



FLY PAPER

February '06

Members in KS, NE, CO, MO, OK, TX, NC, FL, AZ, NM, & AK!!6

LAST MONTH

I asked the lady at the Cactus Grill, in Beaver Oklahoma, if she had ever had a group of diners make any more noise, or do more arm waving than the squad from Chapter 377. She replied " Well yes, I host the highschool football team every Friday night after the game." So, there you are. At least we came in second.

It would not be unusual for the second Saturday in January to be a raging blizzard, but this time it was a downright decent day for our first trip to Beaver for a fly-in. I didn't get a final count, but somebody said there were about eighteen airplanes on hand, including Chuck Couch's, fresh out of the chute, RV-8. As a matter of fact, about half of the flight line were offspring of the VAN's family. Just remember, I told you earlier that if we didn't spray for those things, they were going to crowd us Classic fliers off the ramp.

Thanks to the Judy family, and others, there was a line up of performance automobiles to admire while we waited for the flock to gather. It was interesting to observe that AJ's new toy could best my flying cruise speed, in the length of the runway, and get stopped without "Crash and Burn" although he did leave a little burned rubber on both ends of the trip.

One of the problems that we flyers get used to, is wondering how to get into town after we get to the local airport. In this instance, the Jenkinsons had a bus waiting (Are we uptown, or what?) to ferry us down to the eatery, then on over to AJ's digs for a look at his racing shop, and a chance to inhale a bunch of his Mom's delicious pies.

When I think of all the airplanes that sit in their hangars day after month after year, wondering what is their purpose, I just think it's a shame that their drivers don't know about Chapter 377, where, at least once a month, they could blow the dust off the wings, prove that they can get up and down without blowing the tires, and even get to blow through a few of their favorite flying stories. Pass the word around !

A tip of the wing to the Judys, the Jenkinsons, and all involved, for a fun day. Do not fail to show up at Dighton this Saturday for more of the same.

~Walter Rundell

THIS MONTH

SATURDAY, FEB 11 AT NOON

DIGHTON, KS

COME SEE DELMAR'S PLANES, TRAINS & AUTOMOBILES!

Bring a friend!

Saturday, February 11th we will gather at Dighton, KS Airport (K65). Jack and Della will have the bus for our first class transportation to town at noon. After lunch we will be offered a tour of **DELMAR WATERSON's** "toy shop" featuring planes, trains and automobiles. Delmar builds beautiful radio controlled model airplanes (they have flown at previous 377 chapter fly-ins), and electric and steam powered trains that run on a diorama of Cripple Creek, Colorado. Delmar also has an automobile to drool over: a beautifully restored 1932 Buick. Don't miss a chance to get together with Chapter 377 members and friends. Meet us at the Dighton Airport on Saturday! Note: Be cautious of the wires on the north end of the runway--- take them out, and consumers of electricity all the way to Tribune might be irritated with you!

Dighton (K65) —One mile NW of city

N38-29.38 W100-28.78

Elevation: 2278

CTAF - 122.9 (Please make position reports)

FSS - WICHITA 122.65

Runways:

13-31: 2000X110; turf; ; pwrline ry 13; railroad ry 31

17-35: 2400X40; asphalt; PCL; pwrline ry 17

6-24: 2000X110; turf; road ea end



February 2002 EAA 377 toured Delmar's place.

F.Y.I.

Chapter 377 normally meets on the second Saturday of each month. January thru March meetings are varied. April through November are normally fly-ins to different member airports, with a potluck at noon and short meeting following. December is the Club Christmas Party. Contact any of the officers listed to confirm meeting date and place. Anyone interested in recreational flying or building is encouraged to attend.

FLY PAPER is published monthly, normally mailed a week before each meeting/fly-in.

Annual membership in Chapter 377 includes one year subscription to FLY PAPER. Send \$15 (\$7.50 after July 1) to Harley Foulks, Treasurer,

Readers are encouraged to contribute articles, photos, etc. by submitting them to the Editor/Publisher.

March's deadline for newsletter items is March 1.

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COMING UP...



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11—PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES courtesy Delmar Waterson at Dighton, KS. Noon. FMI contact Delmar at 620-397-2516 or 397-5513

THURSDAY, FEB 16—DONUTS WITH THE DIRECTOR. 10AM, Mid America Air Museum. FMI please contact Donald Westfall at (620) 624-5263 or liberalcityamd@swko.net.

SATURDAY, MARCH 11—CROTTS AVIATION, Dodge City, KS. Tour of Dodge City weather station at 11am, noon potluck at Crott's hangar. FMI contact Wayne Neese at 620-225-3368.

SATURDAY, APRIL 8, 2006—Tentative date for **NORMAN BUEHLER'S 90th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION FLY-IN!** Scott City, KS.

