



*“Rising Above for Education”
“Making Dreams Become a Reality”*

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Help Flight Expo Induct **John R. Sandberg** into the **Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame**

Many years ago, Sharon Sandberg submitted a recommendation to have (late) John R. Sandberg (or Dad) inducted into the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame (MAHOF). At that time, there were no structured guidelines for applying.

Last week Sharon was contacted by one of the MAHOF board members regarding John’s application. To finalize John’s (Dad’s) recommendation there needs to be letters of support. Below you will find the guidelines that will need to be in those letters of recommendation.

What is the MAHOF?

The MAHOF is dedicated to honoring individuals and groups who have made significant contributions to aviation in Minnesota. Its primary mission is to recognize and celebrate the achievements of pilots, engineers, educators, and other aviation professionals who have left a lasting impact on the state's aviation history.

MAHOF holds annual induction ceremonies to honor new inductees into the Hall of Fame. These events often include speeches, presentations, and the recognition of the inductees' contributions.



Flight Expo NEEDS YOUR HELP to recommend John Sandberg as a 2026 induction candidate for the significant impact his life had on the aviation world. As many of you may recall, John devoted his life to building various aircraft over 40+ years. Dad was one of the few in the late 1950s, scoring high 90s on the United Airlines Maintenance application for a job at the San Francisco location. In 1966 he received his A & P and in 1969 he was encouraged by the FAA to start an aircraft engine overhaul shop located in Plymouth, MN area called Metma Aircraft, later JRS Engines. With Dad’s help and his precision machine shop (Metal Masters), he developed parts for the first Moon Walk in 1969.



From 1965 to 1991, Metal Masters was the premier precision shop that worked with many aeronautical divisions to implement new products in the aviation community. IBM, Honeywell, CDC, and others. JRS Engines rebuilt and restored engines for both the general aviation sector and larger engines that you would see in the B-25s, B-29, P-51s, P-63s, and many other aircraft. In the late 1980s, Metal Masters design was designing new parts under John Sandberg's guidance. Parts that were no longer available. He restored many various aircraft from scratch such as Hellcat, Monk, Waco, T-6, P-63, T-28, P-51's (at least 3 of them), Stearman, and Tsunami.



In 1965, Dad caught the air racing bug when Mom and he ventured out to one of the first air races. Which lead to the purchase of the P-63 King Cobra. Throughout Dad's flying he had two major accidents the Hellcat in 1965 and the P-63 Cobra in 1969. Both aircraft were rebuilt to flying status. The Hellcat was donated to the Commemorative Air Force, which is still flying in California. The Cobra was the testing ground for air racing. Dad clipped the wings, designed various engine modifications, and had the Allison engine run on alcohol at one point. It was said that he went through over 32+ engines with various modifications. In 1979 at the Red Baron's 3km record, Dad and Bruce Bolland came to an agreement that they would build a one-of-a-kind aircraft for speed records and air racing. This was the start of the development of the Tsunami. (To read more about the aircraft, please go to <https://flightexpo.org/the-tsunami-project>.) The goal with Tsunami was for a PRIVATE PILOT to hold the 3km speed record in the class of Tsunami. This had not been done since Howard Hughes built his HR-1.

One of the many things about John was his willingness to help others, and as (late) Lyle Shelton, owner of Rare Bear, stated John put his money where his mouth was.

This is just a sampling of the various donations, help, etc. Dad did during his life:

The CAF and donated the Hellcat aircraft, engines for the B-29, B-17 (not sure which wing) P-51, B-25, B-24, and many others (I have the plaques to prove this). Plus, if John knew that the engine was being run up for the first time on the aircraft, he would either himself or send one of his engine people to ensure that everything was installed correctly.

Upon his death, Ralph Royce stated in the memorial that he was one of the largest single contributors to the CAF.

The Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA). When Paul Poberezny called John, Paul knew that John would deliver whatever he needed. Some of the ventures Paul and John did were donations for the main facility, donations for the Warbirds facility, engines for the B-17, donations of both engines, and aircraft parts for the XP-P-51, P-38, and Corsair. When Paul wanted to recreate part of the Spirit Flight from Charles Lindbergh, he looked to John to help with the engine and service it along the way.

Other Museums: Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, Lone Star Museum, Planes of Fame West and East, and many others received various donations and discounts on their engines.

The last thing I (Sharon) am going to say; once the Tsunami was flying; the Air Racing world was challenged by the development of the cutting-edge Tsunami. Many of the racers from all classes re-looked at their racing programs and changed to also develop new technology that was used in other facets of aviation and our everyday lives. At the time of Dad's death, he had Shell Aero and several other companies that were willing to sponsor and continue the development of the Tsunami and ideas John Sandberg was manifesting.



