

SWIFT MUSEUM
FOUNDATION, INC.
223 COUNTY ROAD 552
ATHENS, TENNESSEE 37303

423-745-9547

EMAIL:
SWIFTMUSEUMFOUNDATION
@AOL.COM

WEB SITE:
SWIFTMUSEUMFOUNDATION
.ORG

MCMINN CO. AIRPORT (KMMI)

2026 Event Schedule

Sun-N-Fun
April 14-19
Lakeland, FL
Swift Dinner 4-16, 6:30pm

Swift National 2026
May 13—17
Granbury, TX

AirVenture 2026
July 20-26
Oshkosh, WI

If your Swift group is planning an event this year please let us know so we can include it in the

Swift Museum Foundation, Inc.



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80TH ANNIVERSARY SWIFT NATIONAL FLY-IN & CONVENTION

May 13-17 - Granbury, Texas
Granbury Regional Airport (KGDJ)

BRINGING THE SWIFT HOME TO TEXAS

If you haven't already, make your plans to join in the celebration of "80 years of the Swift". It promises to be a great one!

Everything is on track and the Texas crew is anxiously awaiting your arrival. We're anticipating a great turnout. So—if you haven't sent in your **Pre-Registration or made your hotel reservations, do it today!** Steve, Barb, and their crew want your experience to be a fantastic one and this information is crucial in accomplishing that goal!

Please try to give the hotel a timely heads up if you are delayed and remember to **bring your own tie-downs**. Also, don't forget your western attire for the Ft. Worth Cow-Town event and lederhosen for German Night. Of course, you don't have to dress up, but is sure is fun.

Give yourself plenty of time, if your schedule permits. Come early, stay longer, or both. There is so much to do in the Dallas—Ft.Worth metroplex.

** 2026 Swift Museum Foundation Raffle **

It's almost that time again.....

swiftraffle.com

The 2026 Swift Museum Foundation fund raising raffle is beginning soon! Ticket sales will begin **May 13, 2026!** Watch for more information in your next newsletter concerning PRIZES and ticket prices.

Drawing will be September 10, 2026

SMF Committees**Executive**

Paul Barnett
Paul Mercandetti
Sam Swift
Scott Anderson

Nominating

Paul Barnett
Pick Freeman
Scott Anderson

Audit

Paul Barnett
Paul Mercandetti
Sam Swift

Finance

Sam Swift
Paul Barnett
Scott Anderson

Fund Raising

Jim "Frog" Jones

Newsletter

Pamela Nunley
Scott Anderson

National Convention

Paul Mercandetti
Sandy Mercandetti
Scott Anderson

Parts

Steve Wilson
Scott Anderson
Steve Roth

Formation

Paul Mercandetti
Jim Roberts

Building

Roger Weber
Scott Anderson
Paul Barnett

IT/Web

Heather Day

Aging Aircraft

Steve Wilson
Dave Carpenter

Formation Committee Report

By Paul Mercandetti

I guess I was in too big of a hurry to get your cards out this year. I was so excited that you were so good about getting your Proficiency Reports to me in record time this year. It seems that when switching to a different computer (the old one gave up the ghost) the format changed and it left off some information and I didn't catch it.. This coupled with the fact that I'm at a decisive disadvantage at the computer. This is embarrassing as I used to build computers... never liked operating them. Well anyway—Your new cards are on the way. Don't forget to review the formation manual before you get to Swift National in Granbury as there will be limited time with all the activities planned.

FAST has updated our latest changes to the FAST Manual. Go check out the site if you haven't already done so. No other info from FAST at this time. The next scheduled FAST Board meeting will be at Oshkosh.

Checkspeedgeardownlandingchecklist (all one word)

"She Finally Runs!"
Special by Will "Buddy" Kientz



Monday February 23rd, 2026 marked a huge day for the Kientz family. Just shy of eight years of continuous work, our T-35A Buckaroo moved under its own power for the first time in almost seventy years.

For those new to the story, my father, Bill Kientz, went on an expedition of sorts to Saudi Arabia in 1976 to track down the next iteration of the Swift... the elusive T-35A Buckaroo. The paper trail is a bit scarce, but records indicate only sixteen were built. Ten went to Saudi Arabia, three went to the USAF, and three were used as trainers..

My father, Robert Dickson Sr., and Charlie Nelson were the biggest researchers of the time. Bill spearheaded the charge in Saudi Arabia where he and Charlie Nelson obtained two armed T-35A trainers. He, along with the newly formed Swift Museum Foundation, spent sixteen years rebuilding the first one. His “finders fee” was our project. Shortly after he began work on it, he had his hands full with me.

