

## **EAA Manitoba Chapter 63 Fly Out to Disley, SK August 21/22, 2010**

The second annual gathering of Experimental Aircraft Association Chapters in Canada's Prairie Provinces took place on the weekend of August 21/22. The idea of EAA members from the Prairies getting together was hatched in the summer of 2008 when EAA Canadian Council Member, Jack Dueck and Chapter 63 president Jack Neima talked at AirVenture Oshkosh about doing something special to celebrate our freedom to fly. Sponsored by Chapter 63, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Chapter 145, Regina, Saskatchewan, and Chapter 1410, High River Alberta, the first "Hands across the Prairies" meeting took place in late August, 2009 with participation from all three Chapters, and hosted by Vic Zubot from Chapter 145. The gathering took place at Vic's private strip at Disley, 20 miles northwest of Regina, roughly the mid way point between Winnipeg and High River. It was a great success and the three Chapters decided to do it again in 2010.

The date selected for 2010 was the weekend of August 21/22 and once again Vic and the Regina Chapter offered to host at Disley. When the weekend arrived the High River folks were experiencing low visibility in smoky conditions caused by forest fires in the interior of BC and unfortunately were unable to make it. The Winnipeg Chapter had 8 aircraft participating and decided to make it a real adventure weekend by participating in a number of aviation events along the way. Participants included Mark Odegard and John Blackner in Mark's C172 C-GXTL, Tom and Joyce Stoyka in Tom's Ercoupe C-FGQM, Jerry Mason and Ken Podaima in Jerry's C182 C-GFZV, Buddy and Jac Laliberte in Buddy's Cherokee, C-GOMI, Adrian Meilleur in his Land Africa C-IHJX, Dani Pokornik and Bob Stewart in Dani's Zenith CH250 C-GSYZ, and Jack and Lianne Neima in Jack's C172 C-FPXK. Jim Goold joined us at Disley on Saturday in his Piper PA12 C-FLZV.

The weekend started with a Friday evening rendezvous at Shoal Lake Manitoba where we were hosted at a BBQ by the friendly folks at the Shoal Lake Flying Club. A highlight of the visit was a first ever small airplane ride for 84 year old Doris Riseley who was taken for a local flight by Tom Stoyka in his Ercoupe.



84 Year old Shoal Lake resident Doris Riseley goes for a ride.

After refueling and a delightful visit we were off to Russell Manitoba where we tied down and stayed overnight at local motels. Arriving in Russell at dusk we experienced some of the low visibilities due to smoke that was grounding our Alberta friends and we talked to a local pilot who flew in from the west earlier with very little forward visibility due to the smoke.



Tied down for the night at Russell Manitoba

We were up early the next morning for a planned 7:00 am departure for Moose Jaw Municipal Airport to participate in the fly-in breakfast sponsored by the Moose Jaw Flying Club. Weather conditions were below VFR due to fog but the forecast called for clearing so we waited it out for about an hour and a half. After a couple of short "circuit check" flights it was decided that conditions, though marginal, were probably adequate for a westbound departure and we were off at about 9:30 with Jack and Lianne leading the way under an overcast ceiling at about 3500 feet and five miles of visibility. It was a smooth and enjoyable flight and we appreciated the spectacular views, especially the rolling terrain of the Qu'Appelle Valley with patches of ground fog clinging to the low lying areas.



Westbound over the Qu'Appelle Valley with low lying fog.

The ceiling and visibility deteriorated as we approached Regina requiring a northward diversion to stay clear of the muck but they opened up again as we approached Lumsden, to the north west of Regina. This allowed us to reset our course to Moose Jaw Municipal and we all arrived there without incident.

We refueled in Moose Jaw and enjoyed a late breakfast of pancakes and sausages. While there we also met up with some of the Regina EAA members to firm up our overnight stay at Disley which is only about 20 miles north of Moose Jaw. The seven Winnipeg planes departed Moose Jaw for Disley about 11:30 in order to get in and tied down before the strong and gusty winds that were in the forecast for the afternoon. Our arrival at Disley coincided with Jim Goold's from Lyncrest via Virden Manitoba and he landed a minute or so before our flight of seven making us now a flight of eight.

