

N.A.P.P.



Volume 59

October 2022

No. 2

## Fr. John Schmitz and his parish volunteers roll out the red carpet for NAPP convention

Fourteen members of the National Association of Priest Pilots assembled in Branson, Missouri, for the 2022 convention.

Five NAPP aircraft landed at Branson Downtown Airport (PLK). They were piloted by Fr. Joe McCaffrey, Fr. John Schmitz, Fr. Phil Gibbs, Fr. Gene Murray and Fr. Bill Menzel.

Others in attendance were Fr. Allen Corrigan, Fr. Nick Radloff, Fr. John Swing, Fr. Jack Fitzgerald and Fr. Alex Nevitt, as well as associate members George Gratton, Jim Knights, Vincent Kearns and Tom Enwright. A few other members attended the annual meeting via Zoom.

Fr. Schmitz, our convention host, was assisted by eight members of his parish who served as convention staff: Joe Brown, Louise and Jimmy Clossick, Julie and Tom Cummings, Pam Rusk, Rose



**Fr. John Schmitz (front) with some of the volunteers who staffed the convention. Left to right: Tom and Julie Cummings, Rose Vanderbeck, Georgia Vincent and Joe Brown.**

Vanderbeck and Georgia Vincent. The Lodges at Thousand Hills Golf Resort served as our home away from home from September 18-22.

At the annual meeting, Fr. Phil Gibbs of Dubuque, Iowa, was elected president, succeeding Fr. Joe McCaffrey, who served since 2019. Thank you, Fr. Mac, for your dedicated service to NAPP, and thank you to Fr. Phil for answering the call when nominated.

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## Fr. Joe McCaffrey looks back on his presidency; Fr. Phil Gibbs elected next leader of NAPP

By Fr. Joe McCaffrey  
*Past President*

Congratulations to Fr. Phil Gibbs, our newly elected president, and to Fr. Nick Radloff, who was reelected for a second term as 1st vice president at our annual meeting in Branson, Missouri, on September 21.

This is my last official article as president. Fr. Phil will take over these articles beginning with the December newsletter.

Looking back over my years as president, it has truly been an honor to serve you. We have lived through some unsettling times with a worldwide pandemic and the loss of several of our dear friends and founding members.

As a result, we forged ahead with our first “digital convention” via Zoom because no pandemic was going to keep us from having our time together and our annual meeting — or collecting our dues!



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## NAPP banquet speaker Craig Huck gives insider's look at air traffic control

NAPP members and guests learned about the complexity of air traffic control at the annual banquet in Branson, Missouri, on September 21. Craig Huck, a retired Federal Aviation Administration controller, traced the evolution of air traffic control in the United States and gave us a virtual tour of the Kansas City Air Route Traffic Control Center (commonly known as Kansas City Center), where he spent most of his career.



Craig also gave an insider's guide to different FAA control operations: Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT), Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON), and Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC).

With the growth of air traffic in the 20th century came the need for reform following the tragic crash involving United and TWA airliners over the Grand Canyon in June 1956. All 128 people were killed. Both flights had departed from Los Angeles, one bound for Chicago, the other for Kansas City. Craig noted the collision occurred in uncontrolled airspace, so the pilots had responsibility to maintain visual separation. The crash illustrated the failure of an antiquated air traffic control system.

A controller's job is challenging even on good days, but adverse weather compounds the stress for controllers and pilots.

Craig showed a fascinating replay of FedEx aircraft trying to negotiate converging thunderstorms at the company's hub in Memphis. Kansas City Center controllers did their best to funnel many of the flights, but some were forced to go to alternate airports as the weather worsened.

Craig also described various ATC tools to improve safety and reduce congestion. These include Airport Surface Detection Equipment (ASDE-X), which depicts aircraft on the ground; Traffic Management Advisor, which sequences aircraft to provide a smooth flow of arrivals; and the National Playbook, which helps route large flows of aircraft around weather.

Craig shared stories of unusual incidents. There once was a lost pilot who thought he was over Coop, Kansas, after describing any landmarks to the controller who was helping him. It turned out he was reading a sign on an agricultural co-op building.

Then there was the pilot flying in instrument conditions who landed at Springfield, Missouri, without talking to ATC.

In a 2014 example close to our convention site, a Southwest Airlines Boeing 737 mistakenly landed at M. Graham Clark Downtown (PLK) instead of the nearby Branson airport (BBG), coming to a stop about 300 feet

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Fr. Nick Radloff was reelected 1st vice president. Mass followed the annual meeting. Both were livestreamed by Fr. Alex.

Fr. Schmitz and his outstanding team of volunteers from St. Patrick Parish in Laurie, Missouri (Lake of the Ozarks) provided the ultimate in hospitality, from making creative, delicious meals to providing unlimited shuttle service, and parish volunteers also did fundraising to defray costs for participants. We are grateful for the months of planning and long hours devoted to service at the convention.

On Monday evening, we had pizza and continued the tradition of each member telling a bit about themselves, their interest in aviation and how they got involved in NAPP.

On Tuesday morning, the group toured part of the campus at the College of the Ozarks, a private, Christian institution. Full-time students work at one of more than 100 campus workstations or industries to defray the cost of their tuition. The remaining portion is covered through scholarships. The Work Education Program and donor contributions allow students to graduate debt-free.

Tuesday afternoon provided an opportunity for sightseeing, shopping and lunch at Branson Landing, followed by group tickets for the "Jesus" play at Sight & Sound theater. In the evening, the Knights of Columbus from Branson provided grilled pork steaks back at the lodges.

Wednesday allowed for ample free time after the annual meeting and Mass. The banquet was held at Top of the Rock with Craig Huck, a retired air traffic controller, as guest speaker. (See separate story.)

Most members headed for home on Thursday, but Fr. Mac and his two passengers, Fr. Jack Fitzgerald and Jim Knights, elected to wait until Friday because of weather, so they had an extra day for exploring.

