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**Special points of interest:**

Our next gathering will be on Monday, November 17, 2025, at 7:00 pm. IMC/VMC Clubs meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.



## CONTRIBUTING

The Lee's Summit Municipal Airport is just about ready to open its beautiful new facility, Hangar 2. Chapter 91 was asked to provide some aviation-related mementoes to grace a shadow-box table in the new building, and here we show Tom Licata, Rob Schmitt, and Griff Pickett making those contributions. The officers and board members were invited to tour the new building before the public open house on November 17. You can see and read more about Hangar 2 on Page 8 of this issue.

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**

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

# President's Corner

EAA Chapter 91 president Rob Schmitt

Young Eagles season officially ended with our event in October. Everything ran smoothly from the flights provided to pancakes on the grill. Once again, I want to express my thanks to all of our volunteers who are doing a tremendous job making these events happen.

Our next major event for the chapter will be the chili dinner and contest on December 15 at 6 pm. All members are encouraged to dust off their favorite recipes and fight for the winner's trophy! The chapter will also provide chili, concocted by Master Chef Michael Dooley, to consume. No one will go hungry!

The Hedrick Scholarship committee awarded this fall's \$2,000 scholarship to Noah Freeman at our October meeting. Congrats Noah! We received a generous donation for the scholarship from Buzz Hetrick that ensures the program will continue. We will award additional scholarship(s) in the spring.

If you see a bunch of new plants around the Eagle Hangar, please thank Hattie Cumminham. She has donated her time and effort to improve the flower beds on the east side of the Blue Hangar.

We have lots of great chapter events coming up for this winter, such as our pizza dinner in January and our annual banquet in February. Hope to see you there.

Upcoming Chapter 91 highlights include:

IMC/VMC Club, Monday, November 10, 7 pm

Monthly Chapter Gathering Monday, November 17, 7 pm

Next Board Meeting, Monday, December 1, 7 pm

Chili Dinner/contest/Gathering, Monday, December 15, 6 pm



# **EAA CHAPTER 91 GATHERING MINUTES**

**October 20, 2025**

- I. The meeting was called to order by President Rob Schmitt at 7:00 pm with Mike Ketterman leading the Pledge of Allegiance, following a warm welcome to all our new members and guests. Rob provided a recap of September and October happenings, which included the upcoming December Chili Dinner! Chris provided a recap of October and the year's Young Eagles events. Chapter 91 flew over 350 kids this year for Young Eagles! In 2025, Chapter 91 also supported several other organizations' airport fun days and youth events. Young Eagles has concluded for the year, but if you are interested in volunteering or helping coordinate events for 2026, please contact Chris.
- II. Old Business: Jim Brady provided the chapter with updates regarding Benjamin, who has continued to work on his training since moving and hopefully will be finished up soon! Rob provided the news that Noah Freeman was awarded the \$2,000 Hedrick Scholarship from the chapter. Noah will be pursuing his CFI training at Summit. Susan Calvin updated the chapter about the RC model program, which is going well! They are targeting a November finish, and the program has seen involvement by all different kinds of kids. Sadly, Paul Rodriguez has recently passed away, and as a by-product, it was announced that his C750 Cruiser project is for sale. Please contact Rob for more information.
- III. New Business: It is that time of year again, where Phil has EAA calendars to sell! After a convincing speech, all calendars were sold at the meeting. Chapter 91 also welcomed two new board members: Tom Licata and Griff Pickett. The board is still interested in more members, so if you are interested, please reach out. We'd love to hear from some more young voices about how to make the chapter more successful!
- IV. Calendar: November board meeting: Monday, November 3, 7 pm. IMC/VMC Club: Monday, November 10, 7 pm. Jeanné Willerth will be presenting. November's chapter gathering: Monday, November 17, 7 pm. Dr Keith Cochran will be presenting on cardiac health. December gathering: Monday, December 15, 6 pm. Chili dinner and contest!
- V. Announcements: There were several movies for sale in the hangar. \$2.50 for a VHS/DVD. Nancy Inderwiesen has revived the Ladies Lunch! The next one will be this Friday at Legends of Asia. If you or your spouse are interested in participating, please contact her. If you are interested in helping provide food to ATC, who are working without pay during the shutdown, please reach out to Mujahid Abdulrahim, who has been helping coordinate support.
- VI. Presentation: Rainbow Aviation: MOSAIC
- VII. Adjournment



