

# The Lippisch Letter



Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 33

March 2002

**The Lippisch Letter** is the monthly publication of the Dr. Alexander M. Lippisch Chapter (33) of the Experimental Aircraft Association, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

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## The Littlest Warbird Comes Full Circle

by Marvin V. Hoppenworth

My involvement in this story starts back in 1948. This young Iowa farm boy was working as an A & P mechanic (A & E in those days) and had just earned a private license. He would have liked to buy a Taylorcraft but those were over \$1000, well out of reach for this young mechanic. He heard a rumor about a damaged J3 Cub in a barn south of Jesup, Iowa. Jubilee was the name of the community, just a church and a store. A friend took him to see this so-called "damaged Cub". They were introduced to the pastor of the church and he led them to the lean-to portion of the barn. There, in the far corner was the most depressing sight he had seen in a long time. There was an Army Cub, L4 type, olive drab paint; light blue bottom with yellow numbers NC9245H. It was all slumped over on a damaged left gear, wings along side with the struts folded up close. Obviously, it had been disassembled in a military manner and it was covered with a years worth of rural farm dust. What a dismal sight, but he had found an affordable airplane. The purchase price was \$250. Later it was

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Photo Courtesy Kalamazoo Air Zoo

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discovered that it only had 248 hours since new. That lucky farm boy was me.

My mother took me to make the formal purchase since I was not yet the legal age of 21. The owner's father, Pastor Sandrock, signed for him since he was away in the military service. It was a purchase by proxy.

The records showed that this airplane, an L4H, had been flown in Europe as a spotter. This 'Grasshopper' was brought back by, a then Col. Vernon Sandrock, the owner and possibly the pilot in Europe. It was licensed-as a civilian J3C-65 in Pennsylvania in 1945 and it was assumed he flew it in the U.S. until some time in 1947 (judging by the years worth of dust, being an Iowa farm boy and knowing about such things). About 15 years ago I read where General V. Sandrock (Two Star, I think) retired from the army.

The derelict L-4 was transported to the Livingston Airport in Waterloo, Iowa where I was working as a mechanic for the Terry Flying Service. It was looked over good and the decision was made to recover it as long as I was doing it, and it would have to be done in Cub yellow. In 1948 there was no interest in war birds, they were "a dime a dozen".

3 months were spent, working evenings and on days off, rebuilding and recovering the Cub. On January 2nd 1949, it was gassed up and made its first flight as my Piper J3C-65. It proved to be a good Cub. It was unique in that it had the L4 buckboard seat in the rear, not the common canvas sling. Several other things that were unique were the propeller, a Sensenich 72CK43, the only wooden prop I have ever seen with a 43" pitch, and the windshield was a full .250" thick. It must have been a combat windshield. I'm sure it was a combat Cub because when I recovered it, Signal Corps messages and empty carbine shells came out of the belly under the floorboards. There was an interesting emblem painted on each side of the fin. It was about 5" square, yellow with about a 3/8" red border and a Siamese horse and donkey head

(black) in the yellow square. Most likely it represented the pilot and observer flying back to back. I saved the patch of fabric. This is the only Piper L4 that I know of which served in Europe and was brought back to the United States,



The Cub was flown to its maximum. The Cub and I had some real interesting experiences, many of which should not be put into print. Our hometown football/baseball field became the town airstrip for this Cub. It was used to commute to work from my parent's farm, a distance of 25 miles at least 3 times a week. (This was a year and a half before I had a car). Commuting to and from work, the Cub flew exactly the same route almost every time, right on the middle of an Iowa square mile section. There is usually a fence on the half-mile mark giving an option of fields left or right. Most all our trips were below 100 ft. and when the visibility got

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down to about ½ mile, we were right at home in familiar territory. Recalling one morning the Cub and I were 'bombing along'; into view came a truck and two farmers trying to load a horse into that truck. No doubt about it, I know we ruined their morning.

After about 5 months of flying the Cub, the desire to enjoy the luxury of night flight grew stronger so a set of nav lights and a battery were installed. In the summer the Cub and I went out on many full-moon-lit nights. Our field had no runway lights. In the winters the Cub was equipped with Heath tubular skis.

In all my flights with this Cub during the 500 hours plus put on it from January 1949 to September 1954, I would estimate over half of the landings were off-airport landings. I recall one field was so short; the Cub was just pushed to the other end against the fence rather than taxi it. About 180 people received their first airplane ride in this Cub. That was my greatest thrill in flying, to share my Cub with someone and make it a nice smooth flight.

