



The Flyer

August 2003
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High Sky Wing of the Commemorative Air Force
Midland, Texas - Hangar: 432-563-5112

On the Web at
HighSkyWing.org

We Have A Very Busy Month Ahead!

The rest of August and all of September are going to be very busy for High Sky Wing members, family and friends. Why? Well, aside from AIRSHO 2003 on September 27th & 28th, we have a number of events and activities in the next several weeks. Here is a brief listing:

Thursday, Aug 28th — High Sky Wing meeting will again feature aircraft rides in our planes for members, starting at 5pm, weather permitting. We will be serving hamburgers and hot dogs, so just bring your \$5 donation and plan to have a good time. Dinner will be served about 7pm and the Wing meeting will focus on all of the volunteer jobs and events for AIRSHO 2003.

Thursday, Sep 4th — AIRSHO Volunteer Dinner in the main CAF hangar, with the HSW cooking.

Saturday, Sep 6th — HSW staff meeting at 10am and general hangar clean up day, plus set up tables and chairs for the Gen. Olds dinner (see below).

Friday, Sep 12th — HSW Golf Tournament from 11am until all done. Special dinner seminar with Gen. Robin Olds in the HSW hangar at 7pm — members show up early to visit with our guest. Note that the dinner is put on by the AAH Museum and tickets are required. Call the museum offices for details.

Wed., Thurs. & Friday, Sep 24-26 — HSW Cantina will be serving lunch to AIRSHO workers and aircrews from 11am to 2pm each day. We need volunteers to help man the cantina each day. Please call Gena Linebarger or Ernie Webb if you can help, or sign up at the next Wing meeting. This is an important fund raiser for our Wing as well as offering some hospitality to early arrivals and workers at AIRSHO.

Thursday, Sep 25 — USO/Bob Hope display fund raising kickoff dinner in the CAF hangar at 6pm featuring the music of Les Brown and his Band of Renown.

Friday, Sep 26 — Dedication of a memorial to historian Steven Ambrose in the morning in the Memorial Garden. *Save the Girls* luncheon in the CAF

hangar at 11:30am. For tickets call the Museum. That evening, the American Combat Airman Hall of Fame dinner will be held downtown. For tickets, call the CAF Development office.

Sat. & Sun., Sep 27-28 — AIRSHO 2003 !!!!

Monday, Sep 29 — Normal life returns for a short while until we start planning AIRSHO 2004.

HSW Meeting Changes

Due to the dates for AIRSHO 2003, **there will not be a HSW general membership meeting in September** but be sure to make the August 28th meeting, where we will talk in detail about AIRSHO jobs and events. The next regular HSW meeting after that will be on Thursday, October 23rd.

As we have done in past years, we are switching our HSW staff meetings to the first Saturday of the month, at 10am, after AIRSHO. This year, due to other conflicts, the September staff meeting has also been rescheduled to Saturday, Sep 6th at 10am.



Lead — Check Six — there's a Val on your tail! Details of the great raid on Big Lake can be found inside.

From the Back Office

by Col Ralph Gillette

Another month has come and gone at the High Sky Wing. It has been very hot around the hangar, so we thank our previous staff for getting those swamp coolers that at least cut the temperature a bit. We tried to make a fly-by for the big national girls-under-16 softball tournament but potentially inclement weather kept the planes on the ground. We did do the Hale Center trip which I unfortunately mentioned in our last news letter. (Bill, it wasn't boring, it was just two very warm hours looking at West Texas non-greenery) Our last Wing meeting was a rousing success with flying and the reenactors' displays. Did I mention it has been very hot? Tony has worked wonders on the new tug. I wonder what Bill is going to do to it with that spray can. We've started some cleanup of the hangar in preparation for AIRSHO and can use some help on that. All in all, a very busy month of July and August looks to be just as busy.

I want to thank everyone that made it out to the July Wing Meeting. We had about eighty people, which is getting into the record making category. I especially want to thank Rusty Hall for the Stearman rides, Danny Duewall for the Starduster rides, Bill Coombes and Randy Wilson for the PT-19 rides, David Linebarger and staff for the hamburgers, and Gene Smith and his group for the reenactment displays. It looks like we might be doing this again; see the Exec's column for details.

