War Eagles Air Museum
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Santa Teresa, NM

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Plane Talk

Volume 18, Number 4

The Newsletter of the War Eagles Air Museum

Editorial

To Publish a Newsletter…

The *Plane Talk* newsletter that you are reading is the result of the efforts of a team of dedicated, enthusiastic contributors. Preparation starts about three weeks before publication. At that time, Contributing Authors Robert Haynes and Jim Parker prepare the first drafts of their respective *Historical Perspectives* and *Tailspins* columns. Robert, a recent University of Texas at El Paso graduate with a Bachelor's degree in History and a minor in Criminal Justice, currently works for the Texas Department of Public Safety, but still finds time to write thought-provoking columns. Jimmy, a retired Army aviator with Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Universidad Nacional de Mexico, published his novel *The Guevara Legacy* in 2001. He's working on a sequel, but still manages to pen his column on memorable aviation "characters." Yr. obdt. svt., a retired aerospace engineer and former writer for *Wings*, *Airpower*, *Space World* and *FineScale Modeler* magazines, starts work on the *Featured Aircraft* column at about the same time, tapping the Internet, the Museum's extensive library and personal books for research. E-mails fly back and forth as successive drafts get better and tighter. Finally, before the newsletter hits the presses, Frank Harrison and Kathy Sunday, and sometimes others who get shanghaied into the job, give it an intense, word-by-word scrutiny to eliminate factual and typographical errors. It's a lot of work...we hope you enjoy it. ✪

▲ *War Eagles Air Museum founder the late John MacGuire flies the beautiful Chance Vought F4U-4* **Corsair** *over the West Texas desert near Fort Hancock in this ca. 1982 photo. This aircraft was the first fighter that John MacGuire acquired.*

Featured Aircraft

Ask any airplane enthusiast which World War II aircraft best epitomizes raw aviation power, and the chances are good that the answer will be "the *Corsair*." Chance Vought's F4U, notoriously difficult to fly with its long nose and inverted "gull" wing, had many nicknames—such as "Old Hose Nose," "Ensign Eliminator," "Whistling Death," "Bent-Winged Bird" and "Hog." Regardless of the name, this aircraft was one of the War's most unusual, important and significant designs. Many regard it as the finest all-around fighter of the period.

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From the Director

Elsewhere in this newsletter you'll find a story about the "Land of Enchantment" RV Fly-In that we hosted at War Eagles Air Museum for the first time on October 14 through 16. The event was a huge success, and the organizers have already asked us to host it again next year. Success was made possible only through the enthusiasm and hard work of a dedicated team of people, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all who contributed their time, materials, expertise and energy. It was a real pleasure to watch so many different, and even sometimes competing, people and organizations pitch in, set aside their differences and accomplish whatever was necessary to make the Fly-In happen. All of the hard work really showed.

The Fly-In was the biggest but not the only fall event for the Museum. The previous weekend we flew our PT-17 *Stearman*, BT-13B *Valiant* and AT-6F *Texan* to El Paso for display at the Amigo Airsho. While we had been flying the *Stearman* and the *Texan* for a while, the *Valiant* had not been in the air since 1996. Thanks to Dan Taylor, Carl Wright, Ed Murray, Ray Davis, Damon Loveless, Fernie Olivares and Adrian Rodriguez for their intensive two-week effort to restore the "pickled" BT-13B to flight status. Finally, the last weekend in October saw us hosting our Third Annual Chili Cookoff. It's been a busy fall.

Skip Trammell ✪

Plane Talk

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Featured Aircraft (Continued from page 1)

The story of the *Corsair* began on February 1, 1938 when the U.S. Navy Bureau of Aeronautics (BuAer) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a new high-performance, carrier-based fighter aircraft. BuAer was open to consider both single- and twin-engine designs using either air- or liquid-cooled powerplants. Traditionally, and as a matter of policy since 1927, the Navy shunned liquid-cooled engines for shipboard aircraft because they were heavier and less reliable than their air-cooled counterparts, required more maintenance and were far more vulnerable to battle damage. On the flip side, radial engines exacted a big drag penalty because of their large cross-sectional area.

