

A COLLECTION OF

# NORTHWOODS NOSTALGIA

FROM THE PAGES OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

by Joyce Laabs

MARKETING  
OF  
MINOCQUA

BUILDING  
THE  
DREAMS



PIONEERS  
WITH  
FLAIR

EARLY  
RESORTS





No M...  
The Bridge

**WHEN  
ESTATES  
WERE IN**

# Casey Lambert

## Man of Contrast

### THE OLD EAGLE ROCK [Nothing To do With Ballin The Jack]

*Hardly a man is now alive  
Who remembers the Curtis SO-X-5  
It may come to you as a terrible shock  
That it powered a plane called an Eagle Rock.  
This crate put together with bailing wire  
Was Casey Lambert's 1st flier  
It took off on an angle of 45 degrees  
Which was hard on the nerves, the back and the knees.  
At the age of sixteen it was Casey's delight  
To scare hell out of his friends with a nice little flight.  
With any quick move, wind screamed through the struts  
A sure way to drive the passenger nuts.  
One fine fall day [but the ground a bit sticky]  
He said to me and his brother Mickey  
Come out to the field and bring your loot  
And we'll fly up to Union for a turkey shoot.  
We flew up to Union, the weather was grand  
Side slipped to a field about as big as your hand.  
It's good we had a favorable breeze  
As the field was completely surrounded by trees.  
We had a good day and if my memory is right  
Mickey was top man in the first flight,  
He won a live turkey as big as a train  
An impossible thing to get into the plane.  
Then I said to Casey, "Will you tell me please  
How do you plan to get the Eagle Rock over those trees?"  
With the ground kind of muddy and a short field ahead  
It's a 10 to 1 bet that we will all be dead.  
When we started the engine I heard Casey shout  
"We got the thing in and we'll sure get it out."  
We cleared the top leaves by an eighth of an inch  
Then soon found the river, it looked like a cinch.  
But!!! Under the bridge at St. Charles we flew  
And the sweat, it enveloped my body like dew  
But Casey will tell you, if he's not too proud  
There wasn't a dry pair of pants in the crowd.*

It was in the family playroom in 1916 that a young lad of seven noticed the lights flicker and grow dimmer as he bent over his microscope. He knew that a penny in the fuse box would solve the problem--and so spends his penny this way--making the correction himself, and returns to his play.

Then his "nanny" appears to trundle him off to bed. He is strenuously objecting as he climbs the stairway, trying to explain that he still has something he must take care of (removing the penny from the fuse box) and he wishes to put his toys away. "Nanny" assures him that other members of the staff will take care of his toys and close the playroom for the night.

Sometime during the night flames licked out of that fuse box; and although the entire family and staff escaped without injury, dawn's early light silhouetted the only remains--two stone chimneys.

The above spectacular ended the placidity of Casey Lambert's childhood; in fact, seemed to "light" the way for his exploits of the future. Casey Lambert was born with the proverbial "silver spoon" in his mouth. Heir to the Lambert Pharmaceutical fortune, which gave Listerine to the country; and then raised by his mother, who, in a second marriage, joined the Busch family, which gave Budweiser to the world. He could have settled back in private schools and become a scion of either industry--but he chose to not only taste life--but to devour it.

To describe Casey Lambert fully is impossible. The dictionary doesn't contain enough adjectives. He has been referred to as the "golden boy", the "man of all seasons", the "darling of the debutantes". He is at home deep under the seas, exploring within restrictions of his diving gear. He is a talented charcoal artist and a precise mathematician. He swings through life--living every moment to its fullest; yet under this swinging exterior lies a deep compassion for others. He is daring yet methodical. He is Stafford Lightburn Lambert--citizen of St. Louis, Mo., Minocqua, Wis., and Boca Raton, Fla. He is "Casey"--Minocqua's Man of Contrasts.

Casey Lambert's father and mother discovered Minocqua in 1900 when they honeymooned at

ann's Trout Lake Resort. In 1905 they bought 200 feet of frontage on Lake Minocqua that remains the Lambert Estate to this day.

