

April 2020



# EAA CHAPTER 145

SINCE 1962



**Chapter Meeting: Cancelled due to coronavirus**

## CHAPTER PROGRAM

Due to the coronavirus, this month's meeting is cancelled. While you are 'sheltering in place' you may want to catch up on the EAA Chapter videos. See below for the link:

<http://eaa.brightcovegallery.com/chapters>

Be safe out there... soon we'll be able to 'social distance' by taking the airplanes out and exploring Michigan and beyond.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

"We did it before and we can do it again." These words are from a song about a past disaster thrust on to United States on December 7, 1941. Do you remember? If not, here are my thoughts on the current situation.

I was six years old when Pearl Harbor was attacked. Our carefree lifestyle was severely curtailed to help combat the disaster to our nation. Over the next four years, we had to make many adjustments for the good of the nation. Of course, I didn't make the actual adjustments; however, I did observe my parents, the community, the state, and the nation doing what was needed to overcome the foe. History has revealed how that disaster turned out. As nation we are stronger because of it. We had learned how to work together for the common good, not only the individual.

The corona-virus is a tough foe. No one of us can hope to defeat it, however working together we can beat it. Let's do it again...that which is necessary to overcome this virus and then after a while, get back to normal aviation activities.

Healthy Sky's, Dick

## YOUNG EAGLES

-At this time, all Young Eagle events have been put on hold. So far, the Grand Haven (EAA211) June 6 event has been cancelled. There will be another YE event update in the May newsletter.

-Stay tuned, Dick

## WEEKS HANGAR TRIP

-EAA has canceled all work parties in Kermit Weeks Hangar for the next several months. EAA145 will not make the annual trip to Weeks Hangar this April.

-More information will be available in the May newsletter.

## EAA145 HANGAR

-The C-182 project has been completed and the A/C is out of the EAA hangar. It has been a pleasure to work with Andy Herter and the C182 club members.

-Hangar space is available for projects. Contact Dick Foster for details.

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## IN DEATH VALLEY'S "STAR WARS CANYON", FIGHTER JET AFICIANADOS HAVE A GOOD FEELING



By Ruben Vives

The fighter jet was flying low over the desert valley when it banked and dove into a ravine. Between the ancient walls, it rumbled like a giant marble careening around a wooden floor. The noise, a stark contrast with the quietude of the desert, is part of the lure for the military veterans, aviation enthusiasts and photographers who gather at the top of "Star Wars Canyon" on the western edge of Death Valley National Park.

But what they really come for is to catch a glimpse of mechanical birds tearing the sky apart — and the U.S. Air Force and Navy pilots who maneuver them like fictional X-Wing Starfighters. Hearing the rumble, Evert Van Koningsveld grabbed his camera and rushed over to a railing on the edge of the canyon. He followed the jet with his Canon 8D, snapping 14 photos in as many seconds. He stopped, lowered his camera and watched the jet disappear in a band of clouds stretched out like a string of cotton balls. The sky grumbled.

After the high-speed pass, Koningsveld reviewed each shot with a displeased look on his face. The photos were vivid and sharp, but none of them had been shot from an angle that emphasized the sleek body of the F/A-18 Super Hornet: its trapezoidal wings, its cockpit, wing strakes or tail. There were no condensation trails on the wingtips or glowing afterburners to convey the maneuverability and power of an aircraft that is capable of traveling faster than the speed of sound.

"That's aviation photography for you," he said. "You never know what you'll get." Koningsveld walked back to his car, sat near the edge of the opened trunk and placed his camera next to him. He gazed at the sky and waited, hoping for another chance.

The canyon — more than 5 miles long and up to 5,000 feet wide — is about a three-hour drive northeast of Los Angeles, off State Route 190. On paper, it's known as Rainbow Canyon because of its gray, orange and red strata. The U.S. Air Force refers to it as the "Jedi Transition," but almost everyone else refers to it as "Star Wars Canyon."

