

The WingNut

EAA Chapter One Flabob Airport (RIR) Riverside, CA



Volume 60, Issue 7/8

We make flying FUN!

July/August 2013

Surviving the Early Years

By Ray Stits

When old pilots thumb through early log books, some entries bring back vivid memories of flying adventures that the pilot was fortunate to have survived without injury or damage to the airplane or a citation for violating some CAA regulations. This is a never-before told story about one of those adventures.

On October 6, 1945, about an hour after a CAA representative handed me my pilot certificate, a person-to-person phone call came to the Marshall, MI, airport office asking for a mechanic known as "Slim." The call was from a mutual friend, Mr. Allen, a Battle Creek lumber yard owner. Allen asked Slim to recruit a pilot to fly to Frankfort the next day to meet him when the ferryboat arrived from Milwaukee.

Slim asked me if I was interested, and I said "Yes, and tell Allen I will charge the going rate of \$4 per hour airplane rental time plus fuel at 25¢ per gallon."

I owned a Piper J-3 Cub with a 65-horsepower Franklin engine, NC38845. It was equipped with the standard instruments--magnetic compass, airspeed indicator, single-hand altimeter, oil pressure and temperature gauges, and a tachometer.

The procedure for starting a Piper J-3 Cub when alone is to stand on the right side with your toe under the tire, hold on to the windshield



frame, and reach forward to engage the reliable "armstrong starter" with a fast pull down of the prop blade.

Navigation was by a magnetic compass and a \$2 wrist watch. A line was drawn on a map to the destination and landmarks checked along the line to correct for drift and mark off distance traveled.

The Piper Cub fuel capacity is 11 gallons, enough for two hours with a little reserve, with a cruise speed of about 60 miles per hour. My fuel stops were planned at a maximum of 120 miles if there was no head wind. I grew up in Arizona and was not familiar with Michigan geography. When planning the trip I was surprised that Frankfort was way up in the northern end of the state, so I planned a fuel stop at Big Rapids.

The next morning the weather was clear and no wind, and I got an early start. When I was about 15 miles from Frankfort, I noticed a big fog bank which appeared to be way out on the lake. As I approached the vicinity of the airport, I was concentrating on spot-

ting the grass runway, which blended in with all the farm fields.

While I was looking down, I flew into a thick fog bank with zero visibility. I realized that the fog came in fast off the lake to my left, so I made what felt like a 90-degree turn to the right and neutralized the controls to what felt like level flight. After about 45 seconds in the fog, I flew out straight and level into a clear sky with a fast ground speed.

I flew about 10 minutes ahead of the storm at full throttle, looking for a suitable field in which to land. I picked a field with no tall brush and a clear approach, and made a tight 180-degree turn to face the fast approaching storm. As I got close to the field, the first of the storm hit, and my ground speed dropped to a slow walk.

Running at full throttle, I flew about two airplane lengths past the fence and pushed the stick forward

...I flew into a thick fog bank with zero visibility.

to plant the wheels on the ground and raised the tail higher to increase the weight on the tires to get more traction. I sat there at full throttle and pushing the brakes. Then, about three minutes after I landed, the full storm hit with
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EAA Chapter One

Officers

President

Jan Buttermore
(951) 318-5215
president@eaach1.org

Vice-President

Jim O'Brien
951-847-5600
redwhitechamp@me.com

Treasurer

Nancy Acorn
(951) 788-5694
treasurer@eaach1.org

Secretary

Garbriella Baumert
951-225-7100
secretary@eaach1.org

Directors

Dave Cudney
(951) 255-4880
yenduc@sbcglobal.net

Leon Grumling
(951) 582-0978 home
(951) 818-5551 cell
editor@eaach1.org

Ron Headlee
(951) 485-9812
ardee0@hotmail.com

Ray Stits
(951) 682-6236

Walt Wasowski
(909) 829-8029 home
(909) 565-8099 cell
chap1flabob@gmail.com

Tech Counselors

Norm Douthit -- (8 88) 811-2232
Jan Buttermore -- (951) 318-5215

Webmaster

Jan Buttermore
webmaster@eaach1.org

WingNut Editor

Leon Grumling
editor@eaach1.org

Young Eagles

Wes Blasjo -- Coordinator

Kathy Rohm -- Reservations
ye@eaach1.org

Ad Rates

Business card size--
\$5.00 per issue

1/8 page, 4"x 2½ --
\$10.00 per issue

1/4 page, 4" x 5"
\$18.00 per issue

½ page, 8" x 5" --
\$26.00 per issue

Join us for the
July Fourth celebration
at Flabob Airport!

