



Operation "Little Vittles"

Col. Gail Halvorsen, The Berlin Candy Bomber

Long Island Early Fliers Club, Inc.

March, April 2016 Newsletter

A word from our President, Sal Vitale:

This issue focuses the written articles on the period after World War II, with two cold war stories. The Berlin Airlift was a tremendous undertaking on the part of flight crews who, only months before, were waging war against these same people.

I was hired by Lockheed to assist in the required maintenance on aircraft that were involved in the airlift. Much of the work was done at Long Island MacArthur Airport. The procedure was part of the "tear down line," where we did the pickling and preservation of these airplanes, as well as structural work, if needed. When we lifted the flooring in these airplanes, to our surprise, we found a great deal of debris amid the control cables. That debris consisted of beets, turnips and coal; remnants of the goods delivered to the people of Berlin. The aircraft had "wet wings," meaning that this was where the fuel was kept...and there were many leaks. When we completed our work at MacArthur, the aircraft went back to the Air Force and Navy to continue flying the airlift.

One of the advantages of our electronic newsletter is that we can bring you special links to stories that will touch your heart. Please click (or control button, then click) on the following link as we, hopefully, get you in a post war mood..... (turn up the sound!)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=l3P15s4zWNQ>

One Man Changed Their World.....

In this month's issue we are going to look at the life of one man, a humble pilot who served in WWII, and how he changed the world for many children who lived in post war Berlin.

After World War II, Germany was divided between the Soviet Union and the western allied powers.



Berlin, which was located deep in the Soviet territory of East Germany, was also divided between the east and the west. It wasn't long before the Soviets decided that they wanted all of Berlin. This oasis of freedom in their territory was simply unacceptable.

To lay siege to the city, the Soviets stopped all surface transportation into Berlin, believing it would not be long before the city became theirs. That might have

happened had it not been for the Brits calling the U.S. State Department and suggesting that the Berliners be supplied by air into the three airports in the western territory.

The sentiment was harsh toward the German people in 1948. War atrocities were being discovered and many Nazi's and their collaborators were being prosecuted for crimes against humanity. Most pilots resented the idea that they were being asked to once again risk their lives in the skies over Germany, now to save the lives of the former enemy. But they did.

The airlift brought in tons of food, coal and supplies to keep Berliners from starving to death. Only a minute apart, in all types of weather the C-47s and C-54s came and went 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.



Gail Seymour Halvorsen was one of those pilots. Duty called and he responded; day after long day of flying and cold nights in

his makeshift bunk. There was little rest. The planes had to keep going.



Unloading at Tempelhof Airport

One day while his plane was being unloaded at Tempelhof, Halvorsen decided to go for a walk to help stay alert for the return flight. He found himself at the airport perimeter fence, where there was a group of beleaguered looking children standing on the other side of the fence watching him, while occasionally being distracted by the next plane coming over their heads to land.

The kids had a far off look of despair in their eyes. There was no hope, no

excitement. All so emotionless, quietly looking at this man who came up to their vantage point overlooking the landing planes.

Halvorsen was moved to do something. He reached into his pocket, but all he had was a stick of gum. In his mind he thought, if he threw this one small stick to the kids, the biggest kid would get it and that would be the end of it. He threw it to them anyway.

He was right. The biggest kid got the gum, but instead of taking it for himself, he tore it into little pieces and distributed the gum amongst the kids. When they ran out of gum, they shared the pieces of wrapper, licking the paper carefully in order to savor the taste. The gesture touched Halvorsen.

He then spoke, saying I'll be back and I'll bring more. I'll drop it from the plane. The kids asked how they will know it was him. He said he would wiggle his wings.

Several days passed before Halvorsen was to return to Berlin. In that time he collected as much candy and gum as he could get his hands on and made little parachutes from handkerchiefs so the falling candy wouldn't hurt anyone. When on final to Tempelhof he looked for the kids, many thoughts racing through his mind; would they actually be there? did they think he had forgotten them....? As he approached, there were indeed many kids at the fence, but were they the same ones? He wiggled his wings....the crowd erupted

in wild waving and jumping! Gail called back to his crew to drop the candy and away it went.



