

FALCON FIELD



THE BEGINNING

- Falcon Field got its start during the early years of WWII.
- German air raids over England made pilot training there too risky.
- President Roosevelt agreed to help train combat pilots for the British Royal Air Force.
- Southwest Airways Inc. was chosen to build and operate No.4 British Flying Training School to be located in Arizona.
- Southwest Airways leased 720 acres from the city of Mesa for two dollars per acre per year.

BREAKING GROUND

Ground breaking ceremonies for the new air field were held at 10:30am on Wednesday July 16, 1941. Mesa's mayor, George N. Goodman and Arizona's governor, Sidney P. Osbone dug the first shovels of dirt.

The ceremony was only one and a half hours as the same dignitaries had to officiate another ground breaking ceremony at another unnamed training base thirteen miles southeast of Mesa. This U.S. Army aircrew training base would become known as Williams Field.

MESA JOURNAL-TRIBUNE

SEVENTY-NINTH YEAR MESA, ARIZONA, FRIDAY, JULY 18, 1941 Phone 34 Number 38

Ground Is Broken For Two Airports

FIVE MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON TWO PROJECTS

City Officials Take Part in Ceremony As Mayor Turns Fields Over To Nation's War Birds For Training

Within the space of a short two hours Wednesday, the city of Mesa broke ground on two great air bases in the local district.

Work started on more than five million dollars worth of construction.

In a brief, impressive gesture, Mayor George N. Goodman turned over land in which the city invested approximately \$50,000 to the agencies which will train war eagles America and for the United Kingdom.

The ground-breaking ceremony at the Mesa military air base near Higley at 9 o'clock, the second at the Southwest Airways field northeast of here at 10, were broadcast. Spectators at the bare fields where great things will rise with amazing rapidity, where surveys have already been completed and work is already beginning.

Thirteen miles southeast of Mesa, near Higley, the federal government will spend some \$5 million dollars to build over than 150 buildings to use more than 3,000 officers, listed men and flying cadets. Designated as the Mesa military airport, the field will come one of the largest basic training bases in the United States. It will later bear the name of some army airman whose service has been worthy of extraordinary recognition. The field, at Litchfield Park, an advanced training base, was named for famous Frank Luke, a youthful world war hero.

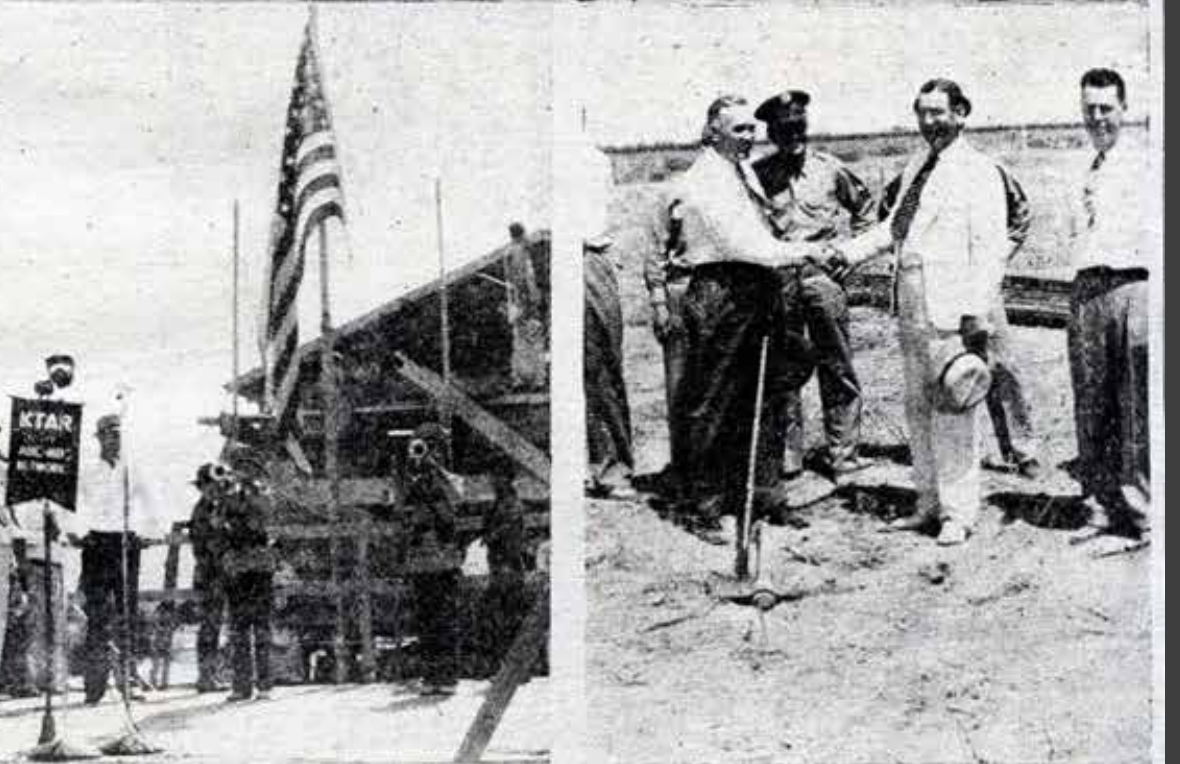
The project is Mesa's baby. Co-termining with the war department's inception of the big pilot training program, Mesa's chamber of commerce and the city administration located many proposed sites for big bases in the local district. When the Higley location was selected, the city of Mesa quickly took action on much of the land as possible. A suit last week to condemn property not under option. Continuation proceedings were taken last week to condemn property held in option as well. In order to speed up the legal requirements title to the land. In a hearing last week ago, the superior court ordered immediate possession of land involved in the suit. Later (Continued on page 7)

