

## Wright "B" Flyer, Inc.

# WRIGHT LANDINGS



Issue 2, 2010

Dayton, Ohio

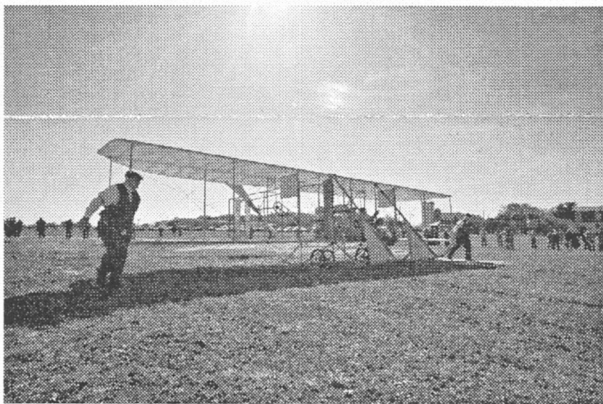
Spring 2010

### The Wright B Flyer Goes to Ft Sam Houston

The Wright "B" Flyer organization sent two airplanes and 13 volunteers to San Antonio to participate in the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first flight (March 2, 1910) of a military aircraft (a modified Wright A Flyer) by a military pilot (1<sup>st</sup> Lt Benjamin

tion were welcomed graciously and treated with cordiality. We were overwhelmed and delighted by the hospitality.

Our special thanks and recognition go to all the people that helped us from the beginning and throughout the event; without them our job would have been much more difficult, if not impossible. From Fort Sam Houston: Phil Reidinger, Public Affairs Officer, Esther Garcia, Community Relations Officer, Bruce Tyler, Garrison Operations Center, and Carrie Starkey - IHG Army Hotels. From the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce: Marcel Johnson, VP Economic Development, Will Garrett, Assistant VP Economic Development and Jerry Strain of Jordan Ford. Special thanks for the great in-flight pictures and event coverage by Lance Cheung, a U.S. Air Force photographer, and Gene Jensen, who flew the photo chase plane.



**John and Richard guide the Yellow Bird**

Foulois) from a military base (Ft Sam Houston). This was a major logistical undertaking for us.

The WBF organization has been involved in similar events, and in our experience the success of such events is directly related to the care, commitment and capability of the people planning the event. As a consequence of years of planning and preparation by the Stinsons Flight #2 of the Daedalians, led by Bill Stewart, and the hard work and diligence of Gary Walston and Ed Sheeran (Air Ops), Al Cargen (Yellow Bird Host), John Tosh (Curator of the Texas Air Museum and the Brown Bird Host), Jay Baker (Aerodrome Officer) and Fred Pillet (Treasurer), the event was spectacular!

Upon our arrival and continuously throughout our stay, the pilots, crew and staff of the WBF organiza-

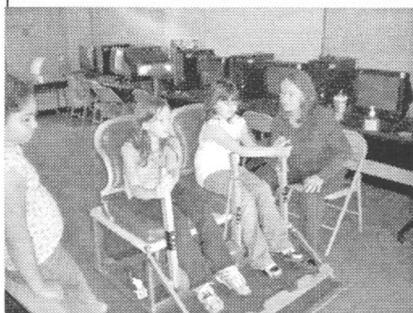
We all feel like we have made some new "old friends" and are thankful for the opportunity to participate in this celebration.



**Amanda shows she is fearless while riding with Don Gum**

## Wright "B" Flyer at Kitty Hawk Elementary

On January 27, and 28<sup>th</sup> volunteers of Wright "B" Flyer and National Aviation Heritage Alliance



Jessie is becoming one of our most experienced pilots

(NAHA) flew into Kitty Hawk Elementary School in Huber Heights, OH. Jessie Duckro from NAHA and Orville Wright



From Left: Greg, Roger, Les, and Bill

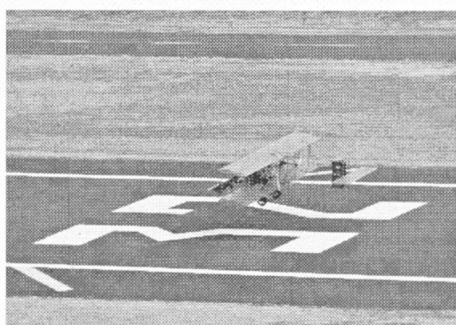
(played by Greg Carter) kicked off the event at an assembly of 1<sup>st</sup> thru 5<sup>th</sup> graders. Bill Simpson, Les Dunning and Roger Krolak, assisted Jessie and Orville run two Wright "B" Flyer simulators so the children and a few brave teachers/administrators could take to the skies to experience flight like the Wright Brothers. The event was coordinated by the school Counselor Julie Carter and Principle Becky Molfenter to commemorate the school's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