The dates of the 2023 convention are September 19-20, with arrivals on September 18 and departures on September 21. The location will be decided later, so watch for updates.

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At this year's convention in Branson, I made the recommendation to honor our charter members and the late Hemann brothers (Mel, John and Ev) by naming our monetary grants after them. This was unanimously approved. So, henceforth, one of our grants will be known as the Hemann Brothers Grant and the other as our Charter Members Grant. For more information, please read the minutes from our convention that will be published on our website.

Speaking of our convention, a huge thank you to Fr. John Schmitz and his parishioners for a unique and amazing time in Branson. We had prevailed on Fr. John to take over the convention for this year and he did an outstanding job making it one that we will never forget. I love the fact that he involved his parishioners in fundraising and participating in the convention itself.

This cheerful group of men and women provided for our needs for food and transportation. They could not have been more accommodating or kind and generous! It was truly a joy to have them at our convention and liturgy. They even provided home-cooked, gourmet meals for us! What a special treat! I particularly loved the enthusiastic "thinking outside the box" ingenuity that made this convention unique, fun and flawless! Kudos to all involved!

It was also decided at our convention that we would continue with the fall convention dates. Because September weather is usually better flying weather than July, we will gather next September from the 18th to 21st. Please be alert to the newsletter and emails regarding final arrangements. Several site suggestions were made. More details will be provided in the months to come.

I was blessed this year with the

company of Fr. Jack Fitzgerald and Retired Special Agent Jim Knights as my travel companions. We flew out in my Cessna Cardinal RG, N1986Q. Total airtime each way was approximately six hours. We flew three, two-hour legs, which proved to be comfortable for both the plane and the occupants! The details of the flights can be found on FlightAware.



***Fr. Joe McCaffrey (center) and his flying companions, Fr. Jack Fitzgerald and Jim Knights.***

Go/no-go decisions are a major part of being a good pilot. On Thursday, there were storms along our flight path home that were going to persist even into the night with high winds at our destination airport, New Castle, Pennsylvania (KUCP).

So, we made a unanimous decision to stay an extra day. This was a blessing in many ways. It afforded us the opportunity to do more sight-seeing. This included the caves at the Top of the Rock Resort and the amazing Native American museum underneath the banquet hall that was truly fascinating!

The next day, Friday, proved to be a perfect flying day. The ride home was smooth, cool and refreshing. We found ourselves commenting repeatedly on the blessing of waiting 24 hours! It was clearly the right decision for us!

My heart is full of gratitude to all of you for allowing me to serve this amazing group in some small way! I will always be grateful to my fellow officers for their support and generosity of time and service. I am

especially grateful to Tom Enwright for producing this newsletter and for his willingness to take over as treasurer when we unexpectedly lost General John Hemann. It was an enormous amount of extra work to take over the treasury, as you can imagine with banking issues and our status as a tax-exempt organization. What complicates things even more is that we are in multiple states with multiple laws and regulations. This was no easy task, but he stuck with it and got us through, and he deserves our gratitude.

I would also like to thank John Zapp, who maintains our website and was invited to do so many years ago by the one and only Fr. Mel Hemann!

Speaking of Fr. Mel, when I last saw him recuperating from his minor stroke and battling cancer in Daytona, Florida, I promised I would do all I could to keep NAPP going. I know you also join me in this pledge!

These are different times and challenging times from when this amazing organization was first established over 50 years ago. But I think we can all agree that it is a very worthwhile gathering of priests and lay people who love our faith, the priesthood and aviation! It is too good a thing to let die on the vine.

We have a whole army of dear brothers now in the Lord's presence and I'm sure we can call upon them to intercede for all our needs. Let us follow their tremendous example and remain loyal to the Lord, to one another and to this group that intends to support those things that we hold most dear — faith, priesthood and the love of aviation!

God's blessings on you and yours. I look forward to seeing you all at our next fly-in! Stay safe and remember: Fear is useless; what is needed is trust! (Luke 8:50; Mark 5:36)



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from the end of the paved surface.

Craig also showed video replays of the air traffic map from September 11, 2001, when four hijacked airliners were used in terrorist attacks in the United States.

He illustrated how controllers quickly worked to get all remaining aircraft on the ground. He also showed how Canadian airports handled a surge of U.S.-bound traffic coming from Europe.

Craig and his wife, Mary Fran, are members of St. Patrick Parish in Laurie, Missouri, where Fr. John Schmitz, our convention host, is



**Mary Fran and Craig Huck visit with George Gratton before dinner at Top of the Rock.**

pastor. Craig, Mary Fran and their service dog Zoey were with us throughout our stay in Branson.

Craig's experience as a controller began in the Air Force, followed by three years in Springfield, Missouri, and 29 years at Kansas City Center, where he was an Air Traffic Controller, Traffic Management Controller, Area Supervisor, Traffic Management Supervisor, and Operations Manager. He then worked for six years in contract support for the FAA. That job involved development and deployment of Next Generation (NEXGEN) air traffic control tools.



**With the chapel in the distance, guests gather on the balcony at Top of the Rock for the sunset ceremony, featuring the playing of bagpipes and the firing of a Civil War cannon.**



**Thanks to all those who shared photos from the convention for this newsletter: Fr. Alex Nevitt (who took the photo above), Fr. John Schmitz, Fr. Joe McCaffrey, Jim Knights and Tom Enwright**



**Left: Taking in the view at Top of the Rock.**

**Right: Fr. Allen Corrigan, Fr. Alex Nevitt and Jim Knights enjoy a campfire at the lodge.**





**More photos from NAPP 2022 Convention in Branson**



*Pizza night after arrivals on Monday, September 19. The tradition continues as each member shares about their aviation story.*



