

Interview with Marilee Ruona-Johnson

January 2nd at Marilee's house, Kim Racine interviewing Marilee Ruona on the airport. In Ishpeming → establish where it is!

Me: Who started the airport and how?

Mrs. Ruona: (Chuckles) Ed Johnson started buying the land for the airport in 1968, and had required most of the land in 1970 and that's when they actually started construction on the airport, himself and three of his close friends, and the three people who helped him build the airport initially were Steve "Bongo" Carlson, George "Babe" Reicko, and Ace ^{Windsand} Windson, a famous pilot from Ishpeming.

Me: Where and when was Mr. Johnson born?

Mrs. Ruona: Ed Johnson was born in 1933, May 11 in his parents home on Gold Street in Negaunee and his full name was Edward Fred Johnson.

Me: Did he have any brothers or sisters?

Mrs. Ruona: Yes, he had 2 brothers Carl Johnson and Wilbert Allan Johnson, and one sister Anna Marie Johnson. Wilbert died when he was 11 years old they think he died from pneumonia, he just died at home.

Me: Did they ever want to learn how to fly?

Mrs. Ruona: Ah? No not any of his brothers or sisters were interested in flying.

Me: Did he have a family background on people who flew airplanes?

Mrs. Ruona: No, he was always interested in flying, just as a young boy and he used to go watch ^{Haines!} Hartley Haines, ~~about one of the only people who~~

part of the name?

were doing and flying in the early days in
Negaunee. Hartley used to fly glider planes
off of Teal Lake.

me: Do you know who ~~the~~ person who got
him interested in flying was?

Mrs. Ruona: Arvid ^{Arvid} Hemala ^{Nowmala} was his instructor and Ace Windsor st
had a lot of ^{early} interest in flying. Ah, these were
two of the people who ~~were~~ gave him his
start in flying.

me: Where to did he go to learn how to fly?

Mrs. Ruona: I think he went to Iron Mountain first,
and then of course from I don't know if
Marquette County's airport was there then, I think
they were flying out of N.E. Sawyer at that
time, And he did do some flying up where
the 41 dragstrip used to be, it was like
a little airport up there, and later it was
made into that dragstrip, and now I think
the dump is up there, ^(techniques) The Ely Township dump
is up there.

me: How old did he have to be to learn how
to fly?

Mrs. Ruona: At that time I don't think there was age
restriction, now you have to at least
be 16 to get a student, no to get your license
you have to be at least 16, but anybody
can get ~~the~~ ^a student ~~&~~ pilot license, as long
as you can reach the pedal.

me! What kind of airplane did he fly?

Mrs. Ruona! the first plane I'm not real sure but,
I'm pretty sure that the first plane he
learned to fly in was piper cub a J-3,

me! Did he have any kids?

Mrs. Ruona! Yes, Edward and I had 2 children Anna
Marlene Johnson, and Sara Marie Johnson.
Anna was born in 1979 and Sara born
in 1981. \$78, 1978, correction, correction.

me! Did they ever want to learn how to fly?

Mrs. Ruona! Yes, they always like to go for rides with
their father, in fact I remember one of
the first times Anna went in the B1-plane,
which is an open cockpit airplane, and Ed
took her up and he used to always go
up with the plane and do loops, and he just
flew around the airport and came in and
landed and, I went and got her out of
there ~~she~~ she was crying, I said what's
wrong didn't you like it, and she said
he didn't go upside down, he didn't do a
loop, she was madder than heck, she
was only four years old at that time. So
they both have shown some interest in
flying, and I am sure they'll be ace
pilots by the time their 18.

blue

me! Is the airport private or public?

Mrs. Ruona!

The airport is a class-C commercial airport registered by the state of Michigan, and it's public open to the public and they just have to check the note-ams with the Marquette County airport to see if it is, if the runways been mowed, or plowed. We have a sawed runway - half a mile long and we have 3 taxi-ways and windsaw we have all the state requirements to make it a Class C commercial airport, and we are inspected every year to make we are up to our standards.

check these requirements

Me!

About how many people fly there?

Mrs. Ruona!

Now let me see now, there's I think there's 12 airplanes and 9 pilots out here because a couple of guys have 2 planes and let's see, there are 10 pilots that fly out of the airport on a regular basis, and we have 12 aircraft that are based here. Although one of the airplanes, which is my late husband's, Eddy's, has gone done for complete reconstruction and that's the Meyers O-T-W, and it is finished and will be coming back this spring.

Me!

Is the airport open in the winter?

Mrs. Ruona!

Ah, we register it as closed with the

Purple

Purple

Marquette County airport because the weather is so unpredictable up here, but the guys in the past have been plowing the runway and flying, and if the runway hasn't been plowed a couple of the guys fly on skis. The Windows and a couple of the other guys have flown on skis on occasion.

Find out more about this!

me!

