



Experimental Aircraft Association

Chapter 135

News



Number Eight

August 2007

Next Chapter Meeting

will be held

Saturday - August 11, 2007

Family, kids, spouses invited

in Maintenance Hanger (Exec 1)

2:00 p.m. fly-in

Family Picnic 5:00 p.m.

Chapter provides meat, drinks, table service, etc.

Bring a side dish to share.

Bring your lawn chairs

Five door prizes will be given out (four gift certificates and an F-16 wheel chock that has seen action overseas)

Upcoming Events:

- **August 11, 2007** - Annual EAA Picnic & Door prize
- **August 18, 2007** - Young Eagles Ames - Contact Scott Olson
- **August 24, 25, 26, 2007** - Replica Fighters "Flight of the Eagles" fly-in Osceola airport - I75
- **August 25, 2007 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon** - Young Eagles Knoxville

and sanding.

I also took my grandson Talan for his first plane ride; he didn't care for the headsets so I kept the engine powered back to a very low setting so it would be easy on his ears. He seemed to enjoy it. That's Allison in the picture with him.

Before Oshkosh Marc, Matt and I flew down to Corydon to Benny Davis's private field to see what was going

Presidents Position

by Dave Kalwishky

I am writing this after returning home from a week at Oshkosh and boy am I tired. I had a great time this year and ran into a number of Chapter 135 members despite the fact that I did not make it by the base camp. This year we pulled a camper up and while that was fun I am defiantly going to fly up next year, I miss the chaos of flying into AirVenture ☺

As I walked around and looked at what the vendors had to offer I thought to myself that I'm glad I'm not in Peter's shoes with having to pick something for my plane. There are so many choices out there for the experimental market.

Terri and Allison went with me again

this year; Allison got to make a small propeller by doing A LOT of whittling



Talan's first flight

on. Benny has quite a place and a collection of all kinds of things both aviation and non aviation related. Marc got to go flying with Benny in his Cub and had a great time, he sure had a big smile when they got back.



Allison making a prop

“Schoenfeldt Firecracker” Replica Arrives in Oshkosh

From EAA e-hotline website



Keith Rider R-4 “Schoenfeldt Firecracker”
Photo by H.G. Frautschy



Marc on tractor

Noted race pilot Skip Holm landed at Oshkosh’s Wittman Field this morning in the Keith Rider R-4 “Schoenfeldt Firecracker,” a replica racer from the Golden Age of Air Racing. The original 1936 aircraft was flown to many top-three finishes in the years just prior to World War II. It was first flown by accomplished race pilot Roger Don Rae, then Tony LeVier placed first in the 1938 Greve Trophy race and second in the 1939 National Air Races behind Roscoe Turner in the Turner-Laird Special.

Retired Air Force Maj. General Pat Halloran, who has flown the Firecracker nearly 60 hours since it’s completion last year, spearheaded this replica project, which is owned by the Thomas Wathen Foundation. Bruce and Evan McCombs, as well as Stan Rackleff, also worked on the project in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The airplane will be on display in the Vintage Aircraft area, just south of AeroShell Square.

Scales Rental Info

Scales going in this week for certification, probably be available again after the weekend.

All scale rentals require check for \$200.deposit (Will be returned, uncashed, upon timely scale return).

Three day rentals. May be extended for thee additional days at no charge, if there are no other conflicting requests for their use, with notification by phone. Otherwise late fee of \$100 per day applies.

All checks to be made out to “J.M. Abrahams / scale rental”.

Chapter 135 members (must be member 3 months prior to rental date.) ..\$25.00 for 3 days

National EAA member but not Chapter 135 member\$75.00 for 3 days

A&P or FBO rate\$125.00 for 3 days

Copy of rental agreement available by fax or email by calling Mike Abrahams at 515-287-3840 or emal to ppcmike@hotmail.com

Scales are kept at Phil Patterson, Corp. / 4214 Fleur Dr., Suite 11 / Des Moines, IA 50321 (two blocks north of N.E. corner of the Des Moines Int’l Airport.

