



REGIONAL EVENTS



Great Success with the 50th Anniversary of the AA5 Fly-In in Europe

by: Kathrin Kaiser

Days before the event, we had the first autumn storms with lightning strikes and floods across the city. I looked at the weather reports with great concern every day, not only locally, but also for the routes of my soon to arrive guests.

On Friday it would be impossible to travel from the west side of the UK, even IFR pilots would not fly in such stormy weather. Fortunately, four English pilots were able to rearrange their schedule and fly to Bonn Hangelar a day earlier with two planes. Of course, I went to the airfield to greet my very first guests. I was suddenly so relieved that someone really came to this celebration I had planned so long. I had tears of joy when my new friends stepped out of their Grumman. I knew Sarah only from Facebook. But in the last month we had become friends when she was most helpful for me. And now finally she was here.

On New Year's Eve I had read something about the maiden flight of my Grumman Traveler on 08/21/1970 and I checked the whole Internet to see if there would be an event for this anniversary in 2020, but I found nothing. I chatted on Facebook with another Grumman pilot and jokingly told him that I was going to do a celebration. And because he immediately promised to participate with his Grumman I now had no choice but to actually plan a meeting. And I was really looking forward to meeting more Grumman owners. Seven months of planning, writing letters, making calls, convinc-

ing airport managers and sponsors, video chats, then this stupid Corona, through which I lost some sponsors. I had to write a lot of letters and ring the doorbells of possible donors. And always and everywhere I talked to all Grumman owners I was discovering during my flights in Europe.

The catering was the biggest problem. In Germany you even need a building permit to set up a party tent on an airfield. Fortunately, the Aviator restaurant which had been vacant for a long time, reopened in June. Jörg Trauboth accompanied me to the first meeting with

sunset. It was such an unbelievable and overwhelming sight. I personally welcomed every single Grumman and gave every pilot a welcome gift. All Grummans received a landing fee waiver for the entire weekend. In Germany it unfortunately always costs money when you land and when you park a plane. Then every Grumman pilot got a commemorative coin for this unique event, it was not just a meeting, it was an anniversary. Each participant got a ticket for the raffle on Saturday evening. But for Friday evening there was mainly the arrival and the get to know each other



Kathrin and her planes.

the lady owner. She is just lovely. I was so happy that my guests got good food and drinks while sitting comfortably. I also organized live music at the same time. And Jörg, as a former AYA President, insisted on designing a nice banner to hang up at the location, so that everyone could see what we were celebrating. That looked really good.

At the same time, I was preparing for many guests hopefully to visit our event and I didn't want to disappoint anyone. With great attention to detail, I organized many small surprises. Although, as the organizer, I never knew how many pilots would really fly in at the end of the day. It was crazy and exciting at the same time, like walking blindfolded towards a cliff, but I have wings, so nothing can happen to me, except to stumble, but then I will just get up again.

On Friday, the first official day of the event, we had 19 Grummans parked in precise formation in front of the tower at

planned. Some of the registered Grummans were grounded because of technical defects or the weather on their route, but people didn't want to miss the event and came by chartered planes or by car if they were able to. Some ex-Grumman owner visited anyway due to loyalty, some were interested in owning a Grumman in the future. So, it doesn't matter what motivation my almost 100 guests came for, we all share our love for this aircraft.

The hotel in the village was full of pilots and all had the possibility to have breakfast there, but many of them came to the airfield the next morning to have breakfast with those who had slept in tents or even in the plane. It felt like a school trip back in the days. On Saturday we all felt like old friends and the conversations became more and more open. At the same time still more Grummans landed and with every plane my heart was beating faster.

For this day I had planned some program items and now had to take care of





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sorting out this whole bunch of excited pilots and getting a certain discipline in a pre-flight meeting. Because I don't speak English very well yet, Jörg helped me once more by taking over the approach briefing to the neighboring airfield. It's an absolute challenge. The runway has a length of 500 m, has a slope at both ends of the runway in the touchdown zone. In addition, there is always wind shear from the surrounding terrain and high-power lines crossing the final approach, which requires the pilot to stay high and drop rather steep with power at idle.

Flying this traffic pattern takes only three minutes, so only two planes are possible in the pattern at the same time. On this Saturday there was also a very strong crosswind and quite a few had even to make a go-around several times. An admirable pilot from England holds the record with seven go-arounds. I was a little worried about his fuel reserve. When I was planning this event, I thought that all Grummans need challenges like this and as it turned out they all did a really great job. The tower was totally surprised with us, this has never happened there before. Every few minutes another Grumman landed, a total of 24, and we parked along the runway as if aligned with a ruler. During the briefing, I recommended to the pilots some nice scenic views in the vicinity to fly to. On the one hand, because these views are really interesting, on the other hand it stretched out the number of airplanes with



Ann-Mette, a lady from Denmark, heard about the event on Friday morning and spontaneously flew 4.5 hours with her little Yankee.

desire to land. I really love formation, but we are not the Red Arrows, sad but for sure. Oh well, some flew over Cologne Cathedral, others over the world's second largest mobile radio telescope, others over the Formula 1 racetrack at the Nürburgring (Green Hell) and actually all of them over at least one of the many great castles along the Rhine Valley. And no plane was getting too close to one another.

