

E Week: Introducing the Glory of Flight

By Ken Philippart

All images courtesy of Lisa Philippart.

The Greater Huntsville Section added an exclamation point to the section's celebration of Engineers Week (E Week) by introducing a young person to the wonders of aviation. Despite an outbreak of late winter storms and bad weather, the section provided an orientation flight for Eric Black, winner of the section's inaugural First Flight Commemoration Contest last December.

Greater Huntsville sponsored the First Flight Contest to commemorate the Wright Brothers' first successful controlled flight of a manned, heavier than air craft. Eric, grandson of longtime AIAA member Herb Hunter, was named the winner on December 17, the 111th anniversary of the Wrights first flight. The prize for winning the contest was an hour of flight instruction in a light aircraft courtesy of Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 190. Eric's winning video titled, "*The Four Forces of Flight*" can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/lnh3t5tekqE>.

The section had initially planned to kick-off its E Week activities by arranging for Eric to receive his hour of dual instruction during E Week. But scheduled maintenance on the EAA's training aircraft forced a change in plans. Aaron Wypysznski, President of EAA Chapter 190 and the scheduled pilot, suggested instead that Eric receive an orientation flight in another aircraft to start E Week. Aaron scheduled the flight for Sunday, February 22 but the poor weather forecast quickly forced a postponement to the following Saturday, February 28, with the prospect of Eric's orientation flight now ushering out E Week instead of heralding it in.

During the middle of E Week, however, winter returned with a vengeance bringing cold temperatures while dumping almost a foot of snow on northern Alabama. Though the skies began to clear by the Friday before the rescheduled flight, the Moontown Airport (3M5) grass runway was still covered in snow. It looked like the flight would need to be rescheduled once again. But at the last minute, the sun worked its magic, the snow disappeared and the flight was back on.



Eric and Aaron arrived at Moontown early Saturday morning and began pre-flighting the Cessna-172. Aaron explained how to check the airplane's controls, fuel, oil and critical equipment. As the preflight inspection concluded, the sun broke through the overcast. Eric climbed into the right seat with Aaron taking the pilot in command position. With a "clear prop" the engine coughed to life. After a short taxi, the aircraft roared down the grass strip and into the wild blue yonder.



Aaron and Eric preflight the aircraft



Aaron and Eric liftoff for the orientation flight

During the 30 minute orientation flight, Aaron demonstrated basic aerial maneuvers while Eric followed along on the controls. Eric learned firsthand about the four forces of flight he had studied in preparing his video, a practical demonstration of aeronautical theory where it mattered most—in the air. He was also introduced to aerial navigation and operation of other aircraft systems. All too soon, the aircraft returned to the Moontown pattern and landed.

Eric's mother was on hand to greet her fledgling pilot. Aaron complimented Eric on his handling of the aircraft and said that few people do so well on their initial flight. Both are looking forward to Eric's hour of flight instruction, to be scheduled later in the spring.

Despite the bad weather and unexpected events, Greater Huntsville succeeded in celebrating E Week through the glory of flying. The Section thanks EAA Chapter 190 and Aaron Wypysznski for making this flight possible.