



# The Flying Wire



January 2026

Volume 65 Issue 1

## Chapter 124 Experimental Aircraft Association

**Next Chapter Meeting: Wednesday, January 7**

**Dinner – 6:15 pm \$10**

**General Meeting – 7:00 pm**

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# Program: January 7 Meeting

## Speaker: Conor Bolke, KSTS Santa Rosa ATC Tower Controller

As you've likely noticed, Santa Rosa Air Traffic is growing! In fact, we've become quite the busy 'little' airport.

Commercial passenger service is continually expanding. Plus, we have bustling FBOs and private jet service, flight training, GA flying, helicopters, Air Fire Fighting wings, and more.

How does it all work??

**Conor Bolke** is one of our Tower Controller team here at KSTS. He's a certified professional controller, NATCA member, local secretary/ treasurer, and the local Safety Council representative. And a super-sharp young man!

Conor will discuss his journey to become an Air Traffic Controller in our tower, what it takes to become an ATC controller in general, and many of the nuances and changes happening within our airspace.

Santa Rosa holds a unique spot in our national air system and there's a lot going on behind the scenes. Come learn about it and help us welcome Conor and integrate him into our aviation community. It's sure to be a great night!

**P.S. DON'T FEAR THE COLD!!** We know winter is here and we will have all the heaters going to keep you **warm and comfortable!!**



**Dinner Menu:** Our January dinner is hamburgers and hotdogs with lots of 'fixings,' coleslaw and baked beans plus chocolate cake and vanilla ice cream for dessert.

**Can you believe this is still only \$10?? Best deal in town!**

# News and Updates

## Please Renew Your Membership if You Haven't Already!

**Your \$50 membership fee is now overdue, but we'll still take it!**

Please remember to give your check to Treasurer John Whitehouse at the January meeting. If you can't make it, you can mail it to our PO Box 6192, Santa Rosa 95406.



## Cash Paid for Your Aviation Memorabilia!

Aviation Historian **Michael Schratt** sent Chapter 124 the following request:

*Looking for aviation/airplane/aerospace related drawings, sketches, photos, magazines, artwork, documents, historical artifacts, models, videos, lectures, audio tapes and plans/blueprints.*

*Specifically interested in anything related to: **Rutan Aircraft Factory/Scaled Composites**. (VariViggen, VariEze, Long EZ, Defiant, Pond Racer, Catbird, Voyager, Grizzly, Quickie, Triumph, Boomerang, Starship POC, V-Jet II, Ares, Vantage.)*

*Also interested in anything having to do with the **early development of stealth aircraft**. (Kelly Johnson, Ben Rich, Lockheed U-2, A-12, SR-71, Have Blue, F-117, YF-22, Northrop Tacit Blue, B-2, YF-23, Phantom Works Bird of Prey, McDonnell Douglas/ General Dynamics A-12 Avenger II.)*

*Plus anything having to do with derelict, dilapidated, dis-repair, forgotten, neglected, surplus aircraft.*

*Also looking for **Reno Air Racers** – specifically, photos of the Pond Racer or Tsunami*

*Please preserve an important part of our national history!*

Contact Michael Schratt on 815-814-2145 or via email: [auroracad5@aol.com](mailto:auroracad5@aol.com)



## Newsletter Articles!

As we kick off the new year, your friendly newsletter editor is looking for content for upcoming issues. If you've recently flown somewhere exciting and have photos of your trip, or you've read an article that others might find interesting, or you're planning to start building your plane – whatever it is, if it's about aviation we'd love to hear about it!

Please send your ideas for newsletter content to [jennyhollingworth14@gmail.com](mailto:jennyhollingworth14@gmail.com). (Note, it doesn't have to be perfect!! I am always happy to edit and polish it up as required.)



## Aviation Magazines!

We are running low on airplane-related magazines to give out at our 2026 Young Eagles events. If you receive any publications and are ready to discard them, please recycle to Young Eagles by bringing them to a meeting. Our Young Eagle attendees love to take a magazine home!

## Another RV4 Adventure!

By John Fritsch

N95JF has introduced me to a bunch of places across these United States over the years, usually because the tanks were getting dryish and/or blue skies were giving way to shades of gray sometimes laced with hail stones and lightning bolts. Most places were pleasant enough, but not pleasant enough or maybe not reason enough to plan a return. Places with names like Muscatine, Iowa; Creve Coeur, Missouri; Mason County, Texas; Clarion County, PA... there were dozens of them, but those come easily to my mind.

