Ainsworth Airport At Age 75

The Ainsworth airport turned 75 years old this year, and on July 29th they had a fly-in breakfast to celebrate. The driving force behind the success of this airport is its manager, Lance Schipporeit and his wife Vicki (both pictured below). From this Editor’s experience, these are great facilities combined with great people.

Lance is a person who doesn’t wish for things to happen, he makes things happen. When he saw the need for VASI lights, he trenched the power in, set the lights and aligned them. When the need for additional snow removal was clear, he found Army surplus units and bought them.

Arriving at the fly-in, Vicki had a fantastic breakfast of pancakes, scrambled eggs and bacon for all the pilots, passengers and local residents who came out to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the airport.

Lunch of burgers and hotdogs was served by the local Lions Club members, showing just how much local support there is for the airport.

Columbus pilots Keith Harbour and Kurt Muhle flew their Nanchang CJ-6’s to the fly-in, but were limited to only smoking up the area with low level passes over the runway due to the lower cloud deck.

One of the great benefits of this fly-in was the youth of Ainsworth coming out to see the many different facets of aviation up close and personal without the restraint of fences we see in so many of today’s airports.

There was a Cessna 150 with a sign on the prop – Learn to FLY – plus a sectional and a sign-in sheet.

An estimated crowd of 200 was on-hand to watch the Lincoln Sport Parachute team of Greg Hladik, Craig Navickas, Chris Holland and Captain Merril Mark do tandem jumps with some of the local residents. However, mid-morning a lower cloud deck put a stop to the parachute jumping.

The most interesting airplane to fly in was a Polish sprayer called a Dromader M-18T. This sprayer can drop 550 gallons of fire retardant known as slurry, and slightly more if only water is carried. The size of the Dromader is very impressive with a wing span of 58 feet, length of 31 feet and a height of 12 feet. This airplane is based in Valentine for the summer on fire fighting standby.
All About Aviation

Ronnie Mitchell

Summer is over and fall is coming fast. Fly in breakfasts are slowing and time to think about what exciting things you will do this winter. One thing you can do is recommend your favorite airport for 2017 Airport of the Year. The application form is on our website at: www.aero.nebraska.gov under the tile Nebraska Airports. The award will be presented during the NAC Aviation Symposium at Kearney in January.

Another important thing you can do is show your support for an NE Aviation license plate. There are several details that need to be worked out but first I need to get the design approved with an application to the NE Dept. of Motor Vehicles. This could take several weeks and then you will need to fill out an application which will be on our website under the tile License Plate. Once approved by the Dept. of Motor Vehicles you will need to send a check made out to the Dept. of Motor Vehicles for $70 to us and we must have the 250 applications and checks before the plates can be made and mailed to you. This process is a bit lengthy but I will keep you updated through PIREPS and our website as we continue on this incredible journey for support of aviation in our state. Sample license plate below!

Steep Turns

Lee Svoboda

As I sit in the right seat, sometimes left seat, I get the chance to watch applicants struggle with a maneuver. Recently it has been “Steep Turns”. The objective of steep turns is to develop the smoothness, coordination, orientation, division of attention, and control techniques necessary for the execution of maximum performance turns when the airplane is near its performance limits. Now if we go to the skills of steep turns in both the Private and the Commercial ACS, we find the tolerances to be the same, except for the degree of bank required. For a private applicant the required bank is approximately 45 degrees. For the commercial applicant the required bank is approximately 50 degrees. To be successful in this maneuver the applicant must maintain the entry altitude plus or minus 100 feet, airspeed plus or minus 10 knots, bank plus or minus 5 degrees, and roll out on the entry heading plus or minus 10 degrees. Now that we have all the academics laid out, where have the applicants been screwing up? Guess what, in altitude control, airspeed control, bank angle and roll out. Altitude problems generally occur when the applicant does not apply enough back pressure and the nose gets low, and bingo, we are over 100 feet low. And of course, associated with that low pitch, I find the airspeed increases, and bingo, we are more than 10 knots fast. Then, if the applicant notices what is happening, a hard pull back of pitch control is applied, which results in heavy G forces and maybe an increase in altitude, but definitely a decrease in airspeed to the point that it could result in an accelerated stall. Angle of bank during all of this ????? Of course while all of this is going on, loss of orientation and remembering the roll out heading goes right out of the applicant’s mind. From my perspective, I have observed the applicants that do the best in this maneuver generally roll into the maneuver slowly, apply some nose up trim, increase the power slightly, and have a good visual reference both inside and outside the aircraft. And if the nose does get low and altitude is being lost, they stop it early by slightly rolling out of the bank, getting the pitch readjusted and then rolling back to the correct bank angle. The slow roll-in allows them to start compensating for the change of stability that a steep turn brings; the trim helps them with the back pressure required because of diversion of lift; the power overcomes the additional drag and helps to keep the airspeed constant; and both references assure an acceptable roll out. And if readjustment is required, the correct changes demonstrate understanding of the aerodynamics of steep turns. WOW! They get it. Is that, “correlation”???

