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Pittsburgh-Butler Region Experimental Aircraft Association - Chapter 857

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# EAA 857 NEWSLETTER

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## Then and Now

Bob Tedesco submitted these two pictures for the newsletter: "...One is a picture that I extracted from the video of my Viking 110 startup. The other is of a RB47E...I was a crew chief of the B47 from 1961-1964. The picture is from the AF museum at Wright-Patt AFB."

"I'm replacing my 110 radiator today...the one that came with it was leaking, possibly due to shipping stresses."

Bob's making progress on the Zenith 701! Thanks for sharing Bob!

## Presidents Message

EAA 857 Members,

Change in Plans! Earlier this month when I asked if anyone had anything to share in the August Newsletter I had indicated we would be at KBTP. However subsequently Bob Santolla suggested we meet at his hangar at Butler Farm Show, so come on out on Tuesday for the August meeting and his presentation on Electrical Systems. We may attempt to video stream this meeting if we can get a cell hot spot set up at Bob's hangar. Bob said he would grill some burgers and dogs before hand beginning about 5.



Please let us know if you will be there, and please bring a chair. The weather is looking great for Tuesday. We are in essence outdoors, mask at your personal discretion. Also, we may have visitors from the Butler Pilots Association in attendance.

I will remind you that at the Board Meeting on June 23 we decided that we will cancel the public events we had on our schedule for August and September. It appeared to us that the physical conditions and requirements for conducting such events were not viable for us to follow at this time.

I would ask Pilots with current YPP status and who are willing to provide a one on one YE ride with appropriate health precautions, please let me know. I have had some inquiries about the possibility of doing individual YE rides.

And lastly, thanks to Chris McGeary for submitting this months articles, and also to Bob Tedesco, who had a first engine test run of the Viking on his Zenith as shown on the face page of this newsletter.

Please everyone take care of yourselves and your families! See you Tuesday!

Ted Merklin,  
President, EAA Chapter 857



## Minutes of July 21, 2020 Meeting

**Opening:** President Ted Merklin called the meeting to order at 19:00 and led the members in saying the Pledge of Allegiance. This meeting held in person at the KBTP conference room.

**Meeting Attendees:** 14 members plus 3 via a Google meeting online presentation. 3 visitors also present

**Program:** Bob Santolla presented an excellent program on fuel system components and design.

**Previous Meeting Minutes:** Approved the minutes from the June 16, 2020. (presented via Zoom)

**Treasurer's Report:** The current bank balances were reported.

**Newsletter:** The newsletter was distributed July 20, 2020 and uploaded also to the chapter website.

**Website:** The new website went live on 4/1/2020. enter <https://chapters.eaa.org/ea857> in your browser.

### **Business:**

- **Membership status:** 31 paid members.
- **Young Eagles:** Are any pilots willing to fly YE individually at this time?
- **Event Dates for 2020:** All public events have been cancelled for 2020.
- **EAA** has issued guidelines for Covid-19 actions to take at YE Rallies and Pancake Breakfast events. Common Sense, Cleanliness, Physical separation, Mask / Barriers, No Self Service, Individual Condiment Packs
- **Air Academy:** 2020 camps are cancelled. Candidate Zach Jordan had a reservation for late June Basic: Zach indicates desire to go in 2021, however he will be 16 for the Advanced camp and would be waitlisted now. We have \$220 in YE Credits we can apply in 2021.
- **Chapter room:** We will need rolling carts for the transport of tables and chairs.
- **PA Charitable status:** We will be issuing a request for exemption for registering as a public charity in PA due to our low level of monies received in year 2019. (<25K)
- **Chapter Activities:** it was suggested to have fly-outs for Lunch at select local airports.
- **Chapter Appreciation:** Certificates for chapter position volunteers were handed out. Thanks to all who serve!
- **Nominations for Chapter Officers:** Nominations will be taken in October with a vote in November.
- **August Meeting:** Jason Frazier NOAA office is tentatively scheduled.
- **Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn at 20:30 was made by Bob Weir, and seconded by Dave Von Kaenel.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Schubert