EAA MOURNS LOSS OF ED MARQUART

From EAA e-hotline website



Edwin E. "Ed" Marquart, a prominent figure of the early homebuilt movement and EAA Chapter One, died peacefully of natural causes early Wednesday morning, July 4, at the age of 85. Ed worked at historic Flabob Airport, Riverside, California, from 1955 until two weeks ago. Nearly 500 plan sets of his most popular design, the MA-5 Charger biplane, were sold. He was one of the most famous designer-builders of the homebuilt movement. Ed was EAA Member #198.

Ed was born in Ohio in June, 1922. During World War II he joined the Navy, and was a A plank holder@ (original crew) of the U.S.S. Shangri-La, CV-38, the Essex-class carrier built to replace the Hornet when she was lost in action. Ed served aboard the Shangri-La as an aviation machinist mate through action off Japan until war=s end. After the war, he returned to the Philadelphia area where he used his skills at various aircraft manufacturers including Piasecki Helicopter and Lanier Aircraft Corporation, makers of the innovative Paraplane.

Ed was an early member (number 198) of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA), and when he moved to Southern California in 1955 one of his first stops was at Flabob Airport, home of Chapter One of EAA. He was soon hired by Ray Stits, then the leading supplier of airplane kits for homebuilders, and worked with Ray for two years building kits. Stits remembers

that he and Ed, working seven days a week and many nights, built the first SA-5 Flut-R-Bug in 30 days. When Ray stopped producing kits to devote himself to the Poly-Fiber covering process, Ed went into business for himself at Flabob, opening his shop on August 1, 1958.

His first airplane was the MA-3 Maverick, a single-place built as a proof of concept. In

2006, Ed had a chance to purchase the original MA-3, an attractive little biplane which now rests in Ed=s Flabob Hangar. Ed then designed the single-place MA-4 Lancer and the two-place MA-5 Charger, his most successful design, with more than one hundred completed examples. A handsome swept-wing biplane, with graceful lines and excellent performance, the Charger continues to be built. Ed flew the prototype to Oshkosh >71, where it was an immediate hit, and ultimately sold almost 500 plan sets. One Charger, N31DD, built by Dave Davidson of Texas, was the first biplane to solo both ways across the Atlantic.

In addition to providing plans and parts for his own designs, Ed built custom parts for countless homebuilders. In the 1970s, he teamed up with Bill Turner, for whom he built the replica Brown racer Miss Los Angeles, followed by a long line of replica golden age air racers, including a Gee Bee model Z, the Miles and Atwood Special, and major parts of the de Havilland Comet and Laird-Turner Meteor projects built at Flabob. He rebuilt the front section of Benny Howard=s racer Pete, when Pete=s fuselage was extracted from Paul Poberezny=s Li=l Audrey, and helped with the restoration of L=il Audrey, now in the EAA Museum in Oshkosh.

Until a few weeks ago Ed worked daily on his restoration of a Buhl CA-3C Sport Airsedan, which is only one of two known to

exist, and which was nearing completion in 2007. He had numerous other projects, including a Fairchild 22.

Ed was never too busy to lend a hand or give sound advice to homebuilders and restorers. He served as the second President of EAA Chapter One, and was awarded the Cliff Henderson Award in 1996. Almost any day he could be found at lunch at the long pilots= table of the Flabob Airport Caf , where his inexhaustible store of flying stories and aircraft lore were at the service of all who were interested.

EAA Founder and Chairman Paul Poberezny said Ed Marquart was one of the important people who made Flabob such an important location for the homebuilt movement, especially in EAA=s early years.

"Like so many of the fellows at the beginning of our organization, Ed liked the idea of forming EAA and what it had to offer, and he contributed a lot to the movement," he said. "People are still building his airplanes, scratch-built rather than assembly. Back in Riverside, he and Ray Stits and all those fellows at the airport created a hotbed of homebuilding as a result of the EAA.

