



## Pancakes... And remembering Steve Wittman

Mary Jones, EAA 224626

It took some talking to convince my friend Denny to come with me to Oshkosh's EAA Chapter 252 pancake breakfast on Saturday, April 4. He is, after all, a pancake connoisseur, and frankly, the pancakes at most pancake breakfasts just aren't that good. No offense meant to the 252 gang, but you just can't beat homemade, whole wheat blueberry pancakes, Denny's specialty.

But pancake breakfasts aren't just about the pancakes. They're about people enjoying the company of others, raising money for a good cause, creating community spirit, and/or a host of other reasons. Airplanes and those little blobs of flour seem to go well together; probably because it's relatively easy to make pancakes in a hangar ersatz kitchen. Besides, Chapter 252 had the use of Pietenpol guru Bill Rewey's famous pancake wheel (shown in photo), which really turns pancake making into a production line. Good thing, 'cause Chapter 252 served some 250 people that morning. I think we convinced Bill to share his design, and we'll include it in an upcoming Shop Talk column.

Chapter 252's breakfast was a celebration in honor of the 105th anniversary of Steve Wittman's birthday, the gentleman for whom the Oshkosh airport is named. Wittman Regional Airport had been known as Winnebago County Airport, and Steve was its manager for 38 years. Renaming the field in 1972 was defi-

nately a fitting tribute to a man who offered much to aviation...the homebuilt Wittman Tailwind and its spring steel gear, Buttercup, and the great racers—*Chief Oshkosh*, *Bonzo*, and *Buster*.

EAA's Director of Member Programs Charlie Becker shared with me that in 1954 Steve was the first person to have a two-place homebuilt aircraft certificated under the provisions of


### But pancake breakfasts aren't just about the pancakes.

CAR 174-3, which meant amateur-built aircraft that met certain provisions of the regulation could be certified to carry non-revenue passengers. Writing in *Experimenter* at that time, Paul said, "EAA feels it is a stepping stone for the homebuilders and will encourage an increasing number of individuals to design and build two- and four-place aircraft....proving that it (an airplane) doesn't have to be factory built to be safe and an excellent performer...."

Jim Cunningham, a biographer of Wittman's life, flew his Piper Arrow in from Normal, Illinois, to give a brief talk about Steve's life, which many enjoyed. Others in the room could have shared their own memories of Steve, because many had spent years in friendship with him. I'm one

who had the honor to spend time with Steve. Dare I say I even have his signature in my logbook after flying with him in the *O&O Special* at Leeward Air Ranch once? What a thrill that was!

This year's Chapter 252 breakfast was a busy place...lots of airplanes flew in or taxied over from their hangars on the field. It was a beautiful, sunny early spring morning with temps in the low 40s by 9 a.m. Still, Denny and I admired the stoicism of whoever flew in the neat-looking open-cockpit Starduster Too that was parked on the ramp...until we learned its owner, Randy Novak, just taxied it over from his hangar. Syd Cohen flew his brightly polished Ercoupe in from Wausau, Wisconsin, and was having a great time talking about how airplanes fly to the Young Eagles who were going for their rides. I don't even know if he got any pancakes.

But, as I said, pancake breakfasts aren't just about pancakes...especially at airports. They're about people sharing friendship and the camaraderie of a passion they enjoy, and nowhere was that more evident than in the smiling faces and the animated conversations that took place inside the Wittman Terminal and around the airplanes parked on the ramp that Saturday morning. I'm sure each of you could write a similar tale about a pancake breakfast at your airport. The simple things in life truly often are our greatest treasures. 

Copyright © 2009 by the Experimental Aircraft Association Inc. All rights reserved. *EAA SPORT PILOT & LIGHT-SPORT AIRCRAFT* (USPS 600-650; ISSN 1548-7547) is published and owned exclusively by the Experimental Aircraft Association Inc. and is published monthly at EAA Aviation Center, 3000 Poberezny Rd., P.O. Box 3086, Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54903-3086. Periodicals postage paid at Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901 and at additional mailing offices. EAA membership and *EAA SPORT PILOT* magazine are available for \$40 per year, of which \$20 is for the publication of *EAA SPORT PILOT*. Membership is open to all who are interested in aviation. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to *EAA SPORT PILOT*, P.O. Box 3086, Oshkosh, WI 54903-3086. PM 40063731 Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Pitney Bowes IMS, Station A, P.O. Box 54, Windsor, ON N9A 6J5. **Foreign and APO Address:** Please allow at least two months for delivery of *EAA SPORT PILOT* to foreign and APO addresses via surface mail. **EAA Statement of Policy:** Material published in *EAA SPORT PILOT* is contributed by EAA members and other interested parties. Opinions expressed in articles are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Experimental Aircraft Association, Inc. Accuracy of the material is the sole responsibility of the contributor. **Advertising:** EAA does not guarantee or endorse any product offered through the advertising. Refer to Classified Advertising Section under "Plans" for policy regarding the advertising of plans for aircraft. We invite constructive criticism and welcome any report of inferior merchandise obtained through our advertising so that corrective measures can be taken.