



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

Thanks To All!

A big THANKS to all High Sky Wing members for all the hard work at AIRSHO 2002! Once again, the show was a success and we dodged the weather and had a great show. Our own Wing activities, the cantina and mixer, were also very successful and raised significant funds for our new home and aircraft. Please make it out to the next couple of Wing meetings for more details. See you there!

FLASH!

The Tar-Baby Has TWO Wings Again!

After many, many months (and more dollars) the *Tar-Baby*, aka Fairchild 24, once again has two wings and a tail! And they are in much better shape than before, thanks to the hard work of a number of folks. Please see Col Bill Coombes' article inside for details.



From the Back Office

by Col Blake Cowart

I certainly wish to thank all of you that volunteered during the AIRSHO as well as all other times during the year. I don't wish to sound redundant as I know that all of the Staff wishes to express a big THANK YOU.

On Thursday during the week of AIRSHO 2002, I attended a meeting concerning the new TXDOT hangar project at headquarters. In attendance with me were representatives of the B-29/B-24 Squadron, American Combat Airman Hall of Fame, and the Officers Club as well as headquarters Staff and engineers from the Sturgeon Company.

The purpose for my attendance was to inform the group that the High Sky Wing Staff had voted to accept the opportunity to be included in the new project as the Wing is facing an uncertain circumstance with our current home. After December 31st of this year, our lease converts to a month by month term.

The architect made a presentation and answered many questions put forward by the group. The location and design was discussed and displays were made available during AIRSHO at the General Membership meeting and in the Officers Club.

The Group voted to make the initial downpayment, of approximately \$59,000, which is due on or before January 31st 2003. A more in depth article will be published in CONTRAILS soon.

Again, thanks for all your help and support during AIRSHO as it was great fun and a success.

Executive Views

by Col Ralph Gillette

The Queen didn't make, but her court returned. With flags flying high and the sun shining through a thin layer of clouds, *Diamond Lil* made the gentle turn on to final and settled in nicely. What a beautiful sight. The goose bumps are still marching up and down my arms and back remembering the familiar sound of those big radial engines. I guess I'm just a child of the 40s, but the only non-radial that does the same for me is the Merlin in the Mustang.

And speaking of the Mustang, Ron Buccarelli flew *Precious Metal* to a fifth place finish in the Silver division of the Reno Air Races. We had hoped he would be back for AirSho, but he is keeping the plane in the Reno area for some additional races.

The October wing meeting is scheduled for

Thursday the 17th. We are planning to have our regular business meeting and show a video done which tries to spotlight the ten best aircraft of all time. The video includes clips shot at MAF during a past AirSho, and you will recognize our own Bill Coombes and other Colonels commenting on their own favorite planes.

November's meeting will feature Pastor William Clardy, Associate Pastor at Crestview Baptist Church. He was a B-52 driver and has some strong opinions of his own about which airplane is the best ever designed.

From the Flannel Wrench Locker

by Col Bill Coombes

First of all, thank you one and all for the fantastic work all the High Sky Wing members put in to make AIRSHO 2002 such a success. I repeatedly found myself telling various folks that the Airsho could not happen without the men and women of this Wing who so willingly help in a myriad of ways. Everywhere you looked there was a HSW member engaged in something critical to the success of the show. I am in your debt and I salute your efforts.

Secondly, since it was Airsho weekend, the airplane gremlin appeared and rendered our SNJ out of commission for the weekend, the fourth year in a row that good ole 101X has had problems. Randy flew her over to the formation school in Odessa Thursday, and when he went to fly back she acted up and he had to abort a takeoff. The good news is that Rodney and Rudy went over with Randy on Wednesday and fixed the problem (two bad plugs) and we think we can adjust the mag timing to permanently cure this problem....very annoying that it always happens at show time!

Of course everyone saw how wonderful the Tarbaby looks with the new fabric on the wing and tail. Rodney and Rudy, with the great help of Jim Moore, finished all the fabric work and mounted the tail feathers before we had to clean up the hangar for Airsho. In talking with Rodney, he sees no problems in mounting the wing, and then installing the instrument panel and the seats in the next several weeks. **Flash** - The wing is already on! See the photo on the front page.

