

A Trio of Porterfields Trek Across Time



By Jerri Bergen

The stars of this story - Porterfields NC25590, NC37895 and NC34837 practice formation flying in their patriotic red, white and blue arrangement. (Photo by Frank Mormillo)

Cable Airport Begins with A Porterfield

Cable Airport (CCB), the United State's largest privately-owned public-use airport, is seven miles northwest of Ontario International Airport, in Upland, California. Nestled against the San Gabriel Mountains, the airport was built in 1945 by Dewey Cable, an enterprising mechanic who, in addition to his day job as a foreman of the P-38 maintenance depot at Ontario Airfield, had a vision of owning and operating his own airport. Dewey, a 'get-it-done' personality, undertook the task of building an airport that 70 years later encompasses 160 acres, 500+ aircraft and a family tradition of friendly flying in Southern California (see article 'Cable Airport – 70 Years of Service' in this issue).

The first aircraft that landed on the gravel mix runway of Cable Airport on May 5, 1945, was a 1939 CP-50 Porterfield, owned by the Cable family. Today, Cable Airport is home to three Porterfields -- a 1941 CP-65, NC37895 owned by my husband, Chris and I, a 1941 C-75, NC34837, owned by Harold Dyck and Bob Cable, grandson of Dewey Cable, and a 1940 CP-65, NC25590, co-owned by Mike Polley and Bob Cable. These three Porterfields represent a small but relevant snapshot of the development of general aviation training prior to WWII, and today demonstrate the usefulness of these aircraft for training and plain old fun flying.

The Man Behind the Porterfield

The business mind behind this trainer was Edward Everett Porterfield Jr, not an engineer, but a successful Kansas City, Mo., businessman, who had already made a name for himself building biplanes as the American Eagle Aircraft Corp. in the 1920s. The mid-1920s saw the aircraft industry quickly building up, due in part to the passing of the Kelly Act of 1925 that allowed the U.S. Post Office to contract out mail transportation services to private carriers. This created an element of financial security for the commercial operators of air mail routes. Aviation development increased rapidly, as predicted by several aviation experts such as Gen. "Billy" Mitchell, for both passenger and cargo transport. Contractors to the U.S. Postal Service could carry revenue passengers, but the priority was the air mail offered for transport.¹

Porterfield, who was born in 1890 in Kansas City, Mo., was the son of a local circuit court judge. He learned to fly in 1925 in a surplus Curtiss JN-4 *Jenny*, which he nicknamed a 'flying coffin,' at Richards Field, Kansas City, Missouri. Porterfield was already a successful entrepreneur having turned a used car business and a Ford dealership into one of the largest business concerns in Kansas City.² He felt that both aircraft and aviation training facilities were lacking, and that he could do better.



American Eagle A-1, NC3155, msn 71. (Photo from the AAHS photo archives, AAHS-380)

The Porterfield Flying School opened at Richards Field in July 1925 using war-weary JN-4s and Lincoln Standards. Porterfield envisioned a simple, low-cost aircraft to support his flying school. Later that year, he met with Waverly Stearman, co-designer of the Swallow OX-5, and other noted aviation engineers to design what Porterfield thought would make a stable, low-cost trainer, and could also serve in a light commercial use capacity.

The American Eagle Aircraft Company

The results of this meeting became the American Eagle Aircraft Corp., formed in 1925 by Porterfield, and located in a garage at the corner of 52nd Street and Prospect Ave., Kansas City, Missouri. Less than a year later, in April 1926, the American Eagle Model A-1 -- a three-place, open-cockpit biplane, powered by an Curtiss OX-5 -- was rolled out of the small operation. In November 1927, The American Eagle A-1 received an Approved Type Certificate, ATC, #17. American Eagle, now incorporated and refinanced, built a new state-of-the-art facility at Fairfax Airport, Kansas City, Kansas. The factory incorporated production line methods successfully used in the automotive industry. Porterfield's trainers flew high amid the wave of aviation enthusiasm, with pharmacists, oil riggers,

businessmen and traveling salesmen who now felt, with the tremendous success and publicity of Charles Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic in May 1927, that aviation was a safe and improved method of travel.³

The A-1 became very popular, and several variations became available. Twelve aircraft per week were being produced by 1928, at the price of \$2,815 each. More than 300 of these models were sold, making American Eagle one of the top aircraft producers in 1928.⁴ Also in 1928, Porterfield bought the manufacturing rights to a 3-place cabin plane, the 'Wallace Touroplane.' Along with the rights came the designer, Stanley Wallace, and his draftsman Noel Hockaday.⁵ Hockaday would later be instrumental in the design that would become the Porterfield Collegiate.

