

2006 VAA HALL OF FAME



Charles W. Harris

Charlie Harris was born September 30, 1927, in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, the day Charles Lindbergh flew the *Spirit of St. Louis* over Pawhuska on his 150-city tour following his New York to Paris flight in May 1927. Charlie received his public school education in Pawhuska, graduating in May 1945. He graduated from the University of Tulsa in January 1950 with a bachelor of science degree in business administration.

At the age of 3, Charlie received his first airplane ride standing up in the front seat of his father's 1928 OX-5 Travel Air open-cockpit biplane. A life-long aviation fan, he soloed a J-3F-60

Cub at 16 while in high school and has been flying ever since. After service in the U.S. Navy in 1945 and 1946 aboard cruisers, he was fortunate enough to continue to fly and operate an Aeronca Chief, a DCO-65 Taylorcraft, and a World War II surplus BT-13A during college days. He currently owns and flies a collection of pristine vintage aircraft, including a 1942 Culver LFA Cadet; two 1948 polished Temco Swifts; a 1945 J-3C-65 Cub; two factory Pitts; five Luscombes; a 1949 Monocoupe 90AL-115/0320, the last stick Monocoupe ever built; and others of the era. His aircraft have won numerous fly-in awards for quality, appearance, best in class, etc.

Charlie has served as senior co-chairman of the Tulsa Regional Fly-In since 1982. He co-founded the National Biplane Association in 1987 and has served as chairman of the association and the Biplane Expo in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, since its origin. In June 1998 he was presented the city of Bartlesville Medallion (its key to the city) in recognition of his service to the city. He has chaired five EAA B-17 Tour stops in Tulsa and Bartlesville since 1994. He co-chaired the 50th Anniversary Lindbergh EAA Spirit of St. Louis Tour stop in Tulsa in 1977. He chaired the 2005 EAA Ford Tri-Motor six-day stay in Tulsa during which the Tri-Motor flew 743 pas-



At the age of 3, Charlie's first flight was with his father in his dad's 1928 Travel Air 2000.



Charlie Harris, high school senior class president.



A dapper dresser from his earliest days (he tells us all young men "dressed" back then), a 13-year-old Charlie Harris poses with one of his lifelong favorites, the Piper Cub, at the Tulsa airport in 1940.



December 1947. Charles H. Harris, Charlie's father, and his college sophomore son soon after Charlie's return from the service.

sengers. He was named Oklahoma Aviator of the Year in 1984 by the *Oklahoma Aviator* publication, the first year it selected anyone for that honor. In 2001 he was selected for and inducted into the Oklahoma Air & Space Hall of Fame and received the Clarence E. Page Award for Contributions to Oklahoma Aviation in 2001.

He conceived and arranged the 1993 66th reunion of the original Travel Air 5000 *Woolaroc* (winner of the 1927 Dole race) and the EAA replica *Spirit of St. Louis*. The two original airplanes were first together in Tulsa on September 30, 1927, the day of his birth.



Jim Younklin (left) and Charlie with Jim's heart-thumping replica of Benny Howard's *Mr. Mulligan*.

In 2001 Charlie originated the Vintage division's Friends of the Red Barn member contribution fund to underwrite convention activities during EAA AirVenture Oshkosh. The contributions to this fund have

exceeded \$125,000 during the past five years.

Charlie is a lifetime EAA member, a member of all EAA divisions, and a 30-year member of EAA Chapter 10 Tulsa; he is a charter member of EAA


Vintage Aircraft Association Chapter 10 Tulsa and charter member of EAA Warbird Squadron 10 in Tulsa. He has served as president of EAA Vintage Aircraft Association Chapter 10 Tulsa for three terms and has served as president of EAA IAC Chapter 10 Tulsa. Charlie wrote the monthly newsletter of EAA IAC Chapter 10 from 1980 through 1985. He has written the EAA Vintage Aircraft Association Chapter 10 newsletter since 1985 and continues to write on a variety of aviation subjects. In 1998 he was selected by EAA to receive the first ever Bax Seat Award, named for Flying magazine writer Gordon Baxter, for communicating the passion and excitement of aviation. Charlie is the principal writer of the National Biplane Association's *Biplane News* publication.

He was elected a director of the EAA Vintage Aircraft Association in 1988 and has served as treasurer since 1996. Charlie has chaired the VAA Red Barn Interview Circle at AirVenture since 1988 and has served as chairman of the association's executive committee since its formation in 2002.

In 1993 Charlie initiated the contacts and furthered the early discussions that resulted in the Phillips Petroleum Company discounted fuel program for EAA Young Eagles flights.

Charlie has been elected to and currently serves on the board of directors of Tulsa's Jones-Riverside Airport Association. He has served on the Spartan School of Aeronautics graduation speaker's bureau since the mid-1980s.

In 2005 Charlie was honored during the Biplane Expo Awards Dinner in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, by a surprise tribute from the National Biplane Association (NBA) membership, the city of Bartlesville, the Oklahoma State Legislature, and ConocoPhillips for the 20 years of service to the NBA and the Biplane Expo.

Charlie is self-employed, having been in the vehicle rental, leasing, custom handicapped van conversion, and finance business in Tulsa, Oklahoma, since 1950. He also serves as co-trustee of the Sisk Charitable Trust based in Tulsa, Oklahoma. 



A few of the pristine vintage airplanes collected and flown by Charlie over a lifetime of aviation enthusiasm. His Luscombe 8F, Culver LFA (one of about 20 left out of 359 built before World War II), and Monocoupe 90AL are all maintained in museum condition and kept at Tulsa's Richard L. Jones Jr./Riverside Airport. Check out that floor covering!