



Honoring the Past, Inspiring the

Air Force antiquity coming to Grove for permanent

*Story by Clint Branham, Communications Specialist
Photos and images courtesy of the Grove F-4 Phantom Project*



Future ent display

A rare piece of U.S. aviation history is coming to northeast Oklahoma and you can join the effort to help bring it here.

An impassioned group of Grove citizens is spearheading a campaign to provide a permanent home for the last remaining F-4 Phantom fighter plane in circulation. The aircraft will be the centerpiece of a historical display erected along Highway 10, a few miles east of downtown Grove. It is set to arrive in early 2018 and will be stationed near the campus of Ferra Aerospace world headquarters.

Although a fundraising effort is still very much underway, representatives from the United States Air Force advised on April 5, 2017, that Grove had been selected as the recipient of the F-4. The goal

for the project is to raise \$100,000. Nearly half of the transportation cost has been raised to-date, thanks to both individual and corporate pledges and contributions. A committee of the Grove Rotary Club is leading the effort.

The primary expense will be moving the plane from its current home—a hangar at Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, New Mexico. Worldwide Aircraft Recovery, a company in Nebraska that specializes in such work, has been secured for this task at a price tag of \$45,000.

“This is the company that museums use to move aircraft. They have an excellent reputation,” remarked Beverly Helms, communications liaison for the Grove Rotary Club project. “They have moved 16 F-4s in the past so they know what they are doing. Right now they are in the process of moving a B-52 Hustler off an Air Force base.”

Helms said that a bid of \$75,000 was originally submitted by a different company. However, she explained, disassembly, transport and reassembly is all included in the bid submitted by the Nebraska group.

The process is quite involved. The craft’s wings with retracted landing gear will be removed and shipped independent of the fuselage. Specialized jacks and straps are required, and custom cribbing must be utilized to cradle the components once they are loaded onto the trucks. Grand Lake-based Chandler Crane is donating the use of a crane to help unload and position the plane once it arrives.

The plane is expected to be delivered in display condition. Since it was being maintained for training purposes, it was already in excellent condition. Often, these jets are stripped, chopped for scrap metal or used as ground targets for training.

“It was actually being over-maintained,” said Helms. “I am sure there will be some touching up to do, but we have heard that most of the time whenever you get an aircraft like this it comes in bad shape. So, when compared with the cost of restoration, moving it is a small expense. For us, getting it here is our primary expense.”

An arrival date has not been set since there are many variables to consider.

“We don’t have an arrival date yet, but we know they will begin the process in January,” said Helms. “It will depend on the weather and on any issues or challenges they might run into. Plus, they have to get all of the permits to move what will be an extremely long and wide load down the highway.”

Helms’ husband Dave, himself an Air Force Veteran, is collaborating with Ferra Aerospace personnel to create custom mounts for the plane which will place it off the ground and reduce standing wear on its tires while on display. No stranger to creative design, Dave builds prosthetic limbs for disabled individuals and performs contract work for the Veterans Administration. He was also a staff sergeant in the U.S. Air Force, serving as an aircraft structural mechanic from 1970-1974.

“Dave is making mounts to off-weight the landing gear wheels so they are not getting wear on them,” she said. “The canopy is blacked out and plates and covers will be installed to keep out as many birds and bugs as possible. Our objective is to keep maintenance minimal.”

The airplane has been de-militarized and has met all hazardous materials restrictions. It will arrive without ejections seats and, even though the burner cans are still intact giving the appearance of functionality, both J-79 engines have been removed.

Ongoing maintenance, just like procurement of the plane, will be a group effort. Ferra has agreed to maintain the grounds while members of local Veteran’s organizations, Grove Rotary Club and Grove Composite Squadron, a branch of the Oklahoma Civil Air Patrol, will help with maintenance of the display itself. Eventually, flags, lighting, park benches, a donor informational area, and other aesthetics will be added to complement the F-4 display.

To see an F-4 Phantom fighter jet decked out in jungle camo standing guard at the world headquarters of Ferra Aerospace will truly be a sight to behold for anyone driving east of Grove. At 63 feet long with a wing span of more than 38 feet, the sprawling aircraft will not be easy to miss. It is the real deal, not a knock-off or miniaturized replica.

“To give you some perspective on how large this plane is,” Dave said, “you would not easily fit it inside a 60 by 40 building.”

Pete Norwood is another influential community member responsible for Grove “landing” the prized aircraft. Norwood is owner of Honey Creek Marina and himself a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, having served from 1975 to 1985. He has logged more than 1,500 hours of flight time alone as an F-4 Phantom and F-16 pilot. He was a member of the Kansas National Guard from 1986-1989, worked for Boeing, and conducted flight training in the F-4 Phantom as an American advisor to the Egyptian Air Force in Cairo, Egypt. His expertise has been invaluable.

