



# THE WRIGHT FLYER



Aviation Trail, Inc.

Summer 2011

## ATI CELEBRATES 30<sup>th</sup> WITH OLD-FASHIONED, ICE CREAM SOCIAL

ATI will celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary during National Aviation Day weekend with an old-fashioned, fun-filled ice cream social—with FREE ice cream.

The place is Wright Brothers Hill Sunday, Aug. 21, from 1-3 p.m. on Wright-Patterson Air Force Base where there will be activities for young and old in the shadow of the Wright Memorial.

According to ATI President Marvin Christian, attractions for all will include aviation movies in the auditorium of the National Park Service's East Interpretive Center and, for the kids, games and bottle rockets provided by the WACO Learning Center in Troy.

As a special attraction, a costumed Wilbear Wright aviator teddy bear will be interacting with the crowd and handing out the revised Wilbear informational brochure recently completed by Aviation Trail.

"We're pleased to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> on the third day of a weekend of events planned by the base and the National Park Service," he said. "On Friday, National Aviation Day, the base will host a 5K/10K run at 6 p.m. Entry cost is \$5 without a T shirt and \$10 with a T shirt.

"On Saturday the Huffman Prairie Aero Carnival will be held by the National Park Service on Huffman Prairie where Wilbur and Orville Wright conducted flight testing. Prairie activities will include hay rides, a flight school program, silent movies and children's heritage games. Food service will be from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and coupons will be given out for the FREE ice cream on Sunday.

"On Sunday ATI will give out coupons for the FREE ice cream in the NPS's East Interpretive Center; they can be redeemed outside on the plaza. One cup of ice cream per person, please." Marvin Christian said.

Aug. 3, 1981, was the date of incorporation for Aviation Trail as a not-for-profit organization focused on using Dayton's aviation heritage to market the region—a heritage that began with the invention of the airplane by Wilbur and Orville Wright in 1903 and continues on to today's projects of the future now under development at Wright-Patterson.

For more information on the Air Force's 5K/10K run, call 937.904.9381. The National Park Service at 937.225-7705 will answer questions on the Aero Carnival; Aviation Trail's number is 937.443.0793



Stacy Baker aka Wilbear Wright, the aviator teddy, handed out Wilbear brochures at the National Museum of the U. S. Air Force recently.

### WILBEAR WRIGHT AVIATOR TEDDY BEAR PROGRAM FLIES TO AVIATION TRAIL

The aviator teddy bear Wilbear Wright has flown a short hop from Wright-Dunbar Village to Aviation Trail, Inc.

The diminutive aviator bear—complete with leather jacket and cap, goggles and white scarf—now lives at 16 S. Williams St. in Dayton where ATI is managing the popular program for one year.

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Previously, since 2009, Wright-Dunbar ran the giveaway program and more than 2,000 people were rewarded with a free Wilbear Wright bear for visiting at least six designated aviation sites in the Dayton region.

The program was funded by a grant from Preserve America, a White House initiative that encouraged and supported community efforts to preserve and enjoy the country's priceless cultural and natural heritage.

"When funding was terminated for Preserve America, the folks at Wright-Dunbar looked to ATI to continue the program with private funding," according to Marvin Christian, ATI president. "After our board of trustees voted to take the program at our April meeting we began work immediately expanding the program and revising the informational brochure on Wilbear.

"Patty Wagner, our newest board members, took the throttle and got the ATI Wilbear Wright aviator teddy bear program airborne. You might say it debuted at the Vectren Dayton Air Show where a full-sized, costumed Wilbear worked the crowds. And Wilbear also will make an appearance at ATI's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration Sunday, Aug. 21, at Wright Brothers Hill.

"We most appreciate the organizations, besides ATI, which are helping us fund the current Wilbear Wright effort: the National Park Service, the National Aviation Heritage Alliance, AAA of the Miami Valley, the Dayton/Montgomery County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Greene County Convention and Visitors Bureau."

"The cost of the costumed Wilbear Wright was handled by D/MCVB and the brochure paper was supplied by New Page Corporation. We're very thankful to these generous donors," he said.

Christian added that there are some changes to the Wilbear program, which should make it even easier for visitors to obtain a bear. Five additional sites north of Dayton have joined the program for visitation: Wright State Special Collections and Archives, the Armstrong Air & Space Museum in Wapakoneta, Historic WACO Field and Museum, Grimes Field, and Champagne County Aviation Museum.

