

Flight Line

The Official Publication of the CAF

Southern California Wing
455 Aviation Drive, Camarillo, CA 93010
(805) 482-0064

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Visit us online at www.orgsites.com/ca/caf-socal



© Photo by Dave Flood
Overhauled Propeller from Our Spitfire N749DP



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CAF's President and CEO, Steve Brown, spoke to our Wing members in our Museum Hangar on February 23. A synopsis of his remarks is on Page Three.

Wing Staff Meeting, Saturday, April 12, 2008 at 9:30 a.m. at the CAF Museum Hangar, 455 Aviation Drive, Camarillo Airport

THE CAF IS A PATRIOTIC ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMBAT AIRCRAFT

April 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Work Day	2 Museum Closed	3 Work Day	4	5 Work Day
6	7 Museum Closed	8 Work Day	9 Museum Closed	10 Work Day	11	12 Work Day Staff Meeting 9:30 AM
13	14 Museum Closed	15 Work Day	16 Museum Closed	17 Work Day	18	19 Work Day
20	21 Museum Closed	22 Work Day	23 Museum Closed	24 Work Day	25	26 Work Day
27	28 Museum Closed	29 Work Day	30 Museum Closed			

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Operations Officer	* Gary Barber	(805) 659-4319	bearcat69@pacbell.net	For the Least of My Brethren 5
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Safety Officer	* Marc Russell	(805) 955-9404	captmarcr@aol.com	Mystery Cockpit #2 7
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HANGAR PHONE (805) 482-0064 HANGAR FAX (805) 482-0348 WEBSITE www.orgsites.com/ca/caf-socal				Submittal Deadline - 15th of the month Commemorative Air Force Southern California Wing 455 Aviation Drive Camarillo, CA 93010-9501
* Denotes Staff Position				

Hail To The Chief !

by Dave Flood

New CAF President Steve Brown met with Wing members in our Museum Hangar on Saturday, February 23, 2008. He gave us an insight into his vision for the CAF of the future with an effective power-point presentation.

He enunciated his strong belief in our CAF Mission Statement:

The Commemorative Air Force – Honoring American Military Aviation through...

- **Flight** – Continuing to fly those memorable planes of military aviation that have made such a difference over our country's history in the preservation of freedom.
- **Exhibition** – Presenting the CAF Mission through public display, recreating the passion of flying by keeping our military aviation planes in the air.
- **Remembrance** - Honoring those who served and those who flew the magnificent airplanes of the past.

President Brown see future strength in our numbers. His vision includes many units coming together as one group in presenting our largest private air force in the world to the assembled crowds at places like Air Venture, Oshkosh, Wisconsin and Sun 'n' Fun, Lakeland, Florida.

He sees us filling the skies with our various planes (B-29, B-24, B-17s, C-46, P-51s, F6Fs, F8F, SNJs, Zero, Spitfire, etc.) – coming in to land at Oshkosh and Lakeland, and lining up on the flight line. What a terrific sight to behold, and wouldn't that get the attention of the public and the press!

Other new ventures proposed by Steve Brown:

- We need to grow our member base by more and better recruiting, and we need to retain our members once we recruit them. A mentor program was suggested for each wing, so that new members could become comfortable within the wing and find where they can work the best.
- We need a professionally-run tent/display at major air shows to show the aviation community and the public who we are and what we are doing and what we stand for.
- We need regional air shows, with several CAF units acting together – supported by a national sponsor.

- We need to do outstanding flyovers of national sporting events – like the Super Bowl, NASCAR events, World Series, etc.
- We need more articles and photos in major aviation magazines, including those for general aviation.
- We need to invest more in sponsorship development. There is a new person at HQ whose mandate is to do just that. It is hoped that major sponsorships will lead to financial help filtering down to CAF units.

How does President Brown propose that we attain these goals?

- We must increase member dues to \$200 per year as of 3/1/2008.

Since many other items have increased in cost over the years since 1987 (e.g., bread 135%; milk 241%; gas 225%), it seems only reasonable that our dues would increase commensurately. Our dues have been the same since 1987 (20 years!). The dues increase of 25% amounts to just 1.25% per year when spread over the 20-year period.

- Supporting Member dues increase to \$55 per year as of 3/1/2008 (from the present \$45 for Associate Member).
- Cadet dues remain the same, at \$45 per year
- ANUAC for each CAF airplane doubles as of 1/1/2008.