Secretary

## A COVID Cross Country Adventure (Part 1)

by Chris McGeary

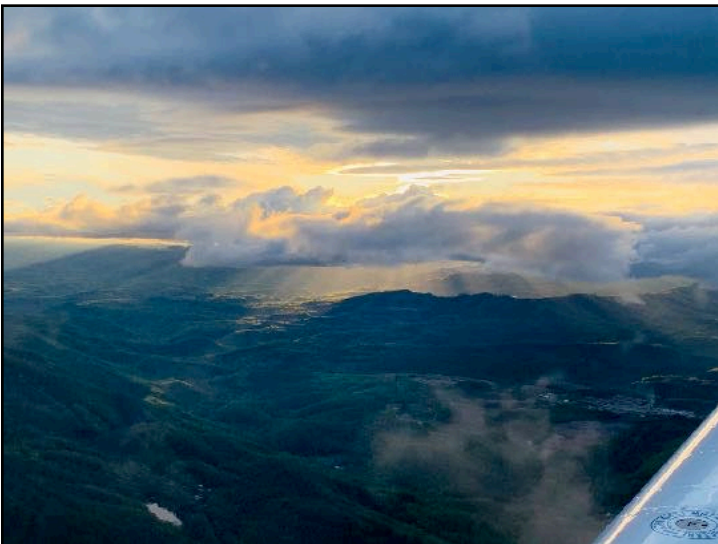
Here is a little trip report for the newsletter:

When coronavirus made a mess of our European vacation plans, Margot & I regrouped and went to Plan B: Let's do a loop of the country in the RV9, maybe get to the west coast. We had a general plan, but with national closings (and the weather) we'd play it by ear.

Step 1 was packing. We figured we would need to be able to camp at times, so a good lightweight tent, air mattress and sleeping bag would be critical. Hiking sticks and a couple folding chairs rounded out the camping gear. A collapsible cooler (with frozen food and frozen water bottles for cooling), and a dry goods bag/picnic basket took care of the food issues. A good set of tie downs and gust locks for the plane (more on that later), as well as some basic tools. And lastly, some clothes for the expected varied climates expected (including one set of dress clothes). Weight and balance looks good with full tanks (and with empty tanks). Of course, getting everything stuffed into the area behind the seats was a bit like assembling a jigsaw puzzle, but it did all fit in.



We took the plane out for a flight and a few landings to make sure the handling didn't change appreciably with the rear CG, and amazingly, it flew (and landed) pretty much the same. No surprises is always a good thing.



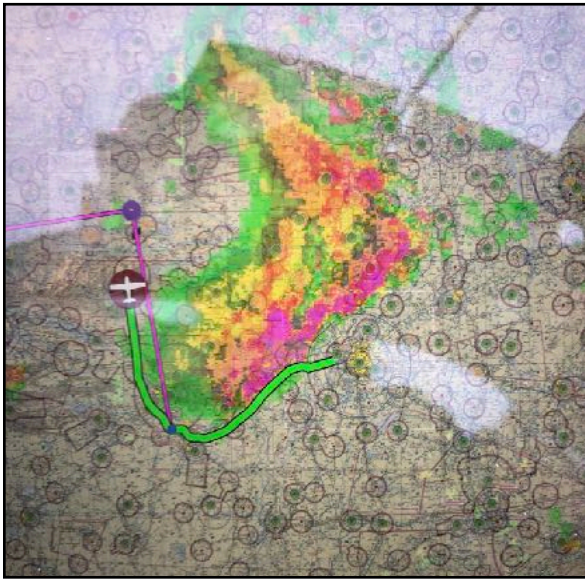
The plan was to fly out on Friday evening, but the usual May Pittsburgh weather was making that look iffy. Well, add a laptop to the mix so that work could be done on the road (recheck weight and balance: yup, still just ahead of aft CG and 50 lb under gross), and leave early.

We headed out at 6PM Thursday, just ahead of bad weather coming down from Lake Erie, and skirted rain squalls down to New Tazewell, TN (3A2). New Tazewell is a quiet little airport northeast of Knoxville. We had been there before and knew that it had a great little area just down the hill from the ramp to set up a tent. It also has self service 100LL, a pilots



lounge with bathrooms, a microwave to heat up that late dinner, and a refrigerator freezer (to refreeze those water bottles for the cooler).

We filled the plane, tied it down, set up the tent, had dinner and bedded down for the night. We were up with the sun the next morning, spread the tent fly and plane cover out to dry on the tarmac, had breakfast, packed up and were on our way by a bit after 9AM. Never saw another soul. From here, we were headed for a spot on the Missouri/Arkansas border, on a little airpark where some land was for sale.



