

SQUADRON

STORY

WOA Squadron No. 2, Cascade Warbirds

BY JOHN HAUG, CASCADE WARBIRDS
NEWSLETTER EDITOR AND "IT GUY"

2018 Olympic Air Show: No. 1 T-28A Ron Morrell (former CWB CO), No. 2 T-6G John "Smokey" Johnson (current CWB CO), No. 3 CJ-6A Tom Elliott, No. 4 CJ-6A Larry Pine. Viewed left to right in the photo, formation positions are 4, 3, 1, 2. Given as position, aircraft, pilot/owner.

WARBIRDS





H

ello from the great Northwest, home of EAA Warbirds of America Squadron No. 2, Cascade Warbirds. I suspect our story and our activities will sound familiar to many of you. As members of Warbirds squadrons, you know the events, the machines, the types of people

who participate, and the types of people you meet. As unit officers, you know what it takes to make the sausage and how much work is done by a select few. I have repeatedly learned through EAA's excellent Chapter Leadership Boot Camp, professional development schools in the Civil Air Patrol, and even volunteer group board meetings that sharing our stories — what we do and how we got there — helps us spread best practices and reinvigorate ourselves.

As I suspect is the case with many squadrons, we are here today because of a few warbird fanatics who got together years ago to have a bit of fun. They subsequently saw strong and steady growth because so many people love the sights, sounds, smells, stories, and people who surround classic warbirds. Naturally! Today, CWB is an organization of more than 250 members who own nearly 200 aircraft (including those of our two museum members), and which has strong internal and public programs. Something from an entrepreneurship course during my engineering education stuck, and I like to summarize our more detailed mission statement with the tagline "Air Shows, Veterans, Youth."

While the nature of private warbird ownership and the character of local air shows have changed, in no small part due to liability and other operating costs, our members still get their historic airplanes on the ramp and in the air at regional shows. Sharing with the public these aircraft and the stories behind them is a core part of who we are. Our members have said that seeing a sparkle in the eyes of a child or a veteran makes all the effort worth it.

Veterans, of course, are a big part of any warbird story. Many of our members are retired military, and our membership as a whole honors those who risked their lives (and still do) in defense of American ideals. Our veterans liaison maintains social contact with area vets and works to get them to events, in front of local media, onto visiting aircraft to which they are personally connected, and even to our parties, where they often share stories both poignant and uproarious.



Marshaller trainee Eric Olsen awaits the return of CWB performers at Paine Field GA Day 2018.

Any organization focused on the past must also look toward the future. We pilots naturally wish to share the joy of flight. The educational and emotional growth that accompanies learning to fly safely is ideally suited to teenagers of the right mindset. Molding future pilots helps maintain everyone's freedom to fly. To those ends, we provide annual scholarships to help qualified area youth get started with their flight training.

Our organization grew over many years through the efforts of many people who gave generously of their time and money. Cascade Warbirds had its origins in social gatherings and public displays, a tradition we maintain today — although our parties are slightly less raucous than they were in the past! In-person meetings, summer hangar barbecues, pickup formation flights, air shows and after events, and the annual holiday party all keep us connected. Multiple members fly out to EAA AirVenture Oshkosh and rent a house together. Many of us fill our multiple boxes at the Reno Air Races, and others have participated as racers, pit crew members, judges, and more.



John "Smokey"
Johnson's T-6G during CWB's V-E Day
75th anniversary formation flight over Puget Sound.



WWII B-17 pilot Capt. Dick Nelms and CWB
XO (current CWB XO) Dave Desmon during
Aluminum Overcast's visit to Olympia,
Washington, in 2017.

We owe all this to Air National Guard pilot Robert D. "Crash" Williams, warbird collector and pilot Carl Terrana, aviation historian Mike Lavelle, and Air Force and airline pilot Rick Fernald. These friends heard about Warbirds of America while attending the annual fly-in and show in Arlington, Washington. Members of a nascent warbird community in the Puget Sound area, they decided to form a squadron. Incorporation papers were filed in July 1993 and approved by the state in August. Rumor has it they missed being squadron No. 1 by mere days. Crash is still celebrated in the masthead of our quarterly newsletter as our "squadron commander emeritus."



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Bravo flight does a practice walk-through before the V-E Day 75th anniversary formation flight.

Others joined, word spread, and interest jumped. Soon you could find the L-3, O-2, Stearman, T-6, T-28, Yaks, P-51, B-25, TBM, Tutor jet, and more among members' aircraft. One year at Arlington there were about 85 aircraft on display! Someone eventually suggested holding meetings to talk about warbirds during the long, wet winters. In short order, we began to hold our monthly October through March meetings at the Museum of Flight. The meetings consisted of some brief business and announcements followed by an engaging educational talk related to military aircraft or veterans. December is our annual dinner and awards party. It often includes a few words from our WWII veteran guests of honor, a slideshow of the year's best from our photographers, an awards presentation honoring members who have gone to extraordinary lengths to give back to the group, a scholarship charity element, and the unofficial after-party, which lasts until the wee hours.

