



Picture of Wiley Post in front of the "Winnie Mae" from the Bob Burke collection.

The Curtiss-Wright Wiley Post Hangar, Inc. of Oklahoma City announces the recent creation of the Wiley Post Commission. In turn, the new Wiley Post Commission has created a new award in honor of famed Oklahoma aviator, Wiley Post, in the form of the "Wiley Post Spirit Award."

Bob Kemper, executive director, Curtiss-Wright Wiley Post Hangar, Inc., said the purpose of the commission is to establish an annual award that brings national and international recognition to an individual in general aviation who best exemplifies the engineering and innovative pioneer

spirit of Wiley Post.

"In particular, we want to award the "Wiley Post Spirit Award" to someone who hasn't the financial support of either the government or of a large corporate backer," Kemper said. "Too often achievements in general aviation or sport aviation are not recognized because they are an individual's effort, and these pilots and builders don't have the media apparatus to make their endeavors known."

Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission Director Victor Bird said he applauds the creation of the commission and subsequent award for recognizing the real historical significance of Wiley Post. Post was an international hero and was the first person to fly solo around the world in 1931. New York City held the largest tickertape parade in history for Post in 1932. He

also invented the high-altitude pressure suit, which is considered today to be a forerunner of the modern spacesuit.

Additionally, Post discovered the jet stream in 1932 and set records for altitude, speed and distance. He was a test pilot for Lockheed Aircraft Co. during the 1930s and was instrumental in the design and development of many of their aircraft - technology gained later was used by the military during World War II and can be found today in many modern airliners. Post died in 1935 after a plane accident in Point Barrow, Ala., along with Oklahoma's celebrated satirist and movie star Will Rogers.

"Oklahoma is immensely proud of our renowned aviators and astronauts," Bird said, "and of Oklahoma's strong love and support of aeronautics. The 'Wiley Post Spirit Award' captures that essence of individualism and exploration that Post is known for and the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission supports any and all such efforts to bring honor to those who embrace aviation."

Bird said Post and other famed aviators were recognized with state citations as "Heroes of Oklahoma Avia-

tion" during the state's 100th Anniversary of the Power of Flight in December of 2004 at Wiley Post Airport in Oklahoma City. Kemper said the Wiley Post Commission's selection committee consist of long time aviation professionals, aircraft builders, pilots, and a former astronaut.

The recipient of the 2004, "Wiley Post Spirit Award" Andy Keech will be honored at a banquet on January 28th. The formal banquet is scheduled to begin at 7 pm at the Servicer FBO at Wiley Post Airport, locate 7200 NW 63 Street. For more information call 405 709-1550 and ask for Donna.

The winner of the first Wiley Post Spirit Award is Andy Keech. As far back as he can remember Andy has been interested in aircraft. By the age of seven, he was building balsa, rubber-band-propelled model aircraft and reading all the books a young person could find on flying.

When he was eight, he had his first flight in a barnstorming itinerant aircraft, and from then on he had a passionate interest in aviation. He clipped articles and pictures from newspapers and magazines to be

pasted into scrap books, and he was able to recognize any aircraft that existed at that time.

At seventeen, he earned his first full-time employment check, part of which was invested in his first flying lesson. He soloed later that year, but unfortunately moved to a town that had no flying club. However, that did not hold him back. He segued into sport parachuting at 19, and developed a passion for the sport which lasted for the next 20 years.

During that time he became one of Australia's pioneer skydivers. He was, with his jump partner, the first Australian to successfully make contact in freefall (relative work). He became a senior as well as chief instructor, national champion parachutist and held the first two expert parachutist licenses issued to an Australian (E1 and F1). He competed at a world competition in Germany and was the top scorer on his team.

Andy came to the US around this time and continued skydiving, but also resumed flying lessons. He became one of the world's top free fall photographers, and produced three books on 'skydiving'. He had assignments with Sports Illustrated, TIME magazine, the London Times and other publications, which took him to Africa, Europe and the Pacific as well as all over the United States.

Andy built and jumped his own parachute, and was the first freefall pho-

tographer to transition on to the modern, high performance ram air parachutes. He was one of the small handful of skydivers to dive off El



Winner of the First Wiley Post Spirit Award, Andy Keech

Capitan in the Yosemite Valley. His El Cap number is 83 (83rd person to freefall down that cliff face). He organized the visit to, and jumped, in China as still photographer on the US Skydiving team in 1980. His work hung in the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum in Washington DC, and he was honored with the Master of Sport award by the Australian Parachute Association in recognition of his international achievements.

While accomplishing the above, he also earned the following certificates and ratings: senior parachute rigger, commercial, single engine, multi-engine, instrument, rotorcraft, helicopter and gyroplane.

He built and flew an ultra light, and repaired a wrecked light aircraft which became his private plane. He

also flew jump aircraft, gliders, tow planes, helicopters and auto gyros. However, it was the world of auto gyros that began to fascinate him and eventually Andy decided to build a new design gyroplane (Little Wing Autogyro). He worked with Ron Herron of Searcy (AR), an airframe and powerplant mechanic, instructor, designer to build a light, high-performance, safe aircraft, which he called 'Woodstock'. The collaboration took five-years.

In October 2003, Andy flew Woodstock across the U.S. and back, resetting three trans-continental speed records.

Then, in February 2004 he set a new world distance record of 617 miles and in May, a new altitude (26,408')

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and time to climb world records. The LW 5 is unique. It is the only aircraft to ever hold records in all parameters of performance...speed, distance, climb and altitude. Andy now looks forward to setting further world records.

The Wiley Post Commission believes that Andy Keech meets all the criteria for the 'Wiley Post Spirit Award' by best exhibiting the engineering and innovative pioneering legacy of Wiley Post.

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