

## *The reality of the dream of flight in Canada “The Silver Dart”*



Read all about it.....page 3!

## *April Meeting*

El Presidente opened the meeting to a large turnout. We had two new members show up and one of them was a Dave Kalbraith from Oakville.....he added a great one liner saying he used to be a full size pilot but “this” is more cost effective.....[wait till he puts a couple “in” or gets into the “techie” side of the hobby!].

Without further ado, Don Wilding took the floor handing out Air Show flyers [not to be distributed to the public at this stage].

Jack Linghorne, who is the Event Director for the June 6th Electric Fun Fly, announced that Jack Devito was not available to BBQ the delectables on the day and was looking for a volunteer.....no one jumped in so Pres Percy said he would find someone for the event.

Bruce McFetridge was given the floor. This is the guy whose information flyer we attached to Fliteline re micro video cameras for “in flight” action. The camera “is” small but fully automatic and it can record for 56 minutes running on 2 triple A batteries. The cost is \$249.00 and it comes with a 2 year warranty. Sound as well.....cool stuff !

At this point, our speaker for the evening was introduced.....Gerald Haddon, grandson of J.A.D. McCurdy .....of Silver Dart fame. A full copy of his speech begins on Page 3.

Following Gerald’s talk and questions from the floor, we held the usual raffle and Percy reminded everyone about next month’s Beauty Contest. As usual, there are 3 categories — Novice, Sport and Scale.

Just before the close, Brian jumped up [well, not really, how about lumbered] and reminded everyone that May 5th was ground school day for new student aircraft to be “picked apart” .

Meeting closed.

## *March Swap Meet*

We were lucky with the March 1st date for the annual swap meet this year. Unlike previous years, we did not have to contend with a snowstorm, resulting in people stranded in ditches or just not even trying to get to it . One year it rained so much the night before the meet that all my signs took on the appearance of used Kleenex !



This year the weather was bright and sunny, albeit somewhat cold. When I arrived at the hall to begin setting up, the temperature was just approaching –11C.

Fred Wolfbauer suggested that we have a table this year given to items donated to the Club that members no longer want, allowing the Club to sell the stuff and keep the proceeds. Many thank to Fred who “primed the pump” so to speak. This worked out well. For the next year, I suggest that members accumulate items no longer wanted for next year’s donations table. The Club made \$67.00 from member donations!! Thank you!!

Many thanks to my son Ian who came with me on Saturday to set up the hall, and to Sacha who manned the donated goods table and helped tear down the hall after. Also, many thanks to the members who stuck around to put the tables back after. We rented a total of 21 tables, and (at a cut rate) rented space to others who needed space but didn't get a table. There were a total of 96 paying customers who came into the swap meet.



- The Air Show under Don Wilding's Chairmanship seems to be taking shape. Plans are afoot for CTV's Breakfast Show and The Weather Channel for promotion so stay tuned! This year, catering will be outsourced.
- The South Field was discussed in detail but please see following notes on this subject.

## *South Field Road*

The South Field road has been a bone of contention for the past couple of years with many Club members, especially those driving cars [not so much for those driving vans or SUV's]. As you all know, we have been under notice for several years by the Developers that construction was fairly imminent ...as a result, the Club has been somewhat reluctant to put money into the road. Also, for a couple of years, we were asked not to make any road improvements. Our new President, Percy Ford-Smith, has been advised that we can repair the road but must not incur any liens on the property. Accordingly, in early winter last year, work was done to level the road and fill the larger Muskoka lakes in the mid section.

Since that time, we have told existing and new members that the road would be made driveable this year and, as a result, we got back a few members. It should also be noted that some members using the South Field were "suggesting" they could leave the Club if the road was not repaired.

Spring has arrived and the although some parts of the road are better, some are worse. Frank Pilih [South Field Manager] and his wife, Kathy, have been working their hearts out for the past couple of weeks re-spreading gravel, digging draining ditches and moving concrete blocks down to the bottom of the road where the stream this Spring has turned into a river. They have carried the blocks from Dundas almost to the flying field as the road has been so soft to drive on! Frank "eloquently" put us all on notice that "something had to be done and fast".

