



HIGH SIERRA FLYER

Newsletter of Sierra Chapter 403

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Student Update



On May 20, 2026, chapter member (and Civil Air Patrol Cadet) Julia Williams passed her FAA instrument written exam with a 100% score!

Using Gleim ground school material and Sheppard Air prepware, along with free ground lessons from her volunteer CFIs, she was able to study diligently to achieve a perfect score on her first try.

Julia is 18 and earned her Private Pilot Certificate (ASEL) at age 17. She is currently working on her instrument rating and Glider add-on rating.

Our chapter graciously paid for a Pilot's Workshop instrument class for Julia. She loves it and has found that it is helping to further her training.

She graduated from high school this May and will be attending UNR in the fall.

With a vision to become a bush pilot, Julia will be adding many ratings and endorsements to her portfolio over the next 6 months, so expect to hear more stories from her soon!



Julia imagines what it would be like to have a driver's license. Someday...

Build-A-Plane Update



*Murphy Elite (optional float version).
Wikimedia Commons – Magnus Manske*

For more than 11 years, Don Dixon has led the “Build-A-Plane” construction project at Minden-Tahoe Airport (MEV).

The project is under the umbrella of the Sports Aviation Foundation (SAF), a

501(c)(3) non-profit, dedicated to promoting youth STEM education, preserving local aviation heritage, and enhancing sports aviation.

Don estimates that more than 150 young people have worked on the Murphy Elite over the years. The airplane is a Canadian high-wing conventional gear (taildragger) design that resembles an old Cessna 170.

The builders are currently sealing the fuel tanks, and next on the list is to start the “firewall forward” tasks.

These include installing the firewall to the fuselage along with the engine mount structure, cooling baffles, wiring, fuel lines, control cables, etc., and eventually “hanging the engine” when everything else is ready for it.



Build-A-Plane Murphy Elite project

Our chapter helped Dixon to locate and procure the 160 hp Lycoming O-320,

Thanks to our Volunteers!

which was in an abandoned Piper Cherokee at “our” airport in Carson City.

The engine has logged 800 hours, so it has another 1200 hours of life before reaching the recommended 2,000 hours “TBO” (Time Between Overhaul).



Lycoming O-320 waiting patiently to fly again.

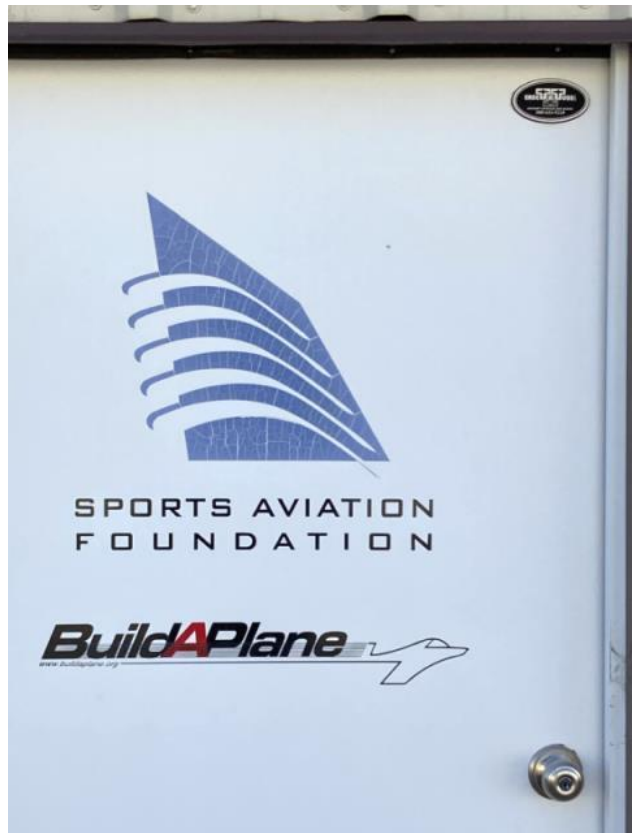
Don Dixon and Cliff Hunter have been working with young students for about three hours on the project on most Saturdays. They have recently asked for our help with accomplishing the firewall forward tasks, since neither of them has experience in this area.

Our chapter Technical Counselor, Jim Nunnelee, met with Cliff to take a closer look at the Build-A-Plane project so he can evaluate what still needs to be done, and figure out which tasks may be able to be performed by our young technical students.

Thanks to our Volunteers!



Jim and Cliff test-fitting the firewall to the fuselage.



The Build-A-Plane project is hangered at Minden-Tahoe Airport (MEV).

Simulator Update



Julia tries our simulator with the new flat screen monitors. Robert is standing by for coaching.

Julia: [Takes off smoothly from Carson-Tahoe Airport.]

Simulator: “Honk-honk, HONNNNK!”

Julia: “Wait, what? Is it stalling?”

Robert: “Remember you’re flying a 172!”

