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# SELFRIDGE CENTENNIAL

The Selfridge Centennial is a special magazine highlighting the citizen Airmen of Selfridge Air National Guard Base. It is produced, printed and distributed in partnership with Digital First Media.

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171st arrives home from overseas deployment. Holding the flag out of the top of the fuselage is Major Kurt Schuster eagerly awaiting a reunion with his family.



Members of the 107th Fighter Squadron, 1950 and 2015.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SELFRIDGE AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE

# Service then and service now

*By Brig. Gen. John D. Slocum*

It is arguable that 90 years ago this summer, Charles Lindbergh was the most famous man in the world. On May 20-21, 1927, Lindbergh stunned the world by flying solo on a non-stop flight from New York to Paris. Lindbergh was feted by cheering crowds around the globe.

A couple of months later, however, it was back to reality for Lindbergh and the famed pilot was required to report for his Reserve duty with the U.S. Army Air Service. And so, naturally, the Detroit native reported to Selfridge Field for two weeks of duty with the 1st Pursuit Squadron. Lindbergh has been followed here at Selfridge by hundreds of thousands of Citizen-Airmen who have served their country via service at Selfridge as a member of the Reserve or the National Guard.

This summer we continue to celebrate that heritage. Two important things are happening at the same time that speak – loudly – to a proud legacy of service that exists here at Selfridge.

For the public and for our own internal audience, we are celebrating 100 years of service at Selfridge. In 1917, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress to declare war against the Central Powers of World War I, in an effort “make the world safe for democracy.” To do that, America needed to quickly grow an air force. And so, Selfridge Field was created, to train America’s young men to serve as military pilots, aerial gunners and air-



craft mechanics.

Along the way, much has changed about the Air Force – we wisely opened the doors to not only both men and women, but agreed that the best way to serve America is to do so with a force that is inclusive of all races, religions and backgrounds. We seek to be joined by all those who are committed to the American ideals and the Air Force core values of Integrity First, Excellence in All We Do and Service Before Self.

Even as we celebrate our centennial this summer – marked of course by our open house and air show on Aug. 19-20 – we cannot pause in our commitment to duty. Over the course of this spring and summer, some 150 of Michigan’s finest Citizen-Airmen from Selfridge have deployed overseas. Most, if not all, of them are disappointed at missing out on our centennial air show, but they all swore an oath – first and foremost – to serve when and where needed by our nation.

Our local Airmen who are now overseas are adding to the great legacy of Selfridge, truly writing their names on the same ledger as Lindbergh signed 90 years ago. For those who are now on duty abroad, know that your Selfridge community is with you in spirit and is eager for your safe return. Those of us at Selfridge could not be more proud to represent Michigan to the world, as we serve both locally and on deployment.

As we head into our next century of service, we are eager to be assigned new missions, new challenges and new opportunities to continue to add to the work that has been done here at Selfridge so well and for so long.

For our community, thank you for your continuing support. For our military personnel and their families, thank you for your continuing service to our great state and nation.

Be it at the open house and air show in August, or on the flightline as we welcome home our deployers, I look forward to seeing you and personally extending my thanks for your support and your service to Selfridge, to Michigan and to America. ➔

# Selfridge base an important piece of Michigan's history

*A word from Gov. Rick Snyder*

This year, Michigan proudly celebrates the 100th anniversary of the Selfridge Air National Guard Base, one of the oldest and most advanced operating air bases in the nation.

Located north of Detroit on the shore of Lake St. Clair, Selfridge has a strong history of hosting and operating military fighter jets. Named after 1st Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge, who was the first person to be killed in a crash of a powered aircraft, the air base was one of 32 air service training camps established after the U.S. entered World War I in April 1917.

While Michigan is home to several military locations important to our nation's security, the Selfridge air base is a primary example of what makes our state a national leader in the defense sector. This long-standing air base helps support our efforts to protect and grow Michigan's defense and homeland security missions, and the Michigan businesses that support our nation's security and our military's safety.

Selfridge not only supports southeast Michigan, but has an important economic impact on the state as a whole. Michigan businesses have been awarded more than \$41 billion in Department of Defense contracts, and Selfridge's close proximity to the U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command and Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center allows it to provide opportunities for leading edge programs like advanced water purification and robotics.

Nearly 4,000 Michigan businesses serve the defense industry on projects ranging from IT solutions, to construction services, to energy savings. Through Michigan's Protect and Grow Initiative, we hope to involve even more businesses by growing assets, missions and opportunities for Michigan companies in emerging markets that are critical to our nation's defense.

Today, the base is home to the Air Guard's 127th Wing — a joint security installation between the U.S. Department of



PHOTO COURTESY OF SELFRIDGE AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE  
Selfridge is home to the Air Guard's 127th Wing and hosts permanently assigned units from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Patrol. It is the only U.S. installation to house all of them.

Defense and Department of Homeland Security that provides trained, equipped and motivated tanker, fighter and support resources for three Major Commands. Selfridge also hosts permanently assigned units from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Patrol and is the only U.S. installation to house all of them.

Selfridge has two primary missions: Fighter and Refueling.

The Fighter mission focuses on air-to-air and air-to-ground operations designed to support ground forces and gain control of enemy airspace; the Refueling mission provides for in-flight refueling for the U.S. military and allied nations' aircraft, extending their flying range. The Air Guard's advanced fleet of fighter aircraft is parallel to the Air Force in defending our country and allies and its tanker and special operations weather flight missions are relevant to the fights our nation faces today.

