

**HISTORY OF  
THE SOCORRO COMPOSITE SQUADRON**

**Civil Air Patrol**

*U.S. Air Force Auxiliary*



1 July 2006 - 31 December 2007

**Volume I -- Narrative**

**HISTORY**  
**of**  
**THE SOCORRO COMPOSITE SQUADRON**

**Civil Air Patrol**  
*U.S. Air Force Auxiliary*

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## Preface

For some period during the 1960s and possibly into the 1970s, there was a Civil Air Patrol squadron in Socorro, New Mexico. Little information beyond that bare fact seems to have survived. The record of that squadron's activities and achievements, its successes and failures, appears to be lost.

As we began to once again bring the Civil Air Patrol to Socorro, I was determined to preserve the record of the new squadron's formative period. This is for the benefit of the future generations that we hope will staff and lead the squadron in the coming years, and will want to know how their unit came into being. In addition, it seemed useful to document how a group of people with practically no experience in the Civil Air Patrol went about forming a new unit from scratch and trying to merge it into the larger organization.

This account is based on notes and records made during the period it covers. These were supplemented by conversations with the squadron members, and, finally, by the author's memory. Writing began on some sections soon after the squadron was chartered, in order to ensure that the account was based on fresh memories.

It has been a great pleasure working with the members of the Socorro Composite Squadron. They are a fantastic group of people who have shown great dedication to the goals and missions of the Civil Air Patrol and to their community and nation. It also has been a pleasure to be associated with the CAP's New Mexico Wing, whose leaders and staff have provided invaluable assistance as we labored to build a new unit.

The author submits this account with the hope that the accomplishments of the early members of the Socorro Composite Squadron will be preserved, and that others may learn from our experience.

David G. Finley, Captain, CAP  
Socorro, New Mexico  
April 2008

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## Chronology

### 2006

- July:** Contacts among potential members.
- 7 September:** First informational meeting.
- 14 September:** Second meeting; applications distributed.
- 28 September:** Applications delivered to NM Wing.
- 5 October:** Meeting: Update on applications.
- 19 October:** Meeting: Squadron Commander selected.

### 2007

- 11 January:** Socorro Composite Squadron chartered.
- 12 January:** Notice of chartering received.
- 19 January:** Members receive CAP ID cards.
- 1 February:** First official meeting of chartered squadron.
- 8 February:** Meeting: Charter ceremony planned.
- 20 February:** NM Wing Commander delivers charter;  
Five senior members complete Level I training.
- 10 March:** Squadron Commander completes SLS.
- 15 March:** 11 members complete BCUT Comms training.
- 21 March:** Squadron patch design approved by NM Wing CC.
- 2 April:** Radio Operator Authorizations received from Wing.
- 4 & 19 April:** Two charter members promoted to 1st Lt.
- 26 April:** First local Level I training session completed.
- 5-6 May:** First cadet O-flights -- Las Cruces.
- 12 July:** Three charter members promoted to 2nd Lt.
- 4 & 7 August:** Powered O-flights at Socorro Municipal Airport.
- 9 August:** First Cadet Promotions to C/Airman.
- 22 September:** Field Trip to Amigo Airsho, El Paso, TX
- 4 October:** Open House: Sputnik 50th Anniversary Program.
- 13 December:** Wing Commander Visits; Cadet Promotions.
- 20 December:** Field Trip to USAF GEODSS facility.

## Chapter I -- Getting Organized

As early as 2004, some Socorro-area residents expressed an interest in establishing a Civil Air Patrol squadron. Loradona Youngman, of Polvadera, contacted the New Mexico Wing Headquarters that year and was sent an information packet. In October of 2005, Youngman was contacted by Lt. Col. Claude Luisada, Group 800 Commander. Group 800 is composed of CAP middle-school cadet squadrons. That month, Luisada came to Socorro, met with Youngman, and went over the requirements and process for establishing a new squadron. He suggested she send a press release to the local newspapers to find additional people who might be interested. However, at that time, it appeared there were too few recruits to establish a squadron.

