

PIREPS

A monthly newsletter for Nebraska pilots and aviation enthusiasts



'Encourage and Facilitate the Development and Use of Aviation in Nebraska'

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Aviation Artists Honored

By Stuart MacTaggart

Young faces beamed with pride and wonder at Saturday's Aviation Art Contest awards ceremony. The



L to R, Taylor Doell, Ian Olander, Chelsea Horner and Kent Penney

warm, spring day ushered in a capacity gathering, past the Big Red football fans and into the Nebraska Air National Guard's Operations auditorium. Parents and relatives flashed photos as the nine winners accepted their engraved trophies at center stage. Chelsea Horner and Ian Olander, both from Lincoln's Messiah Lutheran school won first and second place respectively in the 6-9 age group. Elaine and Homer Doell surprised their grandson, Taylor, when they flew their Mooney up from Arizona to personally present his third place



Taylor and Elaine Doell

trophy. The middle age category saw Yvonne Lin of Lincoln receive her first place award and Carmen Claesson and Justin Birge accept the second and third place trophies. Tysen Johnson captured top prize in the 13-17 year age group while Michael Glebe of Bellevue accepted his second place award. Third place went to Jashier Hinojos of Wallace School District. Nebraska's Aeronautics Director, Kent Penney, along with Patsy Meyer of Nebraska Ninety-Nines and Lt Colonel Steve Plamann, NE Air Guard, presented the trophies and certificates signed by Governor Johanns. Gladys Phillips of Beaver Crossing, an early chairman of the art contest, returned to the podium for a special guest appearance, awarding the Honorary Mention Certificates.



L to R, Carmen Claesson, Patsy Meyer and Yvonne Lin

Keynote speaker and National Guard Chief of Staff, Brig General Mark Musick, captivated kids and parents alike with his presentation on outer space exploration and the Mars landing. Employing the panoramic, large screen display and 3-D glasses, the General proved that learning can be entertaining.

The Air Guard's hospitality extended well beyond the formal presentations. Volunteers from the 155th Air Refueling Wing escorted students, family and friends through the impressive KC-135R aerial tanker, where young artists proudly smiled for hero pictures for their scrapbooks. On display under the tanker's wing sat one of the finest examples of a restored WW II fighter--Harry Barr's P-51 Mustang. King Air "4NU," flown by the Governor, was also on hand, along with the Civil Air Patrol's brand new Cessna 182.



L to R, Tysen Johnson, Michael Glebe and LtCol Steve Plamann

Thanks to all the sponsors and volunteers who make this annual event so special for our youngsters. Congratulations! You are all winners!



Quotes

By Kent Penney

I thought this would be a good time for some inspirational quotes. Often we return to what we have heard for inspiration and direction. These quotes come from a public administration perspective but I believe they are applicable to all.



Kent Penney
Director, Nebraska
Dept. of Aeronautics

-“Excellence is high-quality in certain areas where it is needed, it’s compassionate, it’s humane, basically it’s honest ... the most important single ingredient is integrity.” Leroy Harlow, former City Manager and former professor at Brigham Young University
-“The older I get, the more convinced I am that to really work, programs have to be owned by the people they’re serving. That isn’t just rhetoric, it’s real. There’s got to be ownership.” George Latimer, former Mayor of St. Paul.

-“Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what you want them to achieve and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.” General George S. Patton

-“In every battle there is a crisis, perhaps in the short space of only 10 or 15 minutes, on which the outcome depends. To make proper use of this short space of time means victory, but to neglect it means defeat.” Emperor Napoleon

-“An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.” Solomon

-“It is while we are young that the habit of industry is formed. If not then, it never is afterwards. The fortune of our lives, therefore, depends on employing well the short period of youth.” Thomas Jefferson

There are many Fly-in events this summer and they will be enjoyable. Show your support for aviation in Nebraska and attend as many as possible.

Construction News



Omaha - Construction activities in the vicinity of the north portion of the airport. Cranes and other construction equipment may be in use. Check NOTAMS.

Rushville - Rehabilitation of runway 14/32, taxiway and apron will begin in April or May of 2004. Anticipate construction activities to be complete July 2004. Airport may be closed during phases of construction. Check NOTAMS.

