



# RVator's Log

Newsletter of the Twin Cities RV Builder's Group

June 2011

## In this issue...

Heard around the pattern ..2
SPII's final flight ...3
Tom at Sun N Fun ....5
Sun N not Much Fun ...6

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## Upcoming Events

**June 11:** Join us at Fleming Field in S. St. Paul for a talk my MN Winger and helicopter pilot/soldier-of-fortune Jeff Brenhaug. A Top Secret security clearance required (just kidding!!!)

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**Minnesota Wing  
Van's Air Force**

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## Shop Notes

-Doug

### What's a Homebuilt?

Wow, how is it that as we grow older we start to spend an inordinate amount of time reminiscing about the supposedly "good old days?" I am probably starting to fall into that trap so you may have to indulge me once in a while!



Last issue I mentioned some of the "characters" that hung out at Allen Airport, the grass strip where I learned to fly in the mid-60s. After I got my private license in 1966, I joined a flying club that owned a vintage 1959 Cessna 150. It was a pretty good deal even then: \$300 to join the club, \$5 a month dues, and \$5 an hour wet. There were only 12 members in the club and hardly any of the group ever used the airplane so I had it just about all to myself. I was 17 years old, a complete fanatic about flying and spending every dollar I earned on putzing around in N7900E.

I started to hang around the field all the time and began to meet a variety of other pilots who called Allen Airport home. A couple months after I got my private license, I made the acquaintance of the owner of a genuine "homebuilt" airplane. Now at this stage of my aviation obsession I didn't know anything about "homebuilts". This particular example was a hybrid Bowers Fly Baby. It was a single place tail dragger built of wood and fabric and the builder had made a few modifications like a square tail. It had an open cockpit, a 65 hp engine, and a stiff wood-braced landing gear. It sat out on the tie-down line covered up with a tarp looking rather bedraggled and forlorn.

One day, the owner (whose name long has escaped me), made me an offer to go fly it. Why sure! I was a fearless teenager with probably 75 hours of flight time, most of it in tail draggers, 100% confident in my aeronautical skill, and of course, totally immortal. After a quick cockpit checkout, the owner spun the prop, and the engine sprang to life. The landing gear was completely rigid with only the soft



Original Fly Baby design. The hybrid I flew was dismantled in 1977 according to FAA records.

"Cub" tires for shock absorption so I rock and rolled my way out to the runway. I really had no idea what I was doing but the airplane was so simple I figured I couldn't get in too much trouble. I opened the throttle and the little white homebuilt bounced itself down the strip. With just 65 horsepower and REALLY little wings, it hardly leapt into the air. In fact it barely staggered into the air. I think I crossed the departure end fence by about 20 feet clawing for every foot of altitude.

I really don't recall whether it was a hot day or not but I do recall that we were hardly climbing at all. I also recall being scared out of my mind. This airplane was a total dog being flown by an inept, inexperienced overconfident kid grossly out of his element. A couple miles north of the airport I figured I maybe had enough altitude to start a cautious left turn. I was beginning to conclude that most of the 65 horses of this little Continental engine were still in the barn and it was all I could do to keep it from stalling. I managed to turn south on to downwind and gave up ever getting to pattern altitude. Maybe I staggered up to 4 or 5 hundred feet by the time I turned on base leg and just concentrated on getting this piece of junk back on the ground. Going down did seem to be well within the performance envelope so I managed to get back to the runway and plopped back down on the rolling grass. I taxied back to the own-



er/builder waiting by the gas pump and gladly returned his pride and joy vowing never to get in one of those funny “homebuilts” again. It probably took the rest of the afternoon to get my heart rate back to normal.

A couple years later, I had apparently got over my aversion to homebuilts and ended up helping a friend fly off the test time of his Baby Ace. This little yellow parasol airplane actually generated adequate lift to give me enough confidence to enjoy several hours of open-cockpit fun. Still only 65 horsepower but at least they were all present and accounted for. It was actually a blast to fly and I began to feel better about those homebuilt machines (amazingly 42 years later, the little Baby Ace is still registered in Michigan). I eventually built one whole aileron of a Thorp T-18 before running out of time and money. Twenty years passed before I got really fired up about homebuilts again and got all wrapped up in RVs. Today’s high-tech, high-performance

aircraft from Van’s are a far cry from my first scary flight in a homebuilt way back when. Glad I didn’t give up on ‘em!

