



The ThunderWord

Thunderbird Field EAA Chapter 1217

October 2015

Scottsdale, Arizona

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Greetings from my corner of the hangar! At the September meeting, Chapter member Jim Moss talked about his flying adventures in the wilds of Alaska. Besides the breathtaking scenery in Jim's presentation, it was amazing to me the harsh conditions that pilots for his company endured while operating in the winter months. We always see the pictures of the summer months in Alaska, but this was the first time I had seen what it was like in the dark months!

At the end of this month is the Copperstate Fly-In at Casa Grande. It is a great place to check out all types of planes old and new. Under the main display tent, there are vendors of all sorts, and it is a good place to ask technical questions with the manufacturers about some new part for your plane. So dust off the old winged warrior or road hog and head on down to the Copperstate Fly-In.

See you at the October meeting!

Curtis

OCTOBER CHAPTER MEETING

The next meeting of Thunderbird Field EAA Chapter 1217 will be held on Thursday, October 15, starting at 7 pm. The location is the Scottsdale Aviation Business Center, 15041 North Airport Drive. This month's guest speaker is Jerry Johnson from the Phoenix Sky Harbor Air Traffic Control Tower. Chapter member Lynn Miller is a friend of Jerry's and nice enough to arrange for this month's presentation.

Guests are always welcome.

MEET OUR GUEST SPEAKER

This month's speaker is Air Traffic Control Specialist Jerry Johnston. He wanted to take a moment to introduce himself to our Chapter members:

I have been an air traffic controller for 29 years. My father was an air traffic controller and that is what got me interested in the profession – going to work with him and watching what the job entailed.

I started my career at Los Angeles Center (ZLA). The area I worked set up the oceanic departures and arrivals across the Pacific Ocean, and we also worked at the time what was the busiest air traffic corridor in the world – LAX to SFO. We conducted a mini approach control for San Luis Obispo Airport and worked the LA basin arrivals and departures. I was the quickest off the street (no prior experience – was hired at 19 years old) to certify at LA Center – took me two years.

I grew up in Arizona and my entire family was here, so I spent my time at LA Center trying to get back to AZ. After 10 years I finally was able to get out (they have a saying at LA Center – you are there for 25 years to life and we have pictures of controllers chained to a RADAR scope for shirts). I went to Falcon Field (FFZ) in Mesa AZ and worked there for just over a year before getting a transfer to Phoenix Tower (PHX) where I have spent the last 18 years enjoying my career.

I am very active in the National Air Traffic Controllers union (NATCA). I have been the local president or vice-president at PHX for the last 16 years. For the last 3 years I have

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the additional responsibility of being the “vice president” of the NATCA Western-Pacific Region. I cover 34 facilities located in Nevada, Arizona and Southern California.

It's the best career in the world. It is never the same thing – airplanes take off at different

times, situations are unique, the weather is always something different. After 29 years I still thoroughly enjoy going to work every day. I love my job and I am proud to be a professional air traffic controller.

Jerry Johnston (JJ)



Photo by Lindsey Goss

Jack Pollack's Chipmunk is getting a brand new engine installed at Gosshawk Unlimited at Casa Grande. It looks like they might have put it on upside down!

COPPERSTATE FLY-IN

The 43rd Annual COPPERSTATE Fly-In will be held at the Casa Grande Municipal Airport (CGZ) from Thursday, October 22 through Saturday, October 24.

Over the years, COPPERSTATE has grown exponentially, attracting about 500 aircraft and 5,000 attendees per year, representing 10 countries and 40 U.S. states.

Attendees particularly enjoy the wide variety of aircraft on the ground and in the air. Over 1,000 people attend COPPERSTATE's workshops and forums every year, and several dozen kids participate in the youth activities, including a wing rib building workshop.

The annual aircraft judging awards banquet, held on Saturday night of the event, is another crowd-pleaser.

There will NOT be a temporary control tower in operation or any special arrival/departure procedures in use during the Fly-In. Pilots operating to, from, and in the vicinity of Casa Grande Municipal Airport (CGZ) during this period should follow standard recommended practices for operations at non-towered airports.

If you are interested in volunteering, Chapter 1217 member Dan Muxlow heads up the Aero Mart and is looking to recruit people to assist. You can contact Dan at N27dm@cox.net.

