

The Seasoning

Chapter 1: The Planning

The beginning was so subtle that its significance escaped me. I think it started when I found, again, that my vacation hours were up to the limits and it was time to "take them or lose them". I had been with the court for six years and had never taken more than one or two days off at a time so I was ready for something more.

About that time, an email came announcing the upcoming annual EAA Air Venture (celebration / fly-in / air show / exposition / event) held in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. It is the largest gathering of pilots in the world. Pilots simply call it "Oshkosh" and the rest of them understand.

According to EAA, it attracts 10,000 airplanes each year. New exhibit hangars and expanded facilities serve the more than 750,000 aviation enthusiasts who attend the event annually.

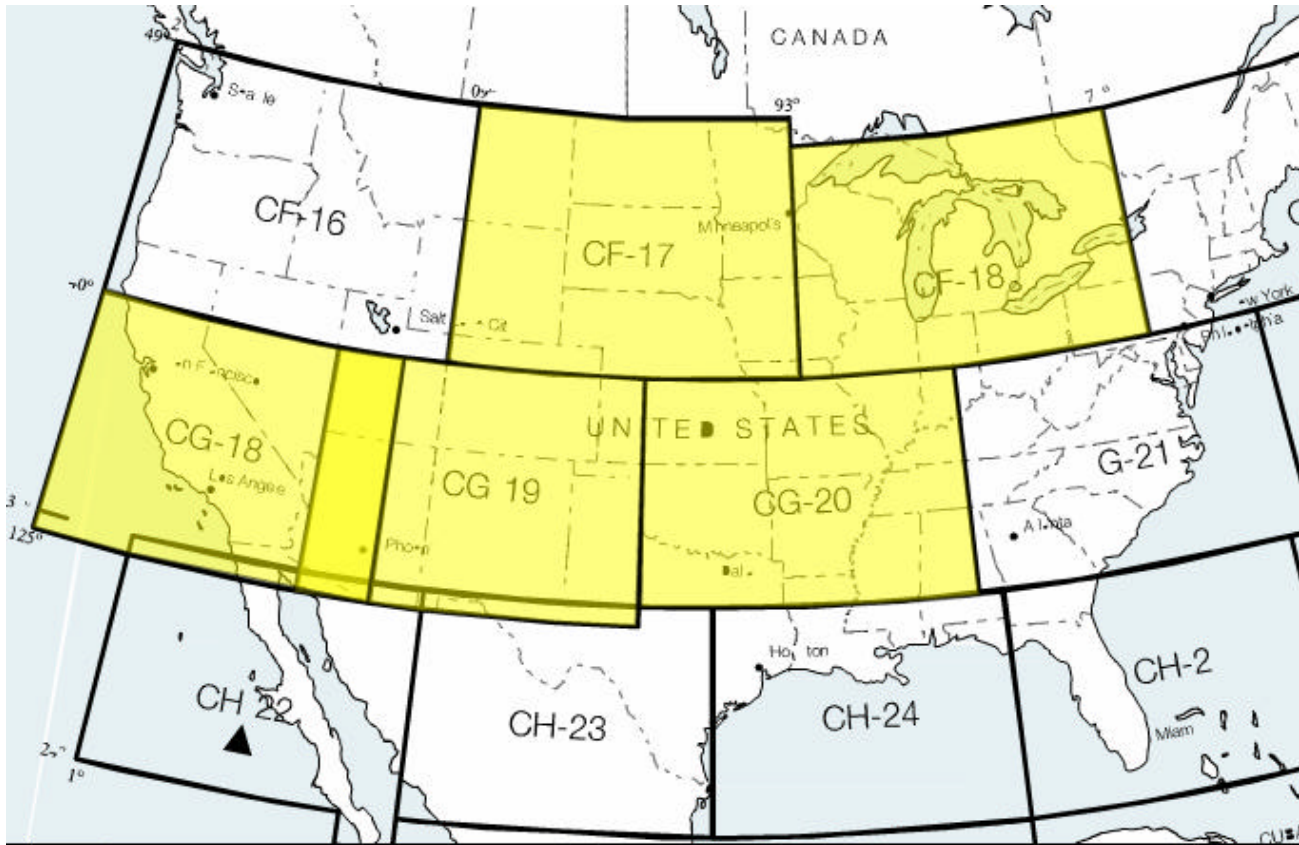
I had never been to Oshkosh even though I grew up in Milwaukee, which is about 1½ hours away by car. Since I have always loved airplanes and especially because I've been a pilot since I was 50, (some 16 years ago), Oshkosh has lured me in the summer, but to no avail. Why not this year? Why not just do it? And so I set out to do just that.