In the last two newsletters I have mentioned some of my trips to other areas of the country. In July we traveled to *La La* land to visit with my oldest son and his family. While there, I took my grandson and a young friend of his to Camarillo to visit the Southern California Wing. We were greeted at the door by a docent for their museum, had the grand tour of their facilities and had a chance to chat with their Wing Leader and several other members. I was very intrigued by the fact that this was a Tuesday and they had a work crew of probably twenty or more people working on various planes in restoration or maintenance. They have two hangars, lots of planes and small, but very interesting, museum of WWII artifacts. It was a very pleasant afternoon, and we even got to see Tinker Bell on the ramp.

Up coming events include a trip to Big Lake for their Santa Rita Days fly-in, honoring Florene Miller

Watson for her WASPS service, our wing meeting on Thursday, August 28th, and don't forget AIRSHO. Since there will be an AIRSHO Volunteer dinner on September 4th, our staff meeting will be at 10:00am on Saturday, September 6th. We will not have a Wing meeting in September, due to AIRSHO starting that week. We will have parking permits for the High Sky area available at the August wing meeting.

Remember, our next Wing meeting is Thursday, August 28th. We will have a short, but very important business meeting to discuss plans and needs for AIRSHO, sandwiched in between flights. Have a good August and we will see all of you there. Be careful out there and remember, wear something CAF.

From the Flannel Wrench Locker

by Col Bill Coombes

"It was a dark and stormy night..." well, actually it was a nice Saturday morning when the Fairchild F-24/J2K, also know as the "Tarbaby," flew for the first time on a real, extended, flight around the airport. After jumping through a number of CAF hoops, I was blessed by the Flight Ops people to become (after Randy) an authorized Fairchild pilot, and so, with Randy out of town with the Helldiver, I found myself in the left seat of the Tarbaby last Saturday morning for her first flight after some needed brake repair.

With a crowd of Jim Moore and Bobby Meroney to help me with start-up, and fortified by Mary Alice's doughnuts, "Tarbaby's" engine ran with characteristic smoothness as I adjusted myself in the rather cramped cockpit. Contacting Ground Control, I asked for clearance to the active runway and told them that I wanted to climb to 5500' above the airport in order to put time on the new engine....and also build some confidence in my ability to get the airplane safely back on the ground..

Ground came back with the expected permission to venture toward the runway and off we trundled. About even with the wash hangar the controller called and informed me of a coyote also heading toward the runway, and he asked that I "pass behind the coyote." I responded with "Coyote traffic in sight, will pass behind him" while thinking I should ask for the coyote's tail number.

Once at the run-up area I performed all the appropriate checks and received permission to take off. Remembering the "fun" Randy had during the earlier

flight attempts, I paid particular attention to keeping the nose straight with small jabs of rudder and gentle movement of the throttle. The silent prayer to the god of tailwheels was also part of this ritual. However, the Tarbaby wheeled down the runway with no particular problems and I soon found myself orbiting MAF in a smooth-flying but slow Fairchild 24.

After thirty minutes, in which the only squawk was a lack of the engine to develop maximum RPM at full power, I entered the pattern, crossed myself, and wheeled the airplane on for an acceptable landing. Success!

Taxiing back, I thought of all the people and all the time and all the money that went into the restoration of the "Tarbaby." I remember how excited we all were when Dan and Roy and Don arrived on wing meeting night in December of 2001, and I remember the low point when the wing had to come off and a major rebuild was necessary. But, the never-ending saga of the Tarbaby gave us a rallying point, and demonstrated the resolve of the members of the Wing to "Keep 'em flying!" I feel privileged to have flown an airplane in which so much of the best of us is contained.

Until the Wing meeting, when hopefully more of you can get some rides in the Wing's fleet....righty-tighty and lefty-loosey.



As the Props Turn

by Col Randy Wilson

My congratulations to Col Bill Coombes, and all of the others who helped, for working out the trim issues on the Tar-Baby and actually flying her while I was off chasing down HQ network issues or campaigning the SB2C at air shows. Hopefully, we have passed the last of the hurdles with this interesting aircraft and can start to qualify other pilots in her and maybe even fly her at AIRSHO!

If you have stopped by the High Sky Wing hangar these last couple of weeks, you may wonder where all our planes have disappeared to — no need to worry, as they have been helping to fill the void left in the main CAF hangar by the departure of *FiFi*. Yes, our B-29 is flying again! We look forward to seeing both the B-29

and B-24 next month for AIRSHO.

