



# THE GRAPEVINE



EAA CHAPTER 663 Livermore, California

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There is a very fine line between "hobby" and "mental illness."

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## MEETING AND PROGRAM

**Our October meeting** will take place at 7:30 P.M. on the 4th of October in the Terminal Building at the Livermore Airport. Our program will be a talk by our own Scott Alair, describing his adventures flying in the 2007 AirVenture Cup Race, his talk will include pictures! This should be a great program!

**MINUTES: GENERAL MEETING**  
EAA CHAPTER 663, 09-06-07, 7:15 PM  
LVK TERMINAL BUILDING

**Guests:** Jim Mille, Dennis Johnson and Lee Travers.

**Treasurer's report:** Barry Weber reported a total of \$4,798.38 in chapter funds.

**Jimmy Kilroy** taxied his spectacular Bronze Lindy winning Pitts model 12 to the terminal building for all of us to drool over. Jimmy told us about some of the custom modifications he made to his Pitts and about his experience flying it to Oshkosh for the first time. Congratulations, Jimmy!

**New business:** Dan VanDusen from the LVK airport asked for volunteers from the chapter to help out with the LVK open house on Saturday, September 22nd. Dan passed out a sign-up sheet for the volunteers to mark when and what they want to do to help out.

**Break:** 8:00 PM for 10 minutes.

**Program:** Doug Henson gave a talk on his flight to the Bahamas with his wife he made in July in his Grand Champion Falco. Doug's presentation not only showed beautiful pictures of the Bahamas but also images Doug had from "Flight Aware" that depicted his IFR ground track over a map and Doug explained why his ground track was often not in a straight line, including one occasion when he had to deal with an IMC failure of his brand new vacuum pump! Doug, thanks for sharing your trip with the Chapter.

Adjourned for pie at 9:25.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING,**  
EAA CHAPTER 663, 09-20-07 7:45,  
BOB FARNAM'S PLACE.

**Present:** Bob Farnam, Scott Alair, Ralph Cloud, Bruce Cruikshank and Barry Weber.

**Treasurer's report:** Barry Weber reported \$4,25.12 in chapter funds.

**Old business:** The Board decided to cancel the September 22nd BBQ due to forecast of bad weather. The next chapter BBQ will be on October 13th.

**The Board** made final arrangements for the LVK open house on September 22nd.

**The Board** discussed nominations for the chapter elections.

**Announcements:** A pilot survival seminar will

be held at the Columbia airport on October 14th from 10:30 to 14:30 presented by Doug Ritter.

**The fifth annual** West Coast Zenith regional fly in will be held at the Cloverdale airport on October 13th from 10:00 to 16:00.

**The October chapter meeting** will be on Thursday the 4th, the program will be me explaining how I was beaten by a SX300 in the AirVenture cup race and photos from the Air Force museum in Dayton Ohio and from OSH 2007.

Adjourned for pie at 8:45.

## SHARE THE THRILL OF FLYING WITH SOME YOUNG EAGLES!



The next date for **Young Eagles** will be 20 October. There is a September 29th date but all of the parents have plans, must be soccer season.

I have a group of **girl scouts**, 8 of them that are driving over from Modesto. I would like to add the other 5 holdouts into that date as well.

### **My needs:**

- 7 aircraft (one of which will be mine)
- 7 pilots
- 4 ground support and safety escort
- 1 person doing certificates

Eric Helms, Y.E. Coord.

### **A STRANGE SYMPTOM**

This came from the Canard List

Friend of mine (LEZ driver) had a persistent oil leak from somewhere, but a week ago took off from Ft Lauderdale for CA. During the trip, he started calling me that his fuel pressure was erratic, and few times along the route he got help with changing the fuel sender, checking the fuel lines, carburetor etc. etc... Nothing helped. Finally at Reno Air Races, he spoke to a Lycoming rep that told him that most likely his fuel pump is failing. ( I suggested that to him at the beginning, but the fuel pump is the hardest thing to get to). So he ordered a new pump and started removing the old one. Than came the discovery that the drain (overflow) line was packed with mud. I don't know much about Lycomings (just rotary) but the mechanic told him blocking the drain tube will affect the diaphragm of the pump and it is responsible for the oil leak, too! Who knew? So, among other things you should check the fuel pump overflow line for blockage too. I still don't get it how the mud daubbers survive the gasoline fumes?

