

THE CHAPTER 961 "FLYER"

EXPERIMENTAL AIRCRAFT ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 961
ROCK HILL, SC - KUZA

A SOUTHERN GATHERING OF BIRDDOGS

Written by Tim Gause

On Saturday, November 28 2020, a fairly rare event occurred. Just two days after Thanksgiving, a group of like-minded individuals coordinated to rendezvous for the usual reasons pilots enjoy gathering. For most of us, any reason is good enough to make the effort. But this gathering was just a bit more special. We were bidding farewell to one of our own for a year-long deployment.

But first, a little history or background information would help explain how this particular group got to know each other. After owning a J-3 for about 3 years, I was getting a little frustrated by not being able to travel very far nor very fast. Don't get me wrong, I think the J-3 Cub is one of the absolute best airplanes ever designed and built. It's perfect for what it was made to do. Fly slow and predictable. Qualities that taught literally tens of thousands of groundlings the skills to become real aviators! From those beginnings,

most moved on to more horsepower and higher performance aircraft. But after a while, I was yearning for an aircraft that had slightly longer legs and a bit more power.

I stumbled across an ad for a L-19 Birddog. Being a former USAF pilot, I knew the history, but not much more about the Birddog. But what made me want this particular airplane goes against every logical thought that most consider when making such a significant purchase. I wanted it because of the paint scheme! It was painted in USAF colors. I did my due diligence and researched the specifics. I asked more seasoned pilots their advice and suggestions. Lucky for me, this airplane was the perfect match for me.

My birddog was sort of withering away in an open hangar in eastern North Carolina. It was being maintained and flown on occasion but wasn't getting the love and attention these great airplanes deserve. I made the offer, and fortunately it was accepted. That was February of 2018.

My experience in tailwheel aircraft was limited to my 60+ hours in the J-3, so maybe I should have built a little more taildragger time. However, I wasn't new to flying. I've had a wonderful career first starting out flying skydivers shortly after obtaining my PPL. I was fortunate to get accepted into the USAF in 1985. After a year as an Administrative Officer, I was granted a coveted pilot slot and started UPT in July of 1986. After flying the T-37 and T-38, I was given the opportunity to fly the mighty B-52 from Blytheville AFB. Then I was selected to fly the KC-10 at Seymour Johnson AFB. From there it was the T-34C at Pensacola Naval Air Station. Then Northwest Airlines gave me the chance to fly for the airlines on 1 Dec 1997. Delta acquired NWA in 2008. I recently took an early retirement from Delta Airlines due to the current economic and pandemic situation with right at 15,000 hours of flying time. I was also able to retire from the North Carolina Air National Guard in 2014. Now I have the opportunity to do the things I want to do which is get to know my Birddog better.

One of my thoughts turned into an attempt to find out just how many Birddogs there are in the Southeast, primarily in the Carolinas. Searching the FAA registry, and the help from IBDA, I found about 15. I fired out requests to those emails I could find. Within a couple of days, I got 4 solid responses. We decided to try to do a fly-in somewhere convenient for those interested. The rally point was BQ1 (Gilliam McConnell Airfield). A privately owned airport but open to the public mainly for the identifiers' moniker. It's called the Pik n Pig, a fantastic Bar-B-Que restaurant on the field that serves pilots and their passengers, as well as plenty of folks who love to drive to the airport for great food and incredible views of arriving and departing airplanes! Even has a

P-40 static display and play ground for the kids.

One of the Carolina Birddogs is also based there. After meeting for a nice BBQ lunch and getting to know each other, we decided to try and get this club/organization off the ground. We made several attempts, but scheduling conflicts and the weather played havoc on our plans. Finally, we knew that one of our members, who is an active-duty Military Officer, was getting close to a deployment date. So, the call went out and decisions were made concerning our next rendezvous.

