



# The Flyer

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High Sky Wing of the Commemorative Air Force  
Midland, Texas - Hangar: 915-563-5112

On the Web at  
HighSkyWing.org

## More Progress on the *Tar-Baby*

The following photos show some of the progress that has been made on our Fairchild 24, also known affectionately as the *Tar-Baby*. As Bill Coombes notes in his own article later in this edition, it has taken a lot of hard work by our mechanical wizards, Cols Rodney Jackson and Rudy Silas (both of whom are now High Sky Wing members, by the way). They have been steadily helped by Col Jim Moore (who else!) and a number of other members.

Not only does the *Tar-Baby* now have a newly rebuilt tail and left wing, as shown in the photo below, but her flaps and control surfaces are installed and she is really beginning to look like something that might one day fly again!



bit of repair and replacement. Once again, master wood worker and wizard Rodney came to the rescue.

Once the basic engine controls, electrical and fuel connections are done and checked, it won't be much longer before we can test run the engine.



Work has also been done in the engine compartment, getting all those important knobs and handles ready to attach to the thingamabobs that they have to control. Rudy did point out to us that there was no heater muff assembly on the exhaust, so the pilots and passengers of the *Tar-Baby* will not have an cabin heat — but that just means we won't fly far when its cold!

The cockpit floor and understructure were also found to be in very poor condition and required a good

## From the Back Office

by Col Blake Cowart

Friday, November 15th, the TXDoT Hangar Committee met at Headquarters during the scheduled General Staff Committee meetings. Progress is moving forward and the architectural plans are for a first class building, one that we will all be very proud to have. The High Sky Wing was represented by: Don McCracken, Bill Coombes, Randy Wilson and me.

This project will take approximately two years to come to fruition. With that said, members of the HSW Staff will be meeting with the Midland Airport Board on November 19th at their scheduled meeting. We have requested to be placed on their meeting agenda to discuss our continued occupancy of our current home as our existing lease contract expires on December 31st of 2002. We will report our findings at the membership meeting on November 21st and in the December newsletter.

In addition to the scheduled HSW Staff elections at this meeting, I will poll the members present to list their selections for the Colonel of the Year and the Spirit of the Eagle awards. As you may be aware, these are awards given within the unit and are regarded with much acclaim. It is truly an honor to be regarded notably by your peers. I hope to see you there.

## Executive Views

by Col Ralph Gillette

I missed the October meeting, but understand the video was good. Even got a few comments from our local movie star and air show chairman extraordinaire, Col Bill Coombes. Hope everybody enjoyed the show.

November will feature Pastor William Clardy. As mentioned last month, he was a B-52 driver and thinks it was the best plane ever to fly. Of course, it didn't make the ten best in the video last month, but neither did many other American vintage planes. So much for the BBC.

The staff has decided that we will have a meeting in December at the hangar. It will be a regular potluck, with a twist. Please bring a new, unwrapped toy or animal for the "Toys for Tots" campaign. We will have one of our local Marines in attendance to talk a little about their toy effort and to take charge of our gifts. Also, we still need the meat and potatoes and dessert, as usual, but it would be nice to have special meat and special potatoes.

We are planning to have our January meeting at a location away from the hangar. This will be our yearly end of season party with induction of new officers. More on this later.

## From the Flannel Wrench Locker

by Col Bill Coombes

I hope that many of you have been out to see the "Tarbaby" (our Fairchild F-24) as Rodney, Rudy and Jim have done truly outstanding work in reconditioning what was a very neglected airplane. Rodney discovered some damaged stringers and formers under the floorboards that were causing some rubbing on the elevator torque tube, so he had to do some more woodworking magic. The new floorboards we have in the airplane as a result of these repairs exhibit better workmanship than the cabinets in my house!

Ted Claussen was out giving Rodney information about the wiring work. Ted has injured his shoulder and can't finish the electrical work, so Bob Walker has volunteered to step in. Surely was good to see former Wing Leader Walker out in the hangar: I appreciate his willingness to help us out. Once the wiring is finished, we will be installing the radio equipment and then we will be looking toward the paint shop. All in all, we are getting very close to the time when we can start the engine!

Elsewhere in this issue Randy will inform you of the latest voyages of our SNJ. It was used to do another fighter pilot check ride, and Randy and I flew a formation hop over the Hispanic Veterans Memorial ceremony on Veterans' Day. We were supposed to fly down to Big Lake on the Saturday preceding Veterans' Day but the thirty-five knot westerly winds kept us from supporting Wing member Dave Crowder and the folks in Big Lake. The airplane has performed without a problem, but we still intend to retime the magnetos and install a new tailwheel shock strut later in the winter.

