

Model A owned by Ford Tri-Motor pilot returns to Put-in-Bay

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This 1930 Model A that once belonged to Island Airlines pilot, Harold Hauck, has returned to Put-in-Bay and will be on display at the Antique Car Museum next summer. (Photo by Sheri Trusty)

PUT-IN-BAY – A 1930 Model A Sedan once owned by war hero and flight record-holder, Harold Hauck, is back on Put-in-Bay, where Hauck was often seen driving it along lakeside roadways. In November, Chip Duggan and Jim “Curly” Wilson, owner and caretaker of the Antique Car Museum on Put-in-Bay respectively, traveled to Florida to pick up the car from Douglas LeVeck, the car’s most recent owner, who graciously donated the car to the museum. LeVeck’s father acquired the car from Hauck at some point, and LeVeck inherited it in the 1980s. “Doug told me that his parents are buried on the island, and he wants the car to be back on the island, too,” Wilson said.

The car was first brought to the island by Hauck, who was born in Port Clinton in 1921 and passed away in 2003. He was an Army veteran who served during World War II. Put-in-Bay resident, Jeff Koehler of the Put-in-Bay Gazette, remembers talking with Hauck about his military history. Hauck was one of the first American soldiers to help liberate the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria.



Chip Duggan stands with the Model A near Perry's Victory & International Peace Memorial. (Submitted photo)

“He talked about carrying two grown men, one under each arm, out of the camp to get food. They were literally starving,” Koehler said. “I’ve often wondered how it impacted him. It had to be very traumatic. I don’t think a lot of people on Put-in-Bay know that part of his life.”

Hauck returned from the war, and in 1946, he took his first flying lesson in a Piper J-3 Cub. He eventually obtained a commercial pilot license, and, in 1950, he began flying a Ford Tri-Motor – the planes were nicknamed the “Tin Goose” – for Sky Tours, which later became Island Airlines. He spent his career with Island Airlines, and by the time he retired in 1980, he had logged over 15,000 hours in Tri-Motors, setting the world record for the most logged hours in Tri-Motors. Because of his achievement, he is included on the National Aviation and Space Exploration Wall of Honor.

Although Hauck was a war hero and world record-holder, he was an unassuming man who enjoyed driving his Model A around the island.

Jim “Curly” Wilson, left, and Chip Duggan celebrate the return of Harold Hauck’s Model A to Put-in-Bay. (Photo by Sheri Trusty)

“I never heard him brag about anything,” Koehler said. “But he was a really interesting guy. There was just something out of the ordinary about him.”

LeVeck met Hauck when he was a young boy accompanying his father to funerals on Put-in-Bay. “My family had the funeral home in Port Clinton for years. We did all the business on the island, and in doing so, we made a lot of friends,” LeVeck said. “Harold Hauck was good friends with my dad.”

While it may seem unusual for a boy to choose to hang out at funerals, Hauck offered an irresistible incentive. “When I was real small – eight or nine – I’d go to a lot of funerals with my dad on the island. One reason was because I got to fly on the Tin Goose,” LeVeck said. “Harold would let me quote-unquote ‘fly’ the Tin Goose.”



Ford Tri-Motor pilot, Harold Hauck, left, talks with siblings Linda and Dale Burris in this vintage photo provided by Dale’s daughter, Robin Burris Cadez. The Tri-Motor transported them daily between North Bass Island and Put-in-Bay for classes.

After owning Hauck’s Model A for decades, LeVeck decided it was time it returned to Put-in-Bay. “We had a lot of camaraderie with people on the island. They supported our business,” he said. “I wanted to give back to the community.”

The car had not run in years, but Wilson was able to get it operating on three cylinders. It’s sitting in island storage for the winter. “I’ll fix it right in the spring,” Wilson said. “It will purr on all four cylinders.” Thanks to Wilson and LeVeck, the car will once again “purr” on the island, where it will pay homage to a humble island man whose quiet impact reached around the globe.