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JANUARY 2009
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE
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Inductee:
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CONTENTS

6

14

20

FEATURES

COLUMNS

DEPARTMENTS

THE COVER

Hall of Fame Inductee Bill Finagin flying his Pitts S-2C. -Photo by Jim Lawrence

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LETTER from the **EDITOR**

by Reggie Paulk

Working Hard for the IAC

As you're sitting down to read this issue, Christmas '08 is but a memory and the New Year is upon us. For many of us, that means we're hunkered down in front of the fire shuddering, as the temperature continues to push the mercury into the bulb of its thermometer. For others, there's no time to waste. There's a job to get done, and they're going to do it. Bill Finagin is one of the latter folks.

For 2008, Bill Finagin was chosen as the IAC Hall of Fame inductee. I had the privilege to spend about an hour interviewing him for the story you'll read in this issue, and it made me think that I am one of the luckiest guys around. I met Bill briefly at Oshkosh last summer, but I never got a chance to have a conversation with him. It wasn't because he was putting me off, mind you—he was just too busy to stay in one place for long. At that time, I was ill-informed as to the contributions this man has made to the sport of aerobatics. One thing I didn't mention in the story is that Bill was the original aerobatic competency evaluator/committee member appointed by the FAA—at one time, if you wanted to fly air shows, Bill Finagin was the guy who gave you the nod. In addition to flying air shows for 20 years, Bill has flown more than 10,000 hours in the Pitts biplane while instructing more than 600 students in the fine art of competition aerobatics–and it's always just been a hobby!

His accomplishments alone are quite amazing, but what really sets Bill apart is his personality. He's humble, kind, and laughs easily–just the kind of person who makes you smile and say, "What an amazing human being." Hopefully, Bill will again be at Oshkosh giving his seminars in the IAC tent. If you get a chance, stop by and meet your newest Hall of Fame member.

Another story in this issue is Ryan Birr's piece on the new IAC life insurance program. The amount of work that went into getting this program to become a reality is staggering. I wanted to make sure to mention the hard work that your IAC president has been doing to help make this and other programs come to fruition. Vicki and I talk regularly, either by phone or e-mail, and every time we do, she's at some airport somewhere in the country doing something for the IAC. I think she spends more time in hotels performing tasks for the IAC then she does at home. She's also a big help to me, and I wanted to say, "Thank you!"

May you all have a happy and healthy New Year!

Please submit news, comments, articles, or suggestions to: *reggie.paulk@gmail.com*

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

by Vicki Cruse • IAC 22968
E-mail: vcruse@earthlink.net

Vicki Cruse

In with the New

2009 will be a good year for getting things done

Jim Klick

I haven't written a "state of the club" column for some time and thought January would be a good time to do it, coming fresh off the fall board meeting. The highlight of the meeting had to be the induction of Bill Finagin into the IAC Hall of Fame. As always, the ceremony held in the EAA AirVenture Museum was a gala event. The board meeting was eventful and productive. Since the meeting minutes are available in the members-only section of the IAC website, I will not rehash the material but hit a few highlights and give a slightly more in-depth look at some exciting things currently happening as a result of the meeting and my November visit to the frozen north (Oshkosh).

Most of you know the executive director position held by Lisa Popp for the past nine years is vacant. Hopefully by the time you read this, the position will be filled and you'll be reading about the new executive director in his or her own words next month. Much of my time in Oshkosh was spent interviewing possible candidates for the job. More than 40 resumes were received, but finding a qualified person willing to fulfill the criteria we want hasn't been easy.

The accompanying photo taken by Jim Klick may sum up one item in the minutes that needs a little further explanation. At Oshkosh (AirVenture) 2009, the IAC building will be located in a new area. You can see the building looks rather sad from this October photo. However, its new concrete pad has been poured. Currently the building is sitting on the opposite side of the taxiway from its old location. EAA Oshkosh site planning necessitated the move, as well as other Oshkosh improvements, all funded by EAA.

The new location for the building will be approximately 100 feet south of the old location and closer to the taxiway, meaning we give up our great space for six to eight airplanes. We are now just off AeroShell Square. Aerobatic aircraft parking will move across the taxiway and stretch out to the runway. Just south of this area is the taxiway where the air show aircraft park during show time.

Ultimately, we'd like to have a permanent awning around the building that negates the need for a tent for our forums. We also hope to jazz up the inside of the building a bit by perhaps doing an IAC Hall of Fame tribute on the back wall, which is first visible when entering the building, through new, larger doors. Over the next few weeks, I'll be brainstorming how to come up with the funding for these things and whether or not the new awning can be done by this year's Oshkosh.

As you'll read in this issue, the IAC now has a new Life Insurance Program. After several requests from IAC aircraft owners, Ryan Birr and Lori Richards of Northwest Insurance Group have found a program that meets our needs as aircraft, and more importantly aerobatic aircraft, pilots. Thanks to member feedback and board approval, we are a go on this program.

Lastly, I'd like to recognize the formal formation of the Technology Committee, as chaired by Tom Myers. The committee has essentially been dormant for some time, and its rebirth is going to create some new and exciting things for the IAC. Tom has assembled a great team, and they are underway with changes to contest registration and scoring, providing pilot and judges feedback at regional contests and new web pages and functions. We hope to make some headway here instead of the consistent frustration that we've dealt with for the past few years for a variety of reasons.

Happy New Year. We wish you all the best for the coming year and thank you for letting us be a part of it.

NEWSBRIEFS

Remembering Ken Larson

–By Reggie Paulk with Debby Rihn Harvey

Ken Larson passed away on November 3rd at 84 years of age, and he will be sorely missed by those who knew him. Debby Rihn-Harvey was a good friend of Ken, so I contacted her to learn more about him. As we were talking, she grabbed a copy of a book Ken wrote titled *To Fly The Concorde,* and began thumbing through it to remember some of the details of his past.

Ken was a farm boy growing up during the Great Depression. As such, daydreaming was, "one of the few sources of entertainment I could afford." As he was attending classes in a one-room school house with one teacher for eight grades, Ken discovered a book about flying which permanently set a theme to his daydreaming.

Ken's first flight was on a Ford Tri-motor that was barnstorming around the countryside. That flight made him want to fly people around the countryside, and began to shape his goals for the future. By the time Ken was in high school, he knew he wanted to get into the Army Air Corps.

During his first year of college, World War II accelerated Ken's plans, and he requested a release from his draft board so he could enlist for the Air Corps. Unfortunately, the board released him one day too late to meet the deadline, and all of his dreams were crushed. With the help of his house mother, and with a heavy conscience, Ken modified a rubber stamp to change the date on the release. That one act paved the way for a lifetime of aviation achievement.

After training as a co-pilot in B-17's, Ken headed to England in October 1944. Five months later, he had flown the required 33 missions, and headed back home to join Sammy, the love of his life, and get into civilian aviation.