Selfridge is an important piece in Michigan's history, present and future. I encourage all Michiganders to join me in recognizing all that the air base contributes to our great state and to help celebrate 100 years of military aviation by participating in the Selfridge centennial anniversary air show this August. ➔

*Rick Snyder*  
Governor of Michigan

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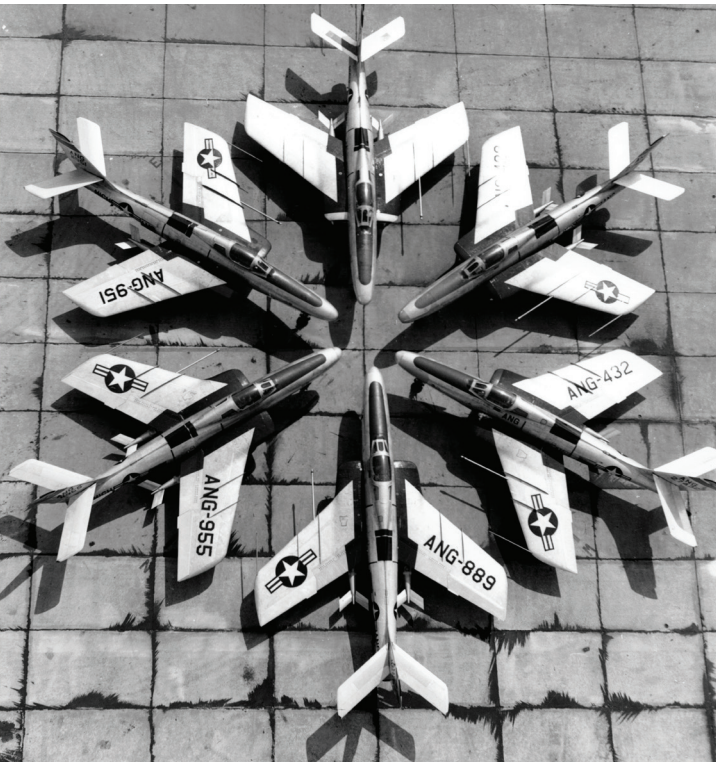


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# A CENTURY OF HISTORY

Looking back at 100 years of the Selfridge air base

*By Tech. Sgt. Dan Heaton*

In 1910, with aviation still in its infancy, Henry Joy set aside several hundred acres of marshland for what would eventually become Selfridge Air National Guard Base. Originally known as Joy Aviation Field, within a very short period of time the land became known as Selfridge Field to honor the memory of Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge, the first member of the armed forces to die in an aviation accident.

As World War I was coming to a close in Europe, and recognizing the value of aviation for military purposes, Selfridge Field became home to the first aerial gunnery school in 1918. After the war, the 1st Pursuit Group returned from France and reorganized at Selfridge in 1919, but left to Texas shortly after. In 1921, Mr. Joy sold the property to the U.S. government. The group returned to Selfridge in 1922, bringing life back into the base with famous war aces and the National Air Races, setting a record for the first airplane to mark over 200-mph.

In 1924, both Charles Lindbergh — straight out of the Air Cadet Training Center for his first duty assignment — and Major Carl “Tooney” Spaatz found their way to Selfridge. Surviving the lean 1930’s, Selfridge Field underwent major construction to its facilities under the Work Projects Administration (WPA).

In 1935, the Field became part of the General Headquarters of the Army Air Corps and by 1940 had increased missions to include four new pursuit groups.

America again became embroiled in global war. Members of the 17th Pursuit Squadron were reassigned to the Philippines and more Selfridge pilots and mechanics volunteered to serve with General Claire Chennault and the Flying Tigers. After the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, the 1st Pursuit Group was moved to San Diego, but by 1942, the field had grown to 3,700 acres. During the war years many units trained at Selfridge, including the famous 332nd Fighter Group’s “Tuskegee Airmen” commanded by Col. Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.

With victory in 1945 and the U.S. Army Air Corp’s evolution into a separate service in 1947, Selfridge Field became Selfridge Air Force Base. As years passed, Selfridge AFB became a critical link in the Cold War defense of the northern United States. In 1949, the 661st Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron was activated and a year later Headquarters for the Tenth Air Force had moved to Selfridge, responsible for all records and reserve-component training for a 13-state area. Air-defense of the Detroit area was part of the mission of the 56th Wing, re-





activated and a year later Headquarters for the Tenth Air Force had moved to Selfridge, responsible for all records and reserve-component training for a 13-state area. Air-defense of the Detroit area was part of the mission of the 56th Wing, reorganized to the 575th Air Defense Group and eventually the 1st Fighter Group and over the decades of the 1950s and '60s, many units, groups, and wings were stood up at Selfridge for the Air Force, Air Force Reserves, Army, Marine Reserves, Navy Reserves and Coast Guard.

In 1967, the base was used as a staging area for the C-130 airlift, bringing thousands of paratroopers and their supporting elements to the Detroit-area to assist police and Michigan National Guard units during the civil disturbances in the city. It was also during this time that the base became known as "The Home of the Generals" as more than 100 general officers served at Selfridge during some part of their distinguished careers. Some most notable are: Charles Lindbergh, Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker, Gen. Curtis LeMay, Carl "Tooney" Spatz, Earl Partridge, Francis Griswold, Jimmy Doolittle and Joseph Cannon.

In 1971, the base was formally transferred to the Michigan Air National Guard and the 127th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, equipped with three dozen aging RF-84F reconnaissance jets, four T-33 jet trainers and one C-54 transport. The 127th TRW, which had been stationed at the local commercial air terminus, Detroit Metropolitan Airport, instantly became the base's largest flying unit and has remained the host organization on base ever since. Over the following year, the 127th's two groups (the 127th and the

191st) converted to an inventory of 32 FR-101 photo reconnaissance jets, four F-101 trainers, six T-33 trainers, and the C-54 transport. In time, the 191st became the 191st Fighter Interceptor Group. Then, the 127th Tactical Fighter Group converted to F-100 Super Sabres in 1972 and in 1973 the F-106 Delta Darts were assigned to the 191st.

By 1975, 191st was performing a full-time, 24-hour-a-day alert mission. With 13 different types of aircraft, the base was now home to more than 70 planes, assigned to 10 units. To assist the guard in the management of the base, the Army established a support adjunct that was responsible for base housing and non-appropriated fund special services.

