

...a journal of  
CAP history,  
feature articles,  
scholarly works,  
and stories of  
interest.

# CIVIL AIR PATROL

## CAP National Historical Journal

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The Civil Air Patrol National Historical Journal is published quarterly by professional volunteer staff. As academic historians by trade, we recognize the demand for quality publications reflecting a variety of interests to Civil Air Patrol readers, and strive to offer the best in feature and thought provoking articles. We trust you will enjoy what the e-journal has to offer and will consider contributing to the mission of our staff in providing a forum for the great traditions of our organization.

### **National Historical Editor's Note:**

In this issue of the Journal, the reader will find the first chapter in a series of articles on the history of the Civil Air Patrol, from its inception in 1941, through its 75th year in 2016. One or more chapters will appear in later issues of the Journal through 2017, as we bring CAP's history up to the present.

The first chapter is by Rev. Jill Paulson, granddaughter of CAP Founder Gill Robb Wilson. Rev. Paulson has unique access to many documents not otherwise available, and provides a unique insight into the foundation of our organization.

## Preview of the 75th Anniversary History of the Civil Air Patrol: *Eyes on the Home Skies*

Jill Paulson

*Where runs this road my wing is set upon -  
This trail that spurns the land and sea?  
The wind that whispers in the tight wire  
Sounds like the call of destiny.  
- Gill Robb Wilson*

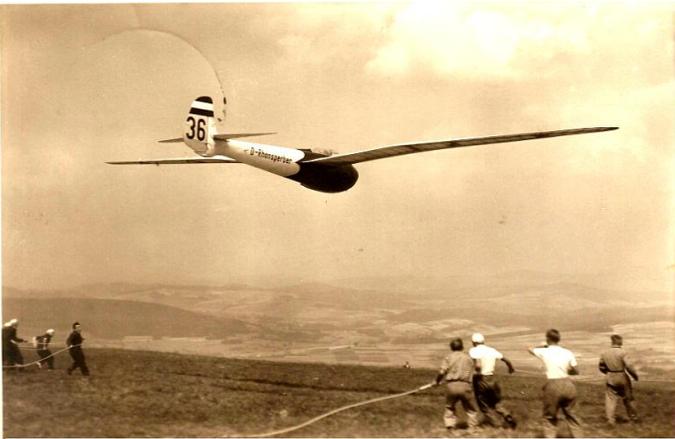
### **An Idea Is Formed**

No one ever said it was going to be easy. It wasn't. But what else can one do with a vision - a dream - that just won't go away? For one man, it started like this...

On a summer day in 1936, New Jersey Director of Aviation, Gill Robb Wilson, stepped on the giant dirigible, the Hindenburg, bound for Germany. During his month-long tour, he was given carte blanche access to German aviation events and facilities. He also met with many German leaders and was even escorted by a forthright - and perhaps too chatty - Army officer. However, their show of aerial strength affected Wilson in a way the Germans could not have foreseen. Rather than returning to America with nothing but praise for German efficiency and aviation superiority, Wilson concluded another world war was inevitable and America would be inexorably drawn into it. A culmination of events prompted this opinion.

First, even though Germany was prohibited by the 1919 Versailles Treaty from having an air force, Wilson saw that it was building a substantial civilian fleet of planes easily converted to military use. He assumed this was Germany's intention all along. Second, after witnessing the massive aeronautical training of schoolboys, he realized the emphasis on a youth flying corps was not benign.

At the German Gliding Championship in Wasserkuppe, when inquiring about why so many boys towed gliders—a job easily done by a truck—he was told efficiency wasn't important. Rather, what was most vital was providing hands-on experience to as many boys as possible. The German leaders believed that the more involved the youth were in any facet of aviation, the more they would participate.



Postcard from Wilson during the 1936 Glider Championship, Wasserkuppe, Germany. Used with permission by Jill Paulson

Wilson later noted, “The basis of Germany’s strength in the air is not merely technical knowledge, but the enthusiasm that is being engendered in the youth of the nation.”<sup>1</sup> To compound this, he realized German emphasis on youth extended beyond aviation. Whereas he was assured prior to his trip that Germany lacked enough men to fight a war, he saw that boys in every town he visited marched under Nazi leadership. Their discipline and devotion were impressive. However Wilson observed, “A swastika armband was a passport to indecency.”<sup>2</sup> What Germany

lacked in manpower was compensated for by its emphasis on *youth-power*. Wilson came to the conclusion, “Hitler was not drafting an air force, he was raising it from the cradle.”<sup>3</sup> No doubt, it would take only few years, before Germany could boast a very disciplined and robust military.

Finally, at a relaxed dinner toward the end of his trip, Wilson’s escort spoke fondly of Atlantic City, New Jersey—a *little too fondly for Wilson’s comfort*. The German said, “I know your Atlantic City well. In the war I was a submarine officer. Several evenings I went ashore and strolled the boardwalk or watched the auctions. I even brought back fresh bread for my crew.” Mellowed by good wine, he continued, “Your East Coast is the best hunting ground in the world for submarines.”<sup>4</sup> This revelation about our vulnerable shoreline—especially in his home state of New Jersey—troubled Wilson for years.

These incidents combined lead him to believe that war was not just a possibility, but an imminent reality. Paradoxically, Charles Lindbergh, who was in Germany just weeks before Wilson, did not reach the same conclusion. Although both men found Germany highly functioning and disciplined, Lindbergh believed America needed to catch up to Germany’s strength—especially in aviation. Wilson, too, believed the U.S. had a lot of catching up to do, but he also thought we needed to prepare for war, particularly one which could involve an aerial attack on U.S shores.

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<sup>1</sup> Gill Robb Wilson’s words to the National Aviation Forum, February 20, 1939

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, Gill Robb, *I Walked With Giants* (Vantage Press) 1968, 274.

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<sup>3</sup> Wilson, *I Walked with Giants*, 273

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 272

This difference between the two New Jersey aviators came in part because Wilson was already open to the possibility that Germany could repeat the aggression of the previous world war. He and the late Colonel William “Billy” Mitchell had been close friends. Mitchell would come to be known as the father of the modern air force because he had a vision of an air force that was far, far ahead of his time. This conviction caused him to anger a lot of military leaders. Despite being court-martialed and demoted, Mitchell never surrendered his beliefs.

Wilson later recounted, “Jeez, we (Mitchell and I) fought World War II over a hundred times, before there ever was such a thing. Now we thought that what would happen was that Germany would attack Europe, as they did, and they would lick Europe, as they did. But we figured that they would lick Britain too. Then they would take their own navy, and the British Navy, and in the combination of British shipping and their own, that now they would proceed against the western world. We thought they would land on the coast of the Carolinas and Florida.”<sup>5</sup>

With these conversations in his head, and after putting together the various pieces he had witnessed in Germany, Wilson concluded immediate preparation for another war was essential. He also had an idea of how civilian aviators could help.



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<sup>5</sup> The Trustees of the Columbia University in the City of New York, Oral History Research Office, Oral interview with Gill Robb Wilson in February and May, 1960, page 25.

**Staff & Acknowledgements**  
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**Rattlesnake at a Picnic**

Besides a few top leaders, such as Chief of the Army Air Corps, Major General Henry H. “Hap” Arnold, most people believed the prospect of another war was unthinkable, even ridiculous. Whereas hindsight tends to make visionaries of us all, in the mid-to-late 1930s, most folks weren’t worried about war, but about putting food on the family table. America was still entrenched in the Great Depression. The stock market crash of 1929 ushered in arguably the bleakest financial crisis in American history. Half the banks across America failed. Unemployment rose to approximately twenty-five to thirty percent of the work force. In 1933 Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated as President of the United States. Almost immediately, he implemented a series of relief programs that would be known collectively as The New Deal. Recovery however, was slow and morale remained fragile throughout the rest of the decade.

Along with the Great Depression, the 1930s was a time of reflection on the previous World War that claimed roughly three-hundred-and-twenty-thousand American lives. Looking back, people questioned, *how had we benefitted? Why did we enter someone else’s conflict? Was the staggering loss worth it?*

The popular conclusion was that the World War was tragic, and we should be vigilant against getting entangled in another European conflict. It was in this decade of despair and remorse that Wilson tried to stir people into believing that we must prepare for war, especially for war in the air.

In addition to advocating a stronger military, Wilson maintained civilian aviators could provide invaluable help during an emergency. However, people were too exhausted to listen. Not only that, folks became angry that he was stirring the pot - agitating for things easily ignored. Wilson felt "as welcome as a rattlesnake at a Sunday School picnic."<sup>6</sup> He was derided as a warmonger, a moron and an aviation enthusiast.<sup>7</sup> He would later write: "Even among my closest friends, I couldn't make anyone believe that a civilized nation would deliberately launch a war. That it was not only sure, but imminent was still less believable."<sup>8</sup> But what else can one do with a vision—a *dream*—that just won't go away?

