



# THE GRAPEVINE



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

Vol. XXVIII,



No. 10, October, 2010

## Officers

- President Ralph Cloud 449-1048
- Vice President Don Smith 785-5824
- Trea\$Urer Mark Palajac 454-0627
- Secretary Kirk Knight 510-390-0840
- Program Co-Ord Don Smith 785-5824
- Tech Counselor Dave Dent 447-8055
- Tech Counselor Gordon Jones 447-1549
- Tech Counselor Bob Sinclair 935-7465
- News Letter Emeritus John Meyer
- News Letter Editor Jeffry Larson 209-608-5981
- Flight Advisor Barry Weber 963-0824
- Flight Advisor Bob Farnam 449-1513
- Young Eagles Trina Anderson 209-609-2162
- Librarian Alan Thayer 582-7274
- Web Editor Brad Olson 866-9289



### Minutes:

August 2010 Minutes

GENERAL MEETING, EAA 663,

9/2/2010 Livermore Terminal

Called to order 7:32 PM by President Ralph Cloud.

Other Board Members in attendance were Mark Palajac, Treasurer and Kirk Knight, Secretary.

**FIRST FLIGHT:** Congratulations to Tim Bennett on first flight of his RV-7A. Tim was not in attendance.

**NEW MEMBERS** in attendance is Mike Bacon who has an RV-6A now hangared on the south side of LVK.

**Guests** this month were Bill and Gary.

**AUGUST GRAPEVINE MINUTES CORRECTIONS** approved: Paul Weiss not John Youngblood provided information on reflective tape last month on the prop balancer.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Mark reports we now have 96 members – yet another new record – and \$3,431.65 in the bank.

**MINUTES** of August moved and accepted.

**BUSINESS:** Many thanks to Bob Tucknott for sponsoring – and providing the feast – at the September 18 BBQ.

## Board Of Directors

- Bruce Cruikshank 510-886-6897
- John Goldsmith 925-447-7362
- Brad Oliver 925-443-1135
- Bob Farnam 449-1513
- Dick Jennings 862-2345
- Bob Cowan 373 0555



## October Meeting And Program

**NOTICE:** Our October meeting will take place at 7:30 P.M. on the 7th of October. The meeting will be at the terminal - KLVK.

### Calendar:

Month	Date	Speaker	Topic
Sept	2	Barry Weber	Airventure Pics
Oct	7	Rich Vetterli	DAR Inspections

**Our October Program** will feature a discussion by Rich Vetterli talking about his experience with the FSDO and a DAR for his inspection for his airworthiness ticket on his Zenith 601

**LVK OPEN HOUSE** set for Saturday October 2. Members are invited to line up their aircraft in the first row. We'll have two canopies and chairs. The Chapter will supply water and soda. Suggestions on providing an incomplete project to show that we really do build airplanes.

**YOUNG EAGLES:** Trina reports that she had 6 Young Eagles scheduled and 15 showed up. Next event is Saturday September 18 at Tracy. Last Young Eagle event of the year will be October 16 at LVK.

**TOOLS:** The new compressor is in process of being re-shipped. Also the chapter trailer has yet another new chapter. It was moved and then stolen and literally hours prior to tonight's meeting was spotted. We're still searching for a storage location and discussions are underway with Rich Perkins of Attitude Aviation to park the trailer in exchange for membership and permission to use it.

**WEBSITE:** Nothing new to report from Brad.

**CHAPTER DINNER:** Set for Saturday January 22, 2011 at Livermore Presbyterian Church. Paul Weiss will donate a case of wine.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** September 16 Board Meeting at Ralph's house in Livermore. October 7 Chapter meeting. Possible Speakers in future are Oakland DAR, Zenith 601 builder.

**MAILBAG:** Watsonville flyin September 5. Willits Fly-in September 12. Flabob Open House September 25. Corvair College with Cory Anderson October 1-3. Open Cockpit at Castle AFB Labor Day weekend.

**MEMBER COMMENTS:** The Gormans attended Van's Homecoming in Aurora for the first time and were very impressed. Van's reports over 7,000 RVs will be flying by end of 2010. They met Jeremy Constant who had flown in as well.

