

Seabee Club Newsletter

a new beginning - Feb 2013

Hello Everyone,

I've really missed doing your newsletter and feel like I've lost touch with family. Speaking of family, you're all probably aware that we lost our dear Seabee friend Bill Shaver this past summer. He had a terrible accident at Weiss Lake near his home in Alabama. On my last attempt to get this newsletter going again I wanted to use the picture above with the empty chair (yes, I did have the idea before Clint). Unlike Clint's use of the chair though, the empty chair is a fitting remembrance of those like Bill that will continue to be with us in spirit, long after they've flown west.

The next time I'm at one of our favorite spots like the one above, I'm going to take an empty chair and give some thought about those like Bill that have given so much to friends and family over the years. I'd only known him through email, but we had an open invitation to stop in anytime if we were headed to Sun and Fun. From many of you I've learned that's just the way he was, and incredible enthusiast and friend to all that knew him.

I know, it's been a long time. This is about my 3rd attempt in the past year to try and find a way to get a newsletter out to you. I've had many of you call or write thinking I've dropped you off the list. No, I've not dropped anyone that I know of. The long and short of it all is; life has become pretty busy. Just after your last newsletter, March of last year, was about the time I got a call for a new job. What a surprise that was, and more surprisingly, I took it.

I guess I failed at retirement, actually, retirement planning. No, it's not a pilot job, it's a real job. Yup.... five days a week and yup, I must have lost my mind. I can see now why it's called work, so no, I didn't drop anyone. I do need your help though. During that time I did get hit with a computer virus and lost most of my contacts. I don't care what anyone says about backups, nothing is foolproof and I'm the fool with the proof! If you know another Bee lover, make sure they are getting this newsletter. If they are not, either send me their email or have them send a note to BruceHinds@Earthlink.net so I can get them on the list. Thanks!

It's been an interesting year. In the NW we were hoping for a summer and barely had one, everyone else burned up. It would be hard to convince any of us here that there is any global warming. Perhaps this crazy winter is proving the same for everyone else. Regardless, I've got this silly newsletter to get out and need your stories to share with everyone else. I did archive some stuff over

the past year so I have some stuff to draw from, but I'd like to make this more about you and what's going on among us.

Older News

Last year while we were in AZ I'd been talking to Don Kyte, that's when he started sending me the great stories I've shared with you. I wrap up this issue with two short ones from him about how this newsletter got started and one about the beginning of SPA. He'd mentioned that he was going to come through Seattle to visit his daughter. I think it was first planned for April. Don is always pretty flexible in his travel plans; his large family seems to have a few demands on his time, so just when it would work for everyone involved is always a little shaky. That being the case, I've missed him his last few visits, but this time I let some people know he'd be coming into town and I wanted to have a little get together for him, and believe it or not, I actually got him to commit to a Saturday. We even had EXCELLENT weather.

I've been in contact with two very special people from his past. John Burrows grew up almost

next door to where Don lived with his Seabee on Lake Washington. John was so inspired by this guy that he decided he just had to have a Bee of his own. I think John was just 21 when he bought his Seabee. "Uncle Don" was quite the mentor. One of Don's great friends in the large Seabee community here was someone we've all heard of, Jack Daubenspeck. Don spent a lot of time at Jack's place as he was developing the GO-480 conversions, in fact, I think Don had the first one, or maybe it was a GO-435. Jack's daughter Debbie remembers "Uncle Don" too. It turns out that Debbie still has her hand in aviation. She is the new manager of Tacoma Narrows Airport (KTIW). Yes, that's where we keep our Bee.



Having these two close, and anxious to see "Uncle Don" again, I put the word out to most of the folks on my NW list to see who could come. I rolled the Beast out of the hangar cranked up the grill and was surprised to see how many people actually got the word. In addition to John and Debbie, Ron Lyle drove up from the Vancouver area. He not only knew Don from the Seabee Days, but he flew with Don at United. He even had a picture of Don on his retirement flight and brought his log book with Don's signature in it.

