

SPORT

December 2015

Aerobatics

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE of the INTERNATIONAL AEROBATIC CLUB





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I look at everything in life as with anything attainable, and you can do anything you set your mind to—the person has to be the one putting in the effort, going the extra mile, doing the things to get them in position to be great
—Goody Thomas

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by Evan Peers with Goody Thomas

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COVER

Team USA 2015 prepares to depart Chateauroux, France with the Unlimited Team Bronze medal. This 1943 Air France DC-3 was a centerpiece of the airshow and ground display portion of the 2015 World Aerobatics Championships. Front to back: Benjamin Freelove, Michael Steveson, Rob Holland, Coco Bessiere, Mike Gallaway, Melissa Pemberton, Jeff Boerboon, Mark Nowosielski, Goody Thomas, Brett Hunter, Mike Ciliberti. Photo by Evan Peers / Airspace Media.

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REGGIE PAULK
COMMENTARY / EDITOR'S LOG

Messing Up Is Easy

Setting the record straight

DECEMBER. . .THE WORD makes me think of shorter days, colder temperatures, and lots of snow piling higher and higher into nearly unmanageable mountains. I live at nearly 9,000 feet in the heart of the Colorado Rockies, so I know my winter is much different than many people farther south—or even those of you in the southern hemisphere—where December 21 marks the longest day of the year. But as I've said in years past during this time of year, now is one of the best times to go flying.

The sharp bump as we passed through it let me know that I'd finished the loop exactly where I'd begun.

Winter flying carries with it the promise of clear skies and buttery smooth air—even in the middle of the day. Launching into a crisp winter morning can give you some very rewarding aerobatic flying. I remember a winter flight in a Super Decathlon about 22 years ago like it was yesterday.

After climbing out to our practice area east of Colorado Springs, we performed some clearing turns

and then began the first in a series of loops. These weren't competition loops, mind you, but I remember a couple of times when, at the bottom of the loop, we passed through the wake turbulence we'd created at the beginning. The sharp bump as we passed through it let me know that I'd finished the loop exactly where I'd begun. The same held true while performing steep turns. You know you're holding your altitude pretty good when you pass through 360 degrees of turn and bump through your own wake. Try doing that on a hot summer day, or a blustery spring or fall day.

Last month, we ran a cover of the 2016 Advanced aerobatic team, but I made a couple of major errors. The logo for the Advanced and Unlimited teams are the same except for their color and the obvious inclusion of their respective titles. I ran the Unlimited logo, which I'm sure won't ruffle too many of the Advanced team's feathers, but it was an error nonetheless. The more embarrassing faux pas was the misspelling of the word "Advanced." All I can do is hang my head in shame and beg forgiveness. I hope I didn't offend too many people, and apologize to the Advanced team for the mistakes.

I look forward to writing to you in January, but until then, please enjoy a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May your holidays be safe and filled with happiness.

IAC

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



MIKE HEUER

COMMENTARY / IAC PRESIDENT, IAC 4

Please send your comments, questions, or suggestions to: mike@mheuer.com

October and November

WHILE THERE ARE SEVERAL competitions held in October and November and after the U.S. Nationals in late September, the contest season closes after the fall Sebring contest in Florida. For your officers, directors, and program chairs, the work is often just beginning.

Every November, the IAC board of directors gathers at the EAA headquarters offices and museum in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, to consider a huge array of issues, programs, and proposals and to plan for the following year's activities. As we have continued our work to revitalize the IAC and bring new people into the organization, the workload has increased and our meeting agendas are more packed than ever. This year, our agenda book for the board meeting numbered nearly 230 pages.

One of the first items on the agenda was a review and approval of the next year's budget. The budget contains dozens of line items that must be discussed by our finance committee each October. It is then presented to the board, and since it takes funding to make our organization work, the budget impacts every activity that the IAC is involved in, from *Sport Aerobatics* magazine to AirVenture to the U.S. National Aerobatic Championships. Our finance committee is very careful with your dues money, but we also must create and nurture additional programs that provide income to the IAC as the membership dues only cover about half the budget. I am happy to report that we are stronger financially than we have been in many years, and this is going to make possible further

improvements in our organization and the services we provide. There is a lot on the table for 2016.

I am also happy to report that we have grown by about 200 members since last year's fall board meeting. New memberships are strong and renewal rates are good, though still needing improvement. Renewal rates are a reflection of how well we are doing and how the member perceives the value in investing their dollars in the IAC.

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Since the principle service to our membership is this magazine, we discussed ideas for future issues that further highlight our activities and can be used as a tool to promote aerobatics outside our organization. *Sport Aerobatics* continues to improve each month under the editorship of Reggie Paulk, and the IAC will be pulling out the stops to make our magazine even better, with new features, contributors, articles, and photographs.

What is particularly exciting is

our plan for EAA AirVenture 2016, which will be held in Oshkosh, on July 25 through 31, 2016. This year was the 70th anniversary of the test flight of the Pitts Special, and what a great event it was for all of us, making it difficult to come up with something to top it. I think we have. AirVenture 2016's IAC theme will be "Grass Roots to the Top of the World."

The IAC was founded in 1970 to promote grassroots aerobatics and to bring aerobatic activities to the local and regional level. We have been incredibly successful, with dozens of chapters and regional contests held all over the country. The IAC has also become an organization for anyone interested in aerobatics and improving their flying skills, and the people who are out there in the chapters and who attend contests are some of the finest stick-and-rudder pilots that aviation has ever produced. With basic flying skills deteriorating due to cockpit automation and electronics, our mission could not be more important. We will be announcing new initiatives, in cooperation with EAA, to bring our skills and training to more pilots in the future as the industry has turned its attention to loss of control as an important issue. We aren't just competition, and our work in these other areas will be enormously valuable to the entire aviation community.

The AirVenture exhibition will emphasize this and how pilots and enthusiasts can become involved in the IAC and aerobatics at almost any level they choose—from the grassroots to world competition. I have

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BY MIKE HEUER



Board Meets in Oshkosh

The IAC board of directors met at EAA headquarters in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, on November 4 and 5, with a full agenda of issues to consider that affect all aspects of our organization and the sport of aerobatics. We will cover some of the highlights of the meetings in “Lines & Angles” so you are fully informed.

Thanks to all of the officers, directors, program chairs, and volunteers who attended the meeting. The fall meeting is actually a gathering of all the various boards of directors, including EAA and its various divisions and councils, as well as an opportunity to meet with EAA staff and to work together on various problems of mutual concern. Our thanks to EAA Chairman Jack J. Pelton and the staff for hosting an excellent series of meetings. The activities culminated in the Sport Aviation Hall of Fame ceremonies, at which luminaries from all the various groups within EAA were recognized, including the induction of Sean D. Tucker into the International Aerobatic Hall of Fame. Our congratulations to Sean.

President's Report

IAC President Mike Heuer reported to the board that significant progress has been made in the last year to revitalize the IAC and to bring new life to our organization and its programs. Mike reported, “We have now turned that situation around, we are growing, and we are financially strong.”

Highlighting the past year, some of our initiatives have included:

- An ever-improving *Sport Aerobatics* magazine. These past several months have had excellent features on the Pitts Special as a part of our celebration of the



Mike Heuer and Sean D. Tucker

70th anniversary of the test flight of this iconic aerobatic aircraft at EAA AirVenture 2015. Our emphasis will be on continual improvement of our magazine and articles and photos that will be of value and interest to our members.

- A renovation of our IAC pavilion in Oshkosh to include an exhibit area that was used for the Pitts exhibition this year and will feature other themes in the future. A refurb-

ished sales area is now featured, along with the relocation and restoration of our historical, prestigious, and valuable collection of trophies. The building was also opened up with new glass and doors to make it more welcoming to members and those who want to know more about aerobatics.

- An improved U.S. National Aerobatic Championships, held this year under the direction of Gary DeBaun. Additional improvements are planned for 2016. This year's Nationals attracted a total of 98 power and glider aerobatic competitors, the most in years, and selected the U.S. Advanced Aerobatic Team, which will compete in Poland next year.

- Increasing use of social media and our IAC website (www.IAC.org) to bring news and information on aerobatics to more people.

