

# Paradise Found

## Heaven on earth for light flying enthusiasts

**O**n weekends, the airpark is a home away from home for flying enthusiasts from throughout western Illinois and eastern Iowa. Campers and tents dot the perimeter of the 26-acre airpark, while aircraft of all types come and go throughout the day. “We have Cubs, Champs, Citabrias, Stearmans, a Cessna 210, and a host of other fixed-wing airplanes along with some helicopters, gyroplanes, powered parachutes and trikes that visit the airpark regularly. That’s in addition to the 27 Challengers, the miniMAX, Vista Cruiser and RV-9 that are based here,” said owner Jim Robinson.

In the evenings, the weekend fly-in community gathers around grills on the clubhouse porch, sharing food and camaraderie. “If we have enough wood, we’ll have a bonfire in the fire pit and get our guitars out for a sing-a-long. There’s activity nearly every weekend from April through October,” Jim added. “We take Mondays off to rest from the fun of the weekend. Otherwise, I’m teaching flight instruction mornings and evenings Tuesday through Sunday, and working

About 150 miles west  
of Chicago, 5 miles  
off Interstate  
Highway 88, down a  
quiet country road  
you’ll find para-  
dise...if you enjoy  
flying for fun. Erie  
Airpark is the place,  
and it may well be  
one of the busiest air-  
parks in the country.

MARY JONES

on airplanes, while my wife, Sue, manages the day-to-day airpark activities.”

Jim and Sue have owned the airpark since April 1999, purchasing it after the death of the original owner, Jerry Earl. Jim recounted how they came to own it, “I came home from work one night after Jerry died, and Sue said, ‘Jim, if we sold our T-shirt business and the house, we could buy Erie Airport and you could become a flight instructor and we could sell airplanes.’” With a big smile, Jim added, “Man, I love that woman!”

Jim started flying in 1989. He stated he took his first flight then, in a Challenger. “I was hooked immediately. I went home and sold my 1970 Boss 3 Mustang and bought a Challenger kit. In 1992, I soloed in that airplane after taking flying lessons from Jerry. Back then, I never dreamed I’d own Erie Airpark.” Jim became an EAA Ultralight Flight Instructor in June 2000 and estimates he’s introduced more than 60 people to flying in the last five years. As part of his instructional program, he conducts ground school classes throughout the year in a classroom adjacent to the clubhouse.

# Get Into the Loop!



Subscribe to  
e-Hot Line, EAA's  
free weekly  
members-only  
electronic  
newsletter



To start receiving e-Hot Line this week, visit the members only site at [www.eaa.org](http://www.eaa.org), or simply click on the "Subscribe to e-Hot Line" box on the home page.

- Get dialed into the latest EAA News You Can Use
- Learn about new developments in recreational aviation
- See a complete listing of EAA Chapter events and other aviation events of the week
- View the popular Question of the Week
- Choose from full html (graphic) or plain text versions



Erie Airpark's grass strip totals 2,300 feet. Currently, there are 27 hangars on the west side of the airport...with three new hangars to be added this spring.

COURTESY ERIE AIRPARK

The airpark is home to 27 hangars and an equal number of aircraft...most of them Challengers. Jim is a Challenger dealer and the ex-officio company pilot, as Erie Airpark is 20 miles east of Moline, Illinois, home of the Challenger factory, Quad City Ultralight Aircraft Corp. "When the factory has potential buyers, they'll send them here, and I take them on an introductory flight," Jim explained.

The grass strip is 2,300-feet long, though officially it's listed as 1,700 feet because of a 600-foot displacement area adjacent to the large hangar where Jim works on aircraft. Wires on the north end of the runway have been buried to provide a clear approach.

To encourage people to come to the airpark, Jim and Sue plan monthly events in addition to welcoming the casual weekend and summer evening regulars, and they sponsor community-related activities. Each May, in combination with a local car club, Erie Airpark hosts a Fly-in/Drive Show 'n Shine weekend. Jim explained, "The car restorers bring their vintage cars and park them along the runway, and we pull our aircraft out of the hangars and then we 'drool' over each others' toys. We invite everyone from the community to come out and learn about the airpark and flying. It's a great way to interact with the local community."

Weather permitting, every Memorial Day, some of the airpark pilots fly over the local cemeteries and drop rose petals to show respect for area veterans. "It's a way we can show our



WE'VE  
GOT YOU  
COVERED

These are the **first** tools you need to buy when you re-cover your airplane. Anyone who has used them will tell you they're the next best thing to having one of our staff right beside you. The **VHS** tape and the **DVD** will give you the Big Picture, and the **manual** will walk you step by step through every part of the process. You're never on your own when you're using Poly-Fiber.

