



# The Flyer

March 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

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## An Evening with the Blacksheep Friday March 15th

As part of our fund raising for a new Wing home, you are invited to have dinner with three members of Marine Fighter Squadron 124 (VMF-124), the famed "Blacksheep". Our guests will be Jim Hill, Tom Emrich and Ed Harper. Joining them will be author and historian Bruce Gamble, who has written a history of the squadron.

The event will be in the High Sky Wing hangar on Friday, March 15th. The social hour will begin at 6:30pm with an Italian dinner at 7:15pm.

Following dinner Mr. Gamble will have some remarks about the history of the Blacksheep.

The cost is only \$20 per person but you do need to make your reservation ASAP. Please call either Lois Harrington at 694-2332 or Ralph Gillette at 570-8093 to make your reservations.

You are also invited to join the Blacksheep and Bruce Gamble the next day, Saturday, March 16th at 2:00pm in the main CAF hangar for their Remembrances of War program. See you there.



An F4U-1A flown by VMF-214 commander Major Gregory Boyington, while based at Vella Lavella in December 1943.

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## Chuck Yeager and Bud Anderson Friday April 26th

Next month will again feature a fund raising dinner in place of our regular Wing meeting, this time with guests Chuck Yeager and Bud Anderson. This event will be held in the main CAF hangar.

Reservations can be made with Col Gena Linebarger at 528-0997 or with Col Blake Cowart at

528-1344, and the cost will be \$50 per person.

We will have further details about this dinner next month but one thing that Col Bill Coombes has requested is some help from about 25 members or other volunteers to help set up and staff this event. Those who help will receive a special thank you.

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## From the Back Office

by Col Blake Cowart

In our February issue, you were informed about a combined use facility that will be funded primarily from a grant made possible by the Texas Department of Transportation. The High Sky Wing was invited to participate in the project for a new home. It will be built on a yet to be determined location on the CAF designated property of the airport.

Members of the Wing staff will be attending a meeting in Dallas on March 9th to learn more about the plans for the new building and will present the Wing's needs and requirements for space and access, should we decide to be a part of the new facility. We will have a report on those discussions next month.

Should the HSW decide to not participate in the project, plans for a separate building of our own cannot be made until the location of the combined use facility is established by the General Staff and Museum Board. In the interim, we need to stay focused on fund raising as either option will require significant monies.

Thanks to those of you that attended the Winter Staff Conference and a thank you in advance to those volunteering to help at the March and April special dinner meetings. I hope to see all of you at these dinners as they are intended as fund raisers for the new home project.

## Executive Views

by Col Ralph Gillette

If you missed the February wing meeting, you missed an opportunity to visit with Bill Vanderland. He is the Midland Senior FBI agent. He had some very interesting things to say and also gave everybody a chance to ask questions. If you ever wondered why it takes so long to bring down some of the crimes that are going on, we got some of the answer from Bill. He and his office of about a half dozen people cover basically all of the Permian Basin. There just aren't enough bodies to get all the work done. Plus there are so many federal laws they are watching over that they have to put their manpower where it will do the most good.

The next two months are going to be very exciting about meeting time. We have replaced our regular meeting with a fund raising dinner on March 15th, which is a Friday night. We are honoring the Black Sheep Group that will be the subject of Bill Coombes' Remembrance of War seminar on Saturday, March

16th. I know there is a Black Sheep Squadron, because I met a man who knew Pappy Boyington, and I spent many hours in front of the television watching the antics of VF 214 in the Pacific. And we all know that television really tells it like it is. For the real story, I suggest you make the meeting and the seminar.

In April it is Bud Anderson and Chuck Yeager in the big hanger at CAF headquarters on Friday the 26th. Again, this fund raising dinner will be in place of a regular Wing meeting that month. See comments concerning reservations in this newsletter.

## From the Flannel Wrench Locker

by Col Bill Coombes

As Spring approaches, our SNJ is back in service after a lengthy annual. Randy ran the engine and pronounced it OK, although the possibility still exists of a leak in the induction system. We shall cowl it and fly it. Everything else on the airplane was fine, with just some minor tweaking to be done, and now she is ready for the air show season. Our first event will be the Dyess Open House on May 11. It would be nice to have many High Sky Wing people there to show the flag, etc. The Blastards will be there, and Gena Linebarger, everyone's favorite Airsho assistant chair, will be helping to coordinate invitations to the modern military and warbird community, so you know it will be a first class show.

