

# Oshkosh 2022

I have procrastinated long enough. I usually write this story in the middle of winter but apparently April 4 is still the middle of winter this year. We're under a blizzard warning, the wind is gusting to near 70 mph and it's snowing so hard I can't see across my deck. Seems like a perfect evening to cast my memory back to July and imagine being warm again.

## Wednesday, July 20, 2022

I have been fighting a brake fluid leak in the Oshkosh Marriott (the Merry Yacht) for about a week and I think I finally have it fixed. It has been so frustrating I was considering borrowing a friend's van because nothing will stop me from this trip. After replacing calipers and pucks on the 1990 Chevy the brake lines refused to seal and I'm up to my armpits in grease, rust and brake fluid but I don't see a leak right now. I have loaded most of my camping essentials so I'm going to shower and hope for the best.

## Thursday, July 21, 2022

The sun is already high when I wake at 7:00 so I load the bicycle on my new receiver hitch rack and pack the coolers. It's cool enough for jeans but the sky is clear and the forecast is sunny and warm with nice northwest tailwinds. I stop at the Holiday station in Two Harbors to top off the coolers with ice and hit the road a little after 9:00. Over the years I have spent eight hours or more on the 400 mile drive but the roads are much better now and I'm not dragging an airplane behind the Yacht so I anticipate an early afternoon arrival. Just through Superior I hit the rest stop at the head of Hwy 53 to check the luggage rack and change into shorts. The sun angles through the windshield onto my lap but there are fluffy cumulus now and then to ease the burn. It's easy driving on the freeway-like highway flanked by forests and later, farm fields. Easy on the eyes too. I finally take my foot off the gas at Wausau to stretch and fuel up. Gas is \$4.20 a gallon! There goes a hundred bucks of my fun money. My right knee is giving me some grief but I dismiss it as too long in one position. That's the titanium one but the pain is different from when I had it replaced so I dismiss it and roll on.

Now on Hwy 51 I pass Central Wisconsin Airport and remember skirting their traffic pattern when I made this trip by air. One year I got the distinct impression that a 727 was impatiently waiting for me to get out of his way before turning final. At Stevens Point we turn onto Hwy 10 and head east. Now I can feel Oshkosh like it's just over the horizon but we still have a good hour to go. The weather is perfect and without the sun in my lap now I'm very comfortable and happy. My memory starts playing little snippets of past bivouacs at Beagle Field.

Oshkosh freeway traffic snaps me out of my reverie like a bucket of cold water. Highway 41 is the Indy 500 with four or five lanes of Mario Andretti going for the checkered flag. I can only glance at the campgrounds as we flash by but soon we're on the exit ramp and I breath a long sigh of relief. We made it!

We roll down Ripple road just before 4:00 and find Tammi at her guard post. I jump out and get a big hug. We catch up a little and then I motor up to Rick and Nancy's trailer on top of the rise. Nancy tells me they have been Campground Hosts for 30 years and says, "We must get some kind of award for that." I chuckle and pull the Yacht down to our spot at the fence.

I see Mikey just as we pull in and jump out for another hug. I met Mike Garrett, aka 'Dusty Rotors', aka Mikey right in this very campground almost thirty years ago and while I've gotten older, he is still a big, happy kid. Husband to Kristi and father to twins Amelia and Piper but still a big kid. He tells me he got in about noon and I can see his camp is all set up around his VW microbus. Kristi and the girls will arrive later and take up residence in Chuck Garrett's motor coach. Grampa likes to spoil his little princesses. Mikey tells me the microbus crapped out on him on the way up but a good Samaritan pulled over and cranked the starter while Mikey wiggled wires on the motor and got it going.

I start erecting the structure for my front porch tarp and suddenly find helping hands in the person of Paul Rickert. Paul and his family are a large branch on our Oshkosh family tree and we've been friends for decades. He parks his trailer up on the hill behind Rick and Nancy where his brother, Phil has room for all of his cooking gear. Phil is an outdoor chef extraordinaire and I always look forward to his creative consumables.

Paul and I chat while we unfold the tarp and I climb to the roof of the Yacht to drape it over. An interesting arrival out on the big runway gets my attention and I stop to stare. A few years back a fellow named Bally built a scale model B-17 big enough for a human pilot. I have seen it up close and it is a four engine work of art. So Bally's Bomber is on short final and I follow it through touchdown when it bounces once then teeters to the right and drops down the slight slope out of my field of view. The good news is, she wasn't going fast enough to severely injure the pilot but the bad news is, she most certainly turned an ankle at the very least. Bally Bomber Bummer.

When my site is set up I sit at the fence and relax. It is a beautiful early evening at my favorite place and I'm not exhausted. For decades I brought wings to the convention and my day wasn't done until those wings became an airworthy airplane. I miss flying in the show but I don't miss that. Across the ultralight strip that big Grumann Mallard is tied down in her usual spot by her perennial neighbor, the white DC-3. There are half a dozen dome tents under the DC-3s wings so she looks like she's parked in a mushroom patch.

I watch the rescue crew tow the Bally Bomber off on her own wheels so her damage is probably slight. That makes me feel better. The airplane noise ramps up now that the big runway is open again and I watch each landing. No way to cook until Jim comes with the kitchen so I grab a piece of cold pizza and curl my toes in the soft grass. After dinner I take a spin on the bike and scout for a picnic table. No luck.

I smell brats cooking on Mikey's grill so I sit with him and Paul as they dine. We talk about some old adventures and our plans for the week. As the sun goes west and the airplane noises stop our neighbor across the camp road starts his generator and turns on all his lights. He has a nice big rug with some cool patio furniture but nobody is there. He must be in his trailer but why is he running all the lights? Eventually the three of us tire of the generator noise and retreat to our campers. I find a blanket very comfortable on this cooling night and soon I'm sawing logs.

## **Friday, July 22, 2022**

I wake to a sore knee and low blood glucose. A big gulp of orange juice fixes the blood sugar but the knee nags at my attention. The sky is blue and the sun is warm, perfect weather. Mikey has moved his whole camp layout three spaces down the fence. His VW microbus had been directly across the camp road from the noisy generator and he couldn't stand the racket.

Arrivals on runway 36 are light but steady. I watch a beautiful Cessna 195 make a nice three point landing followed by a sleek Shrike and a classic biplane that I can't identify because of the angle of the sun. I always come early to our convention just to watch the cool airplanes fly in. Our camp gives us an excellent view of the arrival area of runway 36 and the tower always defaults to 36 unless

there is a brisk southerly wind. I have seen the most amazing aircraft from my lawn chair.

