

A (very short) History of the Freeman Field Flying Association

by Larry Bothe, July 2003

Disclaimer and plea for additional information: The history presented below is the best that Karen Phillips and Larry Bothe could come up with while doing research in 2002-2003. There are very few written records that we could find going back before 1998. Some of the information presented below could well be incorrect, and we know it is woefully incomplete. We implore anyone who can offer any corrections and/or additional information to contact Larry Bothe at LBothe@aol.com.

The FFFA was founded in 1976 or 1977 at about the same time that the first 10-bay T-hangar was constructed on the northwest side of Freeman Field. Steve Boas is believed to have been the first president. Since Dr. William Blaisdell was instrumental in the construction of the hangar he was also likely to have been one of the founding members. Some other early members included Fred Morgan, Bob Phillips, Jack Hildreth, Ray Niccum and Orville Toler. Fred recalls that other active pilots in Seymour at the time included Gary Cottingham, Dave Stanfield, Libby Wheeler and Dave Hodapp. They may have been early FFFA members as well.

It is not known how long Steve Boas served as President. At some point Ray Niccum succeeded him. Karen Phillips found records indicating that in 1984 the officers were Ray Niccum, President; Al Seibert, VP; Jack Hildreth, Secretary and Bob Phillips was Treasurer. After Ray passed away, in 1987 we think, Gregg Pardieck became President and served in that capacity until 1999. During most of that period Jack Hildreth was the Treasurer. The fortunes and activity levels of the FFFA have ebbed and flowed over the years. There were periods of regular meetings and no meetings at all. A sporadic newsletter was in fact a meeting notice and a plea for members to pay their dues. Often there was little money in the treasury so Jack paid the then-required insurance premium out of his pocket. It is believed that the association has been incorporated twice; once a long time ago and the incorporation was allowed to lapse, and then again in 1998 during Gregg's final year as President.

In 1999 several things occurred that led to a revitalization of the FFFA and a substantial increase in membership. Gregg Pardieck started a second FBO business on the field. In order to avoid any conflict of interest Gregg declined to run for President again. That resulted in Jan Sipes becoming President and a new era of regularly scheduled and better-attended meetings began. At that same time Larry Bothe retired from industry and went to work for Pardieck Aviation on a part-time basis. Larry had time available; saw the need for a

regularly published newsletter as a vehicle for member communications and the *Freeman Flash* was born. The first issue is dated July of that year.

In 1999 there were about 35 FFFA members. Membership records and dues payments were spotty at best. Since Larry needed the membership records in order to be able to send out the newsletter he took over the maintenance of those records. For the first time it was all put into a computer. Once the membership database was created it was easy to keep all the records up to date. In 2000 bylaws were adopted that made member's dues payable in January of each year. Dues payments were tracked in the computer. Group e-mail addresses were created so that members could be contacted quickly and reminded of meetings and events. By the summer of 2002 membership had swelled to just over 100, which is where it stands today (summer of 2003). In 2002 Larry Bothe was elected to the position of Treasurer. Combining Treasurer with the membership and newsletter functions was logical because there were recurring expenses (copying and postage) associated with the newsletter and a written Treasurer's Report could easily be included in each edition of the newsletter. All the recordkeeping was now in one place.

In January of 2001 Don Furlow was appointed by Mayor John Burkhart to be the manager of Freeman Municipal Airport. In an effort to get off on the right foot with his new job Don, with the encouragement of Mayor Burkhart, solicited the FFFA for a wish list of things that needed to be accomplished at Freeman Field. The biggest (financially) thing on the wish list turned out to be the renovation of the suite of rooms known as the Pilot's Lounge. The restroom was especially in need of attention. The City agreed to completely reconstruct the restroom; new fixtures, walls, ceiling, flooring, everything. New carpeting was installed in the other rooms. At the same time the FFFA decided to turn what had been a storage room into a kitchen. One wall was common with the restroom where a new shower was installed so the sink plumbing for the kitchen fell right into place. Purchase of kitchen cabinets and countertop and the acquisition of used but nice appliances (thanks to Bob & Karen Phillips) rounded out the new kitchen facility. Additional electrical circuits and an exhaust fan were installed and the kitchen was complete. The kitchen is important to the history and growth of the FFFA because now, for the first time, we had an on-site food preparation area. That in turn facilitates our "pitch-in" potluck suppers and allows us to sponsor pancake breakfasts and the like.