



YOU BE THE HISTORIAN

David C. Schilling
Schilling Air Force Base

In 1957 Salina's Smoky Hill Air Force Base was renamed Schilling Air Force Base in honor of David C. Schilling. This was a great honor for the man and his family but who was David Schilling? What did he do? Even today, decades after the base closed, Schilling Road and Schilling Elementary School remind us that this man did something important with his life. Read on to find out more!

YOU ARE HIRED

Sometimes historians are **biographers**. They use their knowledge and background to study individuals and interpret the effect they had on events and people. Read the following information about David Schilling and then answer the questions on the back.

Who was David C. Schilling?

David Schilling was born on December 15, 1918 in Leavenworth, Kansas. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1939 and then joined the United States Army Air Force. Schilling was married twice, to Georgia "Jo" Weidman in 1942 and then to Eugenia "Gene" Hunnicutt in 1951 after Jo died in 1950. He had three children.

Biographers know that how and where people grow up has a huge influence on the kind of person they become.

David grew up in Leavenworth, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri in a comfortably middleclass family. There was money for outdoor activities like fishing and hunting vacations in Michigan, a nice home, and an expensive Ivy League education at Dartmouth College. Although his father and brother both loved hunting and fishing and David participated, he was more interested in motors, airplanes, and motorcycles.

As bright as he was, David was not an outstanding student. *By the end of my sophomore year (at Dartmouth), I was on probation with one semester to go before I either got cranked up or was to be politely asked to leave.*

A lecture from his parents and a summer of hard physical labor changed his attitude. *My junior and senior years were very successful and I did quite well. The Geology professors were not only teachers of the technical details of their specialty but taught us how to become a man.*

Biographers study what people meant to their professions. In Schilling's case the profession was the military.

Schilling earned his wings on May 9, 1940 at Brooks Field in Texas. After the U.S. entered World War II in 1941, Schilling was deployed to Europe in January 1943. He flew his first combat mission on April 8

VOCABULARY

Wingman: (**wing**-man) *noun* A pilot whose plane is positioned behind and outside the leader in a formation of flying aircraft.

Biographer: (**bye-og**-ruh-fer) *noun* A person who writes another person's life story.

Sortie: (**sor**-tee) *noun* A flight of a combat aircraft on a mission.

Luftwaffe: (**looft**-vahf-uh) *noun* The German air force before and during World War II.

but it was October 2 before he shot down his first enemy aircraft. After that he was so successful that he earned the nickname "One-a-Day" Schilling. In his 132 combat **sorties** (missions) Colonel Schilling shot down 22.5 enemy aircraft and destroyed another 10.5 on the ground.

How people lead, make decisions, and handle pressure are important indications of who they are.

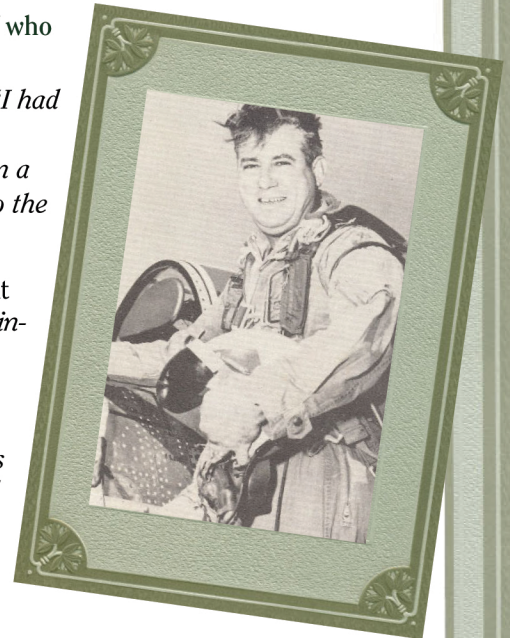
Captain Cliff Tichenor was the Schilling's squadron's World War II flight surgeon. *"I had to teach him that other people's problems are their own, not his. There was a tremendous amount of stress in his job, having to make life and death decisions on a daily basis. ...he did have a sense of purpose and that made him react favorably to the challenges that confronted him."*

After the war Schilling remained in the Air Force and became one of its most important innovators. *"Among his many achievements in his postwar years was the initiation of in-flight refueling of single-engine planes using bombers as tankers"*.

How people die and how they are remembered are important to biographers.

"... Schilling was sent to England as inspector general of Strategic Air Command's 7th Air Division. On April 16, 1956, Schilling left Lakenheath Air Base in England hoping to sell his racing car (he had become interested in amateur sports car racing) to another Air Force officer at nearby Mildenhall. Schilling's sports car spun into a bridge as he tried to avoid an oncoming car on a narrow country lane. He was thrown from the car and killed instantly. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery." —Albany, Georgia Herald

On Schilling's death, international correspondent and friend, Bob Considine wrote, *"Dave Schilling, who couldn't be downed by the Luftwaffe nor swallowed by the oceans he successfully challenged, was killed in an automobile accident on a peaceful road in England...The nation has suffered a great loss."*



QUESTIONS

1. What qualities did David Schilling have that you admire?
2. Are there things about David Schilling that you don't admire?
3. American author Mark Twain wrote that, *"Biographies are but the clothes and buttons of the man. The biography of the man himself cannot be written"*. What did he mean? Do you agree?

BEYOND THE MUSEUM

Scanlon, General Jim, Wall, Bailey, Arnold, Summers, and Sutherland are all Salina street names once connected with Schilling Air Force Base. See if you can discover who these people were and why streets were named after them.

Much of the information and all of the quotations you just read about David Schilling came from the book *Follow Me: The Life and Times of David C. Schilling* by John C. McClure, Lt. Col., USAF (ret.) and Charlotte S. McClure, PH.D. The book can be found at the Salina Public Library.



Smoky Hill Museum • 211 West Iron • Salina, KS 67401
www.smokyhillmuseum.org • 785-309-5776

A division of the Salina Arts & Humanities, a department of the City of Salina.