

Hope you are having a great holiday season. We are taking a few days off, but we will be open for business as usual on January 2. In the meantime we wanted to get you caught up on the news..

Since the last "Notes" we had a Fly Mart (August 2), the Lobster Fly-In (September 24), were closed for most of October to resurface 15-33 and we had the first Chili Fly-In of the year on December 18. Thank you all for your participation at the events, and patience while we were closed. If you haven't seen it, Tom Haines in addition to having an excellent presentation at the Lobster Fly-In (Is there anything harder than talking to the home folks?), gave us a few kind words in his column in AOPA Pilot. All in all it was a good, fun day. We are looking forward to next year.

Speaking of 2006, here are some dates to circle on your calendar;

January 12-The first day of private pilot ground school. Contact the office for details. 724-588-1665

January 15-The second annual **Fruit Cake Bomb Drop** and Chili Fly-In. We will begin around noon and hope to have **Bob Griffin on hand to defend his title of "Fruit Cake Ace"**.

After the competition we are going to have a meeting of any persons interested in starting a Flying Club at Greenville, probably around 3:30 pm.

February 19-**Pierogi Fly-In**. Carol's cousin Eddie Leko will be supplying the Slovak Foods (Figured you may be tired of Chili)

March 20- **End of the Winter Chili Fly-In and Easter Egg Hunt**-We are hoping for good weather at this event for the first time. Please bring the kids and grandkids..

May 20-**Penn Ohio Lineman's Rodeo and Fly-In**. We are hosting a Lineman's Rodeo. This is a skills competition for power linemen in PA and Ohio. It will be held at the airport on our "Branchless Tree Farm". There will be food so it only seemed correct to invite the pilots to come and look around. I think you will find it quite interesting.

In early August we plan to have the **Fly-Mart and the Lobsters** (with some improvements to the transportation of the critters) on September 23.

We hope to see you here for any or all of our events.

About five years ago we, Carol, Nancy, David, and I began this adventure. The kids were a lot younger then and so were we. It has been an interesting experience to say the least. Small business ownership is always challenging-operating an airport is no less so. Here are a **few things I think I learned** over the last several years;

-**We, as pilots** are a very small group, numbering **just over 600,000 in the US**. For comparison, there are over **600,000 boats purchased annually** in this country. However, we are a little more noticeable than boaters. (Unless we are talking about those infamous "pleasure boaters" the Vikings from Minnesota.) Probably because it is harder to drive a boat 500 feet over your neighbors house than an airplane.

-If it is aviation related, whether it is flying 'em or fixin' 'em, **whatever you think it will cost or however long you think it will take, assume it will cost twice as much and take twice as long**. Flying is a lot of things, but it is not is inexpensive, and it takes time. Even the new light sport program does not mean cheap flying. The training will still cost at least \$2000.00, and take 5-6 months. Most of the new aircraft cost as much as a Mercedes. However it is less expensive and quicker than buying a new 172 and learning how to fly.

-The **Siren Song of aviation** is that it usually promises more that it can deliver. There are 4 seats in a 4-place airplane, but you rarely can fill the seats, the fuel tanks and the luggage compartment and go aviating. Or, you plan extensively for a trip, get the family to the airport but, the weather doesn't quite meet the forecast. (Just ask Carol how many times over the last several years we have waited at the airport for the weather to get better...and it never did. Or better yet ask her Mom who was often at the other end waiting for us)

-**Aviation is heavily subsidized by the federal government**. It is true that the aviation trust fund pays the majority of the bills. However, the actual revenues generated by our segment of general aviation is only a portion of the cost of the operation of the flight service stations, let alone the cost of the airports, nav-aids and air traffic control. For example, you pay around \$.24 per gallon in state and federal taxes when you buy 100LL fuel in Pennsylvania, whether you are buying for your plane or the plane you rent. This fall we put the **new surface on our runway 15-33, to the tune of around \$300,000.00**. That's over a million gallons of fuel, or 62,500 gallons a year, at .24 per gallon over 20 years. For the record, in 2005, we (Elbow Street Aviation) purchased roughly 30,000 gallons of fuel, paying **around \$7250.00** into the trust fund. Another example is funding for hangars. Most are built with some portion of grant money. After they are built, because no one

really had to directly pay for them, they are rented at an artificially lower rate. That's good for the guy in the hangar. However there can be no private investment, because you can't afford to build a building, and rent it with any sort of return in a reasonable amount of time. So the airports wait for the government to decide who will get hangars..

-The most profitable segment of general aviation is fuel sales of Jet-A. It makes sense because the jets burn thousands of gallons of fuel. There is much more Jet-A sold than 100LL. But, the surprising thing is that the margin or net **profit per gallon** is normally higher on the sale of 1000 gallons into a G-V, than 3.7 gallons of 100LL into a Cub. It's an interesting example of supply and demand.

-Flight instruction has to be one of the least appreciated, yet hardest jobs in the world. A flight instructor has to be able to impart knowledge with the understanding that the final exam occurs every time the student gets into the left seat. Flying is not driving a car. It involves an element of risk that is not normally acceptable in our society. From my extremely limited experience of watching Nancy solo in a glider, I can say **it is easier to be in the plane, than watching from the ground.**

-In 1993 I bought a Trimble Flight-Mate Pro GPS. Immediately my flying world opened up, because I now knew where I was...within less than a half a mile. Cross country flying was infinitely easier and I was more confident. Nowadays we have even more information at hand. So much that it is sometimes hard to look out the window. In fact the problem has become one of information overload, rather than a lack of info, in just 12 years.

-Knowing what you know, if you could, would you buy an airline ticket on a DC-3, flying from PIT to NYC, at this time of year, on a snowy day, knowing the crew only has the weather and navigation information that was available in 1955? I'm not sure if I would. For Christmas a couple of years ago, I received a copy of "Fate is the Hunter" by Ernie Gann. It is a must for every pilot's library. I never looked at commercial aviation of that era the same way.

-Flying is an addiction. Who, other than a pilot would shovel snow for an hour, pre-flight the airplane and preheat an engine in the bitter cold to fly for a half an hour because it was just too nice to stay on the ground?

-Flying for me is the skies over Oshkosh where the sounds make you turn your head back and forth so you don't miss anything. It is the pride and accomplishment of 1st solos, new pilots, builders and owners as they sneak a peak over their shoulder to steal a look at the aircraft they just shut down. It's Jason's feet in the air, and his head under the panel while he hooks up a vacuum line to an attitude indicator. It's Jan Martin intently watching a student's first solo, and John Julian's gentle (?!) elbow in the ribs just to remind you. It's the smell of fresh coffee in the morning. It's a half dozen tail draggers lined up on the ramp. It's sitting at our picnic table on a warm summer evening watching a limp wind sock when the sun goes down...

Thank you for participating in our little adventure. It's you folks and your support that make all of this work. Thank you for your kindness. All of us want to wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a Blessed 2006.