

FORWARD in FLIGHT

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Quarterly Magazine of the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame

Fall 2026



That AirVenture Spirit

Flight, Fireworks, and America 250

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Photo by Greg Kieca

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AirVenture Spirit, Family Roots

AirVenture has always been more than airplanes to me. It's about people, families, and the community that gathers each summer in Oshkosh. For my family, that means camping in Camp Scholler. There's something special about waking up to the sound of engines overhead, sharing coffee with neighbors who quickly become friends, and watching children pedal their little planes alongside the real ones. Those moments remind me that aviation is a family affair, passed down through stories, experiences, and shared wonders.

During the week, I often find myself at the museum, sharing the story of Paul Poberezny. Paul believed aviation should be open to everyone, not just a select few. He built a movement rooted in accessibility, camaraderie, and family. His vision is alive every time I see a parent lifting their child to peer into a cockpit or hear laughter echoing across the grounds. AirVenture is proof of what Paul started: a gathering that celebrates innovation, history, and the bonds that hold us together. And we remember Audrey Poberezny, a 2026 WAHF inductee, whose steady presence and devotion helped shape AirVenture into the big family gathering it remains today.

This fall, we carry that spirit forward with our 40th annual induction ceremony. On October 10, we will honor Eldon Isely, Gary Buettner, Jeff Williams, Leo Kohn, and of course, Audrey. Each of these inductees has shaped Wisconsin's aviation story in profound ways, and together they remind us of the courage and dedication that keep our heritage alive. This year, we'll gather in the Founders' Wing instead of the Eagle Hangar—a fitting move that connects us more directly to the roots of EAA and Paul's vision.

I encourage you to join us for this milestone event. It will be an evening of reflection, celebration, and community. Just as AirVenture brings us together each summer, our induction ceremony reminds us of the individuals who built the foundation we stand



A pedal plane, a beaming smile — proof that aviation inspires across generations.

on today. Whether you camp at Scholler, volunteer at the museum, or simply stop by to share in the excitement, remember that aviation is a family—and you are part of it.

The WAHF board has voted to return our annual membership meeting to May, aligning with our anniversary. Past May events, including our 40th celebration and the Leo J. Kohn exhibit, drew strong turnouts, affirming this timing. We'll share the exact date soon and hope you'll join us.

Board elections are also coming up, and we encourage members to step forward. Passionate people are always needed, and we'd be glad to have you put your name forward.

— Kurt Stanich
President

WAHF Socials

Follow the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube for AirVenture coverage and much more. From historic highlights to behind-the-scenes stories, our social channels keep you connected year-round.



Forward in Flight

Where Wisconsin's aviation people, news, and history come together.

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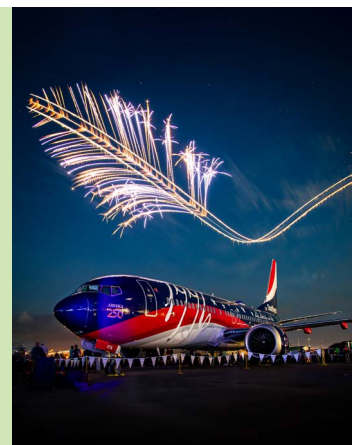
The Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame is a non-profit membership organization. Its mission is to collect and preserve the history of aviation in Wisconsin, recognize those who made that history, inform others of it, and promote aviation education.

Photo by Rose Dorcey

On the Cover

Southwest Airlines' *Independence One* Boeing 737 MAX 8 at AirVenture Oshkosh 2026. Painted for America's 250th, its patriotic livery and night air show presence captured the celebration.

Photo by Greg Kieca



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Hannah looked triumphant as she stood smiling in front of the Cub at Oshkosh, having successfully completed a solo arrival into one of the world's busiest aviation events.

Flying the “Frank Baker Cub” to Oshkosh

My first solo arrival at the world’s busiest airport in a legendary Piper Cub

By Hannah Shickles

I had never planned on flying to EAA AirVenture Oshkosh - the World’s Greatest Aviation Celebration..

That changed in January 2026 when Dan Uminski donated his beautifully restored 1946 Piper Cub to the Kelch Aviation Museum. Restored by Johnson Brothers Flying Service of Lone Rock, Wisconsin, the airplane earned the prestigious Grand Champion award in 2017.

Long before it became a museum piece, however, the Cub belonged to Frank Baker. Among vintage aviation enthusiasts, it is still known simply as the “Frank Baker Cub.” Frank flew the airplane everywhere—across the Continental Divide, on multiple coast-to-coast trips, and regularly to the Sentimental Journey Fly-In in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. It had become far more than an airplane; it was part of aviation history.

When the Cub arrived at the museum, there were early rumors that I might eventually be the one flying it. The museum’s insurance policy requires pilots to have at least 250 hours of total flight time before flying aircraft in the collection. I reached that

milestone in August 2025, completed the paperwork, and was approved after completing a checkout with instructor Ed Lachendro, who generously donated his time.

Then, in late June, Executive Director Pat Weeden asked me a question I wasn’t expecting.

“Would you be willing to fly the Frank Baker Cub to Oshkosh?”

I knew exactly what he was asking—and how intimidating it would be.

For years I had promised myself I would never fly into Oshkosh during AirVenture. The volume of traffic simply wasn’t worth the risk. After hearing about a fatal accident there, my mom once asked if I would ever fly into the show.

“Absolutely not,” I replied without hesitation.

Well... I guess I owe my mom a correction.

When Pat asked, I said yes almost instinctively. Even now, I’m not entirely sure why. Moments earlier I would have told you I had no interest in flying into the busiest airport in the world, yet

something inside me quietly said, *You can do this.*

Another museum pilot even offered to fly the Cub if needed, but Pat thanked him and insisted I would be making the trip. Soon we were telling museum visitors about the plan, and before long EAA Vintage invited the airplane to be displayed in the Class of 1946 Showcase. Suddenly, this wasn't just an idea—it was happening.

Preparation became my obsession. I read the Oshkosh NOTAM cover to cover more times than I could count. I watched countless videos explaining the Fisk Arrival and memorized reporting points, landmarks, frequencies, and procedures.

My biggest concern wasn't the arrival itself. It was fuel. The Cub carries only 12 gallons and burns roughly four gallons per hour, leaving very little room for delays. My plan was to arrive over Fisk as the arrival opened at 7:00 a.m. to avoid heavy traffic. If I ended up holding, however, I would likely need to divert for fuel. To improve my odds, I planned a fuel stop at Dodge County Airport before continuing to Oshkosh. Then Mother Nature intervened.

Canadian wildfire smoke blanketed Wisconsin the day before my departure. Visibility dropped to IFR conditions, forcing me to stay home. I wasn't the only pilot grounded, which meant Saturday morning would almost certainly be busier.

Saturday brought another challenge. While visibility had improved enough for VFR flight, thunderstorms delayed my departure by nearly forty minutes. My carefully planned 7:00 a.m. arrival had slipped to nearly 7:45. After topping off the Cub at Dodge County, I made one final decision. I would fly the NORDO (no radio) arrival.

Before departing, I called Oshkosh Tower and requested Runway 27 using the no-radio procedure. The controller explained the arrival: follow the west shoreline of Lake Winnebago until abeam the tower, make two right turns to establish a southerly heading, and watch for the light gun. A red light meant continue circling. A green light meant I was cleared to land on the orange dot.

Oddly enough, that final leg of the flight became the least stressful part of the journey. The procedure was simple, and I knew exactly what was expected. The strangest part was the silence. From takeoff until I reached Oshkosh, I never physically saw another airplane. ForeFlight showed dozens converging to-

ward Fisk near Puckaway Lake, but smoke still lingered enough that they remained hidden from view. It felt surreal knowing I was surrounded by airplanes I couldn't see.

As I reached the tower, I completed my two right turns and waited. Then I saw it. The green light! I couldn't help but cheer. I turned final, aimed for the orange dot, and touched down at Wittman Regional Airport and AirVenture.

Taxiing across the airport was pure joy. I was laughing, waving at every marshaller, and grinning from ear to ear. Every wave was returned. I probably looked like the biggest kid on the airport—and I didn't care.

When I finally shut the Cub down and climbed onto the grass, the moment caught up with me. I had just flown into the busiest airport in the world. Solo. In a 1946 Piper Cub. NORDO. My seven-year-old self would have thought that was the coolest thing imaginable. Honestly, I think she would have been pretty proud of me.

Looking back, I realize just how many people made that flight possible. It began decades before I was born when Frank Baker purchased the Cub, restored it, and created the legacy that still follows the airplane today. Dan Uminski later became its caretaker, commissioned its award-winning restoration, and ultimately donated it to the museum.

Years before I ever sat in its cockpit, Al Kelch established a museum trust to preserve airplanes like this for future generations. Pat Weeden and Ami Eckard-Lee welcomed me to the museum and gave me my first ride in the 1932 Curtiss 12W, planting a seed I didn't yet realize would change my life.

Then came Elroy Hilbert, who patiently taught me to become a stick-and-rudder pilot and generously helped me build the experience I would eventually need.

When I stop and think about it, this flight was never just about me. It was the result of decades of stewardship, mentorship, generosity, and trust. Countless decisions, friendships, and moments had to unfold exactly as they did before I ever lifted off the runway.

