



The ThunderWord

Thunderbird Field EAA Chapter 1217

June, 2006

Scottsdale, Arizona

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Greetings from my corner of the hangar! At our May meeting Jim Timm brought us up to date on the proposed changes to the airspace here in the Phoenix area. He outlined the Class Bravo changes as well as proposals by Luke Air Force base to increase the amount of airspace they restrict access to. The contact information for writing letters is at the end of this newsletter. After Jim's presentation we chowed down on some great Chapter birthday cake, it's hard to believe it has been eight years! Thanks to Jack Pollack for providing the beverages to wash it down.

Quite a few of our regulars missed the Chapter meeting because they decided to get an early start flying to San Diego for the eleventh annual Stearman Fly-in. Our VP, Terry Emig started the Fly-in and hosted it for

ten years at Casa Grande but decided to pass the baton for the next ten years to Bill Allen from Gillespie Field. I drove my F-150 all weather interceptor over and had a really good time looking at all the Stearmans assembled on the lawn. While looking at old biplanes was a sidebar to this trip, the primary reason was to trailer back a Slingsby T-53B that I had purchased to add to my collection of projects. Towing an antique sailplane backwards down I-8 got quite a few stares. I thought at first it was the glider until I realized they had never seen anyone actually drive at 55 mph on the interstate! A combination of 110 degrees and twenty year old tires kept my speed down, plus there was something undignified towing the old girl butt first at twice its normal flying speed that had me bothered. I hope to see you at the June meeting!

Curtis



JUNE CHAPTER MEETING

The June meeting of Thunderbird Field EAA Chapter 1217 will be held on Thursday, June 15th, in the Scottsdale Airport Terminal Building. The time is 7pm. We are still waiting to get confirmation on our guest speaker at press time but trust me it will be a great program. Guests are always welcome!

MEET OUR MEMBERS

N70MK MEL KALB THE MAN AND THE MACHINE

BY CHAPTER 1217 MEMBER MEL KALB

About 1934, when we lived in Selma, California a neighbor boy, Dick Byfield, and I read an article in an old magazine called, "The Boy Mechanic" about a hang glider that could be made of wood, fabric and wire. We were inspired! We didn't have the 20-foot long spruce pieces for the airframe so we decided to use bamboo. We gathered a few lengths of bamboo and some wire but being seven years old with a rudimentary set of plans from the magazine, our project soon faded. In 1988, I found a reprint of the article and could see why we didn't get very far. It would have taken someone with a good deal of aircraft knowledge to interpret the plans and make a working glider. This is the "plan", across the road from where my grandparents Kalb lived in Strathmore, California there was a gliding hill! It was probably 200 feet high with a quarter mile long slope - just right for first flights in a glider. I dreamed about gliding down that hill for years. But it was not to be.

In early 1945, as WWII was coming to an end, the government relaxed its restrictions on private flying. A small flying school was started at the Hanford, California airport and unbeknown to me my Uncle Spencer started taking lessons as well as my Dad. When I heard about it I wanted to fly too. After a few lessons my Dad dropped out because of a bad cold and didn't take it up again. Also, I don't think he felt comfortable with the unusual attitudes and "g" forces of flying. I

soloed in July and received my private pilot license in 1946 after I returned from the Navy. Since then, I have flown two dozen different types of airplanes, owned two and have accumulated about 1200 hours. But that is another story, another chapter.

The dream to build an airplane never died. I bought numerous sets of plans and even started to build a 1934 Pietenpol in 1970. I bought some Sitka spruce for the spars and wing ribs and made up some ribs but then I was transferred to Chicago with Raychem. I moved the spar and rib wood to Chicago, back to California, to Chicago again then to Scottsdale where I stored the wood in my garage for over 20 years. The project languished.

On my seventieth birthday, July 21, 1997, I decided that if I was ever going to build an airplane I had better get with it. On August 1, 1997 I ordered a set of plans for a high wing parasol from Roger Mann in Townville, South Carolina. Roger calls it a Rag-A-Muffin because it a simple, basic airplane he built at low cost with no frills. He says it looks like an orphan; i.e. a rag-a-muffin. It attracted me for several reasons. It looked like homebuilt airplanes of the 1930's and was simple and inexpensive. Too, Roger said it could be built in 300 to 400 hours and that sounded great (it took me over 1,500 hours!). If I started on it right away in September, I could have it finished and flying in early spring 1998. Wishful thinking.

