

EAA CHAPTER 770



Welcome to the Chapter 770 newsletter. Please share your news and updates from the chapter, upcoming flying events, info and more. If you have flying stories, photos etc to include feel free to send them to etf6911@gmail.com.
Jim Bildilli came up with a very neat topic, we would like to highlight those who volunteer at AirVenture as a countdown to Oshkosh '22. Please get contact me to share your story!

UPCOMING EVENTS

VMC/IMC Club : April 5,2022
Chapter Meeting: April 21, 2022
Young Eagle Rally: April 30,2022 (rain date May 7)
Ford Trimotor AT5 Visit: May 19-22, 2022
EAA Air Venture: July 25-31, 2022

UPCOMING EAA WEBINARS

Your Airplane's Report Card (Wings)	APR 6	7:00pm
Gyrocopters of the EAA Collection Pt.2	APR 12	7:00pm
EAA Getting the Most out of Your Membership	APR 13	7:00pm
Young Eagles Build and Fly	APR 14	7:00pm
Controllability as Affected by Weight and Balance (Wings)	APR 20	7:00pm
Planning for International Young Eagles Day	APR 21	7:00pm
Bad News is Good News: Avoiding most Accident Scenarios (Wings)	APR 27	7:00pm

Register for upcoming webinars at:
www.eaa.org/ea/news-and-publications/ea-webinars



Over the next few months, we will highlight those from Chapter 770 who volunteer at AirVenture. This month we talk with Jim Bildilli as he discusses his longtime role with Aviation Exploring. The Explorers perform a number of jobs needed to make AirVenture a success. The Explorers attending experience job duties unique to the massive fly-in and airshow and have time to take it all in and enjoy it as well.

How long have you been attending Oshkosh/ AirVenture?

"We started camping with Aviation Exploring Post 218 from Racine, WI in 1985. Post 218 is sponsored by EAA Chapter 838. The advisors for the post were Carl and Adele Hemle. Carl was an aerial photographer and had been taking his post to Oshkosh as a "super" activity.

We met the post at an Explorers get together near Chicago, and out of 50 posts present, we were the only two that were involved with aviation. We obviously had a similar interest in aviation so Carl and Adele asked us if we'd like to join them and camp together at "Oshkosh" because at that time, Air Venture was non-existent. Needless to say, everyone had such a good time, both posts agreed to meet again the next year and it soon became a late July activity for both.

Many friendships were developed and 36 years later some of those original high

school age explorers are now advisors themselves and bringing their posts to AirVenture. It's not unusual to see three generations of the same family camping together."

What is the mission of the Explorers there and what activities do the Explorers participate in?

"The primary mission is to have fun and promote careers in aviation. The posts have volunteered for many activities including husking several thousand ears of corn, working at kid venture and assisting with providing security during the convention. However, our primary job is to capture the aircraft on the taxiway after they are released by the tower, sort them as to type and direct them to their specific camping area.

When they arrive, some of the kids assist the aircraft owners in securing their aircraft and helping to unload their gear. Of course, all have been instructed to say a very familiar phrase: "Welcome to AirVenture at Oshkosh" followed by "please follow the guy and gals wearing the orange vests and waving batons to your parking area."

Over the years, the explorers have assisted Burt Rutan with Space Ship One and actually got to get inside the aircraft that is now displayed at the Smithsonian Air Museum in Washington, DC. They have had numerous private tours and enjoyed an "after hours visit" to the control tower.

Some of them work at the "Moo Cow" near the ends of the main runway counting and identifying arriving and departing aircraft. In the evenings after summer in the "Mess Hall"(actually a 40' x 60' tent with picnic tables), we have guest speakers that talk

about their careers in aviation. Over the years, this has included astronauts, payload specialists, air show performers, missionary pilots, FAA employees, aircraft manufacturers and military pilots."

How long have Explorers been involved with AirVenture?

"Aviation Explorers have been associated with Air Venture for over 40 years. Springfield's Aviation Exploring Post #731 was established in 1984. Our original sponsor was Garrett Aviation....hence the "731" which was a very popular Garrett engine that powered several turbo-prop aircraft such as the Mitsubishi MU-2 which we lovingly called the "Rice Rocket." Garrett's other popular was a turbine that was used as an "auxiliary power unit " or APU on many aircraft.

