



# The Flyer

December 2002  
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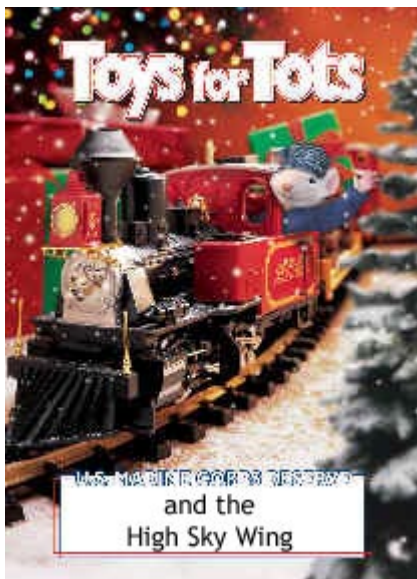
High Sky Wing of the Commemorative Air Force  
Midland, Texas - Hangar: 915-563-5112

On the Web at  
HighSkyWing.org



At our December meeting, we will be participating with the U. S. Marine Corps in their Toys For Tots program. Please bring a **new, unwrapped toy** to the meeting and we will have a representative of the Marines on hand to accept these donations.

If you are not familiar with this program, it was begun back in 1947 in the Los Angeles, CA area and has spread in the ensuing years to all of the United States. Last year, despite the terrible events of 9/11, the Marine Corps and volunteers collected over 13.2 million toys for distribution to over 6.1 million needy children in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.



This is a great way to help children who would otherwise not have a very happy holidays. If you would like to know more about Toys For Tots, you can get more details at the following web site:

<http://www.toysfortots.org/2002>

For those who can't visit the web site, here is a bit more about the program.

**MISSION:** The mission of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November and December each year and distribute those toys as Christmas gifts to needy children in the community in which the campaign is conducted.

**GOAL:** The primary goal of Toys for Tots is to deliver, through a shiny new toy at Christmas, a message of hope to needy youngsters that will motivate them to grow into responsible, productive, patriotic citizens and community leaders.

**OBJECTIVES:** The objectives of Toys for Tots are to help needy children throughout the United States experience the joy of Christmas; to play an active role in the development of our nation's most valuable natural resource - our children; to unite all members of local communities in a common cause for three months each year during the annual toy collection and distribution campaign; to contribute to better communities in the future.

We hope to see you at the hangar next Tuesday as we conclude another busy year. Don't forget to bring a toy and a covered dish or other contribution to the meal. Have a happy and safe holidays!

## From the Back Office

by Col Blake Cowart

As I transition to the status of unit leader emeritus, I would like to thank each of you for your support and hard work during the past two years. I specifically would like to thank the Staff members for making two of the most difficult years that any CAF Unit has faced decidedly less troublesome. The Wing lost two aircraft and three lives last year and this year faced the loss of our current home.

Randy and Mary Alice, thank you for stepping in and filling two Staff vacancies when the Wing was in dire need of help and guidance. Mary Alice with her infectious giggle and past experience in the position and Randy with his knowledge and former background on the General Staff made a big difference. Randy should also be recognized for making the newsletter happen each month. David, your support with the physical and utility needs as well as all safety issues of the Wing and hangar was a big help. Bob, our quiet gentle natured giant has kept our finances in order for several years and manages a weekly volunteer regimen with HQ as well.

You are owed a sincere debt of gratitude. Bill, given all your charges concerning your job as AIRSHO chairman, I am surprised that you have time for the Wing, yet you are one of the most active members. You even manage to find time for your real job as a teacher even while scheduling the seminar series for the AAHM. In my opinion, you should be regarded as an educator not a teacher. A teacher does the work as a job, an educator does it from the heart. We all know that you have a big heart.

As I mention hearts, we all discovered that Ralph has one last year as he suffered through bypass surgery. Ralph was such a big help during our period of transition and has scheduled many interesting guest speakers. He, as the Unit Leader Elect, will need a lot of support during the next two years. I know that he has many good ideas as he has shared a few with me. With that thought in mind, the Wing will be facing many changes in the next two years and beyond. For these changes to occur, we must focus on fund raising and member participation/activism.

As the outgoing leader, I know where many of these areas of needed attention are and will be. I intend to work hand in hand with Ralph in the coming months and I hope that you will join me.

## Executive Views

by Col Ralph Gillette

Here we go again. It is rapidly becoming more like Christmas around our house. No mistletoe, but the tree is up and I didn't fall off the roof hanging the outside lights, mainly because I stayed at ground level this year. Old bones being what they are, I felt it was the better part of valor.

Since it is Christmas and Hanukkah, the staff felt that it would be appropriate to do a little giving this year, hence the **Toys for Tots** meeting on December 19<sup>th</sup>. We will have a representative from the Marine Corps to talk a little about the toy drive and collect everything we bring, so remember to bring a new, unwrapped gift to the meeting this month.

January will be our installation of officers meeting. We are planning something away from the hangar like we have had in the past, but a little less formal. More on this next month.

It is coming up to the end of the year and our annual wing dues are ready for submittal. We plan to send invoices in January so you will have a reminder. Those that joined in the latter stages of 2002 are good for 2003 as usual.

Have a happy holiday season and I hope to see you at the December meeting.

## From the Flannel Wrench Locker

by Col Bill Coombes

Progress, progress, progress! It is very pleasing to be able to report on the significant progress being made on the "Tarbaby" over the last month. Our crack team of Cols. Jim Moore, Rudy Silas, Rodney Jackson, Bob Walker, Ted Claussen, Don McCracken (and others) have made significant progress FORWARD on the airplane. Of course, there have been setbacks, but, it IS the Tarbaby!"

