

THE FEEDER FORCE

By John T. Correll



WHEN Andrew John Mungenast was a boy, he rode his bicycle 15 miles to Lambert Field near St. Louis to watch the airplanes. His father knew the famous aviators Charles Lindbergh and Jimmy Doolittle. Andy was 17 when World War II began, but he wanted to be in it and he wanted to be a pilot.

His best shot at it was the Civilian Pilot Training program offered by his hometown Jefferson College in Hillsboro, Mo., in cooperation with the Civil Aeronautics Administration. By the time Andy started in September 1942, the program had a new name—

the War Training Service—and it was affiliated with the Army Air Forces. As he progressed from primary flight training to secondary to cross-country, he had a dual status: He was a college student but also a member of the Army Air Corps Enlisted Reserve.

Finishing college could wait. He went on Active Duty in 1943, completed basic training, and entered the Aviation Cadets. He earned his wings and his commission in the Army Air Forces in February 1944 and was in transition training for B-17s when the war ended. But his 30-year career in the Air Force was just beginning.

Today, the Civilian Pilot Training program and the War Training Service are almost forgotten, but under their banner almost half a million young Americans learned to fly. Among them was Richard I. Bong, who earned his pilot's license in a Piper Cub in CPT at Superior State Teachers College in Wisconsin in 1940. He went on to receive the Medal of Honor in World War II and become the Air Force's all-time leading ace, with 40 aerial victories.

Another CPT graduate was John Glenn, who went through the program at Muskingum College in Ohio in 1941. In 1962, astronaut Glenn became the

Graduates of the Civilian Pilot Training program had a head start toward flying for the AAF in World War II.