Well, following the Executive meeting, we had an on site meeting and it has been unanimously agreed that we will order additional road tailings/gravel and build some proper drainage into the mid road section. The work will start the week of April 26th.

Please look at the road photos on Page 7.

The Financials are as follows:-

Entrance fees	\$384.00
Table rentals	\$220.00
Sale of Donated items	\$ 67.50
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$671.50</b>
Expenses	
Advertising in MAAC	\$132.50
Hall rental	\$65.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$197.50</b>
Net contribution to OMFC	\$474.00

Erik Genzer

## *Executive Meeting*

The following items were discussed:-

- Todate, the club has 125 members, including 3 new pigeons.
- The North Field Porta Potty will arrive on May 11th and remain until October 19th.....so please hold your water till then!

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you so very much John Pretty for your kind and gracious invitation to speak to The Oakville Milton Flying Club.

W. E. B. Du Bois said that the most important thing in life to remember is this: be ready at any moment to give up what you are for what you might become – and that is how my grandfather, The Honourable John Alexander Douglas McCurdy, lived his life.

My earliest recollections come from numerous summer holidays spent with my grandfather as a young boy and visits to Government House in Halifax when he was Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia. My grandparent's Baddeck home was nestled on a three-acre plot of land overlooking the scenic Bras d' Or Lake, the same expanse of water from where McCurdy made the first flight in Canada and The British Empire on February 23rd, 1909, in a plane he designed and built, called the Silver Dart.

One afternoon, he described to me how that historic event took place. The day was cloudless; the temperature minus 15 with no wind and it seemed almost the whole countryside had turned out to see what was going to happen. Many of the old-timers had come fully prepared to witness a crash. Finally, the Silver Dart was positioned on the ice by several people on skates and, after checking that all was in order, McCurdy gave the signal to let go. The Silver Dart had gone about 100 feet along the ice when, all of a sudden, she rose gracefully into the air to an elevation of about 60 feet, traveling at 40 miles per hour for approximately 50 seconds.

What my grandfather remembers most about the flight were the highly skeptical villagers who had come to see what would happen and had predicted disaster, and the excitement on the face of Dr. Bell. Everyone was thrilled by what they had just witnessed and urged my grandfather to go up again. He said it was as if he had had about two shots of whisky. He wanted to do it two or three more times. However, as prudent as always, and recognizing the importance of what had just taken place, Alexander Graham Bell said "What we have seen just now may well prove to be one of the really important pages in history. Douglas, you can fly her again tomorrow if you like, but that's all for today."

How then did Bell and McCurdy meet and their two families become so entwined?

Bell came to Nova Scotia in 1885 to escape the oppressive summer heat and humidity of Washington, D.C. and stumbled upon one of the scenic jewels of Canada, the picturesque village of Baddeck, situated on the Bras d' Or Lake, in the heart of Cape Breton Island. The magnificent scenery, which reminded him of his native Scotland, immediately seduced him and the temperature was cool. Bell hated hot weather.



One day, as Dr. Bell was walking alone Baddeck's main street, he happened to glance through the window of the Cape Breton Is-

land Reporter and noticed a man trying to fix his telephone. Bell entered the office, offered to help, took the phone, quickly dismantled it and pulled out a dead fly. After reassembling it with lightning dexterity, he returned it to the startled gentleman, who turned out to be J.A.D. McCurdy's father. Upon asking how he fixed the phone so adeptly, Bell replied ... "Well ... I invented it."

The two men soon became fast friends, with Arthur McCurdy ultimately becoming Bell's personal assistant.

Having lost two sons in infancy, Bell wanted to adopt my grandfather, so strong was the bond that had developed between the two. A Scottish Aunt, named Aunt Georgina, who had been charged with looking after Arthur's McCurdy's four young children, following the death of their mother Lucy, got wind of Bell's intentions. Firmly putting her foot down, she said, "J.A.D. McCurdy was born a McCurdy, and by God, he will die a McCurdy." And that was the end of that. However, Bell did become a godfather to my grandfather and throughout his childhood he could be found at Beinn Bhreagh, Bell's summer residence, helping Bell with his glider and kite experiments.

