

An aerial photograph of a yellow biplane flying over a large, open field. In the background, there is a large barn with a dark roof and a parking lot. The field is divided into sections of green grass and reddish-brown soil. The biplane is yellow with blue and white markings, including a star on the wing and tail. The barn is a large, dark-colored building with a complex roofline. The overall scene is a mix of natural and man-made elements.

TAKING A TOUR WITH THE
PUGET SOUND ANTIQUE AIRPLANE CLUB

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GOODWILL BARNST



BARNSTORMING

Back in the 1930s pilots clambered into their Jennys, flew over and around a town, then landed in a field nearby and hung a sign saying AIRPLANE RIDES — \$5. Those were the days. Pilots doing whatever they had to do to make a living flying. Days gone by? Maybe, maybe not. Recently my wife and I were driving north on an Oregon coastal highway and spotted the silhouette of a biplane hugging the coastline and headed southbound at about 1,000 feet AGL. It wasn't a Stearman. Maybe a Fleet. We couldn't be sure. But it had all the earmarks of an airplane hopping rides. Sure enough, shortly thereafter, there was a big sign with red letters proclaiming "BIPLANE RIDES" alongside the road. We didn't stop, but I thought, "Good for you, buddy, doing what you want to be doing in a fun way." Little did I know at the time, but I was soon to experience a barnstorming immersion in grand fashion. I have to tell you about it.



Met the Puget Sound Antique Airplane Club. Think Pacific Northwest, Seattle area. Just another flying club? Hardly. It's been in existence since the early '70s. John Tomlinson said the club has about 80 paying members, but his email list is 170. He said, "Nobody tells me to take them off the list." Dues are a whopping \$20 a year, and that entitles members to a picnic in June. The club meets about five times a year. Members come from several airports around the area but mainly from Norm Grier Field, formerly known as Crest Airpark, (S36), Evergreen Sky Ranch (51WA), and Pierce County (KPLU). As the name implies, they like old airplanes but they do not discriminate. They welcome all airplanes. There is a lot of socializing and a lot of flying. One of their missions is to bring aviation appreciation to outlying communities, kinda like the barnstormers of old. Except they step it up a notch: They go as a group. They have various fly-outs during the year, but their big event, held every other year, is what they call an air tour. It lasts about a week, and it's a big, fun deal. I'll tell you more about the tour in a minute, but first I need to tell you of the airplanes involved so you can get a feel for them, maybe even hear the big radials in your head as you read.

Here is a sampling of the airplanes they bring to the tour: Some Stearmans, a PT-18 Kaydet, an A75 Kaydet, and a B75 Kaydet. From the Naval Aircraft Factory, they bring two N3N-3s and one N2S-4, and a big, beautiful Howard DGA. Oh, and they also bring some Interstate Cadets, a Taylorcraft BC-12D, several Cubs, a PA-11, a PA-18 Super Cub, and a PA-15 Vagabond. Throw in a Bellanca Cruisemaster and Cessnas: a C-140, two C-195s, two C-180 Skywagons, plus Skyhawks and Skylanes. And a 5/8-scale Hawker Hurricane, a Wheeler Express, and an RV-4, -6, -6A, -7, and -12. And while they don't have a partridge in a pear tree, they do have a Bonanza G35. It all adds up to quite a beautiful menagerie of airplanes.

The tour goes kinda like this: A starting point is chosen, and that's where members come together to get reacquainted and briefed. It's loosely organized, but it's well organized. There are no pressures put on anyone. There is plenty of opportunity for input, but of course, tour organizers are named so there is some final authority when issues pop up. A person is assigned to each airport to gather and disseminate information about that airport, facilities, any special procedures, where to stay, where to eat, things to do, etc. Tour participants pay a \$100 fee upfront to register for the tour. When the tour begins, they pay another \$150. That money goes to provide food at each lunch stop and also covers incidental expenses.

