

DECEMBER 2007

SPORT *aerobatics*

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL AEROBATIC CLUB

"Celebrating Excellence & Passion"



Bill Kershner

Debby Rihn-Harvey

HALLOF FAME 2007

Marion Cole • Regional Aircraft Performance • Hosting Young Eagles



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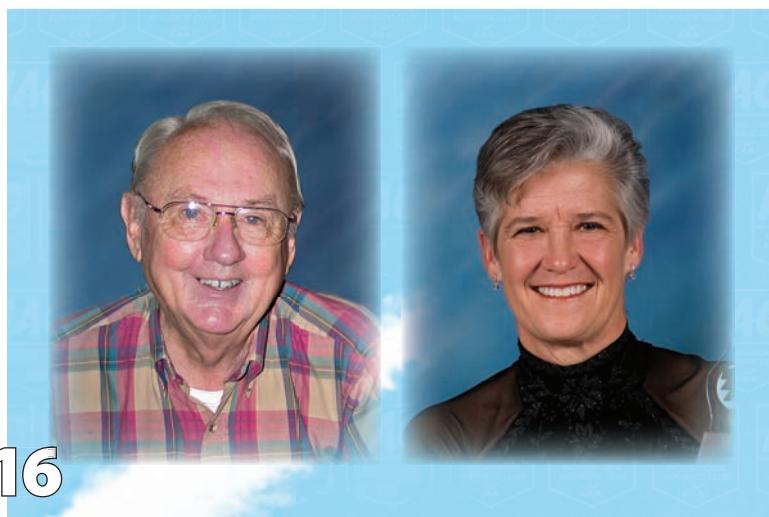
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SPORT Aerobatics

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Judson Bartlett



LETTER from the EDITOR

by Scott Westover

Creating a personal hall of fame

When we are fortunate enough to have pilots honored by being inducted into the Aerobatics Hall of Fame, *Sport Aerobatics* includes information about these legends in the December issue of this magazine. Their stories inspire those of us who are privileged to know them through association or having met them in person at contests and air shows. These aerobatic ambassadors have earned recognition on a national level. Yet the attributes that define their contribution to our sport can be found at virtually every local airport.

Highlighting the Hall of Fame serves as a reminder to search out those not-so-famous people who have made a difference in your flying and say thank you. For those of us who have been on the tarmac for a few years, it also reminds us that we need to be ready to play that role to new pilots who are thinking about getting involved in aerobatics.

For example, I recall purchasing the airplane I currently fly, an Acro Sport II, a few years ago. I had never thought of myself as owning an aerobatic airplane—that was for professionals! I joked about the idea with my instructor, Rob Holland, and he introduced me to aerobatic legend and mechanical guru Dennis Sawyer. Spending time with these two veterans helped me gain the confidence that I needed to get serious about making a purchase. We spent hours talking about airplanes and covered everything from cockpit comfort and safety to performance and price. Eventually the three of us flew to Virginia to look at a Skybolt.

I was convinced this was the perfect airplane for me. The pictures looked great, the seller had all the answers, and it was the right color. Dennis got to work when the hangar doors opened, and in about 30 seconds I could tell that this was going to be a lesson that did not end with me becoming an owner. We left that airplane in Virginia. When we were back in the air, Rob shared that he had a lead on a different airplane that might fit my needs. A few hours later we were back in New Hampshire crawling all over a beautiful Acro Sport II located in Hampton, about a 12-minute flight from where we had started the day. Thanks to the encouragement of Rob and Dennis, I gained entry to a world that has changed my life.

The point of sharing this story—besides urging all prospective owners to look in their own backyard before spending a long day crammed in a Cherokee—is to remind everyone flying aerobatics that we each have our own personal hall of fame. There may not be any plaques, but the people who have earned a place in it are the reason we have experienced this privileged slice of aviation. They gave us our first aerobatic flight, taught us about maintenance, supported us at contests, and turned a blind eye as grocery money became fuel money. It wouldn't hurt us to let them know who they are, and to make it a goal to be inducted into someone else's personal hall of fame in the future. Fly safely!

Sport Aerobatics is your magazine. To submit news, comments, articles, or article ideas, please send them to: **IAC, P.O. Box 3086, Oshkosh, WI 54903-3086;** or email them to tookyflyer@tds.net.

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

by Vicki Cruse • IAC 22968
E-mail: vcruse@earthlink.net



Vicki Cruse

Aviation Is a Universal Language

The aerobatic U.N. in Belgium

This year's CIVA meeting was held in Vilnius, Lithuania, in late October. I decided to go to Europe a few days early and actually see some sights rather than just rushing across the Atlantic for the meeting. I made plans to go to Belgium to visit Sebastien Litt, the little boy I met while training in Fuentemilanos, Spain, during practice with the U.S. Unlimited Team for the 2007 World Aerobatic Championships. I arranged with Sebastien's mother to visit for two days, and made no other plans except to show up in Lithuania four days later. Having no plan is very unlike me, but perhaps change is good.

The Litt family spends a lot of time at the airport about 2 miles from their home. I joined them at the aero club three times. The aero club in Verviers, Belgium, manages four Piper Cubs, a Super Cub, a Robin, a Jodel (French single-seater), a motor-glider, and a Cessna 172 (interestingly the Cessna has a Thielert diesel engine and an MT propeller). The club includes an area with several tables and chairs, wireless Internet, maps, and a bar that serves alcohol and small portions of food including cheese, ham, and bread.

The Verviers Aero Club becomes a center of activity at dusk. The airplanes are put away and the social hour begins. Even people who have not flown that day show up after

work. Since English is the official pilot language, communicating was not a problem, and it was interesting to speak to the local pilots including the two of them who had flown to the United States and attended the Reno air races. Most surprising to them was the price of

*We looked like
the aerobatic
United Nations.*

avgas at my airport, which seemed inexpensive compared to the \$12 per gallon price here, where flying 200 hours per year as a private pilot is unheard of.

On my last day with Sebastien, I had to make a decision either to go to Brussels to be a tourist or to go to the Saint-Hubert Airport where Sebastien's father, Manu, runs the glider school. He enticed me by telling me former World Champion Catherine Maunoury was conducting an aerobatic training camp. I chose the airport.

I was shocked to discover one of the pilots at the camp was Gerrit Nijs, whom I met in Luxembourg while Harry Barr and I were assembling the Edge for the WAC. Gerrit was just as surprised to see me. He is a pilot for Cargolux and owns an Extra 300 that he keeps at Saint-Hubert because there is nowhere to fly aerobatics in Luxembourg. The camp consisted of five pilots—four of whom were flying Gerrit's Extra and one was flying a Pitts S-2B. This camp easily could have been anywhere in the United States. The morning temperature was 26°F and windy, much like I imagine Canada in September. The only difference between this camp and one in the United States was the huge grass runways and that the camp was conducted in French. I know almost no French, but I could understand what Catherine was saying based on watching the pilots. Same story, different country.

So at the airfield in southeast Belgium, we had pilots from France, America, Belgium, and Luxembourg. We looked like the aerobatic United Nations; however, in typical Belgium fashion, the weather allowed for no aerobatic flights the second day. Perhaps there would be fewer problems in the world if more people took a lesson from aviation and focused on things that bring people from so many nations together. May you and your family have a wonderful holiday season. Happy Holidays! ☺

NEWSBRIEFS

Forbes Magazine Features American Champion & IAC

As presented in the ForbesLife section of the November 12th issue of *Forbes* magazine, Jody Bradt, an engineer and test pilot for American Champion Aircraft and IAC forum speaker at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, gave an aerobatic ride to writer Mary Ellen Egan who found the

experience "exhilarating." IAC was referenced as the "go to" organization for more information on aerobatics. To view the article online, visit the member's only section of Forbes.com: <http://Members.Forbes.com/forbes/2007/1112/179.html>.

FAA Expands Education Program

The number of prospective air traffic controllers is expected to increase significantly now that nine additional colleges and universities have been selected by the FAA to train students to be controllers.

There are now 23 schools chosen by the FAA to participate in the agency's Air Traffic Collegiate Training Initiative (CTI) program. The CTI program is part of a broader effort by the agency to recruit, train, and hire controllers as the current workforce faces retirement. CTI schools are accredited and offer a non-engineering aviation degree in aviation programs. "We have a plan in place to make sure the nation's airspace system is managed by an appropriate number of highly motivated, properly trained controllers," said Hank Krakowski, chief operating officer of the FAA's Air Traffic Organization. "The CTI program is a big part of that plan."

Of the 1,815 new controllers hired in fiscal year 2007—a number exceeding the target set in the agency's controller workforce plan—approximately 800 were graduates of CTI schools. Graduation does not guarantee acceptance to the FAA Academy in Oklahoma City, but those accepted are allowed to skip the initial, five-week basic training in air traffic control. More information and a complete list of CTI schools are available at www.FAA.gov.

IAC Opens Online Store

IAC has teamed with CafePress to offer IAC merchandise through a new online store. Merchandise offered will include items such as children's clothing, gifts, and a variety of new items featuring the IAC logo. Plans are to include new T-shirt and merchandise designs and to update selections frequently while maintaining popular "core" items. Design submissions by members are welcome and may be featured on the site. Designs should be sent to iac@eaa.org for consideration. To visit the store, a link may be found on the IAC home page under the Store heading or visit www.CafePress.com/iac_aerobatics.



