



# THREE ZERO NINER

June 2007

Meets every 3rd Monday in Charlotte, NC

## It Really Runs.....

**EAA Chapter 309 was founded in 1973 by a small group of aviation enthusiasts. Since that time, the membership has grown in size and experience. Members come with a variety of skill and experiences. Current members have aviation backgrounds ranging from student pilot all the way to Airline Transport Pilot. Several are A&Ps and all share a love of aviation. Membership is open to anyone interested in aviation and learning about the construction of Experimental Aircraft.**

**EAA 309 is a 501 c.3. organization. Your contributions are welcome and may be tax deductible.**

We had a first for an EAA Dinner Meeting. At the May dinner meeting, Hal and Stuart Schwab rolled their Sonex out into the front yard, attached the wings and cranked her up - the mighty 100 HP Aerovee (Volkswagen based), fired right up and ran very smoothly and quietly. Twenty five or so members showed up to admire the craftsmanship, really nice glass panel, and enjoy the pizza.

Hal told me that on a previous Saturday, some yard sale enthusiasts stopped when they saw airplane parts in the front yard, the lady got out and said - "ah, all they have is stuff from the garage" and she and her friend drove off. She didn't realize it was a real airplane!

The neighbors have been very supportive of Hal and his scratch built Sonex. They stop by and admire the work and encourage Hal to "get er done". Part of the reason for the positive support is the engine runs rather quietly for an open exhaust engined aircraft. Check out [www.eaa309.org](http://www.eaa309.org) - I am planning to post the video of the engine cranking and running as we looked on.



**Remember - Chapter 309 of the EAA is now a charitable organization as defined by 501(c)3.  
Your donations may be tax deductible!**



309'ers WEB SITE [www.eaa309.org](http://www.eaa309.org)

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**2007**



**Chapter 309  
Charlotte, NC**

**YOUR NAME**

**EVENT SCHEDULE!**

- Saturday, June 16 - EAA 309 Breakfast Fly-In at Gastonia Airport.
- Saturday, July 14th - 10:00 am. Navigation School at Gastonia Aero Club hangar, Gastonia Airport
- Saturday, August 18th - 8:30 AM at Lincoln County Airport (IPJ) Time and Distance Dead Reckoning Proficiency competitive flight
- Saturday, September 8 - EAA 309 Fly out & lunch
- Thursday - Sunday, October 4-7. EAA's Aluminum Overcast B-17 at Concord Regional.
- Saturday, November 10th - Lincolnton Fall Fly In.
- Monday, December 10 - EAA 309 Christmas Dinner Party at the Acropolis Restaurant, Cornelius,

**And We need your suggestions and ideas for programs in 2007! Call or Email Kevin Cromie at 704-348-8529 or [kcromie "at" hearstsc.com](mailto:kcromie@hearstsc.com)**

**President's Corner**  
*by Bill Repucci*

Welcome to summer and what a great summer it will be. EAA 309 has birthed another airplane. Congratulations Ron Miller for the first flight of your RV-7A.



It looks like more airplanes are to come. Hal Schwab's Sonex is just about ready, as many members saw when they visited his project in May. Fred Darnell's Murphy Super Rebel only needs an instrument panel before he goes flying and Randy Utsey hopes to have his RV-7 flying before the end of the year. No pressure guys, but let's "Get 'er done!" In case you were wondering, my RV-9 should be moved to the airport within a month.

In addition there are over 30 projects currently under construction and more than 20 former projects, now known as airplanes, flying. That represents roughly 50% of our members who are either flying or building.

The Board had decided that Name Tags will be made for all new members. Contact Earl Fortner - Phone or e-mail Earl at 704-455-5326 or [efortner@vnet.net](mailto:efortner@vnet.net). If you have not received your name tag yet, please contact Earl.

These name tags not only look nice, it helps us learn each other's names - AND if you don't wear yours to each EAA 309 meeting or event, you will be assessed a \$1.00 charge to encourage you to wear yours!

The mix of airplanes flying and under construction is impressive; from almost every model of RV, to a Boeing F4B and a Jenny replica, to a Europa, to a number of Velocities, Lancairs, and a bunch of other airplanes. All powered by an equally impressive array of engine types.

