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ROB HARRISON, THE TUMBLING BEAR RECEIVES THE 2008 AMELIA REID SPIRIT AWARD

On Saturday, March 1, 2008 at the SouthWest Airshow Networking (SWAN) Conference held at MCAS Miramar, San Diego, CA, SWAN president Jacquie Warda showed baby pictures of the Amelia Reid Spirit Award recipient. After the first picture was shown, no one had a clue. After the second photo, everyone had a suspicion, by the third photo Rob Harrison, The Tumbling Bear whispered to his wife Susan “It’s me.” He didn’t know, until the third photo was shown, he was the recipient of this prestigious award. His late wife, Kathleen Wolf-Harrison received the award in 2004, and now both awards are proudly displayed on the top shelf of Rob’s office.

“Rob was chosen to receive the Amelia Reid Spirit Award simply because for as long as anyone has known him, he has always been willing to contribute to the conference and the safety seminar with the best possible attitude. He gives of his time selflessly to help out, and that Spirit is what makes him a valuable asset to SWAN and the air show industry as a whole! His 'esprit de corps' when at air shows is great! He is a very positive role model for kids - big and small! We appreciate his contribution!” said Mrs. Warda.

“I am humbled, and honored, more than I can find words to tell. To find myself in the company of legends like Bill Cornick and Eddie Andreini is overwhelming. I loved Amelia with all my heart,—I even danced with her once, ask my wife how often I dance—her spirit of fun and adventure, her love of all things flying, her dogged maintenance of the highest standards running her airport, and especially her amazing skill as an airshow pilot were and remain an inspiration. Thanks beyond expression to SWAN for this huge honor,” said Rob.

Amelia Reid was a legendary flight instructor with over 55,000 logged flight hours and more than 4,000 pilots personally trained. She won the AOPA Lawrence P. Sharples Award and had been inducted in the National Association of Flight Instructors Hall of Fame. Amelia Reid died in 2001, but her school Amelia Reid Aviation, founded in 1960 out of the trunk of her 1959 Ford Mustang, continues in operation, now owned by one of her former students.



SWAN membership is made up of those who share a love of aviation and air shows. Affiliated with ICAS, the International Council of Airshows, the membership includes airshow performers, vendors, airshow sponsors, producers, and directors. SWAN has members from California, Oregon, Colorado, Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Hawaii, and New Mexico. For more information on SWAN visit their Web site at www.swansafety.com.

Rob was at the controls of a Piper Cub at the age of six with his father Harry, a career Naval officer. He started experiencing aerobatics at the age of 13. Now 66, he has thrilled fans of all ages for the past 15 years throughout the Southwestern United States. Kids line up for his autograph, waiting often as long as an hour and a half after his 12 minute performance. He hands out collector cards, pins, washable tattoos and other personalized giveaways. None are more enthralled with his airborne acrobatics than the youngsters; in turn, their reactions seem to give Harrison the most enjoyment. Harrison has recently added a new feature to his Web site called KidsLink.

Everyone enjoys seeing Rob popping in and out of puffs of white smoke, spinning, twisting through the air in his custom-built Zlin 50LX from the Czech Republic. Rob owns three of these planes. Only 78 were built, and seven in the U.S. His, Zlin is the only one currently flying airshows.

Rob earned a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering at Oregon State and a law degree from La Verne (CA) University. He added a certificate in flight test engineering from the University of Tennessee Space Institute and an FAA Statement of Aerobatic Competency, which allows him a waiver for unrestricted aerobatics.

He is also an Aerobatic Competency Examiner, or ACE. This puts him in select company. "There might be 100 active ACES who are allowed to license others to perform in airshows," Harrison explains.

The Tumbling Bear, retired his Smokey Bear career after 28 years with the United States Forest Service to fly airshows and start his own businesses.

Rob lives in Claremont and Oak Hills, California with his wife Susan, they are based out of Cable Airport.

To see Rob Harrison, The Tumbling Bear perform at a local airshow, go to www.harrisonairshows.com.

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PHOTOS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT
www.harrisonairshows.com
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