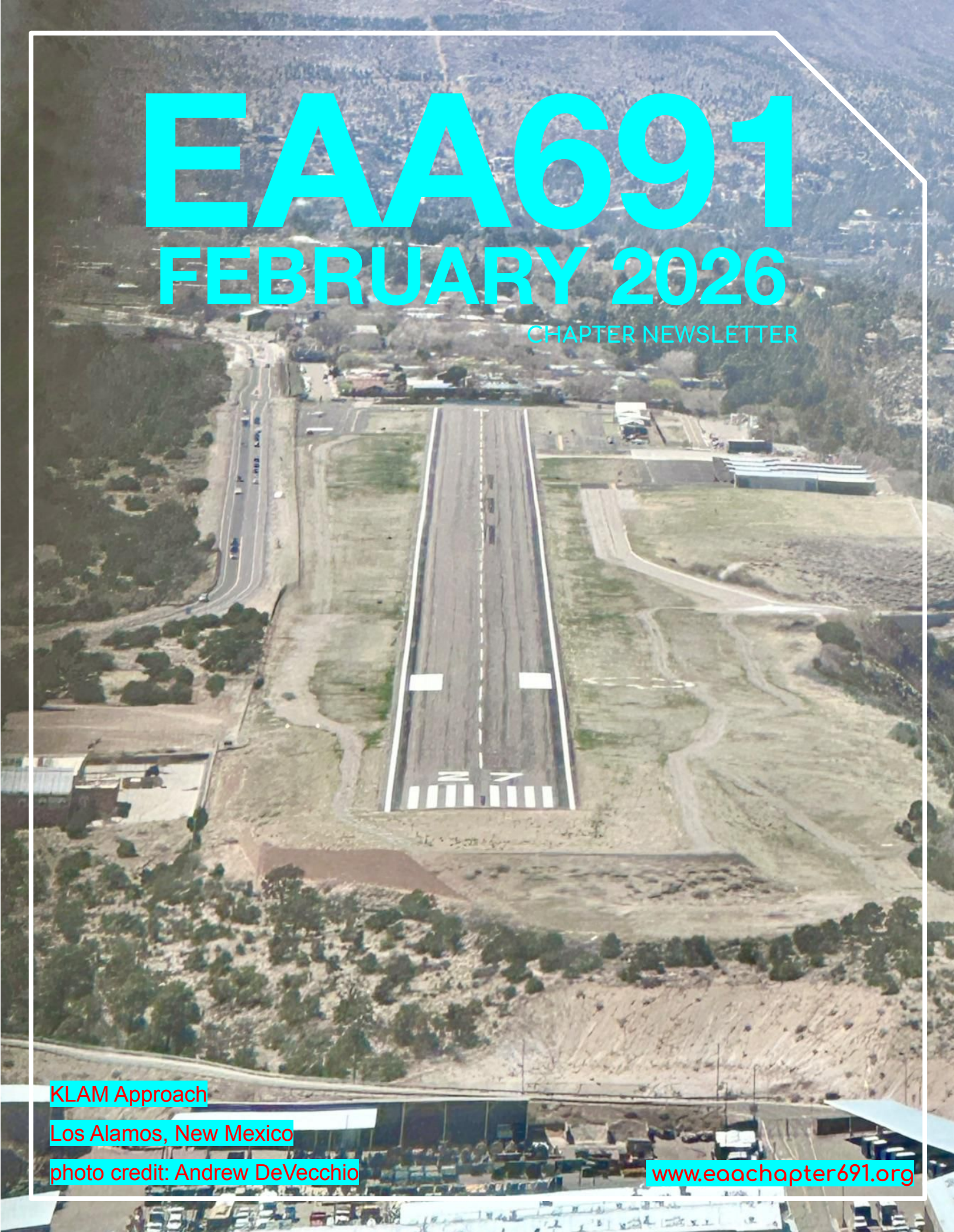
EAA691

FEBRUARY 2026

CHAPTER NEWSLETTER



KLAM Approach

Los Alamos, New Mexico

photo credit: Andrew DeVecchio

www.eaachapter691.org

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Letter from the Editor

by Andrew DeVecchio

I have to keep this one brief, time and travel are working against me.

A lot goes into getting these newsletters out, and the more input I get from all of you, the easier it is on me, and the more dynamic the newsletter becomes. So this month I've got a pretty direct question I think you probably have a great answer to, and I'm sure the rest of us would love to hear.