The Cub was almost lost to fire. It had been wind damaged up at my Dad's farm. To get it back to the airport the wings were secured along side, and with the tail on my Dad's truck, we proceeded to head for the airport. About half way, a flicker in the rear view mirror caught my eye. - The right hand brake was on fire! I stopped, got out to see the fabric start burning up the landing gear. With one big kick of my heel, I broke through the fabric and ripped it down, throwing the burning fabric into the ditch, then jerked off my coat to smother the fire on the tire. 'Poof, the tire blew and burned my eyebrows and whatever hair wasn't under my cap. Fortunately this kid was wearing glasses. One wheel and tire later we were on the way to the airport. After rebuilding another wing the Cub was back in the air again.

After coming back from the service, (I was an aircraft mechanic in the Army 741 Div. Air Section in Korea) the Cub was again used to commute weekends between the farm and the Hunter Airport in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Eighty miles one way just doesn't get it on 12 gallons if you plan on doing anything else. We bought a lot of farmer-gas going back. You know what a head wind does to a Cub on cross-country! It ruins a lot of your estimates.

In 1953, I purchased a T-craft BC12-D needing re-cover and engine overhaul. This airplane fits into the life of the Cub because it was to become the replacement for the Piper J3C-65. (Alias L4H). It had 24 gallons fuel capacity and now would be able to leave Cedar Rapids, Iowa and **file** for Detroit, Michigan non-stop.

Another person enters my life and the Cub. In 1953 I gave a young lady her first airplane ride, all the way from Cedar Rapids to my parent's farm. I found out later she was not afraid, even a bit bored, and was relieved that flying was so smooth. Her name was Catherine and she became my wife in September of 1954. Now, being faced with a problem, a T-craft about 2/3 completed and in need of money to buy furniture, the Cub was advertised and sold for \$505. A gentleman by the name of Ford from Crystal Airport, Minnesota offered \$500 for it and I said, "\$505 and it's yours". Just what had been invested in 1948.

Since selling the Cub, it went on to be used as a training plane at Shamrock Aviation. The Cub was later sold to a farmer in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. From there it was purchased by an airline pilot named Hank S. Weber. We corresponded in 1974, and later found that he was ferrying the plane across Iowa in October of 1975. He accepted my invitation to stop over night in Cedar Rapids on his way to Miami, Florida. The Cub was now painted white with a blue stripe. You know! Once behind the stick it was 'Old Home

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Week'. Something unique about an old Cub, "Instant fun - just add gas". Being able to give my two sons a ride in Dad's old Cub sort of made me proud.

In correspondence with Mr. Weber, he indicated he had sold the airplane to a friend by the name of Jim McIver in Miami. I contacted this man and offered the military acceptance plate (which I had kept) and the shield from the vertical fin because he wished to restore it to the L4H configuration. He indicated that the Cub-L4H was stored in a trailer waiting restoration. It survived Hurricane Andrew only by the trailer being blown on its side by the wind. It was to be restored in the near future.

During the year 2000 I placed a call to Jim again and was surprised to have his wife tell me that he had passed away. Mrs. McIver informed me that the airplane would probably be placed in the Air Museum in Kalamazoo, Michigan. <http://www.airzoo.org/> This summer, through contacts with the museum's curator, I found that it was indeed headed there when completed. In October 2001, Mr. Bill Painter of the museum called and said "The Cub is here". On November 6th, Catherine and I arrived in Kalamazoo to see the Cub. It looked very nice. I recognized the N9245H registration number. I even recognized a splice on the tubing in the cabin, which I had put on over 50 years ago when the Cub was wind damaged on Dad's farm.

So, now the *littlest warbird* has come full circle. From L4H to 50 years as a Piper J3C-65 to back to being configured as an army L4H



Note Shield location on lower front corner of the vertical stabilizer

Photo Courtesy Kalamazoo Air Zoo



SPORT AVIATION ASSOCIATION  
PO Box 2343  
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Now in his later years of life, EAA Founder Paul H. Poberezny recently brought SAA to life so that he could recapture the basics of the homebuilding movement, once the cornerstone of the sport aviation movement. Paul, as you may know, claims his roots are really "grassroots." To him, "grassroots" means learning and practicing the most basic elements of aircraft building, restoring and maintenance. It means flying for its own sake, and sharing information so that we may all learn. Grassroots is the homebuilder who welcomes the challenge of the creative process.