That brings to 14 the number of sites for visitation—seven are now required for a bear. All sites are explained briefly and depicted on a map in the new Wilbear brochure—along with full instructions for obtaining the bear, in person or by mail.

For copies of the new brochure on the Wilbear Wright aviator teddy bear program, call 937.443.0793. Brochures also are available for downloading at each of the Wilbear Wright program websites.

## WRIGHT "B" SILVER BIRD IN FLIGHT TESTING

Flight testing is underway for the much-anticipated Silver Bird—a look-alike for Wilbur and Orville Wright's 1910 model B—at Springfield-Beckley Municipal Airport, Springfield, Ohio.

First flight was completed June 14 with volunteer pilots Don Gum and Don Stroud taking off and landing at Springfield-Beckley after more than a 30-minute flight that reached an altitude of 4,300 feet.

Developed by the Wright "B," Inc. the Silver Bird has been in development since 2007 at Dayton-Wright Brothers Airport in Miamisburg. It is the second in the organization's fleet of planes. The other, older "B" look-alike—dubbed the Brown Bird—continues to fly, but is more difficult to transport than the Silver Bird.

The Silver Bird's first flight was staged from Springfield-Beckley because it has a longer runway with more open fields around it than exist at the Dayton-Wright location.

The Silver Bird's second test flight was piloted by volunteer pilots Thomas Walters and Richard Stepler.

Both the Silver and Brown look-alikes of the Wrights' B model aircraft were built by local aviation enthusiasts; their "home base" is at Dayton-Wright Brothers Airport in a hangar that is similar to the Wrights' 1910 hangar at Huffman Prairie Flying Field near Dayton.

### John Zampatti 1922-2011

John Zampatti, who died April 15, 2011, was a member of the Aviation Trail, Inc. Board of Advisors from 1993 to 2004 and a general member until 2009.

After retirement, John developed a strong interest in his community's local public access TV and suggested several TV projects Aviation Trail might undertake. One of the most successful of these was a 31-minute tape about 20 selected sites on the tourist aviation trail released in 1995. It was titled, *"On the Aviation Trail in Dayton, Ohio"* and was divided into two segments: *"The Story of the Wright Brothers"* and *"Beyond the Wright Brothers."* John was the volunteer director and videographer (using his own equipment), and Aviation Trail member, Mary Ann Johnson was the volunteer script writer and director.

The tape was well received as a sales item and promotion piece. It also was a finalist in a regional contest for public access TV stations in the community-public awareness category.



*Huffman Prairie Flying Field with replica of a Wrights' hangar.*

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base has been recognized with a prestigious Department of Defense environmental award for its outstanding achievements in conserving and sustaining its natural and cultural resources.

Those resources include the Huffman Prairie Flying Field and Prairie, as well as numerous buildings that have been the sites of the nation's most historic events. Many of the historic structures are on the National Register of Historic Places and portions of the base are under consideration as a National Historic Landmark.

The base's 88<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing, Civil Engineering Directorate, Environmental Branch, is a partner with the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park in managing the Flying Field and Prairie. A panel of judges representing federal and state agencies and public members selected the winners of this year's awards which have been given since 1962.

The award to Wright-Patterson was presented June 8 in the Pentagon by Bob Perciasepe, deputy administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. Paul Woodruff and Raymond Baker, both of Wright-Patterson's Environmental Branch, accepted the award.

Huffman Prairie Flying Field east of Dayton is where Wilbur and Orville Wright conducted their aircraft's flight testing beginning in 1904. Later The Wright Company operated a flying school there from 1910-1916 and trained early aviators. Prairie visitors see replicas of the Wrights' 1905 hangar and a catapult used to launch their craft.

The Cultural Resource Team of the Environmental Branch is entrusted with the base's ongoing preservation efforts for a variety of structures. The buildings range from 19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouses—now used as commanders' residences—to World War II airplane testing complexes to facilities built specifically to develop new technologies at the height of the Cold War. Many of those already are on the National Register of Historic Places.

## **A REMEMBRANCE OF HAROLD JOHNSON'S EVENTFUL FLIGHT TO ALASKA**

Editor's note: After ATI member Harold Johnson's death Jan. 12 of this year, Aviation Trail learned of one of his more adventure-some flights—to Alaska to deliver a Piper Cub. We hope you enjoy the story.

