

# FORMATION PROGRAM BEGUN

BY JOHN HARRISON

Sun-N-Fun 1987 is behind us now and several new programs and ideas have been adopted by your WOA Board of Directors which will be implemented over the next few months prior to Oshkosh '87. One of these is to encourage and promote safer and more professional FORMATION FLYING.

Anyone who has attended Oshkosh as a spectator or participant knows the spectacular Formation Fly-bys that have been the hallmark of our shows for so many years. In recent years the thunder of precision flying that once was the sole domain of the T-6's has been STOLEN by the very well organized T-34's under Charlie Nogle, Bob Farrell, Dan Blackwell et al..and by the P-51's under Hess Bomberger, John Baugh, Don Davidson, et.al.

As for the T-28's..well..they just never had it together - but - there has not previously been enough of them to organize in the past. But..times are-a-changing! The way I have it figured, T-28 owners being a better class of folks (as evidenced by their good taste in aircraft) should have no trouble in becoming the cutting edge of Warbird Formation Flying. Face it, if Hess can organize, subdue, coerce, and discipline a group like the P-51 drivers - well anything is possible!! Guess you could say the gauntlet is cast !

As a former F100 pilot, I always found formation flying to be one of the most satisfying and demanding flying disciplines. It is instant gratification as there is never any doubt whether you can hack it or not - you are either in formation or you are not! Good formation flying is a unique skill and probably one of the main distinctions between a military pilot, particularly a fighter pilot, and other aviators. There are many demanding aviation skills from instruments, to acrobatics, to smooth transport flying to crop dusting, etc. Formation flying's roots,however, are almost entirely military and there is no civilian counterpart and hence no civilian training, nor need, nor

Enter the WARBIRD. We can roll 'em, and loop 'em, go cross country in 'em, display 'em, and eventually we want to "fomate" with 'em. It's a natural evolution for the Warbird Pilot..but..one for which most of us are not properly trained, never were trained, or are no longer current. Probably no other form of flying requires more discipline, more practice, more currency, and more standardization. Obviously, too, formation flying is not for everyone and shouldn't be. What may be fun and satisfying for one pilot might be terrifying or not suitable for another. No one should feel pressured or encouraged to fly formation. There are many other flying activities for Warbird Pilots to pursue!

Looking back at my military flight training I remember no phase of training that required more effort. After an hour's formation training I was drained..it was as if I'd been flying all day. I could always tell which of my fellow students had been on a formation hop by the length of his "pits" - how far down under his armpits the sweat stains extended. "Never let them see you sweat" was not a consideration here!

What I'm leading up to is a Warbird Formation Qualification Program specifically geared to T-6's,T-28's and P-51's. The T-34's already have an extremely successful program in effect. Probably the most discussed and hotly debated issue at many a Warbird Directors' Board Meeting is the Annual Warbird Airshow at Oshkosh and this program is an outgrowth of those discussions.

In the Air Force one of the Safety Officers' favorite techniques is to ake each pilot what he thought would be the next accident. This simple question quite often proved to be a good indication of where the unsafe areas were. Who knows better than the Squadron Fighter Pilots where the risky business is. When we discuss Warbird Airshows, formation flying in large formations is the area that frequently crops up as a high risk area.

It is no secret that the potential for disaster is there - all the ingredients are there: high pressure, BIG EGOS, questionable discipline, lack of practice, inadequate briefings, lack of standardization, unqualified pilots and all ONLY WINGTIPS APART!!! For those of you who have flown in these large formations ask yourself how many times you've said to yourself after landing "boy, I'll never do that again!"?

Of course, a year dims the memory (and the proficiency) and we launch and fly the SHOW again the next year. Proper formation shouldn't be unsafe or scary - exciting, satisfying, hard work, yes..but not scary. If it is, then you're doing something very wrong!

About here in our discussion....

LIABILITY rears its ugly head. Can EAA WOA, the T-34 Assoc., or the North American Trainer Association (formerly the T-6 Owners Assoc and now with the T-28's), the CAF, etc."expose" themselves by promoting, encouraging, or teaching formation? From the legal prospective, the answer is obvious..we can't. However, it would be just as bad to do nothing, to be paralyzed into inactivity. Nothing we can do can guarantee that there will never be an accident related to formation flying. God forbid that a midair should ever occur at Oshkosh or any airshow! The results would be catastrophic not only to the participants but to the Sport Flying/Warbird Movement. Can you imagine a formation program mandated and managed by the FAA?? The conclusion is obvious - we cannot continue flying formation and participating in airshows without an active safety/qualification program - to do nothing is a liability we can no longer afford.