Lycoming Engines Helps Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute

Lycoming Engines has donated eight aircraft training engines and engine stands to the Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute in northern New York, giving its students hands-on experience during powerplant training.

Dennis Racine, Lycoming's director of marketing and customer leadership, explained, "The future of our industry rests with the next generation of aviators and technicians. The Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute is providing valuable training to students in the Northeast and Canada, and we are excited to partner with them in that effort. Training technical people to maintain the products we produce is crucial to the long-term success of Lycoming engines."

In addition to the training engines and stands, Lycoming ensured that the students also had the necessary instructional aids, including key reprint manuals

and DVDs on Lycoming products. Instructors can easily obtain the documentation for the specialized Lycoming training as well. "Lycoming's generosity is helping us provide a better program to our students, while also giving them practical experience with the industry's most recognizable piston engines," remarked James McCartney, Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute's project coordinator.

As a result of this relationship, Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute instructors will also have the opportunity to visit Lycoming's training facility at Penn College, an affiliate of Penn State University, in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. The training opportunity is a comprehensive four-day, hands-on refresher course on Lycoming's current production piston aircraft engines. More information is available at www.Lycoming.Textron.com.

FAA Grants Exemption for IAC Practice, Competition Flights

The FAA has approved an exemption requested by EAA on behalf of the International Aerobatic Club allowing IAC pilots greater operating flexibility when making practice and competition flights at contest sites, and removing a requirement that the aircraft flight manual be in the plane when practicing or competing.

A two-year exemption (through September 30, 2009) was granted allowing IAC pilots participating in IAC-sanctioned aerobatic competitions to carry less than the visual flight rules fuel requirements under certain conditions. Fuel onboard must be enough to take off, complete the planned flight maneuvers, and land at the same airport with enough fuel to fly for an additional 10 minutes at normal cruising speed.

EAA asked that the exemption also include IAC members flying aerobatic aircraft while practicing at the actual competition airports prior to an IAC-sanctioned event.

"Prior to this addition to the exemption, IAC competition pilots were allowed the fuel exemption for judged flights only, not for practice flights at the contest site," said Vicki Cruse, IAC president. Regarding the exemption from having to carry the aircraft flight manual in the aircraft at all times, Cruse commented, "You can imagine the safety issue having this requirement in place. It just doesn't work for flying aerobatics. We are happy to have been granted all of these exemptions."



Kate DeBaun

Be sure to catch up on the fuel exemption for pilots at IAC-sanctioned aerobatic competitions.

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Marion Cole & Early Aerobatic competition

Story by, and photos courtesy of, Giles Henderson, IAC 159

*Recollections of
an inverted legend . . .*

“Marion recalled
that he had nearly
30 figures in his
sequence – that’s only
about 14 seconds
per maneuver.”



Marion is the youngest of the famous Cole Brothers, and flew his first air show in 1946.

I recently talked with Marion Cole (EAA 48) about the early U.S. aerobatic competition known as the All-American Air Maneuvers. This national invitational contest was held from the late 1920s through the early '50s at the Opa-locka Airport¹, about 7 miles north of Miami International Airport. The Cole brothers (Duane, Lester, and Marion) were all invited participants from 1949 through 1952, the last year of the event. This meet was a weeklong affair sponsored by Gulf Oil Co. and held in mid-January. It included air races and daily air shows in addition to the aerobatic contests. At the conclusion of the Miami program, participants were invited to fly their aircraft to Cuba for additional performances and prize money.

Pre-Aresti Competition

Contestants were required to be members of FAI and to successfully complete an eight-figure qualification sequence. Marion recalls that about half of these qualifying maneuvers were outside and that one was a single roll in a 360-degree turn. Several well-known pilots failed to qualify.

In those early days there was no category structure, at least as we know it today. All of the contestants were in a single category with significant prize money for the top finishers. Although there were no altitude limits, flights were restricted to a performance zone or "box." Each pilot composed a sequence made up of any combination of about 180 allowed figures. No repetitions were allowed. However, variations of some maneuvers were permitted. For example, a hammerhead or a roll to the right was not considered a repetition of a hammerhead or roll to the left. Each maneuver had a difficulty coefficient and was graded by a team of five judges. An announcer provided a lively, air show-like commentary of each competitor's sequence. The biggest difference from our current IAC Aresti format was that the score for the flight was dependent on how many figures the pilot could complete in a seven-minute time limit.

A stopwatch was started at the completion of a wing wag and scoring stopped at the expiration of the time limit. There was a provision to score a figure that was started but not completed in the seven-minute limit. Marion said he took advantage of this rule by usually putting a rolling 360 at the end of his sequence. Because the time limit was such an important factor in this competition, it encouraged a completely different style of flying than what we have become accustomed to. To maximize the number of figures in their sequence, pilots blended their maneuvers together in one continuous stream. Marion recalled that he had nearly 30 figures in his sequence—that's only about 14 seconds per maneuver.



Joining Marion Cole (far right) on the 1968 U.S. Aerobatic Team were (left to right) Charlie Hillard, Art Scholl, Bob Herendeen, Mary Gaffaney, and Harold Krier.



ABOVE: Marion Cole's favorite airplane was an "exceptionally high-performance Stearman."

LEFT: One of Marion's signature maneuvers was the inverted ribbon cut. He perfected this crowd favorite in aircraft including Decathlon, Stearman, and Beechcraft.

RIGHT: Always an innovator, Marion Cole favored a custom station wagon for his car-top landings.

Marion's Favorite Aircraft

Marion competed with an exceptionally high-performance Stearman. This big biplane was stripped down to 1,750 pounds empty weight and was powered by a hopped-up Pratt & Whitney R-985 that developed over 500 hp. (I would need a 200-hp Lycoming powerplant bolted on my clipped Cub to have an equivalent power-to-weight ratio.) The four-aileron Stearman had balanced controls and was routinely flown to speeds in excess of 200 mph.

The big Pratt & Whitney had to be hand-propelled since it had no starter, battery, generator, or any kind of electrical system. Marion said that

although he loved the Bücker and the Pitts Specials, that Stearman was his favorite airplane. Marion won the All-American Air Maneuvers Championship in 1952 flying against such legends as Jess Bristow, Woody Edmondson, Bevo Howard, Rod Jocelyn, Billy Fisher, Betty Skelton, Caro Bayley, and his own brothers, Duane and Lester. Some years later, he sold the Stearman to Bill Adams. Bill was killed in this aircraft as a result of an engine/prop failure.

Growing Up in a Flying Family

Marion was the youngest of the Cole brothers. He flew his first air show in 1946 and was invited to compete at

Miami in 1949 at age 24. Although he never had to use a parachute in his long aerobatic career, he told me of a couple of incidents in which he would have if it had been an option. He once pulled his Stearman up to a vertical line at over 180 mph for a vertical snap roll. His plan was to let the biplane continue in autorotation until it finally ran out of energy and would torque around into a spin. When he initiated the recovery from the spin, he discovered that the rudder was somehow locked in a deflected configuration. It turned out that the top half of the balanced rudder had broken and had jammed against the vertical stabilizer. Since a parachute was not an option, Marion fought to land in a cross-controlled slip.

In addition to his competition and air show career, Marion raced several midget airplanes. He once test-flew a Formula One Goodyear racer called *Tater Chip*. Shortly after takeoff the midget accelerated to about 150 mph. At that speed the stick began to shake and, in less than a second, the ailerons began to disintegrate from flutter. Marion chopped the throttle and pulled the nose way up to slow down. The flutter was quenched at about 90 mph, slightly above the stall speed. However, the little racer had lost both ailerons and a good part of the

rear spar. Personally, having made more than 1,000 takeoffs and landings in Formula One racers, I cannot imagine how Marion managed to get safely back on the ground with just the elevator and rudder. But then again, that's part of why he's an aviation legend.

A Career Wrapped in Ribbon

Marion Cole probably holds the unofficial record for having made more inverted ribbon cuts in more varieties of aircraft than any other pilot. Marion told me that the best and safest aircraft he ever used for this maneuver was the Decathlon because of its unusually good visibility, excellent inverted flight characteristics, and extremely effective trim.

On the other hand, he recalls that the worst aircraft for performing an inverted ribbon cut was the aerobatic Beechcraft. The problem was its inadequate elevator. In anticipation of the necessary down elevator required for the inverted flight segment, Marion would run the elevator trim to the forward stop while turning to the runway heading. As he descended

toward the runway for the approach, the aircraft required both hands and arms on the controls with extreme pressure to keep the Bonanza from diving into the ground. With this adverse control pressure, the half-roll to inverted was completely contrary to long-established muscle memory.

Once inverted, full forward trim was completely inadequate to maintain level flight. Holding this attitude again required both hands and arms, now pushing very hard on the yoke to maintain the flight path to the ribbon. It was not in the interest of one's longevity to take a hand off the yoke for any purpose. Marion made special modifications to the pilot's seat to withstand the stress from the heavy force applied to the seat back. It is highly unlikely that spectators had any idea how difficult this demonstration was.

