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Special points of interest:

Our next gathering will be on Monday, April 20, 2026, at 7:00 pm. MC/VMC Clubs meet on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. Next Young Eagles Rally & pancake breakfast is Saturday, April 18, 2026. We're always looking for good ideas for programs. Please contact Chris St. Germain with your information.

President: **Rob Schmitt**
 Vice President and Young Eagles Coordinator:
Chris St. Germain
 Secretary: **Becca Weskamp**
 Treasurer: **Sandy Rice**
 Board: **Jim Brady, Larry Rhoads, Phil Ishmael, Griff Pickett, Tom Licata, & Alexandro Paredes**
 Tech Counselors: **Bill Gill, Mark Burrow, & John Rice.**
 Flight Advisor: **Bill Gill**
 Program Chairman: **Chris St. Germain**
 Maintenance: **Tom Licata**
 Newsletter: **Bruce Hood**
 Web Editor: **James Perkins**
 Eagle Flight Coordinator: **Matt Williams**



TLC

Spring Cleanup Day brought out the best of our volunteers. Not only did we clean the clubhouse in preparation for our new Young Eagles season, but several much-needed repairs were also completed. Here, Phil Ishmael and Mike Dooley contemplate how to refurbish some ceiling tiles and improve the insulation on one of our overhead air ducts. We are pleased to report that their skullduggery worked, and the appropriate updates are functioning nicely. A great big THANK YOU to all who helped.

EAA Chapter 91, Lee's Summit Municipal Airport (KLXT)
Lee's Summit, Missouri

President's Corner

EAA Chapter 91 president Rob Schmitt

Spring is here! If that nasty wind settles down a little, we should be able to get in some awesome flying.

It is time to get busy again with several chapter activities and have some fun. If you have never made it to one of our potluck socials, I highly encourage it. We will set up the hangar for Young Eagles on Friday April 17 at 1 pm. We take advantage of that day to also have one of our typical potluck social dinners at 6 pm the same day. The chapter provides the main course. We ask the members to bring a side dish or dessert to round out the meal. We will be serving hamburgers and hot dogs for this April event.

Our Young Eagles event is Saturday, April 18. Hope to see as many volunteers there as possible.

The Ray Scholarship is open for applications right now. If you are interested, or know someone who is, please contact Jim Brady at brady13381@aol.com. We are awarding our spring Hedrick Scholarship at the next chapter gathering on April 20.

On May the 9 we will be conducting our Flying Start program hosted by Matt Williams and Chris Hope. This is the chance for anyone new to aviation and wanting to learn how to fly to get some free information and a flight. To sign up, contact Matt Williams at mawilliams@integritytrans.com.

It is also time to start thinking about AirVenture. If you are interested in chapter camping with us, the cost is \$378 per site for the entire show. Let me know if you are interested in this as well.

Upcoming Chapter 91 highlights include:

- IMC/VMC Club, Monday, April 13th, 7 pm.
- Hangar setup and Potluck dinner. April 17, 1 pm for setup, 6 pm for potluck.
- First Young Eagles event of the year, Saturday, April 18.
- Chapter meeting, Monday, April 20, 7 pm.
- Next board meeting, Monday, May 4, 7 pm.