Youngman was primarily interested in CAP's cadet program as an activity for some of her children, whom she was home-schooling. By May of 2006, she had discussed CAP with several other home-schooling parents and gotten them interested in enrolling their children. Luisada, who had been calling her periodically, called again that month, and Youngman followed up by meeting with Sarracino Middle School Principal Chuck Zimmerly. Zimmerly was receptive to the idea of his school hosting a cadet squadron, but Youngman was disappointed to learn that home-school students could not join a middle-school squadron. It was about this time that her discussions with Luisada turned toward possibly including adult members and forming a composite squadron.

Early in July of 2006, Luisada telephoned Dave Finley, of Socorro, who had filled out an inquiry form on the CAP National web site and subsequently received an information packet in the mail. Luisada briefed Finley on the efforts to date and provided Youngman's telephone number. Finley and Youngman made contact on 12 July 2006 and began collaborating on setting up an informational meeting in the community. Youngman had contacted the local newspapers and one of them ran an item urging interested parties to call her. Finley, the Public Information Officer for the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO), and a relatively newly-minted private pilot, began contacting people he knew might be interested.

In late July or early August, Luisada and Mr. Fred Harsany, the U.S. Air Force liaison for the New Mexico Wing, flew to Socorro from Albuquerque in a CAP Cessna 206. They met Finley at Socorro Municipal Airport, provided him with literature about forming a CAP squadron, and discussed the organizational and procedural details of the process.

On 7 September 2006, the initial informational meeting was held in the auditorium of the NRAO's Array Operations Center in Socorro. Luisada and Lt. Col. Roland Dewing, Director of Aerospace Education for the New Mexico Wing, gave presentations that introduced the Civil Air Patrol and its programs. Twenty-four Socorro residents attended this meeting, 11 of them adults. After Luisada and Dewing answered numerous questions, the group decided to meet again in one week to learn about the details of establishing a squadron and applying for memberships.

The second meeting was held on 14 September, also at the Array Operations Center. Luisada and Dewing distributed membership application forms for seniors and cadets and fingerprint cards for the senior members. They went over the details of filling out the forms. Jon Thunborg, an NRAO engineer, had contacted local police agencies and announced that the New Mexico Tech Police Department would take fingerprints for CAP applicants at no charge, unlike some other agencies that wanted significant fees for that service. Youngman and Finley agreed to collect completed membership materials, consolidate them, and arrange for delivery to Luisada.



*Socorro Municipal Airport in 2006. Credit: D. Finley*

Over the following two weeks, the prospective members filled out their forms, got fingerprinted, and delivered their applications and checks to Youngman and Finley. The two met on the afternoon of 28 September 2006 and assembled the package of applications. There were eight cadet applications and six senior applications. Finley, who was heading to Albuquerque to attend an Air Safety Foundation safety seminar, took the package and delivered it to Luisada in the parking lot of Albuquerque Technical-Vocational Institute's Smith-Brasher Hall.

Then began a long wait. Everyone expected that processing the paperwork to establish their squadron and enroll them as members would take some time. They also recognized that the process probably would be slowed by the oncoming holiday season. They faced the challenge of maintaining contact among themselves and maintaining enthusiasm despite their lack of any official CAP status.

The group met twice before the holiday season, with its attendant family events and travel, intervened. On 5 October 2006, they met in the library of Sarracino Middle School. At this meeting, they heard about the status of their applications and exchanged information about exploring the CAP's national web site to learn more about the organization. On 19 October 2006, they met at Socorro Municipal Airport. Finley, who had done his flight training at this airport, showed them around the facility; then they visited the hangar of Mr. Bill Marcy, a retired engineer, pilot and aircraft owner. Marcy provided cockpit tours of his 1947 Navion for all the young people, explained the parts of his airplane, and showed his original airman certificate from 1944. This was a real hands-on experience, giving the potential cadets an opportunity to touch, sit in, and play with the controls of a real airplane. The young people asked numerous questions

and their enthusiasm was clearly visible.

Following the hangar visit, the group assembled in the small airport's "terminal" building. This, too, offered a learning experience as the group perused the various posters, charts and other publications in the building. They also enjoyed the display of pilots' first-solo cut-off shirttails that rings all four walls of the main room, and represents flying achievements over more than a half-century. The business of this evening was set by the message from Luisada, relayed through Youngman, that the group needed to designate a squadron commander. Youngman nominated Finley and the group agreed. Finley agreed to serve, with the proviso that Youngman serve as deputy commander.

