

Flight Line

The Official Publication of the CAF

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

Vol. XXVII No. 9

September 2007

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© Photo by Eric Van Gilder www.vg-photo.com



Cadet Eric Lange plotting his cross-country flight after soloing on August 1, 2007. See story on Eric and Brittney Johnson, both soloists, on Page 8.

Important Wing Election Information on Page 9.

**Wing Staff Meeting, Saturday, September 8, 2007 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

September 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Work Day
2	3 Labor Day Museum Closed	4 Work Day	5 Museum Closed	6 Work Day	7	8 Work Day Staff Meeting 9:30 AM
9	10 Museum Closed	11 Work Day	12 Museum Closed	13 Work Day	14	15 Work Day
16	17 Museum Closed	18 Work Day	19 Museum Closed	20 Work Day	21	22 Work Day
23	24 Museum Closed	25 Work Day	26 Museum Closed	27 Work Day	28	29 Work Day Airsho 2007 Midland, TX
30 Airsho 2007 Midland, TX						

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IN THIS ISSUE

Wing Calendar	2
Staff and Appointed Positions.	2
CAF National Patriotic Rally 2007.	3
National CAF Election Ballot Request	3
<i>Old Laughabull</i>	4
Museum Building	5
Remembering Sculthorpe	6
To Soothe the Savage Beast	7
Friends Program Gains Momentum	7
Try, Try Again	8
Cadets Lang and Johnson Solo	8
Wing Photo Page I	9
Election Update	9
CAF's B-29 Superfortress	10
Wing Air Show Schedule	10
Flight Line <i>Online</i>	10
"Friends" program Has Good Start	10
It Doesn't Seem That Long ago	11
Museum Update	12
Fore!	12
Wing Photo Page II	13
Memorial for Jerri Fleishman	13
Wing General Meeting and BBQ	14

Submittal Deadline - 15th of the month

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Southern California Wing
455 Aviation Drive
Camarillo, CA 93010-9501

* Denotes Staff Position

CAF National Patriotic Rally – 2007

The CAF's 50th Anniversary National Patriotic Rally – July 9-11 in Las Vegas – was an event-packed three days. Things kicked off Monday with lunch and an abbreviated showing of "Last Flight Home," documenting the search for missing World War II aircraft on Palau and the MIAs associated with them. Monday night gave attendees a chance to chat and be entertained by Phyllis Hasty, magical master of ceremonies, Scott Wells and The *Acoustix*, America's premier a cappella group.

The reception was also the first glimpse anyone had of the motorcycle customized by Ralph Randolph of *Knockout Motorcycles*. Chester Harley-Davidson of Mesa, AZ donated a Harley-Davidson 2007 Heritage Softtail that Randolph customized to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the CAF. Costs for customizing the bike were underwritten by Rosie Velez of *NY Special, Inc.* The P-51-themed bike features design elements including an air intake scoop adapted from the cowling of a B-17 and six hand-built steel exhaust pipes lining each side of the bike's gas tank. The paint scheme reflects that of the CAF's P-51 *Gunfighter*. The bike will be auctioned off. Information on bidding on the one-of-a-kind motorcycle can be found at www.commemoratveairforce.org.

Tuesday began bright and early, with a prayer breakfast, followed by sessions with Bruce Whitman, Col. and Mrs. Bud Day, and lunch with Keni Thomas. After lunch, sessions included Joe Galloway and Barry Pepper, who portrayed Galloway in "*We Were Soldiers Once, and Young*," and the Predator UAV.

RBC Dain Rauscher, a major sponsor of the Rally, spoke at Wednesday's breakfast, followed by members of the active military and Thomas Boghardt, historian with the International Spy Museum in Washington, DC. At lunch, Jim and Meredith Olson spoke about the challenges and honor of being spies for the CIA while raising their children and keeping their families in the dark about their real occupations. After lunch, Margie Stewart, Alice Coombes and Dianne McCrea talked about their roles in supporting the troops during World War II, and afternoon sessions by the RED FLAG unit and the Thunderbirds led into the Gala Banquet, with keynote speakers Lt. Col. Oliver North and Michael Reagan.

The Gala kicked off with a lively auction for an original World War II poster featuring Margie Stewart, which she graciously autographed at the Rally. The poster raised \$1,100 for the CAF. The poster auction was followed by an even livelier auction for a trip for four to the Reagan's ranch, donated by Michael Reagan. Things got so heated between two bidders vying for this honor that Reagan ended up donating two trips – and raising \$17,000 for the CAF. Not to be left behind, North donated \$1,000 – with the stipulation that 10 people match his donation. He wasn't successful, however, in finding just 10 people. He actually got 20 to match his donation, raising the grand total donated that night to \$38,100!



© Photo Courtesy of CAF

CAF Col. Bud Gray, Lt. Col. Oliver North, and Michael Reagan enjoying a light moment during the CAF's 50th Anniversary National Patriotic Rally – 2007.

The speakers were funny and moving, and all received standing ovations. The entertainment was spectacular. In fact, look forward to seeing the *Acoustix* at the "Save The Girls" lunch in Midland, Texas on Sept. 28, 2007, prior to AIRSHO 2007. The food and service at Caesar's Palace was exceptional, and the chance to visit and celebrate the CAF's 50th anniversary with those who attended was – as the commercial says – priceless.

Editor's Note: Thanks to the CAF's Unit Leaders Updates for this description of the CAF's National Patriotic Rally.

Here is an excerpt from Col. Dan Cuvier's writeup of the Rally he published in "The Trumpet," newsletter of the Conejo-Simi Valley Chapter, Military Officers Association of America:

The Commemorative Air Force (CAF) held its first (and only) 50th Anniversary celebration at the fabulous Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, Nevada on the 9th through 11th of July, 2007. I was fortunate enough to have made the "Command Decision" to attend, and was glad that I did. Even though there were only about 250 attendees, we CAF "Colonels" had a very interesting, as well as enlightening, time while attending the many daily seminars, speeches and presentations such as the one given by ex-Army Ranger Keni Thomas, who fought in the Battle of Mogadishu (inspiring the movie/book "*Black Hawk Down*"); Joseph Galloway, who spent several years in Viet Nam (and other wars) as a war correspondent and worked as co-author with Lt. General (ret.) Hal G. Moore on the bestseller book and movie, "*We Were Soldiers Once, and Young*."

