



# HANGAR TALK



Newsletter of The North Puget Sound Chapter of The Washington Pilot's Association. March 2006

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S HANGAR

When I travel as part of my University job, I always like to get out and take a walk. It is great to move around on foot and get a feel for a place. Travel to most places in North America and you can see



general aviation, business aircraft at the major airports, smaller GA aircraft flying overhead and helicopters moving overhead.

Downtown Vancouver is

one of my favorite cities for watching aircraft as the Beaver and Twin Otter floatplanes land, drop passengers and then take off within view of the hotels. Seattle has aircraft flying to Boeing field or setting up to land on Lake Washington, great stuff. Although there are restrictions to aid traffic moving into the major airports, the controllers at Victoria, Whidbey, Seattle and Portland approach are generally helpful. General aviation moves in concert with the airline and military aircraft in our region.

When I was in Beijing, China I was struck by how empty the skies were. Even at the International Airport no general aviation could be seen. Of course this is because there is no general aviation, as we know it in China.

Military and the Airlines are the only aircraft in the sky.

The other quiet city was Washington DC. I just spent most of a week in downtown Washington DC and the only aircraft that were visible were those flying down the Potomac into National Airport (DCA). When I lived in the region it was a great adventure to fly into National under positive control from the approach controllers.

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"you can see  
general aviation"

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The Washington Monument, White House and the Mall were spectacular from a GA aircraft at low altitude.

The approach to DCA was right over the Potomac. On

take off we got cleared to fly straight up the Anacostia River. Great Stuff!

Now those experiences are strictly forbidden. I understand the reasons. Policy makers have decided that protecting the people and institutions of government has a higher priority than preserving a privilege to use that portion of the National Airspace. It is not certain that GA flights into DCA and around the District of Columbia will ever return.

*Continued on page 5*

## FBO News

### Bellingham Aero

February was an interesting month for Bellingham Aero Inc. Despite the typical

winter time FBO lull, we managed to keep all our operations moving along in the right direction.

Bellingham Fuel Service received some incredibly wonderful news on March

3<sup>rd</sup>. We applied for the Government Fuel contract for Bellingham International Airport.....and we got it! This contract gives us exclusive rights to all government aircraft that come into BLI. Needless to say, we're ecstatic!

All of us at Bellingham Aero give Harlow Friday a huge thank you, as he is the one who worked diligently on that project, darn near single handedly. Way to go Harlow!

Bellingham Aero Flight School welcomed 12 new students to our winter Private Pilot ground school session. If you're interested in attending any spring classes, it would be wise to call and sign up now. We usually fill up a few weeks before classes actually begin. Our flight school phone # is (360) 671-2250.

Everyone at Bellingham Aero, and many others at our airport are sad to say goodbye to April Phillips. She is leaving on an adventure to Costa Rica and then to who knows where from there. All of us will truly miss her cheerful, sparkling personality.

Bellingham Air Taxi did exceptionally well last month. We are now offering commuter packages to our clients that live and work out in the San Juan Islands. Our prices are far less expensive than other airlines that fly to the Islands. Give Robin or John a call @ (360) 671-3075, if you're interested in our "share fare" or our

"commuter" pricing. We recently heard from the FAA that our Air Taxi expansion could be approved very soon.

I'll keep you updated.

Don't forget to come by the Bellingham Aero 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month weenie roast.

However, this month it will be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday, March 11<sup>th</sup>. Also, if you enjoy fresh hot chocolate chip cookies and coffee, stop by Bellingham Fuel Service and say hello to Alexa, myself, and Jim and the gang. We have a comfortable lounge area and there's always something entertaining going on.

We'd like to extend a very special thank you to all our

*Continued on page 5*

Bellingham Aero



## FBO News

### Bellingham Aviation Services

It has been a very busy February at Bellingham Aviation Services (BAS). If this is how busy winter is, I cannot wait to see what summer is like.

We had two very special arrivals recently. The first was a baby girl for Carla, born on January 16th (I am remiss in not getting that in last months newsletter). Her name is Alia Marie. The other was a baby boy for Jeff and Jo Ella Eriksen. He was born on February 21, 2006, and is named Hans William. Be sure to congratulate them the next time you see either Carla or Jeff. Just try not to comment on how tired they look!

Our customer appreciation month was a huge success. Thank you to all who took advantage of the fantastic fuel pricing we had in February. For March we are continuing to provide some great fuel prices, with the self-serve pump price being **only \$3.57**. 100LL from the truck will normally be \$3.75, however we are introducing a new **"Midday Markdown"**.

