

The Congressional Record

Newsletter of the Congressional Flying Club and Montgomery Senior Squadron, CAP

Vol. 29, No. 6

Gaithersburg, MD (KGAI)

June 2011

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President's message

Some of our older members will remember **Julian "Tweed" Cottrell**, who passed away this week. According to Bill Hughes, no arrangements for viewing or funeral services have been made yet. Information will be passed along as soon as it is available.

Things are plugging along ever so slowly, so hang in there and fly when you can.

Sorry for the short article — I'll do my best to be more talkative next month.

❖ **BOB HAWKINS**

Chaplain's corner

THE REWARDS OF HOSPITALITY

It's always nice to have guests. Oh, yes, they push us a bit to get ready, and they do make an impact on the course of our routines. But they always leave us richer than we were when they arrived. Remember the last few touch-ups you felt forced to make to ensure that the unfinished details you have tolerated for six months don't get noticed by the visitors? And sometimes you buy a few extras that you hope might score a rating of at least "pleasing" from the guests. They, the guests, come and they go; they stress us a little; but we are better.

We met an airline worker on the way out of Bogotá, Colombia, last October. Things clicked too easily between the wife and the worker. And in short order they had sealed a deal with the declaration, "mi casa, su casa!" (My house is your house!) Well, at 2,500 miles apart, that ought not to be much of a threat, I thought. Then I remembered the last time I heard that declaration. We were in Chicago. Weeks later a call came from a

man whom we had forgotten. Would be arriving with wife and teenage daughter for some hospitality. We wondered who this might be, and how to prepare for them. You never want to say something like "Sorry, but could you tell me who you are!" They wanted to see Washington. We lodged them and showed them, and had a wonderful time getting reacquainted again.

Recently, the family arrived from Bogotá, courtesy of Avianca. Weeks earlier, we had been told that we would be having a holiday in Washington and that they wanted to attend the parade. I wondered what parade and where it would be and how we would be able to say, "No!" As always, we did not prevail. We were forced to discover the particulars about the Memorial Day Parade. It left me a bit bitter, until I found myself down on Constitution Avenue alone. There, our four guests forgot about me. The wife hung with them. What a gift! I found myself crying, shouting, waving, saluting, and reviewing combat stuff from my Vietnam days. I had one hell of an emotional meltdown all by myself by the time that ROLLING THUNDER rode by. It felt good to revisit that whole aspect of my life. A delightful stranger came along beside me. She was quiet, mature, alone and a beauty, and eager to get into the moment of parade participation. We did it together, close enough to support one another but distant enough to let each handle his or her own stuff! At the end we clasped hands in gratitude for the pleasure of sharing the two-hour parade with each other.

Two other things. I finally saw my grandmother's people as the parade pointed to the Cherokee Indian warriors. This was too stunning, too heavy, too deep, to dig into here! I was so glad to have that experience. Secondly, I saw a troop of youngsters in blue. Through the fog of bleary eyes, I thought and guessed right — a Civil Air Patrol Cadet troop, a local group in a national parade along with groups from all over the USA! I felt mighty proud!

And, well, the guests had done it again — forced me out of the funk of the house to have a smash of a time in the streets of D.C.! No wonder Holy Scripture call us to be hospitable! "Forget not to entertain strangers, for by doing so, some have entertained angels in unawares." Hebrews 13:2. AMEN!

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❖ **CHAPLAIN (LT COL)EDCO BAILEY, D. MIN,
B.C.C.**

Fly-ins

Reading was great fun, you missed it! I met the navigator of the Enola Gay. FIFI, the only flying B-29, was there too. We "lined up and waited" (sit on center line waiting for someone to land on you) with FIFI and the Yankee Lady running up on the taxiways behind us. VERY COOL!

Next item for club planes is Oshkosh in late July. Ask around and you might find a seat. (You will need a tent, too.)

Other stuff is on the horizon, and you should grab someone to go on something in the area. Here's one:

Wednesday – Saturday, Jun 22-25, 2011 - Lock Haven, PA. Sentimental Journey Fly-In (Website). Piper Memorial Airport. (KLHV), June 22-25, 2011: 26th Annual Sentimental Journey to Cub Haven Fly-In featuring the PA-15 Vagabond and the PA-17 Vagabond Trainer. Theme Vagabonds Saved Piper. Douglass C-54E "Spirit of Freedom" scheduled to appear. Educational Forums, Static Displays, Food Vendors, Exhibitors, Flying Contests, Poker Run, Local Fly-Out Destinations, Camping, Live Entertainment, Movies, Airplane. Motor Glider Helicopter Rides, and lots of Antique and Classic Airplanes on Display. Piper Aviation Museum Located on the Airport. Fun for all ages! Contact: **Ed Watson, 570-893-4200.**

❖ **JOE STUBBLEFIELD**

Aircraft rates

Following are our aircraft hourly rates as of 1 June 2011.