Marion is a founding member of the International Aerobatic Club (IAC No. 9). He taught aerobatics at the basic and advanced levels, and for the last 50 years has tutored many young aerobatic pilots. In addition, he flew air shows throughout the continental

United States from the late '40s into the early '90s. Though retired from the air show circuit, he still counsels, tutors, and announces for some young aerobatic hopefuls and attends several air shows each year.

Marion Cole was inducted into the International Council of Air Shows Foundation's Air Show Hall of Fame during the December 2006 convention in Las Vegas. Congratulations, Marion! You had a truly great run. ☺

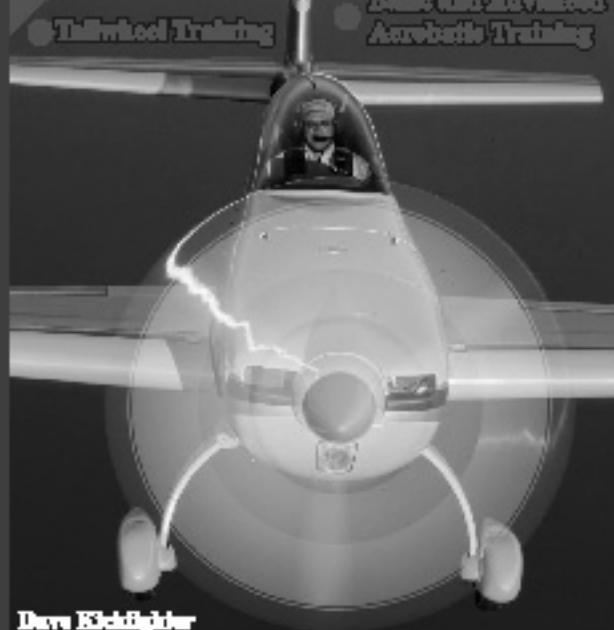
FOOTNOTE: 1 Glenn Curtiss founded the Opa-locka Airport in 1927. Curtiss gave his Florida Aviation Camp to the U.S. Navy shortly before his early death in 1930. Opa-locka Airport was part of U.S. Navy Training Command during World War II and the hub of six naval training bases. Amelia Earhart took off from this location on her ill-fated around-the-world flight attempt in 1937. The U.S. Navy dirigible Akron crashed in a thunderstorm on its 1933 return flight after leaving Opa-locka. During the Cold War, Opa-locka Airport played a part in both military and civilian efforts, including the infamous "black flights" to Guatemala in the 1950s, the Bay of Pigs invasion, and the Cuban Missile Crisis.



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Of all the devices developed by man, none is more portable than the airplane. We can just point our nose, steer around the high rocks and the thunder bumpers, and between breakfast and lunch put ourselves and our airplane in an entirely different world. In fact, the world can be so different that we often don't take into account how the differences are affecting both our flying and our airplane's fragile bones.

Let's say you're a Denver boy and you decide to go blasting down Interstate 80 (don't bother turning on the GPS, just stay to the right of the centerline and above 1000 feet) to the Seward contest 400 miles or so to the east. You've been practicing your

buns off and have all your maneuvers honed to a razor edge. Then you get to Seward and find you can't even get your airplane to land, much less hold altitude on your maneuvers. You're always coming out high, not low. That's easy to understand considering you've been practicing at a runway elevation of well more than 5,000 feet and, at summer temps, the density altitude was more than 8,000 feet. You had to work to squeeze any performance at all out of your airplane. Then you hit Seward: it is 1,500 feet MSL and the temp's the same, so density altitude (DA) is about half what you've been used to. The air is more than twice as fat and your airplane is one very happy camper, but you, on

the other hand, have to totally revise your flying because your airplane flies so much better.

Now let's reverse the process, but keep it in a smaller region. Let's say you're from Phoenix (1,500 MSL) and you decide to go do some aerobatic instruction for some of the Embry-Riddle students 100 nautical miles north in Prescott (5,000 MSL). DA at Prescott is 8,000 feet plus and we're working at 3,000 feet AGL. Do the math. Now you're at 11,000 feet and your supposedly hot rocket of an airplane is wheezing in every possible way. As you dive to start a loop, you look down at the panel and see that full throttle barely gives 19 inches of manifold pressure, and you

"The most dangerous thing about flying competitions and air shows is the process of getting there."



a short cross-country can give you a different airplane

watch it come up a couple of inches as you give up altitude in the entry. The airplane staggers over the top, and the loop is anything but round. You also find that all of your lines take much more time to build speed, your controls lack the usual crispness, and the airplane won't turn a corner worth a darn. Plus there's practically no way you can hold altitude, while the locals seem to have no trouble. This, by the way, is where high-aspect ratio wing airplanes like Extras shine and short-winged bumblebees like Pitts really struggle (this is the voice of experience speaking).

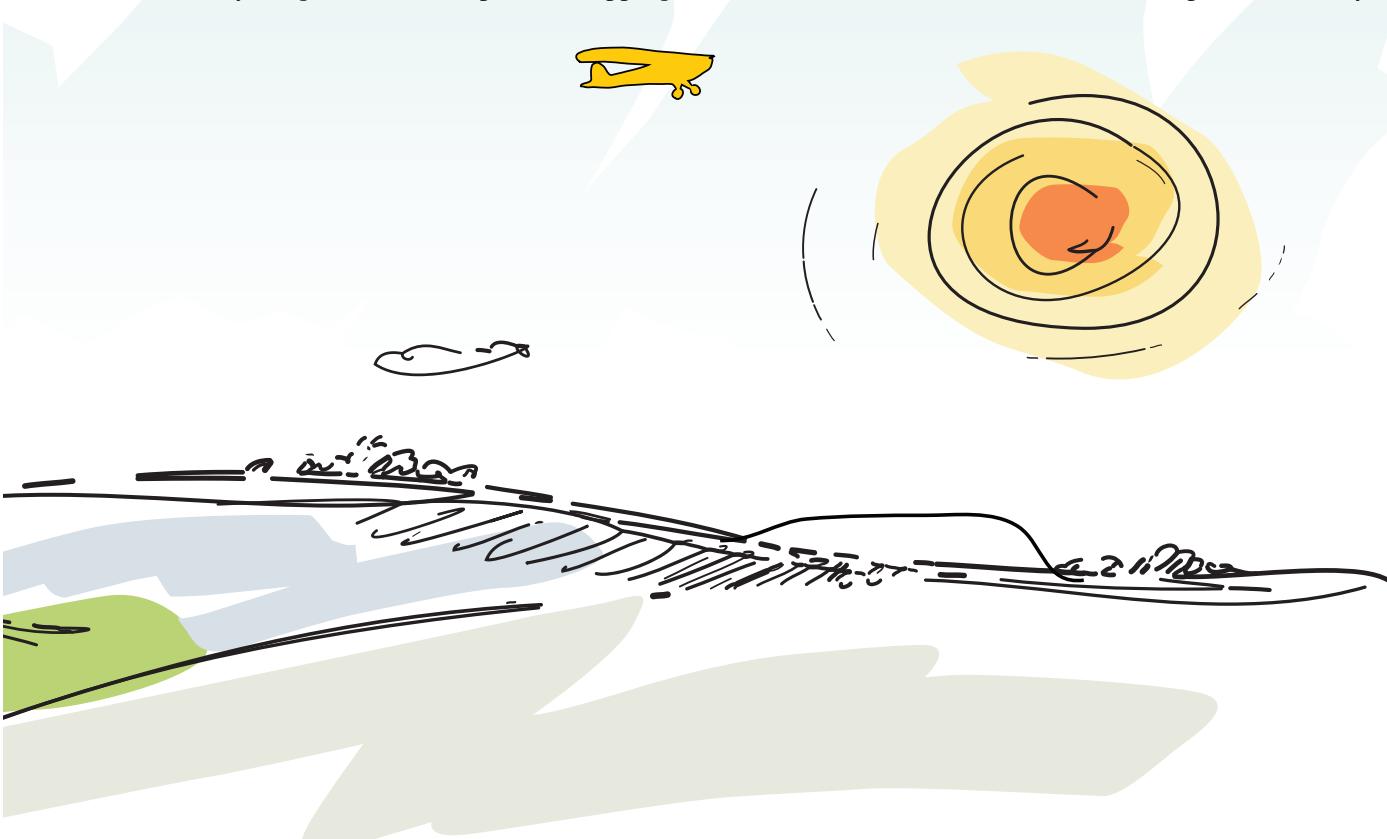
When we go from extremes of temperature and/or ground elevation, everything about our airplane

changes, and unless you've experienced it, you won't believe it. Even performers like Extras and big-engine Pitts turn into puny little Pipers when the DA goes up. Also, whether you're going from the highlands to the lowlands, or vice versa, your wonderfully running little bird is going to need some fine tuning to get the ground mixture set right.

If you haven't experienced it, it's hard to believe how short 2,500 feet of runway becomes as the DA works its way past numbers that start with an eight. Your 90 mph indicated airspeed across the fence remains the same, but the true airspeed goes up dramatically, and all other things being equal, stopping distance is a function of the

square of the speed, which in this case is ground speed. So, if it looks as if you're moving like greased lightning coming across the threshold, that's because you are. For that reason, it's not smart to leave very much runway behind you, because you may wish it was in front of you when you start trying to slow down.