### **MOUNTAIN SURVIVAL**

On June 3, 2007, Sparky Imeson, noted mountain flying author and speaker, survived an accident in the Elk Horn Mountains, west-north-west of Townsend, Montana. He was giving mountain flying instruction in an Aviat Husky A-1B.

This is his story:

#### **My Ordeal**

Jon C. Kantorowicz, "JC," and I got together shortly before 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, June 3, at the Townsend, Montana, airport. I had just returned from a flight and removed my survival vest to "cool down." JC retrieved his own survival vest containing a VHF radio and other items. For some reason I failed to put my vest back on. This was a big mistake because it was outfitted with survival gear and an ACR AeroFix 406 GPS Personal ELT. I've read the propaganda that it takes at least four hours for the 121.5 MHz ELTs to home in on the transmitter and then it's something like 400 square miles that have to be searched. Compare this to the 2-4 minutes and 3-square meters for the 406 GPS Personal Locator Beacon (PLB). So I knew better than to "leave home without it."

Engine start was at 10:09 a.m. Another airplane was using runway 16, so we waited and took off from the grass runway paralleling 16/34 to the north and turned west. We flew by some mining activity and continued working drainages to the north. We spotted many elk. There were three buildings on the south-side ridge about one-half mile west of the mouth of the canyon. We passed over this area and dropped down into the canyon.

I had previously checked the XM-Weather in my plane and determined that the winds aloft were calm for the 6,000-, 9,000- and 12,000-foot levels. The little updrafts and downdrafts we encountered bore this out and appeared to be convective activity. It was a nice day. I had told JC at the beginning of the flight that

my comfort level for flying up canyons was 500 feet AGL; this to allow for a turn around in the event of the terrain out climbing the airplane or to provide for encountering a downdraft. After flying for more than 40 minutes and evaluating the aircraft performance I revised my comfort level to about 300 feet AGL. JC is an experienced pilot and I didn't have to continually say, "Stay in a position where you can turn to lowering terrain." He was flying in a safe, responsible and professional manner. He did not display the bold, macho or hot dogging type of flying that some pilots use to impress me with their skills. He was a solid pilot in a solid plane.

As we proceeded up the south fork of Beaver Creek the terrain continued to climb. The airplane was keeping ahead of the rising terrain. We crossed a bare, rocky hillside on our north (right) and JC transitioned to a small ridge on the south (left). We were having no problem maintaining our AGL spacing interval. In a matter of seconds we encountered a downdraft that "sucked" us down; so much for the XM-Weather wind prediction. It had to be a downdraft shearing to a tail wind because the airspeed went from a solid 70 indicated to an immediate stall. JC did a rudder turn toward lowering terrain and lowered the nose. Although I yelled, "Nose down, nose down," JC had already lowered the nose and broken the stall. For those of you who have not encountered this (and I suggest that you don't), it is difficult to lower the nose when you have trees higher than you at your altitude and the ground rushing up. This one act told me JC wasn't an just an experienced pilot but rather a very professional pilot. Had JC not lowered the nose, and then steered with the rudder between the largest trees, we would have had a vertical descent into very inhospitable terrain. By getting us flying, the g forces were transferred from vertical to lateral. This is important. The human body can withstand about 6-8 vertical (compression) Gs and about 40-50 lateral Gs. I seriously doubt that I would be typing now if it wasn't for JC's quick and more importantly, correct responses.

After impact we spent about 20-30 seconds breathing hard with moaning noises. I asked JC if he turned off the master and mags. He

had already turned them off and shut off the fuel selector. JC said his right foot was hot and I yelled, "We're on fire. Get out of here."

The right wing had collapsed somewhat making it difficult to open the doors very far. JC held the doors while I scrambled out. Although I don't have a lot of hair on the top of my noggin, that fire got what was remaining. I held the doors for JC and tried to help pull him but couldn't muster it (four broken ribs and two crushed vertebrae). JC got out and we scrambled about 20 feet from the plane in a duck walk - crawl - swim - side-ward crab crawl- and other awkward motions.