The North American Trainer Association in connection with the EAA WOA will begin a Formation Qualification Program utilizing the Warbird Formation Manual and following the procedures and practices so successfully developed by the T-34 Association. For the Oshkosh 1987 Airshows it will be strongly encouraged that all T-6, T-28, T-34 formation pilots be qualified in the program. For the Oshkosh 1988 Airshows, all pilots will be required to be qualified as Wingmen or Flight Leaders to participate in Formation flights. It is sincerely hoped that other flying organizations and airshow promoters will adopt our standards.

Before I describe the program further a few points should be clearly stated:

- 1) Formation Flying is not for everyone. There are many other flying activities for Warbird Pilots. You can have the right stuff and not have to prove it by flying formation.
- 2) Formation Flying should be safe, fun, and satisfying - nothing in this program should detract from that.
- 3) The EAA WOA, T-34 Assoc and NATrainer Assoc DO NOT PROVIDE instructors to teach formation. That you must do on your own. Oshkosh and the middle of an airshow is not the place to learn/practice formation flight.
- 4) The EAA WOA, T-34 Assoc and NATA will provide a list of designated, standardized Check Pilots who can administer a Formation Check Ride per the Warbird Formation Manual and upon successful completion issue a formation patch as evidence of qualification.
- 5) MOST IMPORTANT : all pilots regardless of background or experience will be required to qualify. This goes for former Blue Angels, Astronauts, Warbird Directors, etc. Our intent is not to exclude, embarrass or discriminate against anyone; but, what is fair for one is fair for all. There will be no patches issued on reputation. We sincerely hope that the fair application of this standard will not result in any misunderstandings or dented egos! Let's be reminded that professional pilots and military pilots take regular recurrent training and check rides-it goes with the territory. Warbirds are complex aircraft and formation flying requires discipline, currency, and training-and I wouldn't want to be part of a formation with pilots who couldn't accept those standards!
- 6) There will be ample opportunities for those who are not, or do not want to be formation qualified, to participate in Warbird Shows. It is recognized that many pilots want to participate in the airshows at a level consistent with their skills and we will attempt to give them that opportunity. Please don't feel pressure to fly formation.

Formation cont'd...

Sun-N-Fun provided the first get together for check pilots where procedures and techniques could be discussed. As mentioned earlier, it would be impossible to qualify everyone for Oshkosh '87..time and logistics will prevent it. However, you will have the opportunity to contact a Check Pilot in your area to schedule a formation check.

It may take sixmonths or more to qualify a number of check pilots to cover the entire country. In addition,the Warbird Forum Schedule at Oshkosh '87 will include Formation Flying and the schedule of times and location will be published prior to the event.

More important, a Formation Checkout Clinic will be held the week prior to Oshkosh '87 for T-28 and T-6 pilots to give everyone who has practiced their formation skills an opportunity to qualify for a Wingman Patch. I will be handling the T-28 Clinic with co-chairman Dan Blackwell and Fred Webster will be handling the T-6 Clinic.

The T-28 Clinic will be held at Bloomington, Ill from Sunday,July 26, thru Thursday, July 30,when we will depart for Oshkosh...hopefully in smart formation. Bloomington is located an easy I+05 due south of Oshkosh as the T-28 flies. It has an excellent uncongested airport with several long, wide runways, big ramps, and good support facilities. But more important, Bloomington is located just down the road from Farmer City, Ill, home of Robert Ashworth and the best kept Warbird Fly-in Secret.

For years a large number of largely Fl, GA,and CA based Warbirds have descended on Robert's beautiful grass strip on their way to Oshkosh to enjoy the incredible hospitality and generosity of his family, friends and neighbors. It is an idyllic farm setting complete with bar-b-ques, biplanes, warbirds, hangar flying, impromptu airshows and just plain good fellowship. The farm is located just down the road from Champaign, Il. home of the notorious Rudy Frasca and his gaggle of kids and hangar of Warbirds and also the homebase of T-34 guru/organizer Charlie Nogle.

