

MONTANA PILOTS' ASSOCIATION



Heading Bug

November/December 2004

NOTAMS:

AVIATION NUMBERS SHOW GROWTH TREND

—The numbers are showing that the long-hoped-for GA recovery is underway, with industry billings up almost 16 percent in the first nine months of this year, the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA) reported recently. "Recovery of the U.S. economy and accelerated depreciation enacted by Congress for operators of new airplanes stimulated every segment of our industry," said Ron Swanda, interim president of GAMA.

...BUT ACCIDENTS ALSO ARE UP

—Thirty-nine people died in general aviation aircraft in October, EAA reported last week. That's the second-deadliest October in over six years, and should be a "wake-up call" for aviators, EAA said. With winter ahead, and the extra challenges of icing, darkness and marginal weather, pilots need to be extra vigilant to bring the accident rate down. All pilots should take advantage of the available safety initiatives such as EAA's Technical Counselor and Flight Advisor programs for homebuilders, and safety programs offered by the FAA, AOPA and other organizations. "Fly in good weather, and practice superior airmanship," EAA says, and that's a good start for advice on how to avoid becoming a statistic. *Avflash 11/8*

DTC DUAT ADDS NEW FEATURES TO WEB SITE

—DTC Weather and Flight Planning Services (www.duat.com) has announced improvements to its Web site that will make flight planning easier. The site now includes airport diagrams and allows users to overlay a proposed route of flight on radar graphics. In addition, the system highlights errors that are entered into request boxes, allowing pilots to make corrections. New Jersey based DTC Duat announced the changes at AOPA Expo on Oct. 22. *AOPA ePilot 10/22*

President's Message:

The Montana Pilots' Association congratulates Governor-Elect Brian Schweitzer for his successful campaign for Governor of Montana. The MPA looks forward to developing a good working relationship with Governor Schweitzer and his administration as we have had with past governors. The MPA seat on the State Aeronautics Board is up for reappointment and several MPA members have contacted me about this opening. I can honestly report that all of those with whom I have spoken would make excellent MPA representatives. Besides the MPA seat, four other seats are up for reappointment. Governor-Elect Schweitzer will be making those selections in the near future. He has many outstanding candidates to choose from and without a doubt, he will select the right people to represent the Aviation Community of Montana; forward thinking people who will offer sound advice and make sound decisions.

The Southwest Montana Hangar which includes Beaverhead, Madison, Jefferson, Deer Lodge, Silver Bow, Granite and Powell counties is co-hosting the 2005 Montana Aviation Conference in Butte, March 3-5. By all reports, it is unfolding to be another first-class aviation event for Montana, neighboring states and Canadian Provinces. We thank the Southwest Montana Hangar for taking on this huge task. During the Montana Aviation Conference, the MPA will again be giving out awards and scholarships to many well-deserving recipients. Please be thinking about who should receive these awards and let Bob Hollister know your nominations at 406-356-7107 or bhollister@rangeweb.net.

The 2005 membership renewals have been sent out so please pass on the brochure you receive with your 2005 Membership Card to someone you feel would benefit by joining the MPA. It is that sincere person-to-person invitation to join that makes the difference. We can look forward to another successful membership campaign again in 2005. The MPA increased its membership by close to 250 in 2004 through the hard work of all of you. Let's make 2005 another banner year by signing up another 250 members. With a membership force of over 1,000, our voice in aviation for Montana will be heard.

The MPA Board is meeting in Lewistown, Dec. 11, for its last meeting of the year. The Central Montana Hangar is having their Christmas party that evening and welcomes all MPA members who plan to attend the board meeting. For many years this hangar party has brought together MPA members and guests from across the state to celebrate another year of flying, exchange stories, meet new friends and thank the known and unknown powers of our universe for sharing with us the wonderful gift of flight.