Mikey and I take a walk up to Paul's camp and are treated to breakfast. Phil isn't the only Rickert brother with cool cooking stuff. Paul shows us his Egg McMuffin machine and promptly sets it to work. It looks like a toaster from the future with slots for the muffins and a hot cup thingy to poach the egg at the same time. I think I should investigate further but I am way too busy enjoying my breakfast. A delicious breeze tempers the heat of the sun and the pace of arriving aircraft picks up. I stroll over to Rick and Nancy's and sit at their picnic table. These two are just salt-of-the-earth wonderful people and they seem to care about everyone. Perhaps in this diverse, slightly cuckoo family tree they're the parents? Steve Krueger stops by to chat and helps me with the wristband I have been carrying around in my pocket. Steve was my instructor when I pursued my Basic Flight Instructor certificate many years ago. Another good Oshkosh friend.

I decide it's time for a recon run so I grab my bike and head for the show. Bicycles are strictly forbidden inside the fence during the show but no one cares today so I pedal all the way up to the Warbird area soaking in all the sights and smells along the way. A pair of Cessna 337 Mix Masters catch my attention but upon closer inspection I see they are definitely war birds. The O-2A served the Vietnam theater as forward observers and communications platforms and these are meticulously restored military hardware. Rocket launchers and all. The owner gives me the full tour and is as happy sharing his knowledge as I am receiving it. As the week goes on he will have to deal with a crowd of curious enthusiasts so I feel very lucky to be his lone guest today.

Coasting back southward I zigzag through side lanes and rubberneck at all the exhibitors busy putting the final touches on their displays. I hear my name and look around to see Doug Greenfield in an EAA golf cart. Another old Oshkosh buddy, Doug has snagged a sweet volunteer job hauling camera crews and the occasional celebrity for EAA publications. He shows me pictures of a lovely Rans S-6 that he just acquired but when he tells me the price I accuse him of thievery. He laughs it off and we chat for a while. I think I know more people at this convention than in my own neighborhood at home. Riding past the antique/classic area I note a couple of Howard DGAs but no Staggerwings so far. Back at the ultralight area I see the blue Quicksilver that flies every day and stroll through the Barn then pedal home.

The afternoon is getting hot but there is a good breeze and my tarp is flapping. I notice a tear beginning at the top but this is the third or fourth year for this one and I expect it will last another week. Sitting in its shade I see a KC-135 finish his landing roll out and realize the southerly wind has turned traffic around and robbed me of my Landing Judge role for the time being. Without the steady stream of arrivals to watch I decide it's siesta time and throw my beach blanket in the grass. I come to when Paul putts in on his scooter and hands me a bag of ice. He had visited the new store down in the south forty and decided I needed one. Thoughtful fellow.

As long as I'm up I decide to check out the south forty myself so it's back on the bike. Three days before the show opens there are already a lot of planes parked with tarps over wings and tents in the shade. I pedal around aimlessly and discover new eye candy with every sideways glance. Up on the perimeter road above our runway I see Rick Hayes on an electric scooter and flag him down. Rick is a talented aircraft builder with many completions to his credit. He built a beautiful Kolb Twinstar in the early 1990s and sold it to me. I flew that girl (she never had a proper name) at the show for eight or nine years. When I inquire about the scooter he relates a story about some recent balance issues and I try to convey my sincere sympathies. I'm also a little shaken because he calls it an 'old guy thing' and we are about the same age.

Back at the Yacht I see the traffic pattern has been reversed again so I can once again judge landings. Arrivals are slow by Oshkosh standards but it's a pace that would overwhelm a smaller airport in an hour. Family traveling machines dominate the flow but it is punctuated regularly by something exotic and I'm just so happy to bear witness.

About 4:30 I hear the diesel rumble of a huge motor coach idling down my lane and turn to see Chuck Garrett maneuvering to park. When he has it in place he emerges with his big, friendly smile and a firm handshake. He drives that monster all the way up here from Illinois every year just so his five year old granddaughters don't have to rough it then catches a ride back home. It's easy to see where Mikey's social skills come from, everybody loves Chuck.

Jim shows up right at his predicted arrival time of six o'clock. We spend the next couple of hours turning a cow pasture into our home for the week. We assemble the kitchen with practiced precision and loft his pickup box tent. He mates his tarp to the Yacht's framework and declares cocktail hour. The sun heads west and we fall back into an easy, familiar conversation as if last year was yesterday. Mikey joins us and as the sky grows dark we see a fantastic lightning show well off to the north. It doesn't seem to be heading our way. It's been a really full day and I am tuckered out but my knee doesn't want me to get any deep sleep so I toss and turn.

## **Saturday, July 23, 2022**

It's hot in the Yacht before I drag myself out of bed and find my knee no better for the attempted rest. Jim, Paul and Mikey are all up and sipping coffee. It's another perfect day with blue skies and a light breeze. Jim starts chopping veggies straight from his garden and we watch four arrivals at our little strip. A Kitfox, a Rans S-6 and two ultralight trikes make nice landings right in front of our kitchen and I forget about the knee pain. Paul helps Mikey haul his Coleman stove over on a table and start cooking sausages. Jim's veggies go into a delicious egg scramble and we all sit down to dine. Vintage Oshkosh fare. The GA (General Aviation) arrivals start picking up out on the main runway so we all judge the landings while we eat. Flying a small airplane is not difficult with proper training but landing is always a challenge so we see our share of bobbles and bounces. Plus it is a proven fact that one makes their very worst landings when a thousand pilots are watching.

Beagle Field (my name for the ultralight strip) is coming alive as well and we watch a gaggle of light sport types swarm in. Kitfox, Just, Rans and a couple of Cub clones all make sweet landings right in front of us. Now we're talking!

Saturday has become Mass Arrivals day since B2OSH (Bonanzas to Oshkosh) started the practice years ago. They gather at Fond du Lac or another small local airport, launch all at once and form up to arrive in three long lines on final approach to Oshkosh. Watching them land three abreast for twenty or thirty minutes is mind boggling. Today the Mooneys start the show at about 11:30, not as numerous as the Bonanzas but still very impressive. On the other side of the scale the Ercoupes show up with four examples. We sit in the shade of the Yacht's tarp and soak in the spectacle. The Bonanzas start coming in about 12:45 and keep up a steady flow until 1:10. We are impressed.