National CAF Election Ballot Request

All requests for absentee ballots must be in by Sept. 23.

Fax: 432-563-8046. E-mail: diradmin@cafhq.org.

Include your name, CAF ID #, and signature (fax).

Old Laughabull – The B-24 That Got Us Home!

By T/Sgt. (now Col.) Harry Bell

Editor's Note: In the August issue of "Flight Line," we published a photo of the B-24 diorama in our museum, and asked readers to submit a story based on their concept of what happened to that B-24. Here is the winning entry!

Oh, that B-24! Oh, that dirty old.....Sweetheart!

She got us back to Southern Italy one more time...her last time.

She was parted out in a wheat field, between Cerignola and Foggia, Italy. She had done her best. She, *Old Laughabull*, was my crew's replacement for that shiny, spanking-new Henry Ford B-24. You know, the kind he built one per hour/ twenty-four hours a day/ seven days a week – the kind we destroyed at about the same rate. The B-24 Liberator 4-engine bomber – the most-produced plane in World War II.

Now, guess what? We – my crew of ten, under the command of Lt. Yellow, picked up a shiny new B-24 at Lincoln, Nebraska. We had become a crew a few months before – in Tucson, Arizona. We also discovered there were some beautiful young ladies in Lincoln, and they needed to be picked up, too. Oh, the spoils of war!

After swinging her compass, and working out a few minor kinks, we were off to "Somewhere." We found out where when we opened the orders. On to Bangor, Maine. It was a very unusual feeling when they ordered us to put all our identification and paper money in an envelope and mail it home. "Just keep your dog tags," we were told. I had ten dimes and they were to be my good luck charms. I soon believed that, as long as I still had at least one dime left, no harm could come to me. Before long, I added 50-mission-long underwear (not to be washed) to my good-luck-charm list. How great they both worked!

Then on to Newfoundland – tons of gas in the temporary bomb bay tanks. Two nights there – sweating out the weather – cold and windy. Then on to the Azores. I spent most of the night flight curled up around the nose wheel, catching short naps. You see, I was just a Corporal waist gunner. I was not the Pilot, or the Co-Pilot, or the Navigator, or the Radio Operator, or the Engineer. They had the important jobs. The Navigator was very busy, spending lots of time in the astrodome, "shooting" stars, and then sitting at his desk, dumbfounded. And the Radio Operator – reeled out his ball antenna, and finally got a signal!

Wow! There, in the morning sun, were mountains sticking out of the big old Atlantic. It had rained, and the ground was wet and muddy. It was about that time that our beloved Pilot tried to land with one wheel on the steel mat runway and one in the mud. Another save by our great

C.O. Pilot, and there were to be many more to come. He was, after all, only a Flight Officer.

The islands were hot and humid. The six of us enlisted men on the crew were assigned to a 6-man tent. That was probably how it was decided how many enlisted men would be on a B-24 crew. We were not permitted to go off the base, so we held up a part of the perimeter fence while our ball turret gunner slid under and headed for the nearest town. He soon returned with arms loaded with champagne. It was hot! It is a funny sight to see a grown man running around with a canteen cup in his hand, trying to catch a stream of bubbly after the cork pops. We probably managed to catch too much of the bubbly.



Six-man tents at the USAF Base in Cerignola, Italy.

Soon we were off to North Africa. We landed for gas, and spent the night in a 6-man tent. We were next to a large prisoner-of-war camp. There were Italian prisoners inside, and African women outside – teasing them. And then we were off to Cerignola, Italy. My stay there was less than five months. It doesn't take long to fly fifty missions if you fly nearly every day. The airfield was cut out of a large vineyard and olive grove. We pitched two tents next to each other. You guessed it – one for six enlisted men and one for four officers. Our bomb group headquarters was in the old winery, where we could watch girls stomp grapes as we were briefed for our missions. Yes, we had arrived at the 757th Bomb Squadron, 459th Bomb Group of the mighty 15th Air Force! It was only about two months before that the German Luftwaffe had been flying JU-88s off the same field. They had built the wooden tower, which we called Coffey Tower – and we continued to use it.

We had delivered that nice, new polished aluminum B-24, thinking it would continue to be ours. Wrong! The C.O. decided it would be his, but, worse than that, I let some smart-ass Sargeant snooker us out of our K-Rations. They would have been good snacks, or a substitute for a missed meal, when you got to sleep in. Guess what happened when the next new "green" crew arrived with K-Rations on board?

We flew our first two missions individually with a seasoned crew. Then we got an old dog of a plane, an olive-drab aircraft, and our crew was back together again.

Now the fun began. Up early – an orderly woke us. Down to the Bomb Group headquarters for our briefing. "And today, gentlemen, you are going to Ploesti (or Munich, or

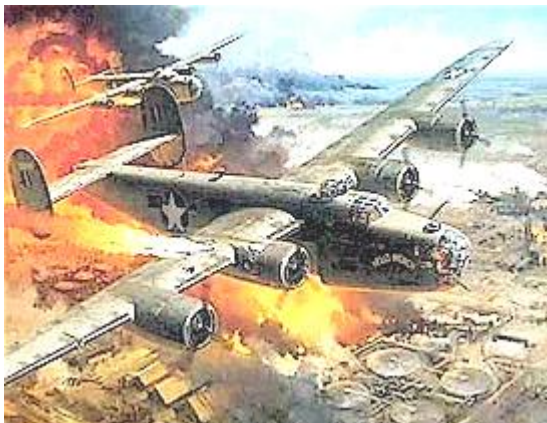
wherever). There is flak here, and fighters there, ...and so on..." as I watched the Italian girls stomp the grapes. And I thought about security and wondered if the girls could pass on anything to the enemy.

