



HONORING AMERICAN MILITARY AVIATION THROUGH FLIGHT, EXHIBITION AND REMEMBRANCE

2014 SURVIVOR'S PARTY

By Col Tom Howe

Your editor and many other Rocky Mountain Wing (RMW) members and guests gathered together at our Museum and hangar on Saturday, December 6th for good company, great food & drink, to begin the election process for 2015 Wing Staff as well as some fun reminiscing 2014 and what it was and wasn't.

The crown begin gathering late Saturday morning - many rolling in early to complete some Wing business and others to begin the hard work necessary to make such a gathering a success.

The feast began about 1:00PM with a fantastic traditional holiday dinner put together by Cols Bob and Sandi Caskey. Wow!



Photo by Col R. Toth

Lame Duck Wing Leader Col Collin Fay called the annual RMW meeting to order straight up at 1:00 PM as scheduled. Collin introduced Col Bob Stenevik - CAF HQ VP of Safety/Maintenance/Operations that was in visiting from the CAF Midland, TX headquarters.

Col Stenevik presented a comprehensive overview of the upcoming move of CAF HQ staff and support personnel from Midland to Dallas Executive Airport this coming spring. His overview of the planned CAF facility in Dallas was impressive.

The next order of business was the election of staff officers for the 2015 calendar year. The positions to be filled were Wing Leader, Executive Officer and Adjutant - three of the top ranking positions. The nominating committee's selections were announced - Col Bruce Verstraete for Executive Officer and Cols. John Mummery and Rich Connor for Adjutant.

Nominations were opened from the floor and nominees for the Wing Leader were

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Photo by Col R. Toth

Visiting HQ Vice President of Safety / Maintenance / Operations Col Bob Stenevik reports to RMWCAF

RESULTS

2015 STAFF ELECTION

WING LEADER
COL BOB CASKEY

EXECUTIVE OFFICER
COL BRUCE VERSTRAETE

ADJUTANT
COL JOHN MUMMERY

DETAILED RESULTS
SHOWN ON PAGE 5



RMW AIR SHOW SCHEDULE - 2015

MONTH	DAYS	LOCATION	SHOW	TBM	CUB	STATUS
Mar						
Apr						
May						
Jun						
Jul						
Aug						
Sep						
Oct						

Our cupboard is a little bare.

However, Cols Bob Thompson and Kent Taylor attended ICAS in Las Vegas (see below) and will have some planned activities for our schedule soon.

Of course we need both our TBM and Cub ready "to show" in order to participate.

Be ready to help support our 2015 activities. We all have to do what we can to make our Wing successful.



ICAS Report



By Col Bob Thompson

ICAS being "International Council of Air Shows" was held in Las Vegas on December 8th thru 11th. Bob Thompson and Kent Taylor attended representing the RMW and our TBM. This is where the action is with nearly 1200 delegates in attendance and 300 vendors such as the RMW. The CAF was well represented with several units presenting their aircraft in 10 booths.

Notable this year was the absence of the military who are still being impacted by sequestration. The Thunderbirds, Blue Angels and Golden Knights are back on a full schedule as well as Demo Teams of the F-22 and F-16 but NO military

static aircraft will be available in 2015. The military bases we usually attend are off schedule in 2015. Bob Thompson will have a report on air shows we will be attending in 2015 at a later date. Obviously we need the TBM to be back in service !!!.

The good news is that Grand Junction will have an air show in 2015 featuring the Thunderbirds. This will be October 9th thru 11th. The other news is that our CAF show in Midland Tx will also feature the TB's on August 28th thru 30th. This is a change from October in order to accommodate the TB's schedule.

Stay Tuned.



ICAS 2015 Scheduled Air Shows Map

Shown above are the 2015 Air Shows currently scheduled through the International Council of Air Shows.

You'll notice a huge void down through the mountain states which means our opportunities are limited due to proximity — if nothing else.

We may have to be resourceful again this coming year and find venues of opportunity for our schedule.



By Col Tom Howe

The Christmas and New Year's Holidays often slow down and/or re-direct volunteer efforts and an effort the magnitude of our TBM repair effort is certainly no exception. After many months of continued, often seemingly endless efforts buy many, many volunteers, work has slowed over the past month while your wing staff and operations teams re-evaluate the overall project.

As directed by the wing staff, proposals are being evaluated to

Project Phoenix - Maintenance Report

have a commercial repair facility complete the TBM repair to again make "309" airworthy and ready for the 2015 Air Show Season.

Your wing staff is currently evaluating proposed plans and should have a joint commercial / volunteer effort defined and underway before the end of January.

