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A passion for flying

By Jesusa Christians, Missouri Valley Times-News Aug 12, 2017



Sherman Struble of Missouri Valley, Iowa, during a flight on June 15 with Missouri Valley Times-News reporter Jesusa

Christians.

Jesusa Christians

Retirement for Sherman Stuble of Missouri Valley, Iowa, has enhanced his love of flying. He has no need to book a flight through an airline, though. He just heads to the local airport and rolls his 1954 Beechcraft Bonanza airplane out of the hangar, climbs in the cockpit, and off he goes to lose himself in moments of freedom in the sky.

His wife, Melba, shared how Sherman's dream of becoming a pilot became a reality.

"He left one afternoon and took a long time returning home that evening," said Melba, "so when he came home, I asked him where have you been and he replied, 'Oh, I drove out by the airport,' and then very quietly he said, 'I take my first lesson next week,' and I said, 'You, what!' And that started the whole thing. I always knew he liked to fly and always wanted to, but it still surprised me."

That was 1968, and two years later Sherman became a licensed pilot.

"I've always wanted to be one and there was a man giving lessons here, and one day I just went down and started with him," said Sherman.

Sherman recalled the first time he flew alone.

"We flew around with an instructor, and it was pretty exciting. He was a big man and the first time I flew, we were doing some practicing with him in the plane, and he stopped out here (Missouri Valley airport) and he got out. My old heart skipped a beat when he got out."

Forty-nine years later, and at age 81, Sherman is a seasoned pilot and enjoys going out at least once a week, if the weather allows.

"It's enjoyable and a fun thing to do," said Sherman. "I enjoy that it allows you to get away from everything. You can forget about your daily routine because you have to think about what you're doing to stay up there. It's that feeling of freedom that I find very enjoyable."

Melba said that Sherman is a very careful pilot.

“Flying takes a lot of concentration, so we try not to visit too much while he is in the air,” said Melba.

The Strubles have enjoyed several years of travel in their airplane to various vacation spots. They also fly to places in Iowa or nearby states for lunch or supper.

“There is a place in Kansas that has a restaurant right along the runway,” said Melba. “It’s across the highway, so they have a special runway that goes across the highway, and that is pretty neat. We would like to go out to Saratoga, Wyoming. It’s one of the places we like to go, and he’s never flown up there. It’s kind of up in the mountains. A tiny, sleepy, little town that’s a resort town – rustic, very rustic.”

As an owner of a Beechcraft airplane, Sherman belongs to the American Bonanza Society, an aircraft club for Beechcraft owners that holds conventions and other social travel events.

“After we retired, we took a trip with 11 other planes and went to Alaska,” said Melba. “We flew in formation, and we had a guide that took us all over – over the glaciers, over the tundra, and over the pipeline. Sherman landed on the Alpine Highway and did a touch and go that was supervised by the guide for the group.”

Added Sherman, “We also went above the clouds and went by Mount McKinley so we could see it, and we got a picture going by it.”

Sherman shared that the ideal time to fly is early morning or early evening.

“The ideal time for flight is a no-wind situation, or small wind or no cold front or when it is cool, so there is no thermals where air moves up from the ground, sort of in a cylinder, which makes it rough out across the hills and can throw you all over,” said Sherman.

Sherman has been retired since 2004 and is originally from Ute, Iowa. Melba is originally from Wichita, Kan. They have three children and three grandchildren.

In retirement, the Strubles also keep busy volunteering for several organizations in the community and are very active in their church. Sherman is also a longtime member of the Missouri Valley City Council.

