



The Flyer



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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 October 22nd 7:00 p.m. in the Hangar

From the Lead

by Col Randy Wilson

First, a big **Thank You** to all of the High Sky Wing members and their families for their outstanding support for AIRSHO 2009, despite the weather! Our Wing meeting this next Thursday will be devoted to a debrief of AIRSHO and the various Wing activities, so be sure to attend and share your own stories and thanks. Be sure to bring a covered dish or other offering and come talk AIRSHO.

With a very wet and cool start on Wednesday, I'm happy to say that the HSW Cantina ended up showing a very good profit by the end of Friday, based on a first report. Several visitors commented how great it was to have a choice of good hot food right on the CAF grounds, including members of the Marshallers and Public Safety teams. Great job Cantina Team! More details at the Wing meeting.

I'm sorry to say that of our four Wing planes, only the SNJ got to fly in the show on Saturday, with Col Lance Sommers at the controls. Plans to have all the trainers, liaison and observation types fly at 10:30 a.m. as part of the pre-show on Saturday and Sunday were weathered out. The sudden clearing of the skies just in time to start flying at noon on Saturday was a shock, based on the weather forecasts we were getting in the aircrew briefing all morning. In fact, the B-1 fly by out of Dyess AFB in Abilene reported that the only area clear enroute was around Midland!

From my vantage point on the announcer's stand, it looked like we had a good sized and very happy crowd on Saturday, and the lines at the concession stands that I could see were busy most of the day. Sunday, however, was not so good, to say the least.

Despite forecasts on Sunday for just barely acceptable ceilings and visibility to fly by 1 or 2 p.m., the ceilings stayed around 3-400 feet with visibilities of a mile or less, with mist, all day. A decision was

made at 1:00 p.m. to cancel the show and organize a taxi parade with a number of the planes, followed by a special fireworks show as the Blastards and EOD had to detonate all the pyro scheduled to be used for that day's show. With the low ceiling, some of those shots really echoed! With temperatures down to 48 degrees with a 38 degree wind chill and misting rain, there just was no other choice.

I am happy to say that after a bit of a slow start, the HSW Cadet Crew 1957, so numbered as that was the year the CAF was founded, recruited 14 members, 12 young men and 2 young ladies, by AIRSHO. Good work to Col Bob Wray and his team. More details about the crew at the Wing meeting.

I'm also happy to say that we continue to recruit new CAF and HSW members, with our current count showing 187 active members, and I believe we gained a few more at AIRSHO. Let's keep working towards a goal of 200 or more HSW members by the end of this year. We can do it!

In other Wing happenings and news, we hope to bring the L-17A Navion back to Midland soon so our maintenance team can inspect the plane for assignment to the HSW. The delay has been partly caused by the Florida unit's checkpilot having been on vacation until now and, of course, AIRSHO.

There may be a couple more air shows for our planes and pilots this year, including the Alliance show in Ft. Worth this weekend and one at Randolph AFB in San Antonio on November 7-8. Again, more info when we have it.

Typically, we do not hold a November HSW meeting and have an early December meeting due to the holidays. Your HSW staff is working now to set the date for the December meeting, at which we will hold the annual Wing staff elections. Up for election this year are the following positions: Executive, Opera-

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tions, Maintenance and Safety Officers. These are four of the seven elected, voting officers that make up your High Sky Wing staff, as defined in the CAF Unit Manual. The other three elected officers, Wing Leader, Adjutant and Finance Officer, are elected in the previous year and all staff officers server a two-year term.

Also in accordance with the CAF Unit Manual, we will have the names of a three person Nominating Committee to you as soon as possible, hopefully by the Wing meeting. You are welcome to propose candidates for the available Wing staff positions to the members of that committee for their consideration. The Nominating Committee will then present its slate of nominees to the staff, and all Wing members will be notified of the list of candidates no later than 30 days before the election.

I know that's a lot of rather dry information but with a lot of new members in the Wing this year, I felt that all might appreciate a quick review of how we select and elect our HSW staff members.

A quick reminder that you can get this and past HSW newsletters online, in color, and save the Wing some postage, from our website at <http://highskywing.org>. If you don't want to receive a B&W printed copy in the mail, just drop me a note at randy@rwebs.net and we'll mark you off just that mailing.

Once again, I'm up against the deadline getting this issue finished and have only one photo — I'll try and correct that for the next issue. See you at the Wing meeting, this Thursday, October 22nd.

Executive Offerings

by Col Rick Peterson

Well, this year's AIRSHO was certainly different. I've only been in the CAF for a couple of years, and we've always had flyable weather, until this year.

Still, everyone that I saw while manning the Ready Room during the two days of AIRSHO seems to take everything in stride. Also, I've passed along dues and new member applications to Steve Bolin that I received during the show.

For this month's Wing meeting, we have decided to forego a guest speaker, and use the time for a debrief of this year's AIRSHO. Looking ahead to our December meeting, I have tentatively lined up two A-26 pilots to speak to the Wing. Thanks to help from Col Bob Wray, and schedule permitting, we should have Bill Billingsley, who flew both A-26s and B-26s talk to us. Bill now lives in Abilene, and his son Cary,

a potential HSW member, has indicated he'll make sure his dad makes it over to Midland. Also, Lawrence Fuller, a good friend of the Coombes', and A-26 pilot in Europe, has said he will gladly talk to us at the December meeting.

So, in addition to Wing Staff elections at the December meeting, we may have the opportunity to hear from two guest speakers.

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 October Wing meeting next Thursday and remember to bring a covered dish. See you then.

Keep 'Em Flying!