As has happened in the past, I have noticed a marked improvement by applicants when I have mentioned a specific maneuver in this media. Instructors, I know you will make it happen again.
C-123 Reunion

The U. S. Air Force Fairchild C-123 Provider was a faithful workhorse during the Vietnam War. With two Pratt & Whitney R2800 18-cylinder radial engines, a large cargo capacity and an impressive short field capability, this rugged airplane was well suited for the combat environment and the tactical airlift and other missions assigned to it during its years in Southeast Asia (1962-1972). And when two General Electric J-85 wing-mounted jet engines were added to its airframe later in the war, this good airplane became a really great airplane! The sixteenth “C-123s in Southeast Asia” Reunion was held in Omaha this past August. I was a C-123K Aircraft Commander in Vietnam (’71-’72), and was fortunate to just learn of this group’s existence in time to attend this four-day event.

The reunion was very well planned, and included tours of the Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum, Offutt Air Force Base and Boys Town, and many fabulous meals together. However, the several opportunities provided to gather in the event hotel’s hospitality room to visit with and get to know others in the group were my favorite times. I really enjoyed reminiscing with my roommate from my Phan Rang days, of course, but I even reconnected with a copilot and a loadmaster who had both flown with me a time or two over 45 years ago! I also met many other very interesting and gracious men. Some were retired senior Air Force officers. Others were former airline or corporate pilots, business executives, engineers, and – well – everything else. All were between 68 and 86 years old.

And I heard some incredible stories, especially from those who had flown the C-123 during its early years in Vietnam. I talked to pilots, for example, who had flown over 1000 combat sorties. I heard one pilot’s remarkable account of the mission for which he had been awarded a Silver Star. There were also many Distinguished Flying Crosses (DFCs) represented, and too many Air Medals to count (one pilot had two DFCs and 21 Air Medals!). In short, all of these amazing-but-humble men were the “real deal,” although most have never been recognized or particularly appreciated for their significant contributions to the Vietnam War effort. The same could probably be said of the C-123. But, as I was reminded during the reunion, it was a truly great machine. And it was flown, crewed and maintained by some truly great people.

Alaska

Yes, I was recently there in my Bonanza. Have you ever thought about such an adventure? I learned from the Textron field rep one of his customers leaves in 4 days in his Cessna 170. In 2002 my wife and I flew there in the Bonanza and there were many Cherokees and Cessnas along the way. Yes, you can do it, too.

My trip this time was in mid-May. It was cooler, but hotels and auto rentals were available. If you go in July, as we did in 2002, hotels and cars were harder to find. In Alaska, as in Nebraska, Mother Nature calls the shots, so you never know if you’ll be in Anchorage as scheduled; therefore, reservations are an issue. In 2002, the Sitka FBO managed to find us a friend with a spare room! For the most part, most of the trip was easy, with plenty of spots to land. However, the passage from Whitehorse to Anchorage had a lot of vertical land along the route, and off-field excursions might be an issue!! My biggest concern was customs, but once you can get the eAPIS figured out, it’s a piece of cake. The Canadian customs are welcoming, and the officers in Anchorage are like your long lost brother. Have your passport out and decal visible.

Sourdough pancakes are reason enough to make the trek north! I’m told you can do this trip by cruise ship, and the Inside Passage is wonderful. Do it by private plane and you get to see all the ship sees, but on your schedule. Aviation is such a small world. In Sitka I was waiting for the van to take me to the airport and was approached by a man who asked me “Who-What-Where-Why”, and it comes to find out he and I had many of the same aviator cronies from years gone by. OK, I was not the first to make this trip, and neither will you be. That is the good news!! There are many along the way happy to help welcome you, and want you to be happy so you’ll totally enjoy the experience. Your Mrs. will really like it!!!

