PIREPS

PIREPS

June - July
2023
Volume 75, Issue 3

Published bi-monthly by

Nebraska Dept. of Transportation
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Lincoln NE 68502
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Circulation: 3320

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The Rest of the Story: Aurora Municipal Al Potter Field Airport

by Penny Rafferty Hamilton. Ph.D.

In 1916, Woodrow Wilson was elected United States President, and Albert C. Potter was born in Hugo, Colorado. Growing up in the hard-scrabble town, Al learned how to "fix things." He was always in high demand by the many farm and ranch implement industries in Colorado and Kansas. His interest in mechanical things led him to the sky and airplanes.

During the 1920s and '30s, known as the "Golden Age of Flight" because of air races and daring record-setting flights, aviation dominated the news. Airplanes evolved from flimsy fabric biplanes to modern metal designs. In 1938, Al started flying at age 22. Soon Al shared his passion for aviation with students when he became a rated flight instructor.

Potter's first airplane was a 58 horsepower Taylor Cub. He bought the parts and assembled it himself. He ran his own flying school. During World War II, Al served as a flight instructor in the U.S. Navy. After the war, he flew for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Department of the Interior in Alaska.

In the 1960s, Al settled in beautiful Aurora, Nebraska. For almost 50 years, Potter worked beside his wife, Grace, in their family-owned business, "Aurora Floral." In 2008, Al and Grace were both inducted into the Nebraska Florist Hall of Fame.

All those years, Al Potter continued his love of aviation through the Aurora Municipal Airport. He flew humanitarian and medical flights to help his neighbors. From 1968 to 2007, Al Potter served as Aurora Airport Manager. Year after year, he was elected and re-elected to the Airport Authority. Under Al's progressive leadership, the small Aurora Municipal Airport grew from a 1600-foot grass runway to a facility with a 4,300-foot by 75-foot lighted runway and modem equipment. In 1994, KAUH was named Nebraska Department of Aeronautics Airport of the Year. In 1997, Al Potter was inducted into the Nebraska Aviation Hall of Fame.

KAUH Aurora, Nebraska chart. Al Potter Field honors its namesake who served as Aurora Airport Manager from 1968 to 2007.

In 2007, at the age of 90, Al felt he was just too old to fly. In honor of his lifetime passion for aviation, family and friends honored Potter listing him in the National Aviation and Space Exploration Wall of Honor permanent memorial located on the walkway to to the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center. On July 26, 2014, at the age of 97, Albert C. Potter flew West. Now you know "the rest of his story and Aurora Municipal Airport Al Potter Field." ■

Aviation Heroes

By David Morris

Louis Blériot: Frenchman Blériot was the first to successfully fly across the English Channel.

Bessie Coleman received the first pilot's license issued to an African American, from the Federation Aeronautique International.

Sally Ride became the first American woman in space in 1983.

Louis Blériot: Frenchman Blériot was the first to successfully fly across the English Channel in a small, 25-horsepower machine on July 25, 1909, at 4:35 a.m.

Tiny Broadwick: Tiny began her career parachuting from balloons. She was the first woman to parachute from an airplane. In 1915, she became the first person to demonstrate parachutes to the U.S. Army.

Bessie Coleman: On June 15, 1921, Coleman received the first pilot's license issued to an African American, male or female, from the Federation Aeronautique International.

Baroness Raymonde de Laroche: The Baroness was the first woman to receive a pilot's license. In 1919, she set a women's altitude record of 15,700 feet mean sea level (MSL).

Amelia Earhart: On June 17-18, 1928, Earhart became the first woman to cross the Atlantic by air as a passenger. As a pilot, Earhart set out in June 1937 to circumnavigate the world and vanished near Howland Island in the Pacific Ocean.

Charles A. Lindbergh: In May 1927, Lindbergh flew solo from New York to Paris in the "Spirit of St. Louis," a single 220-horsepower Wright Whirlwind engine. He completed the 3,600-mile journey in 33 hours and 29 minutes.

Matilde Moissant: Matilde was the second American woman to earn a pilot's license, on August 13, 1911. She also set several altitude records and was the first person of either gender to land an airplane in Mexico City.

Sally Ride: Sally didn't initially set out to become a role model for women, but that's exactly what happened when she became the first American woman in space in 1983. Her most lasting legacy would be the role she played in inspiring girls and women across the nation and the world to pursue roles in science and engineering, writing several science books for children. Sally passed away in 2012 at the age of 61 from pancreatic cancer.

