



# The Flyer



May 2009 Issue, Vol. Seventeen, No. 5  
**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 May 28<sup>th</sup> 7:00 p.m. in the Hangar

### From the Lead

by Col Randy Wilson

Flying season is here again and you will want to check out Col Ronnie Jones's article about their mission to Abilene and other flying in the next few weeks. Our maintenance team continues to work to get the Stinson 105 and Fairchild J2K ready to fly but the SNJ and PT-19 are flying regularly and attended the fly-in at Schlemeyer Field in Odessa last Saturday. After that, all our Wing pilots completed their annual CAF ground school, and we have started our required pilot proficiency training and check rides to ensure everyone is up to speed for another year.

Monday, May 25<sup>th</sup> is Memorial Day and events kick off at CAF HQ in front of the Commemorative Center at 11:15 a.m. followed by various ceremonies, a fly-by and lunch in the ComCtr hangar. After lunch the action moves to the main CAF hangar where an Open Cockpit day will run until 3:30 p.m. The Wing will be selling rides in the SNJ and PT-19 all day and information will be included in advertising and the programs for the events. HSW members are needed to help man a rides table and also to help in the Hangar 57 tent and with the Open Cockpit tours. If you are available to help, give me a call at 432-352-4258, drop me an email or just show up early that morning.

Your Wing staff has been working with CAF HQ to try and improve our shared use of the ComCtr hangar and progress is being made. We should have more information to share with you at the next Wing meeting, Thursday, May 28<sup>th</sup>.

We have also looked at the cost of landscaping the area off our patio and the bids have simply been out of our budget. We plan to start working to better spread the dirt, pull weeds and implement a better walkway onto the patio. We hope we can make use of a sheriff's work crew next Saturday but that isn't yet firm. We also may have some equipment help to do some heavy

dirt moving. If you can help next Saturday, bring some work gloves and we will get as much done as possible so the area is more presentable to our guests on Memorial Day.

Thanks to Col James Martin, we now have an online HSW Events Calendar using the free Google calendar services. If you have access to the Internet this is the best way to keep up with Wing events, meetings, air shows and fly-ins. You will find a link to the calendar on the HSW web home page at <http://highskywing.org>.

For those without Internet access, here is a list of Wing events that we know of for the next several months:

- May 22 - Fly-over for Veterans in Odessa, 7:30pm
- May 23 - Sell rides in Sweetwater for the WASP Museum with a fly-by over the I-20 Walmart that evening
- May 25 - Memorial Day events at CAF HQ, 11:15 a.m.
- May 28 - Wing meeting 7pm
- June 2 - Wing Staff meeting 6pm
- June 6 - Slaton Air Show
- June 13 - Denver City fly-in
- June 19-20 - Denton Air Show
- June 25 - Wing meeting 7pm
- June 27 - Hobbs, NM fly-in and rides
- July 4 - Colorado City fly-in
- July 7 - Wing Staff meeting 6pm
- July 23 - Wing meeting 7pm
- Aug 2 - Pecos fly-in
- Aug 4 - Wing Staff meeting 6pm
- Aug 27 - Wing meeting 7pm
- Sep 1 - Wing Staff meeting 6pm
- Sep 24 - Wing meeting 7pm
- Oct 6 - Wing Staff meeting 6pm
- Oct 9-11 - AIRSHO 2009

## Executive Offerings

by Col Rick Peterson

Joining us as our guest speaker for the May 2009 Wing Meeting will be Bob Lothringer, Lt. Cmdr, USN (Retired).

Bob began his career with the Navy after speaking with a recruiter at Texas Tech in 1968, following his graduation. After Officer Training School and Communications School, he requested duty on a Destroyer in the Pacific. According to Bob, in the Navy's infinite wisdom, he naturally was assigned to an Aircraft Carrier in the Atlantic, the USS *Enterprise*.

There, his primary duty was as Communications Officer. His secondary duty included managing the budget of the Welfare & Custodian Fund, which, at the time, was a \$1 million fund. He also tells me he has an interesting story about Admiral Hyman Rickover.

Later, in 1970, Bob volunteered for duty in Vietnam and ultimately was placed in charge of 16 PBR's (32 foot fiberglass patrol boats powered by twin Detroit diesel engines). And after an eventful career, Bob received an Honorable Discharge in January, 1972.

Now, Bob and his wife live in Midland where Bob is a Business Counselor for Midland College in the Economic Development Department. They have three grown children.

As your XO, I always gladly consider any suggestions for future speakers at upcoming Wing meetings, so let me know if you have someone you would like to speak to us. Please join us at the May Wing meeting and remember to bring a covered dish. See you then.

