

## Fly-In Season Almost Here

### April Meeting Set For

Monday the 10TH, at our hangar, 7:30PM, God's time.

We'll discuss our proposed insulated room project, plan a work day to make some building repairs and Jim Jacobson will have a taped presentation by Roger Lorenzen about Heath Aircraft. Refreshments will be provided.

**Last Month** Jim Coffman reported that the hangar insurance has been paid and membership forms sent to HQ. Hangar rent and dues have been collected to boost our bank account.. A rent paid sheet will be posted. Discussion about insulating a portion of the hangar and non

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Fly-In season is getting close and we have a lot of activity in our area to choose from. May 20 it's the Spring Fling at Wolverton Field and IFC at Elkhart. May 21 we have Benton Harbor, June 4 we're at Coldwater, flying over to Three Rivers and the Mishawaka Pilots Club on June 18, then check out the SAA Convention at Urbana IL on the 23RD & 24TH but you'd better be back in Niles on the 25TH for our annual Fly-In Breakfast. Getting hot in July. Try the Kentland IN Annual Hog Roast on the 15TH, then on to AirVenture 24TH thru the 30TH. Things start winding down after that. Holland MI and Newmans Air Park in Kazoo on the 19TH, Duck's Picnic on the 20TH. If you're flying alone, how about asking a member to co-pilot?

### The Prez Sez

By  
Jim  
Coffman



### The Prez Sez

By Jim Coffman

Believe it or not EAA AirVenture Oshkosh is on the far horizon. Over the last several years a group from our chapter has spent the week camping out and touring the show. AirVenture is not only a spectator event, but it can be a

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Above: Left, Bob Baird talks about his IFR Ground School to be held at Wings on Lathrup ST. at SBN on Monday nights. Center: Dick Haigh listens to a question during his talk on the EAA Tech Councilor program. Right: Tom Gahan tells us how his Mini-Max project is progressing.

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profit status. Bob Baird talked about his IFR Ground School, Dick Haigh talked about the qualifications, duties and responsibilities of a Tech Councilor. And Tom Gahan brought his instrument panel and talked about his Mini-Max project.

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time to build friendships with your fellow chapter members and maybe even the worldwide community of aviation enthusiasts. The event brings together everything from the fundamentals of aircraft construction; to booths full of ever imaginable aircraft and engines; to grass-strip ultralites; to the sophistication military airplanes.

Whether you're a chapter member returning regularly to the show or a first-timer looking for some fun and relaxation in aviation's Mecca, consider going with our chapter members to EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2006!

As the Oshkosh AirVenture website says, "Share the adventure of the world's most significant aviation". We would like all interested parties to come camp out with us.

Jim



### **A Tribute to Bill Wolverton by John Chapman**

**(Ed. Note: Since the 2006 fly-in season is almost here, I thought it would be appropriate to remember a missing man.)**

I met Bill Wolverton through another flying friend, Bill Ashley, in the summer of 1986. Bill Ashley built and flew an Avid Flyer and had crossed paths with Randy Rentz and Bill who were flying Randy's Avid Flyer to the local dawn patrols. I'm not sure of the circumstances, but I can almost bet that Bill

Wolverton was flying cross-countrys and exploring the runways all over southwest Michigan in the new and "hot" side-by-side two-seater. My first flight into Wolverton Field was on April 26, 1987 on a return trip from an Alamo Air Force cross-country to Ralph Banwart's flightpark in Michigan City, Indiana. Since then, there have been many gallons of gas burned at altitude by the Barfing Dogs and the Alamo Air force between Wolverton Field and Red Aero Field. But most of the fuel was burned by Bill and me, flying in for a visit unannounced, on any given day of the year. I've warmed Bill up with hot coffee on a cold winter day and I've cooled him off with iced tea in the shade on a blazing hot summer afternoon. And I have made the trip so many times that the landscape of my route is my most familiar "patch" in the sky. On takeoff, the GPS reads 224 degrees and 47.8 miles. The next flight to Bill and Susan's place will be difficult because Bill won't be there.

Bill passed away on January 15, 2006. He was a true living legend in the ultralight world and probably has logged the most ultralight hours in the nation, 4,428 hours. I would like to challenge anybody to produce a logbook with more hours or makes and models flown. Bill could fly anything and had flown 105 different makes and models of light planes! As an instructor, Bill held Basic and Advanced Flight Instructor ratings and signed off 52 instructors. He flew in 135 competitions with an emphasis on fun and won both ASC and USUA Points Championships multiple times. He has also been the Michigan State Champion and USUA Region 6 Champion. In addition to flying in competitions, he also organized 40 different competitions over the years. I have memories of Bill competing in at least a dozen different ultralights including Flightstar, Challenger, Phantom, Lazair, Vector, Rans, Aerolight 103 and his trademark Hiperlight.

