



SPORT

AEROBATICS

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL AEROBATIC CLUB

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2024



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U.S. NATIONAL AEROBATIC CHAMPIONSHIPS



SALINA, KANSAS
SEPTEMBER 22-27

2024



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ON THE COVER:

Luke Penner, Canadian Team captain in his Extra 330SC, and Jesse Mack, HC competitor flying the Harv's flight school Extra 300L, wing their way over the desolate Nevada desert after the conclusion of the 2023 World Advanced Aerobatic Championships. Photo by Spencer Davis

ABOVE:

A couple of Pitts Specials flown by the Flying Floods out of New Jersey: N188JP Pitts S-2A 180hp and N45JP 1978 Pitts S-1 150hp. Photo by Jason Flood

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Thank You or So Long?

BY JIM BOURKE, IAC 434151



I GET TO WRITE this column before I know the results of the election. I'm talking about the IAC election here, not any of the trivial local, state, or federal government elections you might hear about more often on your favorite non-aerobatic news source.

Depending on how the all-important IAC election goes, either you will continue hearing from me in this space or you will be hearing from the new president for the next two years. So, if it's my last column, let me take a moment to thank you for the pleasure of serving as IAC president, and rest assured, I remain dedicated to helping the IAC in whatever capacity the president and board supports.

Regardless of who wins the election, there is a challenge ahead for the IAC. Our wonderful magazine is unfortunately no longer drawing the advertising revenue it once did. This problem is not the magazine's fault; it's just the nature of print publication in our current age. Going forward, publishing the magazine means that the publication costs are being paid for by the membership dues rather than advertising.

The IAC has generally followed a philosophy that each activity should be paid for by itself. In other words, the feeling has been that the competition registration fees should bear the costs of competition activities, the IAC Nationals should pay for itself with its own registration fees and sponsorships, EAA AirVenture Oshkosh should pay for itself with merchandising and sponsorships, the magazine should pay for itself with advertising revenue, and on down the line with every IAC product being supported by its own revenue stream as much as possible. I think there is a lot of wisdom to this practice in general. But I also think at times it is the wrong approach, because, by definition, in a nonprofit there will always be endeavors that are services with no profit motive. Also, with this method, there is not a lot of room for new ideas since new ideas start with zero income. So, the situation we are in with the magazine is forcing us to rethink our philosophy about finances in general. That's good for us, as all challenges are good for us, because it forces us to think creatively.

The IAC faces other challenges: The availability and expense of insurance are serious problems for many aerobatic pilots, the aerobatic waiver process is still challenging in many regions, airspace is becoming more restricted, and the recent period of high inflation in our economy hasn't had enough

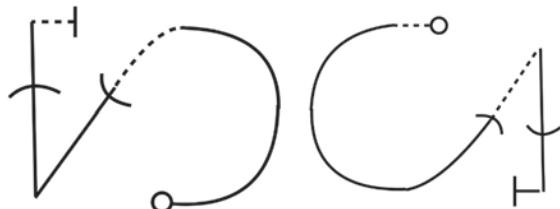
time to settle evenly throughout the economy, which is a fancy way of saying that people are forced to forgo some fun things such as flying so they can dedicate money to their more basic needs. All of these challenges can and will be addressed by our energetic and capable IAC board, so don't worry. But do work together and keep telling your board members and me what concerns you.

Presuming you've decided to retain me as IAC president, I look forward to working on those issues with the board and with all of you, and I thank you for your support.

New Figures?

In addition to being IAC president, I am also the chair of CIVA's Aresti Committee. Previously, I also served as chair of CIVA's Catalogue Committee, but that position is now held by Daniel Genevey.

Daniel recently proposed two new figures for inclusion in the *Aresti Aerobatic Catalogue*. These two new figures are interesting for people who fly Free Unknown programs, as they allow pilots a new option for exchanging one energy state for another.



I don't see any downside to adding an optional roll element to the horizontal line before/after the 5/8 loop.

I've recommended that these figures be called "drivers" because 1) I like golf, and these figures remind me of a golf driver if I imagine the vertical line is long and I squint just right, 2) we already have "wedges" so it fits the motif, and 3)

... recently proposed [are] two new figures for inclusion in the Aresti Aerobatic Catalogue. These two new figures are interesting ... as they allow pilots a new option for exchanging one energy state for another.

the purpose of these figures is to “drive” from one part of the box to another.

New figure proposals are rare, but there has been a lot of talk about figures like these for many years, and I think these proposals may have merit. It will take a lot of thought and dialogue to determine whether they are worthy of being added to the catalogue. I haven’t heard from any

opponents yet, but I’m sure they will make good points. So, to me, the jury is still out.

A big challenge to adding figures to the catalogue is that the Aresti family has apparently no interest in this subject anymore. At one time, family members vigorously defended their copyright of the catalogue, but lately they appear entirely unreachable. That circumstance may make additions to the catalogue impossible in an official sense.

Possibly it’s time for CIVA to branch the catalogue, but everyone must keep in mind this step would not be a work-around for the copyright issues. The Aresti family can and very well may claim that any work created is derivative, and therefore, their property, so it could seek to penalize CIVA or remove any unauthorized changes from public view. Therefore, it is risky to change the catalogue without the support of the Aresti family. There is a long history of drama over this issue that probably felt important many years ago, but today just makes me sad. In the spirit of Col. Aresti, aerobatics must be free to evolve. It isn’t a fitting tribute to let the catalogue stagnate.

That’s all from me this issue. Please remember you can always reach me at president@iac.org. **IAC†**



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Putting the “International” Into the International Aerobatic Club

BY LORRIE PENNER, IAC 431036

MORE THAN 686,000 PEOPLE were on the grounds during the week of EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2024! Of those, 2,581 guests registered at the EAA’s International Visitors Tent. The IAC Aerobatic Center attracted a constant flow of visitors through the store, which featured international aircraft T-shirts. The forums were highly attended as well, and of the 16 forums presented, there were five forums centered on internationally built or manufactured aircraft and/or pilots.

Parked on the south side of the Vicki Cruse Educational Pavilion was a variety of international aircraft, including a Sukhoi Su-26 (Russia), Marchetti SF260 (Italy), de Havilland Chipmunk (England), CAP 231 (France), Van’s RV-14 (Canada), Bücker Jungmann (Germany), Extra SX (Germany), and Yak-50 (Russia).

IAC AirVenture Chairman Jordan Ashley ran a well-tuned operation, and the tradition of the engraved welcome mug for the pilots who parked in the IAC area continued to be a big hit. Another continuing tradition was the meet-and-greets this year with IAC members and airshow performers Vicky Benzing, Patty Wagstaff, Rob Holland, RJ Gritter, and Jeff Boerboon.

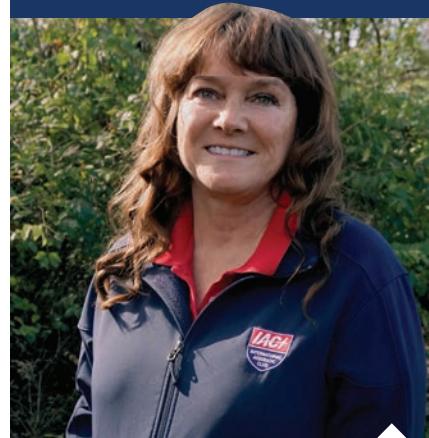
The new volunteer awards started last year were once again presented at the IAC member gathering and dinner. Recipients included Chairman’s Award – Lorrie Penner; Service Award – Tien Luu; AirVenture Forums – “Golden Age of Monoplanes” presented by Rob Holland and Mike Goulian; AirVenture Showplane – Brooks Mershon’s Sukhoi Su-26; and AirVenture Rising Star – Billy Longacre.

A big shoutout to Tien Luu, who participated as a videographer in one of my favorite new traditions in which the Metropolitan State University of Denver aerobatic team members served as IAC ambassadors – interviewing, taking photos, and visiting with all who were interested in aerobatics. They represented the IAC well and give us hope that our traditions and aerobatic knowledge base are making their way through to a younger generation.

In this issue of *Sport Aerobatics*, we continue with an “international” flavor in an article written by IAC member and Canadian Advanced Team captain Luke Penner. While the journey of an aerobatic pilot is filled with challenges and triumphs, Luke gives examples of how the guidance or encouragement of someone who cares can make all the difference. On his own journey he has seen how mentorship plays a significant role in shaping the next generation of pilots.

While the majority of the IAC membership (currently at 4,032) is made up of members in the United States, more than 180 members are

► **SUBMISSIONS:** Photos, articles, news, and letters to the editor intended for publication should be emailed to editor@iac.org. Please include your IAC number, city, and state/country. Emails should be concise, polite, and to the point. All letters are subject to editing for clarity and length.



While the majority of the IAC membership (currently at 4,032) is made up of members in the United States, more than 180 members are Canadian. The IAC membership spreads throughout 38 different countries.

Canadian. The IAC membership spreads throughout 38 different countries. If you are an international member, consider sending an article about your aerobatic experiences. Drop me an email at editor@iac.org.

Coming in September is our premier event – the U.S. National Aerobatic Championships. Registration has been open since May, resulting in more than 58 pilots preregistering (as of August 12). We are expecting this to be another big year for the Advanced power pilots because it is a team selection year.

Although by the time this issue arrives in your home it will be only a couple of weeks before Nationals, pilots and volunteers can still go to the website and preregister. Online preregistration remains open until September 20. So, it’s not too late! Visit IAC.org/nationals.

I hope to see you in Salina, Kansas!

IAC+

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2024 Annual AirVenture Volunteer Awards

Award winners

BY JORDAN ASHLEY, IAC 434846

EAA AIRVENTURE OSHKOSH, like contests, would not exist without a team of volunteers, forum presenters, and airplanes. Volunteering isn't about the individual. Volunteering is our way to give back to an organization and the things we care about. So, my desire was to create a series of awards that could be given to AirVenture volunteers by other AirVenture volunteers that, in some small way, would allow the organization to give back to its volunteers.

The **AirVenture Chairman's Award** was created to allow the AirVenture convention chairman to recognize an individual for their work at AirVenture and as a way for the chair to publicly say thank you to them for a job well done.

This year's awardee always seems to have the magical ability to be where they need to be, when they need to be there. They stepped up to many things this year that were not in their job description and personally carried several areas of AirVenture planning that I was unable to do while planning and then moving across the country. For their work this year but also for their work in years past, showing this same level of care and organization to the entire organization, this year's Chairman's Award goes to Lorrie Penner.



2024 AirVenture Volunteer Awards Chairman's Award – IAC AirVenture Chairman Jordan Ashley with Lorrie Penner.

The **AirVenture Service Award** was created to recognize a volunteer who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in their service to the IAC and AirVenture.

This year's award goes to a person who I'm not sure knows the word no, and who was always willing to help out when I could not be in two places at once, as I've not figured out how to clone myself. They stepped up, not only leading their own contingent but also caring for the technology that allows us to post our forums online for all to see. This year's Service Award goes to Tien Luu.