McCurdy was barely 20 when he completed his engineering degree at the University of Toronto in 1906 and returned to Baddeck. He invited his best friend, Casey Baldwin, a fellow engineer, to join him for a two-week holiday. Baldwin's vacation would turn into a forty-year visit, such was the allure of Cape Breton and the opportunity of working with one of the world's greatest inventors, Alexander Graham Bell.

I recall my grandfather relating to me how the aeronautical powerhouse - the Aerial Experiment Association - was created. "It was on a windy, miserable night in September, 1907 and Dr. Bell, Casey Baldwin and I were all in the big living room of Beinn Bhreagh warming our backs against the fireplace and talking over our kite flights of that day. Mrs. Bell came in with some hot coffee, watched the conversation for a few moments and said: 'Now Alex, you have some pretty smart engineers here. Why don't we form an organization?' " Thus, the Aerial Experiment Association was born on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1907.

Not only was the original suggestion that of Mrs. Bell, but it was she who insisted upon financing the AEA. Members of the group called themselves "Associates" and were five in number: Alexander Graham Bell, Casey Baldwin, J.A.D. McCurdy, Thomas Selfridge and Glenn Curtis. The Aerial Experiment Association was formed with one purpose in mind ... "To get a man into the air."

Some other interesting facts in Canada's aviation history are that McCurdy is attributed with sending the first wireless message in August, 1910 and with sending and receiving the first wireless air to ground transmission while aloft in 1911.

In 1910, McCurdy became the first Canadian to be issued a pilot's license and he and Baldwin formed the first aircraft production company, The Canadian Aerodrome Company in April 1909. He opened Canada's first aviation school, The McCurdy Flying School, in 1915 and was chiefly responsible for the founding of the Royal Canadian Air Force along with W. G. Barker and W. A. Bishop.

Those of you who have earned your pilot's license, or are training for one, will be interested to know what the test was back then in order to obtain one's aero certificate. "The candidate had to make two distance flights, consisting of at least five kilometers each in a closed circuit, without touching the land or water. These flights were made in figure eights and at least 8 figure eights had to be made. Then the aviator had to make an altitude flight of at least 328 feet ... and to descend from that height with his motor cut off. His landing had to be clean and he had to come to rest within 164 feet of a designated point. For these tests, he had to be alone."

Having accomplished what it set out to do, the AEA disbanded on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1909 and McCurdy, forever thinking ahead, wanted to convince the Canadian government of the potential of the aeroplane for commercial use and

for any future conflicts. Arrangements were made with Ottawa to have Baldwin and McCurdy come to Petawawa to demonstrate the Silver Dart's flying capabilities in front of the appropriate Military Officers. I recall my grandfather saying that he made five flights all without incident in August 1909, except for the last one, when he came in to land and his wheels sliced into the sand so deeply, that the Dart went over on her nose and was demolished. Unfortunately, the officials solemnly ruled that flying seemed to have no place in modern defense. McCurdy was very disappointed that nothing came from his aerial demonstrations. However, eventually in 1922, a new Canadian government established the Canadian Air Force, which became the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1924. McCurdy's dream that Canada have its own air force - originally proposed by him in 1909 - finally became a reality.

McCurdy was considered to be the best flyer of the AEA and even of the world at that time. He thought to himself, why don't I do a little barnstorming myself, make some money and hone my flying skills at the same time? He and Lucien, his brother and business manager, decided to go to the United States where from the beginning, my grandfather was a sensational success, bringing thousands of people out to see him fly in various American cities. And as the temperature dropped, he and Lucien moved further south towards the warmer climes, until they eventually reached Florida.

One day McCurdy set himself the challenge of flying the 90 or so miles to Havana, Cuba from Key West, Florida. After being promised \$10,000 of prize money from the Cubans, McCurdy set off - with six American destroyers evenly spaced between Florida and Cuba to help guide him - and fetch him from the shark-infested waters should he come down. He got within a mile and a half of the mainland, but was forced down because of a defect in the engine.

Later examination of the motor revealed that there was a burned crankshaft bearing, causing the aeroplane to lose its oil. Nevertheless, the Cubans were so impressed by McCurdy's courage and flying skills, which he had demonstrated to them in a second plane that he had shipped to Cuba in case he had to ditch in the ocean, that President Gomez held a State Banquet in his honour and presented him with the cheque for \$10,000.00. The envelope in itself was a piece of art with the President's seal affixed on the back.

