



# SPOKANE FLYER

November 2007

## New tower at Spokane International Airport in service

There's a new addition to the Spokane skyline at Spokane International Airport. The recently-constructed control tower at GEG is now in use and providing air traffic control services to pilots and aircraft in Spokane and more.

The new tower is 286 feet tall with the control cab at the 260 foot level.

According to Gary Miles, Air Traffic Control Specialist at GEG, "We didn't care how tall it was, as long as it was taller than the new Seattle tower." Seattle's new tower is 269 feet tall. The height of the Spokane tower was determined by the designers using a crane with observers checking the visibility. Miles said that it takes about a minute for the elevator to reach the cab.

With the height of the new facility, controllers can not only observe traffic at Spokane International Airport, but they can also see operations at Fairchild Air Force Base and Felts Field. The crews can maintain visual separation of aircraft as they leave the ground and join traffic between the three airports.

As before, Approach and Departure controllers are co-located with tower controllers at the new facility with their operations taking place in the new building at the base of the tower. Tower controllers and approach/departure controllers are cross-trained and work both operations in Spokane, rotating as needed.

Miles noted that, at times, the new tower can be "in the sun" when ground fog covers the runways and taxi lanes at GEG. "All you see are tail fins," he said. The airplanes look like sharks."



### NEXT CHAPTER MEETING

WEDNESDAY  
NOVEMBER 21, 2007

6:00 P.M.

Marie Callender's Restaurant  
2111 N Argonne

Guest Speaker:  
Tom Miller, Aviation Attorney

*"Everything you always  
wanted to know about  
aviation law, but were afraid  
to ask."*

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

WPA Spokane Chapter  
2008 Benefit Auction and Banquet  
Saturday, March 1, 2008  
Mirabeau Park Hotel





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**SPOKANE FLYER**

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**DESTINATIONS:**

**Alvord Desert Adventure** by Al Gilson

Back in March, I asked about the Alvord Desert in southern Oregon on the Pacific Northwest Flying group site. That one message mutated into a group fly-out to this dry lake bed in the middle of nowhere on a mid-August weekend. Where is the Alvord Desert? About 70nm southeast of Burns, Oregon, just north of the Nevada border.



Parked on the Alvord Desert floor

The weather forecast is great with low winds and clear skies. I lift off at 7 a.m. My destination: Hermiston, Oregon to meet 6 other planes/pilots from Seattle, Tacoma, Canada, Spokane, and Hermiston. Smooth air with some smoky skies from the fires. I make a good landing at HRI and meet John & Margaret Hubbard, David Herman, Jeff and Kathie Davis, Lee Bergman, and our own Gary White and his son Andrew. I'm the last to arrive.

The gaggle takes off to the south and Burns, OR. We all are chatting on the radio to keep track of each other. The slow guys go first, I'm in the middle, and the fast ones follow. We all follow US 395 from Hermiston south, skirting a fire TFR north of Burns. A group landing follows and I gas up plus, take advantage of the last real bathroom for 24 hours.

Off we go to the southeast toward the Alvord Desert. I quickly lose sight of the fast guys ahead of me and try to make sense of their landmarks in an area I've never seen before. There's a big lake south of Burns that we sneak around to the north, then into the mountains. There's another fire TFR to avoid as I get closer to the lake bed. Then, there it is, the Alvord Desert. I fly a long pattern to lose a couple of thousand feet, line up on final for the 12-mile long runway (yes...12 miles) and touch down in front of an audience of almost 20 planes! The lake is as smooth as any pavement I've landed on. Taxi over to parking, push her in between Jeff and John, and I'm there.

The desert floor is magnificent. We are camped at about 4,200 MSL with Steens Mountain rising to 9,700 feet just a few miles west of us. We sit around and chat, get to meet the other pilots on the lake, and have a few refreshments. In all, 24 planes are on the desert floor. A few folks take their planes up for a tour in the afternoon then, the wind kicks up. It's not real breezy, just enough to rock the wings and test my new tie-down stake system.

In the evening, when it calms down and the sun drops below the mountains, we settle down and watch the Perseid meteor shower. A couple of the other pilots have brought telescopes and we get to do a little star-gazing. The nearest light bulb is 25 miles away, so we have a perfect view of the sky. There's no moon, so the only light is starlight.

It's been a long day of flying and networking so I hit the hay in my tent about 11 p.m. At 6 a.m. Sunday, I'm wide awake.