2024 AirVenture Volunteer Awards AV Service Award – Jordan with Tien Luu.

The **AirVenture Forums Award**, chosen by the AirVenture forums chairman, was created to recognize a forum presenter who contributes to the mission of the IAC with their presentation.

Described as “fascinating and professional,” this year’s forums award goes to the forum “Golden Age of Monoplanes,” organized by Phillip Gragg and presented by Rob Holland and Mike Goulian.



2024 AirVenture volunteer awards Forums Award – Jordan with Phillip Gragg (center), the forum organizer, and Rob Holland one of the presenters.

The **AirVenture Showplane Award**, chosen by the AirVenture parking chairman, was created to recognize an outstanding airplane or pilot who flew their airplane into AirVenture.

This year’s Showplane Award goes to Brooks Mershon and his Sukhoi Su-26, which came all the way from the West Coast to be with us this week. With the limited range of the Sukhoi, this was no small feat, but Brooks took this in stride considering it an adventure to come to AirVenture and to connect to so many with his unique airplane. His was the first Su-26 to park with the IAC in my nearly 20 years of volunteering at AirVenture.



2024 AirVenture volunteer awards Showplane Award – Brooks Mershon (on the wing) with previous owner Rick Volker.

Garnering young or new people is at the core of building a foundation of growth for the sustained future of the organization. The **AirVenture Rising Star Award** was created to recognize a student volunteer who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in their service to the IAC at AirVenture.

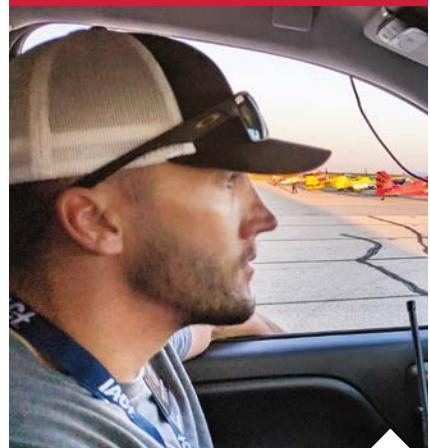
This year’s award goes to someone who only had to work one shift but ended up working one if not two shifts each day, talking aerobatics with anyone and everyone who came into the building. Their welcoming personality allowed them to connect to those who came into the IAC building and those they ran into outside of it. Being new to the IAC and aerobatics, I am excited to see where this person goes in their career and with the organization in the future. This year’s award goes to Billy Longacre.



2024 AirVenture volunteer awards Rising Star Award – Jordan with Billy Longacre (center) and IAC president Jim Bourke.

U.S. National Aerobatic Championships Update

BY SHAD COULSON, IAC 440759, U.S. NATIONALS CONTEST DIRECTOR



GREETINGS, MEMBERS OF THE International Aerobatic Club. It is hard to believe the dog days of summer are nearly behind us. With the change in seasons comes the conclusion of the contest year, but not before we get to gather once again in Salina, Kansas, for the 2024 U.S. National Aerobatic Championships, which are being held September 22-27. I, like many of you, am looking forward to the opportunity to gather with old friends, many of whom we only have the pleasure of seeing at IAC events. Nationals is also a great opportunity to make some new friends and build relationships with other club members and chapters.

Planning efforts for the 2024 U.S. National Aerobatic Championships continue. We are excited to announce and introduce a number of new items for the upcoming Nationals. These include upgraded aerobatic box markings, near real-time scoring and category updates, enhanced livestream features, a digital contest program, and new custom IAC trophies and clinkies. We're also excited



to bring you a refreshed lineup of social events, to include a pancake breakfast and an apps and taps medals event, while keeping some favorites from 2023, to include the barbecue with the board of directors and the customary IAC banquet.

Contest registration is open! As always, registration and payment are required to reserve a practice slot on the official practice days via the IAC website. Practice on unofficial practice days will be coordinated on-site or via email with Gary DeBaun and Jeff Granger. Please see [Nationals Bulletin 1](#) for detailed information on the unofficial/official practice days as well as the registration fees for 2024. This year's Nationals will serve as the team selection for the 2025 U.S. Advanced Aerobatic Team, which is coming off a strong showing at the 2023 World Advanced Aerobatic Championships in Jean, Nevada.

Contest flying is slated to begin Sunday afternoon with the Advanced Known flights. The final contest schedule is heavily reliant on the number of pilots registered and the quantity of pilots in each category. If you are planning to attend, please register for the contest

Nationals is also a great opportunity to make some new friends and build relationships with other club members and chapters.

► ... new items for the upcoming Nationals... include upgraded aerobatic box markings, near real-time scoring and category updates, enhanced livestream features, a digital contest program, and new custom IAC trophies and clinkies.

as early as possible. Early registration is a huge help in several contest planning areas. You can anticipate the release of Nationals Bulletin 2 and a draft schedule approximately 30 days before the contest.

Fundraising for the contest continues. To those companies and individuals who have graciously supported the IAC and the Nationals contest in the past, thank you! We hope you'll consider continuing your support once again this year. If you would like to learn more about sponsorship opportunities or to donate, please contact the Nationals treasurer, Robin Simmons, at acronatstreasurer@outlook.com. The IAC is a 501(c)(3), and donations are tax deductible. Nationals provides a unique advertisement opportunity for companies. Sponsors will be featured in the digital contest program, during the contest livestream, on the contest website, and in *Sport Aerobatics* magazine.

It is hard to truly grasp the scope of effort for a contest of this size until one

gets involved. As with any regional contest, the success of the contest depends solely on the volunteers and judges. It is never too early to begin thanking the many volunteers who support the IAC Nationals, many of whom come solely to volunteer.

Few roles are as demanding as the contest registrar. Mary Beth Rudd has stepped up once again and will likely be the first of many smiling faces greeting you during registration. Alice Johnson will once again serve as the volunteer coordinator, working her magic to ensure we have the right people in the right place at the right time. Monique Hartmann returns as the communications coordinator, ensuring we are all well informed. Terri Branstitre will be returning as the scoring director, supported by Bob "Bwana" Buckley; both work tirelessly to get scores into JaSPer and the hands of our competitors as quickly as possible. Terri's husband, Jim Branstitre, will be returning as our logistics coordinator. If you spend any time on the judging line, in a van, or on the boundaries, Jim has a hand in ensuring you have everything you need to get the job done. Gary Debaun and Jeff Granger will once again serve as the box masters for the contest practice days. They skillfully shepherd us through the practice slots each year. The familiar faces of Dale Byrkit and Doug Vayda will be the contest starters, greeting and preparing each of the powered competitors before they depart for their contest flights. Finally, Sara Arnold is returning as the hospitality coordinator. She has been working tirelessly to ensure we have great social events to remind us all that the "C" in IAC stands for club, and the reason we come together is to spend time amongst like-minded pilots and friends.

The judging lines will be led by a quartet of experienced and esteemed judges who have served in their respective roles for many years. Mark Matticola will be the chief judge for Primary and Sportsman. Nick Buckenham will be the chief judge for Intermediate. DJ Molny will be the chief judge for Advanced, and Hector Ramirez will be the chief judge for Unlimited. Helping the chief judges to keep everyone safe and in order are returning air boss John Smutny and his assistant Jeff Baker. John and Jeff did an amazing job last year! Lastly, we need to thank Lorrie Penner and Tim Dahnke, who are the IAC workhorses. They work day in and day out in support of all IAC activities, not just Nationals.

The names above make up only a small portion of the many wonderful volunteers who help make the U.S. Nationals a success each year. If you see them before, during, or after the contest, please thank them!

I'm looking forward to the 2024 Nationals contest. I hope many of you will choose to attend, and we look forward to welcoming you to Salina in September. **IAC**



International Aerobatics Day

A celebration in photos

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF IAC CHAPTERS 3, 34, 36, 38, VAPOR GLOBAL, PLUS 1 FLYERS, JASON FLOOD, RAUL O'BRIEN AND DAVID PILKINGTON

THE FOURTH SATURDAY IN June turned out to be an excellent day for most to celebrate aerobatics on International Aerobatics Day. In 2021, IAC President Jim Bourke announced the new holiday dedicated to celebrating aerobatics, and it has since become a wonderful opportunity for chapters and flight schools to engage general aviation pilots, aerobatic enthusiasts, families, and friends in learning more about the sport.

True to the original idea, the day has remained loose with a variety of activities: an aerobatic camp, a barbecue, a practice session, hangar flying, aerobatic aircraft static displays, or the sharing of aerobatic videos. IAC Chapters 3, 34, 36, 38, the Flying Floods in New Jersey, Raul O'Brien at OBE Aviation, Plus 1 Flyers, Vapor Global Aviation, and David Pilkington (Australia) share their photos of how they celebrated the joy of aerobatics.

IAC Chapter 3, the Bear Creek Bunch, had a fantastic International Aerobatics Day at Henry County/Speedway Airport, Hampton, Georgia (KHMP). It was great to see several new members coming along to get in some practice and critiquing from the ground, as well as attempt to elevate their skills. It was another toasty day in the mid-80s with humidity, but everyone enjoyed the day. The new IAC 3 tent was a handy addition.

This article is a great opportunity to thank the amazing sponsors that sign up at the start of each year to help keep the chapter going. Thank you for the endless support: Champion Aerospace LLC, Titan Aviation Fuels, Plane Cents Aero Services/Chris Rudd, MT-Propeller, Lift Aviation, Twin Aircraft Engines, Aerobrew Coffee Company, Ladd Gardner Aviation Insurance, Full Stop Aviation (Tennessee), Hartzell Propeller, Method Seven (Experience Optics), Warren Cilliers/Cilliers Aviation, and Flight Outfitters. We can't thank you enough!

Not far from the Bear Creek Bunch (400 miles as the crow flies), Vapor Global Aviation in Munford, Tennessee (<https://VaporGlobalAviation.com>), was experiencing its own fun on International Aerobatics Day, giving aerobatic rides in its Citabria, and sent a "Happy Aerobatics Day" message to IAC 3.

IAC 34 having fun watching aerobatic practice flights.



"Family that Pitts Together Stays Together," Jason Flood.



IAC 36 had a great day under the wing of a Great Lakes 2T-1A-2. Back row (L to R) Morgan, Tania, Dan Jalyna, Doug Tom, Jessica, Shawn Moshe, Josh. Kneeling: (L to R) Miko, Bryan, Kevin and Priscilla.



IAC Chapter 34 decided not only to hold a practice day at Bellefontaine, Ohio (KEDJ), but also to work with the FBO, Midwest Corporate Air, to give a spin ground school and spin lessons. The morning was taken up with a spin presentation and ground school led by IAC 34 member Gordon Penner, MCFI-A. Gordon has been an aerobatic instructor for over 20 years and is a favorite EAA webinar presenter as well as a forum presenter for EAA and IAC during EAA AirVenture Oshkosh. He led the class through the hour-and-a-half presentation with a Q&A at the end of the class.

Midwest Corporate Air recently acquired a Super Decathlon, so Gordon took four scheduled students away from the airport out in the new airplane as a guest instructor. Depending on the level of learning being requested and the pilots' experience, they received about 30 minutes flight time doing rudder exercises, unusual attitude maneuvering, and/or instruction in spins.

