



## **Southern Navion Air Group**

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Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2011

### **FROM OUR PRESIDENT**

This years' Labor Day SNAG Fly-in was a great success with 21 Navions and an Ercoupe in attendance, thanks to the hard work of hosts Steve and Lita Ware, and Co-hosts Wade and Dianne Finley and Nellie and Jerry Schafer. Steve even enlisted the support of his parents who drove in from Oklahoma and helped drive us around. The Ware's have a beautiful home at Country Air Estates with a pool and a hangar that would be easy to live in.

It was a hot 98 degrees when I took off at 2pm and not much cooler when I landed @ 4:30 at 1AR9 where a dozen or so of the SNAG faithful were sitting in the shade. It was a fine sight to see 15 Navions parked in the Ware's oversized lot. We headed toward the Hotel Hospitality room with a feast that Lita brought from her kitchen to begin the festivities. Soon after Steve gave everyone the lowdown on the agenda, I began to wonder, when is Susan Holmes going to call for pickup? Wade Finley and I were chatting away when the first text arrived at 7:53 that they would be arriving 4M3 (Carlisle) and had "battery problems." Four minutes later as Wade was speeding down the interstate to Carlisle in hopes of turning on the landing lights the next came through "total loss of electrical." Now it was well after sunset and mostly dark so the next text confirming Lee's cool piloting skill arrived saying "on ground safe" was very welcome. Then began Lee's and my introduction to the mosquitoes after dark in Arkansas. Surely, the Holmes will elaborate on that story, but everyone was down safely.

Saturday morning Steve led eleven Navions on a Dawn Patrol around Little Rock. It was a beautiful flight over beautiful country and we saw more C-130's on the ground at Little Rock AFB than I could count. A few pilots from Winona had to depart due to other commitments and the approaching Tropical Storm, but the rest of us landed and ate lunch on the Friday night leftovers. The ladies had gone antiquing, so that left us to begin the flying activities which we began with the flour bombing. Dick and grandson Grant McSpadden led off with Charles Allen and I with Derrick Schafer in the first bunch. Bob Swanzy, Mel Sorton, and Wayne Whitaker flew next. Charlie dropped one bag at 34'3" and Derrick scored 32'8" but Wayne Whitaker won 2nd with 31'4" and Dick's grandson Grant McSpadden won 1st with 25' 10". Congratulations Grant!

Next came the Balloon busts and the conditions really cooperated. It was smooth with almost no wind so the balloons went almost straight up. I have never seen 6 Navions hit so many. I followed Charlie and took the lesson as he hit all three and to my surprise, so did I. Next round Bob and Wayne hit all three and stayed up for 4 more, missing the first "sudden death" balloon but following with 3 more for Bob and 2 for Wayne. So it was up to Charlie and I to try once more. Charlie forfeited saying "I could hit them until I run out of gas, today, you go ahead." So with a fresh set of young eyes in my copilot, Grant, I went up and hit the first two, the third bounced off the windshield but did not pop, then went on to hit 2 more. Seven out of eight...will never happen again. I don't know if Bob Swanzy put his hard fought 2nd place on the wall, but the 1st thing I did when I got home was put my Country Air Estates 1st Place Balloon "Prop-Chop" SNAG Labor Day 2011 plaque on my Living room wall. Thanks for spotting them Grant!

Now for the Spot Landings. Bob Swanzy survived his catching the #3 wire I hear, but all but one of us hit the spud locker. Some of us may have survived the post crash fire,

you know those Navy guys are real quick responders. But the way Steve tells it Dick McSpadden hit exactly on the line. Congratulations Dick, fine landing.

That was all gaming, but the best part of Saturday was yet to come, as the catered BBQ dinner in the Ware's hangar was soon to take place. Something for everyone, brisket, chicken and pulled pork, and all the fixins. For desert Lita's Apple Cobbler topped off with neighbor "nitro" Robert's instant liquid nitrogen Ice Cream, what a treat!

