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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the nomination of John Sandberg for induction into the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame. Though I cannot articulate Mr. Sandberg's contributions to the aviation community in Minnesota, nor can I say I knew him or that he would have even recognized me, having only met him a few times in the mid-70s, what I can describe is how he made a difference in my formative years in aviation.

I discovered Unlimited Air Racing in the early 70s when my Dad went to Reno with some friends, then came home to tell me all about it. Thereafter, I consumed everything I could find about warbirds racing the pylons at Reno, Mojave and beyond.

It took a couple years of pestering my Dad before we made my first trip to Reno in 1975, the Saturday event. He bought me a program; we watched the races and flight demonstrations from the grandstands. I was hooked.

A couple months later, the periodicals that covered warbirds and air racing started hitting the newsstands in our local grocery store. Literally stated, I stood by the worker in the store when he unwrapped the Air Classics and Air Progress magazines to put them on the shelves. Therein I found images and text about John Sandberg and his P-63 *Tipsy Miss*, raced by Lefty Gardner, a low-flying crop duster pilot from Texas. The coincidence of this was that I was building a Midwest control line model of a P-63 Kingcobra, my first major flying model project. It did not take long for me to connect the dots between my model and Mr. Sandberg's *Tipsy Miss*. I elected not to install the stock P-63 wingtips, to square-off the wings, and paint the model like *Tipsy Miss*. The wingtip modification was easy; the paint was a huge challenge.

Tipsy Miss was painted orange overall with stylized racing numbers on the wings and fuselage, a cobra logo on the cockpit doors and a *Vargas Girls* sketch out of Playboy magazine of a naked woman kneeling in a martini glass emblazoned as nose art. This was quite risqué for a 14-year old boy to put on a model aeroplane. The problem was there were only a few

pictures of *Tipsy Miss* available, but for my Reno program and the couple magazine articles. This is where my brief connection with Mr. Sandberg began.

I described my model painting problem to my mother, save for the full disclosure of the risqué nose art. She wisely suggested I write a letter to Mr. Sandberg, so I did. It was a silly little handwritten note, which we mailed to the address I found for his business. I hawkishly watched our mailbox for weeks before following up with a telephone call to make sure my letter and request for images were on his radar. Mr. Sandberg took a few minutes to chat with me, answer a couple kid-questions about *Tipsy Miss* and to assure me his people were getting the photographs of the details I needed to paint my model. A couple weeks later, an envelope arrived with a note from Mr. Sandberg and several detailed photographs of *Tipsy Miss*. This was a Big Day in the life of a kid. I still have that note and those photographs.

The next year, I took my P-63 to the races and walked it right into the *Tipsy Miss* racing pit. Mr. Sandberg and his crew couldn't have been more friendly, complimentary or accommodating, even though I missed on the paint color (more red than orange). It was a thrill. They pulled *Tipsy* out for an engine run, which left the pit empty, but for her wheel chocks. I positioned my 44-inch wingspan model in those big airplane chocks. One of the crew guys said, "Hey, look, it's a baby Sandberg."

As the years went by, I watched from afar as Mr. Sandberg built and flew racing airplanes. And while I did not keep this early connection going, those few touches in my life were meaningful to me. Mr. Sandberg was a hard-charger. He did a lot of high-level airplane stuff, which is well documented and widely acknowledged. This little story meant a lot to me in the moment, still today. In my time, nearly five decades hence, I've done a little hard-charging myself, built and flew a couple military airplanes, participated with a couple unlimited air racing teams and worked with some kids to help them pursue their aviation dreams, just as Mr. Sandberg and others did for me. It is a tradition we keep alive, a connection we make with the new generation to pass the baton, keeping old airplanes alive with our loving stewardship. Mr. Sandberg didn't just send me a few pictures all those years ago; he encouraged my interest and captured my imagination toward what I might do in aviation. I wonder how many other kids and people he inspired...

This letter may not be in the scope of the qualifications required to induct John Sandberg into the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame; but if I could vote, I would surely recognize Mr.

Sandberg, for all the reasons.

Most Sincerely,

Benjamin Marsh

Post Script: A couple years ago, whilst reverting back to my childhood, I built another Midwest control line P-63, the third such painted like *Tipsy Miss*, image below.



Ben Marsh-winner of the 2022 Neil A. Armstrong Aviation Heritage Trophy in 2022.