Chuck Manning
MPA President
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Calendar of Events

- Dec. 11**—MPA Board meeting—1p.m. in the Moccasin Room at the Yogo Inn—Lewistown (LWS)
- Dec. 11**—Central Montana Hangar's Christmas party—6 p.m. at the Yogo Inn—Lewistown
- Dec. 25**—Merry Christmas
- Jan. 1**—Happy New Years
- Jan. 21-23**—Terry Surratt Memorial Winter Survival Clinic—for more information call—406-444-2506
- Feb. 5-6**—Flight instructor refresher clinic—for more information call—406-444-2506
- Mar. 3-5**—Montana Aviation Conference—Butte (BTM)—for more information call—406-444-2506
- May 21-22**—Northwest Aviation Association (NWAA) Fly2Fun aviation event at the Linn County Fair & Expo adjacent to the Albany Airport (S12), Albany, Oregon—for more information—www.Fly2Fun.org
- May 28-29**—Spotted Bear Airstrip work session
- June 18-19**—Meadow Creek Airstrip work session
- July 16-17**—Schafer Airstrip work session
- Aug. 21**—Seventh annual Polson Fly-In at Polson (8S1)



2005 Awards Committee Needs Applications!

It is time to start thinking about the awards to be presented at the Montana Aviation Conference March 3-5 in Butte. Nominations are needed for the following awards:

- **Pilot of the Year Award**
- **Junior Pilot Award**
- **Montana Pilots' Association Flight Training Award**
- **Bill Matthews Award**
- **Bent Prop Award**
- **Presidents Award**

A full description of the awards can be found on the MPA Web site. These awards will not be given if a suitable candidate has not been nominated. Please send your nominations, except the Junior Pilot and the Flight Training Awards, to Bob Hollister, bhollister@rangeweb.net by Feb. 1. For the Junior Pilot Award and Flight Training Awards please contact Jeanne MacPherson, Montana Aeronautics Division, jemacpherson@state.mt.us by Jan. 28.

Civil Air Patrol is Requesting Nominations for the 2005 Aerospace Education Teacher's Awards—

The Montana Wing of Civil Air Patrol (CAP) is requesting nominations from all Montana residents for the *Frank G. Brewer –CAP Memorial Aerospace Education Award* and the *A. Scott Crossfield Aerospace Education Teacher of the Year Award*. The Crossfield Award includes membership in the Crown Circle of the National Congress on Aviation and Space Education and a \$1,000 cash prize. The award nomination deadline is 15 January 2005 for the Brewer Award and the Crossfield Award. Aerospace education includes subjects such as astronomy, astronautics,

aviation, and all related fields of science.

Individual schools or entire school districts, non-profit organizations (*i.e. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H Clubs, pilot associations, astronomy clubs, model rocketry clubs, etc.*), colleges and universities, corporations, government agencies and professional educators as well as non-teachers involved in any facet of aerospace education may be nominated for the Brewer Award, however, the Crossfield Award is intended exclusively for professional educators. Contact the Montana Wing Director of Aerospace Education, Captain Kaye Ebelt, at kbelt@msn.com or at 406-251-3341, or contact CAP's Aerospace Education Division at aeadmin@capnhq.gov for information about CAP's various aerospace education programs.

EMS Technologies provides the State of Montana with the capability to locate downed aircraft using SARMaster™

EMS Technologies, Inc. announced Nov. 15, at the Emergency Response 2004 Exhibition & Conference, the State of Montana's Department of Transportation is using the SARMaster™ Integrated Search and Rescue Solution in its 24/7 dispatch center in Helena to track Emergency Locator Transmitters (ELTs) emitted by downed aircraft across the state. The Aeronautics Division can now respond to ELTs in the same way as the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRCC) at Langley Air Force Base. "Montana is a large state with so many remote valleys that you could have a downed aircraft and never see it," said Dr. Neil Mackay, senior vice president and general manager, EMS Technologies' SATCOM Division. Jeanne MacPherson, Chief of the Safety and Education Bureau of the State of Montana's Aeronautics Division, said, "We respond to 125 incidents per year, including ELTs and overdue aircraft. We have used SARMaster to document our actions, and have utilized the reporting format to plot locations on maps. The maps, especially the CAP grid, are useful for us."

EMS has provided ground equipment and management systems for use with the COSPAS-SARSAT satellite system since its launch in 1981. Since that time, the COSPAS-SARSAT system has been credited with saving more than 15,000 lives by using spacecraft and ground facilities to detect and locate signals from distress beacons.

