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years as the program chair, I've stressed the program's message of earned reward, showing young people that, by disciplining and applying themselves, they can earn marvelous rewards, such as the freedom and thrill of flight," Ford said. "Now, Sully and Jeff will add an emphasis on the value of training, preparation, and teamwork. No one could bring more credibility in sharing these concepts with our youth."

Sullenberger and Skiles accepted the offer to lead the program in discussions with Poberezny and Ford that took place during this year's EAA AirVenture Oshkosh (Wisconsin).

Skiles and Sullenberger were inspired to get involved in the program during their visit at AirVenture. A native of Wisconsin, Skiles had been a regular to the annual fly-in. This was Sullenberger's first time to the event.

For Skiles, a rekindled enthusiasm for flight fueled his acceptance of the co-chair role. "I'm grateful to EAA and the AirVenture Oshkosh convention for allowing me to fall in love with aviation for a second time in my life. I'm eager to share this passion with young people and encourage participation in aviation," he said.

The EAA Young Eagles Program, now in its 17th year, has provided inspirational and educational first-flight experiences to nearly 1.5 million youth, thanks to the volunteer efforts of 42,000 EAA member pilots and countless supporters.

In addition to Ford, previous EAA Young Eagles

Program chairs were: Oscar-winning actor and pilot, Cliff Robertson (1992-1993); and the first pilot to break the sound barrier, Chuck Yeager (1994-2003).

Highlights of Harrison Ford's chairmanship of the EAA Young Eagles Program include the following:

- Nearly 500,000 young people received inspirational first-flight Young Eagles experiences while he chaired the program.
- He personally raised considerable funds for the program by donating auction items, such as movie-set experiences.
- He elevated the stature of the Gathering of Eagles event, which takes place during EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, to make it a more effective fundraising vehicle for the program.
- He enhanced the program's public profile and exposure.
- He emphasized the "ambassadorship" message, underscoring the EAA Young Eagles Program's significant potential to enhance the image of general aviation among policymakers and the broad public.
- He personally provided flights to nearly 300 Young Eagles.

Sporty's Pilot Shop, in partnership with EAA, provides free online flight training to participating youth who are inspired by the Young Eagles flight experience to continue pursuing an interest in aviation. ConocoPhillips is the presenting sponsor of the EAA Young Eagles Program. Learn more at www.young eagles.org. □

GRASSROOTS AVIATION

From GA To The Airlines & Back... Jeff Skiles Buys A Waco!

Story & Photos by Dave Weiman



What good is an EAA Young Eagles co-chairman if he doesn't have a general aviation aircraft to take kids flying? Especially when his predecessor, Harrison Ford, introduced young people to aviation using his de Havilland Beaver and helicopter?

Well, that's what Jeff Skiles thought, so after discussing it with his wife, Barb, and friends, he decided to buy a 1935 Waco YOC vintage cabin-class biplane, which an old airline



Jeff Skiles with his new 1935 Waco YOC biplane in Brodhead, Wis.



Jeff Skiles on approach to Runway 27 at Brodhead, Wisconsin.

pilot buddy of his, Larry Harmacinski, helped him to locate.

The Waco was owned for nearly three decades by R.J. Hardin, and then sold to Dr. Robert Jaeger who restored it before Skiles bought it earlier this fall (2009).

When first built, the YOC was a Waco CUC, with a Wright Whirlwind engine. Later, when the owner went back to Waco to order a new airplane, he insisted that Waco remove the Wright from the CUC and install it in his new airplane. During the subsequent aircraft overhaul, among other things, Waco then re-engined the CUC with a 275 hp Jacobs during the conversion to a YOC model.

Skiles' YOC is the only one currently flying in the world. He currently keeps the aircraft in Brodhead, Wisconsin – home of EAA Chapter 431 and the location of the Midwest Antique Airplane Club annual fly-in.

When it was announced that Jeff Skiles was named cochairman of EAA's Young Eagles program, I contacted him to set up a time when we could do a photo shoot of him and his new biplane. It was then that he invited me to go flying with him, which in turn became an invitation for him to fly with me.

Our flights were rather convenient, seeing that we both live in the same town – Oregon, Wisconsin, just 7 miles south of Madison.

I flew our Skylane to the airport in nearby Brooklyn, Wisconsin to pick up Jeff for the 20-minute flight to Brodhead. When I touched down at Brooklyn, Jeff had already met one of the locals – Pete Aarsvold of Verona, Wis. – who unbeknown to me was judging my landing. “On a scale of 1 to 10, I’ll give you a 9, Dave;” said Pete. “Gee, thanks, Pete!” I responded with disappointment.

Jeff intervene, commenting that he thought the landing was worth a “10,” and asked Pete what I had to do to earn it. Being the money king that he is at the local bank, Pete said greasing the palm of his hand never hurts. Jeff and I departed without further ado.

Shortly after takeoff, I asked Jeff to pull out the 2009-2010 edition of the Wisconsin DOT Airport Directory & Pilot’s Guide from the side pocket of the cabin, so we could check the airport elevation, frequency and the direction of the flight pattern at Brodhead. He graciously accepted his duties as first officer and relayed the information I needed.

Certainly, I wanted to make a decent landing at Brodhead knowing the celebrity I had onboard, so I gently set down and stopped short of the crosswind runway, at which time Jeff commented, “I will give you a 9 on that one.”