During his free time, Wilson began flying the coast of New Jersey to determine what was needed for coastal defense. He quickly realized that patrolling the ocean from a small airplane was harder than he assumed. Still, with the words of the German officer in his head - *your East Coast is the best submarine hunting ground in the*

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<sup>6</sup> Wilson, 276

<sup>7</sup> "I have been introduced by well-meaning men as a famous aviation enthusiast. If they called me a son-of-a-bitch, they couldn't have offended me more! My enthusiasm isn't for aviation, it is for the objectives that can be accomplished through aviation." Gill Robb Wilson as reported by Richard Bach, p. 56 Flying Magazine December 1966. Ziff-Davis Publishing.

<sup>8</sup> Wilson, 276

*world* - he persevered. Because military resources would be sent abroad, he believed the creation of a civilian aerial defense corps was absolutely essential.

When he wasn't flying, Wilson was working on logistics. He estimated one hundred and thirty licensed pilots in New Jersey would not qualify for the military. As a friend to many female aviators, including his own wife and sister, he knew women would play a crucial role in a civilian corps. "Now if the statistical figures in New Jersey held approximately true for other states, it was evident that a nationwide organization of several thousand pilots and planes could be put together for [an] emergency."<sup>9</sup>

From the very beginning, Wilson thought this organization should be national, the most obvious locus being the American Red Cross. In 1937, Wilson contacted Red Cross Chair, Admiral Cary T. Grayson, suggesting "the time was ripe for the Red Cross to utilize civil aviation...valuable for emergency and disaster and cooperation with the armed forces in time of military crisis."<sup>10</sup> Admiral Grayson never responded.

After Grayson's death in February of 1938, Wilson had a personal interview with the new Red Cross Chair, Norman Davis, and his staff. Wilson wrote that although Mr. Davis appeared very interested at the time, no action by the Red Cross was ever taken.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 276

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Gill Robb Wilson to the Honorable Audley H.F. Stephan, 21 August 1940. New Jersey State Archives. See full letter in appendix.

For over two years, Wilson was as welcome as a rattlesnake at a Sunday School picnic. Thankfully, others were not afraid of becoming proverbial rattlesnakes either.

### **Band of Brothers...and Sisters**

In 1929, ninety-nine women pilots, including Amelia Earhart, started a women's flying club, aptly called the Ninety-Nines. Although small in number, women fliers were outspoken advocates for a national aerial defense corps. Because women were denied military service, serving domestically in paramilitary or support services would provide them an opportunity to serve, especially as pilots.



Women taking the CAP oath of membership. Photo: CAP National Archives

One of the Ninety-Nines, Ruth Nichols, created Relief Wings, an air service dedicated to disaster relief and medical missions. With the backing of both the religious and aviation communities, Relief Wings was, according to the New York Times, "a coordinating agency for disaster relief, enrolling volunteer pilots, aircraft owners, airline officers, surgeons, nurses and amateur radio operators, and cooperating with the American Red Cross, government forces and sources of emergency supply."<sup>17</sup> The American Red Cross never fully

incorporated Relief Wings. However, it eventually became an adjunct relief service of CAP during the war. Nichols herself became a lieutenant colonel in the Civil Air Patrol.<sup>11</sup>

The National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO) was founded in 1931 to promote local aviation. Frank M. McKee of Ohio was the first president, followed by Reed Landis. Because they were charged with furthering general aviation, the members of the NASAO were early advocates of civilian aerial defense programs in their respective states.

Although new to the aviation scene - incorporated in May 1939 - the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) wasted no time in helping with civilian defense and pilot training. In summer 1940, it was reported, "AOPA has agreed to set up a card index of pilots who may volunteer for...service."<sup>12</sup> Drills were then set up throughout the nation in conjunction with Relief Wings. Soon thereafter, the AOPA created the AOPA Air Guard, training men to military standards. "This plan, if it goes into effect will have the ultimate effect of a civilian air corps."<sup>13</sup>

By late fall, the AOPA reported, "graduates of AOPA's Air Guard courses are now participating in Army maneuvers. Air Guardsmen now are proving AOPA's contention that the experienced nonskied is an important element in national defense and that, with the military orientation

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<sup>11</sup> [airandspace.si.edu](http://airandspace.si.edu); [www.ninety-nines.org](http://www.ninety-nines.org)

<sup>12</sup> *Flying and Popular Aviation*, Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, Chicago, IL. August, 1940, page 49

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 50

courses given through the Air Guard, these experienced pilots can become the backbone of our home defense.”<sup>14</sup> Although some eventually joined the Civil Air Patrol, most qualified members of the AOPA Guard went on to serve in the military.

Federally, there was some movement to further the cause. Milton Knight of Toledo, Ohio, chaired the newly created Civil Air Reserve Subcommittee. This subcommittee was under the jurisdiction of the Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA), forerunner of the Federal Aviation Administration. Frank Tichenor, CAA Chair, who supported Knight, sought Army and Navy cooperation. Even though he was optimistic about receiving it, as of the end of 1940, it was not forthcoming, thereby stalling the forward movement of a centralized Civil Air Reserve.<sup>15</sup>

The National Aeronautic Association (NAA) is the oldest national aviation organization in the United States. Founded in 1905 as the Aero Club of America by leading businessmen eager to promote the new technology of powered flight, it was a powerful organization in which scattered people interested in aviation could convene to promote their united cause. However, the NAA had begun to decline in the latter 1930s. In January, 1940, the NAA elected leadership with the ability to carry out their updated mission. Whereas Gill Robb Wilson was at home sick in bed, he was elected President of the National Aeronautic Association.

Because he was one of the earliest promoters of a general aviation defense corps, Wilson used his NAA office to promote the cause nationally.

Meanwhile, in 1939, German forces invaded Poland. Britain, France and Australia declared war on Germany. Days later the United States announced its neutrality, with Congress passing an increasingly strident Neutrality Act. The summer of 1940 started what German U-boat crews named their “Happy Time,” in which they sunk approximately 1,400,000 tons of Allied shipping from June through October alone.<sup>16</sup> Despite mounting losses, the United States did not consider U-Boats a serious threat. While the Germans reigned victorious during their Happy Time, attempts to create a unified civilian air defense failed.

### Letters to the Editor

The Editor at the CAP NHJ welcomes your comments and feedback. Please submit letters for review by emailing the editor at the address provided. All comments will be reviewed by the entire editorial staff prior to publication. The CAP NHJ Editorial Staff reserves the right to refuse publication to any member based on the content of the letter. CAP members are encouraged to maintain a professional, and collegial attitude when submitting correspondence. [kefinger@sercap.us](mailto:kefinger@sercap.us)

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<sup>14</sup> Flying and Popular Aviation November 1940, p. 45.

<sup>15</sup> National Aeronautics Magazine, January 1941; p. 24.

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<sup>16</sup> Hickam, Homer, *Torpedo Junction* (Naval Institute Press, 1989), 2

## Keep Us Out Of War

On October 5, 1937, in Chicago – the heart of isolationist sentiment - President Roosevelt gave his Quarantine Speech. Using the analogy of a physical epidemic being contained through quarantine, the President said the epidemic of world lawlessness and aggression should similarly be quarantined.

Although his speech recommended no particular military action, the response was severe. A Gallup poll showed that nearly 70% of Americans – and higher in the Midwest - wanted Congress to pass stricter neutrality laws.<sup>17</sup> The numbers were even higher when Americans were asked if we should take part in another world war: 95% responded “NO”.<sup>18</sup>

Even after Kristallnacht, November 9-10, 1938, when in Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland, Jewish property and synagogues were destroyed and thousands of Jewish citizens sent to concentration camps, America maintained even more strident neutrality. In fact, the U.S. Congress passed neutrality acts in 1935, 1936, 1937 and finally in November 1939. The President tried to lessen each successive act, angering both Congress and the majority of the people. But the American stance toward neither investing in nor preparing for war remained firm.

In a February, 1940 Gallup poll, when asked, “If it appears that Germany is defeating England and France,

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<sup>17</sup> Los Angeles Times, October 10, 1937, “Neutrality Favored as Best Hope of Peace,” as reported in 1940: FDR, Wilkie, Lindbergh, Hitler - The Election Amid the Storm, by Susan Dunn; Yale University Press, 24.

<sup>18</sup> Dunn, 1940, 24.

should the United States declare war on Germany and send our army and navy to fight?” Only 23% of American polled said “yes.”<sup>19</sup>

Out of fierce dedication to American neutrality, an isolationist organization called the America First Committee was formed. Its ranks swelled to 800,000 members in 650 chapters. Its leading principle was that American democracy could be preserved only by keeping out of the European war, including providing any aid short of war. Charles Lindbergh, the man who made the first trans-Atlantic flight, was its most famous crusader. Ironically, Lindbergh and Gill Robb Wilson had been friends; however, their outspoken and polemic views during this time created a rift that never completely healed.