I'm writing this column after our mission this morning to Big Lake. My wife, Pat (a.k.a. Little Red) manned the rear cockpit of 101 and Fearless Leader (a.k.a. Col Bill Coombes) had as his ballast, er...crew Col Jim Moore in SNJ 24. The mission began at o'dark thirty, as so many ones do — that's at least one-half hour before it even begins to get light for those of you civilians — as we tugged the planes from the main CAF hangar and readied them for the flight. Once airborne, we winged our way to Big Lake as the rising sun glinted off Bill's plane, caught by Pat's digital.



After landing at the airport in Big Lake, we briefed with the other warbird pilots there, including HSW member Col Rusty Hall. In all we had the two SNJs, two BT-13s, a Tora Val, a T-34, two Stearmans, and L-6 and an L-5. Running on CAF time the 8:30am briefing began about 9:05, after everyone was treated to a breakfast burrito, coffee and juice by the good folks of the town.



We cranked engines for the fly over of the parade and other festivities at 9:30 and I'm happy to report that all pilots and planes made it safely up and back down with no problems. Joining Bill and myself in our lead flight of three was Col Gene Armstrong, who

managed to get a visa to cross over into Texas from Jal, New Mexico to be with us. Gene flew #3 and can be seen above as we orbited the city with the airport in the background.

Upon landing, we then got to do one of our favorite things in the CAF — push airplanes around by hand, as the fuel pump was in the corner of the ramp and naturally, most of us needed fuel. Once again full of 100LL, Bill, Jim, Pat and I climbed aboard the SNJs and were treated to a remarkable display of ground aerobatics (some might say it was more a ballet) by our fearless leader, as he fought an unruly brake on taxi out in the crowded ramp (Note: Details available in the bar at the next Wing meeting if you have the price of a Scotch!). Despite Col Armstrong's question if I was going to emulate my leader, we departed Big Lake without scaring any more men, women, children or jack rabbits.

We enjoyed helping our friends in Big Lake celebrate the town's 100 anniversary, plus all of the other events that went on this weekend. Thanks to Col Dave Crowder and all the others there who made us feel so welcome. Thanks to my sweetie for taking the photos.

See you next Thursday — don't forget to come out early and get a ride in one of our planes!



Frank Hawk (right), with his wife Maxine and nephew Richard, when Richard was our guest speaker at a High Sky Wing meeting.

Col Frank Hawk

by Cols Blake Cowart & Randy Wilson

Frank P. Hawk was born on November 8, 1920 and spent his early years growing up on a farm in Purcell, Oklahoma. He was always intrigued with airplanes as he watched them fly over the family farm. He would spend his time, when not doing chores around the

farm, building model planes from balsa wood. Soon after graduating high school in Norman, OK., he had his first airplane ride in a barnstormer's Ford Tri-Motor. It cost him 50 cents for a circle over the city.

Frank attended college for one year at the University of Oklahoma and while there, enrolled in the Reserve Officer Training Corps. He claims that this is where he learned his right foot from his left. As the United States entered the war, Frank volunteered for the Army Air Corps, requesting flight training and was initially trained as an aircraft mechanic at Sheppard Air Force base in Wichita Falls, Tex. He graduated Aircraft Mechanics School and was sent to Geiger Field in Spokane, Washington as a ground crew member on B-17s.

His request for flight training resulted in his being sent to bombardier training at Kirtland Air Force base in Albuquerque New Mexico as a cadet. He graduated in March of 1943 as a Lieutenant and was assigned to a B-17 crew in Boise, Idaho where many hours were spent on practice bombing flights.



In August of 1943, with his crew, Frank ferried a new B-17 to England via the northern route across Greenland to Iceland and Scotland eventually arriving in Horham, England. He was attached to the 95th Bomb Group, 13th Bomb Wing of the 8th Air Force.

The new B-17 was given to another crew and Frank flew his first eight missions in an older B-17, which on a mission without Frank, was so badly damaged that it had to ditch in the English Channel. Fortunately, all of the crew survived. Frank's crew named their B-17s *Superstitious Aloysious*.

On his first mission to southern Germany, Frank's plane lost an engine over the Channel outbound, and the prop ran away and threatened to tear the engine from its mounts. Fortunately, the pilots finally managed to feather the prop and returned safely to base.

Frank flew on the mission to bomb Schweinfurt on October 14, 1943, a mission know later as simply *Bloody Thursday*. His plane escaped serious damage

from the flak and fighters, but while checking on the damage, Frank found the navigator unconscious. Fortunately, he had passed out from lack of oxygen only a short time before Frank found him and got a fresh mask on him. Such were the everyday dangers these men faced in the air over Germany.

