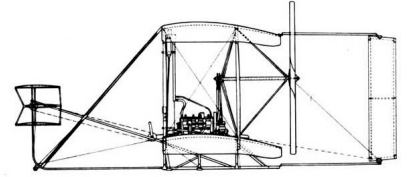




The Flyer



Volume 57, Issue 4

April 2025

More Sad News - Editor

Our Chapter, the Rochester area, and aviation in general lost a great man and his history in March. If you didn't hear, Elmer Pankratz passed on March 14, 2025, at the age of 102. Elmer flew reconnaissance P-51's during WW2, and also authored a book of his wartime training and experiences, titled, "I Needed A War To Do It....A Veteran Remembers." I did a write up of Elmer and an article I found on him in the October 2024 issue of The Flyer. Elmer always had a story to tell, and a quick smile. Here is a reprint of his obituary, from Jennings, Nulton, & Mattle Funeral Home, Inc. :

Obituary of Elmer E. Pankratz

Elmer "Pank" Pankratz, a dedicated veteran, passionate storyteller, and beloved family member, passed away peacefully on March 14, 2025, in Rochester, New York, at the remarkable age of 102.

Born on October 31, 1922, in Rochester, Elmer lived a life marked by service, adventure, and deep connections with family and community. During World War II, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps where he flew tactical reconnaissance missions in the European Theater under General Bernard "Monty" Montgomery. It was during this time that he developed a lifelong admiration for the P-51 Mustang, his "Aluminum Sweetheart". After the war, Elmer continued his military career in the Air Force Reserves until retiring as a Major.

Beyond his military service, Elmer was an active and engaged member of numerous organizations. He belonged to Braman American Legion Post #1229, EAA, Fairport VFW, and the National Warplane Museum. His passion for aviation extended into civilian life as he helped organize the Geriatric Pilots Association. In later years, Elmer was honored to serve as Grand Marshal in multiple parades—a testament to his enduring impact on the community.

Elmer's love of history and storytelling led him to author two books—one chronicling his experiences during military service and another reflecting on life afterward. His enthusiasm for preserving history was matched by his enjoyment of hands-on hobbies such as hunting, bowling, square dancing, working on old cars, playing bridge and his fascination with Alaska and the Iditarod.

A devoted person of faith, Elmer was a founding member of Faith Lutheran Church in Penfield and remained actively involved for over seven decades. His commitment to faith and fellowship enriched both his own life and those around him.

(continued next page)

Mission: EAA Chapter 44 is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization of aircraft builders and aviation enthusiasts in the Western New York region dedicated to promoting aviation and encouraging participation in aviation-related activities. These include designing, building and restoring aircraft, education, advocacy, and youth outreach programs. We promote flying with high standards of safety in an environment that supports freedom, family, and personal fulfillment.

(Elmer, continued)

Elmer is survived by his children: Gary Pankratz; Gail (Donald) Parr; and Gregory (Kim) Pankratz; five grandchildren: Kimberly Parr; Tracy (Richard) Sanchez; Sara (Jim) Fugate; Vicki Pankratz; and Eric (Shannon) Pankratz; as well as six great-grandchildren: Brooke; Braden; Troy; Amelia; Alexandria; and Austin. He was predeceased by his beloved wife Dorothy "Dot" Pankratz, brother Howard Pankratz, and sister Dorothy Nasello.

A viewing will be held on March 21, 2025, calling hours are held from 3 PM-7 PM at Jennings, Nulton & Mattle Funeral Home in Penfield, New York. A funeral service will take place on March 22, 2025, at 10:00am at Faith Lutheran Church in Rochester, followed by interment at Oakwood Cemetery.

Donations are appreciated in his memory to the Braman American Legion Post #1229. PO Box 4, Penfield NY 14526.

Elmer "Pank" Pankratz lived a remarkable life filled with dedication to country, family, faith, and community. His legacy will continue to inspire all who had the privilege of knowing him.

HAPPY LANDINGS ELMER!