The numbers of kids grew with each flight and so did the enthusiasm of more of the flight crews who observed what was happening. On one approach, a newspaper reporter was hit by a piece of candy and wrote a story about it. Halvorsen was called into HQ, and sure he was facing a court martial, timidly entered the room. The story had reached the U.S. media and Halvorsen was asked to return home briefly as an ambassador to discuss the Berlin Airlift and the good will gesture he was involved in. After news commentator Dave Garraway reported about the Berlin Candy Bomber, the town of Chicopee, Massachusetts organized an effort to collect candy and even had school children making little parachutes to carry the candy safely down to the children.

Halvorsen went back to continue bombing Berlin with candy. Often, upon returning from a mission, he would find his bunk loaded with candy and handkerchief parachutes that other flight crews had assembled for him.



Gail Halvorsen truly made a difference in the lives of all the people he touched with his gesture, but the best was still to come.

On the 50th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift, a banquet was given in Berlin, with Halvorsen as the guest of honor. While making his way back to his seat after speaking about his experiences, many people stood and formed lines to approach him.

They were people in their 50s, 60s and 70s who were all seeking his autograph. He was signing his name on candy wrappers from the candy he had dropped to these very same people 50 years earlier. Those wrappers were a valuable keepsake to the individuals who had received this gift from an anonymous pilot who dropped them from the sky, so long ago. This one man changed their world.

Berlin Airlift - Facts & Figures

- Normal daily food requirements for Berlin was 2000 tons (2032 tonnes)
- Coal represented two-thirds of all tonnage; giving each family 11.3 - 11.6 kg (25-30lb) per month
- The airlift required 850,000 multi-layer paper sacks per month
- 394,509 tons (400,821 tonnes) of foodstuffs, coal and supplies carried by 689 military and civil aircraft - 441 US, 147 RAF and 101 British civil.
- The pilots and aircrew also came from Australia, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand
- 83,405 tons (84373 tonnes) of cargo and 68,000 people were flown OUT of Berlin
- 39 British, 31 American and 13 German civilians lost their lives in the Berlin Airlift. They are remembered on the Berlin Airlift monument at Tempelhof
- 200,230,415 km (124,420,813 miles) were flown during the airlift. A total of 277,804 flights
- The Russian blockade lasted from 24 June 1948 to 11 May 1949, but the airlift continued for several more months.
- The airlift cost the United States \$350 million; the UK £17 million and Western Germany 150 million Deutschmarks
- Berliners received an average of 2,300 calories a day which was higher than the UK food rationing system provided at the time
- At the height of the operation, on April 16 1949, an allied aircraft landed in Berlin every minute
- The major Berlin airfields involved were Tempelhof in the American sector, Gatow on the Havel river in the British sector and Tegel which was built by army engineers and Berlin volunteers in 49 days inside the French sector
- Each aircraft was unloaded by German crews in 20-30 minutes
- British aircraft involved - C47 Dakotas and Avro Yorks

So what else was going on in 1949?

**The 1949 National Air Races,
of course!**

..... great history.,.click the link

<http://www.airrace.com/1949%20NAR%20.htm>

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we launch our 2016 Membership
Drive.**

**Russia's unprecedented
monster aircraft ship**

**During the cold war (...make that the first
cold war.... ☹) The Soviets experimented
with flying in "ground effect" – the
cushion of air formed by the compression
of air beneath the wings and the ground.
Here is a story about just how far they
actually got.....**



During the late 1980s, Russia was pushing their boundaries on technology and military advancement. What they were building and testing during that time actually prompted the United States to build unmanned drones to spy on their actions. This plan of action was brought about when satellite images were taken of a giant vessel flying across the Caspian Sea at unheard of speeds. The US military wasn't sure what they were looking at. A vessel that could reach speeds achieved only by airplanes but stayed low enough that it would hide under radar much like a stealthy boat. The spying revealed what the Russian's dubbed the Lun Class Ekranoplan. Not quite an airplane and not quite a ship, the Ekranoplan was something much more and it terrified Navies around the world. It weighed in at a whopping 380 tons and had a wingspan of 148 feet. It contained 6 anti-ship missiles that could be launched from flight or from a stand still. The Ekranoplan could only reach an altitude of about 15 feet

above the sea. This incredible piece of machinery was in a class all its own.



