



# EARL'S OAKLAND

BY EARL HOLMQUIST

OUR NEW FEATURE PRESENTING  
MANY OF THE INTERESTING  
AIRCRAFT THAT PASSED THROUGH  
OAKLAND AIRPORT

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** As readers know, at *Air Classics* we often expound on saving aviation history. Through the efforts of Norm Jukes, Roger Cain, and Nick Veronico, a portion of the photographic collection of the late Earl Holmquist was recently saved. Earl was an enthusiastic photographer in the San Francisco Bay Area but after his passing, the majority of his Kodachrome slide collection went into the dumpster but thousands of 616-size black and white negatives were saved by the individuals mentioned and we will be presenting some of these in upcoming issues. Earl was a very early member of the American Aviation Historical Society and looking through the history book of the 509th Composite Group, you can spot a young Holmquist among the members of the 603rd Air Engineering Squadron. The 509th was, of course, the "Atom Bombers," having dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima (6 August 1945) and Nagasaki (9 August 1945), forcing the Japanese to accept the unconditional

surrender terms dictated by Western powers. Holmquist was with the 509th when the group was stationed at Roswell, New Mexico. He went on to serve in Korea as well. During his time in the Air Force, he served as a B-29 mechanic and after this four-year tour was up, he joined the Air Force Reserves as a flight engineer on C-119s, C-124s, and C-141s. After his time in the USAF, Earl worked at Oakland's North Field where he always had a camera close by. At the time, Oakland was home to the many non-scheduled airlines, including Transocean, California Eastern, and California Hawaiian. Holmquist documented many of these aircraft while working for Aircraft Engine and Maintenance Company (AEMCO) which was in the business of overhauling numerous types of military aircraft. North Field was also home to Naval Air Station Oakland. He later went to work for United Air Lines and eventually retired from that company. After a long retirement, he passed away on 2 May 2010.



Oakland Airport would always have many interesting aircraft in transit — in this case "Air Force One" in the form of Lockheed VC-121E 53-7885 *Columbine III* when used by President Dwight Eisenhower. Originally built as R7V-1 BuNo 131650 for the US Navy, the aircraft was changed on the production line to a VC-121E for the president and delivered to the USAF during September 1954 as *Columbine III*. Initially, the Connie was based at Washington National Airport with the 1254th ATW before moving to Andrews AFB with the 89th MAW. As a presidential aircraft, it was replaced by a Boeing VC-137A in January 1961 but continued on in its VIP transport role until being retired in April 1966. On 20 April, it was transferred to the USAF Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB where it remains on display.



During the 1950s, one of the most common visitors to Oakland Airport was the Lockheed Lodestar series. The Lear Jets of their day, Lodestars were extremely popular business aircraft and numerous modifications were offered to increase the type's performance. In the 1950s, the airport was proud to have its name emblazoned on the sides of Hangar 2 for all to see and Hangar 2 served as a backdrop for many of Earl's photographs including that of Lockheed Model 18 CF-TDI. Built for civilian use, the aircraft was impressed into USAAF service during WWII as C-57 43-34921 and after being surplused it went back into civil use. Operated as CF-TDI by Mannix Limited of Canada, the Lodestar was photographed on 16 May 1955. In 1974, it would become N1030F and would be registered to an owner in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. The last airworthiness test was undertaken in 1965 and the Lodestar was deregistered in 2011 and its final fate is not known.