Blanche Stuart Scott: Blanche was technically the first American woman to solo, when a block on her aircraft's throttle jolted out of place and she went airborne on September 2, 1910. She was not credited with being the first American woman to solo by the Aeronautical Society of America because the flight was ruled accidental.

Charlie Taylor: The "unsung hero of aviation" built the engine that powered the Wrights' first airplane.

Katharine Wright: If we accept the premise that the first machine-powered flight by humans occurred on December 17, 1903, with the Wright Brothers, it is appropriate to include an almost forgotten contributor to that great event: their sister Katharine. In remembering the financial and moral support she provided to them, her brother Wilbur said, "If ever the world thinks of us in connection with aviation, it must remember our sister."

Wilbur and Orville Wright: In 1903, Wilbur and Orville Wright, two brothers from Dayton, Ohio, became the first people to fly a heavier than air, power-controlled machine, known as the Wright Flyer. Orville Wright, who had purchased 97% of the outstanding company stock in 1914 as he prepared to leave the business world, estimated that the Wright Company built approximately 120 airplanes across all its different models between 1910 and 1915.

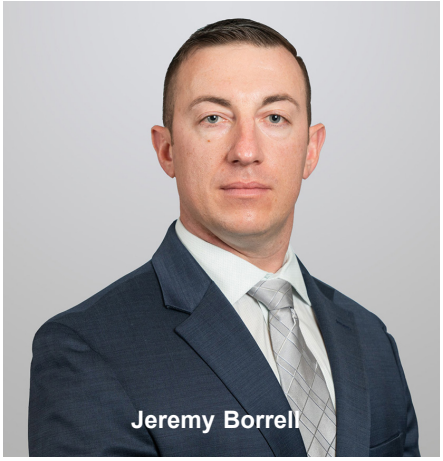
Chuck Yeager: On October 14, 1947, Yeager was the first person to break the sound barrier. With that flight, he traveled faster than any human being ever had.

Jeana Yeager and Dick Rutan: On December 14, 1986, Yeager and Rutan took off to break one of aviation's last records: to fly around the world non-stop and non-refueled. The round-the-world flight of Voyager lasted nine days, three minutes, and 44 seconds, finishing back at Edwards Air Force Base on December 23, 1986.

Watch in future issues of PIREPS for additional AVIATION HEROES to be recognized for their accomplishments and contributions to aviation. ■

Director's View

Legislative Support for Aeronautics in Nebraska



As the incoming director of the Aeronautics Division, it is my sincere honor to be a part of a team of individuals whose focus is advancing the cause of Aeronautics in Nebraska. I have been enjoying some initial meetings with stakeholders around the aviation community, and one message has been consistent: the Aeronautics Division members are doing important work. Every day they work directly with airports across the state. I am quite lucky to be working with such talented and dedicated individuals. As a state, we are also fortunate that the aviation community receives broad support, including from our state legislators.

The Nebraska Unicameral recently adjourned the first session of the 108th Legislature. While the session was marked by vigorous debate and a slower-than-usual start, significant progress was made as they neared the session's close. That progress included passing several pieces of legislation that will directly affect the aeronautics community within Nebraska. LB 138 and LB 727 were passed and signed into law on June 1st and 6th. These omnibus measures were amended to contain legislative bills that were originally proposed as standalone bills (LB 453 and LB 384, respectively).

LB 138 addresses the previous inability to fund administrative costs of the Division of Aeronautics in the same manner as all other NDOT divisions. Providing clear authorization for this funding allows the division to allocate more of the Aviation Fuel Tax directly to projects impacting the airports of Nebraska.

LB 727 redirects Nebraska aircraft sales tax, collected on or after July 1st, 2023, into an Aeronautics Capital Improvement Fund rather than the general fund. These funds will also be used to support the aeronautical system of Nebraska.

Through the combined efforts of Senators Dekay, Geist, Hughes, Bostar, Linehan, Bosn, Raybould, and Brewer; the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee; the Revenue Committee; the Nebraska Aeronautics Commission; the Nebraska Aviation Council; the Nebraska Association of Airport Officials; and many others, the Division of Aeronautics is now positioned to make a greater impact on advancing aeronautical progress within the state. ■

OUR VISION

A dynamic aviation system which enhances quality of life through infrastructure and services that meet the diverse and evolving needs of all Nebraskans.

Clear Air Turbulence

By David Morris

Turbulent air, very similar in severity to that which is signaled by the presence of clouds, may exist at different places and altitudes but be completely invisible. The causes of such turbulent air may be one or a combination of the conditions that are often discussed among pilots: convective currents, wind shear, obstructions to wind flow such as mountains, buildings, etc.

