



# The ThunderWord

Thunderbird Field EAA Chapter 1217

October 2023

Scottsdale, Arizona

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Greetings from my corner of the hangar! Last month Mike Otis delivered an amazing presentation on climbing Mount Everest. For me it was really interesting to learn about surviving at high altitudes and what effects it has on your body. Thanks to Dan Muxlow for lining up Mike to give his presentation.

We have had a couple of short samples of what life will be like after summer, and I was able to get a couple of flights in my RV-8 and finishing up the Cub annual. I am ready for summer to be over!

Hopefully we are dialed in on guest speakers for the rest of 2023 but are on the hunt for speakers for next year. If you have an idea for a good program lets work on it together and try and make it work.

See you around the aerodrome!

*Curtis*

## OCTOBER CHAPTER MEETING

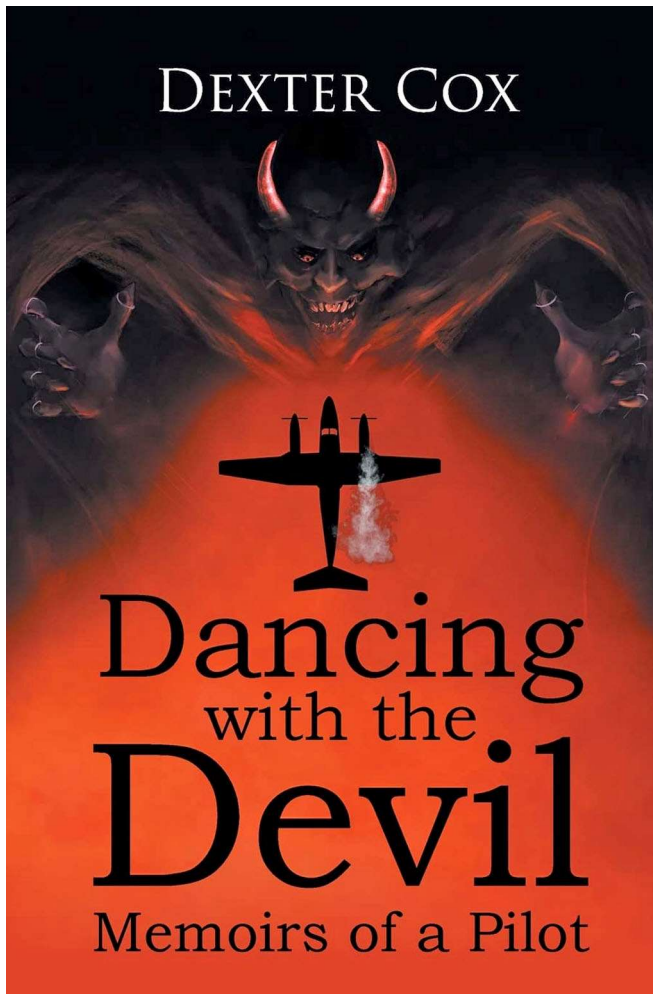
The October 2023 meeting of Thunderbird Field EAA Chapter 1217 will be held on Thursday, October 19th beginning at 7 pm. The location is the Paradise Valley Community Center, 17402 North 40th Street.

This month's guest speaker will be Dexter Cox who has written a book titled "Dancing With The Devil: Memoirs of a Pilot." It is a riveting look at the author's career as a pilot and his lifelong passion for airplanes. The book is a personal account of the author's experiences as a pilot, spanning over sixty years of experiences and various types of aircraft. Beginning with the origins of his love for airplanes, Cox takes readers through various exhilarating flights, including numerous involvements with faulty equipment and engine failures.



**September speaker Mike Otis doing a handstand on top of Mount Everest**

The title of this book was selected directly from a statement made to the author by a representative of the FAA during an informal inquiry into why the author was involved in so many engine failures and equipment malfunction incidents. One of the FAA representatives stated that in the preceding eight months, the author had been involved in more incidents (engine failures and in-flight equipment failures) than all the rest of the pilots in the Rocky Mountain region combined and thought that the author was "dancing with the devil" on a frequent basis, and he was concerned for the author's safety. The author thought that was a unique way of describing his experiences with various types of failures and selected that phrase for the title of the book. Every time there is a problem there is a lesson to be learned!