Harold Johnson, the Flying Mayor of Moraine, loved to relate the many stories of his flying experiences and the years of running Moraine Air Park (earlier known as South Dayton Airport).

A review of some of his better-known feats is the seven years (seven days per week) of performing air shows (Snoopy and the Red Baron) at then Kings Island Amusement Park near Cincinnati, flying in the filming of a WKRP television show episode, and landing in a red WACO on the expressway in downtown Dayton..

His most daredevil adventure, however, may be a trip up the Alcan Highway during winter in a Piper Cub – very cold (-40 F one day), short days (four hours of daylight), no heat, no navigational equipment (follow the roads) and no communications capability--plus a heavy load.

The task was brought on when Harold sold the airplane with the stipulation that it must be delivered, along with its new owner to Kodiak Island. The trip began on November 13, 1969, (the day before the Apollo 12 launch) and took more than three weeks due to the short range of the Cub and the harsh conditions.

More than two dozen airport stops were necessary in addition to road landings where fuel had to be brought in via snowmobile.

The hand-propped aircraft needed a warm engine for a successful start, requiring short layovers, engine heaters (when available), and, in one case, a fire built under the plane. At least once the engine oil was drained, kept hot over the stove, but quickly became molasses when returned to the engine.

In case of a wild animal encounter along the way, Harold had at his disposal his trusty bow and arrows stored in the overhead.

The Cub with its passengers successfully arrived at its destination and the pleased, new owner rewarded Harold with a promised hunting trip.

Thus, Harold was in a group that canoed into a remote area in quest of moose or bear. But somehow Harold became separated and, with darkness approaching, the hunter became the hunted. Without his heavy coat and other provisions, Harold spent the night climbing higher and higher in a tree as the bears milled below.

Meanwhile, the remaining party had built a large fire in an effort to attract Harold's attention, but it wasn't until morning, with the smell of smoke, that Harold rejoined the party. No bear kill that year, but during a subsequent visit--this time accompanied by wife Thelma and via the airline--Harold successfully bagged his bear.



## ATI FOUNDING MEMBER PAUL BROWN DIED APRIL 22



Paul P. Brown (right) at ATI Trailblazer Dinner with wife Doris and son Steve.

Paul P. Brown, 85, a founding member of Aviation Trail -- and an emeritus trustee since December 2005--died April 22, just six days after he presented his son Steve with Aviation Trail's 2011 Trailblazer Award.

Paul and his wife Doris of 64 years of marriage were residents of Brookhaven Retirement Community and members of Shiloh United Church of Christ where memorial services were held.

Besides his wife, he is survived by three sons and daughters-in-law, Stephen and Eileen, Stanley and Laurie and Gregory and Rebby and eight grandchildren.

Paul was graduated from Wilbur Wright High School in Dayton and received a B.S. degree in marine engineering from Kings Point US Merchant Marine Academy and a B.S. in architectural engineering from Ohio State University in 1951. He founded Brown and Head Architects in 1954, was responsible for over 700 area buildings and was past president of the Dayton Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Paul held pilot certificates for sailplanes, single-engine airplanes, and hot air balloons, owned various models of each, and was an active member of QB.

Using his architectural skills, he assisted Aviation Trail in its restoration of two local, historic, aviation-related buildings: The Wright Cycle Co. and the Hoover Block buildings.

Additionally, he served many years on the Board of Directors and nominating committee of the National Aviation Hall of Fame and was involved with all aspects of Freemasonry and numerous community organizations.

Knowing how much Paul will be missed, Aviation Trail extends its sympathy to the Brown family.

## 1911—THE YEAR OF THE WRIGHTS' *VIN FIZ*

The year 1911 marked attempts of early aviators to make record-setting transcontinental flights.

One of those flights was piloted by Calbraith Perry "Cal" Rodgers flying the Wrights' specially built Model EX built in Dayton at the Wright Company factory in 1911.

The plane was named the *Vin Fiz* for a soft drink bottled by Rodgers' sponsor, Armour & Co. and it was competing to win a \$50,000 Hearst Transcontinental prize—provided the trip took fewer than 30 days.



Rodgers' cross-country trek was supported by the Wright Company and was shadowed with a three-car train arranged by Armour that included mechanic Charlie Taylor (builder of the Wrights' original engine who was paid \$10 a day plus expenses), a machine shop and a large stock of spare parts.