Aircraft	Rate
N5244N	\$138
N20300	\$121
N5135R	\$103
N739BA	\$106

Unless otherwise noted, rates are per tach hour, wet.

❖ **BOB HAWKINS**

Work hours

Amy McMaster (AJMcMaster@venerable.com) is our Work Assignment Officer; contact Amy to find out what jobs are available.

Judy Bradt takes care of recording the hours that you work. You can e-mail your work hours to workhours@bradt.com. When sending e-mails, please put in the subject line: *Work Hours, your name, # hrs worked*. This will help Judy organize the e-mails for future reference if there are any discrepancies.

Work hours monitor

June is the twelfth month of the "work hours year," so by 30 June you should have 20 hours of credit.

Here are the work hours "waypoints" listed by

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Meetings: Every Tuesday at 2000 at the CAP Trailer, Montgomery County Airport (KGAI), Gaithersburg, MD

Physical address: Box 4, 7940-I Airpark Dr., Gaithersburg, MD 20879

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quarter. If you have the indicated number of hours at the end of a quarter, you're on course.

Qtr 1	30 September	5.0
Qtr 2	31 December	10.0
Qtr 3	31 March	15.0
Qtr 4	30 June	20.0

Send your hours to workhours@bradt.com.

Don't leave your hours until the last minute in hopes of a warm day for a plane wash!

If you're in doubt about your work hours, contact **Judy Bradt**; if you're looking for jobs to do, contact **Amy McMaster**.

❖ **DICK STROCK**

Breaking up is hard to do

[This account of an SR-71 pilot surviving an aircraft mishap at 78,800 ft comes to us via **Dan Hayes**.]

By Bill Weaver, Chief Test Pilot, Lockheed

Among professional aviators, there's a well-worn saying: Flying is simply hours of boredom punctuated by moments of stark terror. But I don't recall too many periods of boredom during my 30-year career with Lockheed, most of which was spent as a test pilot. By far, the most memorable flight occurred on Jan. 25, 1966. Jim Zwyer, a Lockheed flight-test specialist, and I were evaluating systems on an SR-71 Blackbird test from Edwards. We also were investigating procedures designed to reduce trim drag and improve high-Mach cruise performance. The latter involved flying with the center-of-gravity (CG) located further aft than normal, reducing the Blackbird's longitudinal stability. We took off from Edwards at 11:20 a.m. and completed the mission's first leg without incident. After refueling from a KC-135 tanker, we turned eastbound, accelerated to a Mach 3.2 cruise speed and climbed to 78,000 ft., our initial cruise-climb altitude. Several minutes into cruise, the right engine inlet's automatic control system malfunctioned, requiring a switch to manual control. The SR-71's inlet configuration was automatically adjusted during supersonic flight to decelerate airflow in the duct, slowing it to subsonic speed before reaching the engine's face. This was accomplished by the inlet's center-body spike translating aft, and by modulating the inlet's forward bypass doors. Normally, these actions

were scheduled automatically as a function of Mach number, positioning the normal shock wave (where air flow becomes subsonic) inside the inlet to ensure optimum engine performance. Without proper scheduling, disturbances inside the inlet could result in the shock wave being expelled forward, a phenomenon known as an "inlet unstart." That causes an instantaneous loss of engine thrust, explosive banging noises and violent yawing of the aircraft, like being in a train wreck.

Unstarts were not uncommon at that time in the SR-71's development, but a properly functioning system would recapture the shock wave and restore normal operation. On the planned test profile, we entered a programmed 35° bank turn to the right. An immediate unstart occurred on the right engine, forcing the aircraft to roll further right and start to pitch up. I jammed the control stick as far left and forward as it would go. No response. I instantly knew we were in for a wild ride. I attempted to tell Jim what was happening and to stay with the airplane until we reached a lower speed and altitude. I didn't think the chances of surviving an ejection at Mach 3.18 and 78,800 ft. were very good. However, g-forces built up so rapidly that my words came out garbled and unintelligible, as confirmed later by the cockpit voice recorder.

The cumulative effects of system malfunctions, reduced longitudinal stability, increased angle of attack in the turn, supersonic speed, high altitude and other factors imposed forces on the airframe that exceeded flight control authority and the stability augmentation system's ability to restore control.

Everything seemed to unfold in slow motion. I learned later the time from event onset to catastrophic departure from controlled flight was only 2–3 seconds. Still trying to communicate with Jim, I blacked out, succumbing to extremely high g-forces. Then the SR-71 literally disintegrated around us. From that point, I was just along for the ride. And my next recollection was a hazy thought that I was having a bad dream. Maybe I'll wake up and get out of this mess, I mused.