We would rally at KSOP (Southern Pines Airport), then take-off for BQ1! The great news was that we added one more Birddog to our growing squadron. Midmorning, 28 November, 5 Birddogs landed within 15 minutes of each other at KSOP. Plus, unbeknownst to the O-1 group, there was an O-2 lurking and waiting to join us for the flight over to BQ1.

Once we took-off, we followed in trail where we all chose to land on the grass strip then taxi to park. The O-2 Skymaster brought up the rear and parked near the line of Birddogs. Quite the site seeing 5 Birddogs, parked next to each other, but each unique and each with their own special history.

For the next few hours, we enjoyed the fellowship of not only being members of a relatively small club, that of being pilots, but also having the special privilege of owning and operating a truly unique warbird whose numbers are small and getting smaller. I think each of us realize just how lucky we are to have what we have. I really didn't know, almost three years ago, just what I was getting into. My Birddog is a pure joy to fly!



But more importantly is the history these airplanes have and that we are able to keep this history alive and relevant. Along with this pilot group, there were several Vietnam Veterans, some of which were either directly involved in operations of the L-19/O-1, or benefited from the aerial support of spotting artillery or close air support that these fantastic airplanes provided.

How fascinating it is to hear their stories and see their eyes light up with the fond memories that these airplanes brought back for them. One of my future plans is to try and get as many Vietnam Veterans rides in these wonderful Birddogs, whether they were connected to the operations of the L-19/O-1 or not. I'm not exactly sure how I'm going to do it, but I will make it happen.

We did have one more Birddog attempt to join us but a scheduling conflict prevented our numbers from growing to 6. We also know of a couple more Birddogs who are interested in joining the group. I'm personally hoping to see 8-10 Birddogs eventually becoming a part of the Carolina Birddog Group. I'm also in contact with a group of Birddog owners in Georgia. Hopefully we'll try a Spring/Summer get together that may grow to over a dozen. Stay tuned!

Next, I'll try to give a brief history of each of the Birddogs that are currently involved with our group, and we'll move on to get to know the Birddogs.

MEET THE BIRDDOGS

BIRDDOG: # 21410 Manufactured 05/08/1951 (below, right photo)

OWNER: Tom Givens, Active-Duty US Army Major

BASED: BQ1 - Gilliam McConnell Airfield - Carthage, NC

FAA NUMBER: N5472V, Military Number 50-1680

LIVERY: US Army Olive Drab

This Birddog is one of the very few that flew combat missions in Korea. Has the patched bullet hole to prove it! While in Korea, it was damaged during a landing accident and was repaired in Japan. Has Rocket Pods.



BIRDDOG: # 0038 9H-ACD Manufactured 01/1963 (above, left photo)

OWNER: Larry Melton, Retired Airline Captain

BASED: 6NC8 - Marchmont Airpark - Advance, NC

FAA NUMBER: N2990

LIVERY: Italian/Maltese AF Olive Drab

Very special Birddog. Initially sent to Italy, only 1 of 5 brought back from Malta to Texas. Still has the radios used while in Malta. Has basic flight instruments installed in the rear cockpit. Has Rocket Pods.

BIRDDOG: # 23785 Manufactured 06/21/1957 (below, right photo)

OWNER: Tim Gause, Retired Military/Airline Pilot, Part Time Skydiving Pilot

BASED: KDCM - Chester Catawba Regional Airport

FAA NUMBER: N5601F, Military Number 56-4163

LIVERY: USAF High Visibility SAR

This Birddog started with the US Army up in Alaska in Fairbanks. Spent time like many Birddogs with the Civil Air Patrol. At one time it was put on floats and sported a polished aluminum look. Eventually it was used to tow gliders in Massachusetts. From there it went to Montana, then to eastern NC where it was purchased by its present owner and moved to SC. This Birddog is on the cover of The Lovable One-Niner, while sporting civilian colors as N4729. No Rocket Pods!