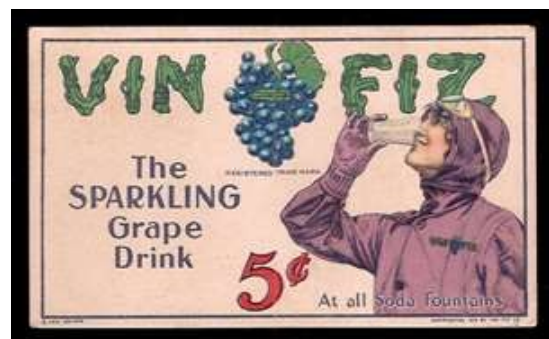
Rodgers left New York's Sheepshead Bay on Sept. 17, 1911, and his trip involved 69 stops, and at least 16 crashes.

According to Tom Crouch in *The Bishop's Boys*, "He ended the flight with a pair of crutches strapped to the wing of the airplane. He had broken his ankle landing at Pasadena on Nov. 12 and spent a month in bed before attempting the short final leg of his journey to the Pacific shore.

"Only the honor of the thing sustained him—he was not even close to the one-month time limit for the Hearst Prize."

Rodgers reached the surf at Long Beach, Calif., on Dec. 10, 1911--84 days after leaving New York.

Rodgers' flying career, however, was to end prematurely. On April 3, 1912, while landing on the beach at Long Beach he swerved to avoid seagulls—a tragic maneuver. Cal Rodgers died instantly of a broken neck.



## Member Profile

### Lea Fry

By Mary Ann Johnson

Lea Fry has been associated with Aviation Trail, Inc. since November 1981, when her husband Bill was elected the organization's first treasurer. The election of officers was one of the requirements of changing the informal committee format to a formal, legally recognized not-for-profit corporation.

Bill Fry had been introduced to the Board of Trustees by Paul Brown, a friend and former client of Bill when he had his own accounting company. By the time he joined Aviation trail, Bill had retired and was teaching at the University of Dayton.

Several years later, Bill developed some health problems that made it important he and Lea spend the colder months in a warmer climate. Then, in 1987, at an urging of his doctor, he and his wife moved to Sun City West, Ariz., permanently, and Bill was replaced as treasurer by Roger McClure.

After the move to Arizona, Lea joined the local DAR chapter and became interested in giving presentations to various groups as a volunteer. Some were presentations about the Wright Brothers and Aviation Trail, topics she and Bill kept up on after they left Dayton. Other presentations were about the history of the United States flag that earned her the title, The Flag Lady.

The flag presentations grew out of two lucky incidents. The first was related to the winner of a student poetry contest about the flag, which was sponsored by Lea's DAR chapter.



Katelyn Bills of Dayton, Ohio, models a formal gown sewn from an American nylon parachute by ATI member Lea Fry of San Marcos, Calif. Mrs. Fry's husband Bill, who was in the U.S. Army Air Corps in the Philippines in World War II, brought the parachute home with him in December 1945. Mrs. Fry has donated the dress to the Aviation Trail Parachute Museum. See Lea Fry's Member Profile in this newsletter.

As part of the ceremony honoring the winner at the school where he was a student, Lea gave a talk about the history of the country's flag. A front page article in the local newspaper by a reporter who had heard Lea's talk lauded the presentation and suggested that those who wanted a good program for a meeting of their



*Lea Fry stands at a podium while speaking to a group about the American flag, with miniature flags of many countries in the foreground.*

group should contact Lea and gave the details on how to reach her. After the article appeared, the invitations poured in from various groups, ranging from schools to state conventions. And people started giving her flags to add to her collection of over 50, some of which dated back to the 1800s. Lea always used a display of flags from her collection in her programs and soon became famous as The Flag Lady. The flag talks usually were presented as part of the living history project of the Freedom Foundation of Valley Forge, of which she was a member.

Bill Fry was a WWII veteran, joining the Army in April 1941 and serving until the end of 1945. At first he was stationed at posts in the United States. Then in 1944, he was sent to the Philippines as commander of the 2015 Quartermaster Truck Company, which transported troops and supplies for the 5th Air Force. During this assignment, the men lived in canvas tents. To help alleviate the intense heat generated by the constant sunshine of the area, they fastened parachutes under their tent's ceiling. After the fighting ended in 1945, Bill brought home with him the nylon parachute from his tent, thinking his wife could make a dress out of the material. And that is what she did. She personally dyed the parachute a pale green and made a floor-length formal gown for herself. Then she wore the gown to important formal occasions around Dayton so Bill could make business contacts to help ease his way back into civilian life as a CPA. Later Lea learned Bill was color blind and was never able to appreciate how nice his wife looked in her pretty green dress.