But grassroots aviation is in need of a flagship, a spokesperson. And who better than Paul Poberezny, himself motivated by a lifetime of dedication. Still, do we really need another aviation organization? As Paul often says, "Aviation needs all the help it can get!" SAA is a niche organization, designed to complement EAA and other aviation support groups by focusing on the basics and remembering our past.

SAA is also unique in that it has no formal dues structure. Each member places his or her own monetary value on being a member. If it is not possible to contribute at this time, that's okay, because we want everyone to be a part of SAA who wishes to be. You need only to send in your application to be a member. Donations are used to publish and distribute our magazine, *To Fly*, as well as our website and occasional newsletters.

While dues are voluntary, we encourage all our members to contribute to the organization by sending in articles for the magazine and website. Everyone has a special way of expressing their love of aviation, and we want you to share it with us.

As a member of the Sport Aviation Association you'll receive our quarterly publication, *To Fly*, and a membership card signed by SAA Founder, Paul H. Poberemy. But most of all, you will gain the peace of mind that you too are supporting "grassroots" aviation.

Won't you please share this information with your fellow enthusiasts and join us? Contact us at the above address; E-mail Paul at [EAARedOne@aol.com](mailto:EAARedOne@aol.com) or visit the SAA website at <http://www.sportaviation.org>.

## Last Meeting

By Todd Millard

We had another good turnout at the February meeting in North Liberty although not quite as many as last month. It must have been the weather or something, definitely not the speakers (it's hard to follow Dave Lammers).

After the usual round of socializing and swapping tales, we settled down to cover some Chapter business. Dave Lammers is proceeding with getting the EAA Memorial Wall plaque for Red Miner. The plaque will read Leo "Red" Miner, Founder & Friend of Ch 33 (with final approval by his wife Velma). Several members have offered to contribute money to help pay for the memorial. If you would like make a contribution to Red's memorial, please contact Steve Ciha.

The next topic discussed was hosting a visit by the EAA's Spirit of St. Louis replica. The consensus of the group was that this was a great opportunity for the chapter and to pursue a weekend in the summer. While initially we were considering a date in early April, but weather at that time is very unpredictable and the plane doesn't handle crosswinds too well. In the same vein, we decided that Iowa City would probably be a better place to host the visit as it is a more approachable and has better crosswind runways. It would be great to tie the visit in to the Sertoma Fly-In and a Young Eagles event. Dave Lammers is checking on the availability of the plane.

Based on an informal show of hands enough flights can probably be sold within the chapter to cover the costs of bringing the plane in. I know that flying that plane would be one of my treasured flying experi-

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Photo by David Koelzer

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ences. As an added bonus, if Dave Lamers is assigned the pilot for the visit, someone could ride with him in his RV-6 up to pick up the plane in Oshkosh and fly back in Spirit of St. Louis. Someone could also accompany him on the return trip. A member of the RV wing in the chapter cracked they just wanted the RV-6 ride. There must be some form of delusional brain damage associated with bucking too many rivets (I've seen similar symptoms from breathing too much epoxy and composite dust). Hosting the event will require considerable organization and volunteer time. I will be looking for a team to lead the effort over the next month or so. If interested, please contact me.

As a heads up for 2003, Cedar Rapids has been chosen to host Fly Iowa 2003. As Mark Anderson can attest, this is a huge event to put on and our Chapter will be one of the organizations asked to step up and help.

Olson gave a great presentation on cutting forming and finishing Acrylic (Plexiglas). Tom brought in the mold and samples he used in making his wing-mounted landing light covers. Jim Zangger also brought in the old windows he replaced while remodeling his Taylorcraft. There was a lot of good interaction and sharing of tips among everyone there. The slides from Tom's talk are on the Chapter site at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/eachapter33/files/>.

Finally I gave an overview of IFR in a talk titled "IFR for Dummies". Hopefully this helped everyone understand the terms and concepts involved with flying on instruments and in the IFR system. All in all it was another great meeting!