Our next meeting of the VMC Club will be **Monday, November 10th at 7:00 p.m.**

How do you feel about un-towered airports? Some pilots shun them as way too scary. Some pilots won't go anywhere else. Wherever you find yourself on the subject, I think we all agree that we pilots take on a lot more responsibility when we fly to an airport without a control tower.

Come join us for a discussion on a situation that many of the more experienced pilots have seen, one that can be real scary for the less-experienced. But if you have not seen this situation, and you fly in the Kansas City area, you will. Come see what I am talking about and share your experiences.

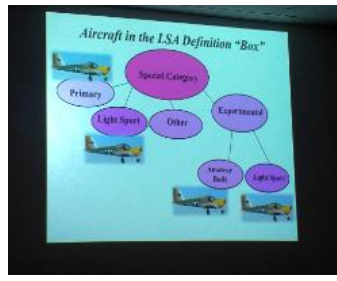
We are fortunate this month to have our own Jeanne Wilerth lead the discussion. Jeanne is an FAA Gold Seal Instructor and is one of the few Master CFIs in the area. She leads aviation discussion groups all over the country as a speaker for the AOPA Safety Foundation.

**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. VMC 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, VMC Club Facilitator  
2015 FAA Safety Volunteer of the Year  
2018 FAA Flight Instructor of the Year, Central Region

# LAST MONTH'S PROGRAM



MOSAIC (Modernization of Special Airworthiness Certification) is the FAA's new program that updates and completely changes the rules for Light Sport aircraft and Sport Pilots. And while most of us focus on the pilot-oriented side, it also affects aircraft maintenance and inspections.

A significant portion of MOSAIC focuses on the non-builder's inspection certificate training as it applies to the new rules. For example, MOSAIC now permits non-A&Ps to handle inspections for light-sport and experimental amateur-built (AEB) aircraft, a major change from the status quo. And that is what Rainbow Aviation is all about.

Clearly, Rainbow offers a unique product to the aviation community, and the owners, Brian and Carol Carpenter, are among the most knowledgeable yet entertaining people you will ever meet. About six years ago, they moved the operation from California to nearby Kingsville, Missouri, and enthusiastically concur that the escape was worthwhile.

Rainbow offers training classes for non-A&P inspection and maintenance certifications, so MOSAIC has made their business even more important. It was that specific topic that Carol and Brian came to address at our October gathering. They addressed many of the most significant areas to us – builders of experimental aircraft.

The specifics of their talk exceed the capability of this article, so we hope you attended in person. MOSAIC is just getting started, and many people are still somewhat confused about it. (See Earl Downs' article that tries to help clarify this on Page 15.) That is understandable since this program turns our conventional understanding of the past on its head. But Brian and Carol answered a lot of interesting questions from the attendees, so it appears it's sinking in a bit better. We are certainly grateful they agreed to explain this part of MOSAIC, and know many learned a great deal.

## THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM

A hundred years ago, when I was growing up – okay, not a hundred years but definitely in the last century – I wanted to be a doctor. I don't remember if that was before or after that dream of driving a garbage truck, but I digress. In high school, I had the opportunity to work in our local small-town hospital, and it was there that I realized I might not be up to the life-and-death decisions a physician had to make every day. The garbage truck became a little more feasible.

All that to introduce a very interesting conversation I had with Dr. Keith Cochran at a recent Young Eagles event. Somehow, we got into a discussion that ultimately turned to the importance of our health, especially to pilots. Keith has a special interest in the study of lipids, and (I hope I say this right) is board-certified in that subject. The ultimate resolution of our discussion led to thinking some of what he said would be very valuable and even eye-opening to our pilot and hoping-to-be pilot members.