Not only do we represent the best aviation has to offer, but we represent a significant economic benefit to a number of manufactures around the country and around the world. We must use this economic muscle to our advantage.

The fight to defeat a fee based FAA is not over, not by a long shot. The airlines are now showing slanted cartoon advertising to their captive audiences AKA their passengers depicting how Big Wigs in fancy business jets are causing all the airline delays, without paying their fair share to support the current aviation infrastructure.

What frightens me most about the FAA user fee funding proposal is that I can foresee a day when the revenue drops due to the lack of GA flights paying into the system. When this happens the FAA could mandate preflight briefings and the filing of flight plans, even for local flights, all for a fee of course.

Don't let that happen, write your politicians today. If you have already written them once, I urge you to write again.

*(Continued on page 3)*

**Chapter Officers**

**President:**  
**Bill Repucci**  
**704-607-4572**

**Vice President:**  
**Kevin Cromie**  
**704-366-8529**

**Secretary:**  
**Bob Allen**  
**704-892-4095**

**Treasurer:**  
**Sam Stewart**  
**704-588-0776**

**Directors:**  
**Bob Dobbins, Dale Ensing, Tad Sargent, John Schroeder, & Bob Thayer**

**Young Eagles Coordinator:** Don Sink  
**Membership:** Ken Poindexter

**Technical Counselors:**  
**Kent Ashton, Neil Stewart, Dale Ensing, Ron Murray, Ronnie Brown and Glenn Babcock.**

**Flight Advisors:**  
**Dale Ensing & Ronnie Brown**

**Newsletter & Web Page Editor:**  
**Ronnie Brown**  
**704.892.5122**

(Continued from page 2)

## Overcast predicted

On October 4<sup>th</sup> through the 7<sup>th</sup> your chapter will sponsor a visit from the EAA's B-17, Aluminum Overcast. The B-17 will offer rides from the Concord airport, as they did in the past. Tad Sargent and Chuck Porter have graciously offered to act as the Event Coordinators for the visit. When they call asking for support, I know we can count on you to help. It will take commitment from all members to make this visit a success.

**“Dead reckoning (DR)** is the process of estimating one's current position based upon a previously determined position, or [fix](#), and advancing that position based upon known speed, elapsed time, and course. While this method of [navigation](#) is no longer considered primary in aircraft, automobiles, rail engines, and construction site engines (tunnels), it is still often used as a backup in case of failure of the electronic navigation systems.” – Wikipedia.com

John Wigney and Sam Stewart have been busy reconnoitering a route for our first Time and Distance Navigational Challenge (TADNC). Stay tuned for details and start practicing your dead reckoning skills. Don't worry, to help you prepare we will sponsor a navigation class prior to the event so dust off your whiz wheel.

**Safety tip: How many people does it take to do a pre-flight?** The following is a true story, I know because I was one of the pilots involved

There were four of us pilot types planning on the famous \$50 burger run. (Gas was much cheaper back in the 80's) The Cardinal was tied down outside and all four of us helped with the preflight. Preflight complete we climbed in, started up, and taxied over to the “defined” run up pad in front of the little FBO building/picnic area. As the PIC was doing the mag check a gentleman walked up to the plane and knocked on the door. He pointed to the gust lock still strapped over the vertical stabilizer and rudder. We shut down, three of us walked away and the owner/PIC performed a thorough and complete preflight before we climbed back in.

Whoever that gentleman was I would like to thank him. How four of us could have missed that gust lock, I will never know.

**Lesson learned, only one person should perform the pre-flight. Everyone else should step back and not interrupt.**

## Mark your Calendar!

Events Downloaded from [www.southern-aviator.com](http://www.southern-aviator.com)

6/16/2007 Gastonia, NC --EAA Chapter 309 Fly-In Breakfast. Starts at 8 am Email: [bill@repucci.com](mailto:bill@repucci.com)  
Web: [www.eaa309.org](http://www.eaa309.org)

6/17/2007 Cheraw, South Carolina --  
South Carolina Breakfast Club, Cheraw (47J)

7/1/2007 Salisbury, South Carolina --  
South Carolina Breakfast Club, Salisbury (RUQ)