What's one of your favorite flight routes?

Maybe it's a canyon worth checking out, or a burger that's worth the trip. If you've got a destination to share with the chapter, that would be fantastic. If it includes waypoints, even better. Send something in and I'll be sure to publish it.

I'll start.

If you plug **34.68°N, 105.97°W** into your GPS, it'll take you to a plane that crashed out on Laguna del Perro dry lake bed. David Roe took me out to see it. It's a little tricky to spot. The white paint blends in easily with the landscape. I don't know the full story of how it ended up out there, but it's a good reminder that dry lake beds aren't always as dry as they look.

Send your suggestions to: **helloeditor691@gmail.com**

– Andrew

Upcoming Events

Saturday February 21st

Flying to Alaska in a Cessna 150: The Adventure of a Lifetime

Time: 9:30 AM Donuts and Coffee, 10:00 Chapter meeting, 10:30 Presentation
Place: Terminal Building, Los Alamos Airport
1040 Airport Rd, Los Alamos, NM 87544
Questions: helloeditor691@gmail.com

In July of 1987, with just 90 hours of total flight time logged, Los Alamos pilot Will Fox set out on what would become one of the defining aviation adventures of his life — a round-trip flight from Los Alamos, New Mexico to Dillingham, Alaska in a Cessna 150.

Accompanied by his good friend Charlie, who was working toward his own private pilot license, they followed their flight instructor north through the Rocky Mountains, across the Canadian wilderness, over the Yukon, and into the vast terrain of Alaska. On the return trip Will and Charlie were on their own with just enough experience to get into trouble but still manage to find their way home. The journey would ultimately add another 90 hours of flight time and nearly 5,700 nautical miles to his logbook.

The presentation centers on the challenges faced by two very inexperienced pilots, and will recount the challenges of mountain flying in a small aircraft, navigating remote northern airspace, fuel planning across long wilderness legs, dealing with bad weather, engine problems, and the lessons learned from the trip.

More than three decades later, with 5,000 more hours in his logbook, 1500 hours of flight instruction, multiple ratings, and having flown more than 30 different kinds of aircraft he will describe what it was like to chase adventure in a 100-horsepower airplane — and why the experience remains, to this day, the adventure of a lifetime.

Upcoming Events

Saturday March 21st

MOSAIC: New Rules for Pilots, Aircraft and Maintenance

Time: 9:30 AM Donuts and Coffee, 10:00 Chapter meeting, 10:30 Presentation
Place: Terminal Building, Los Alamos Airport
1040 Airport Rd, Los Alamos, NM 87544
Questions: helloeditor691@gmail.com

Keith Tschohl will be giving a presentation on the changes coming to general aviation.

Stay tuned for more information.

President's Report

by Will Fox

Just what is in the "mind's eye"?

What's In Store For 2026

At the January meeting, Skip Egdorf gave us a great presentation on what's really involved with the installation of a new or overhauled engine in your aircraft. From rebuilding hoses and engine baffles to the use of new hardware and engine controls. Skip has looked at the problem more from the view of a firewall forward project than a simple engine swap. Skip's presentation is on our Chapter YouTube channel so take a look at it if you get a chance.

I will be giving a presentation this Saturday, February 21, 2026 at the Los Alamos airport about my trip to Alaska and back in a Cessna 150. I was a baby pilot at the time, with only two months since I passed my Private Pilot checkride. The very thought of flying to Alaska was like a dream come true. The plan was for me and my buddy Charlie to fly up to Dillingham which was on the southwest coast of Alaska in the C150 while following our instructor Steve. He was ferrying a C140 up to a buddy of his who ran a Bush Flying outfit. Steve planned to fly back on an airline and Charlie and I would try to find our way home in the C150.

During the trip back we ran into a really bad thunderstorm that forced us to make and emergency landing. To this day I have a very clear picture in my "mind's eye" of that event. We came very close to buying the farm. I hope during the talk to try to paint a picture for you of what happened, how lucky we were, and what we learned. I might have a couple other good stories to tell as well.

The meeting will begin at 9:30 in the terminal building with coffee and pastries, followed by a short business meeting at 10:00 and the presentation, beginning at 10:30.