So, guess who will be presenting our November program! (No, it has nothing to do with garbage trucks.) Since a large percentage of the chapter has advanced beyond the “youngster” stage, it just makes sense that a guy who was a former flight surgeon to military pilots might have some powerful insights to pass along to us. Just because we have Basic Med program to replace the more demanding Class III physical flight requirements doesn't negate the importance or necessity of comprehending a few well-aimed pilot-oriented, health-related topics. And that's what Keith will be sharing with us in a few weeks.

We look forward to your joining us for this important talk on Monday, November 17. As usual, we will start promptly at seven p.m. at the Larry Young Eagle Hangar at KLXT. We hope you will make plans to join us to hear what Keith has to offer.



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# SOME OF OCTOBER'S YOUNG EAGLES



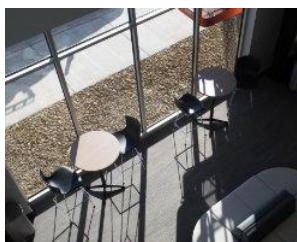
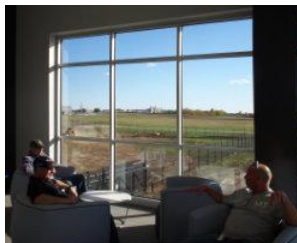
# HANGAR 2 OPEN HOUSE ANNOUNCED



Lee's Summit Municipal Airport Manager Joel Arrington has announced a public open house for the new Hangar 2 building on the east side of the field. The event will be open to the public, and is on Thursday, November 13, starting at two p.m. Everyone is invited to attend, and if you do, you will find a most impressive building indeed.

Joel extended a special preview showing to the officers and board members of Chapter 91, and six of us jumped at the offer. Rob Schmitt, Larry Rhoads, Phil Ishmael, Griff Picket, Tom Licata, and yours truly (along with favorite sidekick and seamstress extraordinaire Nancy Redpath) accepted the offer.

The impressive facility hosts most all the creature comforts any visiting pilot would love. With its twenty-eight-foot-high ceiling, the hangar will hold multiple Gulfstreams and features heated door tracks to permit easy operation of the 120-foot-wide doors, even in wet, freezing conditions. The facility also features a major area for Summit Technical Academy and includes three (so far) Redbird flight simulators. Hangar 2 is slated to open for business on November 17. Rather than detail all the impressive features, we strongly encourage you to see it for yourself on November 13. You will not regret it.



# SCHOLARSHIP UPDATES

## RAY SCHOLARSHIP

Ray Scholarship Coordinator Jim Brady is off galivanting around New Zealand, so he will not be available at our next gathering to update us on the Ray Scholarship program. He has reported that Benjamin Caughton, our current Ray Scholar, is working to finalize his private pilot training in California, where he is attending his freshman year of college. We expect to hear more about Benjamin's progress and about next year's scholarship at the December gathering.

## HEDRICK SCHOLARSHIP

Rob and his selection committee recently announced that this fall's award would be different from the past. Usually, we try to award two \$1,500 checks to two winners, but since the finances have changed recently, we will be presenting a single scholarship of \$2,000. They were pleased to announce that Noah Freeman was the winner of that program. Noah is working on his CFI and certainly appreciates this contribution to help him fund this rating. We will expect to hear that Noah has earned that ticket very soon.

## NEW BOARD MEMBERS



With the passing of longtime board member Paul Rordiguez, the remaining board sought a new member to replace him. You may recall that Griff Pickett was appointed to that position. The bylaws allow up to nine board members, so we have been seeking a few more, with an emphasis on someone younger. Luckily, we found exactly the right people.

In addition to Griff (center), we want to welcome Alexandro Paredes (left) and Tom Licata (right). Tom has been doing an excellent job with hangar maintenance for the chapter, and Alexandro is a young CFI who teaches at Aspire Aviation at KMKC and has shown a significant interest in our chapter. So please help us welcome all three of our worthy volunteers who will help guide the chapter into the future. Thank you for keeping Chapter 91's volunteering spirit strong.