Only one of the aircraft companies competing for the contract—Bell Aircraft Corporation—chose a liquid-cooled engine. Bell proposed essentially a navalized version of its P-39 *Airacobra* with a 12-cylinder Allison V-1710 engine. The other competitors (Brewster Aeronautical Corporation, Grumman Aircraft Corporation, Chance Vought Aircraft and Curtiss-Wright Corporation) proposed to use Pratt & Whitney (P&W) or Wright radial engines. Except for Vought, all of the companies proposed upgrades of existing aircraft designs—the Brewster F2A *Buffalo*, Grumman F4F *Wildcat* and Curtiss-Wright P-36 *Mohawk*.

Vought's design entry was all-new. The company offered the Navy two engine options in its April 1938 proposal. Model V-166A, which the Navy referred to as "Vought A," would use a 1,200-hp, 14-cylinder P&W R-1830 *Twin Wasp* engine. The other option, Model V-166B or "Vought B," would use the new 2,000-hp, 18-cylinder R-2830 *Double Wasp,* which was the world's most powerful aircraft engine at the time.

After a thorough evaluation of the proposals, BuAer chose the "Vought B" as the design that best met its requirements. On June 11, the Navy awarded Vought a contract to build and fly one prototype XF4U-1—the aircraft that would later become famous as the *Corsair*.

The *Corsair's* most distinctive feature is its "gull" wing. There's a reason why it looks that way. A very large propeller was needed to absorb the tremendous power of the R-2800 engine. This meant that the forward fuselage had to sit high so the propeller arc would clear the deck. One option would have been to use long, stalky landing gear, but such gear would not have been strong enough to survive carrier landings. Another option would have been to increase the diameter of the fuselage, which would have had a severe drag and weight penalty. Vought's Chief Designer Rex B. Beisel and the *Corsair* design team chose a third option—they "bent" the wing and mounted short, strong landing gear legs at the lowest point along the span. The approach was similar to that seen in the fixed landing gear of the German Junkers Ju.87 *Stuka* (*Sturzkampfflugzeug*) dive bomber. As an added benefit, the design reduced interference drag at the wing roots, thus improving performance. The wings folded

Featured Aircraft (Continued on page 3)

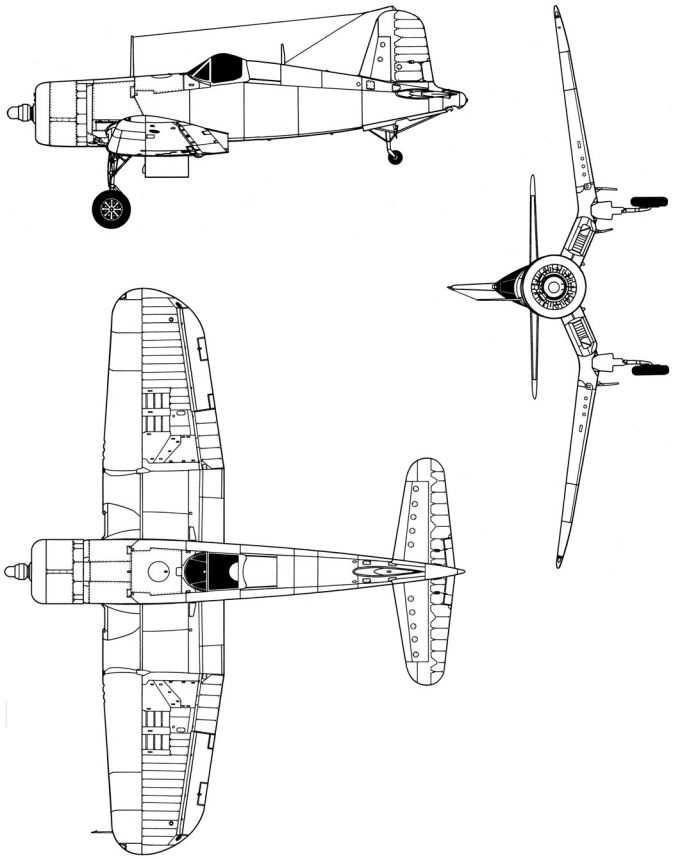
▲ ***Seen here on the Museum ramp back in the "early days," the F4U-4 in this picture has its wings folded for carrier storage.***

Featured Aircraft (Continued from page 2)

upward for carrier storage and the landing gear retracted to the rear, with the wheels turning through 90 degrees to lie flat inside the wing.