**Between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm fuel from the truck will be \$3.60!** The "Midday Markdown" will be continuing as a permanent feature at BAS with full-serve fuel being discounted 15¢ below the posted full-serve price during these hours. This is just another way for BAS to show that we still appreciate all your fueling business.

As those of you who have looked through the latest Bellingham Technical College catalog will already know, BAS is working with the college on an aviation degree program. We are hoping to have the program up and running soon. I will post updates here as they happen, however in the mean time if you know of anyone who might be interested in this program they can contact the college at 752-8444.

Until next time, fly safe and I hope to see you at the airport.

Martyn Harris  
Chief Flight Instructor



# John Huntley

By Chip LaPlante

*As one of our newest members, John is very enthusiastic and excited with flying. He is currently working on his instrument rating which he takes very seriously. His freindly attitude and zest for flying make him fun to talk to around the airport.*



**Age:** 50

**Height and Weight:** 5' 10"  
195lbs.

**Birthplace:** Bellingham, WA

**Marital Status:** Married.

**Children:** 2 boys Jeremy & Josh.

**Occupation:** General Contractor.

**Education:** Bachelor Degree in Business.

**Hobbies:** Flying, Riding bicycles and working out.

**First Solo:** 2003 in a C-172.

**Where:** Bellingham (BLI).

**Own or Rent:** Own a C-172 and possibly a C-206.

**Home Airport:** Bellingham (BLI).

**Licenses and Ratings:** Private - Single Engine Land and currently working on my instrument rating..

**Total Time:** 400+.

**Most significant life**

**achievement:** My wife and kids.

**Life Philosophy:** Everyday is a good day if you wake up and if you don't it doesn't matter.

**How did you become**

**interested in flying?** A lot of my family already flew so it was just a matter of time.

**Flying Philosophy:** Just to have fun with it.

**Brief Flying History:** I've always wanted to learn and I finally had the time. Now I can't stop. I started taking lessons here at BLI with Chip. I earned my private certificate and now I'm working on my instrument rating.

**Who has been your pilot mentor:** Chip

**Explain John in five words or less:** Competitive but reasonable.

**What makes John tick?:** The enjoyment of everyday.

**What safety item do you think is most important or most often neglected?** Weather.

**What are your flying goals?:** To be a safe and competent instrument pilot.

**Any suggestions for new students?** Relax as much as possible.

**Most people don't know this about me:** That I was affraid to fly until I learned how to do it myself.

**What's the toughest thing to do in flying?** Right now it's learning IFR.

**I fly because...**I just love it.



*From the President's Hanger  
Continued from Page 1*

Visiting Washington DC makes me appreciate Washington State even more. We did have a number of TFRs after the attacks on New York and Washington. All but one of those TFRs have been changed to a less restrictive status. I appreciate the effort of the local aviation community, the FAA and national advocacy groups (AOPA, EAA) to bring a more rational approach to managing the airspace.

Have a good flight.  
Wayne Landis  
President  
North Sound Chapter WPA



**Mount St. Helens**



**Bellingham Aero**  
*Continued from Page 2*

regular clients who supported our Av fuel business during the entire month of February. We will forever continue to give you the best customer service on the field. Every month is "Customer appreciation" month at Bellingham Aero!

Sincerely,  
Linda Marrom  
Customer Sales & Service  
Bellingham Aero Inc.



**TAKE NOTE!**

BLI - Tower Cheif Terry Asp reports:  
AS OF MARCH 20TH,  
DELETE "POSITION AND HOLD".  
THERE WILL BE NO MORE  
"POSITION AND HOLD"  
CLEARANCES ISSUED.



C-182  
PA28-161

Well maintained,  
hangered, IFR  
aircraft.



## FROM THE AVIONICS SHOP

Spring is almost here! It was funny..... one day in February we had clear skies and 58 degrees, while driving down hangar row I noticed many hangar doors open with many airplane noses sticking out. It reminded me of a bunch of prairie dogs with their heads poking up out of the ground after a long winter!!

With Spring coming on, most of you have ventured out on a sunny day or two and probably have a few avionics squawks that came up. Now is the time to get your airplane over to the shop and get those radio problems fixed before severe clear sets in. Some of you have been by the shop recently and have seen that we are pretty full with installs and other work. So don't delay, get scheduled for that install, repair or Pitot-Static check today before the line gets much longer!

