

# EAA CHAPTER 1128

Two Harbors Helgeson Airport

[www.1128.eaachapter.org](http://www.1128.eaachapter.org)

They say the polar bears are having a hard time due to lack of ice on Hudson Bay. How long before they start migrating to Lake Superior? Our next meeting will be on **Thursday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30** in the cozy **Community Room at Two Harbors High School**. April, at least it sounds warm!

This month we have another distinguished guest speaker. Bud has prevailed upon his friend, David Wheat to share stories of his time serving in Vietnam including a stay at the infamous Hanoi Hilton. It should be very interesting.

To our friends in chapters 272 and 1221: You know you are always welcome at our meetings and this one will be worth the drive.

## LAST MEETING

Seth called the meeting to order since Mike was in Oshkosh in front of the “Hints for Homebuilders” cameras. Steve reported \$1869.78 in chapter coffers and 21 paid up members. Seth updated us on potential grant monies for our kid programs. He told the members about the Leadership Seminars at EAA HQ and said he, Ryan, Dan and Bud would join Mike there for the weekend. The website for an interesting looking new aircraft design was displayed and discussed then a clean Cherokee 180 appeared on the screen and Seth said it was Matt Ferrari's new plane. After the applause died down a serious discussion about hangar space ensued. We talked about our summer events needing volunteers and Steve said he was working on the flyer announcing our Heritage Days pancake fly-in. Bud said he was hoping he could get his friend to speak at the next meeting (see above). Mike Shannon told us about his adventure to the 60<sup>th</sup> annual Oshkosh ski plane fly-in. Quite the story! He also told of another friend's fly-in where he landed on the lake, got out and sank up to his waist in the snow. The fly-in at his place which was cancelled earlier has been rescheduled to March 22<sup>nd</sup>. Ryan told us he had flown his Flightstar ultralight on a 10 degree day recently and we all shivered. Seth showed an old episode of PBS' Nova called “Frozen in time”. The valiant effort to rescue the B-29 named Kee Bird from her 50 year exile in northern Greenland was a riveting story with a sad ending. Another good meeting.

## 341

Chapter 272 has announced their Oshkosh work party weekend will be May 16-18. I have participated in years past and I can tell you it is a fun time. They are still looking for volunteers and all are welcome. Their meetings are the third Thursday at 7:00 in their clubhouse on Bong field.

Chapter 1221 meets on the second Tuesday at 7:00 and recently celebrated the chapter's birthday with a fl-in drive-in feast at the Cloquet airport. Chapter president Mike Hongisto flew his ski-equipped Avenger in loose formation with Mike Shannon to the Oshkosh ski-in.

## ETC.

As I've been writing this I have been entertained by a flying squirrel frantically trying to leap to my birdfeeder. It used to hang off the eaves and was a favorite flying squirrel hangout but I moved it to a pole on the deck and this poor guy misjudged his first flight off the roof. Time after time he

scrambled up the window trim but couldn't get high enough to glide the eight feet to dinner. Finally he attempted to gain purchase to the roof by jumping to an icicle. When he and the icicle hit the snow he took one last look and scampered off into the night. Perhaps the moral of the story is: Make your best landing every time, you might not get another chance.

Two weeks ago the weather approached my personal minimums and I couldn't resist pulling Miss Chaos out of hibernation. The wind was cross and gusty and the snowbanks were huge but I just had to fly. I changed carburetor jets for the cold while I completed her annual condition inspection and was gratified to find both tires plump and happy. She fired on the second pull (armstrong starter) and after a few rescue shots of prime settled into a contented purr. With the canopy and vents closed tight it wasn't too cold in her unheated cockpit but I was glad I had stored the headset inside all winter. Taxiing was nerve wracking with tall, hard snowbanks close on each side threatening wing tips and blinding me to any intersecting traffic.

Painfully aware of my lack of recent experience I recited my pre-take off mnemonic twice but as I ran the controls through their full range of motion I knew everything would be alright. Lining carefully up in the center of the runway/canyon I moved the throttle lever forward and discovered a delightful correlation. As the revolutions came faster my smile got bigger until at full power a maniacal grin consumed my entire face. Airfoils love cold air and soon the wings took over for the wheels. Miss Chaos swept me sweetly to her boudoir and quickly reminded me why I love her. The perfect dance partner she responded gracefully to my slightest touch and soon we were gliding and twirling through the sweet perfume of open sky. The thick winter air was anything but smooth so my technique was challenged but Miss Chaos made me look good. She may be light and shapely but she is built hell for stout and I never question her integrity.

We practiced the usual moves as we made for the big lake and I saw that the Knife river was still a serpentine snowmobile trail. Thousands of odd shaped ice cakes clotted the small bits of open water near shore but as far east as I could see Superior might as well have been a glacier. The view from altitude in crystal clear air is intoxicating and I floated along in a haze of euphoria. The bumps and the occasional high reading on the EGT gauge were just part of the experience and I dealt with them without undue urgency. The human mind has plenty of bandwidth for any complex task when it has no outside interference. That's the beauty of flying for me, the focus. I'm not thinking about appointments, embarrassments or commitments, I'm just flying. My whole being is involved in this one blissful pursuit and nothing else matters.

Descending towards the airport I saw an aircraft sitting still on the runway so I had to make a low pass to check it out. Miss Chaos loves low passes. As we flashed by in a steep turn I identified Boris and his Aeronca Chief. He had landed in the snow and was putting the taxi wheels on his skis. I decided to give him some time and continued the low pass over Ryan and Emily's house for a friendly buzz job. Pulling up into a downwind leg for runway 24 I saw the Chief still sitting but decided we didn't need all the runway and continued the approach.

Settling in on final I concentrated on the gusty crosswind and made continuous corrections almost subliminally. I was not really conscious of moving the controls, Miss Chaos and I worked seamlessly together to stay on track. After more than eleven years together we communicate automatically but landings are still a variable. If I round out a little high that last drop into ground effect often causes me to flare and then things get very sporty. This time I kept my cool and just stayed in the three point attitude until her wheels kissed the asphalt. Perfect! Another lesson learned: Sometimes when things aren't going right, instead of doing more, do less. Very Zen don't you think? My girl always takes me to another existential plane and I am humbled by her patient instruction. I built her from pieces of soulless metal but she has become a soul to me and my soul is fuller in her sweet arms. I wish you all a similar life changing experience.

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