(Editor's note: I received this tribute to Larry Greeno from Bob shortly after I had sent last month's newsletter out.)

When Larry Greeno Spoke... by Bob Nelligan-Barrett

The terrorist attacks on 9/11/2001 had a direct effect on Chapter 44. At some point after that day, it was deemed that fences should be built around all U. S. airports, large and small. The proposed fence at Ledgesdale would have divided our Colby St. Chapter House in two. It was time to look for another home for Chapter 44, bigger and better. That dream became the Sport Aviation Center of Western New York, and Larry Greeno was instrumental in the early planning.

The Board recognized that for us to grow as a Chapter and to build a new building, we had to become a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization. This would allow us to not only not pay state sales tax but also, more importantly, be able to accept donations of cash or materials that would be a taxable deduction (aka incentive) for the donor.

This was a significant factor in the fund-raising and building of the Sport Aviation Center and the Chapter ever since. Though none of us knew how to make that happen, Larry did. As Vice President of Planned Giving at Roberts Wesleyan University, that is what he did all day, recruiting and accepting donations to the University. So when Larry spoke...everyone listened. Not only because he was very soft-spoken, but also he was the only expert on this in the Chapter.

Larry walked us through the paperwork and legalities of setting up that non-profit status, and it has continued to benefit us to this day. The SAC would not have been built without the 501(c)3 status. Chapter 44 would not have been able to offer its Young Eagle flights (of which Larry often participated with his RV-6A, N446A) or other educational programs, and the Chapter would not have been able to accept the donation of an airplane to restore. All of these programs have led to a doubling of membership since 2001 and six collegians in aviation programs around the country. That wouldn't have been possible without Larry Greeno. Blue Skies and Tailwinds, Larry.

Editor: Not to be a purveyor of only bad news, but that is the theme at the moment, and since we have just lost our own link to WW2 aviation, I think it is only appropriate to acknowledge another passing, that of The Last of The Few. **John "Paddy" Hemingway, the last surviving pilot of the iconic Battle of Britain, passed away peacefully on 17 March 2025 at the age of 105.**

I have copied this story from here: <https://raf.mod.uk/news/articles/the-last-surviving-battle-of-britain-pilot-john-paddy-hemingway-dfc-passes-away/>

Paddy Hemingway, one of a number known as ‘the Few’ and revered figures in British aviation history, played a crucial role in defending the United Kingdom against Nazi oppression during the summer of 1940. His courage in the face of overwhelming odds demonstrated his sense of duty and the importance of British resilience.



Group Captain John “Paddy” Hemingway at his 105th birthday celebration.

Eighty-five years ago, a nineteen-year-old Royal Air Force Pilot Officer from Ireland, flew his Hurricane in the skies over France, providing fighter cover (strafing attacks, air patrols and dogfights) to the British Expeditionary Force and other allied troops as they retreated to the beaches of Dunkirk in the face of overwhelming Nazi Blitzkrieg attacks. It became known as the ‘Battle of France’.

When the invasion of France commenced in May 1940, Paddy, a pilot with No. 85 Squadron, found himself locked in a bitter contest with the Luftwaffe. In an eleven-day period the squadron accounted for a confirmed total of 90 enemy aircraft; there were many more claims that could not be substantiated. On 10 May, Paddy was recorded as destroying a He-111, the following day he downed a Do-17 but his Hurricane aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire, and he had to make a forced landing. As the Germans advanced, it was clear the airfields would be overrun and the remaining pilots, aircraft and crews returned to the UK. (continued next page)

(The Last of The Few continued)

No. 85 Squadron, under a new commanding officer, Peter Townsend, became one of the front-line squadrons of the 11 Group (Fighter Command) response to the daily attacks from Nazi aircraft, which came to be known as the '[Battle of Britain](#)'. Paddy's logbook records, almost nonchalantly, the daily sorties he and the other pilots undertook in defence of the United Kingdom. In August 1940, during hectic dogfights, Paddy was twice forced to bail out of his Hurricane, landing in the sea off the coast of Essex and in marshland on the other occasion.

