



THE READY ROOM

February 2022

Heart Of America Wing Est. 1982

Vol.2, Issue 2

A **ready room** is the room on a Navy aircraft carrier where air crews hold their pre-flight and post-flight briefs. Crews serving during WWII considered the ready room to be a clubroom.

“The funny thing about a ready room is that you get attached to the hole. As much as you are attached to the ship. It's more than sentiment. It's an urge for protection. The loneliest feeling in the whole of a carrier pilot's world is when he's at sea with the gas running low, and he can't see his carrier. You think of the ready room then, and the noisy guys who make it the most desirable place in the world. It's your office, you live in it, it is the big thing in your life. [...] You sweat and worry in it, and grouse and argue, and you get mad at it when you can't hear yourself speak because everyone is yelling at once, but you're deeply attached to the place.

— Tommy Booth

"Wildcats" Over Casablanca

Wing Leader's Report

This year is off to a great start. We have some of the best meetings anywhere in the CAF. Dave Dyer is doing an amazing job lining up interesting speakers. I've invited HQ Staff to come to one of our meetings sometime, I think they will be impressed. Please welcome Mark McMahon to our staff as our new Maintenance Officer. I resigned the position after being elected Wing Leader. Mark will finish out my term and will be eligible to run for the position in the next election in November. Mark, thanks for stepping up and offering to serve.

Four of us attended the CAF Winter Conference. Myself, Brian VonBevern, Jarrett Bertoncin and Anita Mack made the drive to Dallas. Several sessions were held on numerous topics. It is always good to see that we are doing things right within the CAF. I always learn something when I attend these meetings and encourage anyone who wants to learn more about the CAF to plan on attending next year.

We have several events coming up at our hangar this Spring and Summer. I really want to put our best foot forward and make a good impression to our guests. Therefore, I am setting up some groups to take care of specific areas of the hangar, most of which will just be straightening up and cleaning. We need to make the hangar safe and an inviting place. It is our home and needs a little TLC. Let's take pride in our home and do our best to keep it in presentable condition.

The Jayhawk Wing is having a dinner on March 26, 2022 featuring Hank Coates (CEO of the CAF) as the speaker. It is a fund raiser for them and it would be nice if we could support another Wing. It costs \$50 per person or \$400 per table of 8 people. I was thinking about going down on Saturday afternoon for the Jayhawk banquet, Sunday we could tour the B-29 DOC Hangar, and then eat lunch at Stearman Field before returning home. Let me know by **March 12th** if you would like to make a road trip.

Flying Season will be here before we know it.

-- Steve Zimmerman

NEXT MEETING:

19 MAR, 10:00

Maintenance Report

PT13 Report: The Stearman Annual will be completed by the end of Feb. The new tailwheel boot we installed is not fitting properly so we have reached out to the manufacturer. They will send a replacement boot next week. This is the only open item from the inspection. This boot and a required check of the transponder equipment due at the end of February are the final items to complete.

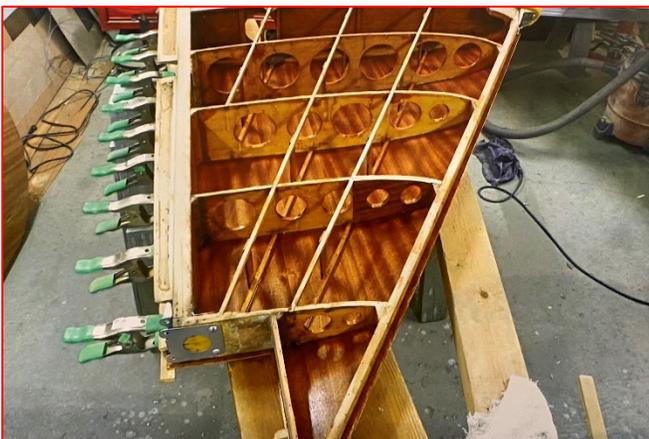
PT19 Report: Mike Kelly in Michigan has completed the wood work on the Horizontal and Vertical Stabilizers. This included removal of the old skins, inspection of internal structure, re-vernishing, and re-skinning both with new 1/16" mahogany plywood. He has started the process of installing the new fabric coverings. As an added job for him, we are having him build a new belly former cage. Hopefully he should have all ready for pick up this Spring.

The wing have been delivered to MD Aero in Pennsylvania for internal repairs and recovering. We also are in the process of crating the center section for its move to MD Aero to be matched up with the wings. Work should start in May after they receive all the various components. Work is expected to take 12 to 18 months.

