



Montana and the Sky



Conference Plans Finalized

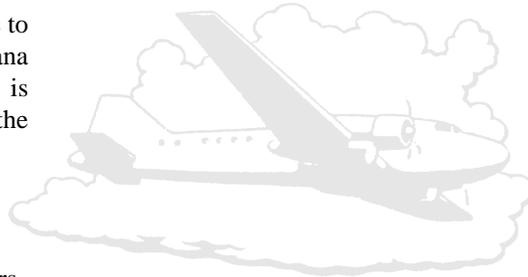
If you haven't already done so, it's time to make plans to attend the 1997 Montana Aviation Conference. The conference is being held February 27–March 1 at the Holiday Inn at Missoula.

The Missoula conference committee and Aeronautics Division staff have been busy putting together an excellent three-day program. Conference sponsors include the Montana Aviation Trades Association, Montana Airport Managers Association, Montana Pilots Association and the Montana Aeronautics Division.

The exhibit area is full with over 35 aviation companies reserving space to display the latest and greatest in aviation products/services. These companies and others donate thousands of dollars in door prizes to be given away during the Conference.

Morning and afternoon refreshment breaks will be held in the exhibit area each day. Friday's box lunch will also be served in the exhibit area and a cocktail hour on Friday evening will allow conference registrants time to visit with these exhibitors. Many of these companies travel great distances to support the Montana Aviation Conference each year. Thank you to our faithful exhibitor supporters, without them this conference would not be possible.

The FAA Civil Aeromedical Institute of Oklahoma City will be bringing its GYRO-1 to display at the conference. The Airman Education Programs portable spatial disorientation demonstrator allows pilots to experience vestibular illusions that occur in flight. The programmed "flight" does not require an instructor—



only an external safety observer. The pilot receives a two minute orientation in Gyro-1 operations and then takes the controls. The six-minute flight progresses from VFR, with "out-the-window" scenes on a CRT, to IFR conditions. Be sure to stop by and test your skills!!

Thursday's kick-off luncheon speaker is Ron Bowers—the only person to fly a helicopter around the world, setting official records in both easterly and westerly directions. Tickets for this luncheon must be reserved through preregistration.

Educators from around Montana will gather Thursday for a day-long teacher workshop session.

Dr. Jerry Cockrell will be featured Thursday evening in an open session which is sure to keep you entertained!

Concurrent session speakers will present a wide variety of topics during the three days.

Larry Andriesen, Regional Administrator of the Northwest Mountain Region of the FAA will be on hand to conduct a question and answer session Friday afternoon.

The Montana Aeronautics Board will also conduct an informal listening session late Friday afternoon.

The Montana 99s will perform its "Air Bear" program for grade school students Friday morning and the aviation/aerospace career awareness program for high school students is being offered Friday afternoon.

A bus will transport spouse/guests to the Southgate Mall for an afternoon of shopping on Friday.

A hangar dance and chili feed will be held in the Neptune hangar at the Missoula International Airport Friday evening. Buses will transport folks between the airport and the Holiday Inn Friday night. Music will be provided by Top Jimmy, a popular Missoula show band.

Dr. Peggy Baty, President and founder of Women in Aviation International (WAI), will be the keynote speaker at the awards luncheon on Saturday, March 1.

Registration fees for the conference are \$30 for an individual and \$40 for a family. This allows entrance into all sessions and includes drink tickets for a hospitality hour and luncheon on Friday.

Meal tickets are separate from the registration, with the exception of the Friday luncheon, and must be reserved no later than 48 hours in advance of each meal.

Rooms for the conference have been blocked at the Holiday Inn (406)721-8550 at the rate of \$63 for a single and \$67 for a double; and at the Executive Motor Inn (406)543-7221 at the rate of \$38 for a single and \$48 for a double. The Executive Motor Inn is about a five-minute walk to the conference site.

Make plans now to attend this great Montana aviation event! We look forward to seeing you there. 