Towards the end of the October 1940, the strain of fighting and loss of comrades was beginning to take its toll on Paddy. He was particularly troubled by the loss of his dear friend 'Dickie' Lee DSO, DFC in August 1940, saying in later years that his biggest regret was the loss of friends.

On 1 July 1941, Paddy was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and in September that year, he was Mentioned in Dispatches. His journey to London to receive his DFC from The King began with him escaping from a wrecked Blenheim aircraft which crashed on take-off.

This wasn't the last of his aircraft related misfortunes. In 1941, serving with No. 85 Squadron, based at RAF Hunsdon, in a Havoc night fighter, Paddy had to bail out at 600 feet due to instrument failure in bad weather, breaking his hand on the tail section. Paddy's parachute failed to open properly, and he was saved further injury as the chute caught on the branches of a tree. In 1945, whilst serving in the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces with 324 Wing, he was forced to bail out a fourth time. While attacking enemy forces near Ravenna in April 1945, his Spitfire was hit multiple times by anti-aircraft fire. He parachuted into enemy territory and managed to contact Italian partisans, who helped him return to his squadron.

John Allman 'Paddy' Hemingway was the last Battle of France and Battle of Britain (last of "The Few") pilot. He never saw his role in the Battle of Britain as anything other than doing the job he was trained to do. He didn't see it as an epoch-making moment in the history of the RAF or the United Kingdom.

Paddy always had a twinkle in his eyes as he recalled the fun times with colleagues in France and London. This quiet, composed, thoughtful and mischievous individual may not have wanted to be the last of 'The Few', but he embodied the spirit of all those who flew sorties over this green and pleasant land. His passing marks the end of an era and a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by those who fought for freedom during World War II.

At right: Group Captain John "Paddy" Hemingway in front of a Hurricane from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight



EAA Chapter 44 Aviation Summer Camp

EAA Chapter 44 Members: Any Chapter 44 members who would like to volunteer to help with this year's Aviation Camp please contact Norm Isler: NormIsler@aol.com ASAP, Volunteers will be needed to supervise and assist with our planned activities. No special training required! **Please share the following information with anyone you think may be interested in participating.**

EAA 44 Aviation Camp

Ages 11 – 17

August 2 & 3 2025

9:00 AM – 4:30 PM

Cost: \$99.00

EAA Chapter 44 Sport Aviation Center

Ledgedale Airpark (5G0)

44 Eisenhower Drive

Brockport NY 14420

Pre-registration is required. Please contact Elise Isler : AviationCamp@eaa44.org for information and a registration form.

Registration closes July 15, 2025

The camp includes 2 days of fun-filled activities all about aviation. Students will be introduced to basic aerodynamics, airplane construction, weather, navigation, instrumentation, different kinds of aircraft, and aviation related career opportunities as well as hands-on experience working with wood and metal and various tools related to building aircraft.

*** Students are asked to bring their own snacks and picnic lunch including a beverage. Water will be provided.

EAA Chapter 44 Young Eagles Schedule for 2025

Founded in 1992, the Young Eagles program is dedicated to giving youth ages 8–17, an opportunity to go flying in a general aviation airplane. These flights are offered free of charge and are made possible through the generosity of EAA member volunteers. The Young Eagles program has flown over 2.2 million kids

May 27, 2025 : 4 PM

June 14, 2025 : 5 PM

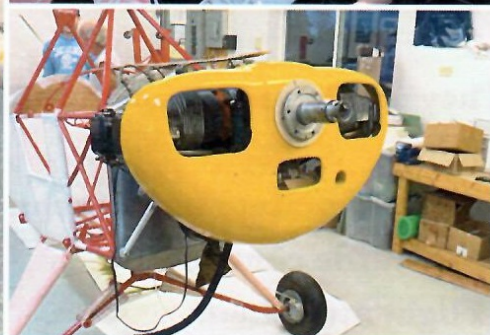
August 23, 2025 : 10 AM

September 20, 2025 : 10 AM

Please pre-register to reserve your child's aviation adventure! For registration and questions, please contact Rick Tandy at rltandy23@gmail.com

For more information from EAA headquarters about the Young Eagles program, visit www.youngeagles.org

Help Start The Chapter 44 Explorer Post!



