
Leroy Peterson

May 7, 1942 – October 20, 2020



“Persistent and passionate” might be adjectives that most of Leroy Peterson’s closest confederates would use to describe his personality. On October 20, 2020 old friends of the National Antique Aircraft Association faced the reality of Leroy’s quiet passing. But “Quiet” would never have applied to Leroy’s “larger-than-life” persona. In fact, this writer would say that President Trump may have been one of Leroy’s admirers. In his prime Leroy was a “get ‘er done” guy who made aviation one of his most ardent ambitions; and what an aviator he was! Within a few years Leroy ascended from flight training to being the proud restorer and pilot of two beautiful classic aircraft.

Born in Mason City Iowa in 1942 he learned as a young man about all things “wheel-driven” while attending dirt track races with his father. As a youth his dad took him to a local (Iowa) fly-in where the image of a Howard DGA-15 buzzing the field was indelibly lodged in his consciousness. He approached life aggressively. Drafted into the US Army in the early 60’s Leroy spent time in Thailand before the big build up in Viet Nam. While in Thailand he was into “logistics”—he drove trucks. With an honorable discharge and the GI bill in hand, Leroy returned to Iowa State graduating with a degree in Transportation Management. He would tell anyone within earshot that he was a “Cyclone”, NOT A HAWKEYE! His first professional work was with the Ruan Trucking Company of Des Moines, Iowa but he was soon transferred by Ruan to Arizona where a lot of growth was occurring. Leroy pretty much fell in love with Arizona so when Ruan asked him to transfer back to Des Moines he said “no thanks”. He soon joined Neils Detroit Diesel in Phoenix which later led to a position marketing very large diesel trucks for Sanderson Ford. Leroy was a very dynamic salesman as evidenced by his “winning the hand” of Peggy Tuers whom he met attending a singles encounter at their Lutheran church. They married in July 1982. Peggy’s interest in aviation came from her private-pilot father, William Tuers. Early in his flying career Leroy was part owner of a Citabria but he felt

the urge to restore antique aircraft. He found an old bull Stearman named “Crazy Legs” that had been used in California as a cotton duster. Purchase of the plane came from selling his share of the Citabria. “Crazy Legs” became the inhabitant of several rooms in their Mesa home. Each year N9LP became an Airshow favorite traveling from the “Cactus Flyin”, held in Casa Grande Arizona in March, to the annual Stearman Flyin at Galesburg to the Antique Aircraft Flyin on Labor Day in Blakesburg, Iowa. For many years Leroy, a proud Shriner, gave generously of himself and his Stearman offering silent-auction-rides around the Phoenix area. A unique prize-experience—flying in the open cockpit of that gorgeous Bull Stearman. This writer will never forget the sensation, in the front cockpit, of lifting off the runway before the “throttle hit the stop”.



But for Leroy the childhood memory of the classic Howard just wouldn't “go-away”. For years Leroy had his eyes on his “dream plane” stored in a secure Phoenix location. As demonstrated by his work with the Stearman, Leroy had the knowledge and the perseverance to restore another genuine classic but he just needed a “jump start”. Father-in-law William Tuers was “there when Leroy needed him” helping provide the “seed money” to get the Howard into the family. Leroy and Peggy eagerly launched a full-scale restoration that took several years. “Black Bear” N999WT was the incredible result. Painted in classic “Howard trim” similar to the Stearman livery, Leroy introduced the plane to the airshow circuit in 2005. That year the “Black Bear” showed up at the Reno Air Races and was the “classic champion” at the Rolls Royce Heritage competition. Of course the Howard appeared at the “Cactus”, “Texas”, “Blakesburg” and even “Galesburg” events for many years. This writer flew with Leroy to Blakesburg in 2009.



Peggy and Leroy moved to their dream home at Arizona's Eagle Roost Airpark in 2008 where they staged annual fly-in breakfasts in April; an event that drew friends from all over the Southwest.

"Father-time" eventually catches all of us. In 2015 Leroy began to suffer from the discomfort of Alzheimer's. His battle was very difficult, not only for his own seemingly indomitable character but also for his closest family and friends. But, for those of us who *sprinted* trying to keep up with him, Leroy's spirit will never be lost.

Submitted By Fred G. Borns