After flight instructing for a few years, Braniff offered Ken a position in November 1948. A decade later, Ken was a captain and an opportunity came he couldn't pass up. Braniff, in an agreement with British Airways and Air France, was to fly the Concorde from Washington/Dulles International Airport to Dallas, Texas, after arriving from their overseas destinations. He was initially turned down, but a stroke of luck caused his number to come up. After training in England for three months, Ken came back as part of the first U.S. aircrew ever to be qualified in the Concorde SST.

Ken and Debby Rihn-Harvey

In addition to being an airline captain, Ken flew his Bucker Jungmeister in intermediate-level competition, taking the IAC Intermediate title. He also flew his Bucker in air shows. Ken served as the judge for the 1988 and the 1990 U.S. Aerobatic Teams.

In the words of Debby Rihn-Harvey, Ken was "Such a genuine guy… he was the typical Midwest gentleman. He would do anything for you. He was just a true friend."

Newsflash! 180-Day Parachute Repacks Have Arrived!

The FAA has issued a final ruling and beginning December 19th, 2008, parachute repacks will be good for 180 days instead of 120 days. Three years of persistent work has paid off! Read the FAA's ruling here: *http://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/rulemaking/recently_published/media/2120_ai85.pdf*

Source: *http://www.silverparachutes.com*

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Bill Finagin *Inducted into the* IAC Hall *of* Fame

Reggie Paulk with Bill Finagin
Photos by Jim Lawrence

William "Bill" Finagin was inducted into the IAC Hall of Fame at a ceremony in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, on October 24, 2008. Anyone who's spent any time speaking with Bill will immediately understand why he was chosen for this prestigious award, but he humbly admits that he "… just doesn't want to lower the esteem of previous Hall-of-Famers." After all he's accomplished, that may be impossible.


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Bill was born just outside of Washington, D.C., in Prince George's County, Maryland, in 1937. He grew up on a farm with horses, cows, and pigs, grew vegetables, played in the dirt, and got dirty. His two older brothers joined the Navy during World War II, and one was a fighter pilot—something Bill obviously looked up to. Bill remembers a day when he was in school and his brother flew over:

"I remember very vividly being in the second grade and hearing this monstrous noise," says Finagin. "Somebody said, 'What was that?' and I said, 'Oh nothing, it's probably my brother flying over in the Corsair.' He'd come down from Wildwood, New Jersey, so of course I was the big man in school for the rest of the day."

Bill's father fell ill and passed away when Bill was 16, limiting his opportunities.

"I went through the local system until the University of Maryland on scholarship," says Finagin, "because I didn't have any other choice."

Bill worked his way through school and started flying as soon as he got to College Park.

"I spent too much time at the airport," says Finagin. "It was one of my extracurricular loves."

He traded time working on UMD flying club airplanes for flight time and eventually earned his ticket in a 65-hp Aeronca Champion 7AC.

"You had to hand-prop it," says Finagin. "You only used the brakes when you did the run-up because they wouldn't hold otherwise."

One time, while flying the Champ back from an annual at another field, the engine began to sputter. A mechanic had replaced the vented fuel cap with a nonventing type, and the negative pressure starved the engine of fuel.

"So I'm flying back over D.C. at about 2,000 feet and the plane starts to sputter," says Finagin. "As I'd come down, the atmospheric pressure would change a little and I kept flying for a bit, but it just wasn't enough fuel to make the airport, so I had to make an off-airport landing on the median strip of a dual-lane highway about 2 miles from the airport."

Within minutes, there were quite a few cops on the scene. After figuring out the problem, replacing the fuel cap, and having the police stop traffic, Bill took off and headed back home.

Aviation stories are inevitably interrupted by the demands of life, and such was the case for Bill. After obtaining his bachelor's degree, Bill entered dental school and then attended special training as part of a Navy internship in Mayport, Florida. Moving on, Bill entered the United States Naval Academy and taught midshipmen sailing in his spare time.

Leaving active duty in 1967 to teach dental school and enter private practice, Bill remained in the Naval Reserve, eventually becoming a two-star admiral—the highest rank possible for a dentist—before his retirement in 1991. It was in 1974, during his time at dental school, that the flying bug finally bit again.

"As I was teaching in the dental school, a couple other professors wanted to get into flying," recalls Finagin. "So the first time I entered into aircraft ownership, there were three of us. We bought an airplane called a Spezio Tuholer—an open-cockpit sport plane. Of course, neither owner had their license, so I basically had an airplane to fly whenever I wanted."

The Tuholer was a homebuilt airplane with a single, low, strut-braced wing. The wings could be folded back 90 degrees and conveniently placed into a fitting in the tail for towing.

"We actually went to Pennsylvania," says Finagin, "saw the airplane and towed it home about 100 miles. It was exciting, with three idiots and a plane trailing along behind."

Because it was called a sports plane, aerobatics were obviously part of its repertoire.

"Today, I'd never fly aerobatics in it," says Finagin. "But at that time, I was like the typical idiot. I went out and flew loops and rolls."

Knowing that he couldn't be competitive in aerobatics with the Spezio, Bill set his sights on the airplane that has become synonymous with him–the Pitts.

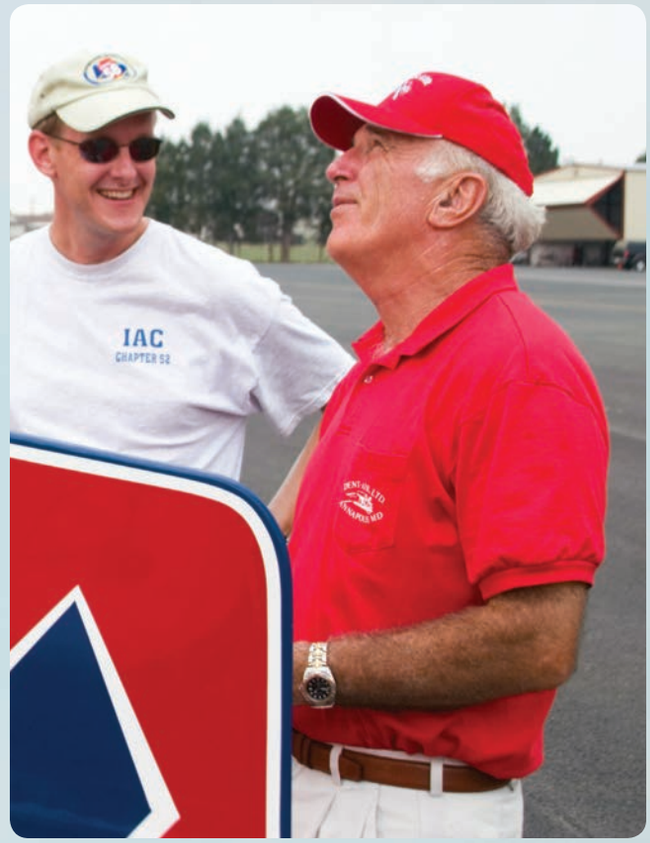
"I'd heard about the Pitts and there was one on the field," says Finagin. "I admired the guy flying it. I don't know if I admired him or the airplane more than the other, but they looked pretty sharp and spiffy, so I decided that's what I'd start looking for."