Then there are the enroute regional differences. A born and bred flatlander generally becomes quite uneasy as he approaches his first mountains. Then, as he threads his way through them following a highway, he has to work hard to (A) convince himself that the engine has run this far, so there's no reason to believe it'll die right now, and (B) to keep track of every single





Ron Gerot



Kate DeBaun

Top: Understanding the characteristics of the region you are flying over is a critical part of flight planning. **Above:** If the heat has you seeking relief under the wing, think about the impact it is having on your airplane's will to perform.

scrap of flatland around him so he knows where he's going to plant that puppy should the motor stop motor-ing. It's a form of pessimistic optimism: it's not likely to quit, so I'm going to enjoy this, but if it does, I'm putting it right "there." Fortunately, as aerobatic pilots, we have a leg up on others in that situation: if it quits and we're not in a good place, go over the side. Don't ride it out while sitting on a \$2,000 parachute.

Incidentally, most aerobatic air-planes are small to begin with, but they seem to shrink as the ground beneath gets more hostile and the mountains get bigger. For that rea-son, a lot of us find the biggest road

we can find and follow it through the mountains or any other kind of hos-tile territory. That way we have some place to go if things get suddenly quiet, and equally as important, if we have to put it down, there are lots of people to see where we went. This whole process is very intimidating to flatland pilots, and rightfully so.

If it's been said once, it's been said a thousand times. The most dangerous thing about flying competitions and air shows is the process of getting there. Weather is a challenge, and very few aerobatic airplanes carry enough fuel to do much more than fly out of sight of their home airport, so we're always fuel-critical. This, in

turn, makes the weather much more of an issue because we don't have enough fuel to outrun anything bigger than a sprinkle.

The regional weather patterns make this kind of problem worse, although it affects the Western pilot flying east more than the other way around. Western pilots are usually blessed with weather that actually lets them see where they are going. A bad day out West is 4,000 feet overcast and 20 miles visibility (we're excluding the Northwest in that com-ment, by the way), while the East will go for weeks never seeing weather that good. So, when an Eastern-based pilot jumps in his little S-1C Pitts and ventures west, his only chal-lenge is dealing with the concept of being able to see check points 50-75 miles away. They'll acclimate to that quickly. The Western pilot plodding toward the East Coast in his Clipped Cub during the summer will find out what flying in milk is like. Lots of (not all) summer skies along parts of the Eastern Seaboard are hazy and white and sometimes have nice little invisible cumulus clouds embedded in them.

The West has its weather, too, but it's more likely to be air-mass rath-er than frontal weather. Clumps of clearly visible bad stuff (like Cumulo-Badus towering to 50,000 feet) that you can see so far away that your decision-making time is measured in hours, not seconds. You don't push weather out West because of the terrain and the fact that when we have bad weather, it is often "really bad" weather with lightning bolts and all that stuff.

When flying short-legged aerobatic birds in the West and fighting weather, it's really important to remember another characteristic of the West that's so different than the Midwest or East: the airports are really far apart. There are lots of places where public runways are 75-100 miles or more apart. This requires you to do your fuel planning much more criti-cally (something like a single-hole Pitts only has about 250 miles to flame out, no reserve), because you may not have enough to make the leg to the next airport, which means you have to fly a short leg to position for enough fuel for the next, longer leg. You also have to make weather go/

no-go decisions earlier. If you don't, you could easily find yourself nose to nose with some ugly weather and not have enough fuel to make the closest airport that has av gas. There is no worse feeling than being in an airplane that has practically zero off-airport landing capability and sweating every last drop of fuel.

Another regional difference is that although the West didn't invent turbulence, it certainly perfected the concept. When practicing aerobatics during summer in parts of the West, you try to schedule everything early because afternoons absolutely pound you and the airplane to death. It's not a comfortable feeling to be pulling 4 or 5 g's and hit a hard piece of turbulence that tacks another 2 g's on the hurt-o-meter.

We've been talking about the flying differences in the various regions and how they impact the pilot and performance, but there are also airframe safety concerns. For instance, when moving something like a Pitts or CAP 10 that has spent its entire life in Florida or Georgia to Arizona or New Mexico, the extreme



Kate DeBaun

When traveling cross-country to a contest, consider how the change in scenery will influence the way you fly.

change in humidity has to be taken into account. If the visit is a short one, there's no concern. However, if you're purchasing an airplane from the Southeast and moving it to the Southwest, be prepared for a lot of wood shrinkage. In our own Pitts,

after moving it to Arizona from Florida, we had continual rigging problems, then finally realized the spars were shrinking so much that everything, and we mean *everything*, was loose. Even the big bolts holding the wire attach fittings to the spars were

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Ron Gerot

Knowing that a short trip may have given you a different airplane takes the surprise out of changes in performance.

barely finger tight. An all-wood airplane like a CAP 10 really suffers in a hyper-dry climate.

Conversely, aircraft in humid areas, especially coastal areas, have serious corrosion concerns, and this affects aerobatic aircraft more than most because many of them have flying wires on at least their tails, and the biplanes have miles of them. One of the problems with even stainless steel flying wires is what's termed "chlorine corrosion." The airplane is flown through air with lots of salt content, and it coats the front of the wire, often running down to collect in the threads on the bottom clevis fitting. The accumulated salt can cause small pits to form anywhere on the leading edge of the wire, which then lead to cracks and eventual failure.

At the same time, the clevises and all airframe hardware are subjected to similar corrosive effects. Most "normal" airplanes don't have clevises exposed to the environment, but many aerobatic airplanes do. Clevises, especially older ones, are famous for thin cad plating that lets the salt/chlorine accumulation cause rust

pits. Plus every time a wrench leaves a mark on a bolt that goes through the cad plating anywhere on the airplane, that mark will eventually start to rust. The very air in which the airplane flies can be unhealthy for it. At the same time, seashore or not, some urban areas have air that is so caustic it hurts the airplane.

Air of almost any kind contains some level of moisture, which is why specific steps must be taken to prevent an engine that is sitting for any length of time from developing internal rust. On average, aerobatic airplanes fly far fewer hours than any other kind of airplane, so they are ready-made to develop internal rust. This is especially true of the rear cam lobes on Lycoming cams. This, as would be expected, is also regionally driven. In Phoenix, where 5 percent humidity is quite commonplace and rain is a seldom seen phenomena, even unoiled, bare steel takes quite some time to rust. In Fort Lauderdale, with the ocean feeding both humidity and salt into the air, bare steel won't last the night before developing a fuzzy coat of red. It's a constant battle for those in coast-

al areas to keep the airborne corrosive elements out of their engines.

The best corrosion protection is lots of flying, but because pilots in some parts of the country can't make their way to the aerobatic box for six or seven months at a time, that's not always practical. At the same time, starting the engine once or twice a month doesn't help either, because it's nearly impossible to get an engine on the ground warm enough to cook the moisture completely out of the oil. On the other hand, there are very few places in the country where there's not at least one passable (above minimums) flying day a month with clear runways, and just roaring around the pattern for four or five touch-and-goes will make your engine last much, much longer. This can't be overemphasized. Pushing yourself to get in just one flight a month will do wonders for your engine's longevity. It'll also prevent rust from forming on your brain.

Then, of course there's the sun damage. The Northwest may have its mildew, but it doesn't suffer things like shoulder harnesses that are sun damaged beyond use in only five years of flying. The Southwest folks have that problem. Same thing with the fabric: there's nothing quite as damaging to fabric as the Southwest's continual sunshine.

Pilots are a peripatetic bunch and are likely to pop up anywhere at any time. That's the fun of being a pilot. But, as we leave home and traipse across country to a contest in someplace new and wonderful, just remember everything may be just enough different that it eats up your margin for safety. So spend some extra time in the planning mode, and be prepared for the differences. 



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William “Bill” Kershner *and* Debby Rihn-Harvey *inducted into the* **Aerobatics Hall of Fame**

Compiled by Scott Westover

The concept of a hall of fame is to set aside a recognition reserved for those who truly soar. It is a place of honor and remembrance, and since 1986 the International Aerobatic Club (IAC) has taken the process of nominating and selecting inductees seriously. The first members are well-known throughout the aerobatic community. Jose Aresti, Duane Cole, Curtis Pitts, and Frank Price were the first Aerobatics Hall of Fame class, which set the bar very high for those who would follow. Aerobatics Hall of Fame induction is not necessarily an annual event. If no nominee is brought forward by the membership or if the names that are brought forward do not receive sufficient votes, then there is no induction that year. This process preserves the integrity of the award, and makes the achievements of William Kershner and Debby Rihn-Harvey all the more impressive.

When planning your EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2008 pilgrimage, include a visit to the Aerobatics Hall of Fame in the atrium of the EAA AirVenture Museum. As you read about Bill and Debby, you may well think of the people in your own flying career who share their commitment to excellence. You may know someone who should be considered for a spot in the Hall of Fame for their commitment to aerobatics. If you have a candidate who you feel deserves to be honored,

please forward your nomination to the Hall of Fame committee for consideration. Chapters are encouraged to support the nomination of a local candidate. Often, the people who represent the very best of our sport are well-known locally, and our members are in the best position to know those who deserve this honor.

The Hall of Fame committee accepts nominations until April 1 of each year. Details, including nomination forms and guidelines, at www.IAC.org.