# SECRETARY BEGINS NEW CHAPTER



Chapter 91 is proud to announce the recent marriage of its secretary, Becca Danik, to Jake Wescamp on Halloween. That will make their anniversary impossible to forget. What may be difficult for the rest of us is to disremember that last name of Danik because she now goes by Wescamp.

Both Jack and Becca work for Garmin where they met. We want to congratulate Becca and Jake, and wish them all the best for the future.

Thanks to Rob Schmitt for the picture.

## FOR SALE

Rob Schmitt has reported the successful sale of Paul Rodriguez's CH-750 Cruiser. But we still have an aviation VW engine and Warp Speed prop available. The engine and prop are not a package, so they can be purchased separately. To find out more, please contact Rob at the next gathering. Or you may call or text him at 816 309-0099 or by email at robert7721@aol.com.



# ANNUAL CHILI DINNER AND CONTEST COMING

One of the most anticipated chapter events of the year is coming up next month. It's our annual chili dinner and contest, and it will replace our regular gathering at the Larry Young Eagle Hangar. That date is December 15, but please make a note that the start time will be one hour earlier – six p.m. rather than seven. If you would like to enter the competitive fray with your sure-fire, old family chili recipe, now's the time to dig it out.

Attendees will sample the available offerings and vote on whose will be named Chili of the Year. The judging guidelines are quite loose, so it's totally up to you how you make your determination. However, the chili receiving the most votes wins. The victor will receive the traveling trophy – a small statue of Buddha – which must be returned the following year to be presented to the next winner. Specific details will be published in next month's newsletter, providing an ample one-day notice, so stay agile.

And if you choose not to compete, you will still want to come. Our chef supreme – El Guapo, aka Mike Dooley – will handle the cooking chores so you can enjoy your dinner. If he replicates last year's menu, he will prepare a standard mild version, a hot one, and a vegetarian variety. That should just about cover everyone's tastes. Oh! And there is no charge. Just bring your favorite significant other (Where did that term come from anyway?) and join us. But remember to move your mental clock back one hour: six rather than seven. See you there!



# SAFARI HELICOPTER COMPANY FOR SALE

If you follow experimental aviation, particularly helicopters, you know that there have been a number of entrants to the 2-seat helicopter market, but few have survived. After many iterations, it appears that Rotorway is out of business permanently. Other projects in the space are certainly “experimental” in the truest sense of the word. Safari alone has remained in constant operation since the late 1970s.

Under the new rules adopted by the FAA (MOSAIC), the Safari is the most likely candidate for certification as a Light Sport helicopter, to be built as “flight ready.” Even under simpler ASTM standards, this won’t be free, but the engineering data is available. Every piece of the Safari has been modeled in SolidWorks, providing a head start on the necessary documentation.

We are Bobby and Delane Baker, the owners of Safari, and we are ready for retirement, but we are determined that Safari continue. Like all businesses, profitability depends on sales and management of costs, but it is viable and profitable with competent management. With an additional investment in certification under the new FAA rules allowing flight-ready builds, the market for the helicopter increases exponentially.

We are seeking a buyer to continue the company into the future. We don’t have a defined plan, only a determination to keep the helicopter viable, available, and supported in the future. Any proposal that includes an exit for us in the near future and a continuation of the support that Safari owners deserve is of interest to us.

Our ideal situation is the purchase of the rights to the helicopter, the digital files of parts, procedures, bills of materials, physical molds, jigs, and inventory of parts. We would assist in setting up the manufacturing wherever you choose on a consulting basis, as long as needed. Most of what is required is already digital, so there’s not much tribal knowledge. You won’t need us for very long.

This is the very short version, and we are happy to fill in the details and answer questions. We have never pushed a buyer to purchase a helicopter, and we will offer you the same courtesy. We can be reached at 850 693-1287 or by email at [gm@safarihelicopter.com](mailto:gm@safarihelicopter.com).

## ***TIM'S PIZZA***

In The Country Meadow's Center

17201 E. 40 Highway

Independence, MO

***816-478-0777***

Dine In or Carry Out

# EAA SURVEY


The annual chapter member survey is now open to **all chapter members**. EAA would like to have all chapter members complete this 5-minute survey by **Wednesday, December 31, 2025**.