- A new brand for the IAC was introduced in 2015 that not only included several new logos for the IAC and its programs but also for Nationals and our aerobatic teams. The new brand gives IAC a fresh, modern image that was also introduced in our new Unlimited Collection of premium merchandise.

- Expanded activities at EAA AirVenture. These included the Pitts anniversary, with several dozen Pitts aircraft in attendance; a superb schedule of forums and seminars, often to standing room only; and the IAC annual membership meeting and gathering of members at the EAA Nature Center



FUTURE FLYERS

KIDS FLY IN STYLE IN IAC UNLIMITED
COLLECTION AEROBATIC APPAREL

GET THE "LITTLE STINKER" AND "AILERONS MAKE THE WORLD GO ROUND" KIDS' TEES
SHOWN HERE AT WWW.IAC.ORG STORE.

near the end of the event.

- The assumption of the full responsibility for not only selecting our U.S. team, which IAC has done since 1982, but now managing and promoting them. To this end a new IAC Team Council was created and staffed with experienced team people. The council will report to the board like other committee and program chairs.

- The board approved the president's proposal to create a strategic planning group for the IAC that will help map out our future, along with an operational plan for its implementation.

New IAC Leadership Team Members

The IAC board has approved the appointment of three new people to our leadership team of volunteers:

IAC Collegiate Program—This important program, which brings college students into aerobatic flying, will now be headed by Jordan Ashley of Marion, Indiana. A graduate of Purdue University, Jordan currently heads up accounting and finance for a church in his area. Well-versed in collegiate aviation, he headed up Purdue's aviation student organization round table and is an active flight instructor. He holds a commercial certificate, has flown aerobatic competition, and was recognized by the National Intercollegiate Flying Association for his leadership skills in 2011. He is also a familiar face at AirVenture, as he has headed up IAC's aircraft parking since 2011 and is a key part of IAC's AirVenture team.

IAC Sponsorships and Development—While the IAC has benefited from sponsorships and donations for many years, it has never been organized into one cohesive program covering all our activities, including AirVenture, the Nationals, and the teams. This new program will now be headed by Ellyn Robinson of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Ellyn is well-known to hundreds of IAC members as the volunteer coordinator at the U.S. Nationals, where she handles the task of staffing all of the positions at the contest, including the judging line. Ellyn brings enthusiasm and a deep dedication to aerobatics to the table, as well as a desire to see our organization grow and prosper, which sponsorships make possible.

IAC Glider Aerobatics—Since the integration of glider aerobatics into the IAC in the mid-1990s, we have incorporated glider judging criteria into our rules and include all glider categories at the U.S. Nationals. While still much smaller than glider aerobatics in Europe, the IAC promotes this form of aerobatics and selects U.S. teams to compete at World Glider Aerobatic Championships in both Advanced and Unlimited categories. Gerry Molidor of McHenry, Illinois, now assumes the chair of our Glider Aerobatics program. Though well-known in IAC circles as a former president of the IAC, Gerry also served on the gold medal winning Advanced Team in 1997 and currently flies

both gliders and a Sukhoi 29. Active in glider organizations as well, Gerry served on the board of directors of the Soaring Society of America (SSA) and has recently worked to forge a closer working relationship between EAA, IAC, and SSA. Our thanks to Klein Gilhausen for his service in this position for many years.

Volunteers are always needed at the IAC national and international level, so be sure to contact President Mike Heuer if you would like to help at mike@mheuer.com or 901-230-9006.

CIVA Info

The FAI Aerobatics Commission (CIVA) met in Budapest, Hungary, on October 24-25 and considered a wide-ranging set of proposals for the 2016 FAI Championships, as well as bids for future events.

The commission voted to adopt the new "Free Known" concept, drop Free Programs from future competitions, and increase the number of Free Unknowns. The new versions of FAI Sporting Code are being finalized as of this writing. While the United States voted in favor of the Free Known for FAI Aerobatic Championships, the IAC board has decided not to adopt these rules for our sanctioned competitions.

In other news, Nick Buckenham of the United Kingdom was elected president of CIVA. Nick has represented his country at CIVA for several years, has been a vice president, is the author of ACRO scoring software, and has been an IAC member for many years, holding IAC 16011. Nick attended the 2012 U.S. Nationals and helped with scoring and judging. He most recently served as the president of the International Jury at the WAC in France. Our congratulations to Nick and best wishes for a successful term.

Mike Heuer continues on CIVA's rules committee and Brian Howard on the judging and catalogue committees.

For those who wish to stay up-to-date on international aerobatic developments, we suggest the CIVA's news website, www.CIVA-News.com.

Collegiate Program

As previously announced, IAC's Collegiate Program will now be headed by Jordan Ashley. The board extended its thanks to Lynne Bowes, who has headed up the program for several years and who currently serves as IAC's secretary, member of the executive and finance committees, and is active in her local chapter. Lynne continues her work as the coordinator of renovations for the IAC pavilion in Oshkosh.

Special thanks to Dagmar Kress of Colorado who has generously donated \$3,000 to the Collegiate Program, which will cover the cost of trophies in 2016. Dagmar is an experienced Unlimited competitor and aerobatic instructor who has introduced many new people to aerobatics since she came to the United States in 1995 from Germany.

Nominations and Election 2016

The Nominating Committee for the 2016 IAC election has been named and consists of Lynne Stoltenberg, chair; Doug McConnell, Bob Hart, Tim Just, Bruce Ballew, Michael Steveson, and Mike Rinker.

Nominations for officer and board positions can be submitted at any time. Forms and requirements can be found on the IAC website at www.IAC.org/legacy/iac-leadership. Membership sign-in is required. Important dates for the 2016 election are as follows:

IAC annual membership meeting, Oshkosh, Wisconsin—0830 CDT, Friday, July 29, 2016

Nominations close—April 5, 2016

Balloting begins—No later than June 29, 2016

Balloting closes—1800 CDT, Monday, July 25, 2016

The method of voting in 2016 will be electronic only.

The AirVenture Theme for 2016

For EAA AirVenture 2016 in Oshkosh, the theme will be “Grass Roots to the Top of the World.”

The exhibit planned for the IAC pavilion will include 18 panels and dozens of photographs showing what the IAC does and how aerobatic pilots, enthusiasts, and those who wish to improve their flying skills can become involved.

The IAC started some 45 years ago with grassroots aerobatics as one of its founding principles. That remains our goal today—to bring aerobatics to the aviation community, to extol its value in pilot training and enhancement of skills and confidence, to promote safety in aerobatic flying, and to be the vehicle for dissemination of information on all aspects of aerobatics.

The 2016 exhibit will feature aerobatic schools, local chapter activities, regional contests, the national championships, and our team efforts in world competition. It will showcase the complete gamut of IAC activities and what we offer the aviation world.

IAC members should plan to attend and participate. EAA AirVenture dates for next year are July 25-31, 2016.

Known Sequences for 2016

The final approved Known sequences for all categories of competition (glider and power) can be found here: www.IAC.org/news/2015-11-10-iac-announces-known-sequences-2016.

The IAC board of directors decided not to adopt the new CIVA concept of “Free Knowns” for use in IAC-sanctioned competitions, so all categories will continue to fly the traditional Knowns and Frees that have been in use for decades.

