



Big Easy Wing



Volume 10-Issue 5

May 4, 2026

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No

Meeting in

May



Unit Leader—Bill Triay



Greetings to all the Big Easy Wing members. I think we all can agree that the winter is over. Hopefully we will have good weather for our flying season this summer.

We are currently working on a firm offer to sell our Stuka. The other offers fell through but a gentleman in Mississippi seems to be serious about buying our aircraft. We are waiting now for the broker to sign the paperwork and send it to Headquarters for their approval. If everything goes correctly, he will fly the Stuka out from KNEW and bring it back to his home in Mississippi. More info from Harvey's article.

There will be no board or general meeting in May but we have a Boy Scout class scheduled for May 16. I'm going to try to get one of our pilots to be there. Kris has been training a new pilot who just joined this month. So the Boy Scouts will be able to see our Stearman in Flight. Kris always comes through if he is available and a big thanks should go out to his wife Krystal for allowing him to be such a vital part of our organization.

Shirley is including a list of our events plus a couple of community events so check out her event page. One that I am interested in is the Nola 250 event which is the tall ships docking at the riverfront will be taking place May 28th through May 31. Maybe it would be fun if we put a little group together and went to see the tall ships. Let me know if anyone is interested.

The Madison Mississippi aviation show will be happening June seventh and we will be giving flights for a cost of \$175 each. Jarod will be flying our Stearman and as of now Dom will be loadmaster. It should be another fun event for the Big Easy Wing, and a chance for us to bring in more funds.

The poker run will not take place in May, but will be rescheduled for one date in November that will give us more time to advertise the event and get more participation. But, I am hoping that our Father's Day/ British Car Show is another big event for us. See you then.



COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE

Big Easy Wing
8550 Lloyd Stearman Dr.
New Orleans, LA 70126
Next to FAA tower

Contact us:
info@bigeasywing.org

On the web:
bigeasywing.org



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Operational Officer—Kris Caldwell



Greetings!

We had a great 8th anniversary of the BEW's founding and had the privilege of serving some delicious BBQ to our local Lakefront air traffic controllers and firemen. Besides thanking these folks it's a great time to build professional relationships. I was able to get a tour of the control tower and, in turn, we gave two rides to ATC. It was an eye-opener to them see how loud the Stearman is and the restricted visibility from the cockpit. I'm sure this hands-on experience is valuable to their professional education. Besides all that, they both left with that unmistakable "Stearman grin"!



Morgan Campbell —FAA



Joseph Decker FAA

We've got another Stearman pilot in the mix! Andy Wilson, of Saint Francisville, LA flies Canadair CL215T water scooper air tankers for Bridger Aerospace. See pics. He's also a taildragger pilot and warbird aficionado like the rest of us! We'll be starting training in N'Awlins Lady as soon as he gets back from his next airborne firefighting .



We're in the process of nailing down a lot of exciting events for the next few months so please continue to support and volunteer! Thanks!



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Executive Officer—Harvey Burns



May the 4th be with you!

Negotiations are in full swing so No jinxing this! Both Bill and I have spoken to HQ. Since the price is different from the previous offer, HQ board needs to address the topic again at their next board meeting. Fingers cross that all gets approved.

Membership—Shirley Colomb



Hi Members,

I'd like to share a special moment from my life: the day I met *Christina Koch*, a renowned NASA astronaut celebrated for her spaceflight. That day, I was dining at the Stennis International Airport restaurant with my friends from Mississippi when Christina walked in with one of her companions. As I spoke with her, her friend mentioned that Christina would be the first woman in space on the Artemis spacecraft. Naturally, I couldn't pass up the chance to capture the moment and took a photo with her. It's amazing how you can stumble upon such remarkable experiences unexpectedly.

