



Questions & Answers

Tom Poberezny, President

I receive letters daily from members with questions about EAA activities. AirVenture Oshkosh increases the number of letters significantly. “Oshkosh” was again an outstanding event. The vast majority of comments were positive, but there were questions and constructive criticism. Here’s a sampling, along with my responses:

Q: Previous editorials reported progress in the sport pilot/light-sport aircraft field, but the biggest obstacle is education. For example, many FAA offices know little about it, and flight schools are keeping their distance because they are uncertain about the rules. Word of mouth is spreading rumors as well as facts. Can EAA prepare a booklet explaining the facts?

A: Educating and earning acceptance of the sport pilot/light-sport aircraft (SP/LSA) initiative is a major undertaking. Initially, the perception was that sport pilot was for people who lost their medical. That was not our prime motivation. EAA’s vision was to break down the barriers of time and cost, encouraging people of all ages to learn to fly! A booklet, by itself, is not the answer, as that information has long been available from EAA.

Acceptance and validation of our vision took significant steps forward with the recent announcements by Cessna (SkyCatcher) and Cirrus (SRS). The introduction of their new LSA airplanes will accelerate the building of a sport pilot training infrastructure.

Q: I attended a forum in Oshkosh entitled Meet the Administrator—Marion Blakey and was extremely disappointed with EAA’s (Tom Poberezny’s) approach. He continually led the discussion away from user fees and treated Mrs. Blakey as an old friend, acting as though she was a great supporter of EAA.

A: It’s no secret that EAA and FAA Administrator Marion Blakey are on opposite sides of the user fee issue. That has been well documented over the past year and a half. Last year, at AirVenture 2006, it was a major topic at the Meet the Administrator session. But the game has changed. We are now fighting user fees in the halls of Congress. I hosted a user fee panel during AirVenture Oshkosh 2007 addressing what members can do. I also hosted the House Aviation Subcommittee on Saturday,

July 28, telling committee members we actively endorse HR Bill 2881, which does not contain user fees. To address user fees with the FAA administrator will not produce the needed results. We are now focused on Congress...it will be the decision-maker.

Aside from the user fee issue, Blakey’s tenure as FAA administrator has seen positive development in general aviation. She actively supported the development of the sport pilot/light-sport aircraft rules and brought together an FAA leadership team in Washington that is one of the best we have worked with.

Q: EAA’s policy of allowing nothing bad in *AirVenture Today* (the daily convention newspaper) or on the AirVenture website was the height of arrogance when nothing was said about the P-51 pilot who lost his life.

A: Recognition of the accident was published in *AirVenture Today* the following day, and a condolence message posted on the AirVenture website within 48 hours after the tragic incident. The delay was to ensure that family had been notified. A responsible government authority (FAA, NTSB, and local law enforcement) released the identities of the departed only after ensuring that next of kin had been contacted. This is a policy that EAA has followed for decades, seeing to it families are properly notified and assisted before the information is released.

Q: I’ve been an EAA member for almost 30 years and have only missed one convention in that time. We have attended many times as a family for one day each year, but recently started spending more time. There are several drawbacks in spending several days. They relate to port-a-potties, updating the facilities on the grounds and showers. Please consider updating the facilities.

A: I have established an AirVenture site task force to develop a plan that will lead to major enhancements on the EAA convention site. After AirVenture 2008, we will start making changes to the site, ranging from the campsite amenities to roadway and transportation improvements. The challenge is to do this within the context of building facilities that operate for essentially one week a year. Updates will be provided as we make progress. 