

NORTH DAKOTA AVIATION HALL OF FAME

Duane “Pappy” Larson

Inducted: 1997



Duane “Pappy” Larson was born in Regent, North Dakota and began his flying career when he joined the US Army and entered the cadet program in 1941. He became an F51 fighter pilot and Flight Commander and flew 68 combat missions in the European Theater during WW II, earning many medals.

Duane returned home after his discharge in 1945 and owned and operated the Mott Airport from 1947-1950. During that time he instructed more than 150 students, flew charter flights and introduced aerial spraying to the area. He also performed flight demonstrations at air shows and county fairs around the state.

In 1951 Duane joined the North Dakota Air National Guard and served in several positions including the 178th Fighter Interceptor Squadron Commander. He retired in 1969 as the Personnel Staff Officer for the State of North Dakota with the rank of Brigadier General. He distinguished himself as an instructor, test and proficiency check pilot in

the B-25, C-45, C47, T-6, F-5 1, T-33, F-94 and F-89.

Duane Larson’s leadership had a significant influence on the traditions of the North Dakota Air National Guard. The 178th Fighter Squadron was dubbed the “Happy Hooligans” and Larson, as their commander, became “Pappy” based on a 1920’s cartoon. This nickname has been adopted by the entire unit and still exists. Duane “Pappy” Larson is considered the original “Happy Hooligan”.

In addition to his career in the Air Guard, Larson continued his civilian flying, instructing over 50 students and teaching refresher courses for the North Dakota Aeronautics Commission.

After retirement from the Air National Guard, he flew with Kraft Aviation of Mapleton, ND and later with Schroeder Aviation of Davenport, ND.