Norfolk - Rehabilitation of runway 13/31, Taxiways A, B, and C. Construction will be phased and will impact operations on runway 1/19. During phases of the construction, runway 1/19 will be NOTAM'ed for visual approaches only.

Chadron - Rehabilitation of runway 11/29 will begin this spring. The runway will be closed during construction. Runway 2/20 will

also be closed during several phases of the project. Be sure to check NOTAMS.

New Pilots and Certificates



Private

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Willie Allen II – Bellevue | Christopher Schuster – Omaha |
| Dustin Bingman – Papillion | Jared Riebold – Papillion |
| Carey Friesen – Omaha | Douglas Chappellear - Elkhorn |

Commercial

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Steven Brinkman – Omaha | Rodney Wartig – Wisner |
| Timothy Fleck – N Platte | |

Instrument

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ross Andrews – Lincoln | Jesse Divelbess – Omaha |
| Jeremy Strack – Lincoln | Steven Overly – LaVista |
| Bradley Lingenfelter – Lincoln | Albert Pfeifle - Lincoln |

Multi-Engine

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Clint Cotton - Kearney | John Harrison – Council Bluffs, IA |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|

ATP

Flight Instructor

- | | |
|--|--|
| Philip Thompson – Omaha
(Single Engine) | Jeffrey Braunger – Omaha
(Multi-Engine) |
|--|--|

Meet Some NDA Personnel



L to R, Marcy Meyer, Roger Fox, Lyle Jacobsen and RD Thompson (Not Pictured: Michael Luff)

Lyle Jacobsen is the Navigational Aids Division Manager while Roger Fox, RD Thompson and Michael Luff are all Electronic Specialists. Marcy Meyer is the Administrative Assistant. These five people all work at the Navigational Aids Division office located at Kearney Municipal Airport.



Flyer Beware!!



Scott Stuart

By Scott Stuart

Bending aluminum, especially if it happens in mid-air, is not a good thing!!! Last week I was landing the Bonanza in Eloy, AZ, for gas. On the way in I heard a jump plane call out position and jumpers to ATC. Shortly after that I announced my position and intentions on

122.8 and proceeded to the airport, announcing downwind, base and short final. It was on short final, and I do mean SHORT, that I saw for the first time a Twin Otter (jump plane) cutting me off and landing. I managed to suggest to him that he use the radio to let other flyers know he was around as the steam came out my ears. Flyer beware!!

Coming up soon will be the summer pancake circuit! If you have never been to a Fly-in pancake breakfast, by all means, and by air, go. Go, especially if the cakes are to be made by Jim Kuyper, the Pancake Man. Not only are they delicious, he really flips 'em, a showman he is!!! But, before you go, give some thought to lots of traffic, and no ATC to sort everything out for you. Keep the head on a swivel and listen up on freq. long before arrival. Many of these events are busy, busy, but very manageable. Still, flyer beware so as not to ding a wing either in flight or on the ground where sometimes the taxiways are crowded with other flyers.

Pireps will tell you where and when to go, take this opportunity to have some summer fun, and remember, Flyer Beware!!

Pilots! Mosquitoes Do Not Come With Warning Labels!!

By Elton Weston

This may be the only warning you get! Do you remember the last time you were bitten by a mosquito? Probably not! If you did find a mosquito biting you, you swatted it and then went on about your business. But when that happened, it may have been too late and the damage already done.

As pilots, we can be affected in many ways: our status of ever flying again, our ability to gain a medical or, at the very least, having had the virus will present problems when obtaining that most important medical certification required to fly.

Believe it or not, only the female mosquito has the skin-piercing mouth parts that extract blood from animals, birds and humans. Some mosquitoes are carriers of certain diseases such as malaria and Yellow Fever. Now, mosquitoes have been found to carry a new, serious disease called the West Nile virus. **Continued on page 6**

Aircraft Requirements for Commercial Rating

By Lee Svoboda

Finally, after earning your Private Pilot Certificate and your Instrument Rating, you acquire the experience and training required for the Commercial Pilot Certificate.

Now the question arises, what category, class and/or type of aircraft must be provided for the commercial pilot practical test?



