

EAA's Attic



Ticket to Race

Powered flight was just two years old when several national aviation organizations, including what is now the National Aeronautic Association (NAA), formed an international body—the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI)—to promote air sports competition worldwide and to document aviation records. To compete, pilots needed an FAI aviator's certificate, which the NAA issued in the United States.

On September 4, 1928, NAA Chairman Orville Wright signed FAI aviator certificate 6947. Four days later, its recipient, 24-year-old Sylvester J. "Steve" Wittman (1904-1995) flew a Pheasant H-10 biplane from New York to Los Angeles, competing in the National Air Race. He placed 12th out of 38 starters with a time of 34:33:10. Not bad for a guy competing against some of the country's top military aviators.

Steve (EAA 34) continued racing and designing his own aircraft. His Goodyear-class racer, *Buster*, piloted by Bill Brennand (EAA 13078), won the 1947 National Air Race. *Buster* now hangs in the National Air and Space Museum. Another of the legendary designer's racers, *Bonzo*, is on display in the EAA AirVenture Museum. Joining it in the EAA collection is Steve's "ticket to race"—his FAI aviator's certificate, signed by Orville Wright.

Read more about air racing and Steve Wittman at www.airventuremuseum.org/virtual/air_racing.asp.

—Kathleen Witman