Administrator's Column

Aviation Trust Fund Dwindles: The aviation excise taxes again expired on December 31, 1996, after only a brief temporary reinstatement by Congress last August. The DOT estimates that without another reinstatement by Congress the Aviation Users Trust Fund will run out of money by July 1997. This trust fund is funded through a 10% airline ticket tax, \$6 per person international departure tax, 6.25% cargo tax, 17.5 cents per gallon jet fuel tax, and 15 cents per gallon avgas tax. There is an additional 4.3 cents per gallon on both jet and avgas but this money goes for the federal budget deficit reduction and this tax did not expire. When the trust fund excise taxes previously expired, the 15 cents per gallon tax on avgas did not expire. It went into the highway trust fund but in the August reinstatement, Congress put language into the act which calls for expiration of the avgas tax at the same time the other taxes expire. Unless Congress reinstates the excise tax the FAA will have to seek other means to fund 75% of its operations. Also there will be no money for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). Of course the Administration would like to totally fund the FAA with new "user fees" even though 75% of FAA funding already comes from the Aviation Users Trust Fund. With the exception of a few major airlines, all of the national aviation organizations support reinstatement of the trust fund through the existing funding mechanism and strongly oppose a new 100% user fee to fund these programs.



Remember Equal to or Better Service Promised by FAA?: Remember when the FAA embarked on closing down all of the Flight Service Stations (FSS) and consolidating them into one for each state and touted over and over again that we would receive "equal to or better service"? There was a strong outcry in opposition and Congress did intervene and mandated that "Auxiliary Flight Service Stations" would be selected if certain conditions were met.

In Montana, Bozeman was selected to keep their FSS as an Auxiliary FSS.

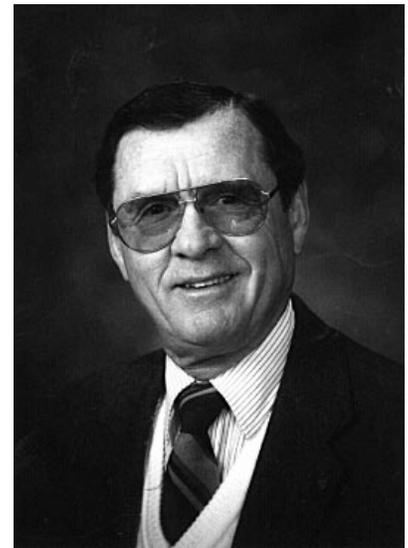
In October 1996 the FAA announced they did not have sufficient funding and were closing down the Bozeman Auxiliary FSS and contracting weather observers which they did in spite of strong opposition. Now the FAA has announced they are terminating their weather observer program at Bozeman, Butte, Livingston, and Miles City and that their Automated Surface Observation System (ASOS) will be the only weather reported at these locations. Well, this may be "just dandy" if the ASOS's were capable of providing more critical weather information than they were designed to provide and if the ASOS's functioned properly.

Sadly, neither is the case! From everything I hear from airport operators, pilots and from my own personal experience I feel that the ASOS is a good aid, **but** currently lacks the capability and reliability to be a "stand alone" weather provider at airports providing IFR approaches. Reliable, experienced human augmentation is still necessary. Stand alone ASOS's are currently premature. I feel that the FAA is not living up to their promise of **providing equal to or better service!**



New Grand Canyon Restrictions: New regulations restricting commercial air tours over the Grand Canyon were announced by, **now get this**, Department of Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, not the FAA which is supposed to have jurisdiction over all air space in the U.S. The new rule bans air tours over 80% of the Grand Canyon effective May 1, 1997. In addition to the new airspace restrictions, Babbitt announced that a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) will be released which will categorize air tour aircraft by the amount of noise they generate and that only the quietest air tour aircraft will be allowed to fly over the park after the year 2008. In December 1996, National Transportation Safety Board

continued on p. 4



Montana and the Sky
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Marv Dye, Director

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Chart and Directory Update

By: James R. Greil
Airport/Airways Bureau

The Aeronautics Division will be receiving its stocks of new 1997 Aeronautical Charts and Airport Directories very soon. We will have these available for purchase at the 1997 Montana Aviation Conference, or if you prefer, you can order them direct through our offices or with your 1997 pilot registration. The Airport Directory has been fully updated for current information and includes an expanded seaplane information section. The Aeronautical chart, which is produced every four years, boasts a brand new look and completely updated cartographic information. The information section also includes a handy METAR/TAF help guide to aid you in understanding the new ICAO weather format.