Since clear air turbulence (CAT) cannot be seen, the first actual knowledge of the existence of a CAT area comes from the pilots who fly into it. This information is transmitted to Air Traffic Control (ATC) or to our flight service weather specialists so that those who will fly through the same area can be prepared.

The probability of CAT can be expected, even if it can't be seen. Light CAT usually is found in hilly and mountainous areas even when winds are gentle. Light CAT turbulence also occurs below 5,000 feet above ground level (AGL) when the air is colder than the underlying surface and at anytime the wind is blowing near 20 mph.

Turbulence can be further classified as light, moderate, severe, and extreme. There are no iron-clad criteria for designating these levels of turbulence because the perception of how much turbulence exists depends on the person reporting it and the type of aircraft being flown. The light airplane pilot's evaluation may be one of moderate turbulence, while the pilot of a large airliner might report light turbulence.

However, it is generally agreed that the following sensations and reactions describe the various levels of turbulence: Light – occupants of aircraft may be required to use seat belts, but objects in aircraft remain at rest. Moderate – aircraft occupants must wear seat belts and unsecured objects move about. Severe – aircraft may at times be out of control; occupants are thrown against seat belts; and unsecured objects are tossed about. Extreme – entire aircraft may be tossed about and is practically impossible to control; structural damage to aircraft or occupant injury may be a result.

There is one man-made type of CAT. This is called Wake Turbulence and is caused by large aircraft in flight. As the wings of these large aircraft slice through the atmosphere, air spilling over and around the wing tips forms a vortex – a twisting, horizontal column of air which possesses a tremendous amount of energy. These vortices can have the same effect on small aircraft as severe CAT.

Because CAT cannot be seen, and sometimes occurs unexpectantly, as pilots we must be wary of natural and man-made atmospheric turbulence that contribute to these conditions. ■

Weather Radar Review

By David Morris

As aviators, most of us are aware of weather radar, its purpose, and basically how it functions. With the thunderstorm season here, I always feel it is prudent to review this topic, keeping safety at a high level for the pilot as well as the passengers.

Airborne weather avoidance radar is, as its name implies, for avoiding severe weather – not for penetrating it. Whether to fly into an area of radar echoes depends on echo intensity, spacing between the echoes, and the capabilities of you and your airplane.

Remember that weather radar detects precipitation drops. Except for the most advanced radar units, it does not detect turbulence. Therefore, the radar scope provides no assurance of avoiding turbulence. The radar scope also does not provide assurance of avoiding instrument weather from clouds and fog. Your scope may be clear between intense echoes; this clear area does not necessarily mean you can fly between the storms and maintain visual sighting of them.

Thunderstorms build and dissipate rapidly. The best use of ground radar information is to isolate general areas and coverage of echoes. It is important to avoid individual storms by in-flight observations – either by visual sighting or airborne radar. It is likely better to avoid the whole thunderstorm area than to detour around individual storms, unless they are scattered.

Remember that while hail always gives a radar echo, it may fall several miles from the nearest visible cloud, and hazardous turbulence may extend to as much as 20 miles from the echo edge.

As a young pilot (in terms of flight hours), I remember being advised of a thunderstorm area at my 12 o'clock indicating "level 3" activity. My thought was, "well the chart goes to level 6, so level 3 can't be too bad." What a ride that turned out to be! I remind myself the definition of level 3 is "Strong Thunderstorm."

Above all, remember this: Never regard any thunderstorm lightly. Even when radar observers report the echoes are of light intensity, avoiding thunderstorms is the best policy. ■

Competitive Aviators Back in the Skies in Wayne, NE

By Matt Hoffmann, KTIV, Published: May. 26, 2023

Top: The Wayne America Fly-In was held over Memorial Day weekend at Stan Morris Field.

2nd from top: A 2007 Vans RV-9 was flown in the STOL event.

3rd from top: Spectators had great vantage points to watch the planes come in for a landing.

Bottom: A 2014 Cub Crafters CCK-1865 was also flown in the event.

Photos by David Morris

It was a new year and a new name for a big aviation event in Wayne, Nebraska, over Memorial Day weekend.

The community held its Wayne America Fly-In and were also remembering the life of pilot Tom Dafoe of California, who died last year at the event.

The event was packed this year, showcasing the largest numbers since it first started. Some 50 aviators took to the skies from the airport's grass runway. Because of its central location and amenities, Wayne, Nebraska, is now a hot spot for the sport.

"Yeah, so this actually is the largest STOL event ever for (the) National STOL Series. We crushed their record (which) was set in their first inaugural event in Texas... and we beat it in Wayne, Nebraska," said Colin Caneva, one of the co-founders of the event.