One memory of Bill competing was at one of his summer fly-ins and we were trying out the new Pylon Race event. My brother, Jeff, was a Barfing Dog at the time and he took the "race" part of the event literally and when he did, Bill gave chase. One of the pylons on the triangular course was right over the east/west taxiway of Wolverton Field and both Bill in a Hiperlight and Jeff in his Flightstar flew that pylon at about 100 feet AGL. I can still hear my brother's war whoop and see Bill's grin as they cranked their planes around the pylon, trying to "win" the race. I don't remember the results of that event but since the scoring was the time difference between the two laps and slower airspeeds give better percentages, I doubt that either one finished well. With the fun that they and the spectators had, I know that neither one cared!

One of Bill's favorite antics was to fly up to the Alamo Air Force Olympics in May even if the weather was windy or threatening, just to say in his Arkansas drawl, "Where were you Alamo woosies?" (he pronounced it oo as in roof :-). Another one was his mischievous goal of making a passenger or student queasy with just enough aerial maneuvering to achieve his objective. He tried especially hard if he was flying the Titan Tornado and had a seasoned pilot with him.

Several years ago, when Meigs Field on the Chicago lakefront was being threatened by its unaccountable mayor daley (not worthy of being capitalized) I received a letter from the Friends of Meigs

Field. I was invited to attend an Antique and Classic fly-in at Meigs to show support and to raise public awareness of the runway's contributions to the Chicago community. I took off in my Champ early on a Saturday morning in June. The Barfing Dogs were hosting the Michigan State Ultralight Championships at Watervliet on the same day and I planned to stop there later in the afternoon. As I approached the Lake Michigan shoreline, spotty ground fog began to be noticeable. Soon, low-level clouds began to obscure the landscape. With just five miles to the lakeshore, the ground had disappeared and I was flying over a solid white carpet. I could see the lake and that it was clear over the water, but as the cool air hit the shoreline, a solid cloud layer drifted inland and broke up about five miles from the lake. Coming to a decision about continuing or turning back, I noticed a tiny biplane off my nose to the south. It was northbound and it was a Hiperlight. Hoping he didn't see me, I diverted to Andrews University Airport in Berrien Springs to wait for the sun to burn off the cloud cover. When I arrived at Watervliet that afternoon, I found Bill and at the same time, we pointed at each other and said, "I saw you pushing FARs this morning!" Isn't that amazing! Such a large sky, yet a pilot can meet a friend in the air 40 miles from home! We had a good laugh over that one.

Bill had heart surgery in 2000 and was just a couple of weeks out of the hospital when he decided he had to get some air time. I picked him up for a November flight to Morris, Illinois and an overnight visit with Ted and Karen Battles. He was still clutching his heart-shaped pillow close to his chest to ease the pain when he coughed or cleared his throat. By the time we reached Morris and its north/south runway, the wind was out of the west at 25 mph and gusting. It was and still is my toughest landing to date and with the left wing banked heavily into the wind, we were still drifting right of the runway as we lined up for runway 36. I had to use some rudder to keep it straight and with some big bumps off the trees along the road to the west and I wasn't sure that we would even land on this attempt. As I began the flare, I touched the left wheel down first and had full right rudder in as the right main and tailwheel came down. It wasn't enough as the tail began to go to the right. I applied right brake and could hear the squeak as the brake locked up. Only then did I keep it straight until taxi. That day I knew what the old timers meant when they said, "You fly a taildragger from start up to shut down!" I was really sweating it as I heard Bill laughing in the back...I was glad he was amused! What great memories.

I could write all day about my memories of Bill but I must close this tribute. My last flight with Bill was on Labor Day weekend, 2005. At his request, I gladly accepted the opportunity to ferry the Aerolight 103 from ASC Nationals in Marshall, Michigan to Wolverton Field near Niles. Bill competed in his last Nationals in the purple Aerolight. After an incredible flight with my feet dangling into space most of the flight, he picked me up in his Hiperlight and we flew back to Marshall. It was a perfect late-summer evening, calm and clear with light and variable winds. It was an uneventful flight, certainly nothing to write about yet it will always remain with me as a cherished memory. Bruce Springsteen was "Born to Run" but Bill Wolverton was "Born to Fly!" He lived to fly. His family's motto has always been, "Work hard, play hard, love hard." That sums up the Bill Wolverton that I knew. A real "larger than life" personality. He will be greatly missed.

Vernon Peckham wrote this about Bill, "He was a great character and friend, with a love for flying, which beat a great many of pilots that I have met all over the world. He was at his happiest when in the air whether it was sharing the joy teaching or showing someone around the patch. We have all lost a character friend...so very rare."