IAC KNOWN COMPULSORY SEQUENCES
2016

PRIMARY

B		Control	Category	Primary
Date:	Program:	Knowns:	Pilot's No.:	

wind direction

Pgt	FAA ID	W	W
Pgt 1	00A1	W	W
Pgt 2	00A2	W	W
Pgt 3	00A3	W	W
Pgt 4	00A4	W	W
Pgt 5	00A5	W	W
Pgt 6	00A6	W	W
Pgt 7	00A7	W	W
Pgt 8	00A8	W	W
Pgt 9	00A9	W	W
Pgt 10	00A10	W	W
Pgt 11	00A11	W	W
Pgt 12	00A12	W	W
Pgt 13	00A13	W	W
Pgt 14	00A14	W	W
Pgt 15	00A15	W	W
Pgt 16	00A16	W	W
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Pgt 28	00A28	W	W
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Pgt 31	00A31	W	W
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Pgt 36	00A36	W	W
Pgt 37	00A37	W	W
Pgt 38	00A38	W	W
Pgt 39	00A39	W	W
Pgt 40	00A40	W	W
Pgt 41	00A41	W	W
Pgt 42	00A42	W	W
Pgt 43	00A43	W	W
Pgt 44	00A44	W	W
Pgt 45	00A45	W	W
Pgt 46	00A46	W	W
Pgt 47	00A47	W	W
Pgt 48	00A48	W	W
Pgt 49	00A49	W	W
Pgt 50	00A50	W	W
Pgt 51	00A51	W	W
Pgt 52	00A52	W	W
Pgt 53	00A53	W	W
Total K = 53			

IAC

FREE PROGRAM CHECK BY: [signature]

IAC Known Sequences - 2016

1

IAC KNOWN COMPULSORY SEQUENCES
2016

SPORTSMAN POWER

B		Control	Category	Sportsman
Date:	Program:	Knowns:	Pilot's No.:	

wind direction

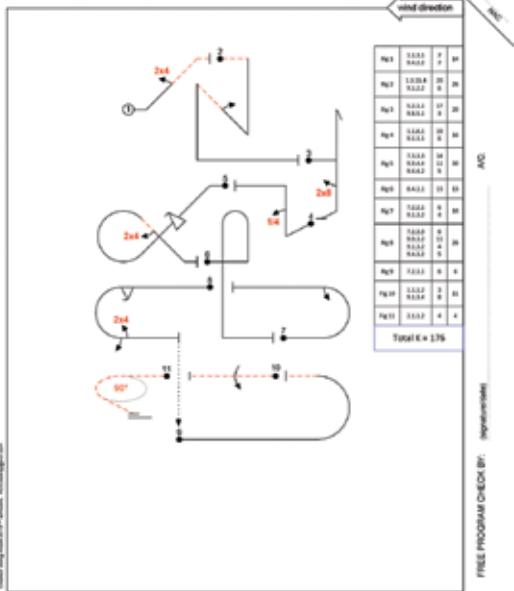
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Pgt 2	00A12	W	W
Pgt 3	00A13	W	W
Pgt 4	00A14	W	W
Pgt 5	00A15	W	W
Pgt 6	00A16	W	W
Pgt 7	00A17	W	W
Pgt 8	00A18	W	W
Pgt 9	00A19	W	W
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Pgt 127	00A137	W	W
Pgt 128	00A138	W	W
Pgt 129	00A139	W	W
Pgt 130	00A140	W	W
Pgt 131	00A141	W	W
Pgt 132	00A142	W	W
Pgt 133	00A143	W	W
Pgt 134	00A144	W	W
Pgt 135	00A145	W	W
Pgt 136	00A146	W	W
Pgt 137	00A147	W	W
Pgt 138	00A148	W	W
Pgt 139	00A149	W	W
Pgt 140	00A150	W	W
Pgt 141	00A151	W	W
Pgt 142	00A152	W	W
Pgt 143	00A153	W	W
Pgt 144	00A154	W	W
Pgt 145	00A155	W	W
Pgt 146	00A156	W	W
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Pgt 211	00A221	W	W
Pgt 212	00A222	W	W
Pgt 213	00A223	W	W
Pgt 214	00A224	W	W
Pgt 215	00A225	W	W
Pgt 216	00A226	W	W
Pgt 217	00A227	W	W
Pgt 218	00A228	W	W
Pgt 219	00A229	W	W



INTERMEDIATE POWER



B	Contest	Category	Intermediate
Date	2016	Program	Known
		Pilot's No.	

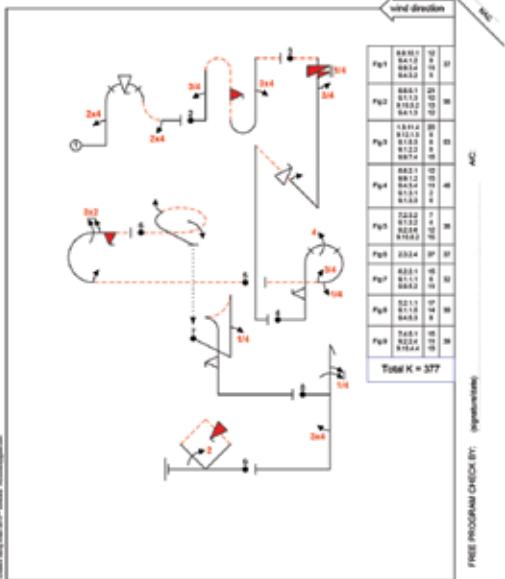




UNLIMITED POWER



B	Contest	Category	Unlimited
Date:	2016	Program	Known
		Pilot's No.	



Team News

The board extended its thanks to U.S. Unlimited Team Manager Michael Steveson, who took on the job of managing the U.S. team's participation in the 28th FAI World Aerobatic Championships in Châteauroux, France, in August, as well as the five training camps that took place prior to the event. Michael did a great job for the IAC, the team, and the United States.

All told, thanks to the generosity of members, chapters, and others, a total of \$45,800.67 was raised on behalf of the team in 2015. After all the bills are paid this year and with a comfortable balance left in place, the team pilots will receive checks from the IAC in equal amounts to help offset their personal expenses in attending the WAC. Team pilots were largely self-funded, and it was not only a huge time and flying commitment, but a financial one as well,

with out-of-pocket expenses approaching \$50,000 per pilot. Five aircraft were shipped to Europe this year via container or cargo aircraft. Our thanks to all the supporters of the team.

We now turn our attention to 2016 and the participation of the U.S. Advanced Aerobatic Team in the 12th FAI World Advanced Aerobatic Championships (WAAC) in Radom, Poland. Dates for the event are August 4-14, 2016. A full team of eight pilots was selected at the U.S. Nationals in September.

The Advanced Team will be managed and coached by Nikolay Timofeev, who also served on the 2014 Advanced Team. Nikolay is a well-known and successful coach residing in Florida who has previously worked with several of the Advanced pilots serving on the team. Team captain is Foster Bachschmidt, the 2015 U.S. National Advanced Champion. The team

captain serves as a representative of the pilots and liaison with various team and IAC officials. Mike Heuer, IAC president and the United States' delegate to CIVA, will serve as chief delegate of the team.

IAC's Team Council, which helps administer the team efforts as a committee that reports to the board, has been appointed for 2016 and consists of Mike Heuer, chairman; Michael Steveson; Gerry Molidor; Foster Bachschmidt; Bob Hart; and Debby Rihn-Harvey.

IAC Open Championships

The following chapters and locations have been selected by the board of directors to organize the West and East IAC Open Championships.

IAC West Open Championships: Sponsored by IAC Chapter 38. Coalinga, California (C80). June 3-4, 2016. Tom Myers, contest director.

IAC East Open Championships: Sponsored by IAC Chapter 27. Union City, Tennessee (UCY). August 11-14, 2016. Contest director to be announced.

Our congratulations and thanks to these chapters for stepping forward and taking on the responsibility of organizing these prestigious events. 

Rules for 2016

The board of directors acted on the report of the Rules Committee that was published to the membership in September and took into account the membership comments we received via the special e-mail address created for this purpose. To summarize, here are the actions the board took on the various proposals (please see www.IAC.org/news/2015-09-30-iac-rules-committee-issues-its-report for a complete copy of the report):

Proposal	Synopsis	Action by Board
2016-01	Requirement for emergency canopy release	Approved
2016-02	Judge certification documentation	Approved
2016-04	Training new candidates for regional judge	Approved
2016-05	Intermediate Free design limits	Not Approved
2016-06	Competitor qualifications (medical/safety pilot)	Approved
2016-07	Competitor qualifications (LSA pilot/safety pilot)	Approved
2016-08	Eligibility for 4-Minute Free	Not Approved
2016-10	Unknown figure changes—Intermediate	Approved
2016-11B	Family 9 versatility in Intermediate	Approved
2016-13	Implicit interruptions	Approved
2016-15	Grading of figures	Approved
2016-17	Figure(s) flown outside the box	Approved
2016-18	Boundary judges	Not applicable
2016-19	Warm-up pilots at Nationals	Approved

Our thanks to the members who commented, as many of these messages were detailed and thoughtful and were helpful in the board's deliberations on the proposed changes.



