



Volume 59

August 2021

No. 1

President's column:

Dubuque extends warm welcome to NAPP

By Fr. Joe McCaffrey
NAPP President

A huge thank you to Fr. Phil Gibbs for hosting our National Association of Priest Pilots convention for 2021! We all had a fabulous time learning more about the Archdiocese of Dubuque, its culture and beauty.

Thank you also to our 1st Vice President, Fr. Nick Radloff, who showed us around his beautiful home parish church of St. Francis Xavier and the family's airstrip where he learned to fly!

We are very grateful to all the volunteer parishioners and friends who fed us delicious meals and did so much to make our time in Iowa so memorable! You will find more detail and photographs in this newsletter.

O mighty God surprised us with an enormous blessing when he sent his angels to save George Gratton, Mel Hemann and Lou Bragg when the engine in George's Comanche died over northern Georgia on their way to Dubuque in IFR conditions.

Through the providence of God and the help of air traffic control, they were vectored to an airfield conveniently placed close by and landed without incident. We offered prayers of thanksgiving for them at our convention Mass.

I called Mel after his brother John told me he was safe on the ground and the first thing I said to him when he answered the phone was, "You guys will do anything for attention!"

My comment was greeted with laughter as I was informed that they were already imbibing in the expen-



Fr. Joe McCaffrey (second from left) and other members watch a landing at the Dyersville Airport.

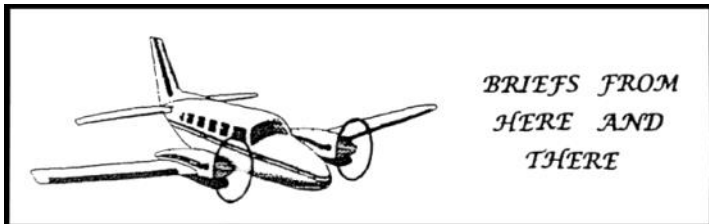
sive bourbon that George was bringing to our convention!

I wasn't sure at first if they were happy to be alive or happy that the bourbon was still in a drinkable state!

On a serious note, this whole occurrence reminds us of just how important training and currency is when it comes to the world of aviation. It also underscores the fact that we should always be in the state of grace, especially when we fly!

Congratulations also to our members celebrating their 60th year as servants of God in his holy priesthood, Fr. Francis (Jerry) Scanlan and Fr. Peter Sweeney. May God continue to bless you with many more years of good health in mind, body and spirit!

Continued on Page 3



A friendly reminder

During the July 2020 (Zoom) NAPP annual meeting, a motion was approved to establish a Missionary Gift Fund to encourage the membership to contribute a donation with their annual dues. These funds would support our annual contributions to the Diocese of Fairbanks in Alaska and the Flying Medical Service in Africa.

Thank you to those who supported the Missionary Gift Fund in the amount of \$2,158.11 in fiscal year 2020-2021.

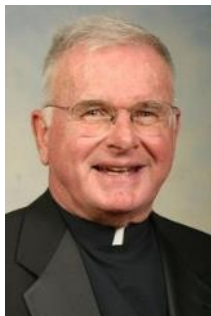
At the July 2021 NAPP annual meeting, members contributed \$300 to the Missionary Gift Fund toward our 2021-2022 account. Thank you.

You are invited to contribute, if you haven't already done so, by sending your donation to the NAPP Treasurer. (See the form below.) Thank you!

Msgr. John Hemann, NAPP Treasurer

Obituary: Fr. James J. Flavin Jr., OMI

Fr. James J. Flavin Jr., OMI, 83, died on September 3, 2019, in Lowell, Massachusetts. He was a member of the National Association of Priest Pilots.



He was ordained to the priesthood in Washington, D.C., on May 31, 1963. He spent 40 years in parish ministry. From 2009 to 2017, he served as Superior of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Residence in Tewksbury, Massachusetts, where he continued to live in retirement.

"Fr. Flavin loved to ski and to fly. He had a pilot's license for small planes. He was always looking for the next adventure," according to his [obituary](#).