Check out our Chapter YouTube channel for the latest videos at
https://www.youtube.com/@eaachapter691
For a schedule of upcoming events, go to the Chapter website at
https://www.eaachapter691.org/upcoming-events/

Flyers Almanac

February into March: Restless Skies

by ChatGPT / Andrew DeVecchio

By early February, northern New Mexico begins to move out of its most static winter pattern. January's persistent cold pools gradually loosen as broader Pacific systems return with greater frequency.

The result isn't necessarily warmer weather — but more motion.

Stable stretches still occur, particularly early in the period, but pressure gradients sharpen and wind events become more common. Day-to-day variability increases as winter edges toward spring.

Upper-Level Flow and Mountain Effects

Late winter often brings strengthening westerly to southwesterly flow aloft.

- 9,000–14,000 ft MSL winds commonly 25–40 kt
- Increased mountain wave when flow is perpendicular to terrain
- More frequent lee-side turbulence east of major ranges

Surface winds may begin light but increase with afternoon mixing. Downwind of the Sangre de Cristo and Jemez ranges, expect localized sink, turbulence, and gusty crosswinds during passing systems.

February into March is often windier than January.

Temperatures and Surface Conditions

Temperatures trend gradually upward, but cold remains persistent.

- Highs 40–55°F
- Lows 10–25°F
- Large diurnal swings under clear skies

Cold-soaked aircraft remain a factor after consecutive freezing nights. Snowfall becomes more event-driven, followed by daytime melt and evening refreeze. Patchy ice and braking variability deserve close attention, especially near sunset at higher elevations.

Transition Toward March

By early March, variability increases.

Stronger systems, sharper temperature gradients, and more frequent wind shifts define the period. Visibility improves, daylight lengthens, and the urge to fly returns.

So does the wind.

Pilot Takeaway

February into March on the northern New Mexico plateau is a season of movement.

The light stretches longer. The ramp thaws in the afternoon sun. The sky looks inviting.

Winter doesn’t leave abruptly here — it loosens its grip in the wind.

Fly.
And listen carefully to what the wind is telling you.

Expect:
Temp 50–20°F
Snowfall 4–8″ (event dependent)
Sunshine ~7–8 hrs/day
Wind W–SW 10–18 kt avg, gustier with passing systems
Precipitation: snow showers, occasional mixed events

Tech Corner:

Rough Field Takeoff

by Will Fox

Imagine landing on an airstrip covered with these kinds of stones

A little while ago, four decades ago if you want to be picky, I took a trip in a Cessna 150 from Los Alamos, NM to Dillingham, AK. Moments from that trip are as vivid in my mind today as the day I experienced them. One such moment was the day that I landed on an airstrip covered with river stones and not sure I could take off again.

I was in northwestern Alaska at the time and saw a beautiful little strip on the edge of a glacial lake. I was flying a 1977 Cessna 150 with my buddy Charlie in the right seat doing the navigation. We were pretty heavy with both of us, our camping gear, and our half full fuel tanks. We decided to land and check the place out. As was our custom, we made a low pass over the airstrip to look at the runway condition.

The strip wasn't very long and appeared to be surfaced with gravel sized stones. But it was long enough and smooth enough for the C150 with 600×6 tires (or so we thought), so we went ahead and setup an approach to land. As I got into the flare, I realized the stones were a little bigger than I thought. Pretty much committed to a soft field landing I put the mains down on the rather large river stones carrying some power to soften the touch down. What happened next caught us both by surprise. The airplane started to slow down very rapidly and rattle so bad I thought my teeth were going to fall out. I added some power and held the yoke all the way back to keep the nose wheel as light as I could as it touched down. Even with a fair amount of power the nose gear came down harder than I expected. As we banged to a stop I was worried that the nose gear might give up the ghost and break off. Fortunately it didn't, thanks to the Cessna engineers that designed it to stand up to all sorts of ham fisted abuse by student pilots. Charlie and I got out to look the gear over and make sure it was still all in one piece. That is when we saw how truly rough the

runway was. The runway was made up of softball sized and larger rocks that were packed together to form the surface. We left the plane right where it was to look around and ponder the situation. I wasn't sure we would be able to accelerate to takeoff speed on such a rough surface.