Thanks to Kris's extensive travels, he continues to meet remarkable individuals who contribute to our organization. We are pleased to announce and warmly welcome **Charles Andy Wilson** as our newest member. Andy is not only a pilot but also a sponsor for our Stearman aircraft. Over the past few weeks, Kris has been providing Andy with training in the Stearman, helping him become more acquainted with the team and our operations. We look forward to getting to know Andy and his wife, and we are excited about the energy and enthusiasm they will bring to our wing.

Member Health Update: I wanted to inform everyone that Glenn Metzger will be undergoing triple bypass surgery May 18. We will provide updates on his condition as we receive them. Please keep Glenn in your thoughts and prayers during this time.



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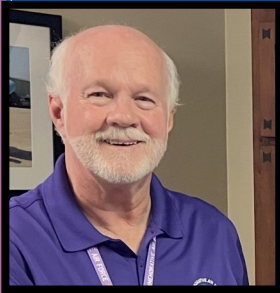
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Educational Officer—Roger Jeffrey



David Capo led a very successful Aviation Merit Badge Class on April 18, 2026. It was the largest group we have had so far. Troop 230 sent eight Scouts and there was an additional Cadet member attending for a total of nine students.

Dave would like to thank these Big Easy Wing members for their valuable assistance: Richie Gray, Karl Shearer, Glenn Metzger, Bill Triay, and especially Kyle Duxworth, who provided excellent computer support and Flight Simulator instruction. Kyle streamlined the Flight Simulator portion of our training by having each student fly a one-way course between Lakefront Airport (KNEW) and New Orleans International (MSY). This saved time versus our previous practice of having each student fly a round-trip course. Kyle was very helpful with all thing's computer related and excelled at using and demonstrating our newest Flight Simulator with X-Plane 12.

As always, the group thoroughly enjoyed the FAA Tower visit and the Airport Fire Station demonstration, where they participated in a demonstration using the “jaws of life” equipment on an actual wrecked automobile.





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Year Events

- May 9** No ---Bd Meeting/General meeting
- May 14 Jackson Barracks - Presentation on Frenchie (any interest going as group send me an email)
- May 16 Boy Scout Class
- May 28-May 31 NOLA 250 – Ships – Riverfront (any interest)
- June 7th** **Madison MS Aviation Show-Jared flying/Dom G loadmaster**
Contact: Brandon Stevens - Event Coordinator - 601-213-6851-fuel discount offered - bstevens0909@gmail.com
Need to acquire a room if deem necessary Dom 630-991-1093
 Flight cost \$ 150. 15 min flights
- June** Father's Day/British Car show - **Need Pilot for June 20th Fathers day weekend if not June 13**
- July 4th** Flag for Flights – Slidell Airport -American Legions/VFW- **Need Pilot from 10 till 1 pm See letter being sent out by Brian if not possible than will move July 11**
- August ?
- September Flight Day 12th
- October 14-16** Birdman Conference -Flight Days- **Need Pilots**
- October 29th Wine and WW2 Social Fundraiser (Thursday-6 till 9)
- November 14 **Poker Run –**
- December 5th** Christmas Potluck Social 5:30 till



EVENTS

Louisiana National Guard Museums 4d · 🌐

A remarkable lineage of the Louisiana Natio... more

LOUISIANA NATIONAL GUARD MUSEUMS

HISTORY SPEAKER SERIES

FRENCHIE
THE SON OF THE FRENCH-SPANISH CAMPS OF WORLD WAR II
JASON P. THIBODEAU

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION
• DISCOVER THE STORIES OF THE PAST •

FRENCHIE JASON P. THIBODEAU HAS A FEW MORE STORIES TO SHARE. MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS AFTER HIS HEROIC FIGHTING DURING WORLD WAR II, THIBODEAU'S LINEAGE OF THE LOUISIANA NATIONAL GUARD BEGINS TO TAKE SHAPE. IN NOVEMBER 1941, THE GUARD WAS REORGANIZED, AND YOUNG CASIN SOLDIER FROM THE MISSISSIPPI COUNTY ENGINEER SERVICE.