## THE COST OF AVIONICS AND INSTALLATIONS

I am never surprised at the reaction I get when quoting the cost of an avionics system or the labor to install it. Being a pilot/owner operator myself, I feel your pain! Aviation is not an inexpensive pastime or mode of transportation. Operating costs for pilots are always rising and usually the maintenance and avionics shops are the first to hear about it. While we at BAS are sensitive to keeping operating costs down for our customers, we also have our own rising operating costs to contend with while providing cost effective quality services to our customers. In addition to rising costs avionics and maintenance shops must bear to provide services, the FAA is always coming out with new rules and regs that aviation maintenance businesses must comply with that adds significant overhead to the business.

As avionics technology continues to improve, the features and complexity of today's systems add to the cost of the modern avionics system. In addition to the cost of equipment, installation labor costs are on the rise. Complex new technology demands a whole new breed of avionics technician/installer. Today's technician/installer not only has to be familiar with older analog avionics systems, they have to be able to make their way through a new and complex digital avionics world. Installing radios is no longer connecting a few wires and power, there are numerous digital interfaces to Multifunction Displays, Autopilots, Mode S Transponders, Traffic Alert Systems, and graphical engine monitoring systems.

The typical cost for avionics installation at most shops around the country varies from \$65 dollars per hours to over \$90 dollars per hour in some cases. The AEA (Aircraft Electronics Association) has just released the numbers for 2005 and the hourly cost in the Western region for installation services is \$73.63 per hour and repair is \$78.37. Our rates in Bellingham are slightly less than the regional average however I know of a Seattle company that charges over \$90.00 per hour for repair. One avionics manufacturer charges over \$100.00 per hour for bench repair labor. How do shops justify these rates?

It's an interesting topic and I want to share a brief perspective on what it takes to operate an avionics shop.

*Continued on next page*

## FAA REGULATIONS

In order to operate an FAA certified repair station you must first meet all of the FAA requirements to become a certified repair station under FAR Part 145.

1) Before you can open your shop for business, you have to apply to the FAA for a part 145 repair station certificate. This requires a mountain of paperwork and literally 6 months to one year to become certified. It took us a little less than a year to become certified. The certification process varies from FSDO to FSDO. This means that for one year, without any income from operations, we had to write the repair station manual, procure a hangar, buy test equipment (typically in excess of \$100,000 for most new shops), build a technical library and have a shop manager on payroll before we were ready to be granted a certificate to operate as a Part 145 repair station.

2) We have to hire employees that qualify for an FAA radio repairman rating before a repair station certificate can be issued. To qualify for the radio repairman rating you must have at least 18 months experience working in a certified avionics facility or have appropriate avionics training from a recognized avionics school. The shortage of qualified avionics technicians and managers is extreme and the competition for employees is fierce. This commands a competitive wage and excellent benefits in order to get the cream of the crop.

3) This year the FAA has mandated that all Part 145 repair stations comply with new training standards for technicians. Training is a combination of in-house and outside training programs. Another cost of doing business born from more government regulation.

4) Ongoing audits and regulatory compliance. The FAA will inspect a repair facility several times per year to assure that the certificate holder is in compliance with the FAA regs for repair stations and the Operations Specs in the repair station manual. Administration of repair station compliance adds to the overhead of the repair station.

## LEASES

Although a shop may own a maintenance hangar, there is a lease cost for the land the hangar sits on. Counties, Cities or Port Authorities normally drive these costs, Make no mistake that airport land is leased for a premium price to aviation businesses.

## EMPLOYEE COSTS

As I mentioned the competition between avionics shops is fierce to recruit and retain the best people. Shops must offer competitive salaries and benefit packages and often times profit sharing programs to entice potential employees. Benefits usually include dental, medical, vision, with disability insurance and life insurance optional participation by employee. Benefits may also include 401K programs and daycare benefits.

*Continued on next page*

## BUSINESS INSURANCE

Aviation is a risky business especially if you repair aircraft or aircraft components. The insurance costs are going to be high. As an avionics and maintenance shop, we have to maintain hangar keepers insurance, and some very serious liability insurance. I won't go into the numbers on this but I will tell you that it really eats away at the bottom line of an avionics and maintenance shop.

## TEST EQUIPMENT CALIBRATION

The FAA requires us to calibrate our test equipment annually which usually runs several thousand dollars each year to stay in compliance.