After class, IAC members, guests, and new aerobatic friends all sat down to a nice barbecue lunch from a favorite local restaurant, "2gs." Over a pulled pork or brisket sandwich, coleslaw, and chips, we swapped aerobatic stories until it was time to watch the practice session.

Longtime IAC 34 member and Treasurer Emeritus Chris Keegan flew both the 2024 Intermediate Known and an Advanced Freestyle in his Extra 300L. We think he was testing out which category he shows the best in. Brett Hunter, U.S. Unlimited Aerobatic Team member 2013/2015, was on hand to give critique and coaching. We all enjoyed a beautiful sunny day celebrating aerobatics.

Meanwhile, out in sunny California, IAC Chapter 36, aka the San Diego Hammerheads, introduced pilots from Plus 1 Flyers to the exciting world of aerobatics. Plus 1 Flyers was founded by pilots and airplane owners who loved to fly and wanted a reliable fleet of airplanes at reasonable prices. The club is organized as a member-oriented nonprofit (PlusOneFlyers.org).

All had a great day under blue skies watching, talking, or flying aerobatics. A Super Decathlon and Great Lakes 2T-1A-2 were used to take anyone upside down that wanted to go. The chapter was



Under the wing of a Super Decathlon at the Moorabbin Airport in Melbourne.



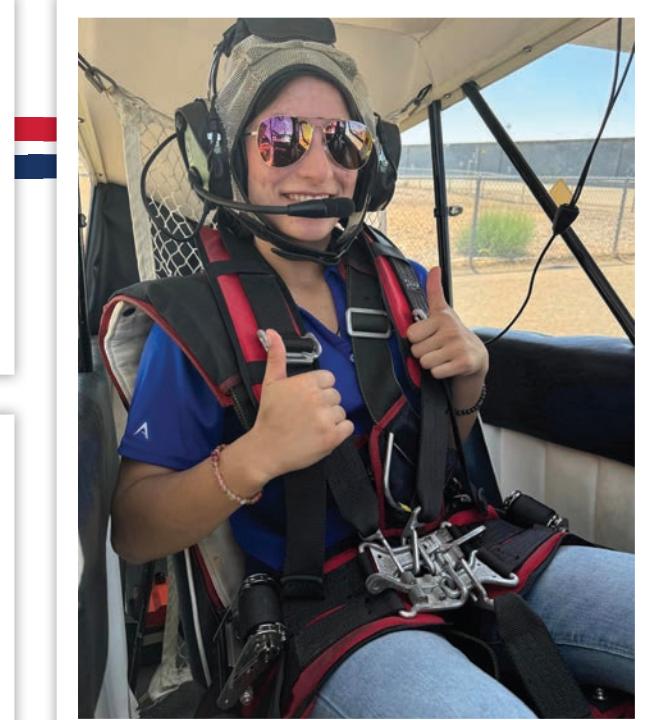
Raul O'Brien getting in some inverted flight on International Aerobatics Day!



Basic Aerobatics and Upset Recovery training at Vapor Global.



Thanks to David Pilkington (right) there was great comradery at the Flight Deck Bar and Grill.



IAC 38 thumbs-up! One of the Patriot Jet Team cadets is ready for a ride in the Super Decathlon.



Going over the flight plan with a couple of Patriot Jet Team cadets. IAC 38



IAC 36 and Plus 1 flyers facilitate another aerobatic ride.

Canopies come in handy in the hot Georgia sun for IAC 3 members.

founded in the 1970s and is one of three IAC chapters operating in Southern California.

IAC 38, the Northern California Aerobatic Club, was at Tracy Municipal Airport, California (KTCY), for International Aerobatics Day on Saturday, June 22!

"Thank you to everyone who was involved," said Joe McMurray, IAC 38 member. "Special thanks to IAC 38 members Dean Hickman-Smith, Josh Horwich IAC38 Director, and Shane Short [for helping out with the day's activities]."

"Such a great day. Fantastic to meet the Patriots Jet Team cadets and give them some aerobatic experience," said Dean. Rides were given in a shiny red and white Super Decathlon.

Whether at a special day like International Aerobatics Day, a chapter meeting, or practice day, the IAC 38 chapter members enjoy connecting with aviators from Northern California, sharing the joy of aerobatic flight with everyone ranging from air show fans to aspiring aerobatics pilots, and of course, providing veteran aerobatic pilots a club that meets their needs as well.

"The Flight Deck Bar and Grill at the Moorabbin Airport was the scene of a wonderful gathering of 20 aerobatic enthusiasts for lunch," said David Pilkington of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. "Aerobic airplanes represented: Cessna A152 Aerobat, two Super Decathlons, three Pitts S-2As, Pitts S-1E, Pitts S-2C, RV-7, Alpha, and Airtourer.

"Discussion topics suggested in advance were New South Wales (NSW) contest, Super Decathlon tire pressures, Sportsman Free sequences to share, upcoming contests, and what type of aerobatic aircraft one should buy. Lots of discussion about people moving up to more capable aircraft. They are going to have a lot more fun!"

We are excited to see all the thoughtful and fun ways to express the joy of aerobatics in the IAC chapters and flight schools and around the world. We hope each year will continue to be even bigger than the year before. Start planning for June 28, 2025, now! Visit IAC.org/International-Aerobatics-Day. **IAC**



IAC 3 members' planes lined up at Henry County/Speedway Airport.



Gordon Penner, MCFI-A, teaches ground school for spins. IAC 34



IAC 38 All smiles with this beautiful Great Lakes biplane.





Enjoying a great lunch at the Moorabbin Airport in Melbourne.



IAC 36 ready to fly in the Super Decathlon!



IAC 38 enjoying a great day for aerobatics!

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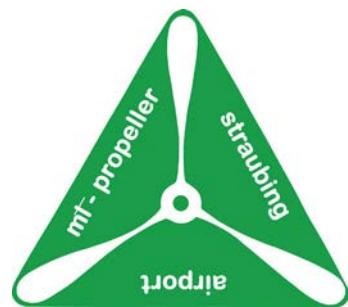


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N22Q

AIRCRAFT LOG

SOME SECRETS REVEALED

BY FRANCOIS BOUGIE, IAC 1884

Disclaimer: After reading Phillip Gragg's Pitts S-2A article, I delved deep into the history of the first Pitts S-2. Consulting the N22Q Aircraft Log helped my gathering of factual "encrypted" details buried in the chronological events and associated test pilots' log entries.

This article is my understanding of the evolution of N22Q Pitts S-2 into an S-2A over a period of five years. I have taken the liberty to fill in the blanks and expand on specific test pilots to link them into the greater Pitts biplane history and also have added detailed information about important dates.

So much was happening from the '60s to the '70s in the development of Pitts S-1 and S-2 that the dates and pilots are intertwined. I found it impossible to isolate the S-2 development recorded in N22Q's Aircraft Log into a certified aerobatic biplane without injecting information from the S-1 parallel universe.

Here is my flight into the N22Q Aircraft Log.

IN THE SPORT AEROBATICS July/August 2023 issue, Phillip Gragg wrote: "On May 22, 2022, the 50th anniversary of the certification of one of history's most influential light aircraft quietly came and went with nary a mention."

Gragg's article, "A Classical Symphony – The Pitts S-2A," goes on to describe this aircraft, specifically, its origin, evolution, and testimonials by many pilots.

N22Q Pitts S-2 *Big Stinker* is the mothership of all S-2As. Due to the results of my research, some of the N22Q Aircraft Log secrets can be revealed here.

1966 N22Q Pitts S-2 First Flight Aircraft Log Date 7-7-66 Flight Test (CHP)

CHP stands for Curtis H. Pitts – designer and test pilot.

He was born on December 9, 1915, and there was nothing aviation related in Curtis Pitts' upbringing in the middle of Georgia until after he was 20 years old. As a youth, Curtis became an airport kid. Aviation would eventually shape his entire life.

By his early 20s, he was spending his limited income on flight lessons. In 1940, Curtis became an aircraft inspector at the Naval Air Station in

AIRCRAFT LOG							
YEAR	MO.	DAY	RECORDING TACH. READING	TIME THIS FLIGHT	TOTAL TIME	REMARKS	SIGNATURE
7	6	0:02					
7	7	:06				flight test	CHP
7	8	1:3				Rigging	CHP
7	9	1:7				Rigging check	CHP
7	10	2:5				flight test	CHP
7	12	3:7				local	CHP
7	13	4:6				local	CHP
7	14	5:1				Belle, loops, Imm. 6:00	CHP
7	15	6:7				local	CHP
7	17	7:4				Vertical Roll outside loops (Royal)	CHP
7	20	8:1				local	CHP
7	25	9:3				local	CHP

CARRY TOTAL TIME TO TOP OF NEXT PAGE

N22Q Aircraft Log first page – flight test on 7-7-1966.

Jacksonville, Florida. This exposure to the engineering side of aircraft matched his thirst for knowledge.

During this time as an inspector, Curtis gave himself the objective to design a small, single-seat, lightweight aerobatic biplane. He consulted with aeronautical engineers about his design. These formative years would give Curtis the tools he needed to design, build, calculate stress analysis, and flight-test his own design. On August 28, 1945, at age 29, Curtis' first Pitts S-1 flight was on NX52650.



Curtis H. Pitts and N22Q Pitts S-2 Big Stinker (photo from Francois Bougie Collection).

Twenty-one years later, on July 7, 1966, at age 50, Curtis' first Pitts S-2 flight was on N22Q. This first dual-seat S-2 was basically a scaled-up S-1 that incorporated 20 years of refinements.

A little Pitts biplane DNA (developing new aerobatic) knowledge is required in order to understand the N22Q Aircraft Log entries. NX86401 Pitts S-1 No. 2 already incorporated improvements from No. 1. It became the most well-known S-1 after Betty Skelton flew it for a short but intense three years from 1948 to 1951. During this time, she baptized it *Little Stinker*, repainted it, and changed the registration to N22E.

Today, N22E is part of the National Air and Space Museum's collection and is displayed flying inverted in the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center atrium located near the Washington Dulles Airport in Virginia. After N22E, the construction of additional Pitts S-1s quickly followed, such as N8M *Black Magic* flown by Caro Bayley and N37J *Mister Muscles* belonging to Jim Meeks.

During this same time period, while the S-1 was still in the embryonic stage, Dean Case built N11J, N11JC, N12JJ, N1411, and N818N. Case-built Pitts are distinctive because he replaced the wooden ribs with metal ones. From Wichita, Kansas, and not part of Curtis' entourage, Case's reverse engineering of the S-1 is somewhat of a mystery.

During the late '40s and early '50s, Curtis also designed two racing monoplanes and Samson, an air show biplane powerhouse, but his earnings would come from his aerial crop-dusting operation using Stearman biplanes. Curtis wore many hats: aircraft designer, pilot, maintenance shop A&E, and aerial crop-dusting business owner/operator.

PAT in the N22Q Aircraft Log stands for Pat Ledford, close friend of Curtis.