I decide to get some exercise so I pedal Knapp Street rd. to the main bike parking lot. In between the large exhibition hangars I see a vision from another time. A big old single engine tail dragger with corrugated skin and open cockpits just screams "Golden Age". The Junkers D-1 looks brand new like it may be a copy rather than a 90 year old relic. I want to run my fingers over those classic wing panels but I know better.

Across the way sits Scrappy, the most over the top bush plane ever conceived. Starting with a Carbon Cub frame Mike Patey has created another outlandish specialty ride. The wings have double front slats, huge flaps and hard points holding an electric motorcycle on each side. The tires are cartoonishly large and the cockpit looks like a TV store.

I stroll off toward the Fly-mart and stumble across a meticulously restored Stinson Reliant so I have to walk around her about three times to check out the details. I don't expect any shops to be open yet but I am surprised to find my favorite hardware store doing a brisk business. I grab a bag of all

metal stop nuts and some small cotter pins that I know Rooby needs. I never come to Oshkosh without a shopping list and now I'm crossing off two items before the show even begins. The puffy airshow clouds are merging into a high overcast but it's not at all threatening, just a little more shade for the campers.

I get back to camp about 3:00 just in time for the Cessna Mass Arrival and there are a lot of them. We all pay close attention because, as opposed to the Bonanza's military precision, the Cessnas can sometimes be very entertaining. It is kind of a circus trick to stuff that many airplanes onto two runways in such a short time. The main runway, 36 is wide enough for two planes to land side by side and the parallel taxiway becomes the third runway for these hectic events. Participating pilots must take a training course but the results may vary.

Meanwhile, the overcast darkens and the humidity rises. It's hot and sticky and about 4:30 a light drizzle dampens the tarp. Jim cuts up potatoes and veggies to go with burgers but the threatening weather downgrades our feast to hot dogs. It's a good thing dogs are quick because we're just finishing up when a powerful gust front rolls down the hill through our bivouac like a freight train. Tarps are flapping like flags and the rain is Niagra Falls. The new and improved shade structure on the Yacht stands strong but Jim's tarp is becoming a lethal weapon so he attempts to cut it free and has his hands full. I don't see the point of both of us getting drenched so I just jump in the Yacht and close the doors. Eventually he crawls in with me and shares a few choice words. The storm rages for an hour and the Yacht rocks on her suspension. When the massive power of nature is at last spent I find all the grommets pulled clean out of my tarp and go around poking holes in the fabric for zip ties to reattach it.

A slight blue tint appears in the western sky as campers all around us begin to clean up their sites and share a few choice words. We receive a royal visit from the princess twins in cute rain outfits and matching umbrellas. The girls just want to jump in puddles and Kristi rolls her eyes. There is no dry place to sit so Jim sheds his wet clothes and climbs into his pickup while Mikey gives rides to the girls on Jim's Ruckus scooter. By the time ten o'clock rolls around I am completely pooped and find my happy place for a good night's rest.

## **Sunday, July 24, 2022**

My knee gave me some grief overnight but I'm still happy to be here. Jim is up before me as usual and has dug out his camp stove toaster. First he toasts slices of bread for ham and cheese sandwiches then he puts hash brown patties on the toaster to go with. We munch happily in the shade of overcast skies. Last night's storm has sucked all the power out of the atmosphere and flags hang limp. About 10:15 we hear the Lycoming grunt of bush planes and the STOL boys come swooping in to our strip. STOL (Short Takeoff & Landing) competitions have become a big draw since starting out as a dare between bush pilots in Valdez Alaska several years ago. The EAA brass decided to bring them here and poor old Beagle Field hasn't been the same since. Most of these machines are actually working back country haulers but some are built specifically to win the contest. All are flown by pros and the landings prove it, not a bounce in the bunch.

Blue holes begin to appear in the overcast and the temperature rises. Jim and I start to re loft his tarp because the shade is necessary but we have to pause when we hear big turbojet engines whistling in from the south. Our view is clear to the spot most big iron touches down but trees block our view of their approach so it's always a fun surprise to see what is making all that noise. This time it is a C-17 Globemaster and it is impressive. When we return to the task at hand a DC-3 taxis in to join her sister in the mushroom patch and disgorges a dozen more happy campers. About 11:30 six or eight more STOL boys arrive at our patch. Please excuse the 'boys', it just rolls off the tongue, there are some very capable women among the competitors.

Paul drops in for a visit and as we talk 12 private jet fighter types fly a formation entry and peel off at show center. These L-39s, F-86s, T-33s and a lone T-2 Buckeye are all in private hands but they fly with military precision. They come back around in three groups of four and peel off again to lower landing gear and configure to land. This is exactly why we come to Oshkosh days ahead of the show, we see things that never happen anywhere else in the world from the comfort of our lawn chairs.

About 1:00 we adjourn our coffee clatch and attack the show from different directions. Jim boldly rides his Ruckus scooter right down Poberezny road and nobody stops him. I lock my bike at the central bike park and stroll towards the Rans tent. Nobody's manning the booth but 3 gorgeous S-21s are parked out front. Now there is more blue sky than clouds and it is getting very warm. Wandering over to the famous Brown Arch I see the Bally Bomber and move in to investigate. There is no damage to the airframe but the two inboard engines are uncowed and propless. Maybe her off runway escapade caused prop strikes. When the heat becomes too much I pedal back to camp and plop down in the shade.

Jim is cutting taters and veggies for foil wraps. We watch arrivals on the big runway dealing with a tricky cross wind. A PBY flying boat doesn't seem to have a problem making a smooth touchdown. All day general aviation airplanes have been taxiing south past our area so I decide to check out the South Forty from Knapp Street rd. I pedal all the way down to hiway 26 and there are acres and acres of parked airplanes. This is going to be an epic year.

The heat of the day is easing and the breeze makes our camp home feel comfortable. I fire up the Smokey Joe with match lite charcoal and Mikey puts the foil raps on Jim's Coleman stove. Phil drops by on his bicycle and we talk while I flip burgers. After dinner we talk about our individual plans for the first day of the show but it seems like we have been here for a week already. Kristi and the girls come over after dark and Piper plays a song for us on her xylophone. She makes no mistakes and we applaud heartily. When they retreat to their castle my eyelids get heavy. I load up on Tylenol PM to see if I can ignore my knee pain long enough to get some good rest and crawl into the Yacht.

