FORWARD in FLIGHT

Volume 24, Issue 4 Quarterly Magazine of the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame Winter 2026/2027



Honoring the

Class of 2026

FORWARD in FLIGHT

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A Legacy of Achievement

Representing military aviation, aircraft restoration, aviation history, organizational leadership, and space exploration, the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame's 2026 inductees reflect the breadth and strength of Wisconsin's aviation legacy. Their achievements continue to inspire future generations of pilots, mechanics, educators, historians, and explorers. Read about our class of 2026, and all our inductees, at wahf.org

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A Picture Worth Remembering

I just had the opportunity to review the pictures from our 40th Annual Investiture Ceremony held on October 10th in the Experimental Aircraft Association's Eagle Hangar. What a wonderful night celebrating aviation in Wisconsin. We had an added guest airplane in the hangar this year which created some challenges in spacing and placing items, however, having the PBY Catalina in the center of the event created an even more amazing space than we could have hoped for. My personal thanks again to EAA staff and the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame Board of Directors for their flexibility and hard work elevating the evening beyond our imagination.

Pictures can capture so much beyond just the setting. They capture the smiles, the greetings, and the fellowship of the evening. Snapshots of the setup offer a glimpse of the work it took to prepare the spaces for you all to enjoy. Individual photos of the inductees with their friends and family after receiving their honors are so heartwarming they are sure to become treasures for generations to come.

Just as I was about to leave EAA for the evening, I took one last look at the hangar. A lot of the event was in the process of being dismantled and the colorful event lights were replaced by the regular white hangar lights. I thought to myself "I should have taken a picture of the evening from my point of view on stage. So few people got to see it from that perspective." The magnificence of looking out and seeing three hundred friends and family seated among a magnificent backdrop with a giant American flag hung from the ceiling is, as you can tell, something I struggle to describe. It's a picture in my mind I will carry with me until my final day.

Driving home, feeling regretful for missing the photo opportunity, I reflected on how many different personal scenes and individual experiences were created that evening. We set the stage for the evening and orchestrate all the details for what we hope will be an outstanding event, but our inductees and



Photo by Kaitlin Piette

their guests are the ones who create the magic of the evening. Much like the airplanes throughout the hangar, they're just a conglomeration of materials until a person sits in it, makes it work and does something really special.

As we look toward the coming year, we're also excited about a change to our annual membership meeting, which will be moving to May. Final plans are still being developed, but we look forward to gathering with members in a new season and sharing more about the Hall of Fame's activities and future initiatives. Please watch *Forward in Flight* and our social media channels for additional details in the months ahead.

Our annual ceremony is and will continue to be one of my favorite evenings each year not because of the space, but because of the people who attend. If there is one thing we've been successful at over the last 40 years, it's that we've connected with and built relationships with people across Wisconsin and around the world. Those relationships will outlast any space or any airplane and will propel the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame well past the next 40 years.

-Kurt

WAHF Socials

Follow the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame on Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram for historical trivia, aviation anniversaries, inductee videos, event updates, and other reminders of Wisconsin's rich aviation heritage throughout the year.

Forward in Flight

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

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The Wiconsin 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.

On the Cover

Five plaques. Five aviation legends. Featured on this issue's cover are the induction plaques representing the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame Class of 2026. This edition celebrates the Hall of Fame's newest inductees and their lasting contributions to aviation.

Photo by Kaitlin Piette



First Time Flying into AirVenture

Why a 1942 Stearman is sometimes the most practical mode of transportation

By Ami Eckard-Lee

I think all Wisconsin pilots are a bit spoiled because EAA AirVenture Oshkosh is so easy to attend. For the Kelch Aviation Museum, it's crucial. Our fleet consists of antique aircraft with limited range and the ever-present possibility of engine trouble, making most long-distance events impractical. Fortunately, Oshkosh is so close to home that even our vintage biplanes can make the trip without the team sprouting too many new gray hairs.

Although we're a flying museum, we're also a museum of wise pilots and risk-averse planning!

I've been attending AirVenture for years, but it's always been by car as a mere spectator. This summer was different: A Kelch Aviation Museum airplane would fly to AirVenture for the first time in eight years! Although I was happily not pilot-in-command ferrying our Cub to and from Oshkosh, I knew our whole team would be on duty to help at AirVenture throughout the week.

But back "home" at the museum in Brodhead, it was another busy July week needing staff, with tours and guests and Oshkosh-bound drop-ins. Lucky for us, the trek to Oshkosh isn't far—a mere two hours by car. But commuting back and forth gets to be a hassle, and by Thursday afternoon as I wrapped up a wonderful museum tour for a group of kids from the Wisconsin School for the Deaf, I was ready to throw in the towel, abandon the team, and simply go home. A real shower and bed sounded awfully appealing instead of days of AirVenture porta-potties, camper cots, and sunscreen.

But then who should pull up to the hangar but my friend Rich Pember? His arrival was impossible to ignore, with the engine of his 1942 Stearman PT-27 roaring and its red paint shining in the sun. He had delivered a friend home and was about to head back up to Oshkosh with an empty front seat in the Stearman. *Would I like to ride back up with him?*

I don't know about you, but I will never say no to an open cockpit biplane ride, even if it means forgoing a shower and a good night's sleep. I grabbed my backpack and a tiny overnight bag (hearing echoes of *"your carry-on baggage will not fit in the overhead bin, ma'am!"),* hopped into the front cockpit, and pulled on the leather helmet with headset attached. With the Bose powered up, I could make as many sarcastic cracks about Rich as I wanted, knowing full well he would hear them all. My favorite. We fly as realistically to the era as possible, but with all nine cylinders roaring on the 225 Lycoming engine, noise canceling headsets are a necessity. I'll leave the historically accurate deafness to *real* WWII pilots, thank you very much.

We took off into the afternoon sunshine from Brodhead Airport's Runway 27, turned right, and headed towards Oshkosh at about 1200 feet AGL. The dark green lushness of Midwest July rolled out under us, fading at the edges with humidity and the last vestiges of wildfire smoke. My seat in the Stearman cradled me, comfortable and unexpectedly secure, a cozy pocket roaring through the sky. Despite the heat below, I felt chilly, glad for my sweater and Rich's spare leather jacket.



Flying Wisconsin in summertime - a lesson in shades of green.

When I first flew in a small plane, I marveled at the feeling of continual suspension at that perfect looking down altitude. It's an altitude so fleeting in an airliner, experienced only in the first minute and a half of a commercial flight, when you can see cars, houses, and people quickly shrinking from life-size to toys to dots to nothing at all. It's still one of my favorite things about flying, and general aviation has allowed me to be as nosy about my neighbors as anyone could ever wish... Our entire flight to Oshkosh we skimmed along just close enough to make out personal details, glimpses into the backyards and lives of those below: The turquoise disks of above-ground pools, the lines and squiggles of mower rows etched onto lawns, the spindly shadows of otherwise invisible flagpoles. How different each crop looked! Wheat already golden, sometimes shorn in crew cuts over the hills; corn topped with tassels; bean fields shimmering in green and silver waves as the wind turned the leaves.

Something I didn't understand fully until I got my pilot license is the joy of taking someone with you—someone who is just as excited as you are—and now I know why Rich never says no to giving a ride. Over the last few years Rich has flown into Oshkosh during the airshow three times, and each time he has just happened to bring someone for their first arrival. This, his fourth, kept the tradition with me on *my* first Oshkosh arrival.

We skirted the east side of Madison, passing Truax field from a respectful distance, just under the shelf of controlled airspace. Soon we were over land I'd only seen from the ground, the pine

forests replacing farm fields, fulfilling every postcard stereotype of what "up north" should look like. Gradually Lake Winnebago slid onto the horizon, a burning silver line shining through the haze.

Approaching Green Lake, Rich still wasn't picking up the Fisk arrival frequency on the radio. He climbed to 2000 AGL, throttled up, and flew in a severe slip, cockeyed sideways and up, attempting to expose the antenna to more direct signals.

"It worked last time," Rich said, relaxed and laid back as ever, while we slid through the sky belly first above the lake, an attitude not unlike full throttle on a powerboat.

Radio… Still nothing. I kept my head on a swivel for nearby traffic, squinting to make out any movement against the shining lake or chaotic foliage below; nothing and more nothing. The countryside remained peaceful, still, and silent to us. I checked the time; still not 6pm. Rich decided to land at Wautoma Municipal Airport (Y50) and wait until the post-airshow arrival rush calmed, then try again to tune in to Fisk and join the evening conga line of aircraft arrivals before the airport closed at 8pm.