The XF4U-1 first flew on May 29, 1940 at the Chance Vought factory airfield in Stratford, Connecticut. Test pilot Lyman A. Bullard, Jr., had to cut the flight short when the elevator trim tab failed because of flutter. On July 11, during the fifth test flight, test pilot Boone Guyton ran the XF4U-1 out of fuel and crash-landed on the longest fairway of the Norwich golf course. On October 1, the repaired prototype covered the 45 miles between Stratford and Hartford at a blistering 405 miles per hour, becoming the first single-engined production aircraft to exceed 400 miles per hour in level flight. The Navy liked what it saw and, in June 1941, ordered an initial batch of 584 *Corsairs*. When production ended in December 1952, over 12,500 had been built: more than 8,000 by Chance Vought, more than 700 by Brewster and nearly 4,000 by the Goodyear Aircraft Corporation.

Problems arose when the aircraft underwent carrier suitability trials aboard the USS *Sangamon* in late 1941. Mainly, the 14-foot-long nose blocked the pilot's view of the Landing Signal Officer during landings. If the pilot was fortunate enough to hit the deck at the right place, the *Corsair* tended to bounce back into the air. Persistent cowl flap hydraulic oil leaks and a nasty tendency to violently drop the left wing in a stall also plagued the trials. So the Navy delayed introducing the *Corsair* to the fleet. Thus the Marines and shore-based Navy units got the first production F4U-1s starting in September 1942. Vought eventually solved all of these problems, but the Navy did not deem the *Corsair* fully suitable for carrier operations until April 1944 with the introduction of the F4U-1A. A big change from the prototype was the installation of a fuel tank behind the engine, which pushed the cockpit aft and further reduced over-the-nose visibility.



In Marine service, the *Corsair* was an invaluable part of America's "island-hopping" strategy that isolated and bypassed Japanese bases in the Pacific. The first Marine *Corsair* unit, VMF-124, became operational on December 28, 1942, and immediately deployed to Guadalcanal, where it flew its first combat mission on February 11, 1943. Within six months all Marine units in the Pacific had received F4U-1s. The *Corsair* racked up an impressive combat record. Some sources claim a loss ratio of 11 to 1 against Japanese fighters. Regardless of whether this figure is inflated (as it probably is), the *Corsair* was a highly effective, well-regarded weapon that excelled in its intended role. It was also produced in photo-reconnaissance, fighter-bomber and night-fighter variants.

The F4U-4 was the definitive *Corsair* model, with an upgraded R-2800 engine rated at 2,760 horsepower, a new four-bladed propeller and cockpit and armament improvements. The Navy accepted the first F4U-4 on October 31, 1944. Delivered too late to have a major impact before V-J Day, the F4U-4 later excelled as a fighter-bomber in the Korean War, during which one pilot shot down a jet-powered Mikoyan Gurevich MiG-15.

The Navy accepted War Eagles' future F4U-4, BuNo 81698, on May 25, 1945. She saw combat in the Pacific with Fighter Squadron 10 (VF-10) on the USS *Intrepid* (CV-11) in the last months of World War II. From December 1946 until February 1948, she was a "pool" aircraft with U.S. Marine Fighter Squadron VMF-122. From August 1952 until December 1953, she flew with VF-92 on the USS *Valley Forge* in Korea with Carrier Air Group 5 (CAG-5), suffering light battle damage from small arms fire on two occasions in early 1953. Decommissioned in October 1956 after a service life of 77 months and 2,069 flight hours, she had several owners before Museum founder John MacGuire bought her in April 1980. Many consider War Eagles' magnificent *Corsair* the finest example of the approximately 20 airworthy "Bent-Winged Birds" still existing in the world today. ✪

***Chance Vought F4U-4* Corsair Characteristics**	
Powerplant	Pratt & Whitney 2,100-horsepower 18-cylinder R-2800-18W two-row *Double Wasp* radial
Cruise Speed	215 miles per hour
Maximum Speed	446 miles per hour
Service Ceiling	41,500 feet
Length	33' 8"
Wingspan	41' 0"
Range	~1,500 statute miles

Tailspins with Parker

Geronimo and I were discussing an FAA Airworthiness Directive (AD) that we recently did on our North American AT-6 *Texan* and we got to talking about how much work is needed to maintain old aircraft. For example, we had to replace some bad aluminum skins on our Vultee BT-13 a while back. And we had to rebuild the PT-17 *Stearman* wings because of cracks in the spars and ribs and some rotten fabric.