## **Monday, July 25, 2022**

I wake to the mosquito drone of powered paragliders but when I stick my head out only a couple are flying. The sky is clear blue and the wind is light so when the PP pilots pack up Beagle Field gets busy. A Just Highlander does some extreme take offs and two Titan Tornados arrive from elsewhere. Mike Ostrander flies his familiar blue Quicksilver with his legs hanging down in the breeze. Phil drops in with some blueberry applesauce bread fresh from the Weber, it's delicious. He sits with us for a bit watching the traffic. Another Just, a couple of Kitfoxes, a Zenith 701, a 75% scale Storch and an Air Cam with a canopy keep the air moving down our runway. The Storch is a replica of an old German observation plane. All sharp angles and dangling gear legs, it looks like a giant insect.

Kristi and the girls appear bearing plates of pancakes and bacon which we happily consume. Good food and great company make an already fine morning even more lovely. We linger around the picnic table with full bellies and happy hearts. Jim has reserved an electric mobility scooter for Monday, Wednesday and Friday this year so he takes off on the Ruckus to go take possession. We agree to meet at the Rans booth and I jump on my bike. Even on this first day of the show bike parking is nearly full so I just wrap my chain between frame and front wheel and leave it on the kickstand. In years past I have forgotten the crude bike lock or just chosen not to use it, the bike is always there when I get back. It's Oshkosh, you could probably leave the keys dangling in your Ferarri.

On foot, generally northbound I detour through Exhibit Hangars "B" and "A" on the way to Rans. Jim is already there so we step inside to greet Shelly and get our yearly hugs. Randy Schlitter, founder and resident genius of Rans Aircraft is friendly and accommodating but his wife, Shelly is the

personality of the company. She remembers everybody's names and always wears a bright smile. We monopolize her time until nine other people want to talk to her then go outside to talk with one of the Rans techs. We admire the smooth fit and finish of the S-21s and get some questions answered.

The day is typical July in Wisconsin, warm and a bit humid. We roll south toward Boeing Plaza, heads on swivels. There is so much to see everywhere we look and so many people rubbernecking with us. At the edge of the plaza the Perlan glider sits on risers near its tow plane. This graceful bird has just set a new world record altitude well north of 50,000 feet! Or 60,000, I don't think to jot down the actual number. Displays around the plane show pilots in space suits even though the distinct round windows speak to a pressurized cabin. They rode a phenomena called Mountain Wave to the edge of the stratosphere in South America and we absorb every detail of this special bird. The tow plane is equally unique to my eye and I check the fuselage for a data plate, no luck.

Still rolling south we swing through Antique/Classic acre to check out Staggerwings, Howard DGAs and cabin Wacos. These aeronautical works of art transport us back to the Golden Age of aviation when airplanes were meticulously assembled by skilled artisans on the cutting edge of the technology of the time. The sun is getting brutal so we sit under a huge black walnut tree for a rest then continue our trek. We head past the corner where Jerry's One Man Band used to fill the air with Polka music and cruise around the Exhibition Hangars. I stop to admire a sleek tandem low wing called Tarragon. Naming an airplane is always a quirky venture but this is the first one I've seen named after an herb. We ogle a Vision Jet at the Cirrus campus and talk with a rep. I'm curious about the price and when I ask he points to the air stair leading into the cockpit. "Like all jets", he says, "A million bucks per step." Our next stop is at the A&W by the fly-mart. Jim has to have a root beer float here every year and I devour a cone. I pick up a bag of zip ties in the mart as we cruise a couple of lanes then we split up to head back to camp.

The afternoon airshow starts with a sky full of formation flyovers. These are not military although several groups consist of former military trainers, T-6s, T-34s and T-28s. One rather large formation is all home built cruisers from the Van's air force. They pass over the field in different directions at different altitudes so there can be forty or more planes stacked up in one casual snapshot. Most of them are trailing show smoke and the lines create a checkerboard in the blue sky. Now in the shade, the weather seems just perfect and the air show cranks up. Two F-18s make some very noisy high speed passes then slow down a little to trade passes with 3 P-51s. I am furiously scribbling notes and every time I put down my journal some other wild things happen. Mikey and Kristi have the girls in protective headphones and sunglasses as they prance around in the grass. Jim arrives from the scooter rental place and the show screams on. Two F-22 Raptors show their stuff with afterburners lit and while we watch them land something flashes by so fast my eyes can't catch up. On the second pass I see it is a T-38 Talon but I have to turn my head quickly to keep it in view. Several aerobatic acts take turns painting smoke corkscrews on the brilliant blue but by now we're so jaded we only glance up occasionally.

Down at the south end of our camp sits a brand new Winnebago that is much smaller than most but tall enough for stand up room. I tell Jim and he pokes his ever present phone to identify it. I'm thinking it would be a good replacement for when the Yacht gives up the ghost but when he tells me the price I realize I'm dreaming. I guess Oshkosh Dreams are not limited to airplanes we wish we could afford.

When the noise abates out on the big runway Beagle Field comes to life and we are up close and personal. As in most recent years true ultralights are the shrinking minority, light sport hot rods dominate the pattern. At least they are mostly home built and well suited to our small, grassy runway. One Highlander is pink! As we watch, Mikey brings over drumsticks and sweet corn so I fire up the grill. The powered paragliders (PPGs henceforth) have nice calm conditions and there are a lot of them. It's so relaxing to wind down at the end of the day watching these banana shaped canopies float by as we chow down.

At Oshkosh B.S. (before STOL) this would be the end of the noise and we might pull out the guitars or just settle into some quiet conversation but the crowds at the far fence are five deep and rabid for the competition and there's nothing we can do about it. The ground crew sets up orange cones and chalks lines while a dozen or more balloon tired bush planes rumble onto the field. The action happens on the north end of our little strip in front of the biggest part of the crowd and we live on the south end so if we want a fifty yard line view we have to walk up a few camp spots, we rarely do. When the wind favors a take off to the north they drift by our living room just before touching down. When launching to the south they scream through our kitchen at full throttle and conversation becomes difficult. Still, it is extreme aviation saturation and we do enjoy it.

It's nearly dark when they taxi off but the "Fun Fly Zone" is just getting started. Six powered paragliders take to the sky and zip around like crazy kids on a swingset. There is a circular tube around their propellers to keep the lines from being cut and these are lit with LEDs for better visibility in the dying light. Jim calls them, "electric hula-hoops." They chase each other up and down the runway low enough to drag their feet in the grass then rise up for formation passes.