Flying the Frank Baker Cub into Oshkosh wasn't simply another cross-country flight. It was the continuation of a story that began long before I arrived—and one I feel incredibly honored to carry forward.

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On the ground at Dodge County Airport, talking with Air Traffic Control before her NORDO landing at Oshkosh.



MARRY ME, MARY

Rag Draggin' Days Part 2

By John Chmiel

One of my more memorable banner missions happened in the middle of winter. It was a Happy Birthday banner. My customer lived along Highway 47 near McNaughton. During winter, the area north of Rhinelander is susceptible to lake effect snow when the wind is out of the north. When that happens, it can be VFR one minute and snowing hard the next. The good news is you can typically see the snow showers to avoid them. The problem that my inexperience didn't anticipate was areas of freezing drizzle.

Since we were at our home airport, set-up in the snow next to the runway for banner pick-up wasn't an issue. The first attempt at the pick-up was successful and I departed to the north with banner trailing. The target was easily found, the display was made, and I headed home. The goal was to get it done in a half hour because we had charged a special winter rate that demanded efficiency to turn a profit. I was fat, dumb, and happy assuming the mission was accomplished, when in a matter of seconds, I couldn't see out the front windshield due to ice. I encountered freezing drizzle. Normally the ice I had accumulated wouldn't have been a problem, but I was hauling a full banner that decided to absorb its fair share of frozen precipitation too. I could feel things getting heavy like an anchor and immediately went to full power trying to figure out how I could get out of this predicament.

After turning out of the drizzle, I aimed to remain along Highway 47 southbound in case things got worse and knew this would take me right to the airport. I decided to turn on the carb heat as part of the icing checklist, but as I applied the heat, I watched the

RPMs descend even further than I could afford with this load. But now there was another problem. I immediately detected that the carb heat knob had come out further than normal. In fact, it came all the way out in my hand! Now there was no way to shut it off to regain the precious RPMs I had lost. The outside air temperature (OAT) was 31F, and I began slowly losing the 1000 AGL altitude I had started with. I was getting nervous. *This is a heck of a way to get my first experience with icing conditions*, I thought. Worst case scenario, I'd have to drop the banner before I got back to the airport and come back to recover it after landing, so I prepared for that. But since God is my pilot, I descended below 600 feet in the sparsely populated area, outside air temperature began to slowly rise above 32 degrees and with that, the ice immediately began melting off the windshield, wings, struts, and the big wet rag behind me. There was a noticeable increase in performance just as I needed it.

A post-flight inspection showed that the carb heat cable had become disconnected while in-flight. There would have been no way to detect the situation during pre-flight or run-up. Normally the RPM loss of carb heat wouldn't impact the safety of a go-around or even take-off. But under my conditions that day it could have been the difference if the OAT hadn't swung in my favor. I had flown through drizzle in warmer temperatures before, but never in the winter. My winter inexperience didn't know any better. Needless to say, I immediately paid much closer attention to my weather briefings, my OAT as I climbed, and suddenly I felt

an urgent need to learn everything I could about winter weather flying, especially icing. The subject of weather had been my least favorite during training. Suddenly I became obsessed with the weather, and I always had a Plan B.

One day we got a call from Cletus, the rodeo clown, who was performing in Merrill's annual rodeo. He requested a proposal banner over the fairgrounds that read, MARRY ME MARY - LOVE CLETUS. (Is there a more perfect name for a rodeo clown?) On the day of the mission there was a cold front thunderstorm system moving quickly across the state. Luckily the mission wasn't until six that evening. These were the days before in-flight weather availability from XM or ADSB, so I stared at the old Weatheration computer at the FBO all day long worrying about the success of the mission. I was encouraged by the speed at which the front was moving.

On this mission I had to fly from Rhinelander to Merrill. As the front got about 20 miles west it began to break up on the radar and we confirmed by looking to the west that there were gaps we could fly through. We departed straight west first and then headed directly south along I-39 after we got behind the front. We loaded up the equipment and took off.

Everything was going according to plan as we shot a gap where we could see the sun and good VFR weather on the west side. The weather on the backside of the front was perfect sunshine and smooth air as we turned south. The view out the right side of the airplane was a perfect clear summer evening, and the view out the left was a nasty, heavy wall of rain.

I mean it looked like a wall of water that you couldn't see even an eighth of a mile into. I wasn't worried yet because this front was one of the fastest moving I'd ever seen move across the state. When we arrived on the west side of the airport the wall of water wasn't showing any signs of eastern movement so we could land and set up the banner. We were flying in great visibility and could spot the number 8 on the end of the runway perfectly, but you couldn't even see the touchdown zone markings on Runway 8 due to the heavy rain. We began holding west of the airport thinking we would be able to land soon and get the job done. Every circle we would measure the progress of visibility improvement each time we came around. Or, in this case, the lack of progress. We held, and we held, and then we held some more but that damn precipitation didn't move at all!

I still had high hopes of success. When we looked to the east, the storm didn't move, but now when we looked to the west, we had a different problem. The sun was getting closer to the horizon. Finally, after an hour we reluctantly canceled the banner.

To this day I still can't believe that the storm decided to stall right over Merrill, Wisconsin, when all day long it had been

“The view out the right side of the airplane was a perfect clear summer evening, and the view out the left was a nasty, heavy wall of rain.”

moving about 30-plus mph across the state. I always felt bad we couldn't pull it off for Cletus the Rodeo Clown, but I also wondered if it wasn't an omen for him. I never found out the result of the proposal. We lost money on that deal. One hour to assemble the banner, and two hours of flying and we couldn't even charge a penny. But that's the weather. You can watch the radar, read the METARs and forecasts, but in the end, you can't ignore what you see outside the windshield of the airplane. You can't let the pressure of the mission cloud your judgement, even if you only get one chance to get the job done.

Before we moved to Wausau, based out of Rhinelander, we got a contract to fly over the Whitewater Kayak Races in Wausau. The day-long gig required us to fly five separate one-hour banners thanking each of the sponsors of the event. This national race happened three years running. It was everything I'd dreamed about when I got into the business: a full day worth of flying banners.

Since there were five hours of flying it was very important that we have efficient turn-around times between banners to complete all five banners during the races. We prepared by making the banners ahead of time, because these were old school banners, you created a banner by assembling individual letters and spaces to spell out the message. Nowadays banner towing aircraft pull custom generated aerial billboards that are enormous in size. My old-school banners were black five-foot tall letters made by a company called Fly-Rite. Each letter attached with safety pin-like connectors through loops to the previous letter. There were eight straps on each letter. It would take about an hour to assemble a banner.

For this contract the beginning of the banner said something like WAUSAU WHITEWATER KAYAK RACE THANKS....., then we would add the name of the sponsor at the end of the banner. After an hour of flying over the races and the Wausau metro area I would descend low near my ground crew taking the wind into consideration to drop it precisely next to my crew. They would announce on the handheld radio when I should drop the banner. I would then execute a go-around and enter the pattern for landing. At Wausau Downtown Airport, we would set up parallel to grass Runway 9/27. After landing I'd taxi up and shut down next to my crew and the banner. They would hand me the grapple hook to reinstall on the airplane for the next pick up. Then I would assist in resetting the banner and tow rope on the pick-up poles for the next pick-up. Finally, we would remove that sponsor name from the banner I'd dropped and replace it with the next sponsor's name. Angela and I made a great team and the turnaround time typically took about 10-15 minutes.

There is a limit to how many letters an aircraft can pull. No matter how much I tried to enforce that limit with customers, they just seemed to have to push it. Because I was young and inexperienced and wanted to please the limited number of customers I had, I slowly gave into external pressure from the customer rather than sticking to my limit. The maximum banner message letter limits insidiously grew one letter at a time as I gained experience.

During the races, I agreed to pull my longest banner to date. I was nervous about it. On this day, the temperature was about 90F. The wind was calm. I came down and picked up the banner and immediately began my climb out. Unfortunately, I was about



to learn an unforgettable lesson regarding density altitude and aircraft limitations. At the peak of my pick-up, I leveled off and attempted the slow climb with my banner in tow, to no avail. As I approached the departure end of the airport I quickly realized I was going to be lucky not to drag my banner through the trees surrounding the airport. As I approached the shoreline of Lake Wausau that surrounds the airport, with my hand on the banner release handle, it became apparent that I would make it.

Once I got over the water my climb performance decreased a little, while increasing the pucker factor. I had never been this low at Wausau and could see that I was almost below the high-tension lines on the other side of the lake. I needed to get some altitude. The level of Lake Wausau was a little low and I remembered that there was exposed sand and a beach on a point across the lake to the right. I headed there hoping for a thermal. When I arrived, I felt the thermal I needed and it helped me get the altitude to continue without dropping the banner. Luckily the area ahead was sparsely populated as I slowly fought for the minimum safe altitude I needed to do my job. It seemed like an eternity before I got to altitude and my blood pressure returned to normal.

Lessons learned: Don't push performance limits to please customers; density altitude is a real thing. No matter what airport you fly in/out of take a good look at the terrain and environment around the airport on the way in, so you know how you can use that terrain to your advantage if you have a problem when you depart.

The last year we flew over the Wausau Kayak Races was the summer before we moved to Wausau. It was very windy that day. The wind was blowing straight down the grass runway, but it was gusting close to 40 knots. Only one other airplane flew in/out that day and I remember that it was a Maule that took off from the

taxiway to avoid the crosswind. I remember we had an audience watching us perform our banner operation. I'm proud to say I didn't miss one banner.