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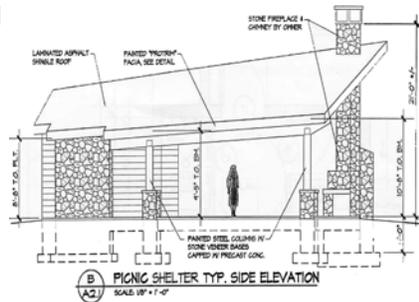
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Hangar Reports

Why is it called a hangar—When famed aviator Louis Bleriot (the first to fly across the English Channel in a powered aircraft on July 25, 1909) crash-landed in northern France in the early 1920's, he put his airplane into a farmer's steel cattle pen made by REIDsteel, a company based in Christchurch, England. "Hangar," is northern French dialect for cattle pen. Louis Bleriot phoned REIDsteel and ordered the first three 'Hangars', and the company made hangars and hangar doors ever since. They placed an advertisement in the French journal *La Science et La Vie* in 1935. It offered agricultural buildings, garages, car parks, churches, *hangars* and houses. This may be the world's first advertisement for an airplane hangar. This history can be verified by visiting REIDsteel's Web site at www.reidsteel.aero/history.htm. *Editor's note—this story came to the Heading Bug via the South Dakota Pilots' Association newsletter which imported it from the Mid America Transportation and Aviation Museum (Sioux City, Iowa) newsletter.*

Gallatin Valley Hangar—in conjunction with the Gallatin Airport Authority and the Recreational Aviation Foundation (RAF) is building a pilot shelter at the Bozeman airport. The shelter is primarily for summer-time use and will feature men's and women's bathrooms, fireplace, BBQ and a grassy area for tents. *By Dennis Guentzel*



Miles City Hangar—held a meeting Nov. 8 at the Miles City Airport. It was decided to keep the same officers as last year, Lee Richardson, president, Monte Reder, vice president, and Barb Hirsch sec-treas. The hangar Christmas party will be held on Jan. 10 and all hangars are invited. I will mail out cards with the place and time. The second annual steak fry will be held on the first Saturday in June at Sunday Creek Airpark. We are going to try and get the "Rondi's" started again and will let everyone know where they will be as soon as possible, will most likely put it on the Web site. Fly safe. *By Barb Hirsch*

Mission Valley Hangar—Monday, Oct. 18, a group of 25 pilots and aviation enthusiasts met in Mauri Morin's hangar at the Ronan Airport and founded the Mission Valley Hangar. Chuck Manning, MPA president, and Chuck Jarecki, an MPA and RAF director, attended and spoke on the benefits of MPA membership. The group elected Mauri Morin, president, and Pat Kelly, vice president. The Mission Valley Hangar covers Lake County and plans to rotate meetings between Polson, Ronan and St. Ignatius. The meetings will be held on the fourth Monday of each month at 7 p.m. The first regular meeting was held Monday, Nov.22 again at Morin's hangar. Jerry

Kurzenbaum was elected hangar secretary and Bill Olson was elected treasurer. No meeting will be held in December. The next meeting will be Jan. 24 at Allard's Buffalo Ranch Café in St. Ignatius. Nels Jensen will give a presentation and video on the B-747 Supertanker. *By Art Lindstrom*

Southwestern Montana Hangar—held meetings the past three months at Twin Bridges, Butte and Dillon respectively. Most of the agenda centered around the Montana Aviation Conference to be held in Butte and sponsored by our hangar. Other agenda issues were recreational airstrips, the closure of the Drummond VOR, which the group opposes, and the Philipsburg airport. There are reports of pressure to close the airport. Over twenty people have attended each of the last three meetings and the next meeting will be held in Twin Bridges on Dec. 14 at Ruby Valley Aviation. *By Byron Bayers*