The stock market crash in late 1929 changed the fortunes of most aircraft manufacturers, and in 1930 the American Eagle struggled to sell to fewer customers. Porterfield saw the growing popularity of smaller, lighter (and less expensive) aircraft such as the novel Aeronca C2, and sought to move the company to this market. Porterfield directed Doug Webber, staff designer, and draftsman Noel Hockaday to create a design that eventually became the American Eaglet monoplane. It was a small, light-weight, parasol design that was powered by a three-cylinder Szekely radial engine. It's distinctive narrow, deep body, parallel struts and M6 airfoil would become common to all descendants of this design.

Although popular, the Eaglet's sales were not enough to save American Eagle, and Ed Porterfield Jr, sold his interests in the American Eagle Corp. in 1931 to A.A. Durant of New York. Durant went on to merge the company with Lincoln Aircraft, becoming the American Eagle Lincoln Aircraft Co., of Lincoln, Nebraska. Porterfield was given a position of general sales manager, which he kept for only a few months before leaving the company.

Porterfield also sold his holdings in the Porterfield Flying School, and vowed to leave the aviation field forever. American Eagle Lincoln Aircraft Co, closed its doors only months later in 1932. The aviation industry had shrunk by 60% in the



American Eagle B-31 Eaglet, NC17007, msn 1111, at AAA flyin in Blakesburg, Iowa, August 31, 2016 (Photo from the Airpower Museum)



The "Look-alike" Rearwin 3000 Junior represented here by NC11092, msn 218. (Photo from the AAHS photo archives, AAHS-55170)

three years following the 1929 market crash -- from 132 to 48 companies.⁶

The Look-Alike Rearwin Junior

The Rearwin Aircraft Co., begun in 1929 by Rae Rearwin, along with sons Ken and Royce, was also based at Fairfax Airport, Kansas. Rearwin survived the early years of the depression in part due to the design work initially begun at Porterfield's American Eagle. Doug Webber, the designer of the American Eagle Eaglet, had been let go from American Eagle as the aviation market declined, and subsequently advertised in a local paper the plans and drawings for a small light trainer. Rae bought the design and hired Webber's design assistance and draftsman Noel Hockaday. Six months later, in April 1931, the Rearwin Junior Model 3000 was test flown, looking remarkably like the American Eagle Eaglet.⁷ Guy Poyer was an engine designer and business associate of Rearwin's co-owner Albert Jones. Poyer was given permission to build and test his aircraft engines in the Rearwin hangar at Fairfax airport. Poyer's engines were initially planned as the powerplant for the Rearwin Junior, but vibration and unreliability issues eventually led Rearwin to certify the Junior with a Szekely SR 3-0 engine rated at 45 hp.⁸

A High School Project-Turned-Aircraft Company

In 1933 the Aviation Club at the Wyandotte High school gained permission to build an airplane, with the help of William House, the welding shop instructor at the school.⁹ Guy Poyer was a former student of House' shop class, and House had supported Poyer in some of his engine builds in the school machine shop. Poyer suggested to House that they build a design put together by then unemployed Noel Hockaday (whom Poyer had worked with at Rearwin), and power it with a donated Poyer engine. House agreed, with only a few required changes to Hockaday's design. House had Hockaday reduce the width of the airframe by 2.5 inches, to allow for the completed airframe to be carried through the school's shop doors, which measured 30 inches wide.¹⁰

