



The Eagle's Scream



Spring 2022

The Florida Wing of the Commemorative Airforce Newsletter

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Wing Leader Comments

-by Col Joel Lonky



First of all, I would like to thank Col Tom Huntington for his hard work the previous year as wing leader and the successful acquisition of our SNJ. Well Done, Sir!

As we start 2022 a fresh and eager new wing staff is now in place. The pandemic, (which curtailed many of the Florida Wings outreach activities over the past 2 years), is ending and in person events are returning. The light at the end of the tunnel is now visible, the wing is beginning to see a rebirth in our outreach activities with groups like the ROTC, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Explorers, church groups and any others I might have forgotten to mention.

Airshows are coming back, our participation is returning in this arena. With Sun N Fun around the corner, the Baker formation fly in, NATA Formation clinics, Red Tail Fly In and Airventure at Osh Kosh to name a few. We have several members already planning on attending these events and many others to represent the Florida Wing of the CAF with the wing's aircraft.

Our two aircraft are back from extensive maintenance, fully online and proudly flying, and we continue to garner new sponsors for the Wing's SNJ and T-34a. A new training program is in the final stages of development for both aircraft. A new position for training and standardization has been created to ensure the safe and homogeneous operation of our aircraft from all pilot sponsors.

We have initiated a \$5000 fund raising campaign for the general membership that will help support our missions. We cannot rely on any one donor to keep us alive, it takes all of us to do our part and support our fine unit. Members will see a letter in their mailboxes soon.

Our website is being revamped and refreshed to mirror our energized new wing staff.

The Florida wing is very fortunate to have a sound and loyal membership who contribute to our success with many skill sets, but we must not rest on our laurels.

We must continue our growth and reach, we all must cultivate and recruit new members and aircraft sponsors for our wing. The wings continued success and survival requires this from us as part of our commitment to our wing.

I look forward to helping the Florida wing complete these goals in the coming year and guide us forward into our units goals for the future.



Executive Officer Report

-by Col. Mike Miller

The T-6 and T-34 are available for scheduling. The T-34 was down for some time, and pilots should review the flight manual prior to going flying. Thanks to Colonel Foley our facility is in good shape. This year's Unit dues are currently payable and are \$5.00. This was done to get a firm count on our Unit membership. Your CAF Headquarters dues are in addition. The past two years have been challenging because of COVID. As a result, member and Unit activity fell off. Depending on your individual comfort level I would like to see participation grow especially at the monthly staff meeting (2nd Sat. each month). As conditions improve, we are looking forward to resuming interaction with the local and aviation community which will create a need for more members to participate.

Adjutant Report

-by Col. Laura Kelly

Membership Stats:

Our current membership count is 45 members.

We have 1 recent new member:

Welcome Andrew Payne

We are always looking for new members. Please continue to spread the word about the Florida wing of the CAF.

Wing Operations Report

-by Col. Jeffrey Thornton

A slow winter for the Florida Wing in regard to our usually busy ops tempo this time of year. The bad news came late last year when our T-34 and SNJ had unscheduled maintenance complications that required some extended down time. The good news is that we have almost completely put this behind us now, with the SNJ having returned to the air in late December with two new cylinders, and the T-34 now rapidly approaching its return to service. I have included updates broken down by each aircraft below.

SNJ Ops:

After discovering potentially catastrophic damage on one of our SNJ's pistons back in December, the FL Wing Texan maintenance team, led by Gene McNeely, closely examined the top end of the Pratt and Whitney R1340 engine that powers our SNJ-4. They determined that, in addition to the cylinder with the damaged piston, we had one other cylinder that showed enough wear to warrant replacement. Once we had sourced the parts, our outstanding Texan mechanics

(Ian and Ian) quickly went to work and had the plane flying again in record time. Our Texan now has a clean bill of health and has flown 5 hours squawk free in January but remains on an increased scrutiny engine oil analysis program to ensure we don't have any undiagnosed issues.

It's approaching the time of year for our annual Texan ground school. Mark your calendars for Saturday, March 26th at 10:00AM for our annual SNJ school at our DeLand hangar. T-6 extraordinaire Gene McNeely will once again be presenting this refresher course focusing on best practices and abnormal/emergency procedures. This is a CAF required ground school, and while we'll do everything, we can to make this event available online, it is strongly recommended all current SNJ pilots attend this event in-person to avoid losing their PIC privileges in the airplane. All members are welcome to attend and learn more about our beloved tail-dragging, round-engined noisemaker.

We are still actively searching for additional sponsors for our SNJ. Please continue to get the word out (I'm especially looking at you, FL Wing airline pilots) that we have the best deal going for Texan flying provided the pilot meets the following qualifications: 500 hours total time, 50 hours retractable gear, 30 hours tailwheel (80 landings in the last year). Without 3 more sponsors or an active revenue stream of donations, we are at risk of losing this aircraft next year.

Finally, I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce our newest SNJ instructor pilot, Col. Jeff Linebaugh. Jeff is a 757 Captain and Line Check Airmen for FedEx and also an accomplished warbird and airshow pilot (most often seen flying the P-51 "Gunfighter" operated by the CAF). He is experienced in many of the popular North American built aircraft, to include the B-25, P-51, and of course the T-6. Jeff just recently moved to our area and he has been gracious enough to offer his collective knowledge and experience to us with our SNJ program. If you see him around the hangar, please give him a warm welcome!