Valley Hangar—sponsored a "Rondi" Saturday, Oct. 23, at Bud Johnson's airstrip south of Saco. Bud Johnson has two airstrips and three airplanes. Eight airplanes flew into the airstrip where Bud met us at the hangars and gave us a tour of his airplanes including the Pietenpol he started building in 1981. I must say he was really a true host. Bud explained all about building the Pietenpol and the workmanship he put into it. Joe Younkin flew in with his C-182, opened the big door on the side of the plane and presto, coffee and donuts. Maybe we can have another Rondi next month and we'll bring the flying coffee shop. See you in the sky. *By Ken James*

Vigilante Hangar—held its first meeting of the fall on Oct. 20 at Vetter's FBO at the Helena Regional Airport. The ever-popular potluck was probably responsible for the good turn-out. During the business meeting the members discussed possible plans for the new season, including more fly-outs and safety meetings. The June fly-out to Lincoln (hosted by Jerry and Liz Cain) and the July fly-out to Seeley Lake (hosted by Wade and Geanette Cebulski) are both very popular events, and should be continued. Bill Gallea, vice president and program chairman, has done a great job lining up informative and helpful programs for the hangar members.

The members decided to continue meeting on the second Wednesday of the month. The next meeting is set for Nov. 10, and will have a program by Steve Jones of the FAA presenting an AOPA film on "take-offs and landings." Several people voiced concerns about the rash of aviation accidents in Montana over the last few months, and decided it was a good time for a discussion of safety issues. The program will qualify as part of the WINGS program.

The annual Christmas party will be held Dec. 10. If he is able to obtain an IFR clearance, a visitor from the North Pole is expected to attend. Election of officers for next year is planned. *By Joe Roberts*

Montana Wildlife Federation Opposes Seaplanes

Seaplanes—October 14, 2004 - The Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF), an organization that claims to work "to provide equal access to wildlife, public lands and water for all citizens," has come out in opposition to Seaplane Pilots' Association efforts to maintain seaplane access to the vast stretch of the Missouri River planned for inclusion in the new Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

The current issue of the Montana Wildlife Federation's newsletter contains an article urging readers to write to the Bureau of Land Management and urge the BLM not to allow seaplanes on the river. The article suggests that the river and campsites belong to canoeists, not pilots, and alleges safety and liability issues without providing any elaboration or supporting evidence. The MWF did not acknowledge that pilots have just as much right to the public lands and campgrounds as other citizens, even though they state that part of their purpose is to promote equal access to public lands.

The MWF also suggested that seaplanes are a disruption to the solitude sought by wildlife, hunters, anglers and floaters, but failed to point out that SPA is only advocating seaplane access to stretches of river where motorboats are permitted. The MWF failed to consider that hunters, anglers and floaters may be disruptive to the solitude sought by seaplane pilots, and failed to acknowledge that seaplane pilots tolerate the disruption and competition for campsite space without complaint.

At stake is access to over a hundred miles of the Missouri River in Montana. The stretch of river is presently open to seaplanes, although it is very rarely used by seaplanes. The Bureau of Land Management is tasked with implementing a new Missouri River Breaks National Monument along the river, and is presently drafting a management plan for that Monument. The Seaplane Pilots' Association takes the position that seaplanes should be allowed access to those stretches where motorized boats are permitted, while the BLM's preferred alternative calls for seaplane access to only a few miles of river. The Seaplane Pilots' Association has already established via a public records request that the BLM's preferred seaplane policy has no basis in research, fact, or public requests for regulation.

Members of the Seaplane Pilots' Association are urged to write to Gary Slagel, Monument Manager, BLM - Lewistown Field Office, PO Box 1160, Lewistown, MT 59457, or email mt_lewistown_FO@BLM.gov in support of seaplane access to the Monument and to specifically refute the MWF's false, misleading, and elitist claims. Members who are interested in this issue are also urged to contact the Seaplane Pilots Association for inclusion in future notices as this issue develops.