For first timers, it may seem like an odd place to pull over. The desolate landscape offers little beyond the craggy hills, rocks and tufts of brittle flora that look as though a month of rain could never revive them. But the canyon is part of a restricted military airspace called the R-2508 Complex, used for air-combat training, supersonic flight tests and other military operations, and it's been a magnet for plane spotters for several years.





There's only one requirement for membership in the fellowship: "You have to be bananas for aviation," says Koningsveld.

Plane spotters who were interviewed over the course of two days in March spoke about the power and the speed of jets that zoom through the area at speeds up to 500 mph. That brief moment in time when feats of engineering obliterate any prior notions about aircraft — and gravity. When a fighter jet transcends its role and becomes a testament to mankind's technological achievements. Wearing an orange hat with a back flap, Candace "Candy" Campbell of Pacific Grove, Calif., tried to catch her breath as she explained the thrill she gets from watching. "It's pure, raw excitement," she said. "It's power. ... those pilots are skilled, and they've got courage."

Some of the pilots dive right at the start of the gorge, afterburners blazing. Others change course in the middle of the canyon, flying at eye level with spectators before dropping down. Some pilots fly straight through like a bullet.

"Sometimes they'll come down and turn so you can see their face and you can take their picture," said Campbell, 68. "We've seen one enter, swing and go right over us." Some of the images on social media look as though the pilots are truly aware of their audience as they flash a thumbs-up or rock 'n' roll sign.

Campbell and her husband had set up camp at a vista point called Father Crowley Overlook, named after a Catholic priest (Father John C. Crowley) who served the desert area during the 1920s and '30s. There are at least two other viewing points nearby, but Crowley is the hot plane spotting spot.

For Campbell, each pass is different from the next. In addition to fighter jets, she's observed helicopters flying in the same space, and once she watched a C-17, a fat military cargo plane with four engines, drop into the canyon like a Slinky and then — as one spectator described it — "saunter" above the desert floor.

"It just moves side to side so gracefully," she said. "It's like ballet. It's gorgeous."



Richard, 71, and Candy Campbell, 68, of Pacific Grove, Calif., look for military aircraft with their eyes peeled to the sky and ears focused on flight chatter coming from two scanners hanging from their camper.

The Air Force and Navy have used "Star Wars Canyon" as a training area since World War II, long before it became part of the national park in 1994, according to Patrick Taylor of the U.S. National Park Service.

Most of the aircraft that pass through come from nearby bases such as Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Naval Air Station Lemoore, Edwards Air Force Base, Fresno Air National Guard Base and Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. Foreign allied forces are also known to make flybys.

Over the years, Taylor said the number of plane spotters has increased, in part because of social media. In 2010, the National Park Service installed a parking lot, a railing along the edge of the canyon and a bathroom at Crowley Overlook to accommodate the growing number of visitors.

Larry Grace, a former Air Force veteran and president of the International Society for Aviation Photography, said the Mach Loop, a high-speed flight training area in the United Kingdom, and "Star Wars Canyon" in Death Valley National Park are two of the most publicized plane spotting areas in the world.

"As pictures got out," he said, "people asked about where they were taken, and that's how those areas got popular."



Ten years ago, Koningsveld drove to the canyon and waited for half an hour hoping to see a plane.

The gravelly voiced Dutchman, who became obsessed with aircraft as a child, was not successful in his quest. But he and his wife, Jose, were already frequent visitors to the United States, attending annual air shows in Nevada and California, when four years ago, Koningsveld, 61, decided to give "Star Wars Canyon" another try. This time, he spotted a fighter jet, and since then, he and his wife have made annual trips to the desert.

"Now I'm a little more patient. I can stand around all day here, getting old," he said, chuckling. Success at "Star Wars Canyon" is frequently about luck. Some days the only things in flight are crows (or as some of the more frequent regulars have come to dub them: "B1-RD.") And then there are those holy mackerel days when dozens of military aircraft make an appearance. Experienced plane spotters (many of whom are professional photographers) come prepared. They bring meals. They unload their gear, unfold their chairs, apply sunscreen — and they keep their eyes to the sky.