Sam Richardson and his wife Ali drove up from Aurora, OR. Sam had flown with Don at United too and was also another Bee owner for many years. Sheryl and John Cuny drove down from Sequim. They are long time Bee owners and may be close to breaking a record for the longest rebuild. The famous Bill Flotens even came out to see Don. I've known of Bill for years.... but this was the first time we've actually had a chance to meet. John Piquet, who owned one of the first Seabee dealerships in the area and was actually the one who taught me to fly the Bee came out of the woodwork too. Tim Boughner who'd know Don for years had wanted to come out, but was tied up and Bill Sayre couldn't come, but he too knew uncle Don from when he used to fly into Horse Head Bay to visit Bill's dad. It was fun to see the smile on Don's face all day. I can't imagine all the people he's inspired over the years. It was one great day. Thanks for coming Don and to all of you who spent the day with us.

Another old timer many of you from the east coast may know is Donn Booth from southern New York. He's a Filed Director for SPA and long time Seabee owner. Donn had contacted me some time ago to let all of you know about his HUGE collection of aviation magazines he's trying to get rid of. He picked out a few items to send to me, what treasures! Over the next several months I hope to scan some of ads and stories from them to share with you. What a great network. Thanks also go out to Addison Pemberton who called and talked with my wife Janie to say he was sending something. A few

days later I get a small package with an original Seabee Owner's Manual that had a CAA stamp on it from the Spokane office. How cool is that? It's a great network folks, I'm going to try and keep this going. Thanks to all of you.

Newer News

Lately I've gotten many calls from tire kickers. The old Seabeast has quite a reputation and it's always interesting to share what a great mistress she really is. So, one day I get a call and the guy says he's real interested in buying a bee. Okay... then I find out he has little to no seaplane time, in fact, just a little flight time period. But, he says he has always wanted a Seabee. I ask him why as I'm looking at the name I just wrote down wrote down. No, it can't be. Spencer, his last name is Spencer. So you know I have to ask... and yes, he is related to Spence! No joke! He's 73 years old and is a great nephew of the master and he's always wanted a Bee. Amazing! We did have a wonderful chat and I've not heard from him since. Anyone sell a Seabee to Mr. Spencer?

The status of the Bee market seems to be at an interesting point. In WA we just had visitors from Aero Club Como, Italy. They were here to purchase Roger Duke's Simuflight Bee. They will be returning in a few weeks to take delivery and then taking it apart for shipping. If any of you are going to visit Europe next summer, they'll have a bee for you to fly. Northern Italy looks like it's littered with wonderful lakes that would make a wonderful vacation.

Don Wehmeyer who purchased the type certificate has big plans for producing parts and perhaps aircraft. It seems he's going to purchase a Bee needing repairs to take over seas for a display aircraft. I have not heard too much on this in a while. What's up with that?

John Cuny, who has been without his Bee flying in about 14 years is now working on it full time and is making tremendous progress. He hopes to have it flying by this summer. Yeah! That means we'll have another flying Bee in W. WA.

This past summer we had a nasty wreck. A fellow that had moved down here from AK said he thinks his prop was not producing thrust while he was trying to get into Harvey Field. He clipped a tree and ended up going down an embankment and into the river. He was going to rebuild but now has decided to sell the wreckage. The bad news about this is that most of the metal is bent. The good news is that it doesn't look like the prop was turning and it's attached to a Simuflight Lycoming conversion.



If you want a good airframe to go with it, I just heard from Dave Neiman who also lives here and he has serial #799 disassembled in his garage that he's thinking of parting out. Looks like these could be two projects to put together. Let me know if any of you are interested in either or both, I can put you in touch.

Safety or My Soapbox

Speaking of wrecks and to get back to my concern for family (that would be you), I have not looked at the record, but it seems that in the past year there have been more than the usual number of accidents. We lost Bill Shaver to power lines. Richard Bach got snagged by those too and is still struggling with recovery. And, it seems that there have been more wheels in the water accidents than we normally see. What is it, why is this happening?