Lee Svoboda

In accordance with the Commercial Pilot Practical Test Standard for airplane single engine land, the applicant is required by 14 CFR section 61.45, to provide an airworthy, certificated airplane. This section further requires that the aircraft must:

1. Be of U.S., foreign or military registry of the same category, class, and type, if applicable, for the certificate and/or rating for which the applicant is applying;
2. Have fully functioning dual controls, except as provided for in 14 CFR section 61.45 (c) and (e);
3. Be capable of performing all AREAS OF OPERATION appropriate to the rating being sought and have no operating limitations which prohibit its use in any of the AREAS OF OPERATION required for the practical test; and
4. Be a complex airplane furnished by the applicant, unless the applicant currently holds a commercial pilot certificate with a single engine or multiengine class rating as appropriate, for the performance of takeoffs, landings, and appropriate emergency procedures. A complex land plane is one having retractable landing gear, flaps, and controllable propeller or turbine powered.

Items 1, 2, and 3 above are pretty self-explanatory. However, item 4 can be a bit difficult to understand. What it means is that an applicant can provide two aircraft meeting the requirements stated above.

One aircraft can be a fixed gear, fixed pitch propeller airplane in which the applicant can perform most of the required tasks and maneuvers. However, the second airplane must be a complex airplane in which the applicant must perform takeoffs, landings, and appropriate emergency procedures.

There is nothing that prohibits the applicant from taking the entire test in a complex airplane.





"The Up and Down and Up Again of Aeroncavorting"

By Thomas Gribble

One of my all time favorite single panel cartoons shows Willy sitting in his torn and tattered overstuffed chair, feet propped up on an equally dilapidated ottoman, while Ethel stands nearby at an ironing board sweating over one of her domestic chores. Willy starts to speak, but after a half dozen words, Ethel interrupts him.



Thomas Gribble

A similar scene and nearly identical conversation took place following my most recent Flight Review (formerly BFR). I am slouched on the nondescript couch in the pilots lounge while the CFI stands at the counter completing his paperwork. I begin with, "Jerry, I hate to brag, but..." Here he interjects, "How fortunate for you, then, the way things turned out." Now, I didn't think the landings were THAT bad. Nothing was damaged, other than my ego.

In spite of that humbling experience after a prolonged interval of being ground-bound, I am now legal and airborne. It's a beautiful autumn day and the town of Judith Gap will not be over-flown for another 25 minutes. However, I can readily see the geographical feature from which it takes the "Gap" portion of its name.

I am forced to wonder where the "Judith" came from, though. The Judith River does not flow through the gap, nor can Judith Mountain be seen from this opening between the Little Belt and Big Snowy Mountains.

I arrive over the nearly flat watershed where town, railroad, highway, and highline blend together, nearly six minutes behind my guesstimate. Getting serious now, the remaining ETE is recalculated. The heading of 135°, easily held on the magnetic compass in this early morning's calm sky, remains the same.

After three quarters of an hour I can make out the Interstate Highway and major rail line I'm approaching at close to a right angle. Soon I'm over the airport and descending. I want to be below the Class C outer ring bordering the field to the northeast before entering the upwind leg for Laurel's runway 4. On the ground now, and right on time.

This has been the first leg of a planned four, bringing my new/old airplane home to Scottsbluff's Western Nebraska Regional Airport. It's a 1949 Aeronca model 7CCM, a Champion by name and in fact. The previous owner had left it in the care of a third party in Stanford, Montana, where funds changed hands early this morning. It's best described as - and may the Bard forgive my plagiaristic paraphrasing - sans battery, sans starter, sans generator, sans radio, sans lights, sans everything.

The "sans lights" means I best not tarry. I've got to beat the sun down, preferably at the Champ's new home base. It's late October, and there'll be nearly seven hours of flying 'twixt S64 and BFF. So, after refueling and decaffeeing, we're on our way. A left downwind departure is flown before turning to a heading of 125°. This'll keep the transponderless Airknocker well clear of that Billings Airspace.

A little more than a half hour has me crossing the Bighorn River where it passes Fort Smith. A 5° right turn and the Champ is heading towards Sheridan. Less than forty-five minutes later, my now long dormant flying skills are put to the test. The wind is gusting to 20 knots, but pretty much down the runway. Fortunately, the 7 series Aeroncas/Champions/Belancas/American Champions are probably the most docile taildraggers aloft. Mine has the No-Bounce landing gear, which helps hide my rustiness somewhat upon touch-down. Taxiing is the bigger challenge.