In 1990, the 127th and the 191st transitioned to the F-16 Fighter Falcons. Both units participated in Operation Desert Storm. In 1993, the 191st began conversion to the C-130 Hercules and in 1995 the two groups were consolidated into the 127th Wing. In the latter part of the '90s, the 127th Wing continued to support global missions, including Operations Southern Watch, Coronet Oak and Joint Forge. With the 9-11 attacks on the United States and the subsequent Global War on Terrorism, the 127th Wing's 107th Fighter Squadron F-16 fighters provided combat air patrols over the northern U.S. These missions continued Selfridge's proud air-defense heritage and was the first F-16 flying unit to be based inside the Iraqi border during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2004, flying mostly reconnaissance and close-air support missions.

The wing's 171st Airlift Squadron was also activated in 2004 and deployed aircraft, crews, maintenance and support personnel continuously to the southwest Asia Theater for a period of almost 24-months. For several weeks in the fall of 2005, the 171st ALS was deployed to missions in three different theaters, supporting Operation Enduring Freedom in CENTCOM, Operation Coronet Oak in SOUTHCOM, and providing airlift support for Hurricane Katrina relief in NORTHCOM.

By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the 127th Wing had transitioned to its current flying missions with the 107th Fighter Squadron operating the A-10 Thunderbolt II and the 171st Air Refueling Squadron operating the KC-135 Stratotanker. Both units have engaged in multiple deployments in the 2010s. The citizen-heroes who call Selfridge home continue to be not only the flyers, but also the hundreds of support personnel who provide the aircraft maintenance, security, communications, civil engineering, medical care, finance and other services that contribute to the overall aviation mission. We are a diverse group with a single mission of defending the United States of America. ➔

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# The tragic tale of Thomas Selfridge

By *Daniel Glover*

Most pioneer aviators are known for their famous flights, but one of them is best remembered for a fatal flight. Thomas Selfridge became the first person to die in a motorized aircraft accident 109 years ago this September. He was 26 years old.

The tragedy occurred at a key point in aviation history, as the U.S. Army considered a contract to buy airplanes from the Wright brothers. Orville Wright was at the controls of the Wright Flyer that day, nearly five years after he and his brother, Wilbur, made history with flights at Kitty Hawk, N.C. Selfridge, an Army lieutenant with an aviation background, was his passenger — a concession that Orville Wright made reluctantly to try to win the contract.

The two were in the air above Fort Myer, Va., for just a few minutes when a propeller malfunction triggered a chain of events that sent the aircraft plummeting to the ground. Wright survived the accident with severe injuries, but Selfridge never recovered from a fractured skull.

The Selfridge surname was well established in military circles before Thomas Etholen Selfridge was born in 1882. His grandfather and uncle, who shared the name Thomas O., had distinguished Navy careers. Both rose to the rank of rear admiral, and the uncle led an expedition related to the Panama Canal.

Thomas E. Selfridge's brother, Edward, also was part of an important event in U.S. history. He was part of an infantry regiment that supported future President Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders at San Juan Hill in the Spanish-American War. "They were a pretty prominent family," said Dan Heaton, who wrote a book about Thomas E. Selfridge while serving at the Air National Guard base in Michigan that bears the family name.

Like his grandfather and uncle, Thomas E. Selfridge excelled in the military, and he did it at a young age. He was chosen as an alternate to the U.S. Naval Academy while he was still underage, and a year later, he won an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. He graduated in 1903, the year of the Wright brothers' first motorized flights.

A native of San Francisco, Selfridge headed back home for his first assignment. He was at the Presidio during the 7.8-magnitude earthquake that devastated the City by the Bay in 1906, a tragedy that prompted a declaration of martial law. As a young



lieutenant, he did such a remarkable job during search-and-rescue and cleanup operations that the Army gave him the choice of his next assignment. He opted to teach at West Point for a year and think about it.

While Selfridge was at the academy, Heaton said he wrote a letter to ask the Wright brothers if he could help in their workshop. But they didn't want someone from the federal government watching them work on an innovative machine the government might want to buy.

Rebuffed by the Wright Brothers, Selfridge instead went to work for Alexander Graham Bell, who turned his attention to aviation and other interests after inventing the telephone. At Bell's request, President Roosevelt assigned Selfridge to the Aeronautical Division of the U.S. Signal Corps in 1907. The corps assigned him to the Bell-funded Aerial Experiment Association for a year of research into an aircraft meant to compete with the Wright brothers' work. Selfridge eventually piloted — and crashed into the water — an unpowered, tetrahedral kite called Cygnet.

As part of his work for the association, Selfridge also designed a powered aircraft called Red Wing, and a few months after it crashed on its second flight, he piloted two other aircraft called



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SELFRIDGE AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE

Selfridge ended up on the flight that took his life in part because of his scheduled departure to Missouri on Sept. 19, and high winds prevented flights Sept. 16-17.

White Wing and June Bug, making him the first U.S. military officer to fly a modern aircraft. He made several flights through the spring and summer of 1908.

That August, the Signal Corps recalled Selfridge so he could learn to fly its first powered aircraft, a dirigible based at Fort Myer. The Army relocated the dirigible to Fort Omaha in Nebraska and planned to exhibit it at the Missouri State Fair. But first it had another assignment for Selfridge, who by then had flown a kite and a dirigible, and designed an aircraft. He was tasked with observing the tests of the Wright Flyer.

“He was by far the most experienced airman in the history of the military – in the history of the world perhaps to that point,” Heaton said. “He was obviously the man to make this determination on whether the airplane is worthy of government purchase.”

Orville Wright didn’t see it quite that way. He voiced his displeasure in a letter to Wilbur, who was demonstrating their air-

craft to the French government. Noting Selfridge’s pending departure for Missouri, Orville wrote:

I will be glad to have Selfridge out of the way. I don’t trust him an inch. He is intensely interested in the subject and plans to meet me often at dinners, etc., where he can pump me. He has a good education and a clear mind. I understand that he does a good deal of knocking behind my back.

In separate letters to his father and sister, Orville accused Selfridge of making “a pretense of great friendliness” while “doing what he can behind our backs to injure us.” Earlier that year, the Wrights had helped Selfridge in his work for Bell’s group by sharing their patent and other information with him. But Orville’s impressions of Selfridge clearly had changed in the interim.