MAY 11 - 14—EAA Texas Fly-In, Hondo Airport/Hondo, Texas

SATURDAY, MAY 13—Don & Helen Blackman host their first fly-in, Garden City private strip. Noon potluck.

SATURDAY, JUNE 10—BILL & NANCY ANTON'S ANTON'S FLYING UV FLY-IN, Satanta, KS. Noon potluck.

SATURDAY, JULY 8—WALTER & ESTHER RUNDELL'S FLY-IN. Pierceville, KS. Noon potluck.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 12—ASHLAND, KS. Noon potluck. Hosted by Krier, White and Luckie families.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER ??—JUDY RANCH FLY-IN. Noon potluck. Gate OK.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14—JENKINSON FUNNY FARM FLY-IN. Noon potluck. Meade, KS.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11—LYDDONS AT LBL. Noon potluck.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9—CHRISTMAS PARTY.

GCK Airport Advisory Board
*Meeting in the Flightdeck
Restaurant at GCK
2nd Thursday — 5:30 p.m.
February 2006—Page 2

The EAA Texas Fly-In
May 11 - 14, 2006
Hondo Airport—Hondo, Texas

From Thursday afternoon, May 11th through Sunday, May 14th, the EAA Texas Fly-In will welcome people and pilots to Hondo Airport in Hondo, Texas. Exhibits presented by scores of general aviation exhibitors will be open Thursday from 3 pm to 5 pm, Friday from 9am to 5pm, Saturday 9am to 5pm.

Catered dinners will again feature the best of local restaurants: Thursday from 6 m to 8pm it's hamburgers. Friday at the same hours it'll be Mexican food. Saturday night Hondo cooks will present a Barbecue fest. On Sunday from 7 am to 8:30am breakfast will be served. Church services will be conducted on Sunday morning at 9 am. In addition to the dinners, local food vendors will be on hand from 6 am to 6pm on Friday and Saturday.

Events on the Fly-In schedule include a variety of Forums: Friday 10am-4pm and Saturday 9am-4pm.

Judging of aircraft will complete by 2pm Saturday. Award winners will be announced on Saturday night. There will be an Airshow on Saturday 4-5:30pm.

All people flying in — whether pilots or their passengers — will enjoy a special rate of \$10 for the whole event and can enter a special raffle for guests flying-in only. Also, their breakfast on Sunday will be free.

Sponsor hotel for The EAA Texas Fly-In is to be the new Hotel Alsace in Castroville, about twenty minutes away. Special rates for Fly-In attendees will be available. Learn more about this by visiting the Fly-In website at www.swrfi.org.

For people who like airplane camping or recreational camping, there will be more showers and motor-home hookups than last year.

For attendees seeking guest houses, rooms, houses or RVs for the week, consult the Housing Bureau page on the www.swrfi.org website.

Local transportation will consist of a shuttle on the Hondo airport, a circulating shuttle in the city of Hondo, and a shuttle between HDO and the Hotel Alsace. Of course there will also be plenty of rental cars available on the airport.

Make plans now to fly or drive to Hondo.



HEARD I N THE HANGAR

FROM GREG

JUDY—I really didn't think I'd have a plane

so soon after the Skyhawk burned before Christmas. Dad and I went to look at this Varga Kachina in early January down in Fredericksburg, TX. A couple of weeks later we went back down for one last look and I flew it home (Arlington, TX). Dad and Alan finally got to go for a ride at the end of January. I'm still learning about the Kachina and having a fun time doing it!

The '79 Varga Kachina 2150A flies at around 130 mph on a 150 HP Lycoming. The Varga legacy includes the 1946 Morrisey Nifty and the 1960 Shinn 2150. It weighs in at 1200# empty and grosses at around 1800#. It's been fun to fly, locally. I made a quick trip to see Mom and Dad recently and found out it can be rather tiring! I plan to do some work on the seats to make them more comfortable and mount my Garmin from the 172. Hopefully, I'll be able to fly up for some of the 377 fly-ins this year. See another picture on the scrapbook page.



MONTHLY FLY-IN BREAKFASTS

- 1st Saturday: Ponca City, OK
- 2nd Saturday: Beaumont, KS
- 3rd Saturday: Alva, OK
- 4th Saturday: Augusta, KS
Enid, OK
9-10:30am
breakfast buffet
- 4th Sunday: Cottonwood Falls, KS

FLAP FROM THE FUNNY FARM

—Special thanks to Nancy (for the pies) Ron and Alan Judy for the January 14th fly—in in Beaver. The bus will be in Dighton for Delmar Watersons fly in. Dighton is straight north of SN12 as Beaver was straight south, so the Express will run through Montezuma and Ingalls. If anyone wants to ride call 620/338-2426. ~Jack

