



EAA Antique/Classic Division

25th Anniversary

by Gene Chase

Since many of our current members may not be aware of the extraordinary efforts that went into the formation of the largest of EAA's Divisions, we're pleased to present a 25th Anniversary reprint of the history of the EAA Antique/Classic Division as first published in the July 1985 edition of the magazine. For the next several months leading up to the EAA Convention, we'll print a section of this history, and then in the August 1996 issue we will conclude the series with a retrospective covering the last 10 years. - H.G. Frautschy

PLANTING THE SEED

Back in the sixties, when EAA was still pretty much a one man operation, the need became ever greater for more assistance in running the annual Conventions. EAA Founder and President, Paul H. Poberezny, conceived the idea of special interest groups within the organization, to be formed basically as volunteer groups to help at the Conventions. These would be members whose primary interests involved warbird aircraft, aerobatic flight and antique aircraft.

Soon the Warbirds of America (a previously organized group of warbird enthusiasts) and the International Aerobatic Club were on board . . . and before long a group of antiquers would be.

During the 1969 EAA Convention at Rockford, Illinois, a group of members were discussing the value of having a separate parking area for the types of planes they loved most — the antiques. The concept of "classic" aircraft would come later.

This group included Bill and Troy Dodd, Lake Zurich, IL; Bob Heuer Maple Park, IL; Buck Hilbert, Union, IL; Lee Parsons, Carrollton, OH; and Charlie Sheets, Solon, IA. There may have been one or two others, but fading memories do not recall their names. While discussing this parking idea, the thought occurred that this special interest group within the Experimental Aircraft Association could actually handle, among other things, the parking of older airplanes at the annual Convention. This small but enthusiastic group would evolve into the Antique/Classic Division of EAA as we know it today.

But first, major changes were on the horizon as outlined by President Paul Poberezny in his "Homebuilder's Corner" in the January, 1970 issue of SPORT AVIATION. He stated: "We will begin this year with a new challenge, that of relocat-



**Dave Jameson, Oshkosh, Wisconsin—
EAA Antique/Classic Division's
first president.**

ing our Annual Convention site. By now each member has received the four-page Convention bulletin announcing the move to Oshkosh, Wisconsin, some 123 miles from Rockford.

Moving a large event such as ours is not an easy task and those of us who are directly involved in its operation are well aware of the great effort that is facing us.

If there had been a reasonable solution other than a move, which would have been in the best interest of the membership, your Board of Directors would have accepted it. However, with such issues as follows to be considered, the Board believed both for future expansion and dollar investment, a new site be obtained for 1970 and future years.

"These items presented by the Rockford Airport were of sincere concern, such as: no further expansion or improvement

should be considered by EAA because of airport expansion plans. The probable rental of land in the campsite area to a commercial concern; a year-to-year agreement of airport facilities; a choice that if there was camping on the airport grounds the evening aerobatic program would not be permitted, and if aerobatics were held, no camping would be permitted.

"It was suggested that EAA rent from the airport, areas such as the campsite, EAA aircraft tie downs and display at a rate comparable to commercial properties rented to others by the airport. Included in the rental would be services that EAA has, in the past, provided or paid for and obtained at a much lower figure than could be purchased by the airport. With this arrangement, the annual convention fee of the members would then have been increased substantially.

"The limited area for future expansion of the homebuilt and antique parking area was of concern and due to a proposed new terminal building at the N.W. corner of the airport, plans call for future closing of the NW-SE runway which was used extensively for fly-bys."

With the definite move of the Annual EAA Convention from Rockford to Oshkosh having been announced, the group asked President Paul if they could have their own parking area at Wittman Field during the 1970 Convention. Paul said they could, but they would have to organize and manage the parking of the antiques themselves.

The group gladly accepted this new responsibility and when the winter snow had melted, antiquers and their wives joined similar groups of homebuilders and warbirds in preparing the grounds for the upcoming 18th Annual EAA International Convention Fly-In, scheduled for August 1-7.