In 1987, the vessel was built from past projects that had been scrapped and was commissioned for use until sometime in the late 90's. At 240 feet in length, she boasted 6 Moskit anti-ship missiles capable of reaching a top speed of Mach 3. Combined with the top speed of the Ekranoplan, these missiles would be undetected until about 30 seconds before they hit. In comparison, the most destructive anti-ship missile the U.S. had at that time gave enemies a 2 minute warning.



The shape of the hull underneath the Ekranoplan was its key to success. The hull is similar to that of an ocean speed boat

capable of cutting through large waves at a very high speed. She was capable of speeds upwards of 300 mph at an altitude of roughly 4-15 feet above the water. Because of the wing shape, a cushion of air was created between the ship and the ocean surface. This allowed for an incredible top speed for such a large vessel.



The Lun Class Ekranoplan was designed by Rostislav Evgenievich Alexeyev to dominate the high seas completely undetected by radar and carrying a payload of firepower that could destroy any ship.



It was equipped with 8 enormous jet engines capable of 28,000 pounds of thrust each. That equals out to be 224,000 pounds of thrust that would propel the Ekranoplan within a 1,200 – 2,000 mile range. It was

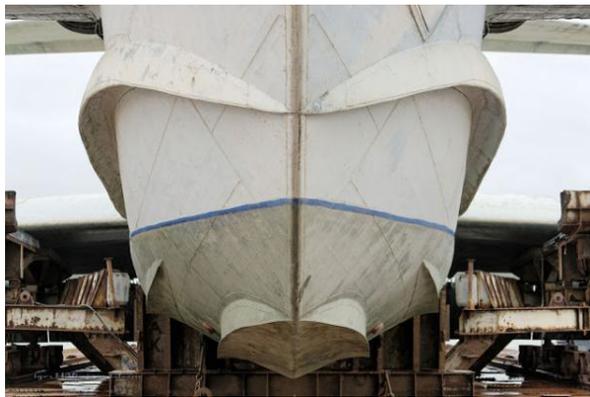
able to support a full crew for only 5 days without resupplying. Although it was never tested, the vessel is said to have been able to transport 900 soldiers if needed, as well.



The jet nozzles are adjustable much like that of a harrier jet. They help control the lift and the speed of the Ekranoplan. With 4 on each side, there is no lack of power here making it the fastest sea vessel of its time. This incredible feat of engineering genius was docked for the last time in the late 90's where it still sits in a guarded Russian harbor located in Kaspiysk, in the Republic of Dagestan.



The vessel has no landing gear, limiting its usefulness to the high seas. It requires a special dock to store it. The dock submerges and lifts it up onto shore. It does receive some maintenance, however the weather is slowly deteriorating this beautiful ship.



The underside of the vessel has crisp lines designed 100 percent for function but they make an ominous statement on their own.



This is also what created the cushion of air when the machine was fully up to speed. Riding in the air allowed the vessel to travel much faster than a boat or a plane of its size.

which also allowed for much heavier payloads.



The whole underside of the vessel is fitted with these electro-chemical protection devices. Often used in boat yards, they attract the corrosive chemicals and salts in the water to protect the hull from deteriorating.



The hull is equipped with a hydro-ski designed to cut through severe waves allowing the massive vessel to take off or land in heavy seas.

The entire vessel is filled with some very high-tech tracking equipment and guidance

systems, as well as two gunners placed at strategic locations.



The missile tubes are massive! Below the backside of them you will notice a darker colored contoured section. This is actually made out of the same type of ceramic tiles that are used on space shuttles in order to protect the hull and the mechanical parts from the blistering heat produced by the rockets when they are launched. I wonder who they stole that technology from?