FROM RACHELLE POWELL—

The **FLIGHT DECK RESTAURANT AT GCK** is now under new management! The City of Garden City began operating the restaurant on January 1, 2006. The Flight Deck has a new menu. The new menu, among many items, includes breakfast served all day, delicious hamburgers and a healthy salad bar. The restaurant manager/cook, Cassandra Irsik keeps busy making homemade pies, cinnamon rolls, cookies along with all the mouth watering items on the menu. Shirley Peck is our waitress. She has spent many years serving our customers with a smile on her face and dedication. The Flight Deck is clean, with great food, and a very friendly staff. So, don't forget the Flight Deck Restaurant on your next \$100 hamburger flight!!! You'll find a link to the Flight Deck Menu on our EAA website.

DENNIS SCOTT is on the move again! He has taken the position of Operations Manager for the Florida River Operation at Durango, CO, starting March 1. He will now be nine hours from ULS, compared to the 11 1/2 that he was in Houston. While he'll have to acclimate himself to the cold temperatures and high-priced housing, the beautiful scenery will be easy to take, and no overseas travel will be a BIG relief. This week he was in London with his wife Terri, and was communicating with this Newsletter Editor using his Blackberry, while touring the Tower of London. FUN!!!

CONGRATULATIONS to **HARLEY FOULKS**, who now serves on the GCK Airport Advisory Board, along with other EAA 377 members Kent Kolbeck, & Tom Stallings.

Air Force Airman **ZACH T. SCHEIMAN** has graduated from basic military training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio. He is the son of **MIKE SCHEIMAN**, manager of GCK Tower. Zach has started his Tower Training, and will know in about a month where he'll be stationed. We'll keep you posted!

CHUCK COUCH reports ten hours flown off of the required 40 on his rv8. The airplane was finished October 8, but he had to wait almost two months for the inspection. Beaver was in his restricted airspace and he was able to make the fly-in last month. However, Dighton is not in his area so he will not be able to fly there. See Scrapbook page.

Our heartfelt condolences go out to the family of Gene & Janet Shore. Their son Randy, also a member of EAA 377 and avid pilot and airplane builder, died Saturday, January 21. Please keep their family in your thoughts and prayers at this very difficult time.

ANOTHER ISSUE!!!

Thanks this month go to: EAA Chapter 1134, Chuck & Karla Couch, George Armantrout, Brenda Rome, Jack & Della Jenkinson, eHotline, Brenda Anderson, AOPA ePilot, Alan Stevenson, Wayne Neese, Farold Fox, Kirk Dearden, Sam Friesen, Dennis Scott, Dave Hilker, Alan Judy, Don Westfall, Mike Scheiman, Greg Judy, Rachelle Powell, Walter Rundell, Delmar Waterson, Jim Misunas/Tiller and Toiler Newspaper.

FROM THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR...

A lot of interesting information has come across my desk in the last month, so I have included many tidbits in this issue of FLY PAPER. I hope you find it interesting or helpful. (More available on our website)

There is a LOT of information and fun stuff on the internet. If you don't use a computer, take your issue of FLY PAPER over to a friend's house and have them help you. Some stuff is just a fun way to waste some time, but some websites will provide you with so much information, FREE, that you will be amazed!

A few months back a fun video clip made its rounds via the internet, titled 16R. Beautiful footage of flying machines set to music, it really did make you want to go FLY! Now the DVD is for sale, and it takes a look at a day in the life of the Van Nuys Airport. The variety of airplanes is awesome, and the stories are humorous. Best of all, the production's purpose is to show the importance of General Aviation airports and airplanes to the financial health of the surrounding cities, and to keep something like the Meigs fiasco from happening ever again. I purchased the DVD, and I think it should be passed around. We should show it at a chapter event, if we have the chance. Let me know if you'd like to see this video.

Also, I have purchased our domain name, and a web host, so we now have 50 gb of space at www.eaa377.org. I hope to get all the photos that are taken each month up on the internet for your enjoyment. Also, we'll have more room to archive more back issues of FLY PAPER. Be patient with me, it'll take time to get it all done. And... I have to go fly!

~Mary Shortridge

Recommended Websites:

www.eaa377.org—our website!

www.aopa.org/asf—AOPA air safety foundation

www.ksdot.org/divaviation—all kinds of misc info

www.flightaware.com—track airline flights and IFR GA flights by tailnumber

www.daisysdesk.com—a free resource for aviation pros--- you won't believe all the info available!

<http://tinyurl.com/56t9u>—a game to see what kind of a fighter pilot you'd make, and a way to waste a lot of time feeling bad about your skills!

www.richard-seaman.com/Aircraft/AirShows/Maks2005/Highlights—Recommended airshow pictures)

www.runwayfinder.com—view the sectional for an airport.

www.skyvector.com—more online aeronautical charts.

