

For Friends of the Gulf Coast Wing—CAF



Cowl Flaps



February 08, 2008

Volume 1

Issue 5

Inside this issue:

Steve Brown visits the Gulf Coast Wing 2

Membership Dues & Fee Changes 2

Membership Benefits, & An Intro to TORA 2

AIR BOSS continued 3

GCW Staff Contacts and Information about us. 4

TEXAS RAIDERS passes Inspection

HOUSTON, TX—The routine of cleaning, moving, tightening and inspecting the parts on this old war-bird doesn't change for wing volunteers, but a recent inspection by the CAF Director of Maintenance and Quality Assurance resulted in a passing grade with conditions: the B-17 must be cleaned more thoroughly...even the old dirt needs dislodging. Although a few minor problems were discovered, there is nothing to stop this determined crew from their objective of flight.

But **progress** takes money and to date nearly \$500,000 has been spent on this six-year maintenance project with another \$200,000 anticipated in the near future.

Volunteers meet each Tuesday



Clean Engine ready for the approval to install. Photo by Col Kevin Hong

evening at 1800 hours and on Saturdays at 0900 hours. It is a slow but spectacular project. The interior restoration, led by Col Rick Robin will prove to be an award-winning effort when complete.

The cleaning is slow and methodical but necessary.

Progress is reflected a little more each day, but more volunteers are required to complete the project. To become a team



Col Price applies cleaning fluids to the aircraft. Photo by Col Sandy Thompson

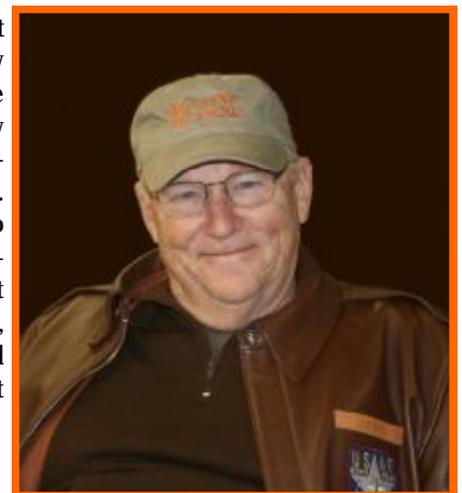
member in this restoration, consider joining our effort. Visit our website at www.gulfcoastwing.org

A Conversation with THE AIR BOSS

"The show has to appear as if it is a swan gliding across the pond...while underneath the surface, paddling like Hell."

Col Ralph Royce, AIR BOSS, on conducting complex, and successful air shows

January 12, 2008 - Sitting down with Ralph Royce may not be as easy as one might think; he's incredibly busy, very much in demand and is possibly one of the most visible aviation figures on the U.S. air show circuit. With thirty years membership in the CAF, including eight years as Executive Director, and recipient of the prestigious Lloyd P. Nolen award (2003), Ralph is one person you must get to know to understand where we are, what we were and possibly where we're going. Ralph is best known through out the aviation and air show community as AIR BOSS. Pilots, air show demonstration teams and participants have noted that he is "The Best in the Business," so I felt lucky to get this opportunity to meet with him.



continued page 3

CAF President. Steve Brown visits Gulf Coast Wing



Steve Brown, January 26, 2008 addressing GCW Members at the Hobby Airport Wing Hangar.

HOUSTON, TX—With just a few visits under his belt, Steve Brown, President & CEO of the CAF visited units in the Houston area on Saturday, January 26, 2008. All CAF members had received a DVD recently which outlined the agenda in returning the CAF to profitability within a 3-year period. Effective March 01, 2008 membership dues, sponsorships and various aircraft fees will be increasing. An intensive effort to raise awareness of the CAF with a heightened effort in Public Relations is on the horizon.

money and to date our membership fees have not adjusted to the rate of inflation.”



“The CAF is the most significant organization you’ve NEVER heard of!” said Mr Brown. “This is something we must change.” To accomplish this awareness, the CAF will aggressively market the organization through increased presence at airshows, magazine ads and increased communication. “We are an organization, unlike other aviation groups...we have a passion for these planes, and our fleet is unique, growing, and very valuable but our Headquarters staff has decreased, and obviously, costs have risen. We are hard-core. 50% of CAF members belong to a unit...whereas in the EAA just 15% of their members belong to a unit. We believe in our aircraft, our mission and purpose...but we need to market our cause. This costs

Mr Brown noted that although the CAF has not raised membership fees in over 20-years, the organization loses 17% of its members every 3-years. So it’s important not only to recruit new members, but to retain members.

Mr Brown will be visiting CAF units all through 2008.

“The CAF is the most significant organization you’ve NEVER heard of.”