"Today, I'd never fly aerobatics in it, but at that time, I was like the typical idiot. I went out and flew loops and rolls."

As seemed to happen often to Bill, the airplane came to him in an unusual fashion.

"The good Lord smiled upon me," Finagin recalls, "and I ended up finding an absolutely beautiful one in the showroom of a Cadillac dealer in Butler, Pennsylvania."

The Pitts had outwitted a couple of naïve victims, and Bill would be the benefactor.



"I guess these guys' father was a World War II pilot," says Finagin. "They had flown some T-6s and other warbirds and decided to buy a Pitts. The one son told me, and I don't know if it's true, that after about 14 passes, he finally got it on the ground. After landing, he got out, kissed the ground, towed it to his Cadillac showroom, and put it up for sale. He said, 'I'll never fly that again!' It was an absolutely gorgeous S-1S."

Bill flew the single-seat Pitts for four years, beginning in 1981. In 1985, it was time to move up, so Bill bought a factory-new '86 S-1T and put his S-1S up for sale.

"I sold my first plane to a guy from Germany who came over," says Finagin. "The moment he looked at it, he opened up a little satchel and paid me on the spot in cash. Then we shipped it to Germany for him."

Bill became a Pitts dealer about the same time he purchased the S-1T. In order to teach students the finer points of flying the Pitts, Bill purchased a two-seat S-2B.

"That started my long and somewhat colorful teaching career, I guess some might say," says Finagin.

So what kinds of things happen to a pilot with more than 18,000 flight hours–10,000 in the Pitts alone?

"I've had a few incidents," says Finagin. "I dead-sticked a T-34 one time as a passenger. I started out as a passenger and ended up being the pilot."

Competition may be fierce, but it's not every man for himself.

"To show you how nice your fellow competitors are," he says, "at a competition a few years ago, my airplane developed an oil leak. While the plane was down waiting for a new oil cooler, I went up in a borrowed S-2C I just sold a few months before to a new customer. We had the single cockpit on it, and coming straight down with a snap roll, I happened to have the cockpit blast open on me. So here I am going straight down, the cockpit opens, my helmet flies off, and I'm reeling in the headset. It's a little noisy and a little unusual, so I decide I better pull the stick back because I'm still heading straight toward the ground. Fortunately, I ended up not zeroing anything. After pulling out of the dive, I was able to tell them I had a little problem. I landed, cleaned up the inside and outside of the airplane, and went back up and finished the flight. That one got my attention a little bit. Otherwise, it's been pretty routine flying. I've had more fun than should be allowed."

Because he has his seaplane rating, it should come as no surprise that Bill has made a few water landings. But one landing in particular was a one-off deal, never to be repeated again–hopefully:

"I was up flying with a new student. It was his first time in the back seat, and maybe his fourth or fifth lesson. He was a very accomplished private pilot, and he had become smitten with aerobatics. We were coming back from the eastern shore of Maryland, which requires us to fly over the Chesapeake Bay, and we checked off the normal items—fuel remaining and da-da-da. About 5 or 6 miles from the airport, I'm in the front seat and he's in back with all the master controls, and the engine just quit as though we had turned the key off.

"So I asked, 'What did you do?' And he said, 'Nothing!' I said, 'Okay, we'll just go through all of the emergency procedures,' and so we did.

"Nothing worked and nothing happened. So he put it in a glide, and, as we were gliding down, I said, 'You know, there's just no place to land that we're not going to have a problem, because it's a very densely populated area.'

"There was one field that happens to be a vineyard, which is about 400 feet long, so obviously we weren't going to be able to get stopped.

"I said, 'At 500 feet, I'll take the airplane, and we'll try to look for two big trees. We'll try to go right between those trees, and hopefully that'll take the wings off at the same rate and slow us down.' He seemed to go along with it, as preposterous as it might sound now.

"At about 100 feet off the ground, the plane–just as mysteriously as it stopped running–started running again. It sounded strong, so I decided to pull up to try to make

the airport. It flew for another four or five minutes, so we made a turn and started climbing up....It wasn't a sputter; it wasn't a cough; it was like someone just turned the key off. It was instantly silent—again.

"The second time the engine quit, we didn't have any choice but to put it into the river, or else we could hurt somebody. We just made sure our belts and everything were tight. It was very uneventful. We hit the water where I'd water-skied before, so I planned about 20 feet of depth in case we dove into the water or turned upside down, we wouldn't have the canopy locked closed. I didn't want to open the canopy beforehand––think of falling off of water skis at 90 miles an hour. That's what it feels like. Of course, the plane hit, and it turned over, which we expected. We unbuckled, and I made sure he was all right, and then told him I'd meet him at the surface. We held our breath and opened the canopy. When we got to the top, we watched the plane right itself and sit there at the surface. I thought, 'What an idiot!' Those things we call wings were actually water wings. It eventually sank, so they brought in a diver, put some airbags under it, and floated it up the river to what used to be an old seaplane ramp at the airport. I washed it down that night, but the saltwater corroded it, and I insisted the insurance company total it, which they did."

"You know, there's just no place to land that we're not going to have a problem..."

The very next day, there was an air show scheduled at the airport, so Bill pulled an identical plane he had for sale out of the hangar.

"Most people, including one from the FAA, thought I flew a plane that landed in the water the night before."

Due to corrosion, the problem was never pinpointed, but a faulty ignition cluster switch was suspected.

Today, if you'd like to buy a factory-new Pitts, you'll need to call Bill Finagin—currently the only Pitts dealer in the United States. The reason for his success in 22 years of Pitts sales lies in the fact that he doesn't consider it his vocation.

"[Selling airplanes] has always been a hobby with me, and we stay very busy," says Finagin. "We've just finished up two very successful years. They rank among just about the best years we've ever had in all the years I've been doing it. I think there are still people out there who want to fly a Pitts bad enough, and they'll find a way. It's all a question of priorities."

One person has been instrumental in allowing aerobatics to remain a priority for Bill.

"One of the major factors of me being involved in aerobatics," he says, "is I've had a very understanding wife. A lot of us are very lucky that way."

This fall, during the Cape May contest, IAC president Vicki Cruse asked Bill to come up to the front to help her present an award. None the wiser, he just thought he was going up to help her hand an award to someone else, like he'd done many times before.

"So I'm standing up there and she starts this speech," says Finagin. "I can't really tell you to this day exactly what she said, but I remember when she said something to the effect of, 'You're our newest inductee into the Aerobatics Hall of Fame.' I guess my brain went dead for a little bit; it was a total surprise. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think about the Hall of Fame, let alone think I'd be a candidate for it. As Vicki says, I was speechless. I really don't remember about an hour of that time after she told me I was inducted. Like a bumbling idiot, I had to ask her the next day what I said after she told me. I'm still awed by it; it's just a tremendous honor."

Bill Finagin has put "150 percent" into his flying over the years. Unable to do something just partway, he puts his all into whatever he takes on. He believes that when the time's over, the time's over. In keeping with that philosophy, Bill announced at the Hall of Fame banquet that he was retiring from competitive flying. His last flight as a contestant turned out to be idyllic.