William Patrick "Pat" Ledford, born in 1930, was 15 years younger than Curtis. He served in the United States Air Force from 1950 to 1954 and then became an airline pilot flying for National Airlines and Pan American Airlines. When not flying, Pat would hang around Curtis' shop, helping to build and

AIRCRAFT LOG						
YEAR MO.	DAY	RECORDING TACH. READING	TIME THIS FLIGHT	TOTAL TIME	REMARKS	SIGNATURE
8 21	49.6	1.8		47.2	temp check	CHP (PAT)
8 22	49.7	.7			temp check	CHP (PAT)
8 30	50.3	.6			local	CHP
9 2	50.6	.3			speed course	CHP
9 3	51.1	.5			aerobatics	Royal
9 4	51.7	.6			aerobatics	Royal
9 10	52.1	.6			aerobatics	Patrons
9 13	52.5	.4			aerobatics	CHP
9 21	53.0	.5			local	CHP
9 23	53.4	.4			local	CHP
9 25	53.9	.5			aerobatics	Royal
9 28	54.3	.4			local	CHP

Aircraft Log date 8-21-1966 and 8-22-1966 temp check CHP (PAT) and Speed Course.

Pat Ledford and N8L Pitts S-1 Pat's Pet using the trusted M-6 airfoil "flat wing" referred to as an S-1C. The M-6 airfoil was used on all Pitts biplanes until 1965 (photo from Francois Bougie collection).



flight-test the Pitts S-1, S-2, and much later, N11PU S-1-11 and N80XP Model 12.

Pat built the first S-1 (N8L) following a preliminary set of plans. This "built to plan" Pitts served to validate the early drawing set.

With the birth of EAA in 1953 and the homebuilt movement, Curtis would ultimately release this validated set of S-1 plans in 1961. The set is composed of 17 sheets, drawn by CHP on 9-9-1945 and traced by CHP, CEW, and H.A. Megary on 3-16-61. Some of the detailed sheets are actually printed together on the same larger drafting sheet. The price of the complete set was \$100. A description and outline of procedure with instructions were furnished with the drawings.

N8L Pitts S-1, today part of the Pitts Flying Museum in Queen Creek, Arizona, was also the test bed for new wings using different upper and lower airfoils in 1965. This new airfoils arrangement was the beginning of the "round wing" symmetrical airfoils configuration, although N8L retained the two lower wing ailerons, like an S-1C.

While designing the Pitts S-2, Curtis would eventually incorporate the different upper and lower symmetrical airfoils configuration by adding four ailerons. This patented wing configuration made the Pitts biplane flight characteristics very similar whether flying upright or inverted.

While the Pitts S-1 quickly evolved into an air show and aerobatic powerhouse, accessible to pilots and builders, the Pitts S-2 was intended to be type certified and factory manufactured from the onset.



Additional N22Q Aircraft Log Entries

Curtis H. Pitts and Pitts Aviation Enterprises, based in Homestead, Florida, became a hotbed of aerobatic activity. Most of the early N22Q Aircraft Log entries are from pilots based nearby in Florida.

Curtis (and many others as seen in the Aircraft Log signature column) flew N22Q for flight-test performance evaluation and certification validation flights. The flight-test program must have been outlined in another document because the Aircraft Log contains only limited information.

Aircraft Log Date 7-17-66 – Vertical Roll, Outside Loops (Royal)

Royal is for L.J. "Skeeter" Royal, National Airlines chief pilot who also raced Pitts S-1, flew aerobatics, and performed at air shows.

A group of National Airlines pilots calling themselves the Flying W's were active in aerobatic competition in 1966. Members included Capt. Steve Wedge, Capt. L.J. "Skeeter" Royal, and Capt. Pat Ledford.

With the help of Pat Ledford, builder of N8L, the group built its own S-1, registered N6W. G. Ray Woody, another National Airlines pilot, also flew N6W. Woody was an Aerobatic Club of America (ACA) president before IAC was founded.

Mary Gaffaney, a CFI and race, skywriting, crop-dusting, glider, and helicopter-rated pilot, would fly to Curtis' airstrip to get maintenance done on her Stearman biplane. Her first Pitts S-1 flight



L.J. "Skeeter" Royal and N6W Pitts S-1C before being acquired by Mary Gaffaney (photo from Francois Bougie collection).

was in Pat Ledford's N8L. This initial flight would ultimately alter Pitts biplane history.

After flying another early S-1, Bob Shambaugh's N3S Pitts S-1, in her first competition, Mary immediately purchased N6W from Skeeter Royal. Mary's registered S-1 Pitts, N5J and N6W, were both painted in almost identical yellow and black trim. She flew them to win World Aerobatic Championships' top medals at WAC '70 (N5J) and WAC '72 (N6W).

AIRCRAFT LOG						
YEAR MO.	DAY	RECORDING TACH. READING	TIME THIS FLIGHT	TOTAL TIME	REMARKS	SIGNATURE
7 26	10.4			0.3	Aerobatic	Royal
7 27	10.9				Aerobatic (0.4)	Royal Major
7 30	11.4				local	
7 31	21.9				Homestead - Rockford	0.4H
8 6	28.3				local Royal	
8 7	39.8				Rockford - Homestead	0.4H
8 14	40.2	.4			Click pop	
8 15	41.0	.8			local 2500 RPM concie	
8 16	42.2	1.2			local "	"
8 17	44.9	2.7			To Hwy + Return	0.4H
8 19	46.7	1.8			local	
8 20	47.2	.5			local	Royal

CARRY TOTAL TIME TO TOP OF NEXT PAGE

7-27-66 Red Line and Major is an Aircraft Log entry without details.

Flying to the 1966 EAA Convention in Rockford, Illinois Aircraft Log Date 7-31-66 Homestead – Rockford CHP

Curtis H. Pitts flew from Homestead, Florida, to Rockford, Illinois. Tachometer reading 11.4 to 21.9 = 10.5 hours of flight time on the same day plus fuel stop.



Rockford 1966

Aircraft Log Date 8-6-66 Rockford CHP

Curtis H. Pitts flew 6.4 hours of demo flight during the EAA convention, tachometer reading 28.3.

Aircraft Log Date 8-7-66 Rockford – Homestead CHP

Curtis H. Pitts flew back to Homestead from Rockford. Tachometer reading 28.3 to 39.8 = 11.5 hours of flight time on the same day plus fuel stop.

[These entries] equal approximately 1,260 miles in 10.5 hours or an average of 120 mph each way.

Mike Heuer, IAC 4, historian, and past president who has held every possible role within the IAC (thank you, Mike), remembers seeing the new S-2 Pitts at the 1966 EAA fly-in convention with a paint scheme that left no one indifferent. Today it has become iconic.



EAA Sport Aviation magazine – October 1966, Volume 15, No. 10, page 27 and page 38.

Mike and his father, Bob Heuer, were already interested by aerobatics. They witnessed N22Q's first appearance at Rockford four years before the IAC was founded in 1970. They later went down to visit Curtis in Florida, and Bob would get to fly N22Q with Bill Dodd in the rear cockpit. Bill Dodd was the first chairman of the EAA Precision Flying Division and pushed Curtis into drawing a set of plans for the S-1.

This flight is not directly recorded in the N22Q Aircraft Log, increasing the mystery surrounding how and when the aircraft was flown. Aircraft Log entry dated from 12-1-1966 to 7-29-1967 is a one-liner; recorded tachometer reading goes from 77.1 to 115.9. A separate detailed log must have recorded such flights.

Mike and Bob Heuer went on to build N442X, the Pitts S-1S flown by Charlie Hillard to the top podium at the World Aerobic Championships in Salon-de-Provence, France, at WAC '72.

Aircraft Log Date 9-10-66 Aerobatics (Holland)

Holland is for James Shepard Holland Jr. He would sign his name Jim Holland and was a couple years younger than Curtis. Jim was born in Florida but joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and became a bomber pilot. After World War II, he returned to South Florida to operate a crop-dusting operation, not far from Curtis' airstrip.

Formation aerobatics became Jim's trademark. His aerobatics formation partners were Debbie Gary, Lindsay Hess, and Jim Moser to name a few. He flew as part of the Great American Air Show, offering a full package that included an announcer, formation display, a comedy routine, parachute dropping, and wing-walking act.

Jim later established his own flight operation in St. Augustine, Florida, and eventually trained the Royal Jordanian Falcons (RJF) aerobatic formation team using the S-2A (later S-2S). The RJF pilots visited Curtis and Pitts Aviation Enterprises down in Homestead, Florida.

N80003 Pitts S-2A, serial No. 2010, was Jim's first air show biplane, with a distinctive cream,



Sport Aerobatics magazine, Volume 11, Number 8, August 1982, back cover, with N80003 custom paint scheme.

green, and black TIGRE paint scheme and later custom painted in red, white, and blue with stars. It was followed by N5302M, the first Pitts S-2B, serial No. 5000, and called Tweety Bird for its yellow color. In an article appearing in *Air Progress*, the May 1988 issue, Robert Gandt wrote, "The Old and the Bold – Jim Holland disproves a well-known aviation proverb."

AIRCRAFT LOG		
YEAR MO. DAY	DESCRIPTION OF INSPECTIONS, REPAIRS, AND ALTERATIONS	
	Certified mechanics or repair facilities must endorse all inspections and repairs with name, rating & Cert. No.	
11/14	5 min above 2700	
11/18	55 min above 2700	
11/20	3½ min above 2700	
11/21	3½ min above 2700	
11/25	1½ min above 2700 - Stand Run - DIVE TEST - AIRCRAFT	
11/28	6 min above 2700 - C-Stat.	
12/1	1 2 min above 2700	
TOTAL TIME TO DATE: (Signature) Page		

*Aircraft Log dates 11-14-66 to 11-28-66, flight test above 2,700 rpm,
speed run - dive test.*

Aircraft Log Flight Test ... Some detail missing ...

From 1967 to 1971, the total time increases from 359 to 815 hours with nothing more than an annual entry! These entries divide the flight time in approximately 100 hours/year, most probably test flying and demo flights. Again, all those entire flight tests were likely recorded elsewhere as part of a flight-test program to support the certification data.

Five Years After N22Q's First Flight

Under the FAR 23 Airworthiness Standards, Normal, Utility, and Aerobatic category airplanes (dated) February 1, 1965, the FAA delivered Type Certificate A8SO for Model S-2, 2POLB (Acrobatic category), approved March 8, 1971, powered by a Lycoming IO-360-B4A (180 hp) engine.

Aircraft log date 4-20-71. Pitts S-2, N220, serial No. 1001, engine change.

Aircraft Log – New Engine Installation

Aircraft Log Date 4-20-71

Pitts S-2, N22Q, serial No. 1001, becomes S-2A Series 2000 and up for a short flight-test program. At 815.3 hours' total time, the Pitts S-2's Lycoming IO-360-B4A (180 hp) engine and Sensenich fixed-pitch prop are replaced by the Lycoming IO-360-A1A (200 hp) and a Hartzell constant-speed propeller. These changes involved a new engine mount with a different cowling modified in such a way to achieve the same center of gravity.

