



EAA Chapter 21 NEWSLETTER

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Calling all kids...Hello?

I'm doing something this month I don't usually do—copy something I found on the internet. This is an important question that needs a good answer, and I think this is as good an answer as I've seen recently, so I want to share it with you.

The question is: How do we get kids—young people—as interested and excited about aviation as we became?

The usual answer at EAA is Young Eagles. Young Eagles is great, but it's usually not much more than a free airplane ride with little or no follow-up.

The question was asked in one of AOPA's blogs that I received in email today. Here it is as presented:

Calling all kids...Hello?

November 30, 2009 by Alton K. Marsh, Senior Editor, AOPA Pilot

Ray Lerner of Lapeer Pilot Center (www.flylapeer.com) in Lapeer, Mich., just posed an interesting question on the phone. I promised I would put it in our blog and see what happens. How do we light a fire under kids ages five to 20? "We are really, really, letting future generations down," Lerner said. He got into aviation, and chose to enter the U.S. Air Force, because of Sky King, Chuck Yeager, Bob Hoover, and all World War II aces. "It was a romantic time in aviation." Now his granddaughter is determined to make it into the U.S. Air Force Academy. Why? Because Ray is around airplanes all the time, and her father encourages her to become a pilot. But what about the rest? I mentioned the EAA Young Eagles program which strikes at the heart of his question. The Young Eagles plan was to fly a million youngsters (they got 1.5 million and counting). He knows about that and thinks we need something more. What would that be? You can reach him through his Web site or just post something here and he will respond. (You can read the whole thing, including comments, at <http://blog.aopa.org/blog/>)

One of the best answers came from Steve Tupper, who writes a blog called [Airspeed](http://airspeedonline.blogspot.com/2006/05/airspeed-take-your-kids-to-airport.html) under the pseudonym Stephen Force. You can read this blog, and his others, at: <http://airspeedonline.blogspot.com/2006/05/airspeed-take-your-kids-to-airport.html> or listen to an audio version at <http://media.libsyn.com/media/airspeed/AirspeedKids.mp3>

Here it is:

Take Your Kids To The Airport

I want to talk to you about three kids. The first took a ride in a Ford Tri-Motor in Warren, Ohio in July of 1936 a little before he turned six years old. By the time he turned 15, he was working to earn money for flight training, putting in almost twenty-three hours to pay for each hour of flight training in an Aeronca Champ at \$9 an hour.

The second attended a summer camp in Elmira, New York, from which she could see sailplanes taking off, soaring above, and landing.

The third went to a scout meeting in the summer of 1980 that was not well attended. His assistant scoutmaster decided to take everyone who showed up out to the airport he got a 30-minute ride in his assistant scoutmaster's Cessna 172.

There's a common thread here. Not hard to guess, really. Each of three kids exposed to aviation and aerospace early in life. It makes an impression on each. It ignites a fire in the belly that grows over the years. It becomes more intense and inspires each to make aviation and aerospace a part of his or her life. And math. And physics. And physical activity. And poetry. And literature. And, to one extent or another, their lives are a little broader, a little grander, and a little more inspired. Some more than others, but none of them is unchanged by the magic.

It's spring where I live. Everything is a little greener, school is letting out, and



kids are looking forward to summer. It's also becoming prime time to expose kids to the wonder of aviation and its related sciences. I took my kids to the airport again today. Cole is an old hand. He sits in the right seat of a Cessna 172 on the flight line, holding the yoke in his right hand. He turns the yoke and watches the ailerons move on either side. He pulls the yoke and watches out the back window as the elevator moves. I turn on the battery side of the master switch and he reaches for the lever and moves the flaps down and then up. Cole is four and we've been coming to the airport and ramp-flying the plane for the last two years.

It's Ella's first time to the airport since she started walking a couple of months ago. She's seventeen months old. By the way – her first and middle two names are Eleanor Ann Arroway – after the protagonist in Carl Sagan's novel, *Contact*. Heavy burden for the shoulders of a little kid? If Ella knows it, she doesn't show it.

