

And the Results Are In

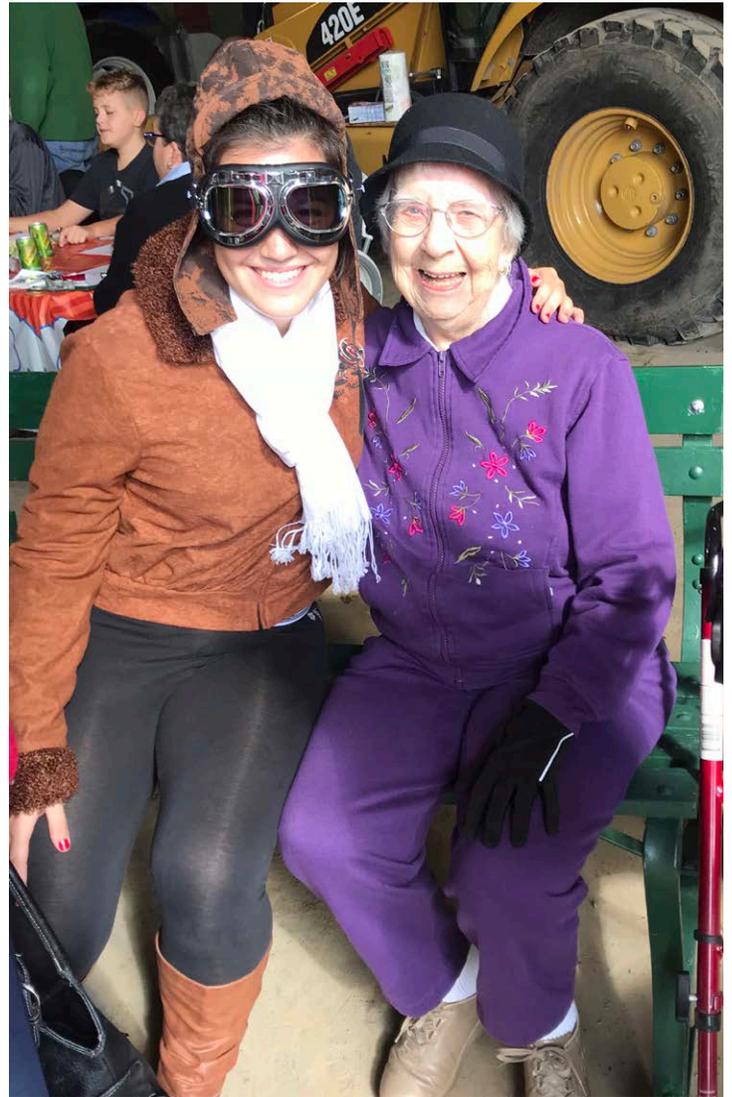
by Lynne Belluscio

Thanks to all the folks who came out to the DW Airport last Sunday to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the opening of what was considered one of the finest private airports in the country. We estimate there were a couple hundred folks that discovered some of LeRoy's hidden history. The airport was decommissioned in the 1950s and all the gravel in the runways was removed. Some years it is planted to corn. They say that if you fly over the airport during a dry year, you can see where the runways were located, because the remaining gravel drains away the moisture and stunts the growth of the crops. The hangar is now used by the town highway department to store equipment. A special thanks to Eric Stauffer and his crew for clearing out a space for us. They also cleaned out the old airport office in the tower. We were able to display lots of pictures of the airport and the "Amelia Earhart chair." It is interesting that the office retains a lot of its original integrity and we are exploring the possibility of restoring the office and installing an exhibit that would be open to the public so that the story of this significantly historic site could be shared.

Inside the hanger, there was a great exhibit of model airplanes built by the Batavia Radio Control Flying Club. There isn't enough space for them to fly these planes at the airport, but next year, they said they'll bring some of their little electric planes, and weather permitting, will fly them outside. Eric Fix and his boys came over with their stunt kites and tried to fly them, but the wind was fickle. At the end of the day, the wind was coming from the east

- - a sure sign of three days of changeable weather. We had little glider planes that the kids could play with. (Well I did see a few adults trying their hand at the gliders too.) Gliders were an important part of the DW Airport. During the depression, when the price of gas made flying too expensive, Russ Holderman who managed the airport taught glider classes. He and his wife Dot, held various glider records. If you google Russ Holderman glider LeRoy you can watch a short movie of him doing 5 loops at the Woodward airport.

The Zonta Club from Batavia had a huge exhibit about Amelia Earhart inside the hanger, and we had the movie "Amelia" running on a small dvd player. The opening scenes include the bright orange tri-motor Fokker, which had been named "Friendship." Amelia Earhart flew in the Friendship across the Atlantic on June 18, 1928. The plane was bought by Don Woodward and returned to LeRoy where it became the flagship of his fleet of airplanes. In January 1929, Amelia Earhart came to LeRoy and had her picture taken with the historic plane. It had a wingspan of 72 feet and the fuselage was 53 foot long. Just before everyone arrived on Sunday, I used a couple of cans of spray chalk to outline the Friendship on the pavement in front of the hangar. (The rain has erased it by now.) And just in case you wanted to have your photo taken with Amelia, Maya Iburi Mather agreed to become the famous aviatrix for the afternoon and put on the goggles with a white scarf around her neck. What a great photo, when she sat down next to Marion Hillman, who 90 years ago,



Marion Hillman, who attended the opening of the airport in 1928, sits with Amelia Earhart portrayed by Maya Iburi Mather.

rode on her father's shoulders to see above the crowd at the opening of the airport.

At the last minute, we decided to have a "Wings Over LeRoy" chicken wing tasting contest. Who has the best wings in LeRoy? Well this year's panel of six judges overwhelmingly agreed that Mooney's PBJ wings were terrific. They will be receiving a gold plated chicken wing to display behind the bar. In second place was Pizzaland's "gold" followed by Pizzaland's hot wings. Tied for fourth was

Mooney's garlic parm hot sauce and Pastore's Cajun. Woody's garlic parm edged out the other ten varieties - - and as they say - - "There's always next year!" A special thank you to Laura Williams who pulled the wing contest together in two days and who will make sure there is an appropriate beverage to go with the wings next year. Mark your calendars now - - Sunday October 13 at the Hanger on Asbury Road. Wings Over LeRoy - - rain or shine.

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