

July 5, 2016 - The EAA at Oshkosh, WI or "Those Magnificent Young Men in their Flying Machines"

Each and every July the Experimental Aircraft Association, of which I have been a member for many a decade, hosts their Oshkosh "Fly-In Convention", which has become known as the EAA's "AirVenture". And every year thousands of airplanes and hundreds of thousands of visitors attend this one week event in America's heartland. While I have never attended AirVenture itself, I have made several trips to this "Mecca for Pilots". Most have been associated with a VW Club convention that I have attend since 1957, and which is sometimes held in the nearby Chicago area. This year's convention was scheduled only three weeks prior to that big flying event, and I decided to make the 4 hour drive north upon my arrival at the O'Hare airport, courtesy of Spirit Airlines. One of my pet peeves with Chicago has always been that my one week car rental will cost twice the airline's \$200 roundtrip fare between Florida and Illinois. In fact that car rental will often cost as much as my airfare, the weekend hotel accommodations, convention registration and all my meals combined. Such is the case in liberal Cook County with all of its extra fees, taxes, and service charges. But once out of this big city you are quickly transported to the beauty of the Wisconsin countryside with all of its farms, dairies and many lakes.

This year my two day venture up to Oshkosh was to explore Pioneer Airport, a small grass field adjoining the much larger commercial Whitman Field and immediately adjacent to the EAA's Air Museum. Reminiscent of a typical 1930's era airstrip, it is a "living history" re-creation that houses many examples of aircraft used by the barnstormers and early pioneers of general aviation. While there, I had hoped to grab a flight in their 1927 Swallow OX-5 as I had heard that this historic bi-plane was going to, once again, be available for passenger rides. However, I was disappointed to learn that I was too early as discussions were still continuing with the FAA to sort out some technical details regarding its gross weight capabilities, which was expected to be resolved in a month or two. Instead I opted to take to the skies in their old standby, the 1929 Travel Air E-4000, which I had experienced, for the first time, just a year earlier. It was an absolutely beautiful summer day when I climbed aboard this grand old dame and settled into the roomy and comfortable front seat as my seasoned old pilot took to the rear cockpit which housed all of the instrumentation and flight controls. While my time aloft was for only 15 or 20 minutes, it



The 1927 Swallow OX-5 Bi-plane



The 1929 Travel Air Bi-plane that I got to ride in

did give me the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the flat Wisconsin farmland and rural countryside, which offered plenty of emergency landing stops, should the need arise. It didn't.



On this page you will see some of what I was privileged to have experienced and view on this latest trip to Oshkosh.

Photos: top left - The Travel Air's power plant & propeller.

lower left - A "selfie" taken of me in the cockpit.

upper right - Wisconsin landscape, thru the rigging.

upper middle right - Flyover of the Pioneer Airstrip.

lower middle right - My seat's view of the low fly-over.

Lower right- The Travel Air on short final just before touchdown