FMI: www.Copperstate.org

KOLB FOR SALE

Chapter VP Terry Emig has a friend from Casa Grande that is trying to settle the estate of his late brother and is looking to sell a Kolb

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folding wing two-seat aircraft. It is located south of Maricopa at a private airstrip. As it looks in pictures, it has a Rotax 912, three blade Ivo prop and tundra tires. They are

open to offers after you inspect the plane in person and do your homework. Contact Bryan via email: bryan.pittman@outlook.com



Larry.Keelings RV-4 at Marble Canyon

CLUB CONCORDE

Club Concorde consists of former Concorde pilots, frequent fliers, and others that have never quite given up on the supersonic airliner. They have been raising funds for a couple of projects, one of which would be returning the SST to service on a private basis.

The Concorde last flew on October 24, 2003. According to the organization's website, nearly \$62 million has been raised to purchase two of the retired airliners and place them on display in London and later Paris. But a more ambitious goal is to start flying the SST again, and last July, the club said that it has a business plan to purchase and operate a Concorde under "private livery."

Club Concorde says that it potentially has nearly \$186 million in reserve from U.K. and other investors for future Concorde projects. The return to flight program would be paid for by those funds. The club said on its website: "All restoration to flight costs would be borne

by Club Concorde International who would also finance the construction of maintenance/display hangars at both the French and UK bases".

But the group also says that now that "money is no longer a problem ... the global Concorde fraternity must keep up the pressure" on those who have said they are in favor of the project to move forward, as "time is running out."

FMI: www.clubconcorde.co.uk/

DVT TO REBUILD NORTH RAMP

Beginning on November 2 and working in phases, the entire ramp, including the areas between each hangar row, all of the asphalt will be completely removed. Additionally, a portion of the subgrade/cobble will also be removed. After re-grading, lime will be used as a stabilizer to help combat the expansive soil issue and to minimize future cracking of

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the new asphalt. Once the new asphalt has been put down, fresh pavement markings will then be applied.

This is a much-needed airport improvement project, but there will be significant impacts. The City of Phoenix will make every effort to make the project as painless as possible for you, but it will be disruptive. During construction, hangars will be inaccessible by tenants since the area will be a construction site. While your hangar is inaccessible, the City of Phoenix will waive your hangar rent. They will also provide covered tie-downs for your aircraft at no cost to you for the period of time that your hangar is inaccessible. If you



On 8-8-15, I was riding with Denny Myrick in his RV-12 on a breakfast flight to Seligman. We were in a group of RV's from DVT; I think there were seven planes that made the trip. We went to Seligman (P-23) to enjoy the cuisine at Westside Lilo's Cafe in the heart of downtown Seligman.

The yellow/blue RV-8A is owned and flown by Hank Rogers and the blue/white RV-7A is owned and flown by EAA Chapter 1217 member Paul Shepard. The formation shot was taken just north of Prescott looking east.

The group shot was taken inside the restaurant. Denny and I are in the midst of the group of RV builders/owners/pilots and fans. Paul Shepard is closest to the camera on the right and is proudly wearing his Chapter 1217 t-shirt.

Jordan Ross

wish to fly your aircraft during the period that your hangar row is affected, you will need to relocate it prior to construction.

Please call Kim Siebert at 602.273.2133 or 602.273.2159 to make arrangements. Additionally, shared storage containers near the covered tiedown area will be provided at no cost to tenants for aviation necessities such as tugs, tools, oil, etc. They do have a very small number of hangars available for aircraft that cannot be stored in a covered tie-down due to susceptibility to the environment, i.e. open cockpit and/or fabric covered aircraft.



Photos by Jordan Ross

THE BATTLE OF PALMDALE

The little known battle that nearly destroyed an American city

On August 16, 1956, the typical clear blue California sky shone brightly. At Point Mugu Naval air station, ground crews prepped an F6F-5K Hellcat drone for its last flight ever. The Hellcat was painted high-visibility red and was rigged to be guided by remote control.

The plane was to fly out over the vast Pacific into a training scenario where the navy would blast it out of the sky for target practice. But the Hellcat had other ideas.

Shortly after 11:30 a.m., the Hellcat drone took off from the Navy base heading west over the ocean. Soon thereafter, it started a lazy turn to the south and began heading straight towards the teeming metropolis of

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F6F-5K Hellcat Drone

Los Angeles. The remote controllers at the Navy base tried frantically to turn the escaped plane back out to the ocean to no avail. Having lost contact, it proceeded to head straight into the heart of one of the most populated areas in the country.

