



# COWL FLAPS

VOLUME XIII  
ISSUE 5  
MAY 2019

The News Magazine of the Gulf Coast Wing

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Photo by Kevin Hong

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- May 9-12 Chennault Air Show B-17
- May 11 Smithville Fly-In Twin Beech
- May 25 Hooks Ride Day B-17 and Twin Beech
- May 31-June 2 Tinker AFB Airshow B-17 - Tentative
- June 7-9 Ft. Wayne Airshow B-17 Confirmed
- June 14-16 Whiteman AFB B-17 Tentative
- July 4-7 Tyler Warbird Expo B-17 Confirmed

**The monthly Wing Meeting has been changed to Saturday, May 18,** The Staff meetings will start at 9:00 AM. FE Training Class will start at 9:30 AM. The General Membership meeting afterward will start approximately 11:30 AM. Maintenance Colonels wishing to work on Texas Raiders should show up around 9:00 AM. All members are encouraged to come out and contribute time, expertise and camaraderie to the occasion. After the general meeting, we will have the standard potluck lunch. Please bring something with you: drinks, an entrée, fruit or vegetable tray, desserts, or any thing you want. While monetary contributions to the lunch are appreciated, we need more people to bring food, otherwise we will not have enough food for everyone.

Hello again Gulf Coast Wing,

I'm writing you from sunny San Marcos which was anything but sunny Friday. We arrived a day later than planned but did not subject our aircraft to the chance of being damaged from hail or winds on Friday. Touring with the B-17 is always a dance between the weather and schedules. Throw in some maintenance issues and it

makes for some headaches for your staff and flight crews. So as always, come join the fun, we need to train a lot of loadmasters this season as well as FE's and a few new co-pilots. Any GCW member is able to bid for the position of ACM, Additional Crew Member, for open seats on TR or the C-45. The requirement to be trained in a qualified position is not an issue for ACM. However, please understand that whenever you bid for a tour, you may not receive the position that you bid for based on several variables. This applies to qualified crew members as well as those in training.

June is going to be a very busy month for us and we need everyone to participate to the best of your ability. Please take note of Nancy's article and the new format for Wing meetings.

So for a completely different subject, I have been advised that we occasionally have had members come out to work on our aircraft without any supervision or direction from the maintenance staff.

Here's a message from our Staff maintenance officer, Terry Barker;

"Any person working in a maintenance capacity MUST comply with all instructions from the Maintenance Officer or his designee. Non-compliance will result in that person being counseled on proper procedures, or required to obtain further training, or relieved of maintenance task or duties"

Our CAF regulations also state; CAF Unit Manual, Section 5:

All Unit personnel should consider the opportunity to operate and maintain a rare WWII or other historic aircraft a privilege. The Unit must prove its ability to maintain its assigned aircraft to the highest professional standards. Superior maintenance is one of the CAF's highest priorities ... If we are going to both fly and preserve these aircraft, the highest quality of mechanical perfection must be maintained in each aircraft. Flying and preservation are compatible terms as long as we maintain the aircraft in top mechanical condition and provide professional maintenance as a priority.

So to be clear, everyone who works on the aircraft must be a CAF member, you must have watched and recorded the 66-1 maintenance training video from HQ. You must have permission and direction from Terry Barker, Tim Searles, Bruce Guest or one of the Aircraft PIC's. I might add, only work on the Turrets can be done under the direction of Laser Dave.

Anyone who is helping in the hangar and has not watched the maintenance required video, please do so immediately. Go to: <https://www.cafoperations.org/training> and watch 66-1 video and follow the instructions to have it recorded. Then, make sure you have both permission and direction to work on any CAF aircraft, component or ground equipment.

Now once again, Thanks for all you do to keep em flying.

Sincerely,

Len Root

## WING LEADER'S

### REPORT

**Col Len Root**



Our Rides Day at Conroe last week may have been a delayed start to the flying season, but it was a very good day. I was so pleased at how smoothly everything ran. Maintenance and ground ops had the aircraft ready to go, flight ops went without any issues, (well except for a

little oil leak, but what's a day on the ramp without a little oil?) PX sales were strong, ride sales went well, Little Raider spent the day at Orange, Texas and came back with a nice profit, and we pulled off a Wing meeting over lunch. The weather was awesome and the customers had a great time, too. All in all, it just felt great. Kudos, too, to the elected and appointed staff members who soldiered through a two-and-a-half hour conference staff meeting on the Tuesday prior. Sometimes there are just a lot of topics to cover!