DATE
MAY 14, 2026 @6:30PM

LOCATION
JACKSON BARRACKS MILITARY MUSEUM
EDUCATION SPACE, 1ST FLOOR
6400 ST. CLAUDE AVE., NEW ORLEANS

DOHATION
\$10

WWW.GEALNGUARDMUSEUMS.ORG

NEW ORLEANS SAIL 250
1976-2026

THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2026
Parade of Sail (Port of New Orleans)
Public Ship Tours (Port of New Orleans)

FRIDAY, MAY 29, 2026
Public Ship Tours (Port of New Orleans)

SATURDAY, MAY 30, 2026
Fireworks (Port of New Orleans)
Public Ship Tours (Port of New Orleans)

SUNDAY, MAY 31, 2026
Seafood Cook-Off (The Delacroix/Spanish Plaza)
Public Ship Tours (Port of New Orleans)

MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2026
Blessing of the Ships (Port of New Orleans)

**HONOR A FALLEN HERO
BRING A FLAG TO FLY IN STEARMAN**

LOUISIANA AMERICA 250

Father's Day Weekend Flights

**JUNE 20TH
10AM - 3PM**

**CARS & PLANES
OPEN HOUSE**

Contact # 504-445-6275

**SEND POP SOARING !!!
BOOK FLIGHT LUNCH IS AVAILABLE FOR \$15.00**

CAF BIG EASY WING

INVITES

CONVENTIONERS TO FLY WITH US

8:30am to 5:30 pm

Flight cost is \$150 to \$250

Contact Bill Triay
504-220-7518

October 14 - 16

Steerman Flight, call 504-445-6275 to schedule a flight

Overview of Flight for Flag

The Flight of the Flags program was started in 2019 to give one last honor to deceased veterans, police officers and **fire fighters**. We invite the public **to** bring the folded funeral flags of their deceased loved ones and we place them on WWII era aircraft and fly them over the families at veteran themed events. Please visit flightoftheflags.org to **see** what it is we try to do.

Our program has spread over four **states** and I would like to make it five. Pat Quigley (retired Navy officer), Kris Caldwell (Stearman and F-18 pilot) and Shirley Colomb (Big Easy Wing) have been working with me to establish their own version of Flight of the Flags in the New Orleans area.

Their plan is to fly flags during the 250th Anniversary of the United States celebration on July 4th. Would you help them? If this flight is approved, they need to get the word out for people to bring their flags to the Slidell Airport at a time to be determined. The flags will be placed in a protective plastic flag bag with a certificate that identifies the person the flag represents. An Honor Guard will demonstrate the proper folding of a flag and present a three round volley and the playing of Taps as the **flags** fly overhead.

I invite you to witness this flight, hopefully with a flag of yours aboard. Big Easy Wing could also use some financial support to make the establishment of the New Orleans Flight of the Flags possible. Contact Shirley at bigeasywingcaf@gmail.com or myself at bsafran83@gmail.com. I'm looking forward to having New Orleans join the Flight of the Flags

July 4th

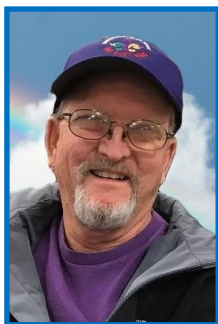
Honoring Our Fallen Heroes
Celebrates the lives of deceased veterans, policemen, firefighters and first responders with a unique last tribute. Flight of the Flags started as a remembrance to those heroes who have passed and display to the public the last honor our government bestows upon those who have served with distinction.

We invite the public to bring the folded funeral flags of their loved ones, and we place them on WWII era aircraft and fly them over veteran monuments. The Honor Guard demonstrates the formal folding of a flag and provides a three round volley and the playing of Taps as the planes flies overhead. The flags are returned to the families after landing

Flight of the Flags Inc is a non-profit 501c3 organization as well as the Big Easy Wing. If possible, please donate to keep the wind under our wings?