On the other hand, some places have become like friends over the years, always changing but still recognizable and so pleasant to see again and again. One of those places for me is Sac Executive: in the early 80s, I listed it as an alternate on my private pilot solo cross country and watched it pass slowly beneath the wing of the Tomahawk as we headed northerly from Stockton to Marysville before turning westerly for the Air Center. Since then, N95JF and I have visited SAC and its mid-century modern terminal many, many times: a visit to a lifelong friend in her last days on the planet; a business trip to visit State Water; a bunch of visits for depositions and a hearing or two; a couple of times to truck marble thresholds home for a remodeling project (!!); and many meals at the terminal restaurants that come and go.



*N95JF ready to go!*

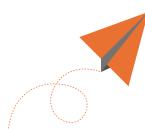
All Hallows Eve came this year with an irresistible show at the historic Crest Theater in Sacramento: Leonid and Friends. So, bride Lisa worked the morning, and then we packed up N95JF for a 2:40 departure bound for KSAC. Call me biased, but RV4s with wooden props and one aboard are a sweet plane to fly: light, responsive and pretty powerful. On the other hand, wooden prop RV4s with two on board and aft baggage? Well, plan to pack light! With a Catto prop and my almost 40-year quest to reduce weight mostly firewall forward, and with costumes and maybe a bottle of Rafanelli and work out stuff aft of the CG, N95JF gets tail heavy damn quick.

We launched with a little tailwheel rolling on the runway into clear blue skies with a bit of tailwind component as we turned easterly. In the 80s, Gary Krambs instructed me through my commercial license and always had stories to tell about flying the Korbel Citation. He impressed the hell out of me when he told me the ETE STS to SAC for the Citation was 11 minutes... well, N95JF is no Citation, but we made it in about 25 minutes with a significant slowdown to figure out whether we would get the right base entry to 20 we wanted or have to swing to the south for the 45 entry... and got stuck with the full pattern because of the 4-6 trainers on and around SAC.

*Il Fornaio* for dinner; the iconic and packed Crest with an adoring, fun crowd; the Leonid show was simply spectacular; and I had a lovely bride masquerading as my stewardess to my Vanguard Airlines captain costume. Whew! Sweet Halloween!

We woke to a gorgeous fall day and walked around the Capitol and downtown... like so many Californian cities today, it is not the prosperous, abundant, clean California of my childhood. The commercial vacancy rate must be astounding. Perhaps our kids will have an answer that our current generation cannot provide. We launched on runway 20 with a "maintain runway heading" clearance so we lost a couple minutes headed southwesterly but got the "own nav contact Departure" before too long and began the knob-turning, party line fun that is flight following across the Class C and Travis airspace: 119.5; 125.25; 126.6; 127.8; 118.5.... and only one call out for traffic: a lonely "opposite direction, 5,500, 3 miles, your 9 o'clock" 172 so far away, it was just a speck. And back home, our tower folk had the perfect clearance for us: "Cleared to land long 32, cross runway 2-20, taxiway Charlie, monitor ground point 9".

Tailwinds! ~ John



## The Fate of the Martin Clippers

By Andy Werback

Pan American Airways was the *de facto* leader in developing long-distance commercial flying via the "flying boats," as they were known. Under Juan Trippe's leadership, Pan Am gobbled up smaller airlines in South and Central America, pioneered routes to Europe and Asia, and contracted for the development of the next generation of flying boat aircraft from Sikorsky, Martin and Boeing.

Initially, Pan Am operated a number of aircraft that were already in use, such as the Douglas FP-2A Dolphin, used in China, and the Consolidated Commodore, used in South America. Pan Am followed up by working with Igor Sikorsky to develop the S-40 and S-42 flying boats – highly innovative for their time, many of these operated for years. To finally achieve trans-pacific range, the company went to Boeing for the massive model 314. But in between the S-42 and the B-314, it contracted with the Glenn L. Martin company for the Martin M-130 flying boat.

Glenn Martin (1896-1955) was another of the innovative and outstanding developers of aircraft early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1912, he built and flew his amphibian biplane, the "Avalon Zipper," to cross from Newport Harbor to Avalon Harbor, Catalina Island, exceeding the distance of the earlier English Channel crossing.