When they land and gather up their canopies truck headlights illuminate a spot in front of the crowd. This is the landing target for skydivers and when we look up we see four comets streaking across the black sky. They open their parachutes at low altitude and swoop in at high speed. Are we done yet? Oh no, it's time for the radio control action. In the past I have dubbed these "chainsaws" for their screaming piston engines but this year some of them have gone electric so the prop noise is all we hear. A pair of scale aerobats do a tandem routine that is a well choreographed dance then a couple of solo acts twist and turn and hang on their props. The last RC act is a helicopter that is apparently immune to gravity because its lit rotor disc seems to be vertical more often than horizontal.

Through the whole evening's entertainment eight hot air balloons have been tethered in a line just east of the field. Their huge gas burners are fired in random intervals making them glow like neon. When the crowd begins to disperse they collapse into dark piles of fabric which their crews stuff into bags.

So much for the guitars and quiet conversation, we are exhausted from the nonstop action and can barely muster the energy to crawl into our beds.

## **Tuesday, July 26, 2022**

I wake to another perfect day and emerge from the Yacht just as the PPGs are folding their laundry. The pattern fills up with fixed wing traffic before I'm done yawning. I take over the Coleman stove and do bacon, eggs and hash browns for me and Jim. Piper and Amelia come over with pictures they have drawn for us. They are almost too adorable for this early in the morning. Kristi is taking them to see their other Grandpa upstate somewhere today and they are dressed to impress. Overhead the B-25 that has been making regular runs in place of the ailing B-17, "Aluminum Overcast" is joined by a different B-17 and "Doc" the B-29. At any other airport this formation flyover would be the biggest thing that ever happened, here it's just Tuesday.

Jim starts the dishes as the rotor craft take over our strip and I hop on the bike. Helicopters are cool but they make too much noise and wind for easy conversation. Jim doesn't have the electric scooter today so I do the tour alone. I cover all four Exhibit Hangars and stop to chat with Tisha Lockwood at their booth. She sells me the bag of fuel line clamps that was on my shopping list. Being in a shopping mood I walk the rows of the Fly-mart, buy a new model channel lock pliers and some aviator bifocal shades.

Pedaling back up Knapp Street rd. I'm barely breaking a sweat under the clear blue sky and I praise the weather gods. Back at camp I take a short nap in the grass while Jim reads. This is living! The military flyovers start the afternoon show and wake me up. Mikey drops by for a while and we

watch as “Doc” takes over the sky all by himself. One of only two flying examples left of the bomber that ended WWII, his aluminum skin is hand polished and he gleams like a new dime. His four compound radial engines produce a powerful symphony that cannot be ignored.

The aerobatic acts commence with a mind boggling performance by the “Rocket Waco”, a classic round motor biplane with a Learjet engine slung underneath. After rolling and looping he points straight up and accelerates till he's nearly out of sight. While the mayhem continues I pedal over to the Barn to scope out the consignment store. I'm still watching the show and I even have a better view from the ultralight parking in front of the Barn. Once the pros are done creating smoke pretzels in the sky our friend Al White does a couple of laps in his Dyke Delta, the home built rocket ship he calls the “White House Limousine.” An F-35 suddenly appears and tears up the sky for a bit then forms up with three P-51s for the Heritage Flight. I hurry back to camp because the daily Heritage Flight is the last display before Beagle Field opens for the evening.

First to launch is a speedy trike (sleek carriage with a hang glider type wing) and he very nearly has a head-on collision with an arriving plane. The BatHawk (new model to me ) has picked the wrong direction to approach and when the two aircraft swerve violently to miss each other they are directly over our heads, and low! My first reaction is to duck but they manage to avoid tragedy and the show never misses a beat. The new guy eventually manages to mix in with the traffic and when he lands a green vest scoots over to have a talk. The pattern is relatively busy but we don't get to judge the landings because they are launching from the north end.

A handful of PPGs fly in the calming conditions and when the STOL crew comes out to set cones and chalk lines the Black Fly is towed right past our kitchen. A handful of young engineers have brought the future to our little strip. The Black Fly is an all electric vehicle that resembles a football with two stubby wings. Each winglet has four props about a foot long mounted on electric motors at a jaunty angle. The crew rolls it off of the trailer onto its round bottom where it rocks in the grass. There are no wheels because it takes off and lands vertically and the bottom is boat like because ultralight regulations allow a little extra weight for floats. The pilot clambers over the side while another crew member performs a pre-flight check by walking around it and poking at a laptop computer. All eight rotors spin quietly then stop. We can see the STOL crowd migrating down the fence line at the other side of the field for a better look. After a nod from the computer guy the motors all spring to life with a loud rush of air and Black Fly literally jumps off of the grass. The point of the football shape is nearly vertical and the pilot is on his back in the cockpit. A rock solid hover is established at about fifteen feet of altitude. Soon the wind rush builds in intensity, the nose begins to lower and Black Fly scoots along the runway. When the football is about level the machine is going 50 or 60 mph and the pilot guides his craft out towards the traffic pattern. He banks a little left and right as the Black Fly carves some smooth turns then returns to the field. Still almost silent the black blob coasts down the runway raising its nose and slowing its progress. When it reaches its point of takeoff it's in a sold hover again then does a perfect 180 pirouette and descends to the ground. The tail touches softly and it rocks back onto the boat bottom as the rotors stop. We hear shouting and applause from the far fence as the pilot dismounts and the crew loads the Black Fly back on its trailer. We step to the fence to give high fives as they trundle off. We have seen the future and it looks incredibly cool.

The rest of the evening is rather anti climactic. The roar of the STOL competition gives way to the angry insect sound of the electric hula hoops and the RC aerobats. The RC helicopter guy destroys Newton's laws of motion while the balloons glow across the way. Jim and I sit up for a while enjoying, at last, a quiet camp.

## **Wednesday, July 27, 2022**

I climb out of the Yacht with a limp and fuzzy brain. I didn't get any restful sleep because of

knee pain even though I ate some more Tylenol PM and it takes a while to organize my thoughts. Luckily, Mikey and Jim are making breakfast and their happy faces bring me around. When we finish eating I stroll down to the showers and emerge feeling refreshed. Jim takes off on his Ruckus to pick up the electric scooter he has reserved so I jump on the bike for another tour of the big show. When I pre-purchased my wristband back in May I received a voucher for a fanny pack and a small back pack from Airbus so I seek them out. They are kind of cheap little items but I thank them and head for the Fly-mart. In the back corner Dan Murphy has a booth for his Blue Feather welding torches and I find him, Diane and Carl manning the display. It's starting to warm up so I sit in their shade and talk for a while. Dan says he has had some interest and a couple of sales.

