



MILE HIGH VIEW

NEWSLETTER OF THE MILE HIGH WING,
COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE (CAF)

Keep 'Em Flying!

October 2004

Outrageous Fortune

By Col Stan Peterson, Wing Leader

All fueled up and finally going places: two rated pilots, qualified to carry passengers, several new members, an aircraft that's finally got fully functioning navigation and communication radios, running strong, shined up with newly painted invasion stripes, and sporting some very impressive graphics. The Mile High Wing's efforts were enough to win accolades and an award recognizing the best work in progress at the Fina-CAF AIRSHO in Midland, Texas, the weekend of Oct. 2-3.

Unfortunately, there seems to be no escaping the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." After the show, a sudden accident claimed our Lockheed C-60.

The first day of the AIRSHO went extremely well, with the Lockheed, Mile High Honey, receiving "excellent" comments from the air-boss, Ralph Royce, as she made her final photo pass with the bombers in review. And later that day we even treated passengers to a scenic tour of the Midland-Odessa area.

The second day we awoke to rain and a low overcast sky. The 09:00 pilot briefing was basically a repeat of the first day's, except that the weather forecast was much worse, without much change predicted until 16:00 local. We had eight revenue passengers signed up for a 10:00 flight, but we had to cancel it due to the bad weather.

The AIRSHO was being modified from one minute to the next, and most of the CAF aircraft were kept on the ground passing in review on the taxiways.

However, the Masters of Disaster were able to thrill the audience with their phenomenal act, which was made even more impressive than usual because of their daring disappearances in and out of the low broken cloud layers.

Finally the weather started to break, and we started readying for a 16:00 departure to Boulder: filing a flight

plan, checking the enroute weather, filling out a manifest and calling in our movement report to the CAF HQ. With fuel, oil, and baggage loaded, we taxied to the active runway, 34L. Sky conditions were now clear, and the weather looked clear to the north as well. As we received our clearance for takeoff, the tower reported the current winds from 140 degrees at 9 knots.

With the tailwheel lock engaged, we began our takeoff roll; as we approached takeoff speed we experienced a slight deviation to the right which was quickly followed by a larger swerve toward the left side of the runway, which became very difficult to overcome.

As we reached safe flying speed and lifted off, I was unable to keep the airplane airborne due to what seemed like a combination of factors, including a possible loss of power or thrust. Presently we're considering an uncommanded feathering of the right propeller, since the propeller was later found to be in that position.

The airplane crashed to the ground in a left skid with fire erupting on both sides of the fuselage.

Flames prevented a normal exit from the cabin door, at which time Stan Hanson opened the emergency exit window on the right side of the aircraft and directed our evacuation. Even this escape route caused burns to any of us who happened to touch the wing on our way out.

The fire engines arrived within minutes and did an excellent job of containing the fire and preserving the cabin and flight deck.

Thankfully, and perhaps miraculously, none of the five crew members aboard (me, Stan Hanson, Tom Howe, Quentin Huston, and Paul LaPrad) was seriously hurt.

However, the members of the Mile High Wing are extremely disappointed with the loss. Thousands of dollars and a huge amount of work over a six-year period had gone into the restoration of this historically significant airplane, and all of our members are personally saddened by this tremendous misfortune. →

Calendar of Events

Oct. 16, 2004 – Wing meeting:
10:00 a.m., Front Range Airport

Wing meetings are held on the 3rd
Saturday of the month at 10:00 a.m.



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