

THE ACCIDENT

THE MARCO ISLAND CAP HANGAR CONSTRUCTION

By Joe Wilkins

"It's an accident this building was ever finished." That's what LtCol Jean Tremblay said looking at the completed 60 x 100 ft. gleaming white home of the Marco Island CAP Squadron with its large attractive sign, bright blue awnings, and beautiful waving American flag.



The Finished "Accident"

It looks like the result of a well-planned and executed program down to the minutest detail. Jean was the Squadron Commander during the construction phase and what he was remembering was the collection of events that could have prevented the completion had there not been some innovative ideas and indeed some accidents.

During the 1990's the Marco Island Senior Squadron was meeting in a trailer with a shed attached for a hangar for the Cessna 172 they were using for daily Sundown Patrols and for training aircrews for the anticipated mission of Search and Rescue or Counter Drug surveillance.



Previous Office and Hangar

Two events changed everything for the Marco Island Squadron. One, the Collier County Airport Authority (CCAA) decided to build permanent hangars on the land, which took away their meeting place and two, three benefactors donated large sums of money to the Squadron in 1999. Marco Island resident A. Gordon Lozier died and bequeathed about \$350,000, Winfried Rauch who lived in Germany donated \$150,000, and Squadron member Ed Shanks donated \$50,000. Rauch flew his Lear 45 to Marco Island Airport (MKY) several times each year and wanted a hangar to park it in for his two or three weeks stay. Monte Lazarus was Chairman of the CCAA and was also the Commander of the Marco Island CAP Squadron. He and a few other key players including Capt. Donn May, LtCol. David Mikelson, LtCol. Fritz Schaller, and John Drury of the CCAA put together the plan to build CAP's own building on land leased from CCAA and provide hangar space for Rauch's plane when needed. National CAP headquarters was unhappy that commitments were made locally instead of at Wing level but they did not intervene. As it turned out Rauch's plane visited Marco Island only once after the hangar was complete.



Wilkins & Tremblay with Echo Lima

Jean Tremblay assumed command of the Squadron in November 2000 and a contract was signed with Huegel Construction for the hangar in September 2001 on a cost-plus basis. Dekonschin and Associates, Inc., was engaged as architect and produced a set of drawings with a concrete block office enclosure inside the metal building. The contractor convinced the CAP officials that he could save lots of money by eliminating the concrete blocks and installing a two-layer drywall firewall between the offices and the hangar. That was probably the biggest "accident" in the whole story. The fire inspector saw the construction of the firewall and announced it was not acceptable. The architect designed a concrete block firewall that was also rejected soon after its construction started. Construction came to a screeching halt because of that and a disagreement over some invoice items, both for Huegel work and several subcontractors. In fact the disagreement reached the point where the lawyers were exchanging correspondence.



Construction Pictures

Joe Wilkins and Tom Barthel had become members of the squadron and both had some experience in construction (another accident). Wilkins was (and still is) a snowbird and Barthel was helping Tremblay especially while Wilkins was away. Barthel became involved in the disagreement that contributed to the shutdown but he was very effective in attaining agreement with the fire inspector on a design for a suitable firewall. When Wilkins got back in the fall of 2002 the firewall design was finished but the contractor was not friendly with either Tremblay or Barthel. Wilkins was able to reach a working agreement with Huegel where we (CAP) would in effect become the general contractor under their license and permit. We would use their carpenter forces to be invoiced separately because of the disputes. Also we would hire additional contractors as required to finish the work. This included outside plumbing, landscaping, kitchen cabinets, paint, and indeed the ever-popular firewall. CAP members did some of the work themselves including laying the tile and pulling cable for phones and computers. They bought and installed the door hardware and designed the flagpole and had it built by Marco Welding. Bob Thomas, a squadron member, donated an antenna tower that was installed and used for the first few years until the Unit installed HF radio equipment and needed a dipole and a beam antenna.

Wilkins negotiated the disputed invoices with Huegel and reached an agreement for settlement. He coordinated the inspections with Collier County to finally receive the Certificate of Occupancy on March 25, 2003. The final building inspection was performed by one James Rose who was recruited into CAP in the process.

The total cost of the building was \$426,071.17 including:

Fees	\$14,031.28
Architect	\$10,000.00
Metal building	\$93,577.00
Hangar door	\$11,882.00
Huegel Construction	\$211,771.10
Other contractors	\$84,809.79

The dedication ceremony was held on 10Apr2003 (see Program attached). Southeast Region Commander Col. Tony Pineda, Florida Wing Commander Col. Matt Sharkey, County Commissioner Donna Fiala, and several representatives of the Coast Guard and other prominent organizations also attended.



Dedication Ceremony



Barthel and Wilkins held the ribbon while Jean Tremblay made the ceremonial cut.

Col. Pineda awarded **COMMANDERS COIN OF EXCELLENCE FOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE** to Tremblay, Barthel, and Wilkins for their accomplishments. Barthel and Wilkins later received Commander's Commendations and the Squadron received a Unit Citation.

During all this construction the Squadron was meeting in the community room in the Community Bank on Marco Island. There was a massive collection of donated furniture and equipment conducted as part of the 2002 annual fund raising campaign (see Attachment 1). That, plus all equipment moved from the original trailer, was stored in the Progressive Auto Center building owned by squadron member Peter Baker. Alarms By Bell donated and installed the security system. Florida Paint and Decorating Center on Marco Island donated the paint. Marco Welding donated the labor to fabricate the flagpole. Numerous members and friends donated equipment, material, and time to the effort.

Just goes to show "all accidents are not bad."

Attachments:

1. Solicitation letter dated February 2002
2. Invitation to Dedication Ceremony
3. Program for Dedication Ceremony (2 pages)
4. Marco Island Sun Times Article (2 pages)
5. Southeast Region "News Flash" (2 pages)