The Flyer

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High Sky Wing of the Commemorative Air Force

On the Web at HighSkyWing.org

Midland, Texas - Hangar: 432-561-5581

Next Wing Meeting is Thursday July 23rd 7:00 p.m. in the Hangar

From the Lead

by Col Randy Wilson

We have a lot of news this month, but first, don't forget that our monthly Wing meeting is next Thursday, July 23rd, with the social hour starting at 6:00 p.m. and dinner at 7:00 p.m. Our program that evening will be *The Legacy of Midland Army Field*, a history of MAAF, presented by the honorable judge John Hyde. I hope to see you there and please remember to bring a covered dish or favorite deli item to share.

The next Saturday, July 25th, we will be taking the Wing aircraft to a fly-in at the Big Spring airport. Please contact Col Sam Strahan if you would like to ride along and help out. The Pecos fly-in breakfast is Sunday, August 2nd. In both cases, plan on being at the hangar and ready to help by 7:00 a.m. unless told differently by Sam or your pilot. Remember to check our online HSW Events Calendar, available from our website at http://highskywing.org, for the latest news.

Looking back at the last few weeks, we attended the Denver City fly-in and sold a ride in the PT-19, send the SNJ and Cessna 195 to the Denton air show and the Colorado City Fourth of July fly-in. We also had a good turn out for our last Wing meeting where we gave rides until sunset to many members. Look for photos scattered through this newsletter of many of these events, thanks to Col H. A. Tuck.

HSW Fly-In September 12th

The High Sky Wing will be hosting a fly-in breakfast in the Commemorative Center hangar and CAF ramp on Saturday, September 12th starting at 8:00 a.m. and running until noon. The event will help publicise the HSW and our rides program to the local aviation community. We are negotiating with a local mobile breakfast wagon to provide the food for fly-ins, members and visitors.

In addition to rides for sale all day, plus rides gift certificates for sale, those who fly-in will receive a free breakfast and a coupon for 1/2 off the admission to the CAF Airpower Museum that day. Other attractions will be cockpit tours of the HSW planes plus tours of the B-29 FIFI. We will also have information tables set up in the hangar with membership brochures for the CAF, HSW and Museum, plus AIRSHO 2009 posters and tickets for sale. We hope to have AIRSHO T-shirts and other items for sale, too.

We will be gearing up for this event starting next week and will have more details at the Wing meeting and in email updates and the next newsletter. Plan to come out to help us put on one of the best fly-ins in West Texas!

Attention! HSW Mission 200

How about a recruiting drive for the High Sky Wing to reach 200 members by the end of 2009? This is what your Wing staff is discussing and will be finalizing at the next Wing staff meeting. We currently have 160+ Wing members and between now and the end of the year, we have our fly-in, several Wing meetings, AIRSHO and the beginning of our new Cadet/Venturing program.

Is your spouse a member? If not, and he or she enjoys coming out to the High Sky Wing functions and events, please consider their joining the CAF and HSW. How about your friends and coworkers? Now is the time to bring them out to a Wing event and see if they might be a potential member. We can do this, I am certain.

This also fits right in with new CAF program ***One & Done*** where every current CAF members who recruits just one new CAF member receives a special pin in recognition. We will have more information on the HSW Mission 200 program at the next Wing meeting and in the next newsletter. Start signing 'em up now!

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Turn and Bank

by Col Steve Bolin

The High Sky Wing's financial status continues to rocket Sky High. Bingo made another $6000 donation this month, and the aircraft rides program continues to grow as our marketing and exposure mature. Over the last year we have sold $3145.09 in rides. That is 75% of our maintenance for the same period. I expect the aircraft to begin to be self sufficient for maintenance in the near future.

I don't believe I've mentioned those that have come forward with the **Paid The Rent** donations in a while. Thanks to Randy Wilson, Deb Magness, Gary Covington, Mary Alice Tidwell, Blake Cowart, and Ed McElrath. Each of these members have put up $500.00 toward the monthly rent.