*Frs. Joe McCaffrey, John Schmitz and Nick Radloff*



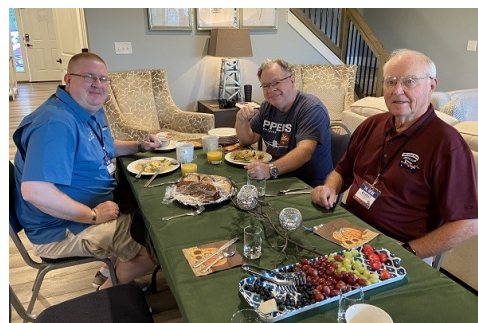
*Beautiful morning view from the patio at our home away from home, The Lodges at Thousand Hills Golf Resort.*



*Louise Clossick (left) provides tableside service at breakfast. Today's gourmet menu: Eggs Benedict with asparagus.*



*Fr. Joe McCaffrey, NAPP president, offers Mass on annual meeting day, Wednesday, September 21. Concelebrating were Frs. John Schmitz, Nick Radloff and Alex Nevitt. Fr. Allen Corrigan provided the liturgical music. Julie Cummings was the lector.*



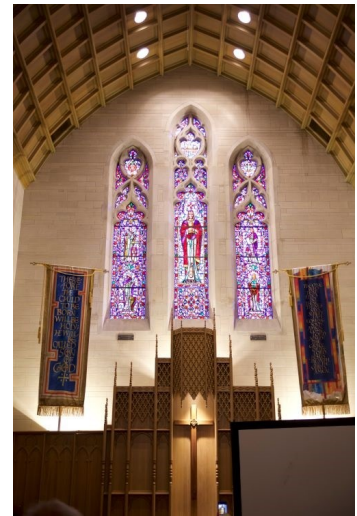
*Frs. Nick Radloff, Phil Gibbs, Gene Murray*



*Amazing volunteers in the kitchen at the lodge: Rose Vanderbeck, Mary Fran Huck, Georgia Vincent, Julie Cummings*



**More photos from NAPP 2022 Convention in Branson**



*Inside the chapel*

**Outside the chapel at the College of the Ozarks: In front, Louise Clossick and Fr. Phil Gibbs. Others, clockwise: Tom Cummings, Fr. John Swing, Jim Knights, Fr. Alex Nevitt (black hat), Tom Enwright, Fr. John Schmitz, Fr. Nick Radloff, Georgia Vincent, Fr. Bill Menzel, Pam Rusk, Joe Brown, Fr. Jack Fitzgerald, Fr. Allen Corrigan, Fr. Joe McCaffrey, Vincent Kearns, Fr. Gene Murray, George Gratton, Jimmy Clossick.**



**Fr. Gene Murray went on a guided fishing trip along with Frs. Phil Gibbs, John Swing and Alex Nevitt.**



**Heading home: Fr. Phil Gibbs**



**Frs. John Swing and Bill Menzel**



**Fr. John Schmitz**

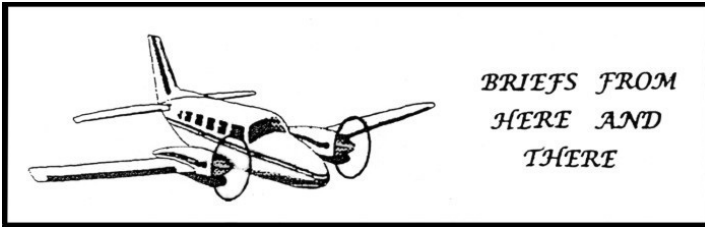


**Fill'er up: Fr. Joe McCaffrey**



**See you next year!**

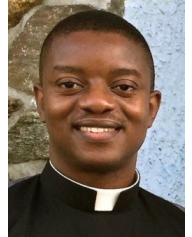




cense in the summer of 2023.” (Photo by Mathieu Labs)

**New assignment in Florida:** Fr. Craig Morley became the new pastor at St. Paul Church in Tampa, Florida, on July 1. After graduating from high school, Craig joined the Army and served as a helicopter pilot for six years. He was ordained to the priesthood on May 19, 2001.

**New member:** Fr. Augustine Dada is a new member of the NAPP. A native of Nigeria, he is associate pastor at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Elmsford, New York. He plans to begin flight school this year.



**New associate member:** Ed Jozsa was born and raised Catholic in western Pennsylvania, just north of Pittsburgh, where he met his wife of 28 years, in their parish youth group. They are the proud parents of three children and are members of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Carmel, Indiana.



Ed started his flying career as a flight instructor and attended various universities while flying, but ultimately obtained his bachelor’s degree in aeronautics from Embry Riddle University. Ed holds the following licenses and ratings: Private SEL, ATP MEL, CFII, MEII, Ground Instructor, Flight Engineer Turbojet and six type ratings. He flew for three airlines where he was a captain at each. Ed first flew the Saab 340 and BAE 3100 turboprops for Chautauqua Airlines. He then moved to American Trans Air where he flew the Boeing 727, 737 and 757. Ed ended his career as a Boeing 767 captain for FedEx, where he also flew the DC-10, Airbus 300 and 310, and the Boeing 757 again. Ed was an airline pilot for 28 years and totaled nearly 13,000 hours in the air.

Ed says he was the last person to expect a mystical vision, but a near-death experience after a catastrophic auto accident brought him closer to God than he ever imagined. In his book, “The Mystic Next Door,” he tells of his experience of miracles, terrifying as well as heavenly visions, and how it transformed his view of life, faith, eternity and the Holy Trinity.

Website: [presenceofGodencounters.com](http://presenceofGodencounters.com)

**New school on Fr. Phil’s campus in Dubuque**

Fr. Phil Gibbs, pastor of Resurrection Parish in Dubuque, Iowa, helped dedicate a new elementary school on the parish campus on August 21. The 44,000-square-foot building accommodates students in pre-

**Update on Fr. Paul Baseford**

Associate member George Gratton sent the following note on September 29 as Hurricane Ian was headed for South Carolina.