After two short months of flight-test validation, the FAA modified the Type Certificate A8SO to add Model S-2A, 2POLB (Normal and Acrobatic category), approved June 11, 1971.

The Model S-2A (serial Nos. 1001, 2001 through 2205) is identical to the Model S-2 except for its: 1) 200-hp engine, 2) constant-speed propeller and associated controls, and 3) normal category weight and CG range. In effect, the 50th anniversary of the S-2A type certificate was actually on June 11, 2021. And it indeed went by with no fanfare.

In *Air Progress*, June 1971, Budd Davisson wrote, "Type certificate! It's finally happened. After four years of hassling, nit-picking, doing and redoing, Curtis Pitts, the guru of the upside-down world, has finally worn the feds down and gotten a type certificate on the two-place, S-2 Pitts Special." Budd spent a week in the company of Curtis, Gene Dearing, Bob Schnuerle, and Bob Herendeen and wrote the must-read, first in-depth report on N220 Pitts S-2.

Just a couple of weeks after FAA Type Certificate A8S0

Just a couple days ago, the S-2A was updated to include the S-2A, the first flight of the first-production S-2A, serial No. 2001, N14CB, was flown by none other than Curtis H. Pitts himself, with the support of his certification engineer Gene Dearing.



HERE IT IS! The first production airplane of the S-2 Pitts Special, new aerobatic airplane being manufactured in Alton by Aerotek, Inc., came off the production line Saturday, July 3, has now been successfully test flown, and is being certificated this week. In the cockpit is Curtis Pitts, designer, and project engineer, Gene Dearing, is standing beside the airplane.

Star Valley Independent newspaper, July 8, 1971 (photo from Francois Bougie collection).

AIRCRAFT LOG	
YEAR MO. DAY	75 11 20
DESCRIPTION OF INSPECTIONS, REPAIRS AND ALTERATIONS Certificated mechanics or repair facilities must endorse all inspections and repairs with name, rating & Cert. No.	
INSPECT AIRPLANE AND FOUND AIRWORTHY. PROTOTYPE CANOPY INST. OR REAR SEAT. <i>To N22Q AF 12357</i>	
11/20/75 Aircraft equipped and experimental certificate issued this date <i>Walter Jacobson</i> SO-EMDO-43	
INSPECTIONS ARE DUE EVERY 12 CALENDAR MONTHS	

Aircraft Log date 11-20-75, prototype canopy install rear seat.

N14CB was built under the watchful eye of E. Herbert (Herb) Andersen of Aerotek Inc.

An agreement had been reached whereby Curtis and Pitts Aviation Enterprises would take care of the design, engineering support, certification, and marketing/sales from Homestead, Florida, while Aerotek

Inc. would manufacture the certified Pitts in a factory in Afton, Wyoming.

Marion Cole took delivery of N14CB Pitts S-2A, serial No. 2001, in the classic Pitts red paint scheme. This historical Pitts S-2A is also part of the Pitts Flying Museum in Arizona.

Aircraft Log Continues ...

Aircraft Log Prototype Single Canopy

The total time is now 950 hours or just 139 hours flown over the last four years as a Pitts S-2A.

All certified S-2As were delivered with only a small windshield for the back seat and a removable windshield for the front hole until this flight-tested/certified single-canopy option became available in 1975. Just after taking delivery in 1972, Art Scholl quickly adapted the S-1-style small single canopy on N13AS Pitts S-2A, serial No. 2002, and offered this aftermarket modification for Pitts S-2As.

N22Q with the rear-seat single canopy installed (photo from Jim Koepnick - EAA Air Museum Foundation).



The single canopy was originally installed on many Pitts S-1s for ferry flights and made removable to reduce weight to a minimum for aerobatic competition. The weight of the single-canopy option was approximately 17 pounds, with the bulk of the weight residing in the heavy steel sliding rails.

Ben Morphew, today a retired airline pilot, has a lifetime association with the Pitts biplane, though he never got the chance to fly N22Q. At age 22, he was already building his N69BM Pitts S-1S from factory parts. In the spring of 1973, after his Pitts S-2A check-on-type in Marion Cole's N24MC, serial No. 2065, Ben flew by airline to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, followed by a van ride to Afton, a route still used today.

From Afton, in a multistop flight, Ben delivered N20MC S-2A, serial No. 2085, to Marion Cole, based at the Shreveport Downtown Airport in Louisiana. In pre-GPS navigation days, this trip meant a lot of preflight planning, including Sky Prints spiral-bound maps and a list of radio frequencies noted down in advance. With the front cockpit hole covered, the rear single-canopy enclosure kept Ben comfortable.

Ben would eventually acquire the N22XP Pitts S-1T prototype, today part of the Pitts Flying Museum. He also owned N11PU, the *Super Stinker* prototype. After he flew the inverted spin test program for N80XP Pitts Model 12, the *Macho Stinker* prototype, Curtis directed him to Kevin Kimball of Jim Kimball Enterprises (now JKEWorks) and distributor of the Model 12-hp kits.

Ben built N69BM Model 12HP (high performance), the first Model HP to fly. Today, Ben owns N3WD Pitts S-2 Pa-Ma Special, an S-2 Pitts built by Curtis from test components for Bill Dodd, and probably the closest to N22Q 180hp configuration.

Ma Special, an S-2 Pitts built by Curtis from test components for Bill Dodd and probably the closest to N22Q 180-hp configuration.

Aircraft Log Dated 10-7-77, Total Time 958.3 Hours, N22Q Was Issued a Special Airworthiness Certificate

Curtis sold the design rights of the certified Pitts S-1S, S-1T, S-2, and S-2A to Doyle Child in 1977. Doyle Child, a businessman from Afton, Wyoming, was the major financier and part of the original trio with Curtis H. Pitts and Herb Andersen that shook hands on bringing the manufacturing of the Pitts biplane to Afton.



Twenty-eight years after Curtis' first Pitts flight in 1945, 22-year-old Ben Morphew in Pitts S-2A, N24MC, in 1973 (photo from Ben Morphew).

While the Pitts S-1 quickly evolved into an air show and aerobatic powerhouse, accessible to pilots and builders, the Pitts S-2 was intended to be type certified and factory manufactured from the onset.

N22Q was donated to the *EAA Air Museum Foundation on 11-9-1977 by Curtis H. Pitts and still bearing *EXPERIMENTAL* on its fuselage side. It is a true testament to the spirit of the Experimental Aircraft Association movement. N22Q, the Pitts S-2 prototype, is currently on display in the Air Racing and Aerobatics gallery at the EAA Aviation Museum in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Delving into the N22Q Aircraft Log allowed me to make important links between the many pilots/people who are so integral to the Pitts biplane DNA.

The N22Q Aircraft Log is now an open book. But while some N22Q Aircraft Log secrets have been revealed, some open-ended questions still remain ...

*The EAA incorporated in 1962 as the EAA Air Museum Foundation.
IAC*

Francois Bougie Raised in a family of four, Francois' interest in aviation was sparked at an early age by his father, who crafted two homebuilt airplanes and restored several others. This passion eventually led to a college education as an aircraft maintenance technologist. The early 1980s, which brought the CAD revolution for the aircraft design industries, were perfectly suited for Francois' drafting talent. He had a successful consulting business as an electromechanical designer in the aerospace industry and now spends his time as a humorous/character illustrator. Francois' broad knowledge of general aviation comes from owning a Cessna C-120 and Pitts Special, then later acquiring and restoring a classic 1946 Globe Swift. He has flown from his home base in Montreal to Florida and across Canada from Nova Scotia to British Columbia. Visit BizzArt.com.

BIG STINKER

N22Q Pitts S-2 *Big Stinker* is the mother-ship of all S-2As. Curtis H. Pitts' first flight test 7-7-1966. The FAA delivered TYPE CERTIFICATE A850 for Model S-2, 2 POLB (Acrobatic Category). Approved 3-8-1971.







Luke in the Extra 300L.

ROLLING WITH THE **BEST**

HOW MENTORS SHAPE AEROBATIC PILOTS

BY LUKE PENNER, IAC 437639

IN THE WORLD OF aerobatics, mentorship plays a significant role in shaping the next generation of pilots. The journey of an aerobatic pilot is filled with challenges and triumphs, and the guidance or encouragement of someone who cares can make all the difference.

Anyone who knows me knows how much aviation, especially aerobatics, means to me. It has been the source of many things I enjoy in life. For nearly two decades, it has endlessly challenged me and given me joy and a sense of purpose. But it was not always this way.

I was born into a family of pilots. On my mother's side, she and all four of her siblings became pilots. My grandfather also flew, and I have vivid memories of a framed photograph of his yellow Aeronca Champ hanging on the wall in my grandparents' basement. After meals at family gatherings, emerging from this basement often meant watching RC model displays flown by my uncles and oldest brother, Adam. Although I would not become a pilot for many years, these formative impressions left a mark on me. At the time, I knew there was something really cool about the aerial feats I witnessed, but it would be many, many years before I found my own way into aviation.

My first mentor in aviation was my father, Harv. Together with my mother, they founded our family-operated flight school, Harv's Air at Steinbach, Manitoba, in 1973. Despite being surrounded by aviation growing up, I lacked confidence as a young man, and a fear of failure kept me out of the cockpit during my late teenage years. My father made his career in flight training, and although I was on the outside looking in at this stage of my life, I witnessed firsthand the impact of his mentorship on all the students who passed through our flight school.

As I matured, I realized the importance of setting aside my fragile ego and simply going for it. During my first flight lessons in a 1943 Taylorcraft L-2M, I discovered that my interest in flying was more than just a hobby — it was a passion and excitement waiting to be unleashed. However, unfocused passion or sheer excitement, without proper guidance, can



Luke with his first mentor and father and first mentor, Harv.

lead to disastrous results. Temper enthusiasm with structure and discipline? How is it done? The notion that my abilities could fall behind my zeal was entirely new to me.

Then entered aerobatics. After obtaining my private pilot license, it was time to take a break from soft-field landings and forced approaches to experience true three-dimensional flight. Harv's Air had a 1983 Pitts S-2B, which I had admired from a distance for years. My dad took me for a celebratory ride in it, and life was never the same. At the time, flying the Pitts S-2B felt as unattainable as flying the space shuttle.

Despite this doubt, I enjoyed every minute of that initial exposure to the world of aerobatics. In the many conversations that followed, I hinted that I might, one day, perhaps, maybe, possibly want to learn to fly the Pitts myself. Like a good mentor, my dad did not laugh or downplay my interest. Instead, he began formulating a safe and efficient path forward to help me achieve this goal.

As I progressed through our basic aerobatics course, training on one of our American Champion Citabrias, a thought crossed my young pilot's mind: "Why can't we just do this training in the Pitts?" In Canada, 10 hours of dual aerobatic training with a holder of an aerobatic instructor rating is required to take passengers during aerobatic flight. Switching to the Pitts prematurely would have been a significant misstep in my journey as an aerobatic pilot. An experienced mentor like my father easily can see the entire pathway, while I could not at the time.

Building a strong foundation in

The journey of an aerobatic pilot is filled with challenges and triumphs, and the guidance or encouragement of someone who cares can make all the difference.



