

Aerospace Education History Events: February

2 February 1916-A German zeppelin, L-19, crashes in the North Sea after an air raid over the English Midlands.

2 February 1962-The first USAF aircraft to crash in South Vietnam, a C-123, was lost while spraying defoliant on a Viet Cong ambush site. The defoliant was better known as Agent Orange because of the orange metal containers it was stored in.

3 February 1950-Klaus Fuchs, a German born British scientist, is arrested in Great Britain for passing information of the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union.

3 February 1959-Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson are killed when their Beechcraft Bonanza crashes in Iowa shortly after take-off from Mason City. Their flight was to go to Moorhead, Minnesota.

3 February 1966-The Soviet Union accomplishes the first controlled landing on the moon when the unmanned spacecraft Lunik 9 lands on the Ocean of Storms.

4 February 1902-Aviator Charles Lindbergh is born in Detroit, MI.

4 February 1962-The first US helicopter is shot down in Vietnam. The helicopter was a Vertol H-21C Shawnee.

6 February 1971-Alan Shepard, Apollo 14 mission commander, becomes the first person to hit a golf ball on the moon's surface.

7 February 1965-As part of Operation Flaming Dart, 49 US Navy jets from the 7th Fleet carriers USS Coral Sea and USS Hancock drop bombs on a North Vietnamese training camp in Dong Hoi.

7 February 1984-Navy Captain Bruce McCandless becomes the first human to fly in space un-tethered when he exits the space shuttle Challenger and maneuvers freely using a rocket pack of his own design.

8 February 1949-The XB-47 jet bomber sets a new transcontinental speed record from Larson Air Force Base, WA to Andrews Air Force Base, MD covering 2,289 miles in 3 hours and 46 minutes.

10 February 1971-Journalists Larry Burrows of Life magazine, Kent Potter of United Press International, Henri Huett of the Associated Press and Kiesaburo Shimamoto of Newsweek magazine are killed in a helicopter crash while covering Operation Lam Son 719.

11 February 1962-Nine US and South Vietnamese crewmen are killed when their SC-47 crashes 70 miles north of Saigon in support of Operation Farm Gate.

11 February 1970-Japan successfully launches their first satellite, Oshumi, from the Kagoshima Space Center making them the world's fourth space power.

12 February 1915-One of the biggest air raids of World War 1 occurs when 34 aircraft from the British Naval Wing attack the German occupied towns of Blankenberghe, Ostend and Zeebrugge in Belgium.

13 February 1945-Allied firebombing raids are conducted against the German city of Dresden. It was the single most destructive bombing of the war, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki. About 135,000 people were killed.

13 February 1965-President Johnson approves the sustained bombing of North Vietnam under Operation Rolling Thunder.

17 February 1915-The German Zeppelin L-4 crashes into the North Sea after encountering a severe snow storm near the Danish coastal town of Varde.

18 February 1930-The ninth planet Pluto is discovered by astronomer Clyde W. Tombaugh at the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona.

18 February 1967-The father of the atomic bomb, J. Robert Oppenheimer dies in Princeton, New Jersey at the age of 62.

19 February 1473-The father of modern astronomy, Nicolaus Copernicus is born in Torun, Poland. Copernicus is the first modern European scientist to propose that the Earth and other planets revolve around the sun.

20 February 1942-Lt. Edward O'Hare becomes the first "ace" of World War 2. Lt. O'Hare took off from the aircraft carrier USS Lexington in his F4F Wildcat and shot down five Japanese G4M1 Betty bombers.

20 February 1962-John Hershel Glenn Jr. becomes the first American to orbit earth aboard the Friendship 7 spacecraft. Glenn was launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida and orbited the earth three times in 4 hours and 55 minutes.

22 February 1967-Operation Junction City begins as an effort to smash the Viet Cong stronghold in Tay Ninh Province along the Cambodian border northwest of Saigon. The first day of the operation saw 575 aircraft sorties.

24 February 1969-Airman First Class John L. Levitow tosses an activated and smoking magnesium flare that entered the AC-47 he was in out of the plane. Later he is presented the Medal of Honor.

26 February 1935-Against the Versailles Treaty that stated that military aviation in Germany was prohibited; Adolf Hitler signs a decree establishing the Luftwaffe as a third

German military service. Hitler also names Hermann Goering as Marshall of the new German air force.

26 February 1949-A B-50 Superfortress takes off from Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth, Texas for the first non-stop around the world flight. The Lucky Lady II under the command of Captain James Gallagher with a crew of 14 averages 249 miles per hour and is refueled by B-29 tanker aircraft.

27 February 1942-The first American aircraft carrier, the USS Langley, is sunk with all 32 of its P-40 Warhawk fighters about 74 miles south of Java by nine Japanese twin engine bombers.

28 February 1944-Hannah Reitsch, the first female test pilot in the world, suggests the creation of a German equivalent of a kamikaze squadron of suicide bombers to Adolf Hitler. Hitler declined the idea.