Today our members are more likely to fly L-17/Navions, CJ-6As, T-6/SNJ's, tandem L-Birds, and even a handful of Romanian IAR-823s than they are B-25s and TBMs. Our public engagement efforts are as strong as ever, with owners spending hours over a show weekend talking to visitors and helping kids into cockpits. We still conduct flyovers of cemeteries and veterans' birthday celebrations, and our pilots once saluted an aircraft carrier returning from a lengthy post-9/11 deployment. The public engagement at regional air shows has extended to supporting visits of EAA's B-17, *Aluminum Overcast*. Someone with the right connection liaised with the museum, a retired PR executive handled advertising, our aircraft marshals provided ramp support, members staffed the souvenir trailer, and our veterans coordinator helped local WWII B-17 veterans attend and speak to the media and attendees.

In 2007, we began our scholarship program and, with the help of an EAA discount, over the next seven years we sent more than a dozen deserving area youth to the camp held during AirVenture. In 2010, we added flight-training scholarships. Today, the scholarship program we established in memory of our members who have passed on provides ground school materials, instruction, and initial training flights to area youth who submit an application and essay describing their goals. A recent tweak to the program has allowed us to extend additional flight-training funds to one highly deserving recipient who has demonstrated solid progress. Nearly 60 outstanding teenagers have been given this opportunity through the generosity of individual donors and our commercial training partners who have been kind enough to waive fees.

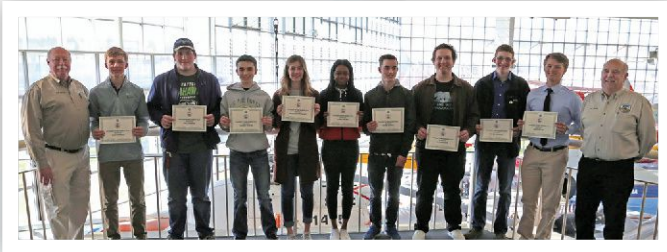
Many members of various squadrons probably see and feel the slow buildup of capabilities that result from so many people giving generously of their time and talents. Sometimes we find ourselves tasked by oh-so-naively asking a question or making a suggestion. Sometimes members have specific goals they are driven to achieve. Those who stand out as contributors are all *doers*. They make events happen, promote the squadron, recruit members, and expand our programs. These are the people who make an impact and grow the organization.

Go be that person — get involved and join the cadre of like-minded people who make magic happen. How? Create an opportunity and act on a “wouldn't it be nice if?” idea. Someone volunteered to take point on working with one local air show organizer, and then another carried the torch. A member offered to do a presentation or rope in a friend with a story to tell. A series of volunteers started, supported, and improved upon our quarterly newsletter. A person with tech knowledge created our online presence, and then others maintained and updated it. Many hands making contributions add up to something greater than the sum of its parts.

During the widespread cancellation of events this year, our new CO/president and T-6 owner organized a flight of members over central Puget Sound to commemorate the 75th anniversary of V-E Day. One person had the idea to do some formation flying, honor our WWII veterans, and educate the public. And the event was covered by the local news. The FAA coordinated access to normally congested urban airspace, the nearby Air Force base promoted the flight, and the formation was able to overfly populated areas, including the Army-Air Force joint base and the local Navy base and shipyard. Many in the region saw and got superb photos of an unusual 11-ship formation of T-6s, CJ-6As, Navions, and IAR-823s. Our website news posts and Facebook page shared photos from our on-board chief photographer and provided links to news coverage and others' photos of the event. One idea, many people, and a big impact!



People can make an impact by working outside the squadron, too. A few years ago, members who wished to see a formation-flying clinic, long missing from the Northwest, formed a separate LLC to bring instructors and pilots together for an annual long weekend of learning and practice. Our former CO formed a Commemorative Air Force unit because he felt that was something that was missing from the Northwest warbird scene.



Nine of 12 recipients of CWB's 2018 flight training scholarship, flanked by then-CO Ron Morrell (left) and scholarship committee chair Pete Jackson (right). Full left to right: Ron Morrell, Alex Marshall, Jake Anderson, Jeffrey Spaeth, Mackenzie Rennhack, London Holmes, Taylor Moffitt, Joe Cavanaugh, Conner Spurling, Logan Delapp, Pete Jackson.

The story of any squadron is the story of the people who contribute to it. All this happened by bringing people together to create opportunities for individual participation. Without hardworking people joining together to continue the mission, warbirds fade away. We each contribute in an enduring way to our culture. Conflicts occur, but a focus on respect and the mission keeps the group bonded, and others notice. We have been fortunate to have hundreds of members over the years who have added to the social fabric and the programs that define Cascade Warbirds. We all support each other. And we should all share with and support those in other squadrons. Most anyone in a squadron can think of things we wish we did or did better. Is there something you would like to ask our members? What can we learn from what you have done? Do you wish to support our programs or grow your own? Visit us at CascadeWarbirds.org, which has links to our news posts, Facebook page, photos, newsletters, and contact info. Let's connect. It takes all of us to "Keep 'em Flying!" ✈

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