1. The idyllic Green Trees Ranch in Oregon.
2. Brenda and Dave Lawrence with their Taylorcraft at Green Trees.
3. Dave Bole's Howard departing Green Trees.
4. Super Cub, Interstate Cadet, PA-15, and Taylorcraft departing.
5. Airplane talk.
6. Bryan Watson's Cessna 140.
7. Savannah Raskey fueling a Stearman.
8. Green Trees lunch.





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Participants pay their own motels, evening meals, and avgas. It's like going on vacation for a week, except it's with a bunch of airplanes and a bunch of fun people. Since it's every other year, people have time to plan for it. Many members are retired so they are free to go pretty much anytime, but some are still working and so they take the time as vacation. There were a lot of couples, which stood out to me. It has been my experience that people who stick together, play together, and adventure together form a special bond. I don't want to overstate it, but the camaraderie, the fun, the goodwill, and the friendliness are, well, palpable. They spread that spirit and goodwill everywhere they go.

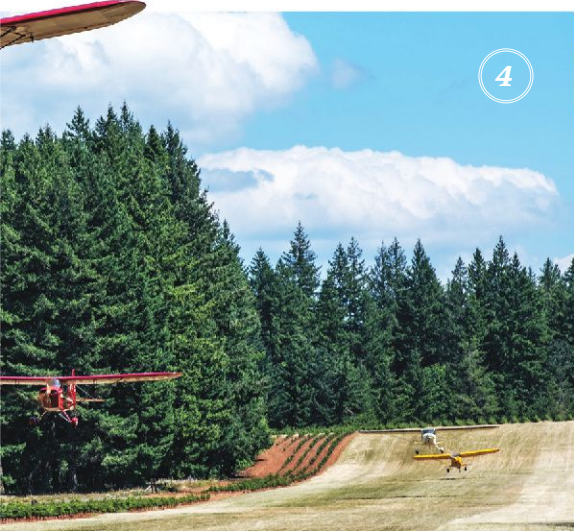
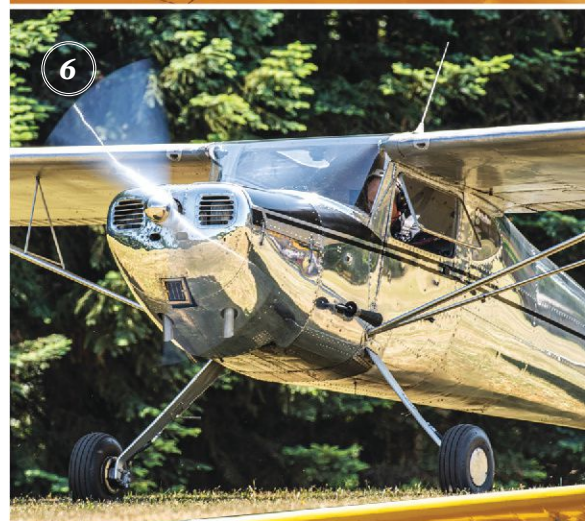
I need here to add a quick note about Tom Jensen, EAA 460623. He was the Puget Sound organizer for the Grants Pass stop. He's a tall, lanky N3N guy, and an absolute wizard when working with metal. He's friendly and commands a presence for his positive energy and aviation knowledge. I also met his wife, Marian, who was wearing a Naval Academy shirt. I asked her about that, and she said her granddaughter goes there. I said, "You can be proud of her." She replied, "I am." Tom, it so happens, is a family friend of Hal Bryan, our very own senior editor at *EAA Sport Aviation*. They were neighbors at the same airport, Evergreen Sky Ranch (51WA). I asked Tom how long he has known Hal. He held his hand out, palm down, about 3 feet off the ground

and said, "Heck, I've known him since he was this tall. His dad still lives at the airport. He's 91. We took him out for his 90th birthday."