We've also purchased some chairs and fans to make the patio and hangar a little more comfortable. Please come out and share some good times while watching the planes fly, or just the clouds rolling by.

We currently have over $66,000 in the bank. There is talk going on about trying to have more aircraft assigned. Can we afford these? As your Finance Officer I believe we can. Our current income stream and expected expenses are well within any conservative guidelines. Our membership is strong, and we have plans to grow it even larger. Our mission is to preserve these aircraft, relive the history, and ***Keep 'Em Flying***.

I'll finish again reminding you that our members are the most valuable resource we have. Introduce yourself to another member you don't know as well as the regular crowd and share the wealth.

The Safety Corner

by Col David Linebarger

Hello everyone, we are safe at the Wing. I have restocked the first aid kit with sting bite sticks and the other items that we needed. I would ask all to try and not leave old drinks sitting around for as they dry out they will attract bees and wasp to the sugar in the drink. We did have a person bitten in the hangar last week by a bee. So let's try to keep the place clean and the trash carried out.

Also we have been given a snake catcher that is in the HSW tool room if it is needed. I would say if you do not know what this is, you should probably not be the person using it! If you see a snake, get some help to deal with it please. All of us can keep an eye on the kids and help make sure that the little ones do not run into the critters that are in and around the hangar.

The yard in front of the patio is taking shape and with a little help from time to time we can have a very nice place to call our home. We need to keep the weeds and stickers pulled and will need to mow in a couple of weeks. If someone has a lawn mower with a cuttings catcher that they would like to donate to the wing we need one. A weed eater would be nice also. Thanks to all who have helped with the yard project as it make the Wing look good. Keep Safe.

New Aircraft Opportunities!

by Col Randy Wilson & Chris Aycock

Some of you may have heard that there has been interest expressed within our Wing in attempting to acquire a Stearman, a two-place, open-cockpit biplane that was one of the most used World War II primary trainers in both the Army Air Corps and Navy. In that regard, several members were working as an exploratory group to test the financial feasibility of the Wing buying a Stearman, donating it to the CAF, and then having it assigned to the HSW. From the work done so far, it seems there is a strong interest in attempting to acquire a Stearman and many have already expressed a desire to pledge funds in support.

While evaluating whether the efforts to purchase a Stearman should become more official, the Wing staff has learned of two airplanes that have become available for assignment within the CAF and which may present an exciting opportunity for the Wing. One is a Stearman PT-17 that is being turned in for re-assignment because of lack of use (the unit had two Stearmans). The other is the North American T-28A which you may have noticed in our hangar at the last Wing meeting.

At the Wing staff meeting last Tuesday night, it was discussed that it may be possible for the Wing to acquire both of these planes for a similar financial commitment as it might take to buy a Stearman, since they are already part of the CAF Ghost Squadron fleet of planes. The Wing staff discussed many reasons that these planes would make great additions to the Wing including increasing member interest and recruiting possibilities and benefiting the Rides for Hire program. The Wing staff voted to form a committee of Gena Linebarger, Mike Hedrick, Sam Strahan, and Chris Aycock to develop a specific business plan and complete the necessary application papers required by headquarters. The purpose of this committee is to

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provide information to the Wing staff so that they can decide whether the Wing should pursue assignment of both of these planes. We are aware that other CAF units are planning on requesting assignments of these aircraft.

The basic application process does not obligate the Wing to accept the assignment if it is offered nor does it guarantee that we will be offered either or both of the planes. If you expressed an interest in making a financial contribution towards the purchase of a Stearman, you will be contacted by one of the committee members to inquire whether you would still be interested in making that contribution, if those funds could be used either for the Stearman, the T-28, or both, and if you want them to be Aircraft Sponsorships or donations directly to the High Sky Wing.