*Steve Brown at GCW members meeting
January 26, 2008*

New Membership Dues and Levels of Membership

The GULF COAST WING of the CAF is dedicated to the preservation in flying status of WWII aircraft including the TORA Fleet and the B-17G TEXAS RAIDERS. If you are interested in joining our wing, you will need to first join the CAF, secure a Colonel ID # (yes, all CAF mem-

bers are “Colonels”) and then complete a wing membership application (wing dues are \$50/year). You may join on different levels:

Yearly Membership in CAF \$200 (provides full voting privileges) and membership discounts.
Yearly Associate/Supporting

Membership \$55 (effective 3/01/08) (non-voting, but receives publications & benefits).
Cadet (Ages 13-23) \$45/year. (non-voting, receive publications and benefits). You may join through our web site at www.gulfcoastwing.org or contact any wing or staff membersee listing on page 4

Rewards of Membership and TORA Air Show Excitement



Volunteer, Ben Garcia at work on cockpit window of TEXAS RAIDERS, September 2007

As a CAF and Gulf Coast Wing member, you will experience the rewards of restoring and flying in one-of-a-kind unique vintage aircraft, honoring the veterans who once flew them. One of “show-stoppers” in CAF air shows is the TORA aerial demonstration team. For a preview of this group, come



annual practice. Col Charles Hutchins (left) has served as TORA Lead for over 20 years until handing the reigns over to Col Jim Ryan.

to Brazoria County Airport, Lake Jackson, TX the last weekend in March (29th & 30th) to watch TORA conduct their

When touring with TEXAS RAIDERS or working with the crew of TORA at air shows, you’ll wonder why you didn’t join the CAF earlier.

Ralph Royce, AIR BOSS

continued from page 1

Above all, Ralph is an aviator, Grandson of Major General Ralph Royce, a WWI/WWII aviator, who led America's 1st Aero Squadron into combat in WWI and was leader of the "Royce's Raid"...a force of three B-17 and seven B-25 bombers deployed from Australia to secret staging bases on Mindanao, Philippines for attacks in Manila, Cebu and Davao in 1942 - just three months after the U.S. entered the War. Ralph's father, Scott, a retired Air Force Colonel, former Gulf Cost Wing member, and a 90-year old "active" pilot, not only flies war birds, but still employs the skills to build, repair, maintain and analyze conditions for flight quite well himself.

Knowing that the profession of AIR BOSS cannot be found in the catalog of curricula at major Universities, but is taught in seminars at ICAS (International Council of Air Shows), I was curious about how this career developed for this long-time CAF member, and how he has become an icon in conducting and directing complex air shows.

Q: You've been a CAF member now for 30 + years. What, if any, are the significant changes you've seen in the organization?

Basically, none. Well, that's not exactly right. The CAF has doubled in aircraft in the last 20 years, and doubled in units. But the membership did not. And, I am concerned about the membership's average age. That hasn't really changed that much since I was the XD in the 80's. In Harlingen, twenty years ago



the average age of our membership was around 56, and now it's between 61-62 years. And as you age, you can't do what you used to be able to do...so the support-staff is important for us to recruit. We probably won't change in the future either; we'll stagnate between 62-64. The scary thing is that about a quarter of the membership is approaching 75 and that is a real concern. Membership retention is the key...it's the nature of things that the starting point is so basic. It takes a significant amount of time (as a new member) to get off the starting point to feel at home in the membership. That requires patience, and sometimes we're just not patient enough.

Q: How did you become an AIR BOSS? What events led to this vocation?

In 1980 I was scheduled to be the FE on TEXAS RAIDERS at the Harlingen air show. An hour before the show started, the appointed Air Boss had a disagreement with the CAF Board, and quit. One of the members asked me if I thought I could run the show. I said "WHY SURE! Why do you ask?" They told me what had hap-

pened and asked if I could handle this right now. So I did. I thought I did a pretty good job, and a few others thought I did as well. But the next day, they had someone else run the show. I didn't run another show until the next year in San Marcos, TX. Then, in 1982 I ran 2 or 3 shows and became the AIR-SHO chairman. I handled the headquarters show from 1982-'90 up until the move to Midland—then from '94 to date. Last year I think I did 19 shows.

Q: The WALL STREET JOURNAL featured you on the front page as skilled in running air shows. What exactly are the skills required to be an AIR BOSS?

1. You have to have a commitment to do the job right. It takes preparation...so much so that it's like a little movie reel in your head. When you look at a specific part, you know what to expect. It's called situational awareness. It's three-dimensional situational awareness. **You've got to know the air show so well that you know where everyone is and where they're supposed to be.**

2. You've got to speak clearly and mean exactly what you say. The air show briefing is a good example of this.

3. Knowing the capabilities of every pilot in each act is critical. If we have three B-17s in the air at the same time, it's up to me to know the capacity of each pilot in what they can and can't do.

4. You've got to be humble, and have a sense of humor.

(with the "chair") is a part of this. I've been doing the "chair" thing for 15 years now, and it's getting to be competitive as to who can con the other into being sent to the "chair"...so I've got to think of something new.

Note: the "chair" is a penalty-box of sorts for pilots and performers who make noise or are notorious with interruptions during briefing. The guilty party is brought to the front of the room and required to sit in the chair facing the group during the remainder of the briefing. The result is respect for the mission and adds humor by emphasizing discipline in attention to safety.

5. And, you have to be in absolute command. In the close environment of a large war bird show, there can be no question of who is going to do what and when.