"That group contributed a great deal to support my beliefs of putting hand and mind to work and being creative. They set a standard for homebuilders for the quality of designs and airplanes."

EAA President Tom Poberezny spoke on behalf of the organization, stating, "We are truly saddened by the passing of one of our early members."



FAA to Issue E-LSA Registrations at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh

From EAA e-hotline website



In a program similar to what was done at Lakeland earlier this year, the FAA will provide on-site registration for a limited number of EAA members who wish to transition an ultralight to the experimental light-sport aircraft (E-LSA) category at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2007. EAA members must sign up in advance for an appointment at the FAA Building, where an FAA employee will review and process their registration materials for issuance of an N-number. Appointments are available during the first two days of AirVenture, July 23-24.

Those who take advantage of this special service will help ensure they'll meet the January 31, 2008, conversion deadline, as well as decrease turnaround time for registering their E-LSA.

Here is how to obtain an appointment:

Contact EAA no later than July 20, 2007, by sending an e-mail to tbogenhagen@eaa.org, with "AirVenture E-LSA Registration" in the subject line. Provide your name, address, phone, e-mail address and EAA membership number. After your information is verified, EAA will return an e-mail assigning your appointment time with the FAA. Plan to have your registration forms completed and ready to turn in to the FAA at your scheduled time.

EAA's E-LSA conversion kit has all the necessary forms and can be ordered by calling 800-843-3612, or through the EAA website.

This EAA/FAA service will help individuals register their E-LSA in less time and assure they do not have unnecessary delays because of improperly completed paperwork. If you already have a reserved N-number, you will need to bring evidence of that, otherwise you will be assigned the next available N-number.

E-LSA Conversion Reminder

Individuals converting aircraft into an experimental light-sport aircraft (E-LSA) have until January 31, 2008, to complete the E-LSA registration, the E-LSA airworthiness inspection, and the E-LSA certification process. The FAA will guarantee that your registration and certification packet will be reviewed and your E-LSA aircraft inspected in sufficient time to meet the January 2008 deadline if applicants meet the following three deadlines.

By August 15, 2007, you submit your aircraft registration (N-number) request to the Aircraft Registration office, and;

By October 1, 2007, you call your local E-LSA DAR to schedule your E-LSA airworthiness inspection, and;

By November 30, 2007, you submit your aircraft airworthiness certification request packet to either an FAA FSDO, an FAA MIDO, or your local E-LSA DAR. Ask your local E-LSA DAR which office should receive this packet.

If you fail to complete the above steps, the FAA cannot guarantee they'll be able to complete your E-LSA registration and certification inspection process prior to the January 31, 2008, deadline.

If you need assistance to convert your aircraft to an E-LSA, contact EAA at 877-359-1232.

The FAA Light-Sport Aircraft Branch Office (405-954-6400) is also available to answer your E-LSA certification conversion questions and to help you locate the nearest E-LSA DAR qualified to inspect your aircraft.

ANOTHER EPIC JET MODEL MAKES MAIDEN FLIGHT

From AOPA Website



The very light jet race has gathered such momentum that customers are willing to build their own. That's at least the business model behind Epic Aircraft. On July 6, the company's second jet, the single-engine Epic Victory, made its maiden flight from Redmond, Oregon, just 202 days after design work began on a clean sheet of paper. It flew one month after the Epic Elite, its twin-engine sibling. How'd they do that? Epic spokesman Lyn Freeman said it was a combination of talent and focus. Both aircraft are powered by Williams International engines and will be initially offered under a builder-assist program. The company plans to pursue type certification after the jets prove themselves. So, for a million dollars (\$1.6 million for the twin) and plenty of your own sweat, you can have a 320-knot, four- to five-seat Experimental jet airplane with an all-glass Garmin instrument panel. Legally, however, the owner-builder also becomes the manufacturer and accepts liability. Epic plans to deliver at least six kits to customers by the end of the year. Both aircraft will be on display at Oshkosh. Epic also has a line of turboprop aircraft.