“As you know, Savannah is getting some very bad weather. Fr Paul Baseford called me from his California home to ask if he could be of assistance to Irene and me. He is alive and well at 97 years. He had a stroke since his last NAPP meeting (Savannah) and does not travel much anymore. He recently tripped on a curb at the shopping center. He said nothing was broken, but his cheek is all black and blue. He would love to have a call from any NAPP members. (His phone number is in the member directory.) Paul has authorized me to share his status with the NAPP.”

**Reminder to pay your dues:** Thanks to the 29 members who have renewed their NAPP dues for the 2023 fiscal year, which began July 1, 2022. Please follow their example by supporting NAPP with your \$25 payment. See the dues form on Page 8.

**Al Taylor completes 100th Young Eagles flight**

NAPP associate member Al Taylor completed his 100th EAA Young Eagles flight on August 13. Al and two other pilots introduced 54 young people to the joy of flight at the Necedah, Wisconsin, airport. The event was hosted by EAA Chapter 931.



“My first Young Eagles flight was on August 25, 2018,” Al says. “I was ‘volunteered’ to participate with a borrowed Grumman Traveler. The excitement that the kids expressed and the appreciation received from their parents were so rewarding. I have been actively promoting aviation to both adults and kids. The Young Eagles program has been a wonderful way to bring young people to the airports and to expose them to the joy and wonder of flight. Over the past four years, I have given over 100 Young Eagles rides promoting aviation with the hope that one of them continues onward to get their license. One of my young passengers is receiving lessons and she is hopeful to get her li-

## 2023 NAPP Dues – U.S. \$25.00

2023 fiscal year began July 1, 2022

Use this form to send your dues or use PayPal  
(go to [priestpilots.org](http://priestpilots.org) and click on Pay Now).

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

Member:  Charter  Regular  Associate

Mail to: Tom Enwright, NAPP Treasurer, 419 Chestnut St., Sauk City, WI 53583

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](http://priestpilots.org) and click on the **Donate** button.

Donate



The National Association of Priest Pilots newsletter is published online six times per year (August, October, December, February, April, June). Fiscal year begins July 1. Website: [priestpilots.org](http://priestpilots.org)

Articles, news notes and photos can be sent to Tom Enwright, [napp.editor@gmail.com](mailto:napp.editor@gmail.com). Deadline for the December edition is November 30.

### NAPP Leadership Team

President: Fr. Phil Gibbs

1st VP: Fr. Nick Radloff 2nd VP: Fr. Bill Menzel

Secretary: Fr. Allen Corrigan

Treasurer & Newsletter Editor: Tom Enwright

### Regional Directors

East: Fr. Al Ruschman Midwest: Vacant

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school through fifth grade. Resurrection Elementary School is part of the Holy Family Catholic Schools system in Dubuque.

“I am extremely pleased with how things went for the school construction,” Fr. Phil says. “A litany of praise is due to God and so many others who had a hand in this project. I am very grateful to the general contractor who was able to lock in subcontractors, laborers, materials and supplies so that we could stay within budget. Also, I am very thankful for all contributors to the cause in financial and spiritual offerings. Praise be to God for all parishioners who, in one way or another, had a hand in the success of this venture. At the dedication ceremony, I quoted Pope Benedict XVI regarding Catholic education, ‘*A good school provides a rounded education for the whole person. And a good Catholic school, over and above this, should help all its students to become saints.*’ That is my continued prayer for this new school building and all its occupants.” *(Photos by Ron Tigges)*



## Blessing of Planes and Pilots

*Tom Beckenbauer, president of the Catholic Aviation Association, sent the following note:*

Several years ago, I attended a wonderful Blessing of Planes and Pilots at Grimes Airfield (I74) in Urbana, Ohio. It was on September 18, 2015, the Feast Day of St. Joseph of Cupertino, the patron saint of pilots, astronauts and air travelers. That event inspired me to conduct similar events on September 18th at Westfield Airport (I72), Westfield, Indiana (2019) and at the Kokomo Municipal Airport (KOKK) in Kokomo, Indiana (2021). The blessing is in the Catholic Book of Blessings.

This year, the Catholic Aviation Association (CAA) is encouraging all priest pilots and pilots to begin preparations for gathering your local group of pilots at an airfield near you to conduct a public blessing in 2023. CAA will be glad to assist by providing guidance and suggested announcements for your diocesan newspaper and church bulletins. *Email:* [TJB@CatholicAviation.org](mailto:TJB@CatholicAviation.org)



# NAPP member helps build the 'One Week Wonder'

By Fr. John Swing

I signed up over a month before EAA AirVenture to help with the One Week Wonder project. We had a



Zoom meeting with all the volunteers about a week before the air show. There were over 75 volunteers. I signed up for Wednesday morning.

I was amazed at the organization. I arrived at the One Week Wonder

building at about 7:30 a.m. I was given a T-shirt, nametag, and coffee and donuts. During the morning, I worked with several people on different projects. For about 45 minutes, I worked with a young girl, probably still in her teens, very enthusiastic and attentive and determined. Together, she and I prepared the leading edge of one wing for riveting. This involved deburring a couple hundred drilled holes on both sides.

Then I ended up with a crew of men working on one of the wings. I placed and pulled many clecos. I also had one of the rivet guns for a time and set quite a few rivets in the wing.

Finally, I ended up working with an interesting fellow about my age and he was obviously very adept at building aircraft. We built the aileron counterweight assemblies. That involved some very careful looking at the plans. We quickly discovered that the precut lead weights were cut wrong. There was a scramble; someone had to go across the field to the Sonex factory and get a new set. I was amazed how quickly all of that happened.

Before noon, we had the counterweight assembly for the two ailerons completed. I needed to use their drill press in this project. It was replete with a laser light to indicate exactly where the drill was centered. The problem with this is that I now covet their drill press and wish I had one!

Coincidentally, Fr. Bill Menzel volunteered to work with EAA that week and he was stationed at a pilot training center only two buildings away from the One Week Wonder. Of course, we exchanged visits that day. (See article on Page 10.)