Despite that behind-the-scenes drama, Orville managed to wow the crowds at Fort Myer with the Wright Flyer. Historian David McCullough noted in his book “The Wright Brothers” that Orville set seven world aviation records before the infamous flight with Selfridge.

Rumors swirled that the president, who in 1905 plunged underwater in a submarine, might want to take flight. Although Orville didn’t think the idea was wise, he said he couldn’t refuse if asked. He was equally unenthusiastic about Selfridge flying with him but felt just as compelled to go along when the Army picked Selfridge instead of Lt. Benjamin Foulois.

Selfridge ended up on the flight that took his life in part because of his scheduled departure to Missouri on Sept. 19, and high winds prevented flights Sept. 16-17. Another passenger reportedly was supposed to be on board Sept. 18, but with the winds down and the plane ready to fly at about 5 p.m., Orville gave the spot to Selfridge.

According to McCullough’s account of the flight and crash, observers said the aircraft lifted more slowly than earlier flights in Fort Myer. Orville steered it safely around the field three times at about 40 miles per hour, but he decided to land after something behind him started tapping in the turn toward a fourth lap.

By then it was too late. Orville heard two loud thumps, and the flyer began shaking violently. He turned off the engine to try to glide to the ground from 125 feet, but as Orville recalled later, “Quick as a flash, the machine turned down in front and started straight for the ground.”

Army officials, journalists and Charles Taylor, who built the engine for the Wright brothers’ first successful flight, rushed to the scene of the crash. Both pilot and passenger were pinned under the mangled aircraft. Orville broke a leg and four ribs; Selfridge fractured his skull and never regained consciousness.

The deadly crash awakened everyone to the risks of flying higher and faster, but it didn’t deter aviation pioneers like the Wrights from continuing their innovative journeys. Both Orville and Wilbur Wright returned to Fort Myer less than a year later, with Orville flying a new plane well enough to satisfy all of the government’s conditions for buying it.

In death, Selfridge also secured his place in aviation history. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery, near the Fort Myer crash site, and the cemetery’s Selfridge Gate is named for him. He was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 1965. ➔

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# SANGB then and now

By Russ Dyer

The year was 1971 and I was the commanding officer of a Marine helicopter squadron in Okinawa when I received transfer orders to the Marine Air Reserve Training Detachment at Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

Two questions immediately came to mind. Where in the world is this Selfridge place and what does MARTD do?

I had mixed emotions when I learned I was going to a base near Detroit. As a life-long baseball fan, I was elated that I would be able to see some Tigers games. But even though I was born and raised in upstate New York and well acquainted with cold weather and snow, I had never been north of Virginia during the preceding 18 years of military assignments. I did not look forward to buying winter clothing and a snow shovel, a tool I had not needed since Eisenhower was president.

After I arrived at Selfridge in August 1971, many of the pieces began to fit together. I learned that shortly before I arrived, the Michigan Air National Guard had taken over the air base from the Air Force. And because the Air Guard was not equipped to manage the multi-tasks required to run an air base, a U.S. Army Support Detachment was soon in place to provide management in such matters as family housing, health clinic, day child care, movies and various recreational facilities.

I learned that Selfridge had been in existence since 1917 and had a rich history of providing training facilities for air crews in both World War I and II and during the Korean conflict. The base was named in honor of U.S. Army Lt. Thomas E. Selfridge who was killed on Sept. 17, 1908 while flying with Orville Wright. At the time, Wright was demonstrating his Wright Flyer aircraft for possible sale to the Army. Lt. Selfridge then had the unfortunate distinction of becoming the world's first aircraft mishap fatality.

I soon found that I could play a round of golf at the eighteen-hole course near the base south entrance informally called the Golf Gate. I could enjoy a movie at the base theater and stand at attention when the National Anthem was played prior to the film feature. I could launch my boat at base docks on adjoining Lake St. Claire and I could keep my trailer at the eighty-pad trailer park near the main gate. My medical needs were satisfied at the Base Clinic. I opened a checking account at a credit union branch. I could play basketball or work out at the gymnasium. There was a do-it-yourself auto repair shop complete with tools where I could work on my car. If I had a pet that needed medical attention, a veterinary clinic was available. A Post Office branch existed. There were frequently-used softball fields near the main gate and the chapel. Near the chapel there was also a tennis court. At an eight-lane bowling alley I could display my



PHOTO COURTESY OF SELFRIDGE AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE

lifelong inability to roll a two hundred game (and seldom two consecutive strikes). The Base Exchange and Commissary satisfied my shopping needs although I recall that during busy Commissary hours, shoppers in check-out lanes sometimes extended to the rear of the store and blocked other shoppers.

The Chapel offered me a choice of a Saturday evening or a Sunday morning Catholic Mass, together with a Sunday Protestant service. The chapel also provided a memorable venue for this writer's marriage a year after my Selfridge arrival. In 1984, former U.S. Representative and now Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice Miller was also married at the chapel to Colonel Donald Miller, then the Selfridge Base Commanding Officer. This was prior to a command restructuring when the 127th Wing Commander assumed also the duties of the Base Commander.

I discovered a mind-boggling variety of aircraft on the Air Guard, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard flight lines. In the late 1980s an Air Force Inspector General described Selfridge as "... perhaps the most complex military installation in the United States." I concurred. At that time the base had more than eighty aircraft of thirteen types assigned to eleven different reserve and Air Guard units. When I checked in to MARTD, I was delighted

to find helicopters I had flown in various locations around the world, including Vietnam, and fixed wing twin turbo-prop airplanes that I eagerly anticipated having the opportunity to fly. Adjoining the Marine flight line were Navy four-engine anti-submarine aircraft and single-engine jet attack planes. On the Air Guard side of the field, an array of jet fighter aircraft and a four-engine transport were chocked. These aircraft were maintained by full-time active duty Air National Guard, Navy and Marine military personnel for training use by Air Guard, Navy and Marine Corps Reserve units on their active duty "drill" weekends. In the northwest corner of the base, the Coast Guard had operated round-the-clock search-and-rescue helicopters since 1966.

I was soon assigned a two-story, four bedroom set of quarters for my family and me. Life was good.

