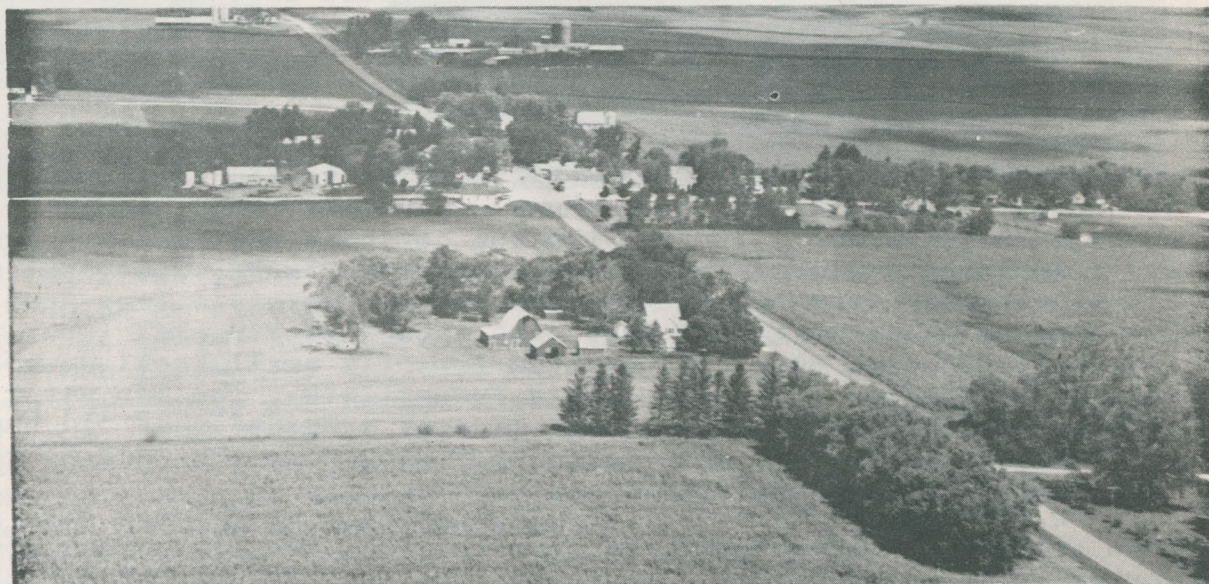


For Piet's Lake!

CHRISTMAS 1976

N.P.A.

Rt. 2 Box 140 Brodhead, Wis 53520



Well, we did it! We had the first annual Pietenpol Fly-in at Cherry Grove. Here is Dick Weeden's version of the event.

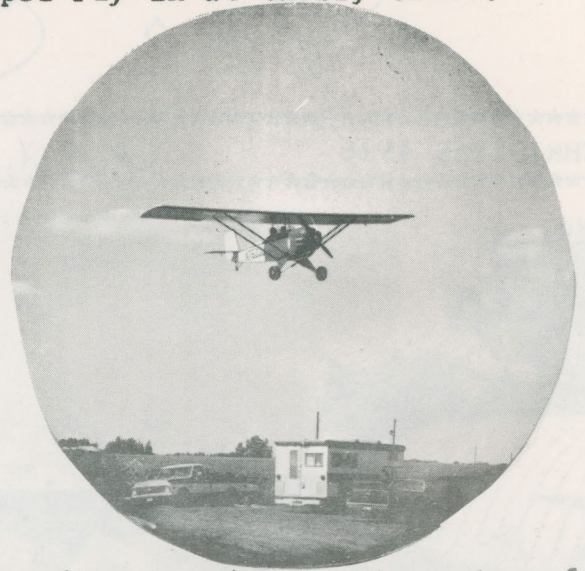
REUNION AT CHERRY GROVE

The weekend of August 13-14-15, 1976 marked an event that will surely happen again. The event: The first annual Pietenpol Homecoming. The place: Cherry Grove, Minnesota. "What is a Pietenpol?", you may ask. Well, it is an airplane. But more important than that, it's a man. A man, who, in the late 20's and early 30's took car engines and put them in airplanes of his own creation and they flew. They didn't just barely fly, they flew very well. This affair was a get-together to honor the man, Bernard Pietenpol.