First, I renewed my EAA membership and started getting their weekly emails. Second, I called my brother Fred in Milwaukee to see if my proposed vacation would fit in with his family's plans. Turns out that it would and I was invited to stay with them. Third, I checked out a special EAA Air Venture web page that listed people interested in ride sharing to Oshkosh. I sent brief emails to 4 or 5 people who had signed up and one replied. His name is Craig Berland. We decided to fly together. More on Craig later.

Charts, oh yes charts. You can't fly cross country without current charts. I wanted to buy them in June, pin them all up on my garage wall, stand back, and plan my route of flight. Wasn't going to happen. Two of the WACs that I needed were going to expire on July 6th and if I used them for planning, they would not be legal for navigating when I intended to leave on July 19. These are the charts that I wanted.

The WAC charts.



I waited to July 6th and ordered the WAC charts from AvShop.com.



They always have given me quick service before but – wouldn't you know it – the charts arrived on July 17th. Too late for the garage wall. I had already planned the whole trip using flight planning software on the PC. At least the charts were current and legal.

After talking with some pilots, I decided to swing around the southern end of the Rockies. Craig and I emailed each other back and forth and he agreed on my proposed route. He is an IFR rated pilot and had more experience flying in the Midwest. In fact I had none. I was very comfortable that he agreed to go with me.

When I wrote that the mid-point for a two day trip should probably be in Kansas, he surprised me with his reply. Turns out Jean and LeRoy Berland, his mom and dad, live in Hays, Kansas, and had invited us to stay overnight. Craig also wrote that he wanted to chip in for fuel. Can you sense my smiles?

The weight and balance for the trip checked out with about 100 pounds to spare.

	Units or Position	Unit Weight	Arm Station		WEIGHT (Pounds)	MOMENT in. lbs.
Current Empty Aircraft weight and moment from your aircraft records -->					1587.8	72165.70
Enter Oil Quarts Here -->	7.5	1.875	-7.4		14.0625	-104.06
Enter Fuel Gallons Here ->	52	6	48.43		312	15110.16
Pilot Seat Position & Wt.	5	225	42.75		225	9618.75
CoPilot Seat Position & Wt.	6	220	44		220	9680.00
Left Rear Seat Pos & Wt.	1	20	70.7		20	1414.00
Right Rear Seat Pos & Wt.	1	20	70.7		20	1414.00
Baggage Compartment		50	93		50	4650.00
Weight in Hat Rack		5	114		5	570.00
Bags on Right Front Floor		0	26		0	0.00
Total Aircraft Weight:		2454	Weight is OK		95.3%	of max.
Available Useful Load		121				
***** Balance Information *****						
	Forward Limit		My Airplane		Aft Limit	
Total Aircraft Moment inch lbs:	111587		114519		120203	
Center of Gravity	= 45.47"		= 46.67"		= 48.99"	
Balance is OK						

The trip seemed exciting but doable, I was ready. Socks and some shirts and jeans in a couple of bags, and I was good to go. Checked weather with FSS, charged the batteries in the camera and cell phone, put the flight plans in the GPS, had the landing info for every leg all printed, and, charts in hand, I headed for Corona's Airport.