At Disley we securely tied down the aircraft around the perimeter of the grassed ramp area to leave lots of room for arrivals on Sunday morning for the Annual EAA Chapter 145 Fly-in breakfast. We enjoyed the afternoon relaxing and helping the Regina folks get set up for an evening BBQ and the breakfast. This included a number of runs to the Disley Community hall to get tables, chairs, and various pieces of equipment. It also gave us the opportunity to see Vic Zubot's Skybolt project under construction in his immaculate and beautifully equipped shop. Vic is a real craftsman who obviously takes pride in his work. The wing spars and ribs are made of sitka spruce and we were in awe at the attention to detail. The wings are complete and ready for cover and the steel tube fuselage is on the gear. It will be a beautiful machine when completed!



Tied down in Disley, Saskatchewan

We were treated to some good old fashioned Prairie hospitality on Saturday evening with a BBQ followed by a campfire. Which was a bit of a challenge due to strong and gusty winds of about 20 knots from the east. The hearty souls pitched tents under the wings and the rest opted for hot showers and comfy beds at the new Days Inn near the Regina airport. We appreciated the rides to town provided by the Chapter 145 folks and the pick ups the next morning to return to Disley for the Fly in breakfast.



Relaxing at Disley

Sunday morning dawned overcast and grey with low lying fog. The wind had dropped off during the night and there wasn't enough left to mix up the air so it looked like another "wait and see" day. There's a tall radio tower 2 miles south of the Disley strip which is a good weather gauge and it was not visible as we prepared for breakfast. The very light breeze alternated from east to west and the damp air just seemed to hang over the airport, although we could tell by looking through the odd hole that an overcast ceiling at about 4,000 ft held the promise of an eventual departure. While we waited we contented ourselves with a great breakfast consisting of orange juice, bacon and eggs, pancakes with whipped cream and strawberries. Yum!



Breakfast at Disley

We were surprised to hear the sound of inbound aircraft and shortly we observed two Cessna's approaching, one from the east and one from the south. This gave us an opportunity to hear first hand about conditions to the east of Disley along our route home to Lyncrest. We learned that ceilings and visibilities were better a few miles to the east but probably marginal VFR at best. Mark and John elected to go have a look and would radio back with conditions and their intentions. A few miles east they reported higher ceiling and visibility of about 5 miles and they were definitely proceeding eastward. That's all we needed so the rest of the flight made ready for departure. Takeoffs were uneventful and, as promised we were in improved conditions a few miles east of Disley. Most of the flight set course for Virden Manitoba to refuel with Mark and John leading the way about 20 miles ahead and radioing updates to the rest. They were headed to Brandon Manitoba for a fuel stop.

We experienced relatively low ceilings along the route but generally good visibility of about 5 miles underneath until we reached the Manitoba border where conditions improved considerably. The wind was forecast to pick up and blow hard from the southeast by mid afternoon so we were anxious to get home to avoid a slow and bumpy ride.



Eastern Saskatchewan enroute to Virden

Most of us have never been to Virden airport and it was a very pleasant surprise to land there and discover an immaculately kept facility with a great little air conditioned clubhouse and very reasonably priced fuel. We highly recommend a stop at Virden for anyone passing through.



Fuel stop at Virden Manitoba

The wind was calm at Virden but with the forecast in mind we pushed on for the final hour and a half to Lyncrest. Enroute the expected wind came up and when we arrived at Lyncrest around 3:00 pm local we were facing 130 at 25 gusting to 35, basically splitting the runways. The landings on runway 17 were a challenge but uneventful and club members came out to walk the lighter aircraft to the hangars where they were all secured.

The weekend ended with cool refreshments and an opportunity to reflect on the great experiences and the privilege we enjoy to explore this great country in a way that very few people get to experience. Along the way we encountered outstanding hospitality and lots of weather challenges but we were able to deal with them and get safely home with feelings of satisfaction. We look forward to the third annual "Hands Across the Prairies" rendezvous in August, 2011 and invite others to come along for the adventure.

Jack Neima  
EAA Manitoba Chapter 63