**Larry** brought to everyone's attention that if you have a Ray Allen relay, typically used to reverse polarity to servo motors, it's likely defective due to a batch of bad solder. Ray Allen is offering replacements at half price, or about \$25.

**Dave & Trina Anderson** note a **Service Bulletin from Lycoming** on epoxy floats in new carburetors being defective. Their lovely new RV narrowly averted a short landing when the engine sputtered and stopped when Dave pulled power on final. The epoxy float literally quit floating as a result of absorbing fuel. The engine ran fine when fire-walled at full power, but throttling back to idle made it dependent upon the float.

**POWER PLANT NEWS** at Byron and Tracy. Dave and Trina Anderson have been busy attending meeting about the two gas turbine peaker power plants proposed near Byron and Tracy airports. The heat plumes from the plants produce up to 1,800 fpm vertical plumes – enough to make a glider pilot giddy, but not conducive to a safe flight for a student pilot or even an experienced pilot on approach.

**The August 26** meeting of the ALUC for Byron had 25-35 pilots attend and the commission seemed to comprehend the problem of a plume on approach. The Tracy ALUC seemed to have a lot going on behind closed doors to negotiate a settlement. The developer was seeking to have the new development termed "an existing development." The project was being sued by both the county and the state in an effort to have the developer agreement canceled. Pilots attended with an attorney. Next hearing is scheduled in Stockton on September 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**MAINTENANCE TIPS:** Dave Dent wanted to bring to everyone's attention FAR 43.13 and FAR 43.12 preventative maintenance. An owner of a certificated aircraft, or owner of an experimental aircraft without a Repairman's Certificate, can perform 31 items under FAR 43.12.

There is a great deal of confusion even within the FAA about what an owner of an experimental aircraft can do vs. what the builder of an experimental aircraft with a Repairman's Certificate can do. **There is disagreement between EAA and FAA over some FAA assertions.** Dave is asking EAA to contact our local FSDO.

Dave, and several other members, took pains to note that if you get a ramp check by an FAA inspector who

doesn't know the rules you are going to stay on the ground until the issue is resolved. Dave didn't say it was proper, or that he agreed with them, or that it was fair, only that when an FAA inspector is uncertain your aircraft is going to stay on the ground until the issue is resolved. Dave suggested that in his experience arguing with the FSDO on the ramp is counter productive to getting back in the air in a timely manner.

**SAFETY CHECK:** put 925-371-4987 for Livermore Emergency Dispatch into your cell phone. Do not call 911 if you see an emergency at LVK as the call will be routed to Highway Patrol dispatch which will delay response. There is no longer an operating fire station at LVK, the nearest is at Rincon. If you have an aviation radio during tower hours you can call LVK tower and report an emergency.

**PRESENTATION:** Barry Weber provided his view of EAA AirVenture 2010 – better known as Oshkosh. It's always interesting to see the aviation world through Barry's eyes and note what catches his attention, especially little details and tricks of construction and design. He also digs behind the paint and polish to scope out new technologies.

**Impressive AirVenture Photos** by Brad Oliver were shown during the break and can be seen online at BradOliver.com.

Meeting adjourned at 9:42 PM for Pie.  
Minutes respectfully submitted by Kirk Knight,  
Chapter Secretary.

### **August 2010 Minutes**

**BOARD MEETING**, EAA 663,  
9/16/2010 at home of Ralph Cloud

Called to order 7:30 PM by President Ralph Cloud.  
Other Board Members in attendance were Mark Palajac, Treasurer and Kirk Knight, Secretary. Members present included Bob Farnham, John Goldsmith, Bruce Cruikshank, Trina Anderson, Dick Martin.

**TREASURER REPORT:** Mark reports balance of \$3,475.29 and 97 members!

**Last BBQ** of the year 9/18/2010 at Livermore.

**LVK Open House** Saturday October 2.

**YOUNG EAGLES:** Trina has 12 young eagles enrolled for September 25.

**TOOLS:** The trailer story is quite an adventure, but it has finally found a home. Currently Rich Perkins at Attitude Aviation is storing the trailer inside the fence at his property. Rich has a key for access. One caution if you use the trailer: Apparently it attracts people who want to steal it. Keep it attached to your vehicle!

