

Chapter 194 News

January 2025

Harry Manvel, Editor

Martin Filiatrault, Contributing Editor



2025-2026 Chapter Officers

President – Curt Martin – 248-420-2295

Secretary – Ryan Ensminger - 248-894-7614

Vice President – Gus Warren - 386-341-6172

Treasurer – Casey Ramotowski- 248-632-9261

2025-2026 Chapter Board of Directors Elected

At our November General Membership meeting, nominees for the four Board of Directors positions were introduced and voted on by the members. The results can be seen in the above blue header, and below. Thanks to these folks for stepping up for the next two years. And, a big THANK YOU to the outgoing board members!!



President Curt Secretary Ryan Treasurer Casey Vice President Gus

Chapter 194 News



CHAPTER PANCAKE BREAKFAST

October 12th was an eventful day. First and foremost, it was Chapter 194's Pancake Breakfast event. As the coordinator of that event, I was compelled to schedule it on that day. It happened to be my birthday. We won't discuss "which" birthday...

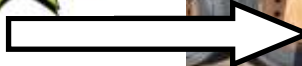
Bottom line, we have previously billed the event as a "Hangar Tour and Pancake Breakfast", but some security minded people preferred the Pancakes only. No problem, I revised the flyer posted in several places, and replaced them. But this is something to discuss going forward.

The weather was great for once, and the turnout was really good. The chapter gained somewhere around \$300 for the efforts, and I have to admit I had a great time with my fellow cooks Gus, Don, Curt, and who knows who else. Thanks to all of you that contributed, assisted, moved equipment, etc. etc. HM



From member Dale Wiltze, from way back in April, Sorry Dale it got lost in the shuffle!

Hey it's Dale great news letter makes me want more. Attached is a picture that's kind of funny for the county scrap pile. Also if you could mention the garbage dumpsters are for all of us to use but please absolutely no tires!



Chapter 194 News



CHRISTMAS SEASON 2024

Chapter Christmas party, Operation Good Cheer

2024 is nearing a close, and what a year it has been! In true “spirit of Christmas” fashion, Chapter 194 members have again outdone themselves with great comradery (dinner) and Volunteerism (OGC). We enjoyed a great party at the Shark Club again this year, and incoming President Curt Martin presented chapter awards to the outgoing board members, coordinators, etc. Thanks Curt!



Shark Club Christmas Party



Shark Club Christmas Party

Not long after the dinner, Operation Good Cheer was again upon us! With another great showing of Chapter 194 members volunteering. The chapter this year sponsored two Orphan kids, buying their various gifts (by their own request), and wrapping them for delivery. Susan Kuntzman and Julie Kaufman again stepped up to coordinate, and acquire the gifts, and arrange a wrapping party and etc. etc. etc.!



Chapter 194 Wrapping party!