Calendar



July 2013

4th – 4th of July at Flabob
Chapter One Hangar - all evening

13th--Young Eagles
Chapter One Hangar - 8 a.m.

13th--Board Meeting
Chapter One Hangar - 3 p.m.

20th – Aircraft Display Day & Car Show
Flabob Airport

29th-Aug. 4th – AIRVENTURE!
Oshkosh, WI

August 2013

10th – Young Eagles
Chapter One Hangar - 8 a.m.

10th – Chapter Meeting
Chapter One Hangar - 1 p.m.

10th – Board Meeting
Chapter One Hangar - 3 p.m.

17th – Aircraft Display Day & Car Show
Flabob Airport

September 2013

14th – Young Eagles
Chapter One Hangar - 8 a.m.

14th – Chapter Meeting
Chapter One Hangar - 1 p.m.

14th – Board Meeting
Chapter One Hangar - 3 p.m.

21st – Aircraft Display Day & Car Show
Flabob Airport



A word from Jim O'Brien— your new vice-president

Hello Everyone!

My name is Jim O'Brien, and I'm your new EAA Chapter One Vice-President. Thanks to Jan Buttermore, my friend, asking for my help and support, I accepted and your board approved my position in April. I am happy and proud to accept, and wanted to take a few minutes of your time to introduce myself, let you know a little bit about me (if we haven't met!) and to ask you how I can help to make EAA Chapter One better and more unified than ever.

I learned to fly at RIR in 1989. I've owned and based two Taylorcraft BC12-D's, and of recent, completely restored a Champ 7EC with my son Jimmy, who, by the way, is graduating from A&P school late May, thanks to our project and all the help and encouragement from the all the regular 'geezers' at Flabob, Jan Buttermore primarily. My hangar is one of the closest in proximity to Chapter One's hangar, so I'm usually around keeping watch... so stop by when the door's open and grab a cold bottle of water with me.

Since returning to RIR after a 10-year hiatus to rebuild the Champ, I've been hearing a lot of discussion and controversy (sadly, mostly negative...) about Chapter One. I've heard many versions of 'what happened'... and am disappointed to know that there's division among the ranks, for all the various reasons. I'm not even sure what really happened, and frankly, don't need to know. What I do need to know is are you willing to set aside your differences, so that we can regain our unity and 'strength in numbers' to maintain our status and home-spun pride of ownership of Chapter One? We had the folks from Oshkosh here a couple of months ago, and frankly, the headquarters folks from Wisconsin were disappointed in the 'local' turnout. We only had 10 members there out of a crowd of 100+. Yikes! Did we not get the info out in time???... or is there just that much apathy and resentment that personal support is a thing of the past?

Monthly meetings primarily consist of the pilots flying Young Eagles and board members. Turnout for our speakers is below low, and since they're all here talking about our favorite subject...Aviation! you all know that we really can do a better job and attend. If we don't and if we don't very soon, we die.

I am a believer that it's a happier existence being grateful for what one has, rather than being ungrateful for what we don't. I believe we were truly rewarded from headquarters when we made the front cover of *Sport Aviation* magazine last month, May 2013, along with two fine articles about Flabob and Chapter One. We are VERY lucky to have all the individual and combined talents of many fine people who are at RIR, and especially those who belong to Chapter One: Ray Stits, Tom Whathen and his crew managing and maintaining our fine airport and supporting all of us and its growth and progress, Young Eagle pilots and the young people who show up each month to help, a fine building to operate from, and the list goes on and on.

We are probably the most well known EAA chapter in existence, and thousands of pilots and non-pilots alike have some positive experience about us somewhere in their 'logbooks.' It's a tragedy that much talk these days is about the experiences of days past at Flabob and Chapter One, rather than current events and activities that can and should be happening now.

