

Certificate of Authenticity

United States Thunderbirds 50th Anniversary

Historical Background

The United States Air Force Thunderbirds began in 1953 when Brigadier General Charles Born was given the task of forming the air demonstration unit. The original name for the team was "Stardusters", however, the selection was over-ruled in favor of the name "Thunderbirds". The first plane flown by the new Thunderbird team was the Republic F-84 Thunderjet. The Thunderbirds flew their first public airshow on June 16, 1953. In 1954, the Thunderbirds flew the F-86 Sabre, and made a 12 country tour of Central and South America. In 1955, the Thunderbirds flew the Republic F-84F Thunderstreak, a swept-wing version of the Thunderjet. For the 1956 airshow season, the Thunderbirds switched to the North American F-100C Super Sabre, and became the first flight demonstration team with supersonic capability. In 1964, the Thunderbirds flew the Republic F-105 Thunderchief, however, they flew the F-105 for only six shows, and then switched to the F-100D.

During the Vietnam War, the Thunderbirds transitioned to the McDonnell Douglas F-4E Phantom II, and a white base paint was applied to each plane, compared to the unpainted aluminum skin on previously used Thunderbird aircraft. In 1971, the Thunderbirds performed at the Paris airshow in front of the largest crowd ever, more than 2.3 million people in two days. In 1973, the Thunderbirds switched to the Northrop T-38 Talon, and performed their 2,000th airshow in 1976. On January 18, 1982, the Thunderbirds suffered a devastating crash during a practice show over the Nevada desert. Later in 1982, the Thunderbirds began flying the General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcon. The Thunderbirds have performed shows in over 60 countries and all 50 states in America for more than 315 million people.

Thunderbirds Commemorative Cachet Envelopes

Each envelope features the painting "Teamwork at its Finest", and each envelope is hand signed by the six pilots of the original 1953 Thunderbird team, and the six pilots from the 2003 Thunderbird team. Envelope set one was First Day cancelled at the Main post office in Dayton, Ohio, to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of Flight. Envelope set two was First Day cancelled at Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina, to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of Flight. Envelope set three was First Day cancelled in Washington DC, to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Korean War. Each envelope is numbered and signed by the artist.

Aviation Artist: John R. Doughty, Jr.

First Day Cancellation: July 27, 2003

Washington DC 20066

Limited Edition # _____ / 30

Artist _____