The antiquers were beginning to orga-

nize, and following the precedent set at previous conventions, a judging committee was named. At Oshkosh '70 this group was officially called the "Judges and Awards Committee, Antique Aircraft Division." It consisted of Gene Chase, Tulsa, Oklahoma - Chairman; Evander Britt, Lumberton, North Carolina; Dusty Rhodes, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Ed Sanders, Ft. Worth, Texas; and Harold Maloy, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

OSHKOSH '70

Despite the geographic move of the Convention, the 1970 event exceeded expectations. The Grand Champion Antique was the Lockheed Vega, NR105W owned by David Jameson, Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Dave restored the all-wood Vega in the same colors as Wiley Post's famous "Winnie Mae."

The Reserve Grand Champion Antique award went to a Stearman PT-17, N11BY, in military colors, owned by Dr. Berne Yocke, Aurora, Illinois. There was no Grand Champion Classic award at Oshkosh '70.

In those early years, a single chairman was in charge of all "Show Plane Parking," then called "Display Aircraft." The Chairman at Oshkosh '70 was Herb Cunningham from Scarborough, Ontario, Canada.

Glorious weather prevailed and the show plane total count was 607 including 249 antique, classic, and "special" aircraft as reported in the October, 1970 issue of SPORT AVIATION. Note the use of the word classic - this is significant, because at that time there was no definition for a "classic" aircraft judging category, nor

separate awards for so-called classic aircraft. But that would soon change.

JACK COX'S TRIAL BALLOON

In that same October, 1970 issue of SPORT AVIATION was a two-page article by Jack Cox, Assistant Editor, who with his wife Golda, had been on the EAA staff since January of that year. Jack's article was entitled "The Classic Airplane" and was described as being a "trial balloon - a device to test public reaction to some new idea."

Basically, Jack proposed to occasionally devote a couple of pages in SPORT AVIATION to planes that were built after January 1, 1946 and were at least 20 years old. In 1970 that would have included 1946 through 1950, and each year thereafter, a new year would be added.

Jack further stated, "What EAA proposes is the formation of an informal coordinating unit having as its purpose the publicizing of existing 'type club' activities, encouraging and assisting in the establishment of new type clubs and, probably most important, making the 'over' 20 classic airplanes a legitimate class recognized at all fly-ins, eligible to park in the display areas and to receive trophies and awards.

"The space in SPORT AVIATION would be used for profiles on the aircraft of the period; reprints of flight tests written when the planes were new; evaluations of the same birds today; articles on restorations by the bankrupt, sorebacked heroes themselves; company histories; reports on outstanding flights of classic airplanes - modifications and maintenance tips; sources of hard-to-get parts; and

much more."

In his article Jack praised the type clubs and listed the nine he was aware of. He was emphatic in stating, "It should be clearly understood here that this is not definitely NOT! an attempt by the EAA to take over any existing club or even make it an affiliate such as the IAC or the Warbirds."

The primary purpose was to legitimize a new classification of older aircraft, thus getting a larger group of aviation enthusiasts in on the fun of strictly "sport" aviation. And during the Annual Convention, EAA would reserve space at Oshkosh for the type clubs to park their own classic planes with their own volunteers. Further, EAA would publicize on the Classic Airplane pages (in SPORT AVIATION) the existing type clubs and their activities.

Jack continued, "Now about the name 'Classic.' Yes, I'm perfectly aware that the term is already used as a subclassification in antique airplane judging - including the EAA's which I devised myself. I am further aware that the term 'Neo-classic' (meaning 'new classic') is often used to denote aircraft of the late 1940's. I don't like the term with its built in contradiction - what is 'new' about a 20-year-old airplane? In my opinion, there is a beautifully simple way to end once and for all the wild names, confusion, and frustration

The Red Barn and an Antique Grand Champion, two rallying points for Antique/Classic members. This OX-5 powered Alexander Eaglerock was named Grand Champion Antique at Oshkosh '73. The Red Barn, shown here as it originally looked, would not become the Convention Headquarters for the Antique/Classic Division until 1974.





Jack Cox conceived not only the CLASSIC category name but also the first subdivisions for judging purposes.

inherent with the classification of old airplanes as it is now done."