One of those topics is our meeting schedule. If you were at the Wing meeting on Saturday you know we discussed meeting dates for the balance of the year.

The consensus of the membership was that we'd rather meet as a group when TR and her crew are at home, even if that means the schedule may vary from the second Saturday each month. The decision is to set the schedule and publish it in advance, so folks can plan ahead and we can still get the best participation. We'll do this for the rest of 2019, and see how it goes.

Thus, for the balance of 2019 we won't be routinely holding the Wing meeting on the second Saturday of the month, but rather on the dates as follows:

## 2019 Meeting Schedule

May 18 (maintenance period)

June 22 (open weekend)

July 20\* (tentative)

Aug 24 (maintenance period)

September 28 (maintenance period)

October 12 (open weekend)

November 16 (in winter maintenance)

See you on the ramp!

Nancy

## Executive Officer's Report

**Col Nancy Kwiecien**



Greeting GCW Colonels & Cadets,

I was fortunate enough to be at Conroe for our recent "Rides day". TR has emerged from Winter maintenance and is looking good as ever thanks to your dedicated maintenance crew. The task of maintaining this legendary aircraft is both technical and labor intensive. Little Raider has also emerged from Winter maintenance and is proving to be a valuable asset for our wing.

Maintenance Officer's  
Report  
Col Terry Barker



Please join me in congratulating your maintenance crew for a job "Well Done"! Their tenacity and attention to detail is beyond reproach as they continue to support flight operations. I'm sure you appreciate the dedication it takes to "Keep em flying"!

We continue to support and mentor every volunteer who assists with maintenance tasks. If you would like to assist in anyway, please contact me, Bruce Guest or Tim Searls. We'll make sure the task your assigned meets your level of experience or expertise. No worries if you're not an A&P Mechanic, you will be mentored. In fact the following statement from HQ sums up our mission;

"All Unit personnel should consider the opportunity to operate and maintain a rare World War II or other historic aircraft a privilege. The Unit must prove its ability to maintain its assigned aircraft to the highest professional standards. Superior maintenance is one of the CAF's highest priorities ... If we are going to both fly and preserve these aircraft, the highest quality of mechanical perfection must be maintained in each aircraft. Flying and preservation are compatible terms as long as we maintain the aircraft in top mechanical condition and provide professional maintenance as a priority".

I look forward to seeing everyone at our next event.

Colonel Terry Barker

Maintenance Officer

Hello Gulf Coast Friends and Family. May has arrived and along with it our 2019 tour season is full steam ahead.

April started off with the weather postponement of our season opener at Conroe and even affected our trip to visit the Houston Wing for their

Warbird Weekend on Saturday. But Sunday's weather was great (though windy) so our Little Raider and (big) Texas Raiders launched from Conroe airport on an ever-important mission to seek out one very unique North American SNJ that was orbiting just west of the lake. The importance of that mission? We got our picture taken. This was the first opportunity that we have had to get air to air video and still photos of our two airplanes together. Thanks to the excellent photo ship aviating by Scott Rozzell, and the ever sharp shooting of Kevin Hong, along with John Bixby, Jim Bixby & Nancy Kwiecien in the BE18 and myself, Nathan Harnagel, Rick Baker & Danny Jan in the B17, I think we did get some good photos and some very nice promo video. I'm sure you will be seeing the fruits of those efforts in future marketing and blastmails (and if you're on Facebook, check out the Wing page for some highlights).

Operation's Officer  
Report  
Col John Cotter



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We were able to make up the postponed Conroe event on the 27th of April and we even got to play with our friends from the Houston Wing and the West Texas Wing. We even were able to share the day with the guys from Everything Albatross who had their Grumman HU-16C on display during the day.

This weekend the B17 and BE18 have traveled to San Marcos to participate in the Go Wheels Up air and auto show. They had great weather on Saturday and hopefully that holds throughout the day Sunday.

Our next May event is the Chennault Air Show with the B17 leaving on Thursday May 9.

Don't forget our first big tour of the season kicks off on May 31 with the B17 heading to Tinker for their air show. Check out the Wing calendar, find a few days you can help out, and come join the team on the road and help make our first tour of 2019 a huge success.

