

One Eye To The Past The Other Eye To The Future

A General Report On The 1956 Convention and Fly-In and How It Shapes Our Plans For 1957

by Leo J. Kohn

Once again, we can draw up the report on our event of the year... the 1956 E.A.A. Convention and Fly-In, held at Oshkosh, Wisconsin. The Fly-In was unique this year, for two reasons. One, it was the first time that it was held any place other than Milwaukee, and two it gave us the opportunity to welcome our international counterpart, the young and inspiring Ultra-Light Aircraft Association, of Canada, and our many friends who comprise the Antique Airplane Association.

Great praise must be reaped upon our Convention and Fly-In hosts, Mr. and Mrs. S. J. Wittman of Oshkosh. A good amount of credit should also be given to the civic organizations in Oshkosh, such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Winnebago County Air Committee, and others. Robert Taylor of A.A.A., and Keith Hopkinson of the U.L.A.A. must also be highly commended for their efforts.

For the first time, the Headquarters Chapter was relieved of some of the burdensome but necessary work that goes into making a successful event, and that is exactly what it was... a highly successful three day Convention and Fly-In, our most successful so far.

There were some 51 aircraft representing the three groups in attendance, plus about 300 visiting aircraft belonging to non-participants. The crowds of public viewers were estimated officially to be about 100,000 over the three day period, and at least 500 E.A.A. members attended.

We are not certain of the exact number of members attending, since some invariably never get around to registering, but we do know that the dinner meetings were so heavily attended, that it was necessary for the hotel management to set up tables out in the entire mezzanine, outside of the dining rooms. Also, there wasn't a hotel room or accommodation to be had by Friday night, in or near

Oshkosh. The number of E.A.A. aircraft and members present, was roughly double that of 1955.

Things happened so fast, that it seems impossible to determine who arrived first, or who traveled the longest distance to attend. Larry Heuberger flew his "Doodle Bug" the longest distance, all the way from El Paso, Texas.

Mr. and Mrs. Wittman's "Hour of Charm" cocktail party, was a very charming affair. Everyone seemed to enjoy it, and it might well be repeated in the future. The Marathon Corp. is deserving of a vote of thanks for turning their large hangar over to us for the cocktail party and the business meeting.

The meetings came off surprisingly well, even though there was not adequate time to allow all of our guests to speak as planned. About the most positive action to come out of the business meeting was the raising of membership and subscription rates, to \$10.00 and \$5.00 respectively, and the installation of a Junior Membership to attract students. The suggestion was bandied about for better than an hour, with the help of more people than we could list here. A wide variety of proposals were made on the floor, regarding the types and the amounts of the memberships. Dr. Van Camp of West Palm Beach, Bill Fenley of the Washington Chapter, Tony Maugeri of the CAA, Ed Young of Savannah, Ed Dunn of the Long Island Chapter, and Walt Philbin of the Detroit Chapter, all led the floor debate over the dues. However, Keith Hopkinson, President of the Ultra-Light Aircraft Association of Canada, was the most persuasive, and won his point over all the others.

It should have been evident to all, that the E.A.A. has increased tremendously over the years, in ranks and stature. This was attested to by our speakers, among them, the well known Professor of Aeronautical Science, Dr. August Rasket, who was made an Honorary Member, Robert Burbick of the CAA, "Steve" Wittman, and other personalities. In addition to these mentioned speakers, our Fly-In attracted such other well known personalities as Betty Skelton, women's aerobatic champion; Bill Brennand, three time winner of the Goodyear midget races; Bill Sweet, National Air Shows announcer; Andrew Surin, pioneer aircraft builder and mechanic; Mike Murphy, former air show pilot and the race starter; Bill Mauldin, famed

cartoonist, who along with Tony Lynck, covered the event for "Sports Illustrated" magazine.

We learned that a dance was not necessary to insure a good time for everyone, as we had tried in previous years, and found not too successful. The quick wit of toastmaster Nick Rezych, and the capable comedy of ventriloquist Bob Neller of Neenah, Wisconsin, kept everyone well amused.