Although many of the Lambert family men had been involved in the young aviation industry, I don't think Casey's mother realized in that year of 1909 that the child she carried as she flew over St. Louis with Major Albert Bond Lambert would come to love the skies with the same passion as the man she flew with.

Major Lambert, who became Uncle Albert three months later, was not only the boy's friend, guide and mentor during his lifetime--but the man who instilled in Casey the obsession for flying and speed.

Albert Bond Lambert's love affair with the skies had begun in Paris, France, when he won the balloon race of 1893. It continued as he became a skilled pilot under the tutelage of Orville Wright. It was Major Lambert who donated the land for the St. Louis Airport which still carries the family name. It was Uncle Albert who backed a young man's dream when he donated a portion of the \$15,000 that was needed to carry Lindbergh on his 1927 flight across the Atlantic. It was Uncle Albert who encouraged the young Casey Lambert to fulfill his dream of flying...but it really didn't take all that much encouragement.

The year that Casey Lambert was 14 he stood looking out his window at the neighboring golf course, he suddenly couldn't believe his eyes. An airplane landed on the No. 1 fairway. He raced over, met the pilot Frank Dunn, and begged to ride with him while he completed his mail run. Frank took him up--and thus it began. He went on to take lessons--soloed at 16 and purchased his first airplane the same year. It was a Curtiss Standard J-1 of World War I vintage.

It was the first of the 27 airplanes he was to own during his flying career, and the cost was \$300. To raise the necessary cash, he sold his motorcycle for \$150 and negotiated a bank loan for the balance. (It took only one weekend of stunt flying to earn the necessary money to repay the loan.) An interesting sidelight: when his mother learned of his purchase, she quickly journeyed to the field to assure herself that this vehicle would be safe for her son. After some swift maneuvering on Casey's part, his mother was shown another plane (cost \$2,500) that gave the outward appearance she sought. In reality, Casey's was a plane of many colors--the wings had sheared so often they were a mad jumble of colorful replacements.

Thus began his relationship with Charles "Slim" Lindbergh and they barnstormed throughout the country. Together they made the mail run from St. Louis to Chicago. If the plane broke down, they completed the run by cab. Casey was once featured in a flying circus. The handbills read--"Daredevil Millionaire Sportsman Pilot" -

"He will thrill you in his \$25,000 plane."

But we're ahead of the story. After Lindbergh's successful flight to Paris, Casey couldn't rest until he owned such a plane. So it was that in late 1927 he took delivery of the sister ship of the "Spirit of St. Louis" and became the owner of the first monoplane with an air-cooled motor that was to tie-up at Lambert Field in St. Louis; a Ryan M-3 monoplane.

Aside from the fees earned through his barnstorming and the flying circus, Casey's first steady job as a pilot (he received his pilot's license at the age of 19 on Feb. 18, 1928--and still carries No. 1887) was flying various real estate men throughout Florida. In addition to these duties, he also carried the Florida bootlegger payroll delivery. It was carried far out to sea and dropped at a vessel docked off the shoreline. In later years he served as a test pilot for Curtiss-Wright.

At 22, Casey was elected secretary of the National Aeronautic Association. He had joined the Air National Guard at 17, served five years, then switched to a career with the Navy; served as a commander in World War II and retired after 20 years of distinguished service.

It was during his military career that he met and became friends with such greats as Jimmy Doolittle, Eddie Rickenbacker, General Goddard and Dwight Eisenhower. Relationships that lasted through the span of time.

His friendship with Eisenhower blossomed in Minocqua where they hunted and shot skeet together. These fond memories are nourished by the frequent letters that still flow between Casey and Mamie Eisenhower. One unforgettable memory came during one of Eisenhower's last visits to the area. Casey, after clearing with the Secret Service, toted his cannon to the road on which the Eisenhower caravan would pass. As they were rolling out of town, suddenly a resounding boom was heard and the cannon appeared in front of the caravan--manned by a man waving a white flag of surrender. Just Casey Lambert giving his friend a fond farewell.

How has a man who has logged thousands of air miles survived with no more than bruised ribs and a few scratches to show for his eight crashes and a multitude of near misses? There must have been an angel riding on his shoulder.