Copy and paste this URL in your web browser to take the survey:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZW9WXBL?mkt\\_tok=OTEwLVNFVSOwNzMAAAGdy26lU1bkgdamu2jb7Adh3rYUpfbZOM4jETsXQ72JOI5-TOZrsXyeyBN0SPCNa5TxaQC\\_R1cjChjirvLF7yev8A4aZ3cwV8uzt\\_wqlqoerPlc2Ko](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZW9WXBL?mkt_tok=OTEwLVNFVSOwNzMAAAGdy26lU1bkgdamu2jb7Adh3rYUpfbZOM4jETsXQ72JOI5-TOZrsXyeyBN0SPCNa5TxaQC_R1cjChjirvLF7yev8A4aZ3cwV8uzt_wqlqoerPlc2Ko)

After the surveys are finalized, chapter officers will receive their chapter's results to better understand the thoughts of chapter members who elected to participate in the survey. Use the survey feedback to improve the chapter experience for your local members. Additionally, this annual survey provides EAA with a snapshot of the types of events and programs chapter members want. The survey will also be used to provide EAA Chapter Recognition Credit to all chapters that meet the minimum survey criteria. The results of this survey are what qualify Chapter 91 for its coveted Gold Chapter status.

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEY AND SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS.**



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NOTE: Jeanné Willerth sent this notice for publication. Application process opens April 1, 2026. Thanks, Jeanné

To learn more: <https://www.aopa.org/training-and-safety/students/aopa-flight-training-scholarships>



**Jeanne, check out these exclusive aviation scholarship opportunities for AOPA members!**

**NEW! Two application periods. More chances for you to achieve your aviation goals.**

#### **Scholarships for Aspiring and Experienced Pilots**

The AOPA Foundation is offering a variety of aviation scholarships exclusive to AOPA members. From earning a private pilot certificate to adding advanced ratings, transitioning to new aircraft, or pursuing specialized training, we'll help you get there.

#### **Opportunities for High School Students and Educators**

High school students and educators engaged with AOPA's High School Aviation STEM Curriculum have access to exclusive flight training scholarships, thanks to generous support from the Ray Foundation.

- \$12,000 Scholarships for High School Students: 90 scholarships are available only to AOPA High School members aged 16–18 to help earn their private pilot certificate. To apply, students must have passed the FAA Private Pilot written exam.
- Additional \$12,000 scholarships are available to educators who are actively teaching in the AOPA Foundation High School Aviation STEM Curriculum.

Know a teen who dreams of flying? Encourage them to join AOPA with our free [High School Membership](#) so they can qualify for these incredible opportunities and access aviation resources, events, and scholarships.

#### **How to Apply**

Explore all available scholarships and start your application at [aopa.org/scholarships](https://aopa.org/scholarships). Each scholarship has specific eligibility requirements; review them carefully. Note: the number and amount of scholarships depend on donor funding and may be finalized just before awards are announced.

#### **Fall Application Period Deadline:**

Submit your application before the December 31, 2025 deadline to be considered for these exciting scholarship opportunities. It's not too early to begin the application process!

# The Push Is on for 2.5 Million Young Eagles!

By EAA Staff

EAA's Young Eagles, which over three decades has become the largest youth aviation education program ever created, is focusing its efforts on reaching 2.5 million Young Eagles flown by EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2026.

"From those first Young Eagles flights at Oshkosh in July 1992 to today, more than 50,000 EAA-member pilots have shared their time, aircraft, and knowledge to open the world of flight to young people," said Jack J. Pelton, EAA CEO and chairman of the board. "We now see its effect in developing two generations of pilots. We are now calling upon EAA members to reach the next big milestone of 2.5 million Young Eagles flown in the next ten months and to celebrate this achievement with us at Oshkosh next July."

