**AERO CLUB OF BUFFALO**



Oldest Aero Club in America, Second Oldest Aero Club in the World

6 December, 2020

Dear fellow Aero Club Member,

2020 - What a year! Despite a global pandemic forcing transitions no one imagined, the Aeroclub has evolved and gone virtual. Our fervent goal is to remain an important part or your life. Going forward, we hope you will continue your affiliation by renewing your membership. The good news: given the COVID situation, the Board of Directors agreed to reduce our membership fees by half for 2021; however, we have not eliminated the wonderful programs we have offered in the past and plan to continue offering ‘virtual’ programs until the meeting restrictions are eliminated. Please complete the attached form and return it when you can so we can continue providing you world class speakers and hopefully, before this next year is over, we’ll be back in person!

**A Recap of our speakers for 2019-2020**: Despite current limitations on in-person gatherings, our 2019-2020 speaker season began with a flourish at the Protocol Banquet Hall. Our first speaker in September 2019 was Retired **Air Force** **Col Scott Anderson**, a former Thunderbird pilot. In October, Aero Club VP, **Ron Franco** spoke about his NASA Human Exploration Research Analog (HERA) experience. In November, **Tom Petrie** spoke about **Buffalo Honor Flight Network**. In December **Alan Reddig** spoke about his father James’ incredible aviation career. In January 2020, Navy Test pilot **LtCdr Scott Elwell** returned to his home, WNY to speak. After the Protocol was forced to close its doors, in February we had our last in-person dinner at the Rizzoto Banquet Hall where **Dr. Rick Volker** spoke about his experience as an airshow demonstration pilot and his Sukhoi SU-26. After February, we were forced to go virtual yet still provided you with stimulating guest speakers. Thanks to our partnership with the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) and Local Chapter Chairman, **Walter Gordon,** the Aero Club of Buffalo was invited to hear **Dr Bill Barry**, NASA’s Chief Historian in April who spoke via Zoom. In September, **Dr. Chris Scolese**, Director of the National Reconnaissance Office spoke. In October, **Dr. Rich Hallion** gave his talk “Through the Sound Barrier”. In November, we hosted a Veterans panel with Retired **Air Force** **Col Richard Shine, LtCol Jack Hales and Maj Mike Sieverding** who shared their collective experiences serving in Vietnam. In November, we also had retired NASA Chief Test Pilot, **Rogers Smith**.

**What’s next for 2021**: It is time to renew your membership to the Aero Club of Buffalo for 2021. Thank you for your continued support and your efforts to promote aviation awareness in the Western New York community. Please complete the attached form and send in your dues at your earliest covenience. Consider providing a 2021 special donation and designate it either for the scholarship fund or general funds. Your contributions are important for the Aero Club to continue supporting ongoing programs given the limited ability to raise funds at this time.

In addition to AIAA, we will continue our affiliation with the Niagara Aerospace Museum [www.niagaraaerospacemuseum.org](http://www.niagaraaerospacemuseum.org) (716) 297-1323. If you’ve not visited their collection, you are really missing out and should plan on doing so. We will be working with all of our partners to increase the visibility of the Aero Club of Buffalo in our community, and abroad. The best compliment any organization can receive is an introduction of a new member. Please consider being an ambassador for our club.

**So what’s the plan going forward?** My goal for the time being is to keep the table set and the lights on so that you, our valued members will be motivated to stay on board. To that end, allow me to let you know what we’ve been doing behind the scenes.

* We have been conducting board meetings virtually to ensure the continued viability of the Aero Club of Buffalo. We have been collaborating, talking, and sometimes arguing passionately to promote two critical goals; providing meaningful thought-provoking programs for you and increasing our membership!
* We have a new web site: [www.aeroclubofbuffalo.com](http://www.aeroclubofbuffalo.com) Take a look and provide us feedback.
* We have recruited two new individuals for our Board of Directors; Jessica Evans and Leah Nolan; both are graduates of the University of Buffalo Aerospace Engineering program, both work at MOOG and both are enthusiastic to bring their talents to our organization. Welcome aboard!
* Next, we hired a new Executive Secretary. After interviewing more than 7 candidates. I will tell you more about her in my next letter.
* We’ve decided to continue offering scholarships to aspiring aviation enthusiasts. Next year, we’ll offer two $2000 scholarships, stay tuned!
* If you wish to purchase aviation ‘stuff’, visit <https://pilotpete.com/> for a 5% discount
* We asked an artist to create a second (unofficial) logo and we are offering apparel on our web site, there is a link and an order form. I’ll introduce our artist on the web site. Take a look and let me hear what you think!

***Last word*: When you participate in the Aero Club of Buffalo, you are continuing the traditions of the oldest Aero Club in the United States and the second oldest in the world. We are dedicated to preserving our rich aviation heritage that makes Western New York so unique.**

On behalf of the Aero Club of Buffalo Board of Directors,

**Happy Holidays, Happy New Year and best regards,**

***Mark Ables***

***89th President, Aero Club of Buffalo***

