

Spring 2013

Issue 2-13

EAA 983



What's going on at EAA in our local meetings

With the hungry hand of the IRS reaching into my pockets, ensuring that the 'Bamster, Michelle and the girls will have sufficient funds for their once a month vacations, I have been lacking of time for writing the next newsletter. I have been flooded with Baby pictures of our members (NOT) and interesting articles from members (NOT) and requests for subject matter to research (NOT) and thus with all that, a lack of creativity fell upon me like a morning hailstorm (I do thank those who sent "Who Dat" bios!).

Well, BABY, I'm Back!! Well, somewhat. So lets see what I can cobble together for the latest newsletter.

Let's start with the upcoming meeting on 4/6/13.

NOTE: This meeting is one week early due to Sun n Fun. The meeting will cover new and old business and we will have a representative of Aero LED's talking about the movement away from Thomas Edison's Incandescent bulb to the energy saving and brighter LEDs.

Our last meeting had more newcomers than any other in recent times. Maybe this is a sign that general aviation is picking up or that we have more aviation enthusiast moving into Pecan Plantation. i counted 12 new people who introduced themselves and although I wrote some names down I am uncertain of the spelling and thus will not attempt to butcher them here. Suffice to say, Welcome to Chapter 983. A few are looking for property to build on or already constructed houses. When you see them let them know that there are houses for sale that are NOT listed with a broker. If you have a house not listed sent me the specs and I'll post them as a service to our members.

Our representative intern going to Oshkosh this year is Patrick Sauer. Congratulations to Patrick.

Be a Part of History

EAA Chapter 983 and the Brazos River Ninety-Nines are sponsoring a fund raising project to provide monies to send Young Eagles to the Air Academy in Oshkosh, for museum programs, activities for school children and other special events.

Make your tax deductible donation and receive a personalized engraved brick which will be permanently placed at Plane View Park. This is a wonderful opportunity to show your family's support, honor a hero, remember a friend, advertise your business, or just because!

These are high quality, laser engraved, and epoxy filled commemorative paver bricks. We can also include many symbols or your corporate/organization logo. Logos have an additional fee.

Please contact Konnie Sasser at 817-579-0903 (ksasser@charter.net) or Wendy and Dave Moore at 682-936-3002 (flymoore@charter.net)

www.giftbricks.com

Patrick is a 17 year old junior from the high school that we have chosen to attend the 2013 Air Academy in Oshkosh. He lives in Pecan and we will met him at March meeting. He has flown with Jerry Gadza and Tom Wood and is looking forward to becoming a pilot. Also, he is pursuing his Eagle Scout rank.

*Q*ur guest presenter at our last

EAA meeting was Steve Welch from Click Bond. If you are like me you might have seen these strange looking connectors but had little idea of their purpose.



Click Bond, is a leader in Adhesive Bonded Fastener. Systems Click Bond manufactures fasteners specifically designed for adhesive bonding to structure. The line of fasteners includes, rivet-nuts, nutplates, studs, cable tie mounts, standoffs, bushings, insulation mounting systems, and patches. Click Bond also provides adhesive systems and dispensing tools. All Click Bond fasteners use a unique self-fixturing process to maintain accurate position on the substrate during bonding with permanent structural adhesive. Since 1981, Click Bond has provided a variety of fasteners to the aerospace, marine, defense and transportation industries. Click Bond has worked with major manufacturers to develop

bonded fastener technology for airliners, military transport aircraft, helicopters, launch vehicles, satellites, yachts, buses, trucks, race cars and sporting goods.

FMI: www.clickbond.com
theflightshop.com

There will be a Young Eagle's Fly-Out at Granbury Airport on May 18th. Sue will need pilots and help escorting the kids to the planes and back. We have invited the high school, middle school and two scout troops, so there will be a lot of kids. People may email or call Sue if they can fly or help with the fly out.

sue.cole.tx@gmail.com
-- [936-537-2476](tel:936-537-2476)
[682-936-3202](tel:682-936-3202) .