Changes in member benefits proposed by Steve Brown:

- All new monthly 4-color magazine – *Dispatch*
- New website – with a sharing of ideas among units
- Better affiliate partnerships benefiting members
- More unit assistance visits (Safety, Ops, Maintenance, President)
- National sponsorships – with the aim to funnel funds back to CAF units
- Merchandise selection through CAF catalog
- Professional organizational presentation and central rallying point at air shows
- Recruiting manual for use by each Wing Recruiting Officer – with use of expertise from exemplary recruiting people at Wings
- Uniform CAF shirt and logo – concerted look
- Help from HQ for units in writing grants.

Mal Stratford At War – Pt. IV by Mal Stratford

Palestine – July 4, 1942

We landed at Lydda, which had a good runway, a small terminal with dining room and bar, and some small barracks down the road, and lots of space. I doubt if that space is there now. Our new engines were hung, so away we went to bomb Tobruk. Heavy firing clear up to 26,000 ft. Our heater went out (they all went out eventually) and we froze. One bomb hung up. It was re-hung, then used on a target of choice at the front lines – surprise!

I was assigned to Capt. Bill Nelson as co-pilot. Orders are for us to take the 513th to Fayid, Egypt. Tobruk has fallen, and the Axis and Rommel are whipping the British. They have encamped 80 miles west of Cairo. If Rommel is successful, the Axis will gain a huge advantage over the Allies. That is why we are here, but hardly anyone who isn't fighting here seems to know who, how or what we are doing here.

More confusion, until Brig. General Jimmy Doolittle took over our now 12th Air Force. We proceeded to whip the Axis in Africa. I might add, nobody seemed to care. Had we not been successful in stopping Rommel, the Axis would have extended the war many, many months.

Promotion Time: September 26, 1942

Promotion Day. I am a First Lieutenant! (The only time that silver looks better than gold.) Walt Gerzin says that I am ready for my check ride! Total combat flying hours to date: 111. Total hours: 311.

My big test is coming up – my long distance cross-country. Started at Lydda (Israel), headed south, paralleling the Nile River. Our destination was Gura, Eritrea, Ethiopia, a new Douglas plant at 7,000 ft. elevation in the most rugged of mountains. The leg was about 1,500 miles. The runway was dirt, with a cement circle pad about 25 ft. in diameter at each end. No one knew what it was for – landing? run-up? end of runway markers? I had to decide, and I opted for landing – so I three-pointed it smack on the pad. I was the King Bee, the only one to hit the pad, and on three points! Competition was always fierce with the guys – make a boo-boo and you are roasted.

The return flight was green and mountainous on the west side and barren sand, with rolling hills on the Arabian side. We landed in Cairo to prepare for our big jump over the firing lines to Constantine, Algeria. En route, we stopped at Mirsa Matruh and Tobruk, both small villages. The enemy had fled from Tobruk, but they did leave oil and gas supplies that we put to use. Several warm lunches that the Italians left untouched were not untouched by us.

Upon taking off at Tobruk, I turned on the radio just in time to hear the gonging of London's Big Ben ringing out 1942 and ringing in 1943. It came in as clear as a bell (pun intended.)

Tunis

The new year (1943) is here just as we are taking off from Tobruk/Gambut. It took ten hours and 15 minutes to get to friendlier territory. After setting up a large encampment, we got right to our business of finishing off what we had started to do – keep the Axis away from Tunis.

We bombed everything that might be helpful to the Axis, like airports, roads, bridges, storage facilities, factories, etc. Sometimes we bombed twice a day. The Germans beefed up their defenses by the addition of more FW-190s, Messerschmitts, Ju-52s, and good old "Bed Check Charlie," who would get us out of our socks into the freezing cold of the midnight air. In other words, nuisance raids.

We bombed the harbor facilities at Tunis, which, incidentally, was very well protected by ack-ack guns. Our engineer/top turret gunner was asked about the density of the puff clouds from the ack-ack guns. He replied, "from miserable to unbearable!"

Upon leaving the area after the bombs were dropped, we dropped down to about 18,000 ft., when I spotted from my co-pilot seat two Me-109s at our level, pointing their guns directly at us from a 45-degree angle. I waited, for I knew my end was coming in about two seconds. The 109s did not fire a shot, nor did we. I saw the two faces as they passed by in front and just below – they both waved, smiled and peeled off to fight another day. I waved, smiled and let out a sigh of relief. I counted my blessings out loud!

I took my favorite plane and flew it to Marrakech, in French Morocco. While in Marrakech we received our orders to return to "states side." As luck would have it, we took to the ocean again, dodging even more submarines. The most beautiful lady appeared in New York harbor on the eighth day. We had landed safe and sound. Our war was over!



Mal Stratford during his time with CAF – SoCAWing.