From briefing to breakfast. At first it was a picnic, outside, and later we got a shell of a building for a mess hall. From mess we went to a bin in a tent, where we kept our sheepskins, our parachutes and our flak suits. And then on to *Old Laughabull* OD B-24. Pre-flight, takeoff, form up, and climb to 40 below zero (usually about 23,000 feet). We would level off at the assigned altitude following our lead plane. Now it becomes real fun! Oxygen mask on...icicles on your chin...open gun-port windows...nice 140 mph breeze...throat mike...and COLD!

Now this was our twelfth mission, and it was Ploesti Oil Fields – the most heavily defended target in Europe. Yes, we did take too much flak, with too many big holes in our self-sealing gas tanks. Our Engineer got hit, so I got an instant promotion to Engineer. I did a great job of transferring gas from the leaking tanks to the good ones – if you don't mind my patting myself on the back. I also spliced a control cable with a gun charger cable.

On the way home – while over Yugoslavia, we estimated we had enough gas to get over the Adriatic Sea, and decided to press on. Everything not necessary – armor, ammo, flak suits, etc. – was tossed out to lighten the plane. We almost made it home. Just 30 miles short of Coffey Tower, with all props stopped, we bellied into a wheat field. Our hero was our Bombardier, for which he paid a heavy price. He actually survived until about ten years ago. Our wounded Engineer was lying under the top turret. That 800-pound Martin turret had a reputation of falling in a crash. The Bombardier arched his legs over the Engineer and took the force of the falling turret. Our hero also traded his 45 caliber pistol for the use of a farmer's horse to ride for help. An ambulance soon arrived, along with a "six-by" truck. The Engineer was taken to the hospital in Foggia, and the rest of us were driven to our six-man tent.

Old Laughabull had brought us home – just barely! It was to be her last flight.



B-24 Liberators over Ploesti oil fields.

Museum Building

by Casey de Bree

At the barbeque and general meeting held at the hangar on August 11, Wing Leader Steve Barber spoke to the approximately 82 Wing members and spouses who attended concerning the plans for our new museum building. For those of you who could not attend, here is a synopsis of what was said, plus some additional information.

There are really two issues that we have with the County of Ventura Department of Building and Safety and the Fire Department.

The first issue is that a museum open to the public requires a class "A" (assembly) building, and our hangar, which houses our museum artifacts, gift shop, and library, is classified as a class "S" (storage) facility. While our hangars are equipped with a full fire sprinkler system, adequate fire exits, and fire extinguishers, we were technically endangering the public in the eyes of the authorities by putting visitors in a class "S" building.

The second issue concerns partitions that we have erected, mostly movable, to separate the museum displays and library from the rest of the hangar. These are vertical partitions only and do not interfere with the fire sprinkler system's operation or block access to the fire exits. Additionally, we have used extension cords, which are considered to be for temporary use only, longer than the period of time considered temporary, and we have added some permanent electrical outlets. The County has issues with us as to whether or not these additions were properly permitted.

Our approach to resolving these two issues is to first resolve the permitting issues with the County authorities and allow visitors back into the hangar once again to view our aircraft. Then, secondly, to construct a class "A" museum building adjacent to the east hangar, abutting the east wall. The footprint of the new building is currently envisioned to be a two-story 100' x 45' structure with an additional 42' x 60' front entrance and gift shop.

The planning for the new building has not progressed beyond the footprint stage and we do not have any cost information yet. We recognize that the costs of this building will significantly exceed the funds available to us in our Hangar Improvement Fund, but we view this as another challenge to deal with, as the Southern California Wing has done several times before. We will solve this issue and get back into full operation at some point in the future.

We hope that none of you will feel discouraged by this disruption in our operation, and the Wing Staff expresses it's appreciation and thanks to our museum volunteers and docent staff for keeping the museum in partial operation while complying with the letter of the Fire Department's order to exclude the public from our facility.

Remembering Sculthorpe by Charlie Valentine

RAF Sculthorpe was built during WWII on farmland, about 125 miles north of London, and about ten miles from the North Sea. It was used for many secret missions. Following WWII it became a standby base for temporary deployments with no permanent tenants.

In the early 1950s, General Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of NATO, requested a nuclear force to protect Western Europe from attack during the very height of the Cold War, when breakout from behind the Iron Curtain was recognized as a distinct possibility, not simply a theoretical threat. In May, 1952, the 47th Bomb Wing, flying B-45 Tornado jet bombers, was assigned from Langley AFB to RAF Sculthorpe. In August, 1952, I was reassigned from Rhein-Main, Germany to RAF Sculthorpe – in charge of a permanent detachment of five C-119 Flying Boxcars to provide tactical airlift support to the 47th Bomb Wing.

Sculthorpe was a far cry from the excellent living facilities that we enjoyed in Germany. Potbellied stoves and kerosene heaters were used in most buildings. England was still in a period of post-war austerity, and rationing was still in effect. Not much was available on the local market. Powdered eggs and Spam were frequently served. I actually got to like it. I still do.

The commander of the 47th Bomb Wing was Col. David M. (Davy) Jones, who had been the pilot of B-25 No. 5 on the Doolittle Raid on Tokyo in 1942. He was a great leader, and had a wonderful sense of humor. When asked to describe his combat career in WWII, he replied, "Well, I fought a very short war. I flew one mission in the Pacific Theater, ran out of gas, had to bail out, and was smuggled out of China. Then I went to Europe and was shot down on my fifth mission, had to bail out, and was captured and spent the rest of the war as a POW in Germany. Altogether, I flew six missions, completed four, and lost two airplanes." After his capture, Col. Jones became part of the group that was later portrayed in the film *The Great Escape*. He never did escape, however, and spent the remainder of the war in German custody.