When launched, the 6 Moskit anti-ship missiles flew at speeds up to Mach 3. The missiles have a range of 75 miles. Because

of the firepower and speeds capable by such a stealthy vessel, it was a force to be reckoned with and was feared so much that our CIA actually had a team devoted to keeping tabs on the Ekranoplan.

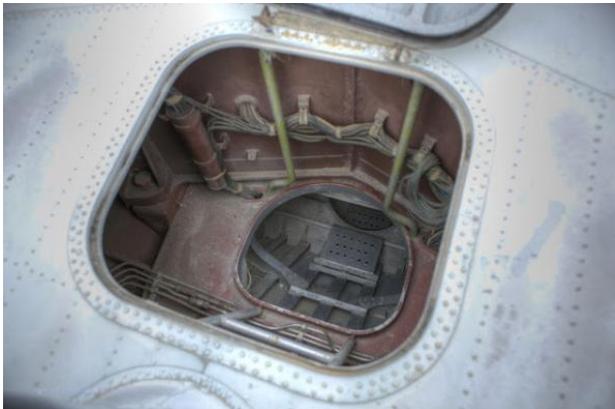


It is actually considered a flying ship rather than an amphibious airplane. It is enormous, though the crew was made up of 7 officers and 4 midshipmen. If you want to compare it to something for size, it is roughly the same size as a Boeing 747 airplane.

The beast is absolutely intimidating looking from every angle. It is easy to understand why the U.S. military was so worried. However, now that the capabilities are understood, it was likely an unjustified cause for concern. There were a few mishaps when investors were watching the vessel fly which resulted in the cut of all funding and dismissed the idea of more Lun Class Ekranoplans being built.



This piece of military hardware is much more than the amphibious planes you see flying around today but it is limited to enormous lakes or oceans. It would only be able to fly to another body of water as long as nothing taller than 15 feet was in the way from take-off to landing, making it extremely impractical. As for the ocean however, this Ekranoplan is right at home and had the potential to become the most dominant vessel of its time.



All of the hatches are designed as ship hatches to handle rough seas. Inside you will find a lot of equipment found standard on a military airplane. It is truly a one of a kind

feat of engineering that will go down in nautical, as well as aviation, history books.



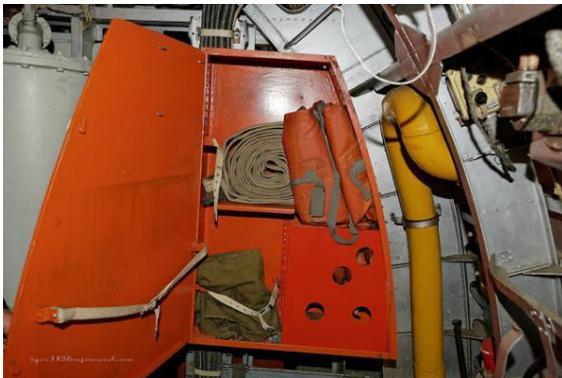
The craft is covered with multiple radar systems and control devices. They monitor all ocean activity as well as air activity. The ship also contains some very powerful guidance systems for the anti-ship weaponry it carries.



The craft now sits, slowly corroding, in a very volatile area where the government chooses to pay little attention to it. It is unclear whether or not the Ekranoplan will be placed in a museum or just left to rot.



The cockpit seems to be in great condition. It is missing one gauge on the left pilot's control panel but other than that it looks like it is ready to be fired up once again.



The interior of the vessel is still fully stocked with all the emergency equipment and gear that it had during its 10 year life. There are emergency fire hoses and emergency rafts placed throughout the hull of the ship.



Although minimal, the crew did have everything they needed inside the ship. Everything from bathrooms, kitchens, and offices to sleeping quarters. It is easy to do when you have a crew of only 11 operating something this enormous.



Although confined, the sleeping quarters offer plenty of space for a 5 day mission.



The corridors of the ship lead to various control rooms that command the guidance and radar systems.



Guidance systems of the 80's and 90's were much larger than they are today. The image above shows just how intricate and complex the guidance system room is.