"I won a contest at Farmville just a week before the Hall of Fame banquet," he says. "At that contest, amazingly enough, Pitts aircraft won all five categories. It's sort of unheard of, but they won Primary, Sportsman, Intermediate, Advanced, and Unlimited. What better contest can I use as a swan song?"

Bill may be giving up competitive aerobatics, but that doesn't mean he's leaving the sport entirely.

"I'll sure keep instructing, and I plan to show up at contests and be a judge if they'll have me. I still have all the vigor and interest in IAC that I've ever had in my life–that's not diminished a bit."

So what does Bill think of the IAC after all these years?

"I think the IAC is a fabulous organization. I just try to recruit people for it all the time. There's never a student who gets in my airplane who I don't encourage to become a member of the IAC if they're not already."

If anyone exemplifies the heart and spirit of the IAC, who better than Bill Finagin? Congratulations, Bill. You are more than worthy of the honor you've received.

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The Last Air Show

I was a very lucky young man. I soloed at age 14 in sailplanes and flew them for two years before switching to powered planes. My dad, a pilot himself, took me to a grass strip to learn to fly powered airplanes. My new instructor, Gordon Bourland, was an old man, about 70 years old, I think.

Charles Cook, courtesy of the National Biplane Association

The airplanes Gordon used in my early lessons were an Aeronca Champ and a PA-11 Piper Cub. Neither had a starter or an electrical system, so my first lesson was in hand-propping an airplane. My dad sat in the cockpit guarding the mags, throttle, and brakes while I stood out in front of the airplane with Gordon, who taught me the commands and motions. From then on, all my lessons started this way, with my instructor seated in the airplane barking commands as I hand-propped the airplane for the flight.

There was a good reason for this: Hand-propping a plane can be dangerous if not done correctly. I would soon be on my own and would have to know how to start the plane without the assistance of either my dad or an instructor. I was told that under no circumstances was I to allow anyone I didn't know to prop the airplane. If someone wanted to help, he was to sit in the airplane and guard the mags, and I was to be the only one touching the prop.

Frank waves to the crowd after flying his 1991 aerobatic exhibition at Bartlesville for which he came out of retirement in support of the NBA. Frank's wife Celesta is right of Frank, Julia Clay is far left, Carl Clay is far right.

Soon after I soloed the Champ, my dad bought me a Great Lakes biplane to allow me to build time and further my experience. It was the first airplane I had flown with an electrical system and a starter. I thought to myself, "How great. When ready to fly, simply turn the mags on and engage the starter." My instructor and my dad had other ideas on how things were to be done. They told me I wasn't allowed initially to use the starter because I would wear it out if I didn't know how to start the engine. Instead, I was instructed to hand-prop it in order to learn the proper number of blades to pull through, the throttle positions, and the amount of prime to use.

At first it was a battle. The engine was bigger than any I had hand-propped before and harder to start. Sometimes I would work up to an hour before I would wear out, give up, or get it started. After days of attempting to perfect the technique, I got to the point where I could get it started by about the third swing with the mags on. From that point on, I was allowed to use the starter.

Although I didn't think so at the time, my dad and the instructor were right. Now I could get it started without the grinding that I heard other people—who didn't understand their engines—inflicting on their starters. It didn't take long for the hand-prop lessons and the Great Lakes to pay off. But it wasn't in starting engines; it was at The Last Air Show.

I was about 17 years old at the time and had been flying the Great Lakes to fly-ins nearly every weekend. For those who've never experienced one, a fly-in is much like an antique auto show: Arrive on Saturday, look at the airplanes, have a barbeque dinner that night while the awards are being handed out, visit a little on Sunday morning, and fly home—good clean fun.

> He didn't need a 17-year-old propping a 185-hp Warner-powered Bücker in front of a crowd of people, but it was Frank's last air show, and he wanted it done his way.

One weekend each fall, there would be a large and very special fly-in at Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and I decided to attend. I flew up from Fort Worth in my Great Lakes on my student pilot certificate and parked in the biplane area. It was airplane heaven—250 or more airplanes all parked in the infield of the airport and in perfect weather. After I tied my Great Lakes down, I started walking the lines and admiring all the various airplanes. Some I knew, some I had seen, others I had only heard about. As I neared the only hangar at the airport where everyone was seated and eating, I noticed one airplane in the hangar was roped off so that no one could touch it. It didn't have an award-winning finish as many of the other airplanes did, so you could tell it had been a "flier" all through its life. It was a Bücker Jungmeister.

I knew what a Bücker was, but I had never seen one. It was designed for aerobatic flight training for the German Luftwaffe in the early to mid-1930s prior to World War II. After World War II it became the aerobatic aircraft of choice in the 1950s and 1960s. There were very few of them in the United States because they had to be imported from Europe, and aerobatic aircraft in general were not in particularly high demand. Most U.S. pilots of the 1950s and 1960s who liked aerobatic biplanes flew Wacos, Stearmans, and Great Lakes. When I got my Great Lakes in the mid-1980s, the Bückers and Great Lakes had both been largely forgotten and surpassed by the Pitts Specials, which had higher power-to-weight ratios.

As I looked at the Bücker, I asked someone what it was doing in the hangar. They told me that the fly-in chairman, Charlie Harris, had invited Frank Price to come to the fly-in. There were not many aerobatic displays at fly-ins, but Frank decided to attend because they were making an exception for him. It was to be Frank Price's last air show.

I knew who Frank Price was because I owned a Great Lakes. When I was given the airplane, I looked into its history. Of all the famous pilots who flew one, Frank

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Price was the most flamboyant. He was a self-employed professional crop duster from Moody, Texas, who had long supplemented his income by flying air shows in his Warner-powered Great Lakes on weekends. He competed in any number of national contests during the 1950s and became the first American to ever compete in the World Aerobatic Championships. There were no sponsors or outside underwriting in those days. Frank paid out of his own pocket the cost of shipping his Great Lakes to Europe. He ground-crewed, competed, and represented the United States all by himself in Czechoslovakia. When the contests were over, Frank did not have the money to ship the Great Lakes back home, so he returned to the United States without the airplane and crop dusted for a year to earn enough to ship his airplane back. Back in the States, he continued to perform in air shows in his Great Lakes, and later in Bückers and Monocoupes.

This was a very special airplane flown by a very special person. I spent the afternoon looking at it through the ropes between trips out to the larger general aircraft display area. That evening at the Saturday banquet and awards presentation, Frank was given a very glowing and impressive introduction by the master of ceremonies, Charlie Harris. Following the introduction, Frank came to the podium and gave a speech about his life as a crop duster and a showman and talked about how he had scraped out a living flying small airplanes. Frank was the ultimate showman; he gave a captivating speech.

Next on the agenda were the awards. They were the typical Best of Show, People's Choice, Best in Class type things. Every year there was also a trophy presented to the Youngest Pilot in Command. The younger pilots were asked to stand, and as ever-younger ages were called, the older pilots sat down. By the time the "call out" age was down to 23, I was the only one left standing. I had been seated toward the back, so I had a long walk up to the podium. As I approached the speakers' platform, Charlie Harris asked, "Young man, did you fly in by yourself?" to which I answered, "Yes." He then said, "What is your age, where are you from, and tell us your name." I answered, "I am 17, I am from Fort Worth, and my name is Charles Cook."

