

Flying High

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Have you ever thought of piloting a plane? You would be up high in the sky next to the clouds with the ground far beneath you. Now imagine you're flying to Alaska in freezing cold weather. This is exactly what I do. Hi, I'm Sergeant Farrell and I'm a pilot during World War II!

The year is 1943 and the U.S. is helping Great Britain and the Soviet Union fight against Germany, Italy, and Japan. The U.S. helps these countries and sends food, clothing, trucks, and planes. I help out by flying planes from Montana across Canada to Alaska. Americans are counting on me and I'm a big part of the war effort.

Since the U.S. is so far away from the Soviet Union, I fly planes to Ladd Field in Fairbanks where Soviet pilots pick them up and fly them to Russia. The route we fly is called the Northwest Staging Route. The planes are built all over the U.S. and sent to Great Falls, Montana, to get ready for their journey.

After I land in Alaska, I get on another plane, fly to Montana, and pick up another plane to fly to Ladd Field again. On August 30, 1942, the first planes left Montana for Ladd Field and I was one of the first pilots to fly. One of the most common planes is the Bell P-63 Kingcobra plane.





Take a look at the Kingcobra planes and color them.

This journey is 2,000 miles! Since we can't fly all day and night, we stop at several airfields in Canada and Alaska. Some of the stops are in Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Fort Nelson, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse.

When we stop, we rest and get more supplies. Before we take off again, we check the windsock on the field to see which way the wind is blowing. If we can't fly, then we're "socked in." If a storm is coming, then we stay safe on the ground until the storm passes. We never know if we'll be socked in for a few hours or even a few days.



It can be very boring just waiting, so we come up with ways to keep busy. We read, write letters, and play cards. Sometimes we get really silly and make up new activities. One of my favorites is when we whittle wood to create the strangest nose picker. I once made the best picker and am now part of the Nosepicker's Club!

Imagine that you're socked in and are making a strange nosepicker. What does it look like?





Lieutenant Makarova translating for American and Soviet engineers, 1943 Soviet airmen in downtown Fairbanks

When we land at an airfield for new supplies, the ground crews help us with our planes. If the weather gets too cold, then the engines could freeze and we would be stuck. I remember one time we needed to put the engine oil on a stove all night to keep it warm. Then we set up heaters to keep the engines warm.

Once we land at Ladd Field, the Soviet pilots take over the planes. After the Soviets have the planes, they paint a red star on each one to show that it belongs to them now.

The Soviet pilots sure are different than we are! They wear dressier uniforms with high boots and leather jackets. Since I speak English and the Soviet pilots speak Russian, we need translators to help. The Soviet Union sent two women to Ladd Field to translate, Lieutenants Elena Makarova and Natasha Fenelonova. They help the pilots understand each other. Do you know any Russian? When the Americans greeted the Soviet pilots, they may have said, "Welcome to Ladd Field!" This looks like Добро пожаловать в Лэдд Филд!! and sounds like "Dobro pozhalovat' v Ledd Fild!" See if you can copy the greeting below. ▼

#### Добро пожаловать в Лэдд Филд!

Before flying to Russia, the Soviet pilots work with soldiers at Ladd Field to check the weather. It can get pretty dangerous flying in bad weather so we need to make sure it's safe to fly before they take off. This route is even colder and longer than the one I fly! After the planes land in Moscow, Russia, they fly to the eastern war front in Europe to fight Germany.



Soviet planes flying over Berlin, Germany



Help the plane get through the clouds on its way to fight in the war.



### Questions to think about

- Would you like to be a pilot and take planes back and forth to Ladd Field? Would it be exciting? Scary?
- 2. If you were a pilot flying on the Northwest Staging Route and were "socked in," what would you do to keep busy?
- 3. If you worked at Ladd Field during World War II, what job would you want? A pilot? A translator? A weather reporter? Why?

12 Flying High in the Sky! \_

Lend-Lease Monument in Fairbanks

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WWII



#### Want to learn more?

World War II ended in 1945, and, by the end of the war, 7,926 planes traveled through Ladd Field. Most Americans didn't know that the U.S. was sending planes to the Soviets. This was top secret information until after the war. In 2006, a monument was built at Griffin Park in Fairbanks to celebrate what we did, so come by and visit it!

#### Check out these resources

Aircraft of World War II (What's Inside?) (Aaron R. Murray)

Alaska: World War II Battleground

http://www.alaskakids.org/index.cfm/know-alaska/Alaska-History/World-War-II

DK Eyewitness Books: World War II: Explore the Terrifying Global Conflict that Shaped the Modern World from D-Day to the Atomic Bomb (Simon Adams)

NACA Aircraft, Research Aircraft at NASA Glenn Research Center, 1943-1958 (https://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/portal/apps/naca/)

Simple History: A Simple Guide to World War II (Daniel Turner)

Warplanes to Siberia (http://alsib.org/en/)

World War II for Kids: A History with 21 Activities (Richard Panchyk)

World War II: Visual Encyclopedia (DK)

Aerial view of Ladd





# Want to learn more about Ladd Field's history?

Ladd Field's history is filled with many amazing stories. You and your parents can take a driving self-guided tour around the Ladd Field Historic District. Stop by the Visitors Center next to the Main Gate or call the Cultural Resources Manager at 907-361-3002 to learn about other history opportunities.

# Cultural Resources Management at Fort Wainwright



Center for Environmental Management MILITARY LANDS

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

The Cultural Resources Management Program supports the Army's mission by inventorying and managing cultural resources in a manner that complies with federal law, minimizes impacts on the mission, supports sustainability of resources and infrastructure, and provides sound stewardship of properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The Cultural Resources Management Office is located within the Environmental Division, Building 3023. Copies of publications and additional information on the history of Fort Wainwright are available upon request. Business hours are Monday through, Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Directorate of Public Works, Environmental Division ATTN: IMFW-PWE (Cultural Resources Manager) 1046 Marks Road, Fort Wainwright, Alaska 99703-4500 (907) 361-3002