## Keeping the Dream Alive: The Foulois Centennial Celebration, by Rich Stepler

The history of the original WBF and the 100 year anniversary of 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Ben Foulios' first flight at Fort Sam Houston captured the hearts and minds of everyone involved in the Daedalian sponsored WBF flights, March 2, 2010. The first task was to disassemble and ship the WBF by truck to San Antonio, Texas (no we did not fly it there!) The reassembly and test flight of the bird at Stinson airport could not have been done without the help of many Stinsons Flight Daedalian volunteers and the use of The Texas Air Museum hanger and facilities. As a pilot I could have spent the day looking at the displays in the Museum but our job took priority and we worked to meet a very tight deadline. We had two days to reassemble and flight test the Brown Bird before the celebration flight on March 2nd, with overhead times of 0915 and 1045. Reassembly went well but the weather (really the winds) proved to be uncooperative. The first attempt at taxi was unsuccessful and we learned again that more than 10 MPH of direct crosswind makes the WBF weathervane beyond the limits we can control. An approaching low pressure center and attached cold front were pushing the winds at 18 knots with gust to 28 knots. Sunday night we had rain with the frontal passage. Monday morning, the day before the event, was

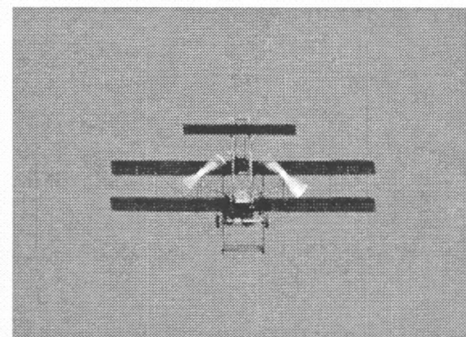
our last and best hope to test the bird; the morning dawned cloudy and calm but the forecast was for the winds to pick up throughout the day as the low moved northeast. Just after sunrise Don Stroud and I flew our test flights, several takeoffs and landings on the runway for each of us. This went well, both Don and I trying to be the pilot that landed the smoothest.



Rich and Don Stroud return to Stinson Field

I think he won the first round! Then we each flew a takeoff, circled the field and landed. The WBF was flying well. We then flew a photo opportunity mission with a chase plane and by the time we returned to Stinson Field the winds had picked up to our limit and continued to increase. If the winds continued at this velocity we would not be able to fly during the ceremony on Tuesday, March 2nd. Only a few hours before our scheduled

take off time the winds subsided! We can fly the event! It was cold, about 45 degrees, which does not sound that cold but remember there is 50 mph of wind chill built into every flight because we are sitting in the open. I had prepared for the cold, wearing thermal underwear, a flight suite, a leather flight jacket and a snow suit. Boots, two pair of gloves, a helmet and visor completed my outfit but after two and half hours of flying I was cold! So was Don who normally spends the winter months in the warm south. For each pass over Ft Sam we launched from Stinson field early and orbited near the I-410 and I-35 interchange waiting for the correct time to begin our over flight of the parade field. The ceremony ran on schedule and we timed our approach to make the historically correct flight time posted by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Foulios 100 years ago.

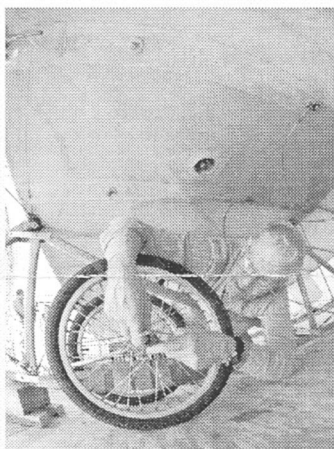


The Brown Bird flies over just as Don taxis the Yellow Bird



## The Yellow Bird on the Ft. Sam Parade Grounds, by Don Gum

One-hundred years later "to the minute" the Valentine Wright B Flyer, aka the "Yellow Bird", taxied twice on the Fort Sam Houston parade ground representing the first two flights of Lt. Benjamin D. Foulois on March 2nd, 1910. While there were many obstacles to overcome, the Yellow Bird crew -- pilot, Don Gum in his WW I uniform with leather helmet and goggles; crew chief, Frank Goepferich; and wing walkers in period dress, John Kennedy and Richard Holt -- performed precisely "to the minute" as requested by the San Antonio area Daedalians. Each taxi run was timed to coincide with the overhead flight of the Wright "B" Flyer, aka the "Brown Bird". The shipping container with the Yellow Bird inside arrived on Thursday,



