



# The Flyer

December 2004  
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High Sky Wing of the Commemorative Air Force  
Midland, Texas - Hangar: 432-563-5112

On the Web at  
[HighSkyWing.org](http://HighSkyWing.org)

## From the Back Office

by Col Ralph Gillette

I've been sitting in front of my computer trying to go over in my mind all the things that transpired over the last two years. As this is my last chance as Wing Leader to try and thank everyone that put in their time and effort to keep our wing flying and active in the CAF and community, I know I will miss something.

First of all, I would like to thank each and every member of the Wing for his or her support and hard work during the past two years. I would especially like to thank the Staff members for making my term of office so trouble free. Gena and Ted as Executive Officers were a great help. Mary Alice kept things lively during the Staff meetings and got most of the minutes close to being right (We won't mention your typist who kept making the typos). Bob, you won't have to hunt me down to sign the checks anymore and thank you for keeping us square with the financial world. Randy and Bill, I know there are a lot of people that have spent many hours keeping the planes flying so you could report that all things were go. David and Don, thanks for watching over our safety. With everything that has happened in the CAF over the last two years, safety is and should be uppermost in all our minds.

There are some others who are not on Staff that have been very helpful. Blake Cowart for keeping the facilities neat and tidy and for helping me with the ins and outs of being Wing Leader. Ed, I know you didn't want to work the lounge another year, so thank you for hanging in. Others that come to mind quickly are Carol Claussen, Becky, the Huglys, the Colliers, Randy and Laurie Skinner (remember to keep Jason in your prayers), Jim Archer who does such a good job with our opening prayer each meeting, Sue Beecraft for keeping the library going through her own problems, Danny DUEwall for his expertise on our airplanes, our motor pool group led by Bobby Merony, Tom Kingon and Lyle Thornton, Jimmy Parker for watching over the front desk during our meetings, Bill

Stella for carting all the cans off to recycle, Jim Moore for being there at all hours to work on planes, set tables, or anything else that needs to be done, and Colonel Colonel for your courage and inspiration.

Some of the special things that took place included our roast of Colonel Wallace for which I thank Dan Linebarger for his recitation of exploits of Colonel Colonel; the sporting clay shoot which was spearheaded by Jeremy Linebarger; the Wings participation in the many events at Headquarters including flyovers, open cockpit day, Memorial Day, and of course AirSho.

I know I have missed somebody who has been there when we needed them and I apologize for the senior moment in not remembering. Again I want to express my sincere thanks to all the High Sky family for their support over the last two years and remind everyone that we continue on and Gena will need your help over the next two years.

I want to congratulate Gena Linebarger, Mary Alice Tidwell and Bob Stine for being elected as officers for the next two years. They have an awesome task ahead of them what with the new Commemorative Center coming on line sometime in 2006. We will be hard pressed to do the housecleaning that will need to be done so we don't have to move so much into the new facilities.

Our next Wing meeting is Saturday night, January 8<sup>th</sup>. Attitude adjustment starts at 6:00 PM. This will be our annual awards banquet and the official handing off of the Wing leadership to our new Wing leader. We will have a Staff meeting at 10:00 AM on Saturday, January 8<sup>th</sup>. In the mean time, remember we are still stressing safety this year like never before. Please be careful out there and wear something CAF.

**Awards Banquet**  
**Saturday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005**  
**Clear Springs Cafe, Midland**  
**6:00 p.m.**

## Executive Views

by Col Ted Claussen

December 2<sup>nd</sup> may have been cold outside, but inside the hangar it was warm and cheery. Gena & Lauri graciously decorated each table with a colorful poinsettia which added to a festive atmosphere. After dinner the election to fill the offices being vacated was conducted and it was approved to accept the slate of candidates presented by the nominating committee. Although Gary Austin, our scheduled speaker for the evening, was unable to be there, we were not without interesting tales to keep us laughing. We will try to reschedule Gary as I'm sure you will enjoy meeting him.

Your first opportunity of 2005 to join us for fun and appreciation will be Saturday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, at the Clear Springs Cafe. Social hour begins at 6:00 and dinner at 7:00. We have new Wing members we all need to meet and get to know. There will be a presentation of awards, a review the past year in Becky's usual creative form, and the official transfer of the gavel from Ralph Gillette to our new wing leader, Gena Linebarger. Ralph has served us well as I'm sure Gena will.

We always have fun at the Clear Springs Cafe so please join us as we kick off another great year that will be filled with many new and exciting things.

## From the Flannel Wrench Locker

by Col Bill Coombes

First of all, I hope that all of you had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The Coombes family traveled this year to Austin and College Station to have Christmas with the "kids," which was sort of a pain (because we had to drive a lot) but which was enjoyable once we arrived. It also made me realize the importance of "family." My family, as dysfunctional as everyone else's, is paramount in my life, and I draw considerable strength from having my mom and dad, my son, my sister, and my wife with me. In all of that I am truly blest, and I know I'm not the only one who feels that way.

