



“Enroute” – Special Edition

Updates from the Washington Pilots Association President

By Jim Posner – August 22, 2016

How to make an aviation event a roaring, record-setting success:

Putting on an event such as last weekend’s AOPA Fly-In at Bremerton National Airport involves a huge amount of work, expertise and commitment. The Port of Bremerton exhibited all of these qualities and hosted, by far, the most successful Fly-In that the AOPA has had to date, all fourteen of them.

The commitment started a year ago last May when Jim Rothlin (the CEO of the Port) and I went down to the Salinas, California AOPA event. We visited with Chris Eads (AOPA’s Event Manager) to get an idea of what was involved in putting on one of these events. We were able to compare and contrast the Salinas airport and Bremerton’s airport in terms of capability, location, community support and logistics (hotels, camping room, support structures and so forth).

When it came time to submit the Bremerton proposal, all of the relevant selling points were included in an outstanding document put out by the Port staff under the leadership of Fred Salisbury, the airport director.

The AOPA event staff came out to do a site visit and, once again, the Port staff made an impressive show of why Bremerton should be the Northwest venue for 2016. Members of the AOPA event staff were taken for a sightseeing ride in Rick Kriss’ beautiful Cessna 182 to get a good sense of the location, size of the facility and beauty of the area to attract participants and adequately support a large number of aircraft, automobiles, campers and other visitors.

When our airport was selected, the Port Commissioners committed the funds to support what needed to be done to do it right. All three commissioners, Axel Strakeljahn, Larry Stokes and Cary Bozeman were clearly committed to making this event a success to highlight the airport and its value to the community. The marketing and promotional value of a successful event would be enormous and they had the insight to recognize that. As it turned out, the estimated infusion of dollars to the Bremerton community is \$700,000. Not bad for a one-day event.

Fred then shifted into high gear with the planning and spent hundreds of hours attending to all of the details associated with an event of this magnitude.

He also championed the construction of a gorgeous new children's playground with an aviation theme that was completed just two weeks prior to the AOPA event. I have not seen it empty since it was opened.

The first face-to-face planning meeting was attended by about 50 folks including Mayor Lent, members of the City Council, Civil Air Patrol, Bremerton chapter of the Washington Pilots Association, fire and police departments, Chamber of Commerce, Avian Flight Center, Seaplane Pilots Association and many others showing the aviation and community commitment to the event's success.

Fred orchestrated these resources superbly and kept them all on point throughout the process. The last three months included weekly conference calls with the AOPA event staff to ensure every detail was being addressed.

So, if you want to host a similar event, be prepared to take on a project that needs a good project manager, plenty of funding (which has an excellent ROI if the event is successful) and a healthy dose of community commitment.

Well done, Fred, Jim R and your team! The results show how effective the planning was!

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