My grandfather did not open it until he reached the privacy of his hotel room after the State Dinner was over. Then, when he broke the seal, he found nothing but a few newspaper clippings. My Grandfather however made the longest flight over water at that time - over ninety miles - a world record.

On the personal side, my grandfather taught me to hold my ground in discussions as long as I was respectful of others. Here is a modern day story, which illustrates what he was trying to teach me.

When the CF—18 Hornet came into service, cracks developed at the base of the two rear stabilizers. A meeting of all the top engineers was convened, where the problem was discussed, with no solution in sight. Finally, from the back of the room, a young graduate engineer stood up and said “Excuse me sir, but I think I know how we can solve the problem. The air, coming over the wing, is causing white tornadoes; these are hitting the stabilizers full force and making them vibrate - with cracks subsequently developing at the base. To correct the situation, two small fins need to be placed on either side to break up the airflow.”

The older engineers treated his suggestion with disdain. The F-18 continued to fly and the problem only exacerbated. A short time later, another meeting was called. Again, from the back of the room, rose the same young engineer who said “Sir: I still feel the resolution to the problem can be found in my suggestions from our last meeting.” And so, wind tunnel tests were conducted and the engineer’s solution was proven to be correct. Two fins are now attached to the fuselage of every F-18 Hornet. As with this engineer, my grandfather always stood by his convictions.

After the Second World War, Prime Minister King appointed McCurdy, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia in 1947. As the King’s Representative, McCurdy relished his new position because it provided him the opportunity to serve his Province from where so much of his worldwide fame came.

In his Vice-Regal position, he met people from every station in life and invariably treated each individual exactly the same. On one of my visits to Government House, when I was sitting in the beautiful wood-paneled library in front of a roaring fire, he asked me how I was getting on at my [boarding] school. I replied that sometimes it was difficult to live with people in close quarters, seven days a week.

Whatever he accomplished in his post as Lieutenant Governor, it was McCurdy’s talent for maintaining the common touch - in spite of the required dignity of his official position - which endeared him to the thousands who came to know him. And, to a young boy such as myself, he was a magnificent figure in his official uniform. He truly was my hero.

In 1951, he entertained Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh at a State Dinner in Government House. Afterwards, I asked him what his impressions were of the young Princess. He replied that he thought her “altogether lovely and clever, but just a little frightened.” When I asked him if he had anything to tell her, he said: “I told her to stay just the way she was, and not to try too hard to grow great or serious. If she could do that, I told her, she would make a wonderful sovereign some day.”

As his fame spread, he rarely mentioned his numerous accomplishments. He always turned a conversation towards the other person. He was modest and humble about his achievements, quoting Confucius to me: “Humility is the solid foundation of all virtues.” And that is how he based his interaction with other people.

Seldom did he mention his flying achievements or his numerous awards. When, in 1959, the Queen made him ... an Honorary Air Commodore, my family had to pry this unique piece of news out of him. [The only other person, at the time, sharing the same distinction was ... Sir Winston Churchill].

I had the privilege of being part of the team, aptly named the AEA 2005 Group, which built the 2009 Silver Dart replica, and I can only imagine the joy and pride of those who designed the original.

Last year I had heard that a replica was being constructed by a group of volunteers in Welland, Ontario. Wanting to meet this group, I arranged to be taken to the hangar unannounced. The highlight of the visit was looking at the Silver Dart, feeling it and being allowed to sit in the “cockpit”. At first, my reaction at being so close to this national aviation emblem was similar to many others. I stood with my jaw ajar, staring in awe until the head engineer, thoughtfully broke the silence and began to give me a rundown on what he and his group had achieved in over 6000 hours of meticulous labour over a period of four and a half year’s of exacting work.

As I was preparing to leave, he asked me if I would like to work on the Silver Dart. When I strongly informed him that I possessed no mechanical skills, he calmly assured me that I would be shown the ropes. On arriving home, my wife was intrigued to learn of my new “job” offer, and fully aware of what I do not possess, politely enquired ... “Isn’t this plane meant to fly?”