As soon as everyone was settled, Col. Jones gave all married personnel time off to hunt for local housing for the families that were coming in by sea from the U.S. When the shipload of dependents was several hundred miles from Britain, he led a mass formation of B-45 bombers out to intercept the ship, and made a low pass to point the way to port. When the ship docked, he gave everyone a three-day holiday.

The mission was top-secret, and frequent exercises were conducted. During one test of the British warning system, ten B-45 bombers took off from a base near Munich at timed intervals, and headed north. At a predetermined time, they all turned west, only to be told that the test had been postponed. All aircraft were told to make a 180 degree turn to an easterly heading. As soon as this happened, every radar on the east side of the Iron Curtain

lit up, and Soviet aircraft scrambled. A turn back to the west was quickly ordered.

Unannounced combat exercises usually lasted for seventy-two hours, and we ate and slept on the job. At the end of one exercise, I was picking up classified material from an RAF dispersal base and was met by two young airmen in a weapons carrier. After I signed for the material, they said they were the last people there and were leaving right away for the four-hour drive back to Sculthorpe. It would soon be dark, and was typically cold. We loaded their vehicle on our plane and put them on the flight deck for the trip back to Sculthorpe. It really made their day. Several days later, the Air Police and RAF authorities were investigating the disappearance of a vehicle and drivers that had checked in through the gate of an RAF field, but had never checked out. About two years ago, I mentioned this in an article for the 47th Bomb Wing newsletter, and in the very next issue was a letter from one of the airmen that we had carried. He said, "I've told this story many times. No one would believe me."

We also supported two fighter wings, and often ferried F-84 pilots to dispersal fields. Fighter pilots were afraid of our funny-looking airplanes. Our normal configuration during missions was with the rear clam-shell doors removed for easy loading and unloading and emergency jettisoning. If the pilot had never flown with us before, and we weren't carrying any cargo, we usually put him in the cargo compartment for the first flight. Then we would make a short-field takeoff and steep climb. The poor guy would stare out of the open back end with the feeling that he was going to fall out. We had a standing bet that we could land three C-119s from an overhead break in less time than they could get two F-84s on the ground. We never lost.

The remote location of Sculthorpe meant that we often had to provide our own entertainment or bring it from London. One never-to-be-forgotten highlight was a mid-week appearance of the Woody Herman Band. They were touring the continent, but could not play in England because of a union agreement. We smuggled them across the Channel from France in our base "Gooney Bird" (C-47) and they gave performances in the hospital, theater, NCO Club and Officers Club in one day. What a party!

RAF Sculthorpe closed in 1992. However, the airfield still belongs to the British Ministry of Defense, and is used as a standby base for NATO. Most of the buildings were converted to commercial use, and the family housing was sold as individual homes to create a new village called "Wicken Green." The American influence was not forgotten. They even fly the Stars and Stripes in front of the old Officers Club, now a community center called "Hawkshaven." It is decorated with USAF photographs, and the first one on the wall just inside the entrance door is of a C-119C flown by Capt. Charles N. Valentine.

Sculthorpe will always hold special memories for me. I met my wife Annie while I was stationed at Sculthorpe.



Photo Courtesy of Charles Valentine

Maj. General David M. “Davy” Jones, USAF (Ret.) and CAF Col. Charles N. Valentine – at the 50th reunion of the 47th Bombardment Wing, the first nuclear-equipped unit to be assigned to NATO. This top-secret bomb wing, flying North American B-45 Tornado jet bombers from RAF Station Sculthorpe, had the exceptionally important mission to protect Western Europe from attack by the Soviet Union during the very height of the cold war. “Davy” Jones is Charlie’s good friend and former commanding officer.



Fairchild C-119C Flying Boxcar – flown by C.Valentine.



North American B-45 Tornado 4-engine jet bomber.

Music To Soothe The Savage Beast

by Clifford Brown

The most important job I had in the Army was that of Intelligence Sergeant in the Headquarters Battery of a Field Artillery Battalion in the center of Korea. I spent a lot of time monitoring the military radio and reading intelligence briefings from HQ. I hated going on patrols and getting my own information first hand. Each morning, well before breakfast, my boss, the Battalion S-2 (Intelligence Officer), would dazzle me with news about the war in Korea. I was dumbfounded. How did he know all that? For a long time I chalked it up to the fact that he was an officer, and they just knew things.

I lived in a neat little cave next to the Battalion HQ bunker. It was a cozy little bunker. It was dry; I had a small short-wave radio that I tapped into the headquarters antenna; a cot; a sleeping bag; and a little Coleman stove. Each night, about 9:00 or 10:00, the war would calm down and I would go off duty. I’d go back to my cave...er, bunker, and make hot chocolate and listen to my short-wave radio until I fell asleep. Normally, we got Armed Forces Radio stations and that was about the only media in that part of the world broadcasting in English. One night, while “surfing” the short-wave bands, I came across a very strong signal playing classical music. Stop right there!...I liked classical music. So at night I’d listen to classical music until I’d drop off to sleep.

One night, for some reason, I stayed awake late. Every so often, between pieces of music, there was a short news bulletin about what was going on in Korea. The reporting was very detailed, which was unusual for AFRS. They were always so security minded. At the end of the news, there would be a few political remarks, which were a little odd. It was like General Motors was pushing the Korean War so they could sell more army trucks. Seemed reasonable to me. I put up with the political commercials in order to get the news and the music.

The next morning I passed on what I had heard to the S-2. He seemed pleased. This went on for a week or so. Very, very late one night there was a station break at midnight, and the signature of the station came through. It was the chiming of church bells. In very formal English, the announcer said, “This is Radio Moscow broadcasting from the Kremlin in Red Square. We now return to our musical presentation.” The Russians were telling us (in English) what was going on in Korea, and they were right! They knew more about it than we did.

