



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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CITY OF TUSTIN CREATES “THE TUSTIN HANGARS: TITANS OF HISTORY”

The historical documentary details the history of the hangars as they contributed to the country’s military history and shaped Orange County’s landscape.

“The Tustin Hangars: Titans of History” is a 25-minute video documentary of the massive blimp hangars at the former Marine Corps Air Station Tustin (MCAS Tustin.) The program explores the history of the Tustin hangars, from design and construction to the present day, and their role in the Navy’s World War II blimp program.

“The Tustin hangars are memorialized as they are great icons of Tustin and Orange County. We hope the public will join us to learn more about their history and in turn learn more about the history of Tustin,” said Mayor Doug Davert. “In addition to the debut on Monday evening, the video will be available on our website and an extremely informative display has been created that will be toured around Orange County.”

City of Tustin 300 Centennial Way, Tustin, CA 92780

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The Tustin hangars each cost \$2.5 million to build. At some 1,000 feet long and 300 feet wide with 5 acres of unobstructed floor area, they were, and still are, two of the largest wooden structures in the world. Despite their size, the wooden giants were built in record time, about nine months, which was typical of wartime construction projects, like the Pentagon itself, which was built in 16 months.

The Tustin air base was built in 1942, following the attack on Pearl Harbor as the United States joined the fight against Japan and Germany. Across the country, lighter-than-air blimps were used to patrol the coasts for enemy submarines, operating from existing and newly constructed airfields, including a new base that was first called Naval Air Station Santa Ana and later became MCAS Tustin.

MCAS Tustin was run by the Marine Corps until 1999. During that time the hangars were used for lighter-than-air blimps for patrols of the Pacific Coast during WWII, and for helicopter training after 1951.

“The Tustin Hangars: Titans of History” opens with a question that sets the stage for what the audience will learn was a critical chapter



in U.S. military aviation history during World War II:

The Tustin hangars are two of the largest wood structures in the world. Who built them...and why?"

The program uses voice-over narration, on-camera interviews, archival still photos and stock footage to explore the history of the Tustin hangars. Producing the program, which took over two years, included an intense, national search for archival footage of the hangars being built, drawing upon collections from the Department of Defense, the United States Navy and the National Archives.

The richest source of footage was an association of airship veterans and enthusiasts in Edgewater, Florida, whose collection included remarkable color film footage of construction crews building the hangars, some of it never seen by the general public before.

The program includes interviews with David Lee Narver, Jr., who helped build the Tustin hangars in 1942 as a recent graduate of the Stanford University School of Engineering, and with Col. Bill Hammerle,



USMC (Ret.), who was base commander of MCAS Tustin from 1993 to 1996.

David Lee Narver, who passed away in 2008, was the son of Lee Narver, a founder of Holmes & Narver Engineering, the firm that engineered and supervised the building of the hangars. In Col. Hammerle's interview, he explains the role the hangars played in support of USMC helicopter operations in every war from World War II to Operation Desert Storm.

With the Cold War over and Operation Desert Storm concluded, MCAS Tustin was slated for closure in 1991.

In all, "The Tustin Hangars: Titans of History" presents a fascinating history of one of the lesser-known but more unique military aviation facilities in the country – and the larger-than-life hangars that set it apart.

The video was produced for the City of Tustin and the County of Orange as part of their agreement with the Department of the Navy in



efforts to memorialize and create an accurate history of both the hangars and the decommissioned military base.

In 2006, the City requested proposals for bids to use and/or preserve the southerly hangar. Four proposals that ranged from 6% to 38% compliant with requirements were submitted. Because of their lack of viability, all proposals were rejected.

Currently the County of Orange is studying the feasibility of incorporating the northerly hangar into a county regional park and is working with a private company on a possible plan.

Both hangars are currently under the purview of the Department of Navy.

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