



NWBS members Doug Haughton and Jim Posner organized the Northwest Formation Flying Clinic at Bremerton, WA, on

June 24th through the 26th for Bonanzas to Oshkosh (B2OSH) certification. There were 38 people at dinner on Friday evening, 32 participating in the Clinic, and a total of 20 airplanes. The attendees came from Alberta, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, and Texas. Eleven attendees were members of NWBS.

Agenda for the clinic covered Safety, Briefings, Ground operations, Take offs, Station keeping, Maneuvers, Landings and De-briefing. The main goal was to launch two ship formations for training for competency for the B2OSH flight taking place on Saturday, July 23rd at Rockford, IL. Second on the agenda was to certify three candidates for the FFI card (Formation Flying Incorporated). The three candidates, all members of NWBS, were Ken VanWinkle (KTIW), Doug Haughton (KPWT) and Rich

Jones (KPAE). All three ended their day Sunday FFI qualified. Air shows, here they come as the Northwest Beechboys.

The weather cooperated later Saturday morning, although ceilings were a bit low, and held through Sunday with mostly clear skies. Larry Gaines and Jim MacKnight flew up from Stockton, CA to enlighten the pilots and safety pilots of the fine art of Formation Flying. Mark Merrill joined us not only as safety pilot/instructor but as one of only two Check Pilots for FFI.

We were also joined by two Mooneys that will be in the 14th Mooney Caravan flight from Madison, WI to Oshkosh that is scheduled to arrive after the B2OSH. Chris Shopperly, from Alberta, owned and piloted one of these beautiful Mooneys. Chris is the Mooney Caravan President and has the honor (thanks to the weather) to be the only Mooney driver who made it to Oshkosh (Sloshgosh) 2010. Two years ago, members formed a Safety Assessment Committee and one of their first orders of business was to discuss training and safety with Larry Gaines. Chris said that the Bonanzas participating in B2OSH looked professional and it was gracious of Larry to discuss with them on how to devise a competency program for Formation Flying. The Mooney Caravan has since partnered with B2OSH clinics and has, this year, put 11 Mooney drivers through the training at various clinics. The participation in the Mooney Caravan had dropped due to safety issues and Chris believes this type of approach with formal training will not only increase participation but make it a safer event. Chris expressed his gratitude to B2OSH and especially Larry for being inspirational and stated that they are headed in the right direction. Their goal is to create their own training syllabus, but until then, they will partner with B2OSH to train their pilots.



Bonanzas to Oshkosh began in 1990 when Wayne Collins and a few friends decided the only way to ensure camping together was to arrive together in formation. Wayne Collins led Bonanzas to Oshkosh until 2001 when Elliott Schiffman took over the reins. In 2007 Larry Gaines slid into the left seat. Today the focus remains firmly fixed: pilots flying the best general aviation airplane camping together in friendship and camaraderie. The formation arrival is the means of accomplishment. The only requirements are membership in ABS and EAA and 3 hours of formation currency in the preceding six months. We cannot stress too strongly that this event focuses on friendship, camaraderie and a grass-roots structure. For more information on B2OSH go to www.B2OSH.org.

I just wanted to take a minute to comment about the Northwest Formation Clinic in Bremerton over the weekend.

What an OUTSTANDING job done by the organizers. It goes without saying that their passion of aviation truly shined over the weekend.

As a first time attendee, I didn't quite know what to expect other than I was going to learn about formation flying to enable me to participate in the B2OSH program. What I learned and was reinforced again is that ABS has some of the most talented folks that step up to the plate and volunteer their time, money, and airplanes to promote their passion for aviation. My sincere thanks to Doug Haughton, Larry Gaines and Jim Posner and all the coaches.

I saw a very high level of pilot skills being displayed over the weekend by everybody involved and appreciated

being welcomed into the group by a bunch of very warm people. In my 40 plus years of aviation, I can say that it just doesn't get any better!