EAA CHAPTER 91 GATHERING MINUTES

March 16, 2026

- I. The meeting was called to order by President Rob Schmitt at 7:01 pm, with Earl Downs leading the Pledge of Allegiance following a warm welcome to all our new members and guests. Rob shared the good news that Chapter 91 received a Gold Recognition Status Award for 2025! Thank you to everyone for your hard work to make this chapter a success. As March comes to a close, things will be getting busy again as the good weather ushers in the activities of April. There will be plenty of opportunities to volunteer! The meeting minutes from February's gathering were approved with a motion by Chris St. Garmain and a second by Bruce Hood. The motion passed. Bricks have been ordered for the memorial walk to recognize Marty Young and Randy Robinson. Chris shared that Chapter 91 will be sending two youth to the 2026 Air Academy. Tyler Lindle and Anthony Widhalm will be attending with the help of our Young Eagle credits. Our first Young Eagles events are quickly approaching! April 18 will be our pancake breakfast and Young Eagles rally. The hangar setup and potluck will be Friday, April 17. Chapter 91 will also be helping with another Young Eagles event in Columbia, Missouri. Thanks to everyone's hard work, we flew 417 Young Eagles in 2025 and received \$2,085 Young Eagles credits.
- II. Old Business: Jim Brady provided the good news that we received a slot for 2026 to award a Ray Scholarship! The scholarship will be for \$12,000 this year, and the recipient must be a Young Eagle. If you are interested, please reach out to Jim. Rob shared that one Hedrick Scholarship will be awarded in the spring for \$2,000. Applications are due by April 1st for award at the April gathering. A signup sheet was passed around for the Hangar Spring Cleaning on April 4 at 10 am. Mike Dooley will be hosting an EAA Sport Workshop at our Eagle Hangar on April 11 and 12. Our April gathering presentation will be by Kobbe Farwick on his aircraft electrical systems design software. Matt Williams and Chris Hope will be hosting a Flying Start program on May 9 at the Eagle Hangar. If you are an adult new to aviation and want more details on what the requirements to become a pilot, please attend. Chapter camping for Oshkosh this year is now open. If you are interested, please reach out to Rob. The cost is \$378 a spot and Rob needs to submit information to EAA by May 1. On Saturday, September 19, from 10 am to 3 pm, the Lees Summit Airport will be hosting a Special Olympics event. The chapter will be providing food service to support the event. This event does coincide with our monthly Young Eagles event, so the chapter will be looking for a large number of volunteers.
- III. New Business: Nancy Inderwiesen has flight suits and flight jackets. See her for more information! Paige is looking for someone to go to Oshkosh with as copilot. Griff shared that there will be an early weekend work party at Oshkosh in May and wanted to know if anyone else is going or would like to go. EAA will provide meals, and lodging/camping options are available. Jeanné informed the chapter that the women's Air Race Classic will be going through St. Joseph this year, and that they are looking for handicap pilots. Barb reminded the chapter of our awesome library!
- IV. Calendar: April board meeting: Monday, April 6, 7 pm. IMC/VMC Club: Monday, April 13, 7 pm. In-person only. April chapter gathering: Monday, April 20, 7 pm.
- V. Presentations: Joel Arrington, airport manager, presented updates and information about the Lee's Summit Airport. Civil Air Patrol then provided a presentation.
- VI. Adjournment



Our next meeting of the IMC Club will be **Monday, April 13th at 7:00 p.m. Central Daylight Time.**

Sometimes everything seems to be going smoothly. You are past the initial approach fix and everything looks perfect. Then, the terrain warnings start. Are you correct, and the warnings are wrong, or have you missed something? Has this happened to you? How did you react?

Come join us and share your suggestions on how to handle this situation.

Back again this month as our discussion leader is Sabrina Meiklejohn.

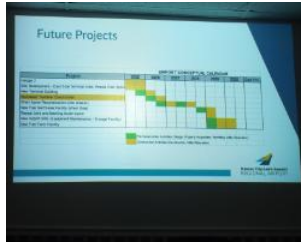
Not an experienced instrumented-rated pilot? Come join us and hear how some more-experienced pilots might handle some unexpected situations.

We meet at the Chapter 91 EAA hangar at the Lee's Summit Airport. Driving directions - take I-470 to Exit 9, Douglas Drive / Lee's Summit Drive, and turn north. At the bottom of the hill, turn right and follow the road to the end. The Larry Young Eagle hangar is on the west side of the parking lot next to the Cessna on a Post.

There is no cost to sit in on our monthly meetings. IMC membership is free to EAA members and guests. Not an EAA member? Ask me about a free six-month EAA membership.