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## Heard around the pattern...

-Doug

**Vince Bastiani** has flown off the test time of his new RV-7. We should be seeing him at the summer fly-ins....

**Bernie Weiss** has sold his RV-7A (it is going to Australia) and has started a RV-9 (see his article in this issue). The QB kit should be arriving shortly (yes, Bernie, flying a tail dragger is very doable!)

**Nancy Burkholder’s** RV-6 has undergone an avionics upgrade: new Dynon Skyview EFIS box, new comm radio and transponder and a new interior!

There is a new **RV-12** in town that was completed at Crystal. The builder is **Jim Nelson** and has not yet flown as of this writing. It is the first RV-12 that I am aware of in the local area.

**Tom Irlbeck** is back in town after spending the winter in Florida. Tom is sporting a new hip (I think all of his movable joints have now been replaced) and is rumored to be able to pedal the Tour de France if needed.

**Jerry Golden’s** RV-6 is now at Lake Elmo and is nearing completion.

**Camon Simon’s** RV-7A has been sold to **Harold Hyman** and is also now based at Lake Elmo. Harold is a corporate pilot for Xcel Energy and Tom Berge has been working with Harold to make the transition from a Lear 45 to a REAL airplane!

## SkyPig II’s Final flight

-Bernie Weiss

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, .....”

The first half of the opening paragraph of *A Tale of Two Cities* sums up my emotions as I made the decision and actually carried out the plan to sell my airplane. I spent four years and eleven months building

*SkyPig II* and the last 2 plus years enjoying the benefits by putting on almost 250 hours of flying. So what happened? I watched Peter Frueling and then Doug Weiler working on their airplanes and realized that I enjoyed that part of the hobby as well. Of course the passage of time made me forget about the “pains” of building. Nonetheless, Doug put the final rivet in the “decision” when I went over to his hangar a second time and watched him labor away in peaceful bliss on his new airplane. (I should note that it is still not finished). I went home and discussed the possibility of building another plane with my wife, Debbie and to my surprise she said, “Sure, go ahead.” I quickly placed an order for the full kit. I was now stuck.





With the help of Doug Weiler, I placed an ad on the Van” AirForce website and soon got a phone call from Craig Vincent who was interested in buying the plane for a person in Australia. A deal was soon struck and I decided to deliver the plane myself to Tracy (KTCY), California. As I planned the flight I had two options, head straight across the country via Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and California, which is about 1250 NM or head south to Albuquerque across Arizona to southern California and then north to Tracy, which is about 1600 NM. There are plenty of passes through the mountains in both directions but I decided to head south as this allowed me lower MEAs along published victor airways which I felt was a safer routing. The other consideration was weather and it looked better going south. Generally on cross-country travel through mountains I file IFR and fly the published airways. To my way of thinking this is usually the less difficult terrain with less unknowns for the pilot. The offset is that the flying is less “seat of the pants” which for me on a cross country in unfamiliar terrain is more comfortable.

The trip was planned in two major legs of with one stop each. Of course I changed my mind after a long and very bumpy first day. Day one was planned from KANE to KGLD (Goodland KS). The winds were with me so I was not concerned with the more than 550 nm distance. It turns out that almost 4 hours in an RV in turbulent conditions are more taxing than imagined. I arrived at Goodland with the winds blowing 18 knots with gusts to 25. I topped off fuel and ate a wonderful lunch that Debbie packed for me. Did I mention that I ate lunch standing up?... my tush was mighty fatigued.

A check of the weather and filing of a flight plan and I was headed southwest toward Albuquerque. I filed for 10,000 feet, which the plane had no problem getting to, and it was bumpy but clear sailing. Soon, as forecast I ran into clouds, but no problem as there was no icing. Then, came the icing (light rime), but ice is ice and ice and airplanes do not mix. I could see the disk of the sun above me and asked for and received 11,000. Clear sailing on top, but still bumpy.

