**Neal V. Loving**

April 4, 1916 – December 19, 1998

Neal Loving was born in Detroit, MI and developed a fascination with airplanes and the possibilities with flight before he became a teenager. This passion for aviation would be the driving force in a lifetime of aeronautical experiments, employment, and international recognition.

One of the classes he took at Cass Technical High School was aircraft mechanics. This increased his desire to build airplanes himself and by 1941 he was co-owner of Wayne Aircraft Company. When the United States entered World War II Neal helped form an all-black Civil Air Patrol Squadron. This group trained on assembly of his Wayne S-1 gliders along with pre-flight inspections and other Civil Air Patrol related activities. During one such flight in 1944 Neal Loving crashed and although he survived, it was not without significant loss and challenges. This crash cost him both legs below the knee. During his substantial stay in the hospital his mother died and his fiancée broke off their engagement.

From this apparent devastating set of circumstances Neal pushed himself and in 1946 he became the co-owner of Wayne School of Aeronautics until 1956. In this period he designed, built and raced a midget racer model WR-1. This plane came to be recognized internationally as an outstanding plane in its class and has been on display at the Experimental Aircraft Association Museum in Oshkosh, Wisconsin since 1964.

During this period he also enrolled in Wayne State University and graduated in 1961 with an engineering degree and the distinction of, at age 45, being the oldest full time student to graduate. While a student he built the WR-2 which was a car towable plane.

After graduation Neal Loving was recruited to Wright Patterson Air Force Base’s Flight Dynamics Laboratory where his first assignment was work on a problem encountered by U2 spy planes. This work garnered him international recognition as an expert in High Altitude Clear Air Turbulence.

While on a pre-employment visit to the base and visiting an acquaintance in Yellow Springs, he and his wife Clare saw a new house for sale at 660 Wright St. This would be their home and the place where their two children Paul and Michelle would grow up.

While working at Wright Patterson Neal designed and built the WR-3 roadable aircraft and much of the time the completed aircraft could be seen in the carport on his house on Wright St. Another unique sight would be to see the plane being towed through town on his way to the Springfield, Ohio airport for one of his many flights. He continued to fly until age 76 but even before then when he wasn’t flying he was talking about aviation and his life at clubs, museums, schools, and anywhere he could share his passion.

During his lifetime Neal Loving received more than 40 awards, he was active with more than 15 aviation professional and technical organizations, and wrote numerous technical publications. He was the first African American and double amputee to qualify as a racing pilot with the National Aeronautic Association and the Professional Racing Pilots Association. In 1994, his autobiography, “Loving’s Love: A Black American’s Experience in Aviation” was published.

*Kevin Jackson*

Sources: MS282, Neal V. Loving Collection, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio