



February 2021

A Newsletter for Members

Westerly Airport Association

PO Box 2053, Westerly, RI 02891

www.westerlyairportfriends.org

Dear Members:

I hope that this newsletter finds you and your loved ones well and strong, as we look forward to better days ahead. The year 2020 was profoundly challenging and certainly a year that will go down historically in infamy. We are now in the New Year of 2021 – and may it be a year of renewal, both peacefully and politically. I wish you all a Happy, Healthy, Strong New Year!



Gratitude goes to Face-time and Zoom, as we were able to see and talk to our families during the holidays. Since we were unable to gather as in the past, it worked out well for all having the ability on their iPhones or computers. We now look forward to the COVID-19 vaccine being administered to all. Hopefully, one day soon, we will be able to resume our in-person meetings in the Westerly Airport Conference Room. However, when that will be is still the unknown. Will certainly keep you posted.

A golf tournament will be planned soon. This event will be the only WAA fundraiser for 2021. Several members have so kindly contributed funds to the Scholarship Foundation, which is very heartwarming. We are grateful and thankful for their kindness.

In the interim, always remember to wear your mask, be vigilant and continue distancing. Be well and strong. “This Too Shall Pass.”

Wishing you Blue Skies and Perfect Tailwinds,

Carol

WAA President

Scholarship Committee News

The Co-Chairs of the WAA Humphrey J. Amedeo, Jr. Aviation Scholarship Foundation, Dotty Stumpf and Linda Theadore, have announced that a letter along with a packet will be sent out to local and surrounding town high schools to begin the 2021 Scholarship award process. Scholarships of \$1,000 each are expected to be awarded this year, the number given to be determined by the number and quality of applications received.

A Zoom Meeting will be planned very soon.

WAA Board of Directors Report

By Jim Gueltzow, Chairman

Since we are still in the midst of the Pandemic, the Board has not met. However, my thoughts are to begin planning for the Annual WAA Humphrey J. Amedeo, Jr. Aviation Scholarship Foundation Golf Tournament to be held at Elmridge Golf Course with a date and time to be announced. Since golfing is an outside sport and distancing is the norm, we will continue to follow protocol. Instead of a steak dinner, we may give a box lunch; time and COVID still hovering will be the deciding factors. I will Chair the Golf Tournament and Steve Christina will be Co-Chair.



A Zoom Meeting will be set soon to begin planning for the tournament. Till then, stay well and strong.



New England Airlines has quietly celebrated its 50th year in continuous air service between Westerly and Block Island and beyond. Congratulations on a truly remarkable achievement! Employees and supporters contributed the funding to purchase a new sign to be placed on the wall above the passenger check-in counter in the main terminal lobby. Congratulations to Bill and Lois Bendokas!

at the airport

by WAA Founder Sandy Niles

Things have been understandably quiet around our airport. The weather has turned thoroughly wintry, and of course the “virus” has most people just hunkering at home.

But, the Rhode Island Airport Corporation has been busy with some serious planning, and recently held Zoom public meetings for each of Rhode Island’s General Aviation Airport communities. In these meetings, those in “attendance” were updated on RIAC’s progress and plans for capital improvements at each airport. Evaluations are the next phase, as the experts determine conditions and needs.

The Corporation’s ongoing efforts to improve and update airport facilities continue to be stymied in some cases by the continued fights against what is still perceived as a threat to the larger community. Some are still complaining about the same old things: noise, jets, and the most absurd - a fear of airport expansion.

Bernie Stumpf was listening to the Westerly RIAC meeting, and asked about the idea of moving the approach lights to match the displaced thresholds, given the length of time pilots have been subject to the shortened runway lengths and lack of approach lighting. Some citizens stated that, as there have been no safety incidents since the thresholds were displaced, why not leave the airport this way? It continues to be a struggle to communicate that the shorter runways, while not unsafe per se, are less safe and have less utility than they had at original lengths. I would like to give Bernie a “shout-out” for writing his concern in a letter to RIAC. The more they hear from pilots in favor of airport projects, the more likely they are to at least realize the airport does have support! The nay-sayers seem to have loud voices and deep pockets.