After a quick layover laying in the grass by the Wautoma FBO, soaking up the golden hour and monitoring the frequencies, we prepared for the last leg of our short cross country. I admired the Stearman on the ramp, bold and handsome in patriotic red, the oil streaks only adding to the effect; a real working airplane commands respect. What a gift to have flight, and friends, and the freedom to enjoy it on such a beautiful afternoon.

Back above Green Lake the radio came to life. Still there was no visible traffic, although ForeFlight indicated a steady stream of airplanes flowing towards Wittman Regional Airport (KOSH). I'd been hearing about the famous Fisk wing-rocking arrival procedure for years, but somehow assumed it would be more dramatic, more crowded, higher off the ground. Instead, we cruised eastward barely a thousand feet up, watching left and right, passing towns low enough to read billboards. What the flight lacked in traffic jam drama made up for in beauty and intricate procedure, a joy to witness in person at last.

I listened to the Fisk arrivals ATC team, peering through the windshield to try to see the plethora of planes they were directing, apparently just ahead of us. Still, we saw nothing. Then a glimmering Cessna of some kind—come on, I'm a vintage girl, can't tell those things apart!—slid up behind us like an unexpected quartering tailwind. Its green stripes matched the trees below. Not wanting to interrupt the radio, I gestured to Rich, a universal signal probably employed in Stearman trainers since day one: *Traffic! There!* Though the Stearman cruises a generous 80mph, the Cessna gained on us.

"Aren't planes supposed to *not* pass here?" I asked Rich, curiosity overcoming my radio silence.

"Yes…" Rich replied, accelerating, and flipped the smoke-oil switch.

If you ever worry you're invisible while flying, a sudden cloud of billowing white smoke is the best alert in the world. I don't think the pilot didn't see us; I guess they just *had* to pass. We slowed and watched them whiz by. Why rush?

"If you're not smiling, you can divert right now," one of the Fisk controllers said over the radio. I laughed out loud. "Go ahead and get out of here if you aren't having fun." Despite



Ami in the cockpit of the Stearman on the way to Oshkosh.

seeming to be alone in the air, I felt a camaraderie with the other pilots near us, the controllers, the world. Then finally the call directed at us: "Hmm, is that a Stearman or a Waco, I can't tell?"

"Stearman!" Rich replied, and rocked his wings – in the extreme, because his self-proclaimed goal is always to make the ATC crew laugh.

"Woohoo, great job!" I could hear the smile in the controller's voice over the radio, and then he added, "I'm glad you're here."

Reading the NOTAM or writing of the experience seems bland now, but every moment is now burned in my memory. We followed the railroad, slowly descending, then came upon the airport almost suddenly, an oddly small area cluttered with planes of all sizes and a choppy sea of campers and tents. It didn't seem as enormous as it always felt on the ground.

"Carb heat on, fuel mixture rich," Rich went through his verbal checklist as I shuffled the papers to make sure which colored dot came first, and then the Stearman turned onto final over a row of neatly parked fighters and an enormous Boeing jet. How strange, I mused, to fly over these modern sleek aircraft in this lovely lumbering Stearman, a Boeing Stearman at that. How wonderful that we're allowed to do this – any general aviation pilot is welcome at Oshkosh and treated with the same respect and care as anyone else on that legendary arrival procedure into the busiest airport in the world.

The runway rose gently to meet us. The heat from the day seemed to cushion our touchdown, and the engine at idle became a gentler sound, like a cat purring at rest. We floated above the orange dot, then the Stearman's wheels met the pavement as soft as can be. "Right on target!" I exclaimed with delight. For a moment we rolled out in that same gentle idle, flying wires whistling in the wind, and I inhaled, thinking, *that's* what flying into Oshkosh should be.

"Hey Ami?" Rich said, and I turned in the cockpit to see him behind me. "Welcome to Oshkosh."

Ami Eckard-Lee is the Creative Director at the Kelch Aviation Museum, and pilot of a 1931 Curtiss-Wright Junior. In her other life, she hosts educational TV for PBS Wisconsin Education. Above all the things she appreciates most about aviation are the people who make it such a joy. Learn more at www.kelchmuseum.org

This article has been adapted from previously published material and updated for Forward in Flight.

Pops, That's My Wingman

How my grandfather's love of flight launched my own

By Arabella Bouchard

It's no secret that grandfathers can play a vital role in shaping their grandchildren's lives as they grow up.

If you're lucky, they watch you grow up and support you in numerous ways. They might take you to and from school, support you at all your extracurricular activities, and sometimes might even teach you how to drive. For me, I was blessed that mine was able to do all the above.

Yet, as I'm in my twenties now and love reflecting on my childhood, I've had a revelation most might not have. My grandfather, 2023 Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame Inductee Tom Bouchard, inspired my love for aviation. Not only did he lead the way for my career, but he helped me start my journey in a way I'm not sure that everyone gets to experience.

The airport has been my home away from home since I was born. It's where I learned to ride a bike, drive a car, and eventually, where I finally learned how to fly a plane. All thanks to "Pops" of course. I've basically lived in hangars my whole life because that's where my family decided they wanted to be every day, especially Pops. Sunny day out? Pops was at the hangar pulling out the plane to go for a ride. Rainy day out? Pops was at the hangar cleaning the plane. Pops wouldn't answer the phone? Yeah, he was mowing the grass at the airport.

For the first eighteen years of my life, it was always, "Hey Boo, wanna go flying?" Obviously, the answer was always yes. What kid wouldn't want to go flying and learn from their best friend? As I'm older now, I've come to understand what a privilege it is to learn from the ones you love, and even more, to grow up surrounded by aviation.

I'm a fourth-generation pilot in my family, so being around airplanes was always normal to me. I thought every kid hung out at the airport with their dad and grandpa. Once I earned my private pilot certificate at eighteen, and Pops started aging more, our roles reversed. It turned into less, "Hey Boo, wanna go flying?" and switched to, "Hey Pops, will you come with me?" He always perked up at that phrase.

I loved learning from him. He kept me comfortable, safe, and made me more confident in myself. A few years ago, I was feeling extremely discouraged in my flying journey. I refused to go flying for weeks and thought my love for it was dissipating. One day, I was having lunch with Pops at his house, and he tried to encourage me to go again. I wanted to say no, but instead, I just looked at him, swallowed my pride, and asked if he would go



Arabella Bouchard made many memories with her grandfather, Tom Bouchard, who helped her find her wings.

"What kid wouldn't want to go flying and learn from their best friend? As I'm older now, I've come to understand what a privilege it is to learn from the ones you love, and even more, to grow up surrounded by aviation."

Photos courtesy of Arabella Bouchard

with me. He smirked and excitedly agreed. We went on a cross country the next day around Northern Wisconsin and just enjoyed our time together.

Pops reminded me that some days flying just needs to be fun. No agenda behind the flight, just get up in the sky, and enjoy the view. He helped me find my spark for flying again. Pops knew me like that. He knew when to push me outside of my comfort zone and when I just needed to have fun. I suppose that's what best friends do for each other.

It's been over a year since Pops passed on September 11, 2025, but I still find him when I fly. I am now a certified flight instructor in Southern Wisconsin where I fly with numerous people aspiring to become pilots. Whether my student's journey is career oriented or as a hobby, my teaching style remains the same. I train them to my company's standards and accordingly with the airman certification standards, but I always add a little "Tom flare".

There are days where I can tell when a student may be stressed or having a harder day, and those days, I just look them in the eye, and say, "Let's go have some fun, and enjoy the view!"

Just like Tom would do.

Pop's Legacy

He showed me
what's possible.

✈

He taught me to be brave.

✈

He gave me and my family
a love of flying.

✈

He believed in me.



Tom Bouchard
A Lifetime in Aviation

Tom began his commercial flying career in Ashland, Wisconsin, in 1962 and joined Midstate Airlines in 1966. He logged nearly 5,000 hours in Beech 18s and served as check airman and check pilot, training pilots in several aircraft types. After Midstate closed in 1989, he flew Cessna Citations for C.G. Bretting Manufacturing Company.

In 1976, Wisconsin Governor Patrick Lucey appointed Tom to the Wisconsin Council of Aeronautics. In 2012, he received the FAA's Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award in recognition of 50 years of safe flying. Over his 38-year career, Tom logged 28,000 flight hours, paving the way for generations of Bouchard family pilots. Affectionately known as the *Ambassador of Ashland's John F. Kennedy Memorial Airport*, Tom was inducted into the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame in 2023. He passed away in 2025.