When I started working on the replica, I was gently guided through the vastly complex task of putting wood, wire, tape, steel rods, grommets, bolts and nuts, all together to construct a flyable aeroplane. I relished every minute of being there and I realize what a privilege it was to be able to work on my grandfather’s aeroplane.

One of the many concepts my grandfather taught me, was that a life of giving would bring more fulfillment than a life of taking and I thought about this message as I toiled on his aeroplane. The total accumulative time that the Welland Group has put into this magnificent venture is – as I mentioned - over 6,000 hours, with many donating their tools and their own money. Those whom I have had the honour of meeting and working alongside, have rekindled in me the sentiments expressed by Sir Winston Churchill ... “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”

My wife Amanda, our 20-year-old daughter Emma, and I were down in Baddeck, Nova Scotia for the recent Centennial of Flight Celebrations. One hundred years later, the Aerial Experiment Association 2005 duplicated the 1909 feat by flying the Silver Dart-piloted by Canadian Astronaut Bjarni Tryggvason – over the same expanse of frozen ice. What a breathtaking moment it was to see the Silver Dart once again take to the skies. It was if time had stood still ... and when somebody asked me, “What would your grandfather do ... if he were with us today? I answered that he would probably say ... “Move over – I’d like to fly her now.”

As there are many pilots here tonight, I would like to relate to you how my grandfather described that historic moment, February 23rd, 1909, in his very own words ...

“The whole scene is still very vivid to me. It was a brilliant day in more ways than one. The sun was glaring down on the ice of Lake Bras d’Or, which is near Baddeck. The town had turned out in a festive mood, done up in mufflers and heavy fur hats. The town by the way consisted largely of very doubtful Scotsmen. Most of them were mounted on skates – the kind you strap to your feet. They didn’t say much – just came to wait and see.

The aeroplane, or aerodrome as it was called in those days, which I had christened the Silver Dart, was surrounded by people. During the early afternoon it was wheeled into place. The propeller was cranked and, ... with a cough, the motor snorted into life. I climbed into the pilot’s seat. With an extra snort from the motor, we scooted off down the ice. Behind came a crowd of small boys and men on their skates – most of them still doubtful that I would fly. With a lurch and a mighty straining of wires ... we were in the air.

It was amusing to look back and watch the skaters - they seemed to be going in every direction – bumping into each other in their excitement at seeing ... a man actually fly. In taking off ... I had to clear one old Scot, so doubtful I would fly, that he had started off across the ice with his horse and sleigh. I think they both had the daylights scared out of them. I travelled three-quarters of a mile at a height of about sixty feet before coming to the surface of the ice. I will say ... the doubtful ones overcame their feelings in short order.”

The Centennial of Flight Celebrations ... including the awe-inspiring Hawk One Sabre Jet, with its team of hugely gifted pilots, has been a resounding success. Having recently met some of the CMR Officer Cadets and three of Canada’s Astronauts, plus the Hawk One pilots, I can safely say that my grandfather would be immensely proud of the outstanding reputation of today’s Canadian Air Force.

The Honourable J. A. D. McCurdy, on his historic flight in the Silver Dart, unleashed the power of man to thrill, shock, elevate and set Canadians free from the pull of gravity. He put his hand on ... the “Arc of History” and bent it towards the milestone of Canadian aviation.

History now awaits Canada to make its mark in the 21st Century.

Thank you very much.

Following the formal presentation we had lots of questions from the floor.

It appears that the replica flew on February 22nd, 2009 a few days prior to the 100th anniversary. The weather on February 25th grounded the Silver Dart replica. On February 25th 1909 it actually flew some 20 miles [approx 33 kilos to the younger set].

The replica will be housed in a new building being built in Baddeck Nova Scotia where it will be permanently

housed later in the year.

The replica is powered by a rebuilt 1944 65 HP Lymington engine, which is some 25 HP larger than the original engine. The original propellor was just under 8' and the engine turned 1,000 RPM's. The replica prop was shortened twice to approx 71" in order to get sufficient RPM's they needed 2,000 with the replica engine.

Someone asked how Curtiss ever got involved in the original project.....Curtiss was approached because he was building motorcycle engines.

The replica will be returning to Welland for the original "old" engine to be installed. The brakes radiator and gas tank have to be remounted as per the original and the seat and seat belts, per Aviation Canada., will also be removed.

