

SOUTH DAKOTA WING

CIVIL AIR PATROL HISTORY

1940'S

Prior to WWI the German army was on fire and seemed unstoppable. The American aviation community was convinced that the civilian aircraft fleet of over 25,000 aircraft could be of a benefit to the nation and our army.

A writer for the New York Tribune, WWI pilot, Founder of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) and director of Aeronautics for New Jersey, Gill Rob Wilson believed that something needed to be done to help the East coast search for submarines. After numerous meetings he was able to convince the governor of New Jersey to form the “New Jersey Civil Air Defense Service.” Feeling that more needed to be done, he enlisted the aid of two of his fellow newspaper publishers, Gannett and Beck to help him “win over” Hap Arnold, the chief of the Army Air Force and the head of the Office of Civil Defense, Fiorello LaGuardia, with the idea that this civilian air force would be of a great benefit to the country. Under the Civil Defense Office the Civil Air Patrol was formed on December 1, 1941.

The new organization now needed national leaders to organize each state with their own commanders. Under the first National commander, Major General John F. Curry, recruiting began on December 8, 1941 with the public announcement of the newly formed “Civil Air Patrol”. Within months 48 states had a new group and wing commander.

South Dakota had 8 groups maned in locations all across the state.

- Spearfish – Clyde Ice**
- Rapid City – Floyd Barlow**
- Pierre -----Franklin Hyde**
- Huron ----- Ken Neville**
- Aberdeen ----Dwight Campbell**
- Watertown - Ralph Hubbard**
- Brookings – Cecil Shuoe**
- Sioux Falls –Knapp Brown**

The first SD Wing Commander was Thomas B. Roberts Jr. a newspaper man from Pierre just like Wilson. Roberts was wing commander

from Dec. 01 1941 – 15 Oct. 1945.

The headline in the Rapid City Journal January 7, 1942 read.

“SD State Civil Air Patrol Organized”

On March 5, 1942 the Costal Patrol was formed to offer help to the Navy. CAP Costal Patrol was credited with helping 91 ships in distress, 865 shipwreck survivors, flying over 6,000 convoy missions, finding 17 floating mines, and spotting 173 submarines, even being credited with the sinking of a few. 65 CAP pilots were killed on duty.

Most members of the Costal Patrol were from the East Coast but South Dakota did have a few pilots that traveled east to participate in the operations. One of those being Luverne A Kraemer from Deadwood. In March of 1942 he traveled to Wichita, Kansas to build B29's. Three months later he had a pilot's license and in April 1943 he volunteered for Costal Patrol in Atlantic City.

Civil Air Patrol participated in the war efforts in numerous ways, one being here in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Members of the wing organized coyote hunts from the air and on the ground using the money from the sale of pelts to help finance the Costal Patrol.

In addition to the coyote hunts, members of the SD Wing joined the Courier

nd Service under the 2nd Air Force to help the Army Air Force transport needed items and supplies between bases. On November 2, 1942 CAP pilots began flying routes out of Rapid City Army Air Force Base, now known as Ellsworth Air Force Base. Wing commander during this period was Col. James R. Barnett from Oct. 15 1945 - Sept. 24 1950.

For an estimated 14 months 9 pilots, most of whom were not eligible to join the military, leased their private aircraft to the Army and flew these routes. These pilots were required to have a minimum of 150 hours of flying experience because these routes were a treacherous undertaking.

None of the pilots were instrument-rated and they flew daily regardless of weather. On days when the Army would ground their B-17's the CAP Courier Pilots were flying 7 routes per day with a completion rate of almost 100%. This was a miracle since most of the aircraft had no or very limited instruments and none had radio transmitters.

Flying time was 3 hours for these planes with the exception of the commander of the SD Courier group, Captain John Moodie. Moodie took out his passenger seat and installed an extra fuel tank giving him extended flying time.

These aircraft were small, 65-75 HP engines, but were defiantly work horses for the Army carrying cargo such as parachutes, rifles, mail and one secret mission carried cases of toilet paper.

The biggest danger for these pilots was boredom, in flying so many hours over the same route they became so familiar with the terrain that some would read books, buzz farms dropping notes and even performing acrobatics for kids along the routes.

The first documentation of a SD CAP pilot flying for the Courier Service was in the log book of Ross Wiehe. His first flight as a courier was February 27, 1941. It was written in a letter from the wife of one courier pilot, Lawrence “Bud” Younger, that he made \$300 a month plus expenses flying for the courier route.

October 1, 1942 Civil Air Patrol started recruiting young people for the cadet program. This initial program was intended for the training of pilots for military service. Potential cadets had to have a senior member sponsor to join. These sponsors had to work with and train their cadets for wartime service. In December of 1943 the Army assigned a Taylor craft L-2 to the SD Wing as a cadet recruiting and training tool.

At war’s end the “mission” of CAP was done but on July 1, 1946 Congress passed Public Law #476 making Civil Air Patrol a permanent non-profit organization to promote aviation and provide air service under emergency conditions. After the Army Air Force became the US Air Force on September 26, 1947 Public Law #557 made Civil Air Patrol the Auxiliary of the United States Air Force on May 26, 1948.

Post-war was a time to focus on cadet growth with the core missions. In 1948 CAP began the International Cadet Exchange program. In this program cadets traveled to another country to learn and train with local units. South Dakota has hosted numerous cadets from other countries over the years starting in the early 1950’s.