7/4/2007 Twin Lakes-Special , South Carolina --  
South Carolina Breakfast Club, Twin Lakes-Special (pvt)

7/7/2007 Salisbury, NC --Monthly "First Saturday at the EAAgles Nest" is gathering of flyers at Salisbury/Rowan County Airport (RUQ) (11 am-3 pm) Email: [jack@fly4fun.org](mailto:jack@fly4fun.org)  
Web: [www.eaa1083.com](http://www.eaa1083.com)

**Saturday, July 14th - 10:00 am. Navigation School at Gastonia Aero Club hangar, Gastonia Airport**

8/4/2007 Salisbury, NC -- Monthly "First Saturday at the EAAgles Nest" is gathering of flyers at Salisbury/Rowan County Airport (RUQ) (11 am-3 pm)

**Saturday, August 18th - 8:30 AM at Lincoln County Airport (IPJ) Time and Distance Dead Reckoning Proficiency competitive flight**



**July 23 - 29, 2007**

**Oshkosh, WI**

The logo for the Gastonia Aero Club (GAC) features the letters "GAC" in a large, bold, red font with a white outline. Below "GAC" are the words "GASTONIA AERO CLUB" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the logo is the website address "www.flygac.org" in a white, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a blue background with white wings extending from the sides of the "GAC" text.

Based at Gastonia Municipal Airport, GAC is a flying club, with three aircraft, including a Cessna 172 and 182 and a Piper Cherokee 180. Memberships available. 704-892-4095 or [info@gastoniaaeroclub.com](mailto:info@gastoniaaeroclub.com)

## WANT ADS



**1998 Yamaha V-rago 250 motorcycle** for sale. 5000 miles, excellent mechanical condition. This is a cool little V-twin cruiser with a black tank, great for first-time or smaller riders. Asking \$1900. Glenn

Babcock 813-505-6027 (cell)

**RC Allen 22-11F vacuum gyro** for sale, new in the box. This is a flagged, lighted gyro. Sells for \$923 at Spruce; I'm asking \$750. Glenn Babcock 813-505-6027 (cell)

**LightSPEED 25XL stereo headset.** Has been used once since being returned from LightSPEED for complete refurbishment. New head band, head pad, ear seals and stirrups, both audio speakers replaced as well as the mic, boom and battery box. Essentially everything is new except the frame. I sent it back to LightSPEED for them to check it out and that is what they did. This unit doesn't work well with my Rotax 912S engine so I'm selling it. Cost \$599 new. First \$400 gets it. Includes the LightSPEED carrying case. **Call Dennis Scearce at 704-660-0860.**

**Watch repair services.** I also have an inventory of used fine watches - both quartz and mechanical, some antique. Gary Witt 704-866-0784

**For SALE: Aeronca Chief** is 1941 model and has a 65-CA engine, The engine has just had a major overhaul with new millenium cylinders and pistons and has approx. six hours since overhaul. The wooden Sensinich prop was overhauled by Sensinich earlier this year. The plane is in annual and all AD's complied with. \$17,500. **Call Earl Fortner at 704 455-5326**

**Cherokee Arrow** is a 1967 with 2006 hours total time airframe and engine. Engine has never been overhauled but runs fine. Aircraft is full IFR and has Narco mark 12 D radios, ADF, Loran, DME, etc. New upholstery 2004. All AD's complied with. Fuel tanks were pulled and all hoses and vent lines were replaced two years ago. Never had a gear up landing and never been used as a trainer. Priced to sell at \$46,000. Both aircraft are based at 8A6 Wilgrove and currently flying. **Call Earl Fortner at 704 455-5326.**

## Meet director Dale Ensing

Aviation has been a passion for me since early childhood. My education is a dual major degree from Western Michigan University in Marketing and Aviation Technology with a career goal of sales and marketing of general aviation aircraft. However, when I graduated in 1965 GA manufacturers were leaving the business because of frivolous law suits and huge jury awards. Next best thing was a position in the Aerospace Division of the Dow Corning Corporation who was a supplier to the major aeronautical contractors. I got to work on some very interesting projects including the Apollo spacecraft and the Lunar Rover.