The aircraft will likely not fly again and it is too fragile to move around the county. However prior to returning to Baddeck it will be on display at the Russell Engineering Air Show in June [just off Sodom Road near Niagara Falls].

The original Silver Dart crashed in Petawawa in front of military brass in 1909 trying to interest the military in the aircraft.....it appears they felt it had no future, however within the next few years the RCAF was formed. Aircraft had arrived.

In 1933 Gerald's Grandfather went to Europe to visit aircraft engineers/manufacturers and he came across two things in Germany that stuck in his mind. One was the Zepplin's and the other was a young engineer named Willy Messerschmit. By strange co-incidence the Silver Dart was stored in Russell Engineering's hanger for a time....next to their beautiful and only original WW 11 combat Me 109E fighter still flying today.

**South Field Road Photos**



The above were taken BEFORE the recent rains!



Several committee members photographed by Frank, pointing out the required tree pruning for Jim Eichenberg....consider this your instruction Jim!!!

**That's all she wrote!**

## *Otterville RC Flying Club.....June Air Show*

Check this out!.....fly through a barn and win a \$1,000.00 !!!!!!! [I'd love to try this.....anyone have a spare aircraft??]

You are invited to attend Our 18<sup>th</sup> annual Air show that will be held on two days, **June 27 and June 28, 2009** at our club located on Rene and Nellie Goossens property near Otterville, Ontario.

You could win \$1000 cash for being the first fixed wing aircraft to fly through our Red Barn. Fly an airplane and receive a free meal. Take 401 to Woodstock and 30 minutes south on Hwy 59 to New Road. On site camping, no hook-ups.

Contact Rene Goossens at (519) 879-6854, [rnegoossens@execulink.ca](mailto:rnegoossens@execulink.ca) or visit our web site at <http://www.start.ca/users/g2v3bake/index.html>

Several hundred adults and children come and enjoy the many aircraft displays and flying demonstrations. Each year we raffle gifts for pilots and guests during the two-day event.

By holding this event we raise funds that help our community. Recently our club donated \$500.00 to the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital capital fund.

We would greatly appreciate if you could present this invitation to your members at your next meeting.

Thank you

Gary Baker, Club President



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Model Aircraft Club



*Invites you to their*  
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*Great Flying Site, Great Hospitality, Come and help us start  
the 2009 flying season with a SPLASH.*



*Saturday May 9th 2009 at*  
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[woody10@rogers.com](mailto:woody10@rogers.com)

## OMFC 2009 Executive

<b>President:</b>	Percy Ford-Smith	<b>North Field Manager:</b>	Bill Funnell
<b>Vice President:</b>	John Pretty	<b>South Field Manager:</b>	Frank Pilih
<b>Past President:</b>	Don Wilding	<b>Social Director:</b>	Jack Devito
<b>Chief Flying Instructor:</b>	Brian Anderson	<b>Field Acquisition Mgr.:</b>	Mike McDermott
<b>Assistant CFI:</b>	Mike McDermott		
<b>Web Master:</b>	Bert Armstrong	bert@virtuhost.com	
<b>Secretary Treasurer:</b>	John Ross	<b>Fliteline Editor:</b>	Mike McDermott
	1339 Grosvenor Street		mike.mcdermott@sympatico.ca
	Oakville, Ontario		
	L6H 3L4		
	Telephone: 905-845-8789		

## OMFC Meeting Dates for 2009

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>
Monday, May 4th	Meeting/ Beauty Contest.	Percy Ford-Smith

## OMFC Event Dates for 2009

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Event Director</u>
Tuesday, May 5th	Ground School [new students only]	Brian Anderson
Tuesday, May 19th	Start of Flight School	Brian Anderson
Saturday, June 6th	Hopedale Mall Show	Don Wilding
Saturday, June 6th	Electric Fun Fly	Jack Linghorne
Saturday, June 13th [14th rain date]	North Oakville Mall Show	Don Wilding
Sunday, June 21st	OMFC Air Show	Don Wilding
Sunday, August 9th / Monday, August 10th	Glider Aerotow	Frank Pilih
Tuesday, September 9th	End of Flight School	Brian Anderson