Bob Brogdon
520 S. Main St.
Grove Oklahoma 74344
March 30, 2017

To whom it may concern,

It is my honor to write this letter of recommendation for the Grove Regional Airport to secure a static display of the F-4E Phantom.

During my tenure in the US Air Force I was deployed to Osan Air Base in Korea in 1972. Working as a Firefighter on the flight line I was uniquely familiar with the F4E as we watched flight after flight depart and return to the field. This aircraft carried out the mission of the US during the Viet Nam Conflict maintaining air superiority. This history of service will be showcased by the addition on this aircraft at the Grove Airport.

After my enlistment in the Air Force, I returned to service in the U S Army where I received my flight wings and served as a Chief Warrant Officer 2, Helicopter Pilot. My flight experiences in the UH-1H Huey and the OH-58 Scout aircraft gave me an even more refined gratitude for the role of aircraft in our armed forces.

With the onslaught of new technology over the past decades the role of the aircraft use in our military are even more important. These older aircraft should never be forgotten. They are our history and our legacy for the future. This rich history can be more easily seen and understood by the younger generations because we are able to maintain these exhibition aircraft and display them for all to see and remember. Air museums around the world keep these aircraft on display to record our history. We in the Grove community would like to do our part to preserve the rich history of aviation with this display F4E Phantom.

As a former member of the Grove Municipal Airport Authority Board and The Grove Planning and Zoning Board, I believe that the display of the F4E Phantom Fighter would be a great asset to the City of Grove, The Grove Airport and the Community.

As a Past President of Grove Rotary I can assure you that a commitment from the Rotary club to help maintain any city venue is not an idle acknowledgement. We will band together as we do with any project and insure the maintenance is accomplished.

Sincerely,

Bob Brogdon
Bandit Business Services
fmr. Chief Warrant Officer 2, US Army
bobbrogdon@yahoo.com



104 W. 3rd • Grove, Oklahoma • 74344
(918) 786-6107 • Fax: (918) 786-8939

March 22, 2017

Mr. Barry Bornemann
Administrative Officer – OKSASP
Office of Management and Enterprise Services
3100 N. Creston
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73111

Dear Mr. Bornemann:

At their March 21, 2017 meeting, the City of Grove City Council took action to authorize the submittal of this letter of intent to officially request the loan of a McDonnell-Douglas F-4E Phantom II, Serial Number 71-0247, that was manufactured on January 1, 1971.

The intended use of this aircraft is for a static display at the Grove Regional Airport. The plane would be located adjacent to the new terminal building in a prominent location that would command a space that would be viewed by all vehicle traffic approaching the terminal as well as most aviation related activity at the airport.

Our airport is a general aviation airport located in northeast Oklahoma and is within a short distance from Kansas, Missouri and Arkansas. Not only does our airport serve the Grove community, it also plays a major role in the field of aviation for Northeast Oklahoma and the region surrounding the Grand Lake O'the Cherokees. Our position as a regional airport is reflected by the recent completion of the new terminal building as well as an FAA funded taxiway and apron improvement project. In addition, the City has begun design work for the extension of new taxi lanes to provide additional space to accommodate new private hangar and t-hangers. These improvements reflect the growth in both transient and based aircraft at the airport.

At this time, the City of Grove does not own any aircraft for any purpose including a static display. To the best of our knowledge there are no other static displays of fixed wing aircraft in the proximity to the Grove Regional Airport.

Aviation is important as it relates to the citizens of our community and tourism based community. Many of our retirees are proud to have served their ties to the F-4 while serving in the military as a pilot or crew member. In addition, Grove also has a strong aerospace manufacturing industry with over 500 employees.

Letters of support for the project demonstrate the excitement and opportunities for the community.

Grove Public Schools

"Home of the Ridgerunners"
PO Box 450789
Grove OK, 74345-0789

Sandy Jo Coaly, Superintendent

To Whom It May Concern:

Grove Public Schools and the Grove Board of Education would like to show our support by writing this letter for the Grove Regional Airport to secure a F4 to be on permanent display in Grove, Oklahoma.

We realize that the display would be very educational for our students as well as our community. Grove, Oklahoma is located in the Northeast corner of our great state and we are located on beautiful Lake of the Cherokees (Grand Lake). Because of the beautiful area we live in we have a large tourist crowd. The F4 would be another site for our tourist to visit.

Our community is very unique in the fact that we truly do support our school, local businesses, and we have a great faith base with numerous churches as well. Grove, Oklahoma is a fantastic place to live or visit.

In closing we would like to show our support for the F4 it would have a great home in Grove! We can't think of any other town that would be a better fit than Grove, Oklahoma.