There will also be a sign up at the April meeting

Program Reminder

Apr 6 (Due to SnF)

Aero -LEDs

Pecan Plantation Airport

Apr 9-14

Sun-n-Fun

Lakeland, FL (KLAL)

May 11

Grand Rapids Avionics

Pecan Plantation Airport

Jun 8

Paul Dye (Kitplanes Magazine)

Pecan Plantation Airport

Jul 13

Emergency Response International (ERI)

Pecan Plantation Airport

Jul 29 - Aug 4

EAA Airventure

Oshkosh, WI (KOSH)

Sept 21

EAA983 Fly-In

Dec Christmas Party TBA

**Pecan Plantation
Clubhouse**

WHO 'DAT?

In other words, who's that guy/gal you're sitting next to at the EAA meeting?

We sit next to them, laugh with/at them and share stories. Ever wonder what their background is?

"Who's Dat?" - Bill Eslick

My flying experience started when I went to meet Linda's parents for the first time. I had always had an interest in airplanes, like most kids, but being raised on a wheat farm, models were about as far as it went. Turns out that Linda's dad, Slim, owned Spanaway Airport near McChord AFB. His little FBO had a flight school and maintenance facility. Before I had a chance to even see their home, I was treated to a round trip to PDX in a 172. The mechanic/CFI that I flew with let me handle the controls during a loose formation return to S44, and I was hooked. By about 4 months later I had earned my private ticket by flying after work on the farm. My instructor was retired military, and had been the boss at Colorado Springs AFB training base during WWII, and was quite a character – but that's another story. I will admit that he made me practice spin recoveries under the hood in a Cherokee 140. Try to teach that now!



Being fresh meat as a college student in the 60's, I realized that when the inevitable happened I would much rather be up there looking down than packing a rifle in the jungle. AFROTC was followed by UPT at Shepherd AFB in Wichita Falls and RTU in F-4s at George AFB. My first and best (and only) assignment was to the 23 TFS in USAFE at Spangdahlem AB, Germany. We were allowed to fly fast low-level routes with minimum (any?) supervision at speeds and altitudes that scare me now. Our job was to nuke the Ruskys if the bell rang. Gotta love "selectable yield" nukes. Everyone I knew said they would crank it full up if they had to go on the planned one-way missions. No use making a small crater if you could make a BIG crater. Thank God we never had to test that intention. In fact, one time I was on alert with a target near Moscow, and Linda was IN MOSCOW on a tour! Anything wrong with this picture?



I was cruising along instructing in the 52nd Wing Stan-Eval department when the war wound down and flying got sparse. Not really looking forward to flying a desk, and being denied Edwards flight-test school, I bailed and went back to the farm. Much to my chagrin, nobody was hiring pilots and I wasn't smart enough to keep bugging people until they would at least answer the phone. I tried my best to work flying into the farm. We owned a 1955 Tri-Pacer, a 1967 Mooney M21, and a 1969 C-180. One winter I got the bug to build a Goldwing ultralight. It had a 36' wingspan and it was all glass over hot-wire cut foam. Guess that is why I still get the shakes when I face a fiberglass project! It was a great platform for checking fences, weeds, trespassers and chasing cattle. All these aircraft were operated off a 1600' grass strip near my house. The C-180 was fitted with a 110-gallon conformal belly tank (after a trip to Worthington, MN for installation) so that I (cont. page 5)

Do you find it hard or too expensive to maintain your Instrument proficiency? i can help.

I spent time with Redbird simulator operator, Bill Ervin, located at Midway airport in Midlothian, who checked me out in its operation. If you would like to do your 6 landings, holding and tracking in a Redbird simulator I will be happy to operate it for a nominal fee plus the cost of the simulator. This could amount to half of the cost of doing it in the airplane.

FMI: <http://motionairflight.com>

Call Tom at 817-579-1850

FLY the BEST - F.8L Falco N89WH

Flying the P-51 "Crazy Horse" was a bucket list experience.

Flying Roy LoPresti's

SwiftFury was another such experience. Owning and flying Falco N89WH, aka "Madame H," equals either.

TTAF 346/SMOH 346.