ARE RAMP CHECKS RAMPING UP?

There has been an increasing number of calls lately to the AOPA Pilot Information Center from members who have been "ramp checked." So should you be concerned? "Nobody likes being ramp checked, but the regulations do allow FAA inspectors to do it at their discretion," said Woody Cahall, AOPA vice president of aviation services. "But a ramp check doesn't have to be particularly painful if you understand the rules and exercise some common sense." An FAA inspector may decide to check you and your aircraft because he's observed something unsafe, or it may simply be a random check. You can expect that an inspector will show you his identification and ask to see your pilot and medical certificates. "Think about how you would react to a police officer and a traffic stop," said Cahall. "When he says, 'license and registration, please,'" you know that a polite response and a cooperative attitude goes a long way toward minimizing any hassles." The regulations require that your pilot and medical certificates be readily available and you should be willing to show them. The inspector can examine your certificates, but he can't keep them. If he asks you to "surrender" your certificates, politely decline and contact an aviation attorney. For more information, see AOPA Online's subject report *Ramp Checks*. Pilots should also consider AOPA's Legal Services Plan should they need an attorney to represent them against an FAA enforcement action.

FREE DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE!

The phone number 1-800-FREE-411 offers free directory assistance service. Phone companies are charging us \$1.00 or more for 411 / information calls. When you need to use 411, simply dial 1 800 FREE 411 or 1 800 373 3411 without incurring a charge at all except for the minutes required to make the call if you are using a cell phone.

BAD NEWS!!!

COMPANY TO DISCONTINUE FREE AWOS DATA SERVICE

AnyAWOS, the service that connects callers to any automated weather reporting station or airport in the country with a public telephone number, is discontinuing free access to its service as of February 6. Services will be available for paid subscribers. For more information, see www.anyawos.com.

DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE FOR THE CLASSIFIED ADS!

AOPA's
Air Safety Foundation
www.aopa.org/asf

PILOTS ENJOY THE FRIENDLY SKIES

By Jim Misunas

Reprinted with permission Tiller and Toiler Newspaper
Larned, KS

Chris Pinkston has been flying planes since he was a teenager, but he acted like a kid in a candy store Thursday at Larned Municipal Airport.

Pinkston joined four other pilots flying Russian-made Yakovlev aircraft in aerobatic formations. The Yakovlev aircraft are affectionately called Yaks, designed as a primary trainer for Russian pilots who would become Soviet jet pilots.

At one point, instructor J.J. Johnson directed five Yak aircraft in perfect tight formation. Two of the pilots were novices flying in formation, but they performed like professionals. Pinkston had flown in groups before, but nothing like the tight pack that flew over Pawnee County Thursday.

"Flying in tandem with four or five planes in tight formation from wingtip to wingtip is something I've never done before," said Pinkston, who farms in rural Stafford County, 13 miles from Larned. "It was a learning experience for all of us. It's very uncommon for a two plane formation. It's out of the norm for most pilots."

The lead pilot is flanked by the other planes, who take their place alongside the lead aircraft. It's precision flying that requires total concentration to avoid an accident.

"It's intense work flying a fingertip formation," Pinkston said. "It requires total concentration on the aircraft you are following. You have to maintain total confidence in your lead man. It's an exacting process that takes discipline and the right type of people to make it work."

Joining Pinkston and Johnson were Cimarron's Dave Hilker, Johnson's father-in-law; Wichita's Frank Haertlein and Valley Center's Jeff Pritchard. Pinkston is good friends with Johnson and Hilker, and got to know Pritchard and Haertlein because they also own Yaks.

"Larned was a perfect place to fly, and we're fortunate someone with J.J.'s experience and background is willing to share his insight. For someone with his ability to share his knowledge is quite amazing."

Johnson's engaging personality kept the other pilots informed and entertained on the ground and in the air. There was never a dull moment.

"J.J. is the type of natural personality who draws people into aviation," Pinkston said. "Not every pilot makes a good flight instructor. But J.J. is the best because of his ability to teach you something. I learn something every day he's around."

Johnson is a Lt. Colonel who serves as a test pilot at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico for the F-117A Nighthawk stealth aircraft. The precision-strike stealth aircraft penetrates high-threat airspace and uses laser-guided weapons against critical targets. He's logged thousands of hours flying and has vast experience

flying aerobatics.

"I really enjoy being an instructor because this type of aerobatic flying is truly fun," Johnson said. "My job is to insure they're flying safely. These guys are having the time of their lives."

The fivesome composed a diverse group. Pinkston and Hilker are farmers and ranchers. Haertlein works as an engineer in laser-guidance defense systems. Pritchard is a real-estate land developer.