“Celebrating Excellence and Passion”

Celebrating Debby Rihn-Harvey

Debby Rihn-Harvey is the First Lady of Aerobatics. She owes much of her aviation success to her grandfather, who whisked her away to many weekend fly-ins. Her barnstorming grandpa had an aviation business and a trade school for mechanics in the 1920s. He even built an airplane called the *Overland Sport*. Debby's father also had the aviation bug, and as a certificated flight instructor he helped his kids learn to fly, and those lessons were punctuated with a solo on their 16th birthday.

Debby discovered aerobatics as a teenager. In an interview with *Sport Aerobatics* after winning the title of 2006 Unlimited Champion at the U.S. National Aerobatic Championships, Debby recalled, "My first spins were when I was about 14 years old, just after one of my dad's friends lost his life in a spin accident. I remember that I was scared to death of stalls, let alone spins. Those spin lessons were my first taste of aerobatics, and my next real aerobatic experience was with my [now] late husband, Eoin "Doc" Harvey. He had flown competition and had been the doctor for

the U.S. Team when we met. I decided for safety purposes that I should learn some aerobatics so that I could recover from any attitude without overstressing the aircraft, passengers, or myself."

Debby has been the women's national champion nine times and is the longest-flying member of the U.S. Unlimited Aerobatic Team. She has represented the United States in 13 World Aerobatic Championships. She refers to herself as "competitive and a perfectionist"; it is no wonder that she has accumulated more medals in world aerobatic contests than any other person in America. Those who work with Debby in the contest environment have come to rely on her expertise on everything from judging and logistics to planning and presenting the perfect 4-Minute Freestyle routine. Bob Stark, the contest director for the 2007 U.S. National Aerobatic Championships, recently referred to Debby as "a national treasure."

Debby is an aerobatic competency evaluator for the International Council of Air Shows and an FAA designated pilot examiner who administers flight exams for private pilot through

airline transport pilot certificates. Those credentials keep her busy, but never too busy to keep her aerobatic edge. "During the season I try to fly at least twice a day and on the weekends three times a day with critiquing," Debby said.

An active member of the IAC board of directors and an aerobatic evangelist, Debby believes that the best way to start down the road that may eventually lead to the IAC Hall of Fame is to get involved. "Start by getting instruction and have someone watch you fly as much as possible. Join a local chapter and have fun...it doesn't have to be as intense as I have made it. Participation is so much more than just winning," she said. "You can make lifelong friends from all over the world who share your love of aviation." She is also keenly aware that the giants of our sport do not achieve their success on their own. "If you become a serious competitor, remember that one never totally succeeds on their own," Debby warned. "It takes the support of family, the help of coaches and critique pilots, and a great deal of determination, dedication, and sacrifice."





AEROBATICS HALL OF FAME HONOREES

1987	1991	2001
Jose Aresti	Mary Gaffaney	Mike Heuer
Duane Cole	Leo Loudenslager	
Curtis Pitts		2002
Frank Price	1993	Bob Davis
	Clint McHenry	Bill Thomas
1988	Neil Williams	
Marion Cole		2003
Mike Murphy	1998	Don Taylor
Betty Skelton Frankman	Bill Barber	
	Rod Jocelyn	2004
1989	Harold Neumann	Dorothy Hester
Bob Heuer	Tom Poberezny	Betty Stewart
Bevo Howard	J.G. "Tex" Rankin	
Harold Krier		2005
	1999	Patty Wagstaff
1990	Henry Haigh	
Lincoln Beachey		2006
Bob Herendeen	2000	Gene Soucy
Charlie Hillard	Gene Beggs	
Art Scholl		2007
		William Kershner
		Debby Rihn-Harvey



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Remembering William Kershner

The tight-knit aerobatic community lost an icon when William "Bill" K. Kershner passed away on January 8, 2007. The following excerpt is from Bill's obituary as it was circulated among his aviation family.

"Bill was born and raised in Clarksville, Tennessee, where he started flying in March 1945, at age 15. Mike Collins, writing for AOPA's Flight Training website shortly after Bill's passing, captured his Hall of Fame spirit beautifully. 'Bill's entry to aviation followed what then was a fairly common path that, unfortunately, is seldom repeated today. He bicycled to Clarksville's Outlaw Field (then a grass strip) and worked as lineboy, fueling, washing, and hand-proping airplanes in exchange for flight instruction,' wrote Mike. 'Twenty hours of work garnered a one-hour lesson.' Ultimately Bill would earn his commercial and flight instructor's certificates through that hard work. He later acquired an instrument rating and airline transport pilot certificate and logged more than 11,000 hours including 1,150 military, 1,900 multiengine, 4,300 aerobatic instruc-

tion, and performed more than 8,000 separate spins of up to 25 turns.

"He attended Iowa State University at Ames, Iowa, and Austin Peay State College at Clarksville, Tennessee. He graduated Iowa State in 1960, with a degree in technical journalism with courses in aerodynamics, stability and control, design and performance, plus math, and structures, in the aeronautical engineering area.

"In the early 1950s, he entered the Naval Aviation Cadet program in Pensacola and after training joined VC-3 based in California; he flew World War II fighters and early jets in California and was a F4U Corsair night fighter pilot off the carrier Philippine Sea in the Pacific. He was navigation and instrument training officer, chase pilot in F9F-6 Cougars, and jet transition training officer in T-33s for VC-3.

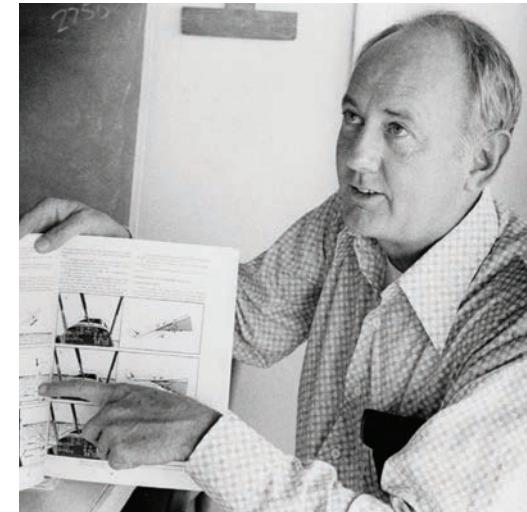
"Later he was a corporate pilot for Texas Gas Transmission Corp. in Owensboro, Kentucky, flying the Beech Bonanza, Aero-Commander, Twin Beech, and the DC-3. From 1960 to 1964, he worked for Piper Aircraft Corporation at Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, in several capacities.

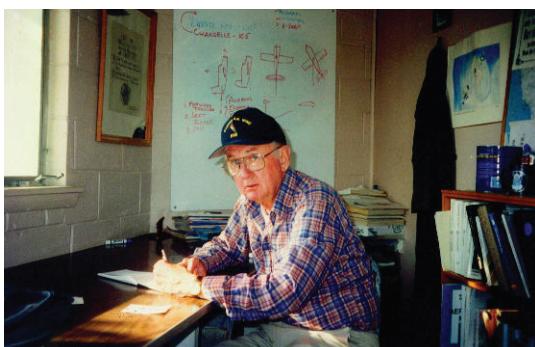
After coming to Sewanee, Tennessee, to write books in 1964, Bill flew charter, instructed, and operated an aerobatic and advanced instruction school. Ace Aerobatic School saw more than 500 students complete his course in 'defensive flying' with its focus on performance, stability and control, and basic and advanced aerobatic maneuvers.

"He was a guest lecturer at UTSI in Tullahoma, Tennessee, lectured and demonstrated spins to engineers and test pilots at the Naval Air Test Center in Patuxent, Maryland. Bill lectured at the FBI academy and taught at various pilot refresher courses around the country. He wrote his first book, *The Student Pilot's Flight Manual*, in 1960, while still at Iowa State University. Other books he authored include *The Advanced Pilot's Flight Manual*, *The Instrument Flight Manual*, and *The Flight Instructor's Manual*. His book, *Logging Flight Time*, is a collection of articles that he wrote during his 61 years of flying. More than one million copies of his books were sold. He also wrote numerous articles that appeared in numerous aviation magazines." 

Bill's enthusiasm and expertise drew students to him and also attracted the attention of several different organizations that seek to draw attention to aviation excellence. A partial list of the awards and honors Bill received includes:

- Tennessee Ninety-Nines Award
- Flying Physicians (Airman of the Year)
- Alpha Eta Rho (International Aviation Fraternity Award)
- General Aviation/FAA National Instructor of the Year
- GE Lecturer at Smithsonian Air and Space Museum
- Civil Aviation Medical Association (Forrest M. Bird Award)
- Elder Statesman of Aviation
- Flight Instructor Hall of Fame, Oshkosh, Wisconsin
- Quick-Goethert lecturer at the University of Tennessee Space Inst.
- Honorary Doctor of Science degree from University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee
- Tennessee Aviation Hall of Fame, Sevierville, Tennessee





Above: Bill Kershner inspired students and instructors alike, including Catherine Cavagnaro, who now runs Sewanee Aerobatic School.

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Who is Randy Reinhardt?

