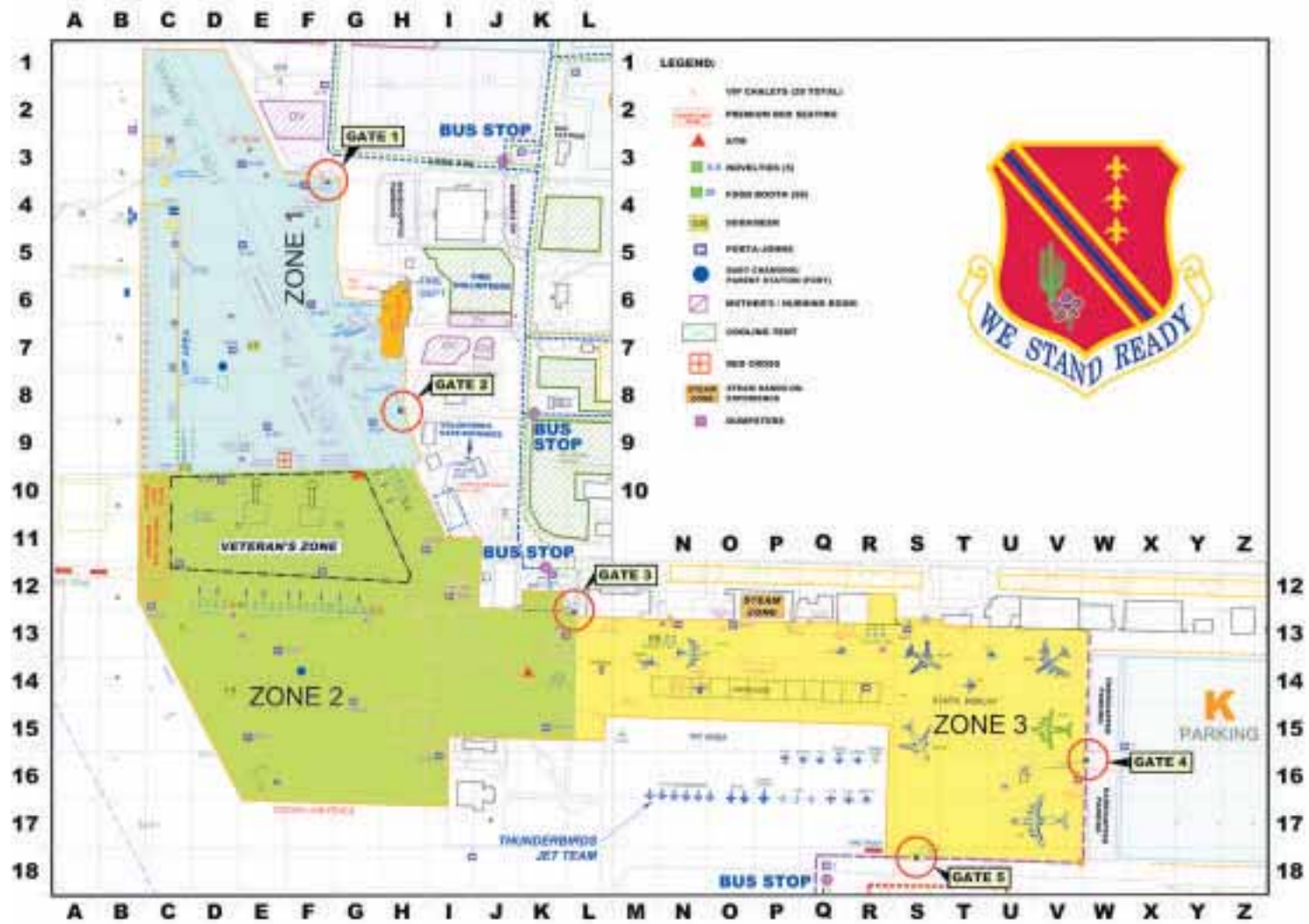
**Key Locations and Routes:**

- MAIN GATE:** GENERAL ADMISSION ACCESS. ROUTE: 21 MILE TO JEFFERSON. MAIN GATE OPEN TO PUBLIC AT 8:00AM.
- JOY GATE:** VIP ACCESS. Opens at 8am. ROUTE: GRATIOT TO JOY RD.
- SOUTH GATE:** (5am-9pm). SOUTH GATE GENERAL ADMISSION ACCESS. ROUTE: I-94 TO NORTH RIVER RD. GATE OPEN TO PUBLIC AT 8:00 AM.
- AIRSHOW GATE:** Opens at 8am.
- North River Rd. Closed:** THURS 2:45pm TO 4:30pm, FRI 2:45pm TO 4:30pm, SAT / SUN 2:45pm TO 4:30pm.
- South Gate Rd. Closed:** THURS 2:45pm TO 4:30pm, FRI 2:45pm TO 4:30pm, SAT / SUN 2:45pm TO 4:30pm.
- Military / Staff & Family Access:** ROUTE: BRIDGEVIEW RD. TO NORTH RIVER RD.


\*Security Forces reserves the right to deny entry to spectators with wagons deemed too large or may pose a safety concern

\*\*Marijuana (medicinal and recreational) is federally illegal and therefore prohibited on Selfridge Air National Guard Base







# STATIC DISPLAYS




A-10  
Thunderbolt II




KC-135  
Stratotanker




KC-46  
Pegasus




CH-47  
Chinook




UH-60  
Black Hawk




C-17  
Globemaster III



KC-10  
Extender



B-1C  
Stealth Bomber



F-16  
Fighting Falcon

## AND MORE!

# PERFORMERS



MIAF THUNDERBOLTS



THE SWAMP FEE



SELF-PROCLAIMED THUNDERBOLT 9 AND MC 130 STRATOTANKER



ACE WAKER AIRSHOW



WEST BLUES



U.S. ARMY GOLDEN KNIGHTS



CANALSAATCHI-10 EXHIBIT



BILL STEIN AIRSHOW



FRANKLIN'S FLYING CIRCUS AND AIRSHOW



U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PATROL



GRANT NELSON CAP 232



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PERFORMER LIST, HEAD TO  
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## LEGACY

# Tuskegee Airmen at Selfridge Field

Story courtesy of Selfridge Military Air Museum