For The Least of My Brethren by Dave Flood



This moving photograph shows Chief Master Sgt. John Gebhardt, now superintendent of the 22nd Wing Medical Group at McConnell Air Force Base in Kansas, holding an injured Iraqi girl. The photo was taken in October, 2006, while Chief Gebhardt was deployed to Balad Air Base in Iraq. According to the *Air Force Print News*, the infant girl Chief Gebhardt held in his arms “received extensive gunshot injuries to her head while insurgents attacked her family, killing both her parents and many of her siblings.”

Chief Gebhardt is now back home in Wichita, Kansas, with his wife Mindy and their two children. In an article in *Air Force Link*, it was reported that: “The chief had a knack for comforting [the injured Iraqi girl] and they often would catch a cat nap together in a chair. “I got as much enjoyment out of it as the baby did,” he said. ‘I reflected on my own family and life and thought about how lucky I have been.’ While deployed in Iraq, the chief tried to help out any way he could. He figured holding a baby that needed comforting would free up one more set of arms that could be providing care to more critical patients.

‘I pray for the best for the Iraqi children,’ he said. ‘I can’t tell the difference between their kids and our kids. The Iraqi parents have the same care and compassion for their children as any American.’”

Sgt. John Gebhardt is a true hero, and represents what America is trying to do. What we are doing over in Iraq is making a difference, even if it is just one little girl at a time.

Pray for them.

“If They Knew Our Names, Would They Like Us?”

The soldier bent down to take the child’s small hand.

“What is your name?” the soldier asked.

“Hadi,” said the child, “And what is yours?”

“David,” said the soldier, as he removed his helmet.

“It means ‘beloved’,” said the boy. “I have a friend named David.”

“That’s beautiful,” said the soldier, sitting down beside the boy.

“And what does your name mean?” asked the soldier.

“It means ‘guiding to the light’,” answered the boy, as he started to draw with a stick in the dirt.

The soldier offered the boy a drink from his canteen, And they sat together under the baking sun.

When the soldier’s tank arrived, he took the boy’s hand again.

He said, “I will remember you, Hadi, and will pray for you.”

The boy had tears in his eyes as he hugged the soldier.

“You are in my daily prayers forever, my friend David!”

With that, the tank moved on, leaving the small boy waving in its wake.

The inscription in the dirt, written by the boy, read: “By our names they shall know us.”

David Flood

2005

Note: the inspiration for the above story was an article in the Ventura County Star, in which an elementary school child asked a question of an official who had described the people responsible for the 9/11 attacks on New York, Washington and Pennsylvania as hateful of the people of the United States. The little girl asked, “If they knew our names, would they like us?”



© Photo by Dave Flood

Katelyn Russell observing the Museum Docents from the vantage point of her dad Marc’s shoulders. Looks as if she liked what she saw! Marc is our PBJ Crew Chief. He and his wife Stephanie both fly for United.

Ode To The Blackbird: Part II

With the Libyan coast fast approaching now, Walt asks me for the third time, if I think the jet will get to the speed and altitude we want in time. I tell him yes. I know he is concerned. He is dealing with the data; that's what engineers do, and I am glad he is. But I have my hands on the stick and throttles and can feel the heart of a thoroughbred, running now with the power and perfection she was designed to possess. I also talk to her. Like the combat veteran she is, the jet senses the target area and seems to prepare herself.

For the first time in two days, the inlet door closes flush and all vibration is gone. We've become so used to the constant buzzing that the jet sounds quiet now in comparison. The Mach correspondingly increases slightly and the jet is flying in that confidently smooth and steady style we have so often seen at these speeds. We reach our target altitude and speed, with five miles to spare. Entering the target area, in response to the jet's new-found vitality, Walt says, "That's amazing" and with my left hand pushing two throttles farther forward, I think to myself that there is much they don't teach in engineering school.



NASA Dryden Flight Research Center Photo Collection
<http://www.dfrc.nasa.gov/dfrc/dfrcphotoindex.html>
NASA Photo: EG94-42853-2 Date: December 1994 Photo by NASA
SR-71 - in-flight from Tanker

Out my left window, Libya looks like one huge sandbox. A featureless brown terrain stretches all the way to the horizon. There is no sign of any activity. Then Walt tells me that he is getting lots of electronic signals, and they are not the friendly kind. The jet is performing perfectly now, flying better than she has in weeks. She seems to know where she is. She likes the high Mach, as we penetrate deeper into Libyan airspace. Leaving the footprint of our sonic boom across Benghazi, I sit motionless, with stilled hands on throttles and the pitch control, my eyes glued to the gauges.

Only the Mach indicator is moving, steadily increasing in hundredths, in a rhythmic consistency similar to the long distance runner who has caught his second wind and

picked up the pace. The jet was made for this kind of performance and she wasn't about to let an errant inlet door make her miss the show. With the power of forty locomotives, we puncture the quiet African sky and continue farther south across a bleak landscape.

