



**July 2021**

## **Remembering the early years of the EAA: The AirVenture began in our back yard!**

The Experimental Aircraft Association’s AirVenture celebration resumes this year from July 26 through August 1. Although most people now associate the EAA and its museum with the city of Oshkosh, it originally was located at 11311 W. Forest Home Avenue, just outside the Hales Corners/Franklin boundary. Its proximity to the Hales Corners Airport on Highway 100 and College Avenue made it a natural stop for flight enthusiasts. The airport ceased to exist in the 1970s and the museum relocated in 1984, but for 20 years the EAA Museum was a major attraction in our area.

Veteran aviator **Paul H. Poberezny** (1921-2013)



**Paul Poberezny, WWII service**  
— EAA Aviation Foundation



**EAA publication, 1966**

founded the EAA in 1953 with other aviation enthusiasts as a sort of flying club, and its first home was in his Hales Corners basement. Paul was officially EAA Member No. 1.

Paul spent three decades in the military as a pilot, test pilot, and maintenance chief during World War II and the Korean War. He retired from the military as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Wisconsin Air National Guard.

During his lifetime, Paul logged more than 30,000 hours of flight time while flying 500 types of aircraft. He also designed 15 airplanes. In 1999, he was inducted into the Aviation Hall of Fame.

Paul recalled that the name for the organization was chosen

“because the planes we flew were modified or built from scratch, and they were required to display an EXPERIMENTAL placard where it could be seen on the door or cockpit.”

in 1953, the EAA’s first official meeting took place at Curtiss-Wright Airport (now Timmerman Field) in Milwaukee, with about 30 people attending. The first officers were elected that night: President, Paul Poberezny; Vice President, **Carl Schultz**; and Secretary Treasurer, **Robert Nolinske**.

Curtiss-Wright also became the location for the first annual EAA Fly-in Convention in September 1953, which included 75 members, with 21 airplanes on display. By 1959, the Fly-in had outgrown the field and was moved to Rockford, Illinois.

During the 1960s, the organization was incorporated as the EAA Air Museum Foundation, and moved out of Paul’s basement and into its own facility. It began to develop the world’s largest private collection of air-

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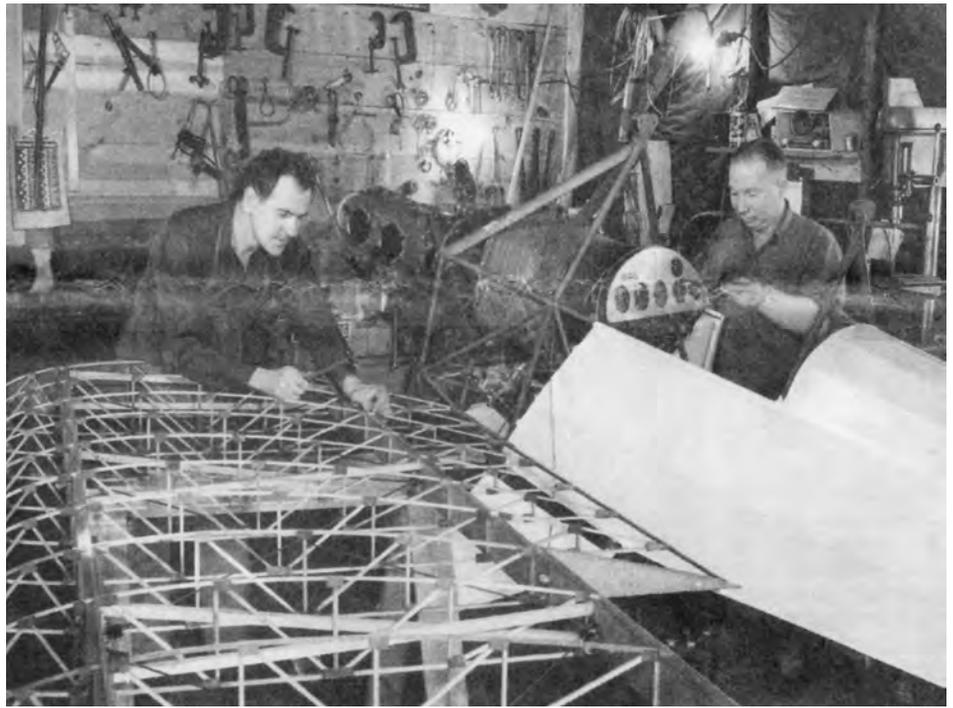
The color photos of eight aircraft on pages 2 and 3 were taken in 1972 at the original EAA Museum by HCHS president **Al Strekow**.