ALONG MEMORY LANE

ed from files of the Mesa Press, founded in 1892.

season opened and says that grain crop this season is better than last.

On June 14, 1939—Saturday evening board of trustees of the Mesa High School district awarded the contract for the construction of the new school building to the Bohman, of Los Angeles, was the bidder, agreeing to con-



BREAK GROUND FOR BIG AVIATION BASES HERE

When Mayor George N. Goodman, pictured in the Journal-Tribune photograph above, told the assembled army officers, state and local officials, contractors and spectators that "Mesa is proud to have done its part in the national defense program," he referred to the investment of approximately \$50,000 in city funds for land which is already being put to use in the big pilot training program.

Mesa bought the four sections where the Mesa military airport is under construction. There, at 9 o'clock Wednesday, a group of prominent men participated in formal ground-breaking ceremonies. At 10:30 a similar program was held at the Southwest Airways Mesa field northeast of here, where the stars and stripes rose on the wide Higley field, shown at lower left, where several temporary buildings already stand and where some 170 big buildings of the air corps

where the Southwest Airways field, where Britain's colors flew under the United States flag.

In the photograph at lower right, Governor Osborn and Mayor Goodman participate in the actual ground breaking, before a considerable number of spectators who went to the two fields for the ceremonies. The pictures are by Carl Senger and Howard Johnson, of

HANGARS AT FALCON FIELDS



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The Mesa Chamber of Commerce sponsored a contest to name the British Flying Training School #4. About seventy entries were submitted.

The winner was city engineer E.B. Tucker who proposed the name Falcon Field because the name is “symbolic of the famous English fighting spirit and is the name of their renowned fighting and hunting bird” As the winner Tucker received a free airplane tour of the Valley.



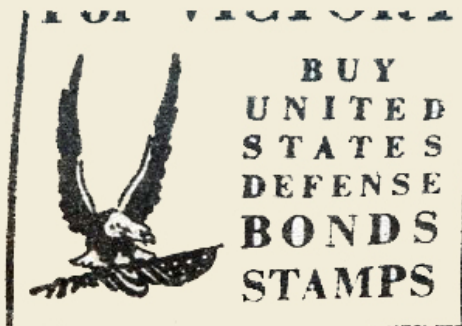
Main building at Falcon Field ca. 1940's

RAF ARRIVE IN ARIZONA

The first class of British cadets arrived in Arizona in June 1941, Falcon Field was still just a stretch of desert, thus their training began at Thunderbird Field.

On Thursday, September 25, 1941 almost 150 RAF cadets moved from Thunderbird to Falcon Field.

By Monday, September 29, 1941 Falcon Field was in full operation even though the facilities were still incomplete.