With the tanks topped again, my Aeronca is alongside the beautiful Big Horn Mountains, heading 140°. Ten miles beyond Buffalo, Interstate 90 peels off to the left, and it'll be over an hour before another identifiable check point comes into view at about the two o'clock position. It's the North Platte River accompanied by Interstate 25. Shortly, the bend where both turn sharply southward can be seen straight ahead, with Douglass's Converse County Airport just beyond.

Taxiing towards the fuel pumps, I spot a familiar airplane parked on the ramp. Inside the FBO office I find Chris Coop waiting for his passengers. After I pay for the 100LL, he gives me a willing hand on the prop, and I'm off again. I've told Chris he'll probably beat me back to Scottsbluff, even if his passengers are late.

I should skirt just north of R-7001A on my 110 heading, but checked its status with Flight Service when I filed my flight plan. Dead Reckoning is proving itself once again to be a reliable form of navigation, but knowing the restricted area is inactive eliminates a concern. As I pass over the state line, Scott Bluff's National Monument stands out prominently on the eastern horizon.

Taxiing towards Valley Airways on William B. Heilig Field, I see that familiar Cessna 340 already in the hangar. It is unplanned, but there to meet me, in addition to Chris, are Ed Nelson, Stu MacTaggart, and Dick Bosn, along with a couple others. They all offer their congratulations and make at least a pretense of admiring my new/old airplane. I'll admit, it's not the prettiest Champion on the field. That one's a 7AC and belongs to Jack Bengert.

The next day, N4635E is securely housed in its own snug t-hangar. A week - or maybe it's a day - later I begin to rethink what I had done. I'd wanted an airplane like this for quite some time. I long ago had calculated the costs and knew it would be cheaper to rent than to buy and own. However, one can not easily find airplanes like this for rent. So, with my bride's willing and cheerful assent, and in spite of the fiscal irrationality of it, I had decided to part with the bulk of one of our joint accounts. Now, I am about to experience postpartum syndrome.

During the next couple of months of ownership I found myself

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"The Up and Down. . . of Aeroncavorting" Cont From Page 4

suffering from anxiety attacks. What if I bought a lemon? What if it needs its wings recovered? Or a major overhaul? Or maybe the spars are cracked? What if it needs a complete rebuild?

Look at the money already spent. The first expense was the insurance. I already had a quote before I left home, but the reality of it hit me later when I wrote the check. Next came the unexpected: a letter from our Department of Revenue telling me of the State's "Use tax". And, fuel is close to three bucks a gallon. Then there's the ongoing monthly hangar rent. Compared to big cities, it's a bargain at \$60.00 a month. Nonetheless, I found my money flowing but me not flying during the cold and windy winter months.

In fact, I fly only twice again that October. Two days after the purchase, it's once around the patch to warm the engine for an oil change. A week later a local hop to get some landing practice. I do not turn the airscrew at all during November. December is somewhat better with three flights. January is down to just two. February and March are even more desolate with only one day of aviating each. Do I now own a costly cloistered monument to my fading flying ego? And, "Oh, dear," I ask my wife, the payer of our monthly bills, "have I put us in the Poor House?"

Then, a ray of sunshine. My daughter-in-law's brother is an airline captain, but she herself does not like flying in the big passenger planes. She gets sick every time. Even so, she has long had a desire to fly in a "little" airplane. A couple of days before their scheduled departure returning them to their mission field work in Mozambique, I ask if she wants to go Aeroncavorting.

With Tammey in the front seat, I make the take-off and the landing, but the rest of the time it is her airplane. Blessed with incredibly smooth air, we go sightseeing at 1,000 feet AGL over the picturesque North Platte Valley. After about an hour of utterly enchanting aeronautical bliss, and just as the sun is kissing the southwest horizon, I make the smoothest landing I have ever accomplished in any Champion. Tammey proclaims this flight unconditionally to be the most enjoyable she has ever experienced. She warns me I may, on their next furlough, have to shake the dust off my CFI. And, no, she didn't get sick.

Now my Aeronca is no longer an idle idol. She is a revered icon waiting patiently in her corrugated alcove. She grants me the pleasure of her company whenever I feel the need to go Aeroncavorting.