Charlie suggested that we unload some our camping gear and that I should try a take off without him. Charlie was a pretty smart guy. If I crashed on takeoff he wouldn't be in the airplane when it happened. If I did manage to take off, but it was marginal, I would fly to another airport to get help. If the takeoff went OK, I would come back to pick him up. So we unloaded enough camping gear to keep him alive for a week if I had to go for help, and with full up elevator and a considerable amount of power, I back taxied the C150 for a takeoff attempt. I didn't stop taxiing when I got to the end of the runway but continued to roll while I made the turn and gave it full power as soon as I straightened out. Acceleration was very slow at first, but as the nose wheel lifted off it increased quite a bit. The plane came off the ground pretty quickly after that, so I flew around the pattern a few times to burn off some more fuel and landed to pick Charlie and our gear up. The landing still shook the plane and rattled my teeth. Charlie and I loaded up the gear and shoved everything as far back in the baggage compartment as we could to make the nose lighter.

With Charlie and all our gear on board it took 50% power just to taxi the plane. That was not encouraging. I had picked a takeoff abort point half way down the runway and was looking at it as we turned around at the end of the runway. I shoved the throttle to the stop. I had the yoke back as far as it would go including that half inch where it is really hard to pull. The acceleration was really slow. I was thinking we should have taken our boots and clothes off and thrown them in the back too. The shaking and rattling got worse as we gained speed. The front wheel finally came off the ground a couple of hundred feet before the abort point. We still didn't have flying speed as we passed the abort point but we only needed another 5 knots, so we both yelled "Keep going" at the same time. The C150 finally lifted off a good 300 feet from the end of the runway, and suddenly it was very quiet. Charlie and I looked at each other and laughed and cheered. Off we went to our next adventure on a trip of a lifetime.

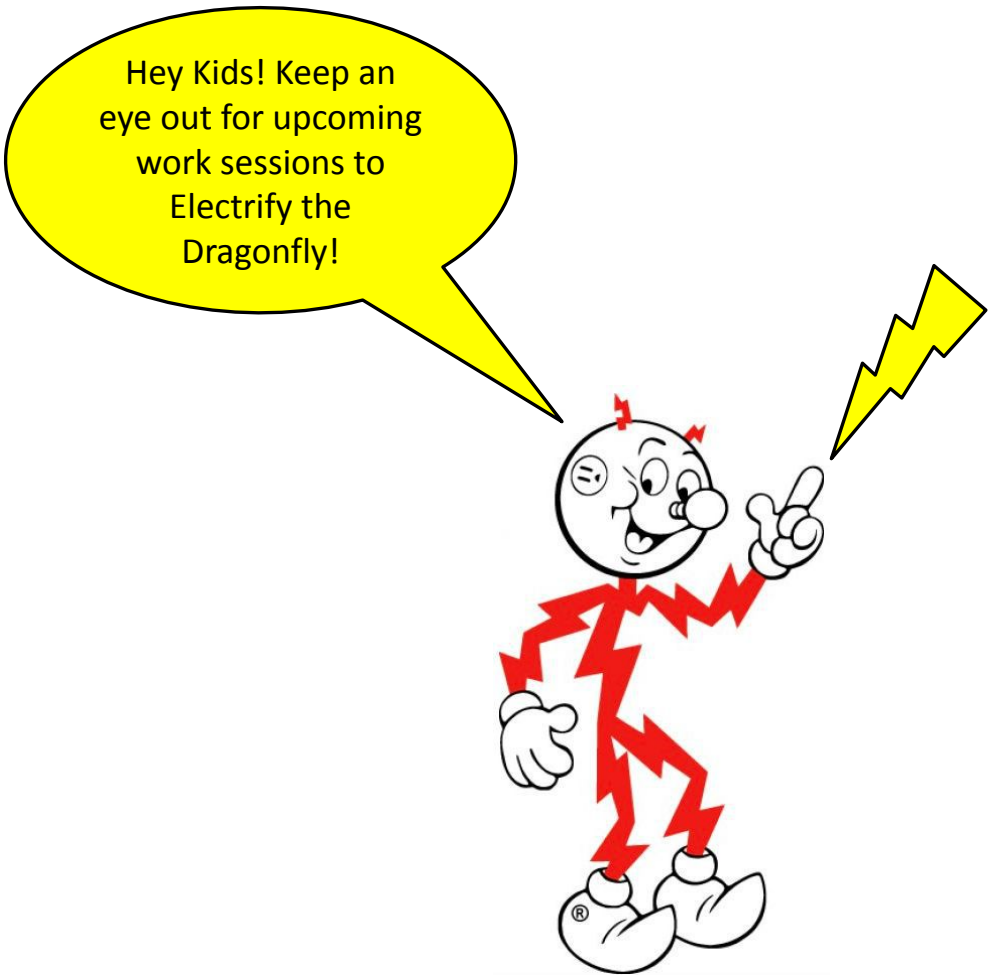
The moral of the story is if it looks like gravel from the air, it is rocks. If it looks like rocks, it is probably boulders.