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Chuck L. EAA #696712

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If It Were Easy...



Everybody would be doing it.

BY EVAN PEERS WITH GOODY THOMAS
PHOTOS EVAN PEERS

The best that the United States has to offer, our 2015 Unlimited Aerobatic Team, has just spent the most part of the past 365 days preparing for and then competing in the 28th FAI World Aerobatic Championships. The pilots and all nonflying

participants universally expressed optimism going in and expected the best results in recent memory. There were many positive advances made, while of course several components both for and against contributed to the final standings. Ultimately, the team brought home a combined medal count of one gold, one silver,

and one team bronze.

Composed of pilots Goody Thomas, Rob Holland, Melissa Pemberton, Jeff Boerboon, Mike Gallaway, Mark Nowosielski, Ben Freelove, Brett Hunter, Mike Ciliberti, team coach Claude "Coco" Bessiere, and team manager Michael Steveson, Team USA brought home a bronze medal. Rob Holland



earning his name on the Hillard Trophy for a second time.

I sat down with 2015 team captain Goody Thomas, to gain an understanding of what it takes to compete, where the gains were made, and how the result came to be.

“It was such a big deal this particular time.”

If we could let people in on all the stuff that goes into getting to that point, whether you’re a winner or not, it would be great because everybody just saw some news updates and then the final result. All the other energy that went into it is not really known. To get that across would be huge.

You put a lot of effort and a lot of money into your own personal achievement. A lot of pilots entering the sport may regard competing in a world championship as out of reach. Let’s talk about what it takes—the effort that it took for you to do this—and why you do it.

I look at everything in life as with anything attainable, and you can do anything you set your mind to—the person has to be the one putting in the effort, going the extra mile, doing the things to get them in position to be great. I think a lot of people will be inspired by what some of these individuals did to get there, yet not realize that even people who excel in life in so many areas still struggle to go, “Now that wasn’t the best; how can I get up to even another level?” So, I’d really like to put as much as possible of my experience out to our membership.

Tell us about your best memory of the process.

To sum it up: teamwork. The entire process took every individual’s effort

to make it all come together and mold together. There really are no individuals; if one person didn’t help or perform or participate, it would affect the entire group. It was really a great experience for five weeks—the camaraderie, the teamwork, the team unity.

Every individual, from Mike Stevenson our team manager, and Coco, our coach, to all the pilots, had such a valuable role that it made it fun through all the hard work. It was a great time to spend with another group of pilots because everybody carried their weight. Looking at the competition side of it, we didn’t go, “We did it. This moment stands out.” So I think it would be the camaraderie and the passion that all the pilots put into it.

This was not your first Unlimited world competition. How did you enter the sport, and how long did it take you to achieve this level?

My first Advanced Worlds was in 2000. My first Unlimited Worlds was England, second was Italy, third was USA in Denison, Texas, and my fourth Unlimited Worlds was this year in Châteauroux, France.

When I started in this sport, I was in a Pitts S-2B. I got the airplane in September 1997. I never flew Primary, nor Sportsman, nor Intermediate. As an exuberant 23-1/2-year-old, I started competition in 1998 in the Advanced category. The year after, I made the Advanced team, qualifying in third place. I ended up flying the Advanced championship in Grossenhain, Germany, and finished seventh in the world. I had only been flying competition aerobatics for two years. Then I jumped into Unlimited.

You know what I quickly learned in the preceding years in Unlimited? That

amazed the world with a third consecutive gold medal 4-Minute Freestyle, which many have likened to a modern R/C 3-D performance. Melissa Pemberton brought home an individual silver for Known, from a field of seven women competing from four countries. Jeff Boerboon placed at the top of the U.S. team and 10th overall,



Goody Thomas

there was so much that I skipped and hadn't learned. The seasoned experience you get through year in and year out of competing, working your way up, learning the ins and outs. I really struggled in Unlimited for many years trying to catch up with what others already had by working their way up through the categories. It started out tremendous, but I paid for it for many years playing catch-up in Unlimited, and in a new airplane as well. I certainly didn't take the easy road.

Can you elaborate on something you wished you had learned earlier?

I think a lot of it was like any time in life when you start participating in something and experiencing something different, where you go, "Huh. . . I didn't know that you could do that, that way." You learn from it. And then the next time you go, "Gosh, I learned from that, but I know there is a better way to do it," or "Let's work a little harder."

And so I think in the competition, I wish I had built more experience in

the actual box and flying Unknowns. I had not flown many Unknowns because I was so new to the sport. All of a sudden, I'm trying to fly the hardest Unknowns there are, in the Unlimited category. Having no experience on how to go about it, it was very intimidating and hard—not having had years and years to repeat the maneuvers themselves and do them over and over and over. That was a challenge. Most of the pilots I was flying against were extremely seasoned competitors. They had put in the time. They had experienced different combinations of figures that I had never seen in my entire life. I simply had not spent enough time practicing new combinations I had never experienced, making mistakes, messing them up, and then re-learning how to do them correctly.

Would you talk about the team's expectation, and then what happened when you were actually there competing?

I would have to say this: There was an exceptionally high expectation.

And in my humble opinion, rightfully so. You have multiple team members with extreme amounts of experience in world competition. You have the current U.S. National Champion and team members with multiple top 10 finishes at past world championships in individual flights, as well as team members that were top 10 overall in world competitions. Every pilot was prepared. And even the ones who didn't have the experience were very skilled; they earned their spot on the team through a lot of intense work. Everyone was highly motivated. We shipped five U.S. airplanes there, all of which arrived on time, which was huge. The weather was perfect. The training camp went great. Everything was planned out and accomplished. It was the most seamless competition at the world level that I've ever been to. Expectations were high. And yet I truly believe we made too many errors too soon.

When I became captain of the team by having finished on top at Nationals, I decided our motto should be "No Excuses" because, for me in life, I believe



excuses are just something people use to try to justify some inaction. So I was trying to make sure all our pilots said, “You know what? If we’re going to get this done, you can’t give me an excuse.” Everybody is accountable for the decisions they make and how they perform. This is going to be a no-excuse team. And if I hear excuses, I’m going to go, “Well, what does your shirt say? No Excuses! You gotta go another direction; you gotta find a way to make this happen.”

Right from the get-go [in the competition], where we didn’t yet have all the tactical data, saying, “Well, we didn’t know how the judges were perceiving the flights,” to me, I’m already hearing the word “excuse.” Why didn’t we have that information? Why were the best pilots in the world flying really high? That was odd. And yet we went out there and flew precisely as we’d been training. And it bit us. We immediately got low calls.

Throughout the contest, there were other errors. I have to say that some pilots made very significant errors,

and this is what it is. Other pilots made smaller errors, but they weren’t such that you would go, “Oh my gosh!” The problem is that when you’re at this level of flying, it has to be perfect. The judges are expecting perfect. If it’s not perfect, they are going to hammer you. And, we got hammered. I mean, we just did. I could say there were a few of our team pilots that didn’t quite understand the percentage they received in their overall score. But when you really lay it down, we just did not perform like we needed to. You know, everything was there. We just fell short when it comes to the technical flying.

The low calls were certainly the hottest subject early on in the competition. Can you explain how, while flying inside the box, a pilot can end up being penalized for being “low”?

I’ll start with this first example and that will lead into Châteauroux. Regular competitors who have been flying the U.S. Nationals are aware that

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when the judges are sitting on the east side of the field, they are on very level ground and they're closer to the edge of the box, which means you can fly at your minimum altitude and not get a low call. However, if the judges are on the west side, they are actually sitting down below the ground level of the box and farther away from the edge of the box. That gives the impression that at minimum altitude, 328 feet or 100 meters for Unlimited, the airplane appears to be lower because it is farther away and the terrain meets the airplane much quicker.

What happened in France is they were using three judges' positions—east, west, and south. When the judges were sitting on the east side—and I went over there—they were literally sitting down in semi-lower terrain. And in front of them, no kidding, was a raised berm and then a full-size 747 beyond that. It was huge. You can imagine, when this thing is in front of you, all of a sudden the brain sees things differently. So, when the judges were on the east side, the bottom altitude of 328 feet looked like the airplanes were literally 50 feet off the ground—it gave this completely false impression. There were many pilots from many countries, not just from the U.S., who were getting hit with these low calls until the scores were generated and people started going, "Oh, no!" I think from where the team chalets were, too, it was hard to tell because we were all on the west side. They were right there, right at the minimum, but the perception was that they were low.

