



The Flyer

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

On the Web at
HighSkyWing.org

Come Out Next Thursday and Fly!

Last month's plans to give rides to our members before the Wing meeting were scrubbed due to weather and high winds, so we are going to try again this month. If you haven't had a chance to ride in one of our aircraft, the SNJ, PT-19 or J2K, this is your chance. Weather permitting, we will be out at the hangar about 5pm and shut down about 6:30 to enjoy dinner and our program.

This month's speaker is our own Bill Gates, who has a number of slides and some video of the unusual aircraft designs (see below) he worked on as an engineer, after World War II. Bill was featured in the July 2003 issue of *The Flyer* and if you missed that story, you can still get a copy from our web site.



July 4th Events

The High Sky Wing will be helping the museum attract visitors over the weekend of July 3-4 by offering our Wing aircraft and crews for rides to lucky visitors. The PT-19, a.k.a. the convertible (above), is one of the planes that we will be flying and we will need some support from our members over at the big hangar. We will have more details at the meeting this Thursday.

Hangar Safety

Just a reminder that we need to continue to pick up after ourselves and not leave tools, air hoses and other items on the floor of the hangar where members or visitors can trip and fall. Let's try and break a bit early each Saturday or other work day, to take time to tidy up our work areas before we quit for the day.

Motoring Along

Well, not quite yet, but the Motor Pool gang reports that disassembly of the deuce and a half is pretty much done and now begins the fun part, putting things back together. If you have ever wanted to learn more about how a differential works or how to rebuild WWII brakes, this is your chance!

If you haven't checked out the progress on the big truck recently, be sure to check it out next Thursday. If you are looking for a way to get involved in a Wing project but don't fly or fix airplanes, why not join the Motor Pool?



Above, the XH-17 and below the XB-49 *Flying Wing*.



From the Back Office

by Col Ralph Gillette

The Wing and hangar have had a busy week or two. First was the Memorial Day Observance at HQ with our Cantina open. Everybody did an excellent job. My thanks. I can't name all the people because I was busy across the street, but we did very well. Several people from outside the CAF have told me they enjoyed the hamburgers.

I understand the Alzheimer's Foundation party was not quite the success they had anticipated, but Jody Nix got a good write up in the MRT and they even mentioned the High Sky Wing. Ernie's fortieth bash was fun. Elvis came back and performed great. Randy Skinner did an excellent job as a stand up comedian act. No cue cards and no script in front of him.

And last Saturday, June 12st, we had the First Annual Iron Eagle Clay Shoot. For those of you that couldn't make it to help out, I must say it was very easy. I'll take this over a golf tournament any day. Jeremy did a great job at getting organized and the folks at Windwalker and with Boy Scout Troop 233 did a good job keeping everything straight. I would guess there will be an article somewhere in this news letter giving greater detail. Oh yes, the fly over went well and the strafing run got everybody's attention. Thanks Bill, Randy and David.

Our staff meeting was somewhat uneventful. We discussed the upcoming Iron Eagle Clay Shoot in detail, got the report on the Memorial Day Cantina (\$550), and discussed the hangar rental for the Alzheimer's party and Ernie's party. The annuals on the two Fairchilds were going well and there is a fly in at Snyder on June 19th.

I would be very remiss if I didn't mention Greg Kinnan. He came down from Amarillo with an AT-6 to get some formation flying and to join our two intrepid pilots in the Memorial Day fly by. I did look much different with three planes instead of two, even if one was a strange gray color instead of our familiar yellow and red.

Our next Wing meeting is Thursday night, June 24th. Check the Exec's column for info on the program. In the mean time, remember we are stressing safety this year like never before. Please be careful out there and wear something CAF.

Lest We Forget

Executive Views

by Col Ted Claussen

Two key ingredients to a successful event are participation and teamwork. Those keys were evident in our Memorial Day event. If you are missing out on these great times you need to join us for this month's wing meeting on June 24th when we will hear from our own Col Bill Gates. Col Gates spent time working with some of these "old planes" that the CAF tries to keep flying.

From the Flannel Wrench Locker

by Col Bill Coombes

Good news from the maintenance front, as the two Fairchilds passed their annual inspections with nary a problem. Credit to H.D. Butler's superb restoration and maintenance on the PT-19 and to a number of people for their work on getting Tarbaby in the shape that she is in today. With the constant, but minor, loving attention that these old airplanes require all of our fleet should continue to be more or less maintenance free for another year.

And speaking of loving attention, sometimes we neglect the easiest part of airplane maintenance, and that is simply cleaning them up, using the ever-popular red rag (the "flannel wrench"). It doesn't require highly skilled personal to clean the dust and oil off the airplanes, and the bellies of all three airplanes can stand some attention. If you wish to get more involved in the Wing than just a once a month meal, remember that there are jobs YOU can do to "keep 'em flying."

On a more serious note, today when Randy and I were putting the two SNJs back in the hangar, I happened to glance at the names on the side of 101, the list of those who worked the hardest to get her back in the air. Sadly, almost 2/3rd of those folks are no longer with us in the Wing. My question is: where are their replacements?? I worry that we are no longer attracting people to join, not just the Wing but the CAF in general. Friends, the eyes of the CAF focus on Headquarters, and thus on the High Sky Wing. We simply MUST have an active, thriving, growing Wing or else the drumbeats for "moving the CAF" will start again, louder than ever, and harder to talk down. Mary Alice, who has faithfully served as our Adjutant for years, always comments in staff meeting, "Recruit new members." She is exactly right. We need new blood, new enthusiasm for the ideals of the CAF. New people

can draw more new people, and their actions can move the “old timers” to more activity. This is one of the reasons why I think our occupancy of the new Commemorative Center is CRITICAL to the health of the Wing. We must be out there meeting and greeting every person who comes through the door, urging them to get involved and welcoming them into our activities. It is up to us! I would love to hear some suggestions from those of you who don't normally volunteer your opinions. Flying in the airplanes and being around them and the members of the Greatest Generation is still the ultimate “E-Ticket Ride” for me and for many of us. We gotta share that experience with “newbies” and soon.