Charles Lindbergh, on behalf of America First, said:

It is difficult to think clearly amidst the contradictory advice of columnists, the claims and counter claims of propaganda, the blind selfishness of party politics. The conservative who scoffed at aviation yesterday has become the radical who says that tomorrow we will be invaded by (European) aircraft. No one wishes to attack us, and no one is in a position to do so.<sup>20</sup>

A few months later, in August, 1940, Lindbergh urged avoidance of war even to the point of cooperating with Germany if it was victorious.<sup>21</sup> In such a divisive and tense climate, our nation faced difficulty in creating a civilian aerial defense corps.

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<sup>19</sup> New York Times, February 21, 1940, War Between U.S. and Germany is Opposed In Any Circumstance, Gallup Test Finds; p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> “The Air Defense of America” by Charles Lindbergh broadcast over the Mutual Broadcasting System, May 19, 1940.

<sup>21</sup> New York Times, August 5, 1940, p.1

## States Organize

With domestic discord and an ensuing convoluted foreign policy, local aviators decided to act on their own. In Colorado, the Denver Pilots Club requested Governor Ralph L. Carr to approve the Home Air Guard. Although Governor Carr was skeptical because of cost, he was assured state financing would be limited to fuel, and that the air guard was in line with the defense program of the NAA.<sup>22</sup> Eventually, this group took flight as the state's Civil Air Reserve under the auspices of the Colorado Defense Force.<sup>23</sup>

Although the Florida Defense Force was not formally recognized for a year, it was mustered quickly into service due to its vulnerable and extensive coastline. Its commander was Captain Wright Vermilya, Jr., a national councilor for NAA as well as an early advocate of the CAA's Civil Air Reserve plan. As was common in the early years, members of the Florida Defense Force flew their own planes on missions.

A similar unit was formed by Milton Knight in Toledo, Ohio. As the Ohio Bureau of Aeronautics Director, Earle Johnson provided the necessary oversight. Earle Johnson would later become the first commander of the Ohio Wing of CAP before becoming CAP's National Commander. Knight was eventually asked to work on a national civil air reserve under the Department of Commerce. As mentioned earlier, Knight's program lacked the appropriate military support.

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<sup>22</sup> National Aeronautics Magazine, a publication of the NAA, p. 20, January, 1941.

<sup>23</sup> National Aeronautics, p. 25 September, 1941.

After years of meeting and training unofficially, Gill Robb Wilson decided to make New Jersey's civilian air defense service official. In a letter to Governor Edison, Wilson's original premise in part read:

The establishment of a Civil Air Guard is purely voluntary, without expense to the state and without any complicated machinery to make it other than what it is: a useful instrument to employ the capacity of willing and able Americans to serve the state and nation within the limitation of their civil status...please note, the establishment suggested in this memorandum could be expanded or contracted to meet the conditions of any state.<sup>24</sup>

Local aviators were doing their part. The NAA was acting as a clearinghouse and support for various state programs. However, their efforts weren't enough. A single, comprehensive and unified patrol was needed. Unfortunately, by the start of 1941, there was still not enough support to form a national organization. In May, 1941, Frank Bane, the director of the Office for Emergency Management's division of State and local cooperation, directed all state and local councils to register aircraft spotters.<sup>25</sup> Ironically, volunteers were mobilized nationally to look at the skies, yet not defend the skies.

***Editor's Note:*** *The Civil Air Patrol National Historical Journal continues to receive quality submissions from across the CAP community, and appreciates the continued support of its members. Please adhere to the guidelines specified in the journal with regard to format, content, and review.*

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<sup>24</sup> Memo from Gill Robb Wilson to Governor Edison, NJ State Archives, Trenton, NJ. See full text in appendix.

<sup>25</sup> New York Times May 15, 1941 p. 28

## The Office of Civilian Defense

On May 20, 1941, President Roosevelt signed executive order number 8757 establishing the Office of Civilian Defense (OCD). New York City Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia was appointed Director. Within a month of the formation of the OCD, LaGuardia called on Wilson, Thomas Beck of Wilton, Connecticut, and Guy P. Gannett of Portland, Maine, to help organize civilian aviation nationally.<sup>26</sup>

Thomas H. Beck, nicknamed “the Flying Editor,” was the president of Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, known for its popular Collier’s magazines. Collier’s readership was estimated to be in the millions. He was also the 1940 director of the National Aviation Forum and an active member of the National Aeronautic Association. Beck had worked with the President to create the New Deal program of wildlife restoration.<sup>27</sup> In April, he took Wilson’s plan of a civil air guard to President Roosevelt, but he heard nothing in response. Guy P. Gannett—also a publisher—was the president and founder of the Guy Gannett Publishing Company of Maine. His company owned five newspapers, two radio stations and a television station. Gannett also held a private pilot license. He was eventually named the first Maine Wing Commander with the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Civil Air Patrol.<sup>28</sup> Like Beck and Wilson, Gannett was a

member of the NAA. All three men were known for their outspoken support of civilian aerial defense.

Because these men were colleagues, the blueprint for the Civil Air Patrol - based on Wilson’s New Jersey plan - was ready for adoption after the first meeting. In fact, the New York Times reported that “the organization of the civilian fliers of the United States into a defense auxiliary is rapidly under way.”<sup>29</sup> But months passed and the plan went nowhere.

Wilson figured there were two reasons for the hold up. The first was the military’s reluctance to allow civilians in the job of defense. In a 1940 letter to Audley Stephan, he wrote:

During the past several months it has become more and more evident and it is inevitable that the activities of civil aviation will be curtailed in the interest of military aviation. The blindness and stupidity of [certain military leaders] regarding aviation as having little more than a nuisance value now rebounds to the great disadvantage of our national defense and our civil air growth. However, that is water over the dam and we must proceed to make the best uses possible of what we have.<sup>30</sup>

That resistance didn’t fade quickly. When CAP started flying in March, 1942, Navy Admiral Ernest King, Commander in Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, was still resistant. When Vice Admiral Andrews, Commander of the Eastern Sea Frontier, advised an aerial “scarecrow patrol” could force U-boats underwater, King and his staff stated the patrol only existed to line the pockets of the general aircraft industry. Worse, ships might become

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<sup>26</sup> New York Times June 14, 1941 p. 9

<sup>27</sup> Giese, Michael, *“A Federal Foundation for Wildlife Conservation: The Evolution of the National Wildlife Refuge System, 1920-1968”* (American University, 2008), 124.

<sup>28</sup> New York Times, April 25, 1954; p.86 Gannett obituary

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<sup>29</sup> New York Times June 23, 1941 p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> Appendix, 16.

complacent in the erroneous belief that civilian aviators could actually provide a competent patrol. Lastly, to further entrench his negative views, King maintained amateur fliers would require ongoing military rescue, and the Navy can't afford to waste its valuable resources on such a frivolous civilian venture.<sup>31</sup>

The Navy was reticent, but many in the Army Air Forces were supportive. Major General Carl "Tooney" Spaatz helped persuade the Navy that civilians could enhance domestic security. Decades later, General Spaatz became the CAP board Chair, and the highest Cadet award is named in his honor. General Henry "Hap" Arnold was a strong advocate of a civilian aerial auxiliary. However Wilson later surmised Arnold's support hindered progress: "For some reason I never clearly understood, Hap was in high disfavor at the White House. He had provided me with a letter approving the establishment of a civilian air cadre for emergency service and had set forth the particular functions it could serve. Further than that he dared not go."<sup>32</sup>

It has since been revealed that Arnold had no qualms about undermining the President if he thought it would strengthen the Army Air Forces. Arnold went so far as leaking the top secret White House document outlining the contingency plan for full war against Germany. Revealing the likelihood of combat, he sought to arouse

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<sup>31</sup> Gannon, Michael, *Operation Drumbeat: Germany's U-Boat Attacks Along the American Coast in World War II*, Location 7126.

<sup>32</sup> Wilson, *I Walked With Giants*, 281

public support for air power and its needed funding.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps personal politics delayed the advent of a civilian aerial patrol, but regardless of the cause, time was running out.

Finally, in October, 1941, Director LaGuardia requested New Jersey Governor Edison to allow Gill Robb Wilson "to devote practically full time to aviation program important to civil defense."<sup>34</sup> Soon thereafter, Wilson headed to Washington, D.C. to build what would become the Civil Air Patrol.

### **DuPont Circle, Washington, D.C.**

The DuPont Circle Building, 1346 Connecticut Avenue, was flat fronted and tall - at least by Washington, D.C. standards. Built a decade earlier by architect Mihran Mesrobian, it was chosen as the headquarters of the Office of Civilian Defense. The Civil Air Patrol moved into room 1011.

The only other staff assigned the Civil Air Patrol besides Wilson was a federal secretary on temporary loan. She was not a pilot, but she certainly was a navigator, guiding aviators through the bureaucratic morass of the national government,<sup>35</sup> made even more formidable by the approaching war.

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<sup>33</sup> Olson, Lynne, *Those Angry Days; Roosevelt, Lindbergh, and America's Fight Over World War II* (Random House Publishing, New York 2013) locations 180 & 185.