But, throughout all the holiday slow down, the volunteer Holiday spirit remains. Shown here is one of the few R2600 Christmas Trees being displayed this year.

If you plan to do your own next year, be sure to have a bigger than normal tree stand ready - these trees weight a little more than your average blue spruce! 2015 will be a Great Year!!!



Photo by Col Jay Anderson

2014 SURVIVOR'S PARTY (CONTINUED)

Continued from Page 1

Col Bob Caskey and Col Rob Duncan . Col Robert Owen was nominated from the floor for Executive Officer.

Ballots were handed to those Cols present and eligible to vote. Absentee ballots were to be mailed to eligible members not present with a return deadline of December 20th. The results published by the election committee are shown in the box on Page 1.

Then—in the best RMWCAF tradition, some important awards were - well, awarded!



Photo by Col R. Toth

Retiring Wing Leader Collin Fay Checking his list - twice.

Col Fay awarded Col Bob Thompson an award for filling in for Col Fay all summer while Col Fay went and played in Alaska.



Photo by Col R. Toth

Col Dick Maddock seems to use magic to fabricate some of the things he makes appear for our wing. His award will help him make things fit when sometimes they just don't want to.



Photo by Col R. Toth

Operations Officer Col Kay Johnson was the recipient of an award for his seemingly never ending contributions to our Wing. Col Johnson single handedly took on the task of cleaning the hangar



Photo by Col R. Toth

and maintenance shop during the TBM's absence.

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“Keep 'em Flying”

WING LEADER'S REPORT

By Col Collin Fay

As Christmas nears, I wish the best of holiday cheer to all RMW members, family and friends. We are all looking forward to a new year when our beloved TBM “309” will roar again to thrill the crowds at air shows.

The Survivors Party on December 6th was again a great success, thanks to Cols Caskeys and their culinary cadre helpers. And it was great to see many of you. This year we had a special guest – Col Bob Stenevik from CAF Headquarters – who helped us celebrate and updated us on the latest news from Midland. Col Stenevik also sat in as the staff made some important decisions regarding the best way to proceed with repairs



on the TBM. Work had slowed at AirBase Arizona with volunteers from both the RMW and the Arizona Wing being stretched too thin to make significant progress. The RMW staff made the decision to hire a professional aircraft maintenance firm to complete the repairs to the TBM. We determined that timely completion of the repairs would require a dedicated team of experienced professionals. We decided to hire Mountain Aviation Enterprises (MAE), based at

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Craig Burgwardt's painting of his Dad's TBM. See Page 6

Falcon Field along with AirBase Arizona, to act as the lead in completing the repairs and hopefully have the TBM up and flying again within a few months. We appreciate the team of volunteers that have been working on the aircraft and welcome their continued involvement, working with the personnel and utilizing the resources of MAE to complete the repairs as quickly as possible. Obviously, there are financial ramifications to this decision, but the RMW staff concurred that the cost involved is worth the benefits of earlier aircraft availability. We hope to be proven correct!

The RMW also held staff elections during the Survivors' party. If you were not present, and your memberships in the RMW and

CAF are in good standing, you were mailed an absentee ballot so that you can vote for your preferred candidates. We ended up with two nominees for each open position. As of this writing, the Elections Committee has not released the results of the voting, as absentee ballots are still being received. Once they do announce the new staff members, I urge all of you to give your full support to the new leadership and work together to keep the RMW one of the best units in the Commemorative Air Force. While we may be one of the CAF's smaller units, we have shown over the years that we can “get 'er done” and I have no doubt that we'll continue with that attitude as we maintain our efforts to get the TBM flying again and back out on the air show circuit. (Continued on Page 6)

RMWCAF STAFF OFFICERS

Wing Leader	Bob Caskey
Executive Officer	Bruce Verstraete
Finance Officer	Robert Toth
Adjutant	John Mummery
Operations Officer	Open
Maintenance Off.	Rob Duncan
Museum & Mess Sergeant	Dorothy Dutton
Safety Officer	Michael O'Connell
Judge Advocate	Gerald Feather
Public Information Officer	Bruce DeRush
PX Officer	Georgia Thompson
Newsletter Editor	Tom Howe
TBM Aircraft Coordinator	Bob Thompson
Cub Aircraft Coordinator	Charlie Huff
Facilities Manager	Bruce Verstraete
Recruiting Officer	Sandi Caskey

Posters were designed and printed for the public here in the US and were in place to help remind those at home that every thing they were doing was helping the war effort.

This cute, quick reminder (by Douglas Aircraft artist, Joe Waano-Gano acclaimed Native American artist) about even small errors making a difference was typical.



