

IN THE NEWS

WWII plane at Greenwood Lake Airport has history

BY ANN GENADER
Correspondent

"Connie," probably one of the most famous airplanes during the World War II period, is majestically silent in her resting place, glistening in the bright sunlight to greet those who arrive at Greenwood Lake Airport. Many are curious about the vintage aircraft.

Her engines are silent and the glory she had in bygone years is virtually unknown today. Thousands of servicemen knew her as "Connie." She flew them to far away battlefields during World War II and in the Korean War and then brought them home to the United States.

"Connie" flew into the heat of battle and wore many scars. She had moments of glory. The late Frank Lembo Sr. respected the plane and vowed to save her. He brought her to Greenwood Lake Airport, vowing she would be ready to fly at any time. Lembo's mechanic, Ted Dick, helped in the project. She was flown in under her own power. There were skeptics who said the runway was too small for the big plane and she'd never make it in. She did.

Her official name was "Constellation." The plane has four engines, a 120-foot wingspan, a fuselage over 100 feet long, and she was the Allies foremost troop carrier. Connie's engines were made at the Curtis Wright plant in Paterson during World War II. There are C18 radial engines, two rows of nine cylinders back to back producing 3350 horsepower each.

During World War II she was loaded with as many as 150 troops, ferrying them to England and France, during the invasion

of Germany.

When the war ended, the Air Force kept "Connie." A few years later the plane was in the famous airlift when Russia blockaded Berlin, and the United States airlifted medical, food and other supplies to the beleaguered people of Berlin. The plane was later used to airlift troops to Japan in the 1950s, when the United States was at war with Korea. Huddled in this plane, thousands of servicemen were flown across the Pacific to Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

There was a lot of excitement after the plane was flown into Greenwood Lake Airport many decades ago. It was transformed into a popular cocktail lounge with the pilot's area and controls visible behind glass for all to see. Attached was a restaurant, where fine cuisine was featured.

Menu specialties included The Pilot's Special, consisting of roast quail served with wild and white pilaf. The Crew's Special was Prime Ribs au jus, a pride of the house, with Yorkshire Pudding. And, there was The Constellation Special, Quail and Tail with rice pilaf. The menu also included broiled or boiled Maine lobster and nine seafood specialties from Seafood Crepes to Lobster Newburg. There were also choices featuring steak, lamb, veal and chicken.

When the restaurant closed down the plane became a pilot's shop with often needed items by those who fly.

"Connie" is still in her familiar spot at the airport and today she is still certainly a tourist's attraction in the Township of West Milford.

Contact Aim at aim@northjersey.com



PHOTOS/ANN GENADER

Pilots landing at Greenwood Lake Airport are greeted by the World War II Constellation "Connie," flown in some years ago under her own power to remain at rest after a colorful past.

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"Connie," a World War II Constellation was a foremost troop carrier and has a colorful history. She is located at Greenwood Airport, and remains as a local attraction in the Township of West Milford.

Wonder Lake upgrades coming

BY ANN GENADER
Correspondent

A resolution for an agreement authorizing an amendment to a New Jersey Department of Community Affairs grant agreement for Wonder Lake storage and supply infrastructure improvements and an amendment to the associated agreement between the Township of West Milford and Wonder Lake Property Association was approved by the Township of West Milford Council on Feb. 1.

A grant to improve the water system for the community originally was for \$198,000,

but bid for the work came in over that amount and additional grant money was requested from the state.

The request was successful and the grant for the work now totals \$250,600.

The Homeowner's Association is handling the project and the township is not being involved, other taking the grants for the association and turning them over to the association.

Wonder Lake, located off Germantown Road, is one of the township's original lake communities.

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