The Canadian Team poses at the 2023 World Aerobatic Championships, Las Vegas, Nevada.

aviation matters, especially for technical or advanced training. As I learned to loop, roll, spin, and perform hammerheads with relative competence, equal focus was put on understanding the failure modes of these maneuvers. Solo practice is only valuable if it is correct practice. Without proper guidance, building initial skills can create an echo chamber of false confidence, where I might just have been getting better at getting bad.

I spent much of my time building up to my commercial pilot license by taking friends for aerobatic rides in the Citabria. This dedication to mastering my aircraft and understanding aerodynamics made the bulk of the commercial pilot license (CPL) and multiengine/instrument rating courses significantly easier. Soon after becoming a flight instructor, I began teaching students on the Citabria. After accumulating a few hundred hours of instructing, I asked my dad if it was the right time to train for soloing the Pitts. He agreed, and we spent the last days of autumn training before the harsh winter of 2005 hit southern Manitoba.

The maneuver transition to the S-2B went smoothly, but landing on our 25-foot-wide paved runway proved challenging. At first, I was discouraged by my struggles with landing, but my dad gave me focused areas to work on and encouraged me to visualize and chair-fly throughout the six-month winter. This mental preparation paid off, and in the

spring of 2006, I successfully soloed our Pitts. Thanks, Dad.

The guidance I received made learning fun, safe, and incredibly efficient. I am deeply grateful for the time and effort my dad invested in training me. His dedication and ethos in flight training inspired me to devote my professional flying career to training the next generation of pilots.

Now, I would like to shift focus to some of the other incredible mentors who helped to shape me as an aerobatic pilot. Without their guidance and support, I would definitely not be where I am today.

As the years went by, I made several trips to the United States to get additional training in areas of aerobatics where I felt less confident. In 2007, I went to Chandler Air Service in Arizona to train on its Pitts S-2C, focusing on flat spins and gyroscopic tumbles. In 2008, I soloed Sunrise Aviation's Extra 300, N300UY, with invaluable guidance from Michael Church. In 2010, I trained in an Extra



Luke with his mentor and coach, Aaron McCartan.



Luke inverted with his father, Harv.

330LC in St. Augustine, Florida. Each trip left me grateful for the knowledge I gained and eager to apply it back home in the Pitts.

It was not until 2015 that my interests turned toward competition. Despite many asking, “Are you going to start competing soon?” between 2006 and 2015, I always made excuses. My fear of judgment and not being good enough held me back. Thankfully, I sought the guidance of Red Bull Air Race pilot Pete McLeod. Pete’s hometown of Red Lake, Ontario, is just 146 nm from my base, so when his air race schedule allowed, we organized a weekend training camp in the Canadian bush, high above the myriad of lakes and trees.

That summer weekend in Red Lake was one of my most formative experiences as a competition pilot. Alongside Pete McLeod, seasoned Canadian advanced competitor Mike Tryggvason also coached me. Drinking from a fire-hose, I learned some of the nuances of

competition flying. Thanks to my father’s foundational training, I quickly adapted to Aresti-style flying and absorbed Pete’s invaluable critiques. That weekend significantly altered my trajectory. Thank you, Pete and Mike.

One standout memory is meeting Sean D. Tucker. In 2015, on my way to EAA AirVenture Oshkosh for the IAC’s Pitts gathering, I stopped for fuel in Waupaca, Wisconsin. Seeing the Oracle Challenger’s unmistakable livery, I was starstruck. Sean approached me, and it felt like meeting Wayne Gretzky. Sean was fantastic and dispelled all sentiments of “you shouldn’t meet your heroes.”

He asked about my aerobatic plans, and I mentioned my intent to compete in the Intermediate category. Sean swiftly dissuaded me, explaining the IAC’s category system and the importance of starting in Primary or Sportsman. Heeding his advice, I flew my first two contests in Sportsman, finishing first at the last U.S. Nationals in Denison, Texas. Thanks, Sean.

As I delved deeper into aerobatics, I was blessed to connect with incredible talents and personalities, including Patty Wagstaff and Tom Adams. I visited Patty’s



Left to right: Red Bull Air Race pilot Pete McLeod, Luke, and air show and competitor Mike Tryggvason for a summer weekend of coaching in Red Lake, Ontario.



Luke with Patty Wagstaff.

school in Florida multiple times between 2015 and 2019. Her feedback on my practice flights at the 2016 U.S. Nationals bolstered my confidence at such an intimidating event. Small gestures from my stellar role model Patty, such as commenting on my performances, meant more than she probably knew. Thanks, Patty.

I met Tom Adams at my first contest in Seward, Nebraska, in early spring 2016. Feeling nervous and excited, I was warmly greeted by a friendly University of North Dakota pilot who showed me the contest ropes. I asked Tom if he would watch my practice flight and give me pointers, and he kindly agreed. Tom's welcoming and supportive nature made me feel like I belonged. Over the next few seasons, Tom coached me through various camps and contests before he passed away. I am forever grateful for his guidance, stories, and friendship. Thank you, Tom.

The person who has influenced me the most as an aerobatic pilot is Aaron



Luke and Tom Adams.

McCartan. I first met Aaron at the 2016 Seward contest and was in awe of his precision and aggression in flying the Panzl S-330. Despite my initial shyness, Aaron's warm personality and enthusiasm made it easy to bond with him. Since that first meeting, Aaron has coached me through numerous U.S. and Canadian national championships. Most recently, he coached the Canadian Advanced Aerobatic Team at the 2023 World Advanced Aerobatic Championships (WAAC) in Jean, Nevada. From being a green competition pilot to becoming the captain of Team Canada, I owe much to Aaron. Thank you, my friend.

Mentorship can make a lasting difference, shaping the future of aerobatics and inspiring the next generation of pilots.

Today, the torch of mentorship has been passed to me, and I have the honor of passing it on. I met Jesse Mack in the summer of 2015 when he was an air cadet training for his private pilot license at our flight school in St. Andrews, Manitoba. After finishing as the top cadet, I offered Jesse an aerobatic ride in our Pitts. The flight went fantastically, and Jesse's

Luke with Jesse Mack at WAAC 2023 in Jean, Nevada .





Luke with Aaron.



Jesse Mack with Aaron McCartan training for WAAC 2023.

passion for aerobatics grew. He completed our basic aerobatics course and started taking friends up for rides in our Citabrias. Jesse's dedication and professionalism were evident, leading to his first solo in the Pitts at a young age.

Jesse's journey into competition aerobatics began with a chance opportunity in a Christen Eagle. The fire to compete grew, and I served as his safety pilot in the Extra 300L. He quickly mastered Sportsman and soon flew solo in the Extra. The cover photo of this issue of *Sport Aerobatics* features me inverted in my Extra 330SC with Jesse flying the Harv's Air Extra 300L above the Nevada desert after the 2023 WAAC. Jesse not only competed but also was the highest-scoring independent pilot at the WAAC! I am incredibly proud.

Now, Jesse is a fully qualified Transport Canada aerobatic instructor, mentoring new pilots and serving as a safety pilot.

Seeing things come full circle fills me with joy and pride. As I start my first season in the Unlimited category, I am grateful for those who mentored me and look forward to passing on the traditions of expertise, precision, and the enjoyment of sport aerobatics to the next generation.

As you immerse yourself in the exhilarating world of aerobatics, know that your encouragement can profoundly impact aspiring pilots. Believing in them and sharing your knowledge might just be the catalyst that propels them to new heights. Mentorship can make a lasting difference, shaping the future of aerobatics and inspiring the next generation of pilots.

IAC

Luke Penner has been a pilot and flight instructor since 2003. He learned to fly aerobatics in a Pitts S-2B, which led him to national and international competition. Some of Luke's accomplishments include being winner in the Sportsman category at the 2016 U.S. National Aerobatic Championships, winner of the Intermediate category at the 2018 Canadian National Aerobatic Championships, third place overall at the 2019 U.S. Nationals in the Advanced category, third place overall in the 2020 Canadian Nationals Advanced category, and second- and third-place finishes at the 2021 and 2022 U.S. Nationals. He was named captain of Team Canada after finishing first overall at the 2022 Canadian Nationals.



2024 IAC CONTEST SEASON CALENDAR



Texas 2-Step



IAC.org/Contests



DATES	HOST CHAPTER	NAME	REGION	LOCATION	AIRPORT
September 22, 2024	119	U.S. National Aerobatic Championships	South Central	Salina, Kansas	KSLN
September 22, 2024	119	Salina Glider Classic	South Central	Salina, Kansas	KSLN
October 5, 2024	5	Clyde Cable Rocky Mountain Aerobatic Contest	South Central	Lamar, Colorado	KLAA
October 11, 2024	25	Texas 2-Step	South Central	Edna, Texas	Z6R
October 11, 2024	34	IAC East Open Championship	MidAmerica	Bellefontaine, OH	KEDJ
October 24, 2024	36	Akrofest	Southwest	Borrego Springs, California	LO8
November 1, 2024	62	Tequila Cup - Power and Glider	Southwest	Buckeye, Arizona	KBXK
November 8, 2024	3	Bear Creek Bash	Southeast	LaGrange, Georgia	KLGC



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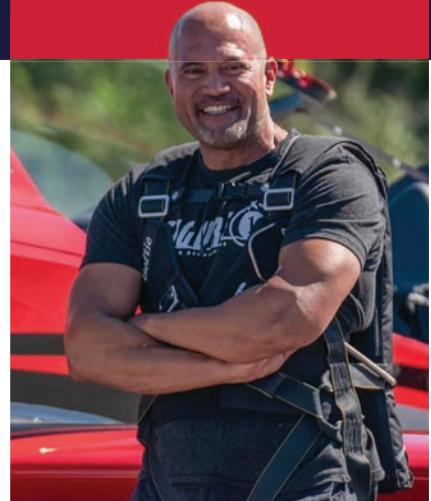
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Transition Training

My personal experience and philosophy

BY JOE MCMURRAY, IAC 441329



TRANSITIONING TO A NEW aircraft, especially one as high-performance as the GB1, is a detailed process that demands dedication, discipline, and a thorough understanding of the machine. My journey into the world of high-performance aerobatic monoplanes was no exception. Despite having several thousand hours of experience in various high-performance airplanes, retractable gear aircraft, tailwheels, and seaplanes, I approached this (and each) transition with the seriousness and respect it deserved.

My philosophy was to treat this transition like any other professional endeavor. To ensure I was fully prepared, I sought out an expert in the field: Hall of Fame air show pilot Sean D. Tucker. Sean's reputation as a consummate professional is well deserved. He challenged me constantly, knowing precisely how far to push my limits while also recognizing when I had reached my threshold, despite my own eagerness to press on.

His [Sean D. Tucker's] emphasis on safety and reverence for the aircraft was instilled in me from the very beginning.





The [transition] journey was demanding, but it reinforced the importance of professionalism, safety, and continuous learning.



His emphasis on safety and reverence for the aircraft was instilled in me from the very beginning.