The sky over Larned was filled with vintage Russian aircraft, thanks to a group of men committed to flying. They performed various aerobatic exercises throughout the day Thursday.

"This type of flying is sport for us," Pinkston said. "We're out there today learning things about a type of flying we've haven't done before. And we're out there having fun. It doesn't get much better than this for people who fly as their hobby."



CHRIS PINKSTON with his Harmon Rocket, sporting it's new three bladed prop at the Beaver fly-in. Photo by Harley Foulks.



For the pilot that has everything.... postage stamps with your airplane's photo on it! Visit www.stamps.com. OK, so they are a bit pricey, but how much fun is it to show off your airplane to the world???? (AJ Judy sent me this on a letter!)

WELCOME to the newest members to EAA 377! **THANK YOU** to all of you who renewed and added some extra dollars for our treasury! We appreciate the help to keep our membership price low. If your label shows 2005, please renew for 2006 by sending \$15 to Harley Foulks, our treasurer (Address on pg. 2). **THANK YOU!!!**

Chapter 377 Scrapbook February '06

1. Bud Pinkston's Piranha always draws a crowd.
2. Chuck & Karla Couch proudly stand in front of the RV8
3. David Huddleston with his RV6A at Beaver
4. AJ Judy gave Jerry Chappell a ride in the Lister Jaguar
5. Hot cars at Beaver
6. Greg and Ron Judy in Greg's new Kachina
7. Bill Moore with his RV6 at Beaver
8. The Lister Jaguar draws as much attention as the Piranha!



SUBJECT: U-2 DRAGON LADY (yes, from the internet!)

Maj. Dean Neeley is in the forward, lower cockpit of the Lockheed U-2ST, a two-place version of the U-2S, a high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft that the Air Force calls "Dragon Lady.." His voice on the intercom breaks the silence. "Do you know that you're the highest person in the world?" He explains that I am in the higher of the two cockpits and that there are no other U-2s airborne right now. "Astronauts don't count," he says, "They're out of this world."

We are above 70,000 feet and still climbing slowly as the aircraft becomes lighter. The throttle has been at its mechanical limit since takeoff, and the single General Electric F118-GE-101 turbofan engine sips fuel so slowly at this altitude that consumption is less than when idling on the ground. Although true airspeed is that of a typical jetliner, indicated airspeed registers only in double digits.

I cannot detect the curvature of the Earth, although some U-2 pilots claim that they can. The sky at the horizon is hazy white but transitions to midnight blue at our zenith. It seems that if we were much higher, the sky would become black enough to see stars at noon.. The Sierra Nevada, the mountainous spine of California, has lost its glory, a mere corrugation on the Earth. Lake Tahoe looks like a fishing hole, and rivers have become rivulets. Far below, "high flying" jetliners etch contrails over Reno, Nevada, but we are so high above these aircraft that they cannot be seen.

I feel mild concern about the bailout light on the instrument panel and pray that Neeley does not have reason to turn it on. At this altitude I also feel a sense of insignificance and isolation; earthly concerns seem trivial. This flight is an epiphany, a life-altering experience.

I cannot detect air noise through the helmet of my pressure suit. I hear only my own breathing, the hum of avionics through my headset and, inexplicably, an occasional, shallow moan from the engine, as if it were gasping for air. Atmospheric pressure is only an inch of mercury, less than 4 percent of sea-level pressure. Air density and engine power are similarly low. The stratospheric wind is predictably light, from the southwest at 5 kt, and the outside air temperature is minus 61 degrees Celsius.

Neeley says that he has never experienced weather that could not be topped in a U-2, and I am reminded of the classic transmission made by John Glenn during Earth orbit in a Mercury space capsule: "Another thousand feet, and we'll be on top."

Although not required, we remain in contact with Oakland Center while in the Class E airspace that begins at Flight Level 600. The U-2's Mode C transponder, however, can indicate no higher than FL600. When other U-2s are in the area, pilots report their altitudes, and ATC keeps them separated by 5,000 feet and 10 miles.

Our high-flying living quarters are pressurized to 29,500 feet, but 100-percent oxygen supplied only to our faces lowers our physiological altitude to about 8,000 feet. A pressurization-system failure would cause our suits to instantly inflate to maintain a pressure altitude of 35,000 feet, and the flow of pure oxygen would provide a physiological altitude of 10,000 feet.

The forward and aft cockpits are configured almost identically. A significant difference is the down-looking periscope/driftmeter in the center of the forward instrument panel. It is used to precisely track over specific ground points during reconnaissance, something that otherwise would be impossible from high altitude. The forward cockpit also is equipped with a small side-view mirror extending into the air stream. It is used to determine if the U-2 is generating a telltale contrail when over hostile territory.

