

EAA Mount Rainier Chapter 326 Newsletter

Thun Field – October 2008

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Meeting Notice

**Tuesday, October 14th, 7 PM
CAP Building, Thun Field**

Program: TBD

Refreshments: Kevin Behrent

Evening program - Axsys air – RV builders learning facility.
Glenn Howe & Dennis Jones

They run a company to help new builders learn the tools and techniques of how to build an RV. Their goal is to teach, not build. They are based at Frontier airpark up north near Arlington.

Basic building class – build an airfoil section part; a 2 day class.
Fiberglass class – 2 day class to learn the basic of RV fiberglass.
RV empennage class – bring your tail kit to the class – 1 week.
RV10 empennage class – longer class to build as it's larger.
TBD – RV12 class coming soon.

Check out all the details at www.axsysair.com

From the Secretary

EAA Chapter 326 September meeting

Joe Andre called the meeting to order, as our fearless leader was AWOL.

Visitors: Ray Vinup: Rans S19 lightspot.
Michael Conner: Flying again.
Steve Dickinson: Interested in starting RV9A.

Notams – remember to check them. Airfield construction, lighting, and obstacles at PLU.

Jackets – Kevin has investigated getting a new batch of jackets made up. The pricing is around \$55 if we can get 12 or more. Another option is a pullover jacket style for about \$17. T-shirts are also an option. If you are interested contact Kevin or Jeff at the meeting.

Elections – Starting in October we will be holding nominations for elections.

Joe Hoskins – had an RV6 accident recently at PLU. Inbound on the 45 towards 16, his engine stopped. He made a shallow 30deg bank towards a large open field with grass and scotch broom. Nearing 60mph and getting low, he lined up on the field. As soon as it touched the nose dug in and flipped over. Joe kicked out the plexi on the passenger side and was able to get out and free of the airplane. FAA & a mechanic were dispatched to investigate the probable cause; after pulling and poking they never found anything related to the engine stoppage. The plane had about 700 hours on it.

John Brick - 51% rule in homebuilds – EAA needs us to provide comment feedback to the FAA about the new proposed changes to the 51% rule. This is a serious change and will make it harder for us to certify kitbuilt aircraft so it's worth your time to give some feedback. eaa.org/news/2008/2008-09-04_proposal.asp

Treasurer Report - \$5094.10.

Chapter Nominations

The two-year term of Chapter leaders is coming to a close at the end of the year. We will be seeking / confirming nominations at this meeting and then voting at the November meeting.

Feel free to nominate yourself or anyone else. Make sure the person you nominate is a willing volunteer for the job.

The positions to be filled are on the cover of this newsletter. Only the first four require voting by the membership, but all are necessary and all are open. Note that technical counselors and flight advisors require EAA HQ qualification and appointment.

A long vacant position of "Custodian" is needed to keep track of Chapter property, i.e. tables, chairs, library, and miscellaneous stuff that is rather randomly distributed at present.

Annual Membership Dues for 2007

Dues collection for 2009 begins now. The EAA deadline for Chapter renewal is December 15th and Jeff has to submit our new roster with the renewal paperwork. So, **\$15 please**. Do your best to pay up this month. Makes checks payable to EAA Chapter 326. An envelope is included with this newsletter. It is addressed to our Treasurer, Norman Pauk. Those who don't get the hard copy newsletter should mail their dues to Norm.

We are not authorized to collect dues from anyone that is not an EAA member. Chapter liability insurance is one of the factors in that. So we need your **EAA number and expiration date**. All chapters are required to forward their rosters to EAA with that info.

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John Thun Buys Puyallup Airstrip

In April 1949, John Thun (1917-2006) buys a rock-strewn airstrip and the surrounding 350 acres of land six miles south of Puyallup. Thun lengthens and paves the strip and opens a private airport, staffed mostly by his family. He will sell the property to developers in 1966 and in 1979 Pierce County will buy the facility. In 2007, the airport operates under the county's Public Works and Utilities Department and is overseen by Thun Field Advisory Commission, made up of airport and neighbor representatives. It is home to nearly 250 recreational and business aircraft, with about 89,000 takeoffs and landings a year. Its mostly aviation-related businesses employ nearly 300 people and the airport generates about \$21 million a year.

The Dream of Flying

John Thun was 32 when he bought the unpaved airstrip six miles south of Puyallup in 1949. Private developers had built the airstrip in 1944, similar to others in the region, as an auxiliary training field for the U.S. Army, but were unable to develop it further after World War II.

Thun was born in Underwood, Washington, a small town on the Columbia River, and he had been a machinist, had served in the U.S. Army, and had worked in Alaska. "He bought the airport when he had just learned to fly, his daughter, Diny Robinson said. "He thought it would also be a good place to raise chickens, but he never got around to it. He got so interested in flying, he just did that."