The 'Wyandotte Pup' was test flown by Hockaday on May 4, 1934, at Fairfax airport, with the three-cylinder radial 40-hp Aeromarine (the Poyer engine eventually proved too unreliable as a standard powerplant) with Ed Porterfield present, invited

by Noel Hockaday. After the successful test flight Porterfield offered Hockaday the job as chief engineer, mechanic and draftsman in his new Porterfield Aircraft Corp., for shares in the new company, as compensation for the rights to reproduce the 'Pup.' Porterfield was back in business at 1328 Locust Street, in Kansas City, Mo., building the renamed 'Pup' as the Porterfield 35-70 Flyabout. The Flyabout featured a 70-hp LeBlond radial engine, priced at \$1,895 at the end of 1935. Its type certification, ATC #567, was issued on May 9, 1935.¹¹

Rearwin also came out with its 'bread and butter' trainer aircraft, the Rearwin Sportster, type certificated only 34 days after the Porterfield Model 35-70. It had a strong resemblance to the Porterfield trainer, being a derivative of the earlier Webber/Hockaday Rearwin Junior design, with more horsepower, girth, and an enclosed cabin. The design similarities between Rearwin and Porterfield created some confusion among buyers and increased the competition between the two companies.¹²

Interest in the Model 35-70 was strong. By 1936 three aircraft per week were exiting the factory, now located at 24th and Charlotte street, Kansas City, Missouri. Porterfield was one of the first aircraft manufacturers to offer payment plans to buyers, instead of the usual cash-up-front model. Buyers, usually flight schools, would purchase a Porterfield for \$495.00 down, and \$96.00 per month. Thus the aircraft could be making money in training while payments were being made.

The early Porterfield models went through a significant change when the new higher-horsepower, horizontally-opposed engines were introduced. Lycoming, Continental and Franklin began replacing radial engines like the LeBlond and Warner. Porterfield first modified the CP-35 airframe to house the Continental A-75-8 (75-hp) engine, which became the 75-C, like NC34837, but quickly turned to producing a lighter, lower horsepower version, called the CP-50, to compete with the popular Piper Cub, Aeronca Champ and Taylorcraft trainers.¹³ An even lighter model, in which Hockaday matched the Continental 40-hp engine to a modified 'Eaglet' airframe was also produced, called the CP-40 Zephyr, comparable to its competition, the Piper J-2 Cub. The larger CP-50, and higher horsepower CP-65 Collegiates were squarely aimed to support the Civil Pilot Training Program, then just ramping up in early 1939.

Civil Pilot Training Program

The Civil Pilot Training Program, was enacted into law on June 27, 1939, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. This program, initiated by the U.S. Government to quickly build the ranks of capable pilots prior to open hostilities of WWII, was to provide 72 hours of ground school and 35-50 hours of flight instruction per student.¹⁴ The goal was to train 11,000 pilots during the 1939-1940 school year. Only 9,885 pilots were trained in 1940, but by the end of 1944, the U.S. had trained over 435,000 pilots, primarily through the CPTP and its redesignation as the CAA War Training Service in 1942.

Many universities and flight schools operated fleets of Porterfields, for the safety features extolled by F.B. Johnson, Chief Engineer of Porterfield Aircraft, published in *Aviation* magazine, April 1940. "With so much attention focused on



Porterfield re-entered the airplane business with the 35-70 Flyabout. NC14427, msn 104, is representative. (John Roby photo from the AAHS archives, AAHS-2748)

safety features being built into light airplanes it is worth noting when a ship can recover in less than a turn from a six spin turn, when controls are released. Such is one of the performance characteristics of the new Porterfield Trainer, Model CP-65.” Additional engineering updates to the CP-65 included slotted ailerons, complete dual control systems, including dual brake pedals and fuel shutoff valves, increased wing strengthening and optional steerable tailwheel. The flight school orders, also favorably impressed with Porterfields’ novel pay-as-you-go plan, pushed Porterfield’s production rate to 10-12 a week by July 1940.¹⁵

E.E. Porterfield Jr., looking to further expand the notoriety and appeal of the Porterfields hired Louise Thaden, first woman pilot to win the Bendix Trophy Race in 1936, to demonstrate Porterfields to potential customers. At first dubious about the merits of ‘light airplanes’ Louise quickly became enamored of the benefits of flying these amenable trainers. She wrote, in 1939, in a proposed article to Popular Aviation Magazine “I’ve been out with the Porterfield for a month now making demonstrations with eyes finally opened to small plane possibilities. The smaller, lighter planes I find fly just as nicely as their big brothers and it takes equal ability to fly them. If a pilot can fly a light plane well he can fly any of the larger single-engine commercial jobs without difficulty.”¹⁶