The bureaucracy moved slowly and not without problems. When Wing Headquarters sent the application package to National Headquarters, the entire package eventually was returned to the Wing because the form requesting a new charter had not been included. That was corrected, and the package sent a second time to National Headquarters. Once again, however, the entire package was returned to Wing, because the charter-request form had not been sent to Socorro for the signature of the prospective squadron commander. The package then was express-delivered to Socorro, where Finley signed the form and mailed the materials to National Headquarters on 5 January 2007, just before leaving on a week-long business trip.

After the airport visit, there were no more meetings in 2006, as the hectic holiday schedule came. Everyone's electronic mail address had been collected, however, and periodic updates on the paperwork status were sent out to keep everyone advised. The soon-to-be squadron received permission from Socorro County to meet at the County Annex Building on Neel Avenue, a facility that included the city-county Emergency Operations Center.

Finally, on 12 January 2007, Finley received an email message from National Headquarters announcing that the squadron was chartered. He immediately forwarded the news to all members. The official date of the charter was 11 January 2007. Within a few days, members began receiving their membership cards and packets in the mail. The Socorro Composite Squadron was, at last, official.

The first big project for the new squadron was to organize and conduct a public ceremony to receive the charter document from the New Mexico Wing Commander. The objective of holding this ceremony would be not just to receive the charter, but also to announce the squadron's existence to the community and to boost the morale of the members who had waited so long for official status. The date was set for Tuesday, 20 February 2007, and the ceremony planned for the Socorro Municipal Airport.



*Socorro Composite Squadron Chartering Ceremony, 20 February 2007. From left: SM Loradona Youngman, Capt. Joe Friel, Capt. Charles Holland, USAF, SM Dave Finley, Col. Frank Buethe, Mr. Ron Morsbach. Credit: C. Chavez*

The NM Wing Commander, Col. Frank A. Buethe, and the Wing's Director of Operations, Capt. Joe Friel, committed to attend on that date, and plans got underway. The squadron met on 1 February and 8 February to finalize plans for the event and also stayed in touch through frequent emails. Finley issued a press release about the event on 12 February, and both Socorro newspapers ran the release as a news item. Since the airport is owned by the City of Socorro, city government officials were advised of the event and invited to attend. Squadron members invited friends and acquaintances.

The weather cooperated nicely and 20 February was cool but sunny. The ceremony was scheduled for 1530, and members began arriving at the airport long before then. Youngman and Dawn Weaver, mother of one of the cadets, brought snacks and set up a refreshment table inside the airport terminal. A crowd of about 60 people waited as Buethe and Friel entered the airport's traffic pattern in a CAP Gippsland GA-8 aircraft. They landed and taxied toward the ramp, and Finley marshaled the aircraft to a parking spot in front of the building. Once the airplane was secured, the crowd was brought out on the tarmac to assemble for the presentation.

With the plane as an attractive photo backdrop, Buethe welcomed the members to Civil Air Patrol and presented the charter, an impressive document

handsomely framed. In addition to Buethe and Friel, other special guests were U.S. Air Force Capt. Charles M. Holland, commander of a satellite-tracking detachment at White Sands Missile Range, Socorro Municipal Judge Frances Cases, and Mr. Ron Morsbach, representing Congressman Steve Pearce, a former Air Force pilot. Morsbach read a letter from Pearce, in which the congressman said, "The Civil Air Patrol contributes to our safety, security and the quality of our lives ... I applaud your dedication to our country and your community by joining the CAP."

When the formal ceremony concluded, the members and their guests enjoyed the refreshments, socialized, and looked over the aircraft with great interest. The GA-8 was equipped with the CAP's ARCHER hyperspectral imaging system, a high-tech search tool.

