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Living Legends Honors Outstanding Individuals

EAA Chairman Tom Poberezny participates in program

By Steve Schapiro

January 27, 2011 — EAA Chairman of the Board Tom Poberezny and his wife Sharon were in California last weekend to participate in the 8th Annual Living Legends of Aviation Awards. There are 70 "Living Legends of Aviation," who have been recognized for their outstanding achievements to aviation.

Many, including Paul Poberezny, Burt and Dick Rutan, Kermit Weeks, Greg Herrick, Cliff Robertson, Carroll Shelby, and Ed Swearingen, have strong ties to EAA. The event is produced by Kiddie Hawk Air Academy, a nonprofit organization that introduces children ages 5 through 11 to flight through the Kiddie Hawk Trainer, designed by EAA member Bill Marcy.

On a night that celebrates the contributions of men and women who have made a difference in aviation, EAA was both represented and recognized. Whether Kurt Russell was speaking about attending Oshkosh, or Harrison Ford and Capt. Sully Sullenberger were being recognized for their efforts to inspire the next generation of pilots through the Young Eagles program, EAA was featured prominently.

The awards, considered the Oscars of aviation, honors the remarkable accomplishments in aviation by entrepreneurs, industry leaders, innovators, record breakers, astronauts, and pilots who have become celebrities as well as celebrities who have become pilots. Attendees are from every aspect of the aviation community, and, more often than not, the celebrities are humbled to be in the presence of these aviation luminaries.

"I feel like a Mouseketeer in the company of legends, true legends," Ford said. "I am honored to be in your company."

Tom introduced former Young Eagles Chairman Harrison Ford, who presented the Aviation Legacy Award, named in Ford's honor, to longtime EAA member Pat Epps. Epps, whose father built and flew the first airplane in Georgia in 1907, founded Epps Aviation at the DeKalb-Peachtree Airport in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1965. He is best known for the recovery and restoration of the P-38 *Glacier Girl* that was buried under 265 feet of the Greenland ice cap.

Speaking from the heart as he introduced the Aviation Inspiration and Patriotism Award, presented to Sean Tucker, Kurt Russell mentioned attending AirVenture for the first time in 2010. He noted the passion and commitment EAA members have to aviation, saying, "[AirVenture] is aviation at its best."

Tucker, who also served as the evening's emcee, referenced EAA in his acceptance speech as well, acknowledging Tom for his mentoring as an air show pilot and mentioning his regular participation at Oshkosh. Tucker shared the emotional side of flying and reminded the attendees just how much fun flying is.

Current Young Eagles Co-Chairman Sully Sullenberger presented the Captain Cool Award to Astronaut James Lovell, commander of Apollo 13 and an EAA member. Sullenberger said the only thing he and Lovell had in common is that they both landed on water – but Lovell meant to!

The evening began with John Travolta, the official ambassador of aviation, inducting Bombardier Chairman Laurent Beaudoin as a Living Legend. Clayton Jones, president and CEO of Rockwell Collins, was recognized as the Aviation Industry Leader of the Year; Lynn Tilton, CEO of MD Helicopters, was named Aviation Entrepreneur of the Year for her efforts to revitalize the once struggling company after acquiring it in 2005; Evergreen International Aviation founder Delford M. Smith was honored with the Lifetime Aviation Entrepreneur Award; and Frank Robinson, who designed the R-22 helicopter in the early 1970s, received the Lifetime Aviation Engineering Award.

Bob Hoover presented the final two awards of the night: the Bob Hoover Freedom of Flight Award to both James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle III, who accepted on behalf of the Doolittle Raiders, and Congressman Sam Johnson. EAA will



Tom and Sharon Poberezny express to Steven Udvar-Hazy the appreciation of EAAers and the aviation community for his contribution to preserve the legacy of flight. Udvar-Hazy provided the funding for the National Air & Space Museum's facility at Virginia's Dulles International Airport, which bears his name. It houses some of the most significant aircraft and spacecraft in global aviation history.



Tom and Sharon Poberezny with Harrison Ford and Calista Flockhart before the Legend ceremony began. Tom recognized and thanked Ford for his leadership to the Young Eagles program, his humanitarian efforts, and his commitment to advocacy on behalf of general aviation. Ford then presented longtime EAA member Pat Epps with the Harrison Ford Aviation Legacy Award.



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honor Bob Hoover on July 29 at AirVenture 2011 with a day-long tribute to the legendary test pilot, air show performer, and Reno racer.

"It was nice to see an evening celebrating aviation legends focus on EAA, Oshkosh, and the emotional commitment and contribution of EAA members," Tom said. "The attendees were from all walks of life, and EAA was recognized. It is recognition of our members and what they do. Every member should be proud."

While in California, in addition to participating and representing EAA at the awards, Tom led a planning meeting for the Gathering of Eagles, the primary fundraising event for the Young Eagles program held each year during AirVenture.

Ford Receives the Wright Memorial Award

Tom and Sharon Poberezny were on hand as Harrison Ford was honored with the 2010 Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy at a dinner in Washington, D.C., on December 17 - the 107th anniversary of the first flight. Tom was instrumental in nominating Ford for the prestigious award, created in 1948 to honor the memory of Orville and Wilbur Wright. It is given by the National Aeronautic Association (NAA) to a living American for "significant public service of enduring value to aviation in the United States."

The NAA recognized Ford for "engaging our nation's youth in aviation and inspiring tomorrow's leaders, innovators, and enthusiasts to secure a strong future for all of aviation." Tom, who introduced Ford at the awards, noted that during Ford's tenure as chairman of EAA Young Eagles from 2004 to 2009, approximately 500,000 children aged 8 to 17 experienced the wonder of flight. Ford also is active in humanitarian events. During the earthquake in Haiti a year ago, he flew his Cessna Caravan full of medical supplies to the stricken island nation. Ford also flies search and rescue missions in Wyoming in his helicopter and has been a leading advocate in protecting the rights of general aviation.

"Look at what Harrison has done to make a difference," Tom said. "He has parlayed his reputation to open doors, create visibility for aviation, and motivate people to fly."



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Richard Williams · Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis

EAA has a great friend in Harrison Ford. I'd sure like to go to next year's Living Legends of Aviation. Thanks to h

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Cynthia Florsheim · Northeastern University

The Young Eagles is a fabulous program. It helps kids see that they can do something difficult yet exciting.

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