The weather, as befitting Friday the 13th, was poor. Low ceilings, low visibility, and intermittent rain was the order of the day throughout west central Wisconsin, northern Iowa, and southern Minnesota. This continued until about 2:00 p.m. Saturday, when it started to break up and move on eastward. At about this same time we began our 250 mile journey to Cherry Grove in a borrowed old school bus that had been converted to a motor home of sorts. At about 6:15 we found ourselves crossing the Mississippi at LaCrosse. After stopping for gas and to let my four boys gang up on the rest room, we left the station and headed west into Minnesota. We expected to hit Spring Valley about 7:30, but thanks to our dependable mode of transportation, we didn't get there until after 8:00. I had wanted to get to Cherry Grove before dark so that we could find the airport easily in the daylight. We finally got there about 8:45.

As we slowly idled thru the village it seemed deserted. I was concerned now that we might have to wait until morning to find Pietenpol Field. Then we spotted 4 men pitching horseshoes under some flood lights in what appeared to be a churchyard. I stopped the bus behind a car that was parked there and asked the gentleman in the car how to get to Mr. Pietenpol's airport. "Straight ahead, second place on the left. There's a lane down to the hangars. Can't miss it," came the reply. With a hurried "thanks" I put the bus in gear and we headed down the road. At the top of a small knoll we spotted the hangars at the end of the lane that turned left. The man was right, it would have been quite hard to miss it. As I headed that old bus slowly down the lane, I wondered to myself how many people in the last 45 years had made this same trip looking for this same man.

We stopped at the end of the lane among a half dozen cars and tents. We were greeted by Janet Green and John LaBarre, two NPA organizers and co-workers on the newsletter. We parked the bus in front of one of the hangars, piled out, and dispersed to see what was going on. In the semi-darkness I could see 4 Aircampers parked in a row in front of the main hangar. It was almost impossible to get a good look at them in the failing light, so I resigned myself to the fact that I would have to wait until morning to inspect them. It was then that I realized how hungry I was and the boys must be, too. We were supposed to have spaghetti, but it seemed like too much work to me. Janet volunteered to make it for us, so naturally we accepted. We were about to set up the camp stove and who should offer us the use of an electric stove in the hangar, but B.H. Pietenpol himself. He greeted us and said he had remembered seeing me before, but couldn't remember my name. "Too many birthdays make for a poor memory, I guess," he said. We talked for a time until it was announced that the spaghetti was ready, so we headed back to the bus to



eat. Finally, with full stomachs, we hit the sack in anticipation of Sunday and a whole day at Pietenpol field. Gary Hanson had promised me a ride in his Corvair Aircamper and I was hoping morning would come earlier than usual.

Sunday morning did finally come. It seemed like winter had come, too. There was no frost on anything, but the temperature seemed like it had to be below zero, although it was probably in the 50's. I got up, dressed, and went outside. It seemed no one else was up yet, but I was wrong. Out in front of the 4 parked Air Campers stood 2 figures in the cold talking together. As I moved to join them I noticed how damp and dewy everything was. Water was dripping of trailing edges and prop tips making tracks in the grass.

The 2 figures turned out to be Cliff Tomas and Otis Lokkin from Stoughton, Wisconsin. They had flown up in Otis's Champ and bedded down in sleeping bags under the wing. Janet Green and John LaBarre joined us, along with Jim and Mike Weeden. As we quietly stood there admiring the whole scene, another figure emerged from one of the tents pulling his jacket collar up around his ears. It was Forrest Lovely. He walked up to his Aircamper, made a quick walk-around, then yelled to us, "I should really blow the dew off this thing, don't you think?"

We unanimously agreed. He pulled the prop though twice, switched it on, pulled it once more, and the Ford was running. It idled so slowly I swear you could count the R.P.M. as the prop turned over. He taxied into position so the tail was pointed at all the other tents, then firewalled it, blowing wind and water all over them. As he headed down the runway and became airborne, the tents emptied of people. Comments ranged from, "What time is it?" or "Not again!" to a few that were unprintable. He then made a couple of low passes down the runway to make sure everyone was up, then he landed. The whole episode lasted about five minutes and the mission was accomplished.

After breakfast Pietenpol himself arrived from the village in his Corvair van. He had a prop with him and a set about to exchange it with the one on his latest Corvair Aircamper. He swung the hangar doors open to reveal the airplane. He handed me a box end wrench and indicated for me to use it to hold the nuts while he backed out the prop bolts. The prop was changed after a short time and we rolled the Aircamper out of the hangar.

