



The Flyer



Tuck Researches Wing History

HSW History Being Collated and Updated



As we acknowledge the High Sky Wing's creation 20 years ago, Wing Leader **Mike Hedrick** has asked me to head up an effort to locate,

update, and publish the unit's distinguished history.

Fortunately, good records were kept in the early days and Col **Megan O'Hearn** has brought quite a number (four crates, to be precise) of clippings, rosters, news stories, newsletters, and photos to the Wing.

I'm now going through these myriad items in order to place them in chronological order. In coming weeks, I'll be contacting a number

of current or former HSW members in order to compile insights about the Wing's now-historic events. There are a number of unidentified photos which I'll bring to future Wing meetings, in hopes of solving some puzzles.

If you would like to take part in this activity, or have photos to share, please let me know by phone or email. Home: 432-694-3414, cell: 432-853-1125, or email: hatuck@midland.edu.

Editors Note: This isn't Tuck's first rodeo. A life-long journalist/photographer, he co-authored the book of Midland College's first 25 years; wrote a history of Memorial Christian Church's first 50 years; and continues to write on two family histories and his autobiography, which he insists is far from finished.

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ROCKET ATTACK ON HOLTVILLE: THIS IS NO DRILL! BY BILL COOMBES

Part One of a Three Part Story

While President Roosevelt was immortalizing December 7, 1941 as the "date that will live in infamy," for at least one angry California potato farmer and one rather embarrassed ensign, one other day, March 15, 1945, would also go down in history as a memorable day. Casualties were non-existent, and damage was inconsequential, but it surely was a "date that will live in ignominy" to those who were there. This story, heretofore never told, begins with, of all things, a short three-day honeymoon...

Ensign George Coombes, newly wedded to the lovely Alice Ann

Collins, found himself rushing to rejoin his squadron, VF-15 "Satan's Playmates," from an abbreviated honeymoon in Las Vegas. The squadron, reformed in January 1945 for a second tour in the Pacific, was based at NAS Los Alamitos, California. Here, the veterans of -15's remarkable first tour worked with new ensigns and jaygees in all the skills necessary to fly and fight in the air war against the Japanese.

Increasingly, Hellcat squadrons like VF-15 were being utilized in the ground support role in addition to their responsibilities for fleet defense, fighter sweeps, and escort duties. VF-15's new CO, Lt. Cmdr. Gordon Firebaugh, received orders in March

to take his eager aviators to NAAS Holtville, an auxiliary airfield on the southern end of the great Mojave desert.



Here, in this sparsely populated region of California, the Navy had established a bombing and rocket range on the Salton Sea.

The squadron had been hard at work for several days, learning the intricacies of successfully delivering 3.5 inch rockets on target from a variety of (See *Potato Patch*, on page 2)



Photo by Michael Clinton.

The 4 C's motor pool (Coombes, Cooper, Clinton & Clinton)



Bill Coombes hard at work, decalin'



Steve Clinton and Ray Hofman work on the Cushman, while able-bodied assistants wait to be called in.



Detail from the Cushman.

Uncredited photos by Greg Gutting

(Potato Patch) approaches, when Ensign Coombes reappeared from his honeymoon. Quickly it was determined that he was slightly behind the rest of his fellow aviators in learning this essential skill, so he was assigned two F6F Hellcats, that he might fly double the number of

daily missions until he "caught up." Ever eager to fly, as long as it wasn't at night, Coombes set to work, diligently flying and firing rockets with what he was sure was consummate skill. Things were progressing well, until the "Ides of March," when Fate inextricably linked

Coombes with a potato patch...

[Follow part two of the exciting Potato Patch Attack in the next issue of The Flyer.]

What famous Shakespearean character died on the Ides of March? *(answer on page 5)*



WORLD WAR II ENDS.

On August 6, 1945 the first atomic weapon ever used in war was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later, on August 9, the city of Nagasaki was partially destroyed by a second atomic weapon. On August 14th the Japanese empire surrendered and the formal peace agreement was signed aboard the USS Missouri on September 2, 1945.

Little Boy (L) was dropped on Hiroshima, while Fat Man wreaked havoc at Nagasaki. Photo from nuclearweaponarchive.org



THE KNUCKLEBUSTERS CORNER BY STEVE CLINTON



See Steve's Aircraft status report on the HSW web page under the Staff Reports tab.

"You da man, Steve!"



If you check this during pre-flight...



then this doesn't happen and...



you don't have to do this.
Lesson learned.



Jay Burns (L) and Keegan Chetwynd (R) present Ray Hofman and his son with photos of Boo-Man Choo and the military history of the plane.



Steve Clinton doesn't look this tall in person! (Lower body double by Mark Haskin) And Bob Keating isn't really this short!



Paul Latham (L) and Bobby Meroney take five while prepping the T-28 for its annual.