As the day drew to a close, Buethe and Friel boarded the plane for their return to Albuquerque, and local members cleaned up inside the building. Both Socorro newspapers, *El Defensor Chieftain* and the *Mountain Mail*, later carried photographs of the event. A photograph and story appeared in the national *CAP News Online*. Everyone had enjoyed the event, and it had, as planned, greatly increased the squadron's visibility in the community. With this success behind them, the members began the formidable task of organizing, training, and building a functioning CAP squadron.

## Chapter II -- The Starting Point

The Socorro Composite Squadron began with 14 members -- eight cadets and six senior members. The cadets ranged in age from 12 to 16; the seniors from 36 to 70. Only one senior member had any experience with Civil Air Patrol, as a cadet long ago. Three senior members had military experience -- two in the U.S. Marine Corps and one in the U.S. Air Force Reserve. In all cases, however, that military experience had been more than three decades in the past. The senior members included one private pilot and two who held both commercial and amateur FCC radio operator licenses.

The senior members would have to learn on the job -- and quickly -- as they undertook the tasks of establishing the organizational infrastructure and the programs of a CAP squadron. They relied heavily on the national CAP web site and its collection of online regulations, manuals and pamphlets. In addition, they found several members of the NM Wing staff who answered a myriad of questions about the various aspects of running a squadron. They also looked for potential new recruits who could bring needed expertise.

Training was the first priority. The senior members had to complete the initial training that would permit them to officially participate in activities with cadets, then learn enough about the cadet program itself to begin teaching and mentoring the cadets.

### *Socorro Composite Squadron Charter Members*

Charles R. Chavez	Senior
David G. Finley	Senior
Glenn A. Mauger	Senior
Jon E. Thunborg	Senior
Larry R. Vanlandingham	Senior
Loradona Youngman	Senior
Joel D. Bowers	Cadet
Alexander B. Cases-Weaver	Cadet
Charles A. Chavez	Cadet
Damon B. Hewitt	Cadet
Weylin Melton	Cadet
Tray G. Mishoe	Cadet
Hanson Oxford	Cadet
Trey A. Thunborg	Cadet

## Chapter III -- Aerospace Education

The squadron's Aerospace Education (AE) program started before the charter was received -- with the meeting at Socorro Municipal Airport on 19 October 2006. The primary purpose of that airport visit was to maintain the enthusiasm of the potential cadets while awaiting formal membership, but they also got a basic introduction to airports and the chance to explore a real General Aviation aircraft. The airplane's owner, Mr. Bill Marcy, went over the parts of his aircraft in detail with the young people, introduced them to the cockpit, and answered a multitude of questions about airplanes and flying. The visit served its original purpose, leaving the potential cadets enthused and eager to learn more.

With the squadron's charter in place, Senior Member Jon Thunborg volunteered to serve as Aerospace Education Officer, and was appointed to that position. An engineer at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, Thunborg had previously worked in the aerospace industry, and could draw on that experience in preparing AE programs and activities. Finley, as a private pilot, could bring a pilot's perspective to the programs.



*Cadet Glider Flights. Credit: D. Weaver*

Youngman, with extensive experience as a homeschool teacher, helped run hands-on AE learning activities. To get an overview of the AE curriculum, Finley went through the CAP textbook *Aerospace: The Journey of Flight*, then passed the online test for the Yaeger Award.

In the Spring and early Summer of 2007, several squadron meetings featured talks and reviews on aerospace education. These covered the first sections of the official AE curriculum, including aircraft and their component parts and basic aerodynamics. In the Summer, Thunborg gave a multimedia presentation that reviewed Module I of the AE curriculum.

In May, several cadets got orientation flights in gliders at Las Cruces. At the Wing Commander's Call in July, Finley learned that the Wing had money designated for cadet orientation flights. He contacted the Wing Operations Officer, and arranged for powered-aircraft orientation flights to be conducted at Socorro Municipal Airport. These flights were held on 4 and 7 August. Prior to these flights, at the regular squadron meeting on 2 August, the syllabus for the flights and their ground instruction was presented and the cadets briefed on what they would see and do on the flights.

