



# SPRING NEWSLETTER

May 2018

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Port Townsend Aero Museum

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## Port Townsend Aero Museum Spring Newsletter 2018 Changing of the Guard

The long-awaited parting of our winter cloud cover and the warmth of the resulting sunshine can only mean one thing here at the Port Townsend Aero Museum: Spring has finally sprung, and with it comes our twice yearly newsletter, in which I'll do my best to bring you up to speed on all that has transpired since our last installment. So without further adieu, buckle up and hold on, because here we go....

First off, you might be wondering about the title of this narrative, "Changing of the

Guard". Perhaps we've taken to posting guards at the aero museum entry to protect the amazing collection of art and aircraft? Nope. No guards. Our changing of the guard occurs each July through August, when our senior teenage staff leave the museum program as they set course toward a new horizon, one of either college or career. Some years we are "lucky" and only lose one or two of our teenage management staff. And then there are years like 2018, when we are forced to say "Good-bye" and "Good Luck" to four of our finest. If you have spent any time at the museum, especially on the weekends when the majority of our teenage volunteers



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*A new addition to our collection is this replica of a Boeing P12-C from the NCVAM Harold Hansen Museum*

are working, then chances are you've already met the four outstanding young adults I'm about to tell you about, and if not, you're in for a treat.

**Maria Morrison:** Maria first arrived at the aero museum to serve as a waiter at one of our annual fundraising dinner dances. It was 2011 and she was only 10 years old! During the event she impressed Jerry and Peggy Thuotte so much so that when she approached them in the following weeks about joining the youth program, she was accepted without





*16 year old Annie becomes the first passenger to ride in the museum's Travell Air 2000 in over 70 years.*



*Ally getting ready to start the museum's 1925 Ford Model T while Blill Sleeper stands back.*



*Caleb teaching Ryan how to rib stitch on a customer's UPF7 Waco.*

hesitation. To this day she remains the youngest member we have ever accepted. In the nearly eight years that Maria has been with us, she has grown from a little girl helping to clear tables into a young woman who's more than capable of running every aspect of the Port Townsend Aero Museum. Teaching a new volunteer how to properly greet and address the public, helping restore aircraft, instructing student pilot ground school (she is a certified instructor and private pilot), and introducing teenage volunteers to their first flight in a small aircraft, are all considered part of a normal day at the museum for Maria. With limited space available, I can only hope to provide a glimpse of just how phenomenal this young woman is, and the important role she has played in our program. Maria will be leaving us to start her college education at Duke University this August. I should mention, she is also wait-listed for Harvard and Yale, and if the call comes, which I suspect it will, she could be changing to either one of those schools. It is true that Maria's limit in life will only be governed by where she sets her sights.

**Christoph Webber:** Christoph first came to the museum when he was only twelve years old, driven by his desire to one day become a pilot. I guess you might call it a false start, because after only a few visits at this age, it was decided little Christoph needed to take a few years off from the museum and come back when he was ready. I remember thinking at the time "too bad he hadn't waited till he was older to volunteer", thinking we would never see him again. Was I ever wrong! A couple of years quickly passed, when one day in walks a tall blond-haired teenager who looked vaguely familiar. It was Christoph, and he was back to volunteer, right where he'd started a couple of years earlier. Since then Christoph has become a manager at the aero museum, helping to ensure that all he has learned is passed on to the next "generation" of young people coming up behind him. He's learned the art of fabric replacement on fabric covered aircraft and has assisted in numerous aircraft restoration projects. Christoph is now a fully licensed private pilot who is heading to the University of North Dakota, where he will start the next chapter in his story of becoming a professional airline pilot. I can hardly wait for the day that I'm sitting at a gate in SeaTac, when I see Christoph in his captain's hat, making way to his next flight. What a story that will be.

**Jacob Kurshbaum:** Jake started at the aero museum two and a half years ago, finding our program at the age of fifteen. Like so many before, it was word of mouth that led him to our program. From day one Jake presented himself as someone beyond his actual years. Being mature for his age certainly did give the museum a head start in bringing



him up to speed with our youth and aviation programs. In the time spent at the Port Townsend Aero Museum, Jake has earned his private pilot license, learned aircraft restoration through numerous projects he's helped complete, and like those mentioned above, became a manager in our facility helping to insure those coming up to continue down the same path to success. Like Christoph, Jake has his sights set on becoming an airline pilot. This fall Jake is going to attend the University of North Dakota, where he's enrolled in their outstanding aviation program, right alongside Christoph, who I suspect will be a lifelong friend. With any luck they will end up as captains for the same airline. If they do, it will certainly make my decision of which airline to fly an easy one to make.