Another of my life goals was to build an airplane which was first realized in 1986 with a MiniMax which I still fly. We were also partners in a Cessna 170B that had been completely renewed by a previous owner. I loved that airplane. Still do. However, when we flew the 170 from our home in the Chicago area to the Southeast to visit our children and friends, the 170 cruise speed made it a rather lengthy trip.

In the late 1980's Van's Aircraft introduced the new RV-6. It's total performance was just what we needed for fun and travel. I started the RV-6A project in 1991. It turned out to be a long term effort because of limited building time due to much business travel in those days. Plus, the building process was my recreation and with having the 170 to fly, there was no hurry to get the RV-6A in the air. I retired in 1997 and we started making plans to move to an Airpark in the Southeast. We purchased a lot in Aero Plantation and had our dream home built there in 2000. My first project after we moved was to build a hangar next to our home. It became the perfect place for me to finish the RV-6A. We have now enjoyed flying the RV for a couple of years while working on preparations for painting.

I have been an EAA Technical Councilor for about 15 years, since the program started, and a frequent volunteer at AirVenture in Oshkosh. It is very rewarding to help other builders reach their goal of completing and safely flying their own

## Commercial ads available

EAA 309 offers commercial ad space on its web site [www.eaa309.org](http://www.eaa309.org) and in the monthly newsletter to Sponsors of EAA 309. Each ad will run for one year in both the newsletter and on the web pages. Your display ad would be approximately 3" wide and 2" high (similar to the example on page 3). The cost would be \$200 per year. Contact Ronnie Brown.

## EAA 309 hangar update

by John Wigney

Our prospective landlord has advised that the project is not going well since he has been unable to get a building permit for his new hangar at Lake Norman Airpark. The plan was that a major section of the finished hangar would be made available to the chapter.

The steel for the main building which was purchased in 2004 for another project cannot now be used since the snow loads to meet code have increased from 10 to 15 pounds per sq. ft. His building company has advised that all new frames and beams are required to meet this new load and only the existing cladding can be used.

With additional costs of significant firewall protection, the costs have now skyrocketed and this means that he now does not have the capacity to donate a major part of the hangar to EAA 309. Next steps are unclear at the moment but I would like to thank Butch Stevens for his sincere efforts to help EAA 309 in finding a home.



**Above are the dual glass displays for Hal Schwab's Sonex - Dynon EFIS and Airmap moving map. Nice "carbon fiber" panel (actually a vinyl stick on!).**

## **UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

### **RV-9 Project Status - Bill Repucci**

N941WR is nearing completion. Either that or I misplaced my list of things to do.

Tad Sargent, Ron Murray, and Ronnie Brown all took the time to come and inspect my engine installation. Each pointed out some small detail that needed attention and now I feel the engine is ready for its first run.

With luck the project will be moved to the airport within a month. I suppose it might be safer to say, "Within a year."

I will let everyone know when I plan to move it as I will need a number of hands for the big move.

### **Builder and Owner Courses**

by Mike Moore

Beginning in August of this year, AvWorks will offer workshops for members and friends. The classes will include welding, basic electricity, and others useful to the home-builder. For more information or questions contact mike, [michaelmoore@yahoo.com](mailto:michaelmoore@yahoo.com)

The AvWorks powered Edge 540 of Mike Mangolds posted the fastest lap times of the weekend at the Red Bull air race in Monument Valley UT, and finished 3rd overall, and was third in points. This past weekend, Mike again posted the fastest laps of the event in Istanbul Turkey, and managed to hold on to his lead, winning the event, and moving up to second in points, just one point out of first place.

AvWorks is beginning to build engines for other Red Bull competitors to include Spains Alejandro Maclean, and Red Bull's own Peter Besenyei of Budapest, Hungary.

### **The Adventures of Austin Meyer**

If you haven't heard of Austin Meyer, then perhaps you have heard of X-Plane, which is a PC based Flight Simulation program. Austin is the chief designer and owner of X-Plane.

This highly successful simulator has apparently made Austin a bit of pocket change - and provided him with a number of real airplanes. Some of his flying adventures are chronicled on a web page <http://x-plane.com/adventures.html>

Thanks to John Wigney for this magnificent find!