<sup>34</sup> Telegram from Fiorello LaGuardia to Charles Edison, October 7, 1941. Full texts of telegrams are in the Appendix

<sup>35</sup> The name of the first CAP secretary has been lost to history. However, the initials LH appear in many of the first CAP correspondence

Reed Landis, Director LaGuardia's Aviation Aide, was frequently in room 1011. Prior to this assignment, Landis was a flier in the war, an active member of the American Legion, a state aviation director and a Chicago businessman. As the OCD Aviation Aide, he was intimately involved with the creation of CAP. Ironically, according to Wilson, Landis was assigned by LaGuardia "to ride herd on us." But since Landis and Wilson had been friends since WWI days—including each serving as president of the National Association of State Aviation Officials—obstructions from the top down were greatly mitigated.<sup>36</sup> Still, the job of creating a national program from scratch was enormous. Where to begin?

The priorities were to: develop a standardized national training program; create uniforms and insignia, and an application process; provide communications, publicity and security; and finally, choose the CAP leadership. To top it all off, the staff and budget were minuscule and the timeline even smaller. No wonder the lights in room 1011 burned well into the night.

### Training

Although the myriad aspects of building a behemoth national program in a meager amount of time were all vital, perhaps the most crucial element was the development of a standardized training program. For that, a committee was formed which included various governmental representatives as well as civilian aviators: Casey Jones, Roscoe Turner, Grove Webster, Harry

Playford, Helen Rough, Cecile Hamilton and Richard Depew. Colonel Harry H. Blee, retired from the Army Air Corps, was asked to chair the committee. Blee had an extensive civilian aviation background, and thus went on to become CAP's first Operations Officer and eventually Deputy Commander.

Since most civilians joining CAP lacked military training, education for volunteers included military courtesy, and discipline, drill, and the basic organization of each military branch, as well as the OCD. In addition, defensive training relevant to CAP's mission was mandatory, including airport protection, crash procedure, and first aid.<sup>37</sup>

### Command Staff

An early priority was the selection of the command staff, especially Wing Commanders. General Arnold was responsible for appointing a national commander. He chose Army General John F. Curry, who assumed the role in December 1941.

Even though the official appointment of wing commanders could only come through the National Commander, their selection was up to Wilson. Relying

#### Editor's Note

The views expressed in the *Civil Air Patrol National Historical Journal* are those of the authors only and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Journal Staff, Editorial Board, the Civil Air Patrol, its officers or members, nor the United States Air Force.

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<sup>36</sup> Wilson, *I Walked with Giants*, 282. On that page he also said that because they didn't live in Washington, Landis and he bunked together, most likely at the Mayflower Hostel, home of the NAA.

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<sup>37</sup> January 27, 1942, Office of Civilian Defense Civil Air Patrol memo to all wing commanders.

heavily on state aviation directors for their input, he chose a slate of local aviators to receive the following telegram:

**NIGHT LETTER            NOVEMBER 4<sup>TH</sup>-1941**

CONFIDENTIAL STOP REQUEST YOUR PERMISSION  
TO RECOMMEND YOU AS WING COMMANDER OF  
CIVIL AIR PATROL FOR YOUR STATE UNDER  
NATIONAL SETUP FOR ORGANIZATION CIVIL AIR  
RESOURCES STOP VITAL JOB STOP SERVICE  
VOLUNTARY STOP YOUR EXPERIENCE REQUIRED  
STOP PLEASE WIRE

GILL ROBB WILSON, EXECUTIVE CONSULTANT  
OFFICE OF CIVILIAN DEFENSE, WASHINGTON D.C.<sup>38</sup>

After these initial telegrams were sent, twenty-two of the twenty- eight recipients accepted and five were unavailable, though some endorsed others for the position.<sup>39</sup>

Once the Wing Commander selection was eventually completed, their resumes were compiled and sent to their respective Governors, so that publicity could be generated by each state as soon as CAP became official.

### **Communications**

As if communicating the progress and goals of a new national organization wasn't tough enough, OCD Director LaGuardia created an even greater challenge by monitoring the daily phone log and all letters generated by room 1011. Nothing extraneous was tolerated. In addition to insuring costs were kept in check, LaGuardia

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<sup>38</sup> All subsequent letters from room 1011 have been reproduced at the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD

<sup>39</sup> See Appendix for original list of Wing Commander candidates.

wanted to make sure CAP was created with national authority; i.e., from the top down. Though he and Wilson were friends, they were also political opposites: LaGuardia, a Democrat, believed national, centralized authority was optimal; whereas, Wilson, a Republican, believed local, de-centralized authority was more efficient. LaGuardia was the OCD boss, so he made the rules. However, CAP was Wilson's baby, so he bent LaGuardia's rules.

Even though LaGuardia insisted state leaders were not to be consulted in the creation of CAP, Wilson invited them to the NAA headquarters, less than half a mile from the DuPont Circle Building, where CAP interviews and conversations were held surreptitiously. Because of local input from the very beginning, state leaders supported the new program and spread the news of its potential in their communities.

During those first several weeks at DuPont Circle, correspondence was voluminous. People inquired about job prospects, volunteer opportunities and offered ideas on how the new program should be run.<sup>40</sup> A frequent theme of these letters was various groups asking if CAP could use their service. The response to each group was the same:

Beyond a doubt there will be a need for service such as is rendered by groups similar to yours. However, the Civil Air Patrol must essentially be a national organization to be thoroughly effective. No organization will be affiliated with the Civil Air Patrol, but enlistment is open to individual application.

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<sup>40</sup> See correspondence in appendix

Judging by some of the letters proceeding from room 1011, including one sent on November 10<sup>th</sup>, the original timeline was not achieved:

...an organization to be known as the Civil Air Patrol is now in process of formation. It is hoped that public announcement can be made within the next week or ten days. Such announcement is dependent upon the publication of our book concerning the Civil Air Patrol.<sup>41</sup>

Regrettably, the government printing presses were overloaded. Announcement about the Civil Air Patrol was thus not quickly forthcoming, even after the Executive Order creating it was signed. In some places, the official CAP book was not obtainable until the New Year. However, because so many local leaders had been brought into its planning process through discreet visits to the NAA, word of mouth helped propel the Civil Air Patrol's early popularity. The general aviation community had been eagerly awaiting such an organization.

### Uniforms

Uniforms needed to be chosen, and since Wilson was in charge, the decision was his. But he believed only insignia was needed. He was vetoed. Wilson then requested the main consideration for uniforms was that they were readily available and cheap.<sup>42</sup> He was vetoed again.



Gill Robb Wilson in CAP uniform in Newark, New Jersey, 1942. Used with permission by Jill Paulson

Reed Landis wrote:

Major LaGuardia believes we should endeavor to secure a distinctive uniform for CAP rather than copy the Army, the Navy or other existing service. It is suggested that you proceed to have a sample uniform made up by some potential supplier utilizing a blue or blue-gray color and material.

Wilson persisted in campaigning for affordability and availability. In a memo back to Landis, Wilson outlined the need for a khaki uniform, requesting, "the work of the Civil Air Patrol must progress without any delays due to unnecessary details."<sup>43</sup> The Khaki uniform was adopted. CAP insignia for both people and airplanes was chosen more rapidly and without controversy.<sup>44</sup>

### Security

Security was an aspect of the Civil Air Patrol no one dared overlook. The possibility of traitorous fliers serving under the new organization threatened not only the fledgling CAP but general American interests as well.

On November 21, Director LaGuardia requested one-hundred-and-twenty-five-thousand National Defense Finger

Print Cards from the FBI. He added, "You will be notified at least a week in advance as to the date the cards are required. We hope this will be prior to the first of December." Due to the frenetic pace of our nation's

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> See Uniform recommendations dated November 12, 1941 in appendix.

<sup>43</sup> See Uniform recommendations and justification dated November 21, 1941 in appendix.

<sup>44</sup> See insignia recommendations in memo dated November 21, 1941.

capital in the early days of December, the fingerprint cards and applications were not ready until weeks later.

### **It Begins**

On December 1, 1941, Director of Civilian Defense Fiorello La Guardia established the Civil Air Patrol as a division of the Office of Civilian Defense.<sup>45</sup> On that date, he prepared a memo to all persons in civilian aviation:

Office of Civilian Defense  
Washington, D.C.  
December 1, 1941

To the end that opportunity for voluntary service by especially qualified citizens may be provided, in line with the traditions of this Nation, and pursuant to the authority conferred upon me as the United States Director of Civilian Defense, by Executive order of the President of the United States, I do hereby order established under the Office of Civilian Defense, the Civil Air Patrol. The organization will be formed and conducted as provided in the attached chart,<sup>46</sup> which is hereby approved.

I have appointed Major General John F. Curry, Air Corps, as National Commander, CAP.

I call upon all persons in civil aviation to enroll and otherwise assist in this important contribution to our national defense.