**Ally Brady:** If memory serves me correctly, Ally was a classmate of Maria Morrison, and it was Maria who suggested Ally should stop in and inquire about the aero museum youth program. That was over two years ago, and Ally has been a key part of our program ever since. If you haven't had the pleasure of meeting Ally, I can tell you in terms of positive attitude and pleasantness of personality, she is at the top of the list. She is also at the top of our list of teens in line to earn their private pilot's license this summer. With her FAA Private Pilot License check ride scheduled for June 25th, she may already be a fully licensed pilot by the time you read this newsletter! Did I mention that last summer Ally was working two part-time jobs, and still making time for the aero museum at least one day a week. That's dedication, and exactly what it takes to be successful in today's world. It's the way it has always been, only somewhere along the way they seem to have stopped emphasizing its importance to our young people. Not at the Port Townsend Aero Museum! Ally will be leaving the museum late this July to start on her mechanical engineering degree at the University of Washington. With any luck, we'll get to see her on long weekends, when she hopefully can find the time to spend a day or two mentoring new volunteers at the aero museum.

As you can imagine, it is going to be a difficult summer for us as we say good bye to these four wonderful young adults. But knowing that we played a part in their future successes, makes the sadness of their loss worth bearing. In the coming years I'll look forward to hearing how far these museum volunteers manage to reach, and the positive influence they'll have on those around them, including each of us.



*Annie, Caleb and Maria installing the wing back on to the museum's Mooney Mite.*



*Lilly, Tyler and Christoph all working hard to assemble the Evergreen Soaring Club Pawnee.*



*Olivia, Ally, Pascual, Tyler and Lee Runion working on a recovering job for the Evergreen Soaring Club.*



The pending loss of senior staff volunteers is good news if you happen to be on the Port Townsend Aero Museum youth volunteer waiting list. This list is made up of young people who have interviewed for our program and are now waiting for a start date. In the last two months I have accepted six new teenagers into the program - Eddie, Zack, Ryan, Logan, Alwyn, and Sophie - bringing our current total to sixteen active teenage volunteers who are committed to a minimum of one day a week volunteering at the aero museum. I'm still setting a limit of sixteen teenage volunteers as a maximum "in program" at any one time. This seems to be a workable number for myself, Kevin Vogel and Rich Taracka (adult museum staff) to oversee at any given time, while keeping them busy with the museum operation, maintenance, aircraft restoration, and the flight training program.

**Speaking of our flight training program....** Caleb, a sixteen-year-old volunteer from Gig Harbor recently soloed in our Cessna 150. I happened to be outside in view of the runway when he made his first ever solo landing, and all I can say is "I wish every one of my landings looked that good!". This is as much a compliment to Caleb as it is to the amazing

group of volunteer flight instructors we are so very fortunate to have on call at the museum. I can say with confidence that if flight instruction was a team sport in the Olympics, the Port Townsend Aero Museum team of instructors would be wearing gold around their necks. I'm not kidding when I talk about the experience, the depth and the knowledge that our instructors are passing on (at no expense) to the kids in our flight program. Let me put this into perspective for you.... All combined, our current cadre of flight instructors have more than 250 years combined flight

experience. That's over twice as long as there have been aircraft motoring through the skies above! With this kind of experience on tap, it is no wonder we consistently produce exceptional private pilots, many of whom have gone on to be exceptional airline pilots. So, to Bill Sleeper, Terry O'Brien, Carl Nepute, Lee Runion, Bill Shepherd, Neil Morrison, Linda Morrison, Doug Vogel, Steve Craig and Jerry Thuotte a huge thank you for all you do and have done for the teenagers at the Port Townsend Aero Museum - teenagers who are quickly becoming the future pilots of tomorrow.



