Der Flügtag

EAA Chapter 958 New Braunfels, TX
Where every day is a good flying day!

May 2013 Issue

Experimental Aviation

The Success Continues...

EAA Chapter 958

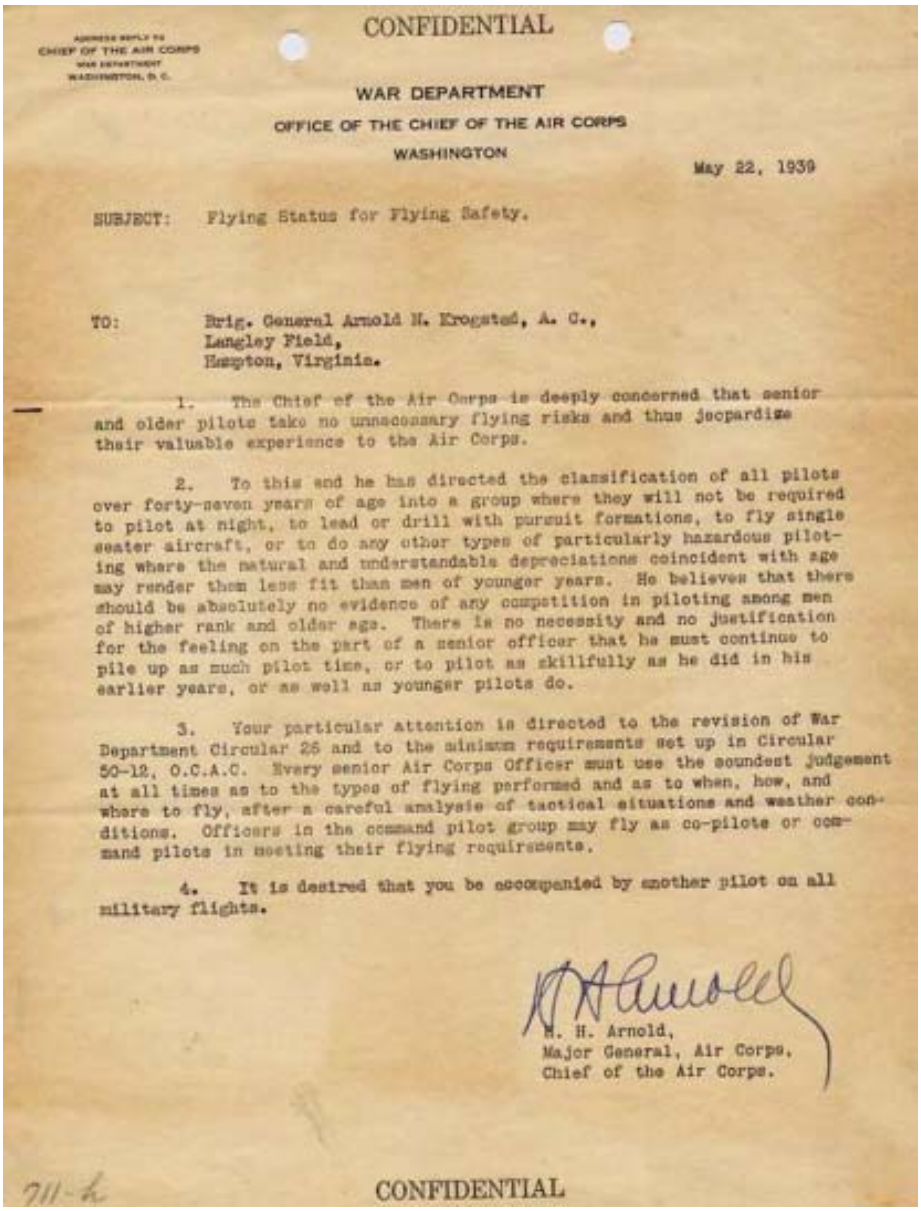
EAA
The Leader In Recreational Aviation

Next Meetng

May 18, 2013 10:00 am at New Braunfels airport

Presentation: Pentathalon - building techniques challenge by Larry New

Too Old to Fly?



CONFIDENTIAL

WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF THE AIR CORPS
WASHINGTON

May 22, 1939

SUBJECT: Flying Status for Flying Safety.

TO: Brig. General Arnold N. Krogstad, A. C.,
Langley Field,
Hampton, Virginia.

1. The Chief of the Air Corps is deeply concerned that senior and older pilots take no unnecessary flying risks and thus jeopardize their valuable experience to the Air Corps.

