



The ThunderWord

Thunderbird Field EAA Chapter 1217

August 2021

Scottsdale, Arizona

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Greetings from my corner of the hangar. Last month we recruited Jack Norris to talk about the Tucano replica kits he is selling. While the plane is basically a pre-punched kit that is a pop riveted together plane. Jack's talk focused on the builder assist program his company offers. The plane weighs about the same as a heavy RV-12 and has almost the same engine so it looks like it would be an interesting plane to build yourself.

The annual Oshkosh pilgrimage started for me on the day after our July meeting. AirVenture was a lot of fun and I was able to catch up with a lot of old friends. The aircraft attendance was unbelievable although not a lot of new unique planes showed up.

The afternoon airshow had acts of all types but the most unique thing for me was watching the Volocopter fly. It has a bunch of what look like ceiling fans arranged on a ring overhead. It is capable of piloted and autonomous flight. A close second was the Blackfly, again a flying machine that has a bunch of electric motors turning at very high RPM. There were two of them flying around. They did a unique belly flop maneuver to take off and land on their bellies, no landing gear! I would not have believed either of these two machines actually flew unless I had seen it with my own eyes. I was told there is a huge hangar full of these Blackflies up near Travis Air Force base and they plan to start selling them in the next couple of months.

Scrappy the oversized Cub that has been immortalized on You Tube was there along with its over-the-top builder/pilot. It probably set a record for screens and electronic displays. It helps when Garmin is your sponsor and they send a truckload of free products for you to install. It did have some really cool mods like a double slotted leading-edge slat

and solar panels to recharge the two electric motorcycles that hang under the wings. I asked one of the people that work there how many people worked on the plane and he said "a bunch". When it came time for the avionics installation Garmin sent out a crew to make sure it was hooked up correctly and worked. Fame has its privileges.

One of the most talked about planes wasn't even at the show. At the start of the show Van's Aircraft announced their RV-15 which would be a STOL, high wing, all metal kitplane. This begs the question; will Van take to social media to show how he single handedly designed and built this new design like the Scrappy videos? Perhaps in the back of the plant they are making a vat of that Oregon blackberry brandy to liven up the videos...only time will tell!

See you around the aerodrome!

Curtis

AUGUST CHAPTER MEETING

The August meeting of Thunderbird Field EAA Chapter 1217 will be held on Thursday, August 19th, beginning at 7 pm in the Thunderbird Room Scottsdale Airport Terminal building. The address is 15000 North Airport Drive. For our August meeting we have recruited Tyler Sepp who is the President of Fly Eagle Sport LLC. Tyler's business is located at the Glendale Airport and does flight training, rental, and sales of Light Sport Aircraft. His company is a low cost alternative to the large flight schools. They also offer programs for a pilot getting back into flying and help you sort through the maze of regulations. Many Chapter 1217 members have gone to Fly Eagle Sport to dust off the cobwebs and get back into flying.

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Check out their excellent website at <https://flyeaglesport.com/>

Guests are always welcome!

AIRVENTURE HAPPY HOUR

Our 23-year tradition, of Chapter 1217 members attending the Oshkosh AirVenture Fly-In to get together one evening and compare sightings and stories, was a great success. At 7pm on Monday around 25 friends and families descended on WENDT'S ON THE

LAKE, an eclectic Wisconsin lakeside eatery. The beer was cold, the fish was good and the mosquitoes were out in force. It was great to swap stories and catch up with folks.

Probably the most interesting story of the night was how Mark and Gretchen Kinder's 16 year old son, Gage, had attended the learn how to hand prop a plane forum and actually got to prop a plane!



Volocopter seen at the AirVenture Fly-In

MOVIES WE FORGOT

Longtime aviator and Chapter 1217 member Dick Delafield sent a note after the last ThunderWord that we missed a couple of great ones; so here is his additions to the list.

Island in the Sky. This was Ernie Gann's true story of ATC airline pilots flying for the military in WW II. The book is even better.

Factoid: John Wayne (Ernie's real life friend) does his least heroic performance and plays a very convincing airline captain.

Breaking Through The Sound Barrier. Historically and technically wrong, this is a fictional version of the DeHavilland family. It is still a great movie with exceptional acting and flying. The opening sequence is very significant to anyone who loves to fly.

