

## Hemme to be recognized as master pilot

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By Seth Boyes, Daily Reporter Staff



Tuesday, local pilot and businessman Bill Hemme will be recognized by the FAA for his expertise in aviation. Hemme has maintained his status as a pilot for 50 years and is generally known to be expertly knowledgeable on the subject of aviation. In 2015, Hemme (pictured with his trophy) received first place in a spot landing competition at Spencer Municipal Airport. (Photo submitted)

Local pilot and businessman Bill Hemme will be awarded the Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award by Federal Aviation Administration Team Program Manager Chris Manthe. The award is given to pilots who have shown professionalism, skill and aviation expertise for at least 50 years. The

presentation will take place at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Spencer Municipal Airport, during the FAA Safety Seminar.

Hemme will be presented with a plaque, certificate and lapel pin, in recognition of his piloting. In addition, Hemme's name will appear on the Roll of Honor, which is listed on the FAA website at <https://www.faasafety.gov/content/Master...>

Hemme, who founded Spencer Avionics, which is located at the Spencer Municipal Airport, serves on the airport board and works alongside fellow aviators as well as representatives of Leading Edge Aviation.

"Bill is an interesting guy. He has built the businesses of Spencer Avionics into quite a business over the years and, now that he's retired, it's still growing. So, he has a lot to take credit for," Gayle Brandt, with Leading Edge Aviation, said.

Hemme explained that after he graduated from Iowa State University in 1963 with a degree in electrical engineering, he began work at a company called Collins Radio in Cedar Rapids. During this time, his work contributed to the Apollo Space Program. Approximately two years after starting work, Hemme received his private pilot's license in 1965. After the Apollo program wound down, Hemme said he transferred to the commercial avionics division of the company.

In 1971, Hemme took a job in Armstrong, at a company called Weightronix before starting Spencer Avionics in 1977 and eventually retired in 1999.

"I ran the business for 22 years and then sold it to one of my 12-year employees and he continues to run the business," Hemme said, noting that he still works for the employee part time.

Hemme went on to indicate that Spencer Avionics is one of only four such businesses in the state of Iowa that operate out of an airport.

"Usually they're in large airports like Des Moines, Sioux City, the Quad Cities or Omaha, (Nebraska). As far as the state of Iowa, there's only four," Hemme said.

Throughout his years, Hemme has continually maintained his pilot's license.



The Spencer Municipal Airport hosted its first spot landing competition in 2015. Several pilots entered the competition. However, Bill Hemme (back row, second from the right) took first prize. Hemme will be recognized as a master pilot by the FAA on Tuesday. (Photo submitted)

"Keeping his pilot's license for 50 years says a lot. Beyond that, he makes sure he keeps himself current," Brandt said.

Hemme explained that, in order to be eligible for the award, a pilot must have maintained his or her license for 50 years with no lapses, violations or accidents.

"Your pilots license doesn't really expire. You retain it, unless you have a violation and the FAA pulls it on you," Hemme said.

He went on to explain that a specialized doctor, called an airman's medical examiner, must conduct medical tests to be sure pilots are able to continue operating aircraft. He explained that the frequency of the examinations depends on the age of the pilot.

"At my age, at 75, it's every year," Hemme said.

Regarding Tuesday's presentation, Hemme seemed ready to accept his award with humility.

"It's kind of a nice award," he said. "To tell the truth, not a whole lot of pilots make it to the 50-year threshold."

He clarified that some pilots lose interest and others are no longer medically able to pilot a craft.

Hemme, on the other hand, has been able to continue to develop his skill as a pilot. In fact, Hemme won the 2015 Spot Landing Contest at the Spencer Municipal Airport.

"That was the first year we'd done that contest. He was the oldest guy there with the highest performing aircraft and he was the guy that had the most precision," Brandt recalled.

Brandt went on to describe Hemme as a conscientious pilot, who carries effective equipment in his plane and knows how to use it to its full potential.

"He's very deserving of the award," Brandt concluded.