In addition to paper charts this year, the Division is offering for sale this year's Aeronautical Charts printed on #18 Tyvek paper. Tyvek paper is most commonly seen as "houserap" used in construction and the material Federal Express uses for their envelopes. The material is extremely durable and waterproof. Many thanks to Larry Larson of Molt for the idea. Paper charts and directories this year will be \$5 while the new Tyvek charts will be \$7. A limited number of unfolded charts will also be available suitable for wall mounting.

Thank you to the many of you who sent in reports of airports and/or sent in airport information forms. We rely heavily on the general aviation public in determining the location of private use airports and their status. Montana has a large number of private use airports, and keeping track of them for cartographic purposes can only be done with your help.

Congratulations! Cheers to the following Aeronautical Chart picture respondents. Their photographs have made it into the latest chart. It is always enjoyable to see Montana aviation "in action."

Leroy Monson, Billings—
"The Skyline Trail"

Phyllis Heyer, Missoula and
Martin Hale, Whitefish—
"Rainbow Skies"

Bob Lipscomb, Glasgow—
"Schafer Meadows Highline"

**40th Rescue Flight of Malmstrom
AFB Great Falls**—
"That Others May Live"

Daniel Darkenwald, Billings
(3 photos)—"Tanker Attack,"
"Lazy Day Flying" and
"Jordan at Sunset"

Calendar

February 27–March 1—Montana Aviation Conference, Holiday Inn, Missoula.

March 1—International Northwest Aviation Council Board, Missoula.

March 2–5—North Dakota Aviation Symposium, Bismarck, ND.

March 8–9—Rocky Mountain Air Fair, Lowry Air Force Base, Denver, CO.

April 6–12—Sun-N-Fun, Lakeland, FL

July 12–13—Missoula Air Show, fly-ins welcome; display aircraft free; call Paul Klawitter (406)728-4381.

July 30–August 5—45th Annual EAA Fly-in Convention, Oshkosh, WI.

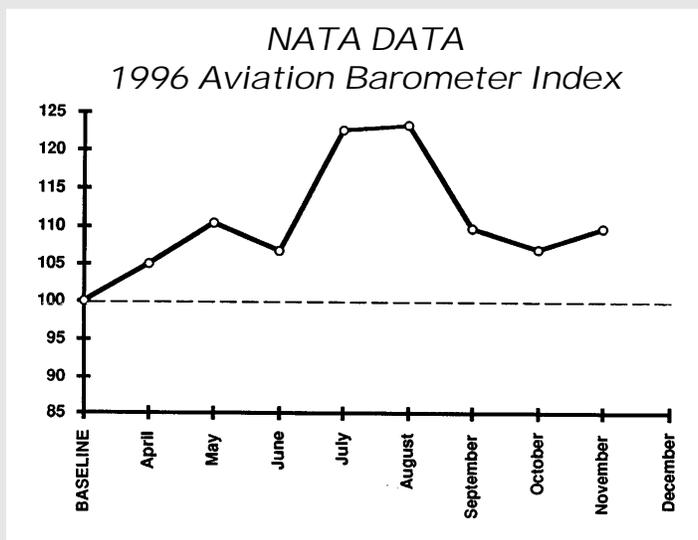
September 13—Aerotronics Annual Open House, Billings.

Calling all CFIs

Attention all CFI, CFII and examiners—please come to a roundtable discussion at the Montana Aviation Conference on Thursday, February 27 from 3–5 pm. For more information contact Jim Cooney of the Flight Standards Office in Helena at 449-5270. 

Aviation Business Barometer

After an average decrease in business throughout the fall, aviation sales activity increased modestly in November. Led by higher Jet A fuel sales and maintenance billable hours, the NATA aviation business average climbed to a 10% increase over the baseline average. Air charter continues to rank at the bottom however, with charter activity posting still lower numbers than anticipated. NATA's Aviation Business Barometer tracks general aviation fuel sales (both Jet A and Avgas), charter flight hours, maintenance billable hours, and flight training hours (both ground and air).



Meet Dennis

Dennis Lohse will carry the torch for aviation education at Helena College of Technology.