Over the course of 14 months, we flew together for two to four hours each month, meticulously preparing for the day I would take delivery of my GB1. In addition to this rigorous training regimen, I spent over two weeks in total flying with the chief instructor at Game Composites. This comprehensive training was essential in ensuring I was ready to handle the unique challenges and capabilities of the GB1.

Learning to fly different airplanes is one of the most rewarding aspects of being a pilot. Each aircraft offers distinct capabilities and adventures, contributing to the excitement and challenges of the profession. Transitioning to a different type of aircraft, however, requires a deep understanding of the differences between the airplanes you've flown before and the new one. These differences can include variations in performance speed, higher stall speeds, and distinct handling characteristics. All these factors can impact your reaction time and potentially lead to loss of control under standard, adverse, or emergency scenarios.

My transition to the GB1 was a deliberate and carefully planned process. With the guidance of experts like Sean D. Tucker and the dedicated time spent with Game Composites' CFI, I was able to safely and confidently make the switch. The journey was demanding, but it reinforced the importance of professionalism, safety, and continuous learning. **IAC**



Dr. Joseph McMurray is a board-certified oral and maxillofacial surgeon. His aviation ratings include ATP, CFI, COM, IFR, and SES. Joe has an insatiable passion for competitive aerobatics and is currently competing in Intermediate in his newly acquired 2023 Gamebird GB1.

A Significant Problem

Tail wheel – stuck in one position!

BY MARK HAVEN, IAC 442182



FLYING HOME FROM THE James K. Polk Open Invitational in Midland, Virginia, in our Christen Eagle, we landed in Beckley, West Virginia, to refuel and wait out the weather. As we attempted to push the airplane into the hangar, it became obvious that there was a significant problem — the tail wheel was stuck in one position.

On closer inspection, the vertical stabilizer post had separated from the tail wheel bracket. We called our mechanic and sent pictures. He got right back to us with partially good news — it was a common problem with a well-documented and successful fix. The issue was metal fatigue where the hollow tube of the vertical stabilizer was welded to the tail wheel bracket, resulting in a break of the weld.

The fix was to weld a 7/8-inch-diameter tube or rod of cold roll steel about 4 inches in length to the tail wheel bracket and then slide that piece into the existing stabilizer tube, place it in the correct position on the tail wheel assembly, then drill a hole and install a bolt and nut to



Tail wheel stuck in one position.

As we attempted to push the airplane into the hangar, it became obvious that there was a significant problem — the tail wheel was stuck in one position.

secure it. This procedure allows for the tail wheel and bracket to carry the weight instead of the bolt.

The problem was that we were far from our home base and our tools, far from our mechanic and his tools, and unfamiliar with the local community. After scouring the local stores for metal tubing or rods, we realized 7/8-inch-diameter material was not a standard size, and we ended up at a machine shop. After we asked about the time frame for the shop to turn a 1-inch rod down to our needed 7/8 inch and showed the owner our bracket, he proceeded to the back of his shop with a “hold on a second” comment.

Some might say it was coincidence, but I believe it was by God’s providence that he came walking back up to us with an exact diameter and length piece we needed. He asked us to return to the airplane and ensure this roll would slide into the stabilizer before he welded it up for us, so we headed back to the airport.



Tail wheel bracket.



Rod welded to bracket.



Mark installs the rod and bracket.



Mechanic drills a hole to install bolt and nut.

The airport mechanic had a fantastic positioning system using a small step ladder with a 2-by-4 cut to fit on the top to rest the tail of the airplane in order to complete the work. (He said it was also helpful when draining the oil to keep the airplane level instead of nose high.) We lifted the tail, set it on the top of the step ladder, and using a rat-tail file inside the tube, removed the burrs and imperfections that were keeping the steel from sliding smoothly into the tube until it was a perfect fit.

We then took the cold roll and the bracket back to the machine shop where the owner's son welded it up for us. Now that we had the part, it was just a matter of getting the installation completed. We slid the new



In fact, the tail wheel has been much more stable and locks and unlocks as it should consistently now, making us think it had been in the breaking process for a while.



piece into place, the tail wheel was attached, and the tail was lowered back to the ground. The mechanic came to the hangar and drilled a hole to install the bolt and nut.

Overall, we spent less than \$100 on material and labor and ended up with a robust repair. The covering on the airplane was not damaged at all in the process, and the flying characteristics were unchanged. In fact, the tail wheel has been much more stable and locks and unlocks as it should consistently now, making us think it had been in the breaking process for a while. This procedure was a permanent fix, not a temporary one.

Our mechanic completed the annual shortly after we got the airplane home, and he was pleased with the outcome, stating it needed no additional attention. We met some fantastic people in the process and enjoyed an extra 24 hours in a beautiful part of the country. **IACI**

Mark Haven had been interested in aviation from as early as he can remember and began his career as a helicopter pilot for the U.S. Army. He earned his commercial and instrument ratings and later went on to secure an ATP certificate. Mark has flown the UH-1, Bell 206, CH-47 Chinook, Cherokee, and Cessna 172/150 and is type rated in E175, DC-9, and A320. Total flight time is 20,500 hours. He began his pursuit of aerobatics after his wife gifted him with a five-hour training block with Patty Wagstaff to gain his spin endorsement for his CFI rating. He began flying aerobatics in 2017 and now has approximately 200 hours in aerobatic flight. Aerobic aircraft he has flown are a Super Decathlon, Extra 300, Pitts S-2B, and Christen Eagle.

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Jerry's Journeys in 2023

Challenged but motivated!

BY JERRY ESQUENAZI, IAC 438873

MOST AEROBATIC YEARS START off the same. Our chapter has its annual meeting, and we decide on a date for the Mark Fullerton Memorial Bear Creek Bash. By this time, I would have practiced the Known sequence a few times, and I can now start thinking about which contests I would like to attend.

I like to go to about six or seven contests a year. I've gone to as many as nine in one year and as few as four. I discovered that nine contests is quite fatiguing! With less than four, I don't feel like I'm getting enough utility out of my expensive investment. Six or seven is my happy place. With that many contests, I can target two regions: our own Southeast region and one other.

I use the Regional Series and the National Point Series as my goal. To qualify for a Regional Award, one needs to attend three contests within the region. Nationals serves as a wildcard and will count toward the Regional Series. The National Point Series requires attendance at three different regions to qualify for the highly coveted Leo Award. Both of these programs are designed to motivate contest attendance. I'm motivated!

Over the years, I've attended contests in the Southeast, Northeast, Mid-America, and South Central regions. I've made a lot of friends in the various regions, and they all have their

own characters and personalities. I guess that's what makes it so much fun! Prior to 2023, the farthest contest I had flown to had been the Doug Yost Challenge in Spencer, Iowa (772 nm), followed closely by the Hill Country Hammerfest in Llano, Texas (734 nm). The Michigan Aerobatic Open in Bay City, Michigan; the Kathy Jaffe Challenge, then in Mount Holly, New Jersey; and the U.S. Nationals at Salina, Kansas, and previously Oshkosh, Wisconsin, didn't even come close!

Despite all of the contests and locales, there were two special contests that eluded me because of the distance: the Green Mountain Aerobatic Contest in Springfield, Vermont (824 nm), and the Ben Lowell Aerial Confrontational at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, a whopping 1,037 nm! It was the year I would make these two contests a priority. They formed the core of my plans. So, the wheels were set in motion for 2023.

I would attend the usual contests in the Southeast: The Snowbird Classic and Sebring,



Taxing out for a contest flight at Rome, Georgia.

both in Florida, and our own chapter's contest, the Mark Fullerton Memorial Bear Creek Bash (MFMBCB) in Rome, Georgia. I kind of had to attend that one since I was the contest director! However, up for debate was whether I was going to compete since I was a first-time CD. Thank goodness I had an outstanding team supporting me. I was able to compete and even do well! I also planned to attend the James K. Polk Open Invitational in Warrenton, Virginia, and Nationals. For those keeping track, that's seven contests, one a month from March through September!

I had some challenges along the way. Snowbird went well, but unfortunately, I made a poor weather decision not to attend the Spring Sebring. It turns out that the weather wasn't a factor, and they had a wonderful event. No problem, though; my backup was the Fall Sebring. The MFMBCB was a tremendous success! We had fantastic weather and attendance. More importantly, we had some amazing volunteers! Warrenton also went without a hitch. It was great to see my friends in the Northeast region again.

On my way to Vermont, I had a brake failure during landing at my second fuel stop at the Northumberland County airport, north of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. It is a quiet rural airport with few services. Fortunately, someone with extensive local knowledge came to the rescue. We gathered enough tools to remove the offending brake line, made a bunch of phone calls, and found an engine shop at a nearby airport to fabricate a new line.

I also had to coordinate getting a rental car and accommodations for the night as there was a good chance I wasn't making it out before dark or before the line of weather approaching Vermont. With a new line in hand and a late lunch, I made it back to the airport and got the line installed. The engine shop lent me a brake bleeder.

Aviation people are very nice and trusting everywhere! I was all buttoned up by about 6:30 p.m. and had enough daylight to make it to Vermont. However, the weather was still a factor, and I was exhausted. The hotel looked more and more inviting, so the decision was made to stay the night. Glad I did. I made it to the contest just in time, about 30 minutes before the noon brief the next day. The contest was everything I had hoped it was. The scenery was stunning, and the



Hartness State Airport (VSF), Springfield, Vermont, Green Mountain contest.



Looking down the runway at the Green Mountain contest.



Brake fluid leak Northumberland County Airport (N79).



Weather at Falcon Field that delayed departure to Colorado.



Approaching Longmont, Colorado, where I would spend the night.



Davis Airfield at USAFA.



Davis Airfield at USAFA, showing field elevation.



Davis Airfield at USAFA, showing part of the U.S. Air Force Academy far off in the background.



Selfie on the ramp at Midland, Virginia.



Tail wheel failure.

small boutique hotel was beautiful and comfortable. My wife had arrived earlier, and we had a great time together, making it into a mini getaway.

Next in the lineup was the Ben Lowell Aerial Confrontational at the U.S. Air Force Academy Airfield. It is a special contest because the airfield is actually on a military installat-

ion and consequently has some unique requirements. This contest takes place only once every other year. The last time it was held was in 2019. The 2021 event never took place due to COVID-19.

There was a good chance that summertime weather wouldn't allow traveling half the country in one day, so I allotted two days of travel on each end. I would still attempt to get out there in one day, but if I didn't, it was no big deal. I planned an early morning departure since I was facing over 1,000 nm and four legs. The weather had other plans. I finally got airborne at about 10:30 a.m., a rather late start to a long day. But once I got on the other side of the weather on my first leg, it was smooth sailing from there. I made it to Longmont, Colorado, before 7 p.m., where I would spend the night with a friend, fellow competitor, and another Extra 300S owner.

The United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) and the Rocky Mountains make for a stunning backdrop. The other attraction to this contest was the high elevation. Davis Field at USAFA sits at 6,576 feet, which puts the floor of the Intermediate box at 7,800 feet. I would start the dive into the box at a minimum of 10,000 feet! How would this sea level guy do at this altitude? I was just hoping I wouldn't get winded by merely walking out to the airplane!