2. To this end he has directed the classification of all pilots over forty-seven years of age into a group where they will not be required to pilot at night, to lead or drill with pursuit formations, to fly single seater aircraft, or to do any other types of particularly hazardous piloting where the natural and understandable depreciations coincident with age may render them less fit than men of younger years. He believes that there should be absolutely no evidence of any competition in piloting among men of higher rank and older age. There is no necessity and no justification for the feeling on the part of a senior officer that he must continue to pile up as much pilot time, or to pilot as skillfully as he did in his earlier years, or as well as younger pilots do.

3. Your particular attention is directed to the revision of War Department Circular 26 and to the minimum requirements set up in Circular 50-12, O.C.A.C. Every senior Air Corps Officer must use the soundest judgement at all times as to the types of flying performed and as to when, how, and where to fly, after a careful analysis of tactical situations and weather conditions. Officers in the command pilot group may fly as co-pilots or command pilots in meeting their flying requirements.

4. It is desired that you be accompanied by another pilot on all military flights.

H. H. Arnold,
Major General, Air Corps,
Chief of the Air Corps.

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CONFIDENTIAL

Wonder what the General would say about us "old guys" flying today?

How The O-2s Really Got There

It's 1967 or maybe early 1968, I forget, and the Air Force has bought a mess of Cessna Super Skymasters and called them O-2s.

The Cessna factory at Wichita , Kansas is pumping them out at a pretty good clip and your problem is to figure out how to get them to Vietnam where they are needed. Your choices are:

1. Fly them to the West coast and turn them over to the Army for transport by cargo ship.

2. Take the wings off them and stuff them three at a time into the belly of C-124s and fly them over.

3. Fly them over under their own power with no C-124 attached.

Question: Which method was used? Right! Every single one of those puppies was hand-flown across the Big P to Vietnam . That sounds like it might have been a Mickey Mouse operation. Believe me, it wasn't that good.

Air Force Systems Command (AFSC) was running that show and their knowledge stopped somewhat short of knowing anything about ferrying airplanes. The Air Force had a perfectly good organization called the 44th Aircraft Delivery Group which operated world-wide and managed the ferrying of all aircraft, except the O-2s.

AFSC contracted with some outfit in San Francisco to deliver the planes to Saigon . The contractor hired a bunch of civilian pilots who couldn't find honest work elsewhere. Since the O-2s were technically "public" aircraft (as opposed to civil aircraft) no pilot's license was necessary to fly one and I'm not sure that all of the pilots had licenses. Some of them were pretty good, but the rest of them were the most god-awful collection of unqualified scruffy-looking alcoholics you ever saw. The dregs of the flying profession. What could possibly go wrong???

The deal worked like this. The pilots were given a plane ticket to Wichita where they got a quickie check-out in the O-2 if they needed one. Then they launched in bunches of four and headed for Hamilton AFB on the west coast of California . Enroute, they were instructed to carefully monitor and record their oil consumption, which, of course, they did not do. That type of pilot does not monitor and record oil consumption.

At Hamilton , the Air Force removed all the seats except the left front one. The seats were shipped to Vietnam by air, which is what should have happened to the rest of the plane, too. Extra fuel tanks were installed in the vacant floor space followed by the pilot himself. He had to crawl over the co-pilot tank to get to the left seat. Next, they installed an oil tank on top of the co-pilot tank followed by a small emergency HF radio on top of that. Now, the pilot was truly locked in. To get out, he could either wait for someone to remove the radio and oil tank or crawl out the emergency escape window on the left side.

Takeoff must have been something to watch. With all that fuel, the planes were way over max gross weight. They had no single engine capability at all for about the first five hours of flight. If either engine hiccupped, the pilot went swimming. The route was Hawaii (Hickam), Midway, Wake Island, Guam (Anderson), Philippines (Clark) and Saigon (Tan Son Nhut.) The Hamilton-Hickam leg was by far the longest; nominally about thirteen hours. The O-2s were carrying fuel for about fourteen and a half hours of flight.

Navigation was strictly dead reckoning. The pilots took up a heading based on wind calculations and flew out their ETA hoping to be lost within range of a Hawaiian radio station. They had no long range navigation equipment.

The fuel tanks were disposable and were dropped off as they were no longer needed. The fuel pumps were not disposable and the pilots were instructed to bring them back along with their dirty underwear and the HF radio. The trip was supposed to take about a week and each pilot carried an airline ticket from Saigon to Wichita to go back and pick up another plane. For this, the pilots were paid $800 per trip with the flight leader getting $1,000. They planned on averaging three trips a month and getting rich doing it.