But in 2005, a shock wave swept throughout the base when the Department of Defense announced a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decision. Together with many other military bases and units around the country, the U.S. Army Garrison that managed Selfridge family housing, recreation facilities and other base functions would be deactivated on September 30, 2007. The announcement date was Friday, May 13, leading to the day being facetiously known as "BRAC Friday."

Reported in a historical housing study published by the Ar-

my's Tank-Automotive Command in Warren, 680 buildings existed at Selfridge in 1988. I presume that number existed at the times of my arrival and of the BRAC announcement. But the Selfridge landscape soon began to change drastically and fewer than 300 buildings are now left standing. In some cases, necessary but outdated buildings such as the Post Exchange, Commissary and the Dining Hall were replaced by modern facilities. Other buildings were demolished simply because they were originally built by the Air Force and the Air National Guard neither needed, nor was authorized, to have such facilities.

There were more than 800 military families then living in Selfridge base housing and in Seville Manor, a 243-building Capehart Housing area about two miles northeast of the base. The BRAC announcement meant that as these families vacated their quarters as a result of routine military transfers, the buildings would not be reoccupied. Today, the Seville Manor homes have been demolished and the only family dwellings remaining on the base are 63 two-story brick structures in the senior officer quarters commonly known as the "400" area.

Recreational facilities were phased out and closed during the following years and even as I write these words, the wrecking ball is creating a pile of rubble out of the bowling alley.

The Military Aviation Museum was opened shortly after I arrived near the Selfridge Main Gate with eighteen aircraft on display. Today that number has grown to thirty, together with a wide variety of indoor military artifacts, paintings, photographs, scale model aircraft and many other features available for the enjoyment of visitors on the weekends.

In the early 1970s, the "Cold War" between the Soviet Union and the United States and its allies was underway and Selfridge units played a significant role in the defense of our country's northern border. The six-story tall building near the Aviation Museum then supported a rotating radar antenna weighing 70 tons. The operators of this device, together with another nearby radar site could track aircraft in the area and furnish information, if necessary, to Army surface-to-air Nike missile sites at Selfridge and in the Detroit area. I still remember the electronic "zip" sound in my car radio when the rotating antenna's beam passed through my car when I was driving on or near the base.

One Federal agency on the base was not affected by the BRAC changes. Few motorists on North River Road know that the cluster of five small white buildings just inside the Selfridge perimeter fence is the headquarters of the U.S. Border Patrol's Detroit Sector, established at Selfridge in 1996 and the largest of 20 such sectors in the country. With five stations in the sector stretching from Sandusky Bay, Ohio to Sault Ste. Marie, 500 agents are responsible for round-the-clock surveillance of 863 miles of international water boundary totaling more than 3800 miles of coastline. With a fleet of watercraft and ten aircraft that were added in 2008, the sector remains an integral part of the nation's homeland security program and efforts.

Selfridge Air National Guard Base has known a succession of major transformations throughout its illustrious hundred year existence. With luck, another significant chapter in the Selfridge story may be announced later in the year when the Air Force reveals its decision as to where two squadrons of the new F-35A Lightning fighter aircraft will be based. Selfridge is one of five air bases in the country currently being considered to receive the state-of-the-art jet fighter. Stay tuned. ➔

# Mount Clemens and Selfridge: A century of partnership

By *Deborah J. Larsen*

Mount Clemens and Selfridge enjoy a long standing friendship that spans the entire 100-year history of the base. Local residents supported Selfridge Field even before the base saw its first flight. While negotiations were underway in the spring of 1917 to build a military airfield east of the city, the Mount Clemens Business Men's Association joined the cause. The association helped to secure right-of-way for a paved road from Gratiot Avenue to the new field, and led a subscription drive to raise part of the funds to build it. The new road was named Joy Boulevard in honor of Henry B. Joy, who had lobbied to bring the base to his private aviation field.

When flying operations began at Selfridge in July 1917, the eyes of Mount Clemens residents turned skyward. Airplanes passing overhead captivated the people, and the local newspaper observed that the whole town was suffering from a case of "stiffitis neckitis." Far from being annoyed by the proximity of the base, the city fathers embraced it and used it to promote tourism. A newspaper ad from June 1918 noted that "an added attraction for Mount Clemens visitors this year is the establishment of Selfridge Aviation Field. It is no uncommon sight to see a dozen or more aeroplanes hovering over the city."

The new airfield was only nine months old when a natural disaster struck and Mount Clemens stepped in to help. In March 1918, heavy rain and an ice jam caused a flood along the swollen Clinton River, and left Selfridge Field under three feet of water and mud. Citizen response to the evacuation of the base was generous and immediate. The residents of Mount Clemens opened their hotels, schools and homes to host more than 800 airmen for the duration of the emergency.

Just as Mount Clemens had saved Selfridge men from a flood in 1918, Selfridge returned the favor in February 1925. An ice jam in the Clinton River near Selfridge threatened to flood the surrounding area. Local authorities asked Selfridge for help. Base officials dispatched a twin-engine Martin bomber to drop dozens of fragmentation bombs on the ice. The bombs broke the ice jams and restored the flow of water toward the lake. The river level receded by more than six feet during the next day, saving many local property owners from disaster.

During the Korean War, a pivotal event in the relationship between Selfridge and Mount Clemens took place. In June 1950, a newspaper series on serviceman morale inspired local leaders to form a Military-Community Relations Committee. The committee coordinated citizen efforts to show hospitality to

service men and women stationed at Selfridge. The organization became the nation's first active and successful military relations committee. Air Force officials took note, and Mount Clemens became a model for other military towns to follow.

When the U.S. Air Force decided to make a documentary film on the topic of hospitality to airmen, it chose Mount Clemens as the subject and locale of the movie. A theatrical trailer entitled *The Mount Clemens Story* was filmed in the summer of 1951 and released nationwide in August of that year. Air Force Chief of Staff Hoyt S. Vandenberg told crowds at the movie's world premiere that "Mount Clemens has always welcomed servicemen with wide-open arms."

