



COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE



LOBO WING CHATTER

June 2022

WING LEADER BREIFING by Scott Witschger

I know it's been a while since you have heard from me and I apologize for the absence. With Scott Ruyle's passing I have been attempting to catch up on the things he was handling as assistant project manager. I had turned over most of the day-to-day project execution to him while I concentrated on the long-term plan, making sure all the required parts and materials were ready to avoid delays and most importantly to make a real dent in the paperwork needed to return the airplane to flight. I'm slowly regaining my knowledge of current project status and what (and who) is needed to proceed. I appreciate David McBride picking up the slack and producing the last newsletter.

As David discussed in the last newsletter, February 17 to 20 was the 2022 Headquarters Conference in Dallas. The Lobo Wing was represented by PX Officer Sara McBride, Finance Officer Maggy Witschger, Executive Officer Dave McBride, and me. The conference was held in the new National Aviation Education Center and the maintenance hangar. This is a beautiful facility that contains the youth education rooms, the nose art collection and a large display area where they can store the B-29 and the B-24.

The conference attendance seemed to be down this year but there was still a good turnout given the ever-increasing cost to attend. There were not as many education and briefing sessions so the headquarters staff could be sure that the facility could handle the load this first year. The biggest issue was below average temperatures and inadequate heat. The maintenance hangar especially was unprepared for the cold and we froze during some of the maintenance briefings.

The following are my thoughts on the Conference.

1. On Thursday Dave and I conducted an American Airpower Heritage Foundation of New Mexico (AHFNM) Board meeting. This meeting was to brief the board on the R-2600 parts transaction and to get approval to invest the funds in the headquarters financial investment accounts. The three AAHFNM Officers are Scott, Dave and Korry Tilbury. There are three members of the general staff that are on the board along with Dave and I.
2. The new NAEC is a beautiful facility which can hold both the B-29 and the B-24 and have enough room left over to seat another 300 people. It also holds nice classrooms and two education centers. One is geared more towards home front education and the other has the aviation education center which has hands on aviation learning projects.
3. The maintenance hangar has undergone major renovation and has been cleaned up and painted and has new lighting. This hangar holds several aircraft that are assigned to the Dallas/Fort Worth Wing and stores the aircraft up for assignment or have recently been acquired.
4. The entry way to the NAEC has a very nice WASP display and the entry to the nose art exhibit. At this point there is no museum and there was never any discussion about the potential for the addition of the museum facility.
5. Attendance was down this year and a number of wings were not represented.
6. There are a number of new wings that have been added this year and one name change. The Dixie Wing was renamed Airbase Georgia. Apparently the rename was needed because folks were offended by the term "Dixie". But it was always designed to be renamed as an Airbase anyway.
7. My overall impressions
 - a. The current focus of the CAF is primarily on Youth Education, minority education, new wing additions and not losing old wings. The bigger operating wings all run on autopilot and do their own thing.
 - b. To that point the CAF is acquiring new planes in the PT or BT category to use as foundations for the creation of new wings. They recently acquired a partially restored BT-13.
 - c. Surprisingly one of the oldest still operating wings is the Lobo Wing formed in 1984.
 - d. The wings that are closing down are those that have had the same founders and leaders for the last 20 plus years and when they age out the wing dies. Unfortunately, that is exactly the situation for the Lobo Wing. Despite the

effort Dave and I have made to groom officers we have not had great success. When the McBride family and the Witschger family represent 5 of 9 officer positions that's really not the place we want to be long term.

- e. Although they want the wings to implement education programs, they have not yet provided the tools to support this effort. They said its coming but is not yet available. They will work with a local group if requested. This is one of our weak areas.

8. Maintenance

- a. This session was focused primarily on paperwork and compliance. The FAA has been coming down hard on wings across the country. They warned us to have all our paperwork in order. Keep it organized, and accessible and ready to go at any time because most of these visits have been surprise visits. Some wings have experienced temporary shut downs while the FAA forms are sorted out.
 - i. UPDATE: I recently ordered new seat belts for the AT11 from Hooker Harness. The tech I talked to said we were the sixth CAF wing that had ordered new belts that week alone. So, the FAA threat is real.
- b. Also keep your parts and spares orderly and documented if necessary. The FAA will react negatively to a work environment that is clearly disorganized and not safe for good maintenance.
 - i. UPDATE: Ralph Crump and I have been working on organizing and labeling the mezzanine parts storage area. After that is complete we can finish cleaning up the shop floor area.

9. Insurance

- a. We had a good year for insurance rates because we had a good year with minor accidents and incidents. Nothing major occurred and this is always a bonus. Our rates will continue to decline if we stay clean.
- b. The one weak area was hangar injuries. We had injury claims that ran from \$30K to \$100k dollars. This is another good reason for us to clean up the shop floor.

10. Branding

- a. A few interesting items in this session.
 - i. The main CAF wings in different forms are copyrighted and trademarked.
 - ii. The individual wing patches are not trademarked due to the high cost.(\$100K)
 - iii. When a picture of a CAF airplane is taken with the CAF wings in view that aircraft picture is automatically trade marked and cannot be used for profit, only for personal use.
 - iv. Due to a recent issue, we now must have all nose art approved by HQ prior to use. That means establishing ownership of the art. We are in the process of doing just that for the AT-11.