Welcome to Dennis Lohse a new instructor of Aviation Maintenance at Helena College of Technology, University of Montana. Dennis is a native of Montana, born and raised in Fort Benton. Dennis will follow in the path of Phil Vittetoe, with a background as a commercial pilot with the following ratings; single engine land, multi-engine land, instrument and flight Instructor along with A&P, IA. In talking with Dennis, you get a feel for a person who not only knows an airplane from the inside out, but who also loves to fly airplanes as well. Dennis flew a Cessna 170 in Alaska, flew as a charter pilot out of Great Falls in a Cessna 210 and flew an Agrtruck as a spray pilot out of Fort Benton. Dennis was the Director of Maintenance at Holman Aviation in Great Falls and later the vice-president



of the company. Dennis said he has had the opportunity to work on a wide range of aircraft from a J3 Cub to a 747.

We are happy to have an aviation specialist like Dennis Lohse to follow in

the foot steps of Hal Keilman and Phil Vittetoe. The added bonus to us is aviation education, Dennis likes the students and is happy to share his skills with the youth of Montana. 🐟

Damron's name lives on

The name of James Damron is flying the skies on a United Airlines 757 as part of a tribute to the Columbus pilot who left a legacy to the airline industry.

J.D. Whitlatch, chief pilot for United Airlines of the Denver, CO, said Damron, who passed away in July 1995, was recently honored by having his name painted on a United jetliner. The idea for the recognition came from the Airline Pilots Association (ALPA) and friends of Damron.

Whitlatch said the inscription "Captain James Damron" was painted on the nose of the jet, just under the cockpit.

Typically the only names that are painted on company planes are names of best customers and change with time. This inscription will be different—it's planned to be permanent, a part of the airplane.

Jim was active in ALPA with the United employees at the time of the employee purchase of United. It was a long, hard fight to get the employee buyout accomplished. It was just completed when he died.

Whitlatch said Damron truly affected the entire airline industry. He coined the

phrase "total airline pilot," which referred to Damron's view that a professional airline pilot is more than just someone who flies airplanes, and urged that training programs be created to try to capture the expanding role of an airline pilot.

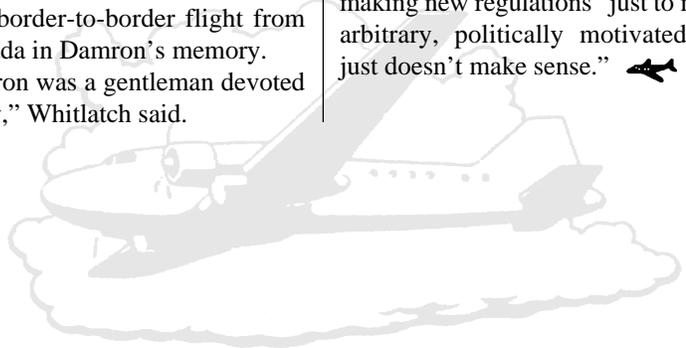
Before moving to Columbus, Damron was a mediator for ALPA in Chicago. At the time of his death he was a pilot of a Boeing 737, but was moving up to a 757 or a 767.

Damron was known locally for completing a non-stop, coast-to-coast flight in his 1949 Piper PA-18 Supercub in September 1992. This past September, Allen Rickman and Tim Blattie of Columbus flew another border-to-border flight from Texas to Canada in Damron's memory.

"Jim Damron was a gentleman devoted to the industry," Whitlatch said.

Administrator's Column *cont.*

Chairman Jim Hall had asked Transportation Secretary Federico Pena to delay the issuance of the proposal to severely limit operations over the Grand Canyon, voicing his concern that the new restrictions will have a serious increase in the potential for mid-air collisions. The Grand Canyon air tour coalition has filed a court injunction to stop implementation of the new Grand Canyon rules. Dan Anderson, president of the United States Air Tour Association, noted that Babbit announced the final rule on the last day of the year to meet an Earth Day promise by President Clinton and that making new regulations "just to meet some arbitrary, politically motivated deadline just doesn't make sense." 🐟



West Air Relocates

West Air, a full service FBO on the Helena Airport, has relocated, moving into a new office/hangar complex just east of its old building. West Air's most recent office building, one of the airport's oldest buildings, was demolished late last year.

An open house was held with viewing of the 12,000 square foot hangar, pilot's lounge, waiting area and offices.

West Air is owned by Dave Coon of Helena, Conrad Akland of Missoula and Pam Erickson of Great Falls. West Air offers flight instruction, charter services and aircraft maintenance.