When our U.S. people went to the east side observing, word could not get back quick enough to us to tell our pilots, "It looks low over here. We don't know what the judges are giving yet, but you better step it up higher." That finding did not get to Mark and Rob, and they flew just like we had trained. Especially when you fly after pilots that have been flying higher, and you come in flying much lower, the judges are not just perceiving it as low, but that nobody has yet flown this low at all. And so it was a tactical error on our

part that cost two of our pilots huge penalties. It's a shame.

This is now the fifth time for you from Nationals to Worlds, and training through the year, spending money and spending time. How does it affect you and your life?

You know it's kind of funny to throw this in. My wife has had to rope me in a few times, because I'm so hard on myself, or I feel my inadequacies over the years, and I haven't finished. And she goes, "Goody, since 2009 when you were in England, you have gotten married and had two babies. Give yourself a break."

So for most of us we do it just to be able to say, "We did it!" And then that's it. It's that personal drive that keeps each of us in the competition.

Yes it is very hard. Some of us are dads. Some of us are husbands. We have normal jobs. Some of us are professional pilots; some of us aren't. Some get to fly their [aerobatic] airplane every day—they're professional air show pilots. You know, we all have lives outside of this. Every person comes from a different scenario, and we all have to come up with the time and money. That is perhaps the most difficult part since we are not state-funded.

Each individual on the team has to ask themselves to do this: "Hey, I want you to go practice this craft, and become an expert on it. But the key is, I want you to do it on your days off, with your own money. And when you excel in this craft, and you've achieved overall excellence, and you're at the top of the world, they will say, "Thank you for coming out, and see you next time." I'm trying to be funny on it, but in a way that's the truth. So for most of us we do it just to be able to say, "We did it!" And then that's it. It's

that personal drive that keeps each of us in the competition.

And sure, this is an expensive sport. I mean these are high-dollar machines, and there are a lot of IAC pilots that could be at a very high level if they chose. The thing about the sport is it's not like going out and getting a pair of tennis shoes and a basketball, or a set of skis, poles, and boots. You know, you need an *airplane*, and fuel too. And so I think what happens is there are people who can be participating but money gets in the way. And then life. You have kids. You have a job. You can't just take five weeks off and say to your family, "See ya—make sure everybody's good." I mean, it's very hard to do that.

Anybody who has become great at something, or excelled, knows it's hard. Because if it were easy, everybody would be doing it.

Why do you do it? Why do you participate and keep going? What drives you?

I know what drives me: I'm a very driven person! Whenever I do something, I do it at 120 percent. So, I personally try to be excellent and excel at whatever I do. Whether it's being a husband, a dad, my job. With aerobatics, it becomes me against myself. It truly is. We had a team where we all had to work together to achieve greatness as a group to bring home an overall gold medal. However, when I'm in the airplane, I can't look left and right and behind me and have a teammate who can come up and help me. I'm up there alone. So, I know for me it's the passion and desire—because I love it—and I'm also trying to do something perfect. Yet, it can never be perfect.

You can put in, well, let's call it the "perfect effort." But no flight is ever perfect. There always are going to be errors. It's about how few errors can you make on this flight to achieve excellence. And it comes down to a personal drive, of going, "I could have done that better; I need to train harder; I need to spend more time with a coach; I need to spend more time with the particular

type airplane that I'm going to be using." I'm very grateful and blessed for what I do have and what I have achieved, but there's always that little bit more where I feel I just haven't yet gotten it "there."

For me that's why I never really went into air shows, because as neat and fun as they are, you're already a hero to the people who go to see airplanes and smoke and noise. I have all the respect in the world for the air show performers and what they do. Their livelihood is a hard life, and they're great at what they do. But when you go to the competition side of things, you start flying or competing against the best in the country and the world—man, it's a different kind of challenge. It's a challenge that I've enjoyed taking on.

And you know what? I know I can be that person. I can compete with these people. I know I can. I just have to put in the time. And it's taken 17 years to get to the point where I can walk on the same podium with these pilots and be right there with them. We might not win, but we're damn close, so that sort of keeps me coming back.

I started with intentions of being on a gold medal team and a national champion. I have three second-place trophies and two third-place trophies sitting in my home, plenty of No. 1 medals, but no No. 1 overall trophy.

Why is that? I screwed this or that up, which cost me. Once I figured out what that was, I'd say, "Next time don't do it." And then a new error pops up. And so I keep going. I'm not quitting because if I quit, I will never know. That's what drives me. Everything is there, but I need to finish the task, so to speak.

This year the team hired the former French coach, Coco Bessiere. Tell us about that decision and the strategic importance of having him as the team coach.

You only have to say "Coco Bessiere," and everybody brightens up. He's a past individual world champion and, as a coach, has won many world championship titles. He has produced many overall individual world champions, male and female. He has produced an amazing product. So having the opportunity to work under him was a great opportunity.

The United States has never really had the best reputation in world contests. I mean, they show up, but unfortunately there's a lot of personality tensions, and it was usually a group of individuals flying, rather than working together as a team and truly wanting to see each other excel. In a team, if individuals excel, then the group will excel. You can't do it by yourself. Two people can't do it by themselves. You need the momentum and support of the group.

I think all the pilots greatly appreciate Coco taking on the U.S. team, with him not knowing really what he was going to get. It was slow at first. At each camp, he got to know us more, our personalities, our flying abilities, and got to know what he had to work with. I think, no, I know, he saw that there was a winning opportunity with the United States. I don't think he would take on a team that he didn't think he could win with. He could win with us. And we could win with him.

Having Coco was a great opportunity, and we are grateful

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for that. I think he helped us most on our style and presentation. He did. He made our flying even better. I think all the pilots would agree on that. We may have some pilots that might question his choice as our coach because of where they might have finished, or errors made along the way, or why the judges didn't like X, Y, Z. But I think that comes back to each individual pilot just not executing. We as a group decided to bring this coach in and let him lead us. I think everybody trusted in that decision and believed in his mission and his insight. And that's what everybody tried to execute. Everybody was just willing to go the extra mile to make things happen, and I think that in turn led into a cohesive group wanting to excel through his leadership. I think he did what he was hired to do. I truly do.

When asked how the team is doing, Coco replied we [the U.S. team] have to fly more like the Europeans, in the European style, because there are so many European judges. Can you discuss the U.S. style of flying versus the European style?

There is a completely different style. The U.S. pilots have always known about this, and some of us have that style while others are working to improve to that style. The style of flying that the European judges like to see is in your face, up close, with lots of energy. High roll rates. Extremely hard stops—just like the airplane hits a wall when it stops rolling. The judges want to see, "Holy smokes. Like, wow!"

In the United States you can fly high, far away to the left, far right, literally going to the edge of the box; whereas the European judges don't really like for you to go to the edge of the box. You don't really want to pass center box toward the back of the box. And that is their style, along with full throttle, in your face, high energy, hard stops, and fast very crisp rolls. Those aren't criteria in the rule book, so to speak, but it gives a presentation that the flight has this spectacular energy to it.

In the United States we're big on criteria of positive, negative, under, over,

shallow, that much of the presentation energy is sort of lost. So, if you look at most U.S. pilots, even a national champion, when you get them over to Europe all of a sudden they just flounder. We have had some U.S. pilots that have done very well at world championships. One person that comes to mind, David Martin, was getting ready to become world champion. He was right there. And on the second Unknown, he zeroed the U.S. figure. He was flying the European way. He had gold-medaled. The world championships was in his hand, and it slipped away. Robert Armstrong finished second one year. Matt Chapman was a fourth-place pilot. We have had pilots over the years that have learned to fly in the European style. They put their time in, worked up respect from the judges, and finally had that world championship in sight where all the stars aligned for them and it all came together.