Porterfield also hired Roscoe Turner, the flamboyant racer and aviation entrepreneur briefly as a sales manager for the sum of \$3,125 in 1939. The name of the company was changed to *Porterfield-Turner Aircraft*, and the logo was updated to include Roscoe’s pet lion Gilmore. But Roscoe was not happy with the airplane design and resigned in 1940.¹⁷



Porterfield Turner logo. (Artwork by Jerri Bergen)

As international conflict loomed, material shortages were created as multiple industries were ramped up for the war effort, competing for the same aluminum, steel and other necessary resources. Porterfield, always the opportunist, published a two-page article in *Air Trails* magazine, explaining to readers why the material restrictions placed on light airplane manufacturers could actually improve the design of the light trainers, as manufacturers like Porterfield substituted more common materials that increased aircraft weight only slightly, yet made the trainer more safe, and economical to use.¹⁸

Porterfield entered a CPTP competition for the primary military trainer contract, and even though production was

high, in late 1939 Porterfield assigned the production staff the task of building an American Eagle 201 from parts left over from the defunct American Eagle Aircraft Corp., to submit for the competition. Wayne Evans, a production mechanic and the Porterfield test pilot from 1939-1942, recalls “Work continued on the 201 at a normal pace until one day Uncle Sam said he wanted the bird yesterday. We went on a 24 hour shift. You did not dare sit down for fear of dropping off to sleep. One fellow working on the inside of the aft fuselage did fall asleep. We missed him at break time and pulled him out. We finished the bird and moved it to the airport. The Ryan ST won the competition.”¹⁹

Porterfield Production Ceases

In 1942, when all civil aviation production ceased for the war effort, the Porterfield Aircraft Co. was turned over the Columbia Aircraft Corp. to deliver the final aircraft, while E.E. Porterfield Jr. was tasked to produce Waco CH-4 troop gliders in Arkansas, at the request of the U.S. government. By December, 1941, Porterfield Aircraft had produced 706 aircraft with the Porterfield name.²⁰ No further Porterfields were built by the company when the war effort ceased.

Ed Porterfield died of a heart attack in 1948.

Different Paths to Cable

The three Porterfields we fly found their way home to Cable Airport through various channels.

1940 CP-65 NC22590

Bob Cable, grandson of Dewey Cable, had been a member of the Inland Empire Wing of the Commemorative Air Force for some time, and needed 250 hours of tailwheel time before he could be certified to fly the unit’s AN-2 Colt, housed at Riverside Airport. Cable contracted with a local aircraft broker to acquire a suitable taildragger for building tailwheel time. In April of 2001, as NC22590, s/n 696, approached Runway 24, Bob commented, “Hey, that’s a Porterfield, my grandfather had a Porterfield”. The salesman said, “That’s your airplane.” It was bought, sight unseen from Dean Vickers of Santa Maria. Bob had purchased it, not realizing it was just a few serial numbers away from the Porterfield CP-50 that had made the first landing at Cable Airport in 1945. NC22590, a CP-65 built in 1940, spent most of its life in the Pacific Northwest prior to coming to Cable. It underwent a full restoration by Bill Burkey, of Moses



NC22590, msn 696, is a CP-65 owned by Bob Cable. (Photo by Moose Peterson via the author)



Porterfield NC37895, msn 1025, seen at the AAA flyin in Blakesburg, Iowa, in August 1980. (Photo from the AAHS archives, AAHS-59175)



NC34837, msn 1657, is a 75-C model owned by Bob Cable and Dick Harold. (Photo by Frank Mormillo)

Lake, Wash., (the story of Bill's restoration of NC25590 is in the April 1990 edition of EAA's *Vintage Aircraft* magazine).

Mike Polley, owner of a 1946 Navion, offered to reskin NC25590, (which developed a serious wrinkling to the wing fabric), if he could also get his tailwheel endorsement in the plane. The agreement was made, and Mike not only reskinned NC25590, but rebuilt a faulty aileron, reupholstered the seats, replaced the floorplate, and overhauled the CP-65 engine. Bob and Mike both completed their tailwheel endorsements and now fly numerous tailwheels, (including the AN-2 Colt).