Editor's note: We didn't learn of Fr. Flavin's death until June 2021. Members who are making their own advance funeral arrangements may wish to include NAPP in the list to be notified by the family or funeral director. Email: napp.editor@gmail.com.

60 years of priesthood

Two NAPP members, Fr. Francis (Jerry) Scanlan and Fr. Peter Sweeney, celebrated 60 years of priesthood in 2021.

Fr. Scanlan lives in retirement at St. Damian Parish in Oak Forest, Illinois. In addition to various parish assignments, he was chaplain for the Illinois Army National Guard from 1974 to 1995.

Fr. Sweeney, a native of Ireland, retired in 2012 and is in residence at St. John Neumann Parish in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

Fr. Alex Kreidler is NAPP's newest member. He is pastor at St. Gabriel Church in Kansas City, Missouri. He received his private pilot certificate in April 2021.

Fr. Mike Kerin, pastor at Holy Family Parish in Blakely, Georgia, included the following message with his dues: "The nearest airplane for rent is an hour from home. I was just getting checked out and got my 'new' medical when COVID hit. I am planning on getting in the air this summer."

NAPP Dues – U.S. \$25.00 2022 fiscal year began July 1, 2021

Use this form to send your dues or use PayPal (go to priestpilots.org and click on **Pay Now**).

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

EMAIL: _____

PHONE: _____

Member: Charter Regular Associate

**Mail to: Msgr. John Hemann, NAPP Treasurer,
481 N. Shore Dr., Apt. 301, Clear Lake, IA 50428-1368**

In addition to the \$25 annual dues, we encourage members to make a separate donation to the **NAPP Missionary Gift Fund**,

which will be used to support the organization's charitable grants.

Donations can be sent to the same address or you can use PayPal. Go to priestpilots.org and click on the **Donate** button.



NAPP MIDWEST REGIONAL MEETING

Monday, Sept. 27, 2021 – Boone, Iowa (KBNW)
Please call, email or mail reservation by Sept. 20

NAME _____

CELLPHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Arriving by plane: N _____

ETA: _____

Arriving by car: _____ ETA: _____

Reservations to: Mike Makelbust

mmakelbust@mchsi.com

204 21st St., Ames, IA 50010

Cell: 515-231-3380

SCHEDULE

10:30 a.m.: Arrive at Boone Municipal Airport, [KBNW](#)

Lunch: [Colorado Grill](#) – Boone

Tour: Iowa Army National Guard – Army Aviation Support Facility – KBNW

Tour: [W&C Aircraft Works](#) – Builder Assistance Center – KBNW. (W&C offers workspace and assistance for building and repair of experimental aircraft as well as for restoration of select vintage aircraft.)

Departure: Whenever

On the road to Dubuque

On the way from Richfield, Ohio, to Dubuque, Iowa, I made a pilgrimage to the current resting place of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria, Illinois.



He died on December 9, 1979, and his body was transferred to Peoria on June 27, 2019, having been quietly flown from LaGuardia Airport to O'Hare, and then by ground to Peoria. This took place after lengthy legal proceedings involving the Archdiocese of New York, Diocese of Peoria, and the descendants of Archbishop Sheen.



Pictured are the Cathedral, the tomb of Archbishop Sheen and other memorabilia including his chalice.



Fr. Allen Corrigan

Continued from Page 1

Our annual business meeting also went well. We welcomed seven new members since our last in-person convention:

Fr. Maurice Culver, M.D. – Orange Park, Florida
Tim Dugan – Siler City, North Carolina
Fr. Michael Gould – Los Altos, California
Abraham Khadivi – Lenexa, Kansas
Fr. Alex Kreidler – Kansas City, Missouri
Fr. Craig Morley – St. Petersburg, Florida
Fr. Alex Nevitt – Cedar Knolls, New Jersey

We hope to see them in person at our next convention, which George Gratton offered to host. But due to all the stress in his life right now, given the state of his Comanche and other concerns, we feel it's not fair to put this extra burden on George at this time.