Cole climbs into the back seat and I put Ella in the left seat with the seat all the way forward. She can barely reach the yoke, but she's instantly all hands. She turns, pushes, and pulls the yoke. She reaches out and fiddles with the knob on the ADF. At one point, she's sitting there with her left hand on the yoke and her right hand on the throttle and she looks absolutely natural doing it. She can't see over the yoke, much less over the dash, but I can't help visualizing her actually flying the plane.

When I was in my early twenties and just getting started professionally, I worked with a guy named Frank. He was a great guy in almost every way. Intelligent, kind, diligent, and everything. He was a senior manager at the company where I worked. We had just finished having lunch one day and we were walking out of the restaurant. The talk had turned briefly to space travel and I let slip a little of my enthusiasm. I said that I would be really disappointed if my grandchildren did not walk on Mars. He looked at me as though I was from Mars. The conversation just stopped. One of the other guys laughed uncomfortably. We walked back to the car in silence. I got the message loud and clear that I had just crossed a line somewhere and that such sentiments were not proper for right-thinking people who worked for pillars of the community like our company.

Whether that particular response was real or just in my head, there's no shortage of sentiment out there that space exploration – and aerospace in general – is something purely for dreamers or the history books. The United States has fallen in a mere two decades from number one in granting scientific and technical degrees to number five. We have been content for more than thirty years to launch manned missions only as far as low earth orbit and we leave the truly new frontiers to robots. I'm not saying that the Mars rover and similar programs haven't been great and that there aren't dedicated and forward-thinking people at NASA, the European Space Agency, Scaled Composites, and elsewhere who have dedicated blood, sweat, and tears to pushing our horizons, but I can't believe

that we could look at ourselves now through the lens of the late 1960s and not be sorely disappointed.

So I do what I can. When I talk to my congressman or senator, I make it a point to tell him or her that I consider the NASA budget just as important as any other program and that I support as much funding as the budget can stand. I subscribe to *Scientific American*. I'm just coming to the end of a list of books I started four years ago on the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo programs. And I fly single-engine airplanes and will talk with great animation about it to anyone who will listen.

But my ace in the hole is my kids. And yours. My eligibility for the astronaut corps runs out at the end of the year, when I'll be too old. Not that there's any chance that I'll come up with a technical

bachelor's degree or a few thousand hours in high-performance turbine aircraft before then.

But my kids and yours are just starting out. Their whole lives are ahead of them. They will make of this world what they see fit and it's up to us – the intervening generation between Apollo and the next step – to show them why it matters.

So I take my kids to the airport. We go ramp-fly whatever's on the line at Tradewinds, where I train. I take them to the open house every year at the airport. I take Cole to Thunder Over Michigan at Willow Run every year. I got to take them to Kennedy

Space Center in January. I'm going to take them to the airshow next year at Selfridge Air National Guard Base.. I sometimes read Robert A. Heinlein's *The Grand Canal* or *The Green Hills of Earth* to Cole at bedtime and I'll start with Ella soon.

These are small things, but each kid is going to grow up knowing that aviation and space travel are very real things and that each of them can have a role in it if he or she wants to. They'll also know that I think it's important and worth their time and energy, even if I seem a little too enthusiastic at times. They, and kids like them, are our next and best hope. Like all kids are at every moment in history.

Like the three kids I mentioned at the beginning. The five-year-old in the Ford Trimotor was Neil Armstrong, who grew up to be the first human on the moon. The girl at the summer camp was Eileen Collins, who grew up to fly on shuttle missions STS 63, 84, 93, and 114 – the second two of which she commanded.

And the last one? The last one was me. I grew up to be a technology and aerospace lawyer and – thanks to the inspiration of the other two and many like them – a pilot. Not that I belong in a class with Armstrong and Collins – the point is the power of the dream.

Flight is a heritage and an obsession. A proper obsession. It is the stuff of our dreams and it drives us to achieve things that the workaday world passes by.

There are going to be plenty of people like Frank in your kids' lives. People who can't see past the ends of their noses. People who



would never have launched the first satellites, much less sent emissaries to another world. Sadly, the Franks vastly outnumber the Neil Armstrongs and the Eileen Collinses. And even pretenders and dreamers like me.