From then on Radio Moscow was one of my sources of military intelligence outside my little corner of the war. I never told anyone how I had gotten so smart all of a sudden. I kept the S-2 happy. I suspect he was listening to Radio Moscow too. I knew what was going on in the world. I got to listen to a lot of good music.

It probably wasn’t treason...was it?

Friends Program Gains Momentum

Please contact Ceci Stratford at (805) 630-3696, or e-mail at cecipilot@sbcglobal.net to become a Friend of the Museum. We need all the friends we can get.

Try, Try Again!

by Scott Drosos

This time I was flying the airplane, and we launched into a clear blue sky, for what we thought would be a short hop to Sydney. The weather was good there, but due to the backlog of airplanes trying to land, ATC put us in a holding pattern. Unfortunately, since the company is on a serious fuel-saving crusade right now, dispatch had not given us enough extra gas for holding. We did have enough fuel to get to our alternate, which was Canberra, with adequate reserves, but any holding we would do going into Sydney would cut into those reserves should we really have to divert again.

We knew the weather was okay at Sydney, and I was sure we could land there once they cleared us for the approach, so I was in favor of accepting one or two turns in holding while we waited for our shot. Ron, though, was adamant about not cutting into our fuel reserves, and wanted to divert to Canberra immediately, while we still had plenty of gas for it. Well, he's the captain, which makes him the boss, so I lost the argument. He requested clearance to Canberra, and off we went, passing Sydney up for the second time that day.

Landing at Canberra was actually a neat experience. The scenery was spectacular. Fields, forests and hills abounded, and everything was so beautifully green. Looking down, it looked like the type of scene a model railroader would love to recreate in miniature. If I hadn't been so busy flying the airplane, I would have gotten my camera out and taken some pictures of it for you. It really was that spectacular!

ATC vectored us in between the lush mountain peaks, some of which we cleared by only a few thousand feet. I made the comment that I was glad we were doing this in the daytime when we could see the mountains. But, of course, the ATC knew what they were doing...and it would have been just as safe had we been oblivious of the terrain below us at night or in bad weather. It really makes you appreciate the faith we put in air traffic control!

The airport surroundings were equally scenic as we approached for landing on runway 35, which is over 10,000 feet long. That would normally be plenty long for a 747, but it had what's known as a "displaced threshold," meaning that the first part of the runway is unusable for landing because of the hilly terrain on the approach path. That left me with only 7,764 feet of useable runway, a bit of a challenge for an airplane the size of our 747-400, especially with an airport elevation of 1,800 feet. I did a good job of putting the airplane down right at the beginning of the touchdown zone, but it still required some aggressive braking and use of full reverse to get the airplane stopped a comfortable distance from the end of the runway.

The next obstacle was that the taxiways at the far end are too narrow to accommodate an airplane the size of ours, so I had to make a 180-degree turn at a turn-around area at the end of the runway and taxi back down the runway to an exit further down. Turning a 747-400 around in a tight turn, while trying to keep all the wheels on the pavement, is always a bit of a challenge, but challenges are what flying is all about. It's all in a day's work!

Cadets Eric Lange & Brittney Johnson Solo !

By Dave Flood

Within a week of each other, CAF SoCAWing cadets Eric Lange and Brittney Johnson completed their solo flights successfully on their way to earning their Pilots License. Congratulations to both Eric and Brittney on this momentous feat! We're all very proud of them.

Eric completed his solo out of Santa Paula Airport in a Cessna 152 on Wednesday, August 1, 2007. He has since flown a cross-country flight to Fox Field, Lancaster and back to Santa Paula. He is planning a three-point flight soon to the Central CA Valley area. Darin Moody is his F.I.



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

Eric Lange landing Ken Gottschall's Luscombe at Santa Paula in a three-point landing. Way to go, Eric !

Brittney accomplished her solo in her uncle's (Rick Johnson) Cessna 150 on July 26 at Camarillo Airport. She was cheered on by her mom & dad; her boy friend, Timothy Andazola; her flight instructor, Roger Vecchio; Rich Ferdon, a good friend; and Ceci Stratford, who acted as her Mentor. Brittney got to autograph the back of her shirt, which was cut off after her memorable solo flight.



Photo Courtesy of Ceci Stratford

Ceci Stratford, Brittney Johnson, and Roger Vecchio, her flight instructor, in front of Rick Johnson's Cessna 150, in which Brittney soloed. Awesome, Brittney!

Wing Photo Page I



© Photo by Larry Kates

Our C-131 Samaritan on display in the CAF's Midland hangar, after our SoCAWing crew ferried her down to Texas for her three-month stay. She looks lonesome!



© Photo by Dave Flood

Don McMillan looking sharp in the USN Commander jacket that Pat Brown altered for him. He is to be officially elected into the Combat Airman Hall of Fame in Midland at AIRSHO 2007. Congrats, Don!

Election Update

by Bill O'Neill

The following members have indicated their desire to run for our Wing Staff open positions:

Finance Officer: Casey de Bree

Operations Officer: Gary Barber

Adjutant: Bob Albee, Sarah de Bree

Ballots will be printed in next month's newsletter, and will be available on a special table in the Restoration Hangar.

Anyone interested in running for one of the open offices, please contact Bill O'Neill, Dave Flood or Bill Gordon, members of the Elections Committee.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Bill Main reacting surprised at a recent birthday party in the O Club for him. Bill's daughter Carol, with assistance from the museum staff members, put on the surprise cake-fest for him.



© Photo by Dave Flood

Col. Barry Schiff being checked out by David Price in David's P-51D recently. Barry has written an in-depth article for an aviation journal on the famous plane.



© Photo by Eric Van Gilder

Fritz Coleman of Channel 4 taping his show from the cockpit of Jason Somes's AT-6 on August 16, 2007.