For the people without planes I organized a place in other planes, so all could come with us. After we had lunch there, we flew back to Bonn Hangelar for the celebration, where more Grummans had arrived. And here, too, some had to do a go around on this windy day, but here

the traffic pattern takes six minutes and therefore up to four planes can fly in it, which was less stressful.

In the end, the trip went well. Anyway, all in all it went well all weekend, that really has to be mentioned. There wasn't even a wasp sting. The airfield manager was very happy about our successful party at his place. In front of the aircraft and all the guests I expressed my warmest thank you to him for the willingness to make this celebration possible for us and gave him a present. Then we all formed a huge "50" with our bodies and a photographer from an aircraft magazine flew above us in a gyrocopter and took pictures. Because of the wind, we couldn't get the ancient planes out of the hangars and place them with us on the festival ground, but we were allowed to go into the hangars and inspect the planes there. For example, there were two Fieseler Storch and an old Messerschmitt and others, partly from WWII. A friend of mine also came to my event with his Cessna 195 and of course he parked with us in the Grumman area. Countless spotters had come and took their pictures of the rare spectacle.

The Grumman owners chatted lively about their aircraft and their various equipment. A total of 29 Grummans came: Yankee, Trainer, Traveler, Cheeta and Tiger (AA and AG), the Cougar unfortunately had to cancel due to bad weather, which was so sad for me. I would love to see one someday in reality.





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But there were so many other exciting stories happening, such as:

An elderly gentleman (really old but still with fire in his eyes) came up to me and pointed to the red Traveler with the tail number D-EEHB and told me that he was the owner of this aircraft from 1974 to 1999 and then he pointed to the Traveler with the registration D-EEMK when he said that this aircraft belonged to him from 1999 to 2018 and that today is the happiest day of his life and thanked me very much for it. I was so touched by this.

Or this story: three weeks earlier, when I flew to the Nordkapp with my Grumman, a man named Karsten wrote to me: "Hello Miss Grumman, I would like to buy an AA5, where can I get one?" At first, I thought that was pretty funny, but by chance knew of one Grumman which was available in Europe and put him in touch with the owner. He was from Germany, the seller from England, the two met in the Netherlands and came to an agreement. And now here he was live, at my party as the newest member of the Grumman family.

Or there was for another example Ann-Mette, a lady train driver from Denmark. She heard about the event on Friday morning and spontaneously flew 4.5 hours with her little Yankee. Incredible how cool she is. I love her girl power so much.

In the evening we sat together with live music and a barbecue. I greeted all the Grumman friends again and actually I had thought of a speech beforehand that I wanted to say at this official part, but I was suddenly so overwhelmed and relieved, that I only could just say that I love my plane. I got no further. Suddenly I broke out in tears of joy that's why I couldn't speak anymore, but everyone knew what I meant. The most important thing was already said and that's why everyone came to this meeting too. Then there was a raffle with super nice prizes. After I regained my voice again, I was able to make 18 winners happy, what a joy for me. The participant with the longest journey to the event received an extra thank you present. There were a few bottles of motor oil, 10 vouchers of 50 liters of Avgas (in Europe three times as expensive as in the USA) and a scale model of a Grumman made of mahogany wood. The main prize was a full-size tailor-made all weather cover for an AA5.



Since unfortunately nobody from America could come because of Corona, I asked the most famous Grumman aviator Bryan Turner in advance for a greeting message in the form of a short video clip, because he is a professional with this. It was an honor for him and in his famous funny way he compensated the absence of, for example, Steve Neal from Fletchier, even if he could not make up for him missing this event.

It was very social and it got late that evening, but sometime in the morning finally the last pilot went to the hotel in a funny walking style. Nevertheless, I was readily standing at the runway the next morning to wave goodbye when the first ones had to fly home at 8 AM. And when the last Grumman left Bonn Hangelar in the afternoon, the clouds drew together a short time later and it began to rain heavily. Thank you, dear weather, for giving us three wonderful days. What an intense weekend it was, all the work in advance was really worth it. Everyone gave me feedback that they arrived home safely and were completely thrilled by this great event. The German press was also very interested and will report about this in various pilot magazines.

I hope very much that this event will stimulate many more meetings. The exchange amongst each other is so valuable. We Grumman fliers in particular depend on each other to support each other so that these beautiful aircraft

always may stay airworthy.

It was a very special pleasure for me to be the host of this wonderful anniversary. I wish you always safe flights and happy landings.

There are some remaining commemorative coins I want to sell, the price is a donation to the Event. Any excess money I will put on sightseeing flights with disabled kids. With all the fun we have by flying I will never forget what a privilege it is. If you want to support me, you can send me a donation via PayPal to Grumman-flyin@gmx.de with your address and I will send a coin to you. I will collect some orders to save shipping cost. I bulk send to my helpful friend Steve from Fletchier, he will disperse in the US. We did it last month, it works good in this way. Thank you very much. Fly safe and happy landings. xoxo from Germany

Your Kathrin from Germany