The highlight of the weekend for the pilots was going to Finley International airport and looking at the Navion Wade and friends are restoring. In addition they had a super rare Lincoln Continental Coupe made December 10 1941, and you history buffs will know that production was stopped, but 10 coupes were made. It has a modern engine and running gear and rides well on the road. The Navion is polished very well and was open for inspection. It truly looks brand new. With a long slope windshield, IO520, Baggage door, I am sure we will see this beautiful Navion flying for many years to come.

From there we went back to Steve's to eat left over BBQ and then on to Bob McGee's hangar home to see his F-model Navion. His plane is one that used to lead flights in the show at Oshkosh at one time but has not flown much lately. Thanks Bob for letting us come look at her.

Lana Heath of Winona MS gave David Heath of Heath Aviation of Winona the task of delivering a Garmin 560 portable GPS, new in the box, to SNAG for us to auction or raffle, in order to raise money for the cause. Thank you Lana and David Heath. In with that we also put 3 of the wooden models that Anne Putche brought. We raised \$1,000 for SNAG fly-in costs. You will never believe who won the Garmin. I am sure that Cecil doesn't need it! Thanks again to Lana and David Heath.

Everyone had fun and all made it home safely, so great flyin! Thanks again to the hosts, Steve and Lita Ware, and co-hosts Wade and Dianne Finley, Nellie and Jerry Schafer. Next month 54J, Defuniac Springs Fla. October 21-22-23...more to follow.

- Robert Gaines

## **WOMEN'S REPORT FROM LITTLE ROCK**

We didn't buy anything. End of story.

Seriously, we had a great time. We were sorry to see some ladies forced to fly home by their worried spouses before TS Lee hit although several husbands decided to tough it out. Saturday, we hit several antique areas. One place had 9, yes 9, buildings from barns to garage sized filled with nice "stuff". I felt like I was more in a museum than a store. Lita & Dianne took us to this marvelous dive for lunch. It's called Coltham's Mercantile. It's a pitiful building with peeling paint jutting on stilts toward the creek. It really was an old general store and lots of old merchandise is still on display. The interior is rustic with bare wood and mismatched furniture. The parking area was jam packed and the food was fantastic. Several of us thought we were being smart by ordering a small house salad and a "half sized" dessert. If that was half, I would hate to see a whole portion! I shared mine with Ann McSpadden & still came out stuffed! If you ever go to Little Rock, this small town restaurant is well worth the drive.

Sunday we visited "The Old Mill" in eastern Little Rock. It is credited for being in one of the opening scenes from "Gone With the Wind" and is possibly the only structure from that movie still standing. Afterward, we toured the Bill Clinton Presidential Library. It is a very interesting structure with a replicated Oval Office & Cabinet Room. We took some time to follow the highlights of his tenure as President and view some of the many gifts from foreign dignitaries. I think Ellen Whittaker was just as thrilled with the Elvis Exhibit there though!

- Susan Holmes

## FAREWELL TO KEN MAHAFFEY

Ken Mahaffey: Flew Corsairs as a Marine fighter pilot in the Pacific Theater of WWII and as an early member of SNAG, he was responsible for introducing several individuals to the ranks of Navion ownership including Dick McSpadden and me. I made my first trip to Oshkosh with Ken and that is a story in itself. Ken was the proverbial horse-trader. He always had something to swap or sell and I was a customer (victim) once or twice. Ora Dell always said to me when I went to visit Ken "Don't buy anything"! In spite of all that, Ken could spend hours telling one story after another and I loved them all.

Ken had the swagger and go-to-hell attitude most of us associate with fighter pilots. He was one of this world's unique individuals. Fiercely independent and supremely self-confident. When he passed from this life some six months ago, the world lost one of its unique individuals, the "Greatest Generation" lost another of its diminishing numbers, and I lost a special friend. As I read the book, Bury Us Upside Down by Rick Newman and Don Shepperd, I ran across the perfect salute to Ken. So, those in attendance at the Labor Day Fly-in hoisted our glasses and bid Ken a farewell with these words:

*"When our flying days are over  
When our flying days are past  
We hope they'll bury us upside down  
So the world can kiss our ass."*

Semper Fidelis

- J.T. McMahon

## A TRIP TO REMEMBER

This is the ... from Robert's report on the Holmes landing. Two thirds of the way into our flight to AR, Lee calmly tells me to unplug the hand held GPS as he starts flipping off switches. I was playing navigator (with a side of games) on the iPad and was surprised since we were having a smooth flight. Then he tells me that battery is not charging to watch the meter & tell him when the readings drop. Now, we were already running behind because of a hospital meeting and it was getting "dusky". He asked me the check the sunset time and we were gonna be tight, so I was already figuring we needed to head to Carlisle which has runway lights & asphalt.