Good food and plenty still graces our table. All our needs and wants are met and more. And, "No, dear," my wife, the payer of our monthly bills, reassures me, "You have not put us in the Poor House".

So, now I'm back to what passes for normal, and enjoying the true basic flying once again. Five hundred feet AGL and 80 MPH indicated is really a great flight delight. Climb out and final at 55 indicated seems just about right. Departing Scottsbluff's runway 30, we're at pattern altitude by the time we reach the end. Oh, in the heat of summer she'll be a little more lethargic, but we can fly with that. And life is good.

Weather Modification by Airplane

By Cork Biemnod

While attending Hastings College, I became acquainted with a brilliant chemist, Dr. Flehardy. In the midst of a severe drought more than 40 years ago, we conspired toward a possible method of inducing rain from clouds in central Nebraska. Given sufficient dark clouds containing moisture, we elected to use our Bellanca 260 or our Super Cub to seed these clouds. The Bellanca, with an initial climb rate of 1800 feet per minute, could out climb the Cub by a considerable margin and it could cruise at up to 197 mph as well. So it offered superior performance to accomplish our aims. Local business men at Ord contributed some gas money for our rainmaking experiments. Any effort was a possible improvement over watching the crops burn up and thus destroy the local agricultural economy.

We chose dry ice in small chunks of about 2 inches square and finely granulated clay dust as the carrier which we placed inside a pail on the floor of the plane. Dr. Flehardy assumed the clay dust would build up larger rain drops and that the dry ice would lower the cloud temperature and cause precipitation. We elected to test this theory. The object was to rise above the clouds, dropping a few handfuls of this mixture on cloud tops and then dive off to one side to observe the results. There was little rain in sight at the time.

Purchasing sufficient amounts of dry ice at Grand Island and contacting the weather bureau for signs of approaching clouds, the first attempt was on some scattered cumulus clouds building up between Ord and Burwell at an altitude of 7000 to 9500 feet. We flew over the top and threw out a few handfuls of the mixture. The clay was to give the in-cloud raindrop particles something to which they could build on and adhere to. Dr. Flehardy was right and it worked! Within 8 or 10 minutes after seeding, it started to rain out the bottom of the cloud. Only 3/4 inch of rain ensued since the cloud was not very heavy with moisture to start with.

The next afternoon the weather bureau indicated a front moving through Nebraska. It had some low black clouds heavy with moisture and considerable winds. At about 4 p.m. we mixed up a pail of dry ice and clay particles and took off to get at these low clouds and try to seed them. The air was rough but it smoothed out a little after we topped the clouds. Using leather gloves, we started dumping out the dry mixture about 100 feet above the dark clouds. Staying VFR, we seeded a stretch about 2 miles long and beat it back to the airport at over 200 mph.

It worked again and some local ground stations in the vicinity measured from 2.5 to 3 inches of rain from these clouds. By then most of our dry ice had evaporated so our experiment ceased. Also during the next week it started to rain again without further seeding experiments.

So I write this note to Nebraska pilots, hoping that they may

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"Weather Modification by Airplane"

Cont from page 5

wish to continue these interesting cloud seeding experiments this spring and early summer. The dry ice was not very expensive and the clay dust was free, so it was just a matter of burning a little gasoline to fly above the clouds and give it the old college try. We were convinced that the initial experiments were well worth the effort.

Editor's note: Cork Biemond is now retired in southern Arizona but has held a Commercial pilots license since the 1940's, has an Aircraft and Power plant rating and is also a CFI. He worked for the Federal Aviation Administration in Engineering for many years where he inspected and approved for flight more than 1500 amateur built aircraft and worked with several airlines on major and minor modifications of their Boeing 727, 737 and 747's, the McDonnell Douglas DC-8 and a variety of other transports. Prior to his work with the FAA, he flew both charter and agricultural aircraft for many years out of Ord, Nebraska.

"Pilots! Mosquitoes . . .With Warning Labels!! Cont From Page 3

First, horses and birds such as crows and blue jays were found to be getting the virus and then dying. Veterinarians were soon giving vaccinations to horses which countered the virus and this saved many horses, but there isn't a vaccine for humans! There was a time when



Elton (Wes) Weston

the public was asked to save dead birds and call the Fish and Wild Life Agency for retrieval and examination for West Nile. I think this procedure has since been eliminated, but if you see dead birds lying around for no reason you should be very curious and suspicious of their cause of death.