I understand that Mr. Johnson had an airplane that was used during World War II. Could you explain how?

Mrs. Buona!

brown

Yes, that's the Meyers O-T-W and it's a 1941 airplane there were a 100 of them built, they were built in Tucumsee, Michigan. Ed, in fact worked at the factory for a while before flying for United Airlines and he worked with the man who designed and built them Al Meyers he is passed on now, but the plane was built in the early 40's and they used it for a trainer for some light recon in World War II. There are only 30 of them left flying now, and I had Ed's brought down like I told you ^{recon} they have completely rebuilt it at the original factory in Tucumsee and it will be coming home in the spring, it should be really something to see.

Find out if it is going to be displayed. Is it still usable?

me

Who got you interested in flying?

Mrs. Buona! Well my Uncle Pauly Haminen had already

had his license and had taken us flying a few times, and I always thought it was something I wanted to ^{try} do, and I just went down to the County airport and took their \$5 introductory flight, and I just loved it, and I started flying once a week after that and paying for it as I went. And that's when I heard about this old by-plane that Mr. Johnson had and I went out to see the airplane and that's how I met Ed and he got me interested in what they call

have to explain tail draggers

Q Tail-draggers.

Me! Where did you live when you were born?

Mrs. Ruona! Ah, I was born in Ishpeming at Bell Memorial and we live in National Mine just down from the school there until 5th grade and then we moved out south of Ishpeming by the 581 store because my mother and father owned the store.

Me! Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mrs. Ruona! Yes, there were 5 of us in the family, I have 3 brothers Marvin, Michael, and David (Fleck), and one sister Melissa (Harmala).

Me! Did they ever want to learn how to fly?

Mrs. Buona! Not that I know of, they didn't
show any interest in it.

Me! Was there anybody else in your family
that flew airplanes?

Mrs. Buona! Just my Uncle Pully that I know of,
Paul Hammen.

Me! Where did ^{you} learn how to fly airplanes
and who taught you how?

Mrs. Buona! Well, after taking that introductory
flight at Marquette County Airport
with Northern Air Motives, and I
had, my first instructor was Hartlines
Hanes who Ed had ^{known} years back as
a pioneer aviation in the area. And he
was a very good instructor and I had a
couple instructors a few years after that
Darrell Spalding, and, well Ed then himself
taught me how to fly the Bi-plane, or
not the Bi-plane the cub, he had a I-3
Piper Cub and it's a tail dragger, and I had
learned in a Tri-gear airplane which is a
lot easier to fly than a tail dragger.

Me! How old were you when you learned how
to fly?

Mrs. Ruona! Let's see, when I learned how to fly
that would have been Ah! 18, 19 by the
time I got my license I was 19.

Me! What kind of plane do you fly?

Mrs. Ruona! Well, I fly a single-engine land is
what my license is rated for and I can
fly a tri-gear airplane which sets up on
3 wheels and a tail dragger which the
backwheel drags.

Me! Do you still fly?

Mrs. Ruona! Ah, since my husband died in a accident (car)
in 1985 I haven't done very much flying
I do still have my license, and I have to
get my medical renewed, you have to
renew your medical every 3 years if you
have Class C, I think it is, 3rd grade medical
Ah, so I want to get back into flying
Maybe this summer I will have ~~the~~ time
to get back and start flying again.

Me! What year did you get your license
and who was your instructor?

Mrs. Ruona! When I finally had qualified to take my
check ride with the ^{FAA} examiner it was
August, 15, 1977 and the examiner at

the time was Harry J. Simmons the same
Mr. Simmons who later went on to build
Simmons Airlines which was flying out of
Marquette County for a few years.

After the death of Ed, Marilee then
went on and ~~got~~ married to a man
named Darrell Ruona, and had another
child Amy Martha-Jo Ruona.

The End

Your story should emphasize flying
first Ed and then their ~~ex~~ shared
interest. Get the ~~the~~ other information
or details I have indicated

Starting airport - Red
Ed's life ^{family} - Blue
the airport + its self - Purple
Marilee's life - Yellow
↓
Her interest in flying - Green

Meyers O-T-W - Brown

Marilee learning how
to fly - ~~Black~~ Orange

Beginning and Ending - Black

Getting the airport started
Ed's life then flying - Meyers O-T-W
Marilee meeting Ed and flying
Her life

Note - ams - notice's for airmen
(airport maintenance)

end
runway

⊗ - grass runway

remove wheels - put skis in place
no brakes

Airplane - 1982-1985 be flown by his
family and stored at the airport. (Johnson)
Anyone interested in seeing can.

E-A museum in Oshkosh airplane **another**
B Meyers
O-T-W

taildraggers - on take-off tail drops
back wheels normally the end doesn't

Manager - Barton "Burt" Erdman
Assistance Roger Pietro 1982

Ed had immigrant parents from
Sweden. Father was the first
licensed embalmer in Michigan