Soon however, we no longer need to worry about lighting because our main GPS and both radios on the panel died. Thank goodness we had told the ATC that we needed to cancel flight following and were going to squawk VFR. Now, I'm getting worried because it's really getting towards dark. I have NO IDEA what to look for, no plane lights - none AND no way to turn on the runway lights. Thank goodness Lee is such a careful pilot otherwise I would have suffered a massive heart attack about then. Needless to say, he got us down safely and we could sort of make out the taxiway cut off. Thanks to Robert & Wade for coming to rescue us & push the plane to park.

After much discussion & a weekend of battery charging, we took off Sunday with minimal avionics and a great tail wind. Although we flew straight VRF without flight following, we were able to monitor our radio the entire way home. I loved that I could check for necessary frequencies on the iPad/Foreflight App. We made it home with plenty of battery left & the Alternator has already been pulled. Thanks to JT for letting us borrow his handheld radio as a back-up. Guess what Lee's getting for Christmas!

## MEMBER NEWS

Jeff Davis, SNAG member, ANS member and soon to be Navion owner passed his private pilot check ride 9/13/2011! Hoorah!

Lee Holmes will not be flying for a while. He is still in the dog house for the battery/alternator problems. I'll let you know when he is "off restriction".

## WITCHES AND GREMLINS FLY-IN

DeFuniak Springs, FL (54J)

Oct 21 -23, 2011

The last SNAG Fly-In for 2011 will be at DeFuniak Springs, Florida starting Oct 21 and finishing on Oct 23, 2011. 54J is located almost due north of the Elgin AFB complex and there is usually quite a bit of heavy metal in the area, so be careful coming in. Easiest way to get to 54J is from the northwest as you will reduce (not eliminate) the military activity in the area of Pensacola, Elgin, Hubert, Tyndall and Rucker training. ***THIS IS A HEADS OUT OF THE COCKPIT AREA.***

54J has one East/West paved runway 4100 feet long, lights and other good things. The North/South runway is politely called a turf strip, but is really a bare dirt 2700 foot runway. Carl Everitt of Monarch Aviation has offered to have his hanger available as the airport social center at the field. Bring your tie-downs as the ramp is very tight for local aircraft. Fuel is available at 54J at one of the least expensive price levels in the area.

**Hotel reservations are made at the Best Western Crossroads, phone 850 892 5111.** As we have a reduced rate agreement with Best Western for the fly-in, the hotel requests reservations for the 20 available rooms be made by Oct 1 to get the \$69.95 rate. The hotel also has a bar and restaurant along with the free meeting room, so be discreet when bringing your adult beverages. Saturday night dinner arrangements will be forthcoming, but normal Friday night get together dishes are needed, (I can't cook!!!).

Activities will be the fun things, a fly-out to perhaps Tyndall for a flight down the runway to see the F-22's and back west along the coast, then back to 54J. DeFuniak is an old railroad town with lots of small antique shops, Destin is about 25 miles down the road for shopping, the USAF Armament Museum is very close (do you realize how really big a 44000 lb bomb is? Don't touch the fuse!!). Evening activities include elections, an auction of Navion stuff like we did in Carrabelle. Either send me the materials or bring it with you – proceeds stay with SNAG.

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### 2012 SNAG FLY-IN SCHEDULE

- Shade Tree, Mississippi in March 2012
- Next year's ANS convention is in Bardstown KY, just outside Louisville

***KEEP THOSE NAVIONS FLYING!***

SNAG NEWSLETTER/SEPTEMBER 2011

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**SNAG**