BIRDDOG: # 24701 Manufactured 02/23/1959 (above, left photo)

OWNER: Edgar "Doc" Clements, Retired Airline Captain, True Operational Birddog Pilot, flew with the 220th Cat Killers

BASED: K8A7 - Twin Lakes - Mocksville NC

FAA NUMBER: N3255S

LIVERY: USAF paint scheme Grey

Upgraded engine O-470-15 with constant speed prop. Leading Edge and Wing Tip Mods for enhanced short field performance. Auxiliary fuel tanks. This Birddog was created up and sent to France but found its way back and saw service with the Bureau of Land Management. Has also spent time on floats and skis. Has Rocket Pods.

BIRDDOG: # 22827 Manufactured 11/12/1952 (photo below)

OWNER: Bill Plaster, Retired US Forestry Service Pilot, Current Skydiving Pilot

BASED: KMCZ - Martin County - Williamston, NC

FAA NUMBER: N19YM, Military Number 51-16955

LIVERY: Multi-colored scheme, unique to Austria

This Birddog was originally assigned to the Nebraska Air National Guard until 1957 when it was sent to Austria to help build up their Air Force. It was retired in 1997 after which it was brought back to Texas. This is probably the most unconventional paint scheme of any Birddog currently flying! The story goes that a pissed off Army crew chief decided to paint this Birddog to his own specifications. Part USAF Grey and part Army OD. No one is sure about the checkerboard pattern on the fuselage. Has Rocket Pods

Editor's Note:

I'd like to thank Tim Gause for providing such an amazing & detailed feature for this month's newsletter! This newsletter would be nothing without our dedicated chapter members and their cool experiences.

If you have a story you'd like to be included in the newsletter, send an email to eachapter961@gmail.com



NEXT MEETING

This month we will have our own Stacy Lutes presenting a program on "Pilots N Paws" and her experience with volunteering for the organization.

"Saving the Lives of Innocent Animals"

"Pilots N Paws® is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our site is intended to be a meeting place for volunteers engaged in the valuable services of rescuing, sheltering and adopting animals, and volunteer pilots and plane owners willing to assist with animal transportation. The intent of Pilots N Paws is to provide an environment in which volunteers can come together and arrange or schedule rescue flights, overnight foster care or shelter, and all other related activities."

Here is a link to their website: pilotsnpaws.org.

MARCH 8
7:00 PM

JOE BAKER'S HANGAR
KUZA - TAXIWAY J

President's Message

WRITTEN BY JOE BAKER

Greetings fellow EAA'ers!

As many of you know, last month was Black History Month. It seems appropriate, therefore, to tell this story since it has both a personal and EAA connection.

Not many of us know the story of Neal Loving, aeronautical engineer, race pilot and EAA member. Neal got interested in aviation the same way many of us do, by watching an airplane fly overhead. His father was Detroit's

first Black optometrist, so his family understood the value of an education. Unfortunately, Detroit in the 1940s was much like the rest of the US, and opportunities were severely limited to him. However, Detroit (and Chicago) had something other major cities didn't, and that was a core of bright, young educated Black people who truly had the bug for aviation. These folks put together technical high schools devoted to aviation (much like today's STEM emphasis.) Neal got involved in that, until another, all-white, aviation high

school hired him away. At first he only taught the boys, but eventually the girls discovered his skill as a teacher, and the principal ran the interference required for Neal to teach all students.

Neal was rejected for service in the Army Air Corps during WWII, but got involved in the Civil Air Patrol after the war. Flying a CAP glider one day, he misjudged his altitude and hit the ground. And they had to take his legs. By this time, the story of Douglas Badger was well known, and Neal fought his way back into the cockpit.

The late forties were golden times for air racing, and Neal jumped into the fray with both of his prosthetic feet. He designed and built a racer known as "Loving's Love" and qualified as a race pilot. The aircraft was unique, having an inverted full wing and a clever design for the wheel streamlining.