Safety– Rick Wood



Good Afternoon BEW

Well Springtime is here which means hurricane season is around the corner.

A few things to remember: a) Getting the planes to a safe location; b) Moving them to high ground or if possible fly them out of harms way. In the hanger anything of importance needs to be taken upstairs. The trailer if possible needs to be moved to higher ground.

One thing to remember is the closing of the levee gates— the time for gates closure is posted on the internet from the levee board and at lakefront buisness offices. This season is to be mild but you never

know about Mother Nature. If you have any questions I plan on being at the next meeting.

Hope everyone has an enjoyable and safe summer.

Thanks to Bill T. and Kris for my flight.





Hello again Big Easy Wing!

Y'all are going to get tired of hearing from me this month.

I have no doubt that you have seen the pictures from the Meridian show, but Shirley has requested that I recount the experience, mainly because I was present from start to finish. What a week it was! (Well, five days but who's counting?)

Colonel Jared Spencer and I arrived at the hanger before noon on Thursday 26 March. Col. Terry Clausing had the ship on the ramp so we pre-flighted and stowed our gear on board. There were some low clouds over the lake and southern St. Tammany Parish which kept us from gaining altitude until we were further north. I got some stick time. Jared was amused by the fact that I could hold the altitude and stay level but had trouble maintaining the heading. Hey I'm not a pilot. Obviously.

We arrived at Key Field, Meridian (KMEI) and met up with Phil Webb in his N3N and his friend Sheldon, another Florida panhandle pilot who was flying a STOL. Those things are cute as all get out. Tiny little "Rotax" engine that gets him airborne in less than a football field. Lots of wings, short fuselage and no frills. Too cool for school.

The FBO at Meridian is first class. Five stars. Would recommend it. On Saturday we met the Business Manager from that operation at the air show, and I complimented his staff and operation. He was thrilled. But I am getting ahead of myself.

The three of us left Meridian as group. We were led, followed by Sheldon with Phil as the dust eater. Phil asked the tower for permission to do a fly-by and they readily agreed. I honestly believe the ATC could read Phil's instruments as he banked over and passed by. NICE MOVE THERE, MAVERICK! The ATCs were no doubt impressed.

All three of us took different routes to NAS Meridian but as luck would have it, we arrived simultaneously. Jared again took lead on approach, with Sheldon and Phil behind, in that order. Jared extended his post-landing roll on the strip to give Sheldon plenty of room to land, which he didn't really need with that STOL. He could probably land on a melting glacier. But since Sheldon was down and off the runway fast, Phil had plenty of room for his landing.

The marshaling crew got us taxied into our respective slots for the show and we unloaded, tied everything down, and covered the cockpit. We went to Base Ops and met Lt. Szabo, the ramrod for the show and her XO, Ensign Williams. We picked up our packets with parking passes and VIP tent passes, along with some swag. Side note: There has not been a show at NAS Meridian in over a decade. Nothing is perfect, but the show was overall, organized well. Kudos to Lt. Szabo and staff.

Phil had a friend with a vehicle, so we hitched a ride to the hotel with them. Tru by Hilton. Five stars. Would recommend it. Very basic, but clean and pleasant staff. It was in downtown Meridian and about 30 minutes from the base. Speaking of which, NAS Meridian is huge. Truly massive. I had no idea. Chow that night was in the rooftop bar at the Three-foot Hotel in Meridian. Very good bar food. Five stars. Would recommend it. You couldn't swing a dead cat in that place without hitting a pilot

Meridian Airshow

Friday, 27 March: Free breakfast at the Tru. Jared's family picked him up and Phil and friend hauled Sheldon and I to the base. I spent some of the day helping Phil clean his plane (push rod tube O-rings are dried out, Oil everywhere,) and seeking shade under the wing of the Stearman. I got cooked, anyway. Shirley and Duck arrived. Meanwhile, after a dead battery and a flat tire (on the NO high rise, no less) Kevin and Dawn got the trailer on base (sort of). The Navy security team wouldn't let them on the flight-line without a parking pass. I hiked over to Ops and got them in. We positioned and uncoupled the trailer and deferred our setup until Saturday, AM. Red Lobster for Good Friday chow.