Keep your nose down in turns, Dick Delafield



Dusty the crop duster is headed to the National Air and Space Museum

WIN AN RV-12

This seems like a great way to win a Vans RV-12.

A small Aviation museum in South Central Texas, that is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is conducting the raffle. They utilize antique aircraft to teach kids any of the aviation trades, from becoming a Pilot, Engineer, or A&P Mechanic. The museum arose from the realization that kids in their area had little or no exposure to Aviation, and a grass roots effort arose to create the museum, which morphed into the non-profit organization. At no expense to them, the kids learn in a J-3 Cub, and after soloing, transition into a Grumman Traveler for their Private Pilot License. So far, they been pleased with (at present) 5 kids in various Aviation Colleges (not too bad for a town of 2600 population).

The RV12 they are raffling was built by a friend and supporter of the museum, he passed shortly after completing it. He flew the airplane 5 hours, and the volunteers at the museum painted the aircraft and are finishing the certification flights. They will send the aircraft

to a Vans specialist to have all the Service Letters complied with immediately prior to the drawing. The airplane is essentially a brand new aircraft, and beautifully constructed.

The proceeds of the raffle benefit the ongoing "Kids in Aviation" scholarships and allow them to begin a new crop of young pilots and mechanics. In addition to the airplane, several more prizes are offered and have been sponsored by some great aviation companies like David Clark, Sporty's, and Garmin. They're continuing to add prizes as the raffle continues.

There is more information about them on their website www.whereolddogsfly.org, Facebook (Texas Barnstorming Museum) and in past and upcoming articles in General Aviation News. The link to the raffle is: <https://rafflecreator.com/pages/41866/vans-rv-12>

For more information call Jim Baker, President, Texas Barnstorming Museum (361)772-6434



Homebuilt Cirrus like plane available in kit form

CIRRUS KITPLANE?

If a four-seat plane that does 203 KTS burning 12 GPH might be in your future then this plane might be worth taking a look at. For \$120,000-you get the engine, avionics, interior, gear, and kit. Assembly time is around 1,000 hours. Or you can order it fully built for \$145k. Basically a turbo Cirrus in numbers and size, but no chute. And not just something in theory, or planning. There are 57 of this plane flying with another 7 of the exact model under construction. The plane is called a Veloce 400 and the dealer is in Las Vegas 773-620-9500.

It should be noted that the press release was sent to our Chapter and it contained several misspelled words; so do a Google search for the plane and proceed cautiously, as the release said

SEAWIND SAGA:

7 CRASHES IN 7 DAYS

The famous pilot Forrest Gump once said "stupid is as stupid does" and truer words were never spoken. A small amphibious airplane is on the bottom of Lake Michigan after crashing during the Fourth of July weekend — but fasten your seatbelts because the pilot says how it got there is one barnstormer of a story.

Dennis Collier, a licensed Traverse City pilot, paid \$110,000 for the 2010 Seawind on a Saturday, ended up in the drink a week later,

and on the way crashed — by his own account — seven times, in seven days in four states.

The Federal Aviation Administration, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Michigan State Police all performed various response and investigative functions at his crashes, too; so their information adds to the narrative.

On June 25, Collier flew commercial, landing at Los Angeles' LAX where Lynn Swann, the retired pilot, airplane builder who'd advertised the Seawind 3000 for sale, was there to meet him. The two aviators drove east from Los Angeles to the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains and Bracket Field Airport. It was here where Collier got his first gander at his new-used Seawind.

At the time he was just excited about the purchase, though later said he didn't think the condition of the plane had been properly conveyed to him.

Swann says that while the plane hadn't been flown for two years, a pilot friend had taken it for a test flight and the aircraft was ship-shape, with only 20 hours of flying time on the engine.

"I went to get some supplies and told him he could wait for me or take off," Swann said. "I came back and he was already lined up to take off. And I figured, OK, cool."

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A Seawind amphibian (not the one in this story)

Crash #1

"I radioed to the tower for a test flight over the airport," Collier wrote. "Climbing to 500 feet above pattern altitude doing left hand turns staying within the airport's landing pattern. After the first turn I noticed the nose gear was up without a green light. I set up for landing after the third time around."

FAA records show Collier landed "gear up" and while he escaped injury, the Seawind got pretty banged up.