The Military-Community Relations Committee evolved into today's Selfridge Base Community Relations Council. This organization of more than 240 members, drawn from many Macomb County communities, continues to advocate for the base and its personnel. The Council supports Morale, Welfare and Recreation services and programs, assists with air shows, and joins the base in sponsoring an annual fundraiser for Special Olympics.

Over the decades, Mount Clemens and Selfridge have followed a "good neighbor" policy that has served them well. Mount Clemens advocates for the base whenever proposals are advanced to close it, and has done so since the first threats to the base were made following World War I. The base and the city have always practiced reciprocity in services. The city and base fire departments assist each other whenever necessary. Selfridge units and equipment are present at many civilian rescue scenes. Selfridge personnel support countless civic, social and charitable events; they've even delivered Santa Claus to downtown Mount Clemens in a helicopter a time or two. With a century of cooperation and friendship between them, Mount Clemens and Selfridge are well-poised to look forward to the next 100 years as community partners. ➔



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# Tuskegee Airmen's legacy continues to inspire the region

By Tech. Sgt. Chelsea E. Barber

A young African-American man walked out on the flight line to prepare his P-51 Mustang for the day's mission. He listened as 63 other P-51s started their engines, simultaneously preparing to escort hundreds of B-17 bombers en route from Italy to Germany.

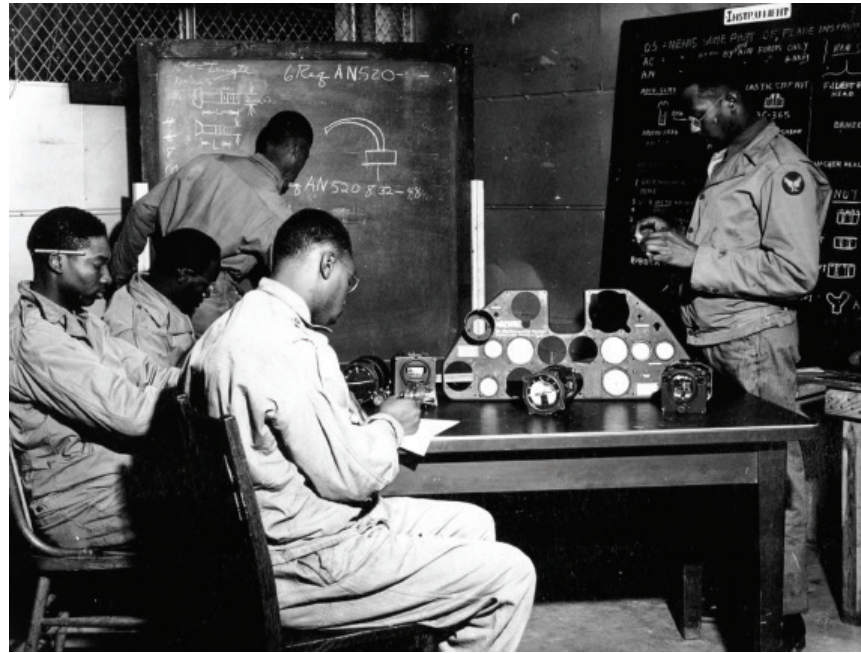
"Exciting: it was exciting to fly top-cover to prevent these [bombers] from being shot down by German fighters," said Alexander Jefferson, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, original Tuskegee Airman, and Detroit-native. With blue eyes gazing off into the distance, the 95-year old recalled his World War II combat missions like they'd occurred the day before.

The Tuskegee Airmen, a collective of African-American soldiers who received their advanced military training from the segregated U.S. Army Air Corps' Advanced Flying School at Tuskegee Army Air Field, Ala., went on to serve in the primarily-African-American 332nd Fighter Group, among other units. Tuskegee P-51 pilots lost only 27 bombers during 179 escort missions during World War II, compared to an average of 46 bombers lost by other P-51 fighter groups during the same period. The 332nd pilot and ground crew training operations began in Alabama but later moved to Selfridge Field in early 1943 and in early 1944, the 477th Bombardment Group stood up its first African-American bomber unit here.

The story of the excellence of the Tuskegee Airmen has been depicted in movies such as, "The Tuskegee Airmen," in 1995, and "Red Tails," in 2012, among many others. When the latter was released, Tuskegee Airmen were invited to the White House by then President Barack Obama for a screening.

"It's important for the young generation to know, first of all the history and the past, but mainly, in order to overcome obstacles, you have to be excellent," said Roscoe Brown, a veteran Army Air Corps captain and also a Tuskegee Airmen present at the White House screening.

Today, organizations and members of the southeastern Michigan community continue to honor the heritage of the Tuskegee Airmen in different ways. The Detroit Public Schools, for instance, offer high school students a unique curriculum opportunity, providing training leading to a private pilot's license, among other programs. Davis Aerospace Technical High School, named in honor of Gen. Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., a Tuskegee Airman, has roots as a civilian training program for veterans returning from WWII service. Detroit is also home to the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SELFRIDGE AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE

The Tuskegee Airmen, a collective of African-American soldiers who received their advanced military training from the segregated U.S. Army Air Corps' Advanced Flying School at Tuskegee Army Air Field, Ala., went on to serve in the primarily-African-American 332nd Fighter Group, among other units.

Tuskegee Airmen National Museum, host to several programs meant to inspire disadvantaged youth with careers in aviation.

The Tuskegee Airmen's legacy in southeastern Michigan began when the first air echelon relocated the 332nd Fight Group from Tuskegee Field to Selfridge Field on March 28, 1943. Today, that legacy is not only shared by Selfridge, but with the entire metro-Detroit community. Jefferson hopes these students will carry on the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen by encouraging young people to strive for excellence, become educated and get involved in their communities.

"Become involved with the different opportunities in the community, all the way from neighborhood opportunities to military opportunities in the city," Jefferson said. "We want these young people to understand the opposition the Tuskegee Airmen went through to get to the place we are today." →



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# What not to bring to the Air Show

## Prohibited and permitted items for Selfridge Open House & Air Show

By Tech. Sgt. Chelsea E. Barber

Safety is always the primary concern at air shows. Selfridge Air National Guard Base works very closely with local and federal authorities to ensure safety. Selfridge follows and enforces all security rules and regulations as required.