1941 CP-65 NC37895

NC37895, s/n 1025, was built in October 1941, and registered with the CAA in January of 1942, by the Columbia Aircraft Company. There were several owners between 1941 and 1948. On August 5, 1948, Mark Rhodes paid \$850 for the aircraft and flew it to Big Bear, Calif., with partner Lawrence Spaulding, where it lived until the mid-1950s, apparently unflyable. The airframe was sold as a project to Ed Green for \$10.00. Records show that Ed Green sold it to Ted Brobank, of Fontana, also for \$10.00. Fred Holloway, of Riverside, saw it in a barn in Fontana, bought it from Walt Klossin in April 1970, as a project. Fred completely rebuilt NC37895 in a four-year restoration effort. Fred put hundreds of hours on the Porterfield, flying it 18 times from Southern California to Iowa and back for the Antique Aircraft Association Fly-in. We bought NC37895 from Ernie Buenting and Paul Allardi in April 2006, both at Cable Airport, who had bought it from Holloway in 2004.

1941 75-C NC34837

75-CNC34837, s/n 1657, took its first flight with Porterfield test pilot Wayne Evan on April 29, 1941, and by 1943 the logs showed it resided in Mobile, Ala., where it trained pilots in a local CPTP program. After the completion of the CPTP program, it was sold as surplus to Hesler Noble Air Service of Laurel, Mississippi. The aircraft stayed in Mississippi until the late 1960s, where it was purchased by a buyer in Birmingham, Ala., and restored. NC34837 won *Best Porterfield* at the Antique Aircraft Airfield fly-in, 1968, flown by David A. Warren. The aircraft was sold to owners in Oklahoma, where it spent time at various airports until it was dismantled for recovering in October 1980, and sat for 20 years. During that time it underwent a complete teardown, new wings made and

new hardware installed. NC34837 had another 'first flight' on June 20, 2000.

Bob, Chris, Mike and Cable Flight School owner Tony Settember were discussing formation flying adventures. Wouldn't it be neat, they agreed, if we could find a blue Porterfield, and fly the three as a patriotic red-white-and blue formation? The very next day, an online- aircraft sales site featured a 1941 Blue 75-C Porterfield -- NC34837. Tony made a call, and made the arrangements for Cable Airport to purchase it. Currently, NC34837 is co-owned by Bob Cable and Harold Dyck.

The Blakesburg Adventure

The three Cable Porterfields have been on several adventures together in the Los Angeles Basin, but it was with some trepidation that we discussed a proposed trek to the Antique Aircraft Assoc. Fly-in, in early 2015. We had all heard glowing stories about the informal, grass-strip (What's that? Angelenos are generally in an emergency landing situation if grass is involved!) field, privately owned by Robert Taylor and his family since the early 1960s. Taylor, who's held the fly-in annually since 1972, purposely keeps the event pilots-and-friends-only, not only to preserve the unhurried, un-commercial nature of the event, but to also avoid legal (and restrictive) entanglements with the FAA. We contacted Robert, and after a couple of phone calls and a \$75 registration fee per plane, were scheduled for the 2016 AAA Flyin!

After much wrangling, the three Porterfield teams (Bob and Suzanne Cable, Mike and Terri Polley, and myself and husband Chris) arranged schedules, plotted routes, stocked the support team's motorhomes and made our five-day flight to Ottumwa beginning August 27, 2016, via Highway 40 through the American Southwest, then north through Oklahoma and Kansas to Iowa, passing through painted deserts, rocky mountains, endless pastures, and countless cornfields on the way. We camped on historic airfields, like Winslow Airport, parking the motorhomes in the shade of the huge TAT hangar built in 1929 and still used by the local FBO. We dodged weather at Las Vegas, N.M., and waited out fog and rain in Dodge City, Kansas. As none of us had landed on a grass strip before, the Porterfields spent an afternoon at Schenck Field, in Clarinda, Iowa, that sported a lush, ankle-deep 2,700-foot grass strip, where Bob, Mike and Chris practiced take offs and landings to



The three Porterfields tied down in front of the 1929 TAT hangar in Winslow, Arizona. (From the author's collection)



NC37837 about to touch down on the AAA grass strip at Blakesburg, Iowa. (Photo by Dennis Price)

familiarize themselves with grass strip procedures.

