

WWII Veteran touches the sky over Siouxland while on a Dream Flight

by Vivian Rennie

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Six planes like this are used across the country for these Dream Flights. So far, 450 veterans have "touched the sky" with help from the program. (SIOUXLAND NEWS)



SIOUX CITY, Iowa — You may have heard of Honor Flights, which take veterans from Siouxland to the national war memorials in Washington, D.C., but there is another organization taking those vets to the air much closer to home.

Cal Swagerty, a Second World War veteran, soared over Siouxland Wednesday, Sept. 1st, thanks to a Dream Flight.

This organization allows WWII veterans to fly above their communities in WWII-era planes.

This fall, the group is embarking on Operation September Freedom, a mission to take as many veterans as they can on these Dream Flights.

Mckenzie Roeber is a life enrichment specialist at Heritage of Emerson.

"He was very excited this morning and then on the way here, he was just full of emotion and excitement," said Roeber.

Cal lives in Emerson, Neb. at that Heritage facility.

He fought on the battlefields of Europe in the 1940s.

His daughter, Betty Wood, was at the airfield.

"He joined the army when he was 18 and World War Two was in full swing when he enlisted and was sent over to Belgium and Germany and served most of his most of his enlisted life over there," said Wood.

An airplane from that era greeted him Wednesday afternoon in Sioux City.

Molly Littlefield is a volunteer pilot with the program.

"This is a 1942 Boeing Stearman, probably 90% or greater of the world war two pilots learn to fly in an airplane similar to this," said Littlefield. "This airplane's first mission in life was to train young men to fly bigger airplanes, bombers and fighters. In his second mission in life was to be a crop duster, and so I kind of like to think it's third mission is to give back to that very generation for which it was created."

Six planes like that particular Stearman are used across the country for dream flights.

So far, 450 veterans have touched the sky through the program.

"We get to talk to him, we get to look in their eyes, we get to hear their stories and see their expressions when they come out to the airplane and when they're in the airplane," said Littlefield. "I can see him in the mirror and he was smiling, they usually smile and it brings out stories. It's very meaningful for me as the pilot."

Once the plane touched down, Cal signed the plane's rudder, adding his mark to the program alongside the signatures of every other veteran who has taken the flight on that airplane.

"It's pretty emotional. I must say, I never, he never talks about his service and so, I think this is probably the most I've seen of any of it," said Wood. "So, this has been great for him and us."

"Nice ride," said Swagerty. "And I enjoyed it very much."

Dream Flights is cost-free to the veteran and is run entirely on Donations.

[For more information about Dream Flights or to donate visit this link.](#)