This year's tour began at McMinnville (KMMV), Oregon. It's the location of the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum, which houses Howard Hughes' H-4 Hercules, which is more commonly known as the Spruce Goose, and a bunch of other neat airplanes. It's also the home of the Wings & Waves Waterpark, where a Boeing 747 sits atop a building. Inside the building, you climb 144 steps to the inside of the 747 and then you jump out of the airplane exits onto a water slide. (I'm not sure how many air tour participants took part in that.) The tour airplanes were scheduled to arrive between 1 and 4 p.m. And that's what they did. They began trickling in at a nice pace, each displaying their unique personality until the previously mentioned impressive menagerie were all there.

Upon arrival, all participants were treated to a catered lunch. The food was good and the banter rolled. At the table where I was sitting, I spoke with Melanie Jordan. She recently retired from the Pacific Northwest Aerospace Alliance, an organization that promotes youth in aviation. She was passionate about that.

"The air tour is the opportunity to have children sit in the aircraft and be inspired toward an aviation career," she said.





Melanie was flying with her friend Dick Migas in his C-172, *Miss Lucy*.

"I was walking around an airport and saw a for-sale sign on this Skyhawk," he said about the airplane's origin. "I called, and it turns out it belonged to a lady named Lucy. She had owned the airplane for 26 years. She was 81 and used it to fly from Phoenix to Denver to visit her daughter, but she was having some medical problems and decided to sell it. But she said, 'If I get well, you have to sell it back to me.' Okay, deal."

They've called the airplane *Miss Lucy* ever since. Stories abound at such gatherings. I love it. Indeed, youth in aviation is a centerpiece for the Puget Sound group, too. They sell raffle tickets at meetings and use the money to build a scholarship to fund flight training for deserving youth. Everyone on the tour is conscious of encouraging youth in aviation.

At lunch, tour packets were handed out. Stay the night at MMV; breakfast and brief the next morning; fly to Green Trees Ranch (OG28) for lunch; and then fly to Cottage Grove (61S), Oregon, for dinner and an overnight stay. Cottage Grove is the home of the Oregon Aviation Historical Society Museum, where the first Oregon aircraft homebuilders are honored. It's "real deal" aviation history. The following morning, the schedule called for flying to Grants Pass (3S8), Oregon, for more barnstorming goodwill, lunch, dinner,

and an overnight stay. The next day they would fly to Gold Beach (4S1), Oregon, for a coastal tour and then back to Grants Pass for another overnight. During the final day, it's on to Creswell Hobby Field (77S), Oregon, for lunch and then to Bend (KBND), Oregon, for the final banquet. That's the big picture.

Notice the airports: small- to medium-sized, friendly towns, and no control towers. All cities are sent press releases announcing the arrival of the tour. I'm told that works as long as someone in the information chain takes up the cause and reiterates it to their public. No matter, somehow you have to believe that the staggered arrival of 30 airplanes flying over your small town and then landing at your airport would bring a lot of interest. And, yes, it generally does. It takes a pretty calloused town to ignore all that. One pilot told me that a whole town came to the airport two years ago! Ideally, kids would ride their bikes to the airport, as in days of old. (I like to think that still can happen, anyway.)

The morning briefing at MMV was a view into the soul of these people: fun, good, and spirited, just like life is supposed to be! The briefing was right after breakfast and held in the lobby of the motel. To the regular guests, walking into a lobby filled with 50 to 60 people all talking with their hands gave a bit of a fright, but they managed to muddle through the crowd with looks of "What the heck?!" on their faces.





1. Stearmans on downwind Grants Pass: (top to bottom) Rich Alldredge, Ben Littlefield, Frank Hoogkamer.
2. Green Trees departure.
3. Repositioning Dave Bole's 1943 Howard.
4. Rich Alldredge discussing finer points of his Stearman.
5. Tom Jensen's N3N-3.
6. Dave Lawrence demonstrating his Taylorcraft tie-down technique.
7. After a hard day's flying, Cottage Grove.
8. Ben Littlefield with a happy passenger in Grants Pass.

