

A Tribute to Garland Wadsworth Pilot, Father, Husband, and Founder of EAA Chapter 83



EAA Chapter 83 wishes to bid farewell and Godspeed to one of its finest. Garland's love for aviation, especially recreational aviation, was evident to all who crossed his path. Garland was perhaps most responsible for the existence of EAA Chapter 83. He was among four individuals who sent letters to area pilots inviting them to attend an organizational meeting to form a Chapter in the New Experimental Aircraft Association. Approximately 75 people attended this first meeting. That was in early 1960. Only a few homebuilt aircraft plans and almost no kits were available at the time. Attendance dripped as pilots joined with others and formed partnerships, flying clubs, and bought used aircraft. A few remained interested and chapter 83 was chartered on March 1, 1960. Garland was one of the 10 original charter members. Three additional meetings were held before all activity ceased. In March of 1970, Garland again mailed a notice to all area pilots and others interested in reorganizing Chapter 83. They met in his shop on Sunday afternoon, March 8, 1970, from 3 until 5 pm. A list of those interested and the minutes of the meeting were sent to the EAA Office in June and the Chapter received its reissued charter on June 24, 1970. For many years following, Chapter 83 meetings were held at Garland's shop on south 7th Street with regular membership numbers around 24. Even after Garland was no longer able to fly, he still attended chapter meetings. He was happy to see his legacy carried on by a new generation of pilots.

The following was from Dean Wadsworth, one of Garland's son's. Our chapter received it shortly after Garland's passing.

I would like to thank EAA Chapter 83 and all the fine folks who made Garland Wadsworth (Dad) proud to be a member of your Chapter. Dad liked to fly and talk about flying. He has influenced and/or infected a lot of people with the aviation bug. I am the oldest of 5 brothers who all have their Private Pilot Certificates. Harley and Van also have instrument ratings. Between us, we currently have 6 airplanes, not counting Dad's Ercoupe and the VolksPlane project. I also have 3 sisters, none of whom have their pilot's license. Sister Joyce has been a promoter of aviation though, along with your help. She is a science teacher at Honey Creek Middle School and has provided a lot of the kids for the Young Eagles flights that Chapter 83 has been so faithful in providing

every year. I believe the world would be a better place to live in if every kid “believed he could fly.”



Garland's Cessna 170B

We grew up expecting to fly and I don't think Dad made any of us do it. In fact, I remember having to be pretty persistent about wanting to fly in order to get to do it. I think Dad was afraid I was going to wear out his Champ, I tried too! When I was a teenager, I remember flying places in it with Dad. He always did the flying when he was in the airplane. While at the destination though, Dad would be on the ground talking to people and I would be out shooting landings. In April of this year, I was visiting Mom and Dad in Terre Haute when I decided it would be nice to go circulate the oil in the Ercoupe since it had been sitting for several months. Dad was recovering from having a pacemaker installed and was not supposed to be doing anything strenuous. I thought about just sneaking out and flying the bird then telling Dad about it later. I knew he would be disappointed though if I didn't tell him first. When I was about ready to go, I mentioned it to him, kind of in passing. Boy did he light up! He was going to go too. I reminded him that he probably couldn't get in the front seat of the van to ride to the airport. He said he thought he could get in the back seat and he did with much effort. I reminded him that he could not get in the airplane and back out in his condition. That didn't matter -- he said he would just watch. We took his scooter along. When we got to Sky King airport, he go on the scooter and rode around supervising my every detail of preflight and told me again how to take off and land an Ercoupe. It was toward evening and the weather was nice with a gentle breeze. I took off and flew around for about 15 minutes and then started making a series of landings. All the time Dad was out between the hangars and the runway on his scooter watching. After I had made a landing or two, I noticed Brownie was over by Dad talking to him. Brownie had been out for his evening ride around the airport on his bicycle.

After an hour of shooting landing, they were still talking when I landed and put the plane back in the hangar. I thought, things haven't changed.

Dad has inspired a lot of people to fly because his excitement fir flying was so contagious. Anybody who has talked to him for very long has talked with him about airplanes. Even the nurses in the hospital had to endure a little hangar flying. He always carried pictures of his airplane with him and showed them to anyone who would listen.

Curt DeBaun told me recently that chapter 83 would not exist if not for Dad. Dad never mentioned or boasted about that to me. The comments he made to me about Chapter 83 was that there were a lot of people in it who liked to fly and that the membership had grown to about 100 members. He was excited about the success of the Chapter and the people who had been a spark plug for the Chapter. He said not all of them are homebuilders, but they all like to fly. I know he was thrilled to be a part of such an active chapter.



Garland's Champ before and after restoration

Garland owned 4 different aircraft. An Aeronca Champ, an Aeronca Chief, a Cessna 170B, and at the time of his death, he owned an Ercoupe. He also had a VolksPlane kit, which he never completed. I guess making a living to support 8 kids got in the way. Growing up, we were relatively poor, but had a Champ and a belief that we could fly.

C. Dean Wadsworth