

September 2021

# PROPWASH

A Newsletter of EAA Chapter 517, Inc.



*Five Valleys Flyers*



*EAA Chapter 517, Inc.*

# From the Chapter President



Steve Rossiter

As I sit watching rain falling I'm reflecting on a trip we took out of state. We left on Monday, August 9 and even with the fires the sky was pretty clear but it was hot. We returned on August 18. The sky was still clear, but we are looking at fall temperatures, sweet! I'm looking forward to a nice rest of the summer.

Well, I have a lot to report and we have a lot to look forward to for the next several months. Things will remain exciting for our MSO aviation community. The first thing I need to report is that due to pressing and time consuming family issues, Eric Ristau has found it necessary to resign as the Chapter Vice-President. He is looking forward to becoming active with the board of directors at some time in the future. We will be seeing him at chapter activities from time to time. Member at large, Ed Lovrien has been appointed to fill out Eric's term of office. For those of you that don't know Ed, he was the first Chapter President when Chapter 517 reactivated back in 1997.

Don't forget the September 4, 2021 Pancake Breakfast and Young Eagle event. In addition, the board



of Directors decided to carry the breakfast through October 2, 2021. On November 6, we will begin our Winter Coffee and Donuts on the first Saturday to run through the first Saturday in February 2022. Because of below, we won't do March.

Speaking of March 2022, the Montana Aviation Conference is scheduled for March 3 through 5, to be held in Missoula. Five Valleys Flyers will have a booth and display at the conference. Gary Matson is our representative on the conference planning committee. The conference is always a great event and I recommend that everyone that can, attend. More details will be coming as we get closer.

On September 17, 2021 at 1700 hours, we will have a 'clean out the chapter trailer' event and a brat and dog burn. We have been storing all kinds of stuff in the trailer and it is time for much of it to GO AWAY!

We will sell anything we can and everything else will be headed for the dump. Helpers will have the first opportunity to make an offer on anything they might want. We will also be offering items for sale at the first September 18 event. No reasonable offer will be refused.

There are two terrific events scheduled for September 18. From 1100 to 1500 hours the Annual MSO Aviation Community BBQ to be held at the East LZ Hangar Condominium complex. Five Valleys Flyers will also be hosting an open house for the BBQ attendees. The second event is the screening of the Miss Montana movie that was produced by our own Eric Ristau. This event will be held at the Big Sky Brewery at 8 p.m. This is a fundraiser so tickets will be \$20. A busy, busy Saturday!

Now that Ed Lovrien has been appointed to be Vice President we need to back fill his position

as a Board Member at Large. I will first ask everyone to consider becoming that board member. Your primary duty will be to attend our quarterly board meeting then to help out with whatever tasks arise from those meetings. We have designed the board so members have a variety of backgrounds and experience. Please contact me if you feel you can contribute to the continued success of Five Valley Flyers / EAA Chapter 517, Inc. There are many exciting things coming down the road.

The board also developed a strategy to earn the most money for the chapter with our aviation themed table and the Dave Mihalic print “Friends Drop In” donated by John Barba. We will conduct a raffle that will start this fall and end at the Montana Aviation Conference on March 5, 2022. Each member will be responsible for selling at least 10 tickets, our goal is to sell 10,000 at \$5 each. The two main prizes will be supplemented with at least eight other prizes.

Mark your calendar, Five Valley Flyers will have our traditional Celebration of Flight on December 17, 2021. Due to the cost of food and labor at restaurants, the Board of Director has decided we will change things up and do a blend of potluck with one or two entrées provided and served in our very own hangar. The details are yet to be worked out but we will keep you posted. Of course the white elephant gift exchange is back on. So where are the antlers and Potty Buddy? We’ll see!

When you go to the hangar next you will see something new. We now have a night light disguised as an old time neon advertising sign. We have decided we will keep it lit as a night light. This unit was provided courtesy of our Quiet Birdmen tenant and Todd Donohue.

Well as you see there are lots and lots of exciting thing going on with Five Valleys Flyers. I hope to see everyone at our next event.

Until next month, be safe.