You will notice extra uniformed security at the Air Show, both military and civilian. Camera and video surveillance are used for security purposes.

Regrettably, due to heightened security requirements items such as backpacks, coolers, and duffel bags will be prohibited on the airfield. Some exceptions will be made for items such as small diaper bags, purses 12" x 12" and folding lawn chairs, but visitors must submit them to security personnel for an inspection. Large purses (tote bag type) are not permitted.

Weapons and weapon replicas of any type are prohibited during the Open House and Air Show.

Weapons include, but are not limited to firearms (regardless of permit), blades, and blunt objects. Patrons with firearms will be asked to leave the installation.

Alternatively, there will also be amnesty boxes at each entry point for leaving prohibited items behind prior to screening. There are no returns of items left in amnesty boxes.

All pets are prohibited from the Air Show grounds.

Service animals assisting physically challenged guests will be authorized. At no time will pets be left unattended outside the area or in vehicles.

Since the show has no admission fee, you may leave and re-enter as you desire. Anyone re-entering will have to go through the security checkpoints again.

### Prohibited Items:

Not allowed: Firearms, replica firearms, airsoft guns, squirt guns, toy guns, anything that resembles a gun, knives, swords, or multi-tools

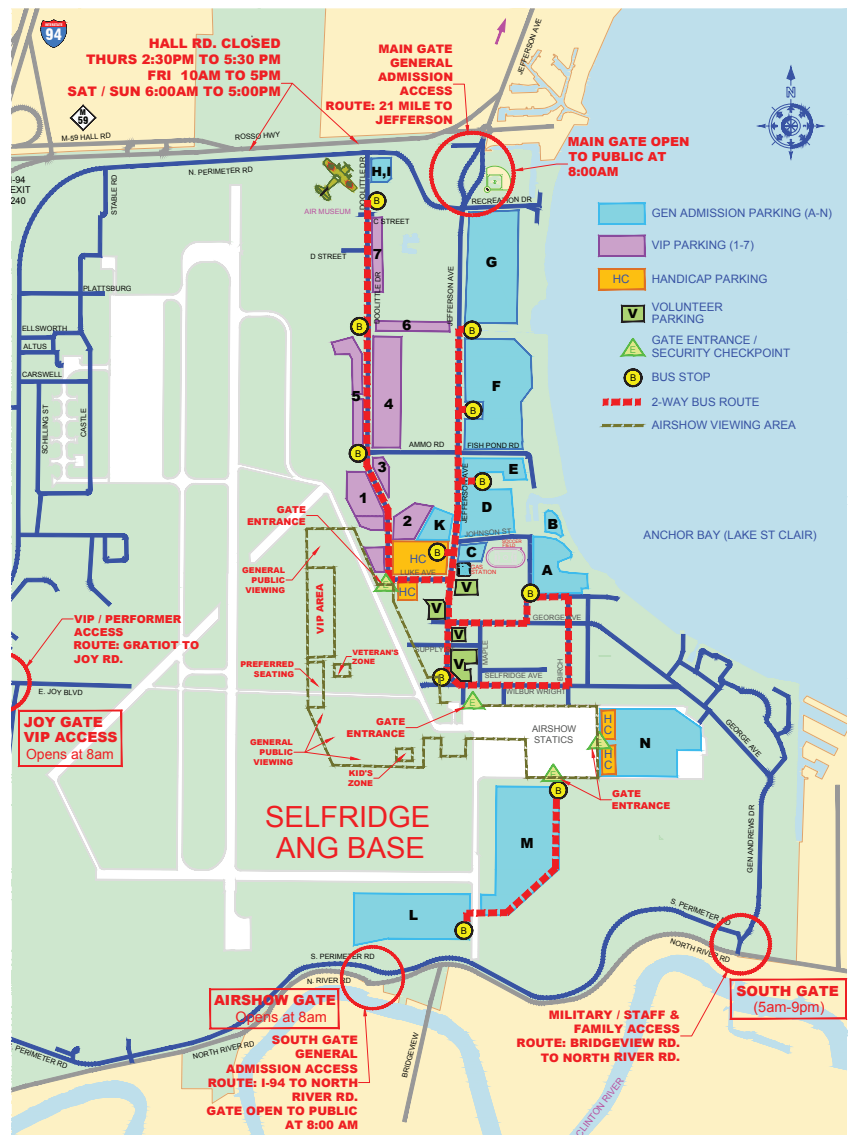
Not allowed: Pepper spray, mace, stun guns, bows, crossbows, or martial arts weapons

Not allowed: Explosives or fireworks of any kind

Not allowed: Personal drones (quad or hex copters), or radio control toys of any kind

Not allowed: Awnings, tents, beach umbrellas, or pop-up canopies

## PARKING MAP



- Not allowed: Outside alcohol, coolers, picnic baskets, backpacks, or duffel bags
- Not allowed: Glass containers
- Not allowed: Pets (service animals with proper documentation are allowed)
- Not allowed: Bicycles, mopeds, roller blades, roller skates, skate boards, or hover boards
- Not allowed: Lasers or laser pointers
- Not allowed: Paint, signs, balloons, flags, or banners
- Not allowed: Horns, whistles, air Horns, or other noise-making items
- Not allowed: Campers, RV's, tailgating
- Not allowed: Illegal drugs.

### Permitted Items:

- One 12" x 12" Purse per person
- Folding lawn chair and blanket
- Baby food, baby medicine, baby stroller
- Binoculars and Cameras
- Water bottle; must fit within 12"x 12" size restriction
- Hearing protection, sunscreen, hats →



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God bless your century of protection that has ensured we remain *the land of the free and home of the brave.*



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# Mission: Bring the F-35 to Selfridge

*By Mike Scott*

Selfridge Air National Base is a very active and diverse base with a rich and diverse heritage spanning 100 years. As the base celebrates its centennial anniversary with an Air Show and Open House August 19-20, members of the 127th Wing and tenant units look forward to enduring well into the next century.

