

I attended AirVenture Oshkosh last week, representing MMOPA (and the Clean 100 Octane Coalition of like-minded type clubs) on the issue of finding a suitable unleaded replacement for 100LL avgas. As owner/operators of high-performance piston aircraft, our concern is that the eventual replacement perform as close as possible to the current 100LL avgas without expensive hardware modifications or operating limitations. Here is a brief summary of the week.

- Monday afternoon members of the Clean 100 Octane Coalition met to organize our advocacy activities for the week, which included the following distribution of green avgas buttons at key locations with the message to wear the button and show up at the “Meet the Administrator” meeting on Thursday.
- Afterwards, met with EAA’s Tom Poberezny to discuss role of owner/pilot associations in the avgas debate at OSH.
- Participated in Tuesday’s avgas briefing at EAA Museum by AOPA, GAMA, NBAA, EAA, etc. There was considerable disagreement about how the large associations see their role in this issue vs how the type clubs believe the process should proceed. During the Q&A, a representative from Swift fuels pleaded that the ambiguity about certification requirements be resolved so that fuel developers would know what will be required of them. Probably some of the most productive discussions happened after the meeting in small groups.
- The most significant event of the week was our meeting with the Administrator’s top certification staff. I was accompanied by Curt Sanford, President of the Cirrus Owners group and Paul Millner, a petro-chemical engineer and VP of Cardinal Flyers. My primary message was that the FAA not relinquish their responsibilities in fuel certification to industry consensus groups that want to massage and manage the fuel development process. I stated that these groups have an appropriate role to play in the implementation of a new fuel AFTER it is developed and demonstrated regulatory compliance. I am sure they “heard” us, but I also know there are also other competing messages from other groups. Success in this matter will require a consistent insistence over time that the FAA fulfill its proper role in certification. We also discussed the FAA’s lack of qualified personnel to undertake fuel certifications and were relieved to hear that they are interviewing outside petro-chemical engineers to bolster their capabilities for this effort.
- Wednesday afternoon late, I gave an interview to Paul Bertorelli of AVweb on this issue. I have already posted a link to that report and podcast on the forum. If you missed it, here it is:  
[http://www.avweb.com/news/airventure/EAAAirVenture2010\\_100\\_Octane\\_Coalition\\_202996-1.html](http://www.avweb.com/news/airventure/EAAAirVenture2010_100_Octane_Coalition_202996-1.html)
- Thursday morning’s Meet the Administrator meeting proved to be mostly a presentation with little opportunity for input. The Administrator said a lot of supportive, reassuring things about GA and its important role in the economy. He also introduced his

boss, DOT Secretary Ray LaHood, whose remarks were similarly encouraging. However, the little said about the transition to unleaded fuel contained nothing new and only vague platitudes about getting the right solution, nothing specific about fixing the process that appears to be off-track. Administrator Babbitt did pledge that a suitable unleaded avgas would be available before any restrictive EPA actions and that supply for our aircraft would not be interrupted. No specifics, but an encouraging commitment nonetheless.

- Like Tuesday's briefing, there was opportunity to informally gather with industry leaders after the Administrator's presentation. That is where I think real progress was made. I met with representatives from AOPA and GAMA to discuss the process ahead. I pointed out that their organizations deal with the FAA on a number of issues, not just the unleaded fuel, and I understood their concern to not compromise their overall working relationship. I also made the point that the type club coalition is very different. We have one issue, no other pending work with the FAA. I suggested that the type clubs could have a different role to play and its message could be much more specific and focused without so much concern for political fallout. This seemed to make sense to them. Our conversation included Alan Klapmeier, formerly of Cirrus, now heading up Kestral, whose views are similar to our own, but with an even stronger emphasis on letting market forces work to allow fuel innovators to progress unimpeded by either government or industry.

Did we do any good? I think we did. Moving the FAA and large trade associations on the unleaded fuel issue is like turning the Titanic. I think of it as nudging. But in the last 60 days, we have successfully nudged this issue repeatedly and move it significantly. If we had not been working this issue, the subject of our meeting with the FAA would have been why 94UL won't work for high performance piston aircraft. Instead, we have at least two promising unleaded fuels in flight testing, and our meeting was about speeding up the certification process. So I think that is quite remarkable.

A big concern at OSH was whether a realistic discussion of the unleaded fuel issue would have adverse effects on the GA economy by calling attention to the problem. Well, I can tell you first hand that concern, long term, over the fuel IS impacting aircraft owners' decision making. I heard it first hand at the show. And of course, folks like Diamond are using it to their marketing advantage as they promote their diesel powered DA42. However, the solution to this uncertainty is not to ignore the problem, or not talk about it. The strategy for now is to objectively report on the progress that is being made so that pilots have good information for decision making and rational reasons for being confident in the GA market. For example, I suggested on Monday night to Tom Poberezny that he should invite both Swift and GAMI to make a high speed pass in their test aircraft down the runway during the daily air show as a tangible sign of progress. Unfortunately he did not act on my suggestion, but you get the point.

You might ask, "As a Mirage flyer, are you concerned that in the future the move to an unleaded avgas will jeopardize the market value and utility of your own aircraft?" The answer is NO I am not. I think we have workable solutions in testing. But I also do not

take anything for granted. I think we as pilots, consumers, and as an association need to stay alert and remain engaged to make sure that this process stays on track and represents our best interests.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jonathan Sisk, President  
MMOPA Board of Directors  
2000 Mirage N555JV (based KLEX)  
Member since 1998