*Steve*





# Ray Aten – EAA’s Outstanding Young Eagle Chapter Coordinator for 2021



*Ray with plaque, flanked by Chris Gauger (left) and Sean D Tucker, Young Eagles Co-chair (right). – John Egan, photographer*

## By EAA 517

Tuesday noon at the Young Eagles Leaders Workshop at AirVenture Oshkosh 2021 Ray Aten was announced as EAA’s outstanding Young Eagles Chapter Coordinator for 2021 and presented with a plaque. Preceding the presentation

his nominating letter, written by Five Valleys Flyers – EAA Chapter 517’s secretary, Sherry Rossiter, was quoted extensively by Chris Gauger, EAA’s Young Eagles and Chapter Programs Assistant.

In addition to several other presentations, John Egan, Sr. manager for Chapters, updated

attendees on the Young Eagles Workshop program, RC model Build and Fly program and the Ray Foundation Scholar program. The latter included short presentations by three recent Ray Scholarship graduates.



*Many of the Young Eagles Leaders Workshop attendees. – John Egan, photographer*



*Chris Gauger with three of the Ray Scholarship graduates. – John Egan, photographer*



# Flight choices on the other side of the Iron Curtain

By Edi Stan

“Metropolitan Helicopters, Bill Houska Jr., how can I help you?”

“Bill, I’m Eduard Stan and my wife gifted me 10 hours of helicopter flight instruction. What do I have to bring and do before starting?”

“Bring yourself and your driver license; see you on Tuesday!”

As simple as that I took flight lessons on Spirit of Saint Louis airfield in Missouri.

It wasn’t like that where I was coming from, Sibiu, Transylvania, former Socialist Republic of Romania...

The year was 1978, socialism was victorious in Romania, and the future looked mildly gray (somewhat different from the official, ‘golden era’). First a rumor circulated at the Model Rocket Club of my high school that Sibiu would again have an Air Club. Our 30 years of punishment for being a Nazi Germany supportive population ended.

The rumor was right. At the Tarom ticket office downtown there was a pilot, Iuliu Man, who took down names for the founding members of the Air Club. Anyone age 16 to 19, enrolled in any school from Sibiu County could apply. Selection started with the fitness tests, followed by a medical exam, background check, school recommendation signed by the principal, and a sworn parental affidavit. All this just to begin theoretical classes. I signed up for skydiving as a first step in becoming a fearless pilot.

Three weeks later, about two hundred skydiver candidates showed up at the gym for the fitness test. Simple elimination worked fast. Candidate needed to do: 20 push-ups, 10 pull-ups at high bar, climb the 30 foot high rope, walk back and forth on the balance beam, jump over a 4 foot high ‘horse’, stand on one foot (with hands stretched in front, eyes shut) for 10 seconds on each foot, and run 500 meters under two minutes. As easy as that. Only about 20 of us remained.

In another week the paperwork was due and a dozen completed their files. After medical exams and National Air Club physician approval, six of us started theoretical classes in the first week of 1979. With the same Iuliu Man, pilot, teaching at the Students’ Culture House. A week later Vasile Mihanciu, the real skydiving instructor came. We learned parachute aerodynamics, parachute construction and use, parachute rigging, skydiving procedures, aeronautical meteorology and airport operations.



Every Thursday at 3 p.m. we would meet for lessons until 7 p.m. After, we would walk one block to the Neptune Public Bath for fitness and water survival training. Against the rules, we regularly and often jumped from the balcony into the pool, trained to survive falling into the water with a parachute, and enjoyed a couple of hours in the pool. Come 9 p.m. we relocated to Restaurant Boulevard for a well deserved ‘rehydration’ with beer (there was no legal drinking age under the Communist rule!). We would ‘close the restaurant’s doors’ around 11 p.m. The next day, school was a total drag.

The last week of April, final exams and tests were held. I passed with a general grade of 8 out of 10. Now we were ready to jump from the plane. May 1 was the beginning of the flight season; skydiving from the Russian Antonov 2 biplane. A few times the AN-2 was scheduled for Sibiu, but flight restrictions and ‘technical difficulties’ intervened.

Tested, trained and morally pumped up, we got excited every time the AN-2 was announced; disappointed when it didn’t come. Our instructors recommended the Communist Youth members among us to apply for skydiving paramilitary camps. I was a member, so I applied. I was selected for the July 10 to August 10 camp at Deva- Săulești airfield.

