



LOBO WING CHATTER

October 2023

Moriarty, New Mexico

WING LEADER BRIEFING by Scott Witschger

Some time ago I became a member of Airbase Arizona. I wanted to become more familiar with Airbase Arizona in hopes of furthering our relationship with our big brother. They publish a monthly newsletter called the Falcon Flyer. What I have noticed is that every month there is an article about the history of the wing. They vary in length from several pages to a short single column. They cover single events or a series of events that have contributed to the Airbase. These apparently then become part of the documented history of the Airbase.

Recently I was trying to organize my laptop files and was looking at some old Lobo pictures. I was shocked at how many members are in these pictures that are no longer with us. Some have passed, some have moved and some are dealing with family or personal health issues. What's not in the pictures are any of our current active members. So, in an effort to retain some Wing history I, along with several other "experienced" Lobo's will start to publish some of our history. I will start with some highlights of our older history and then go into how we got the AT-11, the saga of getting it to Albuquerque, the story of how we built the hangar. When ready we will include the early history of the PT-26. I hope you will find the information entertaining and maybe even valuable in your recruiting efforts. I know it will give you a great appreciation of the efforts put in by you predecessors.

This first installment was prepared by Frank Gasperich in February 2003 and was included as part of our request for assignment of the AT-11. I think you will be impressed with the Lobo's that preceded us.

A LOOK BACK AT THE LOBO WING

A CAF Squadron Charter affiliate of the New Mexico Wing was acquired September 17, 1984. There were 10 Colonels, eight fully employed and two semi-retired. The immediate objective was to make the presence of the CAF and the Lobo Unit known in an effort to accumulate all the needs required for an aircraft restoration project. Because of limited resources, the group felt a duty to do the things that no one else wanted to do, an approach that has continually carried the unit forward. Our reputation was to be one of providing support to all worthy causes, primarily aviation oriented, including others than our own.

In 1985 the Lobo Squadron became a sponsor of the New Mexico Pilot's Association annual "Pilot's Rendezvous", a fund-raising effort for charity. It has sustained this sponsorship for 18 years, the last five which have provided from five to seven \$500 scholarships annually to young men and women under the age of 21 for furthering their aviation education...primarily to young adults whose career options appear limited. The award is given directly to a deserving individual's accredited school for any form of specialized aviation course and is not limited to flight training. Typically, the Lobos also provide the "set-up, tear-down, clean up" effort for the total attendance.

Over the years, three Lobo members have been awarded the "Blue Max", the NMPA's highest aviation award, for their contribution to New Mexico aviation.

The City of Albuquerque invited the Lobo Squadron to a reception honoring the contribution of local voluntary organizations in 1986. At year's end the Lobo Squadron leader is invited by the Mayor to sit on the City's Planning Committee for an upcoming nationally recognized Air Show planned for 1989. The Kirkland Air Force Base invites the Lobos to their open house events and two members do a memorial Fly-over with their privately owned war birds.

The Lobos located and acquired a Wright R-3350 engine and loaned it as a display to the National Atomic Museum. This engine, together with a Norden Bomb Sight, and a Lobo restored Link trainer were major components of the Albuquerque Museum's *Balloon to Bombers* exhibition. Senator Bingaman's Office arranged for the Pentagon to provide specification assistance for the Lobo "Link" restoration. Lobos participated in the Museum's original 1911 Curtiss Model T pusher biplane assembly & exhibit effort and provided "docent personnel" as needed during the 3-month exhibit.

Permission was obtained from KAFB to salvage possible usable parts from a B-29 hulk that had been used for armament testing. The group, working in the desert wearing required "Moon Suits", accumulated over 3500 lbs. of various items of potential use. After decontamination, the salvaged materials were stored on donated space and held for 7 years. This material, together with five B-29 wheels, a small bulldozer designed for glider use, an R3350 display engine, and a Link Trainer, were picked up by Midland and some are currently on display. Another "acquired" engine, an R2600, was provided to the West Texas Wing SB2C restoration "reserve parts" bin...and was put to immediate use for cowl fitting.

