



REGIONAL EVENTS



The International Grumman Fly-In, 2021, Germany

by: Kathrin Kaiser

In the middle of Thursday to Friday night the burger truck from Northern Germany finally drove to the airfield. My caterer was stuck in traffic for many hours on the way to Bonn-Handelar, where the International Grumman Fly-In took place again this year. All the preparations were finally completed and I could actually go to bed satisfied and full of anticipation. But I couldn't sleep because of the excitement. As an organizer, you are responsible for everything and want to please every guest so that they feel comfortable.

I had disappointed some of them when I postponed the fly-in for two weeks for personal reasons. On the other hand, it would have been terrible weather and it might have been canceled anyway. And also on the other hand, others who were now registered for it would not have been able to attend on the original date. It's just impossible to get everyone together. For that I was rewarded with the best weather of the whole year. Plenty of sun and no wind, just perfect.

Most of my guests arrived on Friday. Everyone – GOPA member or not - was warmly welcomed direct at the aircraft and received a small welcome gift package. I had small wooden models of a

Grumman made on a magnet, everyone got a free ticket for the raffle, a Grumman badge, and an exemption from the landing and parking fee that is sadly common in Europe. In the evening we sat in the double-decker bus that I had organized as a mobile restaurant to match the food truck. My guests sat together in mixed groups and talked about maintenance, avionics upgrades, the typical Grumman-stuff and last but not least, about past and future travels. The food tasted delicious and the drinks were reordered in abundance. Some pilots slept in tents near the planes, but the main group was spread over three surrounding hotels, to which they were taken by shuttle or taxi. For my guests from UK I had the fun of getting a rental car so that they could drive on the right side once in their life. Their report on the next day was funny.

More guests arrived on Saturday morning and for the first time in my life I saw a Cougar in real life. The guests attended a lecture by Fore-Flight Europe in large numbers. Then it was the briefing for the Grumman pilots for their joint excursion to the neighboring Koblenz EDRK airfield with a flight time of less than half an hour. There were also some nice formation flights, the Grummans are good at that. And the pan-

orama was fantastic along the Rhine river, past the Siebengebirge, over the largest volcanic lake Maria Laach and several castles. It's not that the fleet had darkened the sky, however on the way, the ATC and in Koblenz even the tower, had a bit of stress with the number of flight movements. But they also made sure that nothing really happened along the way. I have never had so many collision warnings in such a short time as on this flight.

In Koblenz we had a very good lunch in the Greek restaurant at the GAT. Back in Handelar we flew in like a pearl necklace one after the other, the spotters had their great joy. Anyway, the local press was impressed. A cool band of Brazilian drummers then really heated

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up the lottery ticket sales for the raffle. The onlookers were enthusiastic about our spectacle on the square. The caterer had a lot of work to do, to keep everyone satisfied and, above all, to provide everyone with cool drinks in the heat. Later in the evening the private "Grumman and Friends" party began. I officially welcomed everyone once again in a short but emotional speech and awarded the Grumman who had traveled the furthest with a full tank of Avgas to great applause from all those present. Sverre Stalem in his Cheetah flew incredible 1400 NM from the Lofoten in the north of Norway to Bonn. That actually says everything why I have taken this community so much into my heart. Then the long waited for raffle began and almost all of my guests actually won some kind of prize. The prizes included: many bottles of engine oil, map bags, small wooden models of the Grumman that you can assemble yourself, spark plugs, parking blocks, Imperial tools in inch sizes, a headset, a Grumman instrument panel overlay, three one year subscriptions to Foreflight Premium plus, three one year subscriptions to the complete set of Jeppesenkarten, 3 one year subscriptions to the trade magazine "Pilot und Flugzeug", ten vouchers for 50 liters of AvGas each (1 gallon costs \$ 11.20!), a watch from ZeitFlügel with the custom-made product about "70 years of the



Sverre Stalem fills his Cheetah with his free fuel. He flew an incredible 1400 NM from the Lofoten in the north of Norway to Bonn.



It is important to stay hydrated in the hot weather.

A young winner in front of the generous prizes.



Berlin Air Brigade", two balloon trips and as a highlight two covers especially for Grumman. The total value of the raffle prizes was \$ 7,400. Crazy what a party when the prizes were handed out with fun and entertainment. Of course, also this third night wasn't really long for me either, because for nothing in the world did I want to miss the launch of the balloon with the winners.

On Sunday, very early in the morning, next to the pilots who were still sleeping in their tents, the balloon rose out of the morning mist and took off towards the Cologne control zone. A car with trailer chased him and when the airfield opened, a Tiger with a photographer on board took off to visit him in the air. And on Sunday even more Grummans came who had been unable to attend the day before. For example Kai, is the owner of an AA5 Traveler and an airline pilot who was in Atlanta the day before. He came direct from the Netherland Airport where



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The Bonn-Handelar flight line.

Kathrin and her unique under-wing accommodations.

he had landed in this morning after a long night flight. But finally it was time to say goodbye and everyone started their journey home one by one.

The last Grumman then flew to Worms in the late afternoon, where, by the way, it is now for sale. Probably not for very long, I would imagine. After this Fly-In a Tiger changed owners, that brings new members in the GOPA community.

A total of 33 Grummans came to this event and as many friends on other planes. I am so happy that everything went without incident and that everyone was really enthusiastic. There is a saying: the first time it was NEW, the second time it is TRADITION and the third time will be LEGENDARY !!! I have big plans for 2022. One of them is finally to come to Fredericksburg in May, hopefully you will see us there. xoxo Kathrin...