Swann said it would have been worse if he hadn't installed a block of wood under the front of the plane, and that two inches of solid oak took the brunt of the impact. Collier said Swann and his "hanger buddies" helped make repairs

Crashes #2 and #3

Next stop — a layover in New Mexico and Collier's first night landing in 20 years. It was 3:22 a.m. and the descent did not go well.

"The airplane stalled and came down hard and to the left of the runway and into the weeds and bumpy sage grasses," Collier said.

Dawn broke the next morning on an ugly view.

Collier, who had again escaped injury, learned he'd wiped out a sign and some runway lights and did a number on the Seawind's tail. Plus,

staff with Four Corners Airport in San Juan County had called the FAA.

A test flight ended in another runway incident, said Mike Lewis, airport manager.

"We're square," Lewis said. "We called the FAA and filed a report. From what I understand, the damage wasn't anything that would make the airplane unflyable."

Collier recorded in his diary how a local airplane mechanic found him an empty hanger where he could park the Seawind, then loaned him some tools and gave him a ride to a hardware store to fetch supplies.

Collier, who said he'd flown regularly years ago, previously built his own plane.

"I'm a mechanic" he told himself, "I can do this."

Crashes #4 and #5

On July 2, Collier was airborne again.

"My plan was to go north along the western slope of the Rockies to avoid the high terrain around Taos, New Mexico, then to Chicago and east. This was not the way to get over the mountains," Collier said.

He ran into a rain squall but the plane performed well enough for Collier to engage the autopilot, using rivers and highways as

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navigational aids, he turned east after about two hours in the air.

Slicing through the sky over America's breadbasket, however, Collier again encountered trouble.

The left wing's servo (hinged tab) was stuck, he said, and the nose of the plane kept pitching up. When it got worse, Collier put a rag between his knees and the yoke (steering wheel) and pushed as hard as he could toward Nebraska.

There was stalling, there was skipping through the rough and there was crisscrossing the runway but after four attempts, Collier said he landed at O'Neill Municipal Airport in Holt County.

"I forced it to the ground and off into the grasses and eventually back onto the runway and taxied to an awaiting golf cart, and an airport manager and wife team that got me to calm down from shaking," Collier said.

A test flight ended in another crash, Collier said, but he went back to work on the plane and found and fixed some crossed wires.

By July 3 at 7 a.m., Collier was more than ready to put Nebraska below and behind him.

"I opened the hanger door and attempted to push the Seawind out," Collier said. "Getting a few feet, I decided to just fire it up and get going. Taxied out to the runway and with full power lifted eastward into the morning sun."

Takeoff, the climb and the autopilot cruise over South Dakota and Minnesota at 7500 feet went fine. Five hours out of Nebraska, he passed Escanaba and saw Schoolcraft County Airport in Manistique, about 5 miles off.

Then, something went "clunk."

Crash #6

The hydraulic pressure gauge was registering zero, Collier said, and the fuel gauge showed an uneven supply.

The engine sputtered, the gauge showed less than four gallons of fuel and Collier said he was pretty sure the landing gear under the nose wasn't down.

"I landed it with both mains and held it off as long as I could and then the nose hit and the plane skidded down the runway a few hundred yards to a stop at the edge of the pavement but well before the end of the runway," Collier said.

No injuries, the damage was repairable and while Collier didn't see anyone around — no golf cart reception this time — the terminal was within walking distance and the doors were unlocked. Collier said he went in, sat down and considered his lot.

His plane was dinged and out of fuel, his cellphone was shut off and he hadn't seen a soul.

Holiday Motel Manistique co-owner, Pat Mead, let Collier use his phone, knew a store that sold hydraulic oil and drove Collier there.

"A lot of pilots stay here," said Kara Mead, who, in March, bought the motel with her husband. "He did take him to get the hydraulic oil. Owning a motel, you get requests sometimes that don't have to do with booking a room."

Collier arrived back at Schoolcraft Municipal about the same time as the Michigan State Police. He on foot, MSP in a cruiser with lights and sirens.

Lt. Mark Giannunzio, an assistant MSP post commander, said troopers were dispatched to the airport to check out a report that someone's landing gear wasn't working properly. At the scene, MSP turned the incident over to the FAA, Giannunzio said. Collier writes in his diary that troopers interviewed him and loaned him a phone to call the FAA — "once again I was on the phone talking to them explaining what had occurred."