So, now is the time to make the time commitment for 2018. My dad taught me that if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Good counsel, as a trip to Alaska takes time, and you must block that off now, or it likely will never happen.

Here are some numbers for the trip: Mt. McKinley, nee’ Denali is 20,320 feet tall and a great sight from the seat of your plane! The total trip length was 5,193 nm. Total time was 32.7 hrs, with an average groundspeed of 158.8 kts. Flight time from Ketchikan back home to KXVG was 10.2 hrs. The trip was big numbers, big fun, big adventure and memories for a lifetime.

Gear Down and Locked?
As I write this article I am watching Hurricane Irma on the Weather Channel while it is making a beeline for my home in Naples, Florida. Fortunately, I escaped back to Nebraska and am watching it safely from my parents living room. It goes without saying that Irma had a huge impact on aviation as airports were closed and hundreds of flights were cancelled strand- ing thousands of passengers. The airline I fly for flew in a Boeing 737 and 777 just to evacuate crews and flew several extra sections of flights to evacuate approximately 4,000 additional passengers ahead of the hurricane.

Obviously, we as pilots should stay well clear of hurricanes. The effects of hurricanes can be very wide spread, as in the case of Irma in Florida and Harvey in Texas. With these storms, and within hundreds of miles from the center, comes rain with low visibilities, turbulence, tornados, flooding of airports, and power outages. As the hurricane moves farther inland it weakens to a tropical depression and eventually just rain.

Unfortunately, the problems for aviation are not over after a hurricane passes. Airports can be closed for days due to flooding, wind damage, and power outages, so it is imperative that we obtain excellent weather briefings that include NOTAMs. Some of these airports will require recertification from the FAA to determine that they are safe. This will include looking at the runways, lighting, and instrument approaches and navigational aids. You definitely don’t want to be surprised on approaching an airport and find that part of the runway is covered with water and now have to figure if you have enough fuel to go to an alternate airport that you have no idea about its condition.

Catastrophic power failures can create a dire problem for aviation, especially if you are airborne. Since not only hurricanes can cause this, it might be helpful to know that there are certain airports that have a back-up power source so that aircraft can safely get on the ground. These are called Continuous Power Airports. You can find these in the Airport Facility Directory under Special Notices. These facilities can be used independently of any commercial power supply. Omaha is one of these airports. It’s power supply will power ATC and an ILS and lights for Runway 14R.

Hopefully you will never encounter a hurricane, but we can possibly see some of the effects pushed farther north into several states and hopefully we will not experience a catastrophic power failure but as always, its best to be prepared.

Fly safe and wishing tailwinds except on landing.

The engine is idling, You are picking up the AWOS. Turning up the volume doesn’t help, for Mishnshrra is still Mishnshrra, just louder. But from its location in the standard AWOS, I realized that “mishn” was supposed to be in-for-ma-tion. That left “Shrra,” which could only be Sierra. So when I called Lincoln Clearance, I could assure them I had In-for-ma-tion Si-Erra. This repeated experience reminded me of when I was still a professor and trying to clear the office phone message machine. It was often necessary to stand there replaying the message several times to pick off the number to call back. The number to call was always at the end of the message, and the message was often meandering with several curlicues disguising and postponing the essential. And the number was often mashed as if compressed between the squeezing rollers of an old-fashioned Maytag. You’d hear “fretet,” for instance. On the third or fourth time through the brain could decode “fretet” into Four Eight Eight, and the like. I finally told my students “Don’t call me. Email. I check my email at least three times a day, and I get back on the same day.”

In the cockpit, we don’t have that luxury. In ROTC, they taught us the first part of a command was to enlist the attention. Departure or Approach or Tower saying our tail number achieves that. And the second part of the command was telling what to do. It works — unless the instruction is on the order of “Mishnshrra.” I often wish my current commanding officer (for the last 53 years!) had such training. Her commands have no preface, and by the time my attention is engaged, I’ve missed, and have to say to the boss, “What?” And the second part of the command was telling what to do. It comes out “Aurolla,” but the essential is this: In addition to having clear command of the English language, he had respect for the number. Often the number was mashed as if compressed between the squeezing rollers of an old-fashioned Maytag. You’d hear “fretet,” for instance. On the third or fourth time through the brain could decode “fretet” into Four Eight Eight, and the like. I finally told my students “Don’t call me. Email. I check my email at least three times a day, and I get back on the same day.”