The AT-6 AD required a detailed inspection of the upper and lower wing attachments. Seems an AT-6 had lost a wing in flight recently and the FAA had to make sure the other ones still flying are okay. This inspection took a lot of effort, and we have to repeat it every 200 hours of flight time. While we had the bird in the shop, we also decided to fix the top right engine mount, which was corroded.

Speaking of corrosion, Dan Taylor, the Museum's A&P guy, told us that P-51 *Mustangs* tend to develop "stress corrosion" in the wing longerons. And he said *Mustang* engines use zinc plugs in the cooling system to prevent electrolytic corrosion. There are other potential problems with these old warbirds as well. Dan uses the term "making metal" to describe the wearing of engine bearings. When metal shavings from worn bearings end up in an engine's oil screen, it's a sure sign that immediate corrective action is needed to prevent an engine failure.

"Y'know," I told Geronimo, "I think more aircraft failures have been caused by 'metal on metal' than from any other cause in the whole history of aviation."

"That's a pretty broad statement," he offered, giving me a skeptical look.

"Well," I said, leaning back in my chair to get more comfortable, "let me tell you a story and you'll see what I mean by 'metal on metal.'"

"Back in the late '50s, I flew from Austin to Alpine in a Cessna 175 to visit friends. When I landed at Alpine late in the afternoon, there was no one in sight—no one was there to direct me where to park or ask if I needed gas or anythin'.

▲ ***The pretty little Taylorcraft BC-12D was a first cousin of the popular Piper* Cub*, which probably taught more people to fly than any other aircraft.***

"That surprised me, because ol' Johnny Casparis was usually somewhere around. He'd been the fixed base operator there for years. Anyway, havin' been there many times, I went ahead and started up the fuel truck —ol' Casparis was a trustin' soul and always left the keys in the ignition—and drove it over to my plane. After I filled up, I parked the truck and went inside the little airport office. As I was fillin' out my gas ticket, in comes ol' Casparis.

"He was bent over and walkin' real stiff, like he was all stove up. He went straight across to his swivel chair and sat down real easy-like. I said hello and told him he looked like he'd seen better days.

"'That's the damn truth,' he said, shakin' his head. He told me what'd happened.

"'I just come from the hospital visitin' a guy who went flyin' with me this mornin'," he explained. 'He swears I broke his back.'

"I sat on the edge of his desk. 'Keep talkin,' I told him.

"Casparis told me he'd gone on an eagle huntin' flight with this guy in a little 1946 Taylorcraft BC-12D with side-by-side seating. It was real cheap to fly, and he could get down low and slow to hunt. Y'see, he had contracts with some of the local ranchers to hunt eagles, coyotes, wolves, mountain lions and other so-called 'varmints.' He used a double-barreled shotgun with double-ought buckshot. On eagle hunts, he'd fly along 'til he found a nest with a bird in it. But he never shot one in its nest. He'd buzz the nest 'til the eagle took off. Then he'd fly the airplane by controllin' the yoke with his knees to get into position for a shot. Finally he'd reach back and pull out his shotgun from behind the seat. With both hands holdin' the shotgun, he'd squeeze off a shot. He almost never missed."

Geronimo had held his tongue as long as he could. He glared at me with fire in his eyes, his breathing heavy with righteous indignation. "Listen," he rasped, "killin' eagles is against the law. And if it ain't, it oughtta be. Even if your buddy gave the eagle a flyin' chance, he don't get my approval. I can't tolerate killin' somethin' so beautiful, and that's all there is to it."

"I agree with you. But times were different then. There was no big hue and cry about it—it was just bidness, that's all. In later years, though, he was condemned for what he did. But hell, even today ranchers hunt from the air. Mostly they use little helicopters to round up their cattle. They can get more head in one mornin' with a chopper than four or five cowboys on horseback can get in a week. When they're not herdin' cattle, they find coyotes to shoot or do other chores."

Tailspins with Parker
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Historical Perspectives

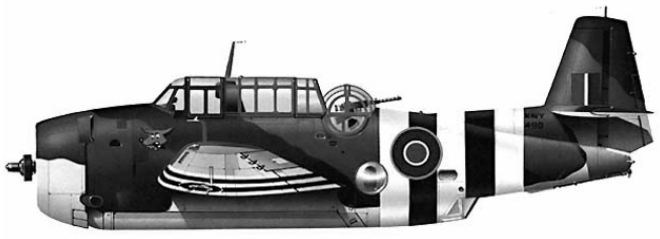
by Robert Haynes

My last *Historical Perspectives* column discussed the role of Grumman TBM/TBF *Avenger* torpedo bombers, flown by U.S. Navy pilots under British commanders, in the Atlantic "U-Boat War" and against targets in German-occupied Norway. This time, I focus on *Avengers* flown from Royal Navy ships in the Pacific in the closing months of World War II, and explore the concept of the *Avenger* as a symbol in a much broader historical context.

