



The Flyer

March 2004
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On the Web at
HighSkyWing.org

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

Fifi Leaves on Tour

After a long winter's maintenance period, *Fifi* was declared ready to go last week, and her crew did several test and training flights at Midland before departing for New Orleans. The photo shows the crew getting ready for a flight on Monday, with some local journalists aboard plus a crew from the History Channel (right).

We all wish the B-29 and B-24 a safe and profitable air show season and look forward to seeing them back for AIRSHO 2004.



Col Bob Morgan visits the HSW

Memphis Belle pilot Bob Morgan was Bill Coombes' speaker at a dinner and seminar program last weekend, and he visited the High Sky Wing hangar on Saturday where he met fellow B-17 crewmember Col Bruce Wallace. Col Clyde Watson's father was a B-17 navigator in the war and Clyde volunteered to be Col Morgan's escort for the visit.

As a backdrop to the programs, the Lone Star Flight museum sent up its newly painted B-17G *Thunderbird* (below), as neither CAF B-17 was available. The *Thunderbird* crew were especially gracious and offered Col Morgan a chance to fly a couple of passes over the CAF/Museum complex after the program on Saturday. Cols Coombes, Watson and Wilson were also invited and all naturally accepted the invitation.



Memphis Belle pilot Col Bob Morgan (right) visits with our own Col Bruce Wallace (center) about their experiences as B-17 pilot and tail gunner, respectively as Col Clyde Watson (left), serving as Col Morgan's escort, looks on.



Don't Forget!
Your 2004 Wing Dues Are Due

From the Back Office

by Col Ralph Gillette

Here we are in the windy season. Our intrepid pilots, Bill and Randy, took the 24 and 101X for a short exercise Saturday, March 6th. The reports were that it was a little bumpy, but they both came back together and with all the parts in lace. The two Fairchilds, Tar-Baby and PT-19, are in the big hangar for show and tell. Fifi was pulled out and is on its way to the tour, hopefully, so we have two of the better displays at CAF.

As reported at our last Wing meeting, Open Cockpit day will be Saturday, April 10th. Ernie Webb has agreed to lead the cooking effort. He will need help. Also, we got a request from headquarters to have any of our Wing members that want to spend the day showing off the planes to visitors meet in the Pub at headquarters at 8:00AM for briefing. The show goes on from 9:00 to 3:00. We usually have a good turn out and an enjoyable day. I will remind everybody again at our next Wing meeting.

The Sporting Clay Shoot group met last week and got some good input from three outsiders that have been involved in setting these things up. More will be forthcoming as we get closer to the final day, which is scheduled for June 12th. From all reports, this should be a very good event.

I was very remiss in not sending congratulations to Gena Linebarger and Bobby Meroney who were our Spirit of the Eagle and Colonel of the Year award winners. We had 77 attendees at the awards banquet which pretty well filled the hall. We need a larger place for future meetings. It will be nice when we get the Commemorative Center up and running.

Our next Wing meeting is Thursday night, March 25th. We are going to try to get Danny or Penny to give there program on their trip to the Kitty Hawk ceremonies. In the mean time, remember we are stressing safety this year like never before. Please be careful out there.

Executive Views

by Col Ted Claussen

As the new Exec the duties are not yet solidly implanted in my mind, but I do know that I need help and suggestions for programs, topics and speakers. With your help perhaps we can start a list of people both local and beyond local that would be willing to speak to our group. REMEMBER. . . . We do not have a

budget with which to pay these people. I am sure that we have overlooked many that would be worthwhile speakers. If you have any suggestions or names, please give these to me or e-mail me at twclaussen@myexcel.com.



Col Coombes rides herd on the inspection on his own SNJ, as Cols Rusty Hall and Harold Davis inspect the landing gear mechanism.

From the Flannel Wrench Locker

by Col Bill Coombes

A short column this month, as the pictures that Randy took will do more to illustrate what was going on with the maintenance department of the Wing than anything I could write. We have successfully completed the annual inspection of our SNJ, and she came through the ordeal of being stripped “neked” for all to see without any major malfunctions. I’d like to thank, first and foremost, Col. Jim Moore who joined me for a solid week of work on 101X as well as with my airplane. His help was invaluable! Joining Jim on Saturday were Rusty Hall, from Austin, Randy, Ted Claussen, Tom Kingon, Ed McElrath, and Harold Davis. We still need to do some minor cosmetic stuff to the airplane and then put all the panels on, run the engine, check for leaks, and give her a final clean-up and she’ll be ready to go for another year. Total expense this year will be less than \$800.

Rusty Hall’s help and enthusiasm was also very valuable, and he is planning on becoming one of our non-sponsor named Wing pilots on the airplane. He will probably take the airplane to the Burnet Airshow on April 10 and will campaign it at a few shows during April and May. He’ll also do some maintenance work involving several of the instruments. The Wing staff



After practising their skills on SNJ 24, Rusty and Harold move on to inspect the gear on our 101X.



Col Dan Duewall installs new fabric boots on the control rods of Col Coombes' SNJ. Besides being a talented pilot, Dan is also an aircraft mechanic (A&P) and has donated a great deal of his time and talent to keep the Wing aircraft flying.

believes that having Rusty involved with the operation of 101X will only help in carrying out the CAF's larger mission of showing the public the airplanes.