Sincerely,

Sandy Coaly
Superintendent

Clara Mills
President

Dr. James Rutter
Vice President

Cheryl
Clerk

Audrey Crawford
Member

Jerry Cooley
Member

918.786.3003 • 918.786.9365 Fax • scoaly@ridgerunners.net • www.ridgerunners.net

CIVIL AIR PATROL

P.O. Box 450451
Grove, OK 74345
March 28, 2017

To whom it may concern,

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of recommendation for the Grove Regional Airport to secure a static display of the F-4 Phantom.

The cadets and members of Grove Composite Squadron are enthusiastic about the possibility of helping to maintain and care for the display. This is a wonderful opportunity for our cadets to earn community service hours as well as an excellent opportunity for development of our aerospace curriculum. The proposal sounds like a perfect match for the local Civil Air Patrol unit. Please contact me at 918-521-9137 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. David L. Roberts

droberts@ridgerunners.net

Lt. Col David L. Roberts, CAP

OKWG Vice Commander

(C) 918.521.9137

(D) 918.786.3003 ex.1010

U.S. Air Force Auxiliary

GoCivilAirPatrol.com

<http://www.okwcap.org/>

"My small contribution to this thing was that I kind of 'spoke Air Force' and so when they would ask about the airplane itself, I could give a little assistance. But it truly has been a team effort."

Norwood is quick to deflect any attention and credits what has been an enormous outpouring of support from the community.

"Dave has been instrumental, as has Beverly. She has been our communications focal point all along and has kept all of the emails that were coming in from the

different government agencies answered in a timely manner. I cannot tell you how important it was to have her processing paperwork, answering emails and filling out forms online," he said. "Bill Kiefer, Grove City Manager, wrote a splendid letter of recommendation on behalf of the project. The Grove Rotary Club's involvement gives us the structure for receiving and distributing funds, as well as the notoriety that goes along with a great organization. Also, when we began doing the paperwork, we needed the city to pledge that they would take the plane. It is important to note that even though the city agreed, there are zero tax

dollars involved in this. The actual funding is coming from private and corporate donors.”

The involvement of Ferra Aerospace was also crucial, explained Norwood. “Two stars aligning” is how he describes it.

“The timing was perfect,” Norwood said. “Here’s a company that builds aircraft parts for the U.S. Air Force. When they found out about the project, they reached out to us and said we have been wanting to display an aircraft out here. So they donated an acre of land which has already been deeded over and approved by the city council. They also are going to be helping with the yard care and things like that since its adjacent to their property.”

Norwood said there are many more to thank for doing their part to bring this unique facet of Air Force history to Grove, adding that it was no small feat, given the competitive nature of the process.

“There were several other cities in the running to get it. We were the dark horse,” he said. “The reason we were selected was the overwhelming show of support they saw. All of the letters from the city council and the City of Grove, the school district, Civil Air Patrol, American Legion, VFW—all the groups that inundated this effort were all instrumental in getting this thing done. We really didn’t have anything to offer other than a lot of people writing letters and putting the weight of their respective organizations behind us. If you think about it in metaphorical terms, it’s like millions and millions of drops get together and that’s called a flood. Everyone who wrote a letter was a drop in the flood. That’s how we got it.”

Added Norwood with a chuckle: “And then they gave it to us and we looked around at each and said ‘Okay, now what do we do.’ We had to start educating ourselves. How are we going to move it? We even thought about going out there with trucks and trailers and doing it ourselves, which would have been silly given what we now know. It’s been such an incredible learning process from where we started out to where we are now.”

It is not easy to grasp how such an involved project came together through the persistence of impassioned individuals.

“If you remove any one step from this process, it would have failed. It is truly a community effort that is making this happen. It has been an enormous challenge bringing the airplane here, coordinating logistics with the Air Force and the city and then getting the support of the community,” Norwood said. “Everyone has been extremely magnanimous in giving us their support—whether they

are dropping pocket change in one of the drop jars that are located throughout the area, writing a \$5,000 check, or even if it’s just moral support. The reward is that we now have something here for perpetuity. It is a special feeling to know that we are going to be able to leave a little bit of legacy, not for us but for children of parents who are not even born yet.”

The U.S. Air Force celebrated its 70th anniversary this fall. A ball was held at Holloman Air Force base to commemorate the occasion. Beverly, Dave and Pete all accepted an invitation to attend. They were delighted to find Grove’s F-4 Phantom being used as a centerpiece for the party.

“It was sitting right in front of the hangar. As everyone was coming in they passed right by it. The Air Force realizes what a significant piece of memorabilia this is to use it as a centerpiece for its 70th birthday party,” said Norwood. “This was one of the leading-edge machines in the U.S. Air Force for a long time. It protected a lot of guys on the ground and in the air. I can’t imagine what the sky looked like when it was filled with these things and those who flew them who dedicated and even lost their lives and the families who supported them. This is a unique opportunity not only for the City of Grove but for northeast Oklahoma and all the people who are giving us their dollars. They are giving to the future. This is not something that is going to wilt on the vine. It’s going to be here for a long time.”