For the Warbirds who regularly assemble at the Ashworth farm, Robert assures me it will be business as usual with one exception: because of liability there will be no "airshow" for the locals. Other local flying, acrobatic, etc will be as usual. Regular visitors remember to contact the Gateway Motel, Farmer City for rooms.

Naturally this should provide an ideal location for T-28 Formation Flight as well as an opportunity to relax, brief, exchange maintenance tips and just get to know each other. We will attempt to practice our T-28 Formations that will be used in the Big Show at OSH. Co-ordinating the T-28 Oshkosh Activities is Dan Blackwell.

NOTE: The Ashworth strip is grass and is not, REPEAT, NOT suitable or open to T-28's (large or small nosewheel). ALL T-28 ACTIVITIES WILL BE OUT OF BLOOMINGTON, AIRPORT.

To get the ball rolling and the formation juices going:

- 1) Obtain a copy of the Formation Manual from the Merchandise Mart, see Warbirds Newsletter. If you are interested in this program and plan to attend either of the Formation Check-out Clinics, let the N.A.Trainer Assoc know. We have a very limited supply of Manuals for members..first ask first receive...free!

Other sources: Every Man a Tiger by Frank J O'Brien with Timothy Foster, Ziff Davis Pub. There are tapes put out by the Military years ago that address military formation flight. Ask around to see if anyone you know has them.

- 2) Pair up with a local Warbird pilot, get good quality instruction and PRACTICE..PRACTICE!!
- 3) Contact a nearby Formation Check Pilot who will conduct the Formation Check in accordance with the Form.Manual, or plan to attend one of the pre-Oshkosh Clinics. A distinctive Wingman Patch will be issued for the type aircraft upon successful completion of the check ride.Each aircraft type will have its own Patch. Designed by Lou Drendel.

One last note regarding the Check Pilots. Naturally it takes two aircraft to fly the check and the check pilot needs to ride in the plane of the "checkee". Our check pilots will require parachutes for all occupants of both aircraft, a good two way radio and a good intercom as minimum safety equipment. I would assume that the need for a parachute would be obvious to anyone involved. But, sadly, past experience shows this is not true! Check Pilots are not necessarily independently wealthy (they may have been prior to owning a Warbird, but may not be so now!) and are not expected to provide the "target" aircraft or gas. Each pilot should make the appropriate arrangements with his Check Pilot. Ideally two "checkouts" with their two planes would present themselves to two Check Pilots - this would qualify two pilots simultaneously and solve the problem of gas and airplane availability.

It is sincerely hoped that those of you who want to "get with the program" will be able to experience the deep satisfaction that only comes after the successful completion of a well briefed and well flown Formation Flight

One other very important note: there is no incompatibility between the small engine T28-A and the large engine T28 B, and C, and Fennecs with regard to formation flying. While it would be logical to have a flight led by an A model if the pilot were Flight Lead Qualified, there is no reason that an A model cannot fly on the wing of a B or C.

When qualifying Check Pilots at Sun'n Fun '87 we specifically addressed this question and flew with A's and B's in the lead - no problem! There are obviously not enough T-28 A's or B's around to attempt to make up flights of only A's or B's. These power settings were adopted for B on B or A on A. In the cases that an A model would fly off a B the listed air speeds will give an adequate performance advantage to the A's to necessitate only a slight power reduction for the B's.

For standardization purposes the following power settings and speeds will be used for T-28 Formation Flight and should be inserted in the appropriate blanks in the Formation Flight Manual, pg 15.

	T28A		T28B,C	
takeoff	38"/2550 RPM		42"/2700 RPM	
climb	34"/2400 RPM	130 KIAS	32"/2400 RPM	130 KIAS
cruise	27"/2100 RPM	160 KIAS	26"/2000 RPM	170 KIAS
rejoin	130 KIAS		130 KIAS	

As of April '87 the following have Qualified as Formation Check Pilots:

Rick Fernald T-6, T-28 102 Sweetgale Ct Anchorage, AK 99518 (907)344-7898	John Harrison T-6, T-28 2280 Glen Ellen Circle Sacramento, CA 95822 (916) 392-8545	Bill Dodds T-6, T-28 40 Collins Ct Bricktown, N.J. 08724 (201) 458-2077
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Dick Ervin T-6, T-28 4401 Dickson Rd Indianapolis, IN 46226 (317) 542-8580	Linc Dexter T-28 1377 Sheffield Way Ft. Meyers, FL 33907 (813)482-4046
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T-28 FORMATION CLINIC ..SUNDAY JULY 26 -THURSDAY JULY30, BLOOMINGTON, ILL

Contacts: J. Harrison, Dan Blackwell (412)327-8579,

Clark Aviation, Bloomington Airport will provide ramp, fuel, support facilities as well as a 25¢ discount on fuel. Contact Ken Rittenhouse, toll free 800-262-8247.