Read Tom's biography at *wahf.org/hall-of-fame-tom-bouchard*

Scott Cameron's 41-Year Legacy

The man behind 7,625 aviation dreams

For more than four decades, Scott Cameron helped thousands of young people discover aviation, build lifelong friendships, and believe their dreams were within reach.

By Mathieu Labs



Scott Cameron

Some people work a job for a few years. Others build a career. And then there are people who dedicate their lives to giving others the confidence to chase their dreams.

For 41 years, Scott Cameron was more than the director of the EAA Air Academy. He was a mentor, teacher, leader, an encourager and, for thousands of young people, one of the faces of aviation they would never forget. From 1984 through 2023, Scott dedicated himself to helping young people discover aviation and, more importantly, discover what they could accomplish. During those 41 years, 7,375 campers and 250 staff members, 7,625 people in all passed through the Air Academy and became part of its story.

The EAA Air Academy was brought to life through the vision of Chuck Larson, who produced the idea of creating an aviation experience where young people could learn, explore, and develop a passion for flight. What started as an idea became a program that would influence generations. For many campers, the Air Academy was their first real opportunity to immerse themselves in aviation and meet other young people who share the same fascination with airplanes and flight.

Scott became part of that vision in 1984. He started his Air Academy career as a counselor, eventually becoming an assistant director and then taking on the role of director in 1998. He remained director through 2023, giving the Air Academy an incredible 41 years of his life.

During that time, the program itself evolved. From 1984 through 1997, campers stayed in the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh dormitories. In 1998, the Air Academy Lodge opened, providing the program with a new home and marking the beginning of a new era for the Academy.

Scott's ability to connect with young people wasn't limited to the Air Academy. He spent 33 years as a middle school math teacher with Oshkosh Public Schools, bringing decades of experience working with young people into his role at the Academy. Teaching gave Scott an understanding of how to communicate, encourage and motivate students, and those skills became a major part of what made him such an effective leader at the Air Academy.

Interestingly, Scott's path to the Air Academy began with a connection from his past. Chuck Larsen interviewed Scott for a position at the Air Academy. During the interview, they talked about Chuck's daughter, Jennifer, who had been in his math class. Chuck told him that he would get back to him about the Air Academy position after he had a chance to talk with Jennifer about him. Jennifer told her father that she thought he was a great teacher, so Chuck hired him for the position. What was unique was what happened when Chuck was preparing to retire. During AirVenture, Scott met the son of the YMCA director, who had originally mentioned the Air Academy position to him. He mentioned that Chuck was going to retire and suggested that he apply for Chuck's position. He applied, was hired, and eventually became his boss. His name was Bob Campbell. Talk about full circle.

Scott's commitment to the Air Academy eventually extended to his family as well. He recruited his cousin Julie to join the program because they needed another female staff member. Julie began working with the Air Academy in 1988 and continued through 2023. Over the years, Scott and Julie became such a familiar pair around the Air Academy that many people assumed they were brother and sister. Together, they became part of the foundation of a program that welcomed thousands of young people over the decades.

For those who attended, the Air Academy was about much more than learning about airplanes. It was about discovering possibilities. A young person could arrive at camp fascinated by aviation and leave with a clearer vision of becoming a pilot. Another might discover an interest in engineering, aircraft

Photos courtesy of Scott Cameron

maintenance, aviation management, or another career connected to flight. Others may have chosen entirely different paths, but still walked away with greater confidence, new friendships and memories that stayed with them for decades.

That is where Scott's impact becomes difficult to measure.

The official number is 7,375 campers and 250 staff members, but behind every one of those numbers there was one person. There were 7,625 individual stories, dreams, and possibilities. For Scott, people were never simply statistics. They were faces and memories.

If you know Scott, you know just how remarkable his memory can be. Years after someone attended the Air Academy, Scott can often recognize them and even tell them what year they attended. Consider how many people he encountered over 41 years. Thousands of campers and hundreds of staff members passed through the program, yet Scott developed personal connections that allowed him to remember people long after their time at camp had ended.

That dedication is one of the clearest examples of how much the people of the Air Academy meant to him.

I personally had the opportunity to attend the Air Academy in 1999, 2000 and 2002, during a time when the internet was still in its early days and staying connected wasn't as easy as it is today. Yet friendships formed at the Air Academy have lasted decades. Former campers still talk to one another today, a testament to the relationships that the program helped create. Those connections are part of what made the Air Academy special. It wasn't simply a summer camp where young people came for a week and went home. For many, it became a community. It was a place where friendships were formed, mentors were found, and dreams were encouraged.

Scott understood that aviation was the transportation, but people were the mission. He helped create an environment where young people could ask questions, try something new, make mistakes, learn from others, and discover where their interests might take them. He encouraged campers to look beyond what they thought was possible and consider where aviation could take them. Whether they eventually became pilots or pursued another career, Scott helped give them the confidence to follow their dreams.

The impact of that kind of mentorship can last a lifetime. A person may forget a lesson they learned in a classroom, but they rarely forget the person who believed in them. They may forget exactly what they did during a particular week at camp, but they remember how the experience made them feel. They remember the friendships, mentors, first time they realized that the aviation world could be part of their future.

His time as Air Academy director ended in 2023, but his connection to EAA did not. Today, Scott continues to volunteer at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, working with the Finance team. After dedicating 41 years to the Air Academy, he continues to give his time to the organization that allowed him to make such an incredible impact.

The real story is about a young person who arrived at the Air Academy with a dream and left believing that dream might be possible. It's the friendships that lasted decades. It's the former camper who still remembers the experience years later. The staff member who learned how to mentor others. The pilot, engineer, mechanic, or aviation professional can trace part of their passion back to an experience at the Air Academy.

His greatest legacy isn't the number of years he served. It's the number of people he inspired to look toward the sky and believe they could follow their dreams.

And somewhere in many of those stories is Scott Cameron.

- 7,375 campers.
- 250 staff members.
- 7,625 people.

Forty-one years. Countless dreams. Scott Cameron didn't simply lead the EAA Air Academy. He helped create an environment where young people could discover aviation, find their people and believe in their future.

His greatest legacy isn't the number of years he served. It's the number of people he inspired to look toward the sky and believe they could follow their dreams.



From Oshkosh to Lakeland, Scott and Julie Cameron join Gene Conrad in a shared commitment to helping young people pursue aviation dreams. Conrad now serves as President and CEO of the Aerospace Center for Excellence and SUN 'n Fun.

Former campers, staff members, and friends gathered this year for a reunion showing the lasting impact of Scott's aviation camps.





The Difference He Made

"Scott has been the central node in my aviation network. He's been incredibly supportive. Not just of me, but of so many of the EAA friends and fellow aviators I've met along the way. He sets an incredible standard for what a mentor should be."

Tyler Sibley
Field Integration Technician, Insitu
(a Boeing company)

"I first attended the Air Academy in 1996 as a high school student, but that was only the beginning. In the years that followed, I returned as an intern learning to fly experimental aircraft, a summer camp counselor, and eventually a college student living at the Air Academy Lodge while working toward becoming a professional pilot."

Brandon NeSmith
Captain, Coca-Cola Consolidated

Above left: Many former campers remain in touch with Scott long after camp ends, a testament to the lasting friendships and inspiration he helped foster.

Left: Former camp staff gathered with Scott to celebrate the friendships and experiences created through years of aviation camps.

For more information about EAA's Air Academy please visit *https://www.eaa.org/education/air-academy*

Photos courtesy of Scott Cameron



Boston Store Takes to the Air

A Photo from WAHF's Leo J. Kohn Photography Collection

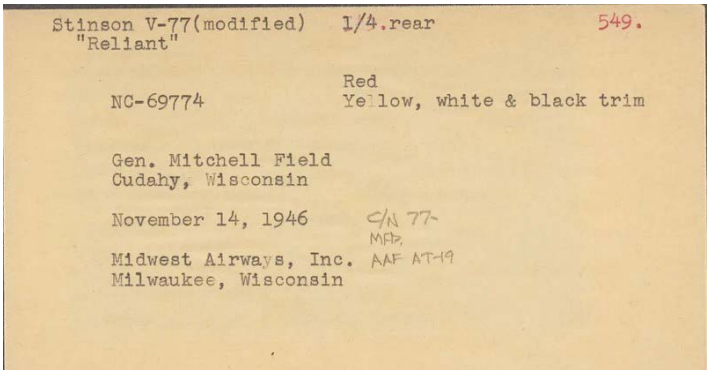
This November 1946 photograph by Leo Kohn shows Stinson V-77 Reliant NC-69774 carrying the markings "Boston Store Air Delivery by Midwest Airways, Inc., Milwaukee." While much about the operation remains to be discovered, the image offers a fascinating glimpse into a time when aviation was finding new roles in business and commerce following World War II.