A couple months later we moved to Wausau to manage the airport. That's when my customers slowly came in to tell me how crazy a pilot everyone thought I was after watching me tow that day. What they didn't know is that the wind made banner tow operations safer and easier than no wind operations. The wind actually decreases your ground speed, which makes the banner pick-up occur in slow motion for the pilot. And, due to the slow ground speed you can gain much more altitude in a shorter distance. Lesson: if you're going to be a professional pilot, learn everything you can about the weather and use it to your advantage, because when you fly, you'll spend your entire career *inside* the weather. You better know how the weather works.

Politics ruins everything. And my banner business wasn't immune to that stink. The names and location have been changed to protect the guilty regarding the story of my last banner. It was election season. I was hired to fly a banner encouraging the masses to vote for a specific candidate in a community away from Wausau. Let's just say the position was alderman. The banner

“You can't let the pressure of the mission cloud your judgement, even if you only get one chance to get the job done.”

read VOTE FOR JONES FOR ALDERMAN.

But the night before the mission, I received a phone call from the first candidate's competition to fly a banner. I was reluctant since I didn't have time to build another banner before the next morning's early departure. To make things easier and to accommodate my last-minute customer (since this would be the second banner of the day), we agreed on a banner that read VOTE FOR SMITH INSTEAD. We both thought this was the perfect compromise since I could accomplish his mission for almost no additional banner building labor on my part.

The next morning was a wintry day. On the way over in my trusty Cessna 172 the ceilings were low and we had to scud run in Class G remaining clear of the clouds. Once again, we experienced moments of ice from freezing drizzle, but because of my previous drizzle lesson I realized that descending would quickly solve that problem.

We set up in deep snow and caught both banners the first time. Near the end of the second banner, I nervously watched a snow squall moving towards the airport. Everything was indicating that if we didn't drop the banner and efficiently load up our equipment, we might be stuck there for the night. I dropped the banner on time and on target just as the squall reached the opposite side of the airport. By the time I landed and taxied in, my crew had the banner equipment ready to load. We departed just as the snowfall was decreasing visibility to VFR minimums and I immediately flew away from the snow. It took 15 minutes of flying until we could turn toward home in good visibility feeling fat, dumb, and

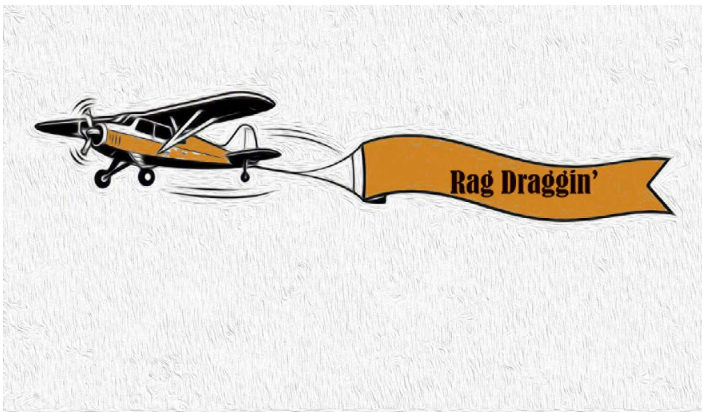
happy about accomplishing our two-banner mission for the day. I continued feeling proud of myself until I arrived home. Then I saw over 20 messages on my answering machine.

It turned out my first customer that day was not at all happy about me flying a banner for his competition. Somehow he and his inebriated spouse thought they had exclusivity to fly a banner over his community. Over the next 20 phone messages they berated me using slurred expletives describing their feelings regarding my lack of professionalism. This was my first dissatisfied customer and my last customer in the banner business.

They never paid me for the banner, even though they ended up winning their election race. The community was far enough away from Wausau that it didn't financially make sense to fight it. Angela and I had already been discussing the sale of the banners since we were now busy running an FBO. The experience put a bad enough taste in my mouth to make that difficult decision easier.

I could write many more banner towing adventure stories describing the lessons I learned. I would do it all over again in a heartbeat and wouldn't trade any of those experiences for the world. Those lessons made me a better pilot and a better entrepreneur, while creating stories worth telling. That's the greatest thing about aviation. Everywhere you look in the aviation universe, no matter what flavor of aviation you love, the adventures are endless. All you have to do is get in your airplane and pursue them. What is the next aviation adventure awaiting you? Search it out and execute your mission before it's too late.

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The Magic of Brodhead

The barnstormer spirit fills the airfield at Brodhead as vintage airplanes drop in, families linger over ice cream, and kids discover the magic of flight. It's a weekend of simple pleasures and skyward wonder, where the people, planes, and grass runway become a living postcard from aviation's golden age.



Photography by Skot Weidemann
Pietenpol and Hatz Fly-in, July 2026



Cleared by a Combine, Carried by Passion

The Didier Field Story

Story and photos by Mathieu Labs



The American Champion Aircraft 7GCBC Citabria Mathieu flew to Didier Field recently, looking east. He has the Wisconsin DOT Bureau of Aeronautics' airport passport stamp to prove it.

It starts, like many great aviation stories do, with a patch of land and a dream. Just two miles west of Lake Michigan, where the breeze carries the scent of open water, and 30 miles north of Milwaukee, lies a quiet strip of grass known today as Port Washington/Didier Field (35W). At first glance, it's just an airfield, but spend a little time there, and you'll realize it's something much more. It's a place where generations, passion, and the freedom of flight all come together.

Back in 1977, a young man named Peter Didier was learning to fly at Flying S Ranch. Like many pilots before him, one runway wasn't enough, he wanted one of his own. And unlike most, he had the land to make it happen. So, he carved a runway out of possibility and turned it into reality. What began as a personal dream soon became a gathering place. By the 1980s, the Flying Farmers were hosting fly-ins there, and over the years, the field welcomed everything from powered parachutes to Pilatus aircraft, Twin Otters, Cessna Caravans, even a Blackhawk helicopter fresh out of Madison.

But the roots of this story stretch back even further. Long before the runway was neatly cut, Peter's father, Grandpa Nick, once cleared a landing strip through a field with his combine so a friend could pick him up in a Cub and fly to a Milwaukee Brewers/Braves game. No permits. No planning committees. Just a love of flying and a willingness to make it happen. That spirit would become the foundation of Didier Field.

Today, that same passion lives on through Tom Didier, the current owner of the field. Tom soloed there on August 27, 2009, in a Cessna 172, a moment that tied him forever to the runway his family built. Now, with three aircraft based on the field, a Cessna 172, an Ercoupe, and a Piper Cherokee, the next chapter is already unfolding. His nephew is learning to fly, carrying the legacy into a third generation.

For decades, the Didier family, well known in the Port Washington community through four generations of real estate, has cared for this land. And without that original vision in 1977, it's hard to say what this place might have become. But it's safe to say it wouldn't be what it is today.

The turning point came when Tom discovered the story of North Fox Island Airport (6Y3) and the work of the Recreational Aviation Foundation (RAF). Inspired, he saw an opportunity, not just to preserve his airfield, but to share it. After connecting with RAF Wisconsin State Liaison Amanda Levin, the conversations began. They talked about access, protections, and the simple idea that places like this should be experienced.

Soon after, Port Washington/Didier Field found its way into the RAF Airfield Guide. With guidance from RAF Director Jeff Russell and support from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Bureau of Aeronautics, the process of opening the field to the public took shape. As Karla Knorr, Director of the Bureau of Aeronautics, stated, "The Wisconsin Department of Transporta-



tion Bureau of Aeronautics is excited to welcome Port Washington/Didier Field (35W) as a new public use airport in the state of Wisconsin and is glad to have another Wisconsin airport available to the public.” What had once been a “call ahead and come on in” kind of place became something more official, yet it never lost its welcoming soul.

Flying into Didier Field feels like being let in on a secret. The approach is simple but memorable: land uphill on Runway 19, depart downhill on Runway 01, unless the wind exceeds 15 knots crosswind. The runway stretches about 2,000 feet with an additional 1,000 feet threshold on 01, with its own character, powerlines, slopes, and all the charm that makes recreational style flying so special. And when the wheels touch down, you’re not just arriving at an airport, you’re arriving somewhere that feels alive with history.

Within ten minutes by bicycle, you can be downtown, walking along the harbor, grabbing a bite at a waterfront restaurant, or heading out on a fishing charter. It’s the kind of destination that reminds you why you learned to fly in the first place.

But what truly makes Didier Field special isn’t the location or even the history, it’s the feeling. It’s in the stories shared between pilots. It’s in the quiet pride of a family who built something lasting. It’s in the excitement of a new student taking the controls for the first time on a runway shaped by generations before them.

I first visited the field in 2024. Since then, I’ve returned half a dozen times, bringing along a mentee, friend, and anyone who appreciates what aviation is really about. Every single one of them walked away with the same impression: this place is different.

That’s the magic of it. Port Washington/Didier Field isn’t just an airport; it’s a love story. One written in grass runways, family legacy, and the simple, powerful idea that aviation is meant to be shared.

And as long as there are people willing to dream and fly, its story is far from over.



Top: Peter Didier’s trio of aircraft is a testament to his passion for flight, at his home-field hangar.