Photos on this page by Greg Gutting

**MUSTANG STAMPEDE SCHEDULED FOR
AUGUST 25 AT THE MAIN HANGAR**

Be sure to come out to the CAF on Saturday, August 25th from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for our first Mustang Stampede presented by the CAF museum. There will be SEVERAL P-51's present, as well as a Mustang car show which is expected to draw as many as 150 Ford Mustang's from around the state.

There will be eighteen categories of Mustang's that will be judged, beginning at 11:00 a.m. Awards will be presented at 4:00 p.m. Entries are expected in all categories from the first generation 1964 1/2 hardtop and convertible, to the newest models from the showroom floor.

If you just want to show off your Mustang, and not participate in the judging, there will be a "Mustang Corral" parking area with special prices which include museum admission.

Photographers will be on hand to take 8 X 10 photos of your Mustang and a P-51 together. Also scheduled to appear are a group of models who can also be photographed with your vehicle.

It has been hinted that there may also be an appearance by a mustang of the four-legged variety.

The HSW will be providing lunch for \$10.00 and the Desert Squadron will be selling drinks for \$1.00.

In addition, the Above & Beyond Speaker Series will feature P-51 triple ace, Colonel C.E. "Bud" Anderson, USAF (ret). He will tell what it was like to fly "Old Crow" in the European theater during World War II.



Many thanks to our sponsors, the Odessa Council for the Arts and Humanities and Cavanaugh Flight Museum. A special thanks goes out to our primary sponsor, Rogers Ford Lincoln of Midland.

Pre-registration ends August 18, 2012. For more information call 432-563-1000 or visit www.airpowermuseum.org

XO REPORT BY GREG GUTTING



Our museum tour program continued in July with a trip to the Silent Wings museum in Lubbock, and the Texas Air Museum in Slaton. Joining me on this trip was new HSW member and CAF Museum Research Specialist **Keegan Chetwynd**. He arranged ahead of time for some "behind the scenes" tours of each facility.

The curator of the Silent Wings Museum, Don Abbe, came in on his day off to give us exclusive access to collections the public never sees.

Keegan and Don shared experiences and ideas about how to better organize their collections.

One of many items on display in Lubbock is a restored WACO CG-4A glider. It was recovered from the roof of a gas station in Fresno, CA where it had been used for advertising. Restoration was completed by 1979 in time for the national reunion of World War II glider pilots in Dallas.

At the Texas Air Museum in Slaton, founder Malcolm Laing took us through his private hangars showing several aircraft in the restoration process, including two

German Bf109F fighters. Laing and his small crew of volunteers work tirelessly to restore and maintain in flying condition a bright yellow T-28, two AT-19 Stinson Reliants, an L-17 Navion and a PT 17 Stearman.

On static display are an F105 Thunder Chief, A-7 Corsair, F-4S Phantom, F-14 Tomcat, T-33, 1949 Sikorsky H-55, a Huey, a T-2 Buckeye and a German "88" antiaircraft gun.

The museum is open on Saturdays only, or by appointment.

October 13-14, 2012
Get your tickets
online at
www.airsho.org





Photo by Greg Gutting

The wing's newest "toy", member owned P-51, Boo-Man Choo

Bill Coombe's Boss 302 Mustang poses with Boo-Man Choo, in a preview of Mustang Stampede which will take place on August 25th.



Photo by Greg Gutting



Photo source unknown.

Owner Ray Hofman (L) presents Bill Coombes with a poster of Boo-Man Choo, styled after a US postage stamp. The framed work is now on display in the Ready Room.

MISCELLANEOUS MISCHIEF

Last year at this time:

We were celebrating the Best Transport award that James Martin's Twin Beech earned at AirVenture 2011 in Oshkosh;

the memorial plinth in the Doolittle Memorial Garden had been constructed and was awaiting the attachment of bronze plaques to honor HSW members who have gone west;

there was discussion about the need for a new engine for the PT-19 as well as the status of the new engine on the T-28;

and there was reiteration of the possibility of having a qualified mechanic on retainer since we were maintaining five wing planes, three member-owned planes and one leased plane (2012 note: we still don't have anyone on retainer and we now have more aircraft)

Answer to Ides of March question: Julius Caesar in Act III, Scene I of *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*.



Training glider on display at the Silent Wings Museum in Lubbock. Photo by Greg Gutting

DID YOU KNOW?

On August 14, 1941, after secret meetings aboard US and British warships, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill issued the Atlantic Charter, setting forth eight global goals, including renunciation of all aggression, the right of peoples to choose their own governments, and guarantees of freedom from want and from fear. This charter became the basis for the blueprint of the United Nations which would be formed after the war.

--From The Almanac of American History, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., General Editor

High Sky Wing Newsletter

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UPCOMING EVENTS

August 11

Monahans Fly-In

August 23

Monthly Wing Meeting

August 25

Mustang Stampede

September 6
Wing Staff Meeting

September 15

KODA Fly-In

September 27

Monthly Wing Meeting

September 29

Hangar Clean-Up Day

Check the Events tab on the
web page for the most current
information.

<http://highskywing.org>

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