One of my favorite stops in the Fly-mart is a big tent full of bargain leather goods. In years past I have bought a fanny pack, a camera case, a belt and a checkbook cover and I'm still using them. In the back I find a big cardboard box full of ten inch notebooks. I have filled so many Oshkosh journals that I've been scribbling in those little spiral jobs for the past couple of years and they have no class. These have leather covers and are full of pockets, dividers and paper. I pick a black one with a full zipper and seven ring paper. When I look at the price written in black Sharpie on the front of the box I dig in for another one. Two bucks! I might buy three.

On my way back to camp I decide to give one of the notebooks to Tammi. She mans the gate to our campground every day and I try to pick up something for her every year. Last year it was bendy straws and I think they cost more than two bucks. The afternoon airshows starts with a U2 Dragonlady spy plane. Long and narrow with sailplane like wings she launches fast and climbs very steeply. She makes two more low passes before climbing out of sight toward the south. The Red Bull helicopter drops four skydivers then comes down to do loops and rolls for the crowd. Yes, a helicopter doing all the aerobatic maneuvers that a fixed wing airplane can do plus some stuff nobody can do. After that four WWII Grumman fighters fly a formation pass. They are the Wildcat, the Hellcat, the Bearcat and the Tigercat. It's extremely rare to see even one of these classics but all four fly for us. Chuck is back to watch the night airshow so he and Mikey and Jim join me at the fence. The weather is warm, breezy and sunny with big, puffy airshow clouds in the distance. The Heritage Flight is two F4U Corsairs and two F-18s making four passes from the cardinal points of the compass and finishing with a dramatic horizontal bomb burst.

Wednesday is not only Night Airshow day it's also spaghetti night. I pull the tupperware containers from my cooler and start the pasta water. I made almost a gallon of meaty sauce a week or so ago and froze it hard but after several days in my cooler it doesn't need much defrosting on the Coleman stove. Chuck brought a nice salad. Darker clouds start moving in but they are not threatening, yet. The ultralight pattern is busy as we seat seven for dinner and the Oshkosh family enjoys the ambiance. The "Fun Fly Zone" gets a rest as the sun slides down the sky and the Night Airshow begins. Before it's even dark an F-22 rips up the place with full afterburner passes just to get our attention. A Korean era F-86 follows with afterburner passes of his own. Once it is fully dark the Aeroshell T-6s light up the sky with their precision formation work belching show smoke and flashing red and white lights. I see these guys every year and I still can't look away for a second. Before their smoke has dissipated Bob Carlton whispers by in his jet powered sailplane. Whisper is the proper term because it's a very tiny jet engine. He wheels through the air in smooth, sweeping arcs with smoke and sparklers on each wing tip. Matt Younkin roars in from the south with his Beech 18 lit up like the Vegas strip. He makes it do things the light transport twin was never designed to do. Several smaller planes rip around shooting fireworks from their wing tips until the ground based show starts up. The last plane seems to be playing chicken with the mortars until he finally retires. It has been awhile since I've seen the Duluth Forth of July celebration but this show seems much bigger. I have a nice conversation with Paul's son Kyle and when the "Wall of Fire" lights off to end the evening we feel the heat on our faces. It has been a long, eventful day so when the family wanders off I find my way into the Yacht. I gobble some more Tylenol PM and a slug of Cuervo. Hopefully I will sleep tonight.

## Thursday, July 28, 2022

Another perfect morning awaits outside the Yacht as I assess my knee situation. I did have periods of sound sleep between bouts of cover twisting. Bacon and Jimmy Dean sausage go with our eggs this morning and feel good going down. It's a little too breezy for the PPGs and the fixed wings are all fighting the crosswind coming over the trees. I know what that is like so I really appreciate their courage. Across the way a Grumann Albatross cranks up her big round motors and taxis to depart. The largest flying boat in the Grumann line she is a commanding presence and I'm sad to see her go. She is followed by a C-47 (DC-3) and I can feel the exodus beginning. There will be more departing traffic than arrivals for the rest of the week.

When the rotorcraft take over Beagle Field I hop on the bike and coast down to the show. I wander aimlessly but I'm still seeing things I haven't seen and I'm still excited for what is around the next corner. I find myself back at the Rans display and have a long talk with Randy. I've been a fan of the man and his flying art for many years and I'm happy for his hard won success in this crazy business. Across Knapp Street rd. I find a couple of WWI replicas and the Fokker DVII is very realistic. If it didn't have a VW motor hiding under the round cowl I'd wonder if it was authentic.

I pedal back up the hill to camp just in time for the afternoon airshow, A shiny new Airbus A-330 starts the show with some low level maneuvering. It seems so quiet compared to all the military stuff. Speaking of which, a C-17 Globemaster makes a dirty slow pass then comes around again at speed. The third time he lands short with full reverse thrust and leaves it in until he starts backing up. A handy maneuver I suspect in some military situations. A KC-135 tanker glides by alone and then an F-22 launches as if to chase him down for refueling. A bunch of civilian jets like L-39s and T-33s make formation passes then line up to strafe the runway in single file.

As the show continues Jim starts snapping beans for dinner and Mikey snaps open a Bud Lite. The girls roll into camp from their trip to Grandpa's place and come over to flirt. It has been breezy all day so when a cloud blocks the sun I find jeans and sleeves necessary. Of course, the sun comes back out but I'm comfortable or just too lazy to switch back.

Out on the flight line a P-51 and a Hawker Sea Fury follow each other through graceful barrel rolls and thousand foot loops flashing the afternoon sun back in our eyes. A pair of T-28 Trojans do a very noisy close formation act. The Heritage Flight consists of a Vietnam era A-1, an F4U Corsair, an F-22 and an F-18, very classy.

Kristi and the kids come over for chicken dinner and the girls give Jim incredible grief over having his elbows on the dinner table. They spend so much time scolding him their parents have to remind them to eat. Just a handful of souls brave the wind to fly the ultralight pattern but the full menu of "Fun Fly Zone" attractions is served. STOL is still drawing huge crowds to the fence at the other side of the field and now we even see strangers drifting into our camp for the better view. Not scary strangers, they're all polite visitors. The competition is followed by electric hula hoops, skydivers, RC chainsaws and helicopter but there is no balloon glow in the background, probably because of the fresh breeze.