Chris Hope, CFI-I, IMC Club Facilitator
2018 FAA Flight Instructor of the Year, Central Region

LAST MONTH'S PROGRAMS



Our March gathering featured an unusual two programs. First, airport manager Joel Arrington reported some of the recent activities and upgrades on the field. For example, they replaced the fueling system, have a new point-of-sale program, and officially introduced the new name change as Kansas City Lee's Summit Regional Airport. Joel explained that the commissioners feel this better addresses the airport's true identity. He also discussed some major improvements in the airport's winter operations, like being able to remove snow faster and more thoroughly. Future projects include adding an equipment storage and maintenance facility, a fire station, and the east-side hangar development project. He even revealed studies that supported the location of a tower that could be implemented in the near future. The upcoming World Cup events will provide ample challenges for the airport, which will serve as a major overflow from MKC. Joel hinted at the possibility of asking for volunteer help during this event. Joel then entertained a significant question-and-answer session, which he handled beautifully.



The second presentation came from our local Civil Air Patrol squadron. David Van Horn, the aerospace education officer, and Paul Caughron, cadet commander, explained how they work with us at our Young Eagles' events. They demonstrated various signaling protocols they use when marshaling our planes. They also covered qualifications for their CAP marshals and discussed ways to improve cooperation with us. They also answered questions concerning various activities that could lead to complications during these sessions.

THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM

Our speaker is Kobbe Farwick, who has developed a program to help design and create all the wiring in your homebuilt aircraft project. He owns SkyWire Studio, which offers a cloud-based, avionics wiring CAD application that is actually free to use. Of course, as your needs grow, you can subscribe to various templates and diagram packages to help further create and manage your design and implementation process. Kobbe's system is used by various manufacturers like Bearhawk Aircraft, and has proven its mettle across a broad range of applications.

A former Garmin guy and a top-notch avionics technician, Kobbe lives in the local area, which makes our access to him very special. Kobbe will present his story and explain how and why his SkyWire programs benefit builders in this difficult and frustrating component of the building process.

CALLING ALL TECHIES

The chapter is searching for some technical assistance. Our vice president, Young Eagles coordinator, and program chairman, Chris St. Germain, would love to have some help updating information on our website. Keeping it current takes effort, and Chris does more than his share for the chapter. Frankly, we don't believe he needs another job, so we would very much appreciate some help with this. If you are comfortable working on technical projects like this and would be willing to assist with this project, Chris would love to hear from you. He is more than willing to provide the support you need to start handling this important effort. You may have questions, so please feel free to contact Chris at his chapter email, youngeagles@eaachapter91.org. He'll be glad to discuss it with you. Or you can catch him at our next gathering on Monday, April 20. Thank you for your assistance.



SCHOLARSHIP UPDATES

RAY SCHOLARSHIP

At our March gathering, Ray Scholarship coordinator Jim Brady announced that Chapter 91 had once again been granted permission to recruit and award a \$12,000 scholarship to one lucky young guy or gal to earn a private pilot's license. Jim says that applications are now being accepted for hopeful candidates to be considered for that wonderful opportunity.

This year, in addition to being between the ages of sixteen and nineteen, an applicant must also be a Young Eagle, have received a class III medical, and hold a student pilot license. Being a Young Eagle is a new requirement, but it makes sense since the competition is so intense. Please direct any inquiries to Jim at brady13381@aol.com, or see him at an upcoming event like our April chapter gathering on Monday, April 20.

Jim also reported on recent discussions with past scholars Layla Cranston, who is completing her first year at the Air Force Academy, and Logan Johansen, a student at Oklahoma State University. A letter from current scholar Benjamin Caughron can be found on Page 12 of this newsletter.

HEDRICK SCHOLARSHIP

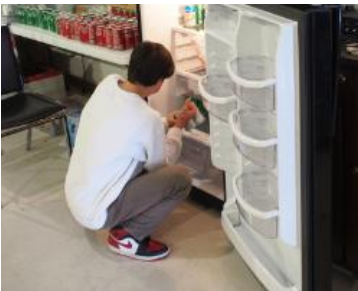
Rob Schmitt, Chapter 91 president and Hedrick Scholarship chairman, has announced that applications are now being scrutinized for the spring offering of the chapter's own program, the Hedrick Scholarship. This award, at \$2,000, is lower than the Ray, but is also less restrictive since it has no age limits or license constraints. For example, it can be awarded to anyone showing need, and can be for any aviation-related purpose, such as earning another license, rating, or endorsement. Rob plans to announce this spring's winner at our upcoming April gathering, Monday, April 20.