# THREE ZERO NINER

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## EAA 309 Navigation School

Saturday, July 14, 2007 10:00 am at Gastonia Aero Club hangar, Gastonia Airport.

This 2 hour school with a CFI instructor is intended for those of you who would like to flight plan using basic navigation equipment and as a refresher before the Dead Reckoning competition on 8.18.07. Primary contact for questions is Bob Allen. Bob is not available from 6.13 to 6.24.07, standby contact is Sam Stewart. \$10 participation fee and which allows participants to log the time spent in class as ground school.

## Dead Reckoning Navigation Competition

August 18<sup>th</sup> -

by John Wigney

Saturday, August 18, 2007. 8:30 am check in at Lincoln County Airport (KIPJ). This is a fun event! Come and demonstrate your skill with compass and chart only round a set course. No GPS or VOR devices will be allowed. All the details are now posted at the Events Schedule page on the EAA 309 website. The event is limited to 20 entries so find your navigator or your pilot and make sure you get your entry in soon. Contact Sam Stewart and John Wigney with questions

We will need two key participants in each plane :-

- (i) An intrepid navigator who can read a stop watch and
- (ii) a resolute pilot who knows where he/she is going!

Please brush up your plotting skills with compass, DG, chart and E6B because that is all you will have. Remember, you will not be able to use GPS or VOR. Pilots, please ensure that you have one of these skilled navigators lined up for the event. They will be snapped up fast.

The format of this event will be a course around 4 or 5 waypoints which will be advised on the evening before.

Planes will be handicapped based on published cruise speed to ensure that all planes are on a level footing. This is not a race. Accuracy of time around all waypoints will be the basis of awarding the winner.

Please let John Wigney or Sam Stewart know if you are interested in attending the July 14 navigation class (this class is NOT required to enter the competition scheduled for August 18 - but if its been a while since you only used dead reckoning and charts to navigate, then you might want to attend this refresher class). **Plan the flight - fly the plan - precisely!**

## Thunderstorm Season

From AOPA's ASF web site

On May 31, 2004 a Lancair IV-P departed Ypsilanti, Michigan (YIP) on an IFR flight plan en route to Billings, Montana (BIL). The flight encountered severe weather over the central part of Michigan, and the instrument-rated private pilot and his passengers were killed.

Prior to departure, the pilot got a weather briefing. He was told to expect thunderstorm and rain shower activity, moderate turbulence below 9,000 feet msl, and icing conditions between 7,000 and 14,000 feet msl. The briefer also described a line of thunderstorms stretching from Milwaukee, through Chicago, and into Iowa.

After departing YIP, the flight was cleared to 10,000 feet msl by Detroit Departure control. He was subsequently handed off to Lansing Approach, Cleveland Center, and Chicago Center. The pilot told Lansing Approach that he did not have onboard weather radar, and requested vectors around the weather ahead.

The Lansing controller then handed off control of the flight to Cleveland Center, telling Center that the flight was heading 270-degrees to deviate around weather.

Upon contact with Cleveland, the pilot was told to "proceed direct Milwaukee (MKE) when able," but was not given any additional information about the weather. The Lancair then turned 20-30 degrees right on a direct course to MKE.

The Cleveland controller transferred control of the flight to Chicago, and told the Chicago Controller that the flight was proceeding direct MKE and had not requested any additional weather deviations. Shortly thereafter, the pilot transmitted "Center, this is 707SH. What do you show us in up here?"

Plotted data showed that the Lancair had entered an area of Level six precipitation at 12,000 feet, followed by a sudden loss of altitude. Level six returns are classified as "extreme" by the National Weather Service, and are the highest intensity displayed. Radar contact was lost, and the Lancair was seen in a "flat spin" before it impacted the ground.

**The NTSB determined the cause of this accident to be the Air Route Traffic Control Center controllers not providing adverse weather avoidance assistance as required by FAA directives, which resulted in the airplane flying into a thunderstorm and the pilot not being able to maintain aircraft control.**

<http://flash.aopa.org/asf/wxwise%5Fthunder/thunderstorms.cfm>

# THREE ZERO NINER

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## Meet new member Gerhard Ungerer



I have been interested in airplanes since I was a young boy. Whenever an airplane flew overhead, I immediately looked up to find it and then followed it until it was out of sight. In my country of birth, South Africa, private airplanes are not as common as in the USA, so seeing one was a fairly rare treat.