The north-south grass runway at AAA was wet from hard rains in the previous few days, and made for a sporty, but successful landing, waved in by Robert Taylor's grandson Ben, who handles the go-no-flags on the approach end of the field. The airfield was already crowded with other early aviation aircraft and their grinning passengers. It was a pleasure to idle the Porterfields among respectful spectators to our parking spots in front of Hangar 2, and cut the engine, while energetic helpers assisted in the tie-down and welcomes all around. After 1,400 plus miles, we were ready to be stationary for a while! Our motorhomes trundled to the south end of the field, where we had great views of the approaching aircraft.

The Antique Aircraft Association

The Antique Aircraft Association, headquartered at Robert Taylor's field, was organized in 1953, three years prior to the beginning of AAHS, and the same year that Paul Poberezny began the Experimental Aircraft Association. Robert Taylor, (also an AAHS member) who must be the longest running president of a historical association ever, still oversees the Annual Fly-in, on the first weekend of September.

I spoke with Robert briefly during the fly in (he was understandably mobbed constantly by the many friends, fans and professional acquaintances who attended the event) about what started his Porterfield interest. "Oh, well, that's because, I've been collecting airplane information since I was a kid, and back then, I'd write to all the airplane companies of the day, asking them for information, brochures, drawings, etc, of their products. Lots of companies didn't answer back, but Ed

Porterfield always did respond, and sent several ads, brochures and layouts. So I'm kinda partial to Porterfields. You know, I've owned the 35-90W that Louise Thadden used to set a light plane speed record, in 1947." Indeed, Louise Thadden, who demonstrated Porterfields for the company in the late 1930s flew NC16401, Model 35-90, to set a light plane speed record, of 109 mph, on July 12, 1946.²¹ Robert sold the 35-90W in the 1990s to a museum in Canada.

Other Porterfields At Blakesburg

A CP-40 *Zephyr*, (the 40-hp version of the Porterfield Collegiate) that was parked next to our Porterfield Collegiates was donated to the Air Power Museum (a separate but partner 501.C.3 organization on the field) in 1982 by long time Porterfield owner Chuck LeBrecht, before he retired to Florida. Chuck remained the president of the Porterfield Club until the late 1990s, a post that he held since 1962.

The Antique Aircraft Airfield has a second Porterfield CP-50, NC21994, that has seen many flight hours from the field. Robert bought this airframe in 1964, which he and sons Brent and Barry flew extensively in the local area. The engine caught some carb ice during a morning flight in the mid-1980s, and Barry stalled it into a pond to avoid hitting some haystacks. After fishing it out, the engine, and airframe were trucked back to the field, where a partial restoration was begun, and has remained in AAA Hangar 1 waiting for the family to get some time to put it back together.

Two other Porterfield owners were in attendance. Howard Coombs, owner of CP-65 NC37703 of Spruce Creek Flying community (who arrived via commercial flight, but had flown



Jerri Bergen and Robert Taylor. (Photo from the author's collection)



Long time AAHS and AAA members Ann and Don Pellegreno. (From the author's collection)



35-90W, NC16401, was flown by Louis Thadden was owned by Robert Taylor before being sold in the 1990s to a Canadian museum. (Brent Taylor photo)



Lunch time at a AAA event is time for socializing and hangar flying. (From the author's collection)



Pilots and support team for the Porterfield trek. Left to right: Mike and Terri Polley, Bob and Suzanne Cable, Chris and Jerri Bergen. (Photo by Moose Peterson via the author)



Howard Coombs' beautifully restored Porterfield NC37703. Howard made the AAA flyin this year but not his plane. (Howard Coombs photo via the author)



The Porterfield "Trio" formation flying over the Iowa countryside. (Photo by Moose Peterson via the author)



The IFR (I Follow Roads) panel of NC34837. (Photo by Moose Peterson via the author)



The Porterfield "Trio" preparing to depart Blakesburg for the return trip. (From the author's collection)



Joe Rankin (left) and his wife “Jo” greet our Porterfield flyers, Mike Polley and Chris Bergen at Rankin Airport. (From the author’s collection)

NC37703 to Blakesburg in 1976 from New Jersey.) His father, Karleton Coombs, bought it in 1968 after he found the fuselage sitting in a farmer’s field. He had flown Porterfields before WWII but never completed his license. Howard and his father restored, the CP-65, and he’s owned the airplane ever since.