Saturday, 28 March: North wind at about 30 knots and very chilly. Drove to base with everyone in two vehicles and got the tent up. It was easy, what with all those plane tie downs on the pavement. The crowd started to show up and we got busy.

Nice haul on donations and plenty of talk with Stearman fans and people who had a dad, uncle, or brother that learned to fly in one. Lt. Szabo came zooming up to us in her utility vehicle with two passengers, Mr. And Mrs. Walter. Szabo explained that Mrs. Walter (Evelyn) had soloed in a Stearman in 1948. She was extremely excited to see her old friend, or at least a reasonable facsimile thereof. While she toured, I spoke to Mr. Walter who told me the back story:

Mr. Walter is a Navy veteran. He was dating "the soon to be Mrs. Walter," who his father had some reservations. In her youth, Evelyn was a bit of a "free spirit."

You see, back in '48, proper young women did not blaze around the country solo on a Triumph motorcycle. He further explained that his father was a flight instructor. A strait-laced, by the book type of instructor. He did not like Evelyn. Or her motorbike. When his son explained that Evelyn had earned her pilot's license, dad's opinion of her softened a bit. "Really. She soloed?" "Yes, pop. She did. In a STEARMAN!" That sealed the deal. If she could handle a Stearman, she was good enough for his baby boy.

Evelyn was in tears at this point. When I handed her a BEW patch with the Stearman on it, she hugged me. "God bless you all," she said. Best part of the whole damn show. Even Lt. Szabo had a Texas-sized grin on her face.

None of us had the energy to go to the VIP reception on base so it was Sam's Club pizza and some very good wine for chow in the hotel lobby on Saturday. Mainly because Kevin got his tires replaced at Sam's Club, which is almost next door to the Tru hotel. Efficiency. Gotta love it.

Sunday, 29 March: "Up and at 'em!" Weather was excellent! Checked out of the hotel and loaded up for the last day. Big crowd, lots of people showing interest in the Stearman. PX was steady, but cell signal was weak the entire time. Square was iffy, or nonexistent. Got everything packed up and hooked up after closing. Shirley, Duck, Kevin and Dawn headed south. Just Phil, Sheldon and I left to clean up.

The Navy recruits were all lined up and about to FOD the deck on the flight line. I looked down out of reflex, I suppose. There at my feet was our money box key. What are the odds? But big as life, there it was. I secured it in my pocket.



Meridian Airshow

The Navy provided us with covered storage on the flight line to prep for departure on Monday. Phil taxied his ship over to it and hitched a golf cart ride with the CAF marshaling detachment back to our ship. Thanks to Ritchie Gray, and his crew. Phil taxied and I rode front cockpit over to the parking line in the Stearman.

A little back story: The Blue Angels had Fat Albert (their C130 support aircraft) in the shop for maintenance during this show. Instead, they had a nondescript, plain Jane Navy grey C-130 to use. The taxiway to our storage had a 90 degree left turn which was a blind corner due to placement of a humongous portable generator. Right. On. The. Corner.

As we approached the corner described above, I saw a big grey vertical fin over the genny, approaching from the left. Phil's presentation from earlier in the month about passengers paying attention suddenly came to mind and I urgently pointed left. A loud "THANK YOU!" came from behind me as Phil throttled back and applied some brakes. Close but no cigar, Fat Albert imposter. You did not get us today.

Phil, Sheldon and I joined Colonel Kris Caldwell who was at a home close to base, visiting his friends. I had no idea that his friends had been in the habit of "adopting" Navy and Marine aviators assigned to NAS Meridian for about 20 years. This couple opened their home to young aviators and fed them, provided a place to do laundry or just get away from base and relax.