Thun lengthened to strip to 5,400 feet, paved it, and opened it as a private airport. "By 1957, the Thuns (John, his wife, Vera, or "Babe," and six children) who lived in the building where they maintained a coffee shop, had several buildings and 45 aircraft tied down at any one time, 15 with hanger space." As soon as the children were old enough, they were working at the field or in its coffee shop. Part of the acreage was used as an archery range and the Boy Scouts maintained a couple of camp sites.

Thun gave flying lessons, flew scenic charters around nearby Mount Rainier, and in winter sold Christmas trees off the property. Drag races were held until a dedicated drag strip could be built and auto enthusiasts of various stripes continue to gravitate to the field.

"Bigger than Life"

Dave Sclair, a writer for *General Aviation News*, called Thun "bigger than life," and Bruce Thun, a son and operations manager at Thun Field agrees. "He was a character, yeah. He took over the airport and made it work. He wasn't afraid to take risks."

For the kids, said Bruce Thun, "It was an interesting way to grow up." All of the children learned to fly but only Bruce remained in the business. He is Thun Field's Airport Operations Manager.

Business had been good, but in 1966, after a 17-year run, Thun sold the airport to a group of investors who planned an industrial park at the site. However the park they envisioned did not materialize, and in 1979 Pierce County bought the property with federal and state help. John Thun died on August 31, 2006, at age 89.

This file made possible by: Washington State Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation.

When Glass Cockpits Go Black

The NTSB announced massive display failures on Airbus aircraft. There were 49 failures on Airbus 319 and 320 aircraft, including seven incidents in which all six screens failed simultaneously. Didn't think that was possible? Neither did the manufacturer, the FAA, or the NTSB. As light GA manufacturers rush into glass cockpits, is it unseemly to ask what assurance we have that there will not be a catastrophic failure or at least a significant failure in our less robust systems? AOPA.

Wiley Post

Unless you're a float plane flyer, Will Rogers Wiley Post Mem SPB may not ring a bell. It's at the north end of Renton Muni. It was the launch base for the fateful journey in 1935.

Wiley Hardeman Post (November 22, 1898 – August 15, 1935) was the first pilot to fly solo around the world. Also known for his work in high altitude flying, Post helped develop one of the first pressure suits. His plywood monocoque aircraft, the *Winnie Mae* is on display at the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center adjacent to Dulles International Airport in Chantilly, Virginia, and his pressure suit is being prepared for display at the same location. On August 15, 1935, Post and American humorist Will Rogers were killed when Post's plane crashed on takeoff from a lagoon near Point Barrow, in Alaska.

Early flying career

Post was born in Grand Saline, Texas (Van Zandt County), but his family moved to Oklahoma when he was five. His aviation career began at age 26 as a parachutist for a flying circus, *Burrell Tibbs and His Texas Topnotch Fliers*, and he became well known on the barnstorming circuit. On 1 October 1926, an oil field accident cost him his left eye, but he used the settlement money to buy his first aircraft. Around this time, he met fellow Oklahoman Will Rogers when he flew Rogers to a rodeo, and the two eventually became close friends. Post was the personal pilot of wealthy Oklahoma oilmen Powell Briscoe and F.C. Hall in 1930 when Hall bought a high-wing, single-engine Lockheed Vega, one of the most famous record-breaking planes of the early 1930s. The oilman nicknamed the plane *Winnie Mae*, after his daughter, and Post achieved his first national prominence in it by winning the National Air Race Derby, from Los Angeles to Chicago. The plane's fuselage was inscribed, "Los Angeles to Chicago 9 hrs. 9 min. 4 sec. Aug. 27, 1930".

Around the world With Harold Gatty

Like many pilots at the time, Post disliked the fact that the speed record for flying around the world was not held by a fixed-

wing aircraft, but by the *Graf Zeppelin*, piloted by Hugo Eckener in 1929 with a time of 21 days. On June 23, 1931, Post and his navigator, Harold Gatty, left Roosevelt Field on Long Island, New York in the *Winnie Mae* with a flight plan that would take them around the world, making fourteen stops along the way in Newfoundland, England, Germany, the Soviet Union, Alaska, Alberta, Canada and Cleveland, Ohio before returning to Roosevelt Field. They arrived back on July 1 after traveling 15,474 miles in the record time of 8 days and 15 hours and 51 minutes. The reception they received rivaled Lindbergh's everywhere they went. They had lunch at the White House on July 6, rode in a ticker-tape parade the next day in New York City, and were honored at a banquet given by the Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce of America at the Hotel Astor. After the flight, Post acquired the *Winnie Mae* from F.C. Hall, and he and Gatty published an account of their journey titled, *Around the World in Eight Days*, with an introduction by Will Rogers.

