



A Semi-Annual Publication of the High Sky Wing of the Commemorative Air Force

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

FEBRUARY 25
Wing Meeting

MARCH 12
NAS Corpus Christi Airshow

MARCH 19
Warbirds and Wheels Car Show
presented by the HSW

MARCH 24
Wing Meeting

APRIL 9
Hops & Props.
presented by the HSW

APRIL 28
Wing Meeting

MAY 26
Wing Meeting

MAY 30
Memorial Day at the High Sky
Wing

***REMEMBER,
IT'S TIME TO PAY
YOUR DUES!***

FROM THE WING LEADER

2016 STARTS ON HIGH NOTE FOR HIGH SKY WING

The High Sky Wing had an incredible 2015 year.

We completed our first year of managing the CAF High Sky Wing campus, grounds and rentals. We ran a successful Hops & Props fundraiser with 750 people in attendance. We showcased our facilities and aircraft at the annual Memorial Day Open House. We pulled off a profitable AIRSHO featuring the Thunderbirds with a record crowd in attendance.

We finished the year with our second annual Christmas night flights known as the "Twelve Nights of Christmas". 2016 has already started out on a high note.

On February 6th, High Sky Wing was proud to open the new Midland Army Air Field Museum. The MAAF Museum was made



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SUCCESSFUL YEAR IN 2015

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possible by the many dedicated High Sky Wing members who first, had a vision; second, gave countless hours of their personal time and energy; and third, had a desire to succeed.

As HSW members, we are excited to bring to our community a new cornerstone in our mission to keep history alive as we tell the story of Midland Army Air Field.

The High Sky Wing, in 2016, will take another giant step as we begin the campaign and project of re-lighting the main HSW hangar. This is the very hangar that houses our new museum. **The lighting project will consist of installing 72 energy efficient LED light fixtures.**

The new lighting will not only illuminate our MAAF Museum and our aircraft, but will also help during aircraft maintenance. Another positive improvement will be the significant savings and decrease in our electric bill through energy efficient lighting.

We kicked off the campaign at the Awards Banquet in January. We had seven members step up and join the “Buy a Light” Club with donations of \$900 each. I hope you will join in with your generous donation as we improve our facility and become a world class aviation attraction!

It’s going to be another exciting year for the High Sky Wing! I want to thank each of you for your continued support of the Wing. Our members are dedicated visionaries who achieve goals.

For the High Sky Wing, there are no limits! We survive, we accomplish, we succeed!

**Gena Linebarger,
High Sky Wing Leader**

Staff Reports Follow

WHAT A YEAR!

FROM THE FLIGHT DECK

What a year 2015 has been. The challenges faced by the High Sky Wing have been daunting but through the efforts of some highly dedicated members we have faced those challenges and have had an extremely successful year. Operationally there were some key areas that attributed to our very successful year.

The C-45 continues to add to the revenue stream for the Wing. In addition to the C-45 the PT-19 and the T-28 also have been valuable participants in the Rides Program. Over the course of 2015 we have added several new wing pilots including **Jeff Barnes, Alan Haskin and Dean Haskin.** We will continue to recruit new pilots for the wing and keep our fleet well utilized. Another key factor in the Wing’s operational status are those member pilots flying their own aircraft in support of the mission.

The High Sky Wing participated in many Airshows, fly-ins and flyovers. There have been numerous members that have provided enormous support in the development of the Wing’s new **Midland Army Airfield Museum which debuted on February 6.**

I am proud to have served the wing this year as your Operation’s Officer and look forward to continuing that service for the next two years.

Our challenges will continue to be great but with the dedication of all the members of the High Sky Wing “the sky is the limit.”

Keep ‘em flying . . .

*Steve Clinton,
Operations Officer*

PREPARING FOR MAAF



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HIGH SKY WING

In case you didn't know . . .



HSW members John Williams, Caroline and Bob Keating, Sarah and James Martin and Steve Boliin.

The Wing dates from 1991-92, and its purpose was clearly stated: a unit to support CAF Headquarters and the American Airpower Heritage Museum. This marked the beginning of the High Sky Wing in Midland, Texas.

Initial membership in the Wing was primarily a mix of former Desert Squadron members and local Midland CAF members who joined at the behest of then **Chief of the General Staff Col. Joe Mabee, and Col. Ernie Webb was chosen as the first Wing Leader.**

Early meetings were held at a local restaurant, as the Wing did not yet have a hangar to call home, or a project airplane to rally behind. However, with the completion of the CAF complex, the “Gillespie Hangar” directly across the street came available, and in 1993-4 the Wing moved in. The search for an airplane to sponsor led the Wing first to the derelict B-23 Dragon.

