

SELFRIDGE FLYER

Volume 3, Issue 6

"127th Wing – Your Hometown Air Force"

November 2020





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INSURANCE AGENCY

**Proud Member Of The
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EDITORIAL

Community support key for SBCC

By Fred Sherrerd

Selfridge Base Community Council

Community coming together to engage and support the men and women of Selfridge is a key mission of the Selfridge Base Community Council. When the opportunity to participate in furnishing a room in the Enlisted Heritage House was brought to council, our members embraced the mission.

The Enlisted Heritage House was created to preserve, honor, and display the rich history of the Enlisted Corps who have served at Selfridge; a home, with a purposefully positive atmosphere where military members, veterans and their families can gather to build camaraderie, celebrate country, unit and personal accomplishments.

BCC member Ray Ahonen of Belfor Property Management heard about the plan to bring an abandoned period desk set back to life and graciously offered to assist with the project. Ahonen engaged Packoutz of Clinton Township, a Belfor company, that special-



Fred Sherrerd

izes in furniture restoration to bring new life into the old goods. The committed craftsman at Packoutz brought new life to the furniture helping to preserve its rich heritage and tradition.

Bruce Johnson of Packoutz was instrumental in coordinating the restoration and arranged for personal delivery of the restored desk and accompanying items directly to the EHH.

This was yet another example of BCC members' dedication to community and support of the Selfridge community.

ABOUT THE SELFRIDGE BASE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Since the 1940s, Selfridge Community Council has been led by members of business and municipal leaders of Macomb County, Mich. Year in and year out we work our hardest to preserve and promote the great relationship the community has with Selfridge Air National Guard Base and the servicemen and women

who serve this great nation of ours.

To be eligible for Membership, an applicant must either have a permanent residential or work address within Macomb County. To learn more about membership types or to inquire about a new membership go to www.selfridgecommunitycouncil.com/membership-registration.



The committed craftsman at Packoutz brought new life to the furniture helping to preserve its rich heritage and tradition.

SEFRIDGE FLYER

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SEFRIDGE BASE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Presidents

Mark Zuccaro (Current)
Drema Isaac (Future)

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.

Wing Commander

Brig. Gen. Rolf E. Mammen

Vice Wing Commander

Col. Alice Clark

Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant

Chief Master Sgt. Richard Gordon

127TH WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

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Chief of Community Relations

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Base Visual Information Manager

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Public Affairs Staff

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Tech. Sgt. Chelsea E. FitzPatrick
Staff Sgt. Samara Taylor
Mr. Terry Atwell
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PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

The Selfridge Flyer is a publication of the Selfridge Base Community Council and is not an official publication of the Department of Defense. Contents of the Selfridge Flyer are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the DoD, or Digital First Media.

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On the cover: Major Brett DeVries, an A-10 Thunderbolt II pilot with the 107th Fighter Squadron here, briefs Secretary Barbara M. Barrett, the 25th Secretary of the Air Force, on the lethality of the main weapon system used on an A-10 — a 30mm Gatling-style gun — during her visit here, Nov. 6, 2020. The Secretary visited Selfridge to award DeVries the Distinguished Flying Cross for superior aerial achievement for successfully landing a damaged A-10 during a 2017 training flight over northern Michigan. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Dan Heaton)

PHOTO COURTESY OF SELFRIDGE BASE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

SEEN AROUND SELFRIDGE



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY MUNNAF JOARDER

TOP: A 171st Air Refueling Squadron KC-135T on a training mission refueled an EC-130J Commando Solo from 193d Special Operations Squadron, Harrisburg Air National Guard Base, Pennsylvania, Oct. 2, 2020. This mission presented a unique opportunity to see a propeller-driven aircraft being refueled by jet aircraft.

RIGHT: Senior Airman Joe Pokornicki is interviewed by Staff Sgt. Drew Schumann at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Mich., Oct. 24, 2020. Pokornicki is a crew chief with the 191st Maintenance Squadron. Schumann is a broadcaster with the 127th Wing Public Affairs Office. A KC-135 Stratotanker is in the background.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DAN HEATON

Senior Master Sgt. George Hall, a boom operator with the 171st Air Refueling Squadron here, is sprayed with water by his sons after making his final flight on October 2, 2020. Upon completion of the last flight prior to retirement, aircrew members are unceremoniously hosed down with water by their peers, family and friends in a tradition endearingly referred to as the, "Fini Flight." The tradition is said to date back to World War II, but was first documented during the Vietnam War when a flight crew celebrated completion of their first 100 sorties by dousing one another with beer.