SPRING CLEANING DAY

When April arrived, Chapter 91's autopilot guided us to get together a willing group of worker bees to spruce up the Larry Young Eagle Hangar in preparation for our upcoming Young Eagles rally and pancake breakfast. So, on Saturday, April 4, bright and early at ten o'clock, we assembled at the clubhouse, brooms, mops, brushes, and rakes in hand to attack what needed to be done. With so many volunteers, most of the work was completed before noon, and the assembled multitude dispersed back home. Our sincere thanks to everyone who came out to help. You are the best!

For those who missed it, here is a brief recap of how things went:



NEXT YOUNG EAGLES

Chapter 91 has been so engaged in EAA's highly successful Young Eagles program that some of us actually go into withdrawal in the fall. But all that's over now that April has arrived. Yes, we will begin our 2026 season on Saturday, April 18. The pancake makers, coffee brewers, egg breakers, bacon and sausage fryers, and everyone else necessary to the success of this event show up before the sun rises to make sure everything is perfect. Then the pilots and ground crews touch base with the check-in table before meeting their passengers and cranking up their airplanes to commit aviation with our Young Eagles guests. It's just a whole lot of fun! If you have never attended one of these, please make an exception to your plans and come join us. Maybe you, too will become addicted.

The chapter's Young Eagles Coordinator, Chris St. Germain, said April's online manifest filled up in just forty-eight hours after it appeared online, so once again, we'll have a full set of kids to fly. Come see what all the excitement is about.

POTLUCK COOKOUT

Chapter 91 has been so engaged in EAA's highly successful Young Eagles program that some of us actually go into withdrawal in the fall. But all that's over now that April has arrived. Yes, we will begin our 2026 season on Saturday, April 18. The pancake makers, coffee brewers, egg breakers, bacon and sausage fryers, and everyone else necessary to the success of this event show up before the sun rises to make sure everything is perfect. Then the pilots and ground crews touch base with the check-in table before meeting their passengers and cranking up their airplanes to commit aviation with our Young Eagles guests. It's just a whole lot of fun! If you have never attended one of these, please make an exception to your plans and come join us. Maybe you, too, will become addicted.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS EVENT CONSIDERED

At our March gathering, Rob mentioned the possibility of having the chapter participate in an upcoming event at the airport. On September 19, Lee's Summit Kansas City Regional Airport (yes, that's its new name) will host an event for Special Olympics. Chapter 91 has been asked to participate by manning a food venue. There will also be commercial food providers on site, but we expect a great deal of business since we will not charge the super-high rates that commercial operations do. We will be cooking and serving hot dogs and hamburgers, which are always popular and great favorites.

The issue is that this will be in the early afternoon of our September Young Eagles event, so if we decide to participate, we anticipate needing a different group of volunteers from our Young Eagles crew. We see this as an opportunity to give back while providing needed funds for some of our own internal programs. A big attraction is the "Airplane Pull," where individuals and companies pay big bucks for the right to pull a business jet a preset distance. (Personally, I'd be willing to pay just to see them do it!) This is a fundraiser, of course, and the proceeds will go to the Special Olympics organization.

Rob will explain all the ins and outs at our April gathering, at which point we will need to determine if the chapter is willing to participate. Give it some thought. The fact that we have been invited is an honor, and we would welcome the opportunity to pitch in. If you could help out with grilling hamburgers and hot dogs, we would love to hear from you. We will see you at the gathering on April 20.

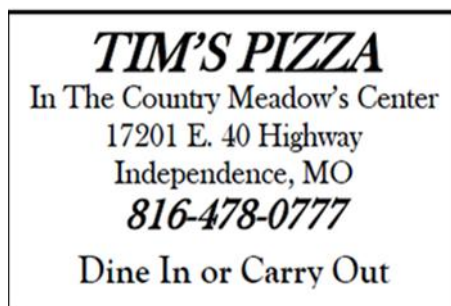
 6717 W 119th St Overland Park, KS 66209 913-345-1380 (p) 913-345-2197 (f) bvgoodyear.com	 7540 Metcalf Avenue Overland Park, KS 66204 913-232-7878 (p) 913-291-2695 (f) oadesbrothers.com	 12 NE Sycamore Lee's Summit, MO 64086 816-246-7177 (p) 816-246-7132 (f) douglastire.com
Andrew Gallaher Manager - Douglas Tire andrew.gallaher@oadesbrothers.com		
Family owned and operated for over 25 years		
  		