As the Props Turn

by Col Ronnie Jones

A couple of weeks before AIRSHO, the Odessa and Midland Chambers of Commerce had a mixer in our hangar. It was interesting to see a lot of the people wandering around the hangar looking our aircraft over. The Wing donated two rides in our aircraft as prizes, and two guests got a ride in our Stinson and PT-19 that evening in a flight over Midland just before sunset.

The best part about that was when Col Steve Brown came to me and said there was a gentleman that wanted to purchase rides for four of his employees in the PT-19! I visited with Mr. Mike Killian and he was very excited about it. I explained that we could only fly CAF aircraft during daylight hours and that we would be happy to accommodate him before he had to return to Houston that Friday. We got things arranged for Thursday afternoon and he and two of his employees came out. The first young lady was a little bit apprehensive to start with, but came back with a huge smile on her face. The second lady could hardly wait to get in the plane. When she got back, all she could talk about was wanting to take flying lessons!! Mr. Killian even promised to come back and buy a ride in the SNJ for himself. I hope to make arrangements for the other two PT-19 rides as soon as possible.

We made it through another AIRSHO, though we didn't get to fly all our planes like we had planned. At least Lance was able to fly the SNJ on Saturday. Weather has played a bigger part this year in our flying schedule than it has in the past. We went to the Big

Country/Dyess Air Show on a Friday in early May, only to wake up to a 500 foot ceiling and drizzle. Then we almost didn't make it out of Midland because of weather for the Denton air show and our Breakfast Fly-In was weathered in! We were lucky that the low clouds cleared just in time for Saturday's AIRSHO but not Sunday's. We still do our best to *Keep 'em Flying*.

A big Thank You to all who helped prepare for, and make our portion of the AIRSHO a big success!

The Safety Corner

by Col David Linebarger

We survived AIRSHO again without any major safety problems that I know of, and the only minor injury I heard of was one person getting a little burn on the hand in the cantina. It was a good show and a good time was had by all.

I would like remind everyone that snake season is not yet over, as this afternoon (10/14/09) my wife Gena called me and had a rattlesnake come into her office in the Commemorative Center as the front doors were opened up to air the building out. Mark and I got it taken care of and it was a small one and probably came out of the rocks in the front of the building. So, as the weather starts to change snakes will be moving on warm days and looking for a warm place on cold days.

Be VERY CAREFULLY when you are moving things in the hangar and pay attention to where you walk around the building. Remember the snake catcher is in the HSW tool room by the ice machine and if you have to ask what it is you probably are not the best person to use it! If so, get back, watch where the snake is going and call for help from someone around the area. Gena was watching the snake and by the time we got there it had moved to the back of her office behind some boxes. Mark and I happened to be at the building at the right time. Safety First!

Maintenance Update

by Col Lance Sommers

Well we made it through AIRSHO with a good turnout for Saturday after the weather cleared. I attended the TraRon Clinic over at Odessa on Thursday and Friday, the turnout was not great because of the weather but we had a successful clinic. Thanks to the High Sky Wing pilots, we gave some rides to the media to help promote the AIRSHO, and I gave a media ride in the SNJ for permainbasin360.com and an interview that will be on their website with a link to

our rides program.

Winter maintenance is right around the corner and our aircraft are in good order so the maintenance is expected to be light but our tugs need some TLC. We will be sending out emails to the membership for worknights and would be glad to have any help offered, so if you see any of the maintenance team running around the Wing over the next few months come over and we will have something that you can do.

Some USAAF Statistics from WWII

by Col Randy Wilson

Recently, while doing some research into flight training in the U. S. Army Air Forces in World War II, I ran into some frankly staggering statistics I'd like to share with you about some of the pilots and aircrews of the Greatest Generation in WWII. I warn you that these may seem like grim numbers but they are, to me at least, important to know and not forget.

The statistics are from the three volume *Fatal Army Air Forces Aviation Accidents in the United States, 1941-1945* by Anthony J. Mireles published in 2006. I had never seen such a detailed account and summary in print before I acquired these volumes.

In 1941, the AAF was increasing its training of pilots and aircrews with thousands of new aircraft. In that year, there were 233 fatal aircraft accidents, with 417 fatalities, 86 injuries and 259 aircraft damaged or destroyed. Just two years later, in 1943, with a massive increase in aircraft and training bases, there were 2,268 fatal AAF aircraft accidents, resulting in over 5,600 fatalities, over 1,000 injuries and 2,536 aircraft damaged or destroyed. That is an average for 1943 of six fatal accidents in the states per day!

During the war, the AAF had a total of over 6,350 fatal accidents in the continental U. S. resulting in the loss of over 15,530 pilots. In another perspective, the AAF lost over 4,500 aircraft in combat with Japanese army and naval air forces but lost over 7,100 aircraft in operational and training accidents back home during the same period! And these are just the figures for the Army Air Forces.

General Curtis E. LeMay, in the book *Mission with LeMay*, noted that in the summer of 1945, it was safer to fly a combat mission over Japan in a Boeing B-29 than it was to fly a B-29 training mission back in the states. There were more fatalities training in B-29s than there were in combat.

Lest We Forget!

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Col Lance Sommers was given this photo at this year's TraRon formation clinic, showing him flying the HSW SNJ 101 on the wing of Jim Munn's SNJ 44 at last year's TraRon clinic.

When I asked Lance who the photographer was, he said basically it was some guy who walked in and pitched out the photos for anyone to take and then disappeared. Ah, the phamous phantom photographer!

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

Oct 22 - Wing meeting (7pm)
 Nov 3 - Wing Staff meeting (6pm)
No November Wing Meeting
 Dec 1 - Wing Staff meeting (6pm)
December Wing Meeting & Elections TBA

Next Wing Meeting is Thursday October 22nd 7:00 p.m. in the Hangar