While nobody can probably put a finger directly on the reason, I believe that it could have something to do with the simple fact that we are just not flying as much as we used to. Whether it's the cost of fuel, the cost of everything else or just being busy in life, don't discount the need to stay

proficient. I'm not talking about currency. Even if you've been flying the Bee for a long time, any professional pilot can tell you that you'd be surprised at what a little break in your normal routine can have on your proficiency.

Over the years I've written a bunch about checklists. I've even said how lucky I am to have Janie fly with me to remind me. She was actually disappointed when I put my Rolodex style check list on the



glare shield because she felt like part of the crew, making sure to read the appropriate list at the right time. She of course was part of the crew and still is, if she's with me. Pretty lucky guy huh? Fact of the matter is though, she's not with me all the time and it's better to have it handy than trying to read a card in hand while trying to fly. She can still be effective as any passengers can if they are briefed to do so. Everyone should know you'll be saying out loud, wheels up for a water landing, right? Oh, the Allen Palm

Drive on the dash? Yes, that means there are plugs removed. It's kind of hard to miss.

Well, as many years as I have with the airlines flying and teaching, I've felt like checklists are a habit, they are so ingrained that they are things that I could never forget. Well, you have to know that any habits, good or bad can be forgotten if not exercised. I've flown less this past year and actually done some flying alone without my bride along. I'll admit here that I've turned off the runway more than once and reached down to turn off the boost pump and landing lights just to find that they were not on. Yes, of course, that means the check list was not done! Fortunately the gear was in the right position, nobody got hurt and nothing got bent. It can happen to any of us. If it has not happened to you yet, it probably is just a matter of time.

The Bee falls into a fairly unique trap. Water landings are easy and fun, but we may find we need to practice land landings. So, you go out to do some touch and goes and since you're staying in the pattern, cycling the gear is 25 strokes for UP and another 25 for down. That's a ton of work for just staying in the pattern. 150 strokes for just 3 takeoffs and landings may seem crazy, so the tendency is to just leave it down. Flying to another airport, doing touch and goes, why be bothered to bring it up only to put it down? The plain and simple answer is Procedural Habit! If you always bring the gear up after takeoff, you'll NEVER have it down for a water landing unless you mistakenly put it there. In most cases you will also fair better in an off airport landing with the wheels up too. Traffic pattern work like takeoffs and landings should not be just about the touchdown or cross winds, it should include the procedures that go along with those maneuvers. Just as a proper approach leads to a better landing, taking the time to complete the procedure at the same time, every time will give you a chance to develop good habits that will last.

If you question any of this, please let's talk about it. If you use a read and do list as opposed to checking items already done, let's talk about that too. I'm happy to share my ideas and experience, they're well proven. No matter how good your procedures are though, lack of proficiency can break the habit and that can have devastating effects.

Please be careful out there.

History of the Seattle Seabee Club
by Don Kyte

I purchased my Seabee, N6144K in 1964 while I was living in the Chicago area. I learned that

there was a Chicago Seaplaner Club ran by George Mojonier and made contact with him. While it was open to anyone with any kind of seaplane, nearly everyone in the group owned a Seabee.

They had dinner meetings once or twice a month at various restaurants. Besides being pilots, a number of them were also mechanics. All of them were very knowledgeable about Seabees and were a great help to me particularly George Mojonier. Over the next few years they helped update my Seabee with a number of modifications and taught me how to avoid making the same mistakes that had befallen them. The Club members got together for "splash-ins" nearly every weekend somewhere.

In August of 1967 I moved to a home I bought on Lake Sammamish near Bellevue, WA. This was perfect Seabee country and Kenmore Air Harbor on the north end of Lake Washington did most of the Seabee maintenance in the Seattle area. Kenmore had been the dealer for Seabees since they were first built in 1947 and always had eight or ten parked around their hangars.