(EAA - Continued from page 1)

craft and aviation-related artifacts, and offered educational programs for research and development. By 1966, additional space was added to house a new museum, an office complex, and a restoration facility.

As the organization grew, so did the demands on the museum, and it quickly outgrew its Hales Corners/Franklin facility. In 1970, the Fly-in was moved to Wittman Field in Oshkosh.

Ten years later, the Board of Directors voted to establish new facilities there, and in 1982, construction began on an Aviation Center, complete with



**Paul Poberezny and Carl Walters build a prototype kit airplane, 1954**  
— Milwaukee Journal



**Fairchild XC-8 Mail and Passenger Express, 1930s**



**Grumman G-22 Gulfhawk, 1936-1941**



**Japanese Mitsubishi A6M "Zero," WWII 1939-1945**



**Bell Airacobra P-39, WWII 1940-1944**

a larger, more sophisticated AirVenture Museum. The complex also included mini-theaters, restoration shops, technical and historical libraries, a meeting and conference center, and international head-

quarters for the EAA Aviation Foundation. The 100,000-square-foot facility was dedicated in 1983, and by 1984, all remaining artifacts at the original museum had been moved to Oshkosh. A very large

office building now occupies the museum's former site, with the Root River Church as its main tenant.

— Sources: Hales Corners Historical Society, *Recollections of Paul Poberezny*, Franklin Historical Society



*Curtiss Warhawk P-40 "Flying Tiger," WWII 1938-1944*



*Pitts Special, 1944*



*Stits SA-2A "Sky Baby," 1952*



*Poberezny's own EAA Bi Plane*

## A rustic remembrance

Recently, **Jenny Najoom** and her husband, **Dennis**, stopped by the Ben Hunt Cabin to see the bench that was built to commemorate the life of her mother, **Priscilla Riebs**, who was a former president of HCHS. Although she chaired many projects for HCHS, Priscilla worked especially hard to preserve the legacy of Ben Hunt and the Ben Hunt Cabin. The bench was designed to resemble the rustic furniture featured in Ben's 1939 book, *Rustic Construction*.



*Dennis and Jenny Najoom with Priscilla's bench*

## Little by little, doors are opening at the Cabin

As described in previous newsletters, the Ben Hunt Cabin has required a lot of repair work this year. Most major tasks have now been accomplished and the grass around the work area has returned better than ever. Thanks go to **Jim Bain** for watering the grass during our drought. The repairs to the Cabin's north side are almost done. The door threshold was no longer safe to step on, so it was replaced thanks to the generosity of skilled wood worker **George Jaloviar** (at right, below). **Chris Schachtlie** (top) and **Randy Sannes** (bottom) also assisted with door framing adjustments and painting. Still to come: a new step with a wider platform.



## TALES OF THE CORNERS

From the files of the  
*Tri-Town News and Hub*

### 90 YEARS AGO (1931)

- The regular semiannual dividends of 7 percent are paid by the Hales Corners Building and Loan.
- The Hales Corners School District is petitioned for a kindergarten.

### 80 YEARS AGO (1941)

- State Bank Hales Corners lists \$836,657 in assets.
- In the interest of national defense, the Hales Corners aluminum drive begins under the direction of District Commander Mrs. Dennis Pierce.
- A kindergarten is approved by Hales Corners School Electors.
- Valley View voters decide to erect a two-room school at a cost not to exceed \$16,500.
- Emanuel Evangelical Church is formally joined with the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

### 70 YEARS AGO (1951)

- The Rapid Transit train makes its last trip to Milwaukee. (*See feature article in August issue.*)
- The Hales Corners School budget for next year is tentatively set at \$80,315.
- Ground is broken for the new \$220,000 Hales Corners English Evangelical Lutheran Church. The new building will be at 111th St. and Luther Ave.

### 60 YEARS AGO (1961)

- The Hales Corners Village Board appropriates \$10,000 for the removal of dead and diseased elm trees.
- The Experimental Aircraft Association announces plans to build a museum on Forest Home Ave.

### 50 YEARS AGO (1971)

- Plans for the Hales Corners Fourth of July celebration include skydivers.
- About a half dozen 18-year-olds register to vote in Hales Corners, responding to the recent Constitutional amendment lowering the voting age from 21 to 18.
- The Hales Corners Village Board adopts a resolution requesting traffic lights on 116th St. and Janesville Rd.

*Research by Katy Galewski*

## HALES CORNERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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