Editor's note--This article is from the Seaplane Pilots' Association Web site and all pilots, not just seaplane pilots, should be voicing their concern that airplanes are discriminated against by local, state and federal agencies. Millions of dollars are spent every year to build or maintain trail heads, trails, camp grounds, boat launch ramps, horse corrals with loading chutes, snowmobile

parking lots and all with disabled person access but little or nothing is spent to allow airplanes access to the same recreational sites. In the past, pilots have not spoken up and the consequence is the loss of airstrips in areas like the Bob Marshall Wilderness where aviation had long been established. The aviation community is a small group compared to the wilderness associations but aviation needs to step up to the plate and find its collective voice. Contact a Recreational Airstrip Committee member to find out how to make your voice heard.



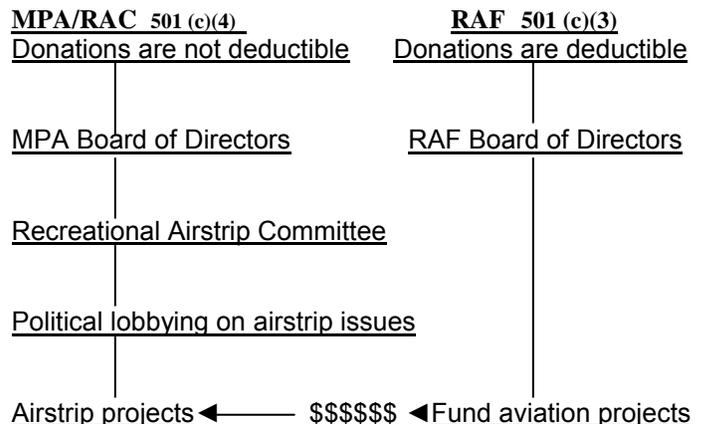
RAC and RAF What Do These Acronyms Mean?

By Chuck Jarecki

The Recreational Airstrip Committee (RAC) is one of the committees of the MPA. It has many purposes, among which is working as a political action committee to not only preserve but also create airstrips. This includes participation in both national forest planning sessions and the development of the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument Resource Management Plan. The committee also coordinates the volunteer maintenance of state and federally owned airstrips. For more information on the RAC visit the MPA Web site at: www.montanapilots.org.

The Recreational Aviation Foundation (RAF) is a non-profit, charitable organization and not a part of the MPA. It is a Montana corporation, established to solicit funds and property through tax-deductible donations to preserve, maintain and create recreational airstrips and fund aviation education and safety programs. Funding requests come not only from the MPA through the RAC, but also from other aviation organizations. Although the RAF was established in Montana, plans are to expand to other states as needs are identified. For more information on the RAF visit their Web site at: www.recreationaviationfoundation.org.

Below is a flow chart showing how the two groups are set up and interact.



Border crossings can ruin a good day's flying!

Recently my wife and I took a day off from work and headed to a Fly-In along the U.S./Canadian Border on the North Fork of the Flathead River. With perfect weather and things caught up at the office, it was just about as good as it gets for people like us. We decided to take the scenic route and fly northeast from Helena towards Havre and then West along the U.S./Canadian Border. This route lengthened the trip and gave us more time to enjoy a fall day in Montana. Around noon we decided to stop for lunch and take a little walk about. Always fun to see new places. We picked an airport from the Montana Airport directory which listed the services we needed. The directory shows Sweetgrass, Ross International (7S8) is owned by the State of Montana, with the border running along the centerline of the runway, Unicom 122.8 (which means its a manned facility, right?) located at U.S. Customs and a caution to not land on the taxiway and that the field is rough. I called about 10 miles out and again five miles out and no response. We landed and discovered the tie downs are located on the Canadian side of the runway but decided that was the place they wanted us to park and so we did.

We walked to the U.S. Customs office and talked with some of the many people standing around. We explained to a customs agent what we were doing and where we came from, used the locked and guarded restrooms, obtained instructions on how to get out of the building and walked into Sweetgrass. It was very pleasant and we had a very good lunch at a local cafe. Now the good part, on our return to the airport, an official U.S. Customs vehicle and agent were guarding our airplane.

We talked with the agent and retold our story. He mentioned they heard us call in but were too busy to answer, but they decided to check us out. The fellow was very professional and courteous and when he drove away we began preparing to make our departure. Before we could leave the customs agent we initially met returned and explained his manager wanted to talk to us and we should wait. Now this guy, the manager, was a real crime buster type of fellow and it was obvious we had better be respectful or go to jail.