Red Tails at Selfridge? Well, not quite. But several squadrons of the brave Tuskegee Airmen, later known as the “Red Tails,” for their heroic service during World War II, did train at Selfridge Field. Some would go on to achieve great things, while others gave their lives in service of a country not yet willing to see them as equals.

In the early days of U.S. entry into WWII, an Allied victory was far from certain. Service personnel were needed at every level — none more than the fighter and bomber pilots. Despite the scores of young, capable African American men with the potential to become great Army fliers, no Black pilots would be allowed to fly for their country until April 1943, when the all-Black 99th Pursuit Squadron, under the command of Capt. Benjamin O. Davis, flew from Tuskegee, Alabama, to Ramitelli Airfield in Italy, to join the 33rd Fighter Group. Davis later became the first Black Brigadier General in the Air Force.

The 99th Pursuit Squadron would soon join with three other Tuskegee squadrons to form the 332nd Fighter Group — aka the “Red Tails.”

Between 1943 and 1944, many pilots of the 332nd Fighter Group, who first trained at the Tuskegee Army Air Field, received advanced combat training at Selfridge Field, Michigan. Once the men arrived at Selfridge, they were assigned to the 553rd Replacement Squadron meant to resupply the 332nd Fighter Group pilots overseas. While at Tuskegee, the



COURTESY PHOTO

Tuskegee Airmen during World War II, estimated to be May 1942.

soldiers trained on Stearman biplanes, BT-13 Valiant, and P-40 Warhawk aircraft. At Selfridge, they were introduced to new P-39 Airacobra aircraft with the engines placed behind the pilot for better weight distribution. The P-39 was the first plane the men would fly with tricycle landing gear.

As Col. Alexander Jefferson wrote in “Red Tail Captured, Red Tail Free: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman and POW,” the P-39 was “a sweet ship to fly.”