Then a brand-new organization appeared, the Experimental Aircraft Association. Neal joined. This was still the fifties, though, and although Neal did not know it at the time, he was EAA's first Black member. EAA didn't think anything of it either, until one day someone realized that an organization that had not only national but international ambitions probably ought to offer official protection for all of its members, regardless of race. The Poberznys duly reviewed their bylaws and inserted anti-discrimination clauses at appropriate locations. Neal learned of this, according to his book, only years later.

Many of you know that my grandfather ran the FBO at Detroit City Airport during the forties and into the fifties. This is where Neal did much of his flying. So far I have no direct



evidence that they knew each other, but they must have. Gramps was also the Michigan Wing Commander of the CAP for most of the war, and although Neal joined after the war, I think the odds are good they knew each other.

Dad knew him, though, because Dad took this picture. It was Dad's first air-to-air with a 4x5 format camera, a 1946 Graflex Pacemaker Speed Graphic, possibly the most iconic camera ever made. My brother has it now, and is exploring its capabilities. I just discovered this image during our mammoth project of scanning Dad's photo and negative collection. (My brother and I estimate he has somewhere around 180,000 images of airplanes in his collection!)

I am still working on this story, but now seemed an appropriate time to run it. And by the way, "Loving's Love" resides comfortably on display at the EAA museum in Oshkosh! Look for it when we all go back this year!

Blue Skies All!

Joe

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

WRITTEN BY ANGELA SELLS



Terry Fisher

This month's spotlight is on Chapter 961 Member Terry Fisher. Terry represents one of the reasons I love interviewing our members and sharing their aviation stories with each of you. When given just a bit of background information about him, I was told he was a retired American Airlines pilot. While that is true, there is much more to his story, not only tips for aspiring airline pilots, but also a remarkable story of a lifetime passion for aviation.

Terry was born in Madison, Indiana. His dad was in the Army in WWII. His parents were

teachers, and his dad was also a coach. While his parents weren't fond of the idea of him flying, they did spark his interest when he was five years old, by letting him become the first pilot of the Hauser Pedal Jet that made its debut in 1957. His uncle later gave him his first airplane ride in a 1930 WACO RNF, which further inspired his aviation interest.

Terry went to college at his dad's alma mater, the University of Louisville, on an ROTC Scholarship. He played baseball there, following in his dad's footsteps, who played baseball and basketball there.

Terry wanted to be a commercial airline pilot. While talking to the airlines at the time, they suggested he go into the military to get experience, as they were mostly hiring military pilots. In 1975, it was the end of the Vietnam War, and the military was making cutbacks. Terry joined the Air National Guard, and beat out 10 other candidates for the single pilot spot that the Guard had open at the time.

While Terry may have started in the Hauser Pedal Jet, he amassed some flying time when he was a teenager, and through ROTC had 30 hours of flight training before his military career took off.

His time in the Guard was spent flying the McDonnell RF-101 Voodoo, and later the McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom. Terry was also one of the Guards F-4 demo pilots and performed in airshows from 1978 until 1984. He flew for the Guard until 1985.

Terry began his commercial pilot career in 1981, flying Boeing 737s, and in 1985 he made Captain and finished up his Guard career.



In 1982, Terry purchased his first plane, a 1942 Stearman PT-17, for \$15,000. He had a new engine and wings installed on it, and it took 6 years to complete the repairs. He trained for aerobatics in it at Rock Hill-York Airport, and began to fly his Stearman in airshows in 1989.

Terry also joined the Screen Actors Guild, and became a stunt pilot for the movies. His favorite movie as a stunt pilot was “Smokey and the Bandit”.

He has owned eight different airplanes over the years, and currently flies his lovely red Citabria 7ECA while participating in EAA Chapter 961 events.

As Terry continued his commercial pilot career, Piedmont was later bought by US Airways, and then most recently became American Airlines, where Terry retired in 2014. He owns Fisher Aviation LLC, where he provides flight training, aircraft restoration, sales consultations, and more.



