

Ely Air Lines –

The Sky is an Etch a Sketch

by Mike Ely and Linda Street-Ely

Not that many years ago, sky artists' only tool for creating atmospheric art was a smoke system mounted on their airplane. They would fly a pattern of shapes – a message, a face, a flag, a heart – while pumping white oil-based smoke into the exhaust, creating giant pictures over the earth that eventually drifted away with the wind. The artwork is loads of fun to see – but it is ephemeral.

Today, artists can skip the smoke entirely. Now most airplanes are equipped to continuously broadcast their position through a system called ADS-B. Flight-tracking websites such as Flightradar24 take the digital tracking data from an aircraft's position broadcast and display it through their app so you can see it on your phone or tablet. The canvas is now a partnership between the sky and your mobile device screen – an Etch a Sketch.

Some of the creations are astonishing. In 2023, Boeing test pilots assigned to fly a routine endurance test in a new Dreamliner spent nearly 18 hours tracing the outline of...a Dreamliner. It was an enormous self-portrait that stretched across portions of 22 states. General aviation pilots have become just as creative: a giant hedgehog, a graceful ballerina, USA 250.

How does this work with air traffic control? Safety comes first, art comes second. Before takeoff, the pilot carefully plans hundreds of GPS waypoints that outline the picture. Air traffic controllers are usually told in advance that the flight will involve lots of unusual turns rather than traveling from Point A to Point B. Most sky art is flown in quieter airspace where it won't interfere with airline traffic. But still, the controller will have the final say, because if an aircraft on an IFR flight plan needs the same airspace, the artist may



suddenly hear the controller say, "Turn left heading..." and just like that, the eagle loses a feather, or the ballerina gains an unexpected elbow. So you smile, follow instructions, and accept that the masterpiece may have a tiny blemish. Take it in stride; imperfection can be part of the charm. It won't be hanging in a museum; the fun part of creating is in the collaboration between careful planning, modern technology, and a little cooperation from air traffic control. And down below, thousands of

people watch a picture slowly appear – made with an airplane. I'm tempted to draw a Highland cow (pronounced "coo" by Highlanders). The shaggy hair wouldn't be too bad, but those long, pointed horns? Our Grumman Cheetah would protest pivoting on point. I suspect we'd need to borrow an aerobatic airplane and throw in a few Immelmans and Split-Ss just to keep the horns from looking like overcooked spaghetti. I'm just imagining the planning session: "Okay...now, I need a Split-S for the left horn...an Immelmann for the right...oops, I just gave him a floppy puppy ear."

I just got a brilliant idea! Someone really should draw a giant Highland coo over Scotland! If Flightradar24 shared that, it would probably become one of their most popular sky-art posts ever!

ElyAirLines.substack.com



We caught this quick photo of our favorite Daisetta Public Works fellow Buddy at the Daisetta Community Center ribbon cutting. Buddy is the sometimes reluctant owner of a very smart kitty named Monkey who has learned how to turn on the water faucet unassisted. Unfortunately, Monkey has not yet learned how to turn the faucet off.



Sharon Touchstone (left) and Holly Hargis joined Liberty County Historical Commission members and guests at last week's meeting and guest presentation by longtime Valley Players member Jackie Hartel Smith.

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Temporary exhibits at SHC highlight nation's anniversary

LIBERTY- The Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center (SHC) continues commemorating the nation's 250th anniversary with temporary exhibits highlighting American history. Declaration 1776: The Big Bang of Modern Democracy and Becoming the United States: Colonial America to Reconstruction are on view at the Center through Sept. 30. Each exhibit contains seven pop-up panels detailing significant episodes from the past using images from historical collections at the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

Trace the development of the new country through the American Revolution to the 20th century with timelines, captivating narratives and fascinating stories of individuals and moments that shaped the future

and led us to the present day. The exhibits offer educational opportunities for students of history and anyone curious about topics like the Declaration of Independence and Colonial America. TSLAC's own Texas America250 pop-up exhibit is also included in the temporary display.

The exhibits are available during regular business hours at the Center, Tuesdays through Fridays, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturdays 9 a.m.-4 p.m. For more information, contact SamHoustonCenter@tsl.texas.gov or (936) 336-8821.

The Sam Houston Center is a component of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission and serves as the official regional historical resource depository for the 10 Southeast Texas counties of Chambers,

Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Liberty, Newton, Orange, Polk, San Jacinto and Tyler. The Center's primary mission is to collect, preserve and provide access to historically significant state and local government records and publications of the designated region and secondarily to serve as a library of Texana and genealogical resources.

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission provides Texans access to the information needed to be informed, productive citizens by preserving the archival record of Texas; enhancing the service capacity of public, academic and school libraries; assisting public agencies in the maintenance of their records; and meeting the reading needs of Texans with disabilities. For more information, visit www.tsl.texas.gov.

Explore Texas' ecosystems with Master Naturalists

If you enjoy the outdoors, want to learn more about Texas's incredible ecosystems, and are looking for a meaningful way to give back to the community, why not explore the Texas Master Naturalist Program?

The Texas Master Naturalist Program is sponsored by the Texas Parks and Wildlife De-

partment and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Its mission is to train volunteers who are passionate about conserving Texas's natural resources through education, outreach, and community service. Participants complete classroom and field training, volunteer service, and advanced

education while learning from engaging experts.

The Lower Trinity Basin Chapter is currently accepting applications for its next training class, which starts September 2. If you are interested in learning more, visit the website txmn.org/lower-trinitybasin or email lowertrinitybasin@gmail.com.



Charles Kaemmerling and beautiful wife Becky joined the crowd at the ribbon cutting of the new Daisetta Community Center last week. Charles told us that the first event to be held at the new center will be the Hull-Daisetta Golden Oldies reunion. The Golden Oldies were founded by the Class of 1928 and the group still carries on today.



RAYWOOD SCHOOL SUPPLY GIVEAWAY

A large group of youngsters and parents were on hand to benefit from the third annual school supply giveaway.

Liberty County youngsters receive school supply packs

RAYWOOD - The third annual Raywood School Supply Giveaway, hosted by Doris Lang Ministries, was held Saturday, July 18. Youngsters from across Liberty County received generously stocked school supply packs, while families received non-perishable bags of

groceries and family hygiene kits. The children had fun playing games, listening to a character-building animated story and prayers for the new school year. The door prizes were popular with the parents.

This well-received annual community event continues to

help meet the needs of children and families in need as they prepare for school to begin.

Thanks to all donors, sponsors and volunteers for their service and support. Organizers are especially grateful to the Hull-Daisetta School system for use of the Raywood gym for this event.