The Tuskegee fliers at Selfridge Field faced difficulties in the sky and on the ground, losing 15 Airmen in training accidents while facing discrimination from fellow officers. Black officers were excluded from the all-white Officers Club in Luftberry Hall and were segregated at the Base theater where a line down

the middle aisle separated white officers from Black. On one occasion, both Black and white officers protested this practice by sitting randomly in seats regardless of race, shutting down the movie.

All was not bleak, however. Given the base’s location near Detroit, the Black pilots often availed themselves of the great entertainment in the Paradise Valley area of what was then known as “Black Bottom.” Paradise Valley had many top-notch clubs featuring some of the best acts in the country, such as Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong or Ella Fitzgerald.

The Tuskegee fliers also had fun in other ways. On low-flying drills, the men would pilot their fighter planes at tree-top level. Jefferson admitted that on one such occasion, he and a

number of other pilots flew their P-39s under the Ambassador Bridge, the international border between the U.S. and Canada. They were never caught.

It is not within the scope of this article to list the names of all 15 Tuskegee Airmen who lost their lives while training at Selfridge, but a few stories stand out.

Lt. Wilmeth Sadat-Singh, from New York City, was a Hindu of Asian descent, but his dark skin color relegated him to Tuskegee and not the other airfields.

He graduated from Syracuse University in 1939 where he was a star baseball and football player, earning an All-American mention for the latter.

His plane went down in Saginaw Bay in May 1943 and his body was not recovered for almost two months.

Lt. Nathaniel P. Ray-

**Between 1943 and 1944, many pilots of the 332nd Fighter Group, who first trained at the Tuskegee Army Air Field, received advanced combat training at Selfridge Field, Michigan.**

burg from Washington, D.C., was well-known as a sports journalist. On Dec. 12, 1943, his P-39 experienced engine trouble and went down in the north channel of the St. Clair River near Pearl Beach. Rayburg’s body was recovered, but divers were unable to access the aircraft due to the strong current and murky waters. In 2015, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Diving With a Purpose organization located the wreck and began recovering parts of the aircraft. A substantial piece of the tail section is on display at the Selfridge Military Air Museum.

Four months after Rayburg’s crash, Lt. Frank H. Moody, an Oklahoman with a degree from UCLA, was flying in formation during gunnery practice over Lake Huron.

His P-39 suddenly crashed into the lake three miles north of Port Huron. Coast Guard and Selfridge personnel searched, but were unsuccessful due to choppy waters in the lake. The search was eventually called off and his body was

recovered two months later.

On Aug. 28, 2021, with funding from DWP, the state of Michigan, the city of Port Huron and the state of Alabama, a monument honoring Rayburg and Moody was unveiled in Port Huron. In attendance were Jefferson and Col. Harry Stewart, two of the last remaining Tuskegee Airmen living in Michigan at that time. The memorial is in the International Flag Plaza at 2520 Wright Street in Port Huron.

During WWII, the Tuskegee Airmen were so good at covering the bombers that they were specifically requested to be assigned. In total, they flew 1,578 combat and 179 bomber escort missions respectively, and received three Distinguished Unit Citations. Individually, Tuskegee pilots received over 800 flying medals including Distinguished Flying Crosses, Bronze Stars and Air Medals. Those serving at Selfridge Air National Guard Base today can take pride in knowing that the installation held a critical part in developing such an accomplished group of fliers.

## ‘NO TRESPASS’ NOTICE

The Firearms Range is located at Building 881, Ammo Road, Selfridge ANGB, MI 48045. Trespassing is not only illegal, but dangerous due to gunfire.

If you have a valid need for entry to the range, please contact Mr. Alan Pionk at 586-239-4282.



# Macomb County School Students and Staff

## With Gratitude for our U.S. Servicemen and Women who Sacrifice for our Freedoms



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Clintondale Community Schools, Eastpointe Community Schools, Fitzgerald Public Schools, Fraser Public Schools,  
Lake Shore Public Schools, Lakeview Public Schools, L'Anse Creuse Public Schools, Mount Clemens Community Schools,  
New Haven Community Schools, Richmond Community Schools, Romeo Community Schools, Roseville Community Schools,  
South Lake Schools, Utica Community Schools, Van Dyke Public Schools, Warren Consolidated Schools,  
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