*Believed to be a rare image of Martin's Avalon Zipper*

**Fast forward to 1932:** Pan Am has successfully contracted with Sikorsky for the S-40 and S-42, but these aircraft are still not big enough for the Pacific routes. Juan Trippe and his senior manager, Dutchman Andre Priester, felt that they needed new ideas and requested the Glenn L. Martin Company to design and produce an improved aircraft – more power, longer range and much better payload.

With better engines and improved aerodynamics, that was possible. But at the price Trippe was willing to pay, it was a huge risk for Martin. This was in 1932, the depths of the Great Depression when Martin was struggling. Nevertheless, he submitted a respectable bid for \$2 million to produce 3 M-130 flying boats. Trippe countered with an offer of \$417,000 for each

boat, take it or leave it. Martin took it, knowing that he would lose money, but hoping to make it back on future sales... that never happened. But the new Clippers were designed, built, and put into service.

**Construction of the Martin Clippers started in 1933**, with first flights in October 1935. The China Clipper, last of the three aircraft to be started but first to be completed, began survey flights to the South Pacific in November 1935.



*Martin M-130 "China Clipper" passing the San Francisco waterfront, Nob Hill in background*



*First Class comfort all the way – the Pan American way*



*China Clipper on beaching gear (trolley) for freshwater wash and servicing*

The Pan American Clippers flew long over-water routes, with all the navigation and weather support available at the time - which wasn't much. No satellite GPS, no Inertial Navigation. Stars, sun, sextant. Compass, time and distance. And an early radio beacon. This was at about the same time, 1937, that Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan (an expert navigator who had recently worked the Pacific flights with Pan Am) were unable to find Howland Island. This was also a time when America and Japan were sparring over Japan's "mandated" islands in the South Pacific – Japan protested vigorously the development of the Pacific routes and the presence of the Pan Am aircraft.

By and large, Pan Am's flights were "routine," flown by expert and well-trained crews over scheduled routes for millions of miles. The S-40, S-42 and, eventually, the Boeing 314 all provided reliable service. Most survived the times and were sold to other small airlines or were scrapped as being obsolete when land-based aircraft took over the routes.

**The Martin Clippers, however, were not quite so lucky.** In fact, all three of the Martin Clippers met with tragic or mysterious fates.

### **Hawaii Clipper (NC14714)**

The Hawaii Clipper was the first to start construction and the last to fly (in order to incorporate modifications), but by October 1936 it was flying the Pacific route – San Francisco, Hawaii, Midway, Wake, Guam, and the Philippines.

A number of issues were encountered during this time, many attributed to Japanese sabotage, such as steel rods in concrete blocks just below the surface that damaged a flying boat hull.

The Clipper's last flight, Pan Am's Flight 229, started perfectly normally, leaving San Francisco, stopping for fuel and overnight stays at the Pan Am facilities on the Pacific Islands. In flight, the Clippers regularly updated the ground stations by radio, giving time, position and weather.

Out of Guam, however, radio communications suddenly ceased.

**No trace of the Hawaii Clipper was ever found** – no debris, nothing. Nine crew members and six passengers in a 26-ton flying boat with all the modern communications and safety devices simply disappeared into thin air.

There is, however, a theory that a couple of Japanese intelligence officers could have stowed away on Guam, taken over the flight and diverted it to Koror, a Japanese-held island in the Palau group. No direct evidence of this has ever surfaced. An oil slick that was found in the vicinity turned out to be heavy fuel oil – not aircraft oil.

Another part of the theory was that one of the passengers, Wah Sun Choy, a Chinese national, was carrying approximately \$3 million for the Nationalist Chinese government, and this presented a threat to the Japanese, who were then engaged in vicious fighting in China.

Finally, it was known that the Japanese were desperate for a decent flying boat design. Their attempts were mediocre at best. But the Emily flying boat, developed just before America's entry in WWII, bears a striking resemblance to the Martin M-130.

The Hawaii Clipper flew for 4,800 hours over two years before its disappearance.



*Hawaii Clipper flight 229, lost somewhere between Guam and Manila*

### **Philippine Clipper (NC14715)**

The second M-130 to be lost was directly involved in World War II. The Philippine Clipper was at Wake Island on December 8, 1941, when it was slightly damaged by Japanese attack aircraft. While bombs and bullets destroyed the Pan Am hotel and other facilities, the Clipper was able to make an emergency departure with Pan Am's Wake Island staff and return to Hawaii, where its bullet holes were patched up. (Unfortunately, the remaining Marine contingent and civilian construction workers at Wake was captured and suffered greatly when the Japanese conquered the island – Wikipedia gives more information about the [Battle of Wake Island](#)).

