

EAA Mount Rainier Chapter 326 Newsletter

Thun Field - September 2006

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Meeting Notice

Tuesday, September 12, 7 PM
CAP Building, Thun Field

Program: "ONE SIX RIGHT" This is a great movie about the history of Van Nuys airport. Very well done. Worth seeing again if you already have.

Refreshments: Lance Newman

Oshkosh RV Community

Bob Collins

Bob Collins Hosts the RV Builder's BBQ in Camp Scholler each year. This is a Wednesday evening affair that is becoming a big deal...400 people this year and growing. Here are Bob's thoughts on the concept of community.

Before I begin this entry -- well, too late, I've already begun it -- I have to make a few disclaimers. First, I'm a real fanatic about studying how people relate and interact. If I hadn't gone into journalism, I'd probably have become an anthropologist of some sort.

In my regular job, which involves a lot of political coverage, I tend to focus not on what blowhard politicians say, but about how people involved in the political process relate to the process and actually change the process -- occasionally for the better, but usually not.

EAA at Oshkosh provides a similar opportunity to re-examine how about a million people relate, what they value, and how they change aviation, occasionally for the better, but sometimes not.

With AirVenture winding down, the various bulletin boards will soon be filled with the annual "EAA is too commercial/no it's not" thread. And it's true that AirVenture -- with EAA's blessing and prodding -- is commercial. Just about everyone has their hands out here and you can always find a friend if you have a personal relationship with anyone named Hamilton, Jackson, and Franklin.

But over the last day or so, I've tried to put to words why the RV BBQ on Wednesday night has such a different feel, and has become so popular in the context of this larger question of homebuilding roots and it was only at Van's annual dinner held last night at the Nature Center, that I began to sort it out.

Don't get me wrong, Van's puts out a terrific product and provides excellent support. They're in the business of selling airplanes and that's why they're here. From all appearances, they're nice people. On the other side of the coin, however, there is a builder who wants to have a good plane and great support but

also soon finds him or herself swept into a community of diverse individuals and a single bond that, as the community begins to flourish, becomes a series of bonds that may have only a peripheral connection to an airplane.

The folks at Van's don't understand that community and those bonds. Last night, Van proudly pointed out, that he's been coming to AirVenture since the days at Rockford. He should be proud of that. For most of that time though, he's been actually coming to a small strip of blacktop to stand near a tent and sell some airplanes. He really hasn't been part of AirVenture -- in a community sense -- for a long time. He hasn't been hanging out with builders at barbecues, or strolling Camp Scholler on a warm night and popping in to sit a spell with someone he didn't know, to start talking about an airplane and end up talking about family, for example.

That's what Oshkosh REALLY is because that's the very definition of a community and while we worry that EAA has gotten away from that and, in essence, gotten away from us, complaining about it isn't going to change anything. It's actually been happening for so long, that it's become instinct. But in a way, that's OK. The community doesn't belong to them, it belongs to those who actually *want* to be a part of it.

It was a fine dinner with very good food and the chance to socialize just a bit although a tent stacked with picnic tables affords little opportunity to mingle. And most of the evening is actually spent listening to Tom Green give some company background and recognize a few folks who help the company sell their planes. Then there's a giveaway in which stuff donated by some businesses get a mention and a few builders get a free gift. It's a nice night.

But since I was in a "sort out this community thing" mode, I had put my anthropology hat on to see how Van's folks related to the community that we -- not they -- created, to see if maybe they want to be part of that. They don't. There were about 200 people there and all the Van's folks sat at a picnic table, together. If you run a business and you've put these sorts of things on, you know this is a huge no-no at events like this. Think about it, you've come all this way to sell some planes, you have a dinner for your customers, and then you and your employees sit with the same people they sit with every day. What they should do is get out and mingle. Sure, they've already sold their airplanes to you, but it's just good business sense to say "thank you" more than after that moment when the customer hands you a check.

It's a good way to stay "in touch" with homebuilding's roots and if you don't, you become like a politician who hasn't got a clue what a gallon of milk sells for, and then tries to legislate as if he does. Van spoke for a few minutes and noted there are 550 RVs here, and then chewed us out in a good-natured sort of way for wanting flush rivets on the RV-12. OK, maybe we deserve that, but the words that I would've liked to have heard at some point were any combination of "it's good to see you, again," "how have you been," and "thanks for being one of our customers."

Those are the underpinnings of bonding, that lead to a true community.

Folks who've been to Oshkosh know, however, that there's a hierarchy here. Tom Poberezny is interested in -- not necessarily in this order -- the Ford Motor Company, John Deere, and anyone else who is (a) listed on the NYSE and (b) has got a wad of cash to give to him. Fine, I get that. Good for him. But Tom Poberezny isn't really part of the homebuilt community either and asking him to change is like asking a newborn not to cry. I think Poberezny is a nice guy and having different priorities is not necessarily wrong and perhaps we've been unreasonable expecting him to understand what the homebuilt community is.