After two years of halting progress, the Wing staff voted to return the B-23 to CAF Headquarters for reassignment, and the **Wing accepted assignment of two airplanes, an SNJ and a BT-13.** Several years of hard work was expended on those two airplanes, and in 1998 a PT-26 was added to the HSW fleet.

The Wing approached the new century full of enthusiasm, with an active membership that was very involved in helping to run AIRSHO as well as volunteering for various museum activities. Another airplane was added to the Wing roster, a **Fairchild J2K nicknamed the Tarbaby.**

However, in 2001 the deaths of three very fine Wing members and the loss of two of the assigned airplanes hurt the Wing profoundly. However, with strong leadership and the support of many members, the Wing rallied, and carried on.

A new PT-19 was purchased, and then a Stinson 105 was assigned to the Wing. The loss of the lease to the Gillespie hangar was overcome in 2008 as the Wing moved into its new home, the **George H.W. and Barbara Bush Commemorative Center.** More airplanes followed, as a **T-28, Navion and Beech C-45 were added to the HSW fleet.**

However, as is true in life, change is a constant . . . In 2014 the CAF membership voted to move the CAF Headquarters and Museum out of Midland. Again the High Sky Wing had to rally and overcome another obstacle. As we begin 2016 the High Sky Wing remains a strong and vibrant unit in the CAF, committed to presenting AIRSHO, operating the new Midland Army Airfield Museum, and telling the story of the **Greatest Generation** to visitors to our facility.

HIGH SKY WING RECOGNIZES 2 MEMBERS

On Saturday, January 9, the annual High Sky Wing Awards Banquet was held in O'Brien Hall. An excellent meal was enjoyed by more than 60 HSW members and spouses, and **Wing Leader Gena Linebarger** recognized her staff for their fine work in 2015. She must be doing something right as they all agreed to serve for another year! **The staff for 2016 includes Gena Linebarger as Wing Leader, Michael Clinton as XO, Steve Bolin as Finance Officer, Steve Clinton as Operations Officer, Mark Haskin as Maintenance Officer, Brent Collins as Adjutant, and Ryan Linebarger as Safety Officer.** Editorially speaking, those folks have a big job ahead of them, and I salute them for their willingness to serve.

The big awards for the evening, the **Spirit of the Eagle** and the **High Sky Wing Colonel of the Year**, went to **Daniel Rathbun and Ralph Gillette**. Certainly these two gentlemen represent the finest in our membership. Daniel came onboard two and a half years ago and has been a mainstay in all areas of Wing activity, including flying all the Wing airplanes, taking a definite "hands-on" role in the maintenance of all of them, especially the SNJ and the C-45, and in helping around the hangar with general clean-up and with the establishment of the new Midland Army Air Field Museum. **The whole Rathbun family, particularly sons Garrett and Parker,** are also heavily involved with the Wing.

Ralph has been a Wing member since the establishment of the Wing back in 1991.

A past Wing Leader of the HSW, Ralph has remained a loyal volunteer (along with wife Carol), working in many areas that might not be glamorous but are essential to the smooth operation of the Wing. "KP duty," liaison with the RC club, hosting and working at every Wing function including AIRSHO, Hops and Props, Christmas Night Flights, Memorial Day, the car show, etc, etc, and etc again, Ralph is always ready willing and able.

Congratulations to both worthy recipients.



Above: Wing Leader Gena Linebarger presents the Spirit of the Eagle Award to Ralph Gillette and the HSW Colonel of the Year Award to Daniel Rathbun (accepted by his family).

Christmas Flights -- 63 rides with 182 passengers



Called this year the "Twelve Night Flights of Christmas," the High Sky Wing offered the folks in the Basin an opportunity for a unique warbird night-ride in the C-45 "Spirit of West Texas" over the city of Midland to see all the Christmas lights. We gave 63 rides, with 182 passengers, and we netted approximately \$17,000 for our efforts. Wing members turned out for twelve nights to work as ticket-takers, food providers, Christmas decorations folks, docent/hosts, ground crew, photographers, and particularly pilots, so that the event was as successful as last year's first attempt. We even had a marriage proposal (and acceptance fortunately) on one of the flights! A special tip of the editorial hat goes to **Lance Sommers, Jeff Barnes, Daniel Rathbun, and**

James Martin, for doing all the flying and earning compliments from every passenger, and to the maintenance team for the flawless operation of the airplane. This is one of the truly enjoyable community-outreach activities we do, and I would encourage you to volunteer next year.

WE PASSED . . . THAT'S THE GOOD NEWS

As the checking account turns

At the first of February, we were visited by **Floyd Houdyshell and April Robinson from HQ** to conduct the annual internal audit of the Wing's financial status.

