

## Aircrew

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ippines, then on to Hickham AFB, Hawaii before returning to Charleston. "It was pretty impressive the distances you could travel with the C-141."

Joseph Tosheff, wing chief pilot in 1965, piloted the first C-141 from the assembly plant in Marietta, Ga.

"It was a big day in Charleston when the first C-141 was brought in. I was picked to fly it because of my experience and was the only pilot checked out in the C-141 at the time," he said.

Tosheff was responsible for getting the initial cadre up to speed on the C-141 and also remembers the around the world missions in the C-141.

"On those around the world missions, you got to see six sun-ups and sundowns while flying to the east, which was interesting to say the least," he said.

Metzger also flew on the C-124 Globemaster IIs and said he came to appreciate the C-141 for the advantages that it had over the Globemaster IIs. "The C-141s were twice as fast, pressurized, quieter, and had a nice toilet instead of the honey bucket found on the C-124s and C-130s."

Tosheff wrote the initial directives for the transition from the C-124 to C-141.

"Our first mission in the jet was a 10 day mission to get 10 of our most experienced pilots trained," Tosheff said. "I would train them on each leg of the flight and by the time they came back to Charleston, they were all checked out in the aircraft."

For the aircrew members, the Charleston C-141 missions in and out of Vietnam were memorable.

"The most interesting missions were the air evacuation missions back to the states. We would see the wounded brought right from the field out to the aircraft on helicopters and then we would fly them to the staging hospital in Japan. The ones in reasonably good shape and

those who had mended a bit in Japan would continue on to the states," Tosheff said. "They were all very grateful and it was very satisfying as an aircrew member to get them home."

Although most people remember when a C-17 transported Keiko, a 10,000-pound Orca whale, fewer probably remember that the C-141 was the first to move an ocean dwelling mammal.

In the 1980's, Metzger remembers when a C-141 was used to transport a dolphin from the Boston aquarium to Hawaii.

Frank Elam, a former C-141 pilot, was here in 1963 and played a role in developing the original airdrop procedures for the C-141 in 1966. "Originally, we made the procedures based on handwritten notes on what we determined what would work best. We would go out and fly a mission and look at what worked or didn't work, and then revise our notes during our debriefs," he said. "Our airdrop procedures were completely changed because Old Shakey (C-124) relied upon reciprocating engines while the C-141s was our first jet transport."

One of the 16 AS most memorable and rewarding missions was providing our nation's long-range, rapid-response, special operations low level capability.

Responding to National Command Authority taskings, the squadron utilized uniquely qualified aircrews, trained in the use of enhanced night vision equipment and specially modified aircraft. These crews rapidly deployed and inserted special operations ground forces into blacked-out, austere airfields/drop zones and extracted those ground forces upon mission completion.

Most of the missions done by the 16 AS were considered classified.

"I remember the days when we got this mission that other people were not allowed to even acknowledge that such a group of highly trained people even existed on the base," said Metzger.

The 16<sup>th</sup> flawlessly performed this complex mission for more than 17 years while maintaining the best safety record in the Air Force, sur-



Senior Airman Jason Smith

**Senior Airman Barret Daniels, a C-141 loadmaster, ties down cargo before the aircraft departs for its final local flight.**

passing 919,000 mishap-free flying hours. This unique mission was formally transferred to McGuire AFB in April 1999.

According to Air Mobility Command Plans and Programs officials, the C-141s will retire from the active duty inventory before 2004 and from the Reserves and Air National Guard before 2006.



courtesy photo

**The first C-141 crew - (standing, from left to right) Capt. Frank Tablas, navigator; Master Sgt. Bill Brazel, Jr., loadmaster; Tech. Sgt. Roger Neal, loadmaster; Chief Master Sgt. Bob Pettie, flight engineer; Maj. Fred Burke, pilot; (kneeling) Master Sgt. Richie Holman, flight engineer; Maj. Joe Tosheff, aircraft commander. In the background is the original "City of Charleston" C-141.**

## What will you miss most about the C-141?



**Lt. Col. Dave "Frenchy" Peaire**  
Aircraft commander

"With more than 5,000 hours in the C-141, the experiences were endless. It's been a very good aircraft to fly. Being the workhorse of AMC, it afforded me the opportunity to fly all over the world and participate in every contingency and operation. Thanks to the men and women who've kept her flying for the past 35 years here at Charleston.



**Master Sgt. David Thompson**  
Flight engineer

"I could always count on the 141 to bring me home; no matter the mission we were flying. The 141 is not just a machine, it has a heart and soul as well. It's the best aircraft that will ever serve this wing."



**Master Sgt. Thomas Duley**  
Chief flight engineer

"The design, engineering and reliability coupled with the crew compliment, still makes the C-141B one of the safest airplanes flying today. It's still "human driven" as opposed to "computer driven." Call me a dinosaur, but when it really counts, human interface is still the safest and most reliable."