Balloonist Wannabe Logs 193 Miles in Lawn Chair

From EAA e-hotline website
“Pilot” Likens Flight to “Jumping on Clouds”



Following in the high-flying footsteps of the infamous “Lawn Chair Larry,” an Oregon man took to the skies last weekend with

105 helium balloons and a lawn chair. Kent Couch was a little better prepared than Larry Walters (shown at right), who achieved an altitude of about 16,000 feet in a Sears lawn chair and 45 weather balloons in 1982. Walters’ feat earned him a \$1,500 fine from the Federal Aviation Administration, and an honorary Darwin Award.

Couch loaded his lawn chair with the requisite snacks, but also instruments to monitor his altitude and speed, a global positioning device, digital camcorder, cell phone and a parachute. He used five gallon plastic bags filled with water for ballast -- complete with a release spigot, according to the Associated Press.

“When you’re a little kid and you’re holding a helium balloon, it has to cross your mind,” he told the Bend (OR) Bulletin. “When you’re laying in the grass on a summer day, and you see the clouds, you wish you could jump on them. This is as close as you can come to jumping on them. It’s just like that.”

This flight is actually Couch’s second. Last September, he remained airborne for six hours in a similar contraption. He had to use his parachute that time, when he put himself into a rapid descent by firing one too many BBs at his balloons.

This time, he reconfigured his bal-

loons and fixed it where he had some control over his helium release rather than just cutting a balloon loose.

His trip lasted nine hours and 193 miles, according to the AP. He ended up in a farm field, short of his destination, but happy with the result.

“It was beautiful -- beautiful,” he told KTVZ-TV. He said the flight, overall, was uneventful with a bit of turbulence, similar to a real hot-air balloon setting down.

To prove he did actually make the flight, local pilot Brandon Wilcox flew a plane nearby and took photos.

After achieving altitudes of 13,000 feet, according to ABC News, Couch decided to land when he did because he was down to eight pounds of ballast and was running low on water. He considered the rugged terrain where he was, including Hells Canyon, and decided to set down.

He decreased his altitude by popping balloons and ended up with a few rope burns. When he reached the ground and stood up, the chair, video camera and remaining balloons took off again - if anyone finds them, he’d like to have them back, please.

The 47-year-old gas station owner’s wife, Susan, followed her husband on his trip to make sure he made out all right. She, their Chihuahua, Isabella, and a few more family and friends formed a chase caravan.

“I was terrified, but I was being supportive,” she said. “I know once something gets in his mind he’s not going to forget it.”

“I know he’d be thinking about it more and more, it would always be on his mind,” she said.

Couch said he could hear children and cattle during his trip and described it as a serene experience, even passing through clouds. Will he be going up again?

He said it’s up to his wife but she isn’t so sure she’s up to another trip and helium balloons can be very expensive.

“This way, at least he’s fulfilled his dream,” she said.

QUEST KODIAK RECEIVES TYPE CERTIFICATE

From AOPA Website



Quest KodiakQuest Aircraft Company’s Kodiak, a single-engine heavy hauler turboprop, has received FAA type certification. What started out as a cargo aircraft for missionaries flying to narrow, short, sloping mountain runways has attracted sales from utility airlines and individuals needing to take their mountain bikes and camping gear to backcountry sites. The production-conforming 10-passenger Kodiak flew earlier this year. It can take off in less than 700 feet at a gross weight of 6,750 pounds and a useful load of 3,450 pounds (it carries 320 gallons of jet fuel) and climb at 1,700 fpm. Certification includes single-pilot VFR/IFR day and night operations.