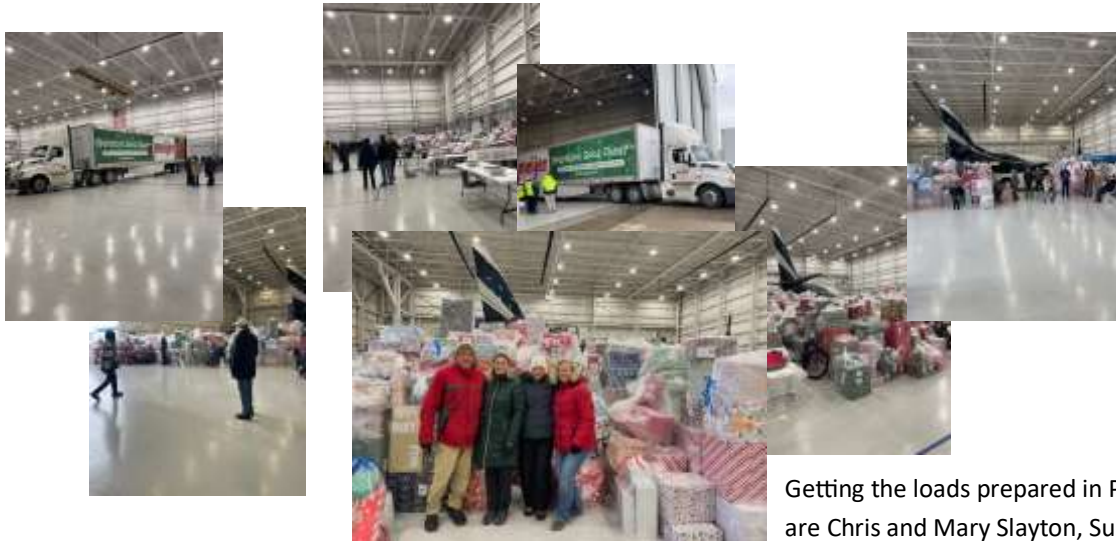
Chapter 194 News



CHRISTMAS SEASON 2024

Chapter Christmas party, Operation Good Cheer (continued)

The Saturday of OGC was promising, weather-wise, for a change. Most of the southern portion of Michigan was decent VFR, and between OGC flying partner Curt and I, we had two disabled aircraft! Looked like we would be flying another Penske truck. As it turned out they didn't realize the need for truckers until late morning, and I was unable to join Curt in a truckload to Grand Rapids. He took his wife Mary, and apparently had a "mild to moderate turbulence" road trip. The count of aircraft participating this year topped 230! That's a lot of planes. It is only due to the efforts of hundreds of volunteers, and some really clever management that this event continues to succeed. Thanks to all who participated!



Getting the loads prepared in Pentastar Hangar are Chris and Mary Slayton, Susan Kuntzman, and Julie Kaufman

A lot of Chapter 194 members chipped in for Operation Good Cheer, some spending the day on their feet in the cold outside on the ramp, some flying their planes or copilotting to deliver gifts some driving a truck to points far away. Thanks all for your efforts, and I hope your Holidays were great! HM

Events Calendar—Note that the January Chapter membership meeting will be **Wednesday January 8th**. The first Wednesday of the month falls on Jan 1, it was decided to push it back a week.

ED—You may notice a slight change in formatting in the newsletter. I have migrated over to MS Publisher which will make life much easier. Comments appreciated (easy folks don't get carried away)



Chapter 194 News



Cars, Blueberries, Apples – Don Ebben provides another trip report!



My in-laws live in southwest Michigan and spend the summers driving their classic Mustang to area car shows. This past month I loaded up the family not once but twice to fly down to northern Indiana. On labor day weekend, I flew to Plymouth Indiana (C65) for their annual Blueberry Festival. It was my first time flying with my 2 month old daughter Raegan and she slept through the trip there and back. The Plymouth airport was great with two courtesy cars and the airport manager even gave us a lift so we wouldn't have to deal with festival parking.

We had so much fun seeing grandparents and enjoying the festival, we decided to go again the weekend of 9/21 for the Apple Festival in neighboring Nappanee Indiana (C03). When I arrived, I got a good reminder that young eagles flying is not limited to just our EAA chapter. The local chapter (937) was hosting their YE rally since the car show was co-located at the airport as part of the festival. They asked me while turning base if I was here for the rally or willing to fly kids. Unfortunately my youth protect expired 9/15 so let this be a reminder to keep your youth protect certificate current. You never know when the opportunity will come up to fly young eagles!

ED – Folks, many of you are taking flying trips, we could really use more stories like Don's! Please write up details of your trip, and provide some pictures! You don't have to be a great writer, this is an informal newsletter!



Martin's Dreams of Firestar Wings

Shortly after selling my beloved RV-8 Falsi-Fighter I realized I really didn't want have to live the rest of my life without an airplane. I knew I wasn't up to the task of building another RV and I can't afford to buy or maintain one. I would have to go a much simpler route.