*Our fundraiser on the evening of June 9th was well attended. With good food, plenty of auction items and great music, it was a good time for everyone.*

Just like our new volunteers are looking towards their future, it's good to check in on some of our early volunteers to see what they are up to today. With Jerry and Peggy Thuotte having started this museum in 2001, some of these early "kids" are now in their 30s! It's hard to believe so much time has gone by since the museum first opened its doors, but just as time marches on, so did these early volunteers.... Doug Vogel recently returned from a six-month deployment with the US Navy where he flew his EA18 Growler in support of our freedom. Doug stops in as time allows, so he can act as one of our volunteer flight instructors. Jake Thibeault and Ben Peterson are both flying Boeing 737s for Alaska Airlines. Christine Thibeault (Jake's wife) is working as an engineer for Boeing while keeping her private pilot license

current. Jake, Christine and Ben all stop in from time to time to mentor the current roster of kids. Luke Jensen earned his Ph.D. from M.I.T. this June and will now be affiliated with Boeing Commercial Airplanes as Dr. Luke Jensen. Kyle Nyberg is working as an engineer for Blue Origin - a world leader in advanced rocket technology - located in Kent Washington. Michael Wilkinson graduated from WSU this year and received his first salute as a second lieutenant in the US Army from none other than Jerry Thuotte. Miguel Salguero will be in his third year at Cal Poly this fall. This summer Miguel will be working as an intern for Scaled Composites in Southern California. Seth Mulhausen will be a senior this year at Rocky Mountain College Aviation Program and will be working at Boeing Field this summer as a certified flight instructor building time towards his career as an airline pilot. Kevin Vogel is a full-time employee of the Port Townsend Aero Museum where he manages the restoration shop while working with the kids in our program. And lastly, remember Dan Thacker, the quiet kid from Kitsap? Dan is flying F-18s as an officer in the US Navy!

If it's been a while since you stopped in to see us in person, you may want to pay us a visit because we have several new aircraft on display, all of which are part of our permanent collection. As you enter the display area you'll be greeted by our recently completed 1928 Travel Air 2000 which is sitting right alongside a de Havilland Chipmunk that we received last December. Walking further into the collection, you'll come across a perfectly detailed 80% replica of a Boeing Model P12-C biplane from the 1930s, and a 1953 Mooney Mite, one of only an estimated 60 remaining in airworthy condition. Both the Boeing replica and Mooney were recently donated to us by the North Cascades Vintage Aircraft Museum in Concrete, Washington. We are very thankful to have received these last two aircraft from our friends up north. In our restoration shop we are busy restoring what will become our new flight training aircraft, a 1964 Piper Cherokee 140. Not just any Cherokee 140, but the very first Cherokee 140 to roll out of the factory. And to make it even more unique, this aircraft was originally given away on an episode of the 1964 game show "The Price Is Right" when new. Yes, this airplane was the Grand Prize one night on a black and white television show in the 1960s! We recently received this one-of-kind Piper from a gentleman who wanted to see it go to a good cause. Having sat outside for close to 20 years, our teenage volunteers are going to have their work cut out for them bringing this aircraft back to like-new condition. Once restored, this airplane will replace our Cessna 150 as our primary flight

training aircraft. All of our young pilots are very excited for the slightly larger and more powerful trainer to be on the flight line.

In our display building we are moving forward with the replacement of a never-used freight elevator that was installed when the building was new, and replacing it with a new elevator that for the first time will allow access to our upper levels for our disabled and elderly members and guests. At this point, our engineer has finished the drawings and calculations, both of which have been approved by our local building department. We are only waiting on a permit from Washington State before we begin the removal of the old unit and the installation of the new elevator. In case you have ever wondered what it would cost to convert a non-used freight elevator into an elevator capable of safely lifting people to a second floor, I can tell you. By the time the dust settles, our new elevator will have cost the Port Townsend Aero Museum \$50,000! I'm hopeful we will be able to pay for this long overdue elevator through the same contributions and donations that we rely on to keep the Port Townsend Aero Museum and its youth program growing and moving forward each and every year. Without the generous contributions from those who support the Port Townsend Aero Museum, we would cease to exist. It is only because of your support that we can continue to make a positive difference in so many young lives. Please, if you have the ability to help, send a contribution to ensure that the kids who have not yet arrived will have the same opportunities as those who came before at the Port Townsend Aero Museum.

That brings you up to date for the last six months. In the coming months we have numerous events planned at the aero museum. Everything from a young couple getting married in our display building, to an antique aircraft fly-in on August 18th. If you are in the area this summer, please stop in to say hello and have a look around. And by all means, take the time to introduce yourself to our teenage staff of volunteers. After all, they are the future, and when it finally comes, wouldn't it be nice to know that you'd already met at the Port Townsend Aero Museum.

Sincerely,

Mike







*We were happy to host an Antique Car Club at the Aero Museum. Give us a call to reserve time for your group.*



Learn more about PTAM. Visit our website [www.ptaeromuseum.com](http://www.ptaeromuseum.com)

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