But for clarity aloft, I will express one main wish. Everyone, when you key the mike, please talk like my Japanese flight instructor! I am not kidding. Tak Yamamoto was straight from Japan. He came to the Aviation Institute at the University of Nebraska-Omaha to become a pilot. Yes, there were some troubles with the letter R, but he got most of them. Aurora, Nebraska, for instance, came out “Aurolla,” but the essential is this: In addition to having clear command of the English language, he had respect for the words. Whenever Tak spoke EVERY SYLLABLE WAS THERE. And EVERY CONSONANT HAD SOME BITE TO IT. The result was precise communication. You never had to say “what?” to Tak Yamamoto. Summing up in 3 words, Clarity Trumps Volume. So let’s, everyone in the tower, everyone at Omaha Departure, everyone flying, whenever you key the mike, talk like Tak!
Airports of Nebraska

There will be a new segment in PIREPS starting soon, and that’s “Airports of Nebraska”. This section will highlight a different airport each issue, and their various features and attractions. If you would like your airport considered, please send (at least the following) to david.moll@nebraska.gov.

1. History of the airport.
2. Was it named after someone, and what did he or she do special to earn that distinction.
3. Has it always been in the same location as it is now?
4. Specifically, what benefits does the airport provide to the town? For example does Life Flight come in; did the runway, IFR approach or any new improvements to the airport attract businesses using corporate airplanes; is your airport used for accommodating hunting or fishing groups?
5. What sightseeing points of interest would you suggest to visit for anybody flying in for the day?
6. Tell success stories of support, such as from the city council, county commissioners, business etc.
7. Please send pictures of a new FBO / Terminal or something aviation related.

We have quite a few very special airports in Nebraska. Therefore the goal is to feature a different airport in each Pireps Publication.

2017 Airport of the Year

Applications are now being accepted to be awarded the 2017 Nebraska Airport of the Year. The application may be found at aero.nebraska.gov by going to the section called the “Nebraska Airports” and clicking on the link that says to Nominate an Airport of the Year. A completed application must be finished and mailed to this office no later than January 12, 2018.

Coincidentally, many of the same questions for Airport of the Year are similar enough to the ones used for the “Airports of Nebraska”. Therefore, all applications for airport of the year will immediately be used for Airport of Nebraska consideration.

Midwest Aerobatic Championships

Have you ever wondered why the Midwest Aerobatic Club isn’t called the Nebraska Aerobatic Club? It’s because the club got its start in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Over the years it has also held contests in Clarinda and Harlan, Iowa. But with a home now at the Seward airport, it sponsors a contest in mid to late June every year.

This year, 31 contestants competed for the top trophy in their respective category June 23rd thru the 25th. The categories are: Primary, for the beginning aerobatic pilot, then progressing to Sportsman, Intermediate, Advanced, and Unlimited as the difficulty level increases. What really differentiates this contest from other is the participation of collegiate pilots, namely from the University of North Dakota and the Metropolitan State University of Denver (pictured below). Under the leadership of Michael Lents, his University of North Dakota aerobatic teams have been crowned the collegiate champs for nine consecutive years. Not to be outdone, MSU recently hired Dagmar Kress, a three time member of the German Unlimited Aerobatic team, who brings unbelievable focus and determination, in addition to her flying expertise. This will be a team that all other collegiate aerobatic teams will have to deal with very soon.

The winners this year were: Jarrett Croy from UND won the Primary category. David Lutes from Berryton, Kansas won Sportsman. Luke Penner from Canada won Sportsman here last year, and then won Intermediate this year. Advanced was won this year by the UND aerobatic team coach Michael Lents.

Contests like this are not possible without help from the Seward Airport Authority, Duncan Aviation, Harry Barr, Whisler Aviation, RO’s Lounge, the International Aerobatic Club, and countless volunteers who start preparation for this contest months in advance.