Let's face it...we're waning at best, and we need to do something about it, and fast! It doesn't matter who's at fault or who's to blame (or what transpired

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Stuart Matthews
8995 Huntsman Rd
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Come Join Us...

4TH OF JULY



at Flabob Airport

Join us for an evening of fun at Historic Flabob Airport on the Fourth of July. There will be grills fired up for cooking your hamburgers and hot dogs, home-made ice cream, and lots of socializing. Come out and join us, whether you're an airport bum or a first-time visitor.

As the sun sets, you'll have a front-row seat to see the impressive vista of fireworks set off on Mount Rubidoux. Bring Mom & Dad, bring the kids, bring the whole family to Historic Flabob Airport in Rubidoux for our Fourth of July celebration.

We'll see you there! July 4th!



**For more information, call
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Ray Stits - Surviving the Early Years

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heavy rain and thick fog. I could see only straight down at the wheels to watch the tires skid back one at a time as the airplane weather-cocked with each slight shift in wind direction. With what appeared to be a solid wall of water, I expected the unprotected spark plugs to short out, but the engine kept running full throttle.

About 20 minutes after I landed, the worst of the storm was over. I gradually backed off on the throttle to idle, and I let the tail down and sat there, in case the lull was temporary. The full-throttle engine running had used a lot of fuel, and the wire-and-cork fuel gauge showed the fuel was very low. I didn't know how far inland I had flown, and thought I might not have enough fuel to get back to Frankfort. In a few minutes, the sky was clear with no wind, so I killed the engine and checked the fuel with my calibrated dip stick. It showed three gallons.

I needed to know the distance to Frankfort. There was a house and car about 600 feet straight ahead in the same field where I had landed, and I started walking toward them. A crop of turnips had recently been harvested from the field, and a few small turnips were left. I landed parallel to the plow ridges, so taking off would be no problem, except for the tall trees around the house straight ahead.

When I got about 150 feet from the house and car, I noticed the silence. I thought about the possibility of a big guard dog protecting the property, so I stopped and hollered as loud as I could, "Hello! Anybody home?" Then I saw through the windshield two heads pop up from the back seat of the car. Apparently, I had interrupted a couple of young people.

I could see a lot of thrashing around, people putting on clothes in the car, so I didn't walk any closer. Soon, the couple got out and walked to where I was waiting. I pointed to my airplane and told them I had landed in the field during the storm, and wanted to know the distance to Frankfort. He said about 20 miles. I thanked them and walked back to the airplane.

I decided that I could safely fly 20 miles if I throttled back and used just enough power to maintain level flight. After takeoff, I leveled off when the wheels were a few feet off the ground to get more speed and then made a shallow left turn to go around the trees.

The wire-and-cork fuel gauge had stopped bobbing by the time I found the airport and landed. I refueled, tied down, and walked to the nearby ferryboat dock. I was told the ferryboat was delayed by the storm and was expected in another hour. So I walked to a café for lunch.

I had been watching another storm out on the lake, and when Allen walked off the boat I told him the storm was coming and we should head back to Marshall with no delay. I got a big surprise when Allen said he wanted to go not to Marshall, but to Detroit, which is on the opposite side and south end of the state. I said, "Okay, let's get going before the storm hits."

I planned a fuel stop at Midland, and while we were there refueling, Allen said his final destination was Howell, and he thought Detroit was the closest airport. I looked at the map and saw that Ann Arbor was a better choice, and Allen agreed.

We had flown about two-thirds of the distance to Ann Arbor, when Allen saw a large three-story brick building way out of town with no other buildings near it. He said that was his final destination, and asked me to land in a grass field across the road. I made a 270-degree turn to land facing the approaching storm. Allen got out, and I taxied back in my landing tracks and took off with light sprinkles falling, and picked up my compass heading to Ann Arbor.

The storm had followed me across Michigan, and visibility soon decreased to about one-quarter mile. I dropped down to about 500 feet above the ground to try to find the airport. Visibility was decreasing when I crossed over Michigan Avenue, a major east-west highway across the bottom of Michigan from Detroit to Benton Harbor, connecting many cities, including Marshall.