TEXAS COMPANY OFFERS CUB KITS

From AOPA Website

For those who like to turn their own wrenches, Texas Sport Aircraft Company is now offering Texas Sport kits. The airplane is based on the production American Legend Cub. Builders can construct the Texas Sport under light sport aircraft (LSA) rules by keeping the gross weight down to 1,320 pounds. That way, it can be flown by sport pilots. Or it can be flown at a gross weight of 1,600 pounds, requiring a private pilot certificate. Base price for the kit is \$37,600, not including engine, electrical components, avionics, and paint. Texas Sport officials said they have a 14- or 21-day builder-assist program.

Letter from Connie Younger

Many of you know Connie Younger, he runs the FBO at Boone. Connie is up in Alaska this summer flying people on sightseeing flights. This is a letter he sent describing what his typical day is like. I thought some of you might be interested in it so I've gotten his permission to have it reprinted here.

July 01, 2007

Hello, everyone...

My email service is nearly non-existent. I only have access after 11 pm and just don't dare stay up that late. So, I'm having Lisa forward this to you all. I talk to her via Verizon cell phone almost daily and you can pass along information through her if you want. Anyway, I've prepared a little "typical day" thing to give you an idea what a flight around McKinley is like. It goes like this!

0800-head for the "strip." Fuel airplanes, wash windows and preflight. To fuel them, we plug the 12-volt pump into a vehicle. We have a 2000 gallon tank at the strip. A fuel truck comes by once-in-a-while (at night) and fills the tank with aviation fuel. The park doesn't allow any service vehicles on the park road between 0600 and 2200 so he has to come into Kantishna one night and go back the next.

Around 0900 or 0930 we will do our first "Flight-See." Matt has visited the other four lodges and drummed up some business for us. If the weather is OK, we'll launch with anywhere between 5 and 15 passengers (1-3 Cessna 206's) to go "see the hill." (Denali or Mt. McKinley, depending on which name you prefer). I'll get 5 folks in the 206 and explain how to open doors, fasten and unfasten belts, location of emergency equipment and sick sacks and how to use the headsets. Part of my ritual goes like this:

"Hi, I'm Connie. The rules for this flight are no smoking, keep belts on and no running up and down the aisle. No food will be served on this flight, but if you feel the urge to get

rid of some, locate the little baggie nearest you and deposit it there. You won't want to share sick sacks. I plan to enjoy retirement, so this will be a very safe flight. If the Mountain weather is good, I'll show you a mush of it as I can."

I close the doors, start the engine, set the flaps (very important to set the flaps to 20 degrees), confirm that all is ready and off we go. I show them an old silver mine on Brooker Mountain and the accompanying landing strip. *"Gold, silver and antimony were mined in this area. I always thought antimony was what one person gave the other after the divorce (joke). Actually, antimony is mixed with lead to harden it and was in great demand during WW2."*

As I cross the confluence of the Muddy and the McKinley Rivers, I explain, *"These are called braided rivers due to the way the channel wanders back and forth, crossing many times and looking as if someone braided them. The McKinley gets its water from the tow, or bottom end, of the Muldrow Glacier about 20 miles upstream on our left. The glacier is covered with hundreds of feet of rock, sand, etc. As a glacier melts, this stuff (moraine) falls into the river and tends to block the river, forcing it to create a new channel (or braid.) Notice all the kettle ponds below us. They were gouged out by a glacier many years ago. The glacier has since melted but some of the deeper ponds still have remains of the original glacier on the bottom!"* I have a hard time believing this part and afterwards pass along a disclaimer that I'm just passing on what I've heard and read and should not in any way be considered an authority on any of the things I'm telling them.

We're up to 7000' or 8000' MSL as we reach the top of the Peters Glacier. *"These smaller mountains are sedimentary rock. They were formed on the ocean floor but got stood up on end when the Pacific Plate slid under Alaska. You can see the vertical lines that once were horizontal layers on the ocean floor. In front of us is the Wickersham Wall. In 1903, Judge*

Wickersham came down here from Fairbanks with the intention of climbing Denali. He made it up to nearly this high and changed his mind. He was quoted as saying he didn't think the mountain would ever be climbed from the North side. He was right for 60 years. It was successfully climbed in 1963."