A glimpse into the spirit of the 2006 Harold E. Neumann Award winner

Editor's Note: In last month's *Sport Aerobatics* you read about Randy Reinhardt receiving the Harold E. Neumann Award. The award is given annually for outstanding contribution as a chief judge during the previous contest year and recognizes outstanding leadership and fairness on the judges' line. Gordon Penner took some time to share more about this special judge who is a fixture in the Mid-America and Southeast Regions.

Gordon Penner

At Mid-America and Southeast Region aerobatic contests we are all used to seeing Randy Reinhardt on the judges' line, or holding court in the hangar afterwards. He and his scooter are such a ubiquitous sight that I personally can't imagine him not being there. Known for running a tight contest and for knowing the rulebook backwards and forwards, Randy Reinhardt's monumental contribution to our sport has earned him recognition and the 2006 Harold E. Neumann Award. An inspiration to many, as he has not let the effects of a horseback riding accident stop him from contributing to the sport he loves so much.

Randy flew in the US Air Force during the Vietnam War from 1968 until 1973, but his association with flying and aerobatics started before that. From Louisville, Kentucky, Randy knew the Soucy family. He helped Gene Soucy build two of his S-1Ts. This included the 6-inch frame extensions needed because Gene was so tall. He sent Gene Soucy up for his commercial checkride. Gene's dad, Paul Soucy, sent Randy up for his commercial checkride when he turned 18.

Randy soloed a Schweizer 2-22 glider when he was 14. By the time he was 18 he had his commercial, instrument, multi, and CFI and was teaching aerobatics in a Stearman

and a Decathlon. When he was called up for Vietnam, the Air Force was looking for pilots with CFI and round engine experience to teach our Allies to fly our older planes. Randy taught Royal Thai air force pilots to fly T-28s with extra machine guns mounted on them. He also spent a lot of time flying the Douglas A-1 Skyraider out of Thailand on some hair-raising missions. Later his wing converted to the F-4 for air-to-ground work and for the Fast-FAC (Forward Air Controller) program.

Randy did not return to aerobatics right away when coming home from the land of crippling humidity. He got into competition sky diving from 1974 until 1985, but on a flight in a Cessna 182 over Florida he happened to fly over Sebring. He saw a lot of activity and a lot of funny-looking airplanes down there. After landing to see what was going on, and staying on to enjoy a few adult beverages, he knew this was something he wanted to be a part of. In less than a year he bought one of the few homebuilt S-1Ts and started competing. Sebring holds a special place in Randy's heart, with him saying, "I never miss Sebring!"

His first contest was in Maytown, Pennsylvania, in 1986 in the Sportsman category. Soon he was placing and winning. He flew Sportsman in

1986, flew Intermediate in 1987 and '88, and then flew Advanced from 1989 until 2001, when he had his horse riding accident. The Pitts S-1T, with a 200-hp engine, spring gear, and fixed-pitch prop was his competition mount until it was lost in a hangar fire in 1996. After that he purchased an Extra 200 and continued to compete in Advanced. During this time he also owned a stock Chipmunk and a Decathlon.

Soon after he started competing he became a judge—Randy doesn't do anything in half measures. He became a judge in 1986. He became a chief judge in the mid 1990s. Randy says, "You can't place well unless you know the rules. You have got to sit out on the judges' line and see and hear how these things are judged." He must have believed this from the beginning, assisting and recording for 85 flights at one of his first contests!

"The idea is not to fly perfectly, but to make it appear perfect. A loop that appears perfectly round to the judges, isn't," says Randy. This is one of the hardest things for the new person to grasp. We are flying for flawed human judges, and things like parallax have to be accounted for. Flying is not just a technical skill; it is an art. To this end, Randy also serves up his skills as an aerobatic coach, able to present the points of view of both

the judge and the competitor. Many of us have improved our flying using his coaching.

I asked Randy if being a line judge and a chief judge are related to one another, or are they completely different skill sets. He said, "They are completely different! You can be an outstanding chief judge and a terrible line judge, and vice versa." Later, he said, "Your job as a line judge is to carefully watch every figure and consistently apply the criteria to arrive at a score. Your job as a chief judge is to run a contest safely, first of all, but your secondary concern is efficiency. Also, as a line judge you need to really know Chapter 8 of the book, but to be chief judge you have to almost memorize the whole rule book."

On November 26, 2001, a horse that Randy says, "Didn't want to be ridden that day" bucked him off, throwing him headlong into the corral fence. At first Randy was devastated by the change in his life, but he climbed out of that depression to reach for as much as he could. At first he made himself get out and go places. Initially, this meant his being in a wheelchair pushed by others. Later, he used his scooter to get around, and a rig on the back of his car to load and unload the scooter. He became strong enough through therapy to not only get from the car to the scooter and back, but to sit out there on the judges' line on a 100-degree day. For the last several years Randy has worked about 10 contests a year, and of course, he never misses Sebring.

Recently, my mother ended up in the hospital with a Parkinson's disease related event, and she will have to move to assisted living. To her it was initially overwhelming. On hearing this, Randy immediately said, "Make sure that she gets out and gets around people. You either get upset or you give up in a situation like this. Anger can be therapeutic." I agree wholeheartedly. Randy considers aerobatics something he is going to do "come hell or high water." I am overjoyed that we are celebrating a person of such character and tenacity, and am again forced to wonder how aerobatics continues to attract such inspired and inspirational people. Congratulations, Randy! 



Soaring with Young Eagles



Weston Liu

I would have never guessed that kids from the modern attention deficit video game generation would line up patiently to fly in the open front cockpit of an old Pitts S-2A. When International Aerobatic Club (IAC) Chapter 35 was first approached about being the host for a Young Eagles event, my first thought was that I had never heard of an IAC chapter doing that. But then, why not!

On a beautiful September Saturday, IAC Chapter 35 hosted a Young Eagles Rally at the Nashua, New Hampshire, airport. A mix of local pilots and IAC 35 members in a Pitts, a Decathlon, an Extra, Pipers, Cessnas, and Grummans flew 99 smiling kids that Saturday. With a line still waiting at the planned closing time, we agreed to return on Sunday, and 25 more kids were flown.

IAC members may take their ability to fly for granted, but there is nothing more humbling than receiving a thank-you note like this one from Cameron Ford. Mr. Ford is a director for the local My Turn program, which encourages less privileged kids to aim

for rewarding careers. He summed up the experience of one Young Eagle by writing, "I would like to thank you folks for providing the opportunity for one of the MY TURN students (Santiago) to participate in the Young Eagles Rally. For some young people, their first ride in an airplane is something they will remember for a very long time. For Santiago, I am almost certain that last weekend was a life-changing experience. Just a few short months ago, he told me that for his career goal, he would really like to get into the aviation field but felt that opportunity is only for 'the other kids.' But then we got the flyer and the rest, as they say, is 'history.' The students of the MY TURN program in the Nashua and Manchester area are constantly looking for opportunities to learn about the careers that are available to them. Opportunities like this help them to dream big. Thank you for what you do. I am sure we will be seeing you folks in the future!"

That sort of thank-you says that when you take a young person out for 20 minutes in your airplane, you

are doing a lot more than going flying. Your average IAC member may know that the EAA Young Eagles program organizes pilots to provide free non-aerobatic airplane rides to kids between ages 8 and 16. What IAC members may not generally know is that any chapter of the EAA, or an EAA division like IAC, may host a Young Eagles event. Many EAA chapters plan for the Young Eagles Day that EAA designates in June. IAC 35 learned that you can organize a Young Eagles event at any time of the year, and that kids will be excited no matter what the time of the year!

Members had several questions at the first chapter meeting where hosting a Young Eagles event was discussed. First, a Young Eagles event must be organized by a chapter. Pilots who are not chapter members can participate, but a chapter has to host the event. Second, the rides are short, non-aerobatic hops around the airport and local town. The goal is to give each kid a taste of flying and maybe show them his or her house from the air. In an aerobatic ship you

IAC Chapter 35 steps up to host Young Eagles meet



Showing a youngster their house from the air makes a lifelong impression.

"Seeing a kid smiling as he or she climbs out of your airplane is a great reminder about why you started flying in the first place."



Sharing the magic of flight with youth strengthens the future of aerobatics.

can choose to leave your parachutes in the hangar and use your regular seats and booster padding. Third, you can have kids fly the airplane if you are comfortable with that, and if they want to. Finally, EAA provides certificates and forms, software, and other support for these events. A Young Eagles event is much less complicated than a contest. EAA puts most of the information on the web. Look at www.YoungEagles.org/volunteers/volunteer.asp.

A Young Eagles event needs a leader, and for IAC 35 the individual who proposed the event and made all of the details happen is Harlan Loken. There has been a history of Young Eagles events at Nashua, but the local EAA chapter was no longer in existence, so Harlan, on behalf of other local pilots, approached IAC 35 to become host of the event(s). Harlan joined IAC and Chapter 35 and, as chapter Young Eagles coordinator, got a local fixed base operator to let us use its parking lot and ramp, contacted local schools to post flyers for the event, did the EAA paperwork, did some advance

planning with the local control tower, and put out the word among local pilots. The chapter organized some volunteer pilots and offered whatever support Harlan needed. Thanks, Harlan!