The troopers drove Collier out to the Seawind and held up the nose so he could add a quart of hydraulic oil.

After a week of bumps, clunks and official inquiries from air and land authorities, Collier was finally near his goal — landing his plane in Boyne City.

He checked the fuel gauge and looked inside the tanks and realized the gauge was flipped.

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The tank that read empty was full, the tank that read full was nearly empty. Perhaps the pump failed, Collier thought, maybe that was the source of the "clunk."

He called a relative who offered the use of a credit card, Collier refueled and taxied to the runway.

Crash #7

The plan was to head south, over Lake Michigan, Beaver Island, Charlevoix and land at the Boyne City Municipal Airport. Per his promise to the FAA, Collier wrote in his diary he'd leave the landing gear down for the 25-minute flight.

It was July 3.

As luck would have it, President Joe Biden was visiting and Collier had to wait for the TFR, or temporary flight restriction, to be lifted before he could depart.

At 7:22 p.m., Flight Aware, shows the Seawind over Manistique. At 7:49 p.m. the plane disappeared from radar.

That was about the time Collier said the engine sputtered and he smelled something burning.

He'd just passed Beaver Island, was out over open water and turned back, hoping to land at the island's airport.

But the wing flaps weren't responding and the hydraulic pressure gauge read nil. Collier said he had no choice but to attempt his first water landing.

"I glanced back over the water and realized I could judge my altitude with the glittering of the sun over the small ripple of the water," Collier said. "Time seemed to slow and I was transfixed on the beauty of the sun over the water ... I could see it coming and it was really close."

But, per his promise to the FAA, the landing gear was still down. "The gear caught the water and the plane went forward and with a big splash went nose down vertically and into the water."

For a few seconds, Collier said he was staring straight down into the deep. Then the plane

popped up, Collier sent out a distress call, checked himself for injuries — again, none — and tried to focus.

The plane was built like boat. It would float, right? He'd wait for rescue, get the plane towed to shore and fix it again.

Grounded

Collier isn't sure how much time passed before he saw a U.S. Coast Guard rescue boat headed his way. By then, the cockpit was full of water, the plane was sinking, his shoes, hat, landing light and new headset were floating away reminiscent of a scene from "Titanic."

"I was holding on, all alone, thinking about my family," Collier said. "It was terrifying. It was a time of realizing I might not make it."

A Coast Guard helicopter circled overhead. Collier by now was perilously perched on the tail. He lifted his head from his hands and gave them a wave. Minutes later he was aboard a rescue boat.

When news the plane had crashed and sunk reached New Mexico, Lewis shared a theory: the hull of the plane had likely been breached during one of the crashes.

Collier gave a statement to MSP, was checked by a Charlevoix Hospital emergency room physician and released in the wee hours of the Fourth of July.

He said he was happy to be alive..

If this were a movie, a director might be tempted to employ poetic license and have Collier somehow, some way, fly off into the wild blue yonder as the credits roll.

But Collier said the Seawind wasn't insured. And the experience was so traumatic, he doesn't see himself piloting an airplane again.

John Masson, U.S. Coast Guard spokesperson, said they've seen no evidence of pollution in Lake Michigan and the fuel was low so the plane, which is in about 300 feet of water, is unlikely to ever be raised.

Whether Collier incurs fines or faces legal action is up to the FAA, Masson said. The

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FAA's investigation is ongoing and is expected to take several weeks to complete, Molinaro said.

Collier recorded his version of an ending in his diary. He's standing outside the hospital in Charlevoix, and the final lines read like this:

"I wondered about the day. Flying all the way from a disaster in O'Neill, NB and a nose landing at Schoolcraft, and almost dying. Let alone the episodes in NM and CA. It was over. I'm alive. And I'm home."



Cessna 195 on floats seen at AirVerture SeaPlane Base

Thunder Ads

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LONGEZ AND SONEX

Tom Partin has decided to stop flying and has two airplanes for sale at Thunder Ridge air park (AZ28), a 180hp LongEz and a 120hp Sonex. Contact Bertha Partin at bmpartin@gmail.com

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New, never used, donated to our Chapter. Curtis 602-710-4494

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