After a question and answer session he stated, "if you were a little younger I would detain you and run a security check but since I cannot find any violations, I will let you continue on your journey. But don't take any pictures of the border crossing station" he added, because he thought the station would be a priority terrorist target.

So once again we were given permission to leave; however, now a four-person detachment from Canadian Customs arrived along with the next higher U.S. boss for a total of four vehicles and seven people securing the airplane. After they held a pow wow we were once again allowed to go but not without a parting shot from the middle U.S. boss, "I'm still going to run you through the system." (Background check I hope.)

It's pretty hard to ruin a good day flying but this was

close. We have crossed the borders many times and have run into all kinds of personalities. Our presence this day apparently caught them off guard and, in my opinion, they overreacted. Fortunately we did not violate any regulations (at least that we were aware of), and pilots need to work hard to follow all the rules since we are on the radar scope and do not want our rights further infringed upon because of our negligence.

We flew past two more border crossing stations, which we planned to visit, but by now time was running short and we had had enough fun for one day. At our destination next to a "closed" border crossing station we encountered one border guard and seven airplanes. This agent was polite, courteous and friendly. Happy flying.

By Lowell Hanson, Vigilante Hangar

Good intentions and being "prepared" do not always guarantee a happy ending—As

a relatively new pilot, the number and complexity of regulations associated with flying never ceases to amaze me. It is also frustrating when one or more of these regulations sneak up behind you and whack you over the head. This was demonstrated to me most dramatically last summer on a business trip to Canada. It also gave my friend, Chuck Jarecki, a good chuckle at my expense. His chuckle was followed by encouragement to write of my experience so others may learn from my mistake.

I am a professor at the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station located on the east shore of the lake. My professional field is stream and river ecology. We have research sites from Kamchatka, Russia, around the Pacific-rim to Tierra del Fuego, Chile. To accomplish our research goals, I obtained my pilot's license and a Cessna 185, which I use for business and pleasure. Part of my research this summer took me to the Skeena River in British Columbia, and that is where this story begins.

As a conscientious pilot, I wanted to make certain I had all my bases covered. While the philosophy of "It is easier to seek forgiveness than permission" may work in some parts of my life, I already knew aviation was not one of them. So, I began to investigate what steps would be needed to successfully travel to Canada and back.

First, I called my insurance agent to make certain that my liabilities and my airplane would be covered for the trip. Next, I contacted the Helena FAA Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) via their Web site. I also talked to one of the staffers at their office for clarification on a couple items. The FSDO staffer provided excellent flight-related information and recommended I contact both Great Falls FSS and Seattle Center a few days prior to departure to obtain any additional information about the details associated with crossing into Canada. On the Helena FSDO homepage is a link titled: Flying to Canada? If you click on that link, you will be directed to "Customs Procedures" which lists procedures for "Entering USA/Alaska" and "Entering Canada."

Continued on next page

Following these instructions, on the day before the flight to Canada I called CANPASS and made arrangements for customs clearance at Cranbrook, BC. The next morning, I filed my flight plan with Great Falls FSS, received a squawk code for the flight and opened my flight plan after departing. Upon arrival in Cranbrook, I was surprised when we were not met by a Canadian Customs Official. I inquired at the FBO about the customs personnel and was given a phone number to call. When I called the number I spoke to the local customs agent, who was in town on other business, and after a couple of questions, I was given a pass code number and cleared to proceed on my journey. Cool!

Nearly a week later, on my return from Canada, I filed a flight plan at Williams Lake, BC for a trans-border crossing North of Bonners Ferry, Idaho with customs inspection at Glacier International Airport (FCA) in Kalispell. Following the procedures from the FAA Web site, I received a squawk code from the Canadian FSS at Kamloops and was assured my Flight Plan would be passed to U.S. FSS and to U.S. Customs. As I approached the Canada/U.S. border I contacted Seattle Center to verify my crossing. They had my flight plan, squawk and they had me on radar and thus I would not be met by an F-16 out of Malmstrom. All was well!