As the applause started, someone called out, "Unless he flew up in a taildragger, he should be disqualified; anyone can fly a Tomahawk." Charlie turned to me with the mike and asked, "What kind of airplane did you fly to Tahlequah?" My response was "a Great Lakes." Immediately, a huge chorus of cheers erupted. I looked out at the crowd, a little embarrassed, and saw that one person had not only stood up but was approaching the podium. It was Frank Price.

Frank was a big man, a bit over 6 feet tall, with a strong, stocky build and long, white, wavy hair that went in every direction. When he arrived at the podium, he towered over me and grabbed both my shoulders, placing me in front of him and speaking to the crowd. He gave a moving speech on what aviation should be, how he felt when he saw young people involved in flying the "right kind of airplanes," and where he thought aviation was headed. As we stepped off the podium, he turned to me and said, "Charles, go get your plate, you're eating up here with me tonight."

EAA Photo Archive

I retrieved my plate, moved up to sit with Frank, and, needless to say, the dinner was one of the best I ever attended. When the dinner was over, Frank said, "Meet me at the field in the morning; you're helping me out before I fly."

The next morning was beautiful. Charlie Harris had done a great job building up the anticipation for "The Last Air Show." When I arrived at the hangar, Frank Price grabbed me and directed me to where the Bücker was parked. "Charles, let's pull her out to the ramp; grab an N-strut."

I grabbed one "N" -strut, and Frank grabbed the other. Charlie Harris marshaled us through the crowd with two orange batons. It was all very official looking.

We reached the rope that separated the crowd from the taxiway and, as the Bücker crossed this line, I let go of the strut and let the airplane roll off into the section where only the "air show" personnel were allowed. The whole time Charlie Harris had stayed with the Bücker. As the airplane got within a few yards of the blocked-off section, Frank looked back and realized I had stopped. Frank's Bücker had an electrical system and starter. What he did next caught both Charlie Harris and me off guard. Frank pulled the Bücker into the wind, looked over at me, and said, "Charles, get out here, you're pulling my engine through."

> "Meet me at the field in the morning; you're helping me out before I fly."

I didn't know how to respond, but the other Charlie was much quicker on his feet. Speaking in a low voice so no one else could hear, he said, "Frank, I'm not sure

Frank Price of Waco, TX–the Old Tiger himself in the cockpit of his last Bucker–a custom-built 300hp Super Jungmeister. Frank was the first American aerobatic pilot ever to represent the U.S.A. in World Aerobatic Competition.

Charles Cook should be hand-propping this airplane." But Frank was ready for him. Before he could finish the sentence, Frank boomed in his strong, decisive manner, "Look, I want him pulling the engine through before I fly!" Charlie then looked to me for reassurance, asking, "Charles, do you know how to hand-prop an airplane?" Before I could respond, Frank's voice boomed again. "Hell, yes, he can prop a plane! He flew up in a Great Lakes!"

While it wasn't particularly good judgment or logical, both Charlie Harris and I picked up on this as Frank turned his back to the both of us, walked to the Bücker, stepped up on the wing, and seated himself in the cockpit.

It was one of those awkward moments. Charlie Harris was right. He didn't need a 17-year-old propping a 185-hp Warner-powered Bücker in front of a crowd of people, but it was Frank's last air show, and he wanted it done his way. With no further comments from anyone, Frank took charge.

"Switch off! Throttle closed! Brakes set! Charles, pull her through four blades!"

I responded, *"Roger, off and closed!"*

I reached up and pulled the blades through four compressions; the whole time Charlie Harris stood by the wingtip watching in apprehension.

"Switch on! Throttle cracked! Brakes set! Clear!"

Both Charlie and I responded, *"Clear!"*

The engine hit on the first pull.

I walked over to the wingtip by the other Charlie. I then looked over to Frank Price. He was sitting in the Bücker with the wind whipping his long, white hair. He looked over at me with a big smile and gave us a huge thumbs up before closing the canopy. It was all pure showmanship, but it was such wonderful showmanship. It was the kind of flamboyant showmanship it took to survive when Frank was making a living doing air shows in the '40s, '50s, and '60s. This would be the last time, and it was moving to see.

I stood out on the taxiway and watched the air show with the other Charlie. Neither of us spoke. The Bücker in earlier days had been flown with more symmetry, cut cleaner lines, snapped crisper rolls ... but at the same time you knew you were watching someone who had mastered it.

When Frank landed and began to taxi in, Charlie turned, handed me the two orange batons he had been holding, and said, "Charles, marshal him in this last time. I think Frank would like that."

Charlie then stood behind me as Frank taxied the Bücker in from the last aerobatic display. He had just flown the LAST AIR SHOW. The world of aviation would never be quite the same … and I would never forget it!

Many thanks to the National Biplane Association and Chairman Charlie Harris who allowed IAC to reprint this article that originally appeared in the Spring/Summer 2008 issue of Biplane News.

Frank Price (left) came out of air show exhibition flying retirement to fly the 1991 Biplane Expo Air Show at Bartlesville. Vern Dallman of Esparto, CA, agreed to come fly the show when he learned he would share the billing with the one and only Frank Price.

Jim Koepnick

The last of the breed … Frank Price flying his last Bucker; a 300hp; 3-blade; gleaming white; two-place; bubble canopy; custom-built Super Jungmeister. Frank flew this screamer in his last aerobatic exhibitions. In a way, both Frank and the Bucker were the last of their era.

Editor's postscript: Frank Price was the first man ever to represent the United States in the World Aerobatic Championships. Frank was our honored guest at the Biplane Expo in June 1995. He was part of the very first class of inductees into EAA's International Aerobatic Club Hall of Fame in 1987. Frank died in 1999.

The 1984 Frank Price Bücker aerobatic display at the Tulsa Fly-In at Tahlequah, Oklahoma, as described by Charles Cook was, without a doubt, intended to be Frank's last air show. He retired from air show flying at that time. But time, tide, and circumstance have a way of changing things. Frank and Celesta acquired a gorgeous new 300-hp, three-blade, bubble-canopy Bücker in the mid-1980s. It was powerful, fast, and stunning in appearance. When the National Biplane Association officials decided to conduct an air show as a part of Biplane Expo 1991, Frank Price had to be a part of that show.

Frank agreed to come out of retirement, renewed his medical and biennial flight review, came to Bartlesville, and, together with Bobby Younkin of Springdale, Arkansas, and Vern Dallman of Esparto, California, flew the show. They were spectacular.

Then Frank, together with Pat and Bob Wagner, Jo Peterson, Van White, and Tom Collier, flew the 1992 show. That show at Bartlesville was Frank's last air show, although he was the Expo Air Show air boss at our final air show in 1993 when Bob Herendeen, Tom Collier, Steve Wolf, Ken Larsen, and Charlie Greer flew!