Not only can the pilots of Wayne America stop on a dime, but they can also do it from their airplanes. It's called STOL Racing: Short Take Off and Landing.

Whoever can get their plane in the air using the least amount of runway, and then land doing the same, wins.

"It's paint a line on the ground, land on or beyond the line and come to a stop as quickly as you can. It's a measured distance, and you do a take-off as well," said Pilot Kyle Bushman.

Bushman, who visited the Wayne America Fly-In from Oregon, says the sport has gained so much popularity. His day job is now mostly retrofitting the bush planes that compete in competitions like this.

"When I say I can land, (when) I look on the field and say I can land there. In an emergency I can land there, we also land there for fun," said Ardillo.

If your feet are firmly planted on the ground, but you'd like to get into aviation, everyone we spoke with said coming to the Wayne America Fly-In would be a great chance to get yourself acquainted with the skies.

Just ask Nick Ardillo, a pilot from Texas who has less than 200 flight hours in his tail-dragging plane.

"These oversize tires really help, you know, so it doesn't have to be an approved (landing) strip. (You can) land off airport (on) gravel, roads, dirt roads, gravel bars and rivers," said Ardillo.

Check out video and photos from the Wayne America Fly-In. ■

State Fly-In & Airshow at Grand Island Draws Crowd

By Tiffany Thompson, Aeronautics

A visit from the Boeing B-29 Superfortress "Doc" bomber was a hit attraction at the 2023 State Fly-In at CNRA in Grand Island. This aircraft is one of two flying in the world.

On Saturday, June 3rd, sunny skies prevailed as the Central Nebraska Regional Airport (CNRA) in Grand Island hosted the 2023 State Fly-In. Highlights of the event included an airshow, static displays, vendors, and a visit from the B-29 Bomber, Doc.

The morning started with heavy fog that lifted later, revealing a beautiful day with a pleasant breeze, perfect for an airshow. Many spectators came out to watch the airshow, and some were lucky enough to find shade under the wing of the B-29. Along with providing shade, the B-29 was a hit attraction, with a long line of curious spectators waiting to tour the bomber. A Chinook helicopter was also open for the public to tour.

The airshow opened with a flag jump anthem performed by the Lincoln Sport Parachute Club. The aerobatic performances by Brian Correll, Doug Roth, Jeff Shetterly, Bob Richards, Van Guard Squadron, Bob Freeman, Susan Dacy, Team Vortex, and Erik Edgren's Clipped T Comedy were exhilarating to watch.

The airshow also drew in many spectators, including amateur and professional photographers hoping to catch the perfect shot of planes in action. Vendors were busy selling their goods, including bottles of ice-cold water. Civil Air Patrol cadets provided security and assisted spectators as needed.

An airshow (top) and static aircraft displays, including a Cessna 140 along with the Navy T-6 Trainer (bottom), kept spectators' attention.

Girls State 2023 Offers Opportunity to Explore Aviation

By David Morris

The American Legion Auxiliary Girls State is a nonpartisan program that teaches young women responsible citizenship. The program began in 1937.

At Girls State, the delegates study local, county and state government. They do this by setting up their own miniature governments and administering them according to the rules and procedures set by Nebraska's laws.

On Thursday, June 8, four young ladies, all just completing their junior year in high school, visited the NDOT – Division of Aeronautics. During their visit, they were greeted by Aeronautics Director Jeremy Borrell, Airport Service Manager Tiffany Thompson, and Flight Operations Manager David Morris. An overview on the responsibilities of the Division of Aeronautics was discussed as well as various opportunities available for anyone pursuing a career in aviation.

After an interesting discussion in the conference room, the group was provided a tour of the state-owned aircraft, Beechcraft King Air C90GTx. The airplane tour provided some of the young folks their first opportunity to experience being near a general aviation aircraft.

Each of the four individuals involved in the visit at the Division of Aeronautics held an elected position that would simulate the structure of the department. These individuals were Lacy Mehaffey of Elkhorn, Emma Klahn of Madrid, Jessalinn Dieriex of Rushville, and Kylee Compton of Howells. The accompanying staff member was Vicki Colson of Paxton.

Girls State visitors to the NDOT – Division of Aeronautics, pictured in front of the state-owned aircraft, Beechcraft King Air C90GTx, from l to r: staff member Vicki Colson of Paxton, Lacy Mehaffey of Elkhorn, Emma Klahn of Madrid, Jessalinn Dieriex of Rushville, and Kylee Compton of Howells.