A very important part of the application process for the assignment of any CAF aircraft is the number of individual Aircraft Sponsors that are willing to put up a Flying Sponsorship, a Maintenance Sponsorship or a Supporting Sponsorship. CAF Aircraft sponsorships are a one-time donation for a specific aircraft and the funds are placed in that aircraft's account at CAF HQ and can be used for any maintenance or restoration costs on that aircraft. Here are the costs of these different sponsorship levels for the two aircraft:

For the Stearman PT-17
- Aircraft/Pilot Sponsor - $1500
- Maintenance/Restoration Sponsor - $750
- Supporting Sponsor - $150

For the North American T-28A
- Aircraft/Pilot Sponsor - $3500
- Maintenance/Restoration Sponsor - $1750
- Supporting Sponsor - $350

If you would like to donate a lesser amount or would rather donate money directly to the High Sky Wing to help obtain these aircraft and not go the sponsor route, the Wing can also put up Aircraft Sponsorships in its own name. Again, a member of the committee will be in touch with you over the next couple of weeks but if you want to express support, financial or otherwise, or if you have concerns, please contact one of the committee members and share your thoughts. As always, you can also contact me, if needed. This may be a great opportunity for the Wing, and the Wing staff is looking forward to hearing the results of the committee's work. See you July 23rd at the Wing meeting where we hope to have more information to share on this.

The Stearman PT-17 (above) that is up for assignment and the T-28A (below).

The Most Important Unit in the CAF

by Col Bill Coombes

I hope the title of this little piece caught your attention, because, as High Sky Wing members, we don't often think of ourselves in those terms. Yet the fact is we are, indeed, the most important Wing, not because we are the biggest unit, or have the largest bank account, or operate the marquee airplanes. The Arizona Wing has the largest membership in the CAF; we are eighth. The Arizona Wing, SoCal Wing, and Dixie Wing all have assets of more than seven figures: the High Sky Wing didn't even rank in the top twenty of all CAF units in financial strength. The SoCal Wing, with its collection of our fighters, operates the most CAF airplanes, while we operate only four. So, why is it that I say we are the most important Wing?

Because we must be.

Elsewhere in this newsletter Randy and the other staff members will be addressing several new initiatives the Wing is undertaking. I applaud those efforts enthusiastically and am fully committed to use whatever influence I have as Chief of Staff to accomplish them. However, success rests more in your hands than in mine. Please read on.

We are the most important Wing in the CAF because we are the face of the entire organization. Our

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location makes this so. CAF Headquarters is just a place: WE are the people. It is the HSW that is identified with the annual AIRSHO, it is the HSW that supports the various functions at HQ and at the museum, and it is the HSW that occupies the Commemorative Center. Rightly or wrongly, the perception of the CAF as a successful dynamic organization, both within the rest of the CAF and with the public in general, rests with us. If we begin to fail, if we don't see the value in the mission of the CAF, if we aren't doing all we can to complete that mission, then the CAF will fail, first in Midland, Texas and then across the country. If we are an irrelevant organization, with a shrinking membership, lacking any sense of mission, then we will cease to exist.

Steve Brown was hired to bail out a leaky vessel. The CAF was operating with a yearly deficit of SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND dollars. Drastic measures had to be taken, and more need to be, before the CAF can be considered on a sound financial footing. The CAF needs to operate as a business instead of a flying club, and it needs to create a business model that will mesh volunteers with paid professionals all pulling together to achieve a worthwhile mission. Steve is working on the business model, while I'm trying to get the General Staff to define the mission, one that captures the loftiest sentiments of honor, remembrance, loyalty, and patriotism. Neither is an easy task.

This leads me to the Commemorative Center. For more than six years that building consumed a huge amount of my time and effort. I suffered through many disappointments and mistakes, and I had to make many more compromises than I ever wanted, just to get the building built, and I was not alone in that endeavor. The finished product is not perfect. But, it is now our home. We voted overwhelmingly to move there, we invested thousands of dollars to make it "home," and it is a first-class facility. Whatever difficulties we had, have, or will have in the future, in meshing our operations with rental events, museum activities, or anything else, must be worked out. For, if we can't work these things out, then the CAF's presence here will become increasingly problematic. Simple economics will force the CAF to look for a place with a larger population/tourism base.

