

World's oldest pilot, from Red Oak, Iowa, turns 100 years old

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RED OAK, Iowa (KMTV) -

"I woke this morning, and I was like, 'Well, you made it,' " said Ernie Smith, the world's oldest pilot.

On Thursday, dozens packed the [Red Oak Airport](#) to wish Ernie Smith a happy 100th birthday.

"It makes me realize, my god, I got a lot of friends," Smith said.

"I always knew he was great, but seeing all these people who agree is pretty cool," his great-granddaughter said.

Everyone wanted a photo with Smith — not because he hit the century mark, it's because he is a record-setter.

[KMTV 3 News Now Anchor Emily Szink](#) was just one of many people who can say they've ridden in a plane piloted by a man in the [Guinness Book of World Records](#).

"To go up with a man that is twice my age and telling me how to do things, it was amazing," pilot Brenda Nelson said.

Nelson was one of the last people to take flight with Smith. This past summer, at 99-years-old, Smith suffered a heart attack. His daughter, Sherry Lee Davis, said doctors were in her dad's corner to get him healthy for this day.

"There were people who actually thought we could fast track that and get him up before his 100th birthday," Davis said.

Shortly after the heart attack came a stroke. Even though he is doing great, Smith has been grounded for some time.

“Well, I miss it,” he said.

On his 100th birthday, everyone was determined to get him back in the sky, but Mother Nature had other plans.

“Visibility is only about a mile and three-quarters,” Nelson said.

But the weather wasn't stopping him from stepping inside a plane. With Nelson's help, Smith got to taxi the Cessna 150.

"The temptation is to give her some gas and pull up," Smith said.

It wasn't just a present for Smith; it was a special moment for everyone who witnessed it. Smith said maybe he will fly by himself again, but for now, he is just blessed for his time both in the sky and on the ground.

“Life is sweet, it really is. So I will take all they are going to give me,” Smith said.

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