I decided to follow the road instead of trying to find the airport in the storm. As the rain and visibility decreased, I dropped down to about 300 feet--just high enough to clear any power lines that crossed the road. Soon, the heavy rain and wind arrived as expected. I opened the top half of the door to look straight down

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Ray Stits - Surviving the Early Years

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through the rain for level and navigation reference. My ground speed was reduced to about half. In about 20 minutes, the rain and high wind stopped and was replaced with a high solid overcast and good visibility but I still had a light head wind.

Missing the refueling stop at Ann Arbor caused a fuel problem. I had enough fuel get to Jackson, which had a control tower. But, with the headwind, I would arrive after dark and get a violation.

I was flying along contemplating all my options when I saw a crossroads with a gas station and grocery store in the southwest corner. I decided to land in a grass field behind the gas station to refuel. I made a 270-degree turn and landed crosswind toward the road and power lines. I taxied up to the fence and climbed over and went in and told the attendant that I had landed in the field and needed fuel. He walked to the front of the store, picked up a five-gallon can and large funnel. He said that a lot of airplanes landed in that field to buy fuel. He filled the can, carried it out to the fence, I climbed over and he handed me the can and funnel, and said when I was through just drop the can and funnel over the fence and he would get it later. After refueling my Cub, I picked up the airplane tail and turned it around and took off in my landing tracks instead of chopping another track through the tall grass.

I had enough fuel to get to Marshall, and with the high overcast blocking any sky light, it was soon very dark. The headwind tapered off and the city lights could be seen for miles. I followed Michigan Avenue, which was well defined by the headlights. I could soon see the Marshall Airport's blue boundary lights, which were mounted on eight-foot posts, about three miles away. Marshall was a big grass field, and I decided to land straight in, heading west, and I started to let down about a mile away.

I reduced power by sound and speed by feel. I crossed over the eastern fence at about 30 feet. I backed off on the power and let it slowly settle in to what seemed like a big, black hole, until I felt the wheels touch, then chopped the power. I watched the flood light on the top of the hangar as a directional reference to keep it straight during roll-out.

When I taxied in and tied down, the airport was deserted. So, fortunately, no one witnessed my flying at night with no lights!

I went home and my wife, Edith, asked me why I was so late coming home. I said I had been busy--which was true! I never saw Allen again to collect the rental and gas for the door-to-door airplane ride, and I marked it off as an experience never to be repeated.



First stealth fighter goes to the boneyard...

Attn: Young Eagle Pilots

The Chapter One Board of Directors voted to make two immediate changes to our Young Eagles Program at a special meeting held June 22, for the benefit of our Young Eagle pilots.

The Chapter will now reimburse YE pilots \$1 per gallon of avgas used while flying Young Eagles.

In addition, we have requested that no more than 50 Young Eagles be signed up for any YE day.

We hope these changes will improve your experiences as a YE pilot, and bring back some pilots who have not been active.

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Bern Heimos to speak at FAA seminar

Bern Heimos, a long-time Chapter One member, will be presenting a seminar for the FAA entitled "Always on Final--Cross-country Adventures in a Vintage J-3 Cub." The WINGS-credited seminar will be held July 2 at 6:30 p.m. in the community conference room at the Irvine Ranch Water District HQ, 15500 Sand Canyon Ave., in Irvine

Each summer since 2004, Bern Heimos has flown his vintage 1939 Piper Cub coast-to-coast across America. Generally each adventure totals about 6,000

miles over a four to six week period. He chooses different routes to learn more about our country and to experience a variety of flying challenges. Bern gave a presentation at a Chapter One meeting a few years ago.

The goal of the presentation is to bring a different paradigm to pilots considering "low and slow" cross-country flights. Let's face it – if by low and slow we mean flying at the lowest legal altitude above ground, you are *always on final* approach

A word from Jim O'Brien...