Photographs like this also remind us why the Leo J. Kohn Collection is such an important resource for Milwaukee-area aviation history. Details captured in the background of a photograph, lettering on an aircraft, or even a registration number can help tell stories that might otherwise be forgotten.

As the accompanying information card demonstrates, Kohn carefully documented aircraft registrations, color schemes, dates, locations, and operators. By doing so, he created a resource that continues to benefit aviation historians decades later. His attention to detail helps transform a simple photograph into a valuable piece of Wisconsin aviation history.

Thanks to the generosity of donors who supported the preservation and digitization of the collection, these images remain available to researchers, historians, and aviation enthusiasts today.

Visit *leokohn.org* for more information.


Stinson V-77(modified) 1/4.rear 549.
"Reliant"

Red
NC-69774 Yellow, white & black trim

Gen. Mitchell Field
Cudahy, Wisconsin

November 14, 1946 C/N 77-
MFR
Midwest Airways, Inc. AAF AT-19
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Carefully noted on the negative's envelope, Leo Kohn recorded the aircraft's registration, color scheme, location, operator, and date photographed. More than 80 years later, his attention to detail remains an invaluable resource.

Did you notice?

Kohn's information card recorded not only the aircraft registration and date, but also the aircraft's color scheme, preserving details that black-and-white photography often could not.











The Planes of Christmas

Red, green, and ready to fly

Photography by Skot Weidemann

Santa wasn't the only one flying in red and green this year. While photographing aviation events across Wisconsin, Skot Weidemann kept spotting aircraft dressed in the colors of the season. Gathered together, they make a cheerful holiday flight all their own.







The Boy and His Dog

By Ed Becerra

In fourth grade, I was obsessed with *Explorers*, a movie about three boys who build a spaceship and embark on an adventure deep into space. For a library book contest, I created my own adventure machine: an old cardboard box. My trusty sidekick was Daisy, the fearless black lab of my childhood. Together, we traveled to the Jurassic period, faced a dreaded T. rex, and made it home for dinner; a particularly important consideration for a kid who shopped in the "husky" section.

My story earned an honorable mention at the library, along with a little yellow ribbon. Years later, my mom brought over a box of childhood treasures. Among the pictures, toys, and trophies was a folder containing just one thing: my handmade book.

"I always loved your book," she said. "I could never throw it away."

On its cover were five words: *The Boy and His Dog.*

Shortly after marrying my first wife, Amy, we brought home a Vizsla puppy who tugged at my shoelaces and looked like trouble. My mind went straight to that childhood story and its promise of adventure. That was the dog I wanted. Neither of us could have imagined the adventures awaiting little Lolla and me.

Soon after Lolla arrived, Amy's health began to decline. Born with a congenital heart condition, she spent nearly a year waiting for a heart transplant. Thanks to the incredible staff at Lurie Children's Hospital, Lolla could visit her during that difficult time, bringing a much-needed piece of home into the hospital.

After the transplant, Lolla remained by Amy's side during her recovery, never more than a foot or tail away. Every tear Amy cried, Lolla was there to lick away. At nap time, she was always the "little spoon," keeping one eye open to protect her person.

"Whenever I felt alone, Lolla was there, wagging her tail and ready to be by my side, whatever the day might bring."

A few months before our fifth wedding anniversary, we learned Amy needed another transplant. We spent our last anniversary together in the hospital before she passed away from surgical complications.

Walking into our house afterward, I remember how cold, dark, and lifeless it felt. But whenever I felt alone, Lolla was there, wagging her tail and ready to be by my side, whatever the day might bring.

Eventually, I was ready to share our little family with someone new. My online dating profile featured the usual terrible bathroom selfie, a picture of me in a Piper Warrior, and, of course, Lolla. I figured if the first two didn't attract the right person, my dog surely would. I was right.

Enter Caitlin! She wasn't particularly impressed with my bathroom selfie, but Lolla earned me a second look. On the inevitable "come over and meet my dog" date, Lolla wedged herself between us, making sure Caitlin knew who had been there first. Thankfully, they fell in love with each other and Caitlin eventually decided I was worth keeping, too. We married, and Lolla had her dog mom again.

Not long afterward, we bought our 1950 Piper Pacer, *Stampy*.

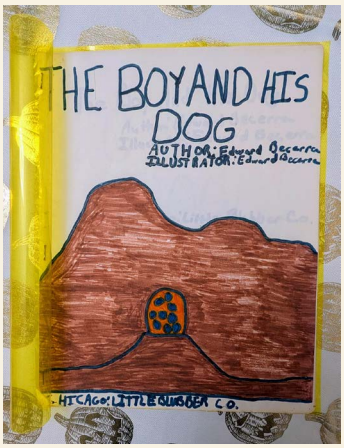
Photos courtesy of Ed Becerra and Rose Dorcey

If you take your dog everywhere, naturally, you want to take her flying, too. Lolla made that easy. The first time I opened the door, she hopped right in and plopped onto the back seat. Caitlin joined her for the first few flights, but soon Lolla was happily riding solo, watching the clouds or napping on the way to our destination. She seemed more at peace in the sky than in the car.

We started with short flights to collect Fly Wisconsin Passport stamps before venturing farther. One of my favorite trips was to Washington Island. After crossing Death's Door from Sturgeon Bay, we landed at the airport and let Lolla loose to investigate the dandelions scattered across the grass. We sat beneath *Stampy's* wing, eating cheese curds as pelicans flew overhead, then borrowed the airport bikes while Lolla chased alongside us. It was a simple afternoon, but one I'll treasure forever.



On solo stamp-chasing trips, I sometimes felt like Han Solo piloting the Millennium Falcon with Chewie along for the ride. Our PA-20 lacked hyperdrive, of course, but Lolla would rest her head on my shoulder, reminding me that adventures weren't about speed. Sometimes, you just need to slow down and enjoy the ride.



Even when Lolla wasn't aboard, she kept tabs on *Stampy*. Living near Racine, Kenosha, and Milwaukee airports, we regularly heard aircraft overhead. Caitlin would tell me Lolla got excited when she heard our Pacer. A quick check of FlightAware often confirmed it: somehow, she seemed to recognize our airplane among all the others passing over our house.

Lolla was our copilot on countless adventures, from a fly-in in Michigan's Upper Peninsula with friends to the Flying Midwest Podcast Fly-In at Lone Rock. She loved being surrounded by her two-legged friends, especially when there was a campfire and a cozy spot beside her favorite people.

Sometimes I wonder what fourth-grade Ed would think if he knew what life had in store. His little book was only ten pages

For Ed and Caitlin Becerra, Lolla was more than a pet. She was a source of comfort, loyalty, and adventure through seasons of joy, loss, healing, and new beginnings.



long, but today I could fill an entire volume with the memories Lolla gave me. Her sassy antics, sweet snuggles, and love of flying are missed by many.

In *Stampy's* glove box sits a small vial of her ashes, so a piece of her will always be aboard the airplane she loved.

I never did get that time machine. But the boy who dreamed of adventures with his dog got something better: a lifetime of them. And no matter where *Stampy* takes us, Lolla will always be our copilot.





The F-86 Sabre in the Eagle Hangar inside the EAA Aviation Museum in Oshkosh is painted in the markings of famed Apollo Flight Director Gene Kranz, who also served as a USAF F-86 pilot in Korea. In future columns, Chris may share stories about Wisconsin pilots who flew the F-86.

The Heroes in Your Own Backyard

The greatest aviation stories aren't always found in history books, sometimes they're waiting just down the road.

By Chris Henry, Director
EAA Aviation Museum

Growing up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, there were go-to places that all of us locals would visit. A car hop called Jerry's Curb Service, Primanti Brothers Sandwiches, and certain malls and movie theaters. I am a '90s kid after all! There were also places we knew had historical value but rarely visited. Maybe a field trip would take us there one day, but we never explored them on our own.

I vividly remember meeting a visitor in my little steel-town suburb who had come all the way from Germany. When I asked what he was doing there, he replied, "I came to see all of the history here." I remember thinking, "Why here?"

Looking back, I realized he saw something that many of us who lived there overlooked every day.

That conversation started my research into my own town. That pioneer village was "Old Economy", and it had a rich history, and was mainly all original buildings. The town of Ambridge itself was historic as a company town for the American Bridge Company. I began to embrace more about how history was not just old stuff sitting around, but a part of who I was, and how my family existed in this area. I even started to look at what my father did in a different light. He was a steel worker, which on the surface is not a glamorous job, but when you think of how integral that is with the city I am from, it becomes more special. I started to take more pride in the thought of my dad working a blast furnace in the steel town. Even the building he worked in had amazing history as they used it to build LST (Landing Ship Tanks) for the Second World War.