Kris is one of the adopted aviators of Dave and Rosie Schuurman. Dave is a Vietnam veteran. He was a decorated Navy Corpsman who had been assigned to the Fleet Marine Force at fire bases in the RVN. His stories and scrapbooks were thoroughly fascinating to a history nerd like me. After his service, Dave trained and worked as a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist. If you have had a general anesthesia procedure in the last 30 years, it was a CRNA that kept you unconscious, but alive during the surgery.

Rosie is an absolute treasure. She is one of those people who never met a stranger. And on top of that, she whipped up one of the best home cooked meals I've ever had. Phil and Sheldon went back to the hotel after supper, while Kris and I slept at Dave and Rosie's.

Monday, 30 March: Dave was up before us turning out bacon, eggs and toast. We thanked Dave and Rosie, said our goodbyes, and drove to the NAS. I helped Kris untie and get six blades, then drove his car to Meridian. I picked up Phil and Sheldon at the rental car agency. (Phil's friend had gone home, so he had secured a rental.) I delivered them to the NAS and drove back to Key Field FBO to do the Loadmaster thing.

We sold two flights at the show. Shirley had one called in on Sunday after the show closed and I sold one to a ground crew member at the FBO. The first rider was a young lady who is headed for an engineering degree and wanted to work in aviation. Our second rider was originally from Louisiana and has a son who is in the Middle East right now flying the F-15 Strike Eagle. He had to tell his son about the Stearman ride. The third candidate is in training as a Naval Aviator. I can't take full credit for the last sale. He was on the fence about it-his crew talked him into it.



Meridian Airshow

We refueled Stearman, paid for today's fuel and the fuel we got at the show (self-serve price). Then got ready to go south. I was wheels up in Kris's Toyota at 1245. Kris got airborne shortly after that.

The weather got worse as I went south. When I got to the Pearl River exit, my phone rang. Kris said he was not going over the lake and had been dodging thunderheads all the way. He was in Slidell. I told him I was near Slidell, too. Or close to it so I drove to Slidell.

We stashed the ship in Jared's hangar at Slidell and headed west on 10. Note to self: We really, Really, REALLY need three people to push the Stearman backwards, up a ramp. Even a small ramp.

Kris dropped me home and headed across the river.

Because the Stearman was sleeping on the North Shore, and schedules and weather did not cooperate, Bill's Stearman was on display at the FAA Appreciation luncheon on 11 April from 1100 to 1500.

Several ATCs from the tower came over in shifts to enjoy the food and a couple of the ARFF crew joined us, as well.

With Kris as the pilot, Bills ship did yeoman service providing rides for two of the ATCs, and our own Rick Wood, Kevin Duxworth, and his son Kyle.

Jared eventually got the opportunity to ferry our Stearman back from its vacation home in Slidell and both planes are now safely stowed in the BEW hangar.

Overall, it was a busy time for us. Thanks to all the BEW members and family who contributed to our success. More fun is on the horizon. Come on out and have some!

Whew! That was some adventure. Next time it could be you telling the story so volunteer as loadmaster and all around worker.

Financial Update– James Myrkis

Thanks to the efforts of everyone involved our wing is furthering the CAF's mission while financially operating on a break-even basis. That is an acceptable way for a non-profit organization to operate but every time we put an extra dollar in the bank, we give ourselves the opportunity to make a greater impact in the community through our quality programming and we make our organization more durable for the long haul. Please consider staying locked in with the Big Easy Wing by supporting every program with your skill and effort and also with your generous donations. Even the small act of paying for an event that you might not attend is meaningful. As we all know, the cost of everything has been rising steadily; the Big Easy Wing's revenue will need to increase commensurately.

