

Pilot Returns to Clarinda to Fly F-15 Eagle During Fly Iowa 2005 Exhibition

By KENT DINNEBIER

United States Air Force pilot Captain Joel “Deuce” Hemphill will be returning to his father’s hometown of Clarinda on the wings of his F-15 Eagle to participate in Fly Iowa 2005 on Sept. 10-11.

Captain Hemphill, the F-15 West Coast Demonstration Team Pilot, will be presenting a flight demonstration of the F-15 as part of the air shows scheduled from 2-4 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 10-11.

“He is one of only two people who can do this in the nation. We’ve been fortunate enough for the Air Force to allow us the opportunity to have the greatest aircraft in the world demonstrate its capabilities during our event here in Clarinda,” Fly Iowa Air Show Coordinator Steve Mowery said.

The son of former Clarinda resident John Hemphill, a 1964 graduate of Clarinda High School, Captain Joel Hemphill received a Bachelor of Science in Aeronautics from Miami University of Ohio before joining the Air Force.

Captain Hemphill has logged about 1,200 flight hours including 900 with the F-15 and 130 combat hours.

During his career Captain Hemphill has been awarded the Air Medal, the Aerial Achievement Medal, the Air Force Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal and the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal.

Besides the F-15 Eagle, Captain Hemphill has also piloted the T-3, T-37, T-38 and AT-38 during his career.

“Joel is absolutely ecstatic about being able to perform his trade in his father’s hometown,” Mowery explained.

The F-15 is commonly viewed as the greatest aircraft in the world because of its capabilities as an all-weather, extremely maneuverable, tactical fighter designed to gain and maintain air superiority in aerial combat.

The Eagle’s air superiority is achieved through a mixture of maneuverability and acceleration, range, weapons and avionics. The F-15 has electronic systems and weaponry to detect, acquire, track and attack enemy aircraft while operating in friendly or enemy-controlled airspace.

Its weapons and flight control systems are designed so one person can safely and effectively perform air-to-air combat. It can penetrate enemy defense and outperform and outfight current or projected enemy aircraft.

The F-15 is equipped with an electronic warfare system that provides both threat warning and automatic countermeasures against selected threats. The “identification friend or foe” system informs the pilot if an aircraft seen visually or on radar is friendly. It also informs U.S. or allied ground stations and other suitably equipped aircraft that the F-15 is a friendly aircraft.

The F-15 Eagle can be armed with combinations of four different air-to-air weapons: AIM-7F/M Sparrow missiles or AIM-120 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles on its lower fuselage corners, AIM-9L/M Sidewinder or AIM-120 missiles on two pylons

under the wings, and an internal 20mm Gatling gun (with 940 rounds of ammunition) in the right wing root.

The F-15 Eagle began its life in the mid 1960s as the Fighter Experimental (FX) concept. Using lessons learned in Vietnam, the USAF sought to develop and procure a new, dedicated air superiority fighter.

The result of the FX study was a requirement for a fighter design combining unparalleled maneuverability with state-of-the-art avionics and weaponry. An industry-wide competition ended on December 23, 1969 when McDonnell Douglas was awarded the contract for the F-15.

The first F-15A flight was made on 27 July 1972, culminating one of the most successful aircraft development and procurement programs in Air Force history.

Considering the impressive history of the F-15 and its obvious military benefits, Mowery is thrilled the visitors to Fly Iowa 2005 in Clarinda will have the rare chance to see a demonstration of this remarkable aircraft.

“This is almost unheard of to have an F-15 at a small venue like this. Normally they only appear at military air shows or large national events,” Mowery concluded.