## THE PHOENIX SIGN

The Phoenix sign on the south side of the Usery Mountains, just northeast of Mesa is one of the great mysteries of Arizona aviation, until now. Back in the 1950s, a pilot named Charles Merritt was looking for a community service project for his Air Explorers Boy Scout Post. Charlie was quite a character and I was fortunate to meet him at a local airport one day as I was fueling "Old Betsy," his well-worn Cessna 205 -- in between jump runs for the skydiving club -- yes that's right, the Sky-Hi Pioneers Air Explorer Post AND Sky Diving Club. He used to land at Scottsdale Airport to get fuel in the plane since his airport was only four miles away.

Charlie had been around. He was a barnstormer back in the 1930s, and was suspected of being one of the first "sport" parachutists in the country. He used to jump out of the plane in front of a grandstand full of people, the plane landed in front of the crowd, October 2023

and Charlie would have some kid come down out of the stands and stuff the parachute back in its pack. Literally. And then he'd go back up and jump with it again. Despite his daredevil stunts he died of old age.

As a young pilot at old Roosevelt Field in New York, Charlie talked of knowing pilots like Charles Lindbergh, and Wiley Post.

All of this just doesn't fit, if you ever had met Charlie, or a photo of him. He was no "swashbuckler," not in appearance anyway. He wasn't over 5'4", and was nearly that same measurement in diameter. But he WAS Errol Flynn at heart!

He liked kids, and so he became a "scout master" as he grew older. The Boy Scouts of America was none too keen on having scouts jumping out of perfectly good airplanes. So, when they were on the ground, they were scouts. The minute they took off in the airplane to climb up a few thousand feet for a parachute jump, the Boy Scouts disavowed all connections with them (until they landed safely back on the ground).

Back to the PHOENIX sign. Charlie decided that transient pilots needed a "navigational aid" to help them find Phoenix -- at that time nearly 40 miles away to the west. (Phoenix has rapidly grown considerably closer to the marker in the past 50 years). So, the Sky-Hi Pioneers humped the rocks into place to form the sign on the side of that mountain, and white washed it, and maintained it for quite a few years, I believe. I don't know who does it now. In these days of VOR/DME radio navigation, and now GPS, such a marker is of little value perhaps. But I smile every time I see it because it reminds me of Charlie Merritt, who though long dead now, is still one of the most interesting people I've ever met.

The most interesting thing about Charles Merritt? Keep in mind all the things he'd done; flying old airplanes, jumping out of them with kid-packed parachutes... He wouldn't drive a car! Said driving with all the crazies out there wasn't safe. He lived in Phoenix, worked in Tucson, and flew "Old Betsy" back and forth

every day. For ground transport, he relied on his wife and daughter if he couldn't get there by plane. Go figure.

Charlie even had his own airport which was located a few miles north of our EAA Chapter meeting location. It was directly under the Highway 51 and 101 interchange. The airport was called Sky-Hi Pioneer Airport, it was a very small general aviation airport conducting skydiving operations, was evidently established at some point between 1967-69,

The earliest depiction which has been located of Sky-Hi Pioneer Airport was on a 1969 aerial view. It depicted a newly-graded northeast/southwest unpaved runway, with one light single-engine plane parked on an

unpaved ramp on the northeast side. A circular skydiving drop zone was to the east of the runway, but there did not appear to be any buildings.

The airport was small but there were some pretty crazy activities there. One such adventure was in the mid-seventies when there was a Soldier-of-Fortune convention in Phoenix. Charlie found a guy with a DC-3 that came out to Sky Hi Pioneer and offered static line jumps under round parachutes for the Airborne experience. The DC-3 full of camo clad paramilitary thrill seekers would kick up a huge cloud of dust and debris as it started its takeoff roll.