## Turn and Bank

by Col Steve Bolin

It has been a while since a written report has been filed, I've been so busy counting your money. Truthfully, I neglect to sit down and type out a few words each month. However, to resolve that issue I have given Randy a big stick to remind me at the staff meetings. Also, I am posting each month's Profit and Loss statement, (cash flow report) and balance sheet on the picture bulletin board in the Ready Room. These will illustrate what and how we are doing financially each month. If you have any questions, my email is: sbolin@grandecom.net and cell phone is 432-553-6290.

So far this year, we have received over \$5000 in donations with *I Paid the Rent Club* leading the way. Thanks to Doc and Amy Watson, George and Alice Coombes, Randy and Pat Wilson, Deb Magness, Gary

Covington, and Frank Hawk.

The Aircraft Rides Program is already up and earning cash this year. Your faithful purchase of soft drinks has allowed the Lounge to donate \$600 so far this year. Bingo is still doing great and has brought in over \$25,000 for the Wing this year. Bill is "Stella" picking up and selling cans for our benefit, and doing a "Stella" job at it. Over 120 have renewed their membership this year. If you haven't sent your dues renewals in yet, please do so. I still say our most important resource is our people

Insurance and the HQ charge called ANUAC have been our biggest expenses so far, almost \$10,000. We've spent \$2500 to Keep the Wing aircraft flying. Of course, there is always rent. However, put it all together and the High Sky Wing is up almost \$18,000 this year. Like Bob Stine used to say, "I need a trip to Vegas."

## As the Props Turn

by Col Ronnie Jones

Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, was our first air show visit for the year....The Big Country Air Show, held at Abilene Regional Airport. With 'Tarbaby' and the Stinson down for maintenance, we only took the SNJ and PT-19. Lance flew the SNJ and Sam flew the PT with me in the back seat and James Martin flew his Businessliner. With the ComCtr hangar being decorated for Permian High's prom, we had to base out of another hangar and Lance's employers were nice enough to allow us to use their's (the old HSW hangar).

We took off Friday afternoon about 5 p.m. and it was on the edge of HOT, at least 'til we climbed to about 1500' AGL, then it was SMOOTH sailing. We were keeping a close eye on thunderstorms building north of Abilene, but they weren't a factor (though the Aspermont area had softball size hail later that night). Abilene Aero allowed us to hangar all the aircraft that night,,,,,and didn't even charge us.

Saturday morning greeted us with FOG, looks like it could be a bust (but we didn't give up!). The gates opened at 8 a.m. and, surprisingly, there was a steady stream of people coming through. As chilly and wet as it was, we manned the flight line like 'soldiers' (check out the picture).

There were only 2 'birds' in the air,,,one was a B-52 from Barksdale AFB in Louisiana doing a fly-by at 500' – in and out of the cloud base! The other was a B-1 that flew in all the way from Dyess AFB (maybe

8-10 mi.) – his 2 fly-bys were NOT high enough to be in the clouds and demonstrated just how LOUD this bird can be!! A B-2 was scheduled to do a fly-by, but after flying down from Whiteman AFB in Missouri, the ceiling was just too low.

We visited with a lot of people, handed out a few of our ‘RIDES’ flyers to those that were interested and invited everyone to come to Midland and visit our museum.

The Dyess AFB Commander, Col. Gass came by to visit with us and made it clear that he wanted to reinforce their relationship with the CAF. He volunteered to give us extra help in scheduling aircraft for our AIRSHO and even said he would like our help in working toward a Heritage-type flight of trainers,, the new T-6 Texan II and our T-6 Texan. Very promising, don’t you think?

At 4 p.m., the ceiling was starting to lift and we prepared to return home. At 5 p.m., the ‘weather trend’ was continually getting better and we launched about 5:30 p.m.. We came out from under the clouds at Big Springs, but the temperature was still in the mid-50’s in the air --- and believe me, mid-50’s with a 100 mph wind is uncomfortable!

It’s about to get very busy. Memorial Day weekend is next and the schedule is full. Friday afternoon, the 22<sup>nd</sup>, we hope to perform a fly-by for a street concert for veterans at Dos Amigos in Odessa. The next morning we plan on going to Sweetwater for the annual WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots) Museum celebration. There is a HUGE move on in the U.S. Congress spearheaded by Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson to award the WASPs the “Congressional Gold Medal”, which is the highest civilian honor awarded. We don’t yet know if this will be completed by then, but the event will be fun. Later that afternoon/evening, we hope to provide a fly-over for a concert at the I-20 Wal-Mart. We are working to finalize these plans now.

