



# CHAPTER 430



# MARCH 2024

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## Upcoming Events

### March

30 – Gathering @ 10am Wm. R. Fairchild Airport Terminal, 9:30 a.m. breakfast and social time

### April

2 – Tetrahedron rebuild at W28 @ 10AM  
 10 – VMC/IMC, Mariner Café @ 7PM  
 19 – BOD, Mariner Café @ 9AM  
 27 – Gathering, **W28** @ 9:30 AM

### SAVE THE DATES

#### Flying Start

May 18 – CLM @ 1PM

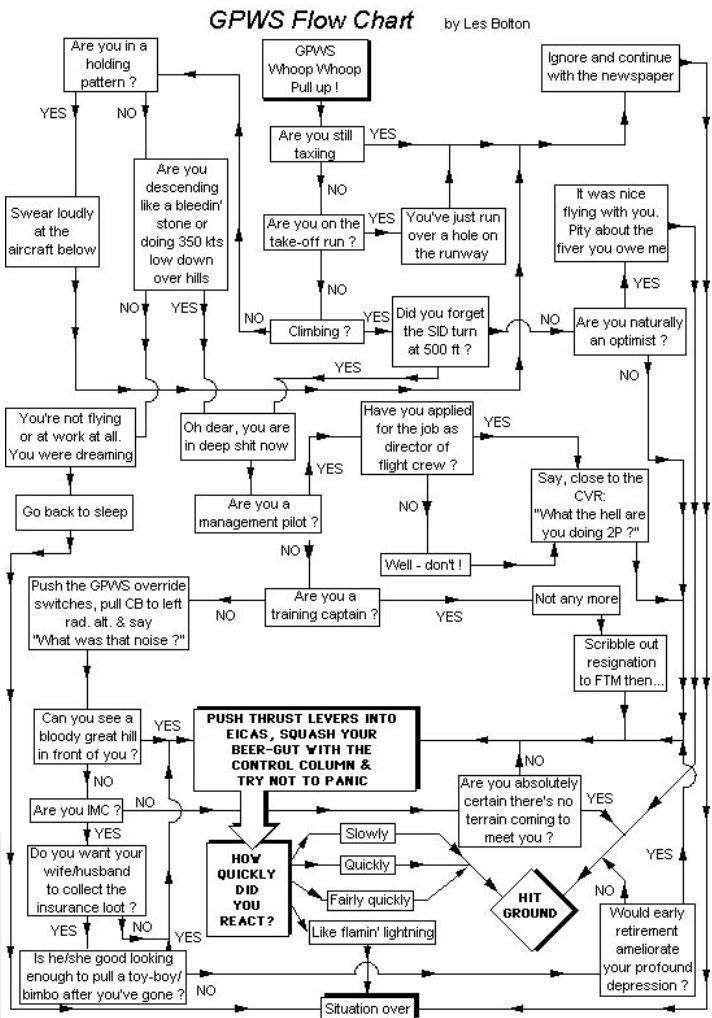
#### Young Eagles

June 1 – Sequim

July 13 – Port Angeles

September 7 – Port Townsend  
 (moved from August 17<sup>th</sup>)

September 21 – Sequim (contingent on weather June 1)



## FROM THE LEFT SEAT –RAY BALLANTYNE



For the first time this year, we're enjoying some good flying weather! Barry jumped right on that and held the March fly out to Tacoma Narrows on the 14th. His report is later on in the newsletter.

It was great to see so many 430 members- (about 30) at the Northwest Conference and Trade Show last month. I thought it was a good show.

At VMC/IMC this month, 18 members were regaled and challenged about aviation by Harry Cook. Come early for a seat at the Mariners Cafe on April 10 at 7:00 pm for the next meeting.

Although weather prevented us from flying, I joined Richard, Barry and Tracy, as we drove to Harvey field to attend the EAA leadership boot camp on Saturday the 9th. It was a full day of briefings and meeting with other chapter's officers in the region. It was a long but worthwhile day.

We received the great news that our chapter has been approved to administer a Ray Foundation Scholarship. The scholarship pays up to \$10,000 for flight training to earn the Private Pilot License. We have selected Gunner Rogers as our first candidate. He came to know aviation through our Young Eagle program. He's a high school senior in Forks and wants to be an airline captain. He has begun flight training and has already soloed. He's been attending the chapter FAA written discussion group with other students from our last year's Flying Start program. By the way, this year's Flying Start program, led by David Woodcock, will be at Fairchild conference room on Saturday, May 18 at 1 PM. Tell your friends and those that say they always wanted to fly to come check it out. We hope to offer Eagle

Flights afterwards if we have enough volunteer pilots. You just have to be an EAA member offer an Eagle Flight. All are welcome to attend our discussion of all the ways to get into aviation.