For the last eight years we've been hammering away at the project. We would be nowhere close to where we are without the help of Scott Anderson, Tailwind Aviation Solutions, Robert Dickson Sr., Paul Barnett, and countless others.



It was great to be able to get my dad in the Buckaroo to do some taxi checks after having the project for nearly fifty years.

Next is just tidying up some loose ends, fixing some inevitable leaks, and getting the paperwork in order.

For more updates on the project, follow “T-35A Buckaroo Restoration” on Facebook!



Board of Directors

Chairman

Paul Barnett

P. O. Box 546
Brookhaven, MS 39602
pbarnett@pbniisan.com

Vice Chairman

Paul Mercandetti

4716 Buffat Mill
Knoxville, TN 37914
mercandettipaul@gmail.com

Scott Anderson

779 Highway 39 East
Athens, TN 37303
swiftmuseumfoundation@aol.com

Norm Fox

1138 Hitchhike Trail
Maryville, TN 37803
norm.fox99@gmail.com

Mark Holliday

P. O. Box 243
Lake Elmo, MN 55042
markh85@aol.com

Jim Roberts

P. O. Box 11744
Knoxville, TN 37939-1744
jim.roberts7804@outlook.com

Sam Swift

702 Mickelson Way
Lebanon, TN 37087
flyboycpa@aol.com

Roger Weber

757 Luscombe Street
Independence, OR 97351
rogermichaelweber@hotmail.com

Steve Wilson

9606 Taxiway Drive
Granbury, TX 76049
stevewilson@aol.com

Executive Director

Scott Anderson

779 Highway 39 East
Athens, TN 37303
swiftmuseumfoundation@aol.com

Honorary President

Jim “Frog” Jones

1061 Devon Drive
Madison, GA 30650
jim@dixie-industrial.com

Historian

Jim Roberts

P. O. Box 11744
Knoxville, TN 37939-1744
jim.roberts7804@outlook.com

Globe Aircraft Draws a Pair of Aces

By Jim Roberts

As WWII drew to a close, most military pilots were eager hang up their helmets and goggles, return to their families, and get on with a ground-bound life. Others sought their fortunes in peacetime skies; two of these, celebrated aces Don Gentile (Gen-TILL-ee) and John Godfrey, landed in Fort Worth, Texas, promoting the new Globe Swift. This is their story, and it begins in a dogfight over western Europe.

“The theory of fight between fighter planes is very simple. You see the enemy, grab for his coat-tails, hold on to them, put your guns up against his back pocket and press the trigger. But while you are reaching for his coattails, he is reaching for yours.

You make your grab and he twirls out of the way and into position to make his grab. Whereupon you twirl with a twist that will put you in a fair way to grab him and so on and so on, grab - twirl - twist, grab - twirl - twist, sometimes for quite a long time - for 10 minutes or maybe 15 minutes - until at last somebody has grabbed hold for good and the other fellow starts to die.”

That’s how 8th Air Force ace, Captain Don Gentile, described fighter combat over Germany in April 1944. By then, the P-51 pilot had come a long way from Piqua, Ohio, where, as a sixteen-year-old, he had entertained his neighbors from the cockpit of an Aerosport biplane.



Captains John Godfrey (L) and Don Gentile with their WWII mount, the P-51 Mustang.

In an interview with the *Dayton Daily News*, he recalled, *“On Saturday afternoons I would beat up the town in my airplane and the cops chased me...I could see their cars running after me... I’d raise the hair on everybody’s head with my propeller. I’d blow in the curtains on Betty Levering’s house (his girlfriend) and make the geraniums in Mary Dill’s front yard give up the petals.”*

Gentile and his frequent wingman, Captain Johnny Godfrey, became known as “General Ike’s two-man air force.” Gentile stated, *“I picked the best man I could get to fly on my wing - Johnny Godfrey of Woonsocket, R.I., who doesn't like Germans. They killed his brother, Reggie, at sea, and the name Johnny has painted on his plane is "Reggie's Reply." He means it, too.”*

An April 1944 news dispatch described their tactics: *Godfrey flies behind him, either to the right or left. Gentile keeps tabs on him by asking every few seconds over the radio phone: "Are you still with me, Johnny? Are you still with me, Johnny?" "You break to the starboard," Gentile will call out, "and I'll hesitate and if he follows you around I'll follow him and we'll have him right between us.”*

By war’s end, Gentile, flying his P-51 “Shangri-La,” was credited with destroying 32 enemy aircraft, and Godfrey 37. The victories came with a cost; on August 24, 1944, Godfrey was accidentally shot down by a wingman and captured by the Germans. He later escaped from Stalag Luft III shortly before the end of the war.