The briefing was typical with talk of weather, special procedures at Green Trees, and stuff like that. All questions were answered. There was a young man in the room — young faces stand out since there aren't many — and the T-shirt he was wearing said "Capt. Molly — 40 years of flying the friendly skies of United." I thought to myself, "I'll get to the bottom of that later." And then the talk turned to the Binky. When I asked Tom about it, he put two fingers to his lips and made a sucking noise — like a pacifier. More to the point, the Binky is an award of dubious distinction. It is awarded daily for the duration of the tour. If you are found guilty of some infraction, you are awarded the Binky. It comes with a lanyard, and you have to wear it around your neck all day. At the start of the next day, the Binky awardee gets to pass it on to the next person who is judged to have made an infraction. Binky-worthy transgressions are freely passed on to the person with the lanyard so that he or she may have material to re-award the Binky. This day the awardee was deemed to have done something in the pattern, but it wasn't exactly clear to me what. He objected in his defense but then — ya know — the cellphone cameras came out. He said, "Ah, those things are all just smoke and mirrors." And then he hung the Binky around his neck. A fella standing next to me leaned over and said, "Heck, I got it once for leaving a gas cap off for a minute, and I wasn't even going anywhere."

Back to the airfield we went, and I found the kid with the "Capt. Molly" T-shirt. He was polishing a blue and yellow Stearman. He introduced himself as Ben, and I asked him about the shirt.

"Molly is my mom, and she just retired from United and came on the tour with us," he said. "She's in that Cessna 140 over there."

Then he added, "You may know my dad, Keith Littlefield. He's right over there by his Cub."

I do know him. We once worked for the same airline. I didn't know him well because we were in different airplanes, but I did know him. I went over and talked to him, and we had a great conversation discussing old memories. So, that's the Flying Littlefields, all on the tour — Molly in the C-140, Keith in the Cub, and Ben in the Stearman.

The band of friendly barnstormers gradually took off and headed for Green Trees Ranch. The ranch belongs to Geoff and Jan Stevenson and defines the word "idyllic." It's a turf runway atop some low rolling hills. The unofficial photographer for the tour was Tim Heneghan. He uses a drone and gets some spectacular shots. I think his pictures of Green Trees do it justice. It's beautiful. The group was treated to lunch.

The next stop was Cottage Grove Airport (61S). There they were greeted by the Oregon Aviation Historical Society Museum, housing





a treasure trove of Oregon aircraft home-building history. It's always special to lay eyes and hands on what the "Oregon Outlaws" did to give flight to homebuilt aviation. The tour spent the night at The Village Green hotel, just across the road from the museum.

The next day it was off to Grants Pass, rather a key stop on the tour. Parking was meticulously planned by airport staff and EAA Chapter 725. The local newspaper put the tour on the front page, and that worked! Roughly a thousand people came out. Car parking was difficult. Luckily, the nice people at Chief Aircraft allowed for some additional parking. Almost everything at the airport is on one side. The other side has the Dutch Bros. Coffee corporate hangar, and that's about it. Still, Grants Pass did itself proud, opening both its doors and its hearts. It was symbiotic; you could feel it. It rather centered on the FBO, Pacific Aviation Northwest, a full-service FBO ably run by David Traeger. Larry Graves is the airport manager, and he's a force for general aviation. I hate to say it, but some airport managers tend to somehow disappear during events. Not Larry. If it has to do with the airport, he's there participating. In front of the FBO was a band called DD214. It was made up of all veterans. Veterans know that the DD214 is the form given to them as a record of their service. That was a nice touch. The band leader declined to take donations.

"We're doing this for YOU," she said.