The best we can do is understand why EAA is what it is and not what it was and move on. On a smaller scale, perhaps the best we can do is understand Van's in this regard too. They sell airplanes. Period. Anything else that springs up from that isn't them, it's us.

The other part of last night that was telling was when Tom Greene was thanking his supporters and giving out prizes. First, he called a shoutout to Doug Reeves, who -- and let's be perfectly clear here -- has done a lot for the RV community. He may understand better than anyone the importance of "community." A few minutes later, he was giving away a t-shirt from Rivetbangers.com. It's another online forum of RV builders. He never heard of it and actually had a slight lilt of disdain -- well, we know how Van's feels about the Internet anyway -- for it. So there it was. Green was Poberezny. Doug Reeves -- in the Van's hierarchy -- was Ford Motor Company, and Rivetbangers.com was a guy sitting on a lawn chair in front of a pop-up in Camp Scholler. That's not a community, at least not in the sense that I've discussed before.

And finally, the third element of my "anthropological" research were the builders I talked to last night who told me they stopped by the Van's tent to see if they knew where the Wednesday night BBQ was. Every person I talked to who did that said the same thing. They were told "I don't know anything about it," and one person said Tom Greene said he didn't think it was very well publicized so he didn't have much information about it.

OK, let's think about that one for a second. The BBQ was posted on Van's own Web site, it occupied almost half of one full page in the last RVator that Van's publicizes. It was on Doug Reeves' site, it was on the Yahoogroups site, it was on Rivetbangers, it was on the RV-List, and it was in the RV Builder's Hotline, it was on the AirVenture Web site, and it was in not one, not two, but three separate e-mails to Van's inviting them to stop by, and confirmed by at least one employee who said he'd be sure to pass it along.

If you work for Van's and you have any interest at all in being part of a community, it was hard for the BBQ to escape their notice, but it did. Not wrong, just telling.

The one thing I notice in my "research" over the years, is people want -- desperately want -- a true sense of community. And that involves knowing someone as an acquaintance, and then a friend, and having no other vested interest other than that friendship.

I referred to the folks who were at the BBQ the other night as my "family." And in many ways -- many ways -- they are.

When I come to Oshkosh, I come to spend time with my family. Everything else comes second. Family is funny like that.

And if you came to Oshkosh and you didn't stroll through Camp Scholler at some point and stop at a campsite -- anybody's camp site -- and meet a new friend, brother, you didn't really go to Oshkosh and you weren't really at AirVenture.

Bob Collins

First Cross Country

John & Pat Brick

RV-4

Pat had only flown twice in the RV, the longest was to Friday Harbor. We had planned to do something longer with an overnight stay as sort of a shakedown cruise in preparation but never got around to it. Now we were off to Green Bay and Saint Louis without a good idea of how many hours we could comfortably ride, how warm to dress, food to take aboard, etc.

My RV holds 53 gallons so it would be easy to get to GRB with one stop for fuel, weather permitting. But that means four-hour legs, so we opted for an overnight stay along the route with three hops.

Day 1: IFR departure. It was 1200 overcast here but we were on top at 6000. We cruised at 11,000' and were in clear skies past Moses Lake. We stopped at Helena to check out all the good things we heard about Beck's U-Pump. They have a nice lounge with TV, computer, refridge, coffee if you make it, a small bedroom with two bunk beds, shower across the hall, courtesy car, and the cheapest gas of the whole trip, \$3.79.

That flight was only 2.5 hours and it was still early, so we would continue. We had planned to RON in Jamestown, SD but there was severe wx with tornadoes all across SD and MN so we elected to go to Miles City in eastern Montana. That was a short flight, 1.6 hours, and a good thing because it was very bumpy most of the way.

Miles City treated us nice...put our aircraft in the hangar and gave us their courtesy car. The Ford LTD was lacking a few things, gas gauge, seat belts, paint...but it ran good. It had two doors that swept half the parking lot. They said it was full of gas and not to fill it up. Okay.

At the Best Western, the gal checking us in said, "I see you're driving the airport bomber." Our credentials as cheapskates were firmly established and she gave us every discount in the book. They also had one of those serve yourself free breakfasts with eggs, dumplings & gravy, cereal, juice, coffee. Ain't small towns great. If it wasn't for the Casino directly across the street, we'd have been under budget at that point.

Day 2: Miles City to Green Bay would have been a long stretch so we filed IFR to Alexandria, MN (AXN). 11k again between layers with widespread IFR enroute...the aftermath of yesterday's severe weather. AXN has nice facilities and a good place to stop.

Same deal to GRB, IFR at 11k with about the same kind of weather enroute but 1500 broken at Green Bay. My mother and sister would be waiting at the FBO (Titledown) at Austin-Straubel

airport. I asked the tower for a low approach so they could see the airplane in flight. High speed with sharp pull-up to downwind...very impressive no doubt, followed by my worst landing to date. Must have bounced 50 feet..