I was delighted to hear that the pilot for the One Week Wonder's first flight was Joe Norris. He is a former parishioner of mine. I have flown with him in a Sonex, and I consider him the most knowledgeable



**Joe Norris takes the One Week Wonder (a Sonex Waix-B) on its first flight in Oshkosh. (EAA photos/Connor Madison)**



person regarding the Onex plane that I am building.

All in all it was a wonderful experience to be a part of the One Week Wonder. It is a real hoot working together and doing something in an hour that would take me months to do alone.

Finally, apart from the One Week Wonder but still related, I attended a barbecue Wednesday evening on the other side of the Oshkosh airfield. It was the private residence of a Sonex builder. There were about 75 people from our Sonex builder club who were present. It took place in the private hangar next to his house. That was a good thing because it started to rain during the evening air show.

At the conclusion of the air show, our host directed us all to pick up our lawn chairs and follow him on the taxiway in pitch darkness, right up to the eastern border of the Oshkosh airfield. From there we had a terrific view of the concluding fireworks — the most unique I have ever seen! They combined traditional fireworks with the elaborately illuminated aircraft, even launching some of the fireworks from aircraft. It was an extravagant and effusive celebration of flight.

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**EAA's background on the One Week Wonder:** This year's One Week Wonder aircraft had a successful first flight at Wittman Regional Airport on Thursday morning, August 18. Joe Norris, EAA Lifetime 113615, was at the controls of the Sonex Waix-B on a beautiful sunny day.

The One Week Wonder project began as a kit on Monday morning of AirVenture Oshkosh 2022, July 25, and ended on Sunday, July 31, with the aircraft's first official taxi during the air show.

EAA Director, Chapters & Homebuilt Community Manager Charlie Becker reports that more than 2,200 people stopped by the booth to pull a rivet. Once certified, the One Week Wonder will be flown by EAA to chapter events and other activities throughout the country.



# AirVenture: Volunteer helps prospective pilots take first step

By Fr. Bill Menzel

As anyone who has ever been there knows, AirVenture is a remarkable experience on many levels. It's as much about people as it is about airplanes.



This year I saw that from a perspective different than ever before.

My first time going to the Annual EAA Convention, as it was known then, was also the very first time it was held in Oshkosh. It was Tuesday, August 4, 1970. I was a grad student at the University of Michigan at the time and had met a friend, Fred, who

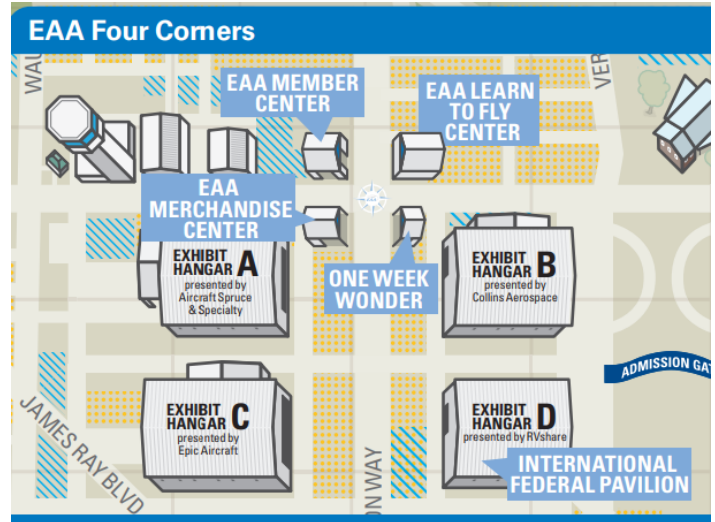
owned a v-tail Bonanza. On a whim, Fred said that the convention was moved from Rockford to Oshkosh and maybe we should fly over for a day. A couple of days later we left the small grass strip at Milan, Michigan, where he kept the Bonanza, and off we went to Oshkosh. Since that first trip I've gone almost every year, usually just for a day and once in a while for two days. This year I did something different.

Like everyone else, I missed going to AirVenture in 2020 because of the pandemic. In 2021 I scheduled a week at our family cottage in northern Wisconsin without checking my calendar first. Oops! Turns out that was the week of AirVenture. I missed two years in a row! This would be my make-up year, so for the first time ever I purchased a pass for the whole week. It was a great decision. For once, I wouldn't feel rushed. I could explore at my leisure. I could visit with friends. I could take in a workshop. I could even volunteer. To make it all the better, my sister Kathy and her husband Chuck invited me to stay with them in Appleton, a half-hour drive from Oshkosh.

The volunteer opportunity I settled upon was at the Learn to Fly Center. This was located at EAA Four Corners, right in the middle of the grounds at the intersection of Knapp Street and Celebration Way, just west of Boeing Plaza and just east of the Exhibition Hangars. I volunteered for Wednesday morning, and my job was essentially to be a greeter. What a great time I had!

The Learn to Fly Center did not attract great crowds, but it did attract some who were just curious and some who wanted to learn more about getting a pilot certificate. The latter ranged from the mildly interested to the passionate I-always-wanted-to-do-this hopefuls.

At any given time, there probably were between eight



and 10 volunteers staffing the center. One or two were flight instructors. At first, I wasn't sure exactly what I was supposed to be doing. To be honest, I don't think that those in charge gave me a clear idea of my role. I had even stopped by on Tuesday to get a feel for how things were supposed to work, but that didn't help much. Not to worry, though. After about an hour of misleading a few early visitors (sorry, folks!), I began to catch on.

Greet them as they come in. Ask them where they're from. Find out if they're just browsing or if they have an interest in learning to fly. Welcome the browsers and invite them to ask any questions. Engage those with an interest in learning to fly:

Have you had any lessons already? Do you have a student pilot certificate? Would you like to get one? You know, we can do that for you right here. It won't cost you anything and it's good for life, but you can't do anything with it until you pass a physical and an instructor signs you off for your first solo. If you're at all interested, why not get it now? It'll take 15 minutes or a half-hour, but you're here now and we can do it now! When you get home, go out and find an instructor you can work with. It might not be the first one, but there are good instructors out there. Have fun!