We're looking for a few motivated people!

- The chapter survey makes engaging youth in aviation a key priority.
- Starting an Explorer Post may allow us to connect with more youth through Scouting America (formerly Boy Scouts of America).
- Exploring a vocationally oriented Scouting program.
- <https://www.exploring.org/aviation>
- 4 adults are required to set up the initial leadership of the post. We have 2 and need at least 2 more.
- The anticipated commitment is 1-2 days a month.



Jeremy Wyatt

Cell: 585-410-3943

Email: jpywyatt@pm.me

Address:

390 Reeves Road

Henrietta, NY 14467

What's in it for the youth?

- **Flying Knowledge**
- **Aviation Protocols**
- **Leadership methods**
- **Teamwork**

They will have an opportunity to participate in

- **Flight scenarios**
- **Flight simulator lessons**
- **Tours of airports and aviation facilities**

They will have an opportunity to network with

- **Pilots**
- **Aircraft maintenance technicians**
- **Air traffic controllers**
- **Flight attendants**
- **Airport managers**

They will learn about the educational requirements for a career in Aviation and receive tangible advice on steps they could take now to prepare and position themselves for a successful career in the field of Aviation.

Being associated with Chapter 44, they can learn about building and maintaining aircraft. With the acquisition of the Kitfox 3, they could help restore the plane and learn about what goes into making aircraft airworthy.

Of course, we hope that some of these youth will become regular members of the chapter to help ensure the future of Chapter 44!

Please consider volunteering to be a leader in the new post or helping out at one or two events.

THANK YOU!

Stop Dreaming! Start Flying!

Aviation for young people and adults



SPORT AVIATION CENTER OPEN HOUSE FLY-IN

Saturday June 21 10 AM - 4 PM

Free and open to the Aviation Community & General Public

Aircraft & activities will show the fun of building, restoring, & flying airplanes for their recreational and educational value.

**Baby Ace Restoration, Homebuilt, Restored,
& Production Aircraft on Static Display or Fly-by's,
Classic Car Cruise-In Parking, Grill Food (\$), FAMILY FRIENDLY**

**Sport Aviation Center of Western New York
44 Eisenhower Dr., Brockport NY 14420
Brockport Airport/Ledgedale Airpark (7G0)
15 minutes west of Rochester**



Sponsored by Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 44

A Rochester Red Tail - A Local WW2 Tuskegee Airman

At last month's gathering, our guest speaker was Austin Hancock, who is a local CFI and historian. Austin has volunteered at the National Warplane Museum in Geneseo since he was a kid, doing many tasks including aircraft restoration.

Austin was looking for a local connection to the Tuskegee Airmen for a museum when he came across the story of Rochester native Leland Pennington. This has led to a years long quest to find as much information about him as possible, which has put him in contact with surviving family members.

Leland Pennington flew a P-51B (called Lucy Gal) with the famous Red Tails squadron. He went missing in action on April 21, 1945, presumed to have crashed in the sea off the coast of Zadar, Croatia.