John

If you didn't see the initial issue of the new email letter that is going out to our fans, keep an eye out next week. "Flight Briefing" has information intended for the public, and it promotes upcoming missions, offers updates on our aircraft, and gives our fans some "insider" looks at

our operations. The intention of the "Flight Briefing" email is to keep our fans engaged with us, so that they hear from us regularly, and not just when we're soliciting donations. While "Flight Briefing" will occasionally have some of the same information as this newsletter, it's not a substitute for the important member communications that we share in our beloved Cowlflaps. So be sure to stay tuned here to Cowlflaps for the important information that comes from your officers. (Not to mention the way cool photos that come in from each mission!)

In other marketing news, we are purchasing new A-frame sandwich-board style signs to travel with us. (I know the loadmasters will be sorry to see that big metal sign take up permanent residence in the hangar, rather than having to lug it on and off the aircraft.) We'll have three new A-frames, including one that will sit under the nose of the B-17 with pricing for cockpit tours, and another that will describe the history of the B-17 on one side and its technical specs on the other. Lastly we'll add a sign for the Rides table with ride pricing.

Hard to believe it's only about 60 days until the big July 4 weekend event in Tyler, Tx. The Thunder Over Cedar Creek Air Show and Warbird Expo is a first – we're combining an appearance at the twilight airshow with a four-day CAF Warbird Expo. The Gulf Coast Wing is coordinating the Warbird Expo which will include seven CAF aircraft: Texas Raiders, Little Raider, Devil Dog, the Helldiver, Night Mission, and Houston Wing's T6 Ace in the Hole and the N3N. This is a great win-win: the CAF aircraft get four days of tours, rides and PX, and Thunder Over Cedar Creek gets seven performers at their July 6 airshow over the lake. Crew bids for this one will be out soon, and it's going to be good! Check out the promotional video on our Facebook page [HERE](#) and see the event flyer elsewhere in this issue.

Marketing Team

Report

Col Nancy Kwiecien (Lead)



## The Gulf Coast Wing is in Search Of a PX Assistant

### PX Officer's Report Col Kathy Doucette



**DUTIES INCLUDE:**

- 1) He/She must be willing to occasionally help the PX Officer pack/unpack PX bins before/after GCW missions;
- 2) He/She must be available to go on occasional missions on behalf of the PX Officer, and to be able to carry out all responsibilities of the PX Officer;
- 3) He/She must have an ipad or iphone that can be used during a mission to operate the Wing's Chase App & Credit Card Reader; and must be willing to learn how to use the Credit Card Reader;
- 4) He/She must always remember to be cheerful, and be in search of new volunteers to sign up to join the CAF

If you are this Man or Woman (who is immediately available) and willing to undertake the above duties, then please contact Kathy Doucette TODAY at: [twokatz08@yahoo.com](mailto:twokatz08@yahoo.com)

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### PX Financial Report for April

The PX has begun another busy flying season with Texas Raiders and Little Raider. Each mission is unique and always interesting! Please consider joining us if you can.

Here is a recap of our revenue from each tour stop so far this quarter.

Warbird Weekend West Houston	\$1,275
Conroe Rides Day	\$ 983
Twin Beech Fly-In/Orange, TX	\$ 780
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$3,038</b>

Great job PX team. Thank You Insert metal B-17 picture here

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### UP-COMING MISSIONS

5/3-5/19 San Marcos, TX – Inaugural Airshow

5/9-12/19 Lake Charles, La – Chennault Civilian Airshow

5/11/19 Smithville, TX - Twin Beech Fly-In

5/25/19 Hooks Rides Day – VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Please sign up on line if you are available to go on a mission in support of the Gulf Coast Wing, and your PX Officer

Now that the flying season is upon us, the opportunity for recruitment is at its peak. How can aviation lovers resist being part of this, when they see these awesome warbirds take to the air!

I am still recovering (getting stronger every day) from my battle with cancer, so I'm not able to go on away missions. For this reason, I am counting on you who are part of these missions to step up and talk to visitors about joining the CAF.

Remember the CAF has units throughout the USA, so wherever we go there is most likely one nearby.

And now here are the Colonels who joined in the month of May:

Jimmy Davis	05/15/1984
Morgan Gibson	05/18/1993
Marty Huvar	05/07/2009
Dave "Laser" McConkey	05/27/2011
Aubrey Herzog	05/29/2014
David Henry	05/12/2005
Hal J. Fruchtnicht	05/03/2017

Thank you all for your continued support!!!