☺

Dragonfly Project Update

Stay tuned here. I'll have some updates on the brakes, wheels, fairings, new firewall forward, and new panel and instruments in the following months.

We haven't stopped working but with the holidays and cold weather we have slowed down a bit.



Editors Log: Kitfox N39RW

by Andrew DeVecchio

Momentum on this project has been hard to sustain, but thankfully Will Fox flew down to Santa Fe to lend a hand this month. We picked back up on the rudder pedal brackets that David Roe and I started last month. We didn't quite get them finished, but we built a solid plan, and when I get back I should be able to wrap them up.

We had some good hangar talk and a nice lunch. I can't overstate how much it helps to have chapter members involved, especially when motivation starts to dip. It's not a lack of desire to get it done. Sometimes progress just slows when life gets hectic.

I probably sound like a broken record by now about this slow progress. It's humbling. I'd love to build something someday, likely from a kit, but even that time commitment is beyond my budget at the moment.

With some tools borrowed from David, I was able to transfer the rivet holes from the brackets onto the rudder pedal tubes. A little cleanup is next, and then I'll be able to install them properly. After that, I can finally get back to the brake lines that started this whole mess in the first place.

Catching Up

by ChatGPT / Andrew DeVecchio

The Minimums That Move

When was the last time you updated your personal minimums?

Not thought about them.
Not referenced something you wrote down years ago.
Actually updated them.

Most of us have numbers in our heads. A crosswind limit. A ceiling we're comfortable with. A gust spread that starts to feel like work instead of fun. And at some point we decided those numbers were "ours."

But here's the uncomfortable part:

Personal minimums aren't permanent.

The airplane may be the same. The regulations haven't changed. The runway is still the same length.

But you are not the same pilot every day.

Some days you're current, sharp, and well-rested. Some days you haven't flown in three weeks and work is still buzzing in the back of your mind. The weather might be identical — but your capacity isn't.

And that's where the drift begins.

We tend to treat personal minimums like regulations. Fixed. Defined. Reliable.

But they were never meant to be rigid.

They're meant to protect us from ourselves — from overconfidence on good days and quiet rationalization on average ones.

Because minimums don't only change with the weather.

They change with currency.
With fatigue.
With distraction.
With the subtle pressure to “just make it work.”

An 18-knot crosswind doesn’t feel the same after three weeks off as it does after three recent landings in gusty conditions. A 3,000-foot ceiling looks different when you’re relaxed and current than when you’re slightly behind the airplane.

The dangerous assumption is this:

If it was fine before, it’s fine today.

But personal minimums aren’t a record of what you once handled successfully.
They’re a reflection of what you can handle *right now*.

And right now is always moving.

Flying has a way of rewarding honesty.

Not dramatic honesty — just quiet, internal calibration.

There are days when the air is moving more than it appears from the ground. Days when the wind has a little more edge to it. Days when you’re technically legal, technically within limits, technically capable.

But “technically” isn’t the standard personal minimums were built for.

They exist for the version of you who is a little tired.
A little rusty.
A little distracted.

They exist to absorb the gap between what you’ve done before and what you can do well today.

And that gap shifts.

Sometimes upward, when you’re sharp and current.
Sometimes downward, when you’re not.

The discipline isn’t in setting personal minimums once.
It’s in adjusting them honestly — before the throttle goes in.

Before engine start, ask:

- **When was my last flight?**
- **How sharp do I actually feel today?**
- **If this were a checkride, would I launch?**
- **If conditions worsen slightly, do I still have margin?**

Personal minimums aren’t static numbers written in a logbook.

They’re moving boundaries.

And the safest pilots are the ones willing to move them.

EAA Chapter 691 Membership Application/ Renewal Form

Please consider making a donation to our 501c(3) non-profit by mailing this form along with $35 to our Chapter Treasurer, Checks can be made out to <u>EAA Chapter 691</u>:

David Young
819 Gonzales Rd
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Name: _____
Spouse/partner's Name: _____
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Please list your currently flying A/C and any finished or in-progress projects:

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