## NEW TECHNOLOGY = \$\$NEW TEST EQUIPMENT\$\$

Anytime new avionics technology hits the market, you can be assured that the required test equipment to install and certify advanced avionics systems is going to be costly. Looking at Mode S Transponders for example, expect to invest \$15,000 in just the required test equipment to certify Mode S transponders. Some of the new test equipment incorporates both Mode S and TCAS test capability in one box but you are still over \$20,000 for the investment to provide that level of service. Complex new technology requires sophisticated test equipment and the FAA says that if you want to be rated to work on the equipment you need the required test equipment and appropriately rated repair personnel to perform the service.

**AVIONICS EQUIPMENT TSO REQUIREMENTS** - Every FAA certified piece of avionics equipment must comply with the appropriate FAA TSO (Technical Standards Order) for that type of device. This drives the design, safety, performance and environmental operations criteria of the manufacturers equipment. It is complex and expensive for a manufacturer to comply with a TSO and the cost of TSO compliance is built into the price of your avionics equipment. For example a non-TSO GPS/COM cannot be certified for IFR operations and costs much less than an equivalent TSO version of the same type.

When considering the price of equipment and installation labor for that next big avionics purchase, keep in mind that there are significant costs for shops just to keep the doors open, hire the best technical people, and stay in compliance with the FAA regs. We at BAS Avionics always do our best to provide the highest quality products and services at competitive prices for our customers. Sometimes the shop down the road might be willing to give their stuff away just to get your business, but will they be there for you to provide service when you really need it?

## NEXT MONTH

Next month I am going to discuss avionics installations and outline the labor process that goes into a typical GPS/NAV/COM upgrade.

Jeff Geer

Director of Avionics Operations - Bellingham Aviation Services- [jgeer@bli-jet.com](mailto:jgeer@bli-jet.com)  
360-752-1252



# Washington Pilots Association North Sound Chapter



**March Meeting Speaker**

**Harold Hutchins**

**from the Seattle FSDO**

**will be with us to present:**

**“The FAST Program”**

**This is the FAA Aviation Safety  
Team.**

**The FSDO, is undergoing change, including the  
“Wings” program.**

**Be sure to attend for all the latest information  
and how this will effect us all.**

**When: Thursday March 9th. Doors open at 6:30pm  
Time: 7:00pm**

**Where: in the old Port Administration building.**



## North Sound Chapter WPA Control Tower

Hangar Talk Newsletter is the official publication of the North Sound Chapter of the W.P.A.

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*Deadline for the next issue is  
Friday March 31st.*

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North\\_Sound.htm](http://www.wpaflys.org/Chapters/North_Sound.htm)

Articles for submission can be either e-mailed to:  
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## JOIN NOW

Join your fellow pilots and aviation enthusiasts. Become a member of the North Sound Chapter of the Washington Pilots' Association. The North Sound Chapter represents members from Whatcom, Skagit, and San Juan Counties. To be a member, you need not be a pilot but only have an interest in and promote general aviation.

name (last, first, middle initial)

spouse if applicable (last, first, middle initial)

address (street, apartment number)

city

state

zip

phone number

email address

The \$31 Chapter dues are comprised of \$19 State and \$12 Local dues. Active CFIs are charged \$1 for State dues. Soloed student pilots receive first year State dues at no charge. Also offered, on a voluntary basis, is a year subscription to the GA News for \$25.

### STATE DUES

\_\_\_\_\_ \$19 STANDARD  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$1 ACTIVE CFI  
\_\_\_\_\_ n/a SOLOED STUDENT

### LOCAL DUES

\_\_\_\_\_ \$12 ALL

### GA NEWS

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25 VOLUNTARY

### TOTAL ENCLOSED

\_\_\_\_\_

Please mail completed form and check (payable to North Sound WPA) to Mike Holl, North Sound Chapter WPA Treasurer, 259 Friday Creek Road, Bellingham, WA, 98226.



## **SPONSORS**

The Hangar Talk Newsletter Mails out 100 Plus copies each month. Most of these copies, of course, go to members of the North Sound Chapter of the Washington Pilots Association. However there are numerous copies mailed to interested persons and companies outside the membership. Some copies go to the State entities such as the State WPA President and editor of the Wings publication. We believe the Hangar Talk reaches a surprising number of people.

We wish to offer to all interested persons and businesses to advertise their services in Hangar Talk. A sum of \$50 will purchase a year (10 issues) of business card advertising. Please send a check payable to North Sound WPA and a business card to Rick Miller, North Sound Chapter Treasurer, 1015 W. 54<sup>th</sup> Lane, Bellingham, WA 98226

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