When all backup systems failed, the Navy finally gave up and called for assistance. As the Navy had no fighter aircraft standing by, they swallowed their pride and made a call to Oxnard Air Force Base. Five miles north of the navy base were two F-89D Scorpion interceptor jets ready to scramble. Being that this was in the thick of the cold war era, the planes were armed and fueled and ready to go. The Scorpions were armed with two rocket pods containing 52 Mighty Mouse rockets. These rockets were designed to be fired into approaching Russian bomber formations and thus had no guidance systems. However, on this day, this was an altogether different threat. 1st Lt. Hans Einstein and his radar op 1st Lt. C. D. Murray sprinted across the tarmac and climbed into their waiting silver steed. 1st Lt. Richard Hurliman and 1st Lt Walter Hale jumped into the second plane and joined the pursuit.

The Air Force planes raced southward at full speed to intercept the small wandering blip on their radar. At 30,000 feet just north of Los Angeles the sprinting jets intercepted the portly drone. It was on a southwest course that took it directly over Los Angeles, then it turned slowly circling over the city of Santa Paula. The pilots were waiting for it to

wander away from populated areas so they could blast it from the sky.

Soon the red Hellcat drifted over a rural area known as Antelope Valley. The pilots tried to fire their rockets with a turning fire-fire control method, but a malfunction in the system prevented the rockets from igniting. The drone then turned southeast and began heading back for the center of Los Angeles. Under pressure, the pilots decided it was now or never. They abandoned the automatic fire modes on the rockets and decided to launch them manually. One snag was that the gun sights had recently been removed from the planes! The theory was that they shouldn't ever have to use them because the automated firing system would target the rockets, but it had failed.

The pilots decided to fly by the seat of their pants and began their first rocket run. They set their intervalometers to "ripple fire," which would strafe the plane with three rocket salvos. The first plane lined up and let loose... and missed completely. The second plane's rockets undershot the fleeing drone.

The rockets blasted past the mindless drone, overshooting their target. They then descended into the mountains near the town of Castaic and exploded in the forest below. They started a raging forest fire that would destroy 150 acres in an area known as Bouquet Canyon.

The second salvo of rockets also missed the drone, blasting into the town of Newhall.



F-89D Scorpion Interceptor

These rockets started fires in an oil field. They ignited a number of oil sumps and began a fire that burned more than 100 acres of brush. These fires blazed out of control and almost reached the Bermite Powder company's explosives plant!

The drone continued to drift northward toward the town of Palmdale. Frustrated, the pilots tried another rocket run. The first salvo went wide again, and of the second salvo, a few Mighty Mouse rockets bounced harmlessly off of the slow moving drone's belly.

Suddenly in the quiet bucolic town of Palmdale, all hell broke loose. Mighty Mouse rockets fell from the sky like fiery hail. An explosion outside Edna Carlson's house caused shrapnel to smash her front window, blast through a wall, and wreck her pantry. Mrs. Lilly Willingham heard a deafening explosion and nearly missed being maimed by a hot piece of metal that lodged in the wall inches from her face in her own living room. A rocket exploded in the middle of the street directly in front of the car young Larry Kemp was driving. The explosion blew out his tires, and made Swiss cheese of the front of his vehicle.

After a few minutes the mayhem subsided and the bewildered residents of Palmdale searched the skies. Was this a coordinated Russian attack? A nefarious Sunday surprise? Luckily, no one was injured in the battle and 13 dud rockets were recovered by air force ordnance disposal teams. But it took 500 of the region's firefighters two days to put out the brush fires that raged.

The pilots of the interceptor jets were running on fumes so they abandoned the mission and returned to their base defeated. The drone itself headed east and ran out of fuel. It descended in a spiral glide into an unpopulated area eight miles east of Palmdale. In its final moments, it sliced through some power lines and cartwheeled into the dirt, disintegrating in the crash.

So this was the story of one of the only aerial battles to be fought in the skies over the continental United States. The story of how one oblivious, mindless drone evaded the concerted attacks of the state of the art weaponry of its day. A day that will live in infamy for the rest of recorded history and will always be known as the Battle of Palmdale.

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ThunderAds

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2010 VAN'S RV-12 ELSA

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'65 MOONEY

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RV-4 PARTIALLY BUILT KIT

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Estate sale. Aircraft close to finishing. Located in Yuma, AZ. Contact Bob Carter for more information BobC@buildersguild.com

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PULSE AUTOCYCLE

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PROJECTS FOR SALE

Protech, PT-2, folding wings & trailer, 82 hp Mosler engine. Also, Gere bi-plane, about 75% done, built from magazine plans, circa 1932, rebuilt Model A engine. Pat Wall 928-851-2244.

ESTATE SALE

Chapter member Marty Williams has flown west and his family is selling his Zenith 701 kit. Contact his son Keith at 480-998-4873.

OIL COOLER REPAIR AND SALES

Chapter member owned. R & E Cooler Service 800-657-0977 www.oilcoolersvs.com

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