Walt continues to update me with numerous reactions he sees on the DEF panel. He is receiving missile tracking signals. With each mile we traverse, every two seconds, I become more uncomfortable driving deeper into this barren and hostile land. I am glad the DEF panel is not in the front seat. It would be a big distraction now, seeing the lights flashing. In contrast, my cockpit is "quiet" as the jet purrs and relishes her new-found strength, continuing to slowly accelerate.

The spikes are full aft now, tucked twenty-six inches deep into the nacelles. With all inlet doors tightly shut, at 3.24 Mach, the J-58s are more like ramjets now, gulping 100,000 cubic feet of air per second. We are a roaring express now, and as we roll through the enemy's backyard, I hope our speed continues to defeat the missile radars below. We are approaching a turn, and this is good. It will only make it more difficult for any launched missile to solve the solution for hitting our aircraft.

I push the speed up at Walt's request. The jet does not skip a beat, nothing fluctuates, and the cameras have a rock steady platform. Walt received missile launch signals. Before he can say anything else, my left hand instinctively moves the throttles yet farther forward. My eyes are glued to temperature gauges now, as I know the jet will willingly go to speeds that can harm her. The temps are relatively cool and from all the warm temps we've encountered thus far, this surprises me but then, it really doesn't surprise me. Mach 3.31 and Walt is quiet for the moment.

I move my gloved finder across the small silver wheel on the autopilot panel which controls the aircraft's pitch. With the deft feel known to Swiss watchmakers, surgeons, and "dinosaurs" (old-time pilots who not only fly an airplane but "feel it"), I rotate the pitch wheel somewhere between one-sixteenth and one-eighth inch location, a position which yields the 500-foot-per-minute climb I desire. The jet raises her nose one-sixth of a degree and knows, I'll push her higher as she goes faster. The Mach continues to rise, but during this segment of our route, I am in no mood to pull throttles back.

Walt's voice pierces the quiet of my cockpit with the news of more missile launch signals. The gravity of Walter's voice tells me that he believes the signals to be a more valid threat than the others. Within seconds he tells me to "push it up" and I firmly press both throttles against their stops. For the next few seconds, I will let the jet go as fast as she wants. A final turn is coming up and we both know that if we can hit that turn at this speed, we most likely will defeat any missiles. We are not there yet, though, and I'm wondering if Walt will call for a defensive turn off our course.

With no words spoken, I sense Walter is thinking in concert with me about maintaining our programmed course. To keep from worrying, I glance outside, wondering if I'll be able to visually pick up a missile aimed at us. Odd are the thoughts that wander through one's mind in times like these. I found myself recalling the words of former SR-71 pilots who were fired upon while flying missions over North Vietnam. They said the few errant missile detonations they were able to observe from the cockpit looked like implosions rather than explosions. This was due to the great speed at which the jet was hurling away from the exploding missile.

I see nothing outside except the endless expanse of a steel blue sky and the broad patch of tan earth far below. I have only had my eyes out of the cockpit for seconds, but it seems like many minutes since I have last checked the gauges inside. Returning my attention inward, I glance first at the miles counter telling me how many more to go, until we can start our turn. Then I note the Mach, and passing beyond 3.45, I realize that Walter and I have attained new personal records. The Mach continues to increase. The ride is incredibly smooth.

There seems to be a confirmed trust now, between me and the jet; she will not hesitate to deliver whatever speed we need, and I can count on no problems with the inlets. Walt and I are ultimately depending on the jet now - more so than normal - and she seems to know it. The cooler outside temperatures have awakened the spirit born into her years ago, when men dedicated to excellence took the time and care to build her well. With spikes and doors as tight as they can get, we are racing against the time it could take a missile to reach our altitude.

It is a race this jet will not let us lose. The Mach eases to 3.5 as we crest 80,000 feet. We are a bullet now - except faster. We hit the turn, and I feel some relief as our nose swings away from a country we have seen quite enough of. Screaming past Tripoli, our phenomenal speed continues to rise, and the screaming Sled pummels the enemy one more time, laying down a parting sonic boom. In seconds, we can see nothing but the expansive blue of the Mediterranean. I realize that I still have my left hand full-forward and we're continuing to rocket along in maximum afterburner.

The TDI now shows us Mach numbers, not only new to our experience but flat out scary. Walt says the DEF panel is now quiet, and I know it is time to reduce our incredible speed. I pull the throttles to the min 'burner range and the jet still doesn't want to slow down. Normally the Mach would be affected immediately, when making such a large throttle movement. But for just a few moments old 960 just sat out there at the high Mach, she seemed to love and like the proud Sled she was, only began to slow when we were well out of danger. I loved that jet.