Then she will either go to the paint shop or over to the radio shop. We are getting very close to having the airplane up and flying! I am going to suggest having the first flight in December, on the second anniversary of her acquisition. It has been an expensive lesson in how much an airplane can cost, but I believe

all of us can take real pride in the accomplishment when she finally rolls out of the hangar. We've decided on a unique paint scheme, that of a US Coast Guard Fairchild 24, making it the only Coast Guard marked airplane in the CAF, as well as the only Fairchild 24.

Finally, as was authorized by the Wing staff, I contacted the airplane dealer in Florida who has the Focke-Wulf 149 for sale and notified him that, due to Airsho, we would not be able to send our mechanic to look at the airplane until sometime after the show. We will be talking to Rodney and to Eric about going, with a VERY critical eye, to examine the airplane. Come to the Wing meeting for an update on that project.

My thanks once again to everyone for all the work at Airsho. Y'all the greatest!

As the Props Turn

by Col Randy Wilson

AIRSHO 2002 started out OK for me on Thursday, when I flew the Wing's SNJ 101X over to Odessa for the CAF TraRon formation clinic. I ended up in back or right seats of other folks planes all day and didn't get back into 101 until almost 6pm to fly back to Midland. During the engine run up, the left mag ran very rough and would not completely clear, so I had to leave the SNJ tied down there.

Over the weekend, I wasn't able to get back to try and fix the SNJ but did put it into the FBO's hangar Sunday morning, due to the forecasts for some rough weather late that day. And for once, the weather guessers were right, as a front or dry-line hit with high winds, blowing dust and possible hail late Sunday afternoon. Everyone pitched in to get as many planes as possible into the big hangar and I grabbed our HSW tug and Ryan Linebarger and Ryan Green as helpers. With the boys' help, we managed to pack the hangar with all of the smaller CAF planes plus several private ones before any damage was done. A special thanks to the two Ryans.

The weather didn't break until Wednesday, when Rodney Jackson and Rudy Silas drove over with me and found and replaced a couple of fouled or bad spark plugs. Since the left mag fires the back set of plugs on the SNJ's P&W R-1340, we had to remove the engine cowl to get at the bad plugs. You should have heard Rodney and Rudy's comments about how nice the SNJ was to work on compared to the B-29 and Helldiver. I think they just like the fact that most of the parts were not as heavy!

Anyway, after a good run up and the ceiling lifted a bit more, I took off with no problems and got the SNJ safely back home. Rodney thinks we may have a timing issue in the mags which is causing the plugs to foul, and we will be checking on that as soon as time allows. He has also finished repairing and rebuilding another tail wheel strut for the SNJ and hopes to have that installed in the near future. This should make the SNJ's slow speed handling a lot better.

As Bill has noted in his column and as you can see from the photo on the front page, the Fairchild, aka *Tar-Baby*, is going back together very nicely, again thanks to the hard work of Rodney, Rudy, Jim Moore and others. We are shooting to have it done and ready to paint and maybe flying by the end of the year. Donations are still needed to help get the plane finished and we are still looking for more qualified pilots for both the Fairchild and SNJ.

While it is not a Wing aircraft, many of you have helped me with the Curtiss SB2C Helldiver assigned to the West Texas Wing and know that we had carburetor and other problems which we were trying to resolve in time to fly for AIRSHO. The bad news is that the engine is going to have to come off and be rebuilt due to a broken rod on one cylinder. I just wanted to thank the Wing and all of you who pitched in to help care for the "Beast" while we were working on it. We have moved it to the CAF hangar and I will keep you posted on its progress. Anyone happen to have a spare Wright R-2600-20 handy?

I'd like to thank all of you who worked so hard to make the show and our own Wing events a success. I hope to see you and thank you personally at this month's Wing meeting. See you there.



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Wing Elections in November

At the November 21st Wing meeting, elections will be held for three of the Wing staff offices, as directed in the CAF Unit Manual. A nominating committee was appointed consisting of Cols Bill Coombes, Jim Moore and Ernie Webb, and they have recommended the following candidates for election:

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 1st.

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

Oct 17 - Wing meeting
Nov 7 - Staff meeting
Nov 11 - Veteran's Day
Nov 21 - Wing meeting & Elections
Dec 5 - Staff meeting

Next Wing Meeting is Thursday, October 17th at 7:00pm in the Hangar