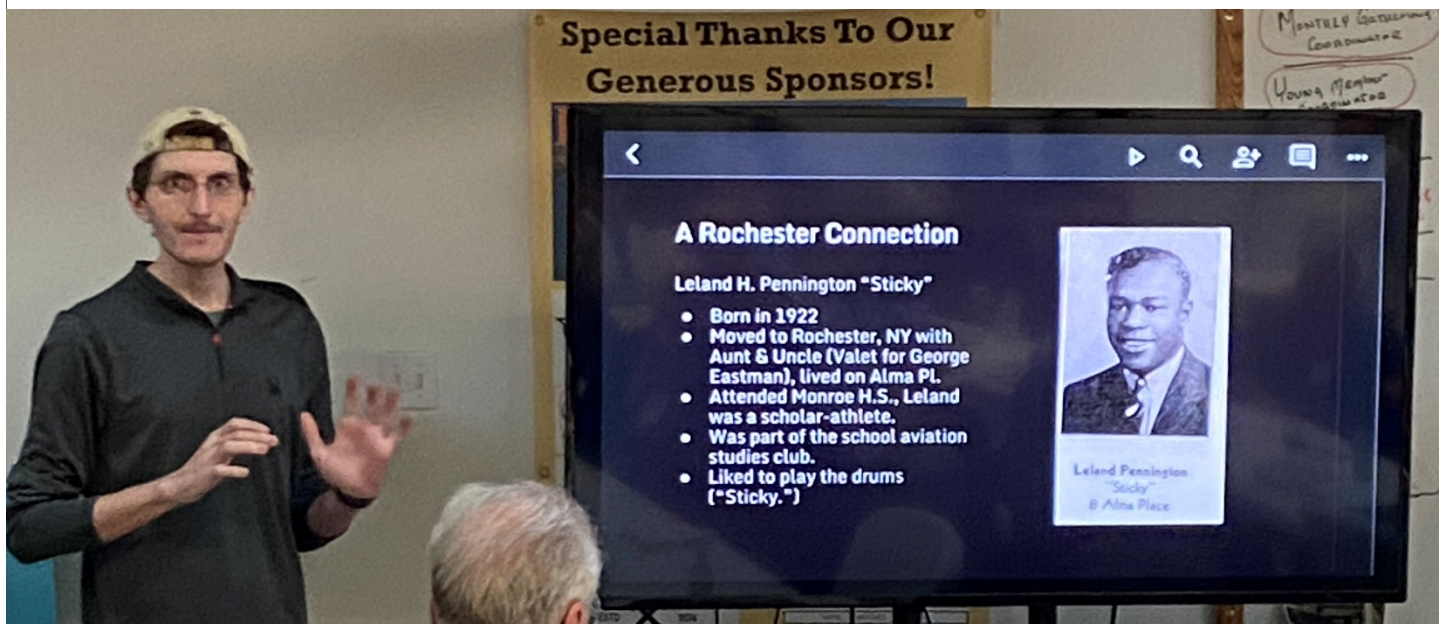
Austin is continuing his research and has high hopes to build a P-51 replica to honor Flight Officer Leland Pennington, as well as three other local P-51 pilots: Lt. Leonard B. Fuller, of Linden, NY, was lost to enemy flak over Germany on 7/7/44 while flying his P-51D "Myrt II." ; 2nd Lt. Gordon H. Root, of Victor, NY, was lost on 11/26/43 while ferrying a P-51 over Rochester when it experienced a mechanical issue; and our own Elmer Pankratz.

Austin has a GoFundMe page if you wish to make a contribution to his project: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/pennington-p51-memorial-project>



At right: Photo of Flight Officer Leland Pennington, borrowed from the GoFundMe page.

Below: Austin Hancock during his presentation.



Sun n Fun 2025 - Chapter President Mark Scheda

For me, Sun 'n Fun 2025 was a series of extremes. Extreme flying, fantastic aircraft, incredible seminars, way too much dust, and searing heat all week long!

I have dozens of stories from the week, but here I'll just share one story which stands out and let the pictures do the rest of the talking. We visited C-47 Tico Belle, a veteran of D-Day (three successful round-trips that day!) and the Battle of the Bulge, among other notable missions. While I was seated in the cockpit, our national anthem played at the opening of the day's airshow. I can tell you it was a moving experience knowing I was sitting among the memories of so many brave young airmen who sacrificed for all of us.

I also had a nice time visiting with our Chapter 44 South friends Dave Hurd, Norm Isler, and Craig Ritson. It's so nice having friends who know the lay of the land!