Pilots from Albuquerque's Squadron II flew to Socorro on 4 and 7 August, and presented the ground school and aircraft walk-arounds prior to the flights. The 4 August flights were in a Cessna 182 and the 7 August flights in a Cessna 206. Eight cadets got in the air on these two days, and all were greatly enthused about their experience. The Socorro officers were pleased to hear the pilots

remark about how well the cadets were prepared for the flights. Finley had alerted the local news media about the flights and a photo of cadets emerging from an aircraft appeared on the front page of Socorro's *El Defensor Chieftain* on 8 August.



*Cadets Bilderback and Weaver Finish Orientation Ride, 4 August 2007. Credit: D. Finley*

Soon after the chartering ceremony, Capt. Charles Holland, USAF, joined the squadron. A graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, he immediately pitched in to help with many aspects of the program. Noting that the USAF Thunderbirds were scheduled to perform at the *Amigo Airshow* in El Paso, Texas, Holland contacted the organizers and negotiated a reduced admission fee for the squadron's members. On 22 September, squadron members convoyed down to Biggs Army Airfield for the air show. The Thunderbirds were the final act of a lengthy aerial show and a very impressive collection of static displays, including WWII warbirds, current military aircraft, and NASA aircraft, including the Boeing 747 modified to carry the Space Shuttle on its back. During the road trip to and from the airshow, members who had qualified for their CAP radio-operator authorization practiced communication procedures with CAP handheld radios.

The 50th anniversary of the launching of Sputnik I, the first artificial Earth satellite, came on 4 October, a regular meeting day for the squadron. Instead of a routine meeting, however, a public open house was planned to mark the historic anniversary. Holland prepared a presentation on 50 years of space history. The lecture was scheduled in the auditorium of New Mexico Tech's Workman Center and the public was invited via a press release that appeared in local newspapers and on the NM Tech Web site. Townspeople joined squadron members and parents for the event, and enjoyed Holland's excellent presentation.

On 20 December, Holland hosted the squadron at his duty station, the Ground-based Electro-Optical Deep-Space Surveillance System (GEODSS) station at Stallion Range, on the White Sands Missile Range southeast of Socorro. This station is part of the Air Force's world-wide effort to track and catalog objects in Earth orbit. It uses three high-tech, 1-meter telescopes equipped with advanced sensors feeding data to computers to do the tracking and match detections to cataloged objects.

After meeting for dinner in San Antonio, NM, the squadron members followed Holland in a convoy to the base gate and then to his facility. There, he presented a briefing on the facility, its capabilities and its mission. Then he and other staffers led a tour, showing the telescopes, other equipment, and the control room where operators run the systems. It was a highly educational and

impressive view of a vital part of America's frontline defense.

At the end of the year, the squadron members could look back on a series of events and presentations that had brought alive several aspects of the aerospace environment and, particularly for the cadets, increased their knowledge of aviation and space operations.

## Chapter IV -- Professional Development

With the nearly-complete lack of CAP experience among the charter members, training was the obvious first priority for the new squadron. Socorro's distance from other CAP squadrons made it relatively impractical for an experienced officer from an established squadron to be assigned as commander or advisor. The charter members used the resources available on the World Wide Web to begin training themselves about the organization they were joining. Those with military experience drew upon distant memories and those with CAP mission-related skills began to apply those skills to building the squadron.



*Drill Instruction at the County Annex Building.  
Credit: D. Weaver*

Once their memberships were official, the senior members used the CAP Web resources to work on completing the requirements for Level I training. For several, their first official CAP achievement was completing the online OPSEC training. They then downloaded and studied the materials for Level I orientation and for the Cadet Protection Program Training (CPPT). Immediately following the squadron's chartering ceremony

on 20 February 2007, Col. Buethe and Capt. Friel conducted the formal training session required to complete the orientation and CPPT certification for five senior members.

A Squadron Leadership School (SLS) was scheduled at Kirtland AFB in Albuquerque on 3 and 10 March, and Finley, the squadron commander, attended and completed this training. The SLS provided valuable information about CAP organization and procedures, and Finley found this information immediately useful both for administering the squadron and for training other members.

Through the Spring of 2007, squadron meetings focused on basic training for both cadets and senior members. The lessons in the cadet leadership curriculum on CAP organization, rank structure, military customs and courtesies, etc., formed the basis of the squadron's initial training sessions. This material was new not only to the cadets but also to many of the senior members, particularly those without military experience.