Turns out we should have gotten up a bit earlier (or maybe it wouldn't have mattered). By the time we got to western Tennessee, there were a couple lines of thunderstorms working their way east across the midwest. Gotta love ADS-B IN. Between that and the Mark 1 Eyeball, situational awareness is greatly increased. It's easy enough to see the storm next to you, but what ADS-B weather allows you to do is get an idea of what is over the horizon. It gives you more information to decide whether to go left or right of a thunderstorm (or just find an airport to hunker down). Anyway, we got to southwestern Kentucky and were looking at what seemed to be a solid wall of storms. We found a gap between storms to the south and ended up at West Memphis (KAWM) for lunch (BBQ!) and to top off the tanks. The FBO there was happy to lend us a crew car and give us directions to the nearest decent BBQ spot, this being a place called Tacker's Shake Shack. Coming from the general lockdown in PA, this was place a bit of a shock. Most people didn't have masks on, and the place was fairly crowded. We waited outside until our order was ready, grabbed it, and found a nice, quiet park to sit under a tree and munch down some REALLY GOOD BBQ. Hard to miss with BBQ around Memphis, even on the Arkansas side.

We called the folks at the airpark we were planning to visit and asked about the weather. They had just had 65mph winds and there were some trees down, and the storm line was headed our way. I didn't want to have the plane sitting on an airport ramp with that coming, and it looked like the south end of the line was near Little Rock, so we headed southwest to go around. Our 1 hour flight ended up taking almost 2, but we landed at Lost Mine (MO56) and got a look at the place. Not a bad runway as private airparks go, and very friendly people. After looking around for a few hours, we fired up the RV and flew over to Branson, Missouri's



Clark Downtown Airport (KPLK). This place was a bit disappointing. Nobody there when we arrived, pilot's lounge (and bathrooms) all locked up, no security around the airport, no automated fuel service. After some debate, we tied down the plane, called an Uber and got driven to a hotel. We did get plenty of local commentary by the Uber driver, and the hotel was letting each room sit unoccupied for several days between use. No breakfast, though. Thank goodness for that bottomless picnic basket and cooler. It supplied dinner and breakfast, too. We got an early ride back to the airport from the hotel. Still no one at the airport. We loaded up and left (a month later a bill arrived for overnight parking). If you overnight at KPLK, there's a La Quinta Inn about 2 miles away that is likely as comfortable and definitely cheaper than anything downtown.

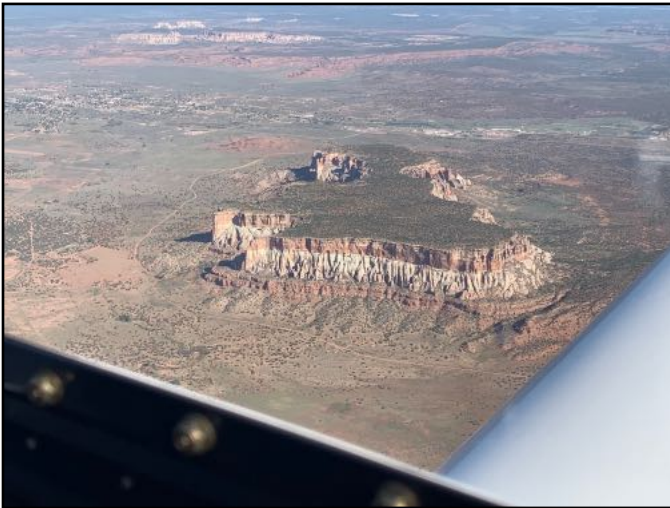
Our early start got us into a different Carroll County (4M1) for fuel, then we headed west for Tucumcari New Mexico (TCC). As you head west, the land starts rising, and so does the heat. Once you get west of Amarillo, TX, there aren't many airports to choose from. In fact, the nearest airport with 100LL to Tucumcari is 50 miles away. Out west, you really want to be sure of your gas reserves. Coming into Tucumcari was interesting. The runway is long, and was well aligned to the prevailing wind, but it was gusty, so the plane would seem to come to a stop relative to the landscape as a gust would come thru, and then accelerate again once it had passed. The landing ended up being a nice one. When we topped the tanks and went to tie down, we got a couple more surprises. First of all, no ropes here. You chain the plane down. Second, when we got in, I received a message from my sister that my dad had been rushed to the hospital and had passed away. COVID had gotten into the nursing home in Erie (likely from one of the workers or therapists, as we had been unable to visit him for the past couple of months). After looking at flight options (it was Saturday, and even out of Phoenix, we wouldn't be able to get a commercial flight home until Wednesday), and talking to my brother and sister, we decided to continue our trip. We had brought along my dad's EAA hat, and had been sending him regular updates, so we felt his spirit was along with us for the adventure.