Stunning Italian design - beautiful, fast, responsive, based at OTX1 (Pecan Plantation, TX). Plans built by Willard Hofler with excellent quality construction. IO-320 B1A Lycoming, 8.5 g/hr cruise at 155 knts/hr, aerobatic design loads, GPS, NavCom, Com, autopilot, electric trim, leather interior. No damage history. **Henderson Roy** ifraviator@aol.com \$84,000 US 206-399-6980

KIT FOR SALE

Plans # 21556 purchased 1989. Empennage and left wing have been completed, all parts for right wing present. Fuse frame for wing joint also present. Phlogiston wing spar option. Finishing kit and quick-build fuselage option are still available from Van's (according to Van's website). I bought a flying RV-6 after finishing the first wing, so it's time to let the project go. Good workmanship (modesty aside). Asking \$3500, reasonable offers considered. Great inexpensive way to get into building.

Pics at <https://picasaweb.google.com/N889RV/RV6KitForSale?authkey=Gv1sRgCNC93ezCj7TrkWtE#>

Located at Nassau Bay airport (OTX0).

jpsewell@windstream.net

Can't afford a whole airplane?

Cessna 172, 180HP
STC, 4600 TT, 100SMOH, 1/4 share \$13,900. Call Larry @ 501 802-1876

Airplane Earl (you know, the slippery stuff)

Exxon Elite Aircraft Oil.
Otx1 has our own distributor!
Top rated for both wear and corrosion protection. Profits donated to the Dennis N. Polen Educational Foundation
\$77.14/case. Dick Keyt
817-279-7590

HOUSE for SALE

5b/5b 3 car garage. Formal dining, and living. Two family rooms and separate office. 3000sq/ft hangar with elect/air and full bath. Best view in PP Airpark. 817-579-1850 for pixs: buhwana@charter.net

RV8 for Sale

YellowBird I

1346TT 846 SMOH, Lyc IO-360, 200hp, Hartzell CS prop, VFR panel, BK Skymap III color GPS, Garmin 496, EI sixpax, Trutrak AP, AH, Apollo SL40 com, KT76A, Poplawski paint job
\$82,900
Don 214-729-6187
214dc@charter.net

Members listening intently to another excellent presentation



(Cont. from page 3)

could do our own aerial application work. Turns out that MN lied to me about how easy it was to get the FAA to sign this thing off in WA. I am now the proud owner of an STC for one serial number aircraft, the product of FAA engineering test flights. After 11 years of working with my dad and brother on the family farm, I discovered that the airlines were hiring "old people", as old as 50! Being a youthful 39, I jumped in a light twin to get my ATP, passed the FE written and eventually got a shot at American Airlines.

Fast forward through 25 years, and here we are. 13,000 hours in everything from ultralights to DC-10-30s, and we're actually living on an airpark!

My present ride is an RV-6 I started in 1992. No prepunched skins on this baby. In 2000, when it was time to put the wings on, (it was built in a 1-car garage) we started looking for an airpark. The Sutters had settled in here, and when we came for a visit, just one time, sitting on their porch sipping tea and watching the action hooked us. First flight was in June 2002, after only 10 years of construction. It now has over 800 hours on it, and the Mazda rotary has been replaced with an IO-360 200 HP Lyc. But, once again, that is another story.



Occasionally we have an experience, though not pleasant, can be a lesson, which if shared, beneficial to others. Here is one for your consideration from EAA member Roy Henderson.

AOPA Emergency Assistance Plus

Friday September 7, 2012. I'd spent the day washing and polishing my Falco N89WH aka "Madame H" in preparation for EAA #983's Fly In the following day. I was just enjoying an evening glass of wine, when I received a call from my wife, Mel, who was on board the yacht Grace Anne II in The Lake of the Woods researching the vintage yacht for possible filming for her television series, *ESCAPESEEKER*. I was expecting an update and asked how her cruise was going. Much to my surprise, she said, "Well, actually not so great! I had an accident onboard and fell down a companionway stairwell and injured my foot and shoulder. I am in the hospital in Kenora, Ontario, Canada." She thought she would be taped up and return to the yacht, but over the course of an hour X-ray images were emailed to me and our nephew, an orthopedic surgeon in Boise, Idaho. He soon emailed me that Mel's foot injuries were very serious – all toes dislocated and four fractures - and she needed surgery as soon as possible in a major hospital. He recommended Harborview Hospital in Seattle.....a long long way from Kenora, Canada.

