**State of the Squadron 2018**

**It has been an interesting and successful year. Our membership numbers have been stable for a while and that is a good thing. If nothing else, we are staying connected with the mailing of the Weekly Events (thank you Steve Ritzi for putting it together and Lynn Olzacki for distributing it), and attempts to get together with each other from time to time.**

**On a sad note, we lost Don Stamp, one of our members and a significant pilot in the NATA formation world. He was an awesome pilot, and a pillar in the flying community. He will be missed.**

**In the Spring of 2018 , we had the formation clinics put on by the different trainer groups followed by the SUN ‘n FUN Fly-in and Expo. SUN ‘n FUN is enjoying a resurgence both in general and in Warbird participation. This is a good thing. Let’s all try to help this phenomena continue. Palatka has become popular to locals and is early in the year. This time of year also sees the TICO Airshow take place and it also seems to be continuing to be popular to the public. The Valiant Air Command has been experiencing some issues internally, and time will tell how that all shakes out.**

**The summer is a time when the rest of the country’s Warbird activity cranks up and we here in Florida experience the summer doldrums. During this time period, the Squadron has two of its bigger flyover commitments. The Gasparilla Kids Fishing Tournament is a fundraiser for the Moffett Cancer Center and the Memorial Day Race is a fundraiser for veteran’s. Both of these worthy events give us donations for our involvement.**

**During the year we get occasional requests for different types of Warbird support or activity, and when we can respond, the Squadron gets a donation for our involvement.**

**Fall and Winter results in activity here while most of the rest of the country has buttoned up their planes and many annuals are being conducted. Here in Florida we have the Stuart Airshow, the Homestead Airshow every other year and Ocean Reef. A small number of planes get invited to the 24 hours of Sebring Pistons and Planes event. This has become very popular. Thank you Tom Smith for building the great rapport with Sebring and making it so much fun.**

**Lastly, this year, at the suggestion of the Red Star Association leader Jon “Saber” Blake, we put together The Great Southern Warbird Fly-in. The purpose was to gather Warbirds in the southeast for fun and fellowship while attempting to raise funds for the Veteran’s Airlift Commend. It was a resounding success in spite of weather cutting our attendance. We plan to make it an annual event. We had just under thirty Warbirds attend and had RSVPs originally for almost 60 people which would have resulted in quite a few more Warbirds. The event was not open to the public. It was intended to draw together Warbird operators and enthusiasts from all walks of Warbird organizations and individuals including Red Stars, T-34s, and NATA to name a few. We solicited some sponsor money to support our expenses and would make up any shortfall from attendee donations. We also invited a select group of aviation photographers to have a class in aviation photography followed by participating in our Warbird flying activity by being in our back seats and taking pictures. All attendees were requested to make a $60 donation for expenses and funds for the Veteran’s Airlift Command. The photographers made a $250 donation for their class and flying activity. There was a beer and pizza event Friday night. Thank you to EAA Chapter 454 for putting on a cookout on Saturday and to Sun ‘n Fun for providing the food. Saturday night included a catered dinner and entertainment. Thank you to Bob and Deedra Knight for their help, guidance and support. Deedra’s event experience was invaluable. We had two host hotels who did a great job supporting this event.**

**We have not done the final reconciliation and balance sheet, but it looks like we will net $5,000 for the Veteran’s Airlift Command. We are planning to put this on again next year and it will be even bigger and better.**