Now that the Stearman Annual is complete, we can turn our attention back to the fuselage restoration of the PT19 and hope to speed up the restoration process... So long as we can stay funded for the project.



-- Jim Stella



We have a new Maintenance Officer!

Since Steve Zimmerman was elected Wing Leader, Mark McMahon was appointed MX Officer to help carry the workload. Below is a little bit about his background:



30 years military service;

Enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1984

Commissioned in 1988, flew UH-1N and AH-1W

Transferred to the Air National Guard in 1999

Retired from the Air Force Reserve in 2014

I Flew the KC-135R, RC-26B, MQ-1B, and MQ-9.

While in the Guard and Reserve I flew with Life Flight Eagle from 2006 to 2015.

I am a graduate of the Air Force Maintenance Officer Course, I was the 155 ARW Quality Assurance Officer in charge, and I was also a Quality Assurance Officer at HMLA-269 when I was on Active Duty in the Marine Corps.

I grew up around aviation, my dad was one of the pilots of the Fairfax Ghost, and co-founder of the Airline History Museum.

I'm excited to take over from Steve, there is a good plan for our way forward and things are progressing nicely.



Guest Speaker/Veteran Outreach Report



March I am hoping to ask Ed Matheny who @ 98 served under Admiral Nimitz and wrote a book called the Ruptured Duck. He tells the stories of Kansas City Veterans. Gary Swanson has said he is willing to speak and I plan on calling him before the meeting.

April, I have a tentative from Colonel Meyerwitch. He led the rescue of the two Blackhawk helicopters that crashed in Mogadishu, in the operation made famous by the book and movie "Black Hawk Down".

In August, Walt Schley (Purple Heart Vietnam) will be our speaker.

My hope is to get a POW from Korea era and I have my work cut out for me.

-- Dave Dyer

Operations Report

It's too cold out to be flying in our open top Stearman, so we've been preparing for the Aviation Day at the Capitol in Topeka, the CAF Winter Conference, our annual Pilot Safety reviews, and SPRINGTIME! The days are getting longer, warmer weather is not far away.

Later in early March, our annual Pilot Recertification Training meetings will be held at our hangar, the exact time and date(s) to be announced. Safety is always on the top of our list of concerns and goals. We had an excellent meeting last year and we're looking forward to expanding member participation next month.

Last, but certainly not least, many many thanks to our Maintenance crews for all their hard work in getting the Annual inspection done as early as possible on our Stearman this season. This will be a help as we've also been invited to participate in the Missouri CAF Wing's Memorial Day event at the Spirit of St Louis (KSUS) airport, May 27-30. We might finally be able to show up with a gaggle of vintage aircraft to enhance the display and be proficient early this year. Again, more details to follow when I know better what I'm talking about. Any time we get to hang with the MO Wing, it is a good time. Be safe.



-- Bob Robinson

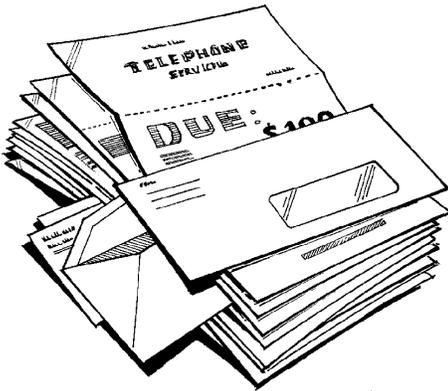


Finance Report

Winter can't seem to make up its mind...frigid one day, warm the next. We can't depend on the weather, but we can depend on January being a month with lots of bills to be paid!

A couple of quick updates financially:

- If you looked at our books for January, you'd see that our investment accounts suffered as badly as the stock market in the first month of the year. We lost almost 5% on paper, but we've done very well since their inception.
- You'd also see some serious cash outlays for insurance and some of the expenses we have with HQ. While they're painful when they hit, we are now done with them for the year.
- Despite that, we are still in pretty good shape financially. Bills for the PT-19 restoration are starting to roll in, so we need to keep revenue flowing!
- By the way, if anyone wants to be copied on the financial statements as I send them to staff, please email me at Finance.HOA.CAF@gmail.com.



To that end, we have collected 2022 dues from almost half of our membership. If you are in the other half (plus), you have several options to pay.