It turns out that the preparation back home of going out and practicing at 10,000 feet outside the Atlanta Class B was helpful. Practice at the contest site was limited due to military requirements. We got the first two flights in on Day 1. The military had some conservative weather rules that didn't allow us to get the Unknown done on Day 2. By the time the contest was called in the early afternoon, the real weather was beginning to move in.

Fortunately, I had everything ready to go and made a beeline to the self-serve fuel pump. I got the airplane fueled, strapped in, started up, and began to taxi. In a few short feet, I heard a loud clunk and felt the airplane settle a bit. "Houston, we have a problem." I shut down the airplane, unstrapped, got out, and discovered a failed tail wheel. Fortunately, a fellow competitor came to the rescue.

It was another case of truly wonderful aviation people. He was right behind me, second in line to get fuel, and he had a spare tail wheel. We had some challenges getting the tail wheel on, but we managed to get it installed right before



WAAC 2023 Opening Ceremony.

getting kicked out of the ramp. The military wasn't going to allow us to remain on the ramp as the thunderstorms approached, and there was no place to tie down the airplanes in the vicinity of the fuel pump. I finally got underway and headed home, knowing I wasn't going to get far. I ended up spending the night in Tulsa, Oklahoma and had an uneventful flight home the next day.

Nationals was right around the corner. I couldn't wait. It's the contest we prepare for all year. And it's the contest where my friends from the various regions will congregate all in one place. Aside from some scheduling hiccups, the contest was well run and a ton of fun. It was great to see everyone again.

Next on the agenda was the World Advanced Aerobatic Championships (WAAC) in Jean, Nevada. This event wasn't part of my original competition plan. I wanted to see what a world-level contest was like and support my friends within the U.S. and Canadian teams. It was so much fun to watch! I also got to volunteer a bit by driving the judges' van and performing some other duties. It was much more rewarding to be involved in some capacity other than just being a spectator; this experience turned out to be another wonderful mini getaway for my wife and me. We had a lot of fun hanging out in Vegas and going to dinner with some of the competitors.

Finally, it was the beginning of November, a time when the Fall Sebring would have been scheduled normally. This late in the year, I just didn't have it in me to get spooled up for a December contest. I needed to catch up with work, house projects, and airplane maintenance, and Thanksgiving was right around the corner. Both the airplane and I needed a break. As a result, I made the tough call not to attend Sebring this year.

So how did I do? I made it to six contests, including Nationals. I hit my goal of attending two contests that have been on my radar for a long time. The contests I attended allowed me to



Judge's canopy at WAAC.



WAAC 2023 Ramp.

qualify for both the Regional Series* in two regions and the National Point Series.** I got to see many of my friends and meet some new ones. 2023 was truly a banner year for me! What's in store for 2024? We'll see as I dive into the Advanced category!

Editor's Notes:

*Jerry placed first in Intermediate in the Northeast and the Southeast for the 2023 Regional Series.

Jerry placed first in Intermediate in the IAC's 2023 National Point Series Championship (The Leo). **IAC

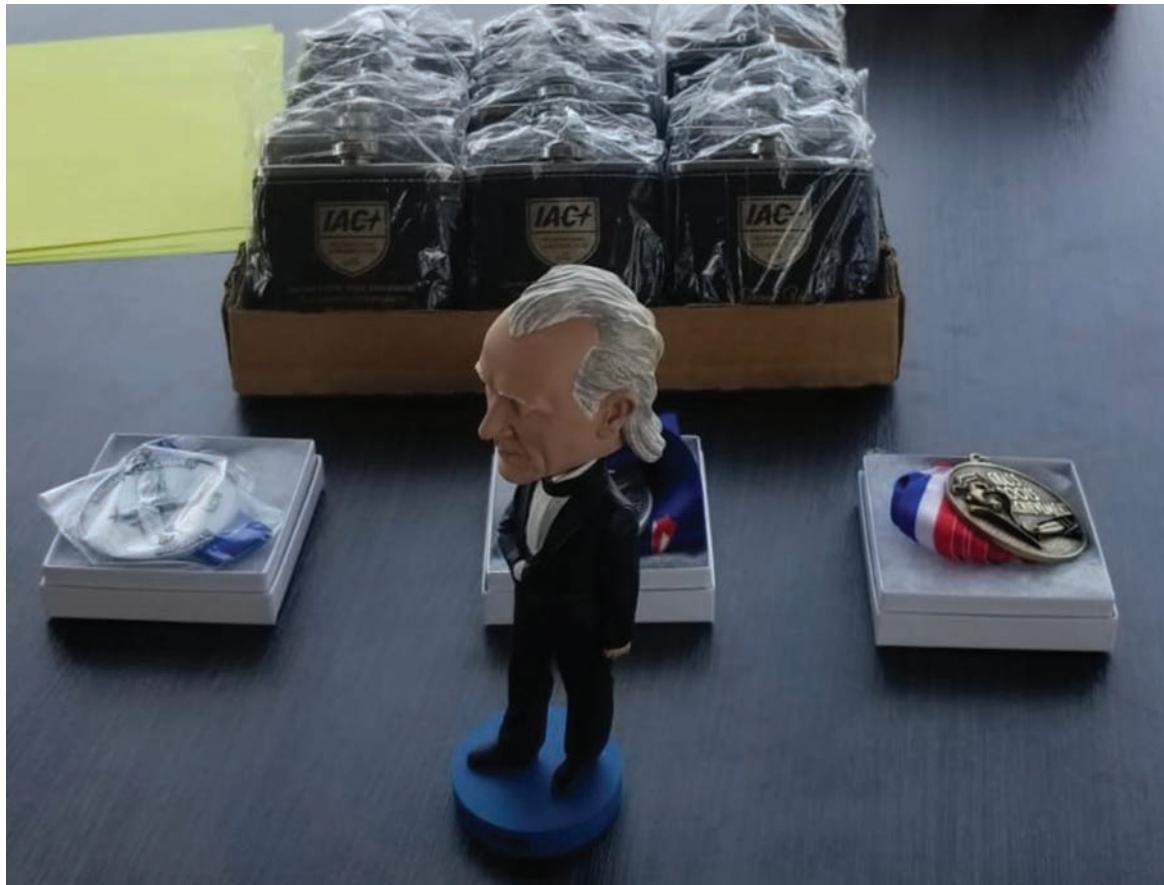
The James K. Polk Open Invitational

Fun and light but safe and businesslike when needed

BY ADAM COPE, IAC 25104

The 2024 James K. Polk Open Invitational contest group.





James K. Polk (bobblehead) greets all the competitors and volunteers.

AS FOR THIS YEAR'S contest, it was great! I liked the eclectic mix of airplanes we had this year.

There was a little of everything: Pitts; Giles 200 and 202; Sukhoi Su-31 and Su-26; Super Decathlon; Extra NG, 330SC, 330LX, 300L; and a Great Lakes.

We had seven first-time competitors with four pilots flying a Super Decathlon in Primary and three in Pitts Specials.

Traditionally, we schedule two flights on Saturday and Unknowns Sunday morning with Primary flying four times. This year we had low clouds Saturday morning, so we couldn't fly until 1330 hours. It took 4.5 hours to complete five categories with 32 pilots flown.

The choice for Sunday was to fly the contest in the morning and not be able to get home or just pack up and leave Sunday morning. Everyone decided to stay and have the contest. All the folks going north knew it meant staying until Monday.

We ran two judges lines, one with Primary, Advanced, and Unlimited flying. The other had Sportsman and Intermediate. Everyone did a great job of getting it done.

We had seven first-time competitors with four pilots flying a Super Decathlon in Primary and three in Pitts Specials.

I will claim the following statements with no backup; I put it on any challenger to dispute what I am calling as fact.

The 2024 Polk contest has the record for the widest age spread. We had an 81-year-old and an 18-year-old competitor. Find a contest with a larger age spread.



Of the seven first-time competitors, four pilots flew a Super Decathlon in Primary and three flew Pitts Specials.

There were two folks from the Flight Standards District Office during the contest. They started out wanting to be flies on the wall, but we wouldn't let that happen. Everyone did such a great job showing them around, and they stayed at the judges line with us; one of them (the trainee) didn't want to leave. Both were smitten with us, saying that they loved our ability to have fun and make things light but be safe and very businesslike when needed.

James K. Polk greets everyone when they walk into the registration room. The bobble-head of him watches over the registration process. He attends the briefings, and you often see pilots rubbing his head for good luck.

The coveted James K. Polk award, as everyone knows, was named after *James K. Polk, who attended the first World Aerobatic Championships (WAC) at Denison, Mexico, in 1845. He so loved what he saw that he knew he needed to take that land and make it America. Polk started the Mexican-American War and annexed the Texas territory. He kept the WAC in Denison, but now it was in Texas and thus started the American dominance in aerobatics.



(left to right) 3rd place: Steven Bucko; 2nd place: Raul O'Brien; 1st place: Donald Henry; and CD Adam Cope.



(left to right) 3rd place: Mark Haven; 2nd place: Trevor Smith; CD Adam Cope; and 1st place: Ruben Alconero.



(left to right) 3rd place: Pete Muntean; 2nd place: Martin Hill; 1st place: Nathan Zieman; and CD Adam Cope.



(left to right) 3rd place: Ronald Mann; 2nd place: David Taylor; 1st place: Angelo Cillaroto; and CD Adam Cope.



(left to right) 2nd place: John Fellenzer; 1st place: Marco Bouw; and CD Adam Cope.

The 2024 Polk contest has the record for the widest age spread. We had an 81-year-old and an 18-year-old competitor.

These events are why the U.S. National Aerobatic Championships were in Denison for over 150 years.

The Polk award doesn't really have a set criterion. It's up to me to just pick something that makes me happy. One year it went to RJ [Gritter] for flying the Decathlon in the Intermediate category and literally making me cry watching. One year it went to someone who flew a RANS S-9 in the contest. I still giggle thinking of him starting his airplane like a lawnmower, pulling the cord, and worrying about the "prop blast." This year it went to Bob; he brought five of the first-timers, four flew his Decathlon and one flew his Pitts S-2B, and he flew Intermediate as well. So, I gave it to him for sparking all those folks as well as flying a 1-3/4 spin instead of 1-1/4 in the Unknown, which put him out in the correct direction and fooled a judge or two.

The spirit of James K. Polk lives on in IAC Chapter 11. As the 11th president of the United States, *he saw fit to start an IAC chapter in Washington, D.C., and called it Chapter 11. The foresight he had was remarkable, especially when you take into consideration that IAC wasn't even founded until 1970.

Contest results can be found online at <https://IACCDB.IAC.org/Contests/897>.

*Editor's Note: Some "facts" in this recounting of the origin of the James K. Polk Open Invitational were not fact-checked and are purely speculative. **IAC**

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IAC Vice President Rob Holland comes in for a landing at 2024 EAA AirVenture Oshkosh.

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(left to right) IAC Vice President Rob Holland, NAA President and CEO Amy Spowart, IAC President Jim Bourke, and NAA President Emeritus Greg Principato.

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