**November Meeting** will feature Electronic Charts.

**LVK – Airport Land Use Commission.** After much turmoil, a proposal to return to the old model has been sent to Livermore City Council.

**October 7** regular meeting, October 21<sup>st</sup> Board Meeting at Ralph's house.

**Break for pie at 8:30 PM.**

### **Feedback/Questions/Suggestions**

**Any and all feedback is welcome. please take a few minutes to send suggestions, tips, corrections or any other feedback to: [jeffrylite@comcast.net](mailto:jeffrylite@comcast.net).**

**Mailbag:** Harry Crosby sent me the web link to this story. I contacted the Southern CA newspaper (<http://thecommunitypaper.com>) from their website where it was published and ask for their permission to share. They not only agreed, but provided another story for another edition. You will need a hanky.

**About the Author – Kent Ballard**

*Kent Ballard is a masterful writer who lives near Brazil, Indiana. While he made his living as a Journeyman Machinist for many years, he also fascinated a small group of writer friends with his tales of history, adventure, and of the military.*

*This is the third cover (for the newspaper) story from Kent Ballard. More to come.*

*Stick around and enjoy!*



felt. I watched until they flew out of sight, then quietly went home.

When our crew returned several days later, they brought with them a story that put my misery in its proper perspective. Just when you think that you have troubles, you always seem to hear about someone who is facing a real trial.

He was an old man, suffering from serious depression and an incurable illness. His future, such as it was, looked grim. Just a few weeks earlier he had been diagnosed as having Hodgkin's disease.

#### THE LAST FLIGHT – 1991 by Kent Ballard



In an effort to cheer their father up, his sons had driven him from Massachusetts to the great air show taking place in Genessee. Their dad had been a Navy combat pilot in WWII. He'd often told them stories about his days as a younger man, a man they'd never met and perhaps never really believed existed. But they knew how his eyes would light up when he talked about his wartime experiences. Dad became young again, if only for a moment, as he remembered being strong and healthy, fighting against fascism so many years ago. The boys hoped that being around the old warbirds would lift his spirits for at least a day.

Recently, there was a titanic air show at Genessee, New York. This "gathering of eagles" brought in WWII aircraft from all over the United States and Canada. Aircraft from all American military branches were there, along with combat fighters and bombers from the RAF, the Soviet Air Force, the Luftwaffe, and the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy. It was warbird heaven.

His sons, loving and attentive, helped him out of the car somewhere on one of the fields reserved for parking. He'd been glancing up more frequently as they go closer to the airfield. With a veteran's practiced eye, he identified the aircraft as they wheeled and banked over the field or taxied to the parking positions. He'd already told his boys that "his" plane wouldn't be there. They weren't saved after the war like the more glorified Flying Fortresses or Liberators. Still, young men by the

Try as I might, I couldn't adjust my schedule to attend. Feeling somewhat like the kid who didn't get picked for the team, I helped get our bomber tuned up, spit-shined, and polished. I was pretty dispirited when they left. I smiled and waved when they took off, never telling anyone how disappointed I

thousands had flown and fought in "his" type of aircraft, and not all of them had made it home. He knew that the model he flew was only a memory shared by a dwindling band of old men like himself. His own sons had never even seen one of the planes that carried him to war. For the most part, no one knew they ever existed. The old planes, like the old man himself, were fading away.

Once they had been young, the hope and pride of a nation. But now...no one cared anymore.

They walked slowly along the crowded flight line. Over the rumble of the engines, Dad gestured for his boys. "That one's a B-17," he'd explain, "we had those in the Pacific, too. There's a P-38 Lightning. You can always tell by the twin tail booms. They were good escorts. They went in with us sometimes. We were glad to have them around."

Further down the line they passed a Japanese Zero. The old man glared at it silently for a moment, some strange emotion passing briefly across his face. His sons didn't know if it was grief, fear, anger, or a combination of all. He turned and without a backward glance continued his slow walk.

The memories were becoming stronger for him. The breeze carried the scent of rubber, aviation gas, and hot oil, just like his base used to smell. Planes jockeying into position along the line revved their engines, sending gale-force prop wash blowing across the tarmac as people clutched at their hats and leaned into the wind. Overhead was the deep-throated roar of ancient propeller-driven fighter formations passing in review, a sound unlike any other. Air show announcers all over the country call it the same thing: The Sound of Freedom.