Last year in Nebraska, over 2000 cases of this virus were found in humans as reported in newspapers and articles in the Omaha World Herald and 28 people died from the virus. Many more were hospitalized for long periods of time, some were paralyzed and now use wheelchairs or walkers to get around.

I do not remember being bitten, but in September 2003, I was taken to the hospital after a seizure that occurred for no reason. The Emergency Room doctor came out to the waiting room to talk with my wife and to hear her tell the story; they went into the "bad news room" and closed the door. She knew I was in deep trouble when he said, "He is a very sick man, would you like for me to pray with you?" I spent five days in the hospital with intravenous needles sticking in my arms connected to plastic bags full of liquids hoisted high above the bed. The nurses came often to collect samples of my blood which was sent to the Mayo Clinic; it tested positive for the West Nile virus.

After five days, they thought I was well enough, and I was more than ready to go home with instructions to drink plenty of water, get plenty of sleep and take anti-seizure pills three times per day. Even now, in my estimation, little is known about how to treat the West Nile virus and I am still taking anti-seizure pills, just not as many, and the doctors are counting on time to let my body heal the illness. I have also lost my medical for flying due to the virus.

When I talk to others about how the West Nile virus has affected me, most people have some friend or relative who has somehow been afflicted by the virus. In some cases, they have told me real horror stories about how the virus affected the lives of their friends or loved ones. The mosquito bite has no favorites and the virus can attack anyone!

My only hope is that this warning, a **RED FLAG**, will help you and others not to suffer from the West Nile virus. I wish someone would have warned me about this terrible, complex virus and what can happen to you, to your relatives, or your loved ones if this warning is not heeded. Prevention is the only cure at the present until a vaccine can be developed for humans. Please heed this mosquito warning, it may save your life, or at least your anguish!

An article written by Michelle Rerucha appeared in the Kearney Hub newspaper on January 8th. It stated that "according to Nebraska's chief medical officer, West Nile is here to stay. He feels Nebraskans should take proper precautions such as wearing repellent containing DEET, wear long sleeves and pants, avoid being outdoors at dusk and dawn, and clean pools of standing water from yards. Veterinarians and doctors now know what to look and test for when diagnosing patients suffering from the West Nile virus." Don't let yourself be the next victim!

X Prize Award Closer

From AVFlash

At somewhere around Mach 2 and 105,000 feet, Scaled Composite's SpaceShipOne on April 8 took Peter Siebold to a place where civilian pilots have never gone before. The test flight launched one day after the FAA had granted its first-ever license for suborbital manned rocket flight to Scaled Composites. The license was issued April 1 by the FAA's Office of Commercial Space Transportation for a sequence of flights spanning a one-year period. The FAA license is required for U.S. contenders in the X PRIZE competition. The X PRIZE foundation will award \$10 million to the first company or organization to launch a vehicle capable of carrying three people to a height of 62.5 miles, return them safely to Earth, and repeat the flight with the same vehicle within two weeks.

Last week's events brought aircraft designer Burt Rutan another step closer to capturing the X PRIZE and realizing his dream of creating a commercial space-tourism industry. "We look to the future, hopefully within ten years, when ordinary people, for the cost of a luxury cruise, can experience a rocket flight into the black sky above the earth's atmosphere, enjoy a few minutes of weightless excitement, then feel the thunderous deceleration of the aerodynamic drag on entry."



"Aircraft Lost"

By Jess Banks

We had been airborne for almost 12 hours, in heavy cirrus with Saint Elmo's fire dancing over the front windows of our aircraft. The display of static electricity was dazzling and almost hypnotic to watch after so many hours in the air. The tanker, which had accompanied us the first few hours, was long gone back to the warmth and security of our departure point. If our aircraft was to go down, it would be in the frigid waters of the North Pacific Ocean. Survival time, if you didn't die in the water landing, would only be 5 to 20 minutes as you would rapidly lose body heat and succumb to hypothermia. How many ships and aircraft lie disintegrating on the bottom of that ocean after battling the stormy skies and seas was anyone's guess!