We are grateful to Fr. John Schmitz for volunteering to host in 2022. Please watch for further details regarding our next amazing convention. Some even sug-

gested it might be wise to consider a date in September as opposed to July, considering better weather options. We will certainly keep you posted on the final details as we move forward.

Between now and then, let us continue to pray and work to invite more members into this happy group of priest aviators!

Anyone who has seriously taken the time to be involved in NAPP can attest to the fact that it is life-enriching on many levels. Those fine men who established this organization over 50 years ago did us all a service. Little did they know that their efforts would enrich the lives of so many priests and lay people over these years. It is a wholesome and noble endeavor to strengthen one another in this way. I hope and pray that in the months and years ahead, we will all do our part to solidify this blessed opportunity for many years to come.

So let us pray: Lord Jesus, help us to desire what you desire and please give us the grace to do it. Amen.

Convention highlights: Mississippi River cruise | Monday, July 12



Fr. Jerry Scanlan, Vincent Kearns, Fr. Merlin Kieffer



Fr. Allen Corrigan, Fr. John Wolesky, Fr. Neil Manternach, Fr. Gene Murray, Jim Knights, Fr. Joe McCaffrey

Mike Makelbust, Fr. John Herzog, Fr. Phil Gibbs, Fr. John Schmitz, Fr. Scott Jabo

Photos by Tom Enwright

Hospitality Room | Wednesday, July 14



Panoramic photo by Fr. Allen Corrigan

University of Dubuque Flight Center | Tuesday, July 13



In the lobby at the University of Dubuque Flight Center at the Dubuque Regional Airport: Fr. Jack Paisley and Fr. John Herzog; Fr. Gene Murray and Fr. Bill Menzel.



Randy Warm, who has extensive experience as a military helicopter pilot, explains the aviation curriculum at UD.



Student and instructor using a Cessna 172 flight simulator.



Mike Phillips describes the CRJ-200 simulator.

Upper left photo by Tom Enwright; others by Jim Knights

NAPP Convention Mass | Wednesday, July 14



The NAPP Convention Mass was held at the Cathedral of St. Raphael in Dubuque. The celebrant was Fr. Joe McCaffrey, NAPP President. Concelebrants were (left to right) Frs. Nick Radloff, John Schmitz (hidden behind Fr. Joe), Merlin Kieffer, Richard Funke and John Wolesky.

Photo by Tom Enwright

Basilica of St. Francis Xavier | Tuesday, July 13



Fr. Nick Radloff gives a tour of his home parish church, the Basilica of St. Francis Xavier in Dyersville. The church was dedicated in 1889. Pope Pius XII declared it a minor basilica in 1956. Today, it is one of 53 basilicas in the United States.



Photo above by Tom Enwright; all others by Jim Knights



Dyersville Airport | Tuesday, July 13



Dyersville Area Aviation and local church organizations hosted the NAPP group for a hangar lunch, followed by some take-offs and landings by Craig Kramer in his 1946 Ercoupe. Fr. Nick Radloff learned to fly at this airport, which has a 2,700-foot turf runway.



Photos by Jim Knights



Barbecue at Fr. Phil Gibbs' rectory | Tuesday, July 13



Chad Blanchard, a United Airlines pilot and one of Fr. Phil's parishioners, chats with Fr. Bill Menzel.



Fr. John Herzog and Fr. Richard Funke

Photos by Tom Enwright



Fr. Phil with his parents, Harold and Joyce Gibbs.



Mike Makelbust and Fr. Gene Murray

Living the dream at the 'Field of Dreams' site

NAPP members who went on the motorcoach tour to Dyersville, Iowa, set foot on the grounds where the "Field of Dreams" movie was filmed in 1988. Released in 1989, the sports fantasy drama stars Kevin Costner, Amy Madigan, James Earl Jones, Ray Liotta and Burt Lancaster. The movie was adapted from the 1982 novel "Shoeless Joe."

Our on-field guide was Frank Dardis, one of the original "Ghost Players" from the area who emerged from the cornfield in the movie. He was dressed in a 1918 Chicago White Sox uniform, just like in the movie.