West Air is an Air BP distributor (formerly Conoco). We wish Dave, Conrad, Pam and all the crew the best of luck in their new facilities. Next time your travels bring you to Helena, stop in, say hello and check out West Air's new home.



Above Mike Ferguson, Pete Sanders and Conrad Akland enjoy refreshments and conversation during the open house.



Internet Sites of Interest

Aviation Sites

- <http://www.avweb.com>
(aviation like magazine)
- <http://cnn.com/weather/images.html>
(good weather images)
- <http://www.aerolink.com>
(aviation infosource)
- <http://www.awgnet.com>
(Aviation Week Magazine)
- <http://www.airspacemag.com>
(Air and Space Magazine)

Miscellaneous Sites:

- <http://stsci.edu/pubinfo/pictures.html>
(Hubble Space Telescope pictures)
- <http://www.lmco.com/>
(Lockheed Martin)
- <http://www.boeing.com>
(Boeing Company)
- <http://flight.jac.nasa.gov/realtime/>
(view of orbitor flight real time)
- <http://www.reservations.com>
(online airline reservations)

Aviation Education

Charlo Middle School 7th and 8th graders were treated to an aviation day. The students plotted out a flight course using sectionals and then filed a flight plan. Jeanne Lesnik of Montana Aeronautics then presented a search and rescue program. The students used direction finding equipment to locate the aircraft in distress.

The annual aviation career awareness day will be held February 28 from 1-3 pm in Missoula at the Holiday Inn. The program features aviation career specialists from four aviation career fields. High school and junior high school students are encouraged to attend.



FAA to Use Alaska and Hawaii To Debug Free Flight

(Reprinted with permission from *Aviation Week & Space Technology*)

The FAA plans to evaluate its Free Flight concepts for air traffic control in the 21st century with tests that will cover all of Alaska and Hawaii's air space, starting in 1999.

The demonstration is intended to spur progress and provide operating experience to debug Free Flight concepts and the latest version of the National Airspace System architecture, said George L. Donohue, the FAA associate administrator for research and acquisitions.

THE EFFORT WILL BE an integrated demonstration and will include airborne and ground equipment, gate-to-gate operations and ground path automation. Looking toward employing the system in the entire U.S., the FAA is seeking incentives to encourage operators of all types of aircraft to install the equipment voluntarily. In that regard, any new avionics should be compatible with current systems. In a somewhat contradictory move, the FAA is considering dates for phasing out ground-based navigation aids, an action that will force users to buy new equipment.

The two states were picked because of their relatively isolated air traffic and complementary attributes. Hawaii has primarily commercial and military flight operations, benign weather and a couple of spots with moderate traffic density. Alaska has commercial and military airspace users, general aviation is predominant, and the state offers extremes in terrain and weather. Using the features for both states, the FAA sees the demonstration as providing a reality check for a mid-term airspace architecture.

The plan is to completely upgrade ATC ground systems in both states and a total of about 2,000 aircraft. In Hawaii, all commercial and general aviation aircraft, estimated to total 600, and an unknown number of military aircraft would have to be modified. In Alaska about 1,400 civil aircraft and an unknown number of military aircraft would have to be equipped initially, leaving unequipped a large number of general aviation aircraft that operate outside controlled airspace.

The strategy for the demonstration and evaluation is to start simple and integrate the technology components. Eventually, controllers are to receive new traffic management tools. Included is conflict probe

software that automatically will identify inadequate separation between aircraft.

Automatic dependent surveillance broadcast (ADS-B) capability must be available in the cockpit and to the controller. ADS transmits the aircraft's GPS position over a digital data link to the controller without action by the pilot.

In the broadcast mode (ADS-B), the aircraft would use a low-level "squitter" transmission to alert other aircraft in the vicinity to its presence. Displays in the cockpit should let pilots see traffic and weather. All of the equipped aircraft will need digital radios for data link.

Donohue sees software as the key to holding down avionics costs. The agency's approach is to develop certified and reusable software.

Cockpit capabilities and safety improvements would be added beginning in 1999, followed by evaluations that require no ground infrastructure improvements. Objectives would include reducing controlled flight into terrain and mid-air collisions. Participating aircraft would need GPS, ADS-B, cockpit display of traffic information (CDTI) and a digital terrain data base.