We continue up the Peters to Kahiltna Pass and go through at 12,000 feet MSL. *"Below and above us on the left you can see climbers working their way up or down the mountain. They flew up from Talkeetna in a ski plane, landed on Kahiltna Glacier at Base Camp (700' MSL) where they left half of their supplies and took the other half up to a higher camp site. Then they go back and get the rest and bring it up. So they really have to climb a lot of mountain twice. They will stay in various camps for a few days to get acclimated to the altitude or wait out a storm. It generally takes around 3 weeks to make it up and back. They smell a lot better going up than coming down!"*

"The mountain ahead and to the right is Mt. Foracre. It's 17,000 feet tall but doesn't get much attention with Denali being taller and so close by. Denali is the tallest mountain in north America and one of the tallest in the world. It's base is at 2000 feet above sea level and the summit is at 20,320 feet, giving it over 18,000 feet of vertical rise! On our left is Mt. Frances and on the south side of it you can see skid marks in the snow where the ski planes land and take off, leaving folks at base camp. You can see the trail in the snow where the climbers made their way up the glacier trying to avoid the many crevasses. In front of us is Mt. Hunter. It is not as tall as Denali but much more difficult to climb. We will go through North Hunter Pass into the Ruth Amphitheater. If you are not scared of heights, you can look down on the right at the big drop-off. I'll just keep looking for traffic. If you look carefully ahead on the right, you can see more skid

Continued on page 8

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

from the Iowa Department of Transportation Office of Aviation web site

EVENT	DATE	DETAILS
<u>August 2007</u>		
3rd Bi- Annual Fly-In / Drive-In / Air Show Event	8/12	Manchester Municipal Airport 11:00a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Pilots in command eat FREE Air Show starts at 1:00 p.m. 563-927-3636 (Marty Kelzer) mkelzer@iowatelecom.net
Humboldt Rotary Flight Breakfast	8/12	Humboldt Municipal Airport 7:30 a.m. – Noon Pilots in command eat FREE 515-332-4012 (Dean Telford) telford@trvnet.net
Fly-In / Drive-In Pancake Breakfast	8/19	Monona Municipal Airport 7:00 a.m. – Noon Pilots in command eat FREE 563-539-2561 (Sharon DeSotel)
Fly-In Breakfast	8/19	Mapleton Municipal Airport 7:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. All Fly-Ins eat FREE 712-881-2764 (Bill Ashley)
Fly-In Breakfast	8/19	Council Bluffs Municipal Airport 8:00 a.m. – Noon 712-323-2173 (Lisa Smith)
29th Annual Fly-In Breakfast	8/26	Iowa City Municipal Airport 7:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Hosted by: Iowa City Sertoma Clubs 319-338-9222 (Jim McCarragher) jamesm@meardonlaw.com
15th Annual Fly-In	8/26	Greenfield Municipal Airport 7:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. 641-343-7184 (Lee Ann Nelson) aviation@iowatelecom.net
<u>September 2007</u>		
Masonic Lodge Flight Breakfast	9/9	Carroll Municipal Airport 7:00 a.m. - noon Pilots and passenger eat FREE 712-792-4980 (Don Mensen)
Annual Algona Rotary Flight Breakfast	9/9	Algona Municipal Airport 7:00 a.m. - noon 515-295-7492 (Jim Kohlhaas) algonaaero@trvnet.net
Tommy Martin Memorial Fly-In Breakfast	9/9	South Sioux City, NE Martin Airfield (7K8) 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. Pilots in command eat FREE ralter@cableone.net

Letter from Connie Younger
Continued from page 6

marks in the snow where ski planes are landing at Don Sheldon's mountain house. I think you can actually stay there overnight. It would be interesting listening to the avalanches and glaciers grinding their way down the mountain."