While stationed in England with the 95th, Frank flew 25 combat missions in his regular tour, plus three volunteer shuttle missions to Russia, of which he says only two were combat missions. He flew as the lead aircraft bombardier on four missions of his group. The 95th Bomb Group was the only group in the 8th Air Force to receive 3 Presidential citations for precision bombing on targets. Those targets were: Regensburg,

Munster and Berlin. Frank participated in the mission to Munster. After finishing his required missions, Frank became the group bombardier in October of 1944. After a few months, he returned to the United States and was assigned to Midland Army Air Field.

During his time at MAAF, he met Maxine Hughes, the daughter of a local jeweler. They were married in June of 1945 and Frank learned the family business and worked with his father-in-law for many years, having graduated from the Gemological Institute of America in 1953.

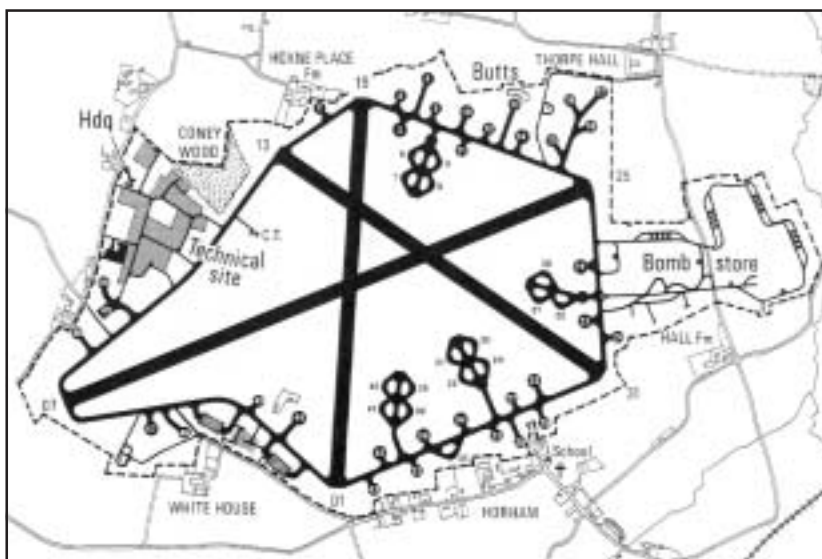
Frank is still active on a daily basis in his business with the participation of his daughters, Shanna and Jama. Frank and Maxine also have three grandchildren.

Horham, Suffolk, Sta. 119

by Col Randy Wilson

Frank was stationed at Horham, home of the 334th, 335th, 336th and 412th squadrons of the 95th Bomb Group, near Suffolk in England. The following illustrations and photos are from Roger Freeman's excellent series on the Might Eighth Air Force.

Frank recognized Lt Col Harry G. Mumford (bottom right) who was a member of the 95th's original staff and later commanded the 412th Bomb Squadron. He also knew 1st Lt Albert Keeler (below), who was a copilot in his group.



A diagram of the Horham station shows the typical runway layout and perimeter taxiway of the 8th Air Force bases in England during World War II.



HIGH SKY WING - CAF
 Post Office Box 61064
 Midland, Texas 79711-1064

Markings of the 13th CBW

The following illustration is from *Air Force Colors, Vol. 2, ETO & MTO, 1942-45* and shows the markings of the three Bomb Groups in Frank Hawk's Bomb Wing. Frank's group was the 95th. The black square with the group letter was repeated on the right wing. In March, 1945, the tail color changed to the rudder only.



High Sky Wing Elected Officers

Wing Leader: Ralph Gillette - 570-8093 ofc
 Executive Officer: Gena Linebarger
 Adjutant: Mary Alice Tidwell
 Finance: Bob Stine
 Operations: Randy Wilson - 352-4258 cell
 Maintenance: Bill Coombes - 689-8359 home
 Safety - David Linebarger

Hangar Phone: (432) 563-5112

all numbers are Area Code 432 unless indicated

What's Happening & When

Aug 28 - Wing meeting
 Sep 6 - Wing staff meeting &
 hangar clean up/work day
 Sep 12 - HSW Golf Tournament
 Sep 24-26 - HSW Cantina 11am-2pm
 Sep 27-28 - AIRSHO 2003
 Oct 4 - Wing staff meeting

Next Wing Meeting is Thursday, August 28th at 7:00pm in the Hangar