The *Air Fiesta de Santa Fe* marked the completion of the Santa Fe City Airport renovation in 1988. The Lobo Squadron received a letter of recognition for being instrumental in its success by bringing in 11 warbirds and assisting in program planning and operations. The following year the Lobo unit was assigned responsibility for war bird attendance at the City of Albuquerque's successful "*Southwest Airlines Air Show*".

By this time, the group was a fixture in the Albuquerque "*Balloon Fiesta*" and July 4th Annual Parades with its trailered large-scale PT-26 aircraft model being towed by a newly acquired and refurbished Lobo PX van. Indeed, the Squadron had also become a fixture on the local PBS, KNME-TV Pledge Drive Programs by volunteering as a group to handle the Station's Pledge Drive telephone response. A Citation of Appreciation was received from KNME-TV in recognition of over 500 volunteer service hours.

On January 26, 1989, the Squadron received its charter as a Wing unit of the CAF and celebrated by hosting a fabric covering seminar for members and all others in the local aviation community who were interested. The relationship with Kirtland AF Base continues as

the Lobos help celebrate the KAFB 50th Anniversary in support of the 7th Annual Memorial Bombardier Reunion.

Early fund-raising efforts involved the donation of a truck and automobile badly in need of repair and refurbishing, projects that provided early testing of the group's skills and participation. The vehicles were quickly completed and sold, developing proceeds that enabled the purchase of a used Air Force Van from the New Mexico State Salvage Yard for use as a PX vehicle.

In 1988 the first 50/50 cash raffle was introduced and has met its goal for 14 straight years. In 1995 the winning \$1000 grand prize was a ticket purchased by a Lobo on behalf of the Gulf Coast Wing B-17, *Texas Raiders*.

Every fund-raising effort has met its goal enabling the purchase of a zero-time engine, center section rebuild, wing rebuild, canopy, and all needs of the PT-26 restoration project and enabled successful hosting of all CAF B-29/B24 visits by providing fuel, oil, crew lodging and transportation.

The completed PT-26 aircraft restoration is being campaigned throughout the area and members are continually seen at air shows and other events across the country.

AMERICAN AIRPOWER HERITAGE FOUNDATION of NEW MEXICO

The foundation received the final payments and the Aero Traders loan associated with the sale of the R-2600 parts has been retired. We are still owed a few parts and services.

Thanks to an extended effort by Chuck Swanberg the Foundation is now the owner of the 1954 Ryan Navion that we inherited with the passing of Scott Ruyle. It's just as disassembled as the AT-11 was but there are a lot fewer parts to deal with. We also received a wrecked Navion that had been removed from the FAA register. This is purely a pile of parts.

The initial thought is that this would be our next project after the AT-11 is finished due to the zero-acquisition cost. However, the plane might have to be transferred to the controlling foundation which holds ownership of all CAF aircraft. If that happens then we lose all say in the future of the aircraft. This issue is still to be resolved with headquarters. The Foundation already owns five Navions and they may feel we don't need another. That's not necessarily a bad thing. It's possible that they may have something better available for assignment.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We have recently signed on two new members. Maria Vianco and Daniel Fernandez.

Maria is an Albuquerque native having graduated from Albuquerque Academy. She then went on to CNM to obtain her Airframe and Powerplant certificate and is currently employed at Bode Aviation. Maria also recently received a scholarship to learn about radial engines. Just to make sure she stays busy she is also pursuing her pilot's license.

Daniel (Dan) has a vast background in aviation management and as a pilot. He is a retired Air Force pilot and is currently in training to fly corporate jets. He's also already started the process to get qualified in the PT-26.

UPCOMING ELECTIONS

This year we will again elect some of your wing officers as part of the membership renewal process. There are five positions up for election on this cycle. The only real change is for wing leader and XO. As I explained in 2019, headquarters implemented a new rule that limited Wing Leaders to two consecutive two year terms. My four years is concluded this year so Dave and I have begrudgingly agreed to swap positions yet again. I don't remember how many years total I have been Wing Leader but it sure seems like a lot. My hope is that you have found my leadership to be adequate. Meanwhile, I will remain as AT-11 project manager and President of the American Air Power Heritage Foundation of New Mexico. I remain committed to seeing the AT-11 fly.