CAF's B-29 Superfortress

by Dan Cuvier

The Boeing B-29 was designed as a long-range, high altitude bomber during WWII – capable of delivering 10 tons of bombs on an enemy target. Because of its flying range, this aircraft was assigned to the Pacific Theater. The Superfortress was the result of an advanced design in aeronautics that was to revolutionize future bomber design. This aircraft has fully-pressurized crew compartments; remotely-controlled gun turrets; and the world's most powerful engines (Wright Cyclone 18-cylinder R3350s) – capable of 2,200 hp.

Now to how the CAF came to acquire their B-29, affectionately called "Fifi." With the Bureau number 44-62070, this old B-29 had been left for dead in the desert at China Lake, CA back in the mid-1950s. For more than 17 years, she (and dozens like her) baked in the Mojave sun. They had been donated to the Navy by the Air Force to be used as targets in ordnance and weapons tests conducted by the Navy at China Lake.

The Confederate Air Force (as it was then known) had begun searching for a B-29 in 1966, after a "command decision" to collect one example of each of the U.S. combat aircraft that had served in WWII. The CAF got word from a pilot who recalled seeing large numbers of B-29s in the desert in California. The Navy confirmed this, but let CAF know that the planes were the property of the USAF, and could not be given up without prior approval of the USAF Logistics Command.

A group of CAF colonels arrived at China Lake to check out the B-29s. They eliminated many as wrecks, and narrowed on three planes in the best condition. They finally selected one with no major structural damage, little corrosion, and with some of its glass intact. It was Number SN44-62070. As to the engines, very expensive to replace, there were no records.



© Photo Courtesy CAF

B-29 #44-62070 in China Lake, CA during the period of restoration to flying status by CAF volunteers.

After weeks of paperwork, both with the Air Force and the Navy, the CAF finally became the proud owner of 44-62070. On 31 March, 1971, the CAF maintenance team

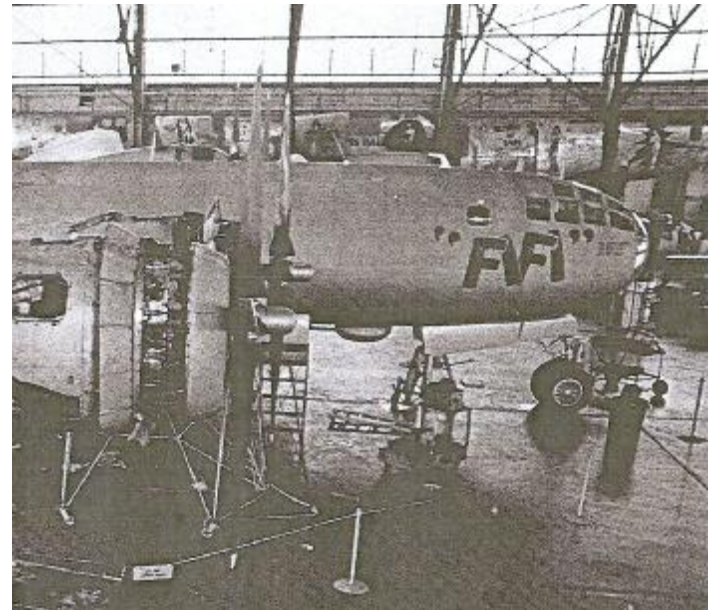
arrived at China Lake to begin restoration. Over a period of nine weeks, all systems were restored. Fuel, oil, and hydraulic hoses were replaced; aircraft controls were removed, recovered and installed or repaired; the engines were run; windows replaced; and, finally, the landing gear retracting test were completed.

The big bomber was ready for flight! But due to Navy regulations and the top-secret status of China Lake, the CAF crew was informed that no test flights would be permitted. Once the aircraft left the runway, it could not return. This info noted, it was determined to take on enough fuel for a non-stop flight to Harlingen, Texas.

At 0748, Tuesday, 3 August, 1971, the Superfortress, after being out of action for 17 years, soared into the California sunshine, circled China Lake, and set course for its 1,250-mile flight to Texas. After a 6 hour, 38 minute flight, SN44-62070 touched down at CAF headquarters.

You can see her now at CAF Headquarters in Midland, Texas, where major engine maintenance is currently being done.

The old girl has come a long way, baby – and still has miles to go before she's done!



© Photo Courtesy CAF

Here's #44-62070 in the CAF's hangar, undergoing further restoration. Now named "FIFI," the only B-29 of flying status has thrilled tens of thousands of air show attendees since the time she first flew out of China Lake into history.

Wing Air Show Schedule

by Jason Somes

September 29, 30 AIRSHO 2007, Midland All aircraft
October 6 Arizona Skyfest, Prescott F6F, Zero

Because changes may be made, please call us at (805) 482-0064 to confirm air show dates.

Flight Line Online

by Dave Flood

Did you know you can get the Flight Line online and in color on our web site at www.orgsites.com/ca/caf-socal ?

It Doesn't Seem That Long Ago

By Joe Peppito

The fall of 1941 doesn't seem that long ago, but it was very memorable. I was just seventeen years old and getting ready to graduate from Manhattan High School of Aviation in January, 1942. Looking to the future, I applied for a job as a mechanic with the U.S. War Department at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio – and was accepted. It wasn't long after that, on December 7, 1941, that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and changed the future of a lot of Americans, including me. Many of my classmates were joining the service, but my future was already decided. On January 6, 1942 I finally graduated from high school, and left for Springfield, Ohio on a Greyhound Bus on January 10.

My first assignment was on the maintenance crew overhauling North American O-47A airplanes. To me, a new mechanic, this was a very impressive and overwhelming airplane. This was my first real job – working on a real warplane!

The O-47A airplane was a single-engine, mid-wing observation airplane that had a crew of three: pilot, observer/radioman and gunner, all in tandem. North American built two models of the O-47, the A and B models, plus the X model. A Wright R-1820-49 engine powered the plane. It had a wingspan of 46 ft., 4 in. and a length of 33 ft., 3 in., with a top speed of 225 m.p.h. The first airplane – the XO-47 – was built in 1937, with a total of 239 of all models built to follow.