Above: Didier Field from the air, looking north, as seen during Labs’ recent visit. As Mathieu noted, what began as a casual “call ahead and come on in” airfield evolved into a more official operation, yet its welcoming spirit hasn’t changed.



More than seventy years after earning his pilot certificate, Walter once again wrapped his hands around the controls. For thirty minutes, he wasn't just a passenger, he was a pilot again.

Thirty Minutes That Lasted a Lifetime

A simple Pacer ride becomes a return to the skies of a young aviator's past

Story and photos by Ed Becerra

The sun began to set below the horizon at my home field of John H. Batten International (KRAC) in Racine, Wisconsin. I hopped out of my little Pacer, the evening air cooling my face from the sweltering heat just an hour earlier. The same old song and dance of putting my airplane away after a flight begins. Open hangar. Pull the plane in. Crack open a beer. Wipe down windows and leading edges. Tidy up cockpit. Plug in battery tender. Finish beer. Close hangar. Drive home. It was the same monotonous routine after every flight and this evening was no different. It wasn't until many years later that I realized what had seemed like just another flight to me had become someone else's cherished memory for the rest of their life.

Pulling your airplane up to a pancake breakfast, EAA Chapter gathering, or any of the hundreds of other events around Wisconsin, you're guaranteed to hear a few oohs and ahhs from the attendees of said gatherings. But there's just something about a classic or antique taildragger that tends to garner a lot of atten-

tion. To some folk these aircraft tend to evoke a sense of the romanticism of early aviation with their sleek lines and classic paint jobs. Or maybe they've seen their favorite YouTuber or Instagram pilot landing a vintage Super Cub in the remote parts of the country where no tricycle gear aircraft would ever dare to go. But what I find most often is that there is a memory or feeling from their past that instantly presents itself the moment they see a classic or vintage aircraft.

One evening during an otherwise unremarkable EAA chapter meeting in Racine, followed the usual script. Familiar faces mingled with first-time visitors, stories were exchanged, and hangar flying commenced long before the meeting officially began. Nothing about the night suggested that it would be remembered years later.

Then a fellow member stopped me and asked if I had a moment. One of the guests made a request. It wasn't for an autograph, a photograph, or a look inside my Pacer. The gentleman

simply wanted to know if there was any chance that I could take his father flying again for his 93rd birthday.

If you're like me and love to share this gift of flight that we've been so blessed with, you certainly know I said yes! I traded contact info with my soon-to-be passenger's son, Phil. Over the next week or so we coordinated with each other and Mother Nature to determine a day to surprise his father, Walter.

The day of the flight began much like hundreds before it. Drive to the airport. Open the hangar. Pull the Pacer into the sunshine. Check the fuel. Drain the sumps. Walk around the airplane one more time. Climb aboard. Prime. Start. Taxi. Run-up. Take off. After many years, these rituals become second nature. Not because we've lost our appreciation for flying, but because repetition has a way of making even extraordinary things feel familiar.

This story began in the evening when Walter climbed into my Pacer. His began more than seventy years earlier.

Like many of us, the familiar fire started burning within Walter at an early age. During his time at Milwaukee's Bay View High School, he joined the Civil Air Patrol and then the Army Air Corps, soon after graduation. Long before his military service, however, Walter had already earned his pilot certificate and purchased a 1947 Taylorcraft. Walter took to the skies, wandering the Midwest from Wisconsin to Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan, discovering the freedom that only a small airplane can provide.

His military service only strengthened that passion. Walter served as a weather observer, first with the 126th Weather Station at Milwaukee's Mitchell Field before being assigned to a weather station detachment in Salt Lake City, eventually earning the position of Senior Weather Observer. Later, he was transferred to the 72nd Air Force Air Base Squadron at Minneapolis-St. Paul as he and his young family began their next chapter.

Like so many pilots of his generation, life eventually demanded that aviation take a back seat. Walter traded weekends in the left seat for long hours working multiple jobs to support a growing family of six children. The airplane was gone, but the pilot never left. Throughout the rest of his life, aviation remained woven into who he was. He built countless model airplanes by hand, eagerly shared stories from his flying days, and never lost his fascination with weather, aircraft, and the small airports that had once welcomed him. As the years passed and his memory began to fade, one thing never seemed to leave him: his love of flying.

Decades later, on his 93rd birthday, Walter's family had arranged for a local pilot to reunite him with the sky. Thinking he was just on his way to another appointment, instead his family drove him to KRAC to the awaiting plane and pilot. As soon as his feet hit the tarmac, the flame that had been burning inside him all these years ignited into an inferno. The young aviator he'd once been was present again, eager to take to the skies.

Climbing into the cockpit was a bit of a challenge, but with the help of his family, he got settled into the Pacer. The sight of the vintage instruments instantly became familiar, harkening the time spent in his Taylorcraft many years ago. The plane came to life and taxied to the runway as he adjusted his headset and aviator glasses before entering the airspace above. Pushing the throttle all the way forward brought all 125-horsepower of the little Lycoming alive and in just under one thousand feet, Walter was

reunited with the skies of the past that brought him so much joy.

Fifteen hundred feet above the shores of Lake Michigan, the Pacer settled in. Straight ahead you could just make out the Chicago skyline and to the West, the view was almost limitless. The pilot then said those two magic words, "Your airplane," as he handed off the controls to Walter.

Walter didn't say much after that. He didn't have to. His smile stretched from ear to ear, his eyes glistened with emotion, and his hands settled naturally onto the yoke as though they'd never left it. I wish I could tell you exactly what was going through his mind that afternoon, but I can't. Those memories belonged to Walter alone.

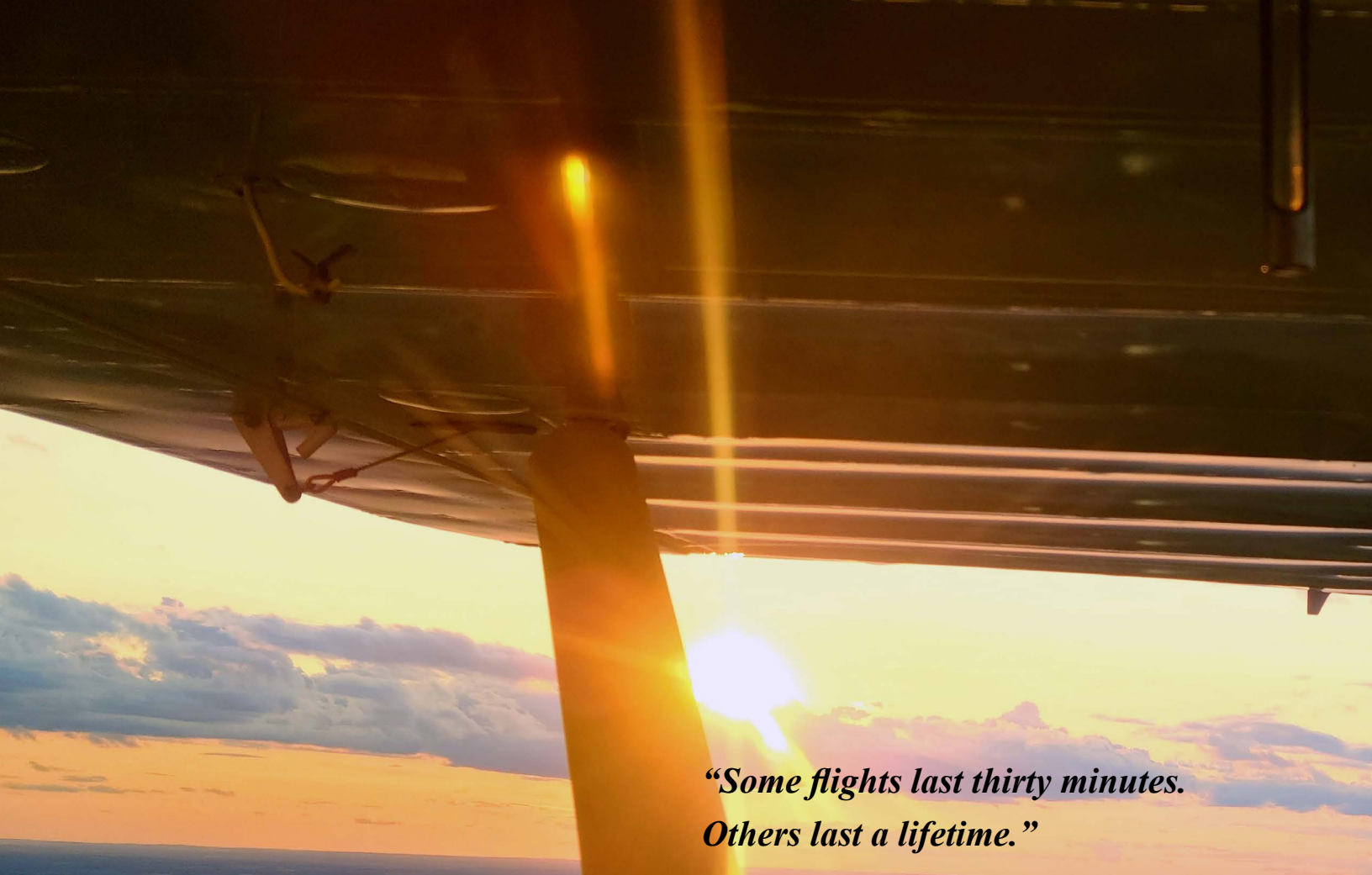
I can only imagine where that little Pacer took him. Perhaps he was once again hopping between the small airports of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois. Maybe he was thinking about the little airport in Fond du Lac, where a friend's father would welcome him with a homemade chicken dinner, or smiling to himself about his famous claim that he "had a girl at every airport." Whatever was running through his mind, one thing was certain; he was home again.