Bernie has a short box to help him get into the airplane and after some assistance from Gary Hanson and Forrest Lovely he was settled into the back cockpit. He puled on a leather helmet that had to be 150 years old. Duane Duea propped the Corvair and in a very short time it was running. He taxied out, made his runup, and took off. Bernie is 73 years young and doesn't get around like he used to. A hip operation has helped some. Despite all this, you surely could see that he was in his element. Man and machine were as one and he had been freed from his years and ailments on the ground.

He flew the Aircamper around for about 15 minutes doing gentle turns



and easy glides and just enjoying himself. All eyes watched as he greased it on right in front of the crowd. It almost made you feel like applauding.

People were beginning to arrive from everywhere. Townspeople were showing up and airplanes full of people were too. A Taylorcraft, A J-5, a Luscombe, and others parked and their passengers joined the well-wishers already on the field. By noon the place was packed. Dinner was served in the hangar by some very nice ladies headed by Mrs. Vi Kapler. I can assure you that no one went away hungry.

After dinner the pilots owning the Aircampers began hopping rides. Duane Duea, Forrest Lovely, Vi Kapler in B.H.'s Corvair, Gary Hanson, and Ed Sampson were all busy giving rides to anyone that wanted them. Gary signalled that he was ready for me, so I moved to the left side of the Corvair Aircamper which was already running and attempted to get in the front seat. Every move I made seemed to be the wrong one. There is only one method to get into the front cockpit of an Aircamper. Gary, from the rear cockpit, explained each move in succession, and after what seemed an eternity, I was placed in the front seat. You have to get in from the left and lean almost out on the right side...then and only then can you sit down.

The front seat is 100% more comfortable than it looks. Leg and foot room is excellent. It's a bit narrower than expected, but comfortable enough. If you are riding as a passenger and trying to keep your feet and knees clear of the controls, it takes some doing, but it can be done without too much conscious effort.

After we turned into the wind, I didn't know what to expect. The acceleration of the Corvair from 0 to lift off is amazing. It really punches you down in the seat, but what is more amazing is the totally different engine sound. It's so different, in fact, I can't think of any other engine that sounds similar. It's also very smooth and when he brought it back to cruise power, the noise level was not uncomfortable either. We made 2 circuits of Pietenpol Field and landed just behind Vi Kapler and ahead of Forrest Lovely. I shook hands with Gary and thanked him for the ride. I told him we had to leave soon and invited him and his friends to Brodhead whenever he had the time. He accepted the invitation and said he would write.

At about 3 p.m. Sunday I reluctantly rounded up my crew, loaded the bus, and departed Pietenpol Field while the party was still in full swing. We had a six hour drive ahead of us and wanted to get home about 9:00.

During that six hour drive I thought about a lot of things, the people I had met and seen; Al Rudolf, Gary Hanson, Vi Kapler, Ed Sampson, Duane Duea, and a young man and his father whose name I cannot recall. He started building an aircamper when he was 13 and he had flown it to Pietenpol Field for this reunion four years later. It was a maroon colored Franklin powered aircamper. The pride showed on his father's face. I thought of the easy-going, unscheduled pace of the fly-in, a fun-type gathering attended by fun-type people flying fun-type airplanes. One couple came all the way from California on commercial airlines, rented a car and drove to Pietenpol Field and had a ball! They even got there a day early! I thought of Bernard Pietenpol himself and his airplanes. I don't think anyone can ever really evaluate the contribution Pietenpol has given to aviation, but as far as I'm concerned he has to be the father of the homebuilding movement and sport aviation as we know it today. It all started here over 40 years ago and I would bet B.H.P. himself could not guess how many Aircampers and Scouts are hiding away in garages, barns, and basements waiting to fly. I think it would be safe to say that there were more aircampers built, are being built, and will be built than any other airplane. Mainly because of their simplicity, performance and appeal. Vari-eze's, BD-5's, and KR-1's come and go, but you can bet that the Pietenpols will outlast them all. Yes, it was a fantastic weekend. We'll have to do it again next year!



Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Pietenpol

Aviation greats attending the fly-in: kneeling- Forrest Lovely, Gary Hanson standing- Allen Rudolf, Don Finke, Mr. and Mrs. Pietenpol, unidentified friend

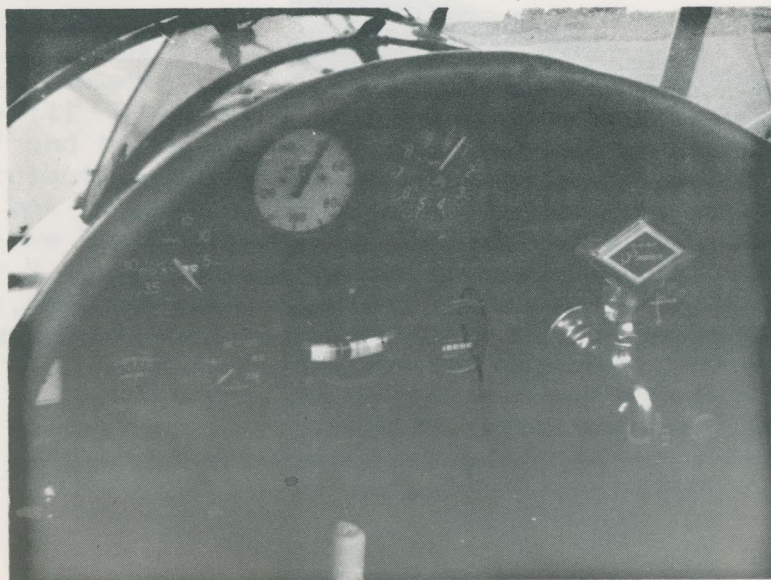


Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Daniels
from California

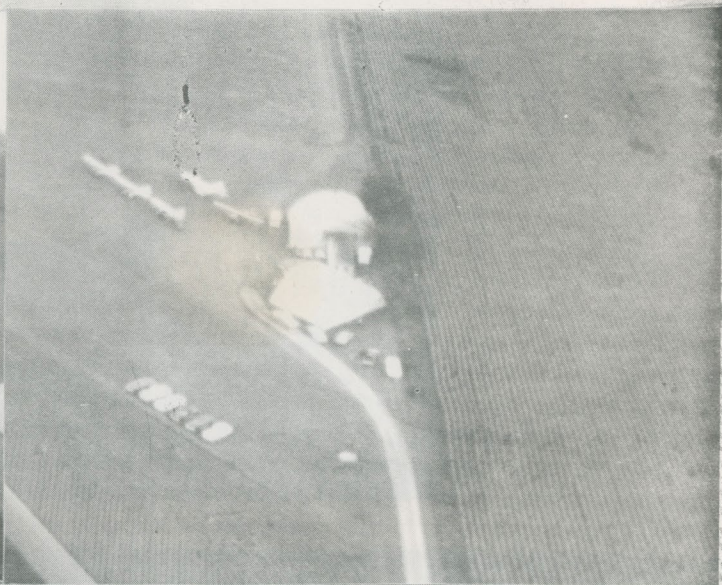
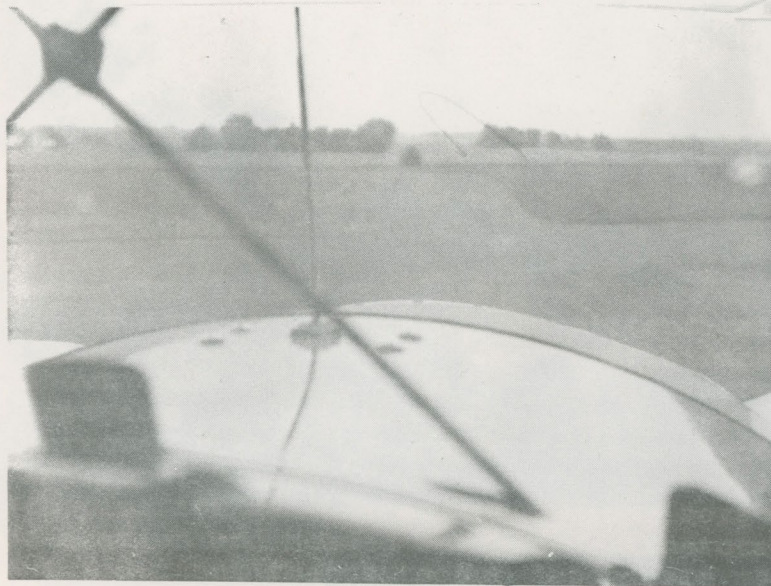


B.H. getting ready for his flight

Note the full IFR panel in Gary Hanson's Piet. "IFR: In flight refueling"... obviously for pilot not aircraft. Reportedly, that's where he gets his Vodka gimlets!



Best of luck in the
New Year!



On final from the front
cockpit of Ed Sampson's
Piet. Ed gave me my
first ride in a Piet.
Now!



Happy
Holidays!