My first question was, "How do I transport her as soon as possible to receive the proper medical care?" I was home in Pecan Plantation and she was in central Canada. Then I remembered we were members of the Emergency Assistance Plus, an AOPA program managed by FrontierMEDEX. We originally purchased this coverage, which is available to all AOPA members, in case something happened to me as we were flying around the country in our Falco. One of the benefits is that EAP+ brings your aircraft home as well as assists with medical care and transport, anywhere in the world. I called the EAP+ 800 # about 9:30 pm and within 45 minutes their medical staff had spoken to the doctor in Kenora, confirmed the extent of my wife's injuries and confirmed to me that our situation was covered. Approximately 11:30 pm EAP+ confirmed they would medevac Mel to Duluth, MN, which was the nearest medical facility with the necessary surgical expertise. I requested they bring her to DFW, but after some discussion they advised the policy only covered medevac transportation to the nearest suitable medical facility.

At 01:30 am Saturday EPA+ confirmed the Sanford LifeFlight air ambulance would pick up Mel in the morning and transport her to St. Lukes Hospital in Duluth. By 02:00 am I was ticketed on United Airlines DFW>ORD>DUL departing at 05:50. I left the house at 03:00 am and arrived Duluth at 10:44 am. Mel spent a rather painful night in the Kenora before being picked up by the outstanding Sanford crew out of Fargo, ND and flown to Duluth, checked through immigration and customs, and then brought to St Lukes by the air ambulance crew all the way into her room, where they transferred her care to the hospital about 2:30 pm. She was in surgery by 4:30 pm and after 3 hours of surgery had two 2" pins, two plates and ten screws holding her size 6 foot together. The Doctor indicated several days in the hospital then 8 to 9 weeks with her foot elevated, toes to the nose, and no-weight bearing on her foot. The St Lukes staff, doctors and nurses were superb, their care compassionate, their spirit joyful!

The next question was, "How do we return home given the requirement to keep her foot elevated 23+ hours per day?" All commercial flights out of Duluth are the small regional jets that require connections in Detroit or Chicago. Eventually, we determined that renting a car and driving home was the best though not necessarily easiest solution. Until then, I never knew where I35 goes, but the north end of it is Duluth. We drove straight through as one of our daughters flew out and helped with the 1,176 mile 20 hour road trip home...Mel's foot elevated all the way.

EAP+ consistently monitored our situation the air ambulance pick up, the arrival at St Lukes, the outcome of surgery, the determination of the best way home and finally calling to confirm our safe arrival at

home. They handled everything very professionally and significantly reduced the emotional and financial stress of our situation. The total costs covered –ambulance, air ambulance, transportation home - by EAP+ were \$13,967, non of which were covered by regular medical insurance.

I recommend every pilot carry this type of coverage...just in case. Its inexpensive and you're covered everywhere, even if you're not flying your plane.

Roy Henderson
ifraviator@aol.com

FMI: <http://insurance.aopa.org/life/emergency-assistance-plus>



Nice ride if you can get it for free!

As an Extra bonus here's one more

WHO'S DAT

Don Gumm's Aviation Adventures

My love of airplanes and things that fly go back to my earliest memories as a young boy about age four or five. At the time WWII was raging and I lived in Inglewood, California. There was an aircraft manufacturer near our home and I could watch fighters take off and land for hours. My stepfather was a private pilot but was not accepted for military service because of a motorcycle injury that left him with one leg about a half inch shorter than the other.

He had many friends that flew both military and for the airlines so there were always pilots and airplane talk in our home. After WWII was over in 1945 we moved to my step dad's home town on an island off the coast of Maine. There was a small runway on the island and I could watch the bush type aircraft come and go.

In 1950 we left Maine and returned to California. Our home was about a mile from the Compton airport. I rode my bike to the airport whenever I had time and walked around looking at airplanes. Too shy to talk to the pilots, I just watched and dreamed of flying.

In 1955 I turned seventeen; I was determined to get closer to aircraft so I joined the U S Air Force. Little did I know that the closest I would get was to fix airplanes for others to fly? My first ride in an airplane was after basic training. I missed the train to Chicago, Illinois where I was to report to Chanute AFB for training as a jet engine mechanic. I flew from LAX to Chicago on a DC6 and from there to Rantoul, Illinois on a DC3. The most exciting moment was the tail popping up on takeoff in the DC3. I was seated way to the rear.