The two Fairchild's will have their annual inspections in June, and H.D. Butler has generously agreed to come up to help with that. As they are simpler airplanes, we hope that the inspections will not take as long.

Coming up will be the big "fly-out" to Fredericksburg and the Hangar Hotel. I hope that many of you will be down there. Until next month....righty-tighty, lefty-loosey.



Col Jim Moore is one of the hardest-working HSW members and here fights to get the fairings reinstalled on our SNJ.



Harold shows Rusty, soon to be a pilot on our SNJ, some of the key points to know and inspect — important things like the landing gear down lock!



Col Chris Trobridge drove down from Lubbock to help Jim and the others with 101X.

Progress in the Motor Pool

Work on the deuce-and-a-half continues, as the Motor Pool gang continues to disassemble things to see what will need to be repaired or replaced. Sometimes just figuring out how something comes apart can be an issue, as shown in these photos.

They also say that it is good to have a new, full drum of solvent available, as they have lots to clean!



Col Tom Kingon surveys the big truck project in the motor pool area of the hangar.



However, after a few more minutes of examination, the secret pin was found, and shortly after this photo was taken the joint and its large ball bearings were apart.



Cols Tom Kingon, Lyle Thornton and Don McCracken study part of the truck's front drive train, looking for the secret to disassembling the drive joint, which is in need of service. As you may be able to tell from this photo, the secret has not yet revealed itself.

Lest We Forget



Col Bobby Meroney tackles the deuce-and-a-half's hood, removing rust and layers of old paint in preparation for repriming and painting in the hopefully near future. Bobby noted that Col Don Davis had several gallons of primer that he would donate to the HSW Motor Pool. Many thanks, Don.



Col Marjorie Fulbright

by Col Blake Cowart

Marjorie Ruth Fulbright graduated high school in the spring of 1941 in Colman, South Dakota. She worked in her home town after graduation as her family did not have the money for her to attend college. She was approached by her best friend, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, to travel to the West coast and seek work opportunities. A sense of patriotism had swept the nation and they wished to help as best they could. In the spring of 1942, they traveled to California and Marj found work at the Douglas manufacturing plant in Long Beach. After two weeks of training, learning to shoot and buck rivets, Marj a.k.a. *Ruthie the riveter* by her peers, was assigned to the assembly line working on the nose and wing sections of B-17 Flying Fortresses. Even though the plane was a Boeing product, assembly lines of other companies were used to address demand.

Marj's first paycheck made a lasting impression as she made \$47.32 for her first week. Certainly different from the 3 dollars per week she was accustomed to earning in South Dakota. Marj worked the evening shift from three o'clock in the afternoon until eleven at night. She shared an apartment with one of her coworkers on

the oceanfront for 35 dollars per month with all bills paid!

In the later half of 1942, Marj was introduced to F.M. Fulbright by Dodie, her friend from South Dakota. He was serving in the Army Air Corps as a mechanic. They dated for several months and were married in 1943. Marj left the Douglas factory when they started a family in 1944 having her first of five children.

After the war, Marj and the kids followed F.M. to several bases as he continued his aircraft maintenance work. They lived in Ft. Worth, TX. El Paso, TX. and Sioux Falls, SD. They spent many years, 1952 to 1969, in Big Spring at Webb Air Force base.

Marj joined the Commemorative Air Force in January 2000 after being invited to a Wing meeting by her neighbor. That neighbor was our own Megan O'Hearn. There is a lesson here so please bring a friend with you to a meeting as we just might gain a new member.



Final assembly of a B-17F at the Douglas plant in Long Beach, Calif. where Marj worked. The image is part of the collection of 258 photos in the book *Picture History of World War II American Aircraft Production* by Joshua Stoff. If you don't have it in your library, you might want to get a copy.

Ramp Safety Day

Don't forget we are having a Hangar and Ramp Safety Day on Saturday, March 27th beginning at 9:00am and continuing until lunch. We will be cooking hamburgers and hot dogs for lunch. If you've ever wondered how to hook up our planes to a tug, what all those mysterious hand signals mean or how to fight an engine or fuel fire, be sure to attend!

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Our thanks to the Lone Star flight crew that brought their B-17 to Midland for Col Morgan's two programs. The only problem is that two of the crew have the same names, so if you think I'm confused, you are right! Left to right, I hope, are David Anderson (engineer), George Hartigan (pilot), Col Bob Morgan, Keith Hibbett (copilot), Dave Anderson (engineer) and our own Col Clyde Watson, escort for Col Morgan. Again, thanks to George, Keith, Dave & Dave!

High Sky Wing Elected Officers

Wing Leader: Ralph Gillette - 570-8093 ofc
 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

Mar 25 - Wing meeting
 Mar 27 - Hangar & Ramp Safety Day
 Apr 3-4 - Fredricksburg outing
 Apr 7 - Wing staff meeting
 Apr 23 - Wing meeting & VF-15 dinner
 Apr 24 - VF-15 seminar program

Next Wing Meeting is Thursday, March 25th at 7:00pm in the Hangar