And, of course, Memorial Day itself follows on Monday, the 25<sup>th</sup>. We’ll be performing a fly-by for the HQ Memorial Day opening ceremonies, plus the grand opening/dedication of the Commemorative Center, all the traditional CAF events for the day, and the Open Cockpit tours in the main Hangar will make for a full day. Please come out and help any way you can.

***Keep ‘Em Flying!***



Col Sam Strahan tries to keep the PT-19 dry on the wet ramp at the Abilene air show above. With very little flying, Col James Martin, below, demonstrates the comfort of his Cessna 195 Businessliner with a short nap. Threatening to end that nap is good friend Col Lance Sommers!



This year, we hope to really push our Warbird Rides for Hire program both here in Midland and at area air shows and fly-ins. Remember that you can purchase a ride as a present for a friend or family member and gift certificates are available for either the SNJ or PT-19.

## That's What it is All About

by Col Chris Aycock

For the last ten years or so on Sunday mornings, my family and I have shared the same general area near the back of the church sanctuary, and even occasionally the same pew, as Don Troy. Don is not particularly tall and is of slight build. He is very friendly, has a wonderful smile and a quick, dry wit. He is also a quiet, soft-spoken man. Over time I learned that Don served as a pilot in the Army Air Corps in World War II and later in the Air Force during the war in Korea. But, as is true with many of the greatest generation, and despite my several attempts to learn more, he rarely speaks of the war or his role in it. So, until recently, I was left to wonder what part this unassuming and gentle little man played in fighting tyranny and preserving freedom. It turns out quite a lot and, without the High Sky Wing and the Commemorative Air Force, I might have never known.

Just two weeks before his eighty-seventh birthday, Don Troy was reunited with an old companion, the North American T-6. He last flew a T-6 in 1952 when he served at instructor pilot school, teaching other former combat pilots to become instructor pilots themselves, in Alabama after returning from Korea. It was my privilege recently to arrange for Don to have a ride in the High Sky Wing's SNJ, the Navy version of the T-6. But, it was my highest honor to see the expression on Don's face when Col Lance Sommers lead him through open hangar doors to reveal the SNJ shining in the morning sun. I watched closely as Don



Col Lance Sommers help WWII and Korean veteran pilot Don Troy buckle into our SNJ for a flight. Col Chris Aycock made this flight happen and wrote this account of the flight and something about Don's past exploits.

ran his hand along the leading edge of the wing and patted the wing tip. For a brief instant, I saw a flood of memories return. I suspect some were quite bad, but then considering the quickly appearing broad smile and spark in Don's eyes, I knew that many were good.

It was at this point, when we were preparing the plane for flight, that Don began to share more of his story. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps and became an airplane mechanic. In 1942, he had the opportunity to join the "Flying Sergeants" program. After being accepted into flight school, he followed the usual training regimen: primary training in the Stearman PT-17; basic training in the Vultee BT-13; and advanced training in the T-6. By the time Don started to tell of his combat assignments, Lance had the SNJ ready for flight.

While he may not be able to climb into a T-6 quite as fast as he could more than half a century ago, it was remarkable to watch hands and feet quickly become familiar again in the cockpit. In no time, Don had the parachute harness tightened, the seat belts fastened, and even the rudder pedals adjusted. I watched as his hands expertly moved around the cockpit with his left naturally coming to rest on the throttle quadrant and his right on the stick. It was quite clear that the Don was also ready for flight so Lance started the engine and off they went.

After they were away, I could not help myself and I snooped. When I picked Don up at his house earlier that morning, I noticed that he brought his log book. After watching him and Lance take off and head north towards the practice airspace, I saw the book sitting in my car. I carefully leafed through the pages and discovered a particular chart on a page near the back of the book humbly summarizing Don's wartime experience. I was in awe.

While stationed in the Burma/China theater in WWII, Don flew more than one hundred combat missions, first in P-40s and then in P-47s. After serving his commitment in WWII, he was recalled to fly nearly one hundred more combat missions in Korea in F-51 Mustangs, by then the P for "pursuit" had been replaced by F for "fighter." Most striking was the entry showing over 750 hours of combat flying. This quiet unassuming man is a warrior, a hero.

By now Lance and Don were taxiing back to the hangar. Don said he had a good time but wasn't as good at barrel rolls as he used to be—even after all these years he still expects excellence in his flying.

Lance reported that shortly after reaching altitude he offered Don to make a turn or two. Without missing a beat, Don rolled the SNJ up on her side and expertly pulled a steep turn where, at just the moment he leveled the wings, the plane hit a bubble of turbulence. He flew the maneuver so perfectly that the plane flew through its own prop wash. From the looks on their faces, both pilots clearly had a good ride.