A few weeks ago, Rose Dorcey approached me with the idea of writing a column for the *Forward in Flight* magazine. One that will in each edition call out a different story that has a local tie in our museum. The chance to do this is very special for me as local history is something I am very passionate about, and hope that

"While our core mission is to preserve these stories, it is a team effort."

most people are. The truth is that many think that they are not interested in what happened in their own town years before they were alive, but much of that is from a lack of exposure to it. In many cases, once they have the chance to hear about the amazing events and people, they take more pride in their town and that story. They tell it to others. That is an avenue for keeping the stories alive.

Many may drive to Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport (KMKE), to fly out on another business trip, or maybe a vacation they have been looking forward to. They head toward the parking garage and pass an F-4 Phantom on the right side of the road—never realizing the story of absolute heroism, bravery, and determination that Capt. Lance Sijan displayed during the Vietnam War. There are jets on poles and displays across the country, and most of them are placed there for a reason. That hometown, somewhere in its history, crossed paths with this aircraft type, and someone thought enough of the story to place the item there to honor a hero. It is our job to remind the public and communities why it is there. That is the importance and core mission of institutes like the EAA Aviation Museum and Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame.

While our core mission is to preserve these stories, it is a team effort. Those who visit our museums, events, join our memberships, and explore our historic landmarks, become story tellers and ambassadors for these tales as well. Together we must work to ensure these stories are never forgotten.

That brings me to this column and what we are doing in the EAA Aviation Museum. We are working on telling more of these Wisconsin based stories. Our new Hometown Heroes of Aviation self-guided tour started on Veterans Day this year. Using this tool, we can call out more of a Wisconsin focus on aviation history. Showcase what truly brave aviation icons came from our own backyard.

In future editions, this column will be talking about people like Fritz Wolf, a Flying Tiger from Shawano, Wisconsin, who took to the skies over China to help fight the Japanese aggression during World War II.

Scott Alwin, a Fort Atkinson native turned Huey helicopter pilot in the 68th Assault Helicopter Company who flew close air support for troops on the ground during Vietnam. He would become the most decorated helicopter pilot in the war.

Steve Wittman, America's most winningest air race pilot, and innovative homebuilder.

These are the stories we are working on to ensure people learn about each day in our museum, and we are deeply honored to highlight them here with the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame. I hope you enjoy the upcoming pieces and learn about the heroes from our own backyard as much as I have while researching them.



Radar Contact: Chris Henry

Chris serves as Director of the EAA Aviation Museum and is a passionate advocate for preserving and sharing local, state, and world history. Through this new column, Chris will spotlight Wisconsin aviators, innovators, veterans, and hometown heroes whose stories continue to inspire future generations.

Chris's Likes

- Favorite aircraft: B-17
- Favorite Wisconsin aviation figure: Richard Bong
- First aviation memory: "My Dad driving me out to the airport to volunteer at the air museum back home when I was a kid."

"I began to embrace more about how history was not just old stuff sitting around, but a part of who I was, and how my family existed in this area."

—Chris Henry

After the Sun Goes Down

One pilot's mission to capture antique aircraft in a whole new light

Story and photos by Tom Pawlesh



1934 Aeronca C-3

As the sun sets and aircraft owners secure their airplanes for the evening, my work is often just beginning.

This past September, I attended the Midwest Antique Aircraft Club Grassroots Fly-In in Brodhead, Wisconsin, for the first time. I arrived not in an antique aircraft, but with a vehicle full of photography equipment and the hope of creating nighttime portraits of some remarkable airplanes. I was not disappointed. In addition to photographing several aircraft at the Kelch Aviation Museum, I photographed twenty visiting aircraft over four evenings at the fly-in.

Why night photography? As an aviation photographer, I wanted to do something different, something that would make my images stand out from the crowd. I call my night images portraits because the photograph focuses entirely on the subject. Background distractions disappear, and the aircraft's colors, lines, and character truly come to life.

My interest in photography began when I was fourteen years old. My father bought me a 35mm camera and a black-and-white darkroom, and then we headed to the airport to take pictures. I have been a photographer ever since, but I chose a career in aviation. I learned to fly in college and worked as a flight instructor before landing a job as a corporate pilot with a Fortune 100 company. In 1986, I was hired by Piedmont Airlines and eventually retired from American Airlines in 2021. In 2026, I received the FAA Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award, which recognizes pilots who have maintained safe flight operations for 50 or more years.

At fly-ins, I offer complimentary night photo sessions to aircraft owners. The shoots are well received by both organizers and participants because they provide a unique experience and a one-of-a-kind image of each aircraft.

Although I will photograph static aircraft, I prefer to have the engine running so the propeller appears as a blurred disc. After the aircraft is positioned, I brief the pilot and place five small battery-operated LED lights around the airplane. Once the aircraft is running, I begin photographing from one side and work my way around to the other, capturing a variety of angles. Using a handheld VHF radio, I ask the pilot to switch navigation lights on for some shots and off for others.

The entire process takes about ten minutes.


1932 Brewster Fleet 7


1930 Pitcairn PA-7S Mailwing


Kelch Museum's 1932 Travel Air 12W


1937 Aeronca K Scout

The aircraft are equally captivating with propeller still or in motion.

After editing the images, I post them on my website and provide the aircraft owners with a password so they can download the digital files. They are free to make prints, create business cards, or share the photographs on social media.

Surprisingly, I have had groups of spectators set up lawn chairs to watch the aviation photography show. The nighttime scene is such a contrast from what we normally see during the day, and I love it when the aircraft shuts down and the crowd breaks into applause.

The dark airport environment can make taxiing difficult, especially for aircraft without taxi lights, so I require help marshaling airplanes into position and back to their tie-down spots. Fortunately, there is never a shortage of volunteers willing to help.

Night engine-run photography has become increasingly popular at airshows. Photographers purchase tickets to attend evening sessions where four to six aircraft are individually illuminated and photographed. To make the events even more engaging, I often incorporate vintage automobiles, motorcycles, and reenactors dressed in period clothing.

"I do this because of my love of aviation and the friendships I have formed...."

Night photography is not limited to fly-ins.

For the past two years, I have donated my time to provide lighting for a night photography fundraiser at the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome in New York. The museum sold tickets to the event, and approximately twenty-five photographers attended. With the help of museum volunteers, we created a variety of historically inspired scenes.

One featured an airmail pilot standing beside a Curtiss Jenny. Another paired a 1917 Columbia Ambulance with the museum's 1917 SPAD replica.

A favorite scene, which we kept secret until the end of the evening, involved the museum's Ryan NYP Spirit of St. Louis replica. We recreated a moment from April 28, 1927, at the Ryan Flying Company hangar in San Diego, California. In the scene, the engine was running on the recently completed aircraft. "Charles Lindbergh" sat at the controls while mechanic "Douglas 'Wrong Way' Corrigan" looked on from a Ryan Airlines service vehicle.

To complete the evening's storytelling, we created a second scene depicting May 21, 1927, at Le Bourget Airport outside Paris, France. "Lindbergh" had just completed his historic solo flight from New York. The Spirit of St. Louis sat quietly on the field while a lone vintage Renault taxicab waited nearby to carry passengers back into the city.

These photo sessions provide memorable experiences for museum volunteers, while photographers leave with unique images and a deeper appreciation for aviation history.

Although appreciative aircraft owners have occasionally



offered to pay me for my work, I always decline. I do this because of my love of aviation and the friendships I have formed through the fly-ins.

I am grateful for every opportunity to photograph these antique aircraft. The excitement and joy owners experience when they see their photographs is reward enough. If they insist on repaying me, I usually suggest taking me flying instead.

I plan to return to both the Grassroots Fly-In and Sentimental Journey in 2027. If you're interested in a nighttime portrait of your aircraft, let me know and we'll make it happen.

To contact Tom about his aviation photography, please email him at tpawlesh@comcast.net

Above: Few aircraft capture the grace of the Golden Age of Aviation quite like the Howard DGA-15P. Illuminated for this special photo session, this 1943 example, powered by a Pratt & Whitney R-985 radial engine, is currently registered in Washington state.

L-R: Kelch Aviation Museum aircraft enjoyed their moment in the spotlight, too. A 1931 Curtiss-Wright CW-1 Junior posed with Museum Curator Ami Eckard-Lee at the controls, while a 1929 Fleet 7 and a 1936 Ford Phaeton made a striking pair under the glow of the lights.