The father and his sons ambled along, pausing occasionally to look up at whatever was flying over. After one particularly low pass by a British Spitfire, the boys turned to remark to Dad and saw him standing as if he were frozen in place. He had walked around the aircraft they'd been looking at and was staring like a man possessed with the next plane in line. A look of incredulous wonder began to spread across his face..

"My God," he whispered. "My God, there it is. It's...someone...how...I never thought that I'd ever..."

"What is it, Dad? Are you okay?"

He seemed to stand taller and his shoulders squared. "Okay? Hell yes, I'm okay! THERE'S MY PLANE!"

It just so happened that "his" plane was also "our" plane. Lockheed PV-2 "Harpoons" were never immortalized by Hollywood like the Flying Fortresses of "12 O'Clock High," the B-25 Mitchells of "Catch-22" or any of a score of other films. Why this is so remains a mystery, for the missions they flew were some of the most heroic—and harrowing—of the war. Flying out of New York, Norfolk, and Pensacola, PV-1s and 2s scoured the Atlantic for Nazi U-boats. The WWII cliché "sighted sub, sank same" is attributed to a PV-1 crew. In the Pacific theater, astonished Navy pilots soon realized that the PV-1 could actually outrun the dreaded Japanese Zeros, a feat unheard of for a medium bomber. The Lockheed's phenomenal speed saved scores, perhaps hundreds, of American lives.

With the debut of the heavier and more stable PV-2, Marine Corps pilots and ground crews, as usual, made a few non-standard "field modifications." This normally meant torching extra holes in

the nose and welding in as many .50 machine guns as they could cram into the forward bay. The Marines also tore out the torpedo and depth charge racks in the somewhat pregnant-looking bomb bay and installed hooks for 500 pounders and napalm. As if this wasn't enough, industrious gunneys even bolted rails under each wing and loaded them with air-to-ground rockets! Aeronautical engineers were appalled when they heard this, but soon reports came back from the combat zones of Harpoons taking on everything from subs and fighters to tanks and heavy cruisers, all with disastrous results to the enemy. The Harpoons could—and did—fight anything. And somewhere amidst the fire and fury, somewhere between the Philippines and the Aleutians, there was a young Navy pilot who would live to be taken to Genessee, New York by his sons...

The old man stood at the front of the plane and, after a long moment, simply reached up and placed his hand on the underside of the nose. *"I never knew they saved one,"* he said softly. *"I never thought I'd see one again."* To his sons, the man sounded as if he had suddenly found something priceless that he had lost many years ago.

One of his boys slipped around to the port side of the harpoon. He'd seen an open hatch and one of our crewmen standing near it. The younger man had decided to ask, plead—beg if he had to—for permission to let his father climb aboard a Harpoon just one more time. Please, please...

To his surprise and delight, he was informed that we welcome visitors aboard our plane. In fact, we encourage them to climb in and take a look around. It's no fun having a bomber if you can't show it off once in a while,

right? Besides, we're maintaining a living piece of American history, and we're rather proud of that fact.

The fellow who climbed into the hatch did so with the grace and familiarity of a young naval aviator, not an old man suffering from Hodgkin's disease. Our crewman offered to show the old gent around and point out objects of interest in the plan, a courtesy we perform for all visitors, but one of the man's sons tugged at his sleeve. *"Dad knows his way around in here. Can we talk outside for a moment?"*

Our crewman was somewhat bewildered, but he was beginning to realize that something out of the ordinary was going on. He'd seen that eerie look in the old fellow's eyes and it was plain that these other two guys wanted to explain his behavior. He hopped out of the hatch and listened to them. They told our man about their dad's crushing depression upon learning of his incurable disease, how they had hoped to just cheer him up a little, and how overjoyed he was to see that a bunch of characters from Indiana were actually flying around the country in a plane that he thought no longer existed.

Our man knew there was more to it than that. There was a lot of happiness and relief in these men, too. Their mission was accomplished: against all odds, they'd broken the black spell on their father.