We stripped the airplane down to the basic parts, tagged all the parts and sent them off for cleaning and refurbishment. Then it was a matter of putting it all back together again. We did this with P-39s and P-40s as well. Then, in July, 1942, I was transferred with seven other mechanics to start up a maintenance facility at Topeka Army Air Force Base, in Topeka, Kansas. This was a new base, and the hangars were not quite completed. They had no doors or electrical wiring or other facilities in place. However, it was summer, and we made do with what we had as far as facilities were concerned. Our job was preparing B-17s and B-24s for operation in North Africa. There would be lines of airplanes parked on the ramp at night, and they would be gone the next day.

Then came the sad news...I received my draft notice for induction into the U.S. Army Air Force. I was inducted into the service in April, 1943, and went to Amarillo, Texas, by way of troop train, taking two weeks for the trip, for basic training. My first assignment was to Eglin Field, Florida. It was then under the U.S. Army Air Force Proving Ground Command. We did all the armament testing and improvements on all the various airplanes. I was assigned to a P-47C Thunder-bolt airplane. It became one of the loves of my life – the best fighter airplane ever built. One day, when a pilot was making a low pass over the field, he had a runaway propeller (Curtiss Electric). The propeller came off, along with the nose case of the engine and the

airplane crashed about half-mile from the field. The pilot bailed out over the field, and landed safely, with no injuries. I wasn't out of business yet, though, as I was assigned another new P-47D razorback model airplane. I expended all of my time and efforts maintaining this airplane, until I was selected in April, 1945 to attend B-29 Flight Engineer Training at Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Alabama. This was a great experience for me to go from pursuit airplanes to bombers. The B-29 was the largest airplane I had ever seen, and very impressive. However, my flight career was not to be – with the surrender of Japan in August, 1945, the classes were discontinued, and we were all shipped to Chanute Field, Illinois for discharge.

Then in April, 1946 I was finally discharged from the U.S. Army Air Force and started my civilian life again. It was a very interesting career in the USAAF, and I would be willing to do it all over again...I think.

Editor's Note: After many years of devoted service to our Southern California Wing, including terms as Wing Leader and Maintenance Officer, Joe has decided to step down as our Maintenance Officer due to health considerations. All of us wish Joe the best, and will delight in having him continue as Crew Chief of SNJ-4. He also will continue to be the Awards Committee Chairman. Kudos, Joe !



© USAAF Photo

Here's Joe's first airplane – the North American O-47 in all its glory. Joe remembers it with nostalgia.



© Photo by Steve Williams www.airliners.net

Here's the plane Joe considers the best plane ever built. This P-47 D Thunderbolt is named "No Guts, No Glory." It recently returned from England to the U.S.

Museum Update...

by Sarah de Bree

As most of you know, the Museum is under restricted operating instructions from the Ventura County Fire Dept. and Buildings and Safety Dept., and this has placed a severe burden on the Museum personnel and has caused a reduction in the Museum/Gift Shop income.

In an effort to put more Museum Docents into the more productive days, Museum operations have been closed on Mondays and Wednesdays, beginning on August 27, 2007. The Museum hours have returned to 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.. When you see a Docent, please stop and say 'thank you' for the extra efforts they have put forth in an attempt to keep things going. Since we are under a 'no public entrance inside the Museum' policy, the Docents must walk the visitors around the exterior of the hangar to the ramp. This is tiring for them and therefore they must have more assistance. If any member thinks they can help during this difficult period, please talk to me. I don't know what we'll do during the winter months...any ideas? Please call: 805-482-0064.



© Photo by Dave Flood

"A moveable feast." Our Gift Shop temporarily set up at the front of the Museum Hangar.

For those of you who have recently been in the Museum, you have seen that the gift shop has been moved to the front of the hangar and behind the hangar door tracks. This too was a decision made so that we could continue to operate, but stay within the 'no entrance' restriction we now have.

The Wing Staff members, including myself, have decided that the best approach for the Museum needs is to build a separate building that will house all of the Museum - including displays, artifacts and gift shop. This, of course, will require the Wing's full cooperation to bring this goal to completion.

One of the ways to raise money is to reduce spending. Before you say you really need something, make sure you need it now, or is it something that could be postponed? There are many operating expenses for the Wing and one

of them includes the daily items we use, such as paper towels, soaps, toilet tissue, cleaners and office supplies. Each hangar has members that could volunteer to provide each of these items, therefore reducing layout of Wing's operating funds. As a result, monies that could be used toward the building funds would be retained.

When we know more about the cost of the new building, we will start raising money to assist this effort. This too will involve all of our members, their support and their ideas. What benefits the Museum, benefits the Wing. Any ideas for this upcoming task will be greatly appreciated. Of course, more shopping in the gift shop always helps!

Recently received gift shop items: hats for C-46, F-6F, and CAF. Air Force patches and pins, and gold and silver Wing patches.

Congratulations to Ceci Stratford and the 'Friends of the Museum' program for reaching nearly \$1,000 and twenty new members. This program was designed to raise needed funds for the Museum. Great job!

Until next time...



© Photo by Dick Burrer

Two hard-working CAF Cadets – Michael McWaid (left) and "Big Al" Echeverria. They, along with Michael's sister Brittany, helped out at the BBQ & Air Show.



Fore !

Keep your eye on the ball. Our Annual CAF-SoCAWing Golf Classic will be coming next spring. Watch for upcoming exciting news of the plans in future issues of *Flight Line*. Steve Barber, Jr. heads up the committee.

Wing Photo Page II



© Photo Courtesy of Dan Newcomb

The PBJ Restoration crew moving the right gear into place. L to R: Gary Barber, Marc Russell, Dan Newcomb, Scott Drosos, Ken Barger.



© Photo by Dan Newcomb.

After 2 ½ years, the PBJ's right gear is again attached. Basking in its accomplishment, the team here is: (L to R): Iran Ausley, Jerry Royce, Tim Kutzbach, Marc Russell, Scott Drosos, and Ken Barger.