F.H. LaGuardia,  
U.S. Director of Civilian Defense

On 1 Dec 1941, Mr. La Guardia also signed Office of Civil Defense Administrative Order No. 9, formally establishing the Civil Air Patrol based on the authority of

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<sup>45</sup> Blazich, Frank, "Civil Air Patrol Congressional Gold Medal Fact Sheet," Organizational Background Information.

<sup>46</sup> See original organizational chart in appendix

Executive Order 8757, dated 20 May 1941. That order was not issued publicly until December 8, 1941, and read as follows:<sup>47</sup>

December 1, 1941  
Administrative Order No.9  
Establishing Civil Air Patrol

By virtue of the authority vested in me through my appointment as United States Director of the Office of Civilian Defense, through the Executive Order of the President creating said Office, dated May 20, 1941. I have caused to be created and organized a branch of this Office of volunteers for the purpose of enlisting and training personnel to aid in the national defense of the United States, designated as the Civil Air Patrol.

In conformity with said organization, Major General John F. Curry, U.S.A. Air Corps has been assigned to this office by the U.S. Army and designated by me as its National Commander. Said organization shall be formed as outlined in the attached chart, which is made a part of this Order as if written herein in full. The Civil Air Patrol shall carry out such Orders and directives as are issued to it by the Director of Civilian Defense. It shall be the duty and responsibility of the National Commander to see that the objectives and purposes and orders issued in conformity with the policy of this office are carried out and that all activities are reported regularly to the Director through the Aviation Aide.

All enlistment's and appointments in the Civil Air Patrol may be disapproved by the Director of the Office of Civilian Defense.

F.H. LaGuardia,  
U.S. Director of Civilian Defense

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<sup>47</sup> Although signed on 1 Dec, 1941, the date the Civil Air Patrol became operational, OCD Administrative Order No. 9 was not publicly announced until 8 Dec, 1941. See US Government Manual , 1945, First Edition, Appendix A, p. 31, Civil Air Patrol (Office of Civilian Defense). For the organizational chart attached to OCD Administrative Order No. 9, see the Appendix to this article.

Friday, December 5, Willard M. Fletcher received a confidential letter from CAP headquarters:

Detail of organization of the Civil Air Patrol is about completed. Our National Commander has been appointed, the book has gone to press, and a national announcement will be made as soon as the Government Printing Office is ready to mail books, applications and finger print cards.<sup>48</sup>

Although moving at breakneck speed, all the necessary details were not completed before Japan bombed America two days later.

On December 8, President Roosevelt addressed the nation: "I ask that the Congress declare that, since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire."<sup>49</sup> On December 11, the President declared war on Germany. It was, unfortunately, as Wilson feared five years earlier: America was at war. But unlike the First World War, this time civilian aviation could play a significant role. Still, this war would be even more costly than the last, claiming almost half-a-million U.S. casualties,<sup>50</sup> including twenty-six members of the Civil Air Patrol.

### **The CAP Story Continues**

As soon as CAP was created, thousands of citizens stepped up to serve. Seventy-five years later, thousands of patriotic volunteers still serve. No one ever said it was going to be easy. It wasn't.

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<sup>48</sup> See booklet/application in Appendix

<sup>49</sup> The President's Message as reprinted in the New York Times, December 9, 1941.

<sup>50</sup> [www.nationalww2museum.org](http://www.nationalww2museum.org). Official count is 418,500

The power of a dream—*especially a dream relentlessly pursued*—can change the course of history. The Civil Air Patrol continues today as a legacy of our forerunners' perseverance and commitment to America.

*Jill Robb Paulson is an author, minister, CAP chaplain, and granddaughter of G. Robb Wilson.*



### **Call for Submissions**

The Civil Air Patrol *National Historical Journal* (NHJ) welcomes articles, essays, and commentaries not exceeding 2,000 words on any topic relating to the history of the Civil Air Patrol, or military/civilian aviation history. CAP's history extends to the present day, and the NHJ seeks accounts of on-going activities and missions, as well as those of earlier years.

All historiographical works and essays must be submitted in Chicago Manual of Style (CMS), or they will be rejected unless otherwise permitted for special purposes. We encourage authors to submit digital photographs (minimal resolution of 300 dots per inch) and illustrations for publication. All content should be the work of the author or open source. Adjustments to pixel saturation, color and size will be made according to the editorials staff's recommendations. Please note that when submitted to the editor at the Civil Air Patrol National Historical Journal, all works and related media are released from copyright infringements if published.

Editorial changes are at the sole discretion of the editorial staff, but will be discussed with the author prior to publication, and require a signed release from the author.

*The CAP NHJ editorial staff reserves the right to refuse any work submitted. All submissions must be sent as MS Word attachments and mailed to the editor at [kefinger@sercap.us](mailto:kefinger@sercap.us).*

# APPENDIX SECTION NEXT PAGE

## Appendix

August 21, 1940

The Honorable Audley H.F. Stephan  
Chairman, New Jersey Defense Council  
Trenton, New Jersey

My dear Major Stephan:

Following my return from Germany where I had gone on the Hindenburg for the purpose of studying German air development and where I had very courteously been shown everything that Germany was doing in the air, I realized that the inevitable resent conflict would develop. I then wrote to the late Admiral Grayson, who was president of the American Red Cross, suggesting to him that that time was ripe for the American Red Cross to utilize civil aviation so that they would have builded up a background of experience with the aircraft, which experience would be valuable for emergency and disaster and cooperation with the armed forces in time of military crisis.

I felt that the Red Cross should establish standards of pilot training and make research in those forms of equipment which could be utilized. I refer to rubberized packages for waterproofing parachutes designed for the dropping of all sorts of materials, rubber life rafts, aluminum stretchers which would be light in weight and a great host of other such material.

I never received an answer from admiral Grayson or from the American Red Cross.

About a year ago I again approached the Red Cross through a personal interview with Mr. Norman Davis, and several other members of the office staff. Mr. Davis appeared to be very interested but time has passed and to the best of my knowledge no program of this kind has been instituted by the American Red Cross.

Now, several days ago the director of the Red Cross for the New Brunswick, New Jersey, area, called me and wanted to know what I could do to assist him to secure the services of a competent pilot and a civil aircraft to be a part of the component organization of that area incase of emergency or disaster. You are familiar with the ordnance located in that area and in view of possible sabotage, you can understand his concern.

I will choose several pilots and owners of aircraft, put them in touch with this local chairman and have them go to work with him, but this does not solve the larger problem and is only an example of the kind of thing that should be established on a nation-wide basis.

During the past several months it has become more and more evident and it is inevitable that the activities of civil aviation will be curtailed in the interest of military aviation, because this nation is so far behind in its air facilities, both civil and military, that there will not be room for both on the present facilities and there is insufficient time to develop military facilities. The blindness and stupidity of regarding aviation as having little more than a nuisance value now rebounds to the great disadvantage of our national defense and our civil air growth. However, that is water over the dam and we must proceed to make the best uses possible of what we have.

Now there are numbers of thoroughly capable pilots who are not and could not be utilized in the military service. Most of these men have intimate knowledge of the terrain surrounding the places they are located. They are eager to do anything in their power and to utilize their experience for the national defense, but they do not know how to proceed. No constituted agency of government has given them any light on the subject nor offered them any opportunity. Many of them write to me asking how they might help and feeling rather chagrined that their long experience is not being utilized or recognized in any way.

Now it might be that the State Defense Councils could organize in each state a corps of these men specifying a certain training procedure which would be valuable in observation patrols or the ferrying of executives and in many other ways. It would take some time to authenticate the thorough American background of these men and to train them for specific work. much of this training would be observation and I can assure you that an untrained observer is no good in the air.

If military operations actually come against an enemy, all civil aviation in any given area would have to be curbed because a man aloft in an airplane could too easily serve enemy purposes if he were so inclined. Yet in cases of such necessity men so trained could do a great deal to supplement the activities of the military establishment especially in carrying messages and persons and in furnishing information. If such a corps is established, it would receive the full cooperation of civil aviation. Aircraft could carry the specific designation and pilots the proper credential of the several state Defense Councils.

I do not want to set up any organization in New Jersey or elsewhere unless it has a specific utility, a specific program and thorough cooperation and understanding and endorsement of the military services and the American Red Cross. Up until the past several years our military air establishment has shown an utter lack of either appreciation or understanding of the possibilities of utilization of civil aviation. The fact that our civil schools have been able to turn out at a fraction of the cost just as well trained pilots as the military schools was apparently astonishing news to the heads of our military establishment.

The fact that civil aviation may now be of tremendous assistance may also be astonishing news to them and I have no idea how they will react. They are, nevertheless, responsible now for our national security and I would be unwilling to move unless what I propose has their full understanding and endorsement.

If the National Defense Council, which is presumably coordinating the activities of various state Defense Councils, think there is merit in what I suggest, it is then their responsibility to clear this matter through the service channels and secure the approval. If this approval is secured, I will then, as president of the National Aeronautic Association, call in the key men from the various states, have them go to work in the establishment of such civil assistance as the various state Defense Councils would desire, and I can assure you that within a space of three months we can have a

program set up in every state in the Union in the hands of civil air men who are not eligible for military service, and whose patriotism is beyond question.