The good news is . . . we passed our review. The good news is . . . we have money in the bank. The good news is . . . our continued outlook is positive.

Where's the bad news. While we did identify a couple of areas where we need to do a better job, rides paperwork, and keeping our accounts receivables from being so far behind in collections, there is no bad news.

So why does the Finance Officer keep badgering you to pay dues, pay insurance, pay more for fuel than what the Wing buys it for, etc., etc? **Lumping all five items of business (Airsho, Museums., Rentals, Operations and Wing) together, our annual budgeted income is approaching 1 million dollars.** Here's some bad news, our expenses approach the same number. Actually, that's exactly how it's supposed to be. We are a nonprofit charitable organization, so it is expected; no it's required that we spend what we receive on activities that we say we are in existence for. While our members will receive the benefits of performing those duties that they enjoy, no one may receive financial gain because they are a member.

That's a pretty broad statement, and there are numerous examples that may look like gain but are actually approved by CAF/donor dollars. **One absolute is you must be a current member (National and Wing dues both to be covered by any insurance).** That goes both ways. It protects the individual member and the CAF. We are covered by many policies from liability to building and contents to participation in airshows that depend on this one issue. If you wish to be covered from harm or be covered in case you cause the CAF harm, you must be eligible for such coverage. So please, if you act in the name of the High Sky Wing or the CAF, make sure your membership is current.

So how much money do we have? What money does each activity generate? What should we spend money on?

These are valid questions. I give a general report at each staff meeting and a more detailed report to the staff as any specific occasion arises. I will also speak to any member about any financial detail where I can make sure that the forest isn't lost in the trees.

We are now talking big numbers that can overwhelm almost anyone, and without the long-term picture of yearly and multi-year budgets plans, the numbers can be deceiving. I am not trying to hide

anything, but when we say that Airho made \$65,000 or that the Christmas Rides program raised more than 17,000, don't forget we have many activities we must support that raise no income. And, we spend a lot of those "profits."

With all that being said, the state of the HSW financial ship is good. The Staff recently approved spending a good portion of last year's windfall to insure that this and future years will continue to produce income to support expenditures we know will be upon us.

The checking accounts are like the giant windmills dotting out skyline.. They take money in. They spit money out, and we just need to keep turning so we can **Keep 'Em Flying.** Once again, **you are the greatest asset** I am charged with protecting.

A 2015 Profit and Loss Statement is posted in the Ready Room at the HSW. If I did the same for 2016 so far, you would see a list of negative numbers. Most of our expenditures come early, and we spend the rest of the year trying to pay for them. **Recruit more assets, spread the word.**



HSW MEMBERS OVERCOME OBSTACLES TO MAKE MUSEUM SUCCESSFUL



From Top: Paul Cooper works on the Link Trainer, a part of one of the exhibits of the new MAAF Museum; Mark Haskins works to hang a Museum artifact; At a wing meeting Brett Collins and Michael Colling explain their view of how the MAAF Museum will work.

FROM THE NEW XO

Before you send a nasty note to Bill Coombes “that you got the Maintenance guy and the XO guys reports mixed up,” it is not a mix up, there has been a transition within the HSW Staff ranks.

For the last year, **Randy Skinner has dutifully filled the office of XO for the HSW and was re-elected to the same office back in November.** Unfortunately, Randy has had to resign his office in order to focus his attention on other matters and did not want create any undo burden on the “business” of the High Sky Wing. The Staff will greatly miss the leadership and camaraderie Randy brought the HSW Staff. **Randy will continue to be a valuable member of the HSW, as well as the Blastards.** His experience and enthusiasm will remain vital to the continued evolution of the HSW.

What does this change in Staff position mean for myself and the HSW? While I will greatly miss leading the knuckle busting, grease monkeys of the Maintenance team day in and day out, **I believe that my skills will have greater impact on the HSW as your Executive Officer.** I leave the leadership of the Maintenance team in the very capable hands of Mark Haskin. But this does not mean that I will no longer spend many hours bathed in Shell 120W oil or sweating profusely on a hot ramp at Airsho. Far from it, my goal is to be the sweatiest, dirtiest XO in the CAF.

As XO, I am excited to get more involved in the overall HSW experience. The tremendous effort to get the MAAF Museum open has been very inspiring and is further evidence that the High Sky Wing is Here To Stay. **I hope to able to spend more time developing the tools and programs, like the Ghosts of West Texas,** that will provide the West Texas community an opportunity to reconnect with our history. I look forward to serving the Membership as dutifully as my predecessors and continue to evolve the ways the HSW tells our story. The HSW has accomplished a lot in the last year but there is much more left to accomplish. We need to get our neighbors, friends, and families more involved and grow our membership, just as our community did back in 1942 with the completion of the largest bombardier school in the world.