**As the last Reno Air Races come to an end does anyone remember this Reno air Racer that was built at Scottsdale Airport. It is the 3350 powered Bling Mans Bluff**

### **HISTORIC AVIATION FILMS ONLINE**

We have just become aware of a great new FREE online resource for historic newsreel films. The Sherman Grinberg Collection is the archive for Paramount and Pathé newsreels.

The Film Library has more than 20 million feet of classic 35mm B&W film with content dating mostly from 1895 to 1957, just before the

television era began. The archive includes the historic Paramount Newsreels, first called Eyes of the World (silent era) and later Eyes and Ears of the World (the "talkies"). It also includes the entire American Pathé newsreel library, which is America's oldest collection (1895-1956), the Industry on Parade series, Allied Artist Scenic stock footage, and over

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3,500 mid-century television and movie theater commercials.

The archive is easy to use. Go to the homepage [shermangrinberg.com](http://shermangrinberg.com) and click on "Browse Collection". To get, for example, newsreels about Amelia Earhart, type "Amelia Earhart" (with quotation marks) in the search box at upper right. Hit "enter" or "return" and you'll see 70 clips, 25 to a page. Hover over a clip and you'll see a summary of what it contains. If you click on the four little boxes at the upper right of the page and select "table view", you'll get the clips with the summary information presented as a table.

In either format, click on the clip and it will play in a separate window. The clips are watermarked and free to view for research or general interest purposes. For a fee, the archive will license clips for commercial use.

In our initial browsing of the Earhart collection, we've discovered there are far more films and interviews than we knew existed and we've already come across new information. Clip Negative #6107, includes film taken aboard the Electra in flight on March 1, 1937, sixteen days before the first world flight attempt. Earhart is seen in the cockpit and Harry Manning is seen taking observations through the window in the navigator's station. Although much was made at the time of the "bamboo pole" system for passing notes between the Electra's navigator's station and the cockpit, at the end of the clip Manning is speaking into, and listening to, what is obviously a speaking tube. Speaking tubes for communicating between crew stations were common, but there was never any mention of a speaking tube in NR16020.



**Cockpit view from solar powered airship that hopes to circle the globe**

### **SOLAR AIRSHIP CIRCUMNAVIGATION**

A French team is preparing for a 20-day long nonstop circumnavigation of the globe aboard an airship. Just to make things more interesting, no fossil fuels will be used in the journey.

'Solar Airship One' is being developed by Euro Airship. At 151 metres long, it is helium-filled, and its upper surfaces are covered with photovoltaic cells, which will power the engines. At night, a hydrogen-powered fuel cell will provide the necessary electric power.

The 40,000km journey, scheduled for 2026, will navigate the globe from west to east. The crew will include Bertrand Piccard, who already has two world circumnavigations under his belt, first in a hot-air balloon and a second aboard Solar Impulse, a solar-powered aircraft. Completing the crew are aerobatic pilot Dorine Bourneton, and former fighter pilot and astronaut Michel Tognini.



**Christmas Gifts for Pilots**



## **SAFFORD AIR FAIR**

Saturday October 14th is the date for this year's Safford Air Fair. Everyone is invited to this fly-in. There will be static aircraft display, vendors, airplane rides, pancake breakfast, and much more! If it is like last year the people flying in their display aircraft get a free breakfast.

## **BOGUS POLYFIBER PRODUCTS**

The FAA notice "encourages aircraft owners, operators," and others in the maintenance and supply industries to inspect certified aircraft and parts inventories to determine if one of the 12 products made by a small California company was on hand, or installed on certified aircraft. In such cases, "the FAA recommends that they be removed and quarantined until a determination can be made regarding their eligibility for installation."

A *Federal Register* search found no airworthiness directives or other documents related to the notice. The September 13 unapproved parts notice names Aircraft Spruce as the vendor that sold the various adhesives subject to the FAA investigation. Rob Irwin, vice president of marketing at Aircraft Spruce and Specialty Co., provided a statement via email:

"Aircraft Spruce had been a distributor of Certified Coatings for decades before the product line was acquired by PTI," Irwin wrote, referring to the adhesives made by Products Technologies Inc., the California company cited as the original manufacturer in the FAA notice. (PTI was a family-run business that has since been sold to new owners.) The parts manufacturer approval (PMA) required for adhesives to be used on certified aircraft would have originated with a prior manufacturer that was acquired by PTI.