These men could clear through channels of the State Councils to the General Council in Washington or they could clear directly to a national coordinator who would have access to the military establishment.

The National Aeronautic Association is directed by men practically all of whom have long military experience in addition to their civil experience, and we can do a magnificent job if it is desired, but before such a thing is attempted we would have to know that the set-up was thoroughly understood and would be watched and advised by the Army Air Corps and the Navy Bureau of Aeronautics, and that the plans for such a corps tied in with the Red Cross.

There will be many crack-pot ideas advanced, most of which will be at cross purposes and would complicate rather than simplify the national defense problem. However, much I believe this plan is simple, sound and in the American tradition, I still only put it forward as a possible helpful suggestion. I have no pride in the authorship of it although I believe it is sound judgment.

If you would like to have New Jersey undertake it as a trial balloon, I would be glad to organize such a unit but if it is worth doing it is worth doing on a national basis and for that job, the NAA is the one national organization in which is represented everybody and every thing that has to do with civil aviation in America.

Sincerely,

*Gill Robb Wilson*

State Director of Aviation and  
President, National Aeronautic Association

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March 24, 1941

To: His Excellency, Charles Edison

From: Gill Robb Wilson, State Director of Aviation

Subject: Formation of a Civil Air Guard

In the state of New Jersey there are a great number of civil pilots who by one reason or another are ineligible for military service. Many of them are owners of aircraft and a great number of them are eager to employ their aviation experience on a voluntary basis in the service of the state or nation from the standpoint of national defense. There may come a time when it will be necessary to place stringent restriction on the use of civil aircraft, particularly in specific areas. New Jersey will undoubtedly be one of those areas.

It is my thought that the formation of a New Jersey Civil Air Guard might be a very wise and constructive move.

- The name of the organization would be the Civil Air Guard of New Jersey.

- It should be the function of the commander of the Civil Air Guard, in cooperation with the Advisory Board, to lay out organization plans, bring into creation the various units of the Civil Air Guard and to supervise the training and operation of the various units.

- No member shall be enrolled in the Civil Air Guard who is not a citizen of the United States.
- Each duly qualified member of the Civil Air Guard shall be presented with a brevet consisting of the winged shield of the state of New Jersey, an overseas cap bearing the legend "Civil Air Guard of New Jersey", and an identification card.
- Any registered civil aircraft when flown by a member of the Civil Air Guard, while engaged in duties connected with the Civil Air Guard, shall carry a distinguishing pennon or other designation identifying it as being on Civil Air Guard duty.

#### Function of the Civil Air Guard

- a. The members of the Civil Air Guard shall engaged in training to thoroughly familiarized themselves with the areas over which they are designated by the orders of the commander of the Civil Air Guard of New Jersey to operate, and shall keep files on this information.
- b. They shall prepare themselves to furnish any and all information concerning the industry, highways, available landing areas, docking facilities and other physical aspects of the area.
- c. They shall map out potential emergency landing areas and where unimportant changes may be made in the terrain. They shall exercise their best efforts to have such changes made in order that the number of designated fields for potential emergency use may be increased.
- d. Each member shall engage in training with the view to becoming an expert on the observation of ground conditions, traffic movements and such other details as will be valuable.
- e. Each member shall prepare to furnish air transportation for personnel, messages or material when called upon for such service by any duly constituted civil or military authority within the state of New Jersey, the request for such service coming through the command channels of the Civil Air Guard.
- f. Each member shall accept responsibility for taking a course in first aid under the supervision of the American Red Cross, the State Police or other constituted and recognized authority.
- g. Each member of the Civil Air Guard shall agree to engage in a minimum of five hours of flight training per month under the direction of the unit Commander and a minimum of ten hours per month in study of navigation, meteorology, aircraft and engine maintenance and air traffic regulations as found in the texts of the Civil Aeronautics Administration for ground school training.

The Governor will observe that the establishment of a Civil Air Guard is purely voluntary, without expense to the state and without any complicated machinery to make it other than what it is: a simple and useful instrument to employ the capacity of willing and able Americans to serve the state and nation within the limitation of their civil status.

The establishment suggested in this memorandum is one which might be utilized in any state and extensions or amplifications of the establishment herein suggested could be expanded or contracted to meet the conditions of any state.

To: His Excellency, Charles Edison

From: Gill Robb Wilson, State Director of Aviation

March 27, 1941

Following your perusal of the brief material I submitted on the formation of a Civil Air Guard, you need not trouble further than to give me a green or red light, with the exception that I would appreciate a letter to the State Defense Council advising of your approval or disapproval. I simply do not want to burden you with the details of my job except that I want to be sure before I plunge ahead that I am doing exactly what you want me to do. Speed is essential because the New Jersey pattern is to be used as the national pattern.

Gill Robb Wilson,

State Director of Aviation

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Telegrams

October 7, 1941

HONORABLE CHARLES EDISON  
STATE HOUSE TRENTON NJ

IN CONFIDENCE I SEEK YOUR PERMISSION TO REQUEST GILL ROBB WILSON DIRECTOR AVIATION NEW JERSEY TO DEVOTE PRACTICALLY FULL TIME FOR APPROXIMATELY THREE MONTHS TO AVIATION PROGRAM IMPORTANT TO CIVIL DEFENSE. ASSUMING HIS STATE SALARY WOULD BE CONTINUED WE WILL COVER HIS EXPENSES AND PROVIDE OFFICE AND STAFF HERE. LIMITED NUMBER EXPERIENCED AVIATION LEADERS MAKE NECESSARY AVAILABLE PEOPLE DOUBLING UP ON JOBS.

REGARDS;

F H LAGUARDIA US DIRECTOR OF CIVIL DEFENSE

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Western Union

ORANGE, NJ OCTOBER 17 1941  
HONORABLE F H LAGUARDIA  
US DIRECTOR OF CIVILIAN DEFENSE

GILL ROBB WILSON TELLS ME THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO HELP OUT TEMPORARILY IN THE AVIATION PROGRAM YOU CONTEMPLATE WITHOUT TOO GREAT A SACRIFICE OF PROGRESS ON HIS STATE ACTIVITIES. HE IS DOING IMPORTANT WORK IN THE AVIATION FIELD IN THE STATE AND CANNOT BE SPARED FOR LONG BUT MATTERS CAN BE ARRANGED SO THAT HE CAN ASSIST. ACCORDINGLY I HAVE ASKED HIM TO TAKE UP WHATEVER ASSIGNMENT YOU WISH HIM TO EXECUTE WITH THE ASSURANCE THAT HIS STATE SALARY WILL BE CONTINUED BUT THAT NO OTHER EXPENSES TO THE STATE WILL BE INVOLVED WITH KINDEST REGARDS

CHARLES EDISON

GOVERNOR OF NEW JERSEY

*At the same time he enclosed a copy with a note to his Director of Aviation*

Dear Gill,

I sent a telegram to Mr. LaGuardia today, copy of which is enclosed, which I think is self-explanatory.

Regards.

Governor

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*A few days later, a letter arrived at the Governor's office.*

Office of Civilian Defense

Washington, D.C.

October 20, 1941

My dear Governor Edison:

I appreciate the fine, cooperative spirit which prompted your telegram of October 17th advising that you were making available on a temporary basis the services of Gill Robb Wilson in connections with our aviation program.

Please accept my very sincere personal regards.

Cordially yours,

F.H. LaGuardia  
U.S. Director of Civilian Defense

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State of New Jersey, Department of Aviation, Gill Robb Wilson, Director

October 21, 1941

His Excellency, Charles Edison

Dear Chief:

Thanks for the telegram to La Guardia. This idea of the organization of the civil air resources of the nation for national defense was first proposed more than a year ago when a plan which is substantially the same as the one now being put into operation was forwarded by this department to our State Defense Council, which in turn endorsed the plan and forwarded it to Washington.

New Jersey, as far as I have observed, has made a great record in cooperation with the President in the furtherance of civil defense plans. I naturally feel some responsibility for helping get the national plan going although, of course, not the least interested in working in Washington or having any more jobs.

I'll go to Washington and be very happy to work without compensation all the time I can give to helping set up the civil air patrol. Just as soon as it gets set up and I have made my ultimate in contribution, I'll resign if they don't throw me out before hand.