At this point I calculated I was more than 30 minutes ahead of schedule, so once again following the procedures from the FAA Web site, I contacted Great Falls FSS on the radio and requested they notify U.S. Customs at FCA of my new ETA. This was done about 45 minutes prior to landing and about five minutes later flight service called to inform me they had successfully contacted the customs office in Kalispell and they (the customs agents) could receive me.

Eric Seabase, my flying partner for the trip, and I landed at FCA and taxied to the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol building. I have crossed the U.S./Canada border by car many times. As a child growing up in Michigan my family routinely traveled to Canada on vacations and on trips to the east coast through Ontario. My wife and I have crossed the border into BC many times, before and after 9/11. Never in my wildest imagination was I prepared for what happened as we came to the U.S. Customs building in Kalispell.

As the engine came to a stop, Eric stepped out of the plane, pulled out his cell phone and began calling his wife. The first of two agents, with his hand firmly placed on his side arm, commanded Eric to get back in the plane immediately and terminate his phone call. The second agent walked to my side of the airplane, asked me to open the door and step out. He then informed me I had landed without "landing rights" and I was in violation of Federal Law. While I showed him my pilot's license, aircraft registration and airworthiness documents, the first agent searched through the airplane looking for anything "suspicious" we might be smuggling into the country. He then said it was in his authority to impound my airplane and its contents because of this violation.

I thought, but did not say, "You've got to be kidding," I did say however, "I assure you we are not trying to get away

with anything here." We had nothing to hide and, in good faith, I believed we were in compliance with the law.

So, I asked, "didn't you receive my flight plan that I was coming?" "Yes, he replied, but you must call and make personal contact with the customs agent at all non-international airports." "Wait a minute", I asked, "Isn't this Glacier International Airport and, isn't this a Customs Office that receives aircraft?" The answer, of course, was yes to both, but no to both as well. Yes, this was Glacier International Airport, but no, this is not an international airport. And, yes this is a customs office, but no, one cannot land without specific permission that only they can give. "Not even during regular hours?" No, not even during regular hours. I said to myself, "just because this is a customs office here to serve and protect U.S. citizens, convenience and reasonable treatment are obviously not part of the new program."

The agent then handed me a citation accompanied by a notice that I would be hearing from the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol regional office in Great Falls. Sure enough, about a week later I received a citation for \$5000. After a brief, but noticeable heart attack, I resolved this must be a mistake. I contacted the Great Falls office. Nope, no mistake. "However," I was told, "you can ask for administrative relief." Following a written explanation of the above events, my fine was reduced to \$500.

Do I believe the customs agents in Kalispell were deceptive by telling the Great Falls FSS to tell me to come ahead and I would be received and do I feel like the FSS Web site at the Helena FSDO is misleading? Yes to both! The lesson learned from this is; when flying to and from Canada one must deal with two distinctly separate agencies, the FAA and the Department of Homeland Security in the form of the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol. Prior to any trans-border flying, prepare yourself by visiting both the regional FSDO Web site www.faa.gov/fsdo/hln/ for flight-related information and the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Web site www.cbp.gov (from the home page, go to Know before you go and then to the Guide for Private Flyers) for customs information including U.S. Customs airports. You can call the Helena FSDO office toll free at 800-457-9917 and you can contact U.S. Customs and Border Patrol toll free, 24/7 at their Montana Aviation Center in Great Falls at 877-697-5436. If you are flying into a landing rights airport, you must call them directly for specific permission to land. Landing rights are not granted from the ADVISE CUSTOMS (ADCUS) in the remarks section of flight plans

Since 9/11, we have demanded and received tighter security at our borders. Clearly, these guys (U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Agents) are serious and without humor. Nonetheless, I did not like being treated in a manner I felt was rude at best and I hope the days of being treated poorly at our own borders will be short lived. I really don't look middle-eastern or like a drug runner. I don't even look like a typical UM professor, however this was a good lesson, albeit an expensive one. *By Ric Hauer, Mission Valley Hangar*

She's OK to solo—On Sunday, Oct. 10, Rebecca Smith, a 16 year old Fergus High School (Lewistown) student, soloed Pete Smith's 1946 Aeronca Champ. Pete has owned the Champ since 1975 and only two students have soloed in it, Rebecca and Pete. Rebecca has flown since age three and done most of the flying as soon as she was able to reach the rudder pedals.



