

EAA CHAPTER 1128

Two Harbors Helgeson Airport

www.1128.eaachapter.org

Fresh snow makes everything look clean and new. I should fill my house with it. Our next meeting will happen on **Thursday, February 5th at 6:30**. We expect a good turnout to listen to EAA's Timm Bogenhagen so we will meet at the **Two Harbors Community Center** down by the Railroad Museum. The Chapter Board meeting will start at 6:00.

Last Meeting

The January meeting was held at the Co Op Light and Power offices thanks to Steve Wattnem. Comfy chairs! The board discussed programs for future meetings. Mike said Jeremy Monnett would have to wait till spring. Timm Bogenhagen from EAA's Ultralight Council will be here for the February meeting and the CAF Duluth Squadron may be able to do March. Seth reminded us the April meeting will be at the CLP again. Revues of the Christmas party were positive. It was decided to do it again next year in a larger venue. Engine volunteered to be in charge. Mike said he would attend services for chapter 272's Dan Grambush and invited the members to join him. Mike Shannon said he would have a ski-plane fly in at his house in February. The treasurer reported \$3056.05 in chapter coffers before upcoming insurance payments and collected yearly dues from all in attendance. Mike screened a documentary about the P-38 rescued from under 250 feet of Greenland ice cap. "Glacier Girl" was sad mess when she was located and the film covered all of the restoration work as well as the full story of how she got stuck in Greenland. There was lots of great flying footage as well. We all enjoyed popcorn and soda provided by Mike. Fun meeting!

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Chapter 1221's president Mike Hongisto has found a job with a commuter airline and spends most of his time on the East Coast while continuing his duties with the chapter. Bravo Mike! They have a chapter birthday party coming up in March.

Chapter 272 has a new president and a new newsletter editor. They continue their work with kids and the Aeronca Sedan project. If you would like to lend a hand on a very interesting project I can hook you up with Jim Nelson.

ETC.

Mike Shannon has confirmed his ski-plane fly in on Saturday February 7th from 11:00 til 2:00 at his house on Fish Lake. Sunday will be the rain date. Rain? I have the GPS coordinates and directions for the ground bound if you would like to attend. There will be some cool planes there.

I was watching Sunday morning TV a couple weeks ago and was delighted to see the Superior Dragonflyers segment replayed on Venture North. They did the filming in the spring of 1998 and watching it transported me back in time. Announcing the piece Andrew Green said he felt 'very safe' spending time with us and that just cracked me up. He never got anywhere near either aircraft.

In case you don't know the story Superior Dragonflyers spent six years at the Superior airport teaching people to fly ultralights and hang gliders. The ultralight trainer, a Bailey-Moyes Dragonfly,

was also the tug plane. Doug Johnson and Craig Austin were the certified hang glider instructors and I was the ultralight instructor and tug pilot. A double harness hang glider on wheels gave hundreds of introductory and instructional flights to serious students and curious adventurers. More of the latter than the former. All two place operations in the Dragonfly had to be logged as instructional but many customers just wanted a thrill ride. We were always very serious about safety and spent much time and money getting the certifications to operate properly but the first toast at our 'debriefings' at the Palace Bar was always, "No blood spilled, no metal bent!" In fact, my students bent the tubular steel gear legs of the Dragonfly so often Craig built a special jig just to straighten them. We considered that normal wear and tear.

The Venture North film reminded me what a ball it was to fly a tractor that you sat on instead of in. I have hundreds of hours logged at full throttle and 32 miles per hour climbing at a blistering 200 feet per minute towing a heavy tandem. When the glider pinned off I would stand her up on one wing and descend at 1500 fpm to collect the next customer. Do that for ten hours a day and you really get to know your airplane. Of course you also beat the crap out of the engine.

So it was no real surprise when it gave up the ghost. But it was interesting! I was towing Doug and a student over the refinery tank farm when the rpms started to fade. I worked the throttle a little but I could tell something was not right. When I signaled the glider to release Doug didn't get the message but when we started to descend he pinned off and headed back toward the airport. I was already on the way.

Back on the ground I checked the plugs and the fuel filter but found no smoking gun so we all grabbed onto the struts and gave her a hard static run up. She seemed smooth enough so I jumped in for a quick test flight. She leaped off the ground like she always did when lightly loaded and everything seemed in order. I decided to cut a short pattern to get back to work and as soon as I turned crosswind all hell broke loose. It felt and sounded like someone was in the back seat running a stump grinder on a garbage can. The Dragonfly is one of the draggiest airplanes ever and losing power is like stomping on the brakes but after years of 'engine out' drills with my students I was spring loaded to lower the nose and avoid a stall. Now I was looking down at weeds and rocks and God knows what rushing up at me and pointed directly away from where I wanted to be. Using my best gentle touch and my sweetest voice I coaxed her around a 270 degree shallow turn. Gliding like a manhole cover she almost brushed a wingtip on the ground as I finished the left turn and banked slightly right to line up with the runway. We were still turning when the wheels plopped on the grass and we rolled right up to where we had started. The boys just stood and stared. I peeled my white knuckles off the stick and turned the key off. The racket had come to a violent stop before we got to the ground but I couldn't tell you when.

Craig stepped over and said, "Didn't you see me giving the cut-off signal?" I thought, "Sorry Craig, the next time I try to make the Impossible Turn to save my hide I'll be sure to check for hand signals from the ground." but I didn't say anything. I was pretty shook up.

When we opened up the old grey-head Rotax 582 there was metal everywhere. The rear crank bearing had disassembled itself and the bits tore up anything that was moving. We tossed it, found a reasonably priced used blue-head and went back to work.

In six years of towing hang gliders and teaching stick and rudder there were a couple of other times I got nervous but the old yellow Dragonfly always let me down easy and she will always hold a sweet spot in my heart. The FAA changed all the rules in 2004 and the Superior Dragonflyers ceased operation but I have a log book full of memories and I'm thankful that Venture North brought them all rushing back. If you ever want to waste an afternoon hangar flying, ask me about them.

Don't forget the big program next Thursday at the Two Harbors Community Center.

.....Happy Landings!.....