As always,

Gill Robb Wilson

#### **Original Wing Commander Candidates Contacted**

Harold Wood, Birmingham, AL  
Thomas Lockhart, Hartford, CT  
Wright Vermilya, Jr., West Palm Beach, FL  
A.H. Near, Louisville, KY  
George Viehman, Basking Ridge, NJ  
Col George Vaughn, V.P. Casey Jones School of Aeronautics, Newark, NJ\*  
Earle Johnson, Columbus, OH  
Leo G. Devaney, Portland, OR  
Jack Vilas, Chicago, IL  
Roscoe Turner, Indianapolis, IN  
Guy P. Gannett, Portland, ME  
Moss Patterson, Oklahoma City, OK  
John Quinn, New Cumberland, {A  
Dexter Martin, Nashville, TN  
Herbert Fox, Nashville, TN  
David Giltinan, Charleston, WV  
Winship Nunnally, Atlanta, GA  
Daniel C. Hunter, Cedar Rapids, IA  
Sheldon R. Steers, Lansing, MI  
Stanley E. Hubbard, St. Paul, MN  
Fred Sheriff, Helena, MT  
I.V. Packard, Lincoln, NE  
Russell Hilliard, Concord, NH  
Fred Bonfils, Denver, CO  
Gilbert Leigh, Little Rock, AR  
Richard C. DuPont, Wilmington, DE  
Walter York, Boise, ID  
Howard Wilcox, Anthony, KS

\*Because Col. Vaughn was with an aeronautical school, it is presumed Wilson asked Vaughn strictly for recommendations. George Viehman became the first NJ Wing Commander.

*Examples of the correspondence to and from room 1011, late October through early December, 1941.*

November 10, 1941 Confidential

Mr. George A, Viehmann, Manager  
Somerset Hills Airport, Basking Ridge, New Jersey

Dear George:

My wire to you also went out to a number of other men in the various States. Our Jersey State Wing will of course tie into this thing completely and will not change your status in any way, except to make you the representative of the Federal as well as the State set-up.

I have complete confidence in your ability to do a swell job with this thing and had no hesitancy in telling the General Staff (which is composed of representatives of Army, Navy, CAA, and the Office of Civilian Defense) that you were the man for New Jersey.

The Wing Commanders are going to be the key men in all of this, and the armed services are definitely looking to the Civil Air Patrol for help.

A training Directive is now being prepared and will be out very shortly.

Regards, as always.

Sincerely yours,  
Gill Robb Wilson

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November 25, 1941 Confidential

Mr. Harry Copeland, Loew Building, Syracuse, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Copeland:

Thank you for your letter of November 20 offering your services in the organization of "Air Defense Clubs."

As you probably know, an organization of the civil air resources of the nation, to be known as the Civil Air Patrol, is proceeding at the present time, and it is hoped that public announcement regarding it may be made within the next week or so. The Civil Air Patrol program calls for organization under our nine regional offices, with State Wing Commanders and a breakdown into Groups, Squadrons, and Flights. Enlistment will be voluntary and open to ground as well as flight personnel, and to men and women. We are preparing a booklet giving complete details for state organization and individual enlistment, which will be distributed when the plan is ready for public announcement. A copy will be sent to you at that time.

At the present time the staff of the Civil Air Patrol consists of myself and a small office force which is furnished, of course, by the Office of Civilian Defense. I myself am here on a loan basis from the State Aviation Commission of New Jersey. A large force in the Washington office is not contemplated. It may be, however, that a need for personnel may develop in the various Wing (State) Commander offices. It is suggested, therefore, that you watch for the announcement of the appointment for your state and then communicate with the Wing Commander. As you are doubtless aware, administrative personnel of the Office of Civilian Defense are certified to us by the Civil Service Commission.

Sincerely yours,

Gill Robb Wilson  
Executive Consultant

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November 28, 1941 Confidential

Miss Jeska Thompson, Town & Country Players, Canandaigua, NY

Dear Miss Thompson:

This is in further reference to your letter of June 17 which was addressed to Mayor LaGuardia at New York and acknowledged at that time with the statement that you would hear from him again. The Office of Civilian Defense is, of course, extremely glad to receive the offer of cooperation from the Albany Chapter of the Women Flyers of America.

I am happy to be able to inform you that an organization of the civil air resources of the nation, to be known as the Civil Air Patrol, is proceeding at the present time. It is hoped that public announcement regarding it may be made within the next week or so. For your information, the civil Air Patrol is being set up as a division of the Office of Civilian Defense. Organization will be based upon the nine-Corps-Area plan of the Army, with breakdowns into Wings, Groups, Squadrons, and Flights. Enlistment will be entirely voluntary, open to both ground and flight personnel and to men and women. There will be a national training directive to provide uniform training so that we may best coordinate the civil air resources of the nation for national defense.

Beyond a doubt there will be a need for service such as is rendered by groups similar to yours. However, this must essentially be a national organization to be thoroughly effective, and we hope that members of your group will feel it possible to volunteer their services in the Civil Air Patrol. No organizations will be affiliated with the Civil Air Patrol, but enlistment is open to individual application.

Further details pertaining to the Civil Air Patrol will be available within the next few weeks through the Wing Command of the Civil Air Patrol, the State departments of aviation, and the airport managers.

Sincerely,

Gill Robb Wilson

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November 28th-1941 Confidential

Mr. Theodore B. Appel, Jr., 3004 Fountain Park Boulevard, Knoxville, TN

The White House has turned over to this office for reply your communication of November 12<sup>th</sup> to Mrs. Roosevelt, and on her behalf as well as my own, I wish to thank you for your interest in the civil air program of the Office of Civilian Defense.

We are indeed grateful to you for the plan which you submitted and you may be sure that in the development of our program, it will have consideration.

*(The letter then went on to contain the same paragraph as the previous two letters)*

Additional information regarding the Civil Air Patrol will be available through State Defense Councils, local Civil Aeronautic Administration Offices and in your state, through the Bureau of Aeronautics, 1018 Cotton States Building, Nashville.

Your interest is tremendously appreciated, and I hope you will make a special effort to volunteer your services when the plan is announced.

Sincerely,

Gill Robb Wilson

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December 2nd, 1941

Major William B. Robertson, President Robertson Aircraft Corporation, Lambert-St. Louis Municipal Airport.

Dear Bill:

Thanks for your good letter and the information which we wanted.

I have recommended you as Wing Commander for Missouri in my most glowing and convincing manner.

The organization booklet has gone to the printers and I surpass the Director of Civilian Defense will be ready shortly to make a national announcement.

As always,

Gill Robb Wilson

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December 4, 1941

Mr. Howard Wilcox, Wilcox Building, Anthony, Kansas

Dear Howard:

Immediately upon receipt of your letter of November 28, which reached me December 2, I sent you the following telegram:

“Confidential letter dated November 28 Director LaGuardia to Governor Ratner gives up to the minute status of Civil Air Patrol.”

On December 3 Postal Telegraph notified me of its non-delivery stating that the message had been forwarded by their Wichita office to Topeka but that you were not registered at any of the hotels and could not be located at the State Supreme Court. I feel certain, however, that your conference with the Governor developed the fact that he had received Director LaGuardia’s letter of November 28 which contained all pertinent current information regarding the Civil Air Patrol. Our booklet is now in the hands of the printer and a copy will be sent you immediately upon its release.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Gill Robb Wilson

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#### Personal Notes

November 10, 1941

Mr. Stanley T. Wallbank, 514 Equitable Building, Denver, Colorado

Dear Stanley:

Thanks for all of your work in connection with the recommendation as to who should head the Colorado Wing of the Civil Air Patrol. It is extremely important that we get men of the highest caliber, because they are definitely going to play a big part in the common defense.

Received your nice letter at Washington. It was a very happy occasion. Met a lot of men who knew you and wished to be remembered.

Mary told me of the announcement of the wedding. It naturally made us very happy. I reckon there isn’t a chance in a million that either of us could get there, but there will be a remembrance along which we hope will remind the youngsters of how sincerely we join in your pride and affection for them.

We are making good progress down here in the Office of Civilian Defense and, while all of us are working at a grueling pace, there is satisfaction that we are getting things done.

Affectionately, as always,

Gill Robb Wilson

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*(From the following letter it can be presumed that once the initial Wing Commanders were chosen, Wilson talked to Johnson about taking his place as the permanent Executive Director.)*

November 19, 1941

Mr Earle Johnson

Dear Earle,

Just received your good letter of the seventeenth. I'll be calling you within the next several days.

In the meantime, I wish you would send me a personal history of yourself as related to education, business experience, and that sort of thing. We want to use a lot of this data for publicity out of the national office and also must have it on file.

Also, you had better be thinking over who you will want as Wing Commander of Ohio if you take of leave of absence to come down here for a tour of duty. It is about this latter possibility that I will be calling you, so do some thinking about it.

I want to hear about the hunting trip. Love to Dorey.

As Always,

Gill Robb Wilson

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*On November 12, 1941, Wilson sent these uniform recommendations to Helen Rough and Cecile Hamilton:*

Sears Roebuck: Nu-blue slacks and shirt to match in *Sanfordized* Army twill. Shirt: \$2.29, pants \$2.49, purchased as combination \$4.25.

J.C. Penny(sic): Only suitable uniform not subject to delay in delivery is a lightweight suit of teal green herringbone pattern. Shirt: \$1.39, pants \$1.79, total being \$3.18.

Montgomery Ward: List an Army twill ion smoke khaki of same style as mentioned above in Sears Roebuck report: two pieces: \$5.25.