Each compartment is able to seal itself off from the others in case of a hull breach. This would keep the vessel from sinking if the hull was damaged.



This is a forward mounted marine radar. It reads, "don't touch by hands. It was set, it will kill".



Here are the controls for the flight engineer. He would work directly with the pilots and control the main functions of the ship.



The interior of the cockpit resembles that of a military aircraft and uses similar controls, however it is in a ship. You won't see anything else quite like this ever again.



Miles and miles of cable feed various devices throughout the craft. There are also two auxiliary engines to sustain mobility in case any of the main engines are damaged.



These engines would also allow the Ekranoplan to safely return home if any of its engines were destroyed during a mission or in rough seas.



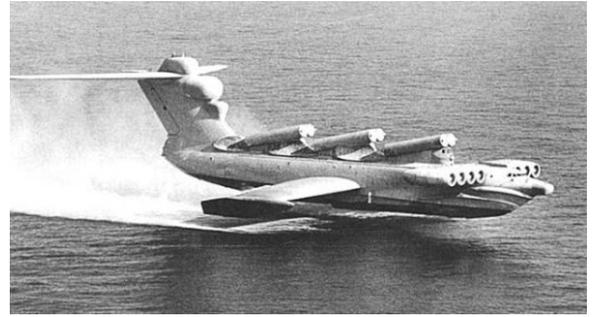
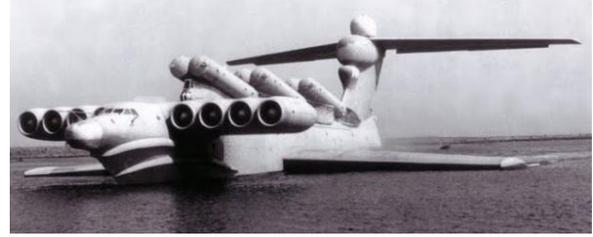
Looking up at the front gunner's cockpit. This is situated right below the front missile launchers. Can you imagine seeing two of those launch right above your head?



The cockpits were lined with an insulated fabric to protect from heat and cold, but mostly from the noise of the eight 28,000 pound thrust engines.



More fire system controls. This ship seems very much prepared for an attack.



For a few short years, this was considered the most destructive force on the ocean.



This corridor leads to the rear gunner's cockpit.



Staring out the back of the plane is the rear gunner's cockpit. I can't help but think this is very close in design to the rear gunner's position in the B-52.



LIEF club news.....

LIEF, having hosted a joint project with Bayport Aerodrome Society, was invited by Boy Scout Troop 329 to participate in their Court of Honor to award the Aviation Merit Badge to the scouts who participated in the bivouac at the Aerodrome.



Fred Coste handing a scout his merit badge.

It was a pleasure to have the fine young men and their adult leaders at the Aerodrome and an honor to be invited to participate in their awards ceremony.



Troop 329 at the Court of Honor Ceremony

LIEF and BAS met with Troop 329 leaders in February to discuss future plans and activities with the scouts. During that

meeting both LIEF and BAS were the recipients of a framed photograph commemorating the scouts visit to the Aerodrome, together with a wonderful thank you note and a monetary donation to each organization.

We look forward to continuing our support of scouting on Long Island.

