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Iowa Aviation Museum honors Iowa's "2nd Generation" of aviation promoters

■ Jim and Mike Connell receive distinguished award

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By John Klotzbach editor@bulletinjournal.com |

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Courtesy Photo

Mike Connell (left) and Jim Connell with the "2nd Generation" plaque at the Iowa Aviation Museum

INDEPENDENCE – Jim Connell has been a part of aviation since 1954 when he joined the Army and became an aircraft mechanic. After the Army he worked for PanAm at night, while continuing his education during the day. In 1968, after a short stint at the Oelwein Airport, he became the first Fixed Base Operator (FBO) of the Independence Municipal Airport.

While airplanes pretty much still fly the same (i.e. stick and rudder), he has seen quite few changes in technology.

"Avionics is the biggest change," said Connell. "Pilots can navigate, with pinpoint accuracy, with a push of a button on a GPS."

Connell has overseen many changes at the Independence Airport during his tenure as FBO. Through support of aviation fuel taxes, the airport now has a 5,500 ft. run way, a parallel taxiway, and GPS guided approaches.

"It's the finest airport in northeast Iowa," he said.

Even in semi-retirement, he continues his passion and works at the airport doing fabrication and restoration.

Because of his life-long passion, Connell was recently honored at the Iowa Aviation Museum in Greenfield.

Opening in May 1990, the Iowa Aviation Museum, was formed to preserve, display and educate the public on Iowa's aviation heritage. The collection includes many vintage aircraft and other historical memorabilia ranging

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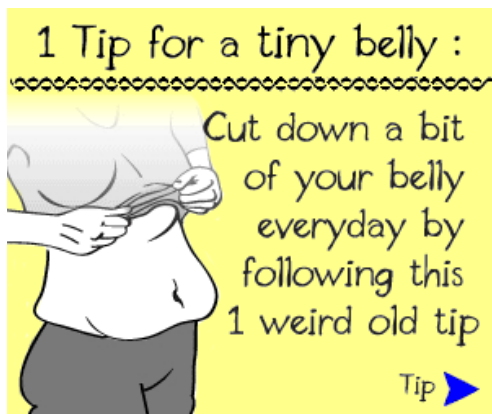
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from balloons of the 1800s to Iowa's contribution to space exploration. The museum was dedicated to the original Aviation Pioneers, whose hard work, tireless hours and sometimes dangerous efforts created the Iowa general aviation industry of airports, aerial transportation, instruction and agriculture applicators.

As the museum approaches its silver anniversary they decided to honor the next generation of Iowa aviation promoters: The airport operators, pilots, mechanics, and salesmen whose untiring efforts continued the work of their predecessors to give us the Iowa aviation system we enjoy today. The Museum refers to them as the "2nd Generation."

Twenty-seven individuals, including Jim's son Mike, were chosen by their peers and were recognized at a formal ceremony on August 24 during their 22nd annual "Wings" fly-in.

"Celebrating the Iowa Aviation Museum's silver anniversary, it is only fitting to honor the Fixed Base Operators, Pilots and Mechanics who continued the hard work and long hours of the Aviation Pioneers to mold General Aviation into what we enjoy today," said Greg Schildberg, Iowa Aviation Museum board president. "They worked tirelessly promoting aviation in the 1970s and 1980s. Many are the sons and daughters of the early Iowa Aviation Pioneers; for this reason they shall be forever known as the '2nd Generation'.

"Jim Connell started his flying business at the Independence airport in 1968 and like many small airport operators provides all services; flight instruction, aircraft maintenance, hangars, fueling.

"Mike Connell, like his two brothers, got the aviation bug from their dad. Mike not only runs the Decorah airport but emulates his father by wearing all the hats; focusing on aircraft maintenance (particularly fabric covered tail-draggers) and is type rated in the Jet Commander and DC-3."

"The award honors Iowa airport operators, pilots, mechanics, and salesmen who've had to change their business practice, build larger hangars, invest in more equipment," said Richard Westbrook, Vice President/Treasurer of Iowa Aviation Museum. "And over time, that equipment becomes obsolete and replaced by newer, better equipment so that the public will fly in safer airplanes with better trained and capable pilots. That's the nature of this award. Honoring those commitments.