November 21, 1941 Memo:

It is recommended:

1. The field uniform of the Civil Air Patrol shall be
  - A. Khaki shirt
  - B. Khaki trousers
  - C. Khaki overseas cap
  - D. Black tie
  - E. Black or brown shoes and socks
  - F. Any type leather or cloth windbreaker or jacket

2. Civil Air Patrol insignia shall be worn
    - A. On left shoulder of shirt
    - B. On left breast of flying jacket or windbreaker
    - C. On overseas cap.
  
  3. For dress uniform
    - A. Any style or grade of khaki tunic
    - B. Any style or grade of khaki trousers
    - C. Brown shoes
    - D. White or khaki shirt - optional
    - E. Black tie
    - F. Civil Air Patrol insignia shall be worn on left shoulder of tunic.
    - G. Flight and/or rating insignia shall be worn on left breast.
  
  4. Uniform dress for women shall be any adaptation of colors heretofore prescribed.
- 

The above recommendations are based on the following considerations:

1. Khaki is the most available of all the colors.
2. It is procurable in so many different qualities of material. The volunteer may get a uniform for less than \$5 or he may procure garments of finer quality.
3. Khaki clothes are available everywhere. In fact, many volunteers already own such clothes.
4. Experienced personnel requests khaki be adopted.
5. The use of khaki will immediately give a psychological character to the organization. Blue and all other colors have been adopted by airlines and various other groups. The khaki will convey the sense of national defense significance.
6. It is the insignia which will distinguish the organization and the military will have no objection.
7. I wish to make the most urgent recommendation that the uniform be adopted. This will free us from any bottleneck and it is vital that we prescribe a uniform upon announcement of the plan because local units already formed are already planning most resplendent outfits for themselves and if they proceed to do this, it will hurt our recruiting badly.

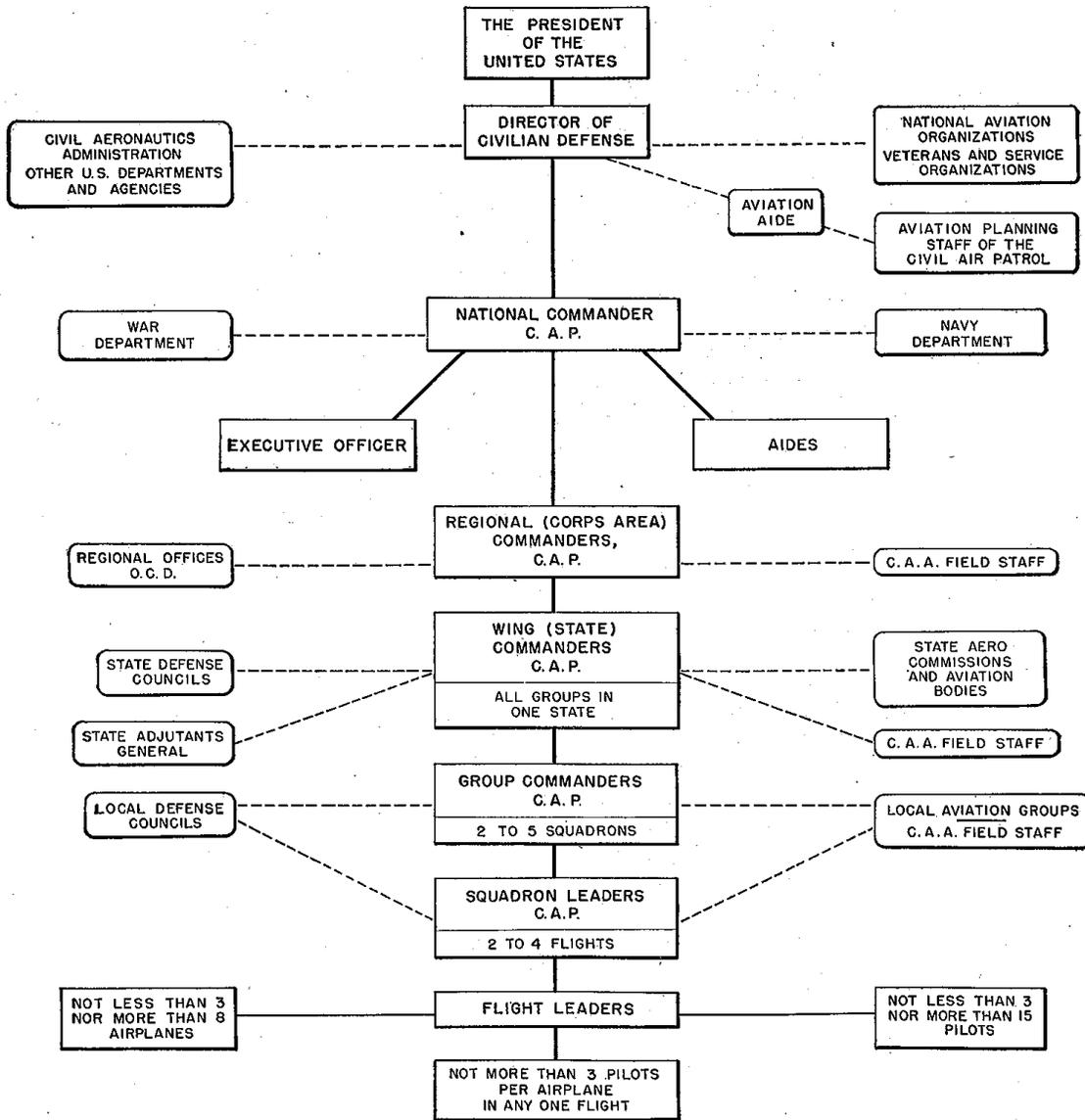
The work of the Civil Air Patrol must progress without any delays due to unnecessary details.

For insignia:

1. Sleeve ornaments: cloth, embroidered, 3" circle of CAP basic design.
  2. Cap ornaments: cloth, embroidered, 1.5" circle of CAP basic design.
  3. Metal and embroidered wings for shirts and tunics - full wing. Pilot.
  4. Metal and embroidered half wings. Observer.
  5. Metal and embroidered propellers. Ground Personnel.
  6. Rating insignia: 5 point metal gold and metal silver stars.  
5 point embroidered red and embroidered blue stars
  7. Airplane insignia: stencils and/or decals of the basic CAP design to be painted or imprinted on wings, fuselage, tail, etc. of all CAP airplanes.
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# Original Structure for the Civil Air Patrol

## ORGANIZATION CHART CIVIL AIR PATROL



Solid lines indicate COMMAND; dotted lines indicate COOPERATION.

# UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT MANUAL

1945

First Edition

Division of Public Inquiries • Office of War Information

## Appendix A

### Executive Agencies and Functions of the Federal Government Abolished, Transferred, or Terminated Subsequent to March 4, 1933

**Civil Air Patrol (Office of Civilian Defense)**--Established by Administrative Order 9 of December 8, 1941, to enlist, organize, and operate a volunteer corps of civilian airmen, with their own aircraft and equipment, for wartime tasks. Executive order 9339 of April 29, 1943, transferred the Civil Air Patrol to the War Department

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FORM I

*Proposed National*  
~~POLICY~~ FOR ORGANIZATION  
OF CIVIL AIR DEFENSE

I.

There shall be established an Aviation Section in the Office of Civilian Defense.

II.

The duties of this Section shall be to organize and correlate the non-scheduled civil air resources of the *United States* ~~Nation~~ into a National Civil Air Guard.

III.

Organization shall be effected through the State Defense Councils *and shall follow the plans of organization of the U.S. Army Air Corps,*

IV.

Each State Defense Council shall be requested to organize the civil air resources of the state into a ~~State~~ *Unit* Civil Air Guard.

V.

*Aviation Section of the*  
The Office of Civilian Defense shall assist in organizing *tion* and shall correlate the <sup>*state*</sup> Units of the ~~State~~ *National* Civil Air Guard after organization is effected.

VI.

The Office of Civilian Defense shall furnish each state Defense Council:

- (a) A uniform plan of organization.
- (b) A uniform training ~~program~~ *objective*.
- (c) A uniform service ~~policy~~ *objective*.
- (d) A personnel and aircraft complement schedule based on the civil air resources of the state.
- (e) Financial assistance based on a schedule which is a part of this report.

VII.

Personnel of the state units of the National Civil Air Guard shall receive federal status by being placed on the payroll of the Office of Civilian Defense at a salary of one dollar per year and taking the oath of allegiance to the United States and by signing enlistment papers in the National Civil Air Guard.

VIII.

The Office of Civilian Defense shall secure priorities of aviation fuel, lubrication, repair parts, and materials for manufacture of such civil aircraft whose purchasers shall make affidavit that such aircraft are to be used in the volunteer service of the National Civil Air Guard.

IX.

All personnel of the Civil Air Guard shall be enrolled on a volunteer basis except those full time employees necessary to administration of the National Civil Air Guard and the State Units.