My wife has been very supportive of my dream to fly and agreed in 2004 to letting me take flying lessons. I absolutely loved it. The weather in Michigan, where I lived at the time, did not allow me to get my pilot license until July 1, 2005.

I am married and have 4 young daughters. My two eldest daughters love to go flying with me. They usually take turns and do not give their seat up for anyone!!!

We moved to North Carolina in late 2006 and settled in Monroe. After quite a

search, I joined the Anson Flying club and have been flying their Cessna 150 and Cessna 172.

I met Kent Ashton in early 2007 who both introduced me to the Cozy MkIV and EAA 309. I had been following the Cozy MkIV for a number of years, but with nothing more than cursory interest. After a flight in Kent's Cozy, I knew that my life would never be the same.

Kent and I flew to Tennessee on March 04, 2007 to look at an abandoned Cozy MkIV project. I put down a deposit on the project and returned on March 24, 2007 to retrieve it. It has a LONG way to go, but I am looking forward to the challenge of the build and the exhilaration of flying it one day.

## Welcome Aboard Gerhard!



Gerhard Ungerer

[www.randombitcorp.com/cozymkiv](http://www.randombitcorp.com/cozymkiv)



## THREE ZERO NINER

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### 1941 CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF the GLOBE BY PAN AM'S "PACIFIC CLIPPER"

This article is sure to arouse empathy from aviators who have piloted or navigated aircraft over long stretches of open ocean....or imagined the challenges of doing so.

The Round The World Saga of the "Pacific Clipper"  
John A. Marshall

Engines: Four (4) 1,600 hp (1,192 kW) Wright R-2600 Twin Cyclone (1,192 kw), 14 cylinder, air-cooled, radial engines.

Wing Span: 152 ft. (46.33 m.)

Length: 106 ft (32.31 m.)

Max T.O. Weight: 84,000 lb. (38,102 kg.)

Max level speed: 199 mph (320 km/h)

Cruising speed: 184 mph (296 km/h)

Range: 5,200 miles (8369 km)

First flight: June 7, 1938

Ceiling: 19,600 feet

Accommodation: 10 crew, 74 passengers

December 7, 1941 The first blush of dawn tinged the eastern sky and sent its rosy fingers creeping onto the flight deck of the huge triple-tailed flying boat as she cruised high above the South Pacific. Six days out of her home port of San Francisco, the Boeing 314 was part of Pan American Airways' growing new service that linked the far corners of the Pacific Ocean. With veteran captain Robert Ford in command, the Pacific Clipper, carrying 12 passengers and a crew of ten was just a few hours from landing in the harbor at Auckland, New Zealand.

The calm serenity of the flight deck early on this spring morning was suddenly shattered by the crackling of the radio. Radio Operator John Poindexter clamped the headset to his ears as he deciphered the coded message. His eyes widened as he quickly wrote the characters on the pad in front of him. Pearl Harbor had been attacked by Japanese war planes and had suffered heavy losses; the United States was at war. The stunned crew looked at each other as the implications of the message began to dawn. They realized that their route back to California was irrevocably cut, and there was no going back. Ford ordered radio silence, and then posted lookouts

in the navigator's blister; two hours later, the Pacific Clipper touched down smoothly on the waters of Auckland harbor. Their odyssey was just beginning.

The crew haunted the overwhelmed communications room at the US Embassy in Auckland every day for a week waiting for a message from Pan Am headquarters in New York. Finally they received word -- they were to try and make it back to the United States the long way: around the world westbound. For Ford and his crew, it was a daunting assignment. Facing a journey of over 30,000 miles, over oceans and lands that none of them had ever seen, they would have to do all their own planning and servicing, scrounging whatever supplies and equipment they needed; all this in the face of an erupting World War in which political alliances and loyalties in many parts of the world were uncertain at best. Their first assignment was to return to Noumea, back the way they had come over a week earlier. They were to pick up the Pan American station personnel there, and then deliver them to safety in Australia. Late on the evening of December 16th, the blacked out flying boat lifted off from Auckla!

nd harbor and headed northwest through the night toward Noumea. They maintained radio silence, landing in the harbor just as the sun was coming up. Ford went ashore and sought out the Pan Am Station Manager. "Round up all your people," he said. "I want them all at the dock in an hour. They can have one small bag apiece."