At first I thought the CFIs had to do the whole process, but I soon learned that I could walk the future pilots through the first part, which is all about getting their personal information entered into the IACRA website. In order to apply for the student certificate, a CFI has to complete the process, so I would call one over after the personal details were all entered.

*Continued on Page 11*



# Flanking the derecho

By Patrick J. McDonald, ATP, CFI-I

The word derecho (*deh-REY-cho*) is fairly new to our pilot weather vocabulary. Spanish in origin, it literally means “straight ahead.” The word attempts to convey a notion that as a derecho builds in magnitude, the winds surge forward in a straight line — rather than through the spinning phenomenon of a tornado.



My first encounter with a derecho was on the morning of August 10, 2020, when the now-named Heartland Derecho wreaked havoc in the Midwest.

I’m a mental health practitioner and I was working in my office with a client that morning. I heard no tornado warnings, but I did hear the rush of heavy winds and the crashing of tree branches. I turned toward the window and tried to catch a first glimpse at what was going on. The immediate impression was that of a bright neon-like green sky, emerging from the west. Then I saw a mature tree go down, taking out a neighbor’s fence, followed by a storm of asphalt shingles and splintered pieces of roof support peppering my parking lot. I somehow knew that the broken building products came from the roof of a large sports arena several blocks away.

The wind picked up intensity over the next 15 minutes as the rain thickened. It grew darker, but the sky still remained a haunting green color. Both my client and I expressed our fears, noting that we had never experienced anything like this — ever. As the rest of the day unfolded, I participated in the widespread cleanup efforts in our community. The cleanup crews were shak-

en by stories of damage from as far away as Illinois. Every TV report noted that the culprit was not a tornado, but a derecho with straight-line winds howling up to 140 mph.

I remember remarking to my client that I was happy to be ground-bound, rather than fighting something as destructive as this event in a small plane. He laughed and agreed. I would never have deliberately bargained for an encounter with this much destructive energy, but my opportunity to bump up against a derecho came on the morning of July 5, 2022.

## Out of Billings

By 10 a.m., my brother and I are at Billings Montana’s Logan Airport, waiting for some low ceilings in Sheridan and Rapid City to lift, opening up an undisturbed flight home to Des Moines, Iowa. We had just spent a carefree week whitewater rafting in the magnificent Salmon River country of Idaho. Our flight home is programmed to become the last chapter of a grand summer adventure. The only hint of a potential



weather problem is clearly visible on a Sirius XM weather presentation as we sit in my Piper Arrow, waiting for an IFR clearance to Rapid City.

The full-color weather pictorial shows two clusters of morning thunderstorms 100 miles away, approaching Miles City Montana. The weather is moving in a northeasterly direction — away from our route of flight. “Nothing to worry about,” I reassure my brother.

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This was so exciting! A couple of the future pilots practically hugged me! The folks at the FAA must have wondered where all these new applications were coming from. I think that I personally helped between 10 and 15 complete student pilot applications.

Knowing that Fr. John Swing was going to be working on the One Week Wonder just across Knapp Street from where I was volunteering, I took a brief break during the morning to see if I could spot him. Yes, there he was, working away doing I’m-not-sure-what amid the organized chaos of that amazing process. I caught his eye, and he stopped for a brief visit right there. Later he came over to the Learn to Fly Center

for a longer visit. Of course, we see each other every Sunday, but it was fun sharing our AirVenture moment. Also volunteering on the OWW at that same time was [Hobie Lippold](#), the young Ray Scholar that I have been mentoring for the last few years. He and John had never met, so it was fun to introduce them to each other, even though the busy-ness of the moment did not lend itself to any conversation.

I had such a good time volunteering that, after lunch (subs, munchies and drinks that were provided for us), I decided to stay on into the afternoon. I met so many wonderful people. I felt so good about helping the interested ones perhaps take an important step in life — and maybe in a career. I think I’ll do it again next year.



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We are soon in bright sunshine at 10,000 feet. Clouds are now obscuring the Black Hills in multiple layers below us, down to 800 feet above the ground into our Rapid City fuel stop. I had filed for Chadron, Nebraska, as an alternate — another 75 miles to the southeast. On my weather pictorial and from my observation, all of Nebraska was clear with good visibility.

About the same time that Ellsworth Approach Control advises us to expect a GPS 32 approach to Rapid City, our situation changes dramatically.

The same early morning thunderstorm area that prompted us to fly southeastward to Rapid City has now tripled in size. It blatantly presents itself as one massive patch of red, laced throughout with lightning bolt images and severe storm boxes — stretching from eastern Montana to the edge of the Black Hills to well past Pierre, South Dakota.

I also see a haunting green hue to the wall of water that is now clearly visible and converging on my left flank at a frightening closing speed. It is the same menacing green color of the derecho that assaulted my office two years ago. I know that I can get into Rapid

City with some difficulty, but I'll likely get stuck there in violent weather conditions. I request to proceed to my Chadron alternate and receive an immediate clearance from air traffic control.