**POLY FIBER**  
Aircraft Coatings

[www.polyfiber.com](http://www.polyfiber.com)  
e-mail: [info@polyfiber.com](mailto:info@polyfiber.com)  
800-362-3490



Jim and Sue Robinson on the steps of the "control tower" that overlooks Erie Airpark. The original airport hangar is in the background.

COURTESY ERIE AIRPARK



KATHY HOUSEGGER PHOTOS

There's always lots of food and camaraderie inside the Erie Airpark Clubhouse.



appreciation to the community, too, for accepting us as neighbors” said Jim. In addition, EAA Ultralight Chapter 188, the Illowa (Illinois/Iowa) Sport Flyers, meets monthly at the airpark, and Jim frequently organizes impromptu Saturday morning Dawn Patrols to area airports for breakfast sorties. Each fall, as the flying season winds down, Jim and Sue host a USO Party to celebrate another successful flying season.

To keep everyone informed about the airpark’s activities, Jim and Sue maintain an airpark website, [www.erieairpark.com](http://www.erieairpark.com), that provides information on upcoming events as well as news about members of Chapter 188 and other airpark regulars.

Like many others, Jim and Sue are eagerly anticipating the final sport pilot

and light-sport aircraft rule, hoping it will make it easier for more people to choose aviation as a recreational hobby. Jim intends to become a sport pilot flight instructor and possibly even a designated pilot examiner, in time. “We’re looking to grow with the rest of the light aviation world.”



**TITAN**  
A I R C R A F T

## T-51 MUSTANG

**Technical Data**

- Gross Weight 1232 lb
- Limit Load +6/-4g's
- Empty Weight 750 lb
- Vne 197 mph
- Cruise Speed 150 mph
- Stall Speed 39 mph
- Climb Rate 1200 f/m
- Take Off Run 300 ft
- Landing Run 300 ft
- Range 690 mi
- Engine: 100 hp 912S

Titan Aircraft is offering a 3/4 scale P-51 replica that combines friendly, low speed handling characteristics with agility and high performance. When powered by the 912S engine, the T-51 yields cruise speeds in the 150 mph range with a 39 mph stall speed in landing configuration.

**Kit Price:**  
**\$37,500.00**

**FOR MORE INFO CONTACT:**  
**TITAN AIRCRAFT**  
 1419 State Route 45 South  
 P O Box 190  
 Austinburg, Ohio 44010  
 Phone: (440) 275-3205  
 Fax: (440) 275-3192  
[www.titanaircraft.com](http://www.titanaircraft.com)

See us at Sun-N-Fun 2004 Booth's UL-72 & UL-73.  
 \* Pricing & Specifications subject to change without notice.





Each fall, the Robinsons host a USO Party at the end of the flying season. Here, Jim and Sue, far left, pose with Mike and Kathy Housenga, and Steve and Darlene Bornhoeft, in their World War II garb.




This past summer, Erie Airpark added a meeting room onto its clubhouse to provide a place for ground school classes and other social events.



Airpark regulars gather for weekend cookouts frequently during the summer months.


In the meantime, they're enjoying operating the airpark every day and have never regretted the decision they made five years ago. And, they're prov-

ing that with hard work and dedication, a local flight park can thrive and provide a great community for aviators of all interests. 

**Six Chuter Inc.**  
Powered Parachutes  
Since 1991


Honesty, integrity and a commitment to quality and excellence since 1991. The things Legends are made of!

**2004 Legend by Six Chuter Inc.**



**Sport Pilot Ready**

**Starting at only \$12,850**



[www.sixchuter.com](http://www.sixchuter.com) 509/966-8211

**OCT. 28th - 31st 2004**

 **U.S. SPORT AVIATION EXPO**

**AT SEBRING**

**4 DAYS IN FLORIDA**

**Featuring SPORT PILOT & LIGHT AVIATION**

**SPORT AVIATION IS HERE!**

- Exhibits
- Experiments
- Light sport aircraft
- Supply line
- Eyes by mail

**DAILY ACTIVITIES**

- Forums
- Uplights
- Food
- Entertainment
- Boats and Regattas
- Demonstrations

**Enjoy beautiful Highlands County**  
Championship golf courses / Lakes & fishing / Marais  
Great dining / Shuttle and rental cars / RV & tent camping on site  
Overnight accommodations

**For more information**  
Phone: (863)655-6444 ext. 117  
Fax: 888-740-7628  
[www.sport-aviation-expo.com](http://www.sport-aviation-expo.com)  
[expo@sebring-airport.com](mailto:expo@sebring-airport.com)  
128 Authority Lane Sebring, FL 33870

**YOU KNOW SEBRING FOR GREAT RACING - NOW AVIATION**