The sun is just creeping over the mountains to the west. I hear an airplane engine in the distance. It's Jeff and Kathie scooting out early. John and Margaret are packing up too. Yep, it's time to go. I push the plane out into the lake bed a bit to avoid blasting Gary's plane with dust, then hop in and start her up. I'm off the ground after John and Lee at about 7:30. Back to Burns for gas and a clean bathroom, then to Pendleton for a mid-trip pit stop. After a quick break, off to Spokane. It gets bumpy during the last 30 minutes of the flight. I touch down at Felts Field at about 12:30 p.m.



# Spokane Air Traffic Control- The inside story

Air Traffic Control Specialist, Gary Miles, was the guest speaker at the WPA Spokane Chapter's October meeting. Miles spoke to a group of about 30 members and guest gathered in a Spokane Airways hanger at Spokane International Airport.

As the group dined on an outstanding menu provided by O'Doherty's Irish Grille, Miles filled them in on the new tower at GEG and some of the ins and outs of the controller's world in the Spokane area airspace.

The controllers at Spokane International Airport not only provide service to traffic in and out of GEG, but they also operate the approach and departure functions for the Class "Charlie" airspace that surrounds the Spokane and Fairchild Air Force Base fields. Along with that, radar personnel provide approach and departure services for the Missoula, Montana airport (MSO).

Miles noted that some changes may be in the works with the possibility that controllers from Grant County Approach in Moses Lake and Chinook Approach in Pasco moving to the new Spokane radar facility. All the details have not been ironed out, but changes could occur within the next 18 to 24 months.

He also said that there are a lot of air traffic controller trainees on the airwaves. These new employees are working with veteran controllers as they gain the experience necessary to go it alone. "The FAA is in a hiring binge," Miles said. "Retirements are exceeding the hiring rate."

With the training underway, Miles said that it is important that pilots be patient and if they hear something that is questionable from the controller to "ask again" to clarify the instructions. He said that it is better to train the new controllers during the busy periods in order to provide the best experience possible.



New GEG tower with the terminal in the background (SIA photo)

Miles also chatted about a few other topics related to flying around the Inland Northwest. He championed the use of VFR Flight Following and that they will "take all comers" for the service if at all possible. He mentioned that there is some new "lingo" that pilots might hear over the radio. When an aircraft is on flight following, controllers may now ask, "Do you see that terrain in front of you?" No longer assuming that the pilot sees Mt. Spokane or Mica Peak in their windscreen.

He also asked for a little help from pilots operating at GEG. "Please don't pull off the runway, stop, and do your after landing checklist. "There may be someone right behind you," he said.

Miles also advised that, with increased radio traffic in busy airspace, efficient communications is a must. He recommended that newer pilots invest in a scanner or hand-held aviation radio and monitor ATC communications to learn the 'lingo' of the professional pilots. He said that controllers get a little frustrated when a pilot rambles on with unnecessary babble in an attempt to make a request or confirmation of a controller's instruction. It uses up valuable radio time that may be needed by another pilot in the same airspace.

The group gathered at Spokane Airways gave a rousing round of applause and thanked Gary for the outstanding service that he and the entire Spokane air traffic control crew provide for Spokane area pilots.

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## Where are the lost airports in Washington?

by David Herman

There are a lot of lost, abandoned and closed airports out there in the state of Washington. There's also a bunch of airports that are clearly still in use but are just not on the charts.

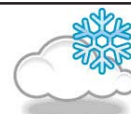
A lot more than most people would imagine.

I've been hunting lost and uncharted airports for a while, and have discovered more than 300 across the state that have been closed or abandoned over the years, some of them well known, others all but forgotten. Some of these airports have been completely gone for many years. Others are still there either in part or entirely.

Point your internet browser to: [www.lostairports.com](http://www.lostairports.com) and discover the lost airports that might be in your backyard.



## Be ready for winter flying in the northwest



Winter flying in the Pacific Northwest can adversely affect flight operations. Poor weather conditions with fast moving fronts, strong and gusty winds, blowing and drifting snow, and icing conditions are just part of the conditions that require careful planning in order to minimize their effects. Operation in this environment requires special winter operating procedures.

Winter flying is not particularly hazardous if the pilot will use a little extra caution and exercise good judgment in analyzing weather situations.

The FAA Safety Team (FAAST) has put together an online guide for winter flying with ideas pilots need to keep in mind during winter months.

To see the entire guide, go to the WPA Spokane Chapter website at: [www.wpaflys.org/Chapters/Spokane/Spokane.html](http://www.wpaflys.org/Chapters/Spokane/Spokane.html) - look under "Hot Topics" and click on "Winter Flying" to go to the FAA site.