So much for my idle musings. See you at the meeting Thursday and remember, lefty loosey, righty tighty.

As the Props Turn

by Col Randy Wilson

As Bill has noted, all of our aircraft are inspected and back in service, thanks to the hard work of a number of members. Thanks to everyone who pitched in to help.

Last Saturday we had planned to fly the SNJs to Snyder to attend their fly-in and get some free fuel. The morning started out fine, as we lined up on runway 10 and took off together, but a few minutes later, as we leveled out and reduced power to cruise, the engine of 101 became slightly rough and we returned to the airport without incident to determine the problem.

If you aren't familiar with aircraft ignition systems, the spark is generated by two magnetos or mags, which fire two sparkplugs in each cylinder. Each mag also has its own ignition wiring harness. This provides not only more power but the dual ignition system is also a major safety feature, allowing the engine to continue to run even if one magneto or a sparkplug should fail.

One of the checks we do just before each takeoff is to run the engine up and switch between the left and right mags, comparing the drop in rpm on each single magneto vs. both mags, which is the normal setting. Usually this would catch any misfiring sparkplugs or other ignition issues before flight. In this case, the plug seems to have failed right after takeoff and did not show up on the run up.

In the air, a quick check of the left and right mags showed that the roughness was only on the right mag, which fires the plugs in the front of the SNJ's engine. After an uneventful landing, we put 101 back into the hangar and pulled the nine front sparkplugs. Using our sparkplug cleaner/tester, we quickly found that one plug was dead and not firing at all. The other plugs were cleaned and reinstalled and a new one substituted for the bad one. Problem resolved and a good example of just one of the many safety issues we deal with every time we fly on of our planes.

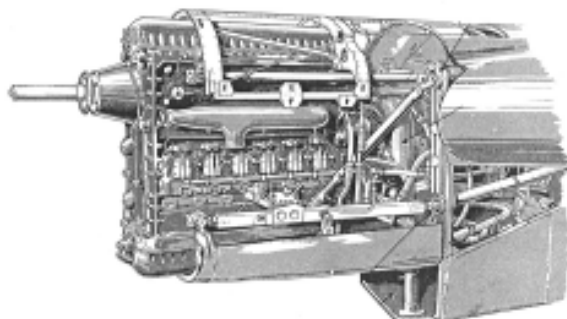
It was now too late to go to Snyder, so we decided to make a quick test flight in the recently inspected PT-19 and J2K. With Bill in the lead in the *Tar-Baby*, we roared around the pattern at MAF for a couple of laps to ensure everything was working and airworthy in both planes. Both performed great and are ready to offer rides to you before the Wing meeting next Thursday. Come out early and wear something comfortable if you'd like a ride.

We will also be helping the museum on July 3-4 by giving some rides to lucky visitors, so we will need a few HSW members to help then. Our B-17 *Sentimental Journey* is also on display in the big hangar and we hope to give tours of it and perhaps other planes that weekend by some of our veteran members who flew back when the skies weren't so friendly.

Remember that bringing a friend out to a meeting or to the hangar on Saturday is a great way to introduce folks to the CAF and help recruit new members. Don't forget that we have an active Cadet program and these young members can join the Wing and ride in our aircraft, provided their parents give permission and sign the appropriate forms.

One final editorial note to some of our officers and writers that a **hangar** is where we park airplanes but a **hanger** is where you park your shirts!

See you Thursday and until then, fly safe!



This WWII aircraft engine is this month's brain teaser. Answer at the Wing meeting on Thursday.

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Curtiss XBT2C-1

Last month's Mystery Plane was Curtiss' response to the Navy's request for a bomber/torpedo in early 1945, and the design was heavily based on the SB2C Helldiver. The XBT2C was fitted with the more powerful Wright R-3350-24 engine, rated at 2,500 horsepower and gone was the Helldiver's sliding greenhouse, replaced by a bubble canopy for the pilot, while the radar operator's station was in the aft section of the fuselage.

Nine XBT2C-1s were built for evaluation and testing, and one airframe was fitted with the massive P&W R-4360 engine of 3,000 horsepower and designated the XBTC-2 (it isn't clear what happened to the 2 in the designation.)

The winning design was the Douglas XBT2D-1, which was later redesignated AD-1 and became the Skyraider. Even the runner up, the Martin XBTM-1, was produced in limited numbers and was redesignated the AM-1 Mauler.

High Sky Wing Elected Officers

Wing Leader: Ralph Gillette
Executive Officer: Ted Claussen
Adjutant: Mary Alice Tidwell
Finance: Bob Stine
Operations: Randy Wilson - 352-4258 cell
Maintenance: Bill Coombes - 689-8359 home
Safety - Don McCracken
Hangar Phone: (432) 563-5112
all numbers are Area Code 432 unless indicated

What's Happening & When

June 24 - Aircraft rides (5pm)
and Wing meeting (7pm)
July 1 - Staff meeting (7pm)
July 3-4 - Museum events in big hangar
July 16-17 - CAF Summer Advisory Board
July 22 - Wing meeting (7pm)

Next Wing Meeting is Thursday, June 24th at 7:00pm in the Hangar
