

THE HISTORY OF EAA 172

PART II

With photos archived by Al Patton and with some of his margin notes.

Some of the text below refers to what was written in PART I – in the May, 2013, *Pea Patch Post*. You might want to refer to that newsletter or for those on the Internet click here: [PART I](#) and keep it on the Desktop.

Keep in mind these are at least 5th generation photos – 35 mm black & white photos were taken many years ago, the negatives transferred, then they were scanned, put on someone's Website (now defunct), which was printed out 9 years ago, then from those pages scanned again for this newsletter.

At the May 11th club meeting Richard Fender and Bob Rhodes filled in more information about the history of EAA 172. Richard said yes, he did have a Cessna 172 which he kept in an area surrounded by a barbed wire fence. He said he owned forty acres at the end of the old Pea Patch field. It was called “Fender's 40” and he owned it for several years.

Here are some photos showing the fun activities of the early EAA 172 crowd. The first is an early club meeting at Patton Field. The one on the right is of the EAA 172 members clowning around with a wind sock (they were younger at that time – some 30-40 years ago!). Below those on the left is Ken Moore working on an airplane. The Pea Patch Corporation named the entrance road to the present Pea Patch after him. And, yes, he still is alive and a current member of EAA 172. On the right is Dan Silliman working on the Star Duster. Dan is also still a current member of EAA 172.

CHAPTER
172
FIRST HOME
—
PATTON FIELD



KEN
MOORE



DAN
SILLIMAN
&
STAR DUSTER

Bob Rhodes filled in more information about the construction of the old Pea Patch. He said that they obtained 100 acres from Arthur Johnson. Bob used a motor grader to grade the strip. Then he got a bulldozer to finish up some things such as burying one power line. The other power line, as mentioned previously, was over the field so pilots had to watch out for it when landing or taking off. Bob said that he had a Taylorcraft then, and called it the “best airplane ever made for a poor man.” When in the army Bob was a cook and carried this skill over to many meals he prepared at the old Pea Patch. Among other foods he prepared were french fries which he was known for – he was a fabulous “french fry cooker.”



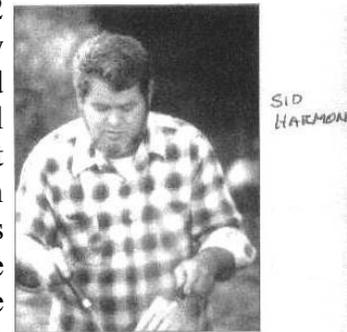
Bob's still alive and in our club. Claude passed away in 2004.

Another interesting group at the old Pea Patch were those who were flying gyroplanes – they called them “gyrocopters” which is a trademarked name given to them by Igor Bensen, who founded the Bensen Aircraft Corporation in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1953. Back in the 50s to



Are you this scruffy looking gyrocopter pilot?

70s most gyroplanes were gyrocopters™. One EAA 172 member who flew one was Sid Harmon. Sid's property in Appling, Georgia, was not that long, so he would power his gyrocopter™ around his circular drive until the rotor blades were going fast enough, then swing out to his short runway so he could take off. Sid Harmon stopped flying after he had an accident when starting his gyrocopter in the mid 1990s. It ran over him, and the propeller cut up his legs quite badly. In March, 1999 he had a slight stroke. Later on he had another stroke which incapacitated him. Before that time he was active at the old Pea Patch and also with a regional rotorcraft club. Sid was in our EAA 172 through the early 2000s. Our senior members also recall a “scruffy looking fellow with a large beard”



who sometimes came with Sid Harmon to the old Pea Patch. They don't recall that person's name. If you are that person (and perhaps are no longer “scruffy looking”) please let us know!

O. B. Brown, who knew Sid Harmon well, also flew gyrocopters in the 1960s. There are photographs of O. B. flying one on pontoons. Visitors can see a poster with O. B. and a gyrocopter at the annual Wrens O. B. Brown Memorial fly-in. O. B., a long-time EAA 172 member, passed away March 3, 2004. O. B.'s son, Sid, remembers his dad flying those gyroplanes. O. B. Brown also was in the MCG Flying Club and was a licensed pilot who, besides piloting gyrocopters, also flew Cessna 172s among other aircraft including the light plane he built, the Challenger I, which can be seen at the Wrens Fly-in.

There are a number of previous EAA 172 members who were at the old Pea Patch and have now passed away. Among them are: Bill Christenson, Jack Cunningham, Red Donar, Charlie Evans, Ed Flint, Jim Holden, Bill Messer, Jack Niland, Jack Richards, and Dean Paschal. If any of these people are still alive, please let us know! In future issues there will be photos of these people with their aircraft at the old Pea Patch.

If you see something you don't quite agree with on these “History” pages, don't yell or scream, just write a note to the club Secretary. Include your full name and describe what you disagree with. Or you might want to add on information you know first hand. Please make sure you include the first and last names of people you mention. You may e-mail or “snailmail” the note or hand it to the Secretary at a club meeting. If you just say something about a change without writing it down it will possibly be forgotten.

E-mail to: EAA172@jcmservices.net any comments, additions, subtractions, etc.