Mike Weidhaas flew his 1940 LP-65, NC32417, from St. Louis, Missouri. Mike has owned his since 2005, when he bought it from Tom Shappell, of Pennsylvania. There were several aircraft types at the fly-in that represented the only one of its kind, like the Hamilton Metal Plane H-47, flown by Ben Redman of Rare Aircraft, while other aircraft models arrived en masse, like the long, orderly row of Luscombes, and J-3 Cubs. Parked next to us was the only Rearwin 6000 Sportster on the field, the aforementioned Porterfield look-alike, owned by the Air Power Museum.

Several AAHS members were in attendance, some of whom we had the chance to visit. These included Ann and her husband Dan Pellegrino, both long time attendees of the AAA Flyin. Ann, among her many aviation accomplishments, is the author of the three-volume series *Iowa Takes to the Air*, an extremely comprehensive chronicle of aviation personalities and events in the state of Iowa. Tom and Nancy Lowe (Tom flew his Stearman in), Jack Hurdle, and Sid Yahn also attended.

It was surprising to learn, after meeting with Cindy DeWild, AAA’s membership coordinator, that there is little overlap between AAA members and AAHS members. With roughly the

same number of members among the two organizations, there are only 45 or so individuals that are members of both. We are in discussions now with AAA to offer benefits and discounts to individuals with joint memberships.

Adventures on the Way Home

We left Saturday, before the AAA Fly-in was in full swing, having to get back to the west coast. Enroute home, we had two additional flight destinations; to visit the Iowa Aviation Museum, where members of the Cable family were honored, and to visit Joe Rankin, the current Type Certificate holder of the Porterfield.

Rankin Field, Missouri

Joe Rankin, and his wife Erlene (‘Jo’) have lived at Rankin Airport, near Marysville, Mo., about an hour south of Blakesburg (by air) since 1972. Joe bought the Type Certificate for the Porterfield models in early 1980s, and since then, has helped several Porterfield enthusiasts with repairs, modifications, and some updates to the airframe. Joe had modified the CP-65 to accommodate a 100hp engine, along with some other tweaks, and had intended to go into production with this new aircraft as the ‘Rankin Collegiate’.

We flew into Rankin Airport after leaving Blakesburg, and taxied up to Joe and Jo’s front door. Joe had just had a fall recently; his mobility was limited. We did get to see his Rankin Collegiate, and briefly review some of the changes Joe had planned for his airplane. These included metal ribs for the wing, and an updated noseowl. Sadly, Joe passed away on October 31 and it’s unclear yet what the family plans with the Type Certificate.

Iowa Aviation Museum Hall of Fame

Unknown to most of us in Los Angeles, the Cable family was from Waterloo, Iowa. Bob’s grandfather, Dewey Cable, was born in Dysart, Iowa, in 1897. Dewey’s brother John, born in 1904, started flying when he was 19, and started Iowa’s first airport at Waterloo in 1927. John flew airmail from 1931 to 1933, tested aircraft for Douglas Aircraft Co., and was a TWA pilot. John was killed in 1939 as he demonstrated an A-20 Havoc at the Douglas Santa Monica plant for the French Air Ministry,



AAHS/AAA members Nancy and Tom Lowe. (Photo from the author’s collection)



John and Clyde Cable are honorees in the Iowa Aviation Museum (IAM) Hall of Fame. (Photos courtesy of the IAM)

with Capt. Paul Chemidlin, a French government official on board. Capt. Chemidlin survived, and the crash made national headlines, as the U.S. was supposedly still neutral among other world powers.

John Cable was the first person to be inducted into Iowa's Aviation Hall of Fame. His son, Clyde, shortly after his birth, became the youngest person to go up in an airplane in the state of Iowa, when his father took him flying over Waterloo at a few days old. Clyde later became a United Airlines pilot, and created a cockpit leadership program that has since been utilized across most major airlines. Clyde, also, has been inducted into the Iowa Aviation Hall of Fame.

