

Historic C-47 *That's All Brother* Visits Birmingham

by
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That's All Brother, the historic C-47 that was the lead aircraft of 800 to drop paratroopers in the World War II invasion of Normandy, visited Birmingham from April 12 – 14, 2019. The stop was part of the aircraft's Spring Tour *en route* to its return to Normandy to participate in events commemorating the 75th anniversary of D-Day on June 6.

That's All Brother is owned and operated by the Commemorative Air Force Central Texas Wing and was invited to visit Birmingham by the Southern Museum of Flight.



Ken Philippart prepares to board *That's All Brother*.

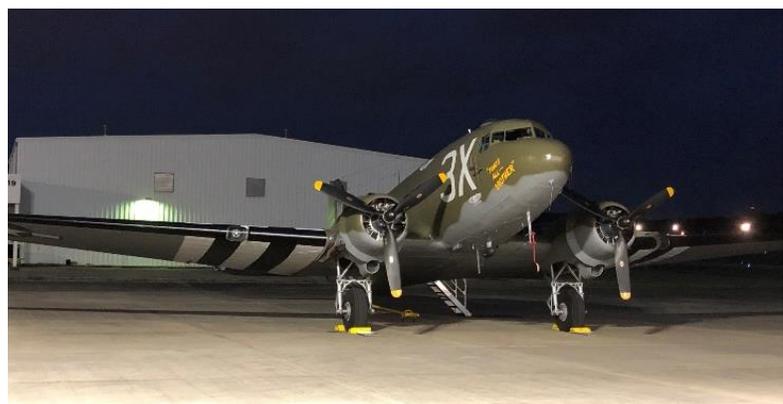


Paratrooper seats were not designed for comfort.

spartan nature. Hard metal, pan seats lined each side of the fuselage. A wire cable ran the length of the aircraft where paratroopers hooked up their stasis lines before jumping. Like most military aircraft, *That's All Brother* was noisy, hot and uncomfortable with no creature comforts. Today, we can only imagine what it must have been

The aircraft was the centerpiece of the museum's educational programs to inform students and adults alike on the history of World War II, D-Day and the aircraft that led the largest aerial invasion in history. During the operation, the aircraft was piloted by then-Lt Col John Donalson, a Birmingham native who ultimately rose to the grade of Major General and was the first commanding general of the Alabama National Guard.

Rides were available for those wanting to experience history by flying in the C-47. I took advantage of this opportunity on April 13. Climbing into the aircraft, I was struck by its





The view of the dance from the cockpit of *That's All Brother*.

like for the young men who flew in this aircraft in darkness, coming under intense anti-aircraft fire on their way to the drop zones, or the thoughts running through their heads as they prepared to jump into the killing fields on that day. The word “courage” seems inadequate to describe what they did. At the end of our flight, the pilot flew over the cemetery where John Donalson was buried, an appropriate salute to an American hero.

As part of the weekend’s events, the Southern Museum of Flight hosted a World War II Victory Dance complete with Big Band music, food, drink and dancing. *That’s All Brother* provided a fitting backdrop for the evening and attendees were allowed to tour the aircraft. Keynote remarks were provided by Col. Scott Grant, Commander of the 117 Air Refueling Wing in Birmingham. Major General Donalson’s grandchildren attended and told stories about their grandfather to cap the weekend’s commemoration of the D-Day invasion and aircraft along with honoring the men who made history and liberated Europe.



Display commemorating Maj Gen John Donalson.