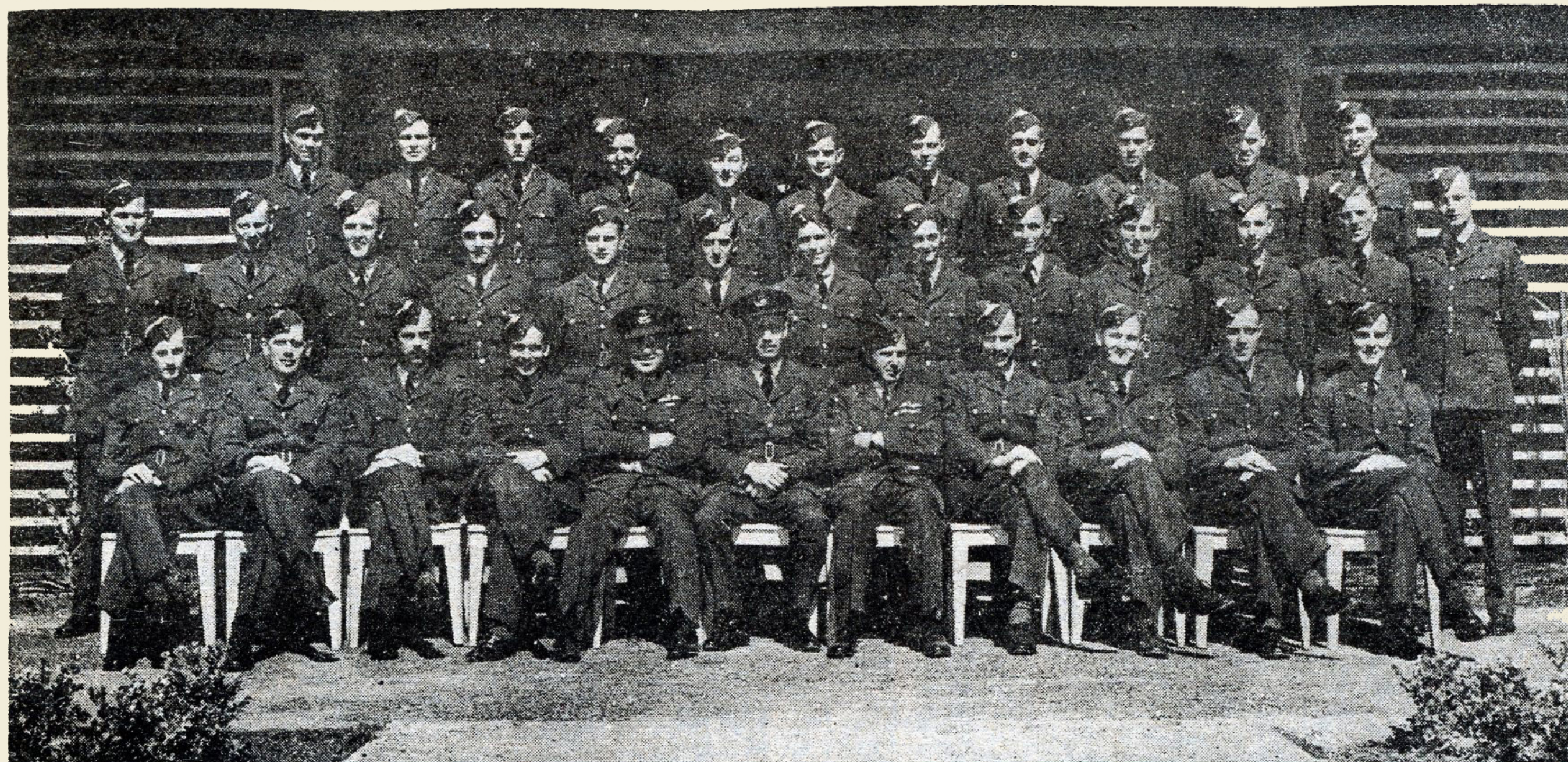
MESA JOURNAL-TRIBUNE

FIFTIETH YEAR

MESA, ARIZONA, FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 1942

Number

ROYAL AIR FORCE FLEDGLINGS GET WINGS AND HEAD FOR THE WAR



Twenty-eight weeks ago these Royal Air Force flying cadets arrived at Falcon Field from England to begin an intensive course of training. Completion of the course was marked by commencement exercises this week and a

dinner dance at Westward Ho hotel last night. Average number of hours spent in the air during training: 170. Fifty "freshmen" fliers arrived at the field this week. Britain's new air fighters and their officers, above, are: Front

row (left to right)—B. A. Woolfson, S. G. Vials, G. J. Moore, J. Harrigan (Sgt.) Sqdn. Ldr. R. S. Mills D. F. C., Sqdn. Ldr. W. T. Holloway, Flt. Lieut. C. V. Kerpen, A. C. Peet, P. M. Picot (Cpl.), E. G. A. Taylor, R. J. Lilwall. Cen-

ter row (left to right)—J. T. S. Williamson, T. J. R. Bird, R. Ronald, J. W. Gilvey, H. Hannah, J. Henderson, E. G. Searle, W. J. Goby, D. J. Chandler, R. Berry, J. W. Kelly, A. A. Leake, C. S. Cos-

sar. Back row (left to right)—J. A. Pressland, V. A. East, J. Lane, W. Whalley, S. J. Huxley, E. F. Hicks, C. E. Peters, R. Symonds, N. P. Gibbs, K. S. G. R. Fleming.
(Photo by Max Openshaw, Staff Photographer)

37 RAF Boys Close Course

Thirty-seven RAF cadets, having finished 28 weeks of training at Falcon Field, left for England this week. The time and method of their departure and their immediate destination, are military secrets.