Photo of FAA Social and Anniversary





Kris has a YouTube page for his articles—please check it out

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYPyqh9dit0>

First Impressions: Even among warbird enthusiasts in North America, most will not recognize this somewhat ungainly two-seat trainer called the Fokker S-11. Considering there is only one airworthy example in North America, it's not surprising that few have ever heard of them. What I discovered is that it is a very rare treasure and a great airplane to fly!

Background: Fokker aircraft are instantly associated with the one, two, and three-winged fighter planes that once patrolled the Western Front and, for many, with Snoopy's imaginary nemesis, the "Red Baron." Anthony Fokker, a Dutch designer and aviator, moved to Germany to be an automobile mechanic, but his fascination with aircraft quickly led to his first aircraft design, "de Spin" or "the Spider", in 1910. Two years later, he founded his first company outside Berlin. During World War I, Fokker produced over 700 aircraft (mostly fighters), primarily for the Imperial German Army Air Service. His designs included the famous *Eindecker* (the first aircraft with a synchronization gear that allowed a machine gun to fire through the propeller), and the Dr.1 (*Dreidecker*), famously flown by Baron Manfred Von Richthofen – the real *Red Baron*.

Early two-seat trainers were rare. First flights were largely solo and often resulted in "crack ups". In 1919, Anthony Fokker also developed his first trainer, the 75 hp Mercedes-powered V-43. Unique to trainers at that time, it offered side-by-side seating and had a single parasol wing. It was soon used to develop the S-1, which was powered by a 90 hp Curtiss engine. A single S-1 was delivered to the U.S. Army Air Service in 1922 and was designated TW-4.

After the Great War ended, Fokker left Germany for his homeland of the Netherlands, where the terms of the Treaty of Versailles did not apply. Of note, he smuggled 350 train cars worth of airplanes, engines and parts out of Germany, which allowed him to hit the ground running in his new company. By the end of the 1920s, Fokker Aircraft was the largest aircraft manufacturing company in the world. He continued to make military and civil aircraft, and his Fokker F.V11 Trimotor was a standout success. On May 9th, 1926, it was in a Fokker Trimotor that U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander Richard Byrd and Chief Machinist Mate Floyd Bennett flew the first aerial navigation flight over the North Pole (with some controversy).

Anthony Fokker died in 1939 but his companies continued manufacturing a wide variety of military and civil aircraft until WWII, when the captured Fokker factory was used to Bucker Bu-181 *Bestmann* aircraft. The first successful post-war Fokker to be manufactured was the S-11 *Instructor*, which first flew in 1947. Like the 1920 Fokker S-1, the S-11 was also a side-by-side, two-seat monoplane trainer. By 1959, a total of 426 Instructor aircraft had been produced, including those manufactured under license by Fokker in Brazil and by Macchi in Italy as the M.416. The militaries of Brazil, Bolivia, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, and Paraguay all introduced student pilots to flying in S-11 and S-12 (tricycle gear) variants.

Barry Hou, of San Marino, CA, a businessman and long-time RC airplane enthusiast, recently began flying "full scale" aircraft. He has owned his 1954 Fokker S-11 (s/n E11) for two years. Once E11 finished its service in the RNLAF, it was taken to the U.K. in the 80s before making its way to the U.S. in the early 2000s, where it was meticulously preserved by Clifford Heathcoat.



Design Characteristics: I've never seen an airplane so deliberately designed with ease of maintenance in mind. The cowling opens with quick access “shutters” that swing out like petals on a Dutch tulip, giving wide-open, unobstructed access to everything forward of the firewall. Panels on the belly quickly detach to access control cables, fuel lines, wiring, and the battery box, which conveniently slides down on tracks. Lift rings make strut and wheel servicing easy. Even the landing lights, tucked into the wing leading edges, have hinged doors secured by simple butterfly latches. It's as if the designers asked, “How do we make mechanics not grumpy?” — and then built the plane around the answer.

