

EAA Chapter 1128

Two Harbors Helgesen Airport

www.1128.eaachapter.org

There is still a foot of snow over two feet of ice on my little lake. It seems strange to be writing the April newsletter in these conditions. Our April meeting will be a special treat. We will meet at the **Richard I. Bong Veteran's Historical Center** in Superior at **6:30 on Thursday, April 5**. Actually, the program starts at 6:30 and refreshments will be served so we may want to show up a little early. EAA's Programs Coordinator Chris Henry will present "Apollo-for all Mankind". It should be very interesting.

Last Meeting

A full moon welcomed us to the A/D building at the airport. (The High School was closed). We had a long discussion about Swift Fuel's potential replacement for 100LL avgas. By coincidence the Airport Commission had taken a conference call from Swift's CEO the night before so we had the pertinent facts. They have a product called UL 94 ready now to replace auto gas but their UL102 avgas replacement still needs FAA certification. Our treasurer reported \$3587.59 in chapter coffers. Our summer schedule was discussed starting with a tour of NOAA (the federal weather guys) on March 14 and listing our Open the Hangar BBQ on June 7, our famous Pancake fly-in on July 8 (with set-up on the 7th) and the Fly-in Movie on August 10. Mike gave a comprehensive report on the AAR tour with some cool pictures and suggested we check out the High School Robotics competition at the DECC on March 9th and 10th. Seth asked if we should make a Chapter Logo and perhaps a flag. He said he was updating our chapter website as well. The videos for the night included a history of the ubiquitous Cessna 172 and a Hint for Homebuilders segment on aircraft wiring techniques. Mike said the 'Hints' program has produced 750 videos and he himself has made 23 of them.

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All three chapters were represented at the NOAA tour on March 14. We filled a conference room where Jesse, a four year veteran, gave us an overview of the National Weather Service's duties. He explained how balloons carrying radiosonds are launched twice a day from 50 locations around the country to gather raw data from the atmosphere. Using that data along with radar images they create a forecast "model", updated every six hours, predicting future weather. He answered a bunch of questions and then brought us into the work area. Five or six specialists worked at desks surrounded by computer screens. He showed us how they work their magic and when we started peppering him with questions a couple of the other weather experts chimed in with explanations. A huge display on the back wall was split into about a dozen web-cam views from all around the area. These screens changed cams every few seconds so the crew could virtually look out the window and actually see the weather that they were predicting. The whole experience was fascinating and I think we all learned a lot about this arcane science. I know I did.

To most people the behavior of the atmosphere is little more than a nuisance or a small joy but to a light plane pilot the stakes can be much higher. To see dedicated professionals working hard to get it right seems like a good use of my tax dollars.

ETC.

Saint Patty's day was a beautiful March Saturday and the sky called my name. The little thermometer in my car said 48 degrees when I got to the airport and the wind was light. I wanted to just jump in Miss Chaos and go but being the first flight of the year I took the time to do a proper condition inspection. For experimental aircraft the condition inspection is roughly equivalent to an annual inspection for certificated aircraft and since I hold the Repairman Certificate for Miss Chaos I don't need to pay someone else to do it. The hardest part was climbing in and out of the cockpit because I am still learning the limitations of my new titanium knee. I ran into Dave and Carmen at the gas pumps. They were refueling their ski plane after a trip to Cloquet and we chatted a while in the warm sun. After I put the gas in my girl I twisted my old body down into the seat and crossed my fingers. I only had three hours on the tach since totally rebuilding her engine last fall so this was still technically a test flight. The lithium battery spun the cold engine well but to no avail. I pumped the primer a few more times and she popped but quit. I was already glad I wasn't yanking on the old starter rope. A couple more shots of prime and she fired up strong and settled into a high idle. The prop was dumping buckets of cool air into the cockpit so I swung the canopy down and just sat there grinning. The only bad thing about being your own mechanic is that you don't have anyone to curse at if things don't go right.

That hurdle cleared I sank into the comfortable routine of preflight checks and began to roll. The sun warmed me through the canopy and the familiar sensations of sound and motion penetrated my body. I was so excited! After five long months on the planet surface I was finally going to leave it behind. At the hold-short line I did my pre-takeoff mnemonic: BRATTT, Belts, Radio, Altimeter, Tankage (fuel), Top (canopy latch) and Traffic. From there on it was automatic, the quick dance on the pedals, the throttle coming forward, the light touch on the stick, the grin!

As we levitated into the smooth air Miss Chaos, Hangar Queen became *MISS CHAOS! PRIMA BALLERINA!* And we began to dance. It never feels like a man in command of a machine, it feels like the two of us cooperating to make magic. Okay, I'm a hopeless anthropomorphic but that's why I love it so much. When we're together in our element we can put the horizon anywhere we want it, we can control gravity with a mere thought. We can leap tall buildings in a single bound, we're faster than a locomotive, we can change the course of mighty rivers! Well, maybe not that but together we do have super powers and once you've been Superman being Clark Kent is boring.

The earth was still locked in winter and the snowmobile trails were gray graffiti on a blinding white background. The big lake was as blue as the sky and a couple of crazy fishermen had their boats out. The smoke was going straight up from the stack at LP and the air was just butter, what a day!

Back at the hangar I did my less than elegant dismount and kissed Miss Chaos on the spinner. Best cabin fever reliever ever. I can't wait to do it again.

Living on a lake by an old airstrip, I get my share of impromptu airshows. I got a great one just the other day. The wind was blowing like crazy so when I heard an aircraft engine I thought I was dreaming. I looked out the picture window and saw olive green flying across the lake. When he turned I caught the invasion stripes and knew it was Jake Hayes. He came around again with the flaps out and I swear he hovered over my deck before descending for a nice ski-and-go on the lake. Life is good!

So fear not little fledglings, flying season is on the horizon. I'm already thinking about OSHKOSH!

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

