



Why?

Tom Poberezny, President

Aviation is part of my life, every day of the week, 365 days a year. Each day, directly or indirectly, I address questions such as, “Why do people want to fly?” or “I am interested in flying...how can I get involved?”

Each of us should take a few minutes to answer the question, “Why do I (want to) fly?” Reflect for a moment on why it’s important. To be honest, it’s not a question of why we want to fly, rather why do we care. One thing that I have learned from EAA members is that there are “core” reasons that are common for most of us, but there is also great diversity in our aviation interests. The path you take to get involved in aviation or learning to fly can vary significantly.

In the end, for many it is a passion and inner feeling that engages us in aviation...it can’t be measured, it’s just there! Demographically, EAA spans a wide spectrum. Members come from all walks of life, but when they’re at their local airport or here in Oshkosh, the common bond is their engagement in some form of flight. When we are together, we speak the same language, share information that’s valuable, and enjoy the stories that are never ending.

When I talk with members who have been involved in aviation for decades, I’m asked, “What can we do to preserve the legacy of flight and provide future generations opportunities for participation?” Some question whether the young people

today have the same interest that existed 20 to 30 years ago. Their perception may be “no,” but the reality is “yes.” We have to remember that because of today’s communication technology, our youth are deluged with a level of information that is unprecedented.

But technology can serve as an advantage and is one of the reasons why I am optimistic about aviation’s future. I would like to share an example. Each summer in Oshkosh, we

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host hundreds of young adults in the EAA Air Academy program. When they arrive, I share insights as to how their participation will impact their lives. For many it’s the first time they have been away from home for an extensive period of time...most importantly, it’s the first time that they’ve been with a group who is together for one reason...aviation. That’s significant!

As a result of their involvement in the Air Academy, they will make friends that can be maintained for a lifetime. For most of us growing up, our sphere of friends was geographically close to home. Today, technology allows young people to make

and maintain global relationships that reinforce a common interest, such as aviation. The geographical boundaries that we experienced no longer exist. As a result, I see their interest and passion for flight is just as strong today as it was for many of us...they are just engaged in different ways than we were.

There are many reasons for EAA to exist...information, camaraderie, relationships, advocacy...the list is extensive. One of the most important is to preserve and promote the opportunity for those who have a passion for flight, especially young people, to participate at the level they choose, whether it’s enthusiast, builder, restorer, pilot, or participant. Never before has this been more important than today!

Each month, sharing perspectives on subjects such as Transportation Security Administration (TSA) actions, government regulations, and safety is important and, in some cases, requires a call for action. But there is also the emotional side of aviation. Taking the time to reflect as to why it’s important, and why we continue to participate helps put things in perspective.

So in a way, this is a call to action... to reflect and understand the value and personal satisfaction that we’ve gained as a result of our aviation participation, including the friends we’ve made, because at the end of the day...that’s the real value for many of us. 