To my dismay, once I arrived in camp, I found out that I was enrolled in the gliding section. To no avail I petitioned for transfer to the skydiving section. The Communist Youth Representative and the National Defense Advisor for the camp told me: “You serve where the country needs you, not where you please!”

The only acceptable answer to that was: “I understand Comrade; thank you!”

# Upcoming film documents efforts to return Miss Montana to flight status

By Eric Ristau

When a friend suggested in September 2018 that I might be interested in shooting a film about the restoration of the Johnson Flying Service DC-3 called Miss Montana and the efforts to get her to Normandy, France for the 75 anniversary of D-Day, I couldn't have dreamed that a full-length documentary film would be the result.

Over the fall, winter, and spring leading up to the departure of Miss Montana in May, 2019, I spent approximately 45 days shooting the film as volunteers raced the clock and completed the work just in time. The story I witnessed and documented on film is an inspiring, dramatic and historic effort, leading to a successful mission. It is a tribute to Johnson Flying Service, forestry aviation, as well as those who lost their lives at Mann Gulch and in the crash in the Monongahela River. More than anything, I hope the film is a fitting testament to the efforts of the countless volunteers who worked in an unheated hangar for those many months – putting approximately 15,000 hours of labor into bringing the airplane back to life.

The film, called "Return to the Big Skies: The Story of Miss Montana to Normandy" Premieres in Kalispell on Saturday, September 11 and in Missoula on Saturday evening, September 18 (after the GA barbecue!). All profits from the screenings will help continue the mission of Miss Montana – buying gas, insurance and making sure the



airplane can stay in the air into the future. A limited run of Big Sky Brewing beer, Miss Montana t-shirts and posters from the film will be available.

Many of our fellow EAA Chapter

517 members volunteered on the Miss Montana project and appear in the film. Both screenings will be outdoors and will offer refreshments. Details and tickets are at [www.missmontanamovie.com](http://www.missmontanamovie.com).

# EAA sees blue skies ahead after weathering 2020 storm

By EAA

EAA survived 2020 in solid financial shape, despite not being able to hold a fly-in convention last year due to COVID-19. At EAA's Annual Meeting on Wednesday, EAA Treasurer Stuart Auerbach said fiscal year 2021, which ended February 2021, was a challenging year. But he said EAA managers and the board believe the organization weathered the impact of the pandemic reasonably well and that their financial position remains solid. But in early 2020, things didn't look as promising.

"Just as the year began, EAA was faced with the sudden need to navigate the unknowns of the COVID pandemic," Auerbach said. Programs and activities were placed on hold, staffing adjustments were made, and by early May, it was clear that the annual convention would be canceled. EAA staff began implementing a contingency plan to save almost all uncommitted costs of AirVenture and to implement a virtual event.

"Financially, the loss of AirVenture net income had a devastating impact on the organization's finance performance in FY 2021," Auerbach said. But support from donors and investment yields helped to offset operating losses.

Total income in FY 2021 totaled \$28.8 million, down \$24.4 million or 48.9 percent from FY 2020. However, investments increased to \$8.8 million, up \$6.8 million or 340 percent, from FY 2020. EAA's operating income was \$20 million in FY 2021, down \$31.2 million or 60.9 percent, from FY 2020, mainly

due to no income from AirVenture. Donations were also down \$2.2 million in FY 2021, to \$9 million. "Much of this decline is a result of the cancellation of The Gathering, our annual fundraising gala held during AirVenture," Auerbach said.

The remaining \$11 million in other income sources in FY 2021 came mainly from memberships and subscriptions, advertising, and merchandise sales.

EAA membership decreased by 6.9 percent to 224,975 during FY 2021, likely due to the loss of renewals and new joins that occur during AirVenture. However, recent membership campaigns have recovered a considerable portion of that loss. EAA CEO and chairman of the board Jack J. Pelton said total membership is now at 240,651. "So membership is back and stronger than ever," he said.

EAA incurred \$28 million in operating expenses in FY 2021, down \$17.6 million or 38.6 percent from FY 2020, as many EAA programs were either canceled, curtailed, or delivered online. AirVenture costs were \$3.8 million, down \$9.7 million from the year before as EAA only incurred fixed costs for such things as insurance and depreciation, as well as staff costs invested in planning for the 2020 event.