I was surprised to learn that no one had formed a club for Seabees in Seattle. I obtained an owners list from the FAA and sent out a letter to everyone to have a dinner meeting with me at El Nido restaurant on the edge of the Bellevue Airport near my home. We held our first meeting the evening of January 12th 1968. I had insisted that everyone bring their wives as well. My wife, Mackie, set up a desk and collected the cost of the dinner from everyone and made out name-tags. We had 25 at that first meeting, about double the number the Chicago Group usually had.

After dinner I started the meeting by asking everyone to stand up and tell us who they were and a little about themselves. I think it was the third or fourth owner who mentioned that they had the distinction of having been towed through the locks leading from the Puget Sound to Lake Union and on into Lake Washington. After a few more short stories from people down the table another man stood up and said he ALSO had been towed through the locks. Six or seven more owners told about themselves and then a man stood up and said he didn't own a Seabee, but was planning on buying one. He said the first thing he planned to do was to GET TOWED THROUGH THE LOCKS to get that out of the way! This set the tone for our group and we had a great time getting to know one another. We agreed to meet again the following month.

There was a Seabee Club in Vancouver, BC. They had pooled together to rent a tie-down area along one of the main runways. They charged dues and had regular meetings and "Splash-ins" whenever the weather allowed. They heard that we had started a club in Seattle and started coming down to our meetings. We all enjoyed each other and soon we started attending their meetings and "Splash-ins" as well.

In the beginning I would write a newsletter each month and made mimeographed copies that I would mail to all the members. Before long I contacted the Editor of the Northwest Flyer newspaper who invited me to put my newsletter in the Flyer. This saved me lots of work and the expense of mailing it. This had the side benefit of exposing our group to the flying public and we frequently had other pilots attending our meetings as well.

It wasn't long before The Vancouver Club wanted to host our Club every other month so from

then on for all intents and purpose we were one group.

Over the next few years I was contacted by so many Seabee owners from all over that I decided to form The Canadian American Amphibian Assoc. I called it Can-Am Amphibs for short. I knew the editor of Sport Flying Magazine who invited me to write a Can-Am Amphib column each month in the magazine. This was read by pilots all over the world and hardly a day went by when I didn't get a phone call or letter asking for something to do with Seabees.

The workload became so great that I decided to enlist a Seabee owner, who showed interest in helping, in various parts of the country. This is how I met Richard Sanders from Ft. Worth. I had asked each of the Reps to send me news from their section of the country so I could include it in the magazine. Richard was the only one who regularly responded, however.

About five or six years later I moved to California and turned the club over to someone else. I met some wonderful people through the Seabee Club and consider those years as some of the happiest times of my life.

Beginning of SPA

By Don Kyte

Perhaps you would like to know how SPA got started. A United pilot, Ed de Chant, decided to start a seaplane club at Little Ferry, New Jersey. This was shortly after I had established the Seattle Seabee Club. He contacted me about it, for my comments. His idea was to charge dues for a membership. He had a modest response and built up enough in the treasury that he felt warranted to tap it for some trips he made to promote his USSPA (United States Seaplane Pilots Assoc). This quickly depleted the treasury and Ed dropped out. One of the members there decided to take it over (I can't recall his name offhand) and developed it into the organization it is today (after a series of leaders, each of which contributed to its development). The guy I'm trying to remember worked at a studio in New York where they copied TV tapes they sent out to TV stations all over the country. I visited him at the studio once.

I joined USSPA (later, SPA) but didn't get involved in a leadership roll as I had my hands full with my own operation. Years later I accepted the roll as a Field Rep on the West Coast, but this was transferred to Walt Windus after our first big Splash-In at the Orville Dam. Walt, with help from Jim Sorensen, established the event at Clear Lake. As you know, Walt has ran the West Coast operation for many years now. Don

Thanks all for taking the time to read through this. Once again I'm so sorry it's been so long. Feel free to call or write, Seabee is always spoken here.

Bee Sea n'ya,

Bruce Hinds

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