When it finally gets quiet I pull out a guitar and pull in a new friend. The folks who came over for the view are trickling out of our camp when one of them zeros in on my guitar and introduces himself. We talk music and do about a minute and a half jam, him singing and me strumming, he wishes he had his blues harp in his pocket. When he shakes hands goodbye I ask him to repeat his name, my hearing is not so good. He says "Mock" or that's what I hear. I shake my head and cup a hand behind my ear. "MOCK" he says loudly for the old man. Finally my old brain cells wake up and I get it. He has been talking and singing with a heavy southern drawl and what he is really saying is Mike! I'm so happy I shake his hand again and he promises to look us up next year with his harp.

Jim and I relax into camp chairs and familiar conversation. We've both gone to jackets, it will be full sleeping bag in the Yacht tonight. It's pretty late when his phone rings, he listens, says "What?", listens intently and then gets out of his chair. I can hear a loud, excited voice when he pulls the phone away from his ear and ducks out of the tarp to look up. Of course I follow. The voice on the phone is Mikey, I don't know where he is calling from but he is watching the space station go over and he wants us to see it too. I'm so glad he called. Tracking roughly northwest to southeast is the brightest light I can ever recall seeing in the heavens. We watch for about 30 seconds before it dims and disappears. It seems very appropriate that we should have this experience at Oshkosh.

## **Friday, July 29, 2022**

It's cool and breezy when I limp out of the Yacht but there isn't a cloud in the sky and I can't help but smile. Another sunny summer day in my favorite cow pasture is just what the doctor ordered. The only PPG pilot to brave the breeze has a tiny three wheeled cart so he doesn't have to foot launch. A pretty red Fisher Renegade biplane with Canadian numbers departs and a handful of Highlander types fly a few circuits for our morning entertainment. Jim digs leftovers out of his cooler and we cut up pork chops, shrimp, taters and mushrooms for a delicious egg scramble. Mikey and the girls eat with us.

When I sit down to do the dishes Jim takes off for the scooter rental place. After kitchen patrol I lock my bike outside the Barn and walk the ultralight vendors acreage. I find Jim at the Aerolite 103 display, he can't get over the bargain basement price for a fully built ultralight. As usual we both buy some of their T-shirts because they are also great bargains. The grass is well beat down this late in the week so it's no problem for the little wheels on Jim's scooter. We are close to the big runway so we divide our attention between the showcase flights and the ultralight displays. Over in the ultralight parking area we check out an older Rans S-7 with a for sale sign on it. It's dirty white and well used but the owner is asking what we think is a premium price. After a quick swing through the Barn we sit out front in the smoking area and just enjoy the ambiance. We don't have a schedule and it's a beautiful day. Every corner of the sky is decorated with some kind of flying machine and every face wears a smile.

We split up and take different routes to show center and meet again at the Fly-mart. I show him where I got my new notebook but he doesn't have use for one and passes. I finish off my shopping list with the last bits of hardware and then add one item. All week I have seen campers lounging on an inflatable that looks for all the world like a huge, colorful hot dog bun so I loiter in front of their display and watch the demonstration. The "Nature's Lounge" is just a long fabric tube folded in half. The ends meet in a clever device that allows one to hold them wide open to scoop in the air then close them quickly to hold in the pressure. It looks simple, I bite.

Back at camp I do the cooler move ritual. We always leave our coolers in whatever shade we can find but during the day, the shade moves so the first one back repositions them. Once they are shaded I plant myself in the shade and watch the rotorcraft in front of our kitchen. I have been avoiding them all week so I pay attention and see some really good piloting. I wanted to fly helicopters once but I never came up with the (substantial) funds for training. It sure looks like fun though.

Later, as Jim rolls in on the Ruckus the powerful throb of some really big rotors announces the arrival of two V-22 Ospreys from the south. They both land at show center but one takes off again and transitions from helicopter to airplane as it accelerates right past us. It's amazing how quickly that can be accomplished. After a fast winged pass he transitions back on a downwind leg and slows to a hover at show center.

Skydivers carry the American flag for the official start of the airshow and the Aeroshell T-6 formation flies a spiral around the descending banner. The whole Aeroshell act follows leaving thick twisting smoke trails on the blue summer sky. The four Grumann cats do formation passes again and two odd birds with three vertical tails and a huge Frisbee on top come in to land. Some kind of military AWACs I'm sure. Patty Wagstaff shows her skill and Jim takes a bag of shrimp out of his cooler, Yum! We snack and relax in the shade of our tarps while the airshow rolls on.

I can't sit for long so I pedal over to the Barn again and find some books in the consignment shop that I need to read. From this perspective I watch Matt Younkin begin his performance by parading both of his Beech 18s and then going full smoke and roar. More aerobatic craziness ensues as I pedal back to camp and the shiny B-29, Doc does a vanity pass. Mikey has had racks of ribs slow cooking all day and the aroma drifts through our living room. Jim and I get out the guitars for a while but the F-22s start ripping up the sky and making afterburner music. We can't compete. A pair of F-18s join the noisy fun and the Heritage flight includes one of them, the A-1, F4U Corsair and an F-22. I'm getting dizzy from looking up all afternoon.

Jim starts chopping veggies and taters to go with the ribs and my mouth is watering. The Ultralight Volunteers are having their annual pig roast tonight so no light stuff will be flying. When we finally dig into the ribs they are so tender and delicious we can almost ignore the STOL competition. As we are clearing the table the Black Fly bunch comes by for another demonstration of their flying football and I'm still impressed. That looks like a really fun toy. The sun sets and nine hot air balloons light up as the "Fun Fly" folks do their thing. Electric hula hoops, skydivers and RC aces turn and twist and wow the crowd but it's the fourth time we've seen it and we kind of wish it would stop.

After the girls are asleep in Chuck's motor castle Kristi sneaks over for a smoke and a beer. She devotes all of her energy to those girls and really deserves a break. It's so nice to sit and have a quiet conversation after a crazy busy noisy day. I still haven't defeated my night time knee pain but I'm tired enough to face it so I say my good nights and fall into the Yacht.

## **Saturday, July 30, 2022**

I do manage to get some rest and another perfect day greets me when I crawl out. Since that nasty storm last Saturday the weather has been amazingly cooperative for living outdoors and I am truly grateful to be alive. Jim cuts up the last of his shrimp for a delicious scramble to go with hash browns and sausage and I can't imagine a better start to a summer day. Mikey and Kristi are off with the girls to go meet Patty Wagstaff and I wander down to the showers to remove a layer of Wisconsin dirt. I know it's the last day of my annual odyssey and I need to absorb every detail to carry me through til next year.

