



201 TOURIST CENTER DRIVE, PO BOX 368, HAVELOCK, NC 28532



AVIATION CONNECTIONS: NEWSLETTER

Winter 2023

WWW.ECAVIATIONHERITAGE.COM

Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation

February 2023



**Eastern NC's
Best
Kept Secret!**
Presented by: Mark Meno

**Explore The
Past, Present and Future
of FRC East**

2023 ECAHF Gala
Friday, February 24th 2023
Havelock Tourist & Event Center
201 Tourist Center Dr, Havelock, NC

**Enjoy a fun evening with a catered meal and
a terrific presentation!**

Proceeds from the event benefit Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation (ECAHF) in efforts to inspire young learners to pursue new and exciting career pathways through STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education.

Doors open at 5:30 pm
Dress: Business Casual

For More information, visit:
www.ecaviationheritage.com
e-mail: events@havelockevents.com
or call 252-444-4348

Individual Tickets:
\$60.00

Tax Included

Sponsorships Available




Now Accepting Applications

Eastern NC Summer Elementary School Engineering Camp



WITH SUPPORT FROM

The City of Havelock

Fleet Readiness Center East and 

ANNOUNCE THE **2023** EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA SUMMER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ENGINEERING CAMP

Havelock Tourist & Event Center
July 24-28, 2023

Rising 4th, 5th and 6th graders

The Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation will offer an exciting, aviation-themed weeklong summer day camp this July for elementary school students (rising fourth, fifth and sixth-graders) at the Havelock Tourist & Event Center.

The camp will provide students a fun and positive glimpse into various fields of engineering by using hands-on, creative investigations and real-world building activities. Throughout the week, students will work to design solutions to real world issues. They will be led by local elementary school teachers and engineering staff from FRC East. Students will be given the challenge to individually design and build various devices related to aviation and engineering. Students will learn engineering fundamentals by exploring various experiments related to aviation and safety.

CDC guidelines will be followed and safety protocols will be practiced to help protect all students, staff and volunteers.

The camp is from 8:30am – 12:00noon Monday through Friday and a snack is provided. No lunch is provided.

Cost for the camp is \$125 per student. Scholarships may be available for students with demonstrated financial need. Send no money until the selection process is complete and your child has received notification of acceptance.

If you are interested in sponsoring a camper, please contact Pam Holder at pholder@havelocknc.us.

The application process opens **February 1, 2023 and closes on April 3, 2023**. To apply, go to www.ecaviationheritage.com and follow the link to "2023 Elementary Summer Camp".

For more information, contact Pam Holder at (252) 444-4348 or email pholder@havelocknc.us.

Eastern NC Summer Middle and High School Engineering Camps at Craven Community College – Havelock Campus

High School: July 10-14, 2023 (9am-3pm)

Middle School: July 17-21, 2023 (9am-3pm)



For more information call
(252) 444-0739

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Spotlight an Exhibit

Havelock History Room



Feature Fact: Havelock History

“Construction of the railroad in 1857-1858 required a name for the whistle stop here. The place was known as Slocum’s Creek, but the big name in the news at the time was British war hero Major General Sir Henry Havelock. In the summer of 1857, Sir Henry’s exploits in the bloody Sepoy Mutiny in India captivated the world. Soon, eight cities were named for him on three continents..”

- Edward B. Ellis
Author and Local Historian

General Henry Havelock designed a hat covering used by his troops in India to protect the men from the elements. It is known to this day as “a Havelock.”



Ensign Jesse L. Brown, USN

ECAHF Winter 2023 Newsletter

Compiled by Barry R. Fetzer, ECAHF Historian

His Distinguished Flying Cross citation reads: “The President of the United States of America takes pride in presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross (Posthumously) to Ensign Jesse Leroy Brown, United States Navy, for heroism in aerial flight as pilot of a fighter plane in Fighter Squadron Thirty-Two (VF-32), attached to the USS Leyte (CV-32), in hostile attacks on hostile North Korean forces. Participating in 20 strikes on enemy military installations, lines of communication, transportation facilities, and enemy troop concentrations in the face of grave hazard, at the Chosin Reservoir, Takshon, Manp Jin, Linchong, Sinuiju, Kasan, Wonsan, Chonjin, Kilchu, and Sinanju during the period 12 October to 4 December 1950. With courageous efficiency and utter disregard for his own personal safety, Ensign Brown, while in support of friendly troops in the Chosin Reservoir area, pressed home numerous attacks destroying an enemy troop concentration moving to attack our troops. So aggressive were these attacks, in the face of enemy anti-aircraft fire, that they finally resulted in the destruction of Ensign Brown's plane by anti-aircraft fire. His gallant devotion to duty was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.”