As of September 24, 2025, there have been 2,453,776 Young Eagles flown. Those Young Eagles have been flown in aircraft ranging from hot air balloons to corporate jets on every continent except Antarctica. The success of the Young Eagles program is also the foundation of EAA's expanding youth aviation education resources, which now include AeroEducate, Sporty's Learn-To-Fly course, Young Eagles Connect, the EAA Air Academy, and chapter-based Ray Aviation Scholarships.

"As I visit Young Eagles rallies, the volunteer leaders often tell me the same thing — there are plenty of eager kids ready to go flying, but more pilots are needed and always welcome," said Jimmy Graham, Young Eagles chairman and retired NFL All-Pro tight end. "We aviators all have had that one flight that sparked our love of aviation, so it's time to get involved and sign up to fly Young Eagles. You can make a difference — who knows where that young person could go because of your willingness to take them flying?"

EAA is offering recognition for Young Eagles pilots who join the **"25 for 2.5"** campaign to reach 2.5 million Young Eagles in the coming months. In addition, participating EAA chapters that assist in new volunteer pilot recruitment will be eligible for extra Young Eagles credits that can be used to obtain further resources for Young Eagles rallies or cover tuition fees of deserving youths for the EAA Air Academy residence camp held each summer in Oshkosh.

More information regarding these recognition levels and incentives is available at [EAA.org/Fly25YE](https://EAA.org/Fly25YE).

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# SPORT PILOT AND THE LIGHT SPORT AIRPLANE

By Earl Downs

NEWS FLASH: Sport Pilot and the Special Light Sport Airplanes are no longer associated. They have separated, divorced, and gone their different ways.

If you missed our last meeting on October 20, you lost a lot when Rainbow Aviation's Carol and Brian Carpenter filled us in on the new maintenance rules that apply to Experimental Amateur Built aircraft (EAB), Special Light Sport Airplanes (SLSA), and Experimental Light Sport Airplanes (ELSA). I would like to throw my two cents in on how MOSAIC has separated the sport pilot from the term: Light Sport Aircraft.

A touch of history - when the whole sport pilot development process began in about 1994, there was a push from the White House to simplify the aircraft certification processes and create more readable regulations. It was suggested that the aircraft industry be allowed to come up with manufacturing, flying standards, and maintenance standards for a sport pilot-eligible airplane that the FAA would accept as being certifiable without going through their own FAA certification process. Industry ASTM committee F37 was created to accomplish this goal. The manufacturers would present compliance documents to the FAA, and the FAA created the SLSA and ELSA special airworthiness certificates that would be issued to these aircraft. These aircraft were directly related to sport pilot operation.

MOSAIC has changed that. Effective July 2026, these ELSA and SLSA airworthiness certificates will be issued by the FAA to industry-compliant aircraft that are not associated with sport pilot operation. I'm sure some of the airplanes produced under this new system will be okay for sport pilots, but there is no mandate for them to meet sport pilot requirements.

Of course, the Sport Pilot rules changed on October 22 of this year, and Sport Pilots can already fly a much greater variety of airplanes than were permitted before MOSAIC. Here's my point: do not connect the term "Sport Pilot" with the term "light sport aircraft." The FAA certification of Special Light Sport Aircraft and Experimental Light Sport Aircraft will continue, but these certifications are no longer directly connected to sport pilot operation.

Did the regulations get easier to read? Go take and take a look at the Sport Pilot certification regulations. This would be FAR 61, subparts J and K in the index. They are using a question-and-answer format. (These regulations are changing because of the new rules, but the writing format will not change.)

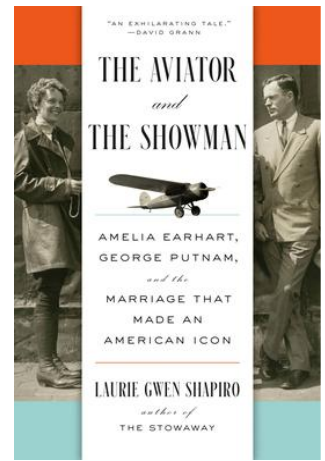
A question for next month: Did you know that a private pilot can be a Sport Pilot flight instructor?