Turning back we saw the entire cockpit was engulfed in flames. We had about 3/4 fuel and both JC and I thought there was sufficient vapor for the fuel tanks to explode, so we went through the contortions of moving farther away. We only got another 20 feet and JC was in too much pain and too weak to continue. He had a broken sternum, broken right leg, two crushed vertebrae, a gouge on his head and numerous other scrapes and bruises that I could see.

The airplane burned totally, leaving nothing but a brown ring. We both had visions of the forest catching fire and us being unable to escape. Through my stupidity, we had not filed a flight plan. Because of this decision, I decided the time before we would be rescued to be excessive and thought the best way to facilitate our rescue would be to head down the creek to gain cell phone coverage. Although I had a cut above the eyes I was coherent, but scared. I thought JC's condition might be even worse than what I could see (internal injuries). So, without reservation, I told JC that I would head down the creek (besides we didn't have any coffee). We could see the curve of the canyon about 3/4 mile away. I thought I could make it to that curve in about 1 1/2 hours and did, in fact, make it; but before that there was another curve ... and another curve .. and another curve.

I walked 13 hours from 11:20 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. and only made it about 5 miles. It was chilly (well, actually it was cold). I had a problem lifting my legs over the downfall so I

would approach a log, turn sideways and lift one leg over, turn slightly and lift the other leg over. The last two times I tried this in the dark I fell over backwards and couldn't get up for about 10 minutes. Although there was nearly a full moon, it didn't come out until later.

As much as I wanted to continue I couldn't. I began shivering hard. JC didn't have much firewood to work with, whereas I had abundance to burn. You won't believe this but trees had fallen in a rectangular pattern just as if you were stacking them up to build a cabin. I had a 4-foot by 5-foot enclosure with a large, mostly flat, rock occupying the space. I built a small fire and lay down.

At 6:00 a.m. I tried to walk out, and even with the motivation of obtaining help for JC, I just couldn't do it. I didn't eat anything, although there were elk, porcupine, orange colored snakes with stubby tails, tree squirrels, and plenty of spiders around.

It wasn't until 8:40 a.m. that I developed the wherewithal to actually get going. With all the downed timber and the inhospitable terrain, it was slow going. I had only made about one mile in 5 1/2 hours.

Search planes were now flying over us back and forth. The helicopters seemed to concentrate their search along the creek. I built a couple of smoky fires, but the helicopters disappeared by the time the smoke began billowing out. I even burned all the trees on the side of a mountain a little later on (well, okay, there were only two trees - a green one and a dead one). It poured out smoke. No one was around to see it.

A National Guard helicopter passed over me a couple of times: once, while I was in thick timber and the other, while I was at the creek getting a drink. At 2:10 p.m. the military version of the Jet Ranger passed over me while I was in a somewhat open area. It "slammed on the brakes" and turned around. The pilot spotted me and waved.

The helicopter landed on the north side of Beaver Creek, which, at this lower elevation,

was a raging river, not a creek. A crew member crossed over on a fallen log. When he determined that my injuries would prevent me from crossing the creek, he headed back and radioed for a "hoist" helicopter from Malstrom Air Force Base.

He then filled a large baggie with water and came back to wait with me. At 3:25 p.m. I was "jerked from the jaws of death again," and flown to St Peter's Hospital in Helena. Although the newspaper said I was picked up about 1 mile from the crash site, it was closer to 6 miles.

#### Lessons Learned:

- 1) USE a flight vest with some survival equipment. Carry a PLB with a built-in GPS. It doesn't do much good sitting in the baggage compartment or draped over the pilot's seat, so wear the vest.
- 2) File a flight plan (I know the delays encountered on the phone are sometimes frustrating - but file it with some other responsible person if you can't get through to Lockheed Martin).
- 3) If you modify your route of flight, tell someone.
- 4) It was stupid to modify my personal safety standards. I have developed them after years and years of flying. Had we been at my comfort level of 500-foot AGL, this would not have happened.

Thanks to everyone for your thoughts, concerns and prayers. I'm sure they provided us with much of the will to survive and to continue.

Blue skies, tail winds and safe flying!  
Sparky Imeson

Editor's note: I don't know what all Sparky had in his survival vest, but in terrain such as he was in, a signaling mirror would have speeded up the locating process quite a bit. How many of you have one or have ever practiced using one?



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