Because of the special wing meeting/dinner with the Blacksheep (have YOU made your reservation??) on March 15, we need to have a number of Wing members out to the hangar this coming weekend for a clean-up day. I know it isn't glamorous, but it needs doing. We also need to service the tug, air the tires in the airplanes, and resort the tool boxes. I shall try to get with Dennis at the college to see about scheduling an evening work party in covering the tail feathers of the Fairchild. Stay tuned.

Finally, I had uncovered new pages of the "Saga of Tarbaby," but space might be limited in this edition and so I will save it for the next newsletter. As a teaser, however, I'll treat you to a few lines....

*...And dar I wuz, wif my nekked fuselage exposed fo' all to see, an de airplane doctor is atellin' me dat my wings done been completely useless, but, tru the miracle of modren airplane science, Iz gorn to be fitted with two new wings, what been fum a differer plane. Lawsy, I be so happy I squirted some oyl outtn my exhaust stacks ontur the flo!*

More later, and in the meantime, righty-tighty, lefty-loosey.

## More For Members Only!

by Col Randy Wilson

I am happy to announce that the Members Only section of our Wing's website is now open and available to all current High Sky Wing members.

Visit the web at [highskywing.org](http://highskywing.org) and then click on the Members Only link on the left side of the home page. You will need to log into this section using the same user/login name and password that you use on the CAF members only site at [ghostsquadron.org](http://ghostsquadron.org). If you have a problem or just don't know what to use for your login or password, please send an e-mail to me at [info@highskywing.org](mailto:info@highskywing.org).

Once logged in, you can change your password to one of your liking, edit your Wing contact info, look up other Wing members' info and participate in the Members Only Forum, where you can discuss Wing events and happenings with fellow members.

If you would like to reply to a subject in the forum, you will be asked to log into the forum. Please use your real first and last name for the forum login, so folks will know who is saying what. Again, if you have a problem, please let me know and I'll try and help.

We are also discussing a Cadet's Corner as part of our web site, to give those CAF cadet members in the Wing a place to post news and events of interest to younger folks. If possible, we will try and have a cadet as the actual editor and web master for that section. Any volunteers?

It is your web site and your newsletter, so feel free to comment on them, either using the web forum or by e-mail, phone, "snail mail" or in person at one of the next meetings or dinners.



## And the Answer Is...

Last month's Mystery Plane #3 is a Fairchild Model 77 XAT-13, the prototype of an all-wood twin-engine crew trainer. The decision to build the design with wood instead of aluminum resulted in major production problems but the prototype first flew on July 19, 1942 powered by two P&W R-1340 engines

of 600hp each.

Fitted with two 520hp Ranger V-770 engines, and designated the XAT-14, the second prototype flew on November 25 of that year and was supposed to go into production as the AT-14 Bombardier trainer, but ended up being produced as an aerial gunnery trainer and redesignated the AT-21 Gunner (shown).

Only 175 AT-21s were completed, and after 1943, most were used as target tugs, as combat aircraft were then used for most gunnery training.

I'm not aware of any of these rare but good looking planes that still survive — any of our readers know if any still exist? We do have one of the V-770 twelve-cylinder Ranger engines on display in the main CAF hangar.

## When We Were Soldiers

Do you remember that war correspondent and coauthor of the book *We Were Soldiers Once ...and Young*, Joe Galloway, was our speaker a year ago? Some of his remarks are just as valid today.

The only drawback to hanging with the grunts is this: during those 42 year I have personally been bombed, strafed and napalmed, by the US Air Force, the US Navy, the US Army, and the air forces of the independent nations of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and a couple of more whose tail numbers I couldn't read because I was face down in the mud.

I hold no grudges against those gallant aviators who tried to kill me and missed. But ever since the first time they tried and failed I have never - ever - used the words "surgical bombing strike" in any story I have written.

About Vietnam. I am here to tell you that the people I met, often in the worst circumstances, were the cream of the crop of our generation ...

To me, you are the best and the finest of an entire generation ... You were the ones who answered when you were called to serve. You are my brothers in arms, and I am not ashamed to say that I love you ... I know who MY friends are.

On behalf of a country which too easily forgets the true cost of war - any war - I thank you. On behalf of a people who too easily forget who protects the amazing freedom that we all enjoy - I salute you.



*Lest We Forget*



## 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

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all numbers are Area Code 915 unless indicated

## What's Happening & When

Mar 15 - Blacksheep dinner  
April 6 - Staff meeting  
April 26 - Yeager/Anderson dinner  
May 4 - Staff meeting  
May 16 - Wing meeting  
May 27 - Memorial day

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**Next Regular Wing Meeting is Thursday, May 16th at 7:00pm in the Hangar**

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