

PLANEGRAM



HELMET HISTORY

A helmet is a form of protective headgear worn by a pilot. From the first use of the airplane as a weapon of war at the outset of World War I until the late 1940s, most fighter pilots wore headgear made of canvas, cloth or leather for protection. While the image of a pilot with leather headgear, a pair of goggles and a scarf around his neck invokes in many a feeling of romanticism and nostalgia, the truth is the headgear of that era provided very little protection for the pilot.

The leather caps worn by fighter pilots were mainly designed to protect the pilot from wind and cold, not from injury. In later years, these caps were modified to contain communications systems for the pilot, but still essentially provided little protection. The advent

of the jet age necessitated a different approach to the fighter pilot helmet. Jet fighters operate at higher speeds than their propeller-powered counterparts and the increased speed resulted in greater aerodynamic forces on the and the pilot. This brought pilot protection to the forefront of thinking.

The History Of Flight Helmets

This first hard protective helmet, the forebear of all US protective flight helmets today, came about as per the Wright Field Aircrew specification. This helmet was not intended to enable a pilot to survive a crash as much as to provide head protection within the close confines of the jet fighter (and bomber) cockpit. Thus, "crash-helmet" is a misnomer and actually somewhat misleading.

"Hard-hat" and "brain-bucket" were terms in favor among US pilots for these items, while "bone-dome" was a distinctly British term in use as the first hard helmets came into service on both sides of the Atlantic. There were many other slang terms for these items of 'personal equipment' that were somewhat less polite and the new helmets were at first not readily accepted by all air crews, who sometimes found them awkward to wear, visually restrictive, and uncomfortable to get used to.

Today, almost 100 years since the first powered, heavier-than-air flight took place, the advances in aircrew protective equipment span such a great broad range that for reasons of convenience and neces-

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sity, collectors of flight helmets fall into two categories:

- 1) the era of propeller-driven flight, and
- 2) the jet era.

It is fairly easy to see, in examining flight headgear from the earliest days of flight through the present, that it has been largely the increasing challenge to pilot safety in terms of the physics of flight encountered that has dictated the and substance of latter-era protective headgear.

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Silvia Hollis, International Bilingual Rep.

Silvia is one of our most interesting partners. Born and raised in Lima, Peru,

she learned English and became airline stewardess, married to Mike Hollis, a local young man while he was stationed in the U.S. embassy in Lima.

They came to the U.S. after the service and began with us 13 years ago. Silvia travels to Latin countries on behalf of aircraft and parts sales as vital goodwill and International Bilingual Representative for Mid Continent. Silvia resides in Memphis, TN with Mike and their daughter Stephanie Hollis.



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