© Copyright by Brian Shul, author *Sled Driver*
Gallery One - <https://galleryonepublishing.com/sleddriver>

Editor's Note: Parts I and II of *Ode To The Blackbird* were excerpted from Brian Shul's excellent book, *Sled Driver*, his accounts of his experiences as pilot of the famous SR-71 Blackbird. Brian also was a pilot in Vietnam, was shot down over the jungle, crash-landed and was badly burned. He was rescued and brought to Okinawa and then to Houston for many surgeries, hospital care and rehabilitation – almost being given up for dead while there. He bounced back, after being told by medical experts that he would never fly again – only to prove them wrong by becoming one of the very few to fly the Blackbird. His story is an inspiration to us all.



SR-71A #61-7960 *Blackbird* ("old 960") is now on display at the Castle Air Museum in Atwater, CA. Assembly of this aircraft started on 8 Dec., 1964, and it rolled out on 20 Sept., 1965. #960 first flew on 9 Feb., 1966, and last flew on 27 Feb., 1990, when it was brought to the museum, following the first retirement of the SR-71. Over its career, #960 flew a total of 2,669.6 hours. © "*SR-71 Online*," by Paul R. Kucher.



Mystery Cockpit No. 2

Send your guess on what plane this is from to:
Dave Flood, CAF, 455 Aviation Dr., Camarillo, CA 93010,
Or e-mail to: macantuile@yahoo.com

California Highway Patrol vs. USMC

Top this for a speeding ticket....

Two California Highway Patrol Officers were conducting speeding enforcement on I-15, just north of the Marine Corps Air Station at Miramar . One of the officers was using a hand-held radar device to check speeding vehicles approaching the crest of a hill.

The officers were suddenly surprised when the radar gun began reading 300 miles per hour. The officer attempted to reset the radar gun, but it would not reset and then turned off.

Just then a deafening roar over the treetops revealed that the radar had in fact locked on to a USMC F/A-18 Hornet which was engaged in a low flying exercise near the location.

Back at the CHP Headquarters the Patrol Captain fired off a complaint to the USMC Base Commander. The reply came back in true USMC style:

Thank you for your letter. We can now complete the file on this incident.

You may be interested to know that the tactical computer in the Hornet had detected the presence of, and subsequently locked on to, your hostile radar equipment and automatically sent a jamming signal back to it, which is why it shut down.

Furthermore, an Air-to-Ground missile aboard the fully armed aircraft had also automatically locked on to your equipment location.

Fortunately, the Marine Pilot flying the Hornet recognized the situation for what it was, quickly responded to the missile system alert status and was able to override the automated defense system before the missile was launched to destroy the hostile radar position.

The pilot also suggests you cover your mouths when cussing at them, since the video systems on these jets are very high tech. Sergeant Johnson, the officer holding the radar gun, should get his dentist to check his left rear molar. It appears the filling is loose. Also, the snap is broken on his holster.

Thank you for your concern.

Semper Fi.



Museum Update by Sarah de Bree, Museum Director

Special Events

Since our last Special Event in February (The Grand Re-opening) was so successful, the So CA Wing has scheduled three more special events for this year.

We hope to get publicity for each one to draw in more people and get more repeat visitors. This should increase donations and memberships, too.

Each special event will have a different theme related to existing exhibits and our airplanes, making the event more interesting to everyone.

- **Saturday, May 3 – “Doolittle Raid”**
- **Saturday, September 6 – “Battle of Coral Sea”**
- **Saturday, December 6 – “Pearl Harbor”**

We plan to have flyovers during the special events, plus refreshments, related videos, photo opportunities, and maybe even speakers.

Watch for more information. We'll need help in getting set up, talking to the public, taking photos, etc. Contact Sarah de Bree or Ceci Stratford at (805) 482-0064 if you have any ideas on how we can make these activities even better.

Friends of the Museum

We now have 40 official Friends of the Museum!

This means we have supporters of our Wing who are really interested in what we do and want to contribute to the Wing. If you know anyone (spouse, friend, neighbor, teacher, etc.) who is interested in Military Aviation history, be sure to refer them to our Friends Program.

Different levels offer different benefits, but all will receive unlimited admission to the Museum; a 10% discount at the Gift Shop; and a quarterly Friends Newsletter, plus periodic announcements of our activities.

Please see our website at www.orgsites.com/ca/caf-socal and click on the link in the left column titled “Become A Friend of the Museum.” You'll find a Friends Donor Form link on the Friends Page.

For more information, please contact Ceci Stratford, Friends of the Museum Program Coordinator at (805) 482-0064.