If the response to all this was great enough, a formal classic awards system would be formulated and appropriate trophies and awards would be ready for presentation at Oshkosh '71.

Jack closed his article by asking the readers to respond with their ideas, pro or con, and if they supported the concept to send in pictures, articles, personal experiences, etc., which could be used in SPORT AVIATION. Several articles were submitted and published in subsequent issues of the magazine.

THE CLASSIC AIRPLANE

The response to Jack's "trial balloon article" was highly favorable and in the January, 1971 issue of SPORT AVIATION he wrote the first of a series of articles called "The Classic Airplane."

LOOKING AHEAD TO OSHKOSH '71

In the "Hotline from Headquarters" section of the May, 1971 issue of SPORT AVIATION, the following announcement appeared: "The Ercoupe Club, comprised of owners and pilots of this classic aircraft will conduct their national convention in conjunction with the 1971 EAA Conven-

Dave Jameson's Lockheed Vega, NR105W, was the Grand Champion Antique at Oshkosh '70, the first year a special parking arrangement was developed for Antiques and Classic.

tion and Fly-In, and an area for these aircraft will be set aside for them."

In the following month's "Hotline" column, the new parking plan for classic airplanes was outlined: "This year at Oshkosh a new parking area will be designated for Classic airplanes - those aircraft produced between January 1, 1946 and December 31, 1950. Warbirds will be parked at the north end of runway 18-36, the same as last year; homebuilts and antiques (aircraft produced prior to January 1, 1942, and some wartime planes such as Staggerwings, Howards, etc.) immediately in front of the control tower - again, the same as last year. To the south of this group will be the Classic airplane parking area.

"Signs will be erected to designate 'type' rows such as Aeronca, Ercoupe, Mooney 'Mite,' Luscombe, Stinson, Swift, Piper, Cessna 170, etc. so that 'birds of a feather' can park together and, hopefully, get some type club activity started within their respective groups.

"Due to the large number of Classic airplanes (1946-1950) and the difficulty of identifying and differentiating between a '41 and a '46 Luscombe, for example, we are assigning parking spots for these aircraft BY PREVIOUS REGISTRATION ONLY. If you plan to fly a 1946-50 era airplane to Oshkosh and wish to park it in the Classic airplane area, you must write Classic Airplane Parking, Experimental Aircraft Association, Box 229, Hales Corners, WI 53130 prior to the Convention and identify your plane by year and make (1946 Taylorcraft, for instance). You will receive

by return mail a diagram of the field and a small disc to attach to your windshield so that Oshkosh ground personnel will be able to identify you and direct you to the proper area. OTHERWISE YOUR AIRPLANE WILL BE SENT TO THE ITINERANT PARKING AREA.

"Planes of this era which are not pre-registered will be able to move from the itinerant parking to the Classic airplane area only after the owner registers his plane at the EAA aircraft registration booth and is given an identification disc.

"Parking of the 1946-50 aircraft has always been a problem at past Conventions, and this new system is both an effort to solve the problem and to recognize a new class of older aircraft, those Classic airplanes which have been restored with the same 'tender loving care' as older antiques, thereby providing more enjoyment and participation in the Fly-In for greater numbers of members."

Classic airplanes were now being recognized as members of the sport aviation fraternity and type clubs were getting national recognition through EAA's SPORT AVIATION magazine. In the July, 1971 Hotline the Staggerwing Club announced its Annual Meeting would be held at Oshkosh '71 and a special display row would be set up. Also, the Mooney Mite owners, the Aeronca Club and the Mooney Mite Owners type clubs would be there in full force.

Another "classic airplane" article by Jack Cox appeared in that July issue. This one proudly announced, "This August for the first time, the Classic Airplane, those aircraft produced between January 1, 1946 and December 31, 1950, will be fully recognized at an EAA Fly-In Convention. Classics will have their own parking area and will have their own awards."

The classic plane parking area and preregistration procedures were further described as were the new orange and white checkerboard EAA traffic control "towers." These towers would be manned by volunteer ground traffic directors who would "aim you toward the classic parking area."