from Jeff Harshman



Doug Houghton and Jim Posner getting ready to launch the formation groups



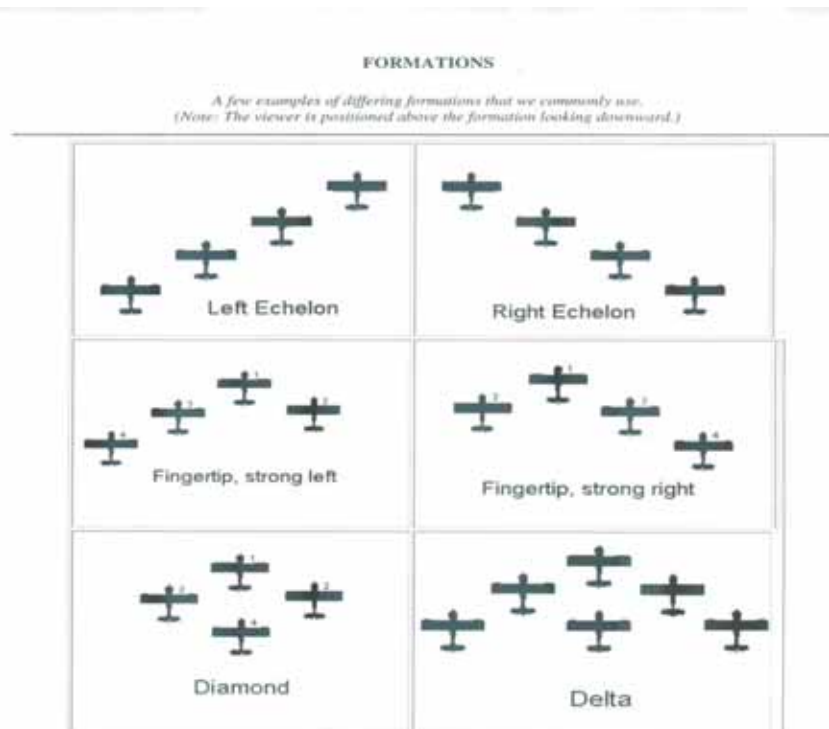


FFI's story begins in 1997, when the FAA began requiring local Flight Standards District Offices to include, in their air show approvals, a stipulation that anyone participating in non-aerobatic formation flight during an air show possess a training and evaluation credential acceptable to the FAA. The Formation and Safety Team (FAST), an organization of warbird groups, had developed FAA-approved credentials, but FAST was recognized by the FAA as a warbird-only organization. The International Council of Air Shows (ICAS), which still issues aerobatic formation cards, terminated the issuance of non-aerobatic cards in 1998 as not appropriate to their core mission. Suddenly, a large and diverse group of competent formation flyers was left without an agency to issue air show credentials.

And that left a man named Stu McCurdy who, in the best tradition of grassroots general-aviation flying, saw a problem, rolled up his sleeves, and went to work. A retired U.S. Air Force Colonel with over 30 years of formation-flying experience in T-38s, F-4s and other aircraft, Stu is an RV-3 owner and is currently building an RV-8. If you were at EAA Airventure Oshkosh in 1997, you may have seen him lead the 25-ship formation flight for Van's Aircraft's 25th anniversary.

Working closely with the FAA, FAST and other organizations, Stu founded FFI and developed a comprehensive evaluation guide, the FFI Formation Standards and Proficiency Program. Patterned after the well-proven, FAA-approved FAST program, FFI's program also has much in common with the Practical Test Standards we all know and love: It clearly delineates areas of required knowledge and competency for formation flyers, and spells out precisely what constitutes qualified and unqualified performance. On April 21, 1999, the FAA approved FFI as the issuer of non-aerobatic, non-warbird formation-flying credentials. Its stated mission is "to provide standards for formation training and flying, a system for proficiency evaluation, and a method for monitoring currency."

FFI checkride maneuvers are all done with 4 ships. The Diamond, Finger Four, Echelon, Close Trail, Extended trail require turns and lazy eights. Communication is mostly by hand signals and signals from aircraft movements such as rocking the wings. Other maneuvers are the Break and the most difficult, the rejoin. Not to exclude cross unders (changing position) element landings and element takeoffs (an element is 2 ships).



Practice for the FFI card by the three candidates and the FFI Lead Pilot resulted in an outreach that I felt should be shared. *by Stephanie Allen*

From an e-mail I recieved from Doug Houghton": On Saturday an elderly friend of the family passed away. The relatives had gathered at the family home on the Hood Canal to grieve, celebrate his life, and have a family dinner. During this time a group of four airplanes in tight formation flew directly overhead. The family took it as a sign that Bill was saying hello. Then again on Sunday "another" group of four airplanes in formation flew over. At that point the Granddaughter (Selena) called the airport to see if she could find out a little more about the group of airplanes. Avian Flight Center gave Selena my name (Doug Houghton based at PWT and organizer of the clinic) and cell number. She was surprised to learn that I was in the formation. (Doug was a old family friend they had not seen or heard from for awhile)

She asked me if there was any way the we could fly over the family home in formation this coming Saturday at 11:30. I explained that it was relatively short notice but that I would contact the pilots to see what they could do."

The day turned out to be Sunday and the weather did not cooperate. We had four pilots to fly, including PAE Members, Rich and Vera. Both PAE and Frontier (Vera) were fogged in during flight time. The weather south at Bremerton was better and Doug and friend Ken in thier bonanzas made the flight.



Photos by Steve Zugschwerdt, the Kitsap Sun

Marjorie Shearer, left, and daughter Kathy Hunter wave to the aircraft that flew over the Shearer home Sunday morning as a tribute to her husband, Bill Shearer, who passed away last week. *by Steve Zugschwerdt / Special to the Sun*