On the maintenance front, since the winter has arrived we haven't had much opportunity to fly, which means we haven't broken anything either. I dragged Bobby Meroney away from the motor pool and we flew the PT-19 over Midland...a rather cool trip in an open cockpit airplane, but it was fun nonetheless. Several weeks ago Randy and I took two of my stu-

dents (who joined the CAF as cadets) for a ride in the two Fairchild; both boys thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I've developed a small cadre of "young backs and weak minds" among my students who we can call on for help when we move into the new building; hence the purpose for the rides.

One thing I did notice after the flight with Bobby, the PT has a dirty belly! Joe Cope and his son Austin did a good job of cleaning the belly of the SNJ (in exchange for a ride) but we need to attack the PT. Leaving oil and exhaust stains on a wood and fabric airplane is not good, so I'll be looking for "belly dancers" over the next few Saturdays to help me completely clean ole' 49797. Probably hit the Tarbaby and the SNJ's again as well. This kind of unglamorous maintenance is something that requires no particular A & P skills, so don't be shy about volunteering!

January's General Staff meeting will mark my first opportunity to sit on that august body. I hope to represent the interests of the Wing as well as the interests of every member of the CAF as well as I possibly can. However, I'm sure that some of the things the GS does will be open to your questions. I want you to speak forthrightly to me about your concerns: I want to know what you think "with the bark off." I shall answer in kind...I hope to avoid political double-speak as much as possible. This is a crossroads moment for the CAF, as we have lots of hurdles to overcome. I prefer to see hurdles as opportunities to measure our resourcefulness, and I think that the CAF will emerge from all of this stronger than ever before. The key is an active and dedicated membership, which is why I am so fortunate to be associated with the High Sky Wing. With the new leadership provided us by Gena Linebarger, I know that even more of you will step up to help meet the challenges confronting our Wing. With young blood in the persons of Sam Strahan, Joe Cope, Wayne Bissett, Paris Sharp, and others, I think we'll be OK.

Finally, I'd like to say "THANK YOU" to Ralph Gillette for his service as Wing Leader. I've known Ralph for more than twenty years and knew when he took over the Wing that we would be in capable hands. It is a sometimes thankless job; I hope all of you join me in saying thanks to a good man and good friend. I'll see you at the party on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

*Lest We Forget!*

# As the Props Turn

by Col Randy Wilson

As Bill has said, it has been a bit too cool to do much flying these last few weeks but we hope to change that as we head into spring. I am planning to go out to Riverside, Calif. to attend the CAF TraRon formation clinic there on Jan. 21-23 to get current as a Formation Lead and Examiner, so we can perhaps do a TraRon clinic in Midland/Odessa this spring.

I'd like to add my thanks and best wishes to Ralph Gillette for his leadership of the Wing these last two years and also welcome Gena Linebarger as our new leader. I hope to see you all next Saturday at the Awards Banquet. Fly safe!

## A Typical Saturday at the Wing

Photos of a typical Saturday, including a Staff meeting, at the hangar, by Ralph Gillette.



Col Mary Alice Tidwell brings her financial skills and a box of donuts (a.k.a. Pilot Food) to the hangar every Saturday and then the rest of us show up to eat them.



After the Staff meeting is done and all problems have been solved or postponed adequately, we head out to open up the hangar doors and commit aviation!



Once our trusty tug warms up enough to fire on at least five cylinders, the team springs into action to unstack the hangar in preparation for flight, with supervision of course.



I bet you didn't know it takes three CAF pilots to preflight a PT-19, eh? Nice shot of my rear, Ralph!

HIGH SKY WING - CAF  
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## One Last Mystery for the Year



**Don't Forget!**  
**Your 2005 Wing Dues Are Due**

**Awards Banquet**  
**Saturday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005**  
**Clear Springs Cafe, Midland**  
**6:00 p.m.**

## High Sky Wing Elected Officers

Outgoing Wing Leader: Ralph Gillette  
Incoming Wing Leader: Gena Linebarger  
Executive Officer: Ted Claussen  
Adjutant: Mary Alice Tidwell  
Finance: Bob Stine  
Operations: Randy Wilson - 352-4258 cell  
Maintenance: Bill Coombes - 689-8359 home  
Safety - Lyle Thornton

**Hangar Phone: (432) 563-5112**

all numbers are Area Code 432 unless indicated

## What's Happening & When

Jan 8 - Wing Staff meeting (10am)  
Jan 8 - Awards banquet, Clear Springs Cafe (6pm)  
Jan 29 - Adrian Cronauer Dinner (6pm)  
Feb 5 - Wing Staff meeting (10am)  
Feb 12 - Dust-Offs & Gunships (2pm)  
Feb 21-22 - CAF Wing Staff Conference

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**Awards Banquet/Meeting is Saturday, January 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm**

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