The crew set to work fueling the airplane, and exactly two hours later, fully fueled and carrying a barrel of engine oil, the Clipper took off and pointed her nose south for Australia.

It was late in the afternoon when the dark green smudge of the Queensland coast appeared in the windscreen, and Ford began a gentle descent for landing in the harbor at Gladstone. After offloading their bewildered passengers, the crew set about seeing to their primary responsibility, the Pacific Clipper. Captain Ford recounted, "I was wondering how we were going to pay for everything we were going to need on this trip. We had money enough for a trip to Auckland and back to San Francisco, but this was a different story. In Gladstone a young man who was a banker came up to me and out of the blue said, 'How are you fixed for money?' 'Well, we're broke!' I said. He said, 'I'll probably be shot for this,' but he went down to his bank on a Saturday morning, opened the vault and handed me five hundred American dollars. Since Rod Brown, our navigator, was the only one with a lock box and a key we put him in charge of the money. That \$500 financed the rest of the trip all the way! to New York."

Ford planned to take off and head straight northwest, across the Queensland desert for Darwin, and then fly across the Timor Sea to the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), hoping that Java and Sumatra remained in friendly hands. The next day, as they droned into the tropical morning the coastal jungle gradually gave way to great arid stretches of grassland and sand dunes.

Spinnifex and gum trees covered the landscape to the horizon. During the entire flight to Darwin the crew didn't see a river big enough to set down the big flying boat should anything go wrong. Any emergency would force them to belly land the airplane onto the desert, and their flight would be over.

They approached the harbor at Darwin late in the afternoon. Massive thunderheads stretched across the horizon, and continuous flashes of lightning lit up the cockpit. The northernmost city in Australia, Darwin was closest to the conflict that was spreading southward like a brushfire. A rough frontier town in the most remote and primitive of the Australian territories, it was like something out of a wild west movie. After they had landed, the Pacific Clipper crew was offered a place to shower and change; much to their amusement their "locker room" turned out to be an Australian Army brothel.

Ford and his crew set about fueling the airplane. It was a lengthy, tiresome job. The fuel was stored in five gallon jerry cans, each one had to be hauled up over the wing and emptied into the tanks; it was past midnight before they were finished. They managed a few hours of fitful sleep before takeoff, but Ford was anxious to be underway. News of the progress of the Japanese forces was sketchy at best. They were fairly certain that most of the Dutch East Indies was still in friendly hands, but they could not dally.

Early the next morning they took off for Surabaya, fourteen hundred miles to the west across the Timor Sea. The sun rose as they droned on across the flat turquoise sea, soon they raised the eastern islands of the great archipelago of east Java. Rude thatch-roofed huts dotted the beaches; the islands were carpeted with the lush green jungle of the tropics.

Surabaya lay at the closed end of a large bay in the Bali Sea. The second largest city on the island of Java, it was guarded by a British garrison and a squadron of Bristol Beaufort fighters. As the Pacific Clipper approached the city, a single fighter rose to meet them; moments later it was joined by more. The recognition signals that Ford had received in Australia proved to be inaccurate, and the big Boeing was a sight unfamiliar to the British pilots. The crew tensed as the fighters drew closer. Because of a quirk in the radio systems, they could hear the British pilots, but the pilots could not hear the Clipper. There was much discussion among them as to whether the flying boat should be shot down or allowed to land. At last the crew heard the British controller grant permission for them to land, and then add, "If they do anything suspicious, shoot them out of the sky!" With great relief, they commenced a very careful approach.

As they neared the harbor, Ford could see that it was filled with warships, so he set the Clipper down in the smooth water just outside the harbor entrance. "We turned around to head back," Ford said. "There was a launch that had come out to meet us, but instead of giving us a tow or a line, they stayed off about a mile and kept waving us on. Finally when we got further into

the harbor they came closer. It turned out that we had landed right in the middle of a minefield, and they weren't about to come near us until they saw that we were through it!"