Larry Doucette  
Recruiting Officer  
larrydoucette0@gmail.com

## Retention Officer's Report

Col Larry Doucette



Belonging to a group such as ours, brings opportunities and adventures you couldn't have dreamt about before joining. We fly in these historic birds, we go where we're greeted and treated like rock stars, and we meet some incredible people, such as Lt. Col. Cole, whom we

just lost. Adventure was certainly the motif for Fred and I heading to Chino in January, to be at Aero Trader, and eventually to the deep desert compound Area 51 of WW2 warbird parts, in quest of unobtainium. While at Chino, we eventually wandered over to Planes of Fame to look around and check out their B-17. My short list included seeing the Northrup N-9M Flying Wing, and it was with no small amount of awe when I walked into the hangar and there it sat. It was late, and a lot of restoration people had gone home, but there tidying up was a smiling man who introduced himself as David Vopat, the "one entrusted with flying this awesome thing!" We chatted for some time, and I learned he planned on attending the Arizona wing ground school, and was wondering how he could get to fly TR. We stayed in touch, and his intent was to come to one of our home base events and introduce himself and join the wing. Such was not to be, as while preparing for the PoF airshow, something went very wrong, and we lost a one of a kind aircraft, and a one of a kind pilot and person. By all accounts, he was a great guy, and death cheated us out of getting to know him. I knew in 20 minutes this was a special man.

## Turret Team Report

Col Dave "Laser"



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Ironically, I was working on the very turret parts from the trip, when Len called to see if I had “heard about the crash.” I had no idea who or what he was talking about, and my blood turned to liquid nitrogen. It took a while to gather myself after the news, and I was about to just quit and go into the house, when it occurred to me, the quest for the motors and such now lying right in front of me, were the only reason I was able to meet David and see this historic aircraft in the first place. There was only one course of action. Grab a cold beer, hike up my shorts, and get back to work, and be damned grateful I could.

And the news from that parts run, at least, has come to be good news. All three motors and all three amplidynes are now in excellent working order, at the whopping extra cost of a couple cans of CRC, a whole bottle of Mouse Milk, and elbow grease. As we only need 2 each, we have spares! I just got in the Edgewater adapters (so named for Edgewater Steel that made them) for the top turret .50's, which we never had, and I found at a reasonable price. I've just returned from day one of San Marcos and have the other top turret spare motors and pumps from the hangar and can now get going on that. I got a lot of hardware from Fred this week, and after making a couple more gaskets, (I hate making gaskets) and securing things with “stabby” wire as Fred calls it, will be ready to reassemble the chin turret for the final time. Motors and all. It's almost as a dream sequence sometimes.

I have decided not to attempt to put the chin turret in the airplane during flying season, and instead we'll run it a lot on the stand, and make sure it's good for the long haul. Fred and I started discussing making it work fully in the very near future, with him bringing some components to CXO we still don't have for testing purposes. We'll possibly do some electrical work in the plane during a long break this summer, such as establishing power to the nose area, and mounting the amplidynes, which go under the wood platform as you step up to the bombardier seat. I have the restored control stick here at the house, and hopefully soon will have the hand controller grip section done, and we can put that piece back in TR.

All of this as we try not to let real life screw things up and delay us further. And indeed, to be reminded daily that there is much risk in what we do. And indeed again, that there is also much reward. Remember the legacy of the veterans we work so hard to honor. Remember Cowden Ward Jr, and all the warbird pilots and crew before us. And remember David Vopat. All vital cogs in the human machine of preserving history and honoring those who gave so much. Only you can answer the question of risk vs. reward for yourself. But I'll wager each and every one of you if faced with adversity and loss, would take a deep breath and get right back to work. We must keep them flying, lest we forget. I'll bring the cold beers. You hike up your own damn shorts.

Until next time, be safe and well. Laser.