A Night to Remember

Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame Welcomes Five New Inductees

More than 300 aviation enthusiasts gathered October 10 at the EAA Aviation Museum in Oshkosh as the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame celebrated its largest induction ceremony to date, honoring five remarkable individuals whose contributions continue to shape aviation in Wisconsin and beyond.

Story by Rose Dorcey. Photos by Kaitlin Piette.



The Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame welcomed a record-setting crowd of approximately 300 guests to its 2026 Induction Ceremony on October 10 at the EAA Aviation Museum in Oshkosh, celebrating five remarkable individuals whose contributions have helped shape aviation in Wisconsin and beyond.

The evening honored Gary Buettner, Leo J. Kohn, Eldon Isely, Audrey Poberezny, and Jeff Williams, whose achievements span generations of innovation, leadership, service, and dedication to flight.

Guests gathered beneath the wing of an iconic PBY Catalina, where a temporary museum exhibit combined Wisconsin's aviation heritage with the excitement of honoring a new class of inductees. The aircraft provided a memorable backdrop for conversations, camaraderie, and storytelling throughout the evening, with many attendees commenting on the special atmosphere created by the historic flying boat.

"The energy in the room was exceptional," said WAHF President Kurt Stanich. "Aviation brings people together, and this evening reflected that in every way."

Adding to the evening's appeal was the stunning setting of the EAA Aviation Museum's Eagle Hangar. Guests gathered beneath the wing of a historic Consolidated PBY-5A Catalina on loan from the American Heritage Museum, a temporary exhibit that quickly became a favorite conversation piece. Many commented on how special it felt to share a meal and celebrate aviation excellence beneath one of the most iconic flying boats ever built.

The celebration also demonstrated strong support for the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame's mission. The annual silent auction raised nearly $6,000, helping support efforts to preserve and share the stories of Wisconsin's aviation pioneers, innovators, and leaders.

Past inductees, family members, friends, fellow aviators, and aviation enthusiasts traveled from across the state and beyond to honor the inductees and celebrate their lasting impact on aviation. As each honoree's story was shared, guests were reminded that the future of aviation is built upon the dedication, vision, and perseverance of those who came before.

The 2026 induction ceremony was more than a celebration of individual achievement. It was a reminder that Wisconsin's aviation legacy continues to inspire new generations to dream, build, and fly.

Photos by Kaitlin Piette

The Class of 2026

Gary H. Buettner

Gary Buettner's aviation career spans more than seven decades of service, craftsmanship, and mentorship. After helping restore a Cessna T-50 "Bamboo Bomber" at age 14, he served in the U.S. Air Force and Air Force Reserve for 28 years. An accomplished A&P mechanic, pilot, flight instructor, and aircraft restorer, Gary inspired countless aviators through his work and volunteerism. Gary spent more than 24 years on EAA's aircraft maintenance staff, leading major restoration projects and supporting EAA programs.



Mae and Gary Buettner with their grandson, Matthew.

Leo J. Kohn

Leo J. Kohn dedicated his life to preserving aviation history through photography, writing, and research. A private pilot, he built a collection of more than 30,000 meticulously documented aircraft photographs that continue to benefit researchers, authors, and restorers. A founding member of EAA, Leo served as the organization's official photographer, vice president, publicity chairman, and editor of The Experimenter, which evolved into Sport Aviation. His photographs and publications helped document aviation history and inspire generations of enthusiasts.



Eldon Isely with his wife, Sally.

Eldon Isely

Eldon Isely's aviation career spans more than six decades, nearly 40,000 flight hours, and an unwavering commitment to teaching others to fly. A U.S. Navy and Naval Reserve veteran, he participated in recovery operations for NASA's Gemini missions. Eldon's civilian career included freight flying, charter operations, flight instruction, and ownership of Yankee Aviation and Beloit Flight School. Recipient of the FAA's Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award, Eldon continues to inspire Wisconsin aviators through his leadership, mentorship, and dedication to aviation.



Mary Ellen Kohn and her brother, Bill Kohn, accepting on behalf of their father, Leo J. Kohn.

Audrey Poberezny

Audrey Poberezny played a foundational role in the growth and success of the Experimental Aircraft Association, which she co-founded with her husband, Paul, in 1953. She managed finances, membership, communications, and countless behind-the-scenes responsibilities that helped transform a small Wisconsin organization into a worldwide aviation institution.

Known as the "First Lady of EAA," Audrey worked alongside volunteers to establish the traditions that helped make Oshkosh aviation's premier gathering place. In 2014, she received EAA's Freedom of Flight Award.



L-R: Dave Chaimson with Charley Hoy and Audra Chaimson. Audra is the granddaughter of Audrey Poberezny, accepting on Audrey's behalf.

Jeff Williams

Raised on a farm near Winter, Wisconsin, Jeff Williams built a career that carried him from Army aviation to the International Space Station. A 27-year U.S. Army veteran, he logged more than 3,100 flight hours before being selected as a NASA astronaut in 1996. Over four space missions, he spent 534 days in space, completed five spacewalks, and served twice as station commander. His journey from a Wisconsin farm to space continues to inspire future generations of explorers and aviators. Inducted into the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame in 2024 he brought distinction to Wisconsin and the nation.

Read their complete biographies at *wahf.org*



Jeff Williams

The Silent Auction

Silent Auction Raises Nearly $6,000

The Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame's annual silent auction was once again a evening highlight, raising nearly $6,000 to support our educational and historical preservation efforts. Proceeds help further WAHF's mission of honoring Wisconsin aviation achievement, preserving our state's rich aviation heritage, and inspiring future generations through education and outreach.

The success of the auction reflects the generosity of ceremony attendees, supporters, and donors who recognize the importance of preserving Wisconsin's aviation story for years to come.

Thank You to Our Donors

The Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame extends its sincere appreciation to the individuals, businesses, organizations, and aviation friends who generously donated items for this year's silent auction. Your contributions played a vital role in the auction's success.

Steve Benesh
John Dorcey
Rose Dorcey
Duane Esse
Sally Isely
Jill Mann
Frank Prio
Kurt Stanich
Katie Wilson
Jim Zuelsdorf
Author Jim Busha
Author Tom Culbert
Author Eileen Bjorkman
Garmin
Twin Disc
Kwik Trip
Stein Aircraft
Aviation Soul
Charlie Berens
Flight Outfitters
Sturgeon Spirits
Textron Aviation
Oaks Chocolates
Brennans Market
Skycom Avionics
Wisconsin Aviation
CAE Flight Academy
Church Works Media
Tyranena Brewing Co.
Discover Flight, LLC
AVP Kenosha Aviation
Driftless Glen Distillery
Timber Rattlers Baseball
Kelch Aviation Museum
Wittman Regional Airport
4ever Creations Studio/Dan
Thompson Strawberry Farm
Aviation Supplies & Academics (ASA)



Scenes from Our Ceremony







Photos by Kaitlin Piette

The Scholarships

Celebrating the Next Generation of Aviators and Engineers

The Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame proudly recognizes its 2026 scholarship recipients—students whose achievements, service, and passion are shaping the future of aviation and aerospace. These awards are supported by the following scholarship funds: Carl Guell Memorial, Thiessen Field, Robert Payzer Memorial/ EAA Chapter 640, Jeff Baum & Jim Quinn, Sidney & Ruth Julson, Kylie's Cub Air Flight LLC/Kylie Murray/Steve & Sharon Krog funds, and new this year, the Dick and Rita Hanusa aviation scholarship.

Since 2002, WAHF has encouraged and supported the next generation of pilots, engineers, and aviation professionals.

Josie Boelter
From Lomira, Josie attends Southern Illinois University and is training to become both a rated aircraft mechanic and CFI. She worked at Dodge County Airport in high school and hopes to fly seaplanes commercially in missionary or remote-area operations.

Parker Wang
Parker of Verona trains at Wisconsin Aviation and plans to study Commercial Aviation at the University of Dubuque. An award-winning water skier, he volunteers with Graceful Wakes and runs his own window-cleaning business.

Nathan Prince
Nathan, from Wausau, is earning his private pilot certificate while studying mechanical engineering at UW–Platteville. He serves on the SAE Aero Team and recently joined CAP, aiming to fly missions and train cadets. He hopes to work for a GA manufacturer such as Sling or Cirrus.

Derek Prince
Derek, also from Wausau, studies mechanical engineering at UW–Platteville and is working toward his private pilot certificate. He is active in drone, rocketry, and SAE Aero Team activities and plans a career in aerospace.