Wing ID Badges (Name Tags)

See Ron Fleishman to order your Wing Name Tag. The badge is black plastic, with white lettering and our Wing Logo (\$10.00). The pin is metal, and your choice of clutch back, pin back or magnetic back. More coffee mugs were ordered (\$8.00), and pins (\$8.00) are still available.

Wing Photo Page I



© Photo by Dan Newcomb

Our Bearcat finally got some fresh air when she was rolled out of the Restoration Hangar for a run-up of her engine.



© Photo by Dave Flood

A rare Grumman Albatross showed up at CMA recently. It was also spotted at Lake Isabella. Keith Bailey tipped us off about the pilot. It's owned by a heavy equipment company in Minnesota.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Another recent visitor to our hangars was the CAF's FM-2 Martlet, piloted by Carter Teeters, on his way to LeMoore NAS for Legacy Flights training.

Old Clocks & Watches & Planes... Oh My!

Join Us in our First Annual Antique Clock & Watch Mart

Presented by Ventura Chapter 190
of The National Association of Watch & Clock Collectors

Sunday, May 18th, 2008 • (See time schedule below)

At the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) hanger
located in the Camarillo Airport, Camarillo, CA
(Map and Directions on back)

100's of Antique Clocks & Watches for sale

Tour the CAF Museum and view the restored WW II aircraft

ADMISSION SCHEDULE

10:00 - 10:30 ••• Sellers Set-Up
(Only NAWCC Members May Sell. Application on back)

10:30 - 12:00 ••• NAWCC Members Only

12:00 - 2:00 ••• Open to The Public

**\$10.00 Mart Admission Includes Tour of
The CAF WW II Air Museum & Aircraft**

The Commemorative Air Force (CAF) is an all-volunteer organization, with members from all walks of life, dedicated to preserving the history of WWII aircraft for generations to come. The CAF is a non-profit, privately funded and totally self-supporting organization.

Mart Questions? Call: 805 384-1936 or, www.nawcc-ch190.com

On Sunday, May 18, 2008 we will host an Antique Clock and Watch Mart in our Museum Hangar.



© Photo by Sagar N. Pathak www.horizontalrain.com

Two beautifully restored North American B-25Js flying at the Nellis AFB Air Show in November, 2007 – *Executive Sweet* and *Heavenly Body*. The former is a good neighbor of ours at CMA, and the latter is currently looking for a place to call home.

Volunteer Docent Opportunities

The WWII Aviation Museum at Camarillo Airport needs more Docents to guide visitors around the CAF facilities and tell them about the various aircraft and their importance to our keeping our freedoms over the years. New Docents are trained by Museum Staff. The Museum is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. except Mon. and Wed.

Call Sarah de Bree at (805) 479-0982.

Flight Engineering on the B-36

by Donald R. Maxion, 1998

When I was a small boy in the early 1950s I lived near the Long Beach airport. The Convair B-36 was built in Fort Worth but several underwent modifications in San Diego. One of them in fact crashed in the ocean off of La Jolla. The B-36s would be test-flown from San Diego and part of the procedure was to shoot a missed approach at Long Beach. Below is a flight engineer's narration of the tests.
Col. Dan Newcomb

The Convair B-36 was a 10-engine aircraft with six reciprocating engines plus four jets. A flight engineer's dream.

Our B-36 test flight crews included a pilot, co-pilot, four flight engineers, a radar operator and a radioman.

At Convair San Diego, two flight crews consisting of eight men each made up the flight test teams.

The Convair crew's function was to receive the B-36 aircraft from production, modification or major maintenance and then shake down the aircraft before transferring the aircraft from the builder to an Air Force flight crew. Sometimes the Convair crew would deliver the B-36 to an Air Force base.

A typical test flight of a B-36 could take 3 or more flight days depending on the success of each flight. The flight crew would receive their notice in the early a.m. any day of the week and was expected to be at the flight crew office not later than 2:00 a.m. Several station wagons would take the flight crew, with all necessary gear, directly to the flight line. Our gear could consist of parachute, Mae West, oxygen leg bottle, shark repellent, flares and a knife. We also carried several emergency gear boxes, which included such things as crowbars, cutters etc. We would stow our parachutes and other gear at our assigned stations.

Many tests were performed at a predetermined parameter over the red line. As an example, our dive test was performed at a given percentage over the red line. Eventually we would climb to 40,000 feet. Back in the 50s, 40,000 feet was considered to be very high. The biggest problem that we would have during the final climb is that military jets would scramble to make simulated passes at us. Very often, the military jet would turn too tight and lose control, go into a stall or some other dangerous situation. In fact, a Convair civilian flight crew flying a B-36 test from Carswell AFB crashed as a result of a military jet losing control and flying into the B-36. Only a few survived that accident as I remember. One name that comes to mind was a flight engineer that I knew named B.B. Gray.