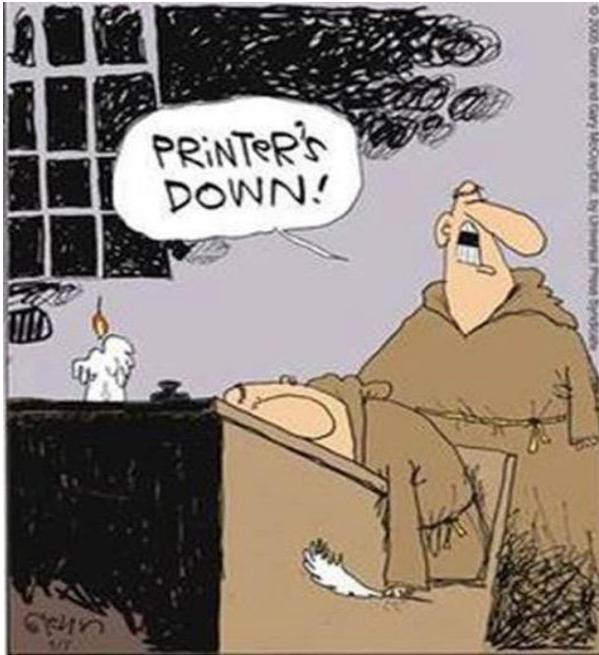
The Club has had cabinetry constructed and installed along a 20' section of the north wall of the hangar for the purpose of storing many of our tables and chairs. The surface of the cabinet is a laminate material and is an ideal place for our big screen TV. Our thanks to John and Tom Hancock, Ray Kelly, Pat Gallagher, Sal Vitale and Fred Coste for making this project come together in January. Also thanks to John and Tom Hancock for the clean-up and restoration of the display engines and their stands.



Donations:

Special thanks to the following:

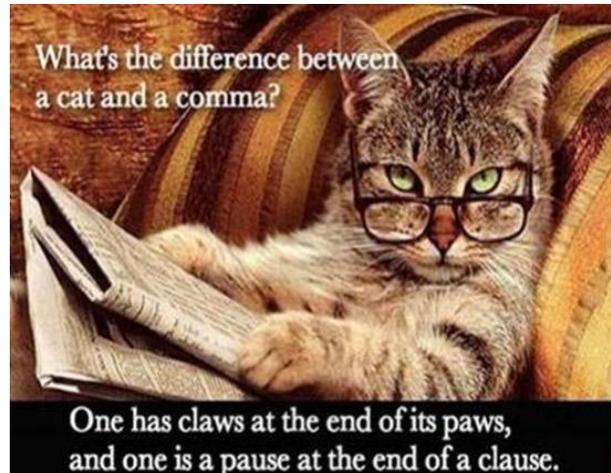
Joan & Sal Vitale	\$500.00
New member Bill Richards:	\$ 65.00
BSA Troop 329	\$100.00



New Members:

We welcome the following new members:

Suzanne Thompson
Bill Richards
Frank & Paula Mauceri
Dennis Doyle



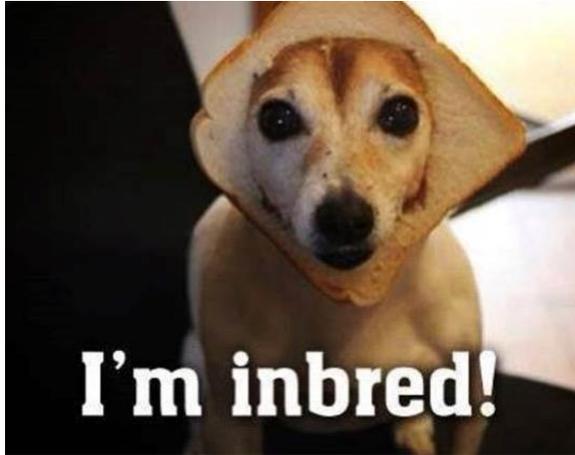
Please support our sponsors. We are pleased at their support of the Long Island Early Fliers Club and cannot say thank you enough for their support of our endeavors.

In other news.....

The Town of Islip has announced the departure of both the Deputy Airport Commissioner, as well as the Commissioner of Aviation and Transportation this past January.

A talent search is on to fill these posts as these positions are directly responsible for both L.I. MacArthur Airport and Bayport Aerodrome. At the present time, the Acting Commissioner is Rob Schneider, who is doing triple duty with these two positions as well as his normal position as Airport Operations Manager. Rob is a very capable individual and can certainly handle the added responsibilities.

Thanks, Rob!and **GOOD LUCK!!!**



Don't forget to renew your membership!
You can use the form at the end of the newsletter.
We need your support as we move ahead with our museum plans.
P.S. We are looking for an antique airplane....any condition to display in the new hangar...can you help?

More.....Humor?