Titletown has a tie-down fee of \$7 per night but it is nice and friendly and I would stay there again.

Day 3: After three nights with my family we were off to Saint Louis to visit Pat's relatives. We filed IFR at 8000' to St. Louis Downtown (CPS). Rain and clouds most of the way but scattered at destination. I had flown through rain showers before without any noticeable leaks, but being in rain almost continuously for an hour changed that. Rain found its way in around the front canopy. I should have asked for higher altitude sooner because 12000' was mostly dry. Center and approach controls were good about vectoring us around heavy cells without even asking.

We tied down at Ideal Aviation. I had called ahead to make sure that would be okay and the gal asked if I wanted a rental car. "Sure" was the extent of negotiations. When we shut down, we weren't even out of the cockpit yet when a Jeep Grand Cherokee was parked alongside. As we drove away from the airport Pat looked at the paperwork and "had a cow." \$69 a day...are you nuts @\$%^&*@\$\$. "Jeez Pat it's only two days." @\$%^&*@\$\$. When we arrived at her cousins house, the first thing was the @\$%^&*@\$\$ car, my @\$%^&*@\$\$ husband. So Butch picked up the phone and in about 30 sec arranged a swap for one at half the price...same company, no hassle. Pays to have a big shot insurance broker as a host.

Lots of driving and lots of visiting the next day. Pat is happy.

Day 4: We knew we would be leaving around noon so we just planned one leg to Pierre, SD. But the forecast was for very strong surface winds at Pierre. We left in marginal VFR and followed the river past the arch and around the north side of St. Louis. Northwest of the city it gradually cleared as forecast and the headwinds were minimal.

I checked with flight watch and the winds at PIR were 24 gust to 32 at about 45 degree crosswind. That was too scary for me so we decided to land at Sioux City (SUX) and look at other options.

I didn't like the FBO at SUX because, plush as it was, they didn't have a flight planner on their computer. And very few little airplanes parked outside. Lucky for us, the surface winds were high for only about a 200-mile stretch and Miles City had 7 knots. So we launched again for MLS.

Our route took us right over Pierre so I listened in to the AWOS. Yup, the winds were still 24 G 32. I switched to their CTAF and was amazed to hear lots of traffic and no mention of the winds. Better pilots than me.

We arrived after hours and the "airport bomber" was gone. I told Pat to get us a taxi while I tied down the RV. I was still at the airplane when I saw a taxi pull up to the hangar. Actually he was delivering a package to the airport but no matter, we had a ride. As we were driving away, in comes the airport bomber. "Stop. Stop. Stop." "Is it available?" A nod came from the bomber. "We want out." Our taxi driver jumped out, opened the trunk and put our three bags on the pavement and drove off...without surprise or animosity as far as I could tell. Guess he had us pegged. He

had several other stops and it would have been a long ride to our hotel.

It's full of gas, right? This time the headshake was no. They have a little card tucked into a crack in the panel near the gas gauge. It gives the date and mileage of the last refueling. It was about 250 miles ago. Yikes...probably near empty and too expensive to fill up. Okay we'll chance it and pay the guy 10 bucks tomorrow. He didn't want the money but we insisted. Love this place..

That night the wind blew hard...tree branches were laying on the streets as we drove to the airport. I shouldn't have put the canopy cover on because when I removed it the canopy was all brown with dust. The airplane was tied down but the tail moved about 2 feet sideways. I have my own tie-downs but no chocks or flight control locks. Airport chocks won't fit under the wheel pants. Something to remember next time.

Day 5: Departed MLS early. Not a cloud in the sky, sun at our back, mild headwind, smooth air...heavenly. We stopped at Helena again for a break. Topped off with "cheap gas" and headed home. As we descended west of the cascades I asked Pat if she was ready for a victory roll. "What do I hang onto?" It was big and lazy and smooth...she liked it.

And that was the best thing about the whole trip...she liked it.

Distance:	3442nm
Hours:	21.7 hobbs
Fuel:	181 gal
Fuel Cost:	\$777
Tie-down Cost	\$28

Calendar

September 13-17, Reno Air Races

September 16, Ephrata, Fly-in. Breakfast 9-11.

September 23, Concrete, --Shortwing Piper Gathering Lunch and museum 10am-2pm

September 24, Walla Walla, Fifth Annual Fly-In/Open House featuring light sport a/c and young eagles.

October 6-8 East Wenatchee, 4th Annual Wings & Wheels Festival at Pangborn Memorial Airport.

October 26-29, Copperstate Fly-In, Casa Grande, AZ (KCGZ)

"With hurricanes, tornados, fires out of control, mud slides, flooding, severe thunderstorms tearing up the country from one end to another, and with the threat of bird flu and terrorist attacks," Are we sure this is a good time to take God out of the Pledge of Allegiance?" Jay Leno

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