

New additions to Chile's National Aeronautics and Space Museum

written by Álvaro Romero | August 30, 2021



Monday August 23, 2021, saw the 91th Anniversary ceremony of Chile's Museo Nacional Aeronáutico y del Espacio or MNAE for short (National Aeronautics And Space Museum), located where the Los Cerrillos Airport used to be, in the Southwest area of Santiago. During the event, two new civil aircraft were inducted into MNAE's collection: an Ercoupe Model E last registered CC-PBZ (c/n 4972) and an experimental Evans VP-1 Volksplane registration CC-AFQ.

Present during the ceremony there were two were special guests: Constanza and Luciana Martínez, two of the four daughters of Eugenio Martínez García, who together with their sisters (Constanza, Consuelo, Luciana and Isidora) donated the experimental plane VP-1 Volksplane, built by their father, receiving the recognition of the MNAE for "for its invaluable contribution to the conservation and dissemination of the aeronautical historical heritage of the nation."

Representing the late Eugenio Martínez, his daughter Constanza stated that "Our father was always linked to aviation, he did radio-control models all his life and excelled in competitions. Later he became a civilian pilot and then instructor, as well as President of the Aero Clubs of Rancagua and La Serena (he was also a member of the Club Aéreo de Ovalle.) In addition, he flew ultra-light aircraft and built an experimental EMG Evans VP-1 Volksplane entirely from blueprints.



The Evans VP-1 Volksplane, civil registration CC-AFQ, which was recently donated to the Museum. (Photo: Via the author.)

After he passed away, we didn't know what to do with the airplane. We thought of several alternatives; Instead of selling it, maybe leave it in an aero club where it could be flown or give it to some other institution that could take good care of it. Finally, after talking with the Rancagua Air Club mechanic -Luis Leiva- we reached the conclusion of what we should do; hence, we decided to donate it to the MNAE, so that it may be well preserved and admired by the new generations, our family and all those who love flying, like our dear father."

Meanwhile, Miguel Muñoz Jorquera, member of the Rancagua Aero Club (which recently celebrated its 80th anniversary) also participated as a special guest, since he donated his Ercoupe 415E aircraft, civil registration CC-PBZ. The MNAE gave him a well-deserved recognition "for his valuable contribution to the conservation and dissemination of the aeronautical historical heritage."

For his part, Miguel Muñoz Jorquera stated "I flew this plane with the previous owner and I loved it, I was surprised with its anti-spin characteristics, and in addition to not having pedals, you could fly with the cockpit open, wonderful to fly in it . It had an accident and at the time its owner put it up for sale and I bought it. From that minute it was an odyssey to get it flyable. It was in several aeronautical workshops and later it was stored in a warehouse.

Whenever I saw the Ercoupe, I would tell it '*one day you will fly again.*' I tried to get it airworthy, but it turned out to be very difficult, I tried to get pilot friends and family involved in the restoration project, but nothing came out of it. One day I had to move it out where it had been stored and that made me think about the future of the plane. I analyzed it a lot since there are few of this aircraft type left in Chile, and finally I decided that it should be placed in the MNAE's care, where it can be preserved for posterity."



MNAE's authorities handing the recognition diplomas to the Martínez sisters and to Mr. Miguel Muñoz. (Photo: Via the author.)

The author wishes to thank the Martínez and Muñoz families for their invaluable help in the completion of this short note.