Teacher: How old is your father?
 Tommy: He is 6 years.
 Teacher: What? How is this possible?
 Tommy: He became father only when I was born.

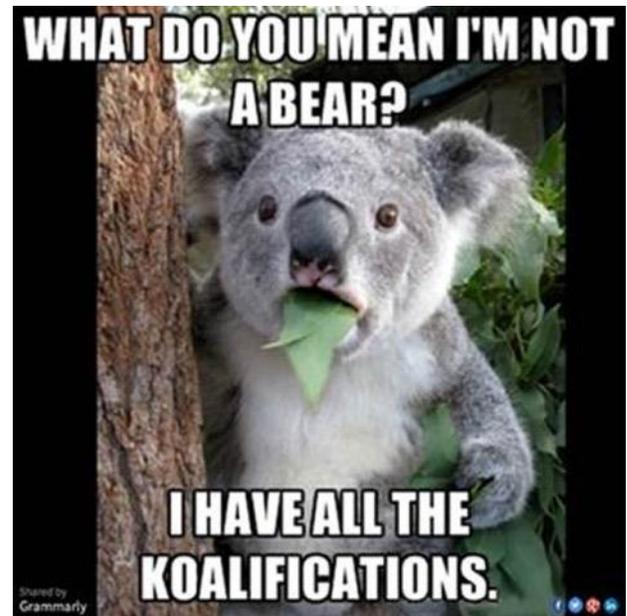
 TEACHER: Maria, go to the map and find North America.
 MARIA: Here it is.
 TEACHER: Correct. Now class, who discovered America ?
 CLASS: Maria.

TEACHER: Donald, what is the chemical formula for water?
 DONALD: H I J K L M N O.
 TEACHER: What are you talking about?
 DONALD: Yesterday you said it's H to O

 TEACHER: Clyde , your composition on 'My Dog' is exactly the same as your brother's.. Did you copy his?
 CLYDE : No sir, It's the same dog.

TEACHER: Harold, what do you call a person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested?
 HAROLD: A teacher

Editors Note:
OK, sorry some of these were a little corny, but hey, you have two months to recover before you hear from me again!



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The LONG ISLAND
Early Fliers Club

Long Island Early Fliers Club, Inc. is a non-profit organization founded in 1956 and Chartered by the New York State Education Department. We are dedicated to aviation education and preserving Long Island's aviation heritage. Volunteers who want to help educate and preserve our history are always welcome. Annual Membership in our organization is \$35.00 for individuals; \$50.00 for families.

Donations of aviation memorabilia, aircraft and aircraft parts, aviation clothing, display quality models and items of historic significance are always welcome and greatly appreciated. Cash donations, as well as artifact donations are tax deductible. You may visit our facility at Bayport Aerodrome, Vitamin Drive, Bayport New York most Wednesdays between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Appointments are necessary as airports are secure locations and can also be arranged at other times for your convenience.

Sal Vitale <i>President</i>	Pat Gallagher <i>1st Vice President</i>	Fred Coste <i>2nd Vice President</i>	Joan Vitale <i>Secretary</i>	Bill King <i>Treasurer</i>	Valarie King <i>Financial Secretary</i>
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Newsletter: LIEF, c/o P.O. Box 43, Holbrook, NY 11741

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Annual Dues*

* Dues are not prorated. Dues year runs from January 1 through December 31

Address: _____

Individual membership: \$35.00

Family membership: \$50.00

Email: _____

I am applying for:

Occupation: _____

Individual ___ Family ___ Membership

Names of family members joining: _____

Background information: (Please check all that apply)

Aviation Enthusiast	Private Pilot	Work(ed) in aviation industry	
Model Builder	Commercial Pilot	Aviation mechanic	
History Buff	Airline Pilot	Aircraft owner	
Computer technician	Enjoy writing	Enjoy photography	

I, _____, being interested in the preservation of all facets of aviation history, Particularly that pertaining to Long Island's aviation heritage, do hereby apply for membership in the Long Island Early Fliers Club, Inc.

(signature) (date)

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