Drill instruction, primarily for the cadets, began soon after chartering. Finley and Senior Member Charles R. Chavez, both former NCOs in the U.S. Marine Corps, began teaching drill fundamentals. Capt. Charles Holland brought his USAF Academy experience to help with the drill instruction. More help came when Cadet 2nd Lt. Caleb DeMarco, member of an Albuquerque squadron and a student at New Mexico Tech in Socorro, began attending meetings and helping train the cadets. Nearly every meeting included a session of drill instruction. Progress seemed quite slow at first, but by mid-June, several cadets were

sufficiently proficient to pass the practical exam on drill required for their Curry Achievement Award.

Senior members filled the principal leadership positions in the squadron, focusing on jobs that needed to be done immediately. In most cases, they chose specialty tracks corresponding to their duty positions and those specialty-track choices were entered into the National HQ database. The specialty-track pamphlets on the CAP National Web page provided guidance for their reading and mostly self-study in learning their jobs. There was much cross-fertilization across specialties as members stumbled across material relating to various jobs. In addition, senior members had to help with functions other than their formally-assigned positions. For example, nearly all helped in some aspects of building the new cadet program.

One significant milestone came on 26 April, when the first local training session presented the Level I foundations course and the CPPT course to new senior members. It was a welcome step toward self-sufficiency.

## Chapter V -- Cadet Programs

The Cadet Program was the area with which the squadron's senior members probably were least familiar in the beginning. They downloaded the CAP regulation (CAPR 52-16) and began earnestly studying it to learn how to establish and run the cadet programs. Senior Member Loradona Youngman was appointed Deputy Commander for Cadets (DCC).

Aerospace Education is covered in another chapter, but its importance as a motivator of cadets cannot be overstated. Most cadets appeared to have joined CAP based on an interest in aviation and space. Their enthusiasm level was notably higher during AE activities and sessions than in many other areas. When they got to fly in CAP aircraft for their orientation flights, their joy was evident. These flights served as long-lasting motivational tools.

For the first few months, the squadron operated under the disadvantage of lacking uniforms for the cadets. The cadet uniform program was at a standstill at the national level because of a problem with a supplier. This delayed teaching the cadets proper uniform wear and made it difficult for the group to start looking like a CAP squadron. Several senior members bought the CAP polo-shirt uniform and appeared in it at early meetings. However, in what was probably an unspoken compact, senior members did not appear in the Air Force-style uniform until at least a few cadets had received their uniforms. In the meantime, the squadron did obtain T-shirts that served as a stand-in uniform as well as part of a PT uniform. Holland designed a squadron patch that first was applied as an iron-on graphic to plain white T-shirts, then was incorporated in professionally screen-printed T-shirts purchased in bulk. The T-shirts did a great job of helping build esprit de corps while the cadets awaited their CAP uniforms.

As mentioned earlier, the cadet leadership curriculum was an early focus of training, covering the basics of CAP history and organization, military customs and courtesies, etc. For much of this, certainly the CAP-specific portions, the senior members doing the training were learning along with the cadets. Several meetings were devoted to covering and reviewing this material prior to administering the written test to the cadets.

The senior members consulted CAPP 52-18 and began coaching the cadets on the events included in the physical fitness test. The first formal physical fitness test was held in April. While some cadets did well, the test, particularly the mile run, was a significant challenge for many. For the first test, Finley and Holland ran the mile with the cadets, offering as much encouragement as possible. As the year progressed, several cadets showed improvement in this area.

The squadron was fortunate in being able to recruit an exceptionally well-qualified member to head the moral leadership training. The Rev. Phil Preston, a recently-retired minister and also a retired Air Force weather officer, eagerly accepted the invitation to join CAP. He immediately submitted his application to



*The Socorro Composite Squadron, following cadet promotion ceremony on 13 December 2007.. NM Wing Commander Col. Richard Himebrook is second from right, back row. Credit: D. May*

become a CAP chaplain, starting a thorough vetting process that required Wing and National approval. In the meantime, he was appointed moral leadership instructor and began presenting regular sessions from the CAP moral leadership curriculum.