I received the plans a few weeks later and on September 15, 1997 made the wing rib jig. I cut out several hundred lineal feet of ¼-inch square spruce cap strips on my table saw and over 600 1/16-inch plywood gussets for the ribs. Ten days later I completed the first rib. That October, I met Scott Hord at the CopperState EAA Fly-in. Scott had a beautiful engine on a test stand mounted on a trailer he wanted to sell. It was just what I was looking for. It was a twin cylinder engine

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made by cutting a VW engine in half. It was beautiful. I wanted an engine that sounded like an airplane engine, had four-cycle reliability and looked like an airplane engine. Scott had the engine mounted on an airplane type mount similar to a Piper Cub and that was what I wanted. I persuaded Scott to make a mount for me as part of the deal. As a result, the engine looks, sounds and runs like an airplane engine. I always get nice compliments on it. I wish I could have built up the engine myself but after much research I realized it would have been a Herculean task even if I had the machine shop tools to do the job. Too, I wanted a reliable engine.

I didn't want to spend the money on an engine right then because I had just started building and knew I wouldn't need the engine for a few months (years!), but I thought I should not pass it by. It proved to be a good decision, even though it would be two years before I mounted it on the airplane. Originally, I thought I could build the airplane under Part 103, the regulations for ultralights, but I soon realized I would exceed the 254 pound empty weight limit. In addition, I wanted to license it under the Experimental category which requires an Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspection and approved flight testing. This required that I apply for a "tail number" which is the registration number for the airplane. For an additional \$5.00 the FAA will allow you to choose your own registration number. Since I decided on my 70th birthday to build the airplane I applied for 70MK. Mike and Kilo are phonetic for my initials. Therefore, Seven Zero Mike Kilo.

At this point I remember reading an article by an EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association) member who had built an airplane. One thing that stuck in my mind was his admonition to work on the project every day - even for a few minutes. One of the main reasons that projects are not completed is that the builder lets other things interfere and soon a missed day turns into weeks and months and years. I found this to be true. Numerous times I would make myself go out to work for "fifteen

minutes" and sure enough it turned out to be several hours. Without this admonition I might not have completed the airplane, or at least it would have taken much longer. My friend, Jim Vance, bought a kit to build a ¾-scale Fokker D8, started off real good then got involved in other things. When I met him he had not worked on his project for over a year but he regained his enthusiasm when he saw my airplane. This principle works on most large projects. "Hard by the yard, but a cinch by the inch." It was a good lesson

Finally, on April 25 I did a weight and balance (which came out well within range but a bit aft) and did my first taxi test. For about a half hour I taxied up and down the ramp. The rudder was sensitive but tracked well. I changed the location of the rudder cables on the rudder pedals several times to reduce the sensitivity until I got them just right.

I did more taxiing and more adjusting until I was confident I could pass the FAA inspector's scrutiny. On June 6, 2000 Mr. James Pendergast, an FAA Designated Airworthiness Representative (DAR) inspected my little red bird with a fine tooth comb and mirror and flashlight. He inspected from propeller to tail, wing tip to wing tip, inside and outside. As he went along he found three minor items that needed to be taken care of. With my promise to fix them, he gave me a Certificate of Airworthiness that gave me the legal authority to fly the airplane and do the flight testing. He also had some kind words about the quality of workmanship. Since I had not flown for a number of years, and it had been forty years since I had flown a taildragger, I decided to take some dual instruction in a Piper Super Cub. The instructor let me do most of the flying just like I had fifty years ago. That is, things like doing forward slips instead of using flaps and doing power off spot landings. That was fun. It brought back memories of when I had flown the old Cubs and Taylorcrafts in the 40's and 50's. After six hours, I took my Biennial Flight Review, was given a tail wheel endorsement

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and signed off. I didn't need the endorsement as I was grandfathered because of my previous tailwheel experience, but it looks good in my logbook. I was once again a fully licensed, legal pilot.

Back to 70MK. I did about four hours of taxiing including some high speed runs down the runway to get a feel for the airplane - and re-learn how to fly. The combination of a new experimental airplane and an inexperienced pilot can make things exciting. I was determined to do all of the flight testing myself so I took each step slowly and deliberately.

I will never forget August 11, 2000. I had made a number high speed runs, going a little faster each time until I decided to try to take off. And take off I did. It scared the pants off me. I flew about five feet off the runway for about a hundred yards and set it back down. I was so hyped I taxied back to the hanger to calm down before trying it again. All I can remember is that I actually flew and didn't crash. I concentrated so hard on flying I didn't check any of my instruments or even looked to see how fast I was going. But it was a beginning. Before I went out again I reviewed that first flight in my mind many times and thought through what I would do the next time. Even then the excitement was so great that all I did was fly the airplane. I concentrated so hard on flying I was oblivious of everything else. But it was quite a thrill to actually fly a machine that I had spent almost three years building.