Newspaper clippings about the RAF from the 1940's



Some of the British cadets at Falcon Field

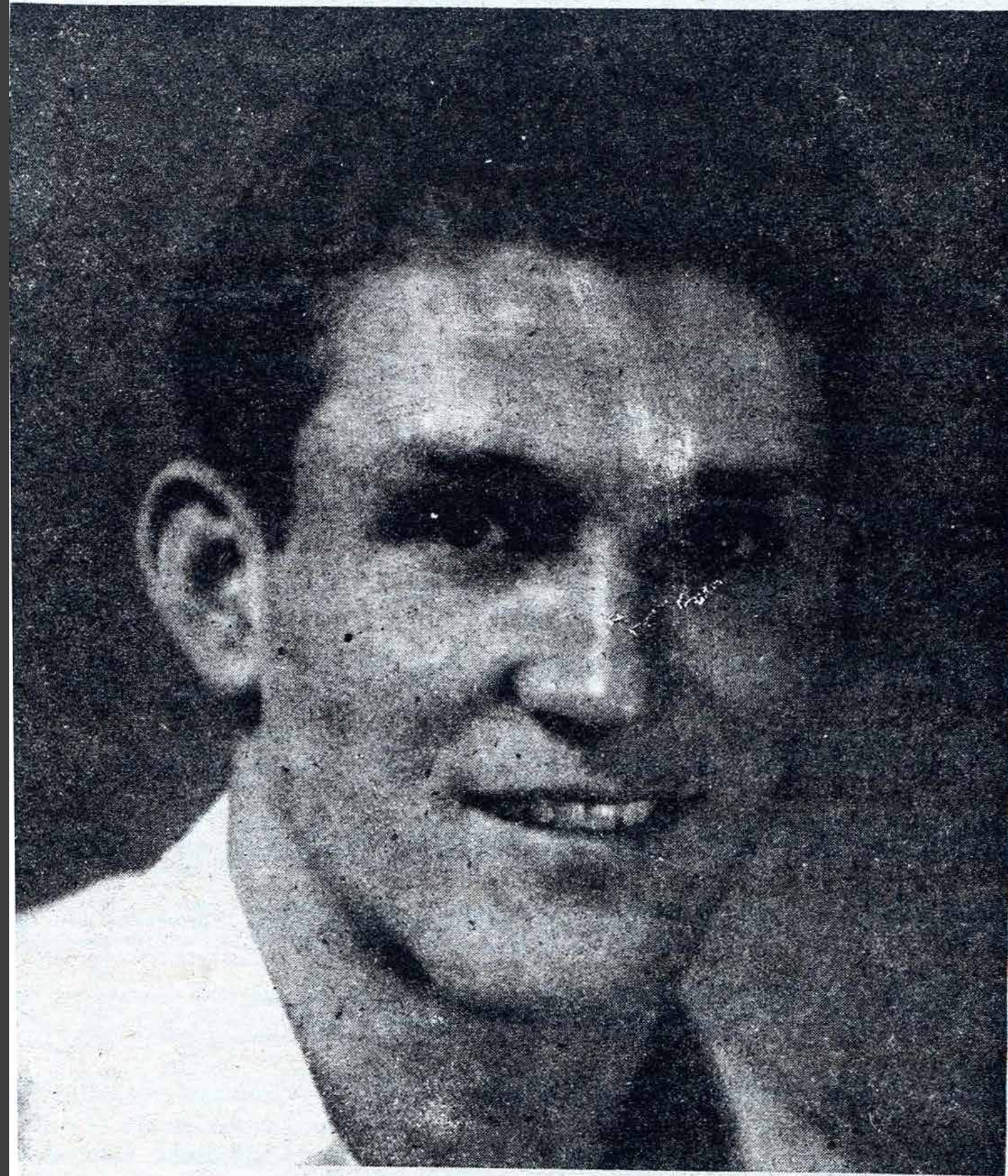
AFTER THE WAR

After WWII had ended the RAF installation at Falcon Field was closed, and the City of Mesa purchased the field from the United States Government for one dollar.

From 1945-65 the field was leased out to industrial interests, including Talley Defense Systems, Astro Rocket Inc., Rocket Power Inc., the Gabriel Company and others.