Pilot Shortage

Business and Commercial Aviation magazine reported that Horizon Air, a subsidiary of Alaska Airlines, reported up to 6% of its flights were cancelled this summer due to a lack of pilots. To combat this shortage, new Q400 pilots are being offered a bonus of $15,000 after training and another $5,000 bonus after completion of their first full year. Meanwhile, Avweb.com reports Horizon has cancelled its Seattle to Colorado Springs flights because of this pilot shortage.
2017 Eclipse  
David Moll

The eclipse of 2017 came with tremendous fanfare, and for the most part, didn’t disappoint too many. Some of the Eastern parts of Nebraska had cloud cover, some light enough to make the viewing quite easy, while some couldn’t see the eclipse at all. However, the western part of the state had low clouds and poor visibility for most of the morning, but cleared off nicely for the event.

A total of 31 Nebraska airports were in the eclipse path but eight were very close to the “shadow of totality” and they were: Alliance with 195 aircraft; Beatrice with 70 aircraft; Broken Bow with 34 aircraft; Chadron with 10 aircraft; Fairmont with 57 aircraft, over 470 cars and 1,000 people; Falls City with 23 aircraft and 175 people driving in; Grand Island with 90 aircraft, Harvard with 11 aircraft and 75 people; North Platte with 60 aircraft; and Scottsbluff with 49, including a Gulfstream 450. Based on the number of pilots calling in to both the Alliance and Beatrice airports, the FAA set up temporary control towers at these two airports to help manage the landing and departing traffic. I was en-route to Chadron early in the morning of the eclipse while the weather at Alliance was at or below landing minimums. The Denver Center controller was absolutely the best I’ve heard in a long time handling this overflow of traffic. He was cool, calm and collected while issuing holding instructions to those who could, or sending them to another VOR for holding or to an airport that was VFR. In the height of the rush, an airplane missed the approach at Scottsbluff. Also, about 10 minutes after our arrival at Chadron, the weather went below IFR minimums. However, as the morning went on, the weather cleared up for good viewing.

More Eclipse

Volunteers were the backbone of success at Nebraska airports during this eclipse. Two of the airports in the totality zone are state owned, and share one manager (Fairmont and Harvard), so staff and several spouses from the Aeronautics Department decided more help was needed instead of relying on the efforts of just one. With 57 airplanes, 470 cars and over 1,000 people showing up at the Fairmont airport, they had their work cut out for them and it was immensely appreciated.

Above, Martha and John King showed up at Alliance for the eclipse. Maybe they will have a new video available on how to plan for, and fly to an event such as what Alliance encountered.

Ronnie Mitchell, the Division of Aeronautics Director wrote the following: “The amazing thing concerning this celestial event is that there were no aircraft accidents or incidents! No one was injured on any public use airport in Nebraska and all the spectators were very courteous and mindful of safety. Our thanks go out to our friends in the FAA, especially the nine FAA controllers who manned the mobile towers, Omaha TRACON and the FAA Central Region Administrator and his deputy who without their assistance the ‘helping hand’ they provided would not have happened.”

Overall, the aviation scene in Nebraska for the eclipse was a perfect example of how teamwork and planning between local, state and the FAA can make events run safe and smooth.
Drone Privacy

David Moll

In the era of a million drones having been sold, is there such a thing as drone privacy? In other words, do you have privacy protection from drones flying over your house? Do we need more laws? Are the FAA Regulations concerning drones only being followed by pilots and not by non-pilots? Would new laws stop people from flying drones over your house even if the Nebraska Legislature passed new laws prohibiting it? Right now there are laws against flying drones near airports, but yet the FAA says sightings of drones near or around airports and other aircraft now exceed 100 reports per month. My point is this: some people really don’t care what the law says, and because of that, there is no doubt we could see a patchwork of state laws and local ordinances attempting to regulate drone flying to help control privacy. The “gotcha” in this issue is why do you regulate new technology when it’s just the same old criminal activity using a different technique? Window peeping can occur using a drone just as simply as sitting in a tree with a telephoto lens, but you’ll never see new regulations on tree climbing and telephoto lenses. At least you can hear the drone and ignore it or react accordingly.

In late August, I attended a UAS (Unmanned Aircraft System) Tech Forum held in Wichita. The speaker from Oregon stressed creating legislative working groups that include aviation experts to avoid this patchwork of laws that conflict with the FAR’s. He also mentioned the ACLU and his local police department actually met outside of a courtroom and came up with reasonable procedures the police can use to apprehend criminals by using drones that do not violate their civil liberties. Ahh – Teamwork in action.