11. Safety

- a. Because the CAF is so large and well known, any warbird accident is assumed to be a CAF airplane and they contact the CAF for comment. They will often start with the local wing. Under no circumstance should members speculate or comment on an aircraft accident of any kind. Since we do not currently have a PIO (Public Information Officer---Recruiting note—the job is open if you're interested) all questions shall be referred to HQ. Never, never speculate to the media on what might have happened.
- b. If we have an accident with our airplane there is an entire procedure to follow for the media and another for the FAA. A future training session will train members on procedures and learn where to find this information.
 - i. UPDATE: This procedure and associated documents can be prepared by anyone. You don't need to be at the hangar or even in Albuquerque. So, if you would like an opportunity to help out, this may be the one.
- c. This is not a new situation but has been highlighted recently because of the Bluebonnet Belle C-47 crash and the B-17 909 crash.

12. Fundraising

- a. Nothing new here. Find foundations and rich people and make them your friend. Foster and develop the relationship. Unfortunately, Henry B. Tippie, who funded the new education center, passed away the day after the conference.

13. Social Media

- a. This landscape is changing but is more important than ever.
- b. The focus is now on Facebook and Instagram.
- c. We are always looking for help with our website. If you're interested let us know.



Figure 1 National Aviation Education Center in Dallas



Figure 2 National Aviation Education Center in Dallas

AT-11 Briefing by Scott Witschger

In the last news letter David mentioned that we are trying to schedule a visit from Greg Downing, a Beech 18/AT-11 experienced IA/A&P, and the Cimarron Wing C-45. Well, scheduling and weather has made it a real challenge to make that happen. First it was snow, then rain and now ridiculous wind. It was either in Moriarty or Guymon Oklahoma and sometimes both. It is important that we make this happen so we can get an experienced twin Beech mechanic to get eyes on our plane to evaluate our condition before we start to rivet on wing panels. We also have questions that can be answered by looking at another Beech 18. Hopefully that can happen soon.

We have gone through all our collection of engine cowlings and picked the two sets that we thought would need the least amount of work. After the CAF conference Maggy and I took these cowlings to Chandler (also known as Lobo Wing South) to a company called Jet-Strip that specializes in aircraft. They use a low-pressure high-volume system using plastic beads to strip paint. They have the biggest blast booth I have ever seen.



Figure 3 Jennifer Witschger, owner of Lobo Wing South

We brought back the cowls and other parts that had been stored in Chandler.



AT-11 Turret Dome

We continue to make progress on building a turret dome. Slow and not steady but progress never the less. Korry Tilbury, Mitch Wainwright and Tom Thompson all have roles in the project and it's finally starting to look like a turret.



Figure 4 Korry, Mitch and Tommy at work

Newer member David Hill has shown a real talent for metal fabrication and has been doing yeoman duty on reskinning the wing center section.



Figure 5 Dave Hill working sheet metal



One of our newest members is Stan Johnson, an A&P who has been working with A&P/IA Steve Reber to go through everything and find all the small issues that plague any long-term project as it nears completion. This is a find and correct project and not just a find and document project. Lots of little things so far but each one moves us closer to the finish.





Korry Continues to make progress on the cockpit windows. It's a many step process with a lot of starts and stops but things are still moving.



I finally located the original data plate and with the help of industry experts located the original mounting holes. With this addition we have a legal airplane.

PT-26 Briefing

Well, we have good news and bad news. We finally have another totally approved PT pilot. Andy Wells has completed Mitch Wainwright's training and headquarters signed off on all his paperwork. Now the bad news. He's leaving. Mitch and his wife have both accepted positions with Boeing at their St. Louis facility. This is a wonderful opportunity for this young couple and we wish them the best. The Missouri Wing will be receiving a fine young pilot. We will miss his youthful enthusiasm.



Lobo Wing Cadet Program

It's been a long time since the Lobo Wing has had cadets. Most of you may not know but we now have two cadets in the ranks at the Lobo Wing. We are happy to welcome Brayden Gifford and Paige Hill to the wing! Brayden is Sean McBride's godson and Paige is Dave Hill's daughter. They are both very eager to learn and are always asking what they can work on next. So far Paige has helped Dave with making new panels for the AT-11 while Brayden has been helping with tightening bolts for the cowling mounts. Both Paige and Brayden are very detailed oriented and want to make sure things are done right.

Our cadet program allows our young members the opportunities to learn about the history of the AT-11 and PT-26 along with learning new skills. We want to be able to teach them how to use new tools, show them steps to building/rebuilding parts and teach them new skills that they can use now as well as in the future. Our job is to make sure they are supervised and provide them with the proper guidance. Once again, let's give a big Lobo Wing welcome to Paige and Brayden!

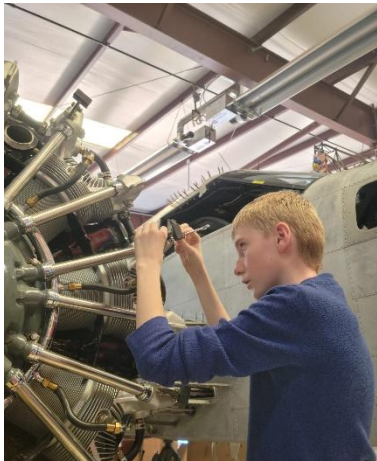


Figure 6 Brayden



Figure 7 Paige