LAST CALL FOR CHAPTER CAMPING

If you are planning to attend AirVenture this year and you like to camp out, you might want to consider doing so with other Chapter 91 members. Oshkosh provides chapter camping, where members from the same organization can stay in the area with others from their own group. This is very popular, and since there are only six slots available, it tends to fill up fast. As of this newsletter, we have one spot left. If you are interested, please contact Rob Schmitt at robert7721@AOL.com to secure your place. The price is \$378 for the whole week. Try getting that deal at a hotel! Rob will be glad to fill in all the details, so get in touch as soon as you can – first come, first served. Good luck.

PULSAR OWNERS GROUP TO RETURN

Recently, the national Pulsar owners' group brought its annual fly-in and convention to KLXT, and used Chapter 91's facilities. Well, they liked it so well, they've asked to come back again this year. Chapter and board member Phil Ishmael, himself a Pulsar owner and flyer, is handling arrangements for this event, which will take place one weekend in September. We will report the details as they become available. Pulsar aircraft will come from all over the country for this event, and we are pleased that they appreciate our facilities enough to want to return.



A LETTER FROM OUR RAY SCHOLAR

Dear Chapter 91,

The month of February has been a busy one as the spring semester continues. Classes, athletics, and flight training have kept my schedule full, and it has been a productive month overall. On campus, there have been several enjoyable events throughout the month. We had a Valentine's Day dance, which was a fun break from our normal routine. We also held our class basketball tournament. The freshmen put up a good fight, but we ultimately lost to the seniors. In intercollegiate sports, our basketball regular season recently concluded with a record of 4–2. We played our first playoff game last night and were able to come away with a win. The games have been competitive, and I have enjoyed being part of a strong team this season. Academically, my studies have continued to go well. In mathematics, we recently finished the books on number theory in *Euclid's Elements*, which were both challenging and rewarding to work through. In philosophy, we have been discussing the nature of scientific knowledge. In science, we have been studying the differences between plant and animal life. This past week, I also had my Don Rags. During Don Rags, I sit in front of my tutors while they discuss my progress in class as if I am not there. I was grateful to receive very positive feedback from them. One tutor commented that without me the class would not have the quality discussions that we have, and two others noted that when I am absent, it is very noticeable. They also said that I am beginning to develop into a strong leader in the classroom.

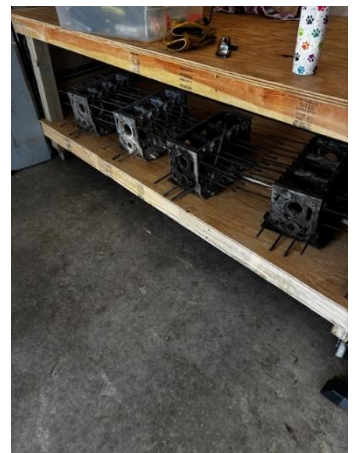
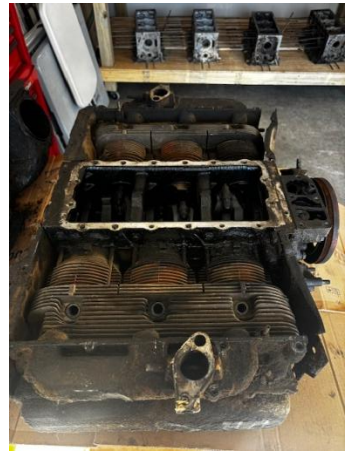
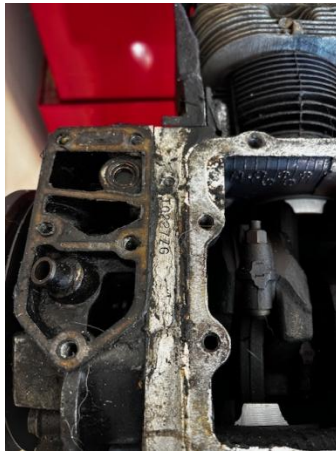
My flight training has also continued to progress. I recently took a phase check but did not pass on my first attempt due to some difficulty with my landings, as I came in too high. Since then, I have had several additional lessons and my landings have improved significantly. I have another phase check scheduled for March 17, and if I pass it, I will be able to schedule my checkride.

