



The Flyer

July 2002
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On the Web at
HighSkyWing.org

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



A Very Interesting Visitor

by Col Randy Wilson

See what you are missing by not being a High Sky Wing member and “hangar bum”? You never know what may show up in our hangar. In this case it was *Precious Metal*, a highly-modified P-51 unlimited racer. Owner and pilot Ron Buccarelli stopped in Midland enroute from Florida to Reno with a rough magneto, in need of a bit of help and space to try and

resolve the problem. Mechanic Rodney Jackson and I happened to be in the hangar when Ron was tugged over to our ramp, and we extended him the normal courtesy and hospitality of the High Sky Wing.

Rodney helped determine that one set of points in the mag were not opening and that the mag needed

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Col Ralph Gillette visits with new Colonel Ron Buccarelli and crew chief Dave Berry.



The Rolls-Royce Griffon engine and counter-rotating props are a tight fit in the nose of *Precious Metal*.

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replacement. Ron called back to his base and had crew chief Dave Berry head towards Midland with a replacement mag.

While waiting for Dave and the parts to arrive, I gave Ron a quick tour of the museum and main hangar, where he was amazed to see the Shackleton parked, with four Rolls-Royce Griffon engines and counter-rotating props, just like his own engine and prop. Proceeding into CAF HQ, Ron joined the CAF and took applications for his crew members, back in Florida.

Ron joined us for our Wing meeting that night, and shared a bit of the interesting history of his aircraft with everyone. I had to leave the next day to take the SB2C to a West Texas Wing fly-in in Amarillo, but I'm told that when the mag and Dave finally made it to Midland, a number of members were on hand to help and to see Ron's successful test runs and final departure onto Reno.

Before leaving, *Precious Metal* received a High Sky Wing decal on its tail, courtesy of Col David Linebarger.



AIRSHO Chairman Bill Coombes invited Ron to bring his unusual bird back for this year's show, so we look forward to seeing Ron and his crew again in October.

From the Back Office

by Col Blake Cowart

During our last Staff meeting, one of the topics of discussion was the current level of our membership. At this time we have approximately 135 members for the year. We generally gain several members each year as they attend the AIRSHO in October either as renewals or new enthusiastic new people. During the first six or seven years, the Wing enjoyed membership levels at about 200 people.

The area of membership renewals and retention has been divided among several Staff members in the last few years. It has largely been overseen by the Finance officer as well as the Adjutant, editor of the newsletter/website, and a few other helpful members. These wonderful volunteers need a little help as they each have many obligations with the tasks at hand with their respective positions. The Wing is in need of an actual Personnel Officer willing to oversee this vital area. Membership is a key issue as it has been one of the five points in the ALPHA project established by Headquarters.

Are any of you willing to step forward and assist? We really could use the help. The position will not be tremendously demanding as most of the requirements are simply to be an ambassador of the Wing and the CAF. All of you fall into that category by just being the gracious freedom loving people that I have come to know over the years.

Our next meeting will be Thursday, July 18th at the hangar at 7 p.m. It is preceded by a TxDOT hangar Committee meeting. The Staff will be making a follow up report to the membership regarding our possible new home which will be discussed in that Committee meeting. I hope to see you there and please, bring a friend.

Executive Views

by Col Ralph Gillette

We have had an exciting three or four weeks since our last newsletter. First, we were able to interrogate Rodney Roberts, the architect for the TxDOT building, during our monthly meeting and we had a visitor drop in with a Reno Racer.

I believe most everybody that attended last months meeting and got a chance to hear and see some of the thought processes going into the new building were impressed. Granted there are some snags and some "why don't you do it this ways", but for a first

pass, I thought they caught the spirit of what we wanted for the High Sky Wing. Our next meeting will feature Chuck Sturgeon, the principal in NC Sturgeon, who we hope will have some more firm details to share with us after his meeting with the building committee. We will also get a report back from our representatives on how they think the meeting progressed. There is a lot more information elsewhere in this newsletter on the building. Suffice it to say, we are rapidly getting to the point that we will need everybody's input to the staff so they can make a final determination as to which way we want to go.

Our visitor was the highly modified P-51D, *Precious Metal*. It is a racer designed for Reno. It has a 2,600 horsepower Rolls-Royce Griffon engine as compared to the normal R-R Merlin at 1,500 horsepower that the combat version used. The owner, and pilot, Ron Buccarelli, stopped in for some much needed maintenance on his way from Florida to Reno. The High Sky Wing's hospitality and willingness to help garnered the CAF a new member on the spot, and when *Precious Metal* did it's low level pass on leaving Midland (it was spectacular), it was sporting a High Sky Wing decal on the tail.

Hope everybody had a safe and good 4th of July. We really need all of our members to come to the next meeting so we can get everyone's thoughts on the hangar situation.