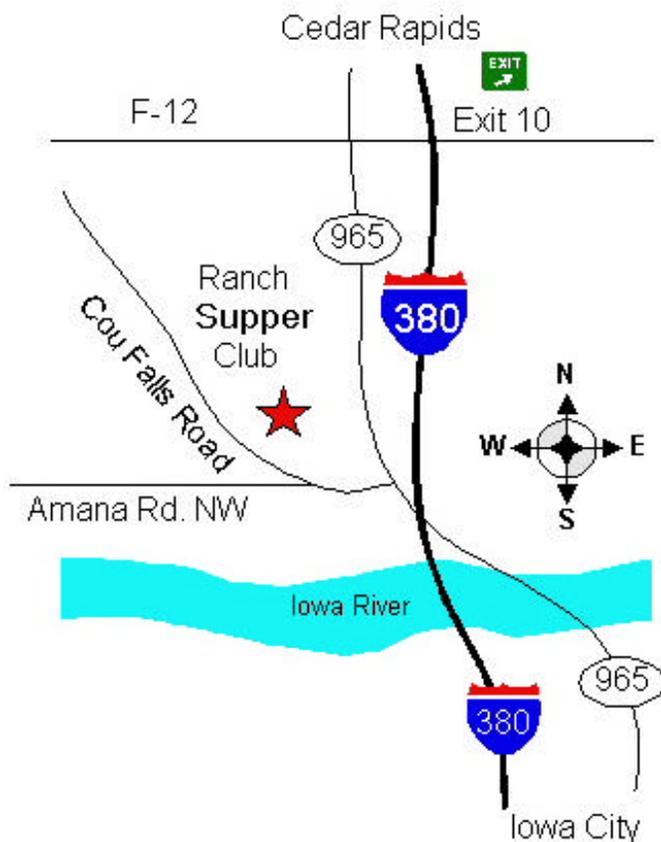
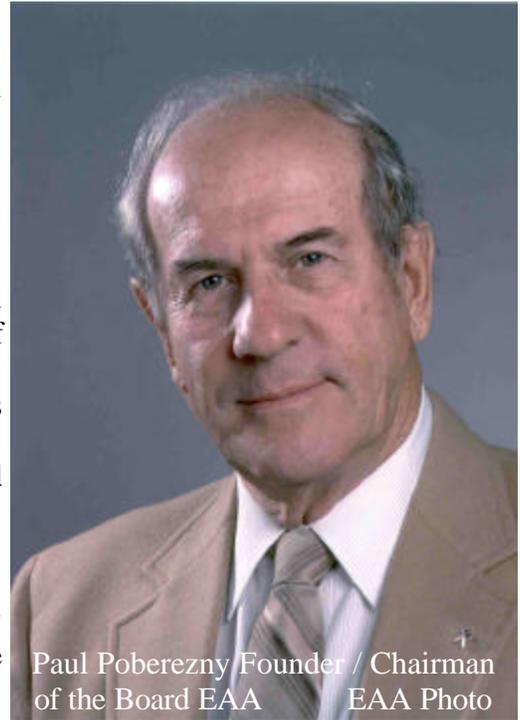
Photo by David Koelzer

## Next Meeting - Ladies Night

By Todd Millard

As all of you know, this year for our Ladies Night banquet we have a special treat. Our speaker will be the founder of EAA, Paul Poberezny. During my vacation this month I had a chance to read Paul's biography "The story begins..." which describes Paul's life up through 1958. While I was aware of role in the creation and growth of EAA, I was amazed by his flying experiences.

Similar to many of us, Paul grew up in love with airplanes. Paul began building models as a child in the Golden Age of aviation of the 1930's. In high school he restored a wrecked Waco glider and taught himself to fly while being towed behind an auto. His military career in the Army Air Corp and Wisconsin Air Guard spanned almost 30 years. In his more than 30,000 hours logged flying, he has flown nearly 400 different types of airplanes including 170 homebuilts and many of our most famous fighters and bombers. Paul has also designed and built 15 different airplanes. He is one of the most decorated individuals in the history of aviation. I am looking forward to meeting Paul and am sure he will keep us captivated.



Ladies Night will be held on Friday, March 1st at the Ranch Supper Club located at 1610 Cou Falls Road in Swisher. From I-380 take the Swisher Exit 10, go west (towards Swisher) on County Road F-12. At the first stop sign, turn south (left) on State Road 965. Turn west (right) on Cou Falls Road. Turn north (right) to stay on Cou Falls Road. The Ranch Supper Club is on the right side. (See map)

The banquet will start at 6:00 pm with dinner to be served at 6:30. Dinner will be served buffet style with: Pork Loin, BBQ Ribs, Fish, Corn, Green beans, Tossed Salad, Whipped Potatoes for \$14.57 per person.

We are limited to 125 persons and have invited members of other nearby EAA chapters, so if you haven't made your reservations and would like to go, please contact me ASAP at [todd@planetdiscover.com](mailto:todd@planetdiscover.com) or 319-393-2284. I look forward to seeing you there.