His biggest scare was in 1930. He was testing the new Lockheed Sirius prior to purchasing the plane. He was flying over his mother's St. Louis home and going into a banked turn at 190 miles an hour when the wings began to disintegrate. As he struggled to gain altitude, he shouted to his passenger to jump. They both parachuted to safety, as the plane crashed to the ground some 400 yards away.

Even though Casey bruised his ribs--it was his pride that was really bruised. His landing was in a

farmer's pig sty and he emerged from among the squealing pigs with his immaculate outfit (would you believe pink flying pants and patent leather boots) covered with mud. Then, to add insult to injury, a few days later he received a billing for \$150 from the farmer to compensate for his loss of peach crop in the four trees Casey brushed on his way down. The remains of the plane No. 7734 from the tail section is among the memorabilia in Casey's Minocqua home.

Although that proved to be his only "bail-out" there were other close calls. During a night landing at unlighted Lambert Field in 1927, he crashed into a house that workmen had been in the process of moving off the field. It was left sitting on the edge of the runway, for they knew that no one would attempt to land in the dark. They didn't know Casey. It wasn't too many months later that Casey donated an 8,000,000 candlepower beacon to Lambert Field.

He hung up on a high tension wire over Mercer Lake and the wing sheared off the plane. Local authorities fished the plane out of the lake, but not Casey--he was unhurt. On another occasion he was flying Game Warden Bud Knudtson to Wausau. As they came in for an 180-degree landing the plane flipped and landed on its back. After many minutes of struggling with the throttle, Casey uprighted the plane for a normal landing. Bud's only comment was "that was fun--let's try it again." Casey didn't. What he did do was fly the plane on to St. Louis and sell it immediately.

In 1928 Casey discovered the thrill of the sea and purchased his first yacht. The Irene II was 53 feet long with a top speed of 23 knots. It was then that he took up deep sea diving, exploring the reefs off the Florida Coast and the Bahamas. In 1934 he invented his own air machine for the diving, owned the only chromium plated diving helmet in the world, purchased the 110-foot yacht "Flight" and took off on one of his many journeys to the South Seas for an underwater filming expedition--using a camera Lambert had invented.

In 1938 he founded Lambert Engineering and went into the tool and die business in St. Louis. (It was sold two years ago.) Among the many things Casey developed during those years was a test machine for Navy 50 caliber machine guns and the first working method for taking high speed military photos at night.

Casey's life in Minocqua has been just as flamboyant. After spending all his boyhood summers in the area, he purchased the property from his father at age 19, built his hangar, refurbished the old log house that today is 125 years old; and at 21 built the guest house.

When Casey first flew into Minocqua, the Woodruff Airport didn't exist. Landings were in Weaver's Field at Long Lake. When the airport was established, Casey built his first hangar. He

merely measured his plane, added a foot to each side, and he had the dimensions for the shelter. He still keeps equipment in his hangar to talk with the airport each day, even though the seaplane he built in his Minocqua machine shop stands ensconced in the hangar with his aqua car. He has served the area as Federal Game Marshal.

Casey gave long years of service to his Minocqua community, quietly and without asking recognition. He was one of the original members of the Hospital Board, prior to the opening of the facility. He served on the Board from 1953 to 1971 and guided them as president from '53 through '71. He still remains an Honorary Board member.

He was a dedicated fund raiser for this cause and when they were having trouble completing the facility he took care of the money situation. How? He threw one of his fabulous cocktail parties at the hangar, invited the men he knew could help--and before they left his home that evening they had signed the notes to guarantee the loan from the Chicago bank--and the hospital was on its way to completion. He was instrumental in supplying the first auxiliary water supply to the hospital, installing the first generator and securing the radio equipment needed to contact the key personnel when they were needed.

It was Casey Lambert who saw that the hospital was established on a firm financial foundation. Casey also served as president of the Minocqua Country Club from 1947 to 1969, and kept it on a paying basis.