Once I'm clean it's back on the bike for the familiar ride down to show center. This time I turn east and stop at the Antique/Classic barn. Out front sits a perfect JN-3 Jenny replica built from original plans by the Poplar Grove EAA chapter. Careful not to touch I get as close as I can and appreciate the meticulous craftsmanship. Wandering north up the flight line I see lots of airplane shaped stencils in the grass left by a week of admirer's footprints. It's a sobering reminder that these planes have departed and more are lining up to leave. I stop at Rans to get a good bye hug from Shelly, she likes my Hawaiian shirt. Despite the dwindling number of parked aircraft the sky is still full of them. The constant drone is a huge part of the overall experience. Like surf on the beach it's a soothing background presence that I'm only subliminally aware of until it stops. The only reason it gets quiet this time of day is to clear the airspace for a military arrival when the hum of piston engines is replaced by the howl of afterburners. It happens as I stroll up toward the Fly-mart and I turn to see two F-22 Raptors ripping down the runway. Within minutes the calming surf returns and go on my way.

The giant hot dog bun lounge that I purchased fiercely resisted my attempts to inflate it so I go back to Nature's Lounge for advice. They tell me the plastic closure is distorted from the tight packaging and in time it will relax. I watch them effortlessly inflate and deflate their demo unit and buy their story.

When I get back to camp I find Jim packing up the kitchen so I pitch in. I give the lounge another try and have some success but when I flop on it my butt hits the ground. The weather is still beautiful with just the occasional puff ball cloud floating by and a light breeze. Taking the cue from Jim I begin to think about tomorrow's travel. I pop the hood and check the Yacht's fluid levels, clean the windshield and kick the tires. The whine of turbines draws my attention to the main runway where five jets are lining up for takeoff. They all wear the same custom paint schemes and I believe four of them are L-39s but the lead jet is much more impressive in size and attitude. My guess is a MIG-29 but I'm not sure any of those are in private hands. When they launch to the north a V-22 Osprey pops up from show center and comes toward us as it transitions from helicopter to turboprop. The change is quick and when those huge props swing down the acceleration is amazing.

The airshow has begun, skydivers deliver Old Glory and a classic Golden Age air racer, Mr. Mulligan does some very fast passes. The C-17 Globemaster does several passes and another back-up landing. Two jet fighters do the thing where you don't even hear them coming until they've passed. They are such a blur that I can't tell if they are F-22s or F-35s, both are here this year. Kristi makes sure the girls are wearing their head phones and the rest of us stick our fingers in our ears. Air Force guys call it the "Sound of Freedom". Four or five different aerobatic pilots leave their smoke pretzels in the blue sky but they all look pretty much the same from here. I think I'm getting jaded.

When the smoke and noise dies down Beagle Field opens up for our close up entertainment but the session is short and no STOL happens because it's Night Airshow time. Just after dark a MIG 15 does an afterburner take off and it looks like his tail is on fire. The Aeroshell team, Matt Younkin, Bob Carlton and many others dance on sparklers and shoot fireworks. The gang all watch raptly from the fence. Family is at the fence We do brats on the Smokey Joe because the kitchen is packed up. After the big fireworks show two huge "Wall of Fire" explosions rock the Yacht and the show is over. The whole glorious ten days is nearly over for me and it's sad. I try to be philosophical about it, the weather was great, the show was amazing and I got to hang out with dear friends but now I have to wait another year to do it again.

Jim and I wheel up to the Rickert camp to say our tearful goodbyes and of course, taste whatever Phil has been creating on the Weber. He never stops. There are a lot of hands to shake. I leave the party early to just stroll slowly around the John Moody Ultralight Campground with eyes and ears open. I have done this every year (more than thirty) on the last night to make sure my senses are loaded to the max with memories.

Satisfied, I get back to reality and pull the tarp off of the Yacht. I am surprised at how much the steel tubing structure got bent during last Saturday's storm. I pack and stow and generally throw stuff into my bedroom leaving just a small path to the bed. I really missed flying Fifi in the ultralight pattern but tomorrow I will be very happy to not fold up an airplane and load it on a trailer. It has been a full, exciting day and I am totally spent so I say my good nights and flop.

## **Sunday, July 31, 2002**

The sun blasts my face at 6:30 because I took the shades out of the windshield last night but my knee thinks it's time to get up anyway. The coolers go into the last space in the Yacht and I'm ready to fly. Jim however is not. He could not load his truck bed last night because it is also his bed. He has a cool tent that fits right in the box so that has to be removed and folded before the truck can be packed. We make quick work of it as the sun rises into another perfect blue sky. As we struggle with the

Ruckus rack on the receiver hitch Paul drops by to wish us safe travels. We enlist his strong back. It's amazing how close you can get to people you only see for ten day a year. We savor long hugs from Mikey, Kristi and the twins and make our promises to meet here again next summer.

The campground is quiet, it's still early and many spaces are vacant already. The Yacht fires right up and I let her warm up while I share the handshake and wishes for safe travels with Jim. I'm only a hundred yards into my journey when I stop to give Nancy a hug, Rick is off doing his Campground Host duties. Swinging down to the exit I get another hug from Tammi and take one last look out on my field of dreams. There is still enough air traffic to produce that soothing surf sound but there are very few planes left parked on the ground. I make my exit. Accelerating north on Hwy 41 I lean on the horn as I race past Camp Scholler then merge into another Indy 500. The sun will be at my back for the whole morning and I am comfortable. A highlight reel of this week's special moments plays in a loop in my head and I'm smiling.

The road rolls by as the sun travels across the sky. Slowly my thoughts transition from what is behind to what is ahead and I'm looking forward to getting back to my little cabin on the lake. The gas stop is another budget buster but I don't let it bother me. Clouds start to build in the northwest but no rain falls and I hit Two Harbors at 2:30. As road weary as I am I cannot drive by Helgeson Field without stopping in and I briefly entertain the notion of taking Miss Chaos for a dance. Very briefly. Thirty more minutes and I'm rolling down my dusty driveway to see the lake waiting to cool me. Mission accomplished, I'm HOME!

It doesn't take long to empty the coolers but the rest of the stuff can just sit in the Yacht. I open windows and water the plants before collapsing on my bed and falling into dreamland. And what do I dream of? OSHKOSH!

## **Friday, April 28, 2023**

Well, it took me the whole month of April to turn my journal into this story but every time I read a line the scene would appear in my mind like it happened this morning and I relished the recollection. It was easy to embellish a short note because I was living it all over again. Now I've been to Oshkosh 2022 twice. I hope you have enjoyed living it with me and I hope you plan to make Oshkosh memories of your own this summer. I'll see you there,

.....Happy Landings!.....