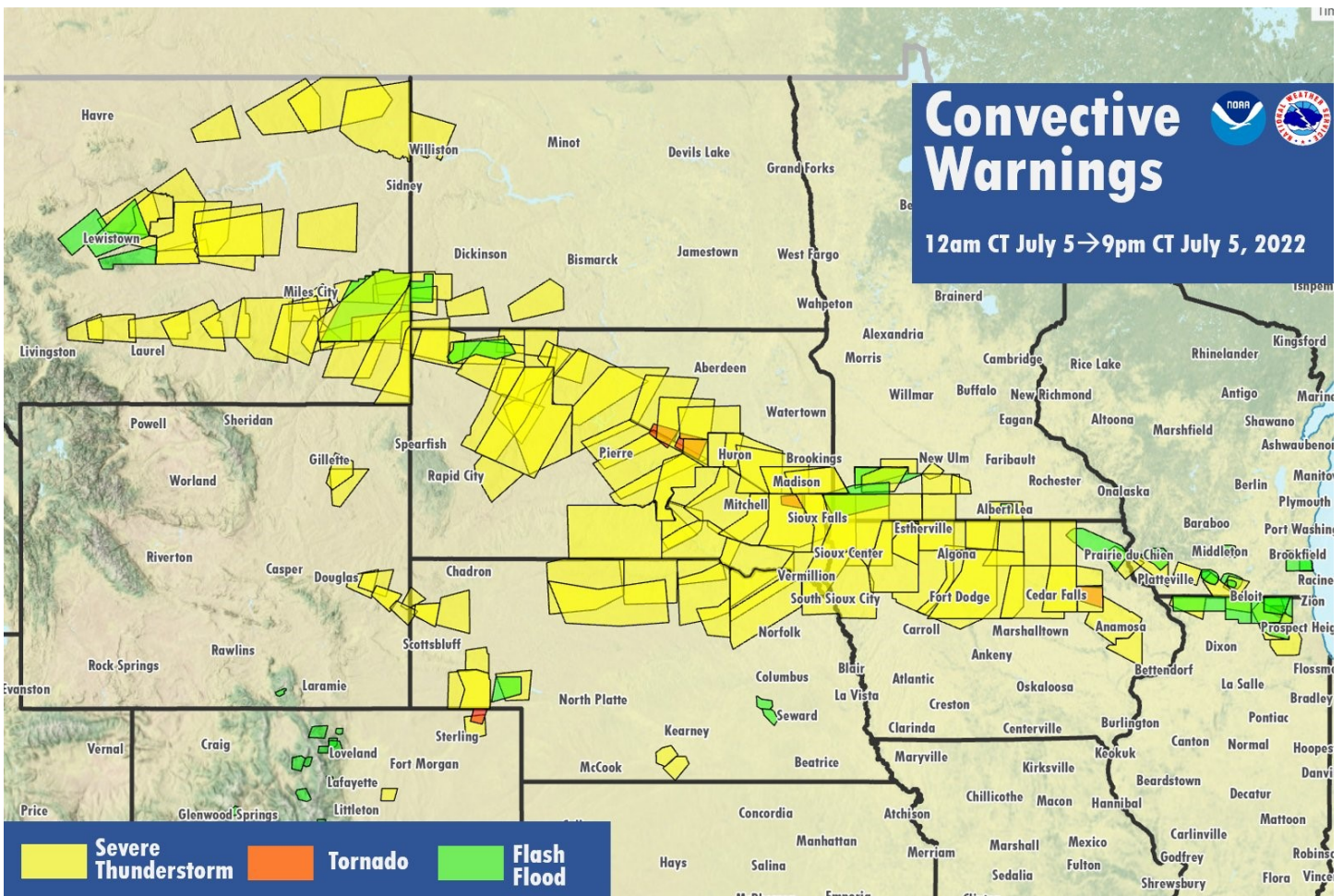
Chadron AWOS reports hot and clear with winds now at 050 degrees at 37 knots and gusts to 43. Runway 3 gives me some edge on the crosswind component, but my final approach is rocky, punishing us with constantly changing wind shear, but we land safely.

As we shut down at the fuel pump, the FBO operator asks us how the ride was. "Miserable — but I landed safely," I answer. "Gets hot and windy around here during the summertime," he says as he assists us in our refueling chore. "Lotsa deviations today. I hear we got real bad weather in the Black Hills." Before I could answer, he continues, "You better not hang around here too long," he notes as he points to another thunderstorm cluster to our south, now starting to crowd our right flank.

### Out of Chadron

The climbout from Chadron is hot and rocky but good VFR. We are now starting to get squeezed between

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*National Weather Service map of the storm's path. Des Moines (not marked) is just south of Ankeny, Iowa.*



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two systems. The massive green wall on our left flank has now passed Rapid City and is rushing along Interstate 90 toward Mitchell. The new Nebraska system crowding our right flank defines one side of a corridor that is growing tighter by the mile.

My XM weather depiction shows moderate rain showers for the next 20 miles, then clear weather to the southeast toward Lincoln. I calculate that I should escape the narrowing cumulus corridor in 40 more miles. Progress is incredibly slow at 89 knots.

I listen to Denver Center flight-following and hear others complain about the conditions. One pilot reports, in a thin voice, that he's encountering severe turbulence at O'Neill, Nebraska (to our south). "Do you need help? Is anyone hurt?" queries the center controller. "No one's hurt," answers the thin voice. "We seem to be out of it, but we got some real headaches."

About that time, as we turn the corner to stay out of heavy rain, it is our turn to encounter severe turbulence. We are already cinched in tight with lap and shoulder harnesses, so no head injuries occur. Our luggage bags lift and reposition themselves several times — fortunately not on top of us. Neither of us says anything. For three long minutes, we struggle to maintain a stable flight attitude, but are essentially helpless to do much except ride out the bumps and hope nothing breaks.

Then in another pleasant surprise, the air unexpectedly calms and cools by 15 degrees. Our groundspeed increases to 170 knots. The massive increase in groundspeed is a real bonus for us. We are now riding in a fast-moving column of air that is part of the derecho's elusive alchemy, while benignly getting pushed away from the destructive interior weather systems wreaking havoc through its core.

Our ride feels secure for the moment, and it now looks like we can flank this green monster all the way to our home base. By monitoring ground stations, I track a broad trail of large hail, 80-knot winds and torrential rains across South Dakota, into Nebraska, then Iowa. The green wall of destruction is moving steadily toward our home base, but all calculations indicate that we should arrive there first.

