

March 26, 2009

TO: EAA CHAPTER PRESIDENTS

Dear EAA Chapter President,

I am taking this opportunity to share with you a letter (via e-mail) I received from Larry Rothrock of EAA Chapter 14 in San Diego, California. For years it has been my recommendation that our chapters work closely to establish a working relationship with the local airport manager, the fixed base operator and elected officials. True, it will take some effort on behalf of the chapter presidents and their officers in making the time and commitment that would benefit not only the chapters, but aviation in the local community. With the aviation climate changing politically, as well as government involvement relative to the operation of all aircraft, it is imperative that we as EAA leaders and members become more involved. There have always been challenges of various degrees over the many years that I have been involved in aviation and the early days of EAA – user fees, airport restrictions or various government agencies not sharing the enthusiasm that we all desire.

I would appreciate any of your comments that I might pass on to your fellow chapter officers and members.

Sincerely,
Paul H. Poberezny
Founder
Experimental Aircraft Association
E-mail: ppoberezny@eaa.org

--- original message ---

From: Larry Rothrock
To: Paul Poberezny
Subject: Newsletter Chapter 14

Paul,

Thank you for sending us the nice note about our Chapter 14 newsletter, The Spirit of Flight. Our editor, Kerry Powell, and contributors are very proud of your email. I remember when you visited our rather remote chapter several years ago. I am proud of a photograph of you and me beside my VariEze taken during that visit.

In your email you mentioned our Chapter's work with the city of San Diego and I want to comment on it a little. For years we were unnoticed by the city and had few issues, but we were unable to have a long term lease on Brown Field. Things began to

change and development reared its head, so we initiated a strategic approach to ensure that Chapter 14 continued to survive and, indeed, to thrive on Brown Field. First among the steps was to evolve our Chapter into the most visible and respected aviation organization in the San Diego area.

One of these first steps was to host and moderate talks at our hangars by the candidates for San Diego mayor. We restricted the talks and questions to San Diego General Aviation's Future and Issues only and we supplied a large audience of San Diego pilots and aviation enthusiasts. These meeting went very well and the politicians were exposed to a significant number of voters who care about aviation. Subsequently, we have given talks about our chapter and the Young Eagles program at City Council Meetings and all other related public and government groups that seem suitable. We are careful to avoid any political partisanship and we are equally careful to avoid any public issues that are not directly related to general aviation. For example, we have not become involved in the heated public discussions regarding the possible relocation of San Diego's Lindbergh Field.

We have attended nearly all monthly meetings of the Mayor's Airport Advisory Committee (AAC). If we cannot find an issue to allow us on the agenda, we rise and speak about EAA-14 and aviation during the Public Comments period that precedes the meeting. The AAC is composed of members of the aviation community and of representatives of the neighborhoods surrounding the city's airports. During the last few years we have managed to have every aviation member of the AAC to be a member of EAA and even have recruited some of the neighborhood representatives to become EAA-14 members. Once or twice a year we invite the AAC to hold its monthly meeting at our hangars.

When the city announced plans to develop Brown Field, we stepped in and hosted meetings among the candidate developers, the city officials and the aviation community at our hangars. We had a series of four such meetings during the pre-proposal process. As a result we appear to be the point-of-contact with the entire aviation community and we have been able to influence the development direction and we are asked for our opinions on developments -- before they are cast in stone. We were able to have our vice president, Joe Russo, and a second Chapter 14 member to have votes on the city committee which actually selected the winning developer. This is a billion dollar, fifty year development plan, so it was very important. The developer who won the competition included many of our suggestions in his development plan. For example, there is a substantial zone of the airfield which is dedicated to small aircraft - not just general aviation aircraft, but small general aviation aircraft. That's a major concession and it came directly from our suggestion.

The Mayor's AAC has no effective public communication means, so we are attempting to make our newsletter the primary organ for communication with the San Diego aviation community by publishing the activities of the AAC. Bob Hitchcock, a

former president of EAA-14, is now an AAC member and writes a column about the Committee actions for our newsletter. We have invited the city's airport management and the control tower chief to write columns, too. This is all part of an approach to make EAA-14 the voice of general aviation and to become the conduit for the city's communication to the entire San Diego aviation community. Times are changing and we need to influence events if general aviation is to survive in a form that is accessible and affordable to the average citizen.

It has been a long process, but we have now negotiated a long term lease on Brown Field, we have expanded our present leasehold and we have options on future expansion areas. It is a continuing effort and requires constant pressure and vigilance by our Board of Directors and is nowhere near as much fun as flying -- but the results have been worth it.

Thank you for noticing our work.

Best regards,
Larry Rothrock, for EAA-14 Board of Directors