After giving a talk about the film production and joining us for a group photo on the bleachers, Dardis pitched to several NAPP members who took turns at batting practice on the famous field.

Major League game set for August 12

The New York Yankees and Chicago White Sox will play a game at a new, 8,000-seat ballpark one cornfield away from the original field used in the movie. The game is set for 6:15 p.m. CDT on Thursday, August 12. It will be telecast on Fox. This will be the first regular-season Major League game played in Iowa.



Frank Dardis pitches to Fr. John Schmitz.

Top two photos by Jim Knights

NAPP members gathered for a group photo on the bleachers.

Front row: Tom Enwright, Frank Dardis from the "Field of Dreams" movie cast, Fr. Jack Paisley, Msgr. John Hemann, Fr. John Wolesky, Fr. John Herzog.

Second row: Fr. Gene Murray, Fr. Allen Corrigan, Fr. Scott Jabo, Fr. Merlin Kieffer, Vincent Kearns.

Third row: Fr. Phil Gibbs, Mike Makelbust

Fourth row: Fr. John Schmitz

Fifth row: Fr. Nick Radloff, Fr. Joe McCaffrey, Fr. Bill Menzel, Jim Knights.



A tribute to Dubuque native Robert Martin, one of the heroic Tuskegee Airmen

The 2021 convention of the National Association of Priest Pilots was filled with historical connections to the host city of Dubuque, Iowa, and its surrounding region. Members came away with a deeper understanding of Dubuque's roots along the Mississippi River, along with the architectural splendor of the Basilica of St. Francis Xavier in Dyersville and the farms made famous by the "Field of Dreams" movie.

Memorable stops were packed into just a few days, but the highlight for many was the closing banquet on July 14. Thanks to the advance preparation of Fr. Mel Hermann, we learned about the life and legacy of Dubuque native Robert L. Martin, who was one of the heroic Tuskegee Airmen during World War II.

In her keynote address, one of his daughters, Gabrielle Martin, described her late father's military service and passion for excellence.

As a youth, Robert took an interest in aviation; he learned to make and fly kites and later helped at the local air show with his Boy Scout troop. He aspired to be a pilot. Later, while studying electrical engineering at Iowa State University, he learned to fly in America's Civilian Pilot Training Program.

After earning his degree in engineering, Robert applied to and in 1944 graduated from flight training at the Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama. He was a member of the 100th Fighter Squadron and the 332nd Fighter Group. The Tuskegee Airmen were the first Black aviators in the Army Air Corps.

"Failure is not an option"

Gabrielle shared stories about her father, whom she described as creative, determined and compassionate. Growing up in Dubuque, Robert's father taught him and his siblings that "failure is not an option." That lesson undoubtedly contributed to Robert's survival during "63 and a half" combat missions over Europe.

In December 1944, Martin was returning to base when his P-51 Mustang had engine trouble. He made a forced landing at a gunnery range in Italy. The propeller was damaged, but he walked away.

In March 1945, in what would have been his 64th mission, Martin's aircraft was struck by ground fire over an enemy airfield in Yugoslavia. Another U.S. pilot was killed by the artillery. Martin was forced to bail out after the engine caught fire. He was injured when the parachute opened. Not knowing if he would be taken as a prisoner of war, Martin found friendly shelter in a farmhouse and eventually made it back to his unit.



Robert L. Martin



Gabrielle Martin and the convention host, Fr. Phil Gibbs.

Closure for Marla

Gabrielle told another story that started two days before Christmas in 1944 and ended in Arlington National Cemetery in March 2019.

Robert Martin joined Lawrence E. Dickson and one other American pilot to escort a photo reconnaissance aircraft on a mission from Italy to Nazi-occupied Prague.

About an hour into the trip, Dickson's aircraft had engine trouble and they tried returning

to base. Martin saw Dickson jettison the canopy and rolled out of formation to avoid Dickson's canopy. The two wingmen circled but didn't see Dickson or the wreckage.

In 1983, Martin wrote to Dickson's daughter, Marla, who was 2 when her father was killed.