After retiring to the lounge for a bottle of cold water, Don shared a few stories with Lance, Col James Martin, and me. He said that he loved the P-47 and wished that he could have flown it in Korea too. He reported that the Mustang “flew great” but was “way too easy to shoot down” during their predominantly ground attack missions. He said that Korea was worse than WWII. He “didn’t think he would make it back from that one.” He said that the North Koreans often knew they were coming and would string cables between buildings to ensnare the Mustangs flying low and fast in an attempt to avoid a deadly ground fire hit to the underbelly radiator. Over half of his group of nine was killed in the first few weeks of combat. Don clearly saw a lot of action and, in fact, estimates that he fired between 300,000 and 400,000 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition while in Burma/China and Korea. Noting that a belt of .50 caliber ammunition is 27 feet long, he said that with the eight .50s on the P-47, “you could really give ‘em the whole nine yards.”

I did receive a surprising answer to my question of what was his most frightening memory. I suspected that he might answer with recounting in more detail the many times he faced ground fire aimed right at him that looked like flaming golf balls screaming past his canopy. Or, I thought he might say that the time he attempted to shoot down a MiG 15 which had jetted, with cannon blazing, from behind his F-51 was the most terrifying. (Don said he pulled too much lead and shot in front of the MiG because he was so excited he forgot to switch his gun sight from ground attack to dog fight mode). But, what scared Don the most was the time he was instructing in the T-6 back in Alabama. A student, who had flown LT-6s in Korea in a forward air support role, demonstrated for Don how he would fire marking rockets so that incoming attack aircraft could more easily spot their targets. Don said the student, at full throttle, rolled the T-6 on its back and pulled the nose through until the plane was diving straight down. The pilot kept the plane hurtling toward earth until the airspeed indicator was “way

above” the red maximum speed line. With the ground filling the windscreen, the student said that the rockets had been fired and then began, by pulling many g-forces, jinking the plane in various directions showing how he avoided ground fire. At the last second the student hauled back on the stick and zoomed away from the earth. Now, with a smile, Don says that “he really scared me.”

Don told several other stories. He told how after fighting two wars he came closest to death when a B-25 pilot he was instructing improperly began his take off-roll when other planes were still on the runway in front of them. Because they were in the tailwheel equipped T-6, neither Don nor the student could see the other planes until the plane had reached sufficient speed to raise the tail. As soon as the tail came up providing unobstructed forward visibility, the student pilot saw his error, panicked, and Don had to take over the controls. They just missed crashing into several other planes and Don recalls, “I nearly died that day.”

We ended the morning’s events with Lance signing off one more T-6 flight in Don’s log book. Don was glad to have his log remain accurate and Lance reports it was an honor and highlight for him to “get to sign a true warrior’s log book.”

Now when I see Don, I still see the friendly man with the happy smile. But, because of an experience provided by the High Sky Wing and the CAF, I also know that I am looking at a hero. With just a short ride in an old plane, I believe that the Wing honored Don Troy and paid respect to what he did for all of us. And that, in my opinion, is what it’s all about.

## *Lest We Forget*



Don't forget the *I Wanna Fly* sign up sheet for rides!

HIGH SKY WING - CAF  
Post Office Box 61064  
Midland, Texas 79711-1064

---

## High Sky Wing Online Resources

by Col Randy Wilson

I'd like to remind all members that they can get a color version of this and all HSW newsletters in Adobe Reader format on our website at <http://highsky-wing.org>. We also have past issues available going all the way back to the August 2001 issue. If you would like to **not** receive a printed B&W copy of the newsletter and save the Wing a bit of postage and printing costs, just let me know by email at [randy@rwebs.net](mailto:randy@rwebs.net) or by phone at 432-352-4258.

We also now have the new online **HSW Events Calendar**, thanks to the work of Col James Martin and others. I have embedded a copy of the calendar on the events page of our website but you can view the calendar directly by clicking on this [link](#). It will be updated regularly so check it often.

Finally, James put together a **video** of some of our flying and has posted it for all to see on YouTube [here](#).

See you at the Wing meeting next Thursday and please remember to bring a covered dish to share!

## 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

May 25 - Memorial Day Events (11am)

May 28 - Wing Meeting (7pm)

June 2 - Wing Staff meeting (6pm)

June 6 - Slaton Air Show

June 19-20 - Denton Air Show

June 25 - Wing Meeting (7pm)

June 27 - Hobbs, NM Fly-in

July 4 - Colorado City Fly-in

---

**Next Wing Meeting is Thursday May 28<sup>th</sup> 7:00 p.m. in the Hangar**

---