Motel near airport: Hampton Inn, (309)662-2800, \$38/single, \$43/double. Bob Keegan is contact

For those wishing to be near Robert Ashworth's farm, the Gateway Motel (309)928-9434 is in Farmer City. 20 mi from Bloomington. Ashworth: (309)928-9080. ★

## T6 FORMATION CLINIC INFORMATION

THE T6 FORMATION CHECK OUT PRIOR TO OSHKOSH IS JULY 27-30 AT BARABOO AIRPORT, WISCONSIN. THE FIELD IS 65 MILES WEST OF FOND DU LAC (255° HEADING) AND HAS A 4,800'x75' RUNWAY WITH PLENTY OF TIE DOWN SPACE.

FRED WEBSTER IS CO-ORDINATING T6 FORMATION FLYING CLINICS. (203)653-7519.

SOME MEMBERS WILL BE STAYING AT BOSCOBEL, WI AND SOME AT FOND DU LAC (HOLIDAY INN). BARABOO HAS FACILITIES ALSO. THE PRESENT PLAN IS TO MEET AT BARABOO AIRPORT, BRIEF AND FLY THE CHECKOUTS.

★ ★ PLEASE LET FRED WEBSTER OR STONEY STONICH KNOW IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THIS CLINIC. WE NEED TO KNOW APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF INTERESTED PILOTS. THOSE OF YOU WHO LET US KNOW YOU MAY BE ATTENDING WILL BE SENT UPDATED INFO PRIOR TO JULY NEWSLETTER. WE HAVE A LIST OF HOTELS/MOTELS AND AIRPORT INFORMATION. PLEASE SEND US YOUR RESPONSE ASAP..

THE CLINICS WILL BE ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS AND YOU WILL NOT NEED TO BE THERE THE WHOLE TIME PERIOD. IF WE KNOW IN ADVANCE WHO WILL BE THERE AND ON WHAT DAYS, WE MAY BE ABLE TO GET A SCHEDULE SET UP. THIS IS OUR FIRST ATTEMPT AT THIS AND AS ALL KNOW, THE WEATHER WILL BE THE MOST DETERMINING FACTOR. WE ARE DOING OUR BEST TO MAKE THIS GO SMOOTHLY.

AS THE T-28 INFORMATION ARTICLE SAID..YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR THE CHECK OUT. FORMATION FLYING MANUALS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE MERCHANDISE MART, WOA NEWSLETTER ORDER FORM THE MANUAL HAS THE CHECK OUT QUALIFICATION AND BRIEFING FORMS. WINGMAN PATCHES UPON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION.

CHECK PILOTS FOR THE T6 PILOTS ARE:

FRED WEBSTER  
6 COPPER HILL TERRACE  
E.GRANBY, CT 06026 (203)653-7519

JOHN HARRISON T6 AND T28  
2280 GLEN ELLEN CIR.  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95822 (916)392-8545

BILL DODDS  
40 COLLINS CT  
BRICKTOWN, NJ 08724 (201)458-2077

RICK FERNALD T6 AND T28  
102 SWEETGALE CT  
ANCHORAGE, AK 99518 (907)344-7898

PETE VANDERSLUIS  
PO Box 86 CANDLEWOOD ISLE  
NEW FAIRFIELD, CT 06812 (203)746-2886

DICK ERVIN T6 AND T28  
4401 DICKSON RD  
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46226 (317)542-8580

MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED UPON COMPLETION OF THEIR CHECKOUTS.



Right: Pete Vandersluis  
T6 Formation Flight Check Pilot  
Solo Six of Diamonds Team. Pete  
also gives private T6 instruction.

Left: G.A. Jerry Walbrun  
T6 Maintenance Forum  
Speaker 1986. Leader of  
Six of Diamonds Team.

Right: Wm "Bill" Dodds  
T6, T-28 Formation Check  
Pilot, flies with Six of Diamonds