Senior Member Charles Chavez became the unit's testing officer and, once his appointment was confirmed at National Headquarters, the squadron received a full package of cadet testing materials. Chavez, assisted by Finley and Youngman, organized the testing program, arranged a double-locked storage facility for testing materials, and began regularly administering written and practical tests required for cadet advancement.

On 9 August, the squadron marked a major milestone -- the first cadet promotion ceremony. Cadets Trey A. Thunborg and Damon B. Hewitt were promoted to Cadet Airman. To celebrate the occasion, parents, family and friends of all members were invited to the promotion ceremony, along with prominent community members. The cadets received their new insignia with appropriate military formality, and the event ended with a reception and refreshments. A

reporter from *El Defensor Chieftain* attended, and a photo of the two cadets appeared in its 11 August edition.

The second round of promotions, in which 10 cadets attained Cadet Airman rank, became a major celebration that marked a growing maturity in the squadron's cadet program as well as an exclamation point to end the year. On 13 December, New Mexico Wing Commander Col. Richard Himebrook made an official visit to the squadron. Again, parents, family and friends were invited to the event, and refreshments were provided. Himebrook addressed the squadron, bringing the members up to date on CAP developments, then took questions from the cadets. He encouraged the cadets, pointing out that he had begun his own CAP career as a cadet, and urged them to take full advantage of the program.

When the time came to promote the cadets, the Wing Commander took position at the front of the room and did the honors, allowing the cadets to receive their first promotion from a full colonel. After each cadet was brought forward, parents were invited to pin on the cadets' new rank insignia. The evening concluded with a reception. Col. Himebrook was very encouraging in his remarks about what he had seen at the Socorro Composite Squadron. A photo of the newly-promoted cadets appeared on the front page of the 29 December edition of *El Defensor Chieftain*.

## Chapter VI -- Operations

In its first year of existence, the Socorro Composite Squadron did not mount any air or ground operations or obtain any vehicles or aircraft. Its members did, however, begin the long road to gaining the training and qualifications needed to turn themselves and the squadron into a CAP operational asset.

The first step was for senior members to take the online Operations Security (OPSEC) training. Most did this quickly, and in fact, this became the first official "CAP accomplishment" for the Socorro members.

2nd Lt. Charles Chavez became the squadron Safety Officer and began presenting regular safety briefings. One briefing he arranged featured a guest speaker, a State Police captain who gave a riveting presentation on methamphetamine and its dangers.

1st Lt. Glenn Mauger brought years of experience in electronics and radio communication to the job of Communications Officer. He immediately began learning CAP communications regulations and procedures and made frequent contact with the Wing communications officer and his assistant. He presented the basic communications user training to the entire squadron, and by 15 March, 11 members had completed the training. The next month, they received their Radio Operator Authorization cards from Wing.

Mauger also worked with the Wing communications staff to obtain radios for the squadron. As a result, the squadron soon had VHF communications capability installed at the Socorro County Emergency Operations Center and a number of small UHF handie-talkies for field use.

In addition to his extensive work with the cadet program, Capt. Holland also assumed responsibility for the squadron's operations and emergency-services training. He quickly researched the requirements for General Emergency Services (GES) qualification and obtained the qualification himself. He then prepared and delivered a presentation on how to gain GES qualification, guiding the other members through the procedure. Several of the senior members qualified, some also taking and passing the Skills Evaluator Test.

Holland also coordinated the squadron's submission of applications for CAP driver's licenses for several of the senior members.

To gain specific Emergency Services qualifications beyond GES, a member must fulfill prerequisite requirements, then perform specific tasks as a trainee at either an exercise or a mission. This procedure presented a barrier, because, with all its members new to CAP, the squadron had no qualified trainers who could sign off on the training tasks. Throughout the year, it seemed that whenever the NM Wing scheduled an exercise, it was either too far away for most members or presented a scheduling conflict.

With an eye toward possible future operations at Socorro Municipal Airport (KONM) or even use of that airport as a mission base, Finley maintained contact with the city's airport manager and other officials, all of whom expressed support for CAP and its mission. The airport manager, Mr. Jay Santillanes, gave blanket

approval for the squadron to meet at the airport and use the facilities in its small terminal building at any time.