The National Biplane Association will be forever grateful and indebted to these aerobatic legends who flew without professional fee for the benefit of the Biplane Center. … Thanks to all of them! Talk about being blessed—we were!

The author, Charles Cook of Fort Worth, Texas, was, as his story indicates, a 17-year-old Great Lakes pilot in the early 1980s when this story took place. He is now a FedEx captain flying international routes.

Teaching the Basic Aerobatic Course

GREG KOONTZ, MCFI-A
PHOTOS COURTESY GREG KOONTZ AND SCOTT SLOCUM

Part Four: The third lesson plan

The following is the fourth part in a series about teaching a basic aerobatic course. The course teaches the four fundamental maneuvers of aerobatics (loops, rolls, hammerheads, and spins) to the beginning student. I will be addressing the instructor who wants to learn more about teaching this kind of course, but hopefully the contents will be helpful to those seeking to begin an aerobatic course as well.

Flight instructing is an art, and therefore it is personal. I will share my personal techniques and philosophy about the subject, but in the end each instructor will teach his or her students with a style best suited to them. Therefore, no information shared here is meant to be a judgment of the quality of the instruction given by anyone else.

Your student has returned once again and is ready to venture into lesson three of the basic aerobatic course. Good for you. You didn't overwhelm him, make him too sick, or scare him away. Lesson two must have been a complete success.

Lesson three is a serious review of loops, rolls, and combinations thereof. The new maneuver for the flight is the hammerhead. But before we jump into the new maneuver, let's take a good look at where our student is right now.

Typically, this lesson presents the first big hurdle for the aerobatic student. In the first lesson, you taught her the relationship between aileron drag and angle of attack. This is more confusing for the average student than you might think. Concepts that involve thin air and flying machines are pretty foreign to the average ground creature and require some time to absorb. By now you have the student doing some pretty good aileron rolls. Hopefully you spent some time pointing out the effects of aileron drag when the maneuver was attempted, without being at the zero-lift angle of attack (AOA) (more commonly called "unloading the wing"). Seeing it in action helps the student understand it. The truth is most of us will attempt to learn by memorizing the steps of a maneuver and not by completely understanding it. It helps us handle the complexity, and we can figure out the details later.

So your student might be doing some of the things you taught him mechanically. It's okay. In fact, you should expect it to happen. But as you add more information and expect an understanding of what you've done so far, you are going to find a limit to how much he can perform mechanically. This is where you are going to find your first learning curve, and it is typical of lesson three.

It reminds me of calculus. I did fair in algebra and sneaked by in trigonometry. I memorized enough not to fail. But when I took calculus, the weak bridge I stood upon collapsed. You can expect to find many students doing the same with lesson three. To avoid disaster in most cases, be sure to ask students to explain why there is no aileron drag at zero-lift AOA and–most importantly–why we are so concerned about that AOA when doing the aileron roll. If they can't tell you, it's time for a thorough review. While doing so, reinforce the concepts and the advantages of the new entry and exit from the roll you showed them in lesson two.

Now you have a decision to make to set the direction you will go from here. If a review of all you've done so far seems to be well within your student's abilities, you might be ready to make the middle of that aileron roll look more like a level slow roll instead of an arc. If this is the case, let's go over your next change to the roll before we talk about hammerheads.

In the last lesson, you showed the student how to blend the aileron and elevator inputs to enter the roll, and you showed her how to use top rudder and then back pressure to end the roll flatter: two steps toward an eventual slow roll. Now let's flatten out that middle arc to have at least a rudimentary slow roll developing.

First, tell her you are not going to set the arc by lifting the nose up before the roll starts, like before (lifting the nose a little for the first attempts might be necessary if the student is having trouble). As the roll starts and the usual forward elevator is applied, have her push a bit further this time to compensate for not having raised the nose. Your earlier explanation of aileron drag will make sense here. Show her the need for right rudder in a left roll to compensate for negative aileron drag, and for top rudder in the first of the roll to hold up the nose. Show her how to taper off the right rudder as she passes through inverted, and then, using the top rudder technique learned in the last lesson, she can bring the roll on around from there. This is essentially step three in my four-step process to teach slow rolls.

I know what you're thinking right now: "Hey, there's a little more to it than that." You are right. I have learned that the slow roll is the most complex and, for their experience, the most difficult maneuver your students are going to attempt for a long while. I found out years ago that I could direct a student to a great slow roll if I chip at it a little at a time. After your student is comfortable doing this version of the roll, she will be ready to clean up the loose ends and smooth it out in step four. That is most likely going to be during lessons beyond this course.

In flight, your third lesson begins with loops and rolls. If you have chosen to progress the slow roll with a student, I suggest making that your first order of business following a short review of the simpler version of the roll as a warm-up. If you have decided that the roll is best left alone for now, use the time to practice the technique learned so far. Again, be sure you let him see all the effects of adverse aileron drag and how unloading the wing changes it.

Time should also be spent fine-tuning the loop. Most students have trouble with the need for right rudder on the initial pull (for P-factor) and even more difficulty seeing the need for right rudder over the top (spiraling

Greg Koontz discusses the finer points of the aileron roll with his student.

slipstream). While you were probably more concerned with where the student was looking and how he was pulling on the last lesson, you can probably spend some time this lesson emphasizing the propeller forces. Like for everything else, it's a building block method of learning, one block at a time.

By starting rolls in lesson one and loops in lesson two, you get four shots in this course at improving the roll, and three at improving the loop. This is right in line with their order of importance and value to the student's development. Now it's time for hammerheads. You have just this and the last lesson to cover them, and I have to tell you, they can present some challenges to the student to learn and the instructor to teach.

Hammerheads are my favorite. That long vertical line, the feeling of almost stopping the airplane on top, and that rush you get pointing straight down as you accelerate all make this maneuver what aerobatics is all about! But the anxiety of doing this maneuver can make your student have a different opinion altogether.

If your student is being too timid to load the plane with the necessary G's, is too reluctant to hold the stick forward during a roll, and tends to get abrupt or erratic on the controls, then he might need more time to settle down before moving on to hammerheads. Most people will show at least some of these symptoms by this lesson. It's a part of the learning process. You should be able to get hammers done here with most students. You'll find most students relax a great deal on this lesson after a successful review of loops and rolls.

I explain the hammerhead in three pieces: the vertical line, the pivot, and the vertical descent. As with all my explanations, I try to develop an understanding of how one should think of this maneuver and leave heavy details for good reading later. As I said once before, we don't fly with a slide rule in our hands, but we should eventually learn all we can.

To warm up for this maneuver, have your student run through a few of those "crazy-eights" from the first lesson. Only this time, do all of them to the left and tell your student that the objective will be to always keep the wings parallel to the road. She will pull up, add rudder to arc over, and find she needs opposite aileron to keep the wings parallel. Great stuff! This technique has drastically shortened how long it takes me to teach a hammerhead. After a few "crazy-eights," all that's left is to straighten it up into a formal hammerhead.