The world is a sober place and only perfect storms of political and military motivation ever seem to spark genuine exploration of the kind that we saw during the late fifties, the sixties, and the early seventies. It's damned hard going some days. We have essentially lost the opportunity for a free-return trajectory to Mars in 2014. No one has set foot on the moon for more than a long, lonely generation.

It's up to us to instill in our kids the dreams of what can be. The world might do it and the kids have a chance if guys like Tom Hanks keep producing media like the HBO From the Earth to the Moon miniseries. But kids have a better chance if you take an active role and help the magic along.

Take a kid to an airshow. Let him or her get a snootfull of av-gas or Jet-A and an earful of the roar of radial or jet engines. Take them to the local science museum. Save a day or two on that next trip to Orlando and make the pilgrimage to the Kennedy Space Center. Better yet, take them to the Very Large Array in New Mexico or the National Radio Observatory at Green Bank, West Virginia. Take them to Willow Run Airport in Ypsilanti to see where they made and tested bombers in World War II. Take them to the shores at Kitty Hawk where the Wrights first flew. Take them to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena. Take them to the US Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Take them where you will. But take them.

Take babes in arms so that they never remember a time when they weren't surrounded by astronomy and flight dynamics and exobiology and planetary geology and whatever else fires their dreams.

Take six-year-olds so that they know that their impending science lessons can lead to big and fantastic endeavors.

Take middle-schoolers so that they see that the college prep curriculum facing them in high school is worth the effort.

Take high school freshmen so that they can map out coursework that gives them the option to follow their dreams of scientific degrees and careers in aerospace and exploration.

Take high school seniors so that science and technology agendas and policy follow them on their first trip to the voting booth.

Plutarch said that the mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be lighted. There is no greater spark and no greater fuel than to know that we are capable of taking our first real steps into the cosmos, if only a generation will rise up and do it.

Somebody took Neil Armstrong up in the Trimotor. Somebody soared over Eileen Collins. Carl Robinson took me up in a 172 on a summer evening.

What's the worst that could happen? Your son might end up a technology and aerospace lawyer who podcasts about aviation. Your daughter might end up a systems engineer with a NASA calendar in her office and a stuffed monkey in a space suit in her shelf. Or one of them might end up the first human to set foot on Mars. At the very least, you – and each of them – will be one more consciousness in a worldwide society that looks beyond the surly bounds of its home planet and reaches for more.

That would be a fine thing indeed. And the price of admission? A trip to the airport.

Take your kids to the airport. And take them to meet the magic that will propel them, you, and me as we take the next step.

Posted by Stephen Force (Steve Tupper) Monday, May 29, 2006 at 1:13 PM

Chapter 21 Christmas Party December 10



We will be having our annual **Christmas Pizza Party** at Kipplee's Party House on **Thursday, December 10**, (We couldn't get the usual Wednesday date) Kipplee's Party House is located at 2322 Division St, right behind Kipplee's Stadium Inn, at Boeke and the Lloyd Expressway. Hors d'oeuvres will be served at 6:00 PM, and the Pizzas will be brought out at 6:30 PM.

The Christmas Pizza Party is when we hand out awards to those individuals who have made a special contribution to the Chapter the previous year. It also provides an excellent opportunity to pay your Chapter 21 dues for 2010. Our Chapter dues of \$15.00 per year is lower than most any other club dues, including most other EAA Chapters.

The cost for the pizza dinner has yet to be determined. Check the website, www.eaa21.org for up to date information.

If you haven't yet done so, call Steve Eberhart at 422-4525, or email him at steve@newtech.com, and tell him that you are coming.

EAA Chapter 21

Send Your Dues Payment To:

11688 Heim Road
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Address Service Requested



Pete Wiggin — Newsletter Editor
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Upcoming Chapter 21 Events

EAA21 Chapter Meeting: December 10th, 6:00 PM, Kipplee's Party House

*Kipplee's Party House is located at 2322 Division St. Evansville, IN right behind Kipplee's Stadium Inn
(See Page 3 for more info on Christmas party)*

Merry Christmas