As I approached Albuquerque the clouds were forecast to disappear but the winds were picking up with expectations of 20

kts and gusts to 25 out of 240. When flying under IFR, the controllers do not plan ahead for your decent (I think they are used to the jets being able to descend comfortably at 3000 fpm) so I had to keep asking for lower and being told that they could not accommodate me now due to high terrain. Given that ABQ is on the other side of a mountain range they were reluctant to bring me down below 9K. Once I was transferred to Approach from Center and passed the mountain range with the airport in site I was cleared for a visual. At this time I was about 5-6 miles from the airport and 4,000 feet high AGL. I asked for and received permission to descend using some 360 degree turns. I descended to a more appropriate height, called approach and they cleared me to land. When landing at high altitudes all of the normal indicated airspeeds are used; it is just that your ground speeds are higher. So far I had traveled over 800 miles and flown about 6 hours. Even though I was using oxygen (which I strongly recommend for long cross country flying, especially at high altitudes), I was tired. I thought briefly about continuing on to Flagstaff, but decided to get a good dinner and a solid nights sleep for an early departure the next morning. Winds are much calmer in the early morning before the sun gets the atmosphere moving in all sorts of directions. The folks at Cutter Aviation were great. They put my plane in a hangar for \$35 (it was still my plane after all) and gave me a ride to an inexpensive motel.



Meteor crater near Winslow, AZ

That night I planned my final day and divided the flight into three 280-300 NM legs. “Zero dark thirty” rolled around and the fine folks from Cutter picked me up at 5am. They had the plane rolled out when I arrived. I did a preflight, checked the weather and filed to Prescott AZ (KPRC). The six am take off from ABQ (elevation 5355) runway 8 was absolutely uneventful. I kept the mixture out a bit, started to rotate off of the nose gear at about 50 and was flying at about 65 Kts.

The plane was climbing at 500 fpm and not struggling at all. Cleared for a left turn once I got to the end of the 13,700 ft runway I headed west and started climbing to 12,000 feet. Again, the RV got up to altitude with no problem and I was cruising at 155 TAS, 90 Kts indicated and a ground speed of about 115 kts. Did I mention that I was burning about 6 GPH? What an airplane; why am I selling it? After about an hour the

turbulence started and I just kept cruising toward Prescott. Prescott is also on the other side of a mountain range so as soon as the airport came into view I asked permission to circle down to a more appropriate altitude. Prescott sits at about 5700 feet elevation and again the landing was smooth and uneventful. Of course there were gusty winds and bumps but by this time I knew more of what to expect. I parked next to a Gulfstream G550. Personally, I think *Sky Pig II* added a little class to the Gulfstream. Departure after a short stop of 20 minutes was again uneventful although there was rapidly rising terrain to the northwest, which was my direction of flight. Again *Sky Pig II* did not disappoint and up she went.



Sedona to Prescott, AZ

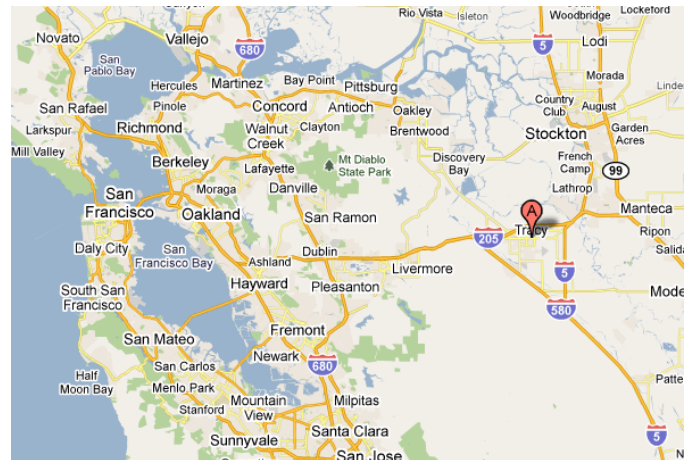
I had flight planned and been given clearance to Palmdale, California. As I was descending from 12,000 to 8,000 and then to 6,000 for my approach the controller asked me for my "permission to land number". I had no clue and told him so. He informed me that Palmdale was a military installation and I could not land without permission. I thought about just climbing back to altitude and picking up my next flight plan (which I had already filed) but looked out the window and saw a big airport at my nine o'clock, which was Victorville (KVCV). The controller cleared me for an approach and transferred me to tower. By this time I was pretty used to doing 360s to descend and after getting permission, landed at Victorville. It turns out that Victorville is a practice approach airport for Boeing experimental aircraft and a bone yard for excess commercial aviation aircraft. I filled up with gas (not a good move as I did not need much for the final 280 NM leg) ate an orange and was soon winging on to Tracy.