After the war, Gentile and Godfrey toured on war bond drives and served as test pilots before leaving the service. Knowing a good team when he saw them, Globe Aircraft president John Kennedy recruited the duo as ambassadors for the “New All-Metal Swift.” The Spring 1946 issue of Globe’s in-house magazine, *The Globe Beam*, introduced the pair as new division directors of sales and service. As such, they would tour the nation as representatives of Globe Aircraft and ambassadors of aviation in general.

The *Beam* described their introduction to Texas: “Gentile and Godfrey were given a typical Western welcome as guests at the Fort Worth Club of Amon Carter, who presented them with Shady Oak hats, noted symbols of hospitality where the West begins.” The pair of aces spoke at the University of Texas and Texas A&M before appearing at the Southwestern Aviation Exposition in Fort Worth. They then departed for the Midwest, where they showcased the Swift at the Cleveland National Aircraft Show, the Chicago Sports and Travel Show, the National Aviation Show in New York, and the Northwest Annual Airshow in Minneapolis.



General Dwight Eisenhower prepares to decorate Captain Don Gentile (center).



Company president John Kennedy welcomes Captains Godfrey (Left) and Gentile to the Globe Aircraft Corp.

Little is known about the pair’s later activities at Globe, but we can surmise that, as business began to falter, they left the company for other endeavors. Godfrey served in the Rhode Island Senate; elected in 1952, he served until 1954, when he moved his family to Maine. He died on June 12, 1958, of ALS. His autobiography, “The Look of Eagles,” was written with Thomas D. White and published posthumously in 1958.

Captain Gentile returned to the Air Force as a test pilot at Wright Field in Ohio. On January 28, 1951, he was killed in the crash of a Lockheed T-33A-1 Shooting Star in Forestville, Maryland, leaving behind his wife Isabella, and sons Don Jr., Joseph and Pasquale.

In the Swift Museum Foundation historical archives, a torn and yellowed page from the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* bears the headline, “Don Gentile, 30, Ace Pilot, and Passenger Are Killed.” It begins, “Capt. Don S. Gentile, 30, World War II ace and veteran of 182 combat missions, died Sunday when his jet trainer crashed. Officials said he was on a routine flight.” To the right of the headline is a 1950 photo of a beaming Gentile with his wife and newborn son, Pasquale.



Captains Gentile (left) and Godfrey, sporting “Shady Oak” hats, show off their new favorite aircraft.

John and Don had the pleasure of a visit with Gill Robb Wilson, aviation authority and syndicate writer, in the Globe Swift exhibit at the National Aviation Show in New York. Mr. Wilson later took a ride in the Swift at Newark Airport. (Caption from the *Globe Beam*, April 1946).



Author’s note: Wilson, a WWI pilot, founded the Civil Air Patrol, and in 1939 became the first member of AOPA.

Sun-n-Fun Swift Update

By Paul Mercandetti

We will have a table at the Sun-n-Fun Type Club tent. Please stop by and see us and sign up for the Swift Dinner on Thursday April 16. 6:30pm. Check with us when you get there for location information as the Bonefish Grill is not available this year.

Request for Swift Aerobatic Performance Visual Media

We are looking for any film, movies, photos, or slides of Swift aerobatic performances at Kentucky Dam, Athens, and Texas from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, please notify Swift Headquarters. (This is for a potential display to be added to the museum.) Thanks so much for your help!

In Memory

Joseph R. "Joe" Threlkeld

We are saddened to report the passing of long time SMF member and friend Joe Threlkeld of Malden, Missouri. Joe was 96 years of age and was the previous dedicated caretaker of Swift N90355, SN#369. Joe purchased his Swift and became a member in 1973 and has been a faithful member for 53 years.

We are pleased to report that Joe's son, Joe Threlkeld, Jr., is continuing his dad's membership. Our thoughts and prayers for comfort go out to Joe's entire family and friends. Godspeed dear friend.

In Memory

Col. (Ret.) Edward A. "Ed" Lloyd

We are saddened to learn of the passing of long time Swift member and friend Ed Lloyd of Austin, Texas. Ed was the caretaker of Swift N3856K and became a SMF member in 1999 and remained a faithful supporting member.



He was a very active member of the Texas Red River Swift Wing and served as a formation check pilot and mentor to many Swift owners.

Ed and Barbara graciously donated a very nice oil painting of his Swift, N3856K to the Swift Museum. It is proudly displayed here in the museum and is enjoyed daily.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Barbara as well as Ed's entire family and many friends. Godspeed dear friend.



Bill and Will "Buddy" Kientz
See story inside!