The *Avenger*—which the British called the *Tarpon*—first fought with the British Pacific Fleet (BPF) in the Okinawa campaign in early 1945 under the overall command of U.S. Navy Admiral Raymond Spruance. Flying mostly American *Corsair*, *Avenger* and *Hellcat* aircraft, the Royal Navy aircrews were a mixture of Brits, Canadians, South Africans and New Zealanders. After a few weeks the BPF sailed from Okinawa to the Sakashima Gunto islands northeast of Formosa. Here their mission was to prevent the Japanese from using the islands to resupply aircraft to Okinawa, which was then a major base for *kamikaze* attacks against U.S. warships.

Since they were at the time heavily engaged in combat in the European Theatre, why did the British decide at that late date to deploy a task force into a campaign that many Americans saw as "their" fight? One of the major reasons was that the defeat of Japan was still uncertain, and Allied military planners believed that it would be necessary to invade the Home Islands. The atomic bomb that eventually ended World War II was still top secret, although some British scientists were involved in its development. But it had not yet been tested and its effectiveness was totally unknown. So, while the *ultimate* outcome was not in doubt—Japan *would be* defeated—the details of how it would happen remained unclear in the spring of 1945. Facing the prospect of a brutal two-year battle against fanatical resistance, the Americans wanted as large a coalition as possible. Thus the U.S. allowed British and even Soviet forces into the U.S.-dominated theatre of operations. The issue then became one of justly compensating the contributing nations. For instance, even though the Soviet Union did not declare war on Japan until August 8—just six days before the war ended—they successfully demanded strategically sited Sakhalin Island as compensation.

Similarly, the issue of who would control East Asia after the war was the main reason for the British government's interest in joining the war against Japan. Before the war, Britain had been the dominant influence throughout the Far East. Those were the days when "the sun never set on the British Empire." The Japanese conquest of Britain's Pacific territories was a near-mortal blow to the increasingly isolated, weakened Empire. The loss of these territories came at a time when Britain itself was under threat of a German invasion. By 1945, Britain's power had been irrecoverably reduced after six years of total war. The British economy, military forces and civilian population were all exhausted. Nevertheless, the British government realized that it had to make every effort possible to recover some of its fortunes that were still locked up in the Far East.



▲ *This profile, from* **www.fleetairarmarchive.net**, *shows a Grumman TBF* **Avenger** *in British Royal Navy markings as it would have appeared in the Pacific in 1945.*

Australia was also a major concern. The Australians had essentially broken away from Britain and placed their security firmly in U.S. hands. For the first time since the 18th century, the British military was unable to influence and protect the Australian continent. So, despite the weary British public's strident calls for demobilization, and daunting logistical challenges, the Royal Navy assembled the BPF and sailed for the Pacific. The *Avengers* aboard the British ships flew in air raids against Sumatra, Okinawa, Formosa and Japan itself.

Was it worth the effort for the British government? I'm inclined to say that it was. Although Australia turned to the U.S. for military supplies and protection, the island nation is still closely tied to the British Commonwealth. Britain continued to rule Hong Kong until 1997.

Japan unconditionally surrendered after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, eliminating the need for an invasion. The war-weary British phased out all of their *Avengers* by June 1946. For most of the planet, World War II was the defining event of the 20th century. For Britain, it can be argued that it was the defining event of the past two and a half centuries. Before the war, the Royal Navy ruled the waves. Afterwards, the Royal Navy had clearly relinquished the rule of the waves to the U.S. Navy.