"Aircraft Spruce was not informed by PTI that the PMA for these products was affected by the transition of the product line from Certified Coatings to PTI. As a distributor of a wide selection of aviation products, Aircraft Spruce relies on the manufacturer to [ensure] that all applicable FAA approvals are in place and current," Irwin wrote.

It is unclear how many aircraft may be affected, though the number is likely small. The various adhesives cited by part number are mostly types of butyrate dope that vary by color, as well as two varieties of clear nitrate dope, also used to secure fabric covering on aircraft, a process that has become increasingly rare over the decades since the products were first sold. Experimental aircraft owners were not asked to supply information to the FAA, while those to whom the notice was addressed—including owners of certified aircraft—were asked to contact the FAA to report findings.

"In addition to the above recommendations, the FAA would appreciate any information concerning the discovery of the above identified part numbers from any source, the means used to identify the source, and the actions taken to inspect and/or remove the part numbers from FAA type-certificated aircraft and/or associated aircraft parts inventories," the agency wrote. The notice originated from the FAA Los Angeles Certificate Management Section, 3960 Paramount Blvd., Lakewood, California, 90712; the phone number 562-627-5290 was provided.

# Thunder Ads



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Continental 0-200 case with data tag and extras.  
\$500; Curtis Clark 602-710-4494

**ADS-B TRANSPONDER & MISC.**  
Appareo Stratus ESG ADS-B transponder, Stratus  
2i UAT w/WiFi, RAM AV-74(-1) Xsponder blade  
ant., pre-wired cable harness, GPS WAAS ant.,  
GPS triax cable, \$3,000<sup>00</sup>, Goodyear 500-5 6 ply  
tire, \$80, 4 Barry engine mounts 94510-41, \$400<sup>00</sup>,  
Dynon D-10A EFIS w/ remote compass & temp  
probe, \$2,000<sup>00</sup>, Charlie Spinelli, 206 678-5678,  
[Spinelllic@msn.com](mailto:Spinelllic@msn.com)

**CURTIS F11C-2 "GOSHAWK"**  
Built by John Pike. R-1340 (600 HP). Less than  
120 hours TT since new. Becker com & txpdr,  
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<https://CaptainBillyWalker.com> 480-773-2823

**AIRCRAFT TOOLS**  
I have some aircraft tools that I acquired through a  
friend. I would like to sell them. Dan Burdett  
480-600-2865

**LONGEZ AND SONEX**  
Two airplanes for sale at Thunder Ridge air park  
(AZ28), a 180hp LongEz and a 120hp Sonex.  
Contact Bertha Partin at [bmpartin@gmail.com](mailto:bmpartin@gmail.com)

**COOL PLANES FOR SALE**  
Only flown by little old ladies to church on Sundays.  
**[HTTP://CAPTAINBILLYWALKER.COM/AIRCRAFT-FOR-SALE/AIRCRAFT-FOR-SALE](http://CAPTAINBILLYWALKER.COM/AIRCRAFT-FOR-SALE/AIRCRAFT-FOR-SALE)**

## **1960 BELL 47 HELICOPTER FOR SALE**

Chuck Millar, owner of Millar Field (2AZ4), is selling  
his helicopter (like in M\*A\*S\*H). Lycoming engine  
132 SMOH. Best offer [CRMUSA@gmail.com](mailto:CRMUSA@gmail.com)

## **THATCHER CX-4 PLANS & MANUAL**

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

## **RV-4 PARTIALLY BUILT KIT**

\$13,500 Lycoming O-290-D2, kit for \$3,000 or  
\$16,000 for both. Wanda Refrow 602-843-9862  
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## **LYCOMING O-360 A1A**

Engine built up for RV project never completed.  
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[fgorrell2@cox.net](mailto:fgorrell2@cox.net)

### **ANNUALS, RESTORATIONS, FABRIC WORK**

Eloy Airport Julie White 520-466-4157

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