The Clipper then served on the Hawaii to San Francisco route under Navy control for the next two years.

**On January 21, 1943, Pan Am Flight V-1104 was attempting to return to San Francisco when it encountered a strong northern California storm** – high winds, low ceilings, heavy rain. This was an urgent flight due to wartime priorities, and the storm was part of the crew's weather briefing. They had plenty of fuel to divert to San Diego, or to hold off the coast for a few hours. But reports of a large low-flying aircraft were received from just west of Ukiah, CA and the Clipper did not respond to radio calls.

It took 10 days for the wreckage to be located and the bodies of nine crew and 10 passengers recovered. One of the victims was the Commander of the Pacific Submarine Fleet, Rear Admiral Robert A. English. He was carrying a briefcase full of secret documents, on his way to a high-level conference. The briefcase was intensely searched for, finally turning up intact.

It is possible that the crew was unable to determine their position or were attempting to land at Clear Lake (an approved alternate).

The Civil Aeronautics Board published:

*PROBABLE CAUSE: Failure of the captain to determine his position accurately before descending to a dangerously low altitude under extremely poor weather conditions during the hours of darkness.*

The Philippine Clipper accumulated 14,638 flight hours over eight years flying the Pacific.



*Philippine Clipper crash site - recovery*

## China Clipper (NC14716)

The last of the M-130s was christened "China Clipper"- the mysterious Orient. NC14716 was the last M-130 to start construction but the first to fly (as the others were being brought up to the latest changes).

The inaugural Pacific flight occurred in November 1935 with Pan Am's senior pilot, Captain Ed Musik, at the controls. Departing from Alameda, the rate of climb was so low that he flew under the SF Bay Bridge, then under construction! In service, the China Clipper initially flew cargo only to establish the routes before taking passengers in October 1936, along with the Hawaii and Philippine Clippers.

NC17416 was painted Olive Drab and served most of WWII under Navy control, including flights from Miami to Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.

**On January 8, 1945, Pan Am Flight 160 crashed in a night landing at Port of Spain, Trinidad.** The plane was destroyed with the loss of 23 crew and passengers, but there were seven survivors, including the supervising pilot, Captain Goyette. The pilot flying, Captain Cramer, was killed.

The Civil Aeronautics Board published the finding:

*"Probable Cause: On the basis of the above findings, the Board determines that the probable cause of this accident was (1) First Officer Cramer's failure to realize his proximity to the water and to correct his attitude for a normal landing, and (2) the lack of adequate supervision by the Captain during the landing resulting in the inadvertent flight into the water in excess of normal landing speed and in a nose-down configuration."*

The aircraft sank, 1.25 miles short of the intended touchdown point.

## Postscript

Glenn Martin was awarded the Collier Trophy in 1932 for his involvement in the development of the B-10 bomber. The Glenn L Martin Company went on in the 1940s to develop and produce the Martin PBM Mariner, a very capable Navy patrol bomber seaplane, replacing the Consolidated PBY Catalina. These aircraft were deployed during WWII and were at Okinawa (where my father's ship, seaplane tender AV-16 U.S.S. St. George, was stationed).

Martin also produced the B-26 medium bomber, known as the Martin Maurader (which my uncle Tom Lotina flew in Europe, late 1944-1945). One of the very few remaining B-26's is *Flak-Bait*, still being restored at Udvar-Hazy. The company also built the huge Martin Mars seaplane, starting in 1943 and last seen at Oshkosh in 2016 (quite a show!!). They are now all retired.



*A Martin Mars JRM-1 at Oshkosh in 2016*

The Glenn Martin company merged with American-Marietta in 1961 to become Martin-Marietta, and in 1995 merged with Lockheed to become the big company we know today, Lockheed Martin, one of the few remaining aerospace/defense companies.