Jack Cox conceived not only the CLASSIC category name but also the first subdivisions for judging purposes. In July, 1971 he wrote: "Due to the great variety of aircraft involved, it has been decided to subdivide classics as follows: Class I, below 100 hp; Class II, 100-165 hp; Class III, over 165 hp." Also listed were several aircraft examples for each class.

Jack's article on the subject concluded with, "Since this is the first year for the Classic Airplane category we will be playing everything 'by ear' and expect to learn a lot. Improvements will be made as interest is shown and experience is gained. Your comments and suggestions are welcomed."



EAA File Photo



Photo by Neil Kozlov

OSHKOSH '71

The 19th Annual EAA Convention was held August 1-7. A total of 828 showplanes were registered, an increase of 25% from the previous year. The new Classic Airplane category accounted for 288 registrations.

Harold Johnston of Pueblo, Colorado won the Grand Champion Antique award with his Vultee V-1A Special, NC16099. It was built in 1936 for millionaire publisher William Randolph Hearst on a no-expense-spared basis. Power was a 1,000 hp Wright R-1820 with a 3-bladed propeller.

The Reserve Grand Champion Antique award went to Charles Klessig of Galesburg, North Dakota for his 1917 Standard J-1, N9477. This stately old biplane was powered with a Curtiss OXX-6 engine.

The very first to be named Grand Champion Classic was the one and only 1946 Spartan 12, a tricycle geared development of the Model 7W "Executive." Ed Wegner of Plymouth, Wisconsin restored this rare aircraft after acquiring it from George Goodhead, Tulsa, Oklahoma, who acquired it through the efforts of Col. Maxwell Balfour, an executive of Spartan Aircraft Company in Tulsa.

There was no Reserve Grand Champion Classic in 1971.

The judging of the Classics was accomplished by the Antique Judging Committee chaired by Evander Britt of Lumberton, North Carolina. He was ably assisted by H. N. "Dusty" Rhodes of Santa Fe, New Mexico; Harold Maloy, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Ed Sanders, Ft. Worth, Texas; Johnny Livingston, Pompano Beach, Florida; and Stan Dzik of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Jack Cox of EAA Headquarters was in charge of Antique Aircraft Awards. A committee responsible for "Homebuilt and Antique Aircraft" was chaired by Herb Cunningham of Scarborough, Ontario, Canada with Co-Chairman Ed Wegner, Carl Koeling and Bob Puryear.

Generally, things went well in the Antique and Classic areas at Oshkosh '71, but the parking by preregistration system would have to be modified. Also, the Antique Judging Committee was worked to death attempting to look at nearly 500 antique and classic aircraft. It was agreed that a separate judging committee for Classics should be formed for 1972.

Immediately after the Convention work was started on the '72 Fly-In. The Classic parking area was plowed, smoothed and seeded. By October a good stand of fall grass was up. Other work consisted of filling, installation of additional culverts, etc. to generally improve the grounds.

In his SPORT AVIATION editorials

Oshkosh '71 - Center stage. Antique parking is at bottom of photo with a few overflow homebuilts, and Wittman Tower is at left center. Across the road south of the Tower is a corn field - The field is now dominated by the large Convention taxiway and display ramp.

after the Convention, Paul paid tribute to the many volunteers who worked long hours before and during the event. He stated, "The 42,000 flight operations for the week is something at which to marvel—10,000 more than last year and approximately 25,000 more than O'Hare Field usually reports as the world's busiest airport during a week long period. This could not have been possible depending upon radio control alone or without the cooperation of both the FAA and the pilots. Tolerance and respect for each other as well as excellent airmanship contribute to this safe record . . ."

"Enthusiasm and favorable personal comments have been received from EAA members/owners of Classic Airplanes (1946-1950) - they have, at long last, been recognized and feel they have a home within their own organization - extra voices to lend weight to the future of EAA/Sport Aviation at the Chapter, local, state and Federal government level."

ANTIQUE AND CLASSIC DIVISION OF EAA UNDER CONSIDERATION



"A meeting was held ... to consider the formation of an Antique and Classic group within the EAA for our members whose interests lie in this area of sport aviation."

The headline above preceded the following three paragraphs on page 17 of the "Hot Line" section of the October, 1971 issue of SPORT AVIATION.