Again, I had filed victor airways and it was a good thing; the whole area up to Tracy was filled with one form or another of restricted airspace. At one time my Chelton screens looked like a checkerboard with restricted airspace everywhere.



A kaleidoscope of restricted airspace to the right

I knew from my weather briefing that I was going to get some IFR on this leg, and I was not disappointed. I was in the clouds after about an hour and after 45 minutes started picking up some light rime ice. I was now about 70 miles south of Tracy so I asked for lower. I knew that I had passed the mountains so I asked to descend down to 4000 since the weather at Tracy (according to my WSI onboard weather) was overcast at 4900. With the airport about 10 NM away and this being my final flight I had to do a couple of steep turns before I landed. I cancelled my IFR and started to have a little fun. With that out of my system I approached the airport for my final landing. Just then the sky opened up and it started to pour. (This is the first time that *Sky Pig II* has flown in the rain) After landing and taxiing off of the runway, Craig Vincent came on the radio and gave me taxi instructions and told me to come to a stop in front of the doors and they would push me in.



Once inside, I started to unpack, transferred the title and they immediately started to take the plane apart (I made them wait until I left) and off I went to SFO to catch a commercial flight back home. As you would expect, the commercial flight was almost two hours late. I got back home at 1:00 am after about

a 3:10 flight (a wee bit faster than my 12 hour journey, but no where near as much fun).

I am now working on SPIII and although I enjoy the work, I sometimes ask myself why did I sell a great airplane and start the process all over again.

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**Editor's note: Most of you recall the wild weather that hit the Sun 'N' Fun fly-in this spring in Lakeland, FL. Here are two accounts from Tom Irlbeck and Ken Klima...**

## ***"What I learned at Sun-n-Fun 2011".***

*-Tom Irlbeck*

This was around my 10<sup>th</sup> trip to SNF at the Lake Land Airport (KLAL). It has grown from a "Small Time" airshow, to a venue that rivals Oshkosh's Air Adventure, only on a smaller scale. I can't remember the exact date of the first year, probably around 20 years ago that I flew my C-180 down to SNF, camped out for a couple of nights at SNF, then flew over to Wamauma a private field 24 miles SW of LAL, and stayed a couple of days with an old friend, an Ex-Marine pilot, John Malecki. Unfortunately John was killed in an RV-6A around 4 years ago at the Knight (KTPF) airfield while flying with a low time RV pilot. This RV pilot made some bad decisions that cost both of them their lives. I had seen John at SNF that year, and always remember his big smile and with each new SNF, I have to put on a big smile in memory of John.



Back to this year's SNF. As most of you probably heard, or read about the weather problems SNF had to endure. A cold front moved down, and somewhat stalled around the middle of Florida, which is right about where good old SNF sits. It started raining Wednesday night, the 30 of March, and the 31<sup>st</sup> was a complete washout. A lot of rain dropped in, plus a couple of good-sized cells moved across the area. It appears from what I've read, it is very likely that an F-1 tornado spun through the area, plus a lot of straight line winds. The last report that I saw said 69 aircraft damaged, and 7 were totaled.

A friend of mine, Tom Kracmer from Ft. Myers who is building a RV-7A has been going with me the last couple of years to SNF. We watched the weather closely, and it was moving out of our way, so we planned an early Friday, April 1<sup>st</sup> blast off. We taxied out as the sun was rising at 0645. Surprising to us, a perfect morning because there was no fog in our area. Shortly before 0700 the wheels broke ground, and we headed north. It is 99 sm from Page Field (KFMY) to SNF. The route to the "Power Plant" arrival adds a few miles. There was only one other aircraft about 5 miles ahead of us, so I kept

the "Bear" moving along, a "little" faster than the normal 100kt arrival speed. At the power plant, two 90 degree, "rock your wings", with a blast of smoke always gets me a "looking good" call. A few minutes later, we were the second aircraft to land at SNF on April fool's day!

As we were tying down the "Bear", I noticed two rows to the East of us, two RV's parked together, not intentionally. Then I stopped and noticed another RV-4 with a damaged rudder, and an RV-6 with damaged tail feathers. About this time another RV friend from Charlotte County Airport (KPGD) walks up with his story. His RV-8 had pulled out its tie downs, and back taxied about 40 yards, missing a couple of aircraft, but went up on the left wing, damaging the left wing tip. WOW, it then struck me what a nightmare had transpired here, just a day before! We started walking around, after we finished tying down my aircraft. Something struck me, as I was looking at the RV's. A number of the ones that were damaged had their flaps down!!!!