Accompanying us, on occasion, was a Russian fighter, normally staying on our wingtip and making sure we didn't stray into Russian territory! This was the midst of the "Cold War" and things were still exciting when flying along the Soviet coastline, "stimulating" the Russian radars to come up and take a look at us. In the event of a nuclear bomber penetration of the USSR's homeland, our pilots needed to know the weaknesses and strengths of the Russian radar and whether or not they had any gaps in coverage. We were to find those gaps!

Our flight had gone smoothly and we were 30 minutes from our second aerial refueling of the mission, just off the coast of Alaska. Normal procedure was to listen on the High Frequency (HF) radio thirty minutes prior to refueling to see if the tanker was trying to contact us. Range on the HF radio could be as much as 1500 miles if the atmospheric conditions were just right. The first thing we heard was a call from Elmendorf Radio trying to contact "Irene 92". "Irene 92, this is Elmendorf Radio, if you hear please respond!" Occasionally, we heard a transmitter being keyed but no voice. This



RC-135 Rivet Amber, "Aircraft Lost"

went on until the HF radio was switched off while we on loaded 80,000 pounds of jet fuel from the tanker.

After refueling and while continuing on toward the lower "48", we would occasionally listen to Elmendorf Radio still trying to contact "Irene 92". Upon landing at our home base after 19 hours and 42 minutes of non-stop flying, we discovered that "Irene 92" was a flight from the Aleutian Island of Shemya to Fairbanks, Alaska. Nineteen people were on board a highly modified Air Force Boeing 707 and they suddenly stopped all radio transmissions approximately 45 minutes after departing the island. Speculation ran high as to what might have happened to the aircraft and crew but

nothing has ever been found even though a two week search and rescue mission immediately took place, June 5, 1969.

Four years later, while stationed at Shemya Air Base, we had a normal spring evening with a low fog ceiling of 100 feet and winds in excess of 50 knots. Not unusual for the tail end of the Aleutian Chain where the Bering Sea and the North Pacific Ocean clash together. The World War II era wooden hangar we kept our mission aircraft in was empty and creaking with the gusts of wind. The aircraft couldn't land with our present weather conditions and had gone on to Fairbanks. Three of us were sitting in a small room of that hangar eating homemade peach ice cream that one of the contractor representatives (CR) had thoughtfully made for just such an occasion! When three people get together they must have some conversation and ours became a discussion of strange and unusual events about the Aleutian Chain of Islands, specifically "Irene 92" and the 19 crewmembers that had never been seen again.

The CR said to us, "I was supposed to be on that aircraft but due to my replacement not catching the flight out, I had to stay on Shemya another two weeks"! He watched as each of the 19 crewmembers got on the aircraft and felt a great sense of despondency as he would now spend a second two weeks on Shemya. That could seem like two years anywhere else! After hearing about the aircraft loss he was relieved that he had more time to stay at Shemya but felt remorse for the missing 19 men.

Several weeks later, in the midst of the Alaskan summer, he was staying at the Air Force base near Fairbanks with the room darkening shades drawn and getting a restless night's sleep. Suddenly, he became conscious of something and saw the first of the 19 missing crewmembers coming through the wall of his room about a foot off the floor. Each looked at him as if to say, "You were supposed to be with us but have survived, for you have other things to do in life!" As the last of the 19 exited through the other wall, he was in a cold sweat and positive this was not a dream but reality. He immediately raised the room darkening shades, viewing the midnight Alaskan sun on the horizon.

I'll probably never know what happened to that CR as we've not seen or talked to one another since that tour on the Island at the end of the Aleutian Chain. Some things are not easily explained. I've often wondered if what occurred that night in his room really happened or was it just a horrible nightmare he had that seemed so real as to become reality? What ever caused "Irene 92" to stop all communications? How did it disappear without a trace? Why do you think he missed the flight and was apparently singled out to survive? Some things will remain a mystery!

This story is dedicated to the nineteen crewmembers who lost their lives on June 5, 1969, somewhere along the Aleutian Chain of Islands. If you would like to get more information about Rivet Amber; the aircraft lost, go to <http://www.6srw.com> and click on page 10. Kingdon R. Hawes has put together a history of RC135's that have flown ColdWar missions over the years. For anyone interested in the exploits of the RC-135's, this is a must read about one of the missions of the historic Strategic Air Command.