"Since the beginning of the EAA, many members have had a great interest in antique and classic aircraft. Actually, the typical EAA member has a wide range of interests within the aviation field—many own antiques or classics and are also building a homebuilt. Members with a homebuilt as their "fun" plane and a classic such as a Cessna 170 for instance as their "family" plane, are much more common than most realize.

"Since the first EAA Fly-In in 1953, all types of aircraft have been welcome, and antiques have been eligible for awards all along. This follows the EAA's avowed policy that the use of an aircraft types it as a 'sport' plane—not age, method of manufacture or other criteria. But though this is the policy, it is recognized that most of EAA Headquarters' time is spent with homebuilt activities and that our annual Convention at Oshkosh is centered around the homebuilt aircraft and the homebuilder. Most of us feel this is just as it should be; however, this is not to say that in addition to the present policies and activities more cannot be done in other ar-

The first Grand Champion Classic, named at Oshkosh '71 - Ed Wegner's 1946 Spartan 12, NC21962.

ea. For instance, in addition to homebuilding forums at Oshkosh, new ones can be held on subjects of interest to owners of antique and classic airplanes, etc.

"With the foregoing in mind, a group of interested EAA members will be meeting this fall at Headquarters to discuss the formation of an Antique/Classic Division of the EAA. The purpose will be to provide direction and leadership so that a larger number of aviation enthusiasts will be able to enjoy EAA activities to an even greater extent than ever before."

FIRST ANTIQUE AND CLASSIC MEETING

As reported on page 5 of the "Hot Line" section of the December, 1971 issue of SPORT AVIATION, "A meeting was held Saturday, November 6 at Hales Corners to consider the formation of an Antique and Classic group within the EAA for our members whose interests lie in this area of sport aviation.

16 men from around the nation attended and a great deal of discussion and planning was done - generally, regarding the antique and classic classification system, aims and goals of the proposed organization, plans to improve the antique and classic phases of our fly-in Convention at Oshkosh, and the selection of a slate of provisional officers and directors.

"Some modification of EAA's classifi-

ciation of antique and classic aircraft was approved and will henceforth become the official policy of EAA at the national level and should be adopted by Chapters for their own fly-ins. They are as follows:

"Antique Aircraft: Any aircraft of any nation produced before January 1, 1946 with the following exceptions:

1) All Beechcraft Model 17s, Fairchild 24s and Monocoups (any model) produced after December 31, 1945 will be classified with the prewar models as Antiques.

2) Any 1946 model year aircraft that came off the production lines in the last months of 1945 will be considered Classics.

3) Any military aircraft produced before January 1, 1946 and not eligible for "Warbird" classification under the current rules of the "Warbirds of America" Division of EAA, will be considered Antiques. Also, if an owner of a military aircraft does not belong to the Warbirds of America and/or does not choose to have his aircraft judged as a Warbird, he has the option of requesting the judges to consider his plane an Antique. It will be the responsibility of the aircraft owner to make this intention known.

"Classic Aircraft: Any aircraft of any nation produced between December 31, 1945 and January 1, 1951 (with the addition of a few 1946 models that actually came off the production lines in late 1945 as mentioned under 'Antique Aircraft'). The decision of the group was to limit the Classics to the 1946-50 era for the time being, rather than having the 20th year from the present as the end of this classification. At some future time a new classifica-



tion for later aircraft could be formulated.

"A large Board of Directors was selected so as to obtain representation from all parts of the nation and to ensure a good number at each board meeting. EAA Antique Chapters 316 and 395 will have representation on this Board.

"Officers and Board members will serve in their provisional capacity until the 1972 EAA Fly-In at which time a formal election will be held. The immediate work for the group will be to prepare Antique and Classic activities for Oshkosh and create an organizational structure. All inquiries concerning the activities of the group should be addressed to the President, Dave Jameson, 4322 Bellhaven, Oshkosh, WI 54901."

