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# Century of Flight – Part X

No comments [Dave Rasdal](#)

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

A hundred years after Art Hartman became the first man to fly a heavier-than-air craft from Iowa soil in Burlington, the Burlington airport is hosting Fly Iowa 2010.

In 2003, a century after the Wright Brothers became the first men to fly such a craft, Fly Iowa was held in Cedar Rapids which had been their boyhood home.

In 2001, Fly Iowa was held in Iowa City; in 2004, in Washington; last year, in Independence.

Always, Fly Iowa brings in pilots and their planes for the enjoyment of spectators. In that respect, it is a reminder of the barnstorming that proliferated for decades after the exploits of Hartman and the Wright Brothers.

Now we take flying for granted. Not so in the early days, or even a half-century ago when Lee Bowden of Independence bought a two-place Taylorcraft airplane and heard his grandmother say, "If God intended you to fly, he would've given you wings."

Lee still flies that plane. He gave me a ride recently as I've explored the history and fascination of aviation in Iowa every Monday for ten weeks. Today, in this final installment, I have a tip of the wing to the creative, courageous, and sometimes crazy people who have taken to the sky like birds.

Each week I've heard from readers with an interest in aviation, whether it be a passing fancy or a real passion. No doubt about it — flying is now a part of our daily lives. Despite advancements in computer communication, allowing us to teleconference for business and see each other's faces when we talk in person, air travel will continue to be important. There's nothing like being there.

Helicopters revolutionized emergency health care, military action, police surveillance, even the gathering of news. But we don't seem to see as many of them as we once did.

The Space Shuttle, developed from the spectacular space race of the '60s and '70s, once promised a whole new world. We hardly pay attention any more. Airplanes and their evolutionary cousins, the jets, however, remain the staple of flight for most of us. Business travel. Pleasure. Air shows.



As I perused Ann Holtgren Pellegreno's three-book series, "Iowa Takes to the Air," I was amazed at not only the depth and breadth of flight in Iowa, but fascinated by the risks and stunts its pioneers took. As I chatted by phone with Ann from her home in Texas, she agreed that throughout her three decades of research for the books she fell in love with the

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barnstorming days. That's what prompted Ann to fly around the world in 1967 along the route Amelia Earhart had attempted 30

years earlier.

Ah, yes, the era between the wars, the 1920s and 1930s, the flying circuses and "car vs. airplane" races and the selling of rides in a rickety biplane that landed in a farm field.

In 1921 one Karl Fischer of Vinton, who had flown war missions in Europe, signed a \$450 contract to perform in Oxford Junction. He was to "make stunts of all kinds" that included having a wing-walker stand on his head and hang by his teeth from a rope. For effect, Karl would outfit his plane with red, green and white flares. He would fly low over main streets to excite the crowd.

Luckily, regulations enacted since then have improved safety while still allowing for excitement.

Versions of today's barnstormers, The Franklin Air Shows and the Aerostars, are among performers from noon to 4 p.m. Sept. 18 during Fly Iowa at the Southeast Iowa Regional Airport at Burlington. The day starts with a pancake breakfast, including military flyovers and sky divers, static displays of antique and World War II era planes and a '40s big band dance at 7 p.m.



A hundred years ago it was Art Hartman flying from a golf course. Now it's a celebration of a century of flight.

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

- Fly Iowa 2010 is Sept. 18 (rain date, Sept. 19) at the Southeast Iowa Regional Airport in Burlington. For details go to [www.burlingtonairshow.org](http://www.burlingtonairshow.org)
- The Iowa Aviation Promotion Group has a website at [www.flyiowa.org](http://www.flyiowa.org)
- To learn about Art Hartman, the first Iowan to fly a heavier-than-air craft, see [www.earlyaviators.com/ehartman.htm](http://www.earlyaviators.com/ehartman.htm)
- "Iowa Takes to the Air," a three-volume history of aviation in Iowa by Ann Holgren Pellegreno, may be available at your local library. (I checked mine out at the Marion Public Library.) If not, you can order them at [www.specialbooks.com/Iowa\\_Takes\\_To\\_The\\_Air.htm](http://www.specialbooks.com/Iowa_Takes_To_The_Air.htm)
- The Office of Aviation at the Iowa Department of Transportation has a wealth of information at [www.iowadot.gov/aviation](http://www.iowadot.gov/aviation)
- The Iowa Aviation Museum and Iowa Aviation Hall of Fame are located at the Greenfield, Iowa, airport. Its website is [www.flyingmuseum.com](http://www.flyingmuseum.com)
- To learn about the Antique Airplane Association and the Airpower Museum at Blakesburg, Iowa, go to [www.antiqueairfield.com](http://www.antiqueairfield.com)



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