The building committee has been busy getting concepts and quotes for a possible clubhouse. There should be a "concrete" proposal to the membership in the near future. Once we know the costs, we will start fundraising to make it a reality. One of the fundraisers we're planning is a multi chapter poker run later this summer.

I hope you are able to attend Barry Halsted's presentation on the restoration of his PA 11 on Saturday, March 30 at our monthly gathering. It will start off at 09:30 a.m. with another delicious breakfast.

Having fun with airplanes!

*Ray*



# 'Idita' Tower

## Controllers Work Remote Operation for Safety

By Ray Ballantyne

The Iditarod sled dog race from Anchorage to Nome is known as the "last great race." The 1,049-mile course takes mushers through some of the most hostile terrain on earth, often during winter blizzards, yet the international popularity of the race increases each year, with more and more people traveling to share in the excitement and activity along the trail. Most mandatory checkpoints along the course are accessible only by snow machines or aircraft, which creates high concentrations of air traffic over normally sleepy airstrips.

### For safety's sake

To avoid midair collisions, runway incursions, and chaos in the airport traffic area, a forum of aviation user groups requested FAA's Alaskan Re-

ing a Mardi gras-type atmosphere. To move the visitors in and out during the short Alaskan day, aircraft had to arrive and depart continually.

Setting up temporary control towers in remote locations is nothing new to the Alaskan Region. They have been operated in such remote areas as Beaver, Tanacross, Anvik, and McGrath to aid the fight against forest fires. During the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, an advisory service was provided for the entire Prince William Sound from the Coast Guard cutter *Rush*, in addition to the temporary control tower at Valdez.

There was one big difference, however: A temporary facility had never before been operated at a remote site during the dead of an Alaskan winter.

### Anchorage to Skwentna

Pulling the "lucky numbers" to staff the tower were Don Hall and John "BJ" Little, controllers from Anchorage tower. Both of these long-time Alaskans enjoy outdoor activities year round and are no strangers to cold weather.

The venturesome controllers covered the 65 miles to Skwentna by POS (personally owned snow machine) at 20 cents per mile, pulling a 200-pound sled filled with survival gear and radio equipment. Starting off in a blinding blizzard that dumped 20 inches of snow on the Anchorage area, the trail down the Susitna River was indistinguishable, and visibility was very low. In an attempt to ride over the drifts, the sled became imbedded in a nine-foot snow cliff, destroying its hitch and tongue.

After its emergency repair with rope, the sled worked fine up hills or on level ground. On the downgrades, however, it would try to pass the snow machine, which then had to increase its speed. The ride was wild for the remaining 30 miles.

At the Yentna River turn, a 1,500-pound moose and calf had positioned themselves in the middle of the trail. High snow prevented the snow mobiles from navigating off the trail, and the hard pack was too narrow for the controllers to turn around or pass. Hall and Little came to a forced stop,



Air traffic controllers John 'BJ' Little, left, and Don Hall at 'SKW ATCT.'

gion assist in establishing a temporary airport traffic control tower at Skwentna.

Located 75 miles south of Mount McKinley, Skwentna has 114 residents scattered about the nearby hills. The population nearly triples during race time with sponsors, media personnel, and assorted tourists creat-



hoping the moose would walk away, but the huge animals just glared and laid back their ears. After some patience and persuasion, the moose left the trail, and the controllers sped on. Arriving just before dark, the controllers settled into a cabin at John and Joyce Logan's Skwentna Roadhouse.

#### **Pulling together**

Lots of time and work go into setting up a temporary facility. Airspace and frequency notifications need to be made, radio gear and equipment assembled, and coordination accomplished among numerous government agencies. Henry Elias, regional Air Traffic Division manager, received excellent cooperation from both FAA and outside organizations. The entire aviation community pulled together to make it safe for the "Iditarod airforce."

For instance, the Regional Operations Center provided handheld radios and a portable generator; Flight Standards cosponsored the setup and helped with logistics; Airway Facilities provided a portable antenna and cellular telephone; the Airports Division expedited the paperwork and coordinated with state agencies; and local Air Traffic facilities provided portable transceivers and personnel.

The Alaskan National Guard agreed to transport a small building provided by the Alaska Sled Dog and Racing Association but were unable to make the airlift because of the heavy snowfall in Anchorage. Also, the Civil Air Patrol transported personnel and equipment in a ski-equipped Dehaviland Beaver.

