



The Flyer

May 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

Yeager Dinner A Huge Success

For about three hours Friday night, the High Sky Wing hangar was turned into a very rough approximation of Pancho Barnes' famous *Happy Bottom Riding Club*, the favorite hangout for the hot stick pilots at Muroc Air Force Base. Chief assistant in charge Gena Linebarger and a bunch of willing volunteers did the hangar transformation to honor BGEN Chuck Yeager and COL Bud Anderson, legendary fighter and test pilots, who were our guests at a special dinner. More than three hundred people filled the hangar to enjoy some of Ernie Webb's delicious BBQ and to listen to some tales of "flyin' on the edge" from Chuck and Bud.

Thanks to Tom Wolfe's book, *The Right Stuff*, almost everyone who knows anything about aviation knows Chuck Yeager. First man to break the sound barrier, WW II ace, and test pilot extraordinaire, Yeager recounted some of his adventures as a test pilot at Muroc, later Edwards Air Force base. Bud Anderson, in his turn, also talked of the test programs he was involved in, two particular programs that even Yeager thought were "hairy."

Both men graciously signed autographs and visited with the attendees, Yeager even posing for a

picture with HSW member Ray Sharp that appeared in the Midland newspaper!

Dozens of High Sky Wing members devoted considerable time and effort toward assuring the success of the dinner. Preliminary numbers indicate that this one event will probably raise close to \$12,000 for the Wing hangar fund. To all of you who worked that evening I would like to extend a very heartfelt "thank you."

The entire weekend's activities, beyond the dinner Friday night, worked so smoothly because of the involvement of many, many High Sky Wing members: your efforts are deeply appreciated. Ernie, Gena and David, Randy and Pat, Blake, Bob Hansen, Jim Moore, the entire Claussen family, my wife, John Llewellyn, on and on goes the list. A special mention needs to be made about the museum and headquarters: without their cooperation we would not have had Yeager and Anderson in the first place. We now have 12,000 reasons to say thanks to Bob, Tami, etc.

Watch for photos from the event. Hopefully we can persuade General Yeager to return to be inducted into the Combat Airman Hall of Fame. If anyone deserves to be there, it is Chuck Yeager.



After the symposium, Col Bill Coombes tries to convince General Yeager that a Mustang really needs a tailhook!



Don't Forget!
Your 2002 Wing Dues
are now past due!

From the Back Office

by Col Blake Cowart

Thanks to all of you that attended the Yeager/Anderson BBQ fund raiser at the Wing last month and a special thanks to those members that sponsored tables. It was great fun and a financial success.

As mentioned in the lead article in this issue, Wing Staff members attended a joint meeting concerning the new TXDOT facility. More information will be offered as it is learned, but we have been asked to attend the next scheduled meeting on July 18th. The Staff originally intended to make a decision during the month of June concerning the direction the Wing should take. Given the dates and subject matter to be presented in July, we must postpone that decision for at least sixty days. As mentioned in the Executive Views column, a future guest speaker will be a representative of the architectural firm.

In the interim, we need to focus on fund raising and future events. We have opportunities during the Memorial Day events at Headquarters and planning for the annual golf tournament will begin this month. Volunteers for all events are needed and welcome.

This month's meeting is NOT the typical pot luck event. Please do not bring food. Ernie Webb, our head chef and idea man, informed me that he has BBQ ready to serve at the meeting. Please bring a healthy appetite and be ready for warm friendship as well.

Executive Views

by Col Ralph Gillette

Hooray for Hollywood. Thanks to all the glamour and glitz of Bud Anderson and Chuck Yeager, we had an excellent dinner showing last month. Full details elsewhere. I just want to thank everybody that attended the meeting and especially those that helped set up and serve the meal. Job very well done.

Our meeting for May 16th is **not** a potluck. We will have BBQ for all, so just the usual contribution is all that is required. Also, there is no planned program for this meeting. We are going to have a "get back into the swing of things" meeting. Eat, drink and talk. There is some movement on the hangar front that we can talk about.

And speaking of the hangar, the architect for the new TXDOT hangar will be our guest for the June meeting. He will be available to discuss the progress of the planning that will be presented to the "Hangar Committee" in July. It just so happens that the meeting

on the new hangar will be held July 18th, which is also our July Wing Meeting night. A representative of the architect will be with us at our July meeting to give us the latest information on what is happening across the street. We are getting close to the point at which your elected staff will have to make a decision on our new home and we will need everyone's input.

Bob Stine tells me the hint in the last newsletter got some people thinking about dues again. Remember it is past time to send them in.

More on the TXDOT Building

by Col Randy Wilson

A meeting was held on April 26th to learn more about the function, design and location of the new CAF hangar funded by a grant from the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT). All of the entities that may participate in the building's use, the Officers' Club, ACAHOF/Member Center, B-29/B-24 Squadron and the High Sky Wing were represented, along with CAF HQ and AAH Museum staff members. Col Blake Cowart and I were present on behalf of our Wing. Also present were Chuck Sturgeon, president of NC Sturgeon, Inc. General Contractors and architect Rodney Roberts, also from NC Sturgeon.

The main purpose of the meeting was to give the architect and contractor a list of functions and spaces that each entity would require to share the use of the new building. Based on this input, a refined design will be drawn and presented for further discussion and modification at a meeting on July 18th.