Each "crow hop" was a bit higher and faster as I felt out the handling and performance of the airplane. I did not do much maneuvering but the airplane handled well both on the ground and in the air. The controls were responsive and as I made corrections due to wind or torque I did not detect any abnormal behavior. I am sure the airplane will fly well up in the air.

I made about 20 of these flights. My last flight was on May 24, 2001. My neighbor, Don Reardon came with me to the airport and

brought his video camera. I made four flights—all captured on video. I have living proof it flies.

One thing I learned from the short hops is that I have only marginal power. The engine at full throttle was doing about 2,800 rpm but should get up about 3,300 rpm. I think the problem is with the prop. The pitch may be too coarse. With a prop that has a lower pitch I think I can get the power I need. I could always tell that I didn't have the extra power needed to get a good climb. For that reason I never tried flying around the airport pattern. Too, the Glendale airport doesn't have much open ground around it in case I had to make a forced landing and it is too close to houses and the riverbed. Now I would like to take the airplane to a field more out in the open like Eloy where I can feel more comfortable to do the flight testing.

On May 31 my wife Flo helped me disassemble the airplane and put it back in the trailer for storage. I hope to find a better place to test fly and when the weather cools off (this being July as I write) I will buy a new prop and try again. There are a few modifications I would also like to make before further testing.

FAA regulations require the airplane to fly a 40-hour test program before the airplane is legal to fly cross-country. Some builders just go up and fly around for 40 hours, but if done properly the airplane and engine should be thoroughly tested and its performance documented. I see this as a good sized task that right now doesn't appeal to me all that much. For one thing, flight testing is hazardous which doesn't excite me like it would have 20 years ago. Perhaps in a few months...

I am quite content that I completed a six-decade-old dream of building and flying an airplane that I made myself. I built it. I flew it.

THE NEXT CHAPTER

Mel wrote a great thirty-three page story on his plane and his trials and tribulations in building it. There are some nice pictures of the project as well as lots of information. We have posted the entire story on the

www.ThunderbirdField.org Chapter 1217 website, go take a look. Now at 79 years young Mel has decided to donate his completed plane to our EAA Chapter so that we can perhaps use it as part of a future aviation education program.



N70MK Cockpit



Mel Kalb and Seven Zero Mike Kilo



N70MK Taxi Tests



N70MK In Flight

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COMMENTS ON AIRSPACE CHANGES FROM JIM TIMMS TALK

As you might know, the "Northwest 2000" route changes, as well as other traffic flow issues, have initiated the proposed re-design of the Phoenix Class B airspace. The comment period is open until July 3rd, and should be sent in triplicate (that would be three times) to:

Air Traffic Manager, Arizona Hub
 Federal Aviation Administration
 2800 E. Sky Harbor Blvd.
 Phoenix, AZ 85034

A large source of information on the proposed change can be found by visiting the Arizona Pilots Association's website at <http://www.azpilots.org> and scrolling down to the bottom.

ThunderAds

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MISCELLANEOUS ENGINES, PARTS, ETC.

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Dave Edmonds, Sharri Shelton's Dad, 209-533-0354

1972 G33 BONANZA

260 hp, 950 since reman engine and new 3-blade prop. King, Garmin 195 GPS, 3-Axis AP, Annual 1/06 \$99,900 obo. 602-441-0093 joseph.hobbs@cox.net

SHEET METAL TOOL KIT & RV-6/8 VIDEOS

REDUCED from \$1500 to \$1350. Never used. Cleveland Complete Sheet Metal Airframe Tool Package (I paid \$1670 2 yrs ago); C-Frame Table; Set of 4 "From the Ground Up" RV-8 construction videotapes (cost new \$80); Set of 10 George Orndorff RV-6/8 construction videotapes (cost new over \$200). \$1,350 for everything. Will sell videotapes and tool set individually. Contact Chapter 1217 member Denny Myrick 480-502-0547.

GlaStar Fixtures

All fixtures to build a GlaStar airplane. Will take \$150. Bill Grieme 480-998-9164

Lycoming O-235-C1

673 SMOH, Sky Tec starter, removed from Long Eze for O-320 upgrade. \$6500. Mark Boram 520-883-0672

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