© Photo by Dan Newcomb

Here's PBJ-1J "Semper Fi" solidly on both gears!



Photo Courtesy of Jim Hinckley

Our C-131 Samaritan was recently ferried to Midland for "Rotation." She's scheduled to be in the CAF hangar there for the next three months. Here's the crew that took her to Texas. (From top): Terry Cedar, Al Kepler, Bill O'Neill, Jim Hinckley, Larry Kates and Dick Troy.

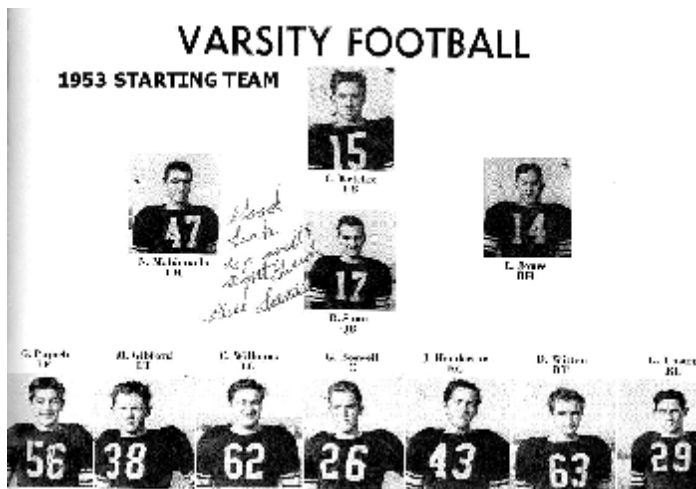


Photo Courtesy Richard Witten, MD

Two of our CAF SoCAWing colonels are in this photo of the 1953 San Fernando High School football team. Chuck Williams (#62) and Richard Witten (#63) are still good friends after all those years!

George Pupich (#56) also became an aficionado of WWII warbirds. He, at one time, was part owner, with brother Mike, of the beautifully restored B-25J "Heavenly Body," hangared at Van Nuys Airport.

Memorial for Jerri Fleishman

On Saturday, September 1, the CAF Southern California Wing will pay its respects to Ron Fleishman's late wife, Jerri Lyn, at a memorial service in the Museum Hangar.

Jerri passed away on June 29, 2007. She was a very active and important member of our Wing since 1982, right up to the time of her death. A flyby tribute is planned.

Wing General Meeting & BBQ by Dave Flood

On Saturday, August 11, 2007, after the work day had wound down, the Wing volunteers put their tools away and wrapped up in the Museum, and started to PARTY!

Dick Burrer was the Event Manager of the BBQ, and his able assistants included: Betty Jean Burrer, Asst. Mgr.; Bob & Lillie Albee, Chefs; Norm Swagler, Asst. Chef; Ron Fleishman, Purser; Cadets Michael McWaid and "Big Al" Echevarria, setup and general preparation.

Hopefully, with an initial attendance of eighty-two members, spouses, and significant others at our August meeting, this will be an incentive to not only hold this kind of meeting on a monthly basis, but to even increase attendance, and more importantly, to increase member participation in our various projects throughout each week.

A General Meeting was held in the Museum Hangar prior to the BBQ, with Wing Leader Steve Barber and Museum Director Sarah de Bree outlining the status of the Museum, and the plans already underway to not only solve the problem, but to go beyond that and create a new Museum building on the east side of the Museum Hangar – in which would be housed our Museum, our Reference Library and meeting rooms on two floors. It is an ambitious undertaking, but nothing we have ventured so far has been for the light of heart, and look how far we've come! It will take the hard work of all our members to make this dream come to life. But when the going gets tough, the tough get going. So pull up your sleeves and put your shoulders to the collective grindstone – and let's all focus on the goal of that shining, new, spacious museum building!

Also at the meeting, the Wing honored some of its volunteers with plaques and certificates. Honored were:

Col. Jim Hinkelman – Outstanding Museum Support Award Plaque; Col. Jack Rogers – Outstanding Service Support Award Plaque; Col. Gene O'Neal – Outstanding Maintenance Award; Col. Shirley Murphy – Outstanding Museum Support Certificate; Col. Dick Roberts – Outstanding Aircraft Support Certificate; Col. Sib Bosso – Outstanding Aircraft Crew Chief Certificate; and thirteen colonels of the PBJ-1J Restoration Team: Marc Russell (Crew Chief), Iran Ausley, Ken Barger, Jeff Birdt, Gil Brice, Scott Drosos, Dave Fish, Tim Kutzbach, Dan Newcomb, Roger Ostlund, Jerry Royce, George Sands, and Thomas Van Stein – Outstanding Dedication to Aircraft Restoration. Plaques which were designated in 2006 from Midland were also awarded to: Jim Hinkelman, Shirley Murphy, Sarah de Bree, and Ken Gottschall. Ceci Stratford received a Certificate of Appreciation from Midland. Congratulations and a standing ovation to all those volunteers who received awards, and to all those others who put their time and effort in each week to "Keep Our Aircraft Flying!"

Remember the old song "A Wing and a Prayer?" Well, we have a Wing, and also a prayer...but, in addition to that, we have dedicated members who are capable of hard work and tough decisions, and all together, as another song says, "We Will Overcome!"



© Photo by Jim Hinckley

The award certificate for Outstanding Aircraft Support being given to Col. Dick Roberts by Joe Peppito.



© Photo by Dan Newcomb

The BBQ was enlivened by a hot, live band – Riptide – of Santa Barbara - brought to our hangars by Col. Vern Olson. Vern works with John Chrisman, one of the band's members. What a treat!



© Photo by Dan Newcomb

The Wing BBQ gave our members' families a chance to join us and see all the progress in both the Restoration Hangar and the Museum Hangar. Pictured above are Marc Russell and his baby daughter Katelyn, and Steve Barber, Jr. and his niece Gillian.