# Editor's Rant

By David Koelzer

General Aviation has had a hard few months. We seem to have become the whipping boy of national security. While the major airlines were back in business days after the events of 9-11 (with their pockets stuffed with government monies), general aviation was down for months and some airports in Maryland are still out of business. Even those of us that are flying do so under the threat of having a F-16 put a sidewinder up our tail pipes if we stray to close to a stadium or power plant. While the majors are free to gouge... er I mean, fly people to and from the Utah Olympics, that area is off limits to general aviation. Sight-seeing flights, banner towers and balloon tours operators are having a very hard time convincing tourists that taxiing around the airport grounds is just as good as flying over snow capped mountains. To be fair though, we all know the building has not yet been built that could withstand the impact of a lighter-than-air balloon hurtling at the speed of the prevailing wind!

Of course, we can not feel to sorry for ourselves. After all didn't inflatable rubber dingy operators face tough new restrictions after the attack on the USS Cole??? Also, in the wake of the first attack on the World Trade Center and the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, not just anybody can still rent a Ryder truck. You must now have a drivers license AND a major credit card. I feel safer. Don't you?

# Fly Market

FOR SALE: Sharps Paint Spray Gun and pressure regulator, If you are interested, please call Ralph Driscoll at 438-1802 Central City. Ralph is a past chapter member and this may be the same gun he used on the Lippisch prototypes. His stories alone are worth the call.

FOR SALE: 25% Share of 1941 Stearman Biplane NC64712 based in Iowa City. The owner is selling his share because he purchased the major share of a newly restored Stearman that is now kept in the hangar next to this one. 220hp Lycoming, full electrical system, radio, Loran, smoke system. Well maintained, always hangared and flown regularly. \$17,500. John Ockenfels 319-351-3461 evenings or 319-351-2848 daytime.

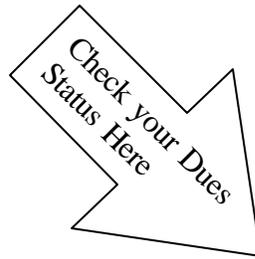
Steve Redman next to his Stearman's very clean engine compartment waiting for his engine to return

Photo by Todd Millard





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In The March 2002 Issue...

Littlest Warbird, Sport Aviation Association

## Chapter 33 Calendar

**March 1-3** Iowa Flying Farmers Convention Ramada Inn, Mt. Pleasant

**March 1** Ladies Night, Ranch Supper Club located at 1610 Cou Falls Road in Swisher (see map page 8)

**March 28** FAA "Listening Session" Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids, IA

**April 5** Chapter Meeting David Hansen's house. Fisher Classic project

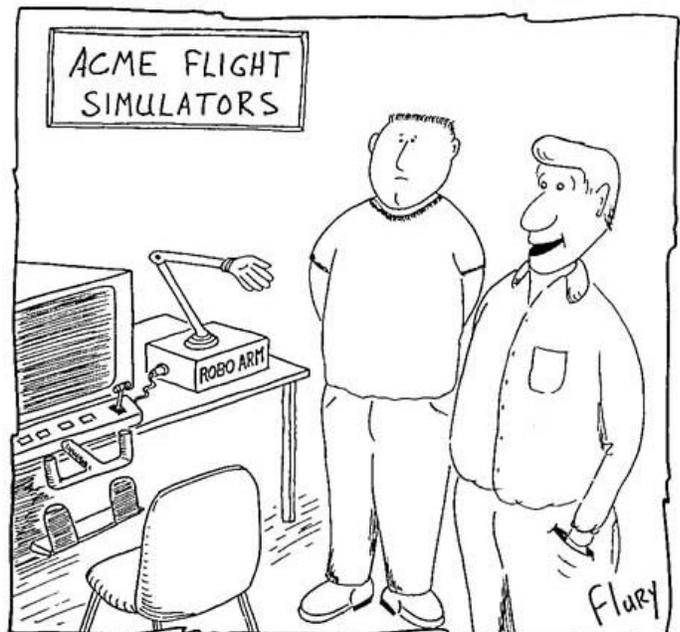
**April 7-13** Sun 'n Fun, Lakeland, FL (Editor: Come on spring.)

**April 13** Chili Fly In Plain Crazyies Fort Dodge Regional Airport, IA

Check out our Chapter's email group on the web:  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/eaachapter33/>

### The Funnies

by Wayne Flury



"It's the greatest software/hardware upgrade ever made. If you do something stupid, it slaps you."