Inspired by an article about a wedding dress made from a white silk German parachute that was donated to Aviation Trail Parachute Museum, Lea decided to also donate her formal dress made from an American nylon parachute. Plans are under development for a joint display of the two dresses.

Bill Fry died in early 2002, 60 years after he and Lea married. In 2003, Lea moved to a retirement community in San Marcos, Calif. to be near her four children. Today, her only connection to Dayton is through her membership in Aviation Trail, Inc.



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## JIM MOSES WELCOMED AS NEW ATI TREASURER

The ATI Board of Trustees welcomed Jim Moses as treasurer to its June meeting.

Jim takes the books from Bill McNabb who has been temporary treasurer since the death of Joe Sonderman who filled the post for several years and died last fall.

Currently Jim is chief financial officer/treasurer of AAA Miami Valley—a position he has held for eight years. He is formerly president/CFO of Matrix Systems, a supplier of access control systems.

He is the outgoing president of the Dayton Chapter of Financial Executives International.

A native of the Dayton area, Jim was one of the original owners of Plastic Trim Inc. located in Beavercreek and has spent the better part of two decades in the automotive supply business.

Raised in Miamisburg, Ohio, and a graduate in 1966 from Miamisburg High School, he pursued a college degree for 22 years—mostly attending night school while raising a family--until 1988 when he earned a B.S. degree with dual majors in accounting and finance from Wright State University.

Jim was married in 1970 to Gail Sharp, a graduate of Belmont High School in Dayton. They have two children, Brad, 38, and Stephanie, 35, and two grandsons, Ethan 13, and Brenden, 10.

### WACO VINTAGE FLY-IN SET FOR SEPT. 16-18

Mark your calendar for the WACO Vintage Fly-In to be held at Historic WACO Airfield in Troy Sept. 16-18.

Organizers promise something for everyone to include airplane rides, exhibits, a "Parade of WACOs," radio controlled (RC) aircraft demonstrations, a candy drop, banquet, and silent auction.

Admission is \$8 for adults and \$4 for students; children under 6 year of age are free.

An all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast will start off activities on Saturday, Sept. 17, followed by a parade of WACOs at 1 p.m. The RC demo and candy drop is scheduled for 3 p.m. and the museum on site will be open for browsing.

The Historic WACO Airfield and Museum are located at 1865 S. County Rd. 25A in Troy. For more information, go to the WACO web page [www.wacoairmuseum.org](http://www.wacoairmuseum.org) or call 937 335 9226.



Summer 2011

[www.aviationtrailinc.org](http://www.aviationtrailinc.org)

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#### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- Aug. 20, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Huffman Prairie Aero Carnival hosted by the National Park Service at Huffman Prairie Flying Field, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Use Gate 16A off Route 444
- Aug. 21, 1-3 p.m., ATI celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a FREE Ice Cream Social at Wright Brothers Hill, W-PAFB. Enter from Kaufman Avenue near the Route 444 intersection
- Sept. 16-18, WACO Vintage Fly-in, Historic WACO Airfield, 1865 S. County Rd. 25A in Troy, Ohio
- Oct. 19, 7 p.m. Engineers Club, Dawne Dewey of Wright State's Special Collections and Archives, speaks on Orville Wright's 1911 gliding experiments at Kitty Hawk
- Nov. 9, 1 p.m., ATI annual public meeting, 16 S. Williams St.
- Dec. 17, 10 a.m. First Flight Ceremony, Wright Memorial, W-PAFB
- Dec. 17, 6 p.m., 108th anniversary of Powered Flight, Presidential Banquet Center

#### AVIATION TRAIL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I would like to become a member of Aviation Trail, Inc., at the following level:

____ Senior Citizen 60 and over \$15	____ Contributing \$50	____ Individual Life \$500
____ Individual \$20	____ Supporting \$100	(May be paid in five annual
____ Family \$30	____ Patron \$1,000/year	installments of \$100 each)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to: **AVIATION TRAIL, INC.** and mail it together with this form to:

Aviation Trail, Inc., P. O. Box 633, Wright Brothers Branch, Dayton, OH 45409