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103rd ANNIVERSARY

Pioneer pilot Jannus honored at 103rd Wright anniversary

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KILL DEVIL HILLS - Flying shrunk the world for the early aviators, but it was the pioneering work of Anthony Jannus that first opened the skies to the masses.

A barnstormer who had taught himself to fly, Jannus in 1914 piloted the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line, the first regularly scheduled air line service. He was killed two years later in a plane crash in the Black Sea at age 27.

Jannus was honored Sunday at the 103rd anniversary of the Wright brothers' first powered flight. He was inducted into the Paul E. Garber First Flight Shrine, a portrait gallery of famous aviators named for the first director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum.

Tom Crouch, senior curator at the division of aeronautics at the Smithsonian, said Jannus' achievements may have been the most influential of the pre-World War I era.

Some believe that if Jannus had lived, he could have rivaled Charles Lindbergh, who electrified America in 1927 with the first non stop solo flight from New York to Paris. Lindbergh is also pictured in the First Flight Shrine.

"His death so far from home drew little attention in the U.S.," Crouch said. "Since that time, he has been largely forgotten, save for his participation in the Tampa-St. Pete airboat line. In his own time, however, he was one of the best-known aviators in the country."

More than 450 aviation lovers at Wright Brothers National Memorial were greeted with one of the prettiest mornings in memory of the annual event.

Clear skies streaked with feathery clouds and temperatures hovering near 60 degrees left loyal veterans of the event counting their blessings that they were spared - for the third year in a row - the nasty December weather that has often plagued the outdoor flyover.

"It's such variable weather," said Penny Leary-Smith, a 64-year-old Currituck resident who has attended the event most years of her life.

"You're always prepared. You just never know."

With the sun glinting over the Wright monument shortly after 10:35 a.m. - the time the brothers' plane first found lift in 1903 - two F/A-18 jets from the Atlantic Fleet approached the crowd, deceptively quiet from the distance. Flying at 1,000 feet, the planes roared past at about 380 mph, according to the show's announcer.

Next over the horizon came a Coast Guard C-130 rescue aircraft, trailed closely by a much smaller Coast Guard helicopter flying at 140 mph, looking somewhat like a mother with a toddler at her heels.

A C-9 Nightingale, a 30-year-old hospital ship, followed, but was soon out dazzled by the four-jet formation of Air Force F-15 E Strike Eagles that raced overhead.

The Flagship Detroit, a 1939 American Airlines DC-3, did some crowd-pleasing midway through the flyover when it seemed to nearly scrape the roof of the First Flight Pavilion before banking left as it passed the visitors center.

"He's a little low," one onlooker commented dryly as the plane loomed overhead.

Absent the dramatic finale of prior years, a two-seat 1948 Luscombe 8 E piloted by Jim Zazas was the last plane. Zazas, a commercial pilot who has flown at the Wright anniversary for about 20 years, wiggled his wings as he whirred over spectators.

For Suzanna Darcy-Hennemann, a test pilot for Boeing for the past 21 years, it was a thrill to finally visit the place where flight began. Now a captain who flies experimental commercial airplanes, Darcy-Hennemann, 54, has been a pilot for 30 years.

"It is such an honor to be here on the 17th," she said. "And if you're an aviation junkie, what better place to be?"

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Piloted C-54



DAVE STEVENS, 83, is shown in front of the C-54, the Candy Bomber which visited Elizabeth City and the Outer Banks last week. Stevens, whose son is stationed on the Outer Banks with the National Park Service, flew the same kind of plane in the Pacific during World War II and wanted to take a ride on one once again, which he did from the Dare County Airport. Stevens flew in the Pacific then became an attorney serving in the Air Force Judge Advocate's office then as an attorney for East Carolina University. The Candy Bomber is a plane which visits various airports for students and the public to tour, teaching them about the Berlin Airlift. (L. Putnam photo)