Now this is where I'm going to go into my "Preacher Mode", or back to my good old "Bush Pilot Instructor Mode". Flaps are designed to be used for take offs and landings!!!! If you've had me as an instructor, I would have harped on you to retract the darn things on landing, as soon as it is safe. They dam up the air under the wing, cause lift, create a weather-cocking situation, and are NOT supposed to be down when you are taxiing an aircraft. Also I teach if you're smart enough to use them on landing, why not use them for take offs too. OK, so we have made it to the parking lot in one piece, I leave my flaps up if I've got an experienced, sensible adult passenger, otherwise I would put them down so some dummy doesn't step on my "NO STEP" sign. Now, when I'm going to leave the aircraft unattended, and parked, I make sure the flaps are UP. You can ask me why!!!! Because dummy, they are made for take offs and landings, and NOT as a barn door while parked!!!! You probably have noticed that I flunked the class on being smooth and tactful in the Navy's Instructor's Class 101. The tail draggers are especially vulnerable when left parked with the flaps down. If you go around to the front of a 4,6 or 8 and look at the wing angle of attack, it is already in the takeoff mode, now if you lower the flaps, you have just put one big blocker of aluminum under the wing, and it will want to trap any air trying to pass under the wing. Ask any

aeronautical engineer, and that pressure under the wing, you might say in ground effect is massive, and much more dangerous than the lift on top of the wing. While I'm at it, I will also strongly recommend that you do not "tie" your controls into the full up or down positions when parking them. This additional deflected elevator can add to the lifting or barn door resistance effect, and cause pressures that can cause your aircraft to want to do a ground "lomcevak"

What about tie downs? The friend that had the 8 that tore loose, was using the "Claw". He admitted that the tie down was not directly under the wing attach point, as is recommended. I use a self-made "tri pod", which I believe is the best, and place it directly under the wing attach point, and make sure it is tight, no slack. I wish I had taken some pictures of the RV's that were damaged, but have included a couple of the "Air Cam's", and the Husky on floats that were tip over completely.

There is only one aircraft company that recommends flaps down when parking, and that is the Piper Aircraft. The PA-18, 20 and 22 series aircraft, use a spring system for retraction. When I owned a PA-22/20, we had a separate flap/aileron lock so as we would not have to lower the flaps for parking.

Now go out and use some common sense, use control locks, good rope, and a good tie down system, no screw in dog anchors, AND don't taxi with the damn flaps down, or park with them down!!!

## Sun 'N-not-much Fun 2011

-Ken Klima, Milwaukee, WI

This is the story of an epic adventure to Sun-N-Fun 2011 and lessons learned along the way.



It all started on Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup> when Tony Phillips and I were scheduled to leave for our long anticipated trip to Florida in my RV9. The weather was not looking good in the Florida panhandle so we decided to delay our departure and take another look at weather later that day. Later came and things had not improved. The outlook was even worse for Monday so we decided we should probably scrub the trip for this year. The prognosis was for rainy weather in Florida for most of the week.

On Monday morning we took another look at the TAF and Prog charts and it looked like there may be a window of marginal VFR that might just allow us to get to Lakeland after all. Being high-spirited, positive thinking young guys, well at least one of us is young; we decided to go for it. The fact that there was a front stretching from Oregon, thought the entire US, through the Florida panhandle and out into the Atlantic didn't

phase us a bit. We were going to get past it and enjoy the sunny weather in central Florida all week, or so we thought.

The trip started out just as we had planned it. Tail winds and clear weather all the way to Tennessee, which was about half way. We refueled at Marion County airport (KAPT) figuring our next stop would be Lakeland. That was not in the cards though. Shortly after takeoff and reaching altitude the clouds became thicker and thicker and we found ourselves "on top", so to speak. Nothing to fear. Our XM weather showed there was better weather to come so we pushed on and, just as predicted, we found a hole over Decatur Georgia.