During my years studying at The Ohio State University (1971-1975), self-absorbed as I was in my own, young life, I had no idea that as a midshipman assigned to the Navy Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) program, I was walking in the same footsteps of an icon of US Navy aviation history, Ensign Jesse Leroy Brown, USN, who was also an Ohio State NROTC midshipman 30 years earlier than I.

Midshipmen who followed me at Ohio State, though, would have no excuse for not being aware of walking in Ensign Brown's footsteps. The NROTC Unit at Ohio State has established a **Flag Honors Hall of Fame** to, according to the Ohio State NROTC website, “...honor NROTC graduates and Ohio State-related sea service veterans who distinguished themselves in their Navy/Marine Corps service.”

“The Flag Honors Hall of Fame also memorializes graduates who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the performance of their duties to the United States of America” as Ensign Brown did during the Korean War.

According to Wikipedia, “Jesse LeRoy Brown (October 13, 1926 – December 4, 1950) was the first African-American aviator to complete the United States Navy's basic flight training program; a recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross; and the first African-American naval officer killed in the Korean War.”

What a great legacy of grit, determination, and perseverance Ensign Brown has left his fellow midshipmen at Ohio State and his fellow naval aviators regardless of sea service, all three of which, the US Navy, US Coast Guard, and the US Marine Corps, may be proud of his honorable service and his fortitude.



Ohio State University's NROTC Flag Honors Hall of Fame portrait of Ensign Brown, taken in an F4U-4 Corsair fighter at an unidentified location (The Ohio State University)

Brown was born in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to an impoverished family and was, according to Wikipedia, “avidly interested in aircraft from a young age. He graduated as salutatorian of his high school, and later earned a degree from The Ohio State University. Brown enlisted in the U.S. Navy, becoming a midshipman. Brown earned his naval aviator “wings of gold” on October 21, 1948 amid a flurry of press coverage. In January 1949 he was assigned to Fighter Squadron 32 (VF-32) aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Leyte*.”

Brown was recently honored in a new movie by filmmaker JD Dillard. Dillard, the son of a Blue Angles pilot, was inspired by Brown's exploits and his legacy as well as those of his own father. The 2022 film he directed, Devotion, tells, according to film and entertainment writer Todd Gilchrist writing for Military Officer magazine, “the story of Brown's life after completing the Navy's basic flight training program and his two years of fighting in the Korean War.”

An interesting side note to the film Devotion is that Fred Smith, a former Marine and the founder of FedEx, financed the production of the film. Smith, who recently gave up his role of CEO of FedEx was quoted by Associated Press reporter Thalia Beaty as saying, “I’m the biggest movie mogul nobody’s heard of.” Another philanthropic endeavor of Smith’s, the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation, announced that Smith “donated the film’s proceeds, in part, to endow a new scholarship fund, the Brown-Hudner Navy Scholarship Foundation for the children of Navy service members pursuing studies in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)”.

Of course, STEM is an organizational pursuit of our own Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation, an interesting parallel to what Fred Smith and the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation are doing in conjunction with honoring Ensign Brown in the film Devotion.

The film highlights Ensign Brown’s challenges breaking the Navy’s flight training color barriers and his final combat mission leading to his crash and death. According to Wikipedia, “At the outset of the Korean War, *Leyte* was ordered to the Korean Peninsula, arriving in October 1950. During the Korean War, VF-32 flew F4U-4 Corsair fighters in support of United Nations forces. Brown had already flown 20 combat missions when his Corsair came under fire and crashed on a remote mountaintop on December 4, 1950, while supporting Marines at the Battle of Chosin Reservoir. Brown died of his wounds despite the heroic efforts of his wingman, Thomas J. Hudner Jr., who intentionally crashed his own aircraft nearby in a rescue attempt, for which he was awarded the Medal of Honor.”