There is also a distinct style how they score, too—10 doesn't exist; 9 doesn't really exist unless it's a connector figure. The world champion might score a 78 percent or an 80 percent. Compare that to our national championships, where our national champion might score an 85 percent or more. That's unheard of in the world championships. They score much harder, more difficult, at the worlds than they do in the United States. But I think a lot of that criticalness comes from when you present that fast, high energy and a perfect figure. They go, "Whoa, this is awesome. What's the next figure going to look like? Oh, this is awesome." And so now they're expecting greatness. Make one tiny little microscopic error, and it throws them off because they've seen all that high power, high energy, hard stops, and perfect flicks. And then—whoop—what was that? You put doubt in their head, it starts snowballing from there, and they just kill you.

You are a four-time U.S. Unlimited Team veteran. What do the new Advanced and next Unlimited teams need to do to attain silver and ultimately gold?

I think what it basically comes

down to is, really, one thing we really need—we need money. Sponsorships. We need somebody to come in, or multiple companies to come in, and supply enough money that the pilots who are finally selected can train and compete. That takes a huge load off when they know they can show up and just fly. They're going to have everything taken care of. Then they can go home back to their families or whatever they do and still pay the other bills and not start getting themselves into the red. You know, money is huge.

Obviously, we need to have the best pilots. I think a lot of the pilots, sometimes your best pilots, might not be able to participate because of lack of funds; that's unfortunate. You can go, okay, well then you take the ones that can afford it, and do have the money saved up, and have the time. Then you select the best pilots out of them. Once those pilots are selected, the level of commitment for them to excel in a world championship is just a lot of very constructive practice at organized camps, with a trainer that is current in the world arena and can guide the group in the right direction. It is imperative that each pilot knows what these judges are looking for and knows how other countries and past winners fly.

We've got some very good Advanced pilots. We have a very good Advanced team. We have Unlimited pilots that, I think, some of them will come back. And I think there's enough individuals to form another great team. In both cases, everybody has to not only show up at the camps and train hard, but they have to train on their off time. They have to want to get better, and have that burning desire. They go, "Okay, I have my time today, and I'm going to go practice. I'm going to work on this. And then I'm going to do this."

As a team there's so much more potential to learn; there's so much to get better at. And I think the United States is on the right track. Everyone wants to see the group excel. Each pilot wants to see the group excel. And I think they are willing to make that commitment, working as a team to win. **IAC**

The Rest of the Story

Fixing what's broken

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY DOUG JENKINS



Picture 1

Block pulled through rib. Note white space where glue block should be.

At the end of my last article, “The Value of the Tech Inspection,” I left you wondering about what the problem inside my Pitts’ upper wing really was. That was because when I wrote the article I had yet to figure that out. Now I know. It was ugly. I’m probably lucky to be here to write this. This is the rest of the story.

Two short days after returning from Lone Star, a spot opened up in my local

mechanic’s shop. I drove to my home field after a day at work and fired up *Daisy* for the cross-town journey. I will admit that I was a little conflicted; I wanted my airplane to be healthy, but I was going to miss having her to fly.

Putting those thoughts aside, we put forth a good effort, enjoyed our last flight, and our last landing together was a good one. I taxied in and was met by a herd of mechanically smart people. In short order I relayed to them the same stuff I told you about

in the earlier article: wrinkles on the aluminum leading edge, loose drag and anti-drag wires, pulled blocks. We needed to look inside the wing and see why all of this was happening. Heads bobbed up and down all around, and we wheeled her into the hangar.

As you may remember from other previous articles, I am not a rich man, so this was not going to be the kind of project where I now left the hangar and got periodic updates. This was going to be a project where I did all of the



Picture 2

Block at center section pulled through rib.



Picture 3

Block certainly not where it should be.

heavy lifting I possibly could. Given that, I dove right in.

I started by removing the easy stuff, just like for any condition inspection...fairings, inspection covers, etc. all fell away with minimal effort. These were familiar tasks. That was all I was able to get to on day one, thanks to my pesky day job. I spent the evening rounding up wing stands, something I hadn't thought about needing until my mechanic pointed out that I'd either need to build or beg/borrow/steal some.

Fortunately, a quick e-mail to my local EAA chapter resulted in wing stands being made available. Then, since they were at a third airport on the far west side of town, I needed a truck to collect them. Luckily my daughter's boyfriend owns just such a vehicle. It truly does take a village to rescue an airplane. While coordinating for the truck and wing stands over the next two days, I continued work at the hangar as much as my real job allowed. I removed the tail components and ailerons. This kept me busy until we were able to move the wing stands across town to *Daisy's* temporary home.

With the wing stands finally in the hangar, I got to work on wing removal. The process was straightforward enough, but mentally painful nonetheless. Finally, after a lot of hard work, the upper wing was ready to be removed. With a couple of spare bodies in place, the wing slid right off and was placed carefully into the wing stand. I thought about delaying the inevitable and removing the bottom wings next, but everyone (except me) wanted to see what we had going inside the upper wing. So out came the sharp objects and away went the fabric. What we found was not pretty. It looked about like you'd imagine a Pitts wing that had not been uncovered in 25 years would look...only worse.

Most of the top wing wire blocks had pulled free and shifted. I'm not talking shifted a little; I'm talking a lot...like all the way through the adjacent compression rib (see pictures 1, 2, 3, and 4). So my load-bearing ribs had been compromised; even I know that's not good—at all. In addition to that, many of the other ribs had cracks and other damage. The leading edges of all the tip ribs were canted inboard pretty significantly. None of my ribs made anything resembling a straight line from leading edge to trailing edge.

The spars looked mostly okay, except where the blocks had pulled along them for significant distances. Having now opened the top wing, I set about removing the lower wings. The news here was better, but that was largely academic. There was some minor shifting, and one nose rib was destroyed, but the bottom wings looked largely okay. Not that it really mattered. After I had everything uncovered we looked closely at what we had found.

It did not take long to arrive at the conclusion that the upper wing was beyond economical repair. My worst fears had proven to be true. Now I had to go through the entire grief cycle again. Anger was short-lived. Denial was pointless given the physical evidence in front of me. Acceptance was mostly a matter of acknowledging the inevitable.

It was closing time at the shop, and I told my mechanic that I needed some time to ponder the next step, but that it was highly likely that due to a lack of funds to accomplish



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Picture 4

Wingtip brace should be glued to rib and spar. Note air between the components.



Picture 5

What it looks like now, although the fuel tank is out now too.

the task ahead, I would simply haul the carcass back to my own hangar to await the arrival of either the money fairy or a time machine. On the drive home I tried really hard to see a solution, but none jumped to mind right away.

Knowing that wing repairs were going to be needed, I had done preliminary research and knew some sources for possible solutions. Internet searches (what did we do before the world wide interweb of life sprang into existence?) suggested that I could replace my wings with nearly identical ones for around \$7,000 in kit form or \$22,000 fully assembled. Alternatively, I could purchase upgraded wings for between \$8,800 and \$12,900 in kit form or \$28,500 fully assembled.

I decided quickly that I needed to accept my limitations in terms of skills and finances. I am not ashamed to admit that I am a flier and not a builder. If I had developed the skill sets required to build a set of wings years ago, I may have contemplated that option, but there were two strong arguments against it: time and confidence.

Given a realistic self-assessment, I figured that I would invest a minimum of two years building wings from a kit. That's about 10 percent of my likely active aerobatic flying time left to me. That seemed a little steep; if it was possible to get back in the air sooner, that was preferable.

That was time. Now about the confidence. Given my complete lack of familiarity with building wings, I knew that every time I pulled 6g's I'd be wondering if that joint I had glued was going to come apart. Not a good recipe. I likened it to learning how to drive at a NASCAR race. I'd rather start on something a little more forgiving. I said I had to accept my limitations. Well, the other limitation is money.

While Chrissy was at work that night I commenced scheming. It finally boiled down to a very few options. If I were going to buy fully assembled wings, the budget for the project had jumped from \$10,000-\$15,000 to somewhere in the neighborhood of \$40,000. Coincidentally, I had told Chrissy at Lone Star that for any air-

plane project, you should take your initial estimate for time and money and then multiply it by three. That was starting to look all too right.