Everett Tryba
Everett is pursuing his private pilot license while attending Altoona High School, working part-time, competing in athletics, and serving in NHS. He plans to study Commercial Aviation at UND and grow into an airline career.

Allen Lijo
Allen of Waukesha attends MSOE, majoring in Mechanical Engineering with a Physics minor. He is active in rocketry and aeronautical groups and church service. He aims for aerospace internships leading to vehicle-design work.

Aidan Hadlock
Aidan, from Stratford, studies Commercial Aviation at UND. He holds his Private Pilot certificate, is pursuing his Instrument Rating, mentors youth, and plans to instruct after graduation before moving to the airlines. He is the first Give Back Scholarship recipient.

Lauren Stettbacher
Lauren of North Fond du Lac attends Fox Valley Technical College, completing her Aviation Management degree. She is a Young Eagles volunteer pilot, active in EAA and Women in Aviation, and a CFI at Cub Air Flight. She plans to fly airline or corporate.

Lauren LaFontain
From New Berlin, Lauren is a private pilot studying Aeronautical Technology at Kansas State University. She competes on the K-State Flight Team, is active in Alpha Eta Rho and Women in Aviation, is working on her instrument rating, and interns with Safran Aerosystems. She plans to begin in charter or corporate flying before moving to the airlines.

Russell "Rusty" Everhard
Rusty of Oshkosh attends Fox Valley Technical College, where he is enrolled in the Aeronautical Pilot and Aviation Management programs, along with Purdue University online. A former EAA intern now employed full-time, he has earned his instrument rating, commercial certificate, and tailwheel endorsement, with plans to instruct and later fly for the airlines.

Alex Brzezinski
Alex, from Wausau, plans to major in Commercial Aviation at UND. An Eagle Scout active in Scouting, church, and band, he hopes to build time as a DNR Survey or State Patrol pilot before moving to the airlines.

Harrison Stanton
Harrison of Wausau attends Western Michigan University, double-majoring in Flight Science and Business. A private pilot, he is active in aviation and community organizations and plans to fly airline, corporate, or organ-transport missions while pursuing business opportunities.

For more information about WAHF's scholarships, visit *wahf.org/scholarship*s and *CFONCW.org*



Previous page: Highlights from the 2026 Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony included a large gathering of past inductees, fellowship among attendees in the event space, and the presentation of plaques honoring the Class of 2026.

Rusty Everhard (right) one of WAHF's 2026 scholarship recipients, attended the 40th annual induction ceremony.



70th Wisconsin Aviation Conference Reflects Strength of State's Aviation Community

Sold-out exhibits, industry networking, and recognition of aviation leaders highlighted the annual gathering at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells.

By Rose Dorcey

Aviation professionals from across the state gathered at Chula Vista Resort October 26-28 for the 70th Annual Wisconsin Aviation Conference, Wisconsin's premier aviation industry event. The conference, presented by the Wisconsin Airport Management Association brought together airport managers, consultants, pilots, fixed-base operators, state and federal agencies, and aviation business leaders for education, networking, and discussion on issues affecting aviation across Wisconsin.

The three-day conference featured professional development sessions, industry updates, and an exhibit hall showcasing aviation products and services. Conference organizers reported strong interest from industry partners, with vendor booth space selling out prior to the event, highlighting continued investment and engagement within Wisconsin's aviation community.

"The Wisconsin Aviation Conference provides a forum for sharing ideas, addressing challenges, and preparing for the future," said Harold Mester, outgoing WAMA president. "The participation and enthusiasm we saw this year reinforce the importance of continuing to work together to strengthen aviation across Wisconsin."

A highlight of the conference was the recognition of individuals and organizations whose contributions have helped advance aviation throughout the state. This year's honorees included:

Lifetime Service Award: Aaron Stewart, PE
Airport Engineer Award: Ryan Donnelly, PE, C.M.
Distinguished Service Award: Bill Streicher
Person of the Year Award: JD Roberts

In addition, Hal Davis, C.M. Wisconsin DOT Bureau of Aeronautics, recognized the recent finishers of the Fly Wisconsin Passport Program. *Forward in Flight's* own Mathieu Labs and his wife Lauren completed the program, along with Greg Campbell and The Dirtbag Pilot. The program launched September 1, 2017. Since then, more than 3,800 participants have registered. Fifteen have reached the Gold Level, by filling their passports with stamps from all 135+- Wisconsin airports.

The conference also marked a leadership transition within the Wisconsin Airport Management Association. Outgoing President Harold Mester reflected on the organization's accomplishments and the strength of Wisconsin's aviation community.

"The Wisconsin Aviation Conference continues to be one of the most valuable opportunities for aviation professionals across our state to connect, learn, and collaborate," Mester added. "This year's strong attendance and engagement demonstrated the strength and vitality of Wisconsin aviation."

Mark Cihlar, assistant airport director at Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) in Mosinee will lead the organization going forward.

The 71st Wisconsin Aviation Conference will be held in Oshkosh in 2027, continuing the event's tradition of bringing together aviation professionals from across Wisconsin.

Additional details and registration information will be available at *WIAMA.org*



Right: Longtime WAHF Supporter Aaron Stewart, airport engineer at Westwood Professional Services, was honored with WAMA's Lifetime Service Award.



Left: Mathieu and Lauren Labs completed the Fly Wisconsin Passport Program by visiting every Wisconsin airport this past year.

Photos by Mathieu Labs and Rose Dorcey

WAHF Inductee's Huey Nose Art Added to EAA Collection

Capt. Scott Alwin's Vietnam-era helicopter artwork finds a permanent home in Oshkosh

By Peter Moll

The EAA Aviation Museum recently accepted a significant aviation artifact for display with ties to a WAHF inductee. Although US Army Captain Scott Alwin (WAHF Class of 2025) may not be a household name like General William "Billy" Mitchell or Paul Poberezny, his achievements and awards are nonetheless admirable to us in the aviation community.

As a reminder, Alwin was the most decorated US Army helicopter pilot in the Vietnam War. Scott earned 136 Air Medals (one awarded after every 25 hours of combat flying), and by some accounts should have been awarded more; a Silver Star, A Bronze Star with four Oak Leaf Clusters; a Distinguished Flying Cross; a Purple Heart with one Oak Leaf Cluster; several distinguished Vietnam Republic medals; and many other accomplishments. Oh yes, and then there was his nearly 5,000 flight hours over five combat tours in Vietnam.

Flying the UH-1 Iroquois "Huey" helicopter, first in the "Slick" role in transporting troops and supplies, and later in the "Gunship" role—into which one was invited by fellow aviators, not assigned—Scott regarded his position as a duty to his country and fellow countrymen, and not a position to seek fame or fortune. His leadership attributes were admired by many within his unit.







The EAA Aviation Museum recently added the original nose art from Capt. Scott Alwin's Vietnam-era UH-1 Huey gunship to its growing Vietnam War exhibit. Preserved by members of Alwin's unit and later entrusted to his family, the historic artwork is now on display in Oshkosh as a tribute to the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame inductee's extraordinary service and leadership.

Unfortunately, a drunk driver took the life of Captain Alwin in 1976 after his return from the war while on his way to his next assignment.

His unit, the 68th Assault Helicopter Company, felt so highly of his accomplishments and leadership that it kept the nose art from his Huey gunship, depicting his Grim Reaper call sign, and presented it to Scott's family. That unique piece of personal aviation history, not a reproduction, now resides in the EAA Aviation Museum.

EAA Museum Director Chris Henry remarked, "The addition of this loaned nose art is a huge honor for EAA. It fits uniquely with the growing Vietnam War display with the UH-1 Huey in the museum, and it especially is a fitting tribute to the hometown heroes of aviation and to the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame which recognized Scott Alwin."

Scott's sisters, Pamela Alwin Fullerton and Penny Kleinhans, who presented the framed nose art to the EAA, are especially commended for championing Scott's family legacy and sharing that legacy with all.



A Forgotten Wisconsin Aviation Pioneer

Stone Age Astronaut brings Milwaukee aviator Lester Maitland back into the spotlight.

Reviewed by Katie Wilson

You probably already know that next year marks the 100th anniversary of Charles Lindbergh's record-breaking solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. Fewer people realize that just weeks later, Milwaukee-born pilot Lester Maitland and navigator Albert Hegenberger achieved a remarkable first of their own, becoming the first aviators to fly nonstop from California to Hawaii. Their accomplishment has largely faded from public memory, but Liam Callanan's new book, *Stone Age Astronaut*, brings their story back into the spotlight just in time for the flight's centennial.