From the Amphitheater we go through the Tralika col. COL is another word for pass. Flying down the Tralika, I point out the medial moraine which is a black centerline on the glacier caused by two glaciers coming together and a spot on the wall of Mt. Brooks, where it looks like Big Foot is greeting us. An avalanche left the image of him in black looking out through the white snow and ice. As we pass over the Muldrow Glacier I point out the bathtub ring on the mountain walls showing how much higher the glacier used to be than it is at present. On the way back to Kantishna and if time permits, I'll fly over the Red Top Mine that was worked by Joe and Fanny Quigely. "The story about them is that Joe got his leg broken badly and Fanny got him out of the mine and to Fairbanks where Joe fell in love with his nurse and never came back. Fanny was famous for her hospitality and cooking (potato beer), her fantastic vegetable gardens, as a hunter and a miner but mostly for her cussing.

She could cuss better than almost any man." Her cabin where she died in her sleep at age 73 is located close to the Kantishna strip.

I get a wind check from KAT (Kantishna Air Taxi) on company frequency and land uphill unless the winds are 15 or more knots from the west. I collect \$175 from each of the five passengers and they all say it was worth every penny! Fuel the airplane, and do to again. **"Hi, I'm Connie. The rules for this flight are no smoking..."**

As much fun as it is to fly up here, I miss Iowa, Lisa, the Municipal Band and all you folks. We're 15% done with the season, but who's counting? I am.

Connie



Marc flying with Benny

'Sun-Times' editorial supports GA position on FAA funding

From AOPA Website

A major Chicago media outlet has decided that the facts support general aviation's position on the FAA funding debate.

The Sun-Times News Group editorial board (the editorial voice for the Chicago Sun-Times, the Daily Southtown, and several other newspapers serving the greater Chicago area) recently met with a representative for the airlines and then later with AOPA President Phil Boyer. In the board's editorial following the meetings, it noted that the airlines and the FAA want "user fees on private planes to make them cough up more" toward the cost of the NextGen air traffic control modernization project.

"But general aviation and corporate jet advocates don't concede that they are not paying their fair share," said the editorial writers. "They say user fees will cripple private aviation — at great cost to smaller airports and rural communities that rely on such planes. Some of them believe the current taxes they and the airlines pay will be adequate to fund the new system; but if taxes have to go up, they favor an increase in the fuel tax that they now pay."

The editorial notes that the number of private aircraft will likely increase, placing greater demands on the ATC system. "They should bear more of the costs. And if user fees are so crippling, perhaps higher fuel taxes can be the way to get them to shoulder a greater share."

Said Boyer, "That's exactly why the GA community has endorsed H.R.2881, the House version of the FAA funding bill. We agree that the ATC system needs to be modernized, but we have always said that it could be done within the existing tax structure. And we're willing to accept an inflation-adjusted fuel tax increase to make it happen, which is what the House bill proposes to do."

This isn't the first time that the Sun-Times News Group editorial board has weighed the facts and sided with general aviation. They supported maintaining Chicago's "lakefront jewel" Meigs Field and roundly condemned Mayor Richard M. Daley after his midnight raid that destroyed the airport.

GA must pay, senators say

From AOPA Website

User fees or bust. Two powerful senators drew a line in the sand on July 12 and made it clear that there would be severe penalties if their FAA funding bill (S.1300) is changed or disapproved.

“Commercial airline passengers shouldn’t continue to subsidize corporate jets,” said aviation subcommittee Chairman John D. Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) during a Senate Finance Committee hearing. “If we don’t restore equity, then as chairman of this aviation subcommittee, I will address the equity issue by looking for ways to limit general aviation access to congested airspace.”

Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) said, “We’re going to have a fair bill or no bill, and I’m prepared to go to the mat.”

But fair can be in the eyes of the beholder. While some of the senators and the witnesses argued that the airlines pay more than their fair share to support the air traffic control system, Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) noted that, “We’ve had preferential tax treatment for the airlines, particularly in pensions.”