The hangar issue, with regard to where we can hang our hats until the TxDoT building is done, is coming to some kind of conclusion. As I write this, we are several days away from meeting with the Airport Board to seek an extension of our lease agreement. However, with Deerhorn Aviation purchasing Avion (soon to be announced publicly), our status in the hangar is even more "up in the air." The HSW staff has been exploring possibilities if we are required to move

out after December 31, and we believe we have a satisfactory plan of action for storing all of our stuff. What we haven't figured out is the manpower requirements to empty the hangar. I believe there are some young bodies out there (at my school) who need community service projects, but in the final analysis it will be our wing members who must step up and help out. Please come to the Wing meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> to hear the latest news.

Finally, let me again thank all of the High Sky Wing members who did so much to make AIRSHO 2002 so successful. The show generated \$45,000 in profits and we figure it was seen by 33,000 people. Pretty good for a small town in West Texas! I have agreed to serve as AIRSHO chairman in 2003, with Gena Linebarger as my chief assistant, and it looks very promising for us to have a jet team as the featured act. More news on that subject after the ICAS meeting early in December.

All for now....remember, righty tighty, lefty loosey.

## As the Props Turn

by Col Randy Wilson

As Bill mentioned in his article, we did fly both SNJs on Veterans Day but were not able to make it down to Big Lake for their parade on the previous Saturday, due to the high winds and runway limitations there. Hopefully we can make it next year.

I had a chance to fly with Col Bill Johnson this last weekend, as we did a fighter check ride in our SNJ 101X to get him ready to fly the CAF's FM-2 Wildcat that I also used to sponsor and fly, which is now based in Virginia. Bill had owned his own SNJ and had done a good bit of aerobatics in it, so the check ride went very smoothly.

As you may or may not know, we charge a fee to cover the cost of operating the SNJ when it is used for check rides or other non-Wing flights, and Col Johnson generously made out his check for more than the required amount, so he is now a new High Sky Wing member. Hopefully, you will see Bill flying the Wildcat at next year's AIRSHO, so please say hello and thanks for the support!

This is the second wing membership we have gotten recently from check rides, as Col Rusty Hall also joined and made an extra donation a few months ago. Along those lines, I'm happy to report that part of

Rusty's donation went to rebuild a new tailwheel strut for the SNJ, which it needed. Hopefully, Rodney and Rudy will get a chance to install the strut shortly.

Let's not forget that we, the existing members of the High Sky Wing, are the best recruiters of new members, both for the Wing and the CAF. When's the last time you signed up a new member?

On other issues, we hope to be able to report to you at this month's Wing meeting on the outcome of our request to the Midland Airport Board to continue the lease of our existing hangar until the new CAF facilities are built. We hope that the board members will realize the significance of the Wing's involvement in making the CAF AIRSHO a major financial draw for the community and also the Wing's major role in the new TxDot building.

Speaking of our future home, at last week's meeting of the TxDot building committee, the architect showed a revised plan for the banquet hall and kitchen area that would allow for the seating of at least 560 guests for dinner, plus allow for easier access to the kitchen by caterers and others. One point that was discussed was that the working name "TxDot hangar" didn't really explain all of the features that were going to be included in the building, and the committee voted to informally refer to the new structure as the *Commemorative Center* until a more formal name is proposed, perhaps by a major donor!

We plan to emphasize to the airport board the economic impact that the new Commemorative Center will have on both Midland and the Midland International Airport, as it will be a perfect place for large meetings by reunion groups or regional corporations and associations. By being located right at the airport, events held at the new center would clearly benefit both the city and airport.

If we don't succeed in convincing the airport board and city fathers to allow us to continue in our old hangar until the new center is built, we will move onto Plan B, C, D or whatever it takes. No matter what happens, the High Sky Wing will continue to grow and prosper in the years ahead. Fly safe!



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## Wing Elections Reminder

Just a reminder that at the November 21<sup>st</sup> Wing meeting, elections will be held for three of the Wing staff offices. The following Colonels have been nominated for these positions:

Col Ralph Gillette - Wing Leader

Col Mary Alice Tidwell - Adjutant

Col Bob Stine - Finance Officer

All three Colonels have agreed to serve or to continue to serve in these positions for another term. Additional nominations may be made from the floor before the election, if desired. The newly elected officers will begin their terms of office on January 1<sup>st</sup>.

Please remember that in order to vote in Wing elections, you must be a current member of both the CAF and the High Sky Wing.

## 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

### Nov 21 - Wing meeting & Elections

Dec 7 - Staff meeting

Dec 19 - Wing meeting

Jan 4 - Staff meeting

Jan 16 - Wing meeting

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**Next Wing Meeting is Thursday, November 21st at 7:00pm in the Hangar**

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