



The ThunderWord

Thunderbird Field EAA Chapter 1217

November 2023

Scottsdale, Arizona

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Greetings from my corner of the hangar! Last month author Dexter Cox made the journey up from Green Valley to visit with us and share some adventures in his flying career. Everyone seemed entertained and he was happy because he sold a few copies of his book that is loaded with his misadventures in general aviation.

Finally, the temperatures have started to cool off a little bit and I have been hard at work finishing off annuals and condition inspections. I am really looking forward to having everything flyable this month!

Last month after using Aerial Engagements fancy projector, I purchased a new super powerful PowerPoint projector to replace the one we have been using. With the size of the screen and distance it just wasn't powerful enough and meeting goers were complaining they couldn't see the images. I can now quit telling people "it must be your cataracts". At the October meeting our normal room wasn't available so we went to plan B and used a classroom. It worked pretty good even though it only holds forty people.

See you around the aerodrome!

Curtis

NOVEMBER CHAPTER MEETING

The November 2023 meeting of Thunderbird Field EAA Chapter 1217 will be held on Thursday, November 16th beginning at 7 pm. The location is the Paradise Valley Community Center, 17402 North 40th Street.

This month's guest speaker will be Chapter 1217 member Scott Redfield who is going to talk about his career as a corporate pilot, the

planes he flew and the interesting passengers he flew.

We will be making final plans for our Holiday Party. Also, remember in December we don't have a meeting because we have the annual Holiday Party.

Guests are always welcome!

CHAPTER HOLIDAY PARTY

The Christmas Holiday Season is fast upon us and it's time for our annual holiday party. We have set the time and date for this year's holiday party. Saturday December 9th starting at four in the afternoon. Bill Unternaehrer has volunteered to once again host the event at his home near Greenway Road and twentieth street. Chapter 1217 is providing the munchies you just need to bring a cask of yee favorite grog to share. Families and guests are always welcome.

WHAT I LEARNED AT BREAKFAST

Earlier this month the Deer Valley Pilots Association (DVPA) holds its fall free breakfast get together. Part of the event is talks by the Airport Manager and Tower Chief. The tower chief brought up two bits of information that I didn't know.

1- Deer Valley Airport has a "Letter to Airman/Air missions" It can be viewed online at https://www.faa.gov/flight_deck/pilot_info/dvt. It serves as an introduction to the airport and goes into some of the unique procedures for this specific airport. Never heard of this before.

2- The other factoid had to do with the "hold short" clearance. I had learned that you read back the hold short with the runway and aircraft call sign. Lately at DVT they have just been saying "stand by". I was thinking that it is a

training tower and they didn't know the ICAO standard phraseology. Well, I was wrong and

the controllers are now saying that so they don't have to get a read back.



Finally a drone that makes sense

ARIZONA FLYING FARMERS

My friend Alex Knox dropped me a note saying, Sad day for this guy. A literal lifetime in this organization; The Arizona Flying Farmers Association ceased operations today 30 October 2023. Many of my oldest friends are/were members. It's this organization and my Dad that inspired me to be a pilot. Thank you AFF for the friendship, fellowship, and mentorship that I've experienced for 58+ years.

A great article from a couple of years ago by Julie Murphree sharing history of the AZ Flying Farmers and the International Flying Farmers.

Of all private pilots, Flying Farmers are perhaps the only ones who will tell you their Cessnas, Beechcrafts and Pipers are no different from their combines, tractors, and pickup trucks," says the International Flying Farmers (IFF) website's history page. "After all, airplanes are workhorses too, for hauling supplies, for checking irrigation systems, for compressing the time between the farm and parts store.

In our own Arizona-agriculture history, a brief mention in the January 1943 Arizona Producers publication indicates a shortage in airplanes and pilots led to a cutback in aerial crop-dusting during World War II. The alternative for farmers was ground dusting equipment that they had to commit to sharing among the farms.

Interestingly, today's IFF got its start one year later in 1944. Currently based in Mansfield, Illinois the IFF began when an agricultural extension director and a farm editor decided to visit several flying farmers in Oklahoma. H.A. "Herb" Graham, director of Agricultural Extension at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, and Ferdie Deering, farm editor of the Farmer-Stockman magazine, traveled across the state. One history-making stop was Henry G. "Heinie" Bomhoff, a wheat farmer. Immediately recognizing a colorful character, Graham and Deering interviewed Bomhoff and in the ensuing discussion uncovered numerous other farmers who owned airplanes and used them in farming operations. Continued on page 3



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ARIZONA FLYING FARMERS Continued

Owned and used airplanes. Inspired by Bomhoff and other flying farmers, Extension Director Graham asked if he would be interested in meeting with others like himself at the annual Farm and Home Week, hosted by Oklahoma A & M at Stillwater.

