

Earl Outland inducted into Illinois Aviation HOF

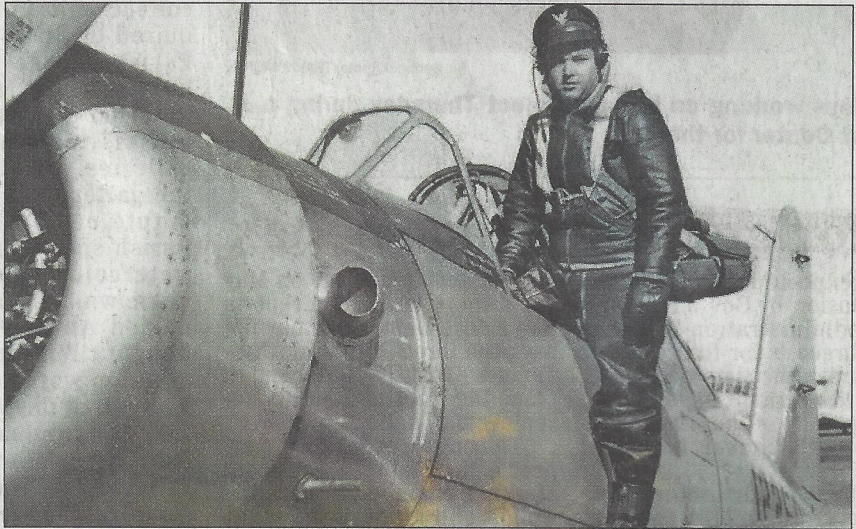
Outland was the first airport director at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport

BY JOSH JONES
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MT. VERNON — A historic figure of Mt. Vernon was recently honored and posthumously inducted into the Illinois Aviation Hall of Fame Class of 2019 in Peoria as the legacy of Earl Outland and Mt. Vernon Outland Airport was recognized.

According to a press release from Mt. Vernon Outland Airport, Outland was Mt. Vernon Outland Airport's first manager and the

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Earl Outland

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airport's namesake. The Illinois Aviation Hall of Fame banquet preceded the Annual Illinois Aviation Conference hosted by the Illinois Aviation Trades Association. The plaque was presented and received by Lisa Outland, granddaughter of Earl Outland.

"It is a great honor for the family and his passion for aviation was just so infectious throughout the community, that we are just really proud of his accomplishments that he made in the short 53 years that he was alive," Lisa Outland said.

Outland was one of the first to fly at the privately owned 60-acre grass field east of Mt. Vernon. He oversaw the dramatic transformation of the facility leading to the all-weather 1100 acre airport enjoyed today. Outland led a team that secured Ozark airline service at the airport in 1962. He operated Outland Aviation during his tenure at the airport offering aircraft fueling, charter service and a very successful Cessna aircraft sales dealer-

ship.

Outland was best known for teaching scores of Mt. Vernon residents to fly. He was giving of his time and resources and on many occasions provided free aircraft transportation to residents with medical needs. Despite his vigor, Outland died from a heart attack at the age of 53 in 1966.

"It is important to note in those days, unless it was the busiest of airports, there was usually one guy that was the airport and that was Earl Outland," said Airport Director Chris Collins. "He was the guy teaching and selling, doing the charter service, mowing grass, doing the budget, in charge of everything."

During World War II, Outland proudly served in the United States Army Air Corps as Director of Training for the 20th Ferry Group based at Nashville, Tennessee. In 1945, Captain Outland flew a four engine C-54 transport around the world testing various navigation methods and establishing routes which became the standard for subsequent military flights. The list of aircraft Outland flew was extensive and can easily be described as "everything the allies operated."

"It is easy to see why the City of Mt. Vernon and the Jefferson County Board rallied the community to name the airport in Earl's honor immediately after his passing in 1966. He was aviation to this community. Now, Outland takes his place among the other statewide aviation greats," Collins said.

Lisa Outland also discussed Earl Outland's impact on the community.

"Perhaps the most significant honor/legacy of Earl Outland was the impact he had, not only in the community but also in the hearts and minds of those who knew him well," Lisa Outland said. "Years after his death, countless friends, family and community leaders could easily recall a fond memory, amusing story or exciting adventure they shared with Earl."

"That impact is a true testament to a man of character — to be gone but not forgotten, remembered for his passion and dedication to aviation," Lisa Outland said. "Earl Outland's was a life not merely marked by accomplishments but rather one filled with service and lived with courage, enthusiasm and compassion."

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