"If you're talking to someone or looking somewhere else, you could miss it," Koningsveld said. Koningsveld and his family lived in the town of Zeist, not far from a Royal Netherlands Air Force base in the center of the country. He was a toddler when his father took him to his first air show and introduced him to the world of aviation. Eventually, Koningsveld channeled his interest in military aircraft into a freelance photography career. By the early 1990s, he was flying with — and shooting photos for — flight demonstration squadrons such as the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, known as the Red Arrows, and a Royal Canadian Air Force display flight squadron, called the Snowbirds.

As he waited at the overlook for the next jet to fly through, Koningsveld said he was hoping to spot his favorite plane, an F-15 Strike Eagle — and he did, the following day. "It looks good and it's enormously powerful," Koningsveld said.

His wife was sporting a denim shirt with the picture of an F-15, a suggestion, perhaps, of a shared enthusiasm.

"She's married to me, so it's by default," Koningsveld said, laughing. Jose smiled and remained as silent as the desert.

The origins of the canyon's nickname are up for debate. Some aviation enthusiasts talk about desert scenes in the "Star Wars" movie franchise that were filmed in Death Valley. The exposed rocks on the canyon walls remind them of Tatooine, the home planet of Anakin and Luke Skywalker.

Others suggest that the pilots who fly into the canyon feel as if they're dropping into the trench of the Empire's Death Star, avoiding fire from laser canons — just like Luke in "A New Hope."





But the nickname was not a hot topic among the plane spotters — the European aviation photographers, military brats, veterans and the Campbells — stationed along the canyon rim on a breezy March day. Their focus was elsewhere.

Hours passed. People napped. A woman worked on her tan. Some of the visitors made small talk, stopping mid-sentence whenever they heard the crackling of a radio scanner. A few of them would jump up with their cameras the second they heard a rumble.

Several veterans suggested the experience at “Star Wars Canyon” is analogous to fishing: You wait and you watch and you hope you catch something good.

Some have seen an F-15 Strike Eagle, an A-10 Thunderbolt II (nicknamed the “Warthog”), an F-16 Fighting Falcon — or transport planes like the C-17 or the C-130. Occasionally someone is lucky enough to observe a rare aircraft such as the F-117 Nighthawk, a stealth attack aircraft that was retired in 2008.

The crowd included a few tourists visiting Death Valley National Park, compelled to pull over at the overlook after spotting the lines of tripods and cameras. What’s everyone waiting for? they asked. Sometimes a fighter jet would appear on the horizon with the answer.

These random encounters can lead to a new hobby, and, in the case of a few, an addiction.

Indeed, that’s how it happened for Campbell, a former landscape photographer, and her 71-year-old husband, Richard.

The couple had long been drawn to Death Valley and the desert landscape. They started to visit the park with their children in the 1970s, but were only vaguely aware that military jets flew in the area. About four years ago, they pulled into the parking lot of Father Crowley Outlook — by chance. The Campbells were sipping tea inside the 2001 Dodge Caravan that they had converted into a camper when they saw a fighter jet burn and turn through the canyon.

Richard and Candy were at eye-level with the pilots — and it was love at first sight.

Now they make the eight-hour trek from California’s Central Coast to the canyon every year, devoting a week to plane spotting. Like the other veterans, they hope they’ll get “buzzed,” a term used to describe what happens when a fighter jet flies low with its afterburners on.

In an email she sent to her children last year, Campbell described such a moment — this one involving an F/A-18 Super Hornet.

“He roars over my head,” she wrote. “And when I say over my head, I am saying he was low ... the sky was covered with the jet’s body. [It was] so close it seemed as if I could have stretched up and touched it.”

The Campbells sat on folding chairs at the overlook; a journal they use to log their sightings sat on a small gray table placed between them. Nearby, radio scanners broke the silence, as pilots communicated with their towers. The Campbells were hoping to hear words like “Jedi,” “Sidewinder” and “Charlie” — anything that would give them an advance warning that a jet was requesting permission to fly through the canyon.