From the Flannel Wrench Locker

by Col Bill Coombes

Progress! It is always nice to see plans come together and to be able to report on real progress toward making the Tarbaby fly. Thanks to the superior skills of Lead Mechanic Rodney Jackson, the left wing of the Tarbaby is well on the way to being made air-worthy once again. When you come out to the hangar, make sure you look closely at the fine work being done on the wing ribs. Rodney has replaced the root rib, and made four more partial ribs, while members of the Wing, including Jim Moore, Mary Alice Tidwell, Tom Kingon, Don McCracken, son-in-law Todd, Bruce Wallace, and Ralph Gillette nudged me out of the way and proceeded to sand off the old fabric and adhesive residue. Ted Claussen has been finishing up the rewiring in his usual superior fashion as well. Henry Anderle came along and was quickly recruited to do some of his quality woodworking, building some other replacement pieces, the offshoot to the whole

affair being real progress. Henry is currently in the hospital but we all wish him a speedy recovery. My thanks to all who have been eager to lend Rodney a hand: it will mean the Tarbaby sees air under her wings sooner and for less money.

And speaking of money, thank you to Bill Stella and Randy Wilson (in Henry Anderle's name) for joining me in putting up \$100 toward the Tarbaby fund. We have enough money now (in her account) to almost get her in the air: your contribution will assure that, plus we will be able to get her painted IF everyone gets really generous. Talk with Bob Stine if you feel philanthropic.

Randy will report on our flight over the Tall City on the morning of the 4th, part of the celebration sponsored by Downtown Midland, Inc. which made money for 101's care and feeding. As Ralph said, and I echo his comments, "There's nothing like the sound of those engines starting up!" It was fun to fly again.

Remember, righty tighty, lefty loosey.



Led by Rodney Jackson, above left, HSW members get "hands on" with the Tar-Baby's wing.



As the Props Turn

by Col Randy Wilson

It is kind of hard to top the visit and low-pass by *Precious Metal*, but your faithful Wing SNJ pilots (Bill Coombes and I) did commit aviation at least once on the Fourth of July, with a flight over the parade in downtown Midland.

Relatively new Wing member Ed McElrath got his first ride in an SNJ, first formation takeoff and first formation break in the back seat of 101X, while Jim Moore kept an eye out for traffic behind Bill in SNJ 24. Ed did comment on how close planes in a formation were from each other but obviously got over that, as he took some photos of leader Bill.

We were all ready to launch again that evening when a small storm cloud managed to whip up the winds at the airport enough that we decided not to test our bravery or the strength of North American's products. As they say, there are old pilots and bold pilots but you don't want to be both!

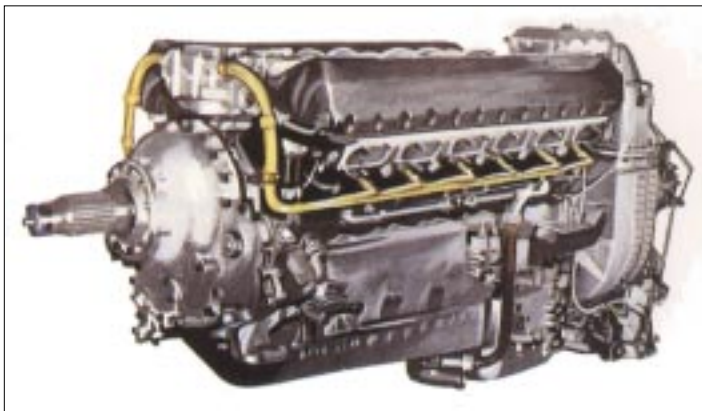
So how do you get a ride? Simple, come out on Saturdays or other times we have plans to fly and help move the birds out, help wipe them off, get the pilot a Dr. Pepper! If you see a back seat empty, don't be bashful. See you at the hangar — fly safe y'all!

British Birds of Prey?

by Col Randy Wilson

What do Hawks, Falcons, Condors and Kestrels have in common? They are all members of the Rolls-Royce family of Vee aircraft engines that includes the famous Merlin (a small falcon) and the big Griffon that we saw powering our recent visitor, *Precious Metal*.

The Merlin is probably the best known of the series, having powered the Hurricane, Spitfire, Mosquito, Lancaster and Mustang, among others. With a



Rolls-Royce Griffon engine

displacement of 1,649 cubic inches, the early Merlins were rated at only 1,000 horsepower or so, however later versions upped this to more than 1,500 h.p.

In 1939, a demand for an even more powerful engine by the Fleet Air Arm resulted in the design of the Griffon, which had a displacement of 2,239 cubic inches (36% greater than the Merlin) and was based on the famous Schneider Trophy R engine. Early Griffons were rated at 1,730 horsepower, while final versions produced over 2,400 h.p. in military service.

Boosted way beyond the normal manifold pressure limits, one can only guess how much a racing Griffon's horsepower is today.



