

Two weeks ago, I began the story of Stan Smith's introduction to aviation. I left off where Stan was walking home and heard a plane landing at Rhonerville airstrip. He investigated and started his adventure with flying. Stan's words continue: I had the cost of a ride and that was all it took. I signed up as a student, soloed and was in heaven. I had a good job working year round after school but I also found more time to work at the airport to earn flying time. At that time Pacific Lumber Company owned a DC3 and, if I was available, I had the job of refueling it. (Hand pumped out of Fifty Five gallon drums). Chocks were needed so with my high school shop teacher, Mr. Lippert's OK I gained welding experience while making many pairs of chocks. Flying days were somewhat scarce during winter so I had to skip school now and then. Mom wrote notes to the principal telling about her feeling about the importance of aviation and I guess that Mr. Badura and Mr. Steinbeck let my absences go by as long as my grades stayed up. After graduation I joined the Air Force but earlier eardrum problems wouldn't let me fly. The first jet fighters were just coming in and I was stationed at Williams Air Force Base in Chandler, AZ. I became crew chief on T33s and was fortunate to be selected to travel with the Acrojets, the forerunner to the Thunderbirds. We traveled to entice young college people to join the Air Force. My private flying ended there but I had plenty of rear cockpit time in the T33. Now back to Mom. She had followed the stories of female pilots all through the War but she had to stay with my sister and I. When I started flying she wanted to know all about my experiences, drilled me about what I had learned. My Dad had passed away while my wife Joan and I were still living in Arizona. Mom bought a small aircraft and joined the Civil Air Patrol. While learning to fly out of Rhonerville she met and married John Walter. They both got their pilot licenses the same day and their lives were never the same after that. Soon, Mom was getting calls from outlying mills. They were requesting help to obtain small parts. She made small parachutes, buzzed the drop zone and delivered small necessary parts. This was done in the early morning or in the evening as she worked with Cerebral Palsy children during the day. The 'Sixty Four' flood hit and the military was called in to help rescue people from Garberville to Hoopa. With so much of the area under water, maps were all but useless. The Civil Air Patrol was called to help with members riding in the helicopters as 'spotters', pointing out homes and areas. John and Mom stayed with it until the military was relieved. Thanks Stan for a great story.

Fred Nelson for Community Comment