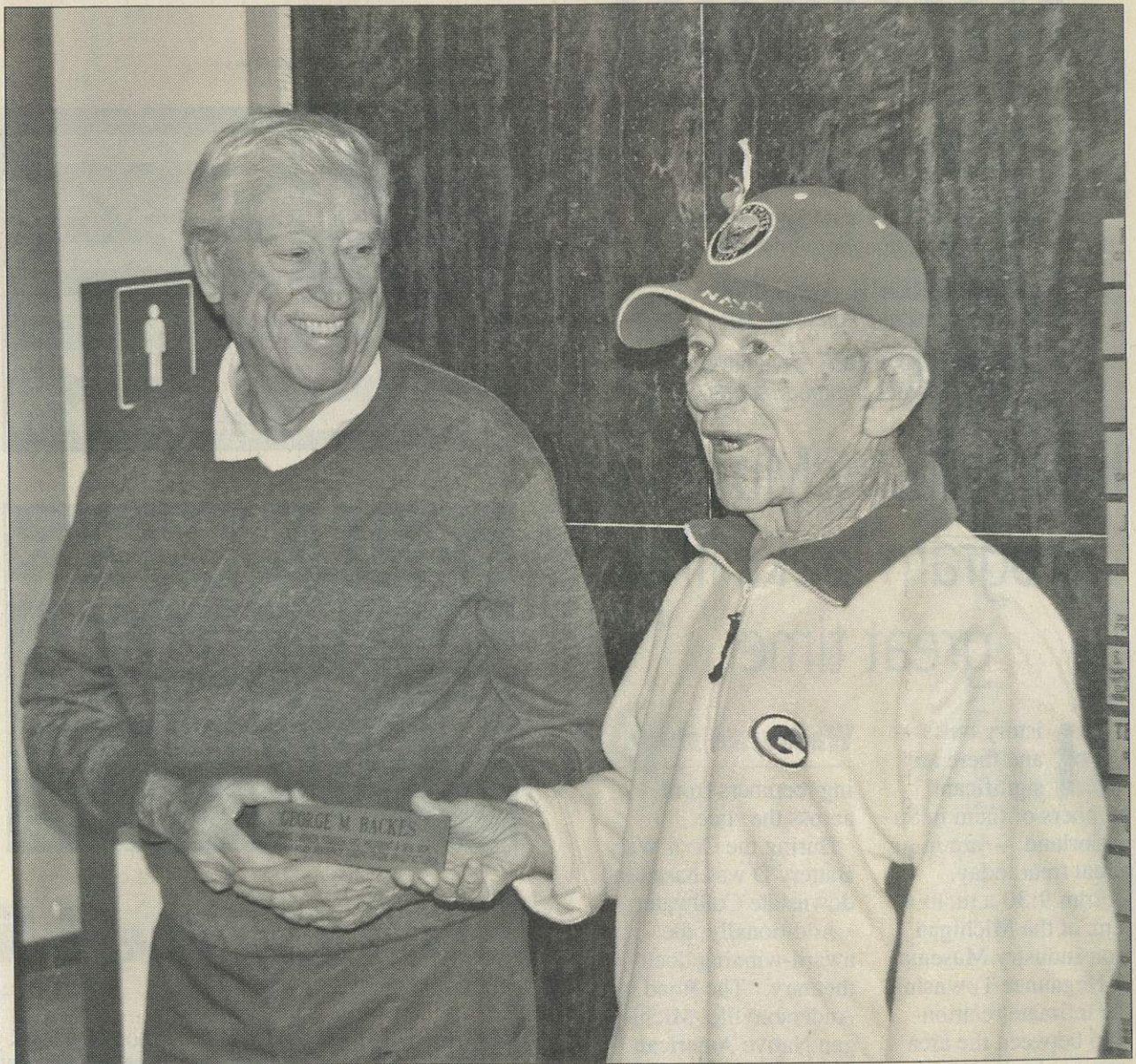


Backes receives wall of Honor plaque



From left, George M. Backes receives a plaque from Joe Peitro, chairman of the Wall of Honor Committee Friday evening at K.I. Sawyer International Airport in Gwinn. Backes was honored for his outstanding contribution to aviation, and his plaque will be added to the Wall of Honor at the airport. Backes, a Michigamme native, graduated from Michigan Tech University in 1953 and was later employed by United Aircraft, Pratt and Whitney Division, in Hartford, Conn. He was a member of the engineering group that developed the J57 engine, which powered various fighter jets, the B-52 bomber and the first U.S. commercial passenger jetliner — the Boeing 707. In 1955, Backes accepted a position with Solar Aircraft Co. in San Diego, Calif., where he was responsible for the design and development of many small turbine jet engines. In the early 1970s, Backes separated the military and aerospace engine business at Solar and formed a new division — Turbomach. He became vice president and general manager. Turbomach produced aircraft auxiliary power units used in both military and commercial aircraft applications such as the F-16 fighter jet, the Blackhawk helicopter and many commercial passenger airlines including the new Boeing 787 Dreamliner. During his tenure at Turbomach, Backes was selected by the U.S. Defense Department to serve on a Blue Ribbon Committee chaired by William Perry, secretary of the Army and later U.S. secretary of defense. Backes retired in 1985. Backes spends his summers in Michigamme. He resides in Carlsbad, Calif. (Journal photo by Elizabeth Bailey)

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GEORGE M. BACKES

George Michael Backes was born on November 15, 1930, at the old Bell Hospital in Ishpeming, Michigan. He grew up in Michigamme and graduated from Michigamme High School in 1948. On the basketball team he was a starting "center" there for all four years.

His interest in airplanes began at an early age and he spent the long winter months building model airplanes out of balsa wood and tissue paper during his preteen years.

George attended Northern Michigan University for one and a half years before he decided upon an engineering career. He transferred to Michigan Tech in the fall of 1950, working summers to pay college expenses. He graduated from Tech in 1953.

He was employed by United Aircraft, Pratt and Whitney Division, in Hartford, Connecticut and was a member of the Engineering Group that developed the J57 engine which powered various fighter jets, the B-52 bomber and the first U. S. commercial passenger jet liner, the Boeing 707.

George accepted a new position with Solar Aircraft Company in San Diego, California in late 1955, where he was responsible for the design and development of many small turbine jet engines.

In the early 1970s George separated the military and aerospace engine businesses at Solar and formed a new Division with the name TURBOMACH. He became Vice President and General Manager. The Division grew into a world class producer of aircraft Auxiliary Power Units, used in both military and commercial aircraft applications, such as the F-16 fighter jet, the Blackhawk helicopter (used in the Bin Laden operation), and many commercial passenger airlines up to and including the new Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

During his tenure at TURBOMACH, he was selected by the U. S. Defense Department to serve on a Blue Ribbon Committee chaired by William Perry, Secretary of the Army, and later U. S. Secretary of Defense. George traveled on business worldwide. He chaired the board of a joint venture company, formed between his company and Dowty Corporation of the United Kingdom.

George retired in 1985 and the Division was sold to Sunstrand Corporation and later on to United Technologies, Pratt and Whitney - a complete career circle. He has spent his retirement traveling the world with his partner, Madelyn Sheets, and the summers are spent at his lakeside cabin in Michigamme, fishing the local lakes at every opportunity. When not traveling or in Michigamme he resides in Carlsbad, California.

George has two daughters from a previous marriage.

