

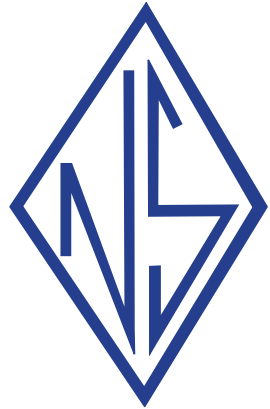
# SELFRIDGE FLYER

Volume 4, Issue 3

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

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## SELFRIDGE HISTORY

## CYRUS K. BETTIS

## A Selfridge hero

By Joseph N. Mazzara  
Selfridge Military Air Museum

Those who knew Army Lt. Cyrus Bettis looked up to him as a kind friend, a patient mentor and one of the most extraordinary fliers of his time. He distinguished himself in WWI as an excellent pilot and trainer of other young pilots. After the war, he continued to prove his talents by winning the Mitchell Trophy, Mackay Trophy and ultimately, the most coveted of all, the 1925 Pulitzer Trophy for air racing. Nine months later he was dead.

Bettis was born on a farm in Carsonville, Mich., near Port Huron, in January of 1893 and joined the Army in 1918, just in time to do combat service overseas. From there, he developed a keen interest in all things related to aviation. His deep knowledge base and quiet personality helped him to become a favorite of nearly all of the men he taught and those with whom he flew. His, then Selfridge Field, colleagues cheered madly when he beat the favorite, Al Williams, in the 1925 Pulitzer Trophy race in New York, with a world record speed of 249.99 mph. One of the first to congratulate him was his friend Jimmy Doolittle, who just a short time later would, himself, beat Bettis' record.

In late August 1926, Bettis, John. J. Williams and Luther S. Smith, all lieutenants of the First Pursuit Group, based out of Selfridge Field, Mich., participated in Philadelphia's sesquicentennial celebration. The trip went smoothly and the men entertained the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE SELFRIDGE MILITARY AIR MUSEUM

Cyrus K. Bettis

Philadelphia crowds with their amazing flying skills.

On the return trip from Philadelphia, the three pilots flew close together in a V-formation with Bettis at the point. At about 1:00 p.m. the men ran into heavy fog about ten miles south of Bellefonte, Pa. With the fog thickening, they could no longer stick together in formation, becoming separated due to low visibility. First Williams separated, landing safely in Middletown, Pa., then Smith sep-

arated from Bettis, landing in Clearfield, Pa. Ultimately both pilots arrived at Selfridge Field safely later that day.

Bettis continued in zero visibility until his aircraft slammed hard into the side of the highly wooded Seven Sister Mountain area on the eastern slope of the Alleghenies. He later said that one of the plane's wings had caught in a tree branch, lessening the impact of the crash. Nevertheless, Bettis was knocked un-



Army Lt. Cyrus Bettis distinguished himself in WWI as an excellent pilot and trainer of other young pilots.

conscious for approximately 45 minutes, sustaining several serious injuries, including a broken leg, two broken jaws and many cuts and contusions. When he regained consciousness, he saw no one nearby and was not able to move. He called out for help many times, but there was no response. Soon he became thirsty and was able to collect rainwater in the palms of his hand. At about 6:00 p.m., he heard airplanes circling overhead and assumed that they must be Smith and Williams searching for him, however no rescue came.

Despite a Selfridge search party dispatch, with Smith and Williams on lead, by the second night, Bettis realized he'd have to save himself.

"I knew if I did not crawl out of there, I never would be found alive," Bettis later told hospital workers.

The next morning, with a broken leg and two broken jaws, Bettis dragged his shattered body out of the woods. Although the area was heavily wooded, it was

well-populated and two locals quickly came to his aid. When local papers ran the headlines, "HEROIC BETTIS DEFEATS CRASH," and "MISSING ARMY FLYER FOUND," his family and colleagues learned he was safe and rejoiced.

At that point Bettis was being treated at a local hospital in Bellefonte, PA., but he was soon transferred to Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington DC. Being that none of his injuries appeared to be life-threatening, family, friends and colleagues all expected that he would be back to flying in no time at all. It was a terrible surprise to all when it was learned that Lieutenant Bettis had died at Walter Reed on September 1, 1926 of spinal meningitis.

To learn more about Bettis and other Selfridge heroes, pay a visit to the Selfridge Military Air Museum, open now on weekends here. Learn more about hours and price of admission at SelfridgeAirMuseum.org.

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## SELFRIDGE BASE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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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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## PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

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**On the cover:** A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft from the Michigan Air National Guard's 107th Fighter Squadron, 127th Wing, prepare to take off for a training mission at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, April 12, 2021. Airmen from the 127th Wing are participating in Green Flag-West, a Joint Force combat exercise, to ensure maximum combat readiness. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Dan Heaton)

**SEEN AROUND SELFRIDGE**

U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY MUNNAF JOARDER



PHOTO COURTESY OF 127TH AIR REFUELING GROUP

**TOP:** Members of the 127th Air Refueling Group here, successfully completed the first-ever, “hot pit,” refueling exercise on May 11, 2021. Hot pit refueling occurs when an aircraft is fueled immediately after landing, while the aircraft keeps one engine running, reducing response time and preparing aircraft to complete any mission, anywhere.