Warm regards,

Benjamin Caughron

FOR SALE

Corvair engine parts available for sale. Suitable for an aircraft engine conversions. Contact Scott Raynal, 816 786-2424.



ME AND THE “D”

A Brief Love Affair in 1966

by Earl Downs

A wise sage once told me, “Never loan another man your motorcycle or your pipe.” Well, I didn’t smoke, and my motorcycle was just a 150cc Honda, but I got the drift of what he had told me...some things are just too personal to loan to others. However, much to my good fortune, my friend Jeff broke that rule. He came to me one day and said, “How would you like to fly my P-51D Mustang?”

Let that soak in for a minute.

In this day and age, that would mean Jeff was offering to let me fly a rare plane worth well more than a million dollars. But this was in 1966, and things were different. The warbird movement of today hadn’t been born yet, and even the great P-51 was just another old war plane that some people liked to play with. As my adventure in the “D” started, I was about to learn some surprising things about the plane, and I would gain a deeper respect for the pilots who flew them in combat in World War II.

This was in 1966 when I was twenty-four years old. I started flying when I was fourteen years old in an Aeronca Champ, and by this time, I guess I had accumulated about 3,000 hours of flight time. A huge part of those hours was gained as a flight instructor at Van Nuys Airport. A lot of those hours were in taildraggers of all sorts, with the heaviest being the Beech 18. I had always been interested in old planes, so I had some experience in biplanes like the PT-17 and the Meyers OTW. My brother and I owned a World War II Ryan PT-22 at this time. Jeff was an airport pal of mine, and I was giving his mother and sister flying lessons. I guess that’s why he offered to trust me with his P-51.

Jeff’s Mustang was just a plain model “D” with blue paint and a white stripe. Of course, all the military trappings had been removed, and it had a modern Narco VHF radio installed. The cockpit layout and instruments were pretty much as represented in the original military flight manual. Like all civilian Mustangs, the fuselage gas tank had been removed, and the only big mod was the installation of a jump seat where the fuselage tank had been. If I remember correctly, Jeff bought the plane in the low \$20,000 range (all the zeros are correct) and got a spare engine as part of the deal.

The jump seat provided a tough ride for the passenger. This P-51D had a stock canopy that sloped down sharply at the back end. That meant the backseat rider could barely sit high enough to see out. It’s common today to see modified canopies that are elevated in the back to accommodate the backseat rider. My checkout started with a couple of rides sitting in “the hole” in back. Of course, there were no controls or instruments in the back, but it did give me a feel for the plane.

Jeff gave me an original P-51D manual and a six-page written examination that he got from some guys who had formed a P-51 club. I studied the manual, and then came the time for the obligatory AT-6 checkout.

Continued on next page . . .

He borrowed a T-6 (actually, it was a Navy SNJ) and I put two flights in it. As is typical, I flew the front seat first and then moved to the back seat. I was surprised by the T-6; I'd expected it to be sort of "gnarly," but it wasn't. It makes lots of noise but is easy to handle. I found flying from the back seat was no big deal; that's probably because I had a lot of experience flight instructing from the back seat in other tail draggers. The most important thing I learned from the T-6 was how to use the stick position to lock the tail wheel; that was new to me. To be honest, I think flying my quirky Ryan PT-22 prepared me better for the P-51 than did the T-6.

Jeff called shortly after my T-6 rides to say he was flying to Inyokern, California, to do some business. He offered to fly me there in the P-51 and then let me solo it while he was in town. Needless to say, I called in sick to the flight school, canceled my students, and we were on our way. We landed at Inyokern (high desert country), Jeff handed me the key (metaphorically speaking), and I was now in command of a real fighter.