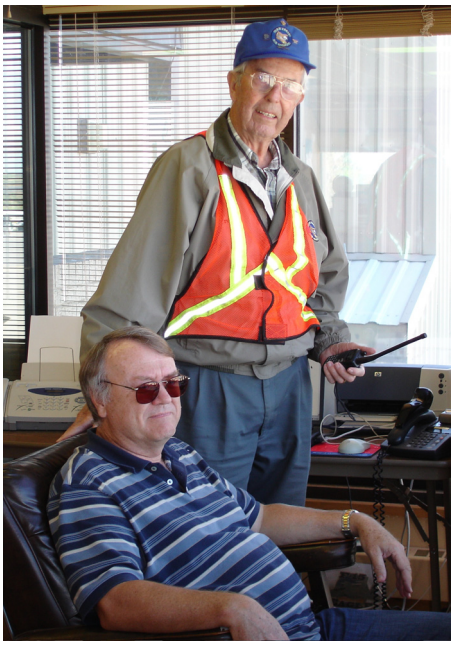
I do not intend to disparage the United Kingdom; on the contrary, I respect the English enormously and have many happy memories from my time in the United Kingdom. Rather, I simply wish to illustrate a recurrent theme in history: change. The British nation underwent great change during the war, and the *Avenger/Tarpon* took part in those changes. I encourage you to visit War Eagles Air Museum and stand face-to-face with our *Avenger* while you ponder the major contributions it has made to U.S., British and world history. ✪

First RV Fly-In is a Huge Success

On October 15, the ramp at War Eagles Air Museum was filled nearly to capacity with 118 tiny aircraft in a dazzling variety of sizes, shapes, styles and colors. The Fifth Annual Land of Enchantment RV Fly-In attracted people from all around the country. Visitors came in from as far away as Florida, Minnesota, Oregon and South Dakota. A stalled weather system directly over west Texas and southern New Mexico brought clouds, wind and rain for much of the weekend, deterring some potential attendees. Even so, the event was considered a big success.

While the acronym "RV" typically refers to a four-wheeled "recreational vehicle," it is also both the name of a family of high-performance "kitplanes," and the initials of the founder of Van's Aircraft, the company that produces the aircraft kits. Richard "Van" VanGrunsven learned to fly in 1956 at age 16, and by now has logged more than 7,000 hours (4,000 in home-builts). He holds CFI (Certified Flight Instructor) and multi-engine ATP (Airline Transport Pilot) ratings. After a brief stint in the Air Force, in the 1970s he started his namesake company that forever changed the world of affordable home-built aircraft. Over the years, Van's Aircraft has designed, developed and marketed a wide variety of fast, nimble tricycle-gear and tailwheel aircraft, ranging from the two-place RV-4 to the new four-place RV-10. More than 5,000 RVs are estimated to be flying in the U.S. today.

▲ *Instructor pilot Dave Harman from neighboring Blue Feather Aero Flight School shot this photo out the open door of a Cessna 182 "jump plane" after dropping a load of skydivers.*



▲ *Ramp manager Frank Harrison (standing) and former Air Traffic Controller Bruce Wheatley were two of the people who helped make the RV Fly-In a big success.*

Ten years ago, RV builders/pilots "Red" Marron of New Mexico and Larry Vetterman of South Dakota put together the first RV Fly-In, which took place in Colorado and attracted a mere 36 aircraft. This year was the fifth time it had been held in New Mexico. The co-organizers had this to say: "...despite the weather, it was an outstanding success. It was enjoyed immensely by all of the RV pilots, spouses, friends and RV enthusiasts. The War Eagles Air Museum was very well-prepared for this, the biggest and best RV Fly-In in the country. The raffle generated almost $10,000 in charitable contributions to the Lee and Beulah Moor Children's Home in El Paso and the Mesilla Valley Community of Hope in Las Cruces. We're already planning for a bigger, better 2006 Fly-In..."

Preparation for the big event took months of hard work by the Museum staff, volunteers and others who enthusiastically pitched in to "make it happen." Just as an example, we had to install over a mile of strong, braided aluminum cable on the ramp for tiedowns. That was a true team accomplishment. Thanks to Blue Feather Aero's Suzie Azar, the Amigo Airsho agreed to donate a spool of cable. Laying it out and installing it required measuring and marking the ramp, pounding in steel endposts, stretching cable and securing the ends. Thanks to a lot of backbreaking work (some of it in the rain) by Ed Murray, Dan Taylor, Carl Wright, Frank Harrison, Dave Coshonet and Vernon Wilson, all of the tiedown cables were ready in time and worked like a charm.