One of the last tests we would perform was an automatic instrument landing system test at a field in Long Beach, California. We would enter the flight path fairly hot and break off from the automatic system as soon as the test parameters were achieved. We would not land but go to climb power in preparation for the next test. We would then fly at speed over the red line at 500 feet over the water for

a given period of time, climb to altitude and typically then head for home.

The final test prior to landing was to accomplish an emergency manual drop of the landing gear. This involved, again, two flight engineers. An opening in the fuselage gave access to the wing root where the landing gear was up and locked. One flight engineer would remain in the fuselage and observe the progress of the flight engineer who went out into the wing and report that progress to the pilot. The flight engineer who went into the wing would climb up on pegs extending out of the rear spar to a narrow platform over the landing gear. Attached to the platform was a ratchet wrench with a cable and hook assembly. The flight engineer would attach the hook to the landing gear and canoe door up-lock mechanism. The flight engineer would then slowly ratchet the hook assembly to pull the up-lock mechanism to the unlock position. There would be a loud bang and much air turbulence as the up-lock pin was pulled and the canoe door and landing gear started to drop. The flight engineer would then dangle his feet and legs off the narrow platform and the flight engineer in the bomb bay would lean out to help place the feet of the Flight Engineer still hanging on to the rear spar structure onto the foot pegs so as to guide him back into the aircraft. A very hairy procedure.

During our approach for landing, the pilot would rev up the engines so that all the wives would know to start dinner, no matter how late. The sound of the B-36 during landing was very distinctive. After landing, a short debriefing was held and reports finalized and signed.

We were a team and really cared about one another. Over the years we held crew reunions. During the last reunion, there were only two remaining: Roy Sommers, the radio operator and Don Maxion, a Flight Engineer. Roy died in August, 1996.



Convair JRB-36F Peacemaker, with "six turnin' and four burnin'". Note the special extensions on the wing tips to accommodate two RF-84 jets as "piggy-backs."

B-36 Specifications:

Wing span:	230 ft.	Length:	162 ft., 1 in.
Range:	5,905 n.m.	Ceiling:	48,000 ft.
Max. Speed:	420 mph (with jets)		
Engines:	6 X 3,500 hp R4360 piston 4 X 5,200 lb. J-47 jet		

Note: The Mystery Cockpit shown in the March issue was from the B-36 Peacemaker.

Wing Photo Page II



© Photo by Gordon Twa

On Friday, February 29, 2008 Jeff Whitesell and his crew started fueling the Martin 404 in anticipation of his ferry flight to its new home in Arizona.



© Photo by Ron Fleishman

Left engine ignition! The aircraft that has been a fixture at our ramp for many years is ready to go to its final stop at the Planes Of Fame Museum in Arizona.



© Photo by Gordon Twa

A Farewell Flyby on her way to Williams, Arizona!



© Photo by Dan Newcomb

Dan Newcomb and Marc Russell and their wives made a visit to Scott Drosos at his home in Lomita. Here Scott shows how his arm and wrist are bandaged up. Note the swelling in his hand. What you can't see is all the pins sticking out and the bars inside his arm.



© Photo by Tim Kutzbach

Scott came for a visit to the hangar on March 20, and seeing his opportunity, the editor challenged him to an arm wrestle. Even with the cast on, Scott won the match 2 out of 3. Bummer! Note the PBJ Crew put him to work deburring holes in the new "skins." No rest for the wicked, even with a cast on and pins in the wrist!

Fairchild Restoration In News

Bob Albee, Crew Chief, and the crew of our Fairchild F-24 Argus made the news in www.flypast.com. The article mentioned our Wing, and the difficulty of the restoration crew in determining the original identity of the aircraft. It gave some background on what is known about the plane, and also mentioned that it will be painted in an RAF Argus color scheme.

Pharewell Phantom

by an unknown Navy pilot

I'm beginning to realize that there's no putting off the fact that one of the most revolutionary, capable, and elegant airplanes ever to dominate the skies has gone away.

I refer, of course to the F-4 Phantom II. Over the last several years, the grand old gal has taken her leave. With the F-4 goes the notion of variable intakes, radar intercept officers, and 2.2 showing on the machmeter. And with the F-4 also goes a big part of what made my life noteworthy, dare I say the stuff of novels.

