



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Contact: Erin Porter**  
**Centennial Planning Office**  
**Tel: 252 441 6291, ext. 224**  
**ErinPorterNPS@aol.com**

**DECEMBER 16<sup>th</sup> FIRST FLIGHT CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION**  
**TO CELEBRATE 100 AVIATION HEROES**

**KILL DEVIL HILLS, NC, (December 9, 2003)** – Event organizers have announced programming for Tuesday, December 16<sup>th</sup> during the First Flight Centennial Celebration, taking place December 12-17 at Wright Brothers National Memorial. Themed “In History’s Footsteps, Celebrating 100 Aviation Pioneers”, the ceremony will honor 100 aviation heroes, as selected by the First Flight Centennial Commission’s 100 Heroes Selection Committee. In addition, the historic contributions of these individuals will be examined through film and exhibits. Gates and exhibits open each day at 8 a.m., with exhibits closing at 4 p.m., and gates closing at 5 p.m.

The 100 Heroes Selection Committee is comprised of national, regional and local aviation dignitaries and enthusiasts. They are:

- **General Ralph E. “Ed” Eberhart**, Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command, and Commander, U.S. Northern Command, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo. General Eberhart’s distinguished career includes command of the 363<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing during Operation Desert Shield. While serving as Commander of U.S. Forces, Japan, he was awarded the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Sacred Treasure by the Emperor of Japan. A command pilot, General Eberhart has logged more than 4,500 flight hours in his career.
- **William Surles “Bill” McArthur, Jr. (Colonel, USA, Ret.)**. North Carolina native Col. McArthur is a NASA astronaut and Master Army Aviator with over 4500 flight hours in 39 different air/spacecraft. Retired from the Army since 2001, McArthur is currently assigned to NASA’s Expedition 8 crew, a long duration flight to the International Space Station, to take place in 2003.

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## December 16 Program

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- **Tom Crouch**, Senior Curator, Division of Aeronautics, National Air and Space Museum, serves as a member of the U.S. First Flight Centennial Advisory Board. He has won a number of major writing awards, including a literary prize for "The Bishop's Boys: A Life of Wilbur and Orville Wright," and frequently appears on the PBS program, "Wings."
- **William H. "Bill" Williams, Jr.**, Director, Division of Aviation, N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT). – Williams oversees the NCDOT division responsible for all aviation functions in the state, and has participated in the state's key aviation initiatives, including preparation and planning for the First Flight Centennial Celebration. A pilot with over 4,500 flying hours, Williams also served 28 years with the Federal Aviation Administration.
- **Ethel Finley**, Regional Director, Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) organization. Finley began her flying career as a student at Winona State Teachers College in Winona, Minn. She joined the WASP in March 1943, and was active in numerous roles while activated. WASPs were the first women in history trained to fly military aircraft during World War II. Finley renewed her active role in the WASP organization nearly 20 years ago, including a two-year tour as president. Finley currently oversees WASP participation in air shows and special events throughout the region.
- **Willard M. "Bill" Dyer, Jr.**, representative of the First Flight Society. Mr. Dyer is a North Carolina native with a life-long interest in flying. A former Army aviation cadet during World War II, he pursued his interest in flying by becoming an airline pilot and later maintaining the Ser-Air Museum in Kinston, N.C. Dyer is a life member of the First Flight Society, and has also served as N.C. President of the Air Force Association.

### Main Stage:

Tuesday's Main Stage highlights include a welcome by Master of Ceremonies Lawrence A. Belli, Superintendent, Outer Banks Group, National Park Service; William H. "Bill" Williams, Jr., Director, Division of Aviation, N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT); and John Robert Hooper, Dare County Board of Commissioners.

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## **December 16 Programming**

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Musical entertainment will be provided by Molasses Creek at 10:00 a.m. The announcement of the 100 Aviation Heroes will be made at 11:30 a.m. with North Carolina Governor Mike Easley, North Carolina Senator Elizabeth Dole, General Ralph E. Eberhart, Senator Marc Basnight, North Carolina First Flight Centennial Commission Chairman Ken Mann, Aaron Tippin, Lee Greenwood and kids from the Wright Flight program participating. A 100 Heroes Finale is scheduled for 12:30 p.m., featuring Aaron Tippin, the Challenger Eagle, and a flyover tribute to the heroes featuring a 100-person parachute jump. Lee Greenwood will perform on the Main Stage at 1 p.m.

### **Air shows and Flyovers:**

Tuesday's airshow will take place at 2 p.m. from 4 p.m. and features Patty Wagstaff, the AeroShell Aerobatic Team, Ian Groom, Mike Mancuso, Bobby Younkin and Matt Hall. At 4 p.m. the USAF Thunderbirds will perform a fly-by in the "Missing Man Formation".

### **First Flight Centennial Pavilion:**

In the First Flight Centennial Pavilion Auditorium, the day will be kicked off at 8:30 a.m. with a panel discussion by members of the Wright Family.

At 9 a.m., Dare County instrumental and chorus students will give a special performance entitled "Riding the Winds of December" on the Pavilion Stage. North Carolina-educated, award-winning composer Dr. Jonathan David Green was commissioned in December 2000 to compose a work for narrator, chorus and instruments. The work alternates between the narrator and chorus, each telling the story of man's earliest desire to conquer the air.

The chorus will be comprised of unchanged voices from current 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. The wind ensemble instrumentation throughout the piece will feature Middle and High School band students. The narrator for this special performance will be Amanda Wright Lane, the great grandniece of Wilbur and Orville Wright.

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In addition, the First Flight Centennial Pavilion will feature its current exhibits from NASA, the United States Air Force, The Outer Banks History Center, General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA) and North Carolina's First Flight Centennial Commission.

### Exhibits Throughout the Park:

On-site exhibits are filled with interactive activities to educate visitors and engage them in the wonders of flight. Confirmed on-site exhibitors for the six-day celebration include the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); the United States Air Force; the United States Coast Guard; the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA); the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA); the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA); Dare County Schools; the United States Postal Service, and the First Flight Society. Static aircraft will also be on display throughout the park.

### Visitor Center:

The park's Visitor Center will house an exhibit of Wright brothers' artifacts from the Museo Aeronautico Gianni Caproni in Italy. Park rangers will give interpretive talks on the hour, and featured guest speakers will include representatives from the WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots), the Ninety-Nines and the Tuskegee Airmen.

All of the most recent information on the First Flight Centennial Celebration can be accessed at the Centennial website on [www.firstflightcentennial.org](http://www.firstflightcentennial.org). Friday, December 12 is a non-ticketed day. December 16 and 17 are sold out. General Admission tickets for December 13-15 are still available for purchase for \$10 per day until the daily 35,000-ticket limit has been reached. Ticket sales must be made **in person** from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. at the Fort Raleigh Visitor Center in Manteo, NC. Forms of payment include personal checks, cash, MasterCard or Visa credit cards. **Phone orders will not be accepted.**

For information on accommodations, check the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau website at [www.outerbanks.org](http://www.outerbanks.org) or call their toll-free number at (877) 298-4373. For information on the event's transportation plan, see [http://www.ncdot.org/news/centennialceleb11\\_03.html](http://www.ncdot.org/news/centennialceleb11_03.html)