While the old aviator was still merrily poking about in our plane, a couple more of our crew strolled up munching on hamburgers. *"What's up? Anything going on?"*

*"Yeah. Wait'll you hear this..."*

Within minutes, two of our crewmen set out to round up the rest of the gang.

The old man was still climbing in and out of the plane, kicking the landing gear and inspecting the bomb bay, when they all arrived. Our whole "away team" shook his hand and took pictures of him and his boys. The old fellow's joy was infectious, and our guys were glad to be a part of it. Then someone in the crew came up with a brilliant idea. It was whispered from man to man and a hasty conference was held under the huge wing. Heads nodded all around. Yeah. It was agreed. They had to do this...

We were scheduled to make a flight the next day for "Aviation Classics" magazine. They wanted some pictures of our rare Harpoon doing its stuff. A photographer had been sent, a swift chase plane had been reserved, and takeoff was set for the following morning.

As is always the case, every seat available was already spoken for. Despite its size, and not counting the pilots and flight engineer, there are only five seats aboard our plane. She was designed as a combat aircraft, not a passenger plane. Even among the members of our organization, a flight is a rare treat. To be honest about the matter, at a fuel consumption rate of nearly two hundred gallons an hour we can't afford much joyriding. At air shows, our fuel and other expenses are paid for by the promoters of the show so every time we lift off five lucky people get to take a "free" ride. These seats are always reserved well in advance, usually for our own people who've spend countless hours of hard work and a lot of their own money to "keep 'em flying." It's a privilege we all look forward to every summer.

Our crew looked at the ancient Navy pilot standing beside the Harpoon. He constantly touched the aircraft as if

to assure himself that it was really there and not just a dream. There was a haunted look about him, as if he were surrounded by the ghosts of his former comrades. He had survived the Zeros, but there would be no escape from the disease that now had a grip on him. The old veteran was fighting his last battle even as they watched...

"He can have my seat," one of our guys said softly.

"Naw. You haven't gone up for a while. Let him take mine."

Soon there was a near fight among all five over who would give up their seat. It was a point of honor. Besides, people who fly and maintain old warbirds are slightly crazy anyway.

The argument was settled and, beaming delightedly, the whole crew marched over to the man and his sons. They told him about the photo run that was scheduled for the next day and that we just, ah, happened to have a spare seat available. Would he like to ride along on the flight?

The question stunned him. "Are you serious?" He looked from man to man, and their faces answered for them. They were all grinning like idiots and nodding their heads in encouragement.

The aged Harpoon pilot blinked a few times and cleared his throat. Then, with his sons standing beside him, he lifted his chin and answered. "Yes," he said. "I'd love to go. Thanks...thank you very much."

His sons didn't comment on our crew's invitation. For some reason they were suddenly having trouble with their voices. But the way they looked at our people spoke volumes on the subject of heartfelt gratitude. The men from

Massachusetts stood with the men from Indiana on an airfield in New York state, and the axiom of a brotherhood among airmen demonstrated its truth once more.

The old aviator arrived at dawn the next day. Only a couple of our people were up and at the aircraft at that time, groggily sipping coffee and still yawning. One of our guys commented that the veteran pilot looked surprisingly wide awake for that early hour. He replied that most of his combat missions had begun at dawn or even earlier. Besides, he admitted sheepishly, he had been unable to sleep the whole night. *"I felt like a kid waiting for Christmas morning,"* he grinned.

Someone reached into a tool box and produced a thermos of coffee. The old fellow accepted a cup and sat a package down on the work bench. *"I thought some of you might be interested in this."* He carefully unwrapped a tattered and patched photo album.

*"My boys talked me into bringing it from home when we came up here. I'm glad I have it with me now."* He opened the cover.

Our crewmen took one glance inside and snapped completely awake, nearly choking on their coffee. They stared at the book, then at each other.