Over the years, the regulars have learned to depend on Campbell, who has become something of a human scanner. She seems to spot jets long before anyone else does.

Mike Price, 66, and his wife, Shelley, 61, of Portland, Ore., were visiting Death Valley when they decided to stop at the overlook. It was about 2 p.m. and Campbell alerted everyone to get ready. A jet zoomed by and, all too soon, the moment was over. Price, who couldn’t get a photo because he pressed the wrong button while trying to turn his camera on, voiced a familiar complaint. “It happened too fast.”

See the following links, or type “Star Wars Canyon” on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiAW6u4Yt1w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUmrqNWnVU8>

## FACEBOOK

EAA Chapter #145 now has a Facebook page. Keep an eye on the site for events and notifications and photos. This will be an ever-evolving page, as we learn how to best use it.

<https://www.facebook.com/EAA145/>



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See the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZUuXpwtz5yBZaoFQdHj0AMKId6N4TWPu>

A side benefit of “sheltering in place” is that we can catch up on viewing great aviation videos. Josh Flowers has a youtube channel, Aviation 101, where he shares his love of flying and travel and flying proficiency. I particularly enjoy his Alaska series (see link above).





EAA Chapter 145 website: [www.145.eaachapter.org](http://www.145.eaachapter.org)  
 EAA National website: [www.eaa.org](http://www.eaa.org)  
 Riverview Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EAA145/>

## **DUES ARE NOW BEING COLLECTED**

Dues of \$35.00 are payable to "EAA CHAPTER 145" and can be mailed to Bob Swietek at the address listed at the end of the newsletter or brought to the monthly chapter meeting. If you need to make any updates on your contact information, please include the tear-off slip for member data and update with your payment.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

<b>Apr 11</b>	<b>Riverview Airport (08C)</b>	<b>Meeting – Cancelled</b>
Apr 25	Oshkosh (OSH)	Week's Hangar Work Weekend
<b>May 9</b>	<b>Riverview Airport (08C)</b>	<b>Meeting – Kolb FireFly – Gregg Kaat</b>
<b>June 9</b>	<b>Riverview Airport (08C)</b>	<b>Meeting – RV-14A Project – Bob Swietek</b>
June 20	Ionia (Y70)	SMAT Community Day
July 1-5	Battle Creek Airport	Battle Creek Airshow & Balloon Festival
July 4-5	Traverse City	National Cherry Festival Air Show
July 20-26	Wittman Field (OSH)	<b>OSHKOSH 2020</b>
July 28-Aug1	Mentone, IN (C92)	P.R.A. Convention - Grycopters
Aug 29-30	Willow Run Airport	Thunder Over Michigan Airshow – Ypsilanti MI
Fall '20	Niagara Falls Trip	West Mich Pilots Group – Niagara Falls

**If you know of events that should be on the event calendar, please e-mail them to me**

If you would like to be on the e-mail list for meeting and event reminders, or if you would like to receive the newsletter electronically, which is full color and delivered days before the print version... please send your e-mail address to:

[randall.houtman@dematic.com](mailto:randall.houtman@dematic.com)

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## **Treasurer's Report: (as of Apr 1th)**

Liabilities: \$4055.00  
 Cash: \$140.85      Checking: \$52.11  
 Savings: \$7080.44      Total: \$7273.40

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## **EAA CHAPTER 145 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM** DUES ARE \$35.00 PER YEAR – JANUARY 1st to DECEMBER 31st

Name _____	Aircraft Owned _____
Co-Pilot / Spouse _____	_____
Address _____	Projects / % Complete _____
City _____	_____
State / Zip _____	Bring this form to the next meeting or mail to:
e-mail address _____	EAA Chapter 145 Treasurer
Home Phone _____	6962 Bridgewater Dr. SE
Work Phone _____	Grand Rapids, MI, 49546
National Membership # _____	