TxDOT Building Update

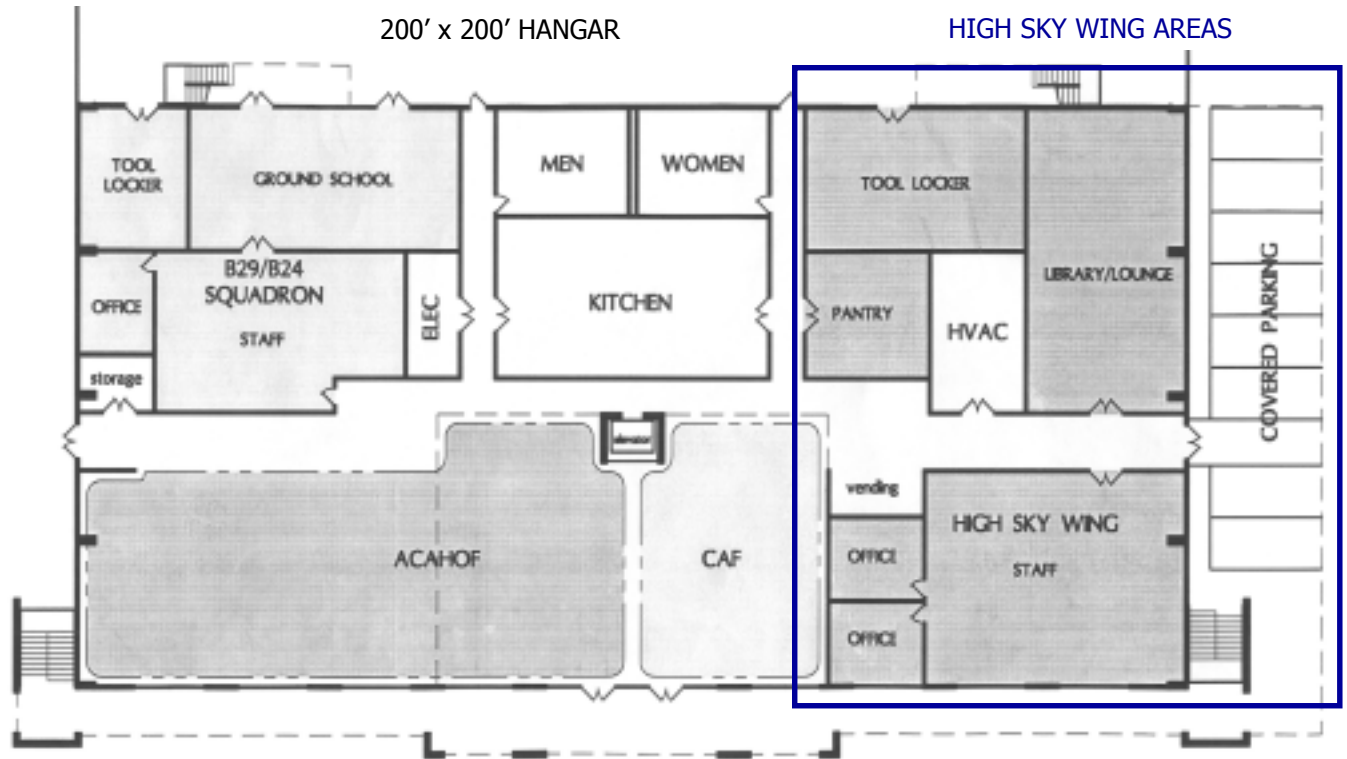
As mentioned elsewhere in this edition, if you missed the June Wing meeting, you missed a chance to see the first rough draft plans of the new TxDOT-funded CAF building. We have reproduced the parts of those plans that show an early idea of the layout and division of space in the enclosed part of the building.

These plans are very preliminary and are bound to change, but show how the needs and wants of all of the groups that may share the building, including the High Sky Wing, can easily be met in the space available.

The next meeting of the TxDOT building committee will be on Thursday afternoon, July 18th, and later that evening, at our July Wing meeting, you will again have a chance to visit with contractor Chuck Sturgeon and architect Rod Roberts. We need as many members as possible to attend this next meeting, as we will have to make a decision soon whether we will participate in the new facility or build our own new building.

We, the members of your Wing staff, will try and get a consensus from the committee at this next meeting as to what our Wing's financial contribution and long-term responsibility would be, if we make our new home in the facility. We will report what we learn to you at the next meeting and in next month's newsletter.

If you have an opinion about this, please share it with us, so the final decision can be one that is supported by a majority of our members. See you at the meeting.



The first draft of the ground floor of the enclosed section of the new building. The area dedicated to High Sky Wing use and control is shaded and outlined to the right, and includes all of the items we have discussed, including a covered parking area. The enclosed area of the building is 200 feet wide by 100 feet deep, for a total of 40,000 square feet on the two floors. The hangar part is 200 feet by 200 feet.



The upper floor would have meeting rooms for 40 and 100 persons, plus a large banquet/meeting hall of about 6,000 square feet. This large room and its outside deck would be available for Wing meetings, parties and other functions, and would be fully air-conditioned. All areas not shaded are shared spaces which can be used by any of the groups, as needed.



What do you mean Rodney, you know where there are four good Rolls-Royce Griffon mags in the big hangar?

A special thanks to Col Morris Bassham for providing the photos used to illustrate this month's edition.

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

July 18 - Wing meeting
July 20 - Summer Advisory Bd. Meeting
Aug 1 - Wing staff meeting
Aug 15 - Wing meeting
Sep 5 - Wing staff meeting
Sep 19 - Wing meeting

Next Wing Meeting is Thursday, July 18th at 7:00pm in the Hangar

HIGH SKY WING - CAF
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