On the Fourth of July, thousands (residents and tourists alike) would line the banks of Minocqua Lake, while hundreds of others anchored their boats off Casey's shoreline to watch the fireworks spectacular he put on for Minocqua. No "big city" show surpassed his.

Casey is now semi-retired, but still spends his summers at his Minocqua Estate, surrounded by memorabilia and by all the things he loves best. In addition to the lake house, log house, two caretakers' homes, hangar, guest house and garages; there is a completely equipped machine shop and photographic lab--and of course, his beloved cannons.

The one dating back to 1723 was a gift from his late step-mother, Mrs. Adolphus Busch, Sr. Overlooking the lake, some 50 yards away, is another cannon he built in the machine shop (it even has white sidewall tires). For many years their blasts were heard across the waters as Casey marked sun-up and sun-down. His tug boat, which he had trucked in from Sturgeon Bay and used to haul his party boat on the lake, has now been put to rest and will occupy a place of honor on the south point of his property.

Then there is Casey's most cherished possession--Hercules--his steam engine. Casey Lambert drove a steam engine before he could



Gov. Ed. ...  
Casey ...  
Missouri

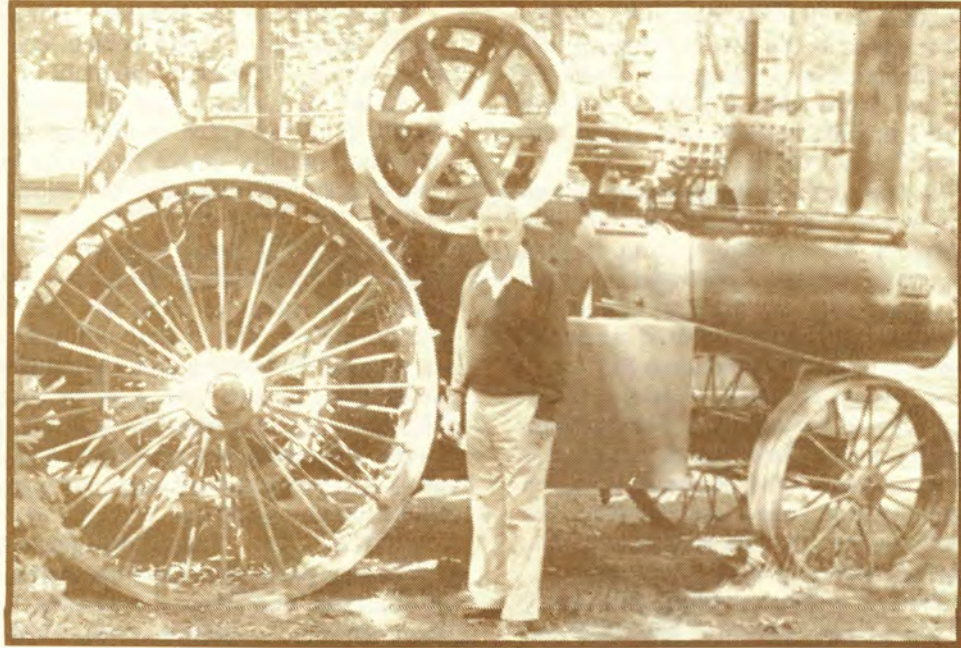
*Casey and his fishing buddy relaxing.*



*El Capitan*

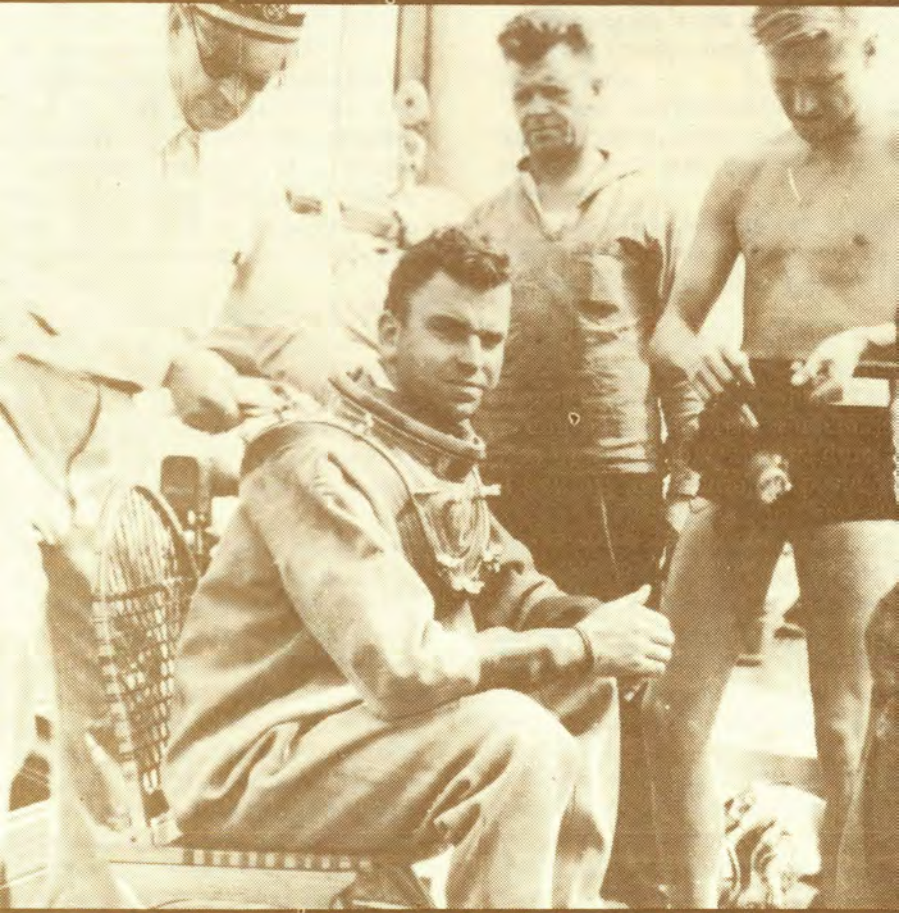


*The Irene II. First yacht purchased by Lambert in 1928.*



*Casey with his most prized possession, Hercules.  
The steam engine now retired to his Minocqua Estate.*





*Casey as he prepared to deep-sea dive off the Florida coastline.*

drive a car. He likes to tell of the day he ran down the symbolic iron gates at the Busch Brewery (his grandfather never found out). Casey Jones was his boyhood hero, and there came a point in his life when he wouldn't answer anyone who called him Stafford...it was Casey...and it stuck.