As mentioned at the top of this article, with the choice of several pretty nice-looking airplanes, a number of the kids made a point of stopping an Extra pilot or a Pitts pilot and asking if they could fly in those specific airplanes. Pretty impressive for a 9- or 10-year-old! Chapter 35 will definitely host the Young Eagles again. Seeing a kid smiling as he or she climbs out of your airplane is a great reminder about why you started flying in the first place. As we talk about where new IAC members come from, we should look beyond the recent flight school graduates and remember that planting the seeds of future pilots helps our sport in the long term. We also earn a lot of goodwill from parents. That goodwill may help you at the next meeting of airport neighbors against noise. Young Eagles is a win for everyone, so don't miss out. ☺

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God, that was great!

The spirit of
aerobatics in
a Pitts Special

Flying Wildcat Steven F. Groce, IAC 0021279

here is one expression, an utterance of pure joy and satisfaction, that escapes my lips after flying the Pitts, virtually without exception. Flight after flight, year after year, the feeling is the same.

Few things in life can compare to zooming through the sky in a Pitts Special, or any other capable aerobatic plane. It is a joyous freedom to be able to fly above the natural bounds of earth. I liken it to the leaps, pirouettes, and power of a ballerina pouring the heart and passion of her soul into a dance, with the combined wings of an eagle and a hummingbird powering the dance through dimensions never possible before. It is a privileged freedom that all should have, but only a lucky and determined few will ever know.

There is also something special in the soul and spirit of those who choose this dance. Most terra bound

earthlings wish to stay grounded, and they lack not only the desire to experience such freedom, but also even the comprehension of those few who do. And, for those of us who do engage in the dance, remember back to your early days. It was not just that you were lucky. There was likely some serious brave determination going on just to venture into this realm of flight, coming from virtually every facet of your life. New skill levels that you would need to survive it, financial demands, not to mention some pretty bold self-confidence. The determination to accomplish all of this came from an inner passion that for some reason, each one of us has. That passion is just part of who we are. As fundamental as a certain DNA sequence. Some people have it, and some don't.

It is like being transformed into an entirely new spiritual creature. In an airplane like a Pitts, it is sometimes

said you don't just get in it. Rather, you strap it on. You become part of it, and perhaps in a very real sense, you become a different being altogether. The agility of a wildcat who sees through the jungle with its senses, and who also has the spirit and wings of an eagle. The mystical flying wildcat that I feel disguised within is no myth.

In the sky, I am focused, sometimes intense, careful yet adventurous, vigilant yet relaxed. A consciousness of risk is always present, surfacing to different degrees of awareness, depending on the moment or my thoughts. I have achieved a level of calmness and confidence that I remind myself not to mistake for complacency. My father told me long ago (based on his experiences as a naval aviator, several of which almost prevented my being here to write this story) that I was engaging in a very unforgiving activity, and

that if I made a major mistake, I would die. He left that message for me on my home voice mail one day, October 1, 1995, to be exact. It was back in the days when answering machines used tapes. I don't know why, but something about it really grabbed me. I pulled the micro cassette tape out of the machine and saved it. My father died in May of 2006, and afterward I remembered the tape that I had put away in a box. I get it out from time to time and listen to it. That and one other cassette are the only recordings of his voice that I have. His words are also a part of my conscious awareness.

In flying, as in life, we learn different things from different people. My first aerobic ride was given to me in a Decathlon by Tim Scroggins, at 3DW in Springfield, Missouri. The

morning he made the offer, I dropped everything and canceled all my appointments, and he could not have reneged on that offer even if he had wanted to. It confirmed exactly what I already knew and felt inside. I had a passion for aerobatic flying. That DNA sequence was part of me, and there was nothing that I could do about it. My first instructor was former U.S. Aerobic Team Coach John Morrissey. I had only a few lessons with John in his Pitts S-2A, but there was one phrase that I still remember and find myself saying to myself at certain times in flight. GIWIT.

It is a phrase in reference to control inputs, and John Morrissey's translation of it was simply, "Give it what it takes." My next instructor, and also a mentor for many of us, was former U.S. Aerobatic Team

Member Bill Thomas. In his red Pitts S-2B, Bill taught me not only basic aerobatics, but also how to land a Pitts, and landing meant survival! I learned many things from Bill, but again there was one phrase that he would always repeat, which I think about on flare-out to this day, "Hold it off...hold it off."

As the years have gone by, at least for the most part, the control inputs in virtually any attitude, other than straight and level, seem second nature. I worry more about an engine or structural failure or even a mid-air collision. I truly see what we do in aerobatics as an artistic expression. It requires precise control inputs and a thorough understanding and feel for what I call energy management. A whole separate story could be written about this, but energy management is, in my view, the single most important key to flying well in every phase of flight. It is as fundamental to learning to fly aerobatic sequences well, and within your airplane's g-limits, as it is to a good landing.

Other people believe that what we do is stunt flying. Some people even think that I am a daredevil. Some pilots with an obvious lack of respect for safety and the wrong attitude may be daredevils, and they may also be flying stunts. Unfortunately, pilots—even those with great experience—who fly without respect usually don't live too long. Many air show pilots have died after pancaking their steed into the earth after a simple maneuver such as a loop, just because they did not have sense enough to do it up higher. There is an old saying that altitude is like money in the bank. The saying usually continues with: It's nice to have it when you need it. I think what we ought to say is this: If you don't have it when you need it, it's not just going to be a bad day...it's very likely your last day! Of course, this is only one example. We have all read the reports, seen the videos, or witnessed the tragedies personally. Even altitude won't save you, or your friends and fellow pilots, from other forms of plain recklessness in the air. On the other hand, knowledge,

That passion is just part of who we are. As fundamental as a certain DNA sequence. Some people have it, and some do not.



Flying Wildcat Steven Groe

Experiencing aerobatic maneuvers in a Pitts, the ultimate freedom, is something many pilots only dream about.



wisdom, and respect, as with many things, will at least give you a pretty good chance of being able to come back and do it again another day.

And with that, we come full circle to where I started with this story. Every time I land, taxi up to the hangar, and pull the mixture, I pop

open the canopy and just sit there in silence for a moment or two...in awe over the surrealism of it all, where I started, where I've been, and where I am. I think about how lucky and fortunate I am to be able to do this, and that I want to do it again. I also think about how lucky I am to live in

America where I can do this, and I say to myself, "God, that was great."

Remember, no matter what kind of pilot you are, a competitor, an air show pilot, or one that just likes to fly straight and level, fly in a way that will allow you to come back and do it again another day. **SA**

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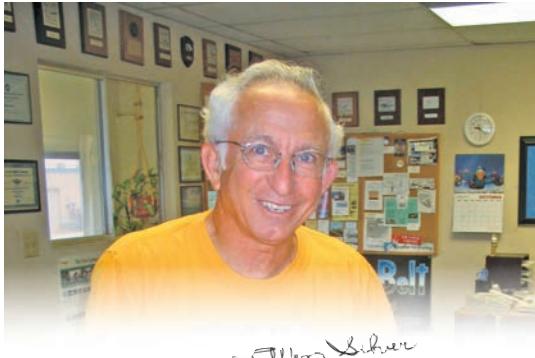
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A master rigger answers your questions about parachutes.

Q : *It looks like the flying season is done where I live...how do I properly store my parachute?*

A : As we enter the winter months, you might find that sitting by a cozy, warm fireplace with a hot drink is more desirable than flying in severe cold weather. Or maybe your aircraft is down for several months of maintenance. Whatever the reason, you need to know how to properly store your parachute. Your parachute and other survival equipment deserve a cozy place to spend the winter, too!

This is a great time to store your parachute in an appropriate place to ensure that next spring it will pass the tests necessary to return it to service. Make sure you have a cool, dry, dark place to properly store your parachute. A perfect place is indoors, at room temperature, where you live, on a shelf off the floor. Don't forget your carrying bag. Place your parachute in it for added protection. If you don't have a carrying bag, an old suitcase will work just fine. Your parachute needs to be in something. You can even go one step further and purchase a plastic storage container that you can securely close to keep out air, moisture, and critters. If you live in a humid climate, place a few desiccants in the container alongside your parachute to protect against moisture.

Always store your parachute away from bright lights and especially out of direct sunlight. Over time, both forms of light can break down the nylon that makes up your parachute system. This is especially true of the UV rays from the sun. Remember, this is a life-saving piece of equipment and needs special attention.

I always tell my clients that if they are going to store their parachute for more than six months, this is the perfect time to put the chute on and practice pulling your rip cord! Once opened, remove all the rubber bands and toss them away. Your parachute rigger can replace the rubber bands when you take your parachute out of winter hibernation. Under the right conditions (typically involving high humidity) the rubber bands can deteriorate and stick to your parachute lines or canopy material. If this happens, it almost guarantees the loss of your parachute.

This may be a good time to send your parachute back to the manufacturer or a qualified master rigger for a thorough inspection, especially if you will not need it

back right away. I have used this extra time to remove my customer's parachutes from their harnesses/containers. I then specially clean the harnesses/containers to remove built-up residue from sunscreen, body oils, and other grime that has accumulated over time. Do not try to clean your harness/container yourself. This requires special dry-cleaning so the material is not damaged or weakened.

Q : *Why did the quick ejector snap that holds my leg straps on break?*

A : Basically, there are two types of snaps used on parachute harnesses. The B-12 and the ejector snap (see photo no. 1). While the B-12 snap rarely breaks or causes a problem, the ejector snap is very popular because of the ease of getting out of your harness. It does need a little tender loving care when opening it, and it does require a little bit of maintenance to ensure it works smoothly.