PIREPS

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Calendar

York Airport, EAA Chapter 1055 Fly-in breakfast on the 1st Saturday of every month. 8-10 am. Free to PIC.

Crete Airport, EAA Chapter 569 Fly-in breakfast on the 3rd Saturday of every month. 7:30-10:30 am. It will never be cancelled!

May 1 & 2 - Aurora, Helio Courier aircraft demonstration, STOL, rides \$15, associated with Jungle Aviation And Radio Service. May 1, 9:30 am to 5 pm and May 2, 2-5 pm. More info: 402-438-4130.

May 8 - Hebron, **Nebraska State Fly-in**. 7:30 am-2:30 pm. Many activities, pancake breakfast 7:30-9 am, lunch 11:30-1:30 pm, aircraft rides, static displays, dedication of AWOS. Several authors in place.

May 15 - Seward, Fly-in lunch from 10 am. - 2 pm. Sloppy Joes, beverage and dessert. Free to pilots, \$3.50 for others.

May 23 - Alliance, Fly-in lunch from 11 am to 2 pm, free to fly-ins. Sponsored by Flying Farmers. More info: Gaylene 308-762-5311.

May 30 - Grand Island Fly-in breakfast and lunch at Reggie's hangar on the North ramp. Pancakes at 7:30 am, lunch at 12:00 noon, eat and visit all day. Free to fly-ins. Will be held rain or shine. More info: Reggie at 308-384-2587.

June 5 - Beatrice, Fly-in or Drive-in breakfast 8 am to 10 am, biscuits and gravy, ham, drinks, \$3.00. Fly-in pilot free. Dedication/Open House at 10:00 am. Fly-bys, static displays and 5 drawings for 20 gallons of 100LL. Airplane rides from 11 am till 6:00 pm, \$10.00 per person. More info: Diana Smith 402-223-5349.

June 5 - Scottsbluff, Fly-in breakfast and lunch by EAA Chapter 608. Static displays, fly overs, "Young Eagle" airplane rides. More info: Dave Fischer 308-783-1035.

June 6 - Central City, Fly-in breakfast (06:30-11 am) and lunch (11:30 am-2 pm). Parachute jumps at 8 & 10 am. RC aircraft fly at 12 noon. More info: Don Shorney 308-946-3450.

June 9-13 - Columbus, Fred Ihlenberg Memorial Fly-in. Four days of events. Breakfast on 13th, 6:30 am - 3 pm. More info: Keith Harbor 564-7884.

June 13 - Tekamah Fly-in breakfast 7:30-11:00 am. Other activities in work. More info: J&D Aircraft, Jim Pollard 402-374-1700.

June 19-20 - Kearney, South Central Nebraska Fly-In Breakfast-Lunch-Dinner-Dance Extravaganza. Four Clubs -- EAA Chapter 1091, Nebraska Antique Aircraft Association, Colorado/Nebraska Flying Farmers/Ranchers, Husker Ultralight Club at Kearney Municipal Airport (EAR). 7:30-10:30 Pancakes/Sausage (Free 2 Fly-ins), 11 am-3 pm. Hot dog, hamburger lunch. 6:30 pm - Dinner - 7:30 USO Style Dance 40s-50s-60s music, Young Eagle flights. Homebuilts, Antiques, Classics, Helicopter, Paraplanes, Trikes, Ultralights, R/C Aircraft. Hot Air Balloons and Military Aircraft also invited. More info: Colin English (Air Boss) 308-234-2318 or Cal Kelly (Director) 308-468-5189 email: ckelly@nctc.net

June 26 - Aurora, Fly-in breakfast, 7-10 am, free to Fly-ins, courtesy of Traudt Aerial & Classic Aero. More info: Terry 402-694-3633.

June 27 - Pender, Fly-in breakfast, 7:30 to 11:30 am. More info, Paul Peters 402-380-9882.

July 10 - Wayne, Fly-in breakfast, free to fly-in's. Omelet feed at Wayne State College Willow Bowl 7-10 am, shuttle provided. In conjunction with the Annual Wayne Chicken Show, parades, fun & games and barbecue chicken. EAA Chapter 291 will provide "Young Eagle" airplane rides. More info: Nancy Braden 402-375-1733.