T-34 Ops:

As many of you are aware, our T-34 sustained substantial damage to its left wing after falling off a jack while it was in for maintenance at New Smyrna last year. By the grace of god no one was hurt, but our little yellow airplane now required some wing surgery. This wing was removed from the aircraft and sent to an expert who specializes in wing repairs for Baker Aviation. The necessary work has since been accomplished. The rear spar and affected ribs have been fixed, and the wing has been reskinned and shipped back to New Smyrna where it has since been repainted and reattached to the airplane, hooray! I know it feels like this airplane has been down for a while, and it has, but given the extent of the damage, our mechanics have made great progress in record time. Special thanks to Doug Scibilia who has dedicated weeks of his time to the endeavor of returning our T-34 to the sky. As of the time of this writing, we are completing some fit and finish work with the landing gear reinstallation, some non-destructive testing, and some other odds and ends seeing as the plane will also return to us with a fresh annual inspection. It is my hope that by the time this newsletter makes it to our membership, the flagship of the Florida Wing will be airworthy once again.

We are currently planning the T-34 annual ground school to occur sometime in mid to late April after Sun N Fun. Expect to hear more about that in the coming month. Speaking of Sun N Fun, we do expect to have both aircraft in attendance. There are also two separate formation events occurring the weekend prior to Sun N Fun (Texans at Williston and T-34s at New Smyrna). I would like to see both our aircraft participating in these events as well.

In conclusion, as we get ready to begin another busy year of flying, I want to remind all the Florida Wing members about safety. We have collectively done a great job of operating the aircraft and equipment in our hangar, but just because something bad hasn't happened doesn't mean it can't. Please continue to remain vigilant and disciplined when operating our equipment. The hangar will be a tight fit again with the return of the T-34, so if you're ever moving an airplane and you have someone else around the hangar, please don't hesitate to ask for help, or at least another set of eyeballs to make sure things don't touch that aren't supposed to. For our pilots, please don't let the stress of running behind schedule rush you though your normally diligent procedures. Remember, all stress is self-induced, and despite our military appearances, we aren't performing a vital function for the safety of democracy. We can always fly another day. Also, there is now a new CAF 60-1 available at www.cafoperations.org. The CAF has highlighted a couple of the changes made to this document in the new [60-1 online course](#), which I need everyone to accomplish as soon as they can. Thank you all for your continued commitment to the CAF Florida Wing and happy flying!

Development Officer

-by Col. Woodie Sprouse

A Note from the Development Officer.

If I recall my 11-year history with the Florida Wing correctly, the Wing never had an active Staff Development Officer. The CAF HQ recently created the Unit Development Staff position to recognize its expanded emphasis on education, as noted below.

I recently returned from the 2022 CAF Conference held at the CAF headquarters in Dallas, TX. The CAF National Airbase facility has undergone an impressive improvement since I visited in 2018. The most striking addition is the Henry B. Trippie, National Aviation Education Center (NAEC.) This complex includes the Victor N. Agather STEM Innovation Hangar, easily housing the CAF's B-29 "FIFI" and B-24 "Diamond Lil." In addition to the hangar, the complex contained a nose art gallery, The Arsenal of Democracy Hall, and a theater dedicated to The Tuskegee Airmen and Brig. Gen. Charles McGee, and three large classrooms.

The original plan for the National Airbase was modified on December 1, 2017, when the CAF General Staff voted to prioritize education over competing projects. This executive decision set the tone and direction for creating the Development Officer as a voting member in all CAF Units.

It has taken time for me to fully understand my role within the Florida Wing. I've found that Development => Expansion, Change, Improvement, Maturity, and Promotion cannot exist in a vacuum. The fundamental element of the Florida Wing development effort resides in our membership. This topic will be the subject of updates in future newsletters. Stay tuned!



Cols. J Lonky, L Kelly, W Sprouse attending the Wing staff conference Dallas Feb 2022

Oral History

-by Col. Joel Lonky

Col Laura Kelly has been actively interviewing and recording WWII veterans for an oral history project for the CAF. These interviews will be featured on our new updated website and the national CAF website. I strongly recommend you visit our website and check them out. Enjoy the stories of sacrifice these men and women endured during some of the toughest times our nation has gone thru. She will also be interviewing some of our own members to get their personal stories recorded for posterity. The series will not be limited to WWII, she has plans to add the Korean conflict and the Vietnam experience to the stories. Stay tuned....This months featured story is Fred LaPonzina





Safety Officer Report

-by Col. Austin Sorrells

The last word must always be; whatever you are doing, pay attention to the task at hand!

It is very easy to become complacent and not really have your head in the game while moving the aircraft in and out of the hanger or driving the tug or the golf cart or use of the checklist and of course flying the aircraft.

We must remain vigilant to mitigate any potential for incidents and accidents. Safety starts with each person, do your part. Keep your head in the game!

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Open every Wed & Sat

0900-1400

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