U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TERRY ATWELL



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY MUNNAF JOARDER

Dominic Rama, roads and grounds crew member, 127th Civil Engineer Squadron based here, runs an industrial mower, November 2, 2020. Mowing large open grassy areas helps reduce avian population in support of the Air Force's Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) program. The BASH program goal is to preserve war-fighting capabilities through reduction of wildlife hazards near aircraft operations. On drill weekends Rama serves as a maintainer with the 127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, also based here.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DAN HEATON

Senior Airman Edward Holloman, a firefighter with the 127th Wing receive his flu shot from Capt. William Waling, 127th Medical Group, at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Mich., Nov. 7, 2020. The 127th Medical Group provided the shots outside of their facility on a balmy fall day in Michigan to better allow social distancing during the procedure.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

SECAF awards 107th FS Pilot Distinguished Flying Cross

By Tech. Sgt. Chelsea E. FitzPatrick
127th Wing Public Affairs

The 25th Secretary of the Air Force, the Honorable Barbara M. Barrett, awarded Maj. Brett DeVries, a pilot with the 107th Fighter Squadron, the Distinguished Flying Cross during a ceremony here today, for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight.

“The Distinguished Flying Cross is America’s oldest military aviation decoration,” Barrett said. “Awarded for heroism or extraordinary achievement that is, ‘entirely distinctive, involving operations that are not routine,’ today, Major DeVries, you will join the ranks of some other American heroes.”

The training flight narrowly avoided catastrophe on July 20, 2017, when DeVries successfully landed his A-10 Thunderbolt II with neither a canopy nor fully-engaged landing gear.

“Major DeVries truly put service before self and demonstrated a level of Airmanship to which we should all aspire,” Brig. Gen. Rolf E. Mammen, commander of the 127th Wing, said during the ceremony.

The first award of the Distinguished Flying Cross was made to ten Army Air Corps aviators for participation in the Army Pan American



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTOS BY TERRY L. ATWELL

Major Brett DeVries reflects on the events that caused him to earn the Distinguished Flying Cross, presented to him by Secretary Barbara M. Barrett, the 25th Secretary of the Air Force, at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Nov. 6, 2020. The Secretary visited to Selfridge to award the Distinguished Flying Cross to DeVries for superior aerial achievement for successfully landing a damaged A-10 during a 2017 training flight over northern Michigan.

Flight, officially awarded May 2, 1927. The first presentation of the award was on June 11, 1927, when President Calvin Coolidge honored Charles Lindbergh for his first transatlantic solo flight. While DeVries was flying the A-10 during the emergency, he relied heavily on his wingman, then-Maj. Shannon Vickers, and

the maintenance team back at Selfridge. Mammen said DeVries had the entire Wing standing behind him.

“As a commander, I cannot tell you how proud I am of Major DeVries and our entire 127th Wing, who work so hard every day to ensure that we are ready to fly, fight and win,” Mammen said.



Secretary Barbara M. Barrett, the 25th Secretary of the Air Force, is greeted by Major General Paul Rogers, the adjutant general of Michigan, and Major Brynt Ellis, 127th Medical Group administrative officer, while at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Mich., Nov. 6, 2020.

IN MEMORIAM

Community remembers hero



COURTESY PHOTO/127TH WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Donald E. "Digger" O'Dell was a native of Pontiac and lived in the Mount Clemens area after his retirement from the Air Force. After retirement, he served for 12 years as the civilian public affairs officer for Selfridge Air National Guard Base, retiring in 1990.

By Tech. Sgt. Daniel Heaton

127th Wing Public Affairs

Donald E. "Digger" O'Dell, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel and once fighter pilot who endured nearly six years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, died October 22, 2020.

Odell was also well known for his long tenure as an organizer and co-founder of the Wertz Warrior snowmobile ride program, an annual fundraiser for the Michigan Special Olympics program.

"Lt. Col. Odell was an American hero and inspiration to several generation of Airmen," said Brig. Gen. Rolf E. Mammen, commander of the 127th Wing and Selfridge Air National Guard Base. "He was always a friend to those who wear our nation's uniform."