**Frank G. checks the wheels**

25 February, and was placed in a parking lot about 100 feet from a tent hangar erected for the aircraft. The first obstacle was getting the aircraft to the hangar because of a muddy and deeply rutted area around and in the hangar which occurred during the hangar's erection. On Friday, a Fort Sam crew with an end loader first filled and leveled the ruts with sand between the parking lot and tent hangar. On further inspection of the parade ground area marked off for the taxi runs, it was found that several areas were rutted and had some deep depressions and holes. Later on Friday, the Fort Sam crew returned with a bigger end loader and two rollers and proceeded to fill and prepare the field for the taxi runs. The Yellow Bird was moved into the hangar on Saturday with the aid of sheets of plywood under the shipping dolly because of the softness of the ground and sand fill. It was

then assembled and prepared for a test run Saturday afternoon. Since rain was forecast for our practice day on Monday, the crew wanted to get an early start. The next difficulties encountered were problems with the electric starter. The starter failed to start the aircraft and eventually it was found that the starter armature had destroyed itself.

To try to get in a practice run we decided to "prop start" the Yellow Bird.

After a quick lesson on

propping, John and Don "prop started" the engine with Frank in the pilot seat. The engine was run in place for a while and then the aircraft was taxied down the parade ground. After it was turned around and taxied part way back, the engine overheated and sprayed hot antifreeze over the pilot and aircraft. So, the Saturday events were rather discouraging and our hosts were probably doubtful that the Yellow Bird was going to be able to perform for the event. However, the crew regrouped and developed a plan to solve both problems. On Sunday, Frank and Richard used the spare starter brought along for the Brown Bird to repair the Yellow Bird starter and John, with his experience



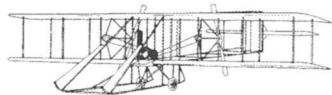
**John and Richard assemble the tail**

with race cars, recommended how to solve the heating problem by replacing the anti-freeze with water and a product called "Water Wetter". On Sunday afternoon a very successful taxi run down and back on the parade ground was achieved. Rain on Monday prevented much activity. On the day of the event there was difficulty again with the electric starter so the aircraft was "prop started" for both taxi runs. This added a bit of drama and theater to the event and was a crowd pleaser. The Yellow Bird drew much attention from the media and was highly photographed. Bill Stewart, retired colonel, organized the event and developed a script detailing each part of the event to the minute and second. The script called for two taxies with a pilot representing Foulois. Since Amanda was to be there, it was suggested that she sit in the right seat and be the copilot on the second run. This only seemed fitting since Foulois had been in the aircraft with her great-granduncle Orville Wright during trials at Fort Meyers. After being prodded for a couple of days, Bill finally agreed and Amanda climbed aboard for the second run and became a star of the show. Looking at the picture (page 1) you will agree that she thoroughly enjoyed it. Much thanks goes to Al Cargen, retired Army Colonel, and Jay Baker, retired Air Force Colonel, who provided immeasurable support to the Yellow Bird crew. In summary, a lot was learned about putting on such an event, and, while there were some challenges, the crew had an enjoyable time putting on this very successful event.



**Don Gum taxies the Yellow Bird on "show day"**

Wright "B" Flyer, Inc  
10550 Springboro Pike  
Dayton Wright Bros. Airport  
Miamisburg, Ohio 45342  
Phone: 937-885-2327  
Fax: 937-885-3310



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### A New Season

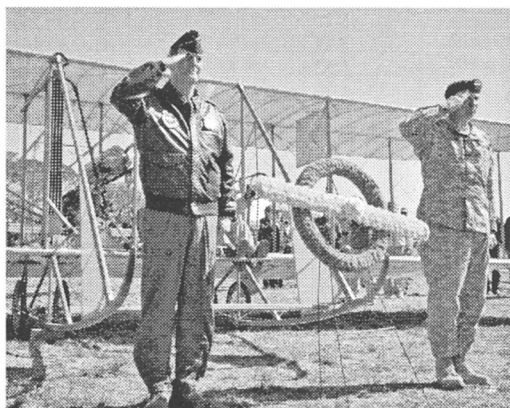
It's with mixed emotions I report that the Foullois Centennial Celebration is finally behind us. Over two years ago we were first contacted by Col Bill Stewart of the Stinsons Flight, requesting our participation in this event. For over two years we have been planning, hoping the Silver Bird would be done in time, and hoping we could successfully "pull off" this historic event. Thanks to the hard work of the volunteers it went perfectly. Thanks to Tim Gaffney we had some spectacular publicity; just a few of his photos are included in this newsletter. We made some terrific friends in San Antonio and leaving was bittersweet. Their hospitality was second to none. Staying in the historic Foullois House was, in itself, a special treat. We'll miss our San Antonio friends. But now, we have a busy summer ahead and hopefully, a Silver Bird flight test program to complete. Come visit us and fly with us, and ... bring a friend.

Mitch Cary  
President

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Gen. Steve Lorenz, USAF and MG Russ Czerw, USA, lay a wreath and then take the controls of the Yellow Bird