How come I know so much about this? Well, I was the Director of Safety at Hickam AFB and every single one of over 300 O-2s passed through my domain and created almost constant headaches. Before this all started, I had no idea what an O-2 even looked like much less any knowledge of the overall ferrying scheme. The trouble started with the very first flight and began with the extra oil tank. The reason for determining oil consumption on the Wichita-Hamilton leg was to know how much oil to add during the really long legs. There were no oil quantity gauges. Shortly after takeoff from Hamilton , boredom set in and the pilots would give the oil tank wobble pump a jab or two and squirt some more oil into the engines.

The O-2 didn't need that much oil. All this did was over-service the engines which resulted in fluctuating oil pressure. The pilots didn't like that at all, so they added more oil which led to more pressure fluctuation. Meanwhile, they were totally lost and not getting much closer to Hawaii . Time for the old MAYDAY call on the HF radio.

When that call came in, the Coast Guard in Hawaii was running a very interesting seminar on sea rescue in downtown Honolulu . I was attending, which is how I found out that we had an O-2 problem. The Coast Guard shut down the seminar and launched their C-130 and a pair of cutters to find the O-2s; which they did.

They herded them to the nearest runway which happened to be the Marine Corps Air Station at Kanehoe on the Northeast side of Oahu . I drove over the mountains to Kanehoe to find out what the hell this was all about. That's when I saw my first O-2; actually my first four O-2s. Aside from being ugly, they were all soaked with oil overflowing from both engines and they didn't have ten gallons of gas among them. One had flamed out taxiing in from landing. They had been airborne for 14 hours and 45 minutes. The Coast Guard was really pissed when they learned the full story and was making noises about sending someone a bill for the rescue effort. I must say, I agreed with them.

That silliness continued for three or four weeks with every single flight of O-2s getting into some sort of trouble. At Hickam, the O-2 pilots were fairly easy to find. Most of the time they were draped over the bar at the O-Club; a situation which was attracting the attention of the Officers Wives Club; always a dangerous thing to do.

I went to PACAF Headquarters and told them what was going on and they were absolutely appalled. Civilian misfits ferrying Air Force airplanes across the Pacific to a combat zone? No way!

Between us, we began firing off messages to get this idiocy stopped. AFSC couldn't understand what the problem was and probably still doesn't. Hamilton AFB was taking a lot of heat for participating and allowing them to launch at all. I was agitating about the stupidity of this through all the safety channels. I think I may have mentioned that when the inevitable accident occurred, they better hope it was out of my area. If I had to investigate it, they were definitely not going to like the report. I was prepared to write most of the report right then before the accident even happened.

AFSC backed down and agreed to let the 44th Aircraft Delivery Group run the operation. The 44th wasn't too happy about that because the civilian pilots didn't seem to take instructions very well. Nevertheless, that brought some organization to the festivities which included things like mission planning, briefings, weather analysis, flight following and escort. The O-2s weren't allowed to fly unless accompanied by a C-47 or C-7 Caribou who could fly at their speed and handle the navigation. That wasn't much of a problem as there were two or three of those planes being ferried each week to Vietnam .

That procedure eliminated most of my problems and things settled down to a routine. The delivery rate to Vietnam was slowed somewhat, but I think more total planes actually got there because of it. During the entire process, only two planes were lost. One ditched due to engine failure on the Wake-Guam leg. The pilot managed to get out of the plane and bobbed around in his life jacket until picked up by a Japanese cargo ship. The other crashed in the Philippines killing the pilot. I never knew the circumstances.

We had, of course, the occasional problem at Hickam. I remember one pilot who landed nose gear first and managed to snap the gear off completely and ding the front propeller. I went out to see what had happened and got a load of bullshit and a strong whiff of gin from the pilot. The plane (he claimed) was nose heavy on landing and the elevator trim was inoperative. He couldn't get the nose up. Furthermore, his transmitter was out and he couldn't tell anyone about his problems. I checked the plane and found the elevator trimmed full nose down, but the trim switch and trim tab worked just fine. Just to the left of the trim switch, I noticed that the microphone toggle switch was actually bent backwards. After several hours of martinis, the pilot was trying to trim using the mic switch. He trimmed the plane full nose down while trying to talk to the control tower on the trim switch. Case closed.

None of these accidents consumed any of my time. I had learned another quirk in the AFSC way of doing business. Appearances aside, the aircraft were not Air Force aircraft and wouldn't be until they arrived in Saigon and were formally delivered and accepted. Since they weren't, technically, Air Force aircraft; they couldn't have an Air Force accident. The planes weren't registered as civil aircraft, so they couldn't have a civil accident either. They were in regulatory limbo and any accidents were non-events. Nobody cared.