IN 2000, THE FAA WOULD LIKE to start evaluating "decision support system" software in the two states' denser airspaces. These tests would involve looking at the integration of terminal and enroute automation, including such controller software aids as conflict probe and scheduling tools.

Controllers will need new procedures to apply these techniques across the boundaries between enroute and terminal airspace as well as between enroute and oceanic airspace. For these latter tests, the FAA would solicit cooperation from users, such as operators of aircraft with the Future Air Navigation System (FANS-1) avionics suite.

But for users to be willing to pay for new equipment, they will have to see benefits. One would be improved surveillance service. The demonstration would add incremental surveillance and flight information improvements after 2000. Among the goals will be to give users improved surveillance services at smaller airport terminal airspace. Safety should be improved during airport surface movements and approaches and departures. 

1997 Aeronautics Mechanics Seminar

The Montana Aeronautics Division is pleased to announce the 1997 Mechanics Seminar/ IA renewal will once again be held in conjunction with this year's Montana Aviation Conference.

The dates for the Conference are February 27 through March 1, 1997. The Mechanics seminar will be held on Friday, February 28 through Saturday, March 1, 1997.

This year's seminar will be a bit different than in past years. This year we are offering six hours of training on Friday and a full eight hours of training on Saturday. Saturday's training will include two hours of FAA Regulations and Policy that will qualify participating mechanics for the PHASE 1 (Bronze) FAA Aviation Maintenance Technician Award, as well as recertify your IA. For those mechanics who choose to attend the entire seminar, they will be eligible for the PHASE 2 Silver award.

There will be no charge for attending the Aviation Maintenance training. Those of you wishing to attend other concurrent sessions associated with the Aviation Conference will have to pay a registration fee.

Tentative Speakers

- Frank Gurko**—Champion Aviation Product
- Bryan Robbins**—Superior Air Parts
- George Braly**—General Aviation Modifications
- Marty Mittelstadt**—Pratt and Whitney
- Dick Jacob**—Northwest Propeller Service
- Ed Chamberlayne**—Teledyne Battery Products
- Paul Yedinak**—Madison Valley Aircraft
- Sue Seckel**—Wall Colmonoy Exhaust Systems
- Jim Szymanski**—Bell Helicopters
- Steve Vold**—Aerotrronics
- Karl Stuhmer**—Raytheon Aircraft Company (Beechcraft)
- Airborne Pneumatics**—Vern Rodgers
- Loren Lemen**—Teledyne Continental Motors
- Bruce Ryerson**—FAA Helena FSDO

Make plans now to attend. Learn about and discuss the latest in aviation maintenance!

Montana Aviation Conference

February 27 – March 1, 1997
Tentative Schedule

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Morning

Registration Opens
Exhibitor Meeting
Concurrent Sessions
Teacher Workshop Sessions

Luncheon

Speaker: Ron Bower—flew Bell JetRanger around the world in both directions-world record holder

Afternoon

MAMA Board Meeting
Concurrent Sessions
Teacher Workshop Sessions

Evening

Dr. Jerry Cockrell-aviation psychologist and humorist



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Morning

Concurrent Sessions
Elementary School Education/Teacher
Workshop Sessions
Aircraft Mechanic Refresher Seminar
MFF Business Meeting
MAMA Membership Meeting
MATA Business Meeting

Luncheon

Held in Exhibit Area, free to paid registrants
Door Prizes

Afternoon

FAA Q&A Session
Aeronautics Board Q&A Session
Concurrent Sessions
Middle/High School Education/Teacher
Workshop Sessions
Aircraft Mechanic Refresher Seminar
Spouse/Guest Program
MAAA Business Meeting
99s Business Meeting

Evening

Hospitality Hour in Exhibit Area
Hangar Dinner/Dance—transportation provided to airport

SATURDAY, MARCH 1

Morning

EAA Business Meeting
MSPA Business Meeting
MPA Business Meeting
Aircraft Mechanic Refresher Seminar
Concurrent Sessions
International Northwest Aviation Council Meeting

Awards Luncheon

Speaker: Dr. Peggy Baty, President and Founder of Women in Aviation International (WAI)

Afternoon

Concurrent Sessions
Aircraft Mechanic Refresher Seminar
AOM Meeting

Evening

Speaker: Captain Scott O'Grady (invited)
The exhibit area will open Thursday morning, February 27 at 10 am and will be open at various times during the Conference through Saturday afternoon. All coffee breaks and Friday's lunch and hospitality hour will be held in the exhibit area.