The first challenge was to get it started. I had started it a couple of times when I was learning the cockpit, but this was a hot start, and the technique was a bit different. A normal start went something like this: with the mixture in cutoff and mags off, pull the prop through a few times (we counted blades and did it with the starter) and let the prop stop. Then, crack the throttle about one inch, hit the primer for three - four seconds, mags on, and engage the starter. When the engine starts, move the mixture to the normal position.

However, on a hot start, you have to be careful about over-priming, because excess fuel will flame out in the very short exhaust stacks. Bottom line, I over-primed, flamed, and chased the guys with the start cart and fire extinguisher away from the plane. I always thought the fire extinguisher guy was supposed to hang around, but it didn't seem to work that way.

Of course, any taildragger with a big engine turning a big prop clockwise really wants to turn left as you add power on takeoff. But by using the published procedure and common sense, the P-51 is pretty friendly in this department. The rudder trim is set to about six degrees right rudder, and it's very important to ensure the tailwheel is locked when you start the takeoff roll. Holding the control stick all the way back while taxiing straight locks the tailwheel.

I was told to keep the stick hard back until about eighty MPH, and then start coming forward to raise the tail. After a few flights, I found that if I just advanced the throttle smoothly up to takeoff power (we used sixty-one inches of manifold pressure at 3,000 RPM), the airspeed would be about right to raise the tail when the throttle was set. With the tail down, it just required moderate right rudder, but a little more was needed as the tail lifted. However, the acceleration was so quick that the rudder trim quickly did its job, and I could relax the rudder as I accelerated. I've done more rudder dancing in a Luscombe than I did in the "D." Needless to say, the Mustang climbs briskly.

If you look at cockpit pictures, there are gauges and switches all over the place. Cockpit ergonomics was not much of a factor in these planes, but the hours I spent on the ground learning the layout paid off. The hydraulic system is only for flaps and landing gear, and the brakes are a closed system like most light planes. Airflow is required for the engine coolant, oil, and supercharger intercooler, and that's what the scoop under the belly does. An automatic system maintains the temperatures,

Continued on next page . . .

We had lots of 130 octane fuel in those days, so we could use the published power settings. At takeoff power, it used a huge amount of fuel, but at low power, I realized why this was such a good long-range plane. When escorting B-17s and B-24s, the cruise speeds were below 200 MPH, and Mustang fuel burn was only a little more than the Aero Commander 680-F I was flying charters in. The Packard/Merlin V-1650-7 was rated for sixty-seven inches of power for five minutes (called “war emergency”), but the throttle on this plane was prevented from moving forward into the high power detent.

Because of the high cost of the fuel (about sixty cents per gallon in 1966), I kept the power back or had a jump-seat rider buy the gas. Jeff asked me to kick in \$20 per hour to help cover the maintenance costs, and that seemed fair to me.

You would think that a fighter would be “hot” to land, but the Mustang isn’t. The final approach speed was about the same as the Aero Commander. However, if you get slow and ram the power to it, directional control is challenging. I once asked race pilot Darrel Greenamyre about that issue on his modified Bearcat. He said that on these types of planes, you should only add enough power to accelerate. “After all,” he said, “you can climb on half power.” I got slow on approach once and followed his advice, but it still took a heavy stomp on the right rudder. I gained enormous respect for the low-speed maneuvers that Bob Hoover flew in his P-51 airshow performances.

The P-51 can be three-pointed or wheel landed; I preferred wheel landing because of the better visibility. There was nothing touchy about the landing, but you wanted to be sure to hold the stick back when the tailwheel touched the runway to lock it straight.

Thousands of Mustang pilots in World War II were sent to battle with only about 300 to 400 hours of flight time. It must have been hell going into combat with such low experience, but at least North American gave them a fighter that did not add to the fight.

The Mustang just flies the way any good plane should fly. By today’s standards, my checkout in the “D” would be considered reckless, but it worked for me. Unfortunately, I only had a few hours in the plane when Jeff sold it and bought a Pitts S2B.