Your Founder finds it amusing that a citizen expressed concern about the possibility of danger and distraction to the students at the Middle School by aircraft using WST. Were this a problem, most assuredly the Town should not have built the school there! Even RIAC representatives were unaware that Westerly Airport has a history going back to the late 1920s; they knew only that it has been there since the 1940s. Even the Corporation in charge of the airports does not know their rich history. The saga continues!

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Spring is Just a Month Away!



WAA Member News

The WAA welcomes new member **Major Brian Smith**, of Wakefield, Rhode Island. Brian is the Squadron Commander of the Civil Air Patrol, Westerly Composite Squadron, 23 Friendship Street. The Civil Air Patrol flies primarily Cessna 172's and 182's, serving local communities in missions for homeland security, search and rescue, disaster relief, and other operations at local, state or federal agencies' request.

Brian can be reached at: BSmith@RIWG.CAP.GOV

We heartily welcome Brian, and look forward to becoming more familiar with the important role that the Civil Air Patrol provides here in the Northeast.

We also welcome Linda Luce of Auburn, MA (Sandy Niles's mom!) as a new member of WAA. Thank you for your support and inspiration.

Our deepest sympathy is extended to **Dotty Stumpf** on the loss of her dear sister, Jane. Dotty's sister passed away in a Nursing Facility in Vermont in November. A service in memory of Jane will be held in the summer.

Second: Dotty was having pain in her shoulder and back, and thought it was due to Osteoporosis. After tests, her doctor determined she had suffered three heart attacks, and a main artery was blocked. She was immediately sent to Mass. General Hospital, which is

In Memoriam

Long time WAA member **Bob Taylor** passed away on January 25th, 2021. He is in a better place, forever flying... We will all miss Bob, with his ever-present smile, his stories, books, and humor.

On Tuesday, January 19, 2021, a beautiful lady, namely, **Elizabeth Dixon Urso** passed away at the Westerly Hospital. She was the first woman pilot to fly solo from the Westerly Airport many years ago. She was a very accomplished person. To read more about Bette's life's story, her obituary can be found on The Westerly Sun Obituary page, or at this link: <https://legcy.co/3c7KSxd>.

Our condolences to their loved ones.

close to her doctor's office, and a stent was placed. After three weeks of convalescence, by mid-November she was feeling fine and has been walking three miles each day. She will begin Cardiac Rehab. soon at Westerly Hospital! Our very Best Wishes to you Dotty as you continue on the path to total wellness.

Suzanne Scully suffered a fall and fractured her pelvis before the holidays. After six weeks at home and then Physical Therapy sessions, she returned to her position around the first of the year, 2021, at "Seniors Helping Seniors." She has begun her schedule now of continuing to help those in need. Our very Best Wishes to you Suzanne as you continue to heal and help others.

Suzanne extends her heartfelt thanks to all her dear friends from the WAA, who helped her during difficult days, also transporting her to Doctor's visits and were so supportive during her convalescence. She reiterates here: thank you, thank you, thank you!

Jeff Morrone continues to do well since his heart transplant and other surgeries. Our very Best Wishes continue to go out to you Jeff.

A Letter from Angel Flight Northeast

Angel Flight Staff and Pilots assist thousands of patients each year. They make an amazing, meaningful impact in the lives of their patients they fly and families, many who face so much uncertainty by providing them a ray of light during the darkest of times. While each patient has their own unique medical situation, they all require Angel Flights assistance always free of charge to access specialized care in the safest and most efficient way so they can focus on what is most important - getting well.

Every donation makes a meaningful impact in the lives of patients they fly. Your supportiveness is enormously appreciated.

Angel Flight sends the Westerly Airport Association huge thanks for being part of their wonderful and most unique organization.

Larry Camerlin, President



Meet Kyle Curtis:

Aviator, Flight Instructor, Business Owner

When Kyle was nine years old, he would go to the Block Island Airport to watch airplanes landing and taking off. He spent summers on Block Island with his grandparents, who lived close by the airport. His love of flying began at that time. He would often get a ride from Bill Bendokas of New England Airlines, who eventually became a great aviation mentor to Kyle. He grew up in Stonington, and all through grade school and then high school, he was never deterred from his dream of becoming a pilot to fly an airplane.

He began taking flying lessons at Groton Airport, and he completed his first solo flight at the age of 16.