Shortly after landing, two other planes arrived. They had started out from Minneapolis on Saturday; this was Monday, with intentions similar to ours. At this point it looked like a little flying at or near minimums would get us to Cross City Florida before the weather closed in for another day or two. From Cross City, Lakeland would be a quick hop so we went for it again. The Minnesota group decided to hold up at Decatur and as a result we didn't see them until late the next day. We did make it to Cross City where we stayed over night and enjoyed some great southern cooking. We were able to make Lakeland the next morning with sunny skies.

The Minnesota group arrived later in the day and camped right next to us. Don had a beautiful Avid Magnum with giant tires, which he had flown to Alaska several times. Dave had a pristine American Champion Prospector.



The calm before the storm....

So, there we were. Sun-N-Fun /Mecca. Lots of sun, plenty to drink and quite a few airplanes but only about 50% of the usual number, mostly due to the stubborn front still blocking access to the Florida peninsula. There were continuous storms north of us moving east along the front, which was now slowly dropping south. But who.....cares? We're enjoying the

show, wearing shorts in 80-degree weather, sipping margaritas and our tents don't leak. Life is good.



Everything started so peacefully

Wednesday was a beautiful day and we enjoyed every minute, including the Blue Angles practice. It rained most of the night and Thursday morning dawned with storm clouds on the horizon but they seemed to be moving northeast so we left camp to attend a seminar entitled "Energy Management when flying your RV". Because it looked like the rain was over we left our raincoats in our tents along with all of our other stuff including electronic equipment.

About 90% of the class was complete when we heard wind blowing and objects hitting the windows with heavy rain. Within about 5 minutes the noise doubled and the lights began to flicker. At that point it was clear that the weather had caught up with us and we were in deep "you know what". We were about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from our campsite and could not leave the building for about 30 minutes while the whole world outside was falling apart. I could only imagine what was happening to my RV, which I had just completed after 5 years of work and way too much money invested.

When we were finally allowed to leave the building and we saw the devastation outside we figured the plane was probably in the next county. After running through the rain for  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile we found the plane still right side up but all alone. There had been 3 other planes right next to mine when we left but they were scattered in the flooded field along with several others and all of our camping equipment. The only damage to my RV was a deep scratch in the rudder, probably caused by my tent flying over the top and dragging a tent stake. My "Claw" tie downs had held although I think the key was being in exactly the right place, through no fault of my own. Apparently several small tornadoes had gone through the area and done amazing damage.



Ken's RV-9 sitting in a mud hole but generally unscathed

We spent the rest of the day in the rain retrieving our belongings and giving thanks for being spared from the really bad devastation. That night we stayed in a low budget motel where we were able to dry our clothes and where Tony tried to dry out his iPad which had taken quite a bit of water. A very interesting place, to say the least.

Upon returning the next morning we were shocked at the number of airplanes, estimated at 50, that were damaged or destroyed. We did enjoy the last day and departed early Saturday morning for a delightful 9-hour marathon flight with 50+ knot headwinds and moderate turbulence the entire way. My back is still sore from bouncing around.



There was one big take away from the whole adventure. NEVER AGAIN !!! If the weather looks iffy, stay home ! Especially when you may be camped under a stalled front like the one we experienced.

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First Class

## **Minnesota Wing June Meeting**

**Saturday, June 11, 2011, 9 am – 11 am.  
Fleming Field Terminal Building Classroom. South St. Paul, MN**



Come hear a fascinating talk from Harmon Rocket driver Jeff Brenhaug. Having always wanted to fly helicopters, Jeff persevered in a “normal” job for several years before getting his rotary-wing rating. Since then he has flown literally all over the world. Consider such exotic locales as Abu Dhabi, Bogota Columbia, Santiago Chile, Iraq, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Borneo and Singapore. Jeff spent two years flying for Blackwater, the controversial private military contractor in Iraq. Currently he is working for the U.S. State Department again flying in Iraq. Jeff is between assignments and will relate some VERY interesting stories of his aviation adventures before returning to the Middle East later in June.

### **Directions:**

From I-494 eastbound: exit at 7<sup>th</sup> St. Go south to Popular. Turn east to Henry Ave. Turn right and follow into the airport parking lot.

From I-494 westbound, exit at Concord Ave, go south to Popular St. Turn right and then left at Henry St.

The Terminal Building is directly in front of you as you come into the airport parking lot. The classroom is on your right as you enter. Fly-ins can park on the ramp.

Questions: Call Doug’s cell at 651-398-1184

**Please note the earlier start time of 0900.** Coffee and goodies as usual.