That suited me just fine. I had other things to do and I couldn't see how an investigation of stupidity would contribute anything to the Air Force safety program. Incidentally, how do you suppose they got the O-2s out of Vietnam and back to the United States? They took the wings off, stuffed them three at a time into the belly of C-124s and flew them back. AFSC was not involved which, I later learned, tended to improve almost any operation.

From The Editor

Welcome to the May edition of Der Flugtag. EAA Chapter 958 had a great hanger meeting at Ron Mudges hanger at Kestrel Aviation where we had an opportunity to see the progress on his RV 12. See the article and pics next page for some highlights.

We also had the opportunity to have lunch afterwards at Rich and Julie Webers beautiful home and continue hanger talk over some delicious burgers and brats. It was something not to miss.

Master Chef Rich manned the grill.....while chapter members supervised

This month we'll be back at the New branfels airport for our regular meeting and a special program presented by Larry New.

Remember the newsletter is "Of, By and For" our membership. We want to hear about your planes (flying, maintainance, etc) and your projects, learnng experiences, & flying experiences. Get the info to us and we'll get it into the newsletter. Thanks.

What Our Members are Building

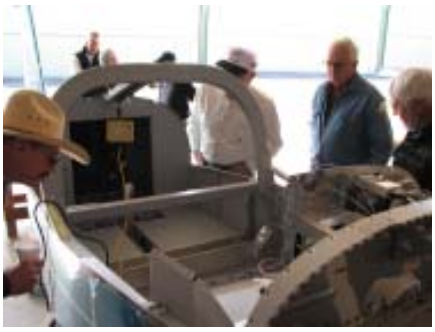
Ron Mudge's RV 12

Last year I decided for various reasons to sell my Glasair and go into a Light Sport airplane. I was interested in the RV 12 and possibly a completed one or nearly complete project. After I sold my Glasair in July 2012, I found in the same week a RV 12 project for sale in Seattle. The airframe was basically complete up through the 'Finish Kit'. It required the electrical/avionics kit and the Rotax engine kit to complete. So my wife and I flew to Seattle to look at and purchase the kit after meeting the seller and seeing the workmanship and records I decided to buy it and truck it home.

The seller invited us stay at his home where he had been doing the construction . We spent a day building jigs to hold the plane in the truck and organizing all of the parts, etc. We spent another day loading it into a Penske truck. Nancy and I left the next day for the trip home which was over 2200 miles through some beautiful country. Penske diesel trucks are not fun to drive however.

I'm going to complete the kit completely to Van's requirements which will keep it as ELSA certification. The final sign off will be easier, also I don't believe this aircraft has a lot of allowance for variation. Van's will not support EAB (Experimental Amateur Built) versions.
This means I am using the Van's avionics kit (Dynon Skyview) and the Van's Rotax engine kit.
Lessons learned are there is always more work than you think there might be, but it is fun.

Trucking the RV back to Texas



RV Hanger talk at the April Meeting in Ron Mudges Hanger

BUILDING TIPS WANTED

Do you have some tips or construction techniques you'd like to share? Send them to r.h.ross@verizon.net and we'll put them in upcoming newsletters. Don't worry about spelling, grammar etc. We'll help get it right. We just want to help get your ideas and experiences out to fellow builders and aviators.

FROM THE SHOP

Good 'Ole Rubber Cement

I was working around the shop the other day and decided it was time to clean my combination belt/disc sander. I had purchased some adhesive backed sanding discs from Harbor Freight a while back and mounted a fresh one on the disc platen after cleaning old adhesive form the platen with some acetone. I centered it and stuck it on. After a short while I noticed that the sanding disc was falling off the platten. The adhesive on the sanding discs was just not holding. I was going to throw the discs out when I noticed some rubber cement on a shelf. Aha. I took the disc and coated it with a layer of rubber cement and did the same to the platen. After about 10 minutes the sanding disc was mounted to the platten and viola- it stayed stuck.

Rubber cement is one of those little tools that is easy to forget about but can be very useful in the shop setting. It can be used as a non-permanent contact cement - handy for attaching sandpaper to all sorts of forms - dowels, extrusions of various shapes and of course flat surfaces. Its handy for attaching a profile of a part (hand or computer drawn) to wood, metal and various plastics (check plastics compatability first) and is easily cleaned off with acetone or a little sanding. Keep a bottle handy for those chores that require a little stick-to-itiveness.