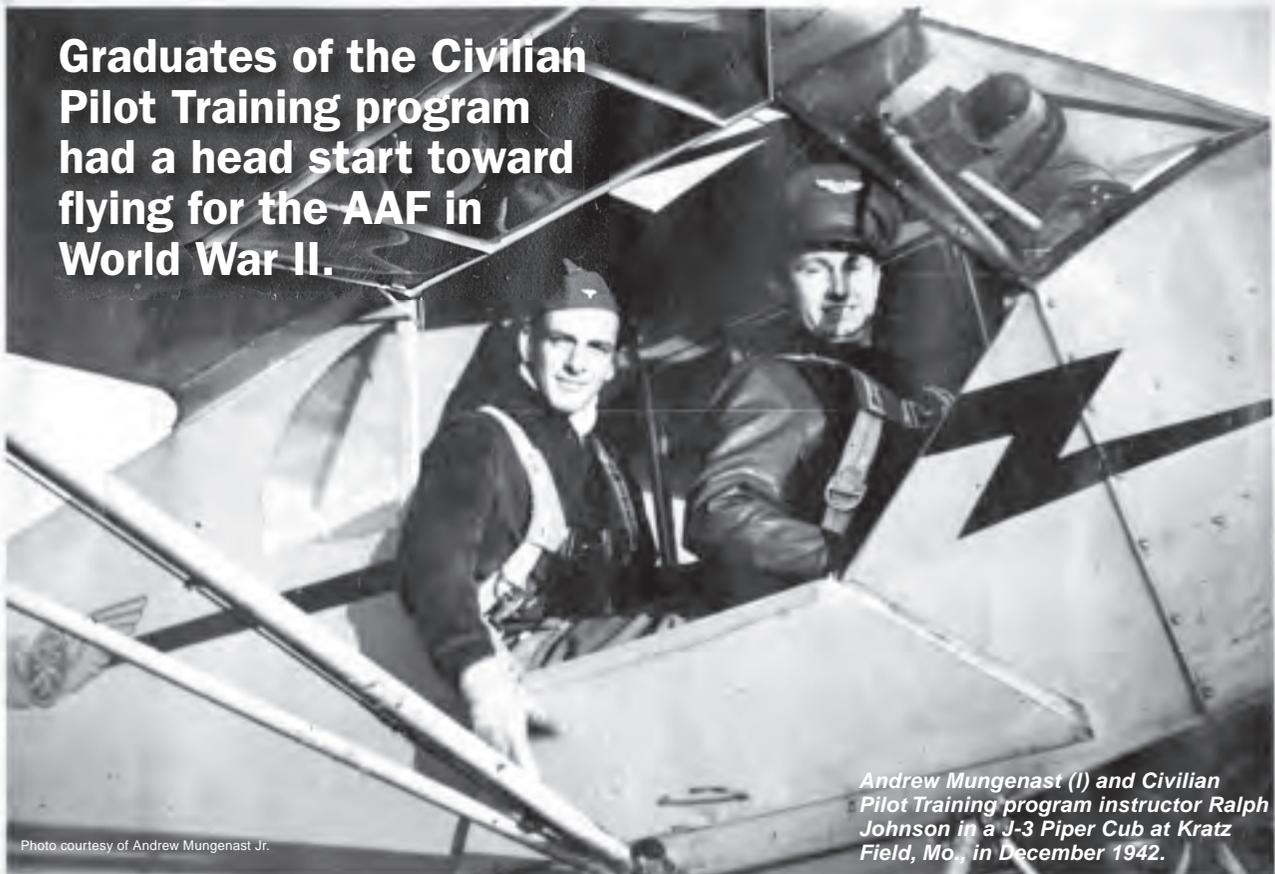


Photo courtesy of Andrew Mungenast Jr.

Andrew Mungenast (I) and Civilian Pilot Training program instructor Ralph Johnson in a J-3 Piper Cub at Kratz Field, Mo., in December 1942.



The publicity poster for "20,000 Men a Year." The 1939 movie about the Civilian Pilot Training program starred heartthrob Randolph Scott as a flying instructor.

Photo via Aaron Church

mind ed" and teach thousands of them to fly.

Hinckley was a dedicated New Dealer. Wartime mobilization was not his motivation. CPT was not only intended as an economic pump-primer for the private aviation industry but also as a vocational training program for American youth. The United States had only 7,400 civilian pilots, including those flying for the airlines. The Army had fewer than 5,000, of whom fewer than half were on Active Duty.

In December 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced an experimental program in which 330 pilots would be trained at 13 partici-

pating colleges and universities. In time, he said, 20,000 college students a year would be trained as pilots. Hinckley, promoted to chairman of CAA, was to make it happen.

In a Gallup public opinion poll, 87 percent supported the plan and an expanded program was soon authorized. Everett M. Dirksen, then a young Congressman from Illinois, added a far-reaching provision to the enabling legislation: CPT training would not be denied to anyone on account of race, creed, or color.

By the fall of 1939, 116 colleges and universities, including Harvard, were participating in CPT. Eventually, 1,132 colleges and 1,460 associated flying schools would be part of it. That October, "20,000 Men a Year" appeared in the movie theaters. Randolph Scott played the role of a flying school operator whose fortunes improved when he threw in with CPT. There were spectacular scenes of Stearman biplanes over the Grand Canyon.

Training was open to anyone between the ages of 18 and 25. Students were charged a \$40 fee, which covered life insurance and a physical examination. For each student accepted, the government paid the college \$20 and its flying school partner \$290.

The Embry-Riddle Flying School— forerunner of today's Embry-Riddle

first American to orbit the Earth and subsequently served in the US Senate.

CPT was originally designed to increase the number of civilian pilots in the United States and give a boost to the Depression-ravaged private aviation industry. During the war it functioned as a screening and feeder service for Army and Navy flight training.

The relationship with the Army Air Forces was never smooth. CPT officials believed the AAF discounted their contributions. The AAF thought that CPT officials wanted to move in and take over the training program. Both sides had valid grounds for their suspicions.

In the end, many CPT graduates went into the Aviation Cadets and became Air Force combat pilots. Some, who could not meet physical standards or other requirements, flew as ferry, liaison, or service pilots. CPT/WTS output effectively stopped in 1944 and it was finally disbanded in 1946 after a seven-year run.