Rebecca and her dad Pete

Blakey vows to protect airports, recognizes AOPA ASN program—FAA Administrator Marion Blakey called airports "natural resources," during her speech at AOPA Expo on Oct.21. "Once they're gone, they're gone," she said. "And I, for one, think we need to do a better job protecting the framework of our national transportation system." Blakey specifically credited the AOPA Airport Support Network (ASN) for its efforts in protecting airports, calling the program's volunteers "an early warning system that really works." Blakey also said that she was concerned about another airport access problem--general aviation being forced out of airports in favor of corporate aviation. "I want to assure you that we're working that issue as well," she said.

AOPA ePilot 10/22

Stehekin State Airport Update—A major milestone was reached on Oct. 12, when the irrigation system at Stehekin was operationally tested for the first time. After almost a year and a half of hard work, including some disappointing setbacks, the sprinkler system stretching along 2,000 feet of the west side of the runway was activated. The 39 sprinkler heads installed in six stations worked as planned, covering an average of 63 feet of the 100 foot wide runway.



The major hurdle to this project was the discovery of a bad batch of irrigation pipe from the manufacturer. Unfortunately the bad lot number was mostly in the 2000 foot section buried along the west side of the runway. In early October we re-dug the trench and laid new four inch pipe, spliced in the valve system and added surge controls with additional drain valves. While surveying the uphill supply line we found a 30-inch diameter tree had up-rooted, smashing the pipe. With help from the National Park Service (NPS), a chainsaw and splice materials we were soon ready to pressurize the system. With almost a mile

of PVC pipe installed in over a years time we only had one small leak to fix during the pressure test. The first station tested was at the north end of the strip. It was a sight to see as the first seven sprinkler heads popped out of the ground and shot water across the runway. After testing and adjusting the west side installation, the trench was filled, the rocks hauled off and the area smoothed for reseeding. The system has been drained and secured for the winter. Steve Smith and I will be heading back in March for a week to start installation of the east side system. This will be done in 300-foot sections to keep the impact to the airport at a minimum. I will send out notices as we get dates confirmed. As you all know, the trees at Stehekin have been posing a hazard for pilots for many years. Several months back the North Cascades National Park Service approved a Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Aviation plan to clear trees within the boundaries as set by the original 1957 right-of-way plat map. This widens the clearing from approx 200 feet to 400 feet. The ends of the runway will be cleared out 1,000 feet and fan out from the strip 800 feet in width. After a survey and tree count it was determined about 700 trees over six-inches in diameter need to be removed. In an effort to get the job completed as soon as possible WSDOT Aviation contracted the job to a local company. As of today 70 percent of the trees have been removed and the balance should be complete by the end of the month. The tree clearing plan has become part of the conditional use permit of the airstrip. This means we can keep the trees cleared within that defined use area as we see fit. A second plan is in the works that identifies hazard trees outside our use area and will be submitted to NPS very soon. That will be a longer process as it has to go through an environmental review. The NPS has been extremely helpful in getting these much needed improvements completed at the airport. We will also be seeding the runway as soon as the snow melts and adding some fill to the north end of the runway. When the airport opens in spring the new grass should be well established and being watered daily.

I want to thank all of you who have spent some of your valuable time and effort to help make Stehekin State Airport one of the best recreational airstrips in the state. I am attaching a picture for your enjoyment. We will post many more pictures on the WSDOT Aviation Web site within a couple weeks. Have a great winter.

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Editor's note—The Stehekin State Airport is a crown jewel for a backcountry airstrip. It is located upstream from Lake Chelan in the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area which is surrounded by the Glacier Peak Wilderness, North Cascades National Park and the Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness. The only way into this area is by airplane, passenger ferry on Lake Chelan or by trail. Stehekin is maintained under an agreement between the pilots, state and federal agencies, much like Meadow Creek, Schafer and Spotted Bear airports in Montana.

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