# The Aviator and the Showman – Amelia Earhart, George Putnam, and the marriage that made an American Icon – by Laurie Gwen Shapiro

## A book review by Chris Hope

If Amelia Earhart had not undertaken that last flight, would she still be in the public eye the same way today? I think so. With her other accomplishments, she was not going to fade from memory. But what if she had not had George Putnam to continue putting her out to the public? Would we remember her the same way? I think not.

After all, there are many other great women flyers of the '20s and '30s who are remembered only by those of us who love aviation history.



Amelia was born in 1897, and so was twenty-one years old when the Great War ended. She became enamored, as so many people did, with the dashing pilots and the planes they flew. Sometime during the early 1920s, she snuck in an airplane ride. She was hooked. But just like so many of us ever since, there was no money to seriously continue.

At this same time, George Putnam, ten years older and heir to the Putnam Publishing Company, was looking for a way to set himself apart from his relatives, wanted to rise to the top of the publishing business. In 1927, George found an opportunity when he published a ghost-written book, *We*, under the name of Charles Lindbergh. George's circle of friends included Richard Byrd, the first man to fly to the North Pole, and that gave him one more ghost-written aviation book, cementing his spot in the aviation book world.

George was looking for a new project, one that would keep his name in the press and keep money coming in. He heard from Byrd that there was a plan in the works to carry a woman passenger from the United States to Europe, and he began looking for a way to capitalize on that. What if he could find a suitable girl, pilots, a plane (and financial backers), and make this happen? Through friends, he came upon a young wannabe aviator who had the smile and personality that the American public would eat up. And thus, the alliance between George and Amelia is born.

Although Amelia loves to fly, she doesn't have much time to do so. After her acclaimed passenger flight to Europe, George schedules much of her time on speaking tours and other promotion opportunities. She is not an experienced pilot. By 1932, however, she felt that she finally had the training and experience that George had been attributing to her all along, and she undertook a solo flight from North America to Europe, the first woman to do so. And it is during this time that she makes a personal decision, one that she agonized over for several years.

*Continued on next page*

## *The Aviator and the Showman, continued*

George has proposed marriage to her several times, and she has always said that she does not want to be pinned down by a man. But he offers financial stability and an opportunity to continue flying. So, in 1931, she agrees. Is this a marriage of love, or of convenience? Over their years together, friends saw many sides and had differing opinions. Probably the two of them saw it differently over time.

And so, that last flight. We often talk about being so focused on the mission that we are blind to the reasons not to fly. The fact is that George and Amelia were desperate for money, and this flight was going to solve that problem. George was always pushing his young wife, and she often agreed to his wishes, though later she wished she had not.

With that background, the two of them find Fred Noonan, an ex-Pan Am navigator with a drinking problem. He is nowhere near their first choice, but he is cheap, and money is tight. The route they have chosen for this flight is probably the worst they could have selected. Crossing the Pacific Ocean, they have chosen to refuel at Howland Island. This spot of land comprises 400 acres and sits three feet above the ocean. Initially, Amelia thinks that they can find it with just dead reckoning and celestial navigation. DR is just about impossible, and she has no experience in celestial navigation. But Fred does.

The only other way they can find the island is by radio navigation, both nav and comm. But Amelia refuses to learn much beyond the basics of either. The flight is doomed before it ever leaves the States.

There was so much that I thought I knew about Amelia that I did not know. For example, I had no idea of her love/business relationship with George Putnam. Author Laurie Shapiro has dug into new and overlooked sources to bring this old story to new life. While she sometimes provides more information than I care about, (she was wearing what at that luncheon?) I found this book fascinating. It is worth your time.



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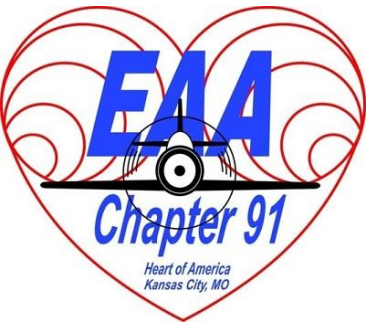
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