When they disembarked the crew of the Pacific Clipper received an unpleasant surprise; they were told that they would be unable to refuel with 100 octane aviation gas. What little there was severely rationed, and was reserved for the military. There was automobile gas in abundance however, and Ford was welcome to whatever he needed. He had no choice. The next leg of their journey would be many hours over the Indian Ocean, and there was no hope of refueling elsewhere. The flight engineers, Swede Roth and Jocko Parish, formulated a plan that they hoped would work. They transferred all their remaining aviation fuel to the two fuselage tanks, and filled the remaining tanks to the limit with the lower octane automobile gas.

"We took off from Surabaya on the 100 octane, climbed a couple of thousand feet, and pulled back the power to cool off the engines," said Ford. "Then we switched to the automobile gas and held our breaths. The engines almost jumped out of their mounts, but they ran. We figured it was either that or leave the airplane to the Japs."

They flew northwesterly across the Sunda Straits, paralleling the coast of Sumatra. Chasing the setting sun, they started across the vast expanse of ocean. They had no aviation charts or maps for this part of the world; the only navigational information available to the crew was the latitude and longitude of their destination at Trincomalee, on the island of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Using this data, and drawing from memory, Rod Brown was creating his own Mercator maps of South Asia. Ford was not only worried about finding the harbor, he was very concerned about missing Ceylon altogether. He envisioned the Clipper droning on over India, lost and low on fuel, unable to find a body of water on which to land.

As they neared the island they could see a cloud bank ahead. Ford said, "There was some low scud, so we descended. We wanted the maximum available visibility to permit picking up landfall at the earliest moment -- we didn't want to miss the island. All of a sudden there it was, right in front of us, a Jap submarine! We could see the crew running for the deck gun. Let me tell you we were pretty busy getting back into the scud again!"

Ford jammed the throttles of the Clipper forward to climb power, the engines complaining bitterly. Their 150 mph speed soon had them well out of range of the sub's guns, and the crew heaved a sigh of relief. It would be difficult to determine who was the more surprised; the Japanese submarine commander or the crew of the Clipper, startled out of their reverie after the long flight.

*This article originally appeared in the August 1999 Issue of "Air and Space Magazine" - To be Continued in the July Newsletter.*

# B-17

## FLYING FORTRESS

*Aluminum Overcast*



### **MISSION:**

Charlotte, North Carolina  
October 4th – 7th, 2007

### **AIRPORT:**

Concord Regional Airport

### **DAILY FLIGHT TIMES:**

9:30  
10:15  
11:00  
11:45  
12:30

MISSION COST: (PRE-STOP BOOKING PRICES)

**\$359**

per person (EAA Members)

**\$399**

per person (non-Members)

### **WALK UP PRICES**

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### **Daily Ground Tours:**

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Adults: \$6, Students: \$5, WWII Veterans FREE

Children under 8 (accompanied by adult) FREE

\$10 per family (adults & children under 18)

Special group rates are made available for schools and large groups. Limited availability. Please call for group reservations.

*All dates and times are tentative and subject to change due to weather or other causes.*

**Call 800-359-6217**  
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EAA's B-17 bomber "Aluminum Overcast" is an example of the American heavy bomber that helped turn the tide of battle in World War II. You can see and tour this historic airplane — and actually fly a mission!

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**The form can be used to pass along enrollment information about the EAA and this chapter.**

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The EAA is for both pilots and non-pilots who are interested in the dynamic world of flight. The organization, founded in 1953, offers activities for the entire family on the local, regional and national levels. EAA also offers support programs for those who are building and restoring aircraft.

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Pilot Rating: \_\_\_\_\_ EAA Member Number: \_\_\_\_\_

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Membership is open to anyone interested in aviation. Dues are \$25 per year. Mail Enrollment Form with Check payable to EAA Chapter 309 to:

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**Pass it On!**

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**NOTICE: There WILL NOT be an EAA 309 Monthly DINNER MEETING in June. Next dinner meeting will be July 16 at the Cookhouse Restaurant in Cornelius.**

**Be sure to come to the Breakfast Fly In at Gastonia, on Saturday, June 16.**

**Call Bill Repucci at 704-607-4572 for more information.**