Walter arrived back to the ramp with his family smiling, anxiously waiting to hear about his flight. His grin said everything. The decades seemed to melt away as he pushed his walker away, strutting confidently into the FBO for a slice of birthday cake. His soul was still in the air.

Photographs from that day remained by Walter's side. For anyone who asked about them he would smile and say that he was just up there yesterday, flying around the skies in an airplane.



Thinking he was headed to another routine appointment on his 93rd birthday, Walter had no idea his family had planned something far more meaningful, a chance to become a pilot again.



***“Some flights last thirty minutes.
Others last a lifetime.”***

He would then chair fly and demonstrate how to fly an airplane, talking through the controls as if he were back in the cockpit. Some flights last thirty minutes. Others last a lifetime.

Many years later I received a text from Phil, Walter’s son, that his father had passed away. Phil mentioned that even on his last day on Earth, Walter would tell his nurse the story of the day that he became a pilot again and flew that little Pacer over Racine. Emotion overwhelmed me as I tried to read the message to my wife, Caitlin. Unable to without bursting into tears, I passed my phone over to her to read on her own. She looked me in the face and said, “I’m very proud of you for doing that. It must have really meant a lot to him.”

For days I couldn’t stop wondering how something that came so naturally to me could mean so profoundly much to someone else. It forced me to ask a question I’d never considered before: How many “ordinary” flights have been extraordinary to the person sitting beside me?

To help answer that question I reached out to Phil and asked if we could talk more about his father and the impact that day had on the rest of his father’s life. For the next thirty minutes, Phil filled in the parts of Walter’s story that only a son could tell. The memories of little airports and the joy of simply wandering the Midwest in a Taylorcraft suddenly gave new meaning to the smile I had witnessed that day.

I asked Phil what he would want other pilots to understand about offering flights like the one Walter and I had shared. His answer has stayed with me ever since.

“It means more to the person you’re giving the flight to than you know,” he said. “What they might think is just a little offer-

ing of what flying is all about... in some cases it means more than that.”

Those words answered the very question I had been wrestling with. We pilots become accustomed to flying. We focus on weather briefings, checklists, radio calls, and landings. But the person sitting beside us isn’t measuring the flight in Hobbs time or gallons of avgas. They’re measuring it in memories. For Walter, thirty minutes in an old Piper Pacer wasn’t just another flight. It was the chance to become a pilot again, to revisit a part of himself that had been waiting more than seventy years to return to the sky.

Walter thought he was receiving a gift that day. Instead, he gave me one. These days, I still pull my Pacer into the hangar, wipe down the wings, plug in the battery tender, and close the doors. The routine hasn’t changed. But now, every time someone settles into the right seat, I can’t help but wonder what this flight might mean to them years from now. Somewhere, someone is climbing into the right seat carrying a story you’ll never fully know.

Fly accordingly.



About the Author

Ed Becerra is a pilot, aviation storyteller, and owner of a 1950 Piper PA-20 Pacer (N7413K). He shares his flying adventures and passion for vintage aircraft on his YouTube channel, The Flying Stampede, where he explores small airports, historic airfields, and the stories behind classic airplanes. A longtime Short Wing Piper enthusiast, Ed enjoys bringing the history, character, and human side of aviation to life, one flight at a time.

Generals and Admirals of WAHF

Celebrating service and sacrifice

by John Dorcsey

A recent visit to the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana, afforded the opportunity to see a tribute to recipients of the Medal of Honor. My wife, Rose, and I were standing on the second level in the US Freedom Pavilion when our gaze drifted to the wall on our right. A breathtaking sight. The entire wall—soaring some 70 feet above us and at least that wide—was filled with images of Medal of Honor recipients. Breathtaking, humbling, and inspiring!



According to the exhibit, 45 of those images were of Wisconsin natives. We studied the wall for several minutes and located Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame (WAHF) inductees Jack Jerstad, Richard Bong, and Lance Sijan.

Later, at lunch, I wondered how else we might categorize inductees. I admit that as a veteran I may have a bias toward military service. I went to the WAHF website and, after searching the entire inductee listing, I discovered some interesting facts. I'll share them here and see if you find them of interest as well.

There are five service academies in the United States:

- Military Academy in West Point, New York, founded in 1802 (Army)
- Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, founded in 1845
- Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, founded in 1954
- Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, founded in 1876
- Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York, founded in 1943

Over 88 years, from 1910 through 1998, sixteen WAHF inductees have graduated from our military academies: five from Annapolis, five from West Point and six from the Air Force Academy. In addition, Tad Oelstrom served as the 14th Superintendent of the Air Force Academy from 1997-2000.

WAHF inductees who are Annapolis graduates are: Marc Mitscher, James Flatley, Dennis Sullivan, James Lovell and George Cudahy. West Point graduates: Nathan Twining, Hoyt Vandenberg, Pete Drahn, Charles Vehlow and Jeffrey Williams. Those who graduated from the Air Force Academy: Lance Sijan, Tad Oelstrom, Greg Anderson, Mark Lee, Pete Bunce and Caroline Bong Jensen.

Another logical category is that of General (or Admiral) officer. Thirteen WAHF inductees have held the rank of general officer and include: Billy Mitchell, Marc Mitscher, Nathan Twining, Hoyt Vandenberg, James Flatley, Dennis Sullivan, Richard Knobloch, Merton Baker, Collins Ferris, Woodrow Swancutt, Pete Drahn, Tad Oelstrom and Jon Kelk. Note that not all general rank inductees came from the academies.

We extend a heartfelt "thank you for your service" to these officers and to all WAHF inductee veterans who dedicated their lives to aviation and country.



EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2026

Aviation's Greatest Stage

Story by Rose Dorcey

Photos by Scott Green, Greg Kieca, and Rose Dorcey

EAA AIRVENTURE
OSHKOSH
2026



The Flying Bulls' P-38 *White Lightning*, Europe's only airworthy Lightning, made its U.S. debut at AirVenture 2026 — a variant of the fighter type flown by America's Ace of Aces, Wisconsin's Richard Bong.

Every July, Oshkosh becomes the beating heart of aviation. This year, EAA AirVenture Oshkosh once again proved why it's called *The World's Greatest Aviation Celebration* — and why Wisconsin is proud to host it.

From the moment the first arrivals touched down at Wittman Regional Airport, the energy was unmistakable, though smoke from Canadian wildfires delayed many arrivals. Even so, the grounds soon filled with airplanes, campers, exhibitors, and enthusiasts from around the globe. By week's end, the numbers told the story: 734,000 people attended — the highest total ever recorded, surpassing last year's record of 704,000.

EAA CEO and Chairman Jack Pelton captured the spirit best: "The celebration of America 250 also became an amazing week at Oshkosh. So many highlights and memories emerged from the grounds over the seven days that made this year unforgettable."

Throughout the week, Oshkosh reflected that patriotic spirit — from flaglined flightlines and redwhiteandblue smoke trails to stirring tributes during the night air shows. These moments underscored that AirVenture is not only about innovation and community, but also about honoring America's heritage of flight during this milestone year.

A Global Gathering

Visitors came from 98 countries, registering at the International Visitors Pavilion. More than 10,000 aircraft arrived in eastcentral Wisconsin, with Wittman alone handling 15,527 operations — an average of 101 takeoffs and landings per hour.

The flightline showcased 2,851 show planes, including:

- Vintage aircraft: 1,346
- Homebuilt aircraft: 875
- Warbirds: 360
- Ultralights: 118
- Seaplanes: 88
- Aerobatic aircraft: 40
- Rotorcraft: 18
- Hotair balloons: 6

Community at the Core

Behind the scenes, 6,000 volunteers contributed nearly 300,000 hours to make the week possible. More than 13,600 camping sites hosted over 40,000 visitors, turning Oshkosh into a temporary aviation city.

Pelton emphasized that while record attendance is gratifying,



Red Arrows streaked across the Oshkosh sky in perfect formation, their red jets trailing dazzling smoke. The Royal Air Force team's precision brought international flair to AirVenture '26, thrilling crowds with each performance.

Below: Patriotic blooms and flags, including an America 250 banner, welcomed visitors at the DeltaHawk exhibit — a Racine, Wisconsin company proudly showcasing innovation in aviation.



the true goal is community: “Our mission is not to chase numbers but to share The Spirit of Aviation. People leave Oshkosh inspired and excited by the world of flight.” At Sunday’s closing day press conference, Pelton added, “we’re chasing engagement.”

Innovation and Inspiration

The grounds buzzed with activity:

- 1,021 commercial exhibitors — a record number — showcased the latest technology.



An F-15 Eagle climbs with afterburners blazing at — speed and power on full display.

- 1,600 forums, workshops, and presentations filled 65 venues, offering hands on learning.
- Online, EAA’s reach soared: 30 million people engaged with social media, with 17.1 million video views and nearly 50,000 new followers.