Montana Aviation Conference Registration

February 27 – March 1, 1997

MAIL TO: Montana Aviation Conference, PO Box 5178, Helena, MT 59604

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT

NAME(S) OF PARTICIPANT(S) (for name tags) _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

YOUR ORGANIZATION AFFILIATION:
(choose one only for name tag)

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> MPA | <input type="checkbox"/> MATA | <input type="checkbox"/> MFF |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MAMA | <input type="checkbox"/> 99S | <input type="checkbox"/> AMAA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MAAA | <input type="checkbox"/> EAA | <input type="checkbox"/> CAP |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MSPA | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER | |

Make checks payable to:
Montana Aviation Conference

PLEASE MAKE THE FOLLOWING RESERVATION

NOTE: Meal tickets **must be** purchased 48 hours in advance.

Enclosed:

Reg. Fee	___ @ \$30/person	\$ _____
	___ @ \$40/family	\$ _____
* Thurs. Luncheon	___ @ \$10	\$ _____
Fri. Luncheon	___ @ FREE	\$ _____
Fri. Dinner/Dance	___ @ \$10	\$ _____
Sat. Luncheon	___ @ \$10	\$ _____
Sat. Banquet	___ @ \$22	\$ _____

* Reservations must be made prior to conference for Thursday Luncheon

Search and Rescue Report

On January 5, a PA 28 departed Billings on a VFR flight plan at 1915 MST and failed to arrive at its destination, Gillette, Wyoming.

Jeanne Lesnik of Montana Aeronautics was called at 2200 MST by Langley Air Force that an ALNOT was in effect. There was an ELT. Montana Aeronautics Search District #10 SAR coordinator, Bob Palmersheim, launched an aircraft at 2230 MST out of Billings. Loren Smith and Jeanne Lesnik left Helena at 0230 MST on January 6 for an ELT search. The search base was set up at Lynch Flying Service, Billings. Eleven aircraft flew on January 6th, including the USAF Malmstrom helicopter. The location of the downed aircraft was pin pointed by ELT direction finding equipment. The terrain was rugged and covered in snow. The location of the ELT signal was in the Big Horn Mountains in the Black Canyon Creek area. The aircraft was approximately 12 nautical miles west of the course V-19 86 to Sheridan VOR. Ground crews conditions were treacherous

in snow and steep terrain. Air search conditions included high winds with down drafts and poor ground visibility with snow.

The search resumed at first light on January 7 with low ceilings and snow showers. At 1000 MST the aircraft was spotted by the Malmstrom helicopter. The Big Horn County Sheriff's ground SAR were helicopter flown in to the recovery area. Both the pilot and passenger died on impact.

On January 6, a call was received regarding a Piper Cherokee PA-24 that was on an IFR flight plan from Billings to Felts Field, Spokane. The aircraft had departed Boulder, Colorado, earlier in the day, stopping at Gillette, Wyoming, to pick up a passenger before landing in Billings. The aircraft disappeared from radar approximately 16 nautical miles east of Helena at 8:26 p.m. The navigation of the aircraft 40 to 50 miles east of Helena was reported as erratic. Ramp checks of airports along the route were checked that evening. No ELT signal was received.

A Montana Aeronautics Division aircraft was launched early the following morning. Four additional aircraft were launched shortly after noon together with a Montana Air National Guard helicopter and the Broadwater County ground search and rescue team.

The wreckage was located around 3:00 pm by Aeronautics Division volunteer pilot Jim Gunderson and his observer Doyle Davis. The Broadwater County search and rescue ground team located pieces of aircraft spread over a two mile radius. There were three fatalities.

Thanks to the Aeronautics Division's volunteers, the Air National Guard, Malmstrom Air Force Base, Lynch Flying Service and the Big Horn and Broadwater County Sheriff departments.

Thirty-two hundred copies of this public document were produced at an estimated cost of 27¢ each, for a total cost of \$864. This includes \$120 for production, \$526 for postage and \$220 for printing.



February 1997

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