

EAA CHAPTER 1128

Two Harbors Helgeson Airport

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Winter is back and the full moon sparkles on the snow outside my window. The wood stove that idled just a few days ago is back to full duty and I'm cozy in its warmth. Our next meeting will be on **Thursday, April 7 at 6:30** in the **Community Room at THHS**. Hopefully it will feel more like spring by then.

Last meeting

At the March board meeting we updated the roster and shared addresses. The secretary promised a list of snail-mail members to the president. The treasurer reported a balance of \$3883.88 in the chapter account. At the general meeting Seth reviewed choices for new chapter T-shirts and hats. Mike went over changes to the Youth Protection Policy which continues to evolve. Dan passed around a Menards ad with shelving for our fly-in supplies. The members made and passed a motion to purchase the model that seemed most appropriate and Bud volunteered to pick it up. Seth went over our summer events schedule and gave an update on the A/D building expansion. He said the City Council had approved the plan and was exploring funding options. He also showed an add for a Duluth based flying club started by Matt Ferrari and an add for TWM slated for the Midwest Flyer magazine. Mike asked for program suggestions for future chapter meetings. Seth showed a video of the annual Ski-plane fly-in at Pioneer field in Oshkosh. Fifty three planes and about 800 people showed up for the festivities. The 'Hints for Homebuilders' selection was about removing scratches from canopy plexiglass. The feature video was about Ketchikan Alaska and the pilots who call it home. The scenery was fantastic.

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Chapter 1221 had their annual Birthday Party fly-in/Drive-in dinner last Saturday. Their meetings are the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 in the Cloquet Airport terminal building.

Chapter 272 continues to make progress on their Aeronca Sedan project and had Dewayne Tomasek make a presentation on the CAF at their last chapter meeting.

ETC.

Mike Busch is working on sleek wheel pants for his Rocket and they look fast! Jim Hayes is expecting his Cherokee back soon and he is ready to go fly. Jake Hayes is wrapping up the firewall forward details on his Carbon Cub SS. Engine finally tracked down that pesky electrical problem in Fifi. Yes!

Miss Chaos and I took advantage of an unusually warm November 24th last year to end our 2015 season on a high note. Just three months later she lifted me into a crazy warm February sky after her shortest winter nap ever. The sun shining through her canopy kept me warm without a jacket and the air was firm and smooth. We had plenty of fuel so I pointed her north and climbed, my spirits rising with the altitude. When my homestead came over the horizon I pulled the power and began a long, winding final for Pat Covington's old strip. I suppose most back country runways are scenic in their

own way and this one does not disappoint. We slip down a pine covered ridge and level off over the ice of Kane Lake. To my left several nice lake homes open big picture windows for inspection but I only have time for a glance. On the right more modest cabins peek out from behind the trees but my attention is on the remnant of runway straight ahead. Years of unchecked alder growth have narrowed this end of the strip to make a snug fit for even Miss Chaos' petite wingspan but that's OK, we aren't landing. I'm sure I could guide her to a safe emergency landing here if the need arose. Indeed that is the only reason I would ever get this low this far out in the forest and if everything went right I might not even break the airplane. But I'd rather not try.

As we flash from lake ice to runway edge the power comes up smoothly and I keep her wings below treetop level as the momentum builds. Zooming by the old hangar a wing drop and a quick pull puts me face to face with my own living room and we rocket over my windsock. Cranking back to the right my girl lowers her nose and puts two ice fishermen in the gun sight. I feel the power of her evil urge but cooler heads prevail and an all out strafing run becomes a non threatening fly-by at FAA mandated distances, probably. They wave. I wave back. At the narrow end of Marble Lake we snap a tight 180 and return for another pass at the runway. Miss Chaos insists that the base leg follow the twisting shoreline and I don't resist. Somebody needs to blow the snow off those poor trees! Another pass down the runway and quick tour of Kane Lake ends our playtime and we climb for home. I always feel like Superman when I dance with Miss Chaos but doing it down low is a Guilty Pleasure that really gets my heart pumping.

Back at TWM snowbanks are still tall along the edges of the runway creating a canyon landing effect. Rounding out to land always hides the runway behind my girl's fair cowling so I must rely on peripheral vision to determine my progress. Today all I see is white. They say any landing you can walk away from is good and if you can use the airplane again it's great. By those standards it was a great landing but I'm glad no one was watching. When I finally had the swerves arrested I relaxed and taxied to the hangar with a huge grin on my face.

I assumed that flight was a palette-cleansing taste of spring before a full fourth course of winter but a mere ten days later I was pulling my girl out onto a warm ramp. We took a delightful romp down the Knife River (at a safe altitude) and watched the mushroom cloud of silt billow out into the aquamarine lake. That was a Tuesday, the following Friday and Saturday were also too nice to ignore so we didn't.

After our tryst on Saturday I brought my other girl out for a glimpse of sun and a loving close inspection. Digging into her wiring for the hundredth time I finally moved beyond my initial assumptions and found the problem right away. Sherlock would be proud. Of course my solution needed to be tested and the weather gods approved. Fifi sprang to life on the second pull and strained at her tie downs, she was anxious. I was tickled.

I feel like an aviation pioneer when I'm flying Fifi. The wind whistling through my helmet and the open airframe sing a song as old as the dream. It seems important to find people to wave at and when you see them you want to land and say, "Did you see that? I was FLYING!" It is an intimate, sensual experience that we have engineered out of our modern flying machines for better or worse. I am so lucky to be able to tread in both worlds.

Now we are back to winter and these flights seem like fever dreams as I shovel the heavy snow and stoke the fire but I carry a smile behind my eyes. Dreams can come true and I know mine will, again.

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