Working at the computer on my own I developed three options. Option one: Buy a kit and invest the time in putting the wings together. This got the job done for the least expense (coming close to our original budget), but took the longest time (way past our time estimate) and caused me the most concern over the quality of the end product. Option two: Buy some assembled wings. This option was about three times our initial money budget but actually returned us to the air quickest. I did the math, and if I sold my car and my Taylorcraft, we could get there. Option three: Throw in the towel and part out what we had that was good. I thought that there was around \$17,000 worth of stuff still air-worthy. This option obviously brought us in way under budget and ahead of time. If I did indeed bring in \$17,000, I could pay off the loan on the Pitts and have a few grand left over. I could forever look at the time as a Pitts owner fondly, something no one could ever take away from me.

I found myself in the proverbial square corner, lacking the time and skills to take the affordable options and lacking the money to take the expensive option. Being who I am, I typed these choices up and printed them out so I would have something to reference when Chrissy and I talked it over.

Chrissy was working late. I tried to stay awake until she got home, but it had been a long day, so I fell asleep and it was the next morning before we got around to the topic of biplane wings. Chrissy asked me how it had gone at the hangar the previous day. I told her what we had found.

She asked what we should do. I said, "Funny you should ask. I have this list of options here," and I ran down the three possible courses of action. She pondered for a moment and then, and I'm not making this up, she said, "Well, I'm not making this up, she said, "Well, we could sell the house." Folks, you can't find that kind of person just any-

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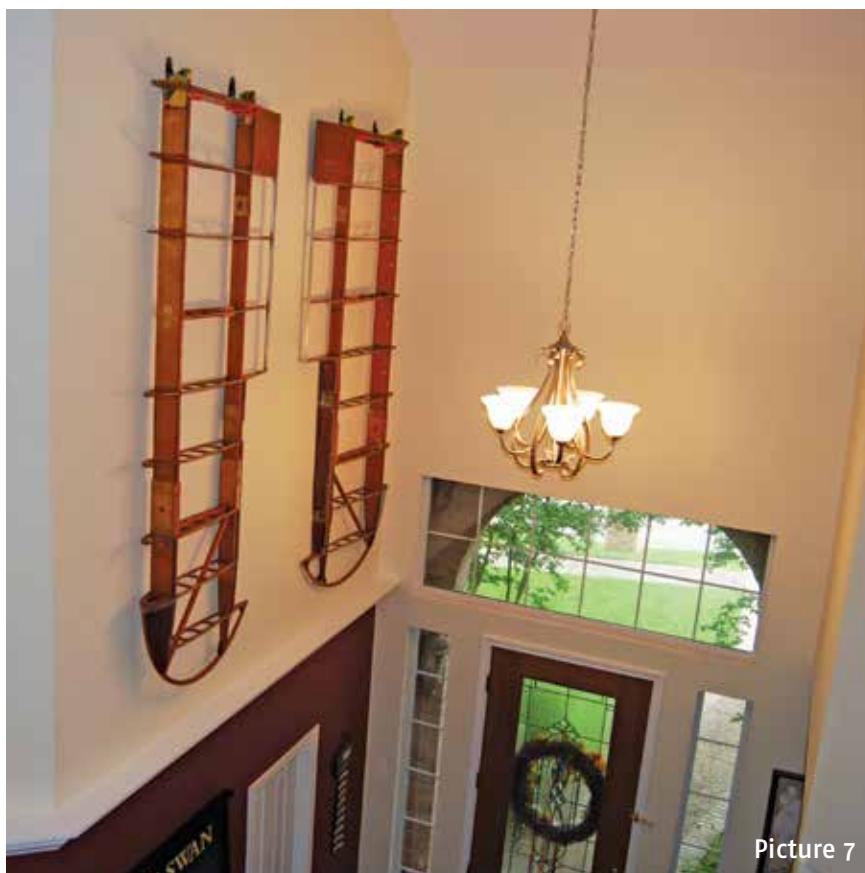
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Picture 6

Vroom, vroom.



Picture 7

Like the Smithsonian, kinda.

where. I smiled and told her that was a little extreme, that I was willing to sell my car and airplane, but I was not going to go quite as far as selling the house.

There was a line and that was across it. She pondered some more. She immediately dismissed the “part-her-out” option and reminded me that we had promised *Daisy* that we would make her better. She also agreed that option one, the wing kit, was probably a non-starter because of the time involved. That left only one possible option: Buy new wings.

If I were going to buy new wings, I wanted to upgrade, and as long as you’re spending money in the \$20,000 range, a few thousand more doesn’t seem like so much. So I set about making plans for financing. We cooked up all kinds of harebrained schemes, some of which were even legal. It all came back to the fact that we had assets in the form of the Taylorcraft and my car, which when taken together, were just about what a set of wings cost. All of the other stuff could go on a credit card or come out of savings. Easy enough, right?



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I was still not completely convinced and was starting the process to get a loan from any bank silly enough to lend me money. On Father's Day we had the family over to our house for dinner. They were curious as to the status of *Daisy*, and so we told our tale of woe and laid out the plan to move forward.

After listening intently, my recently retired father offered that he might be good to lend me a chunk of the money. Astute readers of my articles will remember that he helped me out when I couldn't finance the original purchase of the Pitts while I was stationed in Afghanistan (see *Sport Aerobatics*, April 2013, page 10). I guess he figured that

if he was in for a penny, he was in for a pound. Given this support I finally had a glimmer of hope.

On Monday I went back to my mechanic and laid out the new plan. I was going to order a set of new wings. While those were being worked on, I would proceed to uncover/inspect and repair the rest of the airplane. It seemed like a solid plan. What followed was a flurry of phone calls, check-cashing, and loan-arranging. Miraculously it all worked out. . .so far.

And that brings us to where we are today. *Daisy* looks like this right now (see pictures 5 and 6), and the old wings are hanging in the entryway to my

house, where they look really cool, by the way. (Picture 7.) Chrissy thinks it looks like walking into the Smithsonian.

New wings are being built by professionals, and Aircraft Spruce thinks I am its new best customer. I just may still be on track to compete again in 2016. My bank accounts will be significantly lighter, but my airplane will be better, stronger, and faster. The next time we take to the sky, it will be in *Bi-onic Daisy*. Hopefully, she won't be the 6-million-dollar airplane, but some small fraction of that instead. When you see us on the ramp next year, you may hear me making Steve Austin sound effects. I'm not crazy, but all the same, watch out!

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Don't fall out

The importance of proper parachute adjustment

LET ME START OFF BY WISHING everyone a very happy holiday season and a joyous new year. A special greeting goes to Reggie Paulk, the editor of *Sport Aerobatics* for all his hard work.

Another year has literally flown by. I swear the year only had six months in it. I'm happy to report there have been no major incidents or accidents. My last bailout with equipment I packed was in 2009, and that's just fine with me.

However, just because I've had no problems doesn't mean that everything is coming up smelling like poinsettias. I would like to draw your attention to making sure your parachute is adjusted and fitting properly. Within the past six months there have been two emergency bailouts that fortunately ended happily, but the outcome could have easily been much different.

In one case the individual forgot to refasten one leg strap after undoing it during flight. In the other incident, both leg straps were undone.

Usually this leads to a disastrous ending, but both individuals managed to hang on for dear life. I've been in the parachute business for a very long time, and both these individuals were very lucky. The couple of other incidents I'm aware of did not end so well.

Please review my September 2013 and March 2014 "Ask Allen" columns for tips on properly adjusting your harness. If you have any questions about the proper fit, have it **checked out immediately** by your rigger or someone knowledgeable on the proper wearing of your parachute. I've also had several people send me photos with their parachutes on for me to make sure they were properly adjusted.

I would like to review winter flying again and remind you of some personal equipment hazards you may encounter if you decide to fly in cold weather. I covered this extensively last year. Rather than repeat myself, please go to my December 2014 column for special tips and requirements for flying with bulky winter clothing. Heavier than normal

clothing can create some very interesting moments. You can either dig through your back issues of *Sport Aerobatics* for the column, or you can find it on my home page. Once there click on "Ask Allen" on the left.

If you really have nothing to do this winter, I also gave a bailout webinar for the IAC this past May. You can also access it from my home page. Scroll down a bit and you will find easy directions on how to bring it up. Below that you can make a copy of my bailout seminar handout material that follows along with my webinar.

Remember, your parachute also needs a warm and cozy place to spend the winter. . .