## **Chapter VII -- Administration, Personnel & Finance**

In all of these areas, CAP has long-established procedures and regulations. The challenge for the Socorro newcomers was to learn these procedures and regulations, and that meant much reading and discussion, along with study of the numerous forms used for these tasks. It probably was in this area that the new squadron could have most used the knowledge of an experienced officer who had had the luxury of learning the "CAP way" over the course of several years of service.

Throughout the year, new questions arose about how official actions are implemented and documented. These included questions about duty assignments, promoting active-duty and retired military officers to their military rank, promoting cadets, recording test results and achievements, and many others. Consulting the regulations often proved inconclusive, so the squadron's officers questioned Wing staff members and, on occasion, officers from other squadrons in New Mexico.

2nd Lt Youngman, in addition to serving as DCC, became the Administration Officer and took charge of member records, cadet test scores, attendance records, and numerous other details. Finley initiated the squadron's first official correspondence with a request for approval of the squadron patch designed by Holland. The first official letter worked -- the Wing Commander approved the patch.

Soon after the first group of senior members completed their Level I training, they received duty assignments. With only five such members, however, not all positions available in a squadron's organizational chart could be filled. The positions deemed most vital were filled, with several members serving in more than one assignment. As more senior members joined and completed the required training, additional positions were filled.

The most lengthy duty-assignment process turned out to be that for the chaplain. The Rev. Preston joined in March and immediately submitted an application for appointment as a CAP chaplain. After several months, his application was returned from National HQ with a notation that the form he had used was obsolete. He reapplied, using the new form, but still had heard nothing when the year ended. In the meantime, he was appointed moral leadership instructor, a post the squadron commander could assign. Preston finally learned that he had been appointed a chaplain the following year when he renewed his membership -- and he learned that the appointment had been made in October!

Once the Level I training was complete and recorded at National HQ, several senior members received promotions. In April, Mauger was promoted to first lieutenant based on the mission-related skill represented by his FCC General Radiotelephone Operator License, and Finley (who also held that FCC license) received the same rank based on his appointment as squadron commander. In June, Holland became a CAP captain based on his holding the same rank as an active-duty USAF officer, and Preston became a CAP major because he retired from the USAF at that rank. In July, Youngman, Chavez and Thunborg, having

completed their required six months' time in grade as SMs, received duty-performance promotions to second lieutenant. They were followed by SMs Dawn Weaver and Judy Ives, who became second lieutenants in October.

The New Mexico Wing announced that Wing Banking would become mandatory on 1 October. Because of this, and on verbal advice from the Wing Finance Officer, the squadron did not establish any local bank accounts or mount any fund-raising efforts before then. In the absence of operations, there were few expenses, and the members bore those costs themselves. In preparation for Wing Banking, 2nd Lt Dawn Weaver was appointed Finance Officer and began training herself in CAP financial procedures. A Finance Committee was formed, and the Wing Banking program became fully functional early in 2008.

At the end of the year, membership had grown from the original 14 to 25 -- 10 seniors and 15 cadets. The squadron staff consisted of the following:

1st Lt David G. Finley	Commander Public Affairs Officer Historian
2nd Lt Loradona Youngman	Deputy Commander for Cadets Administrative Officer
Capt Charles M. Holland	Deputy Commander for Seniors Operations Officer Emergency Services Officer
Major Phil Preston	Moral Leadership Instructor
2nd Lt Charles R. Chavez	Safety Officer Testing Officer
1st Lt Glenn Mauger	Communications Officer
2nd Lt Jon Thunborg	Aerospace Education Officer
2nd Lt Dawn Weaver	Finance Officer
2nd Lt Judy Ives	Assistant Operations Officer
C/2nd Lt Caleb DeMarco	Cadet Commander

## **List of Supporting Documents**

Message from NHQ announcing chartering

Squadron commander's message to members

Press Release announcing chartering ceremony

Letter to Wing Commander requesting approval of squadron patch design

Message approving patch design

Cadet Promotion Order 07-1

Cadet Promotion Order 07-2