1. If you are going to see me soon, please bring a check!
2. If not, you can mail a check (payable to "CAF-HOA" or "Commemorative Air Force") to us at 6 Aero Plaza, New Century, KS 66031.
3. Or, you can pay by credit card using this

link: <https://checkout.square.site/merchant/D7X53H0BRNSFT/checkout/BXKRFE3ZOO3BZM4TFJVF6NX>. Please consider adding \$2 to your credit card payment to cover the cost from the credit card vendor.

As always, any contributions beyond dues are always welcome and, if you itemize, are tax deductible.

-- Tom McChesney



We are working with a custom shirt vendor on new HOA shirts that have our full color Wing logo, expected to cost \$32.50 each. They will be cotton, short sleeve polo ("golf shirts"), modeled so stylishly here by Jim Boughan.



The "BAD ANGEL" P-51 at Pima Air and Space Museum

We were in Hanger #4 of the Pima Air and Space Museum to view the beautifully restored B-29, When I happened to take notice of a P-51 Mustang near the big bomber. It's name? "Bad Angel".

I was admiring its aerodynamic lines and recalled enough history to know that until the Mustangs came into service, the skies over the Pacific Ocean were dominated by Japanese Zeros. Then something very strange caught my eye.

Proudly displayed on the fuselage of "Bad Angel" were the markings of the pilot's kills: seven Nazis; one Italian; one Japanese **AND ONE AMERICAN**. Huh? "Bad Angel" shot down an American airplane?



82nd Fighter Group, 95th Fighter Squadron in April 1943 and was assigned a P-38 Lightning. Ten days later he shot down three German Messerschmitt Bf-109 fighters. A few weeks later, he downed two more German Bf -109's. In less than a month of combat, Louis was an Ace. During the next three months, Louis shot down an Italian Mc.202 fighter and two more Messerschmitt's before his luck ran out.

A German fighter shot down his plane on August 27, 1943 over Salerno, Italy. Captured by the Italians, he was sent to a POW camp near Rome. No doubt this is where he thought he would spend the remaining years of the war. It wasn't to be. A few days later, the Italians surrendered. Louis and

Was it a terrible mistake? Couldn't be. If it had been an unfortunate misjudgment, certainly the pilot would not have displayed the American flag.

I knew there had to be a good story here. Fortunately for us, one of the Museum's many fine docents was on hand to tell it.

In 1942, the United States needed pilots for its war planes; lots of war planes; lots of pilots. Lt Louis Curdes was one. When he was 22 years old, he graduated flight training school and was shipped off to the Mediterranean to fight Nazis in the air over Southern Europe. He arrived at his



a few other pilots escaped before the Nazis could take control of the camp. One might think that such harrowing experiences would have taken the fight out of Louis, yet he volunteered for another combat tour. This time, Uncle Sam sent him to the Philippines where he flew P-51 Mustangs. Soon after arriving in the Pacific Theater, Louis downed a Mitsubishi reconnaissance plane near Formosa. Now he was one of only *three* Americans to have kills against all three Axis Powers: Germany, Italy, and Japan.

Pilot Lt. Louis Curdes in his P-51 Mustang "Bad Angel"



Up until this point, young Lt. Curdes' combat career had been stellar. His story was about to take a twist so bizarre that it seems like the fictional creation of a Hollywood screenwriter.

While attacking the Japanese-held island of Bataan, one of Louis' wingmen was shot down. The pilot ditched in the ocean. Circling overhead, Louis could see that his wingman had survived, so he stayed in the area to guide a rescue plane and protect the downed pilot. It wasn't long before he noticed another, larger airplane, wheels down, preparing to land at the Japanese-held airfield on Bataan. He moved in to investigate. Much to his surprise, the approaching plane was a Douglas C-47 transport with American markings. He tried to make radio contact, but without success. He maneuvered his Mustang in front of the big transport several times trying to wave it off.

The C-47 kept ahead to its landing target. Apparently the C-47 crew didn't realize they were about to land on a Japanese held island, and soon would be captives. Lt Curdes read the daily newspaper accounts of the war, including the viciousness of the Japanese soldiers toward their captives. He knew that whoever was in that American C-47 would be, upon landing, either dead or wish they were.



But what could he do?

Audaciously, he lined up his P-51 directly behind the transport, carefully sighted one of his 50 caliber machine guns and knocked out one of its two engines. Still the C-47 continued on toward the Bataan airfield. Curdes shifted his aim slightly and knocked out the remaining engine, leaving the baffled pilot no choice but to ditch in the ocean.