For the High Sky Wing, we presented a list of needs based on our previous discussions at Wing staff meetings — key points being hangar space for our existing and future aircraft, a meeting/dinner area for up to 300 persons, a food preparation/kitchen/pantry area, space for outdoor cookers, two Wing offices, a break room (lounge) and spaces to house and store the Wing's library, and other items and aircraft parts and equipment. Also, it was explained that we would need exclusive use and control of much of this space and access to our part of the facility 7 days a week and at any time.

After hearing each group's requirements for space, the architect showed us a preliminary design for the building, with dimensions of 300 feet by 200 feet, with the back 100 feet having a second story. This would give a hangar area of 40,000 square feet and another 40,000 square feet of enclosed offices, display

areas, meeting rooms, etc. Mr. Roberts felt that there would be adequate room in the building to accommodate each group's needs for both private and shared space.

The location of the new building was also discussed, and Chuck Sturgeon pointed out problems with drainage between the museum and parts warehouse which would have to be resolved no matter where the new building was built. He also noted that significant fill would be needed if the building were built in the initially proposed location, just northwest of the main museum exhibit hall. After some discussion of the needs for vehicle access to the new building and traffic flow in general at Airsho and other large events, the architect suggested an adjustment of the proposed location, moving it a bit to the west and aligning the building more with the existing airport fence and boundary. Two other possible locations were also discussed, next to or across the ramp from the existing CAF hangar. Chuck Sturgeon said he would examine the costs and other issues of each location and report on these at the next meeting.

We have devoted this month's Wing meeting to an open discussion about a new Wing home, including the possibility of sharing a portion of the new TXDoT hangar. We will have copies of the very preliminary designs for the building and more information on the different locations for all members to study, plus copies of the Wing's submitted list of requirements. Please plan to attend the meeting and participate in the discussion.

As the Props Turn

by Col Randy Wilson

Plans to fly our SNJ to the Dyess AFB open house last Saturday did not work out, as I had to fill in for the scheduled Helldiver pilot, Col John Hess, and fly the Beast to the show. We have had a couple of folks respond to our note in the last newsletter about our need for qualified SNJ pilots, so perhaps we will have some other pilots available in the future. Col Bill Coombes had also planned to fly his own SNJ there but had to cancel due to demands for his time in his "real" job at school.

Saturday at Dyess turned out to be a very West Texas day, with steady winds over 20 knots and gusts over 35 knots most of the day. However, despite the winds, all but one L-bird flew and the show went on with no incidents. The Thunderbirds were the featured performers but folks seemed to enjoy the sight and

sound of our old warbirds just as much.

As you might imagine, security was tight at Dyess due to the current world conditions and it was sometimes interesting just getting onto the base. Our own Cols Gena and David Linebarger were there advising the Air Force on the pyrotechnics and other air show matters, and they may have a few interesting stories, too.

We will be doing a fly-over for the Memorial Day ceremonies at noon, on Monday, May 27th in the CAF Memorial Gardens and will probably do others on the 4th of July. More later. Fly safe.

Flag Day

by Col Sue Beecraft

Flag day is June 14th, and the first such observance was held in Waubeka, Wisc. on June 14th, 1885 by a grade school teacher and his class, as an unofficial celebration of the adoption of the American flag by Congress on that date in 1777.

The teacher, Bernard Ciqand, and his pupils proposed Flag Day in 1885 but spent the next 31 years crusading for a national tribute to our flag. Finally, in 1916, President Woodrow Wilson officially established Flag Day but it was not until 1949 that President Harry Truman signed an act to make Flag Day an annual celebration every June 14th.

And so, as this Flag Day arrives, let's all encourage our friends, businesses, churches and yes, even schools, to proudly fly our flag and take a moment to salute it and remember those who fought to preserve the freedom for which it stands.

Authors Needed!

by Col Randy Wilson

I would like to encourage all of our Wing members to not be shy about submitting articles for the newsletter, just as Col Sue Beecraft did with the Flag Day note, above.

This is your newsletter and I'm just the poor guy who tries to drag enough info out of some of you to fill at least three pages or so every month. Come to think of it — Editors Needed Too! Seriously, I enjoy helping to edit and assemble the newsletter but we do need more input from you, the readers, on what you like or don't like. The Mystery Planes have not had any guesses these last few issues, so for now, I'll put that idea out to pasture.

If you have any suggestions, please feel free to make them to me by phone or in person. Thanks.

Some Key May Dates in WWII

- May 10, 1940
Germany invades Belgium & Holland
- May 10, 1942
Surrender of Allied forces in the Phillipines
- May 7-8, 1942
Battle of the Coral Sea
- May 14, 1942
U.S. Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) formed
- May 15, 1942
Gas rationing begins on U.S. East Coast
- May 3, 1944
Meat rationing ends in U.S.
- May 2, 1945
Fall of Berlin
- May 8, 1945
V-E Day (Victory in Europe)

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

- May 16 - Wing meeting
- May 27 - Memorial day
- May 30 & June 1 - Ernie's Blow Out
- Jun 6 - Staff meeting
- June 14th - Flag Day
- June 20 - Wing meeting
- July 18 - Wing meeting

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

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