Q: Is there any one show that remains memorable or monumental?

The biggest was the 50th Anniversary of the Air Force at Nellis AFB in 2003. We had 104 aircraft, and the briefing took 45 minutes. It was very detailed. Then there were six flight paths, with a lead on each. That was another hour. Then I and the leads had a private brief. Those 104 aircraft flew over the same spot of ground in only 44 seconds. The briefing is the most important part of any air show — it sets the standard. If the air show changes then you have to adjust. The show has to appear as if it is a swan gliding across the pond, while underneath the surface paddling like Hell.

continued on page 4

continued from page 3

Q: As a pilot, could you talk about the incident with the SBD Dauntless in 2001, while filming with Honor Squadrons? What skills got you through that incident?

Yeah. That was 49 seconds of Hell. I've been training since I was 12 years old, so I just did what I had to do, and you know, that whole event was published in *World Airshow News* and in *Warbirds International*. It was on tape, because we were filming with Sony. My first inclination was to look for an airport, but that was 4 miles away. At first I thought I had run out of gas; but, when my passenger and I began being sprayed with fuel, I just shut everything off and told myself..."OK. We've just got a lousy glider here." I made it in and landed in a cow pasture. Bumped my head which required 27 stitches later.

Q: You've flown TEXAS RAIDERS and THUNDERBIRD also, so you're familiar with the relative value of these B-17s, the last which sold for \$3.2 million. What do you see happening to the value of flyable B-17s?



Ralph and Sony High-Def engineer, Jeff Cree, March 31, 2001 after amazing landing of SBD Dauntless. Photo by Larry Taylor

In the mid 70's to the 90's the population of war birds almost doubled. I suspect the population may increase even more. The value? The potential market is so small. These planes will be worth only whatever someone is willing to pay for them. Even though these are the last of its kind, with fuel costs at \$4+/gallon it will shrink the market even more. But I'd hate to see these planes go static.

Ralph Royce has been a Gulf Coast Wing member since 1977. He's served as Flight Engineer/Crew Chief with the B-17, Wing Adjutant, Bomber Operations Officer and Tour Director. Serving as Executive Director of the (then) Confederate Air Force in Harlingen, Texas, Ralph left his position to join the Lone Star Flight Museum as President in 1990. Since retiring from Lone Star in 2006, he continues his passion of air show coordination as Air Boss at various shows through out the U.S. He is chairman of the ICAS Safety Committee and consults/instructs with Air Force Project managers and coordinators of air shows. His concern for aviation safety is reflected passionately through his memorable briefings.

Ralph is the professional you want running your show...one who considers safety above everything else. For a few moments I felt fortunate to experience the inside world of THE AIR BOSS.

*Col Sandy Thompson
Gulf Coast Wing Public Information Officer*

Note: Watch for a future issue featuring Ralph Royce's "Lessons Learned from the SBD Incident".



The aircraft of the Gulf Coast Wing consist of Zeros, Vals & Kates in the *TORA* fleet and the B-17G *TEXAS RAIDERS*. We are the third oldest wing in the CAF, and are headquartered at Houston Hobby Airport at 8411 Nelms Road, Houston, TX 77061. Our phone is 713 649 7227 and our website is www.gulfcoastwing.org

We welcome you to volunteer with our group each Tuesday evening at 1800 hours and on Saturdays at 0900 hours. Please contact our Maintenance Officer, or our Wing Leader for security clearance, if you wish to join us at the hangar

Col Sandy Thompson, Public Information Officer. Comments or suggestions? 817 341 1541 or 813 304 0393 or via email at thompson17@peoplepc.com

If you believe in old war birds, the legacy of those who flew them, and the stories provided within, you can help us preserve and honor our past in one of several ways. You can either:

- Join the CAF and our Wing as described on page two.
- Donate any amount of tax-deductible money to our non profit organization.
- Donate or volunteer any time to the restoration of our aircraft, or to the Wings Over Houston event.

Any of the above efforts will be genuinely appreciated. If you have questions, contact any staff member listed here. Donations should be mailed to the Finance Officer, Col Mark Allen at 18042 CR 127, Pearland, TX 77581

GULF COAST WING—CAF

GULF COAST WING 2008 STAFF

Wing Leader—Col Don Price —713 988 2765
don_price56@hotmail.com

Executive Officer—Col Wayne Kennedy—281 855 2520
wfkennedy@swbell.net

Adjutant—Col Craig Freeland—281 298 1818
craig@swtrgroup.com

Finance Officer—Col Mark Allen—281 648 4813
mallen@triconex.com

Fighter Opns Officer—Col Jim Ryan—979 233 5919
tora113@yahoo.com

Bomber Opns Officer—Col Walt Thompson—817 341 1541
txraiders@worldnet.att.net

Maintenance Officer—Col Craig Aronson—713 991 7449
cpaajc@aol.com

Supply Officer—Col Bud Bearce—713 864 7435
budk5jgu@hal-pc.org

Safety Officer—Col Ky Putnam—713 683 8930