Both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives are working on legislation to protect the FAA’s authority to ensure safety of the airspace, while also maintaining state and local authority to protect public safety and security, personal privacy, property rights, and managed land use regarding the operation of drones.

Hopefully, Washington DC will actually produce something workable and not purposely vague or so detailed only lawyers can understand it. If successful, this could very well put more emphasis on local or state governments to help make drone laws that fit their jurisdiction and not conflict with the FAR’s. Rules for big cities, such as New York cannot be the same as the ones used for Greenwood, NE, just as our airspace structure has different categories A thru E. It’s just Midwestern common sense.

Aviation Nation

Ten of us AviationNation-Omaha students recently took a week off from building a Van’s RV-12 at the Millard Airport to fulfill a common pilot’s bucket list item – attend EAA Air Venture 2017 in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Our adventure started rather mundanely on a bus driving east on I-80, but once arriving at the Rockford, Illinois airport, the aviation activities quickly began. Following dinner in a hangar with 150 of our newest pilot friends, we narrated and watched the BeechNutz, Texas V-tails, and California Beech Boys demonstrate airshow quality precision formation flyovers and then retired for the evening in sleeping bags on the floor of the historic Poplar Grove Wings and Wheels museum.

The next day, after a formal formation briefing, we arrived at Wittman Regional Airport in style as part of a 116-ship Bonanzas to Oshkosh mass-formation and then rendezvoused with other AviationNation students from Indiana. Over the next five days, we attended the airshow; met Richard VanGrunsven (founder of Van’s Aircraft) and Paul Dye (NASA lead flight director for STS-79/86/91); attended home-building workshops; spoke with college and airline representatives; watched a movie at the Fly-In Theater; and saw lots and lots (and lots) of airplanes.

Unfortunately, the fun couldn’t last forever, and Thursday morning we once again loaded the bus destined for Omaha; and except for a flat-tire in southwestern Wisconsin, we arrived as planned.

If you want to learn more about AviationNation, we’ll be building the RV-12 at Oracle Aviation on Tuesday’s at 4pm and Thursdays at 6pm. We just finished the horizontal stabilizer and will be working on the tailcone in the next couple weeks. Our FB page is aviation.nation.omaha.

Special thanks to our mentors Ms. Vaughan, Mr. and Mrs. Beyer, Mr. Trogdon, Mr. and Mrs. Person and Mr. Kelly.
Events Calendar

- **York Airport (KJYR)**, EAA Chapter 1055 Fly-in breakfast (free-will donation) on the 1st Saturday of every month, 8:00-10:00 am.
- **Crete Airport (KCEK)**, EAA Chapter 569 Fly-in breakfast on the 3rd Saturday of every month, 8:00-10:00 am.
- **Cozad Airport (KCZD)**, Last Saturday of April, May, June, July, August & Sept. Fly-in breakfast 8:00-10:00 am. Pilot info seminars starting at 9:00 am. Check out our Facebook page: Mid State Aviation. More info: allison@mid-stateaviation.com or 308-784-3868.

Editors note on Aviation Nation

On page 7 is an article on Aviation Nation. Please read it because I think this is one of the most important aviation programs aimed at the youth today. Their motto “Mentors build the students, students build the airplane” is what aviation needs because hands-on education in aviation does not come from being heads down on smart phones.

This RV12 is not a cheap project. It is funded by private donations, plus the students doing odd jobs as they come up. Please consider donating to this organization. Aviation Nation is a 501c3 organization. Contact Jim Beyer at jimbeyer34@gmail.com for donation information and be generous.

Retiring Engineer

Barry Scheinost retired from the Division of Aeronautics on September 8th after 22 years of service. Barry was born and raised in Norfolk, a graduate of the Air Academy and the University of Nebraska-Omaha where he earned his engineering degree. He flew KC-135s in the Air Force and the UH-1, U-21 and C-12 for the Nebraska Army Guard, plus serving in Desert Storm.

New Engineer

Bryan DeHerder joined the engineering team at the Division of Aeronautics August 8, 2017. Bryan graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in mechanical engineering. He and his fiancé Laura live in Omaha where she is finishing her Ph.D. in Occupational Therapy.