

**Transfer of Norman Hanger Ceremony**  
**City of Norman**  
**Oklahoma Army National Guard**  
0900 Hours Friday 14 October 2011

**Heritage of the Norman Hanger** – Prepared by COL (Ret) David W. Brown

Max Westheimer Field has quite a heritage. It began in 1940 when the Nuestadt family of Ardmore, Oklahoma made a \$10,000 donation in the name of their uncle, Mr. Max Westheimer, to the University of Oklahoma for the purpose of building an airport. The University acquired 160 acres on this site with the City of Norman contributing an additional adjacent 109 acres. The University agreed to operate the airport for the benefit of the citizens of Norman.

When the Second World War began, the United States Navy, seeking a place to train combat pilots for the war, took control of the airport and expanded it to 1,700 acres. Throughout the war, the airport was known as Max Westheimer Navy Flying Field. In 1948, the airport and all 1,700 acres of airport property were returned to the University. Two years later, the control tower built on top of the airport's terminal building was destroyed in a tornado.

For years, the airport operated with a series of temporary fixes and replacements until the University acquired an unused tower from the Tinker Air Force Base. In 1984, the Oklahoma Army National Guard transported the 28 foot wide tower by trailer from Tinker to the Westheimer Airport. Following two years of rehabilitation and modernization, the tower was lifted to the top of the terminal building and opened for business.

The Oklahoma National Guard's involvement with Westheimer Airport began earlier in 1959 when this small hanger was built and leased by the Oklahoma Army National Guard for its fixed-wing aircraft and rotary-wing helicopters. That was 52 years ago and it was a different world back then.

In 1959, Dwight D. Eisenhower was President of the United States. Alaska and Hawaii became just the 49th and 50th States in the United States. Interstate 35 which runs through Norman, Oklahoma was just completed. The Barbie Doll went on sale for the first time in toy stores. NASA announced the selection of seven military test pilots who would become this nation's original seven astronauts. And, in an appropriate reflection of the times with the beginning of the space race, the US Postal Service attempted to inaugurate mail delivery by guided missiles. That didn't work out too well.

In 1959, this small hanger was home base for the National Guard pilots, flight crews, and aviation mechanics who flew in times of flood, tornados, and other natural disasters to answer the cry for help from the citizens of Oklahoma. From this small hanger, a lot of lives throughout Oklahoma have been saved because of the actions of the soldiers based in this aviation facility. From here, Governors have boarded Army National Guard helicopters and aircraft to tour tornado and flood devastated communities in Oklahoma.

From this small hanger, the Oklahoma Army National Guard's aviation units have expanded into multi-million dollar state-of-the-art aviation flight facilities in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Lexington. The units, aircraft, and personnel from these facilities have now deployed throughout the nation and through most of the world in such diverse places as Thailand, Kuwait, Germany, Honduras, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In 2005, the aviation units from these facilities executed an emergency deployment to New Orleans immediately following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Oklahoma National Guard helicopters were rescuing people off of flooded rooftops six hours after the hurricane came ashore.

In many ways, this small hanger was the birth place for everything that followed in Oklahoma Army National Guard aviation. The University of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics have the best wishes and support of every soldier who ever served here for the continued heritage of service that this facility has provided to citizens of Norman and of this Great State of Oklahoma.