Dickson's remains were found in April 2018, marking the recovery of the first of more than two dozen Tuskegee Airmen who went missing in action during World War II. The Defense Department gave the news to Marla Andrews.

In March 2019, Capt. Dickson was buried at Arlington National Cemetery. His daughter and grandchildren were there, along with Gabrielle Martin. It was a

Continued on Page 10

Continued from Page 9

cloudy day, but Gabrielle says “a window opened up in the cloudy sky and we got to see the missing-man formation” as Air Force jets from the 332nd flew overhead.

Gabrielle’s father, Capt. Robert L. Martin, died July 26, 2018, at the age of 99 at his home in Olympia Fields, Illinois. (The Olympia Fields Post Office was named in his honor in 2019.)

She said her father’s motto was, “Help where you can.”

Capt. Martin earned the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with six oak leaf clusters and the Purple Heart. In 2007, he was among the attendees at a Congressional Gold Medal ceremony honoring the Tuskegee Airmen. All of them were awarded a replica medal. (A single gold medal was struck, to be retained by the Smithsonian Institution.)

Gabrielle says her father was a humble man with a “megawatt smile.” She recalls him saying, “I don’t understand the fuss.”

Honoring Capt. Martin in Dubuque

The Dubuque Regional Airport Commission voted in 2020 to name the airport terminal after Capt. Martin. A \$100,000 fundraising campaign is underway for memorial signage, an honorary plaque and educational displays about Capt. Martin and the Tuskegee Airmen.

Dawnelle Gordon, who filed the petition to rename the airport terminal in his honor, spoke after Gabrielle’s presentation at the NAPP banquet.



[Click here](#) to learn about the campaign. Donations also can be mailed to:

Capt. R.L. Martin Commemoration
c/o Dubuque Branch of the NAACP
P.O. Box 1012
Dubuque, IA 52004

Editor’s note: This article expands on Gabrielle’s remarks at the NAPP banquet to provide additional historical context. Sources include: [Wikipedia \(Robert Martin\)](#), [Wikipedia \(Lawrence Dickson\)](#), [Miami Herald](#), [Washington Post](#) and [Dubuque Regional Airport](#).



Dawnelle Gordon and Gabrielle Martin



Gabrielle Martin with her cousins, Dr. David Martin (left) and Martin (Terry) Smith.



Gabrielle Martin with special guest Steve Bradley. He is a dentist and flight instructor from Cascade, Iowa. He also is a member of the Iowa House of Representatives.



Msgr. John Hemann with special guest Don Fouts. Speaking of Don and Steve, John said, “I would remember that their relationship with the HEMANN FLIERS goes back at least 30 years.”

Emergency over Georgia

By George Gratton

Sometimes Monday just isn't your best day. For example, Monday, July 12.

The plan was to fly to Dubuque for the NAPP annual meeting. Fr. Mel Hemann, Lou Bragg, Fr. Alex Candrang and I were scheduled to fly N8787P, my trusty Comanche 260.

First off, Fr. Alex was out, he had to work. Well, at least the plane was proper! Fresh annual, fresh 12 quarts of oil, fresh good oil analysis, fresh Garmin database, all good – NOT!

With Fr. Mel and Lou aboard, off we went from Savannah in VFR conditions. After a while, IFR came up to meet us at 8,000, now skimming along the tops, but all good. Near the Tennessee border, I changed fuel tanks. Oops! Rough engine. Back to that good fuel tank, no better. Full rich, fuel pump on, left and right mags, to no avail.



Flight Aware map shows the diversion to Lumpkin County-Wimpy Airport (9A0).

unrepairable, at 860 hours since major overhaul.

It held oil pressure to the end, so the prop worked. It also needs IRAN (inspect and repair as necessary) since it was exposed to debris in the oil at a young 1,500 hours since overhaul.

