

President's Page

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At the time of this writing, Kathy and I have just returned from the opening ceremony for the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, which is located just south of Washington Dulles International Airport. It was a magnificent production and featured several dignitaries such as Vice President Dick Cheney, Chief Justice William Rehnquist, Sen. John Glenn, Neil Armstrong, Bob Hoover, Burt Rutan, and many others. Actor/pilot John Travolta did a segment on the Legacy of Flight. From the aerobatic side, Bob Hoover, Patty Wagstaff, and Sean Tucker were among a sizable group honored as legends of aviation.

Collectively, the Smithsonian museum complex sees more than nine million visitors annually, and the theme that was expressed by many, but especially by Steven F. Udvar-Hazy, was that in order to achieve, humans must dream first. When you think of it, this is so true. I did plenty of dreaming about flying as a kid, and darn if those dreams haven't pretty much all come true. I feel truly blessed and fortunate. Truthfully, if I were able to start all over again, I would have set my sights much higher in the first place rather than cranking it up on the fly.

To reflect on the grand achievements of the past, manned flight pushes the limit not only in technical achievement, but with man's inner courage as well. It was pointed out during the museum presentation that the invention of flight carried a real personal risk, unlike other inventions

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such as the development of the light bulb. I think it is this very aspect of innovation and courage that has fueled the romance of aviation for 100 years. Do you think because of our quest to explore the farthest corner of the flight envelope the flame of aviation romance burns brighter among our group?

Now we are at the start of 2004, and I hold some dreams for the IAC. I dream that for anyone who truly loves flying airplanes, our organization is the first thing they think of. I dream that we somehow find an effective way to share our enthusiasm with others that long for adventure in exploring the relative unknown. I dream that we can share on a large scale the camaraderie that goes along with exercising courage in learning the dynamic art of aerobatic flight.

We will face challenges, of course. The one that is on the front burner right now is the growing fight against overzealous people intolerant of any noise. This is a potential problem with anyone operating anything that makes noise. The counter effort is organizing rapidly, and our own Steve

Pennypacker, Peter Schmidt, and others of Massachusetts Chapter 35 are to be commended for their leadership on the front lines. I'm also very appreciative on how the EAA has responded to our call for help and how fortunate we are to have Tom Poberezny at the helm. I have had the pleasure of meeting many exceptional CEOs in my professional career as a pilot. I honestly don't think we could have found a more competent and capable leader to shepherd the sport aviation movement. We are living in fortunate times.

I am also encouraged that the light-sport aircraft (LSA) effort will soon be rewarded and what that could mean for grassroots aerobatics. Expense has always been a barrier to getting truly involved with aerobatics. That first step financially is so big that I am sure many are finding it difficult to dream about. LSA may provide the stepping-stone we're looking for. There is a lot of pent-up innovation out there, and with the eventual final ruling on this effort just around the corner, I think we'll be seeing more options on equipment being developed. Perhaps we can challenge the creative community to do some R&D on quieter alternatives without the degradation of performance.

Lastly, don't short yourself on your dreams. If you can ponder it, it can be achieved. If you want to learn or improve in aerobatics, it can be achieved, and we want to help you do it. I hope you and your family had a great holiday. Now let's get started with a great 2004. Fly safely and have fun! ✈

Dreams