Auerbach said some of EAA's expenses were offset by a loan through the federal Paycheck Protection Program, as EAA was awarded \$2.4 million in funds. The loan was forgiven early in FY 2022.

The overall result for FY 2021 was an increase in net assets of \$800,000, or almost 1 percent. At fiscal year-end, EAA had total assets of more

than \$116.5 million, a substantial portion that was liquid and available to cover debt repayment, the operating reserve requirement, and investment in furthering the organization's mission over time.

"EAA's financial reserve position was key in absorbing the impact of AirVenture 2020's cancellation and curtailed operations of fiscal 2021," Auerbach said. Auerbach said EAA held off on significant capital purchases due to the uncertain economic impact of the pandemic. Capital spending was targeted to AirVenture site development and safety. In addition, EAA acquired land on the south end of the site, he said, with plans to ultimately relocate the ultralight Fun Fly Zone.

Pelton said it is sobering to see what the organization has been through financially. "But it's been rewarding to know that we managed through the storm. The team worked hard to stick to our strategic plan and to have reserves and keep us financially solid, even without AirVenture 2020."

Pelton said he was also proud that EAA continued to deliver to its members — through publications, webinars, and so on — and never lost contact throughout the pandemic. "While we may have kept a calm presence, we were paddling feverishly under water while trying to keep calm."

However, Pelton said he wasn't too worried going into this week because he knew the event only happens because of its 5,000-plus volunteers. They're committed, and they're here. I promise EAA will be strong, vibrant, and making a difference well into the future."



# Help wanted for breakfasts

By Steve Rossiter

Among the many changes for 2022 is the need for a new Breakfast Coordinator. After the best part of 20 years Sherry is retiring as the Five Valleys Flyers / EAA Chapter 517 Breakfast Coordinator. I hope someone will step up soon so Sherry can work with them on the remaining two breakfasts in 2021.

The duties are pretty straight forward:

1. Confirm that our regular cooking crew will be available and

on rare occasions find a substitute when a regular is not available.

2. Purchase food and supplies as necessary. Paid for by the chapter.

3. Collect the meal donations.

4. Assure the cooking equipment and utensils are washed and returned to their place on the serving cart.

5. The time requirement is only a couple of hours a month on your own schedule.

Please contact Sherry at 544-6182 if you can help the chapter on this project.

# Moving sale at the Rossiters

Steve and Sherry are having an estate sale. No they are not dead, but they have sold their house and have all kinds of stuff that won't fit in their down sized living quarters. This is an early notice for their buddies in EAA. Tools, house hold items, art, books and appliances. No reasonable offer will be refused. If you would like to check it out call Steve at 406-529-1601. Or you may wait to compete when things show up on Craigslist.

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## BUILDER'S REPORT

**Bearhawk**  
Dick Tardiff  
Bearhawk Patrol

**Rutan**  
Ed Lovrien  
Limo EZ – 50%

**Van's RV**  
John Barba  
RV-6

Allan Glen  
RV-10 – 20%

James "Cal" Geyman  
RV-9A – 50%

**Zenith**  
Duane Felstet  
CH-750 – 75%

*Builders, please send updates to the newsletter editor at [cburson@gmail.com](mailto:cburson@gmail.com) so this list can be kept current.*

# Chapter preparing to host raffle

By Ed Lovrien

Missoula EAA 517 is starting a raffle very soon. It will end around the end of the aviation conference in the spring. I am hoping it will be a big money maker for the group but I need some help. I need donations of items you may have or ideas of items I can go after which will be of interest and will help sell tickets. I would like to have at least 10 prizes, all of which would be something anyone would want. So far we have the table in the hangar with the map on top and the wheel pants on the legs, A painting that is the same as the one hanging in the office at the hangar (but not that one), A 3D carved Montana in cherry wood, and I will try to make a wavy flag



as pictured. I need at least six more things that would work, aviation or not, but desirable in a drawing. I will include pictures, if possible, of the carvings, but I didn't think to get one of the table and art work at this time. If you have any questions, please call Ed Lovrien. More to come on this at a later date. I would like to have the raffle ready to run by Oct 1 if possible. Thanks for your help.



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