

# **Tiger Flight Airshow Narrative**

## **The Tiger Flight Foundation**

Founded in the year 2000 by two Atlanta-area pilots—to enjoy the challenge of formation flying and to promote a unique aircraft—the Tiger Flight Formation Flight Team now consists of seven active pilots and two skilled formation flight coaches, based at the Richard B. Russell Airport in Rome, Georgia.

What is formation flying? Basically, it's two or more airplanes flying within visual range of each other on the same flight plan. What makes a formation flight team stand out, though, is that the “visual range” is very close from plane to plane, measured in feet instead of miles. Such precision flying takes lots of practice, planning, and communication—three things that are critical in every important thing you do in life.

As Tiger Flight has grown, it has expanded its mission. In addition to performing at air shows and fly-ins, the organization is now a private, non-profit educational foundation designed to increase interest in science, mathematics, and the technologies, particularly among elementary and middle school students and teachers.

To assist them, they have partnered with the Georgia Youth Science and Technology Center, which encourages and supports students to prepare for advanced education and careers in science and technology. The Center provides hands-on exhibits, demonstrations, camps and courses for students and teachers.

The Tiger Flight team has it's won YOUTH TIGER FLIGHT PROGRAM. Through this program, Tiger Flight helps introduce young people from the ages of 8 through 17 to aviation by taking them on flights at the airport in Rome on the second Saturday of each month from 9 a.m. to noon to the first 15 children that arrive. These flights are offered free to participants, and exemplify the Tiger Flight mission of leading the young to the dream of flight. Since Tiger Flight began participating in this program.

[www.tigerflightfoundation.org](http://www.tigerflightfoundation.org).

Because the Tiger Flight Foundation is a 501C3 non-profit foundation, all donations are tax deductible. All proceeds for the foundation go to support children's educational programs. The Tiger Flight pilots personally pay for all fuel, maintenance, and other aircraft expenses.

## **The Tiger Flight Foundation Mission Part 2**

Besides flying the distinctive aircraft you are about to see, the second part of the Tiger Flight mission is a very special and unique undertaking. Their goal of leading the young to the dream of flight applies not only in the air but also on the ground.

The educational programs Tiger Flight provides to busloads of students at the Rome airport can only reach so many. To give kids throughout America the tools they need to grab their dreams, and to teach them how to make their dreams come true, the Tiger Flight is creating a series of children's motivational adventure stories.

The first book is called "Jake and the Tiger Flight." The idea for the book occurred to Tiger Flight pilot Phil—call sign "Sunny"—Cataldo after meeting a real-life teenager named Jake. Sunny had taken Jake on a Young Eagles flight and spoke to him about how to succeed in life three years earlier, and now here Jake was as a full-fledged pilot. Jake credited Sunny with inspiring him to get his wings. And this inspired Sunny to reach out to all of the other "Jakes" in America who could benefit from the lessons of his motivational speeches. The idea for a series of books was born.

One of the primary concepts in the books is taken from the FAA's statement of responsibility for pilots called "Pilot in Command." A Pilot In Command is responsible for the aircraft, the people in that aircraft, and all the people on the ground. Sunny expanded this idea into a concept he calls "Pilot in Command of Your Life." When you are Pilot in Command of Your Life, you take charge of what happens to you, take responsibility for your decisions, and follow through to make sure you get what you want. Though Sunny intended this lesson for children, becoming Pilot in Command of Your Life applies to all of us—and it's never too late to start.

Sunny's ideas for the first in a series of children's stories based on aviation developed over the course of three years into a 17-page draft called "Jake and the Tiger Flight," which Sunny was determined to shepherd into print. In late 2007, his friend Marty Aftewicz [Af-te-wits], who is a writer, introduced him to fellow writer George Weinstein [Wine-steen]. The three of them reworked the story, and George produced a full-length novel for children aged 10 and up.

"Jake and the Tiger Flight" will be published in September, but is available for advance ordering now. For more information about the book, as well as an order form, please visit the Tiger Flight after their performance.

## **The Tiger Flight Planes**

The signature aircraft flown by the Tiger Flight Formation Flight Team is the Aircoupe, a unique, H-tail plane designed in the 1930s by engineer Fred Weick [Wi-ke]. Before the invention of the Aircoupe, planes had a wheel under the tail instead of the nose, so Fred's design was the first so-called tricycle aircraft. The design was also innovative because Fred made his aircraft incapable of stalling or spinning, resulting in one of the safest planes ever built.

Originally, these planes didn't have rudders: the yoke was connected to a steerable nose wheel and you taxied much like you'd drive a car. In fact, Fred Weick envisioned every family owning an Aircoupe because they were so easy to fly. After World War II, these planes were even advertised for sale in the Men's Department at Macy's!

