

Cadet Squadron Renovates Home Base in Nation's Oldest Control Tower

By Minnie Lamberth



This historic control tower at Cincinnati's Lunken Field — the oldest standing control tower in the United States — has been home to the Lunken Cadet Squadron for nearly 15 years now. Members recently renovated the structure. Their renovations included adding window tinting, which — on this sunny day — reflect a panoramic view of the clouds.

Photo by Capt. Eric Reiman, Ohio Wing

It's *déjà vu* all over again.

When Capt. Michael Purvis joined Civil Air Patrol as a 12-year-old cadet in 2000, he helped his squadron renovate the control tower at Lunken Field, a municipal airport in Cincinnati. Now that he's assumed the role as commander of Lunken Cadet Squadron, he's leading the crew through a second round of renovations.

"I've spent half my life in this program so far," Purvis said. "We were working on this renovation when I started as a cadet. When I took over squadron command last year, we decided to start things off by renovating again."

The renovation project has an air of historical significance. The tower at Lunken Field is the oldest standing control tower in the United States. Though it hasn't been in use as a control tower for years, in the late 1990s the Ohio Wing squadron was offered the chance to take it over and use it as its headquarters.

Members renovated the tower at that time. Now, 12 years later, additional improvements were needed.

"We gained tenancy of the tower just before I joined CAP in 1999," said Capt. Eric Reiman, who later served as squadron commander. "Originally, it had been a storage facility for the city of Cincinnati. We use it for administration, recruiting and aerospace classes."

During the first renovation, Reiman said, the squadron installed drywall and painted it, built countertops and sealed the floor. "It was rundown. We cleaned up everything," he said.

But with the passage of time, sun damage and roof



Photo by Capt. Eric Reiman, Ohio Wing



Photo by Capt. John Keating, Ohio Wing

Capt. Michael Purvis, Lunken Cadet Squadron commander, takes a ride in a UH-1N Iroquois.

Cadet 2nd Lt. Jordan Baker, left, Cadet Chief Master Sgt. Daniel Luddeke and Cadet 2nd Lt. Jacob Baker are members of the Lunken Cadet Squadron, headquartered in the historic control tower of Cincinnati's Lunken Field.

leaks there were new needs. While the city took care of patching the roof, the cadet squadron has taken on interior renovations.

"Over the years, we didn't have any type of window tint," Reiman said. "It's been 12 years of sun damage."

Reiman served as squadron commander from 2008-2012 until going inactive to attend the local Police Academy. That's when Purvis took command.

"The sun damage and roof leaks completely destroyed the countertops," Purvis said. "We tried to figure out how best to renovate this time around so we wouldn't have to come back and do this again so soon."

The squadron members replaced drywall, sanded countertops and added primer, a coat of blue paint and a clear topcoat. They also added an air conditioner, display monitor, aviation band radio and weather station.

"In the middle of the center countertop, we placed the Civil Air Patrol seal, then clear-coated over that," Purvis added.



Cadets from the Lunken Cadet Squadron (in uniform) await their scheduled orientation flights aboard the CAP plane visible from the roof of the unit's historic control tower headquarters at Cincinnati's Lunken Field. Cadets in civilian clothes discuss improvements being made to the tower while taking a break from the work.

The renovation was more than a one- or two-person effort. “We’ve had the whole squadron involved,” Purvis said. “Every person in the squadron has had hands on the renovation.” Some adult members donated materials as well as time.

For example, Capt. John Keating donated an air conditioner and a flat-screen TV to be used as an aerospace education tool.

Keating, the squadron’s vice commander, sees the tower as a point of pride as well as a valuable asset. “Our tower has played no small part in our ability to grow the squadron by 35 percent over 2011,” he said.

“Our location at an airport (and in a control tower no less) meant we had ample resources to expand our aerospace education and orientation-ride activities,”

Keating said. “From our tower, we have spotted a transiting Huey flown by a graduate of the Air Force Academy, a C-130 flown by the Kentucky Air National Guard, a B-17 offering rides, T-45 Navy Trainers in town to fly over a Bengals game, F-18s preparing to fly

in formation over Neil Armstrong’s funeral and numerous other aircraft.

“We have been able to weave these into our aerospace education presentations and even get a look at many of the aircraft,” Keating said.

Just as Purvis and Reiman had done a dozen years earlier, cadets participated in the latest renovation as well. For example, Cadet Chief Master Sgt. Daniel Luddeke, who joined CAP in August 2011, helped hang drywall and paint counters. “This is actually one of my first times doing a big renovation project like this,” Luddeke said.

Part of the reason for his involvement has been his work toward a community

service ribbon. But his other motivation was an eye toward history — and to the future.

“I wanted to be a part of this,” he said. “The tower is part of our squadron’s history. I wanted to help with something for my squadron.” ▲



Photo by Capt. Eric Reiman, Ohio Wing

Capt. John Keating, seen here piloting a CAP plane, donated an air conditioner and a flat-screen TV for the control tower, which he sees as a valuable asset for the Lunken Cadet Squadron. The unit’s membership grew by 35 percent last year.