



Photo courtesy of Ken Cheung

WHEN THE ANGELS AND BIRDS ARE SILENT

Dan McDowell

To the casual 'non-aviator' observer, flight and flying is a strange, fascinating, and seemingly dangerous thing. Yet it has a draw that often locks their attention to the skies. But to those who have had flying etch itself into their very being, flying is life and what makes living simply wonderful. The commonality between the casual observer of aviation and the one to whom aviation is life, is the constant fascination with airplanes and flight.

One place where these two "groups" of people come together is at airport open house events and airshows. But it is the airshow that takes the fascination and fixation to new heights, time after time.

Outstanding and popular aviators like Julie Clark, Sean Tucker, Patty Wagstaff, Brett Hunter, and Gene Soucy, (just to name a very few of the great aviators of today), draw tens of thousands of fans across the nation each year. It is most often the military precision teams however, that seem to draw the greatest crowds and the most faithful following. The attraction, besides the beautiful aircraft and amazing aerobatics, is the precision and professionalism of the operation from start to finish, and of course the roar of powerful jet engines that everyone can hear as well as feel!

This 2013 show season will miss the roar and thrills of the military precision teams as the Federal Sequestration comes into play. Teams like the U.S. Navy Blue Angels and the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds will be missed at airfields all across the nation by many people.

It will no doubt, seem strange to see these easily identifiable, gleaming aircraft parked and silent on the tarmac. And that raises the question: What will people do who crave the sight, sound, and smells of the great jet teams? Are there any options?

The answer is yes. And thanks to people like award-winning aviation film producer Paul Marlow, some of the most exciting, high quality footage of the Blue Angels was captured and put onto DVD. The completed work narrated by the late Leslie Nielsen, is called, "Threshold: The Blue Angels Experience" *. Marlow, in the role of Producer/Director and cinematographer, shot all of the footage on 16mm film.

When asked about the film Marlow said, "Threshold, captures the sight and sounds of the US Navy Blue Angels when they flew the powerful (and loud) McDonnell-Douglas F-4J Phantoms. The film captures a portion of the history of the Blue Angels and their time with that amazing aircraft. It also goes behind the scenes to show moments, events, and experiences that one cannot otherwise see. It makes the experience personal." Threshold by the way, is the only official footage of the Blues with the F-4J Phantom aircraft!

Clearly the film was unique for that time, but even today it remains an outstanding contribution to aviation and aviation history. When asked if that was planned for during the production Paul Marlow said, "It was a goal in developing, shooting and producing this film to grab the viewer's attention and make them feel like they were a part of the entire experience from start to finish. For a time, the viewer 'becomes' a Blue Angel and experiences the power and grace of the Phantom as it goes through preparation for, and execution of its aerial ballet!"

When asked about footage of the teams today he said, "We are fortunate to live in a time when high definition video cameras and viewing screens can capture and replay magnificent events like the Blues and the T-Birds aerial demonstrations, in essence, a "plan B". Now, anyone can purchase copies of the 'Threshold' and 'Winter Training' (a shorter version of

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Isackson meets with CAP leaders

Cassandra Isackson, the new Director of Aeronautics for the Minnesota Department of Transportation met with Minnesota Wing CAP Commander Col. Brent Halweg at Wing Headquarters, Wednesday, May 22, 2013. Col. Halweg and Wing Executive Administrator George Supan, briefed Ms. Isackson on the missions of CAP and on the work done by CAP for the State of Minnesota and Minnesota's communities.

Col. Halweg explained how CAP works from National down to the Squadrons. He also described a typical SAR mission and other mission types Minnesota Wing can handle. He then explained the tremendous value Minnesota Wing returns for the state investment received annually.

Col. Halweg further described the growth of the Legislative Squadron as he identified several State lawmakers who were once or remain active members of CAP. He explained the importance of the Legislative Squadron to Minnesota Wing as a whole.

Ms. Isackson was given a tour of the CAP facility at South St. Paul Airport, and the history of the Wing of the flight facility was shared with her.

"CAP cadets (age 12 to 21) have an opportunity for five flights in a glider and powered aircraft". "Once in the air the Cadet may be given the controls of the glider or aircraft. What a thrill for them". "During a week long Flight Academy the cadets fly the glider or powered aircraft as a supervised solo and then can go on to get a pilot's license", said George Supan.

As the tour and meeting concluded, Col. Halweg added, "Minnesota Wing CAP appreciates the time Cassandra took to tour our facilities. We look forward to continuing our relationship with the Dept. of Transportation's Office of Aeronautics as well as the continuation of our service to the State of Minnesota."



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Selleck, is another Blue Angels video, at www.navalaviation-museum.org.

Marlow continued, "there are also video segments, and complete show videos of the Thunderbirds, and the Canadian Snowbirds as well, from a number of online sources. Then for those of us who simply cannot get enough of the whine and rumble of powerful jet engines, the 'Threshold' DVD and others like it will get you as close to being there, as one can imagine, but all in the comfort of your living room."

He added, "The Wings Channel did a series called 'A year in the Life'. It features a history of the Blues in several aircraft types and includes footage from Threshold. It may not be exactly the same experience as seeing these aviators doing their performances live, but it may be as close as we can get."

After seeing an airshow with the amazing aerobatics of people like Clark to Soucy and other magnificent aviation professionals, the need for roar and rumble can be satisfied by

Threshold) DVD's via: www.thresholdtheblueangelsexperience.com, or of the Magic of Flight, narrated by Tom



going to plan B. Then everyone can still experience the thrill and thunder the military precision flight teams provide,...even when the Angels and Birds are silent.

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