One of "Bad Angel's" .50 caliber machine guns built into its wings.



The big plane came down in one piece about 50 yards from his bobbing wingman. At this point, nightfall and low fuel forced Louis to return to base. The next morning, Louis flew cover for a rescuing PBY that picked up the downed Mustang pilot and 12 passengers and crew, including two female nurses, from the C-47. All survived. Later, Lt. Curdes would end up marrying one of these nurses!

50 caliber ammo for P-51 Mustangs.

For shooting down an unarmed American transport plane, Lt. Louis Curdes was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Thereafter, on the fuselage of his P-51 "Bad Angel", he proudly displayed the symbols of his kills: seven German, one Italian, one Japanese and one American.

Walter Bell

<https://southernarizonaguide.com/pima-air-space-museum-bad-angel-mysterious-kill-markings/>



HEART OF AMERICA CAF HANGAR DANCE

Celebrating our 20th year Honoring America's Veterans

Featuring

The Moonlight Serenade Orchestra

Under the direction of
RON ERNST

Saturday, May 21, 2022

7:00 – 10:00 pm

BYOB & SNACKS

Soft Drinks / Water & Ice Available for Donations

ADMISSION: \$35/person, \$350/table

Buy Tickets Here



For More Information
and to Buy Tickets on line go to:
www.KCGhostSquadron.org

or
Call John Wittenborn at
913.486.4123

Fundraiser

CAF-HOA member Bob Conner and his wife Debbie made a beautiful 8 foot by 8 foot aviation themed quilt for us to use as a fundraiser. The quilt features various aircraft and a CAF-HOA logo on the front, with excerpts from the US Constitution on the back. We're going to hold a silent auction for it between now and the hangar dance May 21 (winner will be announced at the dance. Need not be present to win; if the winner isn't at the dance we'll notify them afterward). The quilt will be on display at the monthly general meetings until the dance. Interested parties can submit bids in \$20 increments on the sign up sheet that will be attached to the quilt display, or they can call the CAF-HOA phone (913-907-7902) and bid by phone. Current bid is \$270.



CAF JAYHAWK WING PRESENTS

**MARCH
26TH, 2022
@6PM**

SALUTE TO VALOR



With honored veteran guest speaker Henry "Hank" Coats

Henry "Hank" Coats grew up in Central Louisiana earning himself a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from McNeese University. Following graduation he attended Officer Candidate school and flight training in Pensacola, Florida. Upon earning his wings of gold Hank spent 23 years as a Naval officer and aviator. Hank completed several tours in Southeast Asia, directing foreign and military flight training, simulations, academics, and was a senior flight instructor. After retiring from his military career in 2008, he returned to a job in aviation in 2012 as the President and General Manager for AFA, and most recently President of Sampson Consulting and Management.

@ the CAF JAYHAWK WING HANGER

2560 S Kessler St, Wichita KS 67217

ENTRY \$50 per person or \$400 table of 8 | Reservations required |

Call 316-655-7759 or available @ www.cafjhawks.org

Silent Auction and Bar @ 6pm

Dinner and Silent Auction closes @ 7:30pm

Dinner courtesy of Outback Steakhouse

The Commemorative Air Force is a Nonprofit Organization

-- Caption Contest --

Send in your own caption or vote for your favorite caption below.

Send your votes to anitamack130@gmail.com



2) "Wing Leader Steve Zimmerman checks out the new Economy seating in the Stearman."

3) "Apparently Wing Leader Steve Zimmerman needs to find a better hiding place. Maintenance Officer Mark McMahon and Jim Stella found him in no time."

4) "Steve brings new meaning to "Jack in the Box".



Wing Elected Staff Officers:

Wing Leader: Steve Zimmerman

Executive Officer: John Wittenborn

Finance Officer: Tom McChesney

Operations Officer: Bob Robinson

Maintenance Officer: Mark
McMahon

Safety Officer: Jim Boughan

Adjutant: Beth McCale

Development Officer: Beverly
Wittenborn

Education Officer: Janet McKenny

**Wing Appointed Staff
Officers:**

Guest Speaker/Veteran Outreach:
Dave Dyer

PIO: Brian VonBevern

Open Hangar Day Operations:
Linda Sladish

Facility Rentals: Jim Neese

Wing Newsletter: Anita Mack

Museum & Library Curator: Darren
Roberts and John Curatola

Photographer: John English



**COMMEMORATIVE
AIR FORCE**