

LUVERNE (VERN) ADOLPH KRAEMER

Luverne (Vern) Kraemer, a pioneer of South Dakota aviation, died June 20, 2012 in Rapid City at the age of 95. Luverne (Vern) Kraemer was born June 1, 1917, at Parker, SD son of Paulina and Adolph Kraemer. In 1928, he moved with his parents and sister, Virginia, to Wood, SD. In 1932, to escape the dust bowl of the “dirty 30’s,” the family moved to Nemo, SD. He learned blacksmithing from his father and worked as one for several years, but soon began a love affair with airplanes that spanned eight decades. He earned his private pilot’s license and trained as an airplane mechanic at the Spearfish, SD airport.

When WWII broke out, Vern moved to Wichita, KS and worked as a mechanic for Boeing Aircraft on B-29 bombers. Soon, Civil Air Patrol asked him to join Patrol Base #1 at Atlantic City, NJ, to work as a pilot, observer, and mechanic in CAP’s efforts to find and sink German U-boats terrorizing the East Coast. After the U-boats went home, Vern continued to fly for CAP until the war’s end as a tow target pilot and liaison pilot.

After the war, he moved to Puyallup, WA, and worked as a commercial pilot, mechanic, and flying instructor, then headed to Alaska to try his hand at being a bush pilot for Petersen Flying Service. Vern returned to South Dakota in 1949 and started working for Marshall Flying Service in Rapid City, SD.

In 1952, he built the first licensed homebuilt aircraft in the state of South Dakota, the American Triwing. It is now on display at the terminal at Rapid City Regional Airport. He also built several other homebuilt airplanes during his life, while working as a pilot and mechanic for the rest of his life. In 1953, he joined a new organization, the Experimental Aircraft Association, with membership number 72, becoming a life member. In 1963, he started Black Hills Chapter 39 of the Experimental Aircraft Association and over the years mentored countless builders of experimental airplanes.

After working for Snedigar Flying Service at Rapid City Municipal Airport after Halley Airport closed, Vern opened his own fixed base operation at the airport in 1975, B&K Aircraft, Inc. He retired in 1986 and moved his shop to his ranch at Nemo where he continued to restore antique airplanes.

Vern received numerous aviation awards throughout his life including FAA Mechanic of the Year award for South Dakota and the Great Lakes Region. In 1994, the International Forest of Friendship in Atchison, KS, a park dedicated to aviation pioneers from around the world, placed a plaque in his honor. That same year he was inducted into the South Dakota Aviation Hall of Fame. The Experimental Aircraft Association honored him with their Major Achievement Award in 2001 at the annual fly-in at Oshkosh, WI. The FAA again honored Vern with the Charles Taylor Master Mechanics Award in 1995 and the Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award in 2007. Vern was honored at a banquet at the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum in 1992 for his service in Civil Air Patrol as part of Civil Air Patrol’s 60th anniversary.

His parents, his sisters Gertrude and Virginia, and his first wife Bertha preceded him in death. His wife Norma Kraemer, Nemo, SD and daughter Linda Collings, Burnsville, MN; also three grandchildren survive him.

In Loving Memory Of



Vern Kraemer

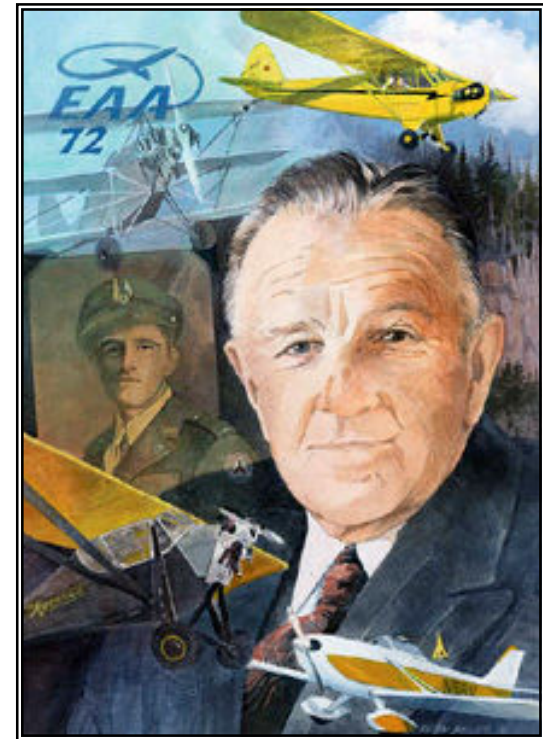
1917 ~ 2012

High Flight

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds,-and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of-wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air....

Up, up the long, delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or even eagle flew-
And, while the silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

John Gillespie Magee Jr.



In Memory Of
Luverne Adolph Kraemer
"Vern"

Born
June 1, 1917
Parker, South Dakota

Died
June 20, 2012
Rapid City, South Dakota

Memorial Services
1:00 p.m., Saturday, June 23, 2012
Kinkade Funeral Chapel

Officiating
Pastor Will Olsen