Callanan tells the story of Lester Maitland within the context of other historical events of his time, giving the reader a good sense of Maitland's world and the state of aviation in the 1920s. Other familiar fliers of the era make appearances, including fellow Milwaukeean Billy Mitchell.

The book details the long and impressive career that Maitland achieved in the decades after the record flight. Maitland rose to the rank of Brigadier General and served throughout World War II. He went on to become the first director of the Wisconsin Aeronautics Commission and ultimately an Episcopal priest.

With gift-giving season just around the corner, this book would make a great gift for any aviation history enthusiast. It is available for purchase now from the Wisconsin Historical Society Press website or through your favorite local bookseller.

Book Details

Stone Age Astronaut: The Astonishing Adventures of America's Forgotten Flier
Author: Liam Callanan
Publisher: Wisconsin Historical Society Press
Length: 191 pages
Price: $24.95
Order: *wisconsinhistory.org/shop*



Did You Know?

Soon after Charles Lindbergh's famous Atlantic crossing in 1927, Milwaukee-born pilot Lester Maitland and navigator Albert Hegenberger completed the first nonstop flight from California to Hawaii.





YOUNG FLIERS' CLUB

FLYING OVER MADISON

"Look down!" Grandma called from the pilot's seat.

Emma peered out the window and gasped.

Far below, a bright white dome rose above the city.

"That's the **WISCONSIN** State **CAPITOL**," Grandma said. "It's where state leaders meet to make decisions for Wisconsin."

From high above, the Capitol looked like the center of a giant wheel. Streets stretched outward in every direction.

"It stands out from everything else," Emma said.

"It sure does," Grandma replied.

Beyond the city, two sparkling lakes caught her eye.

"Those are Lake **MENDOTA** and Lake Monona," Grandma explained. "**MADISON** sits right between them."

The lakes stretched across the landscape like giant blue mirrors. Along the shore, parks, paths, and neighborhoods traced the water's edge. As the airplane continued west, another famous landmark came into view.

"What's that giant oval?" Emma asked.

"That's **CAMP RANDALL** Stadium, home of the Wisconsin Badgers."

The **STADIUM** stood out among the buildings of the **UNIVERSITY** of Wisconsin **CAMPUS**. From above, it looked like a huge bowl surrounded by classrooms, trees, and busy streets.

"Do lots of people go there?" Emma asked.

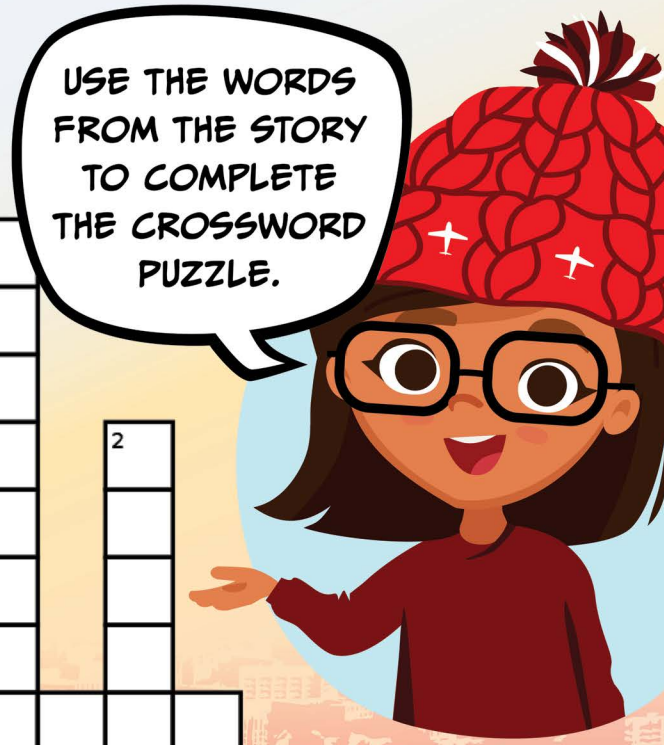
"On football Saturdays, thousands of fans fill those seats," Grandma said.

Emma imagined a sea of red-and-white fans cheering for their team. For a moment, she could see both landmarks from her window: the shining Capitol dome and Camp Randall Stadium. One represented Wisconsin's government. The other represented school spirit and tradition.

As the **AIRPLANE** turned toward home, Madison slowly grew smaller below.

"It's amazing," Emma said. Grandma nodded.

From the sky, Madison's lakes, landmarks, and traditions came together to tell the story of Wisconsin's capital city.



DOWN

1. The state in the story
2. One of Madison's lakes
4. What Emma rode in
7. Where many sports are played

ACROSS

3. Wisconsin's capital city
5. Building where state leaders meet
6. Grounds of a university
8. Home of the Wisconsin Badgers
9. A place of higher learning

Design by Lynn Balderrama

Looking Back and Looking Ahead

Our 2026 Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame induction ceremony is behind us, and what a wonderful event it was. The annual nduction ceremony always reminds me why the Hall of Fame's mission is so important. Every person we honor leaves behind a story worth preserving, and together those stories help tell the larger story of Wisconsin aviation.

This issue also reminded me how much I enjoy the connections I find in the articles our contributors share. While each story stands on its own, many seem to be connected by common threads of mentorship, friendship, family, and a lifelong love of flight. Arabella Bouchard's memories of flying with her grandfather, Tom, and Ed Becerra's reflections on his canine copilot, Lolla, are deeply personal stories that reach far beyond airplanes. They remind us that aviation is often as much about the people, and sometimes the pets, who touch our lives as it is about the aircraft we fly.

I was also delighted to welcome first-time contributor Tom Pawlesh to these pages. Readers will also find a new recurring feature by Chris Henry, Director of the EAA Aviation Museum, who will highlight aircraft with Wisconsin connections from the museum's remarkable collection. I'm equally grateful for the support of businesses that share an interest in preserving and promoting our aviation heritage. We're pleased to welcome Schweiss Doors as a new advertiser and appreciate their support.

Over the past few weeks, I've had the opportunity to attend both the Wisconsin Aviation Conference and our induction ceremony. What stays with me most from events like these are the conversations. Whether speaking with longtime Hall of Fame supporters, meeting new members, or hearing stories shared over a cup of coffee, I'm always reminded that Wisconsin's aviation community is filled with generous, passionate, and remarkable people. Those connections are among the greatest rewards of being involved with this organization.

Our aviation community also said goodbye recently to two longtime WAHF supporters, Bob Wylie and Charles Boie. When I first joined the Board, Bob was especially welcoming and generous with his knowledge and encouragement. His dedication to preserving the history of Wausau aviation, including through his book *Wings North*, leaves a lasting legacy. Charles was a steadfast supporter of both WAHF and the Mitchell Gallery of Flight and worked to strengthen the relationship between the two organizations. Both men cared deeply about aviation history and the people who shaped it, and both will be missed.

As 2026 draws to a close, I want to thank our members, sponsors, donors, contributors, advertisers, and friends. Your support allows us to continue preserving Wisconsin aviation history and sharing it with future generations.

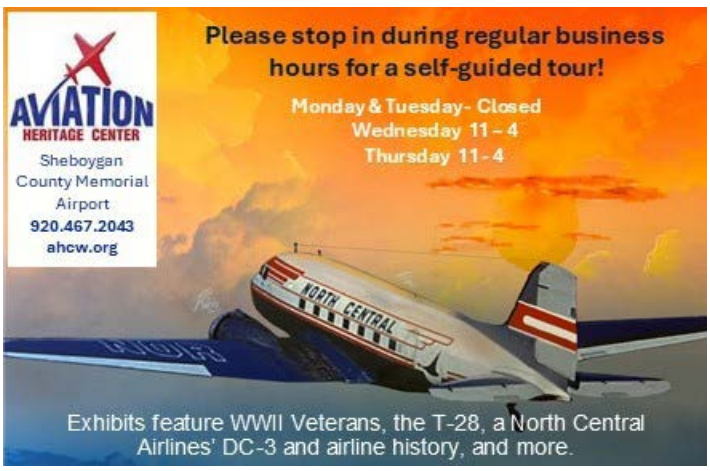
On behalf of the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame, I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

—Rose









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Looking for a speaker to inspire your audience?

The Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame offers lively presentaions 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 Members!

Gordy Anderson
Brandon Doblar
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Jessica Schaefer

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!

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:

Tad Oelstrom
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Every issue of *Forward in Flight*, every story shared through these pages, every induction ceremony, and every photograph preserved is made possible by people who care about Wisconsin aviation history. To our members, donors, sponsors, volunteers, and friends: Thank you for helping preserve Wisconsin's aviation legacy for generations to come.

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