After my graduation from Chanute AFB I was assigned to Yokota AFB in Japan for two years. I was a member of the 6021st Photo Recon Squadron. Our aircraft consisted of F100's, F86's, RB57's and T33's. All were equipped with cameras only and the T33's also had radiation fallout filters in the front portion of the tip tanks. I purchased a new 650cc Triumph motorcycle and toured much of the country in my off duty hours.

When I returned to the states in 1958 I was assigned to the 40th Bomb Group operating B52's out of Walker AFB in Roswell, New Mexico but honestly, I never saw any UFO's while I was there. The only Air Force aircraft I was to ever get airborne in was as a passenger on a MATS Super Constellation returning from Japan back to the United States. I ended my active duty service in December 1958 but remained in the reserves for another four years.

Fast forward to 1969, while working as a machinist, construction and aerospace purchasing, I finished my schooling through UCLA. I am now established in the Aerospace Industry as a Procurement/Materials Manager.

My brother-in-law is washing airplanes in exchange for lessons at Hawthorne Airport and begs me to go for a ride with him and his instructor. It's a beautiful Saturday morning in a Cherokee 140 at about 1500' over the Palos Verdes coast line. I am given the controls for a few turns, climbs and descents, I am forever hooked.

I immediately started shopping aircraft and find a nine month old Cherokee 180D with just 100 hours TT on it. I talk to a couple of the five flight schools at Hawthorne Airport and made a deal to lease it back to one of them for instruction and private rental. I started my lessons, hit the books and in a few months I received my private ticket.

I continued building time in the Cherokee but also had access to Cessna 150, 152, 172, 182 and 210 on the line if my Cherokee wasn't available. I got my commercial rating and then used one of the flight schools Beech Travel Air's to get my multi-engine rating.

During the aircraft rental days I did all the maintenance I had time for in the evenings and on weekends, of course it was done under the watchful eyes of our maintenance shops supervising IA.

I flew the Cherokee as far as Amarillo, Texas and Fayetteville Arkansas but mostly up and down the west coast. After five years I logged 750 hours in the Cherokee with about forty percent being at night after work. In 1974 the Cherokee was paid off and I purchased a new fully equipped Beech A36 Bonanza. I put it on lease back as well for advanced training, charter and rental. I put the Cherokee in the shop for new paint, interior and King panel, all to match my new Bonanza.

After building enough time to become proficient in the Bonanza I took my instrument written and check ride and passed both. With the Bonanza's speed and range we traveled far and wide making trips across the country every summer to visit family and friends all over including several trips to southern Baja, Mexico.

In 1976 my A36 was stolen during the night from the ramp at Hawthorne airport. About ten days later a friend arrived at a fish camp's beachside 2100 foot runway located about sixty miles south of La Paz, Baja Mexico.

While parking his aircraft he recognizes my A36 parked off the side of the runway. The fish camp operator told him the Bonanza had been left there by two men the day before. They had departed in a Cessna 210 to find some parts. They had flown it over forty hours in the ten days and it reeked of Marijuana.

There were no phones in the fish camp and cell phones hadn't been invented yet so my friend flew up to La Paz and called us to report finding my Bonanza. I called US authorities to ask what they could do for me. They said "nothing". I asked Customs if we would be charged if we brought the aircraft over the border. They agreed the airplane was in Mexico illegally and it was reported as stolen. They further stated that if the legal owner recovered it there would be no problem with the U S Custom upon re-entry. The "we" referred to was myself and the flight school owner who happened to be a retired LAPD officer. He flew charters into Baja quite often. I don't use names here other than my own for reasons of a confidential nature.

Early the next morning we entered Mexico "legally" on the mainland at Hermosillo in a Beech Travel Air. We then flew across the gulf to Loreto and topped off the Travel Air's fuel.

We arrived at Palmas de Cortez aka Bahia de Palmas to find the aircraft under guard by a local constable. The fish camp operator informed us that Federal Police had heard radio talk from one camp to another reporting that there was a stolen aircraft there. They had taken possession.