#### **'Beach-like' in the snow**

The morning of February 29 arrived with blue skies and below-zero temperatures. The two controllers loaded the equipment on the sled and headed to the runway where they created an almost beach-like scene in the snow: Along the runway and next to 15-foot snowbanks,



*A musher comes into the Skwentna checkpoint on March 1.*

Hall and Little sunk the antenna deep in the snow. With radios assembled and the generator and heater started, the controllers were ready to sit back in lawn chairs, enjoy the morning, and work airplanes. When the wind picked up and created windchill factors in excess of -30 degrees Fahrenheit, Don Hall used his survival knife to cut blocks of snow for a windbreak.

#### **Busy times**

During its three-day life span, the tower recorded over 200 operations. At times the ramp area was completely filled, and the overflow had to park elsewhere. Ski planes had a hard time turning when the wind was up, and the absence of taxiways to the ramp increased time on the runway and complexity for the two controllers. The controllers also had to keep a watchful eye on the runway for stray cross-country skiers, snow machines, moose, and dogs.

Pilots came by the "facility" to say "hi" and "thanks for the service," and the news media visited for pictures and interviews. A local station filmed a short TV segment with the controllers for the nightly news.

Raymie Redington, the first of 76 mushers into Skwentna, won a new Dodge truck for the feat. Over the next few hours, scores of teams

reached the frozen river, bedded down on straw, and took food and rest before continuing down the remaining 900 miles of trail to Nome.

One musher who passed through the checkpoint was Stephen Christon, a controller from Anchorage Air Route Traffic Control Center. It was his first year in the race and the first time an FAAer has competed.

#### **Where to next?**

After three days, traffic began to slow as the teams departed Skwentna. The "Iditarod airforce" moved on to the next checkpoint. Little and Hall packed their equipment and headed back to Anchorage. The weather, which had gotten progressively colder, stayed clear, so their return trip was faster.

Following a hot shower and a home-cooked meal, the controllers were again ready to work airplanes wherever needed. In the "last frontier," who can guess the location of the next temporary airport traffic control tower? That's why someone suggested borrowing from the title of an old TV western and make the controllers' theme "Have headset, will travel." ✱

Ray Ballantyne is a planning specialist in the Alaskan Region's System Requirements Branch, AAL-518.





Ray is in there somewhere....  
Sign reads: FAA Airport Traffic Control Tower - Skwentna, Alaska





# MEMBERSHIP REPORT – ERIK PETERSEN



Hello EAA 430 members!

We are 88 members strong, 18 are lapsed (Tracy is in the process of contacting you), and we have a yearlong sliding window of 14 new members.

Attached to the Newsletter email is a link to the membership list. If you didn't get the email, send a request to [membership@eaa430.org](mailto:membership@eaa430.org) and I'll get a list to you. Please review your membership record. Is the email and phone number correct? We will be working with Communications to scrub the list. Did you sell an airplane and/or buy another? Send us the make, model and tail numbers to add to your record.

This is also a good time to review your badge, still have it? Is your badge information correct and current? If "no" to either of those questions, send email to [membership@eaa430.org](mailto:membership@eaa430.org) and get \$10 to our treasurer, Tracy Halsted via email at [treasurer@eaa430.org](mailto:treasurer@eaa430.org). Haven't received your badge yet? It will be shortly, I'm getting ready to do a badge order.

New members, look for email from me with regards to learning more about you and including your story in upcoming newsletters.

Blue skies and tailwinds!

-ejp

# MARCH FLYOUT – BARRY HALSTED







## Tacoma Narrows Flyout

The morning of March 14 presented us with clear skies and little wind. Visibility on the way to the Tacoma Narrows airport in Gig Harbor was perfect for our flyout – all the mountains were brilliant white with the recent snow.

Four airplanes brought Richard and Mary Ann Howell, Cenk Özer with Linda-Ann Priddle, Ray Ballantyne with Barry Halsted, Tim Alentiev, and one car brought Sid and Tricia Vandiver! Tim was the first to arrive in his RV-10 (as usual) and the rest of us were close behind. We all enjoyed a nice lunch and watched numerous airplanes land and take off runway 35.

Following lunch we got together by the RV-4 that Cenk purchased recently for more photos, then left for our various destinations. For those of us flying, the skies were just as clear as earlier and the water and mountain views will remain with us for a long time!

## Barry



# BOARD AND DIRECTORS 2023

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| Vice-President            | Rick Vaux           | 2                | vicepresident@eaa430.org                                 |
| Secretary                 | Richard Howell      | 3                | secretary@eaa430.org                                     |
| Treasurer                 | Tracy Halsted       | 4                | treasurer@eaa430.org                                     |
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