We landed the Porterfields at Greenfield Airport, site of Iowa's Aviation Museum, where we met Joy Eden, one of the docents, and were treated to an in-depth review of the many aviation history details scrupulously maintained in the facility, including tributes to both John and Clyde Cable. Much of the detailed research that supported the Iowa Aviation Museum came from the three-volume book, *Aviation Takes to the Air*, by AAHS member Ann Pellegrino.

Westward Ho!

With choppy, stormy weather dogging us most of the way home, it took us six days to return, via the northern route west, across Nebraska and Wyoming, down through Utah, Arizona, and back to Southern California. We'd put 40 hours on the Porterfields, logged 32-plus takeoffs and landings, and covered 3,200 miles in the motorhomes. With no mechanical issues (other than one of the Porterfields being finicky about starting in colder temperatures), and pilotage in conditions that were not for the faint of heart, the red-white- and blue trio (and their intrepid pilots) flew exactly as their creator, Ed Porterfield, envisioned -- safely, inexpensively and with a simplicity that emphasized solid, basic piloting skills.

There are 110 Porterfields still on the FAA register, although just a fraction of these are still flying. There are Porterfield enthusiasts around the country, many of whom are part of the Porterfield Club. The president of the Porterfield Club is Tom Porterfield (no relation), who manages a webpage (www.porterfieldplane.ning.com) dedicated to *Keeping the Skinny*

Birds flying safely.

There were many positives about a trip such as this; meeting new friends seeing the country from an angle few ever get to and building relationships with a long-time aviation organization like AAA. And, not least importantly, we could recreate, for just a little while, a time when flying (and flight training) was done in a less hurried, less technical environment, and aviation was itself the adventure, as well as the objective. We continue to appreciate and admire the vision of E.E. Porterfield Jr had for his Collegiates and their role in promoting our aviation skills. ➔

References

1. Donald B. Holmes, *Air Mail, An Illustrated History 1793-1981*, (Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1981), 138
2. George R. Bauer, *A Century of Kansas City Aviation History; the Dreamers and the Doers* (Kansas City, MO., 1999) 2
3. Page Shamburger and Joe Christy, *Command the Horizon* (New York, Castle Books, 1968) 177
4. Chuck LeBrecht, "The Porterfield Story, Part 1 of 2 Parts," *Antique Aircraft Association News*, 1962, Vol. 5, No.2, 6
5. Jack Cox, "Tom and Viv Tedrow's Porterfield," *Sport Aviation*, September 1985, 13-14
6. Bill Wright, *Rearwin, A Story of Men Planes, and Aircraft Manufacturing During the Great Depression*, (Kansas, Sunflower University Press, 1997), 113
7. (ibid p 101).
8. (ibid p 105).
9. Don Pratt, "Porterfield Collegiate," *American Aircraft Modeler*, August, 1968,
10. Wright, Rearwin, 127
11. Cox, Sport Aviation, 14
12. Wright, Rearwin, 128
13. Cox, Sport Aviation, 14
14. Theresa L. Kraus, "The CAA Helps America Prepare for World War II", https://faa.gov/about/history/milestones/media/The_CAA_Helps_America_Prepere_for_World_WarII.pdf
15. Joseph P. Juptner, *US Civil Aircraft, Volume 8, (ATC 701-ATC 800)* (California, Aero Publishers, Inc.) 78
16. Louise Thaden, "Light Airplanes," *Vintage Airplane*, Volume 15, No, 8, August 1987
17. Carroll V. Glines, "Roscoe Turner, Aviation's Master Showman", (Washington DC, Smithsonian Institution, 1995) 259
18. E.E. Porterfield, Jr. "Priorities May Help the Light Plane!" *Air Trails Magazine*, September, 1941, 33
19. Wayne Evans, Personal letter, 7 Oct. 1990, (J. Underwood collection)
20. Juptner *U.S. Civil Aircraft*
21. Louise McPhetridge Thaden, "High Wide, and Frightened," (Fayetteville, The University of Arkansas Press, 2004) 142

MOVING

IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO MOVE, PLEASE SEND US YOUR CHANGE OF ADDRESS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. We cannot get your *Journal* to you if we don't know where you live. To ensure uninterrupted service, please let us know at least six weeks in advance.