Tucumcari turned out to be more interesting than expected. If any of you have seen the Disney movie "Cars", this was one of the towns that must have served as a model for Radiator Springs. Rt 66 runs through the middle of it, the interstate bypassed it and it even has a mountain in the distance that is similar. We stayed at the Roadrunner Lodge. It was a retro place with 1960s decor, and even a 1965 TV guide and Life magazine in the room! They gave us a ride to and from the airport as part of our stay. We wandered around town (almost no one on the streets) and even visited a curio shop shaped like a teepee. Margot got some very nice Indian jewelry there. We ordered Mexican from one of the downtown restaurants (they deliver) and ate outside, watching a trickle of cars go by.





The next morning we got the motel owner to give us an early ride back to the airport, and we made another discovery. The rudder gust lock normally supplied on the RV9s may work well back east, but the regular high winds out west seem to have easily overpowered it. The heavy gauge stainless steel wire had been bent from a “U” shape to something vaguely resembling a “V” and had worked itself out of the holes in the brackets. The rudder had banged back and forth hard enough for the elevator to leave dimples in the sides of the rudder, plus it had popped the trim tab off the rudder. I checked over the rudder attachment points looking for any signs of flex, but found none. I also checked to make sure all control surfaces were tight. Other than the dimples, everything looked good. It was time to head off to our next destination: Sedona.



But first, we needed to fly past Albuquerque. I mention this because Albuquerque marks the first time I’d seen MEFs (Maximum Elevation Figure) over 10,000 feet. This is where you focus more on flying around things instead of over them. Turns out that’s pretty easy in the Southwest. Normally visibility was 50 miles or more. You just want to be very careful when plotting your course and following it. Albuquerque was

also interesting for another reason: The taxiways were lined with parked airliners. Evidently, the high dry climate is good for (hopefully temporary) aircraft storage. We buzzed along, past Winslow Arizona (such a fine sight to see) and Meteor Crater, and on to Sedona.

Put flying into Sedona on your bucket list! The landscape to the east is dry high desert, just scrub and dirt, all shades of tan and brown. There is a 6700' ridge ahead of you with a bit of green (finally some trees!) at the top. As you crest the ridge, you're in another world. Huge spires of red rock are surrounded by lush green trees, and the airport is on top of a mesa a mile below you. Oh my, was it busy! We joined a steady line of landing aircraft, and got lucky. An aircraft taxied out of the last spot on the ramp just as we arrived. We tied down, collected our rental car, loaded up and headed down the hill for lunch. On the way, we stopped at the Airport Vortex, a spot on the Airport Loop hiking trail where you are supposed to be able to feel the mystical forces around you. Me, not so much, but the view was fantastic. Sedona wasn't really sure where they were on COVID lockdown. You were supposed to wear masks indoors, and most people did, at least in the grocery stores. The shopping areas were crowded, and the bars seemed to be, too. We ate out twice in the 4 days we stayed there, both times outside. The rest of the time we cooked at home in the AirBNB house we had rented. The hiking was great, with amazing views around most every turn.



..And on May 27th, Margot and I got married at Cathedral Rock. Most people want a fairy tale wedding. I got mine at 66.





We got up early the next morning, packed, put the wedding clothes (remember the dress clothes I mentioned?) in a box to ship back, dropped them at UPS and were taking off by 8:15. Turns out, even 8:15 is kind of late when it's a hot day in Arizona. A plane coming in on long final delayed our takeoff, and my RV doesn't like to idle when it's 90 degrees with no humidity. We were barely off the ground when the cylinder overtemp alarm started beeping. I have it set to 410, but it was up to 427 before we gained enough speed to start it cooling back down. Good thing Sedona airport is on a mesa. We flew for several minutes without gaining altitude before the engine cooled enough to silence the alarm. Then we turned north, headed for the Grand Canyon.

To be continued....





## **Gassed over Clarksburg!**

by Chris McGeary

We had something rather terrifying happen to us yesterday. It was about 4:40pm and we were near the end of our flight back to Butler from Florida. We were on autopilot at 150Kts at 7500 ft, up above a scattered cloud layer, just southeast of Clarksburg WV on course for Rostraver, when suddenly the cockpit filled up with what smelled like ammonia fumes. Our eyes and throats immediately started stinging and we started coughing. Margot yelled “Get us down! Get us down!” and I kicked us off autopilot, pushed the stick forward and pulled back the throttle to keep the engine from over revving.