He earned his Private Pilot Certificate at the age of 17, then became instrument rated. He continued on through becoming a Commercial Pilot and was already a Flight Instructor at the age of 18. His determination and hard work along the way has led him to start his own business six months ago: *Fly Upwind Flight School and Aircraft Rentals*, at Dooney Aviation. Besides being an instructor himself, he has also hired two additional Flight Instructors. Even though the pandemic has been hovering, he has been very busy flight instructing. Furthering his education, he is also attending Southern New Hampshire University online.

In ending this interview, Kyle extends his thankfulness and gratitude to Bill Bendokas, his aviation mentor, and friends at the Groton Airport who were all encouraging and supportive on his way to accomplishing what he has thus far. He sends his heartwarming thanks.

Kyle has been a resident of Westerly for the past three years, and lives close to the airport. So very fitting! In closing, Kyle's words were the following: "I will continue to look for opportunities and take my business one day at a time."

Congratulations, Kyle, on your leadership, determination, and firmness of purpose! May other young people follow your lead. Blue Skies and a Multitude of Best Wishes to you Kyle as you continue on your important journey in Aviation!



by Carol L. Amedeo

The “Good Old Days” – Really?

*a retrospective from
Charlie Levandoski*

After almost four decades as a flight instructor, the time has come to begin to the process of “hanging up my headset.” It’s been an amazing journey. I’ve met a multitude of absolutely wonderful people. Carl Kimmons got me into this gig by taking me for a ride in his little Cessna at Waterford Airport. Jim Shortall, a WWII pilot, a true gentleman, and an excellent instructor, taught me the art of instrument flying. Looking back, I’ve had an abundance of excellent students who taught me as much about life in general as I did them about flying. My wife and I have flown our plane(s) from northern Nova Scotia to Key West, Florida. From Eastport, Maine to San Diego. To Maine to see Mom and Aunt Ruth for lunch. To Michigan to see Don & Pat and their kids. To Pennsylvania to tour the Busch Gardens. And on and on. I had the great opportunity to teach one of my sons the art of flying. The other son said “if I want to fly, I’ll call you. I’m still waiting. Different strokes....”

During my journey I have watched as the General Aviation Industry has grown out of WWII era aircraft, equipment, and procedures, into a world we could not have imagined. In the “Good Old Days” (as the old timers call them), it often took hours to calculate the requirements for your next flight. It took a pencil(s), paper, slide rule, and multiple phone calls just to make a simple flight to Maine or Maryland.

In today’s “New World”, the “Good Old Days” are a thing of the past. In the newest aircraft we have computers, iPads, GPS, fancy TV-like screens... Now the planning can be done in a fraction of the time and with increased accuracy and safety. With the touch of few keys, you can determine your fuel consumption, time en route, how much weight can be carried, and on and on. Now we have moving maps, real-time ground speed and fuel flow read-outs. We no longer have to calculate the wind speed and direction. Simply look at the screen. Calculations that once took pilots

hours and multiple phone calls to solve are now done in seconds. And no phone calls.

Today’s autopilots are unbelievably accurate. I once took a WWII pilot up in a single engine Cherokee. He had flown B-17’s during the war in Europe. In fact, his plane was shot down over Yugoslavia where he hid in a monastery along with other American and British flight crews. He pointed to a piece of equipment on the instrument panel and asked “what’s that?” “The autopilot,” I replied. His eyes looked like two kitchen plates and he just shook his head and said “unbelievable”.

For those inside the “circle” it has been an amazing transformation.

But all this new technology has come at a cost. While it has become progressively easier to concentrate on the avionics, to watch the screen, and to push the buttons, it is also easier to become engrossed in the avionics and forget to look outside and check for gulls, hawks, geese, and most of all other planes.

And there are still the basics of flight that all pilots must learn and practice. Airspeed control, emergency procedures, crosswind takeoffs and landings, stalls... They’re all there and lurking in the background. They are some of the most important skills that today’s pilots have to keep in mind and practice routinely.

One quick story about emergency procedures. Roberta and I were on our way home from a Maine lunch visit. Suddenly, without warning, our engine (our only engine) quit. I went through the emergency restart procedures to no avail. We were going to have to land without an engine. Luckily there was an airport within gliding distance and we landed without incident. After we were safely on the ground my wife’s comment to me was “I hope your students can do what you just did.” I certainly tried hard to make sure they could and would. I called my son to drive over and pick us up. He asked where we wanted to go. I replied, “Margaritas.”