Aircoupes have the honor of being called Warbirds because, during WWII, the US Army Air Forces used three models of Aircoupes for wartime service. The Aircoupe made history when the

first jet-assisted takeoff experiments were performed with this aircraft as their test bed. This undertaking led to the formation of the famous Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

## **Tiger Flight and the Greatest Generation**

Part of the Tiger Flight's educational programs for children includes a history lesson on America's Greatest Generation and the development of aviation in WWII. Flying a Warbird gives them one connection to that era, and Tiger Flight's other connection came about because the team needed a squadron patch. Since the Aircoupe bears the military nickname "twin-tailed tiger," the pilots' search for an appropriate emblem pointed them toward the famous Flying Tigers of WWII.

The Flying Tigers was the nickname of the 1st American Volunteer Group that operated as part of the Chinese Air Force in 1941 and 1942, defending China against Japanese forces. At the beginning of the war, the aerial victories of the Flying Tigers often were the only good news in American newspapers. Their record of destroying almost 300 aircraft while losing only 14 pilots on combat missions gave Americans hope that eventually they would win the war in the Pacific.

You would probably recognize the nose art of the Flying Tigers instantly—a snarling shark-like face just behind the propeller. But these three squadrons also had a special insignia below the cockpit showing a tiger with wings, which was designed for them by the Walt Disney Company.

So all of the elements came together for Tiger Flight: flying Warbirds, honoring the Greatest Generation, and saluting the original Flying Tigers. However, to use such a well-respected emblem, which is still worn with pride by members of the military today, the Tiger Flight team felt they should seek permission to use this most honorable symbol of valor, duty and courage.

With much gratitude, Tiger Flight received the blessings of the family of General Chennault, who created and commanded the Flying Tigers, and General Robert Scott, one of the most famous Flying Tigers and author of "God Is My Co-Pilot." General Scott gave his approval with great enthusiasm, and Tiger Flight made him its honorary group commander. Tiger Flight then adapted the Flying Tigers' logo to make it their own. What makes the Tiger Flight squadron patch so unique, and the reason it's becoming a collectible among aviation enthusiasts, is that the tiger shown on the patch has two tails—for the aircraft's nickname, "Twin-Tailed Tiger."

You can see the squadron patch on the aircraft tail fins as well as on the pilots' flight suits when you visit them following this performance. Also, young readers of "Jake and the Tiger Flight" will have an opportunity to obtain their very own Tiger Flight patch by setting and achieving a goal for themselves. Instructions for obtaining a patch are in the back of the book, on sale now, for shipment in September.

## **The Tiger Flight Pilots**

Here are the pilots of the Tiger Flight (date indicates which ones are flying today):

**Phil “Sunny” Cataldo** (flying July 4)

Sunny hails from Manchester, Connecticut. He graduated from Georgia State University and is the co-founder of CDS, a national credit reporting company. Sunny is married to his best friend, Susan. He received his wings ten years ago, and he says it was one of the proudest moments of his life. Sunny is one of the founding members of Tiger Flight. He’s been a formation pilot for over six years with hundreds of hours of formation flight time, and he is a Captain in the US Air Force Auxiliary.

**Blaine Cole developed a love for flying while growing up in an Air Force family. From Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade he attended 13 different schools. He earned a Master’s Degree in Counseling and spent several years providing counseling to children and families. He is the son of a pilot and has three children who fly frequently together as a “flying family”. He is a Commercial Pilot with an Instrument Rating and, in addition to Tiger Flight, volunteers his time with Civil Air Patrol and Angel Flight.**

**Bart “Bones” Barber**

**Bill “Winder” Jansson**

Winder grew up in Texas, where he started flying at the age of 13. He earned his pilot’s license before getting his driver’s license. He flew the A-4 Skyhawk and the A-7 Corsair for the US Navy and is currently a Captain for Delta Airlines. Winder has been flying for 43 years and has logged over 12,000 hours of flight time.

**Tom “TC” Calvinelli**

TC comes from Trenton, New Jersey. He attended Air Force Pilot training at Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, Georgia, and then flew F-4 Phantoms and OV-10 Broncos for the US Air Force from 1968 to 1972. Following his military service, he flew for Delta Airlines until 2004. In 2002 he joined the Civil Air Patrol. 2008 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> year that TC has been flying.

**Keith “Fury” Walker**

**Jon Byrd** (flying July 5)

Jon Byrd was born in Ocala, Florida. He started flying in 1991. Jon is the Director of Aviation for Coosa Valley Technical College in Rome, Georgia. In addition to being a pilot for over 17 years, Jon also holds an FAA Inspection Authorization and an Airframe & Powerplant Certificate.

## **Conclusion**

Ladies, gentlemen, and kids of every age, thank you for your kind attention to the Tiger Flight Formation Flight Team. The Tiger Flight would like to salute our brave men and women in military service, our veterans, and our future defenders of America. Thank you for honoring them and thank you for your support of all of the pilots performing for you today.