Hinckley's Big Idea

CPT was the handiwork of Robert H. Hinckley, who was appointed to the Civil Aeronautics Authority when it was founded in 1938. Hinckley interpreted the CAA's charter to "promote aeronautics" as the authority to launch a program to make American youth "air



Aeronautical University—owed its early survival to CPT. In 1939, it had only two airplanes, one flight instructor, and one maintenance man. Embry-Riddle partnered with the University of Miami for CPT, was chosen for the AAF contract training program when that came along, and grew from there.

In May 1940, Roosevelt requested increased funding for CPT and called for the training of 50,000 volunteer pilots a year. Hinckley said the program could easily produce that number. Roosevelt also reorganized the Civil Aeronautics Authority, splitting it into the Civil Aeronautics Board and the Civil Aeronautics Administration, with the latter to keep CPT and to be headed by Hinckley.

Conversion to War

In the 1930s, the Army Air Corps had only one base, Randolph Field at San Antonio, for primary and basic pilot training. The third phase, advanced training, took place across town at Kelly and Brooks Fields. These bases could handle only a few hundred students a year.



Civil Air Patrol J-3s used for Army Air Corps training await their next mission at an airfield in Lansing, Mich., in 1942.

In 1939, the Air Corps contracted with nine civilian flying schools to conduct primary flight training. Eventually, there would be 99 schools on such contracts to the AAF. Some published accounts confuse this program with CPT, but that was an entirely different proposition. The Army and Navy were wary of CPT.

In congressional hearings, assistant Air Corps chief Brig. Gen. Barton K. Yount was asked whether the Air Corps would commission CPT graduates. He said no. The flying was more difficult in the Air Corps, he said, the training and requirements were different, and officers had to have a military discipline not instilled by the CAA courses. However, he acknowledged that “preliminary training” in the CAA schools might expedite “final training” of selected candidates. Through March 1941, the CPT program had produced 37,000 pilots and almost 5,000 of them had volunteered and had been accepted for further training by the Army and Navy.

Everything changed with the attack on Pearl Harbor and US entry into World War II. Roosevelt declared that the CAA’s pilot training facilities were

to be “exclusively devoted” to preparing men for military duty. CTP was renamed the War Training Service.

CTP/WTS graduates were asked to make good on their pledge, required

since 1940, to enroll in Army or Navy aviation programs if they were qualified and needed. Many did so. Details in the historical record are sketchy, but 19.5 percent of the students in Air Corps primary pilot training in 1941 and early 1942 were CPT graduates. The washout rate for them was less than 12 percent, compared to almost 45 percent washouts for those who had not been through CPT.

Despite the name change to War Training Service, “CPT” continued in frequent usage—sometimes by the CAA itself—for years thereafter. The student wings awarded to Mungenast when he soloed in December 1942 were embossed with “CPT” and “Enlisted Reserve.”

Opening Doors

The Civilian Pilot Training program, mandated as nondiscriminatory by the Dirksen amendment, opened the way to aviation and military flying for women and, on a much larger scale, for African-Americans.

About 2,500 women had completed CPT before it was converted to a war-time mode in 1941. Many of them flew as Women Airforce Service Pilots, or WASPs. More than 40 percent of the future WASPs earned their wings in CPT, according to historian Katherine Sharp Landdeck, who has interviewed many of the former WASPs and who



WASPs Dorothea Moorman (l) and Dora Dougherty both completed civilian pilot training and were recruited by then-Lt. Col. Paul Tibbets (second from right) to fly the B-29. At right is Dean Hudson, a Civil Aeronautics Authority check pilot.



Air Force Magazine Associate Editor Aaron Church's grandfather, Hubert Church, in the cockpit of a Piper J-3 during initial flight training in Lansing, Mich.

has analyzed letters, diaries, and other sources of information.