## Getting It Right – *“This Really Happened”*

By Kevin “K5” Michels, BSEE, MBA

Loadmaster, Media Rep, & Historian

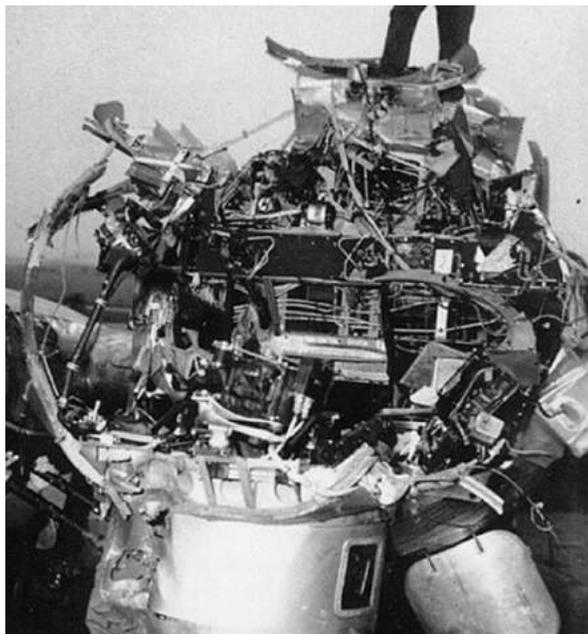


The Internet came into popular use just over 25 years ago. As much as we take for granted the immediate answer to virtually any question at our literal fingertips, I am astonished just how much has morphed into the “Mis-information Age”. We’re surrounded by it. Social media, questionable websites, sensational e-mails that have been forwarded and re-forwarded, not to mention the 24-hour news cycle and its ever-deteriorating state of journalistic integrity. Make it stop! Where is Walter Cronkite when we need him? What happened to truth and accuracy? Does anyone care? When did spinning a narrative become an accepted alternative? If all this is frustrating you to the core, you are not alone.

Rest assured, in this column, accuracy and relentless pursuit of the facts take precedence over all else. My own opinions are meaningless in the face of contradictory facts. Write that down.

We have all seen and heard both true and bogus World War II stories. But how does one differentiate? No easy task! I encourage everyone to be very wary of the ubiquitous “Fish Stories” out there. Many times I’ve heard a story that I really, really wanted to believe, only to find out it was made up (or at least parts of it were). We’ve all faced the same situation. If you come across a story that you are unsure of, please send it to your Historical Team. We’ll dig into it and give you our perspective based on research and available facts. We love the real deal stories, and we’ll help you pick out the “flies in the ointment”.

Speaking of “Real Deal” stories, can you identify what is in the photo below?



If you said “a flyable B-17” you would be correct! In fact on October 15, 1944 “Lovely Julie” (S/N

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If you said “a flyable B-17” you would be correct! In fact, on October 15, 1944 “Lovely Julie” (S/N 43-38172) of the 398th Bomb Group, 601st Bomb Squadron flew approximately 350 miles in this condition. Her pilots were even able to land at their home base in Nuthampstead. In my mind there is no greater testament to the superior design and manufacture of the Boeing B-17. No greater testament to the training, skill, courage, bravery, and sheer will of her two pilots and navigator to bring the crew home. The detailed story below is original as written by Allen Ostrom who was a 398th BG Tailgunner and member of the “Lucky Bastards” Club. He was an eye witness to Lovely Julie’s landing as his own squadron was stood down that fateful day. After the war, Ostrom was the editor of FLAK NEWS, the 398th BG newsletter. Everything in his story has been corroborated by later interviews with the pilots and a review of available corroborating documentation.

### **It Was a Fortress Coming Home**

They could hear it before they could see it!

By Allen Ostrom

Not all that unusual in those days as the personnel at Station 131 gathered around the tower and scattered hardstands to await the return of the B-17’s sent out earlier that morning.

First comes the far off rumble and drone of the Cyclones. Then a spec on the East Anglia horizon. Soon a small cluster indicating the lead squadron. Finally, the group. Then the counting. 1-2-3-4-5..... But that would have been normal. Today was different! It was too early for the group to return.

“They’re 20 minutes early. Can’t be the 398th.” They could hear it before they could see it! Something was coming home. But what? All eyes turned toward the northeast, aligning with the main runway, each ground guy and stood-down airman straining to make out this “wail of a Banshee,” as one called it. Not like a single B-17 with its characteristic deep roar of the engines blended with four thrashing propellers. This was a howl! Like a powerful wind blowing into a huge whistle.

Then it came into view. It WAS a B-17! Low and pointing her nose at the 6,000 foot runway, it appeared for all the world to be crawling toward the earth, screaming in protest. No need for the red flares. All who saw this Fort knew there was death aboard. “Look at that nose!” they said as all eyes stared in amazement as this single, shattered remnant of a once beautiful airplane glided in for an unrealistic “hot” landing. She took all the runway as the “Banshee” noise finally abated and came to an inglorious stop in the mud just beyond the concrete runway.

Men and machines raced to the now silent and lonely aircraft. The ambulance and medical staff were there first. The fire truck....ground and air personnel....jeeps, truck, bikes..... Out came one of the crew members from the waist door, then another. Strangely quiet. The scene was almost weird. Men stood by as if in shock, not knowing whether to sing or cry.