CAPT. EDDIE RICKENBACKER SPEAKS

"During the Antique and Classic meeting, the group was honored with the appearance by Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker who, along with other Eastern Air Lines officials, was touring the EAA Air Museum. Accompanied by President Paul Poberezny, Capt. Rickenbacker inspected the restoration area, offices and the main aircraft display area. In a short talk to the vintage aircraft enthusiasts, Rickenbacker stated he was favorably impressed with the immaculate condition of the buildings and displays and considered EAAers to be one of America's last outposts of individualism and an important reservoir of technical and mechanical skills that made American aviation great.

"Still robust and ramrod straight, Capt. Eddie made his entrance amid a standing ovation, his famed wide-brimmed felt hat firmly in hand—a rare and inspiring glimpse of an aviation immortal."

Those few paragraphs described the first meeting of the newly formed EAA Antique/Classic Division on November 6, 1971.



SECOND ANTIQUE/CLASSIC MEETING

The second meeting of the Division took place at EAA Headquarters at Hales Corners on Saturday, February 26, 1972. Approximately 30 persons were in attendance from all around the nation and the first order of business was the announcement that the Division was legally incorporated.

Major decisions made during the first meeting included an agreement that, initially, no separate dues structure would be applied to members of the Antique/Classic Division. An Antique/Classic membership card would be issued, on request, to all EAA members who wished to be identified with the Division. Special decals and patches would also be forthcoming.

A great deal of time was devoted to the matter of judging. Evander Britt of Lumberton, North Carolina was reaffirmed as chief judge of Antique aircraft at Oshkosh,

Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker chats with President Paul Poberezny during a visit to the EAA Museum in November, 1971. Capt. Rickenbacker, then President of Eastern Air Lines, also addressed the first meeting of the Antique/Classic Division during his visit.

and it was decided that a second set of judges would be selected for Classic aircraft due to the large number of aircraft involved. A rating form for judges was to be looked into and categories formulated and published in SPORT AVIATION prior to the Oshkosh '72 Convention.

Finally the work of vastly improving the program at Oshkosh for Antiques and Classics came under consideration. Committees were formed to plan forums, fly-out activities, parking, etc., and chairmen were appointed to start the ball rolling.

This meeting was deemed the first step in making Oshkosh '72 a great fly-in for owners and admirers of Antique and Classic aircraft. Among the chairmen named for the various aircraft categories for the '72 Convention were Antiques, Dave Jameson and Classics, Dick Wagner.

As was done the previous year, preregistration of classic aircraft attending Oshkosh was required.

Among the details worked out during the pre-Oshkosh '72 planning sessions were that Classic airplanes would be judged by a team co-chaired by Jim Gorman of Mansfield, OH and Morton Lester of Martinsville, VA. Also, rules were changed to disallow a previous Oshkosh Grand Champion Award winner in the Antique and Classic categories to receive that honor again at Oshkosh.

Nest Month, Gene Chase documents the first half of the 1970s, and the creation of the magazine you know enjoy, Vintage Airplane.

Officers Elected at First Antique/Classic Meeting:

President—Dave Jameson, Oshkosh, WI

Vice President—J. R. Nielander, Jr., Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Secretary—Dick Wagner, Lyons, WI

Treasurer—Bill Dodd, Lake Zurich, IL

Directors

Richard P. Austin, Greensboro, NC
Tony Blackstone, Enid, OK
Ray Brandy, Dayton, OH
Ron Fritz, Grand Rapids, MI
James C. Gorman, Mansfield, OH
John C. Luebke, Naperville, IL
Vince Mariani, Findlay, OH
John Perry, Scottsbluff, NE
H. N. "Dusty" Rhodes, Sante Fe, NM
George E. Stubbs, Indianapolis, IN
Landis West, Scottsbluff, NE
George S. York, Mansfield, OH

Richard Baxter, Seattle, WA
Peter Bowers, Seattle, WA
Evander Britt, Lumberton, NC
Wayne Fredline, Grand Rapids, MI
Ken Hyde, Warrenton, VA
Harold Maloy, Oklahoma City, OK
Lee Parsons, Carrollton, OH
Nick Rezich, Rockford, IL
Robert Ring, East Kingston, NH
Ed Wegner, Plymouth, WI
Dr. Bernard Yocke, Aurora, IL