“What,” I asked, “only a 9? What do I have to do to earn a 10 from you?”

“You know what your buddy back in Brooklyn said,” remarked Jeff. He learns too quickly.

We parked and shut down the Skylane near his hangar and that’s when the fun began. Compared with the Skylane, Jeff’s Waco is a tank, but a beautiful tank. The aircraft takes two strong, young men to pull it out of the hangar, so we quickly looked around, saw no one but ourselves, and decided to give it a try. The soft ground on the apron didn’t help, but we managed. Getting the plane back in the hangar after our flight was more of a challenge.

With the Waco, you climb into the biplane from the cabin door. Jeff’s Waco is beautifully restored with leather interior and aside from only a few modern radios, the aircraft is as original as one can get.

We taxied out to Runway 27 for departure, and this time it was my turn to be the first officer, so I pointed out a flock of geese to the east.

“Oh, those things follow me everywhere I go,” said Jeff with the sense of humor that earned him applause at EAA AirVenture-Oshkosh last July (2009).

“I know...that’s why I’m pointing them out to you,” I said.

All joking aside, we both kept an eye on the geese as we prepared for takeoff.

With one last glance, Jeff pushed in the throttle and we were off in the opposite direction from the geese.

There’s something about flying in a vintage aircraft that gets a pilot’s blood flowing, just thinking about the people that have flown the aircraft before you, about the time and effort involved in restoring it, and about the golden age of aviation when pioneers like Lindbergh and Earhart were making history. It’s a good feeling!



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I was also in the moment, realizing that I was flying with the guy that had landed an airliner on the Hudson River. Jeff remained focus on our flight, as I know he was focused that cold, wintry day on January 15, 2009.

In addition to flying Young Eagles in the Waco (his first Young Eagles were his three children), Jeff is looking forward to hanging out with his fellow antiquers at the Waco fly-ins; the Antique Airplane Association Fly-In in Blakesburg, Iowa; and EAA AirVenture-Oshkosh in 2010.

When he owned his 1947 Cessna 140, Jeff didn't fly it that much because there really wasn't any social element for him, he said. The Waco, on the other hand, came complete with a large extended family of Waco owners, two Waco owners' clubs with their own fly-ins, and of course the even larger vintage airplane crowd.

"I am extremely excited about flying to the various vintage airplane events in the area next year," said Jeff. It was the camaraderie he was missing for many years. His involvement in EAA AirVenture-Oshkosh this year rekindled his spirit for sport aviation, which had been lost somewhere in the airline terminals he frequented over the past decade.

We flew around the Brodhead area for awhile, and Jeff handed me the controls so I could get a feel for the Waco. After about 30 minutes, we landed, pushed the Waco back into its hangar, and flew home in the Skylane.

I haven't had Jeff sign my logbook yet, but I will. It's not every day you fly with a guy who can land and score a perfect "10."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jeffrey B. "Jeff" Skiles was the First Officer on U.S.

Airways Flight 1549 on January 15, 2009, when the Airbus A320 in which he and Captain Chesley B. "Sully" Sullenberger were flying hit a flock of geese causing both engines to lose power. They had just departed LaGuardia International Airport in New York on a flight to Charlotte, North Carolina, and were at an altitude of 3,200 feet when they were faced with the decision of either returning to LaGuardia, trying to make nearby Teterboro, or landing instead in the Hudson River. With but minutes before touchdown, Capt. Sullenberger told air traffic controllers that they would be landing in the Hudson. Not sure if he heard him correctly, the controller asked him to repeat, and Capt. Sullenberger reaffirmed, "We are landing in the Hudson." Both Sully and Skiles responded to the incident with professionalism, teamwork and determination and together they landed safely, and all 155 passengers and crew were rescued without serious injury. □

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

First Lee, Then Rose Gilligan

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN. – Rose Marie Gilligan, 77, died October 22, 2009, at her home in South Texas.

Rose was the wife of Lee Gilligan

who together built Crystal Shamrock, one of the largest flight schools and charter operations in Minnesota at Minneapolis-Crystal Airport. Lee Gilligan, 76, died July 30, 2009.

"Gilligan established a flight school

that allowed pilots to be trained and eligible for a Private Pilot Certificate in just 35 hours prior to adoption of FAR 141."

Rose Gilligan was born July 7, 1932 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. □

Poberezny To Be Inducted Into Air Show Hall of Fame

OSHKOSH, WIS. – EAA President & Chairman Tom Poberezny will be among three performers to be inducted into the "Air Show Hall of Fame" during the



International Council of Air Shows (ICAS) Convention in Las Vegas, December 6-9, 2009. The awards program is sponsored by the ICAS Foundation.

Poberezny's 25-year career with the Eagles Aerobatic Team was legendary, with fellow team members Charlie Hillard and Gene Soucy. As an air show organizer, Poberezny has overseen the growth and success of EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wis.

over the past 30 years.

Other inductees will include Charlie Kulp and the late Bobby Younkin. In 1971, Charlie Kulp became a charter member/founder of the famous Flying Circus located in Bealton, Virginia. Bobby Younkin was best known for his Twin Beech, Lear Jet, and "Samson" biplane aerobatic routines. Younkin also performed in a T6, Decathlon and stock Stearmn for many years. □

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