	<b>Registration</b>	<b>First Flight</b>	<b>Lost</b>
<b>Hawaii Clipper</b>	NC14714	Oct 1936	July 1938
<b>Philippine Clipper</b>	NC14715	Nov 1935	Jan 1943
<b>China Clipper</b>	NC14716	Nov 1935	Jan 1945

#### **Pan American Clippers Comparison:**

	<b>S-40 / S-40A</b>	<b>S-42 / S-42B</b>	<b>M-130</b>	<b>B-314</b>
Manufacturer	Sikorsky	Sikorsky	Martin	Boeing
Number Built	3	10	3	12
Number of Engines	2	4	4	4
Type/HP	P&W Hornet B (R-1860)/575 - 660	P & W Hornet / 700 - 750	P & W Twin Wasp / 830 - 900	Wright GR-2600 Twin Cyclone / 1500
Wing Span	114'	114, 118'	130'	152'
Max Weight	34,010, 34,600	38,000, 42,000	52,000	82,500
Range	800	1,200, 1,800 sm	3,000	4,250 sm
Speed	115 -120 mph	150-160 mph	157	150
Passengers	34-40	38, 24	43 (18 night)	74 (34 night)
Crew	5 - 6	5	7	10-16

*Pan American's Ocean Clippers – credit Barry Taylor (Not shown – S-43 "Baby Clipper")*

#### **Reference Books** (links are to Amazon, but many of these titles are also available via independent bookstores)

[China Clipper by Ronald Jackson](#) (publ. 1980): Traces history of Pan Am in developing the Pacific routes and in particular the Japanese aggression and possible sabotage. Lots of "possible" stuff but a lot explained by facts later discovered (cork in the fuel tank – one bad mechanic). Possible Japanese boarding in Guam, sudden loss of communication and no evidence. Parallels to Japanese flying boats – Emily, Mavis.

[Pan American's Ocean Clippers by Barry Taylor](#) (publ. 1991): History of Pan Am with emphasis on the different models of flying boats and how they were developed and their service life.

[China Clipper – The Age of the Great Flying Boats by Robert Gandt](#) (publ. 1991). Probably the best narrative and most informative of the books, great read. Especially interesting is the coverage of all of the other flying boats – German, Russian, French and English – finishing with the Hughes H-4 and the Martin Mars.

## Reference Articles

[The Pan Am Clippers, clipperflyingboats.com](#)

[The 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the China Clipper, SFGate](#)

[First Water-to-Water Flight, Wikipedia](#)

[From Point A to Point B: A Letter from the Glenn L. Martin Company, 13 July 1916, The Homestead Blog](#)

[Does Anyone Remember the Famous China Clipper, the Martin M-130 Flying Boat? Travel Update \(video\)](#)

[Pan Am Flight 229, Wikipedia](#)

[The Civil Aeronautics Authority \(CAA\) Investigation, Hunt for the Lost Clipper](#)

[Battle of Wake Island, Wikipedia](#)

[Pan Am Flight V-1104, Wikipedia](#)

[Investigation of Aircraft Accident: PAN AMERICAN WORLD AIRWAYS: NEAR UKIAH, CALIFORNIA: 1943-01-21, Rosa P \(U.S. Government Bureau of Transportation Statistics\)](#)



## EAA Chapter 124 General Meeting Minutes

**December 3, 2025**

The meeting/Dinner convened at 6:15 pm. The president welcomed members old and new to the Chapter potluck social. He encouraged members to share stories while enjoying a bountiful feast. Special thanks went out to **Sam Werback** for preparing the feature holiday ham!

Members mingled, shared stories and networked with each other until 9:00 pm.

# Chapter Business

## Chapter 124 Contact Information

<b>President:</b>	Dominic Cerniglio (26/27)	(310) 628-9008
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**EAA Chapter 124  
5550 Windsor Road  
Windsor, CA 95492**

Chapter meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm. FOOD (\$10) AND SOCIALIZING (free) from 6:15 to 7:00 pm. **EVERYONE IS WELCOME!**

**Directions:** The site is located on the west side of Sonoma County Airport. Take the Shiloh Road exit from Highway 101 in northern Santa Rosa. Turn left at the stop light (west) and continue to a "T" intersection. Turn left again and follow the road to the EAA sign on the left.

## **How to Submit an Article to the Newsletter**

Members are invited to submit articles of interest. You will be notified whether or not an article will appear in the current issue.

Email your article to: [jennyhollingworth14@gmail.com](mailto:jennyhollingworth14@gmail.com)

**Deadline for newsletter submissions is the 20th of each month.** Articles submitted will be included in the newsletter at the discretion of the editor. All articles are copyrighted. To reproduce any article, please contact the editor.

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