In the seventies dozens of American aircraft were confiscated in Mexico and never returned to their owners. Through an English speaking fisherman we told the guard my son had taken the aircraft without permission and thanked him. We also paid him a generous "tip". He was obviously confused about his duty; he watched us inspect the aircraft for some time and then wandered away.

By this time we had discovered the left tire was not just low, but flat and the brakes were inoperative. We borrowed some tools from a fisherman and did a temporary fix to the tire using masking tape and paint I found in the aircraft. The thieves had been altering the N #'s during their runs across the border. The left brake hydraulic line had been torn out at the fitting and there was nothing we could do to repair it without the proper parts.

The aircraft had enough fuel on board to get it half way up Baja to where we could purchase fuel on a private strip owned by Hotel Serenidad at Mulege. The runway was 4000 feet and has an amphibious plane ramp that is fairly steep coming out of the water at the north end. The last 500 feet on the south end was not very good. The plan was to touch down in the upslope of the ramp and hopefully helping to slow the brakeless Bonanza. There was a slight wind out of the north. This is when short field landing skills hopefully will help.

We manually turned the Bonanza to line up with the gravel/dirt runway and I my friend departed first in the Travel Air. I flew at low power for maximum range. The plan was for him to land at Mulege first and help turn me around at the far end of the dirt runway and taxi back to where the fuel was located in 55 gallon drums.

The spot landing on the uphill ramp went as planned and as I was rolling to a stop when I saw a Beech 18 operated by Baja Airlines on about a one mile final and headed directly at us. At the last moment the pilot saw my aircraft on the runway and he went around passing over us at about a hundred feet. He circled until we were clear and then landed.

After refueling with enough to reach the border, my friend took the A36 with his retired LAPD identification in hand and headed for Calexico and U. S. Customs. I flew the Travel Air, crossed the gulf to Hermosillo and exited Mexico legally.

I later learned that about ten aircraft per year were stolen from California and mine was the only on record that had been recovered from Mexico. They were usually used for several trips and then torched on some dry lake bed by the thieves to destroy the evidence.

Ninety days later and with the help of the insurance company the A36 was like new again and back on the line. Our investigation of the theft pointed to a past renter whom the authorities suspected of being a drug runner for hire. I continued to cooperate with the authorities and we installed a hidden transponder on the aircraft to enable us to track its movements.

About a year later a renter we had suspected of being involved in the theft scheduled the A36 for a flight to Phoenix. He kept delaying his scheduled return telling us stories of bad weather over the desert. After about two days I got a call from the Texas Rangers who informed me that they had my aircraft under surveillance in Brownsville, Texas. They noticed my aircraft because it was still on the stolen list.

The single pilot in my Bonanza and another in a rented Piper Lance were both obviously waiting for the weather to clear so they could fly across the border and pick up loads of Marijuana.

After another day of waiting they gave up and returned to California empty handed. They had disconnected the second transponder before leaving Phoenix for Texas. They knew now they were being watched and never rented an aircraft from us again. The going price at the time for a runner with his own aircraft was \$10,000 per load.

In 1977 I sold my Cherokee 180D and in 1979 I removed the A36 from the flight school. I joined a 135 charter service that had started an evening service ferrying passengers from LAX to Laughlin/Bull Head City Nevada. The gambling casinos were doing a booming business at the time and we made three runs per week transporting clients both to and from.

In 1982 we were hit by a recession and after comparing the reduced revenue to the rising insurance cost I decided to withdraw the A36 from the charter service. Knowing I would now have more time to use her myself, I installed tip tanks, an in wing weather radar and later a Stormscope.

By this time Christal and I decided to marry. I purchased a new home in Mission Viejo in Orange County and moved my A36 from Hawthorne to the Chino Airport. At the Chino Airport I purchased a Port-A-Port T hangar and added concrete floors..

After a few months I met a group of pilots that had been ejected from Orange County Airport by the incoming new airline terminal expansion. I joined a pilot co-op called Chino Development League. They negotiated a thirty-five year land lease with options from San Bernardino County. We started construction on Eagles Nest I and II in 1983

They were executive hangars with twenty two hangars of 2,000 to 3,000 square feet in each building. All were concrete wall tilt ups sharing side and rear walls. Many owners built small living areas or just bathrooms inside. My hangar was only a hundred yards from the front door of the Planes of Fame Museum.