An outstanding example was Dora Dougherty Strother McKeowan, who earned her pilot's certificate through CPT and went on to become one of the first women in the US to earn an airline transport pilot license. She held several world helicopter records and was twice honored by the Air University Gathering of Eagles.

The B-29 bomber was new in 1944, and some pilots were reluctant to fly it, regarding it as too dangerous. Col. Paul W. Tibbets, who later led the atomic bomb mission against Hiroshima, recruited WASPs Dora Dougherty and Dorothea Moorman and taught them to fly the B-29. Their demonstration flight—Dougherty as the pilot in command with Moorman, also a CPT graduate, as copilot—effectively shamed the men and put the B-29 training program back on track.

One of the first schools to sign up for participation in CPT was the Tuskegee Institute, a college in eastern Alabama for black students. The first class graduated in May 1940 and received private pilot licenses.

In 1941, the Army Air Forces opened a school at Tuskegee and began training aviation cadets there. Over the next several years, Tuskegee continued the CPT courses while the AAF program proceeded at another airfield a few miles away. Daniel James Jr. completed CPT at Tuskegee, was briefly a civilian

instructor in the Army program, and then entered the Aviation Cadets himself and earned his commission. In time, "Chappie" James would become the first black four-star general in the Air Force.

The Tuskegee Airmen gained lasting historic fame in combat in World War II. One of the first of them, Robert W. Deiz, had learned to fly in CPT at the University of Oregon before coming to Tuskegee. He shot down two enemy airplanes over Italy in World War II



Daniel "Chappie" James completed Civilian Pilot Training at Tuskegee before entering the Army Aviation Cadets and earning his commission. His is pictured in front of his Mustang in Korea.

and further distinguished himself as a test pilot and in other assignments.

At Tuskegee and elsewhere, CPT trained about 2,000 black pilots in all.

Hinckley and Hap

Hinckley and Maj. Gen. H. H. "Hap" Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Corps, took an intense dislike to each other. Arnold insisted that the Army must have "complete and unqualified jurisdiction" over its training and believed that instruction in the CPT schools was inferior. Hinckley upheld the quality of CPT training and thought the Air Corps should accept the graduates instead of setting up more flying schools for itself.

The Air Corps regarded the 99 selected schools it had on contract as a wartime expediency and thought they left much to be desired. Arnold was not about to welcome aboard the 1,500 local operators of varying caliber in the CAA network.

When a stridently pro-CTP article came out in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Arnold told the writer that he was "being misled by Hinckley and that political gang over there who are trying their best to horn in on the military program."

Roosevelt's executive order had directed the conversion of CAA pilot training to military purposes. Arnold investigated the possibility of transferring CAA functions to the War Department, which enraged Hinckley.

He called in the press and said he would “be in favor of the Army taking us over if we thought that would win the war a minute sooner.” He told an emissary from the Air Corps that he refused to have “someone who knows nothing about it tell me what to do.”

In April 1942, the Air Corps created the Enlisted Reserve to hold the backlog of qualified applicants waiting to begin training as aviation cadets. Then and in his memoirs, Hinckley criticized it as a waste that “thousands of men marked time until places could be found for them in the Army’s own air schools. On government pay, they walked the streets or lounged in hotel lobbies.”

Hinckley resigned in July 1942 and went to work for the Sperry Corp. because the military was “supreme” and the “civilian agencies were pushed aside.” The cudgel was taken up by Sen. Patrick A. McCarran (D-Nev.), the congressional champion of the private flying schools, who complained that the Army was using only 100 schools to train combat and service pilots while CAA training facilities went unused.

The Odd Couple

Nevertheless, the Air Corps signed agreements with the CAA in July 1942 and January 1943 for preliminary training of pilot candidates through the WTS program. *The New York Times* described it as “a compromise in the long-standing feud between the Army and the CAA.”

Under the agreements, WTS was to train a total of 3,152 enlisted reservists in various regiments, specified as elementary, secondary, cross-country, Link instrument, instructor, and flight officer courses.