Voices of Inspiration at Oshkosh

AirVenture 2026 drew leaders from across aviation and beyond. Wisconsin’s own Sean Duffy, US Department of Transportation Secretary attended, underscoring the state’s role in hosting the world’s largest aviation gathering. Meanwhile, NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman delivered an inspiring message about the future of space exploration, highlighting upcoming lunar missions and the promise of Mars.

Our team captured parts of Isaacman’s remarks on video — available now on our Facebook and YouTube channels — so readers can experience the energy firsthand.

AirVenture After Dark

The night air shows are one of Oshkosh’s most dazzling traditions, and 2026 was no exception. Against the twilight sky, performers lit up the evening with aerobatics illuminated by strobes, lasers, and pyrotechnics streaming from their wings. Each show built to a crescendo of fireworks over the Wittman Regional Airport and EAA grounds, blending aviation artistry with festival spectacle. For many attendees, the night air shows are the perfect capstone — a reminder that Oshkosh is as much about wonder and celebration as it is about aviation achievement.

EAA AIRVENTURE OSHKOSH 2026

Impact Beyond the Airport

AirVenture's economic footprint is enormous: \$257 million for the five county Oshkosh-area region, according to a University of Wisconsin Oshkosh study. That impact underscores how deeply aviation is woven into Wisconsin's identity. Beyond the dollars, it's worth noting that while EAA maintains a year round staff of about 170, the organization brings on roughly 1,000 additional employees each summer to carry out the plans that make AirVenture possible. Pelton also thanked Wittman Regional Airport staff for their role in making the event a success, along with the entire Oshkosh-area community.

MOSAIC: Sport Pilot 2.0

AirVenture 2026 also marked a turning point for general aviation with the arrival of the MOSAIC rule — the FAA's modernization of lightsport aircraft certification. First announced at Oshkosh in 2025 and finalized this summer, MOSAIC replaces outdated weight limits with performance-based standards. The change expands what sport pilots can fly, opens the door to four-seat designs and advanced propulsion, and gives flight schools access to more capable training aircraft.

The first MOSAIC compliant airplane — a Van's RV12iS certified for instrument flight — was delivered right on the Oshkosh grounds, underscoring how AirVenture continues to be the place where aviation's future takes flight. As EAA CEO Jack Pelton put it, MOSAIC is "Sport Pilot 2.0," unleashing innovation for manufacturers, schools, and the next generation of aviators.

Looking Ahead

As Pelton noted, "We're going to first take a breath after this incredible year. Within the next month, as we collect feedback and ideas, we'll begin plotting the course for 2027." That year will mark the 100th anniversary of Charles Lindbergh's trans Atlantic solo flight, promising another unforgettable celebration.

Aviation for Youth

EAA is investing in the next generation with the creation of Discovery Park, set to open at AirVenture 2027. This new campus will expand youth programming and bring aviation education into the heart of Oshkosh. That commitment was underscored this summer when EAA's Young Eagles program reached 2.5 million youths worldwide. The milestone flight was made by Hazel Schaefer, age 10, from Wausau, who took to the skies with Young Eagles Chairman Jimmy Graham. Since 1992, more than 50,000 volunteer pilots have shared the joy of flight, making Young Eagles the largest youth aviation education program in history — and Hazel's flight ensured Wisconsin was at the center of the celebration. (see sidebar)

AirVenture 2026 will be remembered for its milestones, and for the spirit of community it revealed — a future built by pilots, volunteers, and young dreamers who share the joy of flight.



Seattle II, Bob Dempster's faithful Douglas World Cruiser replica, with its 50-foot wingspan and original Liberty engine, sits on the field at AirVenture. The original World Cruisers completed the first flight around the world in 1924 — a project championed by Wisconsin native Billy Mitchell, later honored as a Hall of Fame inductee.



Young aviators join EAA leaders in turning the first shovels of dirt at AirVenture 2026, breaking ground for Discovery Park — a youth aviation campus opening in 2027 with expanded programming.

Spirit of St. Louis replica at AirVenture, a fitting reminder as aviation nears the centennial of Lindbergh's historic 1927 flight.



Top: Twin MiG-17s — a 1957 model (#1210) above and a 1960 MiG-17F below — blaze past with afterburners lit during AirVenture 2026's day air show.

Susan Dacy taxis in *Big Red*, her 450-hp Super Stearman, after a performance at AirVenture 2026.

The American Heritage Museum's PBX-5A Catalina, WWII Grand Champion at AirVenture 2026, flies overhead with crew visible in the turret.



Two Point Five Wausau's Hazel Schaefer reflects on her status as EAA's 2.5-millionth Young Eagle

Hazel Schaefer sensed something big was happening. Weeks before, she had completed an application through EAA Chapter 640 to fly with EAA's Young Eagles Chairman Jimmy Graham in a ceremonial flight to mark the 2.5-millionth Young Eagle flown during AirVenture. From the moment Dennis Seitz (chapter board member and Hazel's first flight instructor) began talking about it at a chapter meeting she just knew she'd been selected. And when it was confirmed, she began smiling. "I felt happy and excited."

Once she got to the AirVenture grounds, she got a lot of attention, and some fun little benefits too.

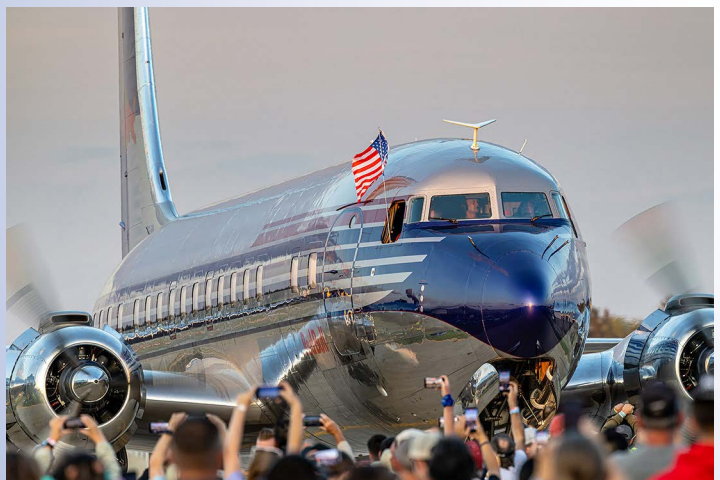
"I was surprised by all the extra opportunities I got at Oshkosh because of that—and I got lots of ice cream," she said.

Of the flight itself, Hazel said it was very short, and she hopes she can fly again with Jimmy—in an Extra. "I liked doing low passes because I could see all the people — but I need to get a little taller or use two seat pads next time." Though she liked the Extra flight, she likes Vintage aircraft best. "I think other kids would love vintage aircraft too. If they got the chance to fly them, they'd grow up wanting to care for them — so they'll still be here when we're adults."

Hazel's mom reflected on what the experience meant for their family:

"Our time at AirVenture put Hazel — and in many ways our whole family — on stage as an example of what access and community can do. I'm not a pilot, and my girls weren't born into the airport family. We simply showed up for a hamburger social, and from there found a home in Wausau Downtown Airport and the chapter's Learn Build Fly program. That welcome led us to thousands of volunteer hours, lasting connections, and countless flights."

Hazel's sisters are also active: Lily, 16, recently completed her first solo as a Ray Aviation Scholar, while her 13-year-old is passionate about leadership through the Commemorative Air Force. Together, the girls share a collective heart for aviation — a family story rooted in community.



Left column: Restored P-51D Mustang, a combat veteran of the 355th Fighter Group, parked beside a period hangar.

A member of the WWII Airborne Demonstration Team descends under a period-correct parachute, honoring Oshkosh native Glenn Cooper of the 101st Airborne.

Right column: A bright orange Coast Guard helicopter at AirVenture 2026 reflects decades of search-and-rescue tradition.

The vivid yellow F8F-2 Bearcat, Grumman's final piston-engine design, thrilled crowds at AirVenture 2026.

The Flying Bulls' 1958 Douglas DC-6B taxis in at AirVenture 2026, greeted by a sea of raised cell phones and cheers, as an American flag waves proudly from its window.



Wisconsin Connections at AirVenture

We were grateful to reconnect with many advertisers and supporters during AirVenture, thanking them in person and hearing about their work to keep aviation strong. We visited with Kurt Hartwig of Eagle Fuel Cells, Kris Brown Baum and Jane Seeber from Wisconsin Aviation, Hal Davis of WisDOT Aeronautics, and Blake Nelson from Rapco. Aviation Supply and Academics (ASA) again supported our silent auction, and we appreciated the chance to thank them at their booth.





O'Hare to Oshkosh

From dishwasher to aviation leader, Bruce Botterman's journey shows how passion shapes a lifetime

By Rose Dorcey

For more than sixty years, past WAHF Board Member Bruce Botterman has been the kind of mechanic who lets his work speak for itself. From airport hangars across Wisconsin to the founding of NewView Technologies in 1995, he built a reputation for steady hands, long hours, and a knack for solving problems others couldn't. His shop became known nationwide for aircraft window repair and avionics work, but at its heart, NewView was always about Bruce's dedication to keeping airplanes safe and flying — and looking good, too. Earlier this year, on May 1, 2026, he passed the business on to Bryan and Nicki Langfeldt, ensuring that the same spirit of hard work and care would be carried forward into the next generation.