Staying in the spirit of extremes, the photos are dubbed in superlatives. I am hoping our editor has sorted them out for you: Prettiest, Sexiest Fairings, Funkiest, Best Value, and Meanest. Then of course is a few of us in front of the SnF 25 sign to prove we were there, and a shot of yours truly in the right seat of Tico Belle.

Enjoy, and go flying!

Mark



Upper left: Prettiest

Upper right: Sexiest Fairings

Left: Norm Isler, Craig Ritson, and Mark Scheda with the Sun n Fun 2025 sign.



Top left: Funkiest

Top right: Best value

Above: Meanest !

Middle Right: Mark Scheda in the right seat of C-47 "Tico Belle"

Right: Chapter 44 "South" members Norm Isler & Dave Hurd about to test drive their next aircraft!



Next General Gathering

April 15, 2025 Dinner @ 6:30, Gathering @ 7:30

Dinner will a Pot Luck Supper! Please bring a dish of your choosing to share. Instead of one main course, we can have many to sample! Thank you!

This month's presenter will be John Mosely, a Reaper Drone pilot for the USAF.

SAC Work Day - Saturday before Gen. Gathering, 10 am.

Newsletter Submission Deadline!

I like to publish the newsletter on the 2nd Tuesday of the month. Please submit pictures and articles by the Saturday preceding that date. Thank you! - The Editor

Contacts & BOD Terms

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mscheda@rochester.rr.com

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Director - Richard Tandy II Nov. 2025
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Director - Sharon Reithel Nov. 2026
slreithel01@gmail.com (585) 334 7011

Director - Harsh Gupta Nov. 2026
harshsayshi@gmail.com (585) 435-3846

Membership Coordinator - Mark Scheda (see above)

Young Eagles Coordinator - Rick Tandy (see above)

All activities take place at the Sport Aviation Center of Western New York, and are free and open to the public, unless otherwise noted.

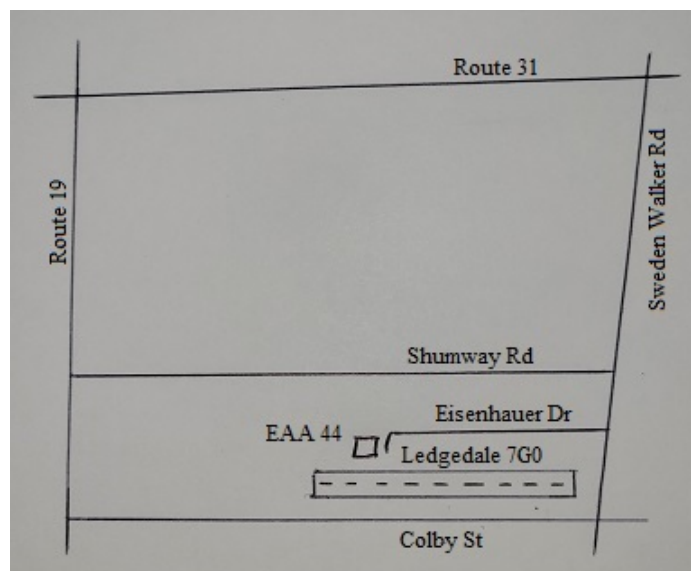
Sport Aviation Center, EAA Chapter 44
44 Eisenhower Drive, Brockport, NY 14420 Brockport Airport / Ledgeale Airpark (7G0)
43° 10' 56" N, 77° 55' 1" W

Board Meetings - 2nd Tuesday of the month

General Gatherings - 3rd Tuesday of the month
\$5 Dinner 6:30 pm, Meeting 7:30 pm

BART (Baby Ace Restoration Team) - Every Wednesday 6pm to 9pm, everyone welcome!

VMC/IMC Club (Visual/Instrument Meteorological Conditions) - 2nd Thursday of the month, 7:00 pm



Building/Grounds Coordinator - Kevin Arganbright
(585) 284-6304

Baby Ace Restoration Team Leader / Historian / Librarian - Bob Nelligan-Barrett
(585) 754-7263

Flight Advisor - Jim Martin
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