Gradually regaining consciousness, I realized this was no dream; it had really happened. That also was disturbing, because I **COULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED** what had just happened. I must be dead. Since I didn't feel bad — just a detached sense of euphoria — I decided being dead wasn't

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so bad after all. As full awareness took hold, I realized I was not dead. But somehow I had separated from the airplane. I had no idea how this could have happened; I hadn't initiated an ejection. The sound of rushing air and what sounded like straps flapping in the wind confirmed I was falling, but I couldn't see anything. My pressure suit's faceplate had frozen over and I was staring at a layer of ice. The pressure suit was inflated, so I knew an emergency oxygen cylinder in the seat kit attached to my parachute harness was functioning. It not only supplied breathing oxygen, but also pressurized the suit, preventing my blood from boiling at extremely high altitudes. I didn't appreciate it at the time, but the suit's pressurization had also provided physical protection from intense buffeting and g-forces. That inflated suit had become my own escape capsule. My next concern was about stability and tumbling. Air density at high altitude is insufficient to resist a body's tumbling motions, and centrifugal forces high enough to cause physical injury could develop quickly. For that reason, the SR-71's parachute system was designed to automatically deploy a small-diameter stabilizing chute shortly after ejection and seat separation. Since I had not intentionally activated the ejection system — and assuming all automatic functions depended on a proper ejection sequence — it occurred to me that the stabilizing chute may not have deployed. However, I quickly determined I was falling vertically and not tumbling. The little chute must have deployed and was doing its job.

Next concern: the main parachute, which was designed to open automatically at 15,000 ft. Again I had no assurance the automatic-opening function would work. I couldn't ascertain my altitude because I still couldn't see through the iced-up faceplate. There was no way to know how long I had been blacked-out or how far I had fallen. I felt for the manual-activation D-ring on my chute harness, but with the suit inflated and my hands numbed by cold, I couldn't locate it. I decided I'd better open the faceplate, try to estimate my height above the ground, and then locate that D ring. Just as I reached for the faceplate, I felt the reassuring sudden deceleration of main-chute deployment. I raised the frozen faceplate and discovered its uplatch was broken. Using one hand to hold that plate up, I saw I was descending through a clear, winter sky with unlimited visibility. I was greatly relieved to see Jim's parachute com-

ing down about a quarter of a mile away. I didn't think either of us could have survived the aircraft's breakup, so seeing Jim had also escaped lifted my spirits incredibly. I could also see burning wreckage on the ground a few miles from where we would land.

The terrain didn't look at all inviting — a desolate, high plateau dotted with patches of snow and no signs of habitation. I tried to rotate the parachute and look in other directions. But with one hand devoted to keeping the faceplate up and both hands numb from high-altitude, subfreezing temperatures, I couldn't manipulate the risers enough to turn. Before the breakup, we'd started a turn in the New Mexico–Colorado–Oklahoma–Texas border region. The SR-71 had a turning radius of about 100 miles at that speed and altitude, so I wasn't even sure what state we were going to land in. But, because it was about 3:00 p.m., I was certain we would be spending the night out here.

At about 300 ft. above the ground, I yanked the seat kit's release handle and made sure it was still tied to me by a long lanyard. Releasing the heavy kit ensured I wouldn't land with it attached to my derrière, which could break a leg or cause other injuries. I then tried to recall what survival items were in that kit, as well as techniques I had been taught in survival training. Looking down, I was startled to see a fairly large animal, perhaps an antelope, directly under me. Evidently, it was just as startled as I was, because it literally took off in a cloud of dust.

My first-ever parachute landing was pretty smooth. I landed on fairly soft ground, managing to avoid rocks, cacti and antelopes. My chute was still billowing in the wind, though. I struggled to collapse it with one hand, holding the still-frozen faceplate up with the other. "Can I help you?" a voice said. Was I hearing things? I must be hallucinating. Then I looked up and saw a guy walking toward me, wearing a cowboy hat. A helicopter was idling a short distance behind him. If I had been at Edwards and told the search-and-rescue unit that I was going to bail out over the Rogers Dry Lake at a particular time of day, a crew couldn't have gotten to me as fast as that cowboy-pilot had.

The gentleman was Albert Mitchell, Jr., owner of a huge cattle ranch in northeastern New Mexico, and I had landed about 1.5 mi. from his ranch house — and from a hangar for his two-place

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Hughes helicopter. Amazed to see him, I replied I was having a little trouble with my chute. He walked over and collapsed the canopy, anchoring it with several rocks. He had seen Jim and me floating down and had radioed the New Mexico Highway Patrol, the Air Force and the nearest hospital.