And while Sen. Lott chastised most of the aviation community for being unwilling to pay more, Sen. Roberts said that wasn’t the case for GA.

“The general aviation community is not unreceptive to an increase in the gas tax,” said Roberts. “They’re for modernization as well.”

While Sen. Rockefeller believes that the proposed \$25 per flight user fee for turbine aircraft “isn’t exactly a backbreaker,” and that “90 percent of general aviation aircraft are excluded” from paying, Sen. Roberts said, “It’s not the fee, it is the structure. All of general aviation is opposed to the fee, even the 90 percent that are exempt.”

And while neither Rockefeller nor Lott mentioned that S.1300 would eliminate the 4.3 cents per gallon fuel tax the airlines currently pay, it didn’t slip past Roberts or Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.)

“I don’t think that giving the airlines a tax break is the best way to start modernization,” said Roberts.

Sen. Bingaman questioned, with all that the FAA was trying to accomplish, “why would you eliminate the fuel tax on the airlines?” He noted that the ATC user fee would likely discourage flights to smaller communities. And witness Gerald Dillingham of the Government Accountability Office agreed, noting that regional air carrier profits are so slim that “the \$25 fee could put them over the edge.”

Dillingham restated his contention from previous hearings, saying that the current excise tax-based funding system “could support all FAA activities, including NextGen” — the ATC modernization program. And he said that forecasted revenues to the aviation trust fund could support increased FAA spending.

Peter R. Orszag, director of the Congressional Budget Office, said that with a forecast 7 percent annual growth in aviation tax revenues, the trust fund would bring in some \$158 billion over the next 10 years, versus an inflation-adjusted FAA budget baseline of \$135 billion. “We [the FAA] don’t feel starved for funds,” said FAA Administrator Marion Blakey in response to a question from Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.).

“I can’t begin to tell you how strongly Sen. Rockefeller feels about the \$25 ATC modernization surcharge or user fee,” said AOPA President Phil Boyer. “And we have tried to explain to him how dead set we are against any user fee on any segment of aviation, regardless of the amount.”

“But general aviation is willing to contribute more toward system modernization through the fuel. That’s why we have endorsed H.R.2881, the House FAA funding bill. We would ask the Senate to give fair consideration to the taxing and funding concepts in that bill.”

The funding authority for the FAA and the government’s ability to collect aviation taxes will expire in about 80 days. If an FAA funding bill (called a “reauthorization bill”) is not approved

before then, the FAA could be forced to stop operations.

Pilots remain frustrated with FSS system

From AOPA Website

At least the steep spiral has stopped, but things are far from getting better for Lockheed Martin’s handling of the flight service station (FSS) system.

A recent survey among pilots shows that there were no significant changes in briefer professionalism, knowledge of local geography, and familiarity with equipment. Nearly half rated briefer meteorological knowledge as “poor” or “very poor.” The June 22 survey was a follow-up to one conducted on May 29.

While 24 percent of respondents in the follow-up survey said service had improved over the past 30 days, 36 percent thought it had become worse. Overall, respondents said the rapid decline in performance has at least leveled off.

“Service has gotten marginally better, but it’s still bad,” said Melissa Rudinger, AOPA vice president of regulatory affairs. “We’ll continue to hold Lockheed’s feet to the fire until we see better results.”

The follow-up survey also found:

38 percent remain dissatisfied about the process of filing flight plans through briefers

38 percent still say their calls are not being answered within a minute or less (some are waiting more than 10 minutes)

24 percent continue to experience dropped calls

Lockheed Martin has been collecting its own performance metrics, but the rosier numbers don’t jibe with real-world pilot experiences. The company is far from reaching the performance goals in the contract. For instance, 85 percent of the calls are supposed to be answered within 20 seconds.

AOPA will be meeting with Lockheed officials next week to continue to press for improvements.



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