**LEFT:** Tech. Sgt. Shane Cannon, a boom operator with the 127th Air Refueling Group, prepares to refuel a jet during Exercise Sentry Savannah. Members of the 127th Air Refueling Group participated in Exercise Sentry Savannah last month, accomplishing 47 refueling missions, in 96.5 hours and offloading 2,004,000 pounds of fuel to 313 fighter jets. Sentry Savannah is a joint aerial combat training exercise hosted by the Georgia Air National Guard, and is the Air National Guard’s largest fighter integration, air-to-air training exercise encompassing 4th- and 5th-generation aircraft.

## AIRMAN PROFILE

# Mission, teamwork drive Michigan Airman



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTOS BY MASTER SGT. DAN HEATON

Senior Airman Maurice Starks, from the 127th Wing, loads a bomb onto a A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., April 9, 2021. Airmen from the 127th Wing are participating in Green Flag, a Joint Force combat exercise, to ensure maximum combat readiness.

**By Master Sgt. Daniel Heaton**

*127th Wing Public Affairs*

Senior Airman Maurice Starks has two priorities when he performs his duties as a weapons loader on A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft for the Michigan Air National Guard's 127th Wing.

"For me, it's all about getting the job done," the Airman said, still standing on the flight line next to an aircraft after he and his team loaded on a complement of rockets and bombs.

"And these guys on my team, they're like family to me and I love being a part of this family," he said.

Starks and his team are part of a deployment of A-10 aircraft and Airmen from Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Michigan to Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, where they will spend two and a half weeks participating in Green Flag West, an air-land integrated combat exercise. The Selfridge A-10s will be performing close air support to U.S. Army forces in



Senior Airman Maurice Starks stand in front of an A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft while at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., April 9, 2021. Starks is a weapons loader on the A-10 in the Michigan Air National Guard. He is also a full-time college student and is enrolled in an Air Force ROTC program.

the exercise, as well as supporting other combat training missions.

Starks and his team will be charged with ensuring that the A-10s have the right load-out of munitions for every mission.

During the exercise, Starks will be performing the duties of the two position on his weapons load

team. That means his job is to check each munition after it is loaded to ensure that all of the bolts on the weapons rack are tight. It is part of a series of cross-checks that the team performs on their work to ensure the weapons are properly and safely loaded.

"Starks is a team player," said Master Sgt. Joe Mack,

a supervisor in the Weapons shop. "You have to work well with the team to do this job right."

As traditional member of the Air National Guard – meaning he generally serves one weekend per month and a couple of weeks of active duty per year – Starks is also a full-time student at Wayne State University in

Detroit. In addition, he is enrolled in ROTC through the detachment at the University in Michigan. Eventually, his goal is to serve as an officer in the Michigan Air National Guard or the Air Force.

"I love doing this and can't wait to see what opportunities open up next," he said.

## OPPORTUNITY

# Airman finds pride in A-10 operations

By Master Sgt. Daniel Heaton  
127th Wing Public Affairs

Before she joined the Air Force, Airman 1st Class Juliann Hammer didn't know what an A-10 was. She admits that she had never heard of a torque wrench.

"And then I enlisted and it was like, 'OK, let's go be a mechanic on a jet,'" she said. "I didn't know about any of it and now - well, just put down that I really, really like it out here. A lot."

Hammer's "out here" is the flight line at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, where she served as a crew chief on an A-10 Thunderbolt II, an attack aircraft flown by the Michigan Air National Guard.

Hammer says that, of course, she was generally aware of the Air Force, but she didn't know anything about the Air National Guard until a recruiter paid a visit to her high school. That set a plan in motion that had her enlisting and beginning a new career. She was in Basic Military Training, almost to graduation, when the pandemic restrictions began in early 2020. She attended her technical training, learning how to be a crew chief, during the lockdown.

"So that was tough. We couldn't have any visitors at our BMT graduation and at tech school, we were restricted pretty much to training and to our rooms. But now, working on the jet, I love it," she said.

Hammer is a traditional member of the Michigan Air National Guard, generally serving one weekend per month and a couple of weeks of active duty per year. She is also a full-time student at Michigan State University, where she is studying mechanical engineering.

"I enlisted mostly for money to help with college and for the travel," she said.

Hammer recently traveled with her unit to Nellis Air Force Base, to support Green Flag, a large Joint Service warfighting exercise. Nellis is on the edge



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTOS BY MASTER SGT. DAN HEATON

Airman 1st Class Juliann Hammer is seen next to an A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, May 16, 2021. Hammer is a crew chief on the A-10. She is also a student at Michigan State University.

of Las Vegas, Nevada. Later this summer, Hammer is scheduled to travel with her unit to the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center in northern Michigan to support another exercise there.

"Really, the whole experience has been great. I am glad I get to be a part of it," she said.

To learn more about career opportunities in the Michigan Air National Guard, call (800) 645-9420 or visit [127wg.ang.af.mil/careers](http://127wg.ang.af.mil/careers).



Airmen from the 127th Maintenance Squadron engage in a variety of tasks to recover an A-10 Thunderbolt II from a flight and prep it for the next mission at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Mich., May 16, 2021. The A-10 is one of two aircraft operated by the Michigan Air National Guard at Selfridge. KC-135 Stratotankers are also assigned to the base.