Below is the list of officers up for election and/or reelection. If anyone has any desire to run for one of the offices please let us know. We would be very happy to entertain new blood.

SLATE of OFFICERS		
Wing Leader	Election	Dave McBride
Executive Officer	Election	Scott Witschger
Adjutant	Election	Ralph Crump
Finance	Election	Maggy Witschger
Operations	Election	Andy Wells
Maintenance		Brad Hueftle
Safety		Sean McBride
PX		Sara McBride
Development		Korry Tilbury
Education		Vacant

BRIEFING: AT-11

Since the last update the upholstery situation has been largely resolved thanks to Larry Dalton and John Lacher. They took it upon themselves to fabricate and install new upholstery using the plan laid out by the original upholstery shop. We needed three things to get started. One was the FAA approved faux leather and hook and loop fastening material. We had already acquired both. Number two was a shop with the ability and experience to sew the material (a bonus would be they could come to the hangar. Number Three was patterns for fabricating the panels off site.

John Lacher had a shop he had used previously who could do the fabrication but could not come to the hangar. So, John and Larry with some input from Stan Johnson decided to test their skills by fabricating patterns for the panels. John had one test panel made for the bombardier compartment for proof of concept.

The panels have been installed and fitted and they look pretty darn good. The green diamond side panels had been finished by the previous shop so they can go in whenever.



Pilot Side Panel



CoPilot Side Panel



Bombardier Overhead



Bombardier Side Panel



Student Seat Upholstery

The number two radio has been repaired. The lighting was burned out backlight bulbs and the low power was a fried capacitor. Fairly inexpensive repairs and the unit has been reinstalled and tested. The software has been loaded into the new transponder and some testing completed. Right now, the pressure altitude readout is not working and troubleshooting is underway. Unfortunately to complete testing the aircraft must be outside so GPS information can be acquired and like all new avionics the necessary testing equipment is very expensive so eventually an avionics shop must come on site for the final signoff.

Work continues on other areas. Stan Johnson is working on installing the original radio equipment. Our resident machinist Billy Lothrop is fabricating some missing original mount retainers (Pictures). Purely decorative but adds to the authenticity.



Cleaned up SCR Radio Set



Chassis retaining mount pins

Stan has also been working on redoing the cabin flooring at the entry door to make it easier to remove the floor panel for access to pulleys and cables.



Cabin Floor Support

Tom Thompson, Dave and Sean McBride have been making progress on the engine cowlings. These have turned into an unexpected major effort but we are figuring out ways to make repairs. The lower cowls with the cowl flaps are especially complicated.



Lower Cowl with repairs



Freshly overhauled cowl seals



Main Spar Strap components

We are also working on the fit for the bomb doors we acquired in March. It did not take us long to realize that we would have to install the spar strap to fit the doors. That led to whole additional puzzle to solve.



Port Bomb doors

BRIEFING: PT-26

We now have another qualified PT-26 pilot! Cooper Livingston recently completed the requirements to be a Pilot in Command of the PT-26 and received the official letter from CAF headquarters in Dallas. We now have three PT-26 pilots to keep the airplane busy.

Cooper also flew the PT-26 to LOEFI for static display.



LAND OF ENCHANTMENT FLY IN (LOEFI)

This Fly In is held every year at Double Eagle airport and this year was a great one, both for general aviation and the Lobo Wing. The EAA chapter 179 hosts this Fly In every year and we are fortunate to be invited to have our PX there to raise funds for the wing. Due to the great efforts of Lobo Wing members Sara McBride (PX Officer), Sean McBride, Lauren McBride, Kim Jackson and Brayden Gifford we had the best sales day ever in the history of the Lobo Wing. Sales were almost \$2500 with a net of almost \$1400. This all goes to keeping the lights on in the hangar and is greatly appreciated!



As you can see from the crowd and airplanes it was a great day for general aviation