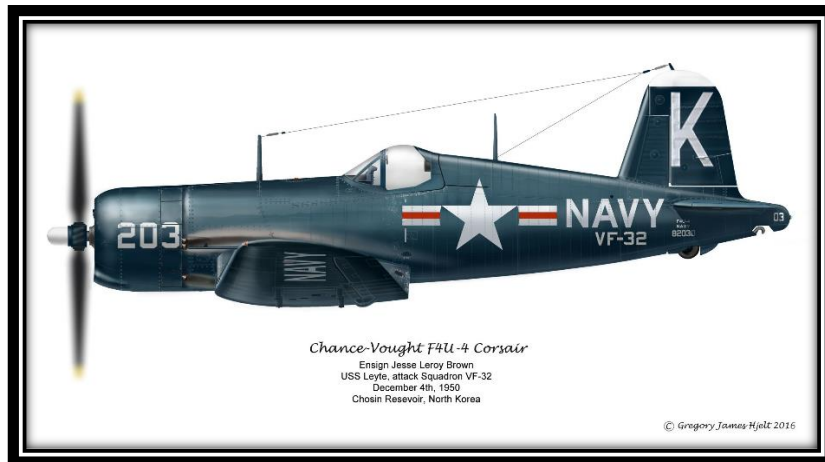
Brown in the ready room of the aircraft carrier USS *Leyte*. (Wikipedia)

“On 4 December 1950, Brown was part of a six-aircraft flight supporting U.S. Marine Corps ground troops trapped by Chinese forces including his wingman Lieutenant Junior Grade Thomas J. Hudner Jr.”



Thomas J. Hudner Jr., Brown's wingman, who was awarded the Medal of Honor for attempting to save him (Wikipedia)

According again to Wikipedia, “Brown’s aircraft had a bullet rupture a fuel line in his aircraft and was forced to crash land into a bowl-shaped valley. Brown's leg was pinned in the aircraft and his aircraft was smoking and a fire had started near its internal fuel tanks.”



An image of Brown’s F4U-4 Corsair (Pinterest)

“Hudner then intentionally crash-landed his own Corsair nearby Brown’s downed aircraft, ran to Brown's side and attempted to wrestle him free from the wreck. While Brown's condition worsened by the minute, Hudner attempted in vain to put out the aircraft fire using snow and to pull Brown from the aircraft. In great pain, Brown began slipping in and out of consciousness. A rescue helicopter arrived but the pilot of the helicopter and Hudner were unable to put out the engine fire with a fire extinguisher, and tried unsuccessfully to free Brown with an axe for 45 minutes. Brown’s last known words to Hudner were, “Tell Daisy (his wife) I love her.” The helicopter, which was unable to operate in the darkness, was forced to return to base at nightfall with Hudner, leaving Brown behind. Brown is believed to have died shortly thereafter of his injuries and exposure to the extreme cold.”

“Brown was the first African-American U.S. Navy officer killed in the war.”

“Brown's shipmates memorialized him in a ship wide newspaper as ‘a Christian soldier, a gentleman, a shipmate, and friend...His courage and faith...shone like a beacon for all to see.’

“As word of his death spread, Brown inspired numerous other African Americans to become pilots, notably Seaman Apprentice Frank E. Petersen. Petersen would become the first African-American Marine Corps aviator and the first African-American Marine Corps general, graduating from the Naval Aviation Training Program in 1952 and retiring from the military after 38 years in 1988 with the rank of lieutenant general.”

“While Brown is often cited as the first African-American Naval Aviator, historian Robert J. Schneller has maintained that Lieutenant (junior grade) Oscar W. Holmes preceded Brown, earning the designation of Naval Aviator in 1943 with an exemption from the Navy's basic aviation training program due to his prior civilian piloting experience.”

“Brown’s life in the U.S. military has been memorialized in books and film, including the film Devotion. The frigate USS Jesse L. Brown (FF-1089) also was named in his honor.”

Next Spring 2023 newsletter: Navy blue and ship ahoy! Norman Fetzer, a Bedford, Ohio boy, enlists in the Navy during WWII.



Join us! Help us celebrate and protect our aviation heritage and encourage our youth to pursue education in aviation-related science, technology, engineering and math.

<https://ecaviationheritage.com/>



Please Join ECAHF Each Year

ECAHF needs your support to share the story of the advancement of military aircraft and those who have made it possible in eastern North Carolina. Your membership helps to provide resources to encourage students to acquire science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills through interactive exhibits and programs.

Together, our joint forces will recognize our neighbors' roles in advancing military aviation since 1942 when MCAS-Cherry Point was commissioned. In addition, your membership will help influence a new generation of aviation enthusiasts and skilled workers for the future. Be a part of this challenging and exciting mission.

Annual Membership

- Co-Pilot (Student) \$25.00
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Havelock Tourist & Event Center

201 Tourist Center Drive

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