Remember, your parachute also needs a warm and cozy place to spend the winter—especially if you're heading to Florida or Arizona to wait out the winter by the poolside. I suggest keeping your parachute in a plastic box with a snap-on lid, like the ones you can get at the big box stores. It'll help keep the moisture and critters out. I've also touched upon this several times over the years. You can go to my December 2007 or December 2008 columns for additional information on the proper storing of your parachute

during the winter or, for that matter, anytime.

The same holds true when shipping your parachute to be serviced. It doesn't have to arrive in a plastic box, but here are some tips to follow. Most of my customers have learned their parachutes need to be properly protected. They ship them in their carry bags and then place that into a plastic garbage bag for additional protection before shipping. If you don't have a carry bag, I would encourage you to purchase one, but at least place it in a plastic garbage bag or two. The shipping boxes usually arrive okay, but once in a while they arrive wet. Getting water on your parachute is not the end of the world (assuming it's water), but it will need drying and that can take several days.

Most of us make New Year's resolutions, and most, including mine, fall by the wayside (or is it waistside) soon after the holiday decorations are put away. Here's one I hope you will consider making. Plan on inviting me to give your

group an emergency bailout seminar this coming year. No, they are not entirely free, but they are affordable and could save your life. I gave more than a dozen seminars throughout the United States this past year and am booking for next year. My seminars are not limited to just the United States. I have traveled as far away as Australia.

My seminars themselves are always free. The only requirement is your group must cover my travel expenses and lodging. I will provide all the handout material, and I do have a PowerPoint projector if you do not have access to one.

Before or after I give my presentation, I am more than willing to check out each of your parachutes and answer any questions or discuss problems you may have with your parachute or how to egress your aircraft. I do not limit the time I'm with your group to just my seminar.

Until then, take care, fly safely, and my best for a healthy and prosperous new year.

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"Down" Time

R&R now that contest season is over? Nah.

THERE'S ALWAYS THAT little-bit-of-a-letdown, "party's over" feeling when the final contest of the year wraps up. Competition pilots have been training the entire year, focused on complete and total world domination in their given category. When the engines go silent in autumn, there is a slight feeling of bewilderment. Waking up from a lucid and elaborate dream, you rub your eyes, look around, and wonder, "What next?"

Aerobatic pilots by nature are inquisitive, ambitious, and driven. They thrive on challenge and novelty. They grab life by huge handfuls and swig deep gulps. The majority of aerobatic pilots do not fly airplanes for a living. They are involved in this sport for exhilaration, challenge, and fun. Someone once described this pursuit to me as an "aerobatic hobby." I was indignant. A HOBBY? The word hobby seems so small, so trivial, unable to contain the immensity of the all-consuming obsession that many of us approach this sport with.

Curious as to what my fellow pilots were going to do with themselves until we meet again next year, I put out a message on Facebook: "A poll: Competition aerobatic pilots, what are you going to do now that the contest season is over?" As I suspected, the results were as ambitious as they were varied. No one replied, "Sit on the beach and drink mai tais." We can't rule out this possibility, though.

Drumroll, please; here are the results detailing what your peers will be up to in the coming months:

Earn Additional Ratings

With a thirst for knowledge and ever-expanding quest for mastery, it is no surprise that aerobatic pilots want to expand the aviation envelope in multiple ways.

- Instrument
- Commercial
- CFI
- Glider

Build, Buy, and Maintain

We all eat, sleep, and breathe airplanes. Some pilots don't just like to fly them, they like to build, tinker with, and fix them.

- Models
- Help get an old Pitts S-1S back in the air.
- Looking to buy a Pitts!
- Put the plane back together (always one more mod, right?).
- Fleet maintenance, then nothing until a week before the first contest, at which time fear of total humiliation will force us to practice.

Hone Mad Skills

Of course, this category garnered the most responses. The pursuit of perfection and glory is never far from the mind of the dedicated competition pilot.

- Practice, practice, practice.
- Do whatever I can to make sure that I am prepared to compete for the first time next season!
- Wait for good weather days to practice for next year.
- Learn to fly rollers and tumbles.
- Work on earning my Intermediate Smooth patch. Snap rolls, square loops, four-point rolls, here I come!
- Get as far as I can with a four-banger Skybolt for the All Ten award (everything minus the Unlimited Stars patch).
- Achieve a level of competency with snap rolls so A Certain Judge will not hard zero Every. Single. One. Of. Them.

Actually Fly Straight and Level

Getting back to the grass roots of how we all got started holds the appeal of travel and adventure.

- Go fly!
- Come fly with other pilots and explore California. You are welcome to join me on Saturdays and Sundays. (Contact information upon request.)

Eat, Drink, and Be Merry

Elite athletes that they are, aerobatic pilots do not see the off-season as an excuse to let their usual standards of nutrition fluctuate. Some favorites mentioned:

- Bacon
- Beer
- Chocolate

Dollars and Sense

We are wizards. We convert financial resources into av-gas. A pilot friend calls his semi-retirement job his WTF money—work to fly.

- Fly a Barbie jet around to pay for next season.
- Recover financially. Oh, and get my commercial. That's still in the plan. So much for recovering financially.

Other (There are activities besides flying?!)

Apparently, in galaxies far, far away, there are enterprises unrelated to flying aerobatics.

- Snowboard
- Recover from shoulder surgery .
- Watch the AOPA app.
- Knitting

Aerobatics for the Sheer Joy of It

This one's the best of all.

-I haven't flown competition in many years, but since I live in California, I'm going to keep doing what I do and **fly aerobatics for fun.** All winter!

IAC



Mark your calendars for these upcoming contests. For a complete list of contests **and for the most up-to-date contest calendar**, visit www.IAC.org. If your chapter is hosting a contest, be sure to let the world know by posting your event on the IAC website.

Lone Star Aerobatic Championships (South Central)

Friday, June 10 – Saturday, June 11, 2016
 Practice/Registration: Thursday, June 9
 Power: Primary through Unlimited
 Location: TBD (NA): TBD
 Region: South Central
 Contest Director: J. J. Humphreys
 Contact Information: 940-564-6673
 E-Mail: jjhump1@brazosnet.com
 Website: www.iac24.org

Ohio Aerobatic Open (Mid-America)

Friday, June 17 – Saturday, June 18, 2016
 Practice/Registration: Thursday, June 16
 Power: Primary through Unlimited
 Location: Bellefontaine Regional Airport (KEDJ): Bellefontaine, OH
 Region: Mid-America
 Contest Director: Samuel Weaver
 Contact Information: 937-681-2680
 E-Mail: piperj3cub46@gmail.com
 Website: <http://www.iac34.eaachapter.org/>

Rocky Mountain "Oyster" Invitational Aerobatic Contest (South Central)

Saturday, October 8 – Sunday, October 9, 2016
 Practice/Registration: Friday, October 7
 Glider Categories: Sportsman through Unlimited
 Power: Primary through Unlimited
 Location: Lamar (KLAA): Lamar, CO
 Region: South Central
 Contest Director: Jamie S. Treat
 Contact Information: 303-304-7937
 E-Mail: jamietreat@q.com
 Website: www.IAC5.ORG

often talked about how the IAC is a menu of choices. Now we have to do a more effective job in getting the word out and passing along our skills, experience, and knowledge to others. That costs money, and it is our responsibility to manage our finances to make it possible. It is also incumbent on us to get that word out since our activities are not well-known to the aviation community, though aerobatics has been around for more than 100 years. We will use every vehicle at our disposal to do so.

Finally, my congratulations and thanks to Sean D. Tucker, who was inducted into the International Aerobatics Hall of Fame when we met in Oshkosh. Sean is a tireless promoter of aviation and aerobatics, chairs EAA's Young Eagles program, and is a pilot who has not forgotten what the IAC brought to him in the way of dedication to perfection, safety, mentoring, and looking out for fellow pilots. Sean gave a rousing speech to the attendees of the Hall of Fame ceremonies that evening of November 5, and I am grateful to him for highlighting what the IAC means to all of us and in front of the leaders in sport aviation who were assembled that night.

Happy holidays and best wishes for the new year to all! **IAC**

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Happy Holidays



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for 2016**



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