She later got a ride in Tom's N3N for that comment. They also held a drawing for more airplane rides. I saw one boy who, when he learned he'd won a ride, clenched his fists, pumped his arms, and jumped up and down. He'll never forget his adventure! The Southern Oregon Air Academy was in session while the tour was there, too. Jenny Jackson is a key person in the program, ably helped by a lot of volunteers. She described to me how they take up to 20 kids at a time for a one-week camp during the summer, and they do that three times to accommodate different kids in different schools. They teach aviation, and the kids like it a lot. It's really a neat program. I saw many of the kids in a classroom in the back of the FBO. Another key person in Grants Pass is Stan Loer of EAA Chapter 725. He works with the kids, he worked with the tour, he's a board member of the Oregon Aviation Historical Society, and probably does a lot of other aviation things I don't even know about. He's a good guy to have around, and he asks for nothing in return.

"The tour was one of the most fun activities I've gotten involved in in quite a while," he said.

While walking the ramp at Grants Pass, my wife and I met Marlo and Susan Jones, tour participants, standing by their Cub. Very nice people. They were talking to Fritz Gemeinhardt, who was in his wheelchair. His





ball cap read “USMC” on the side. The front read “WWII-KOREA-NAM-CW” I took CW to mean Cold War. In talking to Fritz he said he served for 36 years and was 97 years old. When asked about flying, he said, “I jumped out of them.” My wife bent over, shook his hand, and said, “Thank you for your service.” Fritz shook her hand and winked at her.

Somewhere in the conversation, the Binky came up.

“I found that on the ground at Chelan,” Susan said. “I picked it up and put it on the table.”

The rest, as they say, is history. That day, the Binky went to someone who was in the airplane and ready to go except a tie-down rope was still tied. The Binky recipient objected with, “But it was on my wife’s side.” His objection was overruled.

The next day, many on the tour flew to Gold Beach Municipal (4S1) on the Oregon Coast for some salt air and seafood. There they had another great community turn out. Returning to Grants Pass, that evening they took a four-hour, 36-mile jet boat ride on the Rogue River, which includes dinner at the Hellgate River Lodge. Imagine a jet boat full of pilots. Don’t ya know, the pilots wanted to do some “wifferdills.” The boat driver did not disappoint with 360s, wake crossings, etc. All got soaked and loved it. These people know how to have fun!

The next day it was fond farewells, and the tour launched for Creswell Hobby (77S). Creswell is a delightful general aviation airport. The local EAA Chapter 31 hosted lunch. It figures. I’ve visited that chapter, and it has a really nice group of people. After that it was over the Cascade Mountains to Bend (KBND) for the final evening. The Bend EAA chapter pitched in to help with transportation to and from the airport. It was a banquet full of friendships, stories, and hugs. The final Binky was awarded, and the winner has to keep it until the next tour. Then, one of their own on the tour entertained with his guitar and patriotic songs. You don’t just measure success; you feel it. And all felt it after this tour.

The next day, they launched for their respective homes — except for a few who went to some other fly-ins. As they say, “It’s the flying season!”

How to wrap this up? For me, it’s by admiring what the Puget Sound Antique Airplane Club accomplished and how they did (do) it. What a group! They showcased aviation magnificently, brought goodwill and friendship, and provided motivation everywhere they went. To the Puget Sound group: nicely done and thank you. *EAA*

Lauran Paine Jr., EAA 582274, is a retired military pilot and retired airline pilot. He built an RV-8 and has owned a Stearman and a Champ. Learn more about Lauran at his website, www.ThunderBumper.com.

1. Crowd viewing Stearmans, Grants Pass.
2. Savannah Raskey and Frank Hoogkamer.
3. Left to Right: Keith Littlefield (Cub), Molly Littlefield (C140), Ben Littlefield (Stearman) en route to Creswell.
4. Jan and Jeff Poschwatta in their Interstate Cadet.
5. Mike Werner and Theresa White departing Green Trees in an N3N-3.
6. Marlo Jones propping Paul Good’s 1948 PA-15.
7. In their Stearmans departing Green Trees are (left to right) Frank Hoogkamer, Ben Littlefield, and Rich and Carol Alldredge.
8. Mike Werner.
9. 2019 Puget Sound Antique Aircraft Club air tour group photo at final night banquet in Bend.
10. Ben Littlefield en route to Green Trees.