Garrett went through a couple episodes of re-structuring and was eventually sold to General Electric. Post #731 soon found out that it was without a corporate sponsor until the Springfield Airport Authority took on the responsibility and has continued to this day."

How does a kid/young adult get involved and participate at the Explorers AirVenture camp?

"To camp at the Aviation Exploration Base at Air Venture you have to be a registered member of the Boy Scouts of America. Exploring has always been a co-educational activity. In fact, nearly 1/3 of the explorers are female. When the camp was initially started, there were approximately 25 kids and perhaps 5 adults. Today, we place a limit of 200 youth between

the ages of 14-21 with an additional 40 adult advisors.

The only year that we haven't camped at OSH was 2020 due to all of the Covid related restrictions, and the fact that Air Venture was canceled as well. In 2021, we only accepted 125 explorers and advisors because we were still under many rules and regulations with regard to Covid. However, no one in the camp contracted Covid-19 or any of the known variants.

The camp is run by a chairman and 6 co-chairmen with each having a specific area of concern. Mine happens to be "facilities" which includes the maintenance of our permanent buildings and structures at the camp.

About 20 years ago, several of us applied for and were granted a not-for-profit status by the IRS and the state of Wisconsin when we incorporated. You can now register online and pay your camping fee for the week. At \$250, it's probably the best deal going for attending Air Venture because it includes everything except transportation to and from. We have 3 meals per day and lots of snacks etc. After all the camp is usually full of hungry teens. Of course, like most camps, campers have one day of KP duty in which you work with explorers from all over the U.S. We have a modern kitchen, and we use a lot of prepared food items, so the work is easy. As far as transportation goes, we have our own motor home and pull an enclosed trailer to Oshkosh and explorers riding with us, go for free. The website for registration is aviationexplorationbase.org. The website also has a video etc. which shows some of the activities at the camp....and the videos are developed by the explorers at the camp."

Do you get much time to take in the show yourself?

"Each explorer is expected to volunteer 3 hours per day, which leaves you with a lot of hours to roam the grounds with your friends both old and new. However, a favorite "trick" that most Explorers do is to sign up for two consecutive 3-hr. work assignments. Why you ask? Every afternoon there is an airshow and guess who gets to be in front of the crowd line.....Explorers who are wearing their orange vests. It's sort of an automatic security detail....one minute you're working and the next, you're standing in front of the ropes and fences acting as crowd control. So in effect, you're still working, but you have an unobstructed view of the air show."

As for the night air shows, we have our own roped off area in front of the crowd. We take our own tram along with a couple of golf carts loaded with the explorers, camping chairs and enough popcorn to last through the show. In fact, we usually share it with some of the crowd standing around us."

What are some of your favorite aspects of AirVenture?

"What is not to like when you are totally surrounded by aviation for an entire week? Not only can you attend seminars and workshops, but you can assist with the building of an aircraft, purchase tools etc. at discounted prices at the "Fly Market. being able to get up and close to new technology aircraft, avionics and aircraft designs is great, but most of us with grey hair enjoy seeing and hearing the numerous warbirds fly, especially the formation flights and the

"review" that highlights many aircraft from the early days to current aircraft that readily converts Jet-A to noise. In fact, our camp is in the middle of the warbird camping area just west of the Civil Air Patrol's Blue Beret Encampment.

On the Explorer's side, it's interesting to see and hear them talk about their "new" discoveries on a daily basis. Someone will talk about being able to fly drones and the next thing is you'll see a group of kids heading down to the drone arena. Most of the time, on the drive to OSH, the explorers will talk incessantly about what they want to see or do. However, on the trip back to SPI, it is nearly always quiet because everyone is so worn out by the week's activities, they're usually fast asleep."

Are there any "hidden gems" at Oshkosh you'd recommend people stop to see when they are there?

"I consider visiting Sea Base on Lake Winnebago to be the hidden gem at Air Venture. It's like entering a whole different world. It's quiet, everyone is walking around in bathing suits and flip-flops, the pace is slow and everyone makes sure that you aren't thirsty. It's definitely worth the trip...especially about the 4th day of camping on the main grounds. "