Over the years, dozens of different types of aircraft, thousands of servicemembers and numerous mission sets have been assigned to the base.

“What has always remained constant through the years is the unwavering commitment of our Airmen to provide trained, equipped, and motivated support and resources when called upon by our community, state, and nation,” said Brig. Gen. John D. Slocum, base commander and commanding officer of the 127th Wing.

Selfridge is the only Air National Guard Base in the nation that houses Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, and Customs and Border Patrol, blending active duty, reserve, National Guard, civilian and contractor personnel, and more. But what has made the base great are the men and women who call Selfridge home. For example, in 2016 the National Guard Association of the U.S. awarded the 127th Wing the Spaatz Trophy, naming Selfridge the best Air National Guard flying unit in the country. In addition, the Air Force awarded the 127th Wing the Meritorious Unit Award for its performance both in combat operations and in support of those operations.

“These awards acknowledge the incredibly high level at which our Airmen have been performing,” Slocum said. “But we’re not resting on our laurels. We’re posturing the base for next 100 years of service with the enduring fighter mission here and becoming an installation of the future.”

One of the greatest opportunities to enhance the 127th Wing’s longstanding operations at Selfridge is with the potential of landing a “home base” nod from the U.S. Air Force for the F-35 Lightning II fighter jet. A fifth-generation fighter jet, the F-35 combines high-tech stealth capabilities with fighter speed and agility, full sensors, network-enabled operations, and many other features.

Selfridge is one of five Air National Guard bases being considered to bed down the U.S. Air Force’s newest fighter jet. The Air Force has already con-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SELFRIDGE AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE

An opportunity to enhance the 127th Wing’s operations at Selfridge is with the potential of landing a “home base” nod from the U.S. Air Force for the F-35 Lightning II fighter jet.

cluded the site visit at Selfridge and the other bases; Montgomery, Ala.; Boise, Idaho; Jacksonville, Fla.; and Madison, Wis.

A decision is expected to be made later this year, with two out of five finalist bases expected to land a squadron of F-35 contract. Bringing the F-35 to Selfridge will benefit the local economy and the base’s strategic location along the international border with Canada and Michigan’s network of defense resources. At the Mackinac Policy Conference in late May, Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel announced the findings of a report commissioned by the state’s Michigan Defense Center, concluding that Metro Detroit has the experienced workforce needed to effectively host the aircraft and serve as the F-35 Lightning II’s home base, and the capacity to support any F-35 missions.

Hackel has also said that landing the F-35 would guarantee continued operations at Selfridge for at least another 30 years while providing a major boost for the local economy.

“Being strategically located in Southeast Michigan is definitely a benefit for us,” Slocum said. “Not only do we receive outstanding support from our community, but we also enjoy the superior employment patterns, recruitment opportunity, talent base, and contract infrastructure that the Detroit region offers.”

Selfridge is also preparing for the future by improving existing infrastructure. The development of a \$32.6 million jet fuel storage and delivery system currently underway is one example. This new fuel storage and distribution system will improve both safety and efficiency.

The base is also vigorously pursuing alternative energy systems and conservation initiatives such as a corporate partnership to develop a five-megawatt solar power generator with micro grid capability. Also, a joint National Guard Bureau and U.S. Air Force study to determine whether methane capture can be efficiently used as a source for power generation.

“Geothermal energy is in use at the Wing’s Munitions Storage Area and is a technology the Wing continues to explore in all new construction to utilize the natural temperatures of the earth in heating and cooling,” Slocum said.

Selfridge Air National Guard Base is one of the oldest and most complex military air fields in the nation. With National Guard and/or Reserve personnel from every branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, Selfridge provides a broad range of services and capabilities to the state and to the nation.

Known as the Home of Generals, the base was the duty station at one time to more than 150 officers who eventually became general officers in the U.S. Air Force. The base is located on the shores of Lake St. Clair in Harrison Township, Mich., about 20 miles from downtown Detroit. ➔





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A group photo of the 107th FIS.



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Selfridge Field was named to honor the memory of Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge, the first member of the armed forces to die in an aviation accident.



AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TERRY L. ATWELL  
127th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief Tech Sgt Byron Blasky and Airman 1st Class Brian Whitfield, a crew chief in training, reviews a technical order during the pre-flight preparation of an A-10 Thunderbolt II at Selfridge Air National Guard Base on October 15, 2014.

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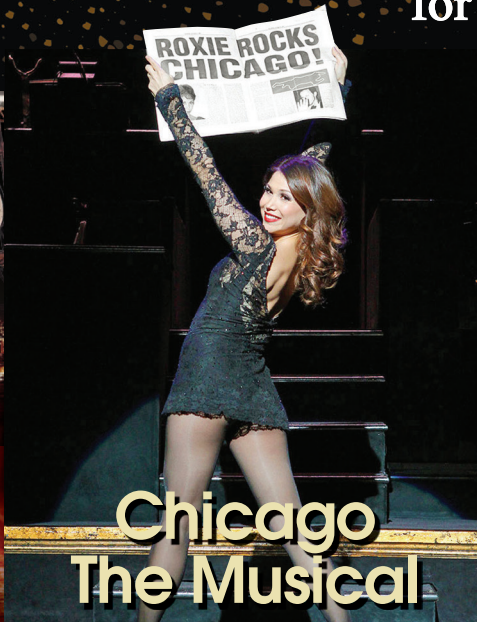


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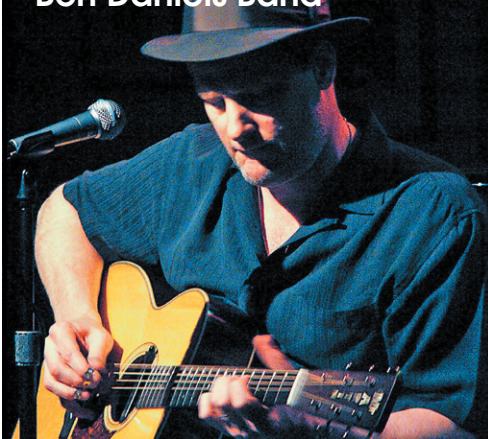
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