Around the world solo. A first.

After the record-setting flight, Post wanted to open his own aeronautical school, but could not raise enough financial support because of doubts many had about his rural background and limited formal education. Motivated by his detractors, Post decided to attempt a solo flight around the world and to break his previous speed record. Over the next year, Post improved his aircraft by installing an autopilot device and a radio compass that were in their final stages of development by the Sperry Gyroscope Company and the United States Army. In 1933, he repeated his flight around the world, this time using the auto-pilot and compass in place of his navigator and becoming the first to accomplish the feat alone. 50,000 people greeted him on his return to Brooklyn's Floyd Bennett Field on July 22 after 7 days, 19 hours -- 21 hours less than his previous record, and he was given a second ticker-tape parade in New York.

First pressure suit

In 1934, with financial support from Frank Phillips of the Phillips Petroleum Company, Post began exploring the limits of high-altitude, long-distance flight. The *Winnie Mae's* cabin could not be pressurized so he worked with Russell S. Colley of the B.F. Goodrich Company to develop what became the world's first practical pressure suit. The body of the suit had three layers: long underwear, an inner black rubber air pressure bladder, and an outer suit made of rubberised parachute fabric. The outer suit was glued to a frame with arm and leg joints that allowed him to operate the flight controls and to walk to and from the aircraft. Attached to the frame were pigskin gloves, rubber boots, and an aluminium and plastic diver's helmet. The helmet had a removable faceplate that could be sealed at a height of 17,000 feet, and could accommodate earphones and a throat microphone. In the first flight using the suit on September 5, 1934, Post reached an altitude of 40,000 feet above Chicago. Eventually flying as high as 50,000 feet, Post discovered the jet stream and made the first major practical advances in pressurized flight. The suit is currently being prepared for display at the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center.

Attempted high altitude non-stop transcontinental flights

Between February 22 and June 15, 1935, Post made four unsuccessful attempts to complete the first high altitude non-stop flight from Los Angeles to New York all of which failed for various mechanical reasons. The first attempt on February 22 ended just 57.5 miles East of Los Angeles at Muroc, CA. This was followed by attempts on March 15 (Cleveland, OH; 2,035 miles), April 14 (Lafayette, IN; 1,760 miles), and June 15 (Wichita, KS; 1,188 miles). As the attempts were also meant to be the "First Air Mail Stratosphere Flight" over U.S. Air Mail Route #2 (AM-2) from Los Angeles to New York, Post also carried a quantity of cacheted covers sponsored by Transcontinental & Western Air, Inc on all four flights. When Post was killed on August 15, 1935, thus ending the possibility of any more attempts to complete the AM-2 stratosphere flight, the covers were finally cancelled in Los Angeles on August 20, 1935, and forwarded to their addressees.

Final flight

In 1935 Post became interested in surveying a mail-and-passenger air route from the West Coast of the United States to Russia. Short on cash, he built a plane using parts salvaged from two different aircraft: The fuselage of an airworthy Lockheed Orion and the wing of a wrecked experimental Lockheed Explorer. The Explorer wing was six feet longer in span than the Orion's original wing, an advantage which extended the hybrid aircraft's range. As the Explorer wing did not have retractable landing gear, it also lent itself to the fitting of floats for landing in the lakes of Alaska and Siberia. Post's friend Will Rogers visited him often at the airport in Burbank, California while he was building the aircraft, and asked Post to fly him through Alaska in search of new material for his newspaper column. When the floats Post had ordered did not arrive at Seattle in time, he used a set that was designed for a larger plane, making the already nose-heavy hybrid aircraft still more nose-heavy. (One source has stated that the floats were the correct type for the aircraft.)

After making a test flight in July, Post and Rogers left Seattle in the plane in early August. While Post piloted the plane, Rogers wrote his columns on his typewriter. On August 15 they left Fairbanks, Alaska for Point Barrow. They were a few miles from Point Barrow when they became uncertain of their position in bad weather and landed in a lagoon to ask directions. The engine failed on take off, at low altitude, and the aircraft, uncontrollably nose-heavy at low speed, plunged into the lagoon, shearing off the right wing and ending inverted in the shallow water of the lagoon. Both men died instantly.

Memorials and awards

Wiley Post received the Distinguished Flying Cross (1932), the Gold Medal of Belgium (1934), and the International Harmon Trophy (1934). He was enshrined in the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 1969. In 1979, the United States Postal Service honored him with two airmail stamps (C95 and C96).

From Wikipedia

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