

The Missing Man Formation

In the movie Hell Divers from 1932, the closing flyby shows a missing man formation.

In 1936, King George V received the first recorded flypast for a non-RAF funeral. The United States adopted the tradition in 1938 during the funeral for Major General Oscar Westover with over 50 aircraft and one blank file. By the end of World War II, the missing man formation had evolved to include the pull-up. In April 1954, USAF General Hoyt Vandenberg was buried at Arlington National Cemetery without the traditional horse-drawn artillery caisson. Instead, Vandenberg was honored by a flyover of jet aircraft with one plane missing from the formation. On November 26, 1999, four Air Force F-16s flew the missing man formation over Kyle Field to honor the 12 Aggies who died during the Aggie Bonfire collapse.

The Delaware Air National Guard flew the missing man formation over the Dover International Speedway on June 3, 2001 to honor NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt Sr., who had perished in a wreck on the final lap of the 2001 Daytona 500 race on February 18. In December 2004, as a final tribute to Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands's former military role in the Royal Netherlands Air Force, three modern F-16 jet fighters and a World War II Spitfire performed a missing man formation during his funeral.

On May 25, 2012, the Royal Norwegian Air Force performed the flypast at the funeral of World War II resistance fighter Gunnar Sønsteby, Norway's most highly decorated citizen. The missing man formation was flown at a family memorial service in Indian Hill, OH, on 31 August 2012 in honor of former American astronaut, US Navy pilot, and test pilot Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the Moon. In November 2014, the state memorial service for former Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, who had served as a navigator in the Royal Australian Air Force during World War II, concluded with a missing man formation flight conducted by four RAAF F/A-18 Hornet fighters.

On 29 March 2015, the Republic of Singapore Air Force's Black Knights attempted to fly the missing man formation as an aerial salute to long-serving Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew during his funeral procession from Parliament House to the University Cultural Centre of the National University of Singapore, but was unable to do so, due to poor weather conditions.

On March 11, 2016, Fairchild Republic A-10 Thunderbolt IIs, also known as the Warthog, performed a Missing Man Formation Flyover at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA, for retired USAF Col. Avery Kay, considered the father of the A-10s. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missing_man_formation]