At the time he was running his own sawmill on the estate, he heard that a steam engine was available in Illinois. He bought it...and it was shipped by flat car to Rhineland. It then became his problem to get it to his Minocqua home.

That Sunday afternoon he and a friend made the journey to liberate Hercules. Fortunately, it was sidetracked near one of the local watering holes. They found that with each successive libation they became a little stronger. They finally wrestled it off the flat car--built up a head of steam--and you can well imagine the startled reactions of the Sunday drivers as they beheld a steam engine puffing its way up Highway 51.

They made the trip without mishap--and Casey spent many happy hours fulfilling his childhood dream of "engineering". Hercules is also at rest on a prominent hill overlooking the Minocqua hangar.

Casey still serves Missouri, Illinois and Kansas as the Honorary Belgian Consul, with offices in the Lambert Engineering Company.

Although Casey takes his life a little easier now-a-days, his spirit is not dampened. There is still the "twinkle" in his eye as he talks of former exploits and he remains very much the "dashing hero".

He loves Minocqua, not only for the many past days that are dear to him, but for its summer climate. October to June are still spent in Boca Raton--still on the water and still near the golf course for it's boating and golfing that now occupy most of his leisure time. And, of course, there are the trips to St. Louis to visit old friends.

But foremost, Casey Lambert is still "the golden boy" - "the man of all seasons" - and Minocqua's "Man of Contrasts".

(NOTE: The preceding feature on Casey Lambert appeared in the September 16, 1976 issue of the Lakeland Times. On October 3, 1976, Casey Lambert died of cardiac arrest at the age of 67 at the Howard Young Medical Center; the hospital he helped to found and continued to serve.)