THE VERTICAL LINE: The pull into the hammerhead is not unlike doing the first one-fourth of the loop. In competition, we like a tight corner here to draw the maximum vertical line. For the beginner, be merciful and be happy with the familiar pull we have used for the loop. Once pulling the first 90 degrees of pitch, the first task is to stop on the vertical. The student has the objective of stopping the pitch by moving the stick to the zero-lift angle of attack with the wing on the vertical. Here you are to reinforce the require-

Instead of sitting out on the porch enjoying the view of his airfield, Greg Koontz brushes up with *Sport Aerobatics*.

ment to look at the left wingtip, just like in the loop. The student gets a nice long look at this position and can better learn what needs to be done with the rudders to keep the wing on the horizon. It's "**L**ower the wing with the **L**eft rudder and **R**aise the wing with the **R**ight rudder."

The vertical line requires maintenance. That is, you can't "set it and forget it." The student is pushing against the trim setting for level flight, and the speed is rapidly fading. This requires constant maintenance of the pitch as well as the yaw and roll; all are being affected by trim and propeller forces. The most common error here is letting the airplane drift over on its back, and the second is dragging a wing. Fixing a dragging wing is relatively easy, but correcting a plane that's a little on its back requires forward stick. This is a potential problem if done late. Your student can be setting control inputs for an inverted spin. I find basic trainers like the Super Decathlon are pretty forgiving here, so don't instill too much fear in explaining this. Just make your student aware of the error.

"THE PLANE IS GOING TO ACT JUST LIKE A CANNON BALL GOING VERTICAL."

The airplane *must* be vertical when arriving at the top for the pivot. A little negative or positive will send the plane in a slanted track that will not work. Just as adverse, the wings must be square, with yaw in check. Wile E. Coyote can run off a cliff and run back in a cartoon, but we mere mortals can't pull that off. The plane is going to act just like a cannon ball going vertical. If it is not straight up, it will enter an arc that will totally destroy your ability to pivot correctly at the top.

THE PIVOT: With only a trace of vertical velocity, apply firm left rudder (the pivot works best to the left due to the propeller forces). You are looking to fly a micro arc here in most trainers, so just a little motion is necessary to start. Begin by helping your student find the place to pivot and then eventually back off and make her decide. Just prior to reaching the vertical down attitude, arrest the pivot motion with a short application of opposing (right) rudder. This brings the airplane to a vertical position ready for the downline.

But wait! The pivot can't be that easy! Well, it isn't. We've got to handle some propeller forces here, too. As you begin your left rudder to pivot, you'll need to apply right aileron for torque (just ask air show performer Skip Stewart with his big-motored biplane) and forward stick to control a big gulp of gyroscopic precession. It amounts to a push of the stick to the right front "corner." If you choose not to reduce power, expect to begin backing off this correction at about the last 45 degrees of pivot as the plane tries to accelerate and widens the arc.

Your reference for all of this pivoting is the left wingtip. I do these first hammers across a reference like a straight road and then move later to doing them along the reference. As the student pivots, her eyes should follow the wing along the reference until the wing reaches the point under the plane for the vertical. There, they should lock on the spot and head for it. Early on, a quick look at the wingtips can confirm the vertical

Teaching aerobatics is about gradual reinforcement and having fun!

downline. I find students learn what it looks like soon and can stop the wingtip look for a more stable concentration on the reference.

THE DOWNLINE: You're not finished yet! The biggest training error in this maneuver is rushing out of the vertical downline. Be sure to draw the line equal to the vertical upline. For the still timid student, this might be a place for a little anxiety. But for most it's just impatience. Set the correct habits early and make sure students do the line.

So what are the real pitfalls here? Well, there's a lot going on and the hammerhead has little forgiveness. You're going straight up and the plane isn't going to wait for you to make up your mind! The biggest problem is a tailslide out of a late pivot attempt. Waiting too long will leave you short of energy and control. The Super Decathlon isn't approved for tailslides like most trainers, but don't panic. If you run out of "umph" before you accomplish the pivot, simply keep trying to pivot. If nothing is happening, I find a lot of success in pulling myself over on my back. In any event, trying to upset the plane will result in an early reversal of direction instead of much tailsliding. As soon as you flop over, reduce power, neutralize the controls, get a little speed, and pull out of the dive like a loop.

So now you've refined the roll, practiced the loop, and introduced the hammerhead. The lesson is just about done. If time permits and your student isn't worn out, take a few minutes and have some fun. Put the three maneuvers in sequence and make your student do some fast thinking, moving from one maneuver to the other. Mix it up some. Don't forget to establish a good habit of drawing that straight and level line between each maneuver. And, finally, laugh a little, hoot and holler a little, and be sure to tell your student what was good about the flight.

Greg Koontz is a NAFI Master Certificated Flight Instructor-Aerobatic and has been teaching basic aerobatic courses since 1974. He is a full-time aerobatic professional sponsored by American Champion Aircraft flying shows in his Super Decathlon, is an aerobatic competency evaluator (ACE), and is a member of the International Council of Air Shows' ACE Committee. Greg is a member of the National Association of Flight Instructors (NAFI) and actively supports its efforts to raise the standards for aerobatic instructors.

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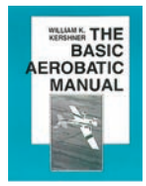

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I09045 $34.99

The IAC's New Life Insurance Program

Ryan Birr, President, Northwest Insurance Group

For the past couple years the IAC Strategic Planning Committee has given considerable thought to what benefits should be offered to members. This sounds like simple brainstorming, but there really are many considerations to make. Bringing in member programs is time intensive and requires the proper allocation of staff. In addition, board members' time needs to be used efficiently. It's difficult to determine what benefits will actually do any good. We have to figure out how many members will use products or services and how the IAC may also benefit from specific relationships with vendors.

Now, you might be asking yourself why the IAC insurance guy is talking about the strategic planning committee. It was this team that made the recommendation to the board to move forward with a new aircraft insurance program last spring, and we have continued to work with that team, learning more about the actual needs of IAC members. Since April we have identified some new things to work on throughout the next year, and most of these ideas are coming from IAC members. As we have been talking to you about your aircraft insurance, surprisingly, you folks have been proactively approaching us with a variety of insurance-product-related questions that we hadn't given any thought to. We forwarded your comments and suggestions to Vicki Cruse, and she has again taken the lead, working for the IAC members, to further enhance member insurance benefits.

One of the common questions we keep getting is about access to life insurance for pilots who are flying competitive aerobatics. In a holistic approach to building the IAC insurance program, we'd have to be considering damage to the aircraft with the use of **hull** insurance coverage, injury to other people and damage to property with the use of **liability** insurance coverage, and finally injury or death to the pilot with the use of **life** insurance and **disability** insurance coverage. Well, it seems you members are one step ahead of our strategic planning with your continued request for the last of these three types of coverage.