The album was a gold mine. The then-young Navy pilot had taken dozens of black and white photos of his aircraft, both inside and out. Equally important, he'd taken many close-ups of the mechanics at work on his forward island bases. We had only been able to guess at where some of the equipment was mounted in the interior of our plane, and how some of the field-expedient repairs had been accomplished under combat conditions. This book could allow us to rebuild and refurbish our

plane to her exact wartime appearance, the goal of all military aircraft restorers. We have a thick manual for the bird, but it's no longer possible to do everything "by the book." Lockheed hasn't made parts for this aircraft for over fifty years. We knew that Navy and Marine mechanics had accomplished wonders with baling wire, tin cans, and friction tape: the big question was how? Which backyard repairs could we get away with and which ones could cause a crash? What do you do when a control cable snaps at 12,000 feet or the port engine starts blowing oil or the landing gear jams halfway down?

Our crewmen suddenly realized that the fellow sipping coffee and looking calmly back at them was not merely an old man suffering from Hodgkin's disease. He was also a retired United States Navy officer, a combat experienced aviator, and a government-trained expert on Lockheed PV-2 Harpoons. A few hours earlier, they felt as if he needed them. Now it dawned on our crew that they needed him—badly—and the knowledge he had carried for nearly half a century.

*"Sir, when the rest of our people get here, would you consider giving us a, uh, briefing?"*

He sat his cup down and smiled. *"Be glad to."*

Later that morning they were assembled around the elderly pilot, hanging on his every word. His constant touching and staring at the aircraft had not been the ghostly reminiscences of days gone by, but a careful and professional examination. Instinctively, he'd been giving our Harpoon a pre-flight inspection. He'd been quietly "grading" us on our reconditioning, maintenance, and craftsmanship. He'd noted where we

had done well—and where there was need for improvement. Our crew jotted down page after page of memos on everything from how the navigator's table folded up to which hydraulic lines to inspect frequently. To no one's surprise, he said that some portions of the manual were nonsense, then went on to tell us how to do things the right way.

He gave our pilots detailed information on how to crash-land the plane in the event of total power failure. Harpoons are not noted for crash survivability, something we all keep in the back of our minds. His crew in the Pacific had been lucky to have him at the controls. He ran out of fuel once and had to belly in on a beach. The plane was a total loss, but the young Navy flyer saved his crew. Someday—God forbid—we may have to try it ourselves.

The veteran continued on for some time without any apparent fatigue or effects from his illness. Presently a civilian aircraft noisily taxied up to the Harpoon and braked to a halt. Two men clambered out of the plane, the photographer and his pilot. They exchanged information with our pilots on how the photo flight was to be handled, shook hands, and hopped back in their plane. The Cessna turned and began to taxi back out to the runway.

Flight line workers began to circle the Harpoon, warning spectators away from our bomber and clearing a path for it to roll out from the parking area. Our pilots and engineer climbed up into the cockpit and began their pre-flight checklist. Two of our people, one at each engine, stood guard outside with fire extinguishers while four more eagerly entered the plane.

For the first and only time in their lives, the old man's sons watched him

climb into a PV-2 Harpoon. Just inside the hatch, he turned and looked at his boys for a long moment. Something seemed to pass between them for an instant, then he gave them a "thumbs up" and shut the door.

He never thought that he'd see another of "his" planes and certainly never dreamed he'd fly in one again, if even only as a passenger, but fate had reserved him one more takeoff, just one more time.

The last flight was under way

Our pilot shouted out his window. "Clear!" The ground crewmen stood by with the fire extinguishers, just in case. The number one starter motor engaged the flywheel, causing that eerie high-pitched whine that quickens the blood of anyone who ever heard it. Then the pistons fired, coughed, and fired again, blowing out rapid puffs of smoke as the Hamilton-Standard prop began to spin. The engine smoothed and revved to a high idle, pounding out a sound like nearby thunder. Number two engine whined, backfired, and blew out a great cloud of white smoke. Its prop remained motionless. Doubtless cursing under his breath, the pilot initiated a restart while the ground crew eyed the engine suspiciously, extinguishers at the ready.

The flywheel built up speed again, the switch was thrown, and this time the mighty Pratt & Whitney radial roared into life, fairly bellowing strength and defiance. The whole aircraft shook visibly as the great 2,000 horsepower engines warmed up. The brakes strained to hold the ship in place while the preflight was completed, then they were gradually released and the bomber started to roll.