There were several follow-on tracks for graduates. Some, like Andrew Mungenast, went to regular Air Corps flight training in the Aviation Cadets. Others, with extra training as required, became service pilots or instructors in assignments where the requirements were somewhat less stringent than for combat duty.

One part of the agreements was a source of continuing discord. In 1943, the Air Corps set up the Aircrew College Training Program. “The college program, to put it bluntly, came into existence not so much to meet an educational need as to hold a backlog of aircrew candidates,” reads the official AAF history of World War II. “The AAF had found it advisable in 1942

The Lifelong Pilot

Andrew Mungenast always retained fond memories of CPT and WTS. Most of his Air Force assignments were in aircraft maintenance, but he never stopped flying and earned his command pilot wings. He transitioned to jets in 1957.

He finally got around to completing his college education at Southern Colorado State in the 1960s, later adding a master’s degree from George Washington University and an MBA from Auburn University. When he retired as a colonel in 1973, he was a tenured professor of economics at the Air War College.

Andrew and Norma Mungenast had five boys go into the armed forces. All were involved in aviation except for one: retired USAF Brig. Gen. James A. Mungenast, who went into intelligence instead. He is currently president of the Air Force Association’s South Central Region. Two of Andrew Mungenast’s sons and two sons-in-law are pilots.

In retirement, Mungenast continued flying as a private pilot. He logged a total of 8,137.2 hours in 147 different aircraft, including a replica of *Spirit of St. Louis*, owned by the Experimental Aircraft Association. On his last flight, several months before he died in 2009, he shot instrument landing system approaches into the Montgomery, Ala., airport in his Cessna C-77B Cardinal, accompanied by a check pilot.

The exhibit on the Civilian Pilot Training program at the National Museum of the United States Air Force in Dayton, Ohio, focuses on Mungenast. The display includes the pilot rating book he used in cross-country training in 1943 and his Enlisted Reserve CPT wings.

to recruit aviation cadets in excess of its immediate needs and hold them in an inactive reserve until needed. ... The pool of idle manpower received increasing notice from selective service boards and the War Manpower Commission.”

The curriculum lasted about five months and “all aircrew candidates were to be assigned from basic training centers to the colleges unless they could pass a special educational test,” the official history reads. “The relatively few who passed this test were sent directly to preflight schools.” Mungenast spent several months in this program at the University of Arkansas until an opening in the Aviation Cadets came up for him.

The college program included 10 hours of “flight indoctrination” conducted by the CAA. It consisted of familiarization operations and simple maneuvers under dual control by the instructor and the student. The Air Corps did not want this “indoctrination” and complained that students were “merely riding around for 10 hours.”

In 1944, with the end of the war approaching and air supremacy established in all theaters, the requirement for more pilots was reduced and thousands of men who had been waiting

for flight training were released. Air Corps contracts with the private flying schools were terminated, and both the Army and the Navy ended their agreements with the WTS. Some CAA instructors with at least 1,000 hours and experience in high-performance aircraft were given an opportunity to join an AAF flight program.

CPT/WTS provided a head start to flying for the armed forces for many. Between June 1939 and June 1942, according to Dominick A. Pisano in *To Fill the Skies With Pilots*, 42,026 graduates of CPT enlisted in the Army or the Navy for further flight training. WTS trained another 55,348 Air Corps enlisted reservists for various specialties and 105,000 aviation students for the Navy.

McCarran, urged by the flight schools and aviation trade associations, managed to revive CPT in June 1944 and persuade Congress to extend it for two years. Among those testifying in its support was Hinckley, although he was no longer associated with the program. He said that instead of being dismantled, CPT ought to be expanded to include high school students. Although authorized, the renewed CPT was never funded and a bid by McCarran to extend it again in 1946 did not pass Congress. ■

John T. Correll was editor in chief of Air Force Magazine for 18 years and is now a contributor. His most recent article, “Doctrine Next,” appeared in the December issue.