Odell was a native of Pontiac and lived in the Mount Clemens area after his retirement from the Air Force. After retirement, he served for 12 years as the civilian public

affairs officer for Selfridge Air National Guard Base, retiring in 1990.

On Oct. 17, 1967, while flying in an F-105 Thunderchief on his 17th mission over North Vietnam, Odell's aircraft was hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire while on a bombing strike on the railyards at Dep Cau. After ejecting from his aircraft, Odell was captured by North Vietnamese nationals. Held as a prisoner of war, he endured frequent torture at the hands of his captors, until he was liberated and returned to the United States on March 14, 1973.

For years, Odell was in demand as a speaker for military and veteran events. He would often conclude his speaking engagements by acknowledging that America was not perfect. He would go on to then ask the audience that if they knew of a better place, of a better system of government, under which to live, to please give him a call.

"The phone never once rang," Odell said in later years.

Odell stated many times that he was always willing to speak about his experiences as a prisoner in the notorious "Hanoi Hilton" in Vietnam as part of his own coping mechanism.

"I decided to go out and speak about it, get it off my chest," Odell said once of his frequent speaking engagements. "I think that was the smartest thing I ever did. I've never had a hang up about it. I think to speak about it helped. I'd like to think I'm strong enough (to not consider suicide) but maybe if I didn't talk about it, there was a possibility."

Odell enlisted in the Air Force in 1952. Three years later, he was commissioned as an officer and became a pilot. Among his assignments, in 1966, he served as an F-106 Delta Dart pilot with the famed 94th "Hat in the Ring" Fighter-Interceptor Squadron at what was then-known as Selfridge Air Force Base. In August 1967, he reported to Korat Air Base in Thailand and the 37th Tactical Fighter Squadron for service in support of oper-

ations in Vietnam.

Odell's military awards include the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal for Valor with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal with 11 Bronze Stars, and the Prisoner of War Medal.

While serving as the public affairs officer at Selfridge in the late 1970s, Odell was among the founders of the current Selfridge Base Community Council, which brings together local community and business leaders with military personnel at the base. Odell is also an inductee of the Michigan Military and Veterans Hall of Honor at the Michigan History Museum in Lansing.

In 2017, a street at Selfridge Air National Guard Base was re-named in his honor.

Odell was the father of four children.

COMMUNITY

Toys for Tots seeking donations

By Tech Sgt. Chelsea E. FitzPatrick

127th Wing Public Affairs

Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Raethen.W. Mitchell, a maintenance chief with the 24th Marines, 25th Marine regiment here, is on a mission to ensure local children experience a positive holiday season. Serving as the Marines' "Toys

for Tots" program coordinator for Macomb and Eastern Wayne counties, he says they need donations.

"Typically, by this time, we would have received approximately 15,000 donated items," Mitchell said. "Today, we have a little more than 2,300 donations."

The Toys for Tots program was adopted by the Marine Corps in 1948 as a community action proj-

ect at each Marine Reserve Center throughout the nation. Today, the program collects new, unwrapped toys and distributes them as Christmas gifts to less fortunate children in surrounding communities. According to the website, in 2019, the Wayne/Macomb district distributed 61,885 toys, supporting 9,122 local children.

Mitchell first encountered the

Toys for Tots program firsthand when he was seven years old, growing up in Philadelphia.

"We grew up in poverty," Mitchell said. "My Mom got in touch with the Marines' Toys for Tots coordinator there and we got toys for three years."

Choosing to serve as the local coordinator at Selfridge is an easy decision for Mitchell.

"It's my way of giving back, you know, to ensure children can have toys for this Christmas," Mitchell said.

Readers interested in finding a donation drop point, or learning more about the local Toys for Tots program, can either go to detroitmi.toysfortots.org/local-coordinator-sites/lco-sites/local-donate.aspx or call (586) 242-6682.

Macomb County Schools Students and Staff

Anchor Bay Schools, Armada Area Schools, Center Line Public Schools, Chippewa Valley Schools, Clintondale Community Schools, Eastpointe Community Schools, Fitzgerald Public Schools, Fraser Public Schools, Lake Shore Public Schools, Lakeview Public Schools, L'Anse Creuse Public Schools, Mt. 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, Warren Woods Public Schools



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



For more information about Macomb County Schools, please visit www.misd.net