The high point of the Fly-In was the Saturday night "banquet" held in the south side of the Museum. Catered by El Paso's Cowboy Cooks, the dinner featured lots of mesquite-smoked barbecued brisket, chicken and sausage and all the trimmings, including "cowboy coffee" served from an authentic chuck wagon. We served almost 250 hungry people, and, based on the feedback we've gotten, everyone really enjoyed the meal and the entire event. We look forward to an even bigger RV Fly-In next year. ✪

Membership Application
War Eagles Air Museum

The War Eagles Air Museum collects, restores and displays historic aircraft, mainly from the World War II and Korean War time periods, to encourage awareness and appreciation of military aviation history through exhibits, educational programs and special events. The Museum is a nonprofit organization as defined by the United States Internal Revenue Code. Operated by staff and volunteers, the Museum is supported by funds obtained from admissions, memberships and contributions. All dues and contributions are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

War Eagles Air Museum memberships are available in six categories. All memberships include the following privileges:

- ✈ Free admission to the Museum and all exhibits.
- ✈ Free admission to all special events.
- ✈ 10% general admission discounts for all guests of a current Member.
- ✈ 10% discount on all Member purchases in the Gift Shop.

In addition, a Family Membership includes free admission for spouses and all children under 18 living at home.

To become a Member of the War Eagles Air Museum, please fill in the information requested below and note the category of membership you desire. Mail this form, along with a check payable to "War Eagles Air Museum" for the annual fee shown, to:

War Eagles Air Museum
8012 Airport Road
Santa Teresa, NM 88008

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Membership Categories

☐ Individual	$15
☐ Family	$25
☐ Participating	$50
☐ Supporting	$100
☐ Benefactor	$1,000
☐ Life	$5,000

War Eagles Air Museum sincerely thanks the following individuals and organizations for their donations to the 2005 Corporate Youth Sponsors Program. This program educates local student groups about the contributions of military aviation to America's history. For many students, visits to the Museum funded by these generous donors kindle an interest in aviation and related technical career fields. ✪

War Eagles Air Museum Corporate Youth Sponsors

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Tailspins with Parker
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"Well, I'm not against shootin' coyotes —they surely deserve it—but they're still human bein's and I'm purty sure that's against the law too," Geronimo objected.

I was taken aback for a second. Coyotes are human beings? Say what? Finally I figured out what he was getting at.

"Look," I said patiently, "I'm not talkin' about the human smuggler type coyotes. I'm talkin' about real four-legged furry animal coyotes. Now calm down and let me finish my story, will ya'?

"So anyway," I continued, "Casparis said this guy whined and pleaded so much to go along that finally he relented. They flew north along Highway 118 from Alpine toward Fort Davis. Ahead, past Mitre Peak, were the old volcanic mesas where he wanted to hunt for eagles. The bluffs are several hundred feet high, slope at 45 to 60 degrees and run up past Fort Davis toward Balmorhea. The steep slopes are strewn with boulders eroded from the igneous bluffs above. You can imagine what a thrillin' and beautiful ride it was in among the cliffs and canyons.

"Casparis soon spotted an eagle in its nest, and durned if the other guy didn't beg to take the shot. Tired of the whinin', Casparis said 'okay.' They turned back around to buzz the nest. Sure enough, the bird took off. Casparis handed the shotgun to his shooter. The guy stuck it out the window, held the butt in tight against his shoulder and took aim. He led the eagle fine, but he didn't pull the trigger 'til it was directly off to the side. BLAM! BLAM! He let go with both barrels.

"Well, the first blast took off the front wing strut and the second blast took off the aft strut. So here was the right wing, just hangin' out there in space with all of its critical bracin' gone. Casparis knew he had to get the airplane on the ground right quick before the wing came off and ruined his whole day. He made for a little space he saw below in between two big boulders on the side of the mountain. Just about at stall speed and right above the ground, he flared 'er hard and let the empennage take most of the impact. Still, the sudden stop amongst the boulders stove 'em up pretty good. His passenger started yellin' and swearin' his back was broke…which it wasn't, turned out, it was just strained.

"In the final irony, Casparis told me that as he crawled out of the plane he saw the eagle circlin' overhead.

"So, Geronimo," I concluded, "y'see how that story's an example of airframe failure from 'metal on metal?'"

Geronimo, always quick on the draw, said, "Yeah, well, I guess so. Too bad the FAA, in all its majesty and power, can't issue an AD to prevent that sort of failure...and plain stupidity…" ✪

For more information, visit:
www.war-eagles-air-museum.com