Being somewhat familiar with drug problems in aviation and law enforcement I made application to join the Orange County Sheriffs Aero Squadron in 1983. I was accepted and by early 1985 I had completed my academy training and been sworn.

This unit was made up of forty reserve officer members, each who owned and operated their person aircraft free to the county with only mission fuel cost being reimbursed. Member deputies were from all walks of life, doctors, dentist, lawyers, business men and yes, two airline pilots.

Our missions were aerial surveillance and photography, transportation of high priority investigative personnel, the Sheriff and his staff and prisoners of all kinds. All transportation missions required instrument rated pilots.

Our aircraft ranged from an L5 and Super Cub to Cessna 340's and 58 Beechcraft Barons. We flew in pretty much all kinds of weather with the pilots making the final weather call on the mission. Our policy was if "anyone" was picked up "anywhere" in California or in bordering states with an open arrest warrant from Orange County, we would go get them. I made one pick up of three teenage prisoners in Salt Lake City, Utah.

In 1989 I was promoted to Mission Operations Sergeant and attended "Gunsite" in Arizona for advanced tactical weapons training.

I went through the week long course with Navy Seal Team members and various personnel from other federal law enforcement agencies. I was also selected as Supervisor of the year in 1985.

I was fortunate to have enough service time with my employer to earn lots of paid time off for personal business. Corporate was very supportive of my efforts for the Sheriffs' Department and understood that it required sudden departures from my office to the airport for a mission. In the twelve years after I was sworn I had the privilege of flying many high profile missions.

One mission in 1985 was with a homicide officer carrying one partial finger print lifted with vaporized superglue from the back of a rear view mirror. It was a nonstop investigation from Orange County to the Sacramento DOJ and on to San Francisco where it resulted in the late night identification of the "Night Stalker" serial killer, Richard Ramirez.

He was chased, beaten and captured leaving a bus station in Los Angeles the following day. He was convicted of over a dozen murders and there have been TV specials made of that story. None however show the detailed involvement or contribution of the Orange County Sheriff's Department in his identification and capture.

In 1989 an Aero Squadron Deputy also transported serial killer Randy Kraft who was known as the "Scorecard Killer" and "Freeway Killer". He was convicted of sixteen gruesome murders of young men between 1972 and 1983. He was suspected of nearly fifty-one murders total. Details of the Richard Ramirez and Randy Kraft cases are both on line.

Another mission was flying two Regional Narcotics Suppression Unit (RNSU) Agents while following a cocaine filled minivan traveling from California across the country. We tracked it from both the ground and air. After crossing into Arizona I landed in Kingman and the head of Narcotics for that stated joined us. The driver was then apprehended in a planned traffic stop near Winslow, Arizona. We landed there and conducted the questioning of the suspect.

One memorable flight involved intercepting a pot transporting Cessna 182. It flew from the Mexican border to a dry lake bed landing site outside Blyth, California. When the ground suspects saw the LEO's they warned the aircraft and the aircraft suspects began to dump everything they could out while on approach and landing. Officers on the ground made arrests of the two suspects fleeing the aircraft. After we landed, questioning of the suspects took place.

RNSU agents had photos of the suspects at various meets around the county. They both produced the same attorney's card and asked for their one call. Both had extremely large amounts of cash on their person.

I flew several missions transporting death row inmates to San Quentin. On these missions the local county law enforcement agencies would not accept responsibility for the condemned prisoner at the airport. They would transport us all to San Quentin Prison where we checked our weapons into lockers outside and then walked the prisoner through the general population and back to death row. It is not a nice place. Why the hurry to get them there? DON'T KNOW, they will never execute in California.

On average I would fly about a hundred mission hours per year plus our annual desert/mountain training flights for search, rescue and message drops. Pleasure flights hours not included.

Many of the law enforcement missions would make good short stories. However, they all would pale in comparison to the memories of some of our celebrated military pilots and their MACH ONE plus experiences in combat. I am in awe of "their" experiences.

I retired from the Sheriff's Aero Squadron in 1997 after undergoing a triple bypass and losing my medical for over a year. I used that time to paint, upholster, modernize the panel and build a new engine for my Bonanza. I also started a frame up restoration/modernization of my classic 1956 Ford F100 which took me four full years to complete. It has been featured in Custom Classic Truck and Ford Truck magazines.