Either would have been acceptable.

The medics quietly made their way to the nose by way of the waist door as the remainder of the crew began exiting. And to answer the obvious question, “what happened?”

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“What happened?” was easy to see. The nose was a scene of utter destruction. It was as though some giant aerial can opener had peeled the nose like an orange, relocating shreds of metal, plexiglass, wires and tubes on the cockpit windshield and even up to the top turret. The left cheek gun hung limp, like a broken arm. One man pointed to the crease in chin turret. No mistaking that mark! A German 88 anti-aircraft shell had exploded in the lap of the toggler. This would be George Abbott of Mt. Labanon, PA. He had been a waist gunner before training

to take over the bombardier’s role.

Still in the cockpit, physically and emotionally exhausted, were pilot Larry DeLancey and co-pilot Phil Stahlman. Navigator Ray LeDoux finally tapped DeLancey on the shoulder and suggested they get out. Engineer turret gunner Ben Ruckel already had made his way to the waist was exiting along with radio operator Wendell Reed, ball turret gunner Al Albro, waist gunner Russell Lachman and tail gunner Herbert Guild. Stahlman was flying his last scheduled mission as a replacement for regular co-pilot, Grady Cumbie. The latter had been hospitalized the day before with an ear problem. Lachman was also a “sub,” filling in for Abbott in the waist.

DeLancey made it as far as the end of the runway, where he sat down with knees drawn up, arms crossed and head down. The ordeal was over, and now the drama was beginning a mental re-play.

Then a strange scene took place. Group CO Col. Frank P. Hunter had arrived after viewing the landing from the tower and was about to approach DeLancey. He was physically restrained by flight surgeon Dr. Robert Sweet. “Colonel, that young man doesn’t want to talk now. When he is ready you can talk to him, but for now leave him alone.” Sweet handed pills out to each crew member and told them to go to their huts and sleep.



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No dramatics, no cameras, no interviews. The crew would depart the next day for “flak leave” to shake off the stress. And then be expected back early in November. (Just in time to resume “normal” activities on a mission to Merseburg!)

Mission No. 98 from Nuthampstead had begun at 0400 that morning of October 15, 1944. It would be Cologne (again), led by CA pilots Robert Templeman of the 602nd, Frank Schofield of the 601st and Charles Khourie of the 603rd. Tragedy and death appeared quickly and early that day. Templeman and pilot Bill Scott got the 602nd off at the scheduled 0630 hour, but at approximately 0645 Khouri and pilot Bill Meyran and their entire crew crashed on takeoff in the town of Anstey. All were killed. Schofield and Harold Stallcup followed successfully with the 601st, with DeLancey flying on their left wing in the lead element. The ride to the target was routine, until the flak started becoming “unroutinely” accurate.

“We were going through heavy flak on the bomb run,” remembered DeLancey. “I felt the plane begin to lift as the bombs were dropped, then all of a sudden we were rocked by a violent explosion. My first thought – ‘a bomb exploded in the bomb bay’ – was immediately discarded as the top of the nose section peeled back over the cockpit blocking the forward view.” “It seemed like the whole world exploded in front of us,” added Stahlman. “The instrument panel all but disintegrated and layers of quilted batting exploded in a million pieces. It was like a momentary snowstorm in the cockpit.”

It had been a direct hit in the nose. Killed instantly was the togglier, Abbott. Navigator LeDoux, only three feet behind Abbott, was knocked unconscious for a moment, but was miraculously was alive.

Although stunned and bleeding, LeDoux made his way to the cockpit to find the two pilots struggling to maintain control of an airplane that by all rights should have been in its death plunge. LeDoux said there was nothing anyone could do for Abbott, while Ruckel opened the door to the bomb bay and signaled to the four crewman in the radio room that all was OK – for the time being.

The blast had torn away the top and much of the sides of the nose. Depositing enough of the metal on the windshield to make it difficult for either of the pilots to see. “The instrument panel was torn loose, and all the flight instruments were inoperative with the exception of the magnetic compass mounted in the panel above the windshield. And its accuracy was questionable. The radio and intercom were gone, the oxygen lines broken, and there was a ruptured hydraulic line under my rudder pedals,” said DeLancey. All this complicated by the sub-zero temperature at 27,000 feet blasting into the cockpit. “It was apparent that the damage was severe enough that we could not continue to fly in formation or at high altitude. My first concern was to avoid the other aircraft in the formation, and to get clear of the other planes in case we had to bail out. We eased out of formation, and at the same time removed our oxygen masks as they were collapsing on our faces as the tanks were empty.”