Thinking it was something inside the airplane I opened the vent on my side, and was blasted with stinging gas. I told Margot to close her vent as I closed mine. I tried the vent again about 30 seconds later, receiving another blast of smell.

By this time we were past Clarksburg, almost beyond their Class Delta, and down to 3300 ft. I normally dial in the various CTAF frequencies for upcoming airports as I fly, and thankfully had Fairmont dialed in; and there it was right in front of us, completely empty as usual. I announced base and final, put it down, pulled over and opened the canopy to fresh air. Total elapsed time from the initial gassing until we were on the ground was less than 7 minutes.

After spending a few minutes coughing, rinsing our mouths and letting our eyesight recover, I called Clarksburg tower to explain why we had violated their Class Delta. They said they had tracked us (ADS-B, I assume) and not to worry about it.

We spent a couple of hours on the ground making sure we were all right, walked across the street and had something to eat and a couple of ice teas while our symptoms slowly cleared. The flight home after was blessedly uneventful. As I write this 18 hours later, my throat is still sore and Margot is coughing occasionally.

After action analysis:

First, there was nothing wrong with the plane. The only thing I could think of that would generate ammonia smelling gasses in the engine compartment MIGHT have been the lithium battery, and it was fine. I opened the oil filler door and sniffed once the plane was on the ground and I could trust my nose to work again. All I smelled was normal hot engine. Plus, if it had been in the engine compartment, or under the instrument panel, it likely wouldn't have been coming in through the vents.



After consulting Google Maps, we found a plastics manufacturing plant on the southwest side of Clarksburg. One of things they manufacture is spray foam insulation. Surface winds were calm and at 7500 ft we had an 8-10 kt west wind. A release from that plant could have been right in our flight path. We were probably in the plume for 30 seconds or more, making it more than a mile wide at altitude.

What should I have done different?

In hindsight, I could have declared an emergency on 121.5, pressed the button on the ELT and/or declared on 122.8 (the CTAF for Fairmont). My priority was to get us on the ground so we could get fresh air. Or, I could have gone into Clarksburg. But, I had never been there and I didn't know what frequency to use. Plus my eyes were watering badly enough that I didn't trust myself to change frequencies. In my mind's eye I could see myself putting the plane down successfully, only to die a fiery death in a collision with a business jet that was taking off.

I'm hoping that this is a once in a lifetime experience.





**EAA 857 - Chapter Meetings and Events for 2020**

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM  
in the Conference Room at the Pittsburgh-Butler Regional Airport.

<b>Chapter Meetings</b>	Tuesdays	January 21	
		February 18	
		March 17	<b>[CANCELLED]</b>
		April 21	<b>[CANCELLED]</b>
		May 19	<b>[CANCELLED]</b>
		June 16	ZOOM Meeting
		July 21	at KBTP
		August 18	at Farm Show
		September 15	
		October 20	
		November 17	
<b>EAA 857 Chili Cook Off -</b>	Sunday,	February 9	
<b>International Young Eagles Day -</b>	Saturday,	June 13	<b>[CANCELLED]</b>
<b>EAA 857 Fly-In and YE -</b>	Sunday,	August 9	<b>[CANCELLED]</b>
<b>EAA 857 Fly-In and YE -</b>	Saturday,	September 13	<b>[CANCELLED]</b>

**2020 National Events**

Sun 'n Fun -	May 5 - 10	<b>[CANCELLED]</b>
Sentimental Journey -	June 16 - 20	<b>[CANCELLED]</b>
AirVenture Oshkosh 2020 -	July 20 - 26	<b>[CANCELLED]</b>

**EAA 857 Chapter Officers for 2020**

Use [contact@eaa857.org](mailto:contact@eaa857.org) to email the Chapter President.  
Your request will be forwarded to the appropriate individual.

<b>President</b>	<b>Ted Merklin</b>
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Phil Kriley</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Frank Szczerba</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Rick Schubert</b>
<b>Newsletter / Web Page</b>	<b>Ted Merklin, Ed.</b>
<b>Young Eagles</b>	<b>Phil Kriley</b>
<b>Technical Advisors</b>	<b>Chuck Potts    Bob Santolla</b>
<b>Board Members</b>	<b>Dan Hood        2020-2022</b> <b>Bob Santolla    2020-2021</b> <b>Gary Marsico    2020</b>