The S-11 has a welded steel fuselage with a wide stance (9'4”), fixed trailing link landing gear attached to the leading edge of the wings. Outboard of the landing gear, the wings assume a noticeable 6.5° dihedral. The fuselage aft of the cockpit is fabric covered. The flight controls are all fabric covered and the three position split flaps are aluminum.

A 6-cylinder 190-horsepower Lycoming O-435-A turns the two-bladed constant speed Hartzell propeller (not original), and each wing's aluminum fuel tank provides 18.5 gallons.

Ground Operations: The Fokker S-11 Instructor turned out to be bigger than I'd pictured. I was expecting something roughly the size of a deHavilland *Chipmunk* but was caught off guard by its something more substantial—closer in scale to the North American BT-13 *Valiant*. The cockpit sits high and gives good forward visibility. Despite the side-by-side seating, the cabin is roomy enough that instructor and student never find their shoulders rubbing.

Both pilots have full dual controls (sticks and left-handed throttle quadrants), the exception being the prop control, which is only available in the left seat. Starting the O-435 is somewhat standard (mixture, prime, start) although it's started with the prop in “full decrease”. The *Scintilla* magneto switch has a unique skeleton key that turns counterclockwise to “Both,” rather than clockwise. Elevator trim is set with a single lever on the center console, and the “Johnson Bar” flap lever activates with a pushbutton. A mechanical rudder trim can only be adjusted with a turnbuckle on the ground. The tailwheel lock mechanism at the pilot's right knee must be pulled up and out to lock. When applying differential braking at taxi speeds, the airplane leans in the direction of the turn - thanks to the trailing link oleo struts. The lean can be characterized as a “dip” and was significant enough to catch me off guard during my first few turns.

Before takeoff, confirm the tailwheel is locked and turn on the electric boost pump (this is a later addition; the original manual wobble-pump handle remains in the center console but is disconnected and no longer used). The Pilot's Operating Handbook recommends conducting both takeoff and landing with the canopy open or unlatched for rapid egress in the event of an accident. The takeoff and climb out (at 70 knots) are fairly uncomplicated; merely push the tail up and keep it straight until it wants to fly away.

Flight Characteristics: The S-11 “Instructor” is a rugged, forgiving primary trainer. It can absorb just almost anything a student pilot can throw at it and still deliver everything a military trainer needs to teach for both basic and intermediate aerobatics. Amusingly, the flight manual explicitly approves the Immelmann turn—a maneuver first flown by Max Immelmann in his Fokker *Eindecker* in 1915.

This Fokker isn't fast – its stout, muscular lines give that away – but it's honest and responsive in the air. To close the canopy in flight, reach back, grab the single T-handle, slide the canopy forward, then push and twist until it latches. The entire sequence can be done by muscle memory, even while tucked in close formation with other aircraft.. Typical cruising speed is about 105 to 110 knots.



Landing: Slow below 80 knots and pull the flaps to the first notch (20°) for a normal landing. The split flaps add a lot of drag and cause a pitching down moment, which aft trim will counteract. After trying a few different speeds, I found that a good approach speed for a wheel landing is 80 knots; which allows some extra time in the flare to ease the plane down to “find the runway”. When it’s time to “fly” the tail to the ground, there is little attitude change from level to tail down. For a three-point landing, carrying about 75 knots over the threshold works well. Yet the moment you pull the power and flare; those big wings and split flaps act like a massive speed brake – the airplane slows down decisively and can “plop” you in. For a true short field approach, fly in with power as slow as 65 knots. You’ll be close to a tailwheel first attitude, but those cast steel landing gear “knuckles” can handle it.

Wrap-Up: The Fokker S-11 *Instructor* is one of those rare aircraft that feels justifiably likable. Tough enough to survive the inevitable botched landings and ham-fisted maneuvers of generations of students, it is light and responsive enough on the controls to reward every small improvement in airmanship. It was the first steppingstone for many military pilots. I relish every opportunity to strap into Barry Hou’s S-11 and am grateful there is one that graces our North American skies!



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