At this point the formation continued on its prescribed course for home – a long, slow turn southeast of Cologne and finally westward. DeLancey and Stahlman turned left, descending rapidly and hoping, they were heading west. (And also, not into the gun sights of German fighters.)

Without maps and navigation aids, they had difficulty getting a fix. By this time they were down to 2,000 feet. “We finally agreed that we were over Belgium and were flying in a southwesterly direction,” said the pilot.

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“About this time a pair of P-51’s showed up and flew a loose formation on us across Belgium. I often wondered what they thought as they looked at the mess up front.” “We hit the coast right along the Belgium-Holland border, a bit farther north than we had estimated. Ray said we were just south of Walcheren Island.” Still in an area of ground fighting, the plane received some small arms fire. This gesture was returned in kind by Albro, shooting from one of the waist guns. “We might have tried for one of the airfields in France, but having no maps this also was questionable. Besides, the controls and engines seemed to be OK, so I made the decision to try for home. Once over England, LeDoux soon picked up landmarks and gave me course corrections taking us directly to Nuthampstead. It was just a great bit of navigation. Ray just stood there on the flight deck and gave us the headings from memory.”

Nearing the field, Stahlman let the landing gear down. That was an assurance. But a check of the hydraulic pump sent another spray of oil to the cockpit floor. Probably no brakes! Nevertheless, a flare from Ruckel’s pistol had to announce the “ready or not” landing. No “downwind leg” and “final approach” this time. Straight in! “The landing was strictly by guess and feel,” said DeLancey. “Without instruments, I suspect I came in a little hot. Also, I had to lean to the left to see straight ahead. The landing was satisfactory, and I had sufficient braking to slow the plane down some. However, as I neared the taxiway, I could feel the brakes getting ‘soft’. I felt that losing control and blocking the taxiway would cause more problems than leaving the plane at the end of the runway.” That consideration was for the rest of the group. Soon three squadrons of B-17’s would be returning, and they didn’t need a derelict airplane blocking the way to their respective hardstands.

Stahlman, supremely thankful that his career with the 398th had come to an end, soon returned home and in due course became a captain with Eastern Airlines. Retired in 1984, Stahlman said his final Eastern flight “was a bit more routine” than the one 40 years before.

## **Epilogue**

Lieutenant Larry DeLancey was awarded the Silver Star for “sheer determination and tenacity”. Larry apparently lived a quiet life after the war and passed in 1995. Lieutenant Philip Stahlman was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for “extraordinary achievement”. Philip continued to fly as an airline pilot and passed in 2005. Lieutenant LeDoux was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross for “extraordinary navigation skill”. After the war Ray resumed his career as a mechanic, fathered eleven children with his wife and passed in 1989 at age 69.

The balance of the DeLancey crew was on its 8th mission, but like Stahlman went on to complete their 35-mission tour. The flying days of B-17 “Lovely Julie” were over. Her tortuous and heroic ordeal completed, the hulk was salvaged for parts that allowed many other B-17’s to return to combat status.

Today, the photo of “Lovely Julie” is famous, even though the whole story does not often get transferred with the image. The iconic image of her nose is on display at many museums and is a permanent part of the National Archives as a testament to just how much damage a Flying Fortress could absorb and still maintain flight.

**Primary Sources: 398th BG Memorial Association, 8th AF Historical Society, Together-WeServed.com**



John Bixby and brother Jim pull props on Little Raider



Tim Daggett, his son Michael and Ted Kirkpatrick at Houston Wing Warbird Weekend



Chris Dowell - Lee Brown - John Cotter



Pilot Briefing - John Bixby, Nathan Harnagle, Jim Bixby and John Cotter.



Chennault crew



Tim Searls - John Cotter

San Marcos, May 4-5, 2018



We welcome any comments, suggestions, and contributions to the newsletter. If you have something to show or tell, don't be shy...send it in! No article is too short or too long. When sending in photos, please be sure to identify the people in them and the photographer's name.. We would like to give them proper credit.