OTHER WWII AIRCRAFT BOTH OURS AND THEIRS



The Finnish Karhumäki Viri was designed in 1935. In 1941 Karhumäki moved into a new facility in Halli build Air Force Trainers.

2015 Wing Staff Election Results

As shown here, the 2015 Staff election results are final.

Nominations were provided by the nominating committee and nominations were taken from the floor at the Survivor's Party and Annual Meeting on December 6th (see page 1.)

Those eligible voters that were not present at the annual meeting were mailed absentee ballots immediately after the meeting with a request that the ballots be returned postmarked no later than December 20th.

The election committee then met on December 27th to open and tally all the votes.

The official results are shown here as certified by the committee.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN WING ELECTION FOR 2015
VOTE COUNT

WING LEADER:

Robert (Bob) Caskey 38

Robert (Rob) Duncan 9

NO VOTE 1

EXECUTIVE OFFICER:

Robert Owen 17

Bruce Verstraete 29

NO VOTE 2

ADJUTANT:

Rich Conner 17

John Mummery 29

NO VOTE 2

COUNTED BY: *Georgia Thompson* DATE 12-27-14

Our congratulations go out to the winners - Col Bob Caskey, Wing Leader; Col Bruce Verstraete - Executive Officer; Col John Mummery - Adjutant.

These new staff members deserve your support. They have many challenges

Finland's Cause is Yours - is the banner on this Swedish poster tempting young men to join the Swedish Volunteer Group supporting Finland.



2014 SURVIVOR'S PARTY

Continued from Page 3



Col Floyd Suits leading another "Cheer"!

Two long time (decades and decades and decades, even) RMW members - Col Floyd Suits and Col Dorothy Dutton received long overdue awards for their seemingly never ending contributions to our Wing. Both Col Suits and Col Dutton can probably be found at the Museum and Hangar on almost any weekend providing hands-on to get done the mundane work required to make our operation function. Much of the long term success of the RMW



can be directly attributed to these two outstanding Cols. Col Suits was awarded the "Outstanding Cheerleader Award" for always being ready to provide that often needed nudge to see that a project is completed. Col Dorothy Dutton that probably



Col Dorothy Dutton just Coronated "RMW Princess"

spends phenomenal time insuring our Museum and associated kitchen, etc. is always well organized and ready for about anything finally received the "Royalty" status she deserves when she was coroneted "Rocky Mountain Wing Princess" - a long overdue action of non dispute.

If you missed this year's party - you missed a good one! Plan now to attend the 2015 RMW Survivor's Party next December!

Wing Leader's Report

(Continued from Page 4)

We'll continue to operate our small portion of the "The Ghost Squadron," honoring those who fought and died for our freedoms. The RMW's aircraft, along with the static displays maintained in the museum, contribute to the CAF's overall mission of education, so that future generations will value and support the contributions of military aviation in assuring our nation's freedom.

This is my last report as the leader of the Wing, and I'd like reiterate my hopes for peace, health, and happiness throughout the coming year for each of you and for the Rocky Mountain Wing. *Keep 'em flying!*

A Son's Tribute

By Col Rob Duncan

This painting by the artist Craig Burgwardt, the son of a WWII TBM Turret gunner, Les Burgwardt, who wanted to fly in our TBM last year. When I asked Les to retell his tales, he introduced me to Bill Haller whom I then interviewed to write that story. (See Page 7) Les was part of the crew that relieved Bill's squadron on the U.S.S. Hoggatt Bay (CVE-75), and they did not have much action during his tour, at least when compared to Bill.

Craig has also offered to paint our TBM 309, and donate it to the CAF RMW in honor of his father Les, Bill, and all that served with the

TBM. We can use that for our fundraising efforts. Craig's online gallery store is seen at <http://craig-burgwardt.artistwebsites.com> if you like his work.

From: Craig Burgwardt: *Rob, it is Amazing just how small it is sometimes, yes? You have no idea the emotion that is pulsing through me right now in regards to this whole scenario.*

Long story, short: I had done some paintings and given them to my father as gifts in the past. One day, out of the blue, I just had to create something special for him. Attached is the result.



I received permission from world-renowned aviation photographer, Phil McKanna, from GHOSTS' fame to use his Four TBM's" image, of which the 309 is included, for reference material.

I am thrilled to share it with you. This piece is entitled "The Homecoming" as it commemorates the last flight my father took with his then pilot and radioman on July 8, 1945.

The other two planes signify Bush's plane (309/middle) and the other is just to show the third color-break. They are escorted by Wildcats.