As some of you know, Rodney, with the Staff's blessing, went back to work with the B-29 squadron. He felt badly for leaving without seeing the airplane finished, but I assured him that we were more concerned that he have job security (with the B-29, that is a given!) and that consideration must come first. Plus, I'm confident that the crew left working on the airplane can do the final finishing touches. Right now, Bob Walker is waiting for the radio man, Les Bannon, to do the installation of the radio gear, and then he will finish the wiring. Kudos to Ted Claussen for the EXCELLENT

job of doing the majority of the rewiring work: Bob and Rodney both spoke to the quality of Ted's work and to the ease of the rest of the installation thanks to what Ted did. We haven't any more info from the paint shop. Rodney will be available to help out when we get close to the engine starting date. If you haven't examined the airplane closely, please do so when you are out at the hangar: it is going to be a show-stopper.

We will be doing the annual inspection on the SNJ (and my SNJ) right after Christmas, with Harold Davis doing the A&P work. My plan is to prepare the airplanes and do what we can do and then have Harold come in for the inspection, compression check, etc., then we will reassemble them. We have to retime the magnetos on 101 and install the new tailwheel shock strut: hopefully that will be all the major items for that airplane. I'll have a better idea re: a work schedule to announce at the Wing meeting.

Elsewhere in this issue of the Flyer you should find something about the new direction the Staff is going to go re: airplane acquisition. The Staff authorized me to contact H.D. Butler in Marble Falls regarding his pristine PT-19 to see if he is interested in selling it. This I did, and he is working up a proposal for us. I am very confident that this would be a "flying" airplane rather than a hangar queen. More at the meeting.

Remember, lefty loosey, righty tighty.

## As the Props Turn

by Col Randy Wilson

As 2002 comes to an end, I can report we have had a safe year in the air. Our SNJ, N101X, and I did another CAF pilot check ride earlier this month, with Col Dick Harper of Houston. Dick will be checking out in the CAF SB2C Helldiver once the plane's engine comes back from the engine shop and is rehung and made ready for flight.

As you may or may not know, we make our SNJ available to CAF pilots for check rides, either with myself or other qualified check pilots. We do charge a fee for the use of the aircraft, plus the actual expenses for gas and oil. Being located here at CAF HQ, this is often a convenient place to get all of the ingredients together, an aircraft, the pilot candidate and the check pilot.

As Bill notes in his maintenance column, work on the Fairchild UC-61, a.k.a. Tar-Baby, has been moving ahead steadily, despite occasional surprises and issues being uncovered — and I mean that literally!

With any luck, we will be able to run the engine in the next few weeks and start to finish up the wiring and installation of the radio and instruments. Once all that is done, we will be ready to have the plane painted in the Coast Guard scheme that has been selected.

Our search for a new plane or planes to replace our losses continues. The idea of purchasing the Focke-Wulf 149 did not fly well (pardon the pun) so we are back looking at another World War II era trainer. As Bill mentioned, there is a very nice PT-19 for sale by Col H. D. Butler and we are looking into that plane now. I understand the plane is configured and painted as an Army primary trainer, with a basic silver scheme and open cockpits, similar to the photo below. As I've said before, if you haven't had a chance to fly in an open cockpit, you don't know how much you have missed.



On a more personal note, I'd like to add my own thanks to all the High Sky Wing members who have worked so hard this year, despite the setbacks and problems we have faced with the hangar and other issues. Let's also remember those family members who are currently serving in the armed forces and may be far from home for this holiday season.

If you haven't seem me much these last few weeks, it is because Pat and I have had to travel back and forth to California to help care for her Dad, who was been undergoing some treatments these last few weeks. I'm writing this column and putting the newsletter together on their dining room table in Laguna Woods, CA, and will get it to Blake for printing and mailing (hopefully) thanks to my laptop and the Internet.

Pat and I wish you all a very happy holidays and we hope to be able to see you at the next couple of meetings, if all goes well with her Dad.

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## New Wing Officers Elected

At the November Wing meeting, elections were held for three expiring Wing staff positions. We are happy to report that the following Colonels were elected unanimously to server the next two years in their respective posts:

**Col Ralph Gillette - Wing Leader**

**Col Mary Alice Tidwell - Adjutant**

**Col Bob Stine - Finance Officer**

If you are new to the High Sky Wing, Ralph has served as our Executive Officer previously, while both Mary Alice and Bob have agreed to server another two years in their existing jobs. Please be sure to visit with Ralph and all of our staff officers at Wing meetings or anytime and share you thoughts and views about the Wing and its future.

Here's hoping for a happy, safe and prosperous New Year for the High Sky Wing.

## High Sky Wing Elected Officers

Wing Leader: Blake Cowart - 528-1344 cell  
Executive Officer: Ralph Gillette  
Adjutant: Mary Alice Tidwell  
Finance: Bob Stine  
Operations: Randy Wilson - 352-4258 cell  
Maintenance: Bill Coombes - 689-8359 home  
Safety - David Linebarger

**Hangar Phone: (915) 563-5112**

all numbers are Area Code 915 unless indicated

## What's Happening & When

Dec 19 - Wing meeting  
Jan 4 - Staff meeting  
Jan 16 - Wing meeting & Awards dinner  
(location to be announced soon)  
Feb 1 - Staff meeting  
Feb 20 - Wing meeting

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**Next Wing Meeting is Thursday, December 19th at 7:00pm in the Hangar**

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