### Out of energy

I confirm my calculations as we land in 7-knot winds and hurriedly park our aircraft, while keeping our eyes on the western horizon. The ugly green color is deepening. A dense wall of water is no longer flanking us.

It is pursuing us from straight out of a westerly heading.

Happy to be ground-bound, we debrief over a beer in a local watering hole as we listen to the weather roll over the top of us.

Heavy rains and wind last for a solid hour. Some trees go down. My hangar sustains no wind damage. We drink another toast to being ground-bound and seemingly safe for the moment.

It takes a number of hours, even days, to construct some credible image of what happened as we flanked this massive phenomenon. I learned through a little research that the ugly green color comes from the refraction of sunlight through a high volume of hail.

The National Weather Service released this interim Tweet on July 6th: *"After discussing with SPC, today's still ongoing thunderstorm complex will be considered a derecho. The peak winds so far have been 96 mph in Huron, SD, and 99 mph near Howard, SD, but there have been many high wind reports."*

One friend, who lives 100 miles to the north of Des Moines, remarked: "The storm blew the roof off my new home, but no one got hurt." Another friend observed a week later, "Hey, I was on a motorcycle trip to the Black Hills. We got hung up there in a terrible storm the day after the Fourth of July. We headed out the next day down Interstate 90 and every directional sign along the interstate highway was flattened from Rapid City to Mitchell. Devastation."

I'm still pondering the same question that stimulated this reflection: Would I rather be ground-bound and seemingly safe or view a derecho from a small plane?

I'll take the small plane, with a few qualifiers. I would never set out to challenge a storm of this magnitude. I was, by fate, invited to view a powerful mix of the forces of nature, and I'll never forget the experience. I also learned that violent turbulence awaits an innocent pilot 40 miles from the edge of this green monster. I knew I could take a more dramatic turn and escape the destruction. Now, in retrospect, I can only say that once in a lifetime is enough.

*NAPP associate member Patrick J. McDonald has been a member of the aviation community for 53 years and has logged 8,350 hours. He has helped a large number of students to obtain various flight certificates. He has done it all for pure enjoyment. He is a licensed mental health practitioner and maintains an active practice in Des Moines, Iowa, in partnership with his wife of 47 years, Claudette.*



## NAPP gets a mention in Smithsonian magazine

Smithsonian magazine has an interesting new article about Geraldine “Jerrie” Mock, who, in 1964, was the first woman to fly solo around the world. She also has a special connection with the National Association of Priest Pilots.

When the National Air and Space Museum reopens in Washington, D.C., on October 14, Jerrie’s Cessna 180 will be in the new exhibition, “We All Fly.”



**President Lyndon Johnson awards Jerrie Mock the FAA Gold Medal on May 4, 1964.**

After Jerrie completed her journey on April 17, 1964, she found herself in the spotlight, receiving lavish gifts and making national appearances. Cessna gave her a new aircraft, but she eventually realized she couldn’t afford the taxes and upkeep on the new plane.

The Smithsonian article says, in part:

*While searching for a new home for the Cessna P-206, she decided to donate the aircraft to the Flying Padres, or the National Association of Priest Pilots, working in Papua, New Guinea. She would fly the plane to the missionary Father Tony Gendusa so that he could use it in the jungles to ferry patients and medical supplies. To make the long-distance flight, she sat on top of a fuel tank padded with five gel cushions, which would give her long-term hip damage. Once she handed over the keys, she flew commercial to see her friends around the globe.*



For more of the story, we turn to the NAPP archives. The late Msgr. John Hemann, a charter member of NAPP, reminisced about Jerrie’s early connection with the Flying Padres in an article he wrote for the [April 2018](#) NAPP newsletter. Here is an excerpt:

*At the organizational meeting of the National Association of*

*Priest Pilots held in Carrollton, Kentucky, July 12-15, 1964, Jerrie Mock was a guest. She had just completed the world record of being the first woman to fly so-*

*lo around the world. ...*

*Now you might want to know, how was it that Jerrie Mock was at the organizational meeting of the NAPP?*

*She and her husband, Russell, both pilots, were friends of the local Catholic priest, who was a pilot. He had seen the articles in flying magazines where Fathers Henry Haacke and Bob Wendeln were inviting any and all Catholic priest pilots to come to Carrollton, Kentucky. The priest pilot friend of the Mock family decided it would be a good thing for Jerrie to attend. After all, everyone at the gathering would be MAKING HISTORY.*

**MY PERSONAL TOUCH TO THIS STORY:** *I was visiting with Max Conrad when Mrs. Mock walked into the room. I asked Max if he had met the NEW WORLD-RECORD HOLDER. He said, “no.” So, I introduced these two world flying record holders to one another.*

**MY REWARD?** *Jerrie Mock autographed her picture in FLYING Magazine. “To Father John Hemann with best wishes. Jerrie Mock.”*

*A favor was later granted by Jerrie to NAPP when in 1969 she flew a C-206 from the States to Papua, New Guinea, to be used in missionary work by an NAPP member, Archbishop Leo Arkfeld, S.V.D. The NAPP membership bought Jerrie’s commercial airline ticket back home to Columbus, Ohio.*

[You can read the Smithsonian article online here.](#)



*“It is with paternal satisfaction that the Holy Father views the efforts of the members of the National Association of Priest Pilots to encourage the use of air transportation to obtain ever more abundant spiritual fruits from their sacerdotal ministry and missionary apostolate.”*

**The Vatican, September 29, 1964**

**Purpose:**

1. To promote the use of private aircraft as a practical, safe, and efficient tool of the apostolic work of a priest.
2. To cooperate with other aviation and ecclesiastical groups wherever possible in order to promote aviation in the cause of the Church.
3. To insist on the safe and proficient use of the airplane by its members.
4. To encourage the use of private aircraft as worthy of the talents and dignity of priests.
5. To further the use of aircraft in the missions.