I spoke at Bill's funeral, following his grandson, Dustin, and flying friend, Cindy Adkison who both gave wonderful tributes. After telling the story about meeting him in the sky, flying over the ground fog, I told the audience that he was the best stick and rudder pilot that I had ever known. It is a fitting tribute to our dear friend and pilot. I closed my tribute with An Ultralight Pilot's Prayer by Vernon Peckham.

As we stood in the beautiful chapel at the cemetery, the sunshine came through the windows warming our faces and the colors of the stained glass were dazzling. I paused, wanting to etch this memory permanently in my mind. And I thought about how beautiful the day was even though it was very windy. But not too windy for Bill. He would have flown on a day like this. He's flying now! Fly on Bill!

## Classifieds

**FOR SALE 1972 Beech Sport 1720 TTAE, Full Panel, NDH, all AD's, annual due Sept '06, good flyer. \$23,000. Dick Haigh 269 695-2057.**

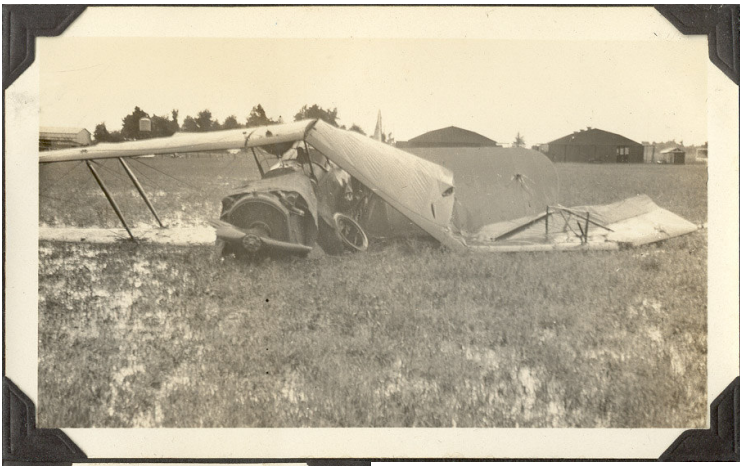
**Subaru EA-81 engine, Pulled from a Subaru Brat. Needs rebuild. Free to an EAA member. Contact: Jim Van Hulle, 574-271-8533**

**For Sale, Hi-Max ultralight. 277 Rotax, Low Hours \$5995.00  
Contact: Dale Neddeau, 269-633-6194**

**For Sale, New Parts to build Mini-Max wings and misc. Mini-max parts.  
Contact; Tom Overmyer, 269-684-2247**

## Last Minute News Flash

Ralph, I bought the 1941 Rearwin Skyraider from Bill Ortman. Bill will remain a silent partner in the airplane. We plan to have an annual inspection done, complete a few details, get it fired up and fly it. Would love to fly it to Oshkosh and to write a journal of the ups and downs of getting it back in the air for the newsletter if you think that would be appropriate. In the mean time the Instrument Knowledge Test Ground School is going on each Monday evening at Corporate Wings. A Private Pilot Knowledge Test is going on as well. The classes can be joined at any time. For EAA students \$50 goes back into the Chapter treasury. Bob Baird.



**These Photos were taken by Roger Lorenzen and are on a CD containing about 600 Pics given to me by jim Jacobson. The Jenny, top left and the Standard, top right and bottom, crashed in Chicago. The two dapper guys are unknown**



## Calendar of Events

- May 20:** Spring Fling, Wolverton Field
- May 20:** IFC Fly-in, Elkhart IN
- May 21:** Benton Harbor Fly-in and Pancake Breakfast
- June 4:** Coldwater Fly-in and Pancake Breakfast
- June 18:** Three Rivers Fly-in and Pancake Breakfast
- June 18:** Mishawaka Pilots Club Fly-in Breakfast
- June 23,24,25:** SAA Convention, Urbana IL
- June 25:** Niles MI Fly-in Breakfast, EAA 865
- July 15-16:** MULA Fly-in, Chesaning MI
- July 24-30:** AirVenture, Oshkosh WI (3Mos, 3Wks)
- Aug. 19:** Newmans Airpark Fly-in, Kazoo
- Aug. 19:** Holland MI Fly-in
- Aug. 20:** Ducks Picnic Fly-in

**FOR DETAILS ON ABOVE EVENTS CALL RALPH @ 269-684-0972**

**Pilots Progress is published each month by Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 865, Inc., located in Niles MI. The contents are for the use, education and enjoyment of the chapter. No claim is made for the accuracy of materials presented. Editorial content is the opinion of the contributor and does not necessarily reflect the position of Chapter 865 or the EAA. Members are encouraged to submit articles for publication. Other EAA Chapters may use articles for publication, as long as credit is given. Meetings are held at our Chapter Hangar, east side of the airport on Lake St., Niles MI, unless otherwise stated in the newsletter.**

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