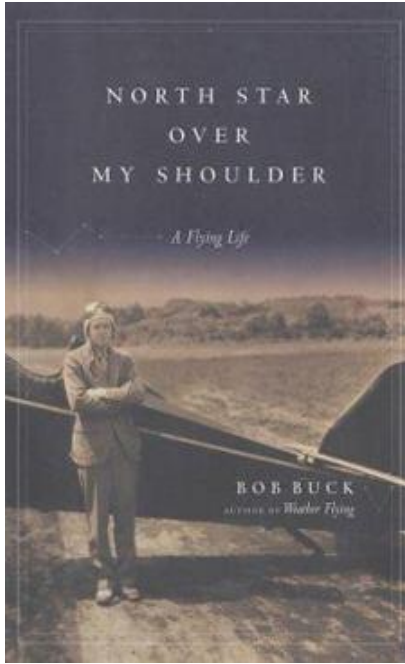
When I was a kid, my brother and I would ride our bikes to Van Nuys Airport, sit under a tree at Valley Pilots Flying Service, and watch the Air National Guard Mustangs in operation. When a Mustang taxied by, we would wave, and the pilots never failed to wave back. When I taxied the Mustang in one day, I saw a family with three children standing at the fence waving like mad. I waved back and saluted them....It was “pass it forward time.”

Funny thing: Jeff never offered to let me fly the Pitts.

Book Review – North Star Over My Shoulder – A Flying Life

by Bob Buck

Review by Chris Hope, Master CFI



Will an airline pilot ever again have the kind of life that Bob Buck experienced? I don't think so. Bob was born in 1912, and was fifteen years old when Charles Lindbergh flew to Paris in 1927. He was already hooked on flying, and this event cemented the love affair. In the early 1930s, after a few years of cross-country flying, he learns that a new company, Transcontinental & Western Airlines, is looking for pilots. Could he do that? Might as well try. And so began an airline career that ended at the mandatory flying age of sixty, nearly forty years later. (And, unknown today, a career marked by no furloughs, layoffs, bankruptcies, or mergers.)

A couple of things struck me as I read this man's story. I too have been flying for over forty years, and my flying story was just beginning as Bob's was ending. During my flying career, I have watched airliners progress from the Boeing 707 to the 777 -- actually, in the big scheme of things, not a lot of change. Any

777 pilot could be transported back in time to 1970 and fall right into the flow of the airline world. But a new pilot in 1970 would have been totally lost, moving into the airliners of the 1930s.

Bob started with T&WA, flying the DC-2 and DC-3, flying unpressurized aircraft at 9,000 feet through all kinds of weather. Navigational instruments? How about an AM radio receiver that only transmits two Morse code identifiers – dah dit, and dit dah. Loud and clear on one and you are either north or south of the station; loud and clear on the other, and you are either east or west of the station. Silence? You are either over the station, or the weather (or static) has caused the signal to die out.

Flying from New York to London? Sure. You can do that -- in about five legs. After the DC-2s and -3s came the big plane: the Lockheed Constellation and Super Constellation. And during the war years, there was ferrying B-17s to Europe.

The 1960s brought another major change in aviation, when jet engines were finally a reality of airline life with 707s and then 747s. And passengers could fly to Europe nonstop, above most of the weather.

In between all of the airline flying came the special assignments: Flying all over the world looking for icing conditions so the aviation world could learn more about that subject; an assignment to fly around Europe and Africa as the personal pilot for movie star Tyrone Power; flights with the Bob Hope tour. And then his flight around the world – Hawaii, across the poles, and back to Hawaii.

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An interesting companion book to Bob Buck's is Ernie Gann's *Fate is the Hunter*. Both men flew airliners during the same era, and both wrote exceptionally well of their experiences. Ernie writes more about individual experiences plucked out of his life of flying. Bob's story is much more matter-of-fact, less lyrical perhaps, but his is the kind of story that makes you imagine that you might be listening to him tell stories while you sit in front of a warm fire.

Read them both, and tell me what you think.

Chris loves to read, write, and fly, but not necessarily in that order

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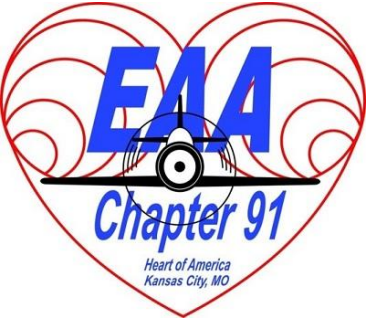
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