Considering its 103-foot wingspan and resultant roll dampening, the U-2 maneuvers surprisingly well at altitude; the controls are light and nicely harmonized. Control wheels (not sticks) are used, however, perhaps because aileron forces are heavy at low altitude. A yaw string (like those used on sailplanes) above each canopy silently admonishes those who allow the aircraft to slip or skid when maneuvering. The U-2 is very much a stick-and-rudder airplane, and I discover that slipping can be avoided by leading turn entry and recovery with slight rudder pressure.

When approaching its service ceiling, the U-2's maximum speed is little more than its minimum. This marginal difference between the onset of stall buffet and Mach buffet is known as coffin corner, an area warranting caution. A stall/spin sequence can cause control loss from which recovery might not be possible when so high, and an excessive Mach number can compromise structural integrity. Thankfully, an autopilot with Mach hold is provided.

The U-2 has a fuel capacity of 2,915 gallons of thermally stable jet fuel distributed among four wing tanks. It is unusual to discuss turbine fuel in gallons instead of pounds, but the 1950s-style fuel gauges in the U-2 indicate in gallons. Most of the other flight instruments seem equally antiquated.

I train at 'The Ranch'

Preparation for my high flight began the day before at Beale Air Force Base (a.k.a. The Ranch), which is north of Sacramento, California, and was where German prisoners of war were interned during World War II. It is home to the 9th Reconnaissance Wing, which is responsible for worldwide U-2 operations, including those aircraft based in Cyprus; Italy; Saudi Arabia; and South Korea.

After passing a physical exam (whew!), I took a short, intensive course in high-altitude physiology and use of the pressure suit. The 27-pound Model S1034 "pilot's protective assembly" is manufactured by David Clark (the headset people) and is the same as the one used by astronauts during shuttle launch and reentry.

After being measured for my \$150,000 spacesuit, I spent an hour in the egress trainer. It provided no comfort to learn that pulling up mightily on the handle between my legs would activate the ejection seat at any altitude or airspeed. When the handle is pulled, the control wheels go fully forward, explosives dispose of the canopy, cables attached to spurs on your boots pull your feet aft, and you are rocketed into space. You could then free fall in your inflated pressure suit for 54,000 feet or more. I was told that "the parachute opens automatically at 16,500 feet, or you get a refund."

I later donned a harness and virtual-reality goggles to practice steering a parachute to landing. After lunch, a crew assisted me into a pressure suit in preparation for my visit to the altitude chamber. There I became reacquainted with the effects of hypoxia and was subjected to a sudden decompression that elevated the chamber to 73,000 feet. The pressure suit inflated as advertised and just as suddenly I became the Michelin man. I was told that it is possible to fly the U-2 while puffed up but that it is difficult.

A beaker of water in the chamber boiled furiously to demonstrate what would happen to my blood if I were exposed without protection to ambient pressure above 63,000 feet.

After a thorough preflight briefing the next morning, Neeley and I put on long johns and UCDs (urinary collection devices), were assisted into our pressure suits, performed a leak check (both kinds), and settled into a pair of reclining lounge chairs for an hour of breathing pure oxygen. This displaces nitrogen in the blood to prevent decompression sickness (the bends) that could occur during ascent.

During this "pre-breathing," I felt as though I were in a Ziploc bag-style cocoon and anticipated the possibility of claustrophobia. There was none, and I soon became comfortably acclimatized to my confinement.

We were in the aircraft an hour later. Preflight checks completed and engine started, we taxied to Beale's 12,000-foot-long runway. The single main landing gear is not steerable, differential braking is unavailable, and the dual tailwheels move only 6 degrees in each direction, so it takes a lot of concrete to maneuver on the ground. Turn radius is 189 feet, and I had to lead with full rudder in anticipation of all turns.

We taxied into position and came to a halt so that personnel could remove the safety pins from the outrigger wheels (called pogos) that prevent one wing tip or the other from scraping the ground. Lt. Col. Greg "Spanky" Barber, another U-2 pilot, circled the aircraft in a mobile command vehicle to give the aircraft a final exterior check.

I knew that the U-2 is overpowered at sea level. It has to be for its engine, normally aspirated like every other

turbine engine, to have enough power remaining to climb above 70,000 feet. Also, we weighed only 24,000 pounds (maximum allowable is 41,000 pounds) and were departing into a brisk headwind. Such knowledge did not prepare me for what followed.

The throttle was fully advanced and would remain that way until the beginning of descent. The 17,000 pounds of thrust made it feel as though I had been shot from a cannon. Within two to three seconds and 400 feet of takeoff roll, the wings flexed, the pogos fell away, and we entered a nose-up attitude of almost 45 degrees at a best-angle-of-climb airspeed of 100 kt. Initial climb rate was 9,000 fpm.

