



Your life. Your neighborhood.

SIGN IN OR BECOME A MEMBER

Submit Content Buy Content Our Writers

You are here: Iowa Life > Century of Flight — Part IX

Posted August 30, 2010

# Century of Flight — Part IX

No comments [Dave Rasdal](#)

NOTE: This is the ninth of 10 Ramblin' columns I'm writing on Mondays from July 5 to Sept. 6 about the first 100 years of flight in Iowa.

## Flying is a fraternity wherever you land

INDEPENDENCE — Being a flyboy is like belonging to a fraternity.

Everywhere you fly, someone is sure to become your friend.

It happened to Orville and Wilbur Wright after they first flew in 1903.

Loads of people befriended Art Hartman of Burlington after he became the first man to fly in Iowa a century ago. (That's why I'm writing about aviation in Iowa for 10 consecutive Mondays from July 5 to Sept. 6.)



"Almost any part of the country you visit, you've got a friend," says Lee Bowden of Independence, who has been flying the same 1945 Taylorcraft BC12D for 50 years.

"Any time we land somewhere and we don't know anybody," adds Linda, his wife and navigator, "they'll let us take their car. It's not a courtesy car from the airport, it's their own car."

These enthusiasts include Jim and Karen Connell who were recently cited by the Federal Aviation Administration for their dedicated management of the Independence Municipal Airport where Lee keeps his plane.

Jim, 75, joined the Army at 18 to become an aviation mechanic. He came to Independence in 1968 when this airport opened. He'd formalized his training in Florida, worked for Pan Am for a while, become a mechanic, flight instructor and charter pilot in Oelwein.



In the beginning, Jim lived in a mobile home at the airport to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. His three sons grew to love it — Mike manages the Decorah airport while Pat and Dave both had careers with Northwest Airlines. Jim gave Karen flying lessons in 1982 and married her in 1985.

Last year this airport hosted Fly Iowa, the statewide fly-in, exhibition and gathering of pilots and fans. It was an opportunity to show off what's been done here lately — the

Tweet 2 Share

PRINT EMAIL

Tags

[Century of Flight](#), [eastern iowa](#), [Ramblin'](#), [The Gazette](#)

From the community



Mount Mercy announces Visiting Writers Series for spring 2012

Related

January 20, 2012 Renting Rooms has Given Center Point Woman Plenty of Company

January 18, 2012 Elkader Fitness Shows Fitness of Elkader

Local Life



GET INVOLVED Submit your story now

ATTACH IMAGE FULL FORM SUBMIT STORY

The Gazette Breaking news and sports KCRG News and weather source

- Business The speed of business
- Life Quality of life news
- Government Eastern Iowa government issues
- Crime and Courts Breaking crime and courts news
- Higher Education Higher education in Eastern Iowa
- Health Health news all the time
- Outdoors Hunting, fishing, canoeing, etc
- Weather Share your weather conditions with us
- Prep Sports Complete high school sports coverage
- Schools Covering K-12 education in Eastern Iowa
- Sports & Rec Smorgasbord of Eastern Iowa sports

Follow Eastern Iowa Life

Eastern Iowa Life on Facebook

Like Confirm

You like tt Page · Ins You like tt Page · Ins

528 people like Eastern Iowa Life. 527 people like Eastern Iowa Life.

Stanley Duane

Facebook social plugin

EIowaLife ElowaLife

ElowaLife Renting Rooms has Given Center Point Woman Plenty of Company: CENTER POINT — Behind the front door and in the li... bit.ly/xnMbt1 3 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite

ElowaLife 22 Jan 2012 19:00 : Auditions for "Leaving Iowa": Continue reading bit.ly/xblcui 9 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite

runway expanded from 4,000 feet to 5,500 feet, the new terminal and pilot's lounge with recliners finished in 2008, the full 24-hour service of the "enhanced" field.

"It's a whole different breed of cat," Karen says about aviation nuts. "You meet them here from all over the world."

While flying small aircraft seems to be a solo event — one pilot per plane — enthusiasts have almost always gathered in clubs from The Ninety-Niners formed in 1929 for women pilots to the Flying Farmers organized in the '40s to those associated with brands of planes. Pilots participate in fly-in breakfasts, military reunions, airplane shows and special events.



Lee Bowden, for instance, belongs to a half-dozen organizations from the Taylorcraft Owner's Club to the Experimental Aviation Association. He also serves on an aviation advisory committee for the Iowa Department of Transportation.

Each July 4, Lee joins five other Taylorcraft owners to fly in formation above Independence. Then again, Lee, who has flown his plane from Maine to California, always looks for an excuse to fly in his beloved Taylorcraft. (Check out the video of my flight in Lee's Taylorcraft .)

On June 6, 1960, Lee paid \$1,050 for his Taylorcraft even before he had his pilot's license. In 1999 he spent more than \$50,000 to have it restored.

How much does this retired business education teacher at Starmont High School love his plane?"



"It was born Nov. 26, 1945," he'll tell you, as if it's a child.

Lee has taken his baby up to 14,000 feet, flown it as fast as 151 mph (cruising speed is 92 mph), even flown at 1,000 feet above sea level among the skyscrapers and 640-foot towers of the George Washington Bridge along the Hudson River in New York City to circle the Statue of Liberty.

Linda, who met Lee when the plane was being restored, says "I really didn't want to fly in it."

Now she can't wait for another National Historic Trails flight. Since 2004 they've joined 50 families to fly over and hike parts of seven trails including the Santa Fe, Chisholm, Klondike (Alaska) and Oregon trails.

"I feel safer flying with Lee than I do on commercial flights," Linda says.

Her husband simply smiles.

IowaLife 23 Jan 2012 19:00 : Auditions for "Leaving Iowa": Continue reading [bit.ly/zk3sHV](http://bit.ly/zk3sHV)  
9 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite



Join the conversation

Follow Our Writers on Twitter

Cindy Hadish: [HomegrownIA](http://HomegrownIA)  
Diana Nollen: [diananollen](http://diananollen)

▶ Latest Posts [Most Commented](#)

- [Renting Rooms has Given Center Point Woman Plenty of Company](#)  
0 comments
- [22 Jan 2012 19:00 : Auditions for "Leaving Iowa"](#)  
0 comments
- [23 Jan 2012 19:00 : Auditions for "Leaving Iowa"](#)  
0 comments
- [Kingsley Man Wins \\$10,000 Lottery Prize](#)  
0 comments
- [Altoona Man Wins \\$10,000 Lottery Prize](#)  
0 comments
- [Mount Mercy announces Visiting Writers Series for spring 2012](#)  
0 comments
- [Southeast Asia comes to Coe Thursday Forum](#)  
0 comments
- [Yard and Garden: Cherry Trees](#)  
0 comments
- [Iowa City Weekender: January 19-21](#)  
0 comments
- [Talking With: Small Business Owners Endangered by Over-Development](#)  
0 comments

Seeking A Job?

[Customer Support Representative](#)  
IA-Cedar Rapids | SecurityCoverage

[Bookkeeper/Admin Position](#)  
IA-Cedar Rapids | Mediaquest Signs

[Financial Aid Advisor](#)  
IA-Cedar Rapids | Kirkwood Community College

GO

[more job listings](#)



"It's not a hobby," he says.  
"It's a passion."

Comments: (319) 398-8323;  
dave.rasdal@gazcomm.com



 Tweet 2

 SHARE  PRINT  EMAIL



## Leave a Reply

You must be [logged in](#) to post a comment.