Weatherwise, we didn't do so well. The first afternoon brought quite a bit of rain and gloom, and on Saturday morning, the fog was right down on the ground. Later on in the morning, the sun burned through to bring the state its hottest day of the summer. Coupled with the rain and dampness, it was about the most humid day of the summer, also. Sunday morning saw more rain and fog, the latter hanging around most of the day, until the usual hour before the Fly-In ended. If the weather would have been clear over all three days, we are sure that the attendance would have doubled, and would have been hard put to handle the situation.

As it was, we had a very bad time with crowd control. Due to a local promotion campaign, anybody who bought an "Air Show Booster" button, assumed that it gave them access to the entire field. With spectators milling around the active runways, the CAA threatened to close down the entire Fly-In and Air Show. While it wasn't our problem, technically, we had to cooperate, and unfortunately, we had to order even the E.A.A. members into the spectator's area until the show portion of the afternoon was over. Only the experimental aircraft owners and passengers, the authorized photographers, and officials were allowed on the field, once the show started, and it seemed to work out fairly well. We regret to say that many of the members could have used a little more forethought, and helped us to avoid this bad situation. We hope none were seriously offended by this move, and that all can appreciate the fact that no one was injured because of it.

On Sunday, the crowd control was a little more in hand, and no such restrictions were deemed necessary.

I also pointed out the advisability of holding our joint Fly-Ins separate from any more air shows. We simply do not have the means at our disposal to cope with the great hordes of spectators.

It has already been decided by

the Board, that the 1957 Fly-In be held again in Milwaukee. The actual dates have yet to be determined, but Bill Lotzer, manager of Curtiss-Wright Airport, has assured us that the airport will be ours on the weekend that we want it. The Antique Airplane Association and Ultra-Light Aircraft Association of Canada are again invited to combine their Fly-Ins with our own. This would seem to be the best arrangement for all concerned, and certainly eliminates triplication of efforts. In addition, Ken Cook, A. A. A. Vice-President, has his business offices located adjacent to the airport, and close coordination between the associations is assured. Almost all the members of the A.A.A. and U.L.A.A. are also members of the E.A.A. It is a practical and economic maneuver, but should not at this time, be misconstrued as a foreseeable merger of the organizations.

At Oshkosh, there were some members who voiced their dislike over the Fly-In always being held in the north central area, and wondered why it could not be held closer to their own areas. Undoubtedly, it is a good question, but these same people will have to provide the answer. In the first place, we all can't be convenient to the location of the Fly-In... that's basic. Secondly, it is only fair, that since all of the work and preparations for the Convention and Fly-Ins falls upon the shoulders of the Headquarters' officers and committees, it is not only impractical, but impossible for them to take care of all the details in some other point of the country. Held in Milwaukee, a relative handful of people can, as they have had to do in the past, handle all the various and innumerable details that arise in connection with the Fly-In. Third, Milwaukee is not too bad as a centrally located city. It offers a good airport and facilities in Curtiss-Wright, and Granaire, Inc., adequate accommodations, and other necessities for a Convention and Fly-In.

To return to an equally important note, we are happy to say that Ed Todd, of Madison, Wisconsin won the coveted Mechanix Illustrated trophy for his "Tailwind", plus two awards from "Steve" Wittman.

Keith Hopkinson of Goderich, Ontario received the E.A.A. trophy for the Outstanding Workmanship displayed on his Stits "Playboy".

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Larry Heuberger of El Paso, Texas took the trophy for the Outstanding Design, with his "Doodle Bug", and also received the trophy for flying a home-built airplane the longest distance to attend the FlyIn.

A.A.A. President Bob Taylor presented the Ken Cook Co. trophy to Dwight Woodard for the most outstanding restoration of an antique, in this case, the Thomas-Morse "Scout". Numerous other awards were given, including a name drawing for two round trip airline tickets from Tampa, Florida to Nassau, Bahamas Islands, via Mackey Airlines. These were provided by Bill Sweet, who is Public Relations Director for Mackey Airlines.

All in all, we are quite happy with the success of the Fly-In, and are looking forward to an inevitably bigger and better Fly-In in 1957. With the many home-builts that are all but finished at this time, we look forward to a field of from 75 to 100 aircraft next year.

With all this, it was unanimously approved at the E.A.A. Convention, that the present officers be re-elected to their respective offices.