Extracting myself from the parachute harness, I discovered the source of those flapping-strap noises heard on the way down. My seat belt and shoulder harness were still draped around me, attached and latched. The lap belt had been shredded on each side of my hips, where the straps had fed through knurled adjustment rollers. The shoulder harness had shredded in a similar manner across my back. The ejection seat had never left the airplane. I had been ripped out of it by the extreme forces, with the seat belt and shoulder harness still fastened. I also noted that one of the two lines that supplied oxygen to my pressure suit had come loose, and the other was barely hanging on. If that second line had become detached at high altitude, the deflated pressure suit wouldn't have provided any protection. I knew an oxygen supply was critical for breathing and suit-pressurization, but didn't appreciate how much physical protection an inflated pressure suit could provide. That the suit could withstand forces sufficient to disintegrate an airplane and shred heavy nylon seat belts, yet leave me with only a few bruises and minor whiplash, was impressive. I truly appreciated having my own little escape capsule.

After helping me with the chute, Mitchell said he'd check on Jim. He climbed into his helicopter, flew a short distance away and returned about 10 minutes later with devastating news: Jim was dead. Apparently, he had suffered a broken neck during the aircraft's disintegration and was killed instantly. Mitchell said his ranch foreman would soon arrive to watch over Jim's body until the authorities arrived. I asked to see Jim and, after verifying there was nothing more that could be done, agreed to let Mitchell fly me to the Tucumcari hospital, about 60 mi. to the south. I have vivid memories of that helicopter flight, as well. I didn't know much about rotorcraft, but I knew a lot about "red lines," and Mitchell kept the airspeed at or above red line all the way. The little helicopter vibrated and shook a lot more than I thought it should have. I tried to reassure the cowboy-pilot I

was feeling OK; there was no need to rush. But since he'd notified the hospital staff that we were inbound, he insisted we get there as soon as possible. I couldn't help but think how ironic it would be to have survived one disaster only to be done in by the helicopter that had come to my rescue. However, we made it to the hospital safely—and quickly.

Soon, I was able to contact Lockheed's flight test office at Edwards. The test team there had been notified initially about the loss of radio and radar contact, then been told the aircraft had been lost. They also knew what our flight conditions had been at the time, and assumed no one could have survived. I explained what had happened, describing in fairly accurate detail the flight conditions prior to breakup.

The next day, our flight profile was duplicated on the SR-71 flight simulator at Beale AFB, Calif. The outcome was identical. Steps were immediately taken to prevent a recurrence of our accident. Testing at a CG aft of normal limits was discontinued, and trim-drag issues were subsequently resolved via aerodynamic means. The inlet control system was continuously improved and, with subsequent development of the Digital Automatic Flight and Inlet Control System, inlet unstarts became rare. Investigation of our accident revealed that the nose section of the aircraft had broken off aft of the rear cockpit and crashed about 10 miles from the main wreckage. Parts were scattered over an area approximately 15 miles long and 10 miles wide. Extremely high air loads and g-forces, both positive and negative, had literally ripped Jim and me from the airplane. Unbelievably good luck is the only explanation for my escaping relatively unscathed from that disintegrating aircraft.

Two weeks after the accident, I was back in an SR-71, flying the first sortie on a brand-new bird at Lockheed's Palmdale, Calif. assembly and test facility. It was my first flight since the accident, so a flight test engineer in the back seat was probably a little apprehensive about my state of mind and confidence. As we roared down the runway and lifted off, I heard an anxious voice over the intercom. "Bill! Bill! Are you there?" "Yeah, George. What's the matter?" "Thank God! I thought you might have left!" The rear cockpit of the SR-71 has no forward visibility — only a small window on each side — and George couldn't see me. A big red light on the master-warning panel I

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the rear cockpit had illuminated just as we rotated, stating: "Pilot Ejected." Fortunately, the cause was a misadjusted micro switch, not my departure.

Your flying account

Dick Stroock and **Bryan Absher** are in charge of our flying account tracking. Dick is posting aircraft usage on a weekly basis and a doing a full close just after the first of the month. You will receive the monthly statement of your account at the beginning of the month for the previous month's activity. You will also get a weekly e-mail that shows your latest usage.

If you don't have an e-mail account, please let Dick know and he will print out your statement.

Crew chiefs

A/C	Chief	Ass't Chief
N5244N	Dan Hayes	Dan Boyle
N20300	Linda Knowles	Todd O'Brien
N5135R	Vic McGonegal	Phil Carls
N739BA	Ron Newton	Vacant

Address for checks

Please note that the address to mail Congressional Flying Club checks is:

Congressional Flying Club
7940 Airpark Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20879

Checks can also be brought to the meetings and given to **Bob Hawkins, Dick Stroock, or Bryan Absher.**

Funny stuff

[Thanks again to **Dan Hayes.**]

Lost student pilot: "Unknown airport with Cessna 150 circling overhead, please identify yourself."

❖ **ANDY SMITH**