Says the IFF website, "Returning to Stillwater, Graham took his idea to the college president, Dr. Henry G. Bennett. Not only did the president like the idea, he took it one step further imagining a national organization.

Through the combined efforts of Bennett, Graham, Deering and Bomhoff, invitations to an organizational meeting at the college campus were sent to all known state farmer-pilots. "On Aug. 3, 1944, the meeting was held and the Oklahoma Flying Farmers Association was born. The following year, after the idea had spread to other states, Bennett's vision became reality. On Dec. 12, 1945, the National Flying Farmers Association was incorporated under Oklahoma law."

Continued on page 4



Tired Old Bird

Doing a road trip to Bouse to pick up a set of Champ wings Chapter members Curtis Clark and John Davis found three tired old birds

The first leader of the organization, Heinie Bomhoff, had 4,000 pilot hours to his credit, most of it flown at less than 100 feet while hunting coyotes. As a national organization (Dec. 12, 1945, through 1961) and an international organization due to Canadian farmers joining (1961 to the present), IFF made a definite impact on general aviation. During the early decades, the National Flying Farmers Association played an important role in the development of tax rulings on equipment deductions, renter's insurance for pilots, and the specific design of aircraft for aerial applications, as opposed to modifying existing war-surplus or passenger aircraft.

IFF's membership peaked at around 11,000 in 1977, but as the farming economy during that

Arizona farm families that have been involved include the Sossamans, Hawes, Shumway, Schnepf, Moore, Hash, Bogle, Sasser, Banker, Kongable, Hollinshead, Baxter, McElhaney, Maricopa County Farm Bureau member Ferrel Anderson also claims a connection to the Flying Farmers. Ferrell's Grandfather and namesake was one of the original Flying

sitting beside the road. Not pictured was a C-12 King Air and an Aztec in similar condition.

period began a downward spiral so did membership. IFF's website sets the current count at around 275 families or 455 members.

Arizona's own involvement in IFF has made its mark including having national officers. Alexander G. Know, part of a Chandler, Arizona Farm family, was an IFF officer from 2014 to 2019 and the president in 2017/18. Still an IFF member, Knox had been Arizona Flying Farmer president for many years before becoming an IFF Officer. His brother, Lyle, is the current Arizona Flying Farmer president. Reflecting the smaller membership, just a few Arizona farming and ranching families are left in the IFF. Said Knox, "But we still have some fun.

Copeland, Copelin, Dana, Hilgeman, and so many more. In fact, Jap and Faith Sossaman were NFF charter members in 1945.

Farmers, from Post Falls, Idaho. The grandfather raised roses. He would often fly down to Arizona, from Idaho, where he and his wife, had a house in Mesa.

Local Arizona aviators will appreciate the story of the former owner and operator of Chandler Air Service, Inc. John Walkup (1944-2017), who grew up on a farm in Stillwater, Oklahoma. While he was never involved in the Arizona Flying Farmers, he was the first International Flying Farmer Teen president.

The Flying Farmer and his Aircraft

While never active in IFF, my own Dad, Pat Murphree, has always been a flying farmer and at 83 and retired still flies to check out other farms. In visiting with him and reflecting on the transition to drones, he will tell you that farmer/rancher pilots used their aircraft to monitor irrigation systems, check livestock and crops, and dust fields. Other flying farmer pilots even delivered and picked up supplies and parts.

When I asked him to put together a list of what he used his plane for, he gave me the following.

1. Water scheduling by satellite or aircraft
2. Aerial photos for project leaders
3. Nearing watering dates on crops, looked from aircraft at plant coloration; often adjusted based on the coloration of the leaves (he envies the accuracy of today's drones)
4. After laser leveling fields, evaluated water coverage from aircraft
5. Often looked for insect disease, flood damage or any other natural or man-made damage to farms
6. Trips to meetings in Safford, Yuma and White Tanks



Bubble Canopy P-40



Normal Canopy P-40



Alexander Eaglerock OX-5 Biplane at the Casa Blanca Airport in downtown Scottsdale



Casa Bianca Airport (Feb 1917)
North/south road is Invergordon
it is just south of Jackrabbit Road.

BUSIEST GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORTS

- 1- Phoenix Deer Valley Airport (KDVT) – Phoenix, Arizona
- 2- Centennial Airport (KAPA) – Denver, Colorado
- 3- Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport (KMYF) – San Diego, California
- 4- Prescott Regional Airport – Ernest A Love Field (KPRC) – Prescott, Arizona
- 5- Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport (KBJC) – Denver, Colorado
- 6- Long Beach Airport (Daugherty Field) (KLGB) – Los Angeles, California
- 7- Portland–Hillsboro Airport (KHIO) – Portland, Oregon
- 8- Falcon Field (KFFZ) – Mesa, Arizona
- 9- Chandler Municipal Airport (KCHD) – Chandler, Arizona
- 10- Grand Forks International Airport (KGFK) – Grand Forks, North Dakota

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