We are always honored to be part of the Girls State program. Here at the Division of Aeronautics we consider this opportunity an investment in our young folks. ■

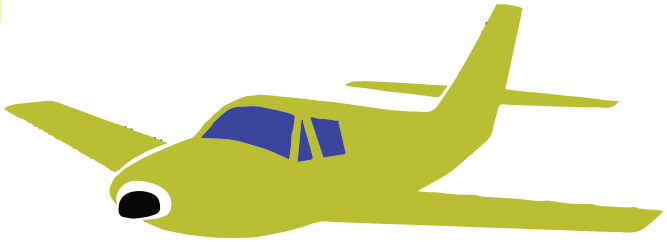
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Announces Safety Panel

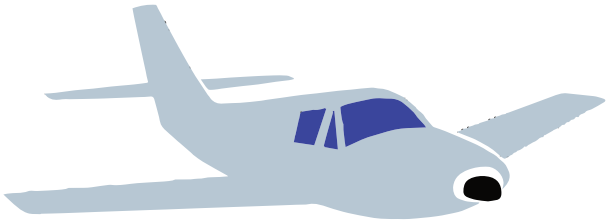
Courtesy of NBAA Insider Daily

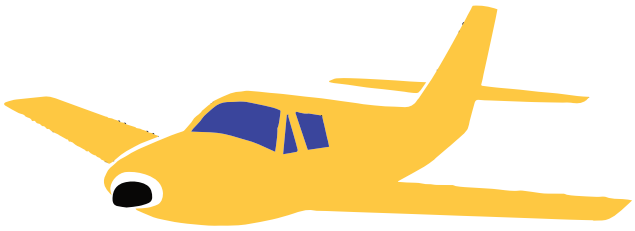
The FAA has formed a blue-chip panel of aviation industry experts to recommend safety enhancements industry wide. The members of the new FAA National Airspace System Safety Review Team include former NASA Administrator and astronaut Charles Bolden Jr.; former Air Line Pilots Association, International President Captain Tim Canoll; former National Air Traffic Controllers Association Executive Vice President Patricia Gilbert; former FAA Chief Operating Officer David Grizzle; former FAA Administrator Michael Huerta; and former NTSB Chair Robert Sumwalt.

A FAA Safety Summit held in March led to the formation of the new FAA National Airspace System Safety Review Team, comprised of a panel of aviation industry experts.

"We are committed to maintaining the safest period in U.S. aviation history," Acting Administrator Billy Nolen said. "This team will strengthen our ongoing safety efforts and identify specific investments we can make to bolster the National Airspace System." The group will start work in May and will deliver recommendations in October. The formation of the committee came out of a safety summit held in March by the FAA in March in response to seven potentially serious aviation incidents in the previous three months ■.







Events Calendar

Please check the Aeronautics web page for a list of upcoming aviation events.

York Airport (KJYR)
EAA Chapter 1055 Fly-in breakfast (free-will donation) on the 1st Saturday of the month, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Crete Airport (KCEK)
EAA Chapter 569 Fly-in breakfast on the 3rd Saturday of every month, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.
Suggested donation:
$10 for adults; $5 for kids

3rd Thursday Pilot Lunch
Jams – Midtown
7814 West Dodge Road,
Omaha, NE 68114
Third Thursday of each month at 11:00 a.m.

Nebraska Chapter of the Antique Airplane Association hamburger cookout (free-will donation) last Saturday of the month, May-October
11:30-1:00pm at KHSI
Hastings Municipal Airport.

Pender Fly-in June 25
8 a.m. to 11a.m. PIC eat free.
Pender Nebraska zeroc4
Contact: John Miller 816-210-2081

Kearney Regional Airport (EAR)
EAA Chapter 1091
Fly In Breakfast Saturday July 8
8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. (Raffle Prizes)
Contact: Kearney Flight Service with any questions. 308-234-4072

Wing Nuts Flying Circus
EAA Chapter 1405 Fly-In, July 8
Gould Peterson Memorial Airport (K57)
Tarkio, Missouri
$10.00 Per Person Airshow Admission
Fly-In's & 5 & Under Free
816-244-6927 Starts at 7:30 a.m.

Great Plains Wing of the Commemorative Air Force Annual Flight Breakfast and Pancake Feed
Saturday, August 5
8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Council Bluffs Municipal Airport (KCBF)
Pancakes by The Pancake Man
Military and GA Aircraft on display
Military Museum open
Discovery Flights by Revv Aviation
Contact: Jeff Hutcheson
jeffhutcheson3@gmail.com
402-981-4633

Annual Nebraska Chapter of the AAA fly-in at Hastings
August 25-27. Includes an air tour from there to the AAA fly-in at Blakesburg, Iowa.