Send your contributions to: [trcowflaps@aol.com](mailto:trcowflaps@aol.com)

### THE COWL FLAPS STAFF:

Colonels Jeff Brown, Kathleen Brown, Beverley Brown and Catherine Young



## GULF COAST WING STAFF 2018:

Elections are held each winter (usually in November at the general meeting). Staff members are elected for a two-year term and elections are held in compliance with CAF Unit Manual Sections 3-8 through 3-23. The current Elected Staff members for 2018 are:

Wing Leader	Col Len Root	214-455-7668	<a href="mailto:B17root@outlook.com">B17root@outlook.com</a>
Executive Officer	Col Nancy Kwiecien	832-444-5043	<a href="mailto:nkwiecien@suddenlink.net">nkwiecien@suddenlink.net</a>
Adjutant Officer	Col Rex McLain	281-639-6480	<a href="mailto:breitlingsteeler@hotmail.com">breitlingsteeler@hotmail.com</a>
Operations Officer	Col John Cotter	440-915-5917	<a href="mailto:calpilot777@me.com">calpilot777@me.com</a>
Finance Officer	Col Dayna Salter	281-229-1365	<a href="mailto:dayna.salter@ymail.com">dayna.salter@ymail.com</a>
Maintenance Officer	Col Terry Barker	871-480-0635	<a href="mailto:Hangar21@me.com">Hangar21@me.com</a>
Safety Officer	Col John Bixby	281-682-0806	<a href="mailto:perbarsten@gmail.com">perbarsten@gmail.com</a>
Development Officer	Col Jane Copeland	936-499-8147	<a href="mailto:janecope@msn.com">janecope@msn.com</a>
Education Officer			

### **Appointed Staff Members serve at the appointment and discretion of the elected staff:**

PX Officer	Col Kathy Doucette	936-524-0249	<a href="mailto:twokatz08@yahoo.com">twokatz08@yahoo.com</a>
Wings Over Houston Rep.	Col Wayne Kennedy	281-855-2520	<a href="mailto:wfkennedy@swbell.net">wfkennedy@swbell.net</a>
Supply Officer	Col Lee Brown	832-541-8349	<a href="mailto:lebro29@yahoo.com">lebro29@yahoo.com</a>
Rides Coordinator	Col Jane Copeland	936-499-8147	<a href="mailto:janecope@msn.com">janecope@msn.com</a>
Marketing Team Lead	Col Nancy Kwiecien	936-273-4182	<a href="mailto:nkwiecien@suddenlink.net">nkwiecien@suddenlink.net</a>
Co-Recruiting/Retention Officer	Col Larry Doucette	281-782-9633	<a href="mailto:larrydoucette0@gmail.com">larrydoucette0@gmail.com</a>
Recruiting/Retention Officer	Col Angela Root	972-679-0854	<a href="mailto:iamhis05@att.net">iamhis05@att.net</a>
Tour Planning Leader	Col John Alkire	281-467-7691	<a href="mailto:jdalkire1@gmail.com">jdalkire1@gmail.com</a>
Co-Lead Flight Engineer	Col Lee Brown	832-541-8349	<a href="mailto:lebro29@yahoo.com">lebro29@yahoo.com</a>
Co-Lead Flight Engineer	Col Jim Hower	713-885-1868	<a href="mailto:fiverocks5@verizon.net">fiverocks5@verizon.net</a>
Deputy Maintenance Officer	Col Tim Searls	936-327-6505	<a href="mailto:T.SearlsTrucking@yahoo.com">T.SearlsTrucking@yahoo.com</a>
Lead Load Master	Col Michael Hart	713-409-2494	<a href="mailto:mike.flyer.hart@gmail.com">mike.flyer.hart@gmail.com</a>
Deputy Safety Officer	Col Tim Daggett	504-813-4440	<a href="mailto:tmdaggett016@yahoo.com">tmdaggett016@yahoo.com</a>
Wing Curator and Historian	Col William Howard	832-563-9499	<a href="mailto:wwb3@yahoo.com">wwb3@yahoo.com</a>
Turret Team Lead	Col Dave McConkey	210-503-6990	<a href="mailto:laserdave@att.net">laserdave@att.net</a>
Web Master	Kent Morrison	970-756-0040	<a href="mailto:kent@steamboat3d.com">kent@steamboat3d.com</a>

### **MEMBERSHIP DUES:**

Wing dues for CAF Adult members are \$50/person and are due no later than the last day of February each year. Wing dues for CAF Cadet members (ages 12-23) are \$35/person and are due on the last day of February each year. Adult wing members are eligible to vote on committees. Cadets are not eligible to vote or serve on committees.