To bastardize the words above the MAAF exhibit room, **“Through this portal pass the most dangerous members in the CAF.”**

***Michael Clinton,
Executive Officer***

2016 -- IT WAS A WILD RIDE, AGAIN

FROM THE EDITOR'S PERCH



A visionary at work . . . It's Brett Collins working on part of the new Midland Armt Airfield Museum exhibitry.

“It was a wild ride again” would sum up this past year for the High Sky Wing. In January we began to realize that CAF Headquarters was indeed moving, and that the **HSW was going to “inherit” the Midland facility, or at least part of it.** Whether the Wing lived or died was now in our hands. The staff, with input from many, began a process for the transition, knowing that there were many questions that had no answers, and many stumbling blocks along the way.

First and foremost, the question of funding the complex, the AIRSHO, and the operations of the Wing airplanes demanded an answer. The Wing staff, led by **Steve Bolin, managed to create a budget,** one that clarified to a large degree the monetary challenges faced by the departure of Headquarters. At the end of the year we can say that we have met most of the financial challenges and have overcome them. The **success of AIRSHO, Hops and Props, and the Christmas Night Flights,** coupled with income from rentals, has given us a financial footing to move forward. We are not financially “out of the woods” by any means, but we now have money to work with.

We are all aware of the reaction in the community to the announcement that “the CAF was leaving Midland.” Much of this year has been spent explaining, reassuring, and working hard to convince the communities of the Permian Basin that the elements of the **CAF most recognizable, the AIRSHO and the Museum, were indeed still in Midland.** **Wing Leader Gena Linebarger,** largely due to her tireless efforts and high visibility in the airshow world, scored a major coup by getting the **USAF Thunderbirds to be the featured act for AIRSHO 2015.** This one thing alone meant that the AIRSHO would be a financial success, which indeed it was. Moving the date (to accommodate the Thunderbirds) was a success, and the incredible efforts by key members of the Wing provided the guidance of a larger number of volunteers so that the people who came to AIRSHO could discern no difference between 2015 and any other year.

The Museum issue presented its own challenges, and many of those are still to be overcome. While it was

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VOLUNTEERS MAKE WING EVENTS WORK

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easy to say that the Museum was morphing into a more Midland-centric one, in a different location, the truth was that the large building housing the Gift Shop and the various galleries was closing. **As of September 1 the American Airpower Heritage Museum no longer existed, and it would be up to the High Sky Wing to create a new museum.**

Thanks to the efforts of many (Tuck, Meroney, Gutting, Clinton, Thornton among others), but particularly Brent Collins, the process has been completed. A new gallery was opened at AIRSHO, and much from the old museum has been re-purposed for the new.

On February 6, 2016 a grand opening was held for the new “Midland Army Airfield Museum” located in the main CAF hangar. Much work must still be accomplished, but we can be proud of the first steps we have taken. **In 2016 the people of the Permian Basin will still have an aviation museum to visit.**

As we have always done, the work (and play) of the Wing continued in 2015. Various fly-overs and airshow appearances provided us visibility, as well as fun for the pilots and crew. **The addition of the C-45 “Spirit of West Texas” was a major plus for the Wing,** as the paid rides at AIRSHO and the Christmas Night Flights proved. The success of the rides program, particularly in the C-45 but also in the other Wing airplanes, has provided money to maintain and operate the fleet. The men who provide the expertise (and most of the sweat equity and much of the “real green”) to “keep ‘em flying” deserve all the kudos we can give them. **The Wing is blessed with a talented pool of skilled pilots, semi-skilled pilots, real mechanics, shade tree mechanics, tool-runners, drip pan cleaners, flannel wrench operators, and professional kibitzers.** You all know into which category you fall: all are important to the success of the Wing. May 2016 see the Wing attract even more of this unique assembly.

As we head into the new year, thankful for all we have, there are still questions to be answered and obstacles to surmount. How can we assure another successful AIRSHO? **At this point we do not have a “named sponsor”** for AIRSHO. Without that guarantee of financial backing the Wing now assumes a larger financial risk. How will the city and the airport view our operations? Will we still have a lease agreement to operate? Can the main buildings of the old Museum and office spaces be leased to another entity? How would that impact AIRSHO? Will we be able to continue to rebuild our relationship with the people of the Permian Basin? Will they support us? And finally, who among the Wing membership will step up to lead, to be the responsible person who can assume a task and see it to completion? **It cannot always be Gena, or Steve, or Michael, or Mark, or Tuck, or the elected staff.** For 2016 to be successful, the answer to that last question is in the mirror at your house.