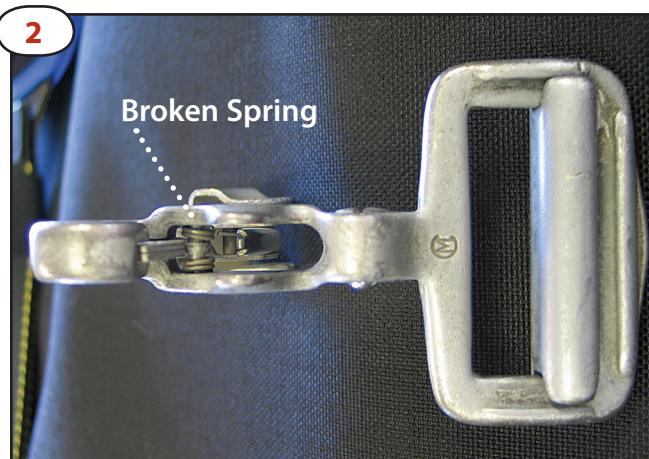
I like quick ejectors because they allow you to get out of your harness, well...quickly. This is especially important if you have to bail out in high winds. Being dragged across a rough landing area is not an option you want to think about. Over time, hyper extending the opening latch will first weaken and then break the spring (see photo no. 2) that helps keep the release closed. Open the snap gently! Repeatedly yanking open the release lever will eventually break the spring.

Even with the spring broken, the ejector snap can still be safely used as long as you make sure it is pushed down and locked securely over the detent ball (see photo no. 3) on the side of the snap. Just make extra sure that your leg strap is tight and the snap will not come open. It will still need to be replaced at the next repack. The broken snap must be carefully cut off the harness and replaced with a separable ejector snap that screws into place. Did I mention this is expensive? The snap alone will run you about \$45, not including the labor. That's why I recommend the B-12 snaps for fixed base operators and flying clubs that have multiple users.

If you do have quick ejector snaps, I suggest that you clean them once in awhile. An old toothbrush works great. Carefully open the snap and brush the surfaces to

remove any dirt. Then spray something like WD-40 on it while working the latch back and forth. Use only a small amount. Also protect the harness/container from overspray by wrapping a rag or paper towels around the snap. Have a warm winter and keep the questions coming in!

Special Note: On August 20 the public comment period ended for changing the repack cycle from 120 to 180 days. Now it's in the FAA's hands. It has 18 months (by law) to approve or reject the proposal (notice of proposed rulemaking). I believe it will pass, especially with all your favorable comments. I want to thank you for them. See you in February.



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meet a member

Name: Matt Hall

City, Country: Newcastle, Australia

Occupation: Fighter Pilot

Family: Wife, Pedita; Son, 2-year-old Mitchell

Pilot License/Certificate: Australian License and U.S. Commercial Certificate

Aircraft Flown: Giles 202, MX2, Pitts, Acro Sport, RV-4, Pawnee, Decathlon, Citabria, J-3 Cub, gliders, hang gliders, ultralights, P-51D, F/A-18, F-15E, and military trainers

What experience drew you to flying? I grew up flying with my father in an Auster towing glider, I would guess at age 2. This led to me flying gliders at an early age, hang gliders soon after that (cheaper!), then ultralights, and finally sport aircraft.

What was your first experience with aerobatics?

I flew aerobatics in a Citabria with my father at age 8.

What got you into competition? I was sent on a military exchange posting to North Carolina to fly F15Es. I purchased an Acro Sport to fly around in and then decided to give a competition a go. After one competition at Farmville, I bought a ticket to Florida to observe the WAC in 2003. I was hooked after watching what was possible in an aircraft.

Tell us about your airplane. It is a Giles 202, which was used as the company demonstrator. The aircraft was modified by Len Fox as he experimented with different setups for the ailerons and tail. I am running a Lycon-built IO-360, and a two-blade Hartzell Claw prop.

How did you obtain this airplane? After seeing a Giles 202 at the WAC, it appealed to me as the next step. Bill Finagin took me flying in his Giles 202, and I was sold. I test-flew a few aircraft and then found ours at the factory at Scappoose.

What is your most memorable contest moment? Winning in Sportsman at Warrenton, Virginia, in the Acro Sport and then getting a 'reward' ride with Bill in his Giles.

What is your favorite part of a contest? Immediately after a flight. I find a great sense of satisfaction (hopefully!) after completing a complex routine at a standard which I was personally hoping to achieve.

Who do you admire in the sport? I have to say Sean Tucker, as he has competed and won at a national level, built a very successful company demonstrating what an aircraft is capable of, and maintained safety margins. I think the number of people he has inspired to take up aerobatics would be astonishing if it were counted.

Where would you like to see yourself going in the sport? I would like my occupation to be an 'aerobatic pilot.' Becoming a full-time demonstration and competition pilot on the international scene with a sponsor would suit me just fine!

What would you most like to see served at a contest banquet? Meat pies! (We don't really put shrimp on a barbecue!)

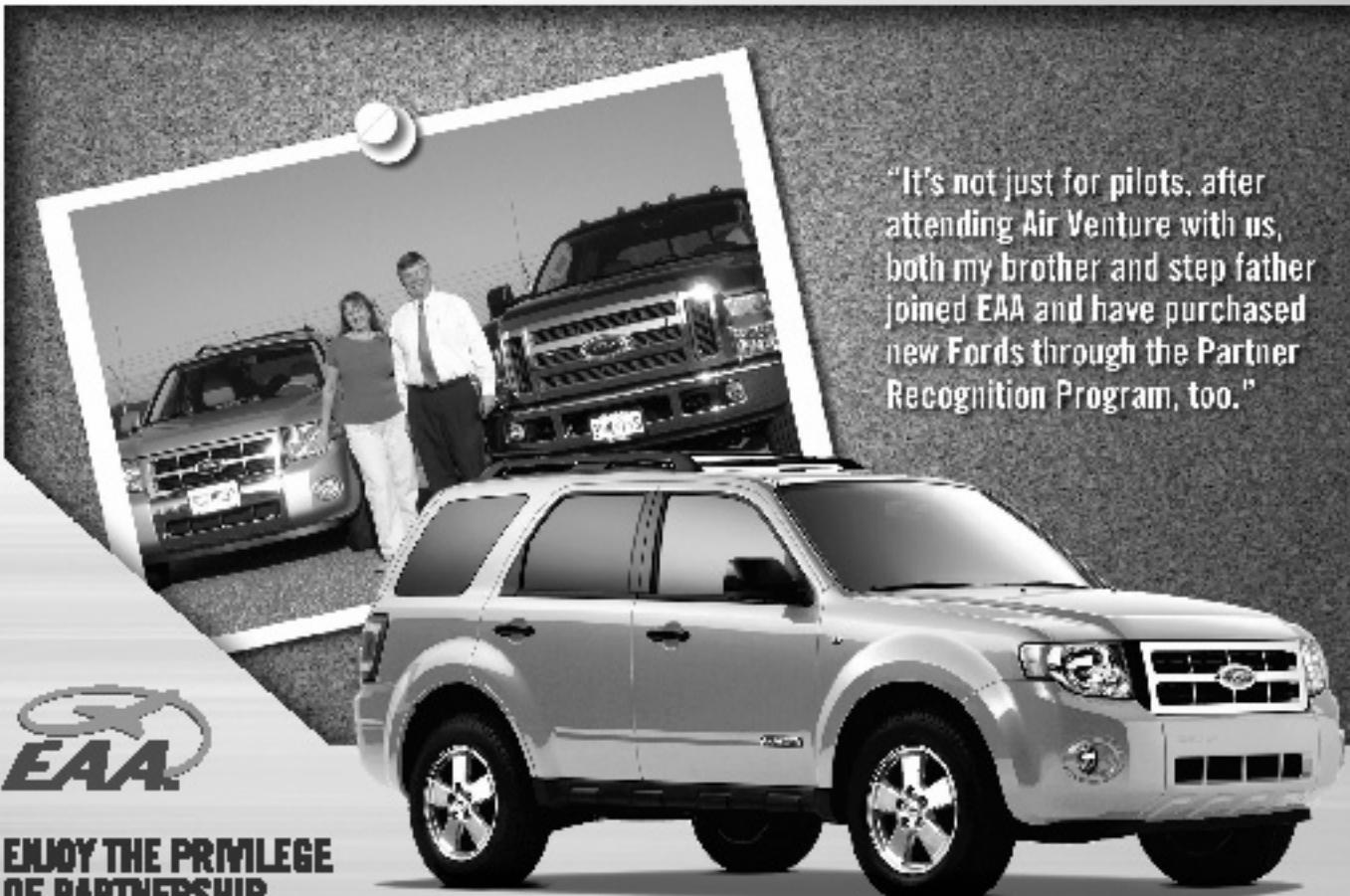


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Best regards,

Ronald R.
Lexington, MS
EAA Member

"It's not just for pilots, after attending Air Venture with us, both my brother and step father joined EAA and have purchased new Fords through the Partner Recognition Program, too."

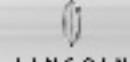
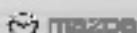
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