

A Chance Meeting Broadens Aerospace Education

**William J. Moran Jr., Col (ret) USAF
Colonel, Civil Air Patrol**

As I was eating breakfast in the hotel last summer, I thought I recognized a man sitting at another table individual. I was deployed as an aircrew member to the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) Green Flag mission in Alexandria, Louisiana. I decided to approach him and asked if he lived in New Hampshire and near Laconia. He said, "yes" with a quizzical look. I asked, "Do you go to St. Joseph Church?" and his eyes got wider as he said "yes" again. I told him, "I'm Bill Moran, and I sit several rows behind you in church on Sunday."

He asked me to join him, and we talked about his engineering job and my volunteer work for CAP, helping to train United States Air Force Joint Terminal Attack Controllers. I soon learned that his grandchildren were pulled out of Laconia's Holy Trinity School (the elementary school next to St. Joseph Church) because of the lack of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education there. He was the second person to tell me the same story about the school in several months.

When I returned home a week later, I decided to take a chance and took the CAP Aerospace Dimensions elementary-level course to the Holy Trinity School principal. I laid out the six modules out on her desk and talked through each of them. My main focus was the first three modules. They cover aviation; my expertise, since I have been a military, commercial, and general aviation pilot for 44 years. Modules four through six are all about space, rockets, and satellites, which does not capture my interest like flight.

The principal was thrilled with the material and said she wanted to use the first three modules as a course in spring 2017. I agreed and we talked about who would teach the 12-week course. She could not spare a teacher. I began looking for one, making inquiries around town, at the airport and at the local Knights of Columbus Council. I could not find a teacher and now the job was in my lap.

I was introduced to Jeanne Matzke, a retired public school teacher, who was teaching algebra and coding at Holy Trinity School and found out that I would be taking Jeanne's place while she was on leave.

Jeanne is a delightful woman, and she became my mentor. Together we hashed out the lesson plans for the 12-week course. Her expertise in education and mine in aviation made us a great team. We worked for weeks on determining content presentation, assembling several short You-Tube videos to support the concepts, and deciding on module activities. We added a field trip to the Laconia Municipal Airport and Boston Approach Control. I also procured New York sectional maps and overhead photograph of the airport.

Now that I definitely had my foot in the door I decided to spring an idea on the principal: since I was volunteering, I wanted to barter my time. Our local CAP squadron, the Hawk Composite Squadron (NH-056), needed a new meeting location. The cadets had been meeting at the airport terminal building, but it is not a big area and had recently been refurbished. Marching cadets on new flooring was a mismatch and running outside during the winter was less than desirable.

I asked the principal if the Hawk Squadron could meet at the school one evening a week. She had to check with the diocese, but she did not see any problem. This became a perfect match for all. The squadron will have access to the gym, cafeteria, and classrooms and the school has added a valuable education course to the curriculum. Hawk Squadron is also transferring several simulators to the school for use by the CAP cadets and school students. One individual has contributed a new simulator with X-Plane 11.

A little thought and initiative can go a long way. Each CAP unit could take Aerospace Dimensions to nearby schools and present them with a ready in-the-box aerospace program. The educational resources, books, activities, guides, grants, scholarships, and STEM kits are available and make it a winner for both parties.

Bill Moran is a retired USAF Colonel and former New Hampshire CAP wing commander. During his USAF career, he was an aircraft commander in B-52G, T-37, F/FB-111 and B-1A/B. He holds three B-1B Time-to-Climb

aviation world records. Presently, he is the NH Wing Finance Officer, an instructor pilot and check pilot. In February 2017 he began teaching Aerospace Dimensions to 7th and 8th grade students.

Laconia Municipal Airport, NH KLCI

