

THE HISTORY OF EAA 172

PART I

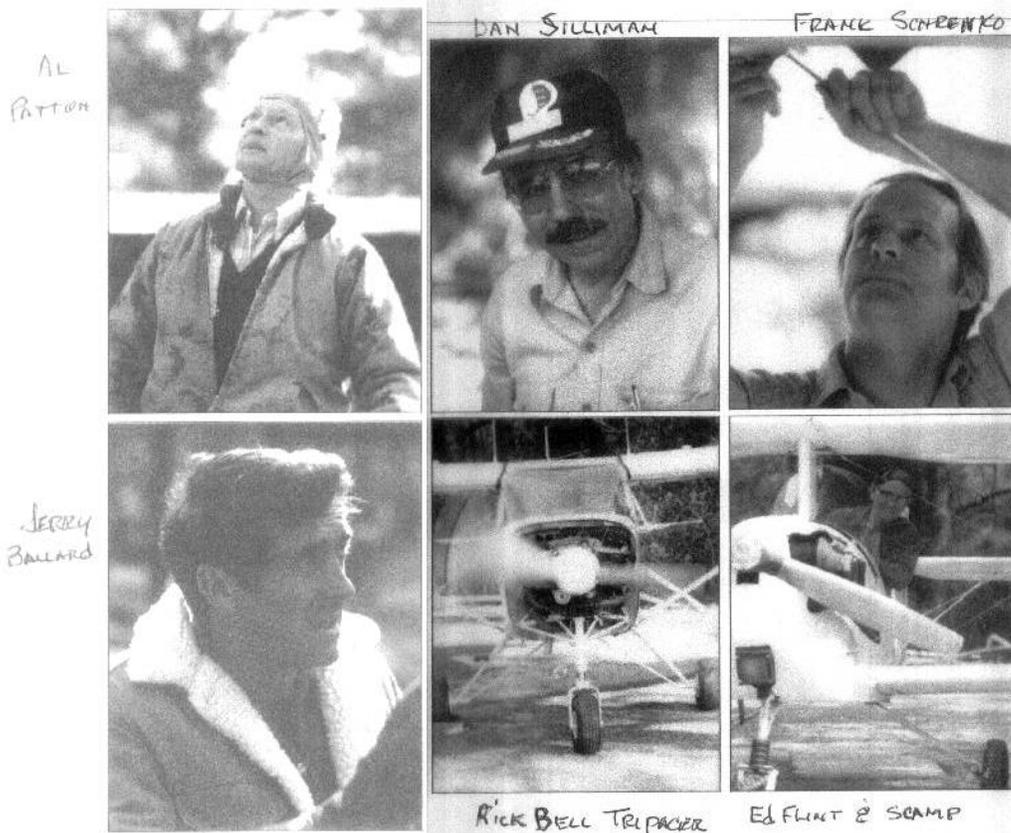
By "Baldo" -- Aldine "Al" Patton

with information from Bob Rhodes, Joe Miles, Al Newman, Gerald Ballard and others

In the early 1960s & 1970s Arthur Johnson created an airstrip near the western Augusta city limits, off old Belair Road. It was called the "Flying J" ranch and airport. It boasted a fishing pond and a modest cinder block house beside the pond. Art Johnson and his wife lived there.

The airstrip was about 3000 feet long and somewhat hilly. At that time a power line crossed the runway midfield and challenged a pilot's ability to touch down before passing under the wire. My first time at Art Johnson's airport I saw that a Cessna 172 (I believe Richard Fender's) was parked in a barbed wire enclosure. This was to protect the airplane from cows or horses. Art built several open hangars and one 50' x 50' main hangar with sliding doors. This one would eventually become EAA Chapter 172's meeting place until 1986.

Art Johnson decided to go back to Yankee Land and sold the property to an investment group headed by Jack Hodges. The airport property was leased to "Farmer Brown" as a cattle ranch for small cows.

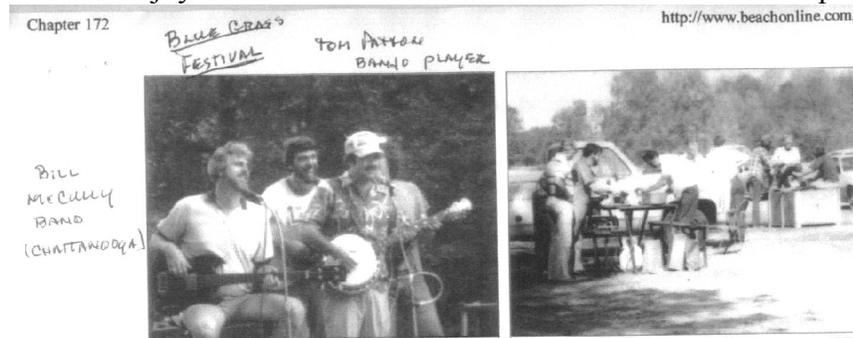


The person who put together the photos on this and future pages in January, 2004, wrote:

"It was my very great pleasure to have been associated with the members of EAA 172 off and on since 1963. It was a wonderful time and place, and I am delighted to take the time to dig out these pictures to share. I hope you enjoy them. Some of them are a little fuzzy because I scanned them from 35mm contact sheets of negatives I made of rolls of film I shot." These are photos taken from the early 1960s through about 1984-1985. [Margin notes by Al Patton]

This created a situation – it was still an airport. Aircraft that were attempting to land would have to buzz the cows until the runway was clear for a landing, a concern if an aircraft was low on fuel! After about a year “Farmer Brown” decided to take his cattle to Texas.

The airport property was then leased to Tom Patton who would live in the house by the pond. He now called the airport “Patton Field” which became a very popular airfield. Tom created the Blue Grass Annual Festival with a small band using a platform by the pond. Food and drinks, Blue Grass music, and an airshow made an enjoyable event. At one time Al and Tom Patton attempted to make the airport an airpark.



Leonard Nance, a club member through at least 2000, was hired to make drawings for future roads, lots and houses. These were presented to the Richmond County zoning board. It did not approve the venture and would not allow permanent structures to be built. In 1985 member Ben Covington bought the airport. Eventually he sold the property and the Pea Patch at Blythe, Georgia, became our new home.

During this time the aviators who used the original Flying J ranch airport, subsequently Patton Field, (both the original “Pea Patch”) were meeting in the mid 1960s just to socialize and “hangar fly” at various homes and restaurants near Daniel Field in Augusta, Georgia. They decided to join the national EAA – Experimental Aircraft Association – and on March 8, 1966, created a Georgia non-profit 501(c) (3) corporation legally named EXPERIMENTAL AIRCRAFT ASSOCIATION, CSRA CHAPTER 172, INC. **State of Georgia No. A601409. Its EIN (Federal Tax Identifying number) is 58-2595879.** The club has continued its Georgia corporate non-profit status as well as its membership in the national Experimental Aircraft Association ever since 1966 – 47 years. Some of the original members remain alive and active in the club. On these History pages, and in future months, you can see their names and photos.

As part of the Federal 501(c)(3) status for EAA 172, Inc.:

"No part of the net earnings ... inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual, no substantial part of the activities of which is carrying on propaganda" and which "does not participate in, or intervene in ... any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office." Also, the corporation Constitution indicates the scientific and educational purposes of EAA 172, Inc. Read the entire EAA 172 Constitution at [EAA 172 Constitution](#) on the EAA 172 Website.

(The original By-Laws unanimously passed at the regular monthly meeting held at Daniel Field, Augusta, Georgia, on May 19, 1966)

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.