For fun flying I've flown to all four corners of the United States and most of the states in between. I've flown many trips down Baja to Loreto, La Paz, Mulege, Palmilla, Palmas de Cortes, Punta Pescadero, Rancho Buena Vista, Santa Rosalia, and Cabo San Lucas.

Mainland Mexico flights included Guaymas, Mazatlan, Puerto Vallarta, Guadalajara, Veracruz, Merida, Cancun, Cozumel, Oaxaca and Acapulco. We stopped traveling there in the mid-nineties.

I made one trip to Alaska in 1980 with a group of flying friends in five aircraft.

While still a student pilot in 1969 I accepted a ride in an older Bonanza. For whatever reason, the pilot decided to land on a private dirt strip in an orange grove. On touch down the landing gear failed and we were skidding on the belly. A tip tank hit and was torn off. When this happened it spun us 180 degrees and we were skidding backward. The prop and exhaust pipes became plows and tore the engine from its mounts. When we stopped, we were in a cloud of dust and I could smell fuel. I couldn't get out of that airplane fast enough. It didn't catch fire but from that time on I've had a plan of how I would exit a burning aircraft if still conscious after it stopped. However, I never thought I would ever have to use it.

I haven't logged much more than maybe 150 hours PIC in aircraft other than my Cherokee and trusty A36 Bonanza that I flew for over twenty-eight years. Unfortunately, I lost her in a mid-air crash/fire during a zero/zero IFR departure from Chino, California. We were en route to Pecan Plantation to select a builder for our new home.

After hitting high voltage power lines at approximately 140 to 150 knots we went down on fire. We were tethered by a one inch diameter high voltage cable buried into my left wing just outboard of the fuel cell and back to the spar. The post impact ride made high speed desert racing in Baja seem like child's play.

Following impact we shed many pieces of the aircraft while traveling about 1500 feet missing a three story industrial building by a few feet and hitting in its parking lot. We took out several sign/light posts, trees and other shrubbery. The good thing was that Andie, then barely five years old and Christal were both seated in the rear facing aft. We exited the burning aircraft without injuries. The Beech Bonanza cabin was not compromised and the rear doors would have opened normally had Christal taken the time to turn the latch before kicking it open.

The aircraft was consumed by flames so I exited over the front seats and out the rear. I won't go into the details leading up to

this event here because it's a complex story. One I won't ever forget, the aircraft can be replaced.

The Chino fire department found us sitting against the building watching it burn fog forty-five minutes later while they were combing the streets looking for the car wreck that had taken out all the power in Chino. No one knew we had gone down, no ELT, nothing, just a big fire on a deserted road in the fog.



(Editors Note: Don called me a couple hours after this incident and told me that Crystal was given the little one a bath, which I thought was incredible after viewing the photo he sent! How many of us would be that recovered only a couple of hours after the event?)

Notice the left aileron that the embedded cable was wrapped over as I tried to turn away from the building.

Thirty three year of flying at that time and never an incident. The FAA however, did their thing and required me to do a full re certification. It included an oral exam and a commercial instrument flight check ride in a Bonanza. I used an aerobatic F33 for the ride.

We sold our home and hangar in California and moved here to Pecan in 2003 with our newly adopted family of three little ones. After nearly a year we completed our home in spite of the rain and labor delays. As soon as we were settled in I started my search for another A36 Bonanza. I found my present Bonanza in early 2005. I traveled by American, did a pre buy, wrote a check and flew her home from Reno, Nevada.

I met Jeff, our local A & P soon after and hired him to assist in maintenance and some modifications to my new (to me) Bonanza. Eventually I started helping Jeff around Pecan's airpark and I have worked on many of the aircraft and met many wonderful people here over the past nine years. Life is good.

I want to add a gratitude of thanks to those who have sent me a little history of themselves. It's not easy to want to talk about yourself when there is such a plethora of talent and experience here in Pecan Plantation. What I find interesting, and hope you do too, is the different paths that people have taken to arrive here at the Plantation.

I encourage you to put a little of your history down on paper and share it with the Chapter. Nobodies story is too trivial to tell.

Send you submissions to the Editor: Bunwana@charter.net