I've always wanted to experience flying in an open cockpit aircraft, preferably where I sat right in the nose with the rest of the airplane behind me. A Breezy with a nose fairing would be ideal, but even Breezys are getting expensive nowadays. There are other light-sport experimental aircraft that utilize that design; Kolb, Chinook, Dragonfly, Rans, Quicksilver and M-Squared all have models that would fit the bill. Some more research drew me toward the Kolb Firestar II.



Kolb has been around for many years; the company was recently acquired by new owners based in Kentucky. Searching the internet for Kolb videos, I learned of Ben Kairys. He's a local Michigan pilot who has shared his flight experiences in a Kolb Firestar and Firefly on his YouTube channel. He made modifications to his Firestar that greatly improved the performance and reliability. I watched several of his videos many times, and they really made me want to own a Firestar just like his, including his engine choice and custom modifications.



I checked in with my DAR Matt Tomsheck and learned a lot more about the Ultralight and Light-Sport Experimental aircraft categories and requirements. I wanted a Light-Sport Experimental that I could fly in controlled airspace.

I started shopping for used Firestars and found a few candidates. Most were built as ultralights, which can't legally be converted into light-sport experimental aircraft. They have to be initially built as Light Sport Experimental aircraft and have special documentation from the factory to be licensed as such. The few candidates I found for sale that were licensed were in the western states, presenting some daunting logistics. I even found Ben's own Firestar for sale; he had sold it to a buyer who had transported it to his home field in Oregon. It needed work and was being sold for a low price. I really wanted to buy that airplane but it seemed impractical to try to transport it all the way back to Michigan.

I started shopping for used Firestars and found a few candidates. Most were built as ultralights, which can't legally be converted into light-sport experimental aircraft. They have to be initially built as Light Sport Experimental aircraft and have special documentation from the factory to be licensed as such. The few candidates I found for sale that were licensed were in the western states, presenting some daunting logistics. I even found Ben's own Firestar for sale; he had sold it to a buyer who had transported it to his home field in Oregon. It needed work and was being sold for a low price. I really wanted to buy that airplane but it seemed impractical to try to transport it all the way back to Michigan.

It was looking more like I would end up building my own, so I planned a journey down to the Kolb facility in London, Kentucky to do some in-person research. On Monday 9/9/24 I drove most of the way down and stayed overnight in Richmond KY before heading to the Corbin-London Airport (LOZ) the next morning to meet up with Tom Cooper. He gave me a tour of the main hangar that served as their manufacturing, assembly and maintenance facility. We talked as we walked and I went over a list of questions I had prepared.

(Continued on page 7)



(Continued from page 6)

Tom showed me a customer's Firestar II that was being restored. They also had a quickbuild kit in one of their transport trailers. The frame was powdercoated in the same yellow I would choose. It was all I could do to resist buying on the spot... not that I had the cash available.



Martin's Dream of Firestar Wings



Tom offered to take me up to his home field to show me his airworthy Firestar II. They had recently purchased it from a customer who had to sell it for medical reasons; they use it as the factory demonstrator. He also had a Yamaha Phazer engine in his hangar with the reduction gear adapter installed that Ben Kairys designed. Tom offered to show me a flight demonstration and I

wished I'd had the time to witness that, but I needed to depart by noon to make it home that evening. I hope to return next spring and take him up on the offer before making my purchase.

We returned to the factory hangar where I met his shop manager Charles May. We talked briefly before Tom showed me around their storage hangars that held other factory mules and kits in various forms of assembly or repair. I said my goodbyes and as I drove home I was making



plans on how to best move forward with the project. I made two videos of the experience and shared them on my YouTube channel. The first describes the journey to Richmond and the factory tour the next day. The second one is the time lapse journey home on county roads. Not really Kolb-related, but a decent road trip that included a wonderful sunset. (Stay Tuned for Part 2 in next newsletter!)

ED – Marty put together this "shrine" to remember his RV-8 project, which he sold. I am planning to sell my Defiant soon. I'll have to get to work on a proper shrine!