As always, she gained speed rapidly. Halfway down the strip, the barn-door sized tail lifted and the plane seemed to balance on her main gear. Then, with the awesome sound of a warbird—the Sound of Freedom—the Harpoon thundered into the sky.

They circled the field once, gaining altitude. The chase plane fell into formation with them, the photographer taking advantage of a beautiful cloudless day. The Harpoon banked gracefully, easing back over the airfield. Together the two aircraft made repeated passes giving the cameraman every shot he could wish for. When the photo run was over, both planes slowed and dropped into a landing glide path, flaps and gear down. The smaller plane led the way, touching down well ahead of the big blue Navy patrol bomber.

It was the moment our crew had been waiting for. The airspace was now clear.

The Harpoon's gear went back up and the engines throttled forward. She picked up speed, streaked over the runway at a breathtaking fifteen feet, and rocketed back up in a tight climbing turn.

One of our ground crew grinned at the old pilot's sons. "*I think your dad is in for a little treat.*" The Harpoon was now going in excess of two hundred fifty knots. The bomber stood on one wing, whirled around in a high-stress turn, and dove like a falcon—straight towards the field. Her engines were audible for miles, and the vast crowd of spectators looked up as one. "*What the hell are they up to?*" Hot dogs and soft drinks were dropped by the score as people snatched for their cameras. The plane shrieked over the flight line, a blue streak above the Mustangs and the Liberators

and that thrice-damned Zero. In the wink of an eye they blew past the throng of spectators as babies cried, women covered their ears, and children howled with delight. The slipstream sent hats, programs, and paper cups flying in every direction.

The plane rocked back on its tail and flew into the sun. The crowd squinted and tried to follow it. Eventually even the sound of the engines grew faint. The plane was gone—but to where? A few minutes passed, then someone shouted, "*There! To the north!*"

They'd gone for altitude, and were now diving back in again. But this time something was different. The plane was flying strangely. A teenager asked his father, "*Are they in trouble?*"

The Harpoon was dodging rapidly left and right and flinging itself up and down in the dive. Experienced combat pilots—and there are many at air shows—knew at first glance what the Navy bomber was doing. "*Jinking*" is how pilots are trained to avoid ground fire in combat. The plane was coming in under evasive action and gaining speed at an alarming rate. Two hundred sixty knots, two seventy, two ninety...Then the aircraft straightened and flew with determined precision, seeming to aim itself at a point just opposite from the crowd on the other side of the runway.

The bomb bay doors snapped open and half dozen dark oblong shapes spilled out.

Spectators gasped as the objects tumbled and fell, whistling loudly as they came. The missiles hit the field and exploded into a spectacular red and green spray. The crowd sent up a mighty cheer as they realized what they'd

seen, and the sons of our passenger laughed and cheered loudest of all.

Genessee, New York had just been bombed by a planeload of Indiana watermelons.

After pulling up from its surprise "*bomb run*," the Harpoon slowed to cruise speed, circled, and came back for a final pass before landing. She swooped in low and slow, one wing tipped in salute to the crowd while cameras clicked and video recorders whirred. Then the great flaps lowered, the gear came down, and the tires screeched on contact with the tarmac. The bomber taxied to the parking apron, turned, and rolled slowly to her assigned area.

Flight line workers held back the crowds who surged in around her, waving, applauding, and holding children on the shoulders. The old aviator's sons stood with our ground crew, shielding their eyes from a final wind blast as the port brake was locked, the starboard engine revved, and the plan ground-looped perfectly into exactly the same spot she had left. The engines were cut, number two giving its characteristic double backfire, and the props clattered to a halt. The elevator surfaces on the huge tail lowered and thumped softly down to their rest positions. The flight was over, the bomber now silent.

Our crew formed a semicircle around the hatch, the veteran's sons standing expectantly in the front. For a long moment the hatch remained closed. Then the handle rotated, the door swung slowly open, and a figure appeared at the top of the access ladder. The sons looked up solemnly, as if seeing their father for the first time. He paused there, returning their gaze. Then the emotion became too great for even him

to control, and his loving, joyous smile became framed by streams of tears that rolled down both cheeks. He hopped down the short ladder and into the arms of his boys. Our crew surrounded them as they gripped each other, laughing and weeping, in an impassioned, back slapping, three-way hug.