The CAF moved to Midland Texas because Joe Mabee mobilized both his own resources and those of the Permian Basin to demonstrate to the General Staff that Midland could and would support the CAF. Each of us is smart enough to realize that Midland is not a tourist stop, and so the business decision, to locate something that is tourism-dependent, in the wilds of West Texas, was made because of that promised support. More than ONE THOUSAND new LOCAL members joined the CAF in 1990-91 as a way to demonstrate that support. Several million dollars were raised and buildings built. The future appeared rosy. Now, almost twenty years later, it is not. Support from the community for the CAF is waning. Local government support has weakened. And those more than one thousand members….where are those members now? And how can this situation be reversed?

I hope that you are looking in the mirror for the answer.

Do I expect the High Sky Wing to come up with the millions of dollars to match those that Joe Mabee poured into the CAF to bring it to Midland? Or do I expect the High Sky Wing to influence government leaders to do more for our operation in Midland? As much as I would like to say "yes," the reality of the situation is that we can't. What we can do, and must do, is increase our membership and be as supportive as we possibly can be with everything being done by HQ and by the Museum. It is imperative to our own self-interest that we do so. IF we were the largest unit within the CAF (and all that would take would be to double our existing membership: who have you recruited?), We would represent a power base that would wield significant influence. IF we eagerly offered even more of our support for AIRSHO, for the museum's events, for the Cadet program, even for helping with the rentals events held in our "own" building, that sense of dynamism and commitment to the mission of the CAF would increase.

But what if we don't? What if we allow small things to distract, unintentional snubs and slights to grow and fester, simple courtesies to be rejected, and valid thoughts and opinions to be rejected out of hand? What if we say "That's HQ's problem/mess/issue, so let them deal with it." How long can economic realities be ignored before harsh measures are taken? The future for us then, my friends, becomes very bleak.

Is the CAF going to move in the near future? No. Does Steve Brown want to move the CAF from Midland to an area with more potential? No. But the economic realities can not be ignored forever. We are not in a crisis now, but we need to be as proactive as we possibly can to prevent that crisis from coming. More

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than anything else I want to see the CAF and the HSW flourish. Much of my life has been tied up with this organization. It has to succeed, and it has to succeed HERE. That is why we are "the most important unit in the CAF."

Photos by Col H. A. Tuck

Above, Col Lance Sommers and another happy rides program customer in the SNJ with his family. Below, Cols James Martin and Garrett Donnelly.

Above, we didn't sell any rides at Hobbs but got some interest for future rides. Below, Col Bill Coombes' Swift was the subject of a young artist at the Hobbs fly-in.

Above, Cols Lance Sommers and Robin Donnelly in the SNJ. Below, Cols Sam Strahan and David Donnell.

Above, Cols Steve Bolin and Jimmy Parker. Below, Steve and David Parker in the PT-19.

Keep 'Em Flying!

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HIGH SKY WING - CAF
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Above, Hobbs fly-in, below sunset flight at MAF.

High Sky Wing Elected Officers

Wing Leader: Randy Wilson - 352-4258 cell
Executive Officer: Rick Peterson
Adjutant: Lauri Skinner - 553-2316 cell
Finance: Steve Bolin
Operations: Ronnie Jones
Maintenance: Lance Sommers
Safety - David Linebarger

New Hangar Phone: (432) 561-5581

all numbers are Area Code 432 unless indicated

What's Happening & When

July 23 - Wing meeting (7pm)
July 25 - Big Spring fly-in
Aug 2 - Pecos fly-in
Aug 4 - Wing Staff meeting (6pm)
Aug 27 - Wing meeting (7pm)
Sep 1 - Wing Staff meeting (6pm)

Next Wing Meeting is Thursday July 23rd 7:00 p.m. in the Hangar

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