

THOMAS E. SMITH



**ARKANSAS AIR NATIONAL GUARD
1956-1963**

THOMAS E. SMITH
ARKANSAS AIR NATIONAL GUARD
1956-1963



A1C (E-3) Thomas E. Smith, served in the Arkansas Air National Guard 1956-1963. The Arkansas Air National Guard origins date to 28-AUG 1917 with the establishment of the 154th Aero Squadron as part of the World War I American Expeditionary Force. The 154th served in France on the Western Front, then after the 1918 Armistice with Germany was demobilized in 1919.

The unit was reorganized with the establishment of a permanent air service in 1920 as the 154th Observation Squadron on 24 -OCT 1925 and is oldest unit of the Arkansas Air National Guard. It is one of the 29 original National Guard Observation Squadrons of the United States Army National Guard formed before World War II. The 154th Observation Squadron was activated for one year of training on 16-Sep 1940. The unit completed its one-year training and returned to state control but was recalled to active duty on 7-DEC 1941 as a result of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

On 24-MAY 1946, the United States Army Air Forces, in response to dramatic postwar military budget cuts imposed by President Harry S. Truman, allocated inactive unit designations to the National Guard Bureau for the formation of an Air Force National Guard. These unit designations were allotted and transferred to various State National Guard bureaus to provide them unit designations to re-establish them as Air National Guard units.

The modern Arkansas ANG received federal recognition on 27-MAY 1946 as the 154th Fighter Squadron at Adams Field, Little Rock. It was equipped with F-51D Mustangs and its mission was the air defense of the state. 18-SEP 1947, however, is considered the Arkansas Air National Guard's official birth concurrent with the establishment of the United States Air Force as a separate branch of the United States military under the National Security Act.

On 2-OCT 1950, the 154th Fighter Squadron, along with detachment B, 237th Air Services Group and the 154th Utility Flight reported to active duty for service in Korea. The unit went to Langley Air Force Base, VA where it was re-equipped with the F-84E fighter and completed transition training. The 154th flew its first combat sortie 2-MAY 1951. Initially

operating out of Itaeke, Japan the unit later moved to Taegu, Korea. The 154th returned to Arkansas and was relieved from active duty 1-JUL 1952. While in Korea the 154th flew 3,790 combat sorties and was awarded the Presidential Korean Citation for its service.

The 184th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron was federally recognized on 15-OCT 1953 at Fort Smith Regional Airport, being equipped with RB-26C Invaders, used for night photo reconnaissance.

On 22-AUG 1962, the 184th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron was authorized to expand to a group level, and the 188th Tactical Reconnaissance Group was established by the National Guard Bureau with the 184th TRS becoming the group's flying squadron. On 1 OCT, the 154th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron was authorized to expand to a group level, and the 189th Tactical Reconnaissance Group was allotted by the National Guard Bureau, extended federal recognition and activated.

Following the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, elements of every Air National Guard unit in Arkansas had been activated in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Flight crews, aircraft maintenance personnel, communications technicians, air controllers and air security personnel were engaged in Operation Noble Eagle air defense overflights of major United States cities. Additionally, Arkansas ANG units had been deployed overseas as part of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq.

Today, the 189th Airlift Wing at Little Rock AFB is home to the most experienced C-130 instructor crew in the world. Since 1998, the primary mission of the 189 AW has been to teach the C-130 Instructor School curriculum for pilots, navigators, flight engineers, and loadmasters. Students include aircrew members from all branches of the DoD, Coast Guard, and many foreign countries. The 188th Fighter Wing's A-10 Thunderbolts at Fort Smith provide close air support to troops on the ground.

Tom started building models (cars, airplanes and armored vehicles) at age 8. He and his wife, Lynn, reside in Wright City, MO, where his collection has been on display throughout their home. He has fashioned by hand authentic replicas of numerous legendary planes from WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam and present day. Each one has intricate, accurate details.



Planes Featuring World War One Aces

Tom's collection of over 200 airplanes and over 30 armored vehicles now resides as part of the permanent collection at the St. Charles County Veterans Museum.

At left is a small sample of Tom's WWI collection. Most of the collection features authentic paint schemes for Aces from around the world.

At right is a sample of Tom's WWII planes.

The majority of the models are 1/72nd scale. Tom is also restoring some larger models that had been donated to the museum by other individuals.



Authentic Replicas from World War Two

The Smith's recently donated a domed Plexiglass case to house a sampling of planes representing the Korean War era through the present day.



This Selection of Modern-era Aircraft is on Display at the Museum.