The scene was best described to this writer by one of our female crew members.

*"Oh, you should have seen it! These macho guys of ours in the plane came out and they were all crying. They were embarrassed by it, but they had to keep wiping their eyes. The old man was the happiest person I've ever seen in my life. He kept on laughing and crying at the same time and asking his boys if they saw the bomb run. They were nodding and hugging him. The ground crew was sniffing and snorting and looking at everything except each other. I finally gave up myself and said 'What the hell?' So I started crying too."*

The aviator told everyone within earshot how happy he was to have been with us, even if only for a short while. Another of our ladies appeared at his side and asked if he would like to join our organization. Before she could even finish the question he exclaimed, "Yes!" She pulled an application out from behind her back and, grinning, handed the old fellow a pen. He quickly read the document and signed it on the offered back of our flight engineer. After handing the paper back, he reached inside jacket. "*I have my checkbook with me. I can pay my first annual dues right now and...*"

There was a cry of outrage and our "*recruiting officer*" steadfastly refused to take a cent. She looked around threateningly at the rest of the team and called for a forum. By immediate and unanimous voice vote, the veteran was made a life member of our crew on the spot, all dues waived forever.

Addresses and phone numbers were exchanged. The retired naval officer was told that he could expect our first organizational newsletter within a week and that we'd stay in touch by mail, keeping him abreast of developments with the plane. He replied that he had many photographs and notes pertaining to PV-2 Harpoons that he'd send us, as well as personal observations and letters answering any questions we might have in the future.

After some time, they had to leave for the long drive back to Massachusetts. Our men shook his firm hand for the last time, our wives and girlfriends each gave him a kiss, and it was time to leave. One of the sons kept repeating to our crew, *"You don't know. You don't know what this has done for Dad. This has brought him back. He's his old self again. You just don't know..."*

Well, maybe we don't. But we have a pretty good idea. We know what he did for us.

Whatever else life may have in store for him the veteran will always know that one of his planes is still flying, crewed by a new generation. And we will know that we have a friend, our senior member, who we can turn to when the skies grow dark and we need advice.

Sometimes people ask me why I love air shows.

I never know what to tell them.

"Grapevine Talking"

For those of you that haven't taken the opportunity, experience breakfast with the chapter every Saturday morning at 8:00 AM at Shari's in Livermore. If you haven't been to the chapter [website](#) lately, take the opportunity to stop by and view the excellent work by Brad Olsen.



Cool video's found on the internet.

[The Grand Canyon flyover.](#)

[Don't know if she flies, but the arrow does.](#)

[Some passengers like to sit a little closer to the front.](#)

[Proof that your newsletter editor is a straight shooter.](#)

**What is it? From last month**  
**Sponsored by:**



Last month John identified this and my saved link no longer works. Guess I have to resort to local saves.

You too can win if you donate a winning photo. Send to your chapter editor. You will be notified prior to the newsletter being published if your photo has been selected and will then be eligible for the prize if no one correctly identifies it via email prior to the chapter meeting.



**Thanks to those that called Aircraft Spruce and mentioned this contest in the newsletter as they have agreed to continue their sponsorship.**

**Prizes are available thanks to them. Please give them a call with your next order and tell them how much you appreciate their generous donation to our monthly newsletter.**

Submit your answer to the newsletter editor to be eligible for a prize to be awarded at the regular chapter meeting. **You must be present to win.**

Winning entries will be decided by the email that is received with the earliest time stamp and the correct naming of the make/model of the pictured airplane.

Winners that correctly identified the winning make/model that do NOT attend the meeting will forfeit the prize to the next available submission.

The correct, first answer that attends the monthly meeting will be declared the winner. You will be notified of the winning entry at the monthly meeting. The winning entry that DOES attend the meeting will receive his/her prize at that time.

What is it?  
Sponsored by:



“Call me when you get on the ground” is generally not what you want to hear in your headset. Diarrhea or root can work, either one is preferable.



16610 Von Sosten Road  
Tracy, CA 95304  
[jeffrylite@comcast.net](mailto:jeffrylite@comcast.net) or  
[President@eaa663.org](mailto:President@eaa663.org)