

Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...

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Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame Names 2010 Inductees Five to be honored at October banquet

OSHKOSH, WI. April 4, 2010 – Five aviation notables will be inducted into the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame in 2010, joining nearly 100 men and women who have been honored since 1986. Jesse Brabazon, Jeannette Kapus, Bob Kunkel, Richard Lutz, and Richard “Dick” Wixom will share the spotlight at the induction ceremony, to be held on October 25 at the EAA AirVenture Museum in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Born near Janesville, Wisconsin, Dick Wixom received his private pilot training in 1955. He obtained his airframe and powerplant mechanic certificate. He flew for Parker Pen, flying a Twin Beech, DC-3, and B-26 until Parker closed its aviation department in 1965. Dick then started Blackhawk Airways, expanding operations to include a Queen Air and King Air B-100, a Navajo, Beech Baron, and other aircraft. Dick is a recipient of the FAA’s Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award, for safe flying for 50 or more years.

Jeannette Kapus received her private pilot certificate prior to World War II. She joined the Womens Airforce Service Pilots. Discharged in 1945, she became a flight instructor at Curtiss-Wright/Timmerman Field. In 1945, she set spin records for spins by a woman at air shows in Manitowoc and South Milwaukee. Jeannette joined the US Air Force in 1947, first in the reserves, then regular duty, serving in Scotland, France, and other locations until 1972. Jeannette is a recipient of the Air Force Association’s Billy Mitchell Award. She passed away in 2009.

Born in Anaconda, Montana, in 1942, Bob Kunkel began flying in 1965. He served two tours in Vietnam as a Seabee, working on airport and road construction projects. Bob came to Wisconsin in 1970 as an airport planning engineer with the Wisconsin Division of Aeronautics. He earned commercial, instrument, flight instructor, multi-engine, and seaplane certificates and ratings, and worked as a part time flight instructor. Becoming director of the Wisconsin Bureau of Aeronautics, Bob oversaw all state and federal airport aid projects in the state, and served as national chair for NASAO. He retired in 2000, and then worked as a senior aviation consultant for Mead & Hunt Engineering.

WAHF Pioneer Inductees—those who made significant aviation contributions before 1927

Born in Delavan, Wisconsin, in 1885, Jesse Brabazon was a graduate of the Lillie School of Aviation in Chicago in 1912. He trained in and flew Wright Model Bs in exhibitions throughout the Midwest. Jesse acquired the crash-damaged Vin Fiz from Cal Rodgers’ widow and flew it in several exhibitions. He also served with the Beloit Civil Air Patrol and was a member of the Early Birds of America.

Richard Lutz started the first airport in Oshkosh in 1920, but went out of business a few years later. In 1925, he organized the Oshkosh Airport Corporation and purchased 100 acres on 20th, building a hangar, grading runways, and erecting a beacon. Lutz hired Steve Wittman, and continued to promote aviation through the 1950s. He died in 1964.

The Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame has inducted more than 90 men and women since its inception in 1985. Its mission is to collect and preserve the history of aviation in Wisconsin, recognize those who made that history, inform others of it, and promote aviation education to future generations.

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