Falcon Field to Be City Property Soon

West's Mr. Athlete: 'Whizzer' White



'That Lucky College Will Claim the 'Whizzer'?
'USC', Says Mesa High School's Great Star

By MACK KENOE

Openshaw Photo.

Offer of Field Made by U. S. WAA Agency

Mesa Plans Lighted Municipal 'Port'

After more than a year of wishful thinking, Mesa Monday was notified it will "soon" receive, without cost, all of the facilities at Falcon Field.

The message came from the War Assets Administration's office in Los Angeles.

The field is one of 40 Arizona and Southern California to be made available to cities controlling them.

Under the terms of the WAA grant, Falcon Field must be operated and maintained as a public airport, with at least 25 percent of the airport available to federal agencies for their use.

This certainly is agreeable to the city, because:

1. Mesa has been operating the field as a municipal airport on an interim permit, pending final disposition.

2. Some of the barracks are being converted into 30 housing units for Mesa veterans and their families. The barracks are controlled by the Mesa Housing Authority, and, no doubt, will eventually become city property.

Improve Field

Mesa some time ago filed a request with the Civil Aeronautics Administration for funds with which to improve the field and to install lights for night flying.

Falcon Field was the home of hundreds of British Royal Air Force trainees and some Americans during the war years.

It was built on city land by Southwest Airways, then taken over by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and then the WAA when it was finally declared war surplus property.

In May of this year, Paul Nichols of Ohio was given a temporary lease on the field for his Nichols Flying Service. He has also been acting as manager of the municipal airport.

City Manager Ed Miller said it is not known if Nichols will become permanent manager after the field is "in the bag."



B-52 receiving maintenance in a hanger
at Falcon Field.

FALCON FIELD TODAY

- Municipal general aviation airport that is owned and operated by the City of Mesa, Arizona.
- 784 acres
- Fourth busiest general aviation airport in the United States.
- Each year more than \$2.3 billion is contributed to the local economy by the airport and its businesses.
- There are more than 95 businesses at Falcon Field employing more than 1,100 people.
- Home of MD Helicopter Inc. and the Commemorative Air force.



Falcon Field Today

Photo courtesy of the City of Mesa

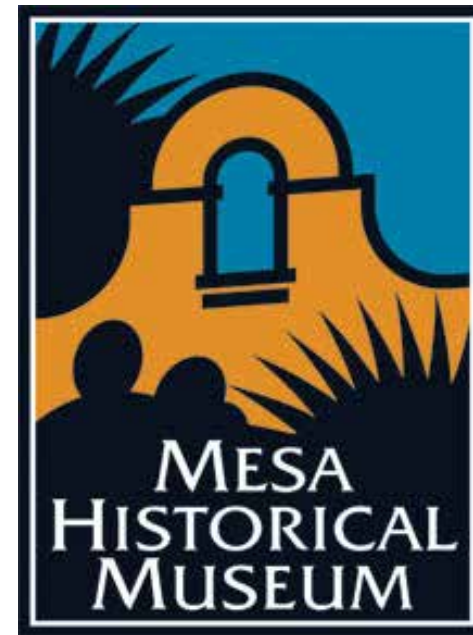
FALCON FIELD TIME LINE

- June 26, 1941** The City of Mesa buys 720 acres of land seven miles northeast of the city for \$28,740.
- July 16, 1941** Ground is broken for No. 4 British Flying training school to train royal air force combat pilots.
- August 1, 1941** The Mesa Journal-Tribune reports the airport is being named Falcon Field and that City engineer E.B Tucker submitted the name in a contest.
- Sept 24, 1941** 144 British cadets arrive as member of Course No. 1.
- Nov. 16, 1941** 17 U.S Air Corps cadets begin training at Falcon Field.
- Sept 10, 1945** The RAF concludes training at Falcon Field having trained 1,200 pilots. Three days later the Army Air Force closes down its operations with more than 120 pilots trained.
- November 1946** The federal government gives the City the field under the condition that it is to be used for commercial aviation for at least 22 years.
- Aug 17, 1948** Falcon Field is officially returned to the city of Mesa.
- 1957** Franz Talley leases the Falcon Field to manufacture rocket motors and develop jet aircraft escape systems.
- 1968** Mesa takes over responsibility for day to day operations after having contracted those operations out for two decades.

THE FUTURE

With additional lease property of 60+ acres available for aeronautical use and 63 acres available for commercial non-aeronautical use, Falcon Field is positioned to become an even stronger economic force for Mesa's future.

MESA HISTORICAL MUSEUM



Mesa Historical Museum
<http://www.mesamuseum.org>