(Continued from Page 3)

over the years or at some event or disagreement), but to take responsibility for one's own survival is the first step in the way of recovery. As my dad always said, "Yesterday's hits...and strike-outs...don't count in today's game!" If we hit home runs in the past, together, we can hit one farther now. If we struck-out in the past, let's work together on our 'stance and swing' and start with singles and doubles, for after all, those are the hits that win games.

Let's start hitting singles and doubles first, by just showing up and supporting the few current activities we DO have. Enthusiasm is contagious. It's one thing to sit at home and flog our minds with what's wrong, but it's another thing to do something about it. I challenge you! Show up and talk to me, email me, call me with your ideas, suggestions, talents, asset, or anything else you can contribute. I assure you, I'll take your positive ideas and suggestions to the board, and I'll fight to get more activities... but be prepared to follow through with your time and support. I ask that you find a positive place in your mind and stay there, because I am not interested in rehashing the past, but in rebuilding for our future. Just talk to us. You have a VERY concerned and interested board of directors who want to lead.

Let's set aside our differences and let's focus on our similarities and unified goals.

I sincerely look forward meeting and hearing from you so that together, we can re-build and have an even better organization than the one we've enjoyed in the past.

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71 Young Eagles flown in June

Seventy-one youth became Young Eagles, but it took some doings by nine pilots to make it happen. Jacob Palmer flew one and then airplane mechanical problems sidelined him. Another pilot wasn't able to get there until late morning and another pilot had to leave early, so it took until early afternoon to fly all the youth who showed up.

For even the casual reader of this column each month, you may have noticed a reoccurring theme: "Not enough pilots." There are several known reasons for this and no doubt several reasons known only to the pilots themselves. However, "The show must go on." If any reader knows of any pilots who might be interested in flying Young Eagles, ask them if they would like to join the Chapter One's group of GREAT pilots. The requirements are few; actually there is only one requirement above and beyond the things that a pilot normally does and that is membership in EAA National. Membership in a local EAA chapter is nice, but not required to fly Young Eagles. The other requirements are: 1) A private or sport pilot license. 2) All FAA requirements for pilot and aircraft. 3) Liability insurance on the aircraft of \$1,000,000 (Most pilots carry at least this much). EAA has an additional \$1,000,000 umbrella policy on top of this (no pun intended).

What are the rewards for this flying effort, you might ask? By far, the greatest are the smiles on the kids' faces when they have seen the earth from a new perspective, and have actually controlled the airplane in flight. These smiles, and squeals of delight from some of the girls, are priceless!!! Another reward is, in many cases, changing the direction of a young person's life in the direction of aviation. We have not had the finances or personnel to do follow-up studies as to how many youth go on in aviation. We only have a great deal of anecdotal evidence as to many who have gone on in many different phases of aviation. It is kind of like planting a new lawn. You prepare the soil and sow a lot of seeds, and then when you get a rich thick layer of green grass, you knew that a lot of the seed took hold and grew. A sometimes forgotten reward is that for many youth, they have been able to see life from a different perspective (literally), and they look at life in a much broader context after having seen the world from a "bird's eye view." Pilots, of all people, don't have to be reminded of this phenomenon. Another reward of flying Young Eagles with Chapter One is that you get to rub shoulders with a GREAT group of pilots that are fun to be around. The list of rewards could go on, but these are starters. Please, if any of you have friends who might be interested, bring them out to a Young Eagle event and see if they don't "catch the fever."

The Board of Directors of Chapter One has "sweetened the pot" a little with the addition gasoline reimbursement on top of the \$1.00 per gallon that Phillips gives if bought at a Phillips pump with a Phillips credit card.

Thanks to pilots and ground support people who helped make another Young Eagle Flight Rally a success for so many youth.

- Wes Blasjo, Young Eagles Coordinator

Pilots Who Flew:

Allyn Auck	Cessna 172	Jacob Palmer	Aeronca
Larry Conley	Ercoupe	Allen Teets	C172
Jim Hayes	Cessna 172	Walt Wasowski	Cub
Tom Jones	Super Cub	Loreen Wynja	C172
Jim Meeker	Taylorcraft		



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*Chapter Meeting
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day of fellowship & fun!!

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Check our website at www.eeach1.org

We Make Flying FUN!!!

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