The Phantom had an amazing run: nearly forty years...the Vietnam War, dozens of brushfires and contingencies. Few airplanes in the history of aviation have adapted as well to the tactical landscape over their years in the inventory. The F-4 was designed by McDonnell Aircraft Company as an interceptor aircraft around the radar missile system, a long-range air superiority fighter that pushed out the boundaries of fleet defense. The threat changed as the Viet Nam War dragged on, and other mission requirements meant the steely-eyed fighter pilots had to load MK-82s on the wings and prove they were capable of beating up the dirt almost as good as any fully-trained attack puke. Suddenly, the Phantom, with its two-man crew and newly-received upgraded radar, was the platform of choice for air superiority in high-threat areas.

But now the F-4's time is over. Emotions stir in the face of this reality. Thousands of hours of my adult life were spent strapped into the front seat of the Big Ugly Fighter. It was there that challenges were met, friendships were forged, and the nation's will was carried out. From that lofty perch I looked up at the heavens and down on hostile lands. I didn't always realize it then. Youth, of course, is lost on the young, but each sortie was a gift.

Now I close my eyes and hear the clack, clack, clack of the shuttle as it moves aft for the next launch. The exhaust from the powerful and reliable J79 engines fills my nostrils until we drop the canopies and bring our jet to life. Air roars through the ECS. Systems power up. Soon we're parked behind the cat, waiting our turn. I roger the weight board...56,000 pounds, buddy, 56,000 pounds. Grasp that, if you can. The jet blast deflector comes down and we taxi into place, deftly splitting the cat track with the twin nose tires. And then, even after decades of doing the same thing, the adrenaline starts to flow as we go through the deck dance unique to the Phantom: the nose strut extends, giving the fighter the look of a beast ready to leap into the air by itself; the director moves you into the hold-back. Wings spread. Flaps lower. Our hands go up as the ordies arm the missiles and bombs.

There's the signal from the catapult officer. I put the throttles to military power and wipe out the controls...stick forward, aft, left, and right; rudder left and right.

"You ready, C-Ball?" I ask. I run the fingers of my right hand across the top of the lower echelon handle (for

orientation purposes) and hear from the back, "Ready, Queenie, I'm right behind you." I salute. We both put our heads back slightly (forget once and you get your bell rung by the head rest). A couple of potatoes later and we're off. Airborne.

And for the next hours we stand ready to bring this machine, this manifestation of American know-how, to bear however it might be required. Or maybe today isn't our day to save the world, so we accommodate one of the small boys' requests for a fly-by or break the sound barrier – just because we can (and we're far enough above our fuel ladder to get away with it). We're flying a Phantom. And we're getting paid to do it.

Alas, I speak of days gone by. What remains of what once gave my working life purpose is now only found in front of main gates, aviation museums, and VFW halls around the country. When an airplane has so much heart, personality, and character, it ceases to be inanimate to those who climb into it on a regular basis.

So it's goodbye, dear friend. Forgive my depression. I've heard the promises of a brighter future, but my time in the arena was with you. I watch you launch into the sunset and wonder how it all could have passed so quickly. It doesn't seem like that long ago when we were together, inextricably linked, one defining the other. Ours was a world of unlimited possibilities and missions accomplished. Ours was a world of victory.

So...goodbye Big Fighter, blessed protector of the American way and our hides. We who knew you, well will miss your class, your swagger, your raw power. Even in the face of technological advances, you bowed to no other. Thanks for the memories. They are indeed the stuff of novels.

Note: author unknown...but bless his heart. Thanks to Dick Burrer for sending along this article.



Boeing Photo

An F-4H Phantom II of VF-102 receives the launch signal from the catapult officer during flight operations off a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier.

Wing Photo Page III

Men At Work (or is it play) ?



© Photo by Jim Hinckley
Dan Cuvier deburring the rivet holes in one of the new "skin" pieces to go on *China Doll's* upper fuselage.



© Photo by Jim Hinckley
Gary Koch also working on the deburring job for *China Doll*. Gary has also worked on the floor boards.



© Photo by Jim Hinckley
Keith Bailey painting up a storm. He's painting parts for the SNJ-4 #N6411D in blue. Note even the tire is getting blue. How come your shirt isn't blue, Keith?



Gone but not forgotten! The *Breitling Connie* at one of her European airshows, still attracting attention.



© Photo by Dan Newcomb
As usual, Gil Brice is putting a lot of TLC into patching up the holes around the flap attachments on the F-24 wing. He and George Sands will be stitching it soon.



© Photo by Dan Newcomb
The Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress *Liberty Belle*, on its recent visit to Bakersfield, Dan Newcomb's home town. Dan took this photo as the warbird flew over his house. One of our long-time members, Bill Main, once flew a bomber just like this one on thirty-five missions over Germany from his base at Bury St. Edmunds, England. We continue our goal of Remembrance!



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