Added Norwood: “This airplane was not given to any one person or organization. It was given to the City of Grove and it was given with the understanding that even though it is a gift to the city, it remains the property of the United States Air Force and is considered an antiquity and to be treated as such. In other words, it cannot be put out in a playground and used as a jungle gym. It is to be treated with the respect of an antiquity.”

“This is the last F-4 that is going to be available anywhere. Period,” said Norwood. “McDonnell Douglas built 5,200 of them and to my knowledge there are only about 200 left and those are not in flyable condition but just in showable condition, so this was the last opportunity to preserve a portion of our aviation history. We consider it an honor to have this airplane.”

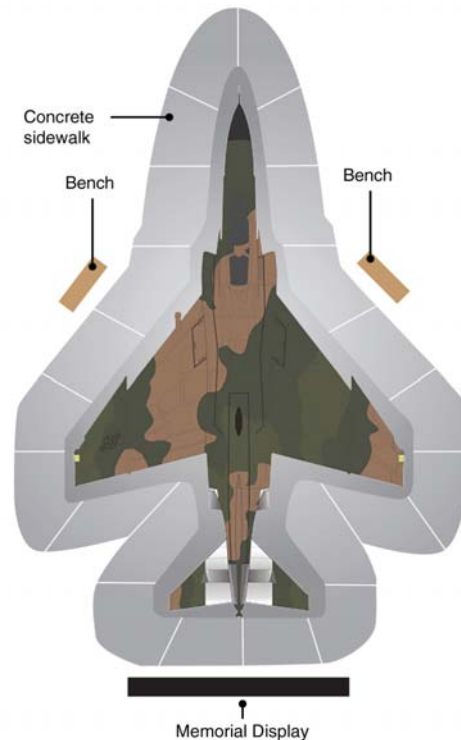
For more information or to make a contribution to the Grove Rotary Club F-4 Phantom project, visit: <https://squareup.com/store/grove-rotary-foundation>, phone Helms at 918-786-4646, or find the project on Facebook at: **F4 Phantom Grove Community Foundation and Grove F4 Phantom Project.** ●

F-4 Facts & Figures

AIRCRAFT SPECIFICATIONS

Wingspan:	38 feet, 5 inches
Length:	63 feet, 0 inches
Height:	16 feet, 6 inches
Empty weight:	29,535 pounds
Max. weight:	61,651 pounds
Powerplants:	Two 17,900 pound thrust afterburner General Electric J79-GE-15 turbojets
Armament:	One 20 mm M61A1 rotary cannon; four AIM-7 Sparrow missiles or 3,020 pounds of weapons under fuselage; up to 12,980 pounds of various weapons on underwing pylons
Crew members:	2
Performance:	Maximum speed - 1,485 mph (Mach 2.25) at 40,000 feet; service ceiling - 62,250 feet; range - 1,100 miles

AERIAL RENDITION OF SITE



HISTORY OF GROVE'S F-4 PHANTOM

- Grove's F-4 made her first flight on October 10, 1972, after which she entered service with the 4th Tactical Fighter Wing unit at Seymour Johnson AFB, in North Carolina. She would remain seven years in North Carolina, before moving in 1979 to the 52nd TFW at Spangdahlem Air Base in Germany. At that time, the aircraft received serial number 71-0247 and 71-1247 for a short time.
- After returning to the US in 1988, she was assigned to the 37th TFW at George Air Force Base in California. The mission of the 37th was to provide pilot transition training for the F-4G 'Wild Weasel.'
- In 1988, operations at George AFB were phased down and all its aircraft were transferred to the 35th TFW in 1989.
- In March 1990, #247 was removed from service and parked in an aircraft maintenance and storage facility at Davis-Monthan AFB in Arizona.
- Next, Holloman AFB in New Mexico needed a ground trainer, and #247 was selected. She was assigned to the Crash Damage or Disabled Aircraft Recovery (CDDAR) unit in July 1995. Remaining F-4s became target drones.
- Over the years, #247 was also used as a 'floater', an aircraft used for display, but without a fixed home on base.
- By 2017, she was collecting dust in a hangar at Holloman, awaiting donation through the GSAXcess SASP system.

Photo on pages 4-5, from left: Staff Sergeant Jesse Shipps, Technical Sergeant Chance Cole, Major Nathaniel Totten, Staff Sergeant David Helms, Beverly Helms, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Norwood, Chief Master Sergeant Barrington E. Bartlett, Colonel Houston R. Cantwell