As we descended through the thick clouds, the rough-

ness got worse. The mixture could not compensate for the unmetered air intake as the altitude evaporated. The plugs in the remaining cylinders fouled one by one until finally only two were making enough heat to move the EGT (exhaust gas temperature) gauge. The shake was enough to make the passengers think we had a flat tire! Shak'n and bake'n, we ran full throttle (only 1,200 RPM) to get clear of the runway and shut down.

Special thanks to Atlanta Center controller Jim who helped so much; the Dahlonega first responders; Richard Gurr, a local pilot who saw us and gave us ground transportation to the Holiday Inn; and Richard Buice, a mechanic from 20 miles away who came to help. Thanks also to the assisting plane with relay information, as the mountain terrain would not allow me to speak directly to Atlanta Center.

The rest is going to be expensive, enough to probably end my aviation career in the Comanche.

Lessons learned: Don't panic, fess up and declare early, take the available help, and don't stop flying!

Postscript: Controller Jim Patrucci was given one hour to recover after helping me. He told me that time was in prayer and meditation. He was saying the Lord's Prayer when not directing me. Power of prayer? I believe! I mentioned the end of my flying Comanche days. Even if I can afford to fix the engine, there is a problem with insurance. Simply put, I cannot afford to insure a Comanche anymore, or for that matter, any other retractable, high-performance plane. Upon reaching my mid-70s, no underwriter has interest except at very high cost. At the time of the engine failure, I was uninsured except for liability. I now realize that risk is too high to accept. Sadly, a plane I have flown for nearly three decades must now go.

ness got worse. The mixture could not compensate for the unmetered air intake as the altitude evaporated. The plugs in the remaining cylinders fouled one by one until finally only two were making enough heat to move the EGT

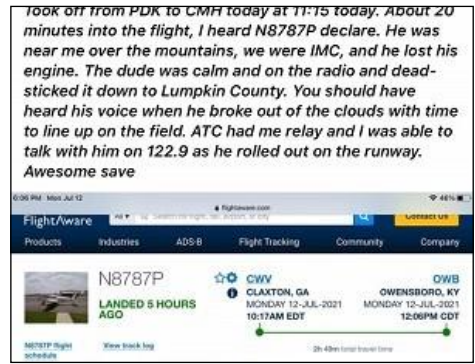
(exhaust gas temperature) gauge. The shake was enough to make the passengers think we had a flat tire! Shak'n and bake'n, we ran full throttle (only 1,200 RPM) to get clear of the runway and shut down.

Special thanks to Atlanta Center controller Jim who helped so much; the Dahlonega first responders; Richard Gurr, a local pilot who saw us and gave us ground transportation to the Holiday Inn; and Richard Buice, a mechanic from 20 miles away who came to help. Thanks also to the assisting plane with relay information, as the mountain terrain would not allow me to speak directly to Atlanta Center.

The rest is going to be expensive, enough to probably end my aviation career in the Comanche.

Lessons learned: Don't panic, fess up and declare early, take the available help, and don't stop flying!

Postscript: Controller Jim Patrucci was given one hour to recover after helping me. He told me that time was in prayer and meditation. He was saying the Lord's Prayer when not directing me. Power of prayer? I believe! I mentioned the end of my flying Comanche days. Even if I can afford to fix the engine, there is a problem with insurance. Simply put, I cannot afford to insure a Comanche anymore, or for that matter, any other retractable, high-performance plane. Upon reaching my mid-70s, no underwriter has interest except at very high cost. At the time of the engine failure, I was uninsured except for liability. I now realize that risk is too high to accept. Sadly, a plane I have flown for nearly three decades must now go.



A Bonanza pilot posted a note after relaying radio communications for the Comanche.



NAPP Leadership Team	
President: Joe McCaffrey	
1st VP: Nick Radloff	2nd VP: Bill Menzel
Secretary: Allen Corrigan	Treasurer: John Hemann
Regional Directors	
East: Al Ruschman	Midwest: John Hemann

<p><i>Please send newsletter articles, notes and photos to:</i> Tom Enwright, napp.editor@gmail.com; 419 Chestnut St., Sauk City, WI 53583</p> <p><u>Deadline for the October edition: September 30.</u></p>
--