Having been asked by the strategic planning team to move forward with a proposal for them, we looked to one of our own strategic partners: a brokerage wholesaler that specializes purely in life insurance products and services and is well-respected by the retail insurance community and by the major life insurance carriers. Our first approach was to find a simple, broad accidental death type of benefit that could be implemented and cover all members simply by being an IAC member. Unfortunately, the organization does not have enough members to meet actuarial tests, and we found no available market for this kind of benefit for you. Our next step was to identify an insurance carrier that would be willing to build a rating and underwriting matrix that would already identify—in effect pre-underwriting—that IAC members would be 1) pilots, and 2) likely involved in or competing in sport aerobatics.

While we were attending the U.S. Nationals in Texas this fall, we met with members of the strategic planning committee to bring forth the proposal they requested, which subsequently was delivered to and approved by the IAC board.

In January of 2009, we will begin accepting your requests for life insurance coverage! Life insurance is a complicated insurance product. In many cases, it requires expert assistance to determine what kind of a product is really needed for you, what limits of insurance you should purchase, and how it should be implemented

within your estate plan. The IAC Insurance Plan is not in any way providing counsel or product variety for this kind of estate planning. The IAC program is offering simple "term" life insurance, which means you need to choose the length of time you wish coverage for—10 years, 20 years, 30 years—and what limit of insurance you desire—$100,000, $200,000, etc. At the end of the "term," the insurance will expire unless you chose to extend it, under certain conditions. Additionally, it is a fully "underwritten" life insurance product, and upon your application, you may be subject to physical exams, blood tests, or any other standard underwriting criteria, which is applicable to any life insurance applicant. Therefore, *we cannot guarantee that you will qualify for this life insurance product (and it may not be available in your state).*

When you call our office, we will take your initial request and forward it to our life insurance department, which is fully staffed and technically sophisticated. Someone from that department will then call you back to begin the confidential process of applying for your life insurance. The reason for this part of the process is so that you are identified as an IAC member and we can make sure you get the special underwriting consideration we have set up for you in advance.

We have really enjoyed our relationship with IAC members, and your proactive approach to helping us provide better service and products that are beneficial for all IAC members has been extremely helpful. Please continue to let us or the board know how we can become an even better partner to you.

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ARESTI Hesitation Roll

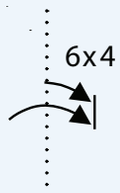
Notation Changed for 2009

Robert Bismuth

Starting this year, the Aresti notation for a hesitation roll (Family 9.2 – 9.8) has changed. For these rolls with rotation other than 360°, the notation relating to the number of stops has changed to the form AxB (note that the "x" must be lowercase), where "A" represents the number of stops and "B" represents the number of stops that would be made in 360° of rotation. Hence, half of an 8-point roll would be notated by "4x8", spoken as, "four of eight," while a 4-point roll of 540° would be noted as "6x4", and spoken as a, "six of four," and so on.

Drawn on a sequence, the new hesitation roll notation looks like this:

"Four of Eight"



"Six of Four"

For hesitation rolls of exactly 360°, the existing notation is retained, with just a "2", "4" or "8" inscribed beside the roll arrow. For example,

"Four-point roll"

The notation for Family 9.1 rolls has also not changed and continues to use the "/" symbol to denote a partial roll of less than, or greater than 360°. Shown below are examples of ¾ (three quarter) and 1¼ (one and one-quarter) rolls. No changes here from what you are already used to seeing.

"Three-quarter roll"

"One and one quarter roll"

The 2009 Known sequences provide further examples of all the roll notations.

Any IAC Free Program approved in 2009 must use this new notation. Existing Free Programs which do not need new approval in 2009, may continue to use the old notation for the 2009 contest year, but note that all IAC Free Programs must use the new notation beginning no later than 2010. The most recent versions of the two common software applications used to draw sequences, Aresti and Olan, already incorporate the new notation.

This change to the hesitation roll notation does not affect the Family pages of the Aresti System (Condensed), but does affect a few of the introductory pages. Change pages to bring your Aresti System (Condensed) up to date may be downloaded for free from ***http://www.fai.org/aerobatics/documents/.***

Submitted by:
Brian K. Howard
Chairman, IAC Rules Committee Member,
CIVA Catalogue Sub-Committee

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meet a member

by Kent Misegades

Name: Hella Comat

City, Province: Burlington, Ontario, Canada

Occupation: Curriculum Developer for TechnoKids Inc.

Family: A very supportive husband, Bill, and a son, Tyler, aged 23

Pilot Certificate: Private

Aircraft Flown: Pitts S-1T

E-mail Address: hcomat@cogeco.ca

What experience drew you to flying? My father had always wanted to fly, but never had the opportunity. He was thrilled when I got my license and [he] could fly with me.

What was your first experience with aerobatics? I took a 10-hour introductory course from Gerry Younger in Kitchener, Ontario.

What got you into competition? I started competing in Gerry's Decathlon in Sportsman. Then I bought a share in a Pitts S-1S in 1980 with seven other pilots! We called it the 8 Hole Pitts and competed in Canada and the United States. It was actually a very good partnership because only two or three of us could manage to get the time to go to any given contest. Most of us were just thrilled to be able to afford and have the opportunity to fly a Pitts.

Tell me about your airplane. It's a completely stock 1984 S-1T.

How did you obtain this airplane? My husband was searching Trade-A-Plane on the Internet and found it for sale in Florida. I have been trying to learn to fly it ever since. Despite not being able to fly from January to April in Canada, I've put over 200 hours on it in just over two years.

What is your most memorable contest moment? Since having competed in the 1980s (!), I haven't flown aerobatics in over 20 years. I started back competing just this year and have had a blast. I have been lucky enough to make it to four contests and have won Intermediate in the last three. The "moment" is the memory of this past summer.

What is your favorite part of a contest? In the four contests I've attended, I've met the greatest people. I went to Ohio, Michigan, Tennessee, and Virginia. Even though there was a totally different group of pilots and volunteers at each contest, and I had not met anyone before, they were all so kind and helpful. My other favorite part is just getting the Pitts safely on the ground after flying a sequence!

Tell me a person or persons in the sport you admire. That would undoubtedly be Gerry Younger. Gerry's first aerobatic competition was in Rockford, Illinois, in 1969. He went on to become a many-time Canadian Unlimited Champion. He competed in the World Aerobatic Championships in Kiev, Soviet Union; Oshkosh, United States; South Cerney, England, and Oklahoma, United States. He is a phenomenal, gifted pilot—one of those rare "naturals." He has been a great friend, instructor, and a source of invaluable information whenever I have a question about aerobatic maneuvers, flying competition, or concerns about the Pitts. He always has the time to watch a practice sequence, make a constructive suggestion about my flying, or try to educate me about the airplane. He is an incredible instructor, teaching students not only how to fly the maneuvers, but also how to analyze the figures. He doesn't tell you exactly what to do, but tries to get you to figure out what is needed. He truly has a gift for instruction and a passion for the sport of aerobatics, flying Unlimited level aerobatics at an age when other pilots only wish that they could.

Where would you like to see yourself going in the sport? I'm there! I'm just thrilled to be going to competitions, meeting the great people, and having lots of fun seeing parts of the United States that I've never visited. I guess the flip side of not being young any more is finally getting to live your dream.

mazda LINCOLN Ford MERCURY VOLVO

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