If you have noticed recent activity in our chapter simulator room, it is because we have made a mid-course correction to the simulator display.

It turned out that the projector arrangement was a bit finicky, and every little jolt or vibration caused the projectors to go out of alignment with the screen.

So we replaced the curved projection screen and two overhead projectors with three big side-by-side-by-side flat screen monitors. The result is a more stable display.

Reminder: The simulator is available as a benefit of chapter membership!



Young Eagle Flights

Our next YE Rally is scheduled for Saturday, June 13, along with a Pancake Breakfast! Last month’s Rally was postponed due to high winds, so if you think of it, do a “perfect flying weather” dance for our upcoming event!



Thanks to our Volunteers!

Monthly Guest Speaker



At our June general meeting, Chris Bueltel led an interesting discussion on using Virtual Reality (VR) with flight simulator software.



Chris is a dad, and brought his kids with him to the meeting. He also has 20 years of Information Technology (IT) experience, and is a student pilot with about 20 hours, working toward Private Pilot certification. He has been a member of our chapter for a year.



Chris demonstrated flying an F-18 and a World War 2 warplane.



Chris launched from Carson-Tahoe Airport in an F/A-18!

Thanks to our Volunteers!

While Chris was flying the simulator with realistic 3-D images in the VR headset, the rest of us could see the same images he was seeing, only in 2-D, on the big monitor screen.

Chris stayed after the end of the regular presentation for people who wanted to try out VR for themselves!



For anyone who missed the meeting, this short history video is instructive!

Brief History of Virtual Reality. Evolution of VR Technology (2:47)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyOqOjSwdVs>

TREASURER's REPORT

Significant Transactions & Activity from Treasurer Report for May 2026

- May 16 Pancake Breakfast grossed only \$168 due to wind-related cancellation of Young Eagles Rally.
- May 30 Lunch grossed \$320.
- Rob Baldwin (Regular) and Natalia Schmidt (Student) renewed their

Thanks to our Volunteers!

memberships. Thanks for supporting our chapter!

- Transferred \$5000 from checking to savings.

Balances as of 31MAY2026

1. Wells Fargo Savings: \$77,374.47
2. Wells Fargo Checking: \$2,095.79
3. PayPal: \$1,671.27

Total cash accounts: \$81,141.53 (\$2,085 designated for Ray Scholarship)

EDITOR's NOTEPAD



At Scott Valley Airport in northern California. The tandem gyroplane is a Magni M16.

I'm back from my flight training road trip to SW Oregon. I didn't quite make it to solo, but learned a LOT, and will probably need just one more concentrated push to solo and prepare for proficiency check flight for the add-on Gyroplane rating.

continued...

In mid-June, I'm heading east for a longer road trip that will include a visit to relatives, more building time on my Gyro Technic gyroplane kit, and volunteering at the EAA Air Venture event in Oshkosh WI, and at the Popular Rotorcraft Association (PRA) annual convention at Mentone IN. I should be back in early August for the rest of the year.

Finally, we have a new chapter member named Jonathan Sabin who reached out to me as a fellow gyroplane pilot! I look forward to meeting him in person when our paths cross.

Errata

When I was out of town in May, I left a draft copy of an "In Memoriam" article on former chapter members Jim and Jean Duensing. The piece was factual, and was summarized from an official online obituary.

But in my draft, I fancifully imagined that the Duensing's RV4 was "Corvette Yellow," until we could find someone who remembered the actual color. Unfortunately, this placeholder stayed in the article in last month's newsletter.

If any old-timers remember the *actual* color of the RV4, please let us know, and we will include it in a future issue.

IMC CLUB

The IMC Club meets on the third Thursday of every month at 1800 in the Chapter House. Tim Rowe leads the group.



MEMBER CLASSIFIEDS

WANTED: Wooden propeller to fit the old (tapered-shaft) Continental A65 engine that Jim Nunnelee's students are assembling. Any condition, any diameter, and any pitch is OK. Contact Jim Nunnelee at 775-790-1396.

FOR SALE: Rotax 914 MQ1 Predator Engine. \$17,500. This is a 2016 Drone Conversion by the U.S. Government. 135 to 140 hp. Logbook shows 362 hours.



FOR SALE: Ray Miller has a TOCSIN CO Cockpit Monitor for \$50. Call him at 775-225-0407 if interested.

FOR SALE: Replica World War 1 Fokker D-VIII kit project. Fuselage on gear. Kit includes fabric and initial paint. Asking \$7,000.



*Fokker D-VIII parasol monoplane, 1918.
Wikimedia Commons.*

For more information on the Rotax engine or the D-VIII kit, please call Ev Young at his home phone. 775-434-7424 (landline).

Larry Jones, 661-810-5272

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Board at Large



If the chapter house seems a little quieter than usual, we can thank our work crew for installing tasteful sound absorbing panels on the ceiling!

Thanks to our Volunteers!