When the decision came on where to hold a proper memorial for Dad (John), the only logical place was in the Eagles Hangar at Oshkosh. In the Memorial tape that EAA provided for the family the following was said about Dad by his friends:

Paul Poberezny (Pope): He achieved higher standards and set a goal many would never attempt to do. He was involved with many aviation organizations and gave of himself freely.

Uncle Jim: Jack was the head of the household from the age of 8 – 10 when his own Father was hospitalized for an extended period. He always had a great knowledge of mechanical ability. All his life he was involved with speed. In 1950 he joined and helped start the National Drag Racing Association in Minnesota. He was a “Hell” raiser at school.

Jim Blomgren: The day after the crash at Wendover, UT (during the 3km speed run) Jim met Jack at the hangar to load parts into the MU-2; Jim asked, “Could they possibly put this aircraft back together again?” Jack stated that he had to try because of all the people out in Wendover.

George Timmerman: He was a friend, generous, helpful, loyal, he was determined, he was intense, he was unique, he was charismatic, he was dedicated, he was a taskmaster, he was extraordinary achiever. In 1991, Jack may not have broken the 3 km record, but he did achieve his goal; To build the fastest home-built piston prop plane in the world – this was proven by the speeds at Reno in the last two years. (Side note – as of today there still has not been a race as fast and furious as the Gold Race of 1991 where speeds exceeded an average speed of 480 mph.)

Gary Levitz: There was John Sandberg of the world and “Jack” Sandberg of MN and there was a difference. When a person needed a friend, John Sandberg was there 100%. Gary associated John with the shiny metal, the smell of the musty air, burnt brakes from long ago, hydraulic fluid – everything that makes these warbirds fly.

Dennis Bradley (Canadian Heritage Warplanes): Jack left his mark in Aviation.

Ralph Royce: When Jack was your friend, he was your friend. He was an engineering genius. JR was sometimes an !@#%^* at times he could be as stubborn and mule-lipped as any human being could be. He was an extremely generous man. At that time (1991) JR was and still is the single largest donor for the CAF. He helped establish their wings and service program for their aircraft. Few men were as generous with their resources and their knowledge as was Jack. He was forthright and had strong integrity. Jack said what he saw, his word was his bond, and his handshake was his commitment; if Jack told you something that was fact, you could take it to the bank. What would Jack say today if he was here: Let's get on with the Program let's do it right, let's strike out on new paths, and have fun while we are doing it. He flew so high he just couldn't come down.

Please consider joining Flight Expo and the Sandberg Family in honoring John Sandberg's contributions to the aviation world by submitting a letter of support to Flight Expo to be included in his Nomination Package.



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The MN Aviation Hall of Fame would like letters of support to address the following:

Did the candidate make a significant aviation contribution to Minnesota?

Was the candidate merely doing his job or did he go beyond his paid duties?

What area of the State does the candidate represent?

Was the candidate a Minnesota native who shed good light on Minnesota though not having spent his/her career in Minnesota or was the candidate from another State, but spent his career in Minnesota?

What makes the candidate unique from his/her contemporaries?

Feel free to use the below template or create your own. All testimonials are due September 25, 2024. Email them to flightexpoinc@aol.com or mail them to PO Box 155, Zimmerman, MN 55398.

Nominees with community backing are favored over those with little support. To accomplish Flight Expo’s goal the Sandberg Family sincerely asks for the help of those who knew him. Completing John’s nomination package will serve as a tribute to his accomplishments and a testament to his enduring legacy. Flight Expo and the Sandberg family thank you for helping us accomplish keeping this legacy alive.

To most people,
the sky is the limit.

To those who love aviation,
the sky is home.

~Jerry Crawford, Wings Over Texas

Wishing you all the best,

Sharon Sandberg - Volunteer/Administrator/Board Member of Flight Expo, Inc.

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Dear MN Aviation Hall of Fame,

It is with great pleasure that I nominate John Sandberg to the MN Aviation Hall of Fame. John was born and raised in Minnesota. In 1931, John opened his aircraft engine shop in Plymouth, MN in 1969. In addition to being a successful businessman, John pursued his passion for aviation during and outside of regular business hours (For him there was no such thing as business hours). His whole life John devoted his whole life to building various aircraft and engines that would make a difference in the aviation community. Tsunami is only one of the many aircraft. With the Tsunami Jack’s dream had come true. The Tsunami was and still is the world’s fastest home-built race plane. John promoted excellence and encouraged others to set high standards in their endeavors. He showcased the best in aviation, driving innovation, progress, and improvement.

Please consider inducting John Sandberg into the MN Aviation Hall of Fame. John continues to be a role model and source of inspiration for others. His passion and determination encourage current and future generations to strive for excellence, pursue their passions, and make positive contributions to the aviation community.

Sincerely,

(Name)

(Address)

(Email or Phone)