We were still over the runway and through 10,000 feet less than 90 seconds from brake release. One need not worry about a flameout after takeoff in a U-2. There either is enough runway to land straight ahead or enough altitude (only 1,000 feet is needed) to circle the airport for a dead-stick approach and landing.

The bicycle landing gear creates little drag and has no limiting airspeed, so there was no rush to tuck away the wheels. (The landing gear is not retracted at all when in the traffic pattern shooting touch and goes.)

We passed through 30,000 feet five minutes after liftoff and climb rate steadily decreased until above 70,000 feet, when further climb occurred only as the result of fuel burn.

On final approach

Dragon Lady is still drifting toward the upper limits of the atmosphere at 100 to 200 fpm and will continue to do so until it is time to descend. It spends little of its life at a given altitude. Descent begins by retarding the throttle to idle and lowering the landing gear. We raise the spoilers, deploy the speed brakes (one on each side of the aft fuselage), and engage the gust alleviation system. This raises both ailerons 7.5 degrees above their normal neutral point and deflects the wing flaps 6.5 degrees upward. This helps to unload the wings and protect the airframe during possible turbulence in the lower atmosphere.

Gust protection is needed because the Dragon Lady is like a China doll; she cannot withstand heavy gust and maneuvering loads. Strength would have required a heavier structure, and the U-2's designer, Clarence "Kelly" Johnson, shaved as much weight as possible-which is why there are only two landing gear legs instead of three.. Every pound saved resulted in a 10-foot increase in ceiling.

With everything possible hanging and extended, the U-2 shows little desire to go down. It will take 40 minutes to descend to traffic pattern altitude but we needed only half that time climbing to altitude.

During this normal descent, the U-2 covers 37 nm for each 10,000 of altitude lost. When clean and at the best glide speed of 109 kt, it has a glide ratio of 28:1. It is difficult to imagine ever being beyond glide range of a suitable airport except when over large bodies of water or hostile territory. Because there is only one fuel quantity gauge, and it shows only the total remaining, it is difficult to know whether fuel is distributed evenly, which is important when landing a U-2. A low-altitude stall is performed to determine which is the heavier wing, and some fuel is then transferred from it to the other.

We are on final approach with flaps at 35 degrees (maximum is 50 degrees) in a slightly nose-down attitude. The U-2 is flown with a heavy hand when slow, while being careful not to overcontrol. Speed over the threshold is only 1.1 VSO (75 kt), very close to stall. More speed would result in excessive floating.

I peripherally see Barber accelerating the 140-mph, stock Chevrolet Camaro along the runway as he joins in tight formation with our landing aircraft. I hear him on the radio calling out our height (standard practice for all U-2 landings). The U-2 must be close to normal touchdown attitude at a height of one foot before the control wheel is brought firmly aft to stall the wings and plant the tailwheels on the concrete. The feet remain active on the pedals, during which time it is necessary to work diligently to keep the wings level. A roll spoiler on each wing lends a helping hand when its respective aileron is raised more than 13 degrees.

The aircraft comes to rest, a wing tip falls to the ground, and crewmen appear to reattach the pogos for taxiing. Landing a U-2 is notoriously challenging, especially for those who have never flown taildraggers or sailplanes. It can be like dancing with a lady or wrestling a dragon, depending on wind and runway conditions. Maximum

allowable crosswind is 15 kt.

The U-2 was first flown by Tony Levier in August 1955, at Groom Lake (Area 51), Nevada. The aircraft was then known as Article 341, an attempt by the Central Intelligence Agency to disguise the secret nature of its project. Current U-2s are 40 percent larger and much more powerful than the one in which Francis Gary Powers was downed by a missile over the Soviet Union on May 1, 1960.

The Soviets referred to the U-2 as the “Black Lady of Espionage” because of its spy missions and mystique. The age of its design, however, belies the sophistication of the sensing technology carried within. During U.S. involvement in Kosovo, for example, U-2s gathered and forwarded data via satellite to Intelligence at Beale AFB for instant analysis. The results were sent via satellite to battle commanders, who decided whether attack aircraft should be sent to the target. In one case, U-2 sensors detected enemy aircraft parked on a dirt road and camouflaged by thick, overhanging trees. Only a few minutes elapsed between detection and destruction. No other nation has this capability.

The U-2 long ago outlived predictions of its demise. It also survived its heir apparent, the Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird. The fleet of 37 aircraft is budgeted to operate for another 20 years, but this could be affected by the evolution and effectiveness of unmanned aircraft.

After returning to Earth (physically and emotionally), I am escorted to the Heritage Room where 20 U-2 pilots join to share in the spirited celebration of my high flight. Many of them are involved in general aviation and some have their own aircraft.

The walls of this watering hole are replete with fascinating memorabilia about U-2 operations and history. Several plaques proudly list all who have ever soloed Dragon Lady. This group of 670 forms an elite and unusually close-knit cadre of dedicated airmen.