"On a side note, I hadn't seen Jim or Mike for years," said Westbrook. "It was very heart warming to see both of them plus all the other airport operators, pilots, etc. whom comprise the '2nd Generation'."

"It's an honor and privilege to be among these award recipients," said Jim Connell. "To receive an award for getting up and doing what I love every day, that's amazing. But, we do it every day because it's just what we do. We fly. Or we make it safer to fly for tomorrow's pilots."

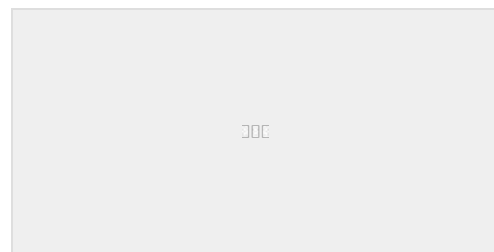
"Aviation is truly a vocation. There hasn't been one day of my life not immersed in general aviation," said Mike Connell, President of Connell Flying Service and FBO of Decorah Airport. "But, it's not only about the flying machines – but the great people that make this industry worth dedicating your life to."

The Connell's are also two members of the Executive Advisory Board of the newly-launched Connell Aviation Group, a 100 percent focused aviation and aerospace communications firm.

"The Connell Family has a rich history of aviation excellence," said Alyssa Connell, CEO of Connell Aviation Group. "For two of our executive members to receive this distinction solidifies what we already knew – the aviation industry is better off for the talents of Jim and Mike Connell."

About the Iowa Aviation Museum

The Iowa Aviation Museum, located in Greenfield, Iowa, became operational in 1988 by order of proclamation from Governor Branstad. The original mission of the museum was "to preserve, restore and display antique aircraft of the 'golden era of aviation' and related memorabilia all for the education and pleasure of the public, and to honor Iowa aviators of the past, present and future." Now, the museum is working toward storing and telling the history of Iowa's rich aviation heritage. Please visit www.FlyingMuseum.com for more information.



Today's Front Page

Sealed Bids on old high school, bus barn and land due Thursday, Sept. 11

INDEPENDENCE — As the bid opening, the Independent Community School Board (ICSB) school board decided to sell the old high school building and land to the city of Independence. The board also decided to sell the bus barn and land to the city of Independence. The board also decided to sell the land to the city of Independence.



Mike Connell (left) and Jim Connell with the "2nd Generation" plaque at the Iowa Aviation Museum.

Iowa Aviation Museum honors Iowa's "2nd Generation" of aviation promoters

Jim and Mike Connell receive distinguished award

INDEPENDENCE — The Iowa Aviation Museum honored two men who have dedicated their lives to the preservation of aviation history. Jim and Mike Connell were presented with the "2nd Generation" award for their contributions to the museum and the aviation community.



Local swimmer scores six medals at 2014 Iowa Games.

Local swimmer scores six medals at 2014 Iowa Games

INDEPENDENCE — A local swimmer has achieved a remarkable feat at the 2014 Iowa Games, winning six medals. The swimmer, who has been training for years, was recognized for their exceptional performance in various events.

Sun rises on a new day for Denton Castings in Brandon



Left to right: Mike Denton, CEO of Denton Castings, and other staff members at the new facility in Brandon.

BRANDON — A new day has dawned for Denton Castings as the company opens its new facility in Brandon. The facility is a state-of-the-art manufacturing plant that will significantly increase the company's production capacity.

District Working to Implement A/C in Elementary Buildings

INDEPENDENCE — An committee is working to implement air conditioning in elementary school buildings. The committee is currently reviewing various options and will be making recommendations to the school board in the near future.

SuperSaver Card fundraiser calls for Tourism

INDEPENDENCE — The SuperSaver Card fundraiser is calling for increased tourism in the area. The card offers various discounts and is designed to attract visitors to the region, boosting the local economy.

Discussion, Share, Print buttons and a post timestamp: Posted in Independence bulletin journal, News on Monday, September 8, 2014 2:13 pm.

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