The carrier is the U.S.S. Hoggatt Bay (CVE-75) on which his squadron was stationed for a time, but not

him. On this day, it was anchored off Leyte Island/Philippines.

So, that's my/our story.

I can't thank you enough for your interest, Rob. I look forward to meeting you one day and I hope my father can be there, also. It would make it a very good day, never to be forgotten. Until then, Dad has his hat and his painting, and I have my shirt, the memories of his stories and the joy of doing this painting. I am so very pleased to be sharing it with you. My heart and soul is in this piece for obvious reasons. Again, it can be a very small world with huge gratification.

Veteran Avenger Turret Gunner Tells His Experience

by Col Rob Duncan
RMW Maintenance Officer

I was introduced to Bill Haller by Les Burgwardt, another Avenger turret gunner who lives in Utah and had been looking forward to a flight in our TBM prior to the accident last March. Both of these guys are true gentlemen and an honor to speak with. I hope we can fulfill Les's dream next airshow season. Les was part of the replacements for VC-14 second tour, and they met at a reunion. Sadly the reunions have been cancelled because of low attendance with deaths and increasing inability to travel for the members.

Bill Haller was born on July 6, 1924 and spent his early youth as a farmer in Somerset, NJ. After Pearl Harbor, becoming of age, and completing the 1942 harvest, Bill enlisted in the US Navy in March 1943. He attended basic training at NS Great Lakes. Bill has been hunting quail, grouse, pheasant and duck since the age of eleven with a single barrel, 28 gauge shotgun and knew how to make each shot count. Thankfully the Navy took advantage of this skill and moved him on to the Aviation Ordnance School in Norman, OK where he was always among the top scoring shooters, and thus he graduated with a 3rd Class Petty Officer grade. His aerial gunnery training was then completed at Whidbey Island, Washington. Although Bill had a lot of prior shooting experience, he recalled another recruit there that had never fired a weapon before, yet he

listened to the teacher's advice and went on to become "almost" as good of a shot. So Bill is sure the Navy knows how to teach gunnery well.

He was then sent to Pasco, Washington where all new squadrons were formed as trained crew assembled there. Here he was assigned to the Composite Squadron VC-14, and his pilot, Ensign Jack Story. As a crew they went on for further training at NAS Los Alamitos, dropping practice bombs on uninhabited islands, and night training at Holyfield, CA. Carrier landing practice was first done on land based Ream Field, near Coronado Island. Finally in December of 1943 they were assigned to the new CVE-75, *Hoggatt Bay* which was an escort carrier with 22 Grumman F4F fighters, and 14 Grumman TBF-1C Avengers.

After a two week shakedown cruise, most of the crew were given 20 day shore leave while the problems noted were fixed, but not VC-14. The new five inch air-to-ground rockets were just coming out and the Navy was decided they needed to be trained. So VC-14 was sent to NAS Sandy beach on the Salton Sea. However they never got to even see any of the new rockets. Pipes were fitted with fins from old bomb cases and training commenced with no live shots. The "glide bombing" technique was used here, as with most other Avenger stores because the Avenger would pick up speed too quickly with traditional "dive bombing" attacks. Bill finally got to see these new rockets when they were being re-



Bill Haller's damaged TBF being removed from the landing area of CVE 75 [USS Hoggatt Bay] on June 16, 1944.

Photo from US Navy Archives

moved from their crates back on ship.

The Avenger was the first aircraft to use air-to-ground rockets, sinking both subs and ships besides being used on ground targets. The story of their development with Jet Propulsion Laboratories is well told in Robbie Robinson's book, *Wings of Gold*.

During every island invasion, the Avengers were first launched as sub hunters to protect the fleet and troop carriers. These missions sometime lasted 4-5 hours. They were armed with two 350 lb depth charges and a 680 lb FIDO acoustic homing torpedo. The FIDO was also a quite successful development through the collaboration of Bell Telephone, Western Electric, and General Electric. It could cruise at 12 kts for 15 minutes, listening for subs between 50 and 150 feet deep.

It was during these island pre-

invasion missions, VC-14 was credited with sinking 12 Japanese submarines, with another listed as probable, yielding a unit citation. After sub duty was completed, the Avengers would then be used to attack enemy gun and troop emplacements. This made for long days, sometimes with five missions per day for the crew of each aircraft.

Bill himself flew 22 bombing missions. The first of these was in the Marianas Island and the Battle for Saipan. This was the first US carrier strike in the South China Sea. Returning from the last sortie on June 16, 1944, the landing gear collapsed. The photo [above] was taken from the island showing deck hands and a tug moving the stricken aircraft from the landing area.

*To be Continued in the
February 2015
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(Just like the old Saturday Serials)