With years of professional flying experience, from military to commercial to airshow aerobatics, Terry takes it all very serious and says his motto is, "Safety, safety, safety! Even the slightest change in a performance can lead to mistakes, safety is the key."

His advice to students is to check out the military. He says, "It's a great way to go. Search out any pilot to get training and air time with, but focus on academics and ground school first."

He says to check out the David Griffin Aviation Foundation as well, as it's a great resource for aspiring pilots.

Terry found our EAA Chapter through fellow member Gardy Wilson and Rick Maury about 5 years ago.

As far as events go, Terry has flown to Oshkosh in a Swift, and while he enjoys Oshkosh, he really loves Sun n' Fun with it's smaller crowds. He also enjoyed flying to the Reno Air Races from 1985-1995. Terry loves the events that our Chapter has been a part of, like Young Eagles and the Tour de York. He says, "99% of the public doesn't understand aviation, and it provides good exposure and a positive environment."

He would love to see Chapter 961 get their own hangar, to house all of the equipment and members, since we have outgrown the fire code limitations of our current facility.



Please take the time to say hello and introduce yourself to Terry and your fellow members as we begin to congregate again. It's a great way to get to know each other a little bit better, and to share our knowledge and expertise. I hope you enjoy getting to know our members better as much as I do. The depth of knowledge and experience in EAA Chapter 961 is amazing. We have an incredible group!



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ADVERTISEMENTS FROM LOCAL CHAPTER MEMBERS

SUBMIT YOURS TO EAACHAPTER961@GMAIL.COM

MOONEY FOR SALE

CONTACT: KEVIN WALKER *803-493-6773*

Early 1980s Mooney M20J 201 for sale. Contact Kevin for more information.

SKYTECH JOB OPENING

CONTACT: ANTHONY CHERRY *803-366-5108 (EXT. 1205)*

Looking for a job in the aviation field? Skytech Inc. at the Rock Hill - York County Airport has an opening! If you are a pilot you get a fuel discount!

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2 weekends a month and an occasional holiday. Must be at least 18 years old.

FREE NAV CARD UPDATE

CONTACT: JAMES CALDWELL *704-400-2935*

I have two Garmin 400/500 series GPS Jeppesen Non-Waas current updates available to anyone who wants to update their Nav card, for free. I updated my GPS to a Waas unit and ended up with more subscriptions than anticipated. This subscription expires either this month or next, so it's not worth the hour wait on the phone to cancel and attempt to get a credit back. Anyone who wants the update can call me. They just need to bring their Nav card to York and I'll do the update. Takes about 10 minutes.

EXCLUSIVE MOBILE DETAILING

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EAA CHAPTER 961 MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT FORM

Interested in becoming a regular member of this active and growing chapter?
Dues paid after September 1st, of any year, will cover the following year.

Print and mail the completed form with a check for \$25.00 (payable to EAA Chapter 961) to:

Paul Fischer / Treasurer EAA 961
11500 Glenn Abbey Way
Charlotte NC 28277

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____

Zip Code: _____

Preferred Phone Number _____

Circle one: home / work / cell

E-mail Address: _____

*EAA Member Number: _____ *

Pilot Ratings: _____

Aircraft Owned/Interested In: _____

**Are you a Young Eagles EAA Member? Circle one: YES / NO **

Do you want to order a chapter name tag? Circle one: YES / NO

Do you want to order a chapter shirt? Circle one: YES / NO

If YES, then what SIZE _____ COLOR _____

(Grey is the standard, but other colors are available.)

*You must either be, or become, an EAA National member to be a member of local Chapters.
To join EAA call 800 - JOIN EAA or go online at www.eaa.org.

**Young Eagles that have completed their registration using the code that is on the back of their Young Eagles Logbook and received their EAA membership number are exempt from paying EAA 961 dues until the end of the year they turn 18, per revised chapter bylaws of 30 Dec, 2019.