AIRLINES VS. HOSPITAL

Statistics show you're a lot safer in a U.S. airliner than in a U.S. hospital and a consulting firm says medicine can learn a lot from aviation. Lifewings Partners LLC, made up of military and commercial pilots, along with active doctors, teaches healthcare providers the principles of aviation crew resource management with the goal of reducing the number of potentially life-threatening errors that happen in hospitals. According to a news release issued by Lifewings, 34 percent of critically ill patients in U.S. hospitals experienced mistakes in their medical care. It's the highest rate among developed countries. By contrast, the FAA published in 1996 that if you flew on "one flight at random each day, [you] would, on average, go for 21,000 years before perishing in a fatal crash." The statement is based off data that suggests your chances of being in a fatal airline crash are one in eight million. Lifewings teaches CRM techniques to healthcare professionals and the effects have been significant for one prestigious medical center. Vanderbilt University Medical Center reports that it has "eliminated wrong surgeries," which undoubtedly has gone a long way toward improving "expected-to-observed mortality ratios." That's also cut malpractice suits. (submitted by Sam Friesen)

PHOTOS BELOW were sent by ALAN STEVENSON from an email circulating on the internet. Subject: "Trust your pilot". (And make sure your life insurance is paid up!)



FEDS ORDER AIRCRAFT OWNERS TO UPDATE REGISTRATIONS BY FEBRUARY 2006

Aircraft owners and operators have until February 2, 2006 to ensure their aircraft registration information is properly completed and up to date (including address) or they may be denied access to the National Airspace System (NAS).

An FAA notice published in the Federal Register on December 9 indicates that FAA and TSA "will revitalize and refocus" U.S. airspace monitoring capabilities to ensure that each aircraft operating within the NAS has met all statutory, regulatory

and certification requirements, effective February 1, 2006.

To read the complete story go to: http://www.eaa.org/communications/eaanews/051212_faa.html

REPAIRS PUT GLOBALFLYER RECORD ATTEMPT 'BACK ON TRACK'

Fossett Flight to Florida Sets Stage for 'Ultimate Flight' "The record attempt timeline is back on track." That's what Adventurist and EAA member Steve Fossett after the Virgin Atlantic GlobalFlyer was repaired and ready to fly down to Florida from Kansas to stage for "The Ultimate Flight," the longest flight on record, sometime in February.

The preliminary test flight Wednesday verified a wing repair made by the Scaled Composites team following a collision with a fueling truck last week. The quick repair and repositioning flight to Florida keeps Fossett's flight window intact—from mid-January through the end of February. Exact dates will be determined by favorable weather and jet stream conditions. For more information, visit www.virginatlanticglobalflyer.com.

**AOPA's
Air Safety Foundation
www.aopa.org/asf**

INTEREST UP FOR FOUNDATION'S PUBLICATIONS, COURSES

In 2005, demand soared for the AOPA Air Safety Foundation's online publications and courses. The foundation's *Airspace for Everyone* Safety Advisor was the most-downloaded publication, with more than 22,000 pilots taking advantage of the information. Use of the foundation's many free online courses also skyrocketed in 2005, with 77,160 course completions. An additional free feature, the Sporty's Safety Quiz, recorded 127,218 completions. You can access all of these resources and more through the foundation's home page.

AIR SAFETY FOUNDATION HOME PAGE GETS NEW LOOK

The AOPA Air Safety Foundation's home page has been redesigned, making aviation safety tips and techniques easier to find. The foundation's popular online courses are right up front in the Online Safety Center, along with the world's largest searchable general aviation accident database and the ASF-Jepesen CFI online renewal course. Also in the front is Sporty's Safety Quiz; check back frequently, as the quiz changes every two weeks. Safety techniques are identified and explained in the Hot Topics section, a one-stop shop of timely, topic-specific safety information. A section is devoted to the ASF library, which includes free downloadable versions of the foundation's safety publications from Safety Advisors to accident reports. This update, online courses, free live safety seminars, and many other services are provided in part by pilot donations. A section at the bottom of the home page describes how pilots can make donations to help the foundation develop programs to ensure GA's safety record continues to improve.

MINICOURSES ONLY TAKE MINUTES TO COMPLETE

So you don't have a lot of time but you want to stay current on safety-related issues? Try the AOPA Air Safety Foundation's minicourses. They only take 5 to 15 minutes each to complete. Say you want to understand the Visual Warning System, the new laser signaling system surrounding the Washington, D.C., Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). Or perhaps your FBO just installed a Garmin 430/530 GPS receiver in your favorite airplane and you'd like a quick course in how to use it. The AOPA Air Safety Foundation has minicourses to address each of these situations.