It's a long way from Bruce's teen years in Chicago, earning money by setting pins at a bowling alley and flipping burgers at McDonald's. His dad worked for Douglas Aircraft at Orchard Airport — before it became O'Hare International (KORD) — building C54s for World War II. Bruce remembers riding along as his dad pointed out new buildings, old hangars, and all the changes happening as Douglas expanded. That's where Bruce's passion for aviation took root.

Soon after graduating high school in Arlington Heights, Illinois, in 1962, Bruce was simply looking for a job that paid a little better. He spotted a help wanted ad in a Chicago newspaper — United Airlines was hiring dishwashers. The work itself wasn't glamorous, but the location stopped him cold. O'Hare. An airport. Bruce remembers the thought hitting him hard: "Working at an airport... now that would be something." That moment — standing there with the newspaper in his hands — was the spark. The job might have been washing dishes, but to Bruce, it was a doorway into aviation, and he wasn't about to let it pass.

It didn't take long for Bruce to work his way out of the kitchen and into the shop. He became a stores clerk, then a maintenance clerk. Talking with aircraft mechanics every day convinced him to earn his Aircraft & Powerplant certification. "It was so much fun as a young kid," Bruce recalls. "So much to see, and people to meet."

In the 1960s, Bruce and his wife, Rae, moved to Janesville, earning his Airframe and Powerplant rating in July 1966, adding the inspection authorization in 1972. He took a position with Midwest Aviation — performing maintenance on DC-3s, DC-4s,



and Twin Beech freighters. When the recession of the '70s hit, Bruce found himself out of work. He moved to Oshkosh to work at Basler Flight Service (Basler Airlines), working as a mechanic and doing quality control on the DC-3, DC-4, and DC-6 fleet. Bruce liked the work, but when he heard about an opening at MaxAir in Appleton for a shop manager, he made the move, eventually becoming part owner.

By 1995, Bruce and Rae were ready for a change. Over dinner with friends, Bruce learned that Aviall, a supplier of aerospace parts, had been sold. His friend told him, "You should think about polishing aircraft windows; call the Aviall owner — he's got all the window repair equipment for sale." Bruce was ready to work for himself. "By golly, I think I will," he told his friend. Rae asked Bruce what he knew about windows, and Bruce just smiled: "We'll figure it out."

That conversation became the catalyst for NewView Technologies. With no one else in the region offering aircraft window polishing, Bruce and Rae drove to Dallas with a truck and loaded up two pallets of window repair and polishing equipment. For the first few years, they ran the business out of their home, traveling to airports around the country with their equipment.

When a hangar at Wittman Regional Airport (KOSH) became available, Bruce and Rae made the move — and NewView Technologies has been headquartered there ever since. He has been celebrated in aviation circles with multiple awards, including the FAA's Charles Taylor Master Mechanic Award in 2016, which highlights the lifetime accomplishments of senior mechanics.

As Bruce eases into retirement, he still finds himself drawn back to the hangar — not out of obligation, but out of love. A few days each week, he stops in to lend a hand, share a story, or pass along a lesson learned over half a century in aviation. Watching Bryan and Nicki carry the business forward gives him confidence

***"Working at an airport...
now that would be something."***

— Bruce Botterman



Left column: Bruce Botterman at work, polishing an aircraft window — the craftsmanship that defined NewView.

Above: Bruce and Rae with an international AirVenture guest — one of many friendships forged through aviation.

Left: Bruce receiving the Wisconsin DOT Bureau of Aeronautics' Outstanding Achievement in Aviation Award, 2005.

that NewView's reputation for care and craftsmanship will endure. Says Bruce, "Rae and I are proud of what this company has become, and we couldn't be more confident in Bryan and Nicki as the people to carry it forward. This is the right move for our customers, our team, and the future of NewView."

With more than 15 years in aviation — including five spent at NewView Technologies in the Fox Valley — Bryan and Nicki bring both experience and dedication to their new role. Their respect for one another, and for the company's founders, is clear.

"We are grateful beyond words for what Bruce and Rae built here," Nicki reflects. "The trust they placed in us, and the trust customers have shown this company for three decades, is something we take seriously."

Bryan adds, "Our responsibility now is to earn that trust every single day."

For Bruce, the real reward isn't awards or recognition, but the friendships forged in hangars and on runways across the country. "I've been lucky," he says. "Lucky to do work I loved, with people I respected, in an industry that always felt like home."

Bruce's story is proof that hard work and passion can carry a young man from a dishwashing job at O'Hare to a lifetime of aviation leadership. As he steps back, we honor not only his career, but his generosity and support of Wisconsin aviation — a true friend to our organization, and to the community he helped keep flying.



Celebrate our 2026 Inductees

It's time to celebrate Wisconsin's aviation legends!

Join fellow enthusiasts for the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame's 40th annual induction ceremony, an evening dedicated to honoring the remarkable achievements of Gary Buettner, Eldon Isely, Leo Kohn, Audrey Pobereznay, and Jeff Williams. Their stories reflect the courage, innovation, and determination that continue to shape aviation in our state.

This year's celebration takes place Saturday, October 10 at the EAA Aviation Museum in Oshkosh. The evening begins with optional museum tours, followed by a social hour and silent auction at 5 p.m., dinner at 6, and awards presentations at 7. New this year: After the ceremony, enjoy a Dessert & Coffee Bar — a sweet way to continue the conversations and camaraderie.

All WAHF members will receive an invitation, along with family and friends of the inductees. Seating is limited, please RSVP promptly; details are available at WAHF.org or by emailing rose@wahf.org.

Whether you're a lifelong aviation history fan or simply fascinated by the wonders of flight, this is a meaningful opportunity to honor the past, celebrate the present, and envision the future of aviation. We hope you'll join us!



Gary Buettner — Honoring his commitment to aviation service and community impact.



Eldon Isely — Recognized for his leadership and lasting contributions to Wisconsin aviation.



Leo J. Kohn — Remembered for his pioneering spirit and contributions to flight in Wisconsin.



Audrey Pobereznay — Honored for her lifelong dedication to the EAA community.



Jeff Williams — Celebrated for his distinguished NASA career and Wisconsin roots in aviation.



Register soon at wahf.org/rsvp

Date Change!

Annual Membership Meeting

This year, the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame's annual membership meeting will be moving later in the calendar, with plans to hold it in May. Traditionally, we've scheduled the meeting just before our induction ceremony, but that day has grown so full of activity that it no longer feels like the right fit. By shifting into May — our anniversary month — we can give the meeting its own space and attention.

May has always been a meaningful time for us, and past gatherings during this season have drawn strong attendance and enthusiasm. We're excited to build on that tradition, offering members a chance to reconnect when spring is in full swing. The exact date is still being finalized, but we'll share details soon.

We look forward to welcoming you to this important gathering, where we'll reflect on the past year, share updates on our work, and celebrate the community that keeps Wisconsin's aviation heritage alive.

To Our Members/Supporters

In recent weeks we've welcomed a number of new members, dozens of renewals, and several donations, and we're truly grateful. Your support plays a vital role in preserving Wisconsin's aviation history and inspiring future generations. Because of your commitment, we can continue honoring the remarkable achievements of the people who shaped our state's aviation story. Thank you for being part of this work and for helping keep these stories alive.

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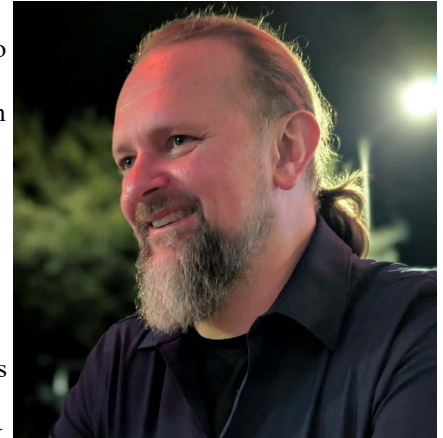
Greg Kieca and The Greens

We are grateful to the talented individuals who help us capture the spirit of AirVenture each year. Their images and video bring the event to life long after the week has ended, allowing us to share those moments with our readers and preserve them for the future.

This year, we'd like to recognize two contributors. Greg Kieca has been shooting for *Forward in Flight* when he's not working as a software engineering manager in the Chicago-area. Greg has a need for speed; his work focuses primarily aviation events and sports car racing.

We also want to thank Scott Green, who not only documents AirVenture through video but also serves as a dedicated WAHF board member. His dual role reflects the spirit of our organization — blending service, creativity, and commitment to aviation history. Scott's wife, Julie, is very much part of the team as well. Her thoughtful ideas and sparkling personality, especially when she interviews subjects, bring our AirVenture stories to life and help us share them with the community. Visit our Facebook and YouTube pages to see their work.

Together, their coverage ensures that the sights, sounds, and emotions of AirVenture are preserved and shared with our members/*Forward in Flight* readers. We are fortunate to have their talents supporting our mission. Thank you!





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Photo from WAHF's Leo J. Kohn Collection

KADDY'S KRATE The Flying Adventure

Once upon a time in Miami, Florida, there was a little airplane with a big personality. Her name was Kaddy's Krate, and she had a painted smile right on her nose. Everyone at the airport knew her by her cheerful face and the words painted on her side: "From Marrs" and "Nuta's Miami, Fla."

Kaddy wasn't just any airplane. She loved adventures, especially ones that took her beyond the clouds. Every morning, as the sun rose over the hangars and shiny cars parked nearby, she would wiggle her wings and whisper, "Where shall we go today?"

One summer morning, a boy named Tommy and his sister Olivia came to visit the airport. They had never flown before, and their eyes grew wide when they saw Kaddy's Krate smiling at them. "She looks like she wants to play!" Olivia said.

The pilot, Captain Marrs, chuckled. "Kaddy loves to meet new friends. Would you like to join us for a flight?"

Tommy and Olivia climbed into the little plane, their hearts racing with excitement. As the engine roared to life, Kaddy's Krate lifted off the runway, soaring higher and higher. The city of Miami sparkled below, and the ocean stretched out like a giant blue blanket.

But Kaddy had a surprise planned. She tilted her wings and zoomed toward the clouds. "Hold on tight!" Captain Marrs called. Suddenly, the fluffy white clouds transformed into castles and animals. Tommy saw a cloud shaped like a dragon, while

Olivia spotted one that looked like a giant swan.

"Wow!" they shouted together. Kaddy laughed, her nose art twinkling in the sunlight. She loved showing children the magic hidden in the sky.

As they flew farther, Kaddy's Krate dipped low over a small island. Captain Marrs explained that pilots often delivered supplies to places like this. "Airplanes aren't just for fun," she said. "They help people stay connected."

Tommy imagined Kaddy carrying books to schools, while Olivia pictured her delivering letters to families far away. The little plane wasn't just playful—she was helpful too.

After a long adventure, Kaddy's Krate circled back to the airport. She landed gently, her wheels kissing the runway. Tommy and Olivia hopped out, their faces glowing with joy.

"Thank you, Kaddy!" Olivia said, patting the airplane's nose. Kaddy's Krate gave a happy wiggle of her wings.

From that day on, Tommy and Olivia dreamed of becoming pilots. They knew that airplanes weren't just machines—they were friends who carried stories, laughter, and hope across the skies.



And Kaddy's Krate? She kept flying, always ready to share her smile and her adventures with anyone who believed in the magic of flight.

YOUNG FLIERS' CLUB

EMMA FLIES TO MADELINE ISLAND

Emma leans forward as the little plane touches down at **MADELINE** Island **AIRPORT** (4R5), just outside the town of **LA POINTE**, Wisconsin. It's the only runway among the Apostle Islands — and it sits on the largest island of them all.

From the window, Emma spots the car **FERRY** below, carrying people and cars across the sparkling blue waters of Lake **SUPERIOR** to **BAYFIELD**.

The lake looks like a sheet of glass, shimmering in the sun. "In winter," Cindi the pilot explains, "the lake freezes and cars drive across the **ICE** road instead!" Emma's eyes widened at the thought.

At Big Bay State Park, she sees a **SANDY** beach stretching for miles, with kids splashing in the waves and trails winding through forests.

Back in the air, Emma gazes down at Raspberry Island's **LIGHTHOUSE** and Stockton Island, where black bears swim in the lake. The sandstone cliffs look like castles, and the caves sparkle like hidden **TREASURE**.

Cindi smiles and says, "Every island has its own adventure — and Madeline is the gateway to them all." Emma nods, already dreaming of her next flight.

USE THE WORDS FROM THE STORY TO COMPLETE THE CROSSWORD PUZZLE.

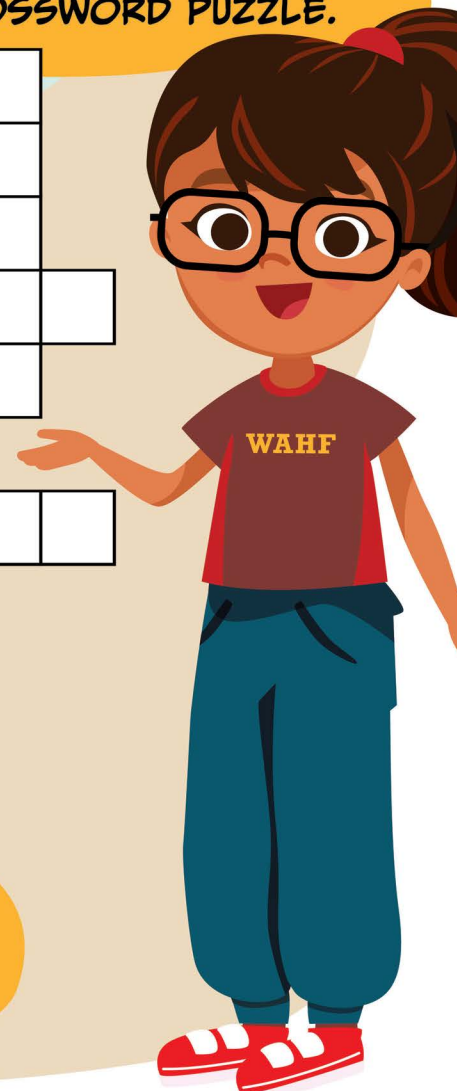


DOWN

1. The town on Washington Island
2. The Great Lake that surrounds the islands
3. Boat that carries cars and people across the lake
4. Mainland town where the ferry departs
5. Largest island in the Apostle Islands
6. What Cindi says each island holds

ACROSS

7. Where Emma's plane landed (4R5)
8. Guiding light on Raspberry Island
9. Big Bay State Park with this kind of beach
10. The kind of road across frozen Lake Superior in winter



Friendships in Flight

AirVenture always brings moments that stay with me long after the week ends, and this year was no exception. It was especially gratifying to reconnect with WAHF members who have become friends. Two of those are Mathieu Labs and Andrew, known to many as The Badger Pilot. Their contributions to *Forward in Flight*—and to aviation more broadly—inspire me.

Mathieu and his wife Lauren volunteer with the Recreational Aviation Foundation, which works to preserve and improve backcountry airstrips for public use. Their efforts help ensure that future generations can enjoy the freedom and adventure of recreational flying. We were glad to see them serving donuts at a RAF press conference, celebrating the launch of the new Fly Rocky Top network in East Tennessee. This “basecamp and outpost” system adds the Southeast to RAF’s growing collection of recreational airstrips nationwide, anchored by Rockwood Municipal Airport and enriched with camping amenities and access to unique landscapes. And closer to home, RAF’s work at Wisconsin airstrips continues to strengthen the legacy of backcountry flying here as well. Sounds like some fun flying!

Badger likewise shares his passion, whether it’s spreading the word about UpHaven’s mission to support pediatric patients and families, or preparing to fly humanitarian missions with organizations like Lifeline Pilots and Freedom Aviation Network. Most recently, he flew a young girl with a rare spinal cancer and her family home so they could sleep in the comfort of their own beds between appointments. Andrew, along with Ryan Krueger,



flew into AirVenture in an RV-10 to promote public benefit flying. Though he hasn’t yet flown for Lifeline or Freedom, Badger has signed up and stands ready to serve.

I also had the chance to briefly cross paths with WAHF inductee Pete Bunce at AirVenture, when he was on his way to a meeting with my husband and others. It was a small reminder that our inductees remain deeply engaged in aviation, not only when they’re honored, but in the everyday work that keeps our industry strong. Their presence is felt not only at formal events, but in the daily rhythm of aviation life.

And then there’s Lily Krueger, an Oshkosh teen who loves both aviation and music. She sang the national anthem to open Sunday’s final air show—a stirring performance she first gave here at age 10!

The stories and images throughout this issue (including two favorites below) remind me how many hands and hearts contribute to our mission. One photo highlights AirVenture’s celebration of the Pioneers of Flight with a Curtiss Standard J-1, a reminder of how far aviation has come. From writers to photographers, volunteers to inductees, each adds perspective—and together they create the living history of Wisconsin aviation.



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Your contributions help ensure that Wisconsin's aviation pioneers and outstanding aviation students will continue to be recognized. Your contributions, in any amount, are appreciated.

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The Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame offers lively presentations that showcase the people, planes, and pivotal moments that shaped our state's aviation story. From daring pilots and landmark aircraft to behind-the-scenes tales of innovation, our speakers bring history off the page and into the room — engaging, informative, and always memorable.

To schedule, email kohn@wahf.org

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Welcome New WAHF Member/Supporters!

Allison Boyer	Julie Buffington	Peter Buffington
Richard Bucholtz	Mark Buehl	Jeff Gentz
Maria Girard	Kerry Smith	Phillip Wilson

Thanks for coming onboard! Your support helps us continue our efforts of collecting, preserving, and sharing Wisconsin aviation history, and honoring those who make it. We also thank the many members who have recently renewed your memberships. We appreciate your support!

Congratulations to WAHF Member/Supporter Laurie Probst on flying her 700th mission with EAA's Young Eagles Program. What an accomplishment! Thanks for all you do, Laurie.

Our Appreciation

We sincerely thank the following individuals for your generous support of the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame. Your contributions help preserve and share aviation history and inspire the next generation of pilots and all those pursuing careers in aviation through our scholarships:

Dan Coyne	Brandon Doblar	Jeff Gentz
Laurel Kitslaar	Tad Oelstrom	Kerry Smith

Your generosity makes a difference - thank you!

Calendar Saturday, October 10, 2026 - WAHF'S 40th annual induction ceremony, EAA Museum, Oshkosh, a night to honor all of our inductees. See page 24 for info. Register at wahf.org/RSVP



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