Fort Worth and Tarrant County are rich in military history

From Wagon Trains to Jet Planes, range wars to the War on Terror

First American Legion Post 516 and neighbor 36th Division Armory
Cobb Park, Fort Worth, Texas 76120

Starting as a small outpost of the 2nd Dragoons and 8th Infantry Regiment in 1849 and gaining fame in the late 1800's for many well-known saloons on the north side and "Hell's Half Acre", a rollicking little vice district on the south side (where Post 516's first home was at a much later date); a town evolved.

World War I kept the Fort Worth Stockyards busy providing Pack Mules for the Army and the opening of Camp Bowie on the west side. Some 100,000 “doughboys” of the 36th Infantry Division (known as the “T-Patchers” for Texas), trained and deployed overseas from this camp. Sadly they lost some 2,600 in the last offensive of the war. Camp Bowie was closed but the 36th Infantry of the Texas National Guard remained. In World War II they were the first combat division to land in Europe in 1943. During the War they served in North Africa, Italy, France, Germany and Austria. After several realignments they are back and now serving in Iraq.

1941 also brought military airpower to town. Tarrant Field Airdrome, later Fort Worth Army Airfield and then Carswell Air Force Base was one of the first SAC bases hosting B-29, B-36, B-58 and B-52 bombers of the 7th Bomb Wing. The Wing remained active throughout the Cold War. Adjacent to the field Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Company was opened producing B-24, B-36 and B-58 Bombers. The facility is still in operation (now Lockeed Martin) and produced F-111’s, F-16’s and is now starting production of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. 1951 brought Bell Helicopter to Fort Worth (Hurst). In 1956 Bell 204 “Huey” (UH-1) helicopters started moving into the Army arsenal, followed in 1966 by Cobra’s (AH-1) and now the Bell/Boeing 901 Osprey (V-22). Greater Fort Worth American Legion Post 516 was chartered on the 29th of April 1965 with the original home located in Cobb Park near the Texas National Guard Armory.

Present Greater Fort Worth American Legion Post 516,

6801 Manhattan Blvd., Fort Worth, Texas 76120

In 1994 Carswell AFB became the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth and in 1995 Post 516 moved to our new home on the east side of town. After extensive renovation by loyal members on May 25th Post 516 opened at its present location. Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Carswell Field, Fort Worth is a joint defense facility which plays a pivotal role in training and equipping air crews and aviation ground support personnel. It now hosts 18 Commands comprised of active, reserve and guard units from the Navy, Marines, Air Force and Texas Air National Guard with over 9,000 assigned military personnel. Personnel from units in the Fort Worth area have deployed to every major conflict since World War I and many are serving overseas at this time. The area is also home to and estimated 145,000 military retirees.

On May 1, 2004, the 49th Armored Division was officially inactivated and the 36th Brigade of the 49th Armored Division was redesignated the 36th Infantry Division. After half a century, the 36th was reactivated to help transform the Texas Army National Guard into a more mobile and lethal fighting force that will see a new generation of T-Patchers committed to helping fight the global war on terrorism and carry on